

Listening to Approved Social Workers: Emotional Well-Being in Context!

*Social Work Research
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Overview

1. Background and Context
2. Methodology and Key Findings
3. Theme 1: Emotional Impact
4. Next Steps, Summary & Close

Background and Context

Research Methods Programme, Ulster University

Year 1: Systematic Narrative Literature Review.

‘The Well-being of Approved Mental Health Professionals’

Year 2: Research and Evaluation Methods.

‘What are the factors that impact the emotional health and well-being of Approved Social Workers?’

- Safe Staffing
- Recruitment, retention and wellbeing
- Resources
- Post Covid-19
- Culture
- Being Open Consultation
- Trauma-Informed Practice
- And... and... and...





Why This Research?

Schizoaffective Disorder

Schizotypal Personality Disorder

Bipolar Disorder

Major Depression with Psychotic Features

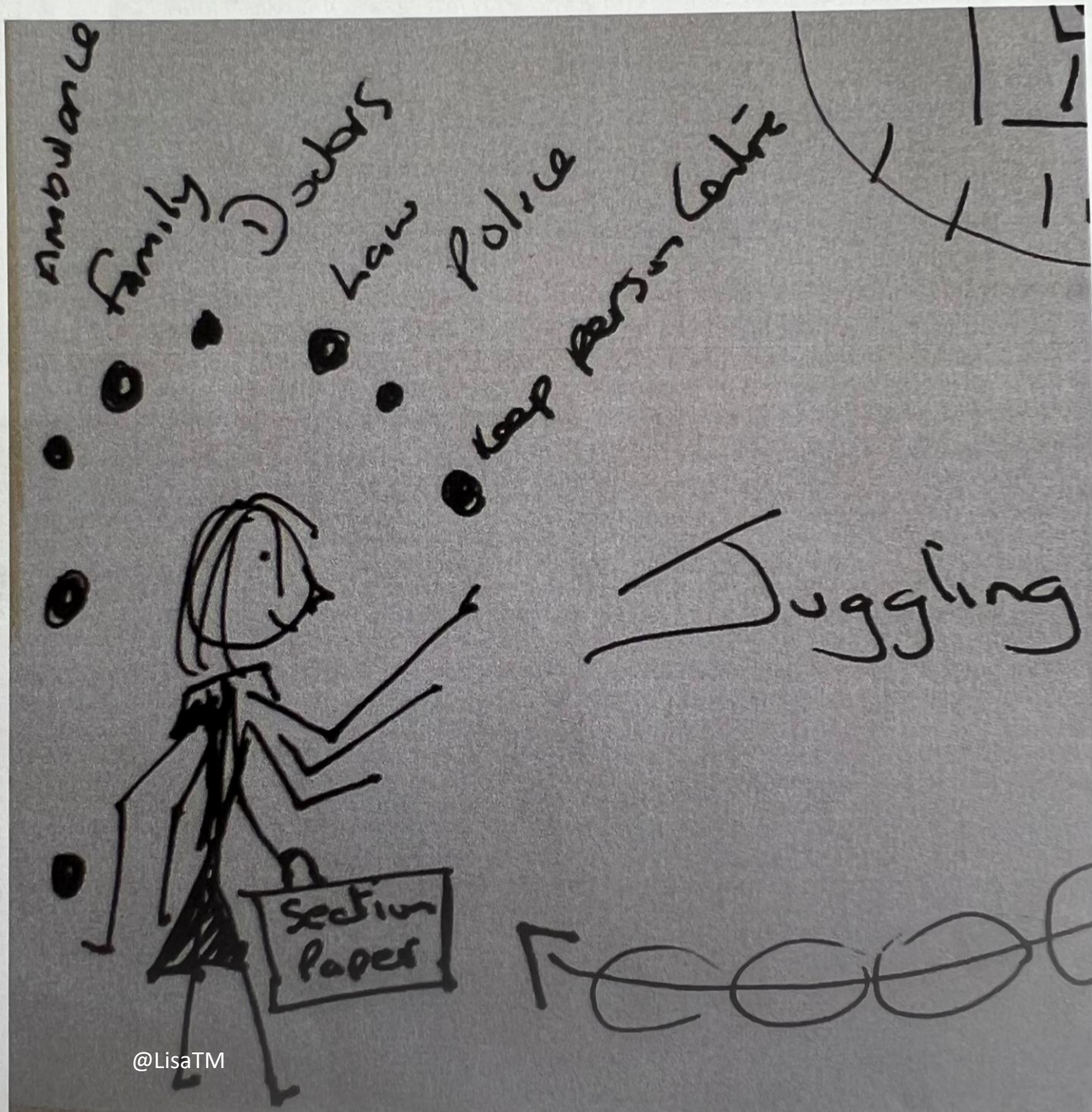
Anxiety

Borderline Personality Disorder
(or EUPD)

Anorexia

Bulimia

Complex Post Traumatic Stress
and Dissociative Disorder



“I think actually it doesn’t matter how good you are as a person at processing things. There’s a limit”

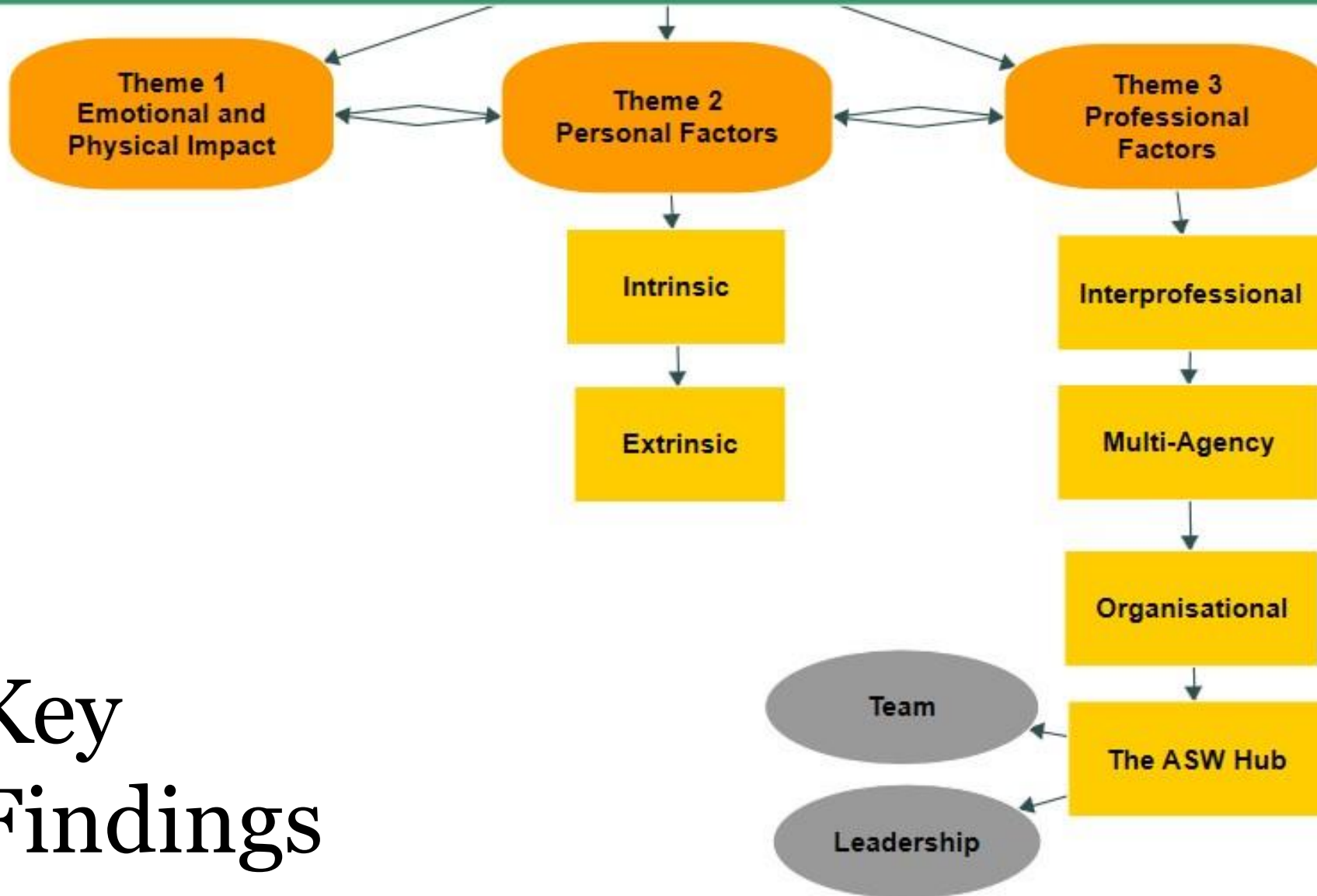
(Allen and McCusker, 2020, p.310).

