Department for Education

Mental Health Support Teams: coverage and school and college experiences

Data release

June 2026

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Introduction and content

This publication provides the latest available data on the expansion of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) working in schools and colleges throughout England and the experiences of the schools and colleges that work with MHSTs based on an online survey. The expansion of MHSTs and the collaboration between education and health partners continues as part of the delivery of the Opportunity Mission within the government's Plan for Change.

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 3 core proposals:

- new 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 4-week waiting time for children and young people's mental health services[1]

Since 2018 to 2019, the NHS has been implementing MHSTs in schools and colleges across England. The 2025 Spending Review confirmed the government is expanding MHSTs to 100% of schools in England by December 2029.

[1] Four week waiting time pilots have ended. Work on waiting times for children and young people's mental health is being taken forward as part of the Clinical Review of Standards: NHS England » Mental health clinically-led review of standards

Summary

Mental Health Support Team coverage

- There are 5.8 million pupils and learners who are covered by an MHST in 2025-26 based on schools and college lists returned from MHSTs, which equates to 60% of pupils in schools and learners in FE in England (including 79% of pupils in state-funded secondary schools).

- There are 11,800 schools and colleges supported by an MHST in 2025-26 based on schools and college lists returned from MHSTs, which equates to 48% of schools and colleges in England receiving MHST support (including 78% of state-funded secondary schools).

- Assuming the average number of schools and colleges and pupils and learners per MHST remains constant, we estimate that, including waves 13 & 14, coverage could increase to 66% of pupils and learners and 53% of schools and colleges by 31 March 2027.

Mental Health Support Teams School and College survey

The data presented is based on responses to an online survey issued to schools and colleges supported by an MHST between 9th May 2025 and 27th June 2025. The survey was issued to 9,308 schools and colleges. 2,421 responses were received, giving an overall response rate of 26%.

Key findings from the survey are:

- 92% of respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that their MHST had provided beneficial mental health and wellbeing support.

- 87% of respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that their MHST helped improve the school’s or college’s overall approach to mental health and wellbeing.

- 83% of respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that their MHST improved their understanding of how to access external mental health and wellbeing support for their pupils or students.

Mental Health Support Teams Coverage

Background

MHSTs support the mental health needs of children and young people in primary, secondary and further education (ages 5 to 18) and use an evidence-based approach to provide early support on mental health and emotional wellbeing issues, such as mild to moderate anxiety and low mood. MHSTs also support education settings in promoting good mental health and wellbeing.

First announced in 2018, MHSTs work with the pastoral care and mental health and wellbeing support that already exists in and around education settings. Existing mental health and wellbeing support may include:

- counselling
- educational psychologists
- school nurses
- educational welfare officers
- voluntary, community and social Enterprises (VCSEs)
- the local authority provision
- NHS Children and Young People Mental Health (NHS CYPMH) services

MHSTs have 3 core functions:

1. to deliver evidence-based interventions for early support for mental health issues
2. 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
3. give timely advice to school and college staff, and liaise with external specialist services, to help children and young people get the right support and stay in education

Overview

The establishment of MHSTs began in 2018, and the number of teams has increased each year as set out in Table 1. The analysis presented in this publication shows coverage up to and including waves 11 and 12, but more teams are being introduced. A further 73 teams are currently training Education Mental Health Practitioners (EMHPs), which means around 785 MHSTs are expected to be up and running by the end of March 2027.

Table 1: Number of MHSTs per wave

Wave	Number of teams*	Year EMHPs training began	Year teams become operational[2]
Trailblazer	58	January 2019	March 2020
Waves 1 & 2	125	Wave 1: September 2019 Wave 2: January 2020	Wave 1 & Wave 2: March 2021
Waves 3 & 4	104	Wave 3: November 2020 Wave 4: January - February 2021	Waves 3 & 4: March 2022
Wave 5 & 6	111	Wave 5: November 2021 Wave 6: January - February 2022	Waves 5 & 6: March 2023
Waves 7 & 8	100	Wave 7: November 2022 Wave 8: January- February 2023	Waves 7 & 8: April 2024
Waves 9 & 10	109	Wave 9: September 2023 Wave 10: January- February 2024	Waves 9 & 10: April 2025
Waves 11 & 12	106	Wave 11: September 2024 Wave 12: January 2025	Waves 11 & 12: April 2026
Waves 13 & 14	73	Wave 13: September 2025 Wave 14: January 2026	Waves 13 & 14: Expected March 2027

Source: * NHS England » Mental health support in schools and colleges and faster access to NHS care.

N.B. Future dates are indicative.

Data sources

The analysis presented in this publication on the coverage of MHSTs uses self-reported information from MHSTs on the schools and colleges they support. This is linked to 2025 DfE data[3] to report on the number and percentage of schools and colleges and pupils

[2] '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.

[3] Lists of schools and colleges supported by an MHST, as provided by MHST teams have been linked to school and college information from 'Get information about schools,' pupil numbers from January 2025 school census and FE learner numbers from 2024/25 Individualised Learner Record.

and learners[4] covered by MHSTs. The subsequent analysis relies on the quality of the data received. As such, the numbers presented here are our best estimates using the latest available data.

Summary

National

There are 5.8 million pupils and learners who are covered by an MHST in 2025 to 2026 based on schools and college lists returned from MHSTs. This equates to 60% coverage of pupils in schools and learners in FE in England (including 79% of pupils in state-funded secondary schools).

There are 11,800 schools and colleges supported by an MHST in 2025 to 2026 based on schools and college lists returned from MHSTs. This equates to 48% of schools and colleges in England receiving MHST support (including 78% of state-funded secondary schools).

Coverage of MHSTs at school and college level is lower than coverage at pupil and learner level due to variation in setting size and because MHSTs are currently working with more secondary schools, which are larger.

Delivery trajectory

Nationally, there are, on average, 8,200 pupils and learners and 17 schools and colleges per MHST, up to and including waves 11 and 12. There are 73 MHSTs that will become operational in waves 13 and 14 (with EMHPs who started training from autumn 2025 and due to become operational in 2026 to 2027).

Assuming the average number of schools and colleges and pupils and learners per MHST remains constant, we estimate that, including waves 13 and 14, coverage could increase to 66% of pupils and learners and 53% of schools and colleges by 31 March 2027.

