Children and young people's perceptions of social, emotional, and mental wellbeing provision and processes in primary and secondary education: A qualitative exploration to inform NICE guidance

Final report
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About the Research Team

The project was independently conducted by a team from the Manchester Institute of Education, The University of Manchester; Liverpool John Moores University; the Evidence Based Practice Unit (Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families and University College London); and Edge Hill University.

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Contents

Tables

Figures

Appendices

List of acronyms

CYP = children and young people

EAL = English as an additional language

EOI = expression of interest

FSM = free school meals

NICE = National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

NIHR = National Institute for Health Research

PHAC = Public Health Advisory Committee

PPIE = patient and public involvement and engagement

PRU = Pupil Referral Unit

SEND = special educational needs and disabilities

Executive summary

Background

Social, emotional, and mental wellbeing is increasingly recognised as a key aspect in the development of children and young people (CYP), associated with short- and long-term outcomes for both education and health. There is a growing emphasis on education settings as an appropriate space to provide support in these areas, and a developing evidence base exploring aspects of impact and considering how this translates into recommendations for practice. However, as a whole this evidence base has limited inclusion of the voice and perspective of CYP themselves. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has been asked by the Department of Health and Social Care in England to update public health guidance on Social, Emotional, and Mental Wellbeing in primary and secondary education. This current piece of research aimed to recruit and facilitate focus groups with CYP to gain insight into CYP's perceptions of social, emotional, and mental wellbeing provision and processes in primary and secondary education, to inform this development of NICE guidance on social, emotional, and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education. The guidance groups school provision into four main approaches, which we explored with CYP in this project: 1) Whole-school approach; 2) Universal education; 3) Targeted provision; and 4) Transition.

Method

A qualitative design was adopted, undertaking remote online focus groups with CYP aged 6 to 17 years from a range of diverse backgrounds across England. Purposeful maximum variation sampling was used to recruit a diverse sample across geographic regions, setting type, phase of education, and CYP demographics. Particular attention was given to including those not always 'heard' in research, such as (but not limited to) CYP excluded from mainstream school or at risk of exclusion, CYP with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), CYP who have experienced trauma, and persistent absentees. A total of 49 CYP in seven educational settings took part in seven focus groups. The CYP spanned Key Stages 1 to 4 as well as a group in Post-16 provision, and 10 CYP were in alternative provision. The focus group approach involved asking CYP to imagine they were headteachers in an imaginary school and to work through a range of scenarios and stories in a 'storybook' approach, with images, visual prompts, and stories/vignettes to aid discussion. There were four parts to the focus group to reflect each of the approaches to school support covered by NICE (whole-school approach, universal education, targeted provision and transition). The research design and focus group schedule and materials were informed by a consultation group of 10 CYP acting as advisors. This process was key to the development of the research approach, and focus group schedule and materials. We analysed data using reflexive thematic analysis to explore themes and patterns across focus group discussions.

Findings and Implications

CYP perceived potential benefit in **whole school approaches**, but emphasised that this needed to be fully embedded, communicated to and shared by everyone, and fit with and complement wider approaches of school life. CYP viewed pupil voice as fundamental here, helping to increase ownership and the quality of the approach, and emphasised that relationships across the school are a critical foundation for the success of a whole school approach.

CYP viewed **universal curriculum approaches** as potentially useful, including short- and long-term benefits. CYP emphasised the need to select and approach sessions carefully, including ensuring age-appropriateness and avoiding over-generalised content, pathologizing 'normal' feelings, and forcing sharing. CYP emphasised that the staff member delivering these interventions should be effectively trained to do so, and that positive, caring staff-pupil relationships were important. CYP also indicated that peers can provide support and learning for one another in these sessions.

For **targeted social and emotional approaches and targeted mental health support**, CYP advised that staff pro-actively monitor pupils to identify needs for support, and actively create opportunities for CYP to seek help. They highlighted approaches to provision including providing space to talk, building relevant skills, and boosting social connectedness. CYP emphasised the importance of positive, trusting staff-pupil connections alongside a wider school culture prioritising wellbeing. CYP highlighted stigma and vulnerability issues and stressed the need for sensitivity and discretion.

CYP highlighted that **transition** can be stressful and advised that familiarisation processes could help to tackle pupils' worries. CYP stressed the value of supporting pupils in building new relationships with staff and peers *and* in managing the loss of important relationships. CYP drew attention to individual needs and the need for tailored support, and emphasised the value of information exchange between settings. CYP stressed the importance of settling back in slowly and gradually rather than rushing CYP to return to 'normal' and pressuring them to catch up in the return of pupils to settings after school closures in the COVID-19 pandemic

We note several overarching considerations that CYP consistently discussed as important in relation to multiple areas of wellbeing provision, namely positive relationships with teachers, a safe and trust-based school ethos around wellbeing, the role that peers can play for one another, CYP voice and decision-making, and the need for multiple approaches to meet varied needs.

1. Introduction to the study

1.1 Context

The social, emotional, and mental wellbeing of children and young people (CYP) is increasingly recognised as a key aspect of development, and is associated with both short- and long-term outcomes across academic achievement, health, wellbeing, and future success (Early Intervention Foundation, 2015). There is a growing emphasis on education settings such as schools and colleges as an ideal environment for the promotion of CYP's wellbeing (Department of Health and Department for Education, 2017). This can be achieved through a variety of combined approaches:

- *whole school approaches,* which provide supportive, caring and nurturing environments via the culture, ethos and climate of the school;
- *universal approaches,* which offer taught curriculum content and classroom-based interventions;
- *targeted provision,* via interventions that are tailored to meet the needs of individual or small groups of CYP identified as needing extra support in developing social and emotional skills or at increased risk of mental ill health; and
- *transition support,* by supporting CYP during periods of transition, which can include, for example, developmental transitions such as puberty, life transitions such as family break-ups or bereavement, and educational transitions such as moving from primary to secondary school.

The impact of, and characteristics of, these approaches and specific programmes and interventions has been widely studied (e.g., Corcoran et al., 2018; Durlak et al., 2011; Goldberg et al., 2019; O'Connor et al., 2018; Sklad et al., 2012; Wigelsworth et al. 2016). However, this research tends to be highly quantitative and outcome-focused (O'Connor et al., 2018), and has not always prioritised direct engagement with CYP to elicit and be guided by their opinions, experiences, and perceived impact. This current study aims to achieve just that, by recruiting and facilitating focus groups with CYP to inform the development of NICE guidance on social, emotional, and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education.

1.2 The voice of CYP

In recent years, directly engaging with CYP in research to understand their views on matters affecting them has been a growing priority, in line with their recognised rights to have a say in such issues (UN General Assembly, 1989) and an emphasis on a 'no decision about me without me' approach, including in developing effective wellbeing provision for CYP (Department of Health and NHS England, 2015). CYP voice can be incorporated into the research process as research partners through patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE), and as participants themselves to share their perspectives on the area of interest (Bishop, 2014). Exploring and understanding the perspectives of CYP is crucial as we continue to shape wellbeing provision within education settings, in order to understand their needs and the best approaches to meet these needs. Furthermore, we highlight that there are often 'seldom heard' groups in educational and health research, and individuals from such groups may have different needs and ideas about what provision should offer

(Ryan et al., 2017; Tangen, 2008). For instance, individuals with additional needs, such as special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), are often less represented in research with CYP (Bradbury-Jones et al., 2018). As such, a key priority in this study was to engage with CYP from a range of diverse backgrounds and ensure inclusion of seldom heard groups, to develop findings that captured perspectives from a variety of CYP.

1.3 The current research

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has been asked by the Department of Health and Social Care in England to update public health guidance on Social, Emotional, and Mental Wellbeing in primary and secondary education. The guidance covers how educational and other professionals can provide a supportive environment, universal education, and targeted interventions to promote good wellbeing in CYP in primary and secondary education. To assist in the development of this guideline, a Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) has been appointed to review the evidence, draft recommendations, identify dissemination and implementation issues and act as a champion for the guideline after publication. The guidance will focus on CYP in all educational settings and cover the following key areas:

1. Whole-school approach including the identification of those with, or at risk of, poor social and emotional wellbeing
2. Universal education
3. Targeted social and emotion approaches
4. Targeted mental health support
5. Transition

This current piece of research was commissioned by NICE as part of this process, and set out to recruit and facilitate focus groups with CYP to inform the development of NICE guidance on social, emotional, and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education. This aimed to allow the perspectives of CYP to be incorporated into the NICE guidance, as CYP under the age of 16 are not able to sit on the advisory committee.

The aim of the project was to discuss both the evidence identified and reviewed by NICE (through their initial reviews of the evidence in these areas) and the Public Health Advisory Committee (the guideline committee that considers the evidence and drafts recommendations for the guideline) and their interpretation of it, with CYP (ages 5-18) in primary and secondary education (Key Stage 1 to Post-16 education), and alternative provision, including 'seldom heard' CYP, so that their perspectives can be incorporated into the work of the PHAC. As per the tender specification, the CYP who joined in the focus groups were asked to provide insight about their perspectives on the evidence (including gaps in the evidence base) and the relevance and impact of initial formative recommendations drafted by the NICE and the PHAC committee and any other specific issues identified by the PHAC (e.g., emergent issues around the transition back to school after closures in the context of COVID-19).

Research question and objectives

What are CYP's perceptions of social, emotional, and mental wellbeing provision and processes in primary and secondary education, as a reflection on formative recommendations on evidence-based best practice from NICE?

1. What are CYP perspectives on the use of whole school approaches for social, emotional, and mental wellbeing?
2. How do CYP think skills-based universal approaches should be delivered?
3. How do CYP think targeted support should be delivered?
4. a) What are the needs and concerns of CYP during the transition process? and b) What do CYP think would support the transition process?

2. Method

2.1 Research design

A qualitative design was adopted, using remote online focus groups with CYP aged 6 to 17 years from a range of diverse backgrounds, with PPIE used to help shape aspects of our approach. Use of a qualitative design suited the research questions, creating space for CYP to share their perspectives and experiences as experts on the issues affecting them and how wellbeing provision in schools can meet their needs. PPIE was undertaken to support meaningful and age-appropriate engagement with our participants. Remote meetings were held with two small 'consultation groups' of CYP from different age groups to explore how best to engage in qualitative discussion with others their age. Details of this process and the key outcomes in shaping our methods are outlined in Section 2.2 Research design consultation process

Engaging a diverse sample was prioritised to ensure that findings could capture perspectives from CYP across a range of backgrounds and circumstances, spanning age groups, education setting types, and personal characteristics. This decision reflects a recognition that there are often 'seldom heard' groups in educational and health research, and that individuals from these seldom heard groups may report different needs and ideas about what provision and care ought to offer (Ryan et al., 2017; Tangen, 2008). To generate data, remote online synchronous focus groups with CYP were used and based within a range of educational settings. Our use of *remote* focus groups was driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, as this allowed us to adhere to UK government restrictions for social distancing at the time of data generation rather than delaying the study until such time that restrictions were lifted. Focus groups are a form of group interview that aim to generate discussion between research participants in order to generate collective group data. This approach is beneficial as it encourages participants to talk to one another, ask questions, exchange and comment on each other's experiences and opinions, and fundamentally explore why participants hold the views they do (Kitzinger, 1995). Use of focus groups was in line with NICE's tender for the project, and this approach to data generation can offer a valuable and interactive means of exploring CYP's perspectives and ideas (Gibson, 2007).

In line with qualitative research guidance (American Psychological Association, 2018), offered here is a brief statement about the research team. We are a team of researchers interested in how schools

and other services can provide appropriate wellbeing support to CYP. We have particular expertise in using qualitative research to include the voice of CYP in this area, in order to understand the process and practices, barriers and facilitators to delivery, reach and experiences, and perceptions of impact involved in such provision. Thus, we are sensitive to working with CYP and well versed in methods and practices suitable for sensitive issues with CYP, including online methods. We acknowledge a range of wider areas of research interest and activity that may have influenced our approach to the project, such as team members' work in relation to specific intervention types, developmental psychopathology and adolescent mental health, health care, and special educational needs provision. Finally, we note that Pert, Deighton, Mason, and Bray are parents to CYP of schooling age.

2.2 Research design consultation process

It is recommended to include CYP as advisors to inform the research design and approach when undertaking research with and about CYP (National Institute for Health Research [NIHR], 2021; Staniszewska, 2018). Our overview of this process here follows guidance from Staniszewska et al. (2017) on reporting PPIE, outlining: aim, methods, results drawn from our PPIE discussions, conclusions drawn for decision-making in the project, and reflections on the process.

Aim: The aim of the PPIE process was to inform the focus group approach and to guide the technical and practical side of running online focus groups with CYP. It was also hoped to engage in PPIE in the final stages of the project to aid our interpretation, but pressures for schools after closures and with ongoing quarantining measures for pupils in the summer term of 2021 delayed data generation and also impacted on school availability, and as a result it was not possible to successfully arrange this with the involved settings.

Method: Consultation groups with 10 CYP were conducted in two settings, one representing primary school children (7 children aged 7-8 years) and one representing secondary age ranges (3 young people across a variety of secondary school ages, as this was conducted in alternative provision with mixed age groups). Demkowicz and Pert met with CYP in their setting over videoconferencing software with a school staff member providing support. We provided information sheets to CYP and their parents/carers, and sought written consent from these CYP's parents/carers and verbal assent from CYP themselves at the start of discussions. We explained the project to CYP, and raised several areas for discussion including how we could best talk with CYP about school-based wellbeing provision, the questioning approaches we could use and materials that could help the process, consideration around a school adult needing to be present throughout, and remote data generation approaches. Field notes were taken rather than audio recording as this was an advisory process, rather than a data source. The CYP who took part in these discussions were provided with a certificate and a voucher as a recognition of their contributions to the project (see Section 2.6 for Benefits to participation).

Results: Through these discussions, CYP reported that:
- Using a hypothetical school approach or 'story' approach would be helpful to facilitate CYP to talk about social, emotional, and mental wellbeing issues. Using this approach would be engaging and using different scenarios or stories would help CYP understand the focus and purpose of the research.

- The story approach was also discussed as being useful as it did not ask for personal experience or individual details.
- CYP liked the idea of asking participants to imagine being a headteacher of a school who had to make decisions. This would be helped by strategies to aid imagination, such as name stickers to write their headteacher names on and creating a name for their school.
- Younger children suggested that engagement would be facilitated by having something physical to aid discussion and engagement, like paper to draw on or things they could hold.
- CYP told us it would be okay for a teacher to be physically present with CYP as they took part in the online focus groups and they stated they would not feel concerned about coming up with ideas of what schools can do better in front of a teacher, as long as there was not an expectation that they specifically share their own personal experience.
- CYP felt that participants would feel comfortable talking remotely with a researcher, and although they acknowledged they would prefer to take part 'in person', remote discussion was better than not having a voice, and said our approach of joining remotely over videoconferencing software with them had worked well.

Conclusions and project decisions: These insights from CYP formed the basis of the approach to undertaking focus groups. Specifically, as a result of these discussions, 'storybooks' were developed and used as the central resource guiding focus group discussion, in which CYP were invited to act as headteachers and make decisions about how things would work in their school in terms of key areas of wellbeing provision. Based on these consultation discussions, it seemed that such an approach would help to engage CYP and focus the conversations while also avoiding asking participants to directly reflect on their own personal experiences, given the presence of a member of school staff. The storybook was made to be bright and engaging, and included drawings and additional resources for younger age groups (e.g., a 'lightbulb' to hold up when they have an idea, and having a large sheet of paper with a school on it to draw on, label, and name). Synchronous focus groups via videoconferencing software were used for data generation as this worked well in PPIE and was received favourably by CYP. We were also able to identify various strategies based on our experiences engaging with CYP in this way for this PPIE process (e.g., making sure the room was quiet and CYP were quite near the device). Greater detail relating to these aspects of our approaches is outlined later on (see Section 2.4 Focus group set up, schedule and resources).

Reflections on PPIE: This process of PPIE was invaluable in facilitating good engagement with CYP in data generation. The storybook approach and focus on an imaginary school proved remarkably helpful for getting participants into the spirit of the activity, and this contributed strongly to the candid and direct reflection and commentary our participants have offered on what provision ought to look like. The process also allowed the research team to identify some of the possible practical challenges that could arise through engaging over videoconferencing software with CYP from different age groups, which was useful as the specific approach used of having CYP together while a researcher joins remotely was new to us as a team. Finally, while it was hoped to engage again with these groups at the end of the project, pressures caused by the pandemic for schools meant this was not possible. Though our interpretations could possibly have been further strengthened through such a process, the focus group approach adopted prompted very direct comments in focus groups and it was possible to clarify our interpretations of their comments during these discussions. As

such, the findings offer a close representation of what CYP told us 'best practice' ought to look like, and there may well have been limited further interpretation to be added to this.

2.3 Sample and recruitment
Recruitment strategy

We used a staged approach to recruitment and advertised via a range of different local and national networks to encourage diversity.

Step One included obtaining expressions of interest (EOIs) from settings. We advertised for settings to submit EOIs via:

a) known education and teaching networks at both national and local levels (e.g., Schools in Mind, Research Schools Network, the Evidence Based Practice Unit at the Anna Freud Centre, HeadStart, eNurture Network, Manchester School Direct Network);

b) emails direct to schools in our research networks; and

c) personal contact with teaching and education practitioners.

An EOI flyer was advertised through these three methods, outlining the opportunity and need for the research. Interested settings were invited to submit their EOI via a brief online survey platform (Qualtrics, 2020), and were advised that we could reach out to invite settings from those who submitted EOIs once ethical approval had been granted.

Once ethical approval was granted, Step Two was to secure formal recruitment. We received an unprecedented number of EOIs, therefore appropriate settings were selected to allow maximum variation sampling. This is a sampling method that aims to create a sample containing cases that are purposefully diverse on specific dimensions of interest. The approach is widely used in qualitative research to pragmatically identify and select individuals that are knowledgeable, experienced, and most effective in addressing the research aims, while also maximising diversity and limiting bias (Patton, 2015). Setting demographics were collected (i.e., from the Department for Education performance tables available online at https://www.gov.uk/school-performance-tables) and included education phase, geographic location, proportions of CYP eligible for free school meals (FSM), speaking English as an additional language (EAL), and receiving SEND support. Settings were then selected based on having larger pools of CYP likely to allow for maximum diversity with respect to the above characteristics and include 'seldom heard' groups.

Finally, at Step Three, relevant settings were contacted and provided with further information. Recruited settings were contacted for a discussion of a suitable approach to the focus group and a point of contact who could liaise to arrange the process was agreed. Additional scoping was undertaken at this stage to ensure representation of different settings, particularly reaching out to alternative provision settings (e.g., via the Alternative Provision Research Network). Information was provided to each setting to support the focus group approach relevant for them, and took account of social distancing policies, IT facilities, staffing and space, and logistics of how focus group participants engage (e.g., seating arrangements to comply with policies on pupil 'bubbles' as necessitated at this point in the COVID-19 pandemic).

Sample: Settings and CYP

Eight settings were recruited, and seven[1] settings participated, across a variety of education settings from different geographic areas (nationwide representation). These schools were selected to represent different stages and types of education from Key Stage 1 through to Key Stage 4, Post-16 education, and alternative provision. Settings were also selected to engage with 'seldom heard voices', with a particular emphasis those from lower socio-economic background (using FSM eligibility as a proxy for this), those receiving SEND support, CYP who would otherwise be excluded or suspended, with adverse childhood experiences, persistent absentees, and young carers. Therefore schools with combinations of above average proportions of pupils eligible for FSM, speaking EAL, receiving SEND support, and higher absence rates, as well as two distinct alternative provision settings (a special school and a Pupil Referral Unit [PRU]) were recruited. Two types of alternative provision settings were recruited in line with our priority focus on inclusion of a range of seldom heard voices. Namely, we engaged a special school where all CYP had a statement of SEND for social, emotional, and mental health needs and/or additional needs (e.g., autism, speech and language difficulties or sensory impairments), and were in receipt of support from other agencies (e.g., social services, the youth offending service, child and adolescent mental health services, or looked after by the local authority); and a PRU supporting vulnerable CYP who are at a difficult time in their lives, and offering provision for a range of CYP as a result of managed moves or permanent exclusions. Table 1 (overleaf) outlines the profiles of each setting.

As the intended sample was to include CYP with a variety of different experiences and backgrounds, in depth discussions were had with setting staff concerning how to best identify CYP to join in. Setting staff were open and appreciative of the need for a diverse group of CYP to be involved in the project and a reason frequently cited for joining the project had been the opportunity for CYP from seldom heard groups to be involved in research informing education practice and policy.

In total, 49 CYP took part in the focus groups, ranging between five to eight CYP for each group[2] as recommended for such work (Guest, Namey, & McKenna, 2017). We collected demographic information for all CYP; for primary-aged participants this was provided by an adult (either a parent/carer or a teacher, while secondary-aged participants and older provided this information themselves (see Appendix 1: Demographic form). The CYP sample included a mix of ages from 6 years to 17 years representing Key Stages 1 to 4 and the Post-16 stage, and 10 CYP were in alternative provision. Based on demographic information provided, 49% (n=23) of the sample were boys, 40% (n=20) were eligible for FSM, 23% (n=11) were in receipt of SEND support, 32% (n=15) spoke EAL, and 61% (n=29) of the sample were of White British ethnicity[3]. These figures, above national norms, demonstrate the diversity in our sample and our emphasis on including 'seldom heard' voices.

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[1] One alternative provision setting withdraw due to whole setting in self-isolation, and a second replacement alternative provision setting was recruited.
[2] The alternative provision special school recommended up to 5 CYP to ensure group dynamics and managing CYP with more challenging needs.
[3] To protect anonymity of individual CYP broader demographic categories and percentages are presented here.

Table 1: Setting characteristics[4]

Setting ID	Education phase	No. CYP in focus group	Age group	Key Stage	Location	FSM eligibility	EAL	In receipt of SEND support	Absence
A	Primary mainstream	8	9-10 years	Key Stage 2	London	Well above average	Well above average	Above average	Average
B	Secondary mainstream	8	10-13 years	Key Stage 3	West Midlands	Well above average	Below average	Above average	Average
C	Secondary mainstream	8	14-15 years	Key Stage 4	West Yorkshire	Well above average	Well above average	Below average	Above average
D	Alternative Provision - Special School	5	10-12 years	Key Stage 3	South East	-	-	-	-
E	Post 16	7	16-17 years	Key Stage 5	North East	-	-	-	-
F	Primary mainstream	8	6-7 years	Key Stage 1	West Yorkshire	Below average	Below average	Well above average	Average
G	Alternative Provision - PRU	5	10-15 years	Key Stage 3/4	North West	-	-	-	-

[4] National averages taken from Department for Education (2020). Schools, pupils and their characteristics - FSM = 20.8%, EAL = 19.2%, SEND = 12.2% with SEND support, overall absence = 4.7%, and are available for mainstream settings. Descriptors of well above average denote 10%> than national averages. These demographics are not available for the AP settings and sixth form post 16 education setting.

2.4 Focus group set up, schedule and resources

Online focus groups offered several advantages; they worked within UK government restrictions for social distancing at the time of data generation, yield immediately available data, and reduce travel and labour costs (Fox, Morris, & Rumsey, 2007; Zwaanswijk & van Dulmen, 2014). Mediating an online focus group in 'real time' (as opposed to engaging in asynchronous online focus groups via, for instance, a message board where individuals contribute at their own convenience) has several benefits, including providing an atmosphere for active discussion and interaction, and allowed the focus group mediator to actively facilitate discussion. Practically and ethically, this allowed the focus group mediator to ensure all voices were heard, including promoting inclusion of 'seldom heard' CYP, and allowed clearer management of group dynamics (Stewart & Williams, 2005).

Focus groups were conducted by two research assistants (KP and CM) who joined remotely via conferencing software (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams), consistent with The University of Manchester's ethical guidance. The CYP were together within their educational setting, supported by a school staff member. Comprehensive school support processes and instructions were developed, which detailed the processes and expectations for the staff member present. The focus groups lasted no longer than one hour in length to limit any burden on the education settings and the time away from class and lessons for the CYP.

