

Ormiston Academies Trust's #iwill programme

Evaluation report

1 Executive summary

This interim evaluation report of Ormiston Academies Trust's #iwill programme brings together findings from a large-scale survey of staff and students across all Ormiston academies, with in-depth case studies of #iwill projects in six Ormiston academies, including a primary and special academy, spread across four regions. This report forms the basis of the final evaluation report, which will also include findings from interviews with senior leaders in Ormiston academies.

This report presents findings on:

- The level of student participation in #iwill, barriers and enablers of participation, and the reach of #iwill across academies
- The impact of #iwill on participating students, focussing in particular on social and emotional learning
- The impact of #iwill on Ormiston academies, including indirect benefits for non-participating students, impact on staff and impact on academy culture and ethos
- The impact of Ormiston's #iwill programme on the wider community outside its academies
- The legacy and sustainability of #iwill projects, and social action more broadly, across Ormiston academy
- The ways in which the process of delivering #iwill across Ormiston Academies Trust had enabled and hindered impact
- The factors that principals of Ormiston academies believe would help maximise the impact of #iwill in future.

Participation and reach

- Case study data suggested that student participation in #iwill varied between voluntary in some academies and targeted in others. Students with SEND were seen as most likely to have been targeted to participate in #iwill.
- Around half of students and the majority of staff had heard of #iwill.
- The greatest barrier to participation students faced was a lack of time to work on their #iwill projects, as identified by both staff and SLT.
- The COVID-19 pandemic was also identified as a significant barrier, by staff, SLT and #iwill leads.
- For students eligible for the Pupil Premium and students with an identified SEND, #iwill leads also cited attendance as a prominent barrier.
- Staff, SLT and #iwill leads were all less likely to identify barriers that students eligible for the Pupil Premium and students with an identified SEND faced, and more likely to identify barriers for other students.

Impact on students

- Students who had taken part in #iwill demonstrated higher scores across a range of SEL traits than was the case for non-participating students. These differences were statistically significant. Spending more time on #iwill appeared to lead to greater impact.

- Staff agreed that #iwill had led to positive changes for participating students, especially in relation to their ability to work in a team and communicate effectively.
- In particular, #iwill appeared beneficial for students' perceptions of their ability to work hard, achieve goals, solve problems and empathise with others; as well as for their feelings about their sense of agency about making changes in the community; and their plans for the future.
- Case studies revealed a number of plausible causal pathways for these changes. In particular, the small group nature of #iwill and the strength of relationships between students and their peers as well as with the #will lead played an important role. Likewise, opportunities for public speaking, leading, solving problems and subsequently seeing tangible changes arise out of #iwill projects appeared to explain many of the measured differences between students taking part in #iwill and those who did not.

Impact on academies

- #iwill had led to benefits for academies, in particular in terms of creating professional development opportunities for staff involved in the programme. These opportunities were largely for #iwill leads, involving experience running whole-school initiatives with a substantial budget, with high levels of visibility to the SLT.
- Academies also benefited from social action being more closely tied to PSHE curricula, and to a lesser extent, careers provision.
- #iwill had influenced changes to academies' culture and ethos, and had contributed to more positive perceptions of academies among students, parents and the community.
- To a lesser extent than for participating students, #iwill had led to some direct and indirect benefits for non-participating students, most notably contributing to a sense that student voice was prioritised in Ormiston academies.

Impact on local communities

- SLT, as well as case study staff and students, perceived some impact of #iwill on the community outside of academies, but to a lesser extent than the impact on academies and students themselves. This was partly due to some projects planning impact within the academy, rather than outside the academy, and partly due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Where there had been impact, this took the form of built structures and resources that the community could use, as well as awareness raising on the topics students chose as part of their #iwill project.
- There was an appetite among staff and students to develop this aspect of social action in the case study academies.

Legacy

- Staff were generally positive about the legacy of #iwill. They perceived that social action was more embedded in academies' culture, in particular through PSHE curricula and perceptions of the value placed on student voice, and to a lesser extent, careers curricula.
- Staff and students also believed that the resources and structures created as part of #iwill would continue to be used within academies.
- The extent to which these findings were generalisable across the Trust was less clear. Around a third of staff knew little or nothing about #iwill, and a similar proportion were unsure about the sustainability of changes made during #iwill.

- Staff believed that more could be done to ensure buy-in across academies, and that social action could be embedded in more curricula, beyond PSHE and careers
- Whilst principals held positive attitudes to social action in their schools that pre-dated #iwill, the programme had enabled a leap forward in embedding social action in schools' cultures and practices.

Process

- In general, #iwill had been well led and well organised, both within academies and across the Trust.
- Key enabling factors included the capacity of #iwill leads, the support they received from other staff within academies, and the support they received from head office.
- Other curriculum areas, in particular PSHE, were also seen as helpful.
- Workload for #iwill leads had been manageable, but more could be done to protect time for staff in these and similar roles.
- Time was seen as the critical barrier to the effectiveness of #iwill, alongside the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of joined-up working across academies on #iwill, albeit with some improvements over the course of the programme.

Principals views on legacy

- Principals in case study academies had clear plans to continue social action. Their plans involved dedicating staff resource to #iwill, increasing the reach of #iwill amongst both students and staff, strengthening student leadership of and parental engagement in social action.
- Principals also suggested improvements to #iwill in future. Principals were clear that Ormiston should prioritise collaboration between academies on future social action. In particular, principals would welcome shared examples of good practice, and stress-testing their plans for #iwill with other senior leaders. Principals also requested support with timetabling; longer-term TLRs and flexible funding to include cover; CPD for a wider range of staff than #iwill leads; and consistency of message from all Head Office staff.

Recommendations

Ensuring social action continues

- OAT Head Office should continue to fund roles to drive and support social action across its academies. Alongside these roles, OAT should audit and advertise the resources and support on offer for academies (for instance with curriculum planning, social media engagement, editing and printing promotional material). This is important for achieving economies of scale and reducing the workload for staff within academies.
- The role of #iwill (or social action) lead should be retained across all academies. OAT should fund a TLR for this role. The role should come with protected time off-timetable for planning and administration, roughly proportional with that of a middle leader or department head.
- OAT should set out clear guidelines and expectations for the support social action leads receive from senior teams. This should include regular check-ins and mentoring, with an emphasis on scaling impact beyond participating

students to maximise impact on the academy as a whole and, to a lesser extent, the local community.

- OAT should work with SLT in academies to agree and set a minimum expectation of student participation (including participation by students eligible for PP and those with SEND) in social action in every academy over the next 5 years.
- Together with #iwill leads and SLT in academies, SLT should explore ways to protect student time on social action. This may be in the form of minimum expectations for all students to take part in a certain number of hours of social action during their time at an Ormiston academy, or tailored by targeted groups or core participants.
- Alongside clear expectation setting, OAT should continue and expand its celebration of social action in academies, including regional and national celebration events, publication of case studies (picking out key process points as well as student activity and achievement) social and mainstream media engagement, and awards.
- OAT should support academies to build relationships with large, geographically spread organisations who may be able to support/sponsor elements of social action projects. Examples of this practice already exist within academies (such as work with organisations such as WE Schools), thus the focus should be on extending these relationships across all academies.

Maximising the impact of social action

- Academies should ensure that students are able to work on social action projects in small groups, even as the overall number of participating students in each academy increases.
- All academies, voluntary participation in social action should be combined with a greater targeted focus on students with SEND and students who are eligible for the Pupil Premium. For these groups, SLT and social action leads should think about what the potential barriers might be and overcome them. For instance, some pupils may find it hard (financially or due to SEND) to travel independently outside of school, so social action leads should take this into account when planning activities.
- OAT Head Office should set an expectation that participation in social action is accompanied by accreditation. Accreditation should not only provide a celebration of students' achievements on social action projects, but also enable students to reflect on the skills they developed through taking part. This reflection could be through Skills Builder (as suggested in one case study academy) or some other form of accreditation that helps recognise young people's social and emotional development (perhaps alongside some of the knowledge they have acquired, e.g. budgeting, catering, gardening).
- OAT should curate a menu of approaches that schools can take to broaden the impact of social action beyond those directly participating, e.g. school-wide competitions, advertising events, opportunities for schools to feed in ideas.
- OAT should create a "live tracker" of social action projects that set out the extent, focus and timelines of social action projects across academies. As well as ensuring greater visibility of social action, this tracker would enable social action leads to identify potential areas for collaboration and peer-to-peer support. OAT should facilitate collaboration between academies especially at SLT level, for example through CPD for school leaders aimed at supporting effective social action, or including reviews of academies' progress on #iwill at a principals forum.



- Social action and careers leads in academies should make use of the Careers and Enterprise Company's "Youth Social Action toolkit" to support academies with linking social action to Gatsby Benchmarks; for example through linking curriculum learning to careers, providing encounters with employers and experiences of workplaces. The toolkit also provides resources to help reduce the administrative burden of delivering social action projects in school. Whilst it may be beneficial for students to work through some administrative processes themselves as part of their leadership of social action projects, this is not always proportionate. OAT should also augment the Careers and Enterprise Company's resources with a pool of useful resources from current/previous #iwill projects (for example paperwork relating to food hygiene regulation to run a community cafe).

2 Method

This evaluation of Ormiston Academies Trust's #iwill programme is drawn on a mixed methods design. Quantitative data was collected through endpoint surveys of students, #iwill leads, senior leaders and other staff conducted in April 2021. These surveys were administered online by Ormiston staff in academies. CfEY gathered qualitative data from six Ormiston academies during June and July 2021. CfEY conducted focus groups with students alongside interviews with Head, #iwill leads and PSHE, careers and student voice leads. CfEY conducted a further set of interviews with principals in five of the six case study schools in September 2021.

2.1 Quantitative analysis

CfEY designed four surveys, each of which fed into the quantitative analysis for this evaluation.

Student survey

CfEY designed the student survey to enable a comparison of participating students' social and emotional characteristics with those of non-participating students. The survey's design was informed both by validated measures of young peoples' social and emotional characteristics, as well as the draft of an Ormiston Academies Trust survey of students' social and emotional learning. The use of validated measures was intended to build on the existing evidence base and previous field-testing (given the lack of available time for field testing) and to maximise the reliability and validity of the measures. The survey also contains questions designed to ascertain the reach of #iwill, as well as questions about process.

The survey was administered by staff in Ormiston Academies, overseen by Ormiston Head Office. CfEY provided regular updates on completion rates, which Ormiston were able to use to provide incentives through competition and recognition by the Trust, as well as using the information to prompt individual schools to complete surveys. Over 14,000 students across all Ormiston Academies responded to the survey, generating a response rate of just under 50% and allowing for highly generalisable analysis, lending a high degree of confidence to the conclusions. Question level response numbers are provided throughout the report.

Where survey measures compared participating students with non-participating students, findings were tested for statistical significance.

Staff surveys

CfEY designed three surveys for Ormiston staff, allowing an element of triangulation between survey findings, and adding questions about the impact of #iwill on schools, as well as process factors and questions about legacy and the sustainability of #iwill.

Staff surveys generated ~1000 usable responses, including 40 #iwill leads, ~150 Senior Leaders and ~950 staff who were neither on school Senior Leadership Teams or #iwill leads.

2.2 Qualitative analysis

Qualitative data comprised of interviews with Head Office staff, case studies of #iwill in six Ormiston academies. Case study schools were selected to represent each of Ormiston's four regions; offer insights into different levels of maturity in terms of how

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well established each academy's #iwill programme was; and also included the Trust's only special school.

In each case study school, CfEY conducted focus groups with between 6-10 students who had taken part in #iwill projects. These pupils ranged in age between Year 7 and Year 12. In the special school, the core group of involved students had all left the school by the summer term 2021, and so the focus group was replaced with an interview with one student who was available to return to the school and take part in the research. In each school, CfEY also conducted semi-structured interviews with the #iwill lead. CfEY conducted three focus groups, held online, with PSHE, student voice and careers leads. Each focus group consisted of three-five participants. Participants in these focus groups were largely based in case study schools, but were also drawn, opportunistically, from other Ormiston academies.

In September 2021, CfEY conducted five online interviews with principals from five of the six case study schools. In two interviews, other members of the school's Senior Leadership Team were also present. Before taking part in these interviews, participants were given an opportunity to read findings from an interim report, synthesising and producing conclusions from all other forms of data from the evaluation.

Additionally, CfEY conducted three semi-structured phone-interviews with Head Office staff in January 2021 in order to explore their perceptions of any changes across the project outcomes and to probe the factors that might have led to any change.

Interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Data from the six schools was coded by theme across the following areas of evaluation:

- The level of student participation in #iwill, barriers and enablers of participation, and the reach of #iwill across academies
- The impact of #iwill on participating students, focussing in particular on social and emotional learning
- The impact of #iwill on Ormiston academies, including indirect benefits for non-participating students, impact on staff and impact on academy culture and ethos
- The impact of Ormiston's #iwill programme on the wider community outside its academies
- The legacy and sustainability of #iwill projects, and social action more broadly, across Ormiston academy
- The ways in which the process of delivering #iwill across Ormiston Academies Trust had enabled and hindered impact
- What principals of Ormiston academies believe would help maximise the impact of #iwill in future.

Within these themes, CfEY identified sub-themes relating to areas of common agreement or disagreement, and extracted quotes to exemplify key points.

2.3 Limitations

Delivery of the #iwill programme had been heavily disrupted by the Covid19 pandemic. This meant that surveys, interviews and focus groups sometimes took place several months after programme delivery. This may limit the reliability of research participants' responses to activity which took place in the past.

Both the qualitative and the quantitative data collection was administered by Ormiston Academies Trust school staff, sometimes by #iwill leads themselves. This may have

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impacted on the validity of the dataset, with student's responses potentially influenced by their perceptions of how school staff might want them to respond.

The original evaluation design provided for a pre- and post-measure of student social and emotional characteristics to measure change in a range of outcomes. Due to a low response rate to the baseline student survey in the autumn term 2019, the evaluation design was changed to include larger-scale surveys of students and staff, allowing a snapshot of student and staff post-hoc perceptions of impact. Only limited claims can therefore be made in relation to causality because whilst qualitative data indicates a number of 'plausible causal pathways' that link changes to activities, this cannot be evidenced through measuring change in comparison to a control group.

3 Findings

3.1 Participation and reach

3.1.1 Students taking part in #iwill

Case studies suggested that academies had taken different approaches to selecting students to participate in #iwill. Some opened #iwill up to volunteers, although more commonly, #iwill leads collaborated with heads of year and pastoral leads to take a more proactive approach to selecting students who might benefit. These selected groups of students generally comprised those with:

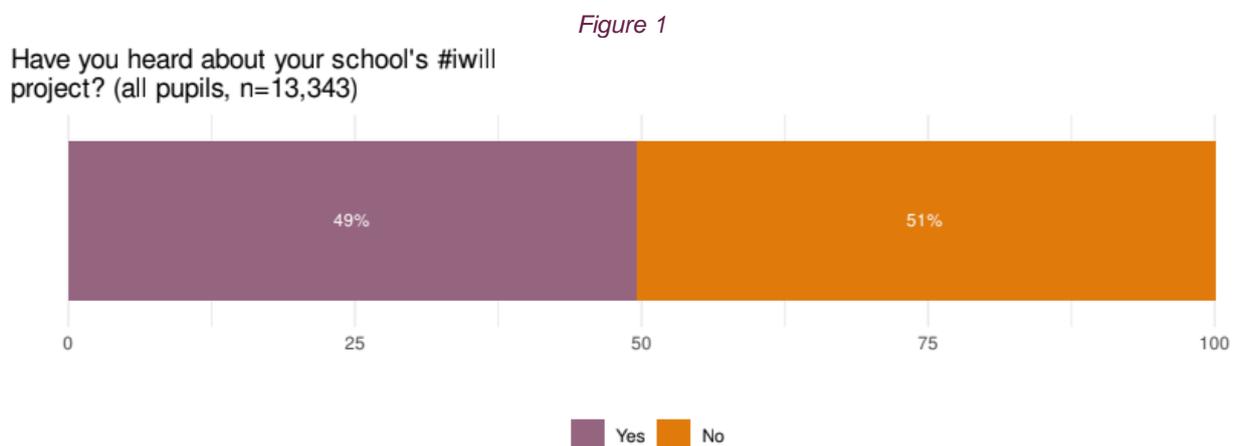
- identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – these students were seen as most likely to have participated
- identified difficulties with mental health
- difficulties with social inclusion
- struggles in academic subjects
- difficulties transitioning from primary school
- lower-income families.

One case study academy reported difficulties with engaging disadvantaged students in #iwill. In this academy, staff suggested that the social action focus on food poverty was “too close to the bone” for some students, and may have prevented them from taking part in the project. In another academy, disadvantaged pupils participated at the start of the project, but were unable to sustain that participation over lockdown, as they were not always able to communicate digitally with the #iwill lead.

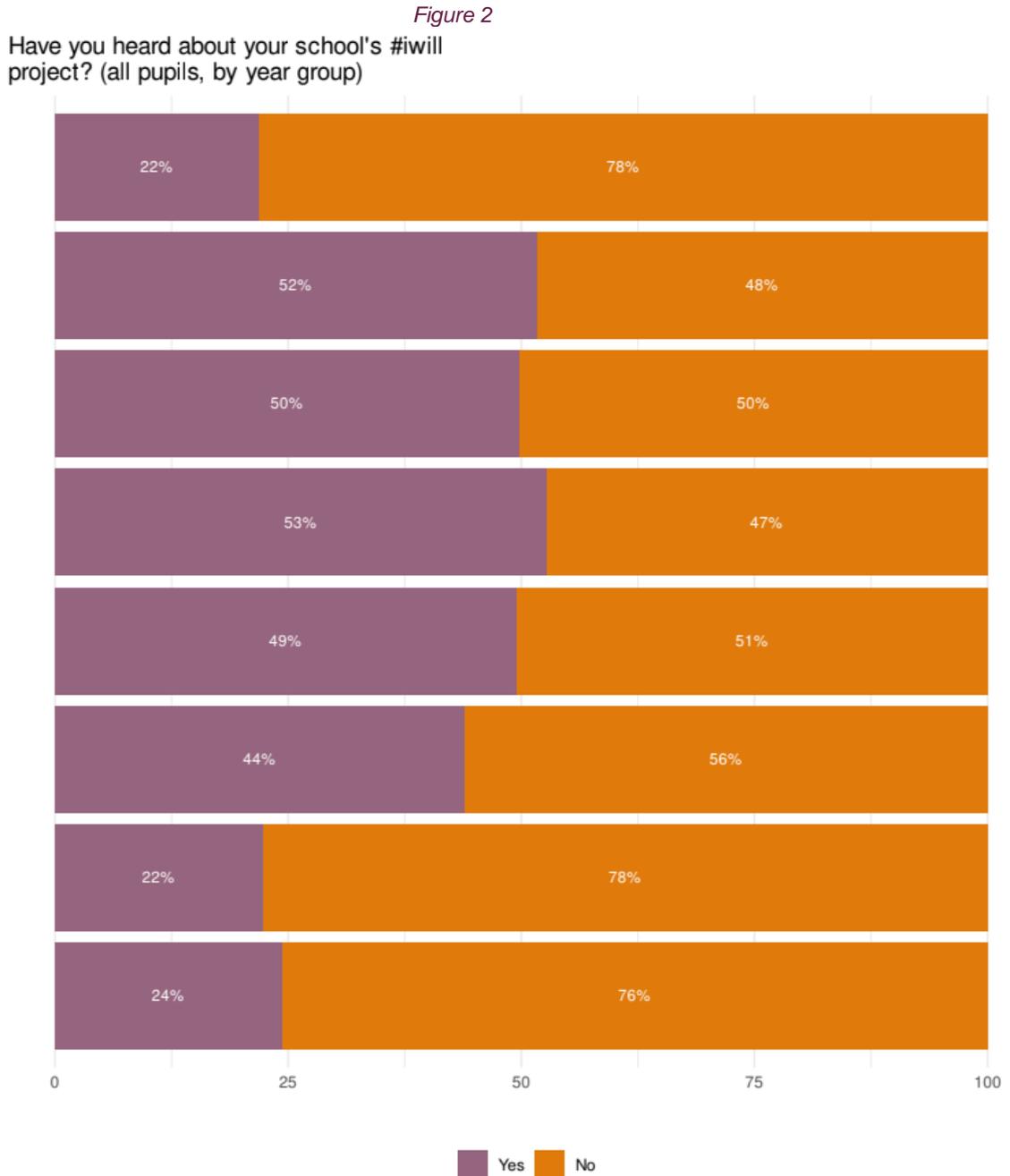
Staff in Ormiston head office also reported varying levels of engagement among students eligible for the Pupil Premium across all academies, although they reported high levels of engagement among students with SEND.

