



Department
for Education

Mental health support team school and college survey

2023 report

October 2023

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Introduction

This report provides a summary of findings from the 2023 Department for Education (DfE) Mental Health Support Team (MHST) school and college survey. The survey asked about the experiences of schools and colleges working with MHSTs – including the support they received – as well as the perceived impact of working with the MHST on their school or college.

About the survey

The data presented in this report is based on responses to an online survey issued to schools and colleges in Trailblazer-Wave 6 of the MHST programme between the 5th of May 2023 and the 30th June 2023. For more information on each wave of the programme, see table 1, below. The survey was issued with the intent for the setting's senior mental health lead to complete the survey, though we cannot guarantee that it was the senior mental health lead who completed the survey for every setting.

The survey was issued to 6,417 schools and colleges. 1,442 responses were received, giving an overall response rate of 22%. Response rates by NHSE region, wave of the programme, and phase were similar and responses received were therefore considered representative at the national level of schools and colleges enrolled in the programme.

Background

In December 2017, the Government published a consultation to gather views on the proposals set out in its publication, [Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: A Green Paper](#).

Following the consultation, the Government Response to the Consultation on Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision: a Green Paper and Next Steps was published in July 2018. It outlined a commitment to implement three core proposals:

- New Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) that provide support and extra capacity for early intervention and help for mild to moderate mental health issues and support the promotion of good mental health and wellbeing.
- Training for senior mental health leads to implement an effective whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges.
- Pilots for a four-week waiting time for children and young people's mental health

services¹.

MHSTs have three core functions²:

1. to deliver evidence-based interventions for mild-to-moderate mental health issues;
2. to support the senior mental health lead (where established) in each school or college to introduce or develop their whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing; and,
3. to give timely advice to school and college staff, and liaise with external specialist services, to help children and young people to get the right support and stay in education.

The establishment of MHSTs began in 2018 and the number of teams has increased each year as set out in Table 1. For more information on the number of teams and coverage of the programme, please see the [Transforming children and young people's mental health implementation programme: 2023 data release](#).

Table 1: Waves of the MHST programme

Wave	Number of teams*	Year teams become operational³
Trailblazer	58	March 2020
Waves 1 & 2	125	Wave 1 & Wave 2: March 2021
Waves 3 & 4	104	Waves 3 & 4: March 2022
Wave 5 & 6	111	Waves 5 & 6: March 2023

Source: * [NHS England » Mental health support in schools and colleges and faster access to NHS care](#).

¹ 'Operational' is defined as the Education Mental Health Practitioners having successfully completed their training with assurance provided through NHSE regional teams. Training of Education Mental Health Practitioners takes around 12 months to complete.

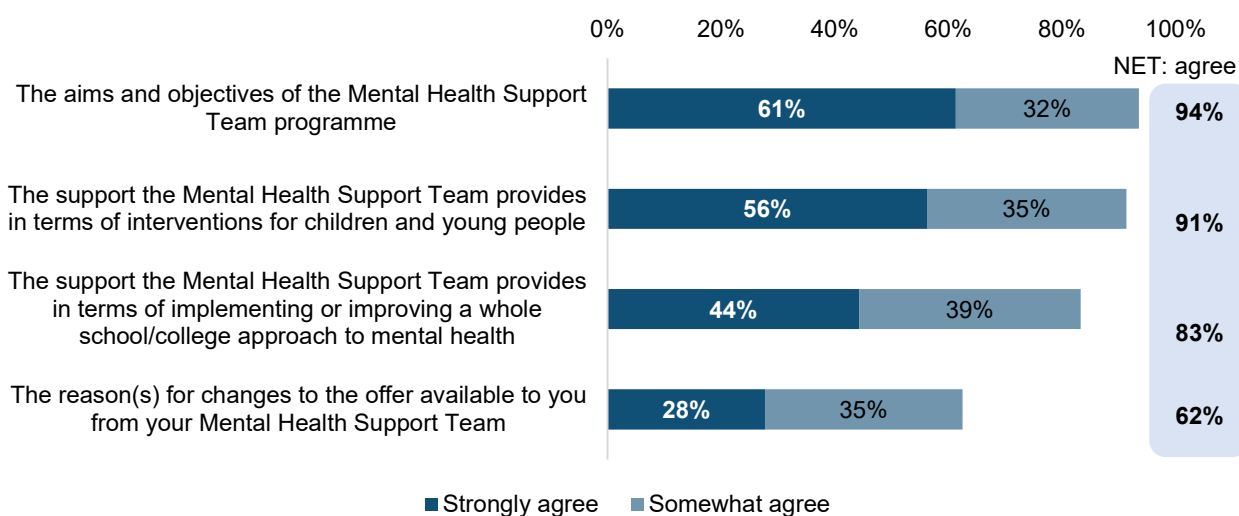
² For more information on the programme, see here: [NHS England » Mental health support in schools and colleges](#).

