School Staff Perceptions of Well –Being and Experience of an Intervention to Promote Mental Well-Being.

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities

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List of abbreviations used in this thesis
CDC Community Development Centre
COR Conservation of Resources Model
DCSF Department for Children, Schools and Families
DfES Department for Education and Skills
EEG Electroencephalograph
EMA Ecological Momentary Assessment
EP Educational Psychologist
GDP Gross Domestic Product
HLTA Higher Level Teaching Assistant
IPP Innovation Promotion Programme
JDCS Job Demand Control Support Model
MBSR Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction
TA Thematic Analysis
TaMHS Targeted Mental Health in Schools
WEMWBS Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale

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Abstract

Educational Psychologists (EPs) spend much of their time working with school staff to solve problems. Staff often report perceptions of high levels of stress, overwork and lack of time to plan and implement changes indicating frequent experience of poor mental well-being. There has been a recent increase in awareness of promoting the well-being of children and young people, however, little attention appears to have been focused as yet upon the school staff who will promote and support this agenda.

Research in schools has tended to focus on teachers rather than including all staff. There is a preponderance of research clarifying contributors to teachers’ stress and, to a lesser extent describing interventions in schools. However, little research has focused on school staff understanding and value of well-being and about perceptions of interventions carried out in schools. This study aimed to obtain a greater understanding of the perceptions of school staff about well-being, the value they placed upon it and the experience and perceived impact of taking part in a study aiming to promote staff well-being.

An 8 week intervention was carried out in a primary school with weekly sessions of a project which was known as ‘Chill and Chat’. Data was gathered via questionnaires completed before and after the project and 3 focus groups held before, during and after the project. Data was analysed using thematic analysis.

It was found that well-being was seen as important, however, colleagues with poor mental well-being were ‘pathologised’. ‘Learning’ to cope and maintain positive well-being was perceived as a responsibility of the staff member. Staff perceived the informality of provision to support their well-being as important and valued the time to develop better relationships with colleagues rather than ‘working relationships’ and also feeling valued and cared for. Staff reported perceptions of greater efficacy in the classroom, increased job satisfaction and feeling calmer in the classroom. The most significant limitation of the study was the continuation of provision to support staff mental well-being which requires commitment and understanding from school senior management teams and local authority members regarding the impact that increased well being can have on teaching and learning and a shift of thought towards focusing on positive well-being promotion rather than managing poor well-being.

There are implications for EP practice and research in helping school staff reflect on their well-being and actions that they can take as a team to promote well-being in school. EPs can also be instrumental in disseminating research findings highlighting the impact of staff mental well being on teaching and learning.
Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institute of learning.
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I would also like to thank Doddy, Maple and my parents whose ongoing support is invaluable.
Summaries of previous work submitted for the degree of Doctorate in Educational Psychology

Assignment 1 – Trainee Teachers’ Willingness and Confidence to Teach Children with Special Educational Needs April 2008.
Working as an educational psychologist and often hearing such comments as ‘you’re the expert’, ‘what do I need to do to help this child?’ and ‘we can’t meet his / her needs’ led me to consider whether teachers necessarily feel prepared to teach all of the pupils in their class. In school work can be carried out individually with staff and at systems level, however, maybe a more effective approach would be to work alongside teacher training institutions as well as schools to ensure that teachers feel able to teach all pupils.

Garner (2001) commented that inclusion was unworkable due to the inadequate coverage of special educational needs and inclusion issues in initial teacher training courses. There have been a substantial number of documents indicating standards which students and teachers need to meet in order to be prepared to teach all children (e.g. DES, 1989; DfEE, 1988; DfES, 2002; DfES, 2004). However, research appeared to indicate student teacher concerns regarding pupil behaviour, getting enough help and managing to meet the needs of all children in a class (Hobson, Maldarez, Kerr, Tracey, Pell, Tomlinson and Roper 2005).

Research appeared to indicate that teaching students are in support of inclusion as a principle (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2000), but that they have not formulated ideas and strategies regarding SEN and inclusion as they end their training (Pearson, 2005). Throughout this review of literature factors which increase student confidence and reduce perceived barriers to inclusion are considered. It is suggested that students benefit from the chance to reflect and develop their ideas about inclusion and SEN, the chance to practice and experience teaching a range of pupils in a safe environment and closer links between their teaching practise and university work with chance to reflect on how they interlink and facilitate development.
For teaching institutions implications are around revisiting inclusion issues frequently rather than as a discrete topic and providing opportunities to practice and reflect on teaching of all pupils.

There is a role for the educational psychologist, which appears to have been neglected by the profession somewhat, in terms of providing in service training to tutors, working with groups of students, familiarising students with the EP role and working alongside teacher training colleagues systemically to provide a link between reflective practice in training and reflective practice in service.

**Assignment 2 – Facilitating Changes Through Interactions with Teachers February 2009.**

The question of what educational psychologists do is raised with considerable frequency. This piece of research attempted to clarify from teachers’ points of view what educational psychologists do which makes interactions more useful and the teacher feel that things may change. Participants from four primary schools completed open ended questionnaires and responses were analysed using thematic analysis. Teachers valued educational psychologists as a source of advice and were keen to communicate ‘first hand’ rather than via the SENCo or reports. The relationship with the educational psychologist and regularity of contact were also important. Teacher perceived self efficacy and willingness / availability to joint problem solve impacted considerably on change likelihood and expressed usefulness of the interaction.

**Assignment 3 – Targeted Staff Mental Health in Schools. An Intervention to Promote School Staff Mental Well-being March 2010.**

Staff in schools are engaged in promoting and maintaining children’s mental well-being very frequently. However, it is intuitive that in order to effectively do so staff must have access to support for their own mental well-being. Staff from a primary school participated in a 5 week project during which they engaged in social and relaxation activities in a therapeutic environment during the school day. Data was collected using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant, Fishwick, Platt, Joseph and Stewart-Brown,
2006; Stewart-Brown and Janmohamed, 2008) and additional gathering of staff views. Analysis was carried out using t-tests, an effect size calculation and content analysis of staff views. Staff felt that their mental well-being had improved and the size effect (0.23) supported this. Particularly valued were the physical break from the work environment, consciously relaxing and feeling ‘permitted’ to take time out and socialise with colleagues.
1. Rationale

A significant part of my work as an educational psychologist (EP) involves working with school staff (mainly teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors and head teachers) to try to solve problems and to improve outcomes for children in a wide range of situations. Teaching staff often tell me during the course of our conversations that they do not have time to plan or implement different strategies, that they feel tired, low and increasingly burdened by expectations from within school (the head teacher, other teachers, governors) and outside school (government initiatives and standards, parents, local authority personnel). There is a wealth of research evidence to support the claim that teaching staff experience high levels of stress (Schwarzer and Hallam, 2008; DfES, 2007; HM Treasury, 2000).

Those with more positive well-being have been found to ruminate about problems and difficulties less (Baer, 2003) and are considered to evaluate, store and recall job related information and experiences differently to individuals who could be considered less happy (Houghton and Jinkerson, 2007). The ability to switch off and detach from work has also been found to promote more positive mood and less perceived fatigue at the end of the day (Sonnentag and Bayer, 2005). Of particular interest in this study it was concluded that it was the act of ‘switching off’ rather than length of time away from work which appeared to have the greatest impact on workers. Presumably then, providing an opportunity to switch off and relax during the work day may be considered to promote greater feelings of well-being.

Why provide interventions for staff?

There is an increasing awareness of supporting the well-being of children and young people in school and the recent TaMHS project (Targeted Mental Health in Schools) has focused on enhancing the mental health of children with the aim of enabling them to participate more fully in school and community life (Mental Health Foundation, 1999). DCSF guidance (DCSF, 2008) recommended ensuring staff are highly supportive and highly supported (p.32) and that staff should be understanding, helpful, friendly, positive in attitude, have high expectations and be enthusiastic. To promote this staff professional development needs
relating to health and welfare were highlighted. No specific guidance was issued as to how teachers access this professional development. Implicitly, mentally healthy staff would also be more likely to participate more fully in school and community life and support their charges to likewise do so.

Why intervene at a school level rather than an individual level?
Some models of occupational well-being highlight a perceived mismatch between the demands of a job and a person’s real or perceived capability to meet those demands (Caplan et al, 1975; Siegrist, Peter, Junge, Cremer and Seidel, 1990). Such models may be seen to provide support for a model of matching individual support to manage well-being, however, it may also be argued that such an approach is demanding in terms of time to assess individual well-being and provide pre-emptive or reactive support to people as they are deemed to require it. Such an approach may also be seen as exclusive as it highlights those who are not considered to be coping and also may miss providing support to those who would benefit from generic input. Brown et al (2002) amongst others have reported upon the stigmatising impact of experiencing stress. Systemic work to promote the well-being of all employees may be considered more accessible and acceptable by employees (Giga et al 2003a). Newell (2002) in her model of occupational well-being noted that ‘perceived threat’ (stress) may be moderated by both personal factors and organisational and social support factors. Additional support for provision of support to all staff in organisations can be found in Cohen and Wills’ (1985) buffering hypothesis in which they postulate social support provides a positive impact for all, not just those who are experiencing stress / poor well-being. The positive impact of social support with teachers has also been identified by Punch and Tuetteman (1998).

As stress and poor well-being are considered sensitive topics by school staff and also appear to be experienced by many staff presumably it would be helpful to clarify what teachers and other members of school staff consider well-being to be in order that support systems and interventions can be arranged to promote the achievement of improvements in a manner which is meaningful and valued by staff. It would also be useful to clarify the extent to which school staff value their own well-being and the methods they currently engage in to
maintain their levels of well-being. Very few studies of well-being in staff in school include staff other than teaching staff. Presumably if research supports systemic and organisational approaches these should be aimed at and available to all those who are part of the organisation.

1.1 Research Questions
The research questions addressed in this thesis are:

- RQ 1 What do school staff understand by the term ‘mental well-being’?
- RQ 2 What values and importance do staff place on promoting mental well-being?
- RQ 3 Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their mental well-being and if so how has it impacted? I am expecting that staff will report some impact on their well-being as this was the case in the pilot study.
- RQ 4 Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their work in school and what evidence do they have for this view? I am expecting that staff will perceive differences in their mental well-being and that this will be perceived to have impacted on their work.

1.2 Summary of methodology
The research was carried out from an epistemological stance of social constructivism. Individuals seek to make sense of their world as they experience it (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). It is possible to identify differences between people, but also sameness by recognising peoples’ attempts to make sense of and interpret the world. ‘Reality’ will be different for people depending on their social history, personality and culture. In reviewing research on interventions to promote mental health I noted that there was a prevalence of individual interventions which may be taken to imply that there is an ‘ideal’ standard for mental health i.e. a ‘true’ mental health. As such, those not attaining this ideal may be pathologised (Burr, 2003). Alternatively one may see knowledge as being socially constructed in interactions in which phenomena are described. By seeing ‘social reality’ as a construct in a state of constant flux as it is revised by individuals making sense of their experiences, one may propose that qualitative research aims not to generalise findings, but to obtain richer, deeper understanding of social phenomena (Silverman, 2000). School staff participating in the
study will have different ideas as to what mental health may constitute and by asking about views and experiences of mental health and participation in a project to promote well-being it is hoped to establish a greater understanding of what school staff conceive of as mental health so that future support is better honed and appropriate to meet perceived need.

A pilot study was carried out in the summer term of 2009 in which the aim was to establish if the provision of a space in which staff could relax and have time out could contribute to their well-being. A five week project known as Chill and Chat was carried out in a primary school at lunchtimes in which staff participation was voluntary. Staff completed the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant, Fishwick, Platt, Joseph and Stewart-Brown, 2006) during the staff meeting in which the project was introduced and during weeks 1, 3 and 5. A small effect size (0.23) was identified in addition to a perception by participating staff that they had benefited from the intervention.

In the current study the intervention ran for 8 weeks. As previously it was introduced in a staff meeting and in letters to staff. Three focus groups were carried out to gather data pertaining to staff understanding and value of mental health and perceptions regarding participation in an intervention to promote mental well-being. Focus groups were held 1 week prior to the commencement of the project, during the 3rd week and 1 week after the end of the project. Staff were asked to complete questionnaires before and after the project and the views of non-participants were also sought via this method. Activities provided were included based on research evidence which supported their potential benefit to staff (see section 3.15).

Data was analysed using thematic analysis which has been identified as compatible with constructivist paradigms (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and is a flexible tool which can yield rich, detailed and complex data.

1.3 Structure of thesis
In chapter 2 the term mental well-being is defined; models and conceptualisations of well-being are considered more generally and then with specific reference to teachers. In chapter
3 The research questions and aims are described and the epistemological position of social constructivism is discussed. A description of the pilot study and the current study is given followed by details of the data analysis. In chapter 4 themes relating to each research question are discussed and potential actions and further research implications for EPs are proposed. Concluding remarks are contained in chapter 5.
2. Literature Review

In the course of working as an educational psychologist (EP) I spend a lot of time working alongside teachers to improve children’s school and learning experiences. Farrell, Woods, Lewis, Rooney, Squires and O’Conner (2006) noted, in their review of the role of the EP, that in addition to case work, consultation and statutory work educational psychologists were frequently involved in systemic work in order to increase the capacity of schools and other organisations to meet need. Frequently during meetings, I am told that the teacher does not have time to differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of their class, attend review meetings or adapt current strategies; and indeed gratitude is expressed when simple, easy to administer plans are the product of a consultation. In the course of discussions, many teachers raise the issue of the burdens they feel placed upon them by government, parents, school policy, pupils and their own standards and expectations of themselves and their job. This recurring professional experience has led me to surmise that there are unmet psychological needs experienced by many school staff members.

The School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (2006) states that teachers must;

‘promote the general progress and well-being of individual pupils
and any class assigned to them…” (no page number).

In order to promote and encourage children’s well-being (in addition to their academic progress) it may be proposed that first teachers must be sufficiently accessing well-being and have strategies in place to manage and cope with every day life. It has been proposed that teaching staff are becoming increasingly important in the development and maintenance of the well being of children which potentially may add to the ‘burdens’ described above.

‘Teachers matter. They matter to the education and achievement of
their students and, more and more, to their personal and social well-being’ (Day, Simmons, Stobart, Kington and Gu (2007) p.1)
Structure of literature review

In this section I will use the term ‘well-being’ which will be considered in terms of different definitions followed by consideration of research into proposed components of well-being and factors which may contribute towards the experience of positive and negative well-being.

To carry out the literature search I initially began by reviewing research papers, identified using PsychLit, relating to ‘mental well-being’. I also used variations such as ‘well-being’, ‘mental health’ and ‘subjective well-being’. Research journals included broad based psychology journals, teaching journals, occupational psychology journals and journals relating more specifically to well-being such as ‘Stress, Anxiety and Coping’. I intended initially to focus on research carried out in Britain, however, there were few studies and it was necessary to widen the scope of the search in order to identify a broad view of studies and theory relating to well-being, teaching and well-being and interventions to improve well-being both individually and systemically and more specifically related to teacher and school interventions. Studies carried out in countries with markedly different education systems to those of the UK were excluded as it was difficult to judge the extent of the differences in expectations and experiences of teachers. Research including teaching staff from institutes of higher education was also excluded. Additional papers were identified by reviewing the research cited in journal articles.

Initially the concept of well-being and its potential components will be considered. Literature regarding the improvement of well-being both in individuals and within organisations will then be reviewed. Individual coping strategies will be considered and also the concept of burnout which may occur when one’s coping strategies are overwhelmed. I will then move to review the literature pertaining to teacher well-being in terms of teachers’ own strategies and attributes and research into supporting and promoting teacher / school staff well-being.
This current research builds on a pilot study of an intervention to support teacher mental well-being (Sharrocks, 2010) which will be briefly commented on and described in more detail in a later section (see section 2.12). Questions relating to school staff understanding and value of mental well-being are posed and the impact that an intervention to enable staff to experience relaxation and ‘time out’ from their day will have on their feelings of well-being and the potential impact this has on their work is studied.

2.1 What is mental well-being?

“Mental well-being is now largely accepted as covering two perspectives (1) the subjective experience of happiness (affect) and life satisfaction (the hedonic perspective); and (2) positive psychological functioning, good relationships with others and self realisation (the eudemonic perspective).” (Stewart-Brown and Janmohamed, 2008 no page number)

Ryan and Deci (2000) provide a further discussion of the two main perspectives which they believe studies relating to well-being revolve around.

- **Hedonism** is considered to relate to one’s happiness and subjective experience of pleasure i.e. subjective well-being. They go on to state that hedonism (subjective well-being) may relate not just to the experience of positive emotions but also the frequency with which they are experienced.

- **Eudemonic well-being** is related to the actualisation of human potentials and may be said to occur when one’s activities link to one’s deeply held views and values (Waterman, 1993). In other words it is not related to feeling positive and perhaps ‘happy’, but rather the extent to which a person is fully functioning. The concept of being ‘fully functioning’ may be considered rather vague and subject to many interpretations and indeed one could propose that if one feels that one is fully functioning then it is likely that one’s eudemonic well-being is high. Ryff and Keyes (1995) opined that six areas of actualisation are key to eudemonic well-being:
autonomy, personal growth, self acceptance, life purpose, mastery and positive relatedness. Such terms are similarly used by Warr (1987b; 1999; 2007) in his Vitamin Model of Well-being (see section 2.6.1).

Surprisingly, Ryan and Deci (2000) challenge the notion that affect is part of the defining characteristics of well-being and propose that as such it cannot be an outcome of aiming to increase mental well-being i.e. it is not an end in itself. This appears rather counter intuitive as it appears reasonable that many people could be described as striving for happiness. However, is one’s happiness (hedonistic well-being) dependent upon one’s eudemonic well-being or indeed vice versa? Could it be that both aspects of well-being are linked and overlapping? Researchers have indicated that aspects of self actualisation predict fluctuations in affect (Ryan and Frederick, 1997) and one’s financial status has been noted to correlate with life satisfaction (Diener and Diener, 1995) which may indicate that it would be rather difficult to entirely separate the experiences of eudemonic and hedonistic well-being. Lyubormirsky (2001) proposed that happy people appear to perpetuate their positive emotional well-being through their construction of life events indicating that one’s perceptions of events can impact on both one’s feelings of hedonistic well-being and one’s eudemonic well-being. (See section 2.4 for a further discussion of happiness.) There may even be a social and cultural aspect of well-being in that experiences which may be valued and indicators of actualisation in one culture or society may not be so in others. Collectivist cultures have been found to report less subjective well-being than more individualist nations where norms support experiencing and expressing emotions (Myers and Diener, 1995). Inglehart (1990) provides a further discussion of reported happiness and possible correlations with nationality.

I feel that individual’s perception of their well-being is likely to be strongly influenced by their own ‘standards’ and ideas of what constitutes a pleasurable experience (for some this may be being in a highly social environment, which is noisy and stimulating, for others it may be quiet, calm and less requirement to talk to others), one’s personal aims and goals and likelihood that these can be achieved i.e. the perceived distance between one’s ideal and current ‘reality’. It is likely that the social world in which one resides may impact on one’s
judgement of the criteria postulated by Ryff and Keyes (1995), for example, in some communities wealth is highly socially desirable, in others confidence is valued and in others self awareness and self knowledge may be prized.

2.2 Components of well-being

It may perhaps be intuitive that one’s happiness and feelings of achievement are likely to be impacted on by one’s skills in interacting with others and also one’s internal thought processes in which responsibility for positive and negative experiences are ascribed internally and hence more within one’s control or externally and therefore presumably less within the scope of one’s control. One’s understanding of the world and perception and interpretation of events are highly complex processes. It may be proposed that the process of construing may impact on well-being. For example, mindfulness, the process of focusing attention on the ‘here and now’ and focusing on and regulating one’s activity has been associated with greater well-being (Brown and Ryan, 2003). However, many theorists refer to concepts which could be considered to be value laden such as happiness and appreciation (e.g. Lyubormirsky, 2001; Adler and Fagley, 2005). It would seem that personal characteristics and one’s own values and expectations provide a context for describing one’s mental well-being. This is of interest as it may be implied that well-being is affected by one’s values which are in turn affected by societal and cultural values.

2.2.1 Social skills and social support

If a person is socially skilled could this contribute to their well-being or enhance the likelihood of their experiencing more positive well-being?

Segrin, Hanzal, Donnerstein, Taylor and Domschke (2007) postulated an association between social skills and psychosocial well-being in that those with good social skills tend to have higher self esteem and satisfaction with social interactions. People who possessed good social skills had also, potentially, greater access to social support and therefore may experience lower levels of stress and higher levels of well-being. These researchers noted that students who scored higher on social skills measures perceived less stress and higher life satisfaction. Those who experienced more major life events and who reported higher
perceived stress rather unsurprisingly had higher symptoms of depression and lower life satisfaction. The study appears to indicate that social skills may have some impact on one’s subjective experience of well-being and possibly that they may prove a buffer to experiencing stress or a lack of well-being. However, it may be opined that other factors may have contributed to these results. For example, would the students have reported the same levels of stress and life satisfaction at different parts of the term and indeed do younger people obtain and perceive well-being the same way as older people? (e.g. Ryff, 1989b).

Those with ‘good social skills’ could be presumed to socialise more and have more opportunities to forge relationships with others who can provide support and companionship. Segrin et al (2007) proposed the propensity to turn to others for help, a higher activity level and believing oneself efficacious would impact on positive cognitive and affective states. Hence, having good social skills would increase accessibility of social support.

It has been noted that social support is often cited as a positive factor in enhancing well-being, however, what sort of support i.e. practical or emotional and who offers the support may also be pertinent. In a study with public sector workers regarding support provided by supervisors and colleagues Brough and Pears (2004) found that practical support from a supervisor accounted for significant variance in perceived job satisfaction, but this was not found to be associated with psychosocial well-being. Employees who perceived more control in their job and less demand reported greater satisfaction and well-being. Although the study reports that employees who completed the questionnaires included direct care workers, managers and administrators I noted that 71% of returns were by direct care workers which may have skewed results somewhat. One may surmise that direct care workers have somewhat less control over their role and possibly value practical support from supervisors more than other workers involved in the study. Workers may also have felt inclined to report high value for supervisor support as they considered it socially acceptable and a potentially desirable outcome to the study. Surprisingly social support was not found
to have a significant impact on well-being, however, access to the support was not described in terms of possibility and frequency and desirability.

2.2.2 Attributional style

Schmutte and Ryff (1997) proposed that certain attributional styles may be more self enhancing and enabling leading to increased subjective well-being. It was proposed that people who scored highly on scales of extraversion, conscientiousness and low neuroticism experienced higher levels of self acceptance, mastery and life purpose. The latter characteristics were felt to be intrinsic to eudemonic well-being indicating once more the overlap of subjective well-being and ‘self actualisation’ (eudemonic well-being).

Affective disposition has also been proposed to impact upon life satisfaction and well-being. Houghton and Jinkerson (2007) examined job satisfaction in relation to dispositional view and opined that job satisfaction is evaluative and dysfunctional thinking may result in information being evaluated inappropriately. However, those who engaged in positive self talk, mental imagery and mental rehearsal i.e. constructive thought processes were more likely to habitually use more opportunity oriented thinking. These authors concluded that those rating themselves highly in subjective well-being may evaluate, store and recall job information differently to less happy individuals. It may be noted that subjective well-being may also be considered an evaluative concept; hence does one feel more job satisfaction because one is happy or does job satisfaction contribute towards one’s subjective well-being? This relates to the discussion in section 2.1 in which I noted that research indicates an overlap of eudemonic and hedonistic well-being.

2.3 Mindfulness and well-being

‘Mindfulness may be important in disengaging individuals from automatic thoughts, habits and behaviour patterns and thus could play a key role in fostering informed and self endorsed behavioural regulation, which has long been associated with well-being enhancement.’ (Brown and Ryan, 2003 p 823.)
Baer (2003) notes that mindfulness relates to intentionally directing attention to internal and external experiences which are occurring at the present moment. Individuals are encouraged to observe thoughts and sensations with non-judgmental acceptance. Kabat-Zinn (2003) has proposed that mindfulness is not about ‘getting anywhere’ or fixing issues, but more about allowing oneself to be where one is and experience the moment and emphasises the importance of the process not being attached to an outcome.

Mindfulness has been studied with regard to its potential contribution towards reducing poor well-being and mental illnesses, although care must be made to note that it is the application of mindfulness which can result in feeling more positive or relaxed rather than this being the means to an end (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). For a fuller discussion of the use of mindfulness training as a clinical intervention reference may be made to Grossman, Niemann, Schmidt and Walach (2004) and Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002).

Mindfulness has been likened to acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) (see Bond and Bruce, 2000 section 2.7.1) in that participants are encouraged to observe their thoughts and phenomena and see these as separate, for example, thinking ‘I’m having the thought I’m a failure’ rather than ‘I’m a failure’. Hence thoughts and feelings are accepted whilst the participant attempts to change their behaviour in ways which may improve life (Baer, 2003). This relates to my earlier remarks regarding a person’s ‘standards’ impacting on their perception of well-being. Ruminating on one’s perceived errors is unlikely to reinforce a positive self image or feelings of well-being and may prevent individuals from considering change and accessing effective relaxation and time away from work.

Mindfulness training has been evaluated in a small scale study with teachers and pupils in America (Napoli, 2004). Teachers related that they felt more focused and that mindfulness strategies supported the children to reduce anxiety before tests and to redirect their attention when off-task. Teachers also reported less multitasking and more single task activity. In reading the research it is evident that none of the children were asked about the impact on the training and hence it is only possible to infer what changes may have been from
teachers’ perceptions. This was also a study which began at the beginning of the academic year and it is hard to know if these improvements are due in part at least to the teacher and the class getting to know each other better during the year.

Training in mindfulness has also been proposed to impact upon physiological well-being in addition to mental well-being. Davidson, Kabat-Zinn, Schumacher, Rosenkranz, Muller, Santorelli, Urbanowski, Harrington, Bonus and Sheridan (2003) trained 41 biotechnology workers in mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) using an 8 week programme during work hours, other workers formed a control group on a waiting list. All participants took part in laboratory tests including EEGs (electroencephalographs) and blood testing and completed questionnaires to measure their levels of anxiety. At the end of the 8 week intervention all participants were injected with the flu vaccine. After 4 weeks participants who had received MBSR had greater numbers of antibodies in their bloodstream than the control group. The researchers also found that in the EEG studies there was increased activity in the left side anterior cortical area which is associated with positive emotional expression. Participants who reported the greatest increases in positive affect in the meditation group also presented with a higher number of antibodies. Davidson and his colleagues stated that this was the first study they were aware of in which associations had been found between meditation, reductions in anxiety and increased positive affect.

Brown and Ryan (op cit) postulate that mindfulness is a state of consciousness and that people can promote well-being by focusing on and regulating their activity. From this idea it may be possible to then postulate that when someone is focused on and fully engaged with their activity i.e. mindful, that they may experience a higher level of well-being. This theory appears to make intuitive sense and implies that when people are engaged in activities which they deem valuable and meaningful they may obtain satisfaction and enjoyment from their endeavours. This state may be compared to the concept of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1979; Snyder and Lopez, 2002). Snyder and Lopez (op cit) postulate that it is the subjective challenges and skills rather than objective ones which influence the quality of an experience i.e. the conscious experience of activities or happiness / enjoyment. These authors appear to propose that it is the experience of operating at ‘full capacity’ (p.90), yet within one’s
resources that results the feeling of ‘flow’ which rather echoes Ryan and Deci’s (2000) and Waterman’s (1995) remarks that in being fully functioning individuals achieve their potential and experience positive feelings.

2.4 Happiness

‘Happiness is a subjective phenomenon including the experience of joy, positive well-being, combined with a sense that one’s life is good, meaningful and worthwhile’ (Lyubornisky, 2001 p.239).

Lyubornisky (op cit) in a review of her research pertaining to cognitive processes in well-being proposed that happy people construe life events in ways which maintain and promote happiness and positive self views in that they derive positive meaning from negative events, use humour, spirituality and faith, do not ruminate repetitively and use social comparison adaptively. It was also posited that affect impacted on perceptions of events (see also later discussion regarding affect and impact on coping strategies in sections 2.7 and 2.9) which coincides with the findings of other researchers e.g. Houghton and Jinkerson (2007). In a study involving teaching participants, a novel task and providing ‘feedback’ regarding their performance and that of a peer Lyubornisky and Ross (1997) noted that happier people were less influenced by reports of ‘superior’ performance by a peer. Unhappy people reported feeling happier and more self confident when they had a poor evaluation, but their peer received a worse one. Of interest is that they felt less confident and happy when they received an excellent evaluation, but heard their peer obtain a better one. It may be that this finding is partially related to cultural norms, for example, Western culture values success and ‘being the best’ which possibly is reflected in these researchers’ findings.

This is highly pertinent to work as an educational psychologist in schools as here is an implication that unhappy people (staff in schools) may trust less in positive reports regarding their work, but feel reassured by the perception that someone else is performing worse than them. This state of affairs is unlikely to motivate individuals or groups to change for the better and may prompt stagnation, competition between staff rather than team work,
rumination regarding what is wrong and potentially poorer teaching and outcomes for children in school.

2.4.1 Dynamic Equilibrium Theory (The hedonic treadmill)
Theorists have attempted to describe happiness in terms of a model of reactions to stimuli. Dynamic Equilibrium Theory was proposed by Brickman and Campbell in 1971. In this model a ‘hedonic treadmill’ is described in which people react briefly to good and bad events and then shortly return to a baseline of happiness (hedonic neutrality) after the disequilibrium. This return to neutrality is termed an automatic habituation process. The process of automatic habituation is adaptive and it is posited that the constant stimuli people are exposed to (psychic income flow) is allowed to fade into the background so that mental resources are available to deal with novel stimuli. For example, a person would not continually be aware of the sensation of the couch beneath them, but novel stimuli such as the smell of food or the television being turned on would be attended to. People may then continuously strive to obtain new stimuli affecting happiness without realising that in the long term this is ineffective and that happiness is determined by internal factors such as personality rather than external factors (Schmalz, Ackbarow and Kapmeier, 2007). In other words it is not so much what happens as how a person manages, interprets, perceives and copes with an event which determines their happiness. Evidence supporting such a hypothesis is cited from measuring happiness of lottery winners who, after a period of time, are not discernibly more happy than other people and those who have accidents resulting in disability whose measured happiness after time is not significantly different from that of other people. This theory does appear to place the individual in a rather helpless and reactive position and does not really take account of the self aware, knowing and learning human condition. It also does not account for the fact not all events which make people happy (or indeed unhappy) are external i.e. thoughts can impact on emotions. Events may also have different effects on people at different times and result in different levels of happiness. Little account is described regarding the resources available to individuals, for example, social support or practical help.
Diener, Lucas and Scollon (2006) postulated a number of revisions to the theory relating to the notion of a ‘set point’ of happiness to which one returns following a positive or negative experience. They stated that the ‘hedonic neutral’ set point may indeed not be ‘neutral’. For example, in one study 80% respondents noted that they were ‘very’ or ‘quite’ happy (European Values Study Group and World Values Survey Association, 2005). The tendency of positive moods to facilitate more positive behaviour and hence more positive outcomes was cited as a potential reason for this. ‘Global happiness’ was proposed to consist of separable variables and indeed positive and negative events can occur concurrently. Hence people may be happier with some aspects of life, for example, just because work satisfaction has increased it would not be reasonable to expect marital satisfaction to increase on this basis. Tellegen, Lykken, Bouchard, Wilcox, Segal and Rich (1988) carried out research with monozygotic and di-zygotic twins who were raised separately and noted that the identical twins were more similar in levels of well-being which is presented as support for the position that some aspects of well-being are heritable.

Levels of happiness can change over time. Brickman and Campbell (1971) opined that people can do little to influence long term happiness and satisfaction; adaptation is inevitable and no changes in life circumstances will lead to lasting changes in happiness. However, subsequent studies have indicated that 85% of variance in national levels of well-being can be explained by objective characteristics such as GDP (gross domestic product) per person, life expectancy at birth and divorce rates (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2005) and in a study in Germany over 17 years Fujita and Diener (2005) found that although many respondents remained stable in reported happiness, 24% changed from reports in the first 5 years of the study to the last 5 years and 9% respondents’ reported happiness changed by more than 2 standard deviations.

Differences in speed of adaptation are also proposed. Those who are ‘chronically happy’ may have little more happiness to gain from a positive event, however, for a less happy person the event may have more effect. Coping strategies may impact on the return to baseline in that ineffective coping may mean a slower return to baseline happiness and indeed optimistic individuals who engage in active coping strategies may change a situation
to a more positive experience. Events which initially influence well-being may lose their novelty and hence contribute less to happiness, for example, the first achievement of a mile swim is very exciting, however, the 20th time is somewhat less pleasing. This notion is similar to the economic law of diminishing returns.

Hence, research would appear to suggest that people can impact on their levels of happiness even in the face of adversity. It is suggested that happiness (which is also referred to as subjective well-being (Stewart-Brown and Janmohamed, 2008)) is impacted on by one’s mood and temperament, economic well-being, constructions of events which are occurring and coping strategies. It seems that happiness is a dynamic construct and that people’s perceptions of their well-being is under constant revision.

2.5 Appreciation

‘...the concept of appreciation...possesses many of the cognitive and emotional elements that seem important for understanding how one comes to experience life satisfaction and happiness.’ (Adler and Fagley, 2005 p.81)

Appreciation appears to offer some useful constructs for understanding how one’s experience of the world may impact on subjective well-being. Adler and Fagley (op cit) describe the concept of appreciation as a dispositional trait which enhances mood, feelings and the experience of subjective well-being. Hence internal traits will impact on happiness and hedonistic well-being as also observed by Lyubormirsky (2001). Eight aspects of appreciation are proposed:

- ‘have’ focus in which people focus on what they have rather than what is lacking - health, family, friends etc.
- awe which is defined as an emotional or spiritual connection to something.
- ritual involving performing acts which promote and foster appreciation and enablement to stop and take note of one’s surroundings.
• present moment in which people focus on feeling positively about their surroundings ‘here and now’. The authors liken this aspect to mindfulness which is discussed in section 2.3.

• self / social comparison - feeling positively in reaction to previous experience or social comparison, for example, considering one’s job as better than the previous one or better than one’s friend’s.

• gratitude in which a benefit is acknowledged or thanks given to another for their actions.

• loss / adversity in which one feels positively regarding a perceived loss or adversity perhaps by a raised awareness of having previously taken a situation for granted.

• interpersonal in which one notices positive feelings towards those in one’s life.

In a study with American students Adler and Fagley found contributive factors to positive affect included the ‘have’ focus, self / social comparison and loss / adversity. Contributors to negative affect were ‘have’ focus, awe and self / social comparison. It was proposed that appreciation makes a contribution to subjective well-being in the aspects of life satisfaction and positive affect. Further it was posited that a focus on what one has rather than what one has not was a fundamental feature of an appreciative person and that those who engaged more in self / social comparison tended to experience more negative affect. This latter finding may agree somewhat with the findings of Lyubormirsky and Ross (1997) who noted that participants who heard peers receive better reviews than themselves even if their review was good felt less happy and confident, but happier if the peer received a worse review than themselves even if their own review was poor. Perhaps it is the unpredictability of self / social comparison which contributes to negative affect and the sense of striving to be better than others with maybe no clear target (as one cannot predict another’s performance) and a potential lack of personal resources.

Adler and Fagley do acknowledge that the sample is limited to well educated and middle class participants and hence may not be generalisable to other populations. It is not inconceivable that the students experienced fatigue in completing the large number of questionnaires (7 in total) and some level of correlation may be an artefact of answering
each similarly due to fatigue. It would, perhaps be interesting to further investigate the potential impact of ‘training’ in appreciation on subjective well-being.

2.6 Models of occupational well-being

In addition to individual factors, one’s environment will also influence well-being to some extent. To use a purely anecdotal example I have walked into many schools which have a good ‘feel’ and am aware of many other professionals whom I have met as an EP and previously as a teacher who also identify this ‘feel’. It may be that the ‘feel’ is a reaction to the environment of the school, both the physical environment and perceived emotional temperature of the school, and the quality of the social and emotional awareness of the school community. A number of models relate to occupational well-being and factors which contribute to positive or negative experiences at work.

2.6.1 The Vitamin Model

Warr (1987b; 1994; 1999; 2007) considered that nine characteristics of jobs can be beneficial to mental health. He likened these characteristics to vitamins and suggested that their presence would have a positive effect. He modified the model to reflect that certain levels of the characteristic could be beneficial, however, for some ‘vitamins’ (job characteristics) an increase beyond a certain level produced a ‘constant effect’ i.e. no increased benefit to mental health. For others an increase beyond a certain level could produce a detrimental effect.

He identified nine characteristics; six of these were likened to vitamins A and D in which benefits were present up to a certain level, but beyond which there was a ‘toxic’ effect. These six characteristics are:

- Opportunities for control – in schools this could be seen as perhaps giving teachers the opportunity to plan to teach their lessons in a manner and style which suits the needs of their pupils, but with some limits and guidance from school policies and curricula. This ‘vitamin’ may become toxic if teachers were asked to plan all lessons with no guidance or limits at all, thereby laying the burden of choice of what to
teach, when and how upon teaching staff and with potentially no system for ensuring consistency of expectations of teachers between schools.

