



Who can I turn to?

A summary of responses from schools regarding young people's views about support and advice services

Who can I turn to?

In autumn 2004, the NSPCC ran a major campaign called *Someone to turn to* as part of our ongoing objective of ensuring that every young person has access to someone they can turn to for help and support.

Children and young people may experience a range of problems, and can be reluctant to share them with others. Talking about a problem can help it stop. Through the campaign, the NSPCC aimed to help children and young people understand what abuse is, why it is unacceptable and how important it is for them to share their worries.

As part of the campaign, we produced the *Who can I turn to?* resource which gave teachers and 11-16 year old students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland the opportunity to express their views on support services for young people.

This document is a summary of the responses received. We hope it will be useful in your teaching and perhaps in considering the provision of support services within your school. Activity ideas to use with your students are included at the end of the document.

Introduction

Who can I turn to? packs were sent out to schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland in autumn 2004. Each pack contained a questionnaire for students and staff, together with a series of activity suggestions. Teachers were asked to return as many responses as possible to the NSPCC so that the results could contribute to a summary of responses. Over 4400 completed student questionnaires from nearly 100 schools were returned, as well as longer responses from the activities in the pack. This document details some of the findings from the student questionnaires. We cannot claim that the survey results are representative of the views of all young people, but we hope it will be useful to share the information gathered from the responses with you and your students.

Survey responses

All charts showing the results of the surveys appear at the end of this document.

1. Problems faced by young people

Respondents were asked if they knew of another young person who had experienced any of a given list of problems in the last 12 months. Please see chart 1 in the appendix.

- The issues most faced by young people responding to the questionnaire are bullying and family problems such as family break-ups. Over four in ten of these young people know someone who has experienced these problems.
- One in four respondents claimed to know another young person who has had a "self harm" problem, and one in 15 know someone who has been sexually abused.
- Girls reported knowing more young people who have experienced self harm (one third of girls), family problems (almost half), exam stress (three in ten), depression (one quarter) and sexual abuse (one in 12) in the last 12 months compared to boys.
- Boys are more likely than girls to know someone with alcohol problems (one quarter of boys), drug problems (one in five) and who has experienced racism (one in five).
- Older age groups are more likely than younger ones to know of other young people with problems.
- Bullying is the only problem which is as familiar to the 13-14 age group (over four out of ten) as the 15-16 age group.

Respondents were asked whether they had had a problem or been worried about a friend or member of their family in the last 12 months and

wanted to talk to someone about it. **Chart 2, in the appendix, shows this information by gender.**

- Just over a third of all respondents have wanted to talk about a problem that they or someone they know has experienced in the last 12 months.
- More girls than boys responded that they had had a problem or been worried about a friend or a member of their family in the last 12 months (four in ten girls, one in four boys).
- Those who responded that they had had a problem were asked if there had been someone that they could talk to about it. Three in ten said that they did not have someone they were able to talk to.

2. Available services for young people in need

Respondents were asked who they have talked to in the past, and who they would talk to in the future if they, or a friend, were affected by one of the problems described in the above section 1. Please see charts 3 and 4 in the appendix.

- Young people who have faced problems in the past have been most likely to confide in friends and family. This is especially marked amongst girls rather than boys.
- One in ten young people responding to the questionnaire have approached their teacher with a problem. Teachers were more frequently consulted than a person outside the school such as a youth worker (only 2 per cent of respondents).
- From the responses received, older age groups are more likely than younger ones to have talked to friends about a problem.
- When asked who they would talk to in the future, close friends and family members remain the most popular choice of support provision for young people, with teachers again more popular than other outside contacts (one in five would talk to a teacher; only one in ten would talk to a youth worker).
- While young people from the different age groups were equally as likely to have approached family

members for past problems, the younger age groups were more likely to report that they would approach such individuals for help with future problems.

- 11-12 year olds were far more likely than any other age group to approach their teacher.

3. Important attributes of support providers

Respondents were provided with a list of attributes of people they might approach if they or a friend had a problem, and asked how important each was when deciding who to turn to. They were asked to rate each attribute on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated “not important” and 5 indicated “very important”. Please see chart 5 in the appendix.

- When deciding which individuals or services to approach, it was important to young people who responded that these people could keep information confidential and would listen to them and believe them (over two-thirds consider these attributes to be important). These factors were especially important for girls.
- Half of respondents claimed that it was important that they knew the person. This has implications when considering the use of external professionals. The person’s ability to solve the problem and the training they had received was considered less important.
- The responses also revealed that it was less important that the person being approached was close to the age of the young people.

Chart 6 in the appendix shows the following information, broken down by age group.

- It is particularly important for the older age groups (13-16 year olds) to approach people who they trust to keep issues confidential.
- Knowing the person was more important for younger age groups (11-14), than older ones. The 11-12 year olds were more likely than others to think it important that the person could solve the problem, and that they should be trained to deal with problems.

