Troubled Families Programme National Evaluation
Research among Troubled Families keyworkers

Conducted by Ipsos MORI on behalf of DCLG

May 2017

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Introduction

Background

Methodology

Background

This report presents findings from research among Troubled Families Programme keyworkers, conducted on behalf of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

The Troubled Families Programme was established in 2011 and expanded in 2014 to over half a million families. It is designed to help families with severe and persistent problems make significant and sustained progress towards their goals. Key features include promoting multi-agency working and a whole family approach.

This research is one element of the national evaluation of the new programme, alongside a longitudinal quantitative family survey, qualitative case studies and monitoring via data collected as part of the National Impact Study and Family Progress Data.

The evaluation aims to explore the level of service transformation driven by the programme as well as the impact of the family intervention approach on outcomes for families themselves.

Methodology

▭	**Result significantly higher at wave 2, compared to wave 1**
▭	**Result significantly lower at wave 2, compared to wave 1**

Data was gathered from Troubled Families Programme keyworkers through an online survey. DCLG provided email addresses for Troubled Families Co-ordinators (TFCs) across all 152 local authorities, who were sent an email with a link for the keyworker survey and asked to forward it on to keyworkers in their local authority (LA). In total, responses were received from 1,274 keyworkers. Fieldwork was conducted between 31 October and 9 December 2016.

Separate reports present findings for similar surveys of Troubled Families Co-ordinators (TFCs) and Troubled Families Employment Advisors (TFEAs). These staff surveys are designed to run annually over the five years of the evaluation; this is the second in the series. One in seven (14%) keyworkers who completed this survey report that they also took part last year.

The questionnaire was updated between waves to reflect changes in the delivery of the programme. However, many questions are consistent allowing for comparison over time. As a guide, when looking at how a result varies, differences should be between +2 to 4 percentage points to be sure they represent statistically significant (or 'real') differences and are not due to chance (based on 95% confidence intervals). Where the 2016 result is significantly higher than in 2015 this is highlighted by the use of a blue box, where it is lower it is highlighted by the use of a yellow box (these differences are marked on the 2015 results for consistency). 'N/A' is used to signify that a year-on-year comparison is unavailable due to the survey question not being asked in a comparable format or at all in 2015.

Percentages are rounded to the nearest integer. Where percentages do not add up to 100, this may be due to computer rounding or multiple responses.

Overall views of the Troubled Families Programme
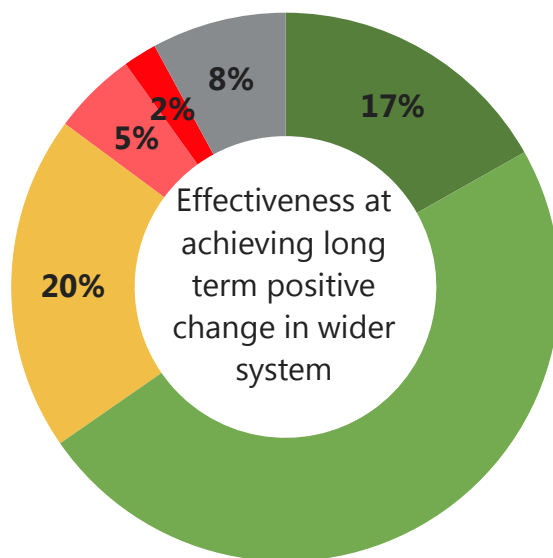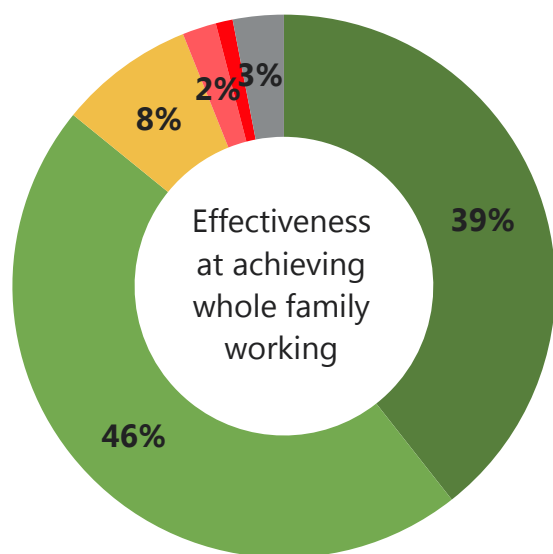
Overall effectiveness

Embedding the approach

Keyworkers are positive about the overall effectiveness of the Troubled Families Programme

Keyworkers are very positive about the ability of the Troubled Families Programme to achieve whole family working; almost all (85%) say it is effective. QKW22B**

While still positive, fewer keyworkers (66%) think that the programme is effective in achieving long term positive system change within their local authority, including half (49%) who say it is fairly effective. QKW22C**

Effectiveness at achieving whole family working

39%
46%
8%
2%
3%

Effectiveness at achieving long term positive change in wider system

17%
20%
5%
2%
8%

- ■ Very effective
- ■ Fairly effective
- ■ Neither
- ■ Fairly ineffective
- ■ Very ineffective
- ■ Don't know/ no opinion

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Keyworkers also believe the Troubled Families Programme is effective at achieving long term positive change for families

Four in five keyworkers (78%) say the Troubled Families Programme is effective at achieving long term positive change in family circumstances; again, more say it is fairly rather than very effective (58% and 20% respectively).

This view is less positive than 2015 (84% effective). QKW22A**

- ■ Very effective
- ■ Fairly effective
- ■ Neither
- ■ Fairly ineffective
- ■ Very ineffective
- ■ Don't know/ no opinion
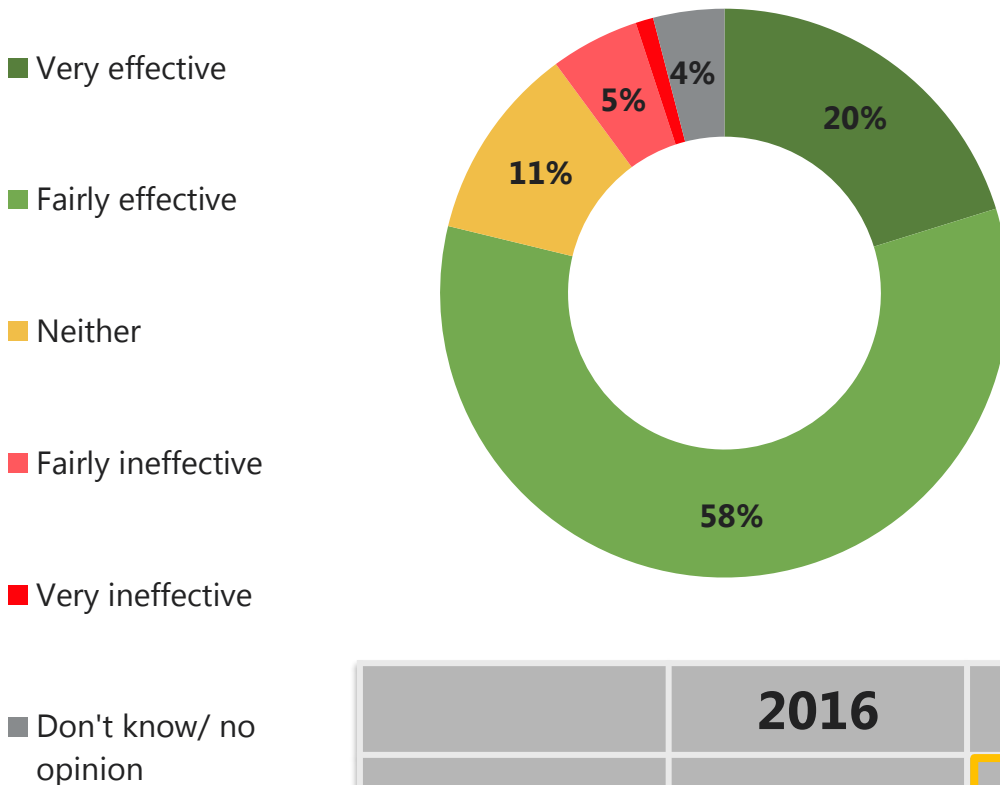
	2016	2015
Effective	78%	84%
Ineffective	7%	4%

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Troubled Families Programme helps families avoid statutory intervention

Almost all keyworkers (91%) think that their local Troubled Families Programme is successful in helping families to avoid statutory intervention, either a great deal or a fair amount. While very positive, as with other measures, this view is not strongly held; more say a fair amount than a great deal (53% versus 38% respectively) QKW2C**
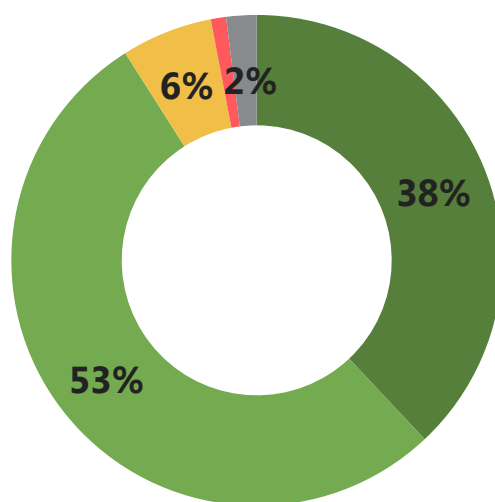
- A great deal
- A fair amount
- Not much
- Not at all
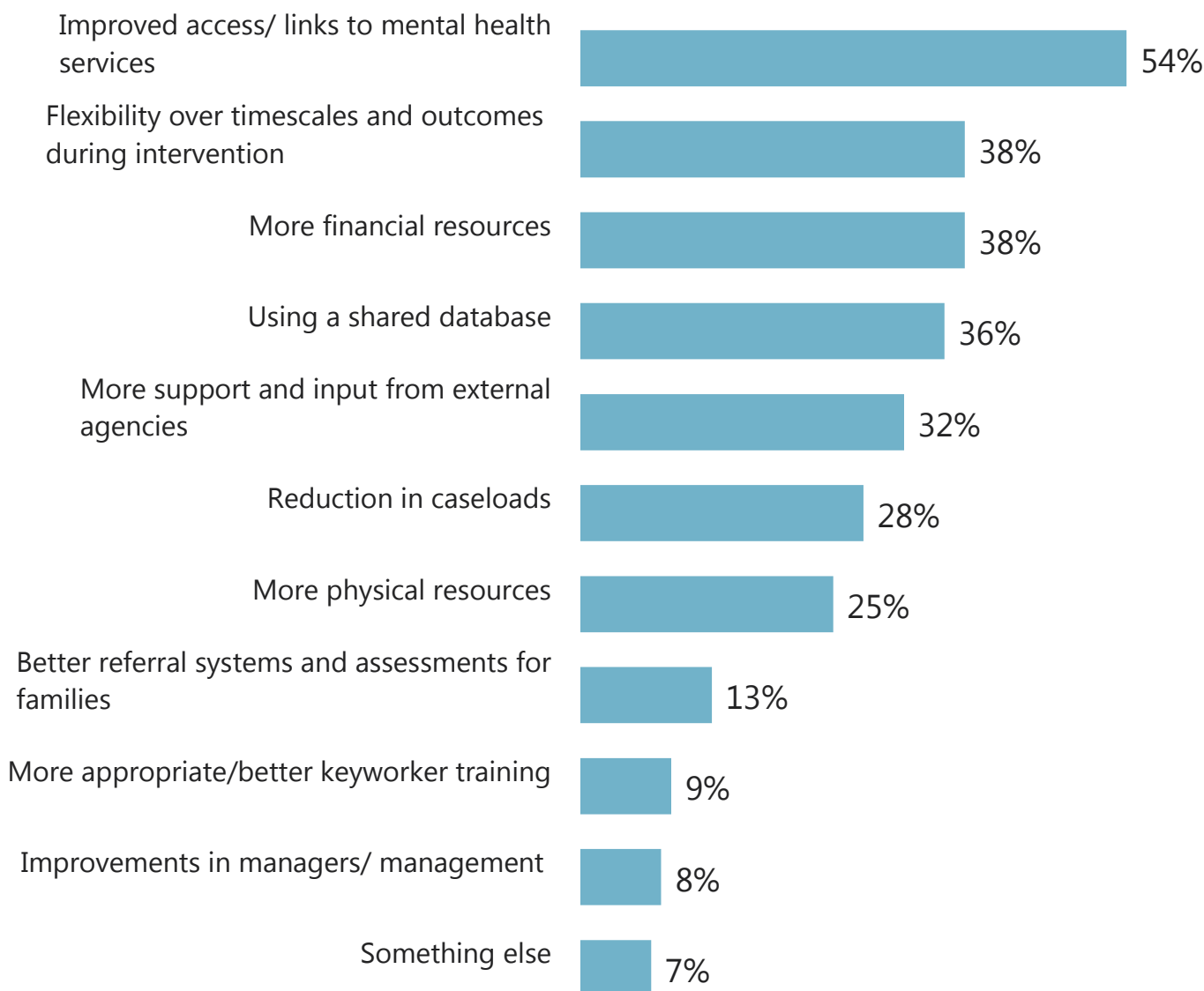- Don't know/ no opinion

