**CTTR Seed funded projects – short report guidelines**

A short report of 2000 words should be submitted to CTTR using the guidelines below. Please prepare the report as a Word document using Ariel font size 11 or 12. Reports will be formatted by CTTR and hosted on the project pages on the CTTR website.

Please email your report to ioe.cttr@ucl.ac.uk by **17.00 on Monday 3 October 2022.**

*For longer work please discuss the possibility of producing an Occasional Paper with CTTR staff.*

The following are guidelines, but reports may vary to include material which is particularly relevant to individual project aims. Please discuss any queries about the report with your linked CTTR staff member.

**Project title**:

‘COVID-19: Trainee TEACHers’ challenges and barriers to mental health and WELLbeing support (C19 TEACH WELL)’

**People involved** (names, emails and affiliations)

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**Keywords**: Trainee teachers, mental health, COVID-19, challenges, support, Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

**Summary of research (with subheadings):**

*Research questions.* Our proposed mixed-method project set out to the following:

1. What are the challenges faced by the trainee teachers and how have they overcome them? If they haven’t overcome them, what resources do they need?
2. What mental health support and resources do trainee teacher with zero to some experience need?

*Background*. Teacher attrition has long been an issue. The COVID19 pandemic has only exacerbated the situation. In a February [Education Support](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/news-and-events/news/mental-health-decline-in-schools-could-push-more-teachers-to-leave-teaching/) (2021) survey, 80% of teachers reported high stress, of which 46% also voiced that their mental health has caused them to consider leaving the profession altogether. As the pandemic continues, these numbers have not improved. Over half of all education professionals felt their mental health had declined either considerably or a little. 60% of teachers reached out to family and friends for support ([YouGov](https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/news-and-events/news/mental-health-decline-in-schools-could-push-more-teachers-to-leave-teaching/) June-July 2021). This is on top of the usual stress experienced by teachers including long work hours, additional COVID testing and workload that prevent them from having time for themselves to engage in professional learning and development. With the new year about to begin, it is clear that teachers need mental health support in order to maintain high standards of teaching, but also to continue to serve the children and families with whom they interact.

Although traditional teacher training programs do teach trainee teachers about children’s attachment and socio-emotional development, cultivating mentally healthy environments by focusing on teacher’s mental wellbeing has rarely been achieved – this is the focus of our project. What mental health support do teachers need to maintain their own wellbeing, and where possible, to then support children is an under researched area. A recent review of the evidence by [White](http://www.healthscotland.scot/media/2951/supporting-teachers-mental-health-and-wellbeing-english-feb2020.pdf) (2020) suggests that there are three major gaps in the literature:

1. all studies focused on the prevention of mental health rather than the promotion of positive mental health,
2. The majority of studies focused on individual-level approaches to help teachers cope with stressors and not strategies at the organisational level to reduce stressors and prevent stress, and
3. a larger body of evidence for interventions in the general workplace to support mental health and wellbeing exists, but it is not known how effective these are in education settings.

Evidently there is much need for a detailed investigation of trainee teacher’s mental health needs and a co-produced set of support tools that may be shared and tested more widely. More specifically, trainee teachers in the early years sector where staffing is notably unstable (11%-15% turnover rates) may need the most support, especially post-pandemic ([Social Mobility Commission](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/906906/The_stability_of_the_early_years_workforce_in_England.pdf), 2020). New trainees are entering settings for the first time and those with some experience (e.g., had some teaching experience but enrolled in the trainee program) may fare slightly better, yet still find new post-pandemic challenges difficult to handle.

*Methods*. This mixed-method study assessing trainee teacher’s PGCE .year experience consists of three assessments:

1. a baseline online survey in October 2021.
2. 1-on-1 interview/group sharing session in January 2022.
3. final online survey/group sharing session in May 2022.

*Participants*. A total of five trainees out of the original 14 in the PGCE Program took part in various 1-on-1 and focus group sessions at different time-points. All had between zero to 12 years of teaching experience (see Table 1).

*Analyses.* Due to the small sample size, only the qualitative data will be presented as it is more insightful than the quantitative questionnaires assessing mental wellbeing.

