



## University of Dundee

Design and Validation of the Primary-Secondary School Transitions Emotional Wellbeing Scale (P-S WELLS); the First Scale to Assess Children's Emotional Wellbeing in the Context of Primary-Secondary School Transitions

Bagnall, Charlotte Louise; Jindal-Snape, Divya; Panayiotou, Margarita; Qualter, Pamela

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# Design and Validation of the Primary-Secondary School Transitions Emotional Wellbeing Scale (P-S WELLS); the First Scale to Assess Children's Emotional Wellbeing in the Context of Primary-Secondary School Transitions

PROTOCOL

CHARLOTTE LOUISE BAGNALL

DIVYA JINDAL-SNAPE

MARGARITA PANAYIOTOU

PAMELA QUALTER

\*Author affiliations can be found in the back matter of this article

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## ABSTRACT

Children with poor emotional wellbeing and mental health, following primary-secondary school transitions, are more likely to experience increased educational disruption, poor academic attainment, and social maladjustment, which can lead to poor life chances and exacerbate existing social inequalities. However, the corpus of scales used to assess primary-secondary school transitions and emotional wellbeing during this time have considerable limitations, which has significant consequences for identifying and supporting children's emotional wellbeing at this critical juncture.

Outlined is a protocol for the design and validation of the first robust, sensitive, and standardised accessible scale, to longitudinally assess children's emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions. This brief and accessible scale will be named the *Primary-Secondary School Transitions Emotional Wellbeing Scale (P-S WELLS)*. *P-S WELLS* will be developed following a multi-informant, mixed-methods model of scale development, which we outline to facilitate transparent reporting.

The lack of a standardised, robust, sensitive, and accessible quantitative scale to assess children's emotional wellbeing, over time and in the context of primary-secondary school transitions, is inhibiting empirical progress within the field, our ability to best support children in practice, and likely leading to policies and practices that are not fit for purpose. *P-S WELLS* and its development will be novel in its (a) approach, in that we will ask children about their feelings towards the changes they are negotiating in context; (b) use longitudinal design and operationalisation; and (c) aim to overcome limitations found in previous work.

## CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

**Charlotte Louise Bagnall**

Manchester Institute of Education, University of Manchester, Ellen Wilkinson Building, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6JA, UK

[charlotte.bagnall@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:charlotte.bagnall@manchester.ac.uk)

## KEYWORDS:

primary-secondary school transitions; emotional wellbeing; scale development; children; protocol; Delphi method; co-production

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The number of children experiencing poor emotional wellbeing that can lead to clinically significant mental health conditions in the long term, is increasing rapidly (Pitchforth et al., 2019). The move to secondary school, at age eleven in the UK, is a critical developmental period, often presented as a turning point in establishing the foundations for nurturing long-term positive emotional wellbeing and mental health (White, 2020). During this time, children negotiate multiple, simultaneous changes leading to concurrent academic, social, psychological, environmental, and personal “transitions”, as outlined in Jindal-Snape’s (2016; 2023) *Multiple and Multi-dimensional Transitions Theory (MMT)*. Primary-secondary school transitions also occur at a time when children are experiencing hormonal changes, which can impact their cognitive and social processing (Ng-Knight et al., 2019). In addition, during this time children navigate school-based pressures, such as academic national Standard Assessment Tests in England, which can perpetuate feelings of instability and anxiety (Bagnall, 2020).

Unsurprisingly, primary-secondary school transitions can pose heightened risk for the development of poor emotional wellbeing and subsequent mental health, which has been recognised by key stakeholders involved in supporting children during this time (e.g., parents/guardians, teachers) (Bagnall et al., 2020). It is also recognised by policy makers; for example the DfH & DfE (2018) highlighted the need for a greater focus on transition periods in children and young people’s lives. The importance of supporting children’s emotional wellbeing over primary-secondary school transitions has been further intensified by the international outbreak of COVID-19, which has shown the negative impact of primary-secondary school transitions on children’s emotional wellbeing to heighten (Bagnall et al., 2022). Thus, the need to intervene is paramount.