3.1.2 Reach of #iwill among students

Across Ormiston academies, just under half of students (49%) had heard of #iwill (Figure 1).



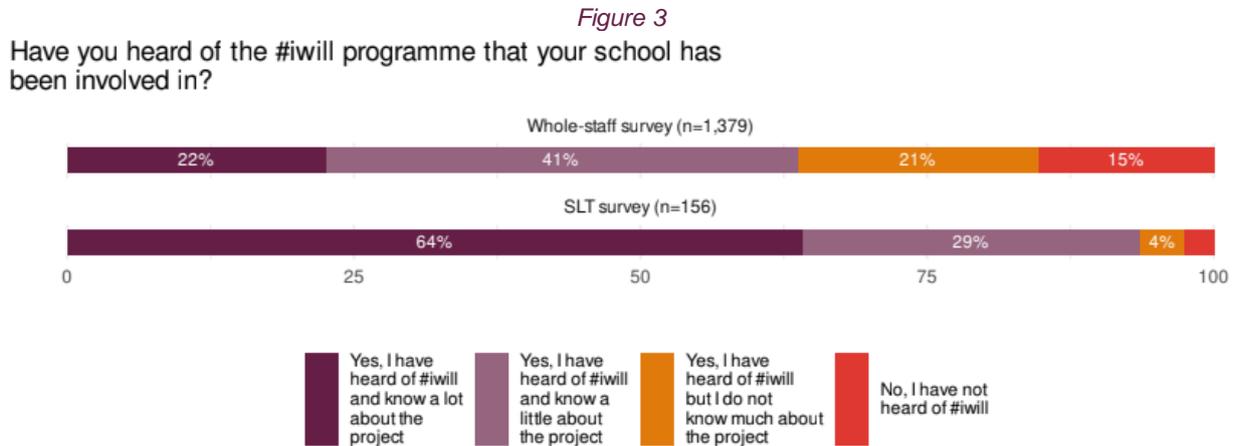
The proportion of students who had heard of #iwill varied by age (Figure 2).¹ Recognition of #iwill was most likely in Years 7–11, in which around half of respondents had heard of it, and least likely in Years 3, 12 and 13, in which under a quarter of students had heard of it.



¹ Student data from Years 4, 5 and 6 have been excluded from Figure 2 as n=4 for each year group.

3.1.3 Reach of #iwill among staff

Most staff had heard of #iwill (84%) and more than half (63%) knew at least a little about the programme (Figure 3). Meanwhile almost all senior leadership teams (SLT) (93%) knew at least a little about the programme.



3.1.4 Staff perceptions of barriers to student participation

Project leads in case study academies highlighted a number of barriers to participation:

- prioritisation of academic subjects, especially for exam groups
- young carers finding it difficult to attend before- or after-school activities
- the limited time available for staff to work with students on #iwill – many #iwill leads noted that they would have liked to open #iwill up to more students.

Project leads suggested two ways in which participation might be increased:

- rotating groups every half term – although it should be noted that this rotation might lead to individual students spending less time on #iwill, which as we set out in section 4.2.3, might lead to reduced impact on students' social and emotional learning (SEL)
- greater integration of social action in the curriculum, as this #iwill lead explained:

"Having something integrated into the curriculum, like we're going to write a poem about why our social care system is so important ... [and] now take the next step and make sure that carers get to see it, put on an event that allows them to come and see it or send it out to them or make posters and get them put up in the local shops."

#iwill lead

Across all academies, Figure 4 shows the barriers to participating in #iwill that staff felt all students faced. The largest proportion (just over a third) of the whole staff body felt that students faced none of the barriers listed, whereas the largest proportions of SLT (27%) and #iwill leads (49%) felt that lack of student time was a barrier to participation. Notably, 'none of the above' was chosen by just 1.7% of #iwill leads, compared with 34% of the whole staff body and 24% of SLT. In fact, far more of the #iwill leads' responses indicated that there were a number of barriers than did those of

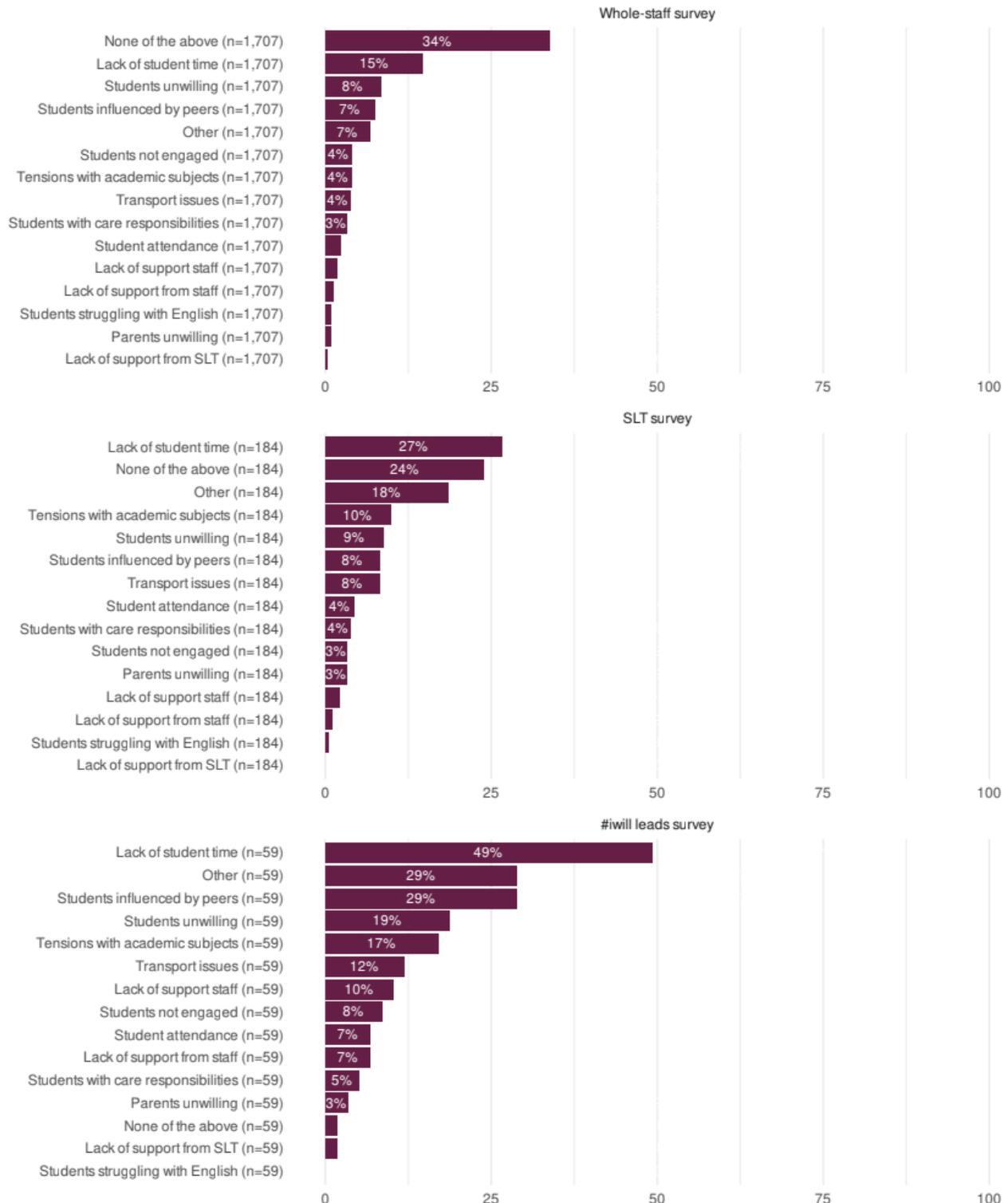
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the staff or SLT. Given the closeness of #iwill leads to the project, this may be indicative of issues that need to be communicated to the SLT in particular.

In all three surveys, responses in the 'other' category primarily referred to issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 4

Barriers faced by all students



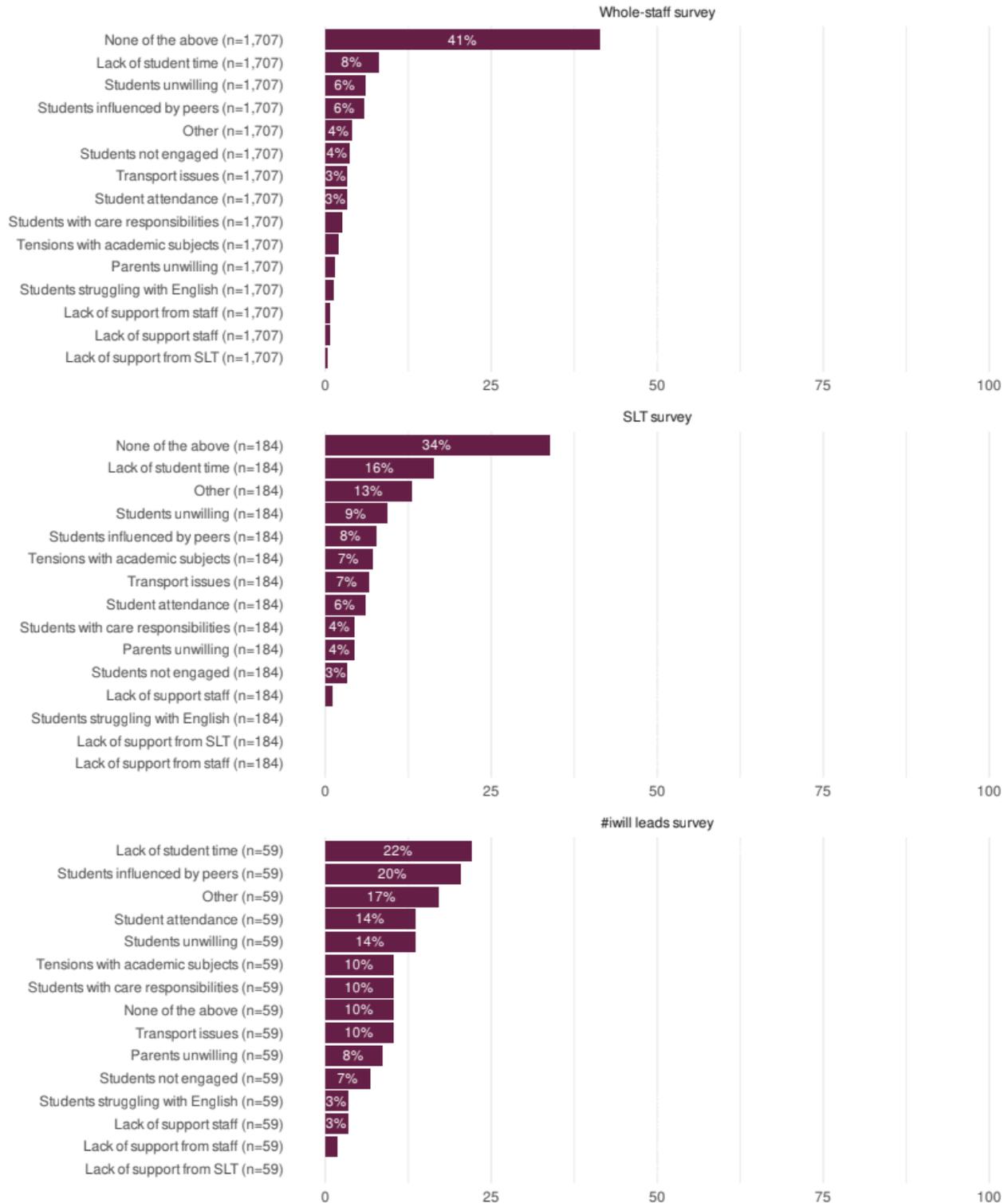
Pupil Premium

Staff, SLT and #iwill leads were all less likely to notice barriers to participation for students eligible for the Pupil Premium, compared with all pupils (Figure 5). The most commonly noticed barrier was, as with the barriers faced by the whole student body, a lack of student time. #iwill leads were more likely to identify student attendance as a barrier for students eligible for the Pupil Premium than for all students.

'Other' responses from all three groups again primarily referred to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 5

Barriers faced by students eligible for Pupil Premium



SEND

Respondents were again less likely to identify barriers faced by students with an identified SEND than barriers faced by all students (Figure 6), perhaps because of the likelihood of students with SEND being encouraged to take part, noted in section 4.1.1.

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Lack of student time was the most prominent barrier identified in all three surveys, and #iwill leads were slightly more likely to identify student attendance as a barrier to students with an identified SEND than for all students.

'Other' responses again primarily referred to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Case study: Ormiston George Salter Academy

George Salter Academy's #iwill lead previously worked as a learning support assistant, supporting vulnerable students across the academy. Her involvement with #iwill provided useful professional development, raising her profile with senior staff and supporting her application to do a teaching qualification.

Students volunteered to take part in #iwill. The project was especially popular with students with an identified SEND, in part because of the #iwill lead's previous role as a learning support assistant, meaning she was already known and trusted by many students with SEND. Students eligible for the Pupil Premium were more reluctant to participate than others, something the #iwill lead believed might be because #iwill social action tackled issues close to home, such as food poverty, leaving students whose families relied on foodbanks feeling vulnerable to stigma.

#iwill at George Salter developed over time to include: a market garden; visits to a local community association; running a foodbank through the COVID-19 pandemic; a newspaper club; a debate club; and competitions.

Students and the #iwill lead reported a positive impact on:

- students' confidence to take leadership positions, find solutions when projects proved problematic and speak out on issues they cared about – this was especially the case for students with SEND
- career aspirations, with students reporting the role of #iwill in prompting them to think about careers in health and social care
- student voice across the academy, through #iwill offering opportunities for public speaking, competitions and the debate club.

Several factors had contributed to this impact, including: the role of the #iwill lead in encouraging students with SEND to take part; students being able to work in small groups on issues they cared about; and the opportunities for students from different year groups to collaborate.

Participation and reach: summary of findings

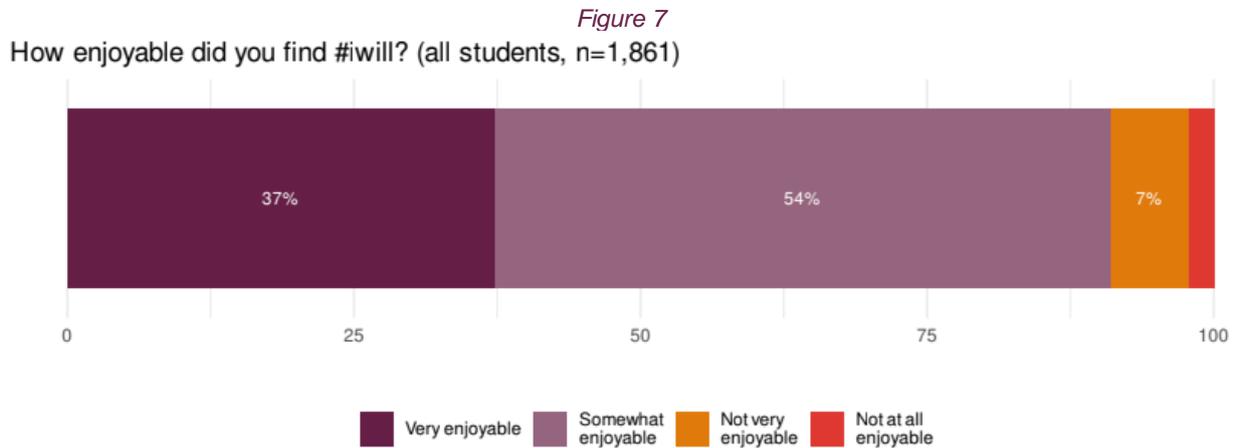
- Case study data suggested that student participation in #iwill varied between voluntary in some academies and targeted in others. Students with SEND were seen as most likely to have been targeted to participate in #iwill.
- Around half of students and the majority of staff had heard of #iwill.
- The greatest barrier to participation students faced was a lack of time to work on their #iwill projects, as identified by both staff and SLT.
- The COVID-19 pandemic was also identified as a significant barrier, by staff, SLT and #iwill leads.

- For students eligible for the Pupil Premium and students with an identified SEND, #iwill leads also cited attendance as a prominent barrier.
- Staff, SLT and #iwill leads were all less likely to identify barriers that students eligible for the Pupil Premium and students with an identified SEND faced, and more likely to identify barriers for other students.

3.2 Impact on students

3.2.1 Student enjoyment of #iwill

Students found #iwill overwhelmingly a positive experience, with 91% of respondents saying that it was at least 'somewhat enjoyable' (Figure 7).



Student enjoyment of #iwill was borne out by student focus groups during case studies. Every student we spoke to was positive about their experience. In particular, students enjoyed working on issues that they cared about, in small teams, and in a way that left them feeling valued by the school and teachers. Students also enjoyed developing their perspective on the world through taking part in social action through #iwill:

"#iwill allows people to just like open their eyes, and it brings joy to the heart and just allows people to be who they are within small groups and to get to know each other, and it just brings a whole community together. ... It's just something you wouldn't usually experience. When I first applied to be a part of the #iwill group ambassador thing, I didn't know what I was getting into ... it was kind of a leap of faith, but it really changed my perspective on things, and it really just changes your views on certain matters, and it changes you as a person."

Student

For one member of staff, high levels of enjoyment translated to greater levels of school motivation:

"I think that is a real clear example where students are enjoying it and liking it so much that they feel more confident and they want to come to school. In a school where we do have quite high elements of school refusal, actually if it's getting them into school, and then we can kind of do the rest once they're in the building. So, it's that hook for students."

Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) lead

3.2.2 Staff perceptions of impact on students

This section brings together staff, SLT and #iwill lead survey responses relating to #iwill's impact on participating students. In this section, we analyse impact on students

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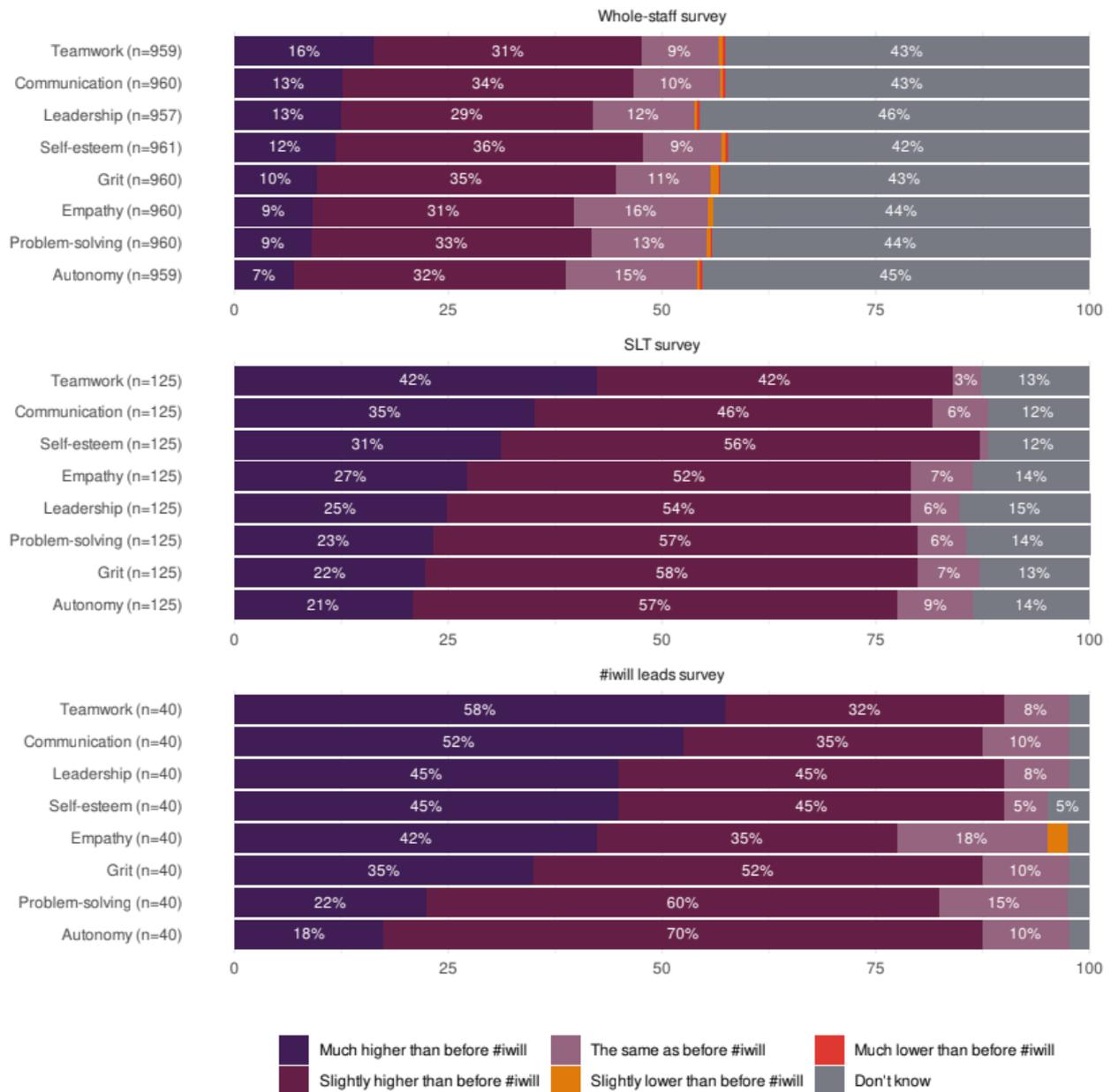
in broad terms, and across all academies. The following section (4.2.3) explores impact on students' social and emotional learning (SEL) in more depth.