**Table 1**

*Summary of years of teaching experience per trainee teacher*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Trainee teacher**  | **Years of teaching experience**  |
| ID1  | 3 years  |
| ID2  | 5 years  |
| ID3  | A couple of years of experience, far apart  |
| ID4  | 12 Years  |
| ID5  | None  |

**Key findings:**

This section is split into three sections, the: challenges, solutions, and support that trainee teachers experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic PGCEyear. Several key themes emerged for each of the research questions we had:

1. **What are the challenges faced by the trainee teachers and how have they overcome them? If they haven’t overcome them, what resources do they need?**

**Trainee’s placement challenges**

  During the interviews, trainees described the variety of challenges they had faced during their placements. Four subthemes emerged based on the origin of the challenge: COVID-related (n = 4), Personal issues (n = 5), Placement setting-related (N = 5), and Programme-related (n = 5).

COVID-related challenges were difficulties that trainees experienced because of the pandemic and its consequences. Trainees spoke about the challenges of engaging in online meetings only, as they were not able to see their tutor in person. Seeing their students going through difficult situations at home and presenting developmental delays was incredibly challenging. One trainee found it difficult to apply COVID restrictions to their placement setting, while another trainee mentioned that the placement setting did not let her know about COVID guideline updates. During the follow-up focus group, three trainees spoke about placement settings not being impacted by COVID, as they did not have any COVID out breaks.

*Even when people had COVID, like, no impact, no direct impact, like, on my course or what I had to do, and I did not have COVID (ID1).*

Personal issues were challenges trainees experienced due to individual circumstances. These included not knowing how the English education system works, not knowing about funding relevant for their degree, lack of time for peer support initiatives, adapting to different age groups, needing help with setting up email, and enrolling on the teacher training programme later than expected, due to delay in meeting the entry requirements. All trainees agreed that they felt hesitant about contacting the IOE when they had questions or difficulties about coursework or their placements, in part because they wanted to be independent and in part because they felt that people from the course had communicated that they worked part-time and would only be able to respond during their working hours. Some trainees did contact the course leader when they had an emergency in their placement, and consequently received support.

*So I think, as well as, like, I almost feel like, if I have, I feel like I’ve really pushed myself to be independent. And that, actually, when I’ve needed the help it actually has been there, I just have to feel like I can access it mm hmm that makes sense, so I don't know how we could make that clearer, you know, like it's not like they haven't said ‘email if you have a problem’. But I definitely felt, for whatever reason, I don't know what communication caused me to feel like I shouldn't get in touch, but I’m really glad that I did when I did, because it has changed the situation pretty dramatically (ID3).*

Three trainees spoke about difficulties in balancing their personal lives with the programme workload. Two trainees found it difficult to know which questions to ask their mentors and tutors. Another trainee struggled to access mental health services as the waiting list was long, so she resorted to other strategies of taking care of her mental health (i.e.., sharing with people from her placement setting and physical exercise).

 Placement setting -related challenges were difficulties concerning adapting to the setting and being able to perform as a trainee. All five trainees reported that their placements did not know what their role as a trainee teacher was, with many being asked by their placement settings to perform actions that were not included in the role or confused this role with other online trainee programmes.

*Yes, and no, so I had the information, so I knew the expectations from the University, but what the school didn't know was what they needed from me, so I was being asked to do more than I should have been doing earlier on, and which was fine by me, because I have got the experience from being in a school, but if I hadn't had that experience, I think It would have been a lot different and I felt a lot more uncomfortable, but um, yeah, so my expectations and the school's expectations were a little bit different and even when I said to them, ‘oh no, I only have to do this, or have to do that’, they weren't quite sure what they had to do with me, and so it was difficult, yeah (ID4).*

Two trainees said their placement setting refused IRIS connect – a trainee teacher observation tool used by UCL to facilitate observation of trainee’s teaching – and therefore, tutor observation and feedback on teaching was adapted. Other challenges mentioned included mentors’ availability, having to observe different teachers at their placement, not being able to perform confidently as a trainee teacher because of restrictions from the placement setting, and teachers from the setting not liking to be observed. Other two challenges mentioned by trainees are related to bigger social issues, such as having to explain to other people in their setting the importance of early years education (e.g., children in nursery should learn and not only be fed and taken care of), and the lack of support of education centres from policymakers because of the social value of early years education.