[4] MHSTs are intended to support all children and young people, however this analysis is based on pupils and learners in schools and colleges as a proxy due to availability of data.

Coverage by region

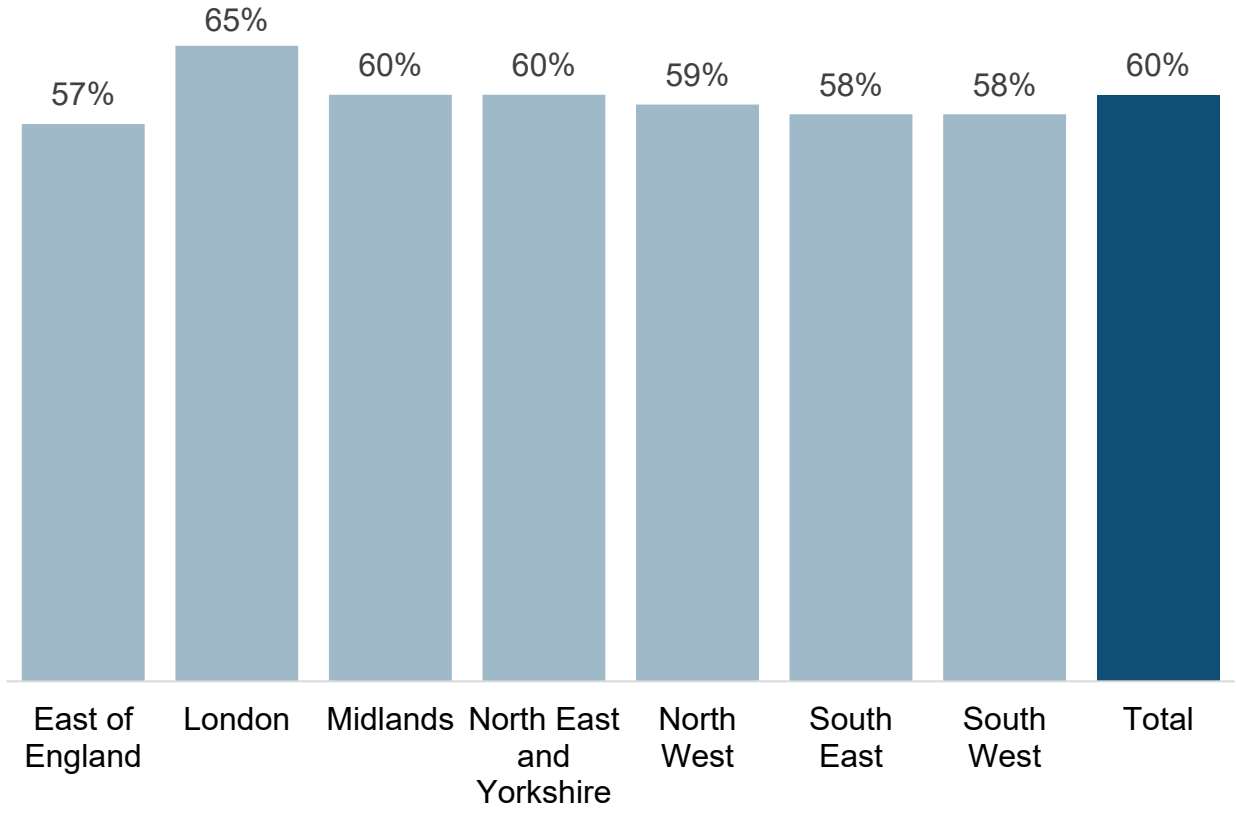
Coverage of pupils and learners and schools and colleges by MHSTs varies across the country. Here we present data for each NHSE region[5]. Note that the analysis represents a snapshot in time. Populations and numbers of pupils and learners can change between years, and historic changes in regional and sub-regional boundaries may affect the overall regional proportions.

The decision on which education settings are covered by an MHST is for local determination. Individual education settings can vary significantly in size, and this can affect analysis. For example, regions where MHSTs cover fewer, but larger, settings would have different coverage statistics to those with more smaller settings. Ensuring equitable population coverage across all regions is a key aim, and the regional variation currently seen in the coverage of pupils and learners and in schools and colleges is expected to reduce as further waves of MHSTs become operational.

[5] NHS England » Regional teams

Regionally, the 60% coverage of pupils and learners nationally varies between 57% (East of England) and 65% (London) (Figure 1).

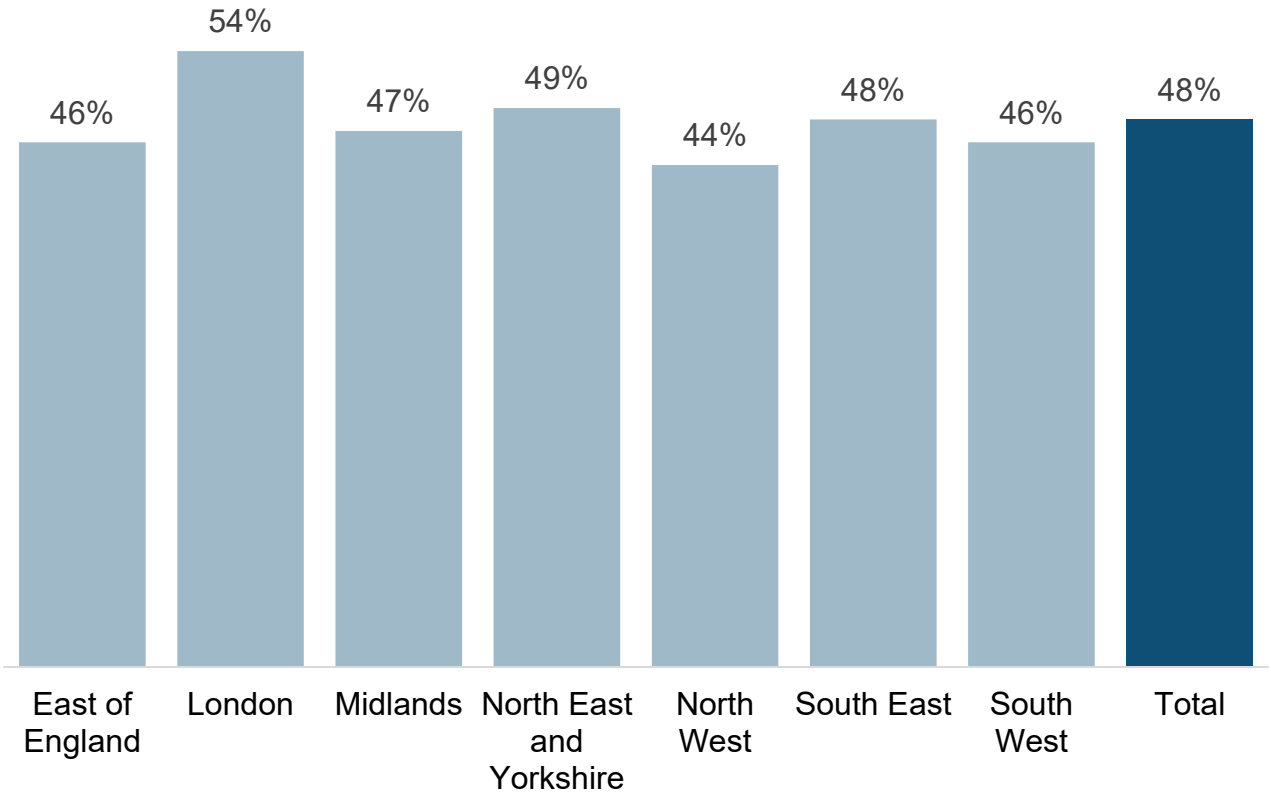
Figure 1: Percentage of pupils and learners in settings supported by an MHST, by NHSE region (up to and including waves 11 and 12)