6% 2%

38%

53%

91%

A great deal/ fair amount

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Improved access/ links to mental health services tops list for making the programme more effective to achieve its goals

When asked what three things would make the programme more effective for service transformation/ achieving the goals of the maturity model, responses are varied, but topping the list, over half (54%) point to improved access/ links to mental health services. Nearly two in five suggest that flexibility over timescales and outcomes during intervention and more financial resources (both 38%) would make the programme more effective, while slightly fewer mention using a shared database (36%) as well as more support and input from external agencies (32%). QKW23**
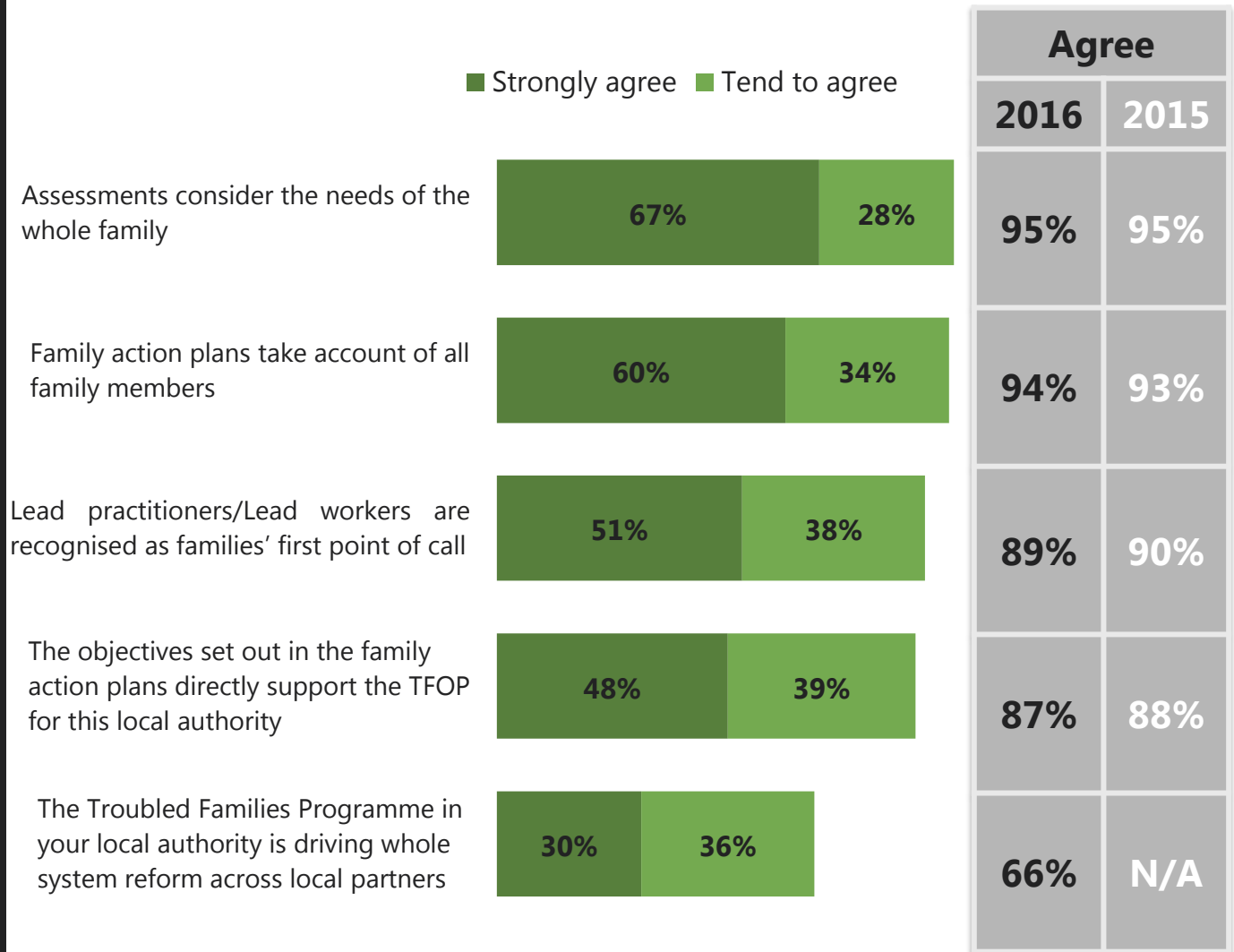
Improved access/ links to mental health services	54%
Flexibility over timescales and outcomes during intervention	38%
More financial resources	38%
Using a shared database	36%
More support and input from external agencies	32%
Reduction in caseloads	28%
More physical resources	25%
Better referral systems and assessments for families	13%
More appropriate/better keyworker training	9%
Improvements in managers/ management	8%
Something else	7%

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Base: All Keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Keyworkers continue to be positive about how the programme engages families

Keyworkers continue to be positive about how the programme in their area engages with families. In particular, two thirds (67%) strongly agree that assessments consider the needs of the whole family and three in five (60%) that family action plans take account of all family members. Half strongly agree that lead workers are recognised as the first point of call for families or that objectives set out in family action plans directly support the Troubled Families Outcomes Plan (TFOP) for their local authority (51% and 48% respectively). However, keyworkers are relatively less positive about the ability of the programme to drive whole system reform across local partners (30% strongly agree).

All these findings are very much in line with keyworkers views in 2015. QKW1**

■ Strongly agree ■ Tend to agree

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Agree 2016	Agree 2015
Assessments consider the needs of the whole family	67%	28%	95%	95%
Family action plans take account of all family members	60%	34%	94%	93%
Lead practitioners/Lead workers are recognised as families' first point of call	51%	38%	89%	90%
The objectives set out in the family action plans directly support the TFOP for this local authority	48%	39%	87%	88%
The Troubled Families Programme in your local authority is driving whole system reform across local partners	30%	36%	66%	N/A

Ipsos

Department for Communities and Local Government

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Most keyworkers think their local programme is focused on early intervention with families

Almost all keyworkers (89%) think that their local Troubled Families Programme is focused on early intervention with families, including over half (56%) who say a great deal. This is a slight increase from the perceived focus on early intervention in 2015. QKW2B**

33% **8%** **2%** **56%**
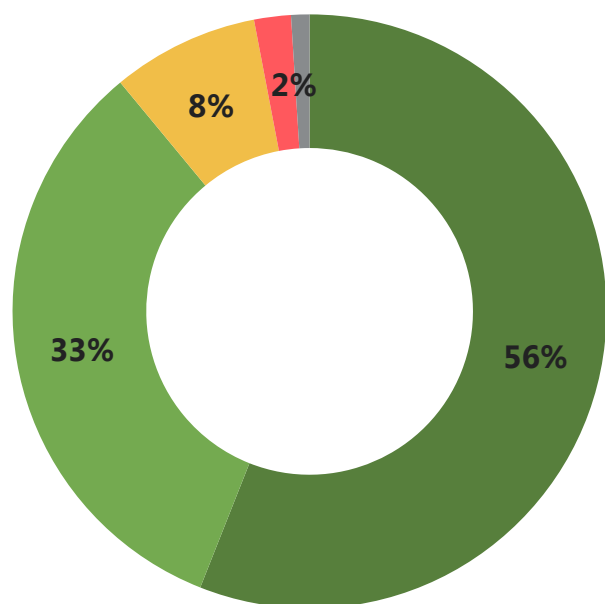
	2016	2015
A great deal/ a fair amount	89%	87%

■ A great deal ■ A fair amount ■ Not much ■ Not at all ■ Don't know/ no opinion

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

The keyworker role

Keyworker profile

Frequency of visits to families

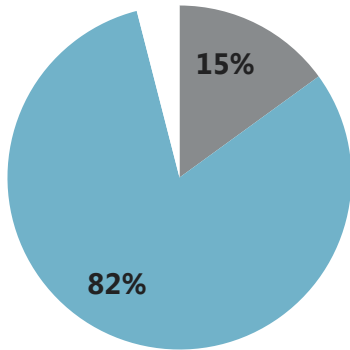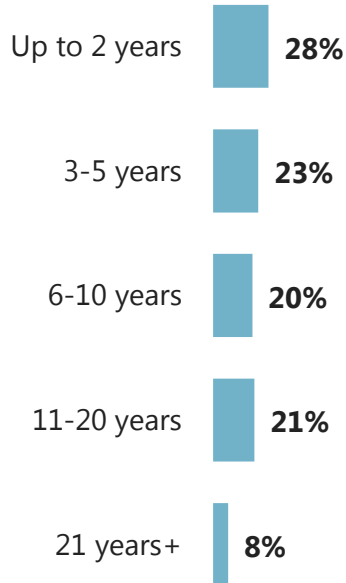Keyworker activities and types of support

