HEADTEACHER STRESS, COPING STRATEGIES AND SUPPORTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR AN EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PROGRAMME

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) in the Faculty of Humanities

2011

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SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
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ABSTRACT

There have been a number of studies investigating stress in the education sector with findings indicating that teachers experience high levels of work related stress (Travers, 1996; Johnson, et al (2005). While there has been limited research looking specifically at the prevalence and causes of stress among Headteachers, recent studies have indicated that they also experience high levels of work related stress (Philips et al, 2007; French & Daniels, (2008).

This study was carried out as a contribution to, and to update, the body of research data on Headteacher work related stress. Research aims were to identify and measure sources of stress experienced by Headteachers in a large West Midlands Local Authority, to identify the coping strategies/supports that they drew upon, or the additional ones that they would find useful. An aim was also to use the research findings to inform the development of a Local Authority Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers.

The study adopted a mixed method research design, using quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis approaches. Data sources included focus group activity, a postal stress audit questionnaire and semi-structured critical incident interviews.

Findings included 45% of Primary and 54% of Secondary Headteachers reporting that they generally found their jobs very or extremely stressful. The six month period prior to the stress audit survey (audit carried out in October/November 2010) was reported as having been even more stressful. Both Primary and Secondary Headteachers reported the top three sources of stress as being the volume of paperwork, the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished and Ofsted/ HMI inspections.

Findings also indicated that Primary and Secondary Headteachers had a generally positive attitude towards their organisation, and perceived themselves as being positively regarded by their organisations. High commitment therefore operated in both directions.

The physical and psychological well-being of Secondary Headteachers was in line with comparable managerial and professional norms. While the psychological well-being of Primary Headteachers was also in line with comparable norms, reported physical health was slightly inferior, although still technically within the ‘normal’ range. The strategies/supports drawn upon were in line with previous research findings (Swaffield, 2008) and included fellow Headteachers, Unions and Local Authority support officers.

In relation to a job satisfaction rating, 84% of Primary Headteachers and 69% of Secondary Headteachers reported being satisfied with their job ‘most of the time’. A further 30% of Primary Headteachers and 23% of Secondary Headteachers, reported being satisfied with their job ‘about half of the time’.

Findings are discussed in relation to some of the significant changes taking place within the educational sector and in relation to the implications that they have for a Headteacher well-being programme and for the practice of educational psychology.

Key words: mixed method; Headteacher stress; paperwork; cumulative tasks; Ofsted / HMI inspections
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INCLUSION SUPPORT PROJECTS IN SCHOOLS – A STRAND OF EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY DELIVERY. WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO IMPACT AND SUSTAINABILITY? (AN EXPLORATORY STUDY).

2007

Working at the whole school level and supporting schools in their inclusive practice has been a feature of Educational Psychology Services for a number of years. A strand of local service delivery which has reflected both of these features has been supporting schools with Inclusion Support Projects. These are particular initiatives undertaken by schools for which additional support from the Educational Psychology Service can be requested through a bidding process.

This was an exploratory case study to investigate whether four projects which had been rated positively at their completion in 2004/2005 had resulted in a lasting impact.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the respective school project coordinators and the Educational Psychologists involved with the projects at the time. This data was analysed to identify helping / hindering factors which were associated with each of these projects. The findings were generally positive, but mixed. Schools and Educational Psychologists felt that this was a valuable strand of service delivery, and all projects revisited had resulted in some lasting effects. Themes emerging from the school interviews were the importance of the relationship the Educational Psychologist already had / formed with the school and the quality of planning / preparation. Themes emerging from Educational Psychologist interviews were the role of the Headteacher, the relationship the Educational Psychologist had with the school and the preparedness of the school / ownership of the project. The implications of the findings for the development of this strand of service delivery are discussed.

EMOTIONAL LABOUR AND TEACHING: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS

2008

There is a relatively new and growing literature on emotional labour, a term first used by Hochschild (1983). Because the profession of teaching involves high levels of emotional labour the focus of this review was to summarise what research findings suggest are the implications of emotional labour for the teaching profession and the strategies that can be used to mitigate its negative consequences. The review discusses some definitions of emotional labour, how the search was carried out, summarises the findings of the literature review and concludes with some implications for the practice and research of educational psychology. A key finding was that emotional labour, over time, can lead to emotional exhaustion, a characteristic of burnout, which is associated with excess levels of stress. Given that teaching is acknowledged as a job requiring a high level of emotional labour, it is concluded that emotional labour research is relevant to teachers and teaching.
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE OCCUPATIONAL STRESSORS EXPERIENCED BY TWO LOCAL AUTHORITY PERIPATETIC SERVICES: AN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE AND A SENSORY INCLUSION SERVICE

2009

This research paper describes a small scale research project carried out in a West Midlands local authority comparing occupational stressors experienced within an educational psychology service and a sensory inclusion service, consisting of hearing impaired and visually impaired personnel. Data was collected on each group’s perception of stress levels, sources of stress and suggested changes to working conditions that may reduce stress levels. A mixed quantitative / qualitative design was used drawing on questionnaire and semi structured interview data.

Findings indicated that the majority of educational psychologists (66%) found their work moderately stressful, the majority of the Visually Impaired Team (53%) found their work mildly stressful and the Hearing Impaired Team found their work either moderately stressful (44%) or mildly stressful (39%).

The three highest reported sources of stress were different for each team and reflected their different specific occupational activities.

Suggestions are made on how future occupational stress audits could be carried out to provide more comprehensive data and to increase the reliability and validity of findings.
CHAPTER 1  INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale for this study

This study arises from the researchers background, the characteristics of schools as organisations, relevant legislation, the stress research literature and a recent increased focus on emotional health and well-being in the workplace, including schools. These background influences explain the rationale for this study and will be briefly described.

Educational Psychologists spend a large part of their working lives in schools interacting with children / young people, teachers, ancillary workers, parents / carers and Headteachers. They are therefore well placed to observe the complexity of schools as organisations and the pivotal role of the Headteacher.

The 27 years that the author has worked as an Educational Psychologist has provided many opportunities to witness the characteristics of Headteachers who are successful, and those who are less successful, in managing the daily pressures that are experienced as part of the job.

Since the 1988 Education Reform Act there has been an increasing marketisation and privatisation of the schools system. This Act heralded the move by some schools to seek Grant Maintained status whereby they were able to opt out of Local Authority control. There were also changes for those schools who stayed with the Local Authority. They were expected to take increasing control over their finances and general decision-making.

The Blair Labour Government reinforced the move towards increased choice and diversity for parents in their promotion of academy schools, which were also outside Local Authority control. The current Conservative / Liberal Coalition Government has accelerated the move towards the availability of independent (of Local Authority control) and private school providers through the move towards increased establishment of Academy Schools. Academy Schools continue to receive their funding directly from the Government and have more freedom over the curriculum and admissions. They are also freed from national and local agreements over pay and conditions for staff. There is also active encouragement for alternative providers to enter the educational arena, be it private organisations or groups of parents and teachers, to establish ‘Fee Schools’. These will also be outside Local Authority control and funded by central government.
Since the 1988 Education Reform Act there has been a gradual move towards the marketisation and privatisation of the English school system, underpinned by the assumption that increased competition will provide more choice and diversity which will result in improved educational outcomes and innovation.

While the Education Reform Act 1988 resulted in the beginning of significant changes taking place in the organisation of the education system it also led to significant changes in the role of the Headteacher. The local management of schools, changes to the National Curriculum, league table pressure and the Ofsted inspection framework have all added to the demands on Headteachers. These demands are largely similar irrespective of the size of school.

Organisations can be considered successful if they deliver the ‘products’, that they were configured to deliver. Schools are complex organisations and a measure of their success depends on who defines the valued outcomes. A pragmatic view of an educational system would be the extent to which it produces rounded young people in terms of their academic knowledge and skills, and their emotional health and well-being. This was clearly the intent of the last Labour government when they published the ‘Every Child Matters: Change for Children’ (December 2004) guidance detailing the national and local priorities for Children’s Services. This prescribed an Outcomes Framework which stated the five outcomes for all children and young people, which was subsequently given legal force in the Children Act 2004. The five outcomes, which were explicitly linked in the Ofsted Inspection Framework for schools, were as follows:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well-being

A key mediating factor in a successful organisation, including a school, will be qualified and emotionally healthy staff. They in turn will operate effectively and efficiently if they are led and managed by a qualified and emotionally healthy Headteacher. The research literature on effective schools, Reynold et al (1996), Sammons et al (1995a), has
regularly identified the key role played by the Headteacher, although little comment has been made on the importance of their emotional health and well-being.

Employers and governing bodies have a duty of care towards their employees in relation to their health and well-being under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. This Act includes the duty to conduct appropriate risk assessments for work place hazards and respond to any health and safety issues that affect an organisation’s workforce. Further guidance is included in the Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 and 2000, and also in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). As it is also accepted that stress in the work place is a source of ill health and reduced productivity, employers are also expected to follow the Health & Safety Executive (2008) Management Standards for Work Related Stress. This includes carrying out stress audits.

The last Labour government’s Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) also provided guidance and advice in a 2008 leaflet titled ‘Common Mental Health Problems: Supporting School Staff by Taking Positive Action’. This publication by was targeted at employers, human resource and occupational health staff, school governing bodies, line managers and school staff. Content covered carrying out risk assessments for compliance with health & safety regulations and guidance on making ‘reasonable adjustments’ to accommodate the additional needs of employees. This publication usefully reminded readers that the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 also covered mental health conditions that can prevent an employee from carrying out their normal work. They correctly observed that there was a common perception that the Disability Discrimination Act only referred to a physical disability. They went on to suggest that employers implement the management standards for work related stress provided by the Health and Safety Executive, referred to above, or a similar programme.

Previous research has indicated high levels of work-related stress in the teaching profession (Travers, 1996; Johnson et al, 2005). While there has been a fair degree of research on teacher stress, there has been far less on Headteacher stress. However, one recent self-report study investigating the prevalence and causes of stress amongst Headteachers in West Sussex (Phillips et al, 2007) found 43% of the sample reporting work related stress, higher levels compared to other recent studies of UK workers. A follow-up study (Phillips, 2008) looking at risk factors for work related stress and health in Headteachers found that they had poor physical and mental health when compared to a general population of workers. It was also reported that psychological well-being, most noticeably of females and primary Headteachers, was worse than a comparable group of
managers and professionals. A teaching load of more than five hours per week was a significant predictor of ‘caseness’ and being female was the main risk factor for poor psychological well being. Of relevance also is the NAHT Work-Life Balance Survey (French and Daniels, 2008) which found 86% of surveyed Headteachers reporting work related stress.

The last Labour governments Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCFS) commissioned the Office for Public Management to design and deliver a programme of action learning sets to support the ‘Phase One’ Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS), Pathfinder Children’s Trusts. The aim of the TaMHS programme was to enable schools to deliver a holistic and whole school approach to the promotion of children’s mental well-being. £16 million was made available over a three-year period to support this initiative targeted at children in the 5–13 age range.

The locality in which this study was carried out was one of the 25 phase one children’s trusts chosen as pathfinders to develop models and processes through which this initiative could be delivered. These 25 pathfinder authorities began work in April 2008 and were promised funding for three years until 2011.

The summary report recommendations from the action learning sets included some ‘top tips’ for future pathfinder local authorities (Learning from Targeted Mental Health in Schools Phase 1 Pathfinders, 2009). One suggestion was that addressing the emotional and mental health needs of school staff could lead to better support for children and young people and that when programmes were being developed it was unwise to leave out any important stakeholder. This would clearly include Headteachers.

On the same theme a National Institute of Clinical Excellence recommendation in its public health guidance on promoting mental well-being at work (2009) was that employers should take a ‘strategic and co-ordinated approach to promoting employees’ mental well-being.’

A number of local authorities have had emotional health and well being programmes in place for school staff for a number of years and there are a number of national support programmes. Reference to examples of support programmes will be included in the literature review to follow.
1.2 Research study aims

The aims of this study were to:

- identify and measure sources of stress experienced by local authority Headteachers (primary and secondary)
- identify current coping strategies / supports used by Headteachers to manage stress
- identify what additional supports would help to reduce, or enable better management of, daily Headteacher stressors
- use information derived from the contextualised stress audit to make recommendations on the content of a local authority emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers

A desired outcome of this study was the provision of local reliable and valid data that would assist the Local Authority in the development of an emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers. Research findings would also provide baseline data that would assist with any subsequent evaluation of an established emotional health and well-being programme.

1.3 Context of study

The research was carried out in a large West Midlands Local Authority having a mix of rural and urban schools.

As noted above, the local authority in which this study took place was one of the original 25 pathfinder Local Authorities involved in the Targeted Mental Health in Schools DCSF funded project. During the second year of this project an audit that took place amongst the fourteen pilot schools involved in the project (Spring Term 2010) highlighted the importance of supporting the emotional health and well-being of Headteachers. This finding resulted in an objective, to reduce staff stress, being included in the local authority TaMHS Action Plan.
Discussion in November 2009 with the local authority Head of Human Resources, had also revealed a long standing intent of the Local Authority to produce an Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers. It was clearly apparent therefore that this study could assist the Local Authority in two ways. Firstly, by providing current local information to inform the development of the Local Authority’s planned emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers. Secondly, by providing baseline data which would help with the evaluation of an established programme.

There was a requirement that lessons learned from the TaMHS pilot schools would be rolled out across the whole of the local authority, before the project was ended. There was therefore agreement that some TaMHS funding would support this research, as it was in line with an articulated need identified from the TaMHS pilot schools. Financial support was therefore provided for the purchase of the risk assessment questionnaire used in this study titled, A Short Stress Evaluation Tool (ASSET) produced by Robertson Cooper Ltd. This is fully described in the Methodology chapter.

Data for this study was collected during the Autumn Term 2010 and the Spring Term 2011.

The researcher has had previous experience carrying out stress audits on behalf of other professional groups. These have included Educational Psychologists, Sensory Inclusion Service staff (Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired teams), admin teams and staff in a residential special school, which included teachers, house staff and care workers. I have therefore drawn on previous experience in planning and conducting this study.

1.4 Research questions

The aims of the study were translated into four specific research questions:

- **Research Question 1**
  What are the stressors currently experienced by Local Authority Headteachers (primary and secondary)?
• **Research Question 2**  
  What are the stressors experienced by different types of Headteacher (male / female, primary / secondary, large / medium / small school Headteachers)?

• **Research Question 3**  
  What strategies / supports are used by Headteachers to manage stress and how effective are they?

• **Research Question 4**  
  What additional supports would reduce Headteacher stress or assist them in managing stress more effectively?

1.5  **Chronology of this study**

• Preparing the ground. This included conversations and written communication with a number of key stakeholders. This included the local authority Head of Human Resources, Headteacher Union Representatives, Primary and Secondary School Workforce Development Advisers, the TaMHS Project Manager, the TaMHS Project Pilot Headteachers and a number of other Headteachers. It was felt important to elicit the support of all those who could encourage the participation of Local Authority Headteachers in the stress audit process.

• Preparing a summary of the planned research to be included in the information from the *Corporate Director* briefing document for Chairs of Governing Bodies and Headteachers, which went to all schools at the beginning of the Autumn Term 2010. This raised awareness and forewarned interested parties of what was pending. (See Appendix A).

• The identification of a suitable, reliable and valid stress audit questionnaire which would enable comparisons to be made with other professional and managerial groups. This instrument needed to have the flexibility to be customised to the target participation group without compromising its reliability and validity. The ASSET questionnaire fulfilled this remit, and is described in detail in the Methodology Chapter.
Focus group activity. Two focus groups, involving local authority Headteachers, were convened during the Spring and Summer Terms 2010. Information from these groups was used to develop additional, contextualised questions, which were included in the final audit questionnaire that was sent to all Headteachers during the Autumn Term 2010.

Development of a semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix P) This was used to provide structure for a small sample of one to one Headteacher interviews which adopted a Critical Incident approach (Flannagan, 1954). Headteachers were asked to choose a stressful episode they dealt with within the last three to six months. These interviews were designed to gain further information about the type of stressors managed by Headteachers, and the strategies and supports that they drew upon in managing such events.

Data analysis. A Content and Thematic approach was used to analyse focus group data. Quantitative analysis of the Questionnaires was carried out with the assistance of SPSS and content and thematic approaches were used to analyse recorded Headteacher interviews (software was not used).

The above chronology is expanded upon in the Methodology Chapter.

1.6 Thesis structure

The remainder of this study is described under the following broad headings:

- Review of Key Literature
- Methodology
- Main Findings and Interpretation
- Reflection and Discussion
  - Implications of Research Findings for an Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers
  - Originality / Distinctive Contribution of this Research
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

There is a vast amount of literature covering both theory and research findings in the broad area of occupational stress and how it can be managed. However, there has been relatively little research where the focus has been on Headteacher stress, or the emotional health and well-being of Headteachers, specifically. Much of the research in educational settings that is available relates to the teaching profession in general.

The approach taken in this review was to identify the literature that it was felt would assist the reader in placing the current research in context, and in relation to the research questions being addressed. A number of electronic databases were used in carrying out the literature search. This concentrated on English peer reviewed sources. This included, PsychINFO, Medline and ERIC. Limits on the search varied. In researching previous findings on Headteacher stress an initial limit was for sources published from 1990 to 2011. This was extended to 1970 when the initial search identified few sources. In relation to models of stress and coping the limits were set from 1960 to 2011. Hard copy books and articles that the author had access to were also drawn upon. Some of these were personally owned and others available from a work library e.g. Real World Research (Robson, 2002).

2.2 Models of stress

Stress has been defined in many different ways, which has included being seen as a ‘stimulus’, a ‘response’, or as an interaction between the two. Many reviewers have described the area as having been confusing and controversial at times. Newton, (1989) provided a useful overview of the difficulties surrounding the conceptualisation and operationalisation of key concepts in occupational stress research. The key concepts studied included stress, strain, coping behaviour and coping style. He argued that the lack of conceptual and operational clarity at the time research was carried out in these areas has resulted in confusion. Recommendations were made for future research methodology. This included the importance of making a distinction between an individual’s description of events and their evaluations of these events. It was argued that in operational terms researchers needed to enquire about the ‘the how and why of stress and coping’ not just ‘how much’ exists (p 456). In other words, to place greater emphasis
on an individual’s cognitive ‘sense making’ of a stressful experience. An emphasis was needed on the sense that individuals made of their experiences, in other words their appraisals. This was clearly in line with the view of Richard Lazarus (1998a) who attached great importance to the part appraisal played in the stress reaction process. It was also suggested that the research literature would benefit from studies that examined stressful episodes, as an alternative to questionnaire measures. The implication was that more qualitative studies were needed.

Transactional Theory of Stress

A key historical figure in the stress literature, particularly in relation to the importance of the appraisal process, is that of Richard Lazarus. He and others have argued that stress is always a product of appraisal and that it was the appraisal process that linked the person to the environment. His view on the importance of the appraisal process has been at the core of his belief about how stress should be conceptualised and measured. For him, a consideration of appraisal had to be part of the measurement of psychological stress. For Lazarus therefore, cognitive mediation was seen as a key to understanding psychological stress (Lazarus, 1997) with the concepts of appraising and appraisals being used to describe the mediating process. Lazarus (1998a) described a transaction taking place between a person and their environment as being defined in terms of personal meanings.

The term appraisal referred to a judgement about the significance or importance of an event for the individual. It was felt that the term appraisal better captured the evaluation that was taking place, rather that the term perception.

Further refinement of terminology relating to the appraisal process resulted in a distinction being made between primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. The former was the initial evaluation of the significance of a transaction between a person and their environment, in terms of their well-being. Secondary appraisal referred to the part of the process where the individual considered what could be done about a stressful situation and involved the evaluation of coping options and deciding what to do. It was therefore the content that distinguished the type of appraisal taking place, Primary or Secondary.

The Transactional Theory of Stress described by Lazarus (1998) focused on two main concepts, that of appraisal and coping. In the early 1980s, Lazarus and colleagues developed the Hassles and Uplifts Scale and the Ways of Coping Interview Questionnaire. The coping questionnaire has been used widely in research on coping
since that time. Lazarus (1998) has written an autobiography in which he described the
different phases of his interests and research. This includes a description of the Berkley
Stress and Coping Project, of which he was a key figure for many years.

The early work of Lazarus was very much on the importance of appraisal in the stress
process, with him changing the focus of his energies in later years to the broader area of
emotions and coping behaviour.

**Effort-Reward Imbalance Model of Stress**

Another influential model described as the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI model)
(Siegrist, 1996, 1998) view workers as expending effort to complete work tasks and
therefore expecting to be rewarded as part of an exchange process and is also derived
from a transactional theory of stress.

The ERI model places emphasis on rewards, such as money, self-esteem etc., rather
than job control. It is argued that workers experience strain when there is any imbalance
in the efforts/reward ratio with workers perceiving themselves as putting in more effort
than is warranted by the rewards that they receive. It is clear in this model that
employees in occupations where there are high job demands and low pay, are going to
experience strain as a result of the imbalance. This is particularly relevant in the current
economic recession, where many organisations are reducing costs by reducing their
workforce. Those retained often have to manage increased demands (fewer people to
share the tasks / increased hours etc) for reduced rewards. The reduced rewards arise
from changes in terms and conditions of employment eg reduced pay / benefits, changes
to sickness cover arrangements etc. There is clearly an imbalance here in the efforts/reward ratio with employees increasingly perceiving themselves as putting in more effort
than is recompensed by the rewards they receive. Under the ERI model this will
therefore result in increased strain.

The ERI model also distinguishes between two sources of effort, extrinsic effort and
intrinsic effort. Extrinsic effort is similar to the job-demand concept in the DCS model.
This is where job demands produce a state of arousal such as increased heart and
breathing rate, increased adrenaline etc. These biochemical / physiological changes
enable the body to respond to the job demands.

In the ERI model ‘intrinsic efforts’ refers to the personal characteristics, such as the
motivations of the individual or a pattern of striving with a strong desire for approval and
being valued. This pattern is referred to as ‘over commitment’. It has been argued that conceptually these characteristics link to the Type A behaviour pattern. Siegrist et al (2000) has argued that the model can explain adverse health effects such as gastrointestinal disorders, psychiatric disorders and poor subjective health in some occupations.

Transactional models of stress seem to have a high degree of face validity or common sense appeal in that they incorporate three broad areas:

- the sources of stress
- factors associated with the individual and their particular environment
- responses to the overall situation

In summary therefore, models of this type take into consideration a wide range of factors in attempting to explain how an individual may cope with work demands. In any situation therefore, a particular work event will not necessarily be stressful for every individual. Whether or not the event is stressful for the individual will be mediated by a range of factors in that particular person’s situation. Therefore, any individual reaction to a work event depends on their appraisal of the situation i.e. whether it is seen as threatening at that time. Even if the event is seen as potentially threatening, whether the individual experiences stress or not will depend on a secondary appraisal of the situation in relation to the resources that they have to cope with the demand. These resources could include personality characteristics, social support systems, financial resources etc. It can be seen that a transactional model of occupational stress can explain why two individuals experiencing the same work demands may have very different responses.

**Job Demand-Control-Support Model of Stress**

The Job Demand-Control model of occupational stress proposed by Karasek (1979) has dominated much research since the early 1980s. Within this model, job characteristics are seen as the main source of stress and it proposes that psychological stain is caused by the combination of high job demands and low job control. Subsequent researchers (Johnson & Hall, 1988) extended the original model to include a further dimension termed ‘social support’ as a relevant feature of the work environment. In this model, demands (taken as hard work, time pressures) require psychological effort. Job control refers to the individual being able to make decisions concerning how the job will be
carried out (when / how it will be done etc.). Support is seen as other people at work being helpful.

The Demand-Control-Support (DCS) model predicts that high work demands, in an environment where there is low control and low social support, is likely to cause psychological strain. Within this model high work demands can be managed effectively when employees can exercise sufficient control over meeting these demands and there is sufficient social support within the environment. From this model, jobs that carry the highest risk for poor psychological and physical health are those having high demands, low control and low support from supervisors or fellow workers. The relevance of the Demands-Control-Support model (Karesek and Theorell, 1990) has also been researched in relation to well-being (see DeLange et al, 2003).

There has been a great deal of empirical testing carried out and support found for the DCS model over a number of years. The model has however also been criticised for being over simplistic in it’s lack of attention to individual employee variables. Also, tests of the model have often involved self-report and therefore draws on perceptions rather than objective measures (see Muntaner & O’Campo, 1993). However, the model does seem to have strong face validity, and this was certainly the author’s experience in describing the rational underpinning the questionnaires given to participants in an earlier study (see Abstract 3) and it also seemed to have relevance to Headteachers.

In relation to individual factors the model does not give attention to the variability between people in managing the emotional components of a situation, when ostensibly dealing with similar work demands. For example, jobs requiring high levels of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983, Zaph et al, 1999, Zaph, 2002)) may require a particular personality type to cope and avoid burnout, other than just relying on the correct buffering effects from having appropriate levels of control and social support in place, as described in the DCS model. Jobs requiring high levels of emotional labour or emotional regulation (social work, teaching, police, ambulance crew) are likely to attract, and require, particular personality types. It may be that particular personality types are likely to be more successful as Headteachers. For example, individuals being high on the trait of emotional intelligence may deal with the Emotional Labour requirements of being a Headteacher better. Such individuals would arguably be better at recognising and responding to the emotional characteristics of others, and in recognising their own emotional needs and responses. A high degree of emotional intelligence could therefore be a protective factor.
It is also likely that Headteacher beliefs and personality traits will impact on their perceptions of personal and work related stress. At a basic level, any individual taking on the demands of Headship would have a strong belief in the value of their profession and in their own ability to make a difference. They are also likely to be highly motivated and have well developed interpersonal skills (emotional intelligence, empathy) and problem-focused skills. It would be very difficult to carry out the demands of Headship if your skills set only included the necessary interpersonal skills, without also having task completion skills. Task completion skills would include a solution-focused approach to problems encountered and a positive outlook. While solution-focused skills can be acquired through training it is likely that particular beliefs and personality traits will play a significant part in the achievement of successful outcomes for Headteachers.

Key summary of the models
All models of occupational stress seem to have as a premise that when there is a mismatch, or imbalance, between the demands impinging on an individual and their resources (or their compensatory rewards), then an outcome will be strain. Transactional models of stress place emphasis on the importance of the interaction between an individual and their environment. Stress is not therefore seen as being located in the environment, or in the individual alone, but arising from the transaction between the individual and their environment. The individual’s appraisal of the situation is also a key part of the transactional stress process.

2.3 Selected key research findings

The Bristol Stress and Health at Work Study (Smith et al 2000) was instigated because it was felt that there was an absence of reliable estimates, within the British working population, of the incidence of occupational stress and related disorders. A broad aim of the study was therefore to determine the prevalence and severity of occupational stress in a random sample of the population. The three objectives of this study were therefore as follows:

- To determine the prevalence and severity of occupational stress in a random population sample.
- To distinguish stress caused by work from that caused by other factors.
To assess the further health impacts of stress using a cohort design.

This study found that approximately 20% of the surveyed population suffered from high occupational stress. Findings also indicated that high levels of occupational stress were significantly related to medical problems such as gastro-intestinal symptoms, fatigue, tension, depression and anxiety, as well as difficulties within the family.

The Bristol study consisted of a thirty-two-page questionnaire that was sent to a randomly selected group of 17,000 people on the Bristol electoral register. This resulted in a response rate of 49%. Analysis subsequently indicated that occupational stress was described as ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ stressful by approximately 20% of those working in the sample that responded.

A second phase of the study was carried out approximately 12 months after the original mailed questionnaire. This involved a second mailing being sent to 4,673 of the original participants who had agreed to a follow up contact being made. This resulted in a 69% response rate. On this occasion, approximately 18% of those working at the time of the second questionnaire return indicated that their occupational stress levels were ‘very’ or “extremely stressful”. The authors took the designation of ‘very’ or 'extremely stressful’ as indicative of being 'highly stressed'.

A research study by Johnson et al (2005) looked at 26 occupations which were ranked in relation to reported stress and job satisfaction levels. This included Headteachers, Teachers, and Teaching Assistants. This study also used the ASSET short stress evaluation tool, which provides information on a number of work related stressors and stress outcomes. Results were described in relation to the three stress related variables of physical health, psychological well-being and job satisfaction. It was reported that correlational analysis indicated significant relationships between the three key factors. That was, as physical health deteriorated, so did psychological well-being, followed by a decline in job satisfaction. The researchers reported that these findings were in line with previous research suggesting a relationship between physical and mental health and job satisfaction (Dewe, 1991). It was reported that teachers came out worst in the rankings in regard to each of the key factors, when compared with Headteachers and Teaching Assistants. It was reported that the ASSET data revealed that:
“Teachers are experiencing higher stress levels and lower job satisfaction levels than both headteachers and teaching assistants, neither of whom score above the norm on any of the factors.”

In discussing the research findings the authors commented on the ASSET scores in relation to the teaching profession. In relation to the finding that teachers were experiencing higher stress levels and lower job satisfaction than either Headteachers or Teaching Assistants, they posited that this could be due to the fact that teachers work in close contact with children every day. In contrast, they suggested that while Headteachers and Teaching Assistants are also in contact with the children, they do not generally take charge of the classroom, or if they do, then it is ‘for short periods of time or whilst under supervision’ (page 185). They therefore suggested that teachers would be experiencing higher levels of emotional labour than Headteachers.

A consideration however is that workforce remodelling in recent years has increased the responsibility of teaching assistants in schools, with many more now having to take responsibility for classes for extended periods. Many Headteachers also now have increased teaching commitments which can be substantial for Headteachers of small Primary schools, particularly in rural areas.