The focus group schedule was designed based on key themes of NICE draft evidence reviews and recommendations:

1. Whole-school approach
2. Universal education
3 & 4. Targeted social and emotion approaches and mental health support[5]
5. Transition

Thus, there were four parts to the focus group schedule to reflect each theme above. Each of the four NICE draft reviews of the evidence in these areas, respectively, was reviewed by the team to identify key areas for discussion, or concepts of interest, within each area of provision, and to identify those that are appropriate for discussion with CYP[6]. These concepts of interest were used as starting points for facilitating data generation and, later, in analysing the data (Patton, 2015). In practice these concepts were areas to look out for and guide discussion, rather than to be imposed as closed lines of questioning. This approach allows the focus group mediators to be aware of relevant concepts and explore and prompt, but not lead responses from the CYP. This approach allows for an inductive nature of qualitative inquiry and allows openness to new ideas and themes, thus allowing us to elicit the perspectives of CYP while also managing the complexity of focus group discussion in a manner that clearly maps against the areas of interest for the NICE committee (Patton, 2015).

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[5] The evidence review recommendations for targeted approaches for both social and emotional wellbeing and mental health were combined by the committee.
[6] For example, some drafted recommendation pertained to school systemic and structural qualities that may not be seen or understood by students e.g., School Development Plans and processes for monitoring and evaluation, role of school governors, Caldicott principles for information sharing and statutory curriculum frameworks etc.

The overarching focus group approach involved asking CYP to imagine they were headteachers in an imaginary school and presenting a range of scenarios and stories to them to explore aspects of provision within an imaginary setting. A storybook was designed to share with each participant which included images, visual prompts, and stories/vignettes. The book was divided into four sections to cover each of the four themes of NICE draft evidence reviews and recommendations. We developed a primary-aged version and a secondary-aged and older version of this book to best meet developmental needs for different groups; for instance, the primary-aged version included simplified wording and colourful illustrations, compared with photos in the secondary-aged version. These storybooks were shared at the beginning of the focus group session. The CYP at primary-aged settings were asked to work together to name and think about their school, while with secondary-aged CYP we simply discussed their fictional school and what it might look like. This facilitated group working enabled the group to 'settle into' the task. Researchers then used a more detailed focus group schedule (see Focus group schedule for primary and secondary aged CYP 2 for the focus group schedule, which includes images of the storybook pages). For instance, the section on targeted provision asked CYP to consider that some children at their imaginary school may need extra help and support, and ways they could help them. The CYP were given a series of scenarios to support their thinking (e.g., "Sunny in Class One is finding it hard to play with other children. Sunny might need some help learning how to make friends") and asked what we can do to help. Prompts followed to consider whether it was important for their school to help, who would they as headteachers talk to when deciding how to help, what this sort of help might look like, and how would they know which children might need extra help and why.

While focus groups are valuable for generating data with CYP, typical question-answer formats may not be most appropriate for engaging with and eliciting the voices of *all* CYP. Use of creative methodologies embedded within the focus groups, as such as the approaches outlined above, offer various advantages, including structuring discussion (Morgan, Gibbs, Maxwell, & Britten, 2002), and maintaining CYP's concentration and interest (Gibson, 2007). Crucially, the creative elements outlined above aided meaningful inclusion of 'seldom heard' CYP by offering them flexibility regarding differences in cognitive, linguistic, social, and psychological competencies, and promoting the voices (verbal or written) of those who may be less confident within a focus group setting. Alongside the storybooks additional physical materials were used to aid discussion and engagement for the primary school aged CYP, for example they had their own 'lightbulb' to hold up when they have an idea, in acknowledging that it may feel hard to 'speak out' to share views and thoughts

2.5 Procedure

Once a setting had formally agreed to take part, a stepped process was activated to support recruitment, technical set-up for the focus group, and expectations for CYP and settings. A researcher checklist for liaising with schools was checked off (see Appendix 3Appendix 4:).

Approximately 3-4 weeks in advance of the focus groups, schools were provided with further information and were asked to identify a member of staff to support the planned focus group within school (point of contact). A discussion was had with the point of contact to explain that the CYP would need to be in a quiet, private space in the school with one member of staff providing support for the focus group and this room would need appropriate IT equipment (e.g., a computer or large screen with a camera and microphone; we offered to help test this with staff in advance if they were

*unsure if this is the case). The school staff member was then asked to identify up to eight CYP to invite to take part in the focus group. As outlined in the sample section, we directly discussed with staff the importance of hearing from all different kinds of CYP. We also asked the staff member to consider factors which may mean taking part would be difficult for some individuals, such as CYP that they thought might find it upsetting to talk about how schools provide wellbeing support, or combinations of CYP where there is a difficult social dynamic (e.g., due to bullying). Packs were sent to the point of contact which contained information sheets and opt-in consent forms for the parents and carers of the CYP the school invited to take part[7], CYP age-appropriate information sheets, and a confidentiality form for the supporting staff member to sign in advance of the focus group discussion (see*Appendix 4: Information sheets

Parents/Guardian Information sheet

 Appendix 4 and Appendix 5). Each setting was provided with a secure online location to then upload signed consent forms and confidentiality agreements to, for our records, and asked to destroy their copies after we confirmed receipt.

A week prior to the focus group a member of the research team contacted each setting to check-in and provide further support where needed. This concerned confirming receipt of consent and confidentiality forms, checking with the member of staff supporting data generation that they understand what was required of them during the discussion, and whether any of the participants that had been invited required additional support that would normally be in place for classroom activities. Technical aspects were also confirmed such as the videoconferencing software to be used (e.g. Zoom or Teams) and links and joining details were provided. An age-appropriate introduction video was sent to show to CYP who had agreed to take part, to assist with informed assent procedures and aid familiarity with the research assistants ahead of the focus group. A second pack containing the focus group booklets and resources was posted to each setting.

On the day of the focus group the two members of the research team mediating the focus group joined the CYP and supporting staff member remotely. It was first confirmed that the supporting staff member was the individual who has signed a confidentiality form and that the focus group space at the setting was private and others would not enter during the discussion. Technical aspects of computing equipment and connection were checked. Participating CYP were reminded of key assent information, provided with an opportunity to ask any further questions they may have, and finally were supported in completing assent forms if they were happy to take part (see Appendix 6: Consent and assent forms); note that post-16 participants provided legal consent for themselves, rather than parent/carer consent.

Following the focus group CYP completed a demographic form (see Appendix 1: Demographic form) and researchers drew their attention to signposting information and verbally went through this information to support participants in understanding routes available to them if they wished to discuss anything further (see Appendix 7: Signposting documents). A researcher also undertook a debrief with the staff member supporting the process after the focus group via phone or email, to

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[7] CYP over 16 years of age at the sixth form did not require parental consent, as could provide informed consent for themselves consistent with ethical guidelines.

follow up on any safeguarding issues or any instances where a participant may require a check-in or support following the focus group process. A secure online location was provided for setting to upload assent and demographics forms to, and again staff were asked to destroy their copies once we confirmed receipt. Each setting was sent a thank you letter and each CYP an 'Active Citizenship' certificate and shopping voucher (see Section 2.6 for Benefits to participationBenefits to participation).

2.6 Ethics and safeguarding

Ethical approval was granted by the University of Manchester's University Research Ethics Committee (ref. 2021-11252-18677) and wider recognised ethical guidelines were followed (British Psychological Society, 2021), including for working with CYP (e.g., Common Room and Association for Young People's Mental Health, 2021).

Informed consent and assent

Multiple methods were used to ensure that CYP and their parents/carers were informed about the study and participation at all stages. Gaining assent from CYP was an ongoing process. All CYP aged under 16 years who were approached to take part by staff in the educational setting, were provided with an information pack to take home about the study at least two weeks prior to participation. The information pack included an information sheet for CYP which used text and graphics to present the information and a parent/carer information sheet (outlining the nature of their child's participation and contact details for a member of the research team if they wished to reach out with queries). Parents/carers provided written informed consent to the school for their child to take part. A week prior to the planned focus group, the CYP who were due to take part were shown a short video that provided an additional overview of the study and participation and introduced the researchers to the CYP. The researchers discussed study information again at the beginning of the focus groups and CYP were given the opportunity to ask questions before making a final decision to take part. Immediately prior to data generation, we ensured written and verbal assent from the CYP.

Young people in post-16 education were provided with information about the study, but information was not issued to parents/carers although the young people were encouraged to discuss the study and participation with their parent/carer. These young people received an information pack two weeks prior to participation, as well as viewing the video with the study overview and the meet the researchers feature. These CYP were asked to provide consent for their own participation and did not require parent/carer consent to take part. Young people aged 16 and over provided written and verbal consent prior to the start of focus groups after researchers had checked understanding and provided an opportunity to ask any questions.

Safeguarding and risk of distress

All researchers within the team were skilled and experienced in conducting research and working with CYP, safeguarding procedures, responding to safeguarding concerns in a research context and had undertaken safeguarding training. The team's existing experience and work in this area was drawn on, along with professional and institutional guidance, to develop a clear safeguarding and distress protocol and ensured that all staff are briefed on this, have a clear risk assessment in place for data generation, and ensured that all individuals involved in data generation have up-to-date Disclosure and Barring Service checks. The safeguarding and distress protocol included clear

procedures for the research team to follow should they have safeguarding concerns about a CYP who was taking part, including logging this information, notifying the Principal Investigators, sharing with appropriate safeguarding authorities (e.g., school safeguarding officer), and keeping an internal record. The protocol also included guidance for staff to follow in the instance that a participant should become distressed or recount significant feelings of distress, including pausing data generation, allow the participant to leave the focus group and be supported by staff, debriefing with supporting school staff, and emphasising areas for support. This protocol was included in our ethics application and so formed part of the ethically approved study procedures.

All participants were provided with an age-appropriate debriefing document at the end of the focus group that outlined routes for support and help if they wanted to talk about their feelings, including people in their family and at school as well as services such as Childline, YoungMinds, and Samaritans, and secondary-aged participants were also directed to The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families for self-care resources.

Benefits to participation

The proposed approach offered several potential opportunities for skill development for the CYP participating. We hoped that the use of creative methods within focus groups provided opportunities for CYP to make use of their teamwork skills, their communication skills with peers and professionals, and creative and critical thinking skills in a new way. The purpose and value of the research was emphasised to CYP so that they were aware that that their contributions aimed to effect meaningful change, which research shows CYP often view as a key advantage of research participation (Cooper Robbins et al., 2012). In line with this, each participant (including those in the consultation groups) was provided with an 'Active Citizenship' certificate (tailored across age groups) to recognise the personal and public value of participation (Kirby, 2004). This included a brief summary of the skills and accomplishment gained (e.g., teamwork, communicating with others, critical thinking skills, being creative, making a positive contribution). Each CYP who participated was also provided with a £10 shopping voucher as a thank you for taking part, this is considered an age-appropriate means of acknowledging CYP contributions to research (Cooper Robins et al., 2012; Seymour et al., 2012). To recognise the contribution of each setting a thank you letter was issued to each setting or supporting our consultation with CYP and outlined that their engagement with this research project has been critical to ensuring that CYP's voices and perspectives were represented in guidance that is being designed to support their wellbeing. It was signed by both the research team and the Chair of NICE Public Health Advisory Committee on Guidance on social, emotional, and mental wellbeing provision in schools in England. The project also includes dissemination to participants and their parents/carers as well as supporting school staff, providing benefit through helping participants see what they have contributed to in the project and understand how we will use findings to support others.

2.7 Analysis plan

Developing the analysis framework

Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, an approach that allows researchers to capture patterns across perceptions and experiences while also identifying nuances and variation across individuals and groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes across codes,

reviewing and refining themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up themes (highlighting illustrative quotes and representation across different focus group contexts). This was undertaken as a hybrid analysis, wherein coding and theme development was guided by a pre-determined conceptual framework, but there was openness to understanding information 'bottom up', or inductively, from the accounts of CYP (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Specifically, data within specific areas of provision (whole-school, universal, targeted, and transition approaches, respectively) were explored and initial organising frameworks were built within these areas based on NICE's evidence review and formative interpretations from the PHAC. For example, the PHAC's engagement with the evidence for whole-school approaches identified key areas of interest including effectiveness, personnel involvement, and the nature of the provision. As such, we engaged in discussion with CYP on whole-school provision within the three areas of 'perceived impact', 'people involved', and 'delivery of provision', while also allowing for flexibility and expansion in the areas focused upon through open-ended questioning. This allowed the construction of themes based on the specific elements within this of importance to CYP, but organised in a manner that allows the PHAC to pragmatically translate this into the development of guidance.

This analysis process was led by Pert, Demkowicz, and Mason, who met regularly throughout as needed. Pert and Mason first double coded all transcripts (i.e., both researchers added a layer of coding in the data), working within organising frameworks for each area of provision as outlined above. This double coding process was undertaken to aid credibility and dependability in our analysis (Guest et al., 2012), and given our use of reflexive thematic analysis was not intended as a 'checking' exercise but instead to allow expansion and development through a shared interpretation of data and subjective discussion of this. Pert and Demkowicz then reviewed this coding to develop and refine themes, and Demkowicz led on writing up the report of these findings in consultation with Pert and Mason. This analytic process was undertaken using NVivo software (QSR International, 2018) to facilitate systematic management of analysis and input from multiple coders, and guided by quality and rigour guidance throughout the process (Yardley, 2000; 2015).

Following analysis, it was hoped to revisit two groups of CYP for member checking, where a subset of participants feedback on findings, to validate and evolve findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). However, this was not possible. The stage at which this would have been undertaken was in the final weeks of the school year in England, and despite engaging with settings to try and organise group meetings, the COVID-19 pandemic had created considerable challenges for schools at this time, including ongoing quarantining of groups of pupils and staff, staffing issues, and concerns about the academic implications of these frequent absences. However, the focus group process facilitated the researchers to check developing ideas with the CYP 'along the way' and ensured careful interpretation of their meanings. The nature of data generation, for example the 'pretend you are a headteacher' approach, asked CYP to share directly what they wanted provision to look like in a focussed and clear way, leaving little room for misinterpretation in relation to elements of practice. The directness of participants' comments have allowed a close representation of what they told us 'best practice' should mean.

3. Findings and implications

In this section, findings are outlined for each of the four areas of provision: whole school approaches, universal curriculum approaches, targeted approaches and support, and transition support. Themes are presented and explored in each area, using indicative quotes to support and illustrate throughout, and we offer discussion and reflection on the implications of these themes in turn.

3.1 Whole school approaches

This section presents and explores themes relating to participants' perceptions of whole school approaches for social, emotional, and mental wellbeing, before reflecting on the implications of findings in this area. A whole school approach is defined as a coordinated setting-wide approach to wellbeing, with activity embedded across multiple levels of the setting including the school ethos and environment as a whole, classroom practice, monitoring and provision of targeted support, leadership and management, support for staff development and wellbeing, and working with families (Public Health England, 2015, 2021). Such approaches are encouraged by the Department for Education (2021). As whole school approaches are complex and multi-level, this discussion with participants was framed through the concept of forming and enacting 'school values' focused on helping people feel happy and okay. Using this as our starting point for discussions, we then explored participants' perspectives around how this translates into activity across the school and considerations to be made in doing so. We highlight that we did not expect participants to attend to all aspects of the considerable facets and complexities of whole school approaches as they are generally understood, and wanted to understand what about a coordinated approach in this regard appeared most meaningful from *their* perspective.

Figure 1 shows themes developed under the following organising concepts to map onto patterns within the NICE evidence reviews: (a) perceived impact of whole school approaches, (b) people who should be involved in their delivery, and (c) considerations of the approaches to delivery.

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┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐
│ Perceived impact│   │  People who     │   │  Approaches to  │
│   of whole      │   │  should be      │   │  delivery of    │
│ school          │   │  involved in    │   │  whole school   │
│ approaches      │   │  whole school   │   │  approaches     │
│                 │   │  approaches     │   │                 │
└─────────────────┘   └─────────────────┘   └─────────────────┘
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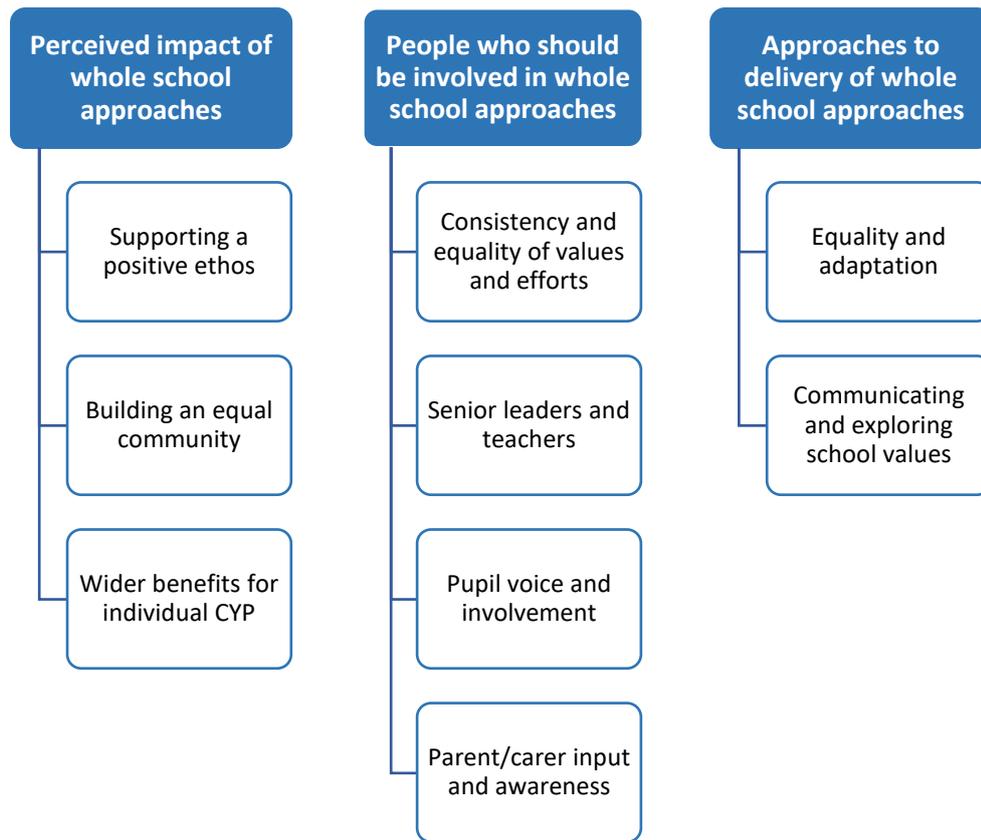

Figure 1. Themes relating to CYP's perceptions of whole school approaches

The perceived impact of whole school approaches

Having shared wellbeing values is important to CYP and supports a positive school ethos

In many cases, participants talked about how having shared whole school values (framed in our focus group discussion as values focused on helping CYP to feel happy and okay in school) could help to create a safe and supportive ethos and environment in a school, and that this could be important and positive. For instance, one participant reflected that if such values were embedded well, then *"the school [will be] a better place 'cause everyone's like appreciating like kindness and compassion it will just be a better place to be" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Whole school approaches as an opportunity to create an equal community between everyone in the school

Participants talked often here about the importance of these values being shared by everyone in the school, which they felt could help to create a sense of equality and fairness across the school: *"everyone's got a chance to be fair" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).* Participants emphasised here the value of pupils *and* school staff agreeing on and upholding these values, which they felt could create more meaningful, supportive relationships within the school where individuals were viewed and treated on an equal footing as people; *"seeing more more [sic] of a relationship between the teacher and the pupil, that's when you tend to get the best education rather than just having sort of a robotic teacher […] that's the best way to create the sort of culture around" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).* Given that this is seen as a key benefit of whole school approaches, it featured heavily

in considerations for implementation of such approaches and is explored in greater depth later in this section.

A whole school approach can bring a range of benefits for individual CYP

Participants explored a range of ways that promoting a positive environment in this way might offer benefits for CYP, including improving peer relationships and reducing bullying, reducing daily stressors, improving behaviour, and increasing their ability to focus and concentrate in lessons: *"I think that if you can have people being friends with each other they won't be that much bullying from each other" (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting); "it's always good to have like things in place when you don't want, say, a student running around and being disrespectful to other students" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).* In several instances participants also discussed the long-term benefits that an embedded ethos could bring, exploring the idea of life skills and what would be required from them later in life: *"in the future in life you don't have rules like that. You need to focus on like treating people around you well" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

People who should be involved in whole school approaches

A need for consistency and equality of values and efforts across the school community in a whole school approach

In many cases, participants directly emphasised the importance of having consistent agreement in a school's values and of everyone working to uphold these if they were to truly feed into a positive culture. This included everyone being aware of these principles: "*it's important for everyone to know the values that they can follow them, they can understand"; Key Stage 3)* and everyone buying in and feeling committed to this as a shared undertaking: *"If that's what you're trying to achieve within the school then that's what you're trying to achieve within the school. Everyone has to buy into that." (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).* This often extended into a matter of "equality", with all pupils and staff at all levels needing to be working towards the same values: *"I think everyone should follow equally like not only students but teachers as well because it's important for like no matter like what position of authority you're in, everyone should have the same values" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Participants offered some specific suggestions for how community members could work to promote values across the school cohesively. This included teachers taking turns at leading on elements of approaches, and all Heads of Year working to promote and embed values among the group they are responsible for: *"they're in charge of each year and they might be able to get them into classroom like assemblies and stuff" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).* Older participants noted that staff and also older pupils could lead by example: *"I think the best way to enforce the values is to have the teachers, erm, showing the same values" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream); "if you see the older students, you know, displaying these values, that's that's what you have to go off of when when you get to be like in your later years of school life" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).* However, they emphasised that it was important that relationships with teachers were perceived as genuine and meaningful for this to be effective: *"if you have a good relationship with your teacher and you trust them and they give you some good advice about these values, I think that's the best way to sort of enforce it" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).*

Senior leaders and school staff as key decision-makers in whole school approaches

When asked about who should decide on school values focused on helping pupils feel happy and okay and how these would be followed, participants often mentioned senior leaders, specifically headteachers and assistant/deputy headteachers. One participant reflected that a good headteacher would have good knowledge and so would be equipped to decide on what should be valued in a school: *"they know a lot about it and if they were that good at their job they have built up very far, erm, I think they should [decide]" (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting).* Participants also explored how other teachers and school adults with specific responsibilities could be involved, such as involving Heads of Year as outlined in the previous subsection. Participants noted that teachers should have a say in deciding on values: *"teachers [should decide what the values are] 'cause then they'd be happy doing what they want" (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting)* and as noted in the previous subsection on consistency teachers too would be expected to uphold these values for them to be meaningfully embedded. It should be noted that there was very little emphasis on the role of external professionals outside of regular school staff, though there was one instance where a participant noted that sometimes the government might need to be involved in deciding what is important in a school environment, *"because they're like in charge of like the area and stuff" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).*

Pupil voice and involvement is important for creating a meaningful whole school approach

In many cases, participants emphasised the value of pupils actively playing a role in decision-making around selecting and working towards school values. Participants felt that pupils should be able to share their ideas on what can be improved *"[student involvement] is a good idea because, erm, we can express our opinions on what we think, erm, can happen and what we think, erm, we should do better" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting).* Some participants emphasised that this could make pupils feel more included and heard: *"it just improves the sort of experience at the school because of things the changing of the school and the students can sort of feel like, you know, they have a part in it" (CYP in Post-16 setting).* Participants emphasised that feeling involved in this sense could help to encourage pupils to actively embrace and uphold values, and suggested approaches such as a pupil panel to help lead decision-making: *"students themselves [should be in charge of making decisions] if the students make, er, make the values, then they're more likely to uphold them" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Parent/carer input and awareness of whole school approaches

Participants predominantly focused on consistency and involvement among pupils and school staff, and parents/carers were not heavily focused on in relation to whole school approaches. However there were a small number of instances where a participant suggested that parents/carers might want to contribute to decision-making in relation to school ethos and values: *"the parents should have a say in 'cause obviously it's their children who are attending school. So at the end of the day I think they really should have a say in what [the school's values] are" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).* There were also a small number of instances where participants suggested sending home a letter about a school's values and how it would be part of school activity, which suggested an emphasis on communicating specifically to parents/carers, and some suggestion that parents/carers could be reassured to see that their child's school was prioritising wellbeing and a positive environment: *"[if you're a parent] who's got a child who's going to come into like Reception […] we want them to know*

what our values are and to make sure there's so then they don't their child doesn't get bullied" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).