Source: Self-reported MHST settings list, linked to DfE data

The 48% national coverage of schools and colleges varies between 44% (North West) and 54% (London) (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Percentage of schools and colleges supported by an MHST, by NHSE region (up to and including waves 11 and 12)

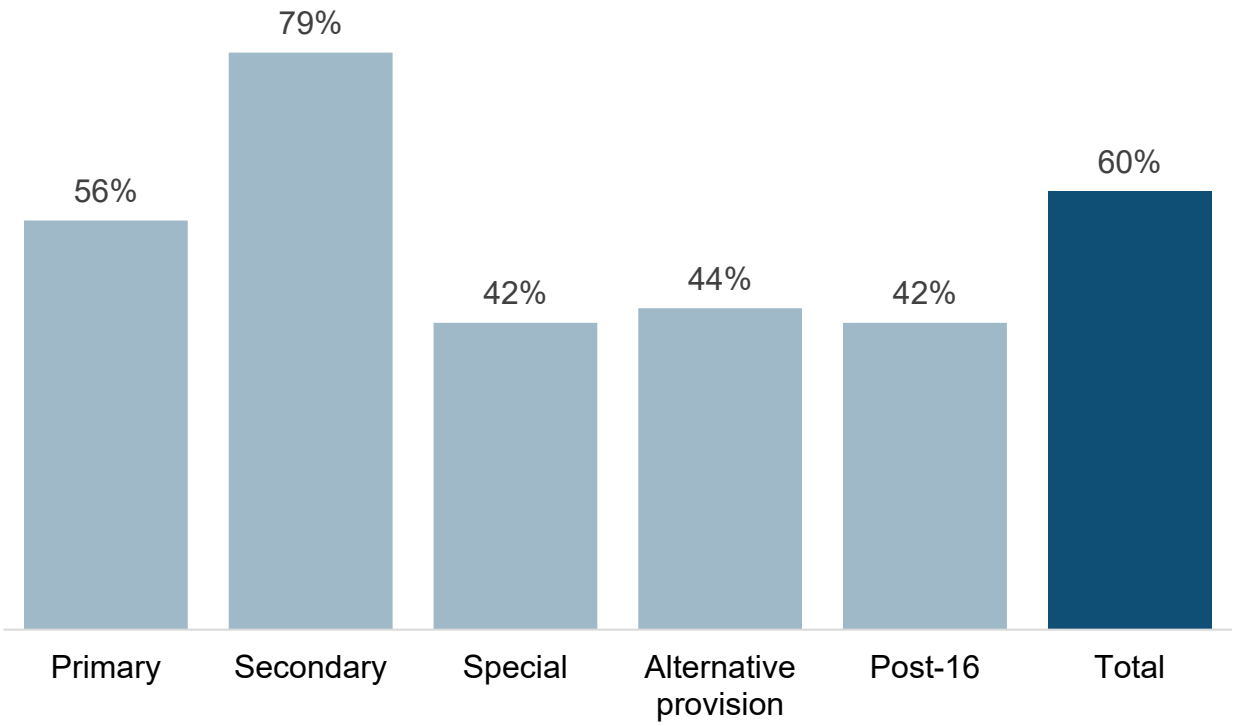


Source: Self-reported MHST settings list, linked to DfE data

Coverage by setting type

Across all setting types, 60% of pupils and learners are in settings supported by an MHST. However, this varies between 42% (special schools and post-16) and 79% (state-funded secondary schools) (Figure 3).

