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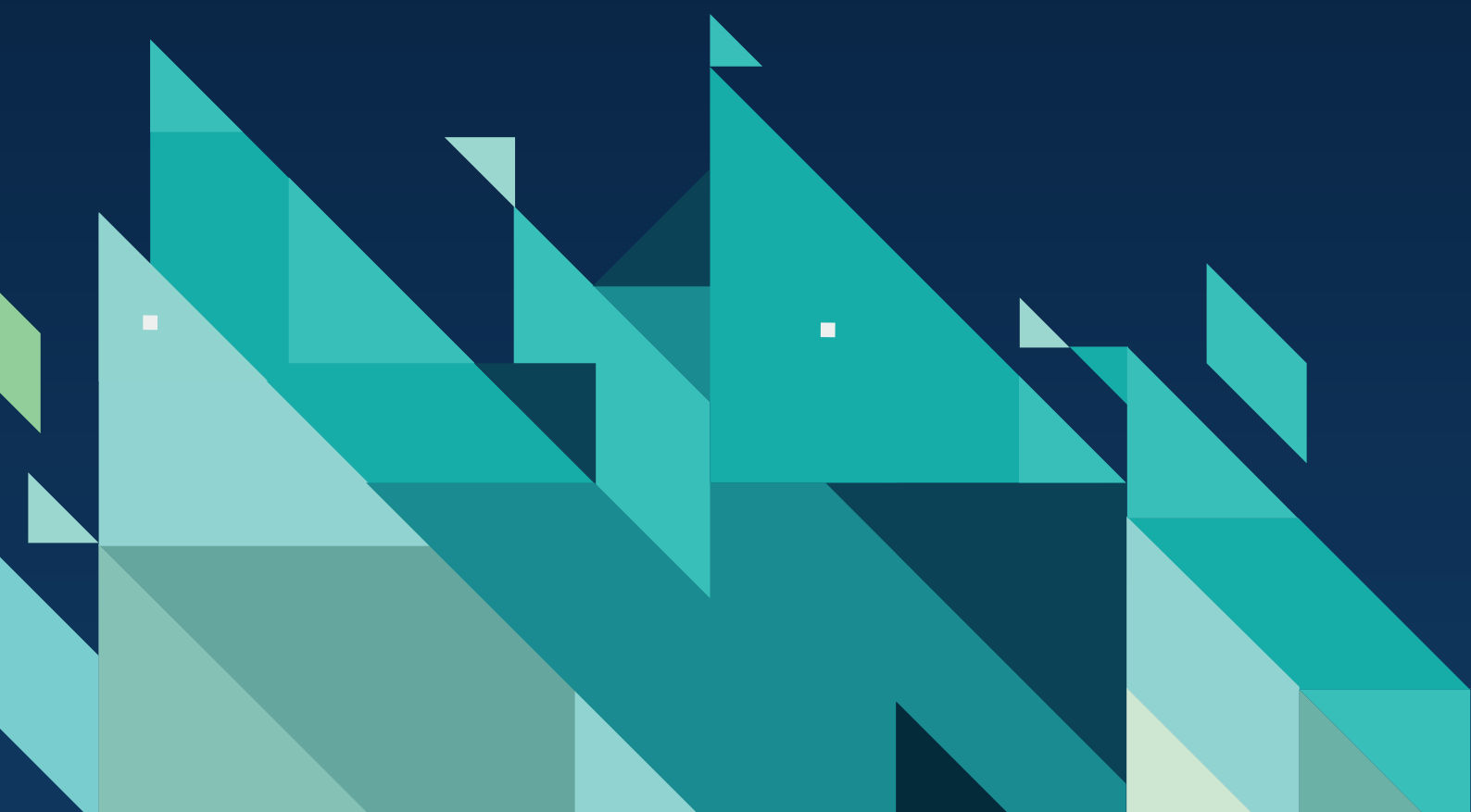
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# The School Completion Programme revisited

EMER SMYTH, GARANCE HINGRE AND MERIKE DARMODY



# THE SCHOOL COMPLETION PROGRAMME REVISITED

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**February 2025**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CPD	Continuous Professional Development
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DESTY	Discovering Exceptional Strengths and Talents in You
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EWO	Educational Welfare Officer
HSCL	Home-School-Community Liaison Coordinator
LMC	Local Management Committee
SCP	School Completion Programme
TESS	Tusla Education Support Service

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The School Completion Programme was established in 2002 to provide support for children and young people at risk of early school leaving and is part of a suite of supports offered through the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)<sup>1</sup> programme. The programme is run by Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) with oversight from the Department of Education. The programme is organised into 121 projects managed by a coordinator and overseen by a Local Management Committee (LMC). Each project covers a number of primary and post-primary schools. The programme currently covers 783 schools that have a total population of over 250,000 students. The three core outcomes of the programme are improved attendance, improved participation (engagement in learning and other school activities) and improved retention among children and young people, with improved participation seen as leading to increases in attendance and retention levels. To achieve these objectives, there are three levels of intervention: the target group, children and young people identified with the greatest need to whom staff provide more intensive support; brief interventions, designed to address a temporary crisis; and universal interventions that provide whole-class support, for example through a life skills programme. The strands of support are divided between in-school supports, supports around the school day (before or after school, or at lunchtime), holiday provision and supports for young people who are out of school (because of school avoidance, suspension/expulsion, or early school leaving).

A review of the programme conducted by the ESRI in 2015 highlighted its value in providing flexible and needs-based supports to vulnerable children and young people. However, the review highlighted a number of challenges, including project governance, variation in the size of projects and the supports provided, and the impact of austerity-related funding decreases. In the intervening period, there have been a number of changes to the programme, including an increase in funding, the introduction of a new intake framework to refer students, a greater emphasis on evidence-based programmes (such as Decider Life Skills and Working Things Out), a roll-out of continuous professional development for staff and webinars for LMC members. There have also been considerable changes in the broader societal context, with the impact of the pandemic on wellbeing leading to marked increases in school non-attendance. This report draws on a survey of SCP coordinators, detailed case studies of six projects, and a consultation event conducted with SCP coordinators and project workers. This rich information is used

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<sup>1</sup> The DEIS programme provides additional resources and supports to schools serving socio-economically disadvantaged populations. At primary level, DEIS schools are grouped into three categories: Urban Band 1 (the most disadvantaged), Urban Band 2 and Rural.

to examine the operation of SCP in this changed landscape and highlight the implications for future development of the programme.

## **TARGETING AND STUDENT NEED**

SCP projects vary markedly in their size: over a quarter cover four or fewer schools while over one-sixth cover nine or more schools. A third of the projects include at least one non-DEIS school. Coordinators are broadly satisfied with current clustering arrangements but point to a lack of continuity of support in cases where young people move to a non-DEIS post-primary school and are no longer covered by SCP. The study findings point to greater needs among the student population, with worse school engagement and wellbeing than before the pandemic. These patterns manifest themselves in higher rates of non-attendance and more school avoidance. SCP and school staff point to the scale of socio-economic disadvantage evident in the project schools, often compounded by additional challenges around parental mental health, addiction and disorder in the local area. The identification of students for support is a collaborative process involving the coordinator, the Home-School-Community Liaison (HSC) coordinator and the school principal. The use of a new intake framework is seen as providing greater transparency, allowing supports to be targeted on the most vulnerable, but challenges are reported in relation to the amount of sensitive information required from parents.

## **TYPE OF SUPPORTS**

All projects provide in-school supports, most commonly transfer/transition and personal development programmes. They are provided on a one-to-one, group or whole-class basis. One-to-one interventions are viewed by SCP and school staff as particularly effective in flexibly responding to the needs of vulnerable students. There has been a shift over time in SCP towards the greater use of evidence-based programmes, with considerable variation across projects in the specific programme delivered. Many staff highlight the value of these programmes in enhancing socio-emotional skills. Yet, others indicate the need to build a relationship of trust with a vulnerable child before embarking on any programme.

Almost all projects provide supports around the school day, generally breakfast or after-school meal provision, and, in the case of post-primary schools, study support. These supports are seen as helping to meet basic needs in the context of food poverty and as promoting a more positive experience of school. However, some challenges are reported in involving those with the greatest need. Almost all projects offer holiday provision, usually at Easter or during the summer, generally focusing on fun activities and trips. Again, involving the target students can sometimes be a challenge and holiday provision is seen as the most susceptible to resource constraints. Almost all projects involve work with young people who are out of school either temporarily because of suspension or longer-term because of

school avoidance or early school leaving. SCP staff offer information and advice to help them re-engage with school or other educational options. Half of the projects provide structured support for learning through iScoil, an online learning platform. Several coordinators indicate the need to expand out-of-school provision given the growing incidence of school avoidance.

## **GOVERNANCE, STAFFING AND FUNDING**

The 2015 review of the programme highlighted variations in employment arrangements for SCP staff, a situation that persists today, although there has been a commitment by the Department of Education to review governance. SCP staff lack pension arrangements and perceive their jobs as less secure, which is seen as impacting staff retention. Each project is overseen by an LMC made up of school principals, HSCLs and representatives of local organisations. Coordinators are generally happy with LMC support but point to a lack of expertise among members in more complex areas such as employment law. The study findings point to a disparity in staffing for large projects, with a much higher student-staff ratio. Over half of coordinators are not satisfied with current staffing levels, with greater dissatisfaction among medium/large projects and more recently appointed coordinators. Almost half of coordinators are dissatisfied with funding. Around 80 per cent of funding goes on staff costs, and coordinators often describe a zero-sum trade-off, with pay increments reducing the amount that can be spent on activities.

## **PERCEPTIONS OF SCP**

SCP is seen very positively in the project schools, with staff highlighting the vital support given to students. The programme is seen as making school a more positive experience for children and young people, a crucial foundation for enhancing attendance and retention. The key strength of SCP lies in the skills of staff in developing strong and supportive relationships with children, providing an adult in their lives that gives them support and acts as an advocate on their behalf. It is viewed as flexible in responding to emerging needs among students and in mobilising local resources to help address the barriers to participation. Its flexibility is sometimes seen as leading to some inconsistency in programme implementation, with staff pointing to infrequent contact and exchange of practice with other projects, a situation that is likely to facilitate variation.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY**

The findings of the study highlight the value of the programme as a vital support for vulnerable children and young people but point to some aspects of the programme that could be further enhanced. Projects remain subject to a variety of employment structures with a need for clear and consistent governance and employment structures across all projects. There appears to be a good deal of

scope to improve contact between projects, to allow them to share good practice and help build and maintain a shared vision of SCP. Existing training is generally viewed favourably but coordinators highlight the need for continuous professional development (CPD) around management and financial issues to support their complex role. There is a case to revisit project boundaries to provide greater continuity of support and to address the challenges found among large projects. Larger projects have a higher student-staff ratio, less frequent contact between coordinators and key school personnel, and more time spent on administration. Funding for the programme has increased since 2016 but does not yet match the funding levels in place before the recession. There is a clear case for a restructured funding allocation model reflecting project size and need among the school communities, which will take into account public sector pay increments. Ringfenced funding specifically for activities would help safeguard supports such as holiday provision.

SCP must be seen against the backdrop of other DEIS supports and the broader policy environment. The study findings indicate strong collaborative relationships between SCP staff, principals, HSCLs and Educational Welfare Officers (EWOs). Yet there appears to be much greater scope to enhance the involvement of SCP coordinators in DEIS school planning to provide a more integrated approach to tackle educational disadvantage. SCP staff frequently work with young people with mental health or other complex challenges. They highlight the lack of adequate referral pathways to mental health and therapeutic provision, given existing waiting lists, and the lack of alternative education provision for those who are too young to access Youthreach services. This situation will continue to impact on attendance and participation in the absence of additional resources. Poverty and deprivation, parental mental health difficulties, addiction and local neighbourhood disorder are all significant barriers to educational participation. The scale and complexity of disadvantage indicates the need for school-based supports like SCP to be underpinned by adequate income support for families with children, access to mental health and therapeutic services, and locally-based interventions to support disadvantaged communities.

## CHAPTER 1

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### Introduction

#### 1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The School Completion Programme (SCP) is designed to provide support for children and young people who are at risk of disengaging from school and is part of a broader suite of supports provided to schools serving socio-economically disadvantaged populations through the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme. An earlier evaluation (Smyth et al., 2015) highlighted the value of the programme in providing needs-based and flexible supports founded on strong relationships between SCP staff and students, and between SCP staff and the rest of the school community. However, the review highlighted a number of challenges around the governance structure, with a significant variation between projects in oversight arrangements and employment conditions, marked variation in the size of projects and in the supports available, and a sharp decrease in funding in the wake of recession-related austerity measures. A number of changes have been made to SCP in the subsequent period, and broader societal factors – especially the pandemic – have impacted on school engagement and attendance. This report examines the operation of the SCP in this changed landscape and highlights potential areas for further development.

#### 1.2 THE NATURE OF THE PROGRAMME

This section outlines the current nature of SCP; later in the section the changes made to the programme since the 2015 review are highlighted. SCP is currently organised through 121 projects that encompass a cluster of primary and post-primary schools. The project currently covers 783 schools that have a total population of over 250,000 students. This represents an expansion of SCP from 694 schools at the time of the 2015 review, with newly designated DEIS schools incorporated into several existing projects. Most schools included in the programmes (89 per cent) are part of the DEIS programme, with non-DEIS schools included where they have students that transfer to or from DEIS schools. Access to SCP is given to DEIS Urban Band 1 primary (primary schools facing the highest concentration of disadvantage and complexity of needs), DEIS Urban Band 2 primary and DEIS post-primary schools.<sup>2</sup> Rural DEIS primary schools do not have an entitlement to access but some (32) are included either because they are feeder schools for post-primary schools included in the project or because they had access to SCP prior to the introduction of DEIS. Figure 1.1 shows the number of students

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast to the situation at primary level, second-level DEIS schools are not distinguished on the basis of profile or location.

and schools of different types included in SCP nationally. Urban Band 1 schools make up 56 per cent of all primary schools included in the programme.

**FIGURE 1.1 SCP PROJECT PROFILE**

<b>121 projects</b>	
<b>783 schools, covering a school population of 250,598</b>	
DEIS – 697 schools; 82 projects with only DEIS schools (68%) Non-DEIS – 86 schools	
Primary schools 535 schools, covering a school population of 132,015 students	Post-primary schools 248 schools, covering a school population of 118,583 students
DEIS – 474 schools, of which: Urban Band 1 – 297 schools Urban Band 2 – 145 schools Rural DEIS – 32 schools	DEIS – 223 schools
Non-DEIS – 61 schools	Non-DEIS – 25 schools
Small projects (less than 5 schools) – 35 projects Medium small (5 or 6 schools) – 33 projects Medium large (7 or 8 schools) – 32 projects Large (9 or more schools) – 21 projects	

*Source:* TESS administrative data matched with Department of Education figures on student enrolment for 2022/23.

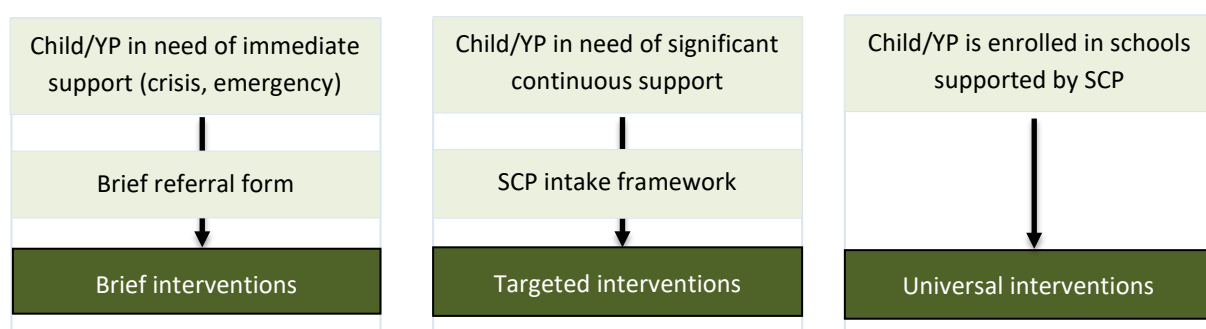
*Note:* There are 122 coordinators because of a merger of two projects. The figures for school and student numbers includes two schools that receive support from SCP but are not part of a project.

Projects receive a funding allocation from Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) and the programme is now under the remit of the Department of Education. The 2015 review of SCP took place against a backdrop of austerity measures introduced during the recession. Overall funding for SCP decreased from €32.9 million in 2008 to €24.7 million in 2015 (Smyth et al., 2015). The more recent period has seen an increase over time, from approximately €23.3 million in 2019 to €31.6 million in 2023. Each project has a coordinator who manages the implementation of the programme, under the oversight of a Local Management Committee (LMC), made up of project school principals, HSCLs and representatives of community organisations. There is a variety of governance structures, with most projects having the LMC act as employers of SCP staff. In a further two projects, the board of management of one of the project schools acts as the employer. Forty-three projects receive administrative support from an Education and Training Board (ETB) who, in some cases, act as the employer. Six projects are supported administratively by Foróige,<sup>3</sup> who act as the employer.

<sup>3</sup> Foróige is a youth organisation that runs clubs, youth projects and other activities nationally.

From its first introduction in 2002, the stated objective of the SCP has been to enable young people to complete the Leaving Certificate or equivalent educational qualification. The three core outcomes are improved attendance, improved participation (engagement in learning and other school activities) and improved retention among children and young people, with improved participation seen as leading to increases in attendance and retention levels. To achieve these objectives, there are three types of intervention. For those children and young people in need of significant continuous support, referrals are made through the SCP intake framework. The framework is completed by school principals, coordinators, or any other designated person, with the parent or guardian. It collates information on a range of risk factors that are given a score or weighting; students scoring above 20 are seen as at-risk and will be targeted for intervention. Some children and young people may need immediate SCP support, as they are going through a crisis or emergency. In this case, they are referred through a brief form completed by the class teacher, year head, or HSCL. They then receive brief interventions for eight weeks or less. Students enrolled in project schools can receive universal evidence-based interventions which are delivered to the whole class or to school groups. The term 'universal' does not imply that all students in the school receive support but rather that particular year groups or classes that are not all part of the target group can be offered support.

**FIGURE 1.2 TYPES OF INTERVENTION**



Source: TESS SCP documentation.

The types of supports or interventions are divided into four strands: in-school provision, which includes personal development, attendance monitoring for the target group and transition programmes; supports around the school day, which includes breakfast clubs and lunchtime clubs; holiday provision, which includes sports activities and trips; and supports for young people who are out of school because of school avoidance, suspension/expulsion or early school leaving. In-school supports can be brief, targeted or universal while other types of supports are generally targeted. SCP guidelines emphasise that staff should not support literacy or numeracy or duplicate the work of teachers in any way.

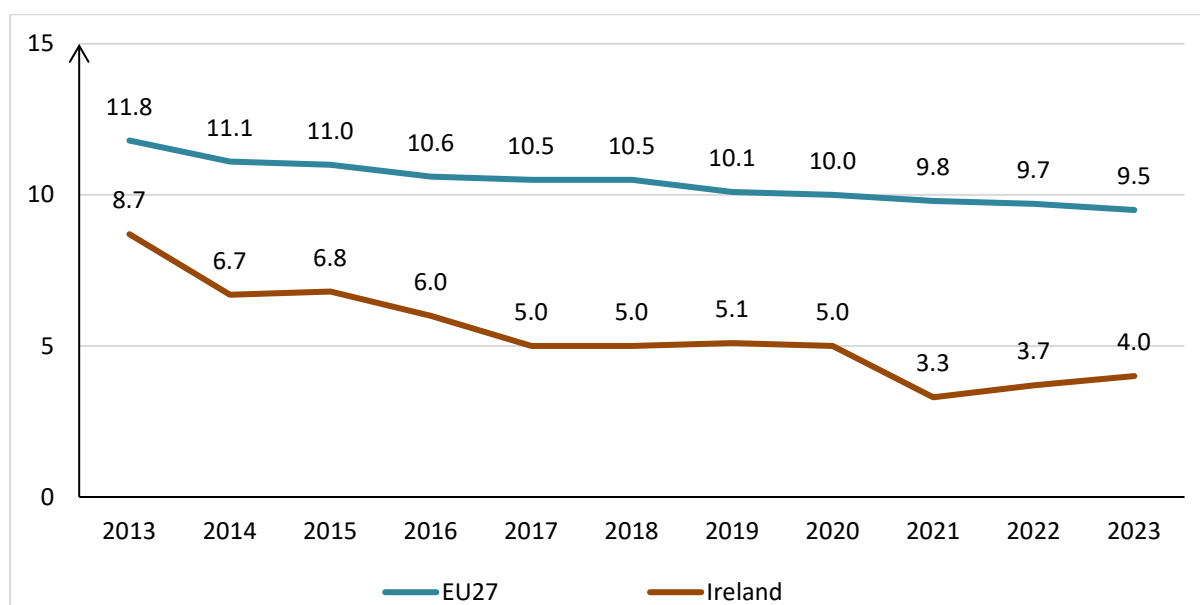


Since the period of the 2015 review, there have been a number of changes to the programme, including: an increase in funding; the introduction of a new intake framework to refer students; a greater emphasis on evidence-based programmes (such as Decider Life Skills and Working Things Out); re-alignment of coordinator pay to the scales for Youthreach coordinators and project worker pay to those for City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDET) youth workers (from October 2023); and a roll-out of a programme of mandatory and elective continuous professional development for staff as well as webinars for Local Management Committee (LMC) members.

### 1.3 THE CHANGING CONTEXT

The European definition of early leaving indicates that early leavers from education and training are individuals, aged between 18 and 24, who have attained, at most, lower secondary education and are not involved in further education or training. In Ireland, the early leaver rate would correspond to the share of individuals without a Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification. The European Union's target is that the early leaver rate should be below 9 per cent by 2030. Ireland is one of the top performers in the European context and its early leaver rate has been below the EU's target since 2015 (Figure 1.3). Between 2013 and 2023, early leaving in Ireland decreased from 8.7 to 4 per cent.

**FIGURE 1.3 TRENDS IN EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING IN IRELAND AND THE EUROPEAN UNION (%)**



Source: Eurostat statistics (Europa.eu).

Although rates of early leaving are low in Ireland in comparison to the rest of the EU, they vary significantly across social groups. Retention to Leaving Certificate is higher in non-DEIS than in DEIS schools, though the gap has narrowed somewhat

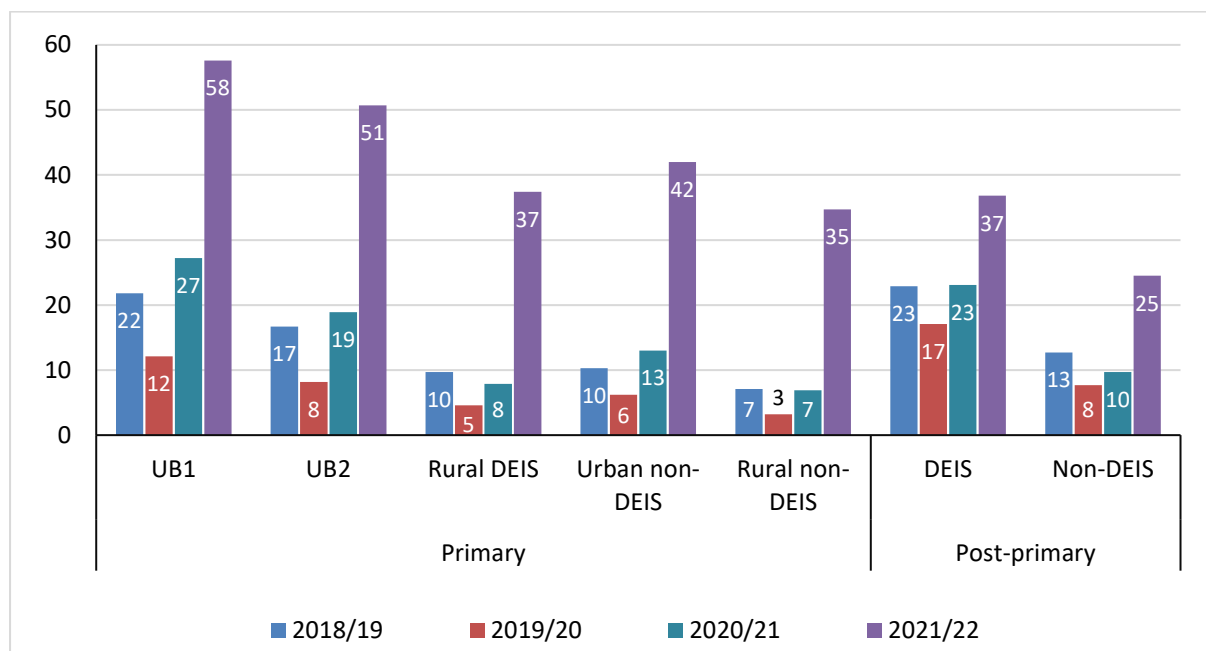
over time (from 15.6 per cent for those entering post-primary education in 2003 to 8.4 per cent for the 2016 entry cohort)<sup>4</sup> (Department of Education, 2023). Retention also varies by area-level deprivation, ranging from 95 per cent in extremely or very affluent areas to 66 per cent in extremely disadvantaged areas (Department of Education, 2023). The long-term decline in early school leaving in Ireland, after a period of stagnation in the 1990s, has been attributed, at least in part, to the DEIS programme, including SCP (OECD, 2024; Smyth et al., 2015).

The context for school engagement and retention has been far from static, with the shock of pandemic-related closures leading to very significant challenges in engaging students in remote learning (Mohan et al., 2020). Furthermore, the economic shock of income loss due to the suspension of many businesses coupled with the curtailment of social activities and interaction had a negative impact on parental and child wellbeing (Darmody et al., 2021; Smyth and Murray, 2022; Laurence et al., 2024). Pandemic experiences are found to have had a longer-term impact on wellbeing (Growing Up in Ireland, 2024) and on school engagement (Carroll et al., 2024; Smyth, 2023). This impact is evidenced in patterns of school absence before and after the pandemic (Figure 1.4). The share of students who lost 20 or more school days decreased between 2018/19 and 2019/20, presumably because a move to online learning during the period of pandemic-related school closures made it more difficult to monitor attendance. Thereafter, the proportion of students missing 20 or more school days increased between 2019/20 and 2021/22 when schools were reopened. There was a further dramatic increase to 2022/23 across all school types, with especially high levels of non-attendance found among primary schools. Urban Band 1 and 2 DEIS schools have much higher levels of poor attendance than non-DEIS schools in urban areas. However, few differences are evident by DEIS status in rural areas. Absence levels are also much higher in DEIS than in non-DEIS post-primary schools. This increase in absenteeism is, of course, not confined to Ireland, with increases also seen in England<sup>5</sup> and further afield (Reimers, 2024). The fact that over half of students in Urban Band 1 and 2 primary schools have missed more than 20 days demonstrates the growing scale of challenge for SCP staff.

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<sup>4</sup> Thus, for the 2016 cohort, retention in DEIS schools was 85 per cent compared to 93.4 per cent in non-DEIS schools.

<sup>5</sup> <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england>.

**FIGURE 1.4 SHARE OF STUDENTS WHO LOST 20 OR MORE SCHOOL DAYS BY SCHOOL STATUS (%)**

Source: TESS (2023).

## 1.4 METHODOLOGY

The aims of the study are as follows:

- To examine the nature of the referral process (including the role of the principal, HSCL and EWO);
- To look at the types of supports provided for students and how they are delivered;
- To examine perceptions of the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) (mandatory and elective) and other supports received by coordinators and project workers;
- To explore how the programme is embedded within the wider DEIS programme and within TESS as well as how it is linked to other local services;
- To document the extent to which the outcomes of children and young people are measured and recorded;
- To capture perceptions of the impact of the pandemic on the work of SCP;
- To identify any other potential challenges to the work of SCP.

To achieve these aims, a mixed methods approach was adopted similar to the methodology used for the 2015 review. A questionnaire was sent by post to all project coordinators (see Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire). This questionnaire covered: project size and composition; the identification and targeting of students; in-school supports, supports around the school day, holiday

provision and supports for those out of school; the impact of the pandemic; staffing and funding; inter-agency collaboration; and student outcomes. In so far as possible, questions were kept consistent with those used for the 2015 review to allow for comparison over time. However, new questions were added to reflect changes in the programme (e.g. the emphasis on evidence-based programmes) and in the broader society (e.g. the impact of the pandemic). The survey was completed by 99 coordinators, giving an overall response rate of 82 per cent.

**TABLE 1.1 PROFILE OF THE CASE-STUDY PROJECTS**

Pseudonym	Profile
Fulham Place	Small project, less emphasis on personal development and family support
Goldborough Lane	Large project, less emphasis on personal development and family support
Trobe Street	Small project, emphasis on family support
Londsdale Lane	Large project, emphasis on family support
McLean Alley	Large project, strong emphasis on personal development and family support
St Michael's Walk	Large project, strong emphasis on personal development and family support

*Note:* For case study selection purposes, large projects refer to those with seven or more schools. A more differentiated grouping of project size is used in the later analyses (see Chapter 2).

Information from the survey was used to identify six projects for in-depth case studies. Two main criteria for selection were used: project size and the type of in-school support provided. There was a core set of supports routinely offered across projects (see Chapter 2), but more variation was evident in the provision of personal development-type supports and family contact/support. The case study selection therefore distinguishes between those with a strong emphasis on personal development and family support, those with a strong emphasis on family support and those not emphasising these supports. Other criteria used to select within these groups included location, satisfaction with staffing and funding, and level of inter-agency cooperation. The profile of the case-study projects is outlined in Table 1.1. Pseudonyms based on street names in Melbourne are used for ease of reading.

**TABLE 1.2 NUMBER OF INTERVIEWS CARRIED OUT BY CATEGORY OF PERSONNEL**

Category	Number
Coordinators	6
Project workers	18
School principals	26
HSCLs	15
Other LMC members (non-principals)	4
EWOs	6

*Source:* Case-study visits.

Within each project interviews were conducted with coordinators and project workers, as well as with LMC chairs/members who were not project school principals. The interviews conducted for the 2015 review focused on coordinators and LMC chairs. In order to provide insights into how SCP is viewed within the school, the current study included interviews with primary and post-primary principals and HSCLs in the case-study sites. In addition, the coordinator was asked to identify one EWO with whom they interacted; these EWOs were interviewed online. All interviews were recorded and transcribed; they were analysed to identify the main themes emerging and to look at differences in experiences between and within projects. The chapters in this report draw on both survey and interview data to provide a more comprehensive picture of the operation of the programme on the ground.

A consultation event was held in May 2024 to which coordinators and project workers were invited. This online event, attended by 92 SCP staff, involved the presentation of preliminary findings from the survey to the group. Participants were then divided into break-out groups and asked to discuss the main strengths of SCP, aspects of the programme that could be improved and the broader supports needed to address disengagement. Rapporteurs then fed back the outcomes of the discussion in an open session. This session was recorded and information from this session has also been used as qualitative material in the report.

## **1.5 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT**

Chapter 2 looks at the size and composition of projects as well as the criteria used for identifying at-risk students, the referral process and perceived changes in the needs of the student population. Chapter 3 examines the types of supports offered through the programme, any challenges involved in implementation and the intensity of supports offered (that is, the proportion of students covered). The chapter also looks at integration with other DEIS supports and collaboration with local organisations. Chapter 4 explores governance, the role of the coordinator, staffing levels and funding. Chapter 5 looks at the perceived impact of the programme from the perspective of SCP staff and school personnel. Chapter 6 summarises the main findings of the study and discusses their implications for the future development of SCP.

## CHAPTER 2

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### Clustering, identification and targeting

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

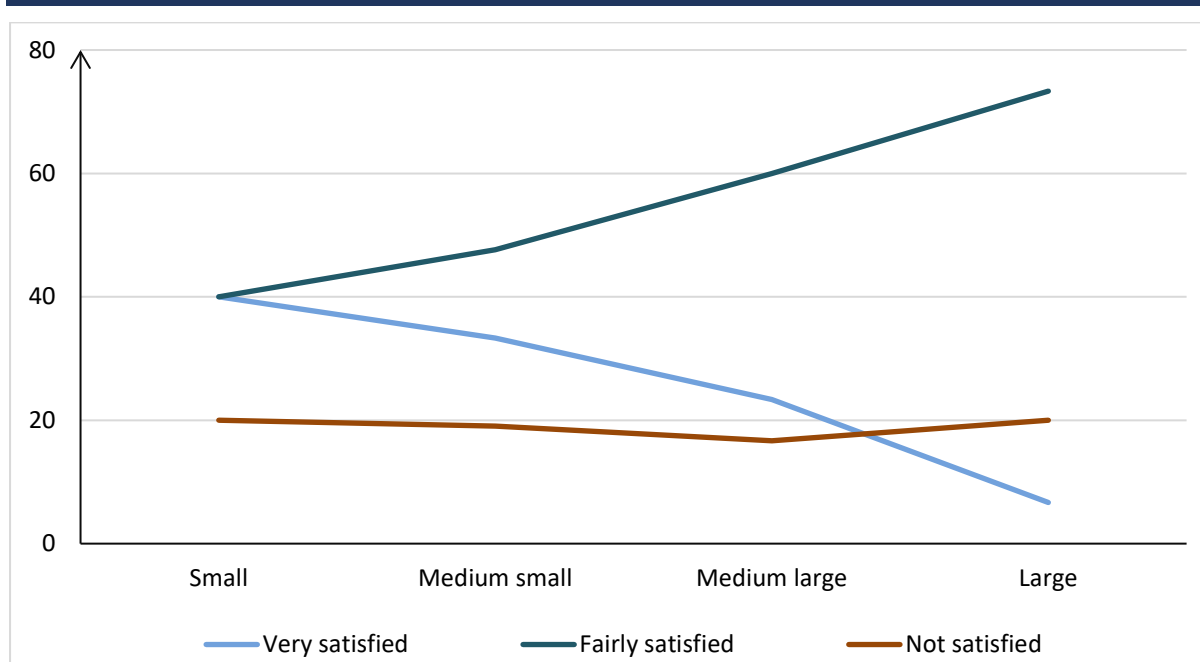
This chapter draws on the coordinator survey and case-study interviews to look at the size and configuration of projects as well as the identification and targeting of children and young people for SCP supports. Section 2.2 examines project size and coordinator and staff satisfaction with existing groupings. Section 2.3 explores needs among the student population, including the factors associated with early school leaving and perceived changes in the profile of need over time. The identification and referral process, including the use of the intake framework, is outlined in Section 2.4. Section 2.5 looks at the proportion of students in the project schools receiving targeted, brief and universal interventions.

#### 2.2 PROJECT CLUSTERING

Chapter 1 has outlined the size and nature of project clustering nationally. In total, 99 Coordinators answered the survey, covering a total of 629 schools and 203,185 students. Among these projects, 23 per cent were in small projects (four or fewer schools), 29 per cent were in medium small projects (five or six schools), 25 per cent were in medium large projects (seven or eight schools), and 22 per cent in large projects (nine or more schools). Within these projects, 89 per cent of the primary schools are DEIS while 90 per cent of the post-primary schools are DEIS. Overall, 65 per cent of projects have only DEIS schools while the remainder have at least one non-DEIS school. Smaller projects are slightly more likely to include a non-DEIS school but there is little marked variation by project size. Projects thus vary markedly in their size but also in whether they include non-DEIS schools or not.

In the survey, coordinators were asked about their satisfaction with the current clustering of schools for SCP. Overall, just over half (54 per cent) of coordinators are fairly satisfied, just over a quarter (27 per cent) are very satisfied, and just under a fifth (19 per cent) are not satisfied. The larger the project, the lower the share of coordinators declaring themselves 'very satisfied' with current arrangements (Figure 2.1). Instead, coordinators in larger projects are more likely to be 'fairly satisfied'. Interestingly, the 'not satisfied' group does not vary markedly by project size.

**FIGURE 2.1** SATISFACTION WITH THE CLUSTERING OF SCHOOLS FOR SCP, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS (%)



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Coordinators were asked what they would change, if anything, about existing grouping arrangements. Not surprisingly, those who were very satisfied with clustering were less likely to make suggestions for change.

*The school cluster for this project are **geographically close** and the families are from the local area. This makes great sense. (Coordinator survey)*

The main reason for lower levels of satisfaction was the lack of continuity over the transition between primary and post-primary school with many students moving outside the project. This was a particular concern where the post-primary schools were not DEIS so there was no continuity of support for those young people, resulting in challenges around school engagement.

*In my area there are other major primary and secondary schools that do not receive SCP supports as they **aren't DEIS**. One major secondary school badly needs it as many of the SCP young people go on to attend this school and within months, we see these young people **suspended and not in school**. (Coordinator survey)*

*All this work and effort has been put on getting the children to school, you know, getting them here in time, all of that in primary school. And then there is **nobody to continue** it once they start secondary school in September. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*It is a pity the **service cannot follow children** with non-participating secondary schools, especially when they have been referred and have received a lot of support in primary. (Coordinator survey)*

Not including feeder schools in the project is described by coordinators as a missed opportunity for early intervention.

*We have **no feeder primary schools**. We [feel] this needs to be reviewed as studies into this field have shown very starkly that early school leaving tendencies and negative habits for school attendance start at a very young age and continue to become a bigger and more difficult issue to resolve the older they are. (Coordinator survey)*

Other coordinators highlighted issues around lack of resources, including time, budget and staffing. Larger projects reported challenges in spreading existing resources across several schools.

*The schools in the cluster work well together with many families attending more than one school in the cluster. However, the funding is not adequate **for the size and need of our cluster** – therefore the staffing levels are not adequate. (Coordinator survey)*

The issue of resourcing for large clusters was also raised in the case-study visits; this theme is discussed in greater detail in relation to the type of supports (Chapter 3) and overall funding levels (Chapter 4).

Geographical distance was raised as an issue by around one-in-six coordinators, more often those in rural areas, with many reporting spending already limited time commuting between schools. The dispersion of schools was also seen as impacting on continuity of support over school transitions.