Across all academies, staff (including SLT, #iwill leads and staff who were less involved in #iwill) felt that #iwill had led to positive changes for students across a range of SEL outcomes. #iwill leads felt more positive than other members of staff about #iwill's impact on students. This may have been a result of #iwill leads more accurate idea of impact on the individuals they worked with, or an indication of positive bias in favour of the project they organised.

For each outcome, staff perceived at least slightly improved SEL compared to before students' involvement in the programme (Figure 8). The high proportions of 'don't know' answers in the whole-staff survey mean that this finding cannot be generalised across all Ormiston staff, but the trend still applies to the whole-staff survey if 'don't know' responses are excluded.

Staff, SLT and #iwill leads believed that #iwill had the greatest impact on student teamwork and communication. These consistently received the highest proportions of 'much higher than before #iwill' answers across all three surveys, and autonomy consistently received the lowest.

Figure 8
Perceived impact on student SEL



These survey findings broadly chimed with head office staff interviews. Although head office staff, who had a broad view across all academies, did not specifically mention teamwork, they perceived #iwill to have had an impact on students' self-esteem, autonomy, empowerment (particularly in terms of amplifying their voice), behaviour, attendance and relationships with staff.

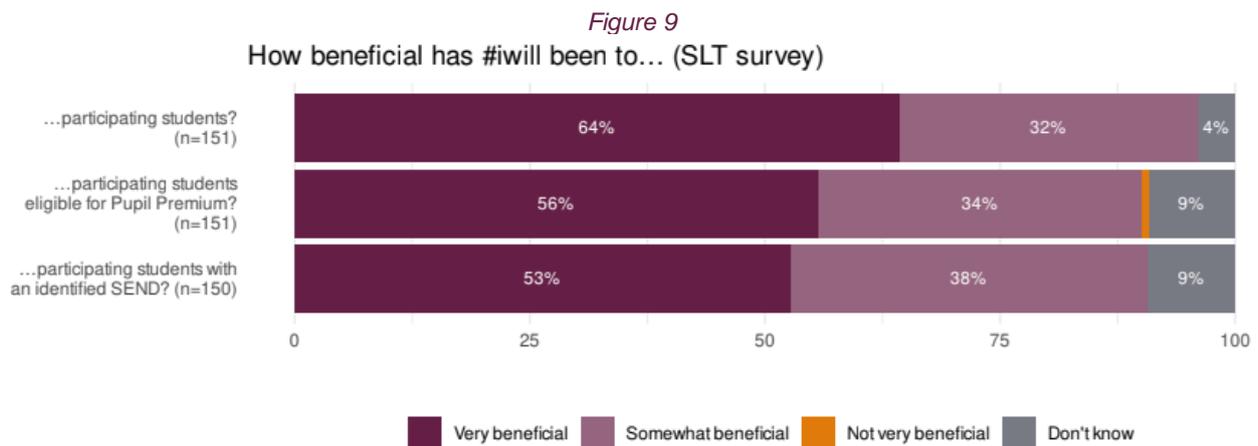
Staff perceptions of impact on different groups of students

A large majority of SLT felt that #iwill had at least been somewhat beneficial to all participating students, students eligible for the Pupil Premium and students with SEND (Figure 9). Fewer SLT respondents felt that #iwill had been 'very beneficial' to students eligible for the Pupil Premium than for all students, and fewer still felt this about students with an identified SEND.

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To an extent, these findings were corroborated by case studies and interviews with head office staff. For example, head office staff reported that, across all academies, the extent of impact on disadvantaged pupils was unclear – there were some reports of high levels of engagement among students eligible for the Pupil Premium in some academies, but this was not uniform across the Trust.

The picture for students with SEND is less clear. Head office staff and staff in case study academies reported that students with SEND had been particularly encouraged to take part in #will projects. The survey findings, suggesting SLT's lower levels of confidence in the benefits of #iwill for students with SEND, may therefore reflect variation between academies, with some making particular efforts to engage students with SEND.



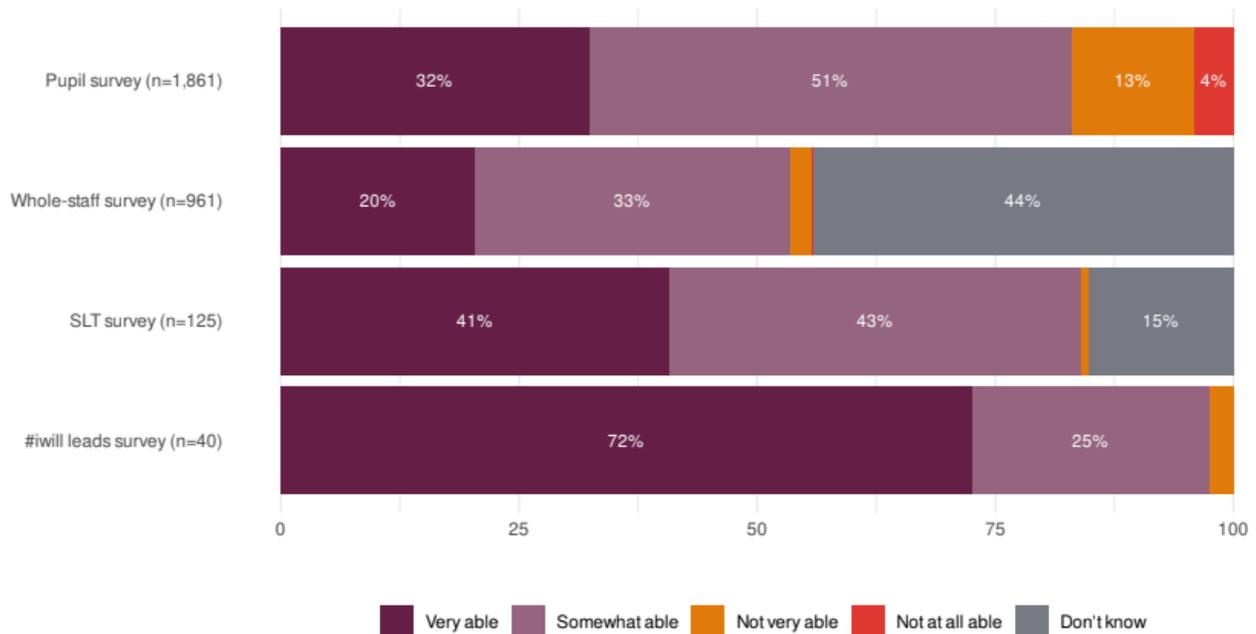
Student leadership of #iwill

High-quality social action is characterised by young people's ownership and leadership of projects, from inception through to the delivery of project outputs.² Across Ormiston academies, the majority of students, staff, SLT and #iwill leads felt that students were at least somewhat able to feed their own ideas into their #iwill projects (Figure 10). The high proportion of 'don't know' answers in the whole-staff survey makes it difficult to directly compare the findings in that survey to the other surveys. Fewer pupils than SLT or #iwill leads (and staff, excluding 'don't know' answers) felt that they were at least somewhat able to feed their own ideas into their projects.

² #iwill, 'What is Youth Social Action?', <https://www.iwill.org.uk/about-us/youth-social-action#quality>

Figure 10

To what extent do you feel students were able to feed their own ideas into their project?



A common theme across case study schools was that #iwill leads had sought to strike a balance between providing necessary guidance and allowing students to largely take ownership of their project. Students in one academy reported that they appreciated having a trusted adult who they could speak to about their project and being able to make compromises on key decisions. Similarly, a student in another academy felt that the #iwill lead worked collaboratively with students on their project, providing a helpful steer and assisting with the administrative side of the project.

"And like I say, she was a bit more of the drive and force to say, 'Actually, we could do this. Do you want to do this?' And we'd say, 'Yes, that's a brilliant idea. Or perhaps we can tweak it by doing this.'"

Student

Staff in case study academies saw this emphasis on student leadership, guided by the #iwill lead, as contributing to students' sense of agency (as explored in more depth in section 4.2.4) as well as leading to wider benefits for academies in creating a culture in which student voice is seen to be valued (section 4.3).

3.2.3 Overall impact on students' social and emotional learning

Across all Ormiston academies, there were promising indications that #iwill had a positive impact on social and emotional learning (SEL) for participating students. Survey questions for students included asking the extent of agreement with a set of statements covering SEL. These statements covered three broad domains:

- tackling challenges and achieving goals

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- solving problems and working with others
- my future, my school, my community.

Case study focus groups and interviews included an exploration of how and why #iwill may have changed, or failed to change, students' SEL across these domains. This section and the next (4.2.4) analyse data relating to each domain.

In general, participating pupils at endpoint reported higher average scores across all three SEL domains than pupils who had not participated in #iwill (Figure 11).



While it is not possible to attribute causality for these higher scores to the #iwill project, there was a statistically significant relationship between whether or not a pupil had participated in #iwill and their scores on SEL questions in each domain.³ It should also be noted that, because some students participated in #iwill voluntarily (section 4.1.1), there may be some element of selection bias, in that students with higher scores, especially those with a pre-existing belief in their ability to effect change in their community, may have been more likely to take part in #iwill.

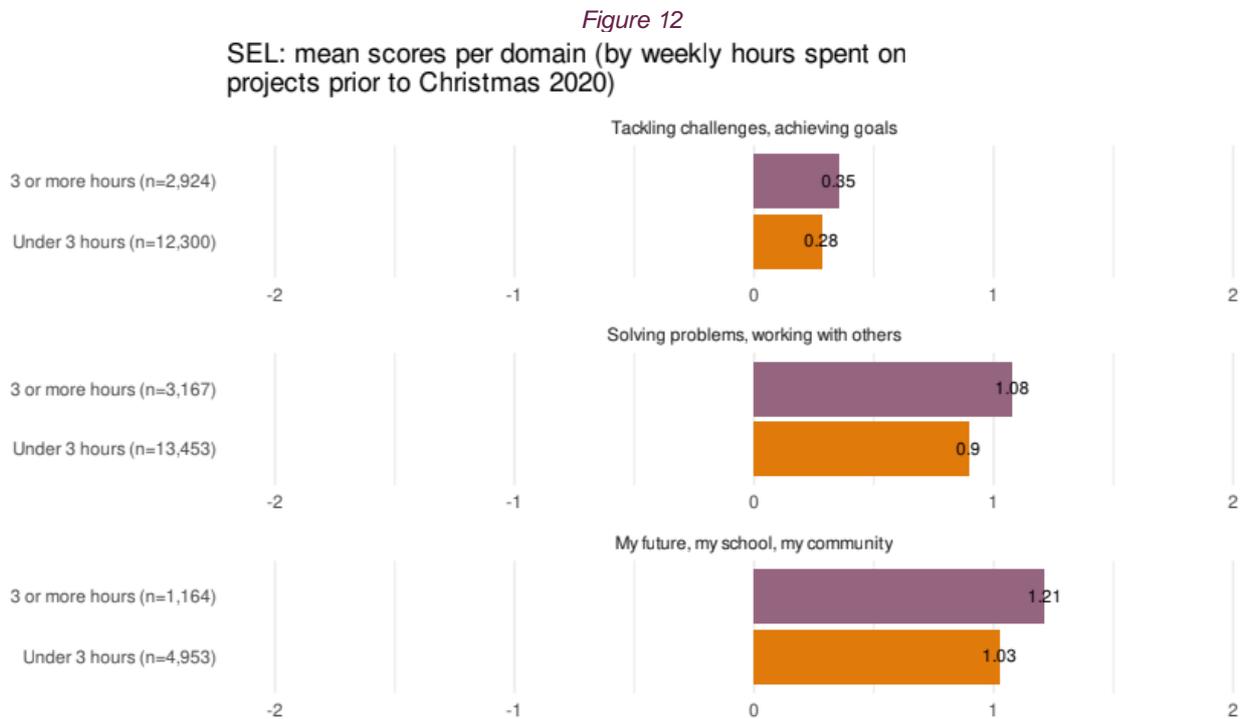
Impact of time spent on #iwill on student SEL

A further indicator of impact on student SEL is seen in analysing students' SEL scores in relation to their self-reported time spent on the project. For participating students, spending more hours on #iwill projects per week appeared to be associated with higher average SEL scores in each domain (Figure).⁴ Similarly, staff in one case study

³ Tackling challenges, achieving goals: $p < 0.01$ ($X^2 = 102.25$, $p = 2.96 \times 10^{-24}$); solving problems, working with others: $p < 0.01$ ($X^2 = 447.62$, $p = 2.38 \times 10^{-99}$); my future, my school, my community: $p < 0.01$ ($X^2 = 401.70$, $p = 2.35 \times 10^{-89}$).

⁴ Based on students' self-reported hours. These are based on recollections, in some cases from several months before completing the survey, and so may not be accurate, but they give an indication of which students spent more or less time on their projects.

academy described how students who had joined the school mid-way through the project had derived fewer benefits than students who had taken part in the full project, from inception to delivery.



3.2.4 Impact on specific aspects of students' social and emotional learning

The positive findings on students' SEL were borne out by students and staff across all #iwill case study schools, who reported that the programme had positively impacted students' SEL.

The following subsections explore the three domains of SEL in turn:

- tackling challenges and achieving goals
- solving problems and working with others
- my future, my school, my community.

For each subsection we present quantitative findings and then explore possible mechanisms for impact that might have led to #iwill changing students' SEL.

Tackling challenges and achieving goals

As part of the SEL survey, students were asked a series of questions seeking to understand their ability to tackle challenges and achieve goals. Students who took part in #iwill were more likely to rate themselves positively across most of this domain of SEL than those students who did not take part (Figure). In particular, participating students rated themselves comparatively highly for the following statements:

- I am a hard worker.
- I will have a go at things that are new to me.

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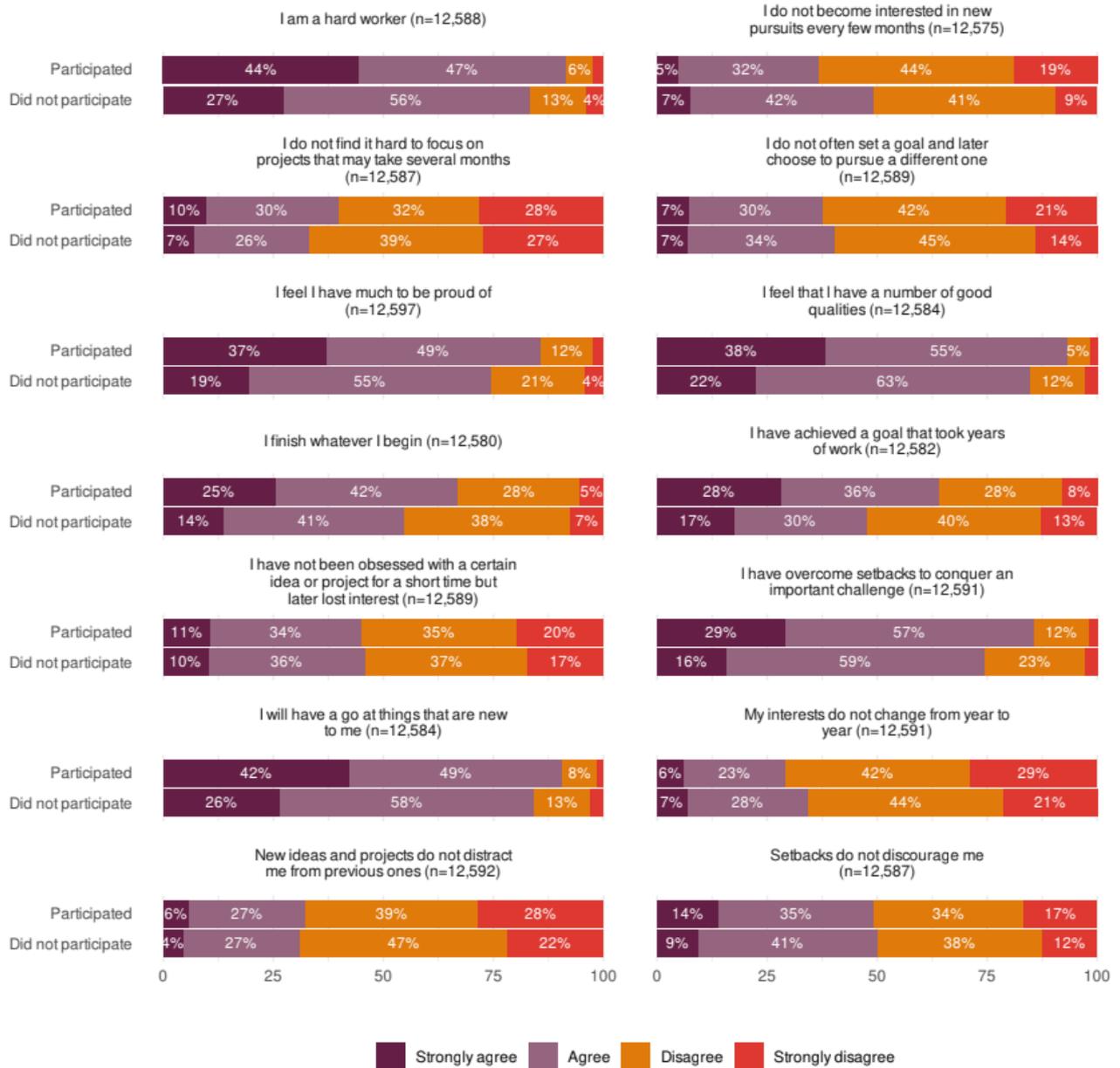
- I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
- I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.

Non-participants tended to score themselves more highly in the following areas:

- I do not become interested in new pursuits every few months.
- I have not been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.
- I do not often set a goal and later choose to pursue a different one.
- My interests do not change from year to year.

Figure 13

Tackling challenges, achieving goals



Case studies suggested a number of ways in which #iwill had helped students develop their ability to tackle challenges and achieve goals. First, students and #iwill leads

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believed that it had allowed students to work hard, experience setbacks and try new things in an environment that felt less threatening and was more supportive than the classroom.

