

PRESS RELEASE

Over half of UK school leaders do not feel able to meet children's mental health needs

Embargoed until 24th April 2019

Starts

The team responsible for delivering a national programme for headteachers on leading mental health and wellbeing in schools have released details from their upcoming report '*Mental Health and Wellbeing in UK Schools Survey 2019*' released on 26th April.

This release relates to school leader's perceptions of meeting the mental health needs of their pupils.

56.9% of respondents identified they do not feel confident in their school's ability to meet the needs of their pupil's social, emotional and mental health needs. School leaders raised most concerns about budgets, staffing levels and access to services as barriers to meeting these needs.

4 in 10 schools felt staff were unable to identify the underlying causes of behaviour difficulties. Reasons given for this included staff misunderstanding, lack of training, inexperience in dealing with the issues and lack of time to unpick the difficulties.

A percentage of pupils at any school will have identified social, emotional and mental health needs. 7 in 10 schools identified they would be unable to fully meet their needs. This included 50% of those settings expected to be specialist in these areas (Alternative Provisions and Special Schools). 62.6% of schools in England felt unable to meet these needs, raising to 83.7% in Scotland.

One of the respondents commented "We have not been trained for this at all. At best we are given strategies to implement which is unmanageable, since staff cannot implement individual programmes of work."

Author, Richard Curtis from the National Leaders in Social, Emotional and Mental Health Programme, says "The current climate of cuts, austerity and rising thresholds clearly conflicts with the increasing mental health needs of our children. It is no wonder that school leaders, who have never received any training on how to lead a team to address these needs, feel overwhelmed and out of their comfort zone."

Ends

Note to editors

The Root Of It carried out an anonymous survey of school leaders across the UK and captured responses from approximately 1% of primary and secondary schools. 75.2% of the respondents were Headteachers, Principals, CEO and Deputies; 21.1% were middle leaders, such as PSHE Leads or SENDCOs. The acceptable confidence level has been set at 80% throughout this survey.

The team run the National Leaders in Social, Emotional and Mental Health Programme for headteachers, local authorities and senior education leaders.

The full report will be available on 26th April at <https://www.rootofit.com/semhw-survey>

For more details or comment, please contact Richard Curtis on 07938 329314 or richard.curtis@rootofit.com.