Teacher recruitment, well-being and workload are currently key DfE priorities. Well-being and workload are also recurrent and pertinent issues for Initial teacher Education (ITE) trainees in England. Although well-being is a key national issue, there is a paucity of research into teacher well-being in general and for trainee teachers specifically. After conducting a preliminary literature search, little has been found on well-being in ITE. This lack of current research highlights the importance and pertinence of this project.

The project involves core full-time UK primary trainees in the photo-documentation of their PGCE and a smaller group of co-researchers in photo-elicitation interviews. Trainees are also time-lining their experiences of workload and well-being across their training to support the images and interviews. The research utilises a visual methodology –time-lining, photo-elicitation and photo-elicitation interviews. It has been suggested that time-lining and photo-elicitation enables a focus on information, affect and reflection, with photo-elicitation interviews providing detailed information on how participants see their world.

This pilot project using interviews and time-lining with trainees, lecturers and NQTs has also taken place in ITE universities in Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands. Emerging themes from the initial data analysis highlight the importance of professional learning communities, belonging and agency in maintaining well-being and managing workload. The project aims to develop next academic year to utilise a larger UK and European sample. Once data collection is complete the aim is to embed findings in our own and other PGCE courses and to evaluate their impact on trainee workload and well-being.