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Department
for Education

Longitudinal study of local authority child and family social workers (Wave 5)

Research report

July 2023

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Government
Social Research

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Executive Summary

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 (CFSW) by tracking individuals over a five-year period.

In Wave 1, 5,621 local authority (LA) child and family social workers in England took part in the survey between November 2018 and March 2019, comprising almost one in six of local authority child and family social workers in England.

This report covers all five annual waves of the survey, investigating trends over time, with a focus on the latest period of fieldwork (Wave 5). Wave 5 fieldwork consisted of 1,283 completed surveys conducted between September and November 2022 (for the main survey) and a further 245 completed surveys with newly qualified child and family social workers who were doing or had recently completed their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

The main survey sample constitutes of a starting sample established at Wave 1. This enables longitudinal analysis of respondents who have completed all five waves of the research. Also at each wave, ASYE respondents who completed the previous wave are invited to take part in the main survey. However, because these respondents joined the main survey after Wave 1, they are not included in the longitudinal sample.

Analysis within this report is based on a wave-on-wave snapshot of the main survey findings for each wave. Chapter 2 focuses specifically on the longitudinal findings, based on respondents who have completed every wave of the research.

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

As we progress through the five waves of research, as expected, we see a steady decline in the proportion of the starting sample working in local authority child and family social work (including agency), 81% at Wave 5, down from 98% at Wave 1. Of the 19% that were no longer in local authority child and family social work at Wave 5, they were most commonly still working in child and family social work but just not at a local authority (10%), the second most common movement was into retirement (5%).

Of those still working in child and family social work across all five waves of the study, 32% had moved to a higher job grade between Wave 1 and Wave 5. Around one in five social

workers at Wave 5 had been promoted in the last 12 months (22%), also to be expected as the sample develops throughout their career.

At Wave 5, 16% of the child and family social workers were employed via an agency. Better pay was the most commonly cited factor for moving into agency work, cited by 60% as a contributing factor and 45% as the main factor, significantly more so when compared to Wave 4, which might in part be an impact of the increased cost of living.

Workplace well-being

Across all five waves, around three-quarters of social workers (75% in Wave 5) reported working over their contracted hours either 'all the time' or 'most weeks' to keep up with their workload. The mean number of cases reported by those in case holding roles also remained consistent across the waves (19 at Wave 5), however the majority (61%) felt that the number of hours spent on each case had increased over the last five years. The main reason given for this was an increase in the severity of issues experienced by children and families (69%).

The proportion of contracted hours spent working directly with children and families has remained stable over time (28% at Wave 5). At Wave 5, social workers reported spending more than half of their time (an average of 59%) completing case-related paperwork – this was a new question in this wave.

The proportions of social workers reporting that they felt stressed by their job, their workload is too high, and they are asked to fulfil too many roles in their job have all increased significantly over time, reaching 65%, 63% and 59% respectively in Wave 5 (compared with 51%, 51% and 47% at Wave 1).

Views on employer, line manager and working environment

Across all five waves, feelings of loyalty to their employer have declined (66% at Wave 5 compared with 71% at Wave 1). However, the proportion feeling valued by their employer has remained fairly stable and was higher at Wave 5 (59%) than Wave 1 (54%).

In the last 2 waves there has been a noticeable reduction in the proportion agreeing that their manager encourages them to develop their skills (71% compared with 76% at Wave 1) and that they receive regular feedback on performance (65% at Wave 5 compared with 69% at Wave 1).

There had also been a reduction at Wave 5, compared to all previous years, in the proportion who feel they have the right tools to do their job effectively (63%) and that IT systems and software support them to do their job (46%). This compares with 72% and 50% respectively at Wave 1.

There are indications that the negative impact of Covid-19 on workplace wellbeing has reduced compared to the height of the pandemic. In particular, social workers at Wave 5 were less likely to say that Covid-19 had worsened relationships with children and families (32% compared with 44% at Wave 3) or worsened relationships with colleagues (50% compared with 59% at Wave 3). However, there was an increase at Wave 5 in the proportion who felt that the aftermath of Covid-19 has increased the complexity of cases (82% compared with 68% at Wave 3).

Job satisfaction

Across all waves, the majority of social workers (67% in Wave 5) find their job satisfying, however satisfaction levels have fallen from 75% at Wave 1.

There has also been a decrease in levels of satisfaction with the sense of achievement social workers get from their work (73% in Wave 5 compared with 83% in Wave 1), the opportunity to develop skills (65% vs. 72%), and the perception of public respect for the work they do (21% vs. 25%). In addition to this, satisfaction with the amount of pay they receive has decreased in Wave 5 (48%) from 56% at Wave 4 and 61% at Wave 3, returning to satisfaction levels seen at Wave 1 (49%). The Wave 5 finding is likely to be influenced by higher inflation and associated cost of living issues.

Satisfaction levels with job security have also fallen in Wave 5 (79%) compared to Wave 4 (84%), however they remain higher than levels seen at Wave 1 (75%).

Short-term career plans

Across waves, the majority (84% in Wave 5) 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.

At Wave 5, the most commonly cited reasons given by those who were considering leaving local authority child and family social work in the next 12 months were high caseload (49%), the working hours in general (45%), the amount of paperwork (37%) and dislike of the working culture (32%). When combining factors related to overwork, such as the high caseload and the volume of paperwork, this is the most common single main reason for wanting to leave (34%) followed by 'it's just not the right type of job for me' (14%) and personal reasons (12%). The single main factor that would encourage these social workers to remain was a more manageable workload in terms of caseload (42% at Wave 5). Recently, higher pay has become more important as the main factor that would encourage people to stay (17% at Wave 5, compared with 8% at Wave 4).

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 59% in Wave 5, was that they did not like the working culture of local authority social work. This was also the most common single main reason (35%) followed by a combination of factors relating to overwork (33%).

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 in the next five years (19% at Wave 5). When those who had left child and family social work were asked what might encourage them to return to the profession, three in ten (29% at Wave 5) said a more manageable caseload and one-quarter (26%) said that nothing would.

ASYE entrants

The profile of new ASYE entrants has remained similar across each of the five years, with the exception of an increasing proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The proportions of ASYE social workers who felt stressed by their job (58% at Wave 5), that they were being asked to fulfil too many roles (45% at Wave 5) or that their workload is too high (40%) have not changed significantly since the previous wave.

Across all five years, the majority of ASYEs were satisfied with their job overall (75% in Wave 5) and most felt that their ASYE had prepared them well to work in child and family social work. The majority planned to remain working in child and family social work for a local authority directly in 12 months' time (72% in Wave 5). However, this represents a decrease from 80% of ASYEs at Wave 1 who thought they would remain working for a local authority directly and there has been an increase in the proportion who see themselves working for an agency in 12 months' time (11% in Wave 5 compared with 3% in Wave 1).

Conclusions

The majority of child and family social workers plan to continue working in the profession in 12 months' time, although an increased proportion at Wave 5 are considering moving into agency work (including among ASYEs), where the appeal has consistently been higher pay (and to a lesser extent, increased flexibility). This appeal seems to have increased and the qualitative interviews suggest this may be influenced by heightened cost of living pressures at Wave 5 compared with previous waves.

The survey has consistently found similar reasons for leaving or considering leaving social work over the waves, and the main factors that would encourage child and family social workers who were thinking of leaving to stay are: a more manageable caseload

(factoring in complexity, not just the number of cases), a better (more supportive) working culture, higher pay, and less paperwork. The qualitative research explored social workers' views about the challenges and opportunities facing their profession in the future. While there was a strong sense that some pressures have intensified, interviewees also provided examples of what they regarded as positive strategies to make better use of experienced social workers, to broaden opportunities for career progression through more senior practitioner routes, and to support and develop less experienced staff.

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 final year (Wave 5) 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 5 of the survey are compared with Wave 1 and Wave 4 findings throughout this report.

The main survey sample constitutes of a starting sample established at Wave 1. A 'top-up' sample of social workers who completed their Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) the preceding year, and who completed the ASYE survey, were invited to take part in the main survey from Wave 3 onwards. However, because these respondents joined the main survey after Wave 1, they are not included in the longitudinal sample.

Analysis within this report is based on a wave-on-wave snapshot of the main survey findings for each wave. There is a separate chapter (Chapter 2) that focuses specifically on the longitudinal findings, based on respondents who have completed every wave of the research.

Because the nature of this sample is different to the wave-on-wave findings (which involve the addition of new entrants to the profession each year as they complete their ASYE), these findings present a distinct picture of the experience of a cohort of child and family social workers across the five years of the study.

The Wave 5 survey was conducted between September and November 2022 and the qualitative research in December 2022 and January 2023. Some specific questions were added at Wave 3 to measure the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which were repeated at Waves 4 and 5, reflecting that the working (and personal) lives of many child and family social workers were still different to what they had been pre-pandemic.

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 5 of the study, before discussing the structure of the report.

Background

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.

For the purposes of the study, a child and family social worker is defined as a qualified social worker registered with Social Work England (SWE) or previously with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), working in a local authority or Children's Trust 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 5 of the study comprised two components:

1. A longitudinal mixed-methods online and telephone survey of child and family social workers. Wave 5, conducted between September and November 2022, comprised two surveys:
 - Wave 5 longitudinal survey: all respondents who completed the Wave 4 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 4 and agreed to recontact were added to the sample for the Wave 5 longitudinal survey. This means that the sample at Wave 5 includes those who were on an ASYE in Waves 1 – 4. Wave 5 ASYEs took part in the ASYE survey and analysed separately to the main sample.
 - ASYE survey: this survey consisted of social workers doing their ASYE, who started in this role between July 2021 and June 2022. This window was specified to avoid picking up ASYE social workers who had already taken part in the survey at Wave 4.
2. Forty follow-up qualitative telephone or video-conferencing interviews (e.g., via Microsoft Teams or Zoom) were conducted with social workers in a range of job roles, working in child protection (CP) and ‘other’ practice areas, and including a small number of interviews with agency workers. In this final round of qualitative interviews, social workers were asked to discuss three key areas of their work, namely the challenges and opportunities for practice, both now and in the next twelve months, administration and recording, and the role of experienced social workers.

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 / Children’s 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 5).

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 5 survey comprised social workers who were recruited through this method, who completed the Wave 4 survey and consented to being contacted to take part in the next wave. Wave 5 respondents also included a small number of people who had last taken part in the survey at Wave 3, and at that point had declined to be recontacted for Wave 4 but given permission to be recontacted at Wave 5. 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 5, but other questions, such as entry routes into the profession, were removed as there was no need to ask these again. In Wave 5, some of 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, as well as new questions on how much time social workers spend on paperwork and learning / development, what areas of paperwork are the most burdensome and why, and views on whether time spent per case has increased over the past five years and why.

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 5 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 be recontacted 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 be recontacted were added to the main sample at Wave 5 and invited to complete the Wave 5 survey.

Response rates

The sample outcomes and response rates for Wave 5, and for the ASYE supplementary survey, are shown in Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3. The overall response rate for the Wave 5 follow-up survey was 73% of those who had agreed to be recontacted at Wave 4 - across both online and telephone modes (including respondents from the Wave 4 ASYE survey who agreed to recontact). For the Wave 5 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 five waves of the main survey are displayed in Table 1.1.

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

Table 1.1 Response rates and recontact rates (Wave 1 - Wave 5)

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5
Starting sample	21,000	4,597	3,347	2,435	1,751
Online (n)	4,177	1,701	1,284	1,017	870
Online response rate (RR)	20%	38%	38%	42%	49%
Telephone top-up	1,411	1,601	956	588	413
Total response	5,588	3,302	2,240	1,605	1,283
% agreeing to recontact for next wave	82%	95%	98%	96%	n/a
Overall RR (as % of starting sample at each wave)	27%	72%	67%	66%	73%

Table 1.2 Responses by local authority region and Ofsted rating (Wave 5 survey)

		Online <i>[valid emails provided]</i> n	Online <i>[valid emails provided]</i> %	Telephone <i>[approached via telephone]</i> n	Telephone <i>[approached via telephone]</i> %	Total response <i>[Online and telephone]</i> n	Total response rate <i>[Online and telephone]</i> %
Overall		870	49%	413	24%	1,283	73%
Region	North East	62	46%	39	29%	101	75%
	North West	69	48%	33	23%	102	71%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	82	57%	23	16%	105	72%
	East Midlands	87	53%	35	21%	122	74%
	West Midlands	70	48%	36	24%	106	72%
	East of England	114	50%	62	27%	176	77%
	South East	139	51%	71	26%	210	77%
	South West	98	60%	35	21%	133	82%
	Greater London	149	49%	79	26%	228	75%
Ofsted	Outstanding	147	51%	79	28%	220	77%
	Good	351	58%	135	22%	460	76%
	Requires improvement	290	51%	152	27%	416	73%
	Inadequate	82	37%	47	21%	169	76%

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

		Sampled re- sponses: 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
		<i>[valid emails pro- vided]</i> <i>n</i>	<i>[valid emails provided]</i> <i>%</i>	<i>[approached via telephone]</i> <i>n</i>	<i>[approached via telephone]</i> <i>%</i>	<i>[Online and telephone]</i> <i>n</i>	<i>[as % of starting sample]</i>	Online	Total ASYE responses
Overall		63	13%	49	14%	112	22%	133	245
Region	North East	5	11%	2	5%	7	15%	13	20
	North West	16	12%	11	10%	27	19%	13	40
	Yorkshire and the Humber	10	13%	4	13%	14	18%	19	33
	East Midlands	0	0%	4	0%	4	25%	8	12
	West Midlands	2	5%	6	23%	8	21%	10	18
	East of England	0	0%	5	31%	5	28%	3	8
	South East	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	26	26
	South West	4	12%	2	7%	6	18%	19	25
	Greater London	22	21%	19	24%	41	36%	22	63
Ofsted	Outstanding	5	12%	1	6%	6	14%	16	22
	Good	19	12%	21	20%	40	24%	57	97
	Requires improvement	25	12%	22	13%	47	22%	41	88
	Inadequate	8	9%	3	6%	11	13%	19	30

Sample characteristics and weighting

The profile of the Wave 5 participants was largely in line with both previous waves, which in turn was similar to the population statistics in the DfE workforce data collection¹. Table A.7 in the technical appendix gives a full breakdown of achieved sample in Wave 5 compared with 2018 workforce population statistics². 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. As in Wave 4, the sample was also weighted by ethnicity (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 5 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 in Wave 3. Of the 2,240 respondents who completed the Wave 3 survey, 756 (34%) did not participate in Wave 4. Of the 1,605 who completed the Wave 4 survey, 554 (35%) did not participate in Wave 5. Over the course of the study, the final achieved sample at Wave 5 (including additional entrants from ASYE top-up waves who transferred into the main survey from Wave 3 onwards), was 23% of the achieved sample at Wave 1.

The structure of this report

The rest of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the key findings for the 1,051 people who took part in all five waves of the survey and for whom **longitudinal** analysis is possible.
- Chapter 3 looks at the **profile of who is still working in local authority child**

¹ [DfE Statistics: children's social work workforce](#)

² [DfE Children's social work workforce 2018](#)

- 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 4 focuses on child and family social workers' **working hours, caseloads and workplace wellbeing** including the amount of time spent on direct work with children and families and on paperwork per week, and the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 on workplace wellbeing;
 - Chapter 5 details child and family social workers' **views on their employer, line manager, and working environment** including the ongoing impacts of Covid-19;
 - Chapter 6 explores **job satisfaction and career progression** in child and family social work;
 - Chapter 7 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 8 looks at child and family social workers' **reasons for leaving social work and what influenced this decision**, among those who have left the profession since Wave 4 and over time;
 - Chapter 9 focuses on the **experiences of current ASYEs**, comparing their views with those of ASYEs in previous waves;
 - Chapter 10 explores some of the qualitative findings around **perceived challenges and opportunities** for child and family social work in the next 12 months; and
 - Chapter 11 highlights the **key conclusions** from 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 5 and Wave 4, while a double asterisk (**) indicates a statistically significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

The qualitative findings are illustrated by anonymised quotes, which are attributed by job role and whether or not the interviewee worked in child protection (CP) or a different area of practice (Other).

2. Longitudinal analysis: key findings for social workers who took part in all five waves of the survey

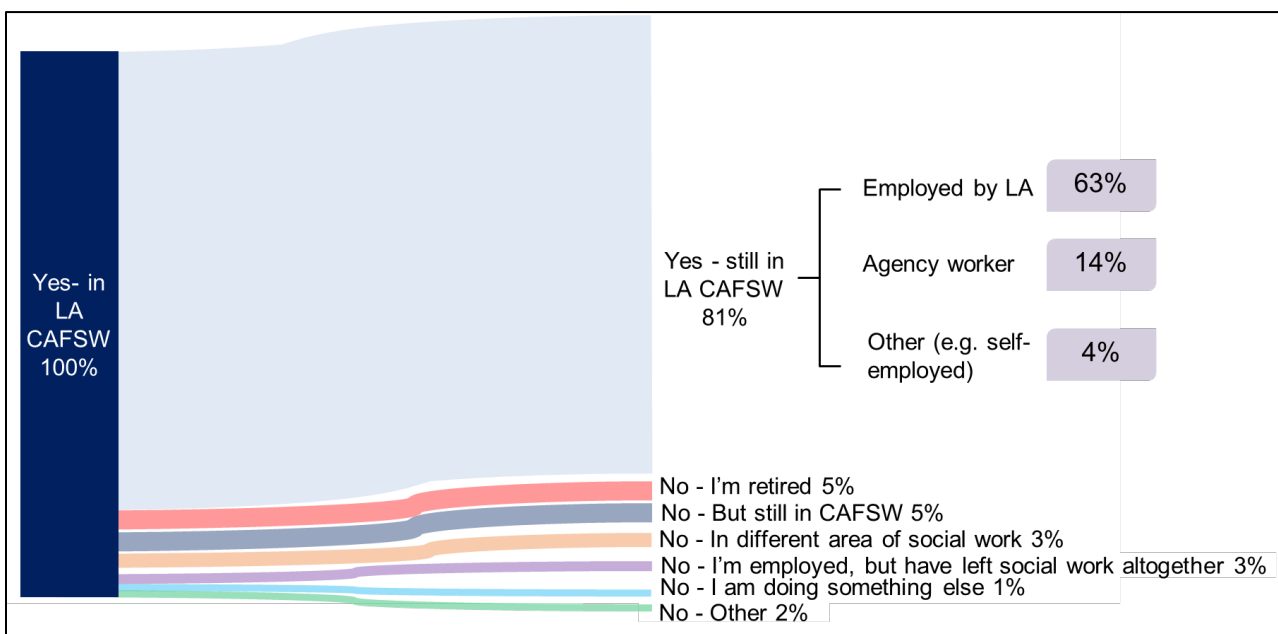
This chapter focuses on changes across time for the 1,051 people who have taken part in every wave of the survey (Wave 1 to Wave 5). The nature of this sample differs from the cross-sectional analysis across waves covered in the rest of the report, because it is not being ‘topped up’ by newer entrants to the profession.

Longitudinal data includes the same group of people over time. Unlike trackers where there is no way to tell to what extent changes are impacted by a different sample, this data enables us to explore changes across time without this potential variation. The downside of longitudinal data is sample bias, in the sense that this is a self-selecting group of respondents who have chosen to take part in the research every year for five years. Non-responder analysis is provided in the technical appendix.

Who is still working in local authority child and family social work after the five years of the study?

The employment status of this sample has changed over time, as we would expect given natural attrition as people retire or leave child and family social work for other reasons. The vast majority of the longitudinal sample was still in local authority child and family social work (81%) at Wave 5. This means that 19% have left over the last five waves.

Figure 2.1 Wave 5 employment status of those in local authority child and family social work at Wave 1

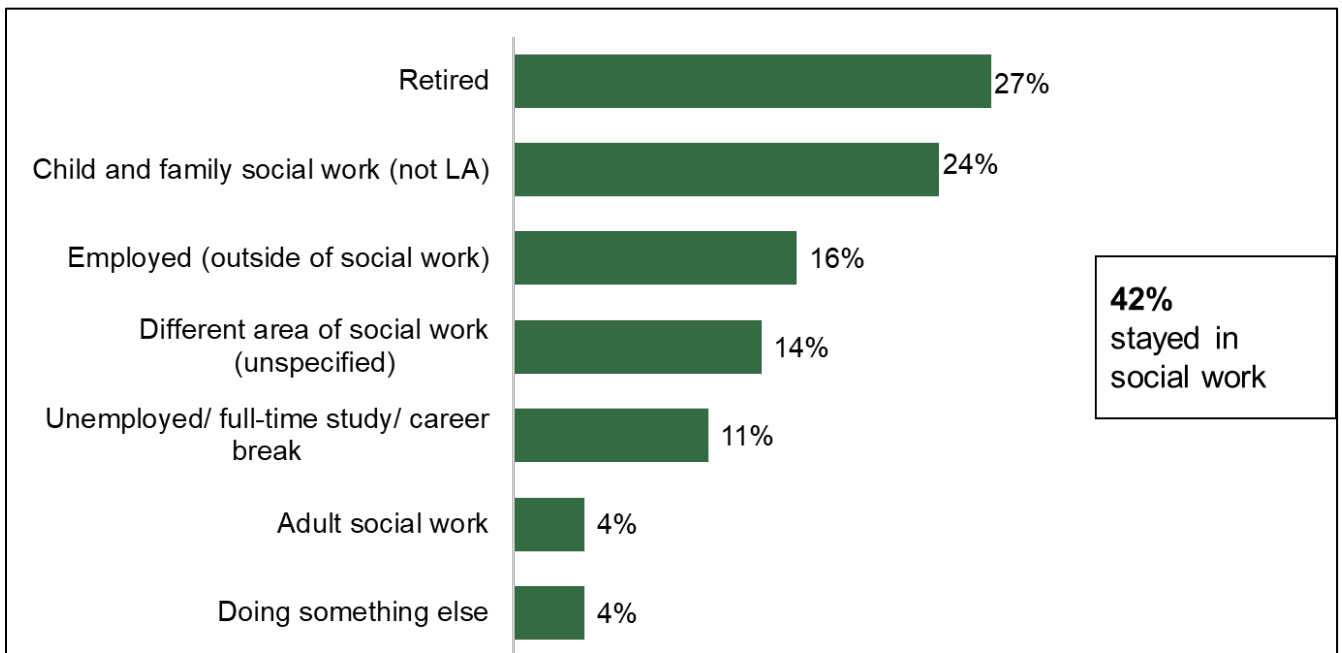


Base: All in local authority child and family social work in Wave 1 who took part in Wave 5 (1,051).

Focusing on the 81% that still work in local authority child and family social work at Wave 5: 64% were employed directly by a local authority; 14% employed by an agency, and 4% employed on another basis, such as self-employed. This shows how this sample is increasingly moving away from direct local authority employment and into agency employment. Looking back to Wave 1, 91% were employed directly by a local authority, 7% were employed by an agency, and 2% were employed on another basis, such as self-employed. This is in line with the findings from the cross-sectional research and with the most recent workforce census data which shows an increasing volume of child and family social workers being employed through agencies rather than directly by local authorities.

Focusing on the 19% who were not in local authority child and family social work at Wave 5 who have taken part in all waves of the research³, at Wave 5 the largest groups were working in some other type of social work (42%) or retired (27%) (Figure 2.2). 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 working in local authority child and family social work (reflected in the growing proportion who had retired).

Figure 2.2 Employment status for those not working for a local authority from Wave 1 to Wave 5



Base: All not working in LA CAFSW in Wave 5 (240)

Those that stayed in local authority child and family social work throughout the study, unsurprisingly, had progressed into more senior roles. Half (52%) of those in senior service

³ 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 and Wave 5, this option was not provided separately at previous waves).

manager / director roles, and three in five (61%) of team managers at Wave 5 had moved into this position since Wave 1, i.e. within the past five years.

