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CST National Survey 2024

Deep Dive

Workforce Resilience and Wellbeing

March 2025

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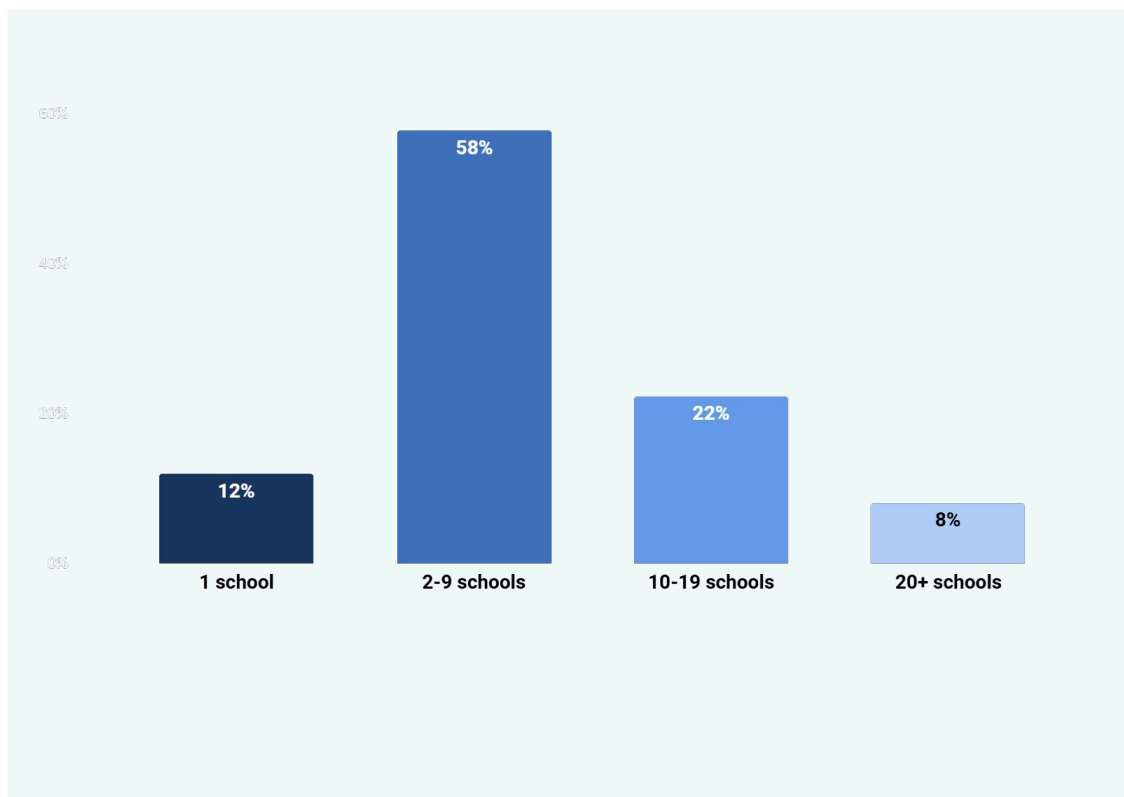
Research Methodology

Feedback from 417 Trusts

In June-July of 2024, the survey was answered by 417 trust accounting officers (the senior leaders directly responsible to Parliament for their trust, usually the CEOs) across England.

The survey covered trusts of all sizes, from trusts with single academies to running dozens of schools, making it a representative sample of school trusts across the sector.

Feedback was focused on trust experience and priorities for the 2024/25 academic year.



Survey designed around the CST's Strong trusts framework

The design of the survey is informed by CST's Building Strong Trusts framework and explores accounting officers' priorities and challenges across the various elements of trust leadership.