Use of sanctions

# Troubled Families Programme keyworkers tend to be...

...more commonly female

15%

82%

Key

...have varying levels of experience in organisation

Up to 2 years	**28%**
3-5 years	**23%**
6-10 years	**20%**
11-20 years	**21%**
21 years+	**8%**

...mostly employed by a local authority

- **87%** are employed by a local authority

- **50%** work in a children, young people and families team

- **36%** work for a specific Troubled Families Programme team within the LA

- **7%** are employed by a third sector agency
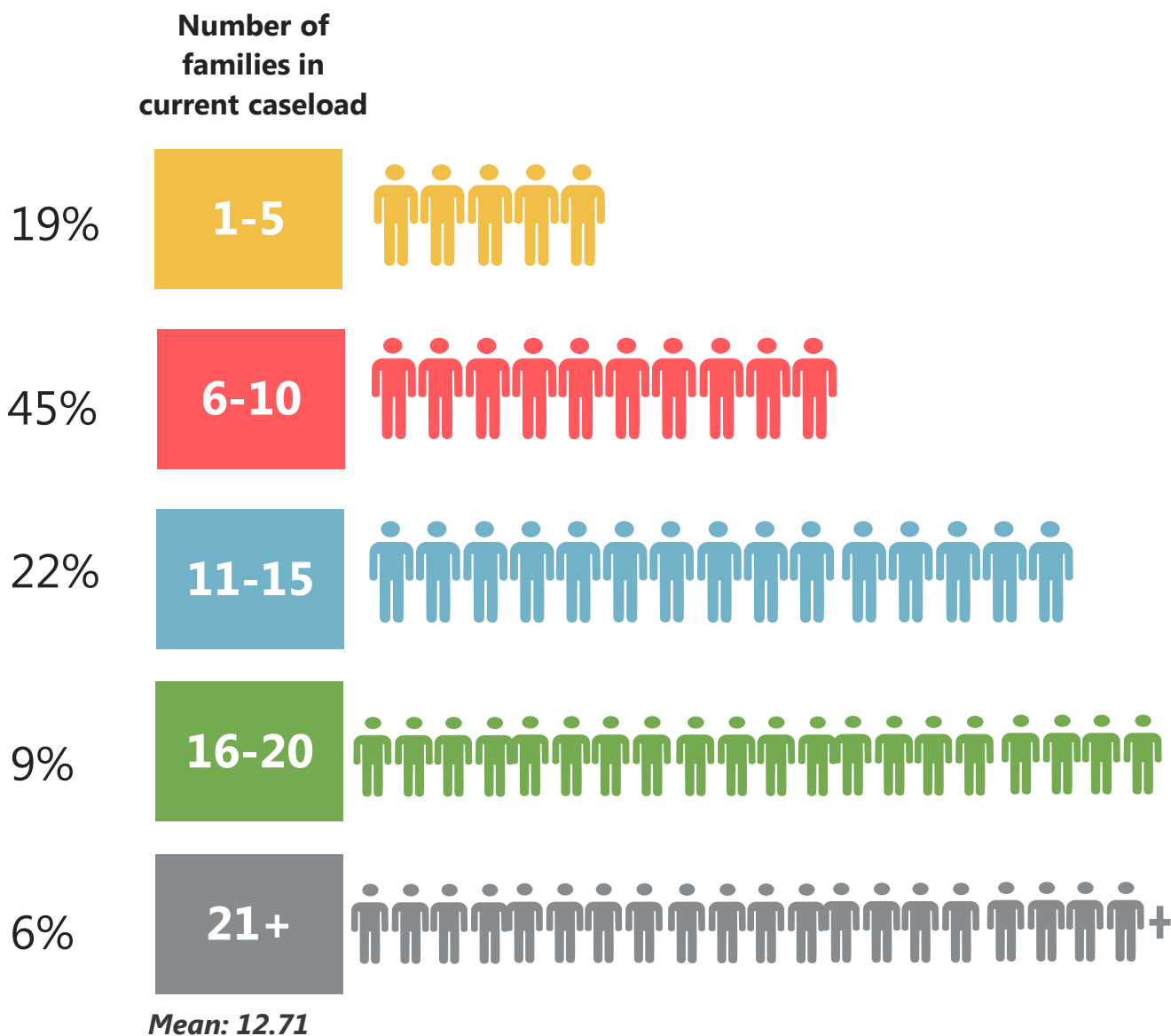
...varied in age

Aged 18-34	**23%**
Aged 35-44	**28%**
Aged 45-54	**33%**
Aged 55+	**12%**
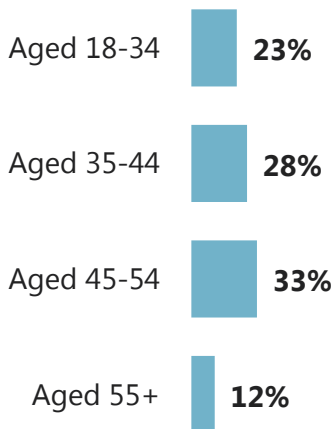
...well qualified

NVQ1-3: 31%
NVQ4+: 60%

Keyworkers reported varied caseloads of families

There is a wide range when it comes to the number of families on a keyworker's caseload. On average, keyworkers are working with around 13 families, but most commonly their caseload comprises between 6 and 10 families (45%). Fewer than one in ten (6%) have a caseload of more than 21 families. W2Q1KW**

Number of families in current caseload

19% 1-5

45% 6-10

22% 11-15

9% 16-20

6% 21+

Mean: 12.71

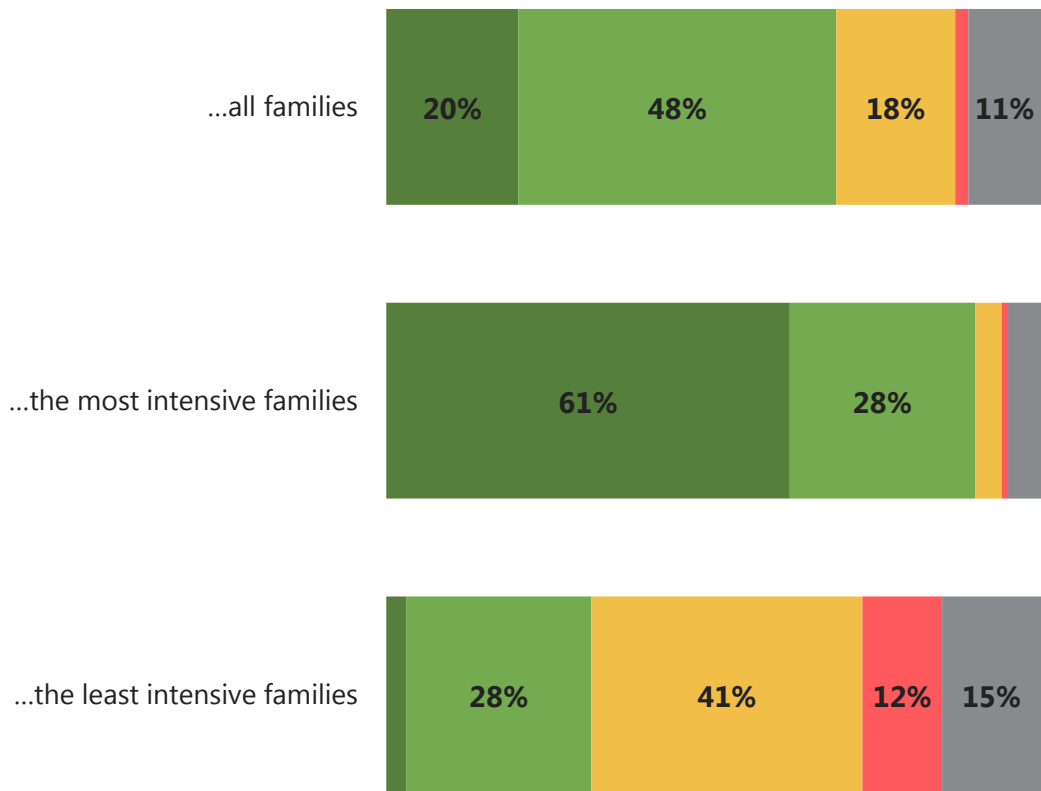Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Keyworkers are making fewer visits, particularly to the least intensive families, than in 2015

Seven in ten keyworkers (68%) say that, on average, they visit all the families they work with at least once a week. This increases to 89% for the families they work with most intensively. Of note, keyworkers appear to be making fewer regular visits to all families this year, largely a result of a fall in the number of visits to the least intensive families (31% visit more than once a week compared with 37% in 2015). Visits to the most intensive families are unchanged. QKW4,5,6**

Average frequency of keyworker visits to…

Legend:
- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once every two weeks
- Once a month or less
- No fixed pattern

	More than once a week	Once a week	Once every two weeks	Once a month or less	No fixed pattern	At least once a week 2016	At least once a week 2015
…all families	20%	48%	18%		11%	68%	75%
…the most intensive families	61%	28%				89%	89%
…the least intensive families		28%	41%	12%	15%	31%	37%

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Keyworker activities are focused on working directly with families

As part of their role in delivering the Troubled Families Programme, the majority of keyworkers carry out a range of activities directly with families themselves. Most commonly this involves making referrals to other local agencies and developing action plans with families (94% and 93% respectively), closely followed by delivering direct support (90%), co-ordinating and delivering action plans (88%) and whole family assessments (87%).