Looking just at people who were front line practitioners at Wave 1, who had remained in local authority child and family social work, by Wave 5, two-thirds (69%) were still front line practitioners. However, 11% were now team managers, 9% were practice supervisors, 3% were practice leaders and 1% were a senior service manager/ director. The remaining 7% were in other roles.

Similarly, looking at team managers at Wave 1, just over half were still team managers at Wave 5 (53%). One in five (22%) were now senior service managers/ directors, 6% were practice leaders, and 11% were in other roles. A small proportion (8%) were now in front line practitioner rather than manager roles.

Movement between local authorities

Of those respondents still working in local authority child and family social work who took part in all waves and therefore whose local authority was known at both Wave 1 and Wave 5, 81% were still at the same authority (similar to Wave 4, 82%). 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: 92% of those directly employed were working for the same local authority as they were at Wave 1, while only 34% of agency workers were still working for the same local authority.

Not in local authority child and family social work at Wave 5

This section is based on the 19% who were not in local authority child and family social work at Wave 5 who have taken part in all waves of the research, 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 and Wave 5, this option was not provided separately at previous waves).

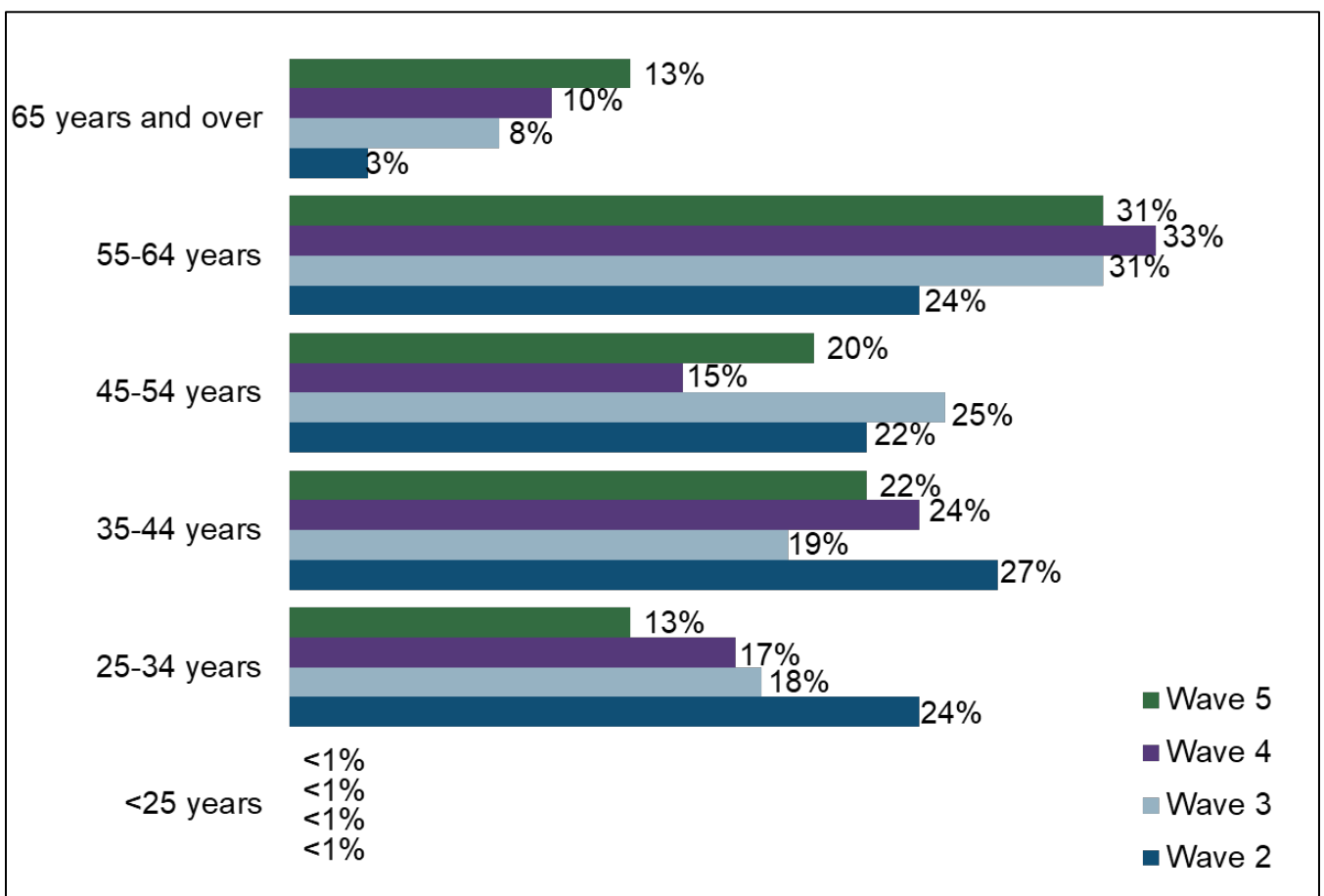
Looking at those respondents who had left local authority child and family social work between Wave 1 and Wave 5 the largest groups were still in child and family social work (44%) or retired (27%) and the main difference in terms of demographic characteristics was that those who had left were more likely to be older than those who were still in local authority child and family social work. Just over four in ten (44%) who had left were aged 55+, compared with 30% of those who had not left.

Those that had left were also more likely to be White British (84% compared with 74% who had not left) and to not have any care responsibilities (54% compared with 44% that had not

left). There were no significant differences between the two groups in terms of: gender or having a physical or mental health condition.

As shown in Figure 2.3, those who had left local authority child and family social work between Wave 1 and Wave 5 were most likely to be aged 55-64 years old (31%), with 22% aged 35-44 years old and 20% aged 45-54. As the chart also suggests this trend has remained consistent over time and shows an aging profile of the sample with significantly more aged 65 and over compared with Wave 4.

Figure 2.3 Age profile of those who had left local authority child and family social work between Wave 1 and subsequent waves



Base: All who had left LA CAFSW between Wave 1 and Wave 2 (203) / Wave 3 (239) / Wave 4 (271) / Wave 5 (210).

Consistent with previous waves, those who had left local authority child and family social work by Wave 5 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.

Those who had left were less likely to be satisfied with their jobs overall at Wave 1 (72%, compared with 76% who had stayed). Looking back to Wave 1, 73% of those who had left by Wave 5 said they expected to still be working in LA child and family social work in 12 months'

time (either directly or through an agency) compared with 89% of those who had subsequently stayed.

Workplace well-being

The study captures how many hours in a typical week social workers say they spend doing direct work with children and families/carers. Social workers in the longitudinal sample, who were also promoted between Wave 1 and Wave 5 (mean hours, 8) reported a lower number of hours doing direct work at Wave 5, compared with those in the longitudinal sample who were not promoted (mean hours, 10.1). This is in line with more general findings for seniority, as more senior roles spend less time directly working with children and families.

Social workers were asked how many cases they were currently allocated⁴. Those who were still frontline practitioners at Wave 5 had a higher number of mean cases, compared with the average (18.5, compared with 17.9). Those who agreed they were stressed at Wave 5 had a higher number of mean cases compared with the average among this longitudinal group (19.2, compared with 17.9).

As expected, and in line with the findings for each wave, social workers' job satisfaction was associated with whether they felt stressed. Social workers who had completed every wave of the research, who reported they were satisfied with their job, were consistently more likely to disagree that they felt stressed by their job at each wave.

Across all waves, social workers who remained in front line practitioner roles were consistently more likely to agree that they felt stressed by their job and their reported stress levels increased over time (from 66% in Wave 1 to 71% in Wave 5, compared with the average of 61% at Wave 5 among those who had taken part in all previous waves). This suggests a group who are remaining in front line roles, where reported stress levels are higher, and who are becoming increasingly stressed over time. Within the longitudinal group, those who were promoted between Wave 1 and Wave 5 were less likely to agree that they feel stressed by their job (56%, compared with those who were not promoted, 64%).

Amongst those who agreed they were stressed at Wave 1, 57% still agreed they felt stressed at Wave 5, whilst 10% now disagreed. Amongst those who disagreed they were stressed at Wave 1, 28% still disagreed they were stressed at Wave 5, whilst 34% now felt stressed.

Across all waves, levels of stress and feeling as though they are having to fulfil too many job roles were connected. Those who agreed they felt stressed were more likely to agree that they were having to fulfill too many roles (escalating from 60% in Wave 1 to 73% in Wave 5

⁴ 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."

compared with the overall average of 57% at Wave 5, among those who had taken part in all previous waves).

Levels of stress and feeling that their workload is too high were connected for those in the longitudinal sample (as for the sample overall). Those who felt stressed were more likely to agree that they were having to fulfill too many roles (rising from 67% in Wave 1 to 78% in Wave 5, compared with the average among those who took part in all waves, of 61% at Wave 5).

Within this longitudinal group, social workers who were working at the same local authority at Wave 5 as they were at Wave 1 were more likely than those who were not, to agree they felt their workload was too high (65%, compared with 53%).

Views on employer and manager

Amongst social workers that took part in the research across all five waves, as expected, job satisfaction was linked to feeling loyal to an organisation. Social workers who were satisfied with their job across all waves were more likely to agree that they felt loyal (increasing from 71% at Wave 1, to 79% at Wave 5, compared with an average of 67% among the longitudinal group at Wave 5).

The same applied to feeling valued, with social workers who were satisfied with their job across all five waves being more likely to agree that they feel valued by their employer (65% at Wave 1, increasing to 73% at Wave 5, compared with 61% on average at Wave 5).

Those who were at the same local authority at Wave 1 as they were at Wave 5 were more likely to feel loyal to their organisation, compared with those who were not at the same local authority (74%, compared with 55%). In contrast, however, this same group were less likely to feel valued by their employer, compared with those who had moved local authority (58%, compared with 66%). This may be because new employees get a boost in terms of feeling valued by their employer.

There was also a correlation between satisfaction with their line manager and whether or not they were promoted between Wave 1 and Wave 5. Those who were promoted between these waves were more likely to agree that their manager encourages them to develop their skills (76%, compared with those who were not promoted, 67%), and more likely to agree that their manager is considerate of their life outside of work (84%, compared with 74%).

Views on job satisfaction in child and family social work

Like the sample overall, social workers who completed the survey across all five waves have become less satisfied over time: 73% agreed that they found their job satisfying at Wave 1, declining to 65% in Wave 5.

Senior service managers / directors were more likely to be satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work compared with front line practitioners (82%, compared with 71% of front line practitioners). This is a consistent trend across the longitudinal sample: at Wave 1, 88% of senior service managers / directors were satisfied compared with 73% of front line practitioners.

In Wave 5, half (51%) of the longitudinal sample were satisfied with their pay. Again, this is a decrease from Wave 4 (57%) and shows a return to levels of satisfaction with pay last seen in Wave 1 (49%). This recent decrease in satisfaction with pay could be due, at least in part, to the increased cost of living around the time of Wave 5 fieldwork.

Findings from the longitudinal sample follow a similar pattern for job security, where results peaked in Waves 3 and 4 and then decreased in Wave 5. In Wave 1, 75% were satisfied with their job security, increasing to 84% at Wave 3 and Wave 4 respectively, but decreasing to 78% at Wave 5. The peaks in views about job security correspond to the pandemic period and may have been influenced by hearing about workers in other jobs being furloughed or made redundant.

Short-term career plans and influences on these

Among those still in LA child and family social work but who were considering leaving, and who had taken part in all five waves, the most common main reason at Wave 5 was because of retirement (28%, compared with 22% at Wave 4 and 20% at Waves 3 and 2) which partly reflects the ageing nature of this sample.

This was followed by a high caseload (11%), personal reasons such as health (10%), dislike of the culture of local authority social work (9%), and the view that it was not compatible with family or relationship commitments (7%). Other than retirement becoming more prominent over time, the main reasons for considering leaving have fluctuated slightly between waves but generally followed a similar pattern.

Social workers' career plans in the next 12 months

Using the longitudinal data sample and because we asked what people expect to do in the next 12 months consistently throughout the waves, we can establish what happened to the sample over time compared with their original intention. The majority of those who said they intended to work directly for a local authority in child and family social work in the next 12 months at Wave 1 were employed directly by a local authority at Wave 5 (62%), while 13% were in agency employment. Plans to move into agency work appear more subject to change - just over half (53%) who said they intended to work via an agency in local authority child and family social work at Wave 1 had proceeded to do so by Wave 5, while 30% were still employed directly by a local authority.

3. Who is still working in local authority child and family work at Wave 5?

This chapter explores the employment situation of all child and family social workers in the sample at Wave 5, compared with those in previous waves of the study. It is different from the longitudinal sample in the previous chapter because this is a cross-sectional sample that includes respondents who did not complete every wave, who either left via survey attrition (from Wave 2 onwards) or were added as a new entrant from the ASYE top-up survey (from Wave 3 onwards). 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 5 of the study.

Chapter highlights

- The majority (81%) of Wave 5 respondents were working in local authority child and family social work (including agency). This is significantly lower than at Wave 4 (83%), Wave 3 (88%), Wave 2 (94%) and at Wave 1 (98%). Movement out of local authority child and family social work is to be expected over time.
- At Wave 5, around one in six (22%) said they had been promoted in the past 12 months.
- In total, 16% of child and family social workers were employed via an agency at Wave 5. Pay was the most commonly cited factor for moving into agency work, cited by 60% as a contributing factor and 45% as the main factor, significantly more so when compared to Wave 4 which could be an impact of the increasing cost of living.

Profile of local authority child and family social workers

As expected, the profile of local authority child and family social workers at Wave 5 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 5, with 85% women and 14% men. This is in line with the preceding waves.

The overall age profiles have also remained largely consistent, although the sample is aging, as would be expected in a longitudinal study of this nature. There was a fairly even spread of ages among the Wave 5 respondents: 23% were aged under 35; 25% between 35-44; 24% between 45-54, and; 27% aged over 55. This compares to only 21% aged over 55 at Wave 1.

Just over three-quarters (77%) of the local authority child and family social workers at Wave 5 were White (74% White British). Twelve per cent were Black or Black British, 5% were Asian

or Asian British, 3% were of Mixed ethnicity and 1% of another ethnicity. These results are based on weighted data and in line with previous waves of the study.

At Wave 5, 22% had a physical or mental health condition expected to last 12 months or more. This is consistent with Wave 4, but significantly higher than at Wave 1 (15%). This is likely at least in part due to the aging nature of the sample.

Half (51%) had caring responsibilities. This was most commonly for school-aged children (32%), followed by caring for other family members or friends (15%) and for pre-school aged children (10%). Only a small number (3%) cared for children with disabilities. The proportion caring for others is consistent with the preceding waves.

Employment status

Figure 3.1 shows the employment status of the whole sample at each wave, providing a snapshot of the sample at Wave 1 to Wave 5.

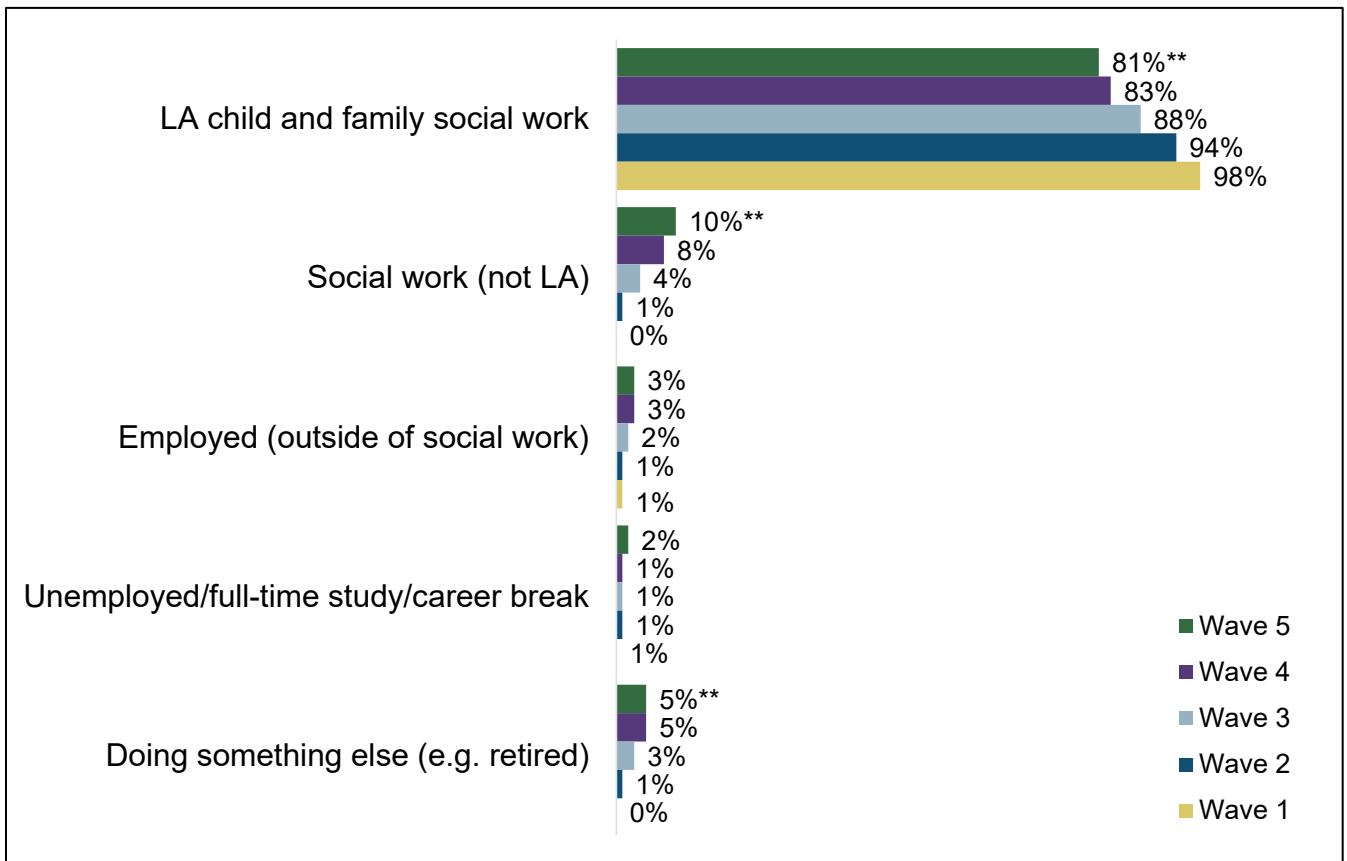
The majority (81%) of respondents at Wave 5 were employed in local authority child and family social work (including via an agency). As shown in Figure 2.1, this proportion has fallen significantly from 98% in Wave 1 and consistently throughout the subsequent waves. As the starting sample for the study 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 5, 10% were working in social work, but not at a local authority: this has more than doubled since Wave 3 (4%). The circumstances of the minority working outside of child and family social work at Wave 5 remained largely consistent with previous waves. Five percent were not in local authority employment but were still in child and family social work; 2% were working in adult social work; 3% in another area of social work; 3% were 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 5% were 'doing something else'⁵. 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 3.1 shows a significant increase for those 'doing something else (e.g., retired)' since Wave 1. The majority of this group have retired, and the questionnaire was changed at Wave 4 to identify 'retired' as a separate code. Four per cent of the total Wave 5 sample were retired, while 1% were 'doing something else'⁶. This is in line with the previous waves' results.

⁵ '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.

Figure 3.1 Employment status (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All respondents: Wave 1 (5,621), Wave 2 (3,302), Wave 3 (2,240), Wave 4 (1,605) Wave 5 (1,283).
 ** Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 1 and Wave 5

Over one-third (37%) of those aged 65 and over, and one in ten (10%) of those aged 55 to 64 at Wave 5 were retired. Almost all those who were retired within the sample were aged 55 or over (97%). There were no significant differences by gender, ethnicity, or caring responsibilities. However, people who reported they had a disability or health condition were more likely to have retired than those who did not (7% compared with 3%).

Of those who had retired at Wave 5, most (71%) considered they had taken early retirement. All of the respondents who said they had taken early retirement were aged 55 or over and one-third of them reported a physical or mental health condition. When looking at why they had taken early retirement, the majority (23 out of 38) said they did so because of ‘work pressure (including high caseload, too much paperwork, long hours)’, which was also the top reason at Wave 4. This was followed by restructuring in their team/Department (9 out of 38), health reasons (7 out of 38), the impacts of Covid-19 on being a social worker (7 out of 38) and always having plans to retire at that age (7 out of 38).

Still in local authority child and family social work at Wave 5

Employed directly by a local authority or by an agency

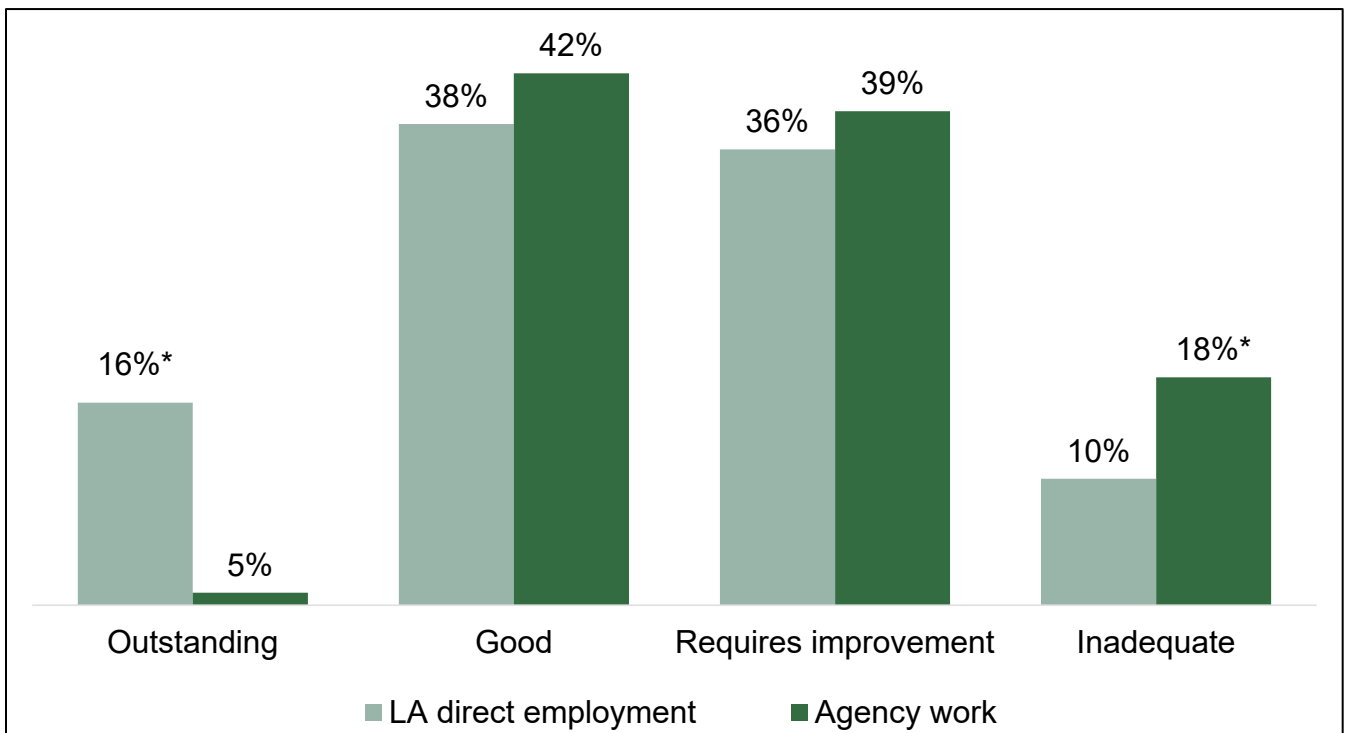
The 81% of all Wave 5 survey respondents who were still in local authority child and family social work can be broken down into: 64% employed directly by a local authority; 13% employed by an agency, and 4% employed on another basis, such as self-employed.⁷ There were some key differences between those 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 (24% compared with 12%).
- **Ethnicity:** Those employed by an agency were less likely to be White British (65%) compared with those employed directly by a local authority (74%).
- **Region:** Similar to the previous wave those employed by an agency were more likely to work in the South West.
- **Ofsted rating of local authority:** Those working for an agency were more likely to work at an 'inadequate' rated authority (Figure 3.2): 18% 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 (1% compared with 16% of those employed directly).
- **Level of job:** Three-quarters of the agency workers were employed as front line social workers (74%) compared with half (50%) of the social workers who were directly employed by a local authority. This is in line with the pattern found in previous waves. One in five (19%) of local authority workers were employed as a team manager, compared with only 5% of agency workers.