Confidence in facing fears

Most striking were students' and #iwill leads' shared perceptions across all case studies of a change in students' confidence to speak up and take the lead, both in the context of their #iwill groups, and latterly, as their confidence progressed, in wider settings too. For most students and staff, the small group settings of #iwill were key in overcoming students' fears about speaking up:

"Because, like, people aren't judging you as much because I mean when it's in a small group, everyone has a chance to say something, and everyone has a chance to take part. Whereas, if it's like in a super-big group, it's just you feel like people are going to judge you just a little bit harder."

Student

Small group work

Students reported that working in small groups was less stressful and more supportive; #iwill leads were able to encourage students to contribute confidently, giving them opportunities to do so and providing feedback. Across a range of focus groups, students noted that they grew through the project and became more willing to contribute their ideas, often from a very low base.

"You had to share your ideas around the table in the meetings, yeah. So, it gave me more confidence to speak than just... Because, at the first couple of meetings, I was just sitting there being quiet, dead quiet. And then later on in the next meetings I started to speak."

Student

Staff agreed that small groups contributed to impact, suggesting that #iwill groups enabled particularly strong staff/student relationships, encouraging and supporting students to take on challenges.

Public speaking

Students also reported that the #iwill process helped build their confidence in public speaking. One student explained that their #iwill meetings filled them with confidence to share their experiences with others and to make a case for change. Others reported that public speaking practice as part of #iwill, including debates and newspaper clubs, had emboldened them to demand change. For example, one student documented their change from a laissez-faire attitude towards their community, to feeling comfortable telling strangers to pick up their litter.

Staff agreed that #iwill had led to students speaking out more, as this #iwill lead explained:

"These students who we thought, 'these are really quiet students, but they're going to work hard at it and try their best' – they've become confident speakers who will ... actually get their points across."

#iwill lead

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Staff also highlighted a number of examples of changes they had observed in individual students when speaking in front of others. One noted that these changes went beyond #iwill groups and enabled some students to take wider leadership roles:

"One of the students ... we decided to go forward for regional student leadership, which is the OAT student leadership team ... she's done some amazing work and she is by nature quite a quiet person, but #iwill and the student leadership programme has given her the confidence to know that her voice matters even though she's not shouting in the classroom; there are other ways and other outlets for her."

#iwill lead

Developing knowledge to help students tackle challenges

Across the #iwill focus groups, students and staff reported that students had gained new knowledge, which had often led to them changing their outlook and behaviours. In some cases, the knowledge related to particular #iwill activities. For instance, students referenced #iwill leading to changes in attitudes and perspectives, for example about different identity groups, or global challenges.

Elsewhere, new knowledge acquired through #iwill had led to tangible changes in student actions. One student spoke about how the project had led them to recycle bottles, make bug hotels and plant more, while another said they had a better understanding of what they could do to encourage natural biodiversity and that they now cared more about the environment.

Case study: Ormiston Horizon Academy

#iwill at Ormiston Horizon Academy started in 2018/19 with a cohort of Year 9 students. This group of students chose to work on the environment, setting up a range of activities aimed at promoting eco-friendly behaviours. One example of this strand of work involved the participating Year 9 pupils working with Year 6 students in a feeder primary school to develop and print a booklet of eco-friendly activities and reflections.

Over the three years #iwill has been running at Horizon, the #iwill funding has allowed new groups of students to join the programme and start a range of projects. The programme has evolved to include creating a resource to support student mental health, a garden school project and a reading leaders programme.

#iwill leads worked with heads of year and a raising standards leader to select students to participate. Criteria included students who had experienced difficulties with the transition to secondary school, students who were socially isolated and students who were finding academic work difficult.

Horizon's #iwill programme overlapped with some pre-existing personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and relationships and sex education (RSE) curriculum topics. Meanwhile some elements of projects benefited other curricula, with some science teaching using the garden school to augment classroom learning.

The two #iwill leads and the participating students identified impacts such as improving student confidence, especially speaking in front of others, and taking opportunities for leadership positions in the school and putting themselves forward for activities such as public speaking competitions that they would not have considered before taking part in #iwill. #iwill also helped participating students to make friends and feel valued within the school. One way in which #iwill enabled these changes was through delivering activities in small groups of no more than 10 students.

Solving problems and working with others

A second set of survey questions testing students' SEL related to solving problems and working with others. As for the previous domain (tackling challenges and achieving goals), in this domain #iwill participants scored themselves consistently more highly than non-participants (Figure), particularly in the following areas:

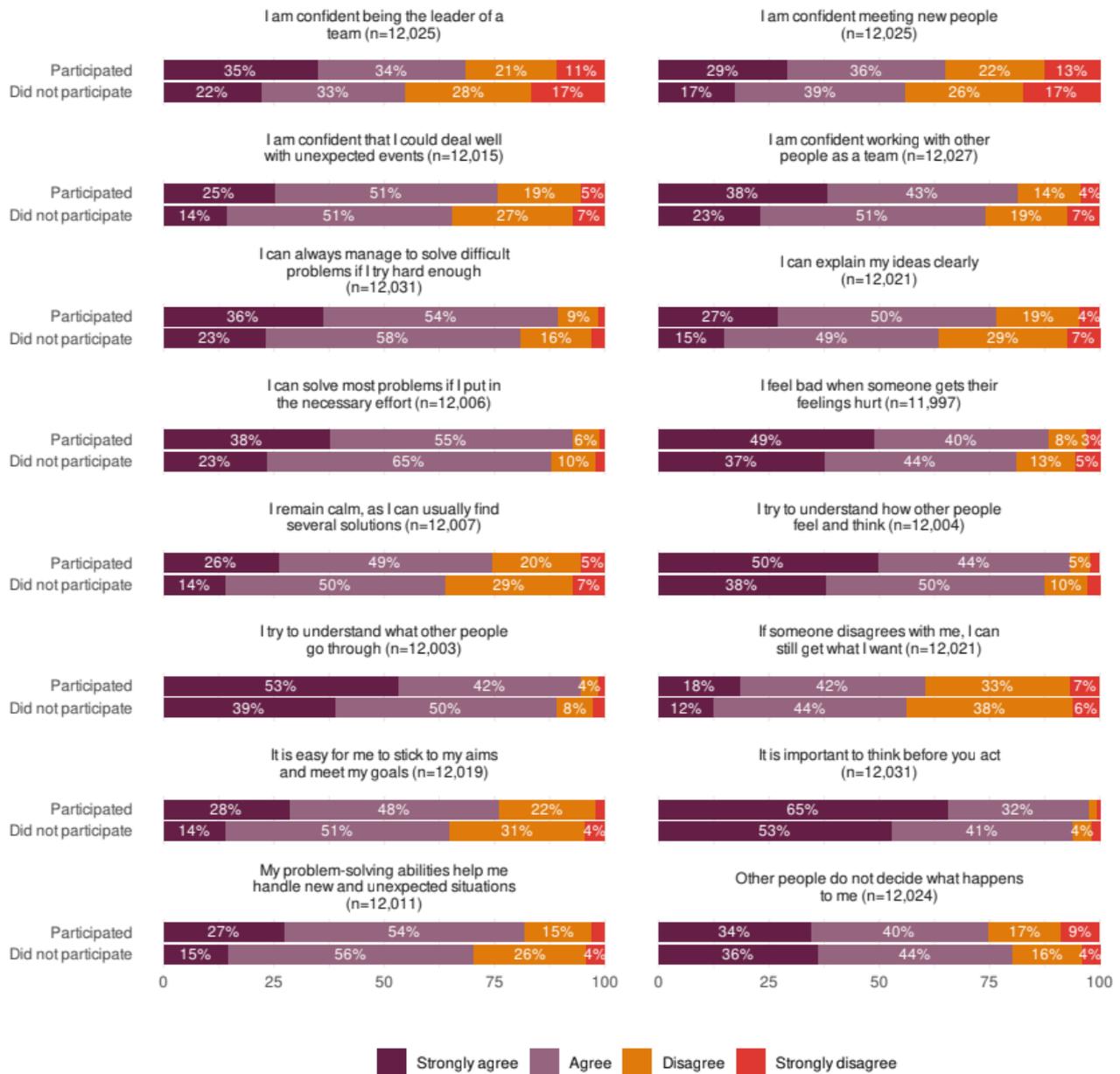
- I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
- I can solve most problems if I put in the necessary effort.
- I try to understand how other people feel and think.
- I try to understand what other people go through.
- It is important to think before you act.

Non-participants scored themselves more highly in one area:

- Other people do not decide what happens to me.

Figure 14

Solving problems, working with others



Students and staff in case study schools gave multiple examples of #iwill leading to changes in students' ability to work well with others and solve problems, and identified five ways in which #iwill may have led to those changes:

- #iwill's small group sizes
- students learning to manage disagreement within the group as part of #iwill projects
- the topic of #iwill social action leading to greater empathy and engagement with others
- the experience of finding solutions to difficulties arising in #iwill projects
- working across year groups.

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Teamworking in small groups

As discussed for the previous domain (tackling challenges and achieving goals), students and staff in all case study schools pointed to the importance of small groups in enabling changes in students' teamworking and problem solving. In particular, many students described going from being passive members of a team at the start of the project, to fully engaging with those they were working with. At one academy, students said that they had gained experience navigating challenges as part of a team and working out solutions diplomatically. While they sometimes felt nervous contributing in class, they believed that the #iwill project provided a platform for them to discuss contrasting opinions in a supportive environment.

Students generally felt that #iwill project work was distributed among their small team, rather than being driven by a few individuals, ensuring they could all gain practice in contributing to a team. As outlined by a Year 9 student below, students gained a renewed appreciation for the benefits of productive teamwork:

"I've found that when you work as a team, rather than just one person, you get a lot more done ... when there's a lot of people you can do a lot more."

Student

Managing disagreement

#iwill had given students opportunities to experience and find solutions to disagreements in team discussions. At one academy, students explained that #iwill had led them to be open to contrasting viewpoints within the group. This balance was captured by one particular student, who sought to bring other people into conversations as part of an #iwill newspaper club. Here, the supporting teacher also modelled inclusive team discussion:

"You have to sometimes take a step back and let other people talk, and then that helps you, as well as them, and it's more about encouraging other people, like, for example, if there was a new person in the club, like, sometimes, my friends went, if there's a new person, you would encourage them to say their opinion or Miss would say, 'Oh, what do you think of this?'"

Student

#iwill leads agreed that managing disagreement during projects had helped students develop their ability to work in teams. One described how students had changed as a result of taking part:

"It's teaching them to solve those selfish urges and think, 'Right, I'm putting something else before myself. There's something more important here and even though I may not like it, I've got to go and do it.' And it's teaching them that life lesson, that there will always be something week-to-week that you probably don't want to do, and that you may not want to be involved in, but it's your job as a good person to go and do that."

#iwill lead

Developing empathy

As well as teamwork among peers, #iwill improved students' capacity to empathise with others. At one academy, students explained that they had previously been nervous

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interacting with people they did not know, but that their experience in a community centre as part of #iwill gave them the confidence to approach and support members of the public. Students explained that assisting residents in the centre had led to greater understanding of other people, while the #iwill lead described a change in one student's outlook following a conversation with a resident about the challenges of loneliness and disability they were facing in old age:

"It made her really retrospective for a couple of days when she kind of took that time to process and think, 'Actually, my life isn't as bad as it could have been' or 'I've got my family around me, and I'm not isolated from them' or 'I'm going to go and make that phone call to my granddad because I hadn't seen him for a couple of weeks' ... So, I think that kind of empathetic and that compassionate side of the students has been really nice to see develop."
#iwill lead

Similarly, a student at another academy explained that their project – seeking to increase knowledge and reduce stigma around disability – allowed others to empathise with some of the challenges facing disabled young people and to consider how they could be more accommodating in the future. Students at another academy had been seeking to improve primary school students' understanding of and engagement with the environment. One student reflected on how they had learnt to build rapport with younger students in order to motivate them.

Student responsibility for solving problems

Across all schools, students and #iwill leads themselves reported that #iwill leads had stepped back when problems arose, leading to students gaining experience with problem solving as part of #iwill. There were several examples of this. For instance, in one academy, students realised that they did not have enough teacher capacity to support their 'Mental Health Mondays' initiative. In response, they sent out emails to staff, asking whether they were available to supervise and actively engage with their #iwill activities. They were able to recruit a range of teachers to support the initiative as a result of this action.

Working across year groups

In some case study academies, students worked on #iwill projects in groups that brought together different year groups. Staff in these schools believed that working with older and younger peers enabled students to develop new skills in collaborating and listening to different voices within the team. For example, in one primary academy, the #iwill lead explained that the team included students from Year 1 through to Year 6, and that this had enabled students to practise important skills:

"They had to overcome challenges and think about things together as a team and to learn how to talk to each other because we had different age groups as well. So we had five-year-olds in the room, and we had our 11-year-olds, right? So the 11-year-olds, because they're older, might have led the meeting a little bit more, but they still realised that the five-year-olds can have an important opinion and they learnt to take turns and speak and work together."
#iwill lead

My future, my school, my community

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The final set of SEL statements in the student survey asked them about their sense of agency over their future, their school and their community. #iwill participants were more likely to score themselves positively than non-participants on every statement (Figure), particularly in the following areas:

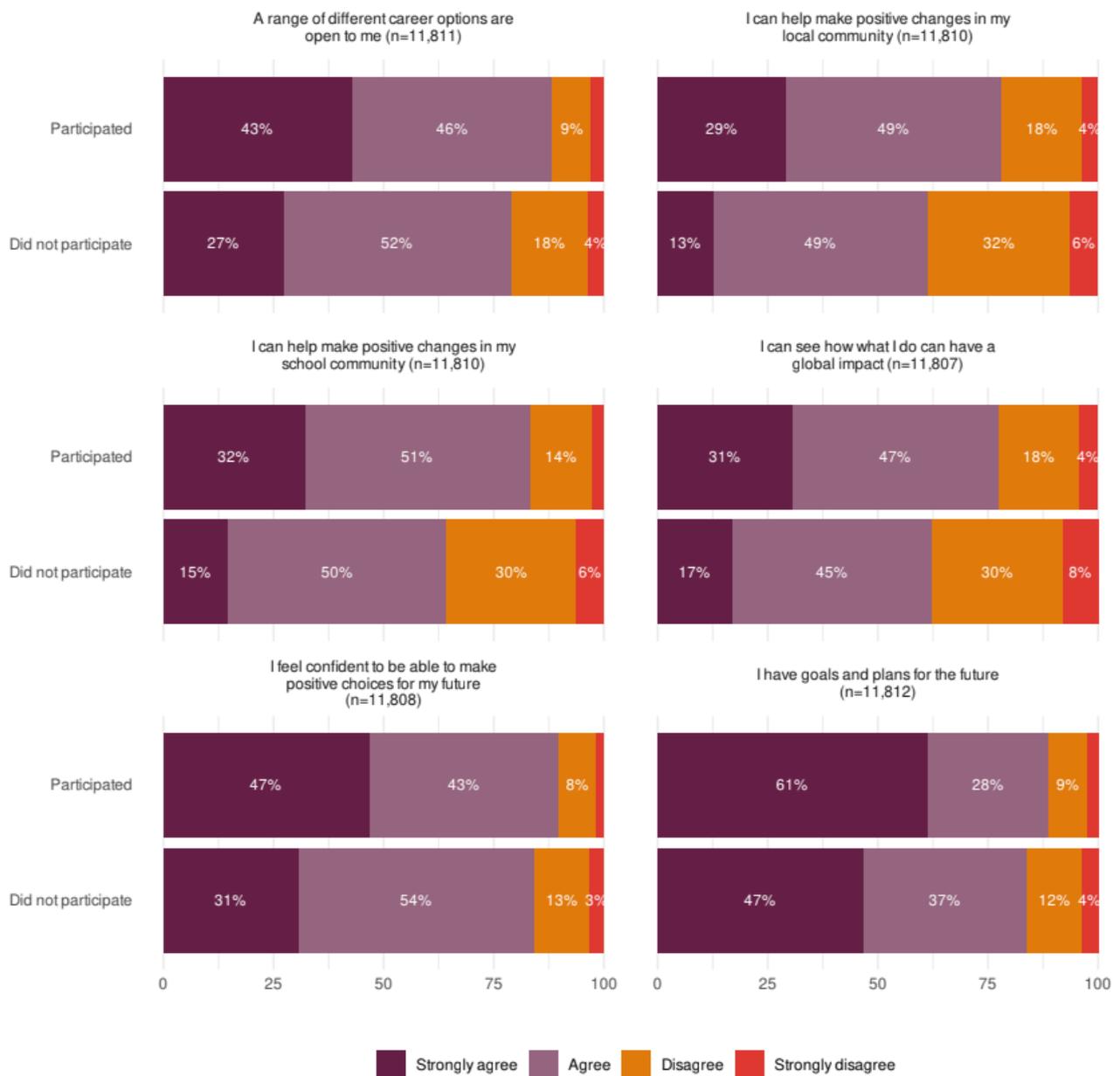
- I feel confident to be able to make positive choices for my future.
- I have goals and plans for my future.

The biggest difference in the proportion of positive responses was in the following area:

- I can help make positive changes in my school community (participants 83%, non-participants 65%).

Figure 15

My future, my school, my community



Students and staff in case study academies highlighted a number of ways in which #iwill had led to changes in how students felt about their future, and the impact they could make on their school and their community. These were:

- developing a greater sense of agency over the issues students cared about
- reflection on how knowledge and skills gained as part of #iwill might support future career aspirations
- plans to carry out more social action in future.

Greater sense of agency

Students across all schools reported that #iwill had helped them feel that they could make changes at the individual, school and community level. Notably, students had begun to make strong connections between their actions and the wider issues they were trying to address. For instance, a student at one academy explained that a newly established eco-community had led their friends to consider picking up rubbish. They made a connection here between their immediate actions and addressing broader environmental damage. Environmental issues were also key for students at another academy, who felt that trips to the allotment and growing hubs in the school grounds had inspired them to take up these activities outside of school. Students' new-found belief in their own ability to make an impact outside of school were captured in the comment below:

"I like to know that I was doing my bit to make sure that everyone was having an equal chance of doing something good for the world instead of just like dismissing it and leaving it to other people."

Student

Staff also noted students' greater belief in their ability to make change happen. One way in which staff in case study schools suggested #iwill had brought about this change was by giving students a voice within the school, which in turn had led to students feeling valued and encouraged to advocate for change. One #iwill lead described how the experience of advocating for disability issues as part of #iwill had led to lasting impact for some students, who had gone on to be an advocate at college and in the wider community after leaving the academy:

"We've had emails off the college of one [former participant in #iwill] to say, they're wanting to share those experiences with college students ... they've built their own mental strength to be able to be a real disability advocate, which I don't know if we would have achieved without a project like this. Even about two months ago ... another young man from the original project, was on BBC Radio Suffolk talking about disability awareness in rural communities."

#iwill lead

Staff believed that these changes were particularly pronounced for students with SEND or those from disadvantaged backgrounds. For one PSHE lead, #iwill had succeeded in changing students' perceptions of their role in the world, and related this to the ethos of Ormiston Academy Trust:

"The whole point of Ormiston as an academy trust is to help those students that come from potentially more deprived areas, isn't it? So, to be showing students their impact on the wider world is a really, really empowering thing that we're doing for them with the #iwill projects."

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Case study: Thomas Wolsey Ormiston Academy

Thomas Wolsey Ormiston Academy is a specialist SEND school. Pupils at the school used the #iwill project to increase knowledge about and tackle stigma over disability in Ormiston schools and the wider community. They completed a survey that sought to better understand perceptions of disability in other schools, including at the regional and year-group levels. This then allowed them to target their work, which consisted of school visits, resource packs, curriculum materials, 'Day in the Life' videos and other components. There was an emphasis on improving young people's knowledge about disability but also on giving them opportunities to empathise with some of the challenges that young people at Thomas Wolsey might face in their daily lives.

The #iwill lead and a former Thomas Wolsey pupil noted a range of positive features of their #iwill project, including the following:

- There were improvements to pupils' confidence, many of whom were motivated to be advocates.
- The project made pupils feel valued, with the 'Day in the Life' films showing them how important their voices are.
- It highlighted the positive culture of the school.
- Impact extended to pupils in a range of other schools, who learnt more about some of the challenges of living with a disability.
- The project provided professional development opportunities for staff.
- It raised awareness among staff about the challenges facing young people with SEND.
- It led to pupil voice being integrated into the curriculum.