Recognising the lack of shared understanding amongst researchers, professionals, policy makers, and young people pertaining to the conceptualisation of emotional wellbeing, for clarity and, in line with contemporary theories of emotional wellbeing (including the dual factor model of mental health, Kelly et al., 2012), we conceptualise emotional wellbeing as:

“a change in feelings and mind-set that *are more than temporary*, that can influence ability to manage emotions, and significant and prolonged changes to emotional states are a key signifier of the emergence of early onset mental health difficulties”

Our definition is in line with broader mental health literature, including longitudinal developmental cascade studies that have shown emotional wellbeing to predict changes in mental health over time within adolescent populations (Demkowicz et al., 2023), and can be applied to primary-secondary school transitions. For example, research has shown that it is common for children to report temporary feelings of stress and anxiety from the last month of primary school into the first month in secondary school. For most children, these feelings dissipate within the first term of secondary school (Bagnall et al., 2021a; Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019; Jindal-Snape et al., 2023). However, this is not the same for all children, and poor adjustment over primary-secondary school transitions has been linked with poor emotional wellbeing and long-term mental health concerns (White, 2020). In line with broader developmental cascade studies (Peterson et al., 2022), these children have an increased risk of educational disruption, poor academic attainment, and social maladjustment, which can potentially contribute to poor life chances and exacerbate existing social inequalities. Thus, supporting children’s emotional wellbeing over primary-secondary school transitions is a significant public health issue.

However, a criticism of the current field is that there is limited understanding of (a) how primary-secondary school transitions affect emotional wellbeing and the implications for mental health; (b) which aspects of emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions are most affected; and (c) how potentially vulnerable children can be identified and what additional emotional wellbeing support they need. This unmet need is not aided by the fact that, to date, there is no standardised, robust, sensitive, and accessible quantitative scale which holistically assesses children’s emotional wellbeing *in the context of* primary-secondary school transitions over time. In addition, scales which inadequately assess emotional wellbeing or primary-secondary experiences have important limitations, which are identified in our systematic literature review (see Bagnall & Jindal-Snape, 2023) and summarised below:

1. Key constructs (primary-secondary school transitions) are not conceptualised nor theoretically defined (especially by children)
2. Inconsistent reliability and validity (specifically adapted or created primary-secondary school transitions scales)
3. Lack of longitudinal focus in the (a) design and (b) operationalisation of scales
4. Mainly use negative terminology, following a negative discourse.

These limitations are inhibiting progress within the field, as we cannot confidently say whether changes in emotional wellbeing during this time are shaped by the transition, and thus context driven, or reflective of other environmental or personal factors.

## RATIONALE AND AIMS

In sum, limitations of previous work demonstrate the abject nature of the current field in respect to key assumptions (i.e., transitions as a static timepoint), with significant consequences for identifying and addressing emotional wellbeing and mental health at a critical juncture. Overcoming this, the overarching aim of this project is:

### 1. To develop the first robust, sensitive, and standardised scale, to longitudinally assess children's emotional wellbeing *in the context of primary-secondary school transitions*

Our scale, which will be named the *Primary-Secondary school Transitions Emotional Wellbeing Scale (P-S WELLS)*, seeks to be qualitatively different and novel in its approach (i.e., asking children about their feelings towards the changes they are negotiating in context), and in its longitudinal design and operationalisation.

*P-S WELLS* offers theoretical and conceptual novelty by demonstrating a vital paradigm shift in conceptualising and operationalising emotional wellbeing in a specific context (primary-secondary school transitions). Providing a model of emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions will overcome *limitation 1* and pave the way to establish best practice research within the field, through our secondary objective:

### 2. To develop a clear theoretical and conceptual definition of emotional wellbeing *in the context of primary-secondary school transitions* and operationalise this conceptual domain through the design of *P-S WELLS*

*P-S WELLS* will be designed to assesses emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions longitudinally (see *Phases 3* and *4*) overcoming *limitation 3*. This methodological advancement aims to innovate the field, in demonstrating the importance and viability of considering longitudinal contexts within the design of scales, to ensure they are *stable* and *sensitive* to capture change over time, as outlined in objective 3:

### 3. To pilot and conduct longitudinal psychometric assessment (*Phase 3*) and longitudinal validation (*Phase 4*) on two discrete samples, across two primary-secondary school transitions periods (2024 academic year for *Phase 3* and 2025–26 academic for *Phase 4*)

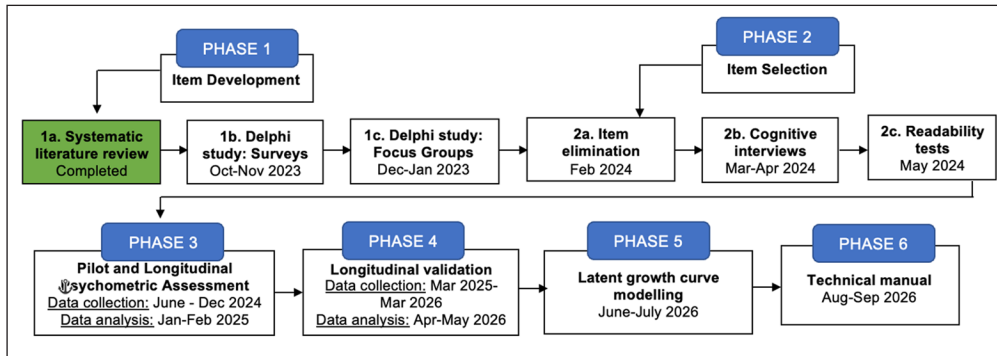
*P-S WELLS* aims to also add distinct value at the wider level of the community, especially for educational practitioners involved in supporting children over primary-secondary school transitions, as outlined in objective 4:

### 4. To develop a *P-S WELLS* manual for use in schools, including how to administer, score and interpret the scale

The *P-S WELLS* manual aims to build capacity for educational practitioners to obtain immediate insight into the emotional wellbeing of their class in the context of primary-secondary school transitions. Specifically, through examination of scores across specific primary-secondary school transitions dimensions, we intend for educational practitioners to be able to identify what universal and targeted support may be useful.

## METHOD

Following recommendations for designing and validating robust and rigorous scales (Boateng et al., 2018; Morgado et al., 2017), we will follow a mixed methods model, drawing on a multi-informant approach (Zhou, 2019) with six phases (see Figure 1). Each phase follows an iterative process with several sub-phases and steps, outlined below. To inform the present research we have conducted extensive research with children, and significant others within their ecosystem (e.g., parents/guardians and teachers) using both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bagnall et al., 2020, 2021b, 2021c; Hannah et al., 2023; Jindal-Snape & Cantali, 2019; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020, 2021) to obtain their first-hand insights into their perceptions and experiences of primary-secondary school transitions and how this period can be improved. In addition, we have obtained insights into the design and implementation needs of the scale through intervention research (Bagnall et al., 2021a; forthcoming; Beatson et al., 2023).



**Figure 1** The six phases of P-S WELLS and corresponding dates.

## ADVISORY GROUPS

*P-S WELLS* will be co-produced with children to draw on their valuable lived-experience and needs. This will ensure the scale is (a) accessible (language and format), (b) sensitive and has a positive discourse, so it is motivating for children to complete and does not give a negative message about secondary school, and (c) contextually relevant to children's experience, environments, and conceptualisations of emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions. In *Phase 1*, we will form a young person advisory group of six Year 6 (P7) and Year 7 (S1) children (equivalent in Scotland), whom are about to or just moved to secondary school. We will also form an adult advisory group with members from relevant English and Scottish Parliament committees, education and mental health practitioners and researchers, to draw on their valuable expertise and experience within primary-secondary school transitions and emotional wellbeing practice and research. We will meet with our advisory groups at each phase of our project, which will ensure research and community expectations are aligned.

### PHASE 1: ITEM DEVELOPMENT

Addressing objective 2, in *Phase 1*, we will combine both deductive and inductive methods, drawing on the first-hand expertise and experience of children, educational practitioners and researchers, to (a) provide a working knowledge of our construct domain (emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions), (b) specify the boundaries, identify domains, sub-domains, indicators and develop a pool of candidate items, and (c) consider the format of *P-S WELLS*. This phase is key to obtain content validation.