In relation to the overall ranking of the 26 occupations, findings in relation to Headteachers were mixed. They were ranked at 11th for physical health, 20th for psychological well-being and 17th for job satisfaction. (A ranking of 3 indicating a worse outcome than a ranking of 7 etc.). An interesting finding from this study was that the 6 occupations seeming to be the most stressful regarding physical and psychological well being, and as having the poorest levels of job satisfaction (ambulance personnel, teachers, social services, customer services, call centres, prison officers and the police) all involved high levels of ‘emotional labour’. The authors discussed this high emotional labour requirement as a potential causal factor associated with high stress jobs.

Gender differences have also been found in some studies. Fotinatas and Cooper (2004) identified ‘significant differences in terms of physical and psychological well being amongst the male and female sample’ (page 14). Earlier work by Cooper and Kelly (1993) also found worse outcomes for female Headteachers in relation to dealing with occupational stress. In that study ‘work overload’ and ‘handling relationships with staff’ were identified as the two main sources of stress for Headteachers, and were more of an
issue in Primary than Secondary schools. This was a study of occupational stress amongst UK Headteachers. It concluded that higher levels of job dissatisfaction and stress were experienced by Primary Headteachers than by Secondary and Tertiary colleagues. They believed that the prevalence of stress in the primary sector was greater because of:

- A lack of clerical support
- Their smaller size and hence lack of variety
- Rewards and power differences
- Their relatively low status and other peoples perceptions that teaching in Primary schools was less demanding than Secondary school teaching
- The amount of teaching cover they had to provide

On this latter feature, the current study produced some relevant findings, which are discussed later.

A useful review of the literature on the possible causes of teacher stress was undertaken by Wilson (2002) for the Scottish Council for Research in Education (SCRE). The identified reported causes of teacher stress included the following:

- Work load
- Pupils failure to work or behave
- Poor working conditions
- Relations with colleagues
- Poor school ethos
- Change
- Raising standards
- School mergers

Wilson, (2002) also included reference to the findings of Travers and Cooper, (1996) who had reported that ‘change’ itself had been reported by teachers as a major source of pressure and a factor in teacher stress. In relation to this, the reported 5 top sources of job pressure were related to changes in the following areas:

- Lack of support from central government
- Constant changes taking place within the profession
Lack of information as to how changes are to be implemented
- Diminishing social respect for teaching
- The move towards a National Curriculum

There is no doubt that the education system has undergone constant change since the 1988 Education Reform Act, and continues to do so. This would include the need to implement modifications to the National Curriculum, responding to the Children Act, 2002 and the Every Child Matters agenda, and preparing for the constantly changing focus of Ofsted Inspection Frameworks.

Following the change of Government in May 2010 there have been further significant changes that have taken place, or are now pending. For example, encouragement to seek Academy status or the establishment of Free Schools, The Education Act 2011, the revised Ofsted Inspection Framework to operate from January 2012 and further changes to the curriculum being planned.

While constant change will have an impact on teaching and teachers in general, it will also impact significantly on Headteachers.

Phillips et al (2007) investigated the prevalence and causes of self reported work related stress amongst Headteachers in West Sussex. The measurement instrument used was also ASSET, a short stress evaluation tool, produced by Robertson Cooper Ltd. This was first described by Farragher et al (2004) Some additional questions were added that the researchers described as having been derived from previous studies (Chaplain, R. 2001, Kelly, M. J. 1991), 'or were new questions altogether'. The detail of these studies or how the new questions were derived is not provided. ‘Stress cases’ were defined as those who felt that their work was ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ stressful. This was a cross sectional postal survey of Headteachers and Principals in the area, with data being collected during 2005. There was an impressive 64% response rate with work related stress being reported by 43% of respondents. Workload and work life balance issues were identified as the two key stressors. These findings are discussed later in relation to findings from the current study.

Findings in the above study indicated poor physical and mental health when compared to general population norms. Findings also indicated that psychological well-being was worse than comparable managers and professionals, particularly for females and
Primary Headteachers. Females were found to be significantly more stressed than males on a number of stressors, including the stressors of degree of control and overload.

A second part of the study (Phillips et al, 2008) aimed to identify risk factors that may predict cases of work related stress and to look at health and other outcomes. Findings indicated that Headteachers had poor physical and mental health in comparison to norms for a general population of workers. Also, compared to a comparative group of managers and professionals, Headteachers had worse psychological well-being. This was particularly so for females and Primary Headteachers. A significant predictor of ‘caseness’ was teaching more than five hours per week, and being female was the main risk factor for poor psychological well-being. The definition of ‘caseness’ was similar to that which was used in the Bristol Stress and Health at Work Study 2000. That was those who felt their work was ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ stressful. The Phillips et al (2007) study finding of work related stress being at the 43% level was more than twice the level reported in the Bristol study, which was at the 20% level. Constant tiredness, feeling unable to cope, avoiding contact with others and difficulties concentrating were the highest scoring items in the psychological health area. It was concluded that in comparison to other professional groups, Headteachers had poorer psychological health and that the health of females and Primary Headteachers was worse than that of male and Secondary colleagues.

The National College of School Leadership (NCSL) carried out a study into the practice and well-being of Headteachers following concerns raised at NCSL regional conferences in 2005. This NCSL study (2007) explored the concepts of well-being, work -life balance, stress and job satisfaction as they related to Headteachers. This study also noted that research literature that focused on these areas in relation to Headteachers, was limited.

The definition of stress that was used to inform the design of this study was taken from Kyriacou (2001):

“Teacher stress may be defined as the experience by the teacher of unpleasant, negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety, tension, frustration or depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher”.

This study investigated the experiences of a cross section of 34 practicing Headteachers. The methodology included the completion of a journal over a two-week period, a non-
participant observation of a working day and a follow up interview. Data was collected between May and August 2006.

The NCSL description of the working lives of the participants in this study was taken from the information derived from the journal entries, the shadowing activity and the individual interviews. The findings therefore seemed to have high ecological validity. A conclusion was that the working lives of Headteachers were ‘demanding and pressured, with a fast pace and involving long hours’ NCSL (2007 p9.)

The NAHT work-life balance survey 2008-9 (French, 2009) provided some interesting research findings. This study involved an Internet based questionnaire that was sent to members for completion between September 2008 and January 2009. The number of respondents totalled 3,213, which constituted approximately 13% of the total membership of the NAHT, in England and Wales, at that time.

The research report included information about the characteristics of the respondent population. This included the following:

- Respondents were predominantly women (71%) and came from the predominantly 41-50 (32%) and the 51-60 (47%), age groups.
- The majority of the respondents were Headteachers (75%) as opposed to Deputy Headteachers (19%) or Assistant Headteachers (6%).
- The majority of respondents (87%) worked in Primary schools.
- Most of the rest of the respondents came from Secondary schools (5%) and Special schools (6%)

The author cautioned that care should be taken in interpreting the findings in relation to how representative the sample was. Given that the survey was an open web based questionnaire, it was not possible to determine whether there was a ‘self selecting’ sample. It was also cautioned that it was possible that there was overrepresentation of NAHT members with work life balance problems responding. In contrast, it was equally possible that those members with the most serious difficulties regarding work life balance did not have time to complete the survey. It must also be noted that the overall response rate of 13% was relatively small.
Other interesting findings included the following:

- Only 24% of NAHT members surveyed stated that their workload was never (or hardly ever) out of control.
- 85% of members claimed they experienced work related stress.
- Over two fifths of respondents (44%) reported feeling stressed or pressurised at work sometimes, while it was reported that the remainder (41%) claimed ‘unequivocally, this to be the case’.
- Work was described as being the main source of stress by over two thirds of members (68%).
- 23% of respondents identified home life and work as equal sources of stress.
- 64% of respondents believed they had suffered illness as a result of work related stress.

Where work related stress was reported by respondents, the most common symptoms were as follows:

- Frequent or unexplained crying (24%)
- Increased smoking or drinking (22%)
- Loss of sex drive (27%)
- Series of persistent minor ailments (24%)
- Anxiety or panic attacks (33%)
- Weight gain or loss (36%)
- Lack of concentration (41%)
- Headaches/migraines (47%)
- Irritability (54%)
- Sleeplessness (66%)
- Fatigue or extreme tiredness (69%)

When data from this survey was compared with previously collected data from a similar survey in 2007-8 it was concluded by the author ‘that problems of work load regulation and levels of stress and ill health remain significant issues for school leaders.’

There were very marginal differences between the reported levels of work related stress from the 2007-8, and the 2008-9, samples. Those reporting that they experienced work related stress were 86% in 2007-8 and 85% in 2008-9.
Those reporting that they were stressed most or all of the time were 42% in 2007-8 and 41% in 2008-9. Those reporting to have suffered an illness as the result of stress were 69% in 2007-8 and 64% in 2008-9.

2.4 Coping

A definition of coping was proposed by Lazarus (1999) who defined it as ‘the constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts a person makes to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person’. This definition was consistent with Lazarus’s transactional view of the stress process, where context and appraisal were seen as key.

A literature search indicated that early work around coping was carried out by Kahn et al (1964) who conducted six intensive individual interviews to find out what individuals were actually doing to handle a stressful situation, to discover their coping behaviours. This early work drew an important distinction between coping styles and coping behaviours, or strategies. If an individual displays the same, or very similar, responses to different stressors, this would suggest a coping ‘style’ which could be related to a personality trait. In contrast, if the coping behaviours vary depending on the type of stressor it makes more sense to refer to these as coping strategies or coping behaviours.

Since the early work by Kahn et al (1964) many researchers have sought to identify and classify different coping strategies. A useful review of these was carried out by Newman & Beehr (1979). There have also been a number of different classification schemes proposed (see Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, Cox & Ferguson, 1991, Dew & Guest 1990, Ferguson & Cox, 1997, Latask, 1986). The approach adopted by Lazarus & Folkman (1984) seems to have been particularly popular where a distinction is drawn between ‘problem-focused’ and ‘emotion-focused’ strategies. The main distinction is that problem-focused coping aims to change the situation, whereas emotion-focused coping focuses on modifying an individual’s perception, cognitions and emotions. For example, the strategy of time management or delegation used consistently to manage excess work demands could reflect a coping style.

Research findings on the efficacy of interventions based on known coping strategies and supports have been mixed. Dewe et al (2010) provided a helpful review and critique of
coping with work stress. They commented on the difficulty of evaluating the efficacy of coping strategies in relation to particular work related stressors because much of the field research failed to describe the specific nature of the stressors being investigated, or did not align the coping strategies with specific stressors. For example, they commented that work ‘demands’ tended to be treated as a global construct rather than the particular demands being clearly specified.

Recent research has shown that strain, arising from work demands, can be alleviated by the use of time management. Peeters and Rutte (2005) examined the effects of time management in relation to burn out in elementary school teachers in The Netherlands. They provided evidence to support their hypothesis that high work demands and low autonomy would lead to burn out among teachers who reported low usage of time management. This was confirmed in respect of emotional exhaustion, a major feature of the burn out syndrome. They concluded that effective time management could be an effective strategy for reducing the negative impact of high work demands.

Health promotion has received significant attention in the literature evaluating stress management interventions. The data on the efficacy of health promotion programmes has been generally supportive of the notion that a psychologically and physically ‘healthy’ worker is more likely to be productive.

Harden et al (1999) reviewed the evaluations of health promotion programmes in the United Kingdom and commented that many evaluations had not been rigorous enough and that they tended to focus on the short-term effects of health promotion, rather than the long-term benefits. Caution was therefore needed in making any generalisations about efficacy.

Richardson and Rothstein (2008) carried out a meta-analysis of 36 experimental studies on stress management interventions and reported medium to large effects for the interventions evaluated in these studies. Interestingly, secondary type interventions that focused at individual attitude and behaviour change, with the intent of helping people to cope better with stress, were the most common. Cognitive-behavioural interventions were reported as being of most benefit. These were aimed at modifying an individual’s appraisal and reaction to stressful events. Other types of intervention (time management, training in goal setting and exercise programmes) were found to be less effective.
A theme pervading research reports in this area is the need to be cautious about the conclusions that can be drawn from any particular research study and the extent to which generalisations can be made.

2.5 The Critical Incident Interview Technique

The Critical Incident interview technique is an approach that can be used to explore stressors, coping behaviours, or the link between the two. The technique was first described by Flanagan (1954) and has been used successfully in a number of areas. For example, to learn lessons from when there has been a systemic failure of some type, in structured employment interviews and to assist with job analysis/job design exercises. In relation to the latter, it has been used by Occupational Psychologists as a useful task analysis tool.

The critical incident analysis technique, used to investigate coping behaviours, would involve asking a respondent to describe a situation where he/she had to manage a particular stressor. The individual would then be asked to describe the behaviours that they employed to manage the situation, and the degree to which these behaviours were effective. O'Driscoll & Cooper (1996) have suggested that the critical incident analysis technique has advantages over a coping checklist approach in analysing coping behaviours, because it enables the researcher to directly link chosen coping behaviours with specific stressors. The validity of the approach clearly rests on the interviewee providing an accurate account of what they actually did. If they are able to do this, the process is probably less subject to the respondent providing a socially desirable response, which is always a risk with questionnaire based measures of coping behaviours. However, given the importance of the appraisal process in the experience of stress, the personal nature of the incident reported by informants, makes it difficult to generalise from the findings. One way to overcome this would be to identify ‘themes’ emerging from a number of different interviews of this type, where the interviewees were describing similar stressful incidents that they had to manage.
2.6 Emotional Labour

‘Emotional Labour’ is a relatively new and developing area of research, defined by Hochschild (1983), as ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display.’ This work requirement is a key feature in some occupations and not in others. These are the occupations where the management and regulation of emotion is expected to be in line with agreed organisational expectations. These occupations are those requiring high levels of interaction with the public, and is clearly relevant to the majority of people who are employed in the service industries. This would include Teachers and Headteachers. Emotional Labour has also been reported as being relevant to work related stress (Zaph et al, 1999, Zaph, 2002).

A previous research paper involved a review of relevant literature in the emotional labour area to identify the implications of research findings for the teaching profession, as well as the strategies that could be used to mitigate its negative consequences (see Abstract 2, page11). A finding included a link between high levels of Emotional Labour and exhaustion and that exhaustion was an accepted feature of ‘Burnout’. The experience of Burnout emerged as an important consideration.

It is possible to see Emotional Labour as a powerful explanatory factor in understanding stress, given its unique relationship with Burnout.

The syndrome of Burnout is seen as consisting of three components, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation (detached attitude to others) and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In a review of the outcomes of emotional management, Bono & Vey (2005) found that irrespective of how it was operationalised, emotional labour was associated with depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion, but not personal accomplishment. There are therefore links between the need for expending high levels of emotional labour and emotional exhaustion. Individuals in occupations requiring high levels of emotional management and regulation are therefore at risk of experiencing Burnout syndrome. Research findings in the area of emotional labour are therefore relevant to understanding the demands that have to be managed by public sector workers, including Headteachers.
Accepting that certain occupations require the expenditure of high levels of Emotional Labour, and that this is a risk factor for adverse stress reactions, it would be sensible to ensure that workers in ‘at risk occupations’ receive appropriate training and support.

Hochschild (1983) and other researchers have identified a number of emotional management strategies that individuals can use to deal with their emotions. Hochschild referred to three strategies, which included:

- Suppressing genuine emotions e.g. a Headteacher hiding irritation with an underperforming member of the team.
- Surface acting e.g. Pretending / faking emotions in line with the organisational rules eg a Headteacher smiling and greeting Ofsted inspectors warmly on their arrival to carry out an inspection of their school when really feeling anxious/fearful.
- Deep acting e.g. attempting to change the emotional state experienced to match the emotional display expected by the school organisation.

Research has also looked at different conceptualisations of the emotional labour concept and its features. Rubin et al (2005) suggested a model to separate out:

- Behaviour
- Emotional state
- Situational demands

It was also hypothesised that there was an intervening construct referred to as perceived ‘emotional dissonance’ and it was suggested that an individual would have to perceive emotional dissonance to be motivated to engage in emotional labour. Emotional dissonance is defined as the discomfort generated in an individual when they are required to express emotions that are not genuinely felt.
2.7 Legal requirements

The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 state that governing bodies have the responsibilities for ensuring that Headteachers can maintain a healthy work-life balance. Employers also have responsibilities under health and safety legislation.

While the above regulations state that a school’s governing body must ensure that a Headteacher complies with the duties of the role, it goes on to say that in so doing:

“The governing body must have regard to the desirability of the Headteacher being able to achieve a satisfactory balance between the time spent discharging the professional duties of a Headteacher and the time spent by the Headteacher pursuing personal interests outside work”.

As far back as the Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974, and associated regulations, the responsibilities of employers, have been clear. In summary, the employers of school staff are responsible for the health and safety of school staff, pupils, and visitors, while in school and also while on school activities. The employer also has the responsibility for carrying out necessary risk assessments of potentially hazardous activities and ensuring that measures to control potential hazards are put in place. Clear notes regarding employers responsibilities are contained on the Health and Safety Executives website.

2.8 Examples of supports available to Headteachers nationally and in various Local Authorities

There are a number of support arrangements available to Headteachers, some of these operating locally and others on a national basis. Examples will be briefly outlined.

Many Local Authorities, including the one in which data for this research was gathered, provide access to a confidential counselling service for school staff. The local service is staffed by occupational health professionals and operates on a self-referral basis.

The establishment of ‘Teacher Line’ in 2000 has provided another support for the teaching profession. This is a telephone ‘help-line’ for teachers that is jointly funded by
the government, local authorities and the teacher unions. This facility provides an opportunity for telephone counselling for stress related difficulties.

The Ten Group is a provider of intelligent support services. This group piloted an information and support service for school and college leaders in England and Wales between 2005 and 2008. The Ten Group did this in partnership with the Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA) and the National College of School Leadership (NCSL).

This information and support service for school and college leaders is referred to as ‘The Key’, which became an independent nationwide membership service in 2009.

This organisation provides access to a website from which articles can be downloaded to address questions raised by members on any aspect of school leadership and management. Relevant articles, in response to questions posed by members, are promised within 3 working days. An aim is to share knowledge and best practice amongst school and college leavers (so they don’t have to keep reinventing the wheel).

Another national organisation, the National Headteachers Support Organisation, was set up in 2007. This grew from the work of a South Western regional group of Headteachers Support Service Co-ordinators. This organisation provides advice to members and convenes regional and national conferences.

Work Life Support is a social enterprise that was established in 1999 by the national charity called Teachers Support Network. It works in partnership with local authorities and schools in delivering programmes to enhance staff well-being and organisational effectiveness. Their website (http://www.worklifesupport.com) states that since 1999 they have worked with more than 200,000 staff in around 3000 schools, local authority departments and charities, nationwide. Some of this work has been undertaken in partnership with the Department for Education and the Health and Safety Executive.

At an organisational level, the Work Life Support organisation, describes their integrated approach to well-being as including the following:

- Employee assistance programmes – individual support packages for employees.
- Well-being programmes – interventions for organisations to help create healthier working environments.
• Organisational well-being surveys – an organisational audit tool.
• Individually tailored learning and development opportunities.
• Head Space – support packages for school leaders.
• Governor Line – a telephone helpline for governors of maintained schools in England, operated by Work Life Support on behalf of the Department for Education.

The well-being programmes referred to above (second bullet) are targeted at helping organisations to develop healthy, motivated and resilient workforces. Schools that buy into this package would undertake a well-being survey which is based on the Health and Safety Executive management standards for work related stress, and which can be completed online by all staff. Analysis of this audit is then used to prioritise areas for development as well as providing data on organisational strengths and achievements. Following the completion of the survey, the institution is provided with a summary data profile and guidance on drawing up a programme of action geared to helping the school create the conditions that contribute to well-being.

Promotional material from the Work Life Support social enterprise group argues that taking part in their well-being programme is a way of carrying out a risk assessment on work related stress and thereby helps schools to fulfil their duty of care under health and safety legislation. This is because the well-being programme is based upon the Health and Safety Executive’s management standards for work related stress.

The Head Space package referred to above (fifth bullet) is a programme specifically designed for Headteachers to help them maintain their own well-being and work life balance. These programmes provide Headteachers with access to a specialist team of advisors and counsellors. Support can be accessed by telephone or online and includes the following:

• Emotional support and up to 5 sessions of counselling, as appropriate.
• Legal advice and guidance.
• Financial advice and debt counselling.
• Specialist information on work life issues.
• Management consultation to support those responsible for managing others.
Work-life Support consultants are also available to work with groups of Headteachers on an agreed programme relevant to their specific local context. Involvement here would be over the course of a year and be made up of a one-day introductory session followed by 5 half-day sessions run by a Head Space facilitator.

The Work-life Support website provides downloadable information on the various packages available.

A number of local authorities publish guidance for governors on how they can support the well-being of Headteachers or they have set up their own Headteacher support services. For example, the Cumbria Grid for Learning lists the main sources of stress and then goes on to suggest some discussion points that governors should consider in relation to each of the identified sources.

Lambeth Council information for governors on supporting Headteachers highlights four main areas and suggests ways to reduce stress and time pressures. The areas featured include the following:

- Work / life balance
- Dedicated Headteacher time
- Cover
- Administration and clerical tasks

Hertfordshire provides a range of support for staff in schools. This includes an online telephone help line and face to face counselling for staff in schools. Arrangements are organised by a Local Authority advisor for staff retention and well-being in schools.

Headteachers were also freely enrolled for one year (2010/2011) to a Hertfordshire County Council employee assistance programme, which was also offered to schools to buy in to. This assistance programme is operated by an outside provider called ‘Care Well’.

School staff, other than the Headteacher, can therefore also be involved in the programme, for a fee. Those enrolled in the employee assistance programme have access to the following:
- A telephone advice and information service
- Access to a 24 hour telephone counselling service
- Up to 4 face to face counselling sessions per employee

The ASSET questionnaire (see Chapter 3.12) used in this study is an instrument that was designed as a short stress evaluation tool that could be completed fairly quickly by any occupational or managerial group, or different types of employees within the same organisation. It was designed to assist with a first phase of a stress risk assessment. The second phase was intended to be a detailed scrutiny of identified problem areas indicated from an analysis of the ASSET questionnaire scores. It was at this point that consideration needed to be given to how the derived data would be used to inform an appropriate response to the findings, and hopefully the design of bespoke emotional health and well-being programmes or interventions.

In relation to this area, the National Council for School Leavers has suggested some important considerations in relation to the development of well-being programmes:

- Support for Headteacher well-being has to be seen to be driven and supported by senior Local Authority Officers
- It needs to be communicated clearly through all aspects of Local Authority policy
- Information about support systems needs to be easily and clearly available
- Governors need to be a key part of this strategy

These all seem sensible and pragmatic suggestions and can perhaps be viewed as necessary features for successful interventions. However, while arguably necessary they are probably not sufficient. To be successful, programmes or interventions will also need the confidence and support of the target group. This is more likely to be the case if the programme has been informed by an analysis of need (Stress Audit) and the recipient group have been adequately consulted on the content and mode of delivery at the planning stage. It was for these reasons that the current research took the form it did with time being taken to prepare the ground carefully (Preparatory Activities) and the stress audit questionnaire being strengthened from information obtained through the focus group activity (Method section). It is also the reason for the work currently being undertaken in the local area. (see Section 5.5 Developments in Research Locality).
Swaffield (2009) reported on the second stage of a national survey investigating the perception of school leaders on the support they seek and the challenge they are offered. Findings were based on a questionnaire sent to a representative sample of English secondary and primary headteachers. Provision of support for the professional practise of Headteachers was found to be variable, with it being concluded that there was:

"considerable scope for enhancing both support and challenge for school leaders."

This research was part of a larger study having two main aims. Firstly, examining the nature of support and challenge that school leaders found most helpful from external professionals. Secondly, examining the concept of ‘critical friendship’ in relation to support and challenge for Headteachers. Swafield (2009) also reported that a literature review indicated that the six most common sources of support and challenge for English Headteachers were Governors, the Local Authority, School Improvement Partners, consultants, professional associations and colleague Headteachers.

Similar sources of support and challenge were reported by respondents in this study. This included fellow Headteachers, school improvement partners, various Local Authority personnel, depending upon the need e.g. Human Resources department, Finance Advisor, Special Educational Needs support services and the school’s governing body.

A number of comments were made about the School Improvement Partners (SIPs). These were introduced into the educational arena as part of the ‘New Relationship with Schools’ (DfES, 2004), being phased into the secondary phase, and then the primary phase. All maintained schools in England should have had one by April 2008. This included all nursery and special schools.

SIPs have been described as ‘critical friends’ and were intended to ‘provide school leaders with challenge and support’ (DfES, 2006, P3) being tasked with making judgements on a school’s performance for the governing body, as well as feeding these judgements back to the host Local Authority. The recent local survey provided a mixed picture of the effectiveness of the SIP in providing the support part of their role. It was more common for SIPs to be described as providing effective challenge, but variable helpful support. There was clearly a time factor operating here, with SIPs being perceived as ensuring that they were able to carry out their monitoring/evaluative
function, within the prescribed time. A number of Heads also commented upon perceived effectiveness being determined by the quality of the relationship established between the visiting SIP and the Headteacher.

2.9 Standardised Stress Audit Questionnaires

The ASSET research tool was used in this study and is described in Chapter 3, Methodology. An alternative that was considered was the Occupational Stress Indicator (OSI) designed by Cooper et al (1988) as an instrument to detect and assess stress related problems within organisations. The OSI is a comprehensive stress audit tool with sections to assess potential sources of pressure at work, Type A behaviour patterns, perceived control over the work environment, job satisfaction, home-work balance, ways of coping and emotional and physical symptoms of strain. Questionnaire items in this instrument are scored on a Likert Scale so analysis can be carried out at the frequency and degree level of response. The results from the self-report scales can also be compared against norm referenced data from other occupations. Norms are provided for police officers, health workers, water company employees, brewery workers, ambulance workers, general practitioners, senior civil servants and also university lecturers.

Although a useful tool, The Occupational Stress Indicator is a time consuming instrument to administer, and because of this, the ASSET instrument was selected for this study.

2.10 Relevant new initiatives

The National Well-being debate was launched by David Cameron in November 2010. The consultation period on this issue concluded in April 2011, with the Office for National Statistics intending to publish a report in the Summer of 2011.

The intent of the Office for National Statistics was to develop an additional index of the United Kingdom’s well being so that this would not just be based on economic indicators.

The British Psychological Society contributed to this debate. An important point made was that well-being necessitated a focus on a wide range of human life and that measurement of these was not going to be easy. It also usefully noted that there were both subjective and objective elements to well being.
At the time of writing (September 2011) the Office for National Statistics has yet to announce a decision on the type of new measures that will be developed.

The models of stress and the importance of appraisal, previous research findings on Headteacher stress, and the approaches to the investigation of occupational stress, all influenced the design of this study. These are discussed in the next section.

2.11 Relevance of literature review to this study

The literature review influenced the conceptualisation and the design of this study. Research findings and features of the models of stress are reflected in the research questions being investigated and the methodology adopted. These influences were as follows:

- There has been relatively little research carried out on the stress levels of Headteachers and their coping strategies. The research that has taken place has indicated that they experience high levels of stress.

- The evidence base quickly dates, given the constantly changing educational landscape and the changing demands made upon Headteachers.

- A premise that underpins influential models of stress is that strain results when there is an imbalance between the demands having to be managed and the resources that an individual can draw upon.

- The transactional models of stress place emphasis on the interaction between an individual and their environment and the transaction between them. ‘Stress’ is not therefore located in the environment or in the individual alone, as such, but can arise from the transaction between the individual and their environment.

- Cognitive appraisal is an important part of the transactional stress process.

- Self-report questionnaires have been a frequently used research tool when carrying out stress audits and the most commonly used measure of teacher
stress. Commercially available instruments of this type have advantages in enabling comparisons to be made between the findings arising from research on a particular occupational group, with a database of other comparable professional and managerial groups. A weakness of these instruments is that while they can often provide ‘broad brush’ data relevant to most managerial and professional groups, they may not be sensitive enough to provide all the data relevant to research on a particular occupational group. A further weakness is that questionnaires do not allow for the investigation of the meaning of the identified stressors for the individuals in question. It is also difficult to control for the social desirability factor when self-report methods such as questionnaires are used.

- A mixed methods design, drawing on quantitative and qualitative approaches would be necessary in answering all of the research questions. This was because data was needed not only on the type of stressor being experienced but also in relation to achieving a deeper understanding of the context and impact of example stressors.

- A combination of focus group activity, postal questionnaire and semi-structured interviews was likely to provide the necessary data to answer the research questions and assist with the triangulation of findings.

- Semi-structured interviews adopting a critical incident analysis approach seemed to be the best way for the interviews to be carried out. The semi-structured feature would bring some consistency and structure to the interviews while also providing the necessary flexibility. The critical incident feature made it possible to explore the context around example stressors that were real and meaningful to the Headteacher interviewees.

The next chapter provides the rationale for, and the detail of, the methodology used in this study.
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This study adopted a mixed method research design to address the research questions. Data was therefore derived from a combination of sources, which included: focus group activity, questionnaire responses and critical incident interviews. Prior to any data being collected, a number of preparatory activities were carried out which it was felt were necessary if the study was going to be successful. These components are described below, beginning with a chronology of the study.

