



School Business Leaders Wellbeing Index 2025

Working in schools in England and Wales

March 2025



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Foreword



Over the past few years, the mental health and wellbeing of School Business Leaders have remained a central focus of our work at Education Mutual. This ongoing research allows us to monitor shifts within the sector – whether an increase or decrease in reported stress, workload, or feelings of isolation. Each fluctuation reveals a deeper story about how the evolving demands placed on SBLs are impacting their wellbeing. While we celebrate areas of improvement, it is just as important to shine a light on the gaps where progress has stagnated or where new challenges have arisen.

As we reflect on the third edition of this critical research, it becomes clear that continuing to make comparisons with previous years' findings is essential. These comparisons help us to track progress, highlight emerging trends, and communicate not only where positive change is taking root but also where further efforts are urgently needed to support the mental wellbeing of the SBL community.

With the future in mind, it's essential to create a culture where School Business Leaders are empowered and supported. The School Business Leader Wellbeing Index is more than just a report – it is a call to action. By addressing their needs, we can help cultivate resilient, sustainable educational environments. As the pressures on educational leaders evolve, so too must our commitment to supporting their mental health and wellbeing.

We believe that by working together to ensure access to a wide range of health and wellbeing services – like those offered through staff absence protection providers such as Education Mutual – we can provide valuable, additional support for both you and your educational staff to utilise.

Louise Levy

Director
Education Mutual

Section 1

Introduction

Introduction

The Mental Health and Wellbeing Index of School Business Leaders in England and Wales

In line with our continued dedication to the education sector, Education Mutual is thrilled to unveil the release of the annual report, School Business Leader Wellbeing Index 2025.

Throughout this ongoing research, we employ the generic term 'SBLs' to acknowledge the various job titles associated with individuals fulfilling management roles. The collective contributions of School Business Leaders, School Business Managers, Human Resources, and administrative staff are crucial in ensuring the efficient operation of state-funded primary, secondary, and special schools in England and Wales.

Who is this report for?

A harmonious and healthy work environment contributes to the overall success of individuals and the entire educational community. The School Business Leader Wellbeing Index aims to spark positive change to extend its benefits to all working roles within the education sector. By prioritising wellbeing, we create an environment where everyone can perform at their best, ultimately enhancing the quality of education.

School Business Leaders

For School Business Leaders (SBLs), we hope this research not only validates your experiences but also provides a practical tool to help you navigate the ongoing changes within the education sector. By comparing this year's findings with previous years, you can track whether improvements are being made in response to your feedback and whether those changes are positively impacting your role.

Senior School Leaders

Our aspiration for senior school leaders is that this report encourages you to prioritise the wellbeing of key team members, such as your School Business Leader, School Business Manager, Operations Manager, or HR lead. By addressing the challenges highlighted in the research, you can create a more supportive working environment that benefits the entire school community.

Colleagues of School Business Leaders

For all colleagues of a School Business Leader, we hope this report helps you gain a deeper understanding of their role and opens opportunities to reflect on how you can collaborate to better support them. Given that you often spend more time with your colleagues than with your family, it's essential to ensure that everyone is working in a positive and supportive environment.

Executive summary

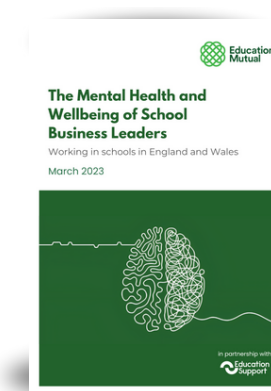
Education Mutual remains committed to deepening the understanding of the wellbeing needs of School Business Leaders (SBLs) across State and Trust primary, secondary and special schools in England and Wales. We are pleased to now present the updated findings of our 2025 edition of this annual research.

In this report, we have also made comparisons to the 2024 data, where available, to provide a clearer picture of emerging trends and shifts within the education sector.

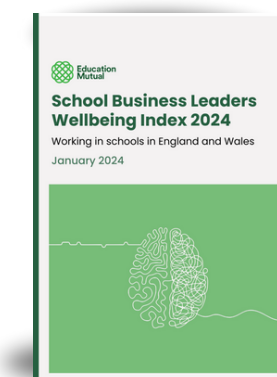
The following research questions underpinned the project:

- What are the work-related factors which have an impact on your mental health and/or wellbeing?
- Which types of mental health and wellbeing support are currently accessible through your school?
- Which services would be/are of most benefit in tackling these work-related issues?
- Overall, how well do SBLs perceive the mental health and wellbeing support provided by their workplace?

Previous versions of the research



2023 edition:



2024 edition:

All editions of these reports are available to download, prints and share via <https://www.educationmutual.co.uk/school-business-leader-wellbeing-index-2025/>

Summarised Methodology

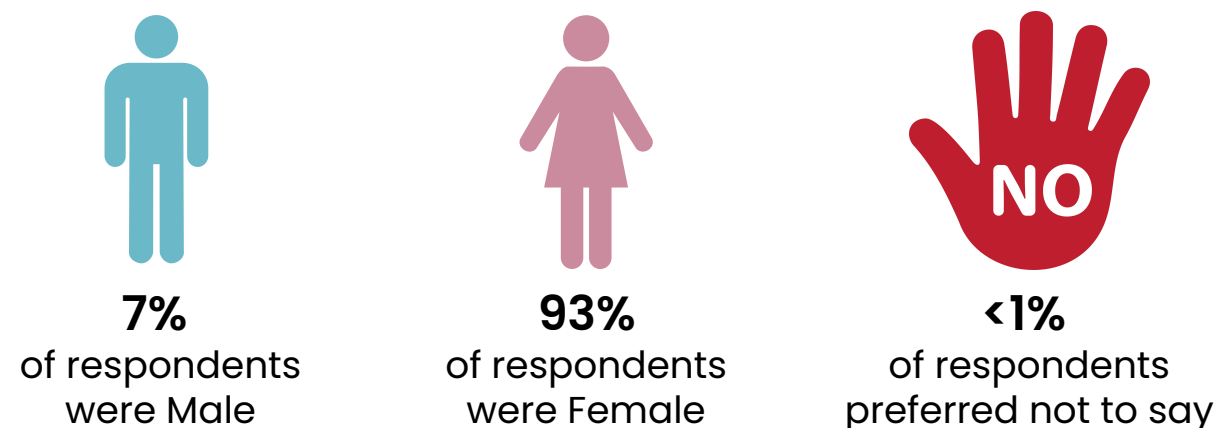
We are thrilled to have received an incredible **715** responses to our online survey, all from School Business Leaders working across England and Wales.

As this research continues annually, we are noticing a significant increase in participation, which strengthens the value of the findings. The more responses we receive, the more your feedback empowers us to identify key trends, advocate for meaningful change, and work towards improving your role and working conditions. Your input is vital in shaping the future of the profession and ensuring that wellbeing remains a top priority across the sector.

Some key participant figures to take from this years findings:

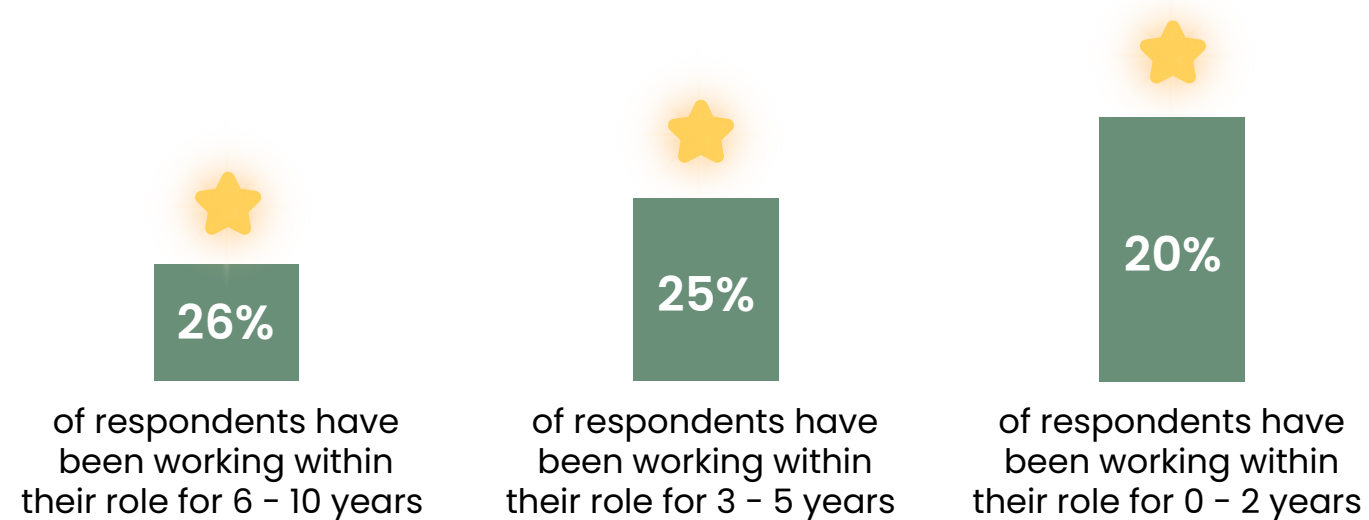
The full appendix and methodology for the School Business Leader Wellbeing Index 2025 is available to browse towards the back of the report.

