Longitudinal study of local authority child and family social workers (Wave 4)

Research report

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Introduction and background

In 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned a consortium led by IFF Research, working with social work academics at Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford, to conduct a longitudinal study tracking the careers of local authority child and family social workers in England. This landmark study aimed to collect robust evidence on recruitment, retention and progression in child and family social work by tracking individuals over a five-year period.

In Wave 1, 5,621 local authority child and family social workers in England took part in the survey, comprising of almost one in six of local authority child and family social workers in England.

This report covers the fourth year of the research (Wave 4), which involved:

- Online and Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) survey of 1,605 respondents who completed the Wave 3 survey and consented to be recontacted. People were still eligible to complete the survey if they had moved job or employer or were no longer working in social work. This represents a response rate of 66% of the starting sample.
- Online and CATI survey of 231 social workers doing their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), who started in this role between July 2020 and June 2021. The sample was generated through liaison with over 60 local authorities in England. It is not possible to provide a reliable response rate for this group because of how the survey was distributed, but the achieved number of interviews represents just under one in ten of the population of ASYE social workers in the qualifying time period.
- 40 follow-up qualitative telephone or video-conferencing interviews (e.g., via Microsoft Teams or Zoom) with front line workers and team managers; with a mixture of direct local authority employees and those working for agencies. The qualitative interviews included a spread of child and family social workers across the following broad ethnic groups: White British, Black/ Black British, Asian/ Asian British, Mixed, and 'other'.

Wave 4 continued the new questions added at Wave 3 about the impacts of Covid-19 on child and family social workers' workplace wellbeing, access to learning and development, flexible working, relationships with colleagues, and relationships with children, families and carers.

This report identifies areas where the Wave 4 findings are consistent or different to previous waves: only statistically significant differences (at the 95% confidence interval)

are discussed (unless otherwise specified). The report also identifies statistically significant differences between sub-groups, within Wave 4.

How many are still working in local authority child and family social work?

The majority (83%) of study respondents were still in local authority child and family social work (including agency) at Wave 4. This is significantly lower than Wave 3 (88%) and Wave 1 (98%). Movement out of local authority child and family social work over time is expected within the sample given that the starting sample at Wave 1 was collected from local authorities, meaning almost everyone was working in local authority child and family social work at Wave 1. Non-responder analysis found minor demographic and attitudinal differences among those who did not take part in Wave 4, but there was no significant difference by employment status.

Of those who were in local authority child and family social work at Wave 1, 82% remained so at Wave 4; this can be broken down into 69% working directly for a local authority, 13% for an agency.

Around one in six (17%) were no longer working in local authority child and family social work by Wave 4, this is a significant increase from Wave 3 (12%). The most common destinations were to be still working in child and family social work but not at a local authority (8%) or to have become inactive in the labour market because of retirement (4%).

One in four (26%) had moved to a higher job grade between Wave 1 and Wave 4. At Wave 4, one in six (18%) said they had been promoted in the past 12 months.

Ten per cent of respondents had moved from local authority direct employment into agency work since the beginning of the study. Pay was the most commonly cited factor for moving into agency work or self-employment for all agency workers at Wave 4, cited by 44% as a contributing factor and 27% as the main factor.

One in eight (13%) had moved to a different local authority between Wave 3 and Wave 4. The most commonly cited single reason for moving to work in a different local authority to the previous wave was a dislike of the working culture[1] at the previous local authority (mentioned by 40% as a contributing factor, and 22% as the main factor), followed by too high a workload, and relocation.

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[1] By 'working culture', social workers were typically referring to the specific working culture at their previous authority, rather than in local authority child and family social work more broadly and were often considering the culture within their specific teams.

Workplace well-being

Overall, three-quarters (74%) of social workers reported working more than their contracted hours either 'all the time' or 'most weeks' to keep up with their workload, consistent with Wave 3.

The mean number of cases reported by those in case holding roles was 18 (19 for case holding full-time workers and 15 for case holding part-time workers). Again, this was in line with Wave 3.

Around three in five social workers agreed they feel stressed by their job (62%), their workload is too high (59%), and they are asked to fulfil too many roles in their job (61%) – the latter represents a significant increase compared with Wave 3. All of these measures have increased since Wave 1.

Three-quarters felt that complexity of cases (76%), had increased as a result of Covid-19, significantly more than in Wave 3. Over two-thirds of social workers also considered that anxiety (67%), workloads (73%) and work-related stress (73%) had increased as a result of the consequences of Covid-19.

The majority of social workers (61%) continued to feel that relationships with colleagues had worsened as a result of Covid-19, particularly among front line practitioners. There was a more balanced picture in terms of impacts on relationships with children and families: while 36% felt these had worsened due to Covid-19, 43% felt it had no impact. This is an improvement on the balance of responses at Wave 3.

Views on employer, line manager and working environment

Compared with Wave 3, feelings of loyalty to their employer (68% compared with 74%) and feeling valued by their employer (56% compared with 61%) have both declined. These measures increased in Waves 2 and 3 before falling back in the most recent wave. **There has also been a fall in the proportion of social workers who felt they received regular feedback on their performance,** at 65% in Wave 4 compared with 70% in Wave 3 and 69% in Wave 1. Otherwise views about whether managers were considerate of life outside of work (77%) and encouraged skills development (73%) have largely remained consistent with Wave 3. The proportion who agreed their manager encouraged them to develop skills has fallen in Wave 4 compared with Wave 1 (73% compared with 76%).

Around two-thirds (69%) felt that they have been well supported by their manager during the Covid-19 pandemic, with views on how the pandemic has impacted support from management being mixed; 38% thought there had been no impact, 32% that the support had worsened and 29% that it had improved.

Agreement amongst social workers that they have the right tools and IT resources to do their jobs has fallen compared to Wave 3. Two-thirds (68%) agreed that they had the right tools for their jobs (down from 76%) and only a half (51%) agreed that the IT systems and software support them to do their job (down from 57%). **Overall, over six in ten (63%) thought that the Covid-19 pandemic had negatively impacted the resources available to support children and families.**

Although most social workers (64%) said they continue to receive reflective supervision at least every five or six weeks, a substantial minority said they did not. Most (75%) who reported receiving reflective supervision rated the quality of it as good. Poor ratings are driven primarily by a sense that is not reflective, and instead the sessions are more akin to being managerial / monitoring progress sessions.

Over nine in ten social workers (92%) said they had received employer-supported Continuing Professional development (CPD) or learning and development over the preceding 12 months. This was the same proportion as in Wave 3, which had seen an increase since Wave 2 (89%)[2]. The majority (67%) agreed that they were able to access the right learning and development opportunities when they needed to, and this was in line with previous waves (69% in each wave).

Job satisfaction

Most social workers (68%) in Wave 4 found their job satisfying overall; however, this was a significant decrease from 72% in Wave 3 and compared with preceding waves.

There were two aspects where levels of satisfaction have decreased – sense of achievement and skills development. In Wave 4, just over three quarters (73%) were satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work; down from 83% in Wave 1. Two thirds (66%) were satisfied with the opportunity to develop their skills in their job; lower than in Wave 3 (68%), Wave 2 (71%) or Wave 1 (72%).

Satisfaction with the amount of pay they receive has decreased in Wave 4 (56%) compared with Wave 3 (61%) but represents an overall increase from 49% in Wave 1.

In contrast, satisfaction levels with job security have remained fairly consistent (84% in Wave 4, 85% in Wave 3) after initially increasing from 75% in Wave 1.

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[2] While it is a regulatory requirement for social workers to do CPD, employers are not required to provide it directly – they are expected to provide dedicated time, resources, opportunities and support for social workers they employ to carry out CPD and record their learning. Agency workers often have to make their own arrangements.

Social workers continued to be most likely to feel their career progression was in line with their expectations (54%), with more reporting it was below (20%) than above expectations (13%), broadly consistent with Wave 3.

Short-term career plans

The majority (81%) of local authority child and family social workers (including agency workers) expected to remain in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time – 70% expected to be employed directly by a local authority and 11% to be working via an agency. Only two per cent expected to be working outside of social work altogether. This is consistent with previous waves.

Overall, a third (34%) of respondents reported that their career plans had been influenced by their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Of these, one in five (21%) said they had decided to leave child and family social work and move into a different area of the profession, and one in six (17%) said they had decided to leave social work altogether. Among those who said they planned to move to a different area of social work as a result of their experiences during Covid at Wave 4, 43% had already done so, as had 49% of those who had decided to leave social work altogether.

The most commonly cited main reason given by those who were considering leaving child and family social work was retirement (22%), followed by dislike of the working culture of local authority social work (17%), the high caseload (12%) and personal reasons e.g., health (7%). When individual factors related to overwork are combined, such as high caseload, working hours and volume of paperwork, this is the most common main reason (26%).

The main factor that would encourage child and family social workers who were thinking of leaving the profession to stay was a more manageable caseload (20%), followed by a better working culture (12%), higher pay (8%), and a more manageable workload in terms of less paperwork (7%).

Reasons for leaving and potential influences on coming back

Among respondents who had left the child and family social work profession but were still active in the labour market, the **most common reason for leaving, cited by just under three in ten (28%) was that they did not like the working culture of local authority social work.**

The majority of those who had left child and family social work had taken the decision to leave the profession permanently and only a minority were intending to return to the profession. A quarter (26%) of these respondents reported it was likely they would return to the profession within five years' time, whilst just under three-quarters (74%) of respondents thought it was not likely.

When those who had left child and family social work were asked what might encourage them to return to the profession, three in ten (30%) said that 'nothing' would. Almost a quarter felt a more manageable workload in terms of caseload was the primary factor that might encourage them back, while just over one in ten (12%) reported a better working culture.

ASYE entrants

The profile of new ASYE entrants at Wave 4 was very similar to ASYEs in previous waves, with few demographic differences. However, compared with Wave 3 there has been a fall in the proportion of ASYE social workers that responded to the survey who were 'White', with a significant fall since Wave 1 (down 13 percentage points, from 79% in Wave 1 to 66% in Wave 4).

Across the survey waves, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of ASYE social workers who feel that they are being asked to fulfil too many different roles, rising from 38% agreement in Wave 1 up to 51% agreement in Wave 4. The proportion who felt stressed by their job (63%) or that their workload is too high (44%) has seen no significant change compared with previous waves.

Looking at all reasons mentioned for feeling stressed by their job, the top two were intertwined - with three-quarters (77%) saying it was because they had too much paperwork, and 58% saying they had insufficient time for direct work with children and families.

ASYEs in Wave 4 were less satisfied with their jobs overall than those in Wave 3 (71% compared with 79%) but were not significantly different to Waves 1 and 2.

While the majority (78%) of ASYEs (including agency workers) planned to still be working in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time, this is a decrease on the previous three waves. When combined, compared with previous waves, more Wave 4 ASYEs said they planned to be working in other types of social work, either in child and family social work but not direct for a local authority, or in a different form of social work (17% overall, compared with 14% in Wave 3).

Conclusions

As in previous waves, Wave 4 of the study has revealed changes in jobs and work status, and some attitudes, but this time overall job satisfaction is declining compared with previous waves. In particular, this wave has started to shed light on retirement, and decisions about early retirement in particular, which will be important to follow up in the final wave as the survey sample continues to get older. Most retirees at Wave 4 (75%) said they had taken early retirement and the main reason for this was because of work pressure.

Despite having come out of lockdowns at the time of the survey (Autumn 2021), the impacts of Covid-19 on social workers' experiences are still challenging in terms of increased feelings of stress and anxiety, more complex cases, and depleted relationships with colleagues and to a lesser extent, service users. Although views have improved compared with Wave 3 (Autumn 2020), the impact of Covid-19 on worsening relationships with colleagues, reported by over half of social workers, remains potentially concerning given the importance of these relationships as a protective factor in boosting resilience. Feelings of stress and having too high a workload have increased over time although are not significantly higher in Wave 4 compared with Wave 3.

Despite this, the majority of those in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4 plan to continue working in the profession. Among those considering leaving child and family social work in the next 12 months, the most common main reason related to overwork (a combination of high caseload, working hours, volume of paperwork and incompatibility with family or relationships), followed by retirement and dislike of the working culture in local authority social work.

These have all been the most common factors in previous waves, suggesting they are the areas which need most focus if more child and family social workers are to be encouraged to stay in (or return to) the profession. Indeed the survey found that the main factor that would encourage child and family social workers who were thinking of leaving the profession to stay was a more manageable caseload, followed by a better (more supportive) working culture, higher pay, and less paperwork.

1. Introduction

In 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) commissioned a consortium led by IFF Research, working with social work academics at Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford, to conduct a landmark new longitudinal study tracking the careers of a cohort of individual local authority child and family social workers over five years. The study therefore provides a unique opportunity to explore not only changes over time at aggregate level, but how individuals' career paths and attitudes may change, and what influences these, over time.

This report covers the fourth year (Wave 4) of the survey and follow-up qualitative research. It sets out social workers' current employment situations and their views on a range of issues including job satisfaction and career progression, career plans for the next 12 months and perceptions about the continuing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the profession. Findings from Wave 4 of the survey are compared to Wave 1 and Wave 3 findings throughout this report. There is also some longitudinal analysis which looks at changes among individuals across the four waves.

The Wave 4 survey was conducted between September and December 2021 and the qualitative research in January and February 2022, while the after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic remained ongoing and the working (and personal) lives of many child and family social workers were still different to what they had been pre-pandemic. Some specific questions were added at Wave 3 to measure the impact of the pandemic, which are repeated at Wave 4, but – more broadly - it is important to consider all results from the fourth wave of the survey within this context.

In this chapter we set out the background to this research and summarise its aims and objectives. We then provide an outline of the methodology for Wave 4 of the study, before discussing the structure of the report.

Background

The latest Department for Education (DfE) child and family social work workforce data[3] shows there were 32,500 full-time equivalent (FTE) child and family social workers employed by local authorities (LAs) on 30 September 2021. Agency workers made up 15.5% of the workforce, in line with the previous year. The staff turnover rate was 15.4% (based on FTEs), up from 13.5% the previous year. The number of reported vacancies was 6,500 (FTEs), more than the previous year (6,100). The national vacancy rate of

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[3] Children's social work workforce data 2021

16.7% (based on FTEs) has increased since last year and is the highest since 2017, when these statistics were first collected. The DfE workforce statistics[4] indicate that 69% of (FTE) children and family social workers leaving a local authority within the reference year had been in service in their local authority for less than five years (similar to the previous year). This includes people who have stayed in social work, but moved to work for a different LA.

Aims and objectives

The aim of this landmark longitudinal study is to collect robust evidence on recruitment, retention and progression in child and family social work. In particular it aims to establish a much stronger understanding of recruitment issues, career pathways, choices and decisions and how these differ according to demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity), different entry routes, roles and responsibilities, region, LA performance and local labour markets.

Within this, the specific study objectives are to:

- explore what attracted respondents to child and family social work and how they feel their training path (and ASYE) have prepared them for this career;

- investigate career aspirations, change over time and between different roles;

- distinguish how the experience of performance management and continuing professional development (CPD) affect retention and progression;

- identify specific issues facing particular demographic groups (e.g., people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, those with caring responsibilities; those with a physical or mental health condition;

- explore whether these issues are similar across different roles and practice areas within children's services;

- understand pull and push factors that influence social workers remaining in post, moving within children's services or leaving the profession;

- find out where social workers go when they leave and why; and

- understand the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the profession.

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[4] Children's social work workforce data 2021

For the purposes of the study, a child and family social worker is defined as a qualified social worker registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) or Social Work England (SWE), working in a local authority or Children's Trust[5], in a children's services department or (if working in an authority where the services are joined up) a social worker that works exclusively on children and families work. This includes social workers regardless of their position in the organisation, i.e., at all levels of seniority and in all relevant areas of practice. Agency social workers employed in local authorities and social workers on secondment to Regional Adoption Agencies are also included within the scope of the research.

Methodology

Wave 4 of the study comprised two components:

1. A longitudinal mixed-methods online and telephone survey of child and family social workers. The fourth wave, conducted between September and December 2021, comprised two surveys:

    - Wave 4 longitudinal survey: all respondents who completed the Wave 3 survey and consented to be recontacted for the next wave were invited to complete this survey, where contact details were held. People were still eligible to complete the survey if they had moved job or employer or were no longer working in social work. This survey allows the experiences of the cohort to be tracked as they move through their careers. This means that changes observed between waves may be attributable to career movement and changes to career plans and therefore are not intended to reflect the current state of the child and family social workforce at the time. Those who completed the ASYE survey in Wave 3 and agreed to recontact were added to the sample for the Wave 4 longitudinal survey. This means that the sample at Wave 4 includes those who were on an ASYE in Wave 1, Wave 2 or Wave 3. Wave 4 ASYEs were given the ASYE survey (see below bullet) and analysed separately to the main sample.

    - ASYE survey: this survey consisted of social workers doing their ASYE, who started in this role between October 2020 and June 2021. This window was specified to avoid picking up ASYE social workers who had already completed Wave 3 of the survey.

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[5] Where we refer to local authorities in the remainder of this report this includes Children's Trusts.

2. Forty follow-up qualitative telephone or video-conferencing interviews (e.g., via Microsoft Teams or Zoom) were conducted with front line workers and team managers; with a mixture of those still in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4 (defined as those who indicated that they planned to stay in local authority child and family social work over the next 12 months) and those working for agencies. The sample for the qualitative interviews included ten agency workers, in order to explore the 'pull' and 'push' factors contributing to decisions about agency employment. More broadly, to reflect DfE policy interest in the experiences of child and family social workers from different ethnicities, the qualitative sample included a spread of child and family social workers across the following broad ethnic groups: White British, Black/ Black British, Asian/ Asian British, Mixed, and 'other'.

Sample building

In order to build the original starting sample of local authority child and family social workers, in summer 2018, prior to the first wave of the survey, IFF wrote to Directors of Children's Services in all 152 local authorities / Children's Trusts in England to invite them to take part in the research. Ninety-five agreed to participate in the study. This accounted for approximately two-thirds of all local authorities / Trusts in England, providing a good spread by region and Ofsted rating (see Tables 1.2 and 1.3 for a detailed breakdown of completes at Wave 4).

Local authorities took part either by providing a census of their in-scope staff work email addresses, and in some cases work telephone numbers (via a secure transfer site), or by sending out an open link to their in-scope staff on our behalf. Where sample was provided direct to IFF it was possible to send an individualised survey link, targeted reminders, and (where a work phone number was provided) to conduct a final top-up survey using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Where the survey was conducted using an open link, the relevant local authorities were asked to send out reminders to staff, but these could not be targeted at non-responders and therefore were less frequent. Respondents to the Wave 4 survey comprised social workers who were recruited through this method, who completed the Wave 3 survey and consented to being contacted to take part in the next wave of the survey. These respondents received a similar, but shorter survey to the one completed in Wave 1, as with previous waves. Questions about current situation, experiences and career plans were repeated in Wave 4, but other questions, such as entry routes into the profession, were removed as there was no need to ask these again. In Wave 4, the new questions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic which had been added at Wave 3 were repeated, to aid in understanding the continuing impacts of the pandemic on the profession.

To ensure that the study continues to represent new entrants to the profession, a supplementary sample of social workers doing their ASYE is being collected at each

wave. A similar sample-building exercise as the one conducted for Wave 1 of the main sample was carried out with local authorities at Wave 4 to build a supplementary sample of ASYE social workers, who received a survey very similar to the Wave 1 questionnaire.

At each wave, those who completed the ASYE survey the previous year and agreed to recontact are added to the previous survey sample and invited to take part in that wave's survey. For example, those who completed the ASYE survey at Wave 4 and agreed to recontact will be added to the main sample at Wave 5 and invited to take the Wave 5 survey.

Response rates

The sample outcomes and response rates for Wave 4, and for the ASYE supplementary survey, are shown in the tables overleaf. The overall response rate for the Wave 4 follow-up survey was 66% of Wave 3 respondents who agreed to be recontacted, across both online and telephone modes (including respondents from the Wave 3 ASYE survey who agreed to recontact). For the Wave 4 ASYE survey, the response rate for those with useable direct contact details was 22%. It is not possible to calculate the response rate for respondents who completed through the open link as not all local authorities provided ASYE population data. The response rate and recontact rates across all four waves of the main survey are displayed in Table 1.1 below.

More detailed information on the methodology is contained within the Technical Annex.

Table 1.1 Response rates and recontact rates (Wave 1 - Wave 4)

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4
Starting sample	21,000	4,597	3,347	2,435
Online (n)	4,177	1,701	1,284	1,017
Online response rate (RR)	20%	38%	38%	42%
Telephone top-up	1,411	1,601	956	588
Total response	**5,588**	**3,302**	**2,240**	**1,605**
% agreeing to recontact	82%	95%	98%	96%
Overall RR (as % of starting sample at each wave)	**27%**	**72%**	**67%**	**66%**

Table 1.2 Responses by local authority region and Ofsted rating (Wave 4 survey)

		Online [valid emails provided] n	Online [valid emails provided] %	Telephone [approached via telephone] n	Telephone [approached via telephone] %	Total response [Online and telephone] n	Total response [Online and telephone] %
	Overall	**1,043**	**44%**	**562**	**44%**	**1,605**	**66%**
Region	North East	90	49%	47	53%	137	72%
	North West	77	38%	52	38%	129	56%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	78	48%	38	46%	116	69%
	East Midlands	101	48%	64	59%	165	78%
	West Midlands	92	51%	43	36%	135	64%
	East of England	139	47%	78	47%	217	65%
	South East	170	48%	89	41%	259	64%
	South West	111	52%	39	40%	150	69%
	Greater London	185	43%	112	44%	297	67%
Ofsted	Outstanding	185	45%	102	47%	287	68%
	Good	392	46%	196	45%	588	69%
	Requires improvement	326	43%	191	46%	517	67%
	Inadequate	140	38%	73	36%	213	57%

Table 1.3 Response by local authority region and Ofsted rating (ASYE survey)

		Sampled responses: Online [valid emails provided] n	Sampled responses Online [valid emails provided] %	Sampled responses Telephone [approached via telephone] N	Sampled responses Telephone [approached via telephone] %	Total sampled response [Online and telephone] n	Total sampled response [as % of starting sample]	Open-link responses Online	Sampled & open link TOTAL Total ASYE responses
Overall		**99**	**20%**	**20**	**11%**	**119**	**22%**	**112**	**231**
Region	North East	4	13%	1	8%	5	16%	8	**13**
	North West	9	16%	0	0%	9	15%	21	**30**
	Yorkshire and the Humber	19	25%	4	13%	23	25%	13	**36**
	East Midlands	3	17%	0	0%	3	17%	15	**18**
	West Midlands	10	12%	9	16%	19	23%	5	**24**
	East of England	14	21%	0	0%	14	21%	6	**20**
	South East	11	34%	0	0%	11	34%	25	**36**
	South West	7	17%	0	0%	7	17%	8	**15**
	Greater London	22	22%	6	16%	28	26%	11	**39**
Ofsted	Outstanding	7	24%	0	0%	7	22%	11	**18**
	Good	31	20%	3	5%	34	20%	45	**79**
	Requires improvement	40	19%	13	13%	53	25%	48	**101**
	Inadequate	21	19%	4	15%	25	23%	8	**33**

Sample characteristics and weighting

The profile of the Wave 4 participants was largely in line with both previous waves, which in turn was similar to the population statistics in the DfE workforce data collection. Table A.10 in the technical appendix gives a full breakdown of achieved sample in Wave 4 compared with 2018 workforce population statistics. The data is weighted back to the 2018 workforce population statistics, that being the year the study began; as the study is tracking the same group of social workers over time, the data is weighted to the population profile at the point in time the sample was collected. As with previous waves, it was weighted to correct for minor differences in whether or not the social worker was directly employed by their local authority or employed through an agency, and by region. In Wave 4, the sample was also weighted by ethnicity as there was a dip in the response rate from Black/ Black British child and family social workers this wave compared with previous waves (see the technical appendix for further detail).

While there was some variation in Ofsted rating between the achieved profile and the population figures, weighting was not applied by Ofsted rating as this is a fluid, frequently changing measure.

The ASYE data were compared with profile data provided by Skills for Care and weighted by ethnicity to correct for under-representation among Black/ Black British and Asian/ Asian British ASYE social workers.

Wave 4 non-responders

Of the 5,621 respondents who completed the Wave 1 survey, 2,319 (41%) did not participate in the research at Wave 2. Of the 3,302 respondents who completed the Wave 2 survey, 1,178 (36%) did not participate at Wave 3. Of the 2,240 respondents who completed the Wave 3 survey, 756 (34%) did not participate at Wave 4. This means that of the original 5,621 respondents who participated at Wave 1, 4,212 (75%) did not participate in the research at Wave 4.

Comparing unweighted figures, the demographic characteristics of Wave 4 non-responders were fairly similar to the Wave 4 responders. However, as with Wave 3, non-responders at Wave 4 were slightly more likely to be Black / Black British (12% compared with 6% of Wave 3 responders) and less likely to be White (77% compared with 81%). Non-responders were also more likely to be male (18% compared with 15%) and less likely to be female (81% compared with 85%). There was no significant variation in employment situation between the two groups. Attitudes of Wave 4 responders and non-responders differed for some measures, although non-responders were not always more negative about their working lives. Further details are provided in Table A.14 of the Appendix.

The structure of this report

The rest of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 looks at the **profile of who is still working in local authority child and family social work**, the extent of job moves between different LAs, and the extent of moves out of LA child and family social work into other roles either within social work or outside the profession altogether;

- Chapter 3 focuses on child and family social workers' **working hours, caseloads and workplace wellbeing** including the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 on workplace wellbeing;

- Chapter 4 details child and family social workers' **views on their employer, line manager, and working environment** including the ongoing impacts of COVID-19;

- Chapter 5 explores **job satisfaction and career progression** in child and family social work;

- Chapter 6 focuses on child and family social workers' **short-term career plans and what influences these**, why people are considering leaving and potential influences on remaining in the profession;

- Chapter 7 looks at child and family social workers' **reasons for leaving social work and what influenced this decision**, among those who left the profession between Wave 3 and Wave 4;

- Chapter 8 focuses on the **experiences of current ASYEs**, comparing their views with those of ASYEs in previous waves;

- Chapter 9 focuses on the **influence of qualification route on** ASYEs' **experiences in their first year**, merging the samples from Waves 1 to 4; and

- Chapter 10 focuses on findings from the **qualitative interviews** with social workers, with a particular emphasis on the **impacts of ethnicity and/or cultural identity** on multiple aspects of social worker's experiences, and;

- Chapter 11 highlights the **key conclusions** from this wave of the study.

Throughout the report, the data are reported by topic area and theme, making it clear which findings are based on the survey and which are drawn from the qualitative research. Only statistically significant findings (at the 95% confidence interval) are referred to when discussing the survey, unless otherwise specified. Data labels in charts accompanied by an asterisk ("*") indicate a statistically significant difference between

Wave 3 and Wave 4, while a double asterisk ("**") indicates a statistically significant difference between Wave 1 and Wave 4.

2. Who is still working in local authority child and family social work?

This chapter explores the employment situation of child and family social workers at Wave 4, compared with the previous waves of the study. It examines the employment status of those working in child and family social work (including movement from direct employment to agency work and vice versa) as well as those who have moved out of the profession. The chapter begins with a brief summary of the profile of child and family social workers participating in Wave 4 of the study.

Chapter highlights

- The majority (83%) of respondents were still in local authority child and family social work (including agency) at Wave 4. This is significantly lower than at Wave 3 (88%), Wave 2 (94%) and at Wave 1 (98%). Movement out of local authority child and family social work over time is expected within the sample over time.

- Of those who were in local authority child and family social work at Wave 1, 82% remained so at Wave 4; this can be broken down into 69% working directly for a local authority, 13% for an agency.

- Around one in six (17%) were no longer working in local authority child and family social work by Wave 4, a significant increase from Wave 3 (12%). The most common destinations were to be still working in child and family work but not at a local authority (8%) or to have become inactive in the labour market because of retirement (4%).

- One in four (26%) had moved to a higher job grade between Wave 1 and Wave 4. At Wave 4, around one in six (18%) said they had been promoted in the past 12 months.

- Ten per cent of local authority child and family social workers had moved from local authority direct employment into agency work since the beginning of the study. Pay was the most commonly cited factor, cited by 44% as a contributing factor and 27% as the main factor.

- One in eight (13%) of the sample had moved to a different local authority between Wave 3 and Wave 4. Of those who had taken part in all four waves, one in five (21%) who were still in local authority social work at Wave 4 were working at a different local authority to Wave 1.

Profile of local authority child and family social workers

As expected, the profile of local authority child and family social workers has remained largely consistent with previous waves. The majority of local authority child and family social workers are women, and this continues to be represented in the sample at Wave 4, with 83% women and 16% men. This is in line with the preceding waves.

The overall age profiles have also remained largely consistent, although the sample is ageing as would be expected in a longitudinal study of this nature. There was a fairly even spread of ages among the Wave 4 respondents: 23% were aged under 35; 25% between 35-44; 24% between 45-54, and; 27% aged over 55.

Almost eight in ten (79%) of the local authority child and family social workers at Wave 4 were White (76% White British). Ten per cent were Black or Black British, 5% were Asian or Asian British, 4% were of a Mixed ethnicity and 1% of another ethnicity. These results are based on weighted data and are in line with previous waves of the study.

At Wave 4, 22% had a physical or mental health condition expected to last 12 months or more; 77% did not have a health condition and 1% did not disclose this information. This is consistent with Wave 3, but higher than at Wave 1 (15%).

Half (50%) had caring responsibilities. This was most commonly for school-aged children (31%), followed by caring for other family members or friends (15%) and for pre-school-aged children (12%). Only a small number (3%) cared for children with disabilities. The proportion caring for other family members or friends is consistent with Wave 3.

Employment status

Figure 2.1 shows the employment status of the whole sample at each wave, providing a 'snapshot' of the sample at Wave 1 to Wave 4.

The majority (83%) of respondents at Wave 4 were still employed in local authority child and family social work (including via an agency). As shown in Figure 2.1, this proportion has fallen significantly from 98% in Wave 1 and consistently throughout the subsequent waves. As the starting sample for the study was collected from local authorities, it is to be expected that almost all would be in local authority child and family social work at Wave 1 and that this would gradually decline through the course of the research. In Wave 4, 8% were working in social work, but not at a local authority: this has doubled since the previous wave (4%).

The circumstances of the minority working outside of child and family social work at Wave 4 remained largely consistent with previous waves. One per cent were working in adult social work; 2% in another area of social work; 3% working but outside of social work altogether; fewer than 1% each were either unemployed and looking for work,

undertaking full-time study or on a career break, and 1% were 'doing something else'. It should be noted that the proportion reporting they were now 'doing something' else in the survey is likely to be an underestimate of the proportion of the population of local authority child and family social workers, because those who have left the profession may be less likely to respond to the survey.

Figure 2.1 below shows a significant increase for those 'doing something else (e.g., retired)'. The majority of this group have retired, and the code was changed at Wave 4 to identify 'retired' as a separate code. As the sample ages we would anticipate the proportion who have retired to increase each year. Four per cent of the total Wave 4 sample were retired, while 1% were 'doing something else'.

Figure 2.1 Employment status (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
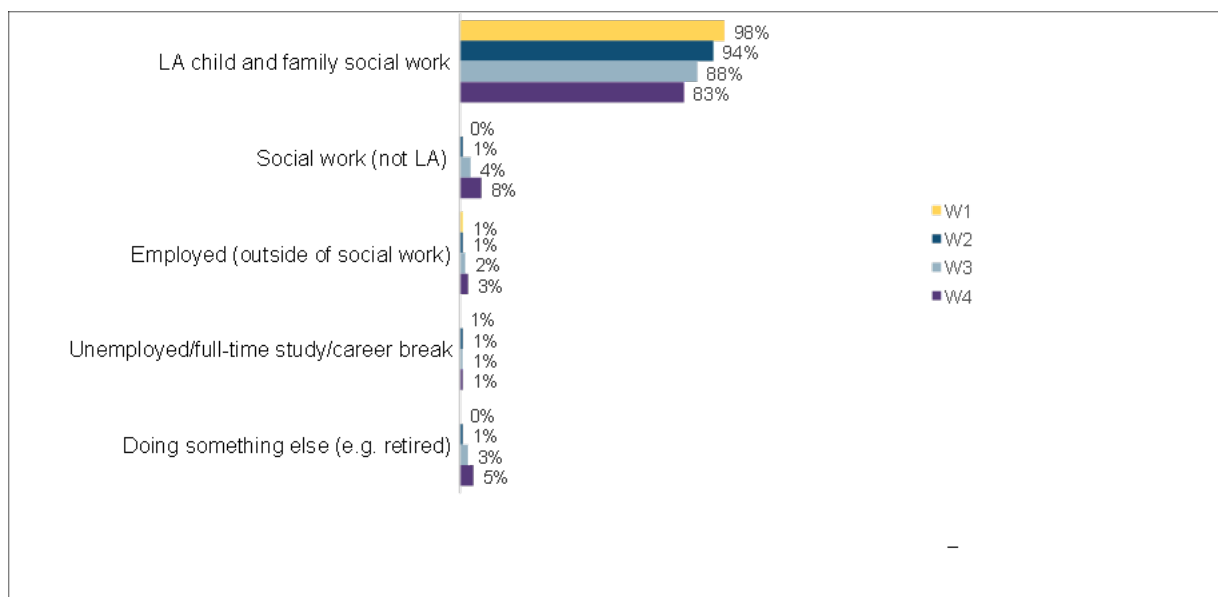
Base: All respondents: Wave 1 (5,621), Wave 2 (3,302), Wave 3 (2,240), Wave 4 (1,605). 'Doing something else' code was changed at Wave 4 to identify 'retired' as a separate code – this chart has combined these for consistent comparison with previous waves.

Journey of local authority child and family social workers since Wave 1

This section focuses on the 1,409 people who were in local authority child and family social work at Wave 1 (98% of the Wave 1 sample) and remained in the research at Wave 4. As can be seen (Figure 2.2), the vast majority were still in local authority child and family social work (82%). This means 18% had left local authority child and family social work between Wave 1 and Wave 4, a significant increase from Wave 3 when one in ten had left (11%). Eight per cent had left local authority child and family social work, but not social work all together, while 4% had retired. It is worth noting that the 18% who had left since the start of the study may be an underestimate, as the status of non-

responders is unknown, and these may have disproportionately left local authority child and family social work.

Figure 2.2 Sankey chart showing Wave 4 employment status of those in local authority child and family at Wave 1
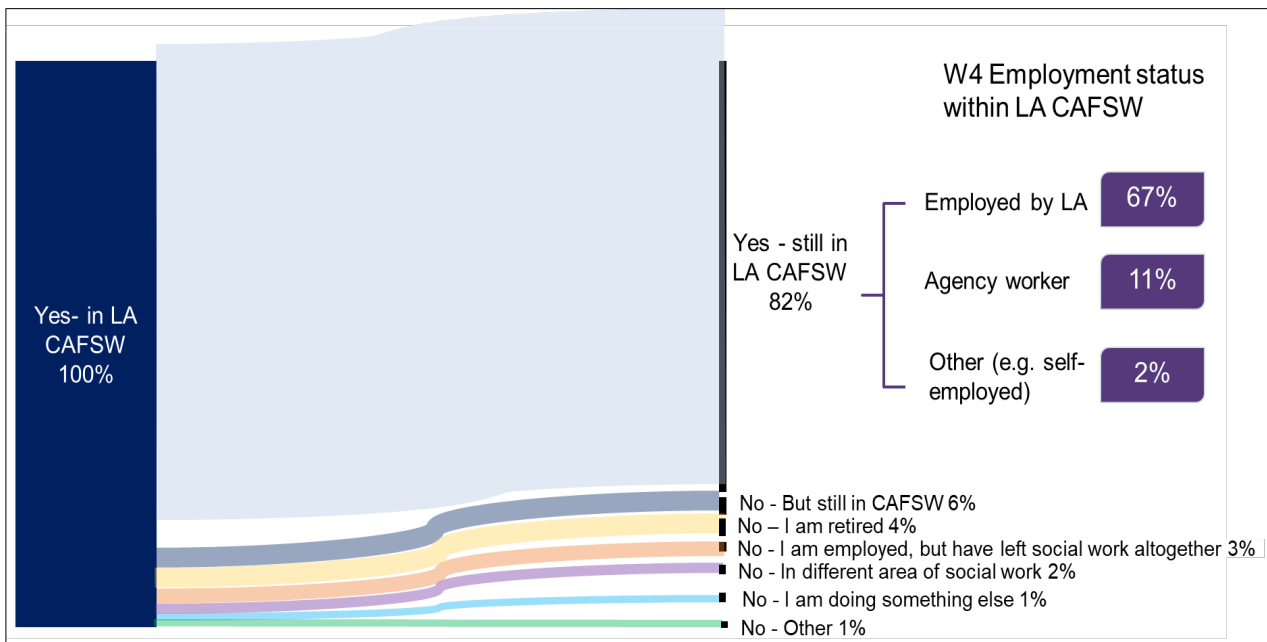
Just over one-quarter (28%) of those aged 65 and over at Wave 4 were retired, and all those who were retired within the sample were aged 55 or over. There were no significant differences by gender, ethnicity, or caring responsibilities, or signs that Covid-19 has impacted their career plans. Of those who had retired at Wave 4 (n=61), 26 had worked as front line practitioners, 18 were team managers, seven were practice supervisors, seven were in 'other' roles and the remaining four were senior service managers or Directors not directly involved in practice.

Of those who had retired at Wave 4, most (75%) considered they had taken early retirement. All of the respondents who said they had taken early retirement (n=46) were aged 55 or over and a third of them reported a physical or mental health condition (15/46). When looking at why they had taken early retirement the majority (27/46 said they did so because of 'work pressure (including high caseload, too much paperwork, long hours)', followed by around one in five who said they could draw a good pension relative to pay/ benefits at work (10/46) and one in five who cited health reasons (9/46)).[6]

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[6] Low base size when looking at those who took early retirement and were asked 'B1f Why did you take early retirement?', base 46.

Still in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4

The 83% of all Wave 4 survey respondents who were still in local authority child and family social work can be broken down into: 68% employed directly by a local authority; 12% employed by an agency, and 2% employed on another basis, such as self-employed.[7] Below we take a look at the key differences between those employed in child and family social work directly by a local authority and those working for an agency, in terms of demographic and employment characteristics.[8] Unless specified otherwise, these breakdowns are largely consistent with previous years.

- **Gender**: Those working in child and family social work via an agency were more likely to be male, compared to those employed directly by a local authority (30% compared with 14%).

- **Ethnicity**: Those employed by an agency were more likely to be Black / Black British (21% compared with 9% of direct employees) or Asian / Asian British (10% compared with 4%). Only 58% of agency workers in the sample were White British, compared with 77% of social workers who were employed directly by a local authority.

- **Region:** Similarly to the previous wave those employed by an agency were more likely to work in London or the South West.

- **Ofsted rating of local authority**: Those working for an agency were more likely to work at an 'Inadequate' rated authority (Figure 2.3): 24% of agency workers worked at one of these authorities, compared with only 10% of those employed directly. Conversely, agency workers were less likely than direct employees to work at an 'Outstanding' rated authority (4% compared with 16%).

- **Level of job:** Three-quarters of the agency workers were employed as front line social workers (73%) compared with half (51%) of the social workers who were directly employed by a local authority.

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[7] The proportion of agency workers have been weighted to be representative in line with the agency worker population as defined by the Social Workforce Data.

[8] Where characteristics are not listed (e.g., age, physical/mental health condition), this is because there were no statistically significant differences between the profiles of those employed directly by a local authority and those employed by an agency.

Figure 2.3 Distribution of local authority Ofsted rating by those employed directly by a local authority and those employed by an agency (Wave 4)
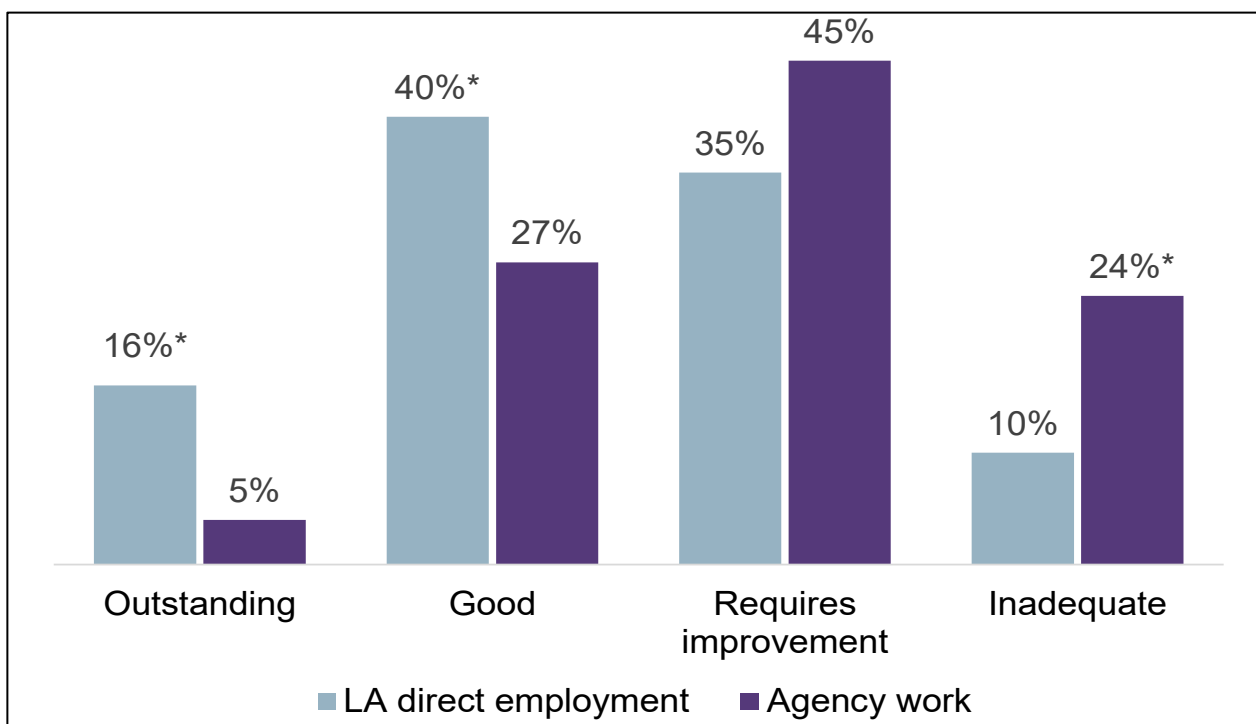
Base: All still in LA child and family social work working directly by a local authority or by an agency: Wave 4: LA direct employment (1, 212), Agency work (80). *Denotes a significant difference between LA direct employment and agency work

Movement between local authorities

Of those local authority child and family social workers still working in social work whose local authority was known at both Wave 1 and Wave 4, overall 82% were at the same authority (in line with Wave 3). This includes both those employed directly by a local authority and agency workers. When taking each of these groups separately, the picture is vastly different: 88% of those directly employed were working for the same local authority as they were at Wave 4, while only 28% of agency workers had stayed at the same local authority between Wave 1 and Wave 4.

Not in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4

This section is based on the 17% who were not in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4, as seen in Figure 2.2. This excludes agency workers who were still employed in child and family social work at a local authority, but does include those who have retired (although we only have clear data on retirement for Wave 4, this option was not provided separately at previous waves).

Looking at those respondents who had left local authority child and family social work between Wave 1 and Wave 4 (which includes those who had left between Wave 2 or Wave 3 and Wave 4) were most likely still in child and family social work (33%) or retired

(24%) and the main difference in terms of demographic characteristics was that those who had left were more likely to be older than those who were still in local authority child and family social work. Just over four in ten (43%) who had left were aged 55+, compared with 28% of those who had not left. There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of: gender; ethnicity; having a physical or mental health condition, or having childcare responsibilities.

Those who left were also more likely than those who stayed to have worked as front line practitioners at Wave 1 (59%, compared with 51% of those still in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4).

As shown in Figure 2.4, those who had left local authority child and family social work between Wave 1 and Wave 4 were most likely to be aged 55-64 years old (33%), with 24% aged 35-44 years old.

Figure 2.4 Age profile of those who had left local authority child and family social work between Wave 1 and Wave 4
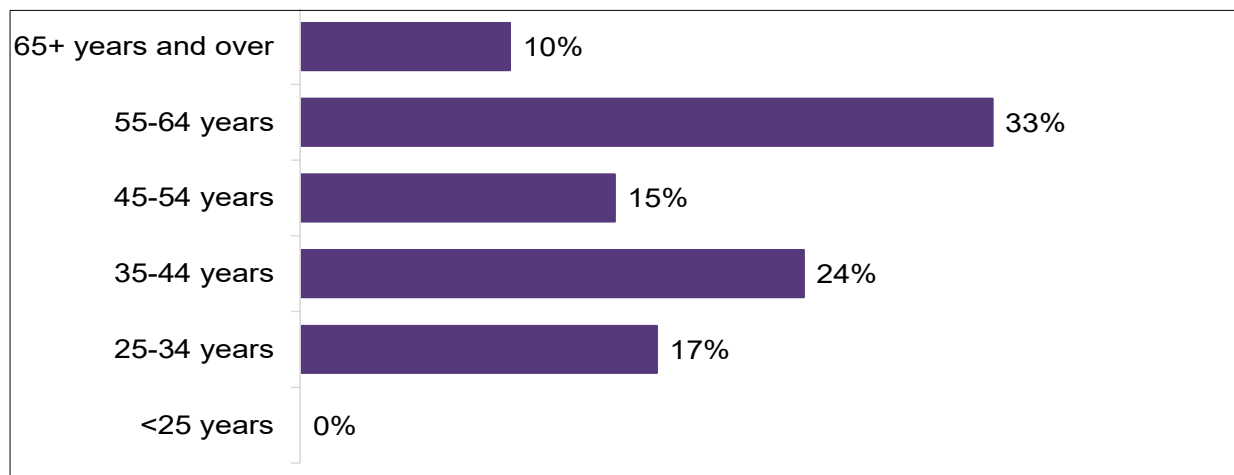
Base: All who had left LA CAFSW between Wave 1 and Wave 4 (236).

Those who had left local authority child and family social work by Wave 4 had more negative attitudes about various aspects of their jobs at Wave 1, compared with those who were still in local authority child and family social work.[9] Those who had left were less likely to be satisfied with their jobs overall at Wave 1 (66%, compared with 78% who had stayed). They were also more likely to report that they were stressed by their jobs at Wave 1 (66% compared with 51% who had stayed).

Further, as shown in Figure 2.5, they were more negative about their employer, manager and the tools and resources at their disposal at Wave 1. For example, only 60% agreed

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[9] These measures use scores from Wave 1, that being the last point that all those who left and those who were still in local authority child and family social work were asked these questions.

they felt loyal to their organisation (compared with 74% still in the local authority child and family social work) and only 61% agreed that the feedback they receive helps them improve their performance (compared with 68%). These patterns are similar to those identified at Wave 3.

Figure 2.5 Attitudes towards working in local authority child and family social work between those who left since Wave 1 and those who were still working in the sector at Wave 4

Base: All still in LA child and family social work at Wave 4 (1,109); All who had left LA child and family social work between Wave 1 and Wave 4 (246)

Current role in local authority child and family social work

This section examines the Wave 4 profile of local authority child and family social workers in terms of job role and area of practice. It also explores movement between grades of job across the study so far.

Job role

Figure 2.6 shows the job role of those working in local authority child and family social work across the four waves of the research. While the overall profile has not changed significantly since Wave 3, changes since Wave 1 show how the profile of the sample is growing into more senior roles. For example, significantly more were working as a team manager at Wave 4 (17% compared with 13%) or as a senior service manager or Director (8% compared with 6%). Movement between job grade is discussed in more detail later in this section ('Movement between grades of job').

Job roles were linked to length of time in child and family social work and age, as one would expect, with younger social workers with less experience more likely to work in junior roles and older social workers with more experience being more likely to work in

senior positions. For example, 74% of 25-34 year olds worked as front line practitioners, compared with 47% of those aged 45 or older, while 11% of those 45 or older worked in senior service manager or Director roles, compared with 2% aged below 45.

As well as job role being linked to length of time in child and family social work and age, those in front line practitioner roles were more likely to:

- Be an agency worker: 73% of the agency workers at Wave 4 were front line practitioners, compared with 51% employed directly by a local authority

- Be of a Black / Black British ethnicity: 63% of the Black / Black British social workers at Wave 4 were front line practitioners compared with 53% of White British social workers

- Have a physical or mental health condition: 61% of those with a health condition were front line practitioners compared with 52% without a condition. Of those with a health condition, 11% were team managers (compared with 18% without a health condition) and 4% were senior service managers or Directors (compared with 10% who did not have a health condition).

Figure 2.6 Job role within local authority child and family social work (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
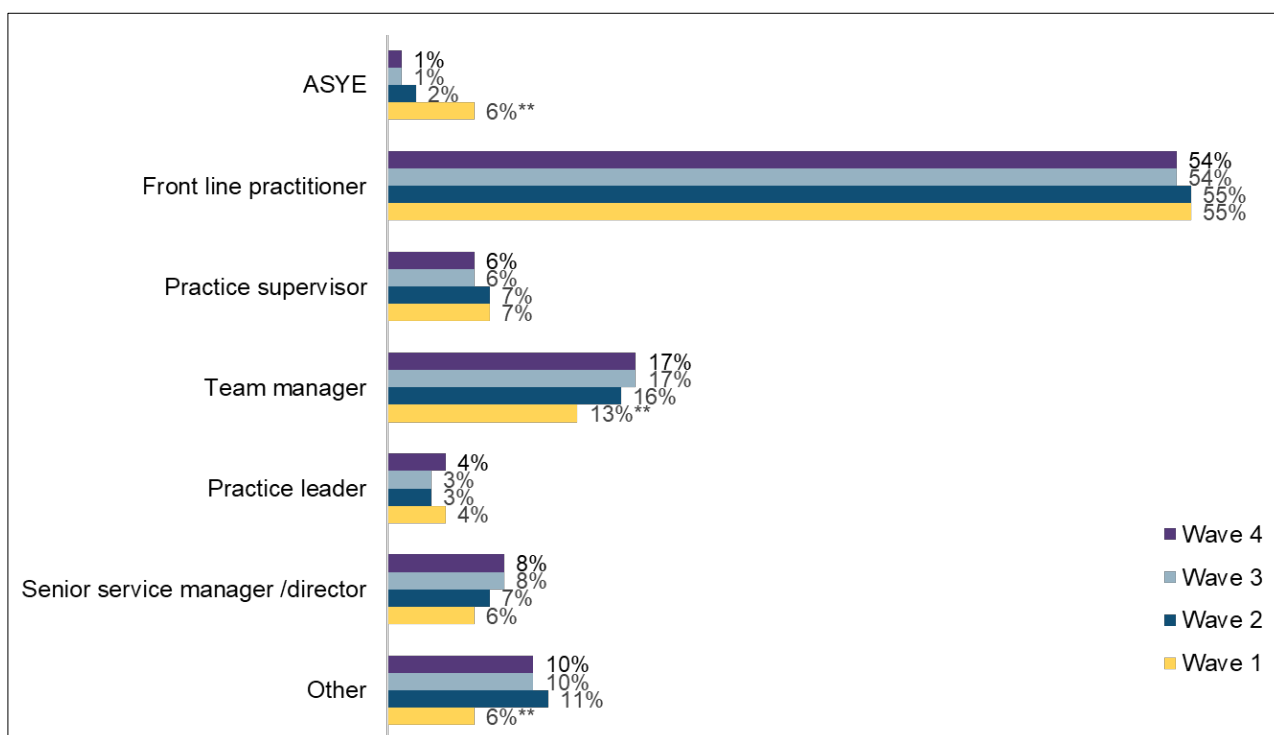
ASYE
- 1%
- 1%
- 2%
- 6%**

Front line practitioner
- 54%
- 54%
- 55%
- 55%

Practice supervisor
- 6%
- 6%
- 7%
- 7%

Team manager
- 17%
- 17%
- 16%
- 13%**

Practice leader
- 4%
- 3%
- 3%
- 4%

Senior service manager /director
- 8%
- 8%
- 7%
- 6%

Other
- 10%
- 10%
- 11%
- 6%**

Legend: Wave 4, Wave 3, Wave 2, Wave 1

Base: All Currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2: (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317).
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 3 and Wave 4
**denotes significant differences between results in Wave 1 and Wave 4

Since Wave 1, 26% of the local authority child and family social workers had moved into a higher position. This is primarily indicative of career progression and promotion.

At Wave 4, 18% of local authority child and family social workers reported they had been promoted in the past 12 months. Promotion in the past 12 months was more common than average among the 25-34 year old age group (30%), and among social workers who were currently working as practice supervisors (29%) and senior service managers / Directors (26%). By length of time in the profession, promotion was most common among those with 4-5 years' experience (37%). Of note, full-time social workers were much more likely to report they had been promoted in the preceding 12 months than part-time ones (21% compared with 9%). Although the base is small (n=45), social workers who entered the profession via the 'Step Up to Social Work' route were also more likely than others to report being promoted in the past 12 months (34%, compared with 18% overall).

Practice area

The distribution of the sample in terms of area of practice has remained fairly consistent across the four waves of the study. The most common practice areas continued to be child in need / child protection (50% worked in this area) followed by looked after children (32%). Consistent with changes between Wave 1, Wave 2 and Wave 3, the proportions

of social workers decreased across many practice areas. For example, 17% were working in assessment at Wave 4, which is significantly lower than at Wave 1 (26%).

The characteristics of workers in specific practice areas are largely consistent with previous waves of the research. Younger, less experienced social workers more commonly worked in child protection / children in need, while those working in adoption and fostering were more likely to be older, more experienced social workers. For example, 60% of 25-34 year olds worked in child protection, compared with 50% of 45-54 year olds and 38% of 55-64 year olds. Conversely, 19% of 55-64 year olds and 17% of 45-54 year olds worked in fostering, compared with just 7% of 25-34 year olds. Older social workers aged 55-64 were also more likely than 25-34 year olds to work in adoption (19% compared with 9%).

While the majority of social workers in the study were women (83% at Wave 4), men were significantly more likely than women to work in leaving care (11% compared with 6% of women).

There were a number of practice areas where it was more common to be employed via an agency and less common to be employed directly by a local authority (Figure 2.7). Agency workers were more likely than direct employees to work in child in need/ child protection (63% did, compared with 49% of directly employed social workers). They were significantly less likely to work in fostering (3% compared with 16% of direct employees).

Figure 2.7 Main area(s) of practice, by local authority direct employment or agency work (Wave 4)
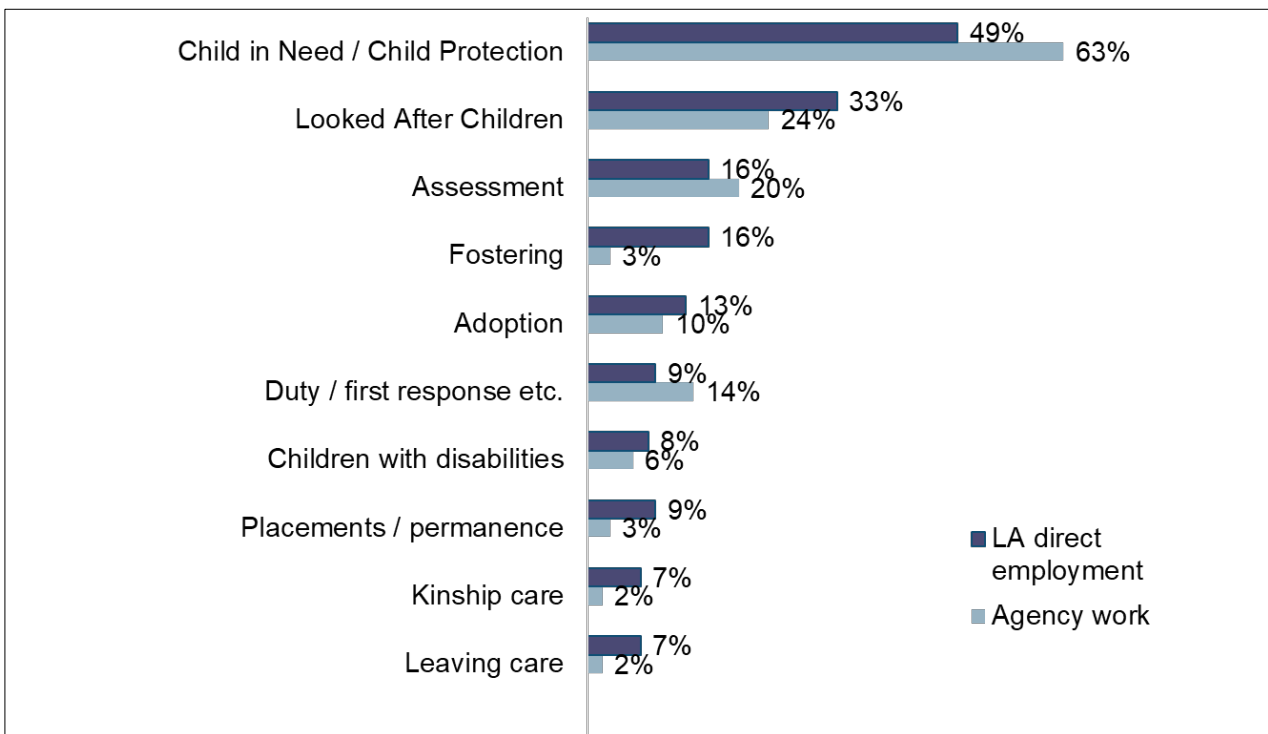
Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work and employed by a local authority or an agency: Local authority (1,237), Agency (70).
This chart only shows the 10 most common areas of work.

Length of time in child and family social work and at current employer

Figure 2.8 shows that at Wave 4, 52% of the local authority child and family social workers had been in the sector for at least 10 years, with a further 19% for 6-10 years. This is significantly higher than at Wave 1, where 49% had been working in child and family social work for at least 10 years.[10]

Child and family social workers move roles frequently, both within the same local authority and to a different employer. As shown in Figure 2.8, 66% of the Wave 4 sample had been in their current role for less than three years, while 41% had been at their employer for less than three years.

As to be expected, given the temporary nature of their work, agency workers were significantly more likely than those directly employed by a local authority to have been in their job for a year or less (88% compared with 35%). Overall, just under three in ten

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[10] This change may be partly because non-responders at Wave 4 were more likely to be younger, therefore skewing the age of the sample slightly towards older social workers or simply reflecting the ageing of the sample.

(28%) social workers had worked at their current employer for more than ten years. Unsurprisingly, this was significantly higher among those employed directly (32% compared to 3% of agency workers).

Those working at 'Inadequate' rated authorities were more likely to have been employed there for a short space of time (19% of staff at these authorities had been employed there for less than 6 months, compared with 9% overall). This is indicative of a higher proportion of agency staff working at these authorities; 23% of those at 'inadequate' rated local authorities were agency workers.