4. School services

Respondents were asked how much they agreed with the following statement: “My school provides enough support for students with problems, e.g. bullying, family problems or personal issues”.

- Almost two-thirds of young people agreed or strongly agreed that their school provides enough support for students with problems.
- The younger students (almost seven in ten 11-12 year olds and more than six in ten of 13-14 year olds) were more likely than the older ones to agree with the statement (almost half of 15-16 year olds).

Respondents were asked to indicate the services available to them in school by rating them for approachability on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 indicated “not approachable at all” and 5 indicated “very approachable”. More detail on this is provided in charts 7 and 8 in the appendix.

- For each type of service, at least one in five young people did not indicate availability by rating the service. This demonstrates that the service is either unavailable in their school, the student does not know that it exists, or the student is possibly unable to give a rating because they have no experience of the service.
- Up to as many as four in ten respondents do not have access to external agencies from within school, do not know that they exist, or have no experience of them. Examples of such external agencies are:
 - social service, peer support, and youth workers
 - education welfare officers
 - charities such as ChildLine and the NSPCC.
- The responses revealed that, within school, possibly as many as a quarter of students either do not have, or are unaware of the existence of, school counsellors and teachers with special responsibilities. This has implications for raising awareness of services both inside and outside school.
- The most approachable individuals were thought to be teachers with special responsibility, followed by school nurses and school counsellors. The least approachable individuals were thought to be youth workers and education welfare officers.

- Girls considered school nurses, information sources (such as booklets, helplines and websites) and peer support services more approachable than boys. In contrast, boys were more likely than girls to consider some of the individuals from outside school to be more approachable.
- Younger students found most of the services more approachable than the older student respondents. This was particularly the case for teachers, helplines, websites and charities.

Respondents were asked to identify the services that they would like to see in their school which currently do not exist. More detail is provided in chart 9 in the appendix.

- Almost six in ten felt that their school services were fine as they were.
- Almost a quarter of respondents said that they would like adults from outside school to help, i.e. youth workers, social service workers, school counsellors, school nurses, or education welfare officers. Almost one in ten indicated that they would like access to information material, including help lines, websites, booklets, and posters.

Respondents were asked to identify other ways in which schools might be able to help young people with problems.

- One third of those that answered said that their school was “fine as it is” and needed nothing changed. Otherwise the most popular suggestions were the provision of special facilities, staff to help students with problems, and dedicated rooms for discussion (girls being particularly interested in the latter).

Respondents were asked whether they would prefer a school-based service or one that comes in from outside the school.

- Preferences for a school-based or outside school service were mixed. There was small difference between those that said they would want a school-based service and those that want a service from outside the school, almost four in ten. One in 20 said that they would prefer both a school-based service and a service from outside the school.
- A significantly higher number of girls wanted an outside service (over four in ten), compared to just under a third of boys. Older age groups (15-16 year olds) were more interested than any other age group in having outside school services coming into the school.

ACTIVITIES based on the Who can I turn to? summary of responses

The following activities give suggestions for including the NSPCC summary of responses in your teaching. The activities are divided into two age groups (11-14 year olds and 14-16 year olds) and have been developed to support PSHE (England and Northern Ireland) and PSE (Wales). Follow-up activities are also suggested for more able groups, or if more time is available.

For 11-14 year olds

Activity 1: Problems faced by young people

Objectives:

To focus students on some of the personal issues that young people (11-14 year olds) may face, and to share information from the NSPCC summary of responses about these problems.

Activity:

1. As a class, ask students to discuss the personal problems that young people aged 11 to 14 may face. To give structure to the discussion, encourage students to think about different types of issues, for example:

- those caused by people around them (e.g. racism, family problems, bullying, sexual abuse)
- those caused by events (e.g. exam stress)
- those linked to substance misuse (e.g. drugs, alcohol)
- issues related to the individual's development (e.g. self-harm, confusion over sexual identity).

2. Ask students to consider the following questions:

According to an NSPCC survey of 4400 students aged 11-16,

- which personal problems were most commonly faced by young people? (*Answer: bullying, and family problems/family break-ups*)
- what proportion of the respondents claimed to know a young person with a self-harm problem? (*Answer: one in four*)
- what proportion of the respondents claimed to know a young person who has been sexually abused? (*Answer: 7 per cent*)

3. Share the information gathered with students, using chart 1. Ask students to compare their own

answers. Were there any responses that were very different from their estimates? If so, ask them to consider why this might be.

4. The information gathered by the survey suggests that older age groups (15-16 year olds) are more likely than younger age groups (11-14 year olds) to know a young person with a problem. Ask students to discuss why this might be the case.

Follow-up:

More in-depth discussion of the survey results could include the following questions.

- The survey results show that girls are more likely to know young people who have experienced self-harm, family problems and exam stress than boys. Discuss possible reasons for this.
- The survey results show that boys are more likely than girls to know young people with alcohol or drug problems. Discuss possible reasons for this.