3.1.1 Chronology of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frames</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| November 2009- April 2010 | - Met with Local Authority Manager of Human Resource Department, Workforce Development Advisors and Union representatives.  
- Met with TaMHS Project Manager |
| April- May 2010      | - Identified appropriate standardised stress audit questionnaire                                    |
| May-June 2010       | - Ran Headteacher focus groups to identify possible questionnaire items  
- Carried out content analysis of focus group data  
- Designed postal questionnaire                           |
| September 2010      | - Letter sent to all Headteachers giving notice of pending stress audit questionnaire  
- Short article published in ‘Information from Corporate Director’ letter to all Headteachers and Chairs of Governing Bodies |
| October 2010        | - Distributed postal questionnaire to all Local Authority Headteachers.                             |
| October-November 2010 | - Developed critical incident semi-structured interview schedule                                    |
| December 2010-February 2011 | - Carried out critical incident semi-structured Headteacher interviews                          |
| December 2010-April 2011 | - Questionnaire analysis  
- Prepared and provided initial findings feedback to HR Department and Headteachers                                |
| May 2011-July 2011  | - Interview transcription analysed (content and thematic)                                           |
| September-October 2011 | - Proposed content of draft Emotional Health and Well Being Programme for Headteachers discussed in Headteacher forums |
3.2 Philosophical orientation

The stance adopted in this research study was that of a pragmatic or critical realist. The pragmatic or critical realist approach, as described by Robson (2002), empowers the researcher to draw from different research paradigms. This study was influenced by the positivist, constructivist and pragmatic traditions because it was felt that the research questions could be best addressed from a research design that captured qualitative and quantitative data. The adoption of a mixed method research design was felt to be pragmatic given the real world open system in which the research was being carried out.

The realist philosophy of science approach has an emphasis on describing the mechanisms that produce an event, seeing the world existing independently of our knowledge of it (Sayer, 1992). Realists accept that there are differing realities and do not therefore strive for absolute truths, particularly when studying open systems when a number of different ‘mechanisms’ can be operating simultaneously to cause effects. Knowledge is not seen as a static object or thing waiting to be discovered, but the product of a social activity (Sayer, 1992).

The mechanisms referred to above are ideas to describe how effects are produced, and are often hidden. In relation to the current research, a ‘mechanism’ could be the belief system held by a Headteacher ie ‘I am expected to be able to cope’, and contribute to an explanation of an outcome in a particular context. Pawson and Tilley (1997) explain these relationships as context-mechanism-outcome configurations (CMOC) and see the description / identification of these relationships as the products of realist evaluation.

My inclinations in this study were in line with scientific realist philosophy, and the realist evaluative approach, clearly outlined by Pawson and Tilley, (1997). My subject matter was real in the sense that previous research had identified high stress levels as being a feature of the teaching profession. I also endeavoured to follow a realist methodological approach deciding that a mixed quantitative / qualitative research design best fitted the research questions being investigated. For example, the ASSET questionnaire used in this study had demonstrable psychometric properties that enabled comparisons to be made with comparable managerial and professional groups. By using a reliable and validated instrument some cautious generalisations would be possible. The use of focus groups was also an attempt to make sure that relevant and realistic questions for the target group were included in the questionnaire.
It would not be possible to generalise from findings from the planned semi-structured critical incident interviews but it was felt that they would provide a richer, real, insight into the reality of Headteacher stress. It was also intended that this study would be realistic in the sense of being of benefit to a number of real world stakeholders eg Headteachers, governing bodies, the local authority and the research community.

3.3 Rationale for research design

This study involved the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data and was therefore within the mixed methods paradigm (Creswell and Clark, 2003). Philosophically therefore, it fitted the pragmatic or critical realist tradition as I believed that the tools drawn from the quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, would address the research questions better than the adoption of either approach alone. In other words, it was strongly felt that a mixed method approach was required to provide a more complete picture of the situation of Headteachers, and that it would also enable the triangulation of findings.
Table 1  Data sources for addressing research questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
<th>Type of Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 What are the stressors currently experienced by Local Authority Headteachers (primary and secondary)?</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Partially Content/ mainly Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postal Questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive / Inferential Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Incident Interviews</td>
<td>Content / Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 What are the stressors experienced by different types of Headteacher (male / female, large / medium / small school Headteachers)?</td>
<td>Postal Questionnaire</td>
<td>Descriptive / Inferential Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 What strategies / supports are used by Headteachers to manage stress and how effective are they?</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Incident Interviews</td>
<td>Content / Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 What additional supports would reduce Headteacher stress or assist them in managing stress more effectively?</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Partially Content / mainly Thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Critical Incident Interviews</td>
<td>Content / Thematic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In adopting a mixed method approach, I was conscious that the choice of research tools needed to flow from the nature of the research questions posed and be ‘fit for purpose’.

The strengths and weaknesses of operating within one research tradition alone, quantitative or qualitative, were considered at the commencement of this study. It was acknowledged that the approaches used within the quantitative tradition provided control and precision and would therefore increase the degree to which any generalisations could be made from the results obtained. It was intended in this study to achieve some quantification of participant responses and this was achieved mainly through the analysis of questionnaire responses. For example, it was felt to be useful to be able to determine whether Primary Headteachers perceived themselves as having more or less ‘control’ than Secondary school Headteachers, or what percentage of Headteachers reported being ‘committed’ to their organisation etc.
An aim was also to gain a detailed understanding of the context around an example of a particular stressor, chosen by a sample of Headteachers, and that had occurred within the last 3 to 6 months. I felt that exploring the context of a recent incident that had to be managed (what it was, its history, how it was resolved, the strategies / supports drawn upon etc) would strengthen the study in relation to the extent to which any tentative generalisations could be made and that it would also better inform the content of an *Emotional Health and Well-being programme for Headteachers*. This was achieved through carrying out a small number of semi structured ‘critical incident’ interviews, which are described below.

While the mixed methods approach brings advantages and strengths, it also brings some disadvantages and weaknesses. These can arise from organisational or resource demands, including that of time, and requires the researcher to have the necessary skill mix. As in all studies, available time was a factor for the researcher and was a limit on the scale of this study. My job changed three times during the course of this study (from Senior Educational Psychologist to Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist, and then to acting Principal Educational Psychologist). On each occasion this resulted in significant additional duties being taken on, including increased working at a strategic level within two local authorities (Joint Service Arrangement), as well as continuing to manage a team of applied psychologists. In many ways I think this helped me understand the difficulty Headteachers had in managing the cumulative roles that have to be carried out and the multiple tasks that have to be completed. In relation to the requisite research skills it was felt that the completion of previous assignments, and previous work experience as an applied psychologist, provided the necessary skills to carry out this study. Previous assignments had included the design, delivery and analysis of stress audits to different professional groups, the qualitative analysis of interview data and an opportunity to research the relevance of emotional labour to the teaching profession. In conclusion the advantages and strengths of a mixed method design was that it provided the tools needed to effectively address the research questions. The potential ‘disadvantages / weakness’ were not seen as such, but rather necessary features that had to be managed to ensure that the study had rigour.

The mixed method design of this study related to data collection and analysis. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were mixed within particular stages of the study, and also across the complete study. For example, the questionnaire sent to
Headteachers included closed questions, where the responses could be quantified, and also some open-ended questions which leant themselves to qualitative analysis.

In contrast, the focus group activity and individual interviews were clearly within the qualitative tradition with derived data analysed through content and thematic analysis. The questionnaire itself was also informed from the information derived from the focus group activity.

Mixed method designs are often classified in relation to the time order in which activities are conducted or in terms of the dominant paradigm informing the study. There were time order variables in this study, for example, the focus group activity was carried out before the questionnaires were distributed to participant Headteachers and analysis of this data contributed to the development of the questionnaire. One stage of the research therefore informed the next. However, within the study, equal status was given to qualitative and quantitative traditions in attempting to address the research questions.

### 3.4 Preparatory activities

Mindful that researching a sensitive area, such as the management of occupational stress, needed to be handled carefully, it was decided at the outset of this study to involve key stakeholders in early discussions and hopefully, to enlist their support. Key stakeholders included Headteacher Unions, Workforce Development Advisers, The Targeting Mental Health in Schools Project Manager, the Local Authority Education Human Resource Manager and the Targeting Mental Health in Schools Project Steering Group, of which the researcher was a participant. In relation to the Headteacher unions, discussion took place with the local NAHT representative, the union to which the vast majority of primary Headteachers belonged to. The majority of secondary Headteachers were members of the National College of School Leaders. It was not possible to meet with the representative of this union, although discussions were carried out with a number of secondary school Headteachers, who were members.

During discussions with the above stakeholders, the purpose of the research study was outlined and any questions answered. These discussions proved particularly useful in gauging how well the study would be received by the majority of Headteachers and also in relation to some of the mechanical aspects of carrying out data collection. For example, views on the appropriate timing of sending a questionnaire and how long this
should be were particularly informative. It had been intended to send the questionnaire to Headteachers during the Summer Term 2010. There was a consensus that this would not be an ideal time to do this, with a few weeks into the Autumn Term being the recommended time, to maximise response. It was also advised that an individual hard copy would be better received and more likely to be completed. However, it was also advised to offer the availability of an electronic copy. Other views included to allow a 3-4 week period for completion and to make it very clear that the identity of respondents would be protected. On this point it was also suggested that any visible coding on the questionnaires could deter some Headteachers from completing the questionnaire. It was also advised that an overlong questionnaire was unlikely to be completed.

3.5  Focus group rationale

Focus groups have been used in social research for a number of decades being extensively used in the consumer product market research arena and also as a vehicle for sampling political views of the electorate. Focus groups have become a well-accepted and respected methodological tool within the social sciences. They provide an ideal way to elicit a range of views in a non-threatening format in the style of a semi-structured discussion.

The two focus groups used in this study consisted of participants who knew each other, and given the nature of the research enquiry, and being Headteachers themselves, were ideally suited to be informants to assist with the development phase of the stress audit questionnaire tool. Given the topics of enquiry the group were highly motivated and entered into discussion willingly.

The researcher’s planning in carrying out this activity was informed from background reading, including the University of Surrey Social Research Update, Issue 19 – Focus Groups, and also a publication from the Texas Centre for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning – Focus groups tips for beginners (1997).

3.6  Focus group critique

Krueger (1994) suggests that focus groups work best with a neutral, unknown interviewer. The researcher was known to all members of both focus groups in this study.
in his role as a Local Authority Educational Psychologist, although not known personally to any group members. The researcher had had some professional interaction with some members of the first focus group. Given the limited contact that there had been, and the nature of this, the researcher felt able to take an objective neutral position as focus group facilitator and it did not feel as if my presence inhibited discussion in any way. (There was however the potential for my role within the Local Authority as a Psychologist to have inhibited responses). That discussion was not inhibited was the opinion of the scribes who assisted with each group, and who were also virtually unknown to the focus group members.

Given that focus groups were needed for a particular reason, *Purposive Sampling* was used (Miles & Huberman, 1984) with the aim being to obtain some specific information about the types of stressor experienced by Headteachers, and the strategies / supports that they currently drew upon, or they felt would be valuable. During the focus group process it felt as if participants were reflecting personal views, with many observations being prefaced with the word ‘I’. There was also much agreement within the group to observations being made by colleagues. The researcher was mindful that there is always the potential for focus group participant to report what they believed to be the case or make socially desirable comments, rather than reflecting their own personal experiences and perceptions. There was also the risk that group processes were operating and that these influenced responses (Asch, 1955, Larsen et al, 1979). While it is never possible to be completely confident that these factors were not operating, the impression given was that they were not significant issues in either of the focus groups convened. Headteachers are a powerful group within any Local Authority and they are usually confident in expressing their views in meetings.

### 3.7 Establishment of focus groups

Focus groups were used to identify additional items to be included in the postal questionnaire that would be sent to all Headteachers. The purpose here was to elicit local context information on the stressors experienced by a representative sample (Primary, Secondary, large and smaller school Headteachers) of the target participant group. Views on the strategies / supports they currently drew upon, and also any additional ones that they would welcome, was also being investigated.
While an established questionnaire measure of stress was being used, it was felt that the inclusion of additional items from the focus group activity would ensure that the questionnaire was up to date in reflecting the current demands impinging on modern Headteachers, as well as reflecting any locally relevant issues. It was felt that it was important to do this to encourage a high participant response rate, as well as contributing to the reliability and validity of the findings.

As noted earlier, the locality within which this study was carried out was involved in a Targeting Mental Health in Schools pilot project. This three year funded project was targeted on a cluster of 12 schools during years one and two, with the intent being to role out lessons learned across the whole of the Local Authority during year three of the project. There was therefore an established group of Headteachers that met regularly for TaHMS stakeholder events. The permission of the TaMHS project manager to approach this group to engage in focus group activity was sort and received. This brought some clear advantages in that this group had identified the need for increased staff support in a recently completed training audit. The group were also clearly sensitised to the development of emotional health and well being in their schools.

In common with other Local Authorities, there were also established meetings of Headteachers organised on a geographical basis. The convener of one local School Development Group was also approached with a request to attend one of their termly meetings to carry out a focus group activity. This was also agreed.

Both focus groups contained Secondary and Primary Headteachers and included a mix of urban and rural schools, of various sizes. The second school development group cluster of schools in particular included a number of Headteachers from smaller rural schools. These Headteachers all had significant teaching commitments.

Once dates had been agreed to run the Focus Groups participants in each group were individually sent a letter explaining the purpose of the focus group and explaining clearly what would take place. (Appendix B). Included with this mailing was a copy of a Participant Information sheet which had been produced to provide general information about the study (Appendix C).
3.8 Focus group process

Each focus group followed the same procedure, which was as follows:

- Introduction and brief overview of the purpose of the study, the part the focus group would play in the development phase of a questionnaire that would be sent to all Headteachers, and the format of the Focus Group itself. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions about any matter they wanted clarified or had a concern about. The introduction included thanking the assembled group for their participation, discussion of ground rules and reassurance about confidentiality. This was in relation to no particular comment being attributed to any member of the group. Reference was also made to the recent letter that had been sent to all focus group participants (Appendix B) explaining the process and including a copy of the general information about the study (Appendix C). Participants were reminded that during the Autumn term 2010 all local Headteachers would be invited to complete a postal stress order questionnaire. It was explained that this would be based on a validated occupational stress audit instrument (ASSET) that would have additional questionnaire items added to it, to reflect the current national and local context that Headteachers were working within. It was stressed that the focus group activity was designed to assist in identifying these additional items. It was explained that the researcher would be facilitating the focus group session with the assistance in one case of a Trainee Educational Psychologist, and in the second focus group, with the assistance of a Graduate Psychologist, both employed by the local Educational Psychology Service. This introductory part of the session, including answering questions, lasted for 10-15 minutes. The group were reassured that the focus group itself would last no more than 45 minutes. The focus group participants were not asked to sign a consent form. The first focus group was composed of the local authority TaMHS pilot school Headteachers. The focus group meeting took place at the end of a morning TaMHS event that they had been attending. All of the school leaders had also received an individual letter, prior to this event, explaining the purpose of the focus group, what was involved and also advising them that their participation was completely voluntary. If they stayed behind after the morning event and turned up for the focus group meeting it was taken that they were doing so in an informed way. They were also reminded in the introductory preamble that their attendance was entirely voluntary and they were free to leave at any time.
The second focus group meeting took place at the end of a pre-arranged half-terminy meeting of a local school development group. These groups are made up of the Headteachers of schools in a local area of the county. This group of school leaders had also received an introductory letter prior to the meeting, explaining the purpose, the process to be followed and advising that participation was entirely voluntary. If a member of this group remained for the focus group session, it was again taken that they were doing so in an informed way. It was therefore decided, on both occasions, that the signing of a consent form was not necessary.

- Participants were all given a sheet headed ‘The Potential Stressors Experienced by Headteachers’ which contained nine bullet point items which the group were informed covered fairly standard questions that would be included in any professional occupational group stress audit e.g. work load, time pressures etc (Appendix D). The group were reassured that the questionnaire that would be sent to Headteachers would include questions on these topics. The reason for doing this was to maximise the use of the time available in focusing the group on additional stressors, which may be peculiar to the occupational group being researched.

- Focus groups were asked to reflect on their own experiences in relation to the following:
  - The potential stressors experienced by Headteachers
  - The coping strategies/supports currently used by Headteachers
  - Additional supports that would help to reduce, or enable the better management of, daily Headteacher stressors.

- Group responses were collated on flip charts. These had been pre-prepared to clearly show the three questions under discussion to help maintain focus during the groups’ deliberations.

- Before the group were asked to address the second question/theme under discussion, ‘the coping strategies/supports currently used by Headteachers’, they were provided with a sheet having this main heading (Appendix E) This
contained eight bullet points, which was used as a prompt for them to shape the discussion, which followed. It was anticipated that the suggested items e.g. exercise, preserving time for important tasks etc. would be the type of strategies/supports being drawn upon. These items had been drawn from prior research literature and from professional knowledge.

- A prompt sheet was not provided at the commencement of discussion on the third question/theme, “additional supports that would help to reduce, or enable the better management of, daily head teacher stressors.”

- At the end of the focus group activity the content collected on flip chart sheets was read back to the respective groups to check for accuracy of recording, for comment or for additional items to be added. This had to be a little hurried when the second focus group took place and so it was agreed that a typed version would be sent to participants for reflection and for any further observations/additions to be offered. This was subsequently sent three working days later. No subsequent comments were received from the group.

- Some fieldwork notes were also made at the end of each session which included observations the facilitator and scribe had made about the strength of feeling behind some the comments that had been made by members within the group.

3.9 Focus group participants

Focus group participants were all experienced Headteachers of varying ages and of mixed gender. The groups contained personnel from small and larger schools, from urban and rural areas and from the Primary and Secondary phases of education. The mixed composition was important so that the issues raised reflected the context of the wider target research population.

The first focus group consisted of the TaMHS pilot schools and came from a predominantly urban area. The focus group was carried out in a rural part of the county with preponderance of Headteachers from small, rural schools. The Headteachers in this School Development Group were representative of Headteachers in many other
parts of the county. This development group was deliberately chosen to be one of the focus groups, because of this feature.

3.10 Analysis of focus group data

The flip chart sheets were typed the following day and then the researcher carried out a mainly thematic analysis to identify the current topics or themes that could be translated into questionnaire items. The annotations on the flip chart sheets after the Focus Group meetings helped in the analysis process because they denoted the consensus in the group (and the strength of feeling) around particular issues reported, and in this sense the analysis drew a little on the content analysis approach. This resulted in ten areas being identified on which questions were devised. These areas included multi-agency working, accessing online information, managing increased teaching commitment, volume of paper work, curriculum changes, Ofsted / HMI inspections, taking an additional responsibility, dealing with difficult parents, the cumulative effect of tasks that have to be accomplished and relationships with governors. An example of an annotated flip chart sheet and a combined condensed summary of the focus group comments is provided in Appendix K.

3.11 Validity issues

Krueger (1994, P.31) argued that:

"Focus groups are very much like other social science measurement procedures in which validity depends not only on the procedures used but also on the context."

The topics under discussion were of inherent interest to focus group members and they engaged in discussion with vigour, and contributions seemed to be heartfelt. This suggested to the researcher that participants were sharing honestly their experiences and perceptions. This, and the fact that participants were a mature professional group, suggested that they were not merely expressing socially desirable responses. Headteachers are also an influential and powerful group within the Local Authority who are not easily intimidated. The group members were also aware that they were involved
in a formative piece of work that would contribute to the stress audit questionnaire that
would be sent to their peers. Motivation therefore was high.

Krueger (1994) also pointed out some of the limitations of focus groups as a data
collection method. The extent to which these apply would clearly depend upon how the
derived data was intended to be used. Limitations would include, the researcher having
less control than in a one to one interview situation, data being more difficult to analyse,
potential difficulties assembling relevant group members and the facilitator having the
necessary skills. Given the characteristics reported above, and given that the facilitator
was an experienced interviewer who had much experience of managing group
discussions, it was not felt that there were significant threats to the validity of data
derived from the focus group exercises. In contrast, it was felt that the information
derived had high face validity and authenticity.

Krueger (1994) described a focus group as ‘a carefully planned discussion’ organised to
obtain participant perceptions on defined areas of interest in a non-threatening and
permissive environment. These were the features operating in the groups convened.

3.12 Questionnaire rationale

The advantage of using an established stress audit questionnaire like the ASSET
questionnaire tool was that it enabled findings to be compared with a national database
of comparable managerial and professional group norms. As discussed below, it also
provided the option of customising the biographical section to fit the target audience and
the flexibility to include additional items relevant to the occupational group being
researched.

An important consideration was also that the questionnaire used did not take too long to
complete. My intent was to be able to advise participants that the questionnaire would
take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

The questionnaire was sent by post, with an accompanying letter, to all Headteachers in
the locality on the 11 October 2010. A stamp-addressed envelope was included for the
return of the questionnaire. All Headteachers had been given prior notification of the
arrival of this questionnaire. This was done via the information contained in the
“Information from The Corporate Director” briefing document sent to all Headteachers
and Chairs of Governing Bodies at the beginning of September 2010 (Appendix A). A separate email letter had also been sent to Headteachers at this time by the researcher (Appendix H). This notification also included a copy of the participant information sheet, so that all Headteachers had background information about the nature of this study (see Appendix C).

The standard ASSET organisational stress screening tool questionnaire template was purchased from Robertson Cooper Limited in May 2010. This was funded through the TaHMS project taking place within the Local Authority. It had been agreed that the research supported a project objective of enhancing the development of emotional health and well-being of pupils and staff in school.

3.13 Selection and development of the stress audit questionnaire

It was felt that an established stress audit questionnaire, with proven reliability and validity, could provide some of the data needed. Clearly, there are many questions that would be contained in most standardised stress audit instruments that would be appropriate for any managerial or professional group. A weakness in using an off the shelf instrument was that it would not reflect any occupational specific features and therefore may lack the necessary sensitivity. A standardised instrument was therefore needed that would allow additional questionnaire items to be included that would reflect the particular participant group being researched, and the current local context within which the target group were operating.

Previous research carried out by Phillips et al (2007), investigating the prevalence and causes of work related stress in Headteachers in West Sussex, had used A Short Stress Evaluation Tool (ASSET), which seemed to have been effective. A sample of this instrument was subsequently requested from Robertson Cooper limited. Some brief case study reports from organisations that had made use of this instrument were also located. This included Chelmsford Borough Council, the City of London Police, Lancashire Constabulary and Somerset County Council. A research study investigating the construct validity of the asset stress measure was also identified (see Johnson, et al, 2003).

The ASSET stress audit instrument (Appendix F) was compared with another well-used instrument, the Occupational Stress Indicator.
Of the two instruments investigated, the ASSET instrument was selected as being the most appropriate, given its flexibility and the fact that less time was needed for its completion, while still having demonstrable reliability and validity. Relevant psychometric properties have been reported (Faragher et al., 2004).

ASSET had been designed as a relatively short screening tool, which could be completed in electronic, or in paper and pencil format. The authors described it as having been designed for use in corporate risk assessment, stress audit work and for individual stress profiling.

The model of stress upon which it has been designed was described by Cartwright and Cooper, (2002). It includes eight sources of pressure and two potential areas of impact. Each of the areas of impact is divided into two sub areas. The sources of pressure include the following:

- Work relationships
- Work life balance
- Overload
- Job Security
- Control
- Resources and Communication
- Aspects of the job
- Pay and benefits

The two main impact areas are organisational commitment and health. Organisational commitment is sub divided into two areas:

- Employee to organisation
- Organisation to employee

The second impact area, Health, is also broken down into two sub areas:

- Physical health
- Psychological health
The purchased ASSET questionnaire was divided into four main sections, which were Biographical, Perceptions of Your Job, Attitudes Towards Your Organisation and Your Health. There was also an open-ended section at the end inviting participants to add anything that had not already been covered in main body of the questionnaire.

The biographical section could be amended to fit with the occupational group being audited although it was advised that the sections headed Perceptions of your job, attitudes to your organisation and your health, should not be amended as this would make it difficult to compare any findings against the national database. The original questionnaire is included in Appendix F, for information.

The questionnaire that was sent to the participants in this study had a number of amendments made to it. Firstly, the biographical section was shortened and made to fit the audit group under study. There were a number of sections in the original questionnaire, which were redundant e.g. which group, or staff do you belong to, which department do you work in? Such questions would clearly be useful if the instrument was being sent in a large organisation having a number of separate departments and where it was necessary to know which staff grouping participant responses were received from so that comparisons between sections could be made eg administrators, technical staff etc. The participant group in this study were more homogenous, although a question was included to identify Primary, Secondary or Special school Headteachers.

There was also a fifth section incorporated into the questionnaire that was finally sent to Headteachers (see Appendix G). This section is headed ‘Additional Sources of Headteacher Stress’ and included questionnaire items derived from the focus group research. This resulted in ten questionnaire items against which participants were invited to indicate the extent to which it resulted in stress for them. Questions related to:

- Multi agency working
- Difficulty accessing online information
- Managing an increased teaching commitment
- Volume of paper work
- Curriculum changes
- Ofsted/HMI Inspections
- Taking an additional responsibility e.g. curriculum lead, SENCo
- Dealing with difficult parents
• The cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished
• Relationships with governors

A five point Likert item was used to gauge participant responses on each of these areas with possible ratings being Never causes stress, Very occasionally causes stress, Occasionally causes stress, Constant source of stress or Not applicable. Participants were also invited to add any additional sources of stress that were not listed but that they felt were relevant. As an example of a typical questionnaire item, the questionnaire to gauge views on accessing online information was in the following form:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never causes stress</th>
<th>Very occasionally causes stress</th>
<th>Occasionally causes stress</th>
<th>Constant source of stress</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty accessing online information</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two additional questions were also included to gauge how stressful participants found being a head teacher generally, and also how stressful they found being a Headteacher during the last six-month period.

A final job satisfaction rating question was also included with participants being asked ‘How often are you satisfied with your job?’ Possible ratings were seldom, occasionally, about half of the time, most of the time or all of the time.

As in the original questionnaire, the final side had an open ended section headed by the following statement 'Is there anything else you would like to add that has not come up already on the questionnaire?' A number of Headteachers took the opportunity to add comments in this section.

The questionnaire items derived from the focus group activity were not piloted on a sample of representative Headteachers. This was because it was felt at they had high face validity as they had been derived from focus group participants who were representative of the participant group to which the final questionnaire was being sent. The questionnaire items were however given to three postdoctoral psychology colleagues and their views sought on whether the questionnaire items were clear and unambiguous. This resulted in one question being amended. This was question nine in the additional sources of head teacher stress section. The question included read as “The cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished". This was
amended from the original, which read as ‘The cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be completed’. It was felt that the word ‘accomplished’ better represented the reality of the nature of many Headteacher tasks, rather than ‘completed’. For example, some tasks have to be accomplished on a regular basis and are therefore not ‘completed.’ For example, being available to parents with concerns, members of staff with issues that may emerge.

Descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used to analyse questionnaire data. If any significant differences were found between different groups I intended to follow appropriate guidelines to check for effect size as proposed by Cohen (1988).

In Chapter 4 – Main Findings and Interpretation, an overall questionnaire response rate of 54% is reported. Increasing this response rate may have been possible by adopting a different strategy. Consideration had been given to requesting time at the local Annual Conference for Headteachers to complete the questionnaire survey. However, attendance at this can be variable and this tends to take place towards the end of a Summer term, which did not co-inside with the timings needed for other parts of the research study.

The provision of an incentive may have increased the response rate. It would have been interesting to have researched what would have been an appropriate incentive. The offer of some consultancy time to advise on carrying out a school based stress audit may have been attractive. However, the costs and practicalities of delivering such an incentive would have been prohibitive.

As noted earlier, a strategic decision had been made not to individually code the questionnaires that were sent out. This was on the advice of Headteacher representatives. If questionnaires had been coded it would have made it possible for the researcher to personalise the email reminders to return the sent questionnaire, or even contact individuals personally by telephone. However, this in itself may have been counter-productive with some Headteachers interpreting this as harassment.

3.14 Set up arrangements for interviews

The original letter that was sent to Headteachers in September 2010 inviting them to participate in the questionnaire stress audit, also mentioned that a second phase of the
research study would include interviews with a representative sample of Primary and Secondary Headteachers. It went on to state that this would be a sample drawn from Headteachers who volunteered to assist with that strand of the research.

On seven of the returned questionnaires Headteachers had added a note that they would be willing to participate in the one to one interviews. Another Headteacher had also made contact to express an interest in being a volunteer interviewee, if provided with further information about what would be involved. Given that the Headteacher volunteers covered a range of different establishments, including Primary and Secondary schools, and schools of varying sizes, it was decided that all eight of the volunteers would be interviewed. It was intended however to use the first interview as a pilot, to check the procedure and timings. It was later decided to include data from this interview in the analysis, as no significant changes were made to the procedure/agreed timings, following this pilot interview. The one change that was made was to change the Dictaphone recording machine being used to 'conference style' recording mode, as this produced better quality than the original setting of 'one to one interview mode'.

All of the volunteer interview participants were then sent an e-mailed individual letter (Appendix I) titled ‘Semi-structured interview – information for participants’. A further copy of the ‘participant information sheet’ (Appendix C) and a copy of the ‘Consent form to participate in an interview’ (Appendix J), which was referred to in the letter was also sent. This was so potential interviewees had sight of this in advance, to assist them in deciding whether they did wish to go ahead with the interview, prior to a date being agreed. It was intended that volunteer Headteachers had all the available information in advance for their consideration prior to formally agreeing to participate in the interview, and so that they were able to give informed consent. The letter concluded by stating that the researcher would contact the Headteacher again shortly to confirm that they were willing to participate, and if so, to agree a convenient time and place for the interview to be conducted. Five of the seven Headteachers who had volunteered via the returned questionnaire responded to this email the same day confirming their willingness to participate. The other two were contacted four days later by telephone to check their willingness. They both also agreed to participate in the interview strand of this research.