Approaches to the delivery of whole school approaches
One size does not fit all: Equality and adapting to individual needs in whole school approaches
As explored in previous subthemes, considerations and possible benefits around consistency and equality were frequently raised by participants. As such, this was emphasised as central to how any whole school approach ought to be delivered, with everyone present in school deciding on, understanding, and working to follow and uphold any shared values that linked to wellbeing (that is, here, to helping everyone to feel happy and okay). However, in some cases participants reflected that this didn't mean *everyone* should be expected to behave in the exact way, and that adaptations in expectations were needed for some individuals or groups. This included considerations around age and developmental appropriateness, and the need for staff to have their own agreed upon values and ways of acting on these: *"you would have a whole different [sign] in the staffroom […] because with the rule the rules with kids it's a little bit different to the rules with adults" (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school[8]).* Participants also raised considerations here around adapting to the individual needs of pupils in thinking about how a value actually translates into expectations, and emphasised that in these situations it would be unfair to enforce standardised expectations. For instance, one example was being sensitive to how having SEND might influence behaviour, and responding in a way that was appropriate for that particular individual; *"just say like [a] kid with ADHD who's kicking off, give him time to be on his own instead of just putting him straight in detention" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).*

Communicating and exploring school values across the school
Participants offered a number of suggestions and reflections as to how 'values' could be communicated and translated into different aspects of the school. There was a particular emphasis on embedding awareness and understanding of values, and consistently reinforcing these messages and what they mean for daily activity in school. Participants suggested having signs up around the school so that everyone could see them: *"I think posters are pretty like simple basic things to have in classrooms, er, just 'cause it's there in your eyesight every day that you're in a lesson and it's easy to pick up the information" (CYP in Post-16 setting)* as well as approaches such as making these clear on the website and sending home letters: *"send letters home" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting)*; *"putting [values] on the website on the school website" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting).*

Participants also suggested more detailed delivery with room for exploration of key aspects of values and how they can link to day-to-day life at school. There was an emphasis here on blending varied opportunities for exploration and interactive discussion, including whole school or specific year group assemblies: *"I think assemblies can be a lot more interactive as well get the students involved so it's easier to hear their opinions as well" (CYP in Post-16 setting);* small group/class-based discussions: *"like going over the main smaller groups in class because I think assemblies can be quite anxious places especially if it's quite interactive" (CYP in Post-16 setting).;* and linking concepts into relevant lesson topics: *"you could maybe like at the start of lessons like go through what [values]*

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[8] Note that students in the special school were a mixed group whose ages spanned the upper and lower ranges for Key Stage 2 and 3, respectively, but were generally studying at Key Stage 2, hence our use of this here

mean and link them to, erm, the topic of the lesson somehow […] just so that everyone knows, erm, like what it is and how it's going to like affect like their life and things" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting). These approaches were seen as the most effective way to translate abstract "values" into meaningful understanding and embedding them into day-to-day activity: *"that's the main effective way of doing it 'cause posters nobody pays attention to the posters" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).*

Discussion of CYP perspectives for the whole-school approach

We talked with participants about a whole school approach in terms of a set of shared values within the culture and ethos of the school, and the discussion of participants' perspectives are interpreted in that light. Whole school approaches can help enable pupils to develop resilience and learn strategies to cope with daily stress and anxiety (Glazzard, 2019), thereby promoting wellbeing and reducing mental health problems. This concept was recognised by the participants, who overall were supportive of using whole school approaches to support wellbeing and mental health. Participants identified benefits of a shared ethos with shared values; they noted immediate impact for peer relationships, reducing bullying, reducing daily stressors, improving behaviour and helping to provide a more conducive learning environment, as well as longer term impact on working and interacting with other people in the future and outside of the school. These views are also consistent with the literature, for example a recent meta-analysis similarly supported the value of the whole school approach for leading to positive change in areas of social and emotional development, behaviour, and internalising symptoms (Goldberg et al., 2019).

 The participants discussed who should be involved in whole school approaches and how these approaches could be effective. They recognised the multiple layers and complexity in being able to successfully implement this strand of well-being and mental health support, also widely reported in the literature (Demkowicz & Humphrey, 2019) and draw on components captured in Public Health England's (2015, 2021) eight principles for promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges. An emphasis was therefore made on needing such approaches to be: i) fully embedded, ii) communicated to and shared by everyone, and iii) fit with and complement approaches to pervade every aspect of school life in order to work. These aspects are also communicated in the Department for Education's (2018) *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools* report, stating school leaders should communicate their vision clearly and with the whole of the school community, similarly acknowledging the broader range of associated people including the school staff, pupils, parents/carers, pupils and outside agencies, and furthermore, should be fully embedded and underpin everything the school does. However, participants felt it important that these approaches are be fair, and in certain circumstances are sensitive to making allowances for CYP who might find maintaining such values difficult. Therefore, it is important to take individual needs into account, so as not to place unreasonable expectations on some CYP.

Working in partnership with pupils is fundamental to a whole school approach to support social and emotional wellbeing and mental health in CYP. Consistency and equality among all were heavily drawn on by our participants in suggestions for how whole school approaches could be successfully implemented. Through this lens, the whole school approach should therefore be inclusive of not only the pupils but the teachers and wider school staff too. This can be achieved through both collective decision-making and in the upholding of these values. Participants reported there is place

for everyone to be involved in decision-making, but there is certainly a role for CYP and our participants actively wanted this. For whole school approaches to be successful, participants felt there needs to be agreement between school staff and pupils in order for this approach to be meaningful and create supportive relationships. That is consistent with previous research on the views on CYP and that the role of the pupil in decision making should be a process leading to real change, not a 'one-off' or appear 'tokenistic' (Hall, 2010). The pupil voice is a key aspect of the Public Health England (2015, 2021) principles for whole school approaches, stating that involving pupils in decisions affecting them helps them to feel part of the school and provides them some control over their lives, ultimately benefiting their wellbeing. It should be noted that this kind of democratic decision-making at the setting level would necessitate ongoing revisiting and reshaping over time, to continue being responsive to changing needs and to create a sense of ownership for newer cohorts of CYP.

Our participants proposed a variety of different ways staff and pupils could promote and uphold these values. For example, senior leadership working to promote and embed values among the school and year groups, teachers leading on elements of approaches, and staff and older pupils leading by example. Participants highlighted this would aid the building of relationships and communication and trust between pupils and staff. The development of positive relationships between pupils and school staff should be central to the whole-school approach (Glazzard, 2019). Together these points suggest it is not just about who is involved, it is the relationship and interaction between them, and the need for all people, pupils and staff to adhere to these. The notion of consistency in relationships within pupils, within staff, and between pupils and teachers, serves as the foundation for developing and practising school-wide approaches and is crucial to their success (Jones & Bouffard, 2012; Oberle et al., 2016)

Overall, these ideas are generally consistent with the literature supporting successful whole school planning, and clearly map onto several of Public Health England's (2015, 2021) eight principles for promoting emotional health and wellbeing in schools and colleges, including whole school components such as leadership and management, school ethos and environment, curriculum, teaching and learning, pupil voice, and targeted support.

Implications of CYP perspectives for the whole-school approach practice
Our discussions with participants highlight a range of considerations for whole school practice that policymakers and practitioners may wish to consider alongside wider evidence in this area:
- A whole school approach were perceived by our participants as being beneficial for providing a supportive environment and for supporting peer relationships, including reducing bullying and improving behaviour.
- A whole-school approach should be fully embedded and pervade every aspect of school life.
- A whole school approach should be communicated to and upheld by all involved in the school.
- A whole-school approach should be consistent and promote equality among all.
- A whole school approach should be fair and recognise needs of where there may need to be adaptations and flexibility based on the needs of individual CYP.
- CYP should be actively involved in decision-making relating to whole school approaches.

3.2 Universal curriculum approaches

This section outlines and explores themes relating to participants' perceptions of universal curriculum approaches for social, emotional, and mental wellbeing, and reflects on the implications of findings for universal provision. Universal curriculum approaches nurture the social, emotional, and mental wellbeing skills of CYP through explicit instruction as part of all pupils' classroom learning (Weissberg et al., 2015). A spiral approach is often used, beginning such provision early in schooling and subsequently continuing to build on skills through the provision of staged age-appropriate curriculum approaches over time (Weare & Nind, 2014). This teaching typically follows a specific intervention and its related content, and there are a wide variety of specific universal curriculum interventions that are available for schools (Public Health England, 2019a, 2019b).

Figure 2 shows themes developed under the following organising concepts to map onto patterns identified within the NICE evidence review for universal curriculum: (a) perceived impact of universal curriculum approaches, (b) approaches to their delivery. We note that we originally included a third organising concept here of decision-making, but points in this area tended to be smaller and closely linked to aspects of approaches to delivery, and hence this organising concept was not retained in line with our hybrid approach to be responsive to the contributions of participants.
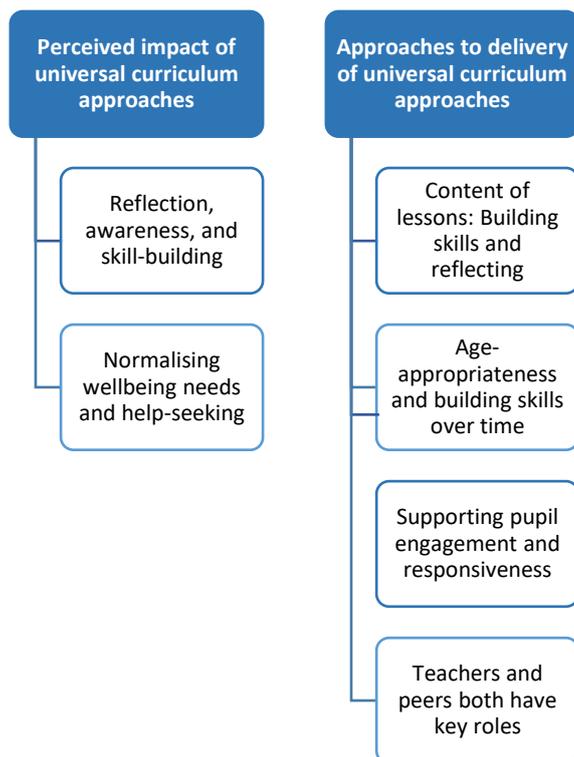

Figure 2. Themes relating to CYP's perceptions of universal curriculum approaches

The perceived impact of universal curriculum approaches
Universal curriculum approaches could allow reflection, awareness, and skill-building for CYP
Participants were generally supportive of the concept of universal approaches to social, emotional, and mental wellbeing, reflecting on various ways in which this could be helpful. This included immediate possible benefits of lesson time focused on wellbeing elements, particularly being able to reflect on one's feelings and de-stress, which they linked to approaches such as meditation and mindfulness: *"[mediation] calm you down and makes you relax more" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting); "[things like mindfulness] calm you down" (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting).* They also explored wider benefits of universal curriculum approaches, including improving relationships and social skills, encouraging greater awareness of their needs, and developing coping and stress management skills:

> *"I think that will be helpful just like more managing skills, stress, managing homework and exams […] making sure that you've got that positive learning environment and like are on top of your homework and manage stress will help them not only do better in work in the school life but also with friendships and things because they're less stressed and feel less kind of scared" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

However, some participants did reflect that whole-class lessons on wellbeing may by nature have to be very generalised and so may not be helpful for all pupils, particularly in older age groups: *"I think that teaching people how to build friendship I don't think that you can I think it's different for everyone" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).*

Universal curriculum approaches could normalise wellbeing needs and encourage help-seeking
Participants explored how dedicating regular time where wellbeing needs are explored in class could help to normalise mental health and wellbeing needs: *"I think it would be good to normalise mental health a bit more so it's less stigmatised and a lot less taboo" (CYP in Post-16 setting).* Some younger participants noted that lessons could act as a space where they know they can ask for help if they need it: *"like even a time like where […] you need help with something erm, you can like have time alone with the teacher if you need to as well" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting),* while some older participants reflected that this kind of ongoing discussion and normalisation of wellbeing could generally promote better communication and help-seeking: *"I think it's definitely useful [to have lessons] because yeah just improves communication and just makes them feel like a more like safer, er, environment" (CYP in Post-16 setting).* It was noted, however, that normalising having issues with wellbeing could cause CYP unnecessary worry or encourage pathologizing of feelings:

> *"psychologically if, erm, students were to have lessons on this then it would make them think 'right if I don't have friends then I'm going to, well, I'm not going to do well in secondary school if I, er, if I don't, er, learn this I'm going to do really bad'" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream)*

> *"I know I talk about normalising it but overly normalising it and saying that that, erm, someone in an English like book they were reading was just a typical depressed teenager doesn't really help and just labels everybody" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Approaches to delivery of universal curriculum approaches

Suggestions for the content of lessons: Building wellbeing skills and having time to reflect

Participants outlined a range of content that they thought would be helpful to focus on in universal lessons focused on elements of wellbeing; these map onto the earlier benefits that they noted could arise if such content is covered. Though these suggestions offer broad areas that could be covered, we note that some participants highlighted that staff could be responsive to emergent issues identified by pupils themselves, such as asking them to write down ideas of what they want to learn or specific worries they are having and then responding accordingly in the focus for their lesson: *"students can maybe put in like a [inaudible] how they've been feeling and the class can all like contribute […] how they can maybe solve that problem and like talk about it" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Suggestions included an emphasis on skills-based learning, both in responding to their own needs and in social skills. In some cases participants explored how lessons could focus on how personal wellbeing works and build their skills in areas like self-care or managing intense emotions such as anger: *"[it's a good idea to have lessons on mental health] because, erm, it's if we don't look after our mental health then we won't, erm, know how our body works and we need to take good care of ourselves" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting).* Participants also explored how lessons could focus on social skills, with content focusing on improving teamwork skills, developing strategies to help them navigate conflict and bullying, knowing how to manage peer pressure, and general building of wider social skill needs in life.

Beyond skills, though, participants noted how having built-in lesson time focused on wellbeing could be used to allow CYP to pause in the middle of their school day and reflect, de-stress, and simply talk to one another about things that are on their mind:

> *"not necessarily like have a full lesson about it you could have like, you know, five minutes where someone takes you out of the lesson where you can all chat and like say what's happened or, you know, has your day been alright" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).*

They noted here various ways this could be achieved, including meditation, mindfulness activities, arts-based exercises, and small-group or one-to-one peer discussions.

The importance of age-appropriateness and building skills over time

Participants emphasised the need for universal interventions to be age appropriate. They explored how CYP had different concerns and needs at different stages, including *within* primary or secondary school:

> *"Nursery can't have the same lesson as Year Sixes" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting);* *"you're teaching someone in Year 7 who has a lot less maturity levels and also a lot less like life experience, especially at high school, so you can't teach a Year 7 how to make friends compared to a year 11 because it's a lot, the way our minds think the way their minds think" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).*

Some suggested that in earlier years universal approaches could build foundational skills at simple levels, and then in later years this could be built on over time to match needs and understanding: *"I feel that as you get older you just need to slowly introduce things and changing them as you go along" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Supporting pupil engagement and responsiveness in universal curriculum approaches

Participants offered suggestions for how lessons and activities focused on wellbeing could be engaging and interesting for CYP. The importance of interactive approaches were emphasised here, encouraging time for discussion and sharing of ideas rather than more didactic delivery from a teacher: *"it can't just be a teacher like stand at the front like reading off a presentation […] have to be like quite interactive and getting everyone talk everyone involved" (CYP in Post-16 setting).* Making materials interesting and engaging was also suggested, and participants in one setting said that using rewards (e.g., stickers, prizes) could help demonstrate that everyone's engagement is valued. Participants emphasised needing enough time to dedicate to these activities and not rushing them or only exploring them once: *"it should be like part of a lesson I think it should only be a whole lesson so that that would be like more time to do the activities" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).*

There were some contrasting opinions from participants regarding the frequency in delivering lessons like these. Though many agreed such lessons would be helpful in some regard, and often suggested making sure these were regularly embedded, they felt that having these *too* regularly would become irritating and boring, and cause pupils to switch off: *"if you do it every single day it's going to be way too much just going to get annoyed" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).* There were different suggestions on what constituted a reasonable balance here, but the most common suggestion was twice a week; however other suggestions included having more regular sessions (e.g., daily) but only for a short period of time, or making time every other week as they felt this would be fine for most pupils unless they were experiencing difficulties: *"I feel like unless you really need to speak to someone like urgently or desperately, once every two weeks will be better" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).*

Although strategies like interactive discussion and opportunities to collectively reflect were generally highlighted as valuable in engaging and benefitting CYP, some older participants advised caution in how this was approached and communicated. Specifically, they noted that some CYP may feel forced to share if they are not comfortable doing so: *"in a sense it can be good because some kids need to talk about stuff and some kids want to talk about it but then it can be negative as well because some kids may feel like they're being forced to talk about their feelings" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).*

Teachers and peers both have key roles in universal curriculum approaches

In exploring the content and strategies that could be used in universal lessons, participants outlined and explored the role that teachers played here but also explored the contributions and role that CYP could play for one another as peers.

There was general agreement overall that these sessions would naturally be led by teachers and that teachers could play an important role here. However there were considerations around *who* that teacher should be, as well as some of the difficulties with teachers leading. There were several

31

instances where participants suggested having a 'specialist' wellbeing teacher that is based in the school leading these types of lessons, because they were seen as having more specific expertise and also because this promoted knowledge of a specific avenue for support: *"[a special teacher] because they're qualified" (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school)*, *"a wellbeing person [...] because we know we can always go to the same person" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting)*. Participants suggested this could be a specific wellbeing teacher or someone in a position like form tutor or senior leadership, all of whom were seen as particularly experienced in some way to lead on such lessons. Notably, some older participants reflected that they felt if a general teacher were to deliver this they would require greater training and understanding on CYP's wellbeing to do so well:

> *"we need an extra, maybe just like a lesson on the teacher training days on what to say what not to say and not to lump the students together and label them as a mental health illness or dismiss them" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Participants also highlighted the importance of the relationship a pupil has with the teacher for how engaged they will be in the lesson. Some reflected that learning and talking about wellbeing considerations with a teacher who they don't feel comfortable with or have had bad experiences with would not work well or encourage their engagement: *"if you've had a bad experience with [a teacher], you then don't want to talk about things with them so you want a different teacher to do it" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream)*. Furthermore, participants' suggestions mostly focused on internal staff, and there was little mention of external staff; one participant suggested that people who have had specific experiences could come in and share for awareness, such as mental health difficulties, but in another focus group a participant explained that some CYP wouldn't want to have more engaged lessons with someone external: *"if some like randomer, well not randomer, but randomer comes from outside and like even though they're a specialist I'm not going to start telling them everything that's going on" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).*

Participants also emphasised that CYP themselves could play an active role in these kinds of lessons through peer activities, reflecting together on different situations, worries, and ideas. Some suggested that peers would more naturally relate to and understand the specific concerns of one another in a way that teachers could not: *"I think it would be better if you like relate with your peers [...] and talk to your peers about like that makes you feel better" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream)*. Participants often talked generally about peers, but on some occasions particularly emphasised friends where there was trust and understanding: *"[a teacher] or a friend [...] 'cause you have a good friendship" (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school)*; *"students are going to listen to students more than listen to a teacher and [...] just by being friends and just like knowing each other better than the teacher would ever know them" (CYP in Post-16 setting)*. One young person suggested training up older pupils to join in delivering these universal sessions, reflecting on how their school uses peer mentoring:

> *"I thought that was really useful because I thought a lot of the time it can be quite intimidating for students to go and try and talk to [an adult] so I thought that would be particularly like, er, useful and more comfortable [...] in these sessions, erm, it would be good have like students as well with teachers, erm, sort of helping" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Discussion of CYP's perspectives for the universal approach

There was general agreement that universal approaches could be useful to support pupils' wellbeing and mental health. However participants highlighted there is lot to consider in terms on how this should be implemented, who should be involved in delivery, and what approach is appropriate. This reflects the wide variety of specific universal curriculum interventions that are available for schools in relation to pupil wellbeing (Public Health England, 2019a, 2019b).

Our participants perceived benefit for universal curriculum approaches that teach through explicit instruction in lessons to whole classes of pupils, which does reflect evidence that some universal interventions do offer positive impact (Durlak et al., 2011; Mackenzie & Williams, 2018). However, participants also discussed an option of a more reactive and fluid approach, describing steps such as allowing CYP space to think and reflect on their own wellbeing and de-stress. Here, approaches pertaining to meditation and mindfulness were emphasised. Mindfulness programmes aims to help change the way we think and feel about our experiences, pay attention to our thoughts and feelings, and fundamentally become better able to manage them. Such approaches have been shown to make positive improvements in wellbeing measures in across both quantitative and qualitative studies (McKeering & Hwang, 2019). Moreover, there is a growing evidence based researching how these work and how these should be implemented (Weare, 2019).

Universal approaches tend to be skills-based; that is, to focus on teaching and developing specific skill sets such as social and emotional competencies, coping with and managing stress and difficult feelings, building positive relationships, and resolving conflict. Participants commented that universal approaches aiding the development of skills such as managing relationships, building social and emotional skills, and coping and stress management skills, can be useful but reported a focus on wider practical skills as well, such as self-care, teamwork, managing conflict, aggression, and peer pressure would be relevant. Therefore, considering the outcome of the intervention and assessing the need of the specific pupil cohort will be helpful in determining what universal interventions to implement. Discussion also recognised the benefit of revisiting and building early work throughout the school life course, indeed beginning such provision early and continuing to build on skills using these spiral bound approaches are critical to many universal approaches (Weare & Nind, 2014).

Our participants also raised some concerns about universal approaches. For example, participants were conscious of the appropriateness for all, over-generalised curriculums, and that effective delivery is needed to be ensure it is meaningful. Participants also commented on how universal approaches are unlikely to really help those with specific needs or challenges, but this lends to the idea of multi-faceted approaches incorporating universal and targeted provision were needed (O'Reilly et al., 2018). There were also tensions around the positivity of normalising mental health and wellbeing needs, without pathologizing mental health by stigmatising and medicalising 'normal' feelings, and forcing some CYP to talk and share when they are not comfortable. This perspective from our participants is important as it highlights the potential for unintended consequences. Participants believed time dedicated to training on wellbeing and mental health for school staff delivering universal provision, and generally engaging with them more widely, could promote better communication, awareness, and understanding, and in turn support help-seeking.

In terms of delivery of universal approaches, participants commented on the need for lessons to be interactive and encourage time for discussion. There was general agreement that class teachers are well placed to deliver these sessions, but again highlighted considerations around *who* that teacher should be. Who should deliver universal social and emotional welling and mental health interventions is key and quite a complex issue warranting careful consideration. Participants stressed this needs to be someone who can understand and relate to them, and someone with whom they have a good relationship and trust, and they want to know their teacher is equipped to actually lead these conversations and feel comfortable with them. Thus, the nature of the teacher-pupil relationship and the way they perceive the self-efficacy of their teacher would impact on how CYP would engage. Universal approaches may therefore naturally give rise to discussions that may require teacher training in awareness and knowing how to respond sensitively and informedly. Integral to many universal approaches are both training and ongoing support or coaching models (Ashworth et al., 2018), and the CYP awareness of the teacher's ability to effectively deliver an intervention is critical. However, the wider points raised about the existing relationship between the teacher and CYP emphasises training may need to be broader than procedural delivery to also include more general training on being able to understand and relate their pupils and establish good relationships, to ensure they are supportive and equipped to manage these conversations and that both staff and pupils feel comfortable.

Our participants recognised their potential contributions to universal curriculum approaches, too, emphasising the opportunity here for 'peer-to-peer' learning. Participants felt they would naturally relate to and understand the specific concerns of one another in a way that teachers might not. Thus, peer-to-peer provides an opportunity for CYP to connect with others like them and may allow them to feel more comfortable sharing experiences with someone they felt they could trust and would understand. There are indications that such an approach can be a promising approach to reduce stigma and increase help-seeking for mental health problems in young people (Ali et al., 2015), and it may be useful to consider how this can be incorporated as a component of a wider universal approach.