Activity 2: Available services for young people in need

Objectives:

To encourage students to think about where they could go for help with a personal problem, and to share real information gathered from the NSPCC summary of responses about other students' perceptions.

Activity:

1. Ask students to consider who they would turn to first for support if they were experiencing each of the following scenarios (from chart 1):

(i) bullying

Imagine you have started at a new school. You are missing your old friends and the other kids in your class call your names and push you around at break times. They are making your life miserable and you can't concentrate in class. Who would you turn to?

(ii) family problems or a family break-up

Imagine that your parents have been going through a tough time. They have been arguing all the time and you think they might split up. You have been staying out late because you don't want to get involved.

Also you have been getting into trouble at school. It feels like it might be partly your fault. Who would you turn to?

(iii) self-harm

Imagine that a good friend has recently confided in you that they have been cutting themselves – on the arms and sometimes the legs. It has become a habit and every time they feel under pressure they do it.

They want to stop but don't know how. Who would you turn to?

(iv) problems with alcohol

Imagine that your dad has recently lost his job and started drinking heavily. He gets angry all the time and he scares you. It seems to be getting worse. You don't know how to help him. Who would you turn to?

Students can write down the number of the problem in a table like the one below, against the person they might turn to for support. (This information will be for their eyes only – they do not have to reveal it later on.)

Scenario number (i-iv)	Person to approach first
	A close friend
	A parent, carer or family member
	A neighbour
	A friend's older brother/sister or their mum/dad
	A teacher
	A GP/doctor
	A school nurse or school counsellor
	A social worker or youth worker
	No-one

2. Share the NSPCC survey information in charts 2, 3 and 4. This shows that the 11-16 year olds surveyed were most likely to confide in friends and family. (If appropriate, see how this compares with the class.)

3. Discuss the findings from the NSPCC summary as a class. Does the nature of the problem affect who you can turn to? Do students feel they know where to go for help?

Follow-up:

- Students could design a poster to encourage young people to talk to someone they trust if they are facing personal problems.
- Students could consider whether they would prefer support providers to be based in school or not. What are the pros and cons of each?

For 14-16 year olds

Activity 3: Important attributes of support providers

Objectives:

To focus students on the qualities that are important in someone they approach for help with a personal problem. To share information gathered from the NSPCC summary of responses about other students' perceptions.

Activity:

1. Using the table below, ask students to rank which qualities are most/least important in someone they might turn to for help with a personal problem.

Rank 1 to 8: 1=most important 8=least important	Attribute of the person approached
	They have training in dealing with other people's problems
	You can see them without others knowing about it
	They are close to your age
	You know them already
	You trust them to keep issues confidential if possible
	You know they will listen to you and believe you
	You know they won't tell you off or judge you
	You think they will be able to solve the problem

2. Discuss the findings from this exercise as a class. What attributes are generally seen as most important? Which attributes are generally felt to be least important?

3. Share the information gathered in the NSPCC summary using chart 5. This shows that the 11-16 year olds surveyed felt that it was most important that the person they spoke to kept the issues confidential, and that they would listen to and believe you. Talking to someone close to your own age was least important. How does this compare with the findings of the class?

Follow-up:

Ask students to suggest other attributes to add to the list above. The survey information in chart 6 could also be shared and discussed.

Activity 4: School services

Objectives:

To focus students on the support services currently offered by the school, to highlight any they are unaware of, and to establish what services they would like to see being made available. To provide an opportunity for students to suggest their own ideas for support services.

Activity:

1. As a class, ask students to discuss the support services for 11-16 year olds currently offered by their school. To give structure to the discussion, encourage students to think about different types of support, for example:

- staff within the school (e.g. teachers, school counsellors)
- visitors from outside the school (e.g. youth and social workers, education welfare officers, school nurses)
- sources of information provided by the school (e.g. booklets, posters, websites, helpline numbers)
- contact details for charities (e.g. NSPCC, ChildLine)
- access to support (e.g. special times when teachers/counsellors are available, school policy about support).

Talk about the findings from the discussion.

2. Share the information gathered from the NSPCC survey with students, using chart 7 (and 8 if time). Interesting points to highlight might include the following:

- For each type of service, at least one in five young people surveyed did not have access to, or were unaware of, that service.
- For external agencies (e.g. social and youth workers, education welfare officers and charities), almost four in ten young people did not have access to, or were unaware of, the support they offer.
- The most approachable individuals were thought to be teachers with special responsibility, followed by school nurses and school counsellors.

3. The NSPCC survey results show the need for students to be aware of services offered by schools. Using the findings for the class, reiterate support offered in your school and highlight in particular any sources that students are unaware of.

Follow-up:

- Ask students to discuss any additional support they would like to see in their school. They could discuss ideas in groups, nominating a spokesperson to feed back to the class.
- Students could design a leaflet or PowerPoint presentation to summarise the support services offered to young people by their school.

Appendix: Charts with more detailed breakdown of data from student survey

Chart 1 shows the proportions of boys and girls who responded positively when asked if they knew of another young person who had experienced any of a given list of problems in the last 12 months, by problem type.