#### 1a. Systematic review of measures: Completed (see Bagnall & Jindal-Snape, 2023)

In line with Boateng et al.'s (2018) first stage of scale development, through our systematic literature review, we have made the first step in (a) providing a working knowledge of our construct domain (emotional wellbeing *in the context of* primary-secondary school transitions), and specifying the purpose of operationalising our construct through *P-S WELLS*. We have also confirmed that there are no existing scales that adequately serve the same purpose. Addressing (b) we have also conducted a content analysis of the items used in present scales to inform the generation of potential core domains, sub-domains, indicators and items.

## 1b. Delphi study: Surveys

*Phase 1a* informed round one of the Delphi study, where we aggregated expert opinion from a multi-disciplinary expert panel of educational practitioners (e.g., Teachers, Educational Psychologists, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, Educational Mental Health Practitioners), primary-secondary school transitions and emotional wellbeing researchers. Our expert panel were asked to complete an online survey with open and closed questions (developed using Qualtrics) to obtain their views on (1) how they define emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions, (2) what factors should be included in a scale to assess emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions, (3) specific items which could be included in *P-S WELLS*, and (4) the format of *P-S WELLS*, e.g. number of items, instructions, to ensure items are clear, specific and positive. We recruited 30 experts, in line with best practice recommendations (De Loë et al., 2016; Turoff & Linstone, 2002) from our National and International Transitions Network (TCELT-INTR), our universities Initial Teacher Education (ITE) network and advice from our advisory group, to participate in round one of our Delphi Study. Findings were analysed using Descriptive Statistics, Content Analysis and Thematic Framework Analysis, and will inform round 2 of our Delphi study, where we will ask a multi-disciplinary expert panel of adults and children their views on potential core domains, sub-domains, indicators, and items.

## 1c. Delphi study: Focus groups

Building on *Phase 1a* and *1b*, 10 semi-structured focus groups (anticipated to last 30–40 minutes) were conducted with Year 6 (P7) and Year 7 (S1) pupils with approximately 6 pupils per focus group, which is deemed optimal for this age group to reach saturation (Guest et al., 2017). Topic guides included questions aligning with the four question topics outlined in *Phase 1b*, to further inform the dimensionality of the scale and the generation of items, inductively. We used Jindal-Snape et al.'s (2023) primary-secondary school transitions comic anthology to guide discussions, as well as a puppet ("Parker" a Year 6 (P7) transition dog). The focus groups were co-facilitated by two trained researchers, audio-recorded (with parent opt-in consent and child assent), anonymously transcribed and analysed using Hybrid Thematic Analysis.

N.B. Qualitative data collected during *Phases 1b* and *1c* will be analysed within a contextualist framework using a semantic and data-driven, inductive approach to describe, summarise, and interpret surface-level patterns in semantic content from the sample.

## PHASE 2: ITEM SELECTION

This phase will allow assessment of face and content validity by ensuring (a) items reflect our conceptual domain, (b) item answers produce valid measurements, meaningful to our end-users, and (c) measurement error and cognitive burden is minimised.

### 2a. Item elimination

Following *Phase 1*, we will have a large pool of items. Aligning with recommendations that content validity should be assessed through evaluation by experts through knowledge (e.g., researchers with emotional wellbeing, primary-secondary school transitions and psychometrics expertise) and face validity by experts through experience, in other words the target population audiences (Guest et al., 2017), concurrent use of both will be used, through consultation with our advisory groups. Using the Delphi method outlined by Jorm (2015), anonymous independent ratings, from each group will be aggregated, and items rated highly across the dimensions identified in *Phase 1* will be included, and the remaining eliminated or refined. This process will be repeated until consensus is reached.

