

Mental Health in Schools and Colleges

2024

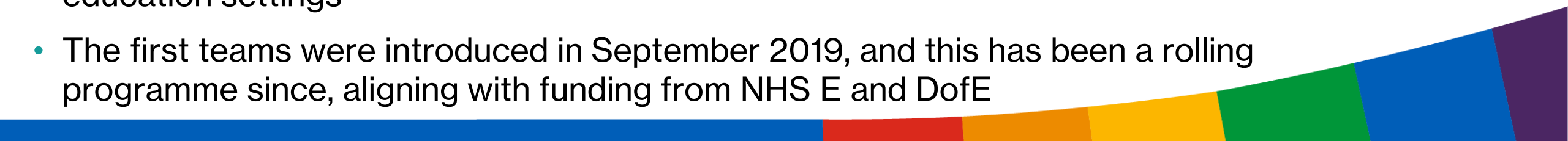


Background

Mental Health in Schools Survey

- The Make your Mark vote that was undertaken by the Devon Youth Council in Feb 2024 showed that mental health is still the top issue for young people in Devon.
- As a result, The Devon Youth Council created a survey to understand if young people are able to access mental health support teams in schools (MHST) and to explore their views on what would support young people's mental health in educational settings.
- Devon Youth Council led the survey and a number of focus groups on behalf of NHS Devon as part of the review of MHST

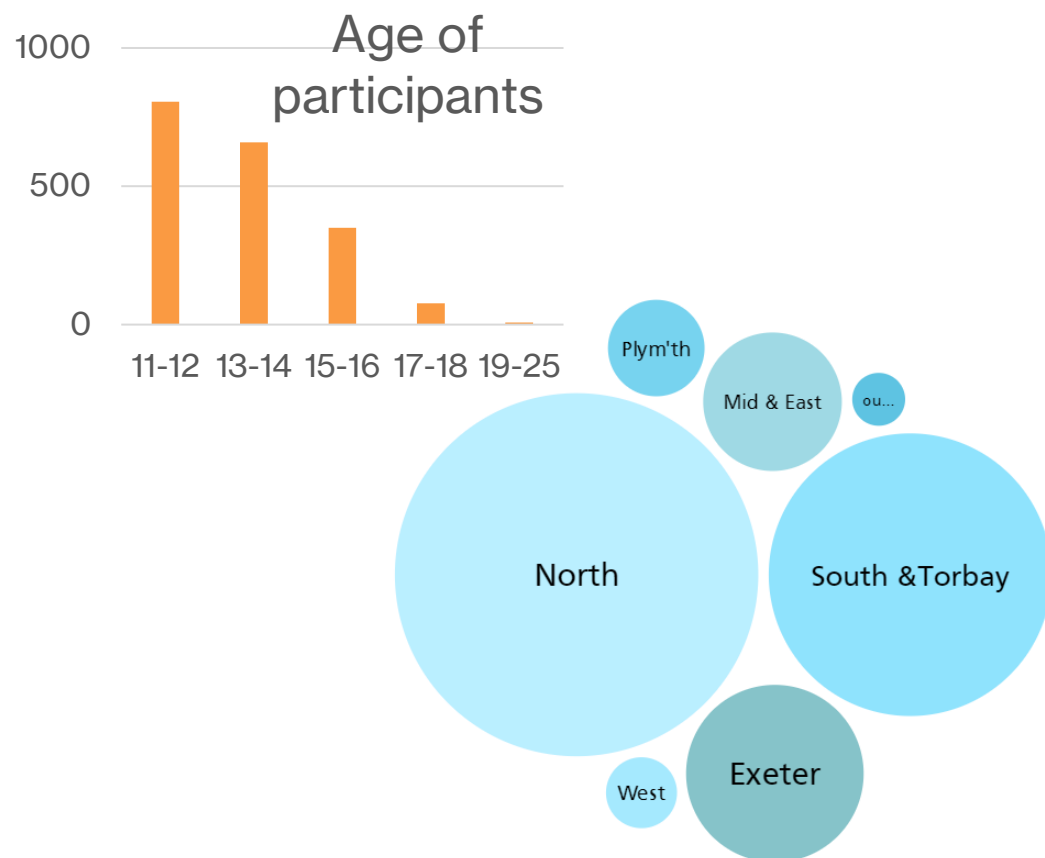
Mental Health Support Teams (MHST)