Respondents by gender: Base: all respondents (n=715)



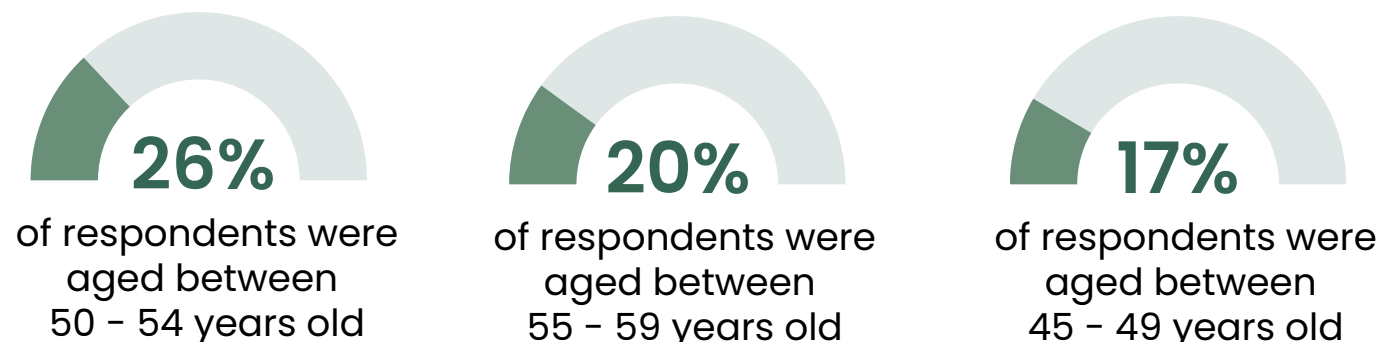
Respondents by tenure: Base: all respondents (n=715)

The top 3 most popular tenure brackets for respondents are featured below:

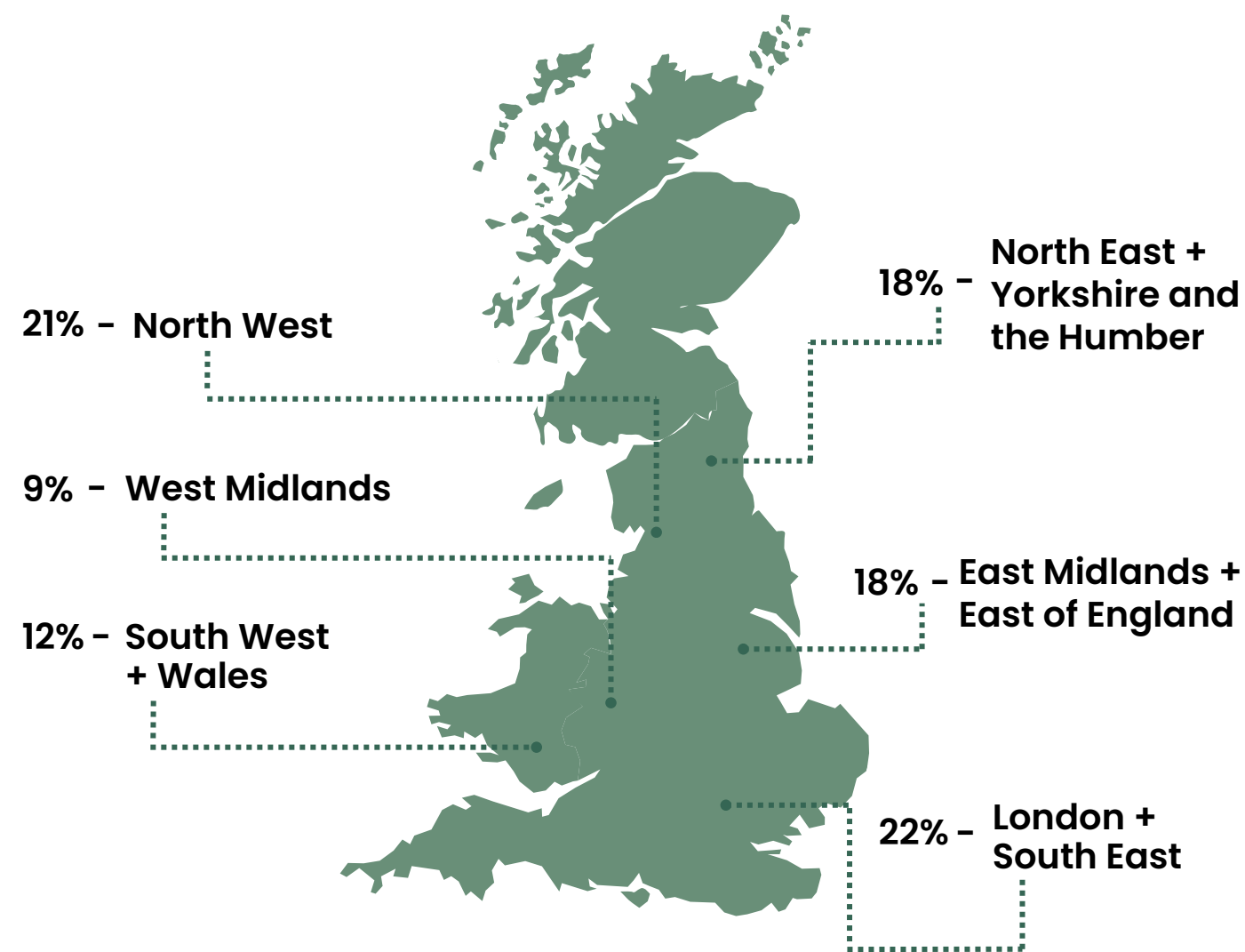


Respondents by age: Base: all respondents (n=715)

The top 3 most popular age brackets for respondents are featured below:



Respondents by region: Base: all respondents (n=715)



Section 2

Key Findings

Key Findings

A) What affects SBLs' mental health and wellbeing at work?

We asked School Business Leaders about the work-related factors influencing their mental health and wellbeing in the workplace.

The top five challenges were:

This challenge is a new addition to the top 5 challenges.



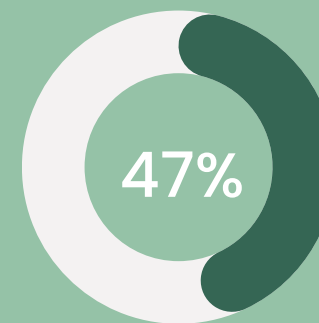
Excessive workload



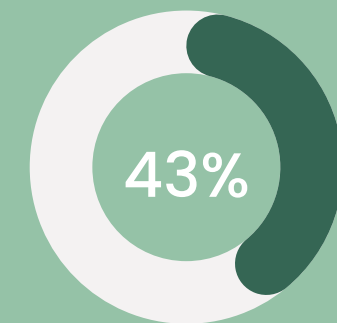
Funding issues



A lack of understanding of their role (by colleagues)



Problems with staffing



Working long unpaid hours

These issues were explored further in interviews with School Business Leaders. More details of each of the five challenges can be found in Section 3 of the report.

You can read the full breakdown in Appendix 1

Further findings

Some interviewees stated that the perceptions that some staff had of the SBL role and their responses to it, adversely impacted their mental health and wellbeing.



39% of respondents reported that their mental health and wellbeing had been impacted by a lack of work-life balance

New challenges raised for 2025



34% of respondents reported that their mental health and wellbeing had been impacted by inequitable pay



31% of respondents reported that their mental health and wellbeing had been impacted by financial reporting/accountability



27% of respondents reported that their mental health and wellbeing had been impacted by government legislation/compliance

You can read the full breakdown in Appendix 1

B) Perception of school employee mental health and wellbeing support

We asked School Business Leaders how well they thought their school supports all their staff who experience problems with their mental health and wellbeing.

83% of SBLs told us their schools supported their employees well (very well or fairly well)



The figure has climbed by 10%, improving on the 73% reported in the 2024 edition.

How well schools support their employees who experience problems with their mental health and wellbeing

Base: All respondents (n=715)

Not well at all

3%

Didn't know

2%

Not very well

12%

Fairly well

52%

Very well

31%

The chart above illustrates a notable 10% increase in the number of respondents selecting 'Very well' compared to the 2024 findings, indicating an improvement in perceptions. On the other hand, there has been a corresponding decline in the percentage of respondents choosing 'Not very well', 'Didn't know', and 'Not well at all', suggesting a shift towards more positive responses overall.

You can read the full breakdown in Appendix 2

C) The wellbeing services being provided by schools and used by SBLs

We asked School Business Leaders which mental health and wellbeing services their school currently provides for their staff.