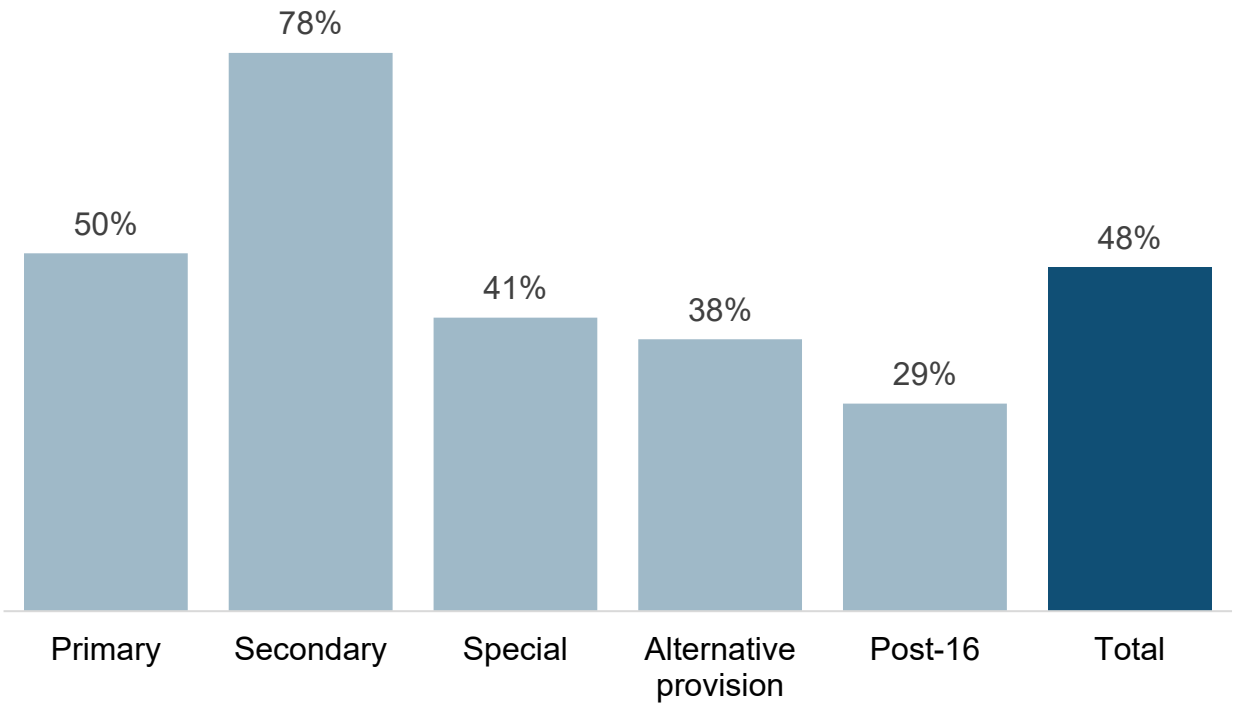
Figure 3: Percentage of pupils and learners in settings supported by an MHST, by type of setting (up to and including waves 11 and 12)



Source: Self-reported MHST settings list, linked to DfE data

Nationally, 48% of schools and colleges are supported by an MHST, ranging from 29% (post-16) to 78% (state-funded secondary schools) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Percentage of schools and colleges supported by an MHST, by type of setting (up to and including waves 11 and 12)



Source: Self-reported MHST settings list, linked to DfE data

Support from an MHST also varies by governance status; 50% of local authority-maintained schools are supported by an MHST compared to 57% of academy and free schools. Full details of the number of eligible settings and the number of settings that are supported by an MHST are available within the data tables for this publication.

Coverage by wave

Figures 5 and 6 show how the MHST coverage has grown over time.

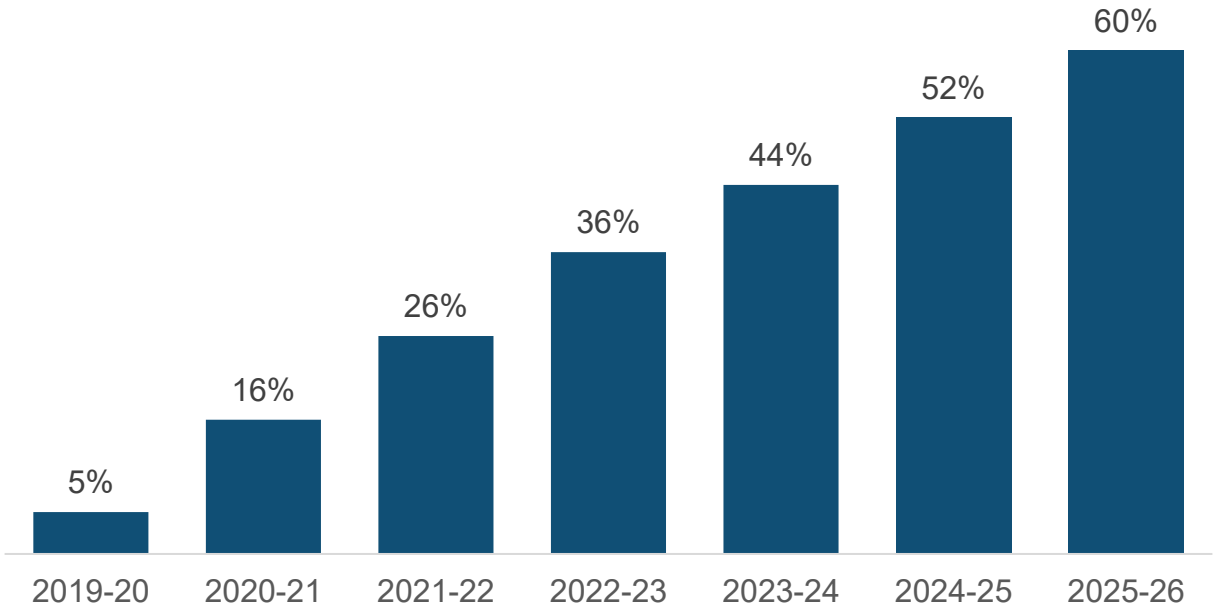
- Trailblazer wave (operational c. 2019 to 2020) covered 5% of pupils and learners and 4% of schools and colleges.
- Waves 1 and 2 (operational c. 2020 to 2021) covered 10% of pupils and learners and 9% of schools and colleges.
- Waves 3 and 4 (operational c. 2021 to 2022) covered 10% of pupils and learners and 7% of schools and colleges.
- Waves 5 and 6 (operational c. 2022 to 2023) covered 10% of pupils and learners and 8% of schools and colleges.
- Waves 7 and 8 (operational c. 2023 to 2024) covered 9% of pupils and learners and 7% of schools and colleges.
- Waves 9 and 10 (operational c. 2024 to 2025) covered 7% of pupils and learners and 6% of schools and colleges.
- Waves 11 and 12 (operational c. 2025 to 2026) covered 8% of pupils and learners and 7% of schools and colleges[6].

Projected coverage

It is projected that waves 13 and 14 (becoming operational c. 2026 to 2027) could cover an additional 6% of pupils and learners and 5% of schools and colleges once operational, assuming average numbers of pupils and learners and schools and colleges per team remain constant. This would take overall coverage from 60% to 66% of pupils and learners and from 48% to 53% of schools and colleges by 31 March 2027.