- Within NHS Devon we have 11 fully operational MHST with 3 teams in training
 - Each team provides low-level mental health support to approx. 7000-8000 CYP within education settings
 - The first teams were introduced in September 2019, and this has been a rolling programme since, aligning with funding from NHS E and DofE
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Survey- Demographics

In total there were 2,318 responses to the survey

- 11-14 year olds were the largest contributors
- Home locations varied with majority of CYP living in North Devon & South and Torbay



Below is a breakdown of the Education Settings the CYP who completed the survey attended;

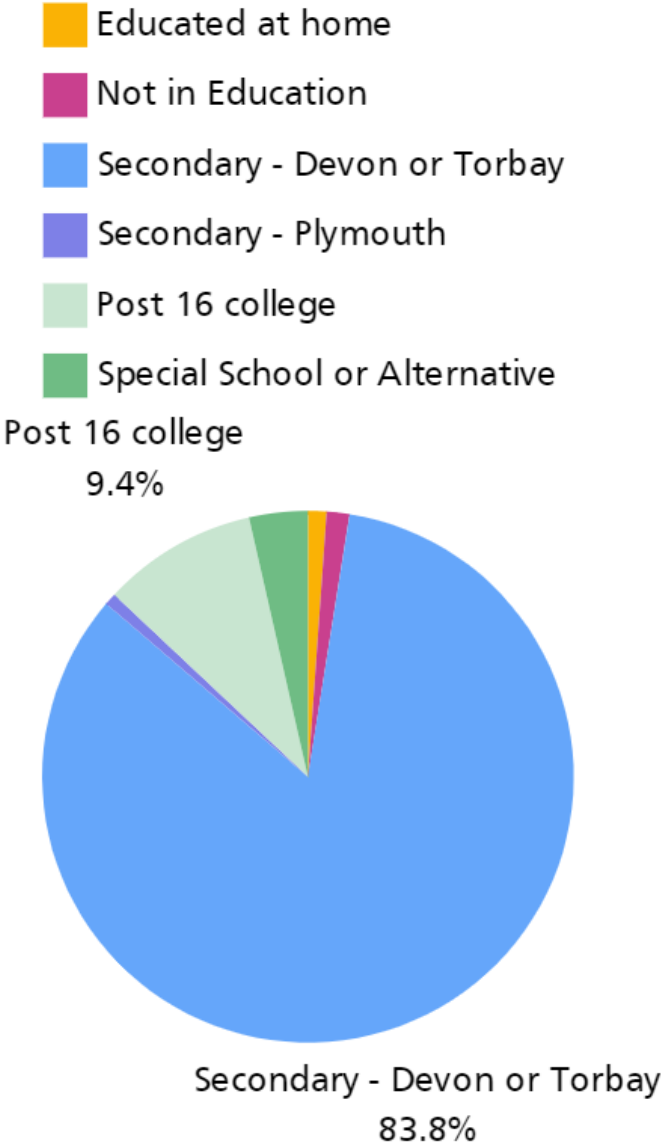
Name of school	number of responses
Paignton Academy (Waterleat and Borough)	283
Bideford College	369
Dawlish College	203
Sidmouth College	262
Churston Ferrers Grammar	145
Davenport school for boys	378
PETROC (Barnstaple)	128
South Molton Community College	85
Queen Elizabeth (QE)	49
Braunton Academy	39
Special schools (majority from Brook Green)	55
St Peters	38

Name of school	number of responses
Home educated/ not attending education setting at the moment	29
Exmouth Community College	21
Okehampton College	18
Park Community School	7
Axe Valley Academy	6
Exeter College	6
Ilfracombe Academy	5