- Externally generated goals – in schools this could be related to government targets for children’s achievement. Up to a certain point this could provide guidance and aspirational targets, however, should too many targets be set or the level at which the targets are set is too high, this will generate stress and impact negatively on well-being. Frequent of changes of policies or initiatives may result in stress for teaching staff who must adapt planning and teaching to follow the proposed changes. This phenomenon has been referred to as ‘initiative overload’ (Humphrey and Squires, 2011).

- Opportunities for interpersonal contact / social support – in schools this may perhaps be reflected in opportunities for school staff to interact and meet. However, should there be too many opportunities this may impinge on other aspects of the job or feel uncomfortable for those who do not wish to interact with their colleagues for prolonged periods during work.

- Skill utilization – in schools this may be likened to learning and using new skills in one lesson which is being taught. However, should new skills need to be learned in most lessons which are taught, this places a burden on the staff member to acquire, practise and effectively use lots of new skills at once.

- Task feedback / supervision – in schools this may be compared to senior management staff providing feedback on a school assembly or a lesson observation. However, if feedback was provided for every lesson the staff member may feel they are over-supervised / watched.

- Variety – in school this may be considered in terms of the number of changes in innovations or policies which need to be incorporated into teaching. If there are a smaller number of changes they may be managed more effectively than if there are too many changes.

The remaining three characteristics were likened to vitamins C and E in that benefits could be gained up to a certain level, but beyond this there was no discernible benefit i.e. there was a ‘constant effect’. These characteristics were:
• Availability of money – in schools this may be considered in terms of gaining enough experience or seniority to be paid at a level a teacher feels is enough to maintain a preferred standard of living.

• Physical security – in schools this may be reflected in the standard of the building maintenance, policies for lone / after school working, a culture of preventing unacceptable behaviour towards or by staff and the value placed on the health and safety of those working and learning in the school. Once a member of staff feels ‘safe enough’ there is little to be gained from being ‘safer’.

• Valued social position – this may be affected by the relationship between the school and the community and also a teacher’s perception of the value of the job they hold. Once the member of staff feels that their job reflects a valued social position which is acceptable to them, there is little to be gained from an increase in this.

Researchers have remarked on the technical inaccuracy of the model in referring to the real effect of vitamins and that it is very rare for vitamins to cause a toxic impact. However, the analogy is generally accepted. For further comment on the accuracy of Warr’s comparison of job characteristics to vitamins, De Jonge and Schaufeli (1998) may be referred to.
Figure 1 Assumed Relationships between Environmental Features and Mental Health (Warr, 1987b)

The above diagram depicts the assumed relationships between job characteristics and well-being. In section A of the model a low level of the nine proposed characteristics is proposed to impact poorly on mental well-being, for example, if a worker had very little opportunity for control in their post this would be related to a lower level of well-being. However, as the level of the characteristic increases there is a marked positive impact on well-being.

In section B of the model the impact of the presence of a characteristic levels off. Warr states that an increase in the characteristic produces a ‘constant effect’. For characteristics likened to vitamins C and E an ongoing increase in the characteristic will continue to produce a constant effect. However, for characteristics likened to vitamins A and D a further increase in the characteristic produces a detrimental effect as seen in section C.
The Vitamin Model proposes that it is the job characteristic which influences mental health rather than mental health impacting on the job characteristics. In a detailed paper in 1987 Warr posited the view that there was a shortage of measurements of affective well-being which were designed and determined through research with large and varied groups of employees. In reviewing available measures at the time he observed that the approach to measuring affective well-being tended to focus on two dimensions: anxiety-contentment and depression-enthusiasm which he opined were indicators of the levels of ‘pleasure’ and ‘arousal’ experienced. However, Warr (1987) felt that there were three main axes along which affective well-being could be measured and researched:

- Displeased – pleased
- Anxious – contented
- Depressed – enthusiastic

Figure 2 below depicts these axes. The vertical axis measuring arousal does not have dimensions labelled as Warr did not consider it to reflect well-being alone. The negative aspects of affective well-being are located on the left side of the diagram and the positive aspects on the right side. The elongated shape (oval) is proposed to indicate that the pleasure dimension is more important than the arousal dimension.
A central importance was placed on levels of pleasure experienced which was proposed to be a helpful measure in studies of job related affective well-being without necessarily referring to levels of arousal in the job. Warr proposed that the above axes could be used as a framework to guide research relating to job related affective well-being. A person’s experience of anxiety / contentment is suggested to be affected by demands placed upon them in their job. For example, if a teacher feels that they have too much work to do and cannot complete it they are likely to feel anxious, however, feeling that the demands placed upon them are reasonable is likely to increase the experience of contentment. Experience of depression / enthusiasm is proposed to be affected by the extent to which a person has the freedom to make decisions. For example, a teacher may be able to decide to take a break or spend some time relaxing which would, according to the figure above contribute to increased experience of enthusiasm in their job. Feeling unable or being unable to make decisions in

Figure 2 Principle axes for the measurement of well-being (Warr, 1987b)
one’s job may increase the experience of depression. Scores obtained on measures of anxiety / contentment and depression / enthusiasm were considered to be positively inter-correlated rather than independent. Hence in research relating to teacher well-being using Warr’s framework, it may be considered appropriate that an attempt to influence the characteristics of the job in order to increase pleasure experienced may have positive effects on a staff member’s levels of occupational contentment and enthusiasm.

2.6.2 Person – environment fit model

Caplan et al (1975) described occupational stress as a mismatch between the requirements and demands of the job and the person’s real or perceived ability to meet those demands. This model is proposed to define stress in terms of the individual and the ‘discrepancy’ between the person and the environment (Caplan, 1987; Edwards, Warr, 1990; Caplan and Harrison, 1998) hence any interventions to relieve stress and poor well-being would be focused on individuals (Guglielmi and Tatrow, 1998). The model was extended in 1985 to consider aspects of individual focus; whether motivation was to satisfy the needs of others (demands-abilities fit) or satisfy their own needs (needs-supplies fit) (Caplan, 1987). Excess demand was proposed to threaten employees’ need to achieve and too little demand threatens need for change / sensory stimulation. Excess need by the employee (of support or reassurance) or being over-skilled for a job was felt to lead to poor well-being. In 1994 Blix and colleagues carried out research to investigate the hypothesis that occupational stress is a lack of fit between individual motivational style and job rewards. This study measured motivational style, job rewards, levels of perceived stress, job satisfaction and stress related health problems. A correlation between lack of fit and stress was noted for female participants rather than male participants. It was postulated that those who experienced high levels of stress were likely to report more burnout and health problems and less job satisfaction.

Wright and Cropanzano (1998) proposed a similar model to the person environment fit model which they referred to as the Conservation of Resources Model (COR). They stated that if there is a discrepancy between organisational demands and the person’s resources to meet demand initially they will experience job stress and then emotional exhaustion.
Emotional exhaustion was felt to occur when a person experienced a loss or perceived loss of resources, a situation in which resources are inadequate to meet demand or the returns received were not felt to be received on one’s investment.

This model may be used to describe the experiences of teaching staff who are motivated to meet pupil and school need, but may perceive a discrepancy between their resources and what they feel is necessary to work effectively. Teachers are subject to the ‘demands’ of a number of groups such as government, local authority, governors, parents, headteacher and their own ‘standards’ and hence this model may not effectively represent their needs as although the demands of many of the groups may be similar others are likely to be more specific and staff may be focused on meeting different demands at different times. There may also be other factors which are not constant but affect perceived resources at certain times such as time in the school year, the arrival of a new pupil with very complex needs, changes in school staff etc.

2.6.3 Demand - Control Model

In this model job strain is determined by the levels of job demand and ‘decision latitude’ (skill and decision authority) (Karasek, 1979; Karasek and Theorell 1990; van der Doef and Maes, 1999). Decision latitude was described as relating to an individual’s potential control over their tasks and behaviour during work. Job demands were defined as psychological stressors which were involved in completing one’s work (Warr, 1990). The lowest levels of strain are experienced when demands are low and decision latitude high. However, the higher levels of demand placed on a person in a prestigious job are proposed to be off set by high levels of control. Greater levels of decision latitude are considered to reduce stress and lead to increased learning, motivation and skills. This is interesting to consider in the light of working in schools. Particularly when talking to teachers I have experienced many discussions regarding what they wish to achieve and the constraints they feel. This relates to possible tensions between school staff attempts to realise their aims and potential in the classroom (which would promote eudemonic well-being) and the constraints which are placed upon their ability to do so possibly by a lack of control or available support.
In 1988 the model was extended to include Job Demand-Control-Support (JDCS) in which it was predicted that the most negative well-being outcomes would be associated with those in jobs with high demand, low control and low support (Johnson and Hall 1988). In a comprehensive review of research regarding the JDCS Model, van der Doef and Maes (1999) noted that there was support for a strain hypothesis in that high strain was associated with lower psychological well-being, lower job satisfaction and more psychological distress. However, there appeared to be significant differences in the strain effect for male and female participants in that most of the female only participant studies there was no support for the strain model. In studies relating to burnout, support for the strain hypothesis was generally found.

Of interest is that a buffering effect of support and control was found in studies focusing on a specific demand if the support / control corresponded to the specific demand placed on the employee. These authors also stated that employee’s personalities and coping strategies may moderate the impact of high levels of demand. This provides support for Brough and Pears’ (2004) findings (see section 2.2.1) with public sector workers who noted that support from a supervisor, low demand and higher perceived control in their jobs contributed to greater job satisfaction. There may be an implication that individuals’ experiences of stress and poor well-being may be mediated by specific support as well as generic support available to all staff. The social acceptability of individual support will be discussed in later sections.

2.6.4 Effort Reward model

In this model ‘effort’ pertains to objective working conditions which are taxing and a worker’s efforts to cope and establish control. ‘Reward’ refers to job benefits and promotion (Siegrist, Peter, Junge, Cremer and Seidel, 1990). If effort is perceived to exceed reward this model would propose that the individual experiences stress. This model also takes into account some measure of coping ability in proposed ‘need for control’. Individuals with a high need for control are theorised to respond less flexibly to a high effort – low reward situation and hence experience more stress than a person with low need for control (Ostry, Kelly, Demers, Mustard and Herzman, 2003).
Ostry et al (2003) noted that the Demand Control model is often criticised for measuring work conditions rather than including individual differences such as coping strategies. They did note that both models recognise demand placed upon employees similarly. These researchers were interested in the predictive ability of a combined model measuring task level work characteristics from the Demand Control model and components of effort and reward upon workers’ self reported health and experience of diagnosed chronic health conditions. Canadian sawmill workers were interviewed either face to face or over the phone and of the 3000 approached there was a response rate of 72%. It was noted that increasing levels of education were associated with self reported health issues and that low control, high effort reward imbalance and job strain predicted poor health. Workers who experienced no effort reward imbalance and high task level control reported the best perceived health and workers experiencing an imbalance of effort and reward and low task level control reported the lowest levels of perceived health. Ostry et al (2003) proposed that combining measures from the Demand Control model and incorporating individual variables such as elements of coping explained higher levels of variance in self reported health than when employed independently.

2.6.5 Summary of models of well-being
The reviewed models of well-being appear to focus on aspects of situational variables, employee / person variables and the interaction of the workplace and the individual. Characteristics of a job have been proposed to have potentially positive or negative impacts upon the well-being of workers some of which, in the manner of ‘vitamins’, were proposed to reach ‘toxic’ and harmful levels (Warr 1987b, 1994, 1999, 2007). I do feel that some individual characteristics may have significant impacts upon perceptions of stress and strain. For example, the ‘rewards’ of a job are likely to be very different if one’s motivation is financial recompense rather than altruistic intent. There may also be variations between males and females in contributing factors to the experience of stress. Caplan et al (1975) (Person- Environment Fit model) found a relationship between lack of fit and stress for females, but not males, however, van der Doef and Maes (1999) (Demand-Control model) noted in female only studies high strain was not associated with lower psychological well-being and lower job satisfaction. However, the Demand Control model has been noted to
consider environmental factors and the Person-Environment Fit model to focus on individual characteristics hence perhaps there are aspects of personal characteristics which impact more for females on well-being. One may also need to consider the decades in which studies were carried out and whether the position and perception of the working woman has changed in terms of the expectations, demands and values of society.

There is also a recurring reference to ‘control’ in the models. A need for higher levels of control may lead a person to strive for positions in which they may possess more control. However, it must be countered that by attempting to maintain a high level of control over a situation one may respond less flexibly to change, be less adaptable and possibly less adept at problem solving which may all in turn lead to perceptions of stress and strain.

2.7 Organisational approaches to well-being

LeFevre, Kolt and Maheny (2006) note that more broad focused organizational approaches to reduce occupational stress may be more appropriate as they opine it is better to remove or reduce the stressors rather than simply moderating and managing their effects. These authors do concede that individual reactions to stressors will have a significant impact on coping.

They refer to three levels of intervention: primary interventions include stress within the workplace and focus at the organisation or group level; secondary interventions intervene at the individual level and tertiary interventions are aimed at ameliorating already existing signs and symptoms in individuals. Primary interventions are proposed as being often seen as proactive and long term, however, secondary interventions are perceived by these authors as putting the onus of stress management on the individual rather than delegating some responsibility to management.

Newell (2002) describes the ‘healthy organisation’ in detail. She proposes a model of job related stress in which one’s perceived demands and resources to cope interact impacting upon experienced stress:
Newell’s model is highly reminiscent of Caplan et al’s (1975) Person-Environment fit model. Clearly this model may be extended to take into consideration factors in rather more detail and acknowledge factors which contribute towards the ‘demands’ of a job, the resources available to manage these and the level of job satisfaction amongst employees. Using this model of job related stress interventions to support workers would, presumably, be individually focused to increase a worker’s ‘resources’ perhaps via job training, interventions to promote coping strategies and to encourage seeking of social support.

The heuristic model of organisational health proposed by Cotton and Hart (2003) attempts to illustrate the range of factors impacting on occupational well-being. I have added examples in italics within some of the boxes to try and apply this model to a school system.
Figure 4 Heuristic model of organisational Health (Cotton and Hart, 2003)

Given the enabling and potential route of discovery implied by this model’s title there is a wide scope to consider the many sources of positive and negative impact upon an organisation’s well-being. Individual characteristics, the characteristics of the organisation and external influences are considered. Rather than a linear model perceived or more
formally measured, performance flows in a circular route and it is indicated that any or all of the factors may affect the well-being of individual workers.

It has been suggested that organisations’ over-reliance on individual approaches implies that stress and occupational well-being is an issue to be controlled by the individual (Giga, Cooper and Faragher, 2003a). These authors posited:

‘A great deal of effort at the individual level is afforded to the management of stress and not to the development of strategies to prevent it,’ (Giga, Cooper and Faragher, op cit, p.289).

### 2.7.1 Individual interventions to improve well-being

A significant amount of research has focused on how to improve well-being of individuals using particular interventions or organisational changes to improve the well-being of all staff. Researchers have studied the types of stressors experienced by workers and also mediating factors such as support and coping factors e.g. Cooper and Marshall (1976); Johnson, Cooper, Cartwright, Donald, Taylor and Millet (2005). Stress management interventions have been studied at the primary level (stress is focused in the work place and the intervention is at a group / organisational level), the secondary (focused at an individual level) or tertiary (addressing already existing signs and symptoms of stress) level (LeFevre, Kolt and Matheny, 2006).

Bond and Bruce (2000) considered offering therapies to members of an organisation to clarify if this improved their well-being and what aspects of the intervention were considered effective. Workers volunteered and the 90 respondents were assigned to one of three groups. One group received acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) which emphasises commitment to one’s goals and also the acceptance of undesirable psychological events which were unavoidable in their work circumstances. A second group received an innovation promotion programme (IPP) which encouraged people to actively identify stressors and change the stressor rather than their emotional reaction to it. The third group were assigned to a waiting list. The 2 therapy groups received 2 half day sessions and
a third 3 months later. The researchers measured a large number of dependent variables (general health, depression, intrinsic job motivation, intrinsic job satisfaction and propensity to innovate). I feel that the high numbers of questionnaires completed by participants may have had an impact on the detail and accuracy which was included within answers and hence the validity and reliability of some findings.

It was found that the groups receiving ACT and IPP improved in scores of mental health and also propensity to innovate, but neither group indicated an increase in job satisfaction or motivation. Bond and Bruce had expected the IPP group to experience higher levels of satisfaction and motivation perhaps as the intervention was intended to offer increases in potential autonomy and goal directed behaviour. They do not state whether staff in this organisation had access to such opportunities or what stressors workers may have been wishing to change. For example, had they been dissatisfied with car parking facilities, but this was something they could not assert change upon it may be hypothesised that the ACT group would be more successful in maintaining well-being. It may also be that the social aspect of the groups, perceived group membership and a ‘collective purpose’ contributed to the well-being of respondents, but the authors do not discuss this point.

In a study to encourage staff to identify stressors and offer solutions Munn-Giddings, Hart and Ramon (2005) found that although staff who completed the offered work shops identified stressors and offered solutions these stressors tended to be more located within organisational culture and senior management style; a finding also echoed by Giga, Cooper and Faragher (2003). Hence the workforce may have been experiencing a lack of opportunity to attain as well as they had potential to and be unwilling to fully engage in such activities due their expectations of continued dissatisfaction.

Much research cites an inability to control aspects of working life as a source of distress and dissatisfaction (e.g. Karasek, 1979; Warr, 1987; 1999; van der Doef and Maes, 1999; Brough and Pears, 2004). Problem solving training has been found to lead to greater perceptions of control and a positive relationship has been identified between positive problem solving orientation and positive mood states and life satisfaction (Aures and
Malouff, 2007). Presumably this would lead to greater feelings of self efficacy which is also associated with feelings of well-being. In a study with 120 Australian flight attendants Aures and Malouff (op cit) investigated the effects of training in problem solving on participants’ mood and job satisfaction levels. Flight attendants were randomly assigned to one of 2 groups and completed the Positive and Negative Affect Scale, the Modified Facet Free Job Satisfaction Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale and the Openness scale from the Big Five Inventory. The intervention group were telephoned to ask them to write down a realistic goal that they would like to achieve and which would make them happier. They then met with the researchers for 30-60 minutes during which they discussed self efficacy, happiness and discussed the barriers which inhibited their goal success. Participants received training in solving problems and applying solutions to barriers and recorded in a booklet their goal and actions taken to achieve it twice weekly for 4 weeks. After the intervention participants once again completed the measures of life satisfaction and affect. The researchers found correlations between the attainment of problem solving skills and self efficacy and between positive mood, life satisfaction and job satisfaction. Participants were noted to experience higher levels of self efficacy, positive affect and life satisfaction. It is not reported whether participants achieved their goals or what progress was made towards them, hence it may simply have been having a sense of purpose and increased feelings of support as they worked on a target rather than the actual acquisition of problem solving skills which contributed to increased well-being.

When considering individual interventions, it appears that input to support workers contributes to increased mental health and propensity to innovate (Bond and Bruce, 2000). Job satisfaction and motivation were not increased in this study. It may be that simply by attending to individuals and showing interest in their well-being contributes to the mental well-being of that individual who perhaps feels more important, valued and cared for. It will be important to ensure that interventions focusing on problem solving ensure that individuals and organisations have the capacity to make any changes required to solve problems otherwise the intervention may simply serve to highlight lack of control rather than empower workers. In Aures and Malouff’s (2007) study participants were encouraged to select a problem they wished to solve and which was ‘realistic’ and support was provided
to enable participants to realise their goal which impacted positively on the individual, but did not require the organisation to change.

2.8 Coping

It would be reasonable to suggest that undesirable and desirable events occur to some extent daily and that the extent to which one manages them effectively will impact on well-being. Lazarus and Folkman defined coping as:

‘thoughts and behaviours people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful.” (1984 p.746-747)

Hence once a situation is appraised as threatening to goals and aims one may activate strategies to cope with and manage the situation. Folkman and Lazarus (1980) and Montgomery and Rupp (2005) indicated that coping involved problem focused coping and emotion focused coping which links strongly to the previously mentioned interventions of Bond and Bruce (2000). Folkman and Moscowitz (2004) suggest that if stressors are perceived as more controllable then problem solving approaches may be more useful, however, if the stressor is less controllable emotion focused approaches could be deemed appropriate. This marries with previous research indicating that if one perceives a level of autonomy or that a task is within one’s capacity one may feel that solving an issue will be appropriate (Montgomery and Rupp, 2005; Snyder and Lopez, 2002; Warr, 1987b; 1999; 2007).

Direct coping strategies have been suggested to contribute to greater levels of resilience and buoyancy (Parker and Martin, 2009). Buoyancy is defined as one’s ability to overcome challenges and setbacks of everyday life. These authors hypothesised that direct and palliative coping predicted work place engagement and well-being directly as, via buoyancy, the use of direct coping strategies and effective responses to everyday setbacks would increase. In a survey of 515 teachers it was found that cognitive coping strategies were a stronger predictor of engagement and well-being than behavioural approaches,
however, coping strategies did predict buoyancy which in turn predicted well-being and engagement. 90% of the variance in workplace well-being, coping strategies and buoyancy were found to be at an individual level which was proposed to suggest that individual level interventions were appropriate when aiming to enhance well-being and engagement. Other researchers have argued for a combination of organisational and individual intervention to support well-being (e.g. LeFevre, Kolt and Matheny, 2006) and others have stated that stress and workplace well-being is situated in the environment and hence organisational change is necessary to promote well-being (e.g. Maslach 2003). For a further discussion of buoyancy and resilience see section 2.10.1.

It could be proposed that coping is the taking of positive action in order to improve one’s well-being. I feel that if one is experiencing stress one may be feeling overloaded, deskilled, unhappy and unable to achieve a pre-determined aim. Hence in order to feel better one will adopt a strategy to reduce such feelings. Clearly not all coping strategies will be successful and effective, however, I feel that the aim of the coping strategies is to promote a more positive feeling within oneself (a hedonistic aim) and manage the disparity between what one is attaining and what one wishes to attain (a eudemonic aim).

It would seem logical that one’s success in coping effectively throughout the day would have an impact on well-being at the end of the day. Stone, Kennedy-Moore and Neale (1995) carried out research with 79 married men in a longitudinal study to investigate coping strategies and how these impacted on mood at the end of the day. Participants were requested to diarise the single most irritating event of the day and complete a questionnaire covering their control of the situation, anticipation of the event, whether it was a single or chronic event, if it had occurred before, how desirable the incident was and how meaningful it was. Participants also answered questions on what they did to cope / feel better using categories provided by the researchers.

When participants reported using distraction, relaxation or acceptance this was related to more positive affect. Use of direct action was only weakly related to mood, however, the more undesirable the problem was the more strategies such as catharsis, seeking social
support, direct action and relaxation were employed. The intractability and frequency of the stressor is not discussed in terms of coping strategies employed, however, the researchers did suggest that they had only looked at problems experienced each day for a short time, however, for longer term problems the strategies employed may be found to be more effective. Researchers also asked participants to focus on only one stressor per day, the seriousness and effect of which is not discussed. They did also hypothesise that it may in fact be mood which mediates the choice of coping strategy rather than the effectiveness of coping impacting upon mood. However, the scope of information regarding coping strategies may be rather limited as participants were required to select from a prepared list rather than freely describe their actions. I also wonder if the act of diarising the event impacted on participants’ analysis and evaluation of the event and thus reduced its impact on well-being.

Researchers have also investigated the accuracy of memory of stressors and also whether the effort of a participant to search for meaning regarding their stressor affects their memory of the stress? Stone, Schwartz, Schiffman, Marco, Hickcox, Paty, Porter and Cruise (1998) carried out a study involving 100 participants to investigate retrospective reports of coping and immediate strategies for coping (referred to as ecological momentary assessment – EMA - and recorded on handheld computers). Participants identified 1 stressor at home in their marital life and 1 at work when prompted by a computer every 40 minutes and their coping strategy. At the end of a two day period they recorded which behaviours they had engaged in to manage their perceived stressor. It was noted that on average 29% of participants who used a strategy on EMA did not report using this same strategy retrospectively and almost the same number reported having used a strategy that they had in fact not used. Stone et al (op cit) proposed that participants were more likely to report a behavioural coping strategy retrospectively and that cognitive coping strategies were under-reported retrospectively. In considering these findings it is possible that people are unaware of the cognitive processes that are employed to manage the plethora of incidents managed each day and hence are more aware of a behaviour that they engage in to cope. However, it may also be that participants felt swayed by the provided list of coping strategies and felt that a behavioural coping strategy was ‘better’ or more appropriate or indeed reported
having used a strategy that with hindsight they felt would have served them better. It is also feasible that after a period of time has passed since the stressor occurred it is then perceived differently or recalled inaccurately as proposed by DeLongis and Holtzman (2005).

Previously the notion of actively coping with stressors has been discussed. However, Sonnentag and Bayer (2005) were interested in the effects on well-being that the ability to ‘switch off’ or detach from work in the evenings may have. They noted that simply being away from one’s work place did not imply that one was leaving a job behind psychologically. It was proposed that the ability to detach from work may provide a respite and encourage well-being. Participants in this German study were drawn from 10 different organisations with workers considered to have highly demanding jobs. Participants filled in surveys on 3 consecutive days on arriving home and before going to bed. They noted that those participants with a higher workload were less successful at detaching from work and that although their need for ‘recovery’ was likely to be higher they were less likely to be successful in obtaining it. Workers who were successfully able to detach from work reported a more positive mood and less fatigue at bedtime. Of interest is the fact that they did not find a relationship between time spent away from the job and psychological detachment implying that it is the ability to detach that is beneficial rather than spending longer away from the work place.

2.8.1 Personality and coping
The importance of individual factors in coping has been highlighted several times in previous sections. Zellars and Perrewe (2001) investigated the associations between affective personality dimensions and emotional support on individuals’ burnout. It was proposed that those who were more optimistic and agreeable were more likely to value service to others and feel accomplishments rather than depersonalise colleagues. Agreeable people were also suggested to be more likely to strive to commune, experience more intimacy and solidarity with others and encourage conversations with their co-workers. Those who scored more highly on measures of neuroticism were postulated to respond more negatively, seek more reassurance and engage in conversations regarding negative aspects of their jobs. These researchers contacted nurses in 2 hospitals and measured experienced
emotional social support (regarding conversational frequency and content with co-workers), personality using the NEO-5 Factor Inventory, burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory, role ambiguity and conflict and an adapted scale to measure quantitative overload. Perhaps unsurprisingly, positive communications negatively predicted reported exhaustion whereas negative conversations positively predicted reported exhaustion. Those who engaged in more negative conversations reported fewer accomplishments; however, the reverse was observed for those having more positive conversations. Differences were also noted with regard to personality characteristics. Those scoring higher in levels of extraversion or agreeableness reported higher levels of accomplishment and more non-job oriented conversations. Those scoring higher on measures of neuroticism reported greater levels of exhaustion, perceived fewer accomplishments and engaged more in depersonalisation of others. Interestingly those higher in both extraversion and neuroticism had more conversations, but about more negative aspects of their job. It was concluded that the content of conversations matters with regard to the positive functions of this social support. Those with a more extraverted personality did tend to engage in more conversations of all types and hence may have been more successful in obtaining support. However the response rate for this study was rather low (23%) and may have been more representative only of those who were perhaps motivated to air a grievance or who were particularly motivated. The structures of the two hospitals were found to be significantly different in their hierarchical structure which may have had some impact on staff, but is not further discussed in the article.

It is perhaps intuitive that social relationships will have a positive impact on well-being. DeLongis and Holtzman (2005) examined coping in the context of relationships and social support. Those who claimed to experience greater satisfaction in social relationships tended to use more adaptive ways of coping, however, if the ‘supporter’s’ efforts to provide support should be perceived as ill matched to needs or indeed critical this can impede coping efforts. Having said this, it was additionally proposed that coping strategies themselves can influence the levels of satisfaction perceived from support. For example, should one attempt to cope by distancing oneself from others potential supporters are likely to miss signals that
support is in fact required. Maslach (2003) noted that situational factors tend to explain many coping strategies.

2.8.2 Burnout

‘Job burnout is a psychological syndrome that involves a prolonged response to stressors in the workplace’ (Maslach, 2003 p.189).

Maslach describes burnout as a multi-dimensional concept including exhaustion (a person’s individual stress experience), cynicism (the response to the job) and feelings of inefficiency. She opines that exhaustion leads workers to distance themselves cognitively and emotionally from work. Cynicism and exhaustion arise from work overload and social conflict whereas feelings of inefficiency arise from lack of resources (personal or physical), lack of information, tools and time. Burnout researchers have tended to focus more on the job environment and situational variables rather than individuals and Maslach (op cit) highlights that the research basis is stronger in evidence of burnout being a function of situation rather than of person. However, paradoxically more interventions to support individuals are employed even though burnout is considered by researchers to be situational / environmental. Maslach queries if this is simply due to the fact that it may be easier to change people than organisations.

2.8.3 Summary of coping and burnout

I have generally selected research in which coping strategies with regard to jobs are studied. There is a noticeable preponderance of studies focusing on participants noted to have ‘stressful jobs’ which does presume therefore that participants must be ‘coping’ with their ‘stress’ during the study. Studies have also related to effective coping, however, there are limitations to studies in which participants are asked about their coping strategies as memory of employed strategies is not always accurate even when participants are asked on the same day as the strategy was purportedly used (Stone et al, 1998). Different coping strategies may impact upon different aspects of one’s life. Parker and Martin (2009) found that the use of cognitive strategies was a strong predictor of engagement and well-being. It
was noted that 90% of variance was due to individual factors, but one may assume that an individual who is more engaged in their workplace is contributing more effectively to organisational well-being. However, Stone et al (1995) noted that behavioural strategies impacted positively on affect and Sonnentag and Bayer (2005) found that ‘switching off’ from one’s work contributed to well-being and positive mood. Perhaps it is that the intended outcome of an intervention i.e. increased positive affect, engagement with the workplace etc. requires that a different focus is required on coping strategies encouraged. The notion that support / interventions should perhaps be specific receives some support from findings that those who are more satisfied with relationships are more adaptive in coping, however, those who receive ill matched ‘support’ to their needs are impeded in their coping (DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005)

2.9 Teachers’ well-being

‘There is ample evidence that teachers, in the course of their careers, experience a great deal of stress that may result in depressed mood, exhaustion, poor performance or attitude and personality changes, which, in turn, may lead to illness and premature retirement.’ (Schwarzer and Hallum, 2008 p.155).

Previously research has referred to studies with a range of participants. As an educational psychologist I work with teaching staff daily and am aware within my schools of the effects of perceived stress and poor well-being on teachers’ willingness to engage with me, attitude to the problems that we are to solve and feelings of competence and confidence. The DfES (2007) noted that constant exposure to remaining vigilant, managing staff, meeting parental expectations, pressure from others and coping with change was likely to have a significant impact on teacher well-being. In 2000 half of the teachers accepted for ill health retirement had mental health issues (HM Treasury, 2000). The Teacher Support Network (undated) carried out a survey of 777 teachers via their website and newsletter and of these 82% of respondents stated that they had suffered from a stress ailment in the last 2 years; of these 60% stated that they felt it was due to work (either over work or rapid changes).
2.9.1 Teacher stress and burnout

Much of the research regarding contributory factors towards teacher stress appears to be carried out in countries other than the UK. The studies are included as it may be surmised that many stressors and coping strategies experienced by British teachers could be similar. It is quite concerning however, that so few studies were found during the literature search which were British.

In a study of Manchester primary and secondary schools Brown, Ralph and Bremer (2002) attempted to identify major stressors for 20 teachers in focus groups from descriptions of contributing situational influences.

- Work related factors including teacher pupil relationships, poor pupil motivation and discipline causing high levels of anxiety.
- Relationships with colleagues. Difficulties were experienced when low levels of mutual tolerance, understanding and communication and a lack of interpersonal skills were the norm in school.
- Relations with the wider community including perceived negative attitudes towards teachers and unrealistic parental expectations.
- Innovation and change. Teachers highlighted the diverse roles expected in teaching and a lack of control in the many changes occurring.
- School management and administration. Poor communication and a lack of involvement in decision making were identified as contributing to teacher stress.
- Time factors. The pressure to complete a great deal in a limited time frame.
- Physical school environment
- Personal perceptions and feelings.

Brown et al (op cit) discuss the perceived stigma attached to stress by teachers. This stigma is rarely referred to in other studies of stress which I have reviewed. It is perhaps pertinent to consider why stress and poor mental well-being should be viewed in such a jaundiced manner by teaching staff. As noted by Giga et al (2003a) a great deal of time appears to be
afforded to individual interventions to manage stress (some of which may of course be necessary and appropriate), however, this may feed into the stigma of stress rather than systemic interventions to prevent / reduce stress. Research into why stress is such a taboo topic in schools even with the advent of the TaMHS projects and how staff can be encouraged to promote well-being would seem appropriate. Maslach (2003) has also pointed out the need for organisational approaches to supporting workers as she states that evidence for the contribution of situational factors to the experience of stress and burnout is more prevalent than evidence for the contribution of purely individual factors.

Punch and Tuetteman (1996) investigated environmental stressors for Australian teachers. Using questionnaires they found positive correlations between psychological distress and inadequate access to facilities, intrusion of school work into out of hours time, student misbehaviour and excessive societal expectations. A negative correlation was identified between support from colleagues and the school principal and praise and recognition and psychological distress. Although correlations cannot be taken to indicate causality these findings do echo those of other researchers e.g. Grayson and Alvarez, (2008); Kahn, Scheider, Jenkins-Henkelman and Moyle, (2006); Griva and Joekes, (2003); Kyriacou (2001). Support from colleagues was felt to have a stronger ameliorating effect on stress for all four stressors reported above than recognition and praise. Perhaps this is due to the fact that teachers consider some elements of stress as inevitable or perhaps they are willing to accept support from colleagues who are experiencing similar levels of pressure rather than praise / recognition from someone who ‘does not understand as well’. Colleague support has not always been found to be effective, however, in environments in which team work is of high importance such support may be more relevant.

In a study with British teachers to identify contributory factors to teacher stress Jepson and Forrest (2006) proposed in contrast with Maslach’s views that it was likely to be a very individual experience and that aspects of teacher behaviour were likely to be instrumental. In their study they investigated possible links between occupational commitment and striving for achievement and stress. 88% of the 95 primary and secondary teachers were described as ‘type a’ and it was noted that the strongest predictor of perceived stress was
occupational commitment and that primary teachers perceived more stress. Of interest was the fact that occupational commitment also appeared to provide a ‘buffer’ to some of the potential work stressors. These authors postulated that those who are likely to experience stress should be identified and receive training. This appears to be a rather difficult solution and indeed teachers may feel unjustly targeted (and stigmatised). It must also be noted that should teachers not want support this may then be an impediment to their ability to cope as the input will be poorly matched to desired support (DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005). It is also very hard to provide anticipatory services for those who may experience stress and risks missing people who do experience stress. This study also does not account for those people who may not be ‘stressed’, but have poor mental well-being.

Although stress has been proposed to be an individual experience (and can indeed be experienced concurrently by members of the same organisation) it is not experienced in isolation. Cotton and Hart’s (2003) heuristic model of organisational health describes the different influences combining to impact on employee well-being; many of these will be very similar for teaching staff (although perceived and interpreted differently) and many will be individual to that member of staff. Can it be possible to ‘pass on’ poor well-being rather as though it was contagious? Bakker and Schaufeli (2000) investigated the prevalence of burnout amongst teachers and its impact i.e. ‘contagion’ on colleagues. It was noted that teachers who reported more burnout in colleagues or were more susceptible to the emotions of others were themselves scoring highly in emotional exhaustion. If participants reported that they hardly talked about work and student problems then the perceived prevalence of burnout in colleagues was not found to impact on emotional exhaustion. It must be noted this study is measuring perceived levels of burnout in colleagues and although the authors do concede that those who are experiencing more burnout may perhaps consider more colleagues to be burned out also, they do not consider that teachers who are more burned out may have more negative conversations due their level of burnout which will impact on their well-being as found by Zellars and Perrewe (2001).

There is also some degree of social desirability in being seen not to talk to colleagues frequently about the experience of stress and the notion of the social stigma attached to
stress amongst teachers has already been mentioned several times. Of some concern is the finding that attitudes towards students were more cynical amongst teachers who perceived more burnout amongst colleagues, frequently talked to these colleagues and were susceptible to the emotions of others. This has implications for the well-being of pupils in school and the effectiveness of teaching and learning. However, teachers who frequently talked to others about their school related problems reported greater self efficacy. It may be that burnout is higher in teachers who are susceptible to the perceived emotions of colleagues although a significant number of emotionally susceptible teachers were identified as experiencing burnout who did not report high prevalence of burnout in their colleagues and did not talk about their problems. It would be interesting perhaps to find out if supporting such teachers in building resilience and experiencing more positively oriented conversations would impact on levels of burnout alongside organisational input to identify and reduce stressors within the environment as advocated by Maslach (2003).

Research into buffering, protective and preventative work to reduce poor well-being in teachers is of high importance. As Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) discouragingly remark:

‘It has been reported that teacher stress and burnout inevitably affect the learning environment and interfere with the achievement of educational goals insofar as they lead to teachers’ detachment, alienation, cynicism, apathy and absenteeism and ultimately the decision to leave the field’ (p.61).

Research relating to the potential buffering effects of teacher characteristics is discussed in the next section.

