

Whole-School Approach to Emotional and Mental Wellbeing: research bulletin (part 2)

Top-line findings from a survey of school leaders and practitioners

1. Background and aims

- 1.1 This research bulletin (part 2) presents top-line findings from a survey of school leaders and practitioners about the implementation of the whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing (WSAEMWB) in their learning settings.
- 1.2 This research bulletin (part 2) is the follow-up to a [previous research bulletin published in November 2023](#) which focused on results relating to the progress of schools in implementing a whole-school approach and the help and resources utilised to support this.
- 1.3 The survey was conducted by officials from Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS) in the Welsh Government in June and July 2023 and was open to all maintained schools.
- 1.4 The survey aimed to understand the progress of schools and education settings to develop and deliver their whole-school approach, as well as their use of relevant resources and the extent of support received to deliver this. It is intended that the survey findings inform policy decisions and support the effective delivery of the [Framework on embedding a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing](#).
- 1.5 This research bulletin (part 2) presents top-line findings about:
 - The frequency of and satisfaction for communication between schools and the CAMHS In-Reach to Schools Service,
 - The availability of and demand for school-based counselling services for learners,
 - Schools' access to and use of funding to support the development of their WSAEMWB,

- Schools' use of '[Responding to issues of self-harm and thoughts of suicide in young people](#)' and [emotional and mental health learning modules hosted on Hwb](#)¹,
- The governance of health and well-being in schools,
- How schools are involving learners in their health and well-being activity.

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The survey invited responses from school leaders (a member of the school's senior management team including headteachers, assistant headteachers, or deputy headteachers) and health and well-being leads on behalf of their learning settings. The survey was disseminated online.
- 2.2 Where more than one response was provided for a school, only the response from the most senior member of staff was included in the analysis to aim for equal representation from responding schools and on the assumption that they were likely to have greater strategic awareness of the school's overall whole-school approach.
- 2.3 [Full details about the methodology are provided in the previous research bulletin.](#)

3. Sample

- 3.1 A total of 152 responses were received. Once duplicates were removed, 136 unique respondents were remaining in the sample. Analysis has been conducted based on the number of responses to each question.
- 3.2 Within the sample of 136 respondents, 68% of respondents were headteachers / acting headteachers, assistant headteachers, or deputy headteachers.
- 3.3 The remaining respondents comprised subject / classroom teachers (10%), head of phase, year, or department (8%), ALNCOs (6%), health & well-being lead (4%), higher level teaching assistant (3%), and other (1%).

School sample

- 3.4 Respondents were asked to provide their school reference ID number to identify their school. Of the 136 responses, 63% were from primary schools, 1% middle (all-through) schools, 13% secondary schools, 6% special schools, and 16% not known (where correct school reference ID information was not provided).
- 3.5 A higher proportion of responses to the survey were from South-West and Mid-Wales (26%) and Central South Wales (26%) than South-East Wales (16%) and North Wales (15%). As a proportion of the number of schools in each geographical area, the response rates were: South-West and Mid-Wales, 8%; Central South, 9%; South-East, 9%, and North Wales, 5%.
- 3.6 Schools with both high and low rates of learners eligible for eFSM and learners with ALN were appropriately represented in the sample. Twenty-three percent of the school sample were amongst those with the highest proportion of learners eligible for free school meals (eFSM) and 24 percent were amongst those with the highest proportion of learners with additional learning needs (ALN).
- 3.7 Also, 60% of schools who responded were English-medium mainstream and 18% were Welsh-medium / bilingual mainstream. The remaining schools were categorised as special schools (6%) or not known (16%). As a proportion of all English-medium schools, responses represented 8%. The proportion for Welsh-medium / bilingual schools was 6%.

¹ Hwb is a digital platform provided by the Welsh Government that offers educational resources, collaborative tools, and personalised learning support to enhance teaching and learning in Wales. It serves as a comprehensive hub for educators, students, and parents to access and utilise digital educational materials.

4. Limitations

4.1 Findings should be interpreted considering the following limitations.

4.2 The findings were based on 136 survey responses and may not fully represent the picture across all schools in Wales:

- In total, 16% of responses to the survey did not include a correct school reference number and therefore it was not possible to identify their school.
- The response rate for all primary schools was 7% (86 responses) and 10% (18 responses) for all secondary schools².
- The response rate for North Wales was lower than other regions.
- The response rate for Welsh-medium / bilingual schools was lower than for English-medium schools.