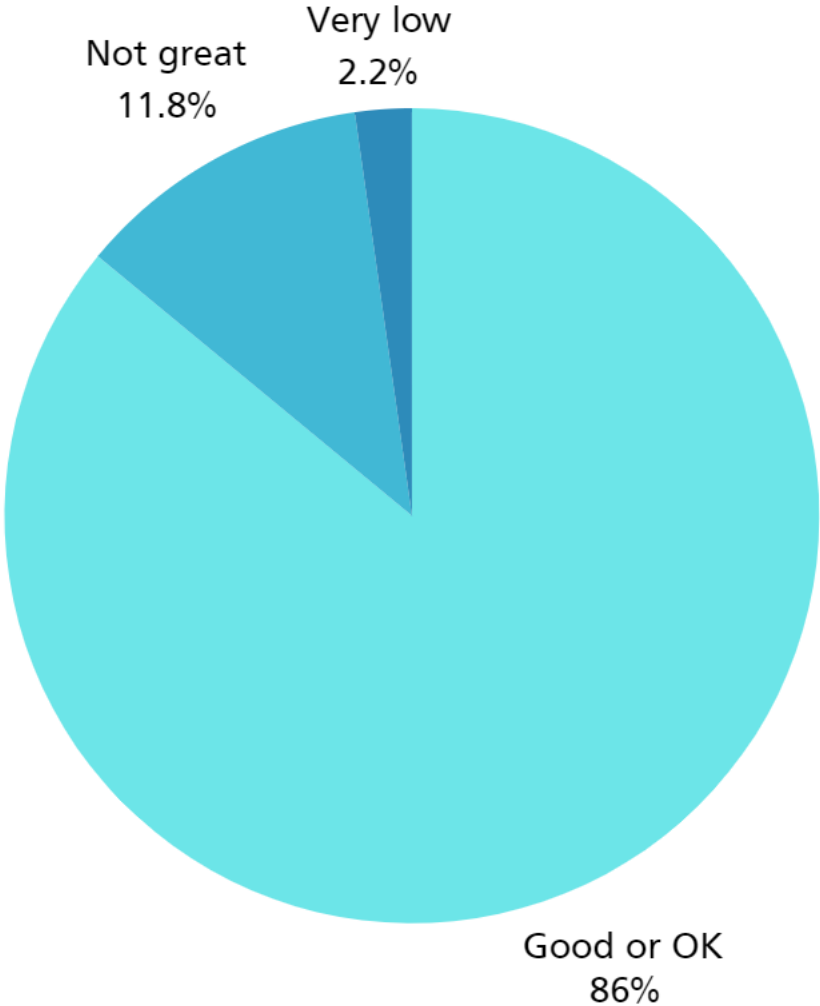
Alongside the CYP completing the survey, focus groups took place at;