Methodology

- Design
- Theoretical framework
- Ethical considerations
- Recruitment and participant profile
- Thematic analysis
- Strengths and limitations
- Aim



FINDINGS: Factors that impact the emotional health and well-being of ASWs and what that impact is



Key
Findings

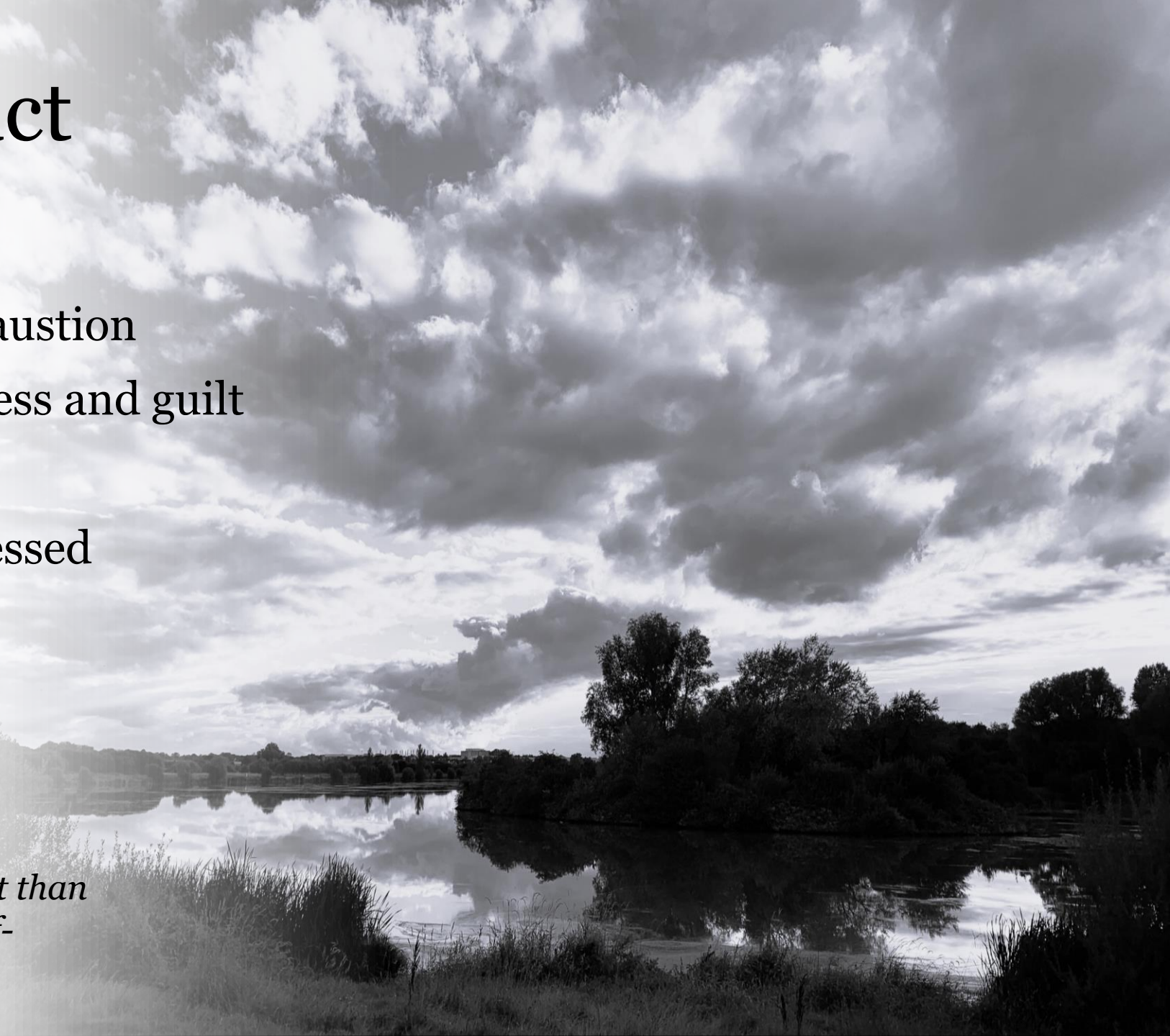
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Emotional Impact

