
The TEACHWELL study: the role of mental health, support and assessments in trainee teachers' placement experiences

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Why are we interested in trainee teachers and their mental health during covid?

- The pandemic has impacted on mental health globally, affecting different symptom clusters (Dragioti et al., 2022).
- High levels of teacher attrition, even before the pandemic. 80% of teachers who participated in a survey have reported high stress. 46% of them have also considered leaving their profession (Education Support, 2021).
- Trainee teachers in the early years sector may need the most support, as its staffing is quite unstable (11%-15% turnover rates) (Social Mobility Commission, 2020).

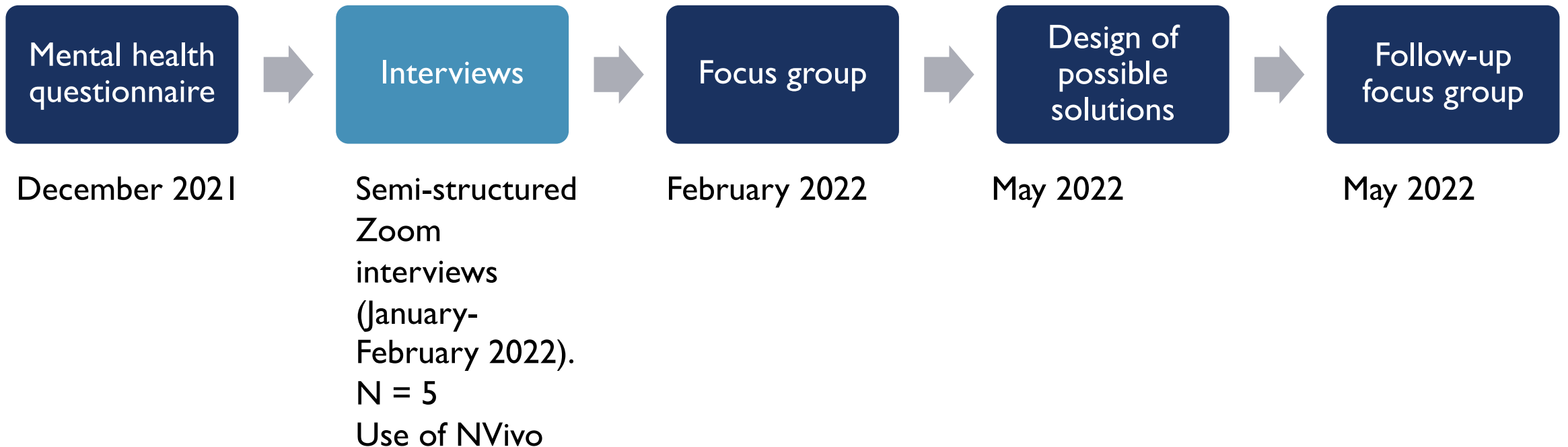


Research questions

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



Timeline

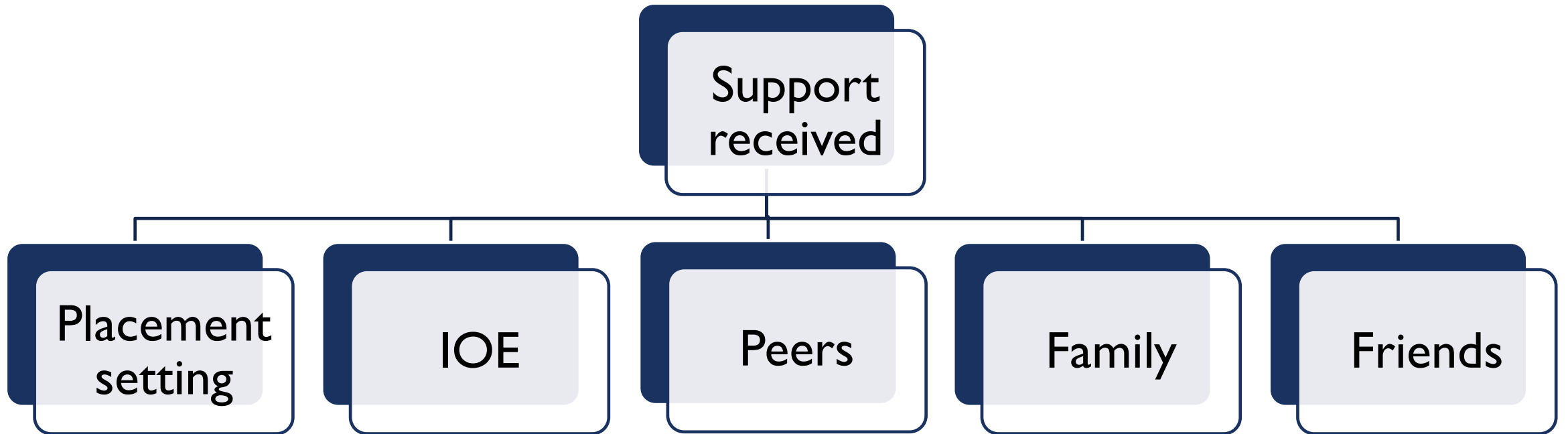


Participant characteristics

- 5 female trainee teachers
- From the Early Years Initial Training PGCE programme
- 4 out of 5 had previous teaching experience (0 - 12 years)



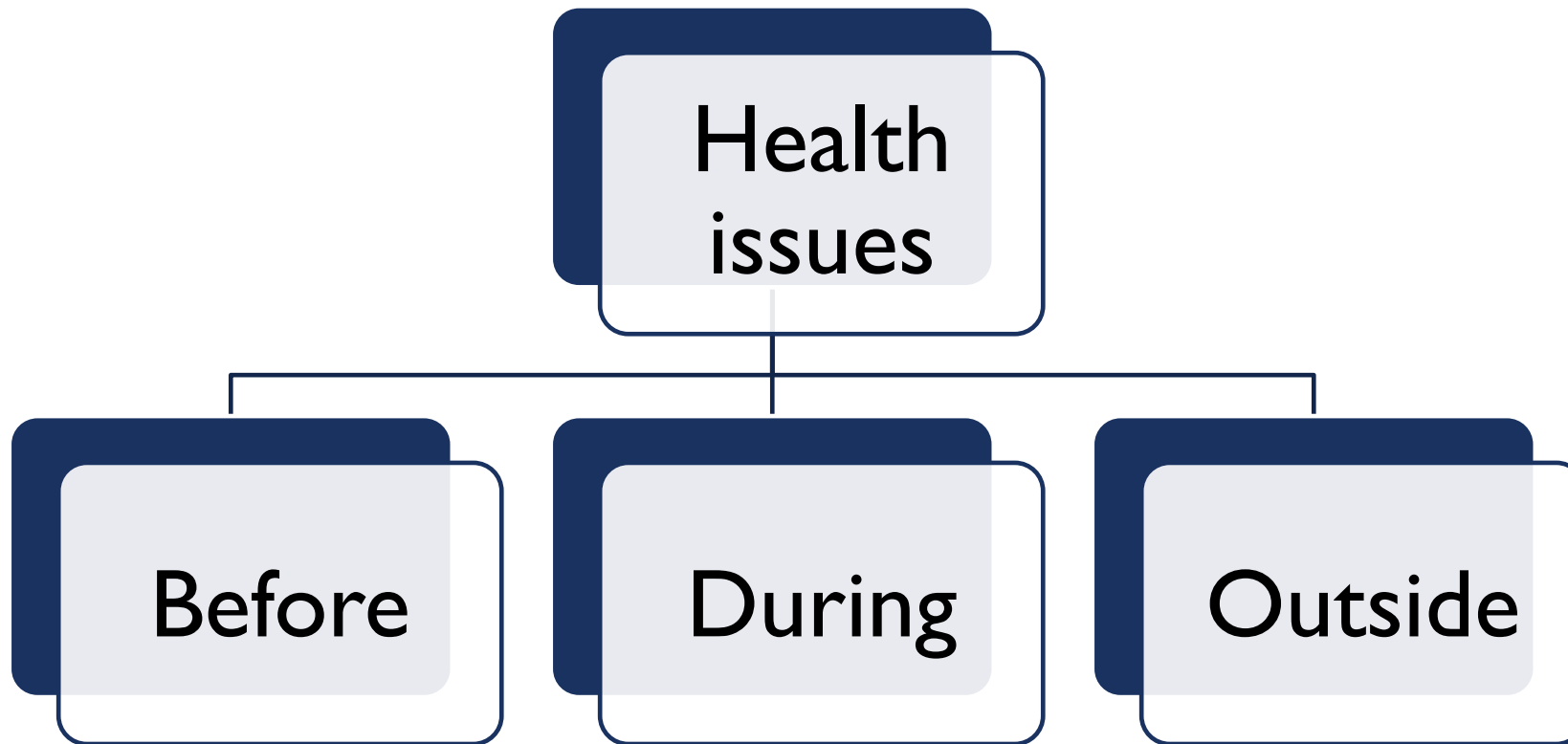
Results: Support received by trainee teachers during covid