- Newton Abbot College x 2
- West Exe

School/college

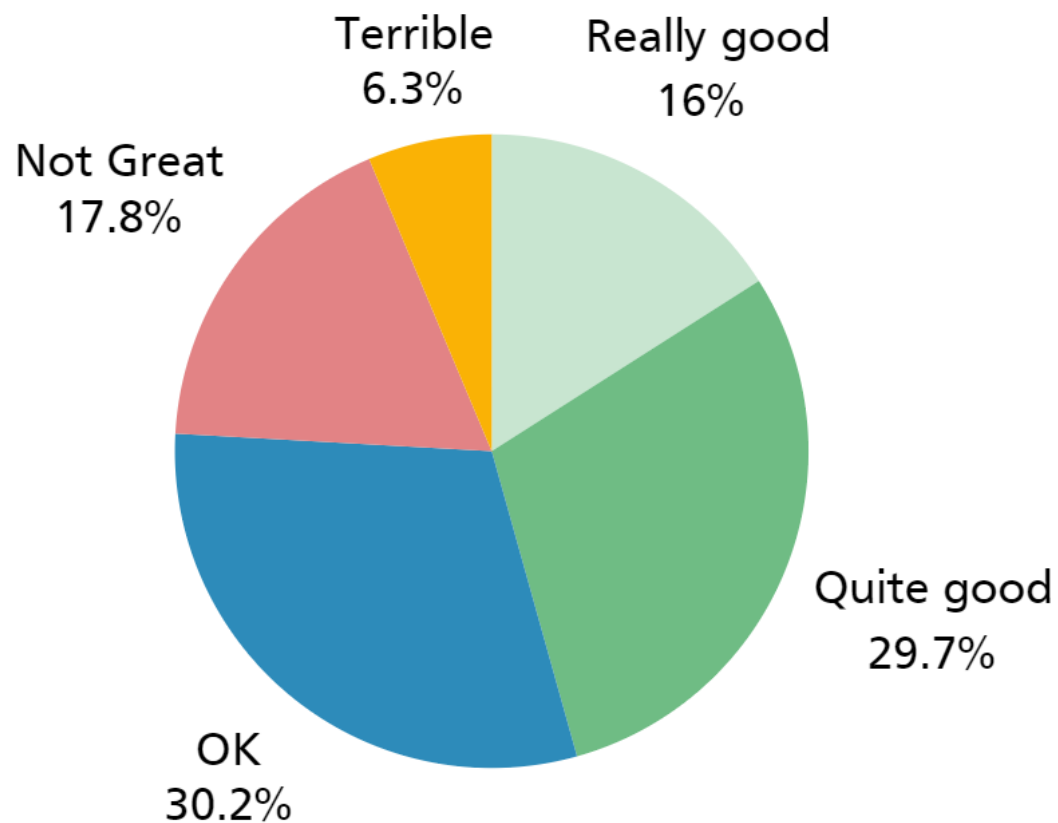


Young people’s views of their attendance levels

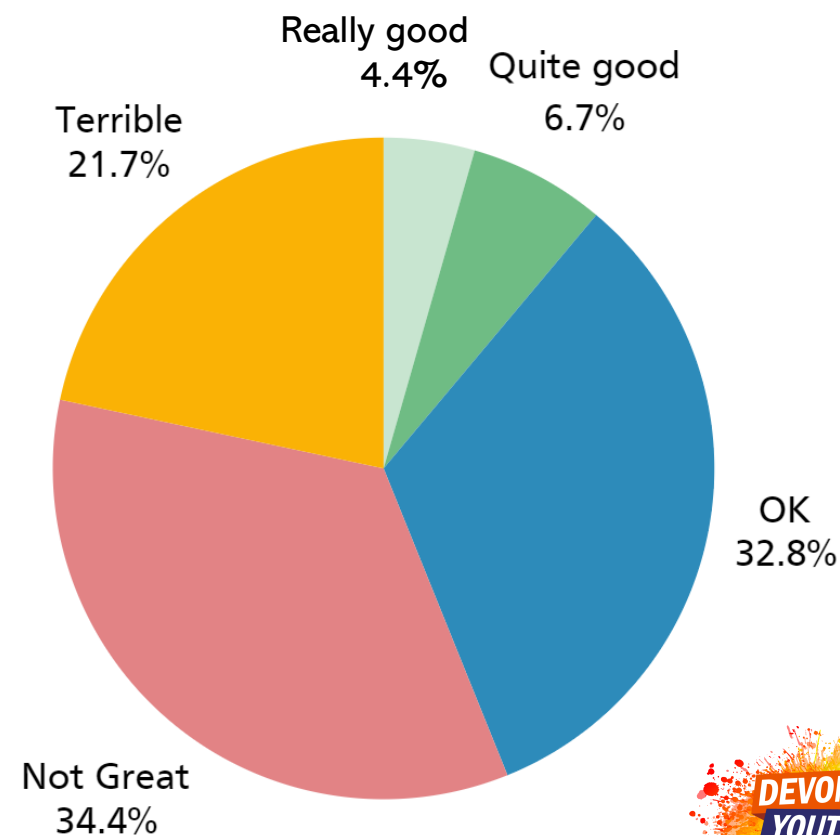


Young people's views of their mental health

Mental health of those with good/ OK attendance

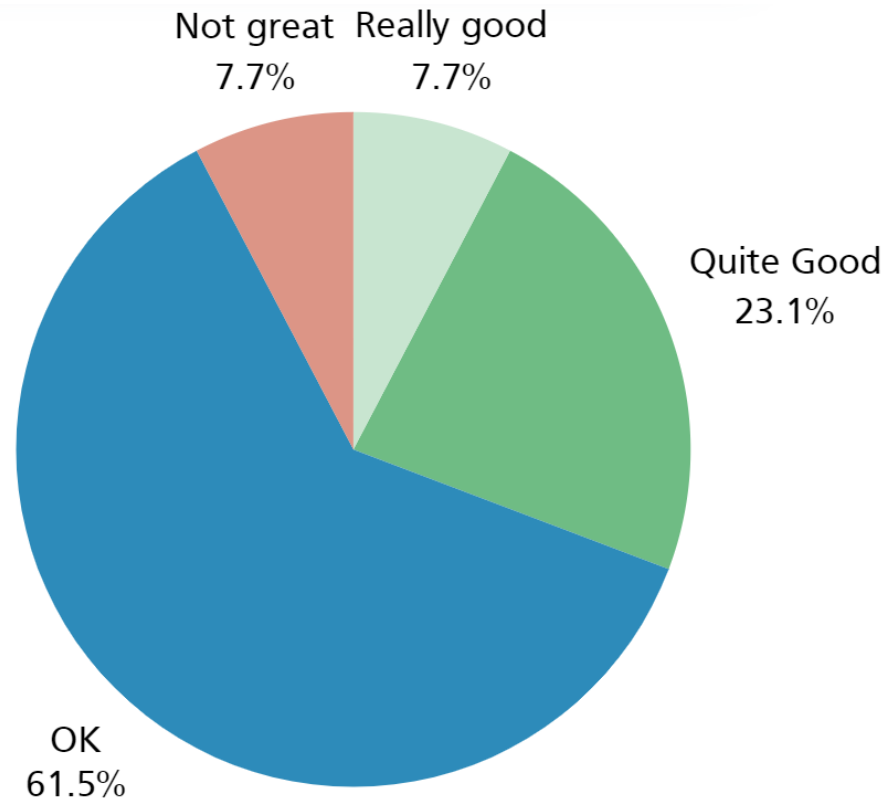


Mental health of those with low attendance

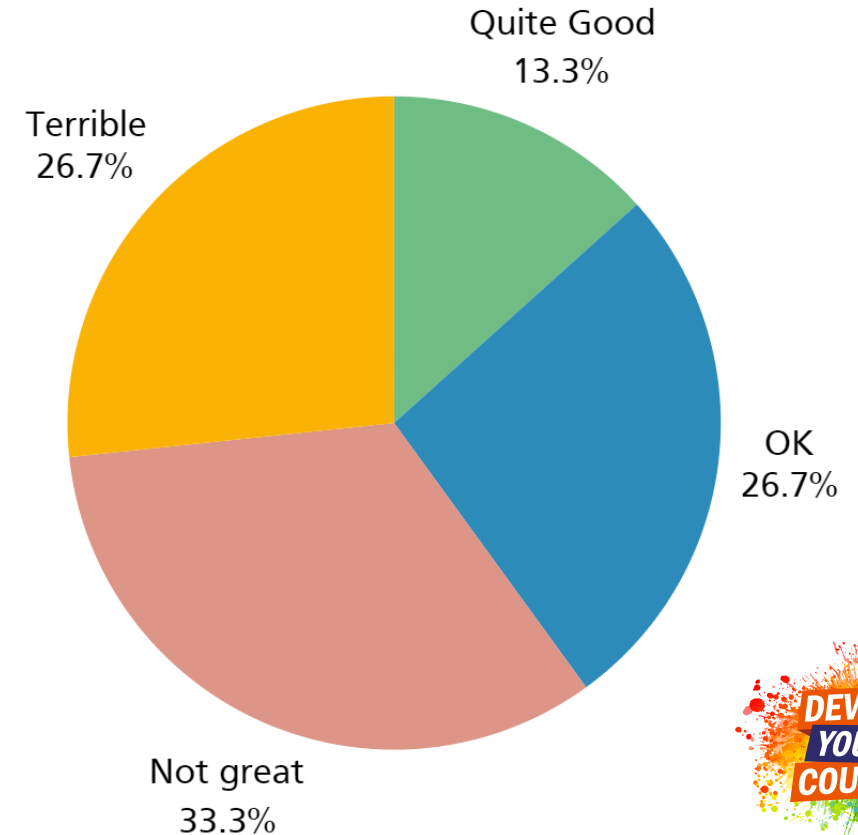


Young people's views of their mental health – not in school/college

Mental health of those educated at home out of personal choice (13 young people in this survey)



Mental health of those not in education (15 young people in this survey, mostly aged 15-18)



Those who had good or OK attendance



The following were the top 10 reasons they identified that helped good attendance:

1. Good friends in schools/ college (77%)
2. Teachers who are kind and supportive
3. School/ college being close to home
4. Lessons which I enjoy and find interesting
5. Clubs and activities I enjoy
6. Someone to talk to in school/ college
7. Support and encouragement from parents/ carer to attend
8. Feeling listened to, valued and understood at school
9. Good support for Mental Health in school/ college
10. Affordable transport to and from school/ college

“My school is really good when it comes to teachers being good friends and mentors to students...it’s nice to know that you always have someone you can go to if you want guidance or a laugh”.