*The **geographical spread** is quite big for our SCP; with one project worker, the delivery of services/intervention can be restricted and challenging. (Coordinator survey)*

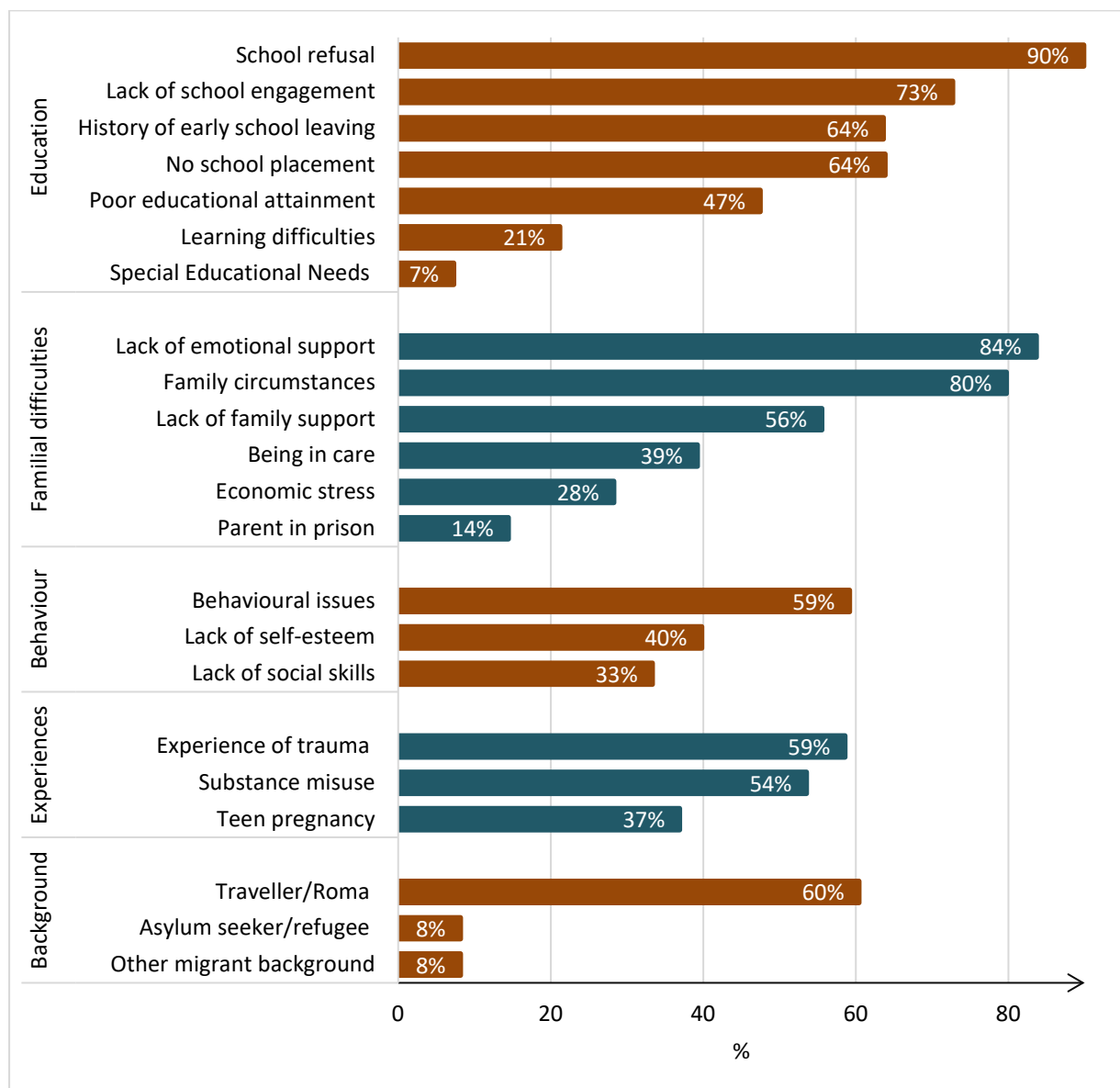
*Our schools are in **different geographical areas** and it would be more beneficial [if] students had SCP follow-on from feeder schools to secondary school. (Coordinator survey)*

### **2.3 NEEDS AMONG THE STUDENT POPULATION**

The survey and case-study visits captured different aspects of perceived needs among the student population, including needs related to early school leaving, the pandemic, disadvantage among families and in local areas, and student wellbeing.



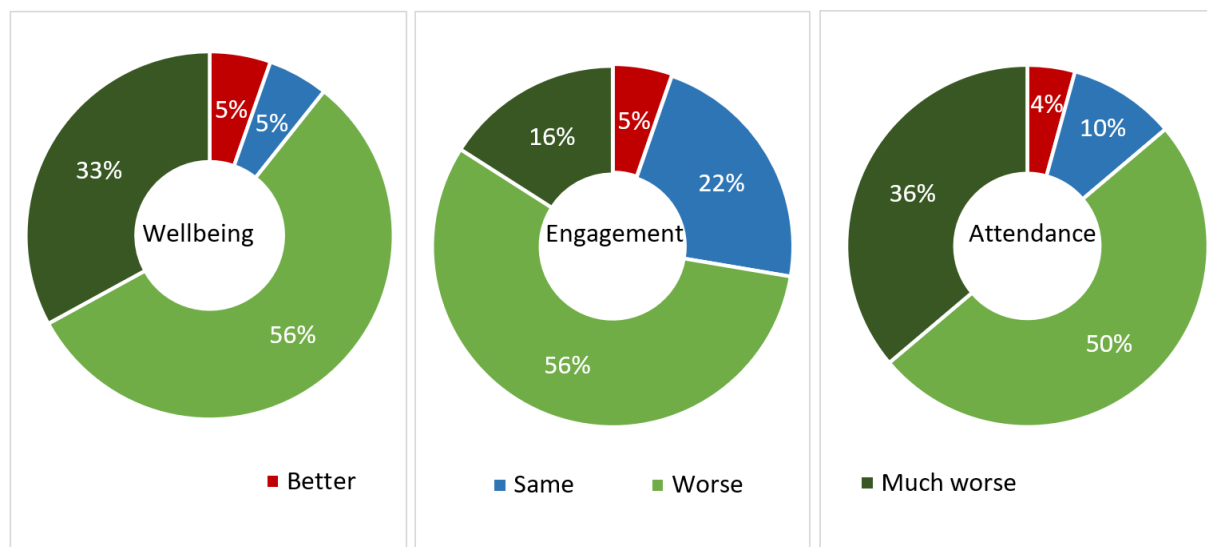
In the survey, coordinators were asked to indicate to what extent a set of specified factors could contribute to early school leaving, with the response categories comprising 'to a great extent', 'to some extent', 'not to any great extent' and 'not at all'. For most factors, the majority of coordinators indicated they contributed to early school leaving at least to some extent, indicating the multiplicity and complexity of the drivers of school retention. The highest-rated factors relate to both educational and family factors (Figure 2.2). Among educational factors, school refusal (90 per cent), lack of school engagement (73 per cent), familial history of early school leaving (64 per cent), and lack of school placement (i.e. being unable to access an appropriate school place) (64 per cent) were deemed to influence early school leaving the most, much more so than poor educational attainment. Among family factors, lack of emotional support (84 per cent) and family circumstances (80 per cent) are highlighted as the main factors. Behavioural issues, experience of trauma and substance misuse (in the family or on the part of the young person) are seen as important drivers by over half of the coordinators. While being from a Traveller/Roma background is seen as an early school leaving factor by most coordinators (60 per cent), having an asylum seeker (8 per cent) or another migrant (8 per cent) background is seen as a main factor by only a small number of coordinators.

**FIGURE 2.2 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING TO A GREAT EXTENT, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS (%)**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Research has highlighted the worsening of mental health among young people during the pandemic (see Chapter 1). Forced confinement and school closures dramatically reduced social interactions and fostered feelings of isolation. Some young people were confined to their home with complex and sometimes challenging family dynamics which further negatively impacted on their wellbeing. Given this important context, the questionnaire asked coordinators about the impact of the pandemic on all students in their project schools. According to coordinators, the pandemic has dramatically worsened student attendance, wellbeing, and engagement (Figure 2.3). Only one coordinator reported 'much better' attendance, wellbeing, and engagement after the pandemic.

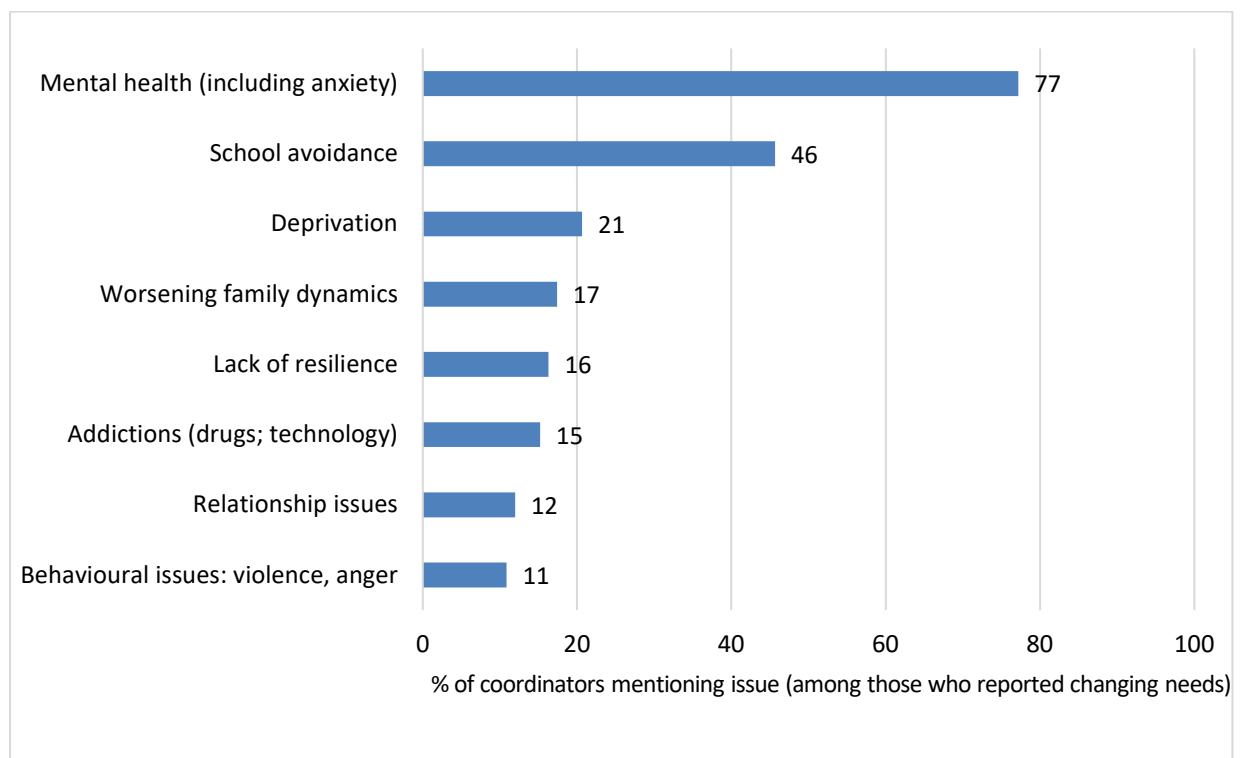
**FIGURE 2.3 STUDENT ATTENDANCE, ENGAGEMENT AND WELLBEING COMPARED TO THE PERIOD BEFORE COVID-RELATED SCHOOL CLOSURES, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS (%)**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Coordinators were asked whether they had seen any change in student needs in the project schools, either because of the pandemic or for other reasons.<sup>6</sup> Over two-thirds (69 per cent) reported that student needs had changed ‘to a great extent’ and just under a third (31 per cent) indicated they had changed ‘to some extent’. Projects comprising only DEIS schools were more likely to report that needs had changed to a great extent (73 per cent compared with 64 per cent). No coordinators reported that needs had not changed.

<sup>6</sup> The response categories were ‘yes, to a great extent’, ‘yes, to some extent’ and ‘no’.

**FIGURE 2.4 RECENT CHANGES IN STUDENT NEEDS, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS (%)**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Coordinators were to describe recent changes in the needs of students, either because of the pandemic or for other reasons, in an open question, with many pointing to more than one change among the group. The dominant change mentioned concerned mental health, cited by 97 per cent of coordinators (Figure 2.4). In particular, anxiety appears as the main dimension, with 53 per cent of coordinators mentioning it. A small number explicitly mentioned depression, self-harm and suicide, with these issues also highlighted in the case-study interviews. Most of these changes are attributed to the effects of the pandemic:

*There is a rise in **anxiety levels** and other mental health issues in the young people we work with post-pandemic due to lockdowns and lack of social engagement. (Coordinator survey)*

*You're trying to retain the children or get them into school. Those who have **anxiety**, who have **school phobia**, who have school reluctance because they've gotten so used to being at home in their bedroom for the years of COVID. So, from that perspective, the profile [of the target group] has changed. (SCP personnel, Goldborough Lane)*

Experiences during the pandemic are described as having had a longer-term impact on the skills and resources children and young people have, with coordinators describing a lack of resiliency and socio-emotional maturity among students, along with more difficulties in forming relationships.

*Especially post COVID, we had a lot of our older children that... really struggled with **anxiety and depression** and very low mood, really apathetic, no motivation whatsoever, no matter what we put in front of them, we couldn't engage them. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*It really damaged young people, their **motivation** and you know their will to get up in the morning and the **resilience** was knocked out of them and the perseverance just wasn't there. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

In addition, several staff described anxiety and other mental health issues as now being evident among young children, which was not the case to the same extent previously.

*And you can see it at **much younger ages** now. Before you'd only see it in the teenagers. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

In addition to the pandemic, other factors were mentioned, including worsening family circumstances (17 per cent), with family break-ups, poor role models, and separation anxiety among young children after months of lockdowns reported. Broader societal factors were also cited as contributors to increased anxiety and mental health difficulties.

*Anxiety levels increased hugely resulting in school refusals. There is also a lot of fear expressed by children in relation to the **wars** in Ukraine and Palestine and also the **attacks** in Dublin city centre. (Coordinator survey)*

*Family circumstances are very poor – **addiction/violence/neglect** and leave a significant impact on children. (Coordinator survey)*

*Their worlds are increasing orientated toward **online interaction**. Issues about self-image are exacerbated substantially by [the] online world, a hugely judgemental and harsh world. (Coordinator survey)*

School avoidance is deemed by almost half (46 per cent) of coordinators to be worse than prior to the pandemic, with a greater lack of engagement and attendance from young people.

*We have a lot of young people who are out of school as well for various reasons, and that there is an increase since COVID. So we're dealing with more young people who are **completely refusing** to go to school, whether it's due to anxiety or mental illness or whatever the reason. But we are also... dealing with more children who've been expelled or who are in long term suspensions. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*The COVID piece is probably really coming to bear now. ... I'm getting a lot of secondary school students with **school refusal** ... I think probably a lot of work needs to go into the parents in these situations ... often times where you have that anxiety within the child, you also have a quite anxious parent, and that needs a lot of work. (EWO)*

In some ways, the pandemic experience was seen as having reframed the relationship between home and school, and the perceived importance of attendance on the part of families.

*With COVID, like the fact that schools were closed and whatever that it kind of gave the message that oh, it's not a vital thing... It kind of had a very negative impact on people's idea of **how important school is**. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

In some cases, these changed attitudes were also seen as reflecting a shift in parent-child relationships, and mental health and other challenges among parents.

*I'm seeing **parental mental health** being a huge issue there. There's no kind of boundaries between parent and child in terms of what they'll share with the child or put onto the child, and the child will take on whatever the family trauma is, or multiple traumas. And there's a lot of **enabling** on the part of the parents. I would find that that is a huge issue behind non-attendance is parents enabling their child not to come in and that co-dependency. (School staff, St Michael's Walk)*

In the case-study interviews and at the consultation event, many SCP and school staff spoke about the difficulties in addressing the mental health needs underlying school avoidance due to the long waiting lists for access to specialist services.

***Limited access to mental health services or counselling supports in school/the community means that SCP is frequently left supporting children with complex mental health difficulties. SCP project workers in our secondary schools report feeling ill-equipped at times to deal with the serious range of emotional and mental health problems that frequently present amongst the student population i.e. self-harm, suicidal ideation, low mood and affect, and chronic anxiety. (Consultation event)***

*There's **very little out there**. It's very frustrating for parents. If the children won't go to school, you know, and it's not the parents' fault, they're trying their best ... I mean it is very hard. I don't know more intervention at that level. Mental health is a huge, huge issue. Anxiety. And then parents at the end of their tether because and then there's*

*the whole suicide, self-harm. It's just way above us here at this level.  
(School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

A number of SCP and school personnel highlighted the emergence of patterns of non-attendance from junior or senior infants onwards, resulting in longer-term absenteeism and disengagement from school.

*It starts off, they miss ... so many days in junior infants **they don't get the basics**. They did then find it really hard to catch up because their attendance is still poor, it leads to behaviour, leads to apathy. They don't want to learn. They start causing trouble. (School staff, St Michael's Walk)*

*It's the poor attendance. ... **Why would you want to come to school** where you don't really know people and you can't keep up with the work and you feel you don't belong. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

The fact that four- and five-year-olds are not covered by the Education Welfare Act was raised as a challenge in targeting school absence among younger children.

*The **age for referral** in education welfare needs to change. It needs to be from junior infants and not six, because if the patterns have already been established with those children, it's very difficult to change them.  
(Consultation event)*

Furthermore, survey responses mention a growth in economic deprivation as a change in need (20 per cent). Some coordinators mentioned homelessness and food poverty as symptoms of this deprivation. The case-study interviews yielded further insights into the needs of the student population and their families. SCP and school personnel painted an often vivid picture of the scale and complexity of deprivation in local schools and communities. The cost-of-living increases were seen as having contributed to greater food poverty and an inability of families to meet educational costs (such as sports equipment). As a result, SCP staff often try to mobilise contributions from local agencies to help address these barriers to school attendance and participation. In many cases, such deprivation was seen as intergenerational.

*We would see **so much poverty**, ... Like we'd see kids that aren't being washed and ... uniforms aren't washed, there's no washing machine.  
(SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

*A lot of children ... would be coming from ... backgrounds where there might be drug abuse. There might be socio-economic difficulties within the home, financial difficulties and family difficulties, and I suppose a lot of the children are kind of born into situations where their parents that their parents were born into and it's like very **cyclical** ... The*

*parents have maybe had a tough upbringing and then it continues, you know, it seems difficult to break the cycle. (School staff, Fulham Place)*

*Severely disadvantaged background, real poverty, ... people living in near derelict houses, **food poverty**, educational poverty, living with families with addiction, physical abuse. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Housing precarity and homelessness was an issue in many of the case-study areas.

*A lot of our families will be living in **overcrowded** situations where they're living with grandparents, and they've had to move back in with other family members. So, there's a lot of them in the one small space which doesn't help relationships either. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Many of the parents in the areas served by SCP projects had themselves low levels of educational attainment which impacted on their ability to support their children's education.

*Like there's this real kind of passive kind of stuff going, of they [the young person] like won't go to school ... I think they're lacking in the skills to get their child to school. I think they **don't value education**. They haven't completed school themselves or nobody in their family has completed, so there's no real value or push or motivation for their child to finish school or even go to school. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

In several areas, the concentration of disadvantage at local level had serious consequences in terms of lack of local facilities (such as sports and cultural activities). Further, in four of the six case-study sites, local conflict and feuds had spilled over, negatively affected the wellbeing of children and young people.

*The social, economical problems that are rife within the area are very evident in the school ... through the literacy and numeracy deficiencies that children are experiencing, but also in the behavioural issues that some of the children may be experiencing due to **trauma caused by drug, drink, violence, gang warfare**. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

*[This is] an area where there would be extreme disadvantage... **drug addiction** is massive and it got worse definitely over the last while. Open drug dealing is like just kind of common place. **Crime** is massive ... There was a feud there not so long ago which had a huge impact on the school. At one point we had to keep the gates closed, you know, during school time, for fear that it would spill and escalate into the schools. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*



*The majority of the young people [in the target group] have experienced or are still experiencing **traumatic events**. ... The impact of ongoing high levels of poverty, mental health, and living in communities with crime and drug use, results in many children entering school with low levels of school readiness. ... Trauma, whether overt or subtle, can significantly impact a child's emotional and psychological wellbeing. (Coordinator survey)*

Socio-economic disadvantage is compounded with other challenges for families, with mental health issues and addiction prevalent in many of the target families.

*Addiction is ... the biggest issue that faces us on a daily basis. ... a lot of our children would report living with some sort of **drug abuse**. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

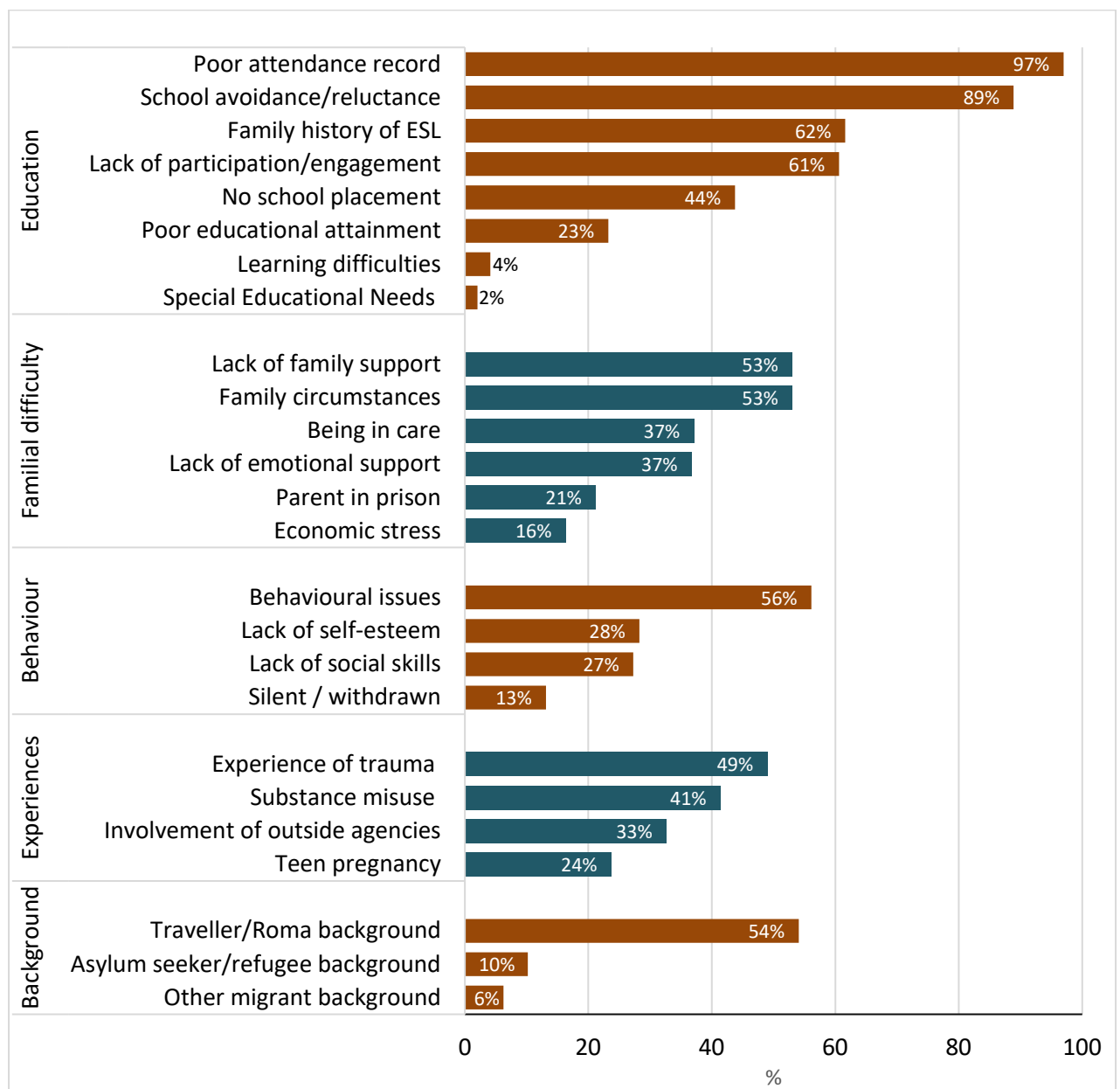
*Many of the parents are struggling with **mental health** issues. ... . We've so many students who are taking care of their siblings because ... Mam's not functioning herself, the siblings then are taking it on and then you'll start to begin to see the young people's mental health decline as well. (Coordinator, Trobe Street)*

All of these factors were seen to impact on levels of attendance and retention in the project schools. As reported in the survey, and evident from administrative data on school attendance (see Chapter 1), SCP and school personnel reported poor attendance levels in many schools, patterns that had worsened in the wake of the pandemic.

## **2.4 IDENTIFICATION AND REFERRAL INTO SCP**

### **2.4.1 Criteria used for identification**

In the survey, coordinators were presented with a list of potential criteria used in identifying students for the programme and asked to indicate the extent to which they used these criteria (with response categories 'to a great extent', 'to some extent', 'not to any great extent' and 'not at all'). The most frequently used criteria to identify students for SCP relate to education, namely, poor attendance record (97 per cent) and school avoidance/reluctance (89 per cent) (Figure 2.5). Reflecting the perceived changes in student needs (Section 2.3), school avoidance is more commonly cited as an important criterion than was the case in the earlier coordinator survey (2014/15). Also widely used is a family history of early school leaving (62 per cent) and lack of participation or engagement in school (61 per cent). On the other hand, learning difficulties (4 per cent) and special education needs (2 per cent) are the least used criteria among all those listed.

**FIGURE 2.5 CRITERIA USED TO A GREAT EXTENT TO IDENTIFY STUDENTS FOR SCP, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS (%)**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Among mental health and behaviour criteria, behavioural issues and experience of trauma are the most mentioned, indicated by around half of the coordinators. Around four-in-ten coordinators mention substance misuse and lack of emotional support. Overall, the factors associated with family background and living circumstances are more commonly used as criteria than those associated with education and mental health/behaviours. Over half of coordinators use Traveller/Roma background and family circumstances as criteria to a great extent. Just under four-in-ten use being in care as a criterion to a great extent.

### 2.4.2 Identification process

In the survey, coordinators were asked about the extent of involvement of groups and agencies in identifying at-risk young people for SCP. Figure 2.6 shows those who were reported as greatly involved by more than four-in-ten coordinators. The most commonly involved groups are HSCL coordinators (90 per cent), school principals (85 per cent) and the student support or pastoral care team<sup>7</sup> (70 per cent). The care team is more frequently involved in small projects (82 per cent) than in large ones (53 per cent). In the case-study interviews, SCP staff emphasised the centrality of the care team meetings in the process, allowing for the identification of need but also facilitating SCP working with other school supports in a holistic way.

*It's a weekly meeting. ... We're feeding this information and also as well, people like myself are highlighting people. The project worker might have highlighted somebody to me during the week, then I might bring up the name and then we work around ... who's gonna work with this young person and what we're going to put in place for them. ... **Everybody has responsibilities** and everybody goes away with tasks to complete. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

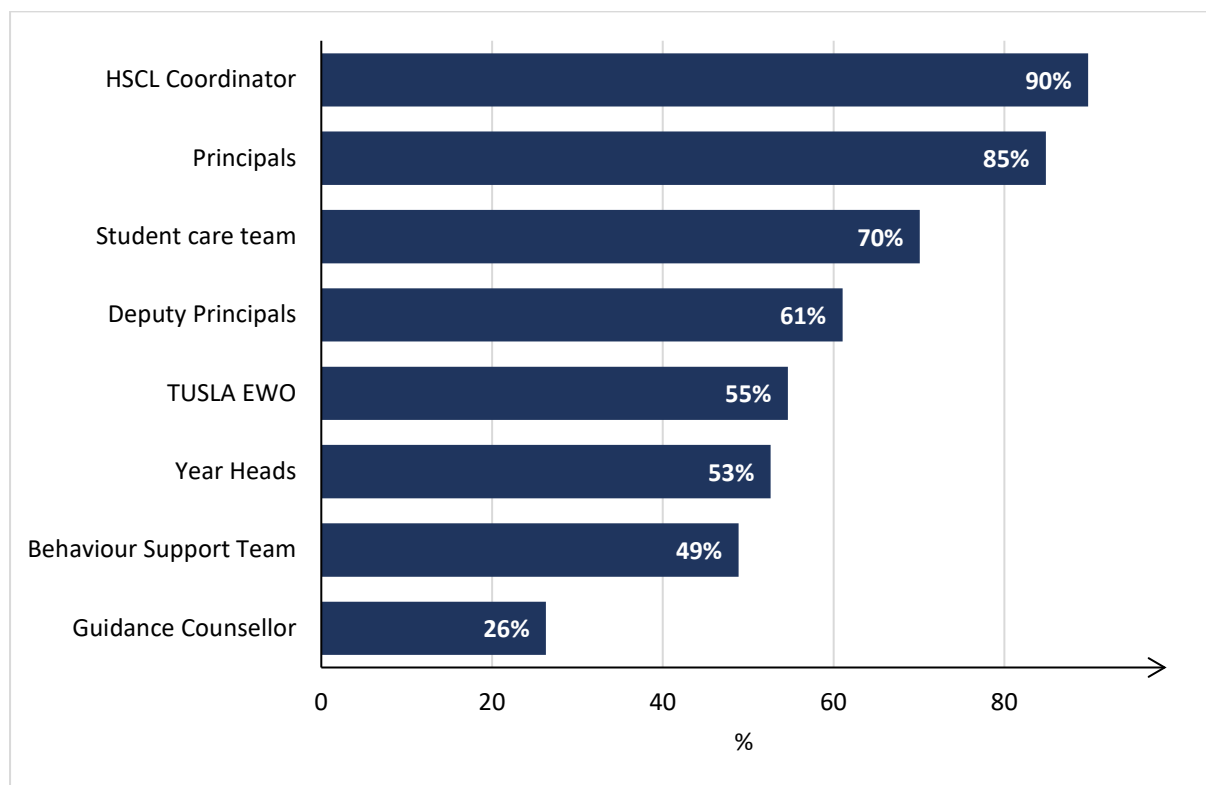
Other school personnel including deputy principals, year heads and the behaviour support team<sup>8</sup> have an important involvement in a significant number of projects. It is interesting to note the EWOs are involved to a great extent in just over half (55 per cent) of the projects.

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<sup>7</sup> A student support team, sometimes called a (pastoral) care team, is intended to coordinate supports around the wellbeing of students in the school. It can vary in composition but typically involves guidance counsellor(s), HSCL, the principal and/or deputy principal and other relevant staff.

<sup>8</sup> This refers to any cooperation at school level which addresses student behaviour, often comprising year heads and class tutors.

**FIGURE 2.6 INVOLVEMENT OF INDIVIDUALS OR AGENCIES TO A GREAT EXTENT IN IDENTIFYING AT-RISK STUDENTS, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

One of the developments since the 2015 review has been the adoption of a systematic SCP intake framework (see Chapter 1). When asked about the extent to which they used the framework, six-in-ten coordinators report using it ‘to a great extent’ and under a third (31 per cent) use it ‘somewhat’. Eight per cent do not use it to any great extent; it is not clear from the survey data what approach this small group use to decide on which students to target. There is little systematic variation in use by project size. An equal share (42 per cent) of coordinators finds the SCP intake framework ‘very useful’ and ‘somewhat useful’ for identification while one-in-six (16 per cent) see it ‘not very useful’. Not surprisingly, use and perceived usefulness are closely related; 95 per cent of those who use it a lot describe it as very useful while half of those who do not use to any great extent see it as not useful. Coordinators in large projects are somewhat more likely to see the framework as very useful (60 per cent). Coordinators serving for more than ten years are somewhat more polarised than other groups, being more likely to find it very useful (50 per cent) or not at all useful (18 per cent).

In the survey and case-study interviews, SCP staff and, at times, HSCLs highlighted a number of strengths of the intake framework. One of the main strengths was seen to be the clear identification of at-risk students and their needs.

*It clearly **identifies needs** and issues of students. It helps in the formulation of a plan/pathway of support for a student. (Coordinator survey)*

Prioritisation was also seen as a strength, with the framework helping staff to identify the most at-risk young people and the most urgent needs in the context of resource constraints.

*Before the intake framework many students being sent for SCP support could have been supported by school and the **most needy children were not being seen by SCP**. (Coordinator survey)*

*I think it's really, really easy definitely to become a catch-all service, you know, and to kind of tick the boxes for everybody and at the end of the day, not really achieve a huge amount. So it is massive to have **a referral process**. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*In this school because there is such high numbers and such a lot of need, there would definitely be a need to [have] a scale where we would assess children to make sure that the **children with the most need** would be on the School Completion Programme. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

It was described as providing a formal structure, with a standardised and transparent process, based on a clear picture of the child's circumstances. Some mentioned it as a way to ensure a more equitable process since the criteria are the same for everybody and objectively based.

*It informs the criteria for participation and ensures the selection process is **equitable**. (Coordinator survey)*

*The intake framework has given the SCP project a clear line of referral and also a clear process of information gathering, that parents are fully aware of. ... Previously, the referral list would change based on the schools' preference. The process is now very clear to all involved and makes the SCP referral more **legitimate and professional**. (Coordinator survey)*

The collaboration involved in the process, with the SCP, EWO, and HSCL working together to share information, assess student circumstances and take appropriate actions was also seen as a key strength of the process.

*The process is the main strength, it ensures schools/agencies are **informing** parents of role of SCP and SCP is being properly informed of the needs of the pupil. (Coordinator survey)*

*I like it in the sense that it has kind of made it formal in the sense that there is a process now that we... stick to. ... Yes, there's a lot of work involved, especially for the home-schools [HSCLs]. ... But at the same time, it makes it kind of **everybody knows** then what's happening. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Issues identified in relation to the SCP intake framework seem to be consequences, at least in part, of its strengths. Collecting clear and comprehensive information can lead to a form being seen as too long and intrusive, with several staff referring to the paperwork involved as 'burdensome'.

*I think the **form could be shortened**. I mean, there's like if somebody needs support. And they get marks for Maths or English or homework? I mean if they need it in one, they need it in all. We don't need to have the three questions. It should be just one. Five points for the whole letter.... It's three pages. It's all over the place compared to the scoring. It could be... streamlined. (EWO)*

As a result, a parent may be reluctant to divulge sensitive information which would actually help the chances of their child accessing SCP support.

*The perception of some parents to the HSCL is that we're checking up on them. So they will be **slow to give the information** at times that would be really, really useful or really advantageous to their children for fear it would look like a flaw on their behalf. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*The parent probably **wouldn't tick a box** for something, but you'd know the family, and you know there's substance misuse or you know there's something going on there, maybe [it] was domestic violence. (SCP walk, St Michael's Walk)*

*Some questions on the forms are very **intrusive** and some parents are put off by this. ... It can take a months before a rapport is built with a parent to the point where they would be ready to accept help and sit down to complete a referral form. (Coordinator survey)*

The focus on criteria rather than a whole-child approach was raised by some coordinators, who felt that relying on meeting specific criteria may not be representative of the challenges faced by children.

*It does not allow us to take advantage of a lot of our **knowledge of families** and their struggles when selecting targeted students. (Coordinator survey)*

Also raised was the fact that the approach makes it difficult to engage in early intervention before needs and difficulties have reached crisis point. The reliance in many cases on HSCLs to complete the forms was seen as posing challenges for schools without an HSCL or with newly appointed HSCLs awaiting training.

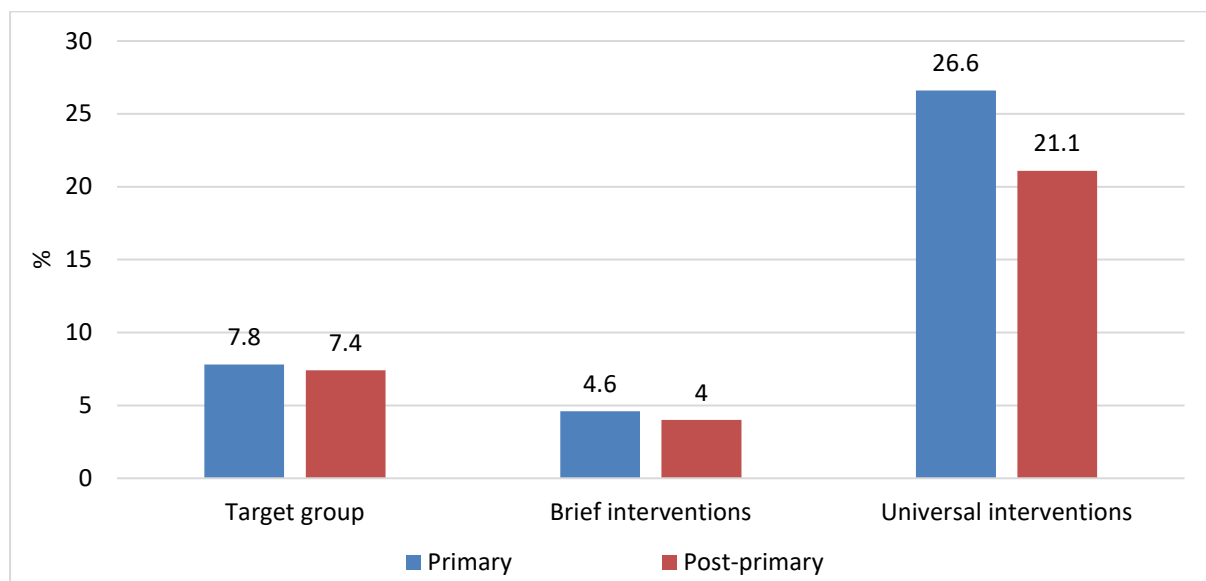
*We **depend on the home-school teachers** to get this completed .... The home-school teachers rotate every five years, so when they come into post, they're then waiting for training ... which then slows down our intake process. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

## 2.5 TARGETING

In the survey, the coordinators were asked to indicate the total number of students in their project in the school year 2022/23 in the target group (that is, those receiving the most intensive support) receiving brief interventions, and receiving universal interventions. Coordinators were also asked about the total number of primary and post-primary students in their project. Because of incomplete responses to this question, Department of Education data on school size for the year 2022/23 were matched to the survey data. These figures were then used to calculate the proportion of students in the project being targeted for interventions.

Figure 2.7 shows that on average 7 to 8 per cent of students within the project schools are part of the target group and around 4 per cent are brief intervention participants, with similar patterns for primary and post-primary students. Projects tend to target more primary students for universal interventions, 27 per cent being involved, compared with an average of 21 per cent for post-primary students.

**FIGURE 2.7 AVERAGE PROPORTION OF STUDENTS RECEIVING INTERVENTIONS ACROSS PROJECTS, DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY STUDENTS**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

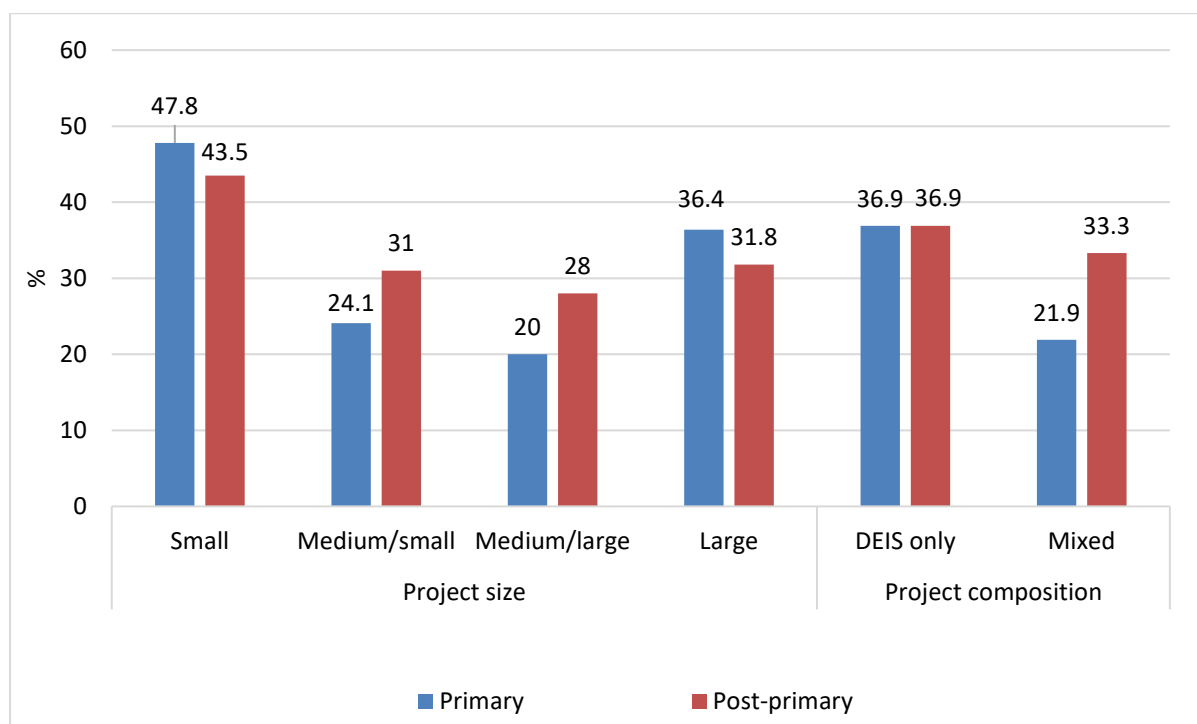
These average figures conceal a good deal of variation across projects. Some projects can include a higher proportion of students in the target group than others because of greater need in the local area, for example. Projects have been classified as high intensity<sup>9</sup> if they include 10 per cent or more of the primary or post-primary student population in the target group, 5 per cent or more of the cohort for brief interventions, and 30 per cent or more for universal interventions.<sup>10</sup> Around a third of projects can be characterised as high intensity in relation to the target group (32 per cent for primary and 33 per cent for post-primary). At both levels, small projects are more likely to be high intensity, that is, include more of their students in the target group (Figure 2.8). Projects that contain only DEIS schools are more likely to target a greater proportion of the primary school population, but the difference is much less marked for post-primary students.