Findings

Understanding of the programme

Overall, survey respondents agreed that their school or college was clear on a range of aspects of the MHST programme, findings are presented in figure 1. However, relatively fewer staff agreed that their school or college was clear on the reason(s) for changes to the offer available to them from the MHST (62% agreed).

Figure 1: Levels of agreement that schools or colleges were clear on aspects of the MHST programme

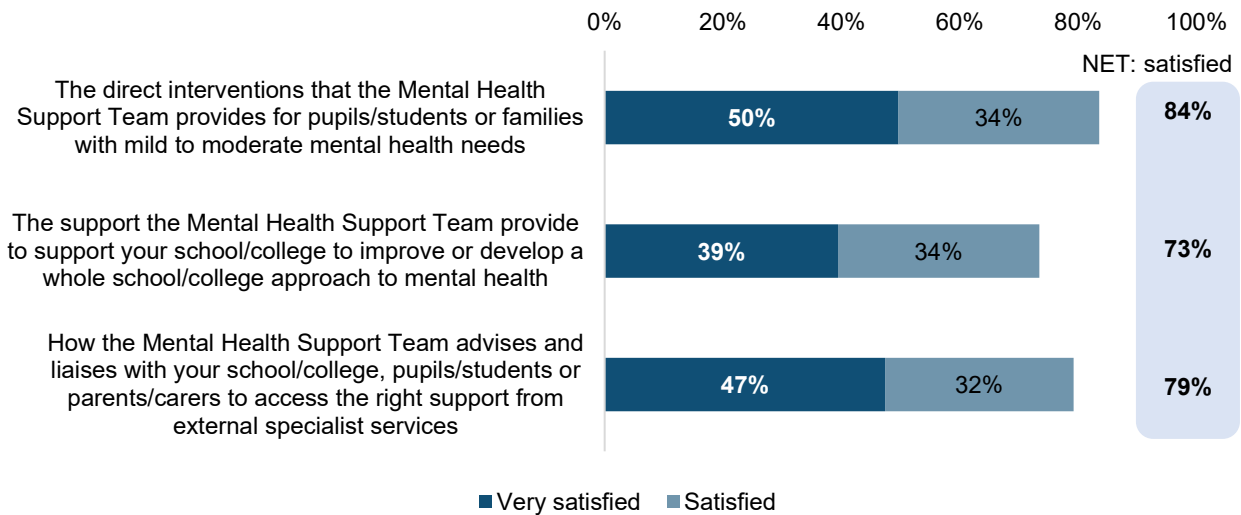


Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2023, n = 1,420

Satisfaction with MHST provision

Schools and colleges were asked about satisfaction with provision by the MHST for the three core functions of the programme, findings are presented in Figure 2. Overall, a large majority of settings were satisfied with provision for each of the three core functions.