4.3 The survey was disseminated online via a link. We cannot be certain of the role of the respondent or their knowledge level of their school's approach.

4.4 Where response numbers are small, the percentages are subject to larger fluctuations and should be interpreted with caution (e.g., data from secondary schools).

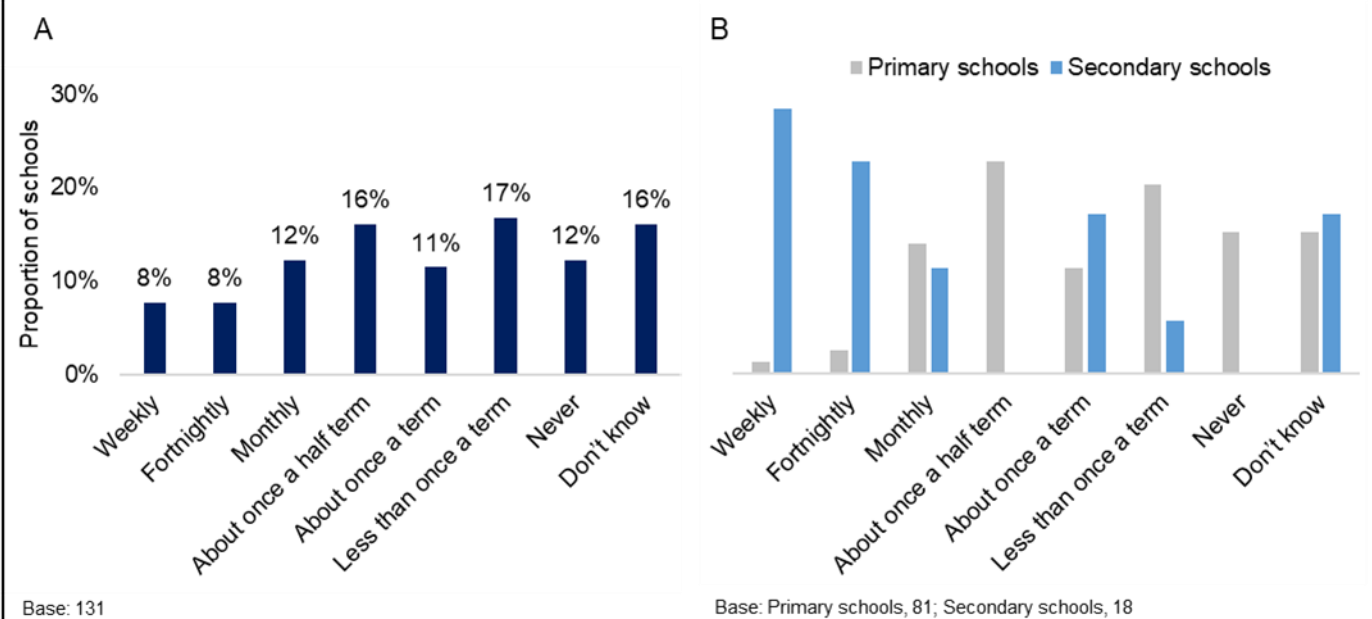
4.5 The survey was conducted in June and July 2023 and so the responses reflect the stage of WSAEMWB implementation at this time.

5. Findings

5.1 The findings below related to the responses that were included in the analysis (one for each school responding).

Communication with CAMHS In-Reach to Schools service:

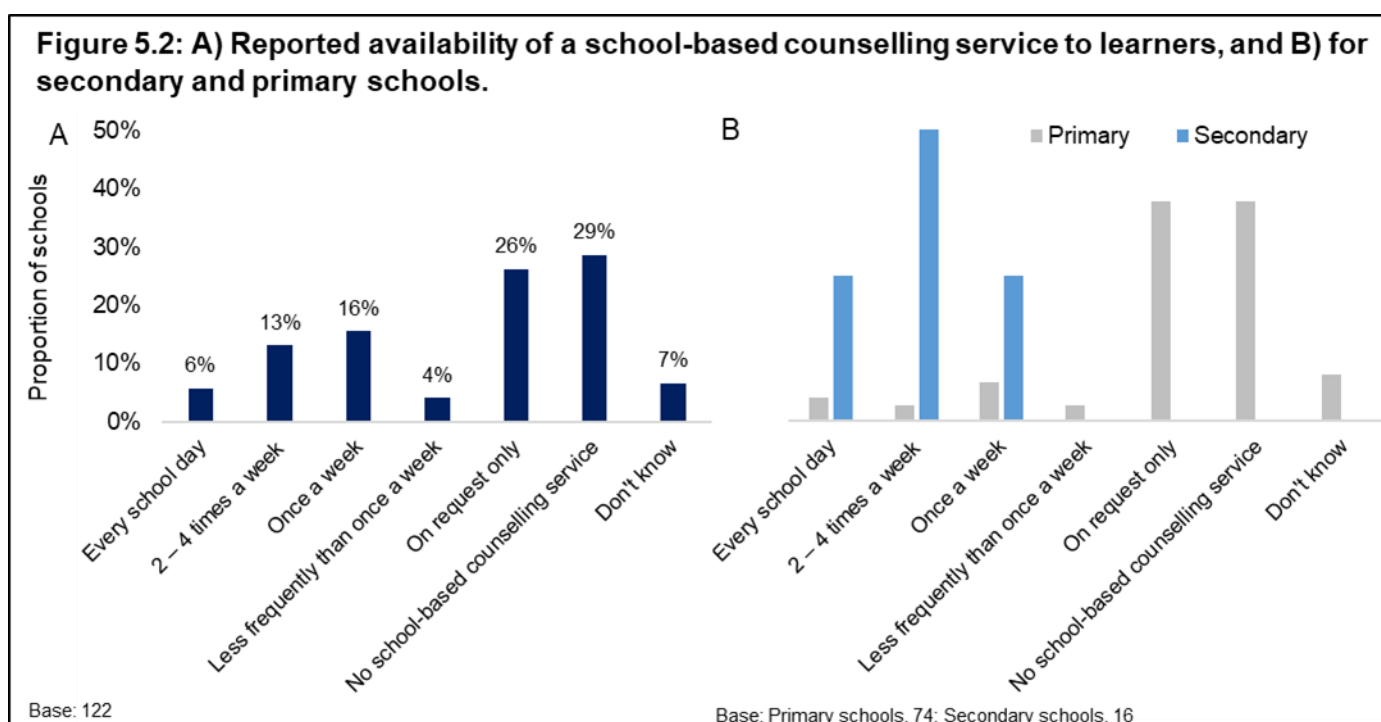
Figure 5.1: A) Reported frequency of communication between schools and CAMHS In-Reach team, and B) for secondary and primary schools.



² Data for primary and secondary schools taken from Pupil Level Annual Schools Census (PLASC)

- 5.2 As Figure 5.1 shows, over one half of respondents (55%) reported that their school have been in communication with their CAMHS in-reach team once a term or more frequently, with over one quarter of schools (29%) indicating that their school were in communication less frequently than once a term or never.
- 5.3 Respondents from secondary schools were more likely to report that they had frequent contact than those from primary schools (around three-quarters of secondary schools compared to around half of primary schools) (see Figure 5.1). Slightly over one third of respondents from primary schools indicated that their school received this communication less frequently than once a term or never.
- 5.4 In addition, respondents from schools in South-East Wales were more likely to report frequent communication with their CAMHS in-reach team (over nine in ten schools) compared to the other regions (North Wales, South-West and Mid-Wales, and Central South Wales³) where only around one in two schools reported frequent communication⁴.
- 5.5 Of the 94 respondents who had communication from their CAMHS In-Reach team, nearly two in three reported that they were 'Quite' or 'Very satisfied' with the quality of their support, slightly under one in four indicated that they were 'A little satisfied' and around one in ten reported that they were 'Not at all satisfied'.
- 5.6 A greater proportion of respondents from secondary schools reported being 'Quite' or 'Very satisfied' with the quality of support from their CAMHS In-Reach team compared to primary schools (around three-quarters of secondary schools compared to slightly over half of primary schools). This pattern remained when examining only schools that reported having frequent contact.