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 3.2 Distribution of local authority Ofsted rating by those employed directly by a local authority and those employed by an agency (Wave 5)



Base: All still in LA child and family social work employed directly by a local authority or by an agency: Wave 5: LA direct employment (901), Agency work (70).

*Denotes a significant difference between LA direct employment and agency work.

Current role in local authority child and family social work

This section examines the Wave 5 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 3.3 shows the job role of those working in local authority child and family social work across the five waves of the research. While the overall profile has not changed significantly since Wave 4, 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 5 (16%, compared with 13%) or as a senior service manager or director (10%, compared with 6%). Movement between job grades is discussed in more detail later in this section ('Movement between grades of job').

As one would expect, job roles were linked to length of time in child and family social work and age, 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

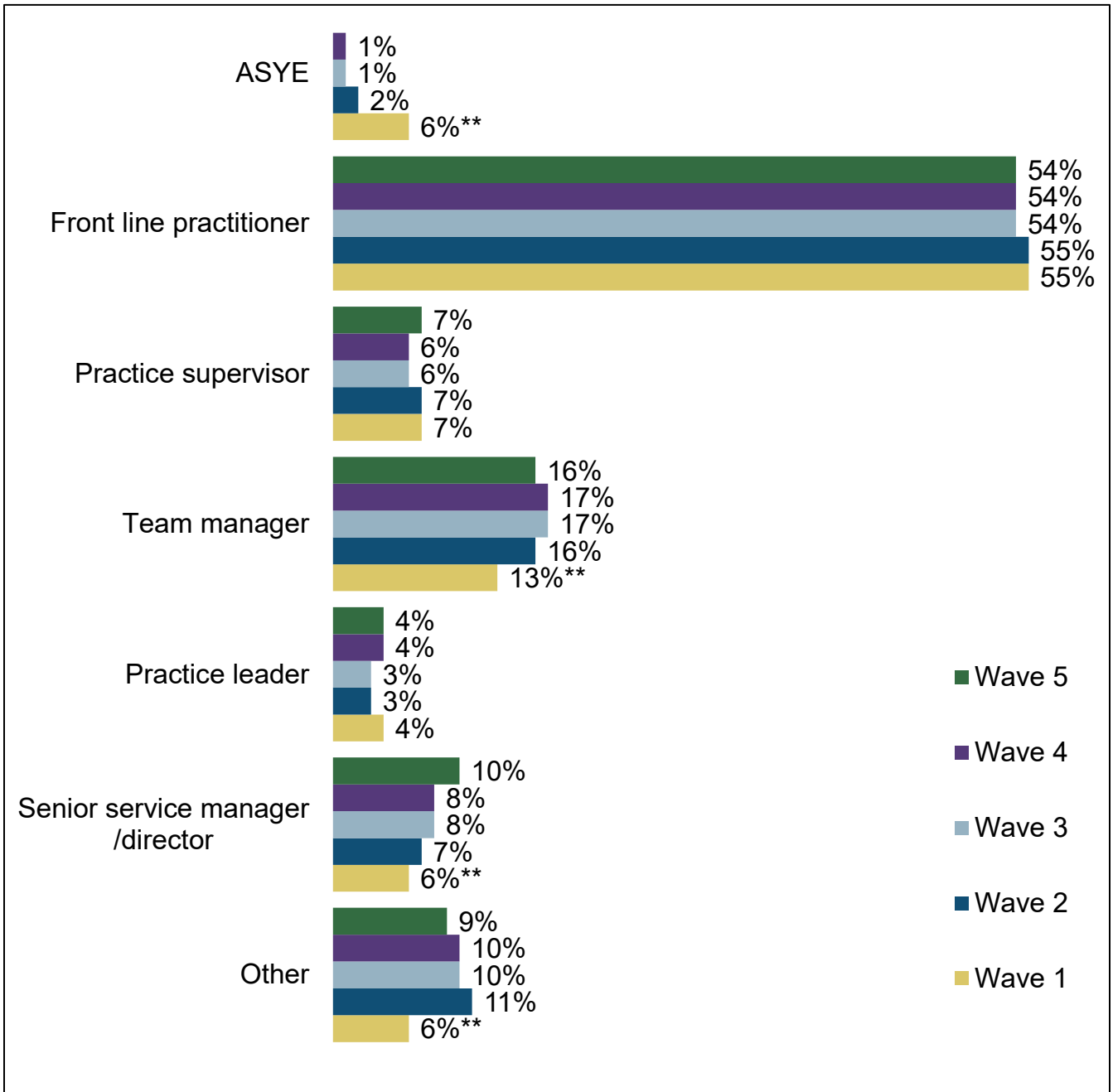
example, 72% of 25-34 year olds worked as front line practitioners, compared with 47% of those aged 45 or older, while 15% of those 45 or older worked in senior service manager or director roles, compared with 5% aged below 45. The same pattern can be seen throughout the waves, including Wave 1.

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: 74% of the agency workers at Wave 5 were front line practitioners, compared with 50% of those employed directly by a local authority.
- Be of a Black / Black British ethnicity: 67% of the Black / Black British social workers at Wave 5 were front line practitioners compared with 53% of White British social workers.
- Have a physical or mental health condition: 64% of those with a health condition were front line practitioners compared with 51% without a condition.

All these patterns are in line with those identified in Wave 1 and have remained consistent across the survey.

Figure 3.3 Job role within local authority child and family social work (Waves 1 to 5)



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 (1,128), Wave 5 (1,000).**Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 1 and Wave 5

At Wave 5, 22% 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 (38%), and among social workers who were currently working as practice supervisors and senior service managers / directors (both 34%).

By length of time in child and family social work, promotion was most common among those with 4-5 years' experience (40%). 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 (26%, compared with 11%). This is consistent with trends established at Wave 4.

Those who were directly employed by a local authority / Children's Trust were also more likely to have been promoted in the last 12 months than those employed via an agency (24% and 17% respectively).

Practice area

The distribution of the sample in terms of area of practice has remained fairly consistent across the study. The most common practice areas at Wave 5 continued to be child in need / child protection (48% worked in this area) followed by looked after children (30%). These have remained the most common practice areas since Wave 1 (when 52% worked in child in need / child protection and 31% worked with looked after children).

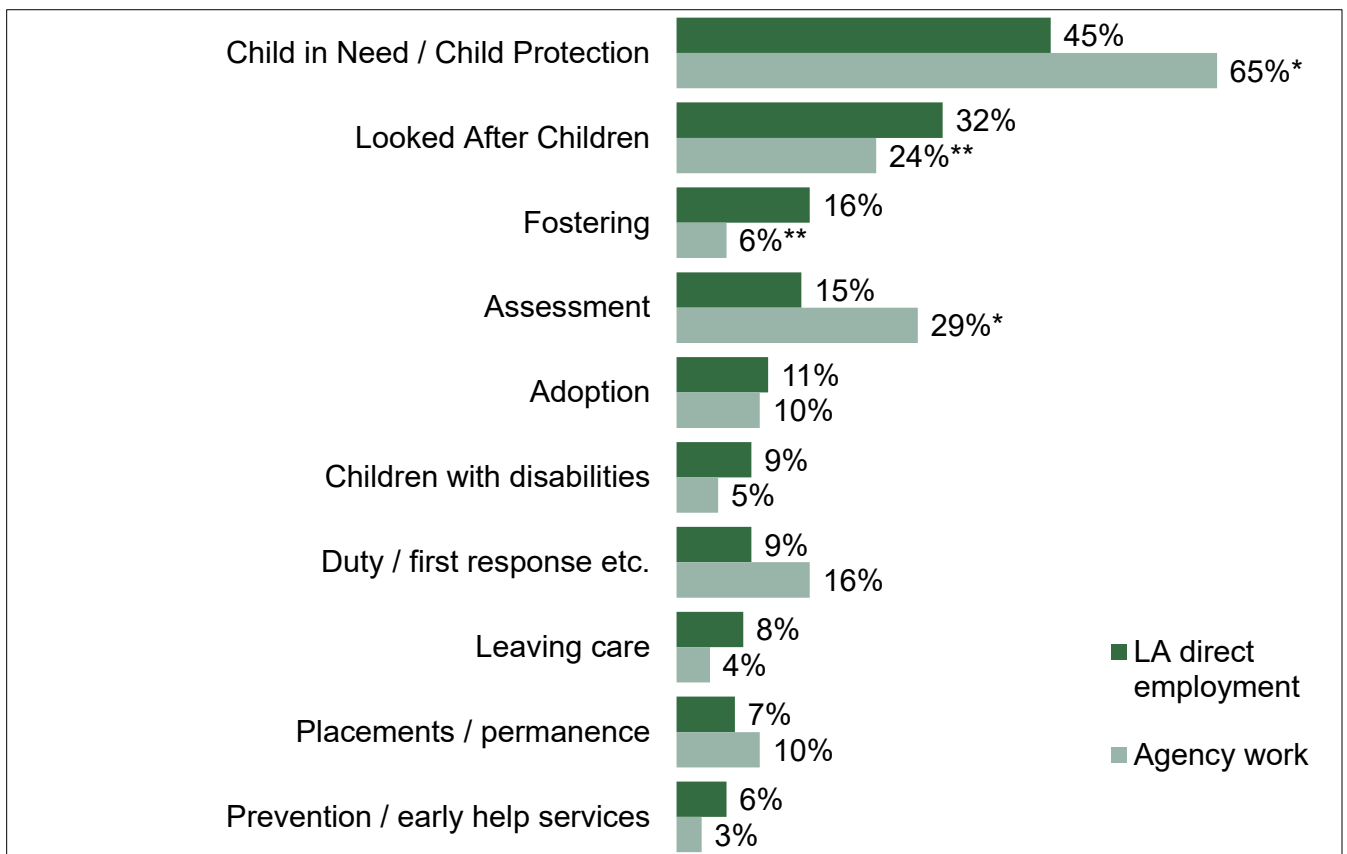
Consistent with changes between previous waves, the proportions working in some practice areas decreased. For example, 17% were working in assessment at Wave 5, which is significantly lower than at Wave 1 (26%).

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, at Wave 5, 56% of 25-34 year olds worked in child protection, compared with 43% of 45-54 year olds and 40% of 55-64 year olds.

Conversely, 19% of 55-64 year olds and 16% of 45-54 year olds worked in fostering, compared with just 9% of 25-34 year olds. Older social workers aged 55-64 were also more likely than 25-34 year olds to work in adoption (17% compared with 9%).

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 2.6). Agency workers were more likely than direct employees to work in child in need / child protection (65%, compared with 45% of directly employed social workers) as well as assessment (29%, compared to 15%). They were significantly less likely to work in fostering (6% compared with 16% of direct employees) as well as looked after children (24%, compared with 32%).

Figure 3.4 Main area(s) of practice, by local authority direct employment or agency work (Wave 5)



Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work and employed by a local authority or an agency: Local authority (899), Agency (66). This chart only shows the 10 most common areas of work. Multiple responses possible in terms of practice area.

*Significantly higher than those employed directly by an LA.

**Significantly lower than those employed directly by an LA.

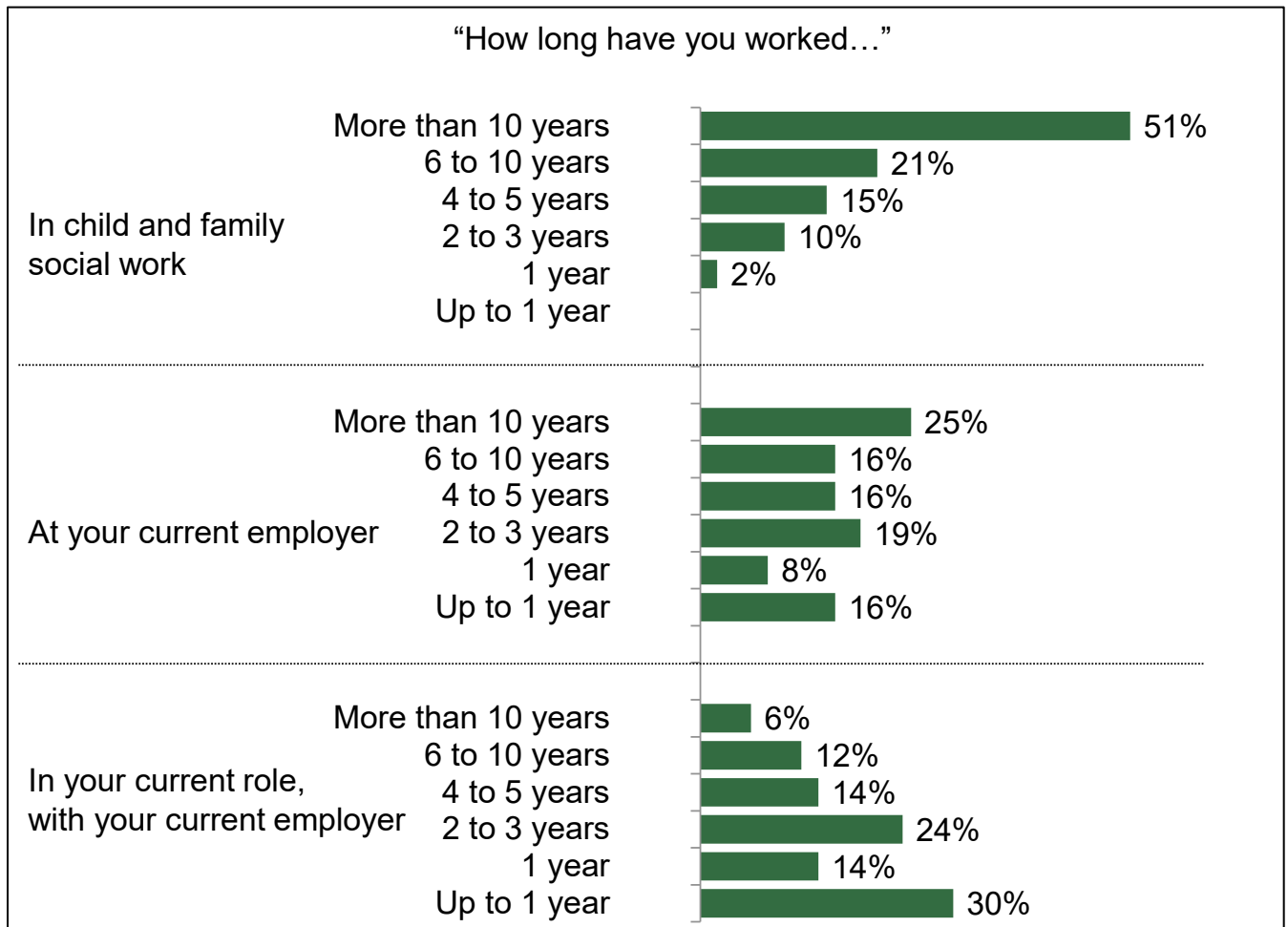
Length of time in child and family social work and at current employer

Figure 3.5 shows that at Wave 5, 51% of the sample had been in the sector for at least 10 years, with a further 21% 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 but it is in line with Wave 4 results.⁹

⁹ This change may be partly because non-responders at Wave 5 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.

Child and family social workers move roles frequently, both within the same local authority and to a different employer. As shown in Figure 3.5, 68% had been in their current role for less than three years, while 30% had been at their employer for less than a year.

Figure 3.5 Length of time: in child and family social work; at current employer; in current role with current employer (Wave 5)



Base: All currently working in child and family social work at a local authority / Children's Trust (1,000).

As to be expected, given the temporary nature of their work, agency workers were more likely than those directly employed by a local authority to have been in their current job for a year or less (82% compared with 37%). Overall, one-quarter (25%) of social workers had worked at their current employer for more than ten years.

Those currently working in child and family social work at a local authority / Children's Trust who had been at their current employer for 10+ years at Wave 5 were more likely than average to be employed by a local authority with an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating (37%, compared with 25% overall). Child and family social workers who were employed directly via a local authority / Children's Trust at Wave 5 (rather than via an agency) were also more likely to be working in an area with an 'outstanding' Ofsted rating (74%, compared with 64% overall).

Motivations for becoming an agency worker or self-employed

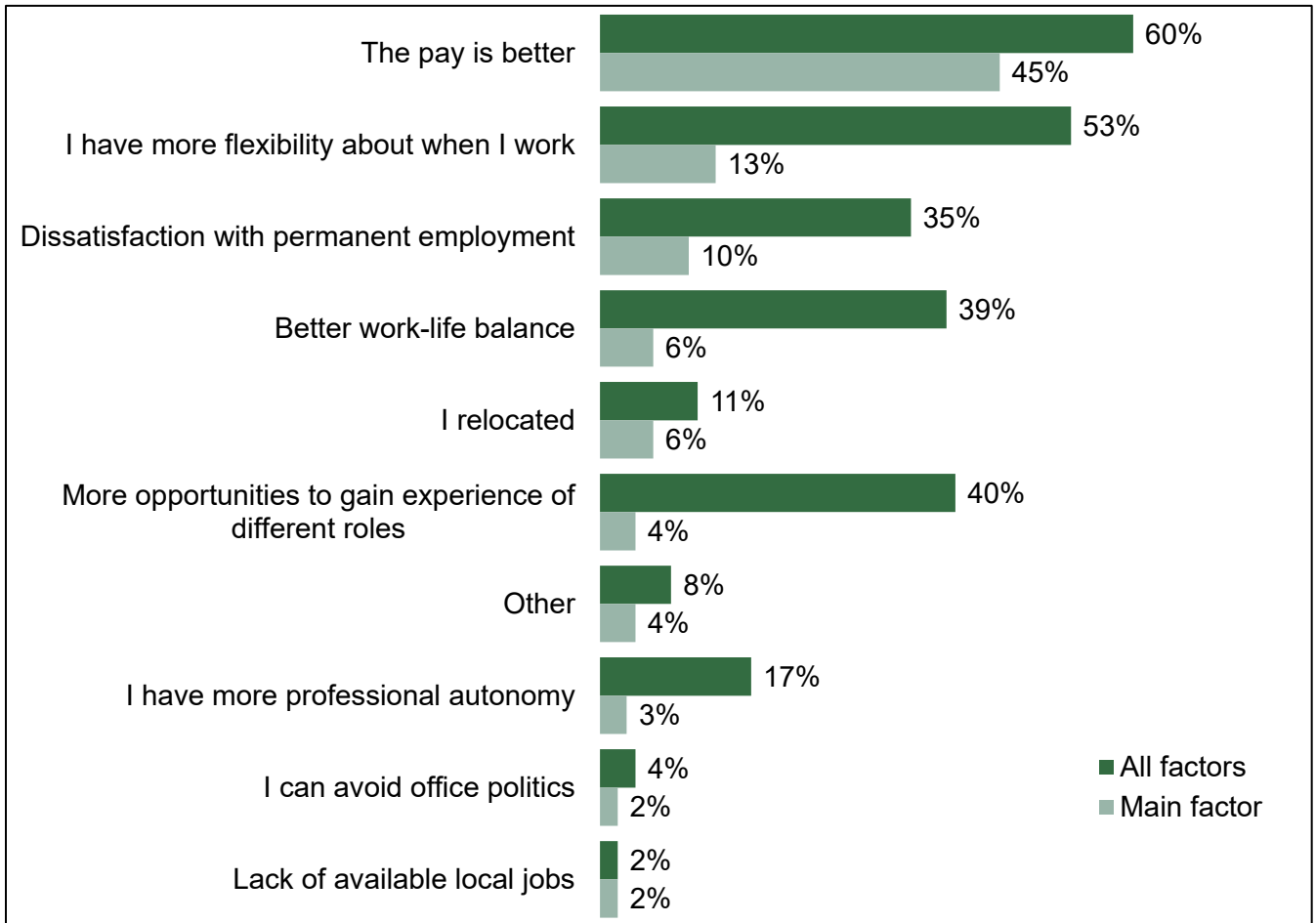
In total, 16% of child and family social workers were employed via an agency at Wave 5¹⁰. Figure 3.6 shows all factors and the main factor which influenced social workers to move into agency work or self-employment between Waves 4 and 5.¹¹

The primary factor was better pay, both when citing all factors (60%) and the single main factor (45%). Other important factors were more flexibility about when they worked (53% 'all factors', 13% 'main factor'). Similar proportions stated more opportunities to gain experience of different roles (40% 'all factors', but only 4% cited as a 'main factor') and better work life balance (39% 'all factors', but 6% cited as a 'main factor'). These findings are broadly in line with Wave 4 results, but as the bases have relatively low numbers (89 at Wave 4 and 64 at Wave 5), findings should be interpreted with caution.

¹⁰ This figure is weighted. The unweighted figure is 6%.

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 5.

Figure 3.6 Factors for moving to agency work or self-employment (Wave 5)



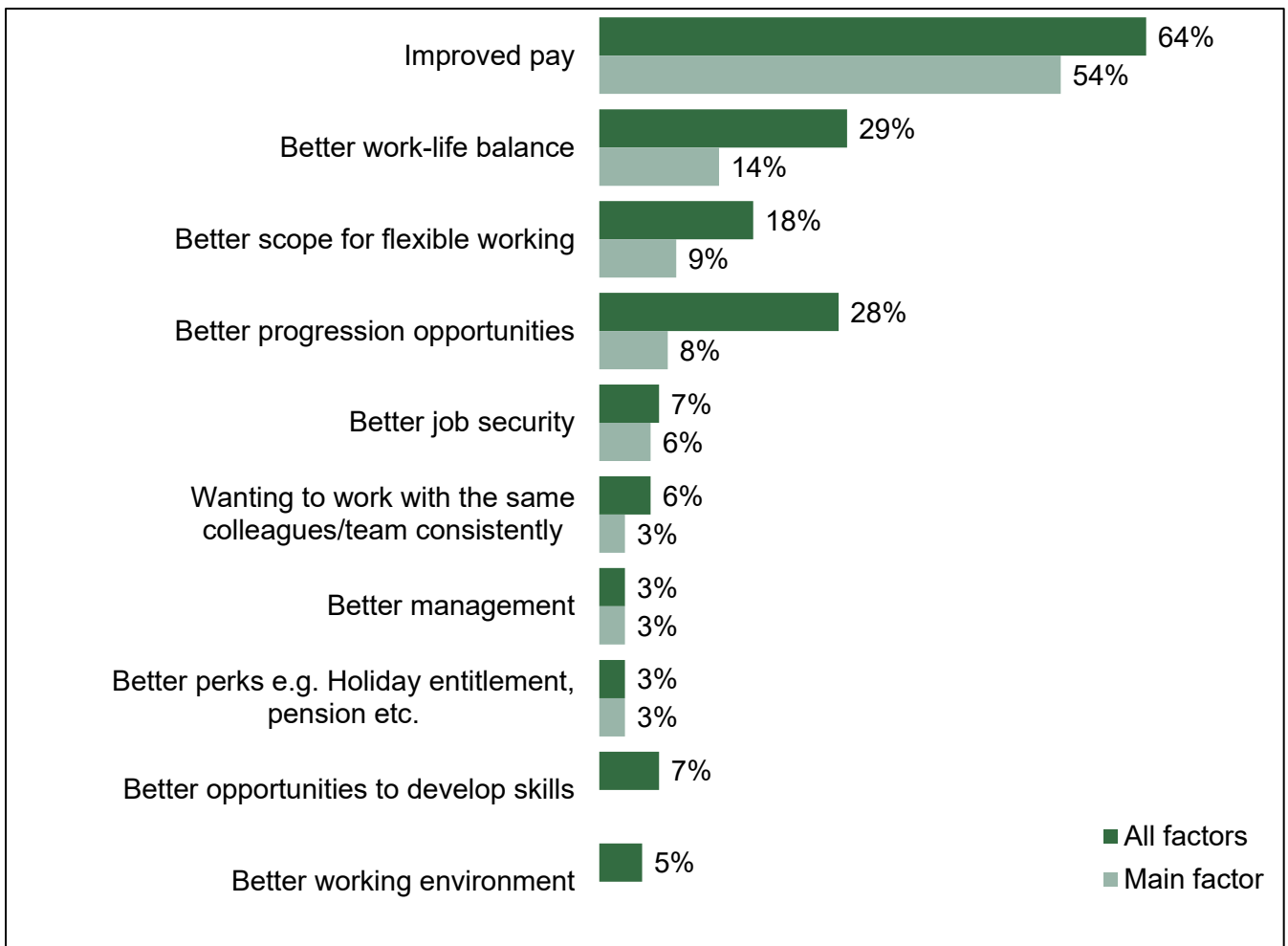
Base: All employed via an agency or independently/self-employed who had worked direct for a LA in W4 (64).
Only the top ten factors are shown on this chart.