Implications of CYP perspectives for the universal approach practice

Our discussions with participants highlight a range of considerations for universal practice concerning decision making and implementation that policy makers and practitioners may wish to consider alongside wider evidence in this area:

- Programmes such as mindfulness and mediation can useful provide a space for self-reflection.
- A skills-based universal approach can be beneficial, but should include a focus on relevant practical life skills, such as self-care, teamwork, managing conflict, aggression, and peer pressure.
- Spiral curriculum approaches are useful for developing skills across the school life course, and help to ensure age-appropriateness in building skills as matches developmental needs over time.
- It is useful to be aware of the balance between normalising and pathologizing mental health.
- Consideration needs to be given when considering in deciding on universal curriculum content to offer, considering both the needs and the perspectives of the specific cohort
- Careful consideration needs to be given to who delivers universal social and emotional wellbeing and mental health interventions, thus supporting 'peer to trusted adult' support.

- It is important to offer training for teachers, both in the specific approach but also more widely in terms of awareness, understanding, and being able to relate their students.
- 'Peer-to-peer' approaches could be incorporated into sessions to allow CYP to connect with others like them and let them feel more comfortable sharing experiences with a trusted peer.

3.3 Targeted social and emotion approaches and targeted mental health support

This section presents themes relating to participants' perceptions of targeted approaches and support for social, emotional, and mental wellbeing and mental health, and explores the implications of findings for targeted provision. Targeted approaches and support are offered for pupils who are identified as having particular emotional and behavioural difficulties and needs. These can take the form of one-to-one sessions with pastoral staff or specialist services or small group interventions, and may focus on a range of activity and goals, including building positive outcomes such as regulation skills, self-esteem, and social skills, or engaging in nurturing approaches such as nurture groups and play therapy (Brown, 2018; Cheney, 2013).

To explore this area of provision, we used a brief vignette, tailored with age-appropriate language across primary and secondary/post-16 data generation storybooks. The vignette presented three gender-neutral CYP in the imaginary school who are exhibiting difficulties (mapped onto areas of difficulty identified in NICE's evidence review) and suggested how this might translate into needs, to help participants begin to explore practical means of support and related considerations. The below sets out the three scenarios offered, drawing on the simpler wording offered in the primary-aged book (images from both the primary and secondary/post-16 book can be found in Focus group schedule for primary and secondary aged CYP).

- "Sunny", a pupil experiencing social difficulties: "Sunny is in Class One and is finding it hard to play with other children. Sunny might need some help learning how to make friends."
- "Robin", a pupil experiencing internalising difficulties: "Robin in Class Six has been feeling sad and more worried than normal. Robin might need some time talking with an adult about these feelings."
- "Alex", a pupil exhibiting externalising difficulties: "Alex in Class Four feels angry some of the time and sometimes shouts at other people. Alex might need some help to get better at calming down."

Figure 3 presents themes developed under the following organising concepts to map onto patterns within the NICE evidence reviews: (a) ways of establishing individuals' need for targeted provision and support, (b) approaches to the delivery of targeted provision and support, and (c) stigma and vulnerability surrounding targeted provision and support.

Routes into targeted provision and support	Approaches to delivery of targeted provision and support	Stigma and vulnerability surrounding targeted provision and support
Staff monitoring and knowing the "signs"	Space to talk through difficult feelings	Stigma may prevent engagement or leave CYP vulnerable
Creating opportunities for help-seeking and being approachable	Building CYP skills based on their individual needs	Ways for school staff to manage stigma and vulnerability
	Boosting peer connection for CYP experiencing difficulties	
	Offering CYP flexibility and space	

Figure 3. Themes relating to CYP's perceptions of targeted approaches and support

Routes into targeted provision and support

Participants explored different ways that school staff could identify CYP who might benefit from targeted support and creating opportunities for pupils to seek help themselves. Both for monitoring from staff and help-seeking by CYP, some specific staff roles, such as form tutors, Heads of Year, and pastoral staff were raised as potentially being appropriate staff members that had a good knowledge of pupils *and* might be considered approachable. However, it was also highlighted that having existing relationships with general teaching staff could be a benefit here. Some participants suggested that parents/carers may identify that their child is exhibiting difficulties and so let the school know and discuss support options, or vice versa with schools contacting parents/carers, but this did not feature prominently in overall discussion and suggestions.

Staff monitoring pupils and knowing the "signs" of wellbeing difficulties

In all cases, participants talked about the importance of school staff 'knowing' pupils and being able to monitor CYP, both more informally on a daily basis and through monitoring changes and patterns over time, to identify those who may need more support. Participants emphasised the need for teachers to be attuned to "signs" of difficulties, often emphasising the need to look behind a pupil's behaviour and understanding subtler cues of difficulty, such as misbehaving, seeming quiet or upset, appearing detached from peers, or shifts in body language: *"[pupils who need help] might misbehave […] because they might be angry" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting); "if they're quiet and like extremely quiet could be a sign that there is something going on" (CYP in Post-16 setting).* Some participants said that teachers ought to receive training on what these signs might be: *"I think teachers should definitely have training course and lessons in sort of noticing the signs" (CYP in Post-16 setting).* Participants tended to suggest discreetly approaching CYP in these instances: *"maybe speak to them separately so they don't get embarrassed" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream*

setting); *"just have a quiet word like "is everything okay?""* (CYP in Post-16 setting); this is explored further in a later theme around stigma and vulnerability. However, participants suggested that sometimes a pupil might not want to share their difficulties or receive support, in which case a teacher approaching them with concerns could feel intrusive and frustrating:

> *"if they don't approach [a teacher] then they don't want to be approach like even if there's instances where you might be struggling but you don't want [...] other people to know about it or help you so I think in that case I think you just need to like leave leave it alone and sort of mind your own business (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).*

Schools should create opportunities for CYP help-seeking and ensure approachability

Participants offered suggestions too for how schools could create opportunities for pupils themselves to disclose difficulties and seek help. This included teachers clearly signalling their availability and inviting such disclosures; daily check-in chats, providing opportunities to speak to someone privately, and opportunities to write down how you were doing and share this were sometimes raised as specific approaches. An older participant reflected that a form tutor of theirs had offered such an approach of inviting pupils to check in if needed:

> *"like lots of teachers at my school especially my form teacher, as we left on the morning of school did ask if we were okay and if we had anything to say could stay back for five minutes and tell him"* (CYP in Post-16 setting).

Some participants outlined the importance of knowing who to go to for support, including being aware of specialist support staff so they knew where to go when they needed help: *"[when I] found out about the wellbeing team I was like I don't need some nex [sic] wellbeing team. But now as I've come to exams I'm like shall I go to the wellbeing team?"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream). It was emphasised here, however, that for pupils to genuinely feel like they can seek help, a positive and open environment around wellbeing was needed, including positive relationships with a given teacher and teachers appearing empathetic, approachable, friendly, and *genuinely* caring:

> *"it's the type of person that teachers are. I think this is why it's important to sort of, you know, for teachers not to just be people who know about their subject but also people who can handle themselves in a social environment of a school and, you know, make people feel like they can approach them and, you know, like yeah I think it all boils down to the teachers themselves"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).

However, as in the previous subtheme, it was suggested this approach would not necessarily work for everyone, as participants did note that some CYP would be personally uncomfortable seeking help: *"depends on what the child's like [Interviewer: what kind what type of child do you think might not feel that comfortable about going?] erm, shy kids quiet kids"* (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school).

Approaches to delivery of targeted provision and support
Targeted provision and support can be a space to talk through difficult feelings
In several cases participants suggested providing space and opportunity for CYP to talk through their feelings. Some suggested this could be done in small groups with peers, where CYP can share how

they're feeling: *"like small sessions to talk to people about things and that it's okay not to be okay"* (CYP in Post-16 setting). Some seemed to focus more on one-to-one conversations with school staff, however: *"I think they should talk to the teacher or someone but I don't think, erm, I don't think we should tell like, erm, a child"* (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting); *"go have a talk with another teacher"* (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting). In some cases, participants reflected that specialist staff with specific training would be most important here: *"I think the school counsellor if the school has one would be helpful first of all but then again if teachers are educated on what they say it would be helpful"* (CYP in Post-16 setting). Some noted that external staff delivering this kind of support could be uncomfortable, explaining that a familiar teacher would be preferred as long as they are trained: *"teachers who see them everyday […] not just completely unfamiliar scary person"* (CYP in Post-16 setting). However, participants did also suggest that in some cases, someone might not want or need to talk through their feelings but instead need an adult to help them find ways to distract themselves and focus on more positive things: *"sort of distract them really from their feelings and just keep them occupied and make them focus on things they enjoy more rather than focus on these negative feelings"* (CYP in Post-16 setting).

Building CYP's skills based on their individual needs

Participants also suggested that schools could support CYP in developing skills that could be helpful for the specific difficulty they are experiencing. This included suggestions like anger management for those experiencing difficulties with anger: *"anger management so he's not shouting at everyone"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU), practising mindfulness to help CYP learn to manage difficult feelings when they arise *"we could take [the pupil] take him inside and do some mindfulness and once he's calmed down teach him a bit about being calm when you get angry"* (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting); and supporting social skill development: *"hold like some workshops about […] people who are finding it hard to make friends"* (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).

Boosting peer connection for CYP experiencing difficulties

Participants explored how school staff could help to encourage greater connectedness between a pupil and their peers. This was often some kind of "buddying" system where school staff could help to encourage connection between a pupil and one of their peers, *"a buddy system […] you're better to have find them the buddy that you think might be good for them"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU). Participants also suggested making use of school social clubs, helping CYP connect with one another in a different space: *"get some after school activities and get some people that are struggling to do it as well"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU). However, some participants highlighted the importance here of this being discrete by focusing on clubs that exist for other reasons, such as hobby groups or after school clubs, as a space or group that was identified as responding to a need could have problematic consequences, as outlined later in this section under 'stigma and vulnerability'. These suggestions of building friendship and connection for a pupil was most often in response to our "Sunny" vignette scenario, which explored responding to a child/young person who was experiencing social difficulties; however, participants did also raise this as a suggestion for responding to internalising and externalising difficulties.

In one case, a participant also suggested peer mentoring, where pupils are directly provided with training to provide support to one another, explaining that their setting is in the process of implementing this: *"like peer mentors where students could come and talk to other students […] we*

actually attended a session, mental health training"; we note this was not raised specifically as a suggestion for targeted support, but in exploring more universal school provision, but participants did note that they felt this could provide a valuable route for support should a pupil experience difficulties and not want to seek support from a teacher.

Offering CYP flexibility and space

Some participants reflected that it would be helpful to have some flexibility within the wider school activity to help pupils identified as needing support. Some suggested that teachers being aware of difficulties was helpful so that they could make things "easier" in the classroom. Several participants also suggested that pupils should be able to step away from a classroom or situation if they were feeling upset and angry, in order to de-stress and calm down, without being told off: *"if they feel like they're going to get angry at something they need to be able to leave walk out and not get told off for it" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).* Importantly this provided contrast to some of the other targeted approaches of talking through feelings or building-in support, in that sometimes it was suggested CYP would simply want some space to calm down and distract themselves from difficult feelings:

> *"they might do something related to like exercise or they might try and like read a book, just like different activities and that can sort of make them feel less worried and, you know, sort of distract them really from their feelings and just keep them occupied and make them focus on things they enjoy more rather than focus on these negative feelings" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

Stigma and vulnerability surrounding targeted provision and support
Stigma may prevent engagement or leave CYP vulnerable

Participants noted that there were issues of stigma and vulnerability that arose through targeted support approaches that need to be given consideration. Such issues could create a barrier for seeking help in the first instance or engaging in any available targeted support, but could also lead to unintended negative consequences for those who do engage: *"it's hard to make appointments [with a school counsellor] then everything would be like spread around like you teachers and students would find out […] and I know that would put a lot of people off" (CYP in Post-16 setting).* As in this last example, this could be about peers *and* school staff knowing about difficulties. In relation to peers, participants noted that there were concerns about mockery and bullying and perceptions of unfairness, and indeed some did report having seen this happen: *"lots of people used to take the mick out of people who went in [a school room for this purpose] which was awful" (CYP in Post-16 setting); "like they might not like it might be jealous how come he's getting extra help able to leave the classroom and they're not" (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school).* As such, there was often a general perception that wellbeing needs and receiving support needed to be treated as private: *"I think that they'll mind [if friends knew they were getting help] because they want it to keep it to themselves 'cause they don't want everyone else to know" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting);* although we note that peers and friends were also suggested as an important source of support. Participants also observed how leaving the classroom for targeted provision could create a sense of removal from their cohort, which could feel isolating and lonely: *"you have to make sure that they're, er, not isolated from the rest of the year group, erm, is you don't want to like make them feel like the the odd one out" (CYP in Post-16 setting),* and could also mean that they are missing out on

lessons and in turn learning: *"[it's not a good idea to take a child out of class] cause they're like missing their learning" (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting).*

Ways for school staff to manage stigma and vulnerability

Participants reflected on some of the ways that school staff can work to avoid some of these issues. Privacy and confidentiality was explored often, including teachers sharing with one's peers *and* with other school staff: *"if I'm going through something like that and someone like knew and then I got bullied I'm going to be absolutely fuming and then it's going to be the teacher's fault for then sharing it" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU)*; *"for things that like you tell the teacher for it to be kept confidential, er, etc. but how do you know that it's actually confidential?" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).* Different routes too of asking for help were suggested as useful, such as writing down if you have needs rather than directly approaching a teacher, which could feel too vulnerable: *"you could like write a note with your name on it telling, erm, like teachers about it instead of having to like go like go and speak face to face" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting),* and as noted in an earlier subtheme finding ways to create support opportunities that may not directly be seen directly as targeted provision might help (like a hobby club, rather than a support group). There are perhaps also considerations in bringing together CYP for support, as participants noted that individuals may not want to share how they're feeling if they're with peers they do not get on with: *"like they just like might not like them or they're not on the best terms with them so they don't want to like share the information" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).*

Discussion of CYP's perspectives on targeted social and emotional approaches and targeted mental health support

Participants focused on two main routes into school-based targeted provision; firstly, via staff identifying and approaching CYP who may benefit from support, and secondly via schools creating opportunities for CYP to seek help themselves. In terms of staff identification, participants emphasised the need for school staff to get to know their pupils to be able to monitor needs effectively, pointing to the importance of meaningful staff-pupil relationships in which staff are sufficiently familiar with individual pupils to be able to identify and monitor their needs; in primary or alternative provision settings this may be a class teacher, while in secondary and post-16 provision this could be a form tutor or Head of Year. Participants stressed the need for staff to be attuned to 'signs' of difficulties, including training to help them build knowledge in this area, suggesting value in training and supporting staff in developing mental health literacy. We note that research has highlighted gaps in mental health literacy among educators in English schools, including that staff may not feel completely confident in this role, and that there are gaps in multi-agency working, with most training being delivered by internal school staff rather than specialist services (e.g., see Danby & Hamilton, 2015; Hanley et al., 2020; Mansfield et al., 2021).

It was clear in our discussions that the role of school staff here in facilitating the help-seeking process is critical to this process. That is, schools should actively create opportunities for pupils to seek help (e.g., staff inviting such disclosures through check-ins or signalling availability for private discussions), clearly signposting avenues for support, and fostering open and positive environments and teacher-pupil relationships that genuinely encourage help-seeking. It is important to note that evidence suggests adolescents are more inclined to seek help for personal and emotional needs through informal relationships (e.g., family, friends) and may view this kind of support as beyond the

remit or capabilities of school staff (e.g., Rickwood et al., 2005; Stapley et al., 2019). As such, it is important that schools take active steps to support pupils in seeking help to help identify needs for targeted provision and support, alongside pro-active monitoring approaches as noted above.

Participants suggested a range of approaches and goals in the delivery of targeted provision and support that they felt would be helpful and acceptable to CYP, including providing a space to talk through difficult feelings (either one-to-one or in small groups), building CYP's skills based on their individual needs (e.g., emotion regulation), and boosting peer connection. These suggestions reflect provision types typically offered in English education settings at the time of writing. School-based counselling as a space to share difficult feelings and explore skill-building is increasingly encouraged (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, 2015; Department for Education, 2016) and there is some evidence of efficacy in reducing distress and creating wider benefits, at least in the short term (e.g., Cooper et al., 2021; Kernaghan & Stewart, 2016; Pearce et al., 2016). A focus on building specific skills (e.g., self-regulation, empathy, social skills) to reduce difficulties is a common feature of a range of intervention approaches (Cheney et al., 2013), with some evidence of effectiveness and acceptability across different intervention programmes (e.g., Humphrey et al., 2010; McKeague et al., 2017). Participants' suggestion also of simply boosting peer connection warrants consideration, reflecting evidence that peers are among the strongest social connections in predicting adolescents' health behaviours and outcomes (Umberson et al., 2010). The suggested approach of helping CYP identified as at risk in building relationships discreetly through hobby clubs and other similar spaces echoes aspects of the social prescribing approach, in which professionals (including school staff) refer individuals to a range of community activities to support wellbeing and mental health (see Bertotti et al., 2020). Thus, findings indicate that CYP may perceive many commonly delivered targeted approaches to be acceptable and potentially helpful, and it would be valuable to directly understand what individual CYP wish to gain through engaging with provision to best identify approaches that suit their needs.

Participants stressed the importance of positive, trusting connections between pupils and school staff throughout our discussions on targeted provision. They explored how such relationships are key for being able to identify need and facilitating help-seeking, that familiar school staff would be a preferred delivery agent for interventions (as opposed to external professionals), and that it was important to trust staff to keep their issues confidential. In interventions that require an external professional delivering provision, it may be advisable to focus on initial relationship and trust building exercises in early sessions before beginning to focus more explicitly on specific content, as advised by Gronholm et al. (2018).

More widely, participants observed that teachers ought to adopt a flexible approach in day-to-day school activity for those identified as needing support. In this sense, it is not only targeted intervention that is needed but a wider attitude of compassion towards these pupils and providing them with the ability to independently manage situations in the way that suits them, such as stepping away from a situation if needed. Participants' emphasis on teacher-pupil relationships as impacting upon the reach and delivery of targeted provision and the needs of at-risk pupils reflects the principle that targeted approaches ought to sit within a wider whole-school approach (Public Health England, 2015, 2021) and should be recognised as closely linked to the wider school culture rather than a fragmented bolt-on (Spratt et al., 2006). Findings emphasise the need, then, to attend

also to the wider school ethos and to facilitate positive and trusting relationships between pupils and staff, ideally before issues emerge that warrant targeted support.

Participants presented stigma and vulnerability as a key concern in accessing targeted provision, noting that this may prevent engagement or create additional vulnerability, potentially leading to mockery, bullying, and perceptions of unfairness. Stigma has long been recognised as a barrier to support for those in need of wellbeing and mental health support, and seems to become particularly intense in adolescence given the growing weight placed on peer status and the development of one's identity (Rickwood, 2015). Though it has been suggested that locating provision within schools may help to normalise support and reduce stigma (Baruch, 2001), past studies have similarly found that CYP do perceive a level of stigma around accessing school-based targeted provision that can prevent engagement and potentially pose risk to those who take part (Gronholm et al., 2018; Prior, 2012; Spratt et al., 2009). Participants noted several ways that school staff can work to reduce concerns and risks, including ensuring privacy and confidentiality is communicated and upheld, offering multiple routes of asking for support, and using discreet approaches to providing support such as how activities are framed. Participants also noted that there is a need to consider the specific composition of CYP in a group-based programme, carefully considering the existing social dynamics that exist among pupils that may influence their engagement (e.g., if there are peers that do not get along well). It is important to note here that findings indicate variation in who CYP might want involved; for instance, some indicated friends could offer a key source of support that should be actively drawn upon and others indicated that CYP may not want their friends to know if they receive support. Taken together with the considerations above, we emphasise the need for individualised discussion with CYP identified as in need of support about who they think ought to be aware and involved, to support a feeling of personal safety and comfort as meets that aligns with individual needs.

Implications of CYP's perspectives for targeted social and emotional approaches and targeted mental health support

Our discussions with participants raise a number of implications that may be useful in targeted social and emotion approaches and targeted mental health support, which policymakers and practitioners may wish to consider alongside the wider evidence in this area in making decisions for their context:

- Actively monitor and identify CYP for targeted support based on individual needs and vulnerabilities, with training and support for staff to facilitate efficacy.
- Pro-actively create opportunities for CYP themselves to self-identify needs or choose to access provision, including consideration of the wider school culture, clear signposting of support avenues, and actively encouraging help-seeking.
- Offer individual and/or group support to CYP identified as needing targeted support and involve CYP in decisions about the interventions that they feel suit their individual needs.
- Consider embedded support beyond individual interventions, including facilitating CYP's peer networks and allowing for flexibility and compassion in wider day-to-day school activity.
- Treat targeted provision as one component of a wider whole school approach to wellbeing and mental health, rather than a single approach that can be added in to support those at risk.

- Ensure that practitioners delivering an intervention has specialist training and knowledge, preferably someone based within the school to aid familiarity.
- Engage in individual discussion with CYP to understand their individual needs as to who should be aware and involved in their engagement in provision, and be mindful of the risk and stigma in how their engagement is discussed with the CYP themselves and others.
- Be sensitive to individual needs and existing social dynamics when considering the composition of a targeted group intervention.

3.4 Transition support

This section outlines themes relating to participants' perceptions of transition processes and how settings can provide support in this area. We note that CYP may experience a range of transitions over their educations, including education and life stage shifts where pupils move to a new year, key stage, or setting, or even leave education, and more individualised transitions such as joining a new school mid-stage or mid-year, or changes in personal circumstances. To explore this area with our participants, we used a broad starting point rather than specifying a specific 'transition' type. With primary-aged participants, we explained that there would be new children starting in the imaginary school and asked them to consider how teachers could help them. With secondary-aged and post-16 participants, we explained that CYP often experience change and transitions in education and provided examples such as starting at primary/secondary school, going to college or sixth form, or moving to a different school. We note that in these discussions participants often appeared to focus more closely on transitions that occur for most CYP at key education stage shifts in England (e.g., the primary to secondary transition), but did also touch upon other types of transitions such as joining a new school mid-stage or mid-year. Where appropriate we specify where points were noted as particularly specific to some types of experiences.