Figure 2.8 Length of time: in child and family social work; at current employer; in current role with current employer (Wave 4)
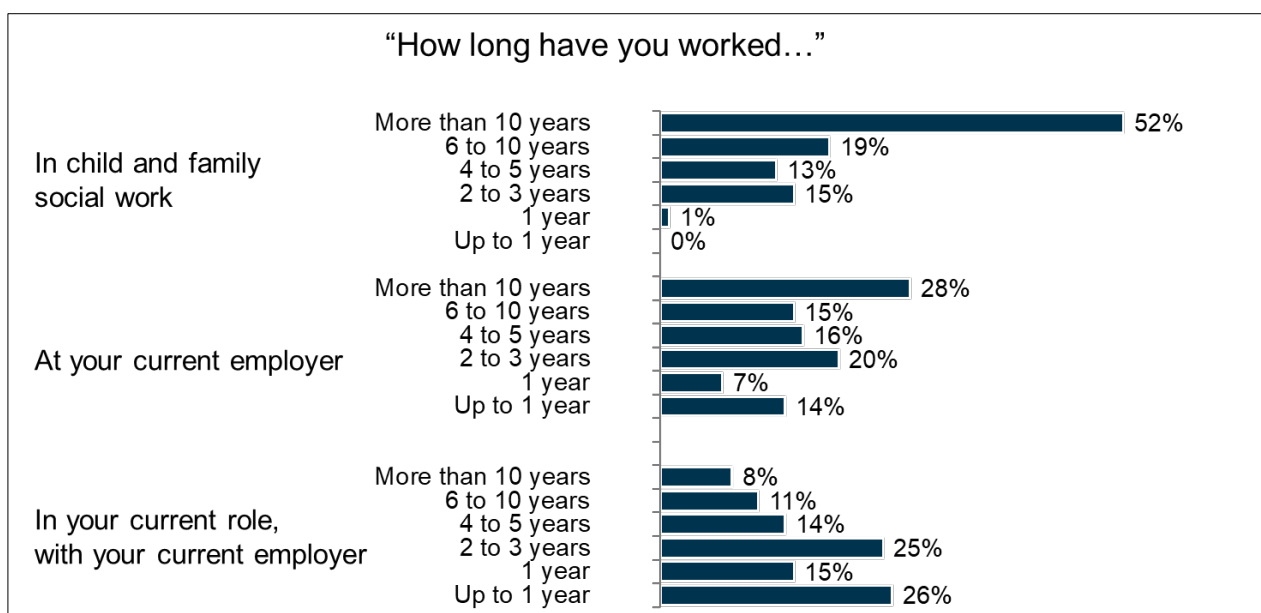
Base: All currently employed in LA child and family social work (1,317)

Motivations for becoming an agency worker or self-employed

Focusing on those who had taken part in all four waves, 10% of those who were still in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4 had moved from being employed directly by a local authority to being employed by an agency since Wave 1.

Figure 2.9 shows all factors and the main factor which influenced social workers to move into agency work or self-employment between Wave 3 and Wave 4.[11] The primary factor was better pay, both when citing all factors (44%) and the single main factor (27%). Other

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[11] Question only asked of those who had moved into agency work / self-employment from Wave 2 onwards, so we do not hold this data for all who moved between the beginning of the study (Wave 1) and Wave 4.

important factors were more flexibility about when they worked (31% 'all factors', 17% 'main factor') and a better work-life balance (30% 'all factors', 17% 'main factor'). While 18% cited more opportunities to gain experience in different roles, only three per cent said this was the main reason for making the transition.

Compared to Wave 3, fewer people said they had moved into agency work or self-employment for more opportunities to gain experience of different roles (18% compared with 27% at Wave 3), or because of the flexibility to work when they wanted (31% compared with 34% at Wave 3). While these differences are statistically significant, they are based on relatively low numbers (85 at Wave 3 and 89 at Wave 4), so findings should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 2.9 Reasons for moving to agency work or self-employment (Wave 4)

	All factors	Main factor
The pay is better	44%*	27%
I have more flexibility about when I work	31%*	17%*
Better work-life balance	30%	17%
Dissatisfaction with permanent employment	27%*	9%
I have more professional autonomy	21%	2%
More opportunities to gain experience of different roles	18%*	3%*
Negative Experience	9%	9%
Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	8%*	
Lack of available local jobs	3%	
I can avoid office politics	2%	2%
Carer	2%	2%
Opportunity to look for permanent, suitable work	2%	2%
I am less accountable / have less responsibility	1%	1%*
Other	14%	12%

Base: All employed vis an agency or independently/self-employed but no longer at the LA in W4) (89)
*Denotes significant differences from Wave 3.

The qualitative interviews invited participants to talk about their experiences of and attitudes towards agency social work/social workers. The sample included ten people who were currently employed as agency workers, including seven from ethnic minority backgrounds, and five permanent/directly employed staff, two from ethnic minority backgrounds, who said that they had done some agency work in the past.

In line with the survey findings, pay and flexibility were the most frequently mentioned benefits in the qualitative research. Sometimes these characteristics of agency working - extra money, or the flexibility to leave a post at short notice - allowed people a means of responding to personal or career challenges or ambitions but were not the primary motivating factor for moving in or out of agency work. Amongst those who were no longer in agency work, or who had never experienced it, the main perceived disadvantage was lack of security.

What would encourage movement from agency employment to direct employment by a local authority

Social workers employed by an agency[12] were asked to indicate what would encourage them to move from being employed by an agency to being employed directly by a local

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[12] These findings are based on 92 social workers who were employed by an agency at Wave 4.

authority, if anything. Just over half (55%) said that 'improved pay' would encourage them to move, 34% said 'a better work life balance' and 24% each said 'better scope for flexible working' and 'wanting to work with the same colleagues/team consistently'.

When asked to give their main reason, 'improved pay' (30%) was still the most popular response, followed by 'for a better work life balance' (16%). Smaller proportions said 'wanting to work with the same colleagues/team consistently' (6%), 'better job security' (5%) and 'better scope for flexible working' (4%). Just over one in ten (12%) said 'nothing would encourage them to move to being directly employed by a local authority'.

Benefits of agency working

For some people, the opportunity to increase their **earning power** was the overriding reason for moving into or remaining in agency work, even when as in this example, they were uncomfortable about doing so:

> "If I was going to leave, I'd be looking potentially to go agency if I'm brutally honest. That's purely because of my financial constraints…I mean, morally, I completely disagree, you know, on moral grounds I think agencies shouldn't exist, but in a – I describe myself as a realist, and in the real world the money just isn't enough." (front line practitioner, Black)

One Head of Service commented on the attractions of agency pay rates for particular groups of workers,

> "I think there are real issues around mainstream social work salaries being such that single or sole breadwinners who are – particularly women and black minority women – forced into agency work because that's the only way that they can pay the bills." (Head of Service, Mixed ethnicity)

Three minority ethnic social workers suggested that for them there was a link between lack of career progression and agency working. One observed that ethnicity was seen by some to be a barrier to progression and that moving into agency work was considered the only, or at least the quickest, way of earning more money:

> "Some social workers of ethnic backgrounds often tend not to progress into management because sometimes they feel that they are at a bit of a disadvantage, or not supported in the same way as their counterparts. So they will sometimes become agency workers because…you're more or less earning the same as what a manager would earn but without the extra responsibility." (Agency front line practitioner, Black)

The other two respondents expressed frustration with the pace of their career development, and an inability to move up salary scales, although they did not state explicitly that their ethnicity was the reason for this:

> "I've thought about going into agency because I would get a little bit more money…and the challenge is that it's taking quite a while for me to get progressed…the job opportunities of progression are very slim for me, but for others they just jump in and get in straight away. So that resentment has really made me think maybe if I went into agency work I could at least get paid for the hard work I'm doing." (front line practitioner, Black)

Participants talked about **'flexibility'** in the context of agency working as being able to move in and out of work as they wished, without having to give lengthy periods of notice. It was important to some people that they could leave a role if it was unsuitable for them, or they were experiencing unhealthy levels of stress:

> "The reason why there's agency workers is because people like to have the option to get up and leave when they need to… working two months' notice is not healthy for anyone that is feeling at rock bottom at that moment" (Agency front line practitioner; Asian)

Among those respondents who were currently agency workers or who had previously done agency work, a number saw this as a **means to an end**, and often, as a temporary arrangement. They mentioned several reasons for this, including because they needed or wanted to relocate to another part of the country, were seeking to develop their skills, knowledge and experience, because they were unsure about the next steps in their career, or had been unhappy in a previous post.

One respondent had spent five years in agency posts as a Team Manager in several different Local Authorities to gain experience to apply for a permanent Service Manager role and is currently in an agency post waiting for the right opportunity to arise:

> "I'm basically doing an agency post now because it pays my bills while I look for the right post. I now know where I want to live and I'm waiting for the right post in those areas." (Agency Team Manager, White British)

Another saw this as a potential way forward should they ever get to the point of considering leaving social work:

> "I think if I'm really stuck and before I decide to leave the profession entirely I might do that, just because that gives you the opportunity to go to different teams, and maybe, if you don't like it, you hand in your notice and you leave." (front line practitioner, Other ethnicity)

Someone else wanted to leave their LA following a change of management and followed other colleagues to a different employer, taking an agency post as that was the only immediate option. Although this front line practitioner had intended this would be a temporary arrangement, they are finding the financial advantages make agency work more appealing:

> "It wasn't about the money, but it is actually quite nice to feel like you're being financially valued for what I think is a very tough and demanding job…even if I take two weeks off it almost doesn't matter [that there is no holiday pay] because within a month I've made [the money] back."
> (Agency front line practitioner, Mixed ethnicity)

Disadvantages of agency working

The key concern about moving to agency working was the **lack of job security**:

> "As a Dad I want a level of certainty. I've seen them just fire all of the agency staff in February to save money for six or eight weeks you know, and they can't do that to me because I'm a permanent member of staff."
> (Senior Practitioner, Other ethnicity)

Respondents who said they were unlikely to consider agency work valued the safety net of other benefits offered by permanent employment, such as sick pay, maternity leave and employer pension contributions:

While hourly rates of pay were much higher for agency staff, respondents mentioned other **financial implications** and responsibilities associated with agency work, for example, responsibility for tax affairs. Agency workers must also factor in some uncertainty about levels of income, and the consequences of being in temporary, potentially precarious employment for personal financial planning.

> "It's a lot more pay absolutely [but]…you have to sort out your own sick pay, holiday pay, all of that stuff, and you've got to have a really good accountant, or you've got to be really good at it yourself…You can't get a mortgage as an agency worker." ('Other' work role, Asian)

A third disadvantage of agency working was their sense of **not being fully integrated into a LA,** with implications such as a lack of access to learning and development opportunities, and to other support systems. While this was to some extent to be expected, it was something to be considered when thinking about agency working.

> "[as a permanent worker] you've got a lot more support in terms of management, and it's more of a community… they were more protective of their permanent workers than their agency workers." (Agency social worker, Asian)

One front line practitioner said that as an agency worker they had been unable to train to become a Practice Educator and could not access other learning and development opportunities, and another said that a benefit of moving to a permanent post would be better access to training. **Self-funding training and development** was another cost for some agency staff to consider.

Why use agency workers?

Local Authorities and other employers of children and family social workers use agency staff to fill gaps caused by recruitment and retention problems. While sometimes these are long-standing, entrenched difficulties, related to for example, geographical location, proximity to higher education institutions (HEIs) providing a supply of newly qualified social workers, or reputational issues, some respondents said that the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in extraordinary pressures on LAs and unusual patterns of staff movement.

An early consequence of the pandemic, as LAs struggled to find new ways of working to maintain essential services, was the absence of staff due to illness, isolation and shielding. One participant whose LA had been working pre-pandemic to avoid using agency workers, in part by encouraging them to take on permanent posts, found that agency staff were once again needed.

As the pandemic continued, home working and more flexible working arrangements offered opportunities for staff to take posts in geographical areas that they might not otherwise have considered, sometimes on an agency basis. This, alongside what one respondent described as a *mass exodus* of staff (for example through early retirement) brought about staff shortages and in some LAs, a struggle to recruit anyone, including agency workers:

> "We've found quite a lot of staff have gone. Because we're offering flexibility now, people can go to agencies and get paid more, and work from home. We're losing those staff and we're not able to recruit, because a lot of places are working from home and a lot of people are [now] much happier where they are." (Practice Supervisor, Mixed ethnicity)

It is perhaps too soon to know whether this perceived increase in agency workers in some areas will continue, or whether it will prove to be a relatively short-term, temporary arrangement chosen by staff during a period of uncertainty, with many of them returning to permanent/direct employment in LAs in the post-Covid 19 period.

> "There's a lot of change at the moment and a lot of unsteadiness and a lot of movement, I think, probably towards agency work. And I think it is because of, you know the various experiences within local authorities,

> the response to the pandemic, the workload… all of those things and
> more, really." (Agency front line practitioner, Black)

Several people, particularly team managers and above, talked about their preference to avoid using agency staff, but acknowledged that in some circumstances there was little option available, particularly in the light of ongoing recruitment and retention problems, and rising, increasingly complex caseloads.

> "It's always been difficult to recruit and retain social workers in XX, but
> more recently there's been more reliance on agency workers and more
> experienced agency staff because of the predominance of ASYEs in the
> team." (Team Leader, Asian)

Some talked about what might help avoid such staffing issues, including working towards providing a positive and supportive working environment, with competitive packages of pay and conditions, to attract and retain high quality staff.

> "It's a terrible waste of money and it's not how you get the best staff.
> What you have to do is make it an organisation that is really attractive to
> people to work in so that you don't need to fill in gaps with agency staff.
> And we're lucky that a lot of attention was put into making it a good place
> to work, where you're going to get really good support, and really good
> management, and really good training so that people want to work here."
> (Service Manager, Other)

Impacts on practice

A common theme running through the interviews was that while agency workers were sometimes needed to staff services, the impact on work with children and families was often perceived as negative by colleagues and managers. The two main reasons given were the rapid turnover of agency staff, and the variable quality of their work.

The overwhelming view of the people interviewed was that short-term agency staffing was not good for work with children and families, particularly in some areas of practice; and that staff moving on at key points in children's 'journeys' was problematic.

> "I think agency work is really detrimental to social work as a whole. I
> don't think it's the right way of working with children, especially like in this
> team, where it's very long-term work and children need consistency and
> stability. I don't think agency work lends itself to that at all." (Team
> manager, Mixed ethnicity)

This impacted on relationships with children, and one respondent gave an example of families' comments about agency workers:

"'Oh, we had an agency worker last time', and 'Oh, they won't be here very long'. Yes, I think there's a negative attitude, generally." (Matching co-ordinator, White British)

One person who had recently moved to agency work and intended to continue acknowledged the potentially negative consequences of high staff turnover for families,

"I think that it probably adds to a stronger sense of instability with, for the families, you know, you've just got agency staff coming and going all the time." (Agency front line practitioner, Mixed ethnicity)

However, another respondent said that half their current team was agency staff, and turnover was high, but suggested this was probably the lesser of two evils, the alternative being that without agency staff there would be major staff shortages.

Managing turnover of agency staff was challenging given that they can move on with only a week's notice. A few respondents mentioned experiences of agency staff leaving suddenly, with work not completed and little in the way of handover. For example, a Practice Leader commented that agency workers leaving part way through preparations for court proceedings could cause significant difficulties,

"It's one of the biggest factors in causing delays for children in care proceedings…every time there is a new social worker, the decision making almost starts again" (Practice Leader, White British)

The quality and experience of agency workers was another issue for some respondents, although most acknowledged that this was variable, and that some, more experienced and established agency staff made valuable contributions to the teams they joined.

"In our team for a long time, we were literally on our knees and begging…and we ended up having two agency workers…and they've fitted in really well in the team, and it's just been really lovely actually, but it was a real battle, a real battle to get them" (Adoption social worker, Black)

However, there was frustration about the cost of employing less effective agency workers, both because people felt that money could be better spent in supporting families, and because of some resentment that agency workers were earning more than colleagues who could be left with more work when agency workers moved on:

"I've worked with some cracking agency workers who are really good, go above and beyond, and then I've also worked with some who leave their cases in a mess…hand their notice in or get pushed out and then the cases are just in a mess, so it's like, what was the point in even having them in the first place?" (Fostering social worker, Black)

Two people made comments suggesting that there were aspects of agency social work that might be improved by some form of regulation. On quality, one practice supervisor said that agency work should not be available to newly qualified social workers.

> "Agency workers need to come with more experience. And I don't love that you can do your ASYE as an agency; but also, we're desperate for social workers, so I don't know whether that's ever going to change. (Practice Supervisor, Other ethnicity)

Overall, the conclusions to be drawn about agency social from the qualitative interviews are that there is a recognition that sometimes there is a need for temporary workers to fill gaps in staffing, and to relieve workload pressures, and to that extent there is a legitimate place for agency social workers in the sector. The pandemic may have increased the need for agency staff, perhaps because of factors such as absenteeism, and altered priorities leading, for example, to early retirement.

However, respondents reported dissatisfaction with the levels of experience and quality of some agency social workers, and concern about the impact on children and families of the typically short-term involvement of agency staff. Most respondents would prefer employers to do more to retain permanent staff by providing attractive pay, conditions, support and development opportunities. Some LAs were seen to do this better than others.

Respondents who had worked as agency staff had done so for a variety of reasons, and amongst the sample interviewed, most saw this way of working as a temporary arrangement, sometimes for personal/career reasons rather than only because of more attractive pay. To that extent, the availability of agency work was seen as a positive option for some workers, in particular sets of personal circumstances or at pivotal points in their careers.

Motivations for moving to a different local authority

One in five (21%) of those still in local authority social work at Wave 4 were working at a different local authority to Wave 1 – this includes both those employed directly and agency workers. Of those who were in local authority child and family social work at Wave 3, 13% had moved authority by Wave 4.

Figure 2.10 shows reasons given by social workers (whether employed directly or through an agency) for moving local authority between Wave 3 and Wave 4.[13] These social workers most commonly cited a dislike of the working culture at their previous local authority as the reason behind the move, both in terms of 'all' factors (40%) and the main factor (22%), similar to Wave 3.

When combining the workload-related categories 'my workload was too high' (cited by 7% as the main factor) and 'better work life balance' (cited by 5% as the main factor), workload-related issues become the next biggest main factor (12%), in line with relocation (12%). Moving to a new local authority because they found one or more colleagues difficult to work was the main factor for 11%.

Figure 2.10 Reasons for moving to a different local authority (Wave 4)
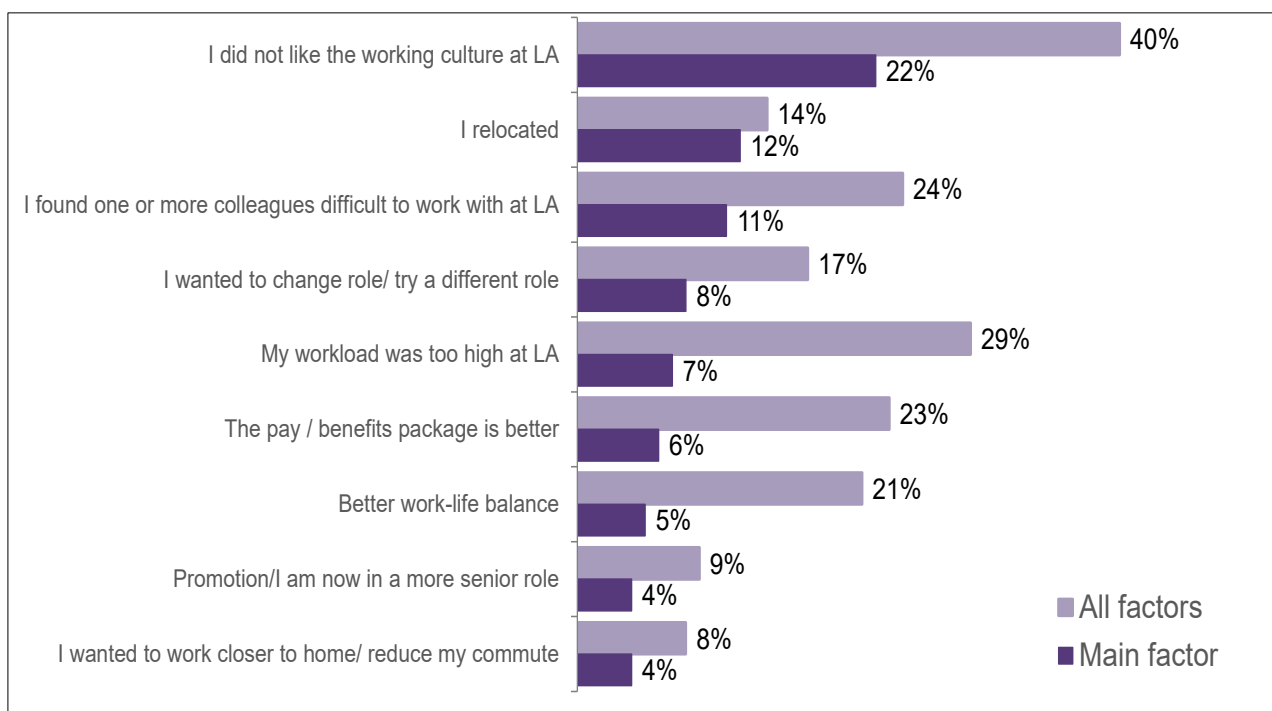
NB: only factors cited by at least 4% as the main factor are shown on this chart
Base: All still in LA child and family social work but at a different LA to W3: (149)

Focusing on the *main* reason for moving to a different local authority, 25–34 year olds were more likely than average to cite relocation (23%) and pay/ benefits (14%).[14] There were no significant differences by other demographics or job characteristics.

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[13] Question only asked of those who had moved local authority between Wave 2 and Wave 3, and Wave 3 and Wave 4, so we do not hold this data for all who moved between the beginning of the study (Wave 1) and Wave 4.

[14] Relatively low base sizes when broken down by age brackets (39 for 25-34 years, 41 for 35-44 years and 38 for 45-55 years).

How changes of circumstance influence career considerations

Social workers who took part in the qualitative research were asked whether they had experienced a change in circumstances since they took part in the Wave 4 survey. Factors that they identified included changes in personal circumstances (for example pregnancy, bereavement, periods of illness), moving to a new role in a different local authority, moving teams or to a new role within the same local authority, or relocating. Thirteen of the forty respondents had experienced one or more such change.

Seventeen of the respondents had experienced no changes since the quantitative data collection for Wave 4 and remained in the same role within their employing organisation with no changes in their personal circumstances. Of the respondents that had experienced a change in personal circumstances, six had moved house, two had become pregnant and two had emigrated.

Although house moves are a personal change, for four of the six movers, this also meant a change of role, either within or between local authorities. For some, relocation was the reason for this change in role (two respondents; both White practice leaders), but for others, the change in role was the precursor to the house move, indicating that respondents included both work and personal circumstances in their decisions about moving house.

Four respondents had been promoted to a new role since the survey, with three of these remaining within the same authority. Of these three, two were progressions following the Professional Capabilities Framework, due to length of service, for example from social worker to experienced social worker, or from experienced social worker to senior practitioner.

Practitioners who had experienced a change in employment circumstances referenced the search for a better work-life balance as the main reason for this. Two had moved into part-time work, and two had moved into a different team away from child protection in an attempt to find this balance, with one stating that even though their hours in the new role had increased, that the step away from child protection offered some respite from the long and unpredictable nature of this role:

> "So, I, sort of, took the leap to do full time and I'm so glad that I did because this job, even working full time, in this role, is 100% more manageable and workable than working just three days in child protection." (Fostering Social Worker, Black)

Overall, the quest for work-life balance was a key theme influencing changes in job role or local authority, for both those who had experienced personal and work-related changes in their circumstances.

Parenthood, childcare and other caring responsibilities

Most respondents in the qualitative interviews said that personal circumstance affected work decisions, and many of these mentioned becoming a parent and managing childcare. Certain areas of practice were seen as more challenging than others, most notably front line child protection work, the demands of which were sometimes regarded as incompatible with bringing up a young family.

Some frontline child protection social workers who did not have children thought they would struggle to manage if they became parents, such as this respondent who talked about the consequences of dealing with emergencies extending beyond working hours:

> "Don't work in assessment unless you have a partner who is fully supportive…You're not always going to be at home for dinner. You're not always going to be at home to put your kids to bed. You know, sometimes you're going to be walking into your home at one o'clock in the morning, and it's unpredictable." ('other' job role, Asian)

Another made a similar point, asking how workers with children were expected to cope when their work with families continued until late into the evening, and there were no structures in place for them to be relieved by other staff. Two respondents stated explicitly that their jobs as front line social workers had influenced their decisions not to have children, as they could not see how they could manage to do both. One front line practitioner, also without children, worried about coping with the emotional impact of the work if she became a parent in the future.

Although the qualitative interviews involved only 40 people, where respondents were part of a couple, male social workers were less likely to see parenthood as significantly affecting their career. A male team manager with two young children, one born during the pandemic, talked about sharing childcare with his partner, but felt that his role in a long term team fits well with his current family circumstances.   Another said that as a man, becoming a parent had not significantly affected his career and he had not had to take "time out".

The challenges of caring responsibilities for other family members had for some, become starker during the pandemic

> "I like to think people come to work because they want to do a good job, but when you can't – because you're thinking about how to pick up your mum's prescription, getting them to a doctor's appointment or a hospital appointment – it's been difficult." (Head of Service, Mixed ethnicity)

Working part time or moving to roles that were more predictable in terms of working hours (i.e., away from frontline child protection work) were common strategies to enable people to combine work with other commitments.

> "We decided I'd be part time and my partner would work full time, and so obviously that remains problematic doesn't it? And that's not about ethnicity, that's about being a woman and it is still problematic, it's still interesting and problematic in a profession that's so heavily feminised and female that the opportunities for job shares, for part time are…[limited]." (Service Manager, Other ethnicity)

Another respondent expressed the view that she was unlikely to progress in her career while working part time. More senior part time roles were difficult to find, and given her circumstances, she could not work full time, and so did not expect to progress any further:

> "It's really hard to find a management job in social care that's not full-time, and I'm a single parent…there's no such thing as a part-time, less than full-time service manager." (Team manager, Mixed ethnicity)

This practice supervisor had secured a new role in management which offered more control over her working hours, and was more compatible with her family circumstances:

> "So for me that influenced my decision to go into a non-case holding role because prior to that I would be out of the house for 14 hours a day and I would miss a lot of that parenting time. So for me it definitely drove my decision to go into a more managerial position where I'm not going to have that burden." (Practice supervisor, Mixed ethnicity)

Some respondents suggested that flexible working, involving reduced travel time, virtual meetings, and the ability to work from home several days each week had provided them with a wider range of options.

3. Workplace wellbeing

This chapter explores social worker wellbeing by considering working hours and caseloads, reported stress levels and workload demands, views on the extent of managerial support for work-life balance, and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Chapter highlights

- Overall, three-quarters (74%) of social workers reported working more than their contracted hours either 'all the time' or 'most weeks' to keep up with their workload, consistent with Wave 3.
- The mean number of cases reported amongst those in case holding roles was 18 (19 for case holding full-time workers and 15 for case holding part-time workers), consistent with Wave 3.
- Around three in five social workers at Wave 4 agreed they feel stressed by their job (62%), their workload is too high (59%) and they are asked to fulfil too many roles in their job (61%) – the latter represents a significant increase compared with Wave 3. All of these measures have increased since Wave 1.
- Over two-thirds of social workers considered that anxiety (67%), workloads (73%) and work-related stress (73%) had increased as a result of the consequences of Covid-19. Three-quarters felt that complexity of cases (76%), had increased as a result of Covid-19, significantly more than in Wave 3.
- The majority of social workers (61%) continued to feel that relationships with colleagues had worsened as a result of Covid-19, particularly among front line practitioners. There was a more balanced picture in terms of impacts on relationships with children and families: while 36% felt these had worsened due to Covid-19, 43% felt it had no impact. This is an improvement on the balance of responses at Wave 3.

Contracted and actual working hours

Social workers were asked how many hours they were contracted to work per week. Throughout this section full-time work is considered to be more than 35 hours and part-time work as any range between 1-35 hours, recognising that 31-35 hours is on the cusp of full-time work (8% of child and family workers worked between 31 and 35 hours).

Contracted working hours were consistent with previous waves. Most social workers held full-time contracts with 76% contracted to work 36 hours a week or more, and 23% contracted to work 35 hours or below. The mean number of contracted hours per week was 35, in line with previous waves of the study (Figure 3.1).

Working on a part-time contract was more common among women than men (25% compared with 17%), as in previous waves. Part-time contracts continued to be more prevalent among those who had caring responsibilities (28%, compared with 17% of

those who did not have any caring responsibilities) – in particular among those with pre-school aged children (37%). As in Wave 3, older social workers aged 65+ (46%) were more likely than average (23%) to be on a part-time contract. There were also distinctions between staff seniority and areas of practice, similar to previous waves. People working in front line practitioner roles were more likely than team managers or senior service manager /Director roles to be contracted to work part-time (25% compared with 18% and 10% respectively), and senior service managers/ Directors continued to be the least likely of all the staff levels to be working part-time (10%).

Part-time working was also more common among staff working in fostering (33%) and adoption (29%) especially compared with duty/ first response/ Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) roles (20%), Looked After Children (22%) and Children in Need (18%).

Social workers were also asked the *actual* number of hours they typically worked per week (regardless of their *contracted* hours).

Social workers on average reported they worked five hours more per week than their contracted hours, with a mean of 40 actual hours worked compared with a mean of 35 contracted hours (Figure 3.1). This is consistent with Wave 3. The mean number of actual hours reported per week has reduced from 42 hours at Wave 1 and Wave 2. Overall, and in line with previous waves, Figure 3.1 also shows that three-quarters (74%) of social workers reported working more than their contracted hours to keep up with their workload, either 'all the time' (41%) or 'most weeks' (33%).

Figure 3.1 Contracted working hours per week and mean reported hours worked per week (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
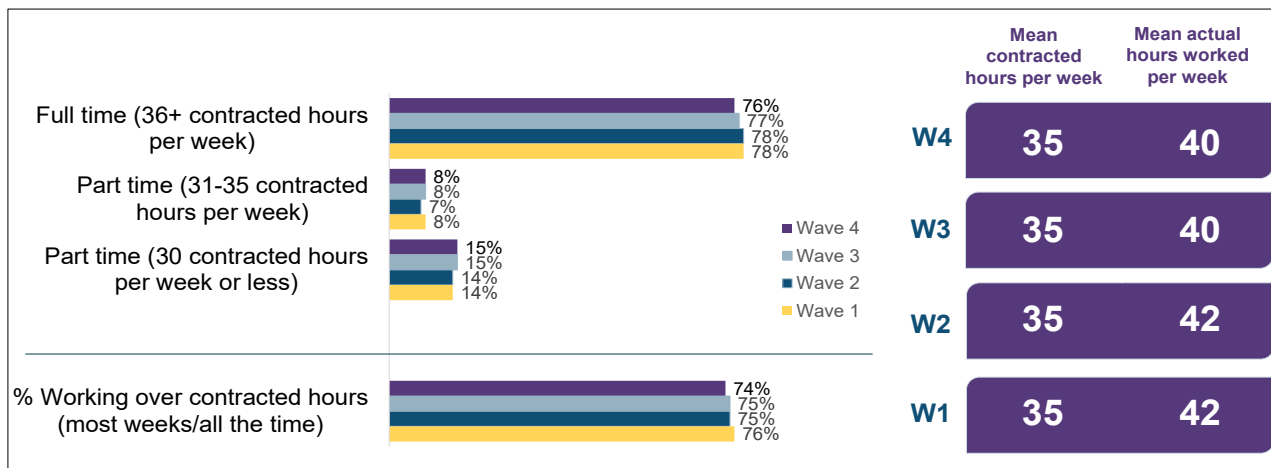
Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2 (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001) Wave 4 (1,317)

Table 3.1 shows that, in a typical week, those whose contracted hours were on the cusp of full-time work (31-35 hours per week) were most likely to work more hours than they were contracted (83%), similar to Wave 3.

In terms of reported actual hours worked, senior service managers/ Directors and team managers worked the longest hours compared to other job roles. They were more likely to report working more than 40 hours in a typical week compared with average (76% and 68% respectively, compared with 51%). Senior service managers/ Directors and team managers were also more likely to report working 46+ hours per week (43% and 36% respectively) compared with other job roles (for example, 24% of front line practitioners, 23% of practice supervisors). Reflecting their long hours, team managers and senior service managers/ Directors were also more likely to say they work overtime 'all the time' (50% and 53%, respectively) compared with 41% on average.

Table 3.1 Contracted working hours versus actual working hours (Wave 4)[15]

Red shading denotes work above contracted hours.

		Contracted hours			
		16-20	21-30	31-35	36-40
		%	%	%	%
Actual hours	1-15	5%	3%	3%	5%
	16-20	30%	1%	-	-
	21-30	62%	54%	-	1%
	31-35	2%	23%	14%	2%
	36-40	2%	13%	44%	26%
	41-45	-	2%	22%	33%
	46-50	-	2%	11%	22%
	51+	-	1%	6%	10%
Any additional hours		***66%***	***41%***	***83%***	***65%***
Base excl. those unable to state either their contracted or actual hours		*66*	*141*	*101*	*987*

Working over their contracted hours 'all the time' was more common in the practice areas associated with longer hours, as we might expect: social workers in Children in Need

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[15] Figures for those with 1-15 contracted hours or 41+ contracted hours are not shown because the base size is <25 for these groups, which is too few to be considered statistically

(48%) and Looked After Children (50%) were more likely than average (41%) to report working above their contracted hours 'all the time' whereas those working in 'education' and 'early help' services were more likely than average to say they never or only occasionally had to work over their contracted hours to keep up with their workloads (46% and 38% respectively, compared with 25% overall).

Other significant differences include:

- older social workers aged 55 to 64 were more likely to work overtime 'all the time' to keep up with their workloads (47%) compared with 33% of younger social workers aged 25 to 34. This is linked to seniority, as older social workers who responded to the survey were more likely to be in senior job roles, where working overtime was more common.
- those with caring responsibilities for family and friends were more likely to report working overtime 'all the time' (50%) whereas those with caring responsibilities of pre-school aged children were the least likely (30%). This was linked to age, with those who cared for family and friends more likely than average to be aged between 55-64 (35% compared with 23% on average). Conversely, those with pre-school aged children were most likely to be aged between 25-34 (40% of whom cared for pre-school aged children, compared with 12% on average).
- Social workers in local authorities rated as 'requires improvement' were more likely than average to say they worked overtime 'all the time' to keep up with their workloads (46%, compared with 41%). Of note, those in 'inadequate' rated local authorities were less likely than average to say they worked overtime 'all the time' (33%).

Direct work with families

Social workers were asked how many hours in a typical week they spend doing direct work with children and families/carers. In line with Wave 3, seven in ten (70%) of the social workers in the study reported they spent time in a typical week doing any direct work with children, families or carers, while three in ten (29%) did not. In terms of role type and in line with the previous year, almost all (93%) of front line practitioners worked directly with children and families, with this significantly lower for more senior job roles: 43% for team managers; 61% for practice supervisors; 32% for practice leaders and 24% for senior service managers or Directors.

The amount of time that social workers who worked directly with children and families spent on this type of activity has remained largely unchanged compared with previous waves, with no significant differences compared with Wave 3. Among those who did any direct work with children and families, around one third each spent 1-5 hours (32%) or 6-10 hours (37%) – the equivalent figures in Wave 3 being 31% and 34%. The proportions spending 11-15 hours (16%) and 16 hours or more (15%) were also in line with Wave 3 (14% and 16%, respectively).

For those whose job involves working directly with children and families, the mean number of hours spent in a typical week directly working with children, families or carers across all job roles was 10, as shown in Figure 3.2. This is in line with Wave 3 (and preceding waves) suggesting that Covid-19 has not led to a reduction in average time spent working directly with children and families/ carers.

Front line practitioners spent 10.3 hours on average working directly with children and families. In terms of practice area, those working in youth offending, and education spent an average of 13 hours or more working directly with children and families, significantly higher than average, as did those working in fostering (11.1 hours). Those working with children with disabilities spent less time than average on direct work (8.2 hours).

Figure 3.2 Time spent working directly with children and families by job role and areas of practice – mean time per week and % of contracted hours (Wave 4)

	Mean time per week	% of contracted hours
Overall	10	29%
Front line practitioner	10.3	30%
Team manager*	6.8	19%
Practice supervisor	10.1	29%
Practice leader	6.5	18%
Youth offending	13.5	38%
Education	13.4	38%
Fostering*	11.1	33%
Duty / first response	10.5	30%
Child in Need / Child Protection	10.5	30%
Assessment	10	28%
Kinship care	9.5	28%
Prevention / early help services	9.7	27%
Adoption	9.2	27%
Looked After Children	9.4	27%
Placements / permanence	9.1	26%
Leaving care	8.5	25%
Children with disabilities*	8.2	24%

Base: all in a relevant case holder role, who gave an integer value: Overall (924); job role: Front line practitioner (646), Team Manager (77) Practice Supervisor: (62), Practice leader (20); Area of practice: Youth Offending (22), Education (21), Fostering (152), Prevention/early help (34), Kinship care (73), Placements/permanence (74), Assessment (152), Looked After Children (301), Child in Need/Child Protection (449), Duty/First Response (61), Adoption (142), Youth Offending (22), Leaving Care (49), Children with Disabilities (76), Job roles and areas of work with a base size of less than 20 excluded
*denotes a significant difference from the average
^small base size not eligible for significance testing

Figure 3.2 also shows the proportion of social workers' contracted hours spent working with children and families directly. At an overall level this was 29% of contracted hours

(not significantly different from Wave 3), and by job role: 30% for front line practitioners, 19% for team managers; 29% for practice supervisors and 18% for practice leaders. Team managers worked a significantly lower proportion of their contracted hours directly with children and families compared with front line practitioners and practice supervisors, as well as the average across all job roles.

Due to the sustained need to work remotely on occasion because of the Covid-19 pandemic, which continued for part of the period covered by the Wave 4 survey, local authority child and family social workers who worked directly with children and families were asked how much time they spent per week working with them remotely, and how much time was spent working with them face to face.

The improving Covid-19 situation between Wave 3 and Wave 4 has significantly shifted the extent to which direct work was conducted remotely or face to face. Those who worked directly with children and families spent significantly more time working with them face to face each week (6.6 hours, compared to 5.1 at Wave 3) and only 3.8 hours remotely (compared to 5.8 hours per week at Wave 3).[16]

Social workers in front line practitioner roles spent more time than average on direct face to face work (7.4 hours per week compared with 6.6). Social workers working in Greater London spent less time than average (5.4 hours per week compared with 6.6), which is likely to reflect the higher Covid-19 infection rates in that region.

Whether time was spent working with children and families remotely or face to face varied by practice area. Those working in Assessment and Child in Need/ Child Protection spent significantly more time than other practice areas working face to face (7.3 hours and 7.1 hours respectively). Conversely, those working in adoption spent an average of 4.9 hours per week working face to face and around the same amount of time working remotely (4.5 hours), similar to those working with children who have disabilities (4.9 hours face to face, and 4.2 hours remote).

Social workers who reported a physical or mental health condition and who spent time directly with children and families, spent more hours on this than average, both face to face (7.4 hours per week compared with 6.6) and remotely (4.7 hours per week compared with 3.8).

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[16] Mean calculations based on 827 child and family social workers who gave an integer value for: all hours spent working with children and families; hours spent working with children and families face to face, and; hours spent working with them remotely. This is therefore lower than the total who reported that they spent time working with children and families (924).

Caseloads

Social workers were asked how many cases they were currently allocated[17]. As shown in Figure 3.3, it was most common for those in relevant case holder roles to be responsible for 11-15 cases (24%). Two in five (40%) reported having 16-25 cases, consistent with Wave 3 (43%). Just over one-third (35%) had 21 or more cases, also consistent with Wave 3 (34%).

The mean number of cases that local authority child and family social workers in case holding roles reported they held overall was 18, consistent with Wave 3 (18) but significantly lower than at Wave 2 (19). The mean number of cases varied by contracted hours and job role, as expected, but patterns were generally consistent with previous waves. Full-time social workers had a mean of 19 cases compared with 15 for part-time workers, consistent with Wave 3. Social workers who had been in child and family social work for 2-3 years had significantly higher caseloads than those who had been in the profession for 4-5 or 6-10 years (averaging 19 cases, compared with 17 cases each). Social workers who had been with their current employer for less than one year also tended to have higher caseloads (19). These patterns are similar to previous waves.

Figure 3.3 Number of cases held (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
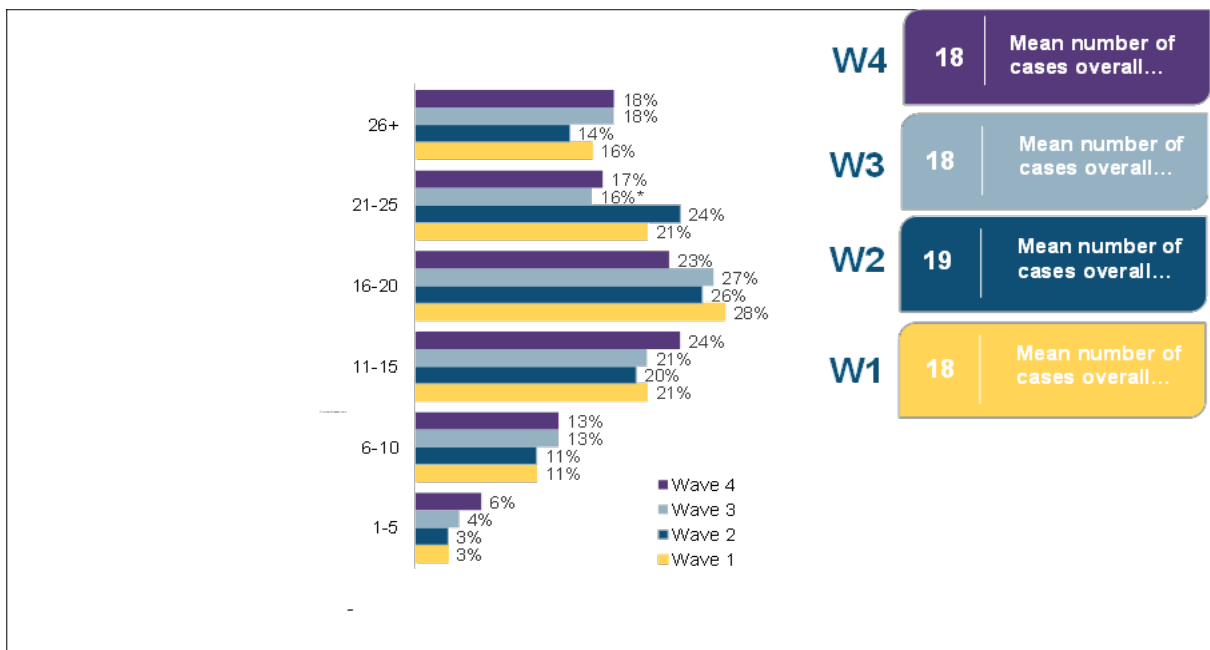
Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work in a relevant, holding role: Wave 1 (3,401), Wave 2 (1,818), Wave 3 (1,239), Wave 4 (773)

[17] Cases were defined as "an individual allocated to a social worker (for example a family of three siblings would be three individual cases) and/or a carer or carers allocated to a social worker for the purposes of foster or adoption."

Social workers in Greater London had the smallest mean average caseload (15 compared with 18 overall) while those in Yorkshire and the Humber and the South West had the highest (with 20 and 21 respectively).

In terms of practice area, social workers in fostering had lower than average caseloads (14) while duty/ first response/ MASH and Children in Need had significantly higher caseloads than some other practice areas (20 for both) (Figure 3.4).

Clearly, the number of cases that social workers are allocated at any point in time will vary depending on numerous factors. These include their contracted working hours, level of seniority/experience, practice area, wider staffing issues within their team (for example, if people are off sick or there are unfilled vacancies) and the complexity of the cases themselves. A lower mean number of cases might imply that the cases are more complex or require closer monitoring, for example.

Figure 3.4 Mean caseload by area of practice (Wave 4)
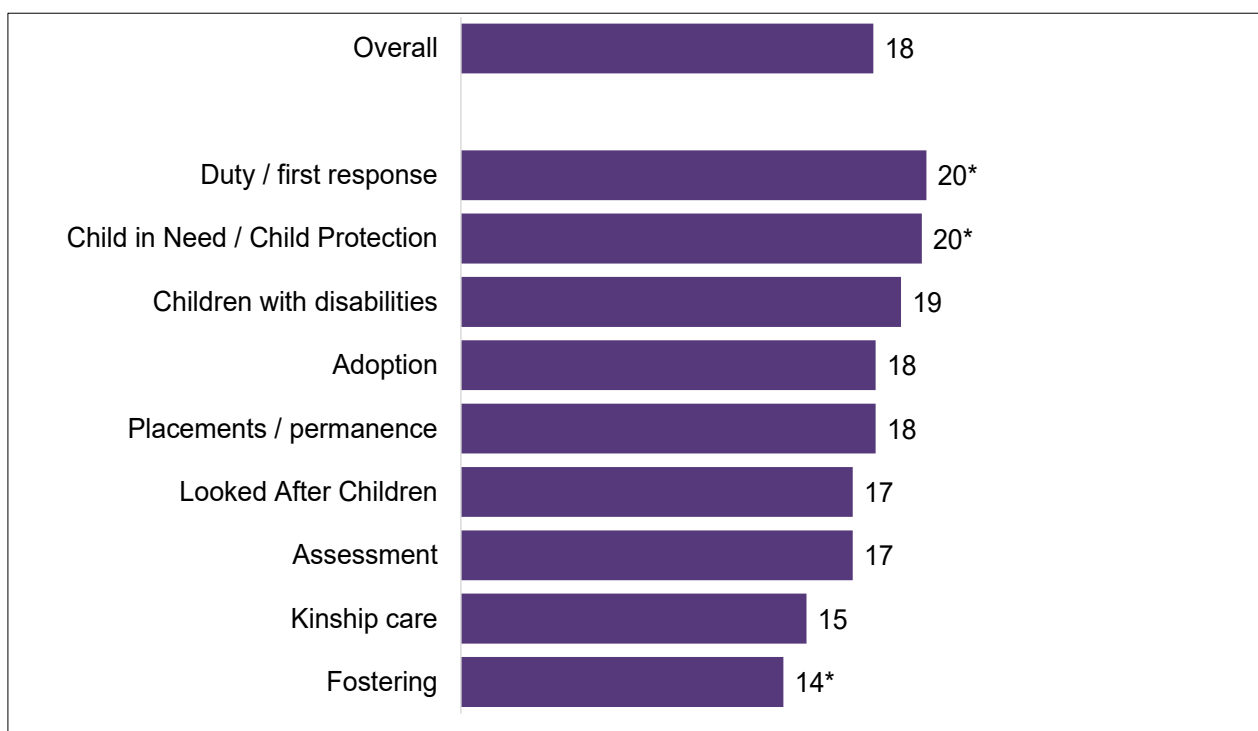
Base – all in a relevant case holder role, who gave an integer value: Overall (689); Area of practice: Duty/First Response (43), Child in Need/Child Protection (327), Children with Disabilities (52), Looked After Children (202), Assessment (120), Adoption (100), Placements/permanence (51), Leaving Care (46), Kinship care (45), Fostering (108). Job roles and areas of work with a base size of less than 40 are not shown.
*denotes a significant difference from the average

Stress levels and workload demands

As in previous waves, all local authority child and family social workers were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statements:

- 'My overall workload is too high';
- 'I feel I am being asked to fulfil too many different roles in my job'; and
- 'I feel stressed by my job'.

Figure 3.5 shows that there were high feelings of workload pressure in Wave 4, with around three in five social workers agreeing with each of the three statements and only one in four or fewer disagreeing. Overall, 62% of social workers said they felt stressed by their job, 61% said they are being asked to fulfil too many roles and 59% said their overall workload was too high.

Figure 3.5 Overall agreement levels regarding stress and workload demands (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
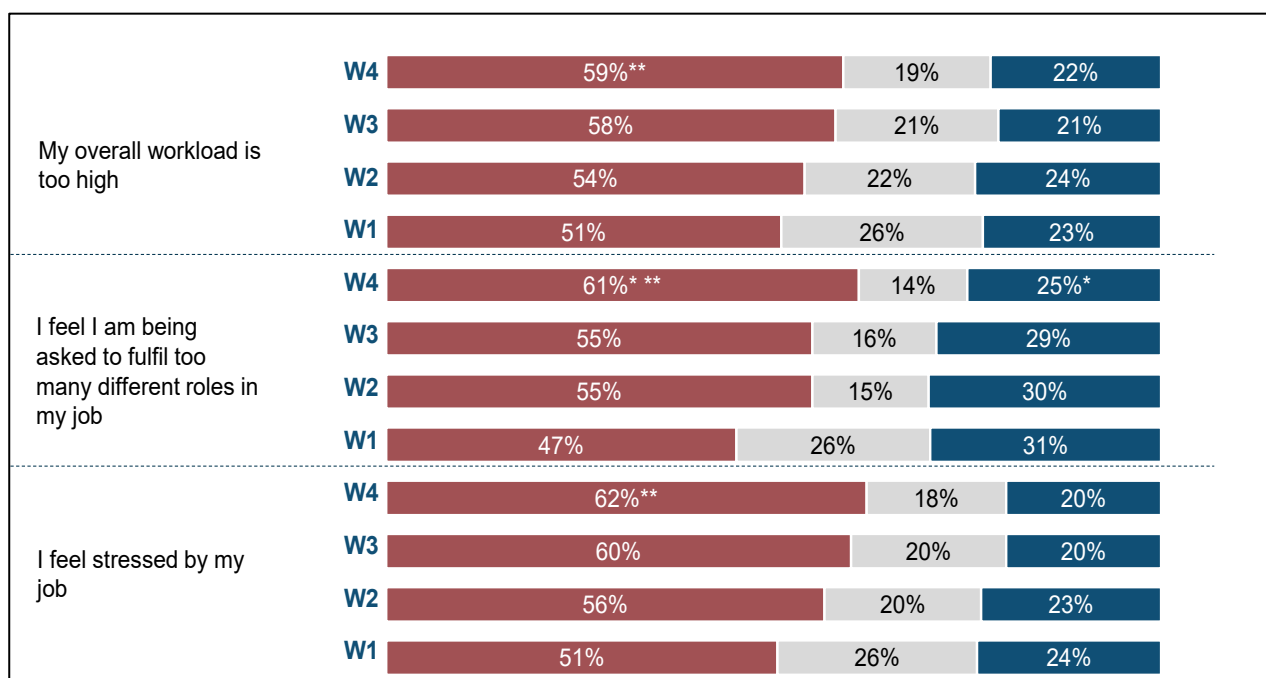
Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2: (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317).
*denotes significant difference between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3, **denotes significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1

Workload pressures and feelings of being stressed have increased since Wave 1, with a significant uplift for all three measures but especially for the area of having to fulfil too many roles; this has increased by 14 percentage points since Wave 1, and also shows a significant increase against Wave 3. The proportion of social workers who said they felt stressed by their job has increased by 11 percentage points since Wave 1 and the proportion who felt their workload was too high by eight percentage points. These are all significant increases since Wave 1.

As in previous waves, views on stress levels and workload demands were associated with job satisfaction and intention to leave the child and family social work sector. Of those who were dissatisfied overall with their job, 84% said they felt stressed by their job, 79% said they were being asked to fulfil too many roles and 75% said the workload was

too high. The comparative figures amongst those who were satisfied with their job overall were 55%, 55% and 53%. Likewise, of those who intended to leave child and family social work, 79% said they felt stressed in their job, 84% said they had too many roles and 84% said their workload was too high. The equivalent figures amongst those who were not planning to leave were significantly lower at 60%, 59% and 59% respectively.

A similar pattern of increasing stress is observed when only looking at those who have completed all four waves of the research (i.e., removing Wave 2, 3 and 4 non-responders). For this group, feeling stressed had increased from 51% in Wave 1 to 59% in Wave 3 but remained stable at 59% in Wave 4.

Having too high a workload

Overall, 59% reported that their workload is too high. There was no significant difference by job role, but significant differences were evident by practice area, with highest levels of agreement about workload being too high among social workers working in the fields of leaving care (75%), child in need / child protection (62%) and looked after children (66%).

No significant differences were found by employment status, gender, ethnicity, working hours or presence of a health condition. However, agreement was higher amongst those in the middle age bands (35-44 year olds and 45-54 year olds) at 63%, compared with 55% of 25-34 year olds and 58% of 55-64 year olds.

Wave 3 found that social workers in local authorities with lower Ofsted ratings were more likely to feel their workload was too high, but this was not the case in Wave 4. In fact, 52% of social workers working for an 'inadequate' rated local authority felt that their workload was too high, significantly *lower* than average.

Fulfilling too many job roles

Overall, 61% of social workers felt that they are being asked to fulfil too many different roles in their job. No real differences by job role were found, but once again social workers specialising in the fields of leaving care, Child in Need / Child Protection and Looked After Children were more likely to feel that they were being asked to fulfil too many different roles (just as they were more likely to feel their overall workload was too high). Agreement that they were fulfilling too many job roles stood at 73%, 67% and 68% respectively amongst those in these practice areas.

By Ofsted rating, social workers in the local authorities with a 'requires improvement' rating were the more likely to feel that they were being asked to fulfil too many different roles (66% compared with 61% on average).

Feeling stressed by their job

Overall, 62% of social workers said that they felt stressed by their job. Feelings of stress were highest for front line practitioners, standing at 69%. They were also highest amongst social workers working in the field of Child in Need / Child Protection (65%), younger social workers (75% of those aged under 35) and those with a physical or mental health condition (70%).

Not all job roles or practice areas reported such a high degree of stress. For example, as a comparison 37% of practice leaders said they felt stressed by their job. Likewise, 34% of social workers working in the field of education, 38% in prevention / early help services and 51% working in duty / first response / front door / MASH said they felt stressed by their job.

There were no differences in levels of agreement that they felt stressed by their job by Ofsted rating, but social workers working for an 'inadequate' rated local authority were slightly more positive about this measure, than they were for their workload. A quarter (26%) *disagreed* that they felt stressed by their job, compared with just 15% of those working for an 'outstanding' local authority.

Around three-quarters of those who said they felt stressed at Wave 1 (71%), Wave 2 (74%) and Wave 3 (75%) also felt stressed at Wave 4. Of those who agreed that they felt stressed at Wave 1, 23% had left local authority child and family social work by Wave 4, compared with 13% of those who disagreed that they felt stressed at Wave 1.

Reasons for feeling stressed by work

Those who agreed that they felt stressed by their job were asked what factors they felt were causing this stress, and to identify the main factor, if there was more than one.

Figure 3.6 shows a range of reasons for stress, although too much paperwork was most often cited (62%), followed by having too many cases (45%) and a lack of resources to support families (44%). When social workers were asked to identify the main factor, there was equal prominence between too much paperwork (21%) and having too many cases (22%). As the main factor, lack of resources to support families drops down behind poor working culture/practices.

Figure 3.6 All and main reported reasons for feeling stressed by the job (Wave 4)

	All factors	Main factor
I have too much paperwork	62%	21%
I have too many cases	45%	22%
Lack of resources to support families	44%	7%
Working culture / practices	38%	11%
Lack of administrative / business support	37%	5%
High staff turnover in my team / area of practice	35%	6%*
Insufficient time for direct work with children and families	34%	3%
Having to make emotional or difficult decisions	29%	5%
Insufficient quality of management / support	26%	9%
Not enough time to cover all the work required	9%	3%
Inadequate staff coverage / performance	5%	2%

Base: All who feel stressed by their job: Wave 4 (812)
Only factors cited by at least 5% (for 'all factors') are shown on this chart.

Figure 3.7 shows the reasons given for feeling stressed in Wave 3 compared with Wave 4. Overall, there has been a rise in mentions for most aspects, with a notable increase in the proportion of social workers mentioning that there has been high staff turnover in their team or area of practice (almost doubling, from 19% in Wave 3 to 35% in Wave 4). Otherwise the hierarchy of reasons is very similar across both waves.

Figure 3.7 All reported reasons for feeling stressed (Wave 3 and Wave 4)

	Wave 4	Wave 3
I have too much paperwork	62%*	55%
I have too many cases	45%*	40%
Lack of resources to support families	44%*	35%
Working culture / practices	38%	34%
Lack of administrative / business support	37%*	28%
High staff turnover in my team / area of practice	35%*	19%
Insufficient time for direct work with children and families	34%	30%
Having to make emotional or difficult decisions	29%*	22%
Insufficient quality of management / support	26%	23%
Not enough time to cover all the work required	9%	7%
Inadequate staff coverage / performance	5%	4%

Base: All who feel stressed by their job: Wave 3 (1179), Wave 4 (812)
*Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3
Only factors cited by at least 5% in Wave 4 are shown in this chart.

When looking at the reasons for feeling stressed by their jobs, there were some distinct differences which generally reflect the different nature of day-to-day roles. For example, front line practitioners were more likely than average to say they had too many cases (50% compared with 45% on average) and insufficient time for direct work with children

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and families (44% compared with 34% on average). In terms of the one main reason for feeling stressed, front line practitioners said it was too many cases (35%) and too much paperwork (26%). In contrast senior service managers / Directors were more likely to say the main driver of stress was the high staff turnover in the team / practice area (22%), followed by working culture / practices (19%).

By practice area, the incidence and hierarchy of reasons was generally similar although a few differences did emerge, most notably:

- Lack of resources to support families was more likely to be mentioned by those working among children with disabilities (64% compared with 44% on average)
- Lack of administrative / business support was more likely to be mentioned by those working in leaving care (51% compared with 37% on average)
- High staff turnover was more likely to be mentioned by those in Assessment (44%) and Looked After Children (44% compared with 35% on average)
- Insufficient time for direct work with children and families was more likely to be mentioned by those working among children with disabilities (45%) and those in placements / permanence (50% compared with 34% on average)
- Having to make emotional or difficult decisions was more likely to be mentioned by those working in placements / permanence (40% compared with 29% on average); and
- Insufficient quality of management / support was more likely to be mentioned by those working in fostering (34%) and assessment (34% compared with 26% on average).

Impacts of Covid-19 on workplace wellbeing

Starting in Wave 3, social workers were asked directly about whether various aspects of workplace wellbeing had increased, decreased, or remained the same as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As shown in Figure 3.8, most felt the pandemic has put pressure on their workplace wellbeing, with the greatest impact seen for the complexity of cases - three-quarters (76%) of social workers said the complexity of cases had increased due to the pandemic. A near equal proportion felt the pandemic has increased work related stress (73%) and workloads (73%), with a reported increase in anxiety following closely behind (67%).