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

Social workers employed by an agency¹² were asked to indicate what would encourage them to move from being employed by an agency to being employed directly by a local authority, if anything. Two-thirds (64%) said that ‘improved pay’ would encourage them to move, 29% said ‘a better work life balance’ and 28% said ‘better progression opportunities’. When asked to give their main reason, ‘improved pay’ (54%) was still by far the most popular response, followed by ‘a better work life balance’ (14%).

¹² These findings are based on 79 social workers who were employed by an agency at Wave 5.

Figure 3.7 What would encourage agency workers to move to work direct for an LA (Wave 5)



Base: All employed via an agency (79). Only the top ten factors are shown on this chart.

Motivations for moving to a different local authority

Almost one in ten (8%) of social workers who took part in Wave 5 had moved to a different local authority compared with Wave 4. Figure 3.8 shows reasons given by social workers (whether employed directly or through an agency) for moving local authority between Wave 4 and Wave 5.¹³ These social workers most commonly cited a high workload as the reason behind the move, both in terms of all factors (37%) and the main factor (14%), an increase from Wave 4.

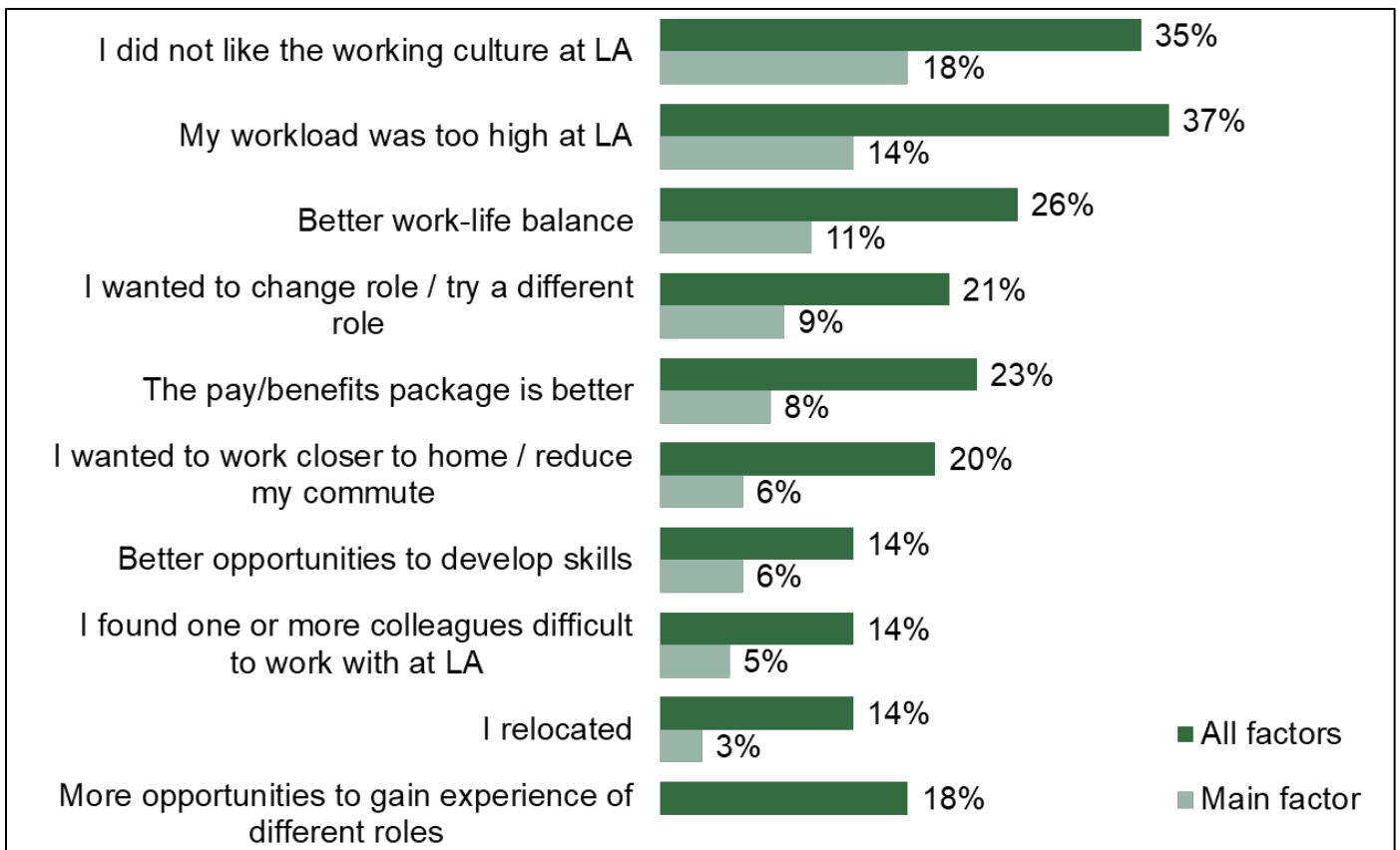
The top three reasons given by social workers relate to heavy workloads and poor working culture. If we combine the top three main reasons ('I did not like the working culture at LA', 'My workload was too high at LA' and 'Better work-life balance') this accounts for 42% of social workers who moved authority between Wave 4 and Wave 5. Reasons related to pay were

¹³ Question only asked of those who had moved local authority between Wave 2 and Wave 3, Wave 3 and Wave 4, Wave 4 and Wave 5, so we do not hold this data for all who moved between the beginning of the study (Wave 1) and Wave 5.

much less common, with just 8% saying their main reason for moving LA was for a better pay/benefits package.

Top factors such as 'I did not like the working culture at LA' and 'I wanted to change role / try a different role' have remained broadly consistent with Wave 4. The proportion that had relocated at Wave 5 was consistent with Wave 4 (both 14%). However, the proportion citing this as their main reason decreased, from 12% in Wave 4 to 3% at Wave 5.

Figure 3.8 Reasons for moving to a different local authority (Wave 5)



Base: All still in LA child and family social work but at a different LA to W4 (108). Only the top ten factors are shown on this chart.

4. Workplace wellbeing

This chapter explores the number of hours social workers work, how this time is spent, as well as what their caseloads look like, and the impact this has on overall workload and related stress.

Chapter highlights

- Contracted working hours at Wave 5 were consistent with those seen at previous waves. Most social workers held full-time contracts with 79% contracted to work 36 hours a week or more, and 20% contracted to work 35 hours or below. However, in line with previous waves, three-quarters (75%) of social workers reported working more than their contracted hours to keep up with their workload, either 'all the time' (44%) or 'most weeks' (31%).
- The mean number of hours worked has remained fairly consistent across the five waves of the study, and at Wave 5 it was 41 hours per week (compared with a mean of 35 contracted hours per week).
- Seven in ten (71%) social workers reported they spent time in a typical week doing any direct work with children, families or carers, while three in ten (28%) did not. The mean number of hours spent in a typical week directly working with children, families or carers across all job roles was 9.8, in line with Wave 4 (and preceding waves).
- The mean number of cases that local authority child and family social workers in case holding roles reported they held overall was 19, not significantly different from past waves.
- Overall, 65% of social workers said they felt stressed by their job, 59% said they are being asked to fulfil too many roles and 63% said their overall workload was too high, all of which have significantly increased since Wave 1. In terms of reasons for feeling stressed, too much paperwork was most often cited (56%), followed by a lack of resources to support families (44%) and having too many cases (44%).
- On average, social workers reported that 24 hours per week was spent on completing case-related paperwork, whilst two hours per week was spent on learning and development. In terms of time spent on each case, the majority (61%) considered that the number of hours has increased over the past five years. Common reasons for this included increased severity of cases (69%), the perceived impacts of cuts to other public services on social work (48%), and increased paperwork (48%).

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 (7% 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 79% contracted to work 36 hours a week or more, and 20% 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 4.1).

Working on a part-time contract was more common among women than men (22% compared with 13%), as in previous waves. Part-time contracts continued to be more prevalent among those who had caring responsibilities (25%, compared with 16% of those who did not have any caring responsibilities) – in particular among those with pre-school aged children (37%). As in Wave 4, older social workers aged 65+ (53%) were more likely than average (20%) to be on a part-time contract, but there was no significant difference compared to the average, among those aged 55-64, among whom 23% worked part-time. Social workers who had been with their current employer for 10 or more years were more likely to work part-time (33%).

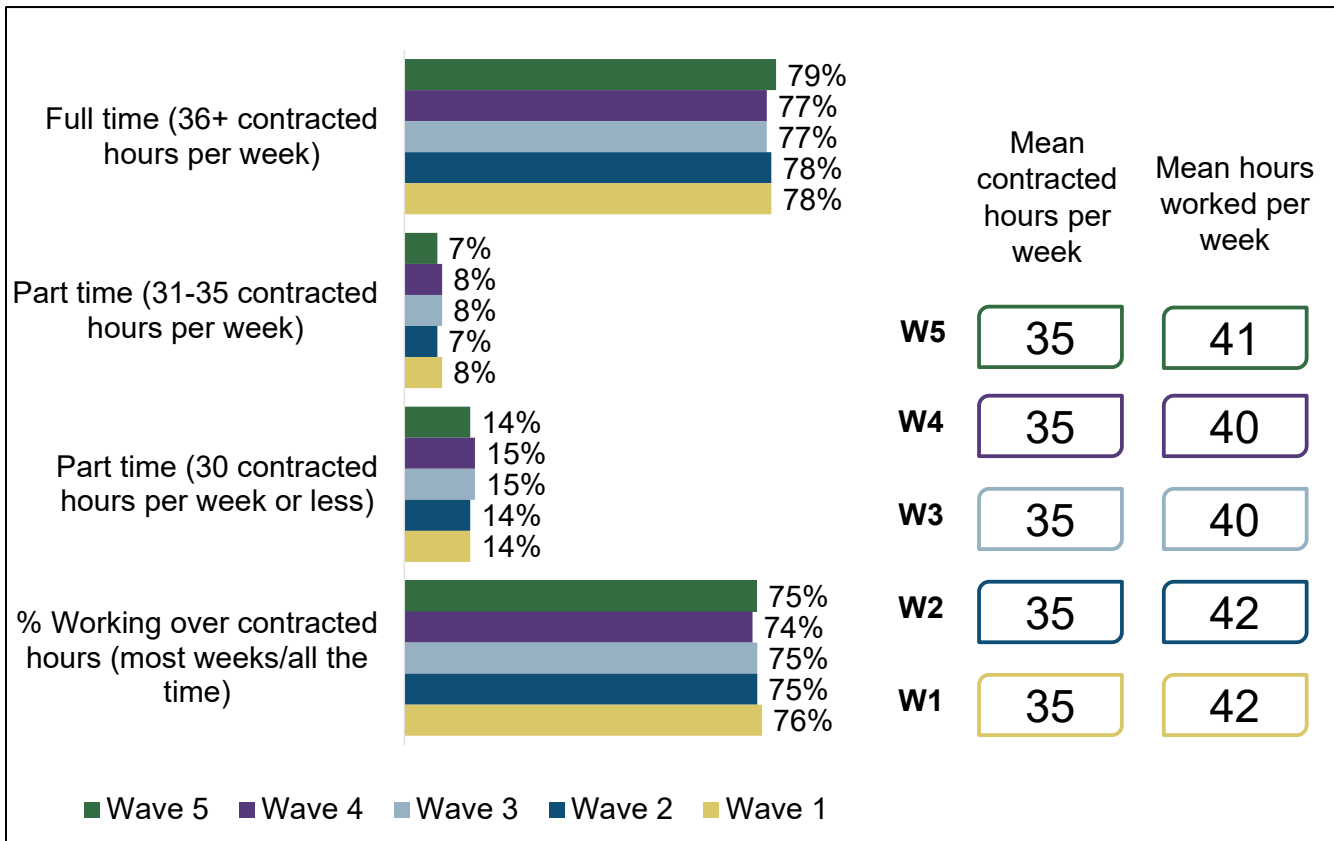
There were also distinctions between staff seniority and areas of practice, similar to previous waves. Senior service managers/ directors continued to be the least likely of all the staff levels to be working part-time (10%). Part-time working was more common among staff working in fostering (28%) and kinship care (30%) while those working in children in need (18%) and assessment (10%) were less likely than average to be working on part-time contracts.

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 six hours more per week than their contracted hours, with a mean of 41 actual hours compared with a mean of 35 contracted hours (Figure 3.1). The mean number of actual hours reported per week has remained fairly stable over the five waves of the survey and has not changed significantly compared with the preceding waves.

Overall, and in line with previous waves, Figure 4.1 also shows that three-quarters (75%) of social workers reported working more than their contracted hours to keep up with their workload, either 'all the time' (44%) or 'most weeks' (31%). This has remained consistent throughout the five waves of the study.

Figure 4.1 Contracted working hours per week and mean reported hours worked per week (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000).

Table 4.1 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 (82%), similar to Wave 4¹⁴. There were no significant differences compared to the longitudinal sample.

¹⁴ The shaded cells in the table show those who reported that they are working for more hours than they are contracted.

Table 4.1 Contracted working hours versus actual working hours (Wave 5)¹⁵

		Contracted hours			
		16-20	21-30	31-35	36-40
		%	%	%	%
Actual hours	01-15	-	1%	-	4%
	16-20	38%	1%	4%	1%
	21-30	60%	38%	-	1%
	31-35	3%	30%	13%	2%
	36-40	-	25%	33%	25%
	41-45	-	1%	34%	33%
	46-50	-	1%	11%	25%
	51+	-	1%	4%	10%
Any extra hours		63%	58%	82%	68%
Base excluding those unable to state hours		42	111	67	764

In terms of actual hours worked, and consistent with previous waves of the survey, senior service managers/ directors and team managers worked the longest hours compared to other job roles. They were more likely to report working 46+ hours in a typical week compared with average (46% and 39% respectively, compared with 29%). Reflecting their long hours, team managers and senior service managers/ directors were also more likely to say they work overtime 'all the time' (58% and 54%, respectively) compared with 44% on average.

Working over their contracted hours 'all the time' was more common in some practice areas: children in need (51%), and looked after children (53%) were more likely than average (44%) to report working above their contracted hours 'all the time' whereas those working in duty/first response/front door/MASH and adoption services were more likely than average to say they have never had to work over their contracted hours to keep up with their workloads (both 9%, compared with 3% 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 (51%) compared with 36% of younger social workers aged 25 to 34. This is linked to seniority, as older social workers who responded to the

¹⁵ Figures for those with 1-15 contracted hours or 41+ contracted hours are not shown because the base size is <30 for these groups, which is too few to be considered statistically.

survey were more likely to be in senior job roles, where working overtime was more common.

- 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 (49%, compared with 44%). Of note, those in 'inadequate' rated local authorities were less likely than average to say they worked overtime 'all the time' (35%).
- those who were dissatisfied with their current job were more likely than those who were satisfied to say that they worked overtime 'all of the time' (57%, compared with 41%).

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. Seven in ten (71%) reported they spent time in a typical week doing any direct work with children, families or carers, while three in ten (28%) did not. In terms of role type and in line with previous years, almost all (94%) of front-line practitioners worked directly with children and families. Those in more senior job roles were less likely to work directly with children and families: 39% for team managers, 65% for practice supervisors, 36% for practice leaders and 22% for senior service managers / directors.

The amount of time that social workers who worked directly with children and families spent on direct work has remained largely unchanged compared with previous waves, with no significant differences compared with Wave 4. Among those who did any direct work with children and families, around one third each spent 1-5 hours (31%) or 6-10 hours (38%) – the equivalent figures in Wave 4 being 32% and 37%. The proportions spending 11-15 hours (20%) and 16 hours or more (12%) were also in line with Wave 4 (16% and 15%, respectively).

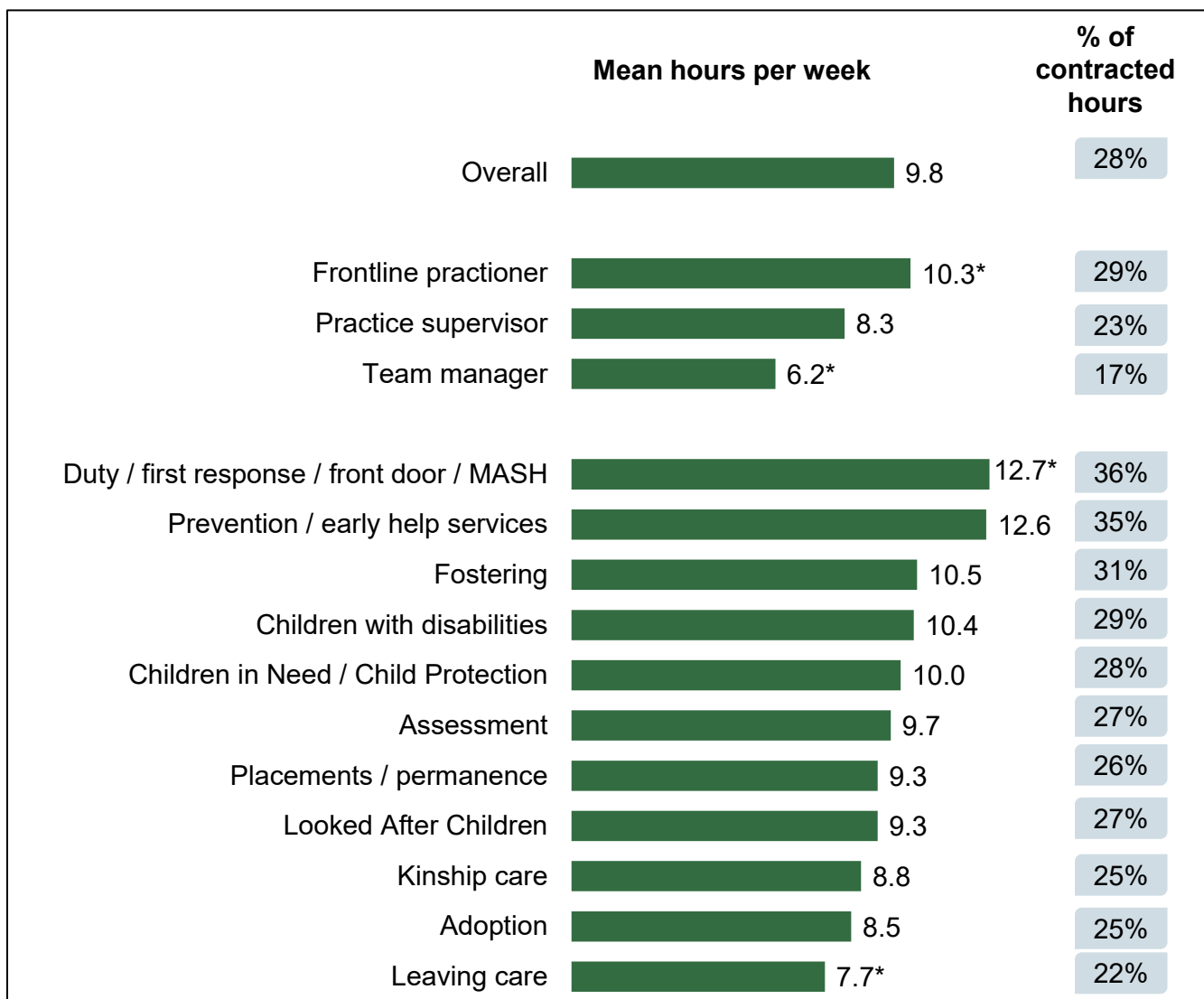
For those whose job involves working directly with children and families, the mean number of hours spent in a typical week directly working with children, families or carers across all job roles was 9.8, as shown in Figure 4.2. This is in line with Wave 4 (and preceding waves).

Front line practitioners spent 10.3 hours on average working directly with children and families, which is significantly higher than average (9.8). In terms of practice area, those working in duty / first response / front door / MASH services spent 12.7 hours working directly with children and families, significantly higher than average (9.8). Those working within leaving care services spent less time than average on direct work with children and families (7.7 hours).

Figure 4.2 shows the proportion of social workers' contracted hours spent working with children and families directly. At an overall level this was 28% of contracted hours (not significantly different from Wave 4), and by job role: 29% for front line practitioners, 28% for

practice leaders, 26% for senior service managers / directors, 23% for practice supervisors and 17% for team managers.

Figure 4.2 Time spent working directly with children and families by job role and areas of practice – mean hours per week and % of contracted hours (Wave 5)



Base: All in a relevant case holder role, who gave an integer value: Overall (536); job role: front line practitioner (360), team manager (59), practice supervisor: (48); Area of practice: fostering (85), prevention/early help (23), kinship care (22), placements/permanence (27), assessment (72), looked after children (152), child in need/child protection (252), duty/first response (30), adoption (69), leaving care (31), children with disabilities (36), Job roles and areas of work with a base size of less than 20 excluded. *Denotes a significant difference from the overall average.

Due to the sustained need to work remotely on occasion because of the Covid-19 pandemic, 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. This continued to be asked at Wave 5.

The improving Covid-19 situation since Wave 3 of the study has changed the balance between face-to-face and remote work with children and families. At Wave 5, those who worked directly with children and families spent significantly more time working with them face-to-face each week compared with Wave 3 (when Covid-19 first emerged) at 7.2 hours, compared with 6.6 hours at Wave 4 and 5.1 hours at Wave 3. They averaged 3 hours working with children and families remotely (compared with 3.8 hours at Wave 4 and 5.8 hours at Wave 3). Social workers in front line practitioner roles spent more time than average on face-to-face work (7.9 hours per week, compared with 7.2).

Whether time was spent working with children and families remotely or face-to-face varied by practice area. Those working in child in need / child protection spent significantly more time than other practice areas working face-to-face (7.7 hours). Conversely, those working in duty / first response / front door / MASH services were more likely than average to spend time working remotely (6.6 hours), as were those working in looked after children services (3.7 hours).

Caseloads

Social workers were asked how many cases they were currently allocated¹⁶. As shown in Figure 4.3, it was most common for those in relevant case holder roles to be responsible for 16-20 cases (25%), followed by 26+ cases (22%), and 21-25 cases and 11-15 cases (both 17%).

The mean number of cases that local authority child and family social workers in case holding roles reported they held overall was not significantly different to previous waves, at 19.