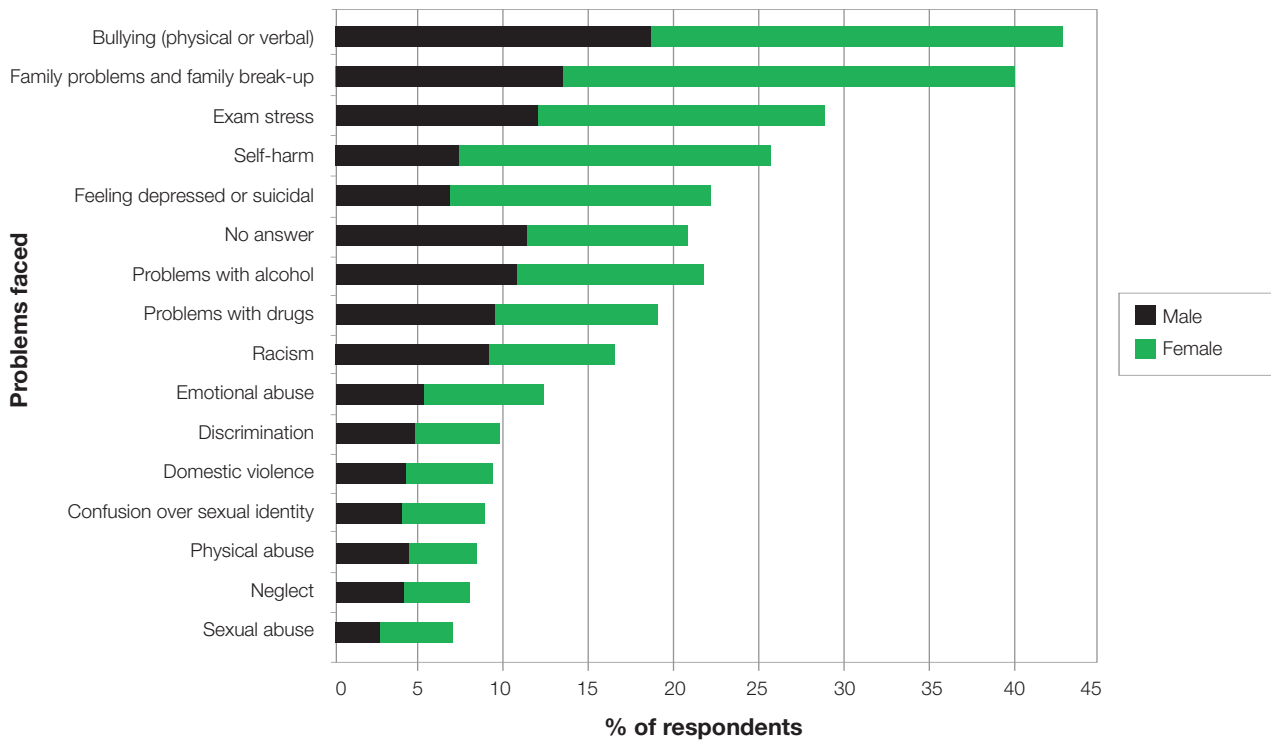


Chart 2 shows whether they had had a problem or been worried about a friend or member of their family in the last 12 months and wanted to talk to someone about it (by gender).

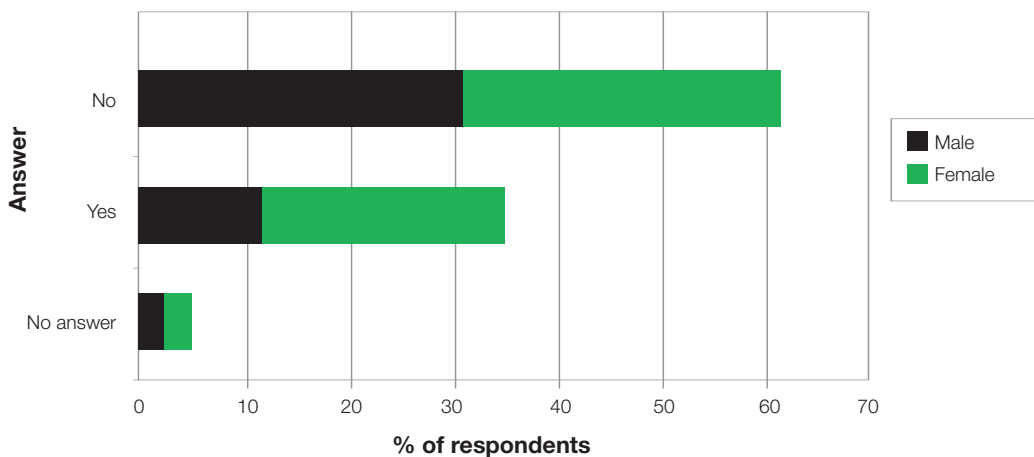


Chart 3 shows who the respondents have talked to about problems they have had in the past.