91% of schools provided mental health and wellbeing services for their staff



This year, we've seen a **3%** increase in schools providing their staff with service access

The top five most commonly reported sources of support were:



Base: All respondents (n=715)

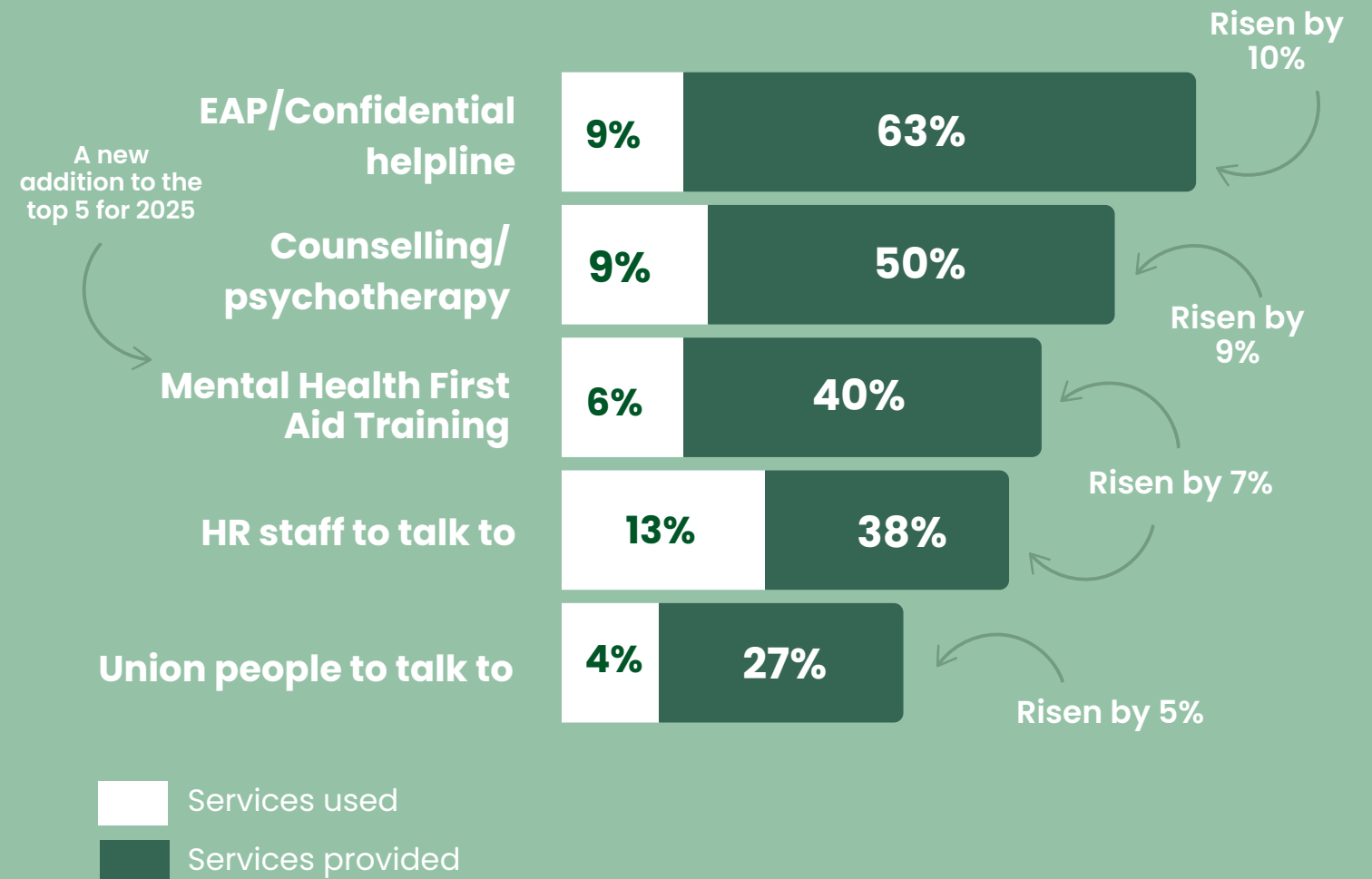
A key comparison in the 2025 edition of this report, compared to previous editions, is the more than **5%** increase in schools' access to the services highlighted above. This is a positive development for the education sector, particularly as staff continue to rate a confidential helpline as the most beneficial service available. There's been a noticeable shift in priorities: the popularity of accessibility to wellbeing sessions has decreased, while there has been a rise in the availability of union representatives for staff to contact. This change suggests a growing emphasis on formal support structures within the workplace.

You can read the full breakdown in Appendix 3

Mental Health and Wellbeing services provided and used

We asked School Business Leaders which services they had used and for the third year running, results from the data found that an Employee Assistance Programme/Confidential Helpline and Counselling/Psychotherapy were the most popular services, with an increase in usage rates.

The chart below details the top five mental health and wellbeing services provided by schools to SBLs, alongside the usage rate of each service.



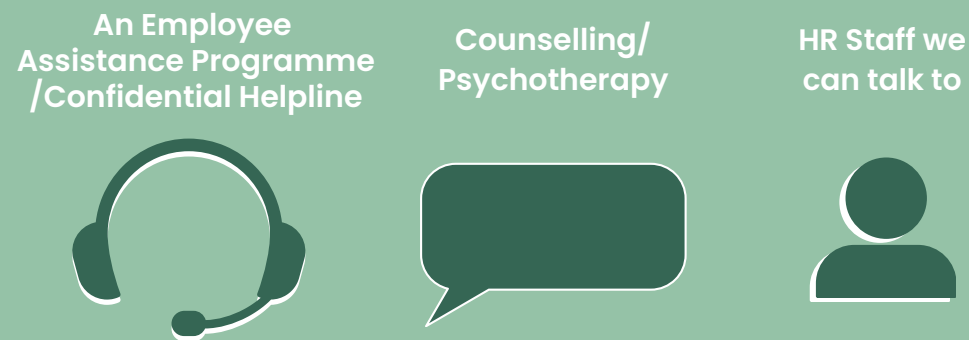
Base: All respondents (n=715)

You can read the full breakdown of reported services and usage in Appendix 3

D) The most beneficial mental health and wellbeing services

We asked School Business Leaders about the services provided by their setting that prove most beneficial in assisting them in managing the work-related factors impacting their overall wellbeing.

SBLs reported their top three services for dealing with their own mental health at work were:



Mental health services of most benefit to SBLs when dealing with work-related factors impacting on their wellbeing

The chart below shows the top 10 services of benefit. Their first choice overall was to use an Employee Assistance Programme confidential helpline.



E) Barriers for not using workplace mental health and wellbeing services

67% of SBLs had not used the services their schools offered

Unfortunately, there has been a 2% increase in this percentage since 2024

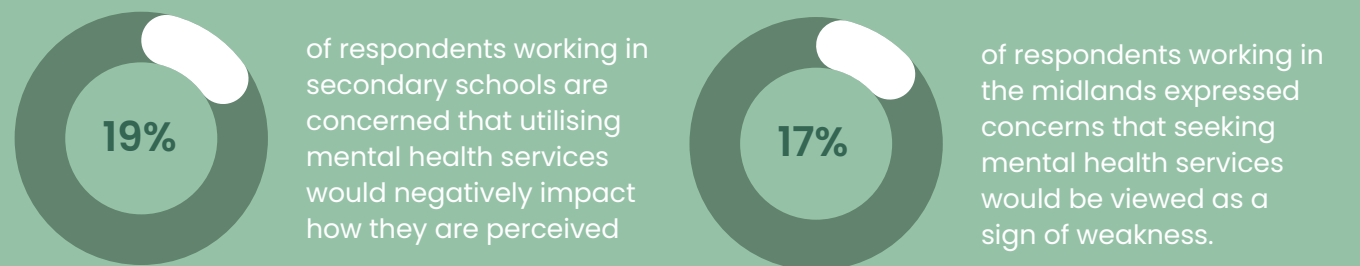


The concerns for not using services provided by their school were:



You can read the full breakdown of reported services and usage in Appendix 5

Further perception concerns highlighted amongst survey respondents:

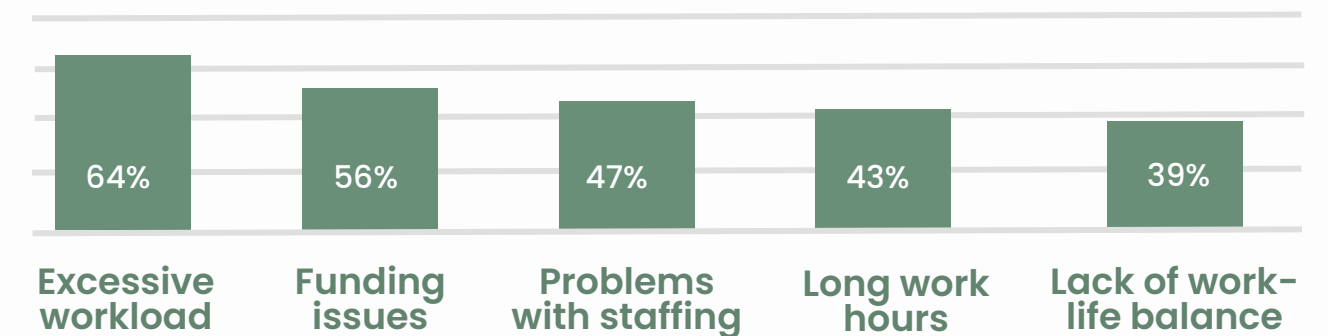


Current issues

Our goal was to gain a deeper understanding of the various challenges currently faced by School Business Leaders (SBLs) working in schools.