The Headteacher who had expressed an interest in being an interviewee when met in another forum was contacted by telephone to check if some further information about the pending interviews could be sent for their consideration and before deciding whether they did indeed wish to participate. This information was again sent electronically.
Agreement was again returned within 24 hours. All interviewees elected to be interviewed at their place of work in their own private rooms.

The interviewees were from schools in the North, Central and Southern areas of the Local authority.

3.15 Interview process

Participants were thanked for their cooperation at the beginning of each interview. They were then briefly reminded of the research being undertaken and any questions they had answered. The intended flow of the interview was also outlined, with reference to the letter that had been sent to them titled ‘Semi-structured interview – information for participants’ (Appendix I). A further copy of this letter was provided for them on the day as a refresher, and also to help signpost the parts of the interview as it progressed. The bullet pointed section of this letter provided a valuable visible prompt on the order of discussion.

The interviewee consent form was talked through prior to the formal interview commencing. All interviewees were happy to accept all of the points on the consent form, including permission being given for an audio recording to be made of the interview.

Participants were asked to reflect on a stressful work related incident that they had to manage within the last three to six months. The points of discussion were then as follows:

- What had occurred? (The matter that they had to deal with)
- What lead up to the incident? (History)
- How the matter had been resolved. (Outcome)
- Whether/How managing the incident had impacted on them. (Effects)
- What helped them manage the situation? (Strategies/Support used or drawn upon)
- Reflections on additional supports that may have helped
Participants had been informed that the interviews were designed to last for approximately 45 minutes, but to allow one hour for the meeting so that there was sufficient time for the introduction, consent form and any questions to be answered.

The interviews were semi-structured in form because it was felt this provided the necessary structure to bring some consistency to the process, as well as the flexibility to follow any lines of interest that emerged. The structure made it easier for the interviewer to use ‘direct and purposeful questioning’ as described by Lincoln & Gubba, (1985).

3.16 Analysis of interview data

A theoretical or deductive thematic analysis approach was taken to the interview data. It was therefore ‘top down’ in the sense that it was very much driven by the researcher’s interest in the area under investigation. An alternative approach would have been to adopt an inductive or ‘bottom up’ approach (see Frith & Gleeson, 2004) and in this sense be more ‘data driven’ than the approach that was adopted, which was clearly ‘analyst driven.’

It could be argued that the approach adopted to interview data analysis was likely to result in a less rich description of the available data. However, a decision was taken that it would better provide answers to the research questions. This was because the intent was to code interview data in relation to the specific research questions, rather than the intent being for the research questions to evolve from the coding process itself.

Analysis was also at the explicit or surface meaning level of the data. The researcher was not looking at a latent or interpretive level, although an attempt was made to interpret the significance of the themes identified and their implications for an emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers.

Four of the recorded interviews were professionally transcribed, as the researcher had found it beneficial in the past to initially use hard copy when at the initial coding stage of analysis. On return, transcribed interviews were checked against the recorded tapes for accuracy.

The qualitative analysis guidelines suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006) were taken as a guide to the analysis process. The following steps therefore took place:
• All of the audio recordings were listened to repeatedly. (Data familiarisation)

• Two of the transcribed interviews were carefully read through twice and interesting features noted. With some initial ideas in mind the further two transcribed interviews were also read through twice and further coding and ideas noted. (Generation of initial codes).

During this stage the researcher was mindful that the codes being used to denote features of interest e.g. having difficulty sleeping at night could turn into potential themes across the whole data set.

• Tapes of the other four interviews were repeatedly listened to and notes made where the identified codes reoccurred. The transcribed interview audio recordings were also listened to repeatedly.

• Data related to the identified codes was collated.

• Identified codes were collated into potential themes. (Theme identification).

• The selected coded extracts of data, relevant to each theme, were assembled. Checks were made to see if the themes and data extracts fitted together.

• Transcriptions were reread and tapes listened to again to check if there was any further data related to the identified themes, as well as to see if any further themes could be identified. (Theme review).

• Further reflection on wording of themes. (Final defining and name of themes).

• Interview questions and related identified themes were collated into a summary table.

This was very much a reiterative process with constant checking and revision of codes, where necessary, until the best interpretation was achieved. The outcome of this process is summarised in section 4.3.9 Critical incident interview by phase, gender and incident.
3.17 Interview data analysis critique

As noted above Braun and Clarke (2006) have provided helpful guidance on how to carry out a thematic analysis in a theoretically and a methodologically sound manor. This included stressing the importance of the researcher detailing the assumptions that were brought to the analysis process. This researcher’s assumptions included the following:

- The ‘data set’ was the transcribed interviews and the complete audio record of the interviews. The researcher was careful not to let prior knowledge of the area influence the analysis process.

- An individual ‘data item’ would be seen as any individual interview.

- A ‘data extract’ would be any selected comment made by an individual interviewee which had been selected to illustrate an identified theme.

- That the interviewees were reporting accurately the circumstances around the incidents chosen.

- That the interviewees awareness that the interviewer was a Local Authority employee and an Educational Psychologist did not influence their comments.

The number of times a topic was raised by different interviewees was taken as an indication of ‘prevalence’ when reviewing the data that had been collated. The importance of a theme, or its ‘keyness” as referred to by Braun and Clarke (2006) was taken as whether the theme captured something that seemed to be particularly important in relation to the research questions being investigated. Clearly, researcher judgement was needed here in deciding what was a key theme. The researcher was guided by the specific research questions in this study. Care was also taken to be consistent in identifying themes, determining their prevalence and deciding upon their importance.
3.18 Methodology critique

Methods of data collection need to be determined by what it is felt to be the most appropriate tools to use in addressing research questions. Different measurement procedures also flow from different conceptualisations of occupational stress.

As psychological appraisal has been demonstrated to be a key component of the stress reaction, gauging perceptions is an important part of a stress audit process. In this regard the use of questionnaires to ascertain the perceptions of a target population has been used extensively in stress related studies and is a theoretically acceptable method to use.

However, while accepting that useful and valid data can be derived from self-report measures there are also clearly some weaknesses with this approach. Problems could arise from inaccurate memories, inaccurate reporting resulting from a desire to provide socially desirable responses, or the demand characteristics of the situation.

There are also clearly considerations to do with questionnaire design related to central tendency bias, ambiguity of question issues etc.

The use of critical incident semi-structured interviews also seemed to be an appropriate method to use in this study to explore the coping strategies and supports used by head teachers when they managed a recent stressful situation, as well as providing an opportunity to gain a richer insight into the type of stressor being managed by Headteachers.

The use of a semi-structured interview approach could have resulted in the interviewer loosing control of the interview situation. However, having pre-determined questions helped to avoid this. The semi-structured approach also enabled issues raised in the interview to be explored in a flexible manner.

In measuring occupational or work related stress, various alternative measures could have been included, such as absenteeism rates or referrals to Occupational Health. Data on absenteeism rates is referred to in the discussion section below.
3.19 Ethical considerations

There was adherence to the professional standards of the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2006), and the Health Professions Council. The approval of Manchester University Ethics committee was secured prior to commencement of this research study. (See Appendix N).

All research participants were informed of the purpose of the research prior to their involvement being requested. Focus group, questionnaire and interview participants were all informed in advance that their participation was voluntary and that it could be terminated at any time. Particular care was taken with this in relation to the focus group participants and the volunteer interviewees. The interviewees were also asked to sign a Consent form before interviews commenced. At all stages caution was exercised to ensure informed consent was secured. All participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality during the research process and in relation to any data being used in this thesis. A procedure was determined in advance about how any distressed participants would be managed (Appendix O).

Questionnaire returns, audio recordings and interview transcripts were carefully coded to ensure the anonymity of participants and these were all kept in a secure, locked filing cabinet.
CHAPTER 4   MAIN FINDINGS

4.1 Overview

This chapter begins with a summary of the sources from which data was drawn in addressing the research questions. This is followed by some comments on how the various data sources related to the research questions and also some assumptions that were made about the data that influenced how it was subsequently analysed. After this there are sections that describe and interpret data derived from the focus group activity, the questionnaire returns and the critical incident interviews. A final section draws together the main findings from the complete data file, in relation to each of the research questions.

The type of data analysis needed and the techniques available to meet these needs were considered at the planning stage of this study, in relation to the research questions being investigated.

The research questions, data sources and type of analysis techniques/ tools used are summarised in Table 1, Chapter 3.3.

Data was available from the three main research activities, which included focus groups, postal stress audit questionnaire and critical incident semi structured interviews. These three different strands of research activity also contributed in different ways to answering the research questions. For example, data was available from all three strands of research activity in addressing the first research question, ‘what are the stressors currently experienced by local authority Headteachers (Primary and Secondary)?’ This contributed to increasing the reliability of the findings because data was drawn from multiple sources and it provided an opportunity for the triangulation of data.

However, the amount of relevant data for each of the research questions, from the various strands of research activity, varied considerably. For example, the postal questionnaire provided the majority of the data relevant to answering research question two, "what are the stressors experienced by different types of Headteacher (male/female, Primary/Secondary, large/medium/small school Headteachers)?"
The focus groups were mainly made up of primary phase Headteachers and the individual interviews consisted of three male and five female Headteachers. The make up of the TaMHS pilot school Headteachers and the SDG Headteachers (that formed the two focus groups), and the small sample of available volunteer interviewee Headteachers, did not make it possible to accurately balance for type of school or gender. A pragmatic decision had been made at the design stage of the study to use existing, established groups as the focus groups for this study. It was also decided to use the seven Headteachers that commented on their returned questionnaires that they would be willing to be volunteer interviewees. A further Headteacher who expressed interest and was provided with further information, was also included. This was because it transpired that this sample fairly well represented the study population. That is, the sample included Headteachers from the Primary and Secondary phase, different sized schools and included male and female Headteachers.

A consideration in analysing the questionnaire returns was the type of questions and scales that I had included, and the amount of data I had available for each of the variables that were to be considered. One limiting factor that became known at the initial checking of returned questionnaires was the high number of Headteachers that had chosen not to provide information on the number on role at their school. This may have been to preserve anonymity. However, there was no reluctance to answer questions related to gender, phase of school or age band. It was therefore not possible to consistently determine if respondents were from small, medium or large schools.

It was also necessary to make certain assumptions about the data that I had and upon which statistical techniques were going to be used. Firstly an assumption was made that the participants in the study were largely representative of the Headteacher population within the county and that they were not a self-selecting sample. (See Table 4 Respondents and total populations by phase and gender).

A further assumption was that if I had received returns from the total population in the county the distribution of scores would have been largely normal. I was therefore assuming that any variances, in the statistical sense, were evenly spread throughout the data. In other words, I was assuming homogeneity. This could have been an erroneous assumption, but I proceeded with this and decided to use parametric techniques. My reading around this topic suggested that these techniques would tolerate possible minor violations of guiding assumptions, particularly if there was a reasonable sample size. (Cooligan, 2009).
There are different views on whether Likert items can be seen as producing interval – level data or whether they should be seen as producing categorical data (Jamieson, 2004 and Norman, 2010). The issue hinges on whether data derived from Likert item scales can be interpreted as being ordinal in nature. In this research, an assumption was made that the distance between successive Likert items was equidistant. Therefore, taking one of the Likert items as an example, Question 1 from the questionnaire was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I work longer hours than I choose or want to</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘distance’ between Strongly Disagree and Disagree was seen as being the same as the ‘distance’ between Agree and Strongly Agree. There were three values towards the Disagree side of the scale and three values towards the Agree side of the scale. This therefore provided symmetry in that there were three values arguably less than a hypothetical neutral position and three values above a hypothetical neutral position. It was also assumed that the different points on the scale had clearly defined qualifying labels.

Accepting that the scales used had symmetric and equidistant properties, and therefore provided a good approximation to the characteristics of an interval level measurement, parametric tests were used to analyse the data.

The data derived from the different research activities, how this was analysed and the interpretation of this data, is presented in turn. A concluding section attempts to draw together and summarise the overarching themes arising from the complete data file.

4.2 Analysis and interpretation of focus group data

My intention was to identify up to ten additional questions from the focus group data that would strengthen the postal stress audit questionnaire by increasing its face validity for this particular occupational group.

As noted earlier, the comments by focus group participants were captured on a flip chart and these notes were then typed for analysis.
The three questions addressed by focus group participants were analysed in turn. The first question ‘What are the stressors currently experienced by local authority Headteachers?’ was intended to identify stressors, additional to those that would be included in the questionnaire anyway. The time was being used to identify any local context stressors that I needed to be aware of. All participants had been given a sheet titled ‘The Potential Stressors Experienced by Headteachers’ showing the type of stressor that would be enquired about in most standardised stress audit instrument, and which it was intended to have in the questionnaire that would be sent to them on a future occasion. The potential stressors that they could take as given included:

- Amount of work
- Time pressures
- Dealing with difficult people
- Having to work long hours
- Insufficient control over some aspects of the job
- Work interfering with home life / personal life
- Not receiving the support from others that you would like (governors / colleagues)
- Insufficient resources (material)
- Insufficient resources (human)

I approached data analysis in a consistent and meaningful way. I sought data that was relevant to the research questions, which were kept in mind during the process of content analysis. The research questions therefore guided my approach to analysis and were therefore used as a priori codes. The typed recording sheets were repeatedly read through to check and to accommodate emerging codes. Some of the information was not relevant and was placed in a not needed category. This was checked again at the end of the process to ensure that nothing relevant had been missed.

I defined my recording unit as relevant words or phrases, being careful to note any words which could have had multiple or ambiguous meanings. This did not transpire and so analysis was possible at the manifest level. This was probably because the context for participants in each of the Focus Groups was clear and explicit and they were addressing specifically posed questions. Similar topics were reported in each of the focus groups and this strengthened the reliability of the findings. Also, given that the focus group participants were representatives of the wider Headteacher population for
which the questionnaire was being designed, I felt that their comments had high face validity.

A combined condensed summary of the comments made by participants in the two focus groups is included as Appendix K along with a photograph of one of the flip chart sheets showing some of my post Focus Group annotations.

When analysing captured participant responses to the first question posed (What are the stressors currently experienced by Local Authority Headteachers?), some of the statements made were very clear and explicit eg in relation to Ofsted. Some concerns raised therefore translated easily into possible questionnaire items. Other comments that were made seemed to be centralised around a general theme, which was also reflected in a questionnaire item. For example, comments around ‘endless form filling’, were indicative of concern expressed about the volume of paperwork that had to be managed eg:

"Was constantly filling in endless forms."

"Endless form filling."

"Paperwork / deadlines etc."

A questionnaire item was therefore included on this theme.

The flip chart sheets had also been annotated shortly after the meetings from my field notes and from memory (Appendix K). This was to denote the degree of consensus / strength of feeling from the group on particular topics raised. For example, Ofsted featured prominently:

"Headteachers must deal with the Ofsted inspection which is felt to be ultra critical and always results led."

"The inspection is always hanging over the Head, and the school’s future rests on a positive report."

The need to include an item in the questionnaire on Ofsted was therefore obvious.
There were also a number of comments made about the demands of multi-agency working, difficulty accessing online information, curriculum changes, dealing with difficult parents and relationships with governors. Questionnaire items were therefore included on these topics.

I also inferred from comments made that a general issue was the sheer number of jobs that Headteachers had to undertake. Comments reflecting this issue were therefore collapsed into a general theme that was reflected in the questionnaire item:

‘The cumulative effect of the number of tasks that had to be accomplished’

(see questionnaire section headed ‘Additional Sources of Headteacher Stress’, Question 9).

This theme was derived from comments which included the following:

“Sheer volume – cumulative effect – rather than individual factors.”

“Feeling that you have never cleared the workload – constant.”

The difficulty of being a teaching Headteacher or of having multiple responsibilities, also emerged as a theme derived from and exemplified by comments such as:

“Headteachers need to fulfil multiple roles within their schools teachers : managers : secretaries. They must be ‘Jack of all Trades’.”

“It is difficult to teach and be a Head at the same time.”

“Secondary Headteacher has to teach – a 50% teaching commitment.”

These comments were collapsed into a theme that seemed to capture the multiple additional responsibilities of Headteachers reflected in a questionnaire item of ‘Taking on Additional Responsibility eg Curriculum Lead, SENCo’. (See questionnaire section headed ‘Additional Sources of Headteacher Stress’, Question 7).

When completed, analysis and interpretation of the focus group data resulted in ten main stressors being identified which were subsequently incorporated into the postal stress
audit questionnaire. These stressors were volume of paperwork, the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished, Ofsted / HMI inspections, taking an additional responsibility, difficulty accessing online information, curriculum changes, managing an increased teaching commitment, dealing with difficult parents, multi-agency working and relationships with governors.

A number of conversations with other Headteachers who were not part of the focus group meetings, but the researcher had the opportunity to talk with at the planning phase of the study, echoed all of the concerns expressed by the focus group participants. This was not a formal part of the data collection strategy but merely an opportunistic way to reflect back on the authenticity of the findings that had emerged from the formal research data collection strategy.

The second question posed for the focus group participants was ‘What strategies / supports are used by Headteachers to manage stress and how effective are they?’ Participants were again provided with a prompt sheet headed ‘The coping strategies / supports currently used by Headteachers’ to help shape their thinking when addressing this question. The suggestions on this sheet included:

- Exercise
- Preserving time for important tasks
- Peer support
- LA personnel (advice / guidance)
- Family support
- Chair of Governors
- Staff deployment
- Other

Their suggestions included the following:

- The support of other Headteachers – this was highly valued
- Delegation – reported as being useful in easing some of the strain
- Dedicated headship time – when it could be secured was highly valued
- The Deputy Head – referred to as being crucial in alleviating stress and strain
- Administrative support – described as being extremely useful and highly valued
The final question posed to the focus group participants was ‘What additional support would reduce Headteacher stress or assist them in managing stress more effectively?’

No prompt sheet was given to participants prior to them addressing this question. Comments made in response to this question were collapsed under three main themes:

- In-school factors
- Local Authority factors
- Personal factors

In relation to in-school factors the main concern was that it was not always possible to secure guaranteed Headship time encapsulated in the comment:

“The Head needs to have time designated to catching up with work, telephone calls etc.”

Changes at the Local Authority level included the following:

- The operation of the school improvement partner, with a consensus feeling that the role provided more challenge than support:

  “SIPs need to be much less number oriented. Some are just number-crunchers which is similar to Ofsted. It has become too much about data. This needs to be addressed and changed.”

- More strategic support as illustrated in the following comments:

  “The induction of Headteachers leaves a lot to be desired. New Heads are left to work things out for themselves with minimal support. Heads feel that they are forever playing catch-up with the old system that was in place before the new one instigated. This must be addressed.”

  “Advisers from the LA used to know the school; they now have no knowledge, understanding or appreciation for the school ethos or school staff.”
“There are not enough key, recognisable people in the LA anymore. Now you are forever being redirected to different services.”

“There is a need for key people in the Authority, who know the school and have a relationship with it. There is concern about losing key people in the Authority due to cuts and retirement, so the LA needs to replenish those valued members of staff.”

- Difficulties accessing information from the local Intranet. There were strong feelings expressed about this matter. The following comments encapsulate the strength of feeling:

  “The virtual learning environment is another administrative nightmare. Heads are forced to use the Gateway. This is stressful and a waste of time. Computer networks seem incompatible and frequently crash, school staff cannot access the system at home. This must be improved and revised.”

  “The Local Authority online Directory is impossible to navigate. All the online material provided by the Local Authority is difficult to access and the whole system needs an overall.”

Personal factors were about managing the demands of the job generally and were linked to being able to decide what is essential / important. When this matter was discussed reference was made back to the vast number of tasks that Headteachers were required to complete.

4.3 Demographics, analysis and interpretation of questionnaire data

Details of the make-up of the occupational population is detailed below followed by sections on the analysis and interpretation of questionnaire and interview data.

Descriptive statistics were first used to make sense of the questionnaire data. Differential statistics were then later used to see if there were any significant differences between the different groups that made up the returned questionnaire sample.
Table 2 below shows the composition of the returned questionnaires by gender and phase. The figures in brackets show the total population in each phase.

Table 2 Composition of questionnaire returns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Special</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>71 (133)</td>
<td>13 (22)</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
<td>86 (158)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 below shows the number of Headteachers in post during the audit period including the number of female and male Headteachers. The third column shows the percentage of Headteachers who returned a questionnaire in total by gender. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Two further, spoilt questionnaires, were also returned. These are not shown in this table.

The overall questionnaire response rate of 54% was very good, given what could normally be expected from postal questionnaires with response rates often being around 30%. (The University of Texas at Austin, 2011). There was a greater percentage return rate from female than male Headteachers.

Table 3 Number of mainstream Headteachers in post during the questionnaire audit period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number in post</th>
<th>Number responding</th>
<th>% response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>155 *</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NB Headteachers of Special Provision (3) not included

Analysis was also carried out to identify the response rates from the Primary and Secondary phases, and in relation to gender. This information is summarised in Table 4.
Table 4  Respondents and total populations by phase and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>22 (50)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>49 (83)</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>71 (133)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>9 (13)</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>4 (9)</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>13 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31 (63)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53 (92)</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>84 (155)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB  Numbers in parenthesis indicate the total populations in each category eg 9 out of 13 possible male secondary Headteachers returned a questionnaire.

Table 4, shows that there was a higher male response rate in the Secondary phase than in the Primary phase. By contrast, there was a better response from Primary female Headteachers than Secondary female Headteachers. However, as can be seen in Table 2, the overall response rate from the Primary phase was 53%. The overall response from the Secondary phase was 59%. It was felt that these overall response rates would make it possible to make some tentative generalisations about the lives of Headteachers in the Primary and Secondary phases.

There were 30 Headteachers absent during the questionnaire audit period. Information provided by the Human Resources department indicated that, by phase, this totalled 70 days absence in the Primary school phase and 59 days absence in the Secondary school phase. There were no absences recorded in the Special school phase during this period.

4.3.1 Questionnaire structure

The ASSET audit tool was designed to measure two main impact areas. These are organisational commitment and health. These two areas are each subdivided into two further component areas.

Organisational commitment is subdivided into:

- Employee to organisation
- Organisation to employee
Health is subdivided into:

- Physical health
- Psychological health

An additional section was also incorporated into this questionnaire entitled ‘Additional sources of Headteacher stress’ which had ten questions derived from the focus group activity referred to above.

Three further questions were included in this section. These were to gauge how stressful participants found being a Headteacher generally, how stressful they had found being a Headteacher during the previous six months, and an overall job satisfaction question.

The findings from the analysis of the questionnaire items relevant to the above areas are reported in turn.

4.3.2 Findings on organisational commitment

Primary and Secondary Headteachers both had a generally positive attitude towards their organisation and perceived themselves as being positively regarded by their organisations. High commitment operated in both directions.

In relation to the commitment of the Headteacher to the organisation by phase, this was slightly stronger for Secondary school Headteachers (Mean = 22.7 and Standard Deviation = 1.64) than Primary Headteachers (Mean = 21.25 and Standard Deviation = 2.34).

There was very little difference between perceived commitment of the organisation to employees by phase. Perception was slightly more positive by Primary Headteachers (Mean = 25.69 and Standard Deviation = 2.68) in comparison to their Secondary colleagues (Mean = 25.12 and Standard Deviation = 3.81). Higher mean scores on this measure indicated higher commitment. Differences were not statistically significant.
4.3.3 Headteacher health

Compared to other managerial and professional groups, Secondary Headteacher questionnaire returns indicated that physical and psychological well-being was in line with comparable managerial and professional group norms, as well as 2005 general school norms (ASSET data base).

Reported physical health of Primary school Headteachers was slightly worse than comparable managerial and professional group norms (and 2005 school related norms) although still technically within the ‘normal’ range. Six items made up this scale. The range of possible scores was from 6 (minimum) to 24 (maximum). A higher mean score indicates inferior physical health ie a mean score of 12 would indicate inferior health to a mean score of 8.

Primary school Headteachers' psychological well-being was in line with comparable managerial and professional group norms, as well as the 2005 comparable school norms. Eleven items made up this scale. The range of possible scores was from 11 (minimum) to 44 (maximum). A higher mean score indicated inferior psychological well-being. That is, a mean score of 28 would indicate inferior well-being than a mean score of 19. The tables below provide a breakdown of physical health and psychological well-being by phase and gender.

Table 5 Physical health by phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary or Secondary</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL HEALTH</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>15.0286</td>
<td>3.76856</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY PHASE</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.5385</td>
<td>3.45484</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 5 Primary Headteachers (Mean = 15.02) appeared to be reporting inferior physical health than Secondary Headteachers (Mean = 13.53).

In Table 6 Female Headteachers (Mean = 15.38) appeared to be reporting worse physical health than male Headteachers (Mean = 13.80). Neither difference was
however statistically significant at the 0.5 level of probability. Findings did not therefore indicate an overall difference attributable to phase or gender.

Table 6  Physical health by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male or Female</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL HEALTH BY GENDER</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13.8065</td>
<td>3.97005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>15.3846</td>
<td>3.50436</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 shows that Female Headteachers (Mean = 25.38) reported inferior psychological health than did male Headteachers (Mean = 23.90) but this difference was not statistically significant. Neither was there a statistically significant difference in relation to psychological health by phase (see Table 8).

Table 7  Psychological health by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male or Female</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH BY GENDER</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>23.9032</td>
<td>7.29088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>25.3846</td>
<td>6.12342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8  Psychological health by phase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary or Secondary</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH BY PHASE</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>24.9714</td>
<td>6.73940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24.0769</td>
<td>5.82325</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.4 Other questionnaire findings

Analysis of other questionnaire items, against ASSET managerial and professional group norms indicated the following in relation to Secondary school Headteachers:

- They had a worse work / life balance with 69% responding to the question ‘My work interferes with my home and personal life’ as Agree / Strongly Agree.
• They experienced high degrees of ‘Overload’.

• They experienced better work relationships.

• They had a more positive attitude towards their organisation and perceive their organisation as being more positive towards themselves. High commitment operated in both directions.

• They perceived themselves as having more ‘Control’.

Analysis of questionnaire responses related to other aspects of the job for Secondary Headteachers (job security, pay and benefits, resources and communication) indicated that Headteacher perceptions were comparable to other managerial and professional groups and the 2005 school norms ie neither positive nor negative.

Primary phase mean Headteacher responses indicated the following:

• Collectively as a group work / life balance just within the average range. Many Headteachers indicated an inferior work / life balance with 62% responding to the question ‘My work interferes with my home and personal life as Agree / Strongly Agree.

• Experience of ‘Overload’ at the higher end of the average range.

• Experience average work relationships.

• In line with Secondary colleagues, had a generally positive attitude towards their organisation and perceive their organisation as being positive towards themselves. High commitment operated in both directions.

• Perceived ‘Control’ within the average range.

Analysis of questionnaire responses related to other aspects of their job (job security, pay and benefits, resources and communication) indicated that Primary Headteacher perceptions were comparable to other managerial and professional groups as well as the 2005 school norms ie neither positive or negative.
4.3.5 Additional sources of Headteacher stress

The responses of Headteachers to the additional sources of stress, derived from the focus group activity are summarised in the tables below. Table 9 shows the activities that were rated as being constant sources of stress by Primary and Secondary Headteachers. Table 10 shows the percentage of Primary Headteachers reporting activities that occasionally cause stress and Table 11 shows the percentage of Secondary Headteachers reporting activities that occasionally cause stress. The responses largely mirrored comments made by Headteachers in the focus group meetings.

There were some interesting similarities and differences between the responses between primary and Secondary school Headteachers. The highest three areas reported as being a ‘constant source of stress’ were common, being the volume of paperwork, OFSTED / HMI inspections and the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished. Managing the volume of paperwork seemed to be a bigger issue in the primary phase than in the secondary phase. Ofsted/ HMI inspections were also bigger stressors in the primary phase than in the secondary phase with a similar strength of feeling about the ‘cumulative effect of the number of tasks that had to be accomplished’.

Taking an additional responsibility such as Curriculum Lead / SENCo also seemed to be a more significant issue for Primary Headteachers. This is perhaps not surprising, given the relatively large number of smaller schools in the locality researched where members of the teaching team, including Headteachers, are usually required to take on a number of curriculum lead roles.

Given their context, it was not surprising that many Primary Headteachers identified ‘Managing an increased teaching commitment’ as a high stressor, with 27% saying that it was a constant source of stress. Of interest, is the 69% of Secondary Headteachers who also said that managing an increased teaching commitment occasionally caused stress. This is likely to reflect staffing shortages or budgetary issues.

While the individual ratings are of interest in themselves, perhaps more concerning is that every single item was rated as a ‘constant source of stress’ by some Primary Headteachers, and apart from ‘relationship with governors’, had high percentage ratings.
Difficulty accessing online information was a higher stressor for Primary Headteachers than for Secondary Headteachers, although in combination with the Secondary Headteacher rating of 57% reporting that it occasionally caused stress, suggested that this is an area that needed to be investigated by the Local Authority.

Table 9  Additional constant sources of stress reported by Primary and Secondary Headteachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Constant source of stress - Primary</th>
<th>Constant source of stress - Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volume of paperwork</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ofsted / HMI inspections</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking an additional responsibility eg curriculum lead, SENCo</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty accessing online information</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum changes</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing an increased teaching commitment</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with difficult parents</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-agency working</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with governors</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10  Percentage of Primary Headteachers reporting activities that occasionally cause stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Occasionally causes stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with difficult parents</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty accessing online information</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with governors</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing an increased teaching commitment</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11  Percentage of Secondary Headteachers reporting activities that occasionally cause stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Occasionally causes stress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with difficult parents</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum changes</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing an increased teaching commitment</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty accessing online information</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-agency working</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with governors</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking an additional responsibility eg curriculum lead, SENCo</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.6  How stressful the job is generally

In general, 45% of primary Headteachers and 54% of Secondary Headteachers found being a Headteacher ‘Very / Extremely Stressful’. In general, a further 41% of Primary Headteachers and 38% of Secondary Headteachers found being a Headteacher ‘Moderately Stressful’.