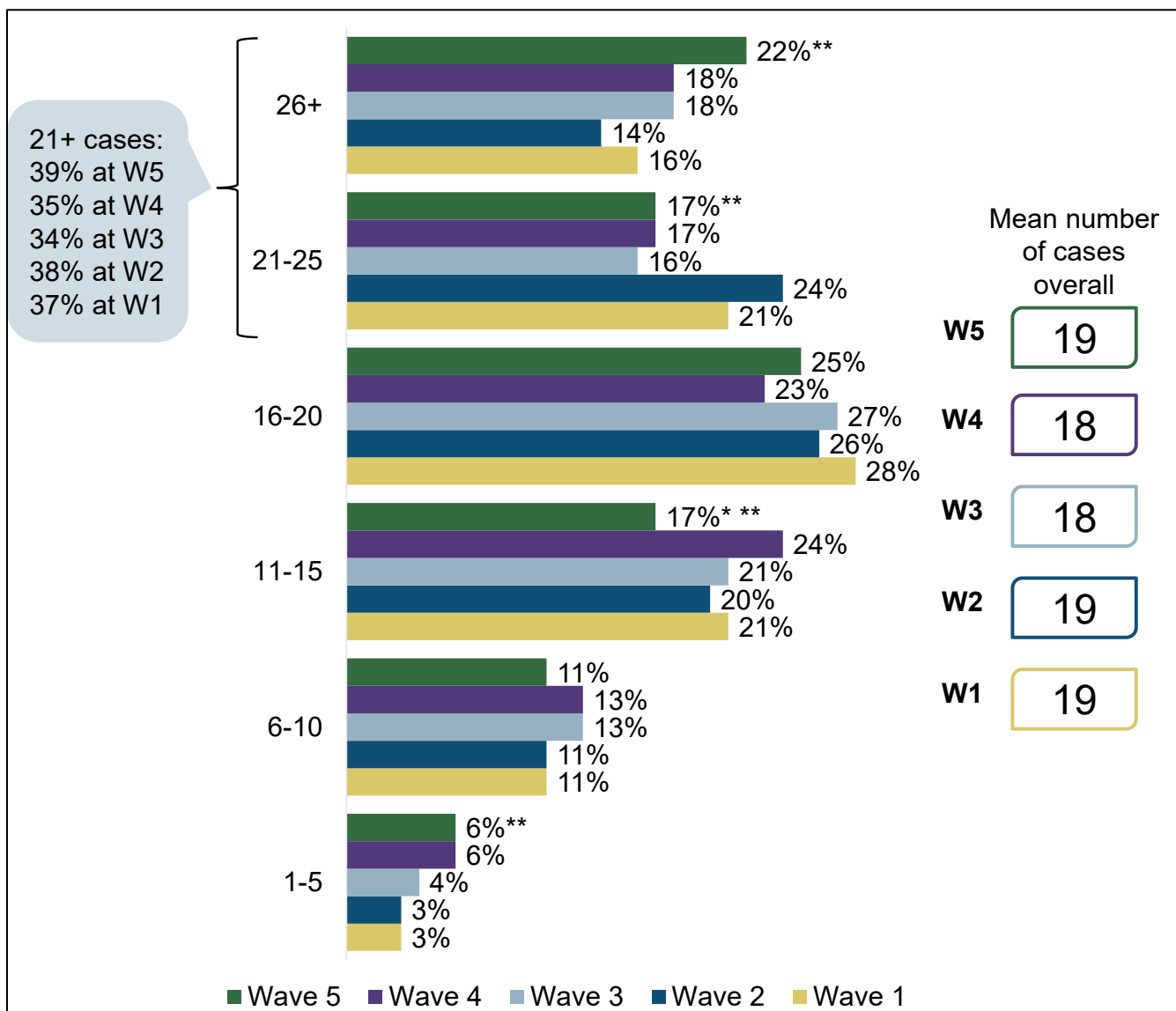
The mean number of cases varied by contracted hours and job role, as expected, but patterns were generally consistent with previous waves. Full-time social workers had a mean of 20 cases compared with 15 for part-time workers.

Social workers who had been working in LA child and family social work for 4-5 years had significantly more cases than average (21) while those who had worked in the profession for 10 years or more had significantly fewer (17). As the mean caseload is based only on those social workers who have cases directly allocated to them, and these are predominantly front line social workers, this difference cannot be explained by different levels of seniority, but it is related to more experienced social workers operating in different practice areas and the higher prevalence of part-time work among those who had been working for 10+ years in the profession.

¹⁶ 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.”

In terms of practice area, social workers working in assessment (21) and in children in need / child protection (21) reported a higher than average number of cases.

Figure 4.3 Number of cases held (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work in a relevant, case-holding role: Wave 1 (3,401), Wave 2 (1,818), Wave 3 (1,239), Wave 4 (773), Wave 5 (568). *Denotes significant difference between results in Wave 5 and Wave 4, **denotes significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

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.

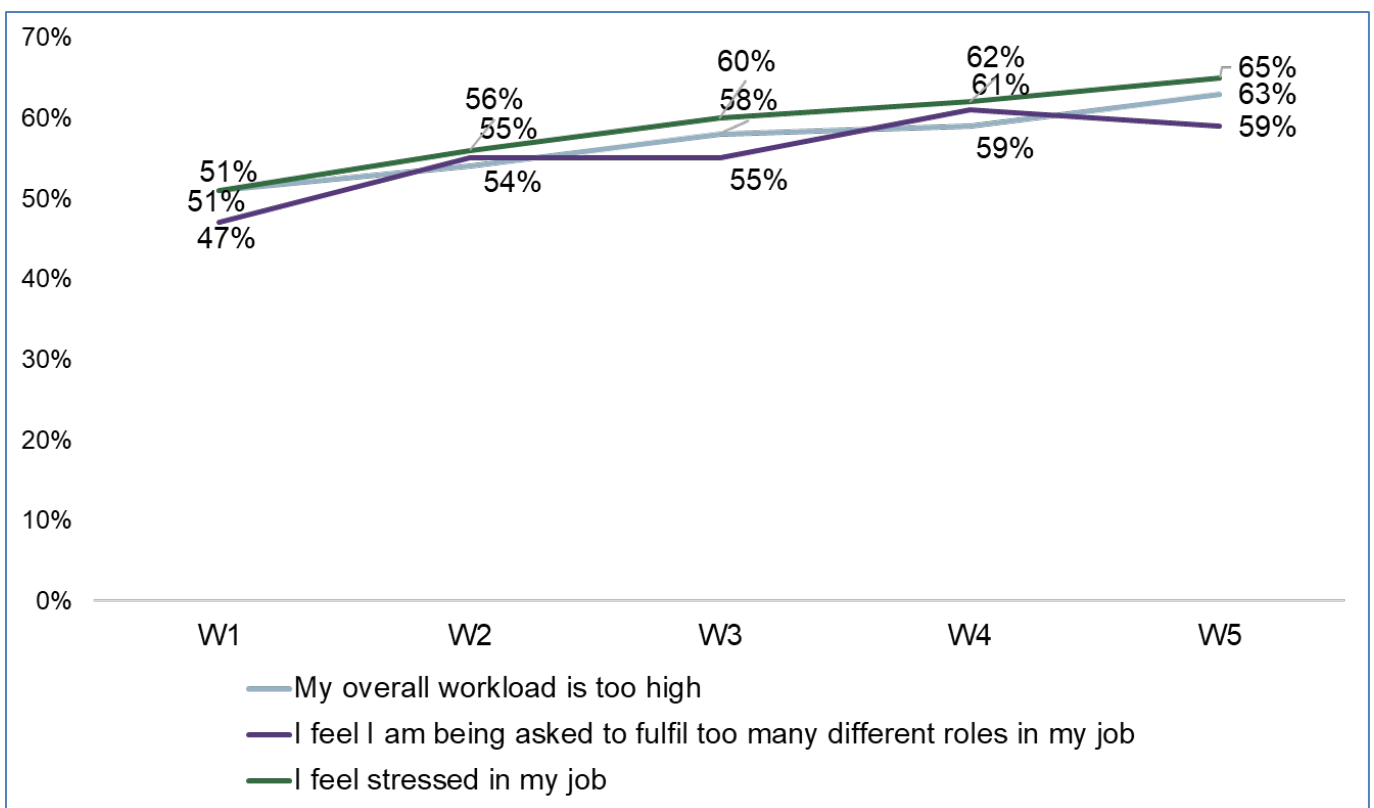
Stress levels and workload demands

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 4.4 shows that there were high feelings of workload pressure in Wave 5, similar to Wave 4. Overall, 65% of social workers said they felt stressed by their job, 59% said they are being asked to fulfil too many roles and 63% said their overall workload was too high.

Figure 4.4 Overall agreement levels regarding stress and workload demands (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000). *Denotes significant difference between results in Wave 5 and Wave 4, **denotes significant difference between Wave 5 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 feeling stressed by their job; this has increased by 14 percentage points compared to Wave 1. The proportions of social workers

who said they were being asked to fulfil too many roles in their job and who felt their overall workload is too high have both increased by 12 percentage points versus 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, 93% said they felt stressed by their job, 81% said they were being asked to fulfil too many roles and 84% said the workload was too high. The comparative figures for those who were satisfied with their job overall were 55%, 51% and 56%. Likewise, of those who intended to leave child and family social work, 94% said they felt stressed in their job, 86% said they had too many roles and 94% said their workload was too high. The equivalent figures amongst those who were not planning to leave were significantly lower at 63%, 58% and 61% respectively.

Feeling stressed by their job

Overall, at Wave 5, 65% of social workers agree that they felt stressed by their job. Feelings of stress were higher than average for front line practitioners, standing at 74%. They were also higher than average amongst social workers working in the field of child in need / child protection (72%).

Not all job roles or practice areas reported similar levels of stress. For example, as a comparison 36% of practice leaders and 49% of senior service manager / directors said they felt stressed by their job. Likewise, 53% of social workers in duty / first response / front door / MASH, 51% in adoption, 57% in fostering, 45% in prevention / early help services and 51% in kinship care said they felt stressed by their job.

Those aged 25-34 were more likely to agree that they feel stressed by their job (78%, compared with the average, 65%). Linked to age, less experienced social workers who had been in the profession for 2-3 years (87%) or 4-5 years (77%) were also more likely than average to say they felt stressed by their job.

Fulfilling too many job roles

In Wave 5 overall, 59% of social workers felt that they are being asked to fulfil too many different roles in their job. Agreement was more common than average amongst front line practitioners (62%, compared with 59%). Social workers in the following fields were more likely than average to feel that they are being asked to fulfil too many different roles in their job: working with children with disabilities (74%), placement / permanence services (75%), leaving care (72%), fostering (67%), children in need / child protection (65%) and looked after children (70%). However, social workers in duty / first response / front door / MASH services were less likely than average to agree with this (48%).

Those aged 25-34 were more likely than to agree that they are being asked to fulfil too many different roles in their job (69%, compared with the average, 59%) as were those with 2-3 years' experience in the profession (82%).

By Ofsted rating, social workers in the local authorities with an 'outstanding' rating were less likely to agree that they were being asked to fulfil too many different roles (48% compared with 59% on average).

Having too high a workload

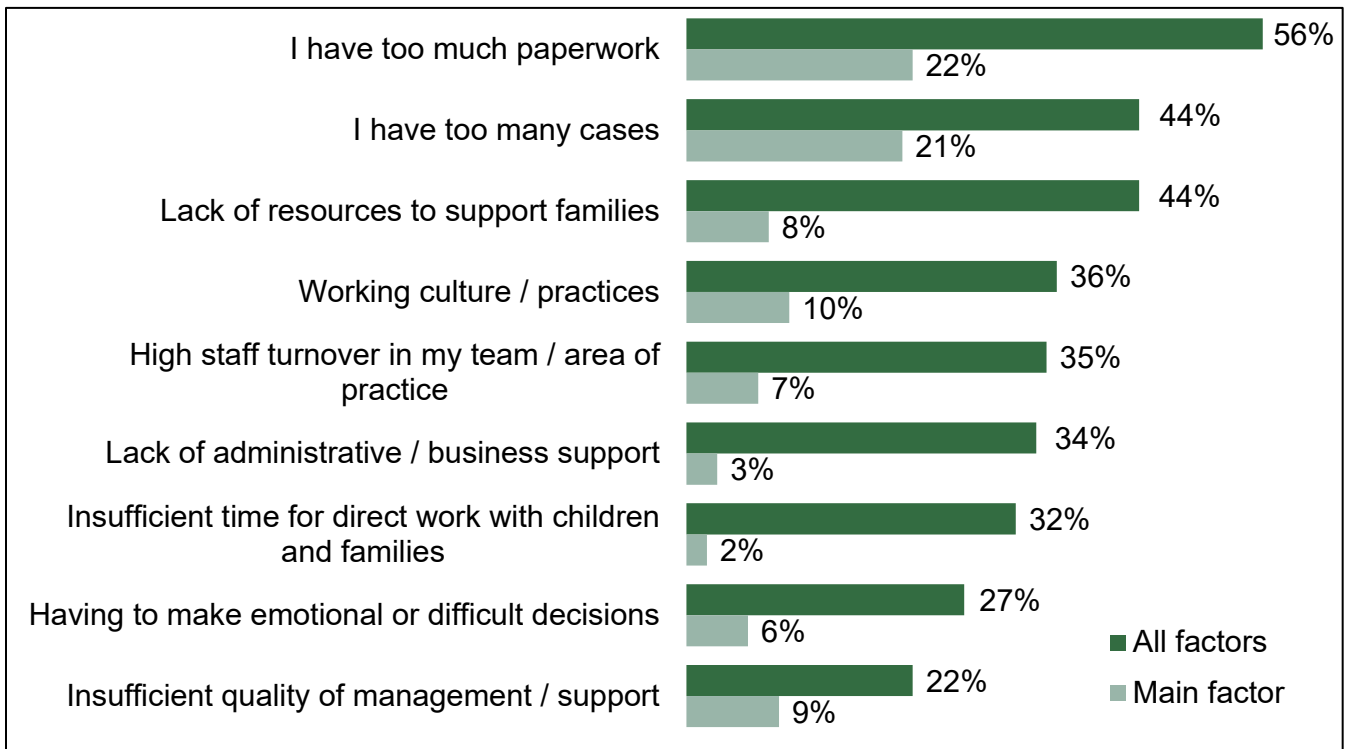
At Wave 5 overall, 63% reported that their workload is too high. Team managers were more likely than average to agree that their workload is too high (69%), whereas practice supervisors were less likely to think this (52%). Social workers working with children with disabilities, those working in children in need / child protection and looked after children were more likely than average to agree that their workload is too high (75%, 70% and 71% respectively).

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 4.5 shows a range of reasons for stress at Wave 5, with too much paperwork cited most often (56%), followed by a lack of resources to support families (44%) and having too many cases (44%). When social workers were asked to identify the most important (main) factor, there was equal prominence between too much paperwork (22%) and having too many cases (21%). As the main factor, lack of resources to support families drops down behind poor working culture/practices and insufficient quality of management/support. The only significant change seen at Wave 5 is the proportion of social workers mentioning too much paperwork as being one of the reasons for them feeling stressed (56%, compared with 62% at Wave 4).

Figure 4.5 All and main reported reasons for feeling stressed by the job (Wave 5)



Base: All who feel stressed by their job: Wave 5 (634). Only factors cited by at least 2% as the main factor are shown on 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 (52% compared with 44% on average), a lack of resources to support families (47%, compared with 44% on average) and insufficient time for direct work with children and families (43% compared with 32% on average). In contrast senior service managers / directors were more likely than average to say that they had a lack of administrative / business support (53%, compared with 34% on average).

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

- Having too much paperwork was more likely to be mentioned by those working in duty / first response / front door / MASH (73%), in looked after children (69%), and placements / permanence (73%, compared with 56% on average)
- Lack of resources to support families was more likely to be mentioned by those working in assessment (55% compared with 44% on average)
- Working culture / practices was more likely to be mentioned by social workers working with looked after children (41%), and in fostering (52%, compared with 36% on average)

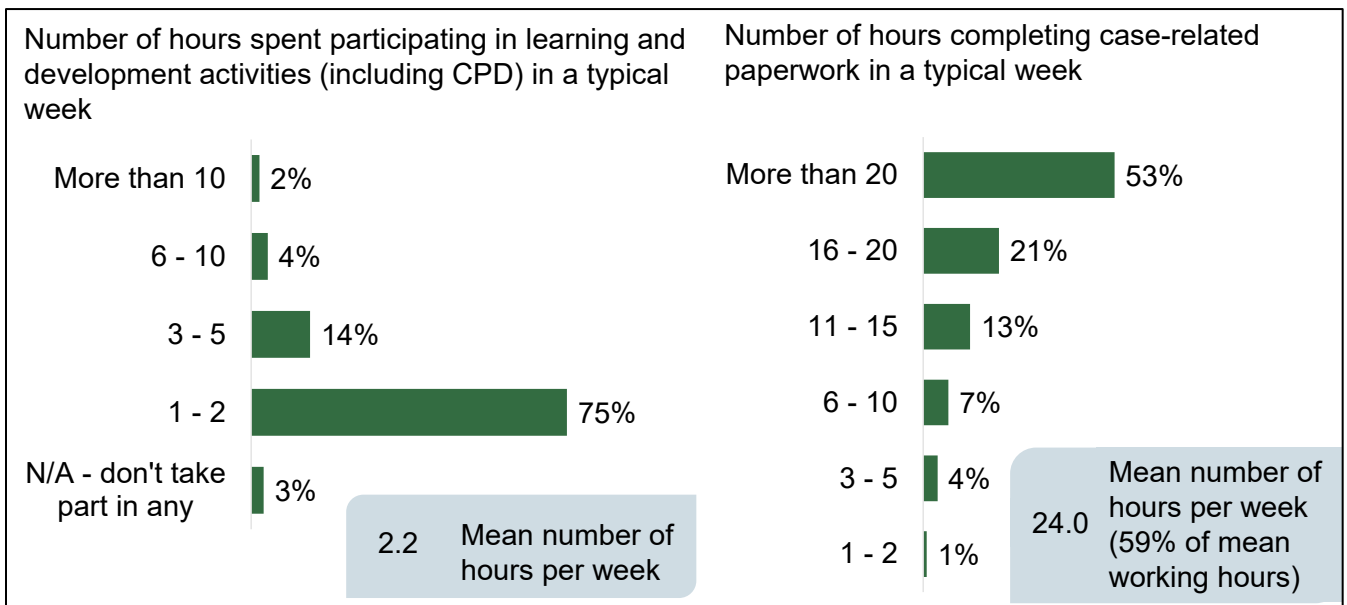
- Lack of administrative / business support was more likely to be mentioned by those working with looked after children (43%), and in assessment (44% compared with 34% on average)
- High staff turnover was more likely to be mentioned by those in placements / permanence support (60%), those working in duty / first response / front door / MASH (50%), within looked after children (48%) and in assessment (40%), compared with 35% on average
- Insufficient time for direct work with children and families was more likely to be mentioned by those working with looked after children (38% compared with 32% on average).

Time spent on paperwork and training

At Wave 5, social workers were asked new questions about the amount of time they spend in a typical week on both completing case-related paperwork, and training or other learning and development activities (including CPD). On average, 24 hours per week were spent on completing case-related paperwork, whilst two hours per week was spent on learning and development (Figure 4.6).

Time spent on CPD was higher among practice supervisors and practice leaders (each averaging 3 hours per week) and senior service managers / directors (averaging 4 hours per week). It also averaged more highly in certain practice areas: prevention / early help (5 hours), leaving care, placements / permanence and working with children with disabilities (4 hours each), and fostering (3 hours). Unlike time on paperwork, there were no significant differences by LA Ofsted rating.

Figure 4.6 Number of hours spent participating in learning and development activities and completing case-related paperwork in a typical week



Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work (1,000)

Front line practitioners reported a higher mean number of hours per week completing case-related paper work (25 hours), whilst senior service managers / directors reported a lower mean number of hours on this (15 hours) as would be expected given they are less likely to be as involved in cases.

By practice area, social workers working with children with disabilities and those working in assessment reported a higher than average mean number of hours completing paper work (both 27 hours, compared with 24 hours on average). Social workers in adoption and fostering, however, reported a lower than average number of hours completing paper work (20 and 21 hours respectively).

Time spent on case-related paperwork was lower than average for social workers employed in LAs rated as 'outstanding' by Ofsted (22 hours). Social workers who felt satisfied with their job overall tended to spend less time on case-related paperwork (averaging 23 hours) than those who were dissatisfied (who averaged 26 hours).

At Wave 5, social workers were also asked about the types of paperwork / administrative tasks they find most burdensome and why. Overall, one in ten social workers regarded no aspects of paperwork as burdensome (10%) while a further 7% were unable to give any examples. The most common things mentioned are shown in Table 3.2. Because social workers could provide an open response to this question, their answers are a mix of specific aspects of paperwork (such as case recording, 26%) and general issues (such as too much repetition, 20%).

Table 4.2 Most common aspects of paperwork / administration cited as burdensome¹⁷

Aspects mentioned by 5% or more:	%
Case recording / reporting / visit write-ups	26
Too much repetition	20
Too much form filling generally	14
Unnecessary meetings / writing up meeting minutes	13
Assessments / assessment reviews	9
Poor IT systems	9
Referrals	6
General administration / paperwork	5
Court work	5

Base: All those working in LA child and family social work (1000). Only responses of 5% or more are shown in the table, which excludes the proportions saying 'nothing is burdensome' and 'don't know'.

Across the five years of the study, respondents have consistently cited excessive 'paperwork' as one of the most time-consuming aspects of their work and a significant cause of stress, and the qualitative interviews explored this in more detail. The interviews included questions on administrative support, recording systems and suggestions for change.

Respondents were asked an open question about the administrative support available to them personally in their current roles. The interviewers did not define 'administrative work' or 'admin support' but allowed respondents to talk about this as it related to their day-to-day work. In summary, several respondents said that recording what happened to children during their involvement with children's services was an important part of a social worker's role. This was both a statutory duty and part of their professional responsibility. However, many respondents were frustrated with the amount of recording required, and dissatisfied with structures, systems and processes that drove this, and with the time spent carrying out other administrative and practical tasks that they felt could safely be done by non-social workers.

Not surprisingly, interviewees said that support for social workers in administrative and recording tasks varies across local authorities and sometimes across different teams within the same local authority. Common themes from the interviews relate to the availability of support, its nature and quality, recording practices, and frustrations with aspects of electronic recording systems.

Respondents were asked to estimate how much time might be saved if admin and recording tasks could be cut back and how they would use that time instead. Some people attempted to do this, but although many said time could be saved, most did not provide a figure. Social

¹⁷ Social workers provided a verbatim response which was then constructed into a code frame during the data reduction process. More than one coded response was possible.

workers typically said they would spend more time in direct contact with families, or on reflection. One manager said they would have more time to support staff and deliver training.

I don't think I ever came into social work thinking that I was going to be sitting behind a desk all the time. I seem to be able to spend less and less time doing direct, face-to-face work because the majority of it is around writing, recording and some of those tasks could be taken by admin staff and allow a lot more opportunities for social workers to be out doing face-to-face. [Social Worker, Other]

Administrative and recording tasks and support

Administrative tasks and responsibilities as described by participants in the qualitative research, fell into three broad categories, although with some overlap between them:

- General organisational admin/clerical tasks
- More specialised administrative tasks
- Recording of professional interventions, analysis, and decision-making.

General organisational admin/clerical tasks

Respondents in the qualitative interviews identified a range of general, largely clerical, work that they felt should be done by administrative or business support staff. These were basic tasks, and included things such as printing, scanning documents into files, posting out letters and other documents, data entry (for example, putting information about new referrals onto recording systems), and processing payments and invoices.