Programme-related challenges were related to collating evidence of teaching and communication with people from the programme, especially their tutor. Four trainee teachers said they were uncertain about their role as trainee teachers and what to do for their formative assessment (observations).

*Uh, my, I wasn't really sure on the expectations, I knew that, what was expected of me of the course, so I knew what I had to do in terms of having observations done, how much I needed to do, I wasn't sure on, and so I just kind of probably I'm a bit of an over thinker, and so I just did probably more than I needed to do. And they, just to make sure that I had done and cross everything crossed, and, but yeah, it would have been nice to be, like, you just need X, Y and Z in order to, in this placement, instead of it being, like, gather evidence, so I was like, literally doing, taking everything I could take (ID4).*

Three trainees mentioned they were uncertain about how to collate evidence of their teaching in their portfolio, and two of them said they had difficulties to do their academic assignments in general. Two trainees mentioned that the placements were too short, which meant that they had to change and adapt to a new setting, just when they were getting used to the old one. One trainee said that her placement was disrupted because of an issue with her placement setting. Other challenges mentioned were not being able to meet the tutor, not being able to see the tutor in person, and the tutor working part time, which made communications more difficult.

**Trainees’ feelings during the placement experience**

Trainees described a wide variety of emotions that they experienced during their placements, and they were grouped into the sub-themes Negative feelings (n = 5), Positive feelings (n = 4), and Like a roller coaster (n = 3).

Negative feelings were described by the five trainees. Three explicitly said they were stressed and three of them said they felt like they were not doing the right thing, in terms of their choice of career and actions they performed during placement. Other emotions that were mentioned once were: anxiety, confusion, fear, insecurity, lack of confidence, lack of control, like a Teacher’s Assistant, loneliness, nervousness, overwhelmed, and pressure. Some of these negative feelings have eased, when trainees have been able to receive support or solve the challenges they faced.

*... and you know the portfolio, I get grades for it, so which is really, really stressful that, for me. So in my portfolio, I met the targets, but, for me, I knew I could do better, and I could meet the targets better. So I spoke to my mentor and things did not really change, so I decided to- to speak to my programme leader and she was preparing a personal support plan for me, so that the Uni will get involved, and they will start- So which, I think I'm not doing this now because the problem was solved, but I think that could be really, really helpful, and the fact that I knew that there is a support plan that I can use at any time, for me, has made a big, big, big impact on, like, my stress levels, like, I don't feel any stress or nervous anymore, because I know if I will struggle again, if the challenge will not. If things will not get better, I will have that support plan, like, so my uni will get involved, and they will start sending me targets, clear targets, for everyone and I will not have to face those challenging challenges and be on those like awkward meetings talking about ‘please, can you let me teach, please, can you let me work’ because you know, yeah (ID1).*

Positive feelings were described by four of the trainees. Two of them described feeling comfortable during their placement, and other two said they were excited. Other emotions mentioned once were confidence, happiness, hopefulness, like a teacher, like doing the right thing, positive, prepared, and supportive.

Three trainees said their placement experiences were ‘like a roller coaster’, as they felt intense emotions and had to adapt to different challenges.

*Hi guys, um, I say for me, um, it's been an interesting, it's been an interesting challenge, challenge, so I was actually off for about a month because I was sorting placements and moving to one place to another, so that meant that I had some time off. Mentally, I mean, it toughened me mentally and I think it was it was interesting to see what happens when, it was just interesting for me to see what happens when, um, a disruption to your studies, what, like, it sort of introduced me to myself and showed me what happens when, when there's, there's a distrup-disruption to your studies, how can I handle it mentally, so that was interesting. So, it was a roller coaster, but it was a very interesting roller coaster (ID5).*

1. **What mental health support and resources do trainee teacher with zero to some experience need?**

**COVID-19 pandemic impacted Trainee's health**

As the trainees were asked about their health issues, they described a series of conditions of mental and physical health, which not only happened during their placement; some of them were conditions they had before the experience started, and some of them were unrelated to it. Thus, the three subthemes related to the Health issues faced during the COVID pandemic theme are: Before placement (n = 4), During placement (n = 4), and Outside placement (n = 3).