Figure 2: Level of satisfaction with provision from the MHST for each of the three core functions



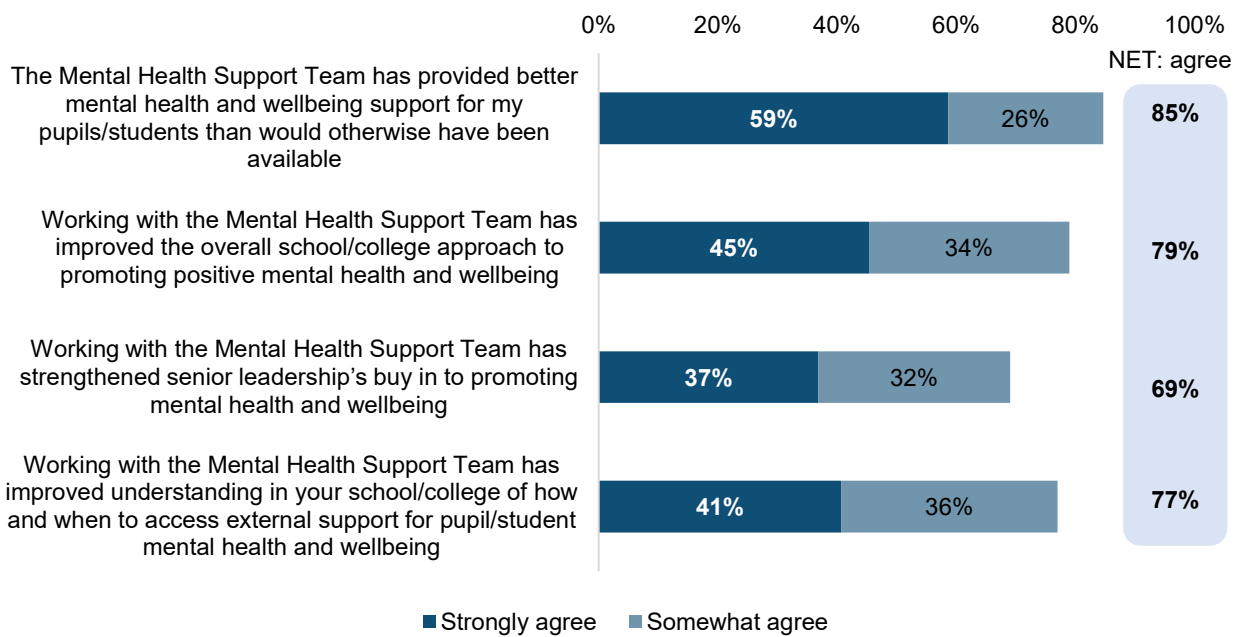
Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2023, n = 1,420

Perceived impact of the programme

Overall, settings responded positively when asked to what extent they agreed that working with the MHST had had a perceived impact related to each of the three functions, findings are presented in Figure 3. Settings were most likely to agree that working with the MHST had provided better mental health and wellbeing support for pupils (85% agreed).

Agreement, while still high, was slightly lower that working with the MHST had strengthened senior leadership buy in to promoting mental health or wellbeing (69% agreed). It is unclear if the slightly lower levels of agreement are a result of pre-existing high levels of senior leadership buy-in or a reflection of the programme.

Figure 3: Level of agreement that working with the MHST had a perceived impact on each of the three core functions



Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2023, n = 1,420

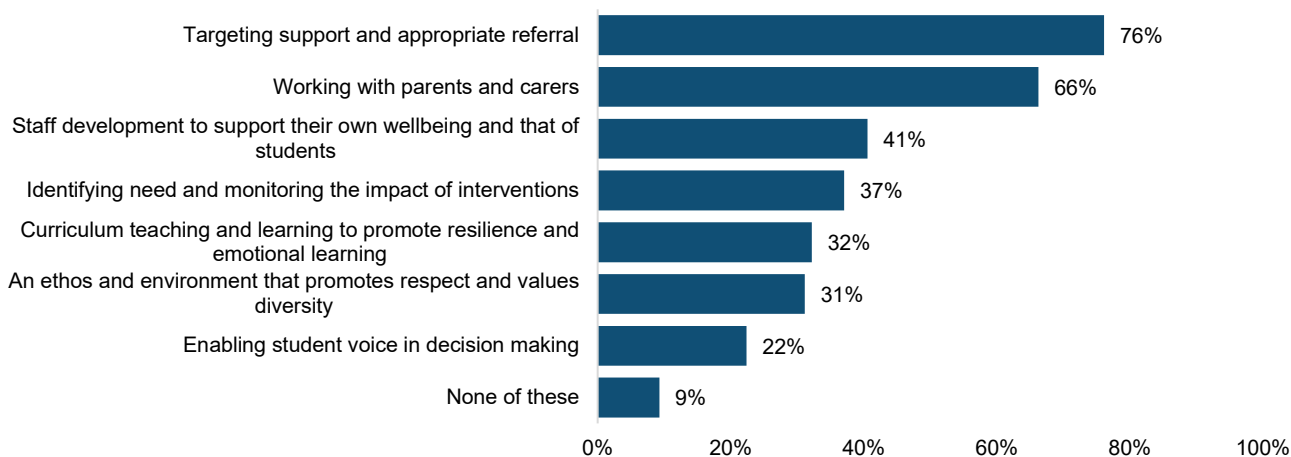
Support to develop a whole school or college approach

Schools and colleges were asked what elements of a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing⁴ the MHST had helped their setting to develop or improve in the last 12 months, findings are presented in Figure 4. Settings reported targeting support and appropriate referral (76%) and working with parents or carers (66%) as the two most common elements of a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing that the MHST had helped to develop or improve in the past 12 months.

Just under a tenth (9%) of schools and colleges reported that they had not received help to develop or improve any principles of a whole school or college approach.

⁴ For more information on the elements of a whole school or college approach, please see: [Promoting children and young people's mental health and wellbeing \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

Figure 4: Elements of a whole school or college approach schools and colleges were helped by their MHST to develop or improve in the past 12 months



Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2023, n = 1,420

Providing feedback & partnership working

Almost nine in ten (89%) settings reported that they provided feedback to the MHST. Of the settings that did provide feedback, almost all (98%) agreed that the MHST were responsive to feedback from their school or college.

Most schools and colleges (92%) were satisfied with how their school or college and the MHST worked together to shape the support offer.

Referral processes

Four fifths of schools and colleges (80%) agreed that the pathway or process for referring pupils to the MHST was fit-for-purpose for their school or college.

