



NATIONAL UK SCHOOLS CONCUSSION SURVEY 2025



Welcome to the Concussion in Schools & Sport Survey Report

Concussion is a serious problem but solving it is full of ambiguity. Pupils want to play, parents want reassurance, coaches need to make tough calls, teachers must manage the impact on learning, and medical staff are stretched. Each has their own requirements. This makes it hard for schools to cut through the noise and know what the right approach really is. The survey was conducted online using Google Forms and sent out to individuals part of five key stakeholder groups: players, parents, coaches, physios and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). *For this report, we will focus on the responses of coaches and the SLT.*

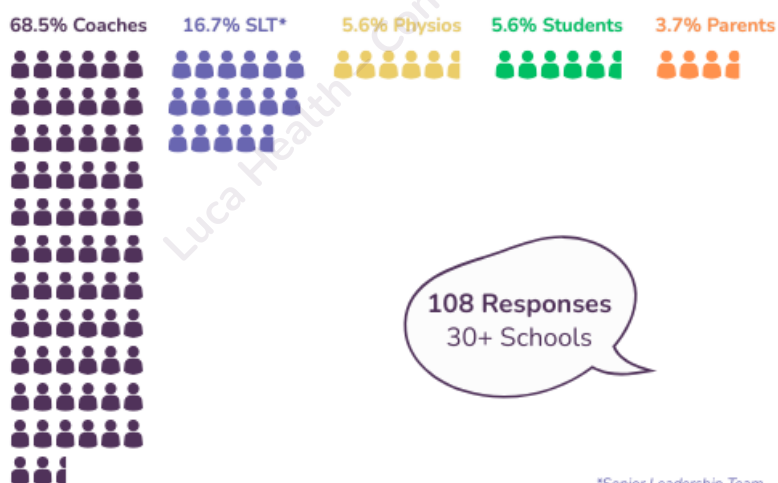
This survey is designed to reveal what's working, expose where gaps remain, and highlight where more support is needed, giving senior leadership teams the clarity to make better-informed decisions that protect pupils. For coaches, this short survey aimed to investigate: how confident coaches feel in return-to-play decisions, how consistent current protocols are, and what pressures coaches face around time, resources, and communication.

Our three key conclusions are:

- The idea of **ambiguity around concussion does exist** in practice across schools across the UK. There are many different areas of concussion management that remain unclear or poorly managed across different stakeholders.
- The **lack of sufficient, concussion-specific education** and training is the most frequent limiting factor of concussion management in schools.
- **Schools are not aware that their staff have trouble managing concussions.** There is an underlying uncertainty across groups when faced with head injuries, putting children at risk.

Demographics of Responses

What is your role?



Where are the schools based?