Trainee’s health issues that started Before placement were mostly related to mental health. Two trainees reported low self-esteem, while PTSD and the death of a close relative were each reported by one trainee. Issues related to physical health were knee problems and COVID, each reported by one trainee.

The health issues that happened During the placement experience were also mostly related to mental health. Sadness, anxiety, fear of self-isolation, lack of sleep, feeling solemn, and studying less than usual were mentioned once during interviews, while lack of sleep was mentioned by two trainees. Physical health issues were flu, dizziness, tonsillitis, vasovagal syncope, and COVID. Each of these conditions was reported by one trainee.

Lastly, health issues that happened Outside placement were anxiety and COVID, each one mentioned by one trainee. The trainee who reported having anxiety said it did not affect much of her work, whereas the trainee who had COVID said that the virus did not allow her to rest during her break, which impacted her performance and capacity to do her coursework when she returned to her placement setting.

**COVID-19 forced Trainee’s to adapt to the placement experience**

Trainees referred to the process of adapting to their placement settings and overall experience. These testimonies were grouped into three subthemes: Challenging (n = 4), Managed (n = 5), and Observed an enquired to adapt (n = 2).

While four trainees found this to be Challenging, they were all able to manage and adapt. One trainee said that it was exhausting but satisfying, and another one said that adaptation depended on the year group. Two of the trainees also described how they adapted by observing what was happening and asking questions when they considered it necessary.

*Um, and so I was the student teacher, and I was in nursery, at reception and year one. And found nursery and reception a lot more easier than I did year one. And yeah, it was, I enjoyed it and I had to do some observations where I observed the teaching and then in the earlier years I felt more comfortable and was teaching whole class sessions and, and did some planning, and just taking ownership of the room and basically being the teacher, at times, under the supervision of the teacher (ID4).*

The specific challenges trainees faced will be described in the Placement challenges section.

**Trainee’s solutions to challenges faced during their placement experiences**

  This theme considers the solutions that trainees resorted to when they were on their placement. After contacting the IOE, trainees were changed to different placement settings (n = 3), and in another case, the mentor performed the class observations instead of the tutor. Also, one trainee approached the Academic Writing Centre for support for her academic assignment, but said that it did not help with her specific needs.

*So I, I worked it out, I had a meeting with them and I moved (…), which is now that's why the survey, for example, will not reflect this because you asked about the last two weeks, which were absolutely fine, because I am in, into like to... I go to school and I go to nursery and both of them are absolutely fine like I, I do get to do the job that I have to do every day, I have my own planning that I follow. And it's getting better, hopefully (ID1).*

It should also be highlighted that four trainees received support from family members. Additionally, one trainee described two strategies she used, which were physical exercise and socialising with people from the placement setting.

**Support received by trainees during their placement experiences**

The support received theme considers the different entities and people who helped trainees with their challenges, and these were grouped into three subthemes: IOE (n = 4), Peers (n = 5), Placement setting (n = 4), Family (n = 4), Friends (n = 1) and the UCL student services (n = 1).

Support received From the IOE involved access to resources, site visits, peer supporters and help from the course leader and course tutors. However, trainees mentioned that they did not have time to have video calls with peer supporters, some of whom did not go through the same course as they did, and therefore trainees felt that they could not offer the help they needed.

*I felt it wasn’t meaningful, and for that it's just didn't, I really just wanted somebody who had been on the course to take me through that may just be into yeah, it just felt like there was no connection, they didn't really understand. How to support me during the…like, I thought that more like a counselling session, the first one, I didn't really, I don't know if it was the way I made it, but I just felt like it would just be more meaningful for me if I had someone who has been on the course, but maybe like ID3 said, might just be that there's not enough people in a course who come back, and even if it's from people from other universities, doesn’t have to necessarily be from UCL (ID5).*

 One trainee also mentioned that some answers that she received were quite broad, but that was probably because the questions were broad as well. Most of the time, trainees would ask help from the IOE when they had emergencies related to their placements, but not when they had questions about coursework.