This is extremely consistent with their stated role in the previous survey, with a notable increase in the proportion contributing to action plans (not as lead) (60% versus 53% previously). QKW3**
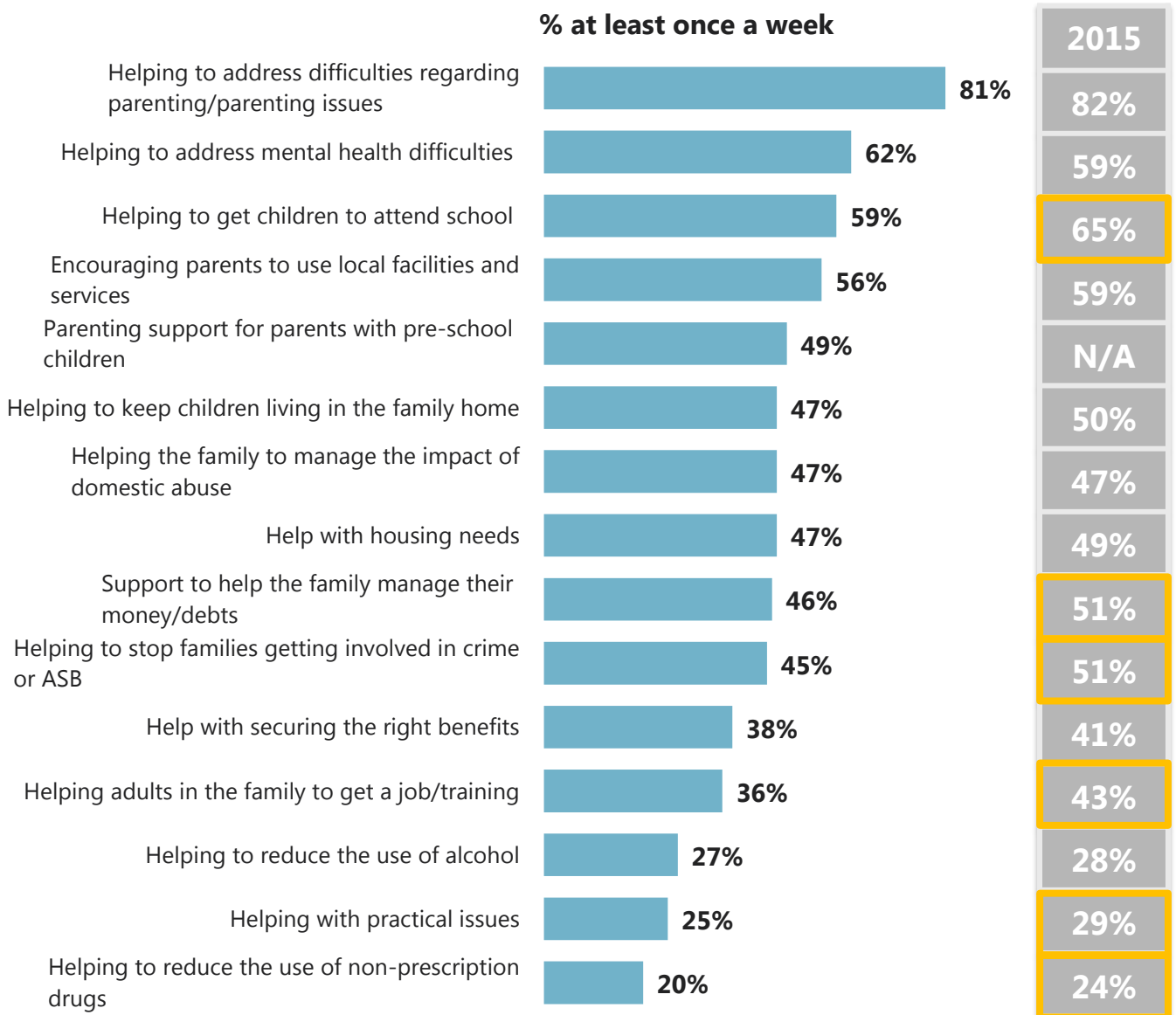
Top answers

Activity	2016	2015
Making referrals to other local services/agencies	94%	92%
Developing action plans with families	93%	92%
Delivering interventions/support to families directly	90%	90%
Providing a lead practitioner role, co-ordinating and delivering family action plan	88%	88%
Undertaking whole family assessments	87%	86%
Contributing towards delivering action plans, but not as a lead practitioner	60%	53%
Co-ordinating local services to deliver action plans (but not working with families directly)	29%	26%
Delivering training to others directly working with families involved in the Troubled Families Programme	22%	19%

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Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Keyworkers most commonly address difficulties with parenting

As in 2015, the most common support given to families at least once a week is help to address parenting issues (81%), along with getting children to attend school and encouraging parents to use local services (59% and 56% respectively). Three in five (62%) regularly help families with mental health issues.

Broadly this pattern of support is similar to that provided in 2015, though keyworkers appear less likely to have selected a number of types of help generally, including getting children to school, help with money/debt, crime/ASB, jobs and training as well as practical issues and drugs. QKW9**
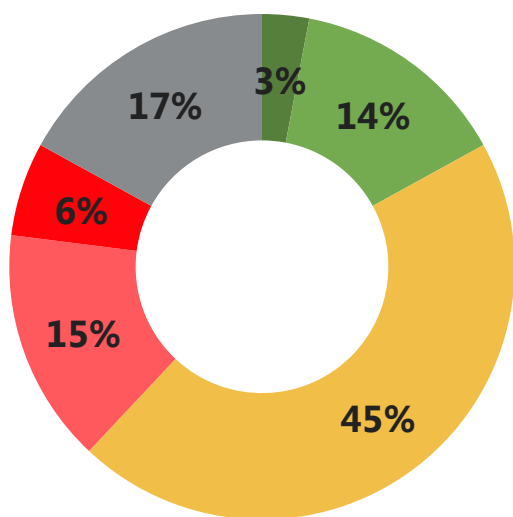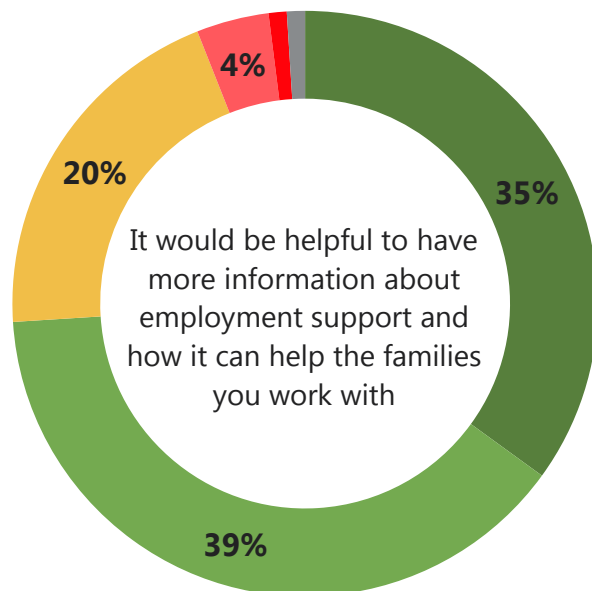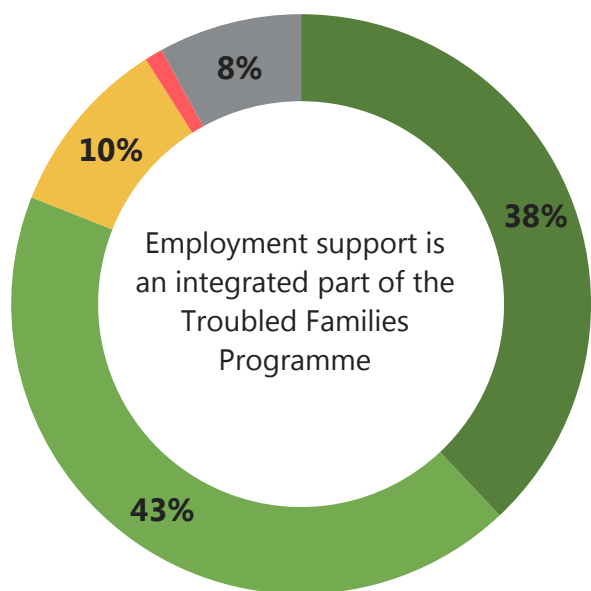
% at least once a week

Category	%	2015
Helping to address difficulties regarding parenting/parenting issues	81%	82%
Helping to address mental health difficulties	62%	59%
Helping to get children to attend school	59%	65%
Encouraging parents to use local facilities and services	56%	59%
Parenting support for parents with pre-school children	49%	N/A
Helping to keep children living in the family home	47%	50%
Helping the family to manage the impact of domestic abuse	47%	47%
Help with housing needs	47%	49%
Support to help the family manage their money/debts	46%	51%
Helping to stop families getting involved in crime or ASB	45%	51%
Help with securing the right benefits	38%	41%
Helping adults in the family to get a job/training	36%	43%
Helping to reduce the use of alcohol	27%	28%
Helping with practical issues	25%	29%
Helping to reduce the use of non-prescription drugs	20%	24%

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Support is largely thought to be offered at the right time

Half (45%) of keyworkers perceive support to be offered at the right time to families, but almost one in five (17%) think support comes too early, despite the focus of the programme on early intervention. One in five keyworkers (21%) consider support to be offered too late.
W2Q3KW**

	2016
Too early	**17%**
Too late	**21%**

Pie chart values: 3% Far too early, 14% A little too early, 45% At the right time, 15% A little too late, 6% Far too late, 17% Don't know

- ■ Far too early
- ■ A little too early
- ■ At the right time
- ■ A little too late
- ■ Far too late
- ■ Don't know

Employment support is integrated in service delivery, though keyworkers would like more information about how it can help

The majority (81%) of keyworkers say that employment support is an integrated part of the Troubled Families Programme, a great deal or fair amount. W2Q4KW**

However, they would like more information about how employment support can help families; three quarters (74%) agree that it would be helpful to have more information, suggesting a potential gap. W2Q2KW**

Employment support is an integrated part of the Troubled Families Programme

- 38%
- 43%
- 10%
- 8%

	A great deal/ fair amount
2016	81%

- A great deal
- A fair amount
- Not very much
- Not at all
- Don't know

It would be helpful to have more information about employment support and how it can help the families you work with

- 35%
- 39%
- 20%
- 4%

	Agree
2016	74%

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

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Actions to encourage behaviour change focus on children and parenting

Patterns in use of actions continue to demonstrate that the focus of a keyworker's role relates to children and parenting; 67% have taken action to safeguard children and 53% to tackle poor school attendance. A quarter (24%) have taken action to address anti-social behaviour and one in five have used the criminal justice system (18%).