Figure 3.8 Social workers' views on the impacts of Covid-19 on workplace wellbeing (Wave 3 and Wave 4)
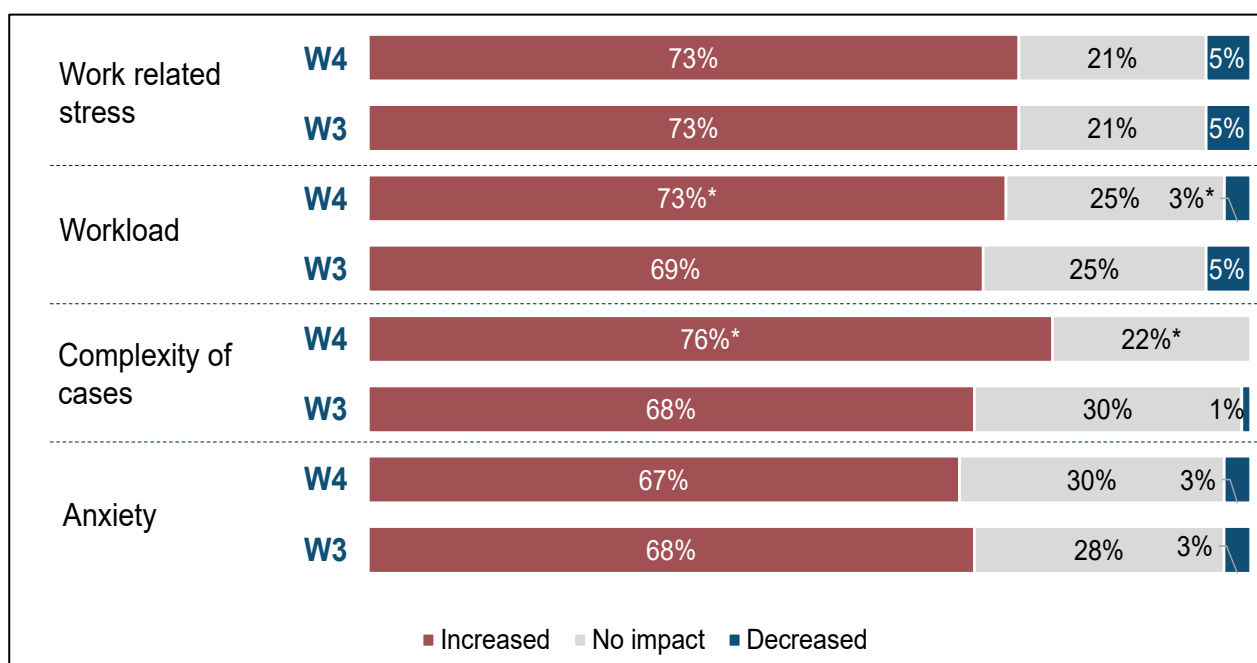
		Increased	No impact	Decreased
Work related stress	W4	73%	21%	5%
	W3	73%	21%	5%
Workload	W4	73%*	25%	3%*
	W3	69%	25%	5%
Complexity of cases	W4	76%*	22%*	
	W3	68%	30%	1%
Anxiety	W4	67%	30%	3%
	W3	68%	28%	3%

■ Increased ■ No impact ■ Decreased

Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2: (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

Compared to Wave 3, the ongoing impact of the pandemic (which had been running for two years by the time of Wave 4) can be seen with a significant rise in the proportion of social workers who felt that the pandemic had increased the complexity of their cases (from 68% to 76% in Wave 4) and increased their workload (from 69% to 73%). Of note, more social workers in Wave 4 said that the pandemic had increased the complexity of their cases 'a lot' (41%) compared to Wave 3 (32%).

Some differences in opinion were found across different roles, practice areas and social worker profiles, though these were less pronounced than have been found for other survey measures.

For example, front line practitioners were more likely than other social workers to say there had been an increase in work related stress (76% compared with 73% on average) and anxiety (70% compared with 67% on average), but team managers were more likely than average to report an increase in workload (81% compared with 73% on average). A not dissimilar pattern of differences was also found in Wave 3 when front line practitioners had also reported a higher than average increase in work related stress (although not anxiety) and team managers a higher than average increase in workload.

By practice area, social workers working in duty / first response / front door / MASH were more likely to report an increase in workload due to Covid-19 (81% compared with 73% on average) and complexity of cases (86% compared with 76% on average), but it was

those working in the Child in Need / Child Protection practice area who were most likely to say anxiety had increased (70% compared with 67% on average).

Finally, by age it is of note that those aged 25-34 were more likely to report an increase in stress (79% compared with 73% on average) and in the complexity of cases (85% compared with 76% on average), but it was those aged 35-45 who were more likely to report their anxiety had increased (72% compared with 67% on average).

Similar to Wave 3, women were more likely to say there had been an increase in stress (75% compared with 67% of men) and in case complexity (78% compared with 67% of men). Equally, as found in Wave 3, those with a physical or mental health condition were more likely to feel that the pandemic had increased anxiety levels (74% compared with 64% for those with no long-term health issues).

Most of the respondents who took part in the qualitative depth interviews reported that the pandemic had significantly increased their caseloads due to additional numbers and complexity, with the expectation that this trajectory would continue. Interviewees felt that the increased demand also combined with a rise in professional anxiety from partner agencies. They mentioned that complexity included domestic, sexual and physical abuse cases; the challenges of fewer unannounced visits during the height of the pandemic; the loss of support networks for families due to bereavement; children not returning to school, aligned with financial and housing issues:

> "The work that we deal with now is quite complex, very multifaceted, lots of layers, not easily resolved. You know, it's not a case of provide a service and an intervention and that will fix it, we're having to hold cases, I would say, a lot longer... I think the pandemic has reduced a lot of people's resilience, a lot of people's networks...some families have lost a lot of people and people close to them; people have lost jobs, you know. Poverty is a really big issue for us." (Service Manager, Black)

Many respondents pointed out that in their view the social impact of the pandemic has been intensified due to the preceding decade of austerity in public spending - entrenched poverty with partner services reduced, longer waiting lists and limited resources:

> "I think that it's really important to recognise that we had a pandemic after ten to twelve years of austerity, and Brexit, and then a pandemic…..There's definitely more work, there's definitely more work for us around the thematic issues... we've also had a massive increase in sexual abuse referrals…….caseloads have gone up, workload has gone up, there aren't any more of us, that's what it is." (Service Manager, White)

Looking to the future, the standout theme mentioned in the qualitative interviews was the surge in mental health issues for children, young people and parents with the reduction in

support services combined with the increased negative impact of social media on teenagers. The impact of parental mental health difficulties combined with financial difficulties and homelessness was identified as the main reason for cases moving up thresholds of risk:

> "Everything is complex at the moment, a lot of it is mental health. We're having a lot of parents who are just, like, cracking, basically… We've had a lot of teenagers; their mental health is declining." (front line practitioner, Black)

Changes to working practices – the impact of technology

Various Covid-19 lockdowns and government guidelines to work from home if possible have led to increased flexible working arrangements for many people who are able to work from home, and social workers are no exception. As in Wave 3, the vast majority (81%) reported that Covid-19 had led to increased flexible working, with very few significant differences by demographic and employment characteristics. That said, although still in the majority, front line workers were slightly less likely than average to say that flexible working arrangements had increased (78%).

Respondents in the qualitative interviews discussed how technological changes introduced to enable more flexible working during the Covid pandemic have affected their experience of the working day. Many reflected how the initial lockdown had accelerated changes in the delivery of services:

> "I think it has forced social workers to work with virtual practices in a way that all had been entirely resistant to doing before, and I think that it has increased therefore flexibility and accessibility for some services for families…. So, what else? I think it's made for a more intense working day for a lot of people, but equally it has allowed for a more blended and more balanced home-work balance, at times." (Head of Service, Mixed Ethnicity)

Whilst these changes have been welcomed with efficiency of time and the positive impact on the environment noted, new ways have led to different levels of stress. Reasons include the intensity of the working day with constant meetings rather than the normal rhythm of breaks and/or driving between meetings; the seeping of work into home with work-life balance affected and having limited access to colleagues resulting in feelings of isolation due to being unable to share professional knowledge and personal conversation. The latter was identified in the survey findings.

> "Every minute in your diary is seen as fair game which can be a bit of a challenge…. You know, there's no debrief, no processing and there's no separation between work and home...Court is now just part of my house.

You know, it takes place at home in whatever room I can find that's free."
(Senior Practitioner, Other ethnicity)

Some respondents highlighted that prior to the pandemic, working from home had not been accepted and needed to be justified. This included one respondent who said their local authority initially expected a daily report to account for productivity, but this was soon dropped as too onerous:

"Now it's, kind of, expected that people can be as productive at home and I think also before there was perhaps a slight perception that sometimes the people that were working from home, perhaps they weren't doing as much work …. So, yes, it's definitely shifted, and it's been interesting to see." (Adoption Matching Practitioner, White)

The majority of participants in the qualitative research applauded working with other professionals in the virtual environment enabling them to be more responsive and efficient with better participation from a range of professionals including health visitors, police and schools who previously had difficulty attending strategy meetings. A deputy team manager commented on the benefits of virtual forums had:

"It's really helped with our decision making in terms of what needed to be happening with families." (Deputy Team Manager, Other ethnicity)

Whilst reduced travelling to meetings provided practitioners with better use of time to undertake direct work with families there were differences in the experience for those practitioners in fostering, adoption and disability services who were more positive about direct work via online platforms compared to colleagues in safeguarding roles. Practitioners working with children with disabilities reflected that some children loved the engagement with technology, and virtual meetings offered flexibility and ease of engagement for families plus increased contact time with children. One fostering worker contrasted her experience of working part-time in a child protection role, where she was working full time hours to keep on top of the workload. She moved to a full-time role in the fostering team during the pandemic and now has a more balanced approach facilitated by the virtual environment and evening appointments. Another adoption practitioner reflected the benefits for families:

"I think it has opened up possibilities and different ways of working that could have been used prior to the pandemic.... using technology in a way that makes perhaps families at times more accessible, so I have seen some positives I would say." (Adoption Matching Practitioner, White)

In contrast, the most common theme from front line practitioners in safeguarding roles like child protection was that face-to-face work with children and young people was recognised as being most effective due to nuances picked up and should be maintained, particularly with the identified increase in mental health issues.

In considering future practice there was recognition that some lower-level meetings with families could continue to be virtual but not the higher risk or significant ones. Several respondents considered equality of access issues including digital and tech poverty; childcare and accommodating travel often add to the stress of the meeting and so access could be varied. Respondents felt that judgment around which meetings that included families should be face-to-face was particularly relevant if there are language or cognitive issues, for example, working with parents with learning disabilities:

> "I do think, you know, the default should probably be face to face, for the sake of the parents, really, because it's such an important meeting, and things can get lost in translation and communication virtually, I find." (ASYE, Mixed ethnicity)

Changes to working practices – managing stress and work life balance.

Whilst respondents recognised the benefits of flexible working and hybrid approaches the theme most often raised was increased isolation and levels of stress. In line with the survey findings about the negative impact of Covid-19 on relationships with colleagues, social workers missed out on peer support, not being able to benefit from informal support and ad hoc supervision and relying on virtual interaction with colleagues. Team cohesion and camaraderie were mentioned by several respondents, notably a number of ASYEs. A front line social worker, three years into practice, contrasted working from home with his previous experience of a team based in the same physical space:

> "Previously I sat there with my entire team and there was a real, sort of, team feel and there was a, kind of, camaraderie and it was a great-, you know, your team who are often-, there's a lot of more experienced social workers there but, you know, you really learn a lot from them and I think that is a generally speaking a much better working environment." (front line practitioner, White)

The tensions of working from home and not having colleagues so readily accessible was reflected across all levels. Some respondents emphasised feelings of isolation and being unable to share professional knowledge. A senior leader identified that she would be unable to step in and respond to a colleague who needed support:

> "I don't think it's the same as being in the office and being able to spot if somebody's not looking quite alright and you can just go and have a conversation with them." (Service Manager, Black)

Home working also impacted on the frequency of 'being at work' as identified by a range of practitioners across all levels including comments that they are always tempted to

work more and are actually doing increased hours at home (although the survey found that average working hours had not increased significantly compared with Wave 3):

> "I've been working harder, I think my hours of work are longer and I think that you've got to have a good degree of personal discipline to turn your computer off and say, 'I'm done'." (Head of Service, Mixed ethnicity)

Several respondents pointed out that travelling time had some advantages as it acted as a space to process and reflect, whereas back-to-back meetings at home precluded those opportunities to take stock or decompress following the working day:

> "I had a 45-minute drive, and I could kind of, unpack the day on the way home." (front line Practice Supervisor, White)

The opportunity provided by the pandemic to work from home initially resulted in increased caring responsibilities and, for the future, ongoing flexible and agile working has been welcomed by many including a manager who was evaluating future progression on the basis of continuing with this practice:

> "So I think for my work life balance and being involved as a father, it's made a really positive difference, it's helped me be a lot more present really." (Team Manager, Mixed ethnicity)

Impacts of Covid-19 on relationships with colleagues and service users

Social workers were also asked about whether Covid-19 had improved, worsened, or had no impact on relationships with their colleagues and with children and families (service users).

Although not as marked as the impact for their workplace wellbeing, as Figure 3.9 shows it was still the case that sizeable numbers of social workers felt that the Covid-19 pandemic had had a negative impact on colleague and service user relationships. This was particularly the case in respect of social workers' relationship with colleagues, with six in ten (61%) at Wave 4 saying these relationships had worsened due to the pandemic.

Figure 3.9 Social workers' views on the impacts of Covid-19 on workplace wellbeing (Wave 3 and Wave 4)
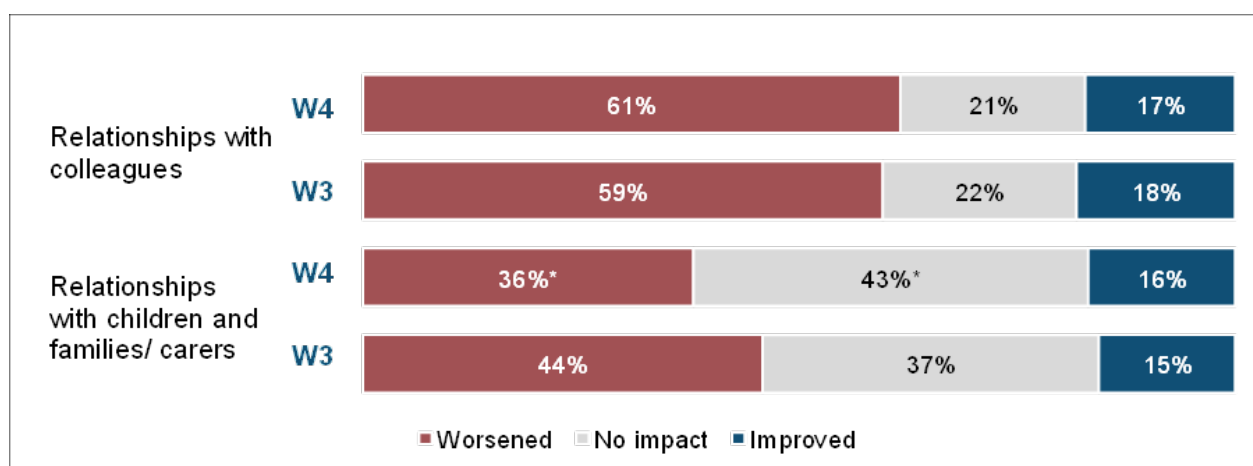
Looking at Covid-19's impact on relationships with colleagues is particularly important given the importance of these relationships for social workers' resilience and morale. As found in Wave 3, front line practitioners were again more likely than more senior colleagues to feel that the relationship with colleagues had worsened (62%), but in Wave 4 this also proved to be the case with practice supervisors (72%). These figures compare to just 54% of team managers, 51% of practice leaders and 51% of senior service managers / Directors.

A sense that the situation had worsened was also evident amongst social workers in certain practice areas, with those working in kinship care (72%), placements / permanence (70%) and fostering (69%) more likely to feel the situation has worsened. Those employed directly by the local authority were also more likely to feel this was the case compared to agency social workers (62% compared with 47%).

No marked differences were found by gender or age, whilst by ethnicity social workers who were Asian / Asian British or Black / Black British were the least negative about the situation. Fifty three percent of those who were Asian / Asian British felt there had been no impact on relationships with colleagues (compared with 21% on average), whilst 41% of Black / Black British respondents felt relationships with colleagues had improved (compared with 17% on average). This may relate to the higher than average proportion of Asian/ Asian British and Black/ Black British social workers who were agency staff (25% and 26% respectively, compared with 13% overall) - as agency staff were more likely than direct employees to consider there had been no impact (31% compared with 20%) and less likely to feel relationships had worsened (47% compared with 62%).

Of note, social workers employed in local authorities with an 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' Ofsted rating were more likely to feel the situation had worsened (66% and

63% respectively compared to just 54% of those working for a local authority with an 'outstanding' rating). A similar pattern was also found in Wave 3.

Lesser impact was seen for relationships with children and families/carers; just over a third (36%) said the pandemic had worsened these relationships but this was outweighed by the proportion who felt that there had been no change (43%) or the situation had improved (16%). As a positive note, fewer social workers in Wave 4 compared to Wave 3 felt the relationship with children and families/carers had worsened, with more now saying there had been no impact either way. Compared with views on relationships with colleagues, there was a more balanced spread in opinion between those who thought the pandemic had had no impact and those who felt it had made relationships worse. Front line practitioners were more likely than average to think there had been no impact (48% compared with 43%).

By practice area, some views were found to differ with those working in adoption the most likely to feel the situation had got worse (43% compared to 36% on average). There is also the suggestion that, as found in Wave 3, those working in duty/ first response/ MASH and assessment were more likely than social workers in certain other practice areas to feel Covid-19 had no impact on their relationships with children and families, which may be related to the nature of their role (49% and 47% respectively).

In line with previous findings about relationships with colleagues, those employed directly by a local authority were more likely than those working via an agency to feel that relationships with children and families had deteriorated (38% compared with 25%).

By Ofsted rating, the pattern of results regarding relationships with children and families differed to the pattern regarding relationships with colleagues. Here it was social workers who worked for an 'outstanding' rated local authority who were more likely to think relationships with service users had deteriorated (43%, compared with 36% on average).

4. Views on employer, manager and working environment

To better understand the work experience of child and family social workers, the survey explored how they felt about various aspects of their working life. This chapter explores: social workers' feelings of loyalty to and being valued by their employer; aspects of their relationship with their managers; experiences of receiving and providing reflective supervision; views on the resources at their disposal and their working environment; and access to learning and development opportunities. The chapter also looks at how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted attitudes towards aspects of their working life.

Chapter highlights

- Compared to Wave 3, feelings of loyalty to their employer (68% compared with 74%) and feeling valued by their employer (56% compared with 61%) have both declined. These measures increased in Waves 2 and 3.

- There has also been a fall in the proportion of social workers who felt they received regular feedback on their performance, 65% in Wave 4 compared with 70% in Wave 3. Otherwise views about whether managers were considerate of life outside work and encouraged skills development have remained consistent with Wave 3. The proportion who agreed their manager encouraged them to develop skills has fallen in Wave 4 compared with Wave 1 (73% versus 76%).

- Agreement amongst social workers that they have the right tools and IT resources to do their jobs has fallen compared to Wave 3. Two-thirds (68%) agreed that they had the right tools for their job (down from 76%[18]) and half (51%) agreed that the IT systems and software support them to do their job (down from 57%). Overall, over six in ten (63%) thought that the Covid-19 pandemic had negatively impacted resources to support children and families.

- Most social workers (64%) said they receive reflective supervision at least every five or six weeks. Most (75%) receiving reflective supervision rated the quality of it as good. Poor ratings are primarily driven by a sense that is not reflective, and instead the sessions are too managerial / monitoring progress.

- Over nine in ten social workers (92%) said they had received employer-supported CPD or learning and development in the past 12 months. Most (67%) agreed they could access the right learning and development opportunities when they needed to.

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[18] In Wave 3, social workers were also asked about their level of agreement with "I have the right resources (e.g., equipment, petty cash, etc.) to do my job effectively". The deletion of this statement at Wave 4 may have had an impact on the trend data for "I have the right tools to do my job effectively."

Feeling valued by and loyal to their employer

Local authority child and family social workers were asked about their loyalty to, and the extent to which they felt valued by, their employer. As shown by Figure 4.1, and similar to previous waves, social workers were more likely to feel loyal (68% agreed) than to feel valued (56% agreed). For both loyalty and feeling valued there has been a fall compared with Wave 3. The change can be seen at both ends of the scale for both measures, with fewer social workers agreeing in Wave 4 compared to Wave 3, and instead more disagreeing. Overall, feeling loyal to the organisation and valued by their employer both increased in Waves 2 and 3 before falling back in Wave 4.

Figure 4.1 Social workers' perceptions of loyalty to and feeling valued by their employer (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
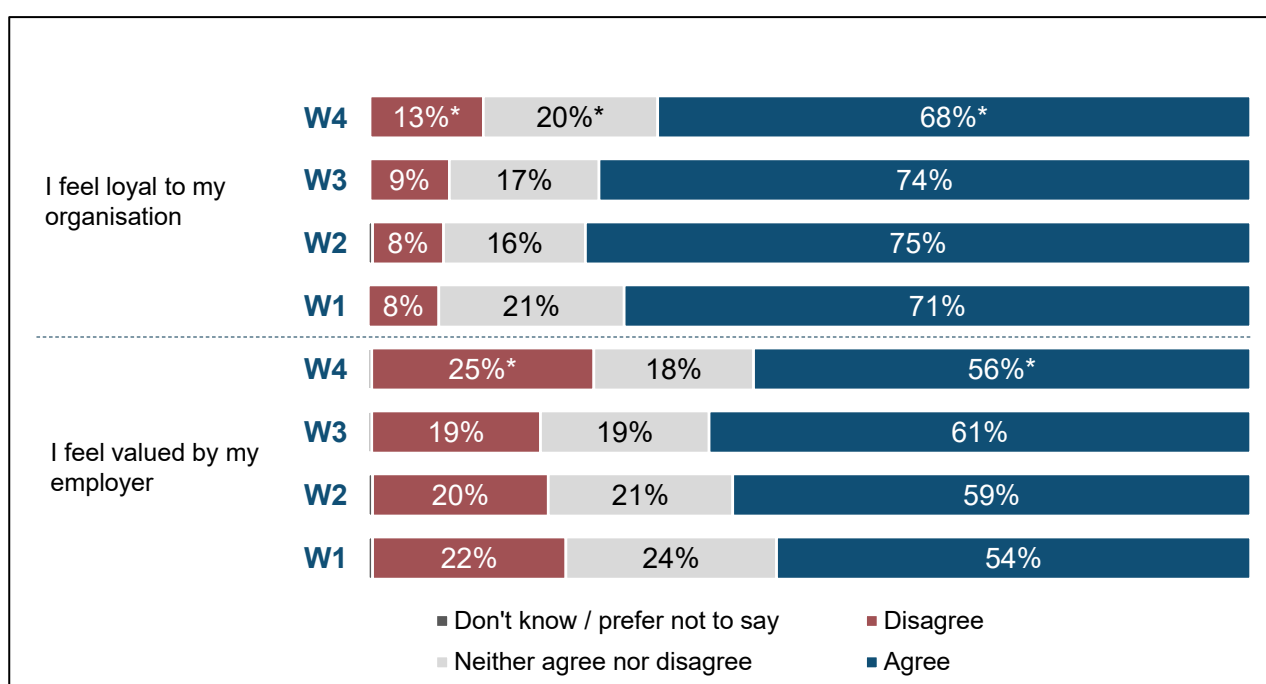
Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2: (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

When looking only at those who completed the survey across all four waves, views about feeling loyal to their employer have also fallen in Wave 4 (68%), while they had remained consistent across the previous waves. Similarly, in terms of feeling valued by their employer, views of those who completed across all four waves have also become more negative in Wave 4, falling to 57% from 61% at Wave 3.

Social workers who had been promoted between Wave 3 and Wave 4 were more likely to feel valued by their employer (65% compared with 54%).

Looking at length of time at current employer indicates that newer employees felt more valued than average (63% if they had only been employed for one year or less,

compared with 56% on average) but less loyal (53% compared with 68% on average, and with 74% of those who had been at the same employer for at least 10 years).

When looking at how feelings of loyalty and value differ by social workers directly employed by a local authority and those working for an agency, those in direct employment were more likely to feel loyal to their organisation (70% agreed, compared to 54% of agency workers) but there was no difference in terms of feeling valued (56% employed directly agreed, 59% of agency workers). This is in slight contrast to Wave 3 which found no difference for loyalty but found that agency workers were more likely to feel valued by their employer than those in direct employment.

Despite this, many of the same differences regarding feelings of loyalty and value that were apparent in Waves 1 to 3 were also apparent in Wave 4. As with previous waves, those in senior roles generally felt more loyal and valued than front line practitioners. For example, 84% of senior service managers / Directors and 79% of team managers agreed they felt loyal to their employer compared with 61% of front line practitioners. For feeling valued, 73% of senior service managers / Directors, 65% of practice leaders and 67% of team managers felt valued, compared with 50% of front line practitioners.

Those who expected to be employed directly by a local authority in 12 months' time were more likely to feel both loyal and valued than those who expected to be working elsewhere. Three-quarters (76%) agreed they felt loyal and three in five (62%) agreed that they felt valued, compared to 57% and 54% for those who expected still to be working for in child and family social work but employed via an agency (57%) or in the private / voluntary sector (54%).

Notably, and as found in previous waves, social workers who had received employer-supported CPD in the 12 months prior to the survey were more likely to feel both loyal (69%) and valued (57%) compared with those who had not (51% loyal, 43% valued).

Agreement that they felt loyal to their organisation was lower amongst those with a physical or mental health condition (62% compared to 69% without). Similarly, social workers with a physical or mental health condition were less likely to feel valued by their employer (49% compared with 58% of those without a health condition).

Agreement that they felt valued by their employer was also lower amongst those working part-time (50% compared to 58% working full-time).

As found in previous waves, and as shown in Figure 4.2, there was a link between higher feelings of loyalty and value and working in a local authority with a better Ofsted rating. Social workers in local authorities rated as 'outstanding' or 'good', were more likely to feel loyal to and valued by their employer, than those in local authorities rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.

Figure 4.2 Views on loyalty and value, by Ofsted rating (Wave 4)
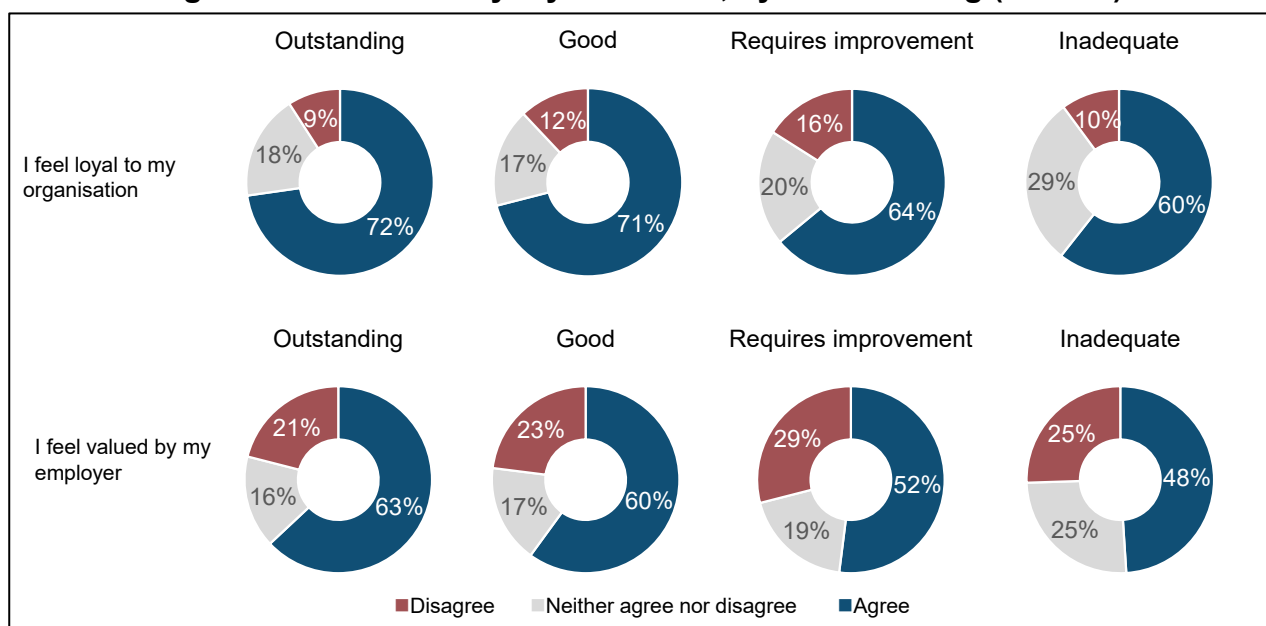
Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work. Wave 4 (1,317)

Views about line management

Child and family social workers were asked about four key aspects of their relationship with their line manager(s). Figure 4.3 shows they were typically positive. They were most positive about their manager being considerate of their lives outside of work (77% agreed) and encouraging them to develop their skills (73% agreed). Although still in the majority, they were less positive that they had been well supported by their manager during the Covid-19 pandemic (69% agreed) and about receiving regular feedback on their performance (65% agreed).

Whilst views have remained largely consistent across the previous three waves of the study, social workers in Wave 4 were less likely to agree that they receive regular feedback on their performance (65% compared with 70% in Wave 3). Likewise social workers at Wave 4 were also less positive about their managers encouraging them to develop their skills when compared directly to Wave 1, 73% against 76% in Wave 1.

Figure 4.3 Social workers' views on their line manager (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
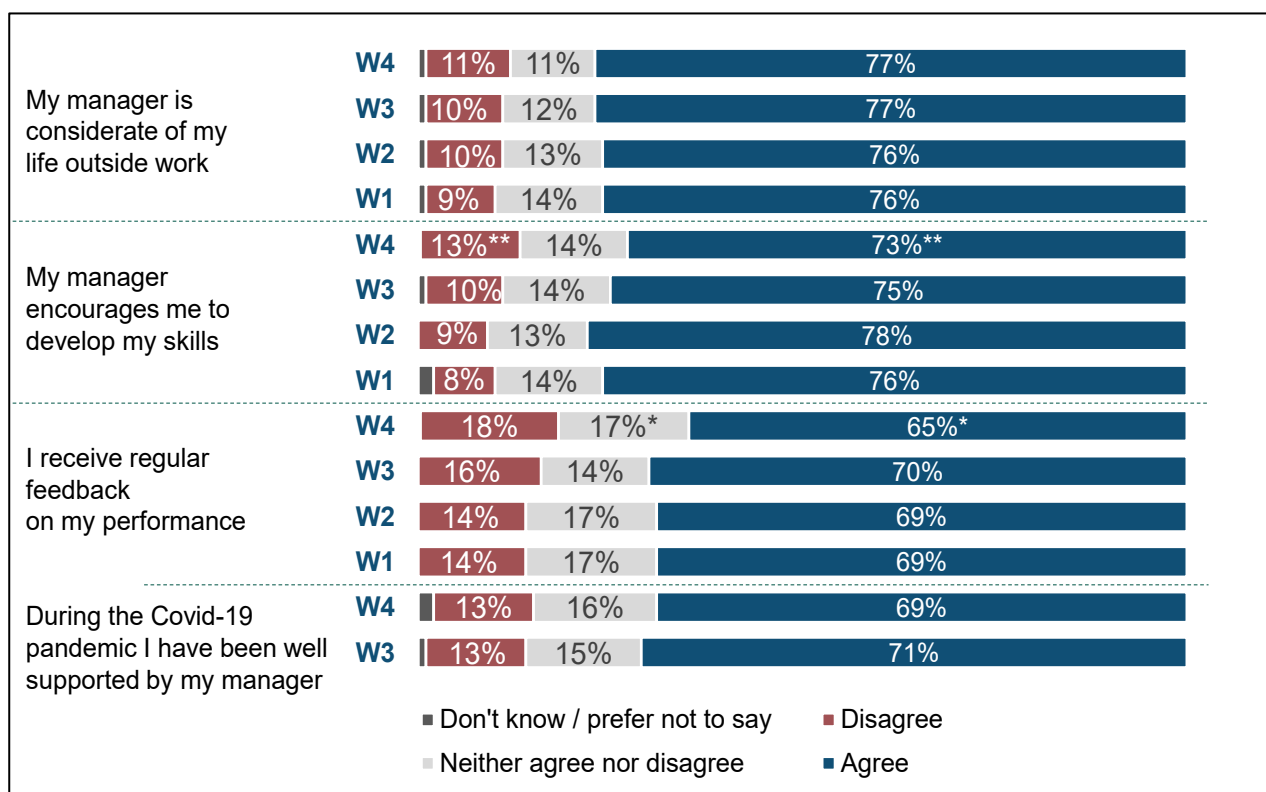
Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2 (3,009), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)

*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3, **denotes significant differences between Wave 4 and Wave 1

There were no differences in views on management by whether the social worker was employed directly by a local authority or via an agency. In fact, mostly the views held on management were the same regardless of the role, practice area and demographic profile of the social worker, although some differences were evident.

In terms of their manager encouraging the development of skills, lower levels of agreement were found amongst those working in fostering (64% agreed, against 73% on average). Lower levels of agreement were also found amongst those aged 45+, with 68% of those aged 45+ agreeing their manager encouraged the development of their skills against 77% of those aged under 45.

As found in previous years, female social workers were less positive about their managers in several areas compared to male social workers. For example, 20% of women disagreed that they received regular feedback on their performance compared with 10% of men, and 14% of women disagreed that their managers had supported them well during Covid-19 compared to just 7% of men. Unlike Wave 3, however, there were no differences in views found between those of different ethnicities or by those who have a physical or mental health condition and those who do not.

As found previously, there was a stark difference in views on management depending on whether social workers had done employer-supported CPD or training in the preceding 12 months. Those who had taken part in CPD were more positive about managers' encouragement to develop skills, as one might expect (75% agreed compared with 56% who had not undertaken CPD or training). They were also more likely to agree that their manager provided regular feedback on performance (66% compared with 55%) and supported them well throughout the Covid-19 pandemic (70% compared with 60%).

Introduced in Wave 3, local authority child and family social workers were asked how the support from management had changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As shown by Figure 4.4, and mirroring the findings in Wave 3, views on this were split fairly evenly. Most commonly social workers thought there had been 'no impact' (38%), but near equal proportions felt that the support from their manager had improved (29%) or worsened (32%) since the onset of Covid-19.

Figure 4.4 Views on how support from management has changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Wave 3 to Wave 4)
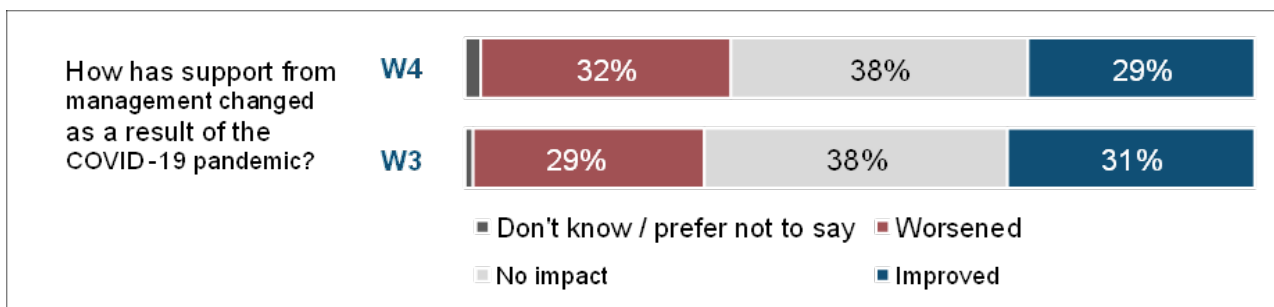
Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work. Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)
*Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

There was no difference in views between those employed directly by a local authority compared with agency workers. However, as in Wave 3, front line practitioners were more likely to feel that the support from their manager had worsened as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (35%). Likewise, as in Wave 3, 'White British' social workers compared with 'Black / Black British' social workers were also more likely to feel that management support had worsened (34% compared with 20%).

Other groups more likely to feel that support from their manager had worsened as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic included:

- Those who had been with their employer for more than four years (36%, compared to 25% who had been with their employer for one to three years).
- Those in the middle age bands of 35-54 (34% compared to 30% aged under 35 and 28% aged 55+).
- Those whose route into social work had been via the 'Step Up to Social Work' programme, compared to those entering with a diploma in social work, or an

undergraduate or postgraduate degree (44%[19], compared to 28%, 29% and 34% respectively).

Qualitative interviewees mentioned that local authorities were offering a range of different forms of support to them as a result of the pandemic. At organisation level this included things like mindfulness sessions, a wellbeing officer, and occupational health support. Other examples given were localised team support including things like team weekly check-ins, weekly forums for emotional support, and virtual coffee/ lunchtime.

Several viewed these actions as very positive – highlighting the importance of regular informal contact with managers and peers - whilst acknowledging that management perhaps did not get things right at the beginning of the pandemic in the absence of government guidelines. Emphasis on regular communication and meaningful updates was valued.

Overall, the respondents who had a more positive outlook on the support offered by their local authority recognised the value of informal peer support combined with effective team manager support to maintain morale. Forums for wellbeing, team lunches and regular catchups were appreciated. The standout theme was the value of 'the team' both virtually and physically was recognised as central to wellbeing and job satisfaction:

> "Yes, it was a lot of doing team stuff, to remind everyone that we're all, like, here, together and to support each other. So, there were those things. They sent out, like, regular newsletters as well, giving information about how to take care of your emotional wellbeing, things like that."
> (front line practitioner, Black)

Views on tools and IT resources

Social workers in local authority child and family social work were asked about their work environment and the tools and resources at their disposal. Specifically, they were asked the extent to which they had the right tools and IT systems to do their jobs effectively.

As shown in Figure 4.5, agreement that they had the right tools and resources was mixed, with two-thirds (68%) agreeing they had the right tools for their job and but only half (51%) agreeing that the IT systems and software support them to do their job.

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[19] Note the relatively small base size for this group (n= 45).

Social workers had been more positive about all three measures in Wave 3 compared to previous waves, but views have fallen back in Wave 4[20]. Fewer social workers now think they have the right tools to do their job effectively compared to Wave 1.

Figure 4.5 Views on working environment and resources (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
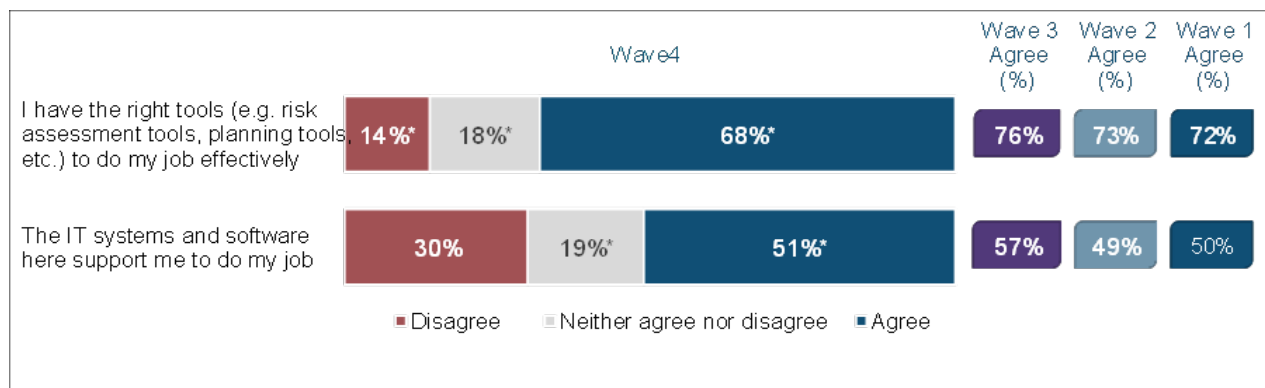
Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that attitudes towards the employer, manager, resources and working environment are interlinked, many of the same groups that were more positive or negative towards their employer and manager typically felt the same about the resources at their disposal.

Of particular note, and as in Wave 3, front line practitioners were less positive than those in senior roles about the tools available to them (although there was no difference in terms of views on the IT systems). Only 62% agreed that they had the right tools to do their job effectively, compared with 78% of practice supervisors, 72% of team managers, 72% of practice leaders and 77% of senior service managers / Directors.

There were no differences in the views of social workers about the tools available to support them between those who were directly employed or employed via an agency.

In line with Wave 3, differences in views on resources were also found by local authority Ofsted rating (the higher the rating, the more positive social workers were) and by physical or mental health conditions (those with a health condition were less positive). For example:

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[20] In Wave 3, social workers were also asked about their level of agreement with "I have the right resources (e.g., equipment, petty cash, etc.) to do my job effectively". The deletion of this statement at Wave 4 may have had an impact on the trend data for "I have the right tools to do my job effectively."

- 74% at an 'outstanding' authority agreed they had the right tools to do their job effectively, falling to 70% at 'good', 64% at 'requires improvement' and 63% at 'inadequate' rated authorities. A similar pattern was also observed for IT systems and software.
- Nearly four in ten (37%) of those with a physical or mental health condition disagreed that they had the IT systems and software to support them to do their job and around two in ten (19%) disagreed that they had the right tools to do their job effectively (compared with 29% and 13% of those without a health condition).

By ethnicity, views and opinions were generally similar, although there was a dip in positive opinions amongst those from a 'White other' ethnic group[21]; 29% disagreed that they had the right tools to do their job with this being just over twice as high as average (14%). Likewise, half of social workers from a 'White other' ethnic group (50%) disagreed that they had the right IT systems compared to 30% on average. This is related to the higher than average incidence of a physical or mental health condition among the 'White other' group who took part in this research (39%, compared with 22% overall).

Social workers were also asked about the impact of Covid-19 on the resources available for supporting children and families (Figure 4.6). Nearly two-thirds (63%) of social workers thought that that the resources available had decreased to some degree because of the pandemic, with a sizeable proportion saying it had decreased 'a lot' (37%). One in five (20%) thought there had been no impact while 15% thought that resources had increased. The views that social workers had on the resources for supporting children and families had not changed significantly compared to Wave 3.

The view that resources had decreased was more common among those directly employed by the local authority (65%, compared to 52% employed via an agency), those who worked in Child in Need / Child Protection (68%) and those who were 'White British' (67%).

Figure 4.6 Views on how resources for supporting children and families have changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Wave 3 to Wave 4)
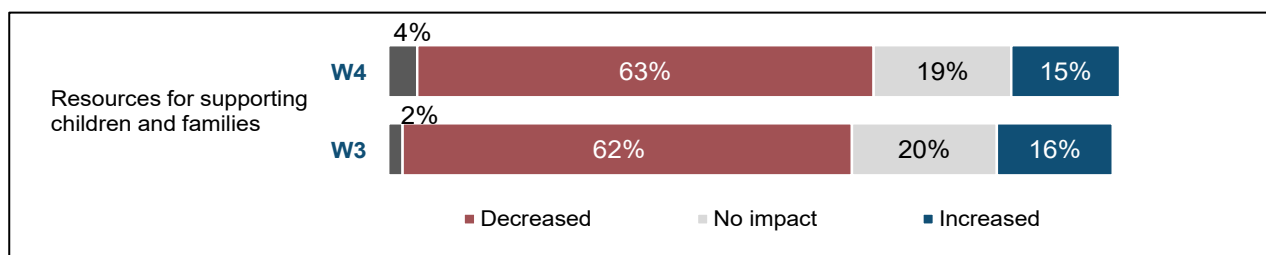
Resources for supporting children and families		Decreased	No impact	Increased
W4	4%	63%	19%	15%
W3	2%	62%	20%	16%

■ Decreased　■ No impact　■ Increased

Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

Receiving reflective supervision

To better understand perceptions of professional development and performance management, the survey explored experiences of reflective supervision, both in terms of receiving and providing supervision.[22]

Local authority child and family social workers in non-managerial roles were asked about the frequency of receiving reflective supervision. As shown in Figure 4.7, it was most common for social workers to say they receive reflective supervision every three or four weeks (41% received it this frequently), although 40% received it less frequently than this (20% every five or six weeks, 20% less often) and 13% had not received any since joining their current employer. Although in the minority, Wave 4 found an increase in the number of social workers who said they had not received reflective supervision at all, up from 10% to 13%.

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[22] Since the Wave 3 survey, reflective supervision has been defined as: a learning process that allows the practitioner to explore the factors influencing their practice, including emotions, assumptions, and power relationships; develop an understanding of the knowledge base informing their practice and its limits; and, to identify next steps.

Figure 4.7 Frequency of receiving reflective supervision (Wave 1 to Wave 4)

	Have not received reflective supervision since joining current employer	Less frequently than every six weeks	Once every five or six weeks	Once every three or four weeks	At least once every two weeks
Wave 4	13%*	20%*	20%	41%	3%
Wave 3	10%	24%	20%	41%	4%
Wave 2	12%	24%	17%	41%	4%
Wave 1	10%	18%	21%	44%	4%

Legend:
- Have not received reflective supervision since joining current employer
- Less frequently than every six weeks
- Once every five or six weeks
- Once every three or four weeks
- At least once every two weeks

Base: All LA child and family social workers who are in a non-managerial role, excluding ASYE; Wave 1 (3,627), Wave 2 (2,006), Wave 3 (1,466), Wave 4 (932)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

As found in previous waves, there is a link between perceived determinants of wellbeing and the frequency of reflective supervision. Those who were satisfied overall with their current job were more likely to receive reflective supervision at least every three to four weeks compared to those who were dissatisfied (52% compared to 32%). Likewise, only 9% of those satisfied said they had not received any reflectively supervision compared to 19% of those dissatisfied with their current job. Although this link does not prove which factor drives the other, it does indicate a link between receiving supervision frequently and better workplace satisfaction.

Social workers employed via an agency were more likely to say they receive reflective supervision on a more frequent basis than those working directly for a local authority (60% received it at least every three or four weeks, compared to 42% working directly for a local authority) which may relate to their greater likelihood of being employed as front line practitioners rather than in more senior roles. That said, overall there was no difference in terms of the proportions who say they have 'ever' received reflective supervision (81% and 86% respectively).

In terms of job role, front line practitioners were more likely to say they received reflective supervision at least every three or four weeks, as one might expect and as found previously (46% did so, compared with 41% of practice leaders and team managers). There is, however, less of a correlation between receiving reflective supervision by age or practice area, than has been observed in feelings about employer, manager and work environment. That said, findings do suggest that those working in duty / first response,

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assessment and kinship care say they are less likely to receive any reflective supervision (17% did not receive any, which compares, for example, to just 4% of those working in leaving care).

Previous waves had found a correlation between Ofsted rating and receiving reflective supervision. This correlation was weaker in Wave 3 than Wave 2, and weaker still in Wave 4 but there is still a suggestion of a trend; twice as many social workers working at an 'inadequate' rated local authority said they had not received any reflective supervision in the last 12 months compared to those working at an 'outstanding' rated local authority (15% compared with 8%).

Quality of reflective supervision

New questions were added to Wave 4 to explore the views of social workers on the quality of the reflective supervision they had received in the last 12 months.

Most social workers who had received reflective supervision gave it a positive rating. Three-quarters (75%) rated the supervision as 'very good' or 'good', with 17% giving a 'very good' rating. Around one in five (22%) regarded the quality as poor, although most of this group rated it as 'poor' (18%) rather than 'very poor' (4%).

There were few differences in perceptions of the quality of the reflective supervision by the role, practice area or characteristics of the social worker. That said, social workers employed directly by a local authority were less positive than agency social workers - a quarter (25%) rated the reflective supervision as poor compared to 10% of agency social workers.

Those who rated the reflective supervision as poor were asked their reasons for this. As shown in Figure 4.8 the main reason behind the poor rating was that the reflective supervision was not sufficiently reflective, and that it strayed into the realms of being managerial supervision or a monitoring of progress. Thereafter main reasons centred on the reflective supervision not being long enough or of a sufficient depth, sometimes because the manager was poorly prepared and/or did not ask the right questions in the session.

Figure 4.8 Reasons for rating reflective supervision as poor or very poor quality (Wave 4)

Reason	Percentage
Supervision is not reflective (e.g. it's managerial, monitoring progress)	80%
It is not long enough / it is rushed	36%
I do not receive any/enough feedback	26%
My manager is poorly prepared / does not ask the right questions	22%
I do not feel the reflective supervision is helping me improve my skills	16%
I do not feel my input is taken on board	12%
The feedback I receive is not useful	10%
My manager lacks confidence	8%
Doesn't happen frequently enough	7%
Badly organised / Lacks structure	3%
Difficulties due to remote working	2%
Other reason	1%

Base: All who have received reflective supervision: Wave 4 (802)
Base: All who think the quality of supervision is poor: Wave 4 (198)

Providing reflective supervision

The proportion of child and family social workers responsible for providing supervision has gradually increased over the course of the study but plateaued in Wave 4. In Wave 4, 28% of respondents were responsible for providing supervision, up from 25% at Wave 1. This increase from Wave 1 reflects the growing experience and seniority of the sample over time, leaving a higher proportion of senior people in the sample.

As in Wave 3, the vast majority of those responsible for providing supervision reported feeling confident of their ability to provide adequate support and supervision during the Covid-19 pandemic (95%, the same as Wave 3). Confidence levels were high across the different groupings and profiles of social workers, although the degree of confidence was higher for those in a senior service manager / Director role (50% felt 'very' confident compared to 38% on average) and for those aged 45+ (50% felt 'very' confident compared to 22% of those aged 25-44), age and seniority of role being linked.

Learning and development

Access to the right learning and development opportunities

Local authority child and family social workers were asked whether they were able to access the right learning and development opportunities when they needed to, and whether they had undertaken any learning or CPD over the last 12 months.

Most social workers (67%) agreed that they were able to access the right learning and development opportunities when needed, although more 'agreed' (50%) than 'strongly

agreed' (16%). Around one in six social workers (16%) felt they could not access the right learning and development opportunities.

Views on access to the right learning and development opportunities have remained consistent across the study (67% agreement in Wave 4 and 69% in each of the previous waves). This trend remained consistent when analysing just those who had completed the survey at all four waves.

Figure 4.9 Access to the right learning and development opportunities (Wave 3 and 4)
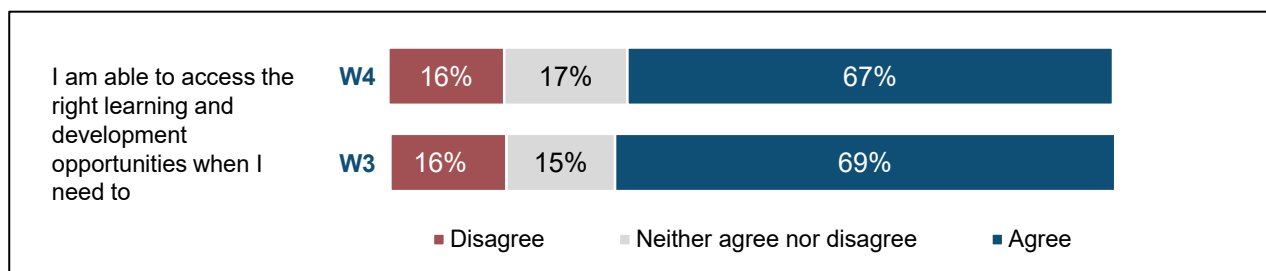
	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree
I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to — W4	16%	17%	67%
W3	16%	15%	69%

Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

Those who were employed directly by the local authority were more likely to feel they could access the right training and development compared to those working for an agency, 69% compared with 56%. This difference was more pronounced than in Wave 3 when the comparable figures were 70% and 63%, suggesting that the divide between the two groups has become wider.

Reflective of findings in other areas within this study, practitioners in front line roles were less positive than those in more senior roles. Only 61% agreed that they could access the right training and development when they needed it compared to 72% of practice supervisors, 74% of team managers, 69% of practice leaders and 77% of senior service managers / Directors.

Views were generally consistent across practice areas and by demographic characteristics. However, as in Wave 3, social workers based at a local authority with an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating were more positive, with 76% agreeing that they could access the right learning and development opportunities, compared to 64% of those working in an 'inadequate' rated local authority.

Incidence of learning and development / CPD

Over nine in ten social workers (92%) said they had undertaken some learning and development / CPD supported by their employer over the past 12 months[23]. This is on par with Wave 3, which had recorded a slight increase on the Wave 2 position (up from 89% in Wave 2).

As found previously, social workers employed directly by a local authority were much more likely have done employer-supported learning and development in the last 12 months, 94% compared with 79% of those working via an agency. Those working full-time were also more likely to have done employer-supported learning and development compared with those working part-time (93% compared to 88%).

Despite these differences, overall participation rates were generally high across the board, reaching 95% or higher for those working in the field of youth offending, the field of education, those who were a team manager and those who had been with their employer for more than 10 years. There were no notable differences in participation rates by gender, age or ethnicity.

Impacts of Covid-19 on career progression and learning

The Wave 3 survey introduced new questions to determine the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on career development. All those working in child and family social work were asked the extent to which opportunities for career progression and time for learning and development had increased or decreased due to the pandemic.

As shown in Figure 4.10, in Wave 4 the majority (66%) of social workers thought that Covid-19 had had no impact on their opportunities for career progression. Amongst those who thought it had had an impact, more said that it had decreased the opportunity for career progression than increased it (18% compared to 10%). That said, there has been a small positive shift in opinion since Wave 3 with an increase in the proportion who felt it has improved opportunities (up from 6% to 10%), and a fall in the proportion who think it has decreased opportunities (down from 23% to 18%).

The impact of Covid-19 has been more marked in terms of the time available for learning and development - half (50%) of social workers felt that the pandemic has reduced the time they have for learning and development (23% felt it had decreased the amount of

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[23] While it is a regulatory requirement for social workers to do CPD, employers are not required to provide it directly – they are expected to provide dedicated time, resources, opportunities and support for social workers they employ to carry out CPD and record their learning. Agency social workers often have to make their own arrangements.

time 'a little', 26% 'a lot'). Again, however, opinion in Wave 4 was less negative than in Wave 3, when the proportion who felt the pandemic had decreased the time for learning and development stood at 57%.

Figure 4.10 Views on how opportunities for career progression and time for learning and development have changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Wave 3 and Wave 4)
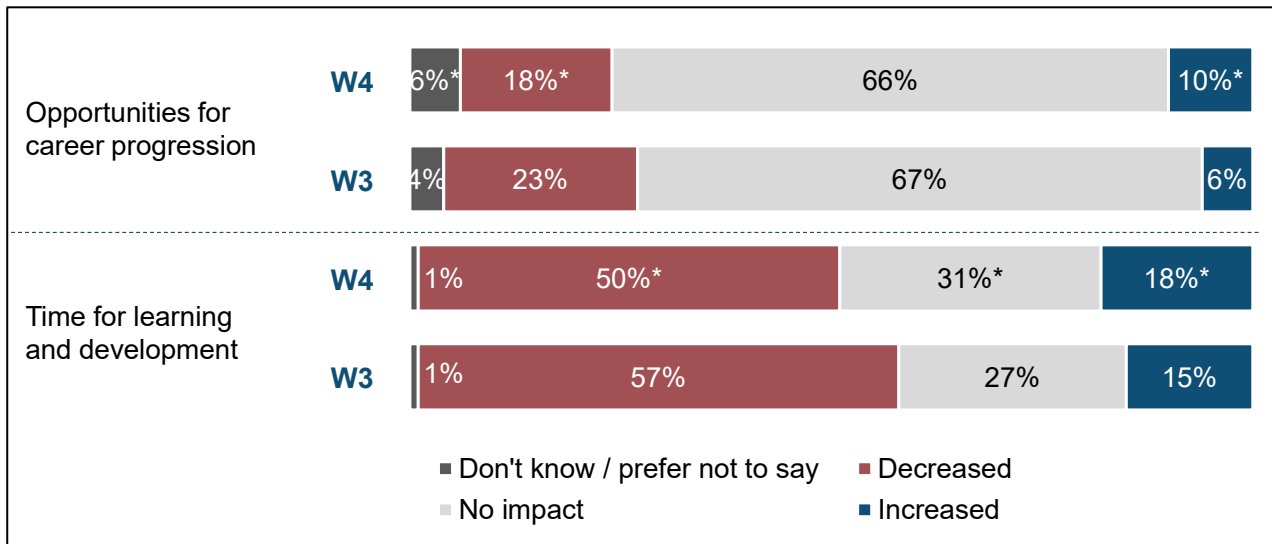
	Don't know / prefer not to say	Decreased	No impact	Increased
Opportunities for career progression W4	6%*	18%*	66%	10%*
Opportunities for career progression W3	4%	23%	67%	6%
Time for learning and development W4	1%	50%*	31%*	18%*
Time for learning and development W3	1%	57%	27%	15%

Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)
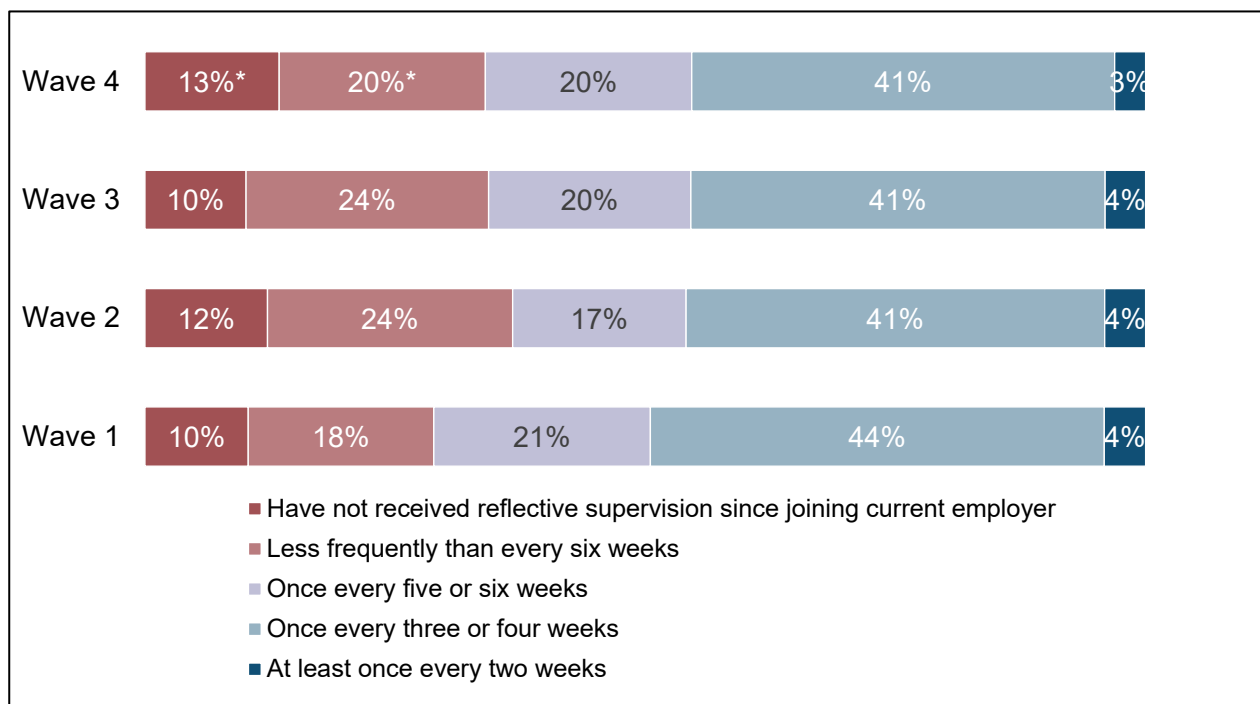*denotes significant difference between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

The perceived impact of Covid-19 on the opportunity for their career progression and time for learning and development varied by job role and practice area.