This section of the report provides a detailed overview of the most common work-related factors discovered through separate interviews conducted with survey participants. Our aim was to specifically examine the wide range of challenges that School Business Leaders (SBLs) encounter in their professional roles, with the goal of informing and offering tailored solutions.

Interviews were held with survey respondents which explored the following factors identified in the survey as affecting SBLs' mental health and wellbeing:



Throughout each interview that took place, a set of recurring themes surfaced, which we outline in this year's findings. We appreciate the contributions of those who volunteered to participate, as their interviews not only shed light on individual experiences but also play a crucial role in broadening an understanding of the common patterns and perspectives currently occurring.

Section 3

Current issues faced by SBLs working in schools

A) Excessive workload

The survey found that:

64% of SBLs considered their workload to be excessive, either all or part of the time, due to the demanding nature of the role



Through both survey participation and individual interviews, we have confirmed a significant decline in how well the SBL population is managing their workloads. In earlier reports, 48% of the SBL population indicated that their workloads were excessive, and in 2024, this figure rose by 33%, reaching a striking 82% of SBMs who felt overwhelmed by their workloads. However, feelings of stress, overwhelm, frustration, and difficulty coping are gradually decreasing, with this year's results showing an 18% reduction.

The main contributory factors to excessive workload were twofold

➤ The breadth of the school business manager role

The role of an SBM extends far beyond what many people assume, encompassing a wide range of responsibilities over several different functions. When staffing is limited, certain duties are often unfairly stereotyped as part of the role, even though they may not be within the scope of the position.

"The role is huge. I qualified as an accountant many years ago, but for this, I need to have in-depth knowledge of Health and Safety, GDPR, HR, Procurement, Site Management, Maintenance, Estates, IT as well as Finance. You have to be up to date with this knowledge all the time as the workload is huge".

(Secondary Maintained School)

➤ The unpredictable nature of requests or requirements

SBLs are often expected to respond quickly, depending on the nature of the request. Ad-hoc requests frequently arise, requiring immediate action, which can make them difficult to manage and time-consuming.

"We don't have a caretaker, other than to open and close the school but there are emergencies. Things that need fixing that don't necessarily require us to call out a professional (e.g. an electrician), falls to me because we need to try and save money."

(Primary maintained school)

Further findings (A)

Other factors raised by some school business managers were:

➤ Lack of funding

Several survey participants suggested introducing a supporting role to help share the responsibilities of the school business manager. However, the primary challenge they face in implementing this idea is the lack of available budget to fund this valuable support.

➤ Competing deadlines

A recurring frustration among the SBL community is that the month-end finance tasks and payroll deadlines fall within the same week.

➤ Lack of other non-teaching staff

This issue is particularly an issue specially in small schools. Some participants described needing to supervise misbehaving children that have been removed from lessons, covering lunch time supervision or taking classes if the school is short of teaching staff that day.

How does workload effect their mental health and wellbeing?

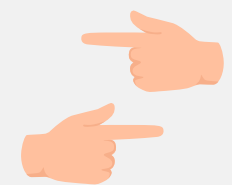
Additional factors mentioned by some school business managers include:



Deadline pressures



Poor sleeping patterns



Blame culture



Job stresses impacting home and family Life



Refusing to work outside of contracted hours

B) Funding Issues

Funding issues were a significant contributing factor to SBLs' wellbeing and workload. Some described how uncomfortable it is to address the issue of "There is no money for that" when speaking with staff. Others managed to reduce the impact of funding on their wellbeing by acknowledging that this aspect is beyond their control, and instead reframing the conversation with questions such as:

"Do we really need that?"

"Is that a wise use of our money?"

Those respondents who stated that funding issues had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing attributed this to factors including:

➤ **The increased behaviour challenges and the mental health needs of students**
Interviewees felt that funding was pressurised further by the increase in student mental health problems, which was driving the need for further pastoral and safeguarding support.

➤ **Staffing Costs**
Interviewees implied that this was one of the most problematic areas regarding fundings issues. Some mentioned that their staffing costs equate to almost 95% of their budget with very few methods of how to significantly reduce this cost.

Below are some examples provided by the interviewees to help reduce their staffing costs:

⚙️ Replace experienced staff with cheaper, inexperienced staff

⚙️ Regularly ask colleagues to cover absence

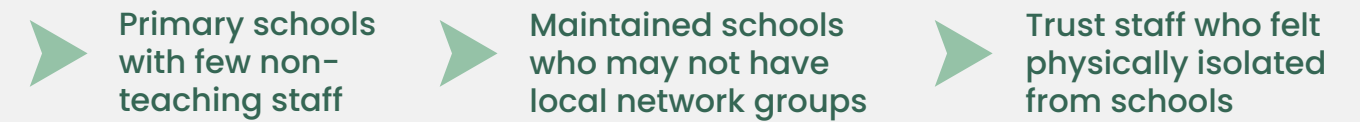
➤ **Health and safety issues not met by estates funding**
The Conditions Improvement Funding (CIF) requirement to fund remedial work was hugely problematic in schools with old buildings.

It's funding issues at the level of health and safety that are difficult for me, because I sit in meetings, and I am asked why is this still ongoing? But at the end of the day, if something has a cost of £20,000 to put right, we do not have £20,000. If we don't have this money, what is the solution?"

(Primary MAT Central Team)

C) A lack of understanding of the role

There were several references from respondents to 'Isolation' within the role. This was an issue across all school types:



Other concerns were:

➤ **A lack of understanding by others regarding what running a school as a business entails**

In terms of tasks relating to statutory responsibilities, funding rules, governance, policies and individual responsibilities for aspects like GDPR and health and safety. All those interviewed commented that this was especially problematic for business managers, not the senior leadership team.

"I have worked in different sectors (commercial and government) and after a long while in the education sector, I'm still very frustrated at the lack of understanding, and I mean by teaching staff, of what it takes to run an organisation, the responsibilities in that role and on themselves, actually. A lot of the time they don't seem to accept the responsibilities themselves. They always think somebody else will do it for them."

(Secondary Maintained School)

➤ **Inadequate job descriptions for the business manager role**

All interviewees thought that their job descriptions were not explicit enough.

This lack of specificity feeds the lack of understanding of their role, and so they are asked to take responsibility for tasks outside their remit.

This leads to the role becoming increasingly operational, rather than strategic. A lack of clarity on school line management structures exacerbates this increase in workload which is outside their remit.

"The misunderstanding about my role and the clear delineations with other peoples roles does have a big impact on my mental health. It is everything that isn't to do with teaching comes the way of the school business manager."

(Secondary Single Academy Trust)

D) Problem with staffing

The survey found that:

47% of SBLs experienced a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing due to staffing problems



There has been no change in this percentage since 2024

Staffing problems were acknowledged to be an issue, with two main concerns identified:

➤ Recruitment and retention issues

This factor impacted the wellbeing and workload for all school business managers interviewed.

Support staff can find better paid, easier jobs outside of education. This increases pressure on school business managers who must now:



Utilising your health and wellbeing service offering helps to attract and retain staff by offering absence protection and health services. These benefits can be highlighted in job descriptions to showcase your commitment to employee wellbeing.

➤ Supporting staff mental health and wellbeing

Listening and providing solutions can be physiologically exhausting for school business managers. Managing high sickness and supply rates had a significant impact on their wellbeing.

"For HR, supporting people with anxiety or concerns, or, you know, mental health issues in particular. Having to talk them through and putting them through occupational health and then doing phased returns and supporting them on their return and things like that. It can be very emotionally draining."

(Secondary maintained school)

E) Working long unpaid hours

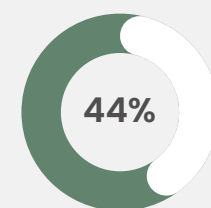
Working long, unpaid additional hours has become an extensive issue for school business leaders (SBLs), leading to significant negative impacts on their mental health and wellbeing.

As staffing issues arise, this can create a ripple effect, where the poor mental health of school business leaders leads to a less cohesive and more disengaged work environment.

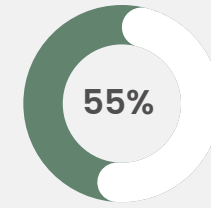
During the interview stage, a respondent highlighted the senior leadership team as a crucial source of support. They emphasised that the guidance and encouragement provided played a key role in helping them navigate this challenge.

"I'm very fortunate where I work now in that I have a very supportive head teacher who has a lot of respect for the role. Prior to that, my first five years in education I didn't have a principal with that attitude, and I found that extremely difficult for my mental wellbeing and just, you know, being taken seriously as a professional with responsibility."