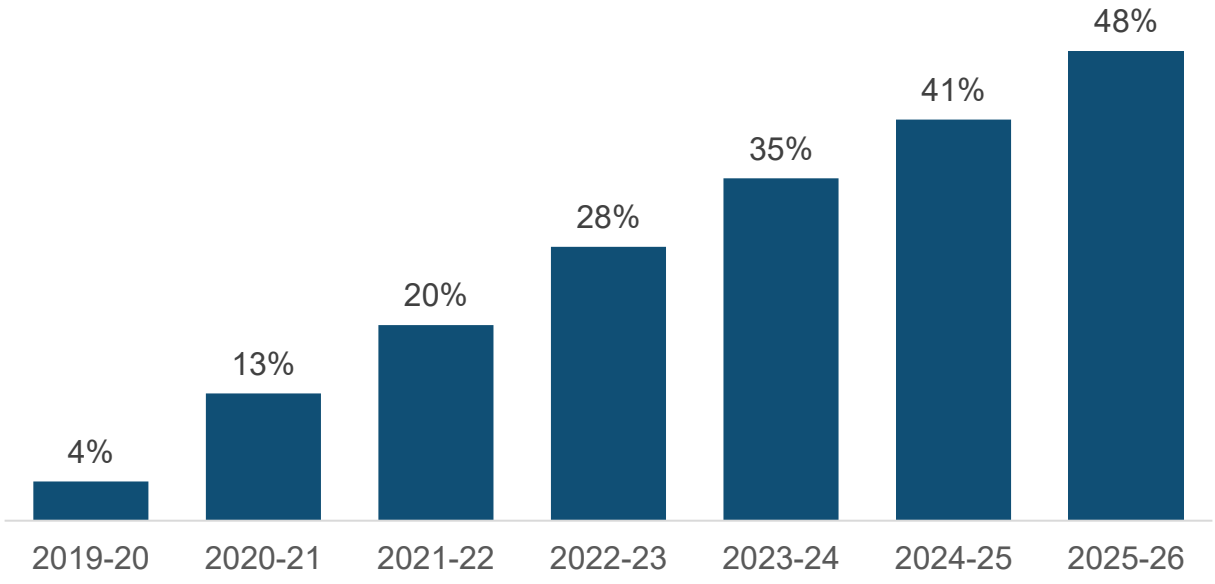
[6] Waves 11 & 12 coverage includes schools and colleges where information is not available about specifically when MHST support started, but where MHSTs are known to have been operational by the end of 2025-26.

Figure 5: Percentage of pupils and learners in settings supported by an MHST, by wave (up to and including waves 11 and 12)



Source: Self-reported MHST settings list, linked to DfE data

Figure 6: Percentage of schools and colleges supported by an MHST, by wave (up to and including waves 11 and 12)



Source: Self-reported MHST settings list, linked to DfE data

Mental Health Support Teams school and college survey

This section provides a summary of findings from the 2025 Department for Education (DfE) MHST school and college survey. The survey asked about the impact that MHSTs have had on schools and colleges and how effective they were at delivering their 3 functions. There were also questions about how well the school or college and MHSTs worked together and the different factors that affected this relationship.

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 10 of the MHST programme between 9 May 2025 and 27 June 2025. The survey invitation email asked that the survey be completed by the senior mental health lead, although we cannot guarantee that it was the senior mental health lead who completed the survey for every school or college.

The survey was issued to 9,308 schools and colleges. Two thousand, four hundred and twenty-one responses were received, giving an overall response rate of 26%. Response rates by National Health Service England (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.

The characteristics of schools that replied to the survey were compared to the characteristics for all schools with an MHST that were sent the survey, as presented in Table 2. There was an under representation for some groups but in all cases this difference was less than 2 percentage points. Since these differences are small, it is unlikely that under or over representation of certain characteristics in the schools who replied has made a difference to the survey findings at a national level.

Table 2: Comparison of characteristics between respondents and all schools sent the survey

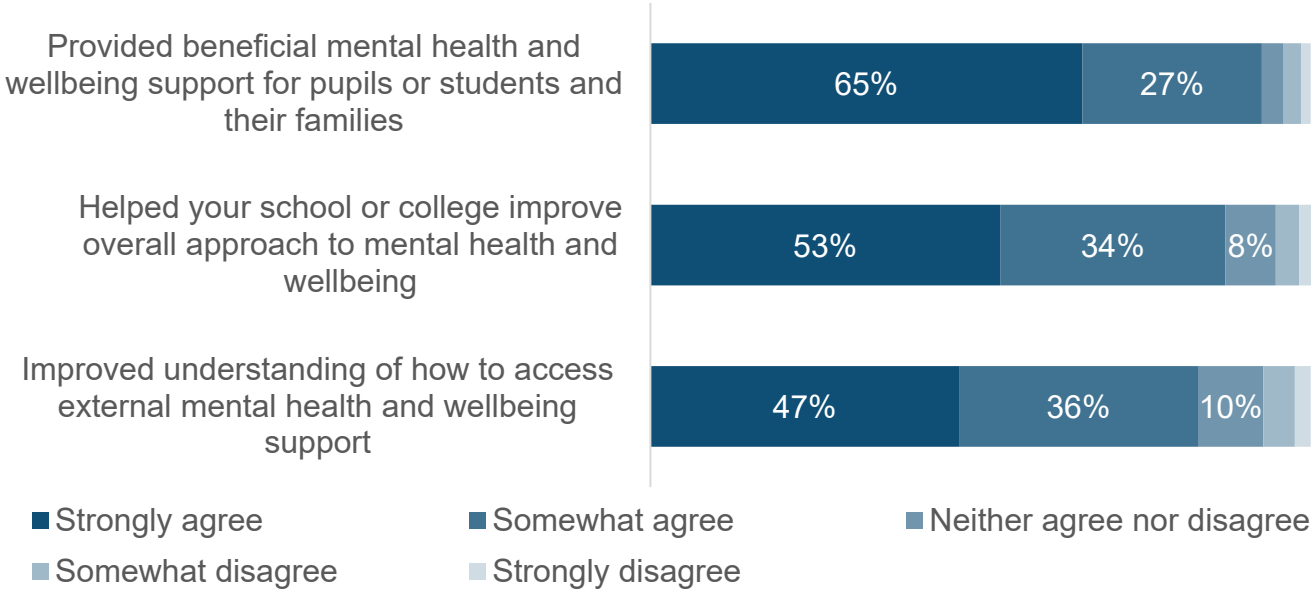
	Responded	All surveyed	Difference
Percentage eligible for FSM	26%	28%	-2 percentage points
Percentage White British	59%	59%	<1 percentage points
Percentage with English as an additional language	22%	22%	<1 percentage points
Percentage identified with SEN support	14%	14%	<1 percentage points
Percentage with an EHCP	4%	5%	<1 percentage points