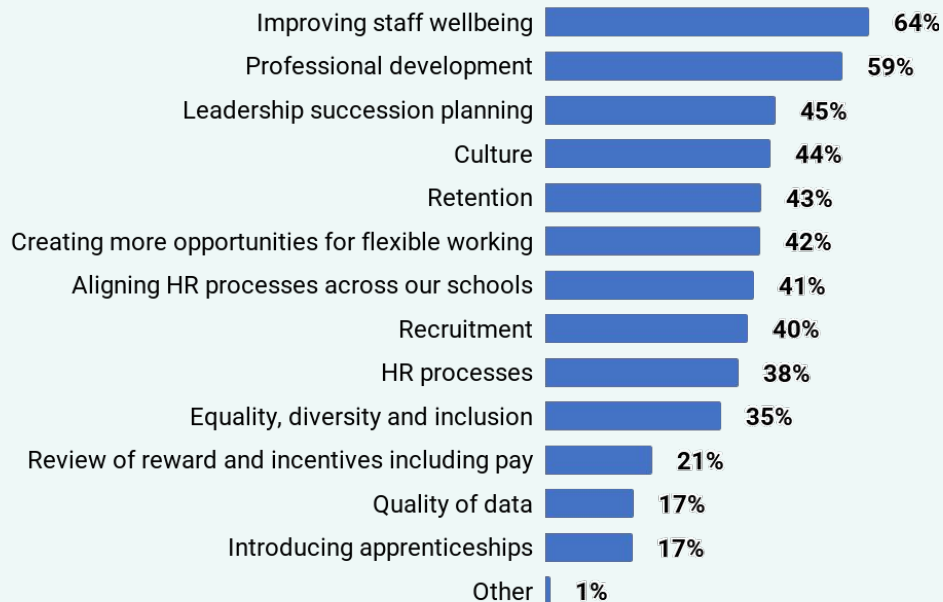
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Priorities and challenges

In which areas does your trust intend to focus its efforts regarding workforce resilience and wellbeing?