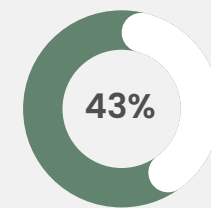
(Secondary maintained school)



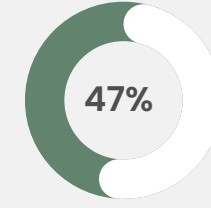
44% of respondents working in **Primary** schools are working extended hours beyond their paid time



55% of respondents working in **Secondary** schools are dedicating long, unpaid hours



43% of respondents working in **MAT's** are dedicating extensive time beyond paid hours



47% of respondents working in **Single Academy Trusts** are contributing significant unpaid overtime.

➤ Other relevant factors



51% of respondents

working in the **East of England** were most likely to mention that long, unpaid working hours impacted on their mental health and wellbeing.



33% of respondents

working in **Single-Academy Trusts** were most likely to mention not being able to take annual leave, compared to other school types.

Further findings

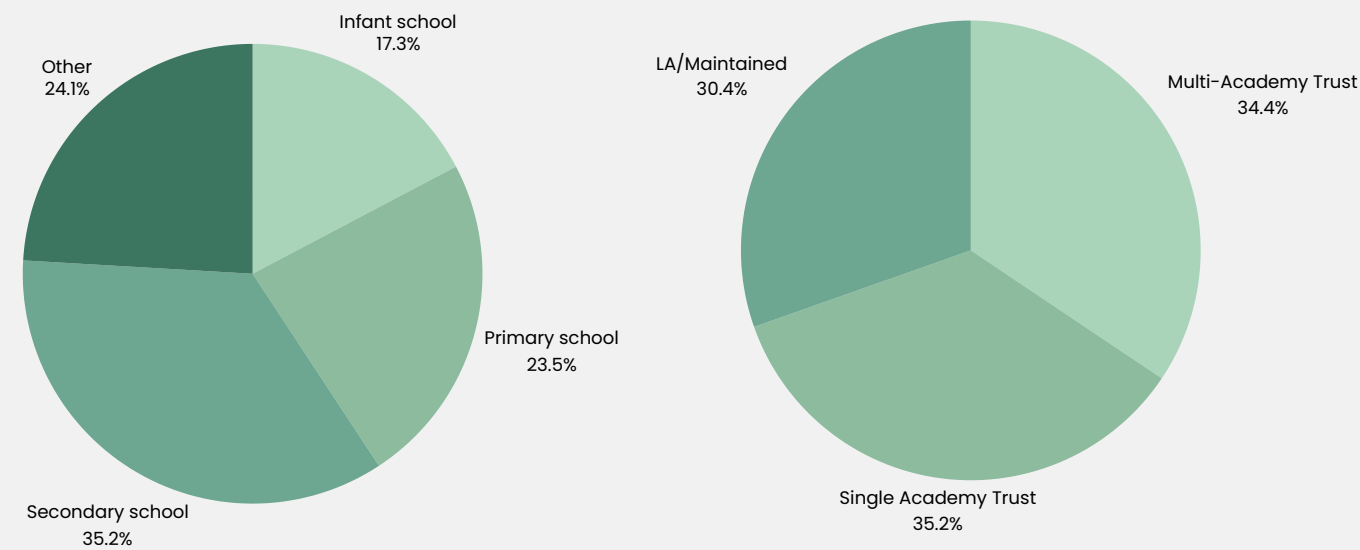
➤ Lack of work-life balance

39% of School Business Leaders recognise that maintaining work-life balance is a particular challenge for them



School Business Leaders acknowledged the negative impact of additional hours on their work-life balance but that it would be difficult to manage the role's demands without these.

➤ A detailed breakdown through category of school



➤ Low income

Respondents to the survey indicated that low income is now influencing their struggle to maintain work-life balance, with a significant effect on the following school categories:

Infant school	Primary school	Secondary school	Other
One third of respondents	One quarter of respondents	Almost one sixth of respondents	Just under one tenth of respondents

Section 4

Conclusions and recommendations



Our Summary

Whilst this research identified a wide range of work-related factors that have had an impact on School Business Leaders mental health and wellbeing. Some of the pressures noted in 2024 edition continue to cause a negative impact, with the most common focusing on:

Funding and Financial Issues

Both of the titled issues above reported to create anxiety around managing school finances and having difficult conversations with staff about the lack of budget, particularly around estates health and safety issues.

Managing and covering staff absence alongside supporting the mental health and wellbeing of staff also caused additional pressures on SBLs.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

The increasing challenge of the SEND funding shortfall, created an increasing demand for safeguarding and pastoral support which added to funding challenges.

The provision for pupils with special needs has a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of primary and infant school SBLs. This is largely due to the strain caused by limited resources for behaviour management and staffing shortages, which often force SBLs to step in and take on additional roles, such as managing challenging behaviours or filling gaps in staffing. These added responsibilities not only increase the workload of SBLs but also contribute to heightened stress and burnout.

Retention and Recruitment

This presented a significant challenge in the most recent year for the SBL community. The increased pressure to find cover or fill gaps themselves combined with the added workload of repeated recruitment and induction for a succession of staff, proved to be a considerable struggle.

Lack of Understanding

The perceived lack of understanding of their role from others also extended to the media and government, leading to frustration that sector concern over workload and mental health is only aimed at teaching staff.



Our Conclusions

Funding

Funding has become a critical issue, with interviewees identifying financial constraints as one of the most problematic aspects of their roles. This strain creates ongoing pressure, as there are limited options to hire additional support staff or seek expert consultancy services to alleviate the burden.

Service usage

SBLs are actively seeking ways to improve their own wellbeing, with one potential action being the inclusion of School Business Managers (SBMs) and support staff in the staff absence insurance/protection cover. However, there is a notable issue with underutilisation of these services, despite their availability. Addressing this gap—by promoting greater awareness and encouraging usage—could have a substantial positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of SBLs and the wider school community.

Mentoring

Mentoring has the potential to significantly improve the mental health and wellbeing of SBLs as they often find the most value in services that provide a supportive network or community. This relationship would not only offer guidance and practical advice but also provide emotional support during the challenging early stages of the role.

Raising the SBL profile

Raising the profile and visibility of School Business Leaders (SBLs) within the education sector is popularly requested. Many SBLs in survey responses credited ASCL for its efforts to elevate the role of SBLs and bring greater recognition to their contributions. By increasing visibility and acknowledging the critical role SBLs play in school management, it could help combat feelings of undervaluation and isolation that often contribute to stress and burnout.

Our Recommendations - For SBLs

For School Business Leaders:

To help navigate these challenges, we've outlined a range of strategies and suggestions below, informed by recent research. We hope these ideas will not only address some of the key issues raised but also provide practical solutions to enhance your efficiency, wellbeing, and overall impact in the role.

Can you join local or national groups and support networks of SBLs, where experiences can be shared and issues discussed?

Does your Local Authority or your MAT chain run a group? If they do not exist, maybe you can start one up? Even a WhatsApp group of a few local SBLs could be an incredibly helpful resource.

Utilise the services provided to prioritise your own mental and physical health

For yet another year, the utilisation of services within the SBL community remains notably low compared to the wide range of services available via your school. Prioritising self-care is essential—take the time to explore the wellbeing services that align with your lifestyle and needs to help reignite your energy in order to regain your spark.

Where possible, can you work remotely?

It is all too easy to forget about your own needs when in a busy role helping others – it must be an equal priority. Working remotely offers significant benefits, particularly in maintaining focus and productivity. In schools, you're often facing a constant stream of impromptu requests such as, "Can you just..." or "Are you able to...?" These can disrupt your workflow and make it challenging to focus on your own critical, time-sensitive tasks.

Utilise the benefits within an Education Mutual membership

It's important to implement the benefits included in your Education Mutual membership, especially the health and wellbeing services available to you and your staff. If you're already a member, you can easily get started by visiting the following link to request a service <https://www.educationmutual.co.uk/contact-us/>

Our Recommendations - For Schools and Trusts

Remote Working Opportunities

Both survey respondents and interviewees indicated that SBLs found working from home more beneficial than being in the office, citing factors such as fewer distractions. When feasible, offering the option to work from home could significantly improve productivity, as SBLs can manage their time more effectively and work in an environment that suits their personal needs.

Calendar Improvements

The SBL community would greatly benefit from engaging in proactive communication with their senior leadership team to collaboratively map out the annual calendar. By clearly outlining their busiest working periods, SBLs can help ensure that additional tasks or responsibilities are not assigned during these peak times, thus preventing excessive workload and alleviating unnecessary pressure.

Accurate and Detailed Job Descriptions

This approach is mutually beneficial. It enables SBLs to clearly understand what falls within their remit, giving them the confidence to decline tasks outside their responsibilities. Additionally, it helps other staff members gain a better understanding of the SBL role and the scope of their duties.