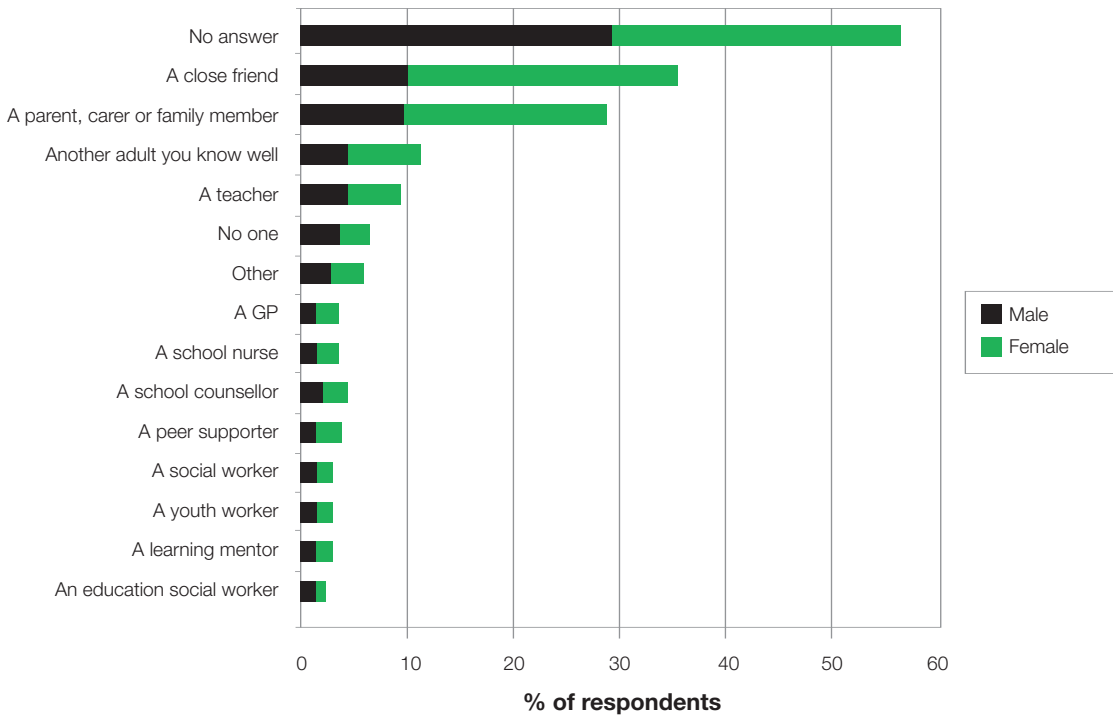


Chart 4 shows the individuals respondents would talk to in the future if they or a friend had one of the problems listed in chart 1.

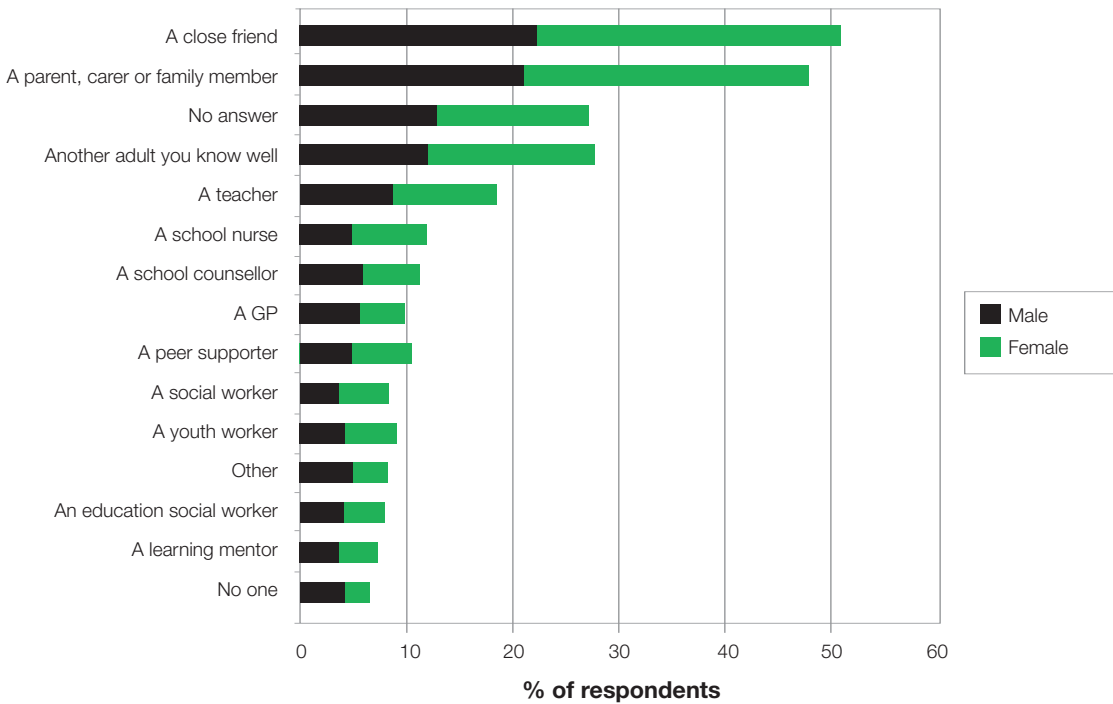


Chart 5 shows the proportions of respondents, by gender, who rated a list of attributes as important or very important when deciding who they might turn to if they or a friend had a problem.