School-based counselling services for learners⁵



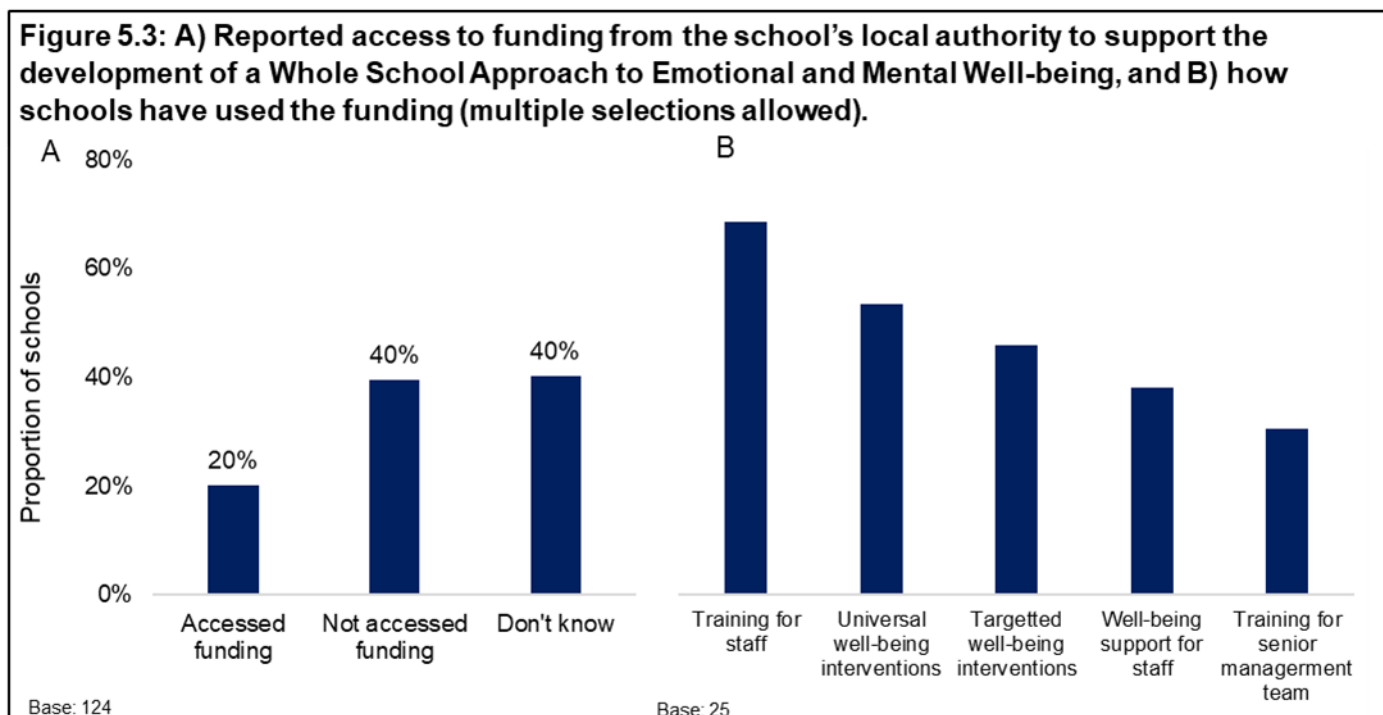
³ South-East Wales consists of Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen, Monmouthshire, Newport; North Wales consists of Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, and Wrexham; South-West and Mid-Wales consists of Powys, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Swansea, Neath Port Talbot; Central South Wales consists of Bridgend, Cardiff, The Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf, and Merthyr Tydfil

⁴ Based on a sample of 35 schools from South-West Wales and Mid-Wales, 35 schools from Central South Wales, 22 schools from South-East Wales, and 17 schools from North Wales.

⁵ All the data in this section is based on a sample of 122 responses of which 74 were primary schools and 16 were secondary schools when exploring the data based on the type of setting.