Parity between Education leaders and Business leaders

Equal recognition for the SBL community can be attained by elevating the perceived value of their role, fostering your appreciation and reducing their feelings of undervaluation. This recognition would also lead to more efficient and strategic school operations, as the contributions of SBLs would be more effectively integrated and aligned with decision-making processes, promoting a more collaborative and supportive working environment.

Added value in absence protection providers

When selecting a provider, ensure that your budget stretches further by opting for one with a comprehensive health and wellbeing service offering. An Education Mutual membership includes the use of services such as Flu Vaccines, 24/7 GP Access, Counselling, and Physiotherapy, further contributing to securing you with long-term budget certainty for your school community.

Our Recommendations - For the Wider Education Sector

Develop Guidelines for Trustees and Governors

Implementing this approach could ensure that staff wellbeing is actively prioritised in line with school development plans. For instance, conducting anonymous staff wellbeing surveys would provide valuable insights into the specific challenges faced by employees. The data gathered could then be used to inform targeted follow-up actions, addressing any concerns raised and implementing meaningful improvements to regularly review.

A Sector Focused Information Stream

A better, more concise sector focused information stream for communicating changes in law, updates and deadlines for school business leaders. It's a good idea to have connections to organisations that can update you on what is effecting the sector.

"I think its the information flow that's important, because I think you worry about what you don't know. You worry about being told off as you haven't done something or don't have the knowledge to implement something. With so many roles to the job, you become a jack of all trades which is a risk."

(Secondary Maintained School)

National Bodies and Organisations

Our recommendation to the wider education sector is to explore how organisations such as ISBL (Institute of School Business Leaders), ASCL (Association of College Leaders), and NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers) can be better utilised to meet the specific needs of the SBL community. Actively encouraging engagement and implementing the guidance, and best practices they offer will allow the sector to leverage the expertise and support already available.

Section 5

Resources

Useful Resources



Staff Absence Protection for Schools and Trusts



Since 2018, Education Mutual has been transforming staff absence protection with an innovative, non-profit making approach that prioritising flexibility of cover and welling support.

We're dedicated to providing schools and academies with the guidance, resources, and protection they need to excel. Our 'Trusted Friend to the Sector' commitment offers a solution to safeguard your school to prevent and reduce staff absences.

Our multi-award-winning service delivers budget certainty and includes complimentary health and wellbeing services to support to reduce and prevent absences.

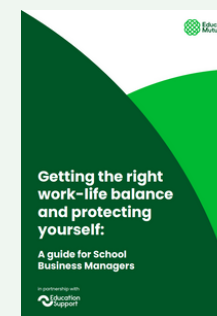
We have published three resources which you may find helpful:



1. Supporting each other with mental health and wellbeing: A guide for School Business Managers

Use this guide to help your colleagues maintain positive wellbeing in your professional role.

<https://www.educationmutual.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2022/11/Resource-1-Mental-health-and-wellbeing.pdf>



2. Getting the right work-life balance and protecting yourself: A guide for School Business Managers

Use this guide to aid the creation and management of a healthy work-life balance.

<https://www.educationmutual.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Resource-2-Work-life-balance.pdf>



3. Ofsted inspections and wellbeing: A guide for School Business Managers

Use this guide to help uphold your own mental health, as well as that of your colleagues, throughout Ofsted inspections.

https://www.educationmutual.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Resource-3-Ofsted_3.pdf



The below healthcare services are included in all Education Mutual memberships:

24/7 GP Service

Flu Vaccines

Physiotherapy

Balancing Parenthood

Nurse Support Service

Surgical Assistance Programme

Stress Management

Face-to-face Counselling

Mental Health First Aid Training

Grief and Resilience

Financial Wellbeing Coaching

Men's Mental Health

Supporting Staff in the Workplace

Menopause Counselling

Navigating your Personal Journey

Menopause Blog

Symptoms Tracker

Guidance for Partners

Neurodiversity Training

Occupational Health Assessments

New Employee Assessments

Occupational Health Support Line

Occupational Health Hub

Deloitte Legal Services

Useful Resources

Useful Resources

JIGSAW²⁴ Supporting Educators with Technology.



The Education team at Jigsaw24 understands the demands of UK schools. As Apple Authorised Education Specialists, we believe in leveraging technology to enhance teaching, learning, and wellbeing.

"Technology isn't just about efficiency – it's a tool for wellbeing, balance, and joy in education. Let's use it to support ourselves as much as we support our students."

Nicola Foote

Professional Development Consultant

✉ education@jigsaw24.com

Technology Tools for Reducing Workload

AI for Mental Wellness & Productivity

An AI-powered wellbeing assistant designed to provide educators with empathetic support, mental wellness guidance, and practical strategies – available anytime for a moment of calm.

AI-Powered Meeting & Note-Taking Assistant

This AI-driven app records, transcribes, writes notes, captures action items, and generates summaries in real-time, ensuring you never miss a detail. Ideal for staff meetings, CPD sessions, and lesson reflections.

TeachmateAI – Save Time & Reduce Admin Workload

TeachmateAI automates lesson planning, report writing, and presentation creation—saving educators up to 10 hours a week. Now featuring the Wellness Check-in Tool, designed to support mental wellbeing alongside workload reduction.

TeachmateAI Wellness Check-in
✉ Contact Jigsaw at education@jigsaw24.com to set up a free trial

Technology Tools for Productivity & Collaboration

Canva – Design, Organise, and Collaborate Effortlessly

Utilise Canva's AI-powered design tools to streamline planning, create engaging classroom visuals, and organise ideas. Its real-time collaboration features enhance teamwork in both classroom and administrative tasks.

🔗 [Canva for Education](#)

Smart Transcription & Voice Notes with Otter.ai

Capture meetings, lessons, and ideas hands-free with automatic transcription. Use voice notes instead of typing to reduce screen fatigue and boost efficiency.

🔗 [Otter.ai](#)

Technology Tools for Wellbeing

Quick Wins for Digital Wellbeing

The below tools and strategies help educators find balance between work, screen time, and mental wellness:

- Set **"Do Not Disturb"** hours on your phone to create boundaries between work and home life.
- Use **guided breathing apps** like Calm or Balance to reset between lessons.
- Schedule **"no-screen" time** before bed to improve sleep and reduce digital fatigue.
- **Batch admin tasks** (emails, marking, meetings) to free up cognitive load.
- Try **Freeform** or **Apple Notes** to visually organise tasks and reduce overwhelm.

Mindfulness & Breathing Apps

Apps like **Calm**, **Headspace**, and **Balance** offer **guided meditation, breathing exercises, and focus techniques**. Balance even offers a **free 12-month trial**.

🔗 [Calm](#)

🔗 [Headspace](#)

🔗 [Balance](#)

Track and Notice: Your Digital Wellbeing

- Check your **device usage stats** by going to **Settings > Screen Time**
- Review your **Pickups** (how often you check your phone) and compare with a colleague.
- Create a personal reflection space with Apple's **Journal app** (iOS 17+), adding notes, images, and insights.

Signposting to useful organisations and available support



Education Mutual

The UK's largest member-owned provider of staff absence protection for Schools and Trusts

<https://www.educationmutual.co.uk/>



Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)

A professional association and trade union for all school, college and trust leaders

<https://www.ascl.org.uk/>



Confederation of School Trusts (CST)

A national organisation and sector body for school trusts in England advocating for, connecting and supporting executive and governance leadership

<https://cstuk.org.uk/>



Department for Education

Department for Education (DfE)

The Department for Education is responsible for children's services and education, including early years, schools, higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>



Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL)

A membership organisation offering sector-endorsed professional standards and development opportunities for its professional community and their institutions through a portfolio of quality-assured qualifications, training, resources, research and events

<https://isbl.org.uk/>

JIGSAW24

Jigsaw24

A leading B2B IT solutions provider helping businesses, educational institutions, and public sector organizations to improve their performance through better sustainable technology and expert services, support and sales.

www.jigsaw24.com



Multi-Academy Trust Association (MATA)

A free to join association which has membership across 600+ Trusts across England. MATA focuses on core pillars when supporting Trust leaders which are: AI, Growth, Finance and Fundraising, Estates and People.