Most said they had access to some administrative support for tasks of this kind, but the nature and extent of this varied widely and there was no strong pattern related to their area of practice or role. Other respondents said that admin support was so limited or ineffective that they adopted a 'do it yourself' approach. Some respondents were not specific about who provided support and how they accessed it. One agency worker said that they were part of a team of staff bought as a package from a social work agency, which included an agency worker responsible for administrative support to the team.

Admin support provided by a centralised or generic business support team was not generally preferred. Social workers would typically have to email these teams to request work to be completed, but often felt distanced from them:

...they've had quite a turnover of staff, so we don't actually know who our business support staff are. So we are just emailing [a] mailbox that we don't know...we don't know what they're called. And that kind of feels, I don't know, that just feels really, really odd. [Social Worker identified as child protection (CP) but 'Other' at the point of fieldwork]

Some respondents contrasted the current centralised arrangements with previous experiences of admin or business support workers allocated to, and sometimes located in specific teams:

Business support is now independent of the team. Before, we used to have admin workers as very much part of our team. They were the eyes and ears, you know, they were very supportive; whereas now they're managed completely separately, and their remits are very clear of what they will do. [Team Manager, Other]

More than one person said that they often found it easier, quicker, and safer to do things themselves, despite feeling that instead, they should be using their time to engage with children and families. For example, a child protection social worker talked about the time it took to book a taxi to get a family to court:

I need to find the specific taxi request form which is somewhere hidden away on some shared server...so I have to go to admin...ask them where the form is. I usually go and look for the form. Can't find it. Go back to admin, they then download it and email it to me. I fill it in. I have to find my manager and ask them to approve the request, and then I have to take the form that my manager signs, scan it in, email it to the admin who will contact the taxi firm and book the taxi. If I could just write an email saying hi so and so I need a taxi from here to here at this time and then they could go and sort it, that would be great. [Advanced Practitioner, CP]

Even though sometimes the structures, systems and processes were sources of frustration, most participants who had access to support with basic admin were satisfied with this:

The business support officers do lots of administrative stuff, so they put all the new referrals onto the system. They do a lot of work around payments and invoices and getting those things sorted. They help the social workers by processing all of the checks...so they do all of the administration around that and then they put it onto the system. So they do help the social workers a lot. [Team Manager, Other]

More specialised administrative tasks

Interviewees identified a second category of administrative and recording tasks specifically generated by children and families social work, which were more complex than those in the first category, but which nevertheless did not necessarily need to be carried out by social workers. Examples of these include taking calls from families, answering questions and passing on messages; carrying out standard checks such as DBS and health checks for foster carers; organising and minuting meetings, and preparing chronologies and court paperwork.

It was noted that some of the work in this category would need to be overseen and checked by social workers, for example, typing up records, or taking minutes of meetings. But certain time-consuming tasks could be carried out by non-social work qualified staff, which would free up social workers' time and attention for work that was and should be their responsibility.

You know, if social workers had...you know, because they're chairing meetings and taking their own notes, and then writing them up afterwards...that's a duplicate and triple role that they're doing as well as trying to take in what they're hearing and managing that process. If they had, you know, someone that was taking the minutes it would just take away a lot of that pressure and get things on the system in a timely way. [Senior Service Manager, CP]

Again, there was variation in the provision of support with these tasks; some people had to carry out all this work themselves, while for others, assistance was available. A number of participants emphasised that staff carrying out tasks in this category would need higher levels of skills and training than those in general administrative roles. Where staff were not suitably trained, experienced and/or qualified, again some social workers said they preferred to do the work themselves, given their professional responsibility as qualified workers.

For example, some respondents said there were staff available to minute meetings, but some minute takers were not always familiar with the subject matter of meetings.

There are minute takers available for strategy meetings or child protection meetings...the one time I did it, they just came back all wrong and they didn't really understand. You can't always expect a business [support worker] to understand what someone's talking about when it comes to risk and child protection, and they can easily get it wrong, so that's a bit tricky. [Practice Supervisor, CP]

In some settings, staff able to carry out these higher level tasks were more closely integrated into social work teams. Examples included a small admin team responsible for supporting six permanence teams within one LA; and in another, all CP teams were allocated a social work team resource officer who was able to attend CP core group meetings and record and type up minutes, and to call families on behalf of the social worker. Another participant talked about the value of having a social work support officer (SWSO) in their team, fulfilling a similar role:

SWSOs organise all our meetings, they'll arrange for minutes to go out, and they take phone calls from people and pass the messages on if need be... the SWSO role is brilliant. [Practice Consultant, CP]

Tasks relating to professional interventions, analysis and decision-making

There was a good deal of agreement that there is some paperwork that needs to be completed by social workers, and that this is an important part of work with children and families. Broadly, respondents said that social workers should be responsible for recording the direct contact they had with children and families, and with writing up documents involving social work analysis, such as case summaries, assessments and reports.

Most respondents who talked about this said that it was important for children that detailed, accurate and sensitive records were kept about them, explaining and accounting for decisions

and explaining what had happened to them, not least because later in life, these children may want to access their records. For example, one Senior Practitioner talked about her attitude towards recording in her previous role as a child protection social worker:

[Recording] used to take up a lot of my time because I felt like the families deserved me to spend a lot of time thinking about how I write what happened in the visit or what we discussed or capturing that for them. So that always used to take me a long time.

[Senior Practitioner, Other]

Some people suggested though that over-recording could be problematic, and take time away from meaningful social work with children.

You write your meetings up. You write every phone call, every email that you receive. You have to get it on the child's file. The amount of paperwork that you have to do for everything is just stupid. It doesn't benefit that child. It doesn't help that child. [Social Worker, CP]

As well as being responsible for maintaining case records, social workers should, according to one team manager, be undertaking recording tasks requiring professional interpretation and analysis, and where decisions were to be made based on this professional assessment and analysis. Clarity about exactly what these tasks are, and delegation of those that could be done by others, would free up social worker time; for example, one respondent said that in their LA, social work assistants are being recruited to do chronologies.

Yes, okay, so, a chronology does not need to be done by a social worker. It needs to be read by a social worker. A case summary, for example, that needs to be done by a social worker, because you've got some analysis in there for it. Organising child in need meetings, core group meetings, they don't need to be done by a social worker. They need to be chaired by the social worker. [Team Manager, CP]

Recording systems and practices

Electronic recording systems have long since replaced paper files in most organisations, but continue to be sources of frustration for many of the interview participants. It was not always clear whether these frustrations arise because of lack of flexibility or fitness for purpose of the systems themselves, or because of practices and policies linked to the culture of organisations and their expectations of recording – for example, ways in which systems were used in different LAs, including levels of detail required in the records. Sometimes this seemed to be a combination of the two.

Where respondents had anything to say about electronic systems, most had criticisms and only two were positive about them, in one instance following recent improvements that had been made to the system they used. The most commonly mentioned issues were the amount

of repetition / duplication of information, the design of systems in terms of the user interface and speed.

A typical frustration was the number of 'clicks' needed in and out of different parts of the system; for example,

Like, in almost all systems when you do social work, there's some allowance to just be able to go on and write a case note if something's happened. In this one, you can't even just write a case note. You have to start a work list and then you have to add a form and then you can write into it. It's just really painful, it's the worst system I've ever used, so that is a problem for me in terms of recording and it does stress me out. [Pod Manager, Other]

Respondents complained that the same information had to be entered in several places on the system and questioned why information has to be repeated. They were frustrated when having entered basic information once, this could not be pulled through to pre-populate different parts of the record.

I don't know how many different pages I have to put Mum and Dad's name and address, and it's just like - they're on the system! I've recorded on a system and I have to put it in and cut and paste it on three different pages within the same document. [Social Worker CP]

While this can be to do with technical issues and the design of the electronic systems, there were also examples indicating that repetition might be because of the way in which things are done in a particular LA, as the following comment about internal referral forms suggests:

...we all have electronic systems, we all have the names, addresses, the genogram, the family makeup, and these forms again and again ask for these details. And what we should always have is an updated child and family assessment, and that should be used for all of the internal referrals rather than filling in another form for another of the family's needs. [Unit Manager, CP]

In terms of agency expectations and recording practices, interviewees said there were differences across LAs.

Compared to my previous local authority this is better... when I worked [there] it had got like you were being asked to write a whole massive report, and then only two boxes of that were actually looked at and discussed in the meeting, and you would only have a short space of time to do it. So that, I thought, was very unnecessary. Whereas in [my current local authority], you're required to do a lot less, but it's clear, concise and gets to the point, so it's just a bit of a less tedious task to do. [Agency Social Worker, CP]

Some participants reflected on the purpose of recording from a professional and values perspective, and while most people who commented on this were clear about the importance

of good record-keeping, a small number expressed concern about over-recording and the reasons this might happen. The idea that 'if it's not written down, it didn't happen' was mentioned by a few people, who recognised the challenge of achieving a balance in recording enough, but not more than was needed. Some people acknowledged that defensive recording arose from anxiety on the part of social workers. Others said that recording unnecessary detail was time consuming:

...those sorts of visits can feel really frustrating where you end up taking ages case recording ...when actually what you really want to say is things were fine... I saw nothing of concern, or like, you know, no significant disclosures. [Advanced Practitioner, CP]

A deputy team manager in child protection said that recording to 'cover your back' arises from the culture set by managers in an organisation and can be related to anxiety about Ofsted inspections. He questioned whether social workers undertaking single assessments have the right to attempt to answer every question about a family's life, and pointed out that the time saved by not doing so could be spent in meaningful work with child in need cases:

[We] could save time and use it with child in need work, often they are getting only the obligatory visits, no meaningful work. We talk about parents doing the bare minimum and we call that disguised compliance. Well, what's this? Because this isn't meaningful work from our end. [Deputy Team Manager, CP]

A practice supervisor said that within their team, they regularly talk about their recording practice, looking at how they write about people, and how that record follows them through their lives.

Many of the participants described how the administrative and recording demands of the job continue to be burdensome. This seems to be the case in all areas of practice, although most challenging for front line social workers in CP teams. An experienced practice leader emphasised the importance of recognising the administrative and recording pressures on social workers, and the potential impact of providing appropriate levels of support:

...good administrative support makes social workers feel valued;...that they've got that support there and it's recognised that, you know, it's something that they've needed and wanted. And yeah... that management understands the pressures that social workers are under. So I think it's helped them to feel really valued themselves as well. [Practice Leader, CP]

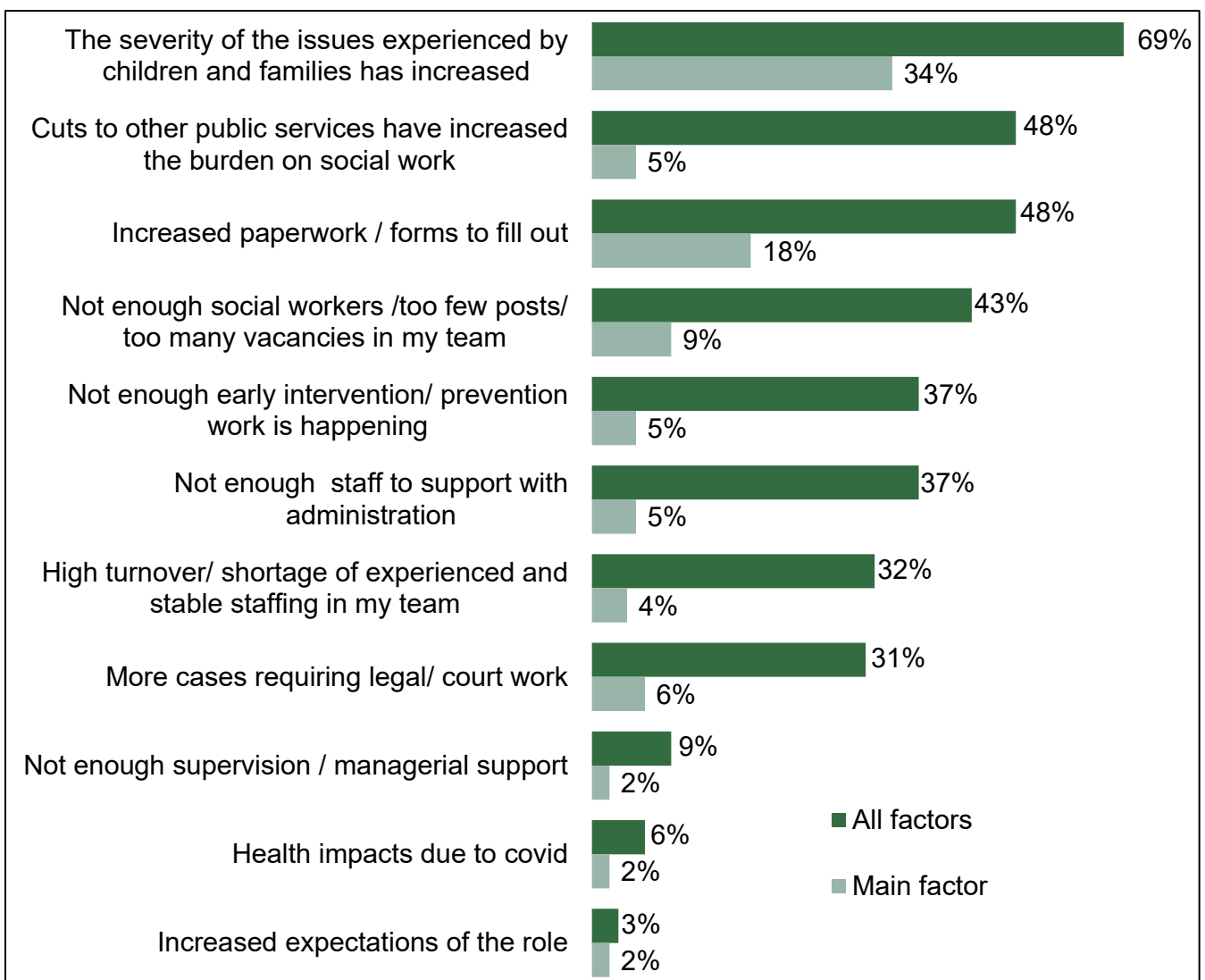
Views on change over time in the time spent per case

At Wave 5, social workers who had a caseload were asked a new question about whether they felt the number of hours spent on each case has changed over the last five years. Three in five (61%) reported that the number of hours has increased, whilst one in five (20%) said

that it has stayed the same. A further 11% reported that this time had decreased. This is notable because the survey has shown a fairly stable average caseload over the past five years, while the proportions of social workers who report feeling stressed by their job and having too high a workload have increased. One reason for this could be that time spent per case is increasing.

Amongst those who said that time spent per case has increased, common reasons included increased severity of issues experienced by children and families (69%), cuts to other public services which are perceived to have increased the burden on social work (48%), increased paperwork (48%), and increased shortages of social workers / too many vacancies (43%). When asked for their main reason, social workers cited increased severity of cases (34%) and increased paperwork (18%), with lack of social workers falling to 9% and cuts to other public services dropping to 5%.

Figure 4.7 All and main reasons for increasing number of hours spent per case (Wave 5)



Base: All caseholders who feel that number of hours per case has increased over the last 5 years (338).

When looking at all factors noted by social workers, front line practitioners were more likely than average to identify cuts to other public services as one of the reasons for why the number of hours they spend per case has increased (51%, compared with 48%). The same applies to social workers working in assessment (72%, compared with 48%). Social workers working in assessment were also more likely than average to cite not having enough social workers / too few posts/vacancies (56%, compared with 43%), not having enough early interventions (58%, compared with 37%), not having enough staff to support with administration (51%, compared with 37%), and having more cases requiring legal/court work (50%, compared with 31%).

Social workers working in looked after children, were also more likely than average to list similar reasons for an increased number of hours per case, including; not having enough social workers / too few posts/ vacancies (56%, compared with 43%), having high turnover (43%, compared with 32%), and having more cases requiring legal/court work (39%, compared with 31%).

5. 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 worker's views on their employer, line manager, working environment and learning opportunities, including CPD and reflective supervision. This chapter will also look at the impact that the pandemic has had on relationships and working environment.

Chapter highlights

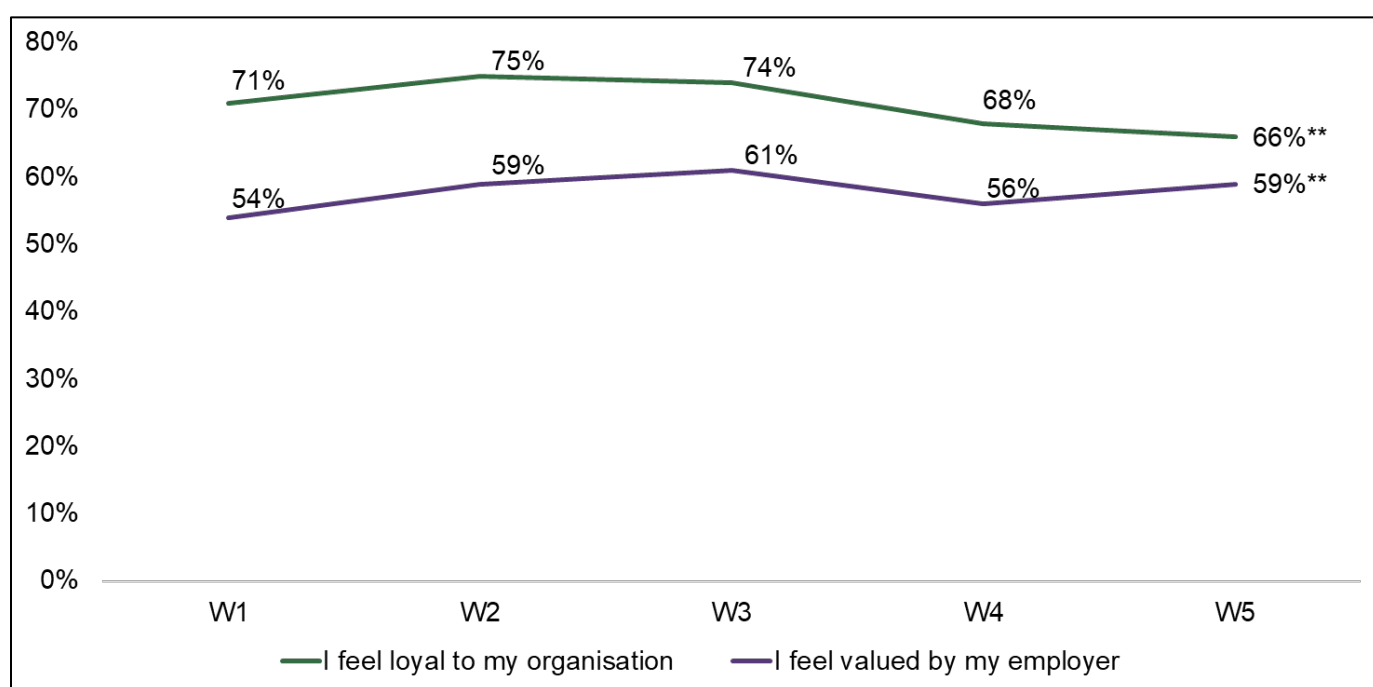
- Consistent with previous waves, social workers were more likely to feel loyal to their employer (66% agreed) than to feel valued by (59% agreed) their employer.
- Social workers were generally positive about their line manager. They were most positive about their manager being considerate of their lives outside of work (76% agreed) and encouraging them to develop their skills (71% agreed). Views have remained largely consistent compared with earlier waves, however, social workers in Wave 5 were less likely than social workers in Wave 1 to both agree that they receive regular feedback on their performance and that their manager encourages them to develop their skills.
- Agreement from social workers that they had the right tools and resources was mixed, with 63% agreeing they had the right tools for their job and but less than half (46%) agreeing that the IT systems and software support them to do their job. Compared with Wave 1, there has been a decline in the proportion of social workers agreeing with these two statements.
- Relationships with colleagues have worsened as a result of the pandemic, with half (50%) stating this. However, this is a marked improvement since Wave 4 (61%) and Wave 3 (59%). At Wave 5, one third (32%) of social workers felt that their relationships with children and families/carers had worsened (an improvement compared with Wave 4 at 36% and Wave 3 at 44%), and one quarter (25%) felt the same for support from management (another improvement compared with Wave 4, 32% and Wave 3, 29%).
- Over eight in ten (82%) social workers believe that the complexity of their cases has increased as a result of Covid-19, a significant increase compared with 76% at Wave 4 and 68% at Wave 3.
- It was most common for social workers to say they receive reflective supervision every three or four weeks (36% received it this frequently), however, this is a decrease since Wave 4 (41%). Three-quarters (76%) rated the supervision as 'very good' or 'good'.
- Most social workers (66%) agreed that they were able to access the right learning and development opportunities when needed, in line with previous waves.

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 in Figure 5.1, and similar to previous waves, social workers were more likely to feel loyal (66% agreed) than to feel valued (59% agreed) by their employer. For both loyalty and feeling valued there are no significant differences between Wave 5 and Wave 4. However, loyalty has significantly decreased since Wave 1 (66%, compared with 71% at Wave 1), whereas feeling valued has significantly increased (59%, compared with 54% at Wave 1).

Figure 5.1 Social workers' perceptions of loyalty to and feeling valued by their employer (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000). **Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 1.

This is borne out by looking at length of time at current employer at Wave 5, which indicates that newer employees felt more valued than average (79% if they had only been employed for one year or less, compared with 59% on average) but, similarly to Wave 4, they felt less loyal (49% compared with 66% on average).

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 with 46% of agency workers). However, as found in Wave 4, agency workers were more likely to feel valued by their employer (74%, compared with 56% of those directly employed by a local authority).

Many of the same differences regarding feelings of loyalty and value that were apparent in Waves 1 to 4 were also apparent in Wave 5. As with previous waves, those in senior roles generally felt more loyal and valued than front line practitioners. For example, 83% of senior service managers / directors, 93% of practice leaders, and 77% of team managers agreed they felt loyal to their employer compared with 59% of front line practitioners. A similar pattern was apparent for feeling valued: this applied to 70% of senior service managers / directors, and 84% of practice leaders, compared with 54% of front line practitioners.

Those who said they 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 (74%) agreed they felt loyal and three in five (61%) agreed that they felt valued, compared with the average (66% and 59% respectively).

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 loyal (67%, compared with those who had not, 57%). However, compared with previous waves, they were not more likely to feel valued.

Social workers working in assessment and children in need / child protection were more likely to agree that they felt valued by their employer (67% and 63% respectively, compared with the average, 59%). Social workers working with children with disabilities and within fostering were more likely to feel loyal to their organisation (77% and 78% respectively, compared with the average, 66%).

As found in previous waves, there was a link between higher feelings of loyalty and value and working in a local authority with a better Ofsted rating. Those working for a local authority with an 'outstanding' rating were more likely to agree that they felt loyal to their organisation (79%, compared with the average, 66%). However, those with an 'inadequate' rating were less likely to agree than average (56%). In terms of value, those working in a local authority with an 'outstanding' rating were more likely to agree that they feel valued by their employer (72%, compared with the average, 59%).