Future careers

Students were forthcoming about the skills they had acquired during #iwill and were able to relate them to their future job plans. This manifested in several different ways:

- **Improved CVs:** One student explained that #iwill allowed them to demonstrate competencies that may help them get a job in the future.
- **Work experience:** A Key Stage 3 student noted that they were not able to get a job in a café until they were 16 years old, so the community café had given them some early work experience, which had boosted their confidence.
- **Motivation to work in certain sectors:** Students in one academy reported that trips to a community centre as part of #iwill had led them towards an aspiration to work in healthcare. #iwill had shown them that helping others can be a key career motivation. In another academy, one student felt that their environmental motivation could form part of a career in politics.
- **Versatility of skills acquired:** Students at one academy pointed out that even if skills were not to shape their future careers, they may help them in other aspects of life (such as decision-making).

A number of academies had purposefully built in time for students to reflect on #iwill's impact on their future plans. In one, a school assembly had been used to outline the skills that #iwill students would gain were they to participate in the project. Teachers and parents were also informed of the project, which helped them to encourage students to take part. One student recalled their parents telling them they would gain life and communication skills, while supporting an important cause. Careers leads felt that projects that built in time for reflection were more successful than others in leading to impact in this area.

Future plans for youth social action

Many students were keen to continue youth social action after #iwill. Some, such as the student quoted below, looked to school-affiliated programmes like the Duke of Edinburgh Award, which would give them opportunities to volunteer in a manner similar to #iwill. Likewise, students from two other academies said they were keen to participate in council-run volunteering programmes, which would help them support the community.

"It also encourages me to do volunteering in my future and try and get other people to do volunteering because that kind of puts something in your heart, that you are able to help people, and it brings you joy in the heart."

Student

3.2.5 Barriers to student impact

Despite the over-riding positive perception of #iwill's impact on participating students, staff in case study academies suggested two ways in which the programme might have enabled greater impact. First, one #iwill lead suggested that "#iwill leaders and ambassadors" had seen the greatest impact on their SEL of all participating students. These students had taken a more prominent role in advocating and promoting #iwill projects across the school and wider communities. The #iwill lead suggested that these roles should be rotated to allow all participating students to derive benefits from the opportunities for more public engagement. Second, another #iwill lead suggested that the project had less impact on boys. This was not the case across other case study academies, but the #iwill lead suggested that, in future, the branding and promotion of the programme could be applied flexibly across different academies, in this case to specifically interest and target boys from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Impact on students: summary of findings

- Students who had taken part in #iwill demonstrated higher scores across a range of SEL traits than was the case for non-participating students. These differences were statistically significant. Spending more time on #iwill appeared to lead to greater impact.
- Staff agreed that #iwill had led to positive changes for participating students, especially in relation to their ability to work in a team and communicate effectively.
- In particular, #iwill appeared beneficial for students' perceptions of their ability to work hard, achieve goals, solve problems and empathise with others; as well as for their feelings about their sense of agency about making changes in the community; and their plans for the future.
- Case studies revealed a number of plausible causal pathways for these changes. In particular, the small group nature of #iwill and the strength



of relationships between students and their peers as well as with the #will lead played an important role. Likewise, opportunities for public speaking, leading, solving problems and subsequently seeing tangible changes arise out of #iwill projects appeared to explain many of the measured differences between students taking part in #iwill and those who did not.

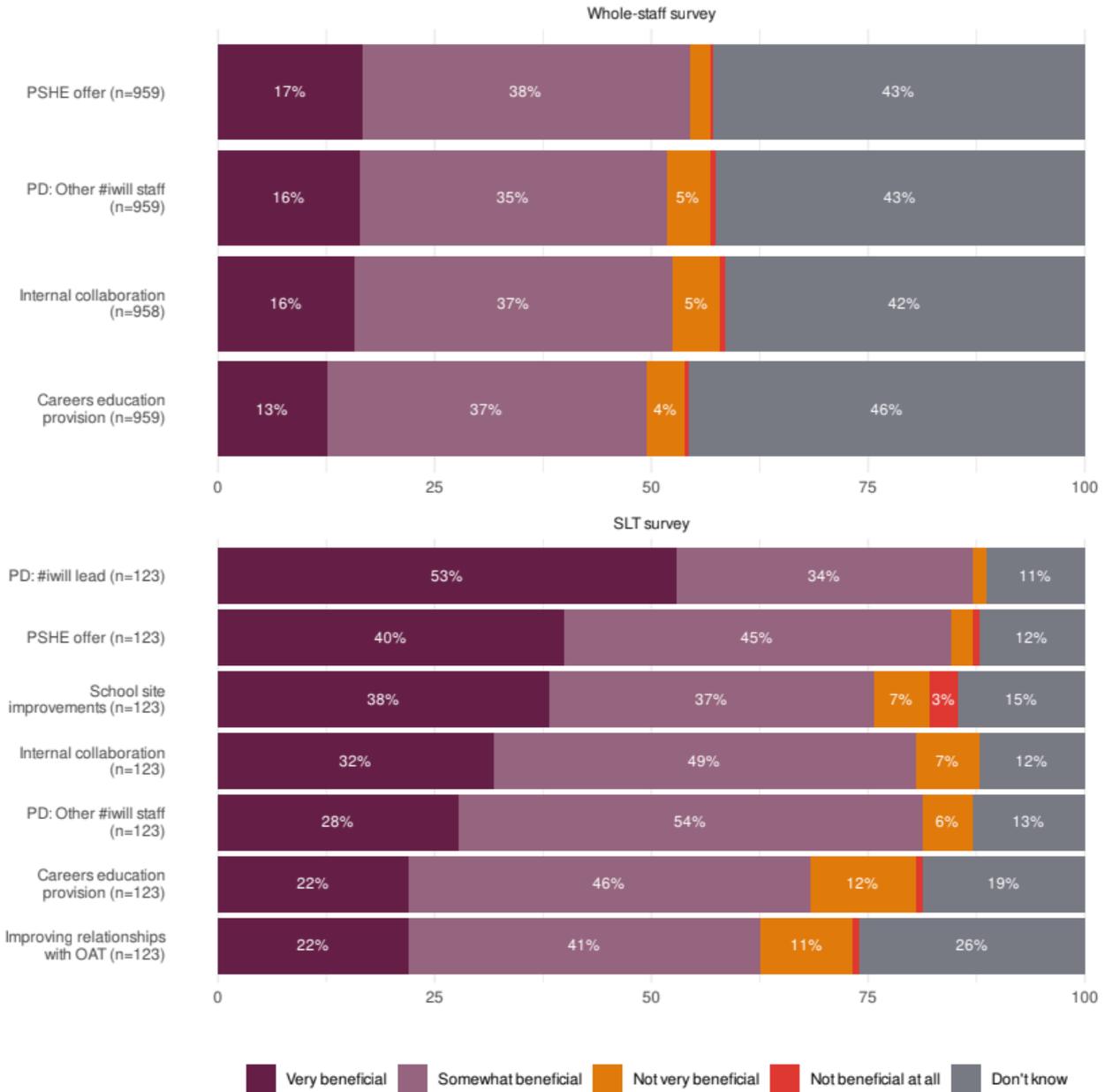
3.3 Impact on Ormiston academies

Analysis of survey and case study data also revealed widespread benefits of #iwill for academies across the trust. These benefits related to supporting schools' ethos and culture, providing professional development for #iwill leads, and augmenting other curriculum areas, in particular PSHE, careers and student voice.

3.3.1 Benefits spread across all Ormiston academies

Surveys of staff, SLT and #iwill leads suggested that #iwill was largely seen as having had a positive impact on the school, although a large minority of respondents to the whole-staff survey again responded with 'don't know' (Figure). #iwill was most commonly identified as 'very beneficial' to the #iwill lead's professional development by SLT, and to the school's PSHE offer by staff, although they were the top two in both surveys. Careers education and improving relationships with the Ormiston Academies Trust tended to attract more 'not very beneficial' and 'not beneficial at all' responses.

Figure 16
Perceived benefits of #iwill to the school



Case studies largely supported these findings, in particular showing how #iwill had supported professional development, although careers leads suggested a more positive impact on their curriculum area than survey findings suggested. Case studies also revealed how #iwill had led to changes in academies' ethos and culture, and that benefits for students extended beyond those participating in #iwill projects, albeit to a lesser extent.

3.3.2 Impact on school culture

Findings on the impact of #iwill on school culture relate to three main areas:

- student and staff attitudes
- the built environment
- perceptions of the academy.

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Student and staff attitudes

Staff in most case study schools reported that #iwill projects had helped shift the value that students and the whole staff body placed on non-academic development. For some academies this was built into their planning for #iwill. One #iwill lead referred to an overarching ambition for #iwill to help embed kindness across the academy:

"Our early objective was to make sure that we were changing the culture of the academy and making sure that kindness was rewarded and valued as part of the community ethos, and that is something that I've seen change."

#iwill lead

In another academy, the #iwill project aimed to change staff attitudes towards disability, with reported success, in that the #iwill lead and students felt that other teachers and support staff had higher expectations of students with disabilities and more appreciation of negative societal attitudes towards disability that affected students.

The built environment

Another way in which #iwill had led to changes in academy culture was through the built environment. Projects often involved building permanent structures in the academy grounds. Staff and students in case study academies saw these structures as extending the benefits beyond the #iwill group to all students who made use of them. One #iwill lead, for example, described how a hub created as part of the #iwill programme was now used as a safe space at breaktime, as well as for after-school clubs.

Perceptions of the academy

A final way in which #iwill had impacted on academy culture and ethos was through its effect on how academy culture was perceived by other students, parents, the community and even prospective members of staff. Students in several schools reported #iwill having a positive impact on perceptions of their schools among students, staff, external stakeholders and the community.

Examples included:

- All academies reported that they would feel confident talking to Ofsted about the impact of #iwill, and the benefits it has created for the school. Principals reported that #iwill would help them convince inspectors of the importance their schools placed on soft skills and enrichment (as opposed to benefits for academic outcomes). Principals did not mention any support for students' career readiness or the school's ability to meet Gatsby Benchmarks. It should be noted that one principal reported that they would feel more confident speaking to inspectors about #iwill if the school was more securely rated as "good".
- There was a belief among Key Stage 1 students in one school that their focus on wellbeing through #iwill would help create a safer school environment for both students and staff.
- In a secondary academy, #iwill induction-day activities helped students get to know some primary school pupils in Years 4 and 6, improving their relationships and reputation among a future cohort of students.

- At another academy, the #iwill media campaign to inform schools and the public about living with disabilities generated positive publicity for the school, as noted below:

"I think the #iwill project did the school brilliantly, actually, because like I say, the media got involved, and that was publicity for the school ... I think that what we did had a massive impact on positivity."

Student

- In one academy, new staff were also involved in induction-day activities, setting a positive first impression for them as they transitioned to their new school. One PSHE lead in another academy noted that #iwill had been mentioned at interview as a selling point for prospective staff.

3.3.3 Benefits for other students

Academies also derived some benefits from #iwill's impact on non-participating students, although staff and students in the case studies saw these as less extensive than the benefits for participating students. This happened in a number of different ways, including but not limited to:

- sharing information and awareness of important issues, for example members of one academy's #iwill newspaper club reported discussions with their tutor groups about what they had read and discussed – similarly, following a science project, also supported through #iwill, participating students shared feedback with other students, who were reportedly shocked by certain statistics and facts, which inspired them to be more environmentally conscious
- supporting less confident non-participating students through peer mentoring and a reading leaders project
- whole-school competitions – for one academy this was a key part of their #iwill campaign, promoting the project and creating opportunities for students across the school
- contributing to a sense that student voice is valued – staff reported seeing other students making a difference and speaking up, for example in assemblies, and attributed this, in part, to #iwill:

"Year 11 ran a project this year in the autumn term raising money. I think a lot of that was ... because of that sort of feeling that was in the school that it really encourages them to do it."

Careers lead

3.3.4 Impact on staff professional development

As noted in section 4.3.1, staff and SLT saw professional development for #iwill leads as a key benefit of the programme for academies. This was also the case in our case studies. #iwill leads, careers and PSHE leads and head office staff all pointed to a range of ways in which #iwill created useful professional development opportunities. #iwill leads were seen as the main beneficiaries, but impact extended to support staff who had also been involved with students on #iwill projects. Benefits included:

- opportunities to lead whole-school initiatives
- experience of managing budgets
- mentoring and support from senior staff

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- visibility among academy leaders
- opportunities to collaborate with other leads across the Trust
- support and guidance from head office staff.

One PSHE lead referred to the benefits she perceived for career progression for the two #iwill leads in the same academy:

"At the moment, in the stage that they are in their career, they're both fourth-year teachers, they are in different sort of almost middle-leadership roles, on courses and things to get to that level, and I think it's really helped them with being able to present in front of staff, explain the project that they're doing. It's really helped to develop them as practitioners as well, and moving forward into that next step in their career, being more confident in how to run a project, how to look at things like action plans and what it is they want to do, and managing a budget themselves too."

PSHE lead

One principal corroborated the impact #iwill had on staff professional development, reporting that running #iwill had helped the #iwill lead in their school progress to the senior team:

"another legacy of it has been [the #iwill lead has] now moved into the leadership team of school. #iwill allowed her to run a whole school project and learn how to manage and lead staff as well as working with the pupils. It wasn't her class. So she had to timetable herself, organized herself across the week to have time with them to do that.... the skills and expertise that, that has given her, allowed her to leap at the opportunity to join the leadership team."

Principal

3.3.5 Impact on careers and PSHE curricula

In contrast to our survey findings, in which SLT and staff were less positive about the impact of #iwill on careers curricula, staff in case study academies recognised important benefits for both PSHE and careers curricula. #iwill leads in case study academies referred to PSHE more often than they did careers, which may suggest that #iwill had been more explicitly linked to PSHE than to careers in some academies. Careers leads were also keen to highlight ways in which social action could be used more effectively to support careers provision, and in particular asked for more opportunities for students to reflect on the skills they had developed through social action. This reflection did occur in many projects, but was not embedded across all case study schools.

Nonetheless, #iwill leads and careers leads suggested that #iwill had augmented careers provision in a number of ways:

- Most notably, careers leads highlighted the impact of support from head office #iwill staff, primarily in facilitating networks of careers leads through which academies could share ideas and practice. Head office staff were also seen as offering valuable advice on integrating social action within careers provision, and raising its importance among SLT.
- #iwill had exposed students to a number of different career options. In one case, the careers lead noted that the science, technology, engineering and maths

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(STEM) focus of #iwill in his academy had prompted him to structure part of the careers provision around STEM.

- #iwill had helped students to reflect on skills, although as noted above, this was also seen as an area for improvement.

For PSHE leads, the key benefit was in drawing together social action activity, some of which was already taking place in PSHE lessons, under the #iwill banner. This was seen as important for raising the profile of PSHE with SLT, as noted by this PSHE lead:

"It's [social action] woven throughout everything. I think that [#iwill] really did solidify to SLT the importance of why we're actually doing it ... how to mix it with character education, British values, it links in with everything. We recently had an Ofsted [inspection], and they were really happy with what we'd made and how we'd shown it across the school."

PSHE lead

PSHE leads also valued head office staff's role in helping to 'bang the drum' for social action and to make it rise up the SLT's agenda. Head office staff were also recognised for creating networks of PSHE leads, as well as opportunities for professional development, such as an #iwill event for all academies across the Trust held in London.

These perceptions of impact were replicated by head office staff themselves, who felt that #iwill had led to positive changes for PSHE, careers, student voice and literacy/language across academies. They believed that these changes had occurred because #iwill had:

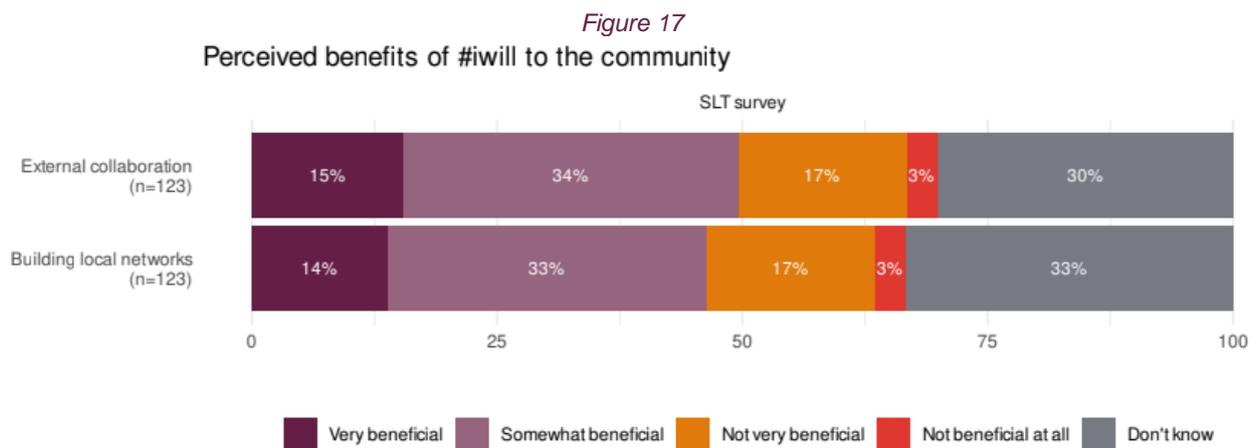
- helped to build networks between academies
- built new and more trusted avenues of communication between head office and schools
- enabled the Trust to experiment with greater central control of (PSHE and careers) curricula centrally, and that this had been successful and valued by schools.

Impact on academies: summary of findings

- #iwill had led to benefits for academies, in particular in terms of creating professional development opportunities for staff involved in the programme. These opportunities were largely for #iwill leads, involving experience running whole-school initiatives with a substantial budget, with high levels of visibility to the SLT.
- Academies also benefited from social action being more closely tied to PSHE curricula, and to a lesser extent, careers provision.
- #iwill had influenced changes to academies' culture and ethos, and had contributed to more positive perceptions of academies among students, parents and the community.
- To a lesser extent than for participating students, #iwill had led to some direct and indirect benefits for non-participating students, most notably contributing to a sense that student voice was prioritised in Ormiston academies.

3.4 Impact on local communities

The impact of #iwill on communities outside of the school was less clear. In surveys, SLT were more likely to state that they did not know about benefits to the community, relative to other benefits (such as those to students or the academy). Nonetheless, the majority of SLT who did not give 'don't know' responses felt that #iwill had had a positive impact on the community in terms of external collaboration and building local networks, although 'don't know' responses did represent a third of respondents for both questions (Figure 17). There were also more negative responses to questions about benefits to the community than there were to questions about other benefits. A fifth (20%; n=25) of SLT respondents felt that #iwill had been 'not very beneficial' or 'not beneficial at all' in terms of external collaboration and building local networks.



Case studies provided some insight into why this was the case. In some academies, the community that #iwill projects sought to impact was the community within the academy. Where activity had been planned outside the academy, students and staff reported the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in preventing planned work in the wider community. In every case study academy, activity had been constrained by the pandemic and, in many cases, had not happened at all. Students and staff spoke about the need for social action to take place in the community and their aspirations to (re)start activity outside academies as soon as possible. One student spoke of their ambitions to broaden the scope of their work through the school council after the pandemic:

"It's all fine and good in school, but outside of school, there's still issues there that need to be faced as well. And I feel like having a school council shouldn't just mean what happens inside the school, but what happens outside of the school with the community and other things like that."

Student

Despite these constraints, a number of benefits to the wider community did emerge in the case study academies. These benefits included:

- **Raising awareness in the community on the topics covered in #iwill:** For example, in one academy, students used part of the #iwill fund to send canes and wheelchairs to local schools, so that other young people could get a feel for what it might be like to be disabled and empathise with students with disabilities. One student explained that young people at other schools were very polite during

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these visits and developed a stronger understanding of issues regarding disability and accessibility.