2.10 Buffers and mediating factors in supporting teacher wellbeing
In 1985 Cohen and Wills proposed the buffering hypothesis in which it was suggested that social support was related to positive mental health outcomes and that a lack of social relationships may lead to negative social states such as anxiety which in turn impacts upon
physical health. Social support was discussed with regard to two possible theoretical positions:

- The buffering model in which social support is related to well-being only for people who are under stress. The support may mediate between stressful events and stress appraisal, for example, boosting perceptions of ability to cope, redefining situations or providing solutions or medication to reduce reactivity to stress.

- The main effect model in which social support provides predictability, stability and recognition of self-worth for all people, not just those experiencing stress. An impact on emotionally induced effects on the immune system was also proposed in terms of improving physical well-being.

In their review of literature they stated that evidence to support a buffering hypothesis could be found when the support functions were most relevant for stressors experienced, which agrees with findings by a number of other researchers e.g. van der Doef and Maes (1998), Brough and Pears (2004). However, social integration also influenced well-being in ways which did not necessarily involve improved means of coping with events. They concluded that social support can provide a range of functions via which well-being was promoted in that social integration and functional support can increase perceptions of available support and act as a buffer, however, social integration was also stated to contribute to maintaining feelings of stability and well-being irrespective of stress levels. It would appear from Cohen and Will’s review that social support may be considered to operate with several functions depending upon one’s current state of well-being.

What factors, then, have been found to protect and support teacher well-being? Interestingly Greenglass, Fiksenbaum and Burke (1996) investigated the possible mediating effects of social support, although other research appears to find that social support in itself is not necessarily very helpful (e.g. Brough and Pears, 2004; Segrin et al, 2007) it may be that at times it is the focus or source of the support which is useful rather than the availability of it. These authors asked 833 Canadian teachers to complete the Maslach Burnout Inventory, a measure of sources of stress and provide information about their social support. Social support was described as practical, emotional or informational and was provided by a
supervisor, co-workers or family / friends. Informational support was found to buffer emotional exhaustion as indeed found by Brough and Pears (2004). Emotional support was beneficial in enabling teachers to relate to pupils as individuals and not to depersonalise them. Practical support enabled teachers to feel more in control of their work. The element of ‘control’ appears repeatedly within the literature on well-being. Bond and Bunce (2000) noted in their study that if one was not able to control a stressor, being able to accept the situation was beneficial. However, other researchers (e.g. Schmutte and Ryff, 1997) have suggested that striving to do better and a high level of conscientiousness, which could be perceived as efforts to manage / control a situation, produced a higher level of eudemonic well-being, but contrastingly lower hedonistic well-being. Of interest is that support provided by co-workers was considered the most important buffer from stress. This may be due to the fact that teachers felt other teachers understood or indeed that they were best placed to offer practical support. The study was carried out with only female teachers and hence it may be that findings for male teachers would indicate different buffers. This may be the case as some studies I reviewed earlier (Caplan et al 1975 and van der Doef and Maes 1999) appeared to suggest that there may be differing contributors to stress experienced by males and females.

It is possible that a teacher’s personality impacts on their access to social support. Kahn et al (2006) stated that employees with high positive affectivity tended to be more energetic and experience more positive moods and seek social support. It was hypothesised that social support is likely to provide opportunities to reappraise and develop adaptive responses to stress and hence reduce burnout. Teachers experiencing high negative affect and low positive affect reported higher levels of burnout. Similarly to findings by Zellars and Perrewe (2001) those who engaged in more negative conversations also reported higher levels of burnout. Surprisingly the number of years spent teaching were not found to be predictive of feelings of efficacy, rather teacher positive affect was predictive which rather echoes findings from Day, Simmons, Stobart, Kington and Gu (2007). Kahn and colleagues (op cit) concluded that affectivity plays a strong role in predicting burnout independently of emotional social support. Possibly one may consider this as contributive to the findings of Bakker and Schaufeli (2000) who found that teachers who were more susceptible to the
emotions of others, possibly as they experienced more negative affect, experienced higher levels of burnout. The more teachers engaged in positive communications the less likely they were to experience burnout symptoms. Hence Kahn et al proposed that structured opportunities to discuss more positive aspects of work may be productive to reducing burnout experienced by teachers thus supporting organisational approaches as a measure to prevent poor well-being. One would presume that the staff room would be an ideal location for such constructive discussions, however, many staff rooms that I have visited tend to be unkempt, poorly furnished and often cramped and full of work related notices and reminders all of which are unlikely to be conducive to discussing the positive aspects of one’s work. Having a pleasant space in school for teachers to relax, have a break and engage in enjoyable and more fulfilling conversation may promote positive affect, feelings of community and social interaction. Interestingly professional efficacy was predicted more by empathy support and conversing about non-job topics.

Griffith, Steptoe and Cropley (1999) carried out a study with British teachers to investigate teacher coping strategies. They found that seeking social support and psychological coping strategies were generally seen by teachers to moderate the impact of stressors. It was proposed that it was the perception of stress rather than the stressors which were affected by the employed strategies. Guglielmi and Tatrow (1998) also proposed that stressed teachers may overestimate the prevalence and experiences of stress. Teachers who reported high levels of job strain were noted to have higher blood pressure and heart rates in the evenings. This relates to Sonnentag and Bayer’s (2005) finding that ’switching off’ in the evenings promoted the experience of well-being. Griffith et al (1999) identified that seeking social support was not associated with reporting stress, however, other research has identified positive effects of social support on well-being and experience of stress (e.g. Punch and Tuetteeman, 1996, Brown et al, 2002, Kahn et al 2006). This may be because the support is unhelpful as suggested by this study or it may be that it moderates the impact of the stressors, but not the perception of them. It may also be that seeking social support from colleagues is felt to be appropriate in the school environment, however, reporting the cause of the support seeking as stress is not.
It may also be important to consider the perceived availability of social support or one’s own efficacy in obtaining such support. Brouwers, Evers and Tomic (2001) found in a study with Dutch teachers that self efficacy beliefs in eliciting support from the head and colleagues had a negative effect on levels of emotional exhaustion; perceived lack of emotional support from school colleagues had a negative effect on teacher’s perceived self efficacy in eliciting support from them. It would appear from this research that a belief in one’s ability to be able to access emotional support from colleagues (and presumably their ability to provide it) is of importance in mediating the experience of burnout symptoms. This coincides with findings from a large scale study carried out by Day et al (2007) in which 63% of their sample of teachers stated that their colleagues and 76% that leadership factors contributed to their sustained commitment to teaching. However, 95% commented that personal support was important.

How then do teachers acquire coping skills and how aware are they of the strategies they use to manage stress and maintain their well-being? Cockburn (1996) gathered data from first, middle and primary school teachers using a questionnaire containing sections regarding biographical and employment history, stress experienced, coping and how the teacher learned to cope. 49% of respondents were main grade teachers and 51% were teachers with posts of additional responsibility. Although 90% of respondents stated that their job was moderately or very stressful 60.5% felt that their ability to cope with stress was ‘average’. Cockburn’s questionnaire listed 45 coping strategies identified during a literature review and teachers commented on these. Most teachers (96%) indicated awareness of coping and management of stress via lesson preparation, understanding what was to be taught, knowing the pupils and keeping up to date with paperwork. Of interest is the teachers’ perceptions of the different strategies, for example, of those who used ‘understanding materials to be taught’ as a work strategy 69.3% employed it as a stress reducing strategy, however, a further 22.4% considered this as simply part of their routine practice. As teachers selected from a pre-prepared list of strategies some data regarding methods employed by teachers may have been missed.
A high proportion of teachers noted that they had acquired strategies through experience (89%). A degree of stigma was expressed regarding seeking help from outside professionals and indeed of the 60 teachers who had done so 29 had stated that it was not effective. The potential reasons for the ineffectiveness of such a strategy are not discussed, except to mention that teachers tended to attempt to obtain help when already stressed rather than as a preventative measure, but would merit further study, particularly given the implications for educational psychologists and others working to support teachers and pupils. Therefore although support may be obtainable a teacher’s motivation to access it may be impacted on by the role / occupation of the supporter. Cockburn did highlight the response of one teacher who expressed concern regarding the apparent general assumption that all teachers were stressed and should they not be so they were not doing their job properly. Hence it may even be that teachers who are not stressed are anxious regarding their lack of stress.

High school teachers experiencing lower levels of stress have been found to use exercise as a coping strategy rather more than those experiencing higher levels of stress, however, relaxation was used by teachers experiencing both lower and higher stress levels (Austin, Shah and Muncer, 2005). Perhaps this is not surprising given that very stressed individuals are unlikely to feel energetic or motivated to exercise or find time to do so. Interestingly teachers who scored in lower stress levels did not use coping strategies less frequently. One may consider that this is because they are using coping strategies effectively and hence experiencing less stress or, as stress is a subjective concept, that they are feeling more stressed than their assigned stress level from the questionnaires they completed and hence using several coping strategies. It must also be noted that the questionnaires employed contained closed questions and hence may have not been sensitive to some of the stressors and strategies employed by teachers. Encouragingly teachers were reported to note that filling in the questionnaires had been useful and given them time to reflect on the effectiveness of their personal coping strategies.

Austin et al’s (op cit) study was completed with experienced teachers. It is also worth considering research carried out with teachers who are more newly qualified. In a study of the impact of social support on new teachers participants completed questionnaires
regarding workload, turnover intention and job satisfaction (Pomacki, DeLongis, Frey, Short and Woehrle, 2010). Although the researchers state that they obtained 100% return it must be noted that one of the researchers was a member of the school board and as new teachers (in their first 3 years of teaching or new to the area) it may be surmised that the respondents were keen to be perceived as diligent and co-operative. These researchers found that social support reduced turnover even when workload increased indicating that supportive relationships with colleagues promote feelings of coping and well-being in school.

If teachers are indeed highly stressed and experiencing poor well-being it may be hypothesised that this impacts upon their performance i.e. the quality of their teaching. Klusman, Kunter, Trautwein, Ludtke and Baumer (2008) proposed that high levels of engagement in their occupation and the capacity to distance oneself from work and cope with failures would be associated with high levels of occupational well-being and better student outcomes. In their study they looked at the relationship between occupational well-being, emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction of 1789 teachers and in a subsample of 318 teachers and their students studied the differences in instructional performances of teachers and the effects on student achievement and motivation. They classified teacher’s responses to questionnaires and grouped teachers into ‘profile groups’. ‘Class 1’ teachers (29.2% of the participants) were found to score highly on measures of resilience and engagement, ‘Class 2’ teachers (25.4% of participants) scored very low on engagement measures and highly on resilience, ‘Class 3’ teachers (16.4%) scored highly on engagement and very low on resilience and ‘Class 4’ teachers (29.0%) had low scores on both engagement and resilience.

Using these groupings the researchers used student ratings of teaching quality for a subsample of teachers. Class 1 and Class 3 teachers were found to set work which was more cognitively demanding. Class 1 teachers set a pace which was more suited to the needs of the class and provided more social support. Class 4 teachers were not felt to promote competence and autonomy. Hence it would appear that teachers who scored lowest on engagement and resilience were most at risk of poor well-being and not meeting the needs
of pupils as effectively. Class 1 and 2 teachers were felt to score highly on measures of well-being. It was proposed that different factors may contribute to teachers levels of well-being and hence they would benefit from different support. This study highlights the potential impact of teacher stress and well-being on ability to teach effectively and maintain the well-being of their pupils. If indeed this is the case it furthers the importance of supporting teachers to maintain their own wellbeing.

Teachers’ emotional state is likely to impact on their well-being and teaching; teachers who feel sad or frustrated may be presumed to feel less motivation. Sutton and Wheatley (2003) noted that emotional incidents are more likely to be recalled than less emotional ones and that mood may impact on the likelihood of recalling positive or negative memories. This is not to imply that I am of the opinion that teachers should be expected to be happy and positive at all times, but that if negative mood is the prevalent state for them this may feed into a self perpetuating negative experience. Positive mood was postulated to be associated with setting more challenging learning goals, greater perceived self efficacy, more use of humour and higher levels of student mastery in the classroom which echoes the findings of Klusman et al (2008) regarding teachers scoring highly in resilience.

In 2005 Montgomery and Rupp produced a model depicting teachers’ potential coping responses to perceived stressors. It is useful in summarising the range of factors which may impact upon teachers’ well-being and strategies employed to maintain this. The focus of the model is very much on occupational stress and well-being and does not really take into account the fluid exchange of experience between home and work. It was proposed that ‘active coping’ strategies involved becoming involved with the stressor using cognitive, behavioural or emotional strategies, however, passive coping strategies were characterised by a lack of direct engagement with the event in order to solve / moderate its impact. The model does not, however, take into account the fluid nature of coping and that several coping strategies may be used concurrently with varying degrees of success.
Figure 5 Theoretical-empirical model of construct relationships of teacher stress
Montgomery and Rupp (2005)
2.10.1 Resilience

‘Socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioural guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation and coaching students through conflict situations, encouraging co-operation among students and acting as a role model for respectful and appropriate communication and exhibitions of pro-social behaviour. These teacher behaviours are associated with optimal social and emotional classroom climate and desired student outcomes’. (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009 p.492).

Jennings and Greenberg (op cit) opined that social and emotional competence was associated with well-being, however, little attention is paid to this area as it is assumed that teachers will possess these competencies. They proposed that the expectation that teachers will manage the emotional well-being of their students as well as teaching and managing their own emotional lives may leave teachers exhausted.

However, not all teachers are exhausted and many remain highly committed to teaching and are satisfied in their jobs. Interestingly research has been carried out in Australia in which resilience and protective factors which had been identified in children were applied to teachers (Howard and Johnson, 2004). The factors included having significant relationships, a sense of connectedness, personal agency, social and problem solving skills, a sense of competence, a future orientation and a sense of achievement. Resources to promote these factors have been proposed to lie within individuals, organisations and communities (Howard and Johnson, 2004, Gu and Day, 2007). In interviews with teachers who had been identified by their principal (head teacher) as being at risk of stress and burnout and yet appeared to be persistently resisting stressors and burnout they investigated teacher qualities which may facilitate their resilience. It was found that the teachers expressed a sense of agency regarding incidents in school. If they perceived that they had acted appropriately
they chose not to feel guilty; in situations which they felt they could have improved their handling of an incident it was not ruminated over, but learned from. Incidents were not perceived to be personally motivated. Howard and Johnson also found that teachers described a ‘moral purpose’ and had elected to work in the challenging school with the intention of making a difference. A strong support network of family, colleagues and friends and strong school leadership was noted to provide opportunities to share experiences and boost morale. Resilient teachers possessed many of the qualities which had been identified in these researchers’ review of research on resilient children. In my experience, and indeed in the literature regarding teacher well-being, teachers are noted to ruminate and worry about their performance and school incidents frequently. If teachers could be supported to feel more confident about their actions and have access to specific time to share experiences and positive time hopefully their resilience could be increased.

Although resilience has been noted to be fostered by organisational and community characteristics, Martin and Marsh (2008b) were interested in individual’s ability to successfully manage daily challenges and setbacks; a quality they termed ‘buoyancy’. Encouragingly this study included a wider range of school staff. Much research focuses on teacher well-being, but neglects to include other members of the school community whose well-being is equally important and who can impact on and be impacted upon by the well-being of others and the school as a system. The buoyancy, self reported responses to setbacks and challenges, motivation, enjoyment of work, participation, positivity and absence, was assessed in 637 staff from 18 Australian schools. Both male and older staff reported higher levels of buoyancy. Buoyancy was also found to correlate with positive behavioural and cognitive aspects of motivation and negatively with maladaptive behavioural and cognitive aspects of motivation. Participation at work was also positively associated with buoyancy. However, these authors do not discuss causality beyond a brief comment. Do staff participate more because they are buoyant or are they buoyant because of their participation? Also, although staff were grouped into teaching, counselling, administration and executive staff no comment is made upon aspects of their role which may impact on buoyancy.
2.10.2 Summary of buffers and mediating factors in teacher well-being and resilience
Teaching has been identified as a rather stressful profession (HM Treasury, 2000; DfES, 2007; Schwarzer and Hallum, 2008), however, not all teachers are stressed and many manage their well-being effectively. Large numbers of teachers in my experience and within the literature profess to have entered teaching in order to work with children and to make a difference. This motivational stance and belief in one’s capacity to impact positively has been found to buffer stressful experiences for teachers (Punch and Tuetteman, 1996; Howard and Johnson, 2004). Hence it would appear that maintaining a belief in a long term aim and one’s efficacy to attain it is of great importance to one’s well-being and links closely with eudemonic well-being. It may also be teachers’ perceptions of what is stressful and what is ‘simply part of the job’, which impacts on feelings of well-being (Cockburn 1996). There is an interesting conflict which is revealed in the literature regarding the social stigma of being ‘stressed’ and obtaining support from one’s colleagues. If situations are available in which one can have positive conversations and obtain social support as part of everyday school life this may reduce feelings of the unavailability of support and promote positive well-being (Brouwers et al, 2001; Kahn et al, 2006). Additionally it has been proposed that one does not have to be experiencing poor well-being to benefit from social support (Cohen and Wills, 1985) or relaxation (Austin, Muncer and Shah, 2005). Hence providing support for teaching staff in terms of relaxation, social support and as part of a whole school intervention is likely to buffer experiences of poor well-being. The fact that there are so few studies relating to teacher well-being (and none relating to whole staff well-being) carried out in Britain does beg the question of whether teacher well-being is valued by policy makers and teachers themselves and clarification about what sort of support should be available and how school staff perceive and value well-being would be appropriate.

2.11 Interventions to support Teachers
Dunlop and Macdonald (2004) carried out a comprehensive review of teacher health and well-being in the UK. Of the 23 interventions they reviewed, 17 were focused on individual teachers and the interventions tended to be focused on specific needs rather than overall well-being.
These authors contacted 1200 teachers from the General Teaching Council Register in Scotland and received a 40.6% response rate. Secondary teachers generally reported better health, although those reporting better health tended also to be nearer the start of their career. This may not be related to teaching however; simply the effect of aging. A higher proportion of ‘mental and behavioural disorders’ were noted amongst special educational needs and nursery teachers. 78% of teachers indicated that psychological stress affected their physical well-being often or sometimes.

It was found that 29 of the 32 Scottish authorities contracted out support services to private providers and teachers were not always able to self refer. It is quite concerning that 73% of teachers asked were unaware that their employer had an occupational health service.

Teachers were asked about the type of support that they would like to be available. 77% of respondents indicated that they felt a specific service for teachers was required. 77% expressed interest in accessing an annual health check and 61% were interested in workshops in stress management and relaxation. Teachers expressed the least interest in having a work place based counsellor. This is perhaps not surprising as it may be perceived as an individual sign of ‘weakness’ or publicly highlight that a member of staff was feeling under pressure. This approach may also unduly ‘medicalise’ a teacher experiencing poor well-being rather than seeing it as an environmental and systemic concern or perhaps a private concern if it is due to pressure outside work.

Seidman and Zager (1992) stated that workshops had been found to be effective in developing teacher’s pedagogical and class management skills. When these researchers ran stress workshops for teachers from different schools they observed a reluctance to admit to colleagues in the same school that they were experiencing difficulties. They emphasised the importance of the attendance of senior management as a demonstration that they do care about the working conditions and lives of staff. It was proposed that some focus in initial teacher training should be on developing coping strategies. However, they do not cover the issue of the importance of the organisation and culture of the school in managing teacher
well-being. Brown and Ralph (1992) describe an intervention in which teachers planned to meet their own needs by identifying stressors and recognising signs of stress in themselves and producing a prioritised personal plan, but also incorporating staff targets and strategies into the school development plan. This appears to recognise the individuality of stress and well-being, but also organisational strategies to promote staff well-being generally.

In the two figures below I have attempted to draw together findings from the reviewed literature and illustrate the conclusions I have drawn. Figure 6 illustrates factors which are identified within the literature to impact on teacher well-being. Figure 7 illustrates factors which may be considered to promote / maintain teacher coping and effectiveness. (Please note that the models refer to ‘teachers’ only as the literature refers mainly to teaching staff rather than more widely to ‘school staff’.)
Figure 6 Factors impacting on teacher well-being

Figure 6 illustrates that research has identified that constant changes and innovations have been perceived by teachers as adding to their workload and the complexity of their role. This has been proposed to have a significant effect on their health and well-being (Guglielmi and Tatrow, 1998; DfES, 2007; Teacher Support Network, undated). Additionally pupil needs, parental expectations and school leadership and management are considered by teachers to increase perceived pressures (Brown et al, 2002). School systems and leadership may also impact on job characteristics which have been proposed by Warr (1987b; 1994; 1999; 2007) to promote or negatively affect well-being depending on the
quantity of the characteristic (for example, ‘opportunities for personal contact’ or ‘opportunities for control’) (see section 2.6.1). Teachers’ quality of homelife can be positively or negatively affected by the extent to which homelife is perceived to be intruded upon by work (Punch and Tuettman, 1996; Montgomery and Rupp, 2005) and the networks of support which are available from family and friends (Howard and Johnson, 2004).

Figure 7 Factors contributing to staff coping and effectiveness

In figure 7 a range of factors have been identified within the literature as contributing to teacher well-being and effectiveness. These include individual characteristics, management
strategies and also systemic factors. Personal characteristics such as scoring highly on measures of extraversion or conscientiousness and lower on neuroticism have been found to be linked with increased perceptions of mastery, self acceptance and sense or purpose (Schmutte and Ryff, 1997) and people considered to be optimistic have also been noted to be more likely to value service to others and notice accomplishments. Hence personal characteristics may play a significant part in how staff may cope with stressors and challenges to their well-being. Levels of motivation and perceptions of one’s role have also been argued to impact on coping. Howard and Johnson (2008) noted that a sense of personal agency, a sense of connectedness and a future orientation all contributed to motivation and how teachers saw their role. These factors are likely to be affected by personal characteristics and circumstances, but also the wider school and community systems that the staff member is part of. The availability, accessibility and appropriateness of social support has been found by a number of researchers to promote feelings of well-being, awareness of one’s accomplishments, feelings of acceptance and positive feelings (Cohen and Wills, 1985; Punch and Tuetteeman, 1996; Zellars and Perrwe, 2001; DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005). Teachers who were more resilient, accessed more positive well-being and engaged in effective coping strategies were also found to participate more at work (Martin and Marsh, 2008b) and to provide more social support and more appropriately demanding work for pupils (Klusman et al, 2008).

2.12 Present study

It would appear that teaching is a very stressful profession and impacts upon teacher well-being. Theory relating to well-being indicates that people can impact upon their own well-being and that one’s perceptions of well-being can be influenced by personal aims, values and expectations, one’s dispositional outlook and strategies used to cope when one’s well-being is challenged. In order to study the well-being of school staff it will be important to understand how they construe well-being and what may contribute to it. The stigma of experiencing or being perceived to experience poor well-being is documented, however, as previously mentioned there are rather fewer studies regarding teacher / school staff mental well-being in Britain than I expected to find. I have wondered if this is partly cultural and is indicative of the fact that the well-being of teachers and school staff (who are promoting the
well-being of subsequent generations) is not valued by society or even by those who themselves work in schools. It would be beneficial to clarify the value which school staff place upon their well-being in order to clarify the likelihood that interventions and support for their well-being would be positively received and valued or if some other manner of support is more appropriate. Research has indicated that many teachers possess and develop a range of strategies to maintain their well-being and also that the characteristics of the organisation in which they work can promote or impede this. Some evidence has indicated that teacher well-being can impact on the quality of teaching offered (e.g. Klusman et al, 2008). Research has suggested that membership of a group, distraction and relaxation can have a positive effect on well-being. The ability to ‘switch off’ even for a short time has been indicated to have a positive effect on well-being. The availability, focus and provision of social support has been frequently mentioned in the literature review. The opportunity to obtain support from colleagues in a structured and regular manner has been suggested to be beneficial to teacher well-being (Kahn et al, 2006). However, of importance are the views of Cohen and Wills (1985) and Austin et al (2005) who have postulated that those who are not necessarily stressed still benefit from social support and employment of such strategies as relaxation. Whilst these may be perceived to focus perhaps on hedonistic well-being, it may be reasonable to suggest that happier and more relaxed teachers may feel more inclined and able to strive to improve eudemonic well-being.

It is intended that a whole school intervention in which school staff can access social support in a positive and relaxing environment, take ‘time out’ and ideally ‘switch off’ from work for a short time will be carried out in a school. As Dunlop and Macdonald (2004) advocated staff will have opportunities to make suggestions regarding support provided.

A pilot study was carried out in the summer of 2009 (Sharrocks, 2010) during which I focused on investigating whether providing a space for school staff to relax and engage in therapeutic activities along with colleagues would impact on their mental wellbeing. There was no assumption that anyone was experiencing lower or higher levels of well-being and it was available to any member of staff at school. Measures of mental well-being were taken before, during and after the intervention in addition to gathering information regarding how
many times a participant had used the space and whether they felt that it had had an impact on their mental well-being. It was found that a short term intervention did impact on staff perceived mental well-being and that the provision of a relaxing and ‘therapeutic’ nurturing space supported staff well-being needs. However, it remained to be clarified what staff understood by the term mental well-being. Some staff had been noted to come regularly and others not to attend for different reasons. It was also felt important to clarify the value that was placed on mental well-being and perhaps the value of interventions to promote this. Finally, as some members of staff had clearly benefited from the intervention and others had either not been able to attend or had chosen not to, it was felt important to clarify what the experience of taking part in the intervention was and if it impacted on work in school. For those who did not attend it was of interest to clarify why not and whether alternative provision would enable them to experience better well-being. For a fuller description of the pilot study refer to section 3.6.

Therefore during this research it is hoped to clarify what school staff understand by the term ‘mental well-being’, how (if at all) the intervention impacted on their perceived mental well-being and if they feel that the intervention has supported them in any way in their work in school. I intend to focus on staff experiences and expectations of the intervention and any changes or impacts on their well-being or practice in school which they attribute to participating in the intervention.

The research questions are:

- RQ 1 What do school staff understand by the term ‘mental well-being’?
- RQ 2 What values and importance do staff place on promoting mental well-being?
- RQ3 Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their mental well-being and if so how has it impacted? I am expecting that staff will report some impact on their well-being as this was the case in the pilot study.
- RQ 4 Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their work in school and what evidence do they have for this view? I am expecting that staff will perceive differences in their mental well-being and that this will be perceived to have impacted on their work.
3 Methodology

3.1 Overview of methodology
In this chapter I intend to review the aims of the research and the research questions. I will then move on to clarify the epistemological stance taken in the research and reasons for the methods adopted. Issues relating to the authenticity and trustworthiness of data and role of the researcher will also be considered. I will briefly summarise the pilot study (Sharrocks, 2010) on which this study expands and then explain the procedure of the research.

3.1.1 Research aims and questions
As has been highlighted in the previous chapter, teaching staff regularly raise issues of the work load, responsibilities and pressures they feel placed upon them during school meetings and consultations. I have proposed that teacher and school staff well-being needs to be promoted in order for them to promote the well-being of their students. Day et al (2007) state that teachers matter to the education, achievement and increasingly the personal and social well-being of their pupils. There are a large number of reports and research papers which highlight stress experienced by teaching staff (e.g. Grayson and Alvarez, 2008; DfES, 2007; Brown et al, 2002; Punch and Tuetteeman, 1996), however, many interventions to support well-being tend to be focused toward the individual. Contributors to teacher well-being and effectiveness are summarised in figures 6 and 7. Research has indicated that membership of a group, distraction, relaxation, the ability to ‘switch off’ and social support all positively impact on well-being and an intervention designed to promote well-being was piloted (Sharrocks, 2010) as is described in section 3.6. The study was aimed at the wider school staff as research had indicated that individuals did not need to be experiencing poor well-being to benefit from social support or relaxation. In the pilot it was established that well-being was positively affected by the intervention, however, clarification regarding school staff value and understanding of well-being and the experience of participating in the project was felt to be necessary.

Through this thesis I hope to clarify the views and understanding by school staff of the term ‘mental well-being’ and the values and importance they place upon promoting mental well-
being. I also hope to discover more about the experiences of staff taking part in an intervention specifically aimed at supporting mental well-being and any impact this has had on their work in school.

The research questions I intend to answer are:

- RQ 1 What do school staff understand by the term ‘mental well-being’?
- RQ 2 What values and importance do staff place on promoting mental well-being?
- RQ3 Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their mental well-being and if so how has it impacted? I am expecting that staff will report some impact on their well-being as this was the case in the pilot study.
- RQ 4 Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their work in school and what evidence do they have for this view? I am expecting that staff will perceive differences in their mental well-being and that this will be perceived to have impacted on their work.

A qualitative methodology was selected as I intended to gather data relating to participants’ experiences, views and sense making. Data was gathered using questionnaires containing open and closed questions and 3 focus groups held before, during and after the intervention. Reflective research diaries were kept by myself and one of my colleagues.

The research was carried out at a primary school which had been the location of the pilot study. It was selected as in the course of our professional work, my colleagues and I had observed tensions and stress amongst staff. An 8 week intervention known as ‘Chill and Chat’ was available in school at lunchtimes once weekly with relaxing, therapeutic and social opportunities and provided the context for the research. It was available to all members of staff. All staff were aware that participation in the research or the Chill and chat project was entirely voluntary. Data from the focus groups and questionnaires were analysed using thematic analysis.
3.2 Epistemology

Bishop (2007) compares the researcher to a ‘bricoleur’ who pieces together practices to create information by reflecting upon social dynamics and constructing knowledge through action. He notes that through use of qualitative methodologies theories may be strengthened by including and recognising complexity. He further remarks:

‘Recognising the possibility of multiple truths and the historically, culturally and chronological specificity of phenomena requires an appreciation that knowledge claims need to be asserted, not as ends in themselves, but as a means of dialogue with other researchers.’ (p.15)

Social constructivism sees the individual as a sense maker in that people seek to make sense of their world as they see and experience it (Darlaston-Jones, 2007). By recognising that people attempt to interpret and make sense of their world it is possible to discuss individual differences between people, but also identify elements of ‘sameness’ (Darlaston-Jones, op cit). One’s background, social and economic status, personality and culture will impact upon the construction of reality even if people could in some respects be viewed as the same. To try to illustrate this point I will use the example of an experience currently very real to myself. The local authority is undergoing a restructure which has profound implications for the educational psychologists. Although we are all educational psychologists who work in the same team and are under equal threat of job loss or relocation to new teams I believe that the ‘reality’ is very different for each of us given our current financial status, experience of previous restructuring, family structure, political beliefs and age (this list is intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive).

The same, I feel, is true of the school staff who participated in the research being described in this thesis; although they all work in the same school and are subject to the same policies, the same pupils, same community they will all have many different interpretations of reality. The experience and interpretation of the Chill and Chat intervention therefore is likely to contain some commonalities and many differences i.e. society is comprised of individuals, but also individuals may understand themselves and derive meaning from their
role and place in society (Darlaston-Jones, op cit). It is possible that the prevalence in society of individual interventions to promote mental health implies that there is an ‘ideal standard’ of mental health to be obtained and indeed those participating in the study may have their views regarding ‘ideal’ mental health standards and those they feel they are currently experiencing. By asking staff about mental health I hope to establish a greater understanding of their own concept of mental health and what may contribute to it.

Alongside attempts to clarify the views and experiences of school staff it is necessary to consider my own role as a researcher and the impact I have had upon the process from the design of the Chill and Chat activities, to questions asked in the focus groups and questionnaires and my understanding and interpretation of the textual data obtained. The role of the researcher will be discussed more in a later section (section 3.5).

Gergen (2009) considers the concept of ‘truth’. This is pertinent as it may be presumed the purpose of research is to confirm / disprove hypotheses and create / construct knowledge. He proposes,

‘For any situation multiple constructions are possible, and there is no means outside social convention of declaring one as corresponding more ‘truly’ to the nature of reality than another’ (p.19).

What is taken to be true may be born of relationships. For example, when people speak they do so from a particular standpoint using language which has gained its utility from different situations. Gergen (op cit) uses the example of a penalty in football; what everyone sees may be described accurately in the term ‘penalty’, however, what it means to different members of society may be vastly different. The term may be said to have little meaning until it is used in context.

A fuller discussion of social constructivism may be found in Gergen (2009) or Burr (2003).
3.3 Qualitative research and social constructivism

Qualitative research may be held to focus on people’s experiences. Berg (2009) noted that it refers to meanings, concepts, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of phenomena. Indeed Smith (2003) notes that experimental psychology was initially defined as the ‘science of experience’ (p.5) and to have a role in studying and understanding more about the inner world i.e. that which is experienced. Ashworth (2003) describes the work of William James (1842-1910) in which consciousness was considered an ongoing process and that significance was established by the individual by its relation to ongoing themes in awareness i.e. its personal relevance to an individual who is self aware and experiencing. As such one may consider the individual as actively trying to make sense of the world (implicit within this is the assumption that there is a real world to be perceived).

The traditional positivist view is reflected in the assumption that events and things have a meaning or essential nature which impacts predictably on a person and that perception is a matter of internalising a ‘truthful’ representation of the world. Other theorists have taken the notion of the person as a perceiver further to consider them as a co-constructor of knowledge in conjunction with those around them (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Harre and Secord, 1972) and the view that ‘knowledge’ is based on an objective and unbiased observation of ‘the world’ is challenged (Burr, 2003). It is proposed that ways of understanding the world are historically and culturally relative and that one is born into a culture in which concepts and categories already exist. People are considered to construct knowledge in daily interactions in which phenomena are described and form an understanding of the world which is not objective, but a product of the ongoing social interactive processes. Theorists propose that as such a person’s language and cultural experience form a vehicle via which reality is constructed. It is also proposed that people are less unique individuals and more members of a society in which culture, history and current issues are highly relevant to constructions of reality. Burr (op cit) notes that a social world is produced by social processes, rather than describing a one real world in which there are given ‘natures’ or essences. Essentialism is considered a limiting process via which identities may be pathologised and oppressed i.e. one can only pathologise that which is different to the ‘norm’ (the ‘truth’ or accepted standard).
Ashworth (op cit) also notes that when research is focused on constructions of reality the psychologist is very much part of the cultural construction of knowledge and research in such context is a product of both the researcher and those who participate in the research.

Carter and Little (2007) define qualitative research as research in which the textual data is relied on with the aim of understanding human behaviour and in which ‘open questions are asked about phenomena as they occur in context’ (p.1316).

Qualitative research is often criticised for not being generalisable or representative (Silverman, 2000). However, if it is argued as many qualitative researchers do, that social reality is in constant flux and continually revised by individuals who are making sense of ongoing experiences, it may then be considered that the purpose of such research is not to be generalisable but to find richer and deeper understandings of social phenomena. Burns (1994) remarks:

‘The results of qualitative research are generalisable to theoretical positions, not to statistical populations and the investigator’s goal is to expand theories and not to undertake statistical generalisation.’

(p.326)

3.4 Authenticity and trustworthiness of data

As previously mentioned generalisability is often considered a staple of positivist research. In qualitative studies the aim is often to understand more about experiences, feelings and constructs. To attempt to enable participants to express their current views and attempt to understand their experiences data was gathered from several sources; questionnaires, focus groups and researcher reflective diaries. It must be noted that respondents would have given their views as they were at the time of being asked and that those views may indeed change due to circumstances, new thoughts and / or new experiences. However, as I was asking about experiences of an intervention to support mental well-being before, during and after it is hoped that current views were obtained.
It is important to try to ensure that participants’ views have indeed been accessed and that findings are not a reflection of the researcher’s biases and prejudices (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). This was referred to by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as the ‘truth value’ of a study. To counter such criticisms I ensured anonymity of respondents in questionnaire data and verbal agreement in focus groups of confidentiality in an effort to access participant’s views more ‘truthfully’, rather than partial views that they may have been willing to share without such assurances. It must also be taken into consideration that as the researcher my findings may be influenced by my own views and biases, such as the desire to find that the intervention was very successful and enjoyable. To this end during data analysis using thematic analysis the system employed was systematic and reflexive, data themes were checked, re-checked and combined in order to make sense of the information iteratively. The process of the thematic analysis is described in section 3.16. Themes identified were also re-presented to participants in focus groups and all members of the school, a process referred to as ‘member checking’ with reference to questionnaires due to the fact that I did not know who had completed them. The purpose of the member checking was to try to ensure that I had understood what participants had been expressing and that themes identified from the data reflected participant views rather than researcher prejudice or misunderstanding. Additional remarks from participants were then considered in the thematic analysis process.

3.5 Role of the researcher

As remarked by Darlaston-Jones (2007) from the social constructivist stance the role of the researcher is inextricably linked with the role of participants in that meaning is co-constructed in partnership with respondents. The researcher’s own worldview will impact upon the process and it would be less ‘true’ to omit to remark and reflect on this central issue. Preconceived notions of the participants held by the researcher may also play a part. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) note that the researcher’s model of a research ‘subject’ is likely to be impacting upon the role and conduct of the researcher during the research process. For example, one may consider how ‘informative’, ‘useful’ and ‘forth coming’ the respondent is likely to be. However, social constructivism advocates critical reflexivity – the
attempt to suspend the obvious and listen to alternative framings of reality or understand multiple viewpoints (Gergen, 2009).

Interestingly Berg (2009) notes that the role of the interviewer is in part determined by the expectations of others i.e. the roles one is expected to play, understood to play and the role the researcher perceives themselves to be playing. Whilst carrying out the research in school it was necessary to be aware of the different roles I may be seen to hold.