Governance

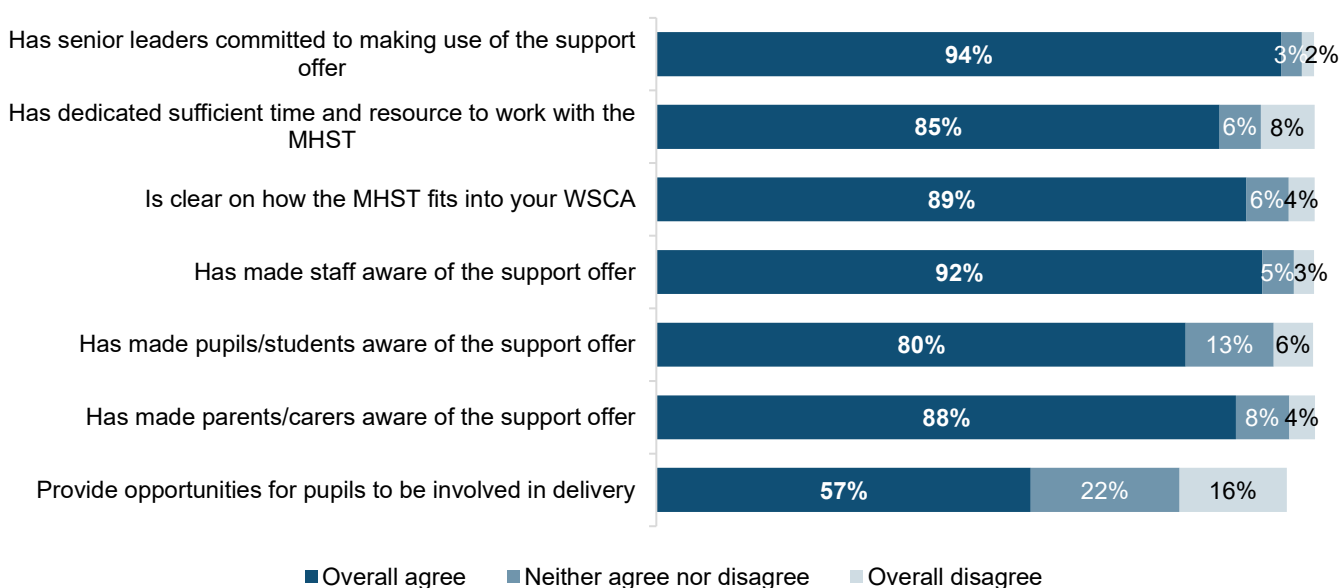
Just over half of settings (54%) agreed that there was ongoing and sufficient representation of the interests of my school/college in the local MHST governance arrangements.

To note, there were a relatively high proportion of schools or colleges that neither agreed nor disagreed (19%), or felt that they did not know if (19%), there was ongoing a sufficient representation of their interests in local MHSTs governance arrangements whilst only 8% disagreed.

School engagement

Schools and colleges were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed that their school or college was engaged with the MHST programme through various means, findings are presented in Figure 5. Overall, schools and colleges reported high levels of engagement with the programme with most settings agreeing that they had senior leaders committed to making full use of the support offer (94%), had made staff aware of the MHST support offer (92%), and were clear on how the MHST fits into their whole school or college approach (89%). However, schools and colleges were less likely to agree that their setting had provided opportunities for pupils or students to be involved in delivery (57%).