<sup>9</sup> The term 'high intensity' refers to the proportion of students covered rather than the intensity of work with them. A similar approach was taken in the 2015 review of SCP.

<sup>10</sup> These cut-offs were based on the distribution of responses in the survey.



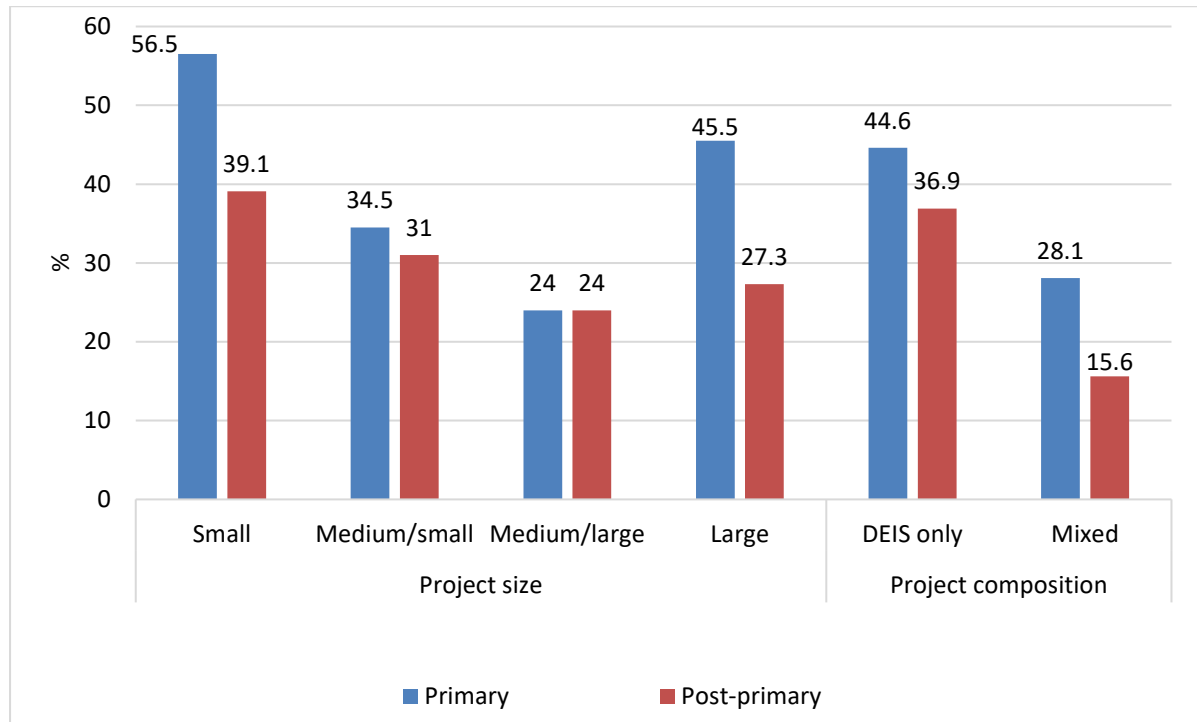
**FIGURE 2.8 PROPORTION OF PROJECTS THAT ARE HIGH INTENSITY IN RELATION TO THE TARGET GROUP BY THE SIZE OF THE PROJECT AND DEIS STATUS (AS % OF THE PROJECTS IN EACH CATEGORY)**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

In terms of brief interventions, 39 per cent of clusters include at least 5 per cent of primary students while 30 per cent include at least 5 per cent of post-primary students. Small projects include a greater proportion of their students in brief interventions, but among primary students, levels of inclusion are higher in large than in medium-sized projects (Figure 2.9). Projects with only DEIS schools include more of their students in brief interventions than those that also contain one or more non-DEIS schools. A greater proportion of primary students are targeted for brief interventions than is the case for post-primary students.

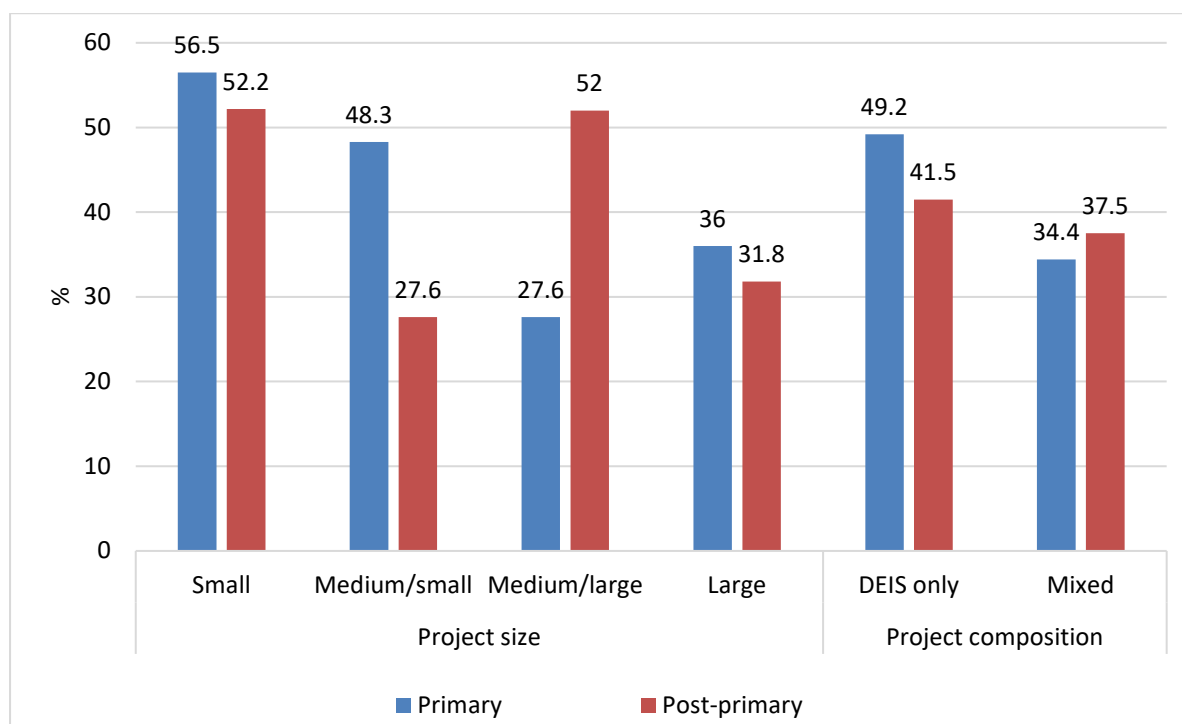
**FIGURE 2.9 PROPORTION OF PROJECTS THAT ARE HIGH INTENSITY IN RELATION TO BRIEF INTERVENTIONS BY THE SIZE OF THE PROJECT AND DEIS STATUS (AS % OF THE PROJECTS IN EACH CATEGORY)**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

A significant minority of projects (43 per cent at primary and 40 per cent at post-primary) include 30 per cent or more of their student population in universal interventions. A tenth of projects provide no universal interventions for post-primary students. Again, a larger proportion of students in small projects are included in such interventions while DEIS-only projects cover more students, at least at primary level (Figure 2.10).

**FIGURE 2.10 PROPORTION OF PROJECTS THAT ARE HIGH INTENSITY IN RELATION TO UNIVERSAL INTERVENTIONS BY THE SIZE OF THE PROJECT AND DEIS STATUS (AS % OF THE PROJECTS IN EACH CATEGORY)**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Coordinators were asked whether the number of students participating in the project tend to change over the course of the school year. A third of coordinators said their numbers tend to remain stable. Most (65 per cent) see their number of students increasing during the school year, reflecting emerging needs and more students being referred onto the programme. The needs can emerge when students experience a change in circumstances:

*As the weeks progress in the first few months of first year, the needs of individual students arise, showing at risk of early school leaving behaviours. **Traumatic events** in student's lives may lead to behaviour issues in school, leading to concerns with school placements. (Coordinator survey)*

The needs may be pre-existing but only identified once SCP and school staff develop a relationship with the student:

*As children settle in schools, school staff become **more aware** of issues and new students are identified and referred as the year progresses. (Coordinator survey)*

Among the emerging needs, most coordinators refer to a 'change in circumstances' or to 'incidents' (16 per cent). Others refer to school-avoidant behaviour and

disengagement (11 per cent), behavioural issues (8 per cent), anxiety and stress (5 per cent). Additionally, the need for brief and/or emergency interventions was mentioned by 13 per cent of coordinators and in two instances the arrival of refugees into the school was cited.

## 2.6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored the configuration of SCP projects as well as the identification and targeting of children and young people for support. As discussed in Chapter 1, projects vary markedly in the number of schools they cover and in the profile of those schools, with a third of the projects including at least one non-DEIS school. As discussed in the 2015 review of SCP, project configuration is largely a legacy issue, though the expansion of the number of schools included in DEIS in 2022 led to the inclusion of these schools in existing projects. Most coordinators are very or fairly satisfied with existing clustering arrangements, with a fifth expressing dissatisfaction. The main reason for dissatisfaction, and an issue brought up by school personnel in the case-study visits, is the way in which school transition for many students can involve moving to a non-DEIS school and therefore losing access to SCP (and other) supports. Other challenges relate to project size, with difficulties in providing a diversity of activities across many schools, and geographical distance between schools.

Coordinators see a multiplicity of factors as shaping school retention, particularly attendance, school avoidance, lack of emotional support and family circumstances. Student needs are seen as having changed in the wake of the pandemic, with worse attendance, engagement and wellbeing than previously. SCP and school staff highlight growth in the incidence of mental health difficulties, especially anxiety, and increased school avoidance among young people. The case-study material and some of the survey responses highlighted the scale of poverty and deprivation in schools and local areas. Such deprivation often led to, and was compounded by, other challenges, including mental health difficulties and addiction, with profound consequences for attendance and engagement among children and young people.

The criteria for identification for SCP support centre on poor attendance, school avoidance and lack of participation or engagement, but also commonly include behavioural difficulties, trauma and family circumstances. The identification process emerges as highly collaborative, most frequently involving HSCLs, principals and the care/student support team. Just over half of projects involve the EWO in the process to a great extent. Since the 2015 review, a new systematic intake framework has been introduced, with two-thirds of projects using it to a great extent. There are mixed views among coordinators as to whether it is very or somewhat useful, with one-in-six being more negative. The strengths are seen as lying in the clarity and transparency it provides, allowing SCP to prioritise the most

vulnerable students. However, challenges are highlighted in relation to the amount of information required from families and parental willingness to discuss often highly sensitive issues openly. As found in the 2015 review, projects vary in the proportion of their students included in the target group and receiving brief or universal interventions. Small projects include more of their students in provision and DEIS-only projects also include more students, especially at primary level. The latter pattern suggests that targeting levels are responsive to need but not enough information is available on the profile of schools (or indeed, individual students) within projects to separate out responsiveness to need from variation in the approaches taken by particular projects.

## CHAPTER 3

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### Types of supports provided through SCP

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

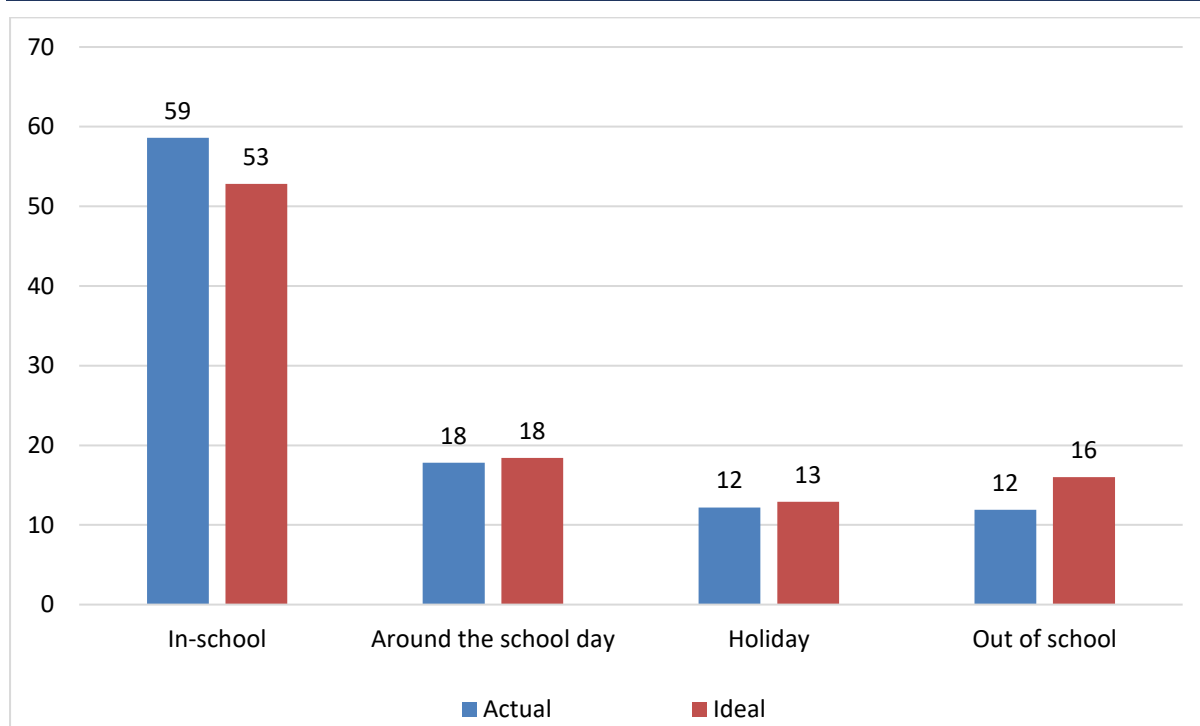
This chapter looks at the types of supports provided through SCP, distinguishing between the four main strands of in-school supports, supports around the school day (such as breakfast or after-school clubs), holiday provision and supports for those who are out of school. The chapter draws on the coordinator survey data and the interviews with SCP and school staff to look at the aims of, and challenges around, the different types of support. All of the clusters provided in-school support for at least one school in their cluster while almost all provided supports around the school day, during the holidays and for those not in school. In addition, online or telephone support for families was provided in the vast majority (87 per cent) of clusters. The small number not providing particular supports generally referred to a lack of staff to provide the services as a reason for not doing so.

#### 3.2 BALANCE ACROSS TYPES OF SCP SUPPORTS

In the survey, coordinators were asked about the current balance of provision<sup>11</sup> across the four strands of SCP and what they would see as the ideal balance. As indicated in Figure 3.1, most current provision is in-school (59 per cent on average), with supports around the school day at 18 per cent, and holiday and out-of-school support at 12 per cent. This pattern is broadly similar to that found in the 2015 review of the programme (Smyth et al., 2015), although there has been a slight reduction in the emphasis on supports around the school day and somewhat of an increase in out-of-school supports over time. It would appear that coordinators are broadly satisfied with the balance between support types but would like to see further development of out-of-school support and a little less emphasis on in-school support. There is no marked variation in the balance by project size, but in-school supports make up a larger proportion of activity in larger projects (65 per cent compared with 54 per cent in small projects). Larger projects are more likely to want to redirect activity away from in-school towards out-of-school provision.

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<sup>11</sup> This was left general (so could refer to time, resources and/or staffing) to be comparable with the 2015 review.

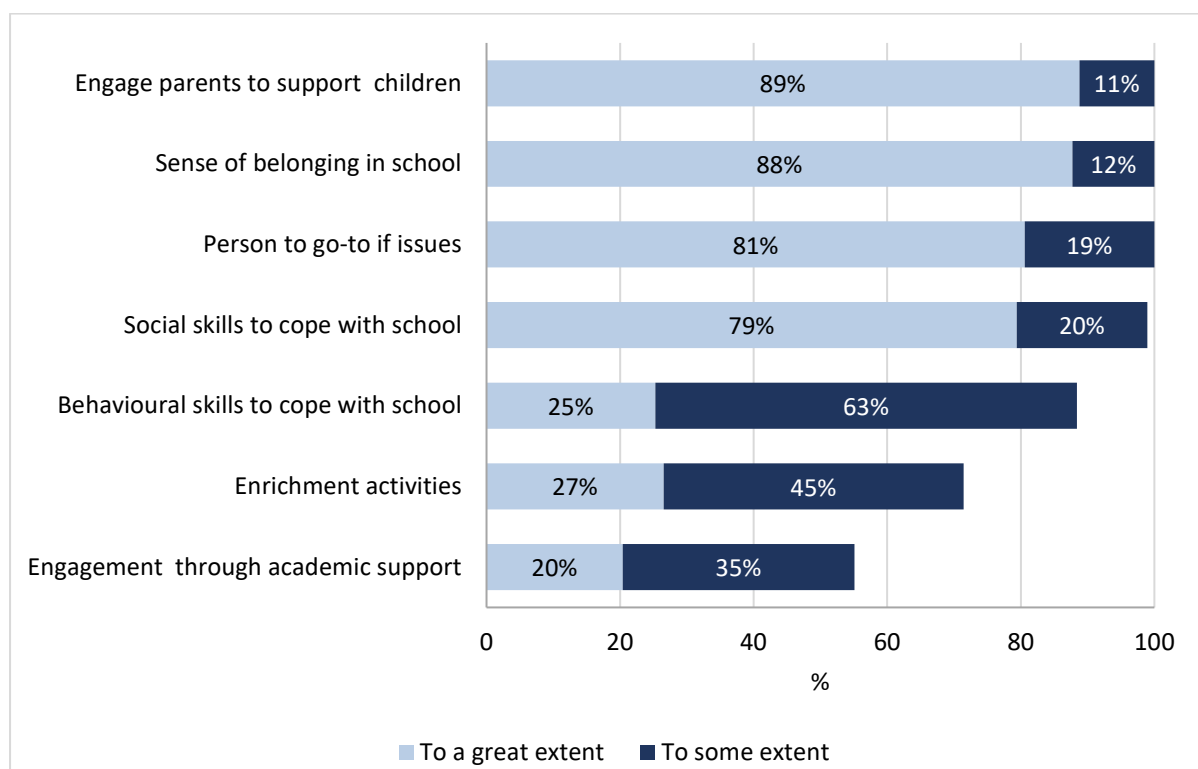
**FIGURE 3.1 AVERAGE ACTUAL AND IDEAL BALANCE ACROSS SUPPORTS, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

### 3.3 IN-SCHOOL SUPPORTS

#### 3.3.1 Types of supports

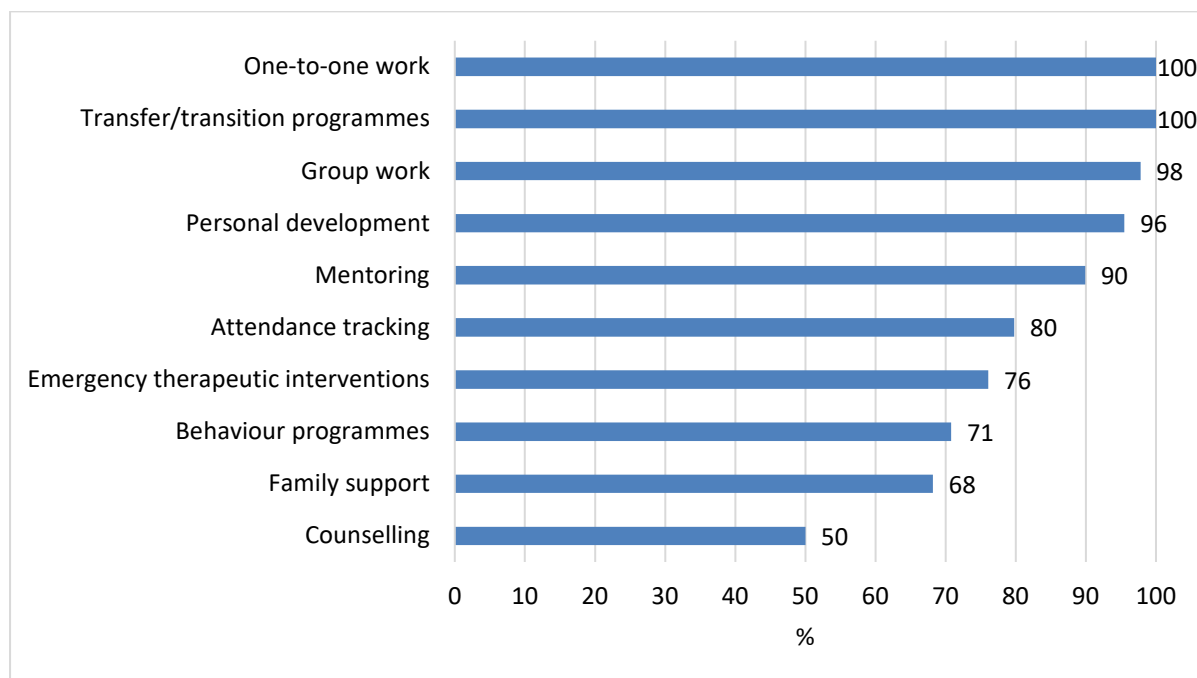
Coordinators were given a list of potential objectives across the four main strands of support and asked to assess their relative importance, with the response categories ‘to a great extent’, ‘to some extent’, ‘not to any great extent’ and ‘not at all’. Figure 3.2 shows that engaging with parents to support their children was cited by 89 per cent of coordinators as being a goal of in-school support ‘to a great extent’. Other highly ranked objectives were to give students a sense of belonging in the school (88 per cent), to give them someone to come to if they are having problems (81 per cent), and to provide children and young people with the social skills to engage with school (79 per cent). Interestingly, enhancing behavioural skills was not as highly rated (25 per cent), though it was mentioned ‘at least to some extent’ by a majority of coordinators (63 per cent). Perhaps not surprisingly, given the focus of SCP, academic support (20 per cent) and enrichment activities (27 per cent) were not as frequently mentioned as goals of in-school support as promoting engagement and wellbeing.

**FIGURE 3.2 COORDINATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE OBJECTIVES OF IN-SCHOOL SUPPORT**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Coordinators were given a list of different types of in-school supports and asked to report the number of schools in which they provided these supports, disaggregated by primary and second level. Provision can be looked at in two ways: the proportion of projects providing the type of in-school support in at least one of their schools (either primary or post-primary); and the proportion of primary and post-primary schools across all projects in which that type of support is provided. Figure 3.3 shows that the provision of one-to-one work, transfer/transition programmes, group work, and personal development supports is (near) universal across projects, with almost all projects providing these supports in at least one school. There is also a strong emphasis on mentoring (90 per cent of projects) and attendance tracking and monitoring of specific groups of students (80 per cent). Other supports offered in the majority of projects are emergency therapeutic interventions, behaviour programmes and family support. Around half of projects provide counselling in at least one of their schools. There is a slight tendency for the number of different types of in-school supports to increase with project size, with an average of 6.5 types of support in small projects and 8.1 in large projects.



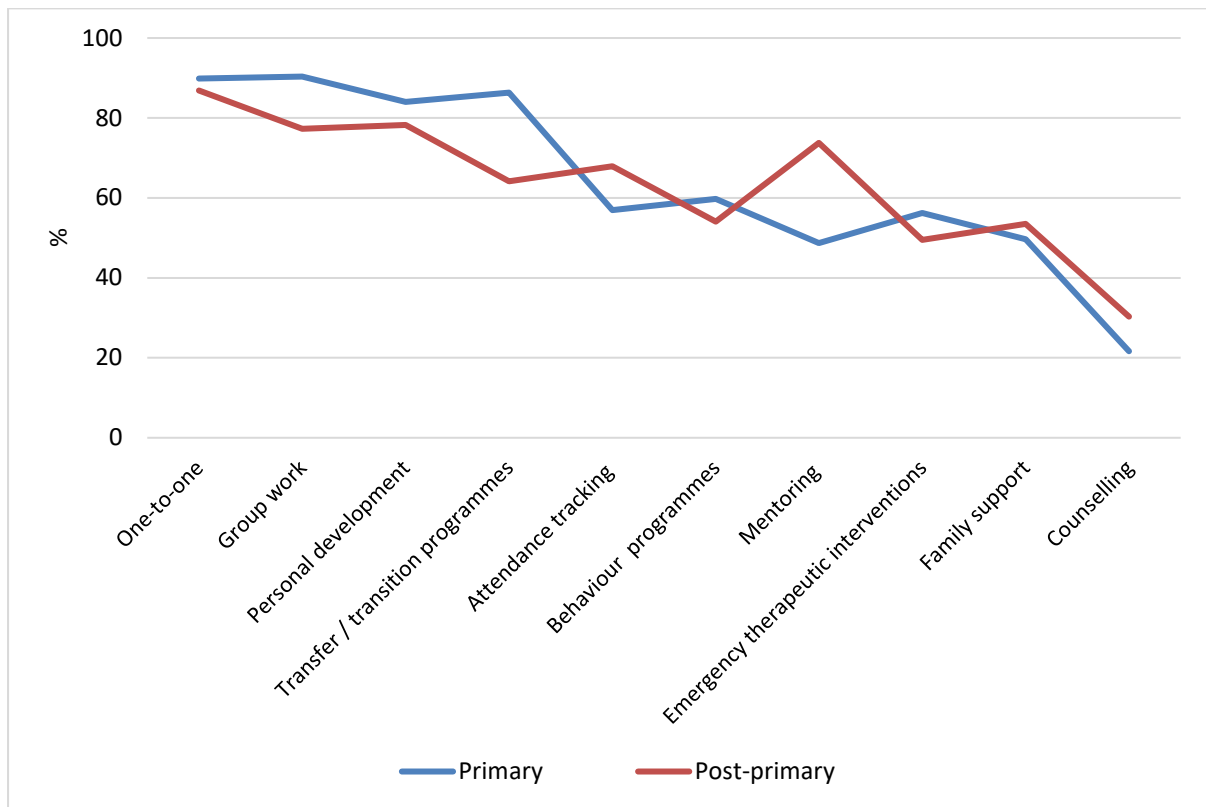
**FIGURE 3.3 PROPORTION OF PROJECTS IN WHICH DIFFERENT TYPES OF IN-SCHOOL SUPPORT ARE PROVIDED IN AT LEAST ONE SCHOOL**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Looking at the proportion of primary and post-primary schools in which the supports are provided yields insight into the extent to which provision varies within as well as between projects. One-to-one work is used in all clusters and is offered in the vast majority of schools across projects (compare Figures 3.3 and 3.4). In contrast, personal development supports are provided in almost all projects but around one-in-five schools in SCP projects do not receive these supports, presumably reflecting varying levels of need within certain projects. Similarly, transition programmes are offered in all projects but only in around six-in-ten schools. Counselling supports appear to be highly targeted on the basis of school and student need; they are provided in around half of projects but just around a quarter of schools. The most commonly provided types of supports across primary and post-primary schools are one-to-one interventions, group work, personal development and transfer/transition programmes (Figure 3.4). Overall, most types of in-school support are offered in a higher share of primary schools compared to post-primary schools, with the exception of attendance tracking, mentoring, and counselling. Coordinators report providing family/parent support<sup>12</sup> in around half of schools; the involvement of SCP staff with families is discussed further in Section 3.6.

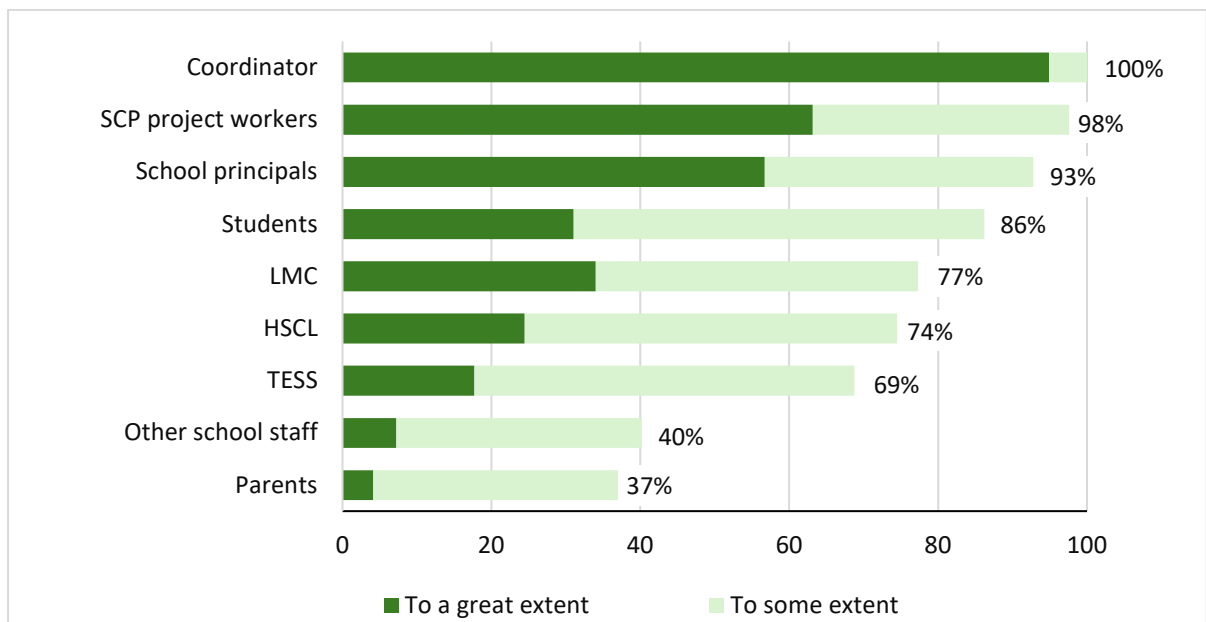
<sup>12</sup> The term 'family/parent support' was used in the survey questionnaire for consistency with the 2015 review. However, the case study analyses unpack further the kinds of engagement and support encompassed in this category.

**FIGURE 3.4 SHARE OF SCHOOLS IN WHICH DIFFERENT TYPES OF IN-SCHOOL SUPPORT ARE PROVIDED**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

**FIGURE 3.5 INVOLVEMENT OF PERSONNEL IN DECIDING ON PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES RUN IN THE SCHOOL, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Note: LMC – Local Management Committee; HSCL – Home-School-Community Liaison Coordinator; TESS – Tusla Education Support Service.

Figure 3.5 shows the extent to which various individuals are involved in deciding which projects and activities should be run in the school, as reported by the coordinator. The main decision-makers are the coordinator and SCP staff along with school principals. In the case studies, coordinators and project workers emphasised the way in which they sought to involve principals and other school staff in identifying the most appropriate supports to respond to student need.

*That's one of the main pieces really is trying to be that **linchpin** between the service we offer [and] the service that you know is needed. So again, I'm trying to figure that out from the different stakeholders, ... from talking with the school staff, talking with the community workers and talking with the young people. And then it's about sitting down with my team and trying to ensure that what we're delivering meets those needs. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*In the primary schools currently it's all one-to-ones and it's withdrawal from class. And that's from the **request from the schools**. So they ask what they think would help the child, and we then negotiate and we'll draw a programme around that. That's the same actually in secondary schools as well. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

In several cases, SCP coordinators and staff were seen as very responsive to emerging needs, providing interventions around particular issues of concern emerging in the class or school:

*It's interesting for a **principal** to ring and say, like, **can you help us**, you know, because this child has not come to school ... the attendance has dropped because they're being bullied, because there's a racial slur being used and then a project worker being able to go in and work with the whole class to bring that kind of unity back. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

*I had a **couple of issues** this year with particularly, I'd say, troublesome students and [the coordinator] will come in and just kind of say, OK, what do you need? And I'll say, I think this child needs a one-to-one intervention and practically the next week [the coordinator] will have that set up and [s/he'll] be meeting with that child and trying to help him or her. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

Furthermore, SCP was seen as providing the capacity to respond to emergencies or traumatic events in a student's life:

*So I knew that when that boy came in [after a violent incident], there's no way that he could have gone into class. And we would use the School Completion staff that way **to sit with the child**, to talk to the*

*child, to, to just again identify the needs of the child. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*We can **respond immediately**. We don't have to wait. We can respond to any emergency, any crisis immediately. (Consultation event)*

In some cases, however, school staff, particularly HSCLs, reported relatively little involvement in decision-making around types of support. This group generally reported involvement in the identification of need but that the supports were put in place by SCP staff based on their expertise.

School principals appeared as the third most important decision-maker (93 per cent) in coordinator responses. Principals pointed to their involvement in matching student needs and interventions to support student attendance, participation and retention.

*We would **work closely with the coordinator**. And we would do a needs analysis each year that they would look at and then, I suppose, put in a plan and tell us what they can deliver in terms of service. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*I'm in **contact** with [the coordinator] a lot, so we discussed among ourselves and we just kind of decided, depending on how serious the issue is, around attendance, what intervention to then put in place. What we're trying to do, I suppose, is make school an attractive place for those children to come, a place where they can be fed and where they feel happy and safe. (School staff, St Michael's Walk)*

Some SCP staff also referred to discussions with individual teachers around a particular child's needs and the best supports to put in place.

*If a child comes up or is referred in care team, you'd probably **approach the teacher** and then they would usually say to you look, I think they could do with a one-to-one or maybe it's more friendship skills but like it just depends on the child. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

The coordinators indicated that students are involved in the decision-making, at least to some extent (86 per cent), while parents are seen to have less involvement (37 per cent). In the case studies, SCP staff stressed the importance of basing provision on the needs of a student, tailoring the type of intervention and approach taken to the challenges faced by that child or young person.

*[The type of provision is] based on a number of factors. First of all, the intake framework form indicates what are **the needs of the child**, so you have to go from the child's needs. So, what does this child need?*

*If it's an anxiety issue, it's anger management, if it's a school reluctance. ... Why has this child been referred in? What are the needs of this child? And then you work on that. Is it a hygiene issue, is it social and communication skills? So it's very much based on the needs of the child. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

### 3.3.2 The use of evidence-based programmes

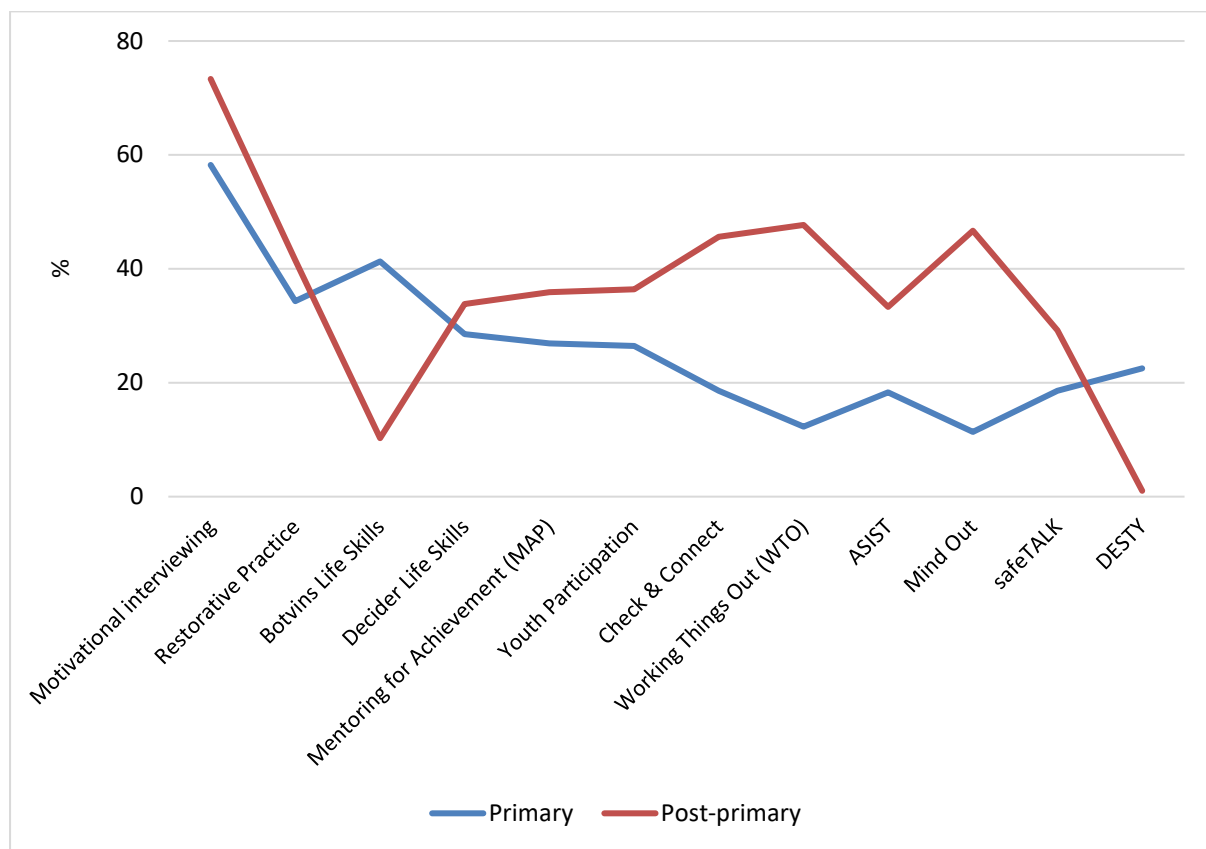
There has been a shift over time in SCP towards a greater emphasis on the use of evidence-based programmes (see Chapter 1). In the survey, coordinators were given a list of the suite of programmes for which training is provided under SCP. The list also included Children First, the national guidance framework for the protection of children and young people,<sup>13</sup> and Meitheal, a Tusla-led multi-agency response to identifying the needs of children and their families.<sup>14</sup> Meitheal was used in 57 per cent of primary schools and 65 per cent of post-primary schools. Some coordinators reported that they now used Meitheal less frequently given the role of the intake framework in identifying children's needs (see Chapter 2). Figure 3.6 outlines the main programmes used across project schools. It is evident that there is a good deal of variation in the use of different programmes across and within projects, with only motivational interviewing used in the majority of schools. Many of the programmes are more commonly used in post-primary settings, with Life Skills and DESTY more commonly adopted in primary schools, given their target age range.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-guidance-and-legislation/>.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support/i-am-a-parent/meitheal\\_2/](https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support/i-am-a-parent/meitheal_2/).

**FIGURE 3.6 SHARE OF SCHOOLS PROVIDING EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMMES OR PRACTICES AS PART OF SCP**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Note: Programmes provided in fewer than 20 schools were excluded from the figure (e.g. Rainbows, Incredible Years, Seasons for growth, Coping power, Incredible Years classroom based Dina,<sup>15</sup> Gaisce).