- 5.7 As shown in Figure 5.2, around one third of respondents (34%) reported that there is a school-based counselling service available to learners once a week or more frequently, while a small group indicated that a less frequent service is available (4%) and slightly over one quarter of respondents indicated that that a service is available 'On request only' (26%)⁶. Over one quarter of respondents (29%) reported that their school does not have a school-based counselling service.
- 5.8 All respondents from secondary schools reported that there is a school-based counselling service available to learners once a week or more frequently, whereas only around one in seven respondents from primary schools reported the same (see Figure 5.2). In primary schools, around two in five respondents indicated that they do not have a school-based counselling service and a similar proportion reported that there is a counselling service available on request only.
- 5.9 Over half of respondents (54%) indicated that learners are informed of other local, confidential counselling services they can use. Under one third of respondents (30%) reported that learners are not informed. A higher proportion of respondents from secondary schools indicated that learners are informed of other local, confidential counselling services they can use compared to primary schools (around two thirds of secondary schools compared to under half of primary schools).
- 5.10 Over two thirds of respondents (70%) indicated that the demand was larger than the counselling services available to their school's learners (that may include school and community-based counselling provision), with under half of respondents (44%) reporting that 'demand is much larger than the services available'. Only 15% reported that the counselling services available were sufficient to meet demand.
- 5.11 Most respondents from secondary schools (around nine in ten secondary schools) reported that the demand was larger than the counselling services available to their school's learners, which was a greater proportion than respondents from primary schools (slightly over two in three primary schools).

Funding to support the development of a whole-school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing

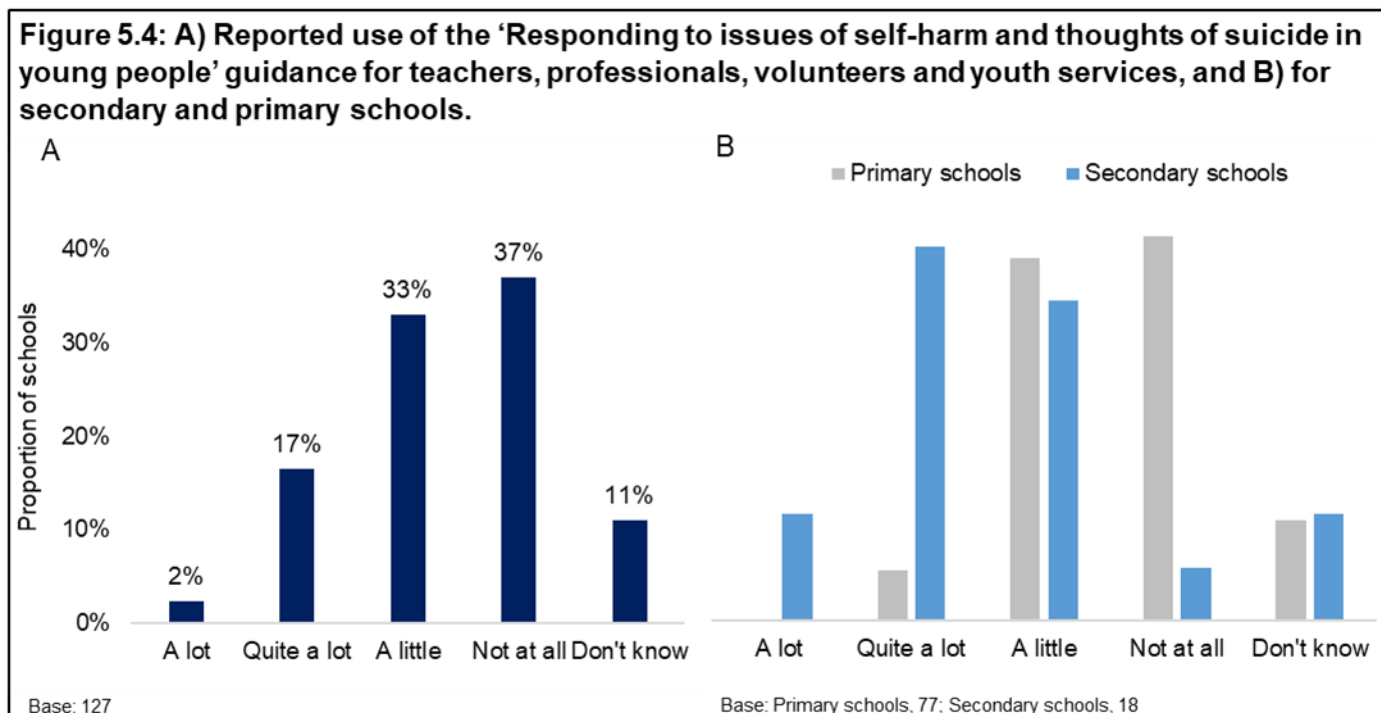


⁶ 'On request only' reflects where there is not a regular school-based counselling service available, but a service can be requested.