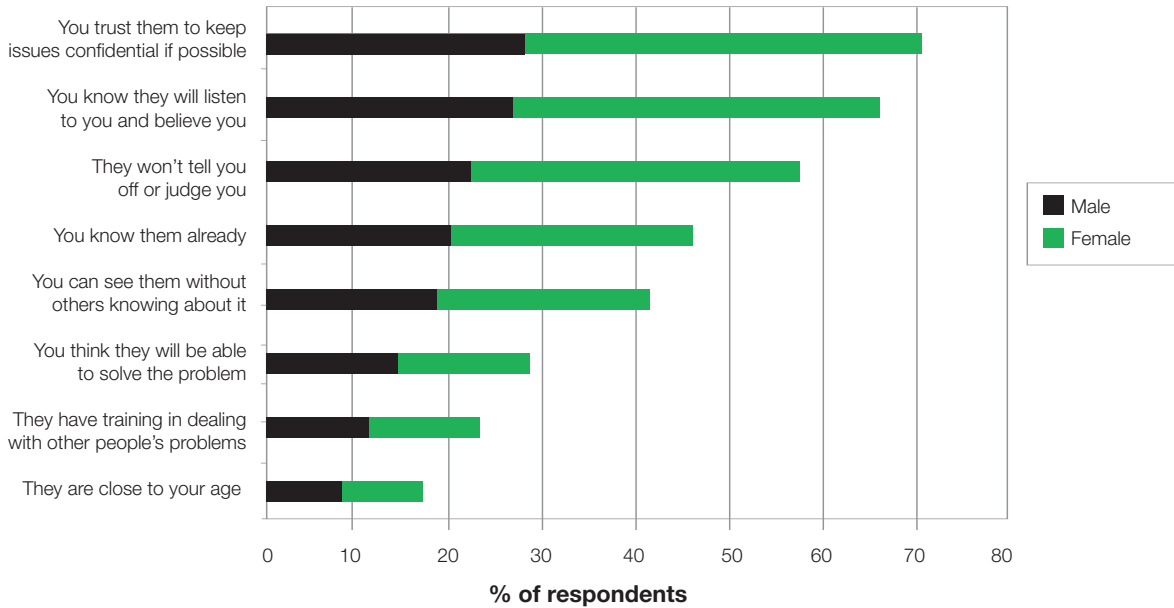


Chart 6 shows the same information by age group.

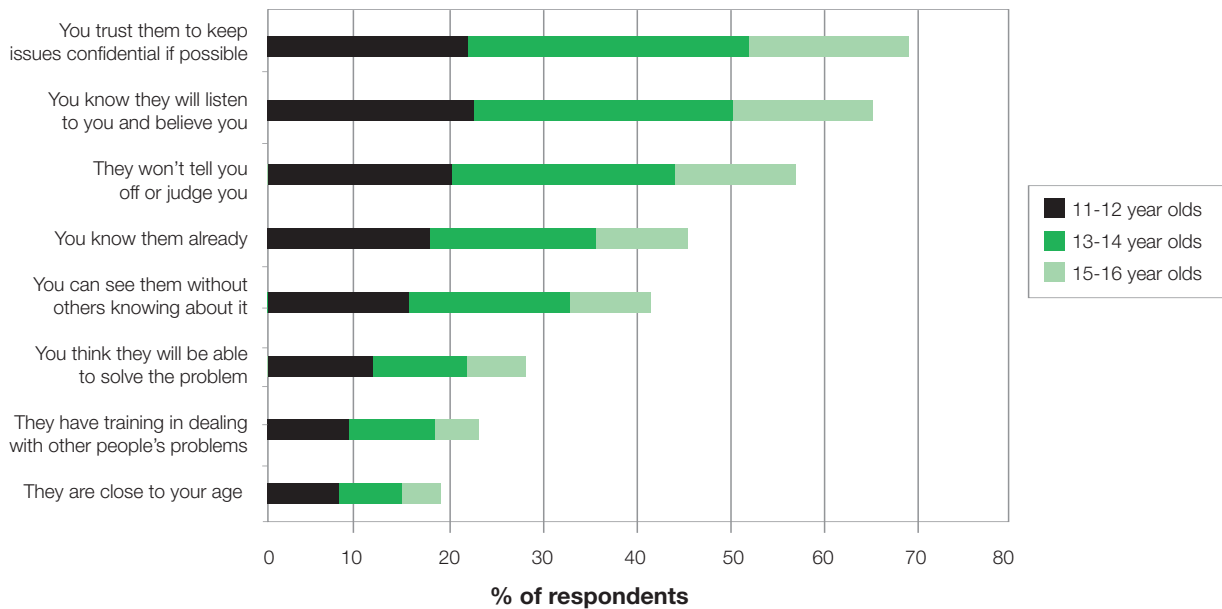


Chart 7 shows the proportions of respondents, by gender, who did not indicate that a service was available for them in their school i.e. did not give an 'approachability' rating.