- Fear and anxiety
- Physical and emotional exhaustion
- Hurt, embarrassment, sadness and guilt
- Anger and resentment
- Impact on people being assessed

‘Talk about staff well-being, that is the most anxious thing for ASWs, all those practical things’. Participant 4

‘We’re less risk averse on a Friday night than any other night. And I think it’s just self-preservation, basically’. Participant 6



Emotional Impact Continued

- Power and Powerlessness
- Moral Injury
- Interprofessional and multi-agency pressures
- Blame
- Abandonment, isolation and not valued
- Lone working
- Finish time

‘We have all culturally accepted a level of risk, that’s not on’. Participant 7

*‘I feel really devastated like you’ve almost let them down, or that the system has’.
Participant 12*

Protective Factors

- Meaning, purpose and satisfaction
- Professional pride and excellence
- Intrinsic and extrinsic factors variable
- The Hub Model
 - Peer support; no stigma
 - Supervision
 - Managers on call
 - Leadership

‘I’ve always got that family perspective because I always think, you know, like, I just really care for our clients’.

Participant 1

‘The Hub Model ‘is much more supportive, much safer’.

Participant 4



ASW Suggestions

- Improve interfaces focused on training and education
- Need for psychological support
- Smaller groups for peer support
- Wellbeing workshops
- Buddy system
- Notable:
 - Training as a social worker: Inadequate focus on mental health and emotional wellbeing
 - Legacy of the Troubles

‘You learn about your emotional wellbeing the hard way’
Participant 4





An invitation to consider...

- Framing of staff well-being
- Social work status
- Collective care
- Culture
- Relationships matter most:
Being seen, heard and valued
- Interconnected risk and recovery

Next steps...

- Disseminate findings more widely
- Meetings with relevant stakeholders
- Narrative account of ASW experiences
- Inform my work: Training and education



Summary...


- Physical and emotional impact
- Lone working and finish time
- Collective responsibility and care
- Being seen and heard
- Drop the divide
- Relational protective factors

'I may work in the system, but I'm also a patient of the system in some regards and my family members are patients of the system, so we, we need to do better. Participant 3.



And it is
still true...
When you go
out into
the world,
it is best to
hold hands
and stick
together.

Robert Fulghum

A coastal landscape featuring a large, vibrant rainbow arching across a blue sky filled with white and grey clouds. The rainbow's colors are clearly visible, transitioning from red on the inside to violet on the outside. Below the rainbow, the ocean stretches to the horizon, with a small, distant rainbow visible on the left side. The foreground consists of a dark, rocky shoreline with some white foam from waves. Numerous small birds are scattered across the sky, and a few small figures can be seen in the distance on the water.

*"It's
relationships that
heal and change
lives"*

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Thank You!

Feedback link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PYM7S6Q>

Lifeline: 0808 808 8000 & Samaritans 116 123

Helplines NI: www.helplinesni.com

Online Co-Produced Safety Planning site for anyone struggling or supporting someone who is suicidal www.stayingsafe.net