

## Exploratory study: What are schools in the South West doing around mental health?

We would like to invite you to participate in a study about what approaches to mental health schools in the South West are currently taking. We are inviting you to contribute to this research because we believe you may have valuable insight and perspective on what is happening in this area. This document will provide some information about the study and what participation would involve.

If you have any questions once you have read this document, and/or if you would like to agree to participate in the study, please contact one of the researchers leading the study:

Dr Katie Howard, University of Exeter: [k.howard2@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:k.howard2@exeter.ac.uk)

Dr Rachel Wilder, University of Bath: [rw2031@bath.ac.uk](mailto:rw2031@bath.ac.uk)

### *About the study*

In response to rising rates of mental health difficulties among children and young people, the UK government has recently increased its policy focus and funding for mental health in and through schools (DoH & DfE, 2017). While it is apparent that schools are now doing more around mental health for pupils and staff alike, there remains a lack of clarity among policy makers, educationalists and scholars about exactly what schools are doing and how.

This exploratory study aims to provide insight into the breadth and depth of what primary and secondary schools in the South West are offering in terms of mental health provision. It is being implemented by a small interdisciplinary team of researchers at the Universities of Bath, Bristol and Exeter. As an 'exploratory study', we are gathering a relatively small amount of data from a select number of policy leaders in education and schools that will provide some initial information and help indicate whether a larger, more in-depth study would be of value.

With the results, we aim to facilitate some multi-sectoral conversations about what is happening in schools around mental health. We hope this will promote knowledge exchange and learning both on the part of practitioners and academic researchers. One of the ways we will do this is by producing a podcast about our results. We may also intend to write about the results in a blog and/or academic publications.

### *What will your participation involve?*

We will ask you to participate in an interview that will last about 45 minutes. It will be done either online (using MS Teams) or in person at your place of work, in a room that is private and confidential. The interview will take place during normal working hours. Only yourself and one researcher will be at the interview. We will ask some questions about your professional role and your experience of school activities/programmes around mental health. We will not ask any questions about your own mental health or the mental health of any specific individuals.

### *Voluntary and confidential participation*

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can change your mind at any time. Should you choose to participate, we will ask you to sign a consent form that provides more detail on how we will use your information. You can change your mind about participating at any time before or during the interview without giving a reason. You can change your mind up to two weeks after the interview and request that your data is removed from the study by emailing the researchers (see names and contact details below).

### *Data collection, security and storage*

The identity and research data from all participants will be treated as confidential. We will audio-record the interview using a dedicated recording device. After the interview, the data file(s) will be downloaded to a university password-protected hard drive and it will be erased from the recording device. The research data will only be available to our research team, which includes seven researchers at the Universities of Bath, Bristol and Exeter. We will transcribe the interview (write it into text) and then delete the audio file. We will anonymise the transcript by assigning pseudonyms to all participants and any other identifiable people/places, including the name and location of the school. We will analyse this data along with the other data we collect. We may use quotations from interviews in publications or audio productions – to help illustrate our findings – however we will not say that where or who it comes from. We will keep the research data for five years and after that it will be destroyed.

### *Future use of data*

The anonymised transcripts are valuable for research now and for future research projects, e.g., a larger, more in-depth study including the views of school policy leaders. Therefore, the anonymised transcripts may be used in the future by our research team, and by other researchers undertaking ethically approved research. We may share this data anonymously through the UK Data Sharing archive for use in future research project(s) but the conditions under which you have provided the data will still apply.

### *Risks of participation*

This is a relatively low-risk study and we don't expect that it will cause participants any discomfort or harm. Participants can request the interview to stop and we will stop right away. Given the unique insights that participants may have to offer, there is a slight risk that others hearing or reading about this study may be able to guess who participated in the study. This is possible even if we anonymise all the data. However, the risk is low.

### *Who has reviewed this study?*

This study has been reviewed by the University of Exeter's social science ethical committee and received a favourable review (Reference: #0000). If you have any questions about the ethical review of this study, please contact the ethical committee at: [ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk).

### *How can I withdraw from the study?*

If you decide to withdraw your consent, or if you have any concerns, please contact one of the following researchers:

Dr Katie Howard, University of Exeter: [k.howard2@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:k.howard2@exeter.ac.uk)

Dr Rachel Wilder, University of Bath: [rw2031@bath.ac.uk](mailto:rw2031@bath.ac.uk)