The case-study interviews showed some divergence of views among SCP staff about the role of evidence-based programmes. Many pointed to programmes, especially DESTY and Life Skills, that enhanced the capacity of students to manage their emotions and articulate their feelings:

*I think some programmes really do work like I wouldn't have ran the DESTY programme if I didn't think that young people needed some **help in emotional resilience**. And I think that them learning about emotions and how to deal with their emotions and what emotions are and how they feel in their body when they're feeling them. I think that's been a massive change... Like there's things happening in class that they're actually able to like regulate and they're able to name their emotion and now they're feeling at the time, and they wouldn't have been able to do that before they started the programme. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

<sup>15</sup> Dina is part of the Incredible Years suite of programmes. It is a group-based intervention that aims to teach children self-regulation and problem-solving skills.

Some SCP staff also emphasised the importance of having a ready-made programme that was tried and tested.

*[The evidence-based programmes] are very helpful, and I think the very fact that the programme is **planned out**, the material is ready for you. We're not wasting time designing programmes and not knowing are they effective or not. We know that these are measured. We know that they've been tried and tested. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

*If you don't have those skills and **programmes** and you haven't trained in these things, you get to the stage where you're like, you know what are you going to do this week? (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

In contrast, other staff were more critical of the perceived primacy of evidence-based programmes in SCP. These perspectives fell into two broad groups. The first emphasised the crucial importance of their role in addressing barriers to educational engagement by helping to meet the basic needs of students.

*Sometimes we're just starting trying to **meet their basic needs**, like TESS wouldn't even realise the things that that we would have to do, like **clothing and hygiene**. ... It could be something as simple as a pair of runners stopping them from coming to school. They don't have the runners or their jacket, or we got donations of football boots. That's like an inequality there with them, where it's like they can't participate in sports, they don't have a pair of football boots. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*I feel that the evidence-based programme in my opinion isn't as good as the **hands on** in the sense that ... you're a lot more paperwork, which means you spend a lot less time with the kids, with the young people, and you're trying to tick the boxes. ... And working with the child in my opinion is not ticking boxes ..., you have to give them your time. You have to go where they are. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

The other group felt that they needed to work with children and young people to build up a relationship of trust as a precondition for embarking on an evidence-based programme:

*You can't work with someone unless they **trust** you ... unless the young person actually feels a connection. ... I think once you have that connection, then yeah, evidence-based programmes are really useful. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*When young people are emotionally distressed, they are in their survival brain, not their logical brain. Therefore compassionate approaches are used to **maintain the relationship and co-regulate***

*before a young person has the ability to engage in evidence-based programmes. (Coordinator survey)*

*For a lot of our children, you know, ... it's not their priorities to come into an evidence-based programme. You must **build that relation**. They're so fragile, so vulnerable, so mistrusting of adults and so mistrusting of systems, they're being let down by so much that you can't go straight into an evidence-based programme. And it is not the way to go. It is a useful tool, it's a brilliant tool to have, ... but ... we very much need to be this one-to-one work to be recognised. (Consultation event)*

These staff members were not critical of evidence-based programmes per se but rather saw them as best embedded within trusted and supportive relationships.

*What I would say in my experience is the importance **of having a relationship before** you can start delivering a programme because some of the families, just around capacity and the challenges of their daily living experiences ... Part of what we do is sitting in that space and meeting them where they're at but ... they're also entitled to a delivery of something that has an evidence base to it. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Some staff used elements of a programme rather than the whole, adapting it to the needs of the student, particularly if the student was critical of aspects of it:

*I did try to do the DESTY programme with three of my kids actually, they didn't like it. Like, seriously. I'm not a baby. They found the programme too babyish, so it just **didn't work for the kids that I had**. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*I'm not going to lie, I don't ever run a programme from start to finish just because we tend, like **I take from them all**. So like you might be photocopying bits from some ... and it depends on the group that you're with. Like I would definitely use them as a basis. But I don't ever go from start to finish. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

Some coordinators and project workers mentioned logistical challenges in the implementation of the programmes. One issue related to the time required for some programmes and balancing this against timetabling constraints (see Section 3.3.4 for a discussion of timetabling issues more generally).

*It's **all about the time**, you have to do it for an hour a week. And like classes are for 40 minutes a week, you know in post-primary... It's then you have to take them for two classes. That's a long time, you know, to take someone out. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*



In some cases, a poor level of student attendance was itself seen as a barrier to programme implementation.

*The Mind Out programme, like we really wanted to do that, we tried it for ages with a particular class of very difficult girls here in this school. But their attendance was so poor, you know, it's quite rigid and they have to be there for the start, and they have to do all these. But sure, you know, **half of them would be missing** for most of it. So ... it never took off. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

The cost of programme materials was also raised as an issue:

*The Dina, the life skills can be **expensive** to run, so funding can be an issue with that. And I think it's probably a shame to lose something like that due to lack of funding. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

Finally, it was suggested that evidence-based programmes were not always available to cover particular student needs,<sup>16</sup> especially around the transition from primary to post-primary school:

*The **transfer programme** is something that we find is really, really important. We're using transfer programmes that we have kind of accumulated over the years ourselves, work together with other school population programmes. We looked at Barnardos, looked at homeschool liaisons, done things together and made our own things out of it. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

### 3.3.3 Approaches to delivering in-school supports

Coordinators were asked about the approaches that were used in delivering in-school supports (Figure 3.7). All of the projects used one-to-one supports, at least to some extent, which represents an increase in the use of this approach since the 2014/15 survey. While the survey evidence pointed to the use of one-to-one interventions in both primary and post-primary schools, in-depth interviews pointed to the greater use of individual support among post-primary students and the senior part of primary school.

*I think the **secondary schools need the one-to-ones**. I don't think they'd share what they share with me if I had them in a big group, and their personalities can change and they don't feel as safe because the group dynamics changes everything. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that designing their own programmes is addressed through mandatory CPD for coordinators.

*Ideally one-to-one is the way to go. At primary level ...not particularly but **at second level it's mainly one-to-one**. We don't do any whole class interventions at secondary level at all. We used to do every now and then; we might do an anti-bullying programme, but there's a lot of these problems being covered by CSPE, SPHE. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Across the case-study projects, SCP staff strongly emphasised the importance of one-to-one interventions as the fundamental basis of their practice, with these supports helping to build trusted relationships and providing support for students who may struggle in a group:

*I think a lot of the kids, **they can't cope in the groups** so the behaviour would just kick off and then they're excluded from the groups. Definitely for me, the one-to-ones are important. ... I could have a social one-to-one which is just having a chat with the child, doing something nice and if there's stuff going on at home and a conversation will come up. ... It's very important to the child that you're **there to listen** and that you're there to support them and that they know when they come into school, that that support is there for them. ... So I think the one-to-ones are very important, more than the group work, in my opinion. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

These one-to-one interventions were also seen positively by school staff:

*I think it's when the child is struggling, maybe emotionally as well, that there's factors in the home that might be affecting the child that they have, you know, a person that they can work through their anxiety or their difficulties or their feelings. ... You can't be providing specific one-on-one emotional support to a child in a group setting as effectively as you can in the one-on-one setting. So, it would be **the most targeted** or the most in need. (School staff, Fulham Place)*

At the same time, whole-class and group work were seen as playing an important part in promoting engagement with school and in building relationships with students who may then be more open to approaching SCP staff for support. Three-quarters used group work to a great extent and over half used pair work (two students at a time) to a great extent.

***Universal is really useful** ... the only way to get the young person to choose to come in is if they enjoy coming in and they have a bit of craic. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*The **homework club, breakfast club**, those general supports are an incentive, you know, for pupils to attend school knowing they're*

*getting breakfast, knowing that homework isn't a struggle. I get to do my homework and I've support in doing my homework, so I arrive to school the next day and my teacher is happy because I have my homework done. You know, it's providing the **support to the pupil** that that they may not get at home. (School staff, Fulham Lane)*

*Where we're going and doing the life skills and the Dina we're learning, basically, **getting to know all the students** in the class and by the time they're in sixth class, they're really comfortable with us and they're sharing like their hopes and their fears. ... I think it's good that we have that relationship with them then and they can ask us things they wouldn't ask the teacher. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

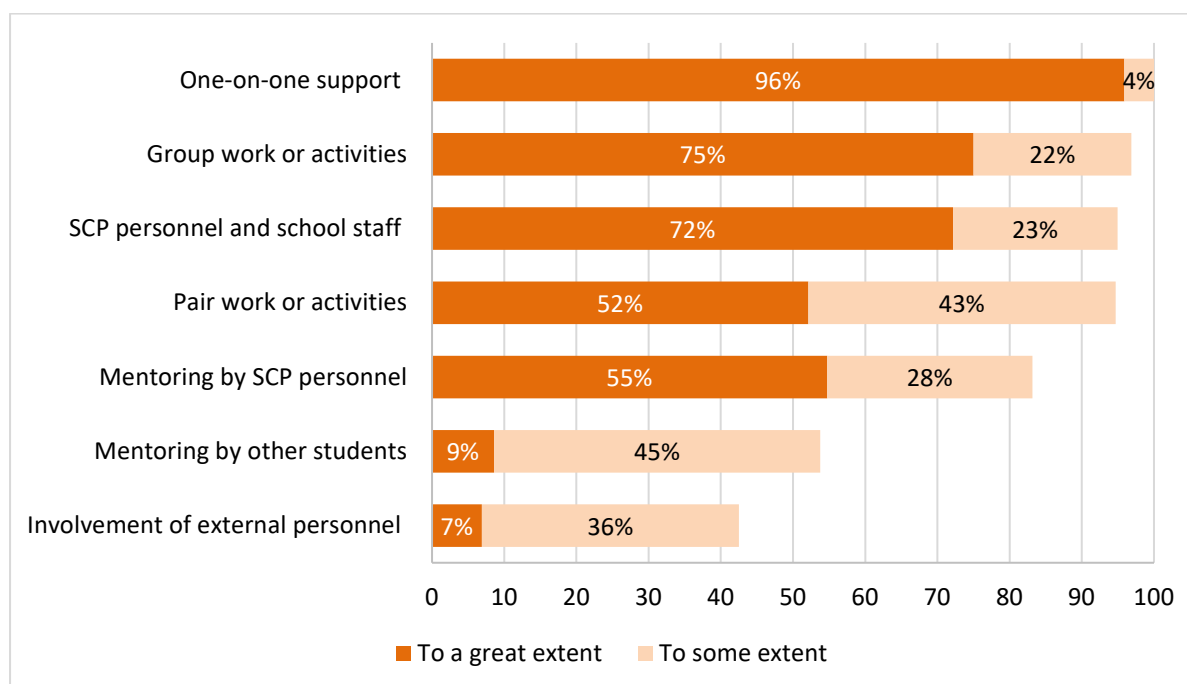
Whole-class programmes like Life Skills and transition programmes were seen as addressing issues arising for all or almost all students in particular settings:

*We would deliver like whole-class programmes to children as well where we feel there might be a particular class where you know there's quite **a high concentration of children** requiring, I suppose, a more positive attitude to school. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

However, given resource constraints, several coordinators reported a potential trade-off between universal or group supports and one-to-one interventions:

*If the project worker has to dedicate time to do that group universal programme with children, that eats into the time that they could be taking one-to-one students and that's **a balance** that I need to keep reminding principals about. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Mentoring was largely delivered by SCP personnel (55 per cent) but not by other students (9 per cent), though there was use of peer mentoring to some extent in half of projects. About four-in-ten relied on external personnel in relation to in-school support delivery, but not to a great extent. There is no further information available from the survey about the exact role of external personnel or whether this is taken by respondents to include sessional staff.

**FIGURE 3.7 APPROACHES USED TO DELIVER IN-SCHOOL SUPPORT (% OF COORDINATORS)**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

As with how the types of supports are chosen, SCP staff emphasised the importance of deciding on the approach used based on the needs of the student.

*What works best is, I think, looking at the referral form and what the **needs** are from the referral form and then allotting to where that need is. Be it individual work, if it's behaviour, emotional ... And it can't be that it's all individual work that we do or that it's all group work that we do. I think we need to be **flexible**. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

*For me, it's **always on the young person**. Some young people can work in a big group and some young people can work in smaller groups. And some young people can only work with one-to-one. It comes down to their need and whether they're coming to school or not and how they need that support to come to school. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

### 3.3.4 Challenges in providing in-school support

In the survey, coordinators were asked about how satisfied they were with the extent to which in-school activities support student engagement and retention; 81 per cent indicated they were satisfied 'to a great extent', 18 per cent were satisfied 'to some extent' while just 1 per cent indicated 'not to any great extent'. Satisfaction levels are lower among coordinators of small projects (71 per cent) and among those who were more recently appointed (within the last two years) (53 per cent). Satisfaction was also slightly lower among the group of projects that had greater provision of personal development or family support.

Coordinators were also asked about the main challenges involved in providing in-school support. In the context of withdrawal as a central dimension of SCP practice, it is not surprising that the main challenge identified by coordinators in delivering in-school support was timetabling (55 per cent). This must be seen in the context of a widespread use of withdrawal from class for in-school supports, with 61 per cent of coordinators indicating this took place to ‘a great extent’ while 37 per cent said to ‘some extent’. To overcome these challenges, coordinators mentioned prioritising and balancing needs, ensuring children are not missing the same subject each week and, in the case of post-primary students, that they attend core/exam subjects.

*[It is about] finding an **appropriate time** to withdraw students from class to minimise the impact of them being withdrawn from class. (Coordinator survey)*

*I’d be more mindful if it’s like obviously like the third or sixth year and it’s like Maths ... I’ll **check the timetable** ... just being kind of practical about it. (SCP staff, St Michael’s Walk)*

In many cases, teachers were reported to have become more supportive of withdrawal when they saw the positive effects of the supports on their students:

*The **majority of the teachers are glad** because when that child gets taken out for the break. And when you have the conversation ... they kind of go back in feeling a bit better, they’re not as disruptive, ... they’re not sad ... And they’re able to maybe concentrate a bit more. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane).*

However, school staff, especially at post-primary, reported challenges in trying to balance student need for support with their access to curriculum, preferring withdrawal only for the most vulnerable:

*I don’t want **disruption to the day**... in a secondary school it just doesn’t work. I can’t have someone being taken out of Maths for example, you know, because sometimes if they miss classes, it’s a greater obstacle for them coming to school because they’re worried about now I’m going to go into the Maths class ... There would be some extraction. But it would only be for those students who I think need intensive support and need that one-to-one to hold them in school. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

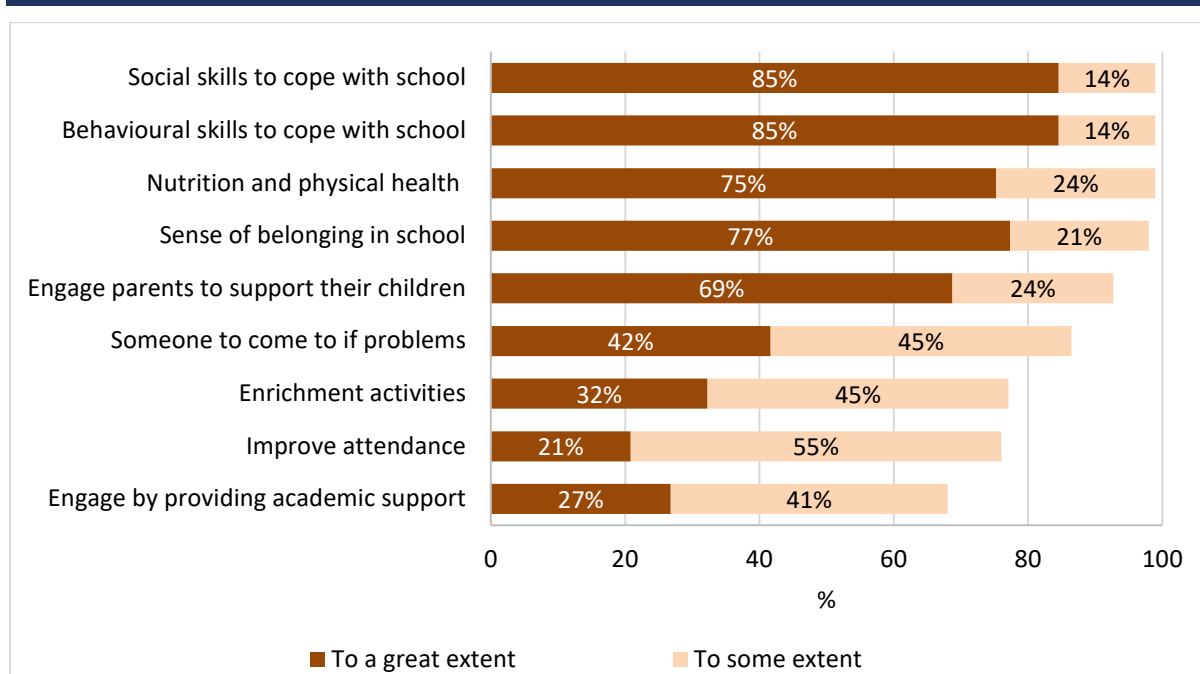
Additionally, the availability of space (26 per cent) and staff (13 per cent) were mentioned by coordinators as a challenge. Space related to room availability to conduct one-on-one or group sessions, an issue that is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. Another challenge concerns students, either because of their lack of

attendance (32 per cent) or behavioural difficulties (6 per cent). Student non-attendance was seen as posing particular challenges for one-to-one withdrawal as SCP staff often had difficulties rearranging a time slot because of capacity constraints.

### 3.4 SUPPORTS AROUND THE SCHOOL DAY

Coordinators saw the objectives of supports around the school day as centring on providing students with the social and behavioural skills to cope with school and fostering a sense of belonging in the school (Figure 3.8). Enhancing nutrition and physical health was seen as a very important goal by the majority of coordinators.

**FIGURE 3.8 COORDINATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE OBJECTIVES OF SUPPORTS AROUND THE SCHOOL DAY**

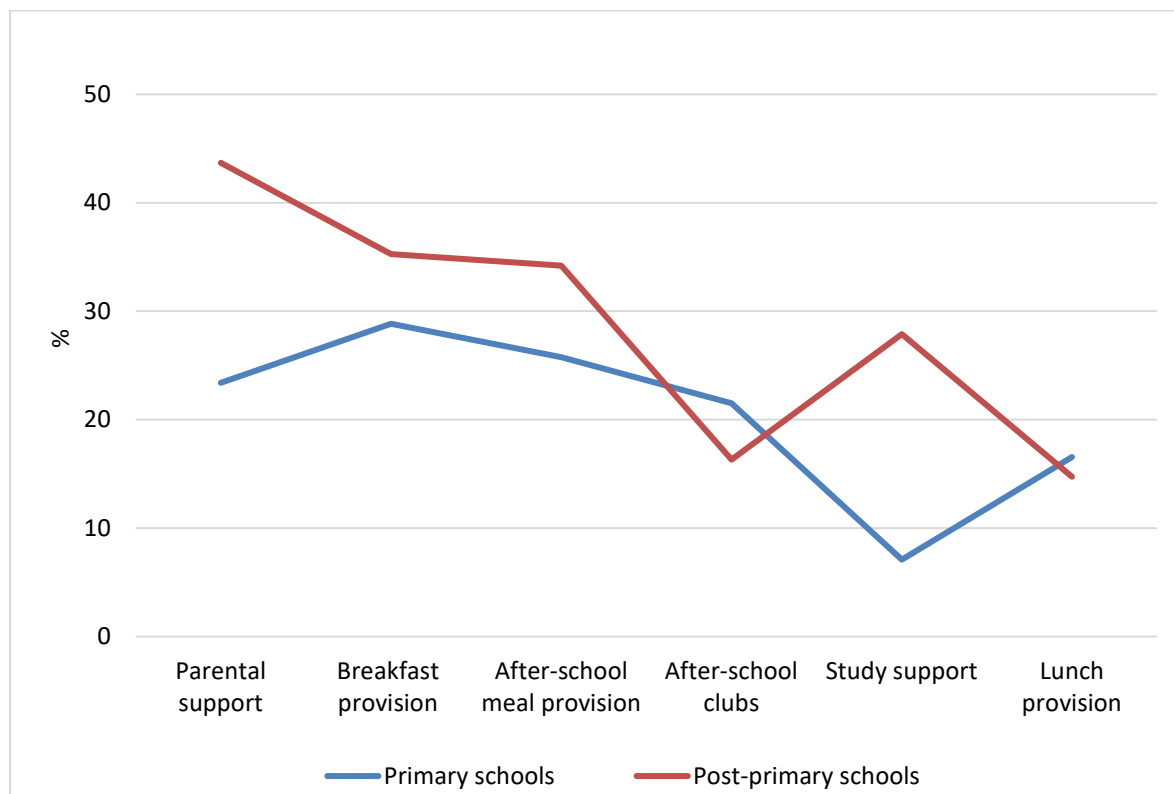


Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Most of these supports were more commonly provided in post-primary schools (Figure 3.9), with breakfast and after-school meal provision as well as study support and parental support being offered in a greater proportion of post-primary schools. The provision levels of lunches and of after-school clubs were roughly similar in primary and post-primary schools. SCP was more likely to be involved in meal provision before or after school than at lunchtime, most likely because many DEIS schools were already providing lunches using DSP funding. On average, supports around the school day are provided for 13.3 hours per week in the project, with rates ranging from 0 to 39 hours. The larger the size of the project, the fewer hours are spent on supports around the school day. Small projects spend an average of 20.4 hours per week compared with 15.1 in medium-sized projects

and 14.7 in large projects. This pattern suggests that larger projects have fewer staff and resources available to conduct these activities across a larger number of schools.

**FIGURE 3.9 SHARE OF SCHOOLS BY TYPES OF SUPPORTS AROUND THE SCHOOL DAY**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

The provision of breakfast to the target group of students was seen as a way of promoting attendance, providing an easier transition to the school day and offering them a chance to interact with SCP staff and/or school personnel.

*We have target children who go into breakfast club. It's a great start to their day. And that has been the difference for some children between coming to school and not coming to school sometimes, you know. And there's a bit of anxiety maybe about coming to school. ... maybe the house has been bit angsty in the morning or, you know, things haven't been organised for them. That's where they can get, you know, just a little bit of downtime and it **helps with the transition** then into school. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

*SCP initiatives like the breakfast club, you know it's such a positive thing to have the young people in there in the morning and sharing breakfast... And the teacher is maybe sitting down with them too. It's such a positive thing... And it's **making school a happy place** because*

*if the students are happy, they're going to learn. (School staff, Fulham Place)*

Activities during lunchtime and after school were also seen as promoting a more positive view of the school for at-risk students and offering them a safe space within the school setting.

*We set up a ton of after-school activities. We had girls' football going. We had boys' football and basketball and athletics, all these different sports and activities that unfortunately weren't accessible in the community. And so it was there for them, and **it got a huge buzz going**. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*They are now running a lunchtime club for us twice a week, which is brilliant. And so you can target different kinds of students. It might be children who are very vulnerable and who you know the type of child you might spot at lunchtime sitting on their own, and even though we have extracurricular activities going into a gym to badminton with 40 other students might just be too much for them. So this is a lovely, **quiet, safe space** for them to go. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

In another project, SCP staff used after-school provision to provide evidence-based programmes, building coping and interpersonal skills among the target students.

*I think **some of the best work is done in the after schools** ... It's teaching them then what's the most important thing about coming to school? What are you going to do in the future? ... being able to have those conversations and then looking at the difference in them, when you're talking to them about this, you know all the things we know, all the things are going on their life. So there's loads of different things covered every week, whether it's from safety to, for example, it might be around like they do the life skills programme, so they might take a session out about being assertive, how to show people respect, identity, friendships. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

Overall, supports around the school day were seen as 'very important' in supporting student engagement and retention among four-fifths (82 per cent) of coordinators, with 17 per cent deeming them 'somewhat important'. Projects where they were seen as somewhat important had fewer hours of provision (an average of 7.1 hours per week compared with 19.8 hours) and were more likely to have more schools.

The main challenge in delivering supports around the school day mentioned by coordinators was young people's willingness to attend school outside of school



hours (37 per cent). Firstly, it was felt that the most vulnerable students were often unwilling to spend additional time in school because of their disengagement:

*Young people do not want to hang around after school. The most vulnerable students in particular **do not want to stay**. We are focusing on building this engagement slowly by providing consistency and reaching out to the young people. (Coordinator survey)*

*It's hard even in some of our in-school programmes like homework clubs and things like that trying to **hit the really targeted kids** that you really need to get. Sometimes it's impossible. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*It's the kids who need a breakfast before school are the **hardest to reach**, you know, and like you could make forty house visits and phone calls. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

However, some clusters reported good attendance among target children at after-school provision, with 'all our target children ... in after schools' (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk).

Secondly, children and young people, especially in rural areas, were often dependent on school buses or other public transport which constrained their attendance.

*Over half of our students take **school bus/transport to school** which prevent them from staying on after school. (Coordinator survey)*

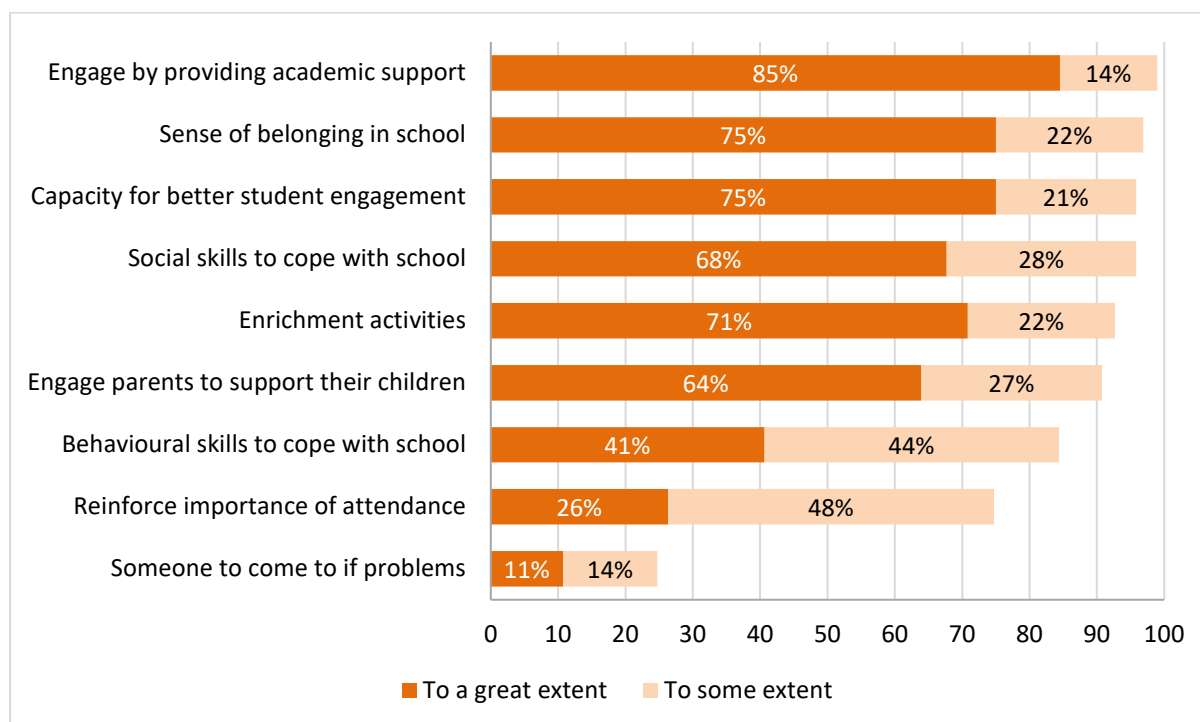
A small number of coordinators mentioned the lack of support from parents as a challenge. Also mentioned as a key challenge to support around the school day was resource availability, especially time (33 per cent), staff (28 per cent), and space (11 per cent).

### 3.5 HOLIDAY PROVISION

In contrast to term-time provision, coordinators were more likely to highlight the importance of academic support (support for learning) as an objective of holiday provision (Figure 3.10). Enrichment activities were also a key objective for the majority of coordinators. The other objectives resemble those of in-school provision in seeking to foster a sense of belonging, promoting student engagement and helping students develop the social skills to cope with school. Other objectives were mentioned by coordinators, including building relationships, either between students or with SCP staff to ensure that young people have a trusted adult to go to. Having fun, creating positive memories and preparing children for transitions,

either from primary to post-primary or from holiday to school, were referred to by a few coordinators as other objectives of holiday provision.

**FIGURE 3.10 COORDINATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE OBJECTIVES OF HOLIDAY PROVISION**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

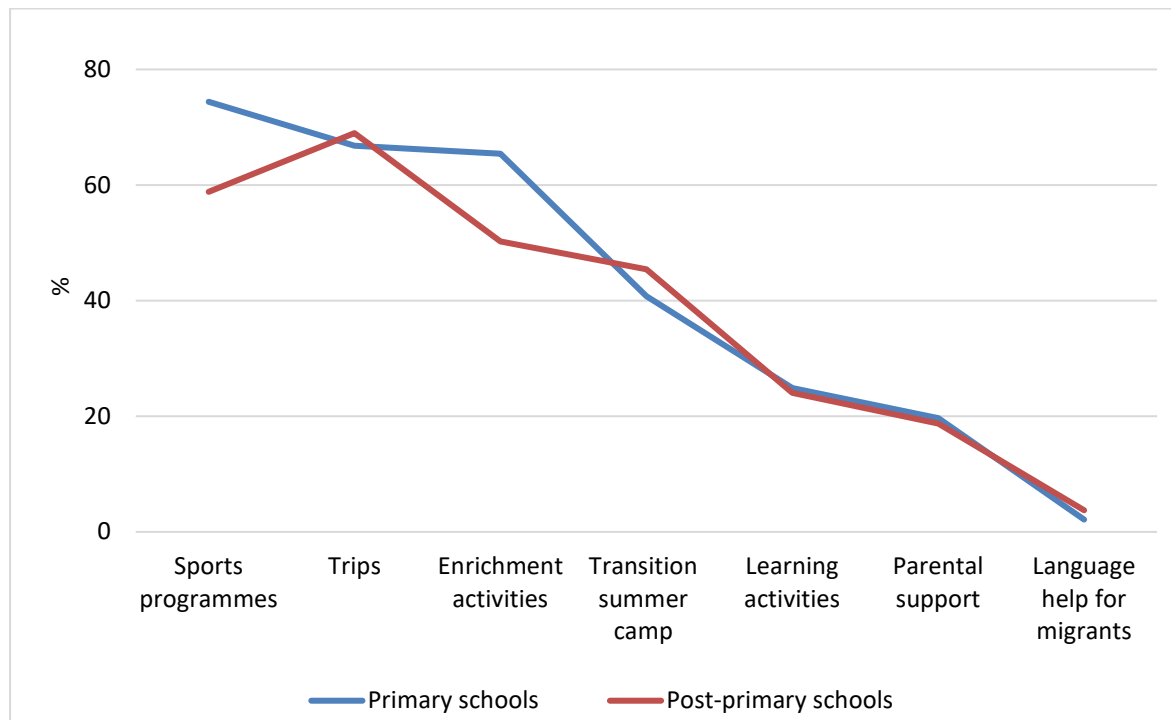
Holiday provision is generally offered during the summer (99 per cent of projects) or Easter (91 per cent), with over half (58 per cent) offering provision during mid-term and only 5 per cent over the Christmas period. On average, holiday support is provided for six weeks per year, ranging from no weeks to 16 weeks per year. The number of weeks does not vary systematically by project size. The types of holiday activities generally centre on sports programmes, trips and other enrichment activities, with post-primary schools more likely to be offered sports programmes and enrichment activities (Figure 3.11). Although academic support was mentioned as an important goal of holiday provision, just under a quarter of project schools had learning activities explicitly included over the school break(s).

Some projects tried to combine 'fun' activities with some learning-based activities.

*During Easter and during mid-term break, it's more about doing something active and **doing something fun** so those who are who we have on our target group list get invited and it's usually an outing and trip to some place that is something active. During the summer, ... it's a balance of doing some educational stuff. So there is some art and craft projects. There is some sort of **educational learning project**, whether it's about with the secondary school people, it's about sexual*

*health programmes. It's about mental wellbeing programmes. It's about drug awareness, alcohol awareness. It's about road safety, so there is always, you know, some sort of an educational element. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

**FIGURE 3.11 SHARE OF SCHOOLS BY TYPE OF HOLIDAY PROVISION**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Others had found that students were more attracted to trips and outings and so reframed their holiday provision accordingly.

*We used to do like in-house kind of things but it just didn't work like. The kids, they're so used to being in the room constantly all day, they were bored of that. So then we started using the money to go off on **trips**. So we'll do like beach days. We'll do hikes, we'll go to Tayto park, we'll go to jump zone. ... The kids really **look forward to** [it]... I think I feel like when we come back off a trip, they're much more engaged with you, the one-to-ones and groups after that, they're much more inclined to have the chats with you. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

Outings and trips were seen as particularly important for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who may not be having a holiday with their family like their peers, while also providing an opportunity to broaden their horizons.

*Children who were very city based didn't really do anything and you know that that first week back: let's write about your summer holidays*

*– and there’s a lot of blank pages. ... And often, you know, they’ll come back and say **I’ve never been to this place** ... so it gives them a conversation piece to have with other peers. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*One of the biggest problems for disadvantaged pupils is **lack of life experience**. So when you’re reading something you have a better chance of understanding it if you can connect to some prior knowledge you have about what you’re reading about... So like if you’re saying talk about the beach or going on a boat and I’ve never been on the boat, I don’t know what you’re talking about. So it’s giving them broader life experiences with their peers and ... those things are transformative for some of them. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Holiday provision was seen as important in providing a structure or routine for children and young people, helping them to avoid engaging in anti-social behaviour.

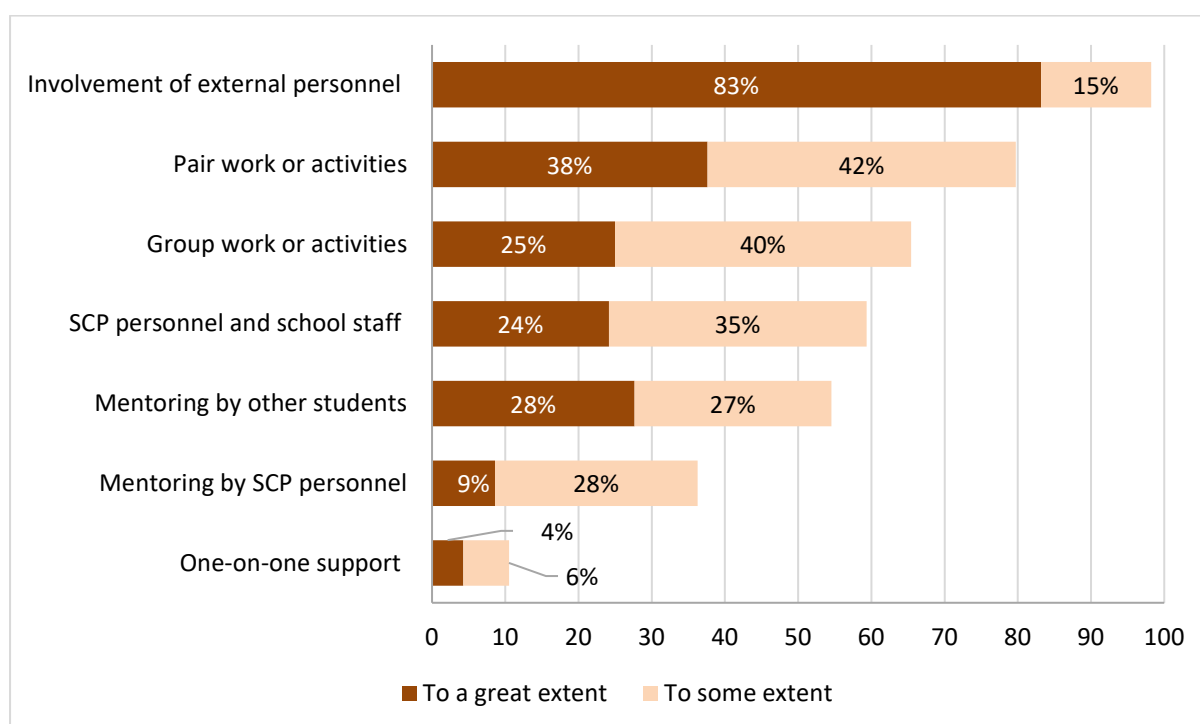
*Some of them ... have free rein. And a lot changes in the life of a 14-year-old, they grow up a lot in the summer. So, I think activities that they would be doing with their peers instead of maybe hanging out with older children, all of those kind of things would help. And there’s a financial burden on the families as well during the summer. So, to all these activities are very expensive, so if they had school-based ones ... Something for them to look forward to. A reason for them to get up out of bed in the morning. **The structure, the routine**. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*Our holiday activities in general are really good to help the students ... that they’re not at home, or **they’re not playing on their Xbox**. They’re out, they’re having fun. They’re being social with other students. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Holiday provision differed markedly from term-time provision in involving external personnel<sup>17</sup> to a great extent (Figure 3.12). Not surprisingly, given the type of supports provided, they usually involved pair or group work, with one-to-one support rarely used. Mentoring by other students was used more frequently than in term-time provision.

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<sup>17</sup> Information was not collected on who the external personnel were but presumably some external personnel were involved in transport for trips, specialist sports activities etc.

**FIGURE 3.12 APPROACHES USED IN HOLIDAY PROVISION**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Overall, holiday provision was seen as very important in supporting attendance and retention by 70 per cent of coordinators, a lower level than for supports around the school day. Small projects were much less likely to see holiday provision as very important (53 per cent) and those who did not see it as very important tended to provide fewer weeks' provision across the project (5.2 compared with 6.3). The main challenges in delivering holiday provision identified were engagement and attendance (mentioned by 57 per cent of coordinators). In many cases, it could be difficult to get the target children to turn up for provision without constant reminders and prompting from SCP staff. In addition, parents not bringing the children to the provision because of their own lack of routine was mentioned in the case of primary school-age groups.

*I do find that it's very, very hard to get the really targeted kids to coming up ... They're telling me they'll come, they'll fill out the forms. You might give them three forms because they'll lose them. ... The forms will come back. You're **ringing them on the day** the phone's off ... and that child has missed out. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*Sometimes ... you nearly have to go down and collect them in the house, you have to **ring them** the day before, you have to ring them that morning. ... but that's only some of them. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

At the same time, some SCP workers mentioned good turn-out among their target group.