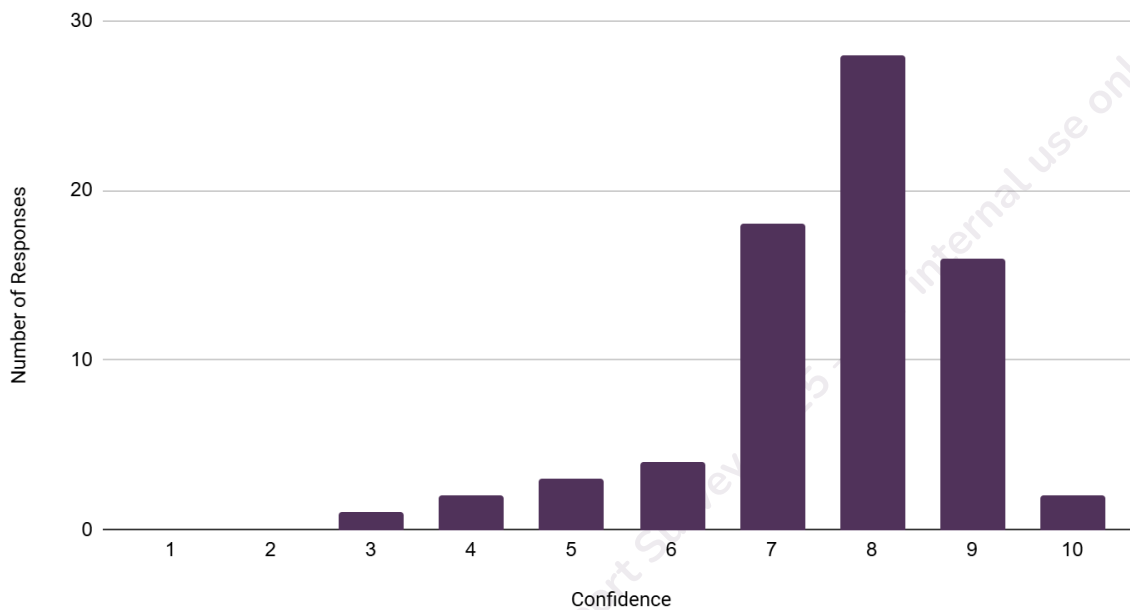
Schools across the whole of the UK



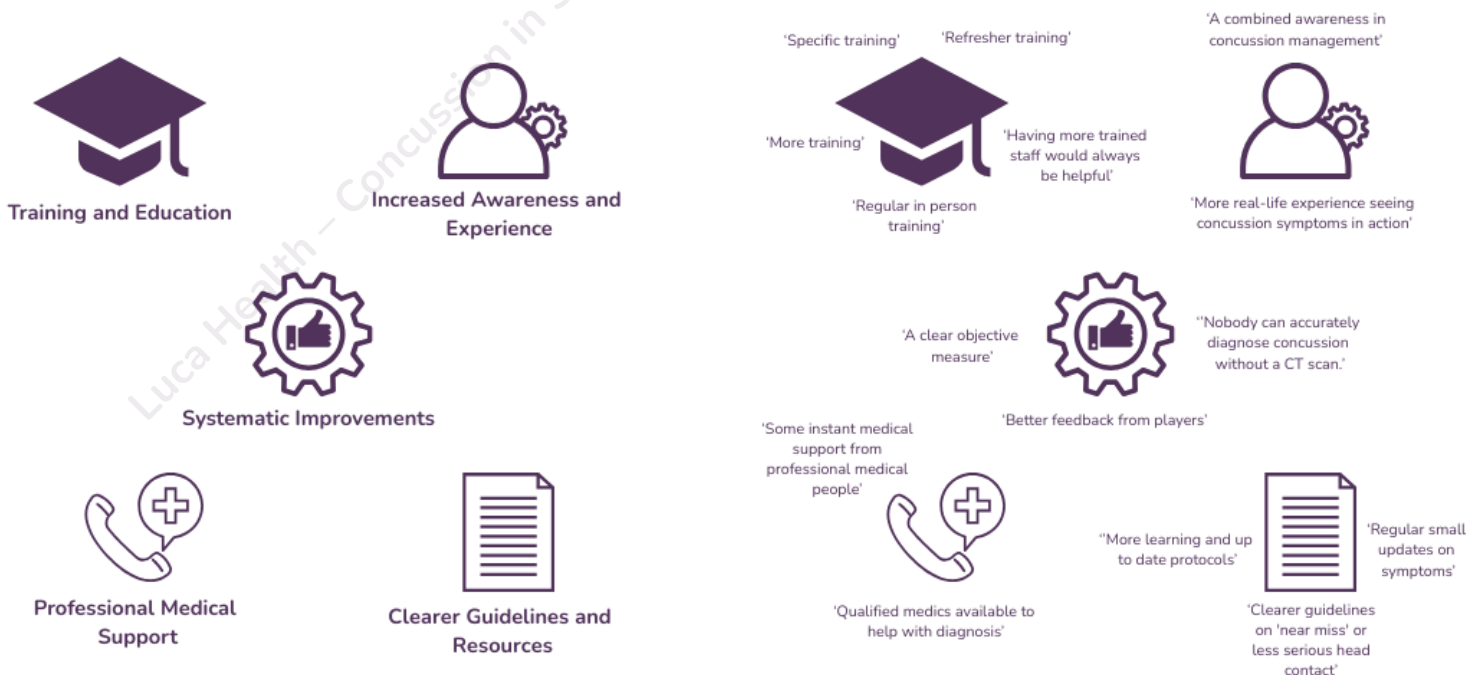
Coaches Survey Report

1. (a) How confident are you at recognising symptoms of concussion and removing players from play in high pressure, game situations?

Mean - 7.62 (n=74)

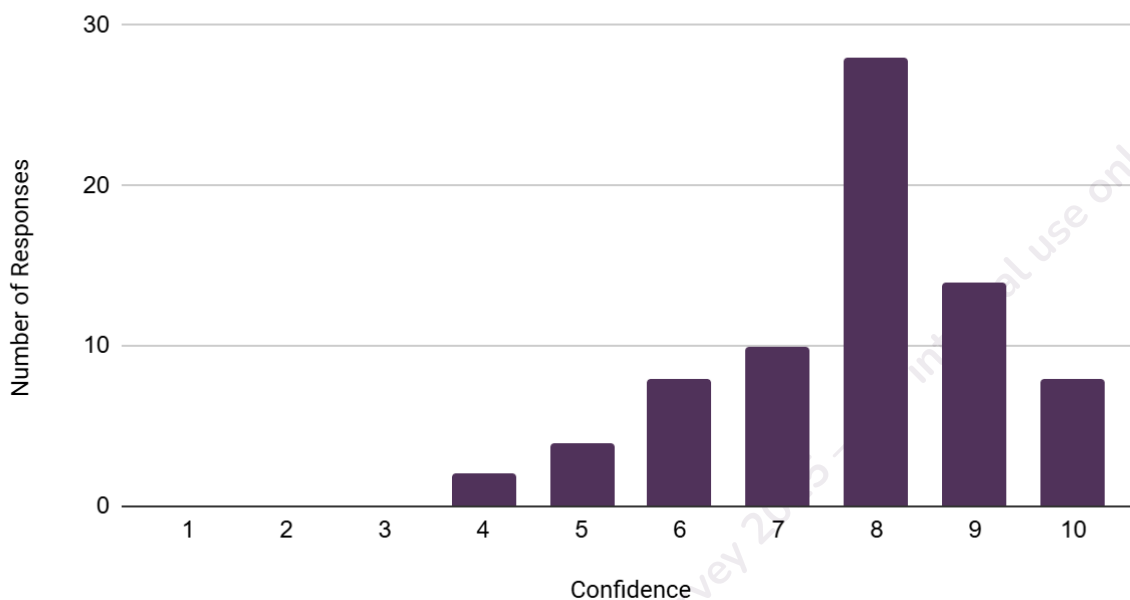


1. (b) What would help to improve this score?