- I am employed by the local authority and as such may be considered as a conduit through which information about the school and teaching may be passed back to others who may be in positions of ‘power’. The particular topic of interest (school staff mental well-being) may have played a part in consternation regarding what information may be passed back. As described in the ethics and procedure sections of this chapter steps to reduce such concerns were taken such as agreements of anonymity in focus groups and anonymous completion of questionnaires and ensuring staff were aware of their right to choose whether or not to participate and the extent to which they did so.

- I am the school educational psychologist and am known to all members of teaching staff, but rather less so to other members of staff such as kitchen staff and lunchtime supervisors. It is possible that some members of staff may have felt obliged to participate to ensure ongoing goodwill towards themselves and the school. Other members of staff may have chosen not to take part as they had disagreed with or been displeased with previous work in school. I am not aware of any such case, but it remains possible that staff members may have privately held views.

- Some members of staff may have been concerned by their interpretation of the role of ‘educational psychologist’, particularly those who may not come into contact with EPs very often. Indeed it must also be considered that the term ‘psychologist’ when used in conjunction with the words ‘mental health’ may carry with it many connotations for staff. Again steps were taken to eliminate such concerns in the presentation, letter and self presentation and demeanour during research.
3.6 Pilot Study

In this section I intend to explain the rationale, methodology and findings of the pilot study (Sharrocks, 2010) on which this study expands.

Teachers are expected to meet the learning and emotional needs of the pupils in their care, however, if their own well-being is poor can it be expected that they can support the well-being of children effectively? In the pilot study I attempted to establish whether providing a space in which staff could relax, socialise and have ‘time out’ for themselves would contribute to their increased well-being.

The research question was:
‘Can a short term intervention aimed at helping teachers to relax and spend lunchtimes differently once a week have an impact on their mental well-being?’

3.6.1 Summary of methodology of pilot study

The study was carried out in a school identified by myself and the behaviour support teacher as a school in which staff were experiencing a high level of stress and workload. The head teacher was approached for permission to carry out the study. The proposed study was then presented in a staff meeting. During the presentation it was made clear that participation was entirely voluntary. The project lasted for 5 weeks and was held at lunchtimes in the Learning Mentor room which was available at this time and was already seen by staff as a pleasant and relaxing space in school which was private and not subject to interruptions.

The project was run during the first half of the summer term in 2009 between 11.45am-1.30pm to accommodate the staggered lunchtimes of infant and junior staff. The following activities were available for all 5 sessions:

- Social seating area for eating with comfortable seats and cushions.
- Comfy chair area with magazines
- Hand massage and head massage
- Cakes made by the researchers and tea, coffee and bottled water
- Relaxing music
Research was referred to in order to decide activities as detailed in Table 4. Additionally in weeks 3-5 Indian head massage, reiki, reflexology and crystal healing were also available from qualified therapists who were also employed in different role in the Children’s Services department. Their managers had been contacted and had agreed to release them to facilitate the study. Staff completed health questionnaires provided by therapists when they signed up for the therapies.

Staff completed the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant, Fishwick, Platt, Joseph and Stewart-Brown, 2006) during the initial staff meeting and then in the first, third and fifth weeks of the project (see appendix 9). As the scale only took 2-3 minutes to complete when staff entered the room it was not considered to be detrimental to their time to relax. Additionally on the last week staff were asked to complete two additional questions:

- How many times did you come to Chill and Chat?
- Do you think Chill and Chat has had an impact on your well-being in school and if so what differences have you noticed?

The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) is a 14 point scale intended to measure subjective well-being and psychological functioning. Each item is scored 1-5 (1 relating to rarely experiencing the descriptor and 5 to always experiencing it) and the maximum score is 70. Items in the scale aim to measure actual well-being rather than determinants of it. For a fuller description see Sharrocks (2010).

**3.6.2 Analysis of data and results of the pilot study**

Data was collected on 4 occasions. As there was a slight variation in teaching staff who attended the sessions between group t tests were performed on mean scores from each
occasion. An effect size was also calculated. With regard to the 2 additional questions asked of staff during data collection during the 5th week, content analysis was used to analyse remarks made by staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>46.5</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>1.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>42.92</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>2.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Means, standard deviations and standard errors of data at times 1, 2, 3 and 4

(note a high score indicates positive well-being)

Between participants t tests on means from times 1 and 4 indicated t=.596, p=.557. I was unwilling to accept this probability level as indicative of a significant difference between the groups. I did notice that teaching staff perceived well-being decreased during times 2 and 3. These times corresponded to the beginning of term and the mid point of a half term. Times 1 and 4 correspond to the ends of half terms. To further clarify the impact of this potential confounding variable I carried out additional analysis.

An effect size was carried out to attempt to triangulate data and reduce chances of making a type 2 error. Between times 1 and 4 d=0.23 indicating a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Post analysis was carried out using G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang and Buchner, 2007) which indicated that the t tests may not have been powerful to detect a difference between the groups given the small number of participants. The power of statistics used in the study was .48 indicating there was less than 50% chance of finding an effect even if there was one. 108 participants would have been required to increase the power of the t tests in order to detect a significant result.
The additional questions were intended to gather data regarding the number of sessions staff had attended and any effect they felt the intervention had had on their well-being in an attempt to avoid errors in interpreting the data.

### 3.6.3 Summary of findings from the pilot study
The intervention, although comparatively short term, was considered by participating school staff to have had a positive effect on their mental well-being. Some members of staff remarked specifically on how they considered their well-being to have been enhanced and others more particularly on activities they had enjoyed. Staff views, researcher observations and the small effect size indicated that the intervention had contributed to increased staff mental well-being. The project was considered to have prompted a sense of ‘team’ and togetherness between staff and also between the research team. It was hard to know if staff meant that their well-being in school had been increased or more specifically general well-being. Hence a need for further clarity about teachers’ perceptions and values of well-being was noted.

### 3.7 Current study overview
The intervention was carried out in a primary school for 8 weeks. The pilot study had already indicated that a difference to mental well-being could be made, however, further clarification regarding staff understanding and value of ‘well-being’ was needed and also about the process by which mental well-being was perceived to be increased. To this end the same primary school was selected for this study in order to expand upon findings from the pilot study from a qualitative standpoint. Staff in the school were already familiar with the intervention and were willing for a second intervention to be carried out. It was felt appropriate to use the same school as the setting for the research as different research questions were being posed in order to investigate school staff well-being in greater depth. Although many of the same staff took part in this study this was felt to be acceptable as the aim of qualitative research is to be able to generalise to research and expand theories rather than to general populations (Burns, 1994, Silverman, 2000).
During this intervention staff attended sessions known as Chill and Chat which took place at lunchtimes with the aim of providing relaxation, social support and a chance to ‘switch off’ in a therapeutic environment. The aim of the intervention was to promote staff well-being. Data was gathered regarding staff views and experiences of well-being and the intervention via the use of questionnaires and focus groups. Participation in the project and the research was voluntary. In this section I will describe the sources of data employed in the research, followed by the procedures by which data was gathered. The Chill and Chat project which was the context for the research will be described. I will then move on to consider the method employed to analyse data. Table 3 summarises the project and research schedule.

3.7.1 Details of the school setting
The research was carried out in a primary school catering for pupils aged 3-11 in an industrial town in the north west of England. The school is located on a large council housing estate where there is a high degree of unemployment. The pupils are almost all white British and there is only one pupil for whom English is an additional language. The most recent Ofsted report states that pupils attending the school generally have challenging lives and weaker academic skills than average especially in English (Ofsted, 2009) and 78% attained at least one level 4 or above SAT result during the year of the study. The current national expectation for pupils to achieve level 4 in English and maths is 74%, although figures for all local authorities range between 69-90%. Half of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. National attainment figures for 2011 indicated that 58% of children who were eligible for free school meals attained expected levels in SATs. Currently the attainment levels achieved within the school indicate that children are achieving as ‘expected’ in at least one subject. The population of the school is transient and up to 40% of the children in the school at any one time are on the special needs register. It may well be that this externally generated goal results in stress for school staff who may or may not believe the targets are appropriate or achievable as is illustrated in figure 6. There is likely to be additional workload placed on staff due to the high number of children who are felt to experience special educational needs in terms of planning work, teaching in the classroom, managing support staff and additional paperwork such as Individual Education Plans (IEPs), review meetings and record keeping. Staff are also likely to experience additional stresses in

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managing the frequent moves of children into the school and out of the school. The school encourages parents in school and holds a number of ‘stay and play’ sessions in the Foundation Stage, coffee mornings and praise assemblies in addition to more formal parent evenings. From my work in the school I am aware that staff are often concerned by the perceived low uptake of appointments for parent consultations. This may also cause stress and be perceived by staff as lack of parental support / interest, lack of appreciation of their efforts or concern that they are not ‘doing enough’ to enable parents to come in to school.

At the time of the project there were 7 teachers at the school in addition to the head teacher and the school Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo). Additionally there were 10 teaching assistants, 2 learning mentors, 2 administrative staff, 5 lunchtime supervisors, 3 Community Development staff and 3 kitchen staff. The timing of the Chill and Chat project meant that kitchen staff were unable to attend as their working hours extended beyond the time of the project. There was a potential pool of 31 staff who may have attended the project.

The school has a history of fostering good relationships with outside agencies and including staff from external agencies in school functions such as school plays or retirement parties. Staff who are not teaching staff are also extended invitations to such events. However, the very fact that such invitations are issued does imply that they may be considered differently to the ‘core’ teaching staff. From my observations and interactions with teaching staff take up of attendance at school plays and other events is generally quite good and many non-teaching staff also have family members who either attend the school or have done so in the past. A wider invitation to take part in an intervention such as Chill and Chat has not previously been issued, hence some non-teaching staff may have been unsure about the ‘acceptability’ of their attendance despite the letters and posters in school. In my role as the school EP teaching staff have reported that they are the ‘core’ staff and that other members of staff are perceived as ‘support staff’ to this core teaching role. Staff stated that they are very supportive of each other and state that they are keen to work together and foster good relations, however, there appeared to be different values of members of staff with different roles. For example, there was surprise from some staff and open encouragement from other
staff when lunchtime supervisors came to the group. Some staff in school currently experience, and others have previously experienced, mental health difficulties. Those members of staff who are currently experiencing mental health difficulties have remarked in school conversations and consultations that they feel they are seen differently and treated differently. I am aware that some school staff are sympathetic towards those who are experiencing difficulties and others who are less so. I am not aware of how the head teacher manages these differences in staff views, however, I am aware that ‘mental health’ has been introduced into the staff health and risk assessment policy since the pilot study.

Staff in key stages 1 and 2 have different breaks and hence tend to see each other less often. Some staff tend to remain in their classrooms working during break times. I am not aware of any discouragement or disfavour of those who go to the staffroom at break times; rather staff who do not ever go to the staff room are viewed as somewhat separatist. However, alongside this the ethos of the school is of hard work and very busy staff who are rarely seen sitting and relaxing. Some staff are not allocated breaks at times when they may see other staff (for example, they have a break after play time) indicating that the break is perhaps seen as rather more functional than a chance to see colleagues, switch off from work etc.

Social support whilst valued does appear to be considered as something that staff do on an ad hoc basis rather than actively encouraging staff support and interaction. This indicates that although staff appear to view themselves as being able to access support they are expected to find time to do this in addition to their school duties. There is a very clear ethos of support when managing children’s safety and behaviour which is led by the head and senior management team.

3.8 Chill and Chat participants
The study was carried out in the same primary school as the pilot study in order to extend and clarify findings. The number of sessions was increased from 5 to 8 weeks and the length of sessions increased an extra half hour to 2 hours in order to enable more staff to attend (lunchtime supervisors, kitchen staff, learning mentors who ran lunchtime clubs).
Table 2 below shows the attendance of school staff during the 8 sessions. As an important aspect of the study was to include a wider range of school staff attendees have been recorded as ‘teaching staff’. Learning mentors, lunchtime supervisors, CDC staff (Community Development Centre staff), administrative staff and student teachers. The student teachers have been recorded separately as they were only visiting the school on one occasion and were not part of the permanent school staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Teaching staff</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning mentors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Student teachers</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Attendance at Chill and Chat

3.9 Data sources

3.9.1 Focus groups.

Focus groups were employed as they are a flexible method of obtaining data. It was necessary to be flexible in order to enable school staff to attend sessions. As I was interested in people’s views and experiences I hoped to access their ‘theories in use’ (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, Argyris and Schon, 1974) during the discussion. Marshall and Rossman (op cit) caution researchers to be aware of the impact of their own presence and management during the focus groups with reference to the extent to which they participate, explain the purpose of the research and the scope and length of the research period. As the participants already knew each other it seemed appropriate to gather some data in a sociable, discursive manner. I was aware of the need to ensure that all participants had opportunities to express their points of view. Focus groups do assume some level of commonality of experience (Patton, 2002) and I hoped to better understand how participants viewed and valued mental well-being and the experiences of the Chill and Chat project. During focus groups participants hear and discuss ideas and points of view sometimes to the extent that a
participant may change their mind. This is of interest and should not necessarily be seen as a weakness as it reflects ‘real world’ conversation and discussion (Krueger, 1998).

Three focus groups were held and four teachers participated in the focus groups (three female teachers and one male) and one female teaching assistant. Two other teachers, a learning mentor and a school administrator indicated interest in taking part in the focus groups, but were unable to join any of the sessions due to other commitments. On arriving to take part in a focus group staff were greeted and offered refreshments. Once all those who had arranged to take part had arrived and were seated, I provided them with written information about the focus group questions and reminded participants that they were free to withdraw at any point. Consent to audio record the focus group was sought verbally and participants were informed that only I would have access to the data and my supervisor would have access to anonymised transcripts. Participants were given a code name known only to myself to enable me to track the sources of data. Participants A, B and E were female teachers, participant D was a male teacher and participant C was a female teaching assistant.

In Focus Group 1 three teachers and one teaching assistant took part. One teacher was male with over 20 years teaching experience (participant D), one of the female teachers had over 30 years teaching experience (participant B) and the third teacher had less than 10 years teaching experience (participant E). The teaching assistant was female and had over 10 years experience of working in schools (participant C). In Focus Group 1 (see appendix 8) questions focused around obtaining views relating to mental well-being i.e. its components, indicators, factors which could promote or reduce well-being and the impact of good/poor well-being on school staff.

In Focus Group 2 the participants were the same: four members of staff including one male teacher, two female teachers and a female teaching assistant. In Focus Group 2, which was held three weeks into the intervention, (see appendix 8) discussion topics centred around staff experience of the Chill and Chat intervention, their motivation for participating, the
impact that participation was having on their mental well-being and their work in schools and any possible changes to the intervention which they felt would be appropriate.

In Focus Group 3 one of the teachers (the female teacher with over 30 years experience) was unable to take part and another female teacher took her place (participant A). This teacher had over 10 years experience of teaching. Focus Group 3 (appendix 8) was held on the week following the last session of Chill and Chat and questions focused on the impact of the intervention on staff, their work and ways in which changes could be maintained. Throughout the sessions the aim was to obtain authentic views of participants and co-construct knowledge about the understanding and value of well-being and the experiences of participating in the research. Although information was specifically gathered in relation to the research questions it was possible to build on questions and issues which had been raised in previous groups. As part of my work as the school’s educational psychologist and to develop awareness of staff mental well-being within the authority, an outcome of the intervention was to produce a well-being pack which could be distributed to schools and staff attending Focus Group 3 were consulted as to their thoughts regarding the content of the pack.

All of the staff who participated in the study had been employed in the school for over five years. Although the number of school staff who participated is small and hence limited in terms of capturing the views of school staff, it enabled those who were present to elaborate on their views which may not have been possible in a larger group. To enable participation the focus groups were held in school between 3.30 pm - 4.30 pm after discussion with staff regarding the most convenient time.
### Table 3 Focus group participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group 1</th>
<th>Focus Group 2</th>
<th>Focus Group 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant E – female teacher, key stage 2, less than 10 years experience</td>
<td>Participant E</td>
<td>Participant E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant B – female teacher, key stage 2, more than 30 years experience</td>
<td>Participant B</td>
<td>Participant C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant C – female teaching assistant, key stages 1 and 2, more than 10 years experience</td>
<td>Participant C</td>
<td>Participant D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant D – male teacher, key stage 2, more than 20 years experience</td>
<td>Participant D</td>
<td>Participant A – Female teacher, key stage 1, more than 10 years experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.9.2 Questionnaire design.

To add to the robustness of data collection systematic and rigorous procedures were followed to improve face validity of the questionnaires. Questions were designed with reference to literature, findings from the pilot study and research questions. Questions were mostly open ended in order to give participants chance to express their views and opinions. For some questions it was necessary to give examples in order to ensure clarity (as
identified in the pilot as mentioned below). For example, when asked in the pilot if anyone had observed a difference in them since attending the project the teacher was unsure who ‘anyone’ could mean. Hence this was clarified by providing examples such as ‘family, friends, children in school’. By providing some examples this may have altered the answers provided, however, I was more confident that the question was clearer and accessible.

The questionnaires were discussed with EP colleagues as an expert reference group and also colleagues who facilitated the project with me who were not EPs to check for clarity and accessibility, eliminate irrelevant questions and identify questions which may result in participants providing more ‘socially acceptable’ answers (response bias). Questions were also shown to a teacher and a teaching assistant as a professional reference group to establish if it was considered that the questions were appropriate and relevant. I attempted to keep the questionnaires short, but to balance this with ensuring that questions covered the issues I was interested in.

The questionnaires were piloted with a qualified practising teacher and a teaching assistant to establish whether the questionnaires were meaningful and identify length of time required to complete them. Teaching staff with whom the questionnaires were piloted considered that the final versions of the questionnaires contained questions which could be expected to elicit answers pertaining to staff understanding and value of well-being and experiences of the intervention.

As responses were anonymous it was not possible to tell if the same people had responded to both questionnaires. In using questionnaires I accepted that I was relying on participants’ honesty, accurate responses and willingness to expand upon their answers and also that the very act of reflecting on the questions which were being asked may impact upon their ‘truth’ or ‘reality’. I also hoped to access views which perhaps participants would not share in a focus group (Berg, 2009) and the views of those who did not wish to come to a focus group / did not have time. As questionnaires were anonymous it was not possible to track the data source. In the pilot study I had asked participants to use a code name which they
could remember and write it on each data return. They found that they could not recall the code names and hence this strategy was not used in this study.

### 3.9.2.1 Questionnaire 1

The first questionnaire given to staff was intended to gather data relating to research questions 1 and 2 (see appendix 5). The questionnaires were handed out to staff at the staff meeting and placed in the pigeon holes of absent staff with an explanatory letter. Envelopes were provided with each questionnaire to ensure anonymity and a box was placed in the staff room to collect replies. The date on which questionnaires would be collected was marked clearly on the top of the front sheet and also mentioned in the letter. Questions 1-6 and also questions 8 and 11 relate to the question ‘What do school staff understand by the term ‘mental well-being?’’ Questions 7, 9, 10, 12 and 13 relate to the research question, ‘What values and importance do staff place on promoting mental well-being?’ Nine questionnaires were returned which was a response rate of 29%. This is quite a low response rate and there are implications for the findings of the research as I was only able to access the views of 9 participants. The low response rate may indicate that staff were reluctant to answer questions about mental well-being or perhaps were feeling overwhelmed by the work they already had to do (despite efforts being made to limit the length of the questionnaire).

### 3.9.2.2 Questionnaire 2

The second questionnaire (see appendix 7) was handed to staff who were present at the final Chill and Chat session and placed in the pigeon holes of those who did not attend the session. The first 5 questions related to whether the participant joined Chill and Chat sessions, their knowledge of the purpose of the sessions and factors which impacted on their decision to attend. The second section was intended to be completed only by those who did not attend Chill and Chat sessions and focused on perceptions and understanding of well-being (questions 2 and 9) and the values and importance of promoting mental well-being (questions 1 and 3-8). The third part of the questionnaire was to be completed by members of staff who had attended any of the sessions and intended to elicit views regarding the intervention and its perceived impact. Questions 2 and 20 related to research question 1
‘what do school staff understand by the term ‘mental well-being?’ Questions 1, 3-7 and 14 related to research question 2 ‘what values and importance do staff place on promoting mental well-being?’ Questions 8-13 related to research question 3 ‘do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their mental well-being and if so how has it impacted?’ Questions 15-19 relate to research question 4 ‘do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their work in school and what evidence do they have for this view?’ 12 questionnaires were returned which was a response rate of 39%. Encouragingly there were more returns for the second questionnaire which may indicate that more people felt able or willing to respond. Although it was made clear in the staff meeting and letter that all school staff members’ views were being sought, some staff may not have completed the questionnaire as they did not attend or did not see ‘mental health’ as relevant to their work. Despite the fact that more than 12 school staff attended the project it was evident that some did not return questionnaires. This may have been that although they were willing to take part in the project, they did not wish to complete the questionnaires. Some participants may not have returned questionnaires as they took part in focus groups. As already mentioned it is not possible to identify them as questionnaires were anonymous.

3.9.3 Researcher reflective diaries.
Myself and the Higher Level Teaching Assistant kept diaries during the research period. The behaviour support teacher who helped facilitate the project also agreed to complete a diary which I provided to her and the HLTA, however, she found that she did not have time to complete it due to other work commitments. In order to support diary completion I provided some guidance questions which were not exhaustive, but intended as a prompt.

The questions were:

- Did you notice anything going particularly well?
- Did you feel / see any differences in staff during the sessions?
- Did you notice anything you feel needs to be changed?
- How did the environment feel?
- Did you hear any positive comments?
There was also an instruction that anything which was felt to be relevant should be recorded. Any comments recorded were to be anonymous and should not contain detail which may be considered to have been not intended to have been overheard.

3.10 Informed consent and ethics
I followed BPS and Manchester University guidelines on ethics. An ethical declaration was made to the School of Education Review Panel before the research began and approval was received (see appendix 1).

The head teacher of the primary school was approached for permission to run the project and the research in school. The timings and length of project were negotiated around events in the school calendar such as SATS and the increased the length of the project to 8 weeks was agreed. The specialist advisory teacher for emotional and behavioural difficulties and myself attended a staff meeting to explain the project and the research regarding staff mental well-being. It was made clear that any member of school staff who wished to attend the project and / or participate in the research was welcome, but that there was no obligation to do so.

It was explained that two questionnaires would be given to staff, one before the project began and the second after the project. The first questionnaire was intended to gather their views regarding mental well-being and support available to staff prior to the project and the second to gather views about the experience of the intervention. For staff who chose not to participate in the intervention, but who were willing to answer questions regarding well-being and their views about how staff support should be provided there was a section of questions in the 2nd questionnaire. It was also explained that three focus groups would be held (one before, one during and one after the intervention) to discuss staff views and experiences in more detail. Again it was made clear that participation was voluntary and participants were asked to sign up during this meeting and a sign up sheet was left in the staff room.
For staff who were unable to attend the staff meeting letters were left in school detailing the project and explaining that participation was voluntary (see appendix 2). The head teacher was available to read the letter to any member of staff who experienced reading difficulties.

The intervention became known as Chill and Chat. When staff arrived at the Chill and Chat room they signed a consent to participate and confidentiality agreement (see appendix 3) that discussions which took place in the room were not discussed or disclosed outside the room.

3.11 Timing of sessions
After the pilot project staff had noted that lunchtimes had worked well. There had initially been concerns regarding time to get to the sessions, however, staff comments indicated that this had not prevented their attendance. In order to include staff who worked at lunchtimes the length of the sessions was extended. In order to clarify if the length of the project impacted on staff well-being the number of sessions was increased from 5 in the pilot to 8.

3.12 Location of sessions
Due to the timing of the sessions the Chill and Chat project took place in the CDC (Community Development Centre) room at the far end of school accessed through a separate door to the main school building. The after school club room was used for therapies as it was light, private and spacious. See appendix 12 for a diagram depicting the layout of the room.

3.13 Facilitator roles
There were 3 facilitators for the Chill and Chat project; myself, a behaviour support teacher and a higher level teaching assistant (HLTA). I have been employed by the local authority for 5 years as an educational psychologist and at the start of the project had been the school’s EP for 18 months. The behaviour support teacher has been employed by the local authority for over 30 years and has held her current role for 10 years. She is well known to the school and has worked with many staff members in the course of her work. The HLTA has been employed in her current role for 6 years and is also known to school, having
carried out group work with pupils on many occasions. It was felt that our familiarity with the school and staff members would in many respects support the informal nature of the intervention, although we were aware that this may not be the case for all staff.

All 3 facilitators were present during all of the sessions. The behaviour support teacher and HLTA and myself were all involved in setting up the room, preparation such as making cake, sourcing resources and welcoming staff. The behaviour support teacher and HLTA had previously received training in hand massage and this was available in a secluded area of the room. They were also responsible for showing staff who were interested how to use the Heartmath computer programme. I managed the sign up sheets for therapies provided in the separate room and ensured that participants were aware of, and signed, the confidentiality agreement on entry to the room on their first visit. As the intervention was designed to be informal we attempted not to lead participants and simply signposted what was available in the sessions. Throughout the intervention we attempted to be unobtrusive and not seen to be clearly ‘leading the sessions’, but rather modelling how staff themselves may be able to set up and continue such sessions should they wish to. We were available should staff wish to speak to us specifically about their well-being; on one occasion a member of staff spoke to me about the shootings which had occurred within this North West Local Authority several weeks prior to the beginning of Chill and Chat and had affected him personally. I was able to speak to him and also signpost and provide guidance as I had done with a school I supported locally immediately after the events. As mentioned previously, reflective diaries were completed by myself and the HLTA throughout the intervention.

3.14 Procedure
During the pilot the intervention was informally named Chill and Chat which was positively responded to by staff hence the term continued to be used. The sessions were held once weekly on Wednesday for 8 weeks in the summer term of 2010 – 3 sessions before the half term break and 5 after. The project ran for 8 weeks as staff had remarked that they had felt the project did not run for long enough during the pilot and also as 8 weeks was the greatest number of weeks that could be allocated by myself and my colleagues allowing for other commitments and school term dates. Sessions were held at lunchtimes from 11.45 am until
2 pm to accommodate the infant and junior staggered lunch times and enable staff who worked at lunch time to participate. On week 2 and sessions 6-8 additional therapies were offered by qualified therapists. The qualified therapists were employed by the local authority in administrative roles, but also had professional qualifications in alternative therapies. They were given permission by their managers to allocate time to the Chill and Chat project. The Accustimulation was provided by a worker from the Drug and Alcohol Advisory Service who had worked closely with the behaviour support teacher on a number of occasions and was willing to give some time to the project. Accustimulation (Black Box Therapy) was offered on week 2 and Indian head massage, crystal healing, back and shoulder massage, foot massage and aromatherapy. Staff signed up for the therapies which were provided in a private room. Health questionnaires were provided by the therapist and completed before any intervention to identify any allergies or health conditions which were contra-indicators for the therapies. The theoretical basis on which activities were selected is summarised in table 4.

The following were available on all 8 sessions:

- Social seating area for eating with comfortable seats and cushions.
- Comfy chair area with magazines
- Hand massage and head massage
- Cakes made by the researchers and tea, coffee and bottled water
- Relaxing music
- Oil burners
- Heartmath computer programme
- Stress balls
- Leaflets and information from the Occupational Health Department

Specific activities to promote relaxation (hand massage, oil burners, magazines, comfortable chairs, Heart Math, stress balls, food and drink) were selected opportunistically as the specialist teacher and HLTA were both trained to give hand massage and we were able to obtain magazines, oil burners and stress balls from our resources. It was felt appropriate that food and drink were offered as they were related to basic human needs and may be
perceived as nurturing. *Heartmath* is a computer programme which is used with children in schools to help them relate their internal sensations to feelings of calm and arousal and we felt that it may also be beneficial to adults. The seats and cushions were provided in order to enable staff to be more aware (mindful) of their comfort and relaxation (Brown and Ryan, 2003). Research had also indicated a professed interest from teachers in relaxation ‘workshops’ (Dunlop and Macdonald, 2004). The Chill and Chat project offered an opportunity for staff to actively participate in promoting their own relaxation through a variety of activities which were available to them. The rationale for the inclusion of relaxation activities was that relaxation stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system which counteracts the sympathetic nervous system activity associated with stress and anxiety. This rationale receives support from Warr’s Vitamin Model (1987b; 1994; 1999; 2007) (see figure 1) in which he proposed that job characteristics promote well-being positively to a certain level, however beyond this level for 6 characteristics (opportunities for control, opportunities for social contact, externally generated goals, skill utilization, task feedback / supervision and variety) a negative or ‘toxic’ effect would be observed. Examples of how these characteristics may affect school staff were discussed in section 2.6.1. Warr further proposed (see figure 2) that pleasure experienced in one’s job was of central importance, hence attempting to increase pleasure experienced at work (through relaxation and time out) may be expected to have positive effects on occupational contentment and enthusiasm.

The social area was arranged in order to promote interaction between staff as social support was identified in research as having a significant impact on well-being (e.g. Griffith et al, 1999; Punch and Tuetteeman, 1996; Segrin et al, 2007). Warr (1987b; 1999; 2007) has proposed that a certain level of opportunity to interact with colleagues and obtain social support is beneficial to well-being. Cohen and Wills (1985) had also postulated the ‘main effect’ of social support which proposes that opportunities for social support and interaction are beneficial even if an individual is not experiencing significant levels of stress / poor well-being. However, for those who were experiencing poor well-being social support provided a ‘buffer’. The culture of the school (as described in section 3.7.1) was one of being very busy and having few breaks and opportunities to meet with colleagues. It was
hoped that by increasing opportunities to access social interaction and support there would be a positive impact on well-being. Research has also indicated that access to social support from *other teaching staff* reduces perceptions of stress (Punch and Tuetteeman, 1996 and Segrin et al, 2007). Social and emotional support had been found not only to promote staff well-being, but also had been found to have a positive impact on teachers’ ability to relate more successfully to pupils; hence it was hoped that staff may perceive some impact on their classroom work and relationships if they successfully accessed appropriate social and emotional support.

Sonnentag and Bayer (2005) found that workers who were able to switch off from work experienced better ‘recovery’ than those who struggled to do so. It was posited that it was being able to switch off rather than the length of time away from work which was important in promoting well-being. By having the space away from the main area of school it was hoped that the opportunity to detach from work and ‘switch off’ was more available. The space also did not have school notices or other ‘work related’ information on the walls which, it was hoped, would promote ‘switching off’ from work. Leaflets for the Occupational Health Service were available for staff who may have been feeling very unwell or very stressed and wished to obtain more formal support beyond what was available in the project. Leaflets and information about this service were provided as research (Dunlop and Macdonald, 2004) had indicated that 73% of respondents had been unaware of the Occupational Health Service and its role. By leaving leaflets near to the signing in area staff could obtain this information privately without colleagues’ knowledge.

### 3.15 Selection of activities and interventions

The same activities and interventions were offered as in the pilot study. During the pilot study reference was made to research in order to decide what to offer and numerous discussions between myself and the behaviour support staff. Comments made by staff regarding the pilot intervention obtained on the second questionnaire indicated that staff were pleased with the provision of activities and did not feel anything else was required hence the decision was made not to change what was offered within the room.
The table below summarises activities offered and corresponding research which supported their inclusion.

**Table 4 Activities provided in Chill and Chat and supporting research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Supporting Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relaxation (hand massage, oil burners, magazines, therapies, comfortable chairs, Heart Math, stress balls, food and drink)</td>
<td>Griffith, Steptoe and Cropley (1999) (see section 2.10) seeking social support and using psychological coping strategies felt by teachers to moderate stress. Snyder and Lopez (2002) (see section 2.3) encouraging the experience of ‘flow’. Brown and Ryan (2003) (see section 2.3) focusing on one’s well-being and being fully engaged in one’s activities promotes mental health. Dunlop and Macdonald (2004) (see section 2.11) 61% of teachers surveyed were interested in relaxation workshops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social area</td>
<td>Warr (1987b, 1999, 2007) (see section 2.6.1) Vitamin Model – opportunities to interact and form relationships with colleagues promotes well-being. Greenglass, Fiksenbaum and Burke (1996) (see section 2.10) emotional support helped teachers relate better to pupils and not depersonalise them. Punch and Tuetteeman (1996) (see section 2.9.1) support from teaching colleagues has a strong ameliorating effect on experience of stress Griffith, Steptoe and Cropley (1999) see above Segrin et al (2007) (see section 2.2.1) developing social skills may result in the perception of less stress. Cohen and Wills (1985) (see section 2.10) opportunities for social integration promotes feelings of stability and well-being.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Private space away from work / pupils

Sonnentag and Bayer (2005) (see section 2.8) the ability to ‘switch off’ or detach from work temporarily is beneficial to mental well-being.

Leaflets from the Occupational Health Service

Dunlop and Macdonald (2004) (see section 2.11) found 73% of respondents did not know there was an Occupational Health Service. Hence these were included to raise awareness and identify another route to support if staff felt it was appropriate.

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### Table 5 Summary of the main steps of Chill and Chat and the research.

The Chill and Chat sessions run from week 4 to 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Talk to staff in staff meeting. Hand out questionnaire 1. Recruit for the focus groups.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Collect questionnaires. Focus group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Focus group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Questionnaire 2 distributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Focus group 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Questionnaire 2 collected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data analysed using thematic analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.16 Data analysis

Data was analysed using thematic analysis (TA). This is a flexible and useful tool which can yield rich, detailed and complex data and is also ‘compatible with both essentialist and constructionist paradigms within psychology’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006 p.78). TA is a method used to identify, analyse and report patterns within data. It is widely used, however, Braun and Clarke (op cit) state that there is no current clear agreement about the process. In their article they do provide guidance on the procedure and it is this which has guided my analysis of data. The researcher is acknowledged to have an active role in identifying themes. I carried out a theoretical TA (Braun and Clarke, op cit) in which the process was driven by my interest in the theory relating to well-being and hence was more analytical than an inductive TA in which themes are linked more closely to the data and the researcher.
does not attempt to link them to a pre-conceived analysis or framework. A theoretical TA is proposed to be less rich in description, but provides a more detailed analysis of themes. During the data analysis I looked not only for semantic themes, but latent themes i.e. identifying underlying ideas, assumptions, conceptualizations and ideologies raised within and through the data.

- Data analysis was carried out by initially transcribing recorded data and reading and re-reading transcripts, diaries and questionnaire responses.
- Initial ideas and observations were noted and different coloured ink was used to annotate transcripts with each reading.
- Each research question was focused on separately and the process of analysis was completed 4 times (once for each question). I felt that this was useful to add to my familiarity with the data set and the rigour with which analysis was carried out in that the process was repeated and offered opportunities to check and re-check.
- I generated initial codes by noting down comments and ideas which appeared to repeat in the data which I felt contributed to understanding what was being said. These initial codes were then written on post it notes and placed on long paper rolls.
- Photographs were taken to enable notes to be rearranged in various ways as required (see appendix 10).
- Transcribed text was highlighted using different colours to respond to research questions to enable ease of reference. I also noted on each post it which data source it had originated from. For example, FG2 p3 meant that the source was from focus group 2 and could be located on page 3 of the transcript. This enabled me to check back through data to ensure that the words which had been spoken really did appear to match the codes I was generating and the later themes and sub themes.
- As the analysis was carried out I engaged in a number of strategies to try to check the consistency of identified themes. The process of TA is iterative and involves being immersed in the data and continually searching across the whole data set for repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006) and checking that themes are coherent, consistent and distinctive. Braun and Clarke also caution against the provision of
inadequate examples from the data set to present and explain themes. Clarification regarding terminology relating to TA is contained in footnote 1 on page 111.

- I identified overall themes for each research question. Themes identified were checked carefully against the data and subthemes also recorded. A thematic map was produced for each research question (see figures 8-11). In the results and discussion section the themes are discussed with reference to the literature and the posed research questions and also with reference to themes and ideas not currently within the literature I have reviewed.

- The named themes were presented to members of school staff in order to check that I had understood their ideas and views and identify any further thoughts on the themes. The employment of ‘member checking’ with participants helped to ensure the trustworthiness and authenticity of the themes and provided opportunities for re-explanations and clarification if necessary. It was necessary to be cautious when presenting themes back to participants to ensure that they were anonymised. For example, in the questionnaires repeated comments from teaching assistants were noted that they felt under pressure and ‘put upon’. As those who made the comments identified themselves as teaching assistants this particular aspect was ‘member checked’ with this sub group of staff.

3.17 Example of data analysis

I have included an example of data analysis within the chapter rather than as an appendix to enable ease of reference as to the process and because I consider the process of data analysis as integral to understanding the experiences and views of staff regarding mental well-being and interventions to support mental well-being.

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1 A note on terminology
Data set refers to all instances across the data corpus which have reference to the subject of interest.
Data item refers to each individual piece of data which together makes up the data set, for example, an interview or focus group.
A data extract refers to a coded chunk of data which has been extracted from a data item.
Research question 1 – What do school staff understand by the term ‘mental well-being’?

Questionnaires and transcribed focus group data were highlighted initially for points of interest and comments which I felt related to research question 1. As described in sections 3.9.2.1 and 3.9.2.2 particular questions in the questionnaires related to research questions. This helped focus reading for themes related to each research question, however, to ensure thoroughness all data was read through and highlighted for each question.

Initial codes were identified and listed. The data extracts below were coded for ‘10 never ends / overload’. The list below is not exhaustive of items which were coded for ‘10 never ends / overload’, but shows a sample of extracts.

‘…it is just too many. You have reached overload.’