- 5.12 Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities to support school-based activity to embed a WSAEMWB. There may be variation in how this funding is allocated or used to support schools by each local authority.
- 5.13 As Figure 5.3 shows, 20% of respondents indicated that their schools had accessed the funding from their local authority to support the development of their WSAEMWB. Forty percent of respondents reported that their school had not accessed the funding and the same proportion did not know.
- 5.14 When explored further, nearly two thirds of respondents (62%) reported that they were not aware of the funding.
- 5.15 Respondents from secondary schools were slightly more likely to report that their school had accessed the funding compared to primary schools (one quarter of secondary schools compared to under one fifth of primary schools)⁷.
- 5.16 Respondents from South-East Wales were more likely to report that they had accessed the funding (under one in two schools) compared to respondents from North Wales (one in five schools), South-West and Mid-Wales (around one in seven schools), and Central South Wales (around one in seventeen schools)⁸.
- 5.17 As Figure 5.3 displays, of the schools who have used the funding, the most frequent use was for training for staff (under three quarters of schools), followed by universal well-being intervention/s (available to all learners) (over half of schools), targeted well-being intervention/s (for learners with specific needs) (under half of schools), well-being support for staff (two fifths of schools), and training for Senior Management / Leadership Team (around one third of schools).

Use of online resources to support emotional and mental well-being:

Self-harm / suicide guidance



- 5.18 As Figure 5.4 shows, slightly over half of respondents (52%) reported that that their school had used the [‘Responding to issues of self-harm and thoughts of suicide in young people’](#) guidance. Usage

⁷ Based on a sample of 75 primary schools and 17 secondary schools.

⁸ Based on a sample of 33 schools from South-West Wales and Mid-Wales, 32 schools from Central South Wales, 22 schools from South-East Wales, and 15 schools from North Wales.

levels varied amongst these respondents as one third of respondents indicated that their school had used the guidance 'A little' (33%), compared to 'Quite a lot' (17%) and 'A lot' (2%). However, over one third of respondents (37%) indicated that their school had not used the guidance.

- 5.19 When explored further, slightly over one third of respondents (35%) reported that they were not aware of the guidance.
- 5.20 A larger proportion of respondents from secondary schools compared to primary schools reported using the guidance (around four fifths of secondary schools compared to around two fifths of primary schools), with half of secondary schools using the guidance 'A lot' or 'Quite a lot' (see Figure 5.4).
- 5.21 Amongst the respondents who had used the guidance (66 schools), slightly under two thirds reported that the guidance was 'Very' or 'Quite useful' and under one third indicated that it was 'A little useful'. Respondents from secondary schools were more likely to indicate that the guidance was 'Very' or 'Quite useful' compared to primary schools (around three-quarters of secondary schools compared to one half of primary schools).

Emotional and mental health learning modules hosted on Hwb

- 5.22 Under half of respondents (46%) reported that that their school had used the [emotional and mental health learning modules hosted on Hwb](#)⁹. Of these respondents, most indicated that their school had used them 'A little' (33%), compared to 'Quite a lot' (12%) and 'A lot' (1%). However, under half of respondents (45%) indicated that their school had not used the modules. A further 9% did not know if their school had used the modules.
- 5.23 When explored further, nearly half of respondents (47%) reported that they were not aware of the modules.
- 5.24 Respondents from secondary schools were more likely to report that their school had used the modules compared to primary schools (around two thirds of secondary schools compared to two fifths of primary schools)¹⁰.
- 5.25 Amongst the respondents who had used the modules (54 schools), over half reported that they were 'A little useful', and over two fifths reported that they were 'Quite' or 'Very useful'. Respondents from secondary schools were less likely to report the modules as 'Very' or 'Quite' useful compared to primary schools (around one third of secondary schools compared to half of primary schools).