### 2b. Cognitive interviews

To ensure that item phrasing is meaningful, cognitive interviews (using think aloud and verbal probing techniques) will be conducted with 20 Year 6 (P7) and Year 7 (S1) children and 7 teachers (which aligns with saturation standards, Willis, 2004) to obtain their input on the item content, format, comprehension, and to identify items that may elicit response error (Desimone et al., 2004). It is anticipated that each cognitive interview will last between 30–40 minutes; they will be audio-recorded (with teacher consent, parent opt-in consent and child assent), and participants will be asked to complete ratings when verbalising their thoughts. In line with

previous research which has shown coding schemes do not offer additional information when analysing cognitive interview data (Lippman et al., 2014; Willis, 2004), Phase 2b findings will be analysed informally to modify and clarify items and response format.

## 2c. Readability tests

Aligning with best practice (Zhou, 2019), readability tests will ensure *P-S WELLS* is simple in language, meets the reading age of our audience and reduces measurement error. We will also consider findings from Phase 1a, and feedback from our advisory groups.

## PHASE 3: PILOT AND LONGITUDINAL PSYCHOMETRIC ASSESSMENT

### Data collection

Following ethical approval, we will test the refined items from Phase 2 using online Qualtrics surveys. We will conduct Phase 3: *pilot and conduct longitudinal psychometric assessment* and Phase 4: *longitudinal validation* on two discrete samples, across two transition periods (2024 academic year for Phase 3 and 2025/26 academic for Phase 4) each of approximately 750 pupils (see power calculation<sup>\*1</sup>). Power analyses will be repeated once the final number of items is known.

At Phase 3 children will complete an online survey at four time points, e.g. June (Year 6 [P7]), July (Year 6 [P7]), September (Year 7 [S1]) and December (Year 7 [S1]), and at Phase 4 five time points e.g. March (Year 6 [P7]), June (Year 6 [P7]), September (Year 7[S1]), December (Year 7 [S1]) and March (Year 7 [S1]) which will consist of our pool of *P-S WELLS* items, demographic questions and brief scales identified in Phase 1a. To address objective 3, analyses will be conducted longitudinally to assess the predictive validity of *P-S WELLS* and ensure it is *stable* and *sensitive* to capture change in emotional wellbeing over primary-secondary school transitions.

3a. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) will enable identification of the number of dimensions in *P-S WELLS* and for poorly statistically performing items to be removed. Item response theory will further explore the performance and dimensionality of the items and response categories.

3b. Reliability Analysis (including internal consistency and test-retest reliability) will be conducted at the same time points as above, to assess temporal stability.

### 3c. Longitudinal measurement invariance

Longitudinal measurement invariance will be conducted to assess whether *P-S WELLS* is measuring the same conceptual domain and dimensions at different time points during the transition within the same group to ensure that the items are robust over time. We will also look at gender, age and ethnicity measurement invariance, recognising that these factors have been shown to be important aspects in predicting wellbeing over primary-secondary school transitions (Bagnall et al., 2021a; Garner & Bagnall, forthcoming; Jindal-Snape et al., 2020).

### 3d. Validity tests

Validity will be assessed through correlation analyses. Construct validity will explore the extent to which *P-S WELLS* correlates with other variables of interest.

## PHASE 4: LONGITUDINAL VALIDATION

See *Data collection* details above. This phase will assess the longitudinal and predictive validity through cross-validation and replication of *P-S WELLS* in a new and independent sample, enabling us to further assess *stability* and *sensitivity*. This will include **4a. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)** which will assess the structural validity of *P-S WELLS*. Traditional model and

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<sup>1</sup> This sample size estimation is based on an exploratory factor analysis model (given that exploratory models are less restrictive with a larger number of parameters and allow for the exploration of the dimensionality of the scale and the performance of the items; thus a larger pool of items are typically included and a larger sample size needed). We conducted Monte Carlo simulations in Mplus 8.5 with 2000 replications for 40 4-point Likert-type items and WLSMV estimation. Based on the literature, we explored a 4-factor model accounting for the social, environmental, academic and personal well-being domains of primary-secondary school transitions. To be cautious, we accounted for 15% missing data due to the longitudinal nature of the study, for ceiling effects (30%) which are typical in wellbeing research, and for average factor loadings (.50). We varied the sample sizes (500, 750) and found acceptable coverage, good power (.90-1) and low bias for the parameters of interest. The model fit was good for both N = 750, RMSEA = .004, CFI = .996, TLI = .995 and SRMR = .033, and N = 500, RMSEA = .005.

item fit indices will be used to explore the structural validity of *P-S WELLS* using CFA and item response theory analysis. In addition, we will also conduct **4b. Reliability Analysis**, **4c. Longitudinal assessment of measurement invariance** and **4d. Validity assessments** (see rationale above).