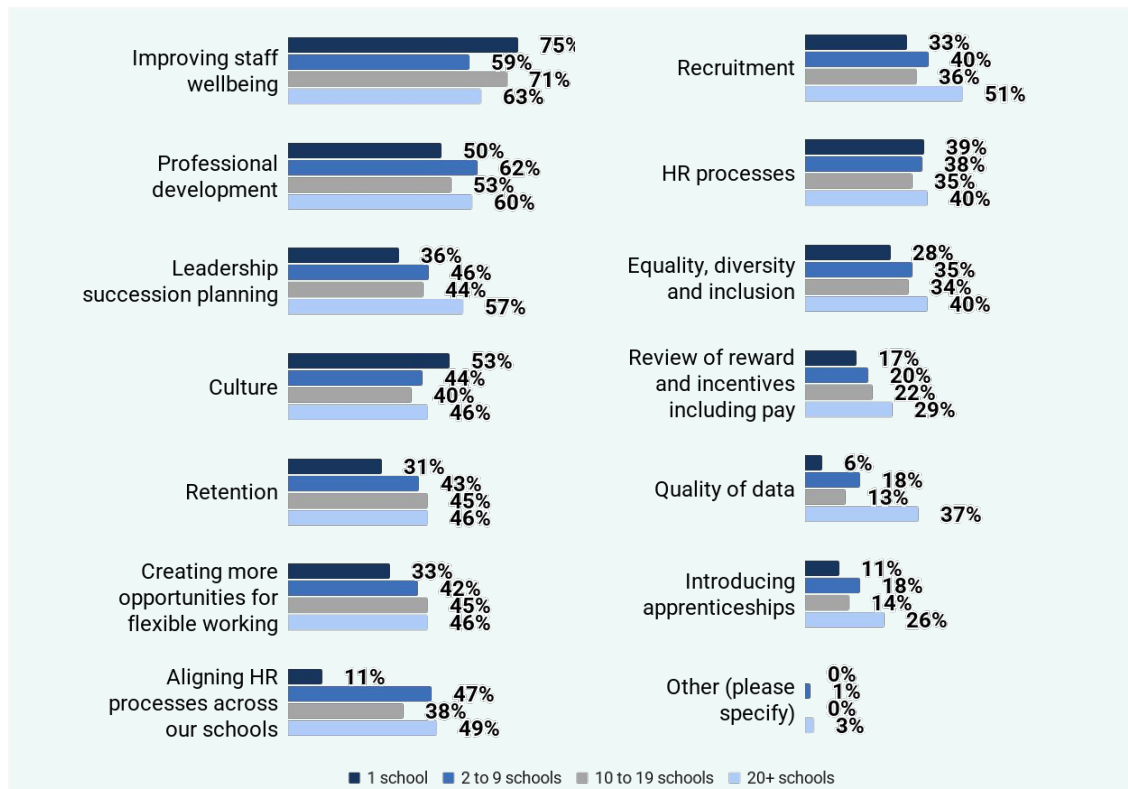


Trust leaders were most likely to report that their trust is focussing its efforts on improving staff wellbeing, with 64% of trust leaders highlighting this as their trust's priority. Professional development is a close second, mentioned by 59% of trust leaders.

Compared to last year's survey, there has been a shift in priorities. Staff wellbeing has replaced professional development as the top priority and, for the first time, retention is valued to be more of a priority than recruitment.

In which areas does your trust intend to focus its efforts regarding workforce resilience and wellbeing?

By trust size



- By trust size, we see that Improving staff wellbeing is a similarly high priority for trusts of all sizes.
- Leadership succession planning is a higher priority for large trusts (20+ schools) than it is for smaller trusts.
- Larger trusts are more likely to intend to focus efforts regarding workforce resilience and wellbeing on “review of reward and incentives including pay”, and the largest trusts are particularly interested in improving their understanding of their workforce through data.

Most demanding priorities for workforce resilience and wellbeing in 2024/25



Recruitment is still seen as the most challenging issue by trusts when it comes to workforce, with a third of trust leaders listing it as a challenge.

Creating opportunities for flexible working has also been listed as a challenge by trust CEOs.

While improving staff wellbeing is the biggest priority for trusts, CEOs were less likely to report this as a challenge.

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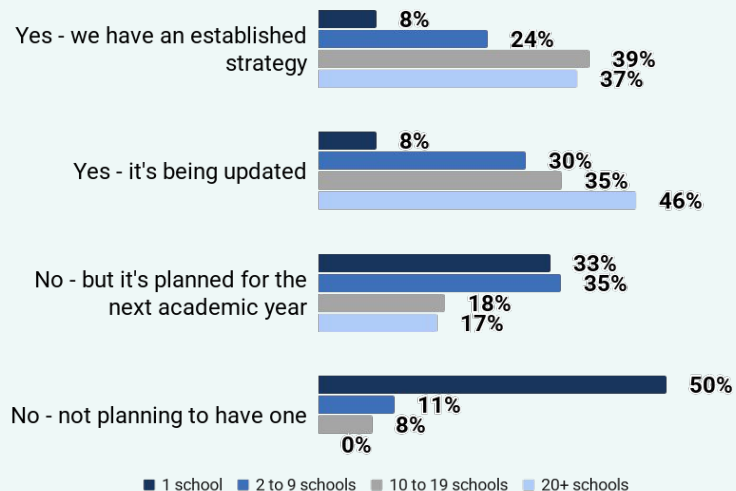
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People strategy

Does your trust have a formal people strategy?