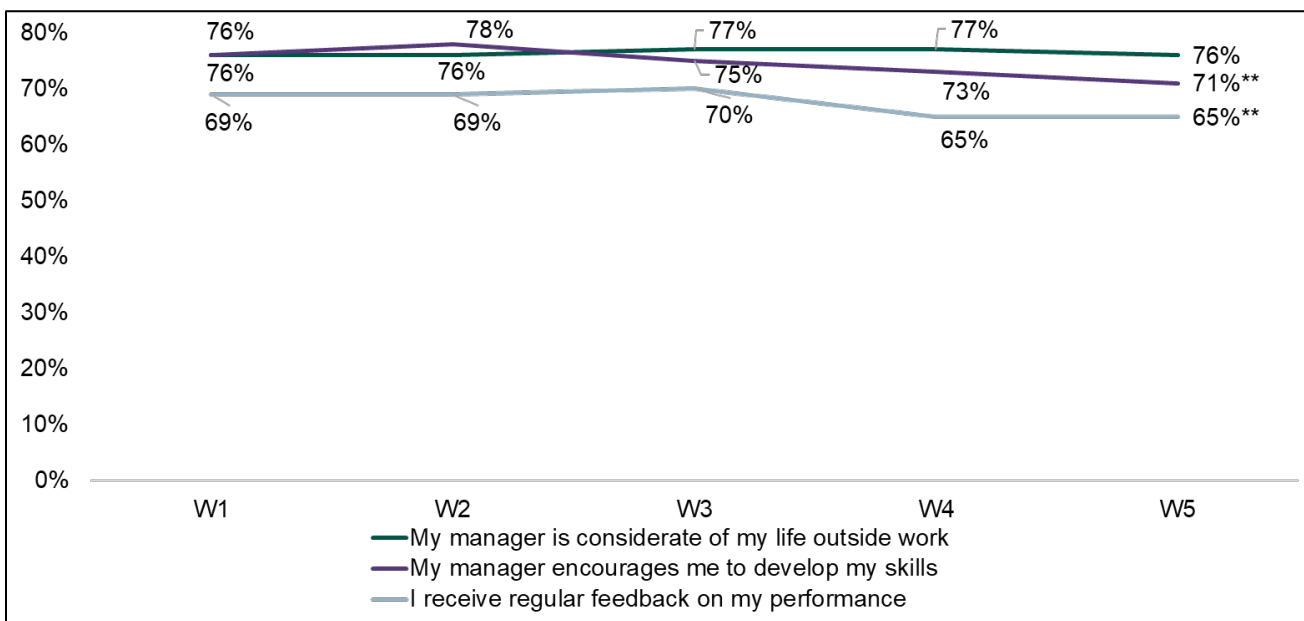
Views about line management

Child and family social workers were asked about four key aspects of their relationship with their line manager(s). Figure 5.2 shows they were typically positive. They were most positive about their manager being considerate of their lives outside of work (76% agreed) and encouraging them to develop their skills (71% agreed). Although still in the majority, they were less positive about receiving regular feedback on their performance (65% agreed).

Whilst views have remained largely consistent across the previous four waves of the study, social workers in Wave 5 were less likely than social workers in Wave 1 to both agree that they receive regular feedback on their performance (65% compared with 69% in Wave 1) and

that their manager encourages them to develop their skills (71%, compared with 76% at Wave 1).

Figure 5.2 Social workers' views on their line manager (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000). **Denotes significant differences between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

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.

By practice area, those working with children with disabilities were more likely to agree that their manager is considerate of their lives outside of work (88%, compared with 76% on average) and were more likely to agree that they receive regular feedback on their performance (77%, compared with 65% on average).

In terms of their manager being considerate of lives outside of work, practice supervisors were more likely to agree with this (86%, compared with 76% on average), whilst front line practitioners were less likely than average to agree (73%).

By demographics, lower levels of agreement were found amongst those aged 55+ (61%, compared with the average, 71%) in terms of whether their manager encourages them to develop their skills. Also, social workers from ethnic minority backgrounds were more likely than White British social workers to agree that they receive regular feedback on their performance (74% compared with 63%). Unlike previous years, there were no differences found by gender.

However, 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 (74% agreed compared with 43% who had not undertaken CPD or training). They were also more likely to agree that their manager provided regular feedback on their performance (68% compared with 37%) and was considerate of their life outside of work (78% compared with 55%).

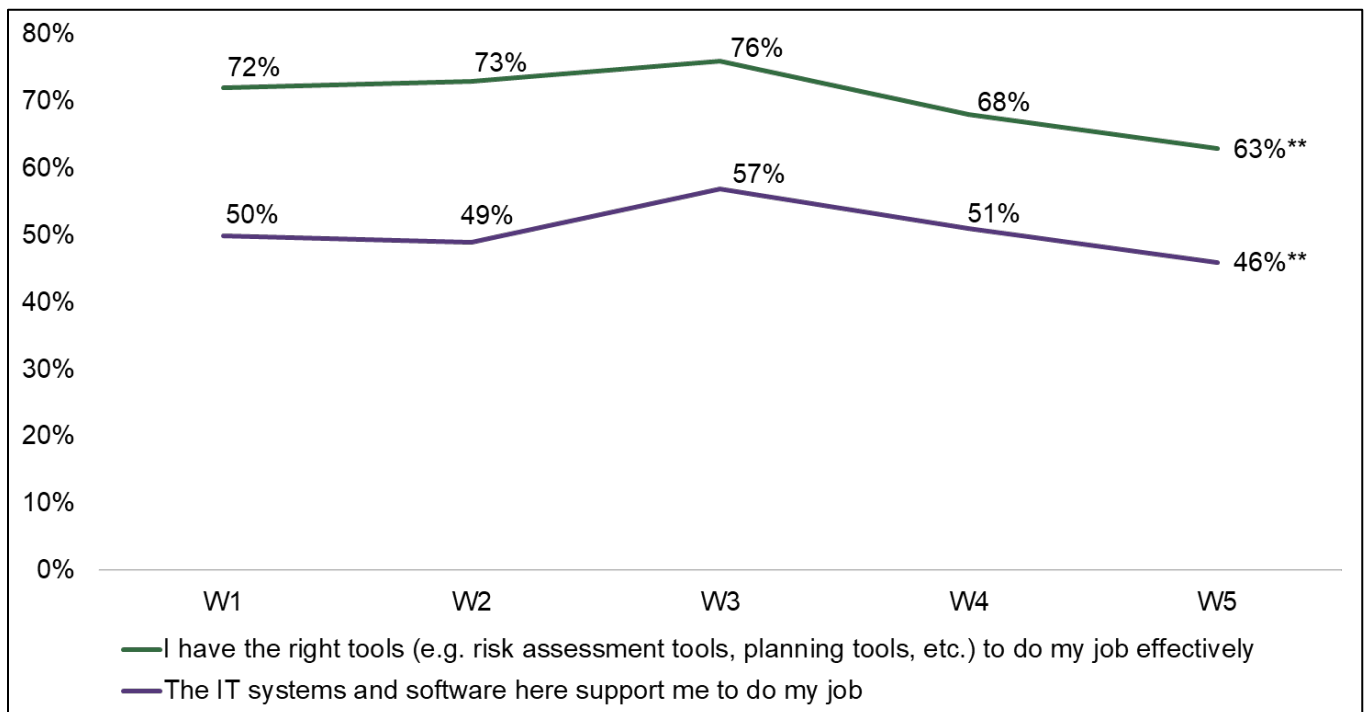
Views on tools and IT resources

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 5.3, agreement that they had the right tools and resources was mixed, with 63% agreeing they had the right tools for their job and but less than half (46%) agreeing that the IT systems and software support them to do their job.

Since Wave 4, the proportion of social workers agreeing that they have the right resources to do their job has continued to decline. Overall, there has been a decrease in the proportion of social workers agreeing that they have the right tools to do their job effectively (63%, compared with 68% at Wave 4, and 72% at Wave 1). There has also been a decrease in the proportion of social workers agreeing that the IT systems and software at their workplace support them to do their job (46%, compared with 51% at Wave 4, and 50% at Wave 1).

Figure 5.3 Views on working environment and resources (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000). *Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and

Wave 4, ** denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 1.

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.

By role, practice supervisors were more likely than average to agree that they have the right tools to do their job effectively (75%, compared with 63%). Practice leaders were more likely than average to agree that they have the IT systems and software to support them to do their job (62% compared with 46%).

Those working within leaving care and prevention / early help services were more likely than average to agree that they have the IT systems and software to support them to do their job (57% and 62% respectively, compared with the average, 46%).

Social workers that had done employer-supported CPD or training in the preceding 12 months were more likely than those who have not, to agree that they have the right tools to do their job effectively (65%, compared with 45%).

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 4, differences in views on resources were also found by local authority Ofsted rating. Almost three-quarters (73%) at an 'outstanding' authority agreed they had the right tools to do their job effectively, compared with 63% on average, and 50% for those with an 'inadequate' rating.

Social workers with a physical or mental health condition were less likely than those without to agree that they have the right tools to do their job effectively (55%, compared with 65%) and less likely to agree that they have the IT systems and software to support them to do their job (37% compared with 48%).

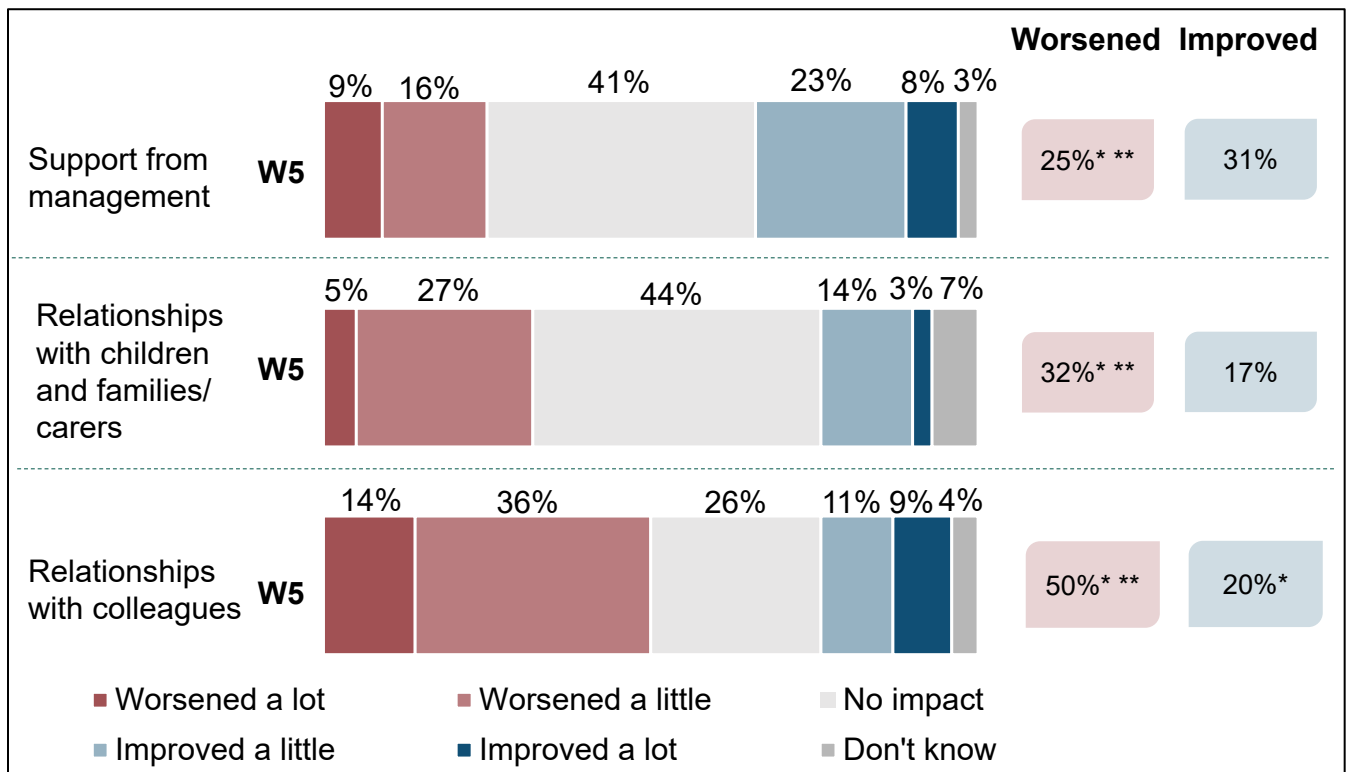
Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on relationships and working environment

Social workers were asked about whether Covid-19 had improved, worsened, or had no impact on relationships with their colleagues and with children and families (service users), as well as how much support they have received from management.

Figure 5.4 shows that, relationships with colleagues have been worsened the most as a result of the pandemic, with half (50%) stating this. This is an improvement since Wave 4 (61%) and Wave 3 (59%). At Wave 5, one third (32%) of social workers felt that their relationships with children and families/carers had worsened (a reduction compared with Wave 4, 36% and

Wave 3, 44%), and one quarter (25%) felt the same for support from management (another decrease compared with Wave 4, 32% and Wave 3, 29%).

Figure 5.4 Social workers' views on the impacts of Covid-19 (Wave 5)



Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work. Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317), Wave 5 (1,000).
 *Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 4, ** denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 3.

Looking at Covid-19's impact on support from management, social workers working full-time were more likely to report that this had improved (32%, compared with 24% of part-time social workers). By practice area, social workers in duty / first response / front door / MASH were more likely than average to also report this has improved (40%, compared with 31% on average), whereas those working within looked after children were more likely to report support from management has worsened (30%, compared with 25% on average).

In terms of relationships with children and families / carers, by role, team managers were more likely to report that they have worsened (38%, compared with the average, 32%). The same applies to social workers who have been working in the sector for more than ten years (35%, compared with the average, 32%). By practice area, those in placements / permanence services (48%), fostering (43%), and looked after children (38%), were all more likely than average (32%) to report that these relationships have worsened.

Social workers working part-time were more likely to report that their relationships with children and families / carers have worsened since the pandemic (38%, compared with 30% of full-time social workers).

In terms of social workers' relationships with colleagues, by role, both team managers (28%) and practice leaders (38%) were more likely than average (20%) to report that they have improved. The same applies to social workers working with children with disabilities (32%), within duty / first response / front door / MASH (28%), assessment (30%), within children in need / child protection (24%) and within prevention / early help services (36%) (compared with the average, 20%). Those working within fostering, however, were more likely than average to report that these relationships had worsened (59%, compared with 50% on average).

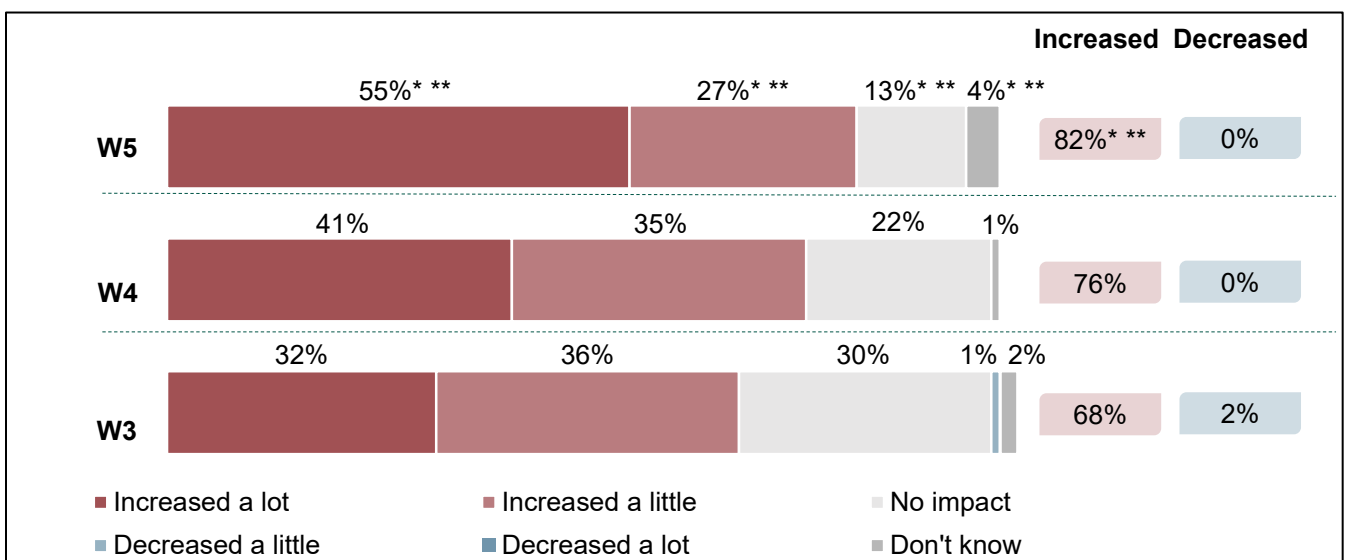
Those working part-time were more likely to report that their relationships with colleagues had worsened since the pandemic (56%, compared with 48% of full-time social workers).

Social workers were also asked about whether Covid-19 had increased, decreased, or had no impact on the complexity of their cases (Figure 5.5). Compared with Wave 3 and 4, at Wave 5 more respondents felt that Covid-19 has increased the complexity of their cases. Over eight in ten (82%) thought that the complexity of their cases has increased, compared to 76% at Wave 4 and 68% at Wave 3. As with Wave 4, no one reported that the complexity of cases has decreased.

Senior roles were more likely to report that the complexity of cases has increased. Nine in ten team managers (90%) and senior service managers / directors (92%) reported that the complexity of cases has increased, compared with 78% of front line practitioners.

Social workers working with children with disabilities were more likely than average to report that the complexity of cases had increased a lot (65%, compared with 55% on average).

Figure 5.5 Social workers' views about the impact of Covid-19 on the complexity of cases



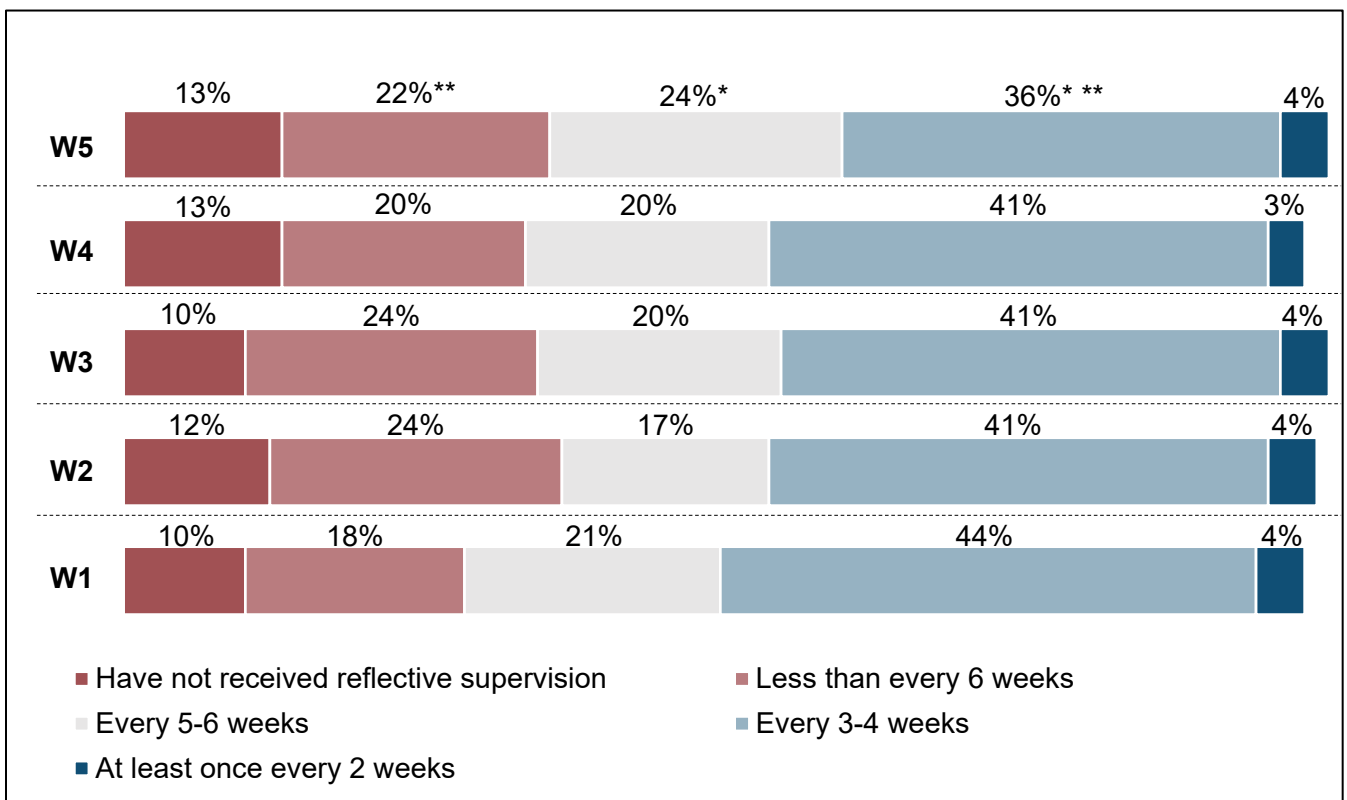
Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317), Wave 5 (1,000). *Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 4. ** Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 3.

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.¹⁸

Local authority child and family social workers in non-managerial roles were asked about the frequency of receiving reflective supervision. As shown in Figure 5.6, it was most common for social workers to say they receive reflective supervision every three or four weeks (36% received it this frequently), however, this is a decrease since Wave 4 (41% received it this frequently). By comparison, at Wave 5 social workers are more likely to have received reflective supervision once every five to six weeks (24%, compared with Wave 4, 20%).

Figure 5.6 Frequency of receiving reflective supervision (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (677). *Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 4. ** Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 1.

As 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

¹⁸ 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.

with those who were dissatisfied (40% compared with 23%). Likewise, only 8% of those satisfied said they had not received any reflective supervision compared with 25% 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.

Full-time social workers were less likely to report that they had not received reflective supervision since joining their current employer (11%, compared with 17% of part-time staff). By practice area, social workers in children in need / child protection were more likely than average to say that they have not received reflective supervision (16%, compared with 13%). Those most likely to say they had not received any reflective supervision had been in their job for less than a year (28% had not yet had any reflective supervision) but it is not possible to say how 'recent' they were to their role, beyond that.

As found in previous waves, front line practitioners were more likely to have received reflective supervision once every three or four weeks (39%, compared with 36% on average), whilst practice supervisors were less likely than average to have received it that regularly (24%).

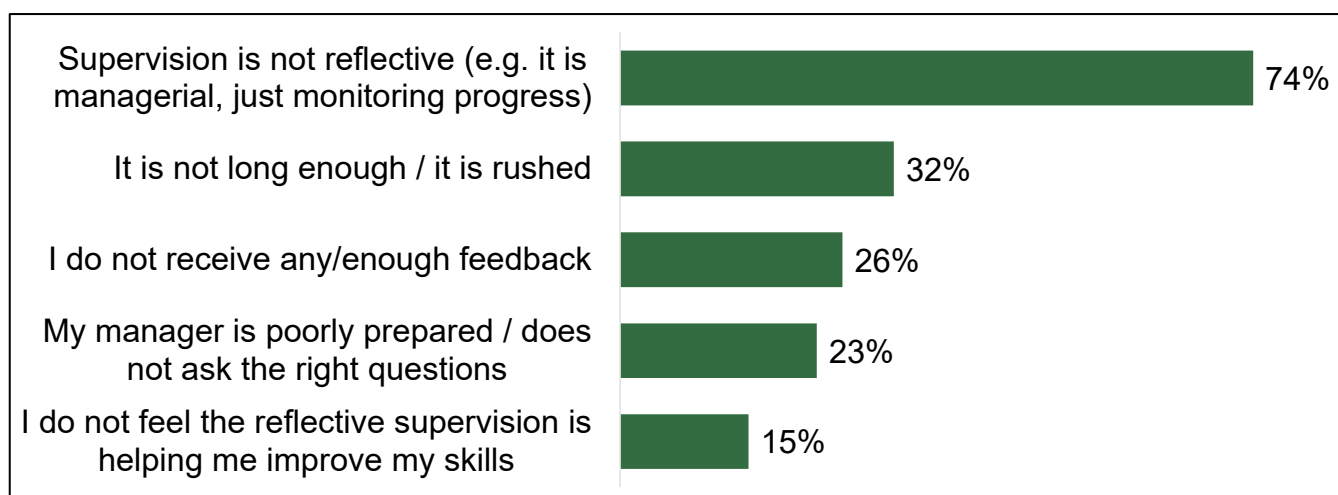
Quality of reflective supervision

Most social workers who had received reflective supervision gave it a positive rating. Three-quarters (76%) rated the supervision as 'very good' or 'good', with 18% giving a 'very good' rating. Around one in five (22%) regarded the quality as poor or very poor, although most of this group rated it as 'poor' (18%) rather than 'very poor' (4%). These findings are consistent with previous waves.