It appears from the Table 12 below that female Headteachers found the job more stressful (Mean = 3.49) than male Headteachers (Mean = 3.37). This difference was not
however statistically significant \((t = -0.639, df = 79, p = 0.524, 2\text{ tailed})\). This means that there was no overall difference attributable to gender.

**Table 12  How stressful the job is generally by gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male or Female</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, how</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>0.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stressful do you find</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>0.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being a Headteacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When analysed by phase (Table 13) Secondary Headteachers reported finding the job generally more stressful \((\text{Mean} = 3.67)\) than Primary Headteachers \((\text{Mean} = 3.41)\). This difference was not however statistically significant \((t = -0.9987, df = 79, p = 0.322, 2\text{ tailed})\). This meant that there was no overall difference attributable to phase.

**Table 13  How stressful the job is generally by phase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary or Secondary</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In general, how</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>0.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stressful do you find</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>0.651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being a Headteacher?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.7 How stressful the job had been during the previous six months (approximate period between May to October 2010)

56% of Primary Headteachers and 62% of Secondary Headteachers reported having found being a Headteacher (Very Stressful or Extremely Stressful) during the previous six month period. A further 28% of Primary Headteachers, and 23% of Secondary Headteachers, reported that they had found being a Headteacher ‘Moderately Stressful’ during the previous six month period. The survey was carried out during October and November 2010 and so the time period being considered by Headteachers covered the second part of the Summer Term 2010 and the first part of the Autumn Term 2010.

As can be seen in Table 14, female Headteachers appeared to be reporting higher stress levels during the previous six month period \((\text{Mean} = 3.67)\) than did male Headteachers \((\text{Mean} = 3.50)\).
As can be seen in Table 15 Secondary Headteachers also appeared to be reporting higher stress levels than Primary colleagues.

These differences were relatively small and not statistically significant. Gender or phase were not therefore important factors on the levels of reported stress during the previous six month period.

**Table 14  How stressful the job has been in the last six months by gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male or Female</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How stressful have you found being a Headteacher during the last 6 months?</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>.974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>.879</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 15  How stressful the job has been in the last six months by phase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary or Secondary</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How stressful have you found being a Headteacher during the last 6 months?</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.896</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>1.032</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.3.8  Job satisfaction rating**

54% of Primary Headteachers, and 69% of Secondary Headteachers were satisfied with their job ‘most of the time’.

A further 30% of Primary Headteachers, and 23% of Secondary Headteachers, were satisfied with their job ‘about half of the time’.

**Table 16  How satisfied with the job by phase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary or Secondary</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often are you satisfied with your job?</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>.555</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Statistical analysis did not indicate any overall difference in job satisfaction by phase. It does however seem interesting that Secondary Headteachers appeared to be more satisfied than Primary Headteachers. This could be due to the greater number of additional sources of stress reported as being a constant source of stress by Primary Headteachers, as shown in Table 9. Multi-agency working (20%), Dealing with difficult parents (26%), Curriculum changes (30%), Difficulty accessing online information (32%), Taking an additional responsibility (38%), Managing an increased teaching commitment (27%), Ofsted/ HMI inspections (63%), The cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished (70%) and the Volume of paperwork (80%) were reported by a large number of Primary Headteachers. These additional demanding aspects of the job, could, in combination, be resulting in diminished perceptions of job satisfaction.

It was perhaps surprising that these additional activities that were identified as being constant sources of stress by a large proportion of Primary Headteachers were not reflected in Primary Headteachers reporting a higher degree of overload than Secondary Headteachers. However, analysis did not indicate that there was any statistically significant difference in relation to these variables, by gender, or phase. However, although not statistically significant, the lower rate of job satisfaction reported by Primary Headteachers may, never the less, be meaningful and be reflected in the difficulty recruiting to Primary Headteacher posts.

It also appeared from the Table 17 below that male Headteachers (Mean = 3.68) experienced greater job satisfaction than female Headteachers (Mean = 3.47). This difference was not however statistically significant and there was no overall job satisfaction difference that could be attributable to gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often are you satisfied with your job?</th>
<th>Male or Female</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.791</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>.723</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.9 Critical incident interviewee by phase, gender and incident

The Headteachers who had agreed verbally to be volunteer interviewees were subsequently sent a formal letter thanking them for volunteering and providing them with
a further copy of the ‘Participation Information Sheet’ providing a general overview of the research study (Appendix I). These Headteacher interviewees were therefore a self-selecting, opportunistic sample.

The letter to interviewee participants explained that the purpose of the interviews was to gain greater insight into the sources of stress experienced by Headteachers, as well as the strategies / supports that they drew upon in managing stressful episodes. The interview process was also described. That is, they would firstly be asked to reflect back upon a stressful work related incident that they had to manage within the last 3-6 months. The questions around which the interview would be structured were also contained in this letter, and were as follows:

- What had occurred (the matter you had to deal with)
- What led up to the incident (history)
- How the matter was resolved (outcome)
- Whether/how managing the incident had impacted on you (effects)
- What helped you manage the situation (strategies/supports used or drawn upon)
- Reflections on additional supports that may have helped

The pre-interview letter that was sent to Headteachers provided an opportunity for them to prepare for the interviews. It also helped to ensure that they were giving informed consent when they signed the interview consent form on the day.

While the six interview questions provided the consistent structure within the semi-structured interview process, they also provided a framework for the first stage of the analysis process.

A number of the Headteachers reported that they could have selected more than one significant stressful incident that they had had to manage during the last 3-6 months. The ones actually chosen are contained in Table 18 below, as is other relevant information.
Table 18  Critical incident interviewee by phase, gender and incident

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Phase (Primary/Secondary)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Stressful Incident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Significant staff restructuring to fit available budget.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Managing a curriculum complaint by a parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Managing prolonged staff absences (teachers).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Managing prolonged staff absence (admin/clerical).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Managing prolonged staff absence (teacher).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Including a child having significant SEN (managing staff/parental expectations).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Preparing staff and pupils for the pending death of the mother of a pupil.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Implementing action plan targets post Ofsted inspection/prior to re-inspection.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Common features (themes) emerging from the interviews were as follows:

- All of the chosen stressors needed to be managed for a period of time and in this sense had an ‘enduring’ or a chronic quality about them. For example, the preparation for the death of the mother of a child extended over a three-year period. This parent was well known to the community and the school was a local community school. The school’s response (preparation for and management after the event) were therefore very visible by a large number of people, as was by definition, the Headteacher’s handling of the situation.

The staff absences reported, were also up to a year and in some cases ongoing at the time of the interviews. The significant restructuring due to budget reduction was also being managed for over a twelve-month period.

- The majority of the incidents reported had not been completely resolved, the majority being ongoing, and requiring continued management. In some circumstances, the most challenging part of the matter had been dealt with but the consequences required continued management. For example, a new staffing structure was in place where the incident reported had required significant structural changes as a result of a reduced budget. However, an outcome of this
had been staff taking on additional duties / new ways of working etc. There was also some ongoing involvement with staff that had been made redundant.

There were two overarching themes that emerged from the interviews in relation to the impact, or effects, that managing the reported incidents had had on the Headteachers. There had been an impact on the relationships (personal / professional) and on health.

- In terms of relationships, in all examples provided, it had been necessary to invest time and energy into maintaining positive and productive relationships with members of staff. This was because in all cases decisions being made had an impact on staff generally, and so it was important to keep them ‘on board’. Diplomacy, tact and the expenditure of a high degree of emotional labour all seemed to be personal resources that needed to be drawn upon. A number of Headteachers also reported that their personal relationships had been affected, mainly because of the additional time needed to manage the incidents that they had to deal with eg less time being available to contribute to managing family issues.

  ‘My daughter – I used to do a lot of things – commented “You’ve stopped doing some things with me – you don’t do that anymore” and that really hurts you know’.

  ‘Contacts with my family were vastly reduced you know and there were times when I was adding it up and I was doing 80 hour weeks you know ridiculous amount of time’.

  ‘My family were fully understanding of the issues but you know it still has an effect on you – because you’re immensely tired and so whereas before – I used to do quite a bit of walking, all that disappeared, I’ve not got that back either. And that worries me’.

- In terms of health, six out of eight of the interviewees made comments about the effects on their personal health. Some referred to weight gain or loss of fitness due to a lack of opportunity to pursue exercise / recreational activities. Sleep disturbance, affecting performance, was also commonly reported.
‘Definitely I mean I would say that my health suffered – I certainly put weight on my doctor said at one point that he was worried about my blood pressure – things like that I’ve never had before – you know never experienced at all in my life’.

‘In the middle of this process I found myself short tempered and I mean again I’m a very calm person I never, also found myself not sleeping so I would be wide awake in the middle of the night having to write down some things that I was going to have to do next day’.

‘I suppose when you get the letters and then you have sleepless nights – you know you wake up in the middle I mean I wake up virtually every single night – I certainly wake up every single night thinking about school – and then I’m awake for about 2 hours thinking things through about what I need to do – yeah. But I kind of I do that on a very regular basis. I can’t remember the last time I had a full night’s sleep really can’t’.

‘My best thinking time is 5 o’clock in the morning – last night woke up at 3 so got up, had a cup of tea, and wrote a number of letters’.

‘I got myself into a very low ebb – I was wondering whether I should go and see the GP because I knew I was very anxious – I knew I was very very anxious – I don’t know what could have helped really’.

‘I think that the knock on effect of not sleeping well is that I’m tired so then I’m ratty and then I lose my temper quickly and I don’t lose my temper very often but sometimes I can be quite abrupt I know that that’s a weakness.’

There was some commonality on the strategies / supports drawn upon by the interviewees. These included fellow Headteachers, professional associations / unions, colleagues in schools and depending upon the issue, local authority personnel. Four out of eight of the interviewees also referred to the importance of family and friends who were supportive and / or helped them to maintain perspective.
‘I got some support from the actual Headteacher Network that we have in …..shire so other heads were really very you know very accommodating you know as I say they sort of mentor you don’t they? And they’re there at the end of the ‘phone if you need to just run something by someone’.

‘And then my Union obviously gave me any support that I requested they were very good’.

‘I think also my School Improvement Partner who is from the Local Authority he serviced that role as well’.

‘We rely quite heavily on other Headteachers’.

‘I hardly ever use the Union (NAHT) – to be honest a lot of support is through other colleagues’.

No consistent theme emerged from the Headteacher reflections on additional supports that they may have found beneficial, other than those that they drew upon. One Headteacher recollected the value of the Area Education Officer that was a key part of an earlier Local Authority organisational structure.

‘Area Educational Officers – oh they were fantastic – my saviour – no they were wonderful – if you had any problem – building, personnel – they told you that you just need to do this – with parents – you just spoke to them and they pointed you in the right direction – a lot of value – we miss that role – you just had to pick up the ‘phone and say – no they were fantastic’.

In contrast, one Headteacher who did not have a strong opinion of support currently provided by their School Improvement Partner, commented that in relation to the future development of supports for Headteachers that:

‘I think Heads will prefer to be able to set up their own systems’.
In relation to the future role of the local authority, all Headteachers seemed to have a realistic perspective on the diminishing role of the local authority in relation to general support for schools, as a result of the unprecedented restructuring that was taking place, due to reduced local authority budgets.

4.3.10 Summary of main findings from the complete data file

This research had four broad aims that were to:

- Identify and measure sources of stress experienced by Local Authority Headteachers (primary and secondary).

- Identify current coping strategies / supports used by Headteachers to manage stress.

- Identify what additional supports would help to reduce, or enable, better management of daily Headteacher stressors.

- Use information derived from the contextualised stress audit to make recommendations on the content of a Local Authority Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers.

The first three aims were translated into four specific research questions which will now be addressed in turn on the basis of the research findings.

Research Question 1  What are the stressors currently experienced by Local Authority Headteachers (primary and secondary)?

As described in Chapter 3, Methodology, analysis and interpretation of the focus group data highlighted ten sources of stress that were turned into additional items for the postal stress audit questionnaire (see Section 3.10). These areas included multi-agency working, accessing online information, managing increased teaching commitment, volume of paperwork, curriculum changes, Ofsted / HMI inspections, taking on additional responsibilities, dealing with difficult parents, the accumulative effect of tasks that had to be accomplished and relationships with governors.
Analysis of questionnaire returns indicated that all of the areas were constant sources of stress for some Primary Headteachers, and in all cases, apart from ‘relationships with governors’ (8% reported) were rated as being constant sources of stress by between 20% and 80% of Primary Headteachers.

The top three constant sources of stress (volume of paperwork at 80%, the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished at 70% and Ofsted / HMI inspections at 63%) were rated by very large percentages of Primary Headteachers as constant sources of stress.

A further 28% of Primary Headteachers reported that the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that had to be accomplished occasionally caused stress. Taking the two ratings together, this indicated that 98% of Primary Headteachers were finding this aspect of the job stressful at some time. This is perhaps not surprising given that over a quarter (27%) of the respondents reported that managing an increased teaching commitment was a ‘constant source of stress’ and a further 23% reported this area as occasionally causing stress.

There is however a difficulty in interpreting what different respondents may mean by the term ‘occasionally’. In hindsight, it would have been useful to have provided some guidance to respondents in using this descriptor or requesting that respondents provided some quantification of what is meant to them, when using this descriptor. This weakness also applies to the other descriptors. Of the five possible options available (never causes stress, very occasionally causes stress, occasionally causes stress, constant source of stress, not applicable) the easiest to interpret is arguably the descriptor ‘constant source of stress’, if it is being used accurately.

Dealing with difficult parents was rated as a constant source of stress by 26% of Primary Headteachers, with a further 55% reporting this aspect of the job as occasionally causing stress. Taken together, this highlights an aspect of the job that will require well developed emotion regulation ability or a high expenditure of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). As noted earlier (Chapter 2, Review of Key Literature) jobs requiring high levels of emotional labour are potentially stressful.

There were strong feelings expressed in the focus group meetings about the difficulties of accessing online information. There was evidence of this in the questionnaire returns
with 32% of Primary Headteachers reporting that this was a constant source of stress with a further 54% reporting that this occasionally caused stress. Therefore, given that combined 86% of Primary Headteachers are identifying this as an area of pressure, it will need to be addressed by the Local Authority. This is particularly important as that, in line with other organisational practice, there has been a trend in recent years for the majority of information to be communicated through this medium. Further opportunistic discussions with Headteachers about where the problems lay suggested that there were difficulties with correct passwords not always enabling access to the site, the system being unavailable / crashing and difficulties efficiently locating information on the site. These opportunistic discussions were possible through the researcher's work as a Local Authority Educational Psychologist and were not part of the formal methodology for this study.

Secondary school Headteachers reported the same top three constant sources of stress, although in a different order eg the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished (62%), the volume of paperwork (69%) and Ofsted / HMI inspections (46%).

While these activities were reported by large percentages of Secondary Headteachers as being constant sources of stress, the percentages were not as high those reported by Primary Headteachers. This may reflect the larger scope that there is for the delegation of tasks within Secondary schools, given their larger size.

There were a number of aspects of the job that were given high percentage ratings as occasionally causing stress, by Secondary Headteachers. These included dealing with difficult parents (92%), curriculum changes (77%), managing an increased teaching commitment (69%), difficulty accessing online information (57%), multi-agency working (54%), relationships with governors (38%) and taking on an additional responsibility (31%). The highest activity reported as occasionally causing stress, dealing with difficult parents (92%) again highlights the importance of well developed emotional regulation ability and also the potential risk of stress and burn out from the occupational requirement to engage in high levels of emotional labour.

The semi-structured critical incident interviews provided a further insight into some of the stressors that were managed by Headteachers. Two common themes emerging from the interviews in relation to the identified stressors were that the chosen stressors needed to
be managed for a period of time, and that the majority of these incidents had not been completely resolved.

There were also two overarching themes that emerged from the interviews in relation to the impact or effects, that managing the reported incidents had had on the Headteachers. These were in relation to the impact on relationships (personal / professional) and on personal health.

On reflecting further on the stressor incidents described by these Headteachers (significant staff restructuring to fit available budget, managing a curriculum complaint by a parent, managing prolonged staff absence, including a child having significant special educational needs / managing staff / parental expectations, preparing staff and pupils for the pending death of the mother of a pupil and implementing Ofsted action plan targets) they are all clearly issues that would require significant emotional management. All of the incidents involve interactions with others where it will be necessary to manage a range of emotions in self, and emanating from others. Taking each of the reported incidents in turn to illustrate the point:

- Significant staff restructuring to fit available budget – discussions needed with those facing redundancy and those taking on additional curriculum / work responsibilities.

- Managing a curriculum complaint by a parent – justifying current arrangements to discontented parents / maintaining a consistent stance and supporting staff.

- Managing a prolonged staff absence – taking on additional ‘front line’ interface duties yourself and managing requirements to take on additional duties / increased workloads.

- Including a child having significant special educational needs (managing staff / expectations) – managing parental complaints about their children being affected by the behaviour of the included child and responding to staff concerns.

- Preparing staff and pupils for the impending death of the mother of a pupil – managing the emotional climate of the school during the lead up to the death and through the grieving process and managing the situation while under heightened scrutiny by the local community.
• Implementing action plan targets post Ofsted inspection / prior to re-inspection – persuading staff to adopt new ways of working within a climate of low morale and managing uncooperative individuals within the team.

Research Question 2 What are the stressors experienced by different types of Headteacher (male/female, Primary/Secondary, large/ medium/ small school Headteachers)?

As reported in Chapter 4, Main Findings, analysis did not reveal a statistically significant difference in the type of stressor reported by male or female Headteachers, within the primary or secondary phases or between the respective phases. That is, no significant difference was found between primary male and secondary male Headteachers, or primary female and secondary female Headteachers. Of note however is the high percentage of Headteachers in general that reported that they were finding the job generally stressful and the high number of activities that were reported as being constant sources of stress. These findings were in line with previous research findings that being a Headteacher is a stressful job.

Many Headteachers omitted to complete the question about the numbers on roll. It was therefore not possible to carry out an analysis to see if there were any statistically significant differences in reported stressors, by size of school.

Research Question 3 What strategies/supports are used by Headteachers to manage stress and how effective are they?

The main strategies / supports reported by focus group participants included delegation, dedicated headship time, the support of other Headteachers, the Deputy Headteacher and administrative support.

The strategies / supports referred to by the critical incident interviewees included fellow Headteachers, professional associations / union, colleagues in schools and depending upon the issue, Local Authority personnel. Four out of eight of the interviewees also made reference to the importance of family and friends as being supportive and / or helping them to maintain perspective. The reported strategies / supports were in line with findings of Swaffield (2008). Comments made by the semi-structured critical incident
interviewee Headteachers suggested that the supports that they drew upon were felt to be largely effective.

It is difficult to be too definitive in answering the second part of Research Question 3 in relation to the effectiveness of the strategies and supports drawn upon by Headteachers. In one sense the methodology was not sensitive enough in providing data on this area, and on reflection, this was an over-ambitious research question for this study. There were a limited number of comments made by focus group participants and the critical incident interviewees in relation to additional supports that they would have found useful. One possible interpretation is that the limited number of suggestions to the question posed about the additional supports that would have been useful from focus group participants and the interviewees, was indicative that the supports that were currently available (professional associations, fellow Headteachers, Local Authority personnel), were sufficient. In contrast, an indicator that this may not be the case for some Headteachers could be the increased rate of Headteacher absence in recent years (see Table 19 below). It was unfortunate that there was not data available prior to 2009. It was also unfortunate that the available data on the increased absence rate between 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 could not be broken down into psychological well-being factors, or physical factors that triggered the absences. What is clear is that there appeared to be a decline in the health of Headteachers that necessitated increased absence from work, and this will need to be monitored. This apparent emerging trend in this key group of workers should be seen in relation to recent information reported in the absence management survey report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) in 2011. This is discussed in Chapter 5, Reflection and discussion.

While it was also reported that 2/3 of the public sector and 1/3 of the private sector had an employee well-being strategy in place, and therefore that the need had been recognised, the CIPD went on to report that:

‘Public sector organisations are most likely to report their well-being spend had decreased over the past year and anticipate further cuts in 2012.’

(page 8).

It may be possible to make some inferences on how successful the Headteachers were being in managing their workloads from other findings in this research. The questionnaire returns provided data on a number of relevant related areas. This included
physical and psychological health and work-life balance data which could be compared to data for other comparable managerial and professional groups (ASSET norm base).

The physical and psychological health of Secondary Headteachers was in line with comparable managerial and professional groups. Primary Headteachers, physical health was slightly worse, and psychological well-being in line, with comparable managerial and professional groups. Statistical analysis did not indicate any overall difference attributable to phase or gender in relation to physical or psychological well-being.

Secondary Headteachers were found to have a worse work-life balance and Primary Headteachers found to have a comparable work-life balance, in relation to comparable managerial and professional groups.

Other relevant findings included responses to the questions on how stressful the Headteachers were finding the job generally, how stressful they had found the job during the previous six month period and the general job satisfaction rating. These findings were as follows:

- 45% of Primary and 54% of Secondary Headteachers reported that generally they found that being a Headteacher ‘very / extremely’ stressful. Statistical analysis did not indicate any overall difference attributable to gender or phase.

- 56% of Primary and 62% of Secondary Headteachers reported having found being a Headteacher ‘very / extremely’ stressful during the previous six month period (period covering the Summer Term 2010 / Autumn Term 2010). Statistical analysis did not indicate any overall difference due to phase or gender.

- 54% of Primary and 69% of Secondary Headteachers reported being satisfied with their job ‘most of the time’. A further 30% of Primary and 23% of Secondary Headteachers reported being satisfied with their job ‘about half of the time’. Statistical analysis did not indicate any overall difference attributable to phase or gender.
Research Question 4  What additional supports would reduce Headteacher stress or assist them in managing stress more effectively?

As reported in Chapter 4, Main Findings, comments made by focus group participants were collapsed under three main themes:

- In school factors
- Local Authority factors
- Personal factors

Examples of what these Headteachers had in mind are illustrated in section 4.2 of this document. These included the preservation of guaranteed Headteacher time, changes to the relationships between schools and Local Authority personnel and time management issues.

No consistent theme emerged from the Headteacher interviewees on supports that would be beneficial, other than those on which they currently drew. Although not articulated in response to the question posed to the interviewees about additional supports that would be beneficial, analysis of the questionnaire data did indicate that some additional supports or strategies could be needed. For example, the Primary and Secondary Headteacher top three sources of stress (volume of paperwork, Ofsted / HMI inspections and the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that had to be accomplished) are areas that could be looked at with a view to reducing these sources of stress or reducing the impact that managing them had. This could be in relation to further guidance on the prioritisation of the tasks that needed to be accomplished, or how much time needed to be spent on particular tasks, in relation to their urgency or importance. These areas relate to primary job purpose and efficient and effective time management skills. A further observation would be that the chronic or enduring nature of the stressors identified by the interviewees, and their interpersonal nature, suggested that Headteachers needed to have well-developed resiliency and strategies for coping with the high emotional management requirements (Emotional Labour) of the job. Carver (1998) defined resilience as the ‘ability to bounce back or recover from stress; to adapt to stressful circumstances; to not become ill despite significant adversity and to function above the norm in spite of stress or adversity’. This summarises well the attributes needed by individuals who work in potentially stressful occupations, and particularly, for
those individuals who work in areas requiring a high degree of emotional regulation. This would clearly include Headteachers.

The implications of the above findings for an Emotional Health and Well-being Package for Headteachers are discussed in the next section.

4.4 Well-being, stress models and study findings

The concept of well-being is complex and difficult to define (Ereaut et al, 2008). School staff will be familiar with the concept being defined in terms of the five outcomes for all children and young people which was given legal force in the Children Act, 2004. These outcomes were as follows:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe
- Enjoying and achieving
- Making a positive contribution
- Achieving economic well-being

These outcomes could be equally applicable to an adult population, but there are alternative or additional descriptors that could be included to reflect the subjective nature of the concept. The findings of the Office for National Statistics on what should be included in an index of the United Kingdom's well-being will be interesting on this issue.

Well-being at work, in its broadest sense, will result from a number of factors and influences. Some of these will be environmental i.e. physical working conditions, while others will be personal i.e. general health. While personal variables, such as resiliency, may act as mediators for the impact of environmental factors, it will also be the case that environmental factors i.e. excess job demands, will impact on personal variables such as emotional health. For example, a Headteacher with a high degree of resiliency is likely to cope better with the demands of the Headteacher role than a Headteacher having low resiliency. Equally, a Headteacher with high resiliency, working within an environment where there are increased demands, insufficient control and reduced supports, will eventually experience increased stress and potential ‘burn out’ as resiliency factors become compromised and diminished.
There is a constantly changing context within which Headteachers work. For example, the marketisation of schools has been given renewed impetus by the current Conservative – Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, through the vigorous promotion of Academies and Free Schools. This has continued the trend towards the marketisation of the school sector which began with the Education Reform Act, 1988. Running in parallel with the move towards increased independence for schools is the reduced influence of the Local Authority. Reduced funding is resulting in Local Authorities moving towards the maintenance of limited core functions and the development of traded operations.

While some Headteachers are likely to relish the challenge of having more autonomy and freedom from Local Authority control, they are also likely to be under increased pressure from having to take total responsibility for the running and survival of their institutions, without the support of the Local Authority.

For those schools remaining within Local Authority control, at least for a time, they will also be faced with the reality of the diminished capacity of the Local Authority to provide them with support.

The changes taking place in the Local Authority within which this study took place are similar to those occurring in many other English Local Authorities. Locally, funding for support services has been drastically cut to the extent that personnel are only being retained to fulfil core statutory functions. Supports that were available to Headteachers and schools in the past, free at the point of delivery, now have to be purchased. This includes curriculum development and support, some finance and personnel services, and learning, behaviour and educational psychology support. The teams that used to provide these services and supports have been encouraged to develop traded operations based on full cost recovery models.

The changes taking place within the school sector can be conceptualised in relation to the Demand-Control Support Model of occupational stress. As noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.2, if the demands impinging on an individual exceed coping resources, there is an increased likelihood of stress being experienced. In the current context, the drive towards the increased marketisation of schools will increase the demands on Headteachers. While having more freedom over the curriculum and staffing may provide some increased control, this will need to be balanced against the market forces
(competition, supply and demand), which Headteachers may have some influence over, but in reality, little control. The Local Authority has also traditionally been the main provider of support to schools, whether this was through the setting and control of admission arrangements (which protected smaller schools), the provision of back office support (Human Resources, Finance) or the provision of Advisory and Special Education Need Support Services. These services and supports have also been delivered with an acceptable degree of accountability and quality assurance that schools could rely upon. Alternative providers are now being encouraged to enter the market as suppliers of services and supports to schools. As schools become more autonomous from the Local Authority there will be an additional demand upon Headteachers to identify appropriate providers of supports and services for themselves and for their schools. With increased demands, reduced readily accessible supports from the Local Authority and the fluidity of levels of control, Headteachers are going to be at increased risk of occupational stress. Attention to the maintenance of emotional health and well-being will continue therefore to be vitally important, and perhaps more so. The provision of emotional health and well-being services and supports is increasingly likely to have to come from peers, professional associations and support networks operating outside the Local Authority structure. This will be the picture nationally and in the locality from which the participants in this study work.
CHAPTER 5  REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Reflections on main findings

Two of the findings from the audit included the following:

- That in general, 46% of all respondents found being a Headteacher ‘very/extremely stressful’. By phase the figures were 45% primary and 54% Secondary, respectively.
- That 57% of all respondents found being a Headteacher ‘very stressful or extremely stressful’ during the previous 6 month period. By phase the figures were 56% primary and 63% Secondary, respectively. This would cover the second part of the Summer term and the first part of the Autumn term 2010.

These appear to be high percentages for any occupational group, and are noticeably higher than the finding in the Bristol Stress at Work Study (Smith et al, 2000) which reported that approximately 20% of the survey population suffered from high occupational stress. The second phase of the Bristol Study which was a twelve-month follow up, reported that 18% of those working at the time reported that their work was ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ stressful. The authors took the designation of ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ stressful as indicative of being ‘highly stressed’. Perhaps of more significance is the finding of Philips et al (2007) who found that 43% of Headteachers reported work related stress. As referenced in Chapter 2, Literature Review, this was a study of the prevalence and causes of work related stress amongst Headteachers in West Sussex. The relative recency of the Philips research makes comparison with the findings of the current study particularly relevant. Comparisons could also be drawn with the findings reported in the NAHT Work-Life Balance Survey 2008/2009 (French, 2009), which reported 44% of the surveyed population reporting that they sometimes felt stressed or pressurised at work. This report went on to state that 64% of respondents believed that they had suffered illness as a result of work related stress. However, as noted above (Chapter 2, Literature Review) the author cautioned about the representative nature of the sample when interpreting the findings and it must also be borne in mind that the overall response rate to the survey of 13% was relatively modest.

Taking the high levels of work related stress being reported by the Headteachers in this study and the findings generally reported in 4.3.10 above, there would seem to be
grounds for the Headteachers to have access to an evidenced informed emotional health and well-being package. The finding of high levels of reported work related stress in this study add validity to previous research findings in which similarly high levels have been found.