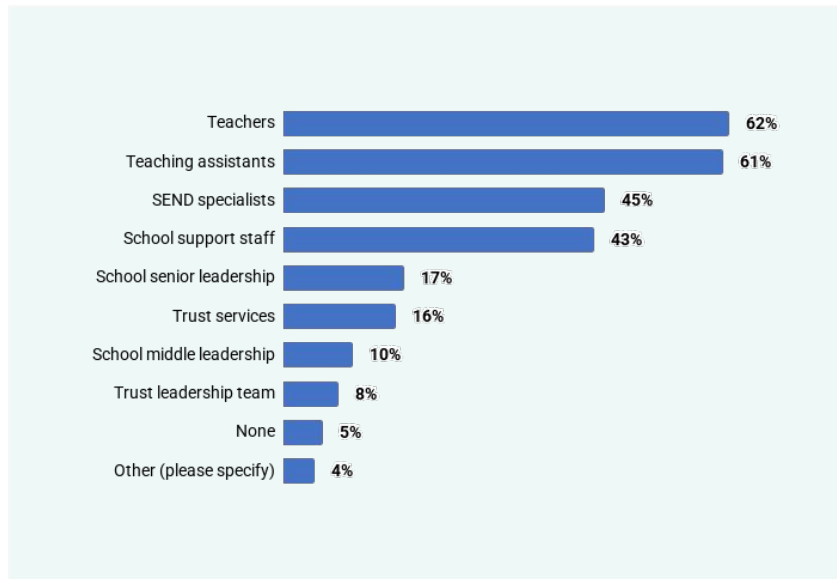
By trust size



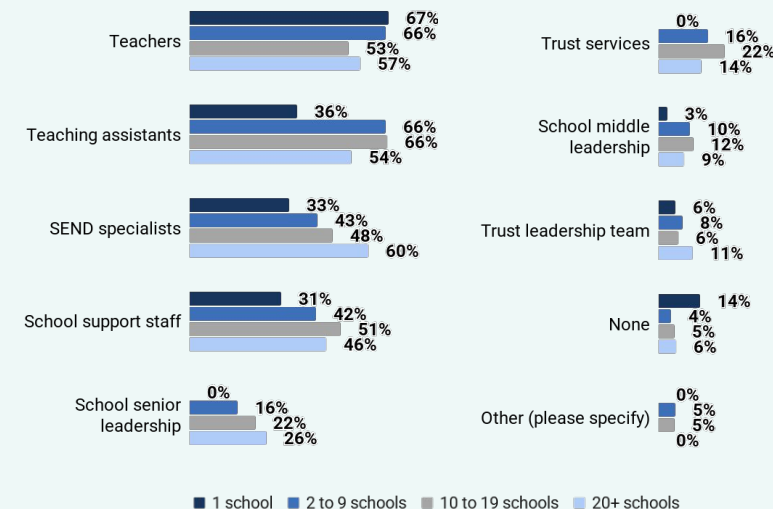
Despite recruitment and retention being seen as priorities, around four in 10 trusts do not have a formal people strategy. This is a slight improvement on last year's results, where around half of trusts had one in place. However, the shift is lower than the share of trusts that had planned to implement a new strategy in 2023/24, suggesting the process is more challenging than envisaged.

Single school trusts were most likely to report not having a people strategy or planning to have one. Larger trusts were more likely to have a people strategy already established or being updated.

Which roles has your trust struggled to fill vacancies in this year?



By trust size



When we asked CEOs which roles their trust has struggled to fill vacancies in this academic year, 62% said teachers and 61% said teaching assistants. SEND specialists and support staff were also listed as one of the roles trusts struggled to fill vacancies for, with 45% and 43% of respondents citing the roles.

CEOs of larger trusts (20+ schools) were most likely to report finding it difficult to recruit SEND specialists compared to smaller trusts. Recruiting teachers was more frequently mentioned as a struggle by single school or small trusts (2-9 schools).