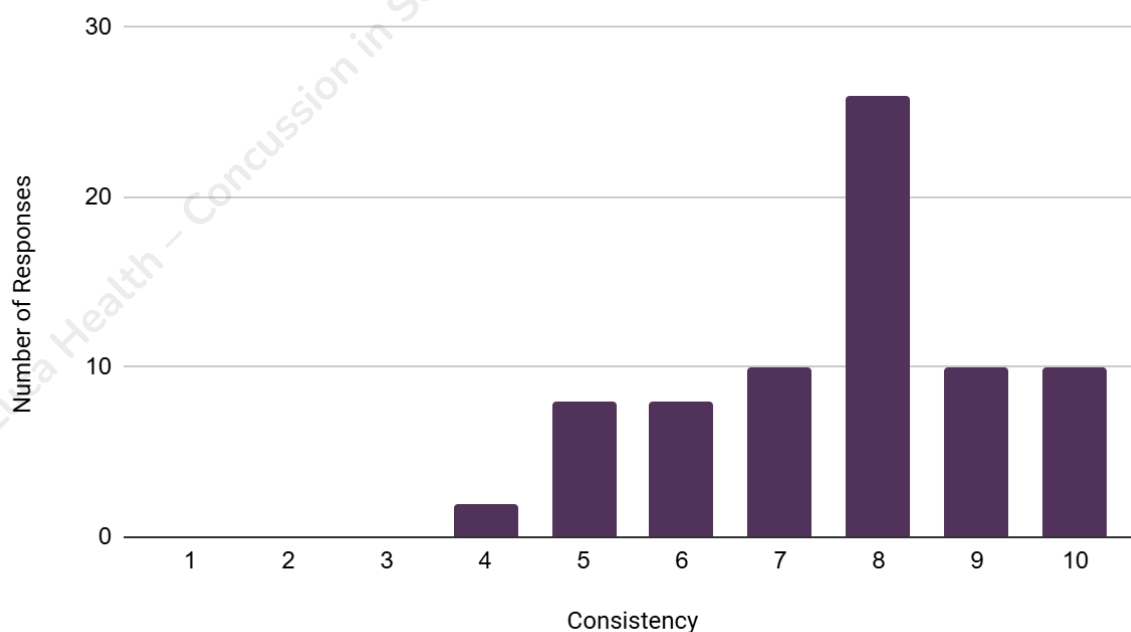
2. (a) How confident are you that your school's concussion management is safe and well-measured in all areas?

Mean - 7.78 (n=74)

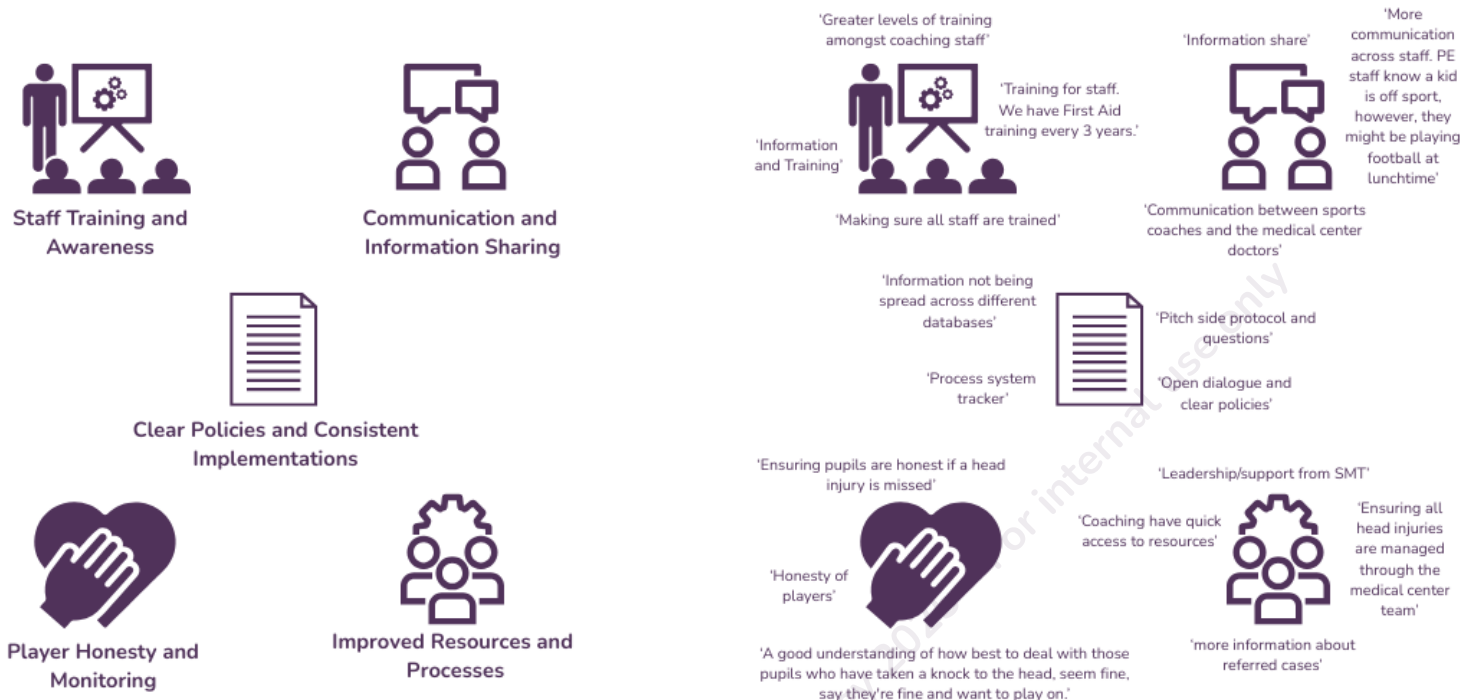


3. (a) Are the latest concussion protocols applied consistently to all cases at your institution?