It is perhaps useful to view the findings from the current study within the context of recent historical data provided by the Human Resource Department. The total Headteacher days absent, by sector, during recent years is illustrated in Table 19 below:

**Table 19 Recent Headteacher absence by phase**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Primary Sector</th>
<th>Secondary Sector</th>
<th>Special School Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01/09/09 – 31/08/10</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>190 (63)</td>
<td>91 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01/09/10 – 31/08/11</td>
<td>519 (106)</td>
<td>154 (10)</td>
<td>12 (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures in brackets show the number of individual Headteachers contributing to the absence totals. Data is not available for the period before 01/09/09.

The figures above for Primary and Secondary school Headteachers are indicative of a possible concerning trend of increased absence rates, particularly in the primary sector. No information is currently available on whether the days absence reported above were due to physical health, emotional health, or a combination of these factors.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) published an absence management survey, in October 2011. The CIPD collects data on absence management trends, policy and practice. This most recent report issued was based on replies from 592 employers, which in total employ nearly two million people. The CIPD reported that the average level of absence in the public sector remained high at a rate of 9.1 days per employee per year. The level of absence in the private sector was reported as being 5.7 days per employee per year. It was reported that in relation to the public sector there had been a decrease of 0.5 of a day’s absence in comparison to data for 2010. It was also stated that the public sector was most likely to report that absence levels had improved compared to the previous year. In commenting on the causes of absence, this report stated that the most common causes of long term absence were stress, acute medical problems, muscular-skeletal injuries, mental ill health and back pain. It went on to report that:
Muscular-skeletal injuries and back pain are particularly common for manual workers while stress is more common for non-manual workers. Stress is particularly common in the public and non-profit sectors.’

The CIPD went on to report that while 40% of employers overall reported that stress related absence had increased over the last year, 50% of employers in the public sector were reporting this. They reported that stress was now the leading cause of long-term absence from work. Workloads, management style and restructuring were reported as the most common reasons for related absence. Interestingly 24% of public sector workers were reported as listing job insecurity as a top 3 cause of stress, which was up from 10% in comparison to the previous year’s survey.

This survey acknowledged that the current economic environment makes it possible that the problem of workplace stress was likely to increase. It was argued that it was critical that organisations keep a focus on monitoring and maintaining employee well-being, particularly during the difficult period of change that most organisations were currently going through.

5.2 Reflections on study methodology

The overall questionnaire response rate of 54% (86 returned from a possible pool of 158) was better than the usual response rate for postal questionnaires which can vary widely. I believe that this was due to a number of factors that included the following:

- Advice on the timing and length of the questionnaire itself from union representatives, workforce development advisors and a number of Headteachers.

- The pre-notification to Headteachers in the ‘Information from the Corporate Director’ letter to schools in September 2010.

- The questionnaire itself. The use of a standardised questionnaire with demonstrable psychometric properties, but also one that could be supplemented with contextually relevant items, derived from focus group activity, had credibility with the Headteacher population.
• The focus groups themselves worked well in helping to identify possible questions to be included in the questionnaire. The responses to the ten questionnaire items added as a result of the focus group work also suggested that the topics raised by the focus group participants had relevance to the wider Headteacher population. I believe therefore that the questionnaire used had good ecological validity.

• The semi structured critical incident interviews provided examples of the significant stressors that were managed by members of the Headteacher survey population and the types of support that they drew upon. This was only a small sample (8) but the incidents described by these Headteachers seem unlikely to be alien to many other Headteachers.

• The absence of identifiable coding on the questionnaires sent to Headteachers (however this made it impossible to follow up an individual questionnaires). This was on the advice of those consulted during the preparation for this study. A consequence of this was that global reminders had to be sent regarding the return date during the early part of the audit period, which could have been irritating to those who had already returned their questionnaire. There were also quite a large number of returned questionnaires which did not include information about the number on roll. It was therefore not possible to follow this up so that analysis could be undertaken to see if there were differences in reported stressors and outcomes for Headteachers, depending on whether they worked in a small, medium or large school environment.

Information about the strategies/support used by Headteachers was derived from the focus group meetings and from the individual interviews. The questionnaire itself did not contain many questions that would give insight into this area. The questionnaire could have included more items to identify these, but this would have increased the length of the questionnaire, and possibly thereby reduce the response rate. As always, there needed to be a ‘trade off’ around issues of this type.
5.2.1 Reliability and validity of data collected

It is important to be confident that the data collected, and upon which recommendations are made, is reliable and valid. In relation to reliability, the issue is whether if the survey were to be repeated (using similar measures) whether the same results would be obtained. In relation to validity, the issue is whether the measuring tools used were actually measuring what they were intended to.

In relation to reliability, the ASSET questionnaire is a standardised instrument with established reliability and validity. It has also been used to survey stress levels in a number of comparable professional and managerial groups, and there is an extensive database against which comparisons can be made.

In relation to validity, the ASSET questionnaire was strengthened by the inclusion of additional questions, derived from focus group activity. The two focus groups convened during the Summer Term 2010 consisted of a typical sample of the surveyed Headteachers.

The semi-structured critical incident interviews were part of the methodology to provide a more in depth understanding of the type of stressor that occurred in the life of Headteachers, the impact that managing the stressors had, and the types of strategies/support drawn upon by Headteachers.

As noted in Section 3.2 the philosophical orientation underpinning this study was in line with the critical realist approach as outlined by Robson (2002). This orientation informed the design of this study. The focus group activity was used to identify current real and relevant issues experienced by contemporary Headteachers. The additional derived questions added to and strengthened the final questionnaire sent to Headteachers. Reliability, validity and authenticity were therefore features of the postal questionnaire. The critical incident interviews provided an opportunity to explore in greater depth some significant real stressors that were managed by some members of the survey population, and the context around the identified stressors.

The focus group activity, postal questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were all viewed as having equal weight in contributing to the validity and authenticity of this research.
A further consideration is whether there was a high enough response rate to give confidence about the findings obtained, and any recommendations made. The 54% response rate in this study does provide this confidence.

An aim of this study was also to provide some baseline data against which the findings from any future survey could be compared. This has been achieved.

There are some issues about the concept of job satisfaction that need to be acknowledged. Asking individuals to come to an overall judgement, combining every aspect of their job, and then summarising this into a single global score, could be misleading. Most individuals have some aspects of their job that they are satisfied with, while there are other aspects that they will be dissatisfied with. An evaluation of different parts of a job can be achieved through using a job description index. (see Kinicki, 2002). An alternative view would be to see rating individual components of a job as conceptually different from obtaining an overall job satisfaction rating. (See Scarpello, 1983). An overall job satisfaction rating may actually be capturing a genuine, real, global attitude about a job in its entirety. This is because an individual may well feel positive and negative about different aspects of the job that they do, but overall, feel dissatisfied. This could be due to the fact that the individual has overall job insecurity. This is probably something being experienced by many people currently in the public and private sector during the current economic difficulties. The Headteachers in this study were involved in operating within reduced budgets, with further reductions on the horizon. This may have been a factor in the job satisfaction ratings reported.

5.3 Implication of research findings for an emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers

A holistic approach is needed for the effective management of workplace stress. This has been referred to as interventions at the Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels. (See Sutherland et al, 2000).

Interventions at the Primary level are concerned with the elimination, reduction or control of a source of stress at work. The focus is therefore on identifying the stressors themselves, and looking at ways that they can be prevented. Findings from this study suggest that the focus locally should be on ways to reduce paperwork and improve access to online information. A dialogue with the Local Authority on these issues would
be needed. Pressures from these sources emanating from National Government could be addressed between the professional associations and the Department for Education.

Interventions at the Secondary level focus on direct help for individuals or groups of employees. This is through the provision of training and development opportunities with a view to the enhancement or development of coping strategies, or resiliency, in managing the pressures of a job. The findings from this study suggest that the focus for Primary Headteachers should be on ensuring that there are opportunities for the development of effective time management strategies. This would assist them in managing the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished, the demands of taking an additional responsibility, implementing curriculum changes and managing an increased teaching commitment. Time management issues may also underpin the problem for the 20% of Headteachers who identified multi-agency working as a constant source of stress. This was indeed an issue raised by focus group participants. The 26% of Primary Headteachers who reported that dealing with difficult parents was a constant source of stress suggested that for some Headteachers the development of skills and strategies in managing difficult interactions could also be beneficial.

The responses of Secondary Headteachers also indicated that it would be beneficial for a Secondary level focus to include opportunities for developing time management strategies / skills in managing the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished and the volume of paperwork. Both of these areas were identified as constant sources of stress by 62% of Headteachers and for 69% of Headteachers, respectively.

Ofsted / HMI inspections was identified as being a constant source of stress by 63% of Primary Headteacher respondents, and 46% of Secondary Headteacher questionnaire respondents. Continuing opportunities for preparation for these inspections is clearly indicated.

Interventions at the Tertiary level focus on the provision of support. That is, ensuring that there are systems in place to help employees who have become prone to excess stress. This is through the provision of appropriate counselling / therapeutic opportunities. The Local Authority within which this study was carried out does make available a confidential counselling service available to all employees, including school staff. The high percentage of Headteachers (45% of Primary Headteachers and 54% of Secondary
Headteachers) reporting that they generally found being a Headteacher ‘very / extremely’ stressful, suggests that access to such provision, as well as the National teacher support networks, should be maintained.

The most effective approach to the management of workplace stress will address all three levels so that the organisational response includes prevention, training and support. A healthy organisation would also ensure that the arrangements in place are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. If arrangements to do this are not in place it is possible that emerging new sources of stress will be missed which may require new interventions to be considered. It is also important to collect some information on the effectiveness of whatever interventions are put in place. The carrying out of regular stress audits is the best way to address these issues.

5.4 Implications for the practice of Educational Psychologists

The implications for the practice of Educational Psychologists at the time of writing (November 2011) are different to those that would probably have been written twelve months ago. That is because there are significant changes taking place to the employment base of Educational Psychologists within many Local Authorities, including the one in which Headteachers participated in this study.

Prior to April 2011, schools in the research locality had a named link Educational Psychologist. This person was able to provide frontline delivery to the schools that they linked with, and they also acted as a conduit back into the Service through which additional support could be delivered to the school, against agreed criteria. The Council now maintains a smaller core of centrally employed Educational Psychologists to deliver statutory functions. This does not include much of the work that was previously delivered to schools at the school action plus stage of delivery. Schools do however have access to a traded Educational Psychology operation that was available from 1 September 2011. This requires schools to purchase packages of time (platinum, gold, silver or bronze packages) or they can elect to operate on a ‘pay as you go’ basis.

The above arrangements are changing the relationship between the Service and schools. One significant change is that unless a school chooses to purchase the same level of service they had received free at the point of delivery in the past, there will be less overall contact between the Service and the school. Therefore, the extent to which
the local service will have opportunities for support and challenge will be very different from school to school, largely determined by their willingness or not to purchase services.

Leaving aside who commissions and pays for Educational Psychology involvement, there are nevertheless a number of areas that this group of applied psychologists could contribute to in relation to supporting the emotional health and well-being of Headteachers. Some suggested areas will now be briefly outlined.

As outlined above, the most effective approach to the management of workplace stress will include interventions at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels and therefore include prevention, training and support. In relation to planning interventions at these three key levels it would be advisable for these to be planned on the basis of an analysis of the current situation and the establishment of some baseline data against which to measure any new interventions. Carrying out stress audits and helping to assess the emotional health of an organisation are areas that Educational Psychologists could assist with.

The job of a Headteacher seems to be multi-facetted which was reflected in the high percentage of Headteachers who reported that ‘the cumulative effect of tasks that have to be accomplished’ was a constant source of stress. It is also likely that the job of a Headteacher will continue to change given that it is within the context of a constantly changing educational environment. It may be that a time has been reached when it would be useful for the requirements of the job to be carefully analysed. This would involve a job, task and role (JTR) analysis which would involve the gathering of detailed and objective information about the specific requirements of the job, the tasks and roles that have to be undertaken currently, or are likely to be undertaken. This technology ordinarily leads into the production of fit for purpose person and job specifications. Job, task and role analysis can be seen as a form of applied research, which would be an area that Educational Psychologists would have the necessary skills to undertake.

Research findings in relation to the concept of emotional labour have implications for Headteachers, and teachers. As noted in earlier chapters, those working in the public services are usually required to engage in a high degree of emotional management. This clearly includes Headteachers and this was also illustrated in the selected stressors by the eight interviewees involved in the current study.
Educational Psychologists work with many people who are required to regulate their emotions and therefore they need to have knowledge of the theory and practice in this area. Through their interactions with others, including teachers and Headteachers, their behaviours could have implications for the degree of emotional management required by the recipients of their advice.

Working at the organisational level they can contribute to the emotional health and well-being of the institution. This could be training and support in the setting up of staff support systems or helping to design positive behaviour policies or anti-bullying polices.

Educational Psychology services have also been heavily involved in the implementation and evaluation of SEAL and TaMHS initiatives within Local Authorities and within schools. The recently published findings on the national evaluation of the TaMHS Pathfinder Projects (Learning from Target in Mental Health in Schools Phase 1 Pathfinders, 2009) has also identified the important role played by Educational Psychologists in the link between schools and local Child and Adolescent Mental health Services.

Educational Psychology services have always been able to provide a reservoir of research skills that could be drawn upon by Local Authorities and schools. Unfortunately, full advantage has not always been taken of these skills. The new Educational Psychology Doctorate training programme has strengthened this facility within the Educational Psychology profession. These skills could be used to identify the variables which determine the effective management and regulation of emotions in particular contexts. Findings from this could assist in the design of appropriate training opportunities for Headteachers and the development of systems within schools that contribute to emotional health and well-being.

Section 5.5, Developments in research locality refers to a number of development areas that would be considered by the Local Authority Headteachers involved in this study. The identified areas of need which are outlined in the section below are all areas in which Educational Psychologists could make a valuable contribution.

Interventions at the tertiary level of a holistic approach to the effective management of workplace stress which would include the provision of counselling / therapeutic interventions, is also an area that many Educational Psychologists currently contribute to. The Educational Psychology Service operating in the locality in which this study was
The Educational Psychology Service in the research locality does however contain five members who have been trained in the delivery of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, although this is not currently made available to Headteachers. Other members of the service, although not specifically trained in Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, have relevant skills through prior training and experience to contribute to therapeutic interventions. Collectively within the team there is extensive knowledge of general behavioural approaches, including functional analysis, as well as much experience in using solution focused approaches in schools. The day to day practice of Educational Psychologists also usually involves operating at the individual and organisational level. They are usually therefore well placed to advise on organisational / systemic changes that need to take place to affect outcomes at the individual level. This orientation, viewing any problem as organisationally bound, lends itself well to the holistic approach that is required (operating at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of intervention) for an effective approach to the management of workplace stress, including for Headteachers.

5.5 Developments in research locality

The findings from the Headteachers’ stress audit were discussed with the local Human Resources Department in October 2011. Analysis had indicated the need for an emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers and so the discussion was around how this matter could be taken forward.

Identified areas of need seemed to be as follows:

- The development of specific people management skills (dealing with difficult individuals / managing confrontation).

- Stress management (recognising signs and developing coping strategies / developing resiliency). This would be a refresher for some and a first for others.

- Of relevance to the above point, managing the ‘emotional labour’ requirements of the job.
• Effective time management (in relation to the management of the cumulative effect of the number of tasks that have to be accomplished).

• Managing the change process in relation to a number of key areas eg curriculum, budgetary reductions etc.

• Managing the Ofsted / HMI inspection process.

• Managing difficult children / young people eg those having additional educational needs / special educational needs.

To take this forward it was felt that it would be appropriate to ask the Headteacher School Development Groups to consider and feedback their views on three key questions:

1. Would a locally available emotional health and well-being package for Headteachers be welcomed?

2. What should the content of this be?

3. How should this be made available?

It was agreed that the individual school development groups would be asked to address these questions at their next meeting in the Autumn Term 2011. This was communicated to Headteachers in a HR letter sent to all Headteachers and governing bodies with a request to include the above questions as agenda items at the pending meetings. The SDG groups were asked to feed back their views to a named contact person at the Human Resources department.

An alternative way of progressing this matter would have been to draw together representatives from a number of school development groups and to carry out a structured focus group activity. The product of this could then have been circulated to the wider Headteacher audience for feedback. It was felt that the logistics of setting this up, and achieving adequate representation, would be difficult in the time frames required.
The agreed approach was felt to be more cost effective, and enable maximum participation in contributing to any decisions on the way forward.

At a wider organisational level, the Local Authority also needs to consider some of the identified stressors from the survey. Two areas that were reported as being (constant sources of stress) were the volume of paperwork and accessing online information. In relation to the latter, strong views were also expressed in the individual interviews about the difficulty accessing information through the current learning gateway.

If there is a majority view fed back from the Headteacher School Development groups that an Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers would be welcomed, there will need to be further dialogue about the detail of this between the Local Authority and Headteachers. A current Local Authority / Headteacher forum may be able to do this, alternatively, a separate working group will need to be established.

The current coalition government have embarked upon radical changes within the state education system. Changes to funding have resulted in an increasingly diminished role for the Local Authority in relation to the support that they are able to provide to schools. The direction is clearly towards encouraging the majority of schools to seek Academy Status or the establishment of Free Schools. There is an intention to reduce the control and influence of the Local Authority and increase the autonomy of individual schools.

The Council of the Local Authority within which Headteachers participated in this study have decided to maintain small teams to maintain core statutory functions and for these teams to develop a traded operation. The activities that are now traded are largely those that it was possible to provide ‘free at the point of delivery’ to schools at the time that the questionnaire audit took place (Autumn Term 2010). It is probable therefore that any contribution that the Local Authority makes to elements of an Emotional Health and Well-being package for Headteachers, will need to be purchased by an organisation on behalf of Headteachers, such as their professional association, or by the Headteachers themselves.

5.6 Originality / distinctive contribution of the work

I believe that this study has contributed to the research literature on Headteacher stress in a number of ways and that it will also be of benefit to a number of stakeholders.
At the methodological level a mixed method approach to data collection made it possible to take advantage of the strengths of qualitative and quantitative tools in addressing complex issues. The use of focus group data to help with the development of the postal stress audit questionnaire proved to be a time efficient and effective way to identify contemporary and relevant stressors impinging on a representative sample of a target research population.

While the use of a standardised stress audit questionnaire, with demonstrable psychometric properties had advantages (made it possible to compare findings to comparable groups), a weakness was that it could not capture all of the issues relevant to a particular professional group. Having the addition of questionnaire items derived from focus group activity made this possible and strengthened the questionnaire. I suspect that a similar approach at the design stage of subsequent studies would be equally beneficial.

The questionnaire data provided a means of identifying and quantifying the impact of particular stressors, but on its own, did not help in understanding what the management of a significant stressor might actually involve for Headteachers. The semi-structured critical incident interviews did help in providing this information and contributed findings relevant to all four research questions.

Research findings can date rapidly, particularly when change is constant. Findings in the current study support those from previous studies, for example, that being a Headteacher is a stressful occupation. Findings also highlighted the chronic or enduring nature of some of the stressors that have to be managed. The stressors identified by the interviewees all involved a high level of emotional labour. This finding, along with the enduring nature of the stressors identified suggested that burnout is likely to be a particular risk factor for Headteachers.

The findings from this study also have implications for the practice of applied psychology. Educational Psychologists work with many people who are required to regulate their emotions and they therefore need knowledge of the theory and practice in this area. It is possible that through their interactions with others, including Headteachers, they could help / hinder the management of Emotional Labour through the advice / interventions suggested. For example, an Educational Psychologist may make recommendations for resource allocation for a child having special educational needs / additional educational
needs. While a Headteacher may be sympathetic to the advice they will often have to weigh the recommendations of an out of school ‘powerful professional’ against other competing demands on scarce budgets. An awareness of the competing demands and perspectives of Headteachers is likely to help psychologists to be balanced in their verbal and written recommendations.

When working at the organisational level, Educational Psychologists can also be in a position to advise and guide on policies, practices and procedures that contribute to the emotional health and well-being of the community. Contributions to the *social and emotional aspects of learning* and the *targeting mental health in schools* initiatives, have been recent examples of work in this area.

A detailed audit of this type has not been carried out in the Local Authority in question. The Local Authority also intended to develop an emotional health and well being programme for Headteachers. The Human Resources Department were interested in using the findings from this study to assist them in the development of this type of programme.

At the commencement of this study it was felt that the findings would have relevance to a number of stakeholders. At the conclusion of this study this is still the case and is likely to include:

- The research community – an addition to the research literature on work related stress in relation to an important occupational group.
- Governing bodies – in meeting their duty of care.
- The Local Authority – factors relevant to the production of an effective emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers.
- Headteachers themselves – raised awareness of the issues and reinforcement of the need for the effective management of workplace stress.
- Children – better delivery of the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes (DfES, 2004) as a result of healthy, and therefore more effective Headteacher operation. An emphasis on the promotion and maintenance of the health of Headteachers also supports the TaMHS aim of the development of emotionally healthy schools.

This study has also helped to identify psychological factors that could be followed up in subsequent studies. This would include the particular personality traits that are relevant
to the selection of individuals who are most likely to cope with the demands of being a Headteacher. It would also be useful to identify the particular skill mix that is likely to maximise performance in occupations where there is a high requirement for Emotional Labour. There may also be particular resiliency factors relevant to leading complex organisations such as schools, which will need to be identified and developed where possible, to maximise the emotional health and well-being of Headteachers.
REFERENCES


11 Cipd.co.uk/2011absencemanagementsurvey. Downloaded on 09 November 2011.


67 National Headteacher Support Organisation Website: www.nationalheadsupport.org.uk


90 Texas Center for the Advancement of Literacy and Learning – Focus Groups Tips for Beginners [http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/orp/orp1.htm](http://www-tcall.tamu.edu/orp/orp1.htm)


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  INFORMATION FROM CORPORATE DIRECTOR

Autumn term 2010

Information from the Corporate Director
Children and Young People’s Services

Managing Headteacher Stress

Local Authority Headteachers will shortly have an opportunity to participate in a research study investigating their levels of stress, current coping strategies/supports, and additional supports that could reduce, or enable the better management of, work related stress.

The study will involve a confidential postal questionnaire to all headteachers and semi-structured interviews involving volunteer headteachers.

The research is being carried out by Martin Howard, Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist, in relation to Doctoral research supervised by Manchester University and in collaboration with the Human Resource Department, Shropshire Council.

The study will assist the Local Authority in two ways; firstly, by providing current local information to inform the development of a planned Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers and secondly, by providing baseline data which will assist with any subsequent evaluation of the established programme.

The confidential questionnaire will be sent to headteachers for completion during the first half of the autumn term 2010. Interviews will take place during the second half of the autumn term 2010.

Research findings and the proposed content of an Emotional Health and Well-being Programme will be shared with headteachers during the spring/summer terms 2011.

For further information regarding this planned study

Contact    Martin Howard (Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist)
            01952 385216

            XXXXXXXX (Human Resources Manager)
            01743 254402
            xxxxx@shropshire.gov.uk
Dear Headteacher

Re: Focus Group Activity (to inform XXXXXX Headteacher Postal Stress Questionnaire)

Thank you for agreeing to take part in the focus group activity scheduled for ......................

During our recent discussion inviting you to take part in this activity, I agreed to send you a summary of relevant background information, prior to the focus group activity taking place.

Towards the end of September 2010 all XXXXX Headteachers will be invited to complete a postal stress audit questionnaire. This will be based on a validated occupational stress audit instrument that has additional questionnaire items added to reflect the current national and local context that Headteachers are working within. It is in identifying these additional items that your help is requested.

You and some fellow Headteachers are invited to take part in a focus group activity at the XXXXX Training and Development Centre, on ......................

The focus group session will be facilitated by myself with the assistance of one of our Trainee Educational Psychologists and will last for 45 minutes.

At the start of the session I will share with you some of the questions that will be included in the audit questionnaire. These are fairly standard questions which would be included in any professional occupational group stress audit eg workload, time pressures etc. The focus group discussion will then provide an opportunity for the group to reflect on their own experience of the following:

- The potential stressors experienced by Headteachers.
- The coping strategies / supports currently used by Headteachers.
- Additional supports that would help to reduce, or enable the better management of, daily Headteacher stressors.

The responses of the group will be collated on a flip chart.

Participation is, of course, voluntary and participants will be free to leave the session at any time, without giving reason and without detriment.

Your assistance in the development stage of the final stress audit questionnaire is greatly valued. It will maximise the validity of the findings and provide invaluable information to guide the development of a Local Authority Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers.

If you would like to discuss any matters related to the Focus Group Activity, or the research project generally, I would be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely
Martin Howard.
APPENDIX C Participant Information Sheet

Headteacher Stress Audit Participation Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study investigating Headteacher stress. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please contact me to discuss if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?
Martin Howard. I am a Doctoral student at the University of Manchester and an Educational Psychologist working in Telford and Wrekin and in Shropshire Local Authorities.

Title of the research
Headteacher stress, coping strategies and supports: What should be included in a local authority emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers?

What are the aims of the research?
The aims of the research will be to:

- Identify and measure sources of stress experienced by local authority Headteachers (primary and secondary).
- Identify current coping strategies / supports used by Headteachers to manage stress.
- Identify what additional supports would help to reduce, or enable better management of, daily Headteacher stressors.
- Use information derived from the contextualised stress audit to make recommendations on the content of a local authority emotional health and well-being programme for Headteachers.

Why have I been chosen?
All primary and secondary Headteachers in XXXXX are being asked to participate by completing a confidential stress audit questionnaire. A smaller number of volunteer Headteachers, randomly selected, will also be asked to participate in some individual interviews.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
All Headteachers – requested to complete a short confidential postal stress audit questionnaire which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete,

Interviewees – participate in a short interview (45 to 60 minutes maximum) to explore the management of a recent stressful situation which took place in the previous 3 to 6 months.

What happens to the data collected?
Questionnaire data will be analysed to identify similarities / differences between different types of Headteacher (primary / secondary, male / female, large / medium / small school. Interview data will be analysed to identify any key themes.
How is confidentiality maintained?
Questionnaire returns will be coded to ensure there is no link between the data and identifiable individuals. Interview transcriptions will be coded and not identifiable. Taped interviews will be kept securely for one year and then wiped.

Questionnaire returns and interview transcriptions will be kept by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet only accessible by the researcher. Analysed data will also be kept securely by the interviewer in encrypted form, on a personal laptop.

What happens if I do not want to take part or I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you agree to take part in an interview you will also be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving reason and without detriment to yourself.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?
You will not be paid for participating in this research.

What is the duration of the research?
The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Interviews will take between 45 and 60 minutes.

Where will the research be conducted?
A postal questionnaire will be sent to you shortly to complete in a place and at a time convenient to yourself. Interviews will take place at a convenient time in school, or at another agreed location, if preferred.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
The research will form the basis of a Doctoral thesis to be submitted to the University of Manchester. An executive summary of the findings will also be provided for all Headteachers and for the Human Resources Department, Shropshire Local Authority.

Criminal Records Check
I have undergone a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau check.

Contact for further information
Martin Howard, Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist, Educational Psychology Service, The Glebe Centre, Glebe Street, Wellington, Telford, TF1 1JP. Tel: 01952 385216 e-mail: martin.howard@telford.gov.uk

What if something goes wrong?
If there is an issue related to this research that you wish to speak to someone about, other than myself, my university supervisor details are as follows:

Dr Garry Squires, Co-director of the Professional Doctorate in Educational Psychology, University of Manchester. Tel: 0161 275 3546 email: garry.squires@manchester.ac.uk

If you wish to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research you can contact the following:

Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.
APPENDIX D  Potential Stressors Experienced by Headteachers

- Amount of work
- Time pressures
- Dealing with difficult people
- Having to work long hours
- Insufficient control over some aspects of the job
- Work interfering with home life / personal life
- Not receiving the support from others (governors / colleagues etc) that you would like
- Insufficient resources (material)
- Insufficient resources (human)
APPENDIX E  The Coping Strategies / Supports Currently used by Headteachers

- Exercise
- Preserving time for important tasks
- Peer support
- LA personnel (advice/ guidance)
- Family support
- Chair of Governors
- Staff deployment
- Other
ASSET
An Organisational Stress Screening Tool

Background

This ASSET questionnaire has been designed to help organisations assess the risk of stress in their workforce. It measures potential exposure to stress in respect of a range of common workplace stressors and consequently can represent an organisation’s first step towards effectively managing stress in the workplace. ASSET provides a quick and reliable method of assessing and monitoring areas of potential risk and so helps to focus organisational attention and resource on these areas.

As a diagnostic tool, ASSET enables organisations to: survey the level of stress that exists in the organisation; examine the extent to which groups are differentially affected; and identify what the sources of pressure are for different groups across the organisation. The ASSET questionnaire collects important stress-related data by asking straightforward questions about the sources and effects of workplace stress. These questions are posed to the people who are the most qualified to answer them: the employees.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections. It starts by asking you for general biographical information. The next three sections ask you about your perceptions of pressure at work. The first of these concerns your job and also includes some questions relating to home and social life-related pressures. The next section is concerned with your attitude towards your organisation and the final section is about your health. Each of these sections has been designed to measure your exposure to stress in respect of a wide range of common workplace stressors.

How to complete the questionnaire:

- Please answer ALL the questions.
- Please print text clearly in capital letters
- Please give your first and natural answer - try not to dwell too long on each question
- Work quickly and efficiently through the questionnaire - it will only take you about 10-15 minutes to complete
- Please base your answers on how you have felt during the last three months unless a question tells you to do otherwise.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Please be assured that the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and your anonymity is assured.
BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

YOUR CURRENT JOB

Q1  Which department do you work in? (If your department is not shown, please specify)

- Production
- Customer Service
- Procurement
- HR / Personnel
- Sales & Marketing
- R & D
- Finance
- Security
- Other
- IT
- Logistics
- Other, please specify

Q2  Which group of staff do you belong to?