In terms of career progression opportunities by job role, it was practice leaders who were most likely to say these had decreased (32%) compared with 18% on average. In contrast, senior service managers / Directors were more to believe that there had been a rise in opportunities, 17% compared with 10% on average.

By practice area, social workers working in placements / permanence (28%) and assessment (28%) were more likely than average to feel there had been a fall in career progression opportunities due to the pandemic. Those working in education (25%) and prevention / early help services (22%) were more likely than average to think that opportunities had increased.

Other groups more likely to be positive about opportunities for career progression or promotion as a result of the pandemic were 'Asian / Asian British' social workers (34%) and 'other ethnic group' social workers (19%). This compared to 8% of 'White British' social workers. Those who had a mental or physical health condition were also more positive, with 15% saying the opportunities had increased compared to 9% of those without a health condition.

In terms of time for learning and development, there were no job roles that were more likely than others to feel that the time available had decreased. At the more positive end of the scale, team managers were the most likely to feel that the time available had increased (23% compared with 18% on average). The same was also true for social workers working in the field of education (46%), youth offending (36%), prevention / early help services (35%), adoption (27%) and placements / permanence (27%).

By age, social workers aged 25-34 and 35-44 years were more likely to feel that the time for learning and development had decreased as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic compared to those in the older age groups (58% and 55% respectively, compared with 44% aged 45-54, 42% aged 55-64 and 37% aged 65+).

5. Views on job satisfaction and career progression in child and family social work

This chapter reports on overall levels of job satisfaction and then examines how satisfied social workers were with different aspects of their job. The chapter also explores how satisfaction with various aspects of work differs for those working inside and outside local authority child and family social work. Finally, the chapter looks at whether social workers' career progression has met their expectations, so far.

Chapter highlights

- Most social workers (68%) in Wave 4 found their job satisfying; however, this was a significant decrease from 72% in Wave 3 and compared with preceding waves.
- In Wave 4, satisfaction with public respect for the work they do remained low, with only just over a quarter (27%) satisfied; similar to previous waves.
- There were two aspects where levels of satisfaction have decreased – sense of achievement and skills development. In Wave 4, just under three-quarters (73%) were satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work; down from 83% in Wave 1. Two-thirds (66%) were satisfied with the opportunity to develop their skills in their job; lower than in Wave 3 (68%), Wave 2 (71%) or Wave 1 (72%).
- Satisfaction with the amount of pay they receive has decreased in Wave 4 (56%) compared with Wave 3 (61%), after initially increasing from 49% in Wave 1.
- In contrast, satisfaction levels with job security have remained fairly consistent (84% in Wave 4, 85% in Wave 3) after initially increasing from 75% in Wave 1.
- Social workers continued to be most likely to feel their career progression was in line with their expectations (54%), with more reporting it was below (20%) than above expectations (13%), broadly consistent with Wave 3.

Overall job satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction among those working in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4 dropped significantly compared with Wave 3, and with Wave 1. Just over two-thirds (68%) of social workers who took part in Wave 4 agreed that they found their current job satisfying, down from 72% in Wave 3, which had been consistent with results in previous waves. The proportion who strongly agreed was also significantly lower in Wave 4 (17%) than in Wave 3 (21%).

Figure 5.1 Extent of agreement with overall job satisfaction (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
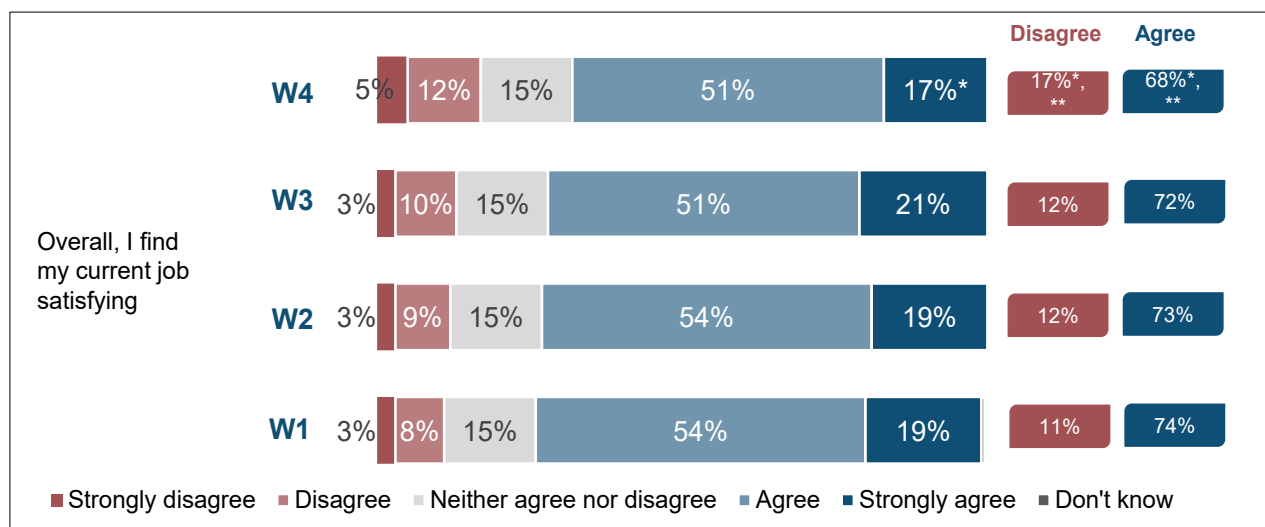
Overall, I find my current job satisfying

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Disagree	Agree
W4	5%	12%	15%	51%	17%*	17%*, **	68%*, **
W3	3%	10%	15%	51%	21%	12%	72%
W2	3%	9%	15%	54%	19%	12%	73%
W1	3%	8%	15%	54%	19%	11%	74%

■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly agree ■ Don't know

Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2 (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)
*denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 3, **denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1

Social workers who completed the survey across all four waves (i.e., who started in Wave 1) have become less satisfied over time: 76% agreed that they found their job satisfying at Wave 1, 73% in Wave 2, 72% in Wave 3 and 69% in Wave 4– the decrease from Wave 1 to Wave 4 is statistically significant.

In Wave 4, those who had been promoted in the past 12 months reported significantly higher levels of overall job satisfaction (77%) than those who had not been promoted (66%). A similar pattern was found in Wave 3.

There were various other aspects of their job role that had a bearing on social workers' overall levels of job satisfaction:

- Front line practitioners were less satisfied with their job overall than those in more senior roles (62%, compared with 75% of team managers and 81% of senior service managers). This pattern was also apparent at previous waves.
- As in Waves 2 and 3, overall job satisfaction was higher among social workers who had taken part in CPD over the past 12 months. Almost seven in ten (69%) who had undertaken employer-supported CPD in the last 12 months agreed that they were satisfied with their job, compared with almost six in ten (58%) who had not done any CPD.
- Those who worked in adoption (76%) had higher overall job satisfaction compared with the average of all in local authority child and family social work (68%), while those who worked in fostering (61%) had lower overall job satisfaction.

Across Waves 1, 2 and 3, overall job satisfaction was lower among those with a physical or mental health condition compared to those who did not have any health condition. However, in Wave 4, the difference was no longer statistically significant. This change

seems to have been driven, in part, by a significant decline in satisfaction amongst those with no physical or mental health condition (69% in Wave 4 compared with 75% in each of the previous waves).

Sense of achievement and skills development

This section explores two key aspects of the job – the sense of achievement social workers feel they get from their work, and the opportunity to develop their skills in the job.

In Wave 4, three-quarters (73%) were satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work, whilst two-thirds (66%) were satisfied with the opportunity to develop their skills in their job. Figure 5.2 shows how satisfaction with both of these measures has declined over time: in Wave 4 sense of achievement was significantly lower than in all other waves, and satisfaction with opportunity for skills development was significantly lower than in Waves 1 and 2. The proportion who were dissatisfied has increased at each successive wave.

Figure 5.2 Social workers' satisfaction with sense of achievement and opportunity to develop skills (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
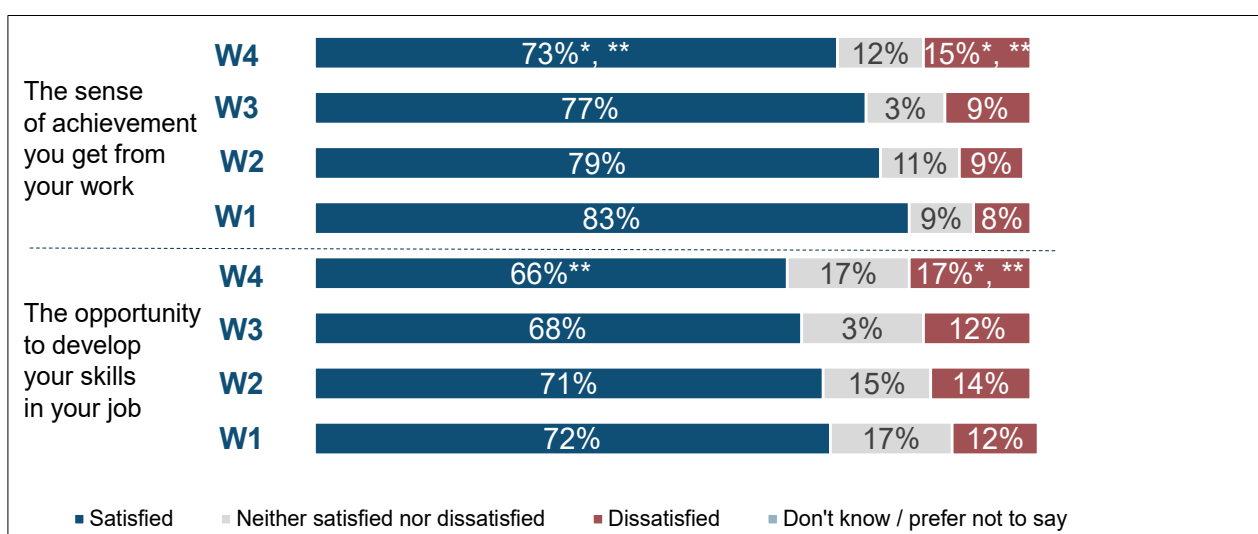
Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2 (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317) *denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 3, **denotes significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1

As in previous waves, front line practitioners were less satisfied (69%) than team managers (79%) or senior service managers/Directors (81%).

Turning to satisfaction with the opportunity to develop their skills in their job, there were variations by certain features of their role:

- Unsurprisingly, those who had undertaken employer-supported CPD in the previous 12 months were much more satisfied with the opportunity to develop their skills than those who had not undertaken any CPD (68% compared with 42%).

- Social workers in local authorities rated as 'outstanding' (73%) were more likely to be satisfied than those in local authorities rated 'good' or 'requires improvement' (64% each).
- Front line practitioners (62%) were again less satisfied than social workers generally (66%), in particular compared with team managers (73%) and senior service managers (82%).
- Those who worked in fostering had lower satisfaction (57%) with opportunity for skills development than social workers generally, as did those who had been employed in social work for 6-10 years (59%).

Public respect for the work social workers do

As presented in Figure 5.3, satisfaction with public respect for the sort of work they do remained low among social workers, with just over a quarter (27%) satisfied. This is similar to previous waves.

Figure 5.3 Social workers' satisfaction with public respect for the sort of work they do (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
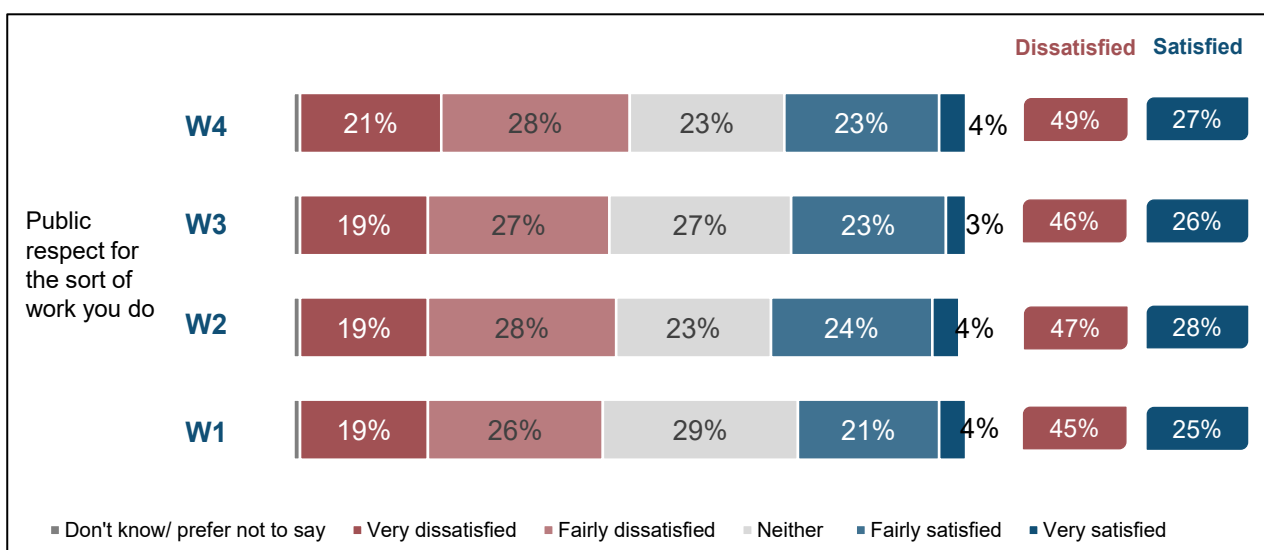
Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2 (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317)
*denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 3

Focusing on the Wave 4 findings, the proportion who were satisfied with public respect for the sort of work they do varied significantly by certain characteristics:

- Satisfaction was higher than average amongst those working with children with disabilities (37%), those supporting young people leaving care (39%) and those working in adoption (38%). Satisfaction was lower than average amongst those working in assessment (20%) and child in need / child protection (22%).

- Those with over 10 years' experience working in the field were more likely than average to be satisfied (32% compared to 27%), while those who had been working for 6-10 years were less likely than average to be satisfied (21%).
- Linked with time in the profession, satisfaction with public respect for the work done also increased significantly with age: rising from 22% of 25-34 year olds to 34% of 55-64 year olds.
- Practice supervisors were more likely to be satisfied than average across all role types (37% compared with 27%).
- Respondents from Asian / Asian British ethnic groups were much more satisfied with public respect for the work done (52%) compared with average, and all other ethnic groups.
- Although still in a minority, those working in local authorities with 'inadequate' Ofsted ratings were more likely than those in local authorities with 'outstanding' ratings to be satisfied (34% compared with 22%).

Pay and job security

In Wave 4, the vast majority (84%) of child and family social workers were satisfied with their job security, and just over half (56%) were satisfied with their pay.

In contrast to the downward trends in satisfaction with the sense of achievement work brings and opportunity for skills development, satisfaction with job security (Figure 5.4) remained fairly consistent between Waves 3 and 4. Satisfaction with job security in Wave 4 (84%) was higher than in Wave 1 (75%).

In Wave 4, satisfaction with pay (56%) declined compared with Wave 3 (61%), while dissatisfaction with pay increased to 30% (up from 25% in Wave 3, but similar to the earlier waves of the survey).

Figure 5.4 Social workers' satisfaction with job security and the amount of pay they receive (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
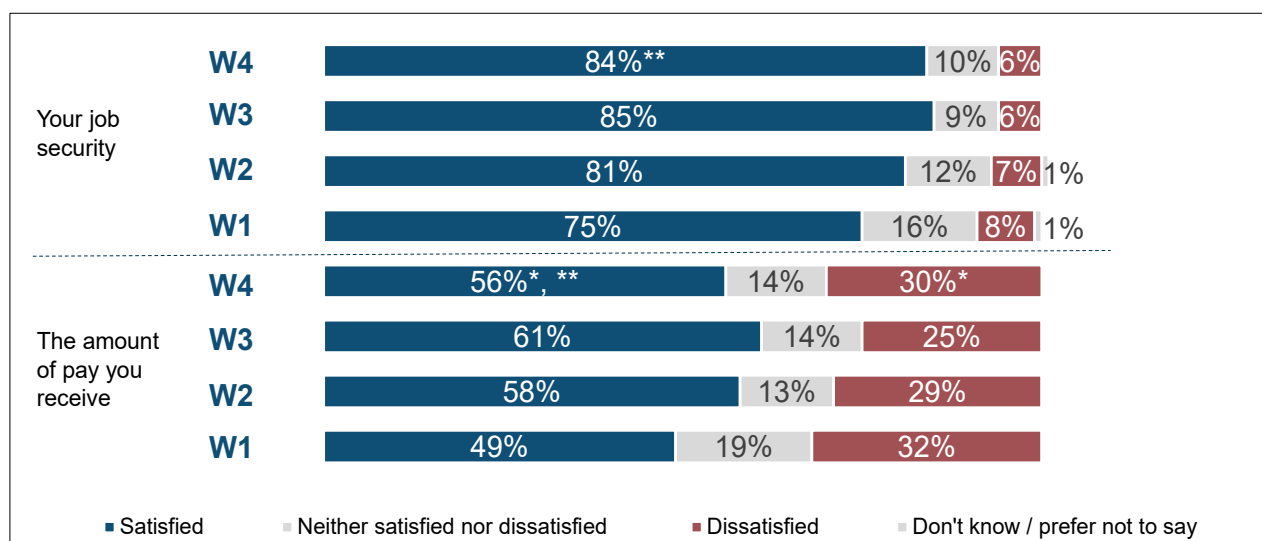
		Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't know / prefer not to say
Your job security	W4	84%**	10%	6%	
	W3	85%	9%	6%	
	W2	81%	12%	7%	1%
	W1	75%	16%	8%	1%
The amount of pay you receive	W4	56%*, **	14%	30%*	
	W3	61%	14%	25%	
	W2	58%	13%	29%	
	W1	49%	19%	32%	

Legend: ■ Satisfied   Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   ■ Dissatisfied   Don't know / prefer not to say

Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work: Wave 1 (5,508), Wave 2 (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317). *denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 3. **denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1.

Following similar patterns to those seen at Wave 3, social workers who had been promoted between Wave 3 and Wave 4 were significantly more satisfied at Wave 4 than those who had *not* had a promotion, about their pay (68% compared with 53%) and job security (89% compared with 83%).

In Wave 4 satisfaction with job security varied with certain aspects of social workers' role, in ways similar to Wave 3:

- Agency status had a significant bearing, as might be expected given the short-term nature of agency work: 88% of those directly employed by a local authority were satisfied with their job security, compared with 60% of those working for an agency.
- Satisfaction with job security varied widely by local authority Ofsted rating: it was 92% in 'outstanding' and 88% in 'good' Ofsted-rated local authorities but lower in those rated as 'requires improvement' (80%) or 'inadequate' (77%). The key differences were in the proportions who were 'very satisfied' which decreased significantly from 53% in 'outstanding' rated LAs to 39% in those rated as 'inadequate'. This is partly due to the higher proportion of agency workers working at 'inadequate' rated local authorities, who were less satisfied with their job security than those employed directly.

As at previous waves, the characteristics of social workers who were satisfied with their pay differed markedly from those who were satisfied with their job security; indeed, those most satisfied with pay were sometimes least satisfied with job security (e.g., agency workers). In Wave 4 satisfaction with pay varied significantly with the following aspects:

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- As in previous waves, agency workers were much more satisfied with their pay (69%) than those who were employed directly by their local authority (54%). A third (33%) of those employed directly were dissatisfied with their pay compared with just 12% of agency workers.
- Satisfaction with pay was significantly higher amongst senior service managers than all other pay grades (81% compared with 56% on average).
- Unlike satisfaction with job security, those working within local authorities with an 'inadequate' Ofsted rating were significantly more likely than those working in local authorities rated 'outstanding' to be satisfied with their pay (70% compared with 54%). This is again related to higher patterns of agency working in local authorities with 'inadequate' Ofsted ratings.

Key drivers of overall satisfaction

In order to identify the main influences on child and family social workers' overall job satisfaction, a key driver analysis was used to determine the variables which contributed most to overall job satisfaction, which are not always apparent from bivariate analysis which focuses on the relationship between two variables. The outcome the model sought to explain was agreement with the statement: 'Overall, I find my current job satisfying', measured on a 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' scale.

As shown by Figure 5.5 below, the main driver of overall satisfaction among social workers in Wave 4 was feeling loyal to their employer, accounting for 19% of the variance in the model. This was followed by feeling valued by their employer, accounting for 13%. So, as in Wave 3, the more loyal and valued the social worker felt, the more likely they were to be satisfied with their job overall. These drivers are discussed in further detail in Chapter 4.

The composite wellbeing measure (aggregating scores about feeling stressed, overworked and being asked to fulfil too many roles[24]), was the next key driver of overall satisfaction, accounting for 11% of the variance in the model. Those reporting negative workplace wellbeing were less likely to be satisfied with their current job (results for the individual components of workplace wellbeing are discussed in Chapter 3).

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[24] Prior to running the KDA model, factor analysis was used to group together responses to questions that respondents tended to answer in the same way, indicating that these questions might represent an underlying concept or factor (such as wellbeing in this case) which could be included in the model as a composite measure rather than as three individual measures.

The next most important was a composite measure aggregating views on tools and resources at the social workers' disposal (including IT systems)[25], also accounting for 11% of the variance of the model. This had a positive effect on the model, with more positive views about resources and working environment driving overall satisfaction. This has become relatively more important as a factor underlying overall job satisfaction, compared with the previous wave.

A range of other factors contribute to overall job satisfaction (Figure 5.5) although to a lesser extent (accounting for between 6% and 4% of variance in the model). These include working in the South West region, feeling that the quality of reflective supervision is good, actual working hours, and being promoted within the past 12 months.

KDA produces a measure called R^2, which gives an indication of how consistent the model is in explaining the variance of data in the model. Typically, the higher the R^2 number, the more confident one can be that the KDA accurately explains the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. This model accounts for 39% of the total variance in satisfaction scores.

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[25] Prior to running the KDA model, factor analysis was used to group together responses to questions that respondents tended to answer in the same way, indicating that these questions might represent an underlying concept or factor which could be included in the model as a composite measure rather than as individual measures.

Figure 5.5 Key Driver Analysis: main influences on front line social workers' agreement that 'Overall, I find my current job satisfying'

Driver	Percentage
Feeling loyal to my employer	19%
Feeling valued by my employer	13%
Wellbeing	11%
Satisfaction with resources and working environment	11%
South West region	6%
Reflective supervision is good	5%
Working hours	4%
Promoted in the past 12 months	4%
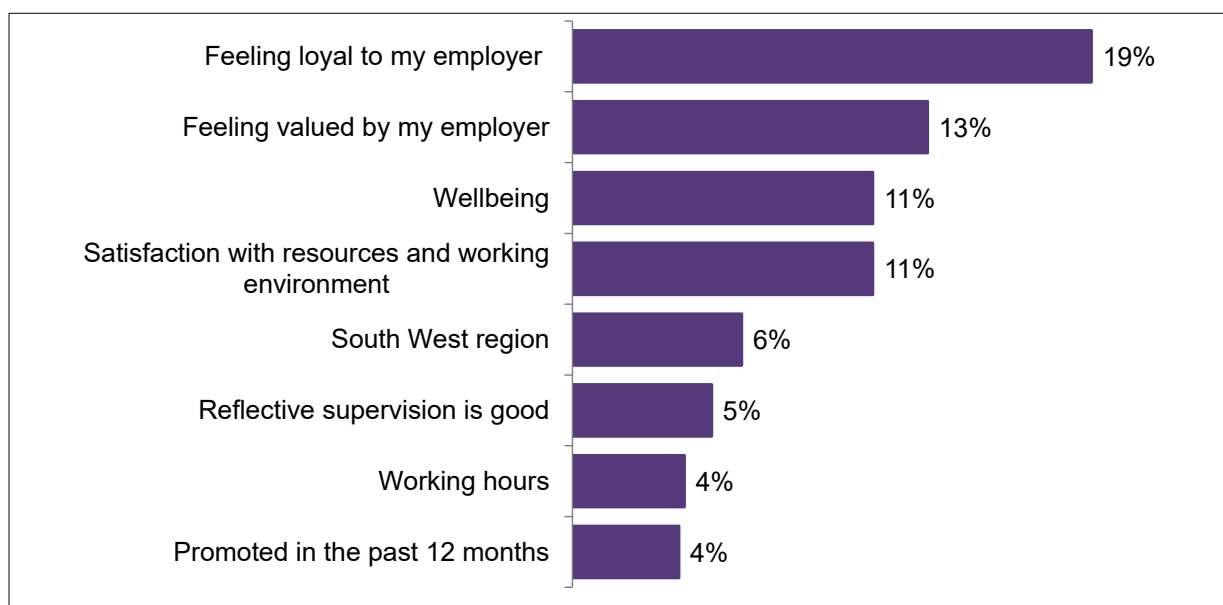
Base: All in LA child and family social work at Wave 4 (1,325)
NB: Attributes which explain <4% of the variance in satisfaction are not included in the chart

Comparing job satisfaction of those working inside and outside local authority child and family social work

The job satisfaction measures were asked of all participants currently working, irrespective of whether that was inside or outside local authority child and family social work. All those not currently employed in local authority child and family social work, including those working outside of social work altogether and those in other areas of the profession, fall into the 'outside local authority child and family social work' category.

In terms of overall satisfaction, 68% of those still employed in local authority child and family social work agreed that they found their current job satisfying, which was not significantly different from those working outside local authority child and family social work (73%). However, those employed in LA child and family social work were significantly less likely to "strongly agree" (17% compared with 27%). The difference was due to significantly higher satisfaction among those employed in other (non-social work) professions (41% strongly agreed) than those employed in other areas of social work (23%); this is a reversal of the pattern seen in Wave 2 and Wave 3.

Figure 5.6 indicates the proportion of participants working inside and outside child and family social work who were satisfied with each aspect of their job.

Figure 5.6 Proportion of participants working inside and outside local authority child and family social work who were satisfied with each aspect of their job (Wave 4)
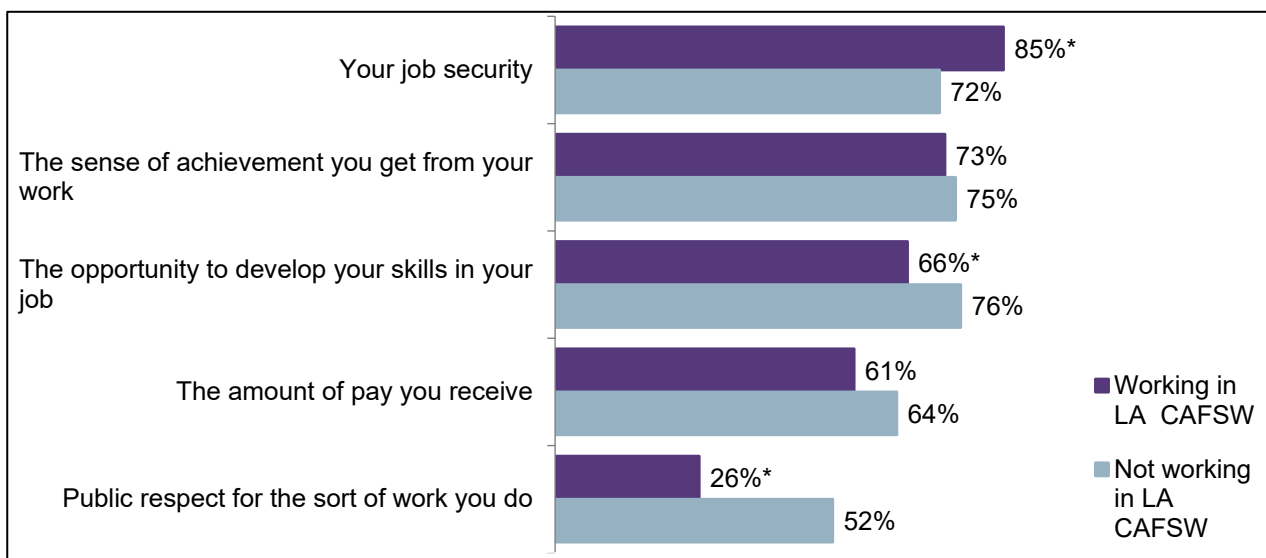
Base: All those working in LA child and family social work at Wave 4 (1,317);
All those employed but not working in LA child and family social work at Wave 4 (171)
N.B. 'Public respect' base is only if still in social work (127)
*denotes significant differences between results in those working in/not in LA CAFSW

For three of the six job satisfaction measures, there were significant differences between these two groups of participants. People who were not currently working in LA child and family social work were more satisfied with the opportunity to develop their skills in their job and public respect for the sort of work they do. Conversely satisfaction with job security was higher amongst those still working in LA child and family social work. The pattern of findings was similar to that found in Wave 3.

Views about career progression

Figure 5.7 shows that local authority child and family social workers continued to be most likely to feel their career progression was 'in line with their expectations' (54%), with more reporting it was 'below expectations' (20%) than 'above' (13%). These findings were broadly consistent with previous waves.

Social workers who had been promoted between Wave 3 and 4 were more likely to rate their career progression as 'above their expectations' as those who had not been promoted (21% compared with 12%).

Figure 5.7 Social workers' views on their career progression so far (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
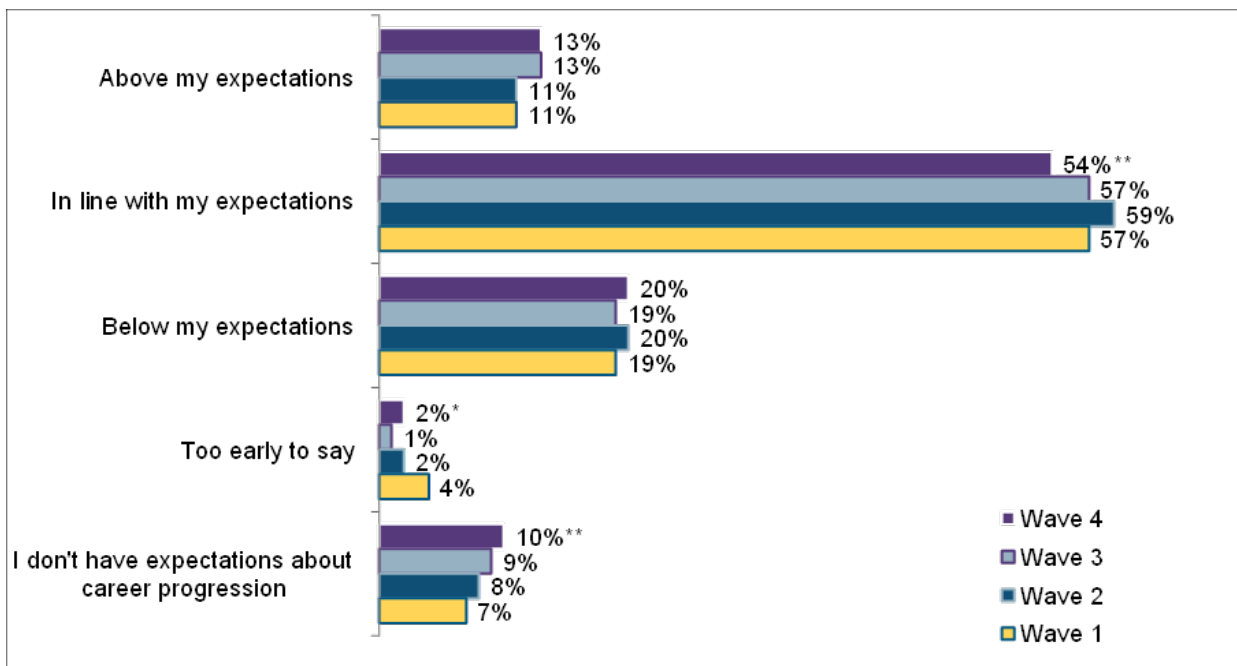
Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work: Wave2 (5,508), Wave 2 (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,334)
*Denotes significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 3

Those who were in more senior roles were more positive about their career progression. The proportion saying career progression was *above* expectations rose markedly through the ranks from 7% of front line practitioners to 16% of practice supervisors, 20% of practice leaders, 20% of team managers, to 33% of senior service managers. Therefore, only 5% of senior service managers felt that career progression was below their expectations, compared to a quarter (24%) of front line practitioners.

The length of time spent working in child and family social work was associated with how positive respondents felt about their career progression. Those who had been working in the field for 2-3 years were more likely than average to feel that progression was in line with their expectations (62% compared with 54%), while those who had been working for 4-5 years were more likely than average to feel progression was above their expectations (18% compared with 13%). A quarter of those working in the field for 6-10 years felt progression was below their expectations.

Those working in certain practice areas were significantly more likely than average to say that their career progression was *above* their expectations, namely: children with disabilities (22%), education (32%), adoption (18%), Looked After Children (17%) and prevention / early help services (27%). Those working in youth offending were more likely

than average to feel that progression was below their expectations (36% compared with 20%).

As in Wave 3, there were no significant differences in social workers' views on career progression at Wave 4 by whether they were employed by the local authority directly versus an agency, or according to the LA Ofsted rating.

In terms of views on career progression amongst those in local authority child and family social work, the results varied significantly with the following demographic characteristics:

- Age – those aged 25-34 years were more likely to feel that progression was *above* their expectations, compared to only 11% of those aged 55-64 and 4% of those aged 65 years and over. Related to this, the 25-34 year old group were more likely than other age groups to have been promoted within the past 12 months (30%, compared with 18% overall).
- Care / Childcare responsibilities –The proportion who thought their career progression was *below* expectations was significantly higher among those with care / childcare responsibilities than among those with no childcare responsibilities (22% compared with 18%) and they were less likely to feel career progression had exceeded their expectations (11% compared with 15%).
- Mental or physical health – The proportion who thought their career progression was *below* expectations was significantly higher among those with health conditions than those without (25% compared with 18%). They were also less likely to think that career progression was in line with their expectations (47% compared with 55%).
- Entry route into social work – those who entered through a postgraduate degree were more likely than average to report their career progression was *below* their expectations (25% compared with 20%). This suggests those undertaking a postgraduate degree may have higher career expectations than those entering the profession through other routes.

6. Short term career plans and influences on these

An important part of the research is to explore social workers' short-term career plans and to identify the reasons they may consider leaving child and family social work. Understanding the push/pull factors that lead to social workers remaining in their position or wanting to move on will enable a better understanding of how retention can be improved in the sector.

This chapter explores career plans in the next 12 months and factors that influence considerations about leaving or remaining in child and family social work.

Chapter highlights

- The majority (81%) of local authority child and family social workers (including agency workers) expected to remain in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time – 70% expected to be employed directly by a local authority and 11% to be working via an agency. Only 2% expected to be working outside of social work altogether. This is consistent with previous waves.
- Overall, a third (34%) of respondents reported that their career plans had been influenced by their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Of these, one in five (21%) had decided to leave child and family social work and move into a different area of the profession, and one in six (17%) decided to leave social work altogether.
- The most commonly cited main reason given by those who were considering leaving child and family social work was retirement (22%), followed by dislike of the working culture of local authority social work (17%), the high caseload (12%) and personal reasons e.g., health (7%). When factors related to overwork are combined, such as high caseload, working hours and volume of paperwork, this is the most common (26%).
- The main factors that would encourage child and family social workers who were thinking of leaving the profession to remain were related to workload issues including a more manageable caseload (20%), followed by a better working culture (12%), higher pay (8%), and a more manageable workload in terms of less paperwork (7%).

Social workers' career plans in the next 12 months

The survey asked all respondents what they anticipate they will be doing in 12 months' time. As shown in Figure 6.1, of those working in local authority child and family social work in Wave 4 (including agency workers), the majority expected to still be doing so in 12 months' time (81%). Seven in ten (70%) expected to be working in child and family social work directly for a local authority in 12 months and one in nine (11%) expected to be working via an agency. There was no change in these proportions between waves.

People working in front line practitioner roles were less likely than those in senior service manager/ Director, practice leader, practice supervisor and team manager roles to expect to be working in child and family social work directly for a local authority (63%, compared with 86%, 86%, 85% and 81% respectively).

Figure 6.1 Anticipated employment situation in 12 months' time

(Wave 2 to Wave 4)[26]
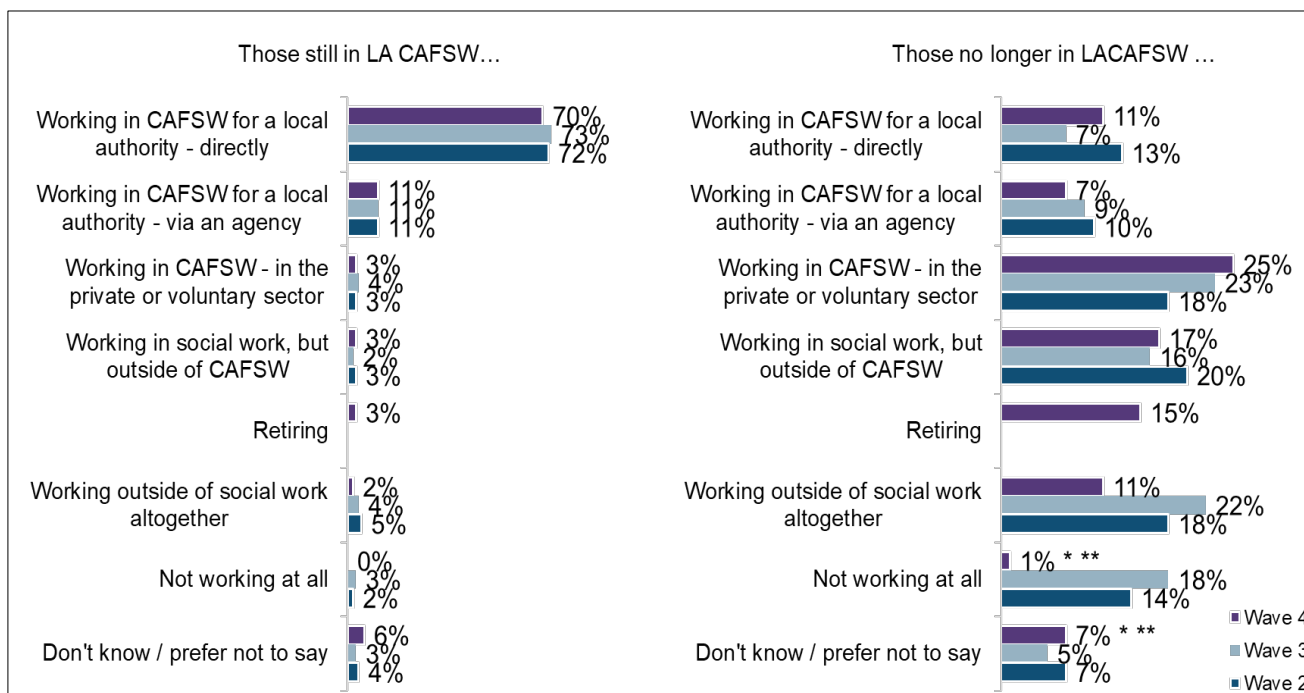
Base: All in LA child and family social work at Wave 2 (3,099) and Wave 3 (2,001) and Wave 4 (1,334); all those not working in LA child and family social work at Wave 2 (203) and Wave 3 (239).
**denotes a significant difference between Wave 2 and Wave 3; and *between Wave 4 and Wave 3.

Currently in local authority child and family social work

Among the 14% who were currently working in child and family social work at Wave 4 (including agency workers) but who thought they would not be in 12 months' time, plans were mixed. Three per cent expected to be in child and family social work in the private or voluntary sector, 3% working in a different area of social work, 3% expected to be retiring, 2% working outside of social work altogether and; 6% unsure what they will be doing. Among those thinking of leaving, retirement plans were most common among 55-64 year olds (9%) and those aged 65+ (28%). People working in practice leader roles were more likely to report they expected to be working in a different area of social work (9% compared with 3% overall).

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[26] 'Retiring' was a new code added at Wave 4

Those employed directly by a local authority (excluding agency workers) typically thought they would still be in the same situation in 12 months' time (79%), while 4% thought they would be employed by an agency.

Of those currently employed directly by a local authority (excluding agency workers), front line practitioner roles (76%) were the least likely to expect they would be directly employed by a local authority in 12 months' time, compared with senior staff (86% of those employed as a practice supervisor or above). Those who were satisfied with their job were more likely than those who were dissatisfied to expect to remain directly in local authority child and family social work (78% compared with 46%). Additionally, those who felt their career plans had been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic were less likely than those whose career plans had not to expect to remain directly in local authority child and family social work (64% compared with 73%).

The short-term career plans of agency workers were more varied. Over half (53%) of those currently at an agency thought they would still be working for one in 12 months' time and one in five (18%) expected they would be employed directly by a local authority; this means 71% of agency workers thought they would still be in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time, compared with 83% of those directly employed by a local authority. These proportions were similar to previous waves. Overall, 14% of agency workers thought they would not be working in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time, compared with 10% of those employed directly. However, compared with Wave 3, significantly fewer agency workers thought they would no longer be working in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time (14%, compared to 22% in Wave 3).

Not currently in local authority child and family social work

Among those not currently working in local authority child and family social work (including those who left between waves or were not in local authority child and family social work in the past three waves either), expectations were more varied.

Figure 6.1 shows that over four in ten (43%) thought that in 12 months' time they would be working in child and family social work again; 25% in the private or voluntary sector, 11% employed directly in local authority child and family social work and 7% in local authority child and family social work by an agency. The proportion who expected to be back working in child and family social work again has increased slightly since Wave 3 (43% compared with 39%). Around one in six (17%) expected they would be back in social work, but not child and family social work and 15% expected they would be retiring. One in ten (11%) expected to be working outside of social work altogether, a significant decrease from both Wave 3 (22%) and Wave 2 (18%).

Impact of Covid-19 on short-term career plans

Overall, a third (34%) of respondents reported that their career plans had been influenced by their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic. Of those who currently work in child and family social work, people who were thinking of leaving the profession were more likely to report that their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic had influenced their career plans (46% compared with 33% of those not considering leaving child and family social work). Among those who said they planned to move to a different area of social work as a result of their experiences during Covid at Wave 4, 43% had already done so, as had 49% of those who had decided to leave social work altogether.

Those who expected to be employed directly by a local authority in child and family social work in 12 months' time were less likely to report that Covid-19 had influenced their career plans (29%), compared to half (52%) of those who thought they would be working in a different area of social work.

As seen in Figure 6.2, the most common influences upon career plans due to the experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic show movement in and out of social work. Of those who felt their plans had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, one in five (21%) decided to leave child and family social work and move into a different area of the profession, just under one in five (17%) decided to leave social work altogether and one in ten (10%) chose to take early retirement.

Figure 6.2. Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on future career plans

Response	%
I decided to move to a different area of social work	21%
I decided I did not want to be a social worker anymore	17%
I decided to take early retirement	10%
Work from home has been a positive experience	9%
I decided to reduce my working hours (e.g. switched to part-time working)	9%
Flexible working / less travel offers me a better work/life balance	9%
I changed employer - to a different local authority/Trust	8%
Working from home caused additional issues / stress / isolation	5%
I decided to relocate	5%
Other	4%
Covid has caused increased stress due to higher workload	4%
Don't know/ prefer not to say	9%

NB: only answers of at least 4% reported in chart.

Base: All whose career plans have been affected by COVID (538)

Those reporting a physical or mental health condition (25%) were more likely to report they did not want to be a social worker any more as an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (compared with 17% overall). Social workers who had been at their current employer for

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more than 10 years were less likely than average to decide to move to a different area of social work (13% compared with 21% overall) and to decide to leave social work (9% compared with 17% overall). However, these social workers were the most likely to decide to take early retirement as an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic (20% compared with 10% overall). This is related to the age profile of social workers who had been working at their employer for 10 years+, who tended to be older. There were no significant differences by length of time in child and family social work overall.

Those reporting they had decided to move to a different area of social work as an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic were more likely to be aged between 25 and 34 years old (29% compared to 21% overall). Those reporting they would take early retirement were mostly over 55 years old (33% were 55-64 and 49% were 65+).

Most of the qualitative interviewees affirmed that the Covid pandemic had provided a time to pause and reflect on job satisfaction and indeed in terms of revaluating life choices. Following the initial lockdown, a number had moved local authorities, changed roles to help improve work life balance, or relocated geographically to reduce travel. Some noted that flexible working hours are now advertised by agency recruitment sites and there is an increased awareness of the value of the hybrid approach.

Of those who had experienced bereavement, and at times multiple bereavements during the pandemic, they discussed a new attitude to work and wanting change. One agency worker pointed out that in the local authority where she worked, agency staff were unable to access the employee assistance programme that could have offered her support. She was now planning to retrain in a career outside of social work.

Re-evaluating their life choices has become a feature of the pandemic with a number of interviewees relocating or considering retiring early. Others experienced a series of stressful life events and felt work had not provided a framework of support, indeed the demands of work had made things worse:

> "I've been in the LA for years. I've done this work for a really long time and you are made to feel really invalidated and like it's almost your own fault…. the only way to possibly keep your head above water is to do at least 12-hour days and at least six of them a week, because there's no other way to do it." (senior practitioner, Mixed ethnicity)

Others highlighted a growing awareness of disillusionment correlating with reduced job satisfaction:

> "The more time I spend as a social worker I think the less I get from the job...Actually five years down the line, since I qualified in 2015, what difference am I actually making? Apart from the long hours, the

toll on my family life, you know, those sorts of things really..." (Team Leader, Asian)

Challenges for workforce planning

Respondents in the qualitative interviews who were Heads of services or other senior managers expressed significant concern about workforce planning as some colleagues were contemplating their futures in the light of Covid and some were deciding to leave, whilst also wondering where people wanting to join social work are going to come from. Some felt that it has been necessary to manage staff vacancies with agency staff. One manager commenting on the challenges of older staff retiring, combined with younger staff planning to leave having decided the job is not for them:

> "I think working more in isolation, working from home, has really knocked them...they have never had the experience of working in a team." (Service Manager, Black)

These staffing concerns were echoed across all levels of respondents in the qualitative research, noting that despite the increased demand on services the numbers of teams that were predominantly made up with ASYEs was concerning particularly as the longer-term impact of the pandemic is yet to be understood and may lead to further increases in volume and/or complexity of cases.

Reasons for considering leaving child and family social work

Of those still working in local authority child and family social work (including agency workers), 8% reported they were considering leaving child and family social work altogether in the next 12 months and this was consistent with previous waves[27]. Those who thought they would be working outside child and family social work altogether were asked why, and what might encourage them to remain in the sector.

The most commonly mentioned individual reason for considering leaving (Figure 6.3) was dislike of the working culture of their local authority (38%), followed by 25% who reported they would be retiring. In combination, however, factors related to overwork, such as high caseload and the volume of paperwork (58%) were more common.

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[27] This includes working in local authority child and family social work and working in child and family social work but not at a local authority.

Figure 6.3. Reasons for considering leaving child and family social work (Wave 4)

Reason	W4 all factors	W4 main factor
I will be retiring / retired	25%	22%
I don't like the culture of local authority social work	38%	17%
The high caseload	36%	12%
Personal reasons (e.g. health)	11%	7%
The working hours in general	23%	6%
More opportunities for progression	6%	6%
I did not/am not making the best use of my skills	13%	5%
It is not compatible with family or relationships	14%	4%
The amount of paperwork	22%	4%
It is just not the right type of job for me	9%	4%
I am taking a career break	6%	3%
I have found colleagues difficult to work with	8%	2%
The pay / benefits package	11%	2%
I have started / am starting a family	3%	2%
Due to the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic	8%	1%
I am temporarily working outside of child and family social work	1%	1%
Too many changes / Restructuring	3%	1%
My fixed term contract ended / ends soon	3%	0%

Base: Social workers who are still in child and family social work but are considering leaving: Wave 4 (138). Multiple responses possible.

When asked to cite the *main* reason for considering leaving child and family social work, the most commonly reported individual reason was retirement (22%), followed by dislike of local authority social work culture (17%), the high caseload (12%) and personal reasons e.g., health (7%). Further individual factors relating to overwork were cited as the main reason for considering leaving for a minority (6% mentioned the working hours, 4% the amount of paperwork and 4% said the work was not compatible with family or relationships). When these factors are combined with caseload, they show that overwork was the most commonly cited main factor for considering leaving child and family social work (cited by 26% in total).

As we might expect, among those expecting to leave social work in the next 12 months, retirement plans were most common among 55-64 year olds (37%) and those aged 65+ (93%). Of those considering retiring, 26% said that the Covid-19 pandemic had influenced these plans, and among these the majority (12/17) reported that the Covid-19 pandemic had influenced them to take early retirement (the base size here is small so this finding should be interpreted with caution).

Those with caring responsibilities were particularly likely to cite dislike of the culture as their main reason for considering leaving (25%, compared with 17% overall and 10% of those without caring responsibilities).

Figure 6.4 shows social workers' main reasons for considering leaving child and family social work, among those still working in the profession who have taken part in all four waves.

The most common reason was again because of retirement (22%), which remained consistent with Wave 3, followed by dislike of the working culture at the local authority (mentioned by 17% at both Wave 4 and Wave 3). Other, less commonly cited reasons have remained largely consistent with previous waves. However, the proportion citing that they are not making the best use of their skills within child and family social work has significantly decreased from 12% at Wave 3 to 5% at Wave 4.

Figure 6.4 Main reasons for considering leaving child and family social work (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
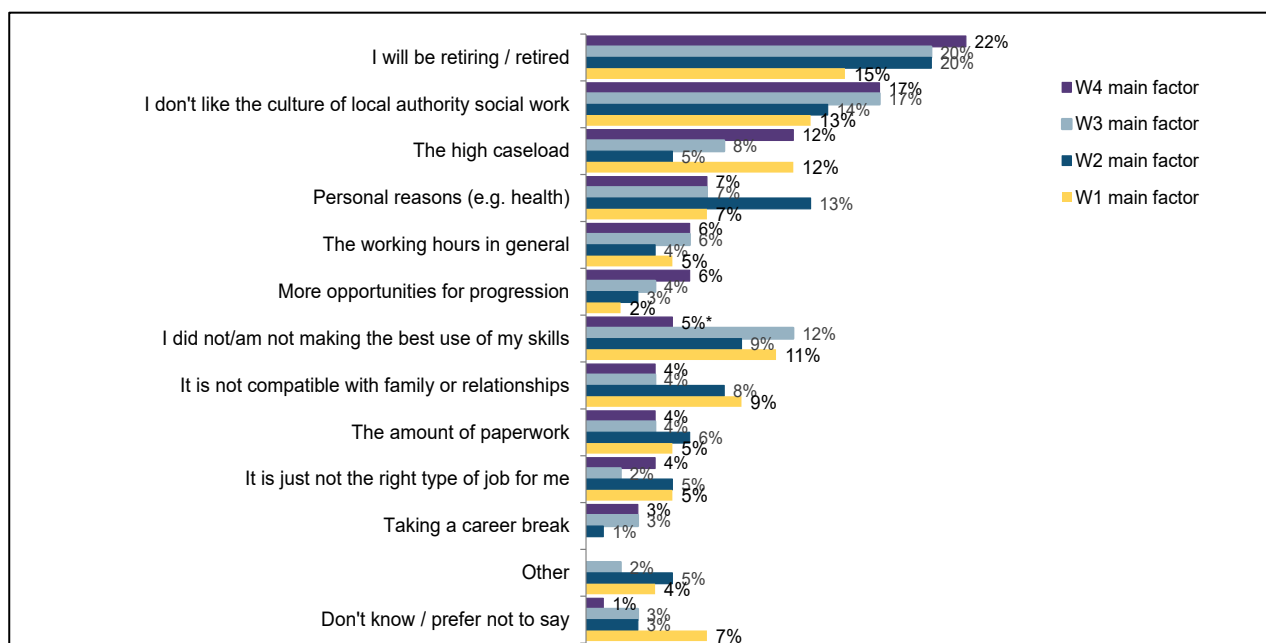
NB: factors cited by <3% of respondents at W4 are not shown in this chart
Base: Social workers who are still in child and family social work but are considering leaving: Wave 1 (504), Wave 2 (278), Wave 3 (190), Wave 4 (137).
**denotes a significant difference between Wave 1 and Wave 4
*denotes a significant difference between Wave 3 and Wave 4

Potential influences on retention

As well as factors that had led child and family social workers to consider leaving the profession, those thinking of leaving were also asked what would encourage them to stay in child and family social work.

As shown in Figure 6.5, consistent with the factors that made social workers consider leaving, when asked to cite changes that would persuade them to stay, a more manageable caseload was the most common (35%). A quarter reported higher pay (25%) and a more manageable workload in terms of administration and paperwork (24%); and one in five reported a better working culture (22%). Other factors commonly mentioned but not cited as the main factor were better promotion / progression opportunities (16%), improvements to IT systems and software (14%), a better physical working environment (12%) and other financial incentives (11%).

When asked to cite the single main factor that would encourage them to remain in child and family social work, a more manageable workload in terms of caseload was the most commonly cited reason (20%), followed by a better working culture (12%), higher pay at 8% and a more manageable workload in terms of administration and paperwork (7%). However, a third cited that nothing would encourage them to stay in the profession.

Figure 6.5 All and main factors that would encourage social workers thinking of leaving to remain in child and family social work (Wave 4)
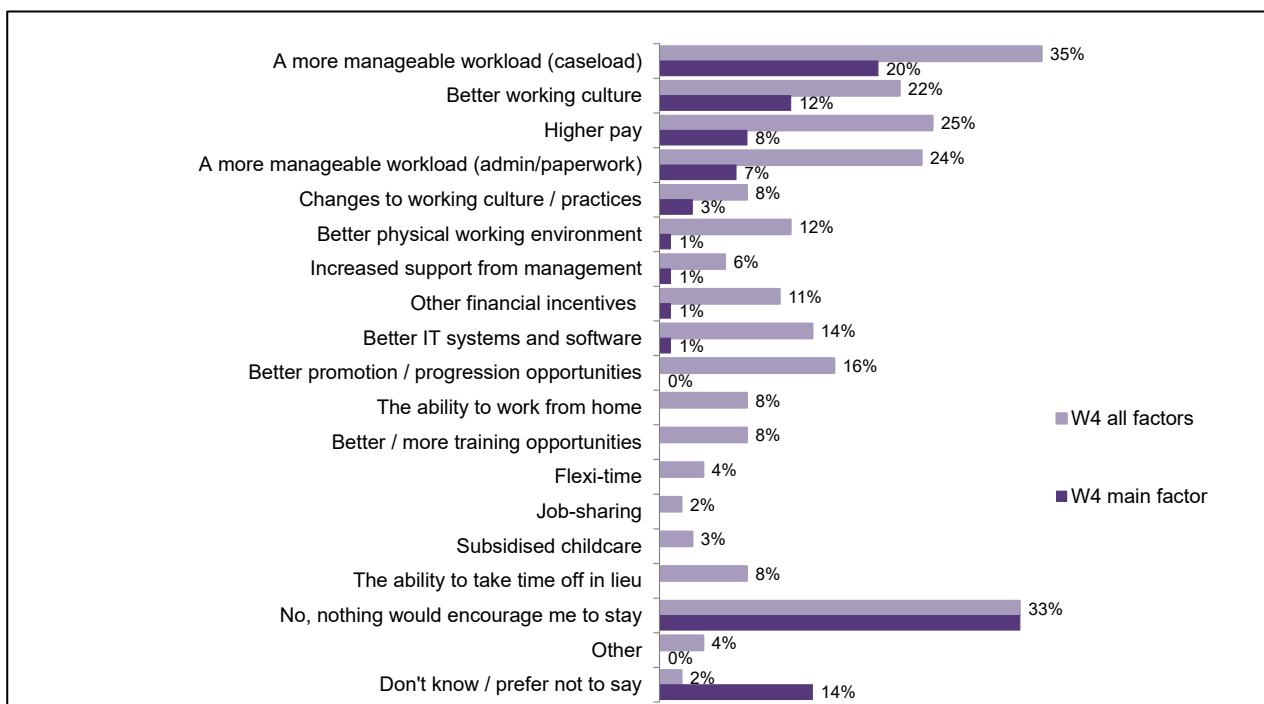
Base: Social workers who are still in child & family social work but are considering leaving: Wave 4 (138).
Multiple responses possible to 'all factors'.

As seen in Figure 6.6, the importance of promotion and progression opportunities as a factor to encourage social workers to remain in the profession has decreased over time, with no respondents reporting it as a factor in Wave 4, compared to 7% in Wave 1, 6% at Wave 2 and 5% at Wave 3. Similarly, to the previous wave, compared with Wave 1, higher pay has become less important as a factor that would encourage people to stay (8%, compared with 13% at Wave 1).

Notably, compared with Wave 1 (17%) and Wave 3 (21%), the proportion of social workers considering leaving who cited that nothing that would encourage them to stay has risen to a third (33%) at Wave 4.