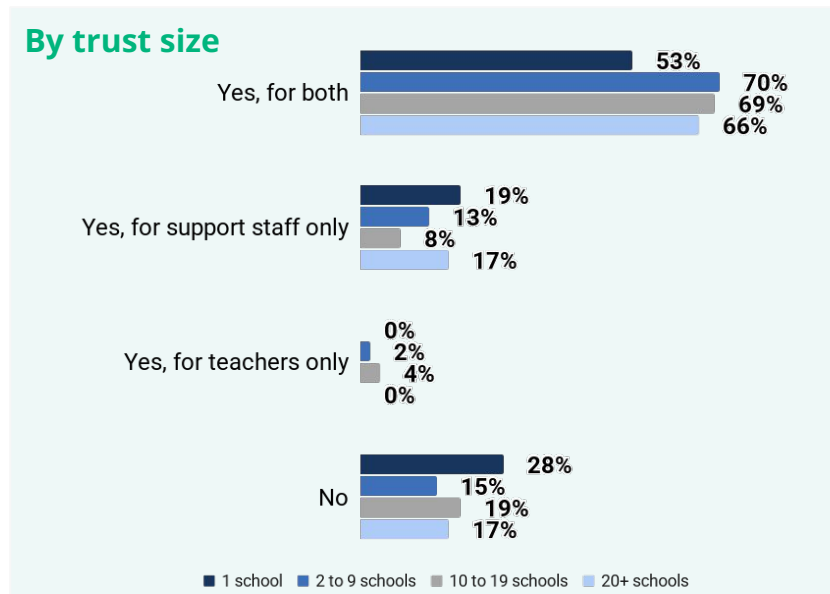
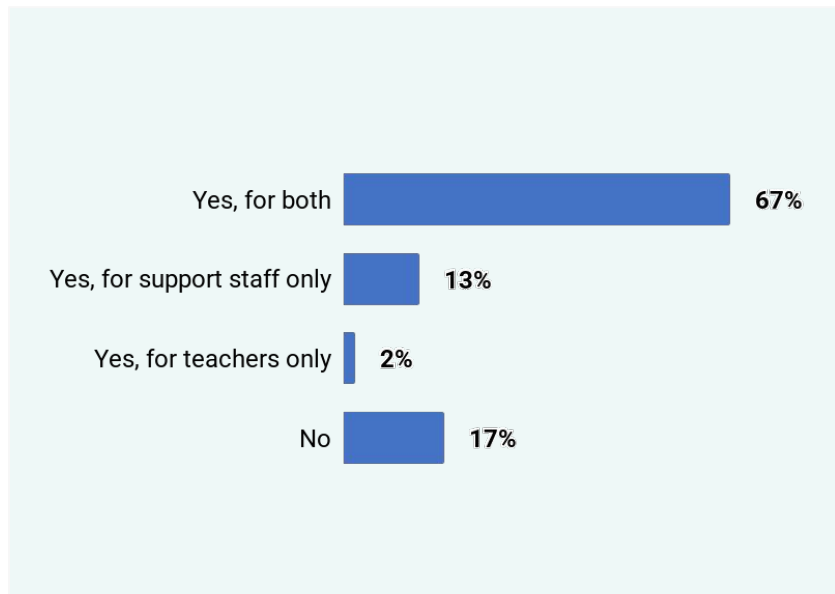
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Workload and wellbeing

Does your trust offer flexible working options for teachers or support staff, such as remote working, term-time leave, flexible hours, or similar.



- ✔ The majority of CEOs (67%) report their trust is offering flexible working options for teachers and support staff. 17% of CEOs report their trust not having any options for flexible working for teachers or support staff such as remote working, term-time leave, flexible hours, or similar.
- ✔ CEOs of single school trusts were most likely to report that they do not offer flexible working options for teachers or support staff, such as remote working, term-time leave, flexible hours, or similar.

Does your trust offer flexible working options for teachers or support staff, such as remote working, term-time leave, flexible hours, or similar. If so, please give examples.

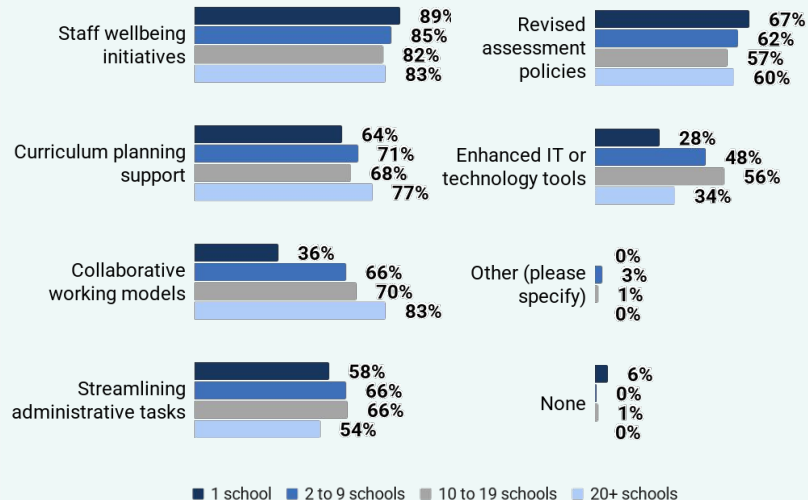
Examples of flexible working:

- “Staff can request flexible working through our policy and most requests are granted. Often staff request for one year, protecting their substantive contract if they want to return to this. Working from home is possible for some staff but many roles are child facing and so this wouldn't be suitable for them. Some staff work flexible hours to suit changing situations in their family life.”
- “We are rolling out more flexibility over the next year as fast as our school leaders will let us. Considering a trust wide agreement on PPA from home and well being days in term time. Already have our first job share Principal(s).”
- “We offer all of the above as well as a programme of no questions asked "personal days" linked to length of service in the trust - the longer staff have been in the trust, the more days they are entitled to.”
- “Working from home is available and adopted by staff not pupil facing, flexible working is encouraged, as appropriate paid leave is provided to staff.”
- “We seek to accommodate flexible requests in hours. We rarely offer term-time leave (exceptional circumstances only). We offer remote working for PPA time.”

What initiatives has your trust implemented to reduce teacher workload?

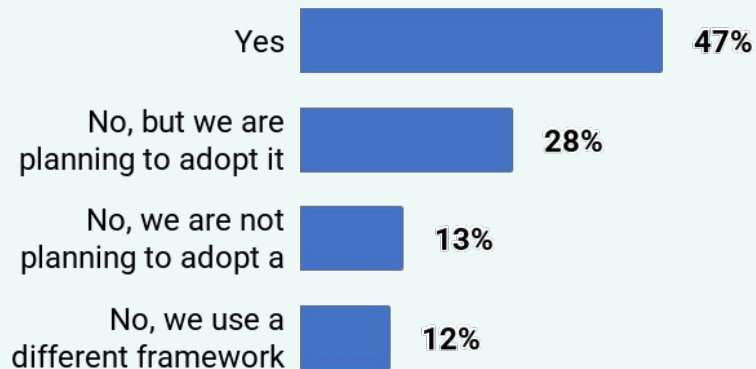


By trust size

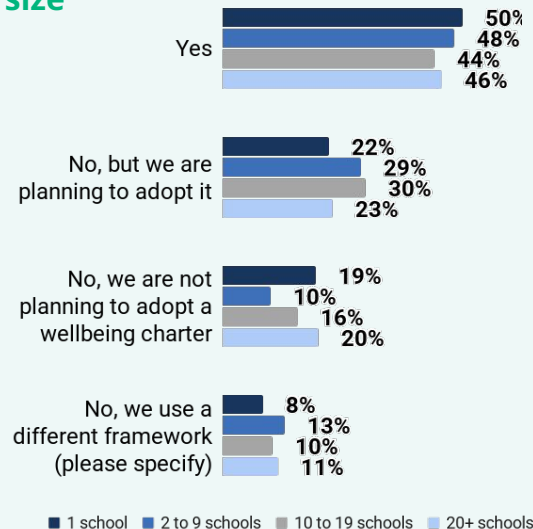


- The survey found that 85% of trusts have implemented staff wellbeing initiatives to reduce teacher workload. 70% have implemented curriculum planning support to support teacher workload.
- The larger the trust the more likely CEOs were to report that they have implemented collaborative working models, perhaps to be expected due to the size of these organisations.

Has your trust adopted the DfE's Staff Wellbeing Charter?



By trust size



Just under half of CEOs report that their trust has adopted the DfE's Staff Wellbeing Charter, and a further 28% of CEOs report that they are planning to adopt it. One in 10 trusts have chosen to use a different framework.

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Conclusion

Sam Skerritt, Director of Public Affairs and Policy, CST



The pandemic shifted the nature of many jobs overnight, and many people's attitudes to their work life priorities. For what is often still a very traditional workplace this is a challenge for schools. However, the role of school trusts as employers is a key difference between academy and maintained schools, and trusts are increasingly looking at ways they can take the initiative and think creatively about how they work, with more than two thirds offering forms of flexible working.

There is more we need to do - around pay, diversity, and opportunity - to make working in education more attractive, but trusts are rising to the challenge.

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