School governance for health and well-being:

- 5.26 Most respondents indicated that their schools had a strategic lead for health and well-being (90%) and a written health and well-being plan / targets (87%)¹¹.
- 5.27 A higher proportion of respondents from primary schools compared to secondary schools reported that their schools had a strategic lead for health and well-being (nearly all primary schools compared to four in five secondary schools) and a written health and well-being plan / targets (over nine in ten primary schools compared to four in five secondary schools)¹².
- 5.28 Of the 118 schools with a written health and well-being plan / targets, most respondents (84%) reported that the Senior Management / Leadership Team formally assess progress at least annually. A smaller group of respondents indicated that their progress is assessed less frequently than annually (9%) or not at all (6%). This pattern was similar for respondents from both primary and secondary schools¹³.

⁹ Based on a sample of 129 responses.

¹⁰ Based on a sample of 79 primary schools and 18 secondary schools.

¹¹ Based on a sample of 136 responses.

¹² Based on a sample of 86 primary schools and 18 secondary schools.

¹³ Based on a sample of 80 primary schools and 15 secondary schools.

- 5.29 Of the 118 schools with a written health and well-being plan / targets, respondents indicated that the most frequent ways students were involved in developing their written school health and well-being action plan or targets was through supporting the implementation of the action plan or targets (31%) and monitoring and/or reviewing the action plan or targets (31%). Learners were also reported to be involved in developing the content of the action plan or targets (27%), commenting on the action plan or targets (22%), writing a learner-friendly version (12%), and proposing when a new action plan or targets were needed (or an existing action plan or targets needed amending) (7%).
- 5.30 A group of respondents (15%) indicated that their settings did not involve students in the development of their action plan or targets.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 These findings should be interpreted with caution owing to the limitations set out in the methodology section, including that the findings reflect the stage of WSAEMWB implementation at the time the survey was conducted (June and July 2023).
- 6.2 Frequent communication between schools and their CAMHS in-reach team was not consistently reported overall:
- Most secondary schools reported frequent contact with their CAMHS in-reach team, whereas this contact was less frequent in primary schools,
 - Overall, most respondents were satisfied with the quality of the support from their CAMHS in-reach team, especially those from secondary schools,
 - There were regional differences with respondents from schools in South-East Wales reporting more frequent communication.
- 6.3 The availability of school-based counselling services for learners varied considerably:
- All secondary schools reported that they offer a frequent counselling services to learners whereas primary schools provide these services much less often, and counselling services were usually available to primary-aged learners on request only or not at all,
 - Most respondents reported that demand for counselling exceeds the available provision, particularly in secondary schools.
- 6.4 Welsh Government provides funding to local authorities to support school-based activity to embed a WSAEMWB. Most respondents indicated that their school was not accessing the funding or they didn't know, and most respondents were unaware of the funding. This finding should be interpreted with caution as the respondent may not be well-placed to know if their school accessed this funding, or alternatively the local authority may have distributed the funding to the school as part of a broader allocation without specifying its intended use:
- There were regional differences, with respondents from schools in South-East Wales more likely to report that their school had accessed the funding,
 - Among the minority of schools who had accessed the funding, it was most frequently used for staff training.
- 6.5 Overall use of '[Responding to issues of self-harm and thoughts of suicide in young people](#)' guidance and the [emotional and mental health learning modules hosted on Hwb](#) was low and most schools reported using the resources only a little or not at all:
- Use of both resources was much higher in secondary schools, particularly for the self-harm / suicide guidance,
 - A sizable group of schools were not aware of each resource, particularly for the modules,

- Most schools using the self-harm / suicide guidance found it useful, particularly amongst secondary schools, whereas the emotional and mental health learning modules were viewed as less useful.
- 6.6 Most schools have a strategic lead and a written plan / targets for health and well-being, particularly in primary schools, and progress is typically assessed against this plan / targets at least annually.
- 6.7 Most schools are involving their learners in developing their written school health and well-being action plan or targets, with learners most commonly involved in supporting implementation, and monitoring / reviewing the action plan or targets.
- 6.8 Qualitative research is planned to build on these survey findings to explore in more detail the barriers that schools and education settings have experienced in implementing their WSAEMWB and develop good practice examples. This research is due to be published in 2025.

Bulletin author: Dr Daniel Burley, Welsh Government.

Views expressed in this bulletin are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

For further information please contact:
Schools Research Branch
Social Research and Information Division
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Email: SchoolsResearch@gov.wales

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

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