Figure 4 shows themes developed under the following organising concepts to map onto patterns within the NICE evidence reviews: (a) the experience and impact of transition, (b) approaches to delivery of transition support, and (c) settling back in slowly after COVID-19 closures. We note that we originally included a fourth organising concept here of facilitators and barriers in transition, but points in this area tended to be closely linked to aspects of approaches to delivery, and hence this organising concept was not retained in line with our hybrid approach to be responsive to the contributions of our participants.
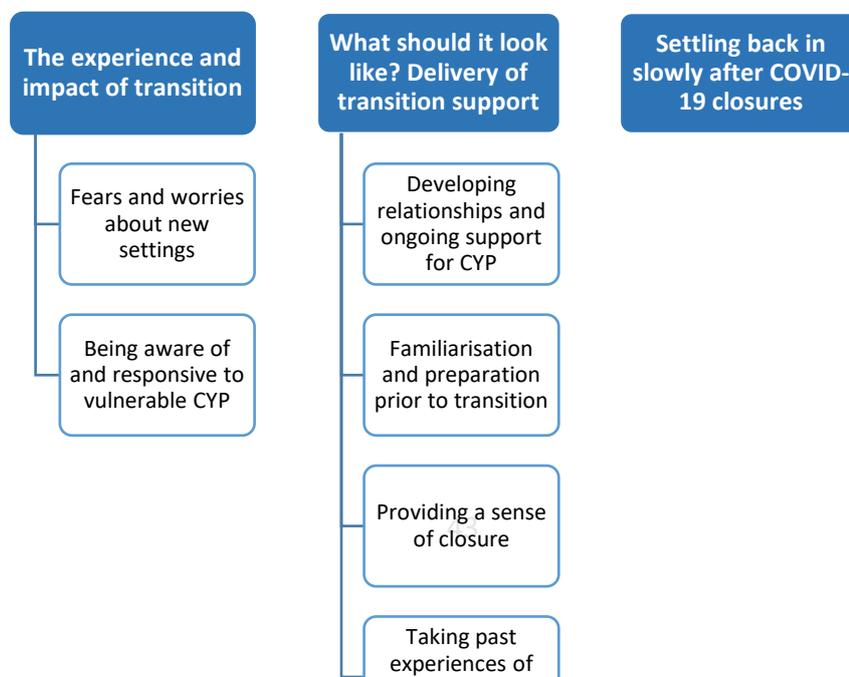
Figure 4. Themes relating to CYP's perceptions of transition support provision

The experience and impact of transition

CYP may have fears and worries about starting at a new setting

Participants identified a range of fears and worries that pupils joining a new setting may experience: *"it's scary starting a new school because like you don't know anyone and you're like don't feel safe"* (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting). This included practical concerns, such as following an unfamiliar timetable and navigating a new environment: *"[CYP] might be afraid to get lost" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting)*; social concerns, such as creating relationships with new peers and suddenly being younger/smaller than everyone else in a new educational phase: *"they might be afraid that they'll struggle to make new friends" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting)*; *"when you go into year 7 it's like you've gone down a pecking order and you need to work yourself back up again" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream);* and concerns about unknown school policy approaches to aspects such as behavioural or appearance expectations: *"[if there was] a rule about your hair like being too short and at their old school it wasn't like that and they had their hair cut the day before they came in, you know, they'll know not to get it too short and get like in trouble" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).* Participants suggested that some of these concerns could create a lot of unnecessary stress and worry and get in the way of CYP being able to enjoy the transitional experience: *"[transition support] saves a lot of stress and worry on [a pupil's] first day, you know, erm, and yeah I think it just makes the whole experience a lot more enjoyable rather than something be like dread it all" (CYP in Post-16 setting).*

It is important to be aware of vulnerable CYP and responsive to their needs

Participants generally indicated that transition support was important for all CYP, but did highlight that some individuals may require more specific support. They provided examples including those with SEND, physical illnesses, negative experiences in a past setting, experience of trauma, difficulties in forming relationships with others, mental health difficulties such as anxiety, or those who have only recently arrived in England and/or are not fluent in English; e.g., *"if they're from a different country so they might say stuff on like Germany and then move to England it might be harder for them to pronounce in English and it might be hard for them for them to learn to understand more, er, teachers and what they're teaching" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting); "say if they went to, er like… er, a bad school before they went to [our imaginary school]" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting).* Participants noted that in these kinds of instances, it would be useful for schools to consider ways to provide more targeted transition support to help manage and ease some of the specific issues raised for these individuals; for instance, *"[if a pupil struggles with anxiety] give them a piece of paper to write down their worries and then help them with their worries" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).*

Approaches to delivery of transition support
Developing relationships and providing ongoing support for CYP is valuable
Participants often emphasised the role that relationships and support from others could play in the transition process, particularly with staff and peers.

Participants highlighted the importance of having opportunities to meet and get to know key staff members, and for these individuals to offer a welcoming and reassuring presence: *"meet the teachers that they're going to be with, obviously the first year of year 7 they'd meet their form tutor they'd meet their head of year" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU); "I think just the teachers being very friendly and building good relationships with the pupils […]showing a more friendly side to the new students would be beneficial" (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).* It was noted that this needed to be sustained beyond a first meeting, and that ongoing check-ins and a friendly demeanour were helpful for pupil wellbeing during the early stages of transition (and beyond): *"first impressions are the best but, erm, even after the first [impression, teachers] should still be nice" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting).* Some pupils indicated that schools could work to identify where pupils are having specific transition issues through approaches such as post boxes or wellbeing surveys, where staff can then provide direct support or help resolve issues: *"after a week or two of them joining we we could probably give them like a wellbeing survey to see how well they're they're doing in class" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting).*

Peer relationships were focused on as particularly important in the transition process, and there were suggestions of creating buddying systems between CYP to help with this. This included buddying with an immediate peer in the same class/group to help them connect with others: *"if they're like feeling a bit new and shy you could show them around and make them make a new best friend" (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting)* and pairing pupils with another pupil further along in the setting (particularly for commonly experienced stage transitions): *"get, er, like a student who's trustworthy and is always good to like get like a few more and get one of each [new students] and show them around the different school" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting).* Though participants did sometimes acknowledge the role that teachers could play in introducing CYP to a setting, they indicated that peers offering this carried greater weight and relatability: *"I think it's better for it to be a child because they can speak a little bit more how he feels about school. With teachers they obviously like, not in a horrible way, they get paid and they just go 'yeah it's a lovely school' but you need some other people with opinions" (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school).* It should be noted that facilitating peer relationships and support was suggested both for stage transitions (e.g., the move to a secondary school) and for those joining a setting mid-stage or mid-year: *"for example, like they're coming midway through the year so they would have to like it would be good to like come in like on the day and maybe like in form time before lunch, you know, like maybe have like five or ten minutes to get to know everyone in your form before coming in" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting).*

Familiarisation and preparation prior to transition helps to reduce stress
Participants explored how familiarisation and preparation before a transition was important, and talked about how both a new setting and the setting CYP are leaving could play a role here. Participants emphasised the helpfulness of having engagement in advance of the transition to a new

school, to help CYP become more familiar with what it would be like and thus reduce some of the worries and concerns that CYP may have beforehand, as well as reducing the stress they feel upon beginning. They often highlighted the value here of "transition days" or "taster days", for the transition to a new education stage, where all new pupils are able to visit the school collectively on one or two days prior to the start of the school year. They noted that these days allowed familiarisation with the environment and a greater understanding of rules and expectations, and was almost like a 'practice': *"that could be stressful for a year 7 person trying to go 'oh well which classroom should I go to with this?' You should have practice"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, mainstream).

Some participants offered suggestions for how this kind of familiarisation could happen for pupils joining mid-year, such as sending home letters with key information beforehand: *"it will be written down so then they'll [know] what the rules there to abide by"* (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting) and giving them a tour of the school and making introductions: *"definitely give them a tour of and of the school and, erm, talk to them and introduce everyone to him to them"* (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school).

As well as engagement with a new setting, participants also explored the role that can be played by staff in the previous setting CYP are leaving. They suggested staff could help to provide support and preparation for what to expect next, helping them to explore and talk about worries they may have:

> *"I think it's really good to, erm, like like, erm, do like anything that will help them like like talking to them or like, erm, do like a little show to to, erm, like put like a little play and stuff so they know what they're doing or show them a video of what they're up to next if they're going to college"* (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school).

Some participants most strongly emphasised this approach of settings preparing CYP for the next stage in relation to *later* education transition steps after compulsory education stages, in preparing to go to university, enter the workforce, or simply become a functioning adult in society. They explored how these later transitions could be especially scary and did not always have the same smoothness between stages relative to earlier transitions:

> *"I think if you're younger change might be easier for them to accept and it's also exciting for them whereas it's a bit more scary for the ones that are leaving [for] university, you have to accept you're no longer a child you no longer have your parents and teachers to rely on"* (CYP in Post-16 setting).

These participants suggested a range of steps that settings could take to prepare older young people for these kinds of later transitions. For preparing for university, they suggested helping them to connect with university pupils to ask questions, and simulating experiences to help prepare them: *"maybe you could change a bit in the lessons set out to be more of a lecture […] that's like lessons of thirty people and then this massive lecture is a big jump"* (CYP in Post-16 setting). They suggested that these kinds of strategies could help young people to set realistic expectations and aid their adjustment: *"if you have that false hope and you have all these expectations, that crash and burn that you get when you get there and you realise that it's nothing what you expected would make you want to drop out"* (CYP in Post-16 setting). More widely, participants highlighted the value of careers

support to help CYP make decisions about their next steps and go about applications for different options, and also emphasised approaches such as teaching CYP about life skills such as how taxes and mortgages work: *"it's a big bad world [so having young people] figure it out themselves doesn't help"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).

Settings can provide CYP with a sense of closure

Participants also discussed how a setting could provide their pupils with a sense of closure as their time there ends, helping pupils create diaries to document their time in the setting or having a party or assembly to say goodbye. Participants suggested that this was useful in helping CYP manage the loss of important relationships with teachers and peers: *"because they like the teachers and they're not going to be able to like have those conversations with them again"* (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting), and could help them remember important people and also *feel* remembered: *"[a card] tells me that they won't forget me"* (CYP in Key Stage 1, mainstream setting). Such approaches were suggested both for whole groups of CYP preparing for an education stage transitions and for individual CYP experiencing mid-stage or mid-year transitions: *"[for a child who is leaving] maybe your classmates look after them and [...] maybe write a message and, erm, the class could, erm, do a present or something"* (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting). However, it was observed that schools should think about what each individual might want here, and not assume all CYP would like a fuss as they leave: *"some people might not like all the all the trouble, someone might just do the card, some people might not want to do a whole assembly when they're leaving"* (CYP in Key Stage 2, special school).

Taking past experiences of CYP into consideration is important

In some cases participants explored the value of a new setting actively working to understand each individual's circumstances and past education experiences, and considering how they as a new setting can be considerate of this. Some suggested directly talking with pupils and their parents/carers about their past experience, especially if they are joining mid-stage: *"you can ask them what happened and then you can just say, erm, what do they like, what do they not like and then, erm, they could help them like that"* (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting). Communication between settings was also emphasised, not only to help connect with and prepare CYP but also to help get to know CYP. Participants in our PRU group emphasised this especially strongly as a challenge in education transitions between mainstream settings, observing that CYP experiencing difficulties move from a setting that knows them well to a new setting that knows nothing about them when they go to secondary school and so cannot provide effectively tailored support: *"in mainstream you just go straight from primary school put into like mainstream school teachers know nothing about you and half the battle [is] they don't know any problems you've got"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU). This was contrasted with their experience in a PRU, where staff already had access to information about them and so had already begun to try to understand their experiences and possible needs: *"when you come into a school like this [... you have] teachers that are trained to know like about you like certain files that they [inaudible] give like saying everything about us"* (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU).

There is a need to settle back in slowly after COVID-19 school closures

We asked participants what settings could do to help CYP in the transition back to full in-person attendance at the end of periods of school closures, reflecting specifically on recent closure periods

in the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants consistently stressed the importance of settling back in slowly and gradually, rather than rushing CYP back into 'normal' routines and processes. They explored how closures meant most CYP had experienced major shifts in relationships, routine, and learning, and would need time and help to feel comfortable and safe again in a classroom environment: *"like slowly ease in the school because some people might have got used to doing their school work in bed or in their pyjamas or something like that, like slowly allow them to get back into the routine" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting)*.

Participants explored how schools could actively try to understand any worries pupils may have about returning and explore this with them: *"when we first came bac after like the second lockdown we like wrote on a piece of paper like if we had like like with anxiety like if we had any issues coming back like worries, how things will work" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting)*. Participants emphasised the importance of helping to build relationships between pupils, perhaps especially where CYP were still relatively new to the school:

> *"make people more comfortable in the classroom again because obviously used to we got six months online or whatever it was and it was like you couldn't really like speak to friends or make any sort of like friendly connections from October till March and it's like how can you be comfortable in a room of thirty people when you don't kind of really know them?" (CYP in Post-16 setting)*.

Some suggested celebratory activities such as a party to celebrate CYP's return to school, emphasising that this would help to make pupils feel happy about the return as well as feeling valued by others: *"make them feel happy to be back and to make them feel like no one forgot them" (CYP in Post-16 setting)*. Participants also explored how day-to-day activities upon CYP's return could be generally more fun and less focused on rules and punishment; *"maybe do some like fun activities a bit for a bit" (CYP in Key Stage 2, mainstream setting); "you could, er, erm, give like less detentions so that they would feel a bit more comfortable with coming back and getting used to the environment again" (CYP in Key Stage 3, mainstream setting)*.

Participants reflected on how there had been lapses in learning and that this necessitated an amount of 'catching up', reviewing topics covered during lockdown and identifying gaps: *"so going back over the things some of the topics that we did in lockdown, er, just to reinforce what we've learned and to help us if maybe we've had the virus and missed out on a whole lot of school to help them catch up" (CYP in Post-16 setting)*. However, participants were clear that this shouldn't mean rushing pupils or creating unnecessary pressure and should instead be a gradual process: *"don't just jump straight into lessons" (CYP in Key Stage 4, PRU)*. Some suggested that there ought to be flexibility in curriculum and assessment expectations for this reason:

> *"not immediately bombard [CYP] with loads of work what was mentioned, erm, I know the school can't really do anything about it but maybe get the governors to try and reduce content because we've all missed a lot of, erm, learning anyway and there's the pressure dealing with all the sort of anxiety and stress" (CYP in Post-16 setting)*.

Discussion of CYP's perspectives on transition support

Our participants highlighted various fears and worries that may arise in preparing for transition, as pupils try to anticipate how things will work and what will be expected of them. This reflects consistent evidence that fear of the unknown can be a primary concern in educational transitions, especially when transitioning between education stages, prompting various broad and specific worries (e.g., Humphrey & Ainscow, 2006; Mellor & Delamont, 2011; Waters et al., 2014; West, Sweeting, & Young, 2008). Our participants explained that these fears and worries could cause stress that could overshadow the positives of transition; longitudinal research has indicated that having positive or negative expectations can affect the nature of transition adjustment accordingly (Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019; Waters et al., 2014). Findings highlight the value of supporting pupils as they prepare for an upcoming transition.

Participants particularly emphasised how familiarisation processes could help to tackle these fears and reduce unnecessary stress. They recommended prior engagement with the school, such as transition days and sharing information, alongside open discussion and preparation from their existing setting. Prior work has similarly reported that CYP value such familiarisation and preparation (Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019), and this has been emphasised in evaluations and guidance relating to transition interventions and support (e.g., Bryan, 2007; Humphrey, 2008). Importantly, our participants felt that this was preparation and familiarisation was less present for later transitions, necessitating attention to how schools and colleges prepare pupils for next steps beyond compulsory education. Participants' suggestions included quality careers support, help with applications, teaching life skills, and helping to set expectations.

Participants viewed relationships as an important component in transitions. This included building relationships with relevant staff as part of familiarisation processes and connecting with other pupils, who may offer a more relatable and genuine introduction to what to expect. Beyond familiarisation, participants described how this needed to be sustained over time as pupils continue to adjust; for instance, school staff can check in regularly and monitor pupils and ensure that they continue to offer a friendly demeanour, while peers can act as a buddy as pupils adjust, perhaps especially for those joining mid-year or mid-stage. We note also that as well as building new relationships, participants reflected here on the need to support pupils in coping with the loss of important relationships in transition as they move on from a setting, and that staff can work to provide a sense of closure in this respect. Our participants' emphasis on relationships is perhaps unsurprising given the extent of social changes often experienced in transitions, while it has previously been indicated that a focus on relationships should be a central component in transition provision (Coffey, 2013).

Participants drew attention to individual needs in transition support. They noted that some individuals may require specific support due to personal characteristics and circumstances, and felt it important that school staff actively work to try to understand how they can provide tailored support to help reduce barriers. This included school staff working to build an awareness of past experiences, including communication with a prior setting and talking with CYP and their parents/carers. In this sense, 'familiarisation' is not just about helping CYP become familiar with a setting, but also about the setting becoming familiar with individual CYP and their needs. The participants in our PRU group strongly emphasised this as a challenge in transitions between mainstream settings. From their

perspective, staff in mainstream settings tended not to have a good understanding of pupils' individual needs and so cannot provide effective support, which contrasted with their own experiences of staff in alternative provision engaging with information about their backgrounds. Sharing of information with new settings is often considered good practice, though we acknowledge that this can be challenging in mainstream settings with large volumes of staff and pupils, whereas PRUs tend to have less staff and so can increase individualised support (Hart, 2013). Nevertheless, findings highlight the need for such awareness and for tailored support, and feasible options could be for selective staff (e.g., form tutors, heads of year) to build knowledge of individual pupils and for staff more generally to be made aware of needs of those identified as vulnerable or at risk.

Finally, participants stressed the importance of settling back in slowly and gradually after school closures when reflecting on recent closure periods in the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than rushing CYP back into 'normal' routines and processes. They explained that CYP had undergone major shifts and may be worried about returning, and though they did acknowledge lapses in learning and talked about a need to 'catch up', participants felt that this should not mean rushing or pressuring pupils. This echoes widespread calls for a gradual and compassionate transition for CYP in returning to in-person education as well as criticism of a government emphasis on 'catching up' as creating unnecessary pressure (e.g., see British Psychological Society, 2021; Moss et al., 2020; Müller & Goldenberg, 2020).

Implications of CYP's perspectives for transition support
Our discussions with participants highlight a range of points that may be useful in practice relating to transition support, which policymakers and practitioners may wish to consider alongside wider evidence and with attention to their specific context:
- Be aware of the concerns and individual needs of CYP preparing for a transition.
- Engage meaningfully with information exchange to build awareness and understanding of pupils, and share key information with wider staff body as appropriate where pupils are considered vulnerable or at risk.
- Provide support and familiarisation to help address concerns and prepare CYP in what to expect of their new environment.
- If additional individual needs are identified, engage in discussion with appropriate stakeholders to build knowledge of needs and context and provide tailored support.
- Create opportunities for CYP to build relationships with staff in advance of transition and create a friendly and welcoming staff presence.
- Engage in ongoing monitoring and 'checking in' over time to support adjustment.
- Organise a peer mentor or buddy for CYP in a new environment (particularly those joining mid-stage or mid-year).
- Help to provide pupils with a sense of closure as they prepare to leave a setting, acknowledging their time at a setting and the relationships they have built.
- Provide transition support preparing CYP for post-compulsory education stages.
- Following periods of educational disruption, e.g., after school closures in the COVID-19 pandemic, allow a gradual return to 'normal' and avoid unnecessary pressure and stress.

4. Strengths and limitations of the study design

The recruitment process and high level of interest in the project emphasised that this sort of research is viewed as important by education settings, and the large number of settings expressing an interest to participate supported the ability to recruit a diverse sample of CYP. The maximum variation sampling approach successfully supported diversity and the inclusion of a range of 'seldom heard' voices, and in our discussions with school staff in selecting possible CYP to participate, staff were understanding of the need to identify a range of CYP from their setting. The success of this approach can be seen in the diversity of the contextual and demographic characteristics of the settings and CYP who took part, as outlined in Section 2.3 on Sample: Settings and CYP. Of course, we note that our approach here was not exhaustive and sought to include a diverse range of voices rather than *all* possible voices and perspectives, and should be read with this in mind.

The online synchronous focus group approach carried a range of strengths and limitations that are worth considering in appreciating and understanding the nature of the data that we generated here. Engaging in data generation remotely first allowed a much wider geographic net to be cast, while reducing labour costs and travel time. This facilitated the generation of data across a range of settings from the North, South, East and West of England, therefore including voices from various different regions. Participants engaged in the discussions with an impressive level of candidness, maturity and insight, and engaged in discussion, comparison, and weighing up of their different perspectives. This yielded a complex and perceptive array of data, offering rich and nuanced insights and differing perspectives. This supports not only the need to include the voices of CYP where relevant and possible, but to not underestimate their ability to participate (Bishop, 2014).

Being able to mediate the focus group in 'real time' via a synchronous approach further provided an atmosphere for this active discussion and interaction and allowing the research team actively prompt discussion and follow-up ideas (Stewart & Williams, 2005). The interactive and creative approach to generating the data further facilitated engagement with the process. The CYP engaged well with the approach of thinking of themselves as a headteacher and this approach allowed CYP to draw on their personal experience where they felt appropriate but did not *require* them to explicitly cite personal or sensitive information about themselves. The primary-aged children also particularly seemed to enjoy naming the school and taking on the role of headteacher, and this imaginary approach aided their engagement.

The storybook approach, while adding structure to the focus group schedule, made the topics more accessible and age-appropriate, while also allowing potentially sensitive topics to be discussed hypothetically through the story vignettes (Egli et al., 2019; Vindrola-Padros, 2016). The use of both a primary and secondary booklet version was needed for tailored age appropriate language and images, although the underlying approach and ideas remained the same and overall approach suitable. The addition of further resources for the primary-aged CYP were also beneficial. In particular, the lightbulbs lollypops aided the younger CYP to indicate they had something to say and supported turn-taking, and they enjoyed this aspect and all primary-aged focus groups made good use of these. While school staff were present during the focus group, they followed the instruction to step back and allow CYP to share their thoughts and ideas and the approach appeared to elicit

honestly and directness, while also supporting managing the technical and behavioural aspects of the focus group process.

The consultation group was pivotal to supporting the approach and highlights the needs for a co-production process to inform research design (NIHR INVOLVE, 2018; NIHR, 2021; Staniszewska, 2018). The chance to be part of project overall was commented on afterwards, and in some cases setting staff told us afterwards how proud the CYP had been to take part in the research and have their voices heard. As such, we note that these aspects of our approach supported our CYP in engaging meaningfully in discussions and has helped to generate rich, insightful data for the project.

While this approach was successful overall, we recognise some challenges to undertaking remote synchronous focus group with *all* CYP, and acknowledge that these have likely played a role here despite our best efforts. Some younger secondary-aged CYP seemed to be more aware of being on camera and self-conscious around this, although we understood that this kind of self-consciousness may occur and emphasised that video recording was not taking place. The youngest primary group (ages 6-7 years) started to lose focus about 30 minutes in, which may have affected later areas of discussion. CYP from the special school found the format more difficult, and needed more time to process questions, which was challenging in the time available. In these cases we worked to keep sample sizes smaller and be responsive to the needs of these groups, but we note that in-person focus groups would likely have been better suited to younger participants and those with additional needs. Practical issues surrounding COVID-19 social distancing did mean while the large sheets of paper were available for the primary groups, social distancing and the need to be in view on the camera meant they were quite awkward for these CYP to actually be able to use. Finally technical issues with recording via online software did not always lend itself to allowing free flowing discussion and some data was lost due to software muting when others were talking. These issues with regard to recording and transcribing when multiple voices are talking is a common issue with focus group approaches more generally; we made use of turn-taking guidelines and approaches to support with this (Gray et al., 2008) and this reduced the extent of overall issues with loss of data.

Finally, the open-ended approach to the line of questioning supported the ability to use both a deductive approach and be guided by the areas of interest identified by NICE and PHAC, but also be open to new ideas through an inductive approach. While the reflexive qualitative analysis allowed us to ground findings in data, hybrid analysis clearly enabled the voice of the CYP to be heard and additional ideas and concepts to be developed and build on the already identified areas of interest by the PHAC Committee. As outlined in Section 2.7 $Analysis\ plan$, due to time constraints and competing priorities at settings, we were unable to engage with the member checking process. However, our use of a focus group approach and our approach of exploring practice via a headteacher perspective meant that CYP were very direct in their discussions and we were able to check meaning 'along the way' to avoid misinterpretation.

5. Conclusions

We set out to explore CYP's perceptions of social, emotional, and mental wellbeing provision and processes in primary and secondary education, as a reflection on formative recommendations on evidence-based best practice from NICE. We engaged in focus group discussions with 49 CYP aged 6

to 17 years across a range of setting types in England, working to include a range of different voices in our sample as there are often 'seldom heard' groups in educational and health research. Findings offer rich insights into how CYP themselves would like wellbeing provision to be delivered and the considerations that they feel need to be made. We have offered a detailed discussion of implications for each area of provision in Section 3; here, we conclude with a brief summary of key points and a reflection on overarching considerations raised by CYP.

CYP perceived usefulness and potential benefit in the use of **whole school approaches**, though they emphasised that this needed to be fully embedded, communicated to and shared by everyone, and fit with and complement wider approaches of school life. CYP viewed pupil voice as fundamental to a whole school approach, noting that CYP being involved in decisions would help to increase ownership and the quality of the approach, and emphasised that relationships across the school serve as a critical foundation for the success of a whole school approach.