Figure 6.6 Main factor that would encourage social workers thinking of leaving to remain (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
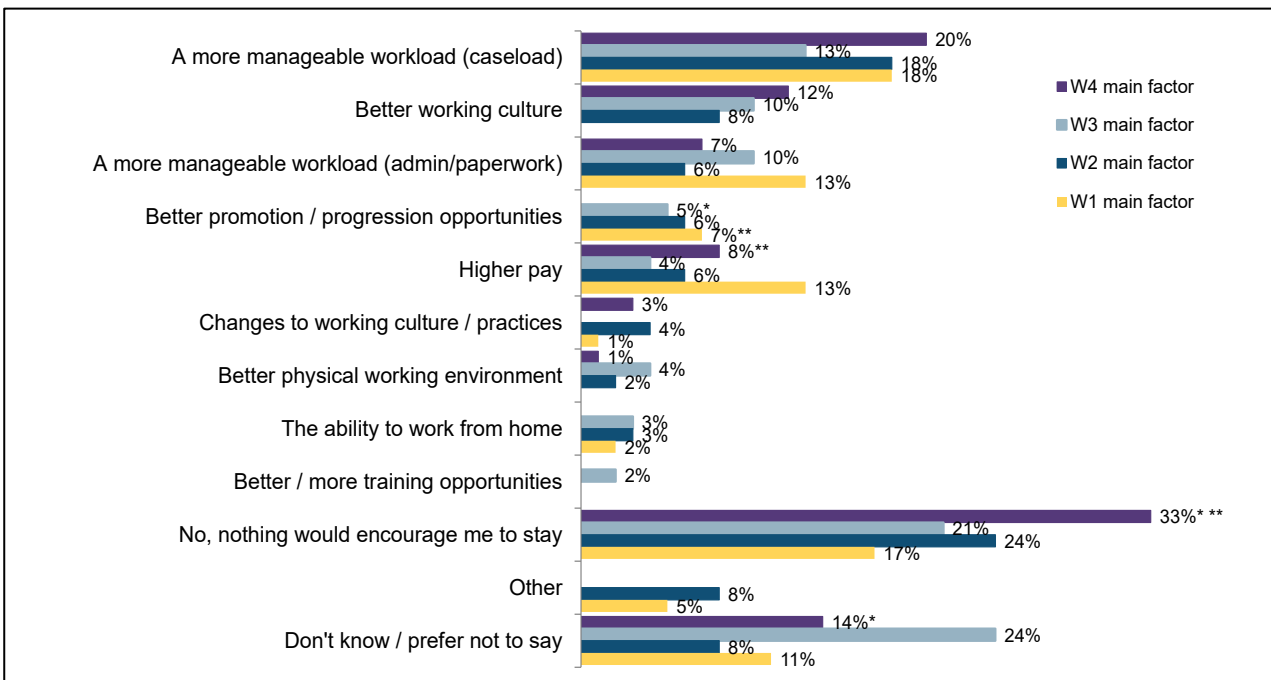
Base: Social workers who are still in child and family social work but are considering leaving: Wave 1 (504), Wave 2 (278), Wave 3 (190), Wave 4 (138).
**denotes a significant difference between Wave 1 and Wave 4
*denotes a significant difference between Wave 3 and Wave 4

7. Reasons for leaving and potential influences on coming back

This chapter looks into why child and family social workers leave the profession (excluding retirement), focusing on those who have actually left. The chapter explores their perceived likelihood of returning to child and family social work in the next five years, along with potential factors that might encourage them to return to the profession.

Chapter highlights

- Among respondents who had left the child and family social work profession but were still active in the labour market, the most common reason for leaving, cited by just under a third (28%) was that they did not like the working culture of local authority social work.
- The majority of those who had left child and family social work but were still in labour market were now in roles unrelated to social work.
- The majority of those who had left child and family social work had taken the decision to leave the profession permanently and only a minority were intending to return to the profession. A quarter (26%) of these respondents reported it was likely they would return to the profession within five years' time, whilst just under three-quarters (74%) of respondents thought it was not likely.
- When those who had left child and family social work were asked what might encourage them to return to the profession, three in ten (30%) decided that 'nothing' would. Almost a quarter felt a more manageable workload in terms of caseload was the primary factor that might encourage them back, while just over one in ten (12%) reported a better working culture.

Reasons for leaving

Around one in twenty (6%) of all respondents had left the child and family social work profession at Wave 4 but were still active in the labour market. These 101 respondents were asked their reasons for leaving and their one main reason (Figure 7.1). The most common response, cited by just under a third (28%) of respondents was that they did not like the culture of local authority social work, followed by one in five (20%) respondents reporting the high caseload –significantly higher than Wave 3 (7%). A range of other reasons were mentioned including more opportunities for progression outside of child and family social work, working hours, the amount of paperwork, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and personal reasons.

Workload-related factors including 'the high caseload', 'the working hours in general', 'the amount of paperwork' and 'it is not compatible with family or relationship commitments' were each mentioned as a contributing factor by over a quarter of respondents (51%,

47%, 40% and 29%). However, these factors were less commonly mentioned as the main factor for leaving (Figure 7.1). When combining these factors into a single 'workload-related factors' code, this becomes the most commonly cited reason, mentioned by 31% who have left the profession.

Figure 7.1 Reasons for having left child and family social work (all reasons and main reason) (Wave 4)
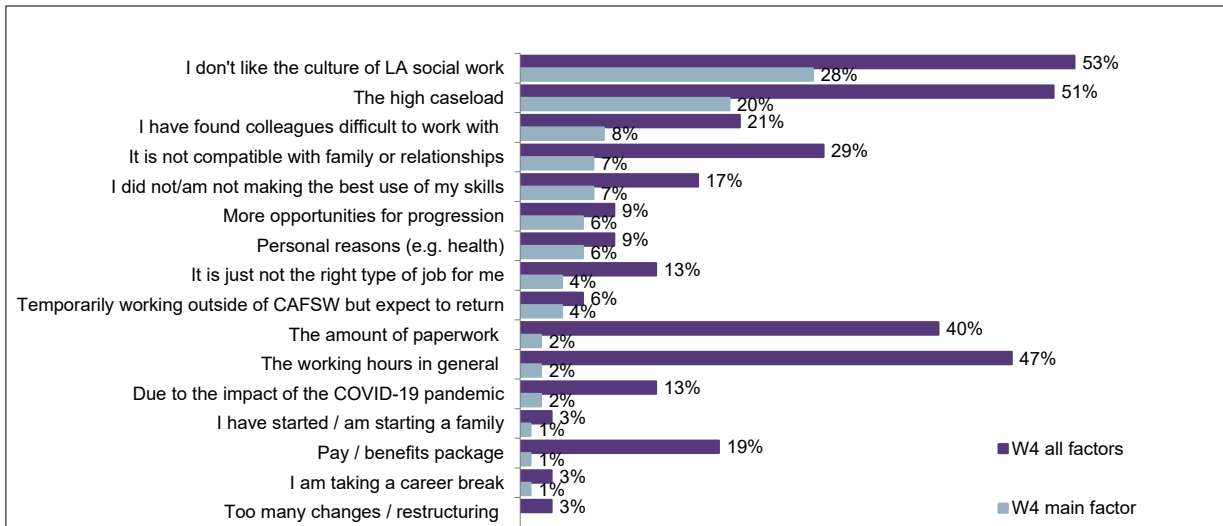
Base: Social workers who have left child and family social work but still active in the labour market: Wave 4 (101)

New job role

Of the minority (44 respondents) who had left social work altogether, but were still active in the labour market, only 12 were in roles related to social work (such as in education or health) whilst 31 were in roles not related to social work.

Those who were working but no longer employed in local authority child and family social work were asked how often they work over and above their contracted hours in their current job. They were significantly less likely to be working more than their contracted hours in their new roles. Only 12% said they did so all the time (compared with 41% of those still working in child and family social work), 16% did so most weeks (compared with 33%), 42% occasionally (compared with 23%) and 16% said they never worked over their contracted hours (compared with 2% of child and family social workers). This pattern is consistent with that found among the equivalent groups who had left child and family social work in previous waves.

Potential influences on social workers to return to the profession

The 101 respondents who had left the child and family social work profession but were still active in the labour market were also asked how likely they would be to return to child and family social work in the next five years. A quarter (26%) reported it was likely they would return to the profession within five years' time (9% very and 17% fairly likely), whilst just under three-quarters (74%) thought it was not likely (35% not very likely and 38% not at all likely). Therefore, only a minority of respondents were intending to return to child and family social work, whilst the majority had taken the decision to leave child and family social work permanently. Interestingly, there were no significant differences between those who are still working in other areas of social work compared with those who no longer work in social work. There was no significant change in these proportions between waves.

There were some significant variations according to people's personal circumstances:

- Those with childcare responsibilities thought it more likely they would return to child and family social work within five years (38% likely) than those without such responsibilities (16% likely). These proportions were consistent with Wave 3.
- Those satisfied with their *current* job were less likely to consider returning to child and family social work within five years (25% likely) compared with those who were dissatisfied (44% likely), and the average (28% likely).
- Those with a physical or mental health condition thought it less likely they would return (13% likely) compared with those without a physical or mental health condition (33% likely). These proportions were consistent with Wave 3.

Additionally, the 101 respondents who were no longer in child and family social work profession but were still active in the labour market were asked whether there was anything that might encourage them to return to child and family social work in the future. If multiple reasons were cited, they were then asked which was the main reason (Figure 7.2). The most common response, cited by just under a third (30%), was that actually 'nothing' would encourage them to come back to child and family social work. Other responses echoed the reasons they left: almost a quarter (23%) cited a more manageable workload in terms of caseload and just over one in ten (12%) said a better working culture. The next most popular factors were a more manageable workload in terms of less administration/paperwork (6%) and higher pay (4%). Almost one in eight (13%) did not know or declined to comment on what might encourage them to return to child and family social work in the future. These proportions were consistent with those at Wave 3.

Figure 7.2 Main factor that might encourage those who had left child and family social work to return in the future (Wave 4)

Factor	Percentage
No nothing would encourage me to return to social work	30%
A more manageable workload in terms of caseload	23%
Better working culture	12%
A more manageable workload in terms of administration/paperwork	6%
Higher pay	4%
Better/ more promotion/ career progression opportunities	3%
Other financial incentives	3%
Flexi-time	2%
Increased support/understanding from management	1%
Subsidised childcare	1%
Better physical working environment	1%
Other	2%
Don't know / prefer not to say	13%

Base: Those who have left social work but are still active in the labour market: Wave 4 (101). Multiple responses possible.

8. Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE): new entrants

The Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) was introduced in 2012 as a way to better support newly qualified social workers into the profession. Across England around 2,800 people start the ASYE in child and family social work each year. Since Wave 2 a separate survey has been carried out with social workers who are in or have very recently completed their ASYE:

- Wave 2: starting ASYE between October 2018 and June 2019
- Wave 3: starting ASYE between September 2019 and September 2020
- Wave 4: starting ASYE between October 2020 and June 2021

In this chapter the views of the Wave 4 ASYE participants are reported, with comparisons to ASYE social workers in previous survey waves. It is worth noting that Wave 3 and Wave 4 cohort were completing at least a portion of their ASYE during the Covid-19 pandemic, which is likely to have influenced their experiences and therefore survey responses. ASYEs start at different time points in different local authorities.

Chapter highlights

- The profile of new ASYE entrants at Wave 4 was similar to ASYEs in previous waves, except for an increasing proportion of social workers from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- There has been a gradual increase in the proportion of ASYE social workers who feel that they are being asked to fulfil too many different roles, rising from 38% in Wave 1 to 51% in Wave 4. The proportion who felt stressed by their job (63%) or that their workload is too high (44%) is in line with previous waves.
- Looking at all reasons mentioned for feeling stressed by their job, the top two were intertwined - with three-quarters (77%) saying it was because they had too much paperwork, and 58% saying they had insufficient time for direct work with children and families.
- In Wave 4, seven in ten (71%) agreed their job was satisfying overall. ASYEs in Wave 4 were less satisfied with their jobs overall than those in Wave 3 (79%) but were not significantly different to Waves 1 and 2.
- While the majority (78%) of ASYEs (including agency workers) planned to still be working in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time, this is a decrease on the previous three waves. When combined, compared with previous waves, more Wave 4 ASYEs said they planned to be working in other types of social work, either in child and family social work but not direct for a local authority, or in a different form of social work (17% overall, compared with 14% in Wave 3).

Profile of ASYE participants

Gender and age

Consistent with previous waves, the majority of social workers on their ASYE and who participated in the survey were female (85%), with around one in seven (14%) being male (1% preferred not to say, and less than 1% identified as non-binary). This is closely aligned with the overall population figures for child and family social workers.[28] As with the gender profile, the age profile of Wave 4 ASYE cohorts was also similar to previous survey waves, with just over a half (55%) below the age of 35, and 41% above the age of 35 (3% preferred not to say)[29].

Ethnicity

In Wave 4 and as shown in Figure 8.1, two-thirds of ASYE social workers were White (66%), with most of the remainder Black / Black British (19%). Comparatively few ASYE social workers were Asian / Asian British (7%), and just 3% were of Mixed ethnicity.

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[28] [Children's social work workforce data 2020](#)

[29] The full distribution was: 18% < 25 years, 38% aged 25-34, 27% aged 35-44, 14% aged 45+.

Figure 8.1 Ethnicity of ASYE child and family social workers who participated in the survey (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
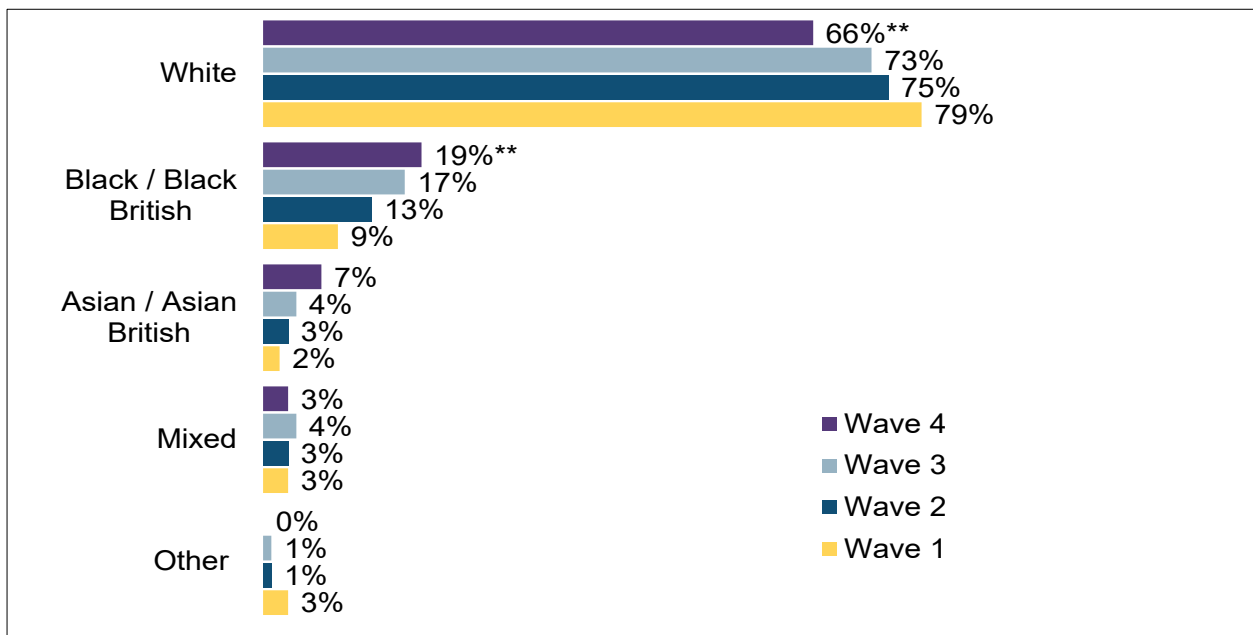
White
- 66%** (Wave 4)
- 73% (Wave 3)
- 75% (Wave 2)
- 79% (Wave 1)

Black / Black British
- 19%** (Wave 4)
- 17% (Wave 3)
- 13% (Wave 2)
- 9% (Wave 1)

Asian / Asian British
- 7% (Wave 4)
- 4% (Wave 3)
- 3% (Wave 2)
- 2% (Wave 1)

Mixed
- 3% (Wave 4)
- 4% (Wave 3)
- 3% (Wave 2)
- 3% (Wave 1)

Other
- 0% (Wave 4)
- 1% (Wave 3)
- 1% (Wave 2)
- 3% (Wave 1)

■ Wave 4
■ Wave 3
■ Wave 2
■ Wave 1

Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (283), Wave 4 (231)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

Compared with Wave 3 there has been a reduction in the proportion of ASYE social workers who were White, with a significant fall compared to Wave 1 (down 13 percentage points, from 79% in Wave 1 to 66% in Wave 4). In contrast, since Wave 1 there has been an increase in the proportion of participants who were Black / Black British (up 10 percentage points) and in the proportion who were Asian / Asian British (up five percentage points).

Disability or long-term health condition

In Wave 4, around one in six ASYE social workers (17%) reported that they had a disability or long-term physical or mental health condition (defined as one that had lasted 12 months or more); four-fifths (80%) reported that they did not have such a condition and 3% preferred not to say either way. The incidence of a health condition amongst ASYE social workers was consistent with previous waves.

Caring responsibilities

Just over four in ten (43%) ASYE social workers who took part in the Wave 4 survey had some form of caring or childcare responsibilities. Most commonly, these social workers cared for school-aged children (34%), followed by other family members or friends (8%), pre-school aged children (7%) and children with a disability (2%). This pattern was consistent with ASYE social workers at previous waves.

Entry routes into local authority child and family social work

An important part of the research is to explore what attracted people to pursue a career in child and family social work. This section explores:

- motivations for becoming a child and family social worker among the latest ASYE cohort;

- qualification entry routes into the profession and their perceived effectiveness in terms of how well-prepared people felt for the role, and;

- whether ASYE social workers came straight into the profession after qualifying.

Motivations for becoming a social worker

ASYE social workers were asked to cite all the reasons they had for wanting to embark on a career in social work. As shown in Figure 8.2, the most common reasons were wanting to help people / make a difference (75%) and wanting to work with children and families (70%). These were the top two motivations for all previous waves of the research, though they were more of a driver amongst ASYE social workers in Wave 4 compared to Wave 3.

Figure 8.2 Reasons for entering social work among new ASYEs (all waves)
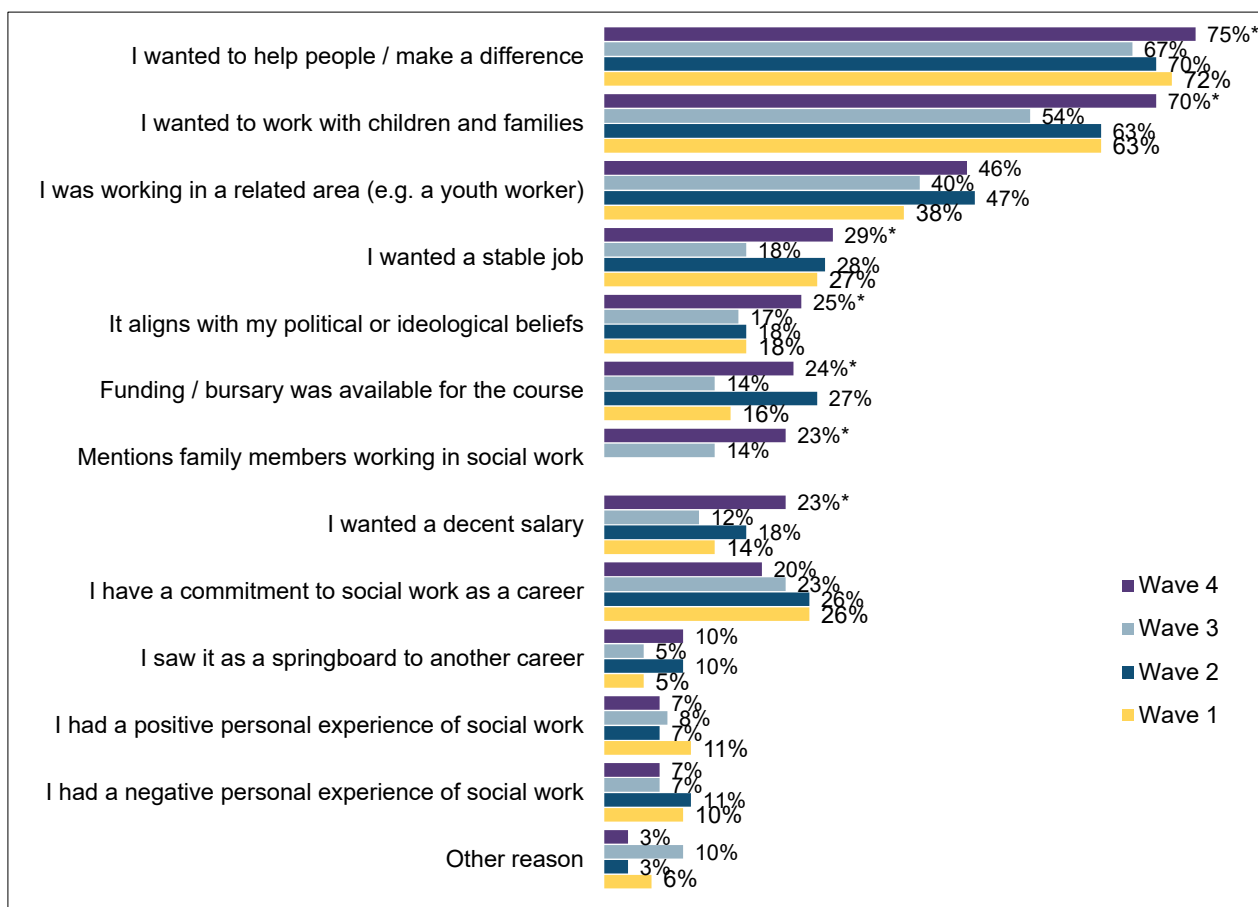
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (283), Wave 4 (231)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

Other significant reasons for wanting to become a social worker were a previous role in a related area (46%), wanting a stable job (29%), alignment with political or ideological beliefs (25%), availability of funding/bursary (24%) and wanting a decent salary (23%). With the exception of the first one of these (already working in a related area), all were stronger motivations in Wave 4 compared with Wave 3.

Whilst one in five (20%) were motivated to enter child and family social work because they had a commitment to social work as a career, the impact of this as a motivation was significantly lower in Wave 4 than in Wave 1 (26%).

Qualification routes into the profession

There are a number of ways through which people can become a qualified social worker, and ASYE social workers were asked about their entry qualifications, namely the qualification(s) that first enabled them to register as a social worker.

As shown in Figure 8.3, the most common entry route into child and family social work at Wave 4 was through a degree, either undergraduate level (43%) or postgraduate level (29%). One in five (23%) entered via the 'Step up to Social Work' programme, and 8% in

Wave 4 entered via the 'Frontline' programme. A few other mentions were given, with less than one per cent mentioning Apprenticeships (a relatively new, degree-level course). Please note that multiple responses were allowed to this question.

The distribution of entry routes at Wave 4 was more similar to Wave 2 than Wave 3. This reflects the structure of the 'Step up to Social Work' programme which takes new cohorts every two years.

Figure 8.3 Entry route into child and family social work among new ASYEs (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
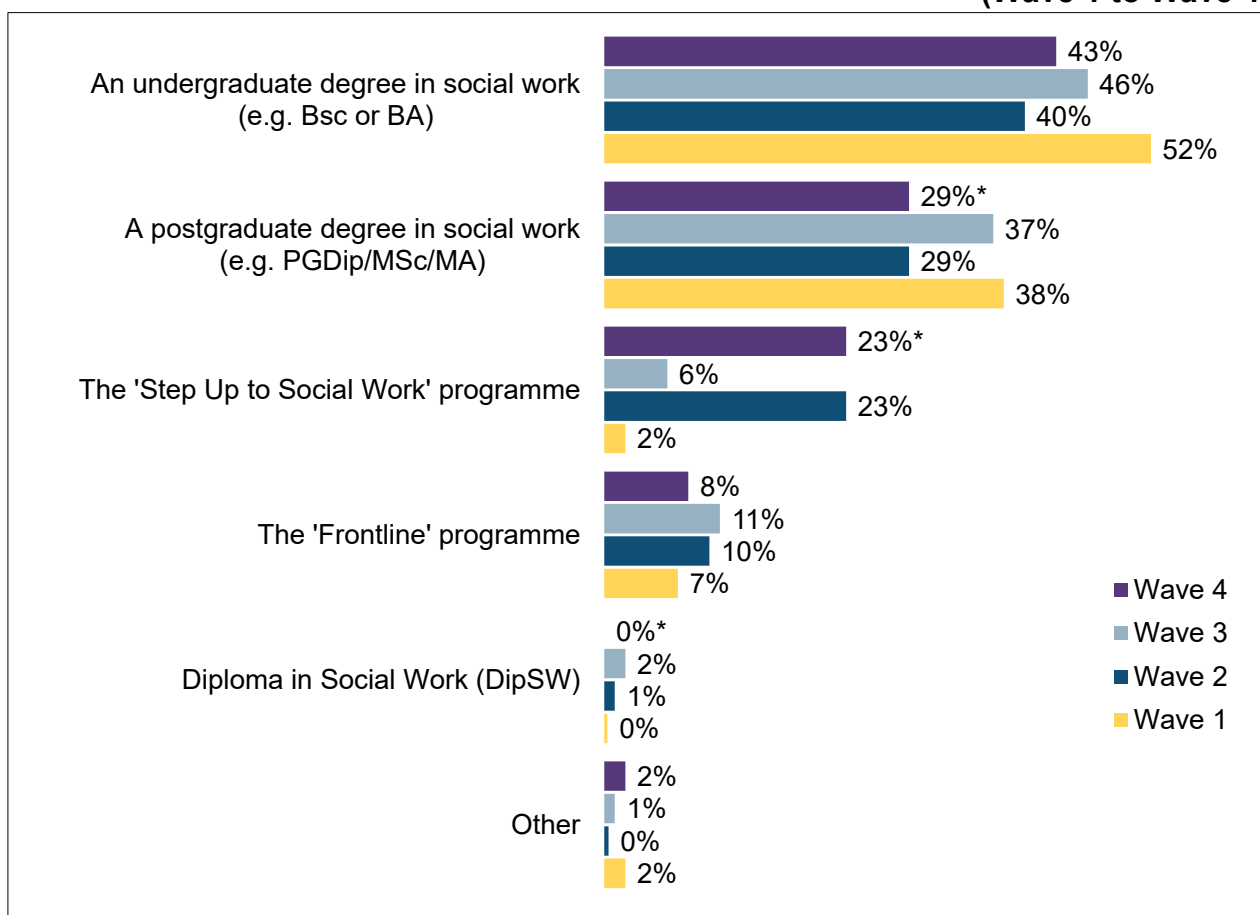
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (283), Wave 4 (231)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

For Wave 4 ASYE social workers who entered the social work profession with an undergraduate degree, attainment levels were broadly similar to those found in Wave 3: 30% had a first-class degree (25% Wave 3), 45% had a 2:1 degree (51% Wave 3), 19% had a 2:2 degree (18% Wave 3) and no one had a 3rd class degree (3% in Wave 3).

In contrast, amongst those who entered the profession with a postgraduate degree in social work, there was a rise in those with a distinction in Wave 4 (22% compared to 9% in Wave 3). Otherwise 35% had achieved a merit (46% Wave 3) and 16% a pass (17% Wave 3).

As in previous waves, just over a half (57%) of ASYE social workers entered the profession having completed an undergraduate degree in a different subject prior to their qualification in social work. The comparable figure in Wave 3 was 54%. Amongst this group, a whole range of different undergraduate degrees were studied, but the most common in Wave 4 were psychology (13%) and sociology (7%).

ASYE social workers were also asked the name of the institution they were registered at for their first social work qualification. Institutions were then coded into 'high', 'medium' and 'low' UCAS tariff based on the ranking of the institution. The UCAS tariff is a measure of prior attainment which is used in the university admissions process and is an indicator of the selectivity of an institution. It should be noted that tariffs can change over time: this analysis was based on current rankings, even if the social worker attended the institution several years ago. ASYEs who responded to the survey most commonly attended low tariff (44%) or medium tariff (29%) institutions, with just around one in ten (13%) attending a high tariff institution. The proportion of ASYE respondents that had attended a high tariff institution was lower in Wave 4 than Wave 3 (20%).

Views on the effectiveness of different qualification routes

ASYE social workers were asked their views on how well they thought their qualification had prepared them for working in social work in general, and specifically for working in child and family social work. As seen in Figure 8.4, most ASYE social workers typically felt well-prepared for a career in social work (77%) and for a career in child and family social work specifically (75%).

There has been no change in the *overall* proportion of ASYEs who felt well prepared for their careers compared with previous waves, standing at 75% for working in child and family social work and 77% for working in social work more generally, at Wave 4. That said, there has been a fall in the proportion for both measures saying they felt 'very well' prepared compared to Wave 3: 26% felt very well prepared for working in child and family social work, compared with 34% in Wave 3, while 25% felt very well prepared for working in social work more generally, compared with 35% in Wave 3. This puts those who feel 'very well' prepared back on par with the levels first recorded in Wave 1 and Wave 2.

At Wave 4 there were no statistically significant differences in how well prepared ASYEs felt by entry route compared with either Wave 3 or Wave 1, although it should be noted that the base size for the Frontline programme is too small for significance testing this wave.

Figure 8.4 ASYE child and family social workers' views on how well they felt their entry route prepared them for social work (Wave 1 to Wave 4)

		Not at all / very well	Quite well	Very well	Well prepared
	W4	23%	52%	25%*	77%
Working in social work	W3	18%	46%	35%	81%
	W2	18%	57%	24%	81%
	W1	25%	51%	24%	75%
	W4	25%	49%	26%*	75%
Working in child and family social work	W3	22%	44%	34%	78%
	W2	23%	47%	29%	77%
	W1	29%	48%	24%	71%

■ Don't know / prefer not to say ■ Not at all / very well ■ Quite well ■ Very well
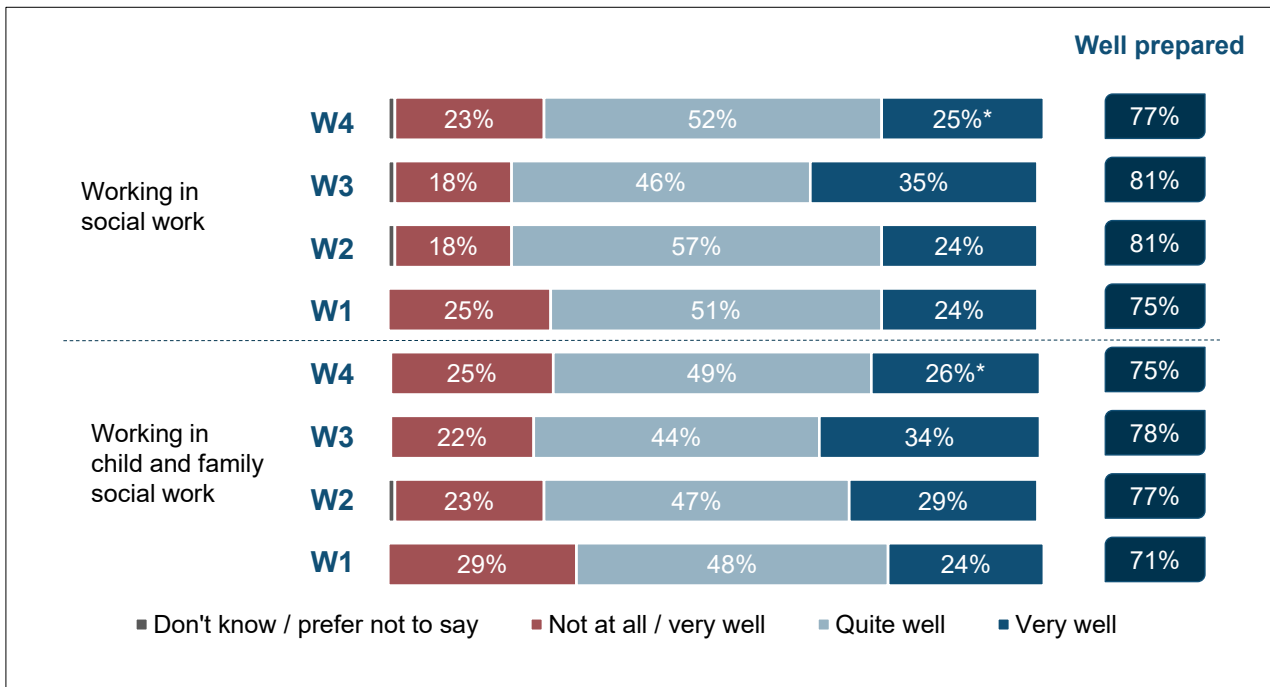
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers who answered how they got into social work:
Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (283), Wave 4 (231)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

Workplace wellbeing

This section explores ASYE wellbeing by considering working hours and caseloads, reported stress levels and workload demands, views on the extent of managerial support for work-life balance, and access to flexible working arrangements.

As context, after qualifying as a registered social worker, over nine in ten of the Wave 4 ASYE respondents (92%) said they went straight into child and family social work. This was a similarly high rate as in previous years, 90% in Wave 3 and 95% in Wave 1.

Contracted and actual working hours

ASYE social workers were asked how many hours they were contracted to work per week. Throughout this section full-time work is considered to be more than 35 hours and part-time as any range between 1-35 hours, recognising that 31-35 hours is on the cusp of full-time work.

Most Wave 4 ASYE social workers were contracted to work full-time, with 85% contracted to work 36-40 hours per week. The remainder were generally contracted to work 31-35 hours (10%) with just a minority contracted to work 16-30 hours (3%). Contracted hours were consistent with previous waves and continued to be higher than

the main survey, where the mean number of contracted hours is 35 across all four waves.

While ASYE social workers were contracted to work 37 hours per week (on average), they reported working 44 hours per week (on average), around a day per week beyond their contracted hours. This was the same as Wave 3 (an extra seven hours) and in line with Waves 1 and 2 (each recording an extra six hours).

Figure 8.5 illustrates the contrast between contracted hours and actual hours worked in a typical week and shows that over half (54%) of ASYE social workers stated that they worked for 41 hours or more in a typical week. This was on par with the situation in Wave 3, when 57% claimed to work more than 41 hours. Sample size bases are too low to draw out any meaningful differences by practice area, but nearly all practice areas recorded a mean average working week of 40 hours+. The same trend with social workers working more than their contracted hours was seen in the main survey, though generally ASYE social workers report working more hours than their non-ASYE counterparts.

Figure 8.5 ASYE actual hours worked in a typical week versus contracted hours (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
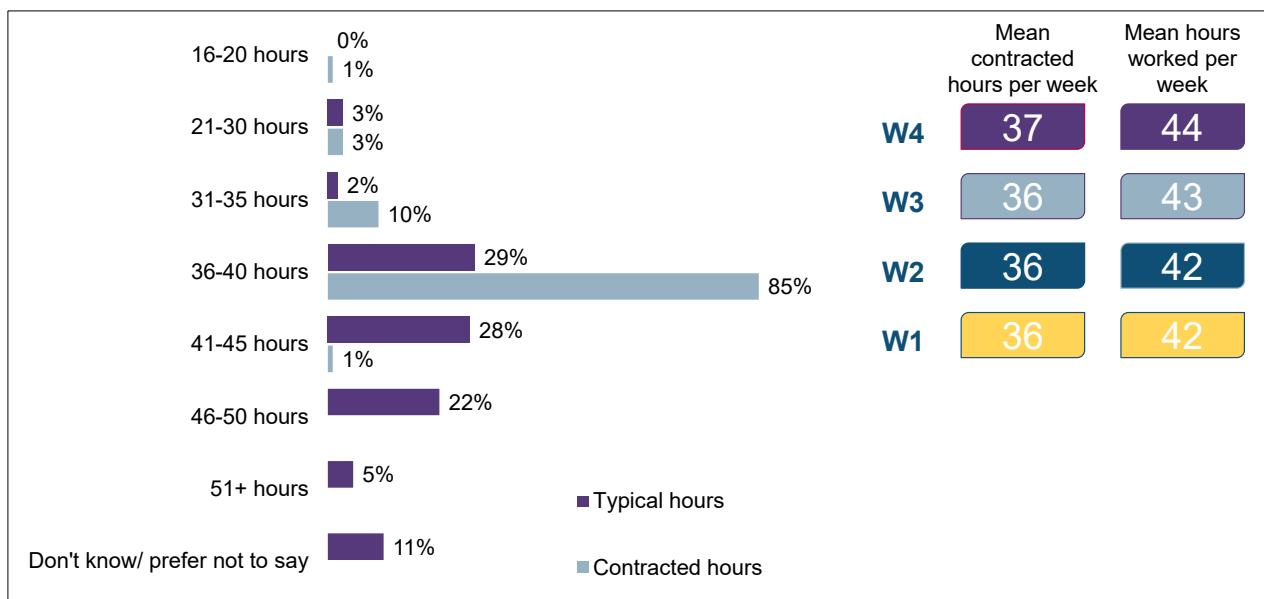
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 4 (231)

ASYE social workers were asked to estimate the number of hours in a typical week that they spent doing direct work with children and families/carers. Most commonly ASYE social workers reported they worked 6-10 hours (40%). Around a quarter (27%) were working 11 hours or more on direct casework, with this being lower than Wave 3 (35%), but comparable with Wave 2 (27%) and Wave 1 (26%). The increase in direct work with children and families at Wave 3 may reflect Covid-related issues. The mean number of hours spent in direct work was 10 hours, which was the same as non-ASYE child and family social workers despite those respondents working fewer hours in general.

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In terms of the split of direct work with children and families between face-to-face contact and remote contact (e.g., by telephone or videoconference), the weight was towards face-to-face contact. Just over half (53%) said that 81-100% of their direct time was spent face-to-face, giving a mean score of 61% face-to-face contact. Conversely around a half (51%) said that just 0-20% of their direct time was spent via remote contact, giving a mean score of 14% remote contact. The respective split in Wave 3 was a mean of 51% spent face-to-face and 29% spent remotely, suggesting that there has been some shift back to face-to-face contact since the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Caseloads

ASYE social workers were asked how many cases they were currently allocated[30]. A broad span of answers was given, ranging from none to 26+. However, most said their caseload was in the range of 11-20 (63%), and the mean was 16. The number of cases allocated to ASYE social workers was similar to previous waves.

Figure 8.6 ASYE caseloads (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
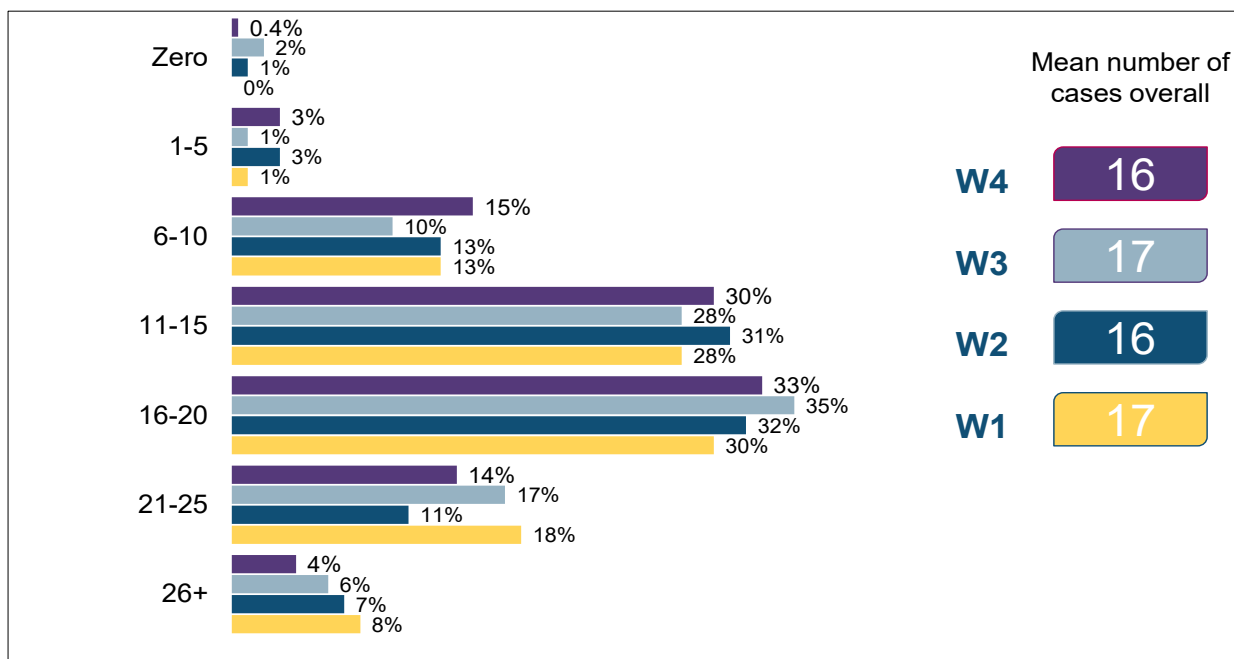
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

[30] Cases were defined as "an individual allocated to a social worker (for example a family of three siblings would be three individual cases) and/or a carer or carers allocated to a social worker for the purposes of fostering or adoption."

Stress levels and workload demands

ASYE social workers were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- 'I feel stressed by my job'

- 'My overall workload is too high'

- 'I feel I am being asked to fulfil too many different roles in my job'.

As shown in Figure 8.7, agreement levels were reasonably high for all three statements, and outsized the proportion who disagreed. Agreement was highest for the statement 'I feel stressed by my job', with just over six in ten (63%) ASYE social workers agreeing this was the case. Thereafter five in ten (51%) agreed that they were being asked to fulfil too many different roles in their job, and four in ten (44%) agreed that their overall workload was too high. Strength of feeling was highest for feeling stressed by the job, with a quarter (26%) of ASYE social workers 'strongly agreeing' that this was the case.

Figure 8.7 ASYE agreement levels regarding stress and workload demands (Waves 1 to 4)
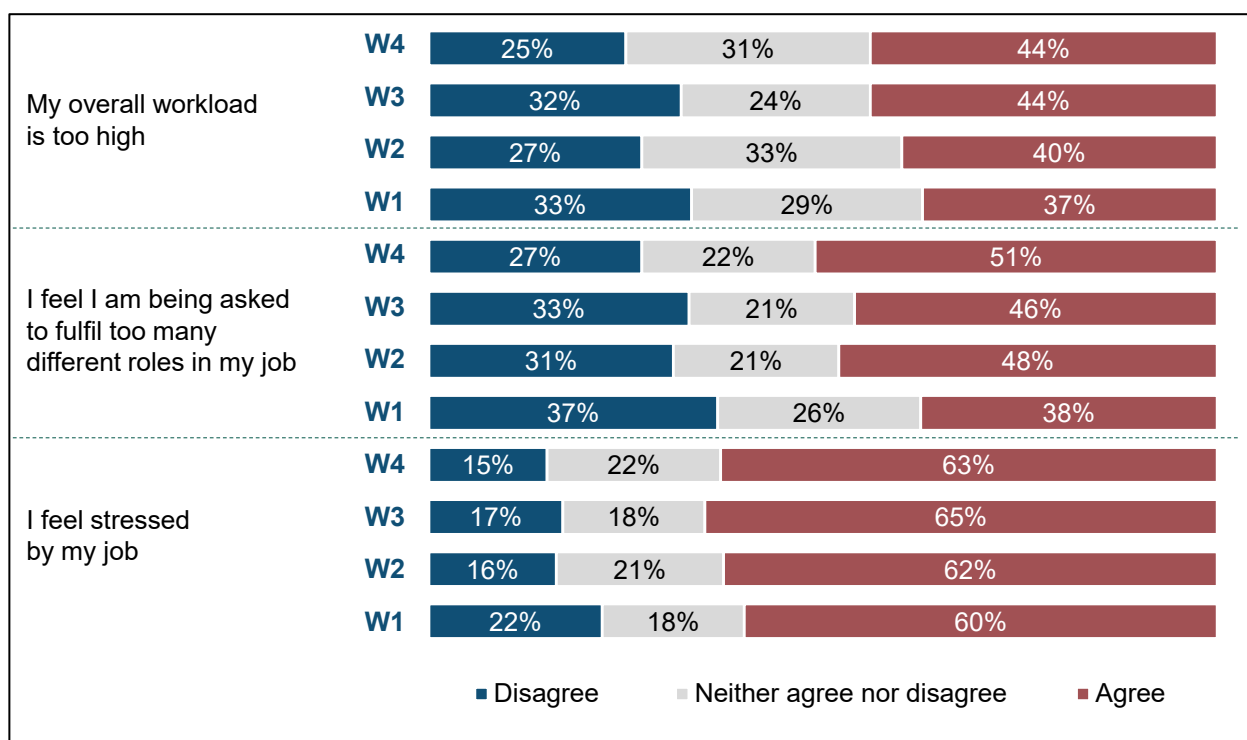
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231)
*denotes significant difference between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

Across the survey waves, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of ASYE social workers who feel that they are being asked to fulfil too many different roles, rising from 38% agreement in Wave 1 up to 51% agreement in Wave 4. This upward trend is in

line with the findings for child and family social workers in the main survey, across Wave 1 to Wave 4. Although the differences for the other two statements are less pronounced (and not significant), they nevertheless show an upward trend in agreement.

ASYE child and family social workers were more positive about some aspects of workplace wellbeing than found in the Wave 4 longitudinal survey (see Chapter 3):

- 44% of ASYEs thought their workload was too high, compared with 59% of child and family social workers in the main survey, and similarly;
- 51% of ASYEs thought they were being asked to fulfil too many roles in their job, compared with 61% of social workers in the main survey.

However, reported stress levels were similar across both groups (at 63% for ASYEs and 62% for child and family social workers in the main survey).

Reasons for feeling stressed

ASYE social workers who agreed with the statement 'I feel stressed by my job' were asked what factors were causing this and the main factor, if there was more than one.

Looking at all reasons mentioned, the top two were intertwined - with three-quarters (77%) saying it was because they had too much paperwork, and 58% saying they had insufficient time for direct work with children and families. Generally a host of reasons were given, and other common mentions included: high staff turnover in team / area of practice (52%), lack of resources to support families (50%), having too many cases (39%), having to making emotional / difficult decisions (38%), working culture / practices (38%)[31], lack of administrative / business support (31%) and insufficient quality of management / support (29%).

In comparison with Wave 3 several of these areas had increased, most notably high staff turnover in their team / area of practice (up 24 percentage points), which has also increased significantly as a reason for feeling stressed by the job among the main Wave 4 sample, compared with previous waves.

Figure 8.8 presents the single main factor identified by ASYE social workers for feeling stressed by their job. In Wave 4 the main reason, cited by a third (33%) of ASYEs, was that they had too much paperwork. This was consistent with previous waves. Thereafter reasons were varied, although over one in ten ASYE social workers said their main

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[31] By 'working culture', social workers were typically referring to the specific working culture at their local authority, rather than in local authority child and family social work more broadly, and often the culture within their specific teams.

reason was that they had too many cases (12%) and that there was insufficient quality of management / support (11%).

The proportion who said that having too many cases was the main reason for feeling stressed has fallen sharply compared to previous waves, even though the average number of cases per ASYE has largely remained the same across the survey waves. There has been an increase in the proportion mentioning high staff turnover issues as their one main reason for feeling stressed (up from 2% in Wave 3 to 8% in Wave 4), which is also seen in the main Wave 4 sample.

Figure 8.8 Main reason why ASYEs feel stressed by their job (Wave 4 and Wave 3)
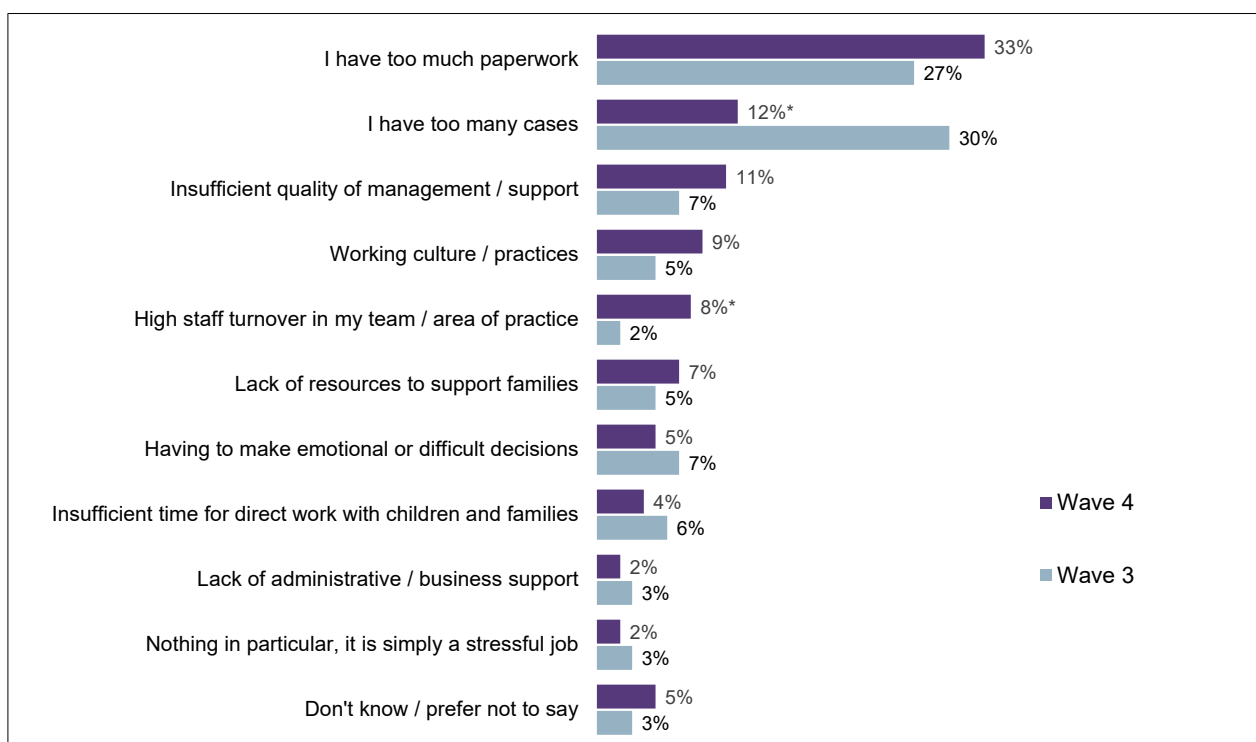
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers who report feeling stressed by their job: Wave 3 (190), Wave 4 (148). Answers above 1% in Wave 4 shown
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

As found in Wave 3, those at Wave 4 who were further along their career journey and had completed ASYE in the past six months compared to those currently doing their ASYE were more likely to mention paperwork as the main reason for feeling stressed about their job (54% compared to 27% who were still currently on ASYE).

Manager consideration of work-life balance

Although a high proportion of ASYE social workers reported they were working more than their contracted hours, most (76%) still felt that their manager was considerate of their life outside of work. Views were evenly split between those who 'agreed' (36%) and those who 'strongly agreed' (39%).

However, compared with Wave 3, and as shown in Figure 8.9, there was a drop in agreement from Wave 3 to Wave 4 (down by 10 percentage points), and a doubling in disagreement from 6% to 13%. Opinion in Wave 4 is more in-line with that recorded for Wave 1 and Wave 2, suggesting that in Wave 3 there could have been more consideration about life outside of work during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 8.9 Extent of ASYEs' agreement that their manager is considerate of their life outside of work (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
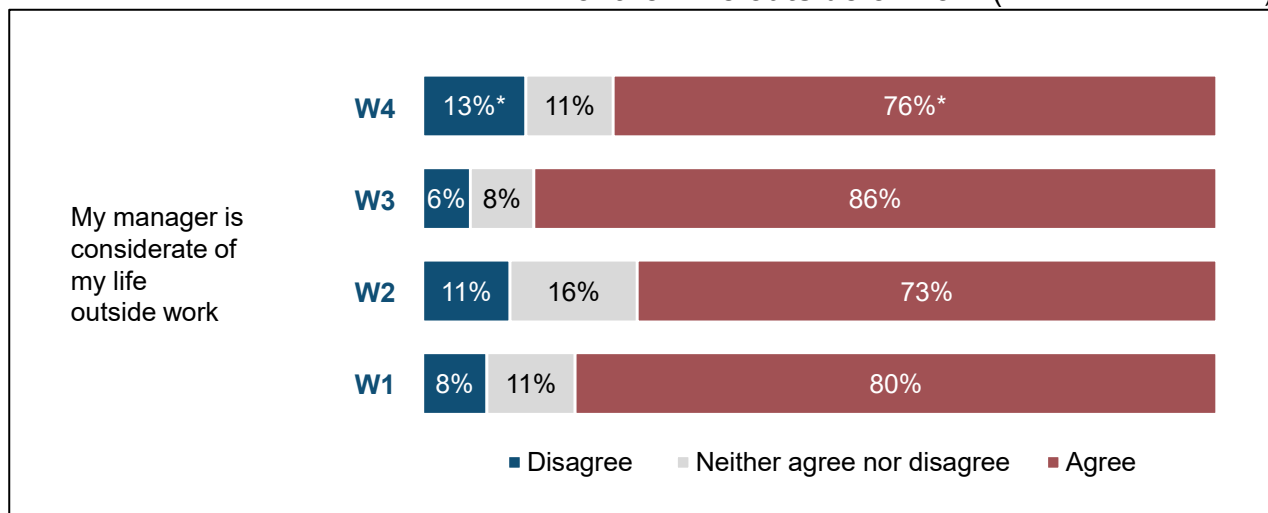
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave (231)
*denotes significant differences between results in Wave 4 and Wave 3

Views on employer, manager and working environment

This section explores ASYE social workers' day-to-day experiences in terms of feeling loyal to and valued by their employer; relationship with their managers; experiences of receiving reflective supervision; access to the right learning and development opportunities, and views on the resources at their disposal and their working environment.

Feeling valued by and loyal to their employer

ASYE social workers were asked the extent to which they felt loyal to, and valued by, their employer. As shown in Figure 8.10, although the majority of ASYEs said they felt loyal to their employer in Wave 4 (63%) – this was a significant decrease on Wave 3 (75%). Likewise, 15% disagreed that they felt loyal, compared with only 7% at Wave 3. There was also a significant decrease in those who said they felt valued by their employer – just over half (54%) agreed, compared to six in ten (61%) at Wave 3. The ASYEs surveyed in Wave 4 expressed the lowest levels of feeling loyal and valued across all waves.

There was a strong correlation between ASYE social workers' sense of loyalty and the Ofsted rating of the local authority. Almost three quarters (73%) of ASYEs at 'Good' or

'Outstanding' local authorities agreed that they felt loyal to their employer, significantly higher than the 56% of ASYE social workers who agreed at local authorities rated 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'. However, with regard to their sense of feeling valued this was less pronounced. Around three in five (58%) of those at 'Good' or 'Outstanding' local authorities agreed that they felt valued by their employer, compared to 51% at those rated 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'.

Figure 8.10 ASYE social workers' perceptions of loyalty to and feeling valued by their employer (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
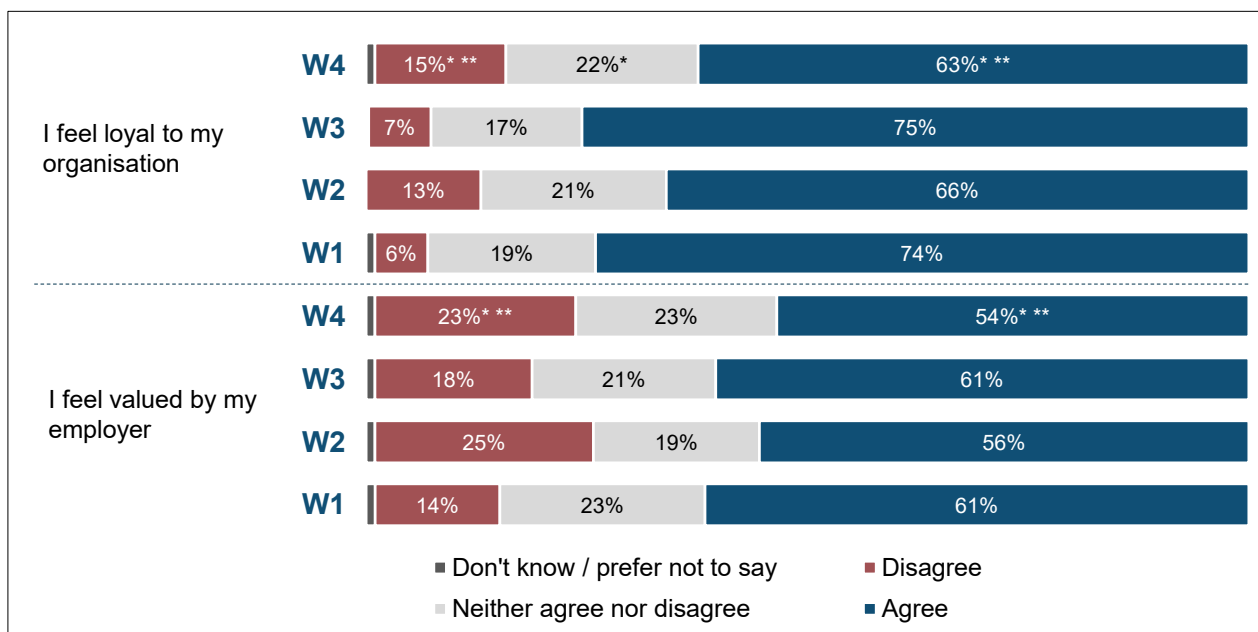
Base: All ASYE child and family Social Workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231) **denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1; and *between Wave 4 and Wave 3.

Views on line management

ASYE social workers were asked about various aspects of their relationship with their line manager(s). In Wave 4 (as in previous waves) they were generally very positive. Agreement levels were greatest in respect to having confidence in their manager's decisions (85%), their manager encouraging them to develop their skills (85%), recognising when they had done their job well (85%), and being open to ideas (82%).

Although still a majority, ASYEs were comparatively less positive about the performance management and feedback components of line management. Three-quarters (77%) agreed that they received regular feedback on their performance, and 78% that the feedback received helped them to improve their performance, while 75% agreed that their manager motivates them to be more effective in their job. ASYEs at Wave 4 were less positive about support from their manager during the pandemic than those at Wave 3 (68% at Wave 4 agreeing that they had been well supported, compared to 79% at Wave 3).

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Receiving reflective supervision

Exploring ASYE social workers' experience of reflective supervision is important in understanding perceptions of professional development and performance management. Overall, there was a wide variation in the amount of reflective supervision received by ASYE social workers (Figure 8.11).   Almost half (46%) said they received reflective supervision once every three or four weeks, with 22% who said they received it more frequently, at least once every two weeks. Three in ten (29%) said they received reflective supervision less regularly – either every five or six weeks (16%) or less often than every six weeks (13%). Only 1% said they had not received any. There were no significant differences compared with previous waves.

Figure 8.11 Frequency of receiving reflective supervision among ASYEs (Wave 1 to Wave 4)

Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231)
**denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1; and *between Wave 4 and Wave 3.

Quality of reflective supervision

Wave 4 ASYE social workers who had received reflective supervision were asked their views on its quality. Around one-third (36%) rated it 'very good', 50% 'good', 9% 'poor' and 4% 'very poor'. This contrasted with 17% of all social workers in the main Wave 4 survey who rated their supervision as 'very good', and 58% saying it was 'good'. These scores were broadly consistent with the pattern in previous waves.

There was a correlation between quality and frequency. Of the ASYE social workers who received supervision at least once every 4 weeks, 93% rated the supervision as 'good' or

'very good', significantly higher than 64% among those receiving supervision less frequently than that.

Perceived effectiveness of the ASYE

ASYE social workers were asked how effective or ineffective they had found the ASYE programme in supporting them to make the transition from training to practice. Two-thirds (66%) regarded it as effective (including 21% who thought it was very effective). Just under a fifth (18%) felt it was neither effective nor ineffective, with slightly fewer (16%) who felt it was ineffective.

There were very few significant differences other than ASYE social workers who had a physical or mental health condition were more likely to feel that the ASYE programme was ineffective (40%, compared with 10% of those who did not have a health condition). There was also a link to overall satisfaction: four in five (79%) of those who were satisfied with their job overall found the ASYE to be effective, compared with 35% of those who were dissatisfied.