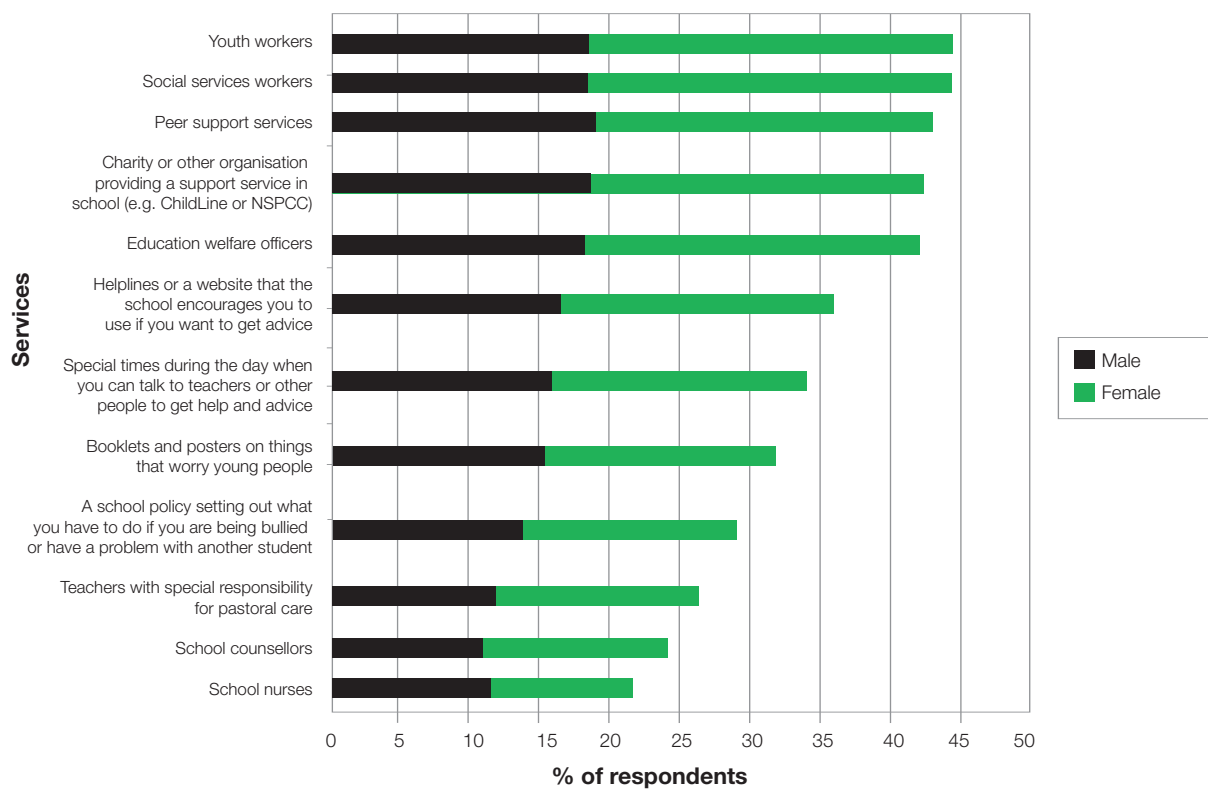


Chart 8 shows the responses for those respondents who rated school-based services in terms of approachability. Average 'approachability' scores have been calculated, and the individual services have been displayed from those deemed most approachable (on average) at the top, to those deemed least approachable (on average) at the bottom.