- **Creating resources or structures that members of the wider community could use:** For instance, one project had developed a 'community fridge' in the academy, from which #iwill students had been able to support local families, and which had also been used as a foodbank outside the school day. Another had developed a community café, which, before the pandemic had limited its use, had allowed the academy to develop its links with the local community:

"I think very visibly having our café where members of the community could actually come in and break down those barriers between the school, which has big gates so people can't come in and out, but actually opening up the little bit to the community has actually allowed them to come in and have a knit and a natter while being served tea by our students."

PSHE lead

Case study: Stoke High School

Stoke High School's #iwill project consisted of two main projects: a garden and a community café. These two projects were intended to support one another, with children growing vegetables, fruit and plants, which could then be sold to the café's customers to generate sustainable income. They also drew on the #iwill lead's experience in restaurants and hospitality to sell homemade cakes and hot drinks. Between September 2019 and March 2020, the garden was planted and baking took place every week on a Friday morning. The café was set up during lunch hour and 2 to 4pm in the afternoon, with local residents joining for tea, coffee and cake. The school also ran a separate project for Year 7 pupils, building raised beds at the front of the school.

The #iwill lead and Year 9 students we spoke to reported several positive features of the project:

- The #iwill lead drew on external support from a housing association, baristas, Active Lives community gardeners and others.
- Pupils tackled challenges as part of a team and had to demonstrate resilience when running a busy café.
- Pupils developed good communication skills, particularly with members of the public, many of whom were elderly.
- The #iwill coordinator wrote a guide to running the café for someone to take it on if she were to leave the school.

Impact on local communities: summary of findings

- SLT, as well as case study staff and students, perceived some impact of #iwill on the community outside of academies, but to a lesser extent than the impact on academies and students themselves. This was partly due to some projects planning impact within the academy, rather than outside the academy, and partly due to COVID-19 restrictions.

- Where there had been impact, this took the form of built structures and resources that the community could use, as well as awareness raising on the topics students chose as part of their #iwill project.
- There was an appetite among staff and students to develop this aspect of social action in the case study academies.

3.5 Legacy

A key aim of the Ormiston #iwill programme was for social action to be embedded in academies beyond the funding period. This section of the report examines the likelihood of this being the case, and the factors that may support or hinder legacy.

In general, staff, #iwill leads and SLT felt positive about the legacy of #iwill. Specific social action projects were seen as likely to continue, and staff in case study academies reported lasting changes in academies' culture and curricula. Staff also pointed to positive changes in the levels of buy-in to #iwill and social action from SLT and other key members of staff.

At the same time, as noted in section 4.1.2, #iwill had not reached all staff in Ormiston academies, and so levels of staff buy-in to and recognition of #iwill and social action were not universal. In case study academies, staff identified a number of threats to #iwill's legacy, including a reliance on individuals, adequately staffing social action and a continued need to embed social action in curricula.

3.5.1 Sustainability of students' changes

The majority of project leads, staff and SLT felt that the changes students had made in their schools were at least somewhat sustainable (Figure 18), although the whole-staff survey again had almost 40% 'don't know' responses.

This sustainability was reflected in the case studies. Staff and students pointed to:

- built structures, such as greenhouses, gardens, hubs and a community café, which could continue to be used after funding for #iwill had ended
- resources, for example supporting social action in PSHE, which could continue to be used
- specific plans for continuing projects that students had started during #iwill but the pandemic had disrupted, for example:

"I already know it's in the principal's plans to make sure that the hub is being used and she's got ... they love the idea of which we've had, of moving parents and toddler sessions into that room... And we know that that's a space that we can use for certain times in our curriculum. So at least I know that the hub is definitely going to be used."

#iwill lead

Most SLT and #iwill leads also felt that pupils' changes made in the local community were at least somewhat sustainable. Case studies suggested that:

- Staff and students were actively planning and looking forward to restarting activity in the wider community that had stopped during the pandemic.
- Within the school community, there were signs that social action had become part of the culture of academies. This was evidenced by:
 - social action and resources to support social action being built into curricula, for example with the following addition of community projects into an academy's STEM curricula, aiming at tackling an identified fear of failure among students:

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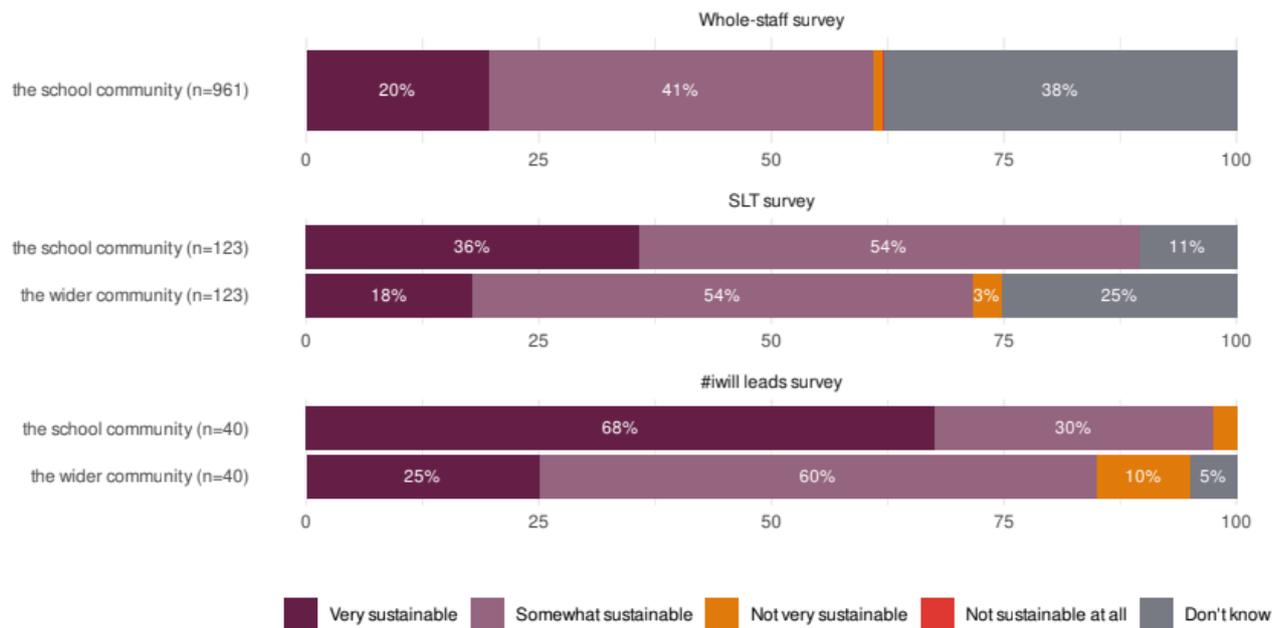
"It's going to be within the technology rotation ... they will have two STEM lessons, which will focus on problem-based solving and design thinking and ideation and considering the community ... design thinking is a specific way of problem-solving that considers the user's needs, and that extends into wider community projects. So there'll be specific growth mindset projects for them to accomplish, and I think, again, underpinning that is to give students a platform, an area to practise ... getting things wrong and improving, and aiming for progress rather than perfection."

Careers lead

- continuous professional development on social action, for example training teachers to support reading leaders
- keeping the name #iwill in order to have a clear branding for one academy's continued social action.

Figure 18

How sustainable are any changes made to ... as a result of #iwill?

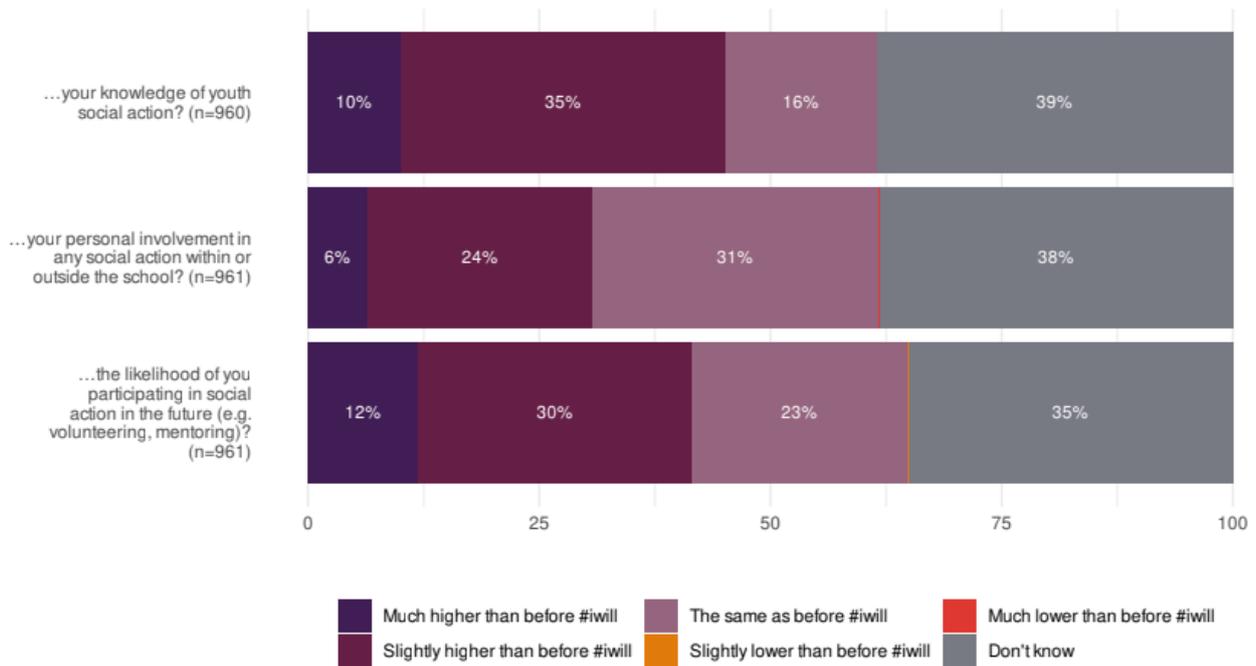


3.5.2 Changing attitudes to social action among staff

There was conflicting evidence about how staff across Ormiston academies may have changed their views about social action. With regard to knowledge of youth social action, their own involvement in social action and the likelihood of their participation in the future, a large minority felt that #iwill had at least made a slight difference (Figure 19). However, almost 40% in each case responded 'don't know'. Excluding 'don't know' responses, the staff who felt that #iwill caused at least a slight change to their knowledge of youth social action and the likelihood of their own future participation were in the majority.

Figure 19

To what extent has #iwill changed... (whole-staff survey)



Staff in the case study schools recognised the importance of staff buy-in to social action in influencing its sustainability in academies. It was seen as important because of the following:

- #iwill leads recognised that they would not always be able to drive social action themselves. Often, they felt there was a single-person dependency within the academy, and worried that if they left, social action would not continue.
- The SLT in particular needed to understand and see for themselves the benefits of social action. A number of staff referred to competing pressures from the 'academic curriculum', especially for academies struggling with poor Ofsted ratings. Where the SLT had supported and promoted social action, this was seen as a crucial factor in enabling #iwill to have an impact.

While survey results are encouraging in terms of levels of staff buy-in, #iwill, careers and PSHE leads in the case study academies felt that more could be done to promote social action with staff. Some cited the impact of presentations and meetings, particularly when supported by the SLT, while others spoke about the importance of opening up the project to more staff. In one academy, the #iwill lead had invited the science department to observe #iwill students and find ways to make use of the garden school:

"I think it's definitely a few teachers that have made comments on the #iwill project, especially we've taken some teachers over from the science department recently and they were saying that they can see the changes that are happening around the school, which they like."

#iwill lead

As well as staff buying into the ideas behind social action, work was needed in some academies to ensure that staffing structures allowed enough capacity for social action to continue, as one PSHE lead explained:

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"We don't have the staffing capacity to then employ someone else. So for example, if we've had three members of staff go down to a 0.8 [full-time equivalent], we've lost half a member of staff essentially because we've lost 0.6 worth of hours. But, we can't employ somebody else, because we're at capacity. So, it's almost logistical issues for us, which would be what stops it rather than staff not wanting to get involved."

PSHE lead

Often, principals described a personal commitment to youth social action that pre-dated #iwill, giving examples of their support for students' fundraising and community work, as well as student voice and leadership. However, these principals believed that #iwill had enabled a step change in their schools; translating this latent enthusiasm into whole school action that was embedded in curricula and staff job descriptions. The drive and leadership of #iwill from the Trust helped principals:

- legitimise a focus on social action within their school
- understand what factors led to quality social action
- maintain a focus on social action amongst multiple competing priorities
- make sense of different elements of social action, some of which pre-dated #iwill for students and staff:

"If there isn't an umbrella, if there isn't an overarching theme to it, there isn't anybody's name on the door, there isn't any support, there aren't any milestones, there's no monitoring, there's no communication."

Principal

For Ormiston's special school, the principle reported that one unexpected benefit for the school had been that #iwill changed staff perceptions of the Trust. Prior to #iwill, the principal report a general ambivalence amongst staff about being part of a large MAT. Staff were unclear about how the benefits of being part of a larger group of schools would translate for their work and their students, given the complexity of student need at the school. However #iwill's emphasis on pupil voice, flexibility and youth led nature had worked well for their pupils with complex needs. As a result, staff felt more bought into the Trust and the idea that being part of a MAT could create benefits for the school.

3.5.3 Embeddedness in curricula

Staff in case study schools highlighted the importance of social action being embedded across curricula. For the OAT special school in particular, personalised targets and outcomes linked to communication, interaction and social and emotional wellbeing were tied to students' Education Health and Care Plans, enabling #iwill to be incorporated throughout the curriculum.

As noted in section 4.3.5, in many mainstream schools, #iwill had helped embed social action in PSHE and careers curricula, and this was seen as contributing to the sustainability of social action in those schools. Staff also wondered about the possibility of embedding social action more widely, across curricula in more academic departments. For example, one #iwill lead reported benefits of linking #iwill to literacy through its reading leaders element of the project in their academy. Another suggested that middle leaders could become key advocates for social action, but this required support from head office in the form of guidance for including social action in their curricula:

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"So many of those middle leaders who'd have the ability to make these things happen are department heads, and so being able to produce resources that say, 'This is how you can turn English into community outreach. This is how you can turn your MFL ... provision into community outreach.' Because it's so easy to make happen. A great example is what our performing arts department do. Performing arts can become community outreach by inviting local communities to come and be a part of these performances, but people don't always have the creative spark or the impetus to make that happen, or they're worried that as a middle leader they're not able to. So giving some guidance on how you can do that might be really beneficial."

#iwill lead

Principals across case study academies reported strong links between #iwill and PSHE, whilst individual principals also mentioned Careers, Pupil voice, Oracy and Citizenship. Principals agreed with the staff reference above that PSHE was an appropriate vehicle for delivering social action within the school curriculum, but one was concerned about whether PSHE lessons alone happened frequently enough to deliver social action in a meaningful way. This principal believed that should #iwill be delivered through PSHE, OAT needed to think flexibly about how to ensure students could be immersed in social action, for example through social action/PSHE weeks.

Case study: Ormiston Herman Academy

Ormiston Herman Academy's #iwill project centred around two themes: 'mental health' and 'opportunities'. As part of the mental health strand of work, a downstairs library was transformed into a safe space for pupils. For the opportunities strand, pupils at the primary school participated in a range of activities run by external organisations, which gave them the chance to work cooperatively as part of a team. The rationale for the opportunities strand was that the academy has a great number of pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds, who may be less able to access such opportunities outside of school. At the end of the project, some remaining #iwill budget was spent transforming part of the school's early years area into a community garden.

The project was run by the school's designated #iwill lead, who had had a longstanding record of delivering enrichment activities in the school. Two pupils in each year group were selected to be #iwill pupil leaders, who would work particularly closely on the project. The #iwill pupil leaders recalled meeting every week during assembly time to discuss how they would transform the library into a space that children would use during breaktimes, lunchtimes and for after-school clubs.

Students and the #iwill lead reported several positive changes resulting from #iwill:

- Many pupils came out of their shells, particularly those who were initially shy. The #iwill pupil leaders noted that the #iwill lead (staff) would interject to ensure all pupils were able to contribute.

- Pupils felt that they were given an opportunity to express their own ideas in meetings, which reportedly made them more confident in other areas of life.
- Pupils were particularly happy about the mental health hub, which they felt could have a lasting legacy in the school.
- School competitions, such as designing the hub and designing the logo for the community garden, broadened participation in #iwill.

Legacy: summary of findings

- Staff were generally positive about the legacy of #iwill. They perceived that social action was more embedded in academies' culture, in particular through PSHE curricula and perceptions of the value placed on student voice, and to a lesser extent, careers curricula.
- Staff and students also believed that the resources and structures created as part of #iwill would continue to be used within academies.
- The extent to which these findings were generalisable across the Trust was less clear. Around a third of staff knew little or nothing about #iwill, and a similar proportion were unsure about the sustainability of changes made during #iwill.
- Staff believed that more could be done to ensure buy-in across academies, and that social action could be embedded in more curricula, beyond PSHE and careers.

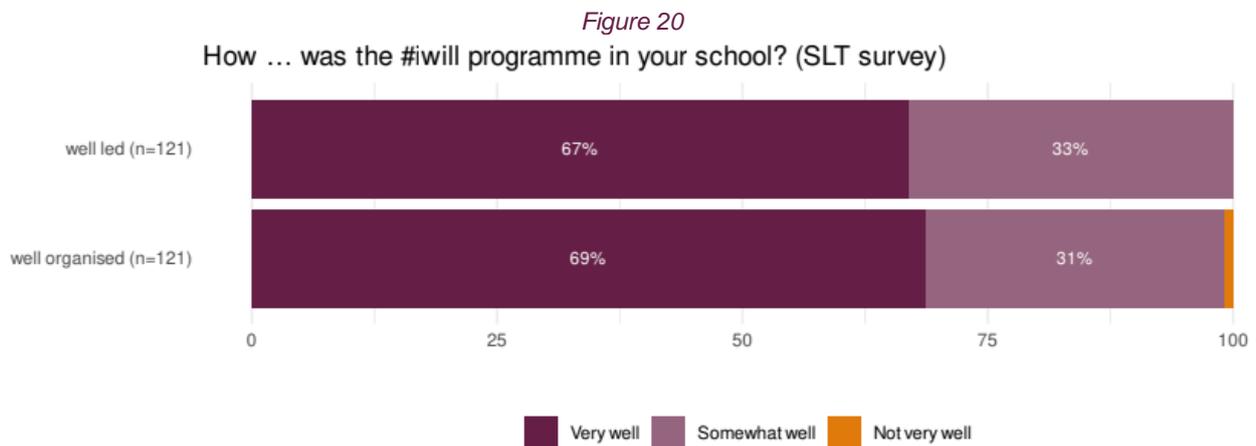
3.6 Process

This final section of the evaluation examines how #iwill was run, and the factors that students and staff in Ormiston academies believed contributed to, or hindered, its impact. The section covers:

- survey responses from SLT across Ormiston Academies Trust academies, suggesting positive perceptions of the effectiveness of the leadership and organisation of #iwill in their academies
- a number of factors that enabled success, including:
 - the capacity of #iwill leads, and how they used their time
 - the extent and nature of support from other staff in academies, including the SLT
 - the nature of support from head office
- barriers that hindered the effective running of #iwill, including:
 - timetabling difficulties
 - variable levels of collaboration within and between academies
 - the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.6.1 SLT perceptions of process

Almost every respondent to the SLT survey perceived #iwill to be at least somewhat well organised and well led (Figure). This was borne out by principals in case study academies, who were universally positive about the organisation of #iwill both in terms of their #iwill lead and also in terms of the support from Head Office. In survey responses, the proportion of SLT responding 'very well organised' was higher than the proportion responding 'very well led'. A small group of respondents felt that #iwill was not very well organised.



3.6.2 Factors that enabled success

Across all academies, staff gave their views on the relative importance of a number of factors contributing to the effective running of #iwill. Overall, the capacity of the #iwill lead was seen as the most important factor. This, and other factors contributing to success, are explored in more detail through case studies.

For the SLT, the capacity of the #iwill lead was the most commonly cited factor supporting the success of #iwill projects within schools (Figure). Other factors cited by more than 10% of SLT were:

- student buy-in
- support from the Ormiston Academy Trust head office
- staff buy-in
- SLT buy-in
- Duke of Edinburgh programme funding.