Notably there has been an increase in the proportion saying they have taken action around safeguarding and school attendance since 2015, perhaps related to the increase in key workers focusing on those families needing most intensive support. QKW10**
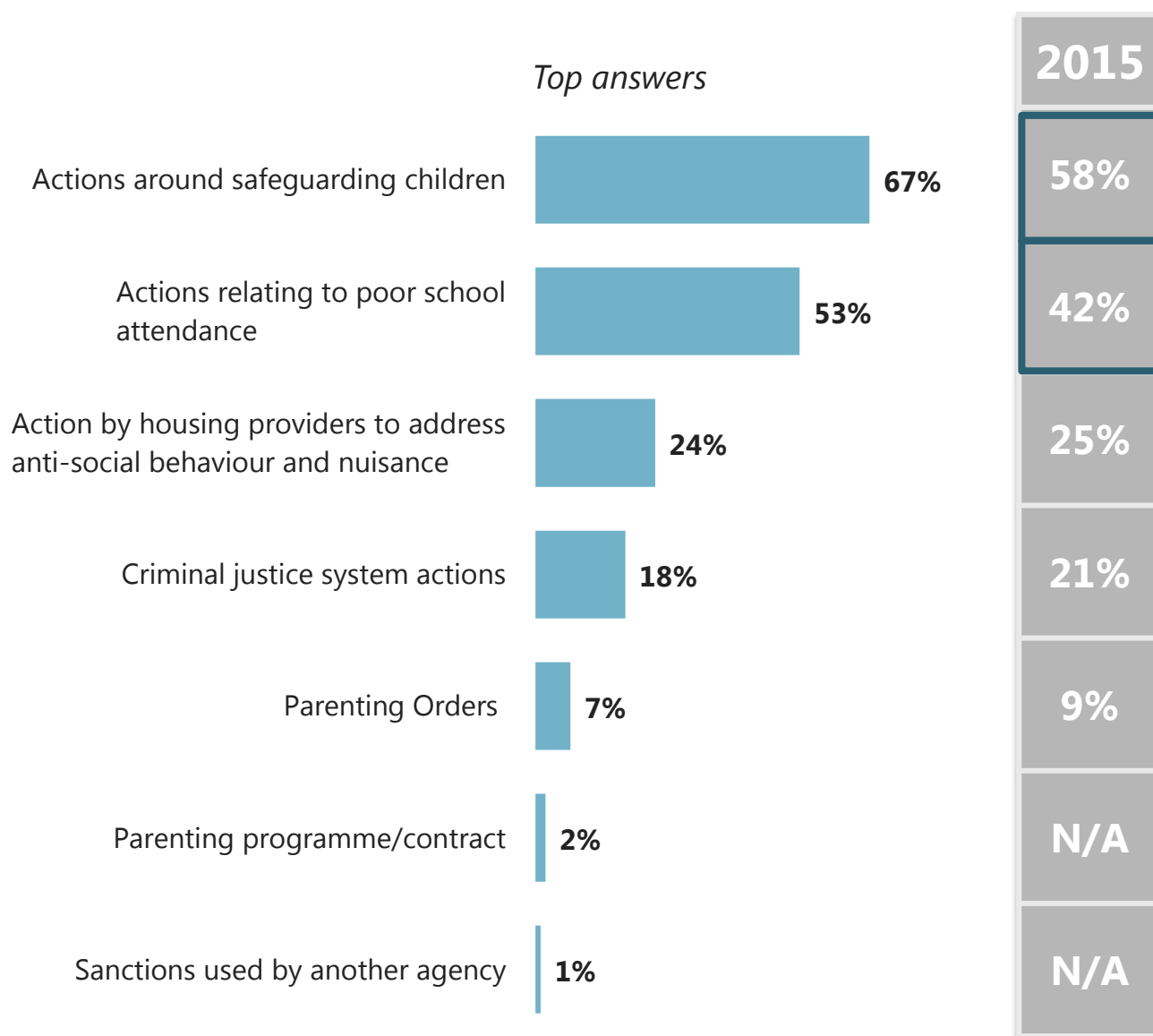
Top answers

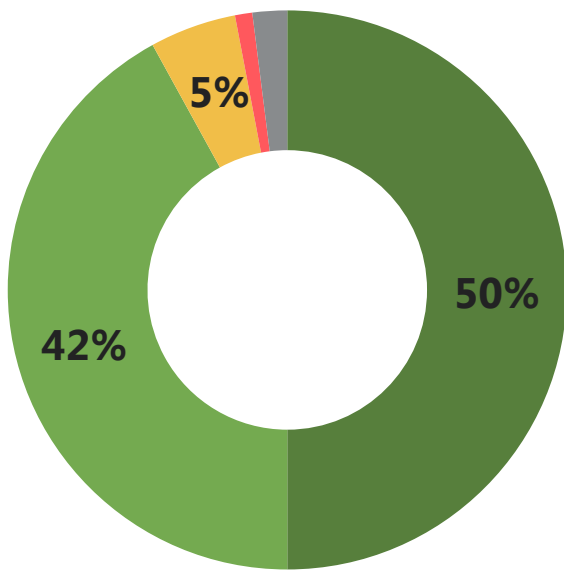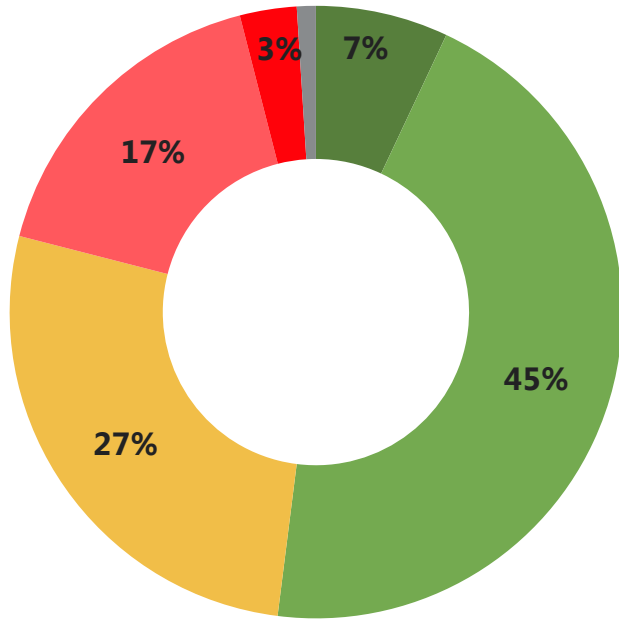|		2015
Actions around safeguarding children	67%	58%
Actions relating to poor school attendance	53%	42%
Action by housing providers to address anti-social behaviour and nuisance	24%	25%
Criminal justice system actions	18%	21%
Parenting Orders	7%	9%
Parenting programme/contract	2%	N/A
Sanctions used by another agency	1%	N/A

Department for Communities and Local Government

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Multi-agency working

Overall success

Working with partner services

Barriers to effective partnership working

Multi-agency working is seen as contributing substantially to the success of the programme

Almost all (96%) say multi-agency working contributes significantly to the success of the programme in their area, including 63% who say a great deal. While continuing to be very positive overall, there has been a fall in the proportion who say multi-agency working contributes *a great deal* since 2015. QKW12**
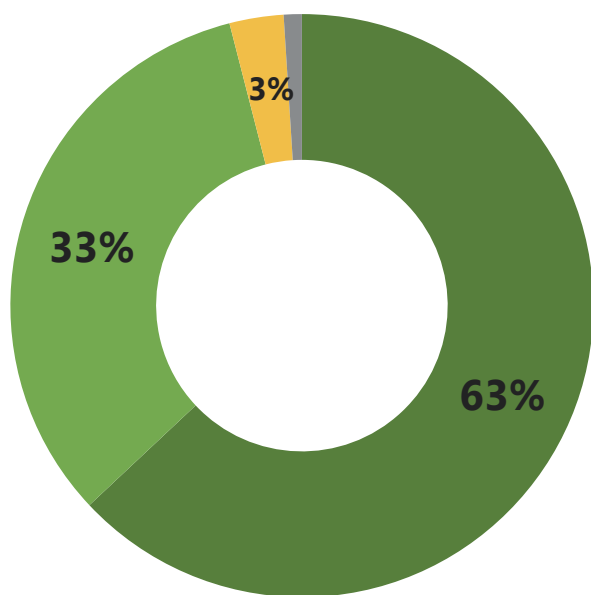
	2016	2015
A great deal	63%	68%
A fair amount	33%	28%

Legend: ■ A great deal ■ A fair amount ■ Not very much ■ Not at all ■ Don't know

Donut chart values: 63%, 33%, 3%

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Local programmes are seen to encourage input from partner agencies

Almost all (92%) feel that the local programme in their area encourages effective input from all partner agencies relevant to each case; with half (50%) saying a great deal. This is a decline from 2015. QKW2A**

50%

42%

5%

	2016	2015
A great deal	50%	56%
A fair amount	42%	38%

■ A great deal   ■ A fair amount   ■ Not very much   ■ Not at all   ■ Don't know

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While still positive, keyworkers find it more difficult to obtain support from partner organisations to deliver family solutions

While the value of multi-agency working is widely recognised, keyworkers are less positive about their ability to get the support they need from partner organisations. Overall, half (52%) say it is easy to get support to deliver solutions for families, though one in five (20%) admit to finding it difficult and three in ten (27%) feel unable to express a view.

Compared with 2015 more consider it difficult to get support this year (20% compared with 15% in 2015). QKW11**

7%
45%
27%
17%
3%

	2016	2015
Easy	52%	54%
Difficult	20%	15%

■ Very easy   ■ Fairly easy   ■ Neither   ■ Fairly difficult   ■ Very difficult   ■ Don't know

In 2015 keyworkers wanted more input from mental health services

In 2015 keyworkers regularly worked with a wide range of local services, but most commonly schools and those offering services to children, young people and families as well as mental health and housing services. The chart shows that keyworkers were mostly happy with the level of input received but clearly would have liked more engagement with mental health services as well as adult services and housing, albeit to a lesser extent.
QKW13 x QKW14**

*The quadrant in blue highlights the local services keyworkers work with most regularly **and** would like more input from.*