‘Overload affects. That’s how it feels. It feels like one of those – I can feel it. ‘Cos if you don’t get a break in between that overload, you just feel as though you can’t process.’

‘Cos I think in our job if you wanted to you could literally do it 24-7. There’s always something you could do. Even if you’ve done everything and I mean that’s once you get distressed you feel; and it’s often at that point you think, ‘I’ve done all this and now I’ve got that to do. So it can be a bit like that.’

These extracts were written onto coloured post it notes (the colour of the post it matched the colour of highlighting for ease of reference) along with other initial codes and stuck onto a large board. The post it notes were moved and sorted numerous times whilst checking back to initial codes and the transcripts. Initially the above items were subsumed within the theme I named ‘never ending’. However, later that theme became ‘battle’ with subthemes: never ending, being answerable, family well-being and time. The change in name of the theme arose from continual reference to the data and my understanding of the data being that school staff perceived they were continually battling against a flow of work,
expectations, lack of time and also that they must keep on going. I explained this in an analogy of rather like soldiers in a battle the staff continued to work and ‘fight’ to complete what they felt they needed to against a common ‘enemy’ of lack of time, expectations, never ending work and changes over which they often had little control. This analogy was used when feeding back to staff who had participated in the study.

A thematic map was then created for the research question which I used to help me identify overlapping subthemes and refer to the literature to identify where my findings supported, differed to and added to previous research.
4 Research findings and discussion

The research questions I am intending to address in this thesis are:

- **RQ 1** What do school staff understand by the term ‘mental well-being’?
- **RQ 2** What values and importance do staff place on promoting mental well-being?
- **RQ 3** Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their mental well-being and if so how has it impacted?
- **RQ 4** Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their work in school and what evidence do they have for this view?

In order to approach the task of presenting and discussing the results of the research I will present themes and subthemes in a diagrammatic format for each research question in turn. For each research question the section will be headed by the question and followed by a diagram to identify the main themes and subthemes. Different colours will be used to enable ease of identification of themes and subthemes as they are discussed. Themes and subthemes will be discussed in terms of the ‘reality’ described by participants and also related to research and theory. I will also consider my own role as researcher and co-constructor of knowledge and how this may impact upon the research process.
4.1 What do school staff understand by the term mental well-being?

Several themes appeared to be evident when analyzing data in order to answer this question. The themes and subthemes are represented below in figure 8. I identified four main themes: anger, wellness / care of self, take control and battle as indicated below. Links from each theme indicate sub themes which I also discuss.
What do staff understand by the term well-being?

- Guilt
- Being heard / recognised / appreciated
- Stigma
- Parent expectations
- Pressure
- No time to stop / always thinking about the job
- Me time
- Physical
- Switching off
- Laughing / being happy
- Wellness / care of self
  - Take control
  - Coping (talking not moaning)
  - Accepting
  - Balance
  - Time available
  - Being answerable
  - Never ending
  - Family well-being
  - Battle

Figure 8 Thematic map for research question 1
4.1.1 Anger

Staff expressed a range of perceptions regarding well-being. I felt a prominent theme related to feelings of ‘anger’ directed towards both themselves as described in sections such as ‘guilt’ and towards external sources such as ‘parental expectations’. Often staff perceptions appeared to combine their own expectations, their perceived performance and perceived expectations of others.

Staff appeared to feel angered by the perception that they had large amounts of work to do which they expected themselves to complete. If they failed to complete this work they felt guilty and also pressured to finish work they had set themselves. Staff raised such terms as ‘work ethic’ (see sub theme of guilt) which may be socially desirable manner in which staff wish to be seen. Perhaps if the work is not completed they ‘demonstrate’ a poor work ethic which may be observed by management, colleagues and other such as parents and outside agencies. This may be a reason why staff suggested that acknowledgment and recognition of their efforts was important to them. ‘Work’ to staff clearly did not just encompass purely teaching, but also the wider care and well-being of the children; ‘failure’ to manage dealings with children to perceived acceptable standards also resulted in frustration and anger which was self directed. In the extract below the teacher was speaking forcefully about the pressures felt in the school and appeared to be expressing anger at the levels of overload and the fact that this was perceived to result in behaviour they felt was unacceptable of themselves.

‘I sort of mentally call this the 20th person. The 20th person can ask you something, whether it’s the head, a three year old, the police – like the 20th person because it is just too many. You have reached overload. You can’t assess someone properly so you blast a kid when you don’t need to, you blast a parent when you don’t need to.’

( Participant D, Focus Group 1)
For educational psychologists there are a number of potential roles to support staff in schools in order to manage anger, but also to attempt to reframe their feelings and the intentions that result in such feelings in a more positive light. Staff themselves stated that they wished for appreciation and acknowledgement, however, it did appear that they did not always acknowledge and appreciate their own efforts. Research carried out by Schmalz, Ackbarrow and Kapmeier (2007) indicated that the ways in which one manages, perceives, interprets and copes with events determines one’s levels of happiness. In other words helping staff to interpret their ‘failed’ efforts to complete work and achieve standards they have set themselves differently may be a fruitful exercise for EPs to work on with schools.

4.1.1 i Guilt

Within the theme of anger I identified a subtheme of guilt. Staff mentioned the term ‘guilt’, particularly in relation to feelings that they should do more work and ‘guilt’ if they should take a break as indicated in the extract below.

‘Sometimes frustrated as I don’t get as much ‘done’ as I think I should.’
(Questionnaire 1, return number 8)

‘Guilt factor that should be doing more!’
(Questionnaire 1, return number 5)

‘..reward myself by doing something I enjoy (just for a few minutes) when I have achieved a set amount of work.’
(Participant B, Focus Group 1)

Alongside this was a related theme of ‘own standards’ in that staff appeared to recognise that they had standards that they applied to their expectations of their own performance and whilst they recognised that these placed additional pressure upon themselves they continued with this ‘work ethic’.
‘Personal work ethic is to complete / finish the job – it never happens!! Therefore permanent stress levels.’

*Questionnaire 1, return number 5*

It is interesting to consider why school staff may feel that they should be ‘doing more’ and why they feel that their work is not finished. It may be that ‘teaching’ and working with children may be perceived to be an ongoing task, indeed when has a child has been ‘taught enough’? It may also be that working in schools and with children is often anecdotally perceived to be ‘easy’ and with short hours (i.e. confined to school hours) hence there may be guilt attached to working hours which could be perceived to be less than the member of staff considers appropriate.

The guilt staff feel may be attributed to occupational commitment. Jepson and Forrest (2006) in their research with teachers found that 88% of their sample were ‘type a’ personalities and that occupational commitment was the strongest predictor of perceived stress. Not all of the members of staff who participated in this current research were teachers, however, and it is conceivable that staff who work with the children in this school are expressing commitment to their work whatever role they may play. ‘Commitment’ to work is likely to be seen as a desirable asset in the teaching community and hence staff may wish to demonstrate this through their actions and time in school.

### 4.1.1 ii Pressure

Although it was mentioned only a few times, I feel it is important to mention the ‘pressure’ that some members of staff perceived. This appeared to be more particularly reported by teaching assistants who took classes when the teacher was absent. It may be that taking a class when the teacher is not there unsettles some children or changes the dynamics of the classroom. In consultations with teaching assistants the credibility and respect afforded them by some children is often cited as an issue. Possibly some teaching assistants may have expressed feeling more pressure as they are currently subject to a
national review of pay and conditions (Single Status). However, although teaching assistants expressed feelings of pressure they did not expand beyond stating that this was when teachers were not in the classroom. Caplan et al’s (1975) Person-Environment Fit model and Wright and Cropanzano’s (1998) Conservation of Resources model both refer to the perceived discrepancy between a person’s perceived or real ability to meet the demands of their job / organization resulting in the experience of stress. The perception of not having the capacity to meet a demand is likely to be rather pressuring. It may also be that when working in a school staff may feel that such a discrepancy may be evident to others. As noted in section 4.1.4iii demands on staff in school are likely to come from a range of sources such as government, parents, school governors. In the following extract a teacher expresses frustration at perceiving they are expected to justify everything perhaps excessively and also ‘artificial circumstances’ which are used in which to test children’s attainments which then lead to secondary schools questioning their judgement after the holidays. Hence it may also be that there is a discrepancy between desire to meet some demands at times.

‘It’s a lot of paperwork I think. I mean sometimes you feel you’re doing things just to justify it you know. Because I’ve been teaching a long time and the paperwork was minimal and yet it was enough.’
(Participant D, Focus Group 1)

‘Tests are pointless because you have to get the children to a certain standard and then they go for the summer holidays and the secondary schools don’t believe in those grades. That’s just wrong and the whole area’s labeled a scrap – the kids, the school.’
( Participant B, Focus Group 1)
4.1.1 iii Being heard / recognized / appreciated

A number of staff remarked on the perceived lack of attention to their efforts and how they felt that their collective voice was not reflected in government policy. When staff mentioned their efforts being recognized it was with reference to professionals from outside school rather than from within. I wondered if this was related to the fact that in the current system in the local authority when outside professionals visit school it is usually in response to a problem which has been ‘referred’ to an agency. This agency then offers advice and problem solving support. In research I carried out with teachers (Sharrocks, 2009) I found that there was an expectation that the solution to problems lay within the EP’s realm and that the EP was considered ‘expert’ in this area. Teachers stated that they wanted immediate advice from the EP and also for their views to be heard and acknowledged. This system is likely to promote feelings of demoralization and deskilling as it appears to place teachers in a more helpless and less powerful position. Farrell and Woods (2006) also found that teachers considered LA guidelines a source of frustration as they appeared to ‘gate keep’ resources teachers felt they needed and had a right to. Ensuring teachers’ voices are heard and included in problem solving is of great importance to recognize the importance of teachers, improve feelings of efficacy and acknowledge and promote good practice.

‘Recognition and acknowledgement that staff work hard and do a good job helped a bit when given.’

(Questionnaire 1, return number 9)

In his Vitamin Model, Warr (1987b; 1999; 2007) indicates that having access to supportive supervision promotes well-being, however, affirmation and value of staff efforts by external sources do not tend to arise in the research as positive contributors to mental well-being. The literature often refers instead to the negative effect of external sources (parent expectations, ongoing change etc.) as will be discussed later in sections 4.1.1 v, 4.1.4 iii, 4.2.2 iv and 4.2.4 v.
Although staff reported that they could obtain support from each other as indicated in the extract below I wondered if this view was expressed as it was felt that staff should get along. Possibly such recognition as is described below was ad hoc.

‘It’s possible in this school to share how you’re feeling and talk about problems with others….Thanking others for their help or for a job well done – verbal recognition and valuing other people’s contribution in school in whatever capacity.’

( Participant C, Focus Group 1)

When asked about the impact of the project staff reported improvements in relationships, increased awareness of well-being as an issue and wider ranging conversations with peers (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 ii). Therefore it may be that it is the quality and depth of relationships with colleagues which is important rather than simply ‘social support’.

4.1.1 iv Stigma

‘There is still a stigma regarding ‘mental health’ equates to can’t cope!’

(Questionnaire 1, return number 6)

It is of interest that when I asked staff about the term ‘mental health’ connotations were consistently negative across responses, however, when asked about their state of mental health or factors which contributed (positively or negatively) to their mental health responses contained more of a balance of remarks. Only one member of staff was able to offer a term they would prefer to use, ‘well-being’. It appeared to be the word ‘mental’ which prompted negative responses from staff to the term. However, it may also be postulated that whenever a new term is introduced it is the culture and social understanding around the concept which continues to be applied to the new terminology.
The member of staff who proposed that only ‘well-being’ be used indicated a high degree of alertness to the perceived needs of the researcher;

‘The term did make me ponder longer than I would normally and not sure if what I have answered is what you are looking for.’

(Questionnaire 1, return number 8)

It is possible that in their effort to provide ‘what I was looking for’ the member of staff felt obliged to adapt their views and offer what they considered was an acceptable response to the questionnaire and the school educational psychologist. However, it is also possible that by engaging with the question posed and considering the term this member of staff offered a response consistent with their own thoughts and feelings.

4.1.1 v Parent expectations
The first focus group, which contained only teachers, expressed concerns regarding parents ‘nit-picking’ and teacher frustration with the ‘lack of parent understanding’ regarding what the teacher was trying to achieve. Although teachers indicated efforts to understand parent motivation they seemed to perceive a gulf between themselves and the parents.

‘... and occasionally parents who are very nit picky. They come over at things that take you aback a bit and you think ‘why on earth are they complaining about that?’

( Participant B, Focus Group 1)

‘I think their memories of school are still there and when they see what’s going on in school they just think of the teacher as an authority figure so if they have a complaint they come in in an aggressive level even if it’s a minor thing.’

( Participant D, Focus Group 1)
The teachers raised the issue that there is a lot of aggression on the local estate and that they felt this was often transferred into interactions with teachers in school. As the school EP I am aware that many discussions around children’s behaviour include spills-over from parent feuds and disagreements between families and gangs on the estate. Teachers perceived that the parents expected them to be aggressive and hence pre-empted this with their own levels of aggression. One explanation for this may be that teachers feel that there is a difference between themselves and the parents i.e. they consider that they are seen as an ‘authority’ to be challenged possibly because other ‘authorities’ such as the community police are challenged on the estate. It may be that the perceived lack of common ground (intellectually, culturally, historically) between parents and teachers prevents joined up working. This is rather interesting as in the literature when parent expectations are referred to it is usually within the context of their children’s achievement rather than their expectations regarding the interactions with teachers and ‘school’. Within this is an echo of the lack of perceived appreciation of staff efforts as discussed in section 4.1.1 iii.

4.1.1 vi No time to stop / always thinking about the job

A frustration with the feeling of not having time to stop in the day was expressed. Staff appeared to express feelings of always having another job to complete rather than reaching a time when a break could be had.

‘So many things coming at you in life. If you have too much affecting you in life you’re going to have to start learning how to prioritise and if you can’t do that then everything seems too much and I can’t cope.’

(Participant E, Focus Group 1)

Staff appeared to feel that although the children had designated breaks, they did not.
Staff also reported that they felt that their jobs intruded into other parts of their life. For example, one member of staff stated that they woke up thinking about how to do activities and planning during the night. Some staff offered the view that because they did not have breaks and took lots of work home they perceived that they were always working/thinking about work. It is quite conceivable that even if staff are not working, if a pile of planning or marking can be seen as they move about the house it is a constant reminder of tasks yet to complete and the staff member might then feel that their home life is intruded upon by their worklife. Punch and Tutteman (1996) also found that teachers cited the perception of work intruding into out-of-hours time as detrimental to their well-being.

A number of views which are incompatible were held by staff which may well contribute to feelings of distress and anger. Staff perceived feelings of guilt that they should be doing more yet also frustration that they never got a break. Potentially feeling that one should work more and yet still being desirous of a break would feed into yet more feelings of guilt. Staff also wanted to be recognized and approved of by external sources in their efforts, however, as noted above they did not always appreciate and notice their own efforts. There is also a tension in that some of the sources they seek approval from are also sources of frustration who are perceived to make demands upon the staff which get in the way of ‘real teaching’. There are a number of roles for the EP in helping staff to notice their own efforts and successes, supporting community cohesion amongst all of those working to support children and learning and also enabling staff to identify realistic targets and expectations of themselves.

4.1.2 Wellness / Care of self

Staff spoke about taking care of themselves both in terms of physical care such as eating healthily and getting exercise and also taking part in activities which could be presumed to promote their positive mental well-being such as spending time on something they enjoyed or having a ‘treat’. The perceived importance of switching off and spending
time not thinking about work or engaged in non-work tasks is clearly something staff members were aware of. I will discuss this further in the following subthemes.

4.1.2 i Me time

In discussing what promotes their mental well-being a number of staff spoke about taking care of themselves in a special way / treating themselves. Such experiences included walking the dog, long soaks in the bath, seeing friends and family. In this section I have included only events which appeared to be deemed ‘special’ by staff who raised them. As will be covered in the next section many instances of more regular care taking were also posed.

4.1.2 ii Physical

A number of activities and actions which may contribute to well-being were raised around healthy eating, sleeping and maintaining fitness levels. Staff talked about trying to ensure that they had enough sleep as it was harder to make decisions when they were tired and also that they felt they worked very long hours hence sleep was important to ensure that they could keep this up.

Staff appeared aware of the potential benefits of healthy eating, however, for some it seemed to be a learned technique to support their well-being:

‘I mean it sounds daft, but bananas, if I eat bananas. ‘Cause sometimes I used to get really stressed almost panic attacky with stress years back and then I realized it was partly because of the diet. Yeah, not eating properly.’

(Participant B, Focus Group 1)

Many staff stated that they tried to get exercise to maintain their well-being. It was also referred to as a conscious decision to do so implying that ensuring exercise was something to be ‘done’ to maintain their health and well-being. Perhaps maintaining well-being is perceived as yet another ‘job’ to do.
4.1.2 iii Switching off

Interestingly staff mentioned ‘learning’ to switch off as means of maintaining their well-being. The ‘learning’ of strategies to cope might then mean that older / more experienced members of staff had more strategies. In the focus groups it was apparent that staff who were more experienced spoke more of learning ways of coping and members of staff who had been in the school system for less time tended to speak about their current experiences.

Switching off seems to be linked to the sub theme ‘no time to stop / always thinking about the job’. Whereas the perception that staff have no time seems to result in frustration / upset, staff clearly appear to try to take steps to counter this and care for themselves by trying to ‘switch off’. In their research in 2005 Sonnentag and Bayer observed that the ability to detach from work was more important than the actual length of time spent away from work. There are challenges to school staff ability to switch off if they are surrounded by reminders of work yet to do, however, an awareness of switching off from work and focusing on other things is indicated. As I will discuss in a later section staff seemed very alert to the amount of time they were able to spend switching off and engaging in activities to promote their well-being. Perhaps detaching from work takes a length of time or perhaps when staff began to relax it was time to return to work and they felt that they had not had very long to experience a pleasant state.
4.1.2 iv Laughing / being happy

‘That’s important in mental well-being is being able to laugh and keep calm. Not getting tired, not getting anxious and snappy. I mean you do meet people like that, I mean nothing fazes them. You know a state of mental equilibrium isn’t it? They just deal with things. I don’t mean that they’re bad, they’ve just made good choices about their lifestyles and they just – cope with things.’

(Participant E, Focus Group 1)

Staff appeared to feel that when they laughed and kept calm they were experiencing positive mental well-being. A ‘good outlook on life’ was also mentioned as indicating positive well-being. The ‘state of mental equilibrium’ referred to above was further elaborated on indicating that the staff member perceived positive well-being to pertain to making ‘good choices’ about lifestyles. Following this through it may be hypothesized that those who make ‘bad’ choices about their lifestyles had poor well-being and hence there may be some level of control over well-being. Interestingly Jarrett (2011), writing in The Psychologist recently made the point that the current social desirability and ‘right’ to be happy may lead people who are not happy to be pathologised rather than acknowledging this to be a ‘normal’ reaction to circumstances. This perhaps highlights the need for caution for those working to improve well-being that this term does not become synonymous with happiness.

The ‘mental equilibrium’ described does appear to echo aspects of the hedonic treadmill (Brickman and Campbell, 1971). In this theory it was proposed that people react to stimuli and returned to a ‘neutral’ state. However, revisions to this theory including those by Diener et al (2006) indicated that people can impact upon their own levels of happiness and that this dynamic construct was perpetually under revision by the individual and was affected by mood, temperament, economic well-being, coping and the construction of events as they unfold.
It is of interest that recently there has been interest from the Coalition Government in measuring the happiness of the nation and also the establishment of movements aiming to increase / promote the happiness of the nation e.g. Action for Happiness indicating an appetite for improving people’s well-being. Alongside this must be noted happiness is only part of one’s well-being (as discussed in sections 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5) and it is unlikely that policy per se will improve happiness and well-being. However, it is positive that awareness of well-being is being promoted.

4.1.3 Take Control
Staff appeared to place great importance in perceptions that they could meet the perceived demands upon them. However, as illustrated by the extracts in the following sections it seemed that most staff who participated in the research expressed the view that they accepted that they could not control all aspects of demands they perceived were placed upon them, but they could control their approach to them and try to establish some level of balance of demand and control. I speculated that it would be socially desirable to express control over demands placed upon oneself and expectations of being able to cope.

4.1.3 i Coping (Talking not moaning)
Throughout the questionnaires and focus groups staff mentioned actions they took in order to ‘cope’ and hence maintain their well-being. In some respects this echoes findings in research which indicate that having or obtaining some level of control induced increased feelings of positive well-being. For example, although staff noted that they had large amounts of work they could take some measure of control over their approach to this:
‘I mean with reports I would give myself a little mini target and think I’ve got to do at least 3 and if I do 2 then I’ve got to do 4, but I work out I’ve got x number of weeks or days and I’ll divide it so that I have a little mini target so that keeps the stress level down.’

Participant B, Focus Group 1)

Some models of occupational well-being, for example, the Person-Environment Fit Model (Caplan et al, 1975), Demand Control Model (Karasek, 1979) and the Effort-Reward Model (Siegrist et al, 1990) indicate that excess demand can threaten a need to achieve if not offset by increased levels of control. It seems that it is a perceived demand and a perceived level of control which may impact upon a person’s levels of job satisfaction. For example, in the above quotation the teacher involved will have little choice about whether to do the reports, however, they can control the approach they take to completing the task.

It also seemed that some staff members felt that they were more able to exert control of their well-being by obtaining support from colleagues. Staff remarked that they would ‘blow off’ in the staff room or ‘huddle round the coffee pot’. This appears to conflict somewhat with findings from Brough and Pears (2004) who found that support from supervisors contributed to job satisfaction, but not to psychosocial well-being. I will further discuss this in sections 4.2.2 and 4.2.3.

4.1.3 ii Accepting

The notion of acceptance was raised in terms of being aware that life may contain some stresses, but that things were ‘generally ok’.
‘It’s accepting that things are alright generally. You know you can’t...I mean you might get stressed and strained and that’s of course alright, but if you’ve got mental well-being you cope.’

( Participant C, Focus Group 1)

In ‘accepting’ some level of challenge to levels of well-being it may be then that staff feel more in control of events. It may also be that in accepting this state staff accept themselves thereby attaining one of the 6 areas of actualization proposed by Ryff and Keyes (1995) to contribute to well-being. The thought processes engaged in accepting some level of stress may impact on the way in which a job is perceived and evaluated and hence lead to more positive or negative states of well-being (Houghton and Jinkerson, 2007). It may also be necessary to consider the corollary of the above extract – if you haven’t got mental well-being you don’t cope.

4.1.3 iii Balance

It appeared that although, as previously mentioned staff felt that they had a great deal of work, they expressed a desire and intention to achieve a balance between their work and the other areas of their life. Of interest that once again staff stated that they felt that they ‘learned’ to balance their time. For example, one member of staff stated that if it rained on Saturday they would work, but they would have Thursday evening off in lieu. The perceived importance of spending time with different people was also highlighted as many teachers talked ‘shop’ as discussed in section 4.2.2 i.

Looking after themselves when not at school (and to a lesser extent when at school) was important to staff. Interestingly it may be that they can exert more control over what they eat or keeping up with fitness regimes and this seemed to be echoed in a perception that it was one’s own responsibility to take care of oneself and be ‘happy’ and cope. There are clearly challenges to this, however, for teaching members of staff in that they feel they are often surrounded by work. Older / more experienced members of staff had learned more strategies to cope with such feelings and it may be expedient to encourage
the sharing of such strategies with newer / younger members of staff or including modules on teacher training courses identifying and promoting teacher well-being as a valid and important issue.

4.1.4 Battle

I felt that staff perceived the achievement and maintenance of their well-being as a ‘battle’ as will be discussed in the following sections. It appeared that there were no clear endings to work; possibly because ‘teaching’ and ‘working with children’ are very vague and all encompassing terms and it is hard to see how these may be considered to be ‘finished’. School staff must then presumably decide for themselves when they are ‘finished’. However, alongside this staff felt that they were answerable to a range of people whom perhaps were perceived to ‘judge’ how well staff carried out their duties. Staff also felt very pressured by time available to them to finish the work they perceived they must complete. It must be very challenging and frustrating to perceive that an ongoing task must be completed in a set time when it is not known what ‘finished’ looks like, as presumably the work of school staff by definition of educating children could not really ever be considered finished.

4.1.4 i Never ending

School staff spoke at length about their perceptions that their work was never ending or could be never ending.

‘Cos I think in our job if you wanted to you could literally do it 24/7. There’s always something you could do. Even if you’ve done everything and it’s at that point you think, ‘I’ve done all this and now I’ve got that to do’. So it can be a bit like that. So it builds up.’

(Participant D, Focus Group 1)
The very next remark following the above quotation mentions feeling as though they are ‘staggering over the line’ when it is realized that there is another job to complete. Perhaps partly this is due to staff conceptions of their job and what it entails. I am aware that in my educational psychology service there are some educational psychologists who work the office hours as stated in their contract and others who feel compelled to work for longer and still others who wish to work for much longer. It would be interesting to clarify how school staff determine that they have done ‘enough work’ and also if there were differing views regarding those who appear to work shorter or longer hours. It appeared when looking through the data set that school staff seemed to perceive that they were ‘battling’ against an enemy of work and limited time, however, they used ‘weapons’ of attempted control, learning to balance work and other life areas and looking after themselves which staff agreed with when I fed back themes. Alongside this I did also wonder if implied within such comments from teachers was the desire for an authority to set some boundaries i.e. tell them when enough work had been done. If work could be done ’24 / 7’ and staff struggle against the onslaught of unending work this may also contribute to feelings of anger against themselves and ‘authority’ (see section 4.1.1v) who could presumably call a ‘truce’ and enable agreed expectations to be clarified.

4.1.4 ii Time available

Limited time to complete ongoing work was cited by staff frequently.

‘I mean you’re right it is the physical thing, but fury I feel I mean I haven’t stopped since 7am and I like working early. I mean I’m in work at 7am and it is 20 past 12 and all I want is 10 minutes to eat a flaming plate of food…I work off mental energy and I work and don’t take care. I will fight it. Fight and fight until I stop so consequently my body needs fuel...and I guess that affects my well-being.’

(Participant D, Focus Group 1)
Although staff reported attempts to find time to take care of themselves at home it appeared that when in school they perceived that they worked constantly with little chance to meet even basic needs such as eating. However, as described in the above section if staff perceive that there is no end to work demands placed upon them it is almost inevitable that they will perceive that they have no time / not enough time to do it.

4.1.4 iii Being answerable

School staff seemed to perceive that they were answerable to a range of different groups:

- Government - The Department for Education (DfE) is the government department with responsibility for infant, junior, primary and secondary education
- Ofsted – The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills. This department was updated and extended by the Education and Inspections Act and is required to: promote service improvement; ensure that services focus on the interests of their users; ensure that services are efficient and offer value for money (Ofsted, 2011)
- Staff personal standards – school staff own standards influenced by their values, training, expectations and understanding of their role.
- Parents – parents may be presumed to expect that their children receive a quality education.
- Managers – This may include the head teacher, the school leadership team, the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator for teaching assistants and possibly school governors.

Being answerable to children in school was not mentioned explicitly, rather more implied in contributions. Mainly teaching staff referred back to the effects of their well-being on their ability to teach children, improve lessons or model social skills for children hence implying that they were there for the children and that this was the
purpose of their job. The following extract indicates an awareness by a member of staff that their ability to maintain social interaction skills is part of their teaching role:

‘You’re interacting with people all the time and you’re giving an example and teaching high expectations. You’re teaching the children how to react – it’s life skills isn’t it? So if we can’t do it for ourselves then we’re not going to be able to teach it.’

(Participant E, Focus Group 1)

It may be that adults feel that they are responsible for the education of children and ensuring that standards are met, however, the perceived pressure around educating children was often described as coming from external sources rather than the children who presumably would be at the centre of the job. Placing pressure upon themselves via their own standards links with the subtheme of guilt in section 4.1.1 i.

It is interesting that these different groups have been mentioned superficially. It may be presumed that school staff would be answerable to them for the satisfactory progress and well-being of the children at school. However, it may well be that pressure is perceived as each of these groups require this progress to be demonstrated differently. It is possible that frequent changes in systems and government policy and strategy may also impact on school staff perceptions of what they are expected to do. None of the school staff mentioned local authority support staff with reference to expectations. This may be due to an unwillingness to express directly and ‘officially’ to a local authority member that they feel demands are placed upon them by advice, strategies planned, expectations of actions taken by schools to support children / manage budgets etc. In unofficial conversations staff have had a number of such discussions with me.
4.1.4 Family well-being

Somewhat linked to the above idea that school staff felt answerable to several professional bodies is that school staff also perceived that they were answerable to their families.

‘The school terms / holidays mean that I can work without worrying about my school aged children.’
(Questionnaire 1, return number 1)

‘Make a positive decision to see friends and family more often.’
(Questionnaire 1, return number 6)

I wondered if only a small number of comments were made regarding staff family commitments as they felt they were considering their own personal well-being.

4.1.5 School staff perceptions of well-being

Staff spoke about well-being in terms of what it is and what it is not. The quality of the relationships and shared understanding with co-workers (including parents and external bodies) was highlighted. Discrepancies in expectations led to staff feeling pressured and that their efforts were unappreciated. Potential work for EPs may lie in developing collaborative working practices between schools, parents and other agencies with a particular focus on developing the quality of relationships and shared understanding of aims and responsibilities.

Implicit within the subthemes in this section is the ‘battle’ that staff in schools perceive themselves to engage in with two main elements: the need to be able to do things for themselves (without interference from those outside the school system); a desire for some limit to be imposed on demands upon them (requiring ‘interference’ from others). A fear of failure was prominent even when staff stated that they had
learned strategies to cope. The role for EPs which may be drawn from staff perceptions is that school leadership teams could be helped to plan with their staff and clarify what they expect from them. However, as raised earlier in the discussion ‘teaching’ is a very vague and unwieldy term and it will be challenging to identify clear expectations and also questionable ethically to what extent demands upon school staff should be ‘limited’.

Maintaining well-being was generally seen as something engaged in at home, however, most staff were clear that threats to their well-being were generally related to work. Highlighting the importance of well-being for school staff and changing ‘threats’ to their well-being in school will be a challenging and ongoing task for EPs as discussed in the conclusions section.
4.2 What values and importance do staff place on promoting well-being?

Four main themes were identified: physical fitness, talking to those who know, control and stigma. Each of these will be discussed in turn with reference to subthemes.
What values and importance do staff place on promoting staff well-being?

- Physical fitness
- Accepting poor well-being
- Offloading
- Talking to those who know
- Talking to other teachers
- Outsiders can / can’t help
- Formality vs informality
- The right to supervision
- Support available
- Time to self
- Control
- Learning to cope
- Being ‘good enough’
- Embarrassed / guilt
- Pointlessness
- Attitudes to mental health
- Imagine having a mental health role

Figure 9 Thematic map for research question 2
4.2.1 Physical fitness

Although staff expressed an awareness of the importance of maintaining and promoting their physical wellness it appeared that staff perceived that this should be done at home or in their own time and did not seem to be considered appropriate or important when actually at work. There was also an expectation that their wellness would deteriorate across the term. In other words although staff perceived that their work contributed to deteriorating well-being as term progressed they appeared to feel that maintaining wellness should be done outside and away from school. I was interested in the apparent perception that staff felt that their well-being was purely their responsibility. In one focus group there was a brief remark made about the staff well-being policy which that teacher had only found out about as the management team had been reviewing policies. Perhaps this reflects a culture in the school and the wider profession that some policies and their topics are more important than others.

4.2.1 i Better wellness / Taking care of oneself

The need to be physically fit and well was perceived to be valuable by staff.

‘So if you keep yourself physically fit it helps you certainly mentally. ‘Cos if I’m tired like when I came back last year I mean I was really ill and I found it really hard to work that next week and it’s probably because I wasn’t physically ready to come back.’

(Participant E, Focus Group 3)

Staff reported feeling that maintaining their health and fitness through ensuring that they had a night off each week and ate healthily was important. As mentioned in a previous section (time available section 4.1.5 ii) staff did not seem to mention eating well and ensuring that they had a break when actually at school. In fact some members of staff were not able to take a break in the day as they were timetabled for activities for the whole of the school day. There is a contradiction evident in the fact that the head teacher was keen for the project to take place to promote the well-being of the
staff, however, some staff were not physically able to take a break due to their assigned duties. Members of staff who could not take part were not employed as teachers and indeed in many schools I work in teaching assistants and learning mentors work on assigned tasks during the ‘lunch time’ and teachers often continue working. Presumably if taking a break is neither permitted or valued by the school leadership it is harder for staff to feel able to do so. With the recent review in pay and conditions for some members of staff (single status) many of these staff now are able to take a break at lunch time as they are ‘working to contract’. Unfortunately this has not occurred due to value of the role they play, more as an artefact of policy change.

4.2.1 ii Accepting poor well-being
There appeared to be an expectation amongst staff that their well-being would be poor, particularly at certain times of the year.

‘Yeah, you do sometimes feel like you’re staggering over the line and then you think, ‘Oh shit, I’ve got to get back to work mentally and physically’. There are points in the year when you know. The end of Easter’s one, Christmas, just before the last bit, not the last week, the week before tests, yeah.’

(Participant D, Focus Group 2)

This cyclical process mentioned above appears to reflect a pattern mentioned in the previous section in that staff do not have breaks in the term times and become very tired at the end of term before having the holidays perhaps when they feel ‘permitted’ to rest and then go back to work at immediate levels of high exertion. Some staff reported feeling anxious before the start of new terms and others becoming ‘depressed’ on Sunday afternoons which may imply that staff are wary of the high levels of work they perceive to face them. Encouragingly not all members of staff expressed very negative feelings and one member of staff who had stated they felt anxious on Sundays as they had to work and plan simply chose to do it another day so that they could have the whole Sunday ‘off’. This may be related to this staff
member’s perception of their control over work and a positive step taken to adapt their approach to work, as they could not change the need for it to be completed.

4.2.2 Talking to others who know

A prominent theme arising was that school staff were keen to talk about their well-being and stressful issues, however, there was a great deal of discussion regarding accessing others to talk in an informal or more formal capacity and a professed keenness to speak to others ‘who knew’ what they were talking about i.e. were in a similar position or were part of their work ‘family’ or team. There was a certain disregard for some external agencies and some jobs were perceived to be held by those who have failed in teaching and hence advised schools and teachers. This then must place a social challenge to school staff to take advice and be inspected by those they feel could not do their job and hence have moved to a possibly less challenging one. Incongruously staff expressed a desire for ‘outside agencies’ to recognise efforts and promote policy change. In my research on facilitating changes through interacting with teachers (Sharrocks, 2009) staff in a number of schools held the view that the EP was in a position of power and held solutions. Alongside this they wished for their views to be heard and acknowledged and I concluded that it was the relationship between the EP and the school / staff which was a pivotal factor. Hence perhaps ‘someone who knows’ is also someone with whom the staff member has a good relationship. The implication for EPs and other external agencies is to ensure and promote positive, trusting and respectful relationships with schools.

4.2.2 i Offloading

An appetite for talking about teaching and stressors was expressed. Generally a perception that staff could talk to each other in school was apparent. Some possible indications of guilt at doing so were indicated by use of other words for talking such as ‘moaning’.
There did seem to be a perception that school work took over the whole of a teacher’s life and that they would ‘talk shop’ if they met another teacher even on holiday.

‘I remember going on holiday once in the middle of nowhere and it was like 6 other people. It was a long time ago, it was when the national curriculum was just coming in and I was in the Seychelles, you don’t always go there and she wanted to talk about the national curriculum. I had to feign an upset stomach to get away from the woman! (laughs)’

(Participant B, Focus Group 1)

Later in the discussion the teachers spoke about spending time with friends who were teachers and the fact that they ‘talked shop’ with them as well as about other areas of their lives. Perhaps teachers perceive it to be more permissible to talk about teaching and shared experiences with others with whom they have a relationship. I will comment further on this in the next section.

4.2.2 ii Talking to other teachers

For some teachers they expressed a view that other teachers may understand what they were going through. It appeared that some perceived comfort was derived from the shared experience. This is interesting as in the first two extracts below the teachers appear to express relief that other teachers had had similar experiences, however, it would be interesting to know if other people who had had panic attacks who were not teachers would have afforded the same perceived comfort.

‘..I know that ‘cos only about a couple of us openly mention about panic attacks and I said, ‘Ok I could never get out of the house without checking’ and he was like, ‘were you like that too?’ and suddenly we were comparing notes.’

(Participant B, Focus Group 2)
‘I think generally when you start chatting you realise we all have bugs and down days as our children are called ‘challenging’.’

(Participant A, Focus Group 3)

This perceived shared experience was not expressed by all members of staff. In the third focus group which contained different teachers than the first two a significant reluctance to speak about panic attacks and poor mental well-being was expressed. These teachers were currently experiencing mental ill health, however, the staff member making the comment in the first extract above experienced poor health a number of years ago and spoke of it confidently. There may be scope for work to enable teachers currently experiencing poor mental health to speak to teachers who have done so in the past (talking to those who know) and permit open discussions of mental health as a shared concern for all teaching staff.

The extract below appears to indicate some possible ‘family feeling’ between staff in that they came together to share their thoughts and feelings about a day. However, it is unclear about how many staff were and indeed are involved in such experiences as indeed will be discussed later staff remarked that they did not have time to see each other often due to workload and different break times. (See sections 4.3.1 i, 4.3.1 iii and 4.3.2 ii.)