Those not in education or educated at home other than out of personal choice

Top 8 reasons:

1. School/ college was too stressful
2. My anxiety was too high to cope in school/ college
3. I felt lonely and isolated in school/ college
4. I was bullied in school.
5. The school/ college that was best for me was too far away
6. I tried to reach out to staff but didn't feel heard or supported
7. The school/ college couldn't meet my needs
8. The school/ college was too big and there were too many people



More quotes from Survey from those not in education/ who struggle to attend



“I feel that the school is more concerned that I attend and not that I struggle in school. It would take someone literally dying in order to be allowed home in the school day because attendance is all that really matters to them”

“Most teachers do not understand how hard it is for me to sit still and stay silent for such a long period of time. The behaviour policy doesn’t support people like me”

“I would like school to understand how hard it is to be a young carer sometimes and provide support for me. Sometimes when I come in to school I don't feel great then there's always a person in my class who has to make it worse by saying something not very nice which on a normal day wouldn't upset me. Some days I feel like if I had my dog there everything would be ok because she's always so calm and it makes me feel better”

“They don’t offer advice on how to unwind after a long week, or to take a break sometimes, they just expect everything of us with no recognition of how it affects our mental health”

“I have sensory challenges and the uniform at my school is not friendly to my needs as I am forced to wear tight skirts and shirts with itchy labels and forced to tuck in my top which makes me feel trapped. I hate sitting in the playground because its too loud and busy but because I don’t have a diagnosis, I don’t get any adjustments. Even though I have extreme levels of anxiety, I am not allowed to sit in the art room where I feel safe”

For those who don't attend regularly, what would support more regular attendance?

Top ten suggestions:

1. Good friends in school including more opportunities to go to clubs and activities
2. Teachers who are kind and supportive
3. Better support for Mental Health in school including someone to talk to
4. Feeling listened to, understood and valued - this also involves schools doing what they say they are going to do in terms of support
5. Lessons which are enjoyable, interesting and interactive so I don't have to sit still for so long
6. Movement breaks for those who need them
7. The option to do less subjects
8. A more supportive approach to behaviour
9. A quiet space or sensory room if I need a break in lesson time
10. A calm safe space to go at lunch breaks



Accessing support

Of the total who answered the survey:

- 60% have an adult they can talk to if they need to
- 42% struggle either to understand or communicate their feelings

Of those who don't feel good and need support,

- 56% haven't spoken to anyone about it
- 31% are on a waiting list for mental health support
- 43% have accessed some kind of mental health support.

The most common forms of mental health support accessed are School Mental Health workers; Counsellors; CAMHS and Young Devon. Kooth and creative therapies are also in the top few. Young people often access more than one.

A broad range of other therapies, groups and people are also mentioned.

mental health support services accessed

42% of those who have accessed support went to School Mental Health workers
39% - Counsellors
33% - CAMHS
10% - Young Devon

45% of young people who accessed School Mental Health support said it was good or really good.

42% felt it was OK but didn't make much difference.



According to those who answered the survey, what are the most common offers in schools/ colleges for mental health support?

1. Assemblies
2. Quiet calming space in school
3. School mental health worker/ pastoral support worker
4. Exit cards
5. Peer mental health ambassadors

Different schools provide other options too but the above are the most common.



What would young people most like to see in school/ college to support positive mental health?