The minority (40) who found the ASYE to be ineffective were asked why. The most common response was limited consideration for balancing caseload with ASYE obligations (mentioned by 18/40), followed closely by general lack of support (17/40). Other important factors (each mentioned by 8/40) were: issues with management, irrelevant training, and lack of reflective supervision.

Views on working environment, resources and access to learning and development opportunities

ASYE social workers were asked for views on their working environment, resources to help them do their jobs, and access to learning/ development (Figure 8.12). Wave 4 ASYE social workers were most positive about having access to the right learning and development opportunities (82% agreed) and about having the right tools to do their job effectively e.g., risk assessment tools (71% agreed). However, and in line with the pattern in previous waves, somewhat fewer agreed that the IT systems and software supported them to do their job (53%).

There were no significant differences compared with Wave 3.

Figure 8.12 ASYE views on tools and resources (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
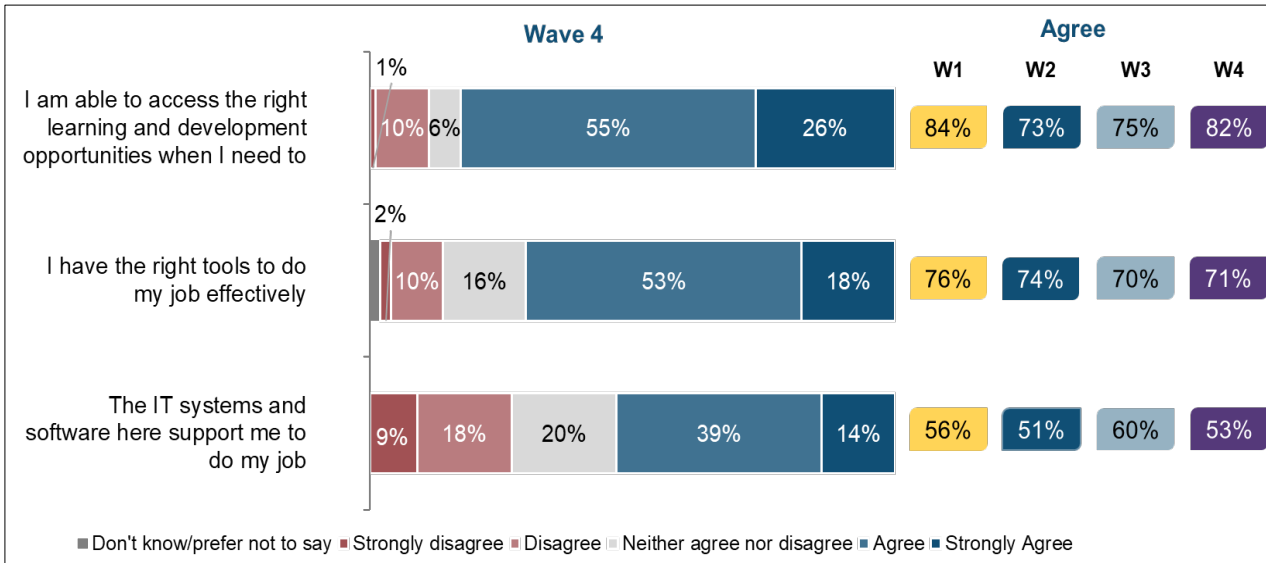
	Wave 4					Agree			
						W1	W2	W3	W4
I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to	1% / 10% / 6%		55%		26%	84%	73%	75%	82%
I have the right tools to do my job effectively	2% / 10%	16%	53%		18%	76%	74%	70%	71%
The IT systems and software here support me to do my job	9%	18% / 20%	39%		14%	56%	51%	60%	53%

■ Don't know/prefer not to say ■ Strongly disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256); Wave 3 (279); Wave 4 (231).
**denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1; and *between Wave 4 and Wave 3.

Job satisfaction

This section examines how satisfied ASYE social workers were with various aspects of their job, and overall.

Aspects of the job

Wave 4 ASYE social workers were asked how satisfied they were with various aspects of their job, on a 5-point scale from very satisfied to very dissatisfied.

On key features of the job (Figure 8.13), almost nine in ten (88%) were satisfied with job security, but this fell to less than half (45%) satisfied with the amount of pay received, and a little over a quarter (27%) with public respect for the work they do.

The results here were broadly consistent wave-on-wave. There had been a significant increase in ASYEs who were satisfied with their pay (54%) and their job security (91%) in Wave 3 compared to Wave 2 or Wave 1, but satisfaction with pay dropped again in Wave 4.

Figure 8.13 Percentage of ASYE social workers' who agreed that they were satisfied or very satisfied with key aspects of their job (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
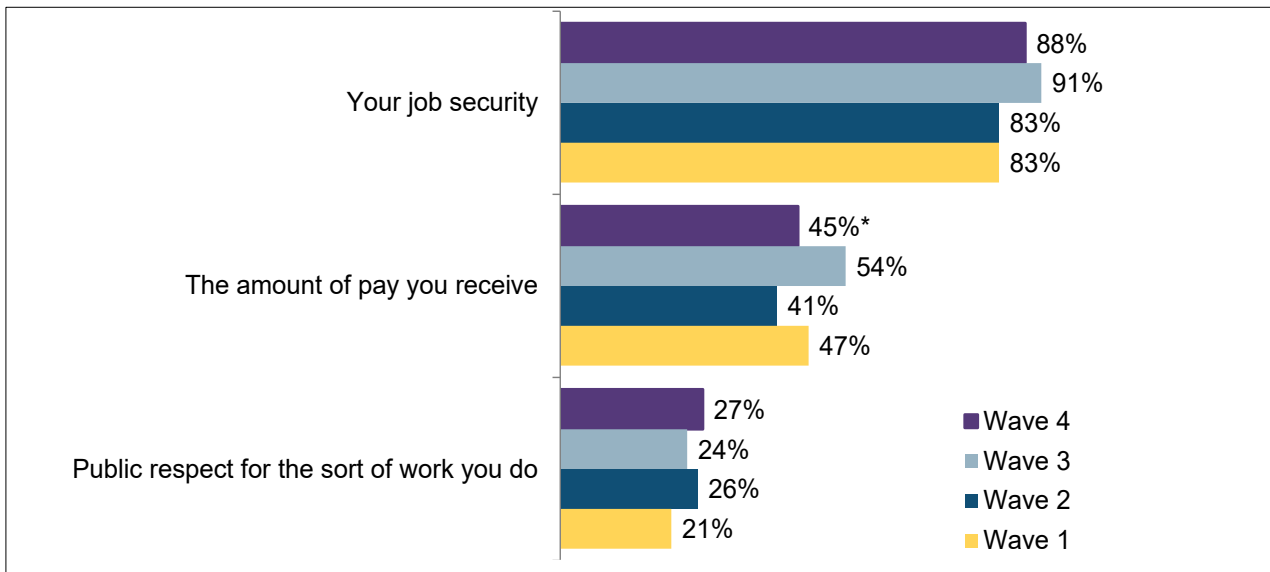
Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231).

**denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1; and * between Wave 4 and Wave 3.

On aspects of how they carry out their job (Figure 8.14) levels of satisfaction were high: 70% were satisfied with the amount of influence they have over their job; 78% with the sense of achievement; 86% with opportunity to develop their skills; 84% with scope to use their initiative and 83% with the extent to which they feel challenged in their role.

On these various elements, satisfaction was consistent with previous waves.

Figure 8.14 Percentage of ASYE social workers' who agreed that they were satisfied or very satisfied with key aspects of their job (Wave 1 to Wave 4)

The extent to which you feel challenged
- 83%
- 82%
- 83%
- 87%

The scope for using your own initiative
- 84%
- 82%
- 83%
- 85%

The opportunity to develop your skills in your job
- 86%
- 81%
- 82%
- 82%

The sense of achievement you get from your work
- 78%
- 80%
- 77%
- 82%

The amount of influence you have over your job
- 70%
- 70%
- 65%
- 64%

Legend: Wave 4, Wave 3, Wave 2, Wave 1

Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231).
**denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1; and *between Wave 4 and Wave 3.

Overall job satisfaction

ASYE social workers were asked the extent to which they agreed that they found their current job satisfying overall. In Wave 4, seven in ten (71%) agreed (15% 'strongly agreed' and 56% 'agreed'), whilst 15% disagreed (4% 'strongly disagreed' and 11% 'disagreed'). ASYEs in Wave 4 were less satisfied with their jobs overall than those in Wave 3 (79%) but were not significantly different to Waves 1 and 2.

Figure 8.15 ASYE social workers' overall job satisfaction (Wave 1 to Wave 4)

Overall, I find my current job satisfying

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know	Disagree	Agree
W4	4%	11%	14%	56%	15%		15%*	71%*
W3		6%	12%	57%	22%		8%	79%
W2	6%	9%	17%	49%	18%		15%	68%
W1		8%	12%	53%	22%		11%	75%
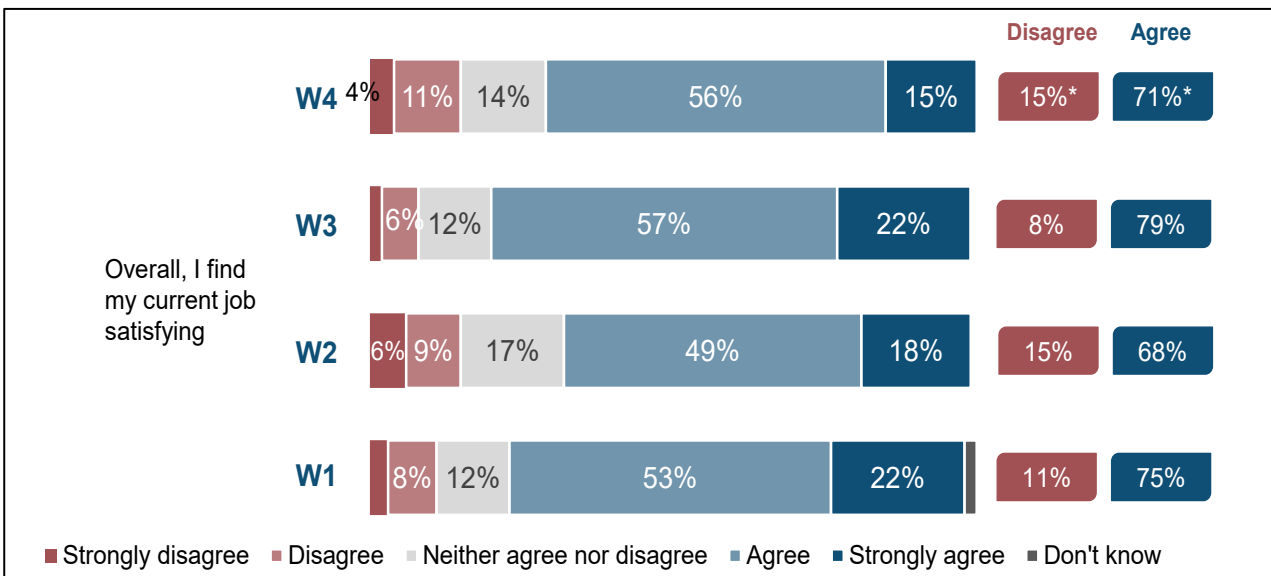
Base: All ASYE LA child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231). **denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1; and *between Wave 4 and Wave 3.

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Short-term career plans and reasons for wanting to leave social work

Identifying ASYE social workers' short-term career plans and reasons for leaving or considering leaving their current positions is important to help to understand how retention might be improved. This section details career plans over the next 12 months and whether these have been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, perceived transferability of social work skills outside the sector, reasons for leaving and potential influences on retention.

Career plans in the next 12 months and beyond

ASYE social workers were asked where they expected to be working in 12 months' time, if at all. Figure 8.16 shows that 71% planned to still be working directly in local authority child and family social work a year hence, a decrease on the previous three waves. Nine per cent were planning to be 'working in social work, but outside of child and family social work', 7% 'working in child and family social work in the private or voluntary sector', 7% 'working in child and family social work for a local authority but via an agency', and 1% 'working outside of social work altogether'. When combined, compared with previous waves, more Wave 4 ASYEs said they planned to be working in other types of social work, either child and family social work but not direct for a local authority or in a different form of social work (24% overall, compared with 14% in Wave 3).

ASYEs who did not anticipate working in child and family social work for a local authority directly in 12 months' time reported more negative views on a range of measures, compared with those who intended to remain working directly for a local authority. For example: 90% reported that they worked overtime 'most weeks' or 'all the time' (compared with 66% expecting to be employed directly by an authority); 64% agreed their workload was too high (compared with 42% expecting to still be working directly for a local authority); 72% agreed they were asked to fulfil too many roles (compared with 46%), and 87% agreed that they felt stressed by their job (compared with 56%).[32] It is therefore not surprising that overall job satisfaction amongst those expecting not to work directly for a local authority in 12 months' time was only 43%, compared with 80% of those still expecting to be employed directly.

Among ASYEs who took part in the subsequent wave of the survey, it is possible to gauge what they actually did 'in 12 months' time' and how this compares to what they envisaged at the point they were first surveyed. Across all waves, 82% of ASYEs who took part in the subsequent wave did what they said they would do in 12 months' time,

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[32] The base size for this analysis is 51, therefore findings should be interpreted with caution.

and 18% did not. Unsurprisingly, there was only matched data for those who expected to be working in child and family social work for a local authority (either directly or for an agency). This is most likely because those who said they were going to work outside of child and family social work or stop working in social work altogether were less likely to continue within the study.

The 82% who did what they anticipated mainly said they would work in child and family social work for a local authority directly[33]. However, those who entered at ASYE Wave 3 and went into the Wave 4 main survey were significantly less likely compared to other waves to be still working directly in LA child and family social work (75% compared to 84% of Wave 1 ASYEs who took part in Wave 2 and 84% Wave 2 ASYEs who took part in Wave 3). Those who did not go on to work for a local authority directly did not have a common alternative path; some went into agency employment, others were unemployed and looking for work, or on a career break.[34]

Figure 8.16 Where ASYE social workers see themselves in 12 months' time (Wave 1 to Wave 4)
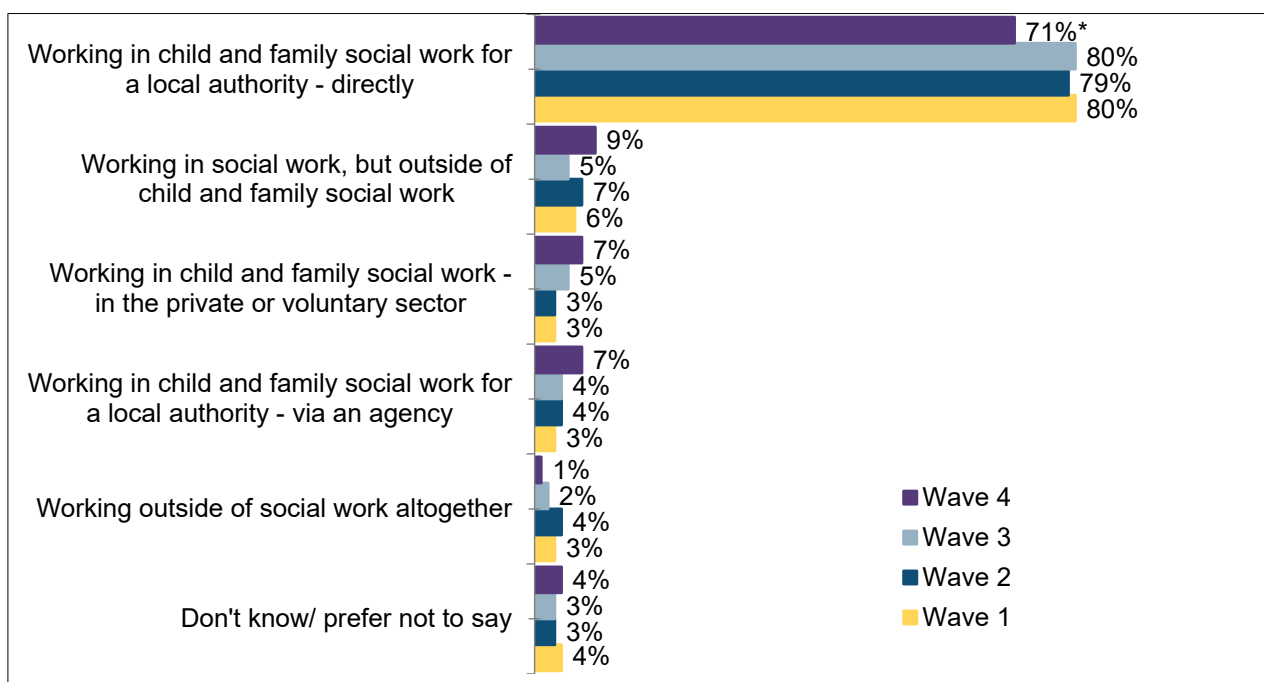
Base: All ASYE LA child and famiy social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231).
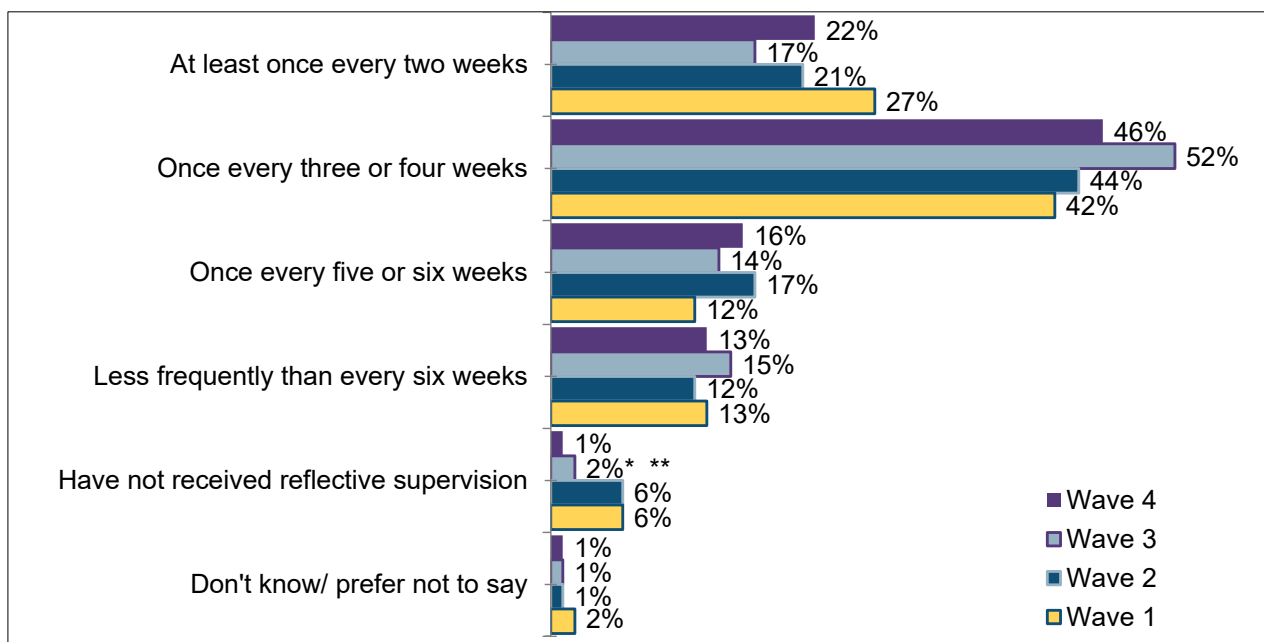**denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 1; and *between Wave 4 and Wave 3.

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[33] This is indiscriminate as to whether it was the same or a different Local Authority to the one they did their ASYE within.

[34] These numbers are too low to interpret other than indicatively.

In Wave 4 around a quarter (26%) of ASYEs said their career plans had been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, which was not significantly different to Wave 3. Those whose plans had been influenced by the pandemic were significantly more likely to say they see themselves working in child and family social work via an agency in 12 months' time, compared to directly with a local authority (47%, compared to 19%). The most commonly cited reasons for this were that the pandemic had motivated them to move to a different area of social work (23%), they had decided to relocate (14%), working from home caused additional issues / stress / isolation (9%), and they had decided to become a social worker / come back into social work (9%).[35]

Reasons for leaving or considering leaving child and family social work

The 27 ASYE respondents in Wave 4 that were considering leaving or had left local authority child and family social work were asked why, followed by their main reason if they provided more than one.

Most likely to be mentioned as reasons were 'I don't like the culture of local authority social work' (11/27 respondents), 'the working hours in general' (10), the amount of paperwork (10), 'the high caseload' (9), 'it is not compatible with family or relationship commitments' (8), and 'the pay / benefits package' (7). In comparison, at Wave 3 'it is not compatible with family or relationship commitments' had been the most common response, but the low base sizes mean it is not possible to make statistical comparisons.

When asked for the single main reason for leaving or considering leaving local authority child and family social work, the most common one cited was 'I don't like the culture of local authority social work' (8/27 respondents).

Potential influences on ASYE retention

Wave 4 ASYE social workers who said they had left or were considering leaving (27 respondents) were asked what may encourage them to remain in or return to local authority child and family social work in future.

The most commonly mentioned factors related to workloads and culture: 'a more manageable workload in terms of administration / paperwork' (13 respondents), 'a more manageable workload in terms of caseload' (10), and 'better working culture' (11). These were the same factors which came up most commonly at Wave 3.

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[35] The base size for this analysis is 56, therefore findings should be interpreted with caution.

When asked for the single main factor that might encourage them to return to, or remain in, child and family social work in future, their responses largely mirrored the general reasons. The most common main factor they identified was either 'higher pay' (4 respondents), 'a more manageable workload in terms of caseload' (4), 'a more manageable workload in terms of administration / paperwork' (3), or 'better working culture (3).

Attrition from social work among ASYEs

In March 2022 IFF conducted an exercise to ascertain whether ASYEs from previous waves were still social workers after a period of one and two years. This was assessed through a combination of survey responses at Wave 4, or, if they had not taken part in Wave 4, whether they were still registered on the Social Work England (SWE) public register of social workers.

We know whether people have left social work, either because they have reported this in the survey or because they are no longer registered on the Social Work England (SWE) register. The rest are either still working in social work or still registered on the SWE register but not currently practising as social workers (for example, because they are working in academia, policy or other roles indirectly related to social work). For 14% of W1 ASYEs,10% of Wave 2 ASYEs and 13% of Wave 3 ASYEs it was not possible to determine whether or not they were still in social work, primarily because they did not provide their name.

Table 8.1 below shows the results of this analysis for attrition from social work one year after ASYE, which was conducted on those who were doing an ASYE at Wave 2 (columns a & b) and Wave 3 (columns c & d). As the table shows, the attrition rate one year after ASYE was 11% for Wave 2 to Wave 3 ASYEs and 9% for Wave 3 to Wave 4 ASYEs.

Table 8.1. Proportion of ASYE social workers who had left the profession one year after their ASYE, based on survey responses and SWE register

Still in social work or on the SWE register?	W2>W3 (n) *a*	W2>W3 (%) *b*	W3>W4 (n) *c*	W3>W4 (%) *d*
Yes	203	79%	221	78%
No	27	11%	25	9%
Unknown	26	10%	37	13%
Total	256	100%	283	100%

Table 8.2 below shows the results of this analysis for attrition from social work two years after ASYE, which was conducted on those who were doing an ASYE at Wave 1

(columns a & b) and an ASYE at Wave 2 (columns c & d). As the table shows, the attrition rate two years on from the ASYE was 14%, for both Wave 1 to Wave 3 and Wave 2 to Wave 4.

Table 8.2. Proportion of social workers who had left the profession, two years after their ASYE, based on survey responses and SWE register

Still in social work or on the SWE register?	W1>W3 (n) a	W1>W3 (%) b	W2>W4 (n) c	W2>W4 (%) d
Yes	244	72%	191	75%
No	47	14%	36	14%
Unknown	47	14%	26	10%
Total	338	100%	253	100%

9. How does entry route influence the experience of ASYE social workers in their first year?

This chapter draws on merged data across Waves 1 to 4 of the study to examine the extent to which entry route influences the experiences of ASYE social workers who are either still doing or have recently completed their ASYE. The data has been merged from four waves of the survey in order to increase the sample of ASYE social workers and hence allow for more detailed analysis by entry route. It is difficult to identify statistically significant differences by entry route within individual waves of the ASYE data, due to the relatively small sample sizes involved (Table 9.1), so merging them provides more scope for this analysis. All data reported in this chapter relates to ASYE social workers' views in the year in which they were doing their ASYE.

Table 9.1: Numbers of ASYE respondents in the first year they took part in the survey, by entry route, by wave (unweighted)

	Undergraduate	Postgraduate	Step Up	Frontline
Wave 1 (n)	181	122	7	28
% within wave	*54%*	*36%*	*1%*	*8%*
Wave 2 (n)	98	80	55	26
% within wave	*38%*	*31%*	*21%*	*10%*
Wave 3 (n)	130	98	17	39
% within wave	*46%*	*35%*	*6%*	*14%*
Wave 4 (n)	98	63	56	20
% within wave	*41%*	*27%*	*24%*	*8%*
Total (n)	**507**	**363**	**135**	**113**

Motivations for becoming a child and family social worker

ASYE social workers were asked to cite all the reasons they had for wanting to embark on a career in social work. The main motivation across all entry routes was wanting to help people/ make a difference (mentioned by 71% overall, with no differences by entry route), followed by wanting to work with children and families (62%). Wanting to work with children and families was a particular motivation among ASYEs who entered social work via the Frontline programme (73%) compared with those who entered through an

undergraduate (62%) or postgraduate (59%) degree. This is not surprising given that undergraduate and postgraduate routes cover both adult and child / family social work, whereas Frontline (and Step Up to Social Work) focus specifically on the latter.

There are some other notable differences in motivations for becoming a child and family social worker by entry route, as follows:

- 'Already working in a related area' was more likely to be cited by those who did 'Step Up to Social Work' (66%) or a postgraduate degree (49%) than overall (42%). Step Up to Social Work in particular is a work-based entry route that requires entrants to already be working in a related area, so is likely to attract people with some relevant experience.
- The availability of funding/ a bursary for the course was a strong motivator for those who entered through Frontline (51%) or Step Up to Social Work (56%), compared with postgraduate (21%) and undergraduate (7%) entrants.
- Alignment with their ideological beliefs was mentioned by one in five overall (19%) but was far more commonly cited among ASYEs who entered the profession through the Frontline programme (41%) compared with other routes.
- Wanting a decent salary was generally not a key motivator (cited by 17% overall) but was more commonly mentioned among those who entered via Step Up to Social Work (26%).
- Around one in ten ASYEs entered the role because of their own positive experiences of social work (9%). A similar proportion were motivated by negative experiences of social work (9%). These were more common among undergraduate, postgraduate and Step Up to Social Work entrants than those who had done Frontline.
- Around one-quarter (23%) said they entered social work because they have a long-term commitment to the career, and there were no significant differences by entry route. Just under one in ten (7%) said they saw social work as a springboard to another career, but this increased to one in six of those who had done Step Up to Social Work (16%) or Frontline (17%).

How well prepared ASYE social workers felt for working in the profession

New ASYE social workers were asked their views on how well they thought their qualification had prepared them for working in social work in general, and specifically for working in child and family social work. The vast majority of ASYE social workers felt well-prepared by their entry qualification for a career in social work (78%), and for a career in child and family social work specifically (75%).

There were some key differences according to entry route, in ASYE social workers' perceptions of how well-prepared they felt for a career in child and family social work

(Figure 9.1). Those who had entered the profession through Frontline (95%) or Step Up to Social Work (83%) were notably more likely than those entering via undergraduate and postgraduate routes to say they felt well-prepared, and in particular 'very' well-prepared (54% and 43% respectively). To some extent this is to be expected given that these 'fast track' routes specialise in child and family social work, while undergraduate and postgraduate social work courses do not. However, similar patterns were found when looking at how well-prepared ASYEs felt for a career in social work, more generally. Overall, 78% said they thought their entry route prepared them well for social work, ranging from 75% who entered with an undergraduate degree in social work, 78% with a postgraduate degree, 83% who did 'Step Up to Social Work' and 94% who did the Frontline programme.

Figure 9.1: How well-prepared ASYEs felt for working in child and family social work, by entry route
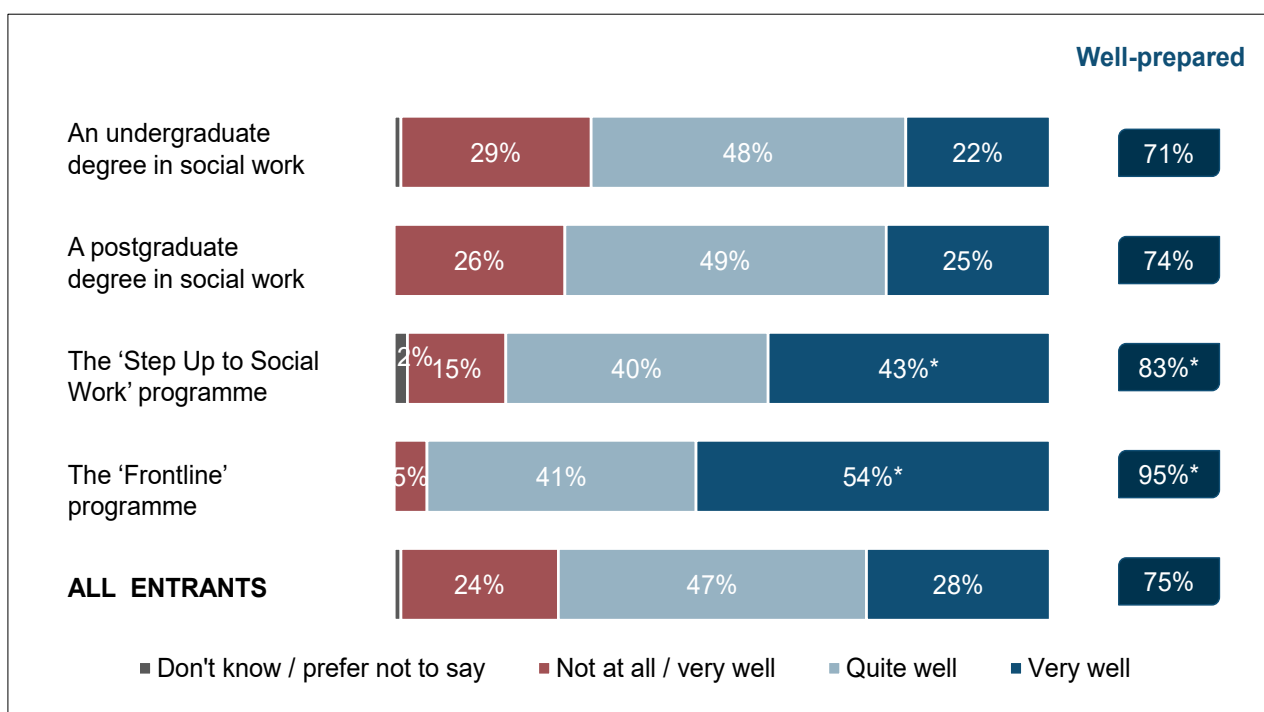
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers in their first year/survey wave (1,108): Undergraduate (507), postgraduate (363), Step Up (135), Frontline (113).
*denotes statistically significant difference.

Although the majority still felt well-prepared for their role (71%), social workers who entered the profession with an undergraduate degree as their most recent qualification were less likely than average to say they felt 'very' well-prepared (22% compared with 28%), and more likely than average to say they did not feel well-prepared (29%, compared with 25% overall) and particularly compared with those who did Step Up to Social Work (15%) and Frontline (5%).

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Aspects of workplace wellbeing

ASYE social workers were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the following statements:

- 'I feel stressed by my job'

- 'My overall workload is too high'

- 'I feel I am being asked to fulfil too many different roles in my job'.

Figure 9.2 shows that agreement was reasonably high for all three statements and surpassed the proportion who disagreed.

Figure 9.2: ASYEs' views on workplace wellbeing, by entry route
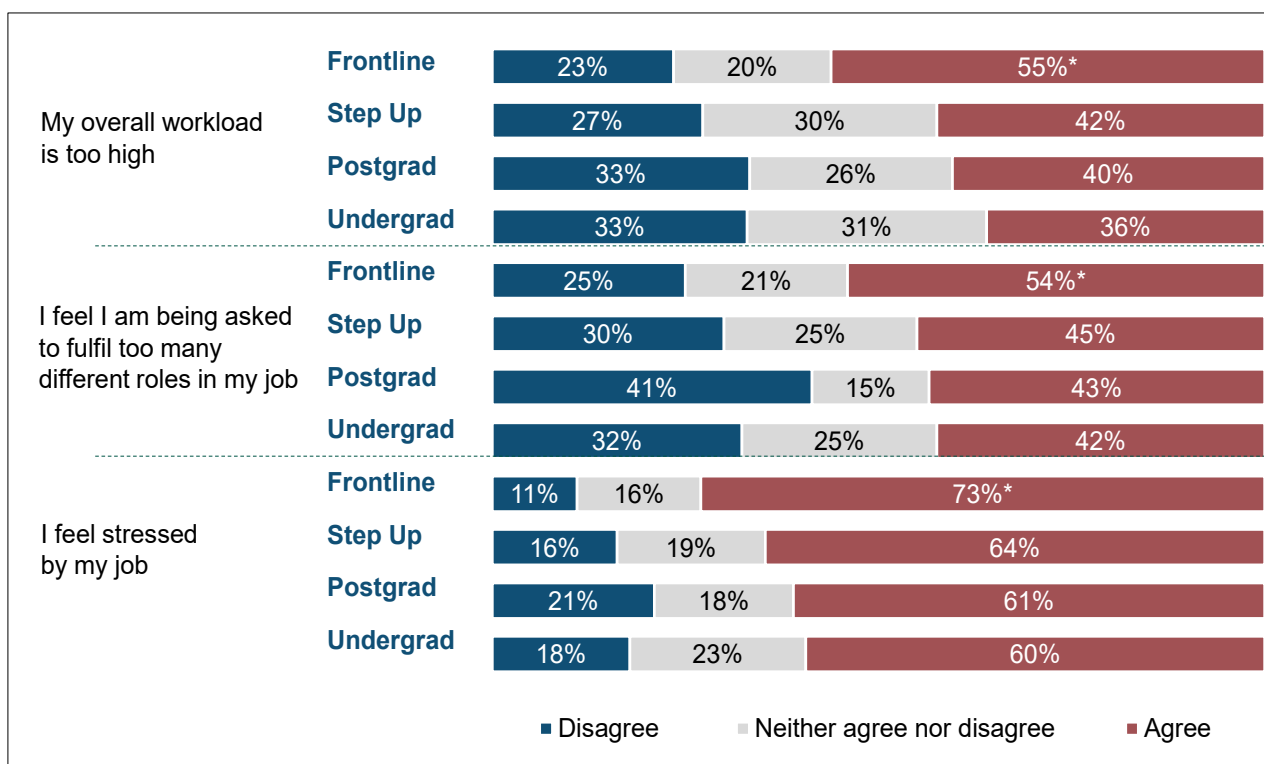
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers in their first year/survey wave (1,108): Undergraduate (507), postgraduate (363), Step Up (135), Frontline (113).
*denotes a statistically significant difference

Interestingly, the only key difference by entry route on these measures of workplace wellbeing is that social workers who entered the profession via the Frontline programme were consistently more likely than average to agree with each statement. They were more likely to say that their workload was too high (55%), they were being asked to fulfil too many roles (54%) and that they felt stressed by their job (73%) during their ASYE year.

The most common reason for feeling stressed by the job overall was having too much paperwork (70%) and there were no significant differences by entry route in terms of who

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cited this. This was followed by having insufficient time for direct work with children and families (mentioned by 53% overall), but this was especially high among ASYEs who entered social work via Frontline (70%). Frontline entrants are doing a Master's degree at the same time as doing their ASYE, which may contribute to them feeling a lack of time.

Linked to this, social workers who entered the profession via Frontline were also more likely to cite insufficient resources to support families as a reason for feeling stressed (59%) as were those who entered via Step Up to Social Work (53%) - compared with 42% overall. As wanting to work with children/ families was a higher motivating factor among Frontline entrants than others, it is interesting that insufficient time to work with children and families is a key reason why they report feeling stressed by their job.

Frontline entrants were also more likely than average to cite having to make difficult or emotional decisions as a factor which made them feel stressed (47% compared with 34% overall). ASYEs who qualified through Frontline were more likely than others to be working in child protection/ Child in Need, which may explain why they found this more difficult: 81% worked in this practice area, compared with 66% of ASYEs overall.

The mean contracted working hours per week during their ASYE was 37 hours across all four waves, and this did not vary significantly by entry route. Mean actual working hours were above this, at 43 hours per week, and almost one in three ASYEs (30%) said they worked over and above their contracted hours all the time to keep up with their workload. There were no significant differences by entry route. The mean number of cases (16) also did not vary significantly by entry route.

What is notable is the difference in the reported number of hours spent directly with children and families during ASYE year, by entry route. Just 3% of ASYEs who had done the Frontline programme reported spending 16 or more hours per week directly with children and families, significantly lower than average (13%). This could relate to protections on their time while they are still doing their Master's as part of the programme, but it is not possible to determine this from the data.

Figure 9.3. Number of hours per week spent on direct work with children and families, by entry route
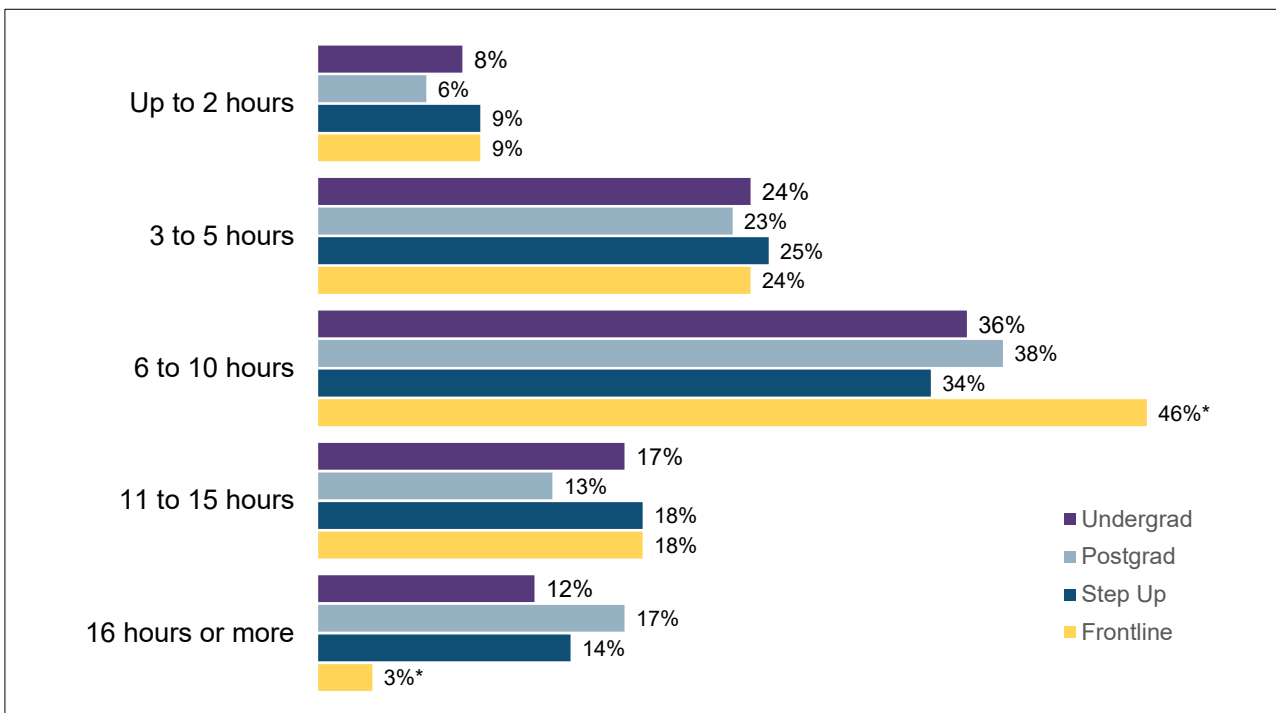
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers in their first year (1,108), chart excludes 29 social workers who said don't know (2%)

*denotes a statically significant difference

Aspects of job satisfaction

ASYE social workers were asked the extent to which they agreed that their current job was satisfying. Overall, three-quarters (74%) agreed (20% 'strongly agreed' and 54% 'agreed'), whilst 11% disagreed (3% 'strongly disagreed' and 8% 'disagreed').

There were few differences by entry route, with the exception that social workers who did Step Up to Social Work were somewhat less likely than those who had entered with an undergraduate or postgraduate degree to say they 'strongly agreed' (11% compared with 23% and 19% respectively), and more likely to say that they disagreed (17%, compared with 10% each).

Figure 9.4: Extent to which ASYEs found their job satisfying overall, by entry route
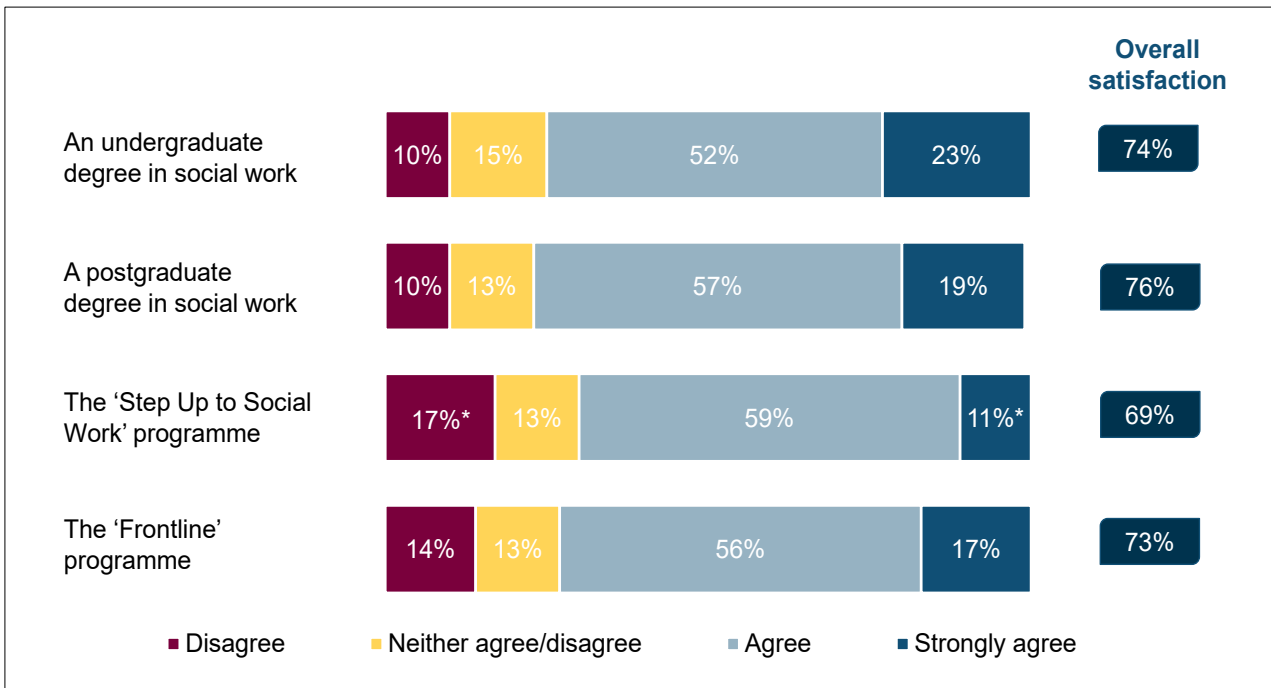
Base: All ASYE child and family social workers in their first year/survey wave (1,108):
Undergraduate (507), postgraduate (363), Step Up (135), Frontline (113).
*denotes statistically significant difference

Looking at various aspects of job satisfaction among ASYEs reveals that, for the most part, there is a high degree of consistency across entry routes, but with some notable points of difference:

- There were no significant differences by entry route in terms of feeling challenged by their job (84% agreed) and having the opportunity to develop their skills (83% agreed).

- While the majority of ASYEs were satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work (80%) and the scope for using their own initiative (83%) in their first year, ASYE social workers who had entered the profession through Step Up to Social Work were more likely than average to be dissatisfied with these aspects. One in ten (11%) were dissatisfied with the scope for using their own initiative, compared with 5% overall; while one in six (17%) were dissatisfied with the sense of achievement they got from their job, compared with 8% overall.

- While two-thirds (67%) of ASYEs were satisfied with the influence they had over their job, those who entered the profession through Step Up to Social Work (18%) or Frontline (21%) were more likely than average (12%) to be dissatisfied.

- ASYEs who qualified via Frontline were less likely than average to be satisfied with their pay (38% compared with 47% overall), but no more likely to be dissatisfied. They were also more likely than average to be unhappy with public respect for the sort of work they did (58% were dissatisfied, compared with 43% overall).

In terms of satisfaction with various aspects of support to do their job, ASYEs who had entered the profession through Step Up to Social Work and Frontline were consistently less positive than those who entered with an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. For example:

- While the majority of ASYEs (78%) overall agreed they could access the right learning opportunities when they needed to, ASYEs who qualified through the Frontline programme were less likely to be positive (63%) and more likely to be negative (18%, compared with 10% overall).
- Although the majority of ASYEs agreed they had the right tools to do their job effectively (73%), this declined to 62% among those who entered via Step Up to Social Work and 64% of those who entered via Frontline. One in five (19%) in each of those routes disagreed, compared with 12% overall.
- While 58% of ASYEs agreed overall that they had the right resources to do their job effectively, and 25% disagreed, the equivalent figures for Step Up to Social Work were 45% who agreed and 42% who disagreed; and for Frontline were 42% and 39% respectively.
- Just over half of ASYEs (55%) agreed that the IT systems and software they had supported them to do their job, but this dropped to less than half of Step Up to Social Work (47%) and Frontline (42%) entrants. Almost as many Frontline entrants disagreed (38%), compared with 27% overall.

Future plans

ASYE social workers were asked where they expected to be working in 12 months' time. In aggregate, 79% planned to still be working directly in local authority child and family social work a year after their ASYE finished. Seven per cent were planning to be 'working in social work, but outside of child and family social work', 5% 'working in child and family social work in the private or voluntary sector', 5% 'working in child and family social work for a local authority but via an agency', and 1% 'working outside of social work altogether'. When combined, 18% said they planned to be moving out of working directly for a local authority in child and family social work in 12 months' time, but almost all of these were planning to continue working in some other form of social work rather than to exit the profession altogether.

Views across ASYEs were very consistent by entry route (Table 9.2). The only point of difference was that ASYEs who had qualified via Step Up to Social Work were more likely to say they planned to continue working in direct employment within local authority child and family social work (87%, compared with 79% overall).

Table 9.2: What ASYE social workers plan to be doing in 12 months' time, by entry route

	Undergraduate %	Postgraduate %	Step Up %	Frontline %
Base (unweighted n)	497	354	130	108
Working in LA child and family social work, directly	80	76	87*	75
Working in child and family social work in private/ voluntary sector	4	7	3	5
Working in child and family social work, agency	5	5	2	5
Working in a different type of social work	7	8	4	8
Other (including work outside social work)	-	1	1	2
Don't know	4	3	4	5

*Denotes a statistically significant difference at 95% Confidence Interval compared with the overall figure

10. Child and family social workers' career experiences: reflections from the Wave 4 qualitative research

The qualitative interviews focus on the impact of race, ethnicity and/or cultural identity on multiple aspects of social worker's experiences. The sample of respondents was selected from those who completed the survey and agreed to be recontacted, to represent practitioners from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. These were categorised into five different ethnic groups (denoted in inverted commas to indicate that some of these categories were not how people would self-identify): 'White', 'Black', 'Asian', 'Mixed' and 'Other'. The sample was devised in this way to elicit views from practitioners with different ethnic, racial or cultural backgrounds, rather than as a representative sample of the ethnic make-up of the social work workforce nationally. Respondents were asked whether they wished to clarify and self-identify their ethnicity during the interviews.

Most respondents felt these Census categories did not accurately describe their identity. The main reason for this was that they wanted to provide a more specific explanation of their ethnicity – for example respondents in the 'mixed' category gave the ethnicity of both parents, 'Black' respondents gave country of origin or parent's country of origin, and respondents using the 'other' category gave their nationality. Other reasons included wanting to choose different words to describe themselves, (for example dual heritage instead of 'mixed') and feeling that there was no appropriate category for them to select (for example 'Jewish').

With this in mind, the aim of this chapter of the report is not to draw comparisons between practitioners from different ethnic, racial or cultural heritage, rather, it is to explore how practitioners from all backgrounds perceive these characteristics to impact aspects of their practice more broadly. In addition, much as we would have liked to use respondent's self-identified ethnicity where direct quotations are referred to, it has not been possible to do so, and maintain respondents' confidentiality.

The sample was structured to include men and women, and a broad spread of social workers across different levels of job and in different age bands. It also included a sub-set of social workers who were employed by an agency rather than directly by a local authority.

Impact of ethnicity on social workers' experiences

Respondents were asked to share their thoughts on how ethnicity, 'race' and cultural identity impacted on their daily work. This included these aspects of their own identity, ethnic diversity of people living in the local area, the local authority workforce, and the

children and families they support. Respondents were recruited across the country and therefore reflect the workforce nationally, with some respondents, particularly those in inner London, working with children and families from a wide variety of different ethnic, 'racial' and cultural backgrounds. Other respondents worked mostly with families from a White British background. The aim of this section is not to draw comparisons between the different levels of diversity across the country, or between practitioners of different backgrounds, rather, to explore how this, amongst other factors, is felt by social work practitioners.

The majority of respondents described the ways in which ethnicity, 'race' and culture impacted on their work, but some stated that this wasn't an influential factor in respect of their work, because of their commitment to social work values, or that they didn't feel qualified to respond to this question, due to what they described as their own "*White privilege".*

> "It's the type of environment that I work in, you know, and social workers, it's all about equality, so it's something that I wouldn't expect working in this environment." (Team Manager, White)

Many respondents raised the importance of seeing ethnic, 'racial' and cultural identity part of a broader and more intersectional conversation about identities. Respondents referred to gender, sexuality and class as intersecting factors that shaped both their experience of their organisation and their work with families. For example, this respondent identified the importance of seeing women and people from minority ethnicities represented in leadership.

> "There's a lot of Black and Minority Ethnic people in high up positions in *name of authority*, and women as well, so that's changed quite a lot over the years. So that helps me to feel like I am represented, and that's something I can aspire to." (Practice Supervisor, Mixed ethnicity)

Structures and Organisations

Respondents from a range of different authorities across England felt that ethnic diversity and representation within the workforce was an issue. Many stated that their senior leadership teams were predominantly White British, which was not representative of either the local social work workforce or the community they served.

> "Especially now in our locality, we have an awful lot of black workers, which we definitely should have, you know, but in terms of the seniority, I mean, we've only got one non White senior manager, from what I can gather." (Head of Service, Mixed ethnicity)

Although this lack of representation in their authorities was viewed as problematic by respondents, some acknowledged that their employer was actively working to improve ethnic diversity within management and senior roles.

One LA consulted their workforce looking for suggestions to help develop more inclusive interview processes. This respondent posed a question to the panel and was happy with the response:

> "I came up with one, 'What will they do to support ethnic minorities to move up the ladder, to enrich their career goal?'. One of the people gave me an answer I was very satisfied with, I thought, if he did what he said he would do. He said, 'First of all I will meet with them one to one just to talk about their career goal, so I know how best to support them to reach that career goal'." (ASYE, Black)

Education and awareness raising within the workforce were identified as being key in order to address inequality.

Many interviewees said that their authorities had developed Black and Minority Ethnic Worker forums or groups and 'safe spaces' for practitioners to share their experiences of discrimination. These forums were seen as a source of support for practitioners but also a way to have their collective voices heard by the leadership team.

> "So, we have a diversity group within the organisation that I manage, they do a monthly newsletter, we do specialist training as a management group." (Service Manager 'other' ethnicity)

Some respondents identified that these forums and the changes they promoted should include White people in the conversation to create a more culturally aware workforce.

Although interviewees felt that these forums promoted equity and provided opportunities to collectively challenge discrimination, some respondents said they felt like their ethnic identity meant that they had had to work harder than others, and that unconscious bias could prevent those from Black or minority ethnic backgrounds from being successful at interviews where the interviewers were predominantly White.

> "I think I have to work three times harder than any of my White British colleagues because when I have worked, I have seen that even people, those who are like in a seven year, eight year, junior than me, they have been promoted up in the position. And that's not really good for morale." (Assistant Team Manager, Asian)

This respondent acknowledged the need for representation on interview panels because of the influence of people's ethnic, 'racial' or cultural background on their decision making:

"Within that environment, it is kind of led I would say, I suppose by people that are White, people that have their own backgrounds. It's very heavily influenced, and I'm not saying that they actually consciously recognise that, but it is very heavily influenced. Whereas if I'm on an interview panel, I will see something in a different way because of how I think and how my own culture influences me." (Service Manager, Black)

Some respondents said they had experienced racism during the course of their work and the way this was responded to by their employer was seen as reflective of the organisation's commitment to anti-discriminatory practice. For example, one described the lack of support he had received after being racially abused by a young person. Another was supported by their employer to challenge the discrimination they had experienced:

"I went back and had a reflective discussion with my manager and then, with confidence, I went back to them." (Fostering Social Worker, Black)

Where interviewees did not see their authorities to be addressing representation or directly challenging discrimination, this had a direct, negative impact on morale and perceptions about career progression.

"We definitely need more ethnically diverse senior managers, because it does show. When we sit in these meetings it does show, it's obvious who's at the bottom of the pile and it's us." (front line practitioner, Asian)

Workforce and colleagues

Many of the qualitative interviewees saw ethnic diversity within their teams as a positive as this broadened their own knowledge of other cultures and was also seen as helpful for families, who could benefit from a shared connection to their social worker where aspects of shared ethnicity, 'race' or culture were present. Respondents from inner London or more ethnically diverse local authorities were more likely to see these benefits, which included knowledge of different cultures, languages and religions.

"Those types of things have been really beneficial for me in terms of being able to relate to people and people feeling that I understand where they're coming from as well. So for me, it's been overwhelmingly positive." (Team Leader, Asian)

Support from colleagues was also seen as important for respondents if they did experience racism:

"Only one occasion in the past as a social worker I've ever been threatened because of my culture or my religious background and I had a supportive team at the time." (front line practitioner, Other ethnicity)

Some respondents from less diverse areas however, felt like the lack of knowledge among their colleagues about people from different ethnic, 'racial' or cultural backgrounds caused tensions within the workplace. Specifically, respondents identified micro-aggressions from colleagues as the most common way these tensions arose. Examples of micro-aggressions included remarks about accounts or volume of people's voices, comments about people's hair, demeanour, written work, names.

> "I can speak very fluently in English, but I really don't have as many English words as a lot of people have. And I think usually people might approach me and expect that I will come up with an answer very quickly, and I think that leads to a perception that I don't know what I'm talking about, or my responses are not as quick as somebody might have expected. And to me that's making me start to doubt myself." (front line practitioner, Black)

Only one respondent described themselves as consciously self-reflecting on how to avoid making micro-aggressions and to challenge those that do:

> "Some colleagues around me said, "Oh, I struggle to-, yes, they need to speak slower. I can't understand their accent." I'm very-, that will jar with me, and I will challenge and say, "For me, that's a micro aggression. I don't want you to-, you know, it's our job to understand people." (Head of Service, Mixed ethnicity)

Managing these micro-aggressions takes up emotional labour for those experiencing them, in addition to the already challenging nature of child and family social work.

Working with families

Overwhelmingly, respondents from all backgrounds who worked in more ethnically diverse areas felt that ethnic diversity was beneficial for families, particularly for families from Black or minority ethnic backgrounds, as there was opportunity to build relationships based on shared experiences, culture or language. Respondents also felt that the renewed focus on anti-racist practice as a result of the murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM) was a positive thing for families.

> "There's been a renewed focus on how children's and families' ethnicities and cultural identities are recorded and responded to." (Head of Service, Mixed ethnicity)

Both respondent's ethnicity, 'race' and culture, and that of the families they worked with were raised in relation to experiencing racism. For families, respondents were empathetic to their experiences, recognising the challenges they faced, particularly in relation to cultural differences, lack of English language proficiency and the use of

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interpreters. Where these challenges were acknowledged and provided for by the workforce and leadership, this was viewed positively, in terms of the impact on families:

> "Our parenting courses, we provide them in different languages, we make sure that we use an interpreter if English is not the first language, we make sure that if we do assessments, we can send them out so that families fully understand them." (Team Manager, Black)

In relation to direct work with children and families, several respondents said they had experienced challenges relating to their own ethnicity; some experienced explicit racism and others identified micro-aggressions. Respondents reported that these issues were more common when practitioners had a noticeably different accent. When faced with these difficulties, respondents utilised the support of their colleagues and management, and were able to respond to families, with some reporting positive outcomes in relation to engagement and changing discriminatory attitudes.

Lack of ethnic, 'racial' and cultural diversity

Local authorities across England have varying degrees of ethnic, 'racial' and cultural diversity. For respondents who worked in areas where there is a more diverse population, they saw this as positive in respect of the variety of knowledge and support available to families, and positive for practitioners in relation to representation of diversity in senior roles within the authority (see earlier sections). Lack of diversity in the local authority was seen as presenting challenges for both practitioners and families. Respondents identified a lack of confidence from their employers in tackling discrimination, lack of awareness of non-Christian celebrations, and struggles to meet family's cultural needs.

> "I've realised that they're less confident in terms of working with families from black and ethnic minorities and they're like, 'Oh, you're from London. You've got more experience of that…I just feel they just seem a bit clumsier when it comes to issues of race and diversity, but they're trying really hard." (Team Manager, Mixed ethnicity)

> "I would say for families, they don't have options, you know, so if the family said, they would really, really like to work with a black male...or a South Asian man, I would say that we would struggle to meet that need." (Service Manager, Black)

When relocating, some respondents looked at the ethnic, 'racial' and cultural diversity of the area they were planning to relocate to, before making a decision about accepting a role there.

> "When I first came to work here, I did a lot of research around [employing authority] itself because that was the worry that I had around how I would be received." (Practice Supervisor, Mixed ethnicity)

Overall, although a small number of respondents felt that ethnicity, 'race' and culture had little impact on their work, overwhelmingly, respondents did acknowledge an impact and where this was the case, they recognised the importance of good support. This support could come in the form of strong and responsive senior leadership implementing change via training or diversity forums for staff, or by a strong and supportive team of colleagues to offload to and share difficult experiences with. Ethnic diversity within the employing authority appeared to influence the availability of this support, with respondents from more diverse areas seeming to have more access to support than those in less diverse local authorities.

Ethnicity and the impact of the pandemic

There were variable responses about the impact of the pandemic on ethnicity. Respondents were aware of increased risk to Black and minority ethnic colleagues from Covid, and some knew colleagues who had died. There was no explicit comment on the impact of ethnicity on the families and children their service supported.