Impact of the Mental Health Support Team service

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with 3 statements, shown in Figure 7, about the impact of MHSTs which related to their 3 functions:

- 92% of respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that their MHST had provided beneficial mental health and wellbeing support. Due to a change in question wording this year we’re unable to directly compare to last year’s results.
- 87% of respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that their MHST helped improve the school’s or college’s overall approach to mental health and wellbeing, which is an increase on the 2024 result of 78%.
- 83% of respondents ‘strongly’ or ‘somewhat’ agreed that their MHST improved their understanding of how to access external mental health and wellbeing support for their pupils or students, which is an increase from the 2024 result of 74%.

Figure 7: Agreement that Mental Health Support Teams fulfilled each of their three functions



Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2025, n = 2,421

Effectiveness of Mental Health Support Teams at delivering direct interventions

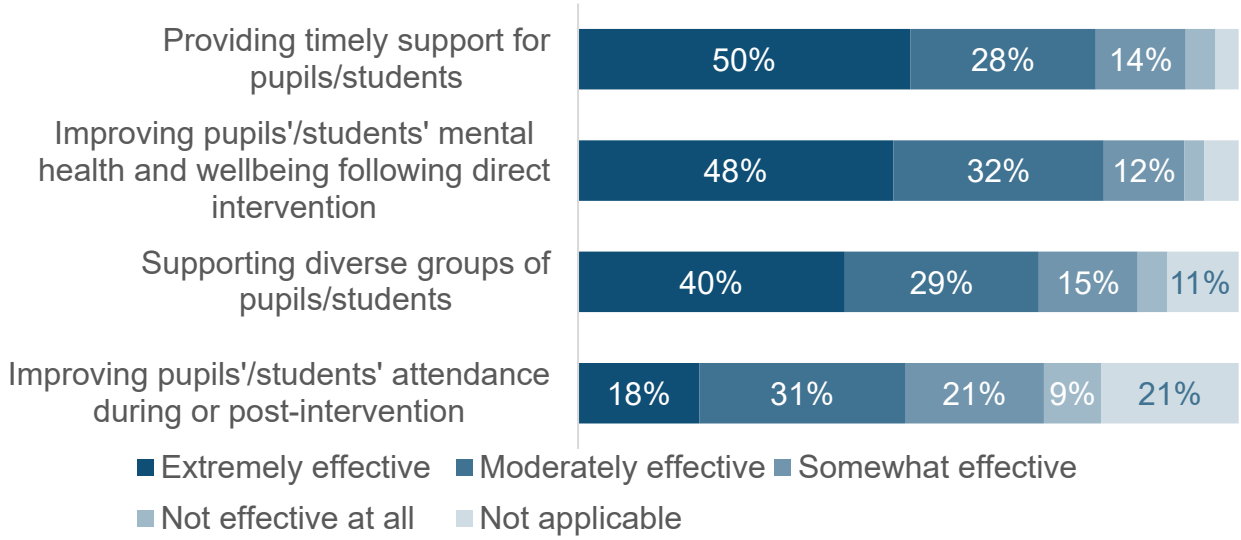
The question presented in Figure 8 asked respondents how effective their MHST is at delivering evidence-based early interventions, one of their 3 core functions. The majority of respondents indicated that their MHST had been ‘extremely’, ‘moderately’ or ‘somewhat’ effective at providing direct interventions that were timely, supported diverse groups and improved mental health.

- 92% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective at providing timely support for pupils or students
- 92% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective at improving pupils’ or students’ mental health and wellbeing following direct intervention
- 85% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective at supporting diverse groups of pupils and students
- 71% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective at improving pupils’ or students’ attendance during or post intervention

The percentage who selected ‘extremely effective’ when asked about the effect of direct interventions on attendance was 18%. This is low in comparison to the other questions

about the effective delivery of direct intervention. However, a high percentage (21%) of respondents selected ‘Not applicable to this question, so caution should be applied when interpreting these findings.

Figure 8: Perceived effectiveness of Mental Health Support Teams in delivering direct interventions for pupils and students



Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2025, n = 2,421

Effectiveness of Mental Health Support Teams at supporting a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing

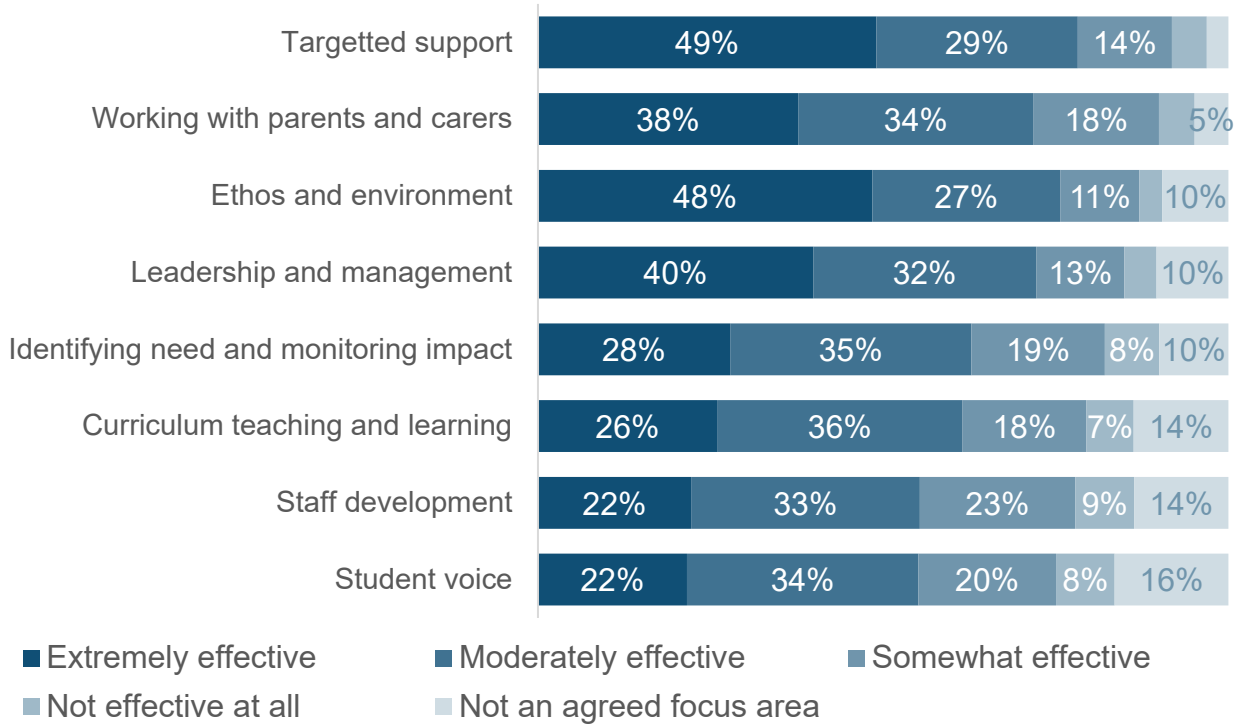
Respondents were asked how effective their MHST had been at supporting their school or college to develop or improve practices associated with each of the principles of a whole school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing[7]. This is function 2 of the MHSTs 3 core functions.

The results presented in Figure 9 show that the majority of respondents indicated that their MHST had been ‘extremely’, ‘moderately’ or ‘somewhat’ effective at helping improve practices associated with the principles of a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing.

[7] Promoting children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing guidance

- 92% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective in relation to targeting support and appropriate referrals
- 90% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective in relation to working with parents and carers
- 87% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective in relation to creating an ethos and environment that promotes respect and values diversity
- 85% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective in relation to leadership and management that supports and champions efforts to promote emotional health and wellbeing
- 82% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective in relation to identifying need and monitoring the impact of interventions
- 79% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective in relation to curriculum teaching and learning to promote resilience and support social emotional learning
- 78% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective in relation to staff development to support their own wellbeing and that of pupils/students
- 75% of respondents indicated that their MHST was effective in relation to enabling student voice to influence decisions

Figure 9: Perceived effectiveness of Mental Health Support Teams at supporting a whole-school or college approach to mental health and wellbeing



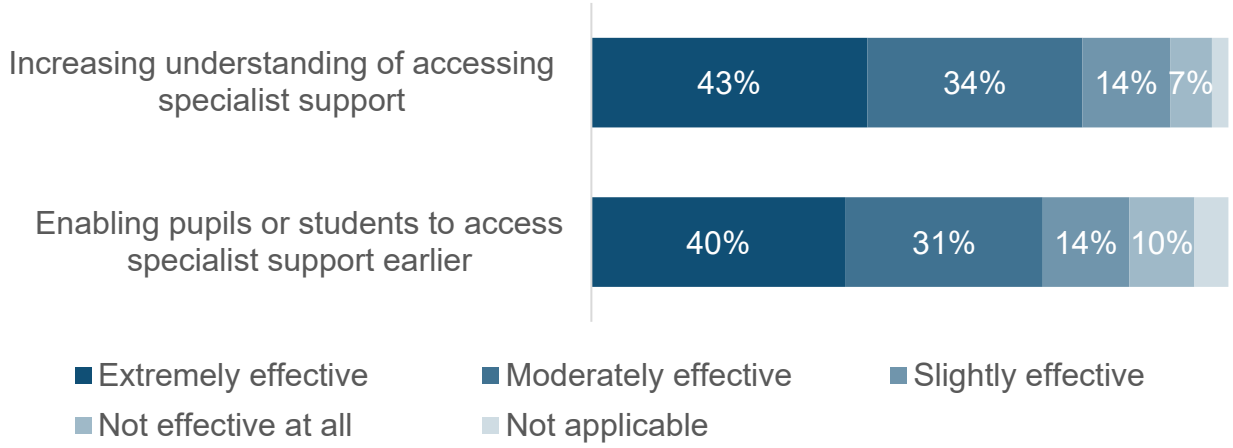
Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2025, n = 2,421

Effectiveness of Mental Health Support Teams at improving understanding of accessing specialist support

This question asked how effective MHSTs had been at delivering their third function of improving schools or colleges understanding of how to access specialist support for their students.

The results presented in Figure 10 show that 91% of respondents indicated that their MHST had been either 'extremely', 'moderately' or 'somewhat' effective at increasing understanding of available support and how to access it. 84% of respondents agreed that their MHST was 'extremely', 'moderately' or 'somewhat' effective at enabling earlier access to support.

Figure 10: Perceived effectiveness of Mental Health Support Teams at improving access to specialist support



Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2025, n= 2,421

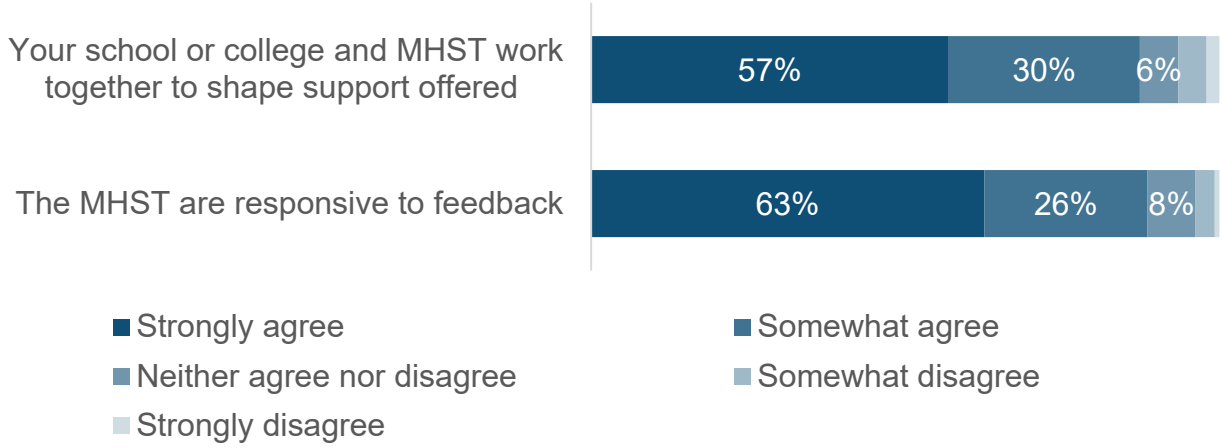
Working relationship between schools and colleges and Mental Health Support Teams