## PHASE 5: LATENT GROWTH CURVE MODELLING

Innovating wider primary-secondary school transitions research, we will conduct latent growth curve modelling (LGCM) and latent class analysis (LCA) on the data collected at *Phase 4*, which will further enrich our understanding of changes in emotional wellbeing over primary-secondary school transitions. Using *P-S WELLS* scores across time, we will examine (a) the overall change in emotional wellbeing across primary-secondary school transitions for our sample (LGCM), (b) whether there are different patterns of change for certain subgroups of pupils (LCA), and (c) what predicts membership to specific groups characterised by different profiles of change (LCA). This will show how *P-S WELLS* can meaningfully capture variation in environmental experience, psychological constructs, and/or subjective experience longitudinally to explain adjustment during primary-secondary school transitions. This will have practical real-world implications in enabling researchers and practitioners to identify children who might be particularly vulnerable during primary-secondary school transitions and what targeted support could be useful.

## PHASE 6: TECHNICAL MANUAL

*P-S WELLS*, scale development and administration procedures, scaling and scoring, and psychometric evaluation findings, will be written in an open-access technical manual so researchers and educational practitioners can assess the rigour and adequacy and use *P-S WELLS* in their work. The format of *P-S WELLS* will be co-produced using creative techniques, with children. To do this, we will hold two young people research consultation days (3 hours each) for 12 children (including members of our young person advisory group).

## DISCUSSION

Supporting children's emotional wellbeing over primary-secondary school transitions is a significant concern in UK policy (DfE, 2021; Public Health England, 2019), practice (White, 2020) and research (Beatson et al., 2023). However, there are currently significant limitations in the scales used within the field to assess primary-secondary school transitions and emotional wellbeing. The protocol provided here evidences our development process in designing and validating the first standardised, robust, and sensitive scale to longitudinally assess children's emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions. This protocol will thus allow for transparent reporting and evaluation of our final scale.

As outlined above, a mixed methods model, drawing on a multi-informant's approach with six phases, will be followed, in line with best practice within the field (Zhou, 2019). Through this design, our protocol has the following conceptual and methodological novel features.

## CONCEPTUAL INNOVATION

There is no shared understanding amongst researchers, professionals, and policy makers about the conceptualisation of primary-secondary school transitions and emotional wellbeing (Bagnall & Jindal-Snape, 2023). Furthermore, there is absence of children's conceptualisations of these key constructs. Addressing these limitations, at the outset of the project at *Phase 1b and 1c*, we will obtain conceptualisations of (a) primary-secondary school transitions, (b) emotional wellbeing and (c) emotional wellbeing *in the context of* primary-secondary school transitions, from experts by experience (e.g., children, educational practitioners) as well as by knowledge (e.g., researchers with empirical, theoretical and psychometrics expertise). This will ensure that our model of emotional wellbeing, is contextually and experientially relevant to stakeholder's lived experience of primary-secondary school transitions, as well as being empirically informed.

In addition, self-report scales developed to date to measure children's primary-secondary school transitions experiences and/or emotional wellbeing, have been designed by researchers, often for specific studies. Our protocol aims to offer further conceptual innovation, by demonstrating the importance, as well as the viability of co-producing a scale, authentically and meaningfully, with end-users, from design (including the grant proposal) to dissemination.



## METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Emotional wellbeing is a dynamic construct, subject to fluctuations over time in response to changing external and internal conditions. Similarly, school transition is an ongoing, longitudinal process. However, primary-secondary school transitions scales are limited in their (a) design, in that they are not sensitive and stable enough to capture the complex changes children are negotiating over primary-secondary school transitions and (b) operationalisation, with a reliance on pre/post designs.