‘We often end up having a huddle round the coffee cup and so you sort of seek each other out really.’

(Participant D, Focus Group 2)

4.2.2 iii Outsiders can / can’t help

An interesting subtheme was related to where school staff seek support from. A surprisingly high number of staff mentioned visits to the doctor / counselling services both in the past and more recently. Those who reported seeing counsellors tended to be
those who had sought help more recently which may indicate a change in the medical view/standpoint of mental health and strategies to support people with poor mental health. Counsellors were stated to understand from the teacher’s points of view which may be related to being able to develop a relationship with the staff member. However, taking care of oneself is engaged in outside of school rather than within school. Dunlop and Macdonald (2004) found that respondents in their research showed least interest in a school based counsellor – I wonder if there would have been more interest if the offer had been for a non-school based counsellor. Again staff management of their well-being appears to be carried out outside of school and perhaps ‘hidden’. This may in part explain why those who come into school from ‘outside’ may be felt not to understand as well-being has previously been considered by staff as something to take care of at home.

Once again there was a significant separation between ‘in school’ and ‘outside school’. Those who came into school seemed to be considered with a degree of suspicion and in some cases pronounced disregard:

‘The irony is that most Ofsted inspectors are failed teachers.’
(Participant D, Focus Group 1)

‘Those who can teach teach and those who can’t teach teach teachers.’
( Participant B, Focus Group 1)

The perceived importance of knowing what it is like to work in a school appeared to impact on whether staff felt that external professionals could help. Those who did express a view that outside professionals could support staff mental well-being felt that it could be done by listening well, offering recognition of efforts and in influencing wider ‘policy’ by acting as a conduit for teacher views.
4.2.2 iv Formality vs informality

In this section I intend to address a subsection of the theme of ‘talking to those who know’. Staff raised a number of issues relating to how they obtained support and promoted their mental well-being by talking to others. Of interest was a perception that staff had a right to supervision as was available in many comparable professions. Formal supervision may be proposed to provide clearer expectations of staff as advocated by Warr (1987b; 1999; 2007) and also to provide support which is matched to need (DeLongis and Holtzman, 2005). However support was also sought informally from colleagues and it seemed that it was the availability of support which was particularly important. This coincides with findings by Punch and Tuetteeman (1996) who noted that support from colleagues ameliorated perceptions of stress more than praise or recognition. A potential role for the EP would be to promote colleague relationships and highlighting to schools and leadership teams the importance to staff well-being of peer / colleague support. As will be discussed in later sections the provision of formal support although wished for was also felt to be pressuring and there was a wide range of views from staff as to whether this would be taken seriously or valued highly.

4.2.2 v The ‘right’ to supervision

Staff perceived that other professions provide access to formal professional supervision. However, there is not a requirement for school staff to have regular supervision. This was suggested as a helpful way for staff to reflect and also for differentiated support to be provided as ‘everyone has different needs.’ However, some concerns were also expressed that people would ‘see’ if supervision was provided more formally. Perhaps although staff felt that they would like support and supervision they also felt that this was embarrassing or that more formal systems of supervision were less acceptable in the school culture than the informal ‘gathering around a coffee pot’. Presumably, however, if formal supervision was a requirement for all staff this may remove the social barrier of accepting the proffered support. Perhaps a barrier to wanting supervision is contained in connotations attached to the word ‘supervision’ i.e. that help is needed to be competent or even that more control
will be wrested from staff. The role of supervision has been proposed by Brough and Pears (2004) to impact upon job satisfaction rather than well-being. However, presumably those happier in their job may experience more subjective well-being.

4.2.2 vi Support available
Staff reported awareness of external support from their unions for those who may be feeling stressed or overburdened. Others mentioned support from colleagues in school. Generally staff reported perceptions that everybody (all members of the school staff) was responsible for promoting staff well-being, however, there was a wide range of views about how this should be carried out ranging from committees with teacher, teaching assistant and administrative representatives, head teacher led initiatives, external independent advisors and provision of differentiated support for staff as necessary or providing the same support for all members of staff. Presumably in all schools support may be provided to staff differently, however, it may be that school management teams may not prioritise staff well-being unless it is highlighted as an area of importance which will promote teaching and learning and advice and guidance is available which resonates with school and teacher culture.

4.2.2 vii Relationships and respect
Staff perceived that they had good relationships in school and that this enabled them to support each other’s well-being.

‘Everybody’s quite supportive in an informal way... so you don’t feel in isolation in this school and I think that’s really important. We have a good relationship with each other and we can have a laugh and we can unwind...’
(Participant C, Focus Group 2)
‘…we have a staff that have a good rapport and I think that’s enough. If you had a different type of staff it might be, you could suffer a bit. I think people are caring…People are concerned if they see somebody’s a bit down so I think we do have a good mutual support system and I think it’s just because of the characters of the people.’

(Participant A, Focus Group 3)

Hence it seems that staff perceive that support is accessible which may in itself contribute to feeling that well-being is valued and promoted. This coincides with findings from Brouwers et al (2001) that perceived efficacy in being able to obtain support was in itself contributive to well-being.

However, alongside expressions of perceived supportiveness it seemed that staff did not feel colleagues would be as supportive and understanding should they ‘admit’ to any mental ill health. In other words it seemed that there was a perception of the availability of support for day to day well-being, however, for those who may be perceived to be overcome by challenges they face the situation may be somewhat different. This, however, will discussed in further depth in section 4.2.4.

4.2.3 Control

Staff appeared to value a number of aspects of control. There seemed to be two aspects of control; that in which staff took actions to gain some control and that in which staff spoke about feelings and thoughts which impacted upon their perceptions of control. The subthemes of time to self, and learning to cope I felt were related to actions staff reported that they perceived they engaged in to promote mental health. Also within this theme there were clear links to the subtheme of taking care of oneself (see section 4.2.1 i). The subthemes of embarrassment / guilt and being good enough relate to staff thoughts and feelings regarding their performance. To some extent one may agree with the suggestion of Jepson and Forrest (2006) who state that the experience of teacher stress is likely to be individual and that aspects of teacher behaviour will impact upon
the well-being of that teacher, however, they do not consider in any depth the importance of teacher perceptions and feelings as well as behaviours. There is also a link to the subtheme of accepting poor well-being (see section 4.2.1 ii) in which staff expressed expectations and perceptions that they inevitably would experience poorer well-being at certain times of the year.

4.2.3 i Time to self
Staff perceived that time to themselves was a positive experience and did try to access such time to promote their well-being. In many ways the time to themselves was expressed similarly to ‘cutting off’ which reflects a similar concept of ‘switching off’ described by Sonnentag and Bayer (2005). It is interesting that staff described a need to switch off from work so that they could have time to themselves where they engaged in their ‘interests’. In talking about making time to enjoy oneself one may evidence commitment to work, presumably the converse of speaking about life external to work encroaching on work life may be seen as less committed.

‘I think you have to learn to cut off. ‘Cos yeah, you could work nights.’
(Participant B, Focus Group 2)

‘I think most people have lots of interests, but they’re all to promote, ‘cos they think about themselves don’t they. They go to Weightwatchers or they’re going for a walk or they’re shouting at B… Football Club.’
(Participant D, Focus Group 1)

4.2.3 ii Learning to cope
Staff spoke about perceptions that they learned to cope both by learning to worry less or perhaps permitting themselves to worry less and also by learning new teaching strategies and referring back to past experience.
Staff noted that as they became more experienced they learned to identify which tasks they definitely needed to complete and which could potentially wait until they had more time. There was also a perception that staff simply learned that they needed to have some time off each week.

‘I think you have to learn to cut off. ‘Cos yeah, you could go home and then you could work nights…’
(Participant A, Focus Group 3)

‘Yeah, ‘cos I don’t work at home very often. Most people do which is why…’
(Participant D, Focus Group 1)

‘Yeah, but I try and make sure that I have one night off a week. I would never work Monday, Tuesday Wednesday right through every evening even if I have a lot to do.’
(Participant B, Focus Group 1)

‘You learn to sort of adjust the time to suit you.’
(Participant E, Focus Group 1)

Staff also perceived that teaching staff learned from experience and that in the earlier years it was much harder as indicated in the following extract.

‘That’s as I say. I mean it’s worse in your first year. Oh goodness!’
(Participant B, Focus Group 1)
‘Yeah, ‘cos you’re not working on any experience or you haven’t got stuff that you use so you’ve got to work it out. I mean everything’s totally new.’

(Participant D, Focus Group 1)

There appears to be an implication in the above extracts that managing time in order to cope is a learned skill. I felt that there was an oblique reference to those who do not learn this skill as perhaps not having attained the ‘required standard’ of time management. Given this possible viewpoint teachers who are then exhausted or unwell may be blamed for their own downfall as they have not learned to manage their time. In research in 1996 Cockburn noted that 96% of teachers in their study stated that they used lesson preparation, knowledge of pupils and keeping up to date with paperwork as strategies and 89% of teachers had learned through experience indicating that indeed for newer teachers it may be beneficial to provide support to develop such strategies. The learning of providing time for oneself and the importance of taking time out mentioned by teachers and staff in this study were not mentioned in Cockburn’s findings. However such studies as Brown et al’s (2002) and Aures and Malouff’s (2007) which take into account some practical problem solving reported successes; hence there may be a role for EPs in supporting schools, teachers and new staff to plan and prioritise tasks.

4.2.3 iii Embarrassed / guilt

When discussing their own mental ill health or perceptions of staff members with mental ill health a great deal of negative feeling was expressed. Emotive vocabulary associated with crime was used such as ‘admitting’ mental health issues, conferring a ‘death penalty’ and ‘you can never come back from it’. Given the recent focus on the mental health of children and young people through the TaMHS funding it was quite surprising (although half expected) to hear school staff speak so critically of having a mental health difficulty. Seidman and Zager (1992) also reported that school staff were unwilling to ‘admit’ to having difficulties. For school staff then it would appear that mental health difficulties are comparable with committing a socially and culturally unacceptable act or being at fault by not having learned the skills one should have (see
Mental health appears to be considered as a skill to be learned, rather in the manner that children who are deemed to ‘need to learn’ better social interaction skills or ‘improve’ their self esteem can often be ‘prescribed’ small group work. This is not to belittle the many very rigorous approaches to improving children’s skills and life chances, but in considering mental well-being as a skill to be taught in school it is perhaps not surprising that staff feel embarrassed by not having attained this standard. It would seem that more work is appropriate to help school staff understand mental health (for all people) and its flexible nature to reduce the pathology of those with poorer mental health.

Cockburn (1996) found that there was a stigma to seeking outside support and that 29 of 60 teachers who reported seeking outside help found that it had not been effective. It may be that the feelings of guilt and shame teachers appear to experience when they seek support for mental health issues are not actually reported / acknowledged and that perhaps the symptoms of stress / mental ill health are treated in consequence only partially and without reference to wider environmental and systemic concerns. This would be an appropriate role for educational psychologists, however, I feel that the well-being of teachers is rather neglected. The point was made by a member of staff in focus group 1 that they are modelling solving problems, remaining calm and positive mental health to children all of the time, but within the school, authority and wider education system school staff mental well-being appears to be a ‘within house’ issue.

4.2.3 iv Pointlessness

Some staff, mainly teachers, expressed frustration at their perceptions of being required to complete tasks they saw as pointless such as ‘having’ to complete work in ‘triplicate’ and justify their teaching and assessment in numerous ways which added to their workload in a way that did not appear to be useful to them. This may be likened to the more colloquial term of ‘hoop jumping’. As a member of the local authority I am part of the system which staff often complain to me about when they fill in forms to obtain advice or funding for support for children. However, the body at which frustration was directed at in the focus groups was Ofsted. Possibly the frustration focused towards the...
direction perceived to be imposed by Ofsted is fuelled by the apparent disregard in which some staff hold this organisation (see section 4.2.2 iii). Had I not been the facilitator of the group it would be interesting to know if staff would also have identified the paperwork required by my service or whether they held this in positive regard. However, generally contact with the EP is generated by the school rather than ‘imposed’ upon school and it may be that this is seen as more useful as it is school / teacher / child needs led as defined by the staff rather than as defined by an outsider.

In the extract below staff express perceptions of being given extra work simply to comply with systems rather than perhaps being trusted to get on and teach.

‘I mind writing about why we do things.’
(Participant E, Focus Group 1)

‘There seems to be a lot of cross referencing of things sometimes. Like you plan it, but then you have to copy it here and there and you can’t remember if you put that bit in there.’
(Participant B, Focus Group 1)

‘You don’t even know what the point of it is. I don’t particularly mind having targets, for me Ofsted can come in every year. What I object to, ‘cos I don’t particularly mind targets, but I do mind being told to teach a certain way to satisfy some artificial set of circumstances.’
(Participant D, Focus Group 1)
4.2.3 v Being ‘good enough’

‘I don’t know, somebody once said to me, ‘I’m terrified of being the shit one’.’

(Participant D, Focus Group 1)

‘Yeah, we do want to be perfect and you do feel a bit of a failure if you’re not 100% all the time.’

(Participant E, Focus Group 1)

The above extracts indicate examples of school staff expressions of desire to be ‘perfect’ i.e. achieve their aims and objectives at all times. There was an awareness that this was unrealistic, but was still an aim. This aim is very laudable and presumably stems from staff commitment and desire to succeed. However, if school staff continue to strive for perfection at all times they will likely fall short of this much of the time and hence perceive that they are failing, not good enough, not getting to the end of their work etc. It may be this apparent desire to be ‘good enough’ which drives many staff to work the long hours described and to be very frequently thinking about work. Potentially then, staff who experience poor mental health as a result of their job or issues related to it may then consider themselves to not only have not attained their aims, but also failed in maintaining their health and ability to continue to try to do their job. The perception that once one had experienced a mental health difficulty they were not ‘fit’ for the job or needed ‘help’ was also raised. This then led to reported feelings of disempowerment. The concept of having some level of control in one’s job has been discussed already in sections 4.1.3 and 4.2.3. Holding a ‘valued’ social position (Warr 1987b; 1999; 2007) has also been proposed to contribute to feelings of positive well-being, however, if one is not able or ‘permitted’ to access their role in this position this may well be challenging to one’s mental health.
Although many staff seemed to perceive not being good enough as a failure they also expressed a perception that ‘good enough’ was a variable concept and that should one not attain this one day they could simply try again:

‘Best advice I’ve ever had was off a mate of mine in secondary. He said, ‘think of all of your lessons bar one or two a week, you’re going to think all of them bar one or two were utter crap, but the best thing about it is that you’ve just got to say ‘stuff it’ and get on with the next ones’. That’s the best advice and it doesn’t mean you don’t feel terrible if you’ve had a terrible lesson on fractions. I’d had a terrible lesson and I was really annoyed and then I thought, ‘Go on I’ll do that tomorrow’ and I got on with something else.’

(Participant D, Focus Group 1)

This appears to reflect an ongoing idea that school staff can learn to manage and cope and reflect on experiences and their well-being. As yet, although they appear to possess this knowledge, the ability / opportunity / motivation to apply many of the strategies they identify does not appear to arise often. There is a significant mismatch in the oft adopted strategy of ruminating about perceived failures when happier teachers have been found to think more creatively and focus more successfully on what is working (Akin-Little and Little, 2004).

4.2.4 Stigma

Staff who participated in the research expressed varied views relating to attitudes to mental health. Those who were older perceived that attitudes were now more positive to issues relating to mental health, whilst younger staff expressed views that they perceived very negative attitudes towards those with mental health difficulties. It is not easy to tell if attitudes have changed, however, younger staff who reported perceptions of negative attitudes also reported more recent mental ill health than older members of
staff and hence may have fresher memories, but also still be experiencing the possible
distress caused by their perceptions of the attitudes of others.

However, even having expressed the view that promoting mental well-being was now
much more acceptable, an older member of staff who was part of the senior
management team made the following remark implying that it is necessary to prove
the benefits of a strategy before it might be entertained as a possibility:

‘I have to say I thought, and I told you. I thought at the
beginning this is flaming mad. I thought it was a daft idea.
But I thought it was really good, I changed my mind.’
(Participant D, Focus Group 3)

This may be an important barrier to school staff accessing better well-being in the
school day as culturally the idea of taking some time out to relax and spend time on
themselves at work rather than out of work may be perceived as a little silly especially if
school staff do perceive that they should ‘learn’ well-being (see section 4.2.3 ii). It may
be the evidence base from research with teaching staff which will be important to
highlight to school management teams to promote attitude and value change from the
top down.

4.2.4 i Attitudes to mental health

There was an interesting perception amongst some staff that attitudes to mental illness
had changed over the years. This was particularly noticeable in the focus groups
between older / more experienced members of staff and younger / less experienced staff.
As previously mentioned all staff who participated in the focus groups expressed that
they had experienced poor mental health. The older members of staff described their
memories of how they felt their difficulties had been perceived and suggested that this
was not likely to be the case now as ‘attitudes had changed’. Some of the older members
of staff were also senior management team members and may have wished to promote
the view that staff well-being was well attended to in school. However, younger
members of staff expressed views that they still perceived that there was a negative attitude towards mental ill health and those who experienced it. There were some tensions between views expressed in sections 4.1.1 iii, 4.2.2 ii and 4.2.2 vii which contain positive remarks regarding staff perceptions of the supportiveness of their colleagues and remarks referred to in sections 4.2.3 iii and 4.2.3 v which refer to the embarrassment and guilt staff felt when experiencing poor mental health and the impact that this may have on their acceptance in the school team and their teaching career and skills. Of interest is that no members of staff described behaving differently towards colleagues who had mental health difficulties; when describing their experiences they did talk about perceived changes in attitudes and behaviour of colleagues towards them as illustrated in the following extract.

‘After having my own personal experience of ill health due to an occupational illness and not being physically or mentally able to continue with my previous extra curricular activities there was a sudden change in some staff’s respect towards me. This then impacted on my own mental health, giving me ‘anxiety’ over ‘whether my teaching was good enough’.’

(Questionnaire 2, return number 6)

One possible option may then to be to highlight well-being in school as an ongoing concern. Well-being co-ordinators and conferences in well-being are increasing in popularity and are advertised in professional journals hence a discussion with staff was held around this as described in the following section.

4.2.4 ii Imagine having a mental health role

Having anticipated that school staff would express concerns regarding a perceived lack of support to promote their mental health I asked in 2 of the focus groups what support would be wanted. Although staff were keen to have someone to talk to who would be accepting and understanding they were also very wary of how this would be
implemented as people would ‘see’ or think they were going to see someone. When working as an EP with children they have expressed a similar view about going to see the learning mentor, school nurse, lunchtime club. As one school staff member stated;

‘Imagine anything worse than a mental health role!’
( Participant B, Focus Group 1)

4.2.5 Staff values and importance placed on promoting well-being

Although staff clearly valued promoting their well-being out of school it did not appear to be valued or permitted overtly in the school culture. Well-being in school appeared to be the responsibility of the member of staff who ‘learned’ the required skills to cope and carry out both specific and perceived duties. Failure to acquire these skills was perceived to indicate that one was not ‘good enough’. Not coping or being seen to be mentally healthy was described in weighty terms which may also be used in the criminal justice system. Maintaining mental health tended to be promoted at home. This possible secrecy and unwillingness to publicly promote well-being is likely to render well-being as a taboo topic, particularly when leadership practices prevented some members of staff from taking breaks. Hence currently a significant tension exists between staff value of well-being and attempts to improve it and the culture and systems within which they work. Appropriate roles for EPs will include highlighting the research base to school leadership teams and local authority representatives regarding the importance and contribution of staff well-being to the teaching and learning within schools.

Staff indicated the importance of talking to people ‘who know’ which appeared to be dependent on positive relationships and shared understanding and also shared experiences. There may be potential for setting up an informal teacher forum (maybe internet based) for local teachers to share experiences and ideas safely and constructively.
4.3 Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their mental well-being and if so how has it impacted?

In analysing data from staff regarding the impact of the intervention on their mental well-being five themes were identified: relationships; time; physical break; stigma and physical impact. These will be discussed in turn with reference to subthemes.
Do school staff perceive that the intervention has had an impact on their mental well-being and if so how?

- **Physical impact**
  - **Stigma**
    - **Risk to attend**
    - **Topic of stress**
  - **Time**
    - **Physical break**
    - **On duty / in role**
    - **Escape**
  - **Sustainability**
    - **Time for self**
    - **Time with colleagues**
  - **Social / getting to know people**
    - **Cared for**
    - **Supportive**
    - **Wanting to go**
  - **Relaxation**
    - **Temporary change**
  - **Awareness of well-being**

Figure 10 Thematic map for research question 3
4.3.1 Relationships

Staff reported perceptions of positive effects of the project on their relationships with colleagues. This is quite interesting as comments regarding staff relationships previously had been very positive. However, there was a perception that staff had been ‘brought closer together’.

‘I think since it very first started when you did the first session I think it helped bring people closer together so they could talk to each other which they didn’t always do before.’

(Participant C, Focus Group 2)

Partly this seemed to be related to the different access to and times of breaks. However, it seemed that by making the choice to join the project staff were expressing a wish to be social and enter a space which was clearly defined as a social area. The project area was set up with the intention of encouraging interaction between staff. There is an implication in the above extract that some members of staff perceived themselves to be in a position where they could not or did not talk to some others, however, in a less formal situation this barrier was broken down. Some staff spoke about the length of time which it can take to build relationships with colleagues especially when they see them rarely and engage in functional conversations. It would be interesting to clarify if expressions of anxiety regarding others’ perceptions of them after a period of mental ill health are more pronounced regarding staff they know less well or feel they know better.

Staff reported that they made time to go to the project because they wanted to go, indicating that perhaps, if staff had access to a pleasant and relaxing space which they wanted to go to then they may be more motivated to spend a short time each day having a break.
4.3.1 i Social

A comparison between the staff room and the Chill and Chat room was evident in that Chill and Chat was perceived more as a ‘social event’ than a ‘space to spend lunchtime’.

‘It’s almost like when I meet my sister in a café.’
(Participant C, Focus Group 2)

‘It’s almost like quality time.’
(Participant A, Focus Group 3)

‘It’s more of a social kind of event rather than just somewhere you go and have your dinner.’
(Participant E, Focus Group 2)

It is interesting that the staff room was perceived to be a functional space which was not conducive to social interaction; perhaps this is because school staff rooms tend to be multi-purpose, whereas the Chill and Chat room served fewer, but more clearly defined functions.

Staff reported speaking to each other about a wider range of subjects such as family and interests. It may be that as the room was perceived to have a ‘café -like’ environment it may have prompted staff to speak more about different topics. Hence in a less formal space staff may have felt able to speak about more social topics. Having engaged in such interactions staff perceived that they knew each other better.
‘Great to encourage staff to talk about life beyond work and engage in a different way. This does happen in the staff room, but in a different way. More likely to talk about well-being.’
(Questionnaire 2, return number 2)

‘It just gives you that little bit of time to find out what people are like.’
(Participant C, Focus Group 2)

This perception of getting to know colleagues better and perhaps improve their relationships may have contributed to staff feeling more positive. Cohen and Wills’ (1985) buffering hypothesis stated that social support may promote positive mental health in two ways. The main effect model proposed that social support provided predictability, stability and recognition of self worth for those who were not stressed, but who nonetheless benefited. The buffering model hypothesised that social support mediated between the experience of stressful events and appraisal of stress.

School staff also seemed to perceive that conversations were more positive and engaging than conversations usually held in other areas of school. It is interesting that this was commented on as perhaps this had not been happening previously or perhaps not between those staff members. When I work in this school it is very much accepted that meetings will occur at lunchtime as it seems to be considered as simply part of the working day. Consequently it may well be that it would not be considered appropriate to discuss family / hobbies when one is ‘working’ rather than when one is ‘having a break’. The engagement in more positive conversations reported by staff may echo the findings of Zellars and Perrewe (2001) in that participants tended to report more accomplishments / feelings of efficacy, although in this study it seemed to be increased perceived efficacy in obtaining understanding and acceptance from peers.
'I think that’s where the Chill and Chat sessions have come in though letting you get to know people that then helps you to get over the fear of saying to somebody ‘actually I’m feeling a bit yuck at the moment’.'

(Participant E, Focus Group 2)

4.3.1 ii Feeling cared for

Staff reported a perception that they felt cared for and that ‘someone’ was interested in promoting their well-being. Many of the opportunities provided in the Chill and Chat room could be seen as nurturing. Of interest is that it appeared to encourage and permit staff to nurture themselves. I have observed the concept of permitting to staff to engage in alternative behaviour in other situations such as making changes in the curriculum they offer to children with additional needs. Although teaching staff are often aware that they need to make a change (such as adapting a curriculum or having a short break) it is reassuring that somebody else whose opinion matters also agrees. This highlights a potential role for the supervision that many staff identified as a need in section 4.2.2 v.

‘You know coffee, just somebody saying, ‘would you like a cup of coffee?’’

(Participant C, Focus Group 2)

‘The ‘pampering’ aspect of the project and the ‘me’ time. Chill and Chat allows you to stop without feeling guilty because someone else has taken the trouble to provide that opportunity.’

(Questionnaire 2, return number 1)

There is very little mention in research of how perceiving one is ‘cared for’ by others may contribute to well-being. However, some aspects of ‘appreciation’ described by Adler and Fagley (2005) such as feeling positive about one’s surroundings in the ‘here
and now’ and feelings of gratitude and interpersonal aspects of appreciation may be similar to the ‘cared for’ feelings perceived and described by school staff.

### 4.3.1 iii Supportive

Staff described perceptions that they were supportive towards each other in order to help and maybe provide the opportunity and permission mentioned in the previous section for colleagues to access Chill and Chat.

> ‘When we go it’s the same people there isn’t it ‘cos our lunch hour’s the same, so we see the same people there and I suppose, but it’s like we know who’s missing and it’s supportive like we’ll say, ‘Oh does so and so know it’s Chill and Chat? I’ll go and get her.’’
> (Participant C, Focus Group 3)

Staff also perceived that their better knowledge of each other led to feeling better placed to discuss how they were feeling and ask more confidently about how colleagues were feeling. This may have been related to the fact that those who came to Chill and Chat perceived that it was a safe space, but I feel that staff who came to the project did perceive that they developed better relationships with each other and hence spoke to each other more about their lives and experiences rather than simply day to day functional work oriented conversations.

> ‘So that little time you get in there (the Chill and Chat room) you can see each other and chill and you can chat about things that might be work related or maybe just how you’re feeling. It lets you know what other people might be feeling as well as yourself.’
> (Participant E, Focus Group 2)
As well as describing a ‘collegial’ feeling staff also raised some issues relating to ‘exclusion’. This arose mainly in a discussion in Focus Group 2 in which the group were discussing who had attended and the fact that they perceived there to be no ‘cliques’ in school which was quite counter to the conversation about staff pleasure to see administrative colleagues joining the project. Teaching staff described a perception that although efforts had been made to encourage administration staff to use the staff room it was considered a ‘teaching staff’ room which may be exacerbated by it containing much curriculum related and teaching information. Staff suggested that it was uncomfortable walking into a room when everyone looked up to see who was coming in and that this may have caused some staff to feel reluctant to use the staff room. A division of staff by role and possibly area of school does appear to be implied which staff were uncomfortable with, for example, key stages having different lunch times, some teaching assistants not being allocated a lunch break. I am aware that the lunchtime supervisors use the staff room after playtime when no teaching staff are in there. It is concerning that the ‘staff room’ is considered the teaching staff room and that all members of staff do not feel equally entitled to use it as they did the Chill and Chat room. This may be part of the history and culture of staff rooms in that teaching staff reside in teaching areas of school and administrative staff reside in administrative areas of school and may require a whole school approach to the purpose and presentation of the staff room if it is to be for the whole staff team.

4.3.1 iv Wanting to go to the project

Staff explained that at the beginning of the project they had been reminded and encouraged to go along and ‘support’ the project. However, they then returned because they wanted to.
‘It’s got to the stage now where I actually look forward to Wednesdays, ‘cos Wednesday is quite a long day for me, ‘cos I do cooking with the kids and then gardening and then there’s a club after school and I often wake up and think, ‘Oh God it’s Wednesday’, but now this gives me a break. I think, ‘I’m here in school, but at least I’ve got Chill and Chat’.’

(Participant C, Focus Group 2)

One teacher remarked that she had rearranged her afternoons to enable it to be easier to set up so that she could access Chill and Chat. This is of interest as staff tended to feel that they could not access / find time to spend any time having a break or attending to aspects of their well-being in the day (see sections 4.1.1 i, 4.1.1 vi, 4.1.3 iii, 4.1.4 i, 4.1.4 ii, 4.2.4 iii and 4.3.2) Staff did make time to come to Chill and Chat, although they did describe an awareness of time available to spend in the project room. It may be that because it was just one day per week and there was a particular space to go to with provision of relaxation and ‘chill out’ activities staff felt more able to, or more motivated, to allocate some time to themselves.

4.3.2 Time

Time for school staff is a valuable commodity. Staff who came to the project stated that they did so because they wanted to do so. As mentioned in section 4.3.1 iv initially some staff were prompted by senior management to attend which may have frustrated them and also meant that they felt imposed upon. However, there were no members of staff who only visited once suggesting their return was by choice and some staff reported negotiating with each other to establish time to attend. Although the head teacher attended the project on four occasions which is likely to have added validity to the promotion of mental well-being it was evident that staff were expected to make their own arrangements to attend although there were many incidents of informal arrangements between staff to access the project (mentioned in focus groups and also discussed in the project room). For staff who were not allocated a break time this remained the case and may have indicated that attendance at a well-being project was
for those who had the time or could make time which may imply that working
conditions and expectations of staff at least regarding access to breaks and
acknowledgement of their well-being were not equal for all staff as postulated in section
4.3.1 iii.

4.3.2 i Time for self
There was a perceived value in spending time for oneself. It appeared that by taking part
in the project staff were ‘permitted’ to relax and take some time out. One teacher was
really quite angry when a phone was brought into the room for her to speak to someone.
The strength of her feeling was evident in that she refused to take the call as she was
‘chilling and chatting’ and would speak to the person later. This is quite a powerful step
for the teacher to take as throughout the data set school staff express perceptions that
they are continually expected to be available and on ‘high alert’.

Others perceived that taking time out in this way was familiar and similar to the way
they do so at home or out of work. The familiarity and routine of Chill and Chat may
have also promoted feelings of relaxation. It may then be inferred that time in the staff
room is very different, but this is likely to be related to the atmosphere and environment
as many of the same people joining in the project would be found in the staff room.

‘Cos it seems more like when you have time for yourself at
home. It seems more like it ‘cos that’s what I’d do. I’d get a
magazine, ‘cos I always pick up the magazines and I’d get a
coffee and I’d probably get a biscuit or a piece of cake. So it
seems like when I take time for myself at home.’
(Participant C, Focus Group 3)

It was also interesting that school staff expressed an intention of relaxing and a focus on
that as an aim. In the extract below staff express the view that currently the staff room is
not a place of relaxation (reasons for this tended to include it being a working room, the
constant flow of children and being considered available for any work oriented tasks). It was the expectation of relaxing which appeared to promote this experience.

(Participant B) ‘But you’re right if it (Chill and Chat) was in the staff room I think it’d be just the same. I think it’s so, it must be the idea of it rather than where or how.’

(facilitator) ‘So you go in there with that focus?’

( Participant B) ‘I think so yeah.’

(Participant E) ‘Yeah, that’s it. That’s what I like about it.’

(Extract from Focus Group 2)

Such a focus on relaxation and simply taking some time out for themselves at lunchtime may be likened to mindfulness in that staff promoted their well-being by focusing on and regulating their activities consciously (Brown and Ryan, 2003) and engaging in single task activity rather than many tasks during this particular time (Napoli, 2004).

4.3.2 ii Time with colleagues

There was a perception amongst staff that they saw little of their colleagues during the school day. However, by coming to Chill and Chat they met colleagues who they would not have had chance to talk to because of limited time, opportunity, different lunch breaks etc. It seemed that by having chance to speak to colleagues in the course of the day reduced perceptions of isolation even in a busy school environment.

Staff also mentioned that they felt the Chill and Chat project had contributed to better relationships with other staff members (see sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.1 i) in that they felt more able to approach each other socially and ask how colleagues were feeling. This is not to imply that staff could not talk to each other before or that they expressed a perception that they spoke in depth about feelings simply that staff appeared to feel that relationships with colleagues they saw more often and spoke to in a relaxed and social context improved.
4.3.2 iii Sustainability

Issues relating to sustainability were raised in two contexts. Staff reported a perception of feeling more relaxed during and for a period of time after the sessions, however, they perceived that for this to have a continual benefit the project would need to continue.

‘I felt more relaxed at the time, but it would need to continue weekly to make an impact.’

(Participant E, Focus Group 2)

However, there was also a perception that as staff felt more relaxed and as though they had had a ‘proper break’ they felt that they handled problems in the afternoon a little better as they were in a less stressed state. This may be related to staff intention to relax at lunchtimes as described in section 4.3.2 ii and hence being more aware of their emotional status.

Obviously as the facilitators could not visit school to run the project on an indefinite basis it was interesting to ask staff about how and if it could be maintained in school. Some small changes were perceived to have taken place as magazines had been brought into the staff room by Chill and Chat participants. There was a great deal of debate in the third focus group regarding using a spare classroom for Chill and Chat and how staff could take turns to bake or bring food, however, it was felt that someone would need to co-ordinate this and that that would add to pressures on staff. In this particular group there appeared to be an appetite for setting up a separate room for staff well-being, however, it may be that it is more appropriate to embed the principles of well-being into school culture rather then having a small group engage in such practices which might be seen as separatist when staff inclusion is already an issue (see section 4.3.1 iii) and also the role of well-being co-ordinators may not be accepted by some members of staff (see section 4.2.4 ii)
Having said this some changes that seemed to have occurred during the project did appear to be sustainable such as staff taking time to talk to each other about other topics than work, feeling they had better relationships, an increased awareness of mental health, increased efforts to take some time for themselves and changes at home such as starting to bake again.

4.3.3 Physical break

There was a perception that attending the Chill and Chat project provided a temporary ‘escape’ from work. The word ‘escape’ is quite powerful and emotive and may indicate that staff feel hemmed in by work and demands and that the provision of a different space provided a physical and mental break in which they could relax and be themselves (escape from their job role temporarily).

4.3.3 i Escape

Staff perceived that generally in school they were unable to ‘escape’ work and responsibilities when they attempted to have a break.

‘Whereas in the staffroom we just end up there for lunch.’
(Participant B, Focus Group 2)

‘Yeah, and it’s so full of….You can’t escape school.’
(Participant C, Focus Group 2)

‘You know, every wall just about is full of school things. The big board with all the messages on, Yeah.’
(Participant E, Focus Group 2)

Staff remarked on the feeling of being ‘away’ from school just for a short time when in the Chill and Chat room as they were in a separate part of the building where they could not hear the bell or the children and nobody knocked on the door to ask for ice packs, medicine or mediation. Of interest is that staff reported the perceptions of other colleagues
who did not come to Chill and Chat that the staff room on project days was very peaceful and relaxing as it was empty and they found this beneficial. It could be inferred from this feedback that all staff are different and although there was the opportunity to sit quietly in a peaceful space in the project room some staff may wish to remain in their own familiar and possibly reassuring space.

This ‘escape’ may be considered to relate to mental and physical states in that staff expressed a view that they were away from their work for a short while and were able to perhaps ‘switch off’ as described by Sonnentag and Bayer (2005) who postulated that it was being able to switch off from one’s work which was beneficial to well-being rather than the length of time one spent away from it.

4.3.3 ii On duty / In role

‘Whereas that (Chill and Chat) does give you a chance to chat.’

(Participant B, Focus Group 2)

‘Yeah, you step out of your role don’t you? Whereas you don’t in the staffroom necessarily.’

(Participant C, Focus Group 2)

‘We never get a chance to chat at school, which you don’t ‘cos you’re always in role.’

(Participant C, Focus Group 3)

Staff perceived that they were somewhat limited in talking to each other and socialising in school as their ‘role’ required them to act differently. This may explain in part why staff have previously described taking care of themselves at home where perhaps they perceive that to be an acceptable part of their home role, but not as part of their school
role. In the Chill and Chat room it may be that they perceived their role to change and that relaxing and having ‘time out’ was permitted.

4.3.4 Stigma / Guilt

Staff expressed a perception that attending the project had involved taking a risk as they were unsure how this would be perceived and interpreted by colleagues. The concern staff expressed with being seen to cope and not demonstrate poor well-being has been discussed in detail already. However, there may well be a tension in being seen to go to an intervention to promote well-being as one may be concerned that others think one needs to go. The stigma attached to poor well-being is in itself a stressor (Miller and Kaiser, 2001). The devalued social identity associated with being perceived as stigmatised (Crocker, Major and Steele, 1998) may have resulted in some staff being reluctant to attend. It was very difficult to obtain information regarding reasons for non-participation in the project as staff who did not participate may not have felt inclined to participate in the study either and there were few returns from those staff. The main reason expressed was physical inability to attend due to running a club or supervising children.

There were also professed feelings of guilt and self consciousness as they were having a break and others were working. However, of particular interest is that surprise was generally expressed when staff were asked in focus groups about the impact of participating in the project on their work. Although this had been mentioned in the presentation to staff it may have been that it was not emphasised enough or that staff had focused more on the intervention than its potential effects. Maybe if I had been able to highlight this to staff more clearly take up of the project would have been even greater.