CYP referred to a range of possible benefits that could be gained through **universal curriculum approaches**, including immediate impacts in being able to pause and reflect as well as in building skills that can benefit their wellbeing over time. CYP emphasised the need to select and approach curriculum sessions carefully, including ensuring age-appropriateness and avoiding over-generalised content, pathologizing 'normal' feelings, and forcing sharing. CYP emphasised that the staff member delivering these interventions should be effectively trained to do so, and that positive, caring staff-pupil relationships were important for meaningful engagement. CYP also indicated that peers can provide support and learning for one another in these sessions.

For **targeted social and emotional approaches and targeted mental health support**, CYP emphasised the need for staff to pro-actively monitor pupils to identify where there is need for such provision, alongside actively creating opportunities for CYP themselves to seek help. They highlighted a range of ways that targeted provision could be offered, including providing a space to talk, helping CYP to build relevant skills, and boosting social connectedness. CYP emphasised the importance of positive, trusting connections between pupils and staff to support targeted approaches and that this type of provision needed to be part of a wider school culture that prioritised wellbeing. Stigma and vulnerability were noted as potentially preventing CYP from engaging in targeted provision or creating risks for those who do, and CYP emphasised the need for sensitivity and discretion on an individualised basis.

CYP highlighted that **transition** can be stressful, with a host of concerns, and advised that familiarisation processes could help to tackle such fears. They presented relationships with staff and peers as an important component, both in building new relationships and acknowledging the loss of important relationships, and that these relational processes needed to be supported. CYP drew attention to individual needs, noting that some may need more closely tailored support and emphasising the value of information exchange between settings so that staff can more quickly and comprehensively understand the needs of their pupils. In discussing the return of pupils to settings after school closures in the COVID-19 pandemic, CYP stressed the importance of settling back in slowly and gradually rather than rushing CYP to return to 'normal' and pressuring them to catch up.

We note several overarching considerations that CYP consistently discussed as important in relation to multiple areas of wellbeing provision, which we briefly explore here, namely positive relationships with teachers, a safe and trust-based school ethos around wellbeing, the role that peers can play for one another, CYP voice and decision-making, and the need for multiple approaches to meet varied needs.

First, the importance of **positive relationships with teachers** who understand wellbeing was a common theme across all areas of provision. Critically, CYP often described how they did not feel some teachers genuinely care about their pupils, or view them as approachable or knowledgeable as a source of support. Though CYP did explore the value of specialist staff in wellbeing provision (e.g., a specific pastoral team), there was a consensus that *all* school staff should be supported with training in wellbeing and that teacher-pupil relationships should consistently be more genuine and caring. These comments reflect wider tensions in which education settings are increasingly tasked with responsibility for wellbeing (Department of Health and Social Care & Department for Education, 2017), but without sufficient training, resources, or support (O'Reilly et al., 2018; The Education Committee & The Health and Social Care Committee, 2018), with staff managing high demands and workload (Ravalier & Walsh, 2018), and with austerity policies systematically heightening needs among CYP and their families (Hanley et al., 2019). This is a complex picture with increasing recognition that teachers themselves are being made vulnerable to poorer wellbeing and mental health (O'Reilly et al., 2018). CYP's wish for stronger teacher-pupil dynamics and greater staff efficacy in delivering wellbeing provision highlight that CYP themselves are feeling the effects of these tensions, and that these issues are likely to influence how CYP experience and engage with school-based provision. This finding adds further weight to calls for much greater support for education settings and staff if they are expected to play a central role in wellbeing provision for CYP.

This also related to a wider point raised in our discussions with CYP around whether school can be an entirely 'trusted' or 'safe' place to discuss wellbeing. In this regard, CYP noted numerous barriers in the school context in relation to talking about wellbeing at school, seeking help from school staff, and engaging in provision. CYP explored the importance of pupils feeling that staff truly care about them and understand how to engage in wellbeing discussions, as explored above, and highlighted a range of unintended consequences that they felt could be incurred through wellbeing provision, including pathologizing of normal feelings and issues of stigma and risk around targeted provision. Feeling psychologically and emotionally safe in school has previously been highlighted as foundational to school-based wellbeing provision (e.g., see Hornby & Atkinson, 2004; Segrott et al., 2013; Weare, 2015), especially for those who are vulnerable (Cole, 2015). Findings highlight that despite views of education as a safe space for the promotion of wellbeing, in reality the school context can feature a range of issues that limit this and risk undermining the reach and effectiveness of wellbeing provision. These issues point to a need for a whole school approach to wellbeing, with pro-active attention to genuinely centralising wellbeing and trust within the ethos and culture of a setting, and for settings to actively engage in discussion with staff and pupils to understand how to improve this in their individual context.

Third, CYP frequently emphasised **peer support** and the role that CYP can provide for one another in wellbeing provision, across several different intervention approaches. Peers play a role in predicting health behaviours and outcomes across childhood and adolescence, and indeed become the

strongest social connection in predicting such outcomes during adolescence (Umberson et al., 2010). A recent review of the evidence highlighted that peer support among CYP is associated with greater wellbeing and lower rates of issues including depression, anxiety, and suicide (Roach, 2018). In recent years there has been a drive towards considering how peers can be involved in providing support, including through peer-led intervention programmes, though mostly among adolescents rather than with younger children. However, we note that the evidence remains mixed on the efficacy of such approaches and some evidence suggests greater benefits for those providing support, rather than for recipients (King & Fazel, 2021). Based on some of the suggestions raised by CYP, it may be that a useful approach is to consider how peer support can be treated as part of a wider programme or inventory of support, rather than leaning predominantly on peer-led approaches, such as through opportunities to talk with peers during curriculum lessons or targeted programmes, or buddying systems to support wider peer relationships and connectedness. We note that it is also plausible that this emphasis on peers from the CYP we spoke with reflects their wider perception of school adults as not universally appropriate in providing wellbeing support, perhaps leading to a wish to support one another rather than rely solely on teachers who in some cases may not be seen as fully understanding their needs.

Our participants frequently emphasised the need for **CYP to be meaningfully involved in decision-making**, including in broader aspects affecting their cohort as a whole (e.g., whole school approaches) and in relation to personalised support offered to them as individuals (e.g., through targeted provision). This echoes CYP's right to have a say in issues that affect them (UN General Assembly, 1989) and a growing emphasis on ensuring that CYP are part of decisions relating to provision and services for them, including wellbeing provision (Department of Health and NHS England, 2015). It was clear in our discussions that CYP feel that involving them in these decisions would improve how closely provision could meet their collective and individual needs, and help them feel more willing to engage with provision through promoting ownership and agency. Indeed, a recent qualitative study in Australia reported that CYP having a say and feeling listened to and respected in school is considered by them to be an active component of their wellbeing (Anderson & Graham, 2015), emphasising the potential benefits of helping CYP to feel heard in the school context. With this in mind, settings need to consider how they can meaningfully engage in shared decision-making and co-production with their pupils. We note that this is important not only in internal school decision-making but also emphasises the importance of pupil voice in evaluation of programmes to inform ongoing policy and resourcing in this area (e.g., see Bourke & MacDonald., 2016).

Finally, we echo guidance from Public Health England (2015, 2021) in that our findings further highlight that provision ought to be blended through a whole school approach, and no single type or approach to provision can meet everyone's needs. Throughout our discussions CYP noted where there is need for such layering of provision; that is, that universal provision would not help those with more specific difficulties, or that transition support may need to be tailored to individual needs. There is a need, then, for blended approaches and the availability of different options and flexibility that can be shaped to meet the individual needs of the various CYP attending a given setting. It is important that no single area of provision is used as a fragmented add-on by schools but is instead situated within a wider culture that meaningfully and pro-actively prioritises wellbeing at the collective and individual levels.

6. Acknowledgements

7. References

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Demographic forms

Primary-aged demographic form (completed by adult)

<div style="background-color:purple; color:white; text-align:center; font-weight:bold">

What do children think about how school can help them?
Information about Children and Young People

</div>

We will need the following information about the children and young people taking part in this research. Having this information means we can better understand the different voices that are included in this project, and this is helpful for thinking about how our learning can be used in schools across England. This form can be filled out by either school staff or parents/carers once parents/carers and children have both consented to taking part.

Full name: _____

Age in years: _____

Gender (please tick):
- ☐ Girl
- ☐ Boy
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Ethnicity:
- ☐ White or White British
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- ☐ Asian or Asian British
- ☐ Black, African, Caribbean or Black British
- ☐ Other ethnic group
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Is this child/young person eligible for free school meals?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Is this child/young person identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Is this child/young person identified as speaking English as an additional language?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

What do children think about how school can help them?
Information about Children and Young People

We will need the following information about the children and young people taking part in this research. Having this information about you means we can better understand the different voices that are included in this project, and this is helpful for thinking about how our learning can be used in schools across England. Please answer these questions to the best of your knowledge. You can ask your teacher or parent/carer to help if needed.

Your full name: _____

Age in years: _____

Gender (please tick):
- ☐ Girl
- ☐ Boy
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Ethnicity:
- ☐ White or White British
- ☐ Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- ☐ Asian or Asian British
- ☐ Black, African, Caribbean or Black British
- ☐ Other ethnic group
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Are you eligible for free school meals?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Have you been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Do you speak English as an additional language?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Primary School Focus Group Schedule
Note: includes relevant pages from children's book

Introduction

Preamble

Schools do lots of things to help children feel happy and okay. We want to know your ideas and what you think about how schools can do a good job of helping young people feel happy and okay.

The things we learn in this project will be used to help make recommendations for schools supporting children and young people. We will be talking to children and young people in some other schools too, to see what they think.

Are you okay to chat to us about this? This will take about an hour. We will ask you some questions, but if you don't want to answer then that is okay. This isn't a test and there aren't any right or wrong answers – we are just interested in what you all think.

We are going to record our conversation on the computer, so we can remember and listen again to all the important things you tell us. We won't play the recording to the school, other teachers, or your parents or tell them what you say, and [name of school staff member] is not going to go and talk about the things you say. **But** if someone talks about something that makes us think that they or someone else are at risk of harm, then we will need to share this so that someone can help.

Ask: Do you have any questions?

It's okay for you to tell other people, like your friends, that we had this conversation today, and you can show other people the certificate that we give you for taking part. But because I am asking you what **you** think, it's also important that we don't tell others what each of you have actually said, because that isn't really fair.

Assent

Are you happy to get involved? If not, this is fine! Just let [name of school staff] know.
(if a pupil decides at this point that he/she does not wish to participate allow the supervising staff member to organise for the individual to go elsewhere as pre-discussed in school liaising)

If you would like to get involved, you can see there are some questions on the form that [name of school staff] has given you. We'll go through these questions together now to help make sure you understand what taking part means. If you understand and are happy with these questions, can you put your hand up and say "yes" for each one? If you're not happy or you're not sure what we mean, shake your head or say no and we can check in with you.

- Do you understand what we will be doing today?
- Have you asked all the questions you want to ask us?
- Do you know that you can change your mind if you would like to finish taking part? You do not have to tell me why.
- Do you understand that we will record our conversation and that your school to give us some information about you (e.g., your gender)?

- Do you understand that we may write what you tell us in some reports and presentations so we can share what we learn? People won't be able to tell it's you we're talking about.
- Do you understand that the things you tell me might be looked at by people who help to keep you safe?
- Do you understand that things you say in the study will be shared with researchers at other places, without your name so they don't know it's you?
- Are you happy to take part?

If you are happy with all of this, please can you tick these on the form that you have and write your name at the bottom? Then you can give these to [name of school staff]. If you were not sure or were not happy about these then that is fine, just let the teacher know and you can finish now. No one will mind.

Explain procedure *(show children that this is in their book as shown below, on pages 1 and 2)*
The book that you have is about an imaginary school. We want you to imagine you are the headteacher in this school. As the headteacher, we will ask you to come up with ideas about how the school can help the children there to feel happy and okay.

We will go through the book all together, as a group. We will read out loud for you some of the different stories in the book and then talk together about them. You can read along if you'd like, or just listen to us read it.

We will ask you what you think is the best thing to do in the story as the headteacher. There are no right or wrong answers. This is all about what you think is best. If you don't understand, just let us know and we can explain it. If you don't know what a word means, just let us know.

When you have an idea, show us your lightbulb to let us know. That way everyone can take their turn to share their ideas.

How does this book work?

This book is about an imaginary school.

We want you to imagine you are the headteacher in this school. As the headteacher, we will ask you to come up with ideas about how the school can help the children there to feel happy and okay.

We will go through the book all together, as a group. We will read out loud for you some of the different stories in the book and then talk together about them. You can read along if you'd like, or just listen to us read it.

We will ask you what you think is the best thing to do in the story as the headteacher.

1

There are no right or wrong answers.

This is all about what you think is best.

If you don't understand, just let us know and we can explain it. If you don't know what a word means, just let us know.

When you have an idea, show us your lightbulb to let us know. That way everyone can take their turn to share their ideas.

2

Ask: Do you have any questions before we start?
Ask: Is it okay for me to start recording now?

Introduction Activity: About Our School (page 3)

On the big sheet of paper you have, you can see there is a big drawing of an imaginary school.

This also shows some of the different people that are at school. This includes children, teachers and other school adults, and parents.

We need a name for our imaginary school. What would you like to call it? You can come up with some names or we can provide some examples to choose from.

Remember that you are the headteacher of this school. What is your headteacher name?

Further prompt:

Here it says that there are teachers and other school adults. What other kinds of adults might we have in this school, other than teachers?

About Our School

On the big sheet of paper you have, you can see there is a big drawing of an imaginary school.

This also shows some of the different people that are at school. This includes children, teachers and other school adults, and parents.

We need a name for our imaginary school. What would you like to call it? You can come up with some names or we can provide some examples to choose from.

Remember that you are the headteacher of this school. What is your headteacher name?

3

School name:

Headteacher (that's you!)

...ents

Children

Teachers and other school adults

1. Whole School Approach: Helping Children to Feel Happy and Okay (page 4)

Helping Children to Feel Happy and Okay

Lots of schools have "school values", where everyone at the school agrees on what is important and how they should behave.

Sometimes schools do things to help use these values and make sure everyone understands.

This might be about helping children to be kind, or having school assemblies to talk all together about these values.

What do you think about having a value like this in our imaginary school?

Values

4

1. Whole School Approach: Helping Children to Feel Happy and Okay

> *Aims: To explore CYP perspectives on the use of whole school approaches for wellbeing*
>
> *Looking for information about:*
> - Thoughts on use of a whole school approach with shared ethos, vision, and principles
> - Perceived impact of a whole school approach (e.g., social emotional skills, behaviour, exclusion, learning and achievement)
> - Individuals that should be involved in a whole school approach (school staff, CYP, parents, external individuals)
> - Provision delivery (integrated, universal vs. targeted differentiation, internal vs. external provider)

Lots of schools have "school values", where everyone at the school agrees on what is important and how they should behave.

Sometimes schools do things to help use these values and make sure everyone understands.

This might be about helping children to be kind, or having school assemblies to talk all together about these values.

Key question: What do you think about having a value like this in our imaginary school?

Prompts:

— *Link to the introduction exercise thinking about the whole school*
— Why/why not? E.g., would it be helpful?
— As headteachers how would you let everyone at the school know about the school values? What sorts of things could you do?
— Remember all the people involved in our school - as the headteacher, who are you going to ask to help you decide what this value is and how everyone follows it? Why these people? Anyone else?
— Might people need help to understand and follow this value?
— Does this value need to be the same for everyone? Do we help everyone use the value the same way?

2. Universal Approach: Teaching Children Skills (pages 5 and 6)

5

Teaching Children Skills

The teachers in our imaginary school have decided that some of the classes are going to do some lessons and activities.

These will teach them skills for taking care of their feelings and being friends with each other.

Everyone will be in the class together for these lessons, and everyone will be taught the same ideas and skills.

What do you think of this idea?

6

2. Universal Approach: Teaching Children Skills

Aim: To explore CYP perceptions of universal classroom-based interventions

Looking for information about:
- Perceived benefits of universal interventions (inc. short and long term)
- Considerations in choosing universal interventions (fit to school, decision-making, training)
- Aspects of delivery (format, frequency, delivery agent)

The teachers in our imaginary school have decided that some of the classes are going to do some lessons and activities.

These will teach them skills for taking care of their feelings and being friends with others.

Everyone will be in the class together for these lessons, and everyone will be taught the same ideas and skills.

Key question: What do you think of this idea?

Prompts:

- Do you think it would be helpful the children at your imaginary school? Why? How?
- As headteachers, when choosing lessons and activities for these classes, what sorts of things do you think are important to think about? Why?
- What should these lessons and activities look like?
- How often would you plan to do lessons and activities like this? Why?
- Who would be involved? Why?

3. Targeted Provision: Helping Children (Pages 7 and 8)

Helping Children

Sometimes, some children need extra help with feeling happy and okay. There are children in our imaginary school who might need help.

Sunny is in Class One and is finding it hard to play with other children. Sunny might need some help learning how to make friends.

Robin in Class Six has been feeling sad and more worried than normal. Robin might need some time talking with an adult about these feelings.

Alex in Class Four feels angry some of the time and sometimes shouts at other people. Alex might need some help to get better at calming down.

7

What can we do to help Sunny, Robin, and Alex?

8

3. Targeted Provision: Helping Children

Aims: to explore children's perceptions of targeted support and how this can be offered to CYP

Looking for information about:
- Decision making (including referral processes, identification of CYP, CYP willingness to engage in support)
- Provision delivery (mode of delivery and appropriateness, provider)
- Sensitivity to needs and vulnerability and stigma (place of delivery and others' awareness)

Sometimes, some children need extra with feeling happy and okay. There are children in our imaginary school who might need help.

Sunny in Class One is finding it hard to play with other children. Sunny might need some help learning how to make friends.

Robin in Class Six has been feeling sad and more worried that normal. Robin might need some time talking with an adult about these feelings.

Alex in Class Four feels angry some of the time and sometimes shouts at other people. Alex might need some help to get better at calming down.

Key question: What can we do to help Sunny, Robin, and Alex?

Prompts:

- Do you think it is important for your school to help Sunny, Robin, and Alex? Why?
- Who would you talk to when deciding how to help Sunny, Robin, and Alex? Why?
- How might we give that help to Sunny, Robin, and Alex? Why? (E.g., who might provide that help, what might it involve?)
- Would Sunny, Robin, or Alex mind if other people, such as the children in their class, know they're getting extra help? Why/why not?
- There are lots of other different children at the school other than Sunny, Robin, and Alex who might also need help. As the headteachers, how do you know which children might need extra help?

4. Change and Transition: New Children are Coming! (Pages 9 and 10)
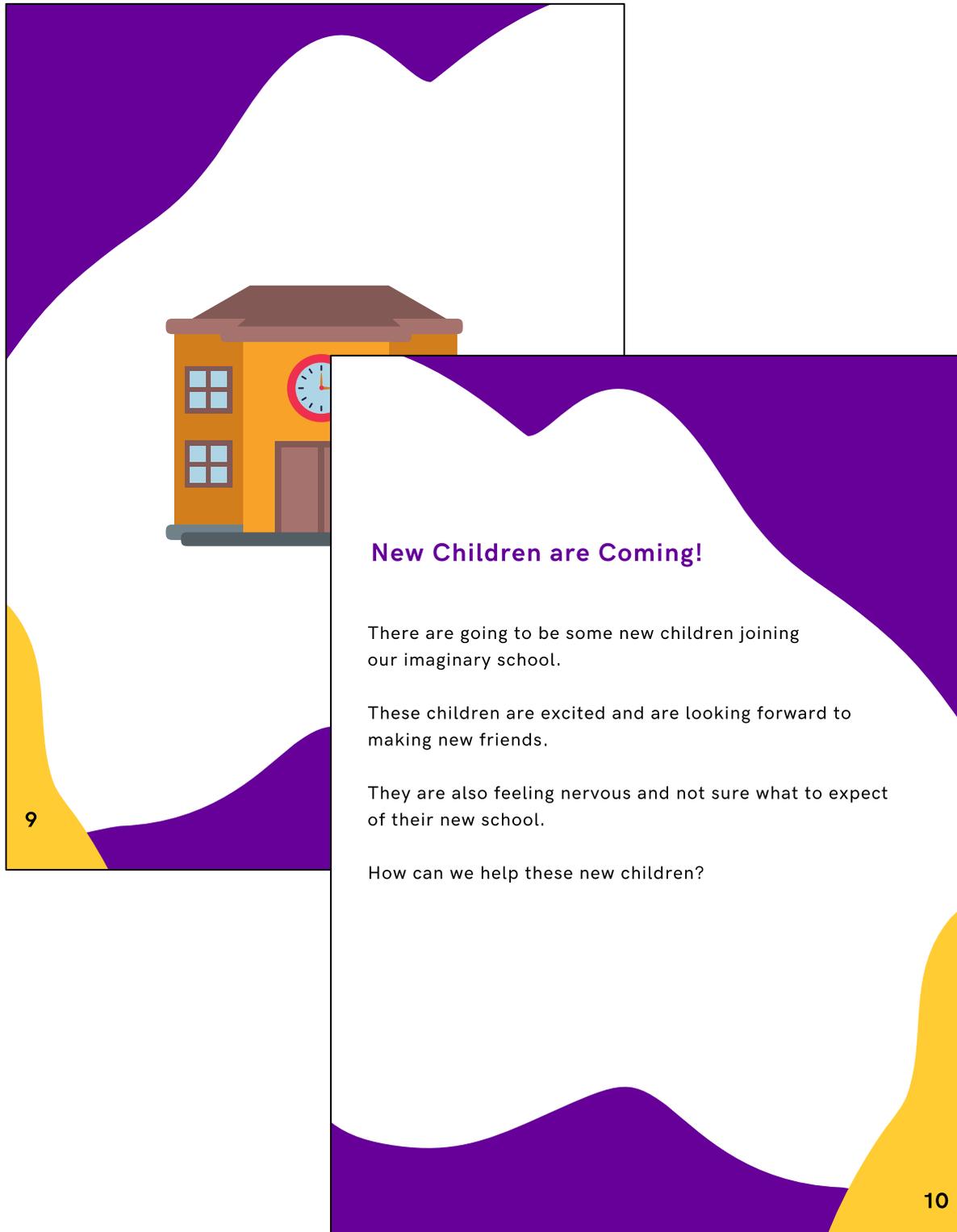
New Children are Coming!

There are going to be some new children joining our imaginary school.

These children are excited and are looking forward to making new friends.

They are also feeling nervous and not sure what to expect of their new school.

How can we help these new children?

9

10

4. Change and Transition: New Children are Coming!

> *Aims: to explore the needs and concerns children have around educational transition and their perceptions of appropriate support*
>
> *Looking for information about:*
> - Ideas around the needs and concerns of CYP relating to transition and potential impact
> - Transition processes and support (practical information, nature and length of support role of different individuals inc. CYP, parents/carers, staff)
> - Considerations around types of transition (including post school closures) or differentiated needs among CYP

There are going to be some new children joining our imaginary school.

These children are excited and are looking forward to making new friends.

They are also feeling nervous and not sure what to expect of their new school.

Key Question: How can we help these new children?

Prompts:

— Do you think it is important to help the new children coming to your school? Why?
— What questions might the new children have about your school?
— Who could help these new children, and how can they do that?
  — Might some of the new children need more help than others? Why? What sort of things would you do to help them even more?
  — What about welcoming students back to school after school closures because of COVID-19? Is there anything that can help them with this change?
  — Finally, is there anything your school could do to help children who are *leaving* the school?

Conclusion

That's all of our stories and questions for you. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you so much for talking with us, it's been really helpful to talk to you and we've learned a lot. To remind you, we're going to write about these ideas in reports but other people won't be able to tell that it's you in those reports. Those reports might help schools to help children feel happy and okay.

Do you have any questions for us now that we've finished? If you think of any questions later on, [name of school staff] or your parent or guardian can help get in touch with us to ask us.

We're going to send your school a certificate for each of you with your name on it, and a book voucher for all of you, as a thank you for taking the time to talk to us today. [Name of school staff] will let you know when these are ready for you!

Secondary School+ Focus Group Schedule
Note: includes relevant pages from young people's book

Introduction

<u>**Preamble**</u>
Schools do lots of things to help young people feel happy and okay. We want to know what you think about how schools can do a good job of this, to help other young people like you.