*I, so with my, when my, when I threw my back out, I was really stressed about what that was, how that was gonna, like, how that was going to affect the programme, like, I was I worked through it for probably longer than I should have because I was stressed about how it was going to affect the programme and how it was going to affect my studies and, and so I pushed as it went to the point where I, like, woke up one morning and couldn't move. But the support that I got, both from my mentor and also from the head of the programme was really, really good. Which I know, I don't know if that's been everybody's experience but it, I had that experience twice, both when I had to change placements as well. The very beginning of SE2 and then again with this, so I felt like I was, even though I feel like there has been lack of communication, sometimes, about what's expected of our assignments and things like that, for the overall kind of mental health was quite positive for me (ID3).*

Another mentioned she received Support from her peers when she was able to see them. Indeed, trainees in the programme provide emotional support to one another and have a WhatsApp group where they chat and have discussions about their questions and experiences. They tended to express their concerns to one peer, who would later write an email to the course leader.

*ID5: So it’s not really like I don't know, but no one really, I haven't really tried to ask for help if I’m honest, I usually just ask ID3, if I’m really honest (laughs). A lot of the time.*

*ID2: That’s true. We all ask ID3.*

*ID5: And ID3 emails, but I’ve not really been bold enough to just go ahead, and in SE where I’ve had some issues of placement and I’ve had to contact the course director, had a meeting with her this morning, so I was able to, yeah, somehow. Yeah, that’s it really.*

Support received from the placement settings involved direct help from the mentors and a general support from the placement settings, which were perceived as welcoming and helpful. Each of these sources of support were mentioned by three trainees.

*So, my school, my school placement, I think they are so familiar with students that I was really supportive, they knew how to support me, how to help me, like teachers are really familiar with having students in the classroom. So they are like open to questions, to discussions to everything, like the head teacher, assistant teacher, everyone was really, really supportive they like, yeah, they really supported me and like if I need to know more information, if I wanted to meet with, like, their SENCO, if I wanted to ask about an, a child. And if I wanted to be observed, there were always supportive (ID1).*

One trainee said that she received emotional support from her friends outside the programme, and another one said that she accessed UCL’s student services and received mental health support from them.

Feedback mechanisms used by trainee teachers during their placement experiences

Trainees agreed that the main feedback mechanism that they used to communicate with their tutor and the IOE in general was their institutional email (n = 4). It should be noted that they feel hesitant to email when they have questions about their coursework but do email during placement-related issues..

*I remember in the last focus group, I think the thing that was not, what I remember being talked about with the lack of support was. When we needed, like, acute support when something went really wrong there was support, but I don't necessarily, like, I’m not going to email somebody if I have a question about something with my portfolio, I’m just getting on with that myself. So that, what, for me that was the part of lack of support, or maybe, more in the lack of written materials as well, those two things almost kind of go together. If something went horribly wrong (laughs). I felt like I had the support, but if it was kind of, like, wanting to understand what was well, like, we were all saying, not being sure what we were supposed to do for the research project, I haven't gotten in touch about that necessarily. (ID3).*

One of the trainees mentioned that she had a Zoom call with the course leader to solve an urgent matter. In another urgent situation, a trainee’s tutor contacted her mentor via phone call. Lastly, the trainee teachers mentioned that they did not have a forum where they could interact with peers and teachers, and one of them said it could be useful to have one to discuss about coursework and general questions.

**Trainee’s solutions to challenges**

During individual interviews and first focus group, when they were asked about potential solutions for the challenges they faced during their placements, trainee teachers had a wide variety of ideas. These were grouped in three subthemes, depending on who would be responsible of implementing this solution, if it were to be implemented: From placement settings (n = 4), From the IOE (n = 5), and from trainee teachers (n = 5).

Trainee teachers considered that Placement settings can help better support trainees by having more meetings with just mentors, giving massages, ensuring there is regular COVID testing and tracking, and giving them the same information about the virus that they give to the teachers. Two trainees mentioned that there should be more underpinning from schools, in terms of helping trainees achieve all that is asked of them in their programme. Lastly, one trainee suggested that their setting should be transparent about how they use the money they receive from the government because of the programme.

Regarding solutions From the IOE, two trainees considered that it should give practical examples of assessment standards, and that tutors should give more feedback. Trainees discussed throughout the focus group that they received mixed messages from the IOE: on the one hand, trainees should contact the IOE when they had questions, but at the same time, some tutors had limited availability as they work part time.. Additionally, trainees felt that they were not sure about what the expectations for them were. Thus, the IOE should continue to build theirsupportive environment so that all trainees know what to expect and feel comfortable when they need to contact the IOE.