Mean - 7.62 (n=74)



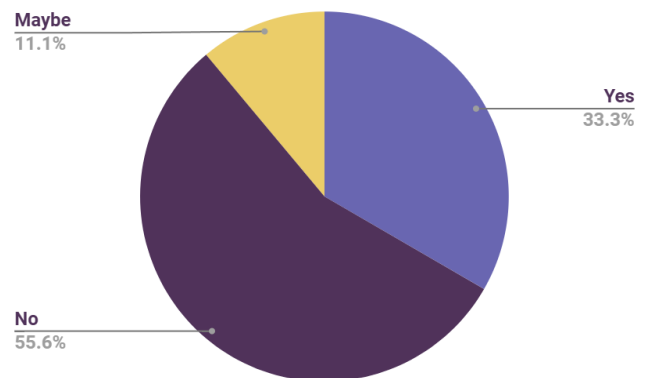
3. (b) What is the most important thing that would improve this score?



4. Have you completed advanced concussion training in the last 12 months? *

*Question added later on hence the lower number of responses

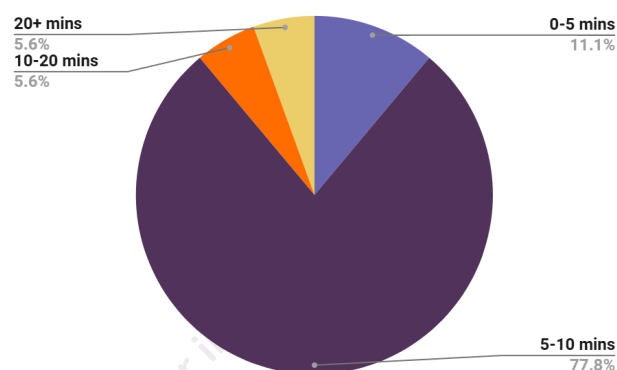
- In alignment with previous responses, it appears that concussion specific training is lacking across many institutions.
- To note, the term 'advanced concussion training' is specific and may be the driver of these results.
- Again, lower sample size due to the question being added secondarily to the survey limits the reliability of conclusions drawn.
- However, when taken together with written responses it appears obvious that education and training is a clear shortfall of current concussion provision in schools.



5. (a) How long does formal concussion incident documentation take you to complete? *

*Question added later on hence the lower number of responses

- It appears that the time taken to complete concussion incident documentation varies across institutions. This is likely due to differences across the variety of platforms used.
- Results tend towards the longer end of the spectrum suggesting that there may be a need for a more efficient system.
- However, in conjunction with findings from 5. (b) it appears that this issue is not significant and therefore is not a focus point of our suggestions.



5. (b) How do you find the incident reporting process at your school overall? *

*Question added later on hence the lower number of responses

Ease of use varied (generally complaints were directed at specific platforms)

- 'Clunky, and if you don't have Evolve on your own phone then you can't report it until later on in the day.'
- 'Pretty thorough and easy'
- 'Clear and relatively easy to access.'
- 'Evolve forms are not ideal.'
- 'It's well established and seems to work well.'

Generally, incident reporting appears fairly effective across most institutions. However, the sample size was lower for this question given it was secondarily added to the survey. As such, a universal, accurate conclusion based on evidence cannot be drawn yet.

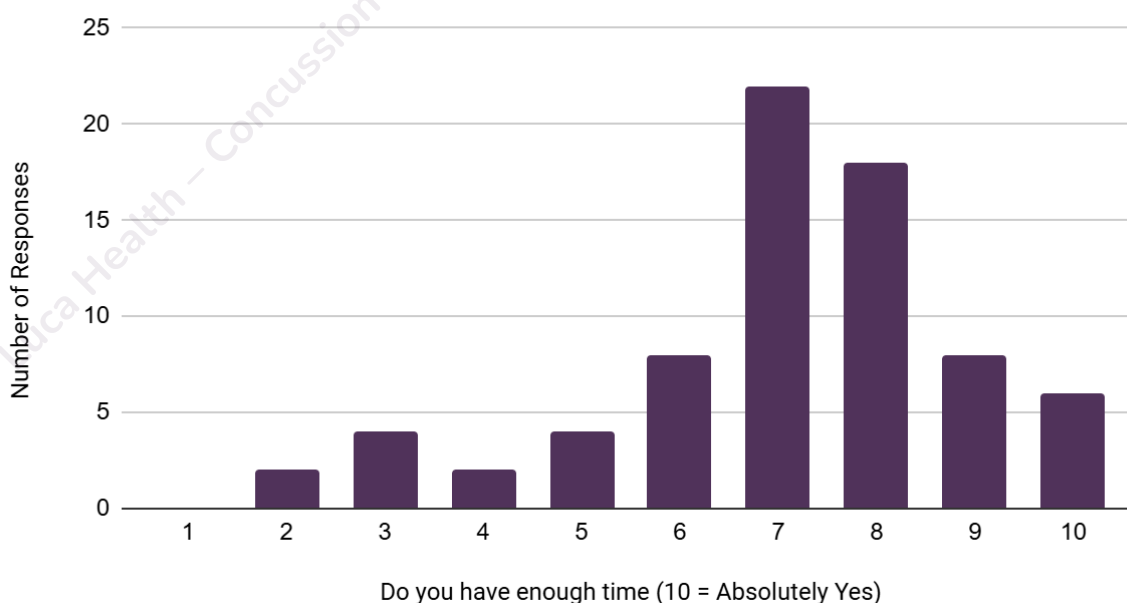
6. Any feedback on the theme of 'communication' when it goes to head injury management at your school? *

*Question added later on hence the lower number of responses

- Despite the low sample size of completed responses (result of question being added later on), there seems to be issues with communication.
- These issues do not follow a general pattern which indicates that there are a number of problems with communication across head injury management in schools.
- Issues appear to arise across multiple different stages of concussion management including the incident as well as the recovery.
- These may be due to a lack of a centralised concussion management system, outdated paper records, or just a general lack of clarity when it comes to the unique management of head injuries.
- Here are a few of the responses:
 - 'My main challenge is checking in regularly to advise player and parent what to do particularly if the recovery isn't smooth.'
 - 'Coaches lack info on player GRTP'
 - 'Sometimes a boy will present with issues after a match and seek medical advice. I am then asked to complete paperwork for an incident of which I am not aware.'
 - 'I don't know who receives the information on Evolve or what happens to it.'