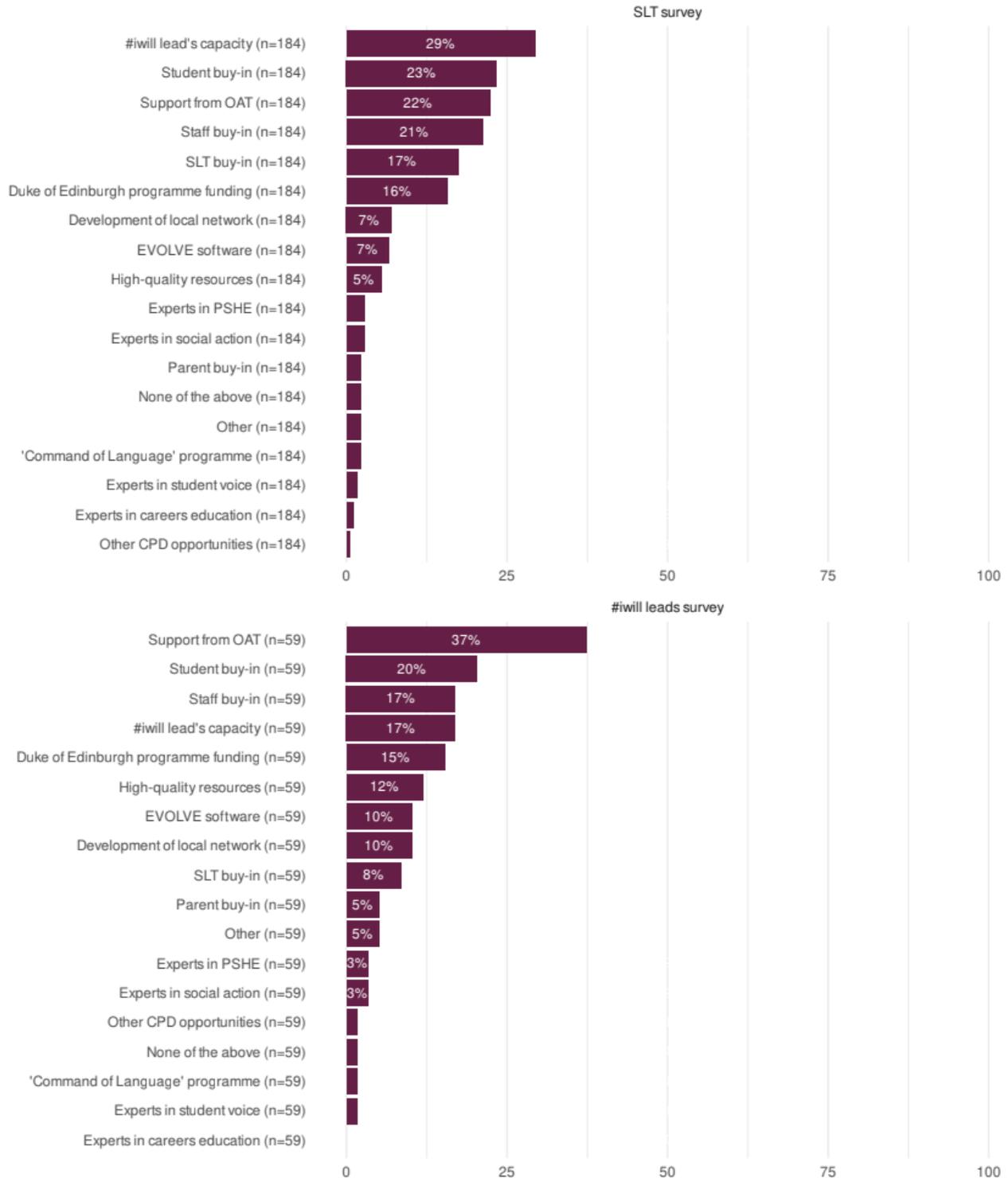
#iwill leads most commonly cited support from head office as a contributor to #iwill's success in their schools. Other factors cited by more than 10% of #iwill leads were:

- student buy-in
- staff buy-in
- the #iwill lead's capacity
- Duke of Edinburgh programme funding
- high-quality resources.

3% or fewer of both SLT and #iwill leads cited any of the external experts as contributors to success.

Figure 20

What helped contribute to the success of the #iwill programme in your school?



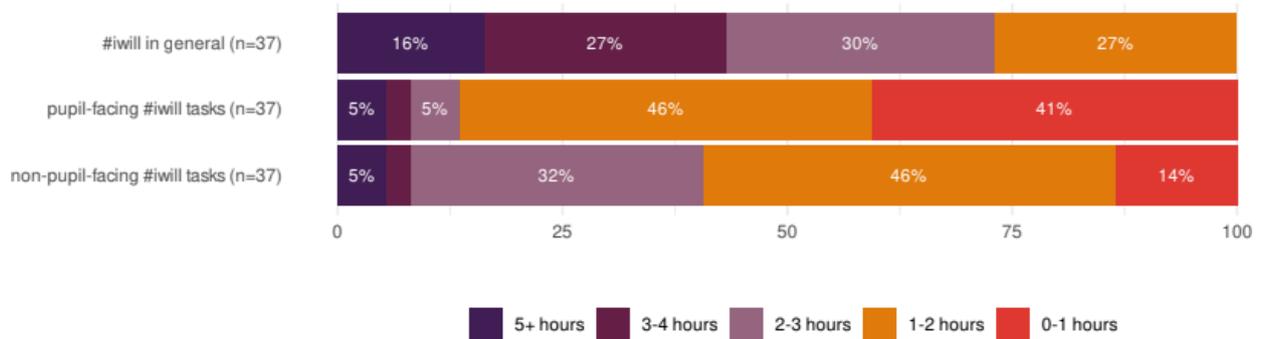
#iwill lead capacity

Across all academies, self-reported data from surveys suggested that most project leads (73%) spent at least two hours a week on #iwill, with 43% spending at least three (Figure). A large majority of #iwill leads (87%) reported spending two hours or less on

pupil-facing #iwill tasks specifically each week. A smaller majority of respondents (60%) reported spending two hours or less a week on non-pupil-facing tasks.

Figure 21

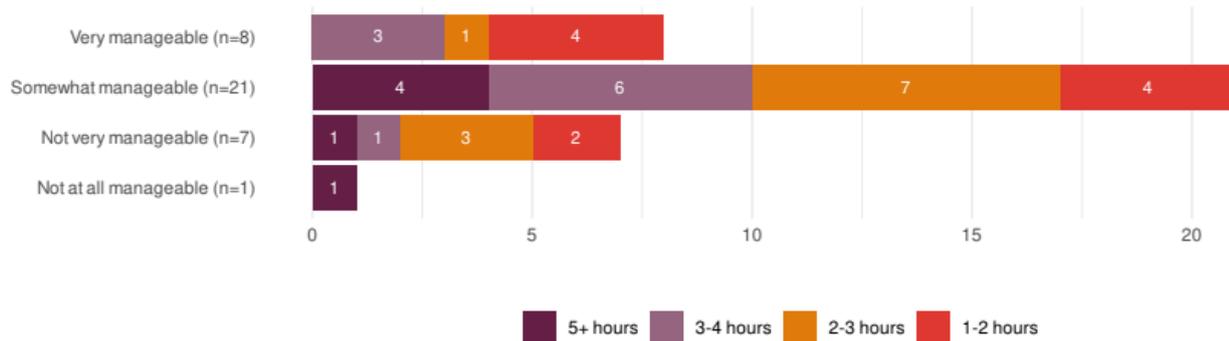
On average, how many hours a week did you spend on... (#iwill leads survey)



Most project leads (n=29) generally felt that this workload was at least somewhat manageable (Figure). None of the leads who felt that their workload was very manageable worked more than four hours a week on #iwill.

Figure 22

Hours spent on #iwill, by perception of workload (#iwill leads survey)



Case studies added further insights into how #iwill lead capacity was managed, and how workload impacted on the project.

Head office staff suggested that a critical factor in enabling #iwill leads to have protected time to run the project stemmed from a decision early on to use #iwill funding to enable a Teaching and Learning Responsibility payment (TLR) for #iwill leads. The TLR was set at the entry level for leadership pay, and was augmented by an honorarium, which allowed support staff to apply for the role, a decision which positively impacted on at least one #iwill lead in the case study schools. Head office had invested significant time in supporting academies with the recruitment of #iwill leads, and this was seen as critical to creating capacity to run #iwill within schools.

For #iwill leads in case study academies, their time on #iwill was sometimes squeezed by other responsibilities. This was also the case for PSHE leads and careers leads who were involved in supporting #iwill. Some suggested that any future roles leading social action/#iwill in academies should be supported by the same protected non-teaching time as was the case for other middle leaders such as subject heads of department.

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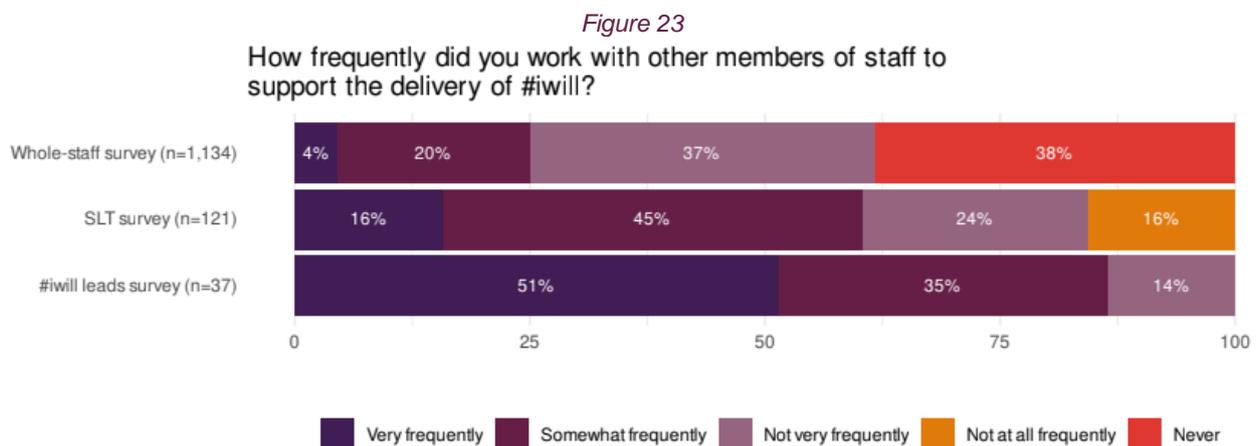
#iwill leads in case study academies saw the workload associated with the project as substantial but manageable. In some cases, the workload was managed through working additional hours, motivated by passion for the project, as exemplified below. Such practice may not be sustainable in the longer term, and Ormiston Academies Trust, as well as individual academies, should consider protecting more time for project leads.

"It's been a bigger workload than I originally thought it was going to be. Not that that's been a bad thing, it's been an enjoyable part of my weekly planning... So yeah, the workload has been big and it has meant putting extra hours in, but because it's been such an enjoyable task and we can see the benefits already ... it's been almost instantaneous. It's only taken 12 months for us to actually see big change. It's been absolutely worth that time. But yeah, I think it's something that next year looking forward, we definitely need support with the management aspect of it to keep the standards the same."
#iwill lead

Support from elsewhere in the academy

Staff across all academies and in case study schools highlighted support from other members of staff, including support staff and the SLT, as an important enabler for #iwill. #iwill leads in particular reported working frequently with other members of staff, and valued the support they received.

Across all academies, a majority of SLT and #iwill leads (61% and 86% respectively) worked at least somewhat frequently with other members of staff on #iwill, whereas only 24% of respondents to the whole-staff survey reported doing so (Figure). More than half (51%) of #iwill leads reported working very frequently with other members of staff on #iwill.

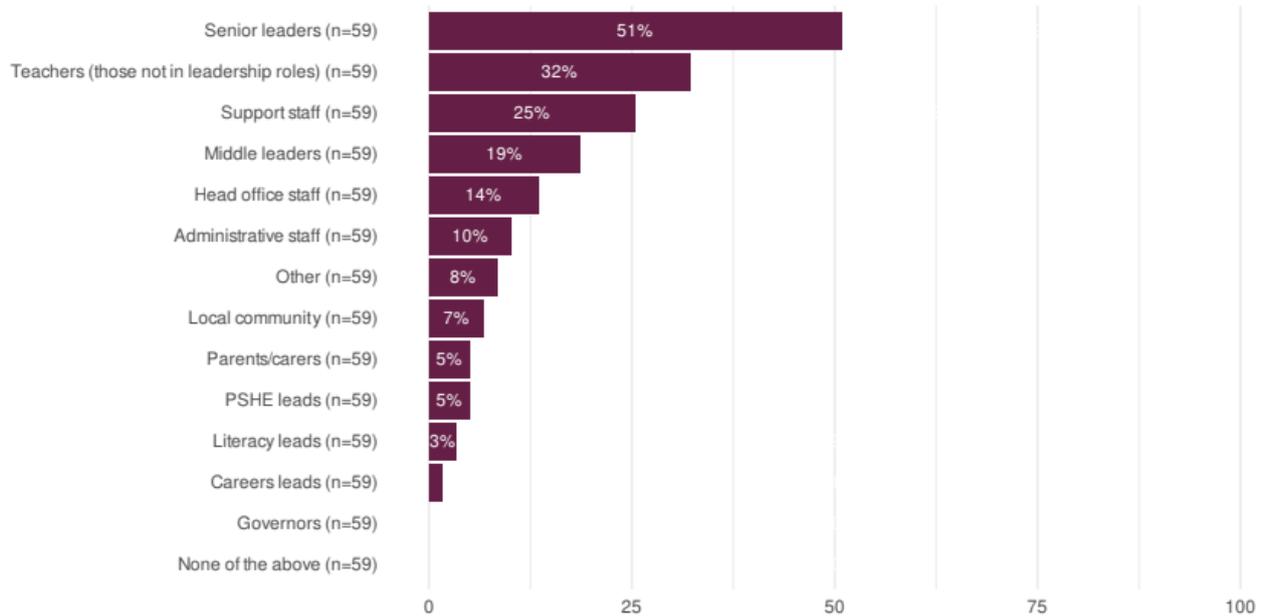


#iwill leads were most likely to cite senior leadership (51%) as a source of support (Figure 25). Other sources of support cited by more than 10% of them were:

- teachers (those not in leadership roles)
- support staff
- middle leaders
- head office staff.

Figure 24

Over the course of the programme, did you receive support from any of the following? (#iwill leads survey)

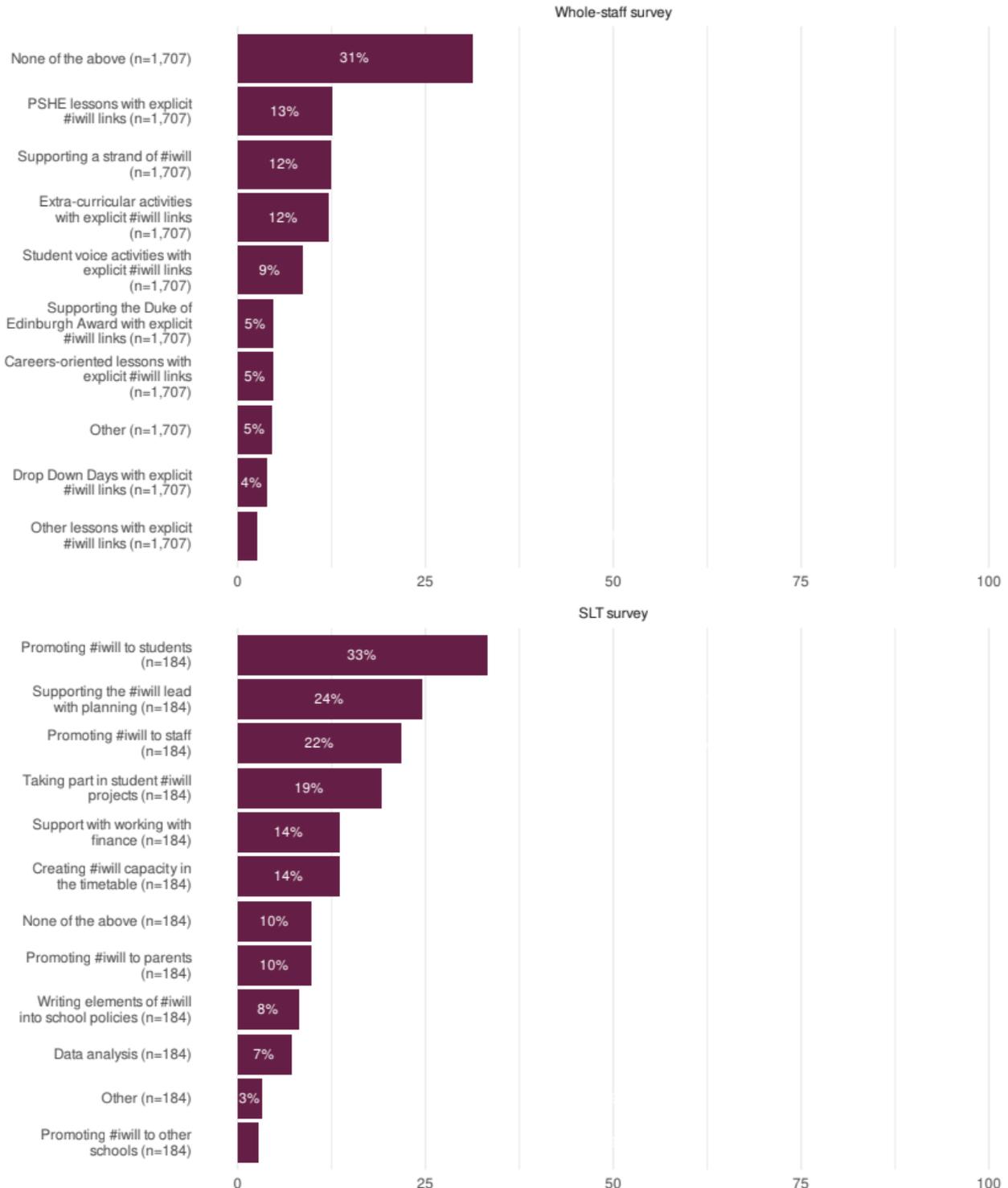


For those staff who reported at least some involvement with #iwill, this took the form of participating in #iwill-linked PSHE lessons (13%), supporting a strand of #iwill (12%) and participating in #iwill-linked extracurricular activities (12%) (Figure). Of the respondents to the whole-staff survey, 31% said that they did not participate in any of the listed activities.

For those SLT that reported at least some involvement with #iwill, this took the form of promoting #iwill to students (33%), supporting the #iwill lead with planning (24%) and promoting #iwill to staff (22%). Of the SLT respondents, 10% reported that they did not participate in any of the listed activities.

Figure 25

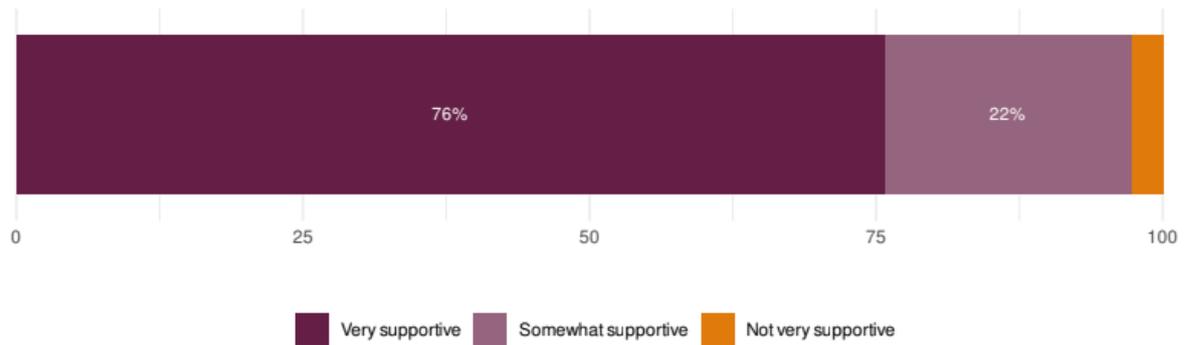
Which of the following have you participated in as part of #iwill?