<https://www.matassociation.org/>



National Association for Head Teachers (NAHT)

A membership organisation which represents school leaders working in the education sector

<https://www.naht.org.uk/>



SBL Connect

A grassroots movement to connect and represent School Business Leaders

<https://www.sblconnect.com/>



Please contact Education Mutual for inquiries into staff absence protection options and wellbeing support available:

01623 287840 learnmore@educationmutual.co.uk



EXCEPTIONAL - 4.9 OUT OF 5 2025

Appendices

Appendix 1: Base: All respondents (n=715)

Work-related factors impacting on mental health and wellbeing

Service	Per cent	Infant	Primary	Secondary	Other
Excessive workload	64%	73%	63%	74%	59%
Funding Issues	56%	50%	58%	57%	46%
Lack of understanding from others about my role	53%	55%	56%	58%	41%
Problems with staffing	47%	55%	45%	53%	53%
Long working hours (unpaid)	43%	38%	44%	55%	34%
Lack of work/life balance	39%	28%	38%	57%	39%
Inequitable pay	34%	33%	33%	43%	37%
Financial reporting/accountability	31%	33%	34%	34%	17%
Provision for pupils with special needs	27%	28%	31%	11%	8%
Government legislation/compliance	27%	33%	27%	34%	22%
Problems with pupils' parents	24%	20%	28%	15%	22%
Inspections	23%	23%	25%	17%	12%
Low income	22%	33%	24%	15%	12%
Not able to take annual leave	22%	8%	21%	40%	11%
Poor pupil behaviour	10%	5%	10%	11%	8%
Redundancy/restructure	9%	10%	8%	19%	8%
Unreasonable demands from manager	9%	13%	8%	19%	5%
Safeguarding	9%	10%	10%	6%	3%
Lack of opportunity to work independently	7%	13%	6%	6%	7%
Lack of trust from manager	6%	3%	5%	13%	8%
Addressing the educational disadvantage gap	5%	-	5%	8%	2%
Bullying by colleagues	3%	3%	3%	4%	2%
Teacher strikes	3%	-	2%	4%	4%
Discrimination	2%	3%	1%	4%	5%
None of these	5%	0	4%	2%	10%
Not answered	1%	-	-	-	-

Section 6

Appendices

Appendix 1 (continued):

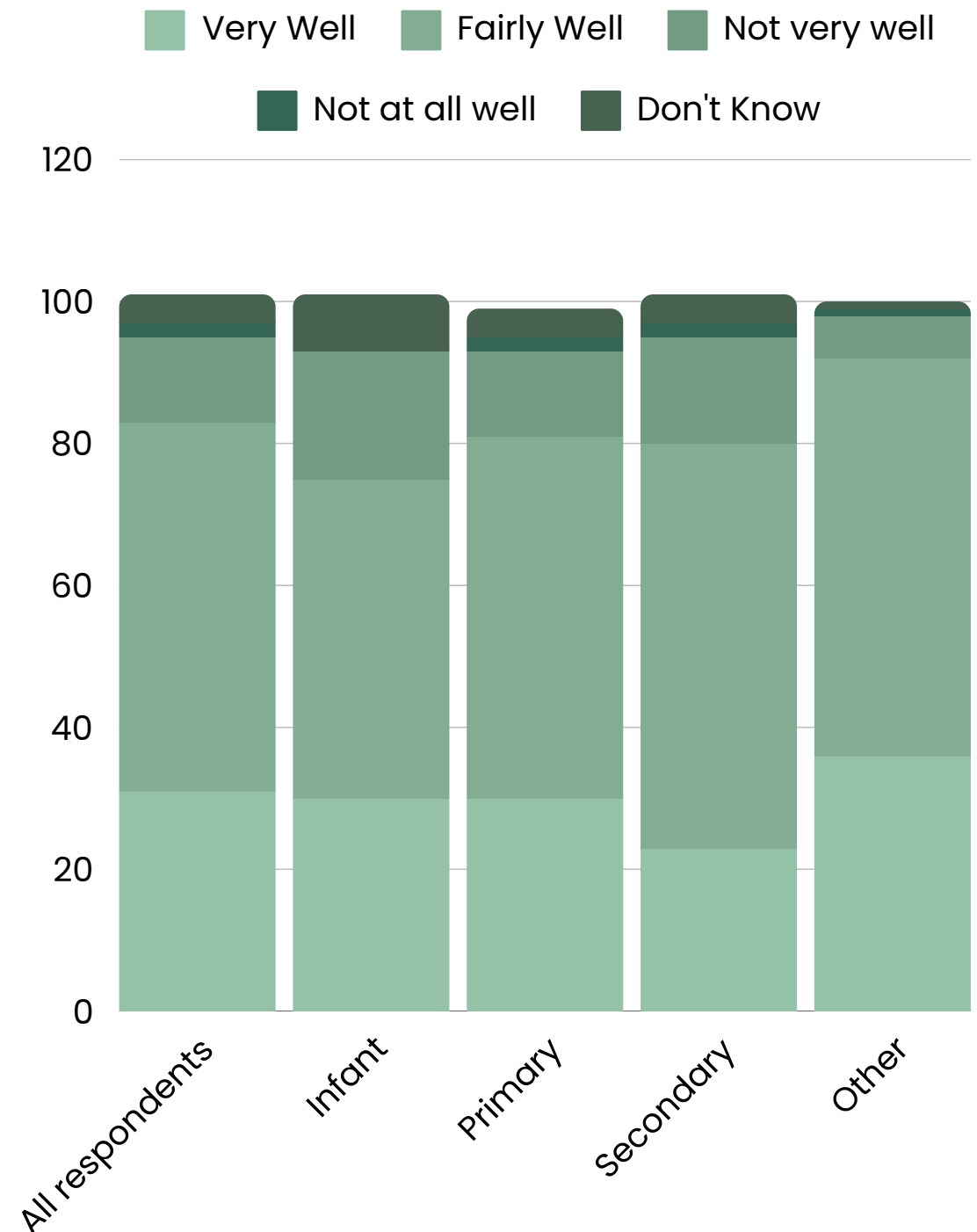
Work-related factors impacting on mental health and wellbeing

Service	Multi-Academy Trusts	Single Academy Trusts	LA/Maintained
Excessive workload	62%	72%	64%
Funding Issues	41%	70%	60%
Lack of understanding from others about my role	44%	53%	57%
Problems with staffing	38%	47%	50%
Long working hours (unpaid)	43%	47%	43%
Lack of work/life balance	39%	44%	38%
Inequitable pay	29%	26%	37%
Financial reporting/accountability	23%	51%	32%
Provision for pupils with special needs	16%	28%	31%
Government legislation/compliance	21%	33%	29%
Problems with pupils' parents	16%	16%	29%
Inspections	17%	23%	25%
Low income	19%	16%	24%
Not able to take annual leave	16%	33%	23%
Poor pupil behaviour	10%	5%	11%
Redundancy/restructure	8%	9%	10%
Unreasonable demands from manager	11%	16%	7%
Safeguarding	8%	12%	9%
Lack of opportunity to work independently	8%	2%	7%
Lack of trust from manager	9%	2%	5%
Addressing the educational disadvantage gap	4%	7%	5%
Bullying by colleagues	3%	2%	3%
Teacher strikes	3%	2%	3%
Discrimination	3%	2%	1%
None of these	8%	2%	4%

Base: All respondents (n=715)

Appendix 2:

Overall perception of support for employees who experience problems with mental health and wellbeing, total and phase



Base: All respondents (n=715)

Appendix 3:

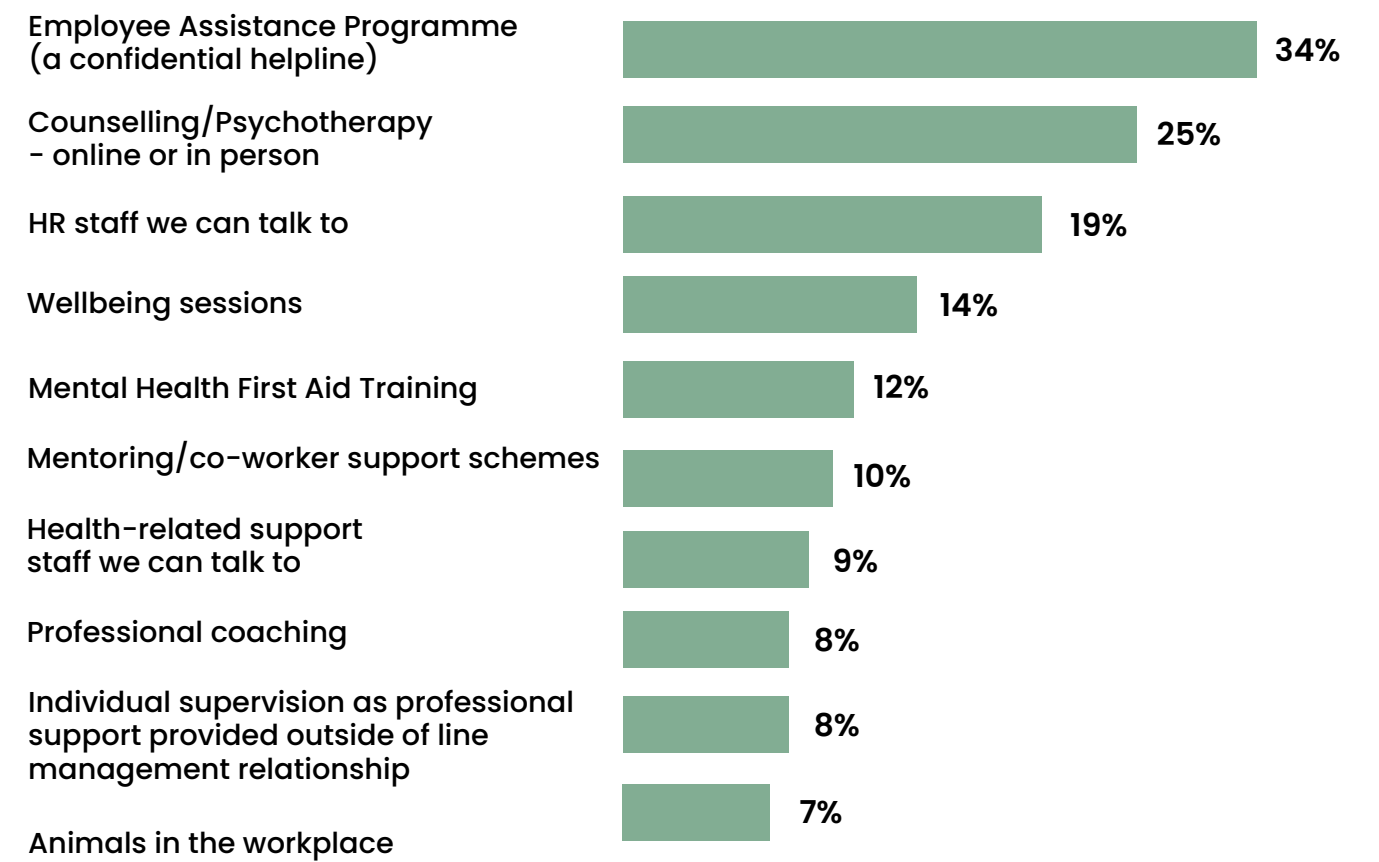
Mental health and wellbeing services provided and used