A number of leaders reported that their local authorities recognised the data about higher risk for ethnic minorities and addressed this with individual risk assessments. However one service manager who self-identified as 'Black' was clear that colleagues did not recognise or address possible barriers to colleagues working from home:

> "The bits we maybe never fully recognised was how people were going to manage at home and the environments that people were living in.... not being able to use other rooms, you know, maybe people lived with extended family, how what that going to work, you know.... that can impact on different people from different ethnic minorities, depending on their culture." (Service Manager, Black)

The management perspective is echoed by another Head of Service, who again discussed that there was no strategic response regarding the impact on Black and minority ethnic staff. In contrast, the positive impact of local support was noted when formal direction was lacking, as one court social worker claimed that whilst their LA did not do anything specific in response to ethnic groups with increased risk, their manager was a key positive factor:

> "They had some sort of risk assessment thing they're supposed to do, but you had to be over 55, I think, and I wasn't. There were certain things, but systemically I don't think there was much done, really. I was lucky in that I had a very good manager." (ASYE, mixed ethnicity)

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Alternative views were also reflected by interviewees from several local authorities who did offer a more strategic approach and recognised the increased risk for staff with non-White ethnic backgrounds in their implementation of risk assessments. One service manager reported that for their local authority, assessment identified who was more vulnerable and took into account their position:

> "As soon as that became a thing that we knew about all of the Black workers had an individual risk assessment to consider their health needs and… that they worked from home for longer, more, and didn't come in, other people covered for them at that point when we were particularly worried about that." (Service manager, Other ethnicity)

The necessity to travel abroad was raised by a number of participants who had experienced this during the pandemic. While some had been told they would need to take annual leave to cover quarantine requirements, others were more positive. An adoption social worker identifying as 'Black', working in a local authority with a high representation of diversity, suffered a bereavement and travelled to the Caribbean for the funeral. Whilst she took annual leave there was also a block of 10 days compassionate leave available which was managed locally by her supportive team manager. Another respondent had to travel home to their country of origin for family reasons during the pandemic. They were appreciative that the authority facilitated this with technology, so they did not have to take leave.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement developed traction during the pandemic and had impact for many of the participants. This included reporting of the increasing emphasis on discussing race and ethnicity in supervision along with more strategic moves to offer support to Black and ethnic minority colleagues. However, many respondents from different 'racial' and cultural backgrounds did not feel comfortable having those conversations at work and being voiced as representative of their community. Positively, in a geographical area that is predominantly White, one interviewee was reported that their local authority listened to those with experience to inform their actions and set up a focus group and network group to support Black and minority ethnic colleagues:

> "We were updated monthly from the Team Managers meetings about what they thought were important, and I think they were very good about saying, some of us aren't Black and Minority Ethnic groups, but tell us what it is you need. So, they tried to capture as much from the employees as they could." (Practice Supervisor, Mixed ethnicity)

> "She asked us to reflect on it and how did it make us all feel, so we did that. And then, in the team meetings, we just talked about how it made us feel and had we experienced it with any of our cases, and what could we all do, on our cases, to, you know, make sure that we're not being

maybe racist towards people or biased or anything." (front line practitioner, Black)

Racism and the impact on their career was discussed by a newly qualified worker who was appointed just before the pandemic and had not used systems prior to working from home with inadequate support. They reported that having made a technical mistake this was immediately escalated rather than addressed with them individually. Their perspective is that they were treated oppressively:

> "I had that issue with the system during lockdown, and I know if I wasn't black, I wouldn't have had that issue. They were supposed to support me at that time, not take it to a principal social worker. It might have impacted on me in a way, because the action was because they are racist, that's a fact". (ASYE, Black)

This social worker, previously an asylum seeker, has had five managers in just under two years, negatively impacting their experience. Nevertheless, they have been proactive with engaging with the recruitment process for ASYE colleagues as their local authority are aware that there is a lack of representation of black people in the staff group. Additionally, they pointed out that they have experienced significant delays in completion of their ASYE process despite being recognised as the social worker with the most effective 'compliance' in the team regarding visits and recording. They stated explicitly that they feel they have to work harder than anyone else to demonstrate that they can achieve:

> "As a black person, and as an ethnic minority, you have to work harder and prove yourself. You have to work three times harder than a White person for you to be recognized, and that puts a lot of pressure on ethnic minorities." (ASYE, Black)

To conclude, respondents felt that their local authorities were often reactive to race, identity and workforce issues. Support during the pandemic for employees with different ethnic, 'racial' or cultural backgrounds was provided by a combination of strategic methods (formal communications, employee assistance programme, forums/safe spaces for sharing experiences) combined with their local team providing informal virtual support and specific support to those who were shielding or bereaved.

Leadership, supervision and career development

In this section we asked respondents to consider what good leadership meant to them, their experience of leadership and to provide examples. All the respondents discussed their views on what good leadership meant to them, with themes including effective communication, providing clear, concise direction; being transparent; advocating for staff;

leading by example in terms of behaviours and values; and the often-repeated phrase of providing a balance between challenge and support:

> "It's about strong decision making, it's about strong support, support and challenge. I always say support and challenge are two sides of the same coin." (Agency Team Manager, White British)

Examples of good management focused on people skills: providing caring check-ins, demonstrating kindness, being respectful in all communications; demonstrating approachability with walkabouts, getting to know staff and using names; giving positive feedback about specific issues; and in one local authority hot desking, so sitting alongside all levels of colleagues to prevent remoteness. More strategic examples included being experienced, knowledgeable and child centred; delegating effectively; having a good career development model and a strong culture of supporting workers to progress.

A number of those who were in leadership roles discussed the complexity of the task, that they balance the good aspects of leadership that they have experienced with their own values and beliefs. There was limited discussion of training opportunities in management skills. One manager asserted that providing a safe forum for staff was essential and asserted that good leadership encompassed:

> "For me, it's about accessibility, visibility, understanding who's in your team, how it works, the dynamics and your style of leadership being one that 'We don't always get things right all the time, but we work from a basis of people try hard' ...It's about people feeling safe and supported in what is a very difficult job." (Head of Service, mixed ethnicity)

Impact of Covid on leadership

The interviews elicited only a few explicit comments about how perceptions of leadership had changed because of the pandemic and not surprisingly they reflected views on wider leadership issues affecting the country. One social worker felt they had better insight into the challenges that leaders experienced by observing the challenges of managing workloads whilst colleagues were shielding. Another front line worker said they had actively responded to poor leadership, and a blame culture following the first lockdown, by leaving a permanent post, and relocating as an agency worker to a different area.

A team manager who had recently moved local authorities in response to improving her work-life balance discussed that due to Covid her views on leadership had changed to the extent that she now recognises the importance of staff well-being:

> "I think it's maybe changed my perception a little bit in terms of what good leadership looks like in terms of looking after your staff's health and

well-being, because I feel like that's more on the agenda now."   (Team Manager, mixed ethnicity)

Equity of opportunity and how ethnicity impacts on experiences of leadership and career prospects.

The qualitative interviews addressed issues of equity and ethnicity in this context. Several respondents who identified as 'White' either did not respond to this section or stated that they found it difficult to make any comment. The sample of people from different ethnic, 'racial' and cultural backgrounds expressed a range of responses and were keen to demonstrate that their perspective may be different from other diverse colleagues. They acknowledged that whilst perhaps not individually having experienced ethnicity as a barrier to opportunity they were aware of its impact for others:

> "I've certainly heard that people have had different experiences that they have attributed to being Black. So, I don't want to minimise anybody else's experiences, but for myself I personally haven't." (Practice supervisor, Black)

The respondents from different 'racial' and cultural backgrounds reflected often opposing views with examples of some local authorities offering positive career development models and supporting staff progression, whilst others reported tokenistic gestures or ignoring the issue entirely. This did not appear to correlate with the demographic of the locality or staff group. A senior social worker who identifies as 'Black' does not believe anything is being done by her leadership to promote equity of opportunity for all staff:

> "But the reality is, unless you have a real full understanding, not just about prejudice, but about White privilege, about unconscious bias, unless you're honest with yourself and look into yourself and think about those things, you're never going to get to a point where you are going to be able to fully address what goes on in the institutions." (Senior social worker, Black)

The 'grow your own' model was supported by several respondents as a positive method of promoting equity of opportunity:

> "I think that my LA, like some other LAs, and I say this knowing that I've probably benefited from it myself, my LA will often grow people for posts.... Like I said I've definitely benefited from that. I think it's if your face fits kind of organisation. So I don't think necessarily that ethnicity has anything to do with it." (Consultant social worker, mixed ethnicity)

One black female adoption social worker provided her perspective on progression having been 30 years in social work. She identified feeling supported during the early stage of

her career by having mentoring sessions paid for and progression opportunities and contrasted this with the experience of current young social workers:

> "So, I just think social work, if they're not careful, I mean, I don't know what's going to happen but I just see it that all the fresh-faced, young people, really in a very short space of time, they're being haemorrhaged out of the system and a lot of them are having breakdowns because it's too much." (Adoption worker, Black)

The most talked about theme was the lack of representation of diversity across the workforce, especially in leadership roles. The complexity of this issue is reflected by the conflicting responses with some examples of authorities valuing and promoting diversity and others where ethnicity is believed to negatively impact on career progression. Representation was considered in discussion about who was 'in charge' of social work nationally and the perception of lack of diversity in those organisations, whereas it was recognised that some authorities that do not have a diverse population have had to be more positively active about anti-discrimination and anti-racism. The BLM movement was also discussed as bringing the issue to the agenda.

> "I think, in terms of people not seeing themselves represented in the services and then not wanting to work in that. But, I think there are other more complex issues there, as well. So, I think representation has a real issue, in terms of seeing people represented." (Head of Service, mixed ethnicity)

Several managers from diverse backgrounds talked about their own approach as being explicitly supportive of inclusivity and progression - offering mentoring and suggesting opportunities to colleagues; cultivating leadership skills among ethnic minority staff and offering training to boost diversity in the senior leadership team as well as across the workforce. One leader who had been encouraged to apply for promotion valued that they had just completed a leadership course at a university. A female service delivery manger identifying as 'Black' asserted:

> "I think black and ethnic minority workers need to see more workers like themselves in senior positions... Because I see the impact I have when I walk in a room, and you can see it...You see, they look and they're like, Oh OK. And you can see, they look proud for you, you know; they actually look proud for you, and it's a positive." (Service delivery manager, Black)

This contrasts with commentary from a service manager who identifies as 'White' and sees that the senior leadership team is all White:

> "We have an entirely White leadership group, senior leadership group, middle management, no, but senior leadership group, so I imagine if you

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weren't White then that's bound to have an impact on just how you perceive things, if nothing else." (Service manager, White Other)

The experience of supervision

The view that supervision remains valued and vital for the role was held by all respondents. Whilst practitioners regretted the lack of opportunity for less formal, ad hoc supervision during the pandemic, formal sessions played the key support. The majority asserted that the aim is for reflective supervision, but workload issues at times led to process driven sessions.

> "Supervision is booked in advance and includes personal supervision, practice, performance of the team and it is reflective I think it is quite a well-rounded offer and yes, it helps me." (Practice supervisor, Black)

The return to face-to-face sessions was positive, with managers recognising that this was most helpful in terms of creating an environment where the individuals feel comfortable, listened to and that they can raise issues. It was identified by several respondents that whilst the supervisee needed to be proactive, the experience was dependent on the individual manager's approach, experience, and knowledge. Several managers reflected that they learnt from how they had been supervised and took the best parts. Training in supervision skills was only mentioned by a small number of managers.

Other methods of supervision were viewed as a positive add on, with one interviewee saying their authority promoted monthly peer reflective groups and another offered additional sessions with clinical psychologists for specialist support.

The impact of supervision on staff diversity, inclusion, and equity of opportunity

Not surprisingly there were different experiences of whether inclusion is addressed in supervision in different authorities. For some it is a key part of the agenda, and others reported it is either tokenistic or implicit. BLM had been a catalyst for change with some managers now promoting discussion on the impact of both personal and professional responses to racism.

For several respondents who identified as being from different 'racial' and cultural backgrounds their experience was positively affected if they had the same ethnicity as their manager. They discussed how supervision was viewed as a safe space to raise issues of ethnicity and progression. Several black respondents talked about how helpful it was to explore personal issues, such as their child experiencing racism at school and for another how BLM was affecting her family.

> "I'm supervised by a Black woman, so my manager is pushing now for me to progress." (Agency front line practitioner, Black)

Specific tools were identified as being helpful in raising diversity including a specialist training course on 'Race and Racism' that was provided in an adoption and fostering service. This was welcomed by the senior social worker who identifies as 'Black', but she felt many of the White colleagues did not fully participate. One respondent said that their local authority uses an 'Empowerment Tool' which encourages thinking about difference and what these differences might afford to people in terms of power. A team manager who identifies as 'White Indian', discussed a specific reflective practice group that promoted discussion on ethnicity as a method of sharing personal and professional contexts:

> "[Looking at] what can we do to try and better understand the experiences of black and minority staff, and to support them?" (Team Manager, mixed ethnicity)

The qualitative interviews reflected agreement on what effective leadership looks like, with clear alignment to the findings from previous waves of the study. Respondents felt that the role of supervision remains the essential ingredient to supporting staff and enabling discussion on career progression. Where there is representation of 'racial' diversity in leadership roles, positive modelling, encouragement and vision is evident in respondents' accounts.

Key conclusions from the qualitative research

Respondents' experiences were variable across the qualitative interviews. It was evident from practitioners at all levels in the interviews that much could be learned about how to support Black and minority ethnic workers. Interviewees who worked in more diverse authorities suggested that the workforce was confident and able to address challenges in both the workplace and in direct work with families. This appeared to be directly related to visibility and the amount of engagement with different cultures. Experiences were very much localised and dependent on clear and transparent leadership, supportive teams and having representation of ethnic, 'racial' and cultural diversity at all levels of the local authority structure.

In relation to ethnicity, respondents were clear that this was only part of the intersectional experience of their work. Gender, class, sexuality, and the different identities at the intersection of these characteristics were also identified as factors that impacted overall experience.

11. Conclusions

As in previous waves, Wave 4 of the study has revealed changes in jobs and work status, and some attitudes, but this time overall job satisfaction has declined compared with previous waves. In particular, this wave has started to shed light on retirement, and decisions about early retirement in particular, which will be important to follow up in the final wave as the survey sample continues to get older.

The impacts of Covid-19 on social workers' experiences are still challenging in terms of increased feelings of stress and anxiety, more complex cases, and depleted relationships with colleagues and to a lesser extent, service users. Although views have improved compared with Wave 3, the impact of Covid-19 on worsening relationships with colleagues, reported by over half of social workers, remains potentially concerning given the importance of these relationships as a protective factor in boosting resilience. Further, the impacts of the pandemic are likely to have contributed to the lower levels of job satisfaction and increasing feeling that social workers are being asked to fulfil too many roles. Feelings of stress and having too high a workload have increased since Wave 1, although are not significantly higher in Wave 4 compared with Wave 3.

Despite this, the majority of those in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4 plan to continue working in the profession. Among those considering leaving child and family social work in the next 12 months, the most common main reason related to overwork (a combination of high caseload, working hours, volume of paperwork and incompatibility with family or relationships), followed by retirement and dislike of the working culture in local authority social work.

These have all been the most common factors in previous waves, suggesting they are the areas which need most focus if more child and family social workers are to be encouraged to stay in (or return to) the profession. Indeed the survey found that the main factor that would encourage child and family social workers who were thinking of leaving the profession to stay was a more manageable caseload, followed by a better (more supportive) working culture, higher pay, and less paperwork.

Appendix 1: Methodology

Overview of methodology

The study comprises two core components:

- A longitudinal mixed-methods online and telephone survey of child and family social workers, to be conducted across five years from 2018/19 to 2022/23. The fourth wave of the survey, conducted between September and December 2021 comprised two surveys:

  - Wave 4 longitudinal survey. All respondents who completed the Wave 3 survey and consented to be recontacted for the next wave were invited to complete this survey, where contact details were held.

  - ASYE survey: the survey for this sample consisted of social workers on their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), who started in their role between October 2020 and June 2021.

- At the end of the Wave 4 survey fieldwork, 40 follow-up qualitative telephone or video-conferencing (e.g., via Microsoft Teams or Zoom) interviews were conducted with social workers in a mixture of roles; of those still in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4 and those working in agencies. The sample for the qualitative interviews included ten agency workers, in order to explore the 'pull' and 'push' factors contributing to decisions about agency employment. More broadly, to reflect DfE policy interest in the experiences of child and family social workers from different ethnicities, the qualitative sample included a spread of child and family social workers across the following broad ethnic groups: White British, Black/ Black British, Asian/ Asian British, Mixed, and 'other'.

Local Authority recruitment and profile

Original longitudinal sample

In order to build a sample of local authority child and family social workers, in summer 2018, prior to the first wave of the survey, IFF wrote to Directors of Children's Services (DCS) in all 152 local authorities/ Children's Trusts to invite them to take part in the research. Ninety-five local authorities/ Children's Trusts in England agreed to participate in the study. This accounted for approximately two-thirds of all local authorities/ Trusts in England, providing a good spread by region and Ofsted rating (see Tables A.1-A.3 overleaf for a detailed breakdown).

Sixty-four areas agreed to take part by providing a census of their in-scope staff work email addresses, and in some cases work telephone numbers (via a secure transfer site)

and a further 31 agreed to sending out a link to the online survey to their in-scope staff on IFF's behalf.

Respondents to the Wave 4 survey comprised social workers who were recruited through this method, who completed the Wave 1, Wave 2 and Wave 3 surveys and consented to being recontacted to take part in the Wave 4 survey. Further to this, at each wave those who completed the ASYE survey the previous year and agreed to recontact are added to the previous survey sample and invited to take part in that wave's survey. For example, those who completed the ASYE survey at Wave 4 and agreed to recontact will be added to the main sample at Wave 5 and invited to take the Wave 5 survey.

Tables A.1-A.3: The profile of participating Local Authorities/Trusts in England (Main survey- original sample (Wave 1))

Table A.1 Number of Local Authorities/ Trusts in England invited to participate in the main survey (Wave 1) and number agreeing.

Number invited	152
Number agreed	95
LA sending invitations	31
IFF sending invitations	64
% of LAs agreed to participate	63%
Declined to take part	40

Table A.2 Number and percentage of Local Authorities/ Trusts in England participating in the main survey (Wave 1) by region

Region	Total LAs in England	Agreed to participate	% of LAs in each region that agreed to participate
North East	12	9	75%
North West	23	13	57%
Yorkshire and the Humber	15	7	47%
East Midlands	9	7	78%
West Midlands	14	9	64%
East of England	11	8	73%
South East	19	11	58%
South West	16	9	56%
Greater London	33	22	70%
TOTAL (ENGLAND)	**152**	**95**	**63%**

Table A.3 Number and percentage of Local Authorities/ Trusts in England who agreed to participate in the main survey (Wave 1) by Ofsted Rating

Ofsted Rating[36]	Total LAs in England	Agreed to participate	% of LAs in each category that agreed to participate
1 (Outstanding)	3	1	33%
2 (Good)	54	39	72%
3 (Requires improvement)	72	45	64%
4 (Inadequate)	23	10	43%
TOTAL (ALL CATEGORIES)	**152**	**95**	**63%**

ASYE supplementary sample

To ensure that the study continues to represent new entrants to the sector, a supplementary sample of ASYE social workers was collected in Wave 4.

This exercise was similar to the approach taken to building the original survey sample in summer 2018 and the Wave 2 and Wave 3 ASYE supplementary sample in Summer 2019 and 2020. It will also be repeated for Wave 5 in Summer 2022. Local authorities / Children's Services Trusts that took part in previous waves were contacted by Skills for Care, who were able to utilise their links with local authority ASYE leads. IFF wrote to the DCS at local authorities / Trusts that did not take part in previous waves to invite them to take part in the ASYE strand. Local authorities/Trusts sent all ASYE contact details directly to the research team at IFF.[37]

Local authorities / Trusts were asked to provide contact details for ASYE staff who had started in their role between July 2020 and June 2021. This timeframe was chosen to minimise overlap between ASYE staff who took part in the Wave 3 ASYE survey and the Wave 4 ASYE survey– sample for the Wave 3 ASYE survey was collected for those who began their ASYE between July 2019 and June 2020.

Ninety-four (94) local authorities /Trusts agreed to participate in the ASYE strand of the research (see Tables A.4-A.6 for a detailed breakdown). Of these, 31 provided contact details of their in-scope ASYE staff and 63 agreed to circulate the open link survey on IFF's behalf. The proportion opting to disseminate the survey themselves by open link has increased since the last wave (when 31 provided sample and 58 disseminated an

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[36] Local authority children's services departments are regularly inspected by Ofsted and therefore their ratings are subject to change. The distribution in this table is based on Single Inspection Framework (SIF)

[37] NB: there were fewer local authorities / Children's Services Trusts at Wave 3 (148) than at Wave 1 (152) due to the merging of some authorities / Trusts in this time period.

open link). Open links generally result in a lower response because IFF is unable to target reminder mailouts and there is no option to use telephone chasing. The achieved sample consisted of ASYE social workers from 67 local authorities, indicating that in 26 local authorities / Trusts there were no responses. This may have been because no ASYE social workers engaged with the survey (especially where there were only a small number of in-scope potential respondents) or it may have been because the local authority did not disseminate the open link.

Tables A.4-A.6: The profile of participating Local Authorities/Trusts in England (ASYE survey)

Table A.4 Number of Local Authorities/ Trusts in England invited to participate in the ASYE survey and number agreeing.

Number invited	149
Number agreed	94
LA sending invitations	63
IFF sending invitations	31
% agreed to participate	63%
Declined to take part	55

Table A.5 Number and percentage of Local Authorities/ Trusts in England agreeing to participate in the ASYE survey by region.

Region	Total LAs in England	Agreed to participate	% of LAs in each region that agreed to participate
North East	12	6	50%
North West	23	14	61%
Yorkshire and the Humber	15	7	47%
East Midlands	9	5	56%
West Midlands	14	10	71%
East of England	11	10	91%
South East	18	8	44%
South West	15	14	93%
Greater London	31	20	65%
TOTAL (ENGLAND)	**149**	**94**	**63%**

Table A.6 Number of Local Authorities/ Trusts in England invited to participate in the ASYE survey by Ofsted Rating.

Ofsted Rating	Total LAs in England	Agreed to participate	% of LAs in each category that agreed to participate
1 (Outstanding)	18	12	67%
2 (Good)	55	40	73%
3 (Requires improvement)	53	33	62%
4 (Inadequate)	19	9	47%
TOTAL (ALL CATEGORIES)	**149**	**94**	**63%**

Social worker invitations

Where sample was provided direct to IFF it was possible to send an individualised survey link, targeted reminders, and (where a work phone number was provided) to conduct a final top-up survey using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Where the survey was conducted using an open link sent out by the local authority, the relevant local authorities were asked to send out reminders to staff, but these could not be targeted at non-responders and therefore were less frequent.

Soft launch

A soft launch of each survey was conducted 20th-24th September 2021, with 4% of the total sample for the Wave 4 survey (87 records). Data collected through this exercise were subjected to a series of quality control checks, to ensure the survey was working and interpreted as intended. Respondents were also given the opportunity to email queries to a dedicated survey inbox, although no queries were received during this period. Quality checks of soft launch data confirmed that no revisions were necessary ahead of the full survey launch.

A pilot was not considered necessary for the Wave 4 survey as it was largely based on the Wave 1 questionnaire, which had been piloted twice prior to its launch.

Mainstage

The mainstage online survey launched on 27th September 2021 and concluded on 3rd November, except for a small minority for whom IFF held no telephone contact details. The mainstage follow-up telephone surveys with people who had not responded to the online survey launched on 25th October 2021 and concluded on 15th December 2021. A final email reminder was sent to all who had yet to respond on 8th December 2021.

A total of 5 online reminders were sent via the direct link for each survey. Alongside this, participating local authorities circulating the ASYE open survey link were asked to send survey reminders to their in-scope staff multiple times. Suggested reminder email text was shared with open link local authorities as part of these communications.

Response rates

A breakdown of overall response rates and response rates by mode is shown in Tables A.7-A.8 overleaf. As Table A.7 shows, the Wave 4 survey response rate was 66% of those who had agreed to be recontacted at Wave 3, achieving a good spread of response by local authority Ofsted rating and region.

It is difficult to calculate an overall response rate for the ASYE strand as the survey was only distributed directly to relevant social workers in less than half of local authorities who took part. The remaining local authorities distributed the survey themselves; as not all local authorities provided population figures for their ASYE social workers, we are unable to calculate a response rate for ASYE workers who completed through the open link. Therefore, only the response rate from sampled ASYE contacts can be calculated: this was 22% overall.

Table A.7: Response by local authority region and Ofsted rating (Wave 4 survey)

		Online [valid emails provided] n	Online [valid emails provided] %	Telephone [approached via telephone] n	Telephone [approached via telephone] %	Total response [Online and telephone] n	Total response rate [Online and telephone] %
	Overall	**1,043**	**44%**	**562**	**44%**	**1,605**	**66%**
Region	North East	90	49%	47	53%	137	72%
	North West	77	38%	52	38%	129	56%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	78	48%	38	46%	116	69%
	East Midlands	101	48%	64	59%	165	78%
	West Midlands	92	51%	43	36%	135	64%
	East of England	139	47%	78	47%	217	65%
	South East	170	48%	89	41%	259	64%
	South West	111	52%	39	40%	150	69%
	Greater London	185	43%	112	44%	297	67%
Ofsted	Outstanding	185	45%	102	47%	287	68%
	Good	392	46%	196	45%	588	69%
	Requires improvement	326	43%	191	46%	517	67%
	Inadequate	140	38%	73	36%	213	57%

Table A.8: Response by local authority region and Ofsted rating (ASYE survey)

		Sampled responses: Online	Sampled response rate Online	Sampled responses Telephone	Sampled response rate Telephone	Total sampled response	Total sampled response rate	Open-link responses	Sampled & open link TOTAL
		[valid emails provided] n	[valid emails provided] %	[approached via telephone] n	[approached via telephone] %	[Online and telephone] n	[as % of starting sample]	Online	Total ASYE responses
Overall		**99**	**20%**	**20**	**11%**	**119**	**22%**	**112**	**231**
Region	North East	4	13%	1	8%	5	16%	8	**13**
	North West	9	16%	0	0%	9	15%	21	**30**
	Yorkshire and the Humber	19	25%	4	13%	23	25%	13	**36**
	East Midlands	3	17%	0	0%	3	17%	15	**18**
	West Midlands	10	12%	9	16%	19	23%	5	**24**
	East of England	14	21%	0	0%	14	21%	6	**20**
	South East	11	34%	0	0%	11	34%	25	**36**
	South West	7	17%	0	0%	7	17%	8	**15**
	Greater London	22	22%	6	16%	28	26%	11	**39**
Ofsted	Outstanding	7	24%	0	0%	7	22%	11	**18**
	Good	31	20%	3	5%	34	20%	45	**79**
	Requires improvement	40	19%	13	13%	53	25%	48	**101**
	Inadequate	21	19%	4	15%	25	23%	8	**33**

Telephone sample outcomes

Table A.9 shows the outcomes from the telephone survey. For the Wave 4 survey, the telephone response rate was 44% overall: as a proportion of completed usable contacts, this equates to 55% adjusted response rate.

Table A.9: Telephone survey outcomes (Wave 4 survey)

	n	As % of total starting sample
Total starting sample	**1,278**	**-**
All confirmed unusable sample	**236**	**18%**
Unobtainable	212	17%
No longer works at LA and no forwarding number given	3	<1%
Requested to complete online	7	1%
Wrong / invalid number	6	<1%
Not available during fieldwork	8	1%
All confirmed usable sample	**1,034**	**81%**
Soft appointment	61	5%
Other live sample (general call backs)	367	29%
Completed contacts	**588**	**46%**
Refusals	18	1%
Breakdown	7	1%
Completed via phone	**563**	**44%**
Subsequently completed online	7	1%

Analysis

Wave 4 weighting

The survey data was weighted to correct for minor differences in the achieved profile of the sample and the population according to the available DfE workforce statistics in 2018, at the time the research began (before Wave 1), where possible.

After comparing the profile of the Wave 4 achieved sample against the 2018 population statistics it was decided to weight by whether or not the social worker was directly employed by their local authority or employed through an agency (as shown in Table A.10 below), and by region, the same approach taken in Waves 1 to 3. In Wave 4, weighting by ethnicity was also applied, which helped to correct for higher non-response among Black/ Black British social workers in this wave.

While there was some variation in Ofsted rating between the achieved profile and the population figures, weighting was not applied by Ofsted rating as this is a fluid, often changing measure.

Table A.10 Profile of achieved interviews at Wave 4 compared with 2018 DfE workforce statistics

Demographic		Survey (n)	Survey (%)	2018 DfE statistics
Gender	Male	236	15%	14%
	Female	1,367	85%	86%
	Other	<5	<1%	-
	Prefer not to say	6	<1%	-
Agency worker **WEIGHTED**	Yes	95	6%	15%
Region of LA **WEIGHTED**	East Midlands	142	10%	8%
	North East	116	8%	6%
	South East	225	16%	15%
	East of England	202	14%	9%
	Greater London	248	18%	16%
	North West	122	9%	14%
	South West	131	9%	9%
	West Midlands	119	8%	11%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	107	8%	12%
Ofsted rating of LA[38]	Outstanding	219	16%	9%
	Good	572	41%	37%
	Requires improvement	463	33%	41%
	Inadequate	151	11%	13%
Ethnicity[39] **WEIGHTED**	White	1,312	84%	79%
	Mixed	62	4%	3%
	Asian/Asian British	39	3%	5%
	Black/ Black British	89	6%	11%
	Other Ethnicity	54	3%	1%
UNWEIGHTED BASE		1,605	100%	

[38] Local authority children's services departments are regularly inspected by Ofsted and therefore their ratings are subject to change. The distribution in this table is based on Single Inspection Framework (SIF) Ofsted ratings as of June 2018, when local authorities were first approached about taking part in the research. The information is published by the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS): https://adcs.org.uk/inspection/article/sif-outcomes-summary

[39] The ethnicity profiles compared in this table have been re-based both for the survey and for the DfE workforce statistics, to exclude 'unknown/ information not provided'. This provides a more clear-cut comparison.

ASYE weighting

As with Wave 2 and Wave 3, ASYE data was weighted by ethnicity, using the latest population statistics from Skills for Care (2020-21), reflecting the time period that the survey was administered. Due to the nature of the sample being those employed by local authorities on their ASYE, there were no agency staff in the sample so weighing by this variable was not necessary.

Statistical significance

In terms of statistical confidence in the findings, the confidence interval for the main survey is +/- 2.5 percentage points, and for the ASYE top-up survey 6.5 percentage points. This means we can be 95% confident that the true figure lies within + or – 2.5 or 6.5 percentage points of the survey findings for the Wave 4 and ASYE top up surveys respectively, based on the whole sample answering the question and a finding of 50%.

Recontact for next wave and qualitative follow-up research

Respondents were asked separate questions about willingness to be re-contacted for the qualitative follow-up interviews and willingness to be recontacted for the next wave of the survey research. There was a high level of agreement on both measures, particularly for the Wave 4 survey respondents, the target of the qualitative interviews: 89% of Wave 4 survey respondents agreed to be re-contacted for the qualitative follow-up and 96% to be re-contacted for Wave 5 of the survey (the final wave). In line with the previous top-up surveys, 78% of ASYE respondents consented to be re-contacted for the next wave of the survey (Wave 5).

The qualitative interviews took place between December 2020 and February 2021 and were all conducted by telephone or video-call, lasting around 45 minutes to one hour. The topic guides were designed by researchers from Manchester Metropolitan University, the University of Salford, and IFF Research, in consultation with the DfE.

The 40 qualitative interviews were a mixture of those who still work in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4, including ten interviews with agency workers. More broadly, to reflect DfE policy interest in the experiences of child and family social workers from different ethnicities, the qualitative sample included a spread of child and family social workers across the following broad ethnic groups: White British, Black/ Black British, Asian/ Asian British, Mixed, and 'other'.

Within each group, interviews were recruited to ensure a spread of characteristics, such as job role, LA Ofsted rating, gender, age band etc.

Interviews were digitally recorded with the permission of respondents, and transcribed. The transcriptions formed the material for analysis. Respondents were each offered a £20 voucher incentive as a thank-you for their participation.

Key Driver Analysis

At Wave 4, a Key Driver Analysis (KDA) model, using linear regression, was used to explore the impact of a range of explanatory variables on the statement: "Overall, I find my current job satisfying".

The model was run on front line social workers working in local authority child and family social work at Wave 4, this being the group who were less satisfied with their jobs and more stressed than those in more senior job roles. This is the same approach to the KDA on overall satisfaction undertaken in Waves 2 and 3.

Several variables directly related to child and family social work, such as Ofsted rating, reflective supervision and length of time as a social worker, were included alongside demographics (gender, age, ethnicity). The full list is included in Table A.11.

Some variables had to be treated so that they were in an appropriate format be loaded into the model. Table A.11 notes how each variable was treated for the KDA.

Table A.11 Variables used for KDA

Individual characteristics	Treatment	Job related characteristics	Treatment
Gender (J3)	No treatment	Main focus of their work (B7)	No treatment
Age (J1)	No treatment	Employment status in LA CAFSW (directly employed or employed by agency)	Recoded into dichotomous variables – 1 variable for each employment status (LA, Agency, Other)
Ethnicity (J5)	Recoded into dichotomous variables – 1 variable for each ethnicity	Length of time as a qualified social worker (B8)	No treatment
Region	Recoded into dichotomous variables – 1 variable for each region	Length of time at current employer (B8)	No treatment

Individual characteristics	Treatment	Job related characteristics	Treatment
Qualification(s) (C2)	No treatment	Views of employer (E1)	Scale recoded: 1=strongly disagree – 5= strongly agree
Childcare responsibilities (J2)	No treatment	Relationship with manager (E2)	Scale recoded: 1=strongly disagree – 5= strongly agree Condensed into composite variable (see Table A.13)
Physical/ mental health conditions (J4)	No treatment	Tool and resources (E9)	Scale recoded: 1=strongly disagree – 5= strongly agree Condensed into composite variable (see Table A.13)
		Wellbeing – workload, roles, stress (H1)	Scale recoded: 1=strongly disagree – 5= strongly agree Condensed into composite variable (see Table A.13)
		Reflective supervision (E4, E5)	E5: Scale recoded: 1=very poor – 5= very good
		OFSTED rating	Recoded into dichotomous variables – 1 variable for each rating

Individual characteristics	Treatment	Job related characteristics	Treatment
		Impact of Covid-19 on various job-related factors (H4, H5)	Scale recoded: 1=decreased/worsened a lot – 5= increased/improved a lot Condensed into composite variable (see Table A.13)
		Number of cases (B10)	No treatment
		Hours worked (B14)	No treatment
		Time spent working above contracted hours (B12)	No treatment
		CPD in previous 12 months (E10)	No treatment
		Satisfaction with various aspects of the job (G1)	Scale recoded: 1=very dissatisfied – 5= very satisfied

Prior to running the KDA models, factor analysis was used to group together responses to questions that both statistically and theoretically respondents answered in ways that are aligned indicating that these questions might represent an underlying concept.

Four sets of questions were grouped in this way, as shown in Table A.12.

Table A.12 Composite variables used for KDA

Composite variable	Individual variables
Relationship with manager	My manager encourages me to develop my skills
Relationship with manager	My manager is considerate of my life outside work
Relationship with manager	During the COVID-19 pandemic I have been well supported by my manager
Relationship with manager	I receive regular feedback on my performance
Tools and resources	The IT systems and software here support me to do my job
Tools and resources	I have the right resources to do my job effectively
Tools and resources	I have the right tools to do my job effectively
Well-being	My workload is too high
Well-being	I feel I am being asked to fulfil too many different roles in my job
Well-being	I feel stressed by my job
Covid impact on Well-being	Work related stress
Covid impact on Well-being	Anxiety
Covid impact on Well-being	Complexity of cases
Covid impact on Well-being	Workload

KDA produces a measure called R2, which gives an indication of how consistent the model is in explaining the variance of data in the model. Typically, the higher the R2 number, the more confident one can be that the KDA accurately explains the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The R2 figure for the overall satisfaction KDA model was 39, meaning the model explained 39% of the variance in the data, which is considered a fairly good fit when running linear regression on survey data.

The key drivers for the model, and the impact they had on variance of overall satisfaction scores, are shown in Table A.13.

Table A.13 KDA model results

"Overall, I find my current job satisfying"	W4 Variance (%)	W3 variance (%)
I feel loyal to my employer (E1)	19%	13%
I feel valued by my employer (E1)	13%	14%
Well-being (H3)	11%	14%
Tools and resources (E9)	11%	6%
Region – South West	6%	-
View on reflective supervision (E5)	5%	-

Non-responders at Wave 4

Of the 5,621 respondents who completed the Wave 1 survey, 2,319 (41%) did not participate in the research at Wave 2. Of the 3,302 respondents who completed the Wave 2 survey, 1,178 (36%) did not participate at Wave 3. Of the 2,240 respondents who completed the Wave 3 survey, 756 (34%) did not participate at Wave 4. This means that of the original 5,621 respondents who participated at Wave 1, 4,212 (75%) did not participate in the research at Wave 4.

The rest of this section details key differences between those who completed the Wave 4 survey and those who had dropped out of the research between Wave 3 and Wave 4, by demographic information, employment characteristics and attitudes towards their working lives, as captured through the survey. The data in this section is from Wave 3 of the survey as this was the last point at which there was directly comparable data for Wave 4 responders and Wave 4 non-responders. The data here is unweighted, as it is an analysis of the sample for the study rather than the wider population of child and family social workers. A full comparison of demographic and employment characteristics as well as some key attitudinal measures can be found in Table A.14 below.

Demographic and employment characteristics

Overall, demographic characteristics of Wave 4 non-responders were fairly similar to the Wave 4 responders. However, as with Wave 3, non-responders were slightly more likely to be Black / Black British (12% compared with 6% of Wave 3 responders) and less likely to be White (77% compared with 81%). Non-responders were also more likely to be male (18% compared with 15%) and less likely to be female (81% compared with 85%). There was no significant variation in employment situation between the two groups.

Attitudes

Attitudes of Wave 4 responders and non-responders differed for some measures, although non-responders were not always more negative about their working lives, as one might expect.

Surprisingly, Wave 4 non-responders were less stressed at Wave 3, compared with Wave 4 responders: 23% of Wave 4 non-responders had disagreed they were stressed by their job at Wave 3, compared with 19% of responders.

Additionally, Wave 4 non-responders were more likely to agree that they felt loyal to their employer at Wave 3 (78% agreed, compared with 73% of Wave 4 responders) and less likely to disagree that they felt valued by their employer (17% disagreed, compared with 22% of responders). Wave 4 non-responders were also less likely to feel that their workload was too high: 54% agreed, compared with 59% of responders.

Table A.14: W4 non-response, compared with Wave 4 responders (Wave 3 data)

*NB: * in the W4 non-responders (%) column indicates a statistically significant difference compared with the W4 responders, at a 95% confidence level.*

Demographic/ characteristic (unweighted)		W4 responders W3 data (n)	W4 responders W3 data (%)	W4 NON-responders W3 data (n)	W4 NON-responders W3 data (%)
Age	Under 25 years	11	1%	11	1%
	25 – 34 years	330	22%	155	21%
	35 – 44 years	377	25%	198	26%
	45 – 54 years	368	25%	206	27%
	55 – 64 years	351	24%	161	21%
	65 years +	42	3%	21	3%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	5	0%	4	1%
Gender	Male	236	15%	138	18%*
	Female	1362	85%	610	81%*
	Other	<5	<1%	<5	<1%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	6	<1%	7	1%
Ethnicity	White	1305	81%	580	77%*
	Mixed	62	4%	25	3%
	Asian	39	2%	24	3%*
	Black	89	6%	87	12%
	Arab	-	-	-	-
	Other	53	3%	19	3%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	57	4%	21	3%
Region	East Midlands	152	11%	79	11%
	North East	119	9%	48	7%
	South East	218	16%	132	19%
	East of England	192	14%	103	15%
	Greater London	251	18%	131	19%
	North West	102	7%	63	9%
	South West	125	9%	53	8%
	West Midlands	113	8%	56	8%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	100	7%	38	5%
Ofsted	Outstanding	213	16%	105	15%

Demographic/ characteristic (unweighted)		W4 responders W3 data (n)	W4 responders W3 data (%)	W4 NON-responders W3 data (n)	W4 NON-responders W3 data (%)
	Good	584	43%	298	42%
	Requires improvement	424	31%	205	29%
	Inadequate	151	11%	95	14%
Agency worker	Yes	77	4%	44	6%
Job role	ASYE	6	<1%	4	1%
	Front line practitioner	688	52%	365	53%
	Practice supervisor	88	7%	54	8%
	Practice leader	44	3%	27	4%
	Team manager	233	18%	116	17%
	Senior service manager/Director	109	8%	55	8%
	Other	147	11%	63	9%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5%	<1%	0	0%
Length of time at employer	Less than 6 months	165	13%	81	12%
	6 months to 1 year	132	10%	56	8%
	1 year	195	15%	96	14%
	2 to 3 years	360	27%	204	30%
	4 to 5 years	202	15%	108	16%
	6 to 10 years	141	11%	76	11%
	More than 10 years	122	9%	62	9%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	0	0%	<5	<1%
Satisfied with career to date	Agree	1030	72%	547	75%
	Disagree	174	12%	81	11%
	Neither agree nor disagree	213	15%	96	13%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5	<1%	<5	<1%
Loyal to employer	Agree	957	73%	531	78%*
	Disagree	125	9%	49	7%
	Neither agree nor disagree	233	18%	102	15%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	2	<1%	<5	<1%
Valued by employer	Agree	790	60%	431	63%
	Disagree	290	22%	115	17%*
	Neither agree nor disagree	232	18%	136	20%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	5	<1%	<5	<1%
Stressed	Agree	790	60%	389	57%
	Disagree	256	19%	159	23%*
	Neither agree nor disagree	266	20%	135	20%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	5	<1%	<5	<1%
Workload is too high	Agree	772	59%	369	54%*
	Disagree	264	20%	158	23%

Demographic/ characteristic (unweighted)		W4 responders W3 data (n)	W4 responders W3 data (%)	W4 NON-responders W3 data (n)	W4 NON-responders W3 data (%)
	Neither agree nor disagree	277	21%	154	23%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5	<1%	<5	<1%
Expected situation in 12 months' time	Working in child and family social work for a local authority - directly	1059	71%	527	70%
	Working in child and family social work for a local authority - via an agency	83	6%	54	7%
	Working in child and family social work - in the private or voluntary sector	85	6%	30	4%
	Working in social work, but outside of child and family social work	59	4%	30	4%
	Working outside of social work altogether	81	5%	48	6%
	Not working at all	65	4%	45	6%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	52	4%	22	3%
Current situation	Yes	1317	89%	684	90%
	No - But I'm still in child and family social work	46	3%	15	2%
	No - adult social work	14	1%	8	1%
	No - but still in social work	23	2%	6	1%
	No - I am employed, but have left social work altogether	21	1%	13	2%
	No - I am unemployed and looking for work	8	1%	<5	<1%
	No - I am undertaking full-time further study. Please note: if you were studying part-time	<5	<1%	<5	<1%
	No - I am on a career break (for example, travelling, caring responsibilities etc.)	12	1%	9	1%
	No - I am doing something else (for example retired, ill-health etc.)	42	3%	18	2%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	0	0%	0	0%

Appendix 2: Wave 4 survey questionnaire

Telephone screener

ASK PERSON WHO ANSWERS PHONE

S1   Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is NAME and I'm calling from IFF Research. Please can I speak to [NAME]?

Respondent answers phone	1	CONTINUE
Transferred to respondent	2	CONTINUE
Hard appointment	3	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Soft Appointment	4	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Engaged	5	CALL BACK
No reply / Answer phone	9	CALL BACK
Call back during Consumer hours	14	CALL BACK
Call back during B2B hours	15	CALL BACK
Refusal	6	CLOSE
Not available in deadline	7	CLOSE
Fax Line	8	CLOSE
Business Number	10	CLOSE
Dead line	11	CLOSE
Wrong telephone number	16	CLOSE
Person no longer works here	14	CLOSE
Request reassurances	12	GO TO REASSURANCES
Request reassurance email	13	COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESS THEN CONTINUE OR MAKE APPOINTMENT (SEE APPENDIX FOR EMAIL TEXT)

S2   Good morning / afternoon, my name is NAME, calling from IFF Research, an independent market research company, on behalf of the Department for Education (DFE).

You might remember that around a year ago you took part in a study of social workers' career experiences, which IFF is conducting on behalf of the Department for Education. At that time you agreed we could re-contact you to see whether your circumstances or views have changed.

We understand that your employment situation may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, or other reasons. If so, we would still like to hear from you, whether or not you are working in child and family social work.

Would you have some time to go through the questions now? The interview should take around 10 minutes.

ADD IF NECESSARY**:**

The research will improve understanding about what motivates people to enter child and family social work, why they stay or leave, and what impacts on their job satisfaction and career development. It will also help us to understand the impact of COVID-19 on these factors.

We are interested in your experiences, even if you are thinking of changing your job or of leaving the profession, or if you have already changed job or left.

All responses will be anonymous and analysed in aggregate form. No individual staff or local authorities will be identified in the reporting.

For further information you can email **SWResearch@iffresearch.com.**

PROVIDE **LINK TO THE PRIVACY NOTICE ON REQUEST: PRIVACY STATEMENT: www.iffresearch.com/longitudinal-study-of-child-and-family-social-workers-privacystatements**

INTERVIEWER NOTE: YOU MUST GET A CLEAR 'YES', OR SIMILAR RESPONSE, TO INDICATE CONSENT TO TAKING PART

Continue	1	CONTINUE
Hard appointment	2	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Soft appointment	3	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Call back during Consumer hours	10	Call back
Call back during B2B hours	11	Call back

Refusal	4	GO TO S3
Refusal – company policy	5	GO TO S3
Refusal – taken part in recent survey	6	GO TO S3
Not available in deadline	7	THANK AND CLOSE
Request reassurances	8	GO TO REASSURANCES
Request reassurance email	9	COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESS THEN CONTINUE OR MAKE APPOINTMENT (SEE APPENDIX FOR EMAIL TEXT)

ASK IF NAMED RESPONDENT NOT ON SITE (S1=14)

S2a Do you have an alternative number we could reach NAME on?

Yes (please type in number)	1	THANK AND CLOSE (THIS BECOMES THE 'REFERRAL NUMBER')
No / Don't know	2	THANK AND CLOSE (GOES INTO UNUSABLE)

IF REFUSED (S2=4-6)

S3   Would you be willing to take part online instead?

Yes	1	CHECK EMAIL ADDRESS, CORRECT IF NEEDED, AND THANK AND CLOSE
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

if agreed to take part (S2 =1)

S4   Before we begin, I just need to read out a quick statement based on GDPR legislation: First, all of the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence, and you have the right to the following:

1) A copy of your data
2) Amending your data
3) Withdrawing from the research at any point

To guarantee this, and as part of our quality control procedures, all interviews are recorded. Based on this information, are you willing to take part?

Yes	1	
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

REASSURANCES TO USE IF NECESSARY

Your details were given to us by [INSERT LA ON SAMPLE].

If respondent wishes to confirm validity of survey or get more information about aims and objectives, they can contact:

- **MRS: Market Research Society on 0800 975 9596**
- **IFF: [name] on 0207 250 3035**

Online landing page

Thank you for your interest in this landmark national study on the career experiences of child and family social workers. You took part in the third survey around a year ago and at that time you agreed we could re-contact you to see whether any of your circumstances or views have changed.

We understand that your employment situation may have been affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, or other reasons. If this is the case, we would still like to hear about what you are doing at the moment, whether or not you are working in child and family social work.

Your contribution will be invaluable to the research, even if you are thinking of changing job or of leaving the profession, or if you have already changed job or left. The research is being conducted by IFF Research, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE). Capturing the views of as many people as possible who took part in the first survey is crucial to ensure that the research remains representative.

For further information about the study, or to find out what happens to the survey data and how it is stored, please click here.

Taking part is voluntary and you may withdraw at any point. If at the end of the survey you'd like to request access to your data or have this deleted, please go to www.iffresearch.com/gdpr/ for more information. All information collected will be treated in the strictest confidence, in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

- If you are willing to take part, please click 'Next'.

- IF INDIVIDUALISED LINK: Please note, **you can stop and start as many times as you like** and pick up where you left off. To do this you just need to use the link provided in your email invitation.

- When completing the survey, please only use the 'Next' button on the page rather than the 'Back' and 'Forward' buttons in your browser.

B   Current Employment Situation

IF ONLINE DISPLAY TO ALL / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: Please note: throughout this survey, where we refer to 'local authority' we also include Children's Trusts delivering LA Children's Services.

ASK ALL

B1   Are you currently working in a Local authority/ Trust in child and family social work? By this we mean any role in child and family social work, including more senior roles which do not have a direct caseload.

If you are currently on furlough due to the COVID-19 pandemic, please count this as employed, even if you are not currently working.

ADD IF NECESSARY: If you are on extended leave – such as maternity leave, or sick leave – but still on the payroll of your employer, then please count this as employed.

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE one ANSWER

IF TELEPHONE: DO NOT READ OUT. IF NO, PROMPT AS NECESSARY. SINGLE CODE.

Yes	1	CONTINUE TO B2
No – but I'm still in child and family social work	2	GO B2 & B3 &B4NW-B4C THEN F1C
No – I now work in adult social work	9	GO B2 & B3 &B4NW-B4C THEN F1C
No – I've moved to a different area of social work (outside child and family or adult social work)	10	GO B2 & B3 &B4NW-B4C THEN F1C
No – I am employed, but have left social work altogether	3	GO TO F1A
No – I am unemployed and looking for work	4	GO TO F1
No – I am undertaking full-time further study. *Please note: if you were studying part-time alongside work, then please select from the relevant work option (either option 1, 2 or 3)*	5	GO TO B1C
No – I am on a career break (for example, travelling, caring responsibilities etc.)	6	GO TO F1
No – I am retired	9	GO TO B1E
No – I am doing something else (for example ill-health etc.)	7	GO TO F1

IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8	GO TO F1

IF RETIRED (B1=9)

B1e   When you retired, did you take early retirement?

SINGLECODE.

Yes	1	
No	2	
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	3	

IF TOOK EARLY RETIREMENT (B1e=1)

B1f   Why did you take early retirement?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY.

if telephone: do not read out. multicode.

DS: ROTATE CODES 1-8

Work pressure (including high caseload, too much paperwork, long hours)	1
My job was not compatible with family or caring commitments	2
Impact of Covid on being a social worker	3
Impact of Covid on myself/ family	4
I was able to draw good pension relative to pay/ benefits at work	5
Restructuring in my team/ Department	6
Health-related reasons	9
I always planned to retire at this age	7
Other (please specify)	8
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	9

ASK ALL STILL IN SW (B1=1 OR B1=2 OR B1=9 OR B1=10)

B2   Which ONE of the following best applies to you?

IF ONLINE DISPLAY: PLEASE GIVE ONE ANSWER

if telephone: read out, CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES. single code.

I am employed by [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE] **and I am based in the local authority / Children's Trust**	1
I work in social work at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE] **but I am technically employed by an agency**	2
I am employed by [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE] **but am on secondment to or based in another organisation e.g., CAHMS, NHS Trust, Social Work England or a Regional Adoption Agency**	3
I am working at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE **on an independent / self-employed basis**	4
I am employed by a local authority/ Children's Trust, but not/no longer by [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE IF CLOSED LINK AND FROM B1b IF OPEN LINK]	5
I am employed by an agency but not/ no longer work at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE IF CLOSED LINK AND FROM B1b (W1) IF OPEN LINK**]**	6
I am independent / self-employed but not/ no longer work at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE**]**	9
Or are you employed on some other basis (please specify)	7
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8

IF PREVIOUSLY EMPLOYED BY LA DIRECT BUT NOW EMPLOYED BY AGENCY OR INDEPENDENT/ SELF-EMPLOYED (B2=6 OR 9)

B3   Why are you now working [IF B2 = 6: for an agency] [IF B2 = 9: on an independent/ self-employed basis] instead of directly with a local authority?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY.

if telephone: do not read out. multicode.

ASK IF MULTICODE AT B3

B3a   And which ONE of these is the main reason you're working [IF B2 = 6: for an agency] [IF B2 = 9: on an independent/ self-employed basis] instead of directly with a local authority?

IF ONLINE: please select one answer only

IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from B3 if needed. single code.

DS: Only show options selected at B3.

The pay is better	1
I have more flexibility about when I work	2
Better work-life balance	3
More opportunities to gain experience of different roles	4
I am less accountable/ have less responsibility	5
I have more professional autonomy	6
Lack of available local jobs	7
Dissatisfaction with permanent employment	8
Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	11
Other (please specify)	9
Don't know / prefer not to say	10

ASK IF EMPLOYED BUT NOT/ NO LONGER EMPLOYED BY LA ON SAMPLE OR BY ANOTHER LA   DIRECTLY (B2=6, 7, 8 or 9 or B1=2)

B4nw In your current role, do you work at a local authority/ Children's Trust?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE SELECT one ANSWER

if telephone: prompt as necessary. single code.

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No – but it is a public-sector organisation	2	ROUTE TO SECTION F
No – it is a private or voluntary sector organisation	3	ROUTE TO SECTION F
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	4	CONTINUE

ASK IF NOW WORK AT A DIFFERENT LOCAL AUTHORITY Than LA ON SAMPLE (B2=5 OR B4nw=1)

B4a   What is the name of the local authority/ Children's Trust you now work at?

To confirm, results will not be analysed by individual Local authority/ Trust.

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE SELECT FROM THE DROP-DOWN LIST.

DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	1	THANK AND CLOSE
Local authority is not in England	2	GO TO F1

IF STILL IN SOCIAL WORK BUT AT DIFFERENT LA TO LA ON SAMPLE [B2=5 OR B4nw=1]

B4b **Why are you now working at [IF LA given at B4a: 'INSERT LA FROM B4a' instead of; IF B4a=1: a different local authority/ Trust to] [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]?**

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY.

if telephone: do not read out. multicode.

ASK IF MULTICODE AT B4b

B4c **And which ONE of these is the main reason you are now working at [IF LA given at B4a: 'INSERT LA FROM B4a' instead of; IF B4a=1: a different local authority/ Trust to] [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]?**

 IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from B4B if needed. single code.

>DS: Only show options selected at B4b.

The pay/benefits package is better	1
Better working hours	2
Better work-life balance	3
More opportunities to gain experience of different roles	4
Better progression opportunities	5
I have more professional autonomy	6
I relocated	7
Change in personal circumstances (other)	8
Better opportunities to develop skills	9
My workload was too high at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]	10
I did not like the working culture at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]	11

I found one or more colleagues difficult to work with at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]	12
I was only on a temporary/fixed term contract at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]	13
Promotion/ I am now in a more senior role	14
I did not like the physical working environment at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]	15
I moved to a local authority / Children's Trust with a better Ofsted rating	16
I wanted to work closer to home / reduce my commute	17
I wanted to change role / try a different role	18
Poor IT systems and software at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]	19
Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	22
Other (please specify)	20
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)" Don't know / prefer not to say	21

ASK IF AGENCY WORKER (B2=2 OR 6)

B4f   What would encourage you to move from being employed by an agency to being employed directly by a local authority, if anything?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY.

if telephone: do not read out. multicode.

ASK IF MULTICODE AT B4

B4g   And which ONE of these would be the main factor that would encourage you to move from being employed by an agency to being employed directly by a local authority?

SINGLECODE.

IF ONLINE: please select one answer only

IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from B3 if needed. single code.

DS: Only show options selected at B4f.

	B4F	B4G
Improved pay	1	1
Better job security	2	2
Better progression opportunities	3	3
Better scope for flexible working	4	4

Better work-life balance	5	5
More steady / regular / permanent employment	6	6
Wanting to work with the same colleagues/team consistently	7	7
Dislike of the agency I work for	8	8
Lack of available agency jobs	9	9
Better opportunities to develop skills	10	10
Other (please specify)	11	11
Nothing would encourage me to move to being directly employed by a local authority	12	12
Don't know / prefer not to say	13	13

ASK ALL: The next few questions are about your current role.

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B5 Which ONE of the following best describes your current role?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE one ANSWER

if telephone: Read out. single code.

Assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE)	1
Frontline practitioner	2
Practice supervisor	3
Team manager	8
Practice leader	4
Senior service manager or Director not directly involved in practice	5
Other (please specify)	6
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	7

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B5a Have you been promoted in the last 12 months?

SINGLECODE.

Yes	1	
No	2	
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	3	

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B5b   Which of the following statements best applies to you?

SINGLECODE.

I aim to seek promotion within the next <u>12 months</u>	1
I aim to seek promotion within the next <u>two years</u>	2
I aim to seek promotion within the next <u>five years</u>	3
I aim to seek promotion, but <u>not within the next five years</u>	4
I am not interested in promotion at any stage	5
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	6

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B7   What is the main focus of your work? For example, Children in Need; Adoption; Early help.

If you work in a support or supervisory role, please select the areas in which those you support or supervise work.

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY.

if telephone: do not read out. MULTICODE.

Adoption	1
Fostering	2
Children with disabilities	3
Placements/ permanence	4
Leaving care	5
Youth offending	6

Duty/ first response / front door / MASH	7
Health	8
Education	9
Assessment	10
Child in Need/ Child Protection	11
Looked after children	14
Prevention / early help services	15
Kinship care	16
COVID-19 recovery	17
Other (please specify)	12
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	13

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B8   And how long have you worked….?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE one ANSWER in each row

If telephone: prompt as necessary. code one per row.

	Less than 6 months	6 months to 1 year	1 year	2 to 3 years	4 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	More than 10 years	IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)" Don't know / prefer not to say
In child and family social work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
At your current employer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
In your current role, with your current employer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Ask all still in cafsw and not a team leader (B1=1 AND B5≠5 OR 8)

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B10 How many cases are allocated to you currently?

Please note, by 'case' we mean either:

- **An individual allocated to a social worker (for example a family of three siblings would be three individual cases); and/or**
- **A carer or carers allocated to a social worker for the purposes of fostering or adoption**

Please only count cases which are assigned directly to you personally rather than all cases held within your team or your department.

WRITE IN	
Not applicable: non-case-holding role	1
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF Don't know AT B10 (B10=2)

B10a Please could you estimate the number of cases allocated to you currently, using the bands below?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-25	5
26-29	6
30+	7
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

B11 How many hours are you <u>contracted</u> to work per week?

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: If no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.

DS: ALLOW RANGE OF 0-168 HOURS

WRITE IN	
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	1
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF DON'T KNOW AT B11 (B11=2)

B11a Please could estimate which of the following hourly bands you are contracted to work per week?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required).

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

1-15	1
16-20	2
21-30	3
31-35	4
36-40	5
41-45	6
46-50	7
51+	8
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	X
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	v

Ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

B12   And how often would you say you work over and above your contracted hours to keep up with your workload?