*We're really lucky here because the relationship that we've built with an awful lot of the young people, **they come to everything** that we do because they absolutely love the energy that we give to the project. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

Most coordinators (56 per cent) also mentioned resource issues as challenges in delivering holiday support, including cost (28 per cent), lack of staff (22 per cent), time (19 per cent), and space (9 per cent). Resource constraints meant that holiday provision was seen as the most vulnerable strand to potential cutbacks:

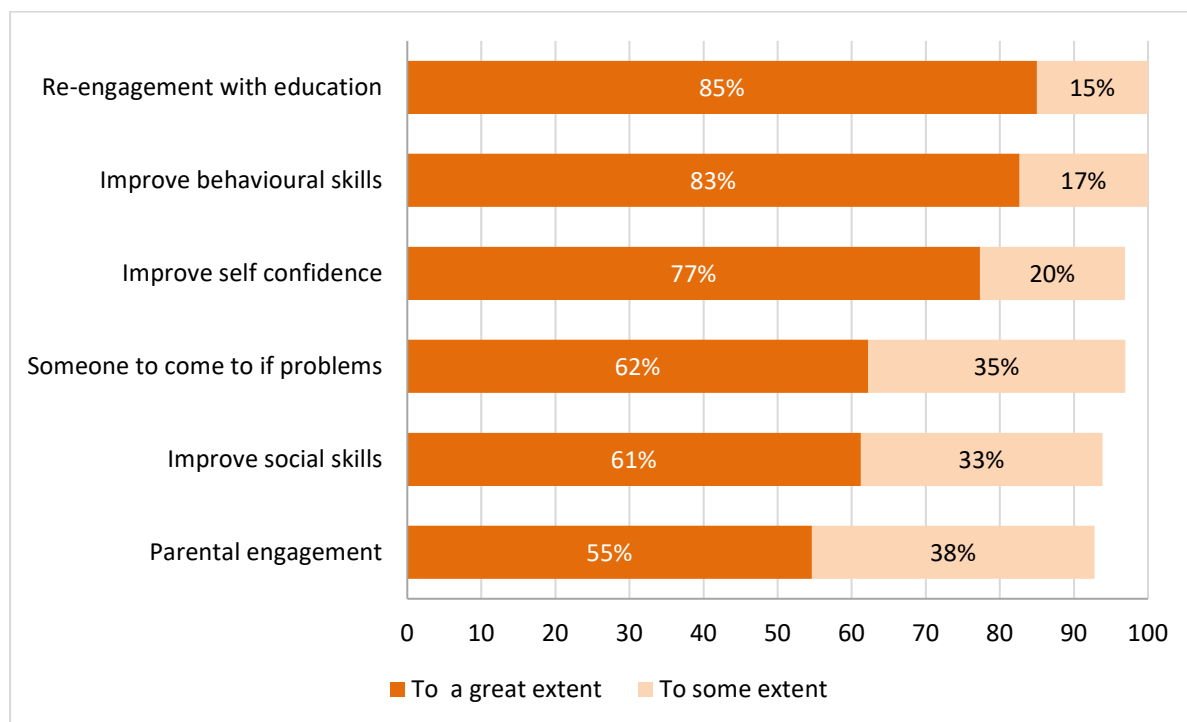
*We have a **budget deficit** in our programme, which has [affected] holiday programmes because the principals said they wanted to prioritise the in-school supports during the school week. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

*Our target children are invited to our programmes, there's no cost. The price of buses, even going on a trip is in the hundreds. ... And every year you're like, my God, where are we gonna get the money for this and. ... I'm **really concerned** about next year, really concerned about it because of the increments and trying to pay staff. ... I think what will give first will be our out-of-school summer programmes. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

Another issue mentioned by coordinators was competition with other agencies or services (16 per cent) in providing support. However, the case-study interviews indicated that, in many instances, coordinators liaised with local services to avoid duplication or overlap of provision.

### 3.6 OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROVISION

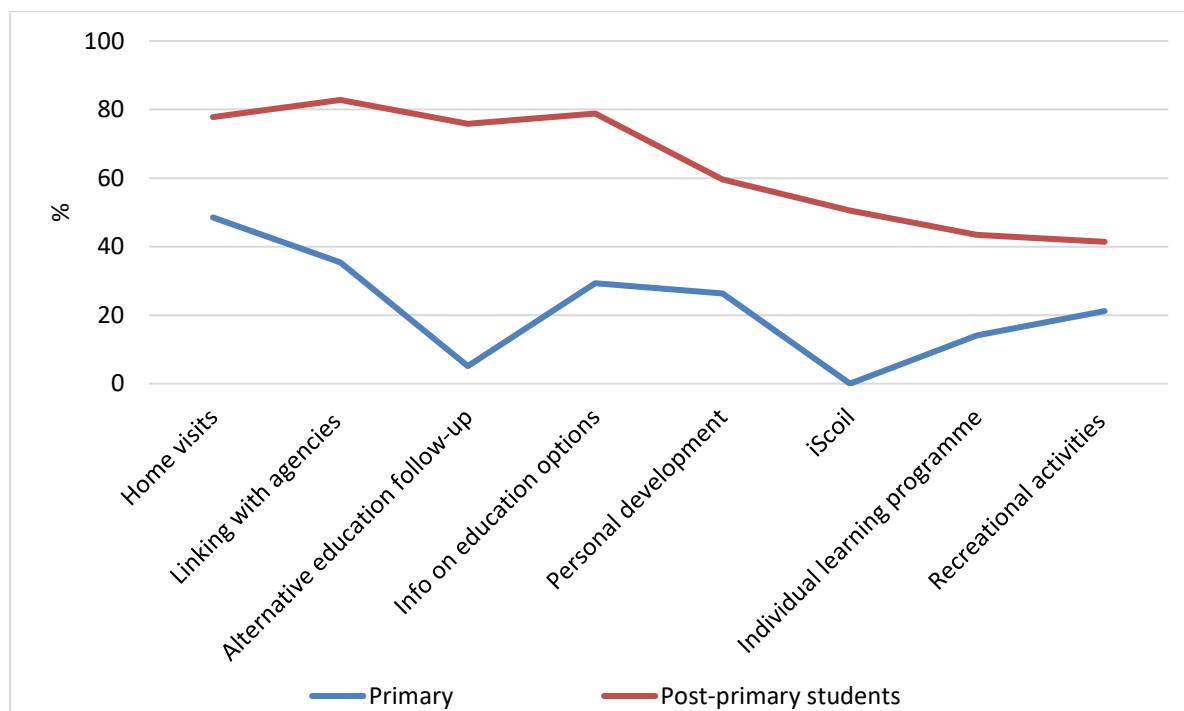
SCP has a role in supporting young people who are out of school, because of school avoidance, because they have been suspended from school or are in the process of being expelled, or because they have dropped out of school before completion. The goals of provision, as reported by coordinators, centre on re-engaging young people with education/training, improving their behavioural skills and self-confidence (Figure 3.13).

**FIGURE 3.13 COORDINATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE OBJECTIVES OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROVISION**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

In a significant minority of projects, at least one student is receiving supports through linking with other agencies, information on education options, personal development programmes or recreational activities. Around half of projects provide home visits. This level appears high but may reflect the increase in school refusal/avoidance reported in Chapter 2. Half of projects have at least one young person taking part in iScoil, an alternative education pathway offered through online support to early school leavers aged 13 to 16 years. iScoil was somewhat more likely to be provided in medium to large projects. Not surprisingly, there is a clear divide between primary and post-primary levels in the extent of involvement in out-of-school provision (Figure 3.14). However, it is interesting to note that school refusal and avoidance is leading to the need for out-of-school supports even at primary level.

**FIGURE 3.14 PROPORTION OF PROJECTS IN WHICH ONE OR MORE STUDENTS IS RECEIVING OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROVISION BY TYPE OF SUPPORT**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

The diversity of the out-of-school work undertaken through SCP was captured in the accounts of staff in the case-study projects.

*We have them **coming to our office** and meet with our staff to continue doing schoolwork, usually two to three times a week just for an hour at a time. ... And we also then offer **support to the family**, ... we're there to go with them if they need us to go into board of management meetings to support them ... and then also to support them with the **contact with the Education Welfare Officer** and that. We get them set up with whatever is the future if they get expelled, where do they go, what do they do next so that we keep that link and support them in **finding a new place**. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*We go to their house, they come and **meet us**, we go to [a café]. They **go for a walk** with a project worker. We work outside with them. ... They might come into the parents' room to do a **one-to-one** there. They have to engage with us while they're out. And the project workers have in their timetable scheduled out-of-school intervention time. So they use that time to meet people outside and to do those interventions or they might pop into the school and meet you. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*



As suggested in the interview quotes, the work was done on a one-to-one basis with the young person in the vast majority of cases (92 per cent), but a significant minority of coordinators mentioned engaging in group work with young people and their families (16 per cent to a great extent and a further 29 per cent to some extent).

Out-of-school provision was deemed very important in supporting re-engagement with learning by the vast majority (91 per cent) of coordinators, much higher than the comparable figure for supports around the school day and holiday provision. Projects providing iScoil were more likely to rate out-of-school provision as very important (95 per cent compared with 85 per cent). Lack of engagement/attendance on the part of young people (41 per cent) and the absence of parental support (31 per cent) were frequently mentioned as challenges in providing out-of-school supports. Almost half of coordinators (48 per cent) mentioned a lack of resources as being an issue in delivering adequate out-of-school support. Resources include time (28 per cent), lack of availability of time or space (18 per cent), lack of staff (16 per cent), lack of budget (12 per cent), and of physical space (12 per cent), especially since most supports are delivered on a one-on-one basis. The lack of resources also appears to be linked to the high and complex needs of students, further reinforced by their isolation. It makes these students harder to reach and more vulnerable, which then requires a lot of time, effort, and consistency, as highlighted in the case-study interviews.

*The out-of-schoolers. It's very entrenched, it **requires huge time** for one child. You could spend the whole week with one child, trying to, you know, access services with the kids, trying to cajole them, trying to inform them, trying to get them to do something at home. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*We'd organise meet ups in local places and we [coordinator and project worker] go together and meet them. That's really **time consuming**. But unfortunately, like that's what it takes and like sometimes the amount of time that can go into a single student who's in an out-of-school scenario. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

Staff highlighted the prevalence of mental health difficulties among young people who are out of school, with them often requiring more support than is feasible within the scope of SCP.

*There's a lot of other needs obviously with students who are very, very disengaged, ... they're **very fragile**, they're very vulnerable and they sometimes have greater needs than we can address. ... Mental health was the big one. (Consultation event)*

***It is bigger than who we are**; like it requires psychologists; it requires timely interventions from whether it's the psychological services,*

*whether it's from [a mental health support service]. And ... the more they've stayed at home, the worse they've gotten. So now we have a number of them who are attending [a mental health support service] before they can ever consider coming back to school. So, we're not even looking now at the come back to school stage of it. We're looking at that. How do we get them out of the bedroom downstairs? How do we get them out of the bedroom to go for a walk around the park? You know, so it's the out-of-school to me should have a dedicated service separate to what we're doing, because I think it's asking too much of us. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Staff in other projects emphasised the constraints in providing out-of-school supports, particularly involving outreach, given current resourcing.

*We have quite a lot of young people who are really disengaged from school and those are the ones that I think we struggled most with. If they're not in school, how do you work with them? ... We offer them that they could come to our office and that we'd meet with them in the office. But again, it's **limited** what we can do because we're all running around and racing a lot. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*We need the **funding** for a staff member to be dedicated to actually doing that kind of work. (Coordination event)*

Coordinators mentioned the lack of options for alternative education in some areas, especially for students who are too young to qualify for Youthreach.

*I have two very young children who are just 13, just 14. So obviously to **find another place** is going to be a big challenge because you know, if you've been expelled, another secondary school is not going to entertain you. And Youthreach is not an option until you turn 15. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*There's **no accredited alternative provision** for those young people... that are too young to be referred into Youthreach. ... We're kind of just holding onto them until... they're old enough to [progress] further into Youthreach if they even go to Youthreach. (Consultation event)*

### 3.7 INTEGRATION WITH OTHER SCHOOL AND EXTERNAL SUPPORTS

This section looks at the degree of contact and cooperation between SCP staff, school personnel and EWOs, at their integration into other DEIS supports and at their level of cooperation with local organisations and agencies. Figure 3.15 outlines the main stakeholders with which coordinators interact as part of their work.

**FIGURE 3.15 CONFIGURATION OF AGENCIES WITH WHICH SCP PROJECTS INTERACT**

TUSLA Child and Family Agency		
TESS – Tusla education support services		Family supports
<b>EWS</b> – Statutory educational welfare service	<b>EWO</b> – Education welfare officer	<b>FRC</b> – Family Resource Centres <i>Improve the family unit, combat disadvantage</i>
<b>HSL</b> – Home-Schools-Community Liaison scheme coordinators		<b>Meitheal</b> <i>Framework for prevention, partnership and family support</i>
<b>SCP</b> – School Completion Programme		
<b>LMC</b> – Local Management Committee		
FORÓIGE <i>Empowering youth and enriching communities</i>		
<b>Youth diversion projects</b> Help with anti-social or criminal behaviours	<b>Youth projects</b> Community-based youth development and family support	<b>Local youth services</b> Help vulnerable children in a non-stigmatised way
GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES	NON-PROFITS	ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION
Garda youth diversion <b>CYPS</b> – Children and young people’s services committees	Community centre Barnardos Sports centres	Youthreach iScoil Alternative providers

Source: Organisational websites.

### 3.7.1 Contact with school and TESS personnel

Coordinators were asked about the frequency of contact with specified school personnel and other TESS agencies. Almost all coordinators report meeting HSCLs at least every fortnight while 84 per cent have at least fortnightly contact with principals (Figure 3.16). Weekly contact is more common in smaller projects; 82 per cent of coordinators in small projects have weekly contact with principals compared with 43 per cent of those in large projects; weekly contact with HSCLs is near universal in small projects (96 per cent) but less frequent in large projects (57 per cent). A recurrent theme in the case-study interviews was the integration of SCP into the school community and the good-quality relationships that had been established between SCP staff and school personnel, especially principals and HSCLs.

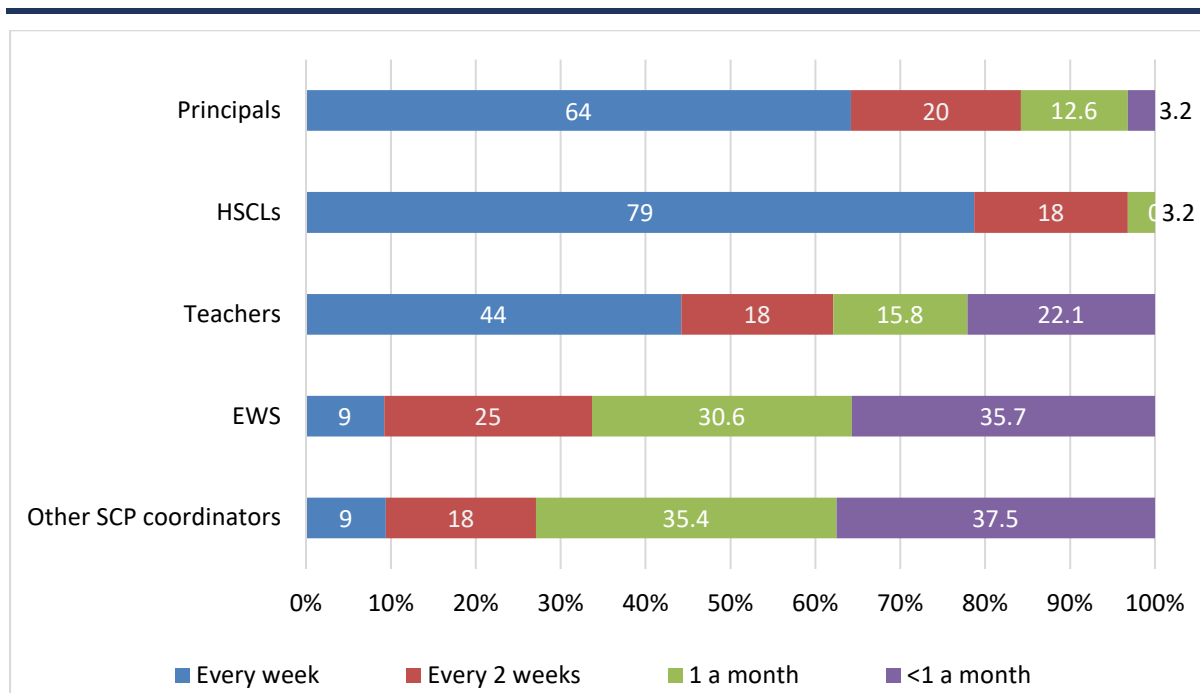
*I meet with the principals all the time. ... it’s great to have a relationship where it’s, you know, you just walk through the door and go, hey, how’s things, you know? So it’s quite **informal** with all the principals. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*We have an attendance team here within the school, so it is school completion, home school and the attendance officer ... so we’d **meet regularly**. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

*I’d say we’re very much **integrated** in all their schools, the home schools [HSCLs]. I meet with home schools probably every week, probably every day. (SCP staff, St Michael’s Walk)*

Contact with teachers is less frequent but nonetheless high, with more than six-in-ten reporting at least fortnightly contact with teachers. Rates of weekly contact with teachers range from 54 per cent in small projects compared with 21 per cent in large projects. Not surprisingly, contact with the EWS (34 per cent) and other SCP coordinators (27 per cent) is less frequent, though a significant minority have at least fortnightly contact.

**FIGURE 3.16 FREQUENCY OF CONTACT WITH SCHOOL AND TESS PERSONNEL, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS**

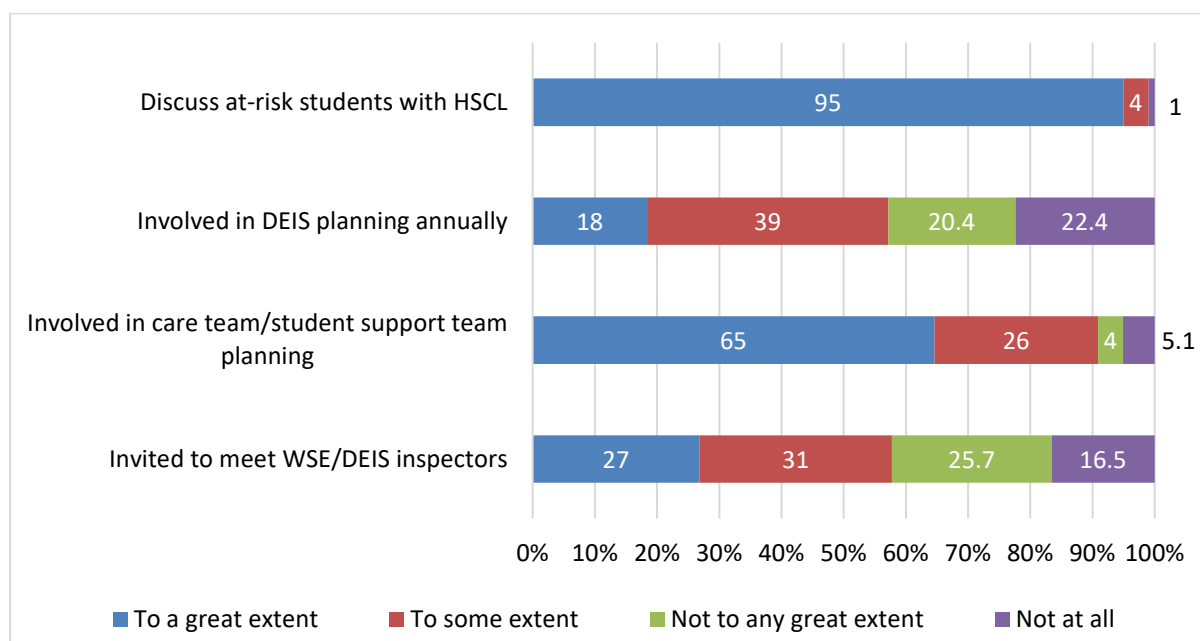


Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

### 3.7.2 Involvement in DEIS planning

Responses to statements about coordinator involvement in DEIS planning indicate a more nuanced picture. They are much more involved in coordination with the HSCL and the rest of the care/student support team (Figure 3.17). Attending school care team meetings plays a very important role in identification and referral (see Chapter 2) and in the ability of the SCP team to respond to emerging issues in the school (see Section 3.3). Although levels of involvement in care team meetings are high overall, they also vary by project size, with involvement to a great extent being 86 per cent in small projects compared with 47 per cent in large projects.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> It is, of course, possible that in large projects, project workers may themselves participate in care team meetings rather than the coordinator, as was the case in St Michael's Walk.

**FIGURE 3.17 COORDINATOR INVOLVEMENT IN DEIS PLANNING, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS**

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

In contrast, there is much more variation in involvement in formal DEIS planning<sup>19</sup> and inspections; under a fifth report they are involved to a great extent in the annual DEIS plan, while over a quarter are invited to talk to the inspector during school inspections. Further analyses suggest that this variation reflects, at least in part, logistical constraints around project size; almost a third of those in small projects are involved in the DEIS plan to a great extent compared with just 7 per cent of those in large projects.

*Due to [the] amount of schools our project are in, it would be difficult to have an active role with all DEIS plans. (Coordinator survey)*

However, involvement in DEIS planning did not only vary by project size. Some of the coordinators reported that they were very involved in overall DEIS planning, sometimes having themselves pressed for such involvement.

*The DEIS plans, especially the primary schools that I'd be involved with, you know **feedback is absolutely taken on.** (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*We've been **named in DEIS plans** ..., it's only the last three years. Even attendance policies have been changed since I've started because there are things like I push on, why is School Completion not named in your attendance policy. You know, we should be in the steps there. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

<sup>19</sup> Schools receiving support under the DEIS programme are required to develop a plan to indicate the activities and targets they seek to achieve.

In other cases, coordinators described being less involved in the planning process.

*Interviewer: And would you be involved in the school DEIS planning at all?*

***Limited**, I'm being honest. ... I'm not sitting around the table with any of the schools for DEIS planning. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Similarly, school principals in some projects saw SCP as central to the DEIS planning process.

*In the case of DEIS planning of the school, ... the School Completion retention plan **links in directly to our DEIS plan** in those areas of attendance, of retention and transition. (School staff, St Michael's Walk)*

Interestingly, there were different accounts of participation within the same project, suggesting that variation in involvement reflects not only logistical constraints around project size but differences between schools in leadership and culture. In one case, the principal indicated:

*We see it [SCP] as an **integral part of DEIS** rather than a separate entity in itself. ... [SCP] would [be involved in DEIS planning] because our DEIS plan includes retention and attendance, but also includes community involvement. And you know, there is a section in it that holds HSCL and SCP work. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

Another principal in the same project referred to a more consultative role for SCP personnel:

*That would be primarily for myself and for the post holders that are involved in it, and mainstream teachers, ... but there would be a **consultation**, obviously, with SCP people. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

### 3.7.3 Coordination with other DEIS supports

#### 3.7.3.1 Overall integration with DEIS supports

Overall, just over a fifth (22 per cent) of coordinators report being very satisfied with the coordination of the full range of DEIS supports in their project, with 57 per cent being satisfied, 18 per cent not satisfied to any great extent and 3 per cent not at all satisfied. Those who are more satisfied with SCP integration have more frequent contact with school personnel, are more involved in care support team meetings and in annual DEIS planning. When asked how coordination could be improved, coordinators frequently referred to the need to have a clearer profile of SCP nationally and better communication with school staff about their remit.

**More education** needed for all staff on the role and work of SCP – we are still very much a ‘add on’. (Coordinator survey)

*It is fairly successful in our SCP but that is because I have been a long time with the project and have advocated strongly for our inclusion. Nationally the work of SCP needs to be **officially recognised**.* (Coordinator survey)

*SCP involvement could be **explicit in the DEIS planning guidance** and inspections.* (Coordinator survey)

Some coordinators acknowledge that awareness has improved over time:

*Recognition by DEIS of SCP during inspections has **improved dramatically** in recent years. Recent DEIS inspections met with SCP in our schools.* (Coordinator survey)

The case-study visits provided further insights into how SCP was integrated into other DEIS supports. As with the survey responses, there was particularly close collaboration with the HSCL.

*When we work with SCP, they work with **the young people** and we work with **the parents** of those young people.* (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)

This contact facilitated the sharing of information and the opportunity to tailor wrap-around supports to meet the needs of the student.

*[The HSCL] kind of keeps me **updated** and if anything was happening with the young person and then I kind of work on whatever they kind of want me to work with the kids, you know whether it’s social, emotional or if something’s been gone on at home, especially behaviour-wise.* (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)

However, not all school personnel were happy with the level of contact, with variation within as well as between projects:

*Our communication, it’s very **ad hoc** at the moment and it’s just a scheduling issue. It’s very hard to find time. ... They do go to our care teams which are great but I would like to be able to have more time to kind of sit down and work on the families to make sure we’re all kind of on the same page for what we’re doing and ... sometimes I don’t know what they’re working on.* (School staff, Trobe Street)

### 3.7.3.2 *Integration in relation to family engagement and support*

In the survey responses, the category ‘family/parental support’ was indicated as an important dimension of all types of provision by coordinators (see Sections 3.3 to 3.6). The case-study visits provided greater insights into contact and engagement with parents. The accounts indicated a spectrum of engagement, ranging from informal contact with parents around day-to-day SCP supports to more intensive work with, for example, parents of young people who were out of school. The different aspects of parental engagement were discussed in the case-study interviews. First, informal contact with parents was often part and parcel of core SCP supports, especially provision around the school day.

*Because we have breakfast schools, we’re seeing the parents often. With after-schools, the parents are coming to collect them. So we’re seeing and **chatting to them**. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

Second, attendance tracking and monitoring are central aspects of in-school supports (see Section 3.3) so SCP staff frequently phoned parents about school absence among the target group.

*I monitor attendance as well and I’ve very **close links with the parents** because I feel it’s very important to keep them updated and where the kids are at. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Third, out-of-school provision often involved working with young people in their home and therefore often placed a good deal of emphasis on discussing and supporting parents regarding potential options for school re-engagement or alternative education pathways.

*I would work more with the families in relation to the out-of-schools, so with them to try to build that relationship up to get the young people back to school, **discuss places** with their parents as well. (SCP staff, St Michael’s Walk)*

Finally, SCP coordinators and project workers were generally well known in the local community and often had already established positive relationships with families whose children had transitioned into the senior primary or post-primary school. These relationships were particularly important in situations where there had been some tension between parents and school personnel, with SCP staff often seen as being in a more neutral, safe space in terms of parental engagement. In these cases, joint SCP-HSCL home visits or a phased approach with SCP making home visits with hard-to-reach parents were employed.

*HSCL [is] a really important link with home, but in a lot of cases [the coordinator] would step into those meetings as well with the parental*



*consent [as] **an advocate and a support** for the parent. And it can help meetings hugely. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*Some of the families then **I might know a bit better** ... some of the Traveller families, we're kind of going down and linking in with and then some of the families the home schools [HSCLs] are better at. So primarily it's the home schools. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*Sometimes **we work together** ... say certain houses you wouldn't travel to on your own, just the neck of the woods they're in. So we'd work together and travel and meet the parents ... to try to support the parents the best we can. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*There'd be a lot of ... issues ... that are **tricky for schools** to handle. You know, sometimes it's easier, I think, for the School Completion coordinator to have those conversations with parents because they're not directly involved at the school. (School staff, St Michael's Walk)*

SCP staff and HSCLs both emphasised the complementary nature of their roles, with close contact between them to avoid the potential duplication of effort with particular families.

*Creating the relationship with the child is easier when you have a relationship with the parents. We **work together** with the home-school liaisons on that so that we're not duplicating our work. ... but we do recognise that our main work is with the child. And that family piece and the liaison should mainly lie with the home-school liaison, but I don't think we as a School Completion Programme can do our work without having contact with the family. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*We do have **fantastic cooperation** between the home school and School Completion worker – like the roles are so complementary. Very different, I mean, but at the same time they have to communicate really well because often they're dealing with the same parent, and you don't want them being overloaded with like, you know, this School Completion person contacting them and then an hour later the home schooling, you know, that's too much. (Schools staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Several HSCLs indicated that the five-year term for their role meant challenges in the early phase in building up relationships with parents and emphasised the importance of SCP staff as a support to them in linking to the broader community.

*They **helped me a lot** ... especially this year ... because they had the information that I kind of needed so, and especially if I had any doubts,*

*I could run things by [the coordinator] or [project worker]. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

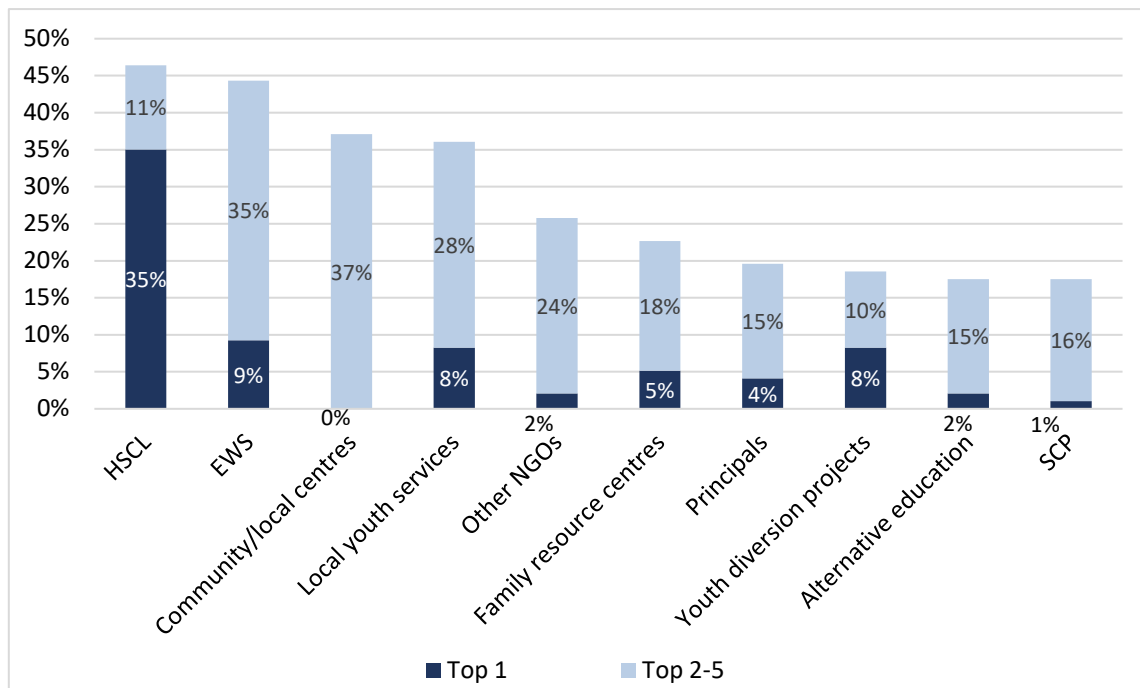
*I'm kind of new to the role this year. And so I would have obviously took great solace with School Completions because they would have dealt with a lot of the parents ... So they were **great help** to me at the start. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

### 3.7.4 Collaboration with other agencies and organisations

One section of the questionnaire to coordinators looked at inter-agency collaboration on the part of SCP projects. Interestingly, many of the people or organisations referred to were under the Tusla umbrella while others were external (see Figure 3.15). Overall, coordinators were divided in the extent to which they felt there was good inter-agency cooperation locally to tackle educational disadvantage, with 41 per cent feeling there was to a great extent while 56 per cent responded 'to some extent'.

*We're **well networked**, I have to say, in in our cluster, in the sense that we have staff who are part of management committees for other local organisations. And vice versa and we have a lot of our staff are part of different local organisations. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

**FIGURE 3.18 AGENCIES WITH WHICH SCP COLLABORATES MOST OFTEN, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS (% OF PROJECTS)**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Note: Only agencies cited by over 15 per cent of coordinators are reported. Respondents were allowed to specify up to five agencies with which they collaborated. 'Top 1' indicates percentage mentioned first, while 'Top 2-5' percentages indicates those listed in second through fifth positions.

Coordinators were asked to indicate the five agencies with which they worked most closely regarding the project, though no information was collected in the survey on the nature of such cooperation. Figure 3.18 shows the main agencies that were mentioned, with the dark shading indicating that the agency was mentioned as having the closest collaboration. The closest collaboration was with other components of TESS; HSCLs were cited as a close collaborator by almost half (46 per cent), with over a third (35 per cent) listing them as their closest link. The EWS was cited by 44 per cent of coordinators as one of the agencies with which they had close collaboration. Over a third of projects collaborated with community/local centres or local youth services. Around a quarter worked with other NGOs or family resource centres, while almost a fifth mentioned school principals, youth diversion projects, alternative education providers or other SCP personnel. In some of the case-study projects, SCP staff described mobilising links with local agencies to secure supports such as food parcels and sports equipment for vulnerable families. However, a number also highlighted long waiting lists for many services, including mental health, occupational therapy and other SEN supports, making it difficult to ensure that the needs of many children and young people were met by local service providers.

*A lot of the agencies are at capacity, they're all **swamped**. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Coordinators were asked about the extent to which these agencies fed into the retention plan; 19 per cent of coordinators use inter-agency collaboration to 'a great extent' and 60 per cent to 'some extent' to help in its design. This inter-agency collaboration was seen as facilitating a more efficient identification of at-risk children and their needs. They also provide reviews and insights, help in the delivery of services, in data collection, or provide additional resources for the programme's implementation. The input of local agencies into retention planning was often funnelled through the LMC:

*The LMC has representatives from youth work, Gardaí, community organisations. (Coordinator survey)*

*They are represented on our LMC so their feedback is funnelled through that. (Coordinator survey)*

However, in some other cases, coordinators consulted more broadly with key local agencies to identify need and avoid duplication of services.

*I use above agencies as advisors to our work and would consult with them regularly to get the most from our services, to avoid duplication and drive common outcomes. (Coordinator survey)*

In terms of SCP more generally, inter-agency collaboration was seen as facilitating the identification of student needs (75 per cent to a great extent), influencing programme activities (29 per cent) and influencing the nature of the programme (24 per cent).

### 3.8 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has examined the type of supports provided across projects, how they are decided upon, and the kinds of approaches used to work with children and young people. All of the projects provide in-school support for at least one school in their cluster while almost all provide supports around the school day, during the holidays and for those not in school. Most current provision is in-school (59 per cent on average); coordinators are broadly satisfied with the balance across strands but would like to see further development of out-of-school support.

The type of support provided is mainly determined by the coordinator and SCP staff along with school principals. It is based on the needs of children and young people and is characterised as responsive to emerging needs at class and school level. The value of one-to-one interventions in establishing positive relationships and addressing individual needs is strongly emphasised by SCP and school personnel, with this approach now more frequently used than previously. At the same time, group and whole-class approaches are seen as playing an important part in social skill development and creating a sense of belonging in the school. In-school support centres on personal development and transfer/transition programmes, with attendance tracking, mentoring and counselling being more frequently provided in post-primary schools than at primary level. SCP staff have mixed views on evidence-based programmes, with some valuing their contribution to children's socioemotional wellbeing, while others place a stronger emphasis on meeting basic needs and building a trusted relationship in the first instance. Coordinators are mostly satisfied with their in-school provision, though somewhat less so for small projects and more recently appointed coordinators.

Supports around the school day largely centre on meal provision, with study support playing a role in post-primary schools. Larger projects appear to provide fewer hours of these supports, most likely reflecting constraints in facilitating activities across several schools. Holiday provision is generally offered in the summer and at Easter, focusing on sports, trips and other enrichment activities. These activities are seen as offering disadvantaged young people access to broader experiences, providing them with a structure during the long summer break and enhancing a more positive perception of school. Unlike other supports, holiday provision is often reliant on external personnel. Supports around the school day and holiday provision face common challenges in trying to involve the most

vulnerable students, with resources emerging as a challenge in offering activities during the school holidays.

Chapter 2 indicated that coordinators report worse attendance and engagement among students than was the case before the pandemic, with school avoidance/refusal and greater anxiety and other mental health difficulties seen as more prevalent than previously. Perhaps as a result, the balance of activities has shifted slightly towards out-of-school provision, but coordinators feel that more such support could or should be provided. This provision is varied, covering more structured activities such as iScoil (offered in half of the projects) to more informal advice to young people and their parents. SCP staff report significant challenges around the time intensity involved in working with hard-to-reach groups, the complexity of need among the group and the lack of referral options to other forms of education and training for younger age groups.

The chapter also explores the integration of SCP into other school and local supports. SCP staff generally appear well embedded in the school community, with frequent contact with HSCLs and principals and, to some extent, teachers. There is strong cooperation with care/student support teams in identification of the target group (see Chapter 1) and in shaping provision to meet student need. However, there is more varied involvement in formal DEIS planning, reflecting logistical constraints (around project size) and school leadership and culture. SCP staff work very closely with HSCLs, and their roles are seen as complementary, with SCP staff involved with parents through informal contact as part of supports around the school day, attendance tracking, out-of-school provision and facilitating contact with hard-to-reach parents. There is close collaboration with other aspects of TESS and, in a significant minority of projects, with community/local centres and youth services, with these agencies having some input into the retention plan.

## CHAPTER 4

### Governance and staffing

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 has outlined the nature of governance and staffing within SCP. This chapter looks at how structures operate in projects and the perceptions of the current governance structure. It then moves on to exploring issues around staffing, activities of the SCP staff, satisfaction with employment terms and conditions and participation in continuous professional development. Lastly, the chapter discusses issues around the level of funding available for the SCP.

#### 4.2 GOVERNANCE

##### 4.2.1 The role of the Local Management Committee

**FIGURE 4.1 SCP GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

<b>GOVERNANCE</b>			
<b>VARIOUS</b>	<b>ETB</b>	<b>FORÓIGE</b>	<b>SCHOOLS</b>
70 projects LMC: representatives of schools and local organisations. Volunteers	43 projects Education and Training Board: local councillor and school representatives. Administrative support to LMC; in some cases, act as employer	6 projects Foróige SCP manager: manage staff and oversight the project and LMC	2 projects Schools: employees' staff and principals on LMC

Source: TESS, written communication.

According to the SCP guidelines, SCP projects are mandated to establish a Local Management Committee (LMC) that has the responsibility to oversee the delivery of the programme. The chairperson of the LMC signs the service-level agreement with TESS on behalf of the project. In most projects (70), there is a variety of governance structures, with unincorporated associations or companies limited by guarantee that act as employers of SCP staff (Figure 4.1). In a further two clusters, the board of management of one of the project schools acts as the employer. Forty-three projects receive administrative support from an Education and Training Board (ETB) which, in some cases, acts as the employer. Six projects are supported administratively by Foróige, who act as the de facto employer.

The coordinator survey included a number of items about the LMC and asked about their level of agreement with these statements. Over two-thirds (69 per cent) of coordinators strongly agreed or agreed that ‘I get sufficient support from the Local Management Committee’<sup>20</sup> while three-quarters reported they were satisfied with current reporting structures to the LMC. Coordinators in large projects were somewhat more likely to say they did not get sufficient support from the LMC. Views were more mixed on the level of engagement among LMC members and the skills and expertise of members: just over half (53 per cent) did not feel that all members were ‘very involved’ in the work of SCP while 58 per cent felt that members had the necessary skills in the areas in financial, legal and employment issues. The latter figure represents an improvement since the 2015 review, likely reflecting the rollout of information webinars for LMC chairs and members in the intervening period. Coordinators in large projects were somewhat more likely to disagree that all LMC members were very involved but there was little systematic variation in perceived skills and expertise by project size.

Across the case-study clusters, coordinators reported generally good contact with their LMC, mostly made up of school principals, HSCLs and some local organisations. The committee meetings were seen as providing a good opportunity to discuss a variety of issues regarding SCP and providing accountability for the project:

*We look at different projects that are coming on stream. You know, we look at things that are coming in. We look at the **training** that the School Completion workers have done. We look at the **finances**, we look at the **future planning**, we look at where we’re going to go with certain aspects. You know, sometimes we look at the **challenges** that may come along, you know whether maybe disciplinary issues or whatever. (School staff, St Michael’s Walk)*

*it just involves making sure we have our meetings, making sure that we’re **best using all the resources** that we have available to us and there’s an **employment** section to it as well, because we are the employer, so there can be HR issues around maternity benefit. (LMC member, Trobe Street)*

LMC meetings were also seen as an important forum to exchange information and to provide support to colleagues facing similar challenges in their schools.

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<sup>20</sup> This was similar to the responses reported in the 2015 review.

Some interviewees contrasted the level of support available for the LMC with that available to school boards of management who are supported by a patron and have more complete control of operational issues.

*There need to be decisions taken in relation to how the projects are governed, like there is this local management committee as employer, but like local voluntary people who are doing their jobs and everything else, **it isn't the same as the board of management of the school**, because the board of management of the school, it has a patron behind it. (LMC member, Fulham Place)*

Perceptions of overall governance structures are discussed further in Section 4.2.2.