4.3.4 i Taking a risk to go

Of interest is that staff expressed a perception that attending Chill and Chat sessions was ‘risky’. There appeared to be a feeling that by coming to sessions one was acknowledging that one ‘needed’ support and that one’s mental health would be improved by participating. In many other professions it is simply expected that support
from a range of sources will be provided, for example, supervision from managers, advice from occupational health etc. However, at the outset of the intervention staff did feel some concern regarding how their attendance at the sessions would be perceived by colleagues. They did not seem to be concerned regarding how the facilitators would perceive their participation and therefore also their mental health.

‘If they were coming in and sitting down and joining us it would be different, but because they’re passing through and I think they’re probably thinking, I think they’re thinking,’ what are they doing? Why are they all sat down and why have they got pillows and cushions and cakes?’ (with reference to work colleagues who did not participate in the project, but on occasion needed to pass through the room)

(Participant A, Focus Group 3)

As this was mentioned in Focus Group 2 the facilitators were able to source some screens to increase privacy in the Chill and Chat room for the remaining sessions. (None of the therapies were at all visible as they were in an entirely separate room.) This had not arisen as an issue in the pilot as the school had provided a different room for the project. It was necessary to use this room in school due to the increased length of time of the sessions to enable more staff members to attend when they had duties during the children’s lunch break.

There also appeared to be some guilt attached to attending the sessions in that the participants ‘sat down’ and ate cake and were comfortable as opposed to, presumably, working as were those colleagues who on occasion needed to pass through the room. Such guilt is unlikely to be felt in the staff room if a colleague is seen seated and eating lunch and indeed no aspect of the Chill and Chat room could not be replicated with ease in the majority of staff rooms and the project was intended to be available to all staff. The project room resembled the learning mentor’s room which is used for relaxation and quiet
work with children. Although staff were keen to have cushions this was identified as a concern when seen by others. Of additional interest is that on one occasion the cushions were not brought to the project as they had been mislaid and again staff commented that they missed them on this occasion. Once again staff appeared not to think that it was acceptable to spend a short time relaxing in similar surroundings to those they feel are appropriate for children to relax in. Anxiety about the stigma of poor well-being is also likely to have had some impact on participants’ ability to switch off and relax.

Some participants expressed some level of trepidation as they were not sure what to expect when they came along.

(Participant C) ‘…and we didn’t know what we were getting did we? We didn’t know what it was about too much. I mean I know you had it on the sheets and notices what it was about, but until you try something you don’t know what it’s going to be like. And time is precious in the school day isn’t it? Just the time to stop running, you don’t know if you can afford to do it always do you?’

( Participant E) ‘No, but you do though don’t you on that day.’

( Participant C) ‘Yeah, you want to.’

(Extract from Focus Group 3)

It seemed that although initially staff had been a little uncertain about joining in the project, once they came along and experienced it they were keen to return ‘because they wanted to’. It appeared that a barrier to staff coming to the project was not knowing what it would be like despite the presentation, posters and information sheets / letters. Staff seemed to feel that in order to feel confident that they liked the project they needed to experience it, hence perhaps a possible solution to this is to provide a ‘taster’ session maybe in a staff meeting.
4.3.4 ii Worry about the topic of stress

Staff perceived that support systems which were available to them in school were generally related to potential problems they may experience with the execution of their job rather than related to their own personal well-being. This perception appeared to confirm their views that they should not say if they are feeling stressed or feeling under pressure.

‘Support systems are more about the problems you’d encounter with your job and children you know, rather than just the fact that you might be stressed and I don’t think you’d want to say really if you felt stressed.’

( Participant D, Focus Group 2)

‘Well I know I wouldn’t, unless ‘cos I have got to that point you know where I’ve felt – urgh I’ve had enough. I just want to get in the car and go. But I wouldn’t want to say that to people, ‘cos I wouldn’t want them to think that I was failing and it can’t be just me that feels like that.’

( Participant A, Focus Group 3)

There was a perception that ‘stress’ needed to be addressed as teaching staff were ‘expected to take on more and more’ and although a wish to be child centred was expressed, the impact on staff of ensuring the children received what they needed was not felt to be considered. This perception that staff are expected to take on additional duties and manage them appears to lead to the feeling of failing / distress when staff do not live up to perceived expectations (imposed by themselves or perceived to be so by others).
‘Once somebody is harassed or stressed or has a breakdown in some sort of way, that has an impact for the future because they think, ‘oh we don’t really want to give her any more responsibility in the future’ even though it may have happened years ago.’

(Participant E, Focus Group 2)

Stress or poor mental health appeared to be considered as a permanent state or almost a characteristic which cannot be changed. Perhaps it is the perceived permanence attached to ‘being a person with poor mental health’ which is so anxiety provoking for staff. This is interesting as staff reported the view that their well-being decreases at certain times of year and then increases when the stressful period passes and also relate numerous examples of how they maintain their mental health and yet there appears to be a permanence attached to being seen not to cope / being a poor teacher.

As staff well-being is not discussed in school except as an ad hoc topic around a cup of coffee staff are unlikely to be aware of others’ needs and feelings and hence not perceive that others feel as they do. Hence the perception that everyone else can cope and they are ‘failing’ may be perpetuated. Staff who attended the Chill and Chat sessions stated that they felt much more able to talk to each other about how they were feeling, possibly because they knew each other a little better through the project or because they had indicated an awareness of their well-being and the possible taboo of talking about such subjects was reduced.

The taboo of the topic may then be attributed to possible permanence of not coping or being stressed. There is a role for work with school staff, trainee teachers and others who support teachers to enhance understanding of well-being and stress and that well-being levels will increase or decrease in response to many factors and also normalising the experience of some levels of stress, self doubt, tiredness or unhappiness at times.
4.3.5 Physical Impact

Staff explained that they attended Chill and Chat with the purpose of relaxing and were more conscious of the impact it may be having upon them physically. There appeared to be an impact upon awareness of both individual well-being and the well-being of colleagues which led to some changes which staff described, for example, talking to each other about wider ranges of subjects than school, but they did not appear to perceive these as changes in the same way that they viewed the perceived temporary change in their relaxation. It may have been the immediacy of this change which staff noted rather more than the changes which take place more slowly. When I work with staff who are stressed or anxious they are often keen for me to provide an ‘answer’ promptly and tend to notice immediate differences rather than slower changes over time. There are benefits to staff having noticed prompt effects of the project, however, they stated that such provision needed to continue for them to continue to have the benefits implying an appetite for the longevity of well-being promotion. Alongside the physical effects were some small systemic changes which staff were less aware of. I felt that it was these changes which were more likely to be sustained as they seemed to represent some changes in constructions of the reality around them.

4.3.5 Relaxation

Staff noted that they purposefully set aside time to come to Chill and Chat intending to relax and feel better.

‘I think it’s the only lunchtime where you go somewhere with the purpose of ‘chilling’ and you do sort of relax. You quite often go in there like that (makes a tense gesture with shoulders and hands) and then you come out relaxed. And it’s different to just being in the staffroom isn’t it?’

(Participant A, Focus Group 3)

Having ‘down time’ consciously was repeatedly identified as important. It appeared to be as much about being aware that one was having a break and taking time for oneself
as it was about physically having the break. This is very much related to aspects of mindfulness in that staff were focusing on their relaxation and well-being and attempting to remove other thoughts temporarily from their minds. It may be that the shared purpose of relaxing and taking some time to socialise and not think about work resulted in staff perceiving themselves as more relaxed and possibly more in control of their well-being i.e. that they could exert some influence over their mental health.

4.3.5 ii Temporary change?

Staff were asked about the changes they perceived as a result of taking part in Chill and Chat and also the longevity of any perceived change. Of interest was the fact that some participants in the focus groups appeared surprised that it may have had an impact on their work / demeanour, however, on consideration the groups felt that there were some changes. Changes in feelings of well-being and relaxation tended to be described as temporary, especially when staff arrived back in the classroom. A certain level of reluctance to leave the Chill and Chat room and return to work tasks was expressed as staff appeared to feel that they would ‘lose the mood’ when they left the room. However, other changes had occurred in that staff reported talking to each other about topics other than school, asking each other how they felt and being aware of their own and others’ well-being and actively being aware of when they took time to have a break in school. In other words although the feeling of relaxation was temporary there were also more sustainable changes, but it was necessary to speak with staff to highlight them.

4.3.5 iii Awareness of well-being

Related to the previous section is that staff appeared to perceive more awareness of their well-being and impact the project had had on them.

‘I have started baking at home again as a hobby.’

(Questionnaire 2, return 1)
'Try to make time to talk to other staff about themselves and not just about work.'

(Questionnaire 2, return number 5)

'I think I go back (to the classroom) feeling refreshed in a way that I probably don’t do when I’m dashing back from the staffroom.'

(Participant E, Focus Group 2)

'But you definitely go back in an improved humour don’t you?'

(Participant B, Focus Group 2)

Staff appeared to notice changes in their mood when they had participated in the project. However, they also reported some changes in their behaviour which they attributed directly to their participation in the project. Presumably staff who changed their behaviours did so as they had experienced a change in their thoughts and beliefs regarding well-being and its importance to them.

4.3.6 Staff perceptions of the impact of the intervention on their well-being

The project was perceived to provide an opportunity to staff to improve relationships and get to know each other as people rather than simply colleagues. Staff who attended also felt valued and permitted to take some care of themselves whilst at work. Permission to take time out appeared to be demonstrated by provision of a conducive space to have time away which any member of staff could choose to go to and also by a formal recognition of staff well-being as a worthwhile area for intervention. Even though staff who attended the project enjoyed it and made time and arrangements to attend, there was still an anxiety regarding being seen participating in well-being activities by those who chose not to attend the project. It would seem that there is work to do around attitudes to well-being and perhaps also the basic rights and needs of human beings. School staff often promote these for children, but do not apply their
knowledge and learning to themselves; sometimes this is partly due to the school culture or previous experience.

Staff noted physical and mental changes in themselves which were temporary, however, they also reported changes in their actions (making time for a break, talking to staff about other topics than work) and relationships which have greater potential for longevity.
4.4 Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their work in school and what evidence do they have for this view?

Staff reported changes in their levels of emotional availability and their functioning in school which they attributed to the intervention. Time in terms of the length of the project and also time staff spent in the project room were felt to be important factors in continuing to promote well-being in school.
Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their work and what evidence do they have for this view?

Figure 11 Thematic map for research question 4
4.4.1 Happiness / Emotional availability

Staff expressed a perception that they had got to know colleagues much better by attending the project. This appeared to be related to being able to ‘be themselves’ and not perceiving that they were constrained by the social expectations attributable to being a ‘teacher’/ ‘teaching assistant’. Those who made such remarks were mostly teaching staff rather than administrators or lunchtime supervisors. When ‘in role’ teaching staff may be more focused on the needs of their class and social dynamics may be more dichotomous i.e. educator and learner proving a contextually inappropriate time for adults to develop their personal relationships. Hence potentially times to get to know colleagues would be out of the classroom. If teaching staff do not take breaks or meet in rooms where they are still considered to be working, they may well remain in role and hence be unavailable to learn more about their colleagues. Although no such comments were made there may be some members of staff who do not view it as part of their job or are simply not interested in knowing their colleagues in a broader sense and it will be important that interventions to promote staff well-being or staff cohesiveness account for and accept this view. There are also some interesting implications regarding staff feelings of failure if they are stressed / unwell in that they could be helped to separate this from themselves as a person if they consider the job as just one of the roles they play in life.

4.4.1 Getting to know people better / Being yourself

There was a perception that during the intervention staff got to know each other better and learned more about each other particularly outside of a ‘role’ played / carried out in their school function. It seemed that ‘stepping out of role’ was a facilitator in this. Perhaps the remarks made in sections 4.1.2 iii and 4.3.3 ii relate to staff feeling able to relax and hence not having to continue to hold the mantle of teacher / teaching assistant / administrator / lunchtime supervisor etc. meant that they felt able to think about a wider range of topics and express themselves differently than when in such a ‘role’.
‘I think like I said before getting to know people a bit better, so that if you’re…like when you’re in the classroom you’re totally different aren’t you to how you are when you’re not in the classroom. But you don’t always get to know people like that ‘cos of the job do you?’

( Participant C, Focus Group 2)

Increased opportunities to ‘be oneself’ are not really referred to in the literature regarding well-being. However, it may be that when one feels that one is behaving in a manner which is more consistent with one’s self image it may be perceived to be calming, more relaxing. It may also be that staff have engaged in behaviours in the Chill and Chat room which they associate with being ‘themselves’ at home and potentially more relaxed and hence associate these feelings with being more ‘true’ to themselves.

It is quite interesting that staff felt that they played a role in the classroom and presumably took on the characteristics of a ‘teacher’, ‘teaching assistant’ etc. Perhaps if one is playing a role one may be trying to live up to the perceived ideal of that role which may be very flexible due to the varied situations staff may find themselves in and how they feel they should behave; such an ideal is likely to be extremely hard to live up to.

4.4.1 ii Awareness of the well-being issue

Staff awareness of well-being was referred to in several contexts: awareness of well-being as an issue to consider with reference to themselves, awareness of the well-being of colleagues, awareness of teaching well-being strategies to children.

Staff reported that they felt much more able to discuss the topic of well-being amongst colleagues who had participated in Chill and Chat, but there was a clear feeling that well-being needed to be a more widely discussed topic in schools:
‘If it was brought more out into the open that people struggle and I think a lot more people struggle than just us. There will be more than me here suffers from depression, even if it’s the odd time and more who feel low. It’s just that people don’t say because I think they’re frightened.’

(Participant A, Focus Group 3)

This is interesting as the perceived stigma attached to reporting feeling as though one was struggling has been well documented both in research (e.g. Cockburn, 1996; Brown et al, 2002; Giga et al 2003a) and remarks made in the course of the focus groups and questionnaires. Perhaps it is rather that the members of staff who came to Chill and Chat felt that it was ‘acceptable’ to speak to each other about both negative and positive well-being. The fact that some staff felt able to discuss this and others may not might be considered to cause some perceived friction, however, staff did not report that they perceived that those who had participated in Chill and Chat were more part of a group than the rest of the staff, simply that they were more willing to speak of issues relating to well-being and their home and non-school lives. Unfortunately it is difficult to ascertain if those who did not attend also did not perceive a clique formed from those who came to Chill and Chat as only one non-participant returned the second questionnaire.

4.4.1 iii Staff emotional availability

Staff appeared to perceive that if they were feeling more positive and happier they would approach the job with more enthusiasm and be able to present more positively towards the children in school. It seemed that staff who felt happier were perceived to have more to ‘give’. Research by Kahn et al (2006) found that teacher positive affect was a significant predictor of perceived teacher self efficacy.
‘If staff are feeling positive about themselves then they approach the job with more energy and enthusiasm and probably clearer thinking.’
(Questionnaire 2, return number 3)

‘Impacts on quality of performance – energy levels. We have more to ‘give’ if well.’
(Questionnaire 2, return 10)

Staff generally reported perceptions that the more social and nurturing aspects of Chill and Chat were beneficial – seeing and talking to colleagues, feeling cared for and that people were interested in their well-being enough to provide an intervention, comfortable seating, cakes, cushions. It may be in that by modelling an interest in the well-being of staff it became ‘acceptable’ to talk of well-being and take part in the project. Many of the feelings reported by staff are similar to aspects of appreciation (Adler and Fagley, 2005) in which relaxation, feelings of positivity and gratitude and noticing positive feelings in others promoted one’s well-being. Presumably, feeling more positive and happier, staff might engage in more positive conversations with colleagues which may promote further feelings of well-being in themselves or colleagues as also found by Bakker and Schaufeli (2000).

4.4.2 Functioning / Attainment

Staff with good mental well-being were proposed by participants to be perceived to be able to teach better and provide a calmer and more productive learning environment for children. Jennings and Greenberg (2009) noted that it is generally assumed that teachers will have the social and emotional competence to manage their lives, teaching and support the emotional well-being of the children in their care. Evidence from the school staff suggests that they feel capable to support the children in their care emotionally, however, they expressed anxiety and self doubt about the quality of their teaching and ability to carry out the work they feel is necessary. This may be a wider issue for teacher
training institutes to teach awareness of and development of resilience and strategies to maintain well-being.

4.4.2 i Impacts on calmness in the classroom

Staff perceived that feeling calmer and more relaxed had a significant impact on their presentation in the classroom and that Chill and Chat had promoted such feelings.

Staff mental well-being was proposed to promote clearer thinking and better teaching and by having adults who were happier this was suggested to ‘cascade’ down to the children in school. As I noted in section 2, school staff are expected to promote and maintain the mental well-being of children in school, however, I proposed that for this to happen effectively school staff must be able to promote their own well-being too and cope when there are challenges to their well-being.

‘If teachers are stressed then teaching is strained, anxiety levels are high and an unhappy learning environment emerges. Unable to focus accurately if unsure of own abilities.’

(Questionnaire 2, return 7)

4.4.2 ii Happier teachers teach better

School staff had very clear perceptions that if they felt happier and more relaxed then they taught better and, it appeared, felt more confident and more focused on the task at hand. Klusman et al (2008) also found that happier teachers teach better and the class is set more challenging learning goals and pupils experience greater perceptions of self efficacy. However, many of the staff stated that they felt cared for and made reference to the fact that somebody other than themselves had shown an interest in their well-being which is likely to have had an impact on their feelings of well-being. Amos and Weathington (2008) noted that employees perceiving their organisation to value
employees as individuals and also promote health and well-being to report more job satisfaction.

Teaching staff noted that they were able to manage incidents in the classroom differently if they felt calmer and more relaxed.

‘I think possibly you do, because you’re not already, you’re not already starting from here (gestures to chest) and going up to there (gestures to above head).’

Participant E, Focus Group 3)

‘I think it (Chill and Chat) sets you up in a particular way doesn’t it, ‘cos you do come back feeling more relaxed definitely. But then it’s back to school life, but yeah, you do perhaps manage it in a slightly different way…’

( Participant A, Focus Group 3)

It is likely to be important to highlight the value of well-being both personally and also the potential impact on teaching and learning. A role for the EP would be in helping to increase such awareness amongst schools and those who support schools. It would also enable the role of the EP to be considered more widely in preventative and positive work as perhaps some school staff have been reluctant to engage as they may feel EPs only address ‘problems’ (such as having poor well-being) rather than projects and new initiatives.

4.4.3 Time

Throughout the focus groups and questionnaires the issue of time was mentioned. When asked how Chill and Chat had impacted on their work, staff often mentioned barriers relating to the length of time of the project (sessions and number of weeks) and also their lunch hour time.
Staff appeared to value the opportunity to take part in Chill and Chat as it presented new ideas to them and was perceived to indicate that they could experience better well-being in school:

‘I think short term can help, ‘cos it’s opened things up to us, but I really think it needs to be long term.’

(Participant E, Focus Group 3)

‘Yeah, I think it’s almost like a taster in some degree and just a breather to get out of the classroom ‘cos usually when you do get out of the classroom you’re in the staffroom if you get the chance. It’s just a breather, but to make the impact of the treatment or anything else you’re offering it needs to be a kind of regular slot.’

(Participant C, Focus Group 3)

Staff were keen to have the Chill and Chat sessions and for a member of staff to run them, but were concerned how this may add to their workload. However, as mentioned previously many smaller changes had already taken place such as magazines being put in the staffroom, different discussions and topics of conversation amongst staff. Staff had many ideas of how a Chill and Chat room could still be available in school, however, there was a concern that it may not be perceived to be a good use of space. It appeared to be the perception that there was a relaxing space where they were welcome and could focus on their own needs for a short time which was important rather echoing Sonnentag and Bayer’s (2005) findings that being able to switch off from work for a short time is beneficial to well-being. The staff room may well be presumed to be such a place, however, staff felt reminded of work, interrupted, harried and judged when they went to the staff room. Potentially there is some work for schools to develop staff rooms differently or to have different expectations of the purpose / role of a staffroom.
A number of staff mentioned the length of time they needed in order to ‘come down’ before they felt calm. They felt that the sessions / their lunch time needed to be longer in order to benefit. It would be interesting to clarify if there is a critical time staff found they needed in order to ‘switch off’ temporarily or if having a Chill and Chat area which staff could always use meant that eventually even a short visit would prompt the calmer feelings they were seeking.

4.4.4 Perceptions of the impact of the project on work in school

The topic of well-being became an acceptable topic of conversation amongst those who attended the project. Although they may have individually valued promoting well-being there was an increased awareness amongst those who came to the project who felt the same way. Others who did not attend the project also were reported to talk about well-being and express a wish to attend or how the project vicariously affected them (quieter staffroom, working with relaxed colleagues). Well-being continued to be perceived within the school (rather unwillingly) as the responsibility of the individual as concerns were expressed about potential workload of continuing the project. It was surprising to staff when reflecting in focus groups or during feedback that changes had occurred which they were not aware of such as asking how colleagues were feeling and wider topics of conversation. The opportunity to be oneself and step out of role appeared to be important to ‘permit’ staff to relax. Hence the staff room may not always be conducive to some well-being activities as one may remain ‘in role’ in that part of school.

Of interest is that staff reported feeling that after focusing on their own well-being they managed incidents relating to children’s emotions in class better perhaps highlighting that those who are involved in supporting the well-being of others should themselves have access to support. Roles for the EP may involve helping schools find new ways to promote support for school staff ensuring that staff are cognisant and in agreement with this. Other work may be more at policy level. The Well-Being Handbook produced from this project (see appendix 11) is included in the county resources to promote well-being
for children and it is hoped that by including the staff well-being advice to raise awareness of the importance of the well-being of those who support children emotionally, behaviourally and academically.

### 4.5 Changes in staff perceptions during the intervention

Although relationships between staff were highlighted in Focus Group 1 as a positive source of support, staff perceived that during the intervention they had been brought together more (see section 4.3.1) and that the project had provided the opportunity to speak about wider topics (see section 4.3.1ii) indicating a perception that Chill and Chat had further enhanced staff relationships. Hence it appeared that staff perceived a greater awareness of support they were able to obtain from each other. Through discussing topics which were non-work related they reported perceptions that they had got to know each other better (section 4.3.1ii). It may have been the perception that they were able to ‘be themselves’ and ‘step out of role’ (section 4.3.3ii) which permitted conversations about work outside one’s school role and the increased knowledge of colleagues as ‘themselves’ as well as their ‘character’ in their job role.

Initially staff reported that colleagues had been ‘prompted’ to attend Chill and Chat (see section 4.3.2) and had gone along to ‘support’ the project perhaps as a duty. However, in Focus Group 2 and Focus Group 3 comments relating to actively making time to go (section 4.3.1iv) were more common. There were also reported perceptions of ‘looking forward’ to going to the sessions. This appeared to contrast with earlier remarks relating to feelings of ‘guilt’ about having time for oneself. The school culture is very much one of being busy and taking few breaks, hence it may have been the perceived ‘permission’ to take a break which relieved staff of some ‘guilt’ they may otherwise have felt. The attendance of the head teacher and senior management team members may have reflected some flexibility within the existing culture regarding taking breaks.

During all 3 of the focus groups there was a great deal of discussion about the acceptability (or not) of talking about well-being. In Focus Groups 2 and 3 staff highlighted the value they perceived in talking about well-being (see section 4.4.1ii) and
being able to share thoughts about feeling low or fed up (see section 4.3.1iii). Participant E (section 4.3.1i) noted that the ‘fear’ in speaking to others about well-being had lessened amongst participants and this view was also shared by participants B and A (see section 4.2.2ii). Of interest is that in Focus Group 1 the possibility of being seen to have a ‘mental health role’ in school was spoken about with some disdain (see section 4.2.4ii), however, in Focus Group 3 there was a long discussion about setting up Chill and Chat in school in order to sustain the impact and how this could be co-ordinated (see section 4.3.2iii). Staff acknowledged that this may not be valued by all staff, however, it may have been that the potential ‘role’ became more valued with a clearer definition and a more valued purpose. Participant D’s views changed significantly during the intervention from thinking it was ‘daft’ to stating that he had changed his mind entirely (see section 4.2.4). This is very positive as in Focus Group 1 participant D made a number of remarks indicating that he perceived a very heavy and unending work load e.g. sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.4i.

Although staff appeared to value the opportunity to talk about well-being there was still concern around being seen to ‘fail’ reported in all 3 focus groups. A perception that one could meet the demands placed on them appeared important (see section 4.1.3). In order to do this one had to be ‘good enough’ (section 4.2.3v) and ‘learn to cope’ (section 4.2.3ii); if these ‘standards’ are not attained the staff member appears to be at fault or perceives themselves to be at fault. These views did not change during the intervention and staff appeared to continue to perceive that ‘positive mental health’ was a standard to attain even though they recognised that this was unrealistic. This reflects the importance of school culture and leadership in maintaining and promoting staff well-being and perhaps incorporating it into everyday school life and including all staff rather than ‘formalising’ support and highlighting those who have failed to attain an arbitrary standard of mental well-being..
5. Summary of Conclusions

In this section I intend to summarise my conclusions with reference to each research question and then remark upon the strengths and limitations of the study and implications for professional practice and further research. Conclusions are summarised using bullet points in order to highlight key conclusions relating to each research question. Conclusions are related to the different sections (sections are referenced in brackets for each bullet point) in which they are explored in the thesis. Reference is also made to models and research introduced in the literature review.

5.1 Research question 1 – What do school staff understand by the term mental well-being?

- Many negative feelings about work level were reported. Staff indicated they felt substantial levels of guilt about wanting to or needing to take breaks and also guilt about feeling under pressure and over worked (4.1.1, 4.1.1i, 4.1.4ii, 4.1.1iv, 4.1.1vi, 4.1.4i, 4.1.4ii, 4.2.1ii, 4.2.3iii). The work level was not generally perceived to be within the staff member’s control and was often cited to be related to external agencies such as government targets. This supports Warr’s Vitamin Model (1987b; 1999; 2007) in which it is postulated that (lack of) opportunities for control and the level to which one needs to achieve externally generated ‘goals’ can reach ‘toxic’ levels which are detrimental to well-being.

- Having ‘time’ appeared to be comparable to promotion of staff well-being. This included time for themselves, with family or time which was spent consciously attempting to look after themselves (4.1.2i, 4.1.2iii, 4.1.3iii, 4.1.4ii, 4.2.2, 4.2.3i, 4.3.3).

- Although staff perceived that they worked very hard, they reported a perception that their efforts were not noted or their professional voices heard by those whom they perceived to be in more powerful positions, for example, those who impact on policies and procedures (4.1.1iii, 4.1.1v, 4.1.4iii, 4.2.2iii, 4.2.2v, 4.2.3iv).
• Staff ‘learn’ to develop strategies to promote their well-being. Using strategies to promote their well-being appeared to be perceived as attaining some control over the balance of work, life and well-being (4.1.2ii, 4.1.3, 4.1.3i, 4.1.3iii, 4.2.2.i, 4.2.2ii, 4.2.3ii).

• Although ‘threats’ to mental well-being tended to be seen as resulting from work, staff actions to promote their well-being took place ‘out of hours’ and away from school. (4.1.2i, 4.1.2ii, 4.1.4iv, 4.2.3i)

The term mental well-being tended to be described by staff in terms of experiences and perceptions which resulted in poor well-being, for example not being heard and feeling guilty rather than positive well-being. Below I have presented a diagram to represent what school staff understand by the term mental well-being.
5.2 Research question 2 – What values and importance do staff place on promoting mental well-being?

- Maintaining well-being was seen as important, but tended to be engaged in at home (4.1.4ii, 4.2.1, 4.2.1i, 4.2.1ii, 4.2.3i). In Focus Groups 2 and 3 more reference was made to promoting well-being in school and potential ways of doing so. It was recognised that not all members of staff may hold shared views about the importance or relevance of promoting well-being in school.
• Staff perceived a responsibility for learning to cope and maintain positive mental and physical well-being. There was a stigma attached to not ‘learning’ these skills and not being perceived by themselves and others as ‘good enough’ and ‘in control’ (4.1.2ii, 4.1.2iii, 4.1.3iii, 4.2.1i, 4.2.3ii, 4.2.3iii, 4.2.3v). Cockburn (1996) found that teachers perceived their development of coping strategies differently in that some saw them as stress reducing strategies and others saw them as simply part of their job. If the skills are seen as part of the job they are more likely to be perceived as skills which should be learned rather than if they are seen as stress reducing tools. It is interesting that despite the wealth of research regarding teacher well-being, the very subjects of such research (the teachers) feel unease should they experience poor well-being. Perhaps research would be more positively received if it focused positively on improving and maintaining well-being rather than confirming that teachers experience stress which then feeds into a model of teaching as a stressful profession and that teachers should or will be stressed.

• A high level of value was placed on shared knowledge and experience in several ways: feeling heard and understood; having positive relationships with colleagues they work with (including those external to school); valuing those who they speak to and identifying commonality of experiences (4.2.2, 4.2.2i, 4.2.2ii, 4.2.2iii, 4.2.2vii). This appears to suggest that a sense of efficacy in obtaining support which is perceived to be appropriate will promote school staff well-being. Perhaps also in this respect staff well-being may be considered not only in terms of individual staff, but a whole staff group well-being.

• Older staff perceived that attitudes towards mental health had improved. Younger staff (who in this study were also those who perceived that they had poorer mental health) perceived that attitudes were very negative towards promoting mental health (4.2.3iii, 4.2.4, 4.2.4i, 4.2.4ii).

Mental well-being was seen as important, but tended to be considered as a staff member’s responsibility to be promoted in their own time. Although in the focus groups there was a shift in emphasis from promoting mental well-being only at home, there was a
recognition that this may not be a priority for all staff. A collective staff well-being was seen as important in terms of staff cohesion and shared understanding, but this presents barriers to promoting practices which may not be compatible with different people’s models and understanding of their role and work. For example, if a teacher feels that they should be available to the children for the whole time they are in school, promotion of relaxation in the day will be unlikely to be acceptable to that teacher.

The current perceived mental health of members of staff appeared to impact on their perceptions of the attitude of colleagues and the teaching profession towards poor mental health. Below figure 13 illustrates my conclusions regarding staff values and importance of promoting mental well-being.
Figure 13 School staff perceived values and importance of well-being

- Being seen to ‘cope’ and to perceive oneself as ‘coping’ is valued
- Staff cohesion and collective staff well-being important not just that of individuals
- Staff member’s own responsibility to learn to cope
- Acceptability of well-being promotion dependent on staff values and role perception
- Those with poorer mental health perceived poorer attitudes to well-being
5.3 Research question 3 – Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their mental well-being and if so how has it impacted?

- The designation of the Chill and Chat room as a less formal space in which to socialise which staff could choose to go to or not appeared to be important. By designating the purpose of the room and the project staff reported a perception of a change of focus at lunchtime to feeling ‘permitted’ to choose to take a break from both work and their professional role. There were links between being able to have a break and perceiving that they had had some time for themselves as described in section 5.1(4.3.1i, 4.3.1iii, 4.3.1iv, 4.3.2i, 4.3.3, 4.3.3i, 4.3.5, 4.3.5i, 4.4.3). Perhaps the opportunity for control (Warr, 1987b; 1999; 2007) regarding whether or not they took a break and the perception that the school culture had at least temporarily shifted in order to ‘allow’ staff to be seen to take breaks, provided staff with the opportunity to choose whether or not to participate in the project which may be perceived as empowering.

- Alongside keenness to attend staff reported some feelings of risk in that by attending they admitted a need to participate in a project to promote mental health. The perception that there is an ‘ideal’ mental health level to attain appears to perpetuate feelings of wariness regarding being seen as ‘not good enough’ or ‘in control’ or perhaps even ‘fit’ to do the job (4.3.1iii, 4.3.4, 4.3.4i, 4.3.4ii).

- Staff reported that they perceived they developed better relationships with colleagues and talked about a wider range of topics including personal well-being and life outside their professional relationships (4.3.1, 4.3.1i, 4.3.1iii, 4.3.2ii, 4.3.5iii, 4.4.1i). DeLongis and Holtzman (2005) noted that those who perceived greater satisfaction in their social relationships tended to use more effective coping strategies. This finding is similar to that of several other researchers in that access to social support and perceived better relationships with colleagues promotes well-being (e.g. Griffith et al, 1999; Brouwers et al, 2001; Day et al, 2007). Kahn et al (2006) opined that social support also provided opportunities to reappraise situations and develop responses. This may
then provide opportunities for staff to ‘learn’ coping strategies in a less formal and more supportive environment.

- Staff valued feeling ‘cared for’ and that others were interested in their well-being and supporting them (4.3.1ii, 4.3.2i, 4.3.5iii). The concept of staff perceiving that they are ‘cared for’ is not specifically mentioned in research I reviewed, but may be related to perceptions of feeling ‘valued’.

Staff perceived that there had been a temporary shift in the school culture to enable them to have time to themselves and take a break without feeling guilty. Staff perceived components of well-being as relating to not feeling guilty and having some time to themselves hence the provision of access to permitted time would be expected to promote perceptions of well-being. By taking this time staff perceived that they developed better relationships and shared understandings of purpose which may promote staff cohesion which is valued as indicated in figure 13. Staff reported feeling valued and cared for which may perhaps be related to feeling that external services (from the local authority) perceived staff well-being as important. There was an ongoing to perception that ‘mental health’ was an ideal standard to be attained rather than an individual experience. Figure 14 below indicates staff of the impact the intervention had on their well-being.
Figure 14 Staff perceptions of the impact of the intervention on their well-being
5.4 Research question 4 – Do school staff perceive that the short term intervention has had an impact on their work in school and what evidence do they have for their views?

- Staff valued the opportunity to ‘be themselves’ at work and acknowledge themselves as individuals and in their role as school staff (4.3.2.i, 4.4.1, 4.4.1i).
- There was a short term impact on well-being which staff felt carried through to their work in school. Being happier and experiencing positive well-being were perceived to increase staff feelings of efficacy, improved teaching and calmer environments and feeling that others cared about their well-being may have impacted on job satisfaction levels (4.3.1ii, 4.3.2iii, 4.3.5ii, 4.4.1, 4.4.1iii, 4.4.2, 4.4.3).
- The opportunity to talk about well-being was valued. In discussing well-being it may be that school staff perceptions of the availability of support, and indeed their own efficacy in obtaining such support, was increased. In feeling that their efficacy was greater this may have fed into perceptions of improved well-being. This suggestion coincides with findings from Brouwers et al, 2001 and Day et al 2007. There was a perception that some colleagues did not accept staff well-being as a suitable topic for school support (4.3.1i, 4.3.2ii, 4.4.1ii, 4.4.3, 4.4.1iii).
- Staff did still appear to maintain the idea of an ideal well-being, however, there was a perception that staff who had participated in the project were more aware of their well-being and how small changes impacted on their job performance (4.3.2iii, 4.3.4, 4.3.4ii, 4.4.2i, 4.4.2ii). If this finding is applied to Warr’s (1987b; 1999; 2007) Vitamin Model it may be proposed that school staff perceived increased levels of control in managing their well-being, obtaining social support and utilising their skills.

Talking about well-being, which although is not a subject often discussed in school was ‘permitted’ in the context of the project. A perception that Chill and Chat impacted on both their well-being and job performance was expressed. The perceived improvements
in job performance were attributed to participation in the project. Figure 15 below indicates staff perceptions regarding the impact that the intervention had on their work.

**Figure 15 Perceived impact of Chill and Chat on work in school**
5.5 Strengths and limitations of the study

The project was aimed at the whole school staff and alongside teaching / teaching assistant staff, two administration staff, two learning mentors, two lunchtime supervisors and three Community Development staff attended. There have been very few studies which include all school staff in well-being interventions which is important in preventative and systemic work to support school staff. Due to the anonymity of staff questionnaire returns it was not possible to clarify issues relating to different jobs and the impact and value of the project. There were also difficulties in obtaining access to the project for some members of staff who were not allocated lunch / rest periods. This highlights the importance of support and input from senior management staff to validate the promotion and maintenance of well-being and permit staff to take breaks.

Initially several staff saw the project as an opportunity to access the educational psychologist and behaviour support staff for consultations regarding pupils in the first two weeks. Impromptu consultations were discouraged at this time (although staff were made aware of opportunities to talk to us about children at alternative times). After the first two weeks staff appeared to be more able to join the project with the purpose of taking a break. All staff who had requested conversations about children continued to attend the project.

Staff expectations and use of the project seemed to change over the weeks. By week two staff were more accepting of allowing the facilitators to make drinks for them and bring refreshments. Staff also asked for the therapies less often as the project progressed and tended to remain in the main room social area with colleagues. It may be possible to draw some links with Maslow’s theory of motivation to achievement of better mental well-being. The project may be presumed to offer opportunities to meet physiological needs (food and drink) and social needs (such as feeling cared for, developing a sense of belonging). The earlier levels to attain on the journey to actualisation were likened to vitamins (perhaps rather similarly to Warr’s Vitamin Model, 1987b; 1999; 2007). However, to attain well-being in the areas of self esteem and recognition may require consistent systemic work in school which is supported in policy and practice and ethos.
Individuals who reach self actualising levels have been considered to see problems as requiring solutions, to be self accepting, to have a sense of awe and wonderment (as also described by Adler and Fagley, 2005) and positive relationships with others. Maslow’s theory is considered to have instinctual appeal for many who work with children and who support the well-being of others (Neher, 1991) and this may be useful to share with school staff to help clarify theoretical bases for intervention with adults as well as children in schools. Maslow’s theory is not without critics, however, and for a fuller review and critique Neher (1991) may be referred to.