- Managers and Senior Officials
- Administrative and Secretarial Occupations
- Sales and Customer Service Occupations
- Professional Occupations
- Skilled Trades Occupations
- Process, Plant, Machine and Vehicle Operatives
- Associate Professional and Technical Occupations
- Personal Service Occupations
- Basic Occupations

Q3  On what basis are you employed?

- Full-time
- Part-time

Q4  When do you expect your next promotion?

- Within 1 year
- 1-5 years
- Over 5 years
- Never

Q5a  In an average week, how many hours are you contracted to work?

Q5b  In an average week, how many hours do you actually work?

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Q6  Sex:

- Male
- Female

Q7  Age:

- Under 21
- 21 - 30 years
- 31 - 40 years
- 41 - 50 years
- 51 - 60 years
- Over 60 years

Q8  How would you describe your ethnic origin?

- White
- Black Caribbean
- Pakistani
- Black African
- Chinese
- Indian
- Black other
- Other
Q9  Of what country are you a national?

Q10  Marital Status

☐ Married  ☐ Single  ☐ Divorced
☐ Living with partner  ☐ Separated  ☐ Widowed

Q11a If you are married/ living with a partner, does he/she work?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Q11b If Yes, is it full-time or part-time?

☐ Full-time  ☐ Part-time

Q12a Number of children aged 18 years or under?

☐ None  ☐ 1  ☐ 2  ☐ 3  ☐ 4  ☐ 5  ☐ More than 5

Q12b Number of children aged over 18 years?

☐ None  ☐ 1  ☐ 2  ☐ 3  ☐ 4  ☐ 5  ☐ More than 5

YOUR EDUCATION & LIFESTYLE

Q13  Academic level reached in full-time education? (please specify an alternative level if appropriate)

☐ No formal qualification  ☐ 'A' level or equivalent  ☐ Higher degree level
☐ GCSE level or equivalent  ☐ Degree level or equivalent  ☐ Other

Other, please specify in the box below

Q14  Do you take planned exercise?

☐ Always  ☐ When possible  ☐ Not usually
☐ Usually  ☐ Occasionally  ☐ Never

Q15  Do you manage an 'ideal' exercise programme? (e.g. 15-30 minutes vigorous exercise 3 times a week)

☐ Always  ☐ Sometimes  ☐ Never
☐ Usually  ☐ Not usually

Q16  Do you smoke cigarettes?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Q16a  If yes, how many per day do you smoke on average?

☐ 1 - 5 per day  ☐ 11 - 20 per day  ☐ 31 - 40 per day
☐ 6 - 10 per day  ☐ 21 - 30 per day  ☐ More than 40 per day

Q16b In the last 3 months, have you been smoking:

☐ More than usual?  ☐ Same as usual?  ☐ Less than usual?
Q17a Do you drink alcohol?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Q17b If Yes, how many units do you drink per week on average? (1 unit = half a pint of beer, 1 small glass of wine or 1 measure of spirits)
☐ 1 - 5 units ☐ 11 - 20 units ☐ 31 - 40 units
☐ 6 - 10 units ☐ 21 - 30 units ☐ More than 40 units

Q17c In the last 3 months, have you been drinking:
☐ More than usual? ☐ Same as usual? ☐ Less than usual?

DISABILITY

Q18a Do you have a disability?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Q18b If yes, does this relate to: physical health?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Q18c If yes, does this relate to: mental health?
☐ Yes ☐ No

YOUR INTERESTS

Q19 Do you find time to relax and wind down?
☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ When possible ☐ Not usually

Q20 Do you have any interests or hobbies?
☐ Yes ☐ No

Q21 In general, do you mix socially with work colleagues?
☐ Yes ☐ No
**PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR JOB**

Cross one of the six categories from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree for each statement as it applies to you.

I am troubled that:

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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>My relationships with colleagues are poor</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>I do not feel I am informed about what is going on in this organisation</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>I am never told if I am doing a good job</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>I am not involved in decisions affecting my job</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>I am not adequately trained to do many aspects of my job</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>I do not have the proper equipment or resources to do my job</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>I do not have enough time to do my job as well as I would like</td>
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<td>My job is likely to change in the future</td>
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<td>My job skills may become redundant in the near future</td>
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<td>My ideas or suggestions about my job are not taken into account</td>
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<td>36</td>
<td>I have little or no influence over my performance targets</td>
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<td>37</td>
<td>I do not enjoy my job</td>
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I am troubled that........

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<td>14</td>
<td>My pay &amp; benefits are not as good as other people doing the same or similar work</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>The technology in my job has overloaded me</td>
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<td>My organisation is constantly changing for change's sake</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>My work is dull and repetitive</td>
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<td>I feel isolated at work e.g. working on my own or lack of social support from others</td>
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<td>I am not sure what is expected of me by my boss</td>
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<td>Other people at work are not pulling their weight</td>
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<td>I am set unrealistic deadlines</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>I am given unmanageable workloads</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>My boss is forever finding fault with what I do</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Others take the credit for what I have achieved</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>I have to deal with difficult customers/clients</td>
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### ATTITUDES TOWARDS YOUR ORGANISATION

Cross one of the six categories from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree for each statement as it applies to you.

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<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>I feel valued and trusted by the organisation</td>
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<td>If necessary I am prepared to put myself out for this organisation e.g. working long hours and/ or unsociable hours</td>
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<td>If asked, I am prepared to take on more responsibility or tasks not in my job description</td>
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<td>I enjoy working for this organisation to the extent that I am not actively seeking a job elsewhere</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>I am proud of this organisation</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Outside of my particular job, I take an interest in many aspects of the running and success of this organisation</td>
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<td>Overall I am happy with my organisation</td>
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<td>I feel that it is worthwhile to work hard for this organisation</td>
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<td>I am committed to this organisation</td>
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YOUR HEALTH

Over the last 3 months, have you experienced any of the following symptoms or changes in behaviour?

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<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of appetite or over eating</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Indigestion or heartburn</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Insomnia - sleep loss</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Headaches</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Panic or anxiety attacks</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Muscular tension / aches and pains</td>
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<td>Feeling nauseous or being sick</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Constant irritability</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Difficulty in making decisions</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Loss of sense of humour</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Feeling or becoming angry with others too easily</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Constant tiredness</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Feeling unable to cope</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Avoiding contact with other people</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mood swings</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Unable to listen to other people</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Having difficulty concentrating</td>
<td>❑</td>
<td>❑</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

YOUR HEALTH (CONTINUED)

Q18 Have you had any significant illnesses in the last 6 months?  
❑ Yes  ❑ No

Q19 Over the last 3 months, how would you rate your overall health?  
❑ Good  ❑ Alright  ❑ Poor

Q20 Over the last 3 months, roughly how productive have you felt in your job?  
❑ 100% productive  ❑ 90-99% productive  ❑ 80-89% productive  ❑ 70-79% productive  ❑ Less than 70% productive

Q21 Over the last 6 months, have you encountered any major stressful events that have had an important effect on you?  
❑ Yes  ❑ No

Q22 Over the last 3 months, how many working days have you been off work through illness or injury?  
❑ 0  ❑ 1  ❑ 2-5  ❑ 6 or more

Q23 How many times have you been to your doctor over the last 3 months?  
❑ 0  ❑ 1  ❑ 2-5  ❑ 6 or more
Is there anything else you would like to add that has not come up already on the questionnaire? If yes, please state below.

_________________________________________________________________
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When you have finished, please check through the questionnaire to ensure you have answered all the items.

MANY THANKS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND, ONCE AGAIN, PLEASE BE ASSURED OF YOUR COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY BY TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY
APPENDIX G  Questionnaire Used in this Study and Accompanying Letter

ASSET
An Organisational Stress Screening Tool

Background

This ASSET questionnaire has been designed to help organisations assess the risk of stress in their workforce. It measures potential exposure to stress in respect of a range of common workplace stressors and consequently can represent an organisation's first step towards effectively managing stress in the workplace. ASSET provides a quick and reliable method of assessing and monitoring areas of potential risk and so helps to focus organisational attention and resource on these areas.

The questionnaire is made up of four sections plus an appendix. It starts by asking you for general biographical information. The next three sections ask you about your perceptions of pressure at work. These sections cover your job (including some questions relating to home and social life-related pressures), your attitude towards your organisation and your health. Each of these sections has been designed to measure your exposure to stress in respect of a wide range of common workplace stressors. The appendix is derived from Shropshire Headteacher Focus Group involvement during the Summer term 2010, as well as conversations with a number of Headteachers during the Spring/Summer terms 2010. This section also includes questions relating to overall perspectives and a general satisfaction level.

How to complete the questionnaire:

- Please answer ALL the questions.
- Please print text clearly in capital letters
- Please give your first and natural answer - try not to dwell too long on each question
- Work quickly and efficiently through the questionnaire - it will only take you about 10-15 minutes to complete
- Please base your answers on how you have felt during the last three months unless a question tells you to do otherwise.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Please be assured that the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and your anonymity is assured
BIOGRAPHICAL QUESTIONNAIRE

YOUR CURRENT JOB

Q1  Which sector do you work in?

☐ Primary  ☐ Secondary  ☐ Special

Q2  How many pupils on roll?

Q3  On what basis are you employed?

☐ Full-time  ☐ Part-time

Q4  How many years have you been a Headteacher?

☐ 0 – 5 years  ☐ 6 – 10 years

☐ 11 – 15 years  ☐ 16+ years

Q5a  In an average week, how many hours are you contracted to work?

Q5b  In an average week, how many hours do you actually work?

ABOUT YOU

Q6  Sex:

☐ Male  ☐ Female

Q7  Age:

☐ Under 21  ☐ 31 - 40 years  ☐ 51 - 60 years

☐ 21 - 30 years  ☐ 41 - 50 years  ☐ Over 60 years

Q8  How would you describe your ethnic origin?

☐ White  ☐ Black Caribbean  ☐ Pakistani

☐ Irish  ☐ Black African  ☐ Chinese

☐ Indian  ☐ Black other  ☐ Other

Q9  Of what country are you a national?
YOUR EDUCATION & LIFESTYLE

Q10  Academic level reached in full-time education? (please specify an alternative level if appropriate)

☐ 'A' level or equivalent ☐ Higher degree level
☐ Degree level or equivalent ☐ Other

Q11  Do you take planned exercise?

☐ Always ☐ When possible ☐ Not usually
☐ Usually ☐ Occasionally ☐ Never

Q12  Do you manage an 'ideal" exercise programme? (e.g. 15-30 minutes vigorous exercise 3 times a week)

☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never
☐ Usually ☐ Not usually

Q13  Do you smoke cigarettes?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q14  In the last 3 months, have you been smoking:

☐ More than usual? ☐ Same as usual? ☐ Less than usual?

Q15  Do you drink alcohol?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q16  In the last 3 months, have you been drinking:

☐ More than usual? ☐ Same as usual? ☐ Less than usual?

DISABILITY

Q17a  Do you have a disability?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q17b  If yes, does this relate to: physical health?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q17c  If yes, does this relate to: mental health?

☐ Yes ☐ No

YOUR INTERESTS

Q18  Do you find time to relax and wind down?

☐ Always ☐ Usually ☐ When possible ☐ Not usually

Q19  Do you have any interests or hobbies?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Q20  In general, do you mix socially with work colleagues?

☐ Yes ☐ No
PERCEPTIONS OF YOUR JOB

Cross one of the six categories from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree for each statement as it applies to you.

I am troubled that:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Disagree</th>
<th>Slightly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I work longer hours than I choose or want to</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I work unsociable hours e.g. weekends, shift work etc</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I spend too much time travelling in my job</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I have little control over many aspects of my job</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>My work interferes with my home and personal life</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I may be doing the same job for the next 5 to 10 years</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>My physical working conditions are unpleasant (e.g. noisy, dirty, poorly designed)</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>My job involves the risk of actual physical violence</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>My boss behaves in an intimidating and bullying way towards me</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>My performance at work is closely monitored</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>I do not receive the support from others (boss/colleagues) that I would like</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>My job is insecure</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>My job is not permanent</td>
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I am troubled that .............

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<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>My pay &amp; benefits are not as good as other people doing the same or similar work</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>The technology in my job has overloaded me</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>My organisation is constantly changing for change’s sake</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>My work is dull and repetitive</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>I feel isolated at work e.g. working on my own or lack of social support from others</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>I am not sure what is expected of me by my boss</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Other people at work are not pulling their weight</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>I am set unrealistic deadlines</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>I am given unmanageable workloads</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>My boss is forever finding fault with what I do</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Others take the credit for what I have achieved</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>I have to deal with difficult customers/clients</td>
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<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>My relationships with colleagues are poor</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>I do not feel I am informed about what is going on in this organisation</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>I am never told if I am doing a good job</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>I am not involved in decisions affecting my job</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>I am not adequately trained to do many aspects of my job</td>
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<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>I do not have the proper equipment or resources to do my job</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>I do not have enough time to do my job as well as I would like</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>My job is likely to change in the future</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>My job skills may become redundant in the near future</td>
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<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>My ideas or suggestions about my job are not taken into account</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>I have little or no influence over my performance targets</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>I do not enjoy my job</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# ATTITUDES TOWARDS YOUR ORGANISATION

Cross one of the six categories from Strongly disagree to Strongly agree for each statement as it applies to you.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
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<th>Slightly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I feel valued and trusted by the organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If necessary I am prepared to put myself out for this organisation e.g. working long hours and/or unsociable hours</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>If asked, I am prepared to take on more responsibility or tasks not in my job description</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I enjoy working for this organisation to the extent that I am not actively seeking a job elsewhere</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I am proud of this organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Outside of my particular job, I take an interest in many aspects of the running and success of this organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Overall I am happy with my organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I feel that it is worthwhile to work hard for this organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I am committed to this organisation</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**YOUR HEALTH**

Over the last 3 months, have you experienced any of the following symptoms or changes in behaviour?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lack of appetite or over eating</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indigestion or heartburn</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Insomnia - sleep loss</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Headaches</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Panic or anxiety attacks</td>
<td>□</td>
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<td>Loss of sense of humour</td>
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<td>□</td>
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<td>Avoiding contact with other people</td>
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<td>Mood swings</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Unable to listen to other people</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Having difficulty concentrating</td>
<td>□</td>
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**YOUR HEALTH (CONTINUED)**

Q18 Have you had any significant illnesses in the last 6 months?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Q19 Over the last 3 months, how would you rate your overall health?

☐ Good  ☐ Alright  ☐ Poor

Q20 Over the last 3 months, roughly how productive have you felt in your job?

☐ 100% productive  ☐ 90-99% productive  ☐ 80-89% productive  ☐ 70-79% productive  ☐ Less than 70% productive

Q21 Over the last 6 months, have you encountered any major stressful events that have had an important effect on you?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

Q22 Over the last 3 months, how many working days have you been off work through illness or injury?

☐ 0  ☐ 1  ☐ 2-5  ☐ 6 or more

Q23 How many times have you been to your doctor over the last 3 months?

☐ 0  ☐ 1  ☐ 2-5  ☐ 6 or more
ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF HEADTEACHER STRESS

Please indicate for each item the extent to which it leads to stress for you (please tick relevant box)

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<th>Very occasionally causes stress</th>
<th>Occasionally causes stress</th>
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<td>Managing an increased teaching commitment</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Volume of paperwork</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Curriculum changes</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Ofsted / HMI inspections</td>
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<td>Taking an additional responsibility eg curriculum lead, Senco</td>
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<td>Dealing with difficult parents</td>
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<td>The totality of the tasks that have to be accomplished</td>
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<td>Relationships with governors</td>
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Please add any additional sources of stress that have not been listed above

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<td>11</td>
<td>In general, how stressful do you find being a Headteacher?</td>
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<td>How stressful have you found being a Headteacher during the last 6 months?</td>
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**JOB SATISFACTION RATING**

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<th>About half of the time</th>
<th>Most of the time</th>
<th>All of the time</th>
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Is there anything else you would like to add that has not come up already on the questionnaire? If yes, please state below.

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When you have finished, please check through the questionnaire to ensure you have answered all the items.

MANY THANKS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND, ONCE AGAIN, PLEASE BE ASSURED OF YOUR COMPLETE CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY BY TAKING PART IN THIS SURVEY

Please return to:

Mr. M. Howard
Asst. PEP
The Educational Psychology Service
The Glebe Centre
Glebe Street
Wellington
Telford
TF1 1JP
Dear Headteacher

I enclose your copy of the county wide confidential stress audit questionnaire referred to in a recent communication to you. Please try to find time to complete and return this to me, in the stamped addressed envelope enclosed, by 8 November 2010.

It is hoped that the majority of Headteachers will be able to return this questionnaire and thereby contribute to the establishment of an accurate picture of Headteacher stress in the XXXXX context.

Please let me if you would prefer an electronic copy of this questionnaire.

A second strand of this research study involves interviews with a representative sample of volunteer headteachers. If you would consider being a volunteer, but would like further information about what this would involve before deciding, could you please contact me and I will send you some additional information and discuss this with you.

Information obtained from analysis of the questionnaires and the subsequent interviews will, of course, be treated confidentially and anonymity protected.

Data is being analysed to identify any broad similarities / differences between different groups, eg secondary / primary phase headteachers, large / small schools, male/ female headteachers etc.

Research findings will also inform the development of a local authority Emotional Health and Well - Being Programme for Headteachers.

Please contact me if you wish to discuss any matters related to this research study.

Thank-you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Martin Howard
Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist
The Educational Psychology Service
The Glebe Centre
Glebe Street
Wellington
Telford
TF11JP

Tel: 01952 385216 Email: martin.howard@telford.gov.uk
Dear Headteacher

Re: Headteacher Occupational Stress Audit

You are invited to participate in a XXXXX Headteacher Stress Audit by completing a confidential postal questionnaire that will be sent to you in the week beginning 11/10/10.

The audit instrument that will be sent to you consists of an existing validated stress audit questionnaire (ASSET) which has been supplemented with additional questionnaire items based on focus group activity and discussion with XXXXX Headteachers during the Summer Term 2010. These additional items have been selected to reflect the current national and local context within which Headteachers are working. The intention here has been to ensure the validity of the questionnaire.

A second phase of the research will include interviews with a representative sample of primary and secondary Headteachers. This will be a random sample drawn from Headteachers who volunteer to assist with this strand of the research.

This study will assist the Local Authority in two ways. Firstly, by providing current local information to inform the development of a planned Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers, and secondly, by providing baseline data which will assist with any subsequent evaluation of the established programme.

Research findings and the proposed content of an Emotional Health and Well-being Programme for Headteachers will be shared with Headteachers during the Spring/Summer terms 2011.

Research findings will be included in a Doctoral thesis on Headteacher stress that I am completing for Manchester University. All Headteachers will also be provided with an executive summary of this research.

A participant information sheet is attached to provide you with additional information about this research, including procedures that will be in place to ensure the confidential handling of data. This is a Manchester University ethical requirement and in line with best practice guidelines.

Please contact me if there are any matters that you would like to discuss.

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Martin Howard
Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist
APPENDIX I  

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWEE INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

Dear

Re: Semi-structured Interview – information for participants

Thank-you for volunteering to take part in a short interview in relation to the research investigating Headteacher stress.

You will already have received a copy of a general background ‘Participation Information Sheet’ providing a general overview of the research. A further copy is attached for your information. What follows is some additional information about the interview.

The purpose of the interviews is to gain greater insight into the sources of stress experienced by Headteachers and the strategies/supports they draw on in its management. The effectiveness of the strategies/supports available will also be enquired about.

During the interview I will be ask you to reflect on a stressful work-related incident within the last 3-6 months. I would like you to describe:

- What had occurred (the matter you had to deal with)
- What led up to the incident (history)
- How the matter was resolved (outcome)
- Whether/how managing the incident had impacted on you (effects)
- What helped you manage the situation (strategies/supports used or drawn upon)
- Reflections on additional supports that may have helped

With your permission I would like to record the interview, otherwise I will keep notes as we proceed. When all the Headteacher interviews have been completed the interview data will be analysed to identify any key themes.

Interview transcripts/notes will be coded so that their source is not identifiable.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you will be at liberty to terminate the interview at any stage.

I am required by the University Research Ethics Committee to ask interview participants to sign a consent form. I will be able to discuss this with you when we meet and before the interview proceeds. A copy of this is attached for your information.

Please contact me if you wish to check/clarify any of the above, or discuss a related matter.

I will contact you again shortly to confirm that you are still willing to participate and if so, agree a convenient time for this to take place.

Thank you for your assistance and I look forward to meeting with you.

Yours sincerely

Martin Howard.
APPENDIX J INTERVIEWEE CONSENT FORM

Headteacher stress, coping strategies and supports: What should be included in a Local Authority Emotional Health and Well-being programme for Headteachers.

CONSENT FORM (TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW)

If you are happy to participate in an interview, please complete and sign the consent form below.

1. I confirm that I have read the attached Participation Information Sheet on the above research, had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions, and have answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation in this interview is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment.

3. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded and I am agreeing to this.

4. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.

5. I agree that anonymous data may be shared with other researchers.

I agree to take part in the above interview.

Name of participant: ______________________ Date: __________ Signature: ______________________

Name of person taking consent: ______________________ Date: __________ Signature: ______________________

Please Initial Box: (Please check appropriate box)

Please Note: This form does not constitute legal advice. It is intended to provide a general guide to the process of participating in a research interview.

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STRESSORS EXPERIENCED BY HEADTEACHERS

- 'Jack of all trades',
- Fitting in all the many roles
- Multiple roles
- Difficult parents/people
  - Going round in circles
  - Same people coming back
- Difficult to teach & be a head
- People requiring your time
- Form filling (travel claim form)
  - Pressure to fill in forms - for financial reasons
- Documents, very long-winded
  - Could be written in fewer words
- LA put all documents on-line, publish endless documents
Stressors

- Pressures of areas where school is economic, etc.
- Going through forms, people/specialists are available, however, contacting & then completing is a MASSIVE waste of time. *Emperor's New Clothes syndrome*

You phone up LA & advisory service, always a new person. They do not know you & your context.

You can be too quickly labelled as the 'cynic' if you complain - etc.

Endless audits: time to fill in these audits does not exist

Too many 'Top-down things'
- Reading projects etc... What about the school's own projects, notions, developments. Always told at the last minute.
- Starting times & end times are confusing & unhelpful.
- Insufficient resources: Lack of money.
COPING STRATEGIES SUPPORTS CURRENTLY USED BY HEADTEACHERS

- Bottle of wine
- Support of other headteachers: know what you’re going through.
  Although, aware of how little time other heads have for external/other school difficulties.
- Delegation can be useful. However, it can lead to difficulties: ‘Union-mindedness’, ‘Shouldn’t be doing X Y Z’. It’s not realistic.
- Coping strategy: Head(leader)ship time: dedicated time for headteachers that is kept free at all cost/time.
- Deputy (can) pick up extra work – ‘Conserve’ (Big personal difficulty)
- Admin support: really makes a difference. Letters can be sorted by admin team.
- Governors do not appreciate the admin – lack of understanding!
  OFSTED = Stressor = Ultra critical – all results lead! Always hanging over you.
Condensed Summary of Focus Group Comments

1. Stressors experienced by Headteachers

“Jack of all trades”- fitting in all the many roles
There are multiple roles
Sheer volume
The cumulative effect…… rather than individual factors

Difficult parents and difficult people to appease at all times
There is a feeling that they are going around in circles, with the same people coming back again and again.

It is difficult to teach and be a head at the same time.
Secondary headteacher has to teach-a 50% teaching commitment

People require your time, all the time

Form filling, i.e., travel claim form
There is always pressure to fill in forms, often there is financial pressure.
Was constantly filling in endless forms.
Endless form filling
Paperwork and deadlines…
Feeling that you have never cleared the workload .. it is constant.

The LA and the government are forever publishing documents. These are often only accessible on-line, so are difficult to access, or navigate. Often these documents say the same thing and are repetitive.

Lack of joined up thinking

Multi-agency working is complicated, often time wasting. The headteachers are expected to do more than the Doctors and social workers, etc.
Why is there time less valued than other professionals in this process?
The school and head is seen as the hub, of multi-agency work. This adds extra stress and is unfair.

There are huge expectations to know the detail of every child’s life.

There are the expectations of the parents and governors, adding to an already endless job to do. It is a total balancing act.

Headteachers need to fulfil multiple roles - within schools, teachers, managers secretaries… must be Jack of all Trades
The complaints that are made about the school, by parents for example. These complaints do not provide the Head with any strategies for improvement. It is unclear what some of these parents actually want.

The Head’s do want to engage with difficult parents and build a relationship, but this is made incredibly difficult by the external pressures to engage, time manage and meet targets, etc.

There is pressure as a result of where the school is situated, i.e., rural or urban, low SES or high SES.

Endless form filling - contacting specialists in order to comprehend and fill in these forms is a massive time wasting exercise. The ‘Emperor’s New Clothes Syndrome’, if you say something is working and convince others it is, people fail to notice the lack of real results or substance.

You can phone up the LA and their advisory service, always a new person; they do not know you or your school. There is no continuity or relationship being established.

You can be too quickly labelled as the cynic if you complain to the LA about something.

Endless audits - the time to fill in these audits doesn’t exist.

Too much paper work - there is not enough time.

Too many top-down initiatives
For example, the ‘Reading Project’, which the LA has decided to implement at the last minute
What about the schools own project, notions and developments? The Head is always told about these LA led initiatives at the last minute.

Insufficient resources - lack of funding

OFSTED!! It is always ultra critical, always results led. The inspection is always hanging over the head and the schools future rests on a positive report… and everything rests on it.

Ofsted and then HMI make stress - most heads think this.

2. Coping strategies and supports currently used by Headteachers

Bottle of wine

Support of other headteachers, who know what you’re going through
Although, they are also aware of how little time each of them have to listen to each others
difficulties.

Delegation can be useful, to ease some of the strain.
However, delegation can also lead to difficulties, such as ‘union-mindedness’, which is a
notion certain staff have, that they shouldn’t be doing x, y, and z, because it isn’t in their
job description. This is a totally unrealistic; everyone needs to pull their weight.

Headship time is dedicated time for headteachers to catch up, that is often sidelined, due
to time constraints. It is incredibly important and should be kept free at all cost.

The Deputy Head can be crucial, and should be crucial, in alleviating the stress and strain
felt by the Heads, although the Head is still left with the ‘lion share’ of the work.

Admin support is incredibly useful and can really make a difference, since they are the
one who deal with the phone calls and post, which otherwise the Head would have to
crawl through. The Governors do no appreciate the admin team; there is a lack of
understanding about the importance of their role.

3. Additional supports that would help reduce, or enable the
better management of, daily Headteacher stressors

Someone in the LA you can ring up and have a relationship with, who know your school
and the surrounding context.

SIPs need to be much less number oriented. Some are just number crunchers, which is
what OFSTED are about. It has become too much about data. This needs to be addressed
and changed.

Advisors from the LA use to know the school; they now have no knowledge,
understanding or appreciation for the school ethos or school staff.

There are not enough people in the LA, who are recognisable any more. There has been
the loss of key people, who use to know you and your school. Now you are forever being
re-directed.

The Educational Psychology Service now rings up to confirm they aren’t required at the
school. There has been a loss in quality support and input.

Pressure needs to be taken away from Headteachers, such as the legal responsibility,
which can easily be delegated to a member of the LA.

Money within the LA is in ‘little pockets’, which Heads have to bid for. Yet, millions are
invested elsewhere, in areas deemed important by the LA. There is no consultation with
schools about this. So funding needs to be addressed and changed.
There needs to be far less bureaucracy. Headteachers are filling in the same forms in different formats again and again. It has come impossible to give things the time they deserve.

Sometimes the Headteachers need to be congratulated and recognised for the work they do, from parents, governors and the LA

The peer-mentoring system for Headteachers needs an overhaul. There is no time or funding for this.

The county itself is not as supportive or friendly towards its schools, as with other counties.

The induction of Heads leaves a lot to be desired. New Heads are left to work things out for themselves, with minimal support. Heads feel that they are forever playing catch-up with the old system that was in place before they were instated.

There is a lack of quality input, support and contact from the LA

Information sharing with your peer-mentor, exchanging information and policy, etc can be very useful. Time needs to be made for this, every week, preferably.

The LA directory on-line is impossible to navigate. All the on-line material provided by the LA is difficult to access and the whole system needs an over-haul.

The Heads need to have time designated to catching up with their work and phone calls.

The LA need to stop implementing last minute strategies, which adds additional, unwanted, unneeded pressure.

There is a need for key people in the authority, which the school has a relationship with. There is concern about losing key people in the authority due to cuts and retirement, so the LA needs to replenish these key people.

There is a need for joined up thinking. Get rid of the confused, insular decision making within the LA, whereby Schools and Heads are consulted.

Passing over responsibility to the Headteacher needs to stop, e.g., with school closures.

Parents have so much power now, as do the children. It seems everyone has power but the head and staff. This power in-balance needs to be readdressed.

The VLE is another administrative nightmare. Heads are forced to use the gate-way, this is stressful and a waste of time.

The LA need to stop implementing bizarre, bureaucratic systems, when the old systems worked well anyway.