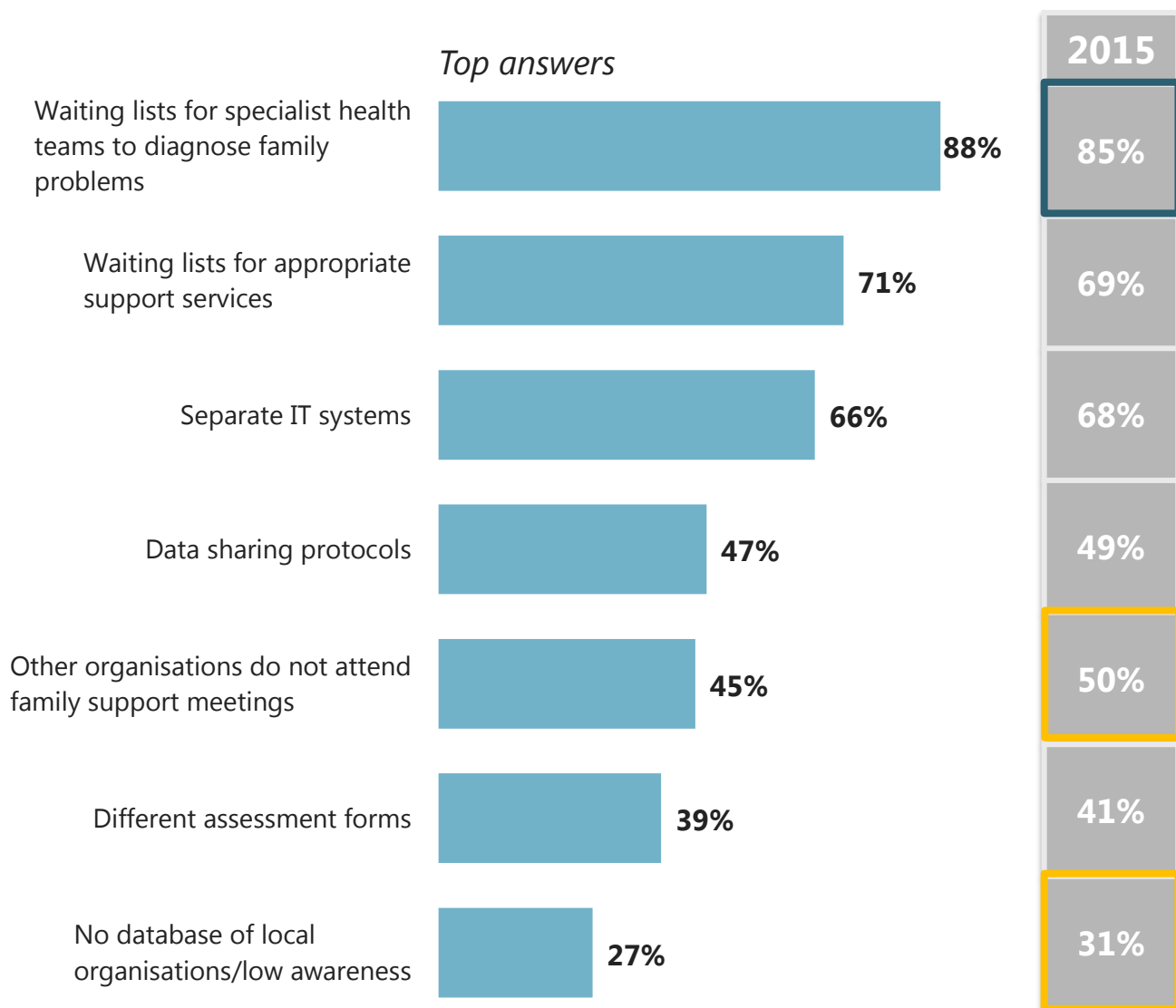Regularly work with (%)

Would like more input from (%)

Children, young people and families services
LA schools
Mental health services
Housing services
Academy schools
Employment support services
Substance misuse services
Other educational training services
Police
Youth support services
Youth justice services/probation
Adult services
Community safety
Fire services
Regeneration and economic development

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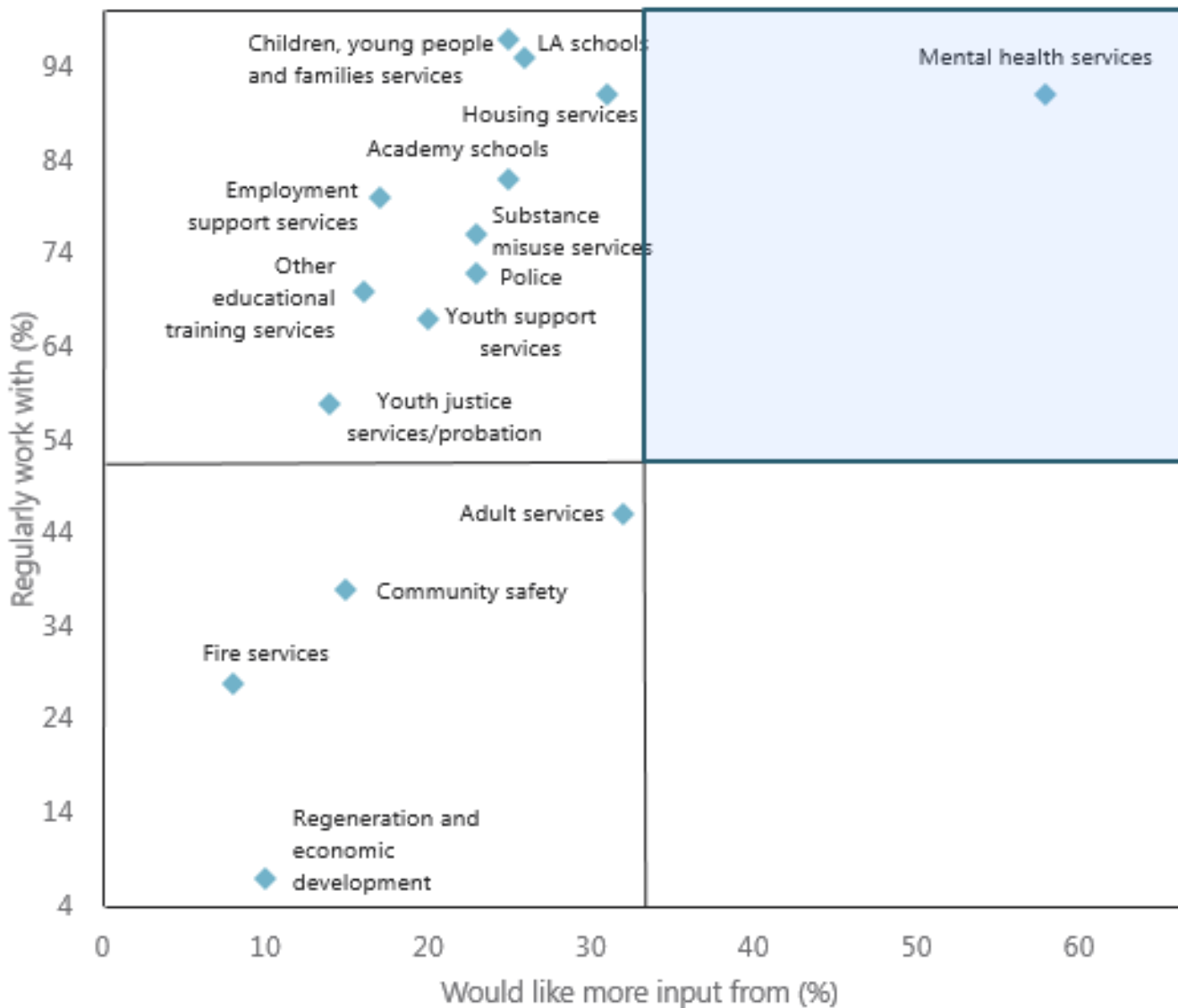
Department for Communities and Local Government

The pattern in terms of the services that keyworkers regularly work with and would like more input from is consistent with that found in 2015, as shown on the previous chart. They continue to be mostly happy with these relationships but again would like more input from mental health services in particular. QKW13 x QKW14**

The quadrant in blue highlights the local services keyworkers work with most regularly and would like more input from.
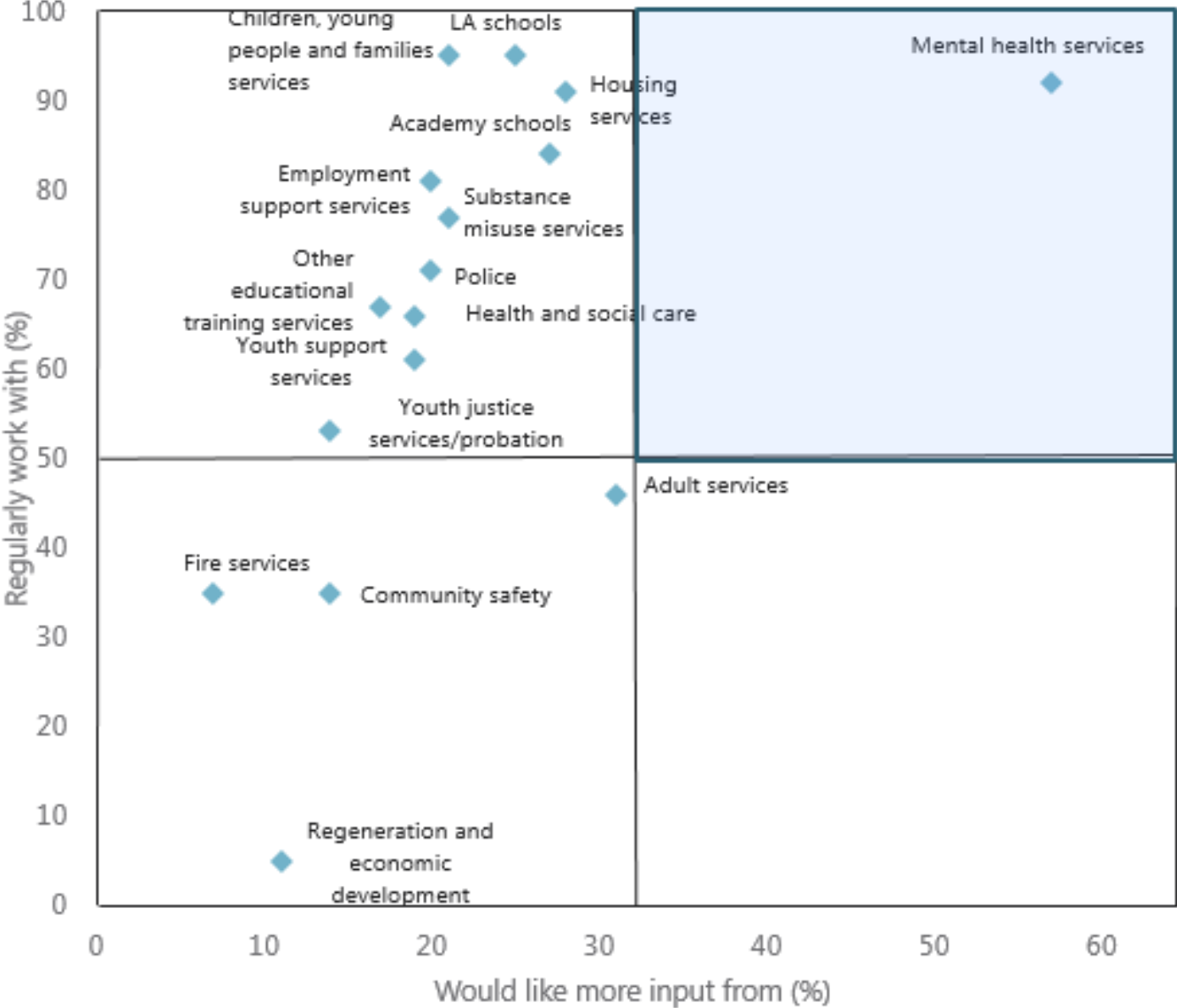
Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Waiting lists top barriers to effective partnership working

Waiting lists, specifically those for specialist health teams to diagnose family problems (e.g. Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) as well as for other support services, are singled out as the main barriers to effective partnership working enabling keyworkers to deliver solutions for families (88% and 71% respectively). Problems created by separate systems are also identified, including IT systems (66%), data sharing protocols (47%) and differing assessment forms (39%).