It was very difficult to obtain the views of those who did not attend the project. The importance of the views of all staff whether they attended or not was highlighted at the staff meeting and in the letter accompanying the questionnaire. Anecdotally reasons for not attending the project appeared to relate to inability to attend due to clubs / duties with children or simply preferring a quiet and private space to spend lunch.

However, as views obtained were predominantly from those who participated in the project it was not possible to obtain data on the ‘reality’ of mental health for non-participants. As the social construction of mental health is impacted upon by past experience, culture and socio-economic status, for example, it may have been that some staff considered it inappropriate to promote mental health in school for adults or that they were concerned that they may be seen to have poorer mental well-being than others. There is a role for educational psychology to challenge the potential notion of a mental health ‘standard’ as an all or nothing concept as ‘truth’ (Gergen, 2009) will be different for staff members depending on their life experience and history and current situation. It is important therefore that individual differences are accepted and valued and that staff are supported to promote their mental health and that a range of opportunities are available which staff may access should they wish to do so.

5.6 Implications for educational psychology
Staff consistently expressed a desire to perform well in their job and a commitment to the education and well-being of the children in school. Although children’s well-being
was valued highly, input to support and promote school staff well-being explicitly and in school was considered warily. Although many staff were keen to access intervention there was a concern around being seen to need support. It would seem appropriate that educational psychologists share with school staff, and particularly senior management staff research relating to staff well-being and the benefits to children, staff and the school system. For example, Akin-Little and Little (2004) proposed that happier teachers were able to be more creative in teaching and problem solving, Brouwers et al (2001) and Day et al (2007) concluded that increased positive affect, rather than simply acquired experience of teaching, promoted feelings of efficacy. However, it is important that one’s well-being does not become a ‘standard’ to aspire to and instead that promotion of the mental well-being of all members of a school community becomes more culturally acceptable alongside an acceptance that individuals will have their own aspirations and standards of what constitutes positive mental well-being. In bringing staff together in a relaxed and informal setting with a shared purpose which permitted them to relax, staff perceived that they developed better relationships and increased cohesion. There is a role for working with staff, senior management and local authority managers to promote informal, accessible and voluntary projects and systems work with school staff to develop relationships between staff.

The perceived lack of clarity around work completion and reasonable expectations of staff workload appeared to induce a response of overworking in many staff, often accompanied by feelings of frustration and worry. There are opportunities for work with senior staff to promote clarity of expectation and staff autonomy where appropriate, but also work with individuals, small groups or particular schools to support reframing ‘experiences of failure’ and unhelpful thoughts, observation of successes, prioritising and sharing of skills learned and, as found in previous research (Sharrocks, 2009), interest, value and increased acceptance of differences in well-being between colleagues. Teaching staff in this research, along with other research, (e.g. Brown and Ralph, 1992; Cockburn, 1996) reported the development of coping during their careers and opportunities to disseminate strategies and learning experiences amongst staff, and indeed teacher training institutions can be promoted by educational psychologists.
5.7 Development of a well-being pack for school staff

As part of my role as a local authority EP I intended to produce a well-being pack for school staff, based on some of the findings from the research, which could be disseminated to schools in the county (see appendix 11).

I referred to research literature, staff perceptions and my conceptualisations based on analysis of data when identifying components of the pack. In questionnaire 2 and Focus Group 3 staff were asked about what they felt staff in other schools could gain from well-being input and what they would wish a well-being pack provided to schools to contain.

In the well-being pack I intended to make explicit links between theory and research about well-being and the impact of well-being on occupational performance. This was because I felt that one possible reason for some staff non-participation in the project was due to not seeing well-being as relevant to their practice or as something that should be part of their school day. In order to highlight and clarify the relevance of well-being the first sections of the pack highlight research on well-being including teaching staff. Research identified indicates that many teaching staff experience poor well-being and also includes research demonstrating positive impacts on health and teaching practice. The pack also includes information on how different behaviours can impact on well-being (for example, having unrealistically high expectations of oneself, unfounded assumptions and self critical thinking). Strategies to challenge these thoughts and behaviours are included. Although the behaviours are not purely related to teaching examples are given with reference to school related situations.

The pack includes a section on mindfulness and relaxation. Mindfulness has been found to improve physical well-being (Davidson et al, 2003) and have a positive impact on teaching practice (Napoli, 2004). Teachers in Dunlop and Macdonald’s (2004) research identified workshops on stress management and information about relaxation as a source of support they would welcome.
Models of well-being frequently highlight characteristics of the workplace/job as contributing to poor well-being. Warr’s Vitamin Model (1987b; 1994; 1999; 2007), Caplan et al’s (1975), Person-Environment Fit Model and Karasek’s (1979) Demand-Control Model all highlight perceived control and perceived ability to meet the demands of a job as contributors to feelings of stress. These were also identified by school staff in the research as summarised in sections 5.1 and 5.2. It was hoped that resilience and perceived levels of efficacy may be promoted by presenting information to staff in a non-threatening, informal pack available to all staff.

I attempted to highlight the importance of ‘taking a break’ during the school day. Research has indicated that having a break and ‘switching off’ can promote well-being and fewer perceptions of fatigue (Sonnentag and Bayer, 2005). In the focus school ‘taking a break’ was generally not part of the culture and indeed I have observed it not to be part of the culture of many schools I visit. Staff who attended Chill and Chat and took some time out in the school day perceived positive impacts on their well-being in school and also their work practice.

Staff reported a desire for ‘tips’ to promote well-being, advice regarding signs of stress and also strategies to use to promote relaxation. Support from colleagues and speaking to ‘those who know’ (i.e. other staff in similar positions) were clear themes during the research hence I attempted to make clear links between staff views and strategies which were included in the pack. In the section on Healthy Staffrooms comments from participants in the project regarding their perceived benefits of taking time out once a week are listed in an attempt to increase the validity and relevance of the ideas. Some themes which staff reported in focus groups and questionnaires as increasing or decreasing their stress levels are also listed as points to consider such as whether the staff room was a place of respite or simply another work space, was the use of the staff room promoted, was social interaction facilitated in school etc.
Findings from this research as mentioned in sections 4.1.5 and 4.2.5 indicate a need for the importance of staff well-being to be highlighted to management and local authority staff as well as school staff, particularly as many ‘threats’ to well-being were perceived to be located in schools. To this end the pack has been included in the county school well-being pack which was produced as part of the TaMHS project. It is also included in the ‘toolkit’ of the Health and Well-Being Officers who have a county wide remit. The Chill and Chat ‘model’ has been adopted by the Primary Mental Health workers in the structure of their school training and well-being input has been included on the in-service training list which is circulated to schools. In the research it was found that ‘receiving permission’ to take a break and acceptance of ‘taking time out’ within the school as a whole was important. By including the pack in county wide initiatives it is hoped that this information will be accessed by school management staff who have the role and capacity to change school policy and practice. As staff had reported in the questionnaires that they were not aware of external sources of support I included contact details of a number of groups.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1 Ethics approval

Secretary to the Ethics Committee
Room 2.004 John Owens Building
Tel: 0161 275 2206/2046
Fax: 0161 275 5697
Email: timothy.stibbs@manchester.ac.uk
ref: TPCSethics/10157

Miss Louise Sharrocks,
Doctorate in Educaonal Psychology student,
School of Education,
Ellen Wilkinson Building

15th October 2010

Dear Louise,

Committee on the Ethics of Research on Human Beings
Sharrocks, Squires. School staff perceptions of well being and experiences of an intervention to promote mental well-being (ref 10157)

I write to confirm that the above project has been ethically reviewed and, after the submission of a revised information sheet, approved.

This approval is effective for a period of five years and if the project continues beyond that period it must be submitted for review. It is the Committee’s practice to warn investigators that they should not depart from the agreed protocol without seeking the approval of the Committee, as any significant deviation could invalidate the insurance arrangements. We also ask that any information sheet should carry a University logo or other indication of where it came from.

Finally, I would be grateful if you could complete and return the attached forms at the end of the project or by September 2011.

We hope the research goes well.

Yours sincerely

Dr T P C Stibbs
Secretary to the Committee
Appendix 2 Letter to those who did not attend the introductory staff meeting

Dear member of staff,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. As you may know J, G and I are intending to run a project at lunchtimes in school this term focusing on staff mental well-being. The project is part of some research I am doing to find out about school staff views about mental well-being and what factors promote and contribute towards mental well-being in school.

The project is known as Chill and Chat and will be held in __________’s room every Wednesday from ________ until ________. You are very welcome to join us for as long or as short a time as you wish. The focus in the room will be relaxation and there will be hand / head massage, magazines, music, home made cake, therapies which you can sign up for and a range of other relaxing pastimes.

If you have any questions please do ask ________ (the head teacher) or contact me (Louise Sharrocks on ________).

Best wishes

Louise Sharrocks
Appendix 3 Consent form

Research project title: School staff perception of well-being and experiences of an intervention to promote well-being.

I consent to participate in Chill and Chat and the research on staff well-being.

I understand that I can come to as many sessions or as few as I wish and that although the sessions run from 11.45 am - 2.00 pm I can stay for as much or as little of this time as I wish.

I agree that conversations held between staff or between staff and Louise, J or G will remain confidential and will not be discussed outside of the Chill and Chat room.

I agree that if I fill a questionnaire in that it will be anonymous and that the data can be used by Louise Sharrocks in her doctorate research. I agree to the data being stored securely by Louise Sharrocks until the research is completed and that when the research is complete the data will be destroyed.

I understand that I can withdraw from participation in Chill and Chat or my consent to complete a questionnaire at any time by contacting Louise on (01229) 407937.

Name:

Signature:

Date:
Appendix 4 Questionnaire 1 letter

Dear member of staff,

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. As you may know J, G and I are intending to run a project at lunchtimes in school this term focusing on staff mental well-being. The project is part of some research I am doing to find out about school staff views about mental well-being and what factors promote and contribute towards mental well-being in school. The attached questionnaire contains a number of questions to help ascertain staff views about mental health. I would be grateful if would complete it and return it in the envelope provided to the box in the staff room. There is no obligation to complete the questionnaire and you do not have to complete it in order to come to Chill and Chat sessions.

The project is known as Chill and Chat and will be held in the learning mentor room every Wednesday for 8 weeks from 11.45 am until 1.45 pm starting on ___ ______. You are very welcome to join us for as long or as short a time as you wish. The focus in the room will be relaxation and there will be hand / head massage, magazines, music, home made cake, therapies which you can sign up for and a range of other relaxing pastimes. Another questionnaire will be distributed to staff after the Chill and chat project which will contain questions about how (if at all) the intervention had an impact on staff well-being and any changes which could be made to improve the intervention. Once again there will be no obligation placed on staff to complete the second questionnaire.

If you have any questions please do ask H or contact me (Louise Sharrocks on 01229 407937).

Best wishes

Louise Sharrocks, J, G
County Psychology Service and Behaviour Support
Appendix 5 Questionnaire 1

Thank you for taking the time to fill this questionnaire in. Please try to answer questions as fully as possible. Once you have completed the questionnaire place in the envelope provided and place it in the returns bag. I will be collecting the questionnaires on 26th April 2010.

1. Please describe your current level of mental well-being when not in school.

2. Please describe your current level of mental well-being when in school.

3. Why is your well-being different / the same in both environments?

4. How do you feel about the term ‘mental well-being’? Is there a term you would rather use and why?

5. Please explain any impact the school terms and holidays have on your mental well-being.

6. Do you feel you have ever experienced ill health due to pressures at work?

7. What support are you aware of for members of school staff who are feeling stressed, overworked, overburdened by the job?

8. How do you feel people can positively or negatively affect their mental well-being?

9. Why do you think staff who work in schools often report having poor mental well-being?

10. What strategies do you use to cope with work pressures?
11. Please explain where you feel the origins of contributing factors to school staff poor mental health are located (e.g. government policy, parent expectations, personal standards and work commitment etc).

12. What role do you feel professionals who are not based in your school can play in supporting school staff mental health?

13. What role do other staff in school play in supporting school staff mental health?
Appendix 6 Letter accompanying questionnaire 2

Dear member of staff,

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. As you will see there is a section to be completed by everybody and then sections to be completed by those who did or did not go to Chill and Chat. If you did not go please do complete your part of the questionnaire as your views about mental health are also important.

I have enclosed an envelope for the completed questionnaire and would be grateful if you could return it to the box in the staff room by Friday 2\textsuperscript{nd} July.

Best wishes

Louise Sharrocks
Appendix 7 Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire for all staff (to be handed out after the Chill and Chat intervention has ended)

Did you attend Chill and Chat? Y N
If you attended how many sessions did you go to? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Were you aware of the purpose of Chill and Chat? Y N

What do you think the purpose was?

What factors impacted on your choice of whether to go to Chill and Chat? Please indicate if the factors were enabling to your attendance or discouraged you.

If you did not attend Chill and Chat please answer the questions below. If you did attend please go the questions headed ‘If you did attend Chill and Chat’.

1. Is promoting school staff well-being important? Why?

2. What factors do you feel impact on mental well-being?

3. Can you describe how you think staff mental well-being can impact on teaching and learning in school.

4. Can you describe how you think staff mental well-being impacts on children’s mental well-being.

5. Who is responsible for the mental well-being of school staff and why?
6. What provision should be available to school staff to support mental well-being?

7. Who should be included in interventions to support staff well-being?

8. Should there be different provision for different members of staff?

9. A well-being pack is going to be prepared for schools as an outcome of the Chill and Chat project. What sort of ideas and activities would you want to see in such a pack?

**If you did attend Chill and Chat please answer the questions below.**

1. Is promoting staff well-being important? Why?

2. What factors contribute to mental well-being?

3. Who is responsible for the mental well-being of school staff and why?

4. Who should be included in interventions to support staff mental well-being?

5. Should there be different provision for different members of staff?

6. How can staff well-being impact on teaching and learning in school?

7. How can staff well-being impact on the well-being of children in school?

8. Please describe what it felt like to take part in the project.
9. Which of the activities on offer did you take part in? (please circle all that apply)

- Reading magazines
- Sitting quietly
- Sitting at the social area
- Cakes
- Hand massage
- Head massage
- Listening to the music
- Stress balls
- Heart Math
- Therapies (which one)____________________

10. Were there any differences in what was available in Chill and Chat than what is available to you daily? What were the differences?

11. Were these differences more or less successful than what is usually available in helping you to feel better?

12. Can you describe any changes in how you feel since Chill and Chat and why you think you feel differently.

13. Did anyone notice any differences about you during the project? (e.g. family, friends, children in school)

14. In other research non-teaching staff have been excluded from interventions. Please comment on your thoughts regarding the inclusion of all staff in well-being projects rather than only teachers.

15. Do you do anything differently in school as a result of the Chill and Chat project?
16. Do you think that having Chill and Chat in school has had any effect on your ability to promote the well-being of children in school? If you do please provide examples.

17. Please comment on how you think Chill and Chat has impacted on staff relationships.

18. What aspects of the Chill and Chat project do you think staff in other schools would find useful?

19. Have you learned anything from participating in Chill and Chat which you think staff in other schools may benefit from?

20. Have your views about mental well-being changed since taking part in the project? How?
Appendix 8 Focus Group questions

Focus group 1

• What is mental well-being?
• What factors affect mental well-being?
• What is a person with high levels of mental well-being like?
• What is a person with poor levels of mental well-being like?
• Is promoting mental well-being important?
• Elizabeth Holmes carries out research into supporting teachers and was a teacher herself. She states that teachers often feel that pursuing their own well-being is indulgent. What do you think about this statement?
• What systems are in place in school which you feel support mental well-being?
• What factors do you feel impact negatively on staff well-being in school?
• Do you think staff mental well-being has an impact on the children in school and how?
• In research carried out with teachers in Scotland it was found that 77% respondents would like an annual health check, 61% would like stress management and relaxation input. The least interest was shown in having a work place based counsellor. What are your feelings about the type of support which should be offered to school staff to support them and how should it be offered?
• What impact would you like the Chill and Chat project to have?

Focus group 2 (halfway through the intervention)

• What is it like taking part in Chill and Chat?
• Why have you taken part?
• Are the activities provided likely to promote staff mental well-being?
• Think about afternoons after Chill and Chat – are they different to other afternoons.
• What is happening in the Chill and Chat room which you think can support mental well-being?
• Is what is happening in Chill and Chat different to other support systems available to you in school?
• If you could change anything about the project (activities available, the room, time etc) what would it be and why?
• Is there anything in the project that you think can be adopted or adapted and continued in school after Chill and Chat has finished?

Focus group 3 (after the intervention)

• What has changed since Chill and Chat started?
• Was the project what you expected?
• Do you think the project has impacted on staff well-being? How?
• Can short term interventions help to promote staff well-being? How can the effects be maintained?
• Think about the project what contributed towards its successes and did anything get in the way of its successes.
• If you could have changed anything about the project to help it have a greater impact what would you change?
• A Well-being pack is going to be created for schools based on the findings from this project. Having taken part in the project what do you think should be included in the pack?
• What other ideas and strategies would you hope to see in a pack to promote well-being for school staff?
Appendix 9 Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (Tennant et al, 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATEMENTS</th>
<th>None of the time</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Some of the time</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling useful</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling relaxed</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling interested in other people</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve had energy to spare</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been dealing with problems well</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been thinking clearly</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling good about myself</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling close to other people</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling confident</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been able to make up my own mind about things</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling loved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been interested in new things</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve been feeling cheerful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 10 Photographs to illustrate data analysis
Eudemonic wellbeing functioning/attainments

Q2 3

Low staff accuracy = less fun for children. Children learn quicker if lessons fun & better opportunities.

Q2 6

Someone else helping productivity!

Q2 1

Reduce time to support staff with more energy, enthusiasm & cleaner living.

Q1 6

Ep

If [admire] have my problems come back from it never come back from it.

FG-1 8.7
Appendix 11 Well-being pack for school staff

Promoting staff well-being in schools

A pack developed from research with school staff to promote the well-being of adults working in schools
Introduction

If you have picked up this pack then chances are you are thinking about your well being or that of school staff generally. The idea for this pack came from a project myself and my colleagues ran in a local school to raise the profile of and promote staff well being. The project was called 'Chill and Chat' was run in school in 2009 and 2010 over a number of weeks (5 weeks one year and 8 weeks the next year). Any member of staff was free to participate in the lunchtime sessions which ran over 2 hours. Lunch time had been selected as a time when most staff were in school and it would not impinge on after school responsibilities. To read more about what was available please read the section on Chill and Chat later in the pack.

By writing this pack it is not intended to presume that all members of school staff are experiencing poor well being or are always stressed. However, for those who are experiencing prolonged stress, feeling more overloaded than usual or are just trying to improve their general well being you may find the information contained here useful.
Why Should I be Interested in Well Being?
‘There is ample evidence that teachers, in the course of their careers, experience a great deal of stress that may result in depressed mood, exhaustion, poor performance or attitude and personality changes, which, in turn, may lead to illness and premature retirement.’ (Schwarzer and Hallum, 2008 p.155).

Dunlop and Macdonald (2004) - 78% of their teacher respondents noted psychological stress affected their well being 'often' or 'sometimes'.

Teacher Support Network survey 2009 82% respondents stated they had stress related ailments over the last 2 years and of those 60% felt it was work related.

DfES (2007) - Teachers are required to be constantly vigilant, manage staff, meet parental expectation, cope with change and manage pressures.

Resilient teachers have been found to have higher levels of well being.

Teachers reporting high levels of job strain were found to have higher blood pressure and heart rates in the evenings (Griffith et al 1999).
What contributes to mental well being?

• Research has indicated that having good social skills is linked to having higher self esteem and satisfaction with social interactions (1). People in possession of good social skills potentially have greater access to social support and hence may experience lower stress levels and higher levels of well being. This research further investigated what aspects of 'social skills' might contribute towards perceiving less stress and it was proposed that the propensity to turn to others for help and a belief in one's self effectiveness were highly important.

• Attributional Style. People who score more highly on scales of extraversion and conscientiousness and lower on neuroticism tended to have higher levels of self acceptance, mastery and life purpose (2).

• Mindfulness – There is a growing literature base regarding mindfulness. This discipline involves being able to observe thoughts and sensations with non-judgmental acceptance. The aim has been proposed to be about allowing oneself to be where one is and experience the moment rather than aiming for an outcome (3) i.e. it is the application of the process which is proposed to contribute to increased feelings of well being not using the process in order to feel more relaxed or positive. Mindfulness training has been reported to have impacts on teachers’ ability to feel more relaxed and focused (4) and also production of antibodies and increased affect in biotechnology workers (5).

• Warr (6,7) identified a range of factors which contribute to workplace well being including: opportunities for control, variety in the job, opportunities to interact with and form relationships with colleagues, supportive supervision, pay, holding a valued social position and job security.

• The ability to ‘switch off’ from work has been identified as a contributor to well being (8). Simply being away from the workplace does not imply leaving a job behind! It was found that the ability to detach was more important and beneficial than simply spending longer away from the workplace.
• The use of relaxation or distraction when stressed is linked to more positive mood (9).
What is stress?

'Stress is a pattern of physiological, behavioural and cognitive responses to real or imagined stimuli which are perceived as dangerous or threatening to well being or abilities' (Buskist and Gerbing 1990 p.648).

The biology of stress
As soon as a stressor is perceived the sympathetic nervous system swings into action:

• Heart rate increases, blood pressure rises, blood sugar rises, blood is directed away from the extremities and towards the major organs.

• Breathing becomes deeper and faster, digestion stops and perspiration increases.

• Adrenalin is secreted.

This reaction is very effective for a 'fight flight' response in order to prepare the body to deal with the immediate source of danger / stress. The biological response is the same whether the stressor is a mugger in a dark alley or a huge pile of marking. With continued high levels of stress initially we adapt, but this high level of arousal cannot be maintained indefinitely and the person will become exhausted and susceptible to illness.

The psychological components of stress
Once a stressors is perceived it is cognitively appraised i.e. is the threat real? Is the person looking at a picture of a pile of marking or is the marking really sitting there waiting?

The decision is then made - Do I have the resources to cope?
Below are some signs and symptoms associated with stress

These signs and symptoms are not intended to be diagnostic, but can be used as a checklist to see if you are experiencing some of the common indicators of stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Symptoms</th>
<th>Emotional Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory problems</td>
<td>Moodiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to concentrate</td>
<td>Irritability or short temper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor judgment</td>
<td>Agitation, inability to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing only the negative</td>
<td>Feeling overwhelmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxious or racing thoughts</td>
<td>Sense of loneliness and isolation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant worrying</td>
<td>Depression or general unhappiness</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Symptoms</th>
<th>Behavioral Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aches and pains</td>
<td>Eating more or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea or constipation</td>
<td>Sleeping too much or too little</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausea, dizziness</td>
<td>Isolating yourself from others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chest pain, rapid heartbeat</td>
<td>Procrastinating or neglecting responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of sex drive</td>
<td>Using alcohol, cigarettes, or drugs to relax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent colds</td>
<td>Nervous habits (e.g. nail biting, pacing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What behaviours may cause job stress?

Sometimes people's views, thoughts and behaviours contribute to their feelings of stress. Below are a range of possible mindsets and some questions which may help you consider if you are perhaps adding to the stress you are feeling.

Need for control -
- Do you feel the need to be in control at all times?
- Do you see not being totally in control as a sign of weakness?
- Do you have difficulty delegating work to others?
- Are you wary of showing signs of 'weakness' or nervousness?

Negative feelings of competence-
- Do you feel your teaching / work is inferior to that of others?
- Do you feel you make poor judgments?
- Do you feel you lack common sense?
- Have you got doubts about your competence and ability to do your job?

Desire to please others -
- Do you tend to rely on opinions and input from others to build your self esteem?
- Are you worried you may disappoint others?
- Do you tend to care more about others' needs than your own?
- Do you try and avoid saying and doing things which would displease others?

Need to be perfect -
- Do you feel under pressure to achieve?
- Are you highly self critical?
- Do you tend to always feel a job could have been done even better?
- Do you sacrifice your time and pleasure to excel and achieve?
Breaking Bad Habits

Below are some 'bad habits' and unhelpful ways of thinking. These thought patterns can be incorporated into the way we think about successes and more tricky times and can contribute to feelings of helplessness, loss of control, unhappiness, poor self esteem and feelings of incompetence.

- **All or nothing thinking** - 'I found today hard, therefore I am a bad teacher.' This 'black and white' thinking allows for no 'grey areas' or exceptions.

- **Overgeneralisation** - 'That child shouted at me today - everybody hates me.' This thinking involves generalizing from one incident with no further evidence.

- **Mental filtering** - This involves filtering out all the positives and noticing the one thing which went wrong. For example, planning a great lesson, having good resources, explaining it well, the children enjoying the lesson, but you forgot to tell the class 1 of the facts you had planned to.

- **Diminishing the positives** - This means attributing your success to external factors (chance, luck, someone else helping), rather than your ability, effort, commitment. 'My class did well on the SATS because they are clever and the questions were easy.'
Jumping to conclusions - Self explanatory really; 'I know this is going to go badly', 'They are all going to hate the school trip.'

Catastrophising - Attributing huge and life changing import to what is probably in reality a small incident. 'I blamed him for something he didn't do and although I've apologized I've ruined his life.'

Emotional reasoning - Gauging reality through how you are feeling. 'I feel very worried and so there really is very serious cause for worry.'

Labeling - Labeling yourself using sweeping negative terms - 'I'm stupid', 'I'm rubbish'.

Personalisation - taking responsibility for anything and everything which does not go well. 'It's my fault that they had a fight, I should have known that they had argued on the way home.'
Top Tips for managing stress

• Get some time away - go for a walk, go somewhere else briefly, listen to music even if just for 5-10 minutes in the day.
• Organise your desk so that you can see what needs to be done. Make a 'to do' list and tick things off as you do them.
• Think in steps - break a large task up into steps and do it one bit at a time.
• Take breaks (even if only for a few minutes), eat away from your work area (including any area you consider 'work').
• Get enough sleep.
• Drink plenty of water during the day - have a water bottle like the children.
• Find humour in the situation. Have a laugh with friends, watch a funny film.
• Talk to someone who will listen - friend, colleague, manager.
• You may strive for perfection - getting it 'almost perfect' is ok.
• Try to maintain a positive attitude.
• Put a treat in your diary every few weeks to look forward to.
• Eat a well balanced diet and exercise properly.
• Don't think vaguely about having a weekend away - plan one and stick to it!
• On the journey home do something to help you make the transition (get your mind off work) - listen to the radio, call on a friend, go to the shop.
• Maintain realistic expectations of yourself.
• Get a hobby.
• Practice relaxation techniques.
Worrying and anxiety

We are all worried and anxious at times and this is normal as we strive to cope with the demands of life and work. However, for times when you feel that you are constantly worrying or if you feel you are a habitual worrier the following self help ideas may be of use.

Accept uncertainty - Worrying about what may happen will not stop things happening, but will stop you enjoying the present.

Create a worry time - Set aside a time when you are 'free to worry' at the same time each day. The aim is to make the rest of the day worry free.

Postpone the worry - when you feel yourself begin to worry about something make a note so that you can think about it later rather than now. During the 'worry time' go over the worry list you have created. If the worry still concerns you then allow yourself to think about it for the set time. If you are no longer as concerned by the idea cut short your worry time and continue with your day. This strategy is felt to be effective as it breaks the habit of worrying at the present moment and provides the worrier with a sense of control if the worrying can be delayed.

Challenge the negative thought - People who worry a great deal are often prone to overestimating the chance that things will turn out badly and underestimating their ability to cope. This can become an automatic way of thinking. Consider 'retraining your brain'.

Question the thought:
- What evidence is there that the thought is true / not true?
- Is there a more positive or realistic way to look at the situation?
- What is the probability that this will actually happen?
- If the probability is low then what is a more likely outcome?
- Is the thought helpful? Will worrying about it help or cause more anxiety?
- What would I say to a friend with this worry?
Getting Started - Relaxation

Try to incorporate time to relax into your daily routine - set time aside specifically.

Don't practice relaxing when you are tired. It is best to relax when you are fully awake and alert to gain the benefits.

Decide if you want to relax alone (meditation, muscle relaxing, listening to relaxation CDs) or with others (in a taught class, with a group of friends).

Possible relation techniques

1) Mindfulness meditation
This is the quality of being fully engaged in the present moment; not dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.
For stress relief, try the following mindfulness meditation techniques:

• **Body scan** - Body scanning cultivates mindfulness by focusing your attention on various parts of your body. Like progressive muscle relaxation, you start with your feet and work your way up. However, instead of tensing and relaxing your muscles, you simply focus on the way each part of your body feels without labeling the sensations as either “good” or “bad”.

• **Walking meditation** - You don't have to be seated or still to meditate. In walking meditation, mindfulness involves being focused on the physicality of each step — the sensation of your feet touching the ground, the rhythm of your breath while moving, and feeling the wind against your face.

• **Mindful eating** - If you reach for food when you're under stress or gulp your meals down in a rush, try eating mindfully. Sit down at the table and focus your full attention on the meal (no TV, newspapers, or eating on the run). Eat slowly, taking the time to fully enjoy and concentrate on each bite.
2) Guided imagery

Whilst sitting or lying in a relaxed and comfortable position in a quiet place picture a scene which is restful and relaxing for you. Consider:
What can you see? (e.g. tall cliffs, birds wheeling in the sky, white peaked waves)
What can you hear? (e.g. the surf crashing, the flap of a sail)
What can you smell? (e.g. salt from the sea, charcoal from the barbeque)
What can you feel? (e.g. the warm sun, the fluffy towel you are lying on)
What can you taste? (e.g. salt on the breeze)

3) Breathing and progressive muscle relaxation

When we are worried changes in breathing and tensed muscles bring on unpleasant sensations and increase anxiety levels. Using breathing and relaxation techniques can decrease the sensations and promote feelings of calmness and relaxation.

Breathing -
If you are breathing too quickly and too deeply you take in more oxygen than the body needs which can lead to worrying sensations. Generally breathing rate is about 12-14 breaths per minute when calm and relaxed.
It is also important to clarify in you are a chest breather or a stomach breather.
Chest breathing is shallow and rapid. Anxious people often experience breath holding, hyperventilation or shortness of breath whilst chest breathing.
Stomach (abdominal / diaphragmatic) breathing is used more by people who are less anxious or managing their anxieties. Breathing tends to be even and the body is better able to produce energy from the oxygen and remove carbon dioxide.

You may wish to consult your doctor before doing any breathing exercises if you have a physical condition which is related to breathing problems.
• Relax your upper chest and shoulders.
• Relax your jaw and breathe in slowly through your nose.
• Breathe in so that your stomach rises. Check that you are using your stomach / diaphragm by placing one hand on your chest and the other on your stomach.
• Breathe out through your mouth and let the air ‘fall out’ effortlessly.
• Aim to breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 2 and breathe out for 6. If you find this hard try 3, 1, 4 first.
• Counting also helps you to focus and not think about anxiety provoking ideas.
• This does take practice. Lots of people find that they experience unusual sensations when they first try this exercise, but it is learning a new skill and takes time to learn and become used to. Do not worry if it is initially difficult – if you have been breathing differently for years this new technique will take some time to get used to.

Progressive muscle relaxation
Initially begin with the breathing exercises. When you are ready focus on the muscle groups as described below. Focus on the tension for 5 seconds and then relax for 10 seconds and notice the sensation of the relaxed muscle.

You may wish to use the following as a script and record it for future use perhaps with some music.

Start with the large muscles of your legs. Tighten all the muscles of your legs. Tense the muscles further. Hold onto this tension. Feel how tight and tensed the muscles in your legs are right now. Squeeze the muscles harder, tighter... Continue to hold this tension. Feel the muscles wanting to give up this tension. Hold it for a few moments more.... and now relax. Let all the tension go. Feel the muscles in your legs going limp, loose, and relaxed. Notice how relaxed the muscles feel now. Feel the difference between tension and relaxation. Enjoy the pleasant feeling of relaxation in your legs.

Now focus on the muscles in your arms. Tighten your shoulders, upper arms, lower arms, and hands. Squeeze your hands into tight
fists. Tense the muscles in your arms and hands as tightly as you can. Squeeze harder.... harder..... hold the tension in your arms, shoulders, and hands. Feel the tension in these muscles. Hold it for a few moments more.... and now release. Let the muscles of your shoulders, arms, and hands relax and go limp. Feel the relaxation as your shoulders lower into a comfortable position and your hands relax at your sides. Allow the muscles in your arms to relax completely.

Focus again on your breathing. Slow, even, regular breaths. Breathe in relaxation.... and breathe out tension..... in relaxation....and out tension.... Continue to breathe slowly and rhythmically.

Now focus on the muscles of your buttocks. Tighten these muscles as much as you can. Hold this tension..... and then release. Relax your muscles.

Tighten the muscles of your back now. Feel your back tightening, pulling your shoulders back and tensing the muscles along your spine. Arch your back slightly as you tighten these muscles. Hold.... and relax. Let all the tension go. Feel your back comfortably relaxing into a good and healthy posture.

Turn your attention now to the muscles of your chest and stomach. Tighten and tense these muscles. Tighten them further...hold this tension.... and release. Relax the muscles of your trunk.

Finally, tighten the muscles of your face. Scrunch your eyes shut tightly, wrinkle your nose, and tighten your cheeks and chin. Hold this tension in your face.... and relax. Release all the tension. Feel how relaxed your face is.

Notice all of the muscles in your body.... notice how relaxed your muscles feel. Allow any last bits of tension to drain away. Enjoy the relaxation you are experiencing. Notice your calm breathing.... your relaxed muscles.... Enjoy the relaxation for a few moments....

When you are ready to return to your usual level of alertness and awareness, slowly begin to re-awaken your body. Wiggle your toes
and fingers. Swing your arms gently. Shrug your shoulders. Stretch if you like.

*Consult your doctor if you have any medical condition which you feel may impact on your ability to access the progressive muscle relation activity.*

**Healthy staff rooms**

Imagine you have just completed teaching 3c for the morning. It has been very busy, 2 children have argued, 1 child has been sick and there is a huge mess in your room from the science investigation you have been doing, not to mention lots of marking and report writing waiting for you. You head along to the staff room for a few minutes rest. As you arrive in this haven what would you hope to see? The following are suggestions from research carried out with teachers and although every school is different may provide some food for thought.

- Try to keep work related notices to a minimum or at least on one wall / corner of the room. Many staff report that work notices add to the pressure they already feel under.
- Consider having notices up about other events going on in the area such as theatres, dance classes, sports clubs.
- Staff may also appreciate a calming colour in the staff room if possible and some pictures.
- Try to have comfortable furniture in the staff room. Staff are going there to relax and feeling uncomfortable only adds to stress, irritability and the sensation of 'not having a break'. Consider cushions: these do not have to be state of the art, but do promote the sense that staff comfort and chance to have a break are valued.
- Encourage staff to use the staff room. In the research carried out into staff well being having something nice to eat in the staff room was important. Perhaps once a week cakes, fruit or home cooking might be available on a rota basis.
• Consider having designated areas in the staff room if it is big enough
  - a work area, a social area, a lunch area.
• Ensure good lighting in the staff room and if possible curtains or blinds.
• Depending on the size of the school see if other ways around constant interruptions can be found. For example, do ice packs have to be kept in the staff room? Is there a culture that being in the staff room means that you are constantly available?
• Some staff have proposed having a staff chill out area in another space in school.
• Some staff suggested maintaining weekly sessions of Chill and Chat with a rota for those who wished to join in to set it up.
• By highlighting staff well being and promoting having a short break staff can be made aware of the benefits to both themselves and the children.
• Consider having a staff well being policy or a staff well being working group to establish ways in which staff well being can be promoted within school systems and with small changes.

Teachers noticed the following benefits and advantages of stopping and taking ‘time out’ at lunchtime just once each week:
- Staff got to know each other better socially.
- ‘Stepping out of role’ for a short time provided both a mental and physical break.
- The chance to eat and enjoy their lunch.
- A supportive and team spirit.
- Discussion of feeling tired, having a bad day or being overloaded was acceptable.
- They felt refreshed and happier after the break.
- A break from ‘work talk’.
- Space to think
- Feeling more relaxed
- A feeling that staff well being was important and part of the school ethos.
Where to get help

The following provides details of sources of support and help. It is not an exhaustive list.

Teacher Support Network - This service is for those who work in the education sector and their families and can be contacted by telephone or on line. The website provides a wealth of information and fact sheets ranging from managing stress to changes in the curriculum. You can also sign up to receive regular newsletters regarding health and well being. Website http://teachersupport.info telephone contact 08000 562561.

Talk to your GP or practice nurse.

Your school educational psychologist will be happy to work with your school to identify ways in which to promote staff well being.

Contact your union.

The ‘Well Read’ Library Scheme provides books and audio CDs and DVDs on mental health issues. Participating libraries include: Barrow, Carlisle, Kendal, Pentrith, Workington and Whitehaven.

For information about sporting and active clubs and societies contact www.activecumbria.com. This website includes details of sport clubs, classes and societies in the area.
References

References for ‘What contributes to mental well being?’


**Additional references**


Teacher Support Network (undated). *The Path to Better Health and Well Being in Education.*

http://teacherssupport.info/uploads/1/Path_1.pdf
Appendix 12 The Chill and Chat room

Therapy area

Cakes and mental health information

Heart math computer

Hand massage

Social eating area

Magazines and comfy chairs

Kitchen area