The things we learn in this project will be used to help make recommendations for schools supporting children and young people, so it's important we hear from young people like you about what you think this should look like. We will be talking to children and young people in other schools too, to see what they think.

Are you okay to talk with us about this? This will take about an hour. We will ask you some questions, but if you don't want to answer then that is okay. This isn't a test and there aren't any right or wrong answers – we are just interested in what children and young people like you think.

We are going to record our conversation on the computer. We are recording it so that we can listen to it again later and won't have to write down your answers while we chat. We won't play the recording to the school, teachers or your parents or tell them what you say, and [name of school staff member] is not going to go and talk about the things you say. **But** if someone tells me something that makes me think that they or someone else are at risk of harm, then I would need to speak with [Name of school staff member] about that so they can let someone know to help.

Ask: Do you have any questions?

It's okay for you to tell other people, like your friends, that we had this conversation today, and you can show other people the certificate that we give you for taking part. But because I am asking you what **you** think, it's also important that we don't tell others what each of you have actually said, because that isn't really fair.

<u>**Assent/Consent**</u>
Would you like to get involved? If not, you just need to let [name of school staff] know.
(if a pupil decides at this point that he/she does not wish to participate allow the supervising staff member to organise for the individual to go elsewhere as pre-discussed in school liaising)

If you would like to get involved, you can see there are some questions on the form that [name of school staff] has given you. We'll go through these questions together now to help make sure you understand what taking part means. If you understand and are happy with these questions, can you say "yes" for each one? If you're not happy or you're not sure what we mean, shake your head or say no and we can check in with you.

- Do you understand what the study is about?
- Have you asked all the questions you want to ask about the study?
- Did you understand the answers to your questions?
- Do you understand you can stop the study at any time without giving a reason?
- Do you understand that our conversation will be recorded and that we'll need you to tell us some information about you?

- Do you understand that things you tell the researchers will be used in reports and presentations that we write about what we learn? People won't be able to tell it's you we're talking about.
- Do you understand that things you say in the study will be looked at by people at the University of Manchester or other people who help to make sure that you are kept safe, including that we may need to let your teachers know if we're worried about you?
- Do you understand that things you say in the study are shared with researchers at other places, with your name removed so they don't know it's you?
- Are you happy to take part?

If you are happy with all of this, please can you tick these on the form that you have and write your name at the bottom? Then you can give these to [name of school staff]. If you were not sure or were not happy about these then that is fine, just let the teacher know and you can finish now. No one will mind.

Explain procedure *(show young people that this is in their book as shown below, on pages 1 and 2)*
Schools do lots of things to help young people feel happy and okay. We want to know what you think about how schools can do a good job of this, to help other young people like you.

To do this, we want you to imagine you are the head of a fictional school (or college). As the head of the school, we want you to think of ideas about how the school can help the young people there to feel happy and okay. We will give you some scenarios for you to think about to help with this.

We will go through this book all together, as a group. We will read out for you some of the different scenarios in the book and then talk together about them. You can read along if you'd like, or just listen to us read it. There are no right or wrong answers. This is all about your thoughts and opinions, and what you think is best. If there is anything you don't understand, such as a word or one of the scenarios, just tell us and we can explain it.

When you have an idea, put your hand up to let us know. That way everyone can take their turn to share their ideas.
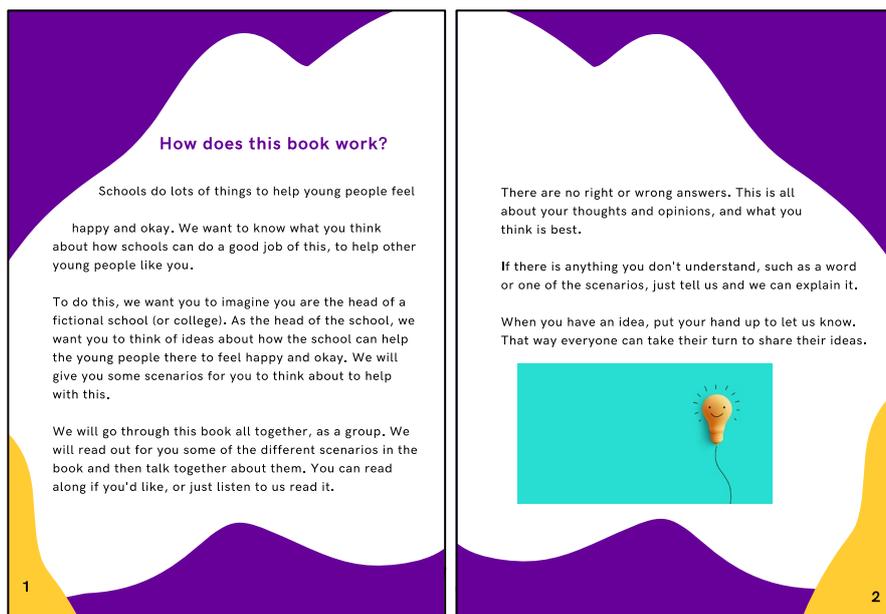
1. Whole School Approach: School Values (pages 3 and 4)

3

School Values

Many schools have "school values", where everyone at the school agrees on what is important and how they should behave.

Sometimes schools take steps to help use these values and make sure everyone in the school understands and can use them.

This might be about helping young people to be kind to one another, or having assemblies to talk all together about these values.

What do you think about having a value like this in our fictional school?

4

1. Whole School Approach: School Values

> *Aims: To explore CYP perspectives on the use of whole school approaches for wellbeing*
>
> *Looking for information about:*
> - Thoughts on use of a whole school approach with shared ethos, vision, and principles
> - Perceived impact of a whole school approach (e.g., social emotional skills, behaviour, exclusion, learning and achievement)
> - Individuals that should be involved in a whole school approach (school staff, CYP, parents, external individuals)
> - Provision delivery (integrated, universal vs. targeted differentiation, internal vs. external provider)

Many schools have "school values", where everyone at the school agrees on what is important and how they should behave.

Sometimes schools take steps to help use these values and make sure everyone in the school understands and can use them.

This might be about helping young people to be kind to one another, or having assemblies to talk all together about these values.

Key question: What do you think about having a value like this in our fictional school?

Prompts:

— Why/why not? E.g., would it be helpful?
— As headteachers how would you let everyone at the school know about the school values? What sorts of things could you do?
— Think about all the different people involved in a school – headteachers, class teachers, students, parents, teaching assistants, experts from outside the school, and more! Who are you going to ask to help agree on these values and follow them?
    — Why these people? Anyone else?
— Might people need help understanding and following these values? How can you help?
— Does this value need to be the same for everyone? Do we help everyone use the value the same way?

2. Universal Approach: Teaching Young People Skills (pages 5 and 6)

Teaching Young People Skills

The teachers in our fictional school have decided that some of the year groups are going to be taught some lessons and activities to help them feel happy and okay.

The lessons will teach the young people skills for managing and taking care of their feelings and building positive friendships.

These will be taught to each class in lesson times, and everyone will be taught the same ideas and skills.

What do you think of this idea?

5

6

2. Universal Approach: Teaching Children Skills

> *Aim: To explore CYP perceptions of universal classroom-based interventions*
>
> *Looking for information about:*
> - Perceived benefits of universal interventions (inc. short and long term)
> - Considerations in choosing universal interventions (fit to school, decision-making, training)
> - Aspects of delivery (format, frequency, delivery agent)

The teachers in our fictional school have decided that some of the year groups are going to be taught some lessons and activities to help them feel happy and okay.

The lessons will teach the young people skills for managing and taking care of their feelings and building positive friendships.

These will be taught to each class in lesson times, and everyone will be taught the same ideas and skills.

Key question: What do you think of this idea?

Prompts:

– Do you think these kinds of lessons and activities would be helpful for young people at your school? Why? How?
– As headteachers, when choosing lessons and activities for these classes, what sorts of things do you think are important to think about? Why?
– What should these lessons and activities look like, and what might happen in them?
– How often do you think lessons and activities like this need to happen? Why?
– Who would be involved in these lessons and activities? Why?

3. Targeted Provision: Helping Young People (Pages 7 and 8)

Helping Young People

Sometimes, some young people experience difficulties and need some extra support to feel happy and okay. There are some young people in our fictional school who might need help.

Sunny is in Year Eight and is finding it hard to connect with other pupils. Sunny might need support to help them build friendships.

Robin in Year Ten has been feeling upset and more worried than normal. Robin might need some time talking with an adult about these feelings.

Alex is in the school's Sixth Form. Alex feels angry some of the time and sometimes shouts at other people. Alex might need some support to get better at calming down.

7

What can we do to help Sunny, Robin, and Alex?

8

3. Targeted Provision: Helping Young People

> *Aims: to explore children's perceptions of targeted support and how this can be offered to CYP*
>
> *Looking for information about:*
> - Decision making (including referral processes, identification of CYP, CYP willingness to engage in support)
> - Provision delivery (mode of delivery and appropriateness, provider)
> - Sensitivity to needs and vulnerability and stigma (place of delivery and others' awareness)

Sometimes, some young people experience difficulties and need some extra support to feel happy and okay. There are some young people in our fictional school who might need help.

Sunny is in Year Eight and is finding it hard to connect with other pupils. Sunny might need support to help them build friendships.

Robin in Year Ten has been feeling upset and more worried than normal. Robin might need some time talking with an adult about these feelings.

Alex is in the school's Sixth Form. Alex feels angry some of the time and sometimes shouts at other people. Alex might need some support to get better at calming down.

Key question: What can we do to help Sunny, Robin, and Alex?

Prompts:

– Do you think that our school should help Sunny, Robin, and Alex? Why?
– Who would you talk to when deciding how to help Sunny, Robin, and Alex? Why?
– If we decide to give help to Sunny, Robin, and Alex, how might we go about giving them that help? For example, who might provide that help and what might it need to look like? Why?
– Do you think that Sunny, Robin, or Alex would mind if other people, like the other young people in their year group or their friends, know that they're receiving extra support? Why/why not?
– There are lots of other different children at the school other than Sunny, Robin, and Alex who might also need extra help. As the headteachers, how can we tell which young people might need extra help?
  – Would it be helpful if students could tell you themselves when they need help? How might we help them tell us?

4. Change and Transition (Pages 9 and 10)
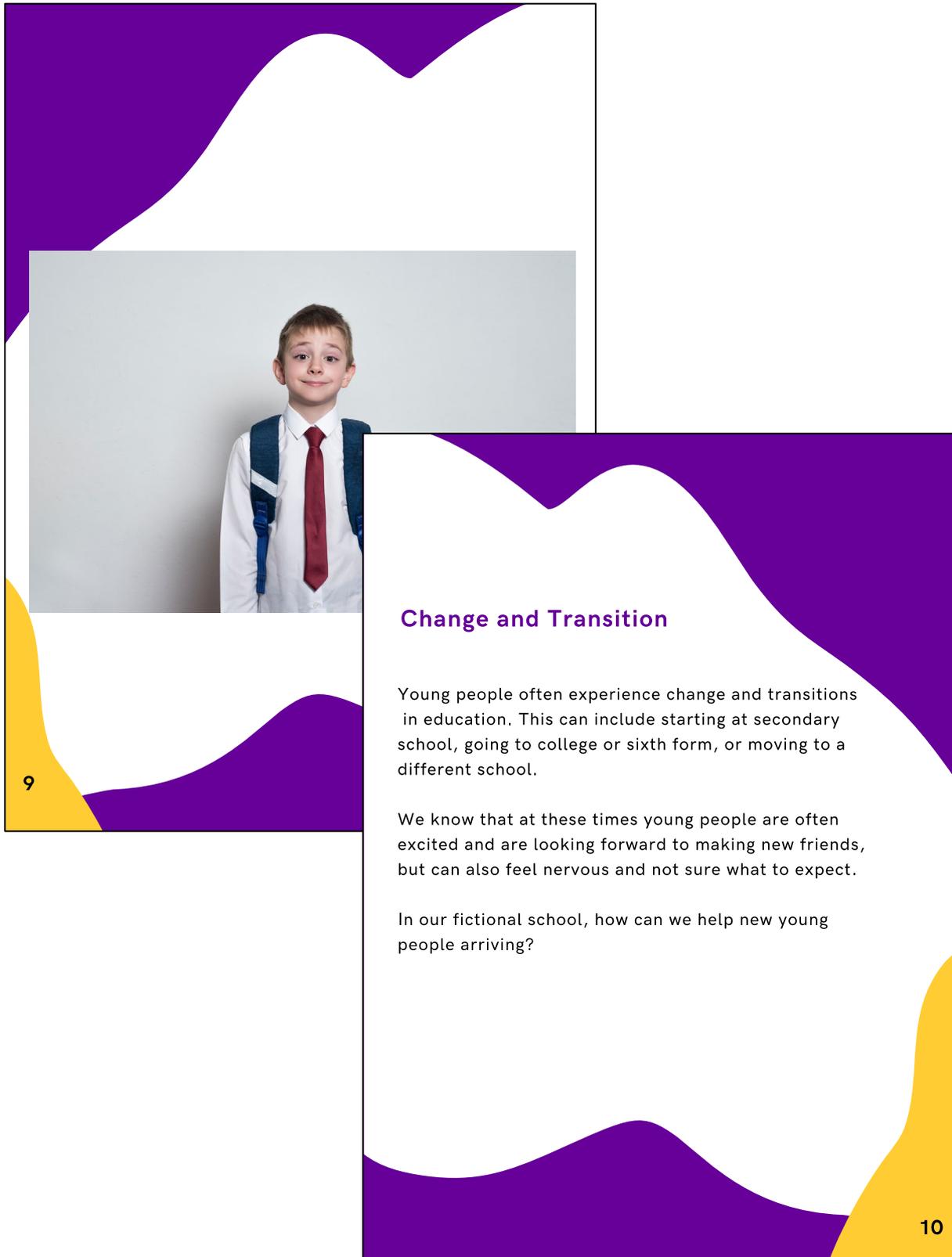
Change and Transition

Young people often experience change and transitions in education. This can include starting at secondary school, going to college or sixth form, or moving to a different school.

We know that at these times young people are often excited and are looking forward to making new friends, but can also feel nervous and not sure what to expect.

In our fictional school, how can we help new young people arriving?

4. Change and Transition: New Children are Coming!

> *Aims: to explore the needs and concerns children have around educational transition and their perceptions of appropriate support*
>
> *Looking for information about:*
> * Ideas around the needs and concerns of CYP relating to transition and potential impact
> * Transition processes and support (practical information, nature and length of support role of different individuals inc. CYP, parents/carers, staff)
> * Considerations around types of transition (including post school closures) or differentiated needs among CYP

**Young people often experience change and transitions in education. This can include starting at secondary school, going to college or sixth form, or moving to a different school.**

We know that at these times young people are often excited and are looking forward to making new friends, but can also feel nervous and not sure what to expect.

Key question: In our fictional school, how can we help new young people arriving?

Prompts:

— Do you think it is important to help the new children coming to your school? Why?
— What questions might new students have about your school? Might they have any concerns?
— Who do you think could help these new students, and can you think of the ways they could do that?
  — Might some of new students need more help than others? Why? What sort of things would you do to help them even more?
  — What about welcoming students back to school after school closures because of COVID-19? Is there anything that can help them with this change back to being at school?
  — Finally, is there anything your school could do to help young people who are *leaving* the school?

Conclusion

That's all of our scenarios and questions for you. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you so much for talking with us, it's been really helpful to talk to you and we've learned a lot from our conversation. As a reminder, we're going to write about the ideas we've talked about in reports but other people won't be able to tell that it's you in those reports. Those reports aim to help schools provide support to children and young people to feel happy and okay.

Do you have any questions for us now that we've finished? If you think of any questions later on, [name of school staff] or your parent or guardian can help get in touch with us to ask us.

We're going to send your school a certificate for each of you with your name on it, and a book voucher for all of you, as a thank you for taking the time to talk to us today. [Name of school staff] will let you know when these are ready for you!

[Name of school staff] also has a couple of final things for us to go through [prompt staff]. Firstly, there is a sources of support sheet. Children and young people can often talk to their parents, family, or friends if they need help, support, or advice with their wellbeing. However, sometimes additional support can be helpful, such as from a trusted adult in your school or from the organisations on this guide.

There is also a form so you can let us know some information about you if you're okay to answer these questions. Once you've filled this in, you can give this to [name of school staff] and they'll send it to us along with the form you filled in earlier.

Researcher Checklist: School Liaising

This document outlines key information and arrangements that need to be made with schools involved in the project and should be used throughout the school liaising process. Please save a copy of this for each school in the project folder.

	School name: Name of liaising school staff member and contact information: Is this the same person that will be supporting the focus group on the day?	

BEFORE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (3-4 weeks in advance)	WHO?	✓
Provide school with information letter and discuss any queries		
Identify member of staff to support project engagement focus group within school		
Arrange date and time for the focus group discussion **Explain:** • We will need pupils to be in a quiet, private space in the school with one member of staff providing support. • This room will need appropriate IT equipment (a computer or large screen with a camera and microphone. We can help test this with staff in advance if schools are unsure if this is the case.		
Discuss with school staff member to identify 5-8 participants to invite to take part in the discussion **Explain:** • Often we only hear from certain voices in research with children and young people, such as those who are more articulate or well-behaved. In this project we want to make sure we're hearing from all different kinds of children and young people. This might include children of different genders and ethnicities as well as children with different needs and backgrounds. This is helpful to consider in thinking about who takes part in this project. • In identifying children and young people that could take part, please consider if there are any reasons that taking part may be difficult for some individuals. This might include children and young people that you think might find it upsetting to talk about how schools provide wellbeing support, or combinations of children and young people where there is a difficult social dynamic (e.g., due to bullying).		
Email school to arrange a convenient time for a phone call approx. 1 week prior to the FG.		
Send pack to school 2-3 weeks prior to focus group date: Part 1 (for staff to use in advance):		

• Information packs to be sent home to possible participants and their parents/guardians (with parent information sheet, parent consent form, CYP information sheet, and information cover letter) – 1 per participant plus a spare • Full school letter and confidentiality form for the supporting staff member to sign in advance of the focus group discussion **Part 2** (to be used on the day of focus groups – should not be shared with participants prior to this) • Assent/consent forms for participants to sign before the focus groups begins, demographic forms, and signposting documents – 1 per participant plus a spare • Resources for the focus group discussion (see front of booklet for resource list)		
Check: Will any families need additional support in understanding information sheets? E.g., if school support is usually in place for non-English speaking families. What support might be helpful?		
BEFORE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (1 week in advance)		
Check in with school on parent consent forms and the confidentiality form for the member of staff supporting focus group discussion. Provide school with a secure Dropbox link where they can add scanned copies. **Store:** Move forms to secure data storage server and add name under "person taking consent" **Check**: Once we confirm receipt of scanned copies that school securely destroys written consent forms and delete virtual copies		
Ask school to send signed confidentiality agreement for the member of staff supporting data collection as in the steps outlined above.		
Send the introduction video to show to students with parental consent to take part and who are interested in taking part. **Explain:** Please remind pupils that participation is voluntary and they do not have to take part, and can change their mind about taking part. The video tells pupils to let their teacher know if they would like to take part; please clearly explain to pupils which teacher they need to tell if they want to take part.		
Check with the member of staff supporting data collection that they understand what is required of them during the discussion (if this is different to the person liaising for the project set up a separate discussion for this) and provide an opportunity for any questions.		
Check with school: Do any of the participants that have been invited require additional support that would normally be in place for classroom activities? Liaise with school to ensure appropriate support is in place if needed to facilitate their participation.		
Agree on videoconferencing software to be used and set up a scheduled meeting. Provide joining information to school.		
Agree on a debrief procedure between the supporting staff member after the focus group discussion (i.e., phone or email) and confirm approach if students become upset as outlined in the distress protocol.		
Check school terminology for "values"; what is the equivalent term for pupils in that school? Most familiar language should be used during the focus group to explain what we mean by values.		

ON THE DAY OF FOCUS GROUP		
Confirm that supporting staff member is the individual who has signed a confidentiality form		
Ensure equipment is sufficient and connection is of acceptable level		
Ask staff member to confirm that the space is private and others won't be entering during the discussion		
Remind participants of key information (as covered in the focus group schedule)		
Go through consent information and ask participants to confirm understanding and check in with any questions		
Ask participants to complete consent forms and pass to staff member		
Follow safeguarding and distress protocol throughout discussion		
After focus group draw participants' attention to signposting information		
Primary: debrief with staff member to arrange completion of demographic forms Secondary+: ask participants to complete demographic forms and pass to staff member		
Debrief with staff member via phone or email on any safeguarding issues or any instances where a participant may require a check-in or support		
Provide school with a secure Dropbox link where they can add scanned copies of assent/consent forms and pupil demographic forms. **Store:** Move forms to secure data storage server and add name under "person taking consent" **Check**: Once we confirm receipt of scanned copies that school securely destroys written consent forms and delete virtual copies		
Move audio recording onto secure data storage service and once this is uploaded and has been tested, permanently delete any local copies.		
Send debrief information to Ola and Alex and save completed checklist to project folder.		

Ola and Alex to arrange for certificates, vouchers, and school letters to be sent within one week of data collection.

Parents/Guardian Information sheet

> ## What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools?
> ## Information for Parents/Guardians

Your child's school is involved in a project that aims to inform the development of guidance on social, emotional, and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education. Our team, led by The University of Manchester, are going to be carrying out focus groups with children and young people, to explore their perspectives and experiences around this aspect of education.

We are writing to you because we would like your child to take part in one of these focus groups, along with some other children from their school, as school staff have suggested that your child might find it interesting to take part.

Before you decide whether you are happy for your child to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully before deciding whether you are happy for your child to take part, and discuss it with your child or with others if you wish. Please ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

What is the research about?

> ### Who will conduct the research, and who is funding the research?

The research is led by Dr Ola Demkowicz and Dr Alexandra Hennessey at the Manchester Institute of Education, The University of Manchester, alongside a wider team from Liverpool John Moores University, the Evidence Based Practice Unit at The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families and University College London, and Edge Hill University. The research is funded by NICE (The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence).

> ### What is the purpose of the research?

NICE are developing guidance for schools on supporting children and young people's wellbeing, and have asked our team to talk to children and young people about their views on this support to help them develop this guidance. This will help NICE to make sure that their guidance can best help schools meet the needs of children and young people.

> ### Will the outcomes of the research be published?

We will write a report based on our focus groups for NICE, and this will be used to support the development of guidance on social, emotional, and mental wellbeing in primary and secondary education. NICE will publish our report, and we will write articles for academic journals about what we find out. Your child's name will not be used in any of the reports we write. We may use quotes from focus groups in these reports, but it will not be possible to identify your child from the quotes.

> ### Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check

Every member of our research team has undergone a Disclosure and Barring Service check at the Enhanced Disclosure level. This means that they have permission to work with and do research with children

➢ **Who has reviewed the research project?**

The project has been reviewed by The University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee 5 (Ref: 2021-11252-18677).

What does this involve?

➢ **What would my child be asked to do if they took part?**

Two members of the research team will chat remotely with a small group of pupils in your child's class, using videoconferencing software (Zoom or Skype, depending on the school's preference). We will ask them some questions about what they think schools can do to support children and young people's wellbeing. This discussion will be supported by small activities, such as imagining they are the headteacher of a fictional school and making decisions about what support can be provided.

The children and young people will be present together physically in a private space in their school, and school staff will be present throughout to provide support, while the researchers lead the session over video. This discussion will take approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

The focus groups will be audio-recorded, so that we can write down what everybody said in their own words. This is called a "transcript". These recordings are essential to the study. If your child feels uncomfortable with the recording process, they do not have to take part, and they will be free to stop at any time.

There is little risk to taking part. Sometimes in rare circumstances a child or young person can feel upset when talking about school wellbeing support. If this happens, we will pause the discussion and provide support as needed, and then the researchers, school staff, and child will decide together about whether continuing is appropriate. At the end of the discussion, we will provide all children and young people with a signposting document that shows different people and services they can speak to if this would be helpful to them after taking part.

We might meet with children and young people in some of the schools in the project one more time after this in June or July 2021, to present what we have learned in the project and ask what they think of this. This is called "member checking" and it helps us to understand if children and young people agree with our interpretations and think about ways we can develop these further. This would be a short discussion lasting 30-45 minutes and would not be recorded. If we decide to revisit your child's school, the school will let you and your child know in advance.