7. (a) Do you have enough time and resources to properly manage head injuries during matches and training?

Mean - 7.05 (n=74)



7. (b) What could help support the shortcomings in this area of time management?



8. How familiar are you with 'return to learn' principles and how would you apply this knowledge to support children?

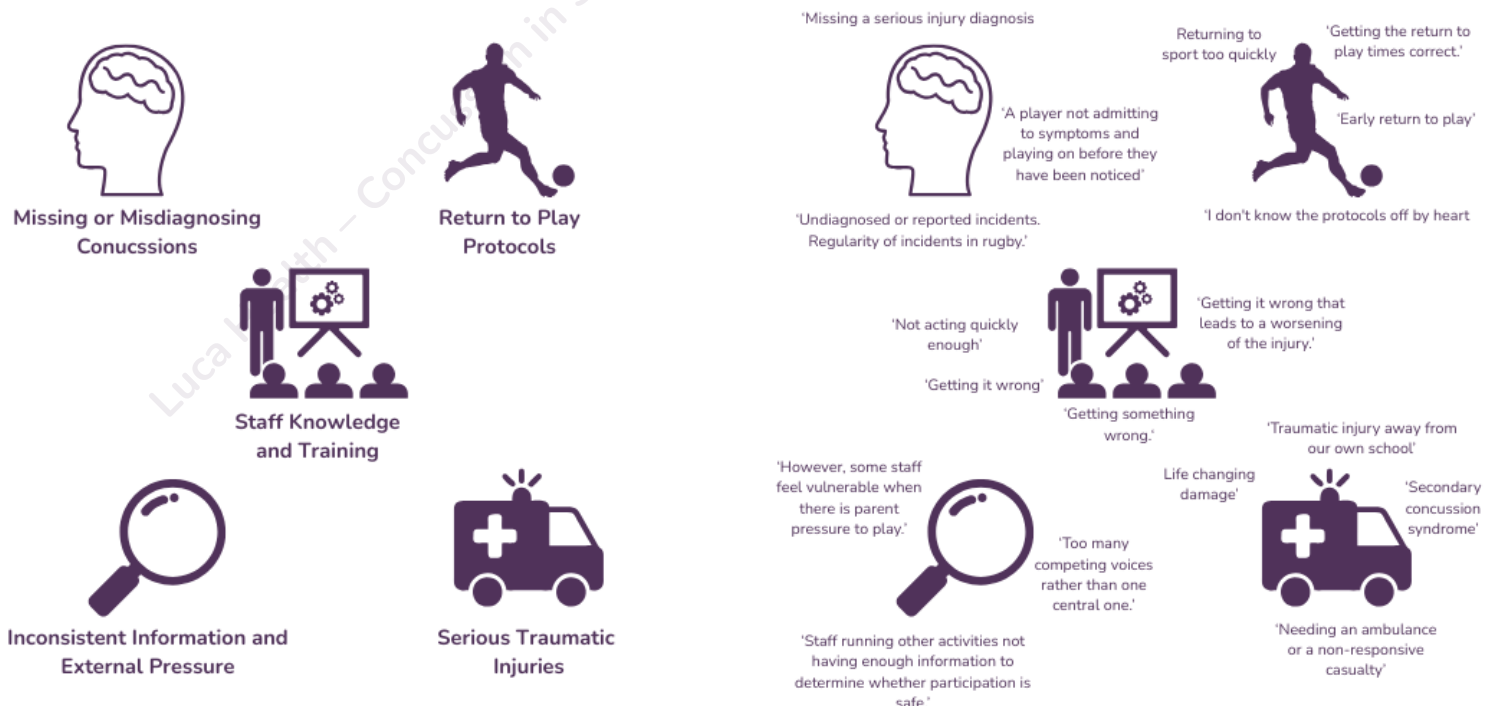
This question was added to illustrate that head injury management in schools goes beyond sport. Concussion impacts the everyday lives of school children which inevitably has a knock-on effect in the classroom. As such, stringent return-to-learn protocols do exist to reintegrate concussed pupils into schoolwork. This ensures that they are able to focus effectively and are not overloaded with stress in a time of acute distress.

Different return-to-learn protocols exist and they are often specific to each institution. However, as evidenced by our survey, many coaches are not aware of this putting children under undue stress in school.