As outlined in this protocol, to overcome (a) we will combine qualitative and quantitative methods, in addition to drawing on lived experiences of children over time, to ensure that our conceptual model of emotional wellbeing in the context of primary-secondary school transitions, operationalised through *P-S WELLS*, is sensitive to children's changing experiences. Furthermore, we aim to pilot and conduct longitudinal psychometric assessment (*Phase 3*) and longitudinal validation (*Phase 4*) on two discrete samples, across two transitions periods; the latter consisting of five time points, to assess the stability of the scale longitudinally.

## PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Retaining research participants over primary-secondary school transition is consistently shown as a challenge within the field (Bagnall et al., 2021a, forthcoming; Jindal-Snape et al., 2019). To overcome this, we are working with partners from our universities Initial Teacher Education network, in addition to our TCELT network, to develop a recruitment strategy, such that it presents as little burden as possible, while also minimising bias, e.g. to minimise containment bias, children will only participate in one phase of data collection, and allocation of children to participate in phases will be at random on a school level. We are also financially reimbursing our participating schools for their time and effort.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Embedded in a school context, the study will adhere to the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, and to the participating schools' internal policies on professional standards and conduct, safeguarding, data protection, and confidentiality. Furthermore, prior to any fieldwork activity commencing, ethical approval for the study will be obtained from our universities Research Ethics Committee's (UREC) standards for research governance, ethics, and integrity.

It is worth noting that the nature of the project – wellbeing – means that there will be a focus on children's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, which may inadvertently be stressful or upsetting for some. However, this is very rare and likely to only cause temporary distress (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2006), and as a mitigation we have a clear distress protocol as part of our standardised instructions, in addition to signposted sources of support (e.g. parent/guardian, Childline, member of school staff) in our debrief. Furthermore, our *P-S WELLS* scale, and the other scales that we will use are in line with scales recommended in routine assessment and monitoring as part of a whole school approach to mental health promotion by the Department for Education (DfE, 2021). Research has also indicated that engaging in wellbeing research can facilitate positive reflective processes among children (Demkowicz et al, 2020), which we have shown to date through discussions within our *P-S WELLS* advisory group.

## DATA ACCESSIBILITY STATEMENT

Materials associated with the protocol are available from: <https://osf.io/ukv7b/>.

## ETHICS AND CONSENT

Ethical approval has been given for all research phases by the University of Manchester and University of Dundee ethics committees.

## FUNDING INFORMATION

This project is funded by The University of Manchester Faculty Research Investment Fund.

**Editor(s):** Dr Beth Hannah & Dr William Barlow

**Reviewer(s):** Professor Jonathan Glazzard & Dr Geraldine Scanlon

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Dr Charlotte Bagnall is a member of IJELT's *Primary-Secondary School Transitions* special issue editorial team.

Professor Divya Jindal-Snape is Editor-in-Chief of IJELT and a member of the *Primary-Secondary School Transitions* special issue editorial team.

Both authors were removed from the review process to ensure independent review and editing.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors were responsible for study conceptualisation, methodology, funding acquisition, writing and editing (CB wrote the first draft). All authors read and approved the final version.

## AUTHOR AFFILIATIONS

**Charlotte Louise Bagnall**  [orcid.org/0000-0001-7213-2668](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7213-2668)

Manchester Institute of Education, University of Manchester, Ellen Wilkinson Building, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6JA, UK

**Divya Jindal-Snape**  [orcid.org/0000-0003-3851-3381](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3851-3381)

School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Law, University of Dundee, Nethergate, Dundee, DD1 4HN, UK

**Margarita Panayiotou**  [orcid.org/0000-0002-6023-7961](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6023-7961)

Manchester Institute of Education, University of Manchester, Ellen Wilkinson Building, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6JA, UK

**Pamela Qualter**  [orcid.org/0000-0001-6114-3820](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6114-3820)

Manchester Institute of Education, University of Manchester, Ellen Wilkinson Building, Oxford Road, Manchester, M15 6JA, UK

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