Compared with 2015, slightly more keyworkers view health-related waiting lists as a key barrier to effective partnerships. In 2016, fewer view the main barrier to be other organisations not attending family support meetings or lack of databases of local organisations. QKW15**

Top answers

	2016	2015
Waiting lists for specialist health teams to diagnose family problems	88%	85%
Waiting lists for appropriate support services	71%	69%
Separate IT systems	66%	68%
Data sharing protocols	47%	49%
Other organisations do not attend family support meetings	45%	50%
Different assessment forms	39%	41%
No database of local organisations/low awareness	27%	31%

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Workforce development
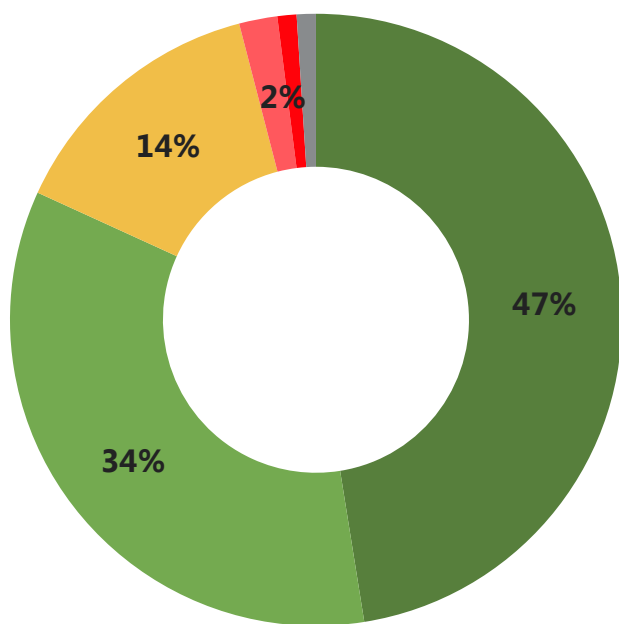
Development of keyworker skills

Training, support and supervision

Sharing good practice

Keyworkers have a strong appetite for skills development

Eight in ten keyworkers (81%) agree that they would like to develop their skills further to enable them to deliver effective services to families. Only three per cent disagree.
W2Q5KW**

81%

Agree

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know/ no opinion

Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

In 2015 keyworkers identified 'soft' skills as most important but keen to develop management techniques

In 2015, keyworkers identified 'soft' communication and relationship building skills as most important to delivering their role. However, they were mostly confident in these skills, which were not a focus for improvement. Instead they wanted to develop their management techniques, including time management, co-ordinating services and building a team around the family, as well as use of sanctions and incentives.   QKW17 x QKW18**

*The quadrant in blue highlights the skills keyworkers report as the most important **and** the skills they would most like to improve.*
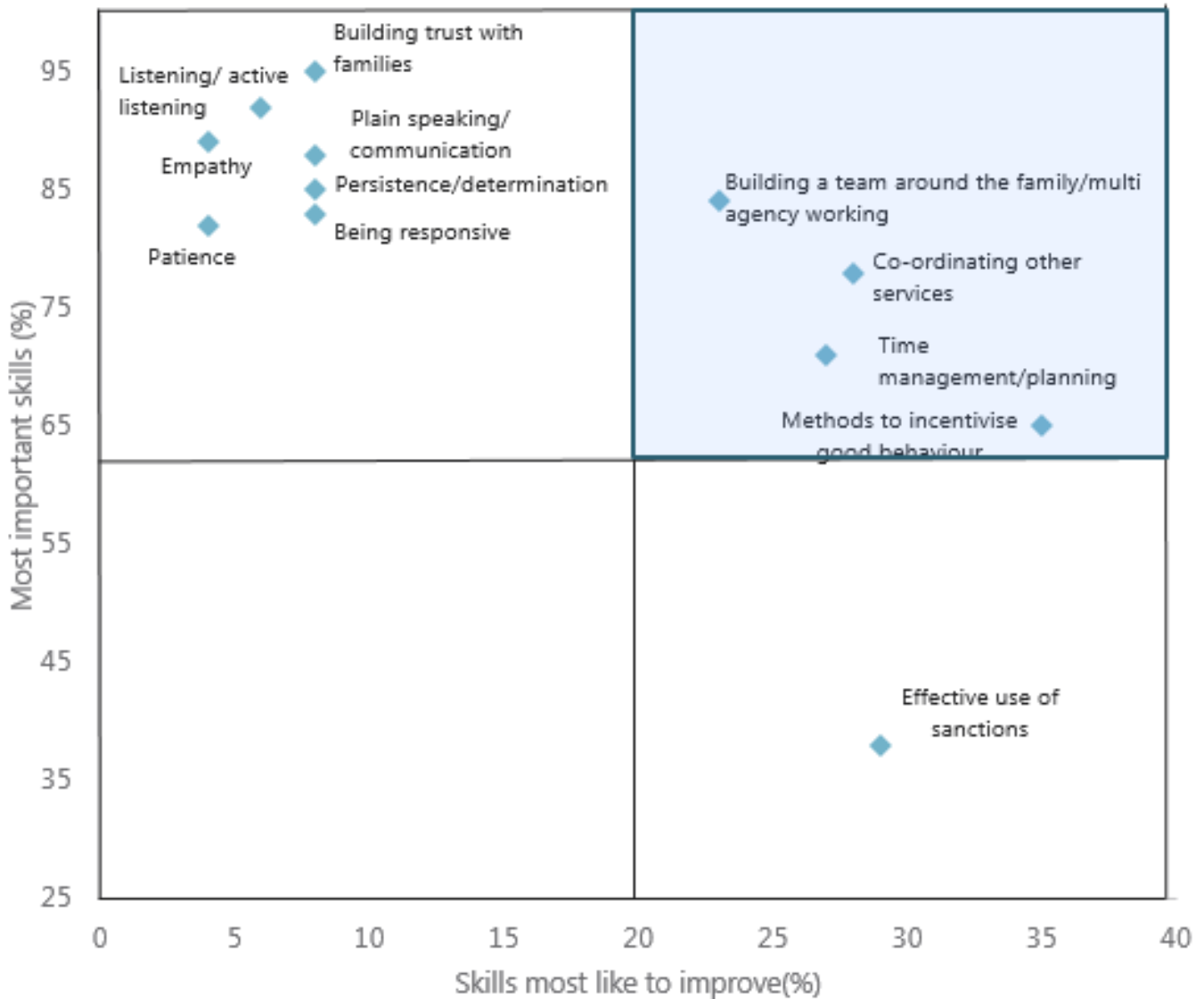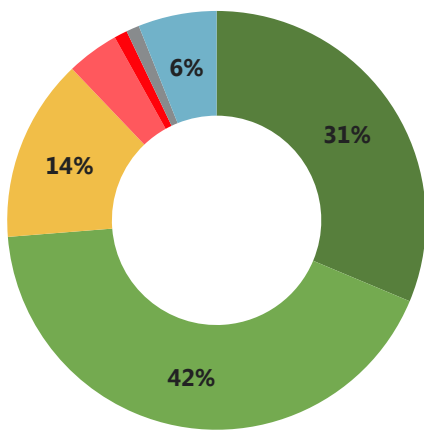

Base: All keyworkers (1,360): Fieldwork dates 26 October – 30 November 2015

Keyworkers continue to value 'soft' skills and want to develop management abilities

These 'soft' skills, relating to communication and relationship building, continue to be identified as most important to the delivery of the keyworker role in 2016. They also continue to be keen to develop their management skills, including building a team around the family, co-ordinating other services and time management as well as their ability to incentivise good behaviour. QKW17 x QKW18**

*The quadrant in blue highlights the skills keyworkers report as the most important **and** the skills they would most like to improve.*

Scatter plot with Y-axis "Most important skills (%)" ranging from 36 to 86 and X-axis "Skills most like to improve(%)" ranging from 0 to 40.

- Building trust with families
- Listening/ active listening
- Empathy
- Plain speaking/ communication
- Being responsive
- Patience
- Persistence/determination
- Building a team around the family/multi agency working
- Co-ordinating other services
- Time management/planning
- Methods to incentivise good behaviour
- Effective use of sanctions
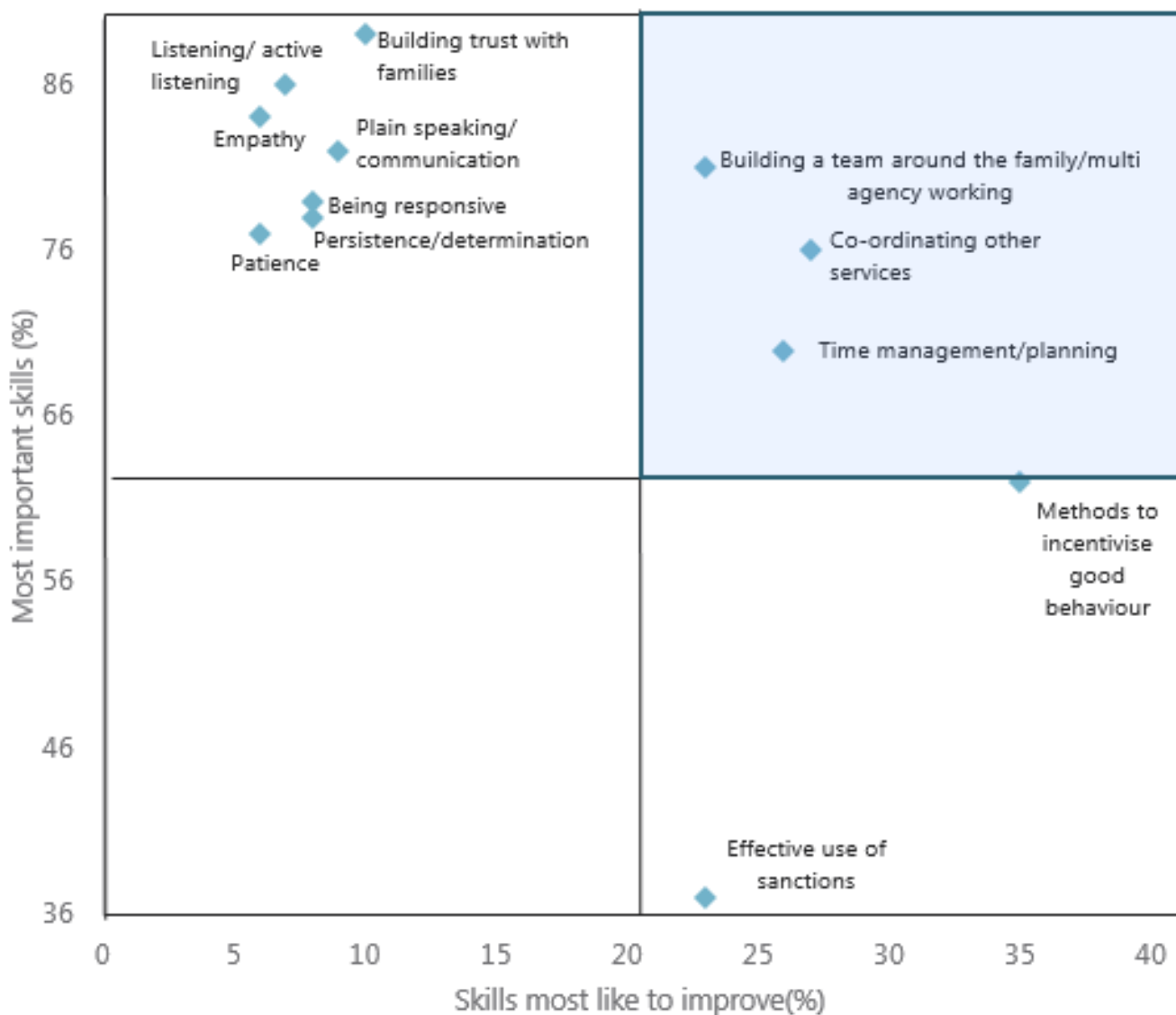
Base: All Keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016
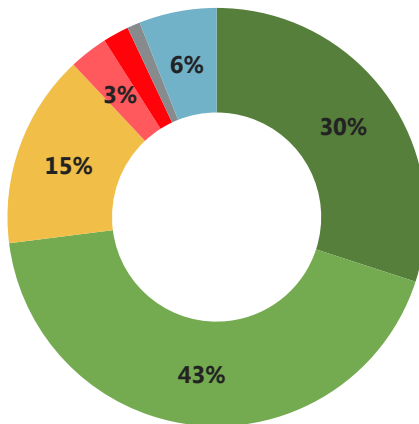
Keyworkers are positive about training but less so than in 2015

