

speaking  
out loud

about mental  
health



in education.

## foreword

Mental health awareness and attempts to tackle it are on the increase but for one in four of us it remains an everyday reality. Despite efforts by the government, companies and organisations, around 300,000 people with a long-term mental health problem will leave their job this year.

According to a survey by the charity Mind, the problem is worse in the public sector where mental wellbeing lags behind the private sector. It found public sector workers were a third more likely to say their mental health was worse than peers in the private sector. It also identified workers in the sector were more likely to have days off due to their mental health problems than those employed by private organisations.

The situation was thought to be the same in education but as our survey results show, teachers and education staff appear to be handling the pressures of the job well. Randstad found 88% of respondents said their overall mental health was either 'very good' or 'perfect'.

Encouragingly, 88% said they did not take a day off work last year because of their mental health and that while supply and temporary teachers reported a better mental wellbeing, the total number was only 3% higher than permanent staff.

Whilst the statistics are encouraging, there's still room for improvement. Teachers do an amazing job but our survey shows a majority of schools do not detect early symptoms of mental illness. Talking about mental health is a step in the right direction, it's now time for employers to open their eyes wider to its early stages.

*Victoria Short, managing director, Randstad Public Services.*

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# introduction.

## checking the wellbeing of teaching staff

Long hours, reduced budgets, and the pressure of exam results mean teaching can be a stressful job and career. Last year, the Education Support Partnership reported three quarters of school and college staff had experienced a psychological, physical or behavioural mental health problem brought on by work.

The findings were similar to those from a Randstad survey the same year, which found 42% of primary teachers suffered from work-related stress in the past six months. However, as well as stats showing increasing working hours and little leisure time, 90% were still happy in their job.

# 42%

of primary teachers suffered from work-related stress in 2017. However, as well as stats showing increasing working hours and little leisure time, **90% were still happy in their job.**

## what we found

In January we surveyed 2,145 teaching staff and the results suggest the mental wellbeing of those working in our schools and colleges is better than we might assume. For example, an overwhelming 94% of teachers believed they have either 'good' or 'perfect' mental health while 5% said their mental wellbeing was poor. Just two respondents (0.3%) said they had 'very poor' mental health.

The positive results were widespread, too, with barely any variation depending on gender, location or type of job: more than three quarters of males (79%) and females (77%) said they had 'good' or 'perfect' mental health.

Overall, at least 90% of teaching and non-teaching professionals from every region in England said their mental health was either 'good' or 'perfect' but the East Midlands had the highest proportion (7%) of workers with either 'poor' or 'very poor' mental wellbeing.

This response correlated with staff absence from mental health problems. An overwhelming number (1,599, 88%) did not take a day off last year suggesting staff viewed their conditions stoically or they forced themselves to attend.

Overall, we found staff reporting the worst mental health took more than three working weeks off - almost 8% of the whole school year.



# 94%

of teachers believed they have either 'good' or 'perfect' mental health.

# the problem.

## silent stress?

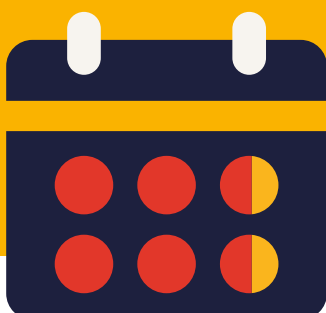
Our data shines a light on how teaching staff perceive their own wellbeing but does not say whether they have showed symptoms of a mental health problem. It raises the concern that education staff see stress, anxiety and other symptoms as simply part of the job, which in turn could prevent them from seeking help. Normalising mental health cannot become the norm. Research undertaken by the Education Support Partnership seems to support our concerns with 64% of respondents to their recent survey claiming they would not feel confident in disclosing mental health problems or unmanageable stress to their employer.

## Does your school do enough to support you with any mental health conditions you may have?



More than half of respondents (56%) said their employer offered mental health support but on this point we found a potential chasm between perception and reality as 91% of employers said they had programmes in place to help staff improve their mental wellbeing. These figures suggest schools are either overstating their support structures or staff aren't aware of them. One fifth of respondents told us 'we don't really focus on that area in a formal way'.

With skills shortages across the country retention should be viewed as important as recruitment and our data suggests ensuring measures to improve or sustain mental wellness is vital.



# 88%

of teachers did not take a single day off last year due to mental health problems.

## undetected symptoms

Although most (56%) of the education staff we contacted said their institution had support mechanisms in place to assist those suffering with a mental illness, more than two thirds (69%) said their employer was slow to notice symptoms. This finding is similar to that of the Education Support Partnership who found in their staff health survey that 72% of people working in education do not feel that they receive sufficient guidance about their health and wellbeing at work.