*So I needed to be a bit more focus on, like, ‘yes, we are here, yes, we want to help you, yes, we want to get to know you a little bit’. So that they cut and, like, so that we did feel a little bit more supported going into what feels like a pretty scary thing. Here, go into the placement, who knows what it's going to be like, everyone's told you your PGCE could be horrible. like, it's a pretty common thing you hear is the PGCE years can be really hard (ID3).*

They mentioned that there could be a support hotline they could call when they had questions about the programme or their placement setting. An alternative communication method that they mentioned was an email address that gets checked every day by 5pm. That way, trainees who have tutors that work part time can have a fast response in case of an emergency.

Two trainees suggested that the IOE should foster a bond between tutors and students, so they can get to know each other, interact, and provide feedback to each other, if in-person meetings are not possible during Covid. Additionally, three trainees said that they would like to have written guidelines about what is acceptable and what is not in their placement settings, so they can contact the IOE when they are asked to do actions that are not within the trainee teacher role.

Other suggestions were that there should be more communication between the IOE and the placement settings before the placements start, more consistency in class formats (either online or face to face), find an alternative to record classes in placements, a guided revision of the portfolio, a model policy for mentors (so they know what the role of trainee teachers is), an online portfolio instead of a paper one, offering practical examples of a typical school day, offer profile support, that UCL communicates more with students before the start of the programme, and work with schools who accept that trainee teachers recording their classes.

Finally, trainees themselves mentioned solutions that were their responsibility. These were meeting peers as soon as possible and plan their own learning. Additionally, two trainees said that they did not know what they could do to solve the challenges they had to face.

Based on these ideas, a few possible solutions were designed by the TEACHWELL team, which received positive feedback from trainees. They said that these tools would help them understand what the expectations of them were, plan ahead, have easier access to information, and know what to do when they faced problems, while being independent at the same time. These solutions were:

-A decision tree, which simplifies the information that is already on Moodle and represents what to do and who to contact in various scenarios.

*I think it sounds like it would be really helpful. Especially in relation to, like, not the urgent thing because, like, there is a thing, when I had to get out of my placement. And I almost didn't write because I wasn't sure if I should be writing, because I wasn't sure if it was something that was worth telling somebody about or if I should just be bucking up and dealing with it. And then, when I did [write], [the Programme Lead] was like we're pulling you out of your placement in the next 24 hours, like, it was, the response was really fast, and so, but I almost didn't do it, and so, if I’d had that thing to look at and go ‘You know, this thing happens at your placement, immediately contact the head of the department or write to someone’, you know, like look through this part of the programme handout or whatever, would have been really useful, especially if there were solutions for things like you're feeling confused about your portfolio. Who can you contact to actually get an answer that isn't ‘you're in control of your own education’. That could actually help. So I think it sounds like a good idea (ID3).*

-A FAQ page, which answers possible questions that trainee teachers may have, regarding their placement experiences and especially their coursework. This page would also have links to other resources that already exist, such as the students’ handbook, Module Guides, Assessment Guide, portfolio guidance documents, placement expectation documents etc.

*Yeah I think I agree with ID1, I feel like I’ve gotten my PPM stuff more figured out, even though I still. I guess at this point, I feel like I’m going to sit down with my portfolio, it's never going to be out of my sight and I can defend what I’ve put in there. Even if it's wrong, like, even if it's not what someone else would have put in there, I can defend why it's what it, why I chose to put it there, but the other ones I don't get to defend. And they've been confusing. It might be useful if it kind of also, like, when ID5 said, you know, you can find this information in these other places as well, because I think having something that's really easy to look at, but it's also cross-referenced (ID3).*

-The development of the timeline, which shows the different stages and milestones of the programme, so trainees can plan ahead and know what to expect. This resource would also be cross-referenced with other resources.

*I don't know if this is in the handbook (…) but I just feel, like, for, yeah, just stressed (…) A lot, to just keep going back to the timeline is a quick way, snapshot, for me to see what each thing means. That, if the diagram will have what each module, course or module is about... (ID5)*

**Differences between programme routes taken by trainees**

Trainees discussed challenges and possible challenges. This included the importance of distinguishing between the mainstream and employment-based pathway (n = 4). This is because trainees in each one of the pathways may have different needs, and therefore, require specific support.