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Placement setting support	<p>“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).</p>
IOE support	<p>“The pressure was a, was a lot. I emailed the tutor of the course, and she really was very supportive actually. Yeah, very supportive, I'm glad I spoke to her, because otherwise I think I would have just cried” (ID4).</p>

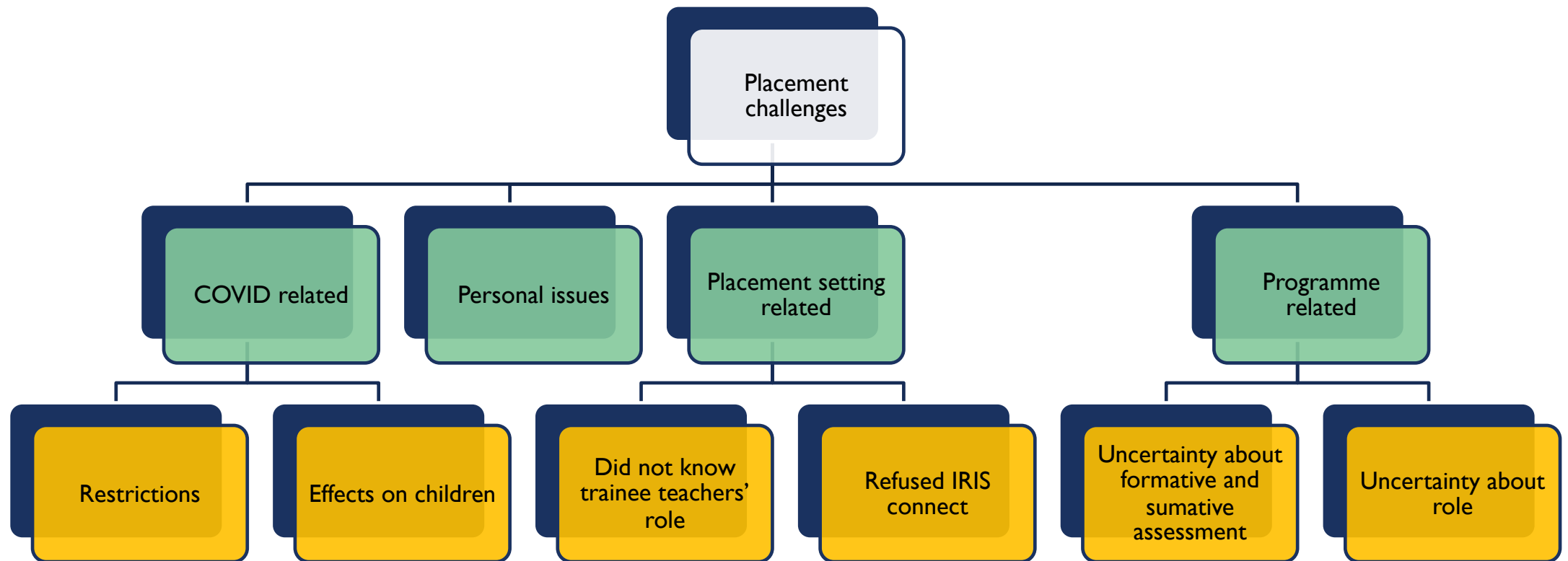
Results: Health issues experienced by trainee teachers during placement