This was a feeling shared by teachers and teaching staff whether they were permanent, or supply teachers and regardless of location, suggesting institutions might lack the ability to spot when employees need support the most.

Part of the solution lies in creating a culture of openness that helps staff feel comfortable expressing how they feel. Another is for schools to detect the signs that suggest employees might be suffering.

# 69%

said their employer was slow to notice symptoms.



## workloads piling up

Teaching staff told us how their workload was the root cause of their mental illness. Of the 90 respondents who described their mental health as either 'poor' or 'very poor' 68 blamed the amount of work they face. The Education Support Partnership found that of those that considered leaving the sector, 77% blamed the volume of workload as the reason. These findings came as another study found half of teachers worked unpaid overtime.

According to the Trades Union Congress, 53% of teachers and educational professionals put in unpaid overtime, the data shows. By contrast, only 26% of chief executives put in unpaid overtime. School heads are usually aware their staff go above and beyond their work hours and should be sympathetic to calls for greater flexibility as pressure starts to build.

Indeed, Randstad found 27% of employers allowed staff time off to deal with their mental wellbeing and a further third said assistance programmes were available. These proactive approaches were at odds with the 8% who said there was no strategy in place to deal with mental health and the 9% that said some support was offered but that the individual should take responsibility for their mental health.



One of the best guides to mental health symptoms can be found at [mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helping-someone-else)

but approaching the subject with a colleague can be difficult. The key is to be open, to listen and to support.

# the solutions.

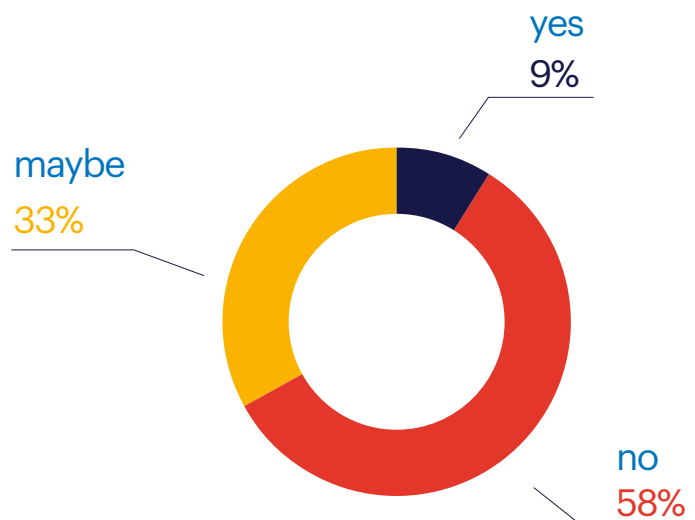
## what next?

The government is committed to improving mental health after it found 300,000 people a year were leaving their jobs at a cost of up to £42 billion annually. Starting with the NHS and the civil service, new provisions aim to improve standards of knowledge and ensure support is in place. The same should be rolled out in education.

The government's plan highlights how many provisions around mental health in schools and colleges focus on student wellbeing and not that of teachers and teaching staff. That leaves employers with the challenge of identifying and supporting those in need. Randstad's HR guide, Workpocket identified ways an employer can improve conditions:

- demands** including workload, work patterns and the work environment.
- control** how much say individuals have in the way they do their work.
- support** encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by an organisation, line management and colleagues.
- relationships** promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.
- role** whether people understand their role and whether an organisation ensures they do not have conflicting roles.
- change** how organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated.

Are you planning on leaving the education sector in the next 12 months?



## conclusion.

There is no silver bullet to solving the mental health crisis in the UK, but as Randstad's survey suggests, there appears to be a disparity between employee and employer perception on mental wellbeing at their institution and the provisions in place to improve it. While our findings provide a snapshot of the bigger picture, there is evidence to suggest that institutions and staff will benefit from openness and transparency around services in place to improve wellbeing. **There is light at the end of the tunnel for teaching staff with mental health problems.**

# resources.

gov.uk  
mind.org.uk  
educationsupportpartnership.co.uk  
randstad.co.uk  
<https://www.tes.com/>

# about us.

Randstad works hard to provide high quality teaching, leadership, support, and non-teaching staff to primary, secondary and SEN schools, multi-academy trusts and federations. We help unlock a world of exciting career opportunities for our candidates whilst ensuring our clients have top class support both inside and outside of the classroom. Through a national network of offices and with a database of over 45,000 active teaching and support staff, we help to fill roles at over 2,500 schools and academies each week.

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