

## Schools need more specialist support

*Summarised by Dr. Jessica K. Edwards*

Schools have a central role in supporting young people with mental health problems, but the level of and type of support available to affected students is unclear. A convenience sample survey of 577 school staff from 341 schools in England has shed light on this issue, by asking participants to report the level and nature of specialist mental health support available in their school and the perceived barriers to supporting adolescent mental health. Specialist support for those with mental health difficulties was reported in 68% schools (typically secondary schools), and no differences were found based on urbanicity, fee-paying status, special provision or level of deprivation. In general, specialist support is obtained by staff training and whole-school approaches, with educational psychologists (81%) and counsellors (62%) providing the majority of support to students. Most participants (61%) considered that mental health support was limited by the capacity of specialist NHS CAMH services rather than attitudes towards mental health disorders. The researchers concede that their non-random sampling method resulted in a sample that was not fully representative of schools across England, but their provisional findings suggest that future studies using a random sampling method would be valuable.

*Sharpe, H., Ford, T., Lereya, S. T., Owen, C., Viner, R. M. & Wolpert, M. (2016), Survey of schools' work with child and adolescent mental health across England: a system in need of support. Child Adolesc Ment Health, 21: 148-153. doi:10.1111/camh.12166*