Keyworkers are positive about the training they receive; over seven in ten say the quality and relevance is good (both 73%) and slightly fewer (65%) say the amount offered is good. These findings are mostly consistent with 2015 but they are less likely to rate the quality of training as good. QKW19**
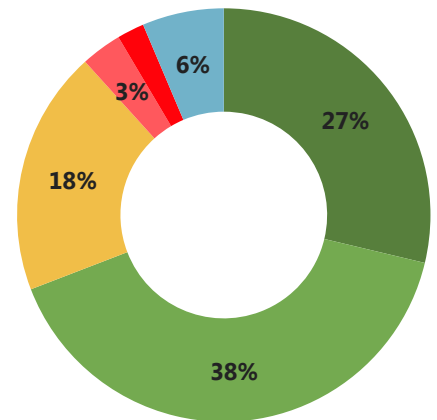
Legend:
- 🟢 Very good
- 🟩 Fairly good
- 🟨 Neither
- 🟥 Fairly poor
- 🔴 Very poor
- ⬛ Don't know/no opinion
- 🔵 No specific training

Quality of training
- 31% Very good
- 42% Fairly good
- 14% Neither
- 6% No specific training

Relevance of training
- 30% Very good
- 43% Fairly good
- 15% Neither
- 3% Very poor
- 6% No specific training

Amount of training
- 27% Very good
- 38% Fairly good
- 18% Neither
- 3% Very poor
- 6% No specific training

% Good

|	Quality of training	Relevance of training	Amount of training
2016	73%	73%	65%
2015	78%	75%	68%

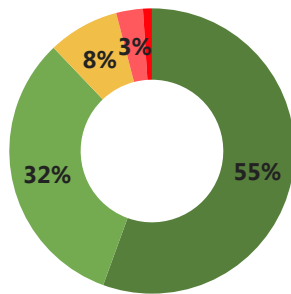Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Ratings for support and supervision remain high

Views on support and supervision are very positive, with at least four in five keyworkers agreeing that they know where to go for advice, have the freedom to act independently as well as having the right kind of supervision and are supported by their organisation. These findings are all similar to 2015. QKW20**
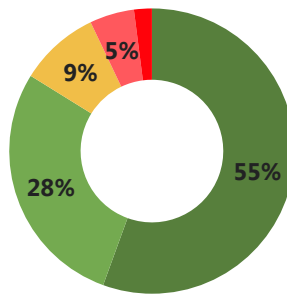
■ Strongly agree   ■ Tend to agree   ■ Neither   ■ Tend to disagree   ■ Strongly disagree
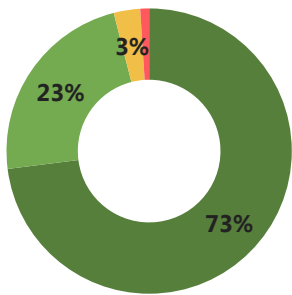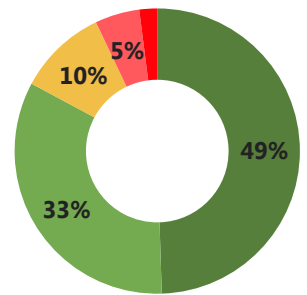
3% 23% 73%	8% 3% 32% 55%	5% 9% 28% 55%	5% 10% 33% 49%
If needed, you know who to speak to for advice in carrying out your role	**You have the freedom to act independently when you need to in your role**	**You have the right kind of supervision**	**You feel well supported by your organisation**

% Agree

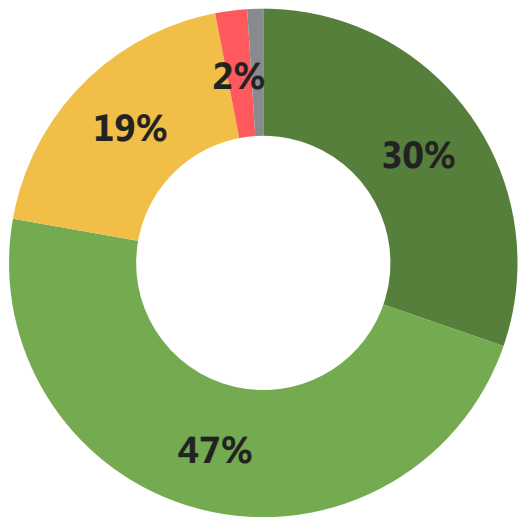|				
2016	**96%**	**87%**	**83%**	**82%**
2015	**96%**	**88%**	**82%**	**81%**

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Department for Communities and Local Government   Base: All keyworkers (1,274): Fieldwork dates 31 October – 09 December 2016

Opportunity to share good practice with partner agencies has increased

Over three quarters of keyworkers (77%) believe that they have a great deal or fair amount of opportunity to share and learn from good practice from partner agencies within their local authority. One in five (19%) believe that they are not making very much of this opportunity.

However, keyworkers are more positive about these opportunities to share good practice than in 2015 (previously 70%). QKW21**

	2016	2015
A great deal/ fair amount of opportunity	77%	70%

- ■ A great deal
- ■ A fair amount
- ■ Not much
- ■ Not at all
- ■ Don't know

Conclusions

Delivering the programme

Support for families

Areas for development

Delivering the Troubled Families Programme – the keyworker role

This is the **second annual survey of keyworkers** involved in delivering the Troubled Families Programme. The **results are mostly consistent** with those found previously – both in terms of the keyworker role and their views of the programme.

The keyworker role

Models of delivery are similar to 2015, with the majority of keyworkers **employed by a local authority** (87%), and half of these (50%) working within a **children, young people and families team**.

Keyworkers are **well qualified** (60% hold an NVQ4+) and are **mostly female** (82%). However, there is some evidence that those interviewed this year are less well qualified and have a broader spread of experience within their organisation than previously.

The average caseload for a keyworker is around 13 families. Overall, the **frequency of visits to these families has fallen**, although this difference is largely accounted for by fewer regular visits (i.e. at least once a week) to those they are working with least intensively. Frequency of visits to the most intensive families is unchanged.

Keyworkers remain involved in similar activities with families; with **direct engagement dominating their role**. This includes developing and delivering action plans as well as delivering support directly and undertaking whole family assessments. Making referrals to other local services also remains a key part of their role.

Much of the keyworker **role is focused on parenting interventions**, though a range of other types of support are also provided, including mental health, money management, housing and anti-social behaviour. These activities are similar to those identified in 2015, though keyworkers generally select fewer activities this year. **The focus on parenting also continues to be reflected in the actions keyworkers use to encourage behaviour change**, with those around safeguarding children and poor school attendance once again topping the list.

Almost all keyworkers (81%) are **keen to develop their current skills** to enable them to deliver effective services to families. However, they are **positive about the training received and feel well supported**, with the **right level of supervision** while also feeling they have the **freedom to act independently**.

Keyworkers continue to be positive about the Troubled Families Programme approach

Keyworkers' views of the programme

Keyworkers are supportive of the Troubled Families Programme approach: 78% say it is **effective at achieving long-term change in families' circumstances**. However, while positive, this level of support is actually lower than in 2015 (84%).

Keyworkers also remain **positive about how the programme engages with families** in their area; assessments and family action plans are largely thought to take account of the whole family and keyworkers feel they are recognised as families' first port of call.

Similarly, **early intervention continues to be recognised as a key focus for the programme** (89% say a great deal/fair amount compared with 87% in 2015). However, while 45% say support is offered to families at about the right time, **one in five (17%) say it is offered too early**.

Keyworkers feel that **multi-agency working directly contributes to the success of the programme**; 96% say it contributes to the effectiveness of the local programme and 92% that it encourages effective input from all agencies related to each case.

However, there is some evidence that keyworkers are **finding it more difficult to get the support they need from partners** when delivering solutions for families; 20% say it is difficult compared with 15% in 2015. Housing and particularly mental health stand out as the services they would like more input from.

This year keyworkers were asked more explicitly about **employment support**. The majority (81%) believe it is integrated within the programme at least a fair amount, but they **would like more information about how this type of support can help families** (74% agree).

Areas for development

The Troubled Families Programme aims to bring about change in the delivery and management of local services for families. Keyworkers continue to be positive about these changes, but as with the findings from 2015, the research does identify some persistent challenges.

Multi-agency working: keyworkers are positive about the multi-agency approach but there is evidence that working with partners is not always easy. In fact, more say that it is *difficult* to get support from partners than in 2015. However, the findings do suggest some notable improvements in this respect. For example, keyworkers are more positive about the opportunities to share and learn from good practice and fewer mention other organisations not attending family support meetings or that there are no databases of local organisations as top barriers to effective partnerships.

Improving relationships with health services: this was identified as a key issue in 2015 and continues to be a focus of concern. Keyworkers would like greater input from mental health services and also identify waiting lists for health teams as one of the main barriers to effective partnership working.

Keyworker training and development: keyworkers are keen to develop their skills to enable them to deliver effective services to families. They remain confident in the 'softer' skills required for their role and are keen to develop management techniques, such as time management/planning, the ability to co-ordinate other services and building a team around the family. They are also keen to develop their ability to use methods to incentivise good behaviour.

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