	Provided	Used
Employee Assistance Programme (a confidential helpline)	63%	9%
Counselling/Psychotherapy - online or in person	50%	9%
Mental Health First Aid Training	40%	6%
HR staff we can talk to	38%	13%
Union people we can talk to	27%	4%
Wellbeing sessions	26%	8%
Health-related support staff we can talk to	19%	3%
Mentoring/co-worker support schemes	17%	5%
Individual supervision as professional support provided outside of line management relationship	16%	5%
Animals in the workplace	15%	4%
Training on common mental health conditions	14%	3%
Professional coaching	13%	5%
Exercise classes, groups or programmes	9%	3%
Mindfulness classes or programmes	8%	3%
Facilitated peer support group	7%	3%
Resilience, energy, or stress management classes or programmes	6%	2%
Massage or relaxation classes or programmes	3%	1%
None of these	9%	33%
Not answered	-	20%

Base: All respondents (n=715)

Appendix 4:

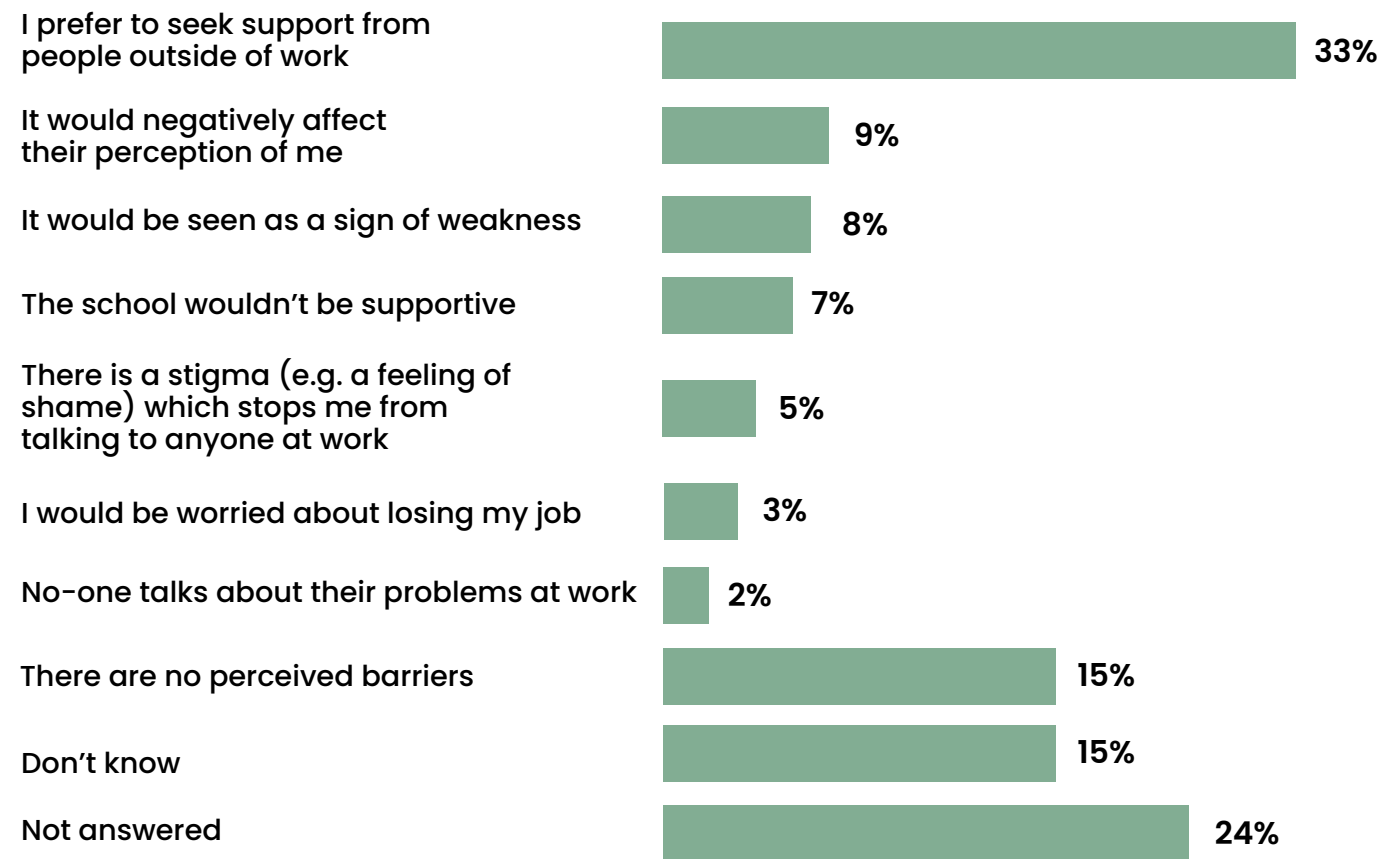
Top 3 services of most benefit when dealing with work-related factors impacting upon wellbeing - top 10 mentions



Base: All respondents (n=715)

Appendix 5:

Barriers to using or accessing services that were available



Base: All respondents (n=715)

Appendix 6:

Methodology

This research study investigated the wellbeing needs of School Business Leaders working in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in England and Wales.

It aimed to understand:

- What are the work-related factors which have an impact on the mental health and wellbeing of School Business Leaders?
- Which types of mental health and wellbeing support do School Business Leaders currently use? Which are of most benefit, in tackling these work-related factors?
- Overall, how well do SBLs perceive the mental health and wellbeing support provided by their workplace?

A mixed-methods design was used to answer the research questions.

This involved:

- 715 online survey responses from SBLs working in schools in England and Wales. The survey was open for completion during the period Monday 23rd September until Friday 18th October 2024. Incentives were offered to take part.
- 5 telephone, or online, depth interviews with SBLs or School Business Managers, to further explore some of the issues raised in the survey.

Details of the respondents who took part in the online survey and the interviews are shown below.

Online survey sample (all tables below based on 514 respondents)

Appendix 6 - Table 1 - Job Title

	Number of respondents	Proportion
School Business Manager/Director	517	72%
Office Manager/Director	65	9%
Office Support Staff	39	5%
Bursar	39	3%
Finance Manager/Director	19	3%
CEO/CFO	15	2%
Operations Manager/Director	13	2%
Headteacher/Principal, Deputy or Assistant Head Teacher/Principal	13	2%
HR Manager/Director	11	2%
Facilities Manager/Director	2	0%

Appendix 6 - Table 2 - Tenure

	Number of respondents	Proportion
0 - 2 years	146	20%
3 - 5 years	180	25%
6 - 10 years	184	26%
11 - 20 years	142	20%
21 - 30 years	52	7%
31+ years	11	2%
Not answered	3	1%

Appendix 6 - Table 3 - Respondent Gender

	Number of respondents	Proportion
Male	48	7%
Female	665	93%
Transgender	-	-
Non-binary	-	-
Prefer not to say	2	<1%

Appendix 6 - Table 4 - Respondent Age

	Number of respondents	Proportion
Less than 20	1	0%
20 - 24	-	-
25 - 29	13	2%
30 - 34	25	3%
35 - 39	50	7%
40 - 44	88	12%
45 - 49	121	17%
50 - 54	188	26%
55 - 59	144	20%
60 - 64	67	9%
65+	9	1%
Prefer not to say	9	1%
Not answered	3	1%

Appendix 6 - Table 5 - Respondent Ethnicity

	Number of respondents	Proportion
Any Asian Background	12	2%
Any Black Background	3	<1%
White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	670	94%
White - Irish	5	1%
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	-	-
White - Roma	-	-
White - Any other White Background	11	2%
Any ethnic group - (includes Arab, Mixed and other)	6	1%
Prefer not to say	18	4%



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