The questions presented in Figure 11 asked about the working relationship between schools or colleges and their MHST. 87% 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that they worked together to shape the support offered. Of the 86% of respondents that said they provided feedback, 89% of these 'strongly' or 'somewhat' agreed that their MHST was responsive to their feedback.

When comparing these results to last year's results, there has been a small improvement in respondents' views of their working relationship with MHSTs. This year 57% of

respondents ‘strongly agreed’ that they worked together with their MHST to shape the support offered, compared to 46% of respondents reporting that they were ‘very satisfied’ in 2024. This year 63% of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ that their MHST was responsive to feedback which is a small increase from 58% recorded in the 2024 survey.

Figure 11: Agreement that Mental Health Support Teams work collaboratively with schools and colleges



Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2025, n = 2,421

Challenges or barriers to making full use of the support offered by MHSTs

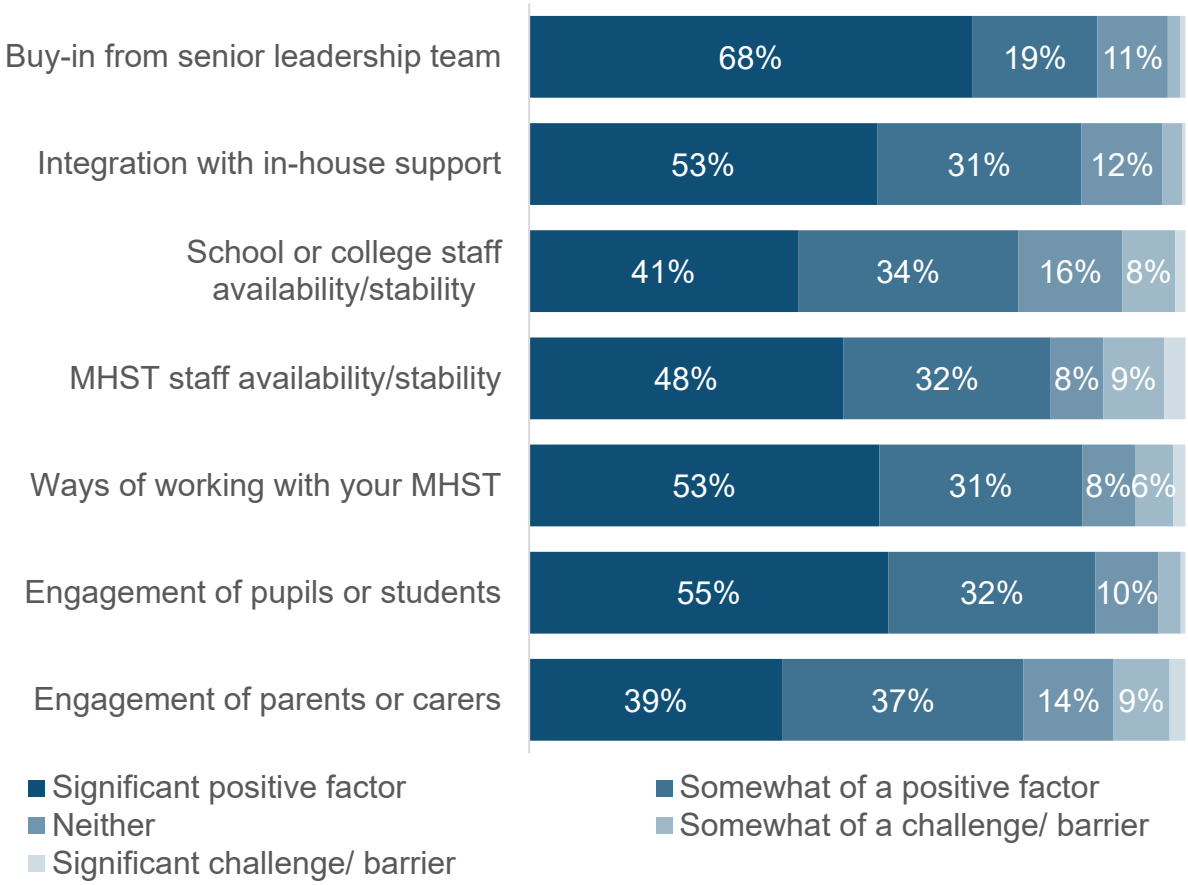
The aim of the questions presented in Figure 12 was to understand whether different aspects of the school or college and MHST partnership acted as a positive factor or a challenge or barrier to schools or colleges making full use of the support offered by their MHST.

The majority of respondents indicated that the different aspects of the school or college and MHST partnership, listed in Figure 12, acted as a positive factor rather than a barrier to making full use of what their MHST offered. The highest percentage of respondents saw buy-in from senior leaders and engagement of pupils or students as positive factors. Whereas, staff availability (both MHST and school or college), as well as parental engagement were seen as barriers by the highest percentage of respondents.

A question about positive factors or barriers was last asked in 2023. Respondents were asked to select three main barriers preventing them from making full use of MHST support. Similarly to this year's results, the highest percentage indicated that MHST staff capacity was the main barrier. In 2023, school or college staff capacity and engagement

of parents or careers were also in the top rated 4 barriers preventing schools or colleges making full use of the support offered.

Figure 12: Percentage reporting that the following has acted as a positive factor or a challenge or barrier to making full use of a Mental Health Support Team



Source: DfE MHST school and college survey 2025, n = 2,421

Department for Education

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