In addition to general awareness (assemblies/ lessons):

1. A quiet calming space to go if you need a bit of a break
2. Therapy pets
3. Safe and easy access to the toilets when needed
4. A trained professional to talk to in school/ college if needed
5. Sensory room/ creativity zone
6. Good two-way communication with students and also with parents/carers
7. A space to move around and get rid of some energy if needed
8. Mental Health Ambassadors
9. Exit cards
10. Assemblies and lessons on Mental Health
11. Therapy involving art/ music or play rather than just talking
12. Drop-in emotional wellbeing support sessions



Learning

- Engagement from education settings was generally poor;
 - It was difficult to get the education settings to promote the survey and to support young people in completing the survey
 - We found it difficult finding education settings who would be happy to support a focus group
- The education settings that had the largest number of responses are those schools where a youth worker from DCC was either within the setting, working with students, or where we had a good relationship with a key staff member.
- We opted out of utilising the Ambassadors aligned to MHST as felt these CYP would have a higher knowledge of the support available so wanted to get an overarching view .



Next Steps

- The presentation given at the Youth Voices event has been circulated in both the headteachers and School Governors newsletters and will be shared at the Mentally Healthy Schools conference in March.
 - The results from the survey will feed into an overall MHST review. The review will encompass;
 - The CYP Voice survey
 - Results from the school survey the Department of Education (DofE) undertook
 - Data from the National team from the MHST Audit undertaken
 - Updated matrix to understand current level of support, and the level of support required to achieve 100% within the Devon ICB footprint
 - Once complete this will go to the MHST steering Group to share information and feedback with the MHST leads and system partners
 - This review will also inform future commissioning for MHST, inputting into future project plans if funding is released by NHSE and DofE for future teams
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Photos from the Youth Voice Saturday 9 November 2024. Tiverton Youth Centre

Attendees' response - aspirations

Attendees were asked to write their goals and aspirations in response to the presentation on clouds around a rainbow. They can be summarised as follows:



- Equal value placed on wellbeing and connections as academic results
- A calming space in every school with someone to talk to
- Time and space to make personal connections in school: both a trusted adult and a friendship
- Every child in school to have a positive relational plan
- Youth worker-type support in every school
- An individualised package of support to help children and young people get back to school if they have been out of education
- MHSTs in all schools in Devon, helping to ensure a whole school approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health
- A mandatory mental health Ambassador programme in every school
- An integrated approach across education and wider organisations
- A platform for Devon Youth Council to be heard by School leaders
- Continuing mental health support and a trusted adult when turning 18

Attendees' response - barriers

Attendees were asked to write barriers to achieving their goals. The barriers can be summarised as follows:



- Money/ funding was the most frequently cited barrier though someone also pointed out that talking about money is also a barrier
- Time and capacity
- Ofsted criteria for measuring success
- Lack of consistency in approach and culture across schools
- Silo working and lack of shared priorities in partnership work with schools
- Lack of vision, aspiration and skilled leadership
- Identifying colleagues in schools to work with in partnership
- Lack of real engagement by politicians
- Doing the same things but expecting different outcomes
- Pressure on school staff
- Resistance to change

Attendees' response – steps to change

Attendees were asked to write steps towards achieving their goals. The steps can be summarised as follows:



- Support schools by offering training, advice and support around inclusion and belonging – relationships over interventions
- Provide low-cost training for mental health strategy development and create a mental health strategy template for schools
- Focus on Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision in schools (what all schools are expected to do) [Ordinarily Available Inclusive Provision - Support for schools and settings](#)
- Compile some creative solutions to support children back to school and share good practice
- Work towards all schools having a quiet calming space that is not related to punishment
- Promote investment in activities and groups to create personal connection – more focus on preventative work is cheaper and better for young people
- Schools supported to have time to really listen to WHY young people may be struggling
- Develop better co-production as a system – working together with young people and for young people.
- Create a platform for Devon Youth Council young people to speak to school systems and leaders.

Next steps

- This presentation is being shared with all of those invited to the Youth Voice Saturday and will be sent out in the Headteachers newsletter and the School Governors newsletter. It will also be shared at the Mentally Healthy Schools conference on 21 Nov.
- A young person's summary of this presentation will be sent out to all members of the Devon Youth Council. You can download the young person's summary version here: [Mental Health Support For Schools - Update Nov 24.pdf](#)
- The survey also included specific questions about MHSTs in school. The Youth Participation team in partnership with NHS commissioning colleagues will be compiling the results from those questions so that we can get a picture of whether pupils feel that MHSTs are effective and providing the right kind of support. This will be added to the other data collected by Commissioners on MHSTs and help to inform the best use of resources to support the mental health of young people in schools and colleges.