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. single code.

Never	1
Occasionally	2
Most weeks	3

All the time	4
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contract	5
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	6

DS: B14 and B15 to be displayed on one page.

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: How many hours in a typical week do you spend doing the following…

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: if no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B14   1) …Working? Please exclude any time spent travelling to and from home from your answer.

DS: ALLOW RANGE OF 0-168 HOURS

WRITE IN	
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	1
Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF Don't know AT B14 (B14=2)

B14a Please could you estimate the number of hours you spend working in a typical week?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE ADD IF NECESSARY: If no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

1-15	1
16-20	2
21-30	3
31-35	4

36-40	5
41-45	6
46-50	7
51+	8
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	X
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	V

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B15   2) Doing direct work with children and families/ carers?

WRITE IN	
Not applicable - I do not do any direct work with children and families	3
Not applicable - e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	1
Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF Don't know AT B15 (B15=2)

B15a Please could you estimate the number of hours in a typical week you spend doing direct work with children and families / carers – by direct work we mean talking with them face-to-face, by video conference or by telephone?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE ADD IF NECESSARY: If no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

0-2 hours	1
3-5 hours	2
6-10 hours	3
11-15 hours	4
16-20 hours	5

More than 20 hours	6
Not applicable	7
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8

ASK IF DO DIRECT WORK WITH FAMILIES AND HAS PROVIDED THE NUMBER OF HOURS (B15=INTEGER PROVIDED OR B15a=1-6)

B15b And how much of this time is spent working with children and families/carers <u>face to face</u> versus working with them <u>remotely or virtually</u>?

Remote or virtual work could include contact by video call, Skype or over the telephone.

Please write in the number of hours below.

DS: ENSURE SUM OF THE TWO DOES NOT EXCEED ANSWER GIVEN AT B15/B15a

Face to face	__ hours
Remotely / virtually	__ hours
Don't know	1

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B17   During your time at your current employer have you made use of any of the following arrangements…?

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer per row.

IF TELEPHONE: Read out. code one per row.

	Yes	**No**	**Can't remember**
Flexi-time	1	2	3
Job sharing (sharing a full-time job with someone)	1	2	3
Time off in lieu (TOIL)	1	2	3
Paid overtime	1	2	3
Blended working (sharing time between home and office/on visits)	1	2	3

C   Entry Route to Social Work – removed after W1

D   Career History – removed after W1

E   Overall views of employer

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

- **To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about working in child and family social work at your current employer?**

IF ONLINE: PLEASE GIVE ONE ANSWER PER ROW

IF TELEPHONE: READ OUT. CODE ONE PER ROW.

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	IF TELE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
I feel loyal to my organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel valued by my employer	1	2	3	4	5	6
I am proud to tell people that I am a child and family social worker	1	2	3	4	5	6

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

- **Now thinking about the managers at your current employer, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?**

IF ONLINE: PLEASE GIVE ONE ANSWER PER ROW

IF TELEPHONE: READ OUT. CODE ONE PER ROW.

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	IF TELE DISPLAY "DO NOT READ OUT)":

						Don't know / prefer not to say
My manager encourages me to develop my skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
My manager is considerate of my life outside work	1	2	3	4	5	6
I receive regular feedback on my performance	1	2	3	4	5	6
During the COVID-19 pandemic I have been well supported by my manager	1	2	3	4	5	6

ask IF B5=1/2/3/4/6

E3   How frequently, if at all, have you received reflective supervision in the last 12 months?

Reflective supervision is a learning process that allows the practitioner to explore the factors influencing their practice, including emotions, assumptions and power relationships; develop an understanding of the knowledge base informing their practice and its limits; and, to identify next steps.

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. single code.

At least once every two weeks	1	ASK E4
Once every three or four weeks	2	ASK E4
Once every five or six weeks	3	ASK E4
Less frequently than every six weeks	4	ASK E4
Have not received reflective supervision since joining current employer	5	ASK E4
Don't know / prefer not to say	6	ASK E6

ask all who have received supervision (E3=1-4)

E5   How would you rate the quality of the reflective supervision you have received in the last 12 months?

IF TELEPHONE: read out. single code.

Very good	1
Good	2
Poor	3
Very poor	4
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	5

ASK ALL WHO THINK QUALITY OF SUPERVISION IS POOR (E5=3-4)

E5a   Why do you say that the quality of the reflective supervision you receive is poor?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY.

if telephone: do not read out. multicode.

DS: ROTATE CODES 1-8

My manager lacks confidence	1
The feedback I receive is not useful	2
I do not receive any/enough feedback	3
My manager is poorly prepared / does not ask the right questions	4
I do not feel my input is taken on board	5
It is not long enough / it is rushed	6
I do not feel the reflective supervision is helping me improve my skills	7
Supervision is not reflective (e.g., it is managerial, just monitoring progress)	8
Other (please specify)	9
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	10

Ask all still in cafsw and not on ASYE (B1=1 and B5≠1)

E7 Are you currently responsible for directly supervising any of the qualified Child and Family Social Workers at your current employer?

Yes (please specify how many):	1	ASK E8
No	2	ASK E9
Don't know / prefer not to say	3	ASK E9

ASK IF CURRENTLY A SUPERVISOR (E7=1)

E8 How confident are you in your ability to provide reflective supervision?

IF TELEPHONE: read out. single code.

Very confident	1
Fairly confident	2
Not very confident	3
Not at all confident	4
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	5

Ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

E9 And to what extent do you agree or disagree that…

Please answer about your current circumstances.

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer per ROW.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. code one per row.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	IF TELE DISPLAY" (DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
I am able to access the right learning and development	1	2	3	4	5	6

opportunities when I need to						
I have the right tools (e.g., risk assessment tools, planning tools, etc.) to do my job effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6
The IT systems and software here support me to do my job	1	2	3	4	5	6

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

E10   Have you undertaken any learning and development/ CPD supported by your employer over the past 12 months?

By 'supported' we mean learning and development that has been provided, facilitated or funded by your employer.

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / prefer not to say	3

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

E11   Have you been assessed through the National Assessment and Accreditation System (NAAS)?

Yes – I have taken the assessment	1
No – I have been endorsed but have not yet taken the assessment	2
No – I have not been endorsed or assessed through NAAS	4
Don't know / prefer not to say	3

F   Job outside CAFSW and short-term career plans

if employed but not in social work (B1=3)

F1a   What is your current job role? Please make sure that your area of work, as well as level, is clear in your answer (e.g., secondary school teaching assistant)

WRITE IN	
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	1

if employed but not in LA CAFSW (B1=2 or 3 OR 9 OR 10)

F1c   How many hours are you contracted to work a week in your current role?

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: If no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.

DS: ALLOW RANGE OF 0-168 HOURS

WRITE IN	
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	1
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF DON'T KNOW AT F1C (F1C=2)

F1d   Please could estimate which of the following hourly bands you are contracted to work per week?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required).

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

1-15	1
16-20	2
21-30	3
31-35	4
36-40	5
41-45	6
46-50	7
51+	8
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	X
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	V

if employed but not in LA CAFSW (B1=2 or 3 OR 9 OR 10)

F1e And how often would you say you work over and above your contracted hours in your current job?

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. single code.

Never	1
Occasionally	2
Most weeks	3
All the time	4
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contract	**5**
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	6

Ask all

F1 In terms of your career plans, which ONE of the following comes closest to where you see yourself in 12 months' time?

IF ONLINE DISPLAY: please give one answer

IF TELEPHONE: READ OUT. single code.

DS: ROUTE B1=5-7 STRAIGHT TO i5 REGARDLESS OF F1 RESPONSE. ROUTE B1=8 STRAIGHT TO SECTION J.

Working in child and family social work for a local authority – directly	1
Working in child and family social work for a local authority – via an agency	2
Working in child and family social work – in the private or voluntary sector	3
Working in social work, but outside of child and family social work	4
Working outside of social work altogether (please specify)	5
Not working at all (please specify)	6
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know/ prefer not to say	7

Ask all

F10 Thinking about the past 12 months, have your career plans been influenced by your experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic?

SINGLECODE.

Yes	1
No	2
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know/ prefer not to say	3

Ask IF CAREER PLANS AFFECTED BY COVID (F10=1)

F11 How have your career plans have been influenced by your experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic?

MULTICODE. READ OUT IF NECESSARY.

I decided I did not want to be a social worker anymore	1
[IF EMPLOYED BY LA – B2=1,3,5 – word qnre] I changed employer - to a different local authority/Trust	2
[IF EMPLOYED BY LA – B2=1,3,5 – word qnre] I changed employer - to work at an agency	3
I decided to move to a different area of social work	4
I decided to relocate	5
I decided to reduce my working hours (e.g., switched to part-time working)	6
I decided to take early retirement	7
Other (specify)	8
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know/ prefer not to say	9

Ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

F3 Thinking more generally, how would you rate your career progression so far?

IF ONLINE DISPLAY: please give one answer

IF TELEPHONE: read out. single code

Above my expectations	1

In line with my expectations	2
Below my expectations	3
Too early to say	4
I don't have any expectations about career progression	5
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	6

G Job satisfaction

ask all in Employment (B1=1-3, 9-10)

G1   How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your current job?

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer per ROW.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. code one per row.

	Very satisfied	**Fairly satisfied**	**Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied**	**Fairly dissatisfied**	**Very dissatisfied**	IF TELE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
The sense of achievement you get from your work	1	2	3	4	5	6
The opportunity to develop your skills in your job	1	2	3	4	5	6
The amount of pay you receive	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your job security	1	2	3	4	5	6
(ONLY IF STILL IN SW B1=1, 2, 9, 10) **Public respect for the sort of work you do**	1	2	3	4	5	6

ask all in employment (B1=1-3, 9-10)

G2   And to what extent do you agree with the statement: "Overall, I find my current job satisfying".

Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	5
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	6

H Workplace well-being

The next few questions are about wellbeing in the workplace. The research team will be analysing the data anonymously and so will not be following up individual responses.

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

H1   How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer per ROW.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. code one per row.

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	IF TELE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
My overall workload is too high	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel I am being asked to fulfil too many different roles in my job	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel stressed by my job	1	2	3	4	5	6

H2   What do you feel is causing this stress?

IF ONLINE: please select all that apply

IF TELEPHONE: DO NOT read out.

ASK IF MULTICODE at H2

H2a   And which of these do you feel is the ONE main thing that is causing this stress?

IF ONLINE: please select ONE ANSWER

IF TELEPHONE:

prompt with answers from h2 if needed. single code.

DS: Please only show options selected at H2.

	H2	H2a
I have too much paperwork	1	1
I have too many cases	2	2
Insufficient quality of management/ support	3	3
Working culture/ practices	4	4
Having to make emotional or difficult decisions	5	5
Insufficient time for direct work with children and families	6	6
High staff turnover in my team/ area of practice	7	7
Lack of administrative/ business support	11	11
Lack of resources to support families	12	12
Other (please specify)	8	8
Nothing in particular, it is simply a stressful job	9	9
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	10	10

ASK ALL CURRENTLY IN LA CAFSW (B1=1)

H4   To what extent have the following aspects of your job <u>increased or decreased</u> as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, if at all?

SINGLECODE FOR EACH ITERATION. DS: ROTATE STARTING POINT.

	Increased a lot	Increased a little	No impact	Decreased a little	Decreased a lot	IF TELE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
Work related stress	1	2	3	4	5	6
Anxiety	1	2	3	4	5	6
Workload	1	2	3	4	5	6
Time for learning and development	1	2	3	4	5	6
Resources for supporting children and families	1	2	3	4	5	6
Opportunities for career progression or promotion	1	2	3	4	5	6
Flexible working arrangements	1	2	3	4	5	6
Complexity of cases	1	2	3	4	5	6

ASK ALL CURRENTLY IN LA CAFSW (B1=1)

H5   To what extent have the following aspects of your job <u>improved or worsened</u> as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, if at all?

SINGLECODE FOR EACH ITERATION. DS: ROTATE STARTING POINT.

	Improved a lot	Improved a little	No impact	Worsened a little	Worsened a lot	IF TELE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
Support from management	1	2	3	4	5	X
Relationships with colleagues	1	2	3	4	5	X
Relationships with children and families/carers (service users)	1	2	3	4	5	X

I   Reasons for leaving / coming back

IF ANSWERED F1=4-6: You mentioned that in 12 months' time you think you'll be [INSERT F1 ANSWER].

ask all left / considering leaving CAFSW (B1=3/4/9/10 or F1=4-6)

I1   Why [B1=3/4/9/10: did you leave] [F1=4-6: are you considering leaving] child and family social work?

IF ONLINE: please select all that apply

IF TELEPHONE: DO NOT read out. MULTICODE

ASK ALL MULTICODE AT I1

I1a   And what is your ONE main reason for [B1=3/4/9/10: leaving [F1=4-6: considering leaving] child and family social work?

IF ONLINE: please select one answer only

IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from I1 if needed. single code.

DISPLAY ANSWERS FROM I1 (WITH DON'T KNOW)

	I1	I2
It is just not the right type of job for me	1	1
It is not compatible with family or relationship commitments	2	2
I have found one or more of my colleagues difficult to work with	3	3
I did not/am not making the best use of the skills or experience I have	4	4
I don't like the culture of local authority social work	5	5
My fixed term contract ended/ends soon	6	6
IF F1=6: I will be retiring / retired	7	7
The amount of paperwork	8	8
The high caseload	9	9
The pay / benefits package	10	10
The working hours in general	11	11
Redundancy	12	12
I am taking a career break	14	14
I am temporarily working outside of child and family social work but expecting to return	15	15
Due to impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic	16	16
I have started/am starting a family	17	17
Other (please specify)	13	13
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	X	X

ask all STAYING IN SOCIAL WORK BUT LEFT / CONSIDERING leaving LA B2=5, 6,7,9

I2   Why did you leave/ are you considering leaving? [INSERT Local Authority FROM SAMPLE]?

IF ONLINE: please select all that apply

IF TELEPHONE: DO NOT read out. MULTICODE

ASK ALL MULTICODE AT I2

I2a   And what is your ONE main reason for leaving [INSERT Local Authority FROM SAMPLE]?

IF ONLINE: please select one answer only

IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from I2 if needed. single code.

DISPLAY ANSWERS FROM I2 (WITH DON'T KNOW)

	I2	I2a
I have found one or more of my colleagues difficult to work with	1	1
I feel I have learnt all that I can from working here	2	2
I would like to try working for a different local authority	3	3
I would like to try working for a different type of organisation altogether	4	4
I am not making the best use of the skills or experience here	5	5
I don't like the social work culture here	6	6
My fixed term contract ends soon	7	7
I am relocating	8	8
I am retired / retiring	9	9
The amount of paperwork I have to do	10	10
The high caseload	11	11
The pay / benefits package	12	12
The working hours in general	13	13
Due to impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (PLEASE SPECIFY – 'why do you say that?)	16	16
Other (please specify)	14	14
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)" Don't know / prefer not to say	X	X

ask all left / considering leaving CAFSW (B1=3/4/9/10 or F1=4-6)

I4   [IF LEFT B1=3/4/9/10: And is there anything that might encourage you to return to child and family social work in future?] [IF CONSIDERING LEAVING (F1=4-6): And is there anything that might encourage you to remain in child and family social work?]

prompt as necessary. multicode.

ASK IF MULTICODE AT I4

I4a **And which ONE of these would you say would be the main thing that might encourage you to [B1=3/4/9/10: return to] [F1=4-6: remain in] child and family social work in future?**

IF ONLINE: please select one answer only

IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from I4 if needed. single code.

	I4	I4a
Flexi-time	1	1
Job-sharing	2	2
The ability to take time off in lieu (TOIL)	3	3
The ability to work from home	4	4
A more manageable workload in terms of caseload	5	5
A more manageable workload in terms of administration / paperwork	6	6
Higher pay	7	7
Other financial incentives such as overtime pay	8	8
Subsidised childcare	9	9
Better/ more promotion/ career progression opportunities	10	10
Better/ more training opportunities	11	11
Better physical working environment	12	12
Better working culture	13	13
Better IT systems and software	14	14
Other (please specify)	15	15
DS EXCLUSIVE CODE: No, nothing would encourage me to return to/ stay in social work	16	16
Don't know / prefer not to say	17	17

ask all WHO HAVE left CAFSW (B1=3-7, 9)

I5 **How likely would you say you are to return to child and family social work in the next five years?**

IF ONLINE: PLEASE SELECT ONE RESPONSE

Very likely	1
Fairy likely	2
Not very likely	3
Not at all likely	4
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	5

J   Demographics

IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL, IF ONLINE DISPLAY TO ALL: **We'd like to end by asking you a few questions about yourself, to help us in our analysis.**

ask all

J1   What is your age?

DS: SET UPPER RANGE 99

WRITE IN AGE

Prefer not to say	1

ASK IF PREFER NOT TO DISCLOSE EXACT AGE (J1=1)

J1a   Please can you tell us which of the following age bands you fall into?

SINGLECODE.

Under 25 years	1
25 – 34 years	2
35 – 44 years	3
45 – 54 years	4
55 – 64 years	5
65 years and over	6
Prefer not to say	7

ask all

J2 Outside of work, do you have any care or childcare responsibilities?

IF TELEPHONE: IF 'YES' PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES. MULTICODE OK

Yes: for school-aged child/children	1
Yes: for pre-school aged child/children	2
Yes: for child/ children with disabilities	3
Yes: caring for other family member or friends	4
No	5
Don't know / prefer not to say	6

ask all

J4 Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / prefer not to say	3

K   Recontact

K1   Would you be willing to be contacted about taking part in a follow-up survey in around one year's time? This will involve doing a similar survey to find out what you are doing then and whether your circumstances or views have changed.

ADD AS NECESSARY: Following up will help us to build a picture of what influences social worker's career experiences and decisions over time. We would still like people to take part next year even if they have left or are thinking of leaving the profession.

Yes *(am willing to be re-contacted for the follow-up survey)*	1
No *(am not willing to be re-contacted for the follow-up survey)*	2

K2   We will also be conducting some follow-up telephone interviews in the next couple of months which will cover these issues in more depth. The interviews will last around 45 minutes and you will be given £20 voucher as a thank you. Would you be willing to help us with this?

Yes *(can re-contact me for the qualitative research)*	1
No *(cannot re-contact me for the qualitative research)*	2

K3   Thank you very much. Could we just take your name and home contact details? This will only be used to recontact you about this research and is just in case your work details change.

WRITE IN FIRST NAME AND SURNAME	
WRITE IN HOME EMAIL ADDRESS	
Refused	X
WRITE IN HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER (LANDLINE OR MOBILE)	
Refused	X

Thanks for taking part and supporting this research, we really appreciate your time.

Appendix 3: ASYE questionnaire

Telephone screener

ASK PERSON WHO ANSWERS PHONE

S1   Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is NAME and I'm calling from IFF Research. Please can I speak to [NAME]?

Respondent answers phone	1	CONTINUE
Transferred to respondent	2	CONTINUE
Hard appointment	3	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Soft Appointment	4	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Engaged	5	CALL BACK
No reply / Answer phone	16	CALL BACK
Call back during Consumer hours	17	CALL BACK
Call back during B2B hours	15	CALL BACK
Refusal	6	CLOSE
Not available in deadline	7	CLOSE
Fax Line	8	CLOSE
Business Number	10	CLOSE
Dead line	11	CLOSE
Wrong telephone number	15	CLOSE
Person no longer works here	14	CLOSE
Request reassurances	12	GO TO REASSURANCES
Request reassurance email	13	COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESS THEN CONTINUE OR MAKE APPOINTMENT (SEE APPENDIX FOR EMAIL TEXT)

S2   Good morning / afternoon, my name is NAME, calling from IFF Research, an independent market research company, on behalf of the Department for Education (DFE).

We have been commissioned by DFE to carry out a landmark new research study into the career experiences of child and family social workers.

The interview should last around 20 minutes. Would you have some time to go through the questions now?

ADD IF NECESSARY**:**

The research will improve understanding about what motivates people to enter child and family social work, why they stay or leave, and what impacts on their job satisfaction and career development. It will also help us to understand the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on these factors. We are interested in your experiences, even if you are thinking of changing your job or of leaving the profession.

We understand that your employment situation may have been affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. If this is the case, we would still like to hear about what you are doing at the moment, whether or not you are working in child and family social work.

This is the fourth of five years that the survey will be running. We have invited child and family social workers who started their ASYE in July 2020 or later to take part this year in order to ensure we capture the views of the new entrants to the sector.

All responses will be anonymous and analysed in aggregate form. No individual staff or local authorities will be identified in the reporting.

For further information you can email **SWResearch@iffresearch.com**

PROVIDE LINK TO THE PRIVACY NOTICE: www.iffresearch.com/longitudinal-study-of-child-and-family-social-workers-privacystatements

INTERVIEWER NOTE: YOU MUST GET A CLEAR 'YES', OR SIMILAR RESPONSE, TO INDICATE CONSENT TO TAKING PART

Continue	1	CONTINUE
Hard appointment	2	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Soft appointment	3	MAKE APPOINTMENT
Call back during Consumer hours	10	Call back
Call back during B2B hours	11	Call back

Refusal	4	GO TO S3
Refusal – company policy	5	GO TO S3
Refusal – taken part in recent survey	6	GO TO S3
Not available in deadline	7	THANK AND CLOSE
Request reassurances	8	GO TO REASSURANCES
Request reassurance email	9	COLLECT EMAIL ADDRESS THEN CONTINUE OR MAKE APPOINTMENT (SEE APPENDIX FOR EMAIL TEXT)

ASK IF NAMED RESPONDENT NOT ON SITE (S1=14)

S2a Do you have an alternative number we could reach NAME on?

Yes (please type in number)	1	THANK AND CLOSE (THIS BECOMES THE 'REFERRAL NUMBER')
No / Don't know	2	THANK AND CLOSE (GOES INTO UNUSABLE)

IF REFUSED (S2=4-6)

S3   Would you be willing to take part online instead?

Yes	3	CHECK EMAIL ADDRESS, CORRECT IF NEEDED, AND THANK AND CLOSE
No	4	THANK AND CLOSE

if agreed to take part (S2 =1)

S4   Before we begin, I just need to read out a quick statement based on GDPR legislation: Firstly, I want to reassure you that all of the information you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence, and that you have the right to the following:

1. A copy of your data
2. Amending your data
3. Withdrawing from the research at any point

To guarantee this, and as part of our quality control procedures, all interviews are recorded automatically.

Based on this information, are you willing to take part?

Yes	1	
No	2	THANK AND CLOSE

REASSURANCES TO USE IF NECESSARY

Your details were given to us by [INSERT LA ON SAMPLE].

If respondent wishes to confirm validity of survey or get more information about aims and objectives, they can contact:

- **MRS: Market Research Society on 0800 975 9596**
- **IFF: [name] on 0207 250 3035**

Online landing page

Thank you for your interest in this landmark national study on the career experiences of child and family social workers. Your contribution will be invaluable to the research, even if you are thinking of changing job or of leaving the profession. The research is being conducted by IFF Research, Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE).

This is the fourth of five years that the survey will be running. We have invited child and family social workers who started their ASYE in July 2020 or later to take part this year in order to ensure we capture the views of the new entrants to the sector.

We understand that your employment situation may have been affected by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. If this is the case, we would still like to hear about what you are doing at the moment, whether or not you are working in child and family social work.

For further information about the study, or to find out what happens to the survey data and how it is stored, **please click here**.

Taking part is voluntary and you may withdraw at any point. If at the end of the survey you'd like to request access to your data or have this deleted, please go to www.iffresearch.com/gdpr/ for more information. All information collected will be treated in the strictest confidence, in accordance with the Market Research Society Code of Conduct.

- If you are willing to take part please click 'Next'.

- IF INDIVIDUALISED LINK: Please note, **you can stop and start as many times as you like** and pick up where you left off. To do this you just need to use the link provided in your email invitation.

- When completing the survey, please only use the 'Next' button on the page rather than the 'Back' and 'Forward' buttons in your browser.

ASK IF ACCESSING SURVEY VIA OPEN LINK

Want to take a break or lost connection? Simply provide us with your email address below and we can send you a link to re-enter the survey at the last question you answered, so you won't have to start again from the beginning.

WRITE IN		
Prefer not to say	1	

J   Current Employment Situation

IF ONLINE DISPLAY TO ALL / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: **Please note: throughout this survey, where we refer to 'local authority' we also include Children's Trusts delivering LA Children's Services.**

ASK ALL OPEN LINK RESPONDENTS

B1b   Before we begin, could I just confirm which local authority you are currently working for? This is just to make sure we're speaking to the right people. To confirm, results will not be analysed by individual local authority.

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE SELECT FROM THE DROP-DOWN LIST.

DS: DROP DOWN LIST TO INCLUDE 'NONE OF THE ABOVE' CODE. IF 'NONE OF THE ABOVE' IS SELECTED, PLEASE THANK AND CLOSE.		
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	1	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK ALL

B1   Are you currently working in child and family social work? By this we mean any role in child and family social work, including more senior roles which do not have a direct caseload.

ADD IF NECESSARY: If you are on extended leave – such as maternity leave, or sick leave – but still on the payroll of your employer, then please count this as employed.

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE one ANSWER

IF TELEPHONE: DO NOT READ OUT. IF NO, PROMPT AS NECESSARY. SINGLE CODE.

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No – but I'm still in social work	2	GO B2 THEN ASK SECTION C
No – I am employed, but have left social work altogether	3	GO TO SECTION C
No – I am unemployed and looking for work	4	GO TO SECTION C
No – I am undertaking full-time further study. *Please note: if you were studying part-time alongside work, then please select from the relevant work option (either option 1, 2 or 3)*	5	THANK AND CLOSE
No – I am on a career break (for example, travelling, caring responsibilities etc.)	6	
No – I am doing something else (for example retired, ill-health etc.)	7	
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8	

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B5   Are you currently on your Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE)?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE one ANSWER

if telephone: Read out. single code.

Yes	1	CONTINUE
No – but completed my ASYE within the last 6 months (since June 2020)	4	CONTINUE
No – completed my ASYE longer than six months ago (before June 2020)	2	THANK AND CLOSE
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	3	THANK AND CLOSE

ASK ALL STILL IN CAFSW (B1=1) OR B1=2

B2   Which ONE of the following best applies to you?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE one ANSWER

if telephone: read out, CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES. single code.

I am employed by [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE IF CLOSED LINK AND FROM B1b IF OPEN LINK] and I am based in the local authority / Children's Trust	1
I work at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE IF CLOSED LINK AND FROM B1b IF OPEN LINK] but I am technically employed by an agency	2
I am employed by [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE IF CLOSED LINK AND FROM B1b IF OPEN LINK] but am on secondment to or based in another organisation e.g., CAHMS, NHS Trust, Social Work England or a Regional Adoption Agency	3
I am working at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE IF CLOSED LINK AND FROM B1b IF OPEN LINK on an independent / self-employed basis	4
I am employed by an organisation/company, but not/no longer by [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE IF CLOSED LINK AND FROM B1b IF OPEN LINK]	5
I am employed by an agency but not/ no longer work at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE IF CLOSED LINK AND FROM B1b (W1) IF OPEN LINK]	6
I am independent / self-employed but no longer work at [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]	9
Or are you employed on some other basis (please specify)	7
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B7   What is the main focus of your work? For example, Children in Need; Adoption; Early help.

If you work in a support or supervisory role, please select the areas in which those you support or supervise work.

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY.

if telephone: do not read out. MULTICODE.

Adoption	1
Fostering	2
Children with disabilities	3
Placements/ permanence	4
Leaving care	5
Youth offending	6
Duty/ first response / front door / MASH	7
Health	8
Education	9
Assessment	10

Child in Need/ Child Protection	11
Looked after children	14
Prevention / early help services	15
Kinship care	16
COVID-19 recovery	17
Other (please specify)	12
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	13

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B8   And how long have you worked….?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE one ANSWER in each row

if telephone: prompt as necessary. code one per row.

	Less than 6 months	**6 months to 1 year**	**1 year**	**2 to 3 years**	**4 to 5 years**	**6 to 10 years**	**More than 10 years**	IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)" Don't know / prefer not to say
As a qualified Social Worker	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
At your current employer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
In your current role, with your current employer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

B10   How many cases are allocated to you currently?

Please note, by 'case' we mean either:

- **An individual allocated to a social worker (for example a family of three siblings would be three individual cases); and/or**
- **A carer or carers allocated to a social worker for the purposes of fostering or adoption**

WRITE IN	
Not applicable: non-case-holding role	1
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF DON'T KNOW AT B10 (B10=2)

B10a Please could you estimate the number of cases allocated to you currently, using the bands below?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
21-25	5
26-29	6
30+	7
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

B11 How many hours are you <u>contracted</u> to work per week?

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: If no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.

DS: ALLOW RANGE OF 0-168 HOURS

WRITE IN	
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	1
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	2

B11a Please could estimate which of the following hourly bands you are contracted to work per week?

READ OUT: **Please round to the nearest whole (if required).**

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

1-15	1
16-20	2
21-30	3
31-35	4
36-40	5
41-45	6
46-50	7
51+	8
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	X
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	V

Ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

B12   And how often would you say you work over and above your contracted hours to keep up with your workload?

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. single code.

Never	1
Occasionally	2
Most weeks	3
All the time	4
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contract	5
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	6

DS: B14 and B15 to be displayed on one page.

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: **How many hours in a typical week do you spend doing the following…**

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: **if no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.**

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B14 **1) …Working? Please exclude any time spent travelling from your answer.**

DS: ALLOW RANGE OF 0-168 HOURS

WRITE IN	
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	1
Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF DON'T KNOW AT B14 (B14=2)

B14a Please could you estimate the number of hours you spend working in a typical week?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE ADD IF NECESSARY: **If no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.**

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

1-15	1
16-20	2
21-30	3
31-35	4
36-40	5
41-45	6
46-50	7
51+	8
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	X

Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	V

Ask all WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND/OR FAMILIES (IF (b1=1)

B15   2) Doing direct work with children and families/ carers?

WRITE IN	
Not applicable e.g., self-employed, zero-hours contracts	1
Don't know / prefer not to say	2
NA – Do not do direct work with children/ families	3

IF DON'T KNOW AT B15 (B15=2)

B15a   Please could you estimate the number of hours in a typical week you spend doing direct work with children and families / carers?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE ADD IF NECESSARY: If no week is 'typical' then please think about the last full week that you worked.

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. SINGLE CODE

0-2 hours	1
3-5 hours	2
6-10 hours	3
11-15 hours	4
16-20 hours	5
More than 20 hours	6
Not applicable	7
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8

ASK IF DO DIRECT WORK WITH FAMILIES AND HAS PROVIDED THE NUMBER OF HOURS (B15=INTEGER PROVIDED OR B15a=1-6)

B15b   And how much of this time is spent working with children and families/carers <u>face to face</u> versus working with them <u>remotely or virtually</u>?

Remote or virtual work could include contact by video call, Skype or over the telephone.

Please write in the number of hours below.

DS: ENSURE SUM OF THE TWO DOES NOT EXCEED ANSWER GIVEN AT B15/B15a

Face to face	__ hours
Remotely / virtually	__ hours
Don't know	1

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

B17   During your time at your current employer have you made use of any of the following arrangements…?

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer per row.

IF TELEPHONE: Read out. code one per row.

	Yes	No	Can't remember
Flexitime	1	2	3
Job sharing (sharing a full-time job with someone)	1	2	3
Time off in lieu (TOIL)	1	2	3
Paid overtime	1	2	3
Blended working (sharing time between home and office/field/ on visits)	1	2	3

C   Entry Route to Social Work

IF ONLINE DISPLAY TO ALL / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL: **We'd now like to understand a bit more about how you got into social work.**

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1) or recently left but still active in labour market (b1 =2,3,4)

C1   So just to start, why did you decide you wanted to embark upon a career in social work?

IF ONLINE: Please GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY

IF TELEPHONE: do not READ OUT, PROMPT AS NECESSARY. multicode.

I wanted to help people / make a difference	1
I wanted to work with children and families	2
I wanted a stable job	3
I saw it as a springboard to another career	4
I was working in a related area (e.g., a youth worker or family support worker)	5
It aligns with my political or ideological beliefs	6
I had a <u>positive</u> personal experience of social work	7
I had a <u>negative</u> personal experience of social work	8
Funding/ bursary was available for the course	9
I have a long-term commitment to social work as a career	10
I wanted a decent salary	11
Other (please specify)	12
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT"): know / prefer not to say	13

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1) or recently left but still active in labour market (b1 =2,3,4)

C2   What entry route did you take into social work …?

IF ONLINE: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as NECESSARY. MULTICODE

An undergraduate degree in social work (e.g., BSc or BA)	1
A postgraduate degree in social work (e.g., PGDip/MSc/MA)	2
The 'Step Up to Social Work' programme	3
The 'Frontline' programme	4
Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW)	5
Diploma in Social Work (DipSW)	6
Apprenticeship	9
Other (please specify)	7
Don't know / can't remember	8

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1) or recently left but still active in labour market (b1 =2,3,4)

C3 What is the name of the institution or organisation at which you were registered for your first completed social work qualification? By this we meant the qualification which allowed you to register as a qualified social worker.

TIP: Please type the name of the institution below and select from the list. If it does not appear, please type it out in full.

DS: DROP DOWN LIST TO INCLUDE CODES AT THE END FOR 'OVERSEAS INSTITUTION'	
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	1

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1) or recently left but still active in labour market (b1 =2,3,4)

C4 What classification or grade did you achieve for your <u>first</u> completed social work qualification?

PROMPT AS NECESSARY. SINGLE CODE

First class	1
2:1	2
2:2	3
3rd class	4
Unclassified	5
Distinction	6
Merit	7
Pass	8
Other (specify)	9
Don't know/ prefer not to say	10

ASK IF DID NOT DO AN UNDERGRADUATE QUALIFICATION IN SOCIAL WORK (IF CODES 2-7 AT C2 **AND NOT** CODE 1 AT C2)

C4A **What if any undergraduate subject area were you studying <u>before</u> you trained in social work?**

TIP: Please type your course below and select from the list. If it does not appear, or you studied multiple subjects, please type it out in full.

DS: ADD JACS CODES AS FOR DHLE	
DO NOT READ OUT: DON'T KNOW / PREFER NOT TO SAY	1
I DO NOT HAVE AN UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE	2

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1) or recently left but still active in labour market (b1 =2,3,4)

C5   And was your first job in social work in the area of child and family social work?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know/prefer not to say	3

Ask all (b1 =2,3,4) unless c2 = 8

C8   And thinking about your career in social work to date, how well do you think your entry route into social work prepared you for…?

IF ONLINE DISPLAY: please give one answer per row.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. code one per row.

	Very well	Quite well	Not very well	Not at all well	IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
Working in social work	1	2	3	4	5
Working in child and family social work	1	2	3	4	5

D Career History

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1) or recently left but still active in labour market (b1 =2,3,4)

D3   How long have you….

IF TELEPHONE: PROMPT AS NECESSARY. multicode.

	Less than 6 months	6 months to 1 year	1 year	2 to 3 years	4 to 5 years	6 to 10 years	More than 10 years	IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)" Don't know / prefer not to say
ASK ALL STILL IN CAFSW (B1=1) OR RECENTLY LEFT BUT STILL ACTIVE IN LABOUR MARKET (B1 =2,3,4) **Worked in child and family social work**	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

E   Overall views of employer

ASK ALL still in cafsw (B1=1)

E1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about working in child and family social work at your current employer?

IF ONLINE: PLEASE GIVE ONE ANSWER PER ROW

IF TELEPHONE: READ OUT. CODE ONE PER ROW.

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	IF TELE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
I feel loyal to my organisation	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel valued by my employer	1	2	3	4	5	6

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
I am proud to tell people that I am a child and family social worker	1	2	3	4	5	6

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

E2 Now thinking about the managers at your current employer, to what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following?

IF ONLINE: PLEASE GIVE ONE ANSWER PER ROW

IF TELEPHONE: READ OUT. CODE ONE PER ROW.

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY "DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
My manager encourages me to develop my skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
My manager motivates me to be more effective in my job	1	2	3	4	5	6
My manager is considerate of my life outside work	1	2	3	4	5	6
My manager is open to my ideas	1	2	3	4	5	6
Overall, I have confidence in the decisions made by my manager	1	2	3	4	5	6
My manager recognises when I have done my job well	1	2	3	4	5	6

I receive regular feedback on my performance	1	2	3	4	5	6
The feedback I receive helps me to improve my performance	1	2	3	4	5	6
During the COVID-19 pandemic I have been well supported by my manager	1	2	3	4	5	6

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

E3 How frequently, if at all, have you received reflective supervision since you joined your current employer?

READ OUT: Please round to the nearest whole (if required)

IF TELEPHONE: prompt as necessary. single code.

At least once every two weeks	1	ASK E4
Once every three or four weeks	2	ASK E4
Once every five or six weeks	3	ASK E4
Less frequently than every six weeks	4	ASK E4
Have not received reflective supervision since joining current employer	5	ASK E4
Don't know / prefer not to say	6	ASK E6

ask all who have received supervision (E3=1-4)

E4 How would you rate the quality of the reflective supervision you have received at your current employer since you joined?

IF TELEPHONE: read out. single code.

Very good	1
Good	2
Neither good nor poor	3
Poor	4
Very poor	5

IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	6

ASK ALL WHO THINK QUALITY OF SUPERVISION IS POOR (E5=3-4)

E5a   Why do you say that the quality of the reflective supervision you receive is poor?

IF ONLINE display: PLEASE GIVE AS MANY ANSWERS AS APPLY.

if telephone: do not read out. multicode.

DS: ROTATE CODES 1-8

My manager lacks confidence	1
The feedback I receive is not useful	2
I do not receive any/enough feedback	3
My manager is poorly prepared / does not ask the right questions	4
I do not feel my input is taken on board	5
It is not long enough / it is rushed	6
I do not feel the reflective supervision is helping me improve my skills	7
Supervision is not reflective (e.g., it is managerial, just monitoring progress)	8
Other (please specify)	9
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	10

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

E6 And to what extent do you agree or disagree that…

Please answer about your current circumstances.

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer per ROW.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. code one per row.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	IF TELE DISPLAY" (DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know

						/ prefer not to say
I am able to access the right learning and development opportunities when I need to	1	2	3	4	5	6
I have the right tools (e.g., risk assessment tools, planning tools, etc.) to do my job effectively	1	2	3	4	5	6
The IT systems and software here support me to do my job	1	2	3	4	5	6

F   Short-term career plans, barriers and enablers

Ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

F1   In terms of your career plans, which ONE of the following comes closest to where you see yourself in 12 months' time?

IF ONLINE DISPLAY: please give one answer

IF TELEPHONE: READ OUT. single code.

Working in child and family social work for a local authority – directly	1
Working in child and family social work for a local authority – via an agency	2
Working in child and family social work – in the private or voluntary sector	3
Working in social work, but outside of child and family social work	4
Working outside of social work altogether (please specify)	5
Not working at all (please specify)	6
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know/ prefer not to say	7

F10   Thinking about the past 12 months, have your career plans been influenced by your experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes	1
No	2
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know/ prefer not to say	3

Ask IF CAREER PLANS AFFECTED BY COVID (F10=1)

F11   How have your career plans have been influenced by your experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic?

MULTICODE. READ OUT IF NECESSARY.

I decided I did not want to be a social worker anymore	1
[IF EMPLOYED BY LA] I changed employer - to a different local authority/Trust	2
[IF EMPLOYED BY LA] I changed employer - to work at an agency	3
I decided to move to a different area of social work	4
I decided to relocate	5
I decided to reduce my working hours (e.g., switched to part-time working)	6
I decided to take early retirement	7
Other (specify)	8
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know/ prefer not to say	9

G Job satisfaction

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

G1   How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your current job?

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer per ROW.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. code one per row.

	Very satisfied	**Fairly satisfied**	**Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied**	**Fairly dissatisfied**	**Very dissatisfied**	IF TELE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)":

						Don't know / prefer not to say
The sense of achievement you get from your work	1	2	3	4	5	6
The scope for using your own initiative	1	2	3	4	5	6
The amount of influence you have over your job	1	2	3	4	5	6
The extent to which you feel challenged	1	2	3	4	5	6
The opportunity to develop your skills in your job	1	2	3	4	5	6
The amount of pay you receive	1	2	3	4	5	6
Your job security	1	2	3	4	5	6
Public respect for the sort of work you do	1	2	3	4	5	6

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

G2   And to what extent do you agree with the statement: "Overall, I find my current job satisfying"

IF TELEPHONE: READ OUT AND SINGLE CODE

Strongly agree	1
Agree	2
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	4
Strongly disagree	5
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	6

H   Workplace well-being

The next few questions are about wellbeing in the workplace. The research team will be analysing the data anonymously and so will not be following up individual responses.

ask all still in cafsw (B1=1)

H1   How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

IF ONLINE: Please give one answer per ROW.

IF TELEPHONE: read out. code one per row.

	Strongly agree	**Agree**	**Neither agree nor disagree**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	IF TELE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say
My overall workload is too high	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel I am being asked to fulfil too many different roles in my job	1	2	3	4	5	6
I feel stressed by my job	1	2	3	4	5	6

IF AGREE STRONGLY OR AGREE THAT FEEL STRESSED (H1_3=1 or 2)

H2   What do you feel is causing this stress?

IF ONLINE: please select all that apply

IF TELEPHONE: DO NOT read out.

ASK IF multicode at H2

H2a   And which of these do you feel is the ONE main thing that is causing this stress?

IF ONLINE: please select ONE ANSWER

IF TELEPHONE:

prompt with answers from h2 if needed. single code.

DS: Please only show options selected at H2.

	H2	H2a
I have too much paperwork	1	1
I have too many cases	2	2
Insufficient quality of management/ support	3	3
Working culture/ practices	4	4
Having to make emotional or difficult decisions	5	5
Insufficient time for direct work with children and families	6	6
High staff turnover in my team/ area of practice	7	7
Lack of administrative/ business support	11	11
Lack of resources to support families	12	12
Other (please specify)	8	8
Nothing in particular, it is simply a stressful job	9	9
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	10	10

I Reasons for leaving / coming back

IF ANSWERED F1=4-6: **You mentioned that in 12 months' time you think you'll be [INSERT F1 ANSWER].**

ask all left / considering leaving CAFSW (B1=2/3/4 or F1=4-6)

I1   Why [B1=2-4: did you leave] [F1=4-6: are you considering leaving] child and family social work?

IF ONLINE: please select all that apply

IF TELEPHONE: DO NOT read out. MULTICODE

ASK ALL MULTICODE AT I1

I1a   And what is your ONE main reason for [B1=2-4: leaving [F1=4-6: considering leaving] child and family social work?

IF ONLINE: please select one answer only

IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from I1 if needed. single code.

DISPLAY ANSWERS FROM I1 (WITH DON'T KNOW)

	I1	I2
It is just not the right type of job for me	1	1
It is not compatible with family or relationship commitments	2	2
I have found one or more of my colleagues difficult to work with	3	3
I did not/am not making the best use of the skills or experience I have	4	4
I don't like the culture of local authority social work	5	5
My fixed term contract ended/ends soon	6	6
IF F1=6: **I will be retiring / retired**	7	7
The amount of paperwork	8	8
The high caseload	9	9
The pay / benefits package	10	10
The working hours in general	11	11
Redundancy	12	12
I am taking a career break	15	15
I am temporarily working outside of child and family social work but expecting to return	16	16
Due to impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic	14	14
I have started/am starting a family	17	17
Other (please specify)	13	13
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	X	X

I1This question was deleted

ask all STAYING IN SOCIAL WORK BUT LEFT / CONSIDERING leaving LA B2=5, 6, 7, 9

I2   Why did you leave [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]?

IF ONLINE: please select all that apply

IF TELEPHONE: DO NOT read out. MULTICODE

ASK ALL MULTICODE AT I2

I2a   And what is your ONE main reason for leaving [INSERT LA FROM SAMPLE]?

IF ONLINE: please select one answer only

IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from I2 if needed. single code.

DISPLAY ANSWERS FROM I2 (WITH DON'T KNOW)

	I2	I2a
I have found one or more of my colleagues difficult to work with	1	1
I feel I have learnt all that I can from working here	2	2
I would like to try working for a different local authority	3	3
I would like to try working for a different type of organisation altogether	4	4
I am not making the best use of the skills or experience here	5	5
I don't like the social work culture here	6	6
My fixed term contract ends soon	7	7
I am relocating	8	8
I am retired / retiring	9	9
The amount of paperwork I have to do	10	10
The high caseload	11	11
The pay / benefits package	12	12
The working hours in general	13	13
Due to impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (please specify)	15	15
Other (please specify)	14	14
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)" Don't know / prefer not to say	X	X

ask all left / considering leaving CAFSW (B1=2/3/4 or F1=4-6)

I4   [IF LEFT B1=2/3/4: And is there anything that might encourage you to return to child and family social work in future?] [IF CONSIDERING LEAVING (F1=4-6): And is there anything that might encourage you to remain in child and family social work?]

prompt as necessary. multicode.

ASK IF MULTICODE AT I4

I4a   And which ONE of these would you say would be the main thing that might encourage you to [B1=2-4: return to] [F1=4-6: remain in] child and family social work in future?

IF ONLINE: please select one answer only

IF TELEPHONE prompt with answers from I4 if needed. single code.

	I4	I4A
Flexi-time	1	1
Job-sharing	2	2
The ability to take time off in lieu (TOIL)	3	3
The ability to work from home	4	4
A more manageable workload in terms of caseload	5	5
A more manageable workload in terms of administration / paperwork	6	6
Higher pay	7	7
Other financial incentives such as overtime pay	8	8
Subsidised childcare	9	9
Better/ more promotion/ career progression opportunities	10	10
Better/ more training opportunities	11	11
Better physical working environment	12	12
Better working culture	13	13
Better IT systems and software	14	14
Other (please specify)	15	15
DS EXCLUSIVE CODE: No, nothing would encourage me to return to/ stay in social work	16	16
Don't know / prefer not to say	17	17

ASK ALL

On a separate note, thinking about your experiences of the ASYE programme to date…

I6   **How effective or ineffective have you found the ASYE programme in supporting you to make the transition from training to practice?**

Very effective	1
Effective	2
Neither effective nor ineffective	3

Ineffective	4
Very ineffective	5
Don't know / prefer not to say	6

ASK IF I6=4,5

I7   **Why have you found the ASYE programme ineffective?**

WRITE IN

Don't know / prefer not to say	1

J Demographics

IF TELEPHONE READ OUT TO ALL, IF ONLINE DISPLAY TO ALL: **We'd like to end by asking you a few questions about yourself, to help us in our analysis.**

ask all

J1   **What is your age?**

DS: SET UPPER RANGE 99

WRITE IN AGE

Prefer not to say	1

ASK IF PREFER NOT TO DISCLOSE EXACT AGE (J1=1)

J1a   **Please can you tell us which of the following age bands you fall into?**

SINGLECODE.

Under 25 years	1
25 – 34 years	2
35 – 44 years	3
45 – 54 years	4

55 – 64 years	5
65 years and over	6
Prefer not to say	7

ask all

J2   Outside of work, do you have any care or childcare responsibilities?

IF TELEPHONE: IF 'YES' PROMPT FOR CATEGORIES. MULTICODE OK

Yes: for school-aged child/children	1
Yes: for pre-school aged child/children	2
Yes: for child/ children with disabilities	3
Yes: caring for other family member or friends	4
No	5
Don't know / prefer not to say	6

IF ONLINE DISPLAY / IF TELEPHONE READ OUT: **The next few questions are about your gender, ethnicity and whether you have a disability or long-term health condition. You can refuse to answer any or all of these questions.**

ask all

J3   What is your gender?

Male	1
Female	2
Other (please specify)	3
Prefer not to say	4

ask all

J4   Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?

Yes	1
No	2
Don't know / prefer not to say	3

Ask all

J5   What is your ethnic group?

IF ONLINE: PLEASE GIVE ONE ANSWER.

IF TELEPHONE SINGLE CODE. PROMPT AS NECESSARY.

WHITE English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	1
WHITE Irish	2
WHITE Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3
WHITE Any other White background (please specify)	4
MIXED/MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS White and Black Caribbean	5
MIXED/MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS White and Black African	6
MIXED/MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS White and Asian	7
MIXED/MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background (please specify)	8
ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH Indian	10
ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH Pakistani	11
ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH Bangladeshi	12
ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH Chinese	13
Any other Asian background (please specify)	14
BLACK / AFRICAN / CARIBBEAN / BLACK BRITISH African	15
BLACK / AFRICAN / CARIBBEAN / BLACK BRITISH Caribbean	16
BLACK / AFRICAN / CARIBBEAN / BLACK BRITISH Any other Black / African / Caribbean background (please specify)	17
OTHER ETHNIC GROUP Arab	18
OTHER ETHNIC GROUP Any other ethnic group (please specify)	19
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT"): Don't know / Prefer not to say	20

K Recontact

ask all

K1 Would you be willing to take part in a follow-up survey in one year's time? This will involve doing a similar – but much shorter – survey to find out what you are doing then and whether your circumstances and views have changed.

ADD AS NECESSARY: Following up will help us to build a picture of what influences social worker's career experiences and decisions over time. We would still like people to take part next year even if they have left or are thinking of leaving the profession.

Yes *(am willing to be re-contacted for the follow-up survey)*	1
No *(am not willing to be re-contacted for the follow-up survey)*	2

ASK ALL

K2 We will also be conducting some follow-up telephone interviews in the next couple of months which will cover these issues in more depth. The interviews will last around 45 minutes and you will be given £20 voucher as a thank you. Would you be willing to help us with this?

Yes *(can re-contact me for the qualitative research)*	1
No *(cannot re-contact me for the qualitative research)*	2

ASK IF AGREE TO RECONTACT AT K1 or K2

K3 Thank you very much. Could we just take your name and home contact details? This will only be used for the purposes of this research and is just in case your work details change.

WRITE IN FIRST NAME AND SURNAME	
WRITE IN HOME EMAIL ADDRESS	
Refused	X
WRITE IN HOME TELEPHONE NUMBER (LANDLINE OR MOBILE)	
Refused	X

Thanks for taking part and supporting this research, we really appreciate your time.

Appendix 4: Guide for qualitative follow-up interviews

DfE Longitudinal Survey of Child and Family Social Workers: qualitative follow-up topic guide, Wave 4

This topic guide is intended to be used in telephone/video-conferencing interviews lasting up to 45 minutes with a range of practitioners:

The aims of the interviews are to: 1) to explore the impact of the pandemic on your experience of children and families social work 2) to explore blended and flexible working in the context of family responsibilities and 3) to consider experiences of supervision and leadership and their impact on career decisions.

Questioning and probing will be framed to ensure we understand participants' situations as they view them. Researchers will adapt the approach, as much as possible, to suit the needs of each participant. The prompts provided are not exhaustive, but rather indicate the types of content we would expect to be covered – this may vary across participants with different characteristics or experiences. Refinements may be made to the guide content, iteratively, as we conduct interviews.

Researchers will review their participant's survey responses in advance of the interview, and tailor prompts and probes in relation to those findings.

- **Interviewer and IFF introduction / Academic institution and background:** Good morning / afternoon. My name is <NAME> and I work at IFF Research / Man Met / Salford. We have been commissioned by the Department for Education, to better understand the experiences of local authority child and family social workers in order to explore recruitment, retention and progression issues in the sector.

- As you are already aware, the interview will take around 45 minutes and we would like to thank you for taking part by offering you a £20 Amazon voucher.

Before we begin, I just need to read out a few quick statements and gain your explicit permission to take part based on GDPR legislation.

- Firstly, you don't have to answer any of the questions. You are welcome to skip any questions or stop the interview at any point.

- It's important to note that in these questions we're looking to explore areas of interest relating to ethnicity and racial identity. If you feel your ability to answer these questions is better enabled at a different time/ place we're happy to reschedule.

- You're encouraged to contact the mental health charity Mind if you feel you need support on any of the issues raised in the discussion today. More details on this are provided at the end of the interview.

- **MUST READ:**

Please be assured that anything you say during the interview will be treated in the strictest confidence and results will be anonymised in any reporting so that they cannot be linked back to you.

- **MUST READ MRS Code of Conduct:**

IFF Research operates under the strict guidelines of the Market Research Society's Code of Conduct. Only the core members of the research team will have access to any of your details. We will not pass any of your personal details on to the Department for Education or any other companies and all the information we collect will be kept in the strictest confidence and used for research purposes only.

- **MUST READ:**

You have the right to have a copy of your data, change your data, or withdraw from the research at any point. You can find out more information about your rights under the new data protection regulations by going to iffresearch.com/gdpr. We can also email this to you if you'd like.

- **MUST READ:**

I would like to record our conversation. The recording will only be used for our analysis purposes and may be transcribed; all recordings and transcripts/notes will be stored securely and deleted after 12 months. Are you happy for me to record the conversation?

Yes – Continue

No - CONTINUE Take detailed notes

Please can you confirm that you have understood the nature of the research and that you are happy to consent to taking part?

Is that OK?

Yes- Continue

No – Thank and close

Don't know – Read assurances

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section One: Current Position

We'd like to start by establishing if anything has changed in relation to your role since you took part in the wave 4 survey.

1. When you completed the W4 survey in Autumn 2021, you told us that you were <W4 SURVEY B1 RESPONSE>. What, if anything, has changed since you completed the survey?
   - Details of current role – confirm job title, explore meaning of job title, responsibilities, case holding, staff supervision, permanent member of staff/agency etc.
   - If moved organisation/changed team or job - New job (probe for details of new post, role, remuneration, location)
   - Changes in current job (e.g., hours, reorganisation, increase/decrease in caseload, management/team changes)
   - Personal circumstances (e.g., moving house, sickness, caring responsibilities)
   - Impact of ethnicity/culture on decision to change role/organisation

2. This year, our interview is looking at social workers' perceptions of ethnicity on experiences of their organisation, daily work, and career prospects.
   - In your telephone interview you described your ethnicity as XXXXX, could you confirm that this is correct? Is there a more accurate way you would like to describe your ethnicity for the benefit of this interview?
   - Could you tell us about the ethnic diversity of the community you work in?
   - In relation to your own ethnic identity, what is your experience of working as a social worker in this community?

3. Can you tell us about the ethnic diversity of your employing organisation? Thinking about your own ethnic identity, what is your experience as an employee within this organisation/ working as a social worker? (for example; language barriers/differences, religious diversity, inclusivity). Do you feel that this has changed recently?

Section Two: The impact of the pandemic on your experience of children and families social work in your organisation

Looking to the future, how do you think the pandemic is changing children and families social work in your organisation?

- complexity of work (give examples)
- caseloads
- ways of working e.g., remote working, digital platforms
- use of agency staff
- statutory requirements.

Focusing on the future, do you think the pandemic has impacted your attitude/perspective on:

- The importance of job satisfaction
- Managing stress/ work life balance

- Career planning & ambitions

What, if any, actions have your local authority taken to support you during this time?

- How have these actions impacted your overall job satisfaction/ morale and/or stress?

Do you think your ethnic/racial identity has affected your experience of working through the pandemic/ been taken into consideration in any support that was offered in response to COVID?

- For example: in relation to increased risk for people from Black and minority ethnic groups, (vaccination preferences).

Section Three: Flexible and blended approaches to working

Many LAs have introduced flexible/blended approaches to working in response to the pandemic.

- What has your experience of this been?
- Would you like to see any of these actions maintained? If so, which ones and why?
- What impact has it had on practice/ children and families?
- Any impact on your job satisfaction/ career choices?

We are interested in the impact of family/personal circumstances (for example starting a family, caring responsibilities, health issues) on your career choices, including actual or anticipated changes in these circumstances.

- How have such circumstances affected your work/career to date?
- How do you think they might affect you in the future?
- If there any specific aspects of family/personal circumstances associated with your ethnic identity, how have these affected your work/career to date? (for example, extended periods of leave for religious festivals, visits to families for special occasions)
- How would blended/flexible working impact on this?

Agency Work

What is your personal experience/ knowledge of agency work? (if agency experience, ask how long in that role).

Agency only

Do you think that more flexible working arrangements in local authorities would reduce the need for agency staff?

What factors influenced your decision to work for an agency? Would you consider moving to LA? Why/why not?

Do you have access to the same learning and development opportunities as permanent LA workers?

* **Local Authority worker***

What factors influenced your decision to work for a LA? Would you consider moving to agency work? Why/why not?

All

What impact do you think that the role of agency workers has on children and families social work in your organisation?

Section Four: Leadership, Supervision and Career Development

We would like to explore your experiences of leadership in your organisation.

- Can you tell us what good leadership means to you?
- Do you feel that you have good leadership in your organisation? Give examples?
- How have your perceptions changed because of COVID?
- Do you feel like the leadership in your organisation promote equity of opportunity for staff?
- Do you think ethnicity impacts on experiences of leadership, supervision, and career prospects/development in your organisation? In what ways?

What is your experience of supervision in your organisation?

- Is it regular,
- is it given priority,
- is it reflective,
- is it about forward planning.
- how could it be improved?
- does supervision cover issues of staff diversity, inclusion and equity of opportunity? Would you feel able to raise/discuss these?

Can you tell us what your career intentions are over the next 12 months?

- If you are intending to stay in your current post, what are the reasons for this?
- If considering leaving current LA what are your reasons? What would encourage you to remain?

- If agency worker – why have you chosen agency work rather than a permanent LA post? What would encourage you to move from agency to a permanent post in a LA?
- If you are considering leaving CF social work altogether, what are your reasons? What would encourage you to remain?

Section Five: Additional Information

We are interested in understanding the impact of ethnicity on social worker's experiences of their employer, daily work and career progression. In relation to your ethnic identity, is there anything that hasn't been covered that you would like to add about how this impacts your experience as a social worker?

SIGNPOSTING SUPPORT IF NEEDED:

Support for mental health/stress:

Mind: [Home | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems](https://www.mind.org.uk)
https://www.mind.org.uk

Information/support line: 0300 123 3393

We would like to send you a £20 Amazon e-voucher to say thank you for taking part.

- Ask for email / postal address so we can deliver it to them

- Explain that the processing of incentives is done through the IFF accounts team and it can take a couple of weeks for their vouchers to arrive.

Amazon E Voucher

Email address:

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. Would you be willing for us to call you back if we need to clarify any information?

Yes

No

IF CONSENT TO RECONTACT

And could I just check, is the number that I called you on today the best number to reach you?

Yes

No- write in number

And what is the best email address to reach you on?

Write in email address:

No- refused to answer:

IF NEEDED: **You also have a right to lodge a complaint with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) and you can do so by calling their helpline on 0303 123 1113.**

Finally, I would just like to confirm that this interview has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct. Thank you very much for your help today.

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE INTERVIEW

I declare that this survey has been carried out under IFF instructions and within the rules of the MRS Code of Conduct.

Interviewer signature:

Date:

Finish time:

Interview Length:

Department for Education

For any enquiries regarding this publication, contact us at:
CSC.RESEARCH@education.gov.uk or www.education.gov.uk/contactus

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