Figure 5: School or college engagement with the MHST programme

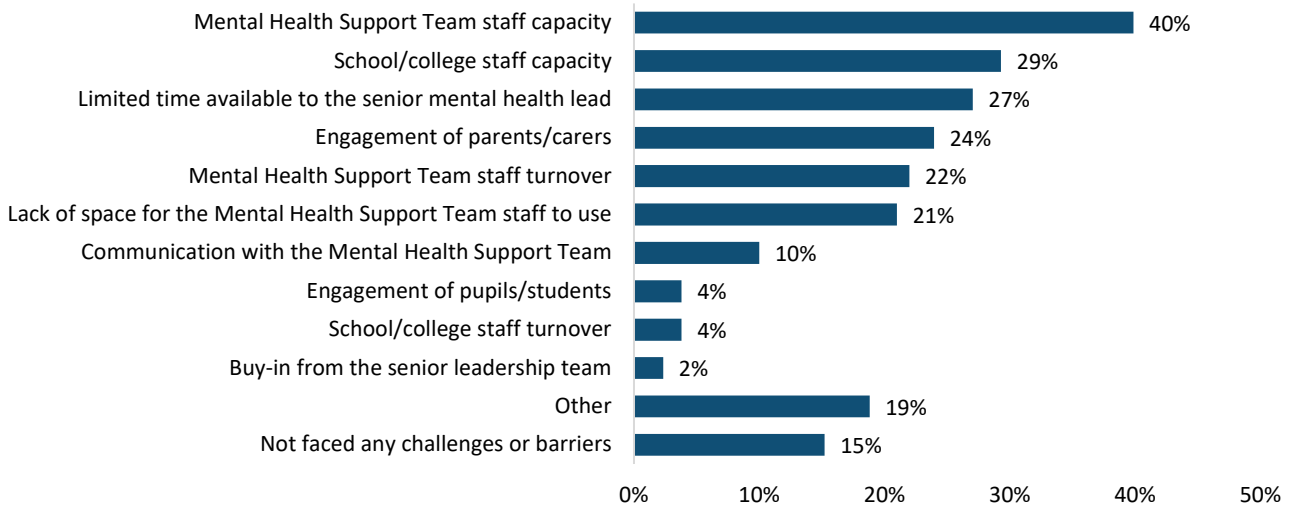


Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2023, n = 1,420

Challenges and barriers

Settings were asked to select, from a defined list, up to three of the main challenges or barriers their school or college had experienced in being able to make full use of the MHST support offer, with findings presented in Figure 6. Settings were most likely to report that MHST staff capacity (40%), followed by school/college staff capacity (29%) and limited time available to the senior mental health lead for their role (27%). 15% of settings reported that they had not experienced any challenges or barriers.

Figure 6: Challenges or barriers settings experienced in making use of the MHST support offer

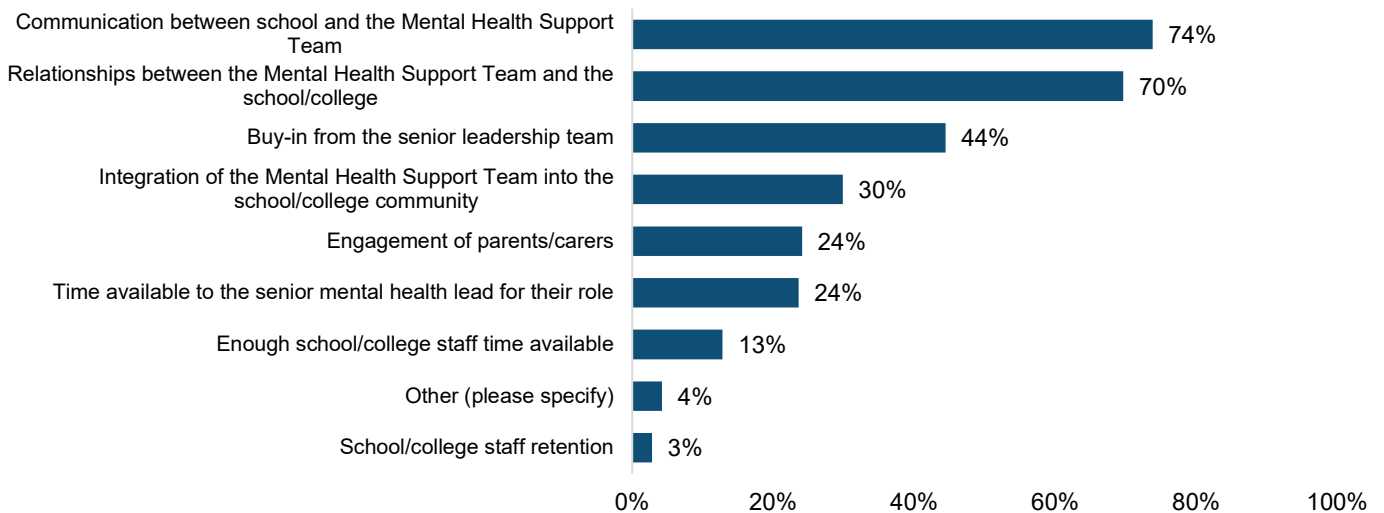


Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2023, n = 1,420

Positive factors

Similarly to challenges and barriers, schools and colleges were asked to select, from a predefined list, up to three of the factors that had been most important in enabling their school or college to make effective use of the MHST support offer, with findings presented in Figure 7. Three quarters (74%) of settings reported that communication was a positive factor while seven in ten (70%) reported that relationships between the Mental Health Support Team and the school/college. The third most cited positive factor was buy-in from the senior leadership team (44%).

Figure 7: Positive factors enabling settings to make use of the MHST support offer



Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2023, n = 1,420



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