Computer networks seem incompatible and frequently crash, school staff cannot access the system at home. This must be improved and revised.
## APPENDIX L  STATISTICAL ANALYSIS TABLES (SPSS)

### Group Statistics

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### Group Statistics

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APPENDIX M  SAMPLE ANNOTATED INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Recording: VN870009
Date Transcribed: 27 April 2011
Transcriber: CEM
Length: 37 Minutes

I: Right just a prompt you’ll have had this but these are the areas I’m just going to go through

P: Yeah.

I: just to set the scene just a ...

P: I looked at them yeah.

I: just greater understanding really about the context in which you have to operate as Heads er er what would what would be really helpful is just to recount a a work related incident that you had to manage within the last three to six months

P: Yeah yeah.

I: just so I can get a context about it and just as the interview goes on then I just want to try and tease out what support you were able to draw upon and how managing the incident affected you .

P: Yeah what I will talk about would be the that we’ve um in the last er the last year really but focused in the last um six months we restructured the school completely.

I: Oh right.

P: So we completely restructured the support staff and teaching staff

I: Yeah.

P: that restructuring was as a result of deficit budget so um you know there was it was budget driven um which obviously led to redundancies loss of hours etc

I: Right right.

P: so obviously it was quite a a big issue for the school.

I: Yeah did that involve all of the staff or was it ...?

P: Everyone.

I: Yeah.

P: Everyone in the school the what we did was um obviously the budget we had a deficit budget situation we looked at firstly we spent a year trimming everything else so trying to find alternative ways of um reducing the deficit we argued vehemently with the Local Authority for them to fund us better

I: Yeah.
P: you know we went down all the routes that were available but then as with all you know the reduction of any deficit in in schools it came down to to to staffing

I: Right.

P: and so um we involved everybody we re-evaluated everybody’s job so support staff and teaching staff

I: Right.

P: um we went through a process of people volunteering to reduce their hours, people looking for voluntary redundancy, um but eventually you know you come to the crunch point where we had to issue the 188 Notice and um and we had to identify teaching and support staff for redundancy.

I: Right was this primarily in the summer term or did this stretch into the autumn...?

P: Well really its it was the whole year we if you think about the problem with with it was we started the process the previous year and what we were aiming to do was to get it complete and the new staffing structure in place for Christmas.

I: Right.

P: Unfortunately the consultation process didn't go as we planned Union opposition led to an extended consultation process and so rather than being in place in the at Christmas time for the for the er Spring term we moved it all away to the new structure came into place in this September.

I: Yeah so the new structure's in place now?

P: Now.

I: Oh right.

P: We've got it now.

I: Yeah yeah. How far before you had to start managing that process did you know it was coming?

P: Well I suppose I knew this is my fourth year in post and when I took the job I knew that the school had a deficit budget

I: Right.

P: and so there was always going to be an issue about reducing that budget having a budget recovery plan (pause) so really I suppose if I'm honest we’ve known about it for three years.

I: Yes.

P: Um but obviously you know there are things to work through you can’t just go straight in and make a cut you've got to I mean I feel I've got to be totally justified in whatever I do I think its important that people see me as being transparent and so when although I was given figures and facts and and the budget I had to explore that in detail so that I felt I had confidence in the figures, the accounts, which I didn't have to start with. That was a problem.

I: Yeah.

P: And it took us a year to get to a point where I felt confident with the figures and so did the counties for that matter. The accounts at the school were accurate. Once we'd got that then we we could then move that forward into a projection because we knew where that would lead over the next two academic years and at that point really that was when we started the process to say right this is now going to have to lead to a staffing reduction.
I: Right and that's been you've operated under the new system ...

P: Since September.

I: ...since September right. Would you say the situation has been resolved to to your own satisfaction?

P: (Laughs) Um to my satisfaction that's a really good question if I could have done it a slightly different way then I would have done.

I: Yeah.

P: I mean I put a set of proposals to to the staff and to the Unions

I: Right.

P: which er meant that I didn't actually lose quite so many people to redundancy.

I: Right.

P: That was rejected because the Unions felt er the joint Unions felt that it wasn't a sustainable position.

I: Right.

P: Although I argued for it being a sustainable position they felt that we would run for maybe two years or three years and then have to go through the whole process again and obviously you know I accepted what they were saying they had more experience of that type of um process and so it wasn't the ideal solution because I lost more staff than I wanted to and people had to teach more.

I: Yeah.

P: So there was two things really if I could have stopped both of those happening I would have done.

I: Can I ask you how many people were quite seriously affected in terms of the outcome either in terms of having to lose their post or take on considerably different types of operation within the school?

P: Ah that's a difficult one there were six redundancies so they were obviously

I: Yeah right.

P: and they were two two support staff and four teaching staff.

I: Right.

P: Um I would say that every member of the teaching staff they were affected by it because we went from a subject led system to a faculty system.

I: Yeah.

P: So we changed the roles we changed the job descriptions for everybody so I think every member of staff's been affected. On the support staff side it I don't think that it was quite as severe their roles and job descriptions stayed the same

I: Yeah.
P: so but obviously they had they were slightly different effects for them in that they lost overtime so there was no more overtime for them in the school. Um obviously we were looking closely at their contracts some of their contracted hours changed so its slightly different for the support staff than the teaching staff.

I: Yeah. I mean in terms of your own role what impact has it had on yourself as as as head of this organisation here?

P: Um I think the worst thing from my point of view was it took me away from my core purpose so rather than being a Head teacher that was focused on learning progress and achievement of young people I spent probably the vast majority of my time dealing with personnel and budget issues

I: Yeah.

P: which was wasn’t satisfactory to me although I knew it had to be done

I: Yeah.

P: you know you always think well its yeah you’re going to do that its not going to take up that much of your time but unfortunately you know when you’re running on you’re running a process 18 months two years and then er and then of course its extended for what was another six months virtually you know that that was it really I felt that my core purpose

I: Yeah.

P: my role as a Head teacher had been skewed in the wrong direction.

I: Yeah. Is there a fall out as a result? Its probably relatively early days since the new structure came in, are you still having to field issues that are emerging from the new structure?

P: We’ve got some we’ve got some small issues right now I mean if I was honest I would say that its been really relatively painless and successful

I: Yes.

P: so I’ve got some staff who are on protected salaries who have er some issues because they obviously have to provide um work or they have to work in a role which is commensurate with their salary for the three years of their protection so that causes that’s a slight problem.

I: Yeah.

P: But um and of course what we’ve got is we’re closely monitoring a lot of new roles

I: Yeah.

P: so that that in itself is although proving successful once you know when things are successful the pressure’s off so we’re monitoring the new roles and they’re that's something that really is constant so I've got a new leadership team

I: Yeah.

P: I've got four new people on on my leadership team we've got new directors of faculty posts six of those. I've got four posts that we created so you know I mean I suppose if you look that's at least 14 out of 37 people with very specific roles. So yeah.

I: Yeah. (925)

P: Yeah (laughs).
I: That leads nicely to my next question really about in terms of the impact on yourself as a Head in terms of all the stuff you have to manage anyway this was something else that you had to to deal with

P: Yes.

I: so I mean it sounds as though effectively you’re having to gel together a new management team

P: Yeah. Yeah.

I: people taking on. How do you feel I mean you have (950) the impact on yourself because it took you away from something you see as your core purpose in school because you have to manage this this initiative um in what other ways do you feel its affected you as a professional Head of this organisation here?

P: I think it wasn't until this year that I felt that I'd gained the the commitment and the backing of the staff because I think up until he point where we final when we finally got through re-structuring

I: Right.

P: I think there was always um there was a certain amount of resentment that I was making those changes although it wasn't actually driven by me as such um you know you carry the can as Head teacher you know you stand up in front of your staff and you say this has to happen um and so its not really until you know I’m four this is my fourth year I now really being to feel I've got the full commitment from the staff and I think that's because I’m very transparent whatever happens you know I tell it as it is. The staff have now seen that what I said through restructuring has come to be true.

I: Yeah.

P: And now I feel that that people are seeing you know seeing me as I want to be seen. You know my colleagues approach my team work the fact that I'll support for people that is now beginning they're beginning to see that in reality without always having am I going to still have my job hovering in the back.

I: Yeah.

P: So er quite important really because as a Head teacher I think that's vital to have that commitment from your staff. As you say difficult times everything's changing so...

I: Yeah. I mean has there been much impact on relationships I mean people would have gone through possibly a grieving process really having to lose part of what they’d been used to but how do you see any effect there might have been in terms of your relationships with your colleagues here?

P: I think its I can see I can probably box that up into two or three different areas one would be those people who lost responsibility didn't lose pay but they lost and they will lose pay in two years.

I: Right.

P: I think there's a certain amount of resentment there, luckily by natural wastage by people moving to other posts there aren't too many of those and so I think I have to work hard at regaining those people's confidence.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: Um the relation ... a worrying thing would be the relationship with the people who were made redundant is is cut dead as soon as they go and although you feel like you've got a responsibility to to you know keep checking on their welfare that disappears and so in the back of your mind
you know you always think well that person was made redundant unfortunately they used to work for me but what's happening to them now and you know I probably I've not managed to do that apart from in one case. Then you've got the other side of the coin where people who maybe in a previous structure felt that they had more to offer or their roles were restricted have now been given the opportunity to the freedom if you like to to open up their development

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: they're very positive so there's a lot of those which is nice because they're people who are coming forward and make you feel that what you've done although it is painful at the time is actually working.

I: Yeah.

P: So so there's that group of people

I: Right.

P: and within this restructuring I expanded the leadership opportunities and I think that those those those people cause I made all those appointments internal so nobody came in from outside so those people are seeing a a completely different opportunity

I: Yeah.

P: and obviously they've become people that I've mentored as part of my my leadership team so there's number of different reactions. The support staff have all been hugely supportive

I: Yeah.

P: they've you know they've all been really the backbone of making sure we kept going and so I think my relationship with them is probably better than its ever been.

I: There's always its funny there's always opportunities aren't there as well as threats to the situation like that some people ...

P: Yeah. You've got to make the most of it.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: I mean its you know its difficult to say this but you know I work on on a sort of life philosophy that somebody deals you the cards and that's it you know you play with it so if this government deals us a different set of cards we'll play with them.

I: Yeah.

P: You know and what structure we've got that's it and we'll play with it and we'll do the best we can cause that's what we're here for

I: Yeah.

P: and so I suppose that sort of philosophy gets you through sometimes. You know.

I: Yeah. Yeah it does I think being philosophical about it helps ...

P: Yeah.

I: Do you feel in terms of yourself I mean emotionally its obviously an emotionally demanding situation you went through there I mean what toll do you think it took on yourself you know in terms of having to keep keep some people on board and deliver bad news to some colleagues in school?
P: Yeah that's difficult.

I: Its not to ...

P: Its hard when you when I think it challenges moral position there's no doubt about that because I had to make some decisions that morally I would never have made so asking people to teach more I would never have done that in a month of Sundays you know I think to say to someone ‘to keep this post you've now got to teach an hour more or two hours more a week’ so that was difficult and I always found that difficult to justify when I was talking to somebody you know and I actually found myself saying ‘look I might not agree with this but to get us to the point where we are solvent where we can carry on that is what has to happen I'm afraid’.

I: Yeah.

P: So that I found that quite difficult so when your morals are challenged.

I: Yeah.

P: Its er I think I suppose you're always I found myself being cautious and I’m not usually a cautious person I’m quite a risk taker you know I quite like the idea that if something's got a good feel about it we'll go with it and I removed myself from that to be very much driven by it had to fit a criteria.

I: Yeah.

P: It had to have a sound basis for a decision to be made and that that really was was a little bit of I suppose its in me because I did it but it isn't part of my nature.

I: Yeah.

P: So ...

I: So somebody forced you into a way of operating that's outside the comfort zone a little?

P: Yeah. I was absolutely outside my comfort zone.

I: Yeah.

P: Yeah. And I suppose you learn quite a bit about yourself because you learn that you can do that yes its er I suppose I've never been in a position where you're you feel you know you're carrying the can for 700 students the community then dealing with people’s livelihoods it was quite difficult really.

I: Yeah it sounds it could I ask what sort of supports were you able to draw on as a professional here managing that because I suppose you would have had a management team but the impact would have affected them as well by the changes what sort of support strategies did you draw on to ...?

P: When I came there was a huge management team in the school there was 11 people

I: Yeah.

P: and because of the issues at the school had I reduced that down to three

I: Yeah.

P: so I drew in a very close management team around me. And obviously they were hugely supportive er my Deputy Head and my Assistant Head as they were at the time. They were you know you couldn't have asked more in terms of you know being people who would take work from
you accept the fact that there were days when you weren’t here etcetera and I felt confidence in handing that over to them so that they were hugely supportive. Our Local Authority supported me so you know I can’t deny that although we had many a battle I still feel at the end of the day people in human resources you know human resources were always there on the end of the phone to to deal with things um (1752) again somebody else who was constantly on the end of the phone saying ‘yeah carry on’ or there for consultation so our Local Authority yeah were excellent I think really.

I: Yeah.

P: Um I got some support from the actual Head Teacher network that we have in X so other Heads were really very you know very accommodating you know cause as I say they sort of mentor you don't they and they’re there at the end of the phone if you need to just run something by someone.

I: Is that the Union Network or the National Development?

P: No that's just just the Shropshire Heads so Shropshire Secondary Heads Association.

I: Oh right.

P: Yeah.

I: I know in terms of the various structure I know you've got the School Development Group in the area as well but was this the whole the wider group of secondary Heads?

P: Yeah its the wider group.

I: Yeah.

P: And then my Union obviously gave me any support that I requested they were very good.

I: Yes I mean just on reflecting back was there anything missing at the time that you feel would have been useful to have been able to draw upon from those sources or was there something missing in the arena you feel might have been useful to tap into in terms of support for yourself or were you were you happy to with what was there managing that big change that was taking place?

P: No I don't think so I mean I always felt that I felt that I was well guided firstly by by the Unions the joint Unions and the Local Authority and so when we I mean even though the first round of consultation didn't wasn't successful we stepped into the second with a lot of confidence because we learnt from the first and so um I couldn’t see I couldn't see any glaring holes it was never a case that there wasn't somebody or some organisations to turn to and also there was I felt very confident that I could recommend to other people so if staff came to me and said 'look I've got issues about this’ I would say ‘well you’re talking to the wrong person but you do need to talk to this person’

I: Yeah.

P: so I felt it felt that we did have it pretty well covered.

I: Yeah. You

P: Yeah definitely yeah yeah.

I: Yeah. That sounds like you had a good good mix of a support support system I don't..

P: We did there's no doubt yeah.
I: Cause not just in terms of your own your life outside the institution how do you keep yourself healthy I mean are you into sport or ...

P: Do you know I think that's probably if I look back on the worst aspect of of going through that process was how it affected my lift outside school

I: Yeah.

P: because I I mean my contacts with my family were vastly reduced you know and there were times when I was adding it up and I was doing 80 hour weeks you know ridiculous amount of time.

I: Yes.

P: Now okay my family were fully understanding of the issues but you know it still it still has an effect on you

I: Yeah.

P: er you let things go because you're immensely tired and so whereas before I played a certain amount of cricket I used to go to the gym I used to do quite a bit of walking all of that disappeared I've not got that back either. And that worries me.

I: You know on the questionnaire one of the questions about ‘do you take regular exercise’ its coming out an issue that a lot of Heads have got things set up but there not always able to use..

P: Yeah.

I: but the time needed to do the job is getting in the way.

P: Yeah. Can't do it.

I: Is it in terms of not being able to re-engage with the things that you know that you like doing outside is that because you know there’s a lot to do with the restructure or you've lost the contacts or maybe its the energy to get to re-engage again?

P: I think the the energy’s part of it I think you physically feel tired and I think there's a I think after a major period of intensive work I think it takes time for you to to to recharge those batteries

I: Yeah.

P: and you know at the age I'm at I'm sure those batteries take longer to recharge.

I: Yeah.

P: I think you're also selective then as well you're selective about the things that you want you feel you've immediately got to address and they take a priority so whereas before I might have taken myself off and played cricket for a whole day in during the summer I think its more important that I re-engage with my family so you know you make a conscious decision to do that and and and you know paint those windows that you haven't painted for three years and stuff like that you know.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: I mean I'm hoping that that does you know lead into the things change and certainly over the summer I started to see things change you know started to do things again I'd not done for two and a half years so yeah yeah.

I: Yeah. It is as part of the cost its the requirement for you to put even more time in cause I know its a busy job anyway

P: Yeah.
I: you had to put even more time in, the knock on effect one of the knock on effects of that then was in terms of your life outside?

P: Yeah. Definitely I mean I would say that my health suffered.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: I mean I've always you know touch wood very lucky been healthy but um I certainly put weight on my doctor said at one point that he was worried about my blood pressure

I: Yeah.

P: things like that I've never had before. You know never experienced at all in my life

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: and so you think oh its something to do with getting old its something to do but maybe you know when you sit back you think maybe its just the pressure that you were under at that time.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: And of course increase in amount of hours that you work cause you've still got to keep the school running even when you're doing it you know so you're adding it on top all the time so its you're working the extra hour out two hours out here and then going home suddenly starting to work again. Cause I used to run a regime where I didn't work at home

I: Yeah.

P: that was one of my principles work at school yeah and if I’m still here at six o’clock I’ve done it but once I got through the door that's my family’s time you know but I found myself ...

I: It was impossible to do that?

P: No I found it impossible you know so you I was taking work home for the first time in years.

I: Yeah. Yeah. Did any of your immediate family members comment on the change in your ...?

P: Its funny (laughs) I told my wife I was having this interview today and she said ‘I should be sitting in the chair next to you to say what you were really like’.

I: Yeah I won’t be doing that I reassure you (laughter).

P: Yeah yeah that happened and I think my daughter commented on my daughter who I used to do a lot of things I’ve got three girls one’s off at university very independent, one’s er she's coming in year 10 so she was in year 9 and the other one was in year 6. The one in year 9 said ‘you've stopped doing some things with me’ you know ‘you don't do that anymore’ and that really hurts you know when that ...

I: Yeah. That's where the guilt kicks in.

P: It is yeah it is definitely. Yeah.

I: Yeah. Can I share something with you about the research in this area , one of the, I suppose one of the accepted models of occupational stress is just accepting that busy professional jobs have pressure but as long as there's a balance between the control that you have over what you do and the supports available most most of us to can deal with the pressure.

P: Yeah.
I: But its when those things get out of sync a little bit where, maybe we lose a little bit of control or the supports go, er, just taking it one by one I mean did you feel that you were always in control of what you had to deal with or were there some unquantifiable unknowns that ...

P: No I mean er I you know I used to pride myself being somebody that, I mean when people used to talk about stress I would quite openly say 'no stress does not affect me I deal with whatever's thrown at me' in the middle of this process I found myself short tempered and I mean again I'm a very calm person I never, I also found myself not sleeping so I would be wide awake in the middle of the night having to write down some things that I was going to have to do next day

I: Hmm.

P: having to work through something to feel that I'd achieved it. You know and I suppose those were real they were very significant things you know and you know I experienced road rage that I'd never done before you know and its not till you draw back from it and you think hang on is this, I mean there was a time when I questioned whether I should carry on with it and again this is a job that I love you know and I've never ever questioned teaching or being a Head you know I've always wanted to be a Head teacher but then I thought, you know, is it worth it, is it worth it at this point?

I: Yeah.

P: And then you come out the other side and the support from colleagues at that time was really important at that time you know.

I: Yeah. I think you might have said what was the most difficult part of the process, was it the cost of possibly relationships in terms of the people who you knew would not be happy about the changes they had to take on board?

P: Yeah.

I: So it was that sort of the personal interface part?

P: It was the fact that morally I knew that I was asking people to do something that I didn't feel was right and that affects your relationship with anyone doesn't it because I've always I've always been a very honest person.

I: Yeah.

P: And although being honest was the way forward and its what I managed to do all the time it hurt people

I: Yeah.

P: and that that my relationship with people was damaged because of that.

I: Yeah.

P: You know. And even to the extent when you talk about your home life having to say to someone 'I can't do that because I'm going to be in a meeting till 7o'clock' you know then that really is you know although you're being honest with yourself because you know its the only way forward instead of saying 'I'll try and be there' and then not turning up I'd rather say 'I'm not going to be there'

I: Yeah.

P: so yeah so I think the relationship side of things and the relationship with my staff relationships at home definitely yeah yeah.
I: Yeah. It sounds as though you were able to draw on some support networks out there to help you manage that process, there weren't any you felt were missing that you could draw on in an ideal world? I mean if you were to do it again there wasn't any missing support or strategy there?

P: Um no I don't think so

I: No.

P: unless somebody could tell me that there was something that is on offer

I: Yeah.

P: er I felt that I always had I always had an outlet so you know there was always if it was an ex colleague or if it was er my Union representative or if it was somebody in HR or if it was my leadership team you know there were a number of outlets for me so I don't think so but I think something I thought of in the summer when lying on a sun bed finally relaxing sort of thing in Greece maybe somebody should have said to me 'do you realise what you're doing to your family?' and 'you should be doing this' now that might have been something but I don't know who should have said that to me.

I: Yeah.

P: Do you know what I mean?

I: Yeah. Its a tricky one, yeah yeah.

P: Its er ...

I: Yeah. you know last summer I did a couple of little focus groups including one with a local SDG.. the

P: Yeah.

P:Right.

I: and that was just to help form questions that went in to the questionnaire and there was another focus group in the Shrewsbury area some of the Heads that had been in the job for a few years were referring back to a time where there was an Area Education Officer in existence

P: Right.

I: er I suppose the gist of it was er that there was somebody who er knew your school quite intimately there was somebody they could contact automatically who knew the staff knew the community and I was wondering is that the sort of person who might have been helpful or ...

P: You see I've got you see I've got that sort of person I think I've got two people that you're talking about when I did my NPQH we're talking a decade ago I had a personal tutor and since doing my NPQH I've kept in contact with him and we meet definitelly once a year and we just chew over whatever but he's somebody who I can just pick the phone up and say 'I just need to run this by you' or 'this is outrageous'

I: Right.

P: but I think also my school improvement partner who's from the Local Authority he he serviced that role as well

I: Yeah.
P: because he knew the school very well and so that was that was again there were two people there both in different contexts one just about me professionally somebody who knows me very well and has worked with me for you know a decade whatever and somebody who knew the school very well who also knows me so so I felt that I had those outlets.

I: Yeah and obviously you felt very confident that they would get back.

P: Yeah.

I: Okay are there any other observations you would make about Heads and the stressors they have they have to manage in their day to day management?

P: Er having to be the person who does have the answers that is I mean like right now people are coming are coming to us about funding issues

I: Yeah.

P: they're coming to us about what the Government's going to do and they expect you to have the answers.

I: (Laughter) Font of all knowledge and wisdom.

P: Yeah. I mean I think you know more and more its frustrating when we when you don't have the answers because you think as a Head you work hard to make sure you've got all the information at your finger tips currently we haven't.

I: Yeah. Yeah.

P: Um I think the external pressures of monitoring and performance are with us but

I: Yeah.

P: you know although we accept them I think that they are something which you know we worry constantly about how our students are performing what levels are they achieving how is that being measured you know where is somebody putting you in a hierarchy um and sometimes sometimes you you feel that your position in terms of somebody who leads learning is being compromised

I: Yeah.

P: just to get results and obviously that's you know again I mean I feel that I deal with that reasonably well because I don't live in a results driven world um I think its very important of the children learn that they learn to learn but I think I can live with the fact that maybe if they don't get the extra 5% GCSE A-C so long as we feel we’ve done our job then its okay you know?

I: Yeah.

P: But I think that external pressure we’re seeing indications of that suddenly going to grow again you know and somebody’s going to change the ball game so that you know they're not only going to deal different cards they're going to deal them from a different pack so you know we're all going to have to get used to that.

I: There's a new Ofsted framework coming as well isn't there?

P: Yeah. I've I've just been Ofsteded in May it didn't inspections never worry me

I: Yeah.

P: somebody has to monitor what you're doing and I believe that somebody's going to check up on you if somebody pays you a lot of money which they do
I: Yeah.

P: then somebody’s going to want to see that you're doing the job and somebody’s going to monitor that they're going to make an assessment that's fine so you know I've worked in schools in special measures and I know the pressure that that was um I've worked with Ofsted before and I think I've done 14 inspections now

I: Yeah.

P: so when they brought the new framework in it didn't phase me at all it was fine actually to be honest it was the best inspection framework I've ever worked in so the last one er in May it was really really positive so ...  

I: Yeah.

P: And I think you know I think we accept that when you take the job you accept that somebody’s somebody’s always going to be judging your performance if its not the parents its the students its you know its your own staff then you can go to the external agencies your Local Authority National Government I think it comes with the job its part of the you know you don’t want that don’t take the job.

I: I know its on the questionnaires that's coming out relatively high probably more from primary colleagues than secondary you know there’s a question about Ofsted stroke HMI and its its coming as a constant source of stress for some people not surprising I suppose but it seems to be more prevalent in the primary sector the people really have identified that as a high um its ...

P: Yeah. Primary Heads are under more pressure than us though

I: Yeah.

P: I mean you know if I look at the I look at the two jobs I would I would you know quite openly say that a primary Head's job is is more stressful I think there are more pressures on them.

I: Yeah.

P: Um as a secondary Head you you get more time to do your job which is important you've got a bigger support structure around you within your school and I think that's significant. I couldn’t imagine being a primary Head in a 60 70 kids school where you're teaching three days a week full time I mean I do some teaching now but its you know its not a big part of my week and and so I think those pressures are different definitely.

I: Yeah. It is again as you won’t be surprised coming out as quite high on the questionnaire as well where you know people have to take on more teaching responsibility in some of the schools..

P: Yeah.

I: it is is quite noticeably high I mean its just confirming what people say ... 

P: I mean managing a school is managing a school it doesn't I mean it doesn't change because you've got 60 kids or 600 you know the number of students in this school doesn't affect the way I run it as a secondary school

I: Yeah.

P: because somebody else is dealing with the actual pupil numbers somewhere within the structure. The management of a secondary school is the management of a secondary school you know its you know 600,3000 its still the same.

I: Hmm how many are there on the role last year?
P: 663.
I: 663 is it fairly static your ...?

P: Gone down we've lost in the last three years we've lost about 170 so we've suffered with the falling roll situation.

I: Yeah. Your nearest I suppose Y just down the road from here is it?

P: Y yeah to the South Market G over to the to the East

I: Yeah.

P: nearest going towards the West would be Dlands but we have a huge competitor just in Malpas in Cheshire just in (3643)

I: Yeah. We had a little bit of work across the border there as well.

P: So they're our they're our main competitors cause they're a foundation grammar school as well which is a slightly different pull on our catchment area. They're only six miles away as well.

I: It is one o'clock. Thank you very much for your time.

P: That's fine.

(End of Tape)

I: Interviewer
P: Participant
Mr Martin Howard,
Educational Psychology
School of Education,
Ellen Wilkinson Building

8th June 2010

Dear Martin,

Committee on the Ethics of Research on Human Beings
Howard, Squires: Headteacher stress, coping strategies and supports: what should be included in a Local Authority emotional health and well being programme for Headteachers? (ref 10022)

I write to confirm that, at its meeting on May 20th, the Committee reviewed the above project, and asked separate information sheets and consent forms for each group and confirmation of a ‘distress policy’. Your email of 3 June satisfied the concerns of the Committee and the project has therefore been given ethical approval.

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

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

We hope the research goes well.

Yours sincerely

Dr T P C Stibbs

Secretary to the Committee
The Committee's procedures require those responsible for projects which have been approved by the Committee to report on any of the following:

* Any incident, accident or untoward event associated with the project (*Please note that if the incident constitutes an accident or dangerous occurrence, the usual Health and Safety reporting mechanism must still be used*)
* Any variation in the methods or procedures in the approved protocol
* A termination or abandonment of the project (with reasons)
* A report on completion of the project or a progress report 12 months after approval has been given.

The report should be sent to the Secretary to the Committee, Dr T P C Stibbs, Room 2.004 John Owens Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL (*tel: 0161-275-2046/2206*).

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**Project:**  
*Headteacher stress, coping strategies and supports: what should be included in a Local Authority emotional health and well being programme for Headteachers?* (ref 10022)
APPENDIX O PROCEDURE FOR DEALING WITH DISTRESSED PARTICIPANTS

If during individual interview a participant becomes distressed the interview will be halted. Prior to interview participants will have been informed that they are at liberty to terminate an interview at any time, without giving a reason, and without detriment.

If during interview a participant discloses that they are experiencing a high degree of stress and they are seeking help then I will provide them with details for contacting the LA Occupational Health Team as well as details for contacting the confidential Counselling Service for LA employees. (see section 3.9 of Ethics Approval Form).

Participants in the Focus Group Activity will also have been informed in advance of the session that they are at liberty to leave the group at any time, without giving reason, and without detriment.

If a departing participant from this group exercise seems distressed on departure the researcher will make a follow-up telephone contact later that day to check if assistance is required. Again, if professional help is requested then the appropriate contact information will be provided.
APPENDIX P   SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Introduction

- Thank you for your co-operation, overview of research, questions answered.
- Reference to pre-interview letter (copy provided), structure of interview outlined
- Interview Consent Form explained and signed.

Interview questions

(Interview taped and skeletal notes taken)

I would like you to reflect on a stressful work related incident within the last 3 – 6 months. I would like you to describe:

- What had occurred (the matter you had to deal with)
- What led up to the incident (history)
- How the matter was resolved (outcome)
- Whether/ how managing the incident had impacted on you (effects)
- What helped you manage the situation (strategies / supports used or drawn upon)
- Reflections on additional supports that may have helped

Any other comments:

Thank you for your co-operation and time.