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 who had been at their employer for less than one year were more likely to rate the reflective supervision as good (91%, compared with 76% on average).

Those who rated the reflective supervision as poor were asked their reasons for this. As shown in Figure 5.7 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 centered on the reflective supervision not being long enough or being rushed, not receiving any or enough feedback, or sometimes because the manager was poorly prepared. This feedback on the quality of reflective supervision is consistent with that raised in previous waves and has also been identified in the qualitative depth interviews.

Figure 5.7 Reasons for rating reflective supervision as poor or very poor quality (Wave 5)



Base: All who think the quality of supervision is poor: Wave 5 (137).

Providing reflective supervision

The proportion of child and family social workers responsible for providing supervision has gradually increased over the course of the study. In Wave 5, 29% of respondents were responsible for providing supervision (in line with Wave 4, 28%), up from 25% at Wave 1. This increase from Wave 1 reflects the growing experience and seniority of the sample over time.

As in Wave 4, the vast majority of those responsible for providing supervision reported feeling confident in their ability to provide adequate support and supervision (96%, in line with Wave 4, 95%). There were limited differences in perceptions of the quality of the reflective supervision by role, practice area or demographics.

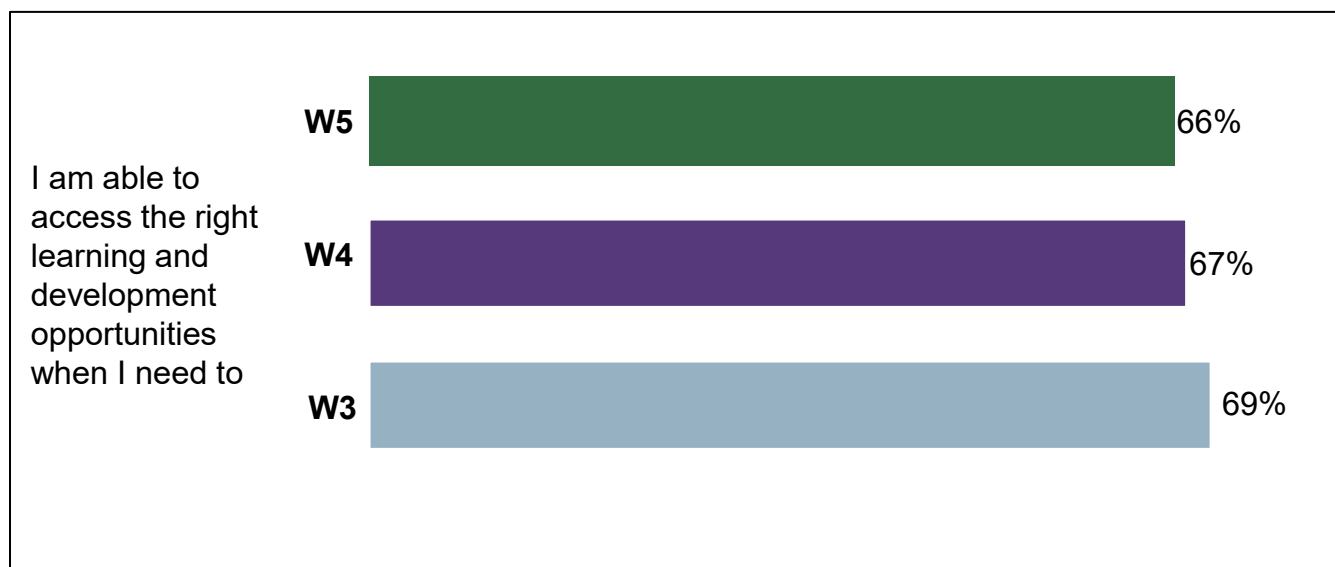
Learning and development

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 taken part in any learning or CPD over the last 12 months.

At Wave 5, most social workers (66%) agreed that they were able to access the right learning and development opportunities when needed, in line with previous waves.

Figure 5.8 Access to the right learning and development opportunities (Wave 3, 4 and 5)



Base: All currently working in LA child and family social work: Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,317), Wave 5 (1,000).

By role, practice leaders and supervisors were more likely than average to agree that they are able to access the right learning and development opportunities (both 81%, compared with 66% on average). Front line practitioners were less likely than average to agree with this (62%). Social workers working directly for a local authority were more likely than agency workers to agree (69%, compared with 55% of agency workers).

By practice area, social workers working with children with disabilities were more likely to agree that they have these opportunities available to them (77%, compared with 66% on average).

Incidence of learning and development / CPD

Nine in ten social workers (90%) said they had taken part in some learning and development / CPD supported by their employer over the past 12 months. This is in line with Wave 4 (92%).

As found previously, social workers employed directly by a local authority were much more likely to have done employer-supported learning and development in the last 12 months (92%) compared with 78% of those working via an agency. Aside from this, there were no notable differences by role, practice area or demographics.

6. 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 of local authority child and family social work.

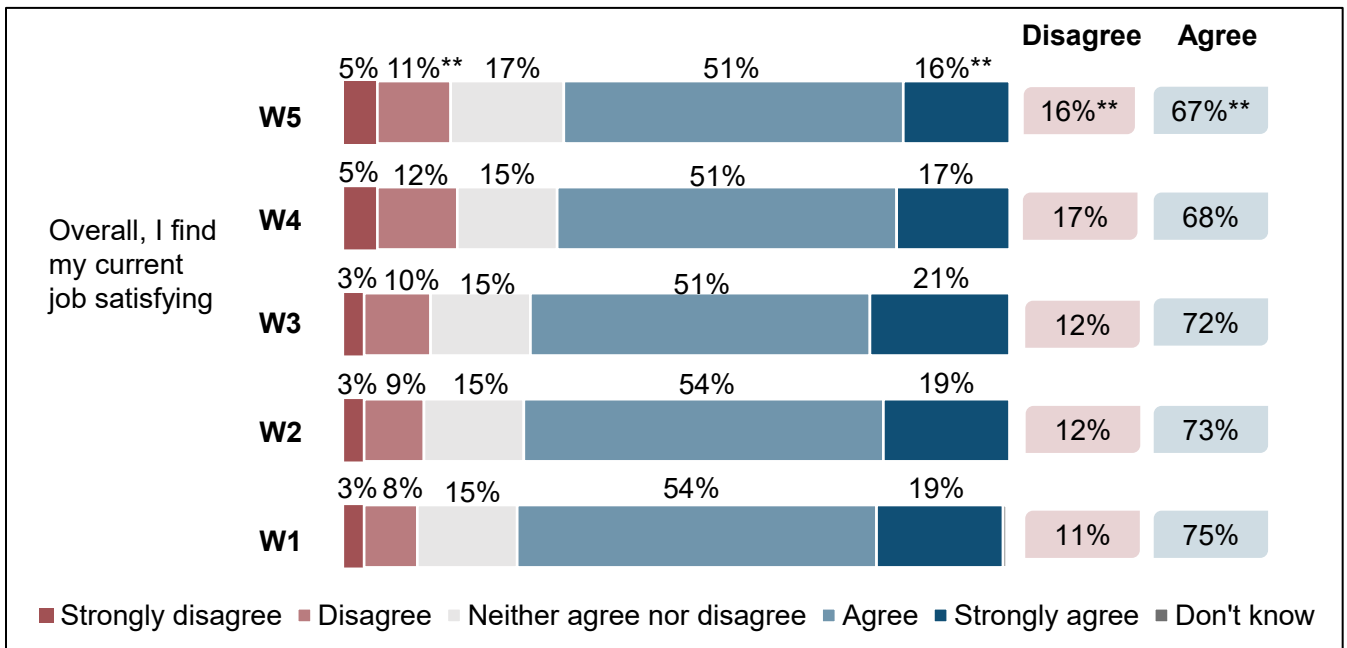
Chapter highlights

- Most social workers (67%) in Wave 5 found their job satisfying. The overall level of job satisfaction is unchanged from Wave 4, and remains lower than job satisfaction levels seen at earlier Waves (75% at Wave 1).
- Between Wave 1 and 5 there had been a decrease in levels of satisfaction with the sense of achievement social workers get from their work (83% in Wave 1 compared with 73% in Wave 5), the opportunity to develop skills (72% vs. 65%), and public respect for the work they do (25% vs. 21%).
- In addition to this, satisfaction with the amount of pay they receive has decreased to 48% in Wave 5, from 56% at Wave 4 and 61% at Wave 3, returning to satisfaction levels last seen at Wave 1 (49%).
- Satisfaction levels with job security have also fallen in Wave 5 (79%) compared to Wave 4 (84%), however they remain higher than levels seen at Wave 1 (75%).
- Across all five waves, social workers were most likely to feel career progression was in line with their expectations (54% at Wave 5), however at Wave 5 there was a significant increase in the proportion of social workers who felt progression was below their expectations (22%), compared with 19% at Wave 1.

Overall job satisfaction

Overall job satisfaction among those working in local authority child and family social work at Wave 5 remained in line with Wave 4 (Figure 6.1). Just over two-thirds (67%) of social workers who took part in Wave 5 agreed that they found their current job satisfying, (68% in Wave 4). However this does represent a drop in satisfaction from previous years (with 74% satisfied at Wave 1).

Figure 6.1 Extent of agreement with overall job satisfaction (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

Within Wave 5, and as seen in previous waves, those who had been promoted in the past 12 months reported significantly higher levels of overall job satisfaction (72%) than those who had not been promoted (65%).

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

- Senior service managers / irectors were more likely to be satisfied with their job (80%, compared with 65% of front line practitioners). This pattern was also apparent at previous waves.
- Those who worked in adoption (72%) and prevention / early help services (78%) had higher overall job satisfaction compared with those who worked in placements / permanence (57%).

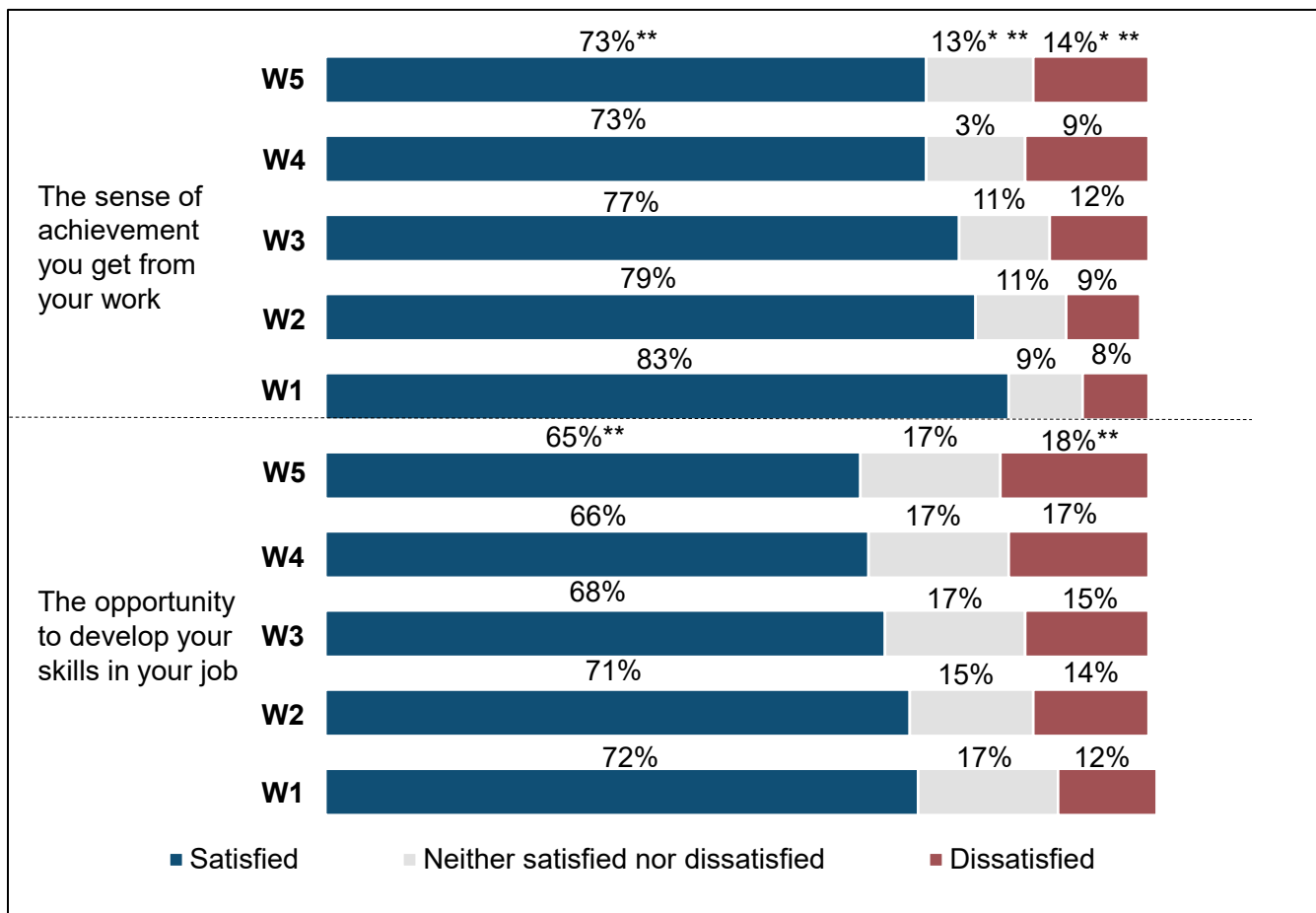
As seen in previous waves, overall job satisfaction was higher among social workers who had taken part in CPD over the last 12 months (68%) compared with those who had not (63%).

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 5, just under three-quarters (73%) were satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work, whilst two-thirds (65%) were satisfied with the opportunity to develop their skills in their job. As shown in Figure 6.2, these measures remain in line with Wave 4, but have decreased over time compared with Wave 1 (83% satisfied with sense of achievement and 72% satisfied with opportunity to develop skills in Wave 1).

Figure 6.2 Social workers' satisfaction with sense of achievement and opportunity to develop skills (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000) *Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 4, **denotes significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

The groups more likely to be satisfied with the opportunity to develop their skills in their job, also remained in line with the previous wave:

- Those who had done 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 (66% compared with 49%).
- Social workers in local authorities rated as 'outstanding' (80%) were more likely to be satisfied than those in local authorities rated 'good' (66%), 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' (59% each).
- Front line practitioners (62%) were again less satisfied than social workers

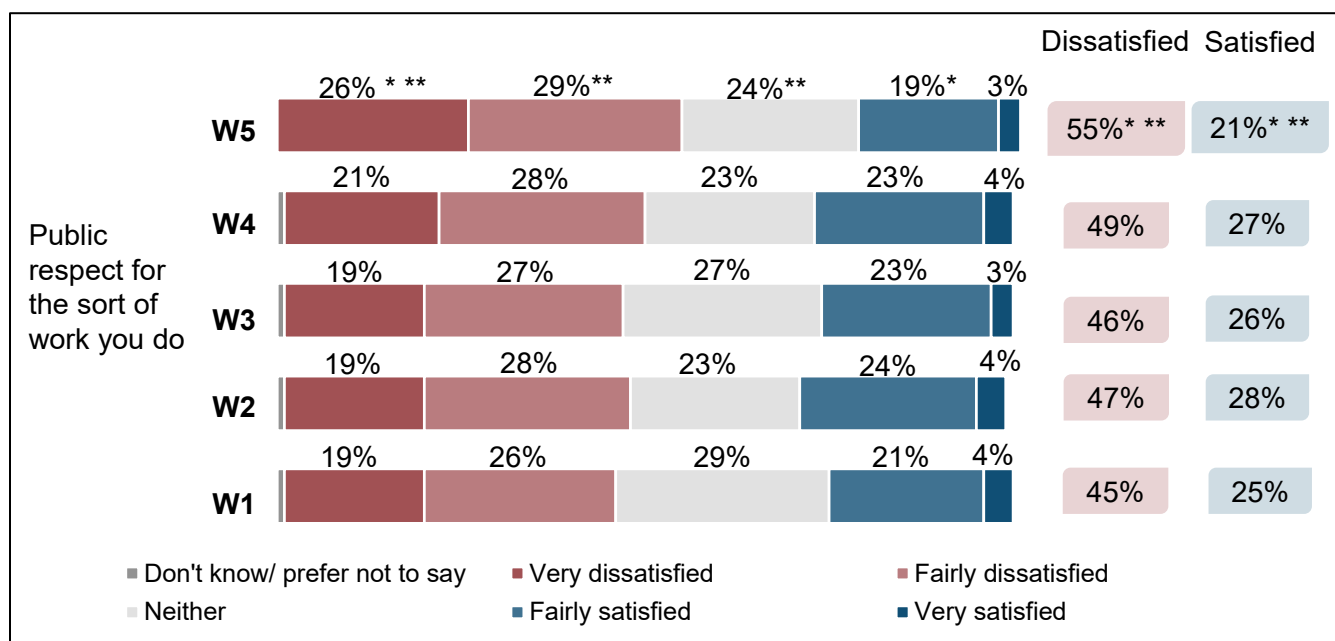
generally (65%)¹⁹, in particular compared with team managers (71%).

In addition to this, in Wave 5, those who worked in prevention / early help services were more likely than those working in other areas to be satisfied with the opportunity they have to develop skills (82%, compared with 65% overall).

Public respect for the work social workers do

As presented in Figure 6.3, social workers' satisfaction with public respect for the sort of work they do remained low, with just one in five (21%) satisfied. Satisfaction in this area is lower than in previous waves, and has fallen compared with Wave 4 (27% satisfied).

Figure 6.3 Social workers' satisfaction with public respect for the sort of work they do (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000). *Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 4, ** denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

In Wave 5, the proportion who were satisfied with public respect for the sort of work they do varied by a number of characteristics:

- Satisfaction was higher than average amongst those working in education (37%), and adoption (28%) and lower than average amongst those working in child in need / child protection (18%).
- As seen in Wave 4, those with over 10 years' experience working in the field were more likely than average to be satisfied (29% compared to 21%).
- Again as seen in Wave 4, and linked with time in the profession, satisfaction

¹⁹ In wave 5 this difference was not statistically significant, finding should be treated as indicative only.

also increased significantly with age: rising from 15% of 2534 year olds to 30% of 5564 year olds.

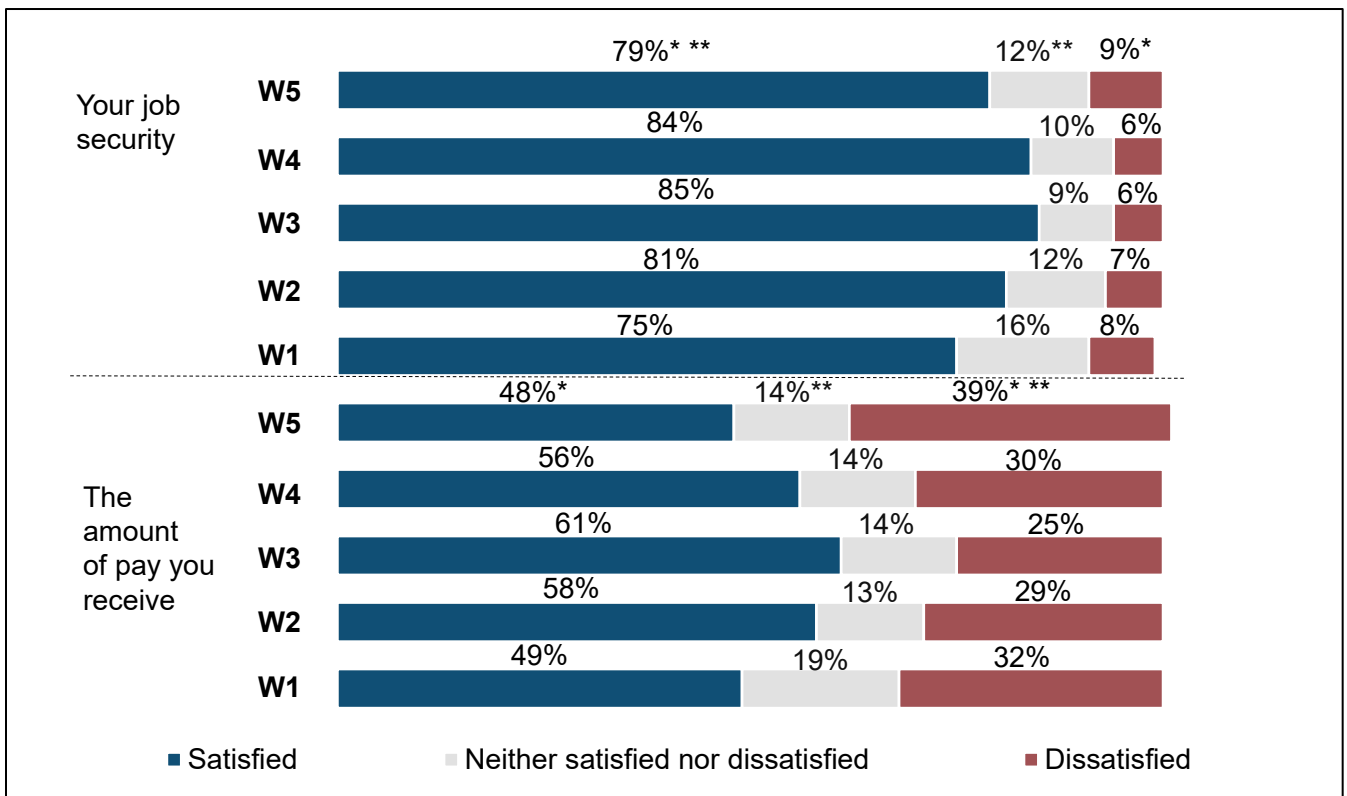
- Respondents from ethnic minority groups were more satisfied with public respect for social work (33%) compared with 18% of respondents who were White British.

Pay and job security

In Wave 5, the majority (79%) of child and family social workers were satisfied with their job security. This represents a fall in satisfaction with job security from Wave 4 (84%), though satisfaction on this measure remains higher than at Wave 1 (75%).

In Wave 5, less than half (48%) were satisfied with their pay. Again, this is a decrease from Wave 4 (56%) and shows a return to levels of satisfaction with pay last seen in Wave 1. This recent decrease in satisfaction with pay could be due, at least in part, to the rise in the cost of living around the time of Wave 5 fieldwork. The findings from the longitudinal group (who took part in all five waves) follow a similar pattern for both job security and pay, rising to Wave 3 and then decreasing in Waves 4 and 5.

Figure 6.4 Social workers' satisfaction with job security and the amount of pay they receive (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (1,000). *Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 4. **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

Following a similar pattern to previous waves, social workers who had been promoted between Wave 4 and Wave 5 were significantly more satisfied at Wave 5 than those who had not had a promotion, about their pay (57% compared with 45%) and job security (84% compared with 78%).

In Wave 5 satisfaction with job security varied with certain aspects of social workers' role, in ways similar to Wave 4:

- Agency status had a significant bearing, as might be expected given the short-term nature of agency work: 83% of those directly employed by a local authority were satisfied with their job security, compared with 45% of those working for an agency.
- Satisfaction with job security varied widely by local authority Ofsted rating: it was 86% in 'outstanding' Ofsted-rated local authorities, compared to 66% in those rated 'inadequate'. The key differences were in the proportions who were 'very satisfied' which decreased from 49% in 'outstanding' rated LAs to 28% 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.
- Again, as seen in Wave 4, satisfaction with pay varied by job role and was significantly higher amongst senior service managers / directors than all other pay grades (70% compared with 48% on average, and 44% among front line practitioners).