Overall, project leads felt well supported by their schools, with 98% feeling that their schools had been at least somewhat supportive, and 76% feeling that they had been very supportive (Figure).

Figure 26

Overall, how supportive was your school during #iwill?
(#iwill lead survey, n=37)



These findings describe a picture of support that was largely echoed in case study academies. Across all case study academies, #iwill leads highlighted the critical importance of the support they received from other staff, including:

- ground staff and site managers supporting the construction and maintenance of built structures on the academy grounds, as well as forming constructive and positive relationships with students
- teaching assistants and learning support assistants lending capacity in student-facing tasks, and directly supporting students with SEND
- food technicians facilitating #iwill activities involving food preparation
- school librarians supporting the public library element of an #iwill project
- business managers supporting #iwill leads with budgeting
- other teachers promoting #iwill and linking activities to their subject areas
- SLT promoting #iwill to staff and students across the school, and providing advice and guidance to #iwill leads – head office staff suggested that SLT were crucial in unblocking problems and helping to drive projects forward.

This varied support from a range of staff across the school has important implications for legacy. If social action is to be sustained across the Trust, #iwill leads, SLT and regional and national directors should ensure that social action is visible in artefacts representing academies' culture and practice. Staff in case study schools and at head office suggested a number of examples, including #iwill (or social action) being:

- written into school documents – such as school improvement plans (SIPs), self-evaluation forms (SEFs) and job descriptions
- visible in promotional material such as websites, newsletters, social media and brochures
- included in recruitment packs for new staff:

"For instance, the community café that I mentioned, we couldn't run that without support staff buying in, for them to see that it's really important as well. So, it has been a whole school, everyone, everywhere. Again, as you lose staff and new staff come in, it's about then getting the message to them"

PSHE lead

Head office support

Staff in case study academies valued head office support highly. In particular, #iwill leads emphasised the following aspects of support:

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- support with planning and key documentation such as budget spreadsheets, reporting templates and action plans
- social media and wider communication about project outcomes
- support with taking ideas to the SLT and promoting #iwill to the SLT
- positivity and enthusiasm, mirroring #iwill leads' excitement about their projects
- advice, support and facilitation of networks for PSHE and careers leads
- continuing professional development, including events to network and share ideas with leads in other Ormiston academies
- a flexible approach to project timelines, as described by this #iwill lead:

"I always knew what deadlines we were working to, and they were always jointly agreed between myself and [head office]. Where I felt I couldn't do something or maybe time constraints were coming in, we'd made a plan B, plan C. I didn't feel that at any point things were too rushed for our pupils as well. Everyone was given that time to process."

#iwill lead

Principals believed that the Trust's monitoring and evaluation helped to keep the school accountable for #iwill.

Head office staff themselves believed that a range of factors had enabled them to support academies effectively. These included:

- processes within head office itself, for example:
 - head office staff having clear ownership of #iwill strands
 - the red/amber/green (RAG) rating of schools, enabling them to target schools where there was a danger that #iwill would be lost to competing priorities
 - the ability to track participation through Evolve
 - the added capacity of a project manager to handle finances and monitoring and free up other staff for strategic/communications work
 - changing the lead academy model from funding aimed at academy-wide initiatives to a focus on a lead practitioner within each lead academy who could then integrate more closely with the head office team, creating more capacity.
- their ability to lend legitimacy to #iwill leads through head office staff and regional and national directors speaking to SLT about how #iwill can contribute to wider improvement (although this was also seen as an area of challenge, in that not all academies' SLT were persuaded)
- head office staff making it clear where #iwill fits into wider school improvement priorities and giving tangible help with writing it into whole-school plans and priorities
- finding existing social action in schools and showing SLT how to bring it all under #iwill.

Other enabling factors

A number of other factors relating to effective processes, not covered in the survey, were also mentioned in case studies. Most notably, staff in a number of case study academies suggested that various forms of accreditation for participating students had proved useful. Accreditation was seen as supporting student reflection on the skills they had developed, as well as building a stronger sense of group identity, and providing

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another visible symbol of the value academies placed on social action. One careers lead suggested that accreditation could be linked to existing careers tools such as Skills Builder.

A small number of factors outside of the Trust's immediate control were also mentioned as facilitating #iwill, such as:

- youth social action being written into Ofsted frameworks
- statutory PSHE
- the Quality Mark for careers.

3.6.3 Barriers to success

Survey and case study responses also revealed some common barriers, hindering the effective running of #iwill. Unsurprisingly, disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was the most commonly cited barrier. Although the pandemic had led to many planned activities being postponed or cancelled, one PSHE lead revealed how the shift to online learning had led to unexpected benefits in terms of freeing up time for promoting social action to students:

"Lockdown was actually quite good, because it meant that we had that daily time online with the students to meet up with all of them, which we wouldn't usually have within the academy. So, we were able to put in more online assemblies or links to videos or, 'This is something that you might be interested in', where we were highlighting key issues to the pupils that previously we hadn't been able to have that time with in the curriculum to do."
PSHE lead

Beyond the pandemic, finding time for #iwill, and a lack of joined-up working across academies, were seen as particular challenges. We explore these barriers in more depth below.

Barriers identified by SLT and #iwill lead survey respondents

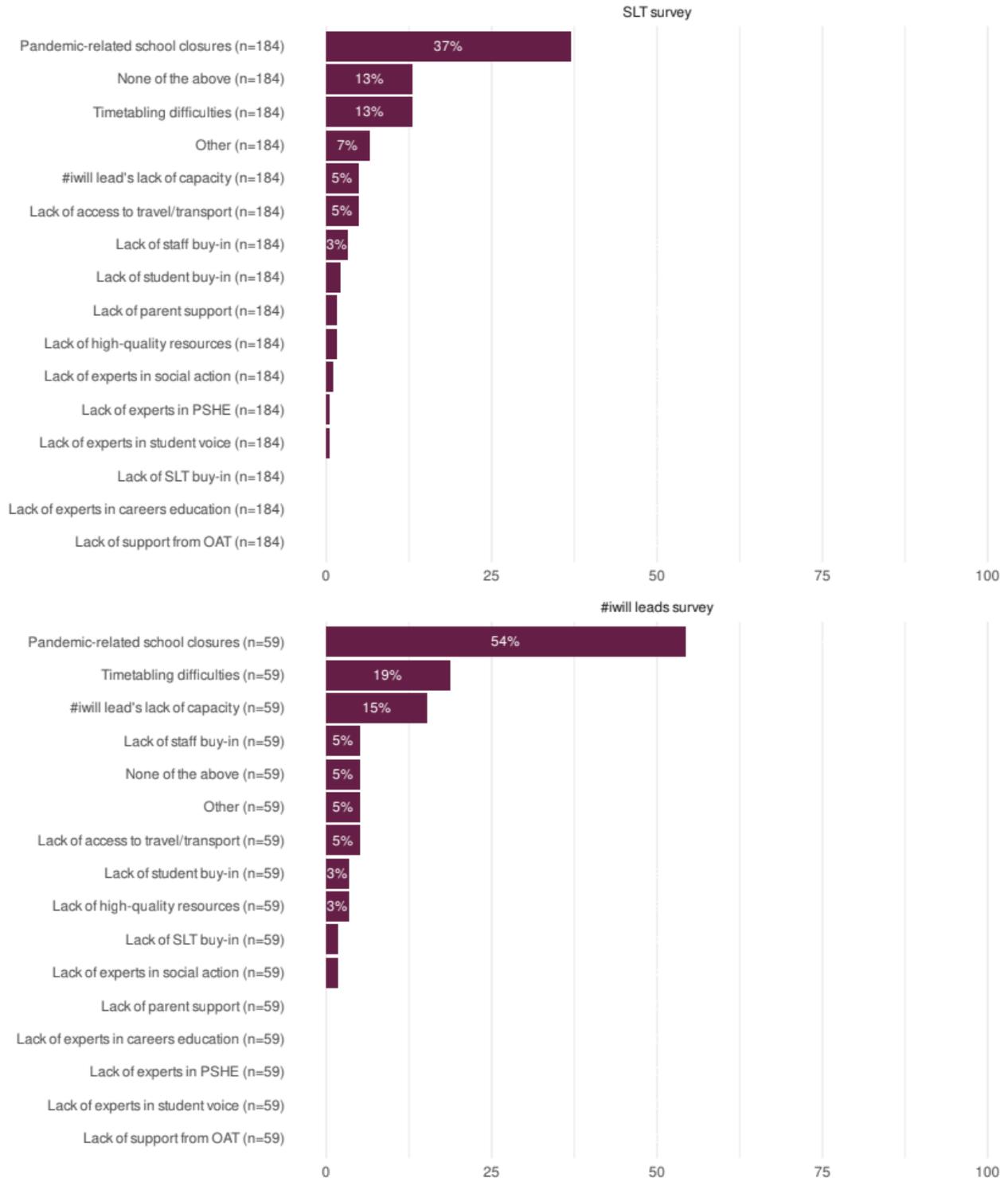
For SLT, pandemic-related school closures were the most commonly cited hindrance to the success of #iwill (37%) (Figure). Of the SLT, 13% felt that none of the listed factors were hindrances to the success of #iwill in their schools and 13% cited timetabling difficulties.

The majority of #iwill leads cited pandemic-related school closures as a hindrance to the success of #iwill in their schools (54%), while 19% also mentioned timetabling difficulties and 15% cited their own lack of capacity.

Building on the finding around experts in section 4.6.2, each 'lack of experts' factor was cited by less than 3% of both SLT and #iwill leads.

Figure 27

What barriers hindered the success of the #iwill programme in your school?



Barriers identified in case studies

Time

Time was seen as a barrier in case study schools as well as across the Trust, in several ways. First, some students felt that infrequent social action activities prevented impact. One student explained that half-termly #iwill community visits were not sufficient to get to know those they were working with. They felt that more frequent opportunities would have given them more chances to develop confidence and benefit from #iwill.

Time was also a constraint in terms of meetings to plan #iwill. There were concerns among students that short fortnightly meetings were not sufficient for ideas to be shared and to make improvements to their #iwill project. There was also a sense that during GCSEs, it had been harder to find time for #iwill and that this would only become more challenging as they progressed through their GCSEs.

As noted in section 4.6.2, #iwill leads felt that they did not have adequate protected time within the school day to manage #iwill. Many were happy to work additional hours, but this may not be sustainable in the longer term.

Finally, #iwill leads perceived tensions with academic subjects, especially for exam groups finding space for #iwill within the timetable.

Joined-up working

A number of #iwill leads, as well as head office staff, felt that academies across the Trust were not yet collaborating on #iwill as effectively as they could. There was a tendency for academies to operate in silos, and although head office had facilitated a number of initiatives to enable more collaboration (such as the networks of careers and PSHE leads mentioned elsewhere in this report), these were not yet mature and embedded across the Trust. #iwill leads felt that while there had been some useful initiatives, they would have liked more opportunities to see how #iwill had operated in other academies and to work together with other #iwill leads, as exemplified below:

"There was always planning to go out to [another academy] to have a look at what they'd done and to get involved and to see how they could have supported us with our garden project and vice versa. Ideally, I think that should have happened earlier than we found it because we weren't talking about that until February 2020, and we all know how that turned out. I think if that conversation had happened earlier then perhaps we would have been able to see more from it, but I think it would have been nice if we'd have been able to take advantage of other academies and go and see what they'd done."
#iwill lead

One #iwill lead suggested that the lack of joined-up working extended to staff within their academy, and that there was a lack of support and buy-in from other teachers, although this was not the case in other case study schools.

Head office staff identified examples of where communication around #iwill had been unclear and fragmented. In some cases this had been the case with communication from head office to academies, although it was felt that additional capacity on communications and marketing had solved this problem. In other, more recent, cases, there were examples of when academies' social media posts and other forms of communication around #iwill had not been joined up.

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Process: summary of findings

- In general, #iwill had been well led and well organised, both within academies and across the Trust.
- Key enabling factors included the capacity of #iwill leads, the support they received from other staff within academies, and the support they received from head office.
- Other curriculum areas, in particular PSHE, were also seen as helpful.
- Workload for #iwill leads had been manageable, but more could be done to protect time for staff in these and similar roles.
- Time was seen as the critical barrier to the effectiveness of #iwill, alongside the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of joined-up working across academies on #iwill, albeit with some improvements over the course of the programme.

3.7 Principals' views on legacy

3.7.1 Plans for social action in future

At the start of the autumn term 2021, principals in all case study academies had specific plans to continue social action in their schools. Some referenced #iwill2 and the Trust's plans to continue #iwill beyond 2021 whilst others spoke about their plans in the context of their individual schools. Principals spoke about the following elements of their plans:

1. **Staffing.** All schools had assigned a named YSA/#iwill/enrichment lead and SLT oversight roles. Principals varied between those who reported having put in place specified salaried roles through new TLRs and those who had not yet decided how to approach staffing in relation to #iwill. For some academies, #iwill leads in future would sit on the school's SLT whereas in others #iwill leads were not SLT themselves but would be closely supported by SLT.
2. **Extending #iwill's reach.** Most principals reported a desire to extend participation in YSA to enable benefits for a larger group of students. Principals believed that such scaling up would be challenging, especially in relation to timetabling, and would require more sharing of ideas and practice between schools than there had been to date. For the special school, plans to extend #iwill's reach involved making use of technology to ensure that pupils who communicated through voice machines could be included.

Three principals had begun developing passports (sometimes described as charters) setting out key enrichment activities that every student in their academy would experience during their time at the school. Social action was a key component of these passports. For one principal the passport was described as a "top three priority".

Referencing Section 3.1.3, one principal also expressed their intention to communicate benefits of #iwill across a larger number of staff within school, possibly through a larger programme involving more staff in delivery:

We realized that 20 staff in the school knew everything about #iwill and were absolutely amazing champions, but your maths teacher or your PE teacher had heard about it ... but didn't know what it was. So I think that's [something]... we need to work on. We need to champion it more. We need to make sure that people are aware [and that] it's drip fed down through the school... constantly feeding back the staff on what we're doing, what #iwill looks like."

Principal

3. **Student leadership.** One principal reported plans to strengthen the youth-led element of #iwill, so that teachers would make fewer decisions in future.
4. **Strengthening parental engagement.** Although some case study schools reported that #iwill had helped improve parents' perceptions of the school (Section 3.3), one principal reported that #iwill had not had the positive effect on parental engagement that the school had hoped for. For this principal, parental engagement was a whole-school priority. Their plans for #iwill had included bringing parents into the school and showcasing the schools' commitment to social action and pupil voice. Restrictions on visits and visitors due to the pandemic had prevented the school from working with parents on #iwill in the

way the principal had envisaged. This was therefore a focus for future YSA in the school.

3.7.2 Improving #iwill in future

Principals outlined a number of factors that they believed would help maximise the impact of social action in Ormiston academies in future. These involved the Trust:

- **Taking the lead on timetabling for #iwill.** Most principals expressed a desire for support from the Trust with when and how to incorporate #iwill into school timetables. Some principals raised a dilemma around the opportunity cost of taking children out of lessons, others offered tentative ideas about social action outside of the school day in holidays, weekends or evenings. However principals were united by a request for some strategic support from the Trust:

"every time you take a child out of the classroom, as much as they enjoy the project and it's worthwhile and meaningful for them, our children are saying, "but we're going to fall behind in our learning." So it's about how you facilitate that time. And I think that's why I'd ask for probably a more strategic thinking around the time and the support."

Principal

- **Enabling collaboration between schools.** Principals reported little collaboration or conversation with other OAT principals about #iwill. Awards and #iwill events had prompted some conversations (awards were also seen as helping to motivate school leaders). Principals suggested that the Trust could do more to enable sharing best practice across the Trust. Further, principals were interested in what OAT saw as effective social action/#iwill. Principals wanted an element of critique in sharing practice. One principal suggested that the next Principals Forum should include reviewing progress on plans for #iwill2.
- **Providing flexibility around funding.** Principals all suggested that funding to support long-term, permanent TLRs for #iwill leads would help their planning. Two principals requested flexibility within #iwill funding to buy in cover for people involved in delivering YSA, as this principal explained:

"if [OAT] made it very clear that within the funding there was some flexibility to actually cover [#iwill lead's] class for half a day or a day here and there to do dedicated work"

Principal

Flexibility was especially important for the special school, who needed more staff to cover classroom teachers due to students' highly specialised individual care needs.

- **Communicating consistently.** All principals agreed that the Head Office staff involved in #iwill had provided support that was instrumental in delivering #iwill. However some principals highlighted some inconsistency from the Trust in communicating about #iwill. For example key figures drive #iwill from OAT central team, but #iwill did not feature in conversations with other OAT leaders (for example with principals' line managers or with regional leads on academic curriculum, or safeguarding). Principals requested reassurance that prioritising YSA was seen by OAT as "the right thing to do":

"in conversations with my line manager I expect [them] to be asking, tell me what you're doing with social action? Have you given them a period off? Why not? Why haven't you given protected time?"

Principal

- **Providing CPD.** In addition to the useful support and professional development offered to #iwill leads, some principals requested CPD for a wider cohort of school staff involved in supporting social action.

4 Conclusion

This evaluation provides high levels of confidence that #iwill led to positive impact for students and schools in Ormiston Academies Trust. Despite the disruption to delivery caused by the pandemic, students, participating staff and leaders were enthusiastic advocates for #iwill, and believed that social action led to real benefits for students, staff professional development and school culture.

The quantitative measures of student outcomes outlined in Section 3.2 suggest that #iwill is strongly associated with higher scores on the social and emotional traits Ormiston seek to instill in students. #iwill appeared beneficial for students' ability to work in a team and communicate effectively; students' perceptions of their ability to work hard, achieve goals, solve problems and empathise with others; as well as for their feelings about their sense of agency about making changes in the community; and their plans for the future.

Whilst we cannot completely rule out the possibility that some form of selection bias may have influenced these results (for example students with higher SEL scores prior to #iwill being more likely to take part), we believe this possibility is remote. This is because participation varied between academies in terms of student self-selection for #iwill and case studies reveal that schools were more likely to select vulnerable students to take part, whose SEL scores would be expected to be lower

Qualitative data from this evaluation provides plausible explanations for the mechanisms by which taking part in #iwill led to positive changes in student SEL:

- Students, staff and leaders pointed to the small group nature of #iwill and the strength of relationships between students and their peers as well as with the #iwill lead. As #iwill expands, care should be taken to enable this small group working, even when larger numbers of students are taking part in each academy.
- Likewise, opportunities for public speaking, leading, solving problems and subsequently seeing tangible changes arise out of #iwill projects appeared to explain many of the measured differences between students taking part in #iwill and those who did not.

The evaluation also points to strong positive impact for schools. Enabling student-led social action created complex, challenging roles for #iwill leads, which in turn supported their professional development and ability to lead projects across the academy. #iwill also helped generate positive cultures of student voice, challenge and community spirit in academies. Finally, #iwill helped to generate positive perceptions of the school for external stakeholders such as parents and community groups.

A number of factors appeared to support the impact of #iwill. #iwill leads benefited from capacity and time to plan and meet with students. The workload associated with leading #iwill was seen as manageable, although more could be done to protect the capacity of #iwill leads. Support from other academy staff was also seen as essential, most notably from SLT and support staff. Support from Head Office was universally valued. Staff and leaders involved in #iwill saw particular overlaps with PSHE, although in some schools there had been useful links with careers, student voice, oracy and citizenship.

Beyond the impact of the pandemic, there were a number of barriers to impact identified in this evaluation:

- Limited numbers of students took part in social action through #iwill
- Academies experienced challenges in creating time for #iwill during the school day
- There were limited examples of academies collaborating on #iwill.

Academies were already planning for future social action. Staff and students believed that the activities undertaken in #iwill to date would have at least some lasting impact on the school, and SLT appeared to see the benefit of continuing social action in future. Principals in case study schools were enthusiastic advocates for social action and were thinking carefully about maximizing its impact in their academies; it appears that in such schools #iwill2 will arrive on fertile ground. These principals also highlighted opportunities to tailor and augment to increase the impact of #iwill2, for example through extending its reach amongst students and staff, and through the Trust enabling more collaboration between academies.