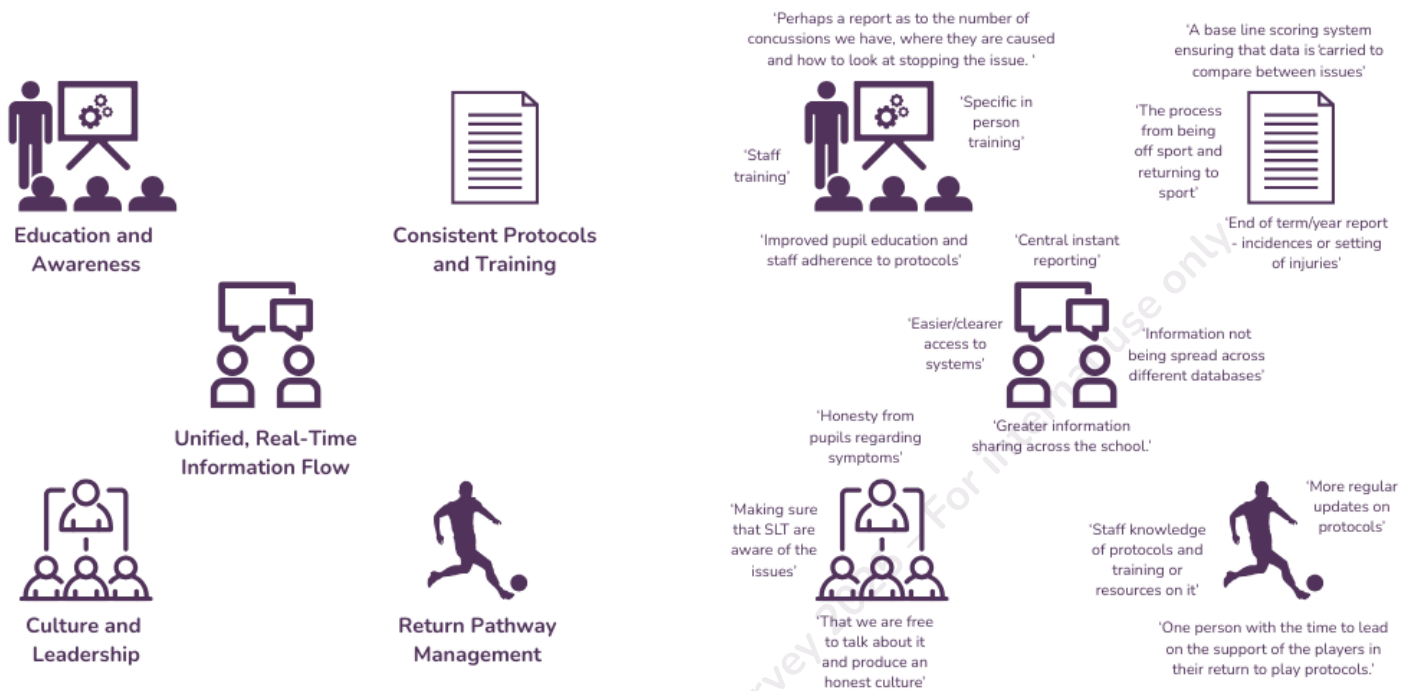
- Responses to this question were very mixed with **over half** of respondents admitting they were **largely unfamiliar** with return-to-learn protocols.

- 'Unknown - I would follow the return to play protocols'
 - 'Unfamiliar'
 - 'Not familiar at all.'
 - 'Not at all.'
 - 'Not sure about return to learn principles'
 - Fairly familiar, but dont know details on severity and variable cases.
- Those who did understand expressed confident familiarity:
 - 'Very familiar - it is required CPD and training at the start of every new term at school'
 - 'Pretty familiar - will be led by feedback from doctors, but ultimately, we need to be led by the student. Can they keep up with the normal pace of work in the classroom, are they using a device in class, should they have access to their phone.'
 - 'Ensuring that the student is returned to their learning with a graduated return based around symptoms and presentation.'
 - The biggest conclusion here again falls back on the **lack of sufficient, concussion-specific training**. In 2025, schools should all adopt clear return-to-learn policies with staff members possessing comprehensive knowledge and awareness on their application.

9. What is your single biggest worry when it comes to head injury management?



10. What is one crucial thing that needs addressing to improve the concussion management experience at your school?



One other quotation which sums up concussion management in schools is this:

'I have been at an away fixture and heard a head of rugby say:

'concussion nonsense - concussion doesn't exist in U18 rugby'

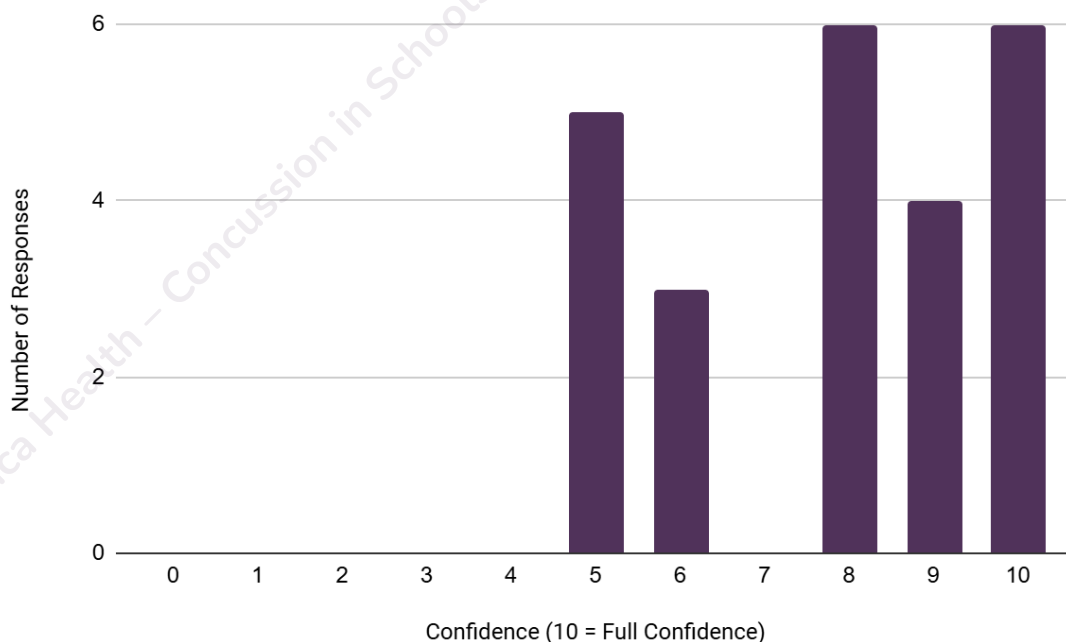
Conclusions on the following page

Key Conclusions:

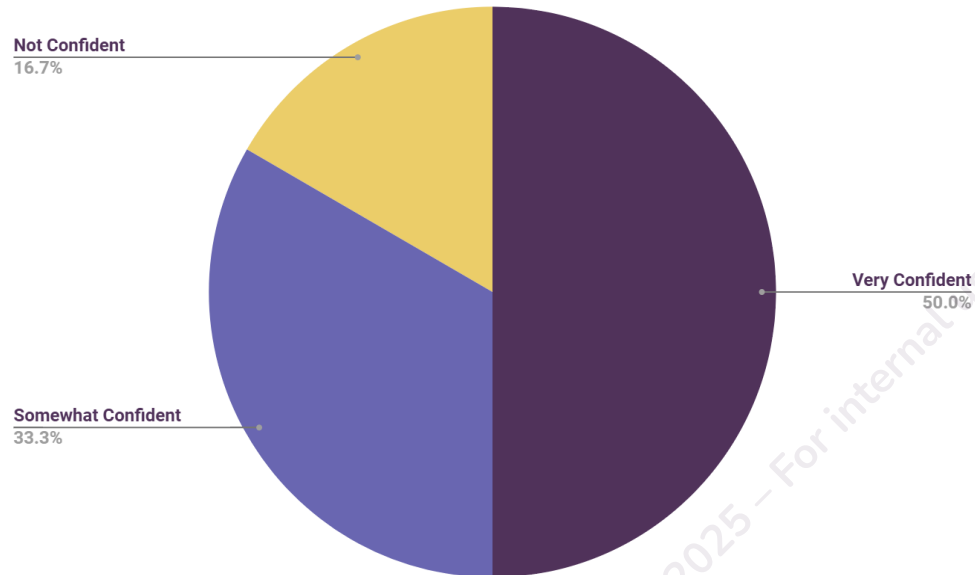
- Education and training must be focused on to improve concussion management for coaches.
- Communication and a lack of a centralised system for management are consistently issues across institutions. This will improve all elements of management from incident to recovery, including protocols such as the graduated return to sport (GRTS) and the graduated return to learn (GRTL).
- Coaches are aware that the problem of concussion is severe. They show genuine concern about 'getting it wrong' or the importance of correct diagnosis highlighting that it is an issue that should be taken incredibly seriously in schools.
- There are a high number of improvements that can be made almost in all cases of concussion management in schools. It appears that coaches have ideas but lack resources to implement these. Therefore, what is 'gold standard' remains ambiguous and almost unachievable within the constraints of individual schools.

Senior Leadership Team Report

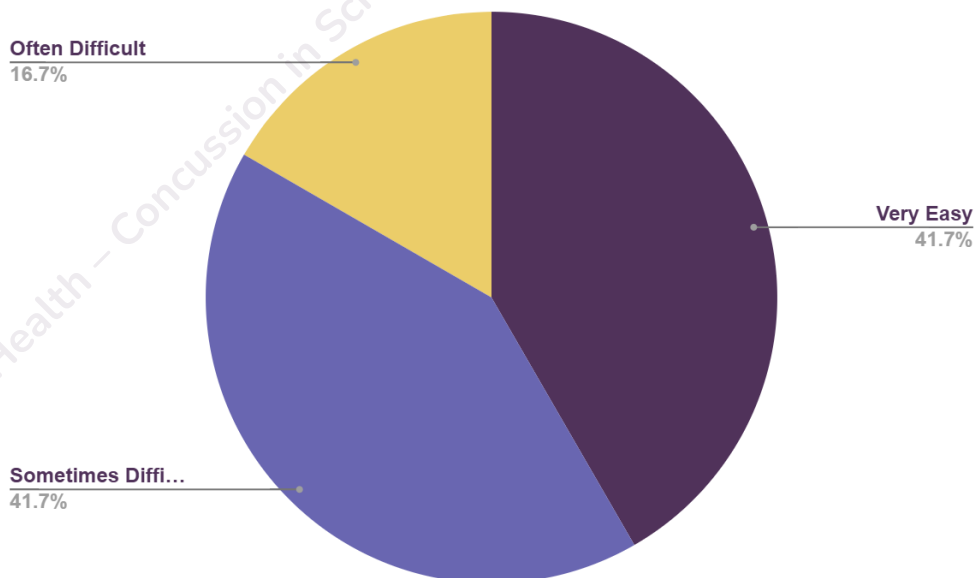
1. How confident are you that your school's concussion management is clear, consistent, and defensible?



2. If a serious head injury at your school were challenged by parents or inspectors, how confident are you that your processes would stand up to external scrutiny?