Results: Health issues experienced by trainee teachers during placement

Before	“But now and I'm honest about it, I do I suffer with anxiety, but I'm not ashamed to, ashamed of suffering with anxiety and, and it doesn't affect my job, it doesn't affect me hanging out with friends or anything, it's just part of me and I just gotta live with it” (ID2).
During	“If I am in a very warm place and, like, under stressful and stress and, like, lack of sleep have to say, because it was really, really, really stressful. Uh... I might feel dizzy so, and so it became really uncomfortable for me to, to work there” (ID1)
Outside	Well, I, I was, was between housing, so I was living with some friends up in Hackney and then. Suddenly, I had to move out, so that was quite stressful, so that didn't help. (...) And, and then, so yeah, but it doesn't affect my job because I love my job...” (ID2)

Results: Placement challenges faced by trainee teachers



Results: Potential solutions

From the placement setting

- More meetings just with the mentor
- Receive same information as teachers about COVID
- Regular COVID testing
- Underpinning from schools

■ **From the IOE**

- Examples of assessment standards
- Feedback from tutors
- Guided revision of portfolio
- Meeting with tutor
- Online portfolio
- Model policy for mentors
- Practical examples of a typical school day

■ **From trainee teachers**

- Meet peers as soon as possible
- Plan own learning

Limitations



Important differences between participants: experiences, route, part-time or full-time.



Volunteers: bias?



Feasibility of possible solutions.

Strengths



Ecological validity



Co-creation of products

CONCLUSION

COVID changed the way placements were executed.

Uncertainty about assessments and how to perform have had a negative impact on mental health.

Feedback and guidance is considered necessary to tackle assessments.

Teach-WELL Study

How are trainee teachers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and what support would they like?



PROPOSED SOLUTIONS (by participants)



Hotline

A phone hotline specifically for Early Years In Training Teachers (EYITT): A helpline that can direct them to someone they need and give advice.

Peer mentor

Participants felt that it would be useful to have someone who had already been through the programme.

"Maybe if there could be a virtual meeting with someone who's already done the PGCE course it could probably tell us about their experience...to make you feel a bit more prepared."

Email System

A centralised communication system where someone would reply before the end of the day. For some participants their mentors worked the whole week and would email back within 45mins, others only worked two days a week and would reply only a week after by which point the emergency is no longer an emergency/has already been dealt with.

CHALLENGES AND COMMON THEMES



Lack of written material

Participants cited a lack of accessible, written rules on what is and what is not acceptable during placements.

"It would be useful for things to be in writing....such as certain things that need to be going on in the placement and if they aren't...to contact the IOE."

Lack of support

Participants cited minimal contact with tutors – one of the participants' tutors were on maternity leave, others would stress that participants 'email during office hours'. Some tutors worked on days when participants were at school or at work so it was difficult to organise meetings.

"There was a general message of 'Yes we're here to help..but we're also extremely busy and only reachable in office hours'."

Lack of communication

Strong general feedback on the lack of communication. Participants believed expectations should have been communicated prior to term starting (September). They also spoke of having to probe University when they felt the University should have reached out first instead.

Poor mental health during COVID

There was a general theme of distress amongst participants, exacerbated by COVID.

"I felt extremely drained."

"We have so limited, kind of casual contact with our tutors, which I think is part of all of our experience over the past couple of years with COVID."

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Poster by Isabelle Wan



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