LMCs are generally chaired by a principal of a school in the project or by an external LMC member. A number of interviewees highlighted potential challenges in needing school principals to step outside their own position to consider the broader project.

*I think the biggest ... challenge for a lot of coordinators is the LMC principals not understanding what School Completion is... you have to understand that **you should be sitting there as a cluster** on what the needs are and you should be working with what the needs in the cluster are, not what the needs in your school are. (SCP, St Michael's Walk)*

Two coordinators pointed to this issue as a legacy of the previous approach to funding within SCP, with principals playing a stronger role in how the budget was allocated across schools to fund activities. As a result, they had to work hard to ensure better governance and transparency within the project.

*I had to tell loads of the schools that what they were getting previously they wouldn't be getting the next year where that was funding towards things that **I didn't feel were SCP**. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*When I started here ... it was this kind of everybody having **an even piece of the pie**. And when I came in, I was like I can't do that because I need to identify where the different needs are and where I need to put the project workers. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

In a number of projects, the value of having a 'neutral chairperson' (McLean Alley) was emphasised, especially if trying to resolve any potential disagreements.

*I will **troubleshoot** on behalf of [the coordinator] if there's an issue with the school, I'll **step in and mediate** directly with them because [the coordinator] and the team have to go into those schools every day, and they need to have a positive working relationship with them*



*and they're there to address these issues and that can impact their relationship in the school. (LMC member, Lonsdale Lane)*

The reliance on volunteers was seen as a challenge in terms of the skills and expertise often required to address complex employment issues, for example, and the time involved in conducting the work.

*To ask volunteers to be in charge of managing people and to have that **responsibility is a massive ask**. And it's an unreasonable task, I think. (School staff, Fulham Place)*

*The board is a board and they are an employer and those are the bits I think are very tricky, the **employment law** and all of that. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

***The amount of time** that it might take, it's like another job. ... if you are going to meet obstacles, that's where the resources are simply not there for those who are giving their time here to be able to address those. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

There were often challenges in involving representatives of local organisations and agencies, with recruitment being increasingly difficult, particularly of senior staff:

*It's **getting more difficult** ... to make sure that we have the right people. ... You maybe don't have a representative on the management committee, who is say equivalent to the principal. ... So the person doesn't have a lot of say in the decisions in their organisation. Maybe if you had someone more senior, they may be able to offer more to the project. (School staff, Fulham Place)*

Similarly, participants at the consultation event called for more governance training for LMC members:

***Governance training for LMC** as well needs to be improved because if you have an LMC that don't understand what School Completion is and what you are trying to achieve, you know, and that your job is to manage and coordinate and their job is the employer. So governance needs to be improved around LMC as well. (Consultation event)*

Where the coordinator was proactive and well organised, this was seen to facilitate the work of the LMC overall, and the chairperson in particular. In turn, the support of the LMC chairperson was seen to facilitate the work of the coordinator.

*In some senses it's an **easy role** because [the coordinator is] so on the ball. (LMC member, Trobe Street)*

*I can contact [the chair] anytime and we're on the phone all the time. I'll meet [them] for coffees, and we have **a great relationship** and [s/he] really values School Completion and [s/he's] very supportive to me. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

#### 4.2.2 Perceptions of governance arrangements

The 2015 review of SCP highlighted a good deal of dissatisfaction among coordinators with governance arrangements, especially around the location of SCP in the overall system (i.e. its parent department/agency) and the variation in legal and employment arrangements across projects (Smyth et al., 2015). A number of consultations around governance took place with SCP staff in the ensuing period. However, interviews with SCP staff and participants at the consultation event indicated that they felt that little progress had been made on this issue to date.

*So, it's a huge issue ... **the governance is the white elephant** ...in the room. It's there. And it's been always there. And ... it's kind of incredible that 22 years later, this has not been addressed. (Consultation event)*

*So there is an issue with governance, clarity of governance across the whole SCP programme. So there have been moves in the past to kind of look at the issues and the governance issues around the programme, but there has been **very little change** or direction or kind of guidance around mapping out or supporting a better governance plan. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

*The whole governance of SCP isn't very good, you know. It's like being between stools. (School staff, Fulham Place)*

Although SCP had been moved to the remit of the Department of Education in the period since the 2015 review (see Chapter 1), many coordinators and staff reported a lack of clarity about the position of the programme in the broader system.

*Having been tossed between one department and another, in between like at the moment, we are with TESS, we're supposedly under the Department of Education, but are we really? So, we're in **no man's land** to a certain extent and that kind of gives a bit of a reflection of how School Completion Programme is valued as well. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

SCP staff criticised the different governance arrangements across the programme, that have resulted in differences in terms and conditions for staff.

*Here this is the problem, ... I'm a limited company, others are run by the ETB [Education and Training Board], others are run by whatever. We're so **disjointed**. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*I think it [SCP] should be under the Department of Education. It would be better for the project workers and for the coordinator. I think that they should have the **same entitlements** in terms of pension etc. of the teachers. Or if they're [to] continue to be in TESS, that they are actually awarded those ... public sector entitlements. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

*And the people under the ETB have permanency rights seemingly, and pension rights seemingly ... There's an **unfairness**, I suppose, in the system. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Many SCP and school staff highlighted the need for a regularisation of employment contracts (including terms and conditions) within one overall structure.

*Maybe someone else needs to be the **paymaster** for the amount of staff that there are on the School Completion Programme, and then the budget given to the board is specifically to cater for the children and the needs of the children. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

While flexibility in approach was seen as a strength of SCP (see Chapters 3 and 5), some coordinators highlighted variation in structures and practice across projects as a weakness of the programme.

*I do think there should be **more standards**. I do think every project should be singing off the same hymn sheet. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

*I think there's a massive weakness in that the alignment of projects can be very different. You know, I've had staff coming to me going that project down there gets to do XYZ, you know, I mean, why don't we get to do that. ... Sometimes we come together quite well. But overall ... **we don't really work as a group**, you know, as an overall national group ... It seems like a lot of little independent services. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

Some school staff also pointed to variation in the way the programme is run and indicated a preference for a more streamlined approach.

*I think all the projects are run differently and it needs a **consistent management structure** and it needs to be run under one division or lead, whoever that may be. (School staff, McLean Alley)*

*All the projects should be working on **the same level** and with the same finances and same way it's delivered. (School staff, Fulham Place)*

The data collected on governance also covered reporting structures to TESS. Over half (58 per cent) of coordinators agreed they were 'satisfied with the current

reporting structures to TESS'. Coordinators in small projects were less satisfied than those in large projects (48 per cent compared with 60 per cent) as were those whose projects comprised only DEIS schools (49 per cent compared with 73 per cent). Around four-in-ten considered themselves satisfied with the feedback they receive from TESS on their retention plan and financial returns. Summing the responses, small projects and those consisting of only DEIS schools appear less satisfied with their engagement with TESS. In the case-study interviews, coordinators varied in the amount of contact they had with TESS personnel. Some reported little contact but felt it was not needed. Others viewed personnel as 'usually always supportive' (Lonsdale Lane), but challenges were highlighted around reaching someone by phone and around changes in management resulting in ambiguity around who to contact. Some interviewees reported areas where contact could be improved, regarding the provision of templates from TESS for specific policies and around greater communication of feedback on the retention plan.

*We should get **templates from TESS** ... because we're not policy developers. We shouldn't be policy developers, and if there's policy that's needed for School Completion Programme, in my mind, it should be given from top to bottom, and then we'll absolutely put it in place and we'll make it our own. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*I do find the feedback difficult because it's feedback in the form of you get a letter, you get, you know, your project has been approved so has funding. And it's a strong plan and then they might give you three or four points of things that they think you know, yeah, could be improved on ... But they're kind of just dropped there ... I think it would be great to **just sit down** and have that little debate on things. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

### 4.3 SCP COORDINATORS

Coordinators are responsible for overseeing the implementation of SCP. Most of them have been in this role for over ten years (62 per cent), with a quarter in the job for less than five years. The professional background of coordinators is varied, including youth work (43 per cent), social work/social care (33 per cent), teaching (31 per cent), and community work (23 per cent).

#### 4.3.1 The role of coordinators

The survey results revealed the diverse nature of the coordinator role. Coordinators were asked to indicate the extent to which they were involved in a list of activities. The activities where the coordinators indicated being involved at least 'to some extent' can be divided into four broad categories:

**The programme and its administration:** this includes setting the programme direction (99 per cent), managing it day-to-day (100 per cent), budgeting (100 per cent), implementing it (99 per cent) and monitoring it (100 per cent).

*I have **overall day-to-day management** of the programme to ensure that we are, I suppose, executing our commitments as per our retention plan. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

*It's **coordinating the activities of the programme**. Then so that's coordination on a number of different ways – coordinating with the schools, coordinating with the community, coordinating with the staff that we have here, and then we do a lot of work on the ground as well with young people to make sure that what we're doing is meeting the needs. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

**Staff management:** the role of the coordinator involves hiring (94 per cent), training (87 per cent), and monitoring the performance of staff (99 per cent). Coordinators vary in the number of project workers and sessional staff with whom they work; staffing levels are discussed in greater detail in Section 4.4.

**Collaboration:** this includes collaboration with agencies (99 per cent), school principals (99 per cent), other relevant partners (92 per cent), and acting as a secretary to the LMC (86 per cent). Having a good relationship with all stakeholders was considered by coordinators as crucial to ensure the smooth delivery of the programme.

*So, a big part of what I do is **establishing and maintaining relationships** with the principals, their HSCLs and the EWO. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

*Having a very **good relationships with my schools**, that's very important and key in relationships with all stakeholders involved, whether it's the home-school teachers, the Education Welfare Officers, people ... in the outside community, because we have to work, you know, on an inter-agency basis. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Their liaison responsibility also includes introducing the functioning of SCP to new staff members in the project schools, with this activity seen as very important in enhancing teacher awareness of the programme.

*I think it's a constant revisit, because the teachers change so much. It [the nature of SCP] is covered in ... their first team meeting of the year. But if somebody comes in in January.... I try and catch them and **explain who we are and what we do**. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

**Support for targeted young people:** this includes organising and facilitating provision (97 per cent) and involving both young students (94 per cent) and parents (89 per cent). It also involves directly supporting students in and out of school.

*I also do a lot of **direct delivery**, so I'm not just in the office as a coordinator really. I'm wearing lots of different hats throughout the course of any day or any week. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

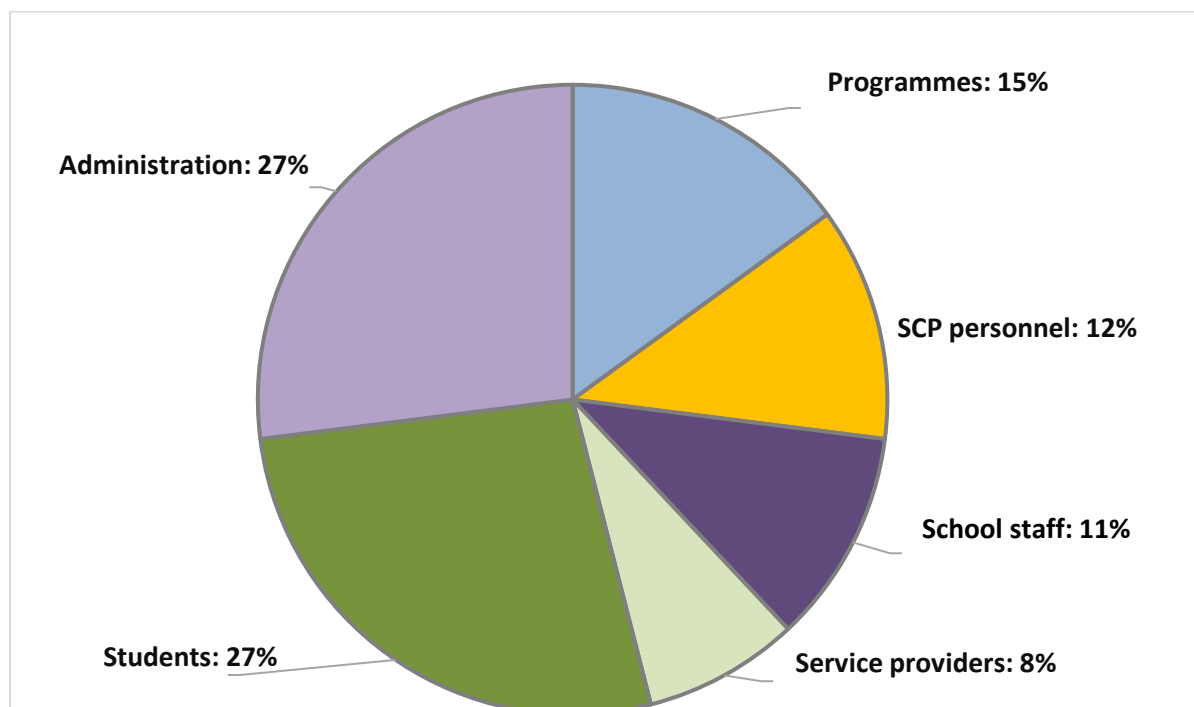
*The bits that I enjoy the most are the bits when I can work with the **young people directly**. That's the work that's the most rewarding for me. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Thus, the role of the coordinators is to manage the SCP project. Yet, it entails multiple responsibilities which are not always clearly defined (Smyth et al, 2015). This can result in some lack of clarity in the division of roles between individuals providing support for students, and in coordinators having to juggle between many responsibilities.

*I'm expected to be a supervisor, my staff recruiter, minute taker, administrator, financial manager, ... good budgeter ... **there's so many different aspects** to the role now and every day [it] changes. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*I very much feel like as a coordinator, I'm a **Jack of all trades** or Jillian of all trades. I feel like I'm an accountant. ... I'm a mother. Like I'm a social worker, like I'm a HR manager, like I'm the teacher, sometimes a youth worker ... And sometimes it feels like I'm on top of the world and it's all good. And then other times it feels like I can't manage because there is so much to do. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

In the survey, coordinators were asked to give an estimate of the proportion of time they devoted to particular activities (Figure 4.2). Coordinators spent, on average, 15 per cent of their time setting up and monitoring programmes, while meetings with SCP personnel, school principals or other school staff and LMC and local service providers took up a considerable amount of time (12 per cent, 11 per cent and 8 per cent of time respectively). Administration, reporting and financial paperwork took over a quarter (27 per cent) of their time on average. Coordinators reported spending over a quarter (27 per cent) of their time in face-to-face contact with students. Time allocation is found to vary by project size, with time spent meeting with SCP personnel and LMC/local service providers and on administration increasing with size. In contrast, direct contact with students is greater among coordinators in smaller projects. More recently appointed coordinators report spending more of their time on administration than other coordinators.

**FIGURE 4.2** AVERAGE PERCENTAGE OF TIME SPENT ON DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS

Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

#### 4.3.2 Continuous professional development for coordinators

When joining SCP, staff must complete a mandatory Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme (see Chapter 1). The objective is to ensure they have the necessary competencies to achieve the desired impact of the programme. All SCP coordinators had completed this CPD, with the exception of one who was very recently appointed. Overall, 21 per cent of coordinators were very satisfied with this CPD, 65 per cent were fairly satisfied, and 12 per cent were not satisfied. Longer-serving coordinators were less likely to report being very satisfied with the mandatory CPD, a pattern that is likely to reflect their completion of induction training prior to the rollout of changed CPD. Newly appointed coordinators were somewhat more polarised than others being more likely to be very satisfied but also more likely to express dissatisfaction. Coordinators in DEIS-only projects are also somewhat more polarised in their satisfaction levels.

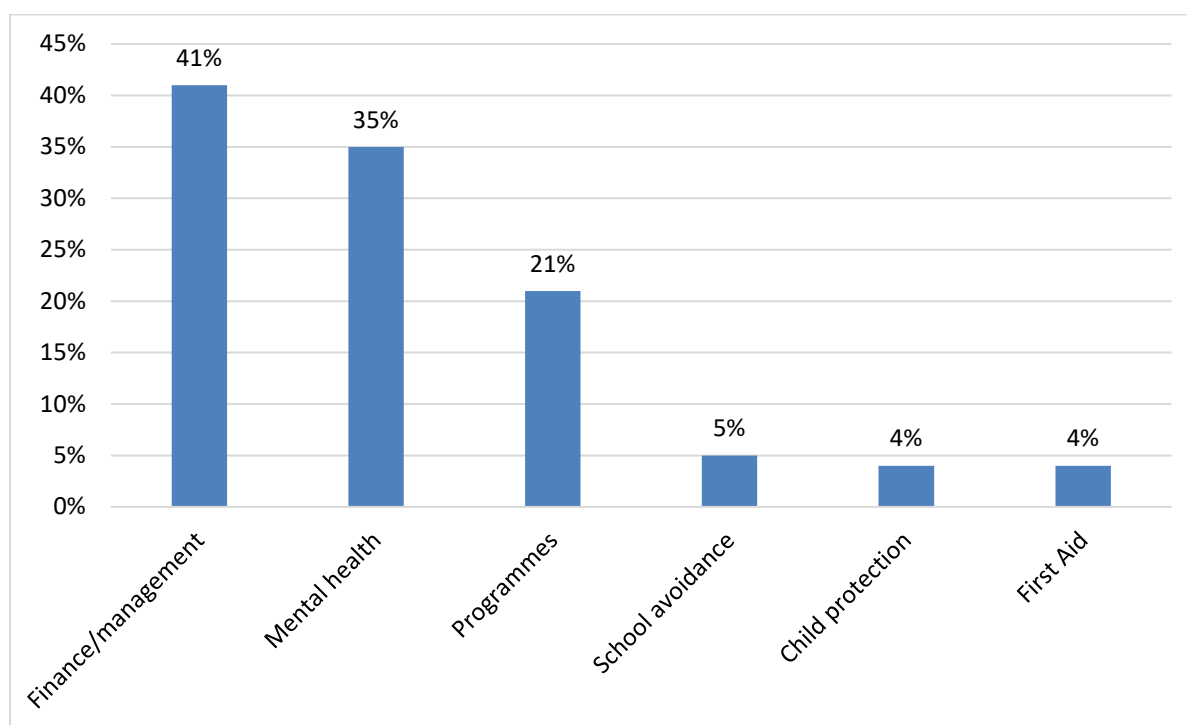
Over the past year, just four-in-ten coordinators had attended any elective CPD. The case-study interviews suggested that this lower rate of participation related to time and resource constraints in attending CPD:

***Time and money.** So, if there's a cost ... like there are programmes, we would love to get trained in, but we didn't have the budget to go for the training, so we can't bring that into this School Completion Programme. ... The Roots of Empathy was a **big commitment**. It was*

*three days back-to-back and then it was a single day again. So that's four full days training. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

The patterns may also reflect variation in the roles of coordinators, with some coordinators less involved in direct work with children and young people, work for which elective CPD would be more helpful. The most frequently attended electives included: Life Skills (33 per cent), Motivational Interviewing (25 per cent), Mind Out (16 per cent), Working Things Out (11 per cent), Decider Skills (9 per cent), Mentoring for Achievement (7 per cent), and child protection and safeguarding (7 per cent). Most coordinators (52 per cent) were very satisfied with the electives and 41 per cent declared themselves to be fairly satisfied. It may be that coordinators are more satisfied because they can choose the elective of interest for them. Satisfaction rates do not vary markedly by cluster size or composition.

**FIGURE 4.3 CPD COORDINATORS WOULD LIKE TO SEE PROVIDED**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

Coordinators were asked whether they would like to see other CPD provided for themselves and/or their staff; the vast majority (86 per cent) would like to see other CPD. While elective CPD generally related to evidence-based programmes, when coordinators were asked which programmes they would like to attend, only a few mentioned evidence-based programmes (21 per cent) (see Figure 4.3). The programmes mentioned were diverse, with no clear preference emerging. The kinds of training most mentioned (41 per cent) were to have specific coordinator training, including finance, management of staff, policies, supervision,



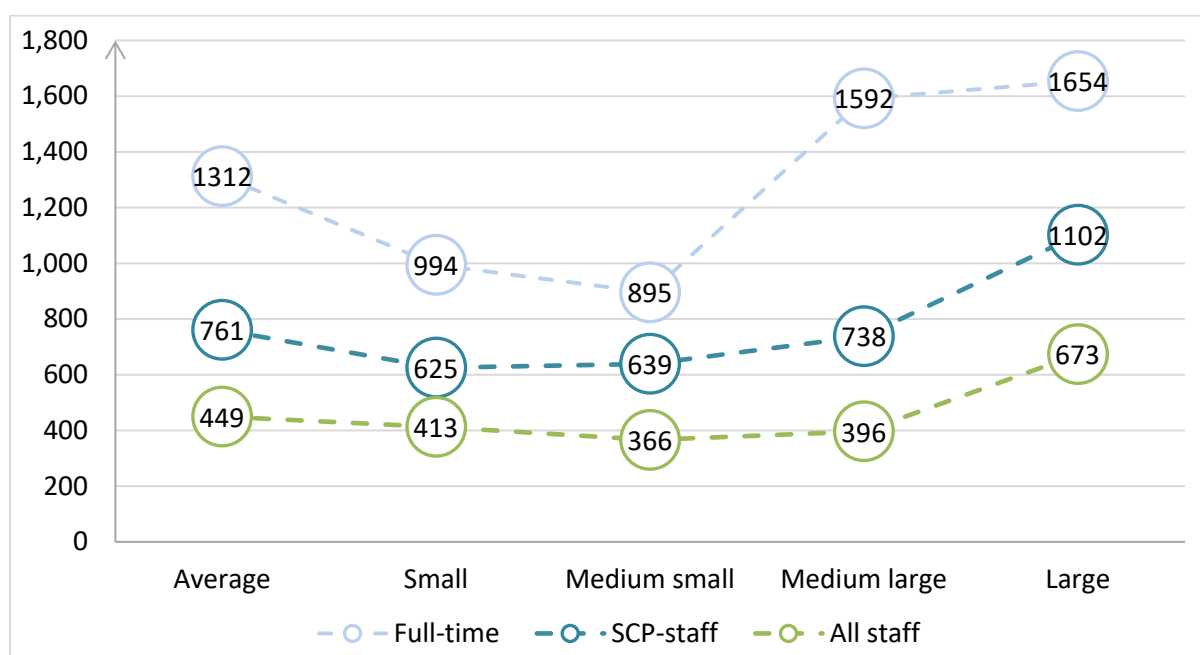
administration, and computer skills training. Additionally, coordinators would like to receive some mental health training (35 per cent) in relation to work with children and young people, including trauma-informed practice, therapy/psychology training, and anxiety management. Coordinators were divided between those who would prefer these courses to be in-person (41 per cent) or blended (39 per cent). Therefore, providing coordinator-specific and mental health-related training appears crucial to ensure coordinators have the necessary skills to undertake different aspects of their roles.

## **4.4 SCP STAFFING**

### **4.4.1 Staffing levels**

The 99 projects that responded to the survey had a total of over 900 staff, including full-time, part-time and sessional workers, with an average of 9.2 staff per project. Among them, 60 per cent are sessional workers, who are paid by SCP on an hourly basis and are not part of SCP project staff; sessional workers include those involved in homework clubs and in breakfast/lunch provision. These SCP projects employ a total of 201 workers on a full-time basis and 164 on a part-time basis. Twelve per cent of projects do not have any full-time staff, other than the coordinator, a decrease of 32 percentage points compared to the pattern found in the 2015 review.

On average, there is one full-time SCP worker for every 1,312 students in the school population of the project. Taking account of part-time staff, there is one SCP staff members per 761 students. When considering all staff, including sessional workers, there is one staff member for every 449 students. Figure 4.4 shows that the student/full-time staff ratio differs markedly between small/medium small and large/medium large projects, being much greater for the latter group of projects. When part-time SCP staff are taken into account, large projects emerge as having the highest student/staff ratio, a pattern that holds even when sessional staff are taken into account.

**FIGURE 4.4 NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE PROJECT FOR EACH SCP STAFF MEMBER**

Source: Staffing information from the survey of SCP coordinators; student numbers for the schools included in the 99 projects surveyed derived from the Department of Education database.

Coordinators were also asked whether they had used contractors for any SCP support over the past year. Contractors are people brought in to deliver a block of work, such as a week-long programme. Around half had used contractors, on average 2.5 such contractors, with a higher average of 4.5 for large projects.

When asked about satisfaction with the number of staff, over half of the coordinators (53 per cent) are not satisfied, with 39 per cent fairly satisfied and 6 per cent very satisfied. These dissatisfaction rates are somewhat higher than was the case in the 2015 review (48 per cent). Medium/large projects and more recently appointed coordinators appear to be less satisfied with staffing than others. Patterns are found to reflect student/staff ratios: on average, SCP coordinators who were dissatisfied have one full-time SCP worker for every 1,094 children, compared to 571 for those 'fairly satisfied' and 534 for those 'very satisfied'.

In the survey, coordinators were asked about whether staff turnover is an issue in their project. Turnover is considered as an issue to a great extent by 6 per cent of coordinators and to some extent by 36 per cent. Turnover does not vary markedly by project size or composition. The main reason given for staff turnover was staff leaving for other employment (50 per cent), with retirement (8 per cent) and redundancy (1 per cent) only making up a minority of cases. Coordinators also reported that several staff had taken leave, such as maternity leave, career breaks,

or breaks to travel. Staff turnover was attributed to lack of security, temporary contracts, low wages and lack of pension opportunities.

*Nobody is on a permanent contract. It's all **contract**. It's all year by year. So for attracting good staff to come in and retaining them, it's a big problem. ... Then **no pension** entitlements. It's really hard to retain staff. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

*We had a part-time worker who left ... citing the **financial instability** of SCP. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

The coordinator in Goldsborough Lane reported being able to interview 'very few people' for new posts because of so few applicants. However, as with the survey responses, there was variation across projects with the coordinator in Lonsdale Lane reporting no difficulties in recruiting staff.

#### 4.4.2 The role of project workers

Across the case-study projects, the individuals interviewed acknowledged the vital role played by the SCP project workers. Like the coordinators, they describe their overarching aim as improving school attendance and preventing early school leaving by implementing various interventions including behaviour support, social skills and emotional supports.

*So, my role would involve, I suppose, **implementing programmes** to people or to children who are identified as at risk of early school leaving, and the purpose of them would be to improve their attendance. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

The work of project workers involves providing one-to-one support and group interventions, depending on the needs of the children on the target list (see Chapter 3). In addition, the project workers are involved in providing holiday support.

*I would work **one-to-one** with a lot of students, some students I work in **small groups**. And then we do run different **clubs** like breakfast clubs, lunch clubs, homework clubs. And then for the holidays like let's say February and October, midterm and Easter and then the summer we do **camps**. So we do a lot. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*Each of the project workers runs their **breakfast club** in the morning. ... then we do **attendance** of our target young people. So, each of our project workers would go to their school and go through all their target young people to see who's in and who's not and follow up on those students. Then they do their **one-to-one work and small group work** ... they'll also do some of their evidence-based, we do the life*

*skills programme. ... Then in the afternoons ... our **after schools** kick in.  
(SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

As discussed above, there was variation in the level of engagement with parents, with greater contact in the case of out-of-school students and during holidays.

*I have a little bit more contact with families and parents for the **out-of-school work**, ... they're out of school, so they no longer have the home school support. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

*I would work more with the families in relation to **the out-of-schools**, so with them to try to build that relationship up to get the young people back to school, discuss places with their parents as well. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

*Where again we would have a lot of contact with parents over the **summer period** because our home-schools would be not working and we'd be contacting them for summer provision. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

The project workers highlighted various challenges that they encounter in their work, including the need to cover considerable distances in some projects. Furthermore, while schools make space available for project workers, often there are no dedicated spaces, with SCP staff relying on access to rooms that are in demand for other uses. Overall, 26 per cent of coordinators declared themselves to be 'not satisfied' with the space available for the work of project workers, 43 per cent with the space available for support programmes and 19 per cent with the space available for sports and other activities. These figures compare with the 16 per cent who were dissatisfied with the space available for their own work as coordinators.

*While they [schools] endeavour to make sure that we have that space, it's not always our space when we go to the school. So that's one of the biggest disadvantages is **finding a space** within the school buildings ... And we find ourselves working from a hallway, a corridor, the corner of the staff room, the corner of the PE hall, which is not ideal. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

In most of the case-study projects, project workers tend to work across several schools, with workers often going to particular schools on specific days. This was seen as creating some challenges if an issue arises for a student and/or if a student is absent from school for their 'time slot'.

*I do think just one member of staff would be far more beneficial ... **if something does come up** they don't see [them] and/or if [s/he's] out on a day's training or whatever. **The kids miss that week** and they*

*really do love meeting [them] and coming out to [them]. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

A different model is used in the Trobe Street project, where a project worker is based in a single school. This is seen as invaluable in building relationships and allowing students to drop in to the project worker when needed:

*We've got a project worker in each of the schools and I think that model for me works really well... I almost look at each of the project workers as the coordinator in their school.... They're there on the ground, **everybody knows them**, they're not moving from school to school where you have to rebuild relationships. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

However, in other case-study projects many staff preferred to work across different schools, giving them a better understanding of the project as a whole and allowing the coordinator to match staff skills to individual students.

*I wouldn't personally like to be just based in one school. ... I feel like I know a bit about each school because I mean where if I was only in [school] I'd feel very **disconnected**. ... I think that if you're just stuck in one school, certain **children will be missing out**, and maybe their needs, that would work better with me. So, I do think it's good that we're mixed around. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

This approach was also seen as having the advantage of young people being familiar with the SCP staff when they made the transition from one project school to another.

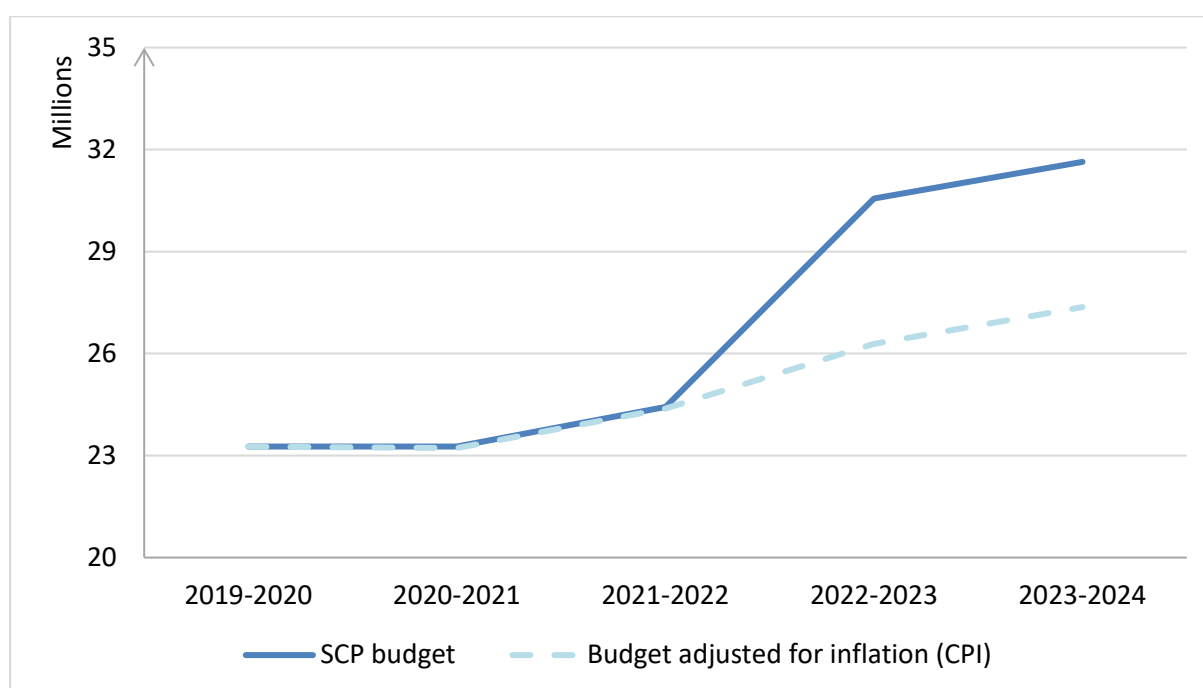
#### **4.5 FUNDING**

The 2015 review of SCP took place against a backdrop of austerity measures introduced during the recession. Overall funding for SCP decreased from €32.9 million in 2008 to €24.7 million in 2015 (Smyth et al., 2015). The more recent period has seen an increase over time, from approximately €23.3 million in 2019 to €31.6 million in 2023, with increases holding for the period 2022-2024 even adjusting for the rate of inflation. In 2022, the increase in funding followed the extension of the SCP to 28 DEIS schools and a 5 per cent increase to support attendance and participation. Once-off payments for wellbeing supports were also paid to projects in 2020 and 2021. However, it is worth noting that the nominal

level of funding for SCP is now still below the level it was in 2008 in a context where the number of schools covered has increased.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to TESS funding, around a quarter of coordinators (24 per cent) indicated receiving some funding from local area partnerships or initiatives. Others (6 per cent) reported receiving funding from fundraising, the school meals programme and other sources.

**FIGURE 4.5 FUNDING ALLOCATION TO SCP OVER TIME**



Source: TESS administrative data.

Overall, only 9 per cent of coordinators are ‘very satisfied’ with the level of funding apportioned to their project, 45 per cent are fairly satisfied and 46 per cent are not satisfied. In response to another question, only 31 per cent of coordinators agreed that they have sufficient resources to run SCP within the project.

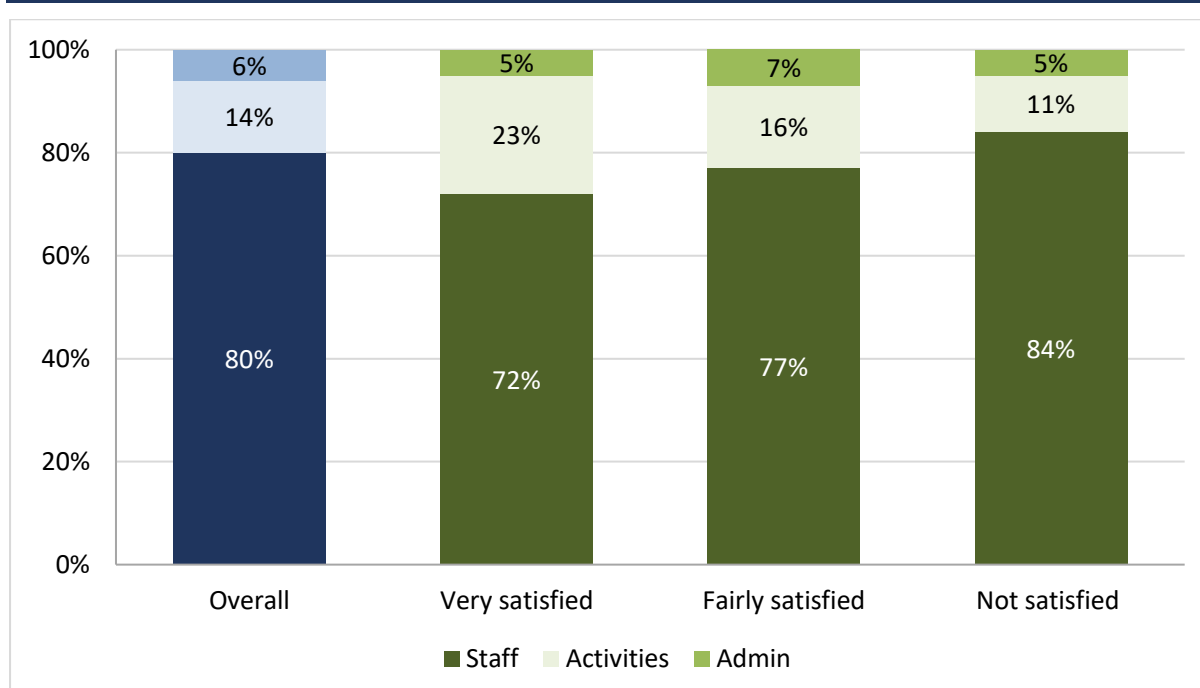
*School Completion has the potential to be the best programme, but it’s **badly funded**... If you look at the model that runs the community schools or running adult education, they put far greater resources into running adult education programmes than they do for young people. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

<sup>21</sup> The equivalent of 2008 funding levels would be €38.7 million in 2023 prices compared to actual levels of funding of €31.6 million in 2023.

Overall, an average of 80 per cent of the funding allocated to the SCP project is used to cover staff costs (Figure 4.6), roughly the same proportion as in the 2015 review. The case-study interviews suggest that the funding allocated to projects has not considered incremental salary increases, thus leaving fewer resources for implementing interventions.

*Our budget is really **saturated by staff costs**, which means we don't have room for additional programmes like iScoil. We don't have budget for that kind of thing. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

**FIGURE 4.6 COORDINATOR SATISFACTION WITH FUNDING BY ALLOCATION OF FUNDING ACROSS HEADINGS**



Source: Survey of coordinators.

Even when spending most of their budget on staff, many projects report still having insufficient personnel to meet student need:

*When **you're only here two days a week**, there are three days a week where those students are not being looked after, and they're the days when they get into trouble... if those three days they'll do something where they can get expelled and then the whole system collapses. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Having additional schools added to the project was seen to have improved the situation regarding funding in some ways. However, the share of funding spent on staff costs is the same for small, medium-small, and medium-large projects (82 per cent). It only decreased to 74 per cent for large clusters, with a greater share

(19 per cent) being allocated to project activities. One of the case-study projects indicated that the addition of new schools had enabled them to expand holiday provision. At the same time, having larger clusters was seen as creating challenges in staffing (Section 4.3), targeting of students (Chapter 2) and in the provision of supports (Chapter 3).

Overall, an average of 14 per cent of the budget is dedicated to project activities. The higher the share, the higher the share of coordinators declaring themselves satisfied with funding (Figure 4.6). Having limited funding available for interventions was seen to curtail the type of interventions put in place, especially over the holiday period. In some instances, coordinators reported unpaid leave or reduced hours among staff to maintain funding for activities.

*We have always strived to keep a small budget for activities, even to the detriment of staff salaries. This has meant that staff has been on **unpaid leave** to subsidise for shortage in the funding. (Coordinator survey)*

Some coordinators tried to mobilise funding from local organisations to maintain provision – again holiday provision in particular – against a backdrop of increasing costs for transport and trips:

*I have managed to get a **few thousand** for next year from [an organisation] **towards our summer programme**, but like I shouldn't have to do that. We should have enough of a budget to cover what we're trying to do in order to give the children ... a positive experience at school. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

Several of those interviewed suggested that funding for activities should be given under a separate budget line and ringfenced to take account of emerging needs and the adoption of new programmes.

*I think that **funding should be ringfenced**. ... [I] have an issue with [that] you can't apply for any more than you applied for last year. So that doesn't help us to grow the project and look at other initiatives, you know it stifles innovation and initiative. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

A recurring theme was the need for SCP staff salary funding to come from a central source, thus leaving sufficient resources for interventions for children and young people.



*I would love it if staff were **centrally employed**, like teachers, so we would have a budget that's for activities and for administration. That, to me would be an ideal situation. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*If the **Department of Education** was paying the salaries of the workers and school completion, it would leave a lot more money for intervention. (EWO)*

Coordinators were asked how funding was apportioned *within* their project. Staff costs was the most commonly mentioned factor (by 54 per cent); in other words, staff costs represented a fixed proportion of the project budget. Needs of the school community (38 per cent), programmes (34 per cent), and number of students (21 per cent) were mentioned by a significant minority. Overall, 26 per cent of coordinators are 'very satisfied' with how funding is apportioned *within* their project, 63 per cent are fairly satisfied and 11 per cent are not satisfied. These dissatisfaction levels are lower than in 2015 (Smyth et al., 2015), which is likely to reflect changes made to the programme. Longer-serving coordinators are more likely to be satisfied with allocation within the project while dissatisfaction is slightly higher in small projects and those serving DEIS-only schools.

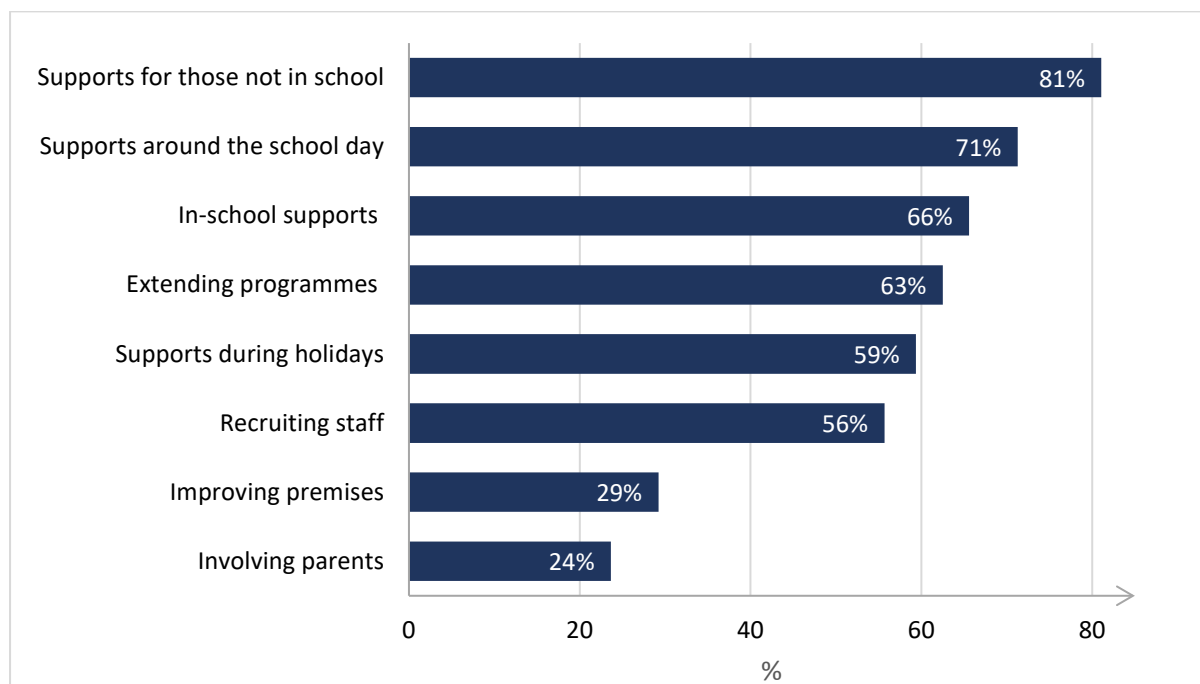
In the survey, coordinators were asked what criteria they felt would be most useful in deciding the level of funding given to projects. Coordinators would place the most emphasis on needs (49 per cent) to allocate budget. Project size, including the number of schools (45 per cent) and students (39 per cent), was also seen as a very important criterion.

*It should be **based on population**. I've nearly 2,000 students in school but I get the same as a school that has only 300 students. (Coordinator survey)*

In the survey, coordinators were asked what additional financial resources would facilitate in their project (Figure 4.7). Four-fifths of coordinators would use extra funding 'to a great extent' to provide more supports for those not in school, though supports around the school day, in-school supports and holiday provision were also mentioned by a majority. Six-in-ten indicated using additional funding to extend the programme to more children and young people.

*I think you could **reach more children** because I think at the moment, as I said, because of COVID and the lockdown and all the repercussions for that on young people and on young children is that there's huge need. (LMC member, St Michael's Walk)*

**FIGURE 4.7 WHAT ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL RESOURCES WOULD FACILITATE ‘TO A GREAT EXTENT’, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS**



Source: Survey of coordinators.

In the case-study interviews, respondents were often torn between covering more students, given the level of need in their project, and providing more intensive support<sup>22</sup> for the existing target group.

*Once a week might not be enough, there might be some kids who actually need a **daily check in**. ... That's not feasible at the moment... there aren't resources to do that. But to hold certain students, you would need that level because sometimes their backgrounds are very volatile ... There's... new things happening for them all of the time and they need that support. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*I think it's **more intensive** support because an awful lot of kids really do need the support and there's an awful lot of young people that **aren't being identified** either because we have such high needs. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

Over half of coordinators (56 per cent), would use extra funding 'to a great extent' to recruit staff, enabling them to reach more children who require help.

*Realistically, we definitely need **more staff** because we have a big cluster and we sometimes don't get to every young person that really*

<sup>22</sup> The survey did not include 'more intensive support' on the list of supports that could be provided with additional funding.

*needs us to give them opportunities, a lot of young people are falling through the cracks in relation to that. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

## 4.6 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has looked at the governance, staffing and funding of SCP. Variation in governance arrangements and insecurity for staff emerged as key issues in the 2015 review of the programme. SCP and school staff in 2023/24 reported dissatisfaction that these issues had not been addressed, despite a number of consultations with staff in the intervening period. Ambiguity regarding the current governance of SCP was considered to create additional challenges for coordinators and LMCs, and was viewed as reflecting how the programme is valued at government level. In addition, current variation in arrangements was considered to contribute to different employment terms and conditions for SCP staff. A recurring theme in the survey responses, interviews and at the consultation event was for the programme to be brought under one overarching governing structure with public sector contracts and conditions for staff.

All projects are overseen by LMCs who are engaged in a range of activities including financial oversight and future planning. There was broad satisfaction with the LMC reporting structure across projects. LMC meetings were seen as a good opportunity to discuss how the programme is running in different schools and exchange information. However, having LMCs as employers, responsible for finances and recruitment, was seen to put an undue burden on the members of the committee made up of volunteers. It was seen as difficult for LMC members to have the necessary skills and expertise to deal with often complex employment issues. It was also not clear who the LMC should turn to if questions arise around recruitment, employment law and other matters and when there is not specialised expertise on the committee to resolve these issues. Many coordinators pointed to a variation in the level of engagement among LMC members.

SCP coordinators, coming from a variety of backgrounds such as youth work, social work, social care and teaching, together with the project workers, were seen as the crucial determinant of the effective implementation of the programme. Over half of the coordinators had been in this role for over ten years, thus providing much valued continuity in implementing the programme in the project schools. This continuity was considered to be particularly beneficial for students but also for new principals and HSCLs.

The survey and interview data showed the variety of tasks coordinators need to perform, including delivery and administration of the SCP, collaboration with schools within the project and with relevant local agencies, and provision of support for targeted students. The coordinators were broadly satisfied with the

mandatory and elective CPD training, although take-up of elective training by coordinators could be considered low, at just 40 per cent. Some expressed a wish to receive training across a range of areas: finances, management, policies, supervision/evaluation, administration, mental health and computer skills.

SCP project workers are responsible for the delivery of support and programmes in schools. Over half of the coordinators were dissatisfied with the number of staff available for their project. Funding limitations meant that project workers often had a heavy workload, and many worked across different schools in the project. Some project workers felt that the limited time available makes it difficult to provide sufficient help for all of the students who need assistance or to provide sufficiently intensive support for the most vulnerable students. Analysis of staffing levels indicates a discontinuity between large and other projects, with large projects having a much higher student-staff ratio.

SCP funding has increased in recent years but remains below the levels of funding in 2008 before the period of austerity cuts. Almost half of the coordinators were not satisfied with the level of funding to their project and just under a third felt there were sufficient resources to run SCP within their project. SCP and school staff often highlighted a disparity between the level of need in their project and the funding allocated to them. Available budget was largely devoted to staff costs, leaving less for the funding of interventions and activities. Coordinators who spent more in relative terms on activities tended to be more satisfied with overall funding levels. Coordinators highlighted a preference for funding levels to reflect need and project size (in terms of numbers of schools and students). Additional funding would cover more supports, especially for those out of school, though interviewees were torn on whether to prioritise targeting more students or to provide more intensive support to the existing target group, given the scale of need among their student population.

## CHAPTER 5

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### Perceived impact of the programme

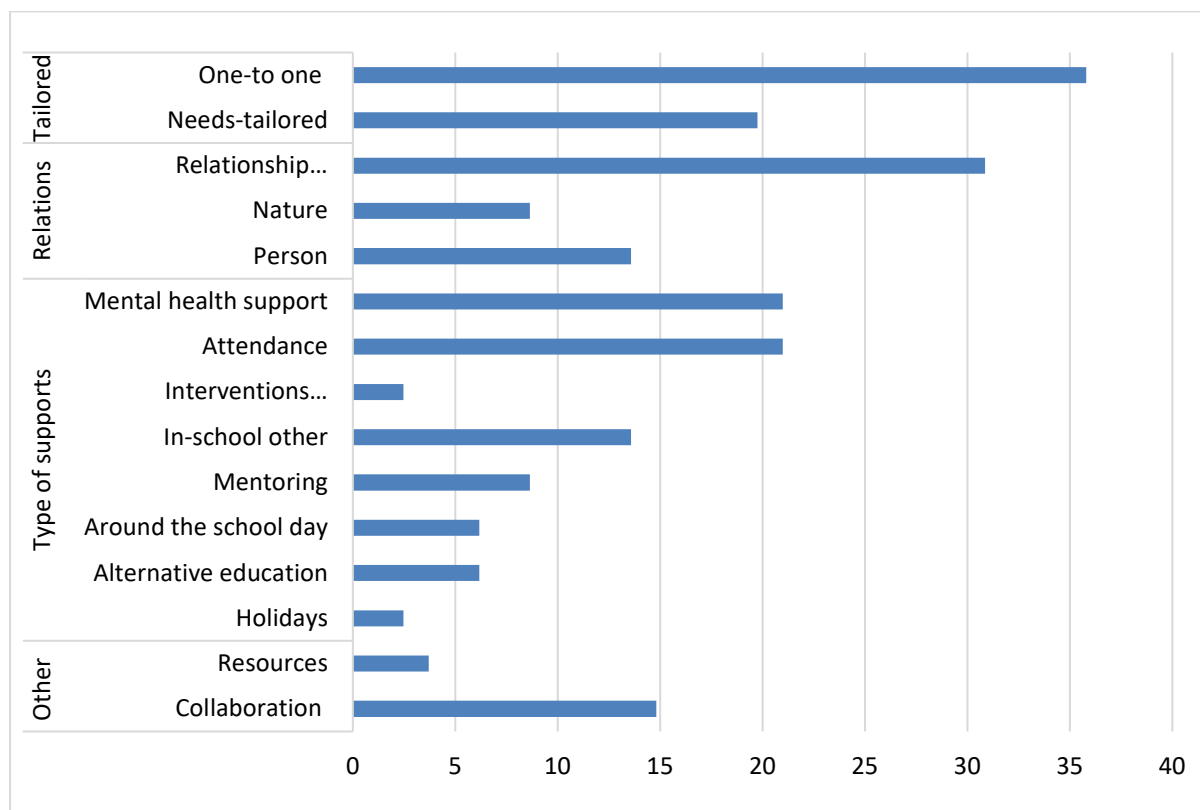
#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter starts by exploring the impact of SCP across a range of areas such as school engagement and attendance as well as social and emotional support. It highlights the importance of the skills of SCP staff in implementing the interventions and their flexibility in providing support for students. The chapter then moves on to discuss the perceived impact of in-school supports and holiday provision, before turning to student outcomes, both measurable and soft outcomes. As discussed in the 2015 review, it is challenging to evaluate the potential impact of a programme like SCP, given that any changes in student outcomes are likely to reflect the comprehensive package of supports put in place. This chapter therefore focuses on SCP and school staff perceptions of impact.

#### 5.2 KEY FACTORS IN ENHANCING STUDENT OUTCOMES

Chapter 3 provides a detailed discussion of the different support measures implemented in the projects. This section explores the perceived impact of these measures on student outcomes. In an open question in the survey, coordinators were asked what support measures they feel are most likely to improve student outcomes (see Figure 5.1), while the case-study interviews allow for a more detailed exploration of the perceived strengths of SCP more generally. Survey responses covered a variety of dimensions, including relationships, the nature of the support and the types of support. For coherence, the discussion of responses from all sources of data is organised around the central themes emerging, namely social and emotional support through relationship building, the skills of staff and the programme's flexibility.

**FIGURE 5.1 MEASURES SEEN AS MOST LIKELY TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS (%)**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

### 5.2.1 Social and emotional support

Respondents highlighted the importance of SCP in providing additional support for vulnerable students and their families, helping, at least in part, to bridge the gap in life chances between them and their more advantaged peers.

*That's what the SCP programme is really about, it's about supporting people where they are at, giving children a leg up so they're on **an even playing field with other children**, you know, so they can compete at the same level, and they need that bit extra. And families in this community really need it because they have been forgotten by successive governments, there is no proper investment. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

*The children really get so much out of it, and it's about them at the end of the day, you know, that they have **that little bit of extra** that ... they just don't get at home because of their circumstances. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*I think that the children in the area would be **lost without it**. I think it's a huge support to families. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

SCP was viewed as supporting the social development of students, by fostering the necessary life skills to cope with life inside and outside of school.

*I think it's a very positive experience for the kids ... it does help them to develop ... skills and **being able to cope** ... [It gives them a] sense of value and does support them in trying to manage what they're doing in school. So, I think in a practical way it is very supportive. (EWO)*

*[A student wrote that] I gave him the skills to be able to **deal with his grief** and be able to enjoy coming to school again. Which shows me that SCP is a vital support because sometimes they don't get that in schools and they don't get that extra bit of support that they need. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

SCP was seen to help the target children to gain confidence and improve their participation in school, particularly in cases where they may not be listened to as much at home or in class.

*Where do you see the differences ... it's in relation to **the confidence piece and the participation piece**. ... They don't engage. Whereas the School Completion often really turns that around, and you have a child that's actually participating when they come in. They're here in mind and body, not just body. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*I definitely think it makes a difference to their lives and does help [them] to come to school. Definitely with their **confidence** and giving them that ... one-to-one kind of support that they may not be getting from anyone else, or maybe can speak to anyone else. (School staff, Fulham Place)*

Evidence-based programmes aimed at larger or smaller groups were seen to help students with developing their social skills and assist in building their self-esteem.

*The programme makes a massive difference – the large group programmes available such as Roots of Empathy, Life Skills get such positive feedback from the children. The small group and individual programmes help build **esteem, social skills**, etc. Without SCP to support these programmes, my schools would not have the capacity to do so. (School staff, McLean Alley)*

Children and young people who have been absent from school for a considerable amount of time require a substantial amount of social support in order to re-engage with school, which the SCP is able to provide them with.

*If a child is not attending school and we're trying to increase the attendance, often the case is you know that they need an awful lot of*

*support socially, because if they've been at home and ... the friendship groups have formed, lots of things have happened and they don't feel part of it. [The project worker] would be particularly skilful with things like that and she would take the kids in small groups and **teach them how to be in a group**. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

Central to the effective delivery of socio-emotional supports is the quality of relationships established with children and young people. SCP staff become a source of support, a reliable figure who will listen to their problems without judgement.

*We're often the **one positive adult** or the one good adult in their life. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

*The **consistency of contact** is massive for children and teenagers, obviously. But these are children who don't have that stability in their lives. ... That's the asset to the children, because that person is there Monday to Friday, dependability, reliability. (SCP staff, Fulham Place)*

The nature of the relationships established with students is seen as quite distinct from the role of the teacher or other school personnel, with children being more likely to approach SCP staff about an issue of concern.

*These are children that **have their voice listened to**. Their concerns are validated, which they might not always be in their home or in the class, the regular classroom situation. They are minded and looked after and that trust then is built up. And because that trust relationship is there then, communication is better, and we are there to give more targeted advice and they know that they can come ....and they would come maybe to SCP [person] before they would come to a teacher. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*We have a unique approach in terms of we don't have an agenda and we're not influenced by the school. We have more of an **independent role**, and we can move beyond the imperfections of the system and work around it. (Consultation event)*

*I suppose they're not teachers, so they have a different type of rapport with them. ... they have that type of rapport with them and that **trust** that is built up often in primary school. So I would say it is really important for these kids to have as many **good adults** as possible in their lives. And I think that's what SCP does. It just provides somebody that's more community based. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*



The SCP team are seen, in many instances, as acting as advocates for students, particularly in cases where conflict may have built up between the student and their teacher(s):

*There are people that owe their lives, and I really mean it, their lives to School Completion Programme, to the coordinator and [their] team of workers because they have been their **advocates**... Teachers want to expel someone, they want to have someone suspended, to address poor behaviour. .... But the SCP can in a very nice way, work with the principal and try and cajole and to say, look, we can do this, ... we can hang on to this student because we can give these supports to keep them in education. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

In addition to providing social and emotional support, some of the children also receive more material assistance in the form of food, clothes and hygiene products. Furthermore, the children are encouraged to set their goals for the future, with the assistance of SCP staff.

*I feel like School Completion should really be called **opportunity** like I feel, whether it's food, clothes, giving them nurture and giving them opportunities to have goals and like think of their future. Because when I sit down with children most times when I say like what's your future goal, they actually never even thought of that. That's not something that people at home would talk to their students. So we're giving them **something to drive for**. (SCP staff, St. Michael's Walk)*

Relationship building was also seen as fundamental to providing more holistic supports to students in collaboration with other school staff.

*So, there is a, you know, School Completion, home-school liaison and the school management **working so well together** to keep young people in school and keeping pupils in school that would never have stayed until the Leaving Cert. And supporting them into apprenticeships and other things like that. So, what the reason I'm saying that is the money that is invested in School Completion does come back. (EWO)*

SCP also played a role in raising teachers' awareness of the difficulties some of the children are experiencing.

*Not only a role in meeting the student's needs, but also in raising **teachers' awareness** of the difficulties that the students are experiencing and sometimes bringing them back to that realisation that you know, this is ongoing, and we all have to work a little bit harder with these kids. (School staff, McLean Alley)*

This was all the more important in a context where teachers were often felt to be unaware of the scale of the challenges faced by some students, with conflict sometimes arising around issues like uniforms in a situation where a student had overcome several obstacles to attend school at all.

### 5.2.2 The skills of SCP staff members and flexibility of the programme

The skills and expertise of SCP personnel are seen as the crucial element of effective programme implementation. Positive and supportive relationships are viewed as enhancing a sense of school belonging among students.

*Completing school, feeling safe in school, **feeling like they really belong** there, 'cause some of our students are not very academic and they'll struggle. But I think us having them there and feeling safe. That's like a huge outcome. Someone believing in them like someone giving them the opportunities. (SCP staff, St. Michaels Walk)*

The support of the SCP team was considered to be particularly valuable for young people who are out of school, promoting opportunities for them to re-engage with education or in exploring alternative options:

*We might be the difference of the child having a school place in the first place. ...I'm thinking acutely of those young people who are out of school. ... But for some individual families and some individual children, it can be the **make or break**. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

The interviews with non-SCP staff showed their acknowledgement and appreciation of the work done by SCP coordinators and project workers in supporting the students:

*I think of **partnership**. I think of **reliability** and someone that I can turn to if there's an issue that has come up that I know doesn't fit immediately into the space of teacher, pupil, parent. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*Amazing. Absolutely amazing. ... they're phenomenal and everything that they do. ... They **go above and beyond**, they're in at the crack of dawn every morning. They're here in the evenings, running clubs. The kids absolutely love them. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

*[SCP is] Fantastically successful. What would I put that down to? I would have to say, you know, a huge part of it is the person who's there, you know, **the coordinator**. [S/he] is a highly impressive person ... who I and other staff would really enjoy working with because she fully understands how busy school life is ... When [s/he] wants to speak*

*to you, you know that it's important. ... And she has an amazing **rapport with students**. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*I think the **relationship** is very important. ... It's a different relationship to a teacher... [Students say] I came to school today because I knew you were here. I was, you know, saying I was sick this morning. But I then I remembered you were in, and I come in, you know, this kind of thing. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

While Chapter 4 showed that some interviewees queried potential inconsistency across projects in their operation, the flexibility of SCP was considered one of the strengths of the programme, allowing staff to develop interventions which meet the needs of the target children:

*Even though there are the national guidelines, ... we can still locally look at what are the needs of the child, what are the needs of the school, what the **needs of the community** ... We have still the **flexibility** to respond to those and not just having to say, well, these are the national guidelines, this is what we do. So that absolutely is the strength. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*A School Completion project in one area can be very, very different and I think allowing them that **flexibility** to do what suits the area and what the needs are [is a strength]. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

There is also flexibility to provide supports where the need for intervention arises, making it possible to address difficulties that might otherwise escalate.

*We have a really good relationship. So ... any family that I feel might benefit from breakfast club, I'd go back to [the SCP team] and I'd say, listen, have you got space at the moment? ... I wouldn't be asking for the sake of asking ... so it is children that really need it, families that really need it and they would always be **accommodating**, always. (School staff, Trobe Street)*

*Having the flexibility within the School Completion Programme, to ... do a quick referral for a child that needs a **short quick intervention** – that has been very useful to sort of maybe prevent something that could become this huge problem. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

## 5.3 PERCEIVED IMPACT OF SCP INITIATIVES

### 5.3.1 Impact of supports around the school day

Much of the discussion in Section 5.2 has centred on the value of in-school supports. However, supports around the school day were seen to benefit the

students in a number of ways. For example, breakfast clubs were seen as providing students with a good start to the school day:

*Breakfast club, I think, is huge, like I know with some of ours, the teachers will text me and say did so and so not get into breakfast club this morning because they're up to 90 when they come in, where I feel like that gives them **time ... to regulate themselves** before they go into class. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

Breakfast clubs and after-school clubs provide SCP staff with a chance to chat to parents and develop a stronger relationship with the family as a result. Lunchtime clubs are seen as another opportunity to provide students with a quiet and safe place to spend their lunch break. In addition, they are considered important in ensuring that students have a proper meal during the day (see Chapter 3).

Homework clubs are viewed as providing students with a supervised environment to do their homework, especially where young people may lack a quiet place at home to do homework or study. Some interviewees noted that, ideally, they would like to provide this opportunity more frequently:

*For the pupils, the **homework club is brilliant**. I would love to see that four days a week as opposed to two days a week because the children really, really need it. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*The homework club has been **a fantastic support** also. If this were available more days, we would love this. (School staff, McLean Alley)*

### 5.3.2 Impact of holiday provision

In addition to the supports available to students during and around the school day, holiday provision was considered to benefit students in offering them opportunities to engage with other students and have positive new experiences (see also Chapter 3).

*A lot of it is down to the trip, they really look forward to it. And you can see you can actually see a young person that you've had all year long that was anxious through the whole kind of one-to-ones and they're **opening up in the programmes** because they're meeting other people their own age. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

While in some schools the holiday provision is available for target children, in other cases it is available for all students in the school, thus avoiding identifying students based on access to the activities:

*I don't see a great advantage in asking the students to take part in a summer programme and in other students not. I think when we start*

*to **identify students based on their access** to a programme, I don't think it's good. (School staff, McLean Alley)*

## 5.4 STUDENT OUTCOMES

### 5.4.1 Perceived impact of SCP activities on student outcomes

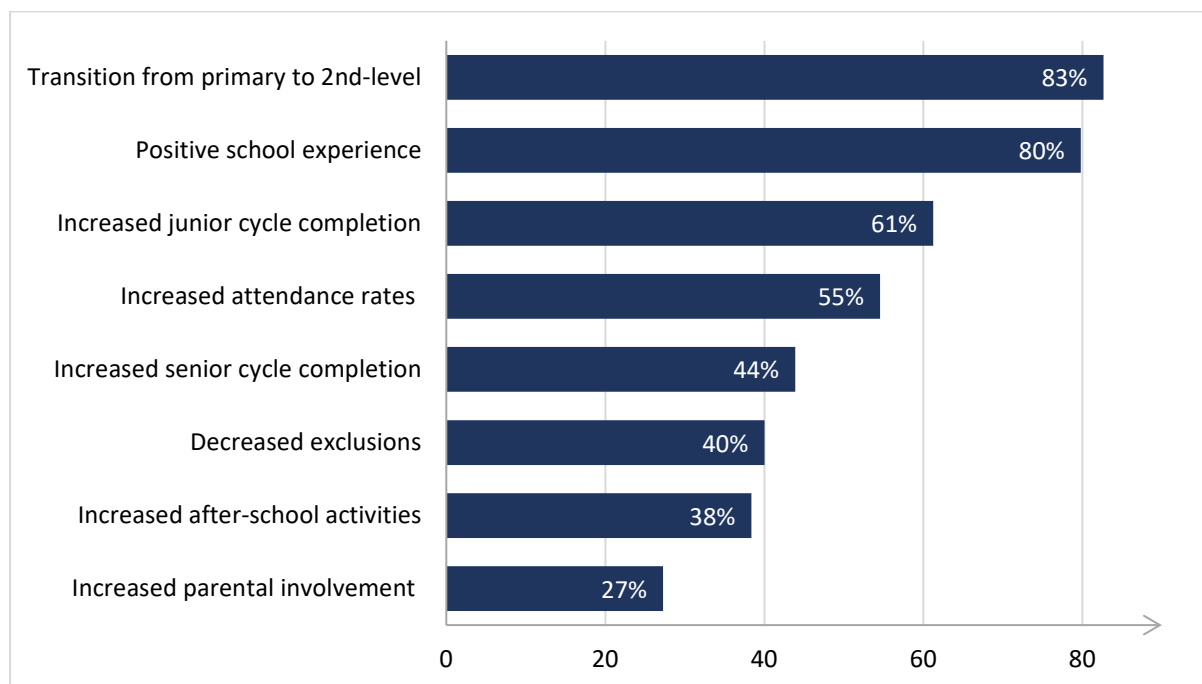
In the survey, the coordinators were asked about the perceived impact of the project on a range of student outcomes (Figure 5.2). Summing responses across outcomes, more recently appointed coordinators are less likely to report impacts to a great extent, but this may reflect not having been through evaluation processes at the time of the survey. SCP was seen as having an impact 'to a great extent' on the transition from primary to post-primary education (83 per cent), especially in mixed-DEIS clusters (88 per cent) compared to DEIS-only clusters (79 per cent).

*I think it does make a difference. It's very, **very good for transitions**. It's very good that Roots of Empathy and the programmes that are working do help the overall culture of the school. (School staff, McLean Alley)*

*It could be sometimes where the School Completion will go in and sit with the pupil to help them at the very, very beginning when they're **transitioning into our school**, because they would have the relationship with the young person. And they would support the young person to settle into our school community. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Most coordinators agreed that SCP activities have an impact to a 'great extent' on making the school experience positive (80 per cent), increasing junior cycle completion (61 per cent) and improving attendance rates (55 per cent). Coordinators were less likely to consider SCP had boosted senior cycle completion to a great extent compared to junior cycle completion. Around four-in-ten indicated the programme's contribution to decreasing exclusions and to increased participation in after-school activities. Not surprisingly, given the explicit focus of the programme, coordinators were much less likely to mention increased parental involvement, though a quarter did so. Taken together with earlier findings, this appears to reflect the fact that at least some engagement with parents is seen as key to engaging children and young people. At the same time, the level of engagement is unlikely to result in increased parental involvement, nor is this a goal of SCP.

**FIGURE 5.2 IMPACT OF SCP ACTIVITIES ON STUDENT OUTCOMES, AS REPORTED BY COORDINATORS**



Source: Survey of SCP coordinators.

#### 5.4.2 School engagement, attendance and retention

The interviews carried out in the six case-study projects showed that SCP was seen as having a positive impact on school engagement by making the school a more ‘positive place’ for students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds where education is not always valued:

*SCP is an opportunity to ... to create a more kind of **holistic school environment**. I think there’s a level of empathy we often bring to students. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*I think it [SCP] actually engages them, and actually shows them the **value of education** because they’re coming from backgrounds where education was never valued. There was no experience in this and there’s no aspiration. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

*I suppose the main strength is to help children have **more positive and happier outlook on school** as well as life. You know, sometimes the students who we work with would have difficult home environments (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

SCP supports were seen as having a positive impact on student attendance and retention.

*School Completion is extremely important as a service for schools, and I think that they do add real value for the young person and definitely*

*has an **impact on attendance and retention** in schools... We certainly would need that type of support here because of the diversity of the student population... that we have and the needs that they come to us with. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

Support from SCP project workers was considered important for student attendance, with those with low attendance levels more likely to attend school when they had a one-to-one session or other activity:

*The teachers will tell you like some of the kids that come out to us [project workers], they're in, **they never miss a day**. Their attendance would slip on other days, but they do tend to, if they have you on the timetable, they don't like [to] miss that day. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

*I think they [project workers] do an awful lot in a short amount of time, I think. The **children look forward** to the School Completion activities because they tell me, and I know of children that are in school on the days that the project worker is here. Because they don't come many other days. Well, they might, but they prefer the days that [the project worker] is here. (School staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

*It has helped **attendance** for a lot of kids that are on the programme that weren't good attenders and now, if they know they have the School Completion worker in the morning or even that day, they're more inclined to be in school. (School staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

The benefit of SCP became particularly apparent after the pandemic, when many students had become disengaged and had lower levels of school attendance. Considering the more holistic nature of the programme, SCP was seen as giving students an opportunity to re-engage.

*Just on a basic practical level, I do think we **increase attendance**. ... I think COVID was really good evidence for School Completion ... Attendance dropped massively, and then when they came back, you know, it took ages for students to be engaged and come back again. ... I think they enjoy it more. And I think they engage in and see school as more than just academics. (SCP staff, Trobe Street)*

#### **5.4.3 The importance of 'starting points' in assessing outcomes**

The interviews conducted in the case-study projects indicated that a 'positive outcome' does not just constitute attendance and retention rates, but also depends on the needs or 'starting point' of the student. As a result, the potential outcomes of participation in SCP covered a very wide range depending on the needs of the children and young people:

*The outcomes can be anything from a change in the young person. It can be anything from getting a young person to sit down and actually make **eye contact** with you to a young person coming to school. ... Probably one of the biggest outcomes for young people is building **resilience**. ... I suppose get them to think about education in a way that's gonna change their life and their circumstances... The outcomes can be huge to small. (SCP staff, St Michael's Walk)*

*So, like for one student, it [positive outcome] might be the case that they're coming to school every day. ... My main goal would that school is a **positive experience** for them and that they would be able to **finish school** and help them and to whatever they might like to do after. (SCP staff, Goldsborough Lane)*

However, sometimes by necessity, outcomes were more modest, involving meeting the basic needs of a young person in very disadvantaged circumstances.

*The official line is that every child is participating, that there's a great retention but for us [if] they come in and have their good **clean uniform** on them ... and that they've had a **hot meal**. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

*Whether that is literally Junior Cert, Leaving Cert ... Getting them in from day-to-day and **clean and happy**. ... It can be small, small things. Or it could be massive things, really. (SCP staff, McLean Alley)*

#### 5.4.4 Assessing the impact of SCP

In open questions on the survey, coordinators were asked about how they assessed the quality of interventions provided for in-school support and support around the school days. For both, most coordinators mentioned the mode of assessment they were using, including evaluations, reviews, feedback, questionnaires and meetings. Most coordinators also referred to the target audience of these evaluations, which mainly include teachers and young people.

*If we run a programme, we **ask the young people** how did that go? What did you like? What didn't you like? (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

This review process was used as a basis for adapting the programme provided in the project.

*We just got kind of ...did an analysis of **what worked well**, what didn't work well. And we'll just change bits of pieces going forward next year ... it's ever changing, it's dynamic. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*



Overall, coordinators mentioned collecting feedback from students, having meetings with teachers, and conducting pre- and post-evaluations, without too much precision.<sup>23</sup> Only a few coordinators mentioned the criteria on which their assessment was based, which included attendance, engagement, and students' needs. However, those were loosely defined. It may be due to difficulties in systematically assessing all outcomes, with socio-emotional development often more difficult to capture.

*We do measure to a certain extent. **Is it always very measurable?***

*Well, not always. (SCP staff, Lonsdale Lane)*

In addition, it was recognised that students in DEIS schools are receiving a number of different supports, making it difficult to separate out the impact of SCP from other support measures.

*It's very **hard to quantify** the effect that SCP is having on the children because we have a lot of other very good strategies in place as well.*

*We have our own play therapist based in the school. ... We do the Incredible Years throughout the school as well. (School staff, McLean Alley)*

## 5.5 CONCLUSIONS

This chapter has explored the perceived impact of the SCP. SCP staff, school personnel and EWOs were very positive about the impact of the programme. The programme was seen to create a more holistic school environment, catering for the different needs of students. Having an adult who supported and listened to them was seen as crucial in offering a flexible support for students, based on their needs. The programme was seen as contributing to more positive attitudes; this was viewed in turn as improving school engagement, attendance and retention. There are challenges in systematically evaluating the outcomes of SCP for students. Nonetheless, the increased use of evidence-based programmes provides a potential evidence base for evaluating the impact of particular interventions and the extent to which they work or do not work with particular groups of students. Pobal's Distance Travelled Tool also provides a good example of how changes in soft skills can be captured but would, of course, need to be adapted significantly for a younger age group.

The provision of social and emotional support for students was considered to be a crucial element of SCP, fostering valuable life skills, self-confidence and helping young people develop a more positive outlook for the future. Fundamental to the effectiveness of such support is the strong relationships built between staff and

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<sup>23</sup> It should be acknowledged that these open questions were quite broadly framed.

target students. SCP staff frequently act as advocates for children, raising awareness among school staff of the difficulties these children may be experiencing in their home lives. For out-of-school children, the SCP provides opportunities to re-engage, or to find alternative arrangements for them to continue their education.

School staff in the case-study clusters were deeply appreciative of the programme and the work done by the SCP team that was perceived to be 'above and beyond', given their involvement in a range of initiatives encompassing one-to-one provision, group work, linking in with parents and running clubs and other activities. The initiatives run by SCP, whether in-school or during school holidays, were seen to support student engagement with school. While there are national guidelines for SCP, having some flexibility to adjust the work according to the needs of the students, school and wider community was considered as one of the key strengths of the programme. This flexibility was also evident through the dynamic nature of provision, adapted following feedback from key stakeholders including children and young people, on what is felt to be working well.

## CHAPTER 6

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### Conclusions

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

The School Completion Programme has been in place since 2002 and is designed to provide support for children and young people who are at risk of disengaging from school. SCP is currently organised through 121 projects that encompass a cluster of primary and post-primary schools, mostly schools with DEIS status. Each project has a coordinator who oversees the implementation of the programme. Supports are offered during and around the school day, during the holiday period(s) and for those young people who are out of school (for reasons of school avoidance, suspension, expulsion or early school leaving).

An earlier evaluation of the programme (Smyth et al., 2015) highlighted the value of the programme in providing needs-based and flexible supports founded on strong relationships between SCP staff and students, and between SCP staff and the rest of the school community. However, the review highlighted a number of challenges around the governance structure, with a significant variation between projects in oversight arrangements and employment conditions, marked variation in the size of projects and in the supports available, and a sharp decrease in funding in the wake of recession-related austerity measures.

Since that period, there have been a number of changes in the nature of the programme, with a revised management structure in TESS and a move to the remit of the Department of Education, increased funding since 2016, a new intake framework for targeting students, a greater emphasis on the use of evidence-based programmes, and the roll-out of CPD for SCP staff and LMC members. There have also been changes in the broader societal context. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic posed considerable challenges to schools in engaging students, with a longer-term negative impact on attendance levels and socio-emotional wellbeing. Deprivation among children has dropped from its recession high but has begun to increase with the recent cost-of-living crisis, with over one-fifth of children experiencing enforced deprivation in 2023 (CSO, 2024).<sup>24</sup> This report examines the operation of the SCP in this changed landscape and highlights potential areas for further development. In particular, the study has had the following aims:

- To examine the nature of the referral process, including the role of the principal, HSCL and EWO;

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<sup>24</sup> Enforced deprivation involves being unable to afford two or more of 11 specified items, including keeping the house adequately warm, new clothes and two or more pairs of shoes (CSO, 2024).

- To look at the types of supports provided for students and their delivery;
- To examine perceptions of the CPD (mandatory and elective) and other supports received by coordinators and project workers;
- To explore the links of the programme with DEIS, and other local services;
- To document the extent to which the outcomes of children and young people are measured and recorded;
- To capture perceptions of the impact of the pandemic on the work of SCP;
- To identify any other potential challenges to the work of SCP.

In addressing these aims, this report draws on a survey of 99 SCP coordinators (four-fifths of the total), a consultation event conducted with SCP coordinators and project workers in May 2024, and six project case studies. In the latter, interviews were conducted with SCP staff, HSCLs, principals, LMC chairs, and EWOs in projects selected to capture key dimensions of variation in programme provision and practice. The combination of quantitative and qualitative information is used to provide a more comprehensive picture of the operation of SCP and practice on the ground. This chapter outlines the main findings of the study and points to areas for further development of the programme.

## 6.2 TARGETING AND STUDENT NEED

SCP projects vary markedly in their size and composition. One-in-six comprise nine or more schools and a third include at least one non-DEIS school. Coordinators are broadly satisfied with current clustering arrangements. Yet, they point to challenges around a lack of congruence between project boundaries and school transfer patterns. Some children who have received SCP support lose it when they transition to a non-DEIS post-primary school, outside the project. Geographical dispersion also creates challenges for some projects in terms of commuting time between schools. Key aspects of the operation and perceptions of the programme are found to vary by project size, patterns that are highlighted in the remainder of this chapter.

The majority of coordinators point to a change in need among the student population over time. Attendance, engagement and wellbeing are generally viewed as worse or much worse compared to before the pandemic. SCP staff point to increased difficulties in motivation and engagement levels among children and young people along with a lack of resilience to deal with challenges. Mental health difficulties, particularly anxiety, are seen to have increased, leading, in several cases, to school avoidance.<sup>25</sup> SCP, and the broader DEIS programme within which

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<sup>25</sup> TESS is currently running a pilot project to help address school avoidance.

it operates, has always targeted the most disadvantaged children and young people. Often vivid accounts given by case-study interviewees highlight the numbers of target group children whose basic needs are not being met, with food poverty and lack of equipment (such as uniforms and sports footwear). Economic deprivation emerges as a barrier to educational participation, especially in the wake of the cost-of-living crisis. SCP and school staff point to how the concentration of disadvantage in neighbourhoods served by the programme leads to additional challenges around mental health, addiction and local conflict or crime that impinge on attendance and participation.

Since the 2015 review, there have been reforms to the way in which students are targeted for SCP support. There are three types of interventions: more intensive supports for the target group, who have the greatest level of need; brief interventions to support children over a difficult period; and universal interventions which provide programmes to a whole class or group. A new intake framework is now used to identify the target group based on a range of criteria, with a more concise form used for brief interventions. Coordinators report good cooperation around the referral process, mainly involving the coordinator, HSCL and the school principal. In just over half of projects, EWOs are involved to a great extent in the process. The majority of coordinators are involved in care or student support team meetings in the project schools, with these meetings assisting with the identification and referral of students to SCP for support. Coordinators have mixed views about the new intake framework, mainly divided between finding it very useful and somewhat useful. It is seen as providing a clear and transparent basis for identifying need and prioritising the most vulnerable students. However, it is frequently viewed as onerous, and difficulties may arise in parents openly providing sometimes very sensitive information.

### **6.3 THE NATURE OF SCP SUPPORTS**

All of the projects surveyed provide in-school support while almost all provide supports around the school day (before/after school or at lunchtime), during the school holidays and for those young people who are not in school. Most provision is in-school (59 per cent on average), broadly similar to the pattern found in 2014/15. There has been a slight increase in the emphasis on out-of-school supports over time, with many coordinators indicating a preference to further expand these supports.

One-to-one interventions are seen as crucial in working with vulnerable children and young people, allowing SCP workers to identify need and develop appropriate supports while building up a relationship of trust with the child. There is now a greater reliance on one-to-one interventions than was the case at the time of the 2015 review. Most in-school work relies on withdrawal from regular class, with

timetabling emerging as a challenge. In this context, SCP staff describe flexibility in the timing of withdrawal and many school staff understand the need to do so, seeing this one-to-one support as effective in dealing with those with greatest need. In addition, group work and universal interventions are seen as playing an important role in developing social and broader life skills, particularly among younger children. Holiday provision is also viewed as important, with most projects focusing on trips and fun activities to help enhance a more positive view of school among young people and provide them with a structure to their day. However, holiday provision is viewed as the most vulnerable to potential funding shortfalls, given the expense involved in transport and trips. Work with out-of-school young people involves advice and support for them and follow-up with those who have gone on to alternative education provision, with around half of projects facilitating access to the iScoil programme.

The types of interventions used are found to vary between and within projects as well as between primary and post-primary students. There is a greater emphasis on attendance tracking, mentoring, counselling and study support in post-primary schools compared to primary schools. There is considerable variation in the use of different evidence-based programmes, with only motivational interviewing used in the majority of schools. Decisions around the activities and interventions to be run are largely driven by the coordinator, project workers and principals, though other school personnel and students tend to be involved to some extent. SCP staff stressed the importance of basing provision on the needs of a student, tailoring the type of intervention and approach taken to the challenges faced by that child or young person.

SCP is part of a broader suite of DEIS supports offered in schools serving more disadvantaged populations. Coordinators describe frequent contact and collaboration with school principals, HSCLs, EWOs and, to some extent, class or subject teachers. SCP staff generally see themselves as embedded in the school community and linked to other DEIS supports, though there is more variation in the extent to which coordinators are involved in formal DEIS planning and in DEIS/Whole-School Evaluation (WSE) inspections. SCP staff work most closely with HSCLs and both parties see their work as complementary. In most projects, SCP staff have some engagement with families, encompassing informal contact with parents through breakfast clubs and after-school activities, calling parents as part of attendance monitoring of target group children, and some joint visits with HSCLs in the case of hard-to-reach families or where the relationship between home and school has broken down. The greatest involvement with families centres on out-of-school provision, with staff providing information and advice to parents as well as the young person and, in a significant minority of cases, engaging in groupwork with both parties.

## 6.4 GOVERNANCE, STAFFING AND FUNDING

Perhaps the issue most strongly highlighted by coordinators in the 2015 review was the overall governance of the programme. While there have been a number of consultations with staff in the intervening period, projects continue to vary in their employment arrangements. Most have a variety of arrangements such as employment by the LMC or through unincorporated associations or companies limited by guarantee, while a smaller number are employed through ETBs, Foróige or even individual schools. Those interviewed emphasise the impact of pay and conditions on SCP staff, with staff turnover an issue in over a third of projects, a situation that is seen by many as reflecting the value placed on the programme nationally. All projects are overseen by a Local Management Committee (LMC), made up of school principals, HSCLs and representatives of local organisations or agencies. Coordinators are generally positive about current reporting structures and the support they receive from their LMC, though a minority indicate they do not receive sufficient support. The voluntary nature of board memberships means that many coordinators indicate a lack of expertise at LMC level to address complex HR and financial issues. Over half of the coordinators are satisfied with reporting structures to TESS but are somewhat less satisfied with the feedback they receive. Small projects appear somewhat less satisfied with engagement with TESS.

The role of the coordinator is varied, encompassing management and administration of the programme, the development and evaluation of interventions, personnel management, interaction with stakeholders including school staff, and face-to-face contact with children and young people. Reflecting their staffing structures, coordinators in large clusters spend less of their time on direct interventions with students. Coordinators reported spending over a quarter of their time on administration, reporting and financial paperwork, with higher levels found among those in large projects and among more recently appointed coordinators. The majority of projects have at least one project worker, whose work centres on direct interventions with children and young people. Analyses indicate a disparity in staffing for large projects, with a much higher student-staff ratio in these cases. Over half of coordinators are not satisfied with current staffing levels, with greater dissatisfaction among medium/large projects and more recently appointed coordinators. Those who are very satisfied have a much lower student-staff ratio than those who are not satisfied.

There has been a rollout of mandatory CPD for SCP staff as well as elective training, mainly relating to evidence-based programmes. Most point to CPD they would like to receive, generally centring on the management and financial skills needed in their role, with a significant minority requesting training in relation to mental health issues.

Almost half of coordinators are dissatisfied with funding and even among those who are fairly satisfied, they tend to highlight the mismatch between funding levels and the scale of need in their project. Around 80 per cent of funding goes on staff costs, and coordinators often describe a zero-sum trade-off, with pay increments reducing the amount that can be spent on activities. When asked about what additional funding could facilitate, coordinators were most likely to mention out-of-school supports. Overall, SCP and school staff appeared torn between the need to provide more intensive support for the existing target group, given that many of these children would require daily rather than weekly check-ins, and the desire to include more students in the target group, given the scale of need in project schools.

## **6.5 PERCEPTIONS OF SCP**

SCP is seen very positively by principals and HSCLs in the project schools, with school staff pointing to the vital support it has provided to their students and, in many instances, to themselves in their own roles. Coordinators are positive about the impact of the programme on making school a positive place for children, thus enhancing their attendance and retention. The programme is also viewed as particularly effective in supporting transitions from primary to post-primary education. The key strengths of the programme are seen to lie in the skills and expertise of coordinators and project workers who develop strong and supportive relationships with children, providing one good adult in their lives to whom they can turn for help and advice and who act as advocates on their behalf. The flexibility of the programme to respond to need by providing different types of interventions and supports on a one-to-one or group basis was seen as a core strength of the programme. The case-study interviews documented many cases of swift responses to emerging needs by SCP staff, preventing difficulties from escalating. Staff play an important role in mobilising resources to address the barriers to participation, including linking to food banks, and obtaining sponsorship or other funding to cover educational costs and to help pay for holiday provision.

The flexibility can lead to inconsistency in the implementation of the programme across projects, which is seen as a weakness of the programme by several coordinators. Coordinators and staff point to infrequent contact with those from other projects, which may itself make it more difficult to build and maintain a coherent vision for the programme. A further challenge relates to how the programme is seen and valued nationally. Many SCP and, indeed, school staff highlighted a lack of general awareness of the programme among key stakeholders and families themselves. Several coordinators made considerable effort to brief project school staff on the programme and to clarify what is and what is not covered by it.



## 6.6 IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

### 6.6.1 Implications for SCP

The OECD (2024) review of DEIS funding allocation describes SCP as ‘widely appreciated within the Irish education system’ and ‘highly regarded by various stakeholders’. The findings of this study echo these statements and the results of the 2015 programme review to highlight the value of SCP as a crucial support for at-risk children and young people, providing them with one good adult to act as an advocate for them and help reduce the barriers to their full participation in education. The key strengths of the programme lie in its flexibility and responsiveness to the needs of children and young people, the skills of the staff in fostering positive relations with students, families and the school community, the commitment of the staff to children and young people, and the provision of a support that is offered and embedded in the school. The remainder of this section points to aspects of the programme that could be further enhanced as well as implications for broader policy relating to child poverty and wellbeing.

The issue of SCP governance was the most strongly emphasised by coordinators and LMC chairs in the 2015 review and continues to exercise SCP staff now. Despite a series of consultations to discuss and address the issue, projects remain subject to a variety of employment structures, with perceived job insecurity and lack of pension entitlements viewed as impacting on staff retention, thus affecting the provision of supports. The study finds that SCP staff work very closely with other professionals, including principals, HSCLs, and EWOs, but do not have access to similar pension arrangements. Echoing the recommendation of the 2015 review, clear and consistent governance and employment structures should be established across all projects. The LMC structure is broadly working well as a support for coordinators and as a forum for the exchange of information and advice among principals, HSCLs and (where involved) local organisations. There are challenges around volunteer members having the level of expertise required for some complex HR and financial issues, though perceptions among coordinators on this lacuna have improved somewhat over time, perhaps reflecting new webinars being made available to LMC members. TESS has employed an external organisation to provide HR support, and this support could perhaps be more widely publicised to LMC members.

The strength of SCP lies in its flexibility, but some coordinators point to considerable variation between projects. There would appear to be considerable scope for greater contact between projects, allowing for an exchange of good practice and a sharing of experience to help build and maintain a shared vision of the programme. The retention plans completed by coordinators provide a good deal of information on the operation of projects. There would appear to be considerable scope to collate this information and feed it back on an aggregate

basis to coordinators, to enhance their knowledge of how other projects are operating.<sup>26</sup> Existing CPD is generally favourably viewed but coordinators indicate the greater need for management and financial training to be able to carry out their role more effectively.

There are challenges in systematically evaluating the outcomes of SCP for students and separating out the programme impact from that of other dimensions of DEIS. Nonetheless, the increased use of evidence-based programmes provides a potential evidence base for evaluating the impact of particular interventions and the extent to which they work or do not work with particular groups of students. Pobal's Distance Travelled Tool also provides a good example of how changes in soft skills can be captured but would, of course, need to be adapted significantly for a younger age group.

The four strands of SCP provision, and the differing interventions and supports within them, emerge as providing complementary ways of supporting vulnerable children, though SCP and school staff are probably more satisfied with how in-school supports are operating in their projects. Many coordinators would prefer a greater emphasis on out-of-school supports in their project, reflecting the growing incidence of school avoidance. However, this strand is seen as the most challenging, requiring a good deal of time to get the young person to engage with them in the first instance and then to provide them with ongoing support to re-engage with school or embark on another educational pathway. A further challenge is the lack of available places for those who are too young to enter Youthreach. A review of out-of-school provision for this age group (Department of Education, 2022) has highlighted the unstructured nature of current provision with a mix of governance structures and marked geographical variation in the availability of places. At the time of writing, the out-of-school provision implementation plan is to be published shortly and it is crucial that links to, and referral pathways through, SCP be part of any such plan.

TESS guidelines indicate that 'home and parental engagement is the role of HSCL'.<sup>27</sup> However the survey, case studies and consultation event point to a much more nuanced situation on the ground. SCP staff work closely with HSCLs but frequently interact informally with parents as part of before- and after-school activities, contact them as part of attendance monitoring, and liaise with them about holiday provision. In particular, they engage with the families of young people who are out of school, including early school leavers, a role that cannot be taken on by the HSCL. Further, in many instances, strong relationships with the local community among the SCP staff form an important resource to assist HSCLs in engaging hard-to-reach

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<sup>26</sup> For a parallel argument, see OECD (2024) on the need to strengthen the use of data at school level.

<sup>27</sup> TESS SCP news, 5 May 2016.

parents, particularly when HSCLs are new to the role. On this basis, SCP guidelines could better reflect the nature of SCP involvement with families and its contribution, while of course emphasising the complementarity of this work to the role of the HSCL.

The 2015 review recommended that project boundaries be revisited to better reflect local neighbourhoods and provide greater continuity of support, while also paying attention to the size of projects. The number of schools included in SCP has grown somewhat in the intervening period, with many clusters taking on newly designated DEIS schools. The study findings highlight particular challenges for large projects, with a much higher student-staff ratio, less frequent contact between the coordinator and key school personnel, more time spent by coordinators on administration, and less satisfaction with staffing. In contrast, small projects (those with four or fewer schools) provide target group interventions to a larger proportion of their student population. There therefore remains a case to revisit project boundaries to both address these challenges and ensure continuity of support for young people over school transitions. If acted upon, the OECD recommendation of extending partial support to all disadvantaged students<sup>28</sup> (see also Smyth et al., 2015) could help address the issue of greater continuity of support over school transfers without involving a change in project boundaries.

Funding for SCP has increased since 2016, even taking account of inflation, though levels in 2023/24 are still lower than the levels of funding in 2008 in real terms, before recession-related austerity measures.<sup>29</sup> Funding to individual projects appears to be driven by legacy levels and there is a clear case for a restructured funding allocation model reflecting project size and need at the local level, and taking account of public sector pay increments. Most of the project budget is absorbed by staff costs, leading to a trade-off, in the absence of incremental increases, between staffing and project activities. This suggests the potential value of ringfencing some funding for project activities. The case-study interviews point to the constraints posed to SCP work by funding levels, curtailing, for example, the number of days per week projects can offer after-school provision and the number of students who can be offered one-to-one supports. As with other supports for educational disadvantage, the costs must be set against the long-term costs of early school leaving to individuals and the broader society in terms of higher unemployment rates and welfare dependency, lower incomes and tax revenue, poorer health and higher crime levels (Smyth and McCoy, 2009).

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<sup>28</sup> This would look something like the UK pupil premium model with some funding paid to non-DEIS schools on the basis of the number of disadvantaged students they have. This means that a student transferring from a SCP project school to a non-DEIS school outside the project would have some access to supports for the transition.

<sup>29</sup> The equivalent of 2008 funding levels would be €38.7 million in 2023 prices compared to actual levels of funding of €31.6 million in 2023.

### 6.6.2 SCP in the broader policy context

SCP represents an important strand of DEIS provision and there is evidence of strong collaborative relationships between SCP staff, principals, HSCLs and EWOs. However, there is greater variation in the involvement of coordinators in formal DEIS planning, indicating the potential for greater such involvement in order to ensure a more holistic service to students. At the same time, there are challenges for coordinators of larger projects in being involved a great deal in this process. Many coordinators are well linked to local organisations and agencies, especially community centres and youth work services. However, waiting lists for mental health services and other supports mean that SCP and school staff often have no ready access to referral pathways for children and young people with more complex needs. The OECD review points to the need for strengthening coordination with health and therapy services. There have been interesting developments regarding the piloting of providing multi-disciplinary teams in DEIS schools in a particular area, though this has not yet been evaluated. There has also been a roll-out of counselling services in primary schools on a pilot basis, though this service did not, until very recently, cover some of the larger cities with significant pockets of deprivation. More broadly, the establishment of the Child Poverty and Wellbeing Programme Office has the potential to facilitate more integrated service delivery to vulnerable children and young people. Overall, however, there is currently a mismatch between growing need – such as school avoidance and anxiety – and available services, a situation that will continue to impact on attendance and participation in the absence of additional resources.

The reduction or removal of certain barriers to educational participation is beyond the scope of SCP itself but is amenable to other policy interventions. Deprivation levels among children and young people are higher than among the adult population and, while lower than during the recession years, have started to increase with the recent cost-of-living crisis (Roantree and Doorley, 2023; CSO, 2024). There has been some progress in reducing educational costs, with free books up to junior cycle and, more recently, to senior cycle and the roll-out of breakfast provision. Nonetheless, there are still significant costs attached to schooling, including uniforms, sports equipment and Transition Year fees, with the OECD review highlighting the need to review these costs and strengthen access to free education. The introduction of a second-tier child benefit to cover all households with children based on means and family size would reduce child poverty by a quarter (Roantree and Doorley, 2023) and therefore has much merit as an income support to the kinds of families served by SCP. SCP and school staff accounts of the concentration of disadvantage at local level and its consequences in terms of mental health difficulties, addiction and local conflict or crime highlight the fact that school-based initiatives to tackle educational disadvantage need to be underpinned by broader supports for vulnerable families at local level. There is therefore a need for joined-up policy to support vulnerable children through mental health and other supports for parents and for integrated approaches to

meeting the needs of local communities, such as through the Social Inclusion and Community Activity Programme (SICAP) (Darmody and Smyth, 2018). In sum, there is considerable scope for further enhancing SCP supports for at-risk children and young people, but a joined-up approach involving school-based supports, changes in income supports and enhancing locally-based initiatives would appear to provide a road map to more systematically reducing the barriers to educational participation.

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## **APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COORDINATORS**

**School Completion Programme (SCP)  
LOCAL COORDINATOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE [2023/2024]**

ID: \_\_\_\_\_

**A. IDENTIFICATION AND TARGETING OF STUDENTS**

**1. How many schools are in your SCP project [please provide a number]?**

**Primary** \_\_\_\_\_ Of which: DEIS Band 1 \_\_\_\_\_ DEIS Band 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Non-DEIS \_\_\_\_\_

**Post-Primary** \_\_\_\_\_ Of which: DEIS \_\_\_\_\_ Non-DEIS \_\_\_\_\_

**2. How satisfied are you in general with the grouping of schools (clustering) for SCP [please tick one box]?**

Very satisfied

<sub>1</sub>

Fairly satisfied

<sub>2</sub>

Not satisfied

<sub>3</sub>

Not sure

<sub>4</sub>

**3. If anything, what would you change about these arrangements? Describe as fully as possible.**

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**4. What was the total number of students in schools in your project in the academic year 2022/23? [Please provide numbers]**

No. of students in primary schools \_\_\_\_\_

No. of students in second-level schools \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What was the total number of students (a) identified as part of the target group, (b) taking part in brief interventions and (c) taking part in universal SCP interventions in the academic year 2022/23?**

	a) Part of target group	b) Brief intervention participant	c) Universal intervention participant
Primary schools			
Second-level schools			

**6. Please indicate to what extent the following criteria are used in identifying students for the programme. [Please tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
Poor attendance record	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Being in care	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Student's behavioural issues	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
School avoidance/reluctance	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Poor educational attainment	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of participation / engagement in school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Learning difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of social skills	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Silent / withdrawn	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of emotional support	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of family support	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Experience of trauma (bereavement / separation etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Family history of early school leaving	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Family circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Economic stress	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>



	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
Parent in prison	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Substance misuse (in family and / or young person)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Involvement of outside agencies	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Asylum seeker/refugee background	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Other migrant background	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Teen pregnancy	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Traveller/Roma background	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
No school placement	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**7. To what extent are these individuals/groups/agencies involved in identifying at-risk young people for SCP? [Please tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any extent	Not sure
Principals	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Deputy Principals	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Year Heads	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Behaviour Support Team	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Learning Support/ Resource teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Student support team/ pastoral care team	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Subject teachers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Special Needs Assistants				
Guidance Counsellor	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Home-School-Community Liaison Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
TUSLA Educational Welfare Officers	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Other TUSLA staff (e.g. Social Workers)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Health Services Executive personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Local youth services	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Gardaí	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Non-governmental organisations (e.g. Barnardos, SVP)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Meitheal	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**8a. Does the number of students participating in the project tend to change over the course of the school year [please tick one box]:**

Increase <sub>1</sub>     
 Decrease <sub>2</sub>     
 Tends to remain stable <sub>3</sub>     
 Not sure <sub>4</sub>

**8b. If the numbers tend to increase, please provide reasons:**

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**8c. If the numbers tend to decrease, please provide reasons:**

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**9a. To what extent do you use the SCP intake framework in identifying at-risk children /young people [please tick one box]?**

To a great extent 1      To some extent 2      Not to any great extent 3      Not at all 4

**9b. How useful do you find the SCP intake framework in identifying at-risk children /young people [please tick one box]?**

Very useful 1      Somewhat useful 2      Not very useful 3

**9c. What would you consider the main strengths of the SCP intake framework? [Please describe]**

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**9c. What would you consider the main gaps, if any, in the SCP intake framework? [Please describe]**

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## B. PROVISION

**This section focuses on the different types of programmes provided for students under SCP. Here we ask separately about: a) in-school supports (programmes or interventions provided during the school day), b) support around the school day (e.g. breakfast clubs, after-school activities), c) provision during school holidays and d) support for those not in school/not in fulltime education.**

**10a. Does your project provide services in the following areas? (Please tick one box on each line.)**

In-school support	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1	No <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Support around the school day	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1	No <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Provision during the school holidays	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1	No <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Support for those not in school/not in fulltime education	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1	No <input type="checkbox"/> 2
Support to students/families online or by phone/text	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1	No <input type="checkbox"/> 2

**10b. If not, what are the main reasons for not providing the service? (Please tick all that apply.)**

	In-school support	Support around the school day	Holiday provision	Support for those not in school	Online/phone support
Shortage of resources [other than staff]	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Shortage of staff	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Limited interest of the children/young people	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Parental resistance	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Discontinued during the pandemic	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Transport/ rural location	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 6	<input type="checkbox"/> 6
Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 7	<input type="checkbox"/> 7

**IN-SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

**11a. All SCPs provide in-school supports to at-risk students. In how many schools in your project are these supports offered as part of SCP? Please indicate zero where these activities are not provided.**

	Primary schools (number)	Second-level schools (number)
Attendance tracking and monitoring of specific groups of students		
Transfer / transition programmes		
Emergency/crisis therapeutic interventions		
Counselling		
Mentoring Programmes		
Personal development		
Behaviour / discipline programmes		
Family / parent support		
Group work		
One-to-one work		
Other, please specify		

**11b. In how many schools in your project are these evidence-based programmes or practices offered as part of SCP? Please indicate zero where these activities are not provided.**

	Primary schools	Second-level schools
Botvins Life Skills		
Check & Connect		
Coping Power		
Decider Life Skills		
DESTY		
Incredible Years Classroom Based Dina		
Mentoring for Achievement (MAP)		
Mind Out		
Rainbows Programme		
Seasons for Growth		
Working Things Out (WTO)		
Gaisce		
Restorative Practice		
Incredible Years		

	Primary schools	Second-level schools
Motivational interviewing		
safeTALK		
ASIST		
Children First		
Meitheal		
Youth Participation		
Other, please specify		

**11c. How is the quality of these interventions assessed? What criteria are used?**

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**12a. To what extent would you see the following as the main objectives of in-school support? [Please tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
To give at-risk students a sense of belonging in school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To improve attendance	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To give students someone to come to if they're having problems	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To engage parents to support their children	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To give students the social skills to cope with school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To give students the behavioural skills to cope with school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To engage at-risk students by providing academic support	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Provision of enrichment activities that students enjoy (e.g., Drama, Arts, Sports)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**12b. To what extent are the following approaches used in delivering in-school support as part of SCP inside and outside the classroom? [Please tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
One-on-one support (from SCP personnel)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Group work or activities	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Pair work or activities	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
SCP personnel and school staff working together	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Mentoring by SCP personnel				
Mentoring by other students	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Involvement of external personnel (sessional work by professionals e.g. Music/Drama)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**12c. To what extent do SCP in-school supports involve withdrawing students from their regular class? [please tick one box]?**

To a great extent 1      To some extent 2      Not to any great extent 3      Not at all 4

**12d. If to a great extent or some extent, what supports do you provide on this basis?**

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**12e. In your opinion, what are the main challenges in delivering in-school programmes?**

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**12f. How satisfied are you with the extent to which in-school activities support student engagement and retention?**

To a great extent 1      To some extent 2      Not to any treat extent 3      Not at all 4

### SUPPORTS AROUND THE SCHOOL DAY

**13a. SCP provides a range of supports around the school day (before or after school and at lunchtime). In how many schools in your project are these programmes offered as part of SCP? Please include schools where you are subsidising participation of the target group in after-school activities provided by the school. Please indicate zero where these activities are not provided.**

	Primary schools	Second level schools
Breakfast provision		
Lunch provision		
After-school meal provision		
Homework clubs/study support		
After-school clubs		
Sports programmes		
Study support		
Parental support		
Other (please specify):		

**13b. For how many hours per week are supports around the school day typically provided?**  
 \_\_\_\_\_ hours

**13c. How is the quality of these interventions assessed? What criteria are used?**

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**13d. To what extent would you see the following as the main objectives of supports around the school day? Please tick one box on each line.**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
To give at-risk students a sense of belonging in school	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To improve attendance	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To give students someone to come to if they're having problems	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To engage parents to support their children	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To give students the social skills to cope with school	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To give students the behavioural skills to cope with school	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To engage at-risk students by providing academic support	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To support the nutrition and physical health of the children/young people	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Provision of enrichment activities that students enjoy (e.g., Drama, Arts, Sports)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**13e. To what extent are the following approaches used in delivering supports around the school day?**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
One-on-one support (from SCP personnel)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Group work or activities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Pair work or activities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
SCP personnel and school staff working together	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Mentoring by SCP personnel				
Mentoring by other students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Involvement of external personnel (sessional work by professionals e.g. Music/Drama)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**13f. In your opinion, what are the main challenges in delivering supports around the school day?**

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**13g. In your view, how important are supports around the school day in supporting student engagement and retention?**

Very important  
1

Somewhat important  
2

Not at all important  
3

Not sure  
4

### SUPPORTS DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

**14a. In how many schools in your project are the following activities currently on offer during school holidays as part of SCP? Please indicate zero where these activities are not provided.**

	Primary schools	Second level schools
Sports programmes/camps		
Other enrichment activities (e.g. dance, art, crafts etc.)		
Transition summer camp for 1 <sup>st</sup> year students		
Language support for migrant students		
Parental support		
Learning activities		
Trips		
Other, please specify		

**14b. When are supports during the school holidays generally provided? Please tick a box on each line.**

Mid-term	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	No <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>
Christmas holidays	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	No <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>
Easter holidays	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	No <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>
Summer holidays	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	No <input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>

**14c. For how many weeks per year are holiday activities typically provided? \_\_\_\_\_ weeks**

**14d. To what extent would you see the following as the main objectives of activities during the holidays?**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
To give at-risk students a sense of belonging in school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To reinforce the importance of school attendance	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Build capacity for better student engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To give students someone to come to if they're having problems	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To engage parents to support their children	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To give students the social skills to cope with school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To give students the behavioural skills to cope with school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
To engage at-risk students by providing academic support	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Provision of enrichment activities that students enjoy (e.g., Drama, Arts, Sports)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**14e. To what extent are the following approaches used in delivering activities during the school holidays?**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
One-on-one support (from SCP personnel)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
One-on-one support (from teachers)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Group work or activities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Pair work or activities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
SCP personnel and school staff working together	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Mentoring by SCP personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Mentoring by other students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Involvement of external personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**14f. In your view, what are the main challenges in delivering activities during school holidays?**

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**14g. In your view, how important are holiday activities in supporting student engagement and retention?**

Very important                      Somewhat important                      Not at all important                      Not sure  
1    2    3    4

**SUPPORTS FOR THOSE NOT IN SCHOOL/NOT IN FULLTIME EDUCATION**

**15a. SCP provides a range of supports for young people who are not in school or fulltime education. For HOW MANY CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE are these activities provided as part of SCP? Please indicate zero where these activities are not provided. [please provide numbers in each column]?**

	No. of primary school age children	No. of second-level school age young people
iScoil Blended Learning		
Home visits		
Individual learning programme		
Personal development programme		
Recreational activities (health and fitness, cookery, music, sport)		
Advice and information to student and family regarding educational options		
Follow-up with those who have entered Youthreach or other alternative education settings		
Identifying and linking with key agencies		
Other, please specify:		



**15b. To what extent would you see the following as the main objectives of support for those not in school? [Please tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
To help re-engage children/young people with school	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To give children/young people someone to come to if they're having problems	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To engage parents to support their children	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To improve their social skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To improve their behavioural skills	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
To improve their self-confidence	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**15c. To what extent are the following approaches used in supporting those not in school/fulltime education? [Please tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
One-on-one support (from SCP personnel)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Group work with families	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**15d. In your view, what are the main challenges in providing support for children/young people not in school or not in full-time education?**

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**15e. In your view, how important are these supports in supporting student re-engagement with learning?**

Very important 1      Somewhat important 2      Not at all important 3      Not sure 4

**GENERAL**

**16a. In your opinion, what is the CURRENT balance (give percentage) between SCP provision within the school day, around the school day, supports during the holidays and supports for those not in school in your project? [Please provide a percentage]**

In- school supports \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supports around the school day \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supports during school holidays \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supports for those not in school \_\_\_\_\_

**Total 100%**

**16b. In your opinion, what would be the IDEAL balance (give percentage) between SCP provision within the school day, around the school day, supports during the holidays and supports for those not in school in your project? [Please provide a percentage]**

In- school supports \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supports around the school day \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supports during school holidays \_\_\_\_\_  
 Supports for those not in school \_\_\_\_\_

**Total** **100%**

**17a. Are there programmes specifically targeted at the following groups in your project?**

Travellers/Roma	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refugees/asylum seekers	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unaccompanied minors	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other migrants	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students who have been suspended	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students with mental health difficulties	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

**17b. If yes, please describe:**

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**18a. In the last 3 years, have any activities in your project ceased or altered?** Yes  No

**18b. If yes, in which category?**

Type of delivery	In-school provision	Supports around the school day	Supports during school holidays	Supports for those not in school
Ceased	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Altered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**18c. Have the activities ever ceased for the following reasons? (Please tick one box on each line.)**

Students did not engage with the programme	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of effectiveness/ poor impact	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Concerns about quality of provision	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insufficient resources	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discontinued during the pandemic	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please specify: _____				

**19a. In the schools in your project, is there follow-up with:**

<b>Early school leavers</b>	Yes, as part of SCP <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, by individual schools <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Poor attendees</b>	Yes, as part of SCP <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, by individual schools <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

**19b. If yes, please give details:**

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**20a. This question focuses on SCP activities in your project and their links with other activities under the DEIS programme. To what extent do you do the following? [Please tick one box on each row].**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
I discuss at-risk students with the Home-School Liaison Coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
I am involved in DEIS planning in schools on an annual basis	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
I am involved in care team/student support team planning in schools	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
I am invited to meet with inspectors during WSE/DEIS inspections	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**20b. How satisfied are you with the coordination of the full range of DEIS supports (including SCP) in the schools in your project?**

Very satisfied  
<sub>1</sub>

Satisfied  
<sub>2</sub>

Dissatisfied  
<sub>3</sub>

Very dissatisfied  
<sub>4</sub>

**20c. In your opinion, what, if anything, could be done to improve such coordination?**

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### C. IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

**21. Compared to the period before the COVID-related school closures, how would you rate the situation for all students now in the schools in your project in relation to the following (please tick one box on each line):**

	Much better	Better	About the same	Worse	Much worse
Attendance					
Engagement					
Wellbeing					

**22a. During the period of school closures, to what extent did you and your staff have contact with the target pupils? (Please tick one box)**

Weekly or more often	A few times a month	Less often	Not at all
<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**22b. What was the main focus of SCP during the period of school closures?**

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**23. After the schools reopened, what activities, if any, were provided under SCP to students to help their adjustment back to a school setting? Please tick all that apply.**

- Summer programme for students with special educational needs 1  
 Summer programme for at-risk/disengaged students 2  
 Additional supports for learning in the classroom 3  
 Additional supports for learning after school or at lunchtime 4  
 Language supports for migrant students 5  
 Session(s) on wellbeing post-COVID 6  
 Additional socio-emotional support 7  
 Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_ 8

**24a. Have you seen any change recently in the needs among students in the schools in your project (either because of the pandemic or for other reasons)?**

- 1 Yes, to a great extent      2 Yes, to some extent      3 No

**24b. If Yes, please describe.**

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#### D. SCP STAFFING

**25a. How many staff do you currently have (excluding yourself)? [Please provide a number] Sessional staff are paid by SCP on an hourly rate and are not SCP project staff.**

	Full-time	Part-time	Sessional
Total			

**25b. Over the past year, have you used contractors for any SCP supports? Contractors are people brought in to deliver a block of work, such as a week-long programme. Please give the number. State zero if you did not use contractors.**

\_\_\_\_\_

**26. How satisfied are you with the number of staff available for the project you currently co-ordinate?**

- Very satisfied 1      Fairly satisfied 2      Not satisfied 3      Not sure 4

**27. To what extent is staff turnover an issue?**

- To great extent 1      To some extent 2      Not to any great extent 3      Not a problem 4

**28. What are the primary reasons for staff turnover?**

- Leaving for other employment 1  
 Redundancy 2  
 Retirement 3  
 Other, please specify 4 \_\_\_\_\_

**29. What is your own professional background? (Please tick all that apply)**

Youth work 1

Community work 2

Social work/social care 3

Teaching 4

Early childhood care and education 5

Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**30. How long have you been an SCP coordinator?**

<1 year  
1

1-2 years  
2

3-4 years  
3

5-9 years  
4

10+ years  
5

**31a. Have you taken part in the mandatory Continuous Professional Development (CPD) provided for SCP staff (from late 2016 onwards)?**

Yes 1

No 2

**31b. If Yes, how satisfied were you with the CPD?**

Very satisfied  
1

Fairly satisfied  
2

Not satisfied  
3

Not sure  
4

**32a. Have you taken part in any elective CPD in your role as coordinator in the last 12 months?**

Yes 1

No 2

**32b. What course was that?**

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**32c. How satisfied were you with that CPD?**

Very satisfied  
1

Fairly satisfied  
2

Not satisfied  
3

Not sure  
4

**33a. Is there any other CPD you would like to see provided for yourself and/or your staff?**

Yes 1

No 2

**32b. If Yes, what type of training?**

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**33b. What would be your preference for how that training would be delivered?**

In-person  
1

Online  
2

Blended  
3

**34. Please indicate the extent to which your role as a coordinator involves the following activities. [Tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
Day-to-day management of the programme	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Acting as a secretary to the local management committee (e.g. taking minutes, drafting agendas)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Implementation of the programme	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Establishing the aim and direction of the programme	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Overseeing day-to-day expenditure of the programme, keeping accurate records of payments and receipts and working within the budget constraints for the Programme	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Hiring staff for the programme	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Monitoring the performance of staff	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Identifying and facilitating the provision of relevant in-service training for programme personnel	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Providing direct support to the targeted children/young people	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Organising and facilitating the provision of supports for the targeted young people	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Evaluating and auditing of the Programme and the collection of data and furnishing of reports	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Establishing and maintaining strong links with all relevant agencies	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Ensuring active participation of the other relevant partners	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Monitoring and evaluating the quality of the programme	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Keeping a comprehensive record and descriptions of all aspects of the Programme recording successes, failures and changes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Consultation with school principals	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Consultation with parents regarding support of at-risk young people	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Consultation with at-risk-students regarding programmes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**35. What percentage of your time would you spend on the following activities? The figures should total to 100%.**

Setting up and monitoring programmes	_____
Meeting other SCP personnel	_____
Meeting school principals/other school staff	_____
Meeting LMC and local service-providers (non-LMC)	_____
Face to face contact with students	_____
Administration/ reporting/ financial paperwork	_____
Other activities (please specify)	_____
<b>Total 100%</b>	

**36. To what extent are the following involved in deciding which projects or activities are run within the schools in your project? [Please tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
You as coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
LMC	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
SCP project workers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
TESS	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
School principals	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Home-School-Community Liaison Coordinator (HSCL)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other school staff	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**37. Please say whether you agree or disagree with the following statements. [Tick one box on each row].**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
All members of LMC are very involved in the work of SCP	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
The Committee members have the necessary skills available to conduct all matters – legal, financial, employment etc. appropriately	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
Sufficient training is provided to local co-ordinators to do their job	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I'm satisfied with the current reporting structures to the LMC	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I'm satisfied with the current reporting structures to TESS	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I get sufficient support from the Local Management Committee	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
There are sufficient resources to run SCP within the project	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I'm satisfied with the feedback I receive from TESS on my retention plan	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
I'm satisfied with the feedback I receive from TESS on my financial returns	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

**E. FUNDING AND RESOURCES [Please use 2022/23 data]**

In this section we ask some general questions about the funding of SCP. This helps us to get background information regarding the resources available. We are also asking questions regarding funding of the project you are currently coordinating.

**38a. What proportion of funding is spent on the following [please provide a percentage]:**

Staff costs \_\_\_\_\_  
 Project activities \_\_\_\_\_  
 Administrative costs \_\_\_\_\_

**Total** **100%**

**38b. Please tick if the project receives funding from any other sources than the allocation from TESS? [tick all that apply]:**

Sources of funding	Yes
Local area partnerships/initiatives	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
Fundraising	<input type="checkbox"/> 2
Other (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/> 3

**39. How satisfied are you with the level of funding apportioned to YOUR PROJECT?**

Very satisfied                      Fairly satisfied                      Not satisfied                      Not sure  
1                                      2                                      3                                      4

**39. In your view, what criteria would be most useful in determining the level of funding to a particular project?**

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**40. How is funding apportioned WITHIN THE PROJECT? Please describe.**

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**41. How satisfied are you with how funding is apportioned WITHIN YOUR PROJECT?**

Very satisfied                      Fairly satisfied                      Not satisfied                      Not sure  
1                                      2                                      3                                      4

**42. How satisfied are you with the current premises [please tick one box on each row]?**

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied	Not sure
Space available for your work as a coordinator	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Space available for the work of project workers	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Space available for support programmes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Space available for sports and other activities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**43. What would additional financial resources facilitate [please tick all that apply]?**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
Recruiting more staff	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Provision of additional in-school supports	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Provision of additional supports around the school day	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Provision of additional supports during the school holidays	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Provision of additional supports for those not in school/fulltime education	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Extending programmes to more children/young people	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Involving parents	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Improving quality of premises	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4



## F. INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION (excluding collaboration through the LMC)

**46. To what extent do you think there is good cooperation to tackle educational disadvantage among local agencies and organisations?**

To a great extent

1

To some extent

2

Not to any great extent

3

Not at all

4

**47. How much contact do you have with the following? [Please tick one box on each row]**

	Every week	Every 2 weeks	Once a month	Less than once a month
Principals from project schools	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
HSCLs from project schools	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Teachers from project schools	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
SCP coordinators outside your project	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Tusla Education Welfare Service	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4
Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4

**48. Which five agencies do you work most closely with regarding the project? [Please rank in order of frequency: 1=most frequent/close collaboration]**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**49a. Do these five agencies/groups feed into the retention plan?**

To a great extent

1

To some extent

2

Not to any great extent

3

Not at all

4

**49b. If yes, please describe as fully as possible how the groups you work most closely with feed into/contribute to the retention plan:**

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**50. To what extent is contact with other agencies centred on the areas listed below [please tick one box on each row]:**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any extent
The nature of the programme	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Programme activities	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
The needs of individual students	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3
Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3

## G. STUDENT OUTCOMES

**51. In your opinion, to what extent do these factors contribute to early school leaving? [Please tick one box on each row]**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all
Poor attendance record	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Being in care				
Student's behavioural issues	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
School refusal	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Poor educational attainment	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of participation / engagement in school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Learning difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of social skills	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of self-esteem	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Silent / withdrawn	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of emotional support	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Lack of family support	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Experience of trauma (bereavement / separation etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Family history of early school leaving	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Family circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Economic stress	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Parent in prison				
Substance misuse (in family and / or young person)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Asylum seeker/refugee background	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Other migrant background	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Special Educational Needs (SEN)	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
Teen pregnancy				
Traveller/Roma background	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>
No school placement				
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>

**52. In your opinion, what support measures are most likely to improve outcomes?**

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**53. To what extent do you think that SCP activities in your project have had an impact on the following outcomes? [please tick one box on each row]:**

	To a great extent	To some extent	Not to any great extent	Not at all	Not sure
Positive school experience	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
Increased attendance rates	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
Decreased number of exclusions	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
Increased participation in after-school activities	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
Increased level of parental involvement in the education of at-risk students	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
Increased numbers completing junior cycle	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
Increased numbers completing senior cycle	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
Successful transition from primary to post primary school	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>
Other, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>

**54. Are there any comments you would like to make about the SCP? There are extra pages provided if you wish!**

**Thank you very much for participating in the study!** Please post the questionnaire to: Garance Hingre, The Economic and Social Research Institute, Sir John Rogerson's Quay, Dublin 2. Should you have any queries, please phone Garance at: 01-8632000 or email her at [garance.hingre@esri.ie](mailto:garance.hingre@esri.ie)

**Comments on SCP (continued)**



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