*One of the things I’ve noticed, and I don't know if we mentioned it at all is that the two routes are incredibly different. And I feel like both groups, like ID4 and I had a chat the other day for other reasons, but what she's going through as somebody who's working full time. And what I’m going through as someone who's in someone else's setting full time, are so different, and I feel like there needs to be some support there to, around making sure that, like, that there's some acknowledgement that they're different and that people are getting the support that they need, that slightly different support. And I don't know how or what, I just felt like that needed to get thrown in there, because we all, we’re a really small little cohort but we're actually two tiny cohorts and that I think is important that difference.* (ID3)

**Relevance to CTTR theme(s):**

This project addresses bullet points 1, 3 and 4:

1. **Addressing social, economic and environmental inequalities that impact on teachers’ professional learning and development.**
2. Building critical research engagement for teachers.
3. **Extending teachers’ capacities to ‘make a difference’ in addressing social, economic and environmental inequalities through their work.**
4. **Deepening theoretical understanding of teacher education in complex contexts.**

**Recommendations**

Based on trainee’s feedback at different points during their placement year, the Teachwell study has made three tangible recommendations:

1. **The further development of the PGCE year Timeline** - To ease trainee’s anxiety, stress, and improve their mental health during the PGCE year, the study team recommends the further development of the ‘timeline’ that documents key assignment deadlines, submission dates and helps trainees keep track of their progress.
2. **Decision Tree** – Attached to the timeline and at different points during the PGCE year, trainees have suggested that it would be helpful to incorporate ‘key questions’ in which trainees should ask themselves to ensure they are on track with their progress, but also to seek help and support if they do not feel that they are where they should be. This would amalgamate various documents and information that is already available on Moodle.
3. **FAQ page** – It has been suggested that trainees often don’t know who to ask for help, what questions to ask, and are afraid to seek help. As such, the program can consider creating an FAQ page with commonly asked questions so that trainees can refer to that page when they are experiencing issues.
4. **Open discussion and co-creating solutions** –The study team recommends keeping communication channels open and to continue to seek continuous feedback from trainees to ensure that their needs are met, but especially in the co-creation of solutions that may best fit resolve challenge experienced by different cohorts.

**Trainee's advice for future cohorts**

Trainees shared their ideas on how to successfully tackle the programme and coursework. One suggestion was better communication with the mentor and the course leader, asking questions regularly. One trainee reflected that there had to be a balance between trainee teachers’ independent work and the support they receive. A second piece of advice was for future trainees to prepare for their coursework and read ahead of time, incorporating other people’s information, and adapting it to their own experience. Another trainee said that she would tell future cohorts about the research module and what it is about, because she did not expect a module of this nature. Lastly, one of the trainees said that she would advise future cohorts to make sure they know what is expected of them in the course.

**Impacts and outputs (current and planned)**

* Impact: Researchers from Australian Catholic University (ACU) approached Keri and Eleanor to discuss the TeachWell Study findings. They are rolling out a similar but larger study with their trainee teachers (N = 2,000+) in the whole of New South Wales, Australia. They will keep us posted on their findings.
* Impact: Charity Education Support has contacted Keri to discuss Teachwell study findings and how they can improve their offerings – as a charity that aims to support the mental health of teachers across all career stages.
* Output: One of the research assistants (Isidora) has presented our findings at the UCL Education Conference in May 2022.
* Output: We are finalising an animation summary video about the Teachwell project to be shared more widely with educators and trainee teachers with an interested in exploring teacher’s mental health further.
* Output: We’ve co-created the study infographics and graphics based on trainee’s feedback which we hope will be useful for future trainee.

**Potential for further development**

* Teachwell study findings may serve as a pilot study on the importance of asking, listening, and collaborating with trainee teachers to understand how best to support their mental health challenges. This can be fed into a larger ESRC bid in the future on teacher wellbeing.

**Key literature and weblinks**

 We have an animation summarising our study findings that can be shared with future students and those interested in developing more resources for trainee teachers.

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