➢ **Will my child be compensated for taking part?**

Your child will receive a £10 voucher as a thank you for taking part in the project. We will also provide them with a certificate acknowledging the contribution that they have made to improving the lives of others. Your child's school will receive a letter recognising their partnership in a research project.

➢ **What happens if myself or my child do not want them to take part or if we change our mind?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not your child takes part. If you decide not to take part, you do not need to do anything further. If you do decide you are happy for them to take part, you will be asked to complete the attached consent form to let us know. You and your child are still free to withdraw after giving consent without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself or child. It will not be possible to remove your child's data from the project after the focus group discussion has taken place because their contributions will then form part of a wider dataset and removing it would affect the data of other children and young people. This does not affect your child's data protection rights.

Will information about me and my child be kept private and confidential?

➢ **What information will you collect about my child?**

In order for your child to participate in this research project we will need to collect information that could identify your child, which is called "personal identifiable information". This includes the audio recording of our conversation as well as some information about them, such as their gender. Having this information means we can better understand the different voices included in the project, which is important for thinking about how our learning can be used in schools across England. Specifically, we will ask your child to provide us with your child's:

- Name
- Age in years
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Eligibility for free school meals
- Special education needs and disability status
- English as an additional language status

We will also ask for your name if you provide consent for your child, and will ask if you are happy to share your email address so that we can share findings from the study with you and your child at the end of the project, to make sure all the children and young people who take part get to find out what we learn.

The focus group will take place over video conferencing, and during the video your child will be visible to researchers.

➢ **Under what legal basis are you collecting this information?**

We are collecting and storing this personal identifiable information in accordance with data protection law which protect your your child's rights. These state that we must have a legal basis (specific reason) for collecting your child's data. For this study, the specific reason is that it is "a public interest task" and "a process necessary for research purposes".

➢ **What are my child's rights in relation to the information you will collect?**

Your child has a number of rights under data protection law regarding your personal information. For example, your child can request a copy of the information we hold about them. If you or your child would like to know more about these different rights or the way we use your child's personal information to ensure we follow the law, please consult our [Privacy Notice for Research](http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=37095) (http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=37095).

➢ **Will my child's participation in the study be confidential and my child's personal identifiable information be protected?**

In accordance with data protection law, The University of Manchester is the Data Controller for this project. This means that we are responsible for making sure your child's personal information is kept secure, confidential and used only in the way you have been told it will be used. All researchers are trained with this in mind, and your child's data will be looked after in the following way:

All data provided will be treated as confidential. Identifying information (e.g., your name or your child's name) will not be used and will be replaced with an ID number only known to the research team (known as pseudonymised). The data will be fully anonymised once transcribed, shortly after recording, and any personal identifiable information will be removed from the final transcription. Data will be stored on University encrypted drives to ensure secure storage. Audio data will be deleted upon completion of the project. All other data will be stored for 5 years, after which time it will be destroyed following The University of Manchester guidelines. Only the study team at The University of Manchester will have access to any personal information, and only anonymised information would be shared with our partnering colleagues and funder.

Your child's participation in this research will most likely be recorded in Zoom and your child's personal data will be processed by Zoom. This may mean that your child's personal data is transferred to a country outside of the European Economic Area, some of which have not yet been determined by the European Commission to have an adequate level of data protection. Appropriate legal mechanisms to ensure these transfers are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation are in place. The recordings will be removed from the above third party platform and stored on University of Manchester managed file storage as soon as possible following the completion of data collection.

The recordings will be used to create transcripts, which will be completed by a University of Manchester approved supplier. This supplier will only receive audio recordings (visual information will be added after, by members of the research team), and these will be transferred and handled in line with data protection requirements.

Potential disclosures:

If, during the study, we have concerns about your child's safety or the safety of others, we will inform your child's school and follow their safeguarding procedure.

Please also note that individuals from The University of Manchester or regulatory authorities may need to look at the data collected for this study to make sure the project is being carried out as planned. This may involve looking at identifiable data. All individuals involved in auditing and monitoring the study will have a strict duty of confidentiality to you as a research participant.

What if I want to get in touch or have a complaint?

If you have any concerns or wish to complain, you should contact Dr Alexandra Hennessey by email in the first instance.

DR ALEXANDRA HENNESSEY
MANCHESTER INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER
OXFORD ROAD
MANCHESTER

M13 9PL
EMAIL: ALEXANDRA.HENNESSEY@MANCHESTER.AC.UK
TEL: 0161 72 53504

If you wish to make a formal complaint to someone independent of the research team or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact:

The Research Ethics Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 306 8089.

If you wish to contact us about your child's data protection rights, please email dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL at the University and we will guide you and your child through the process of exercising your child's rights.

You also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office about complaints relating to your personal identifiable information (https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/) Tel: 0303 123 1113

CONTACT DETAILS
If you have any queries about the study then please contact **DR. ALEXANDRA HENNESSEY VIA EMAIL**
ALEXANDRA.HENNESSEY@MANCHESTER.AC.UK.
DR ALEXANDRA HENNESSEY
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TEL: 0161 72 53504

What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools?

Information for Children

Who we are?

Hi, our names are Kirsty and Carla. We work at the University of Manchester. Our job is finding out about schools and children like you.

What are we doing?

Schools do lots of things to help children feel happy and okay. We want to know what you think about how schools can do a good job of this, to help other children like you.

What would joining in involve?

We will meet with you and some other children in your class and come up with ideas together about how schools can help children feel happy and okay.

You will be in your classroom with an adult from your school, and we'll join in the conversation over a computer. This will take no more than one hour. If you get involved, we'll give you a certificate and a £10 book voucher to say thank you.

We might come and speak to you again one more time, later in the year, to tell you about what we have learned and see what you think. We'll let you know if we decide to come and talk to you again.

Sometimes someone might feel upset by talking about how schools can help. If this happens, we will take a break and you can stop if you'd like.

What information will you need?

We will record our conversation and then write down the things you say. We will delete the recording at the end of the project.

We will ask your school to tell us some information about you. This includes your name, your age, whether you are a boy or a girl, whether your school gives you free school meals, whether you have special educational needs or a disability, and what language you speak. This helps us understand the different voices in our project.

What will you do with the things I say?
Only Kirsty and Carla, some other grown-ups working on this project, and the teacher helping will know who said what. If we're worried you or someone else might be at risk of harm, we would need to talk to a teacher at your school about this.

We will store the things you say and our information about you for five years and then we will delete it.

We will write about what we learn in reports to help schools do a good job. We might write about the things that you say, but other people won't be able to tell that it's you.

What do I do if I want to join in?
If you would like to join in and your parent or guardian tells us it's okay for you to join in, your teacher can show you a short video where we will say hello. If you have any questions please ask your teacher, or your parent or guardian.

If you would like to join in, let your teacher know, and they will tell us. You don't have to join in if you don't want to!

What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools? Information Sheet

Can you help us with our research work?

Before you decide if you wish to get involved, please make sure that you understand:
1. Why the research is being done
2. What your involvement will be

Take your time to read through this information sheet before you decide if you wish to take part. Ask as many questions as you wish – you can ask your teacher or parent, and we'll also be available for questions on the day.

What is this project about?

Schools do lots of things to help young people feel happy and okay. We want to know what you think about how schools can do a good job of this, to help other young people like you. The things we learn in this project will be used to help make recommendations for schools supporting children and young people, so it's important we hear from young people like you about what you think this should look like.

What will we actually do?

We will meet with you and some other young people in your class and come up with ideas together about how schools can help children feel happy and okay. You'll be in your classroom with an adult from your school, and we'll join in the conversation over a computer. This discussion will take around 45 minutes to one hour. If you get involved, we'll give you an "Active Citizenship" certificate and a £10 shopping voucher to say thank you. We might ask to talk to you once more later in the school year to share what we have learned and ask what you think about this. Your school will tell you beforehand if we would like to talk to you again.

Sometimes someone might feel upset by talking about how schools can help. If this happens, we'll take a break and you can stop if you'd like. We'll remind everyone of people they can talk to and ask for help when they need it.

Why have I been asked to get involved?

We have asked you to join in on this project because your school thinks this will be interesting for young people in your school, and will also be useful and help other children and young people like you.

Who is organising and approving the research?

The research is led by Dr. Ola Demkowicz and Dr. Alexandra Hennessey and some other researchers at the University of Manchester, Liverpool John Moores University, The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, and Edge Hill University. The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) who are writing some advice for schools on ways to support children and young people's wellbeing. The project has been reviewed by The University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee 5 (Ref: 2021-11252-18677).

Will my information be confidential?

We'll record our conversation so that we can write down the things you say. We will delete the recordings when the project ends. We'll also ask you to tell us some information about you, including your name, your age, whether you are a boy or a girl, whether your school gives you free school meals, whether you have special educational needs or a disability, and what language you speak. This information means we can better understand the different voices included in our project.

Only researchers working on this project, and the teacher helping, will know who said what. We will store this information safely for 5 years, and then delete it. This will be kept confidential, which means only the research team will have access to your information and we will ensure it is kept safe and secure.

Our conversation will just be between all of us in the room at the time, unless we're worried you or someone else might be at risk of harm. If that happens, we would need to speak with your teacher so they can let someone know.

We are keeping this information safe and following data protection law.

The University of Manchester is the Data Controller, which means that we will protect the information about you. All researchers have received training to do this and we will make sure that they keep your information safe.

We will make sure that no one knows you have chosen to take part in the study and will also not share your name. We may write about the things you tell us in reports about what we learn in this project, but other people won't be able to tell that it's you.

You have a number of rights under data protection law, including the right to see any of the information you have shared with us. If you would like to know more about your rights or find out the legal reason we collect and use your information, please through the Privacy Notice for Research or discuss it with your parent/guardian.

Do I have to take part?

It is completely up to you if you wish to talk with us. Make sure you think carefully and consider all the information contained in this sheet before you decide. If you decide to help with the project, we will ask you to confirm that for us when we meet. Your parent/guardian will also need to sign a consent form to say they agree for you to get involved.

Can I change my mind?

You are free to withdraw at any point without having to give a reason. However after you have taken part you cannot withdraw your data, because your comments will be part of a discussion and removing them would affect other people's data.

What do I do now?

Your teacher will also show you a short video talking through this information if your parent/guardian says its okay for you to join in. If you have any questions, you can ask your teacher, or parent/guardian as they have some more information about the work. Kirsty, one of our researchers, will also be able to answer any questions you have when we meet. You can also contact us directly with questions, by getting in touch with Dr. Alexandra Hennessey:

EMAIL: ALEXANDRA.HENNESSEY@MANCHESTER.AC.UK.
ADDRESS: DR ALEXANDRA HENNESSEY, MANCHESTER INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER, OXFORD ROAD, MANCHESTER, M13 9PL
TEL: 0161 72 53504

What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools? Information Sheet

Can you help us with our research work?

Before you decide if you wish to get involved, please make sure that you understand:
1. Why the research is being done
2. What your involvement will be

Take your time to read through this information sheet before you decide if you wish to take part. Ask as many questions as you wish – you can ask your teacher or parent, and we'll also be available for questions on the day.

What is this project about?

Schools do lots of things to help young people feel happy and okay. We want to know what you think about how schools can do a good job of this, to help other young people like you. The things we learn in this project will be used to help make recommendations for schools supporting children and young people, so it's important we hear from young people like you about what you think this should look like.

What will we actually do?

We will meet with you and some other young people in your class and come up with ideas together about how schools can help children feel happy and okay. You'll be in your classroom with an adult from your school, and we'll join in the conversation over a computer. This discussion will take around 45 minutes to one hour. If you get involved, we'll give you an "Active Citizenship" certificate and a £10 shopping voucher to say thank you. We might ask to talk to you once more later in the school year to share what we have learned and ask what you think about this. Your school will tell you beforehand if we would like to talk to you again.

Sometimes someone might feel upset by talking about how schools can help. If this happens, we'll take a break and you can stop if you'd like. We'll remind everyone of people they can talk to and ask for help when they need it.

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We have asked you to join in on this project because your school thinks this will be interesting for young people in your school, and will also be useful and help other children and young people like you.

102

Who is organising and approving the research?

The research is led by Dr. Ola Demkowicz and Dr. Alexandra Hennessey and some other researchers at the University of Manchester, Liverpool John Moores University, The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, and Edge Hill University. The research is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) who are writing some advice for schools on ways to support children and young people's wellbeing. The project has been reviewed by The University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee 5 (Ref: 2021-11252-18677).

Will my information be confidential?

We'll record our conversation so that we can write down the things you say. We will delete the recordings when the project ends. We'll also ask you to tell us some information about you, including your name, your age, whether you are a boy or a girl, whether your school/college gives you free school meals, whether you have special educational needs or a disability, and what language you speak. This information means we can better understand the different voices included in our project.

Only researchers working on this project, and the teacher helping, will know who said what. We will store this information safely for 5 years, and then delete it. This will be kept confidential, which means only the research team will have access to your information and we will ensure it is kept safe and secure.

Everything you tell us private or confidential unless we're worried you or someone else might be at risk of serious harm or danger. If that happens, we would need to speak with let someone know (e.g., the police or someone at your school).

We are keeping this information safe and following data protection law.

The University of Manchester is the Data Controller, which means that we will protect the information about you. All researchers have received training to do this and we will make sure that they keep your information safe.

We will make sure that no one knows you have chosen to take part in the study and will also not share your name. We may write about the things you tell us in reports about what we learn in this project, but other people won't be able to tell that it's you.

You have a number of rights under data protection law, including the right to see any of the information you have shared with us. If you would like to know more about your rights or find out the legal reason we collect and use your information, please read through the Privacy Notice for Research or discuss it with your parent/guardian.

Your participation in this research will most likely be recorded in Zoom and your personal data will be processed by Zoom. This may mean that your personal data is transferred to a country outside of the European Economic Area, some of which have not yet been determined by the European Commission to have an adequate level of data protection. Appropriate legal mechanisms to ensure these transfers are compliant with the UK General Data Protection Regulation are in place. The recordings will be removed from the above third party platform and stored on University of Manchester managed file storage as soon as possible following the completion of data collection.

Do I have to take part?

It is completely up to you if you wish to talk with us. Make sure you think carefully and consider all the information contained in this sheet before you decide. If you decide to help with the project, we will ask you to confirm that and write it down for us when we meet.

Can I change my mind?

You are free to withdraw at any point without having to give a reason. However after you have taken part you cannot withdraw your data, because your comments will be part of a discussion and removing them would affect other people's data.

What do I do now?

If you have any questions please your teacher or tutor who told you about this project, or you can share this with a parent/guardian and discuss it with them. Kirsty, one of our researchers, will also be able to answer any questions you have when we meet.

You can also contact us directly with questions, by getting in touch with Dr. Alexandra Hennessey:
EMAIL: ALEXANDRA.HENNESSEY@MANCHESTER.AC.UK
ADDRESS: DR ALEXANDRA HENNESSEY, MANCHESTER INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER, OXFORD ROAD, MANCHESTER, M13 9PL
TEL: 0161 72 53504

If you wish to make a formal complaint to someone independent of the research team or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact:

The Research Ethics Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning 0161 306 8089.

If you wish to contact us about your data protection rights, please email dataprotection@manchester.ac.uk or write to The Information Governance Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, M13 9PL at the University and we will guide you through the process of exercising your rights.

You also have a right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office about complaints relating to your personal identifiable information (https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/) Tel: 0303 123 1113

CONTACT DETAILS
If you have any queries about the study then please contact DR. ALEXANDRA HENNESSEY:
EMAIL ALEXANDRA.HENNESSEY@MANCHESTER.AC.UK.
ADDRESS: DR ALEXANDRA HENNESSEY, MANCHESTER INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER, OXFORD ROAD, MANCHESTER, M13 9PL
TEL: 0161 72 53504

	What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools? **School Staff Confidentiality Agreement**

Please read the following statements, and complete and sign if you agree to each of these points.

		Initials
1	I understand what the study involves and have read a copy of the information sheet for pupils	
2	I understand that the focus group will be audio recorded	
3	I understand that while supporting pupils during the focus groups, I may be captured on audio recordings. I understand that this will be stored as outlined in information sheets, and that researchers will not use that information as a part of their dataset	
4	I understand that what pupils say will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in line with the Data Protection Act (2018)	
5	I will not discuss any of the confidential information disclosed to me with anyone, under any circumstances after supporting this focus group (except for safeguarding as captured below)	
6	I understand that if safeguarding issues arise during the focus group discussions, these should be treated as normal and reported to the setting's safeguarding officer, but that I should let the research team know before reporting these using the agreed upon debriefing procedure.	

Signed:

Full name:

School:

Date of signature:

Appendix 6: Consent and assent forms

Parents/Guardian Consent Form

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What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools?
Parents/Guardian Consent Form

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If you would like for your child to take part, please review the points outlined below. If you are happy with all of these statements, please fill in the information and sign at the end and return this to the school. You should keep your copy of the information sheet.

	Activities	Initials
1	I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet (Version 3, Date 22/04/2021) for this study and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.	
2	I understand that my child's participation in the study is voluntary and that we are free to withdraw without giving a reason and without detriment to myself or my child. I understand that it will not be possible to remove my child's data from the project after they have taken part in focus groups as this would affect the data of other children and young people.	
3	I agree to the focus group process being audio recorded and that researchers can be provided with some demographic information about my child as outlined in the information sheet (e.g., gender, whether they have special educational needs).	
4	I agree that data may be published in anonymous form in academic books, reports or journals.	
5	I understand that data collected during the study may be looked at by individuals from The University of Manchester or regulatory authorities, where it is relevant to my child taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my child's data.	
6	I agree that any anonymised data collected may be shared with researchers/researchers at other institutions.	
7	I understand that there may be instances where during the course of the interview/focus group information is revealed which means that the researchers will be obliged to break confidentiality and this has been explained in more detail in the information sheet.	
8	I understand that researchers may revisit some schools to discuss their findings with some children and young people and agree that my child may take part in this discussion if their school is included in this stage.	
9	I agree for my child to take part in this study.	

Data Protection

The personal information we collect and use to conduct this research will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet and the Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

(Please see continued overleaf)

_____   _____
Name of Child   Name of Parent

_____   _____
 Parent Signature   Date

If you would like to receive information about what we learn in this project that you can share and discuss our findings with your child, please provide your email address below. We will only use this information to share our findings from the study.

_____
Email Address for Parent

_____   _____   _____
Name of the person taking consent   Signature   Date form received

What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools?
Children and Young People's Assent Form

If you would like to get involved, these questions will help make sure you understand what taking part means. If you're not sure about any of these let us know and we can explain them more. If you understand and are happy with all of these, please tick next to each one and pass it to the teacher who is helping you today.

1 Do you understand what we will be doing today? ☐

2 Have you asked all the questions you want to ask us? ☐

3 Do you know that you can change your mind if you would like to finish taking part? You do not have to tell me why. ☐

4 Do you understand that we will record our conversation and that your school to give us some information about you (e.g., your gender)? ☐

5 Do you understand that we may write what you tell us in some reports and presentations so we can share what we learn? People won't be able to tell it's you we're talking about. ☐

6 Do you understand that the things you tell me might be looked at by people who help to keep you safe? ☐

7 Do you understand that things you say in the study will be shared with researchers at other places, without your name so they don't know it's you? ☐

8 Are you happy to take part? ☐

If you don't want to take part, or you answered no to the above questions, don't sign your name! Let us know if you'd like to stop now or if you have more questions. If you do want to take part, you can write your name below.

_____   _____
Your Full Name   Signature

_____
 Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of the person taking consent   Signature   Date form received

What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools?
Young People's Assent Form

If you would like take part, these questions will help make sure you understand what taking part means. If you're not sure about any of these let us know and we can explain them more. If you understand and are happy with all of these, please tick next to each one and pass it to the teacher who is supporting.

	Activities	✓
1	Do you understand what the study is about?	
2	Have you asked all the questions you want to ask about the study?	
3	Did you understand the answers to your questions?	
4	Do you understand you can stop the study at any time without giving a reason?	
5	Do you understand that our conversation will be recorded and that we'll need you to tell us some information about you?	
6	Do you understand that things you tell the researchers will be used in reports and presentations that we write about what we learn? People won't be able to tell it's you we're talking about.	
7	Do you understand that things you say in the study will be looked at by people at the University of Manchester or other people who help to make sure that you are kept safe, including that we may need to let your teachers know if we're worried about you?	
8	Do you understand that things you say in the study are shared with researchers at other places, with your name removed so they don't know it's you?	
9	Are you happy to take part?	

Data Protection

The personal information we collect and use to conduct this research will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet and the Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

If you don't want to take part, or you answered no to the above questions, don't sign your name! Let us know if you'd like to stop now or if you have more questions. If you do want to take part, you can write your name below.

_____   _____

Your Full Name   Signature

_____

 Date

_____   _____   _____

Name of the person taking consent   Signature   Date form received

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<tr><td colspan="3">What do children and young people think about wellbeing support in schools?
Young People's Consent Form</td></tr>
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If you would like to take part, these questions will help make sure you understand what taking part means. If you're not sure about any of these let us know and we can explain them more. If you understand and are happy with all of these, please tick next to each one and then sign your name at the end. You should then [give/send] this to the teacher or tutor who is helping today.

	Activities	✓
1	Do you understand what the study is about?	
2	Have you asked all the questions you want to ask about the study?	
3	Did you understand the answers to your questions?	
4	Do you understand you can stop the study at any time without giving a reason?	
5	Do you understand that our conversation will be recorded and that we'll need you to tell us some information about you?	
6	Do you understand that things you tell the researchers will be used in reports and presentations that we write about what we learn? People won't be able to tell it's you we're talking about.	
7	Are you happy that things you say in the study will be looked at by people at the University of Manchester or other people who help to make sure that you are kept safe?	
8	Do you understand that things you say in the study are shared with researchers at other places, with your name removed so they don't know it's you?	
9	Do you understand that the researchers may have to tell other people (e.g., your school/college, the police) things you said in the study if they are worried about you?	
10	Are you happy to take part?	

Data Protection
The personal information we collect and use to conduct this research will be processed in accordance with data protection law as explained in the Participant Information Sheet and the Privacy Notice for Research Participants.

If you don't want to take part, or you answered no to the above questions, don't sign your name! Let us know if you'd like to stop now or if you have more questions. If you do want to take part, you can write your name below.

_____   _____
Your Full Name   Signature

(continued on the next page)

_____
 Date

If you would like to receive information about what we learn in this project, please provide your email address below. We will only use this information to share our findings from the study.

_____
Email Address

_____   _____   _____
Name of the person taking consent   Signature   Date form received

Primary-aged signposting document

MANCHESTER
1824
The University of Manchester

Getting help

Sometimes it is helpful to talk to someone about our feelings. This sheet has some ideas of who you could talk to if you were worried or upset.

People in your family

You can tell someone you trust in your family how you are feeling. Let them know if there is something you are finding tough or worrying about.

Adults at school

There are adults in your school that can listen and help if there is something you are finding hard or worrying about.

Childline

Childline gives help and advice to children about lots of different things they might be worried about. You can get in touch with them on the phone or on their website.

Telephone: 0800 1111
Website: www.childline.org.uk

YoungMinds

YoungMinds has a website with information about mental health and wellbeing for children and young people.

www.youngminds.org.uk

MANCHESTER 1824

The University of Manchester

Sources of support

Children and young people can often talk to their parents, family, or friends if they need help, support, or advice with their wellbeing. However, sometimes additional support can be helpful, such as from a trusted adult in your school or from the organisations below.

CHILDLINE

Childline is a free and confidential service offering help and advice on a wide range of issues (phone or online)

Telephone: 0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

YOUNGMINDS

YoungMinds is a charity that provides information about mental health and wellbeing for children and young people

www.youngminds.org.uk

SAMARITANS

Samaritans provide emotional support to anyone in emotional distress or struggling to cope
Telephone: 116 123
www.samaritans.org

SELF-CARE RESOURCES

The Anna Freud Centre has guidance on the things children and young people can do to look after their mental health and wellbeing

www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care