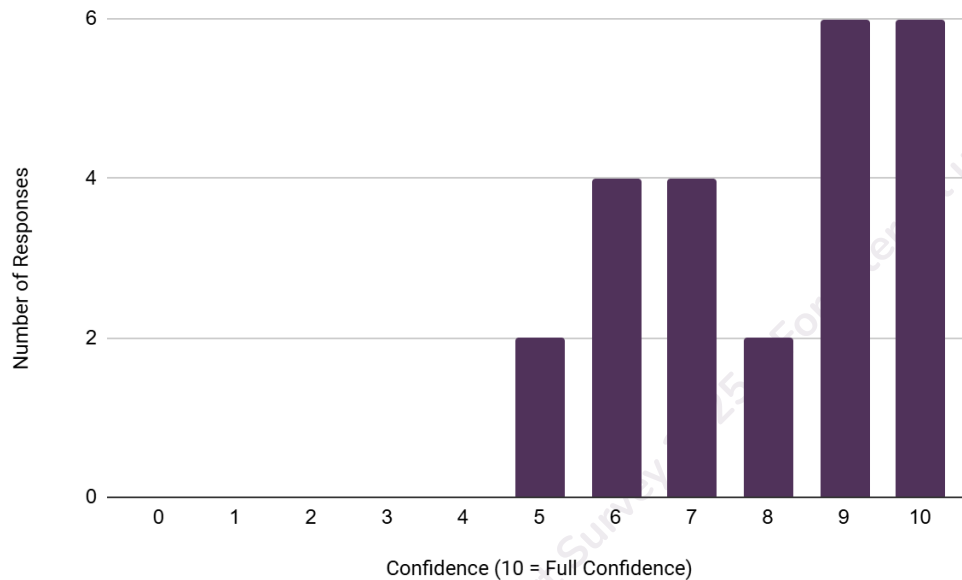
3. How easy is it for you to get a full picture of how head injuries are being managed across all teams and age groups?



4. Is your concussion policy board-approved and reviewed annually?

Question added within last week - no responses yet.

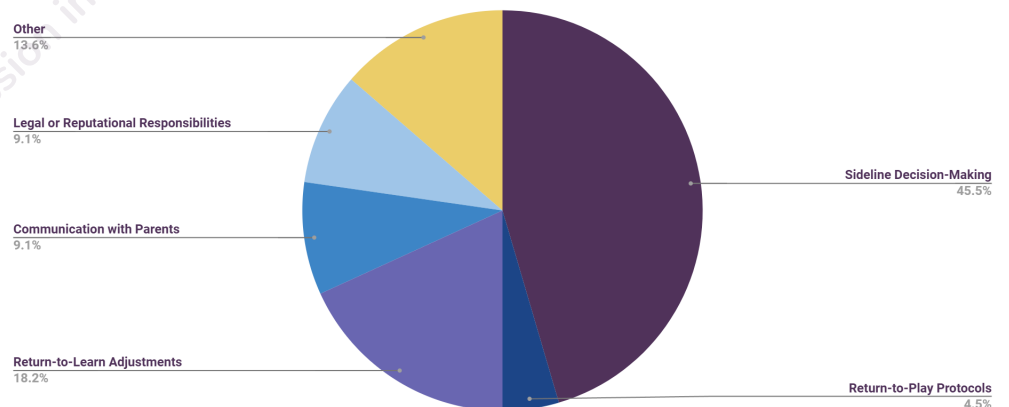
5. How confident are you that coaches, teachers, and medical staff all have the training and knowledge they need to manage concussion properly?



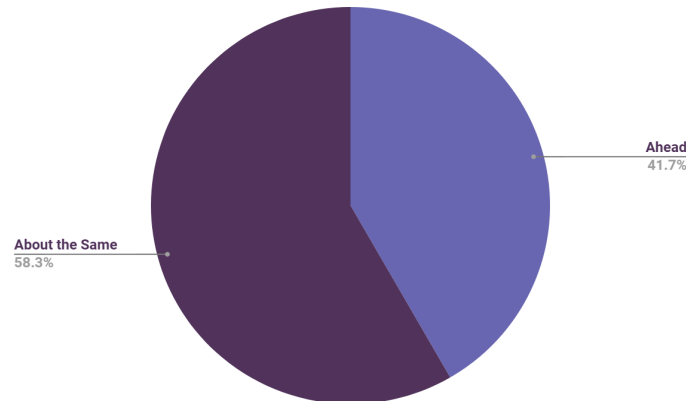
6. Where do you feel the greatest ambiguity lies in your school's approach to concussion?

Other included:

- 'Clubs' (twice)
- 'The students' comprehension of the effects'



7. Compared to other schools you know, do you believe your concussion management approach is:



Other options with 0 responses included:

- Behind
- Unsure

8. What is your single biggest concern about how concussions are currently managed at your school?



Key Conclusions:

- The SLT staff appear slightly tentative over concussion management. **There is not complete, 100% certainty in their school's policies.**
- **Concussion management massively varies** from institution to institution. Some school leaders are very confident in their policy whereas others not so.
- Shared themes (with coaches) of communication, inconsistencies in management and the lack of robust protocols are key challenges faced by the SLT regarding concussion management.
- It is possible that **some schools don't actually know what they should be offering** in terms of concussion management. There is a **lack of understanding of what 'gold standard' actually looks like** and therefore, how this is then reflected in policy and protocol.

Survey Report Key Takeaways:

- **What do schools actually need?**
 - Ambiguity is rife within the concussion management space. Stakeholders are unsure of whether their existing measures are appropriate enough and are concerned about pupil safety.
- **Education and training deficiency**
 - To empower coaches to make the correct decisions, keeping pupils safe, they must be better educated. This isn't just about on field decisions but also concerns recovery and protocol understanding.
- **Schools left in the dark**
 - Schools of course don't know what they don't know. These kind of findings unearth some very important information about concussion management. They show that school staff are not wholly confident in existing procedures and policy which could put children at risk.

We will leave you with this harrowing quote overheard by one of the coach respondents at a school fixture which illustrates that something has to change:

'Concussion doesn't exist in U18 rugby'

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