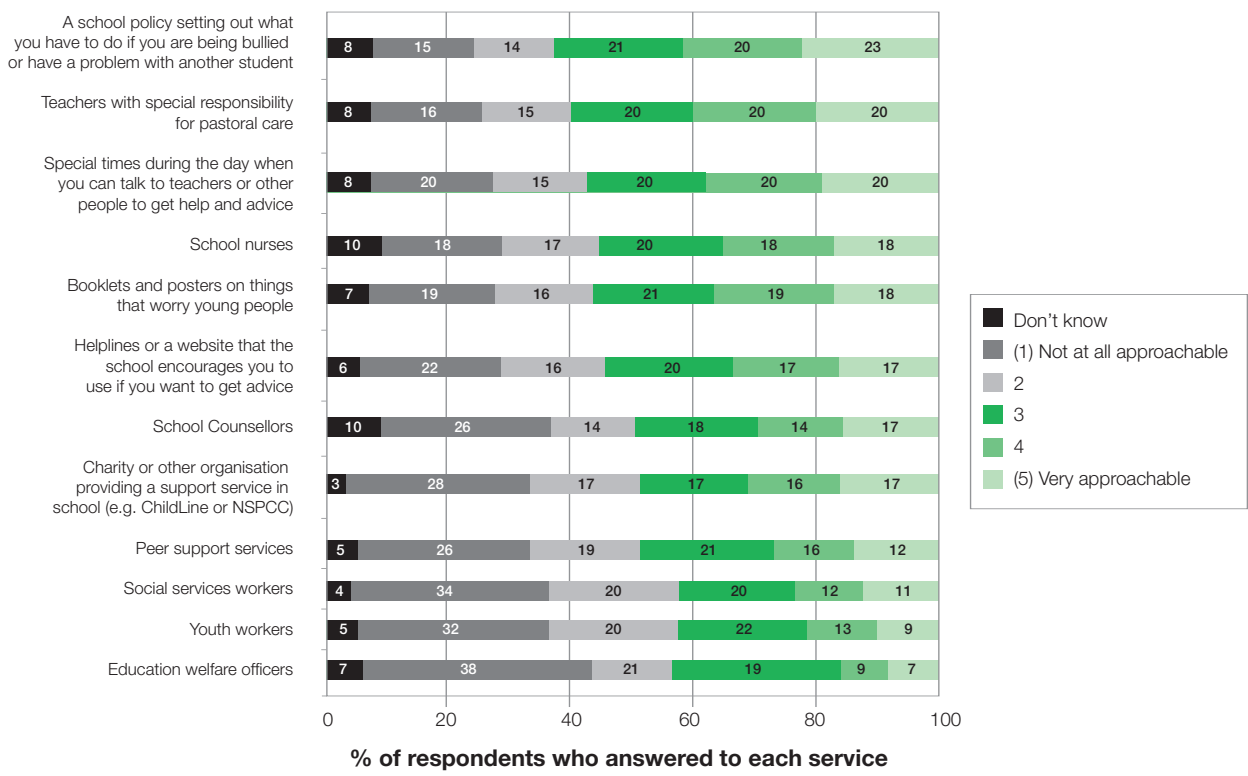
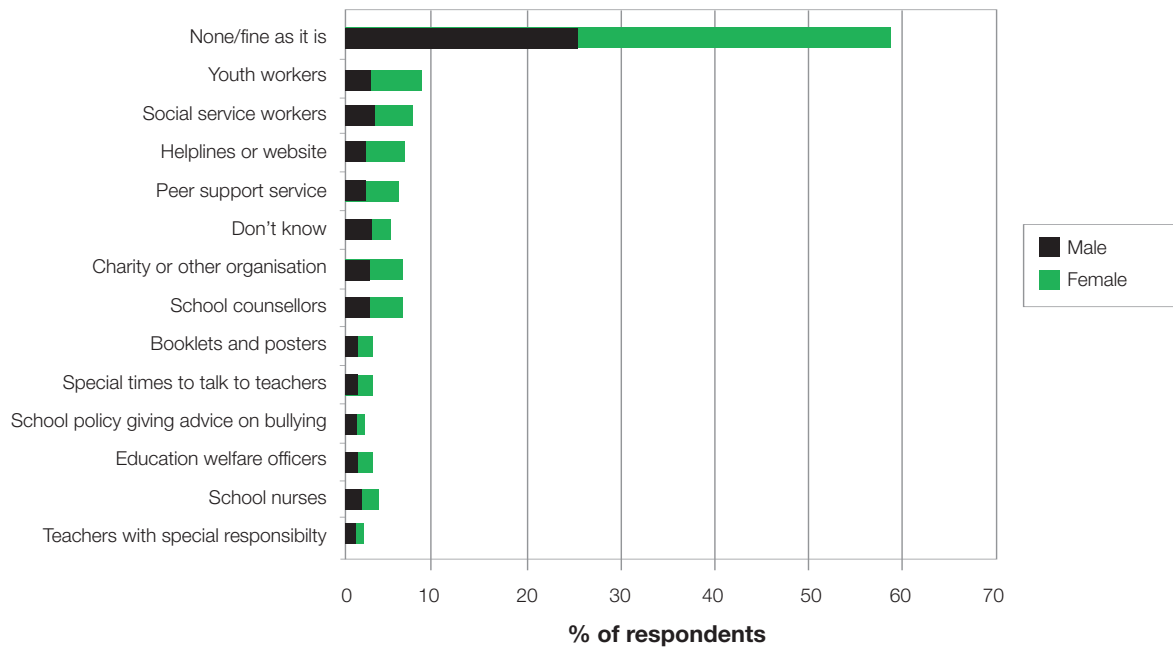


Chart 9 shows what students would like to see in their schools.



NSPCC
 Weston House
 42 Curtain Road
 London EC2A 3NH
 Telephone: 020 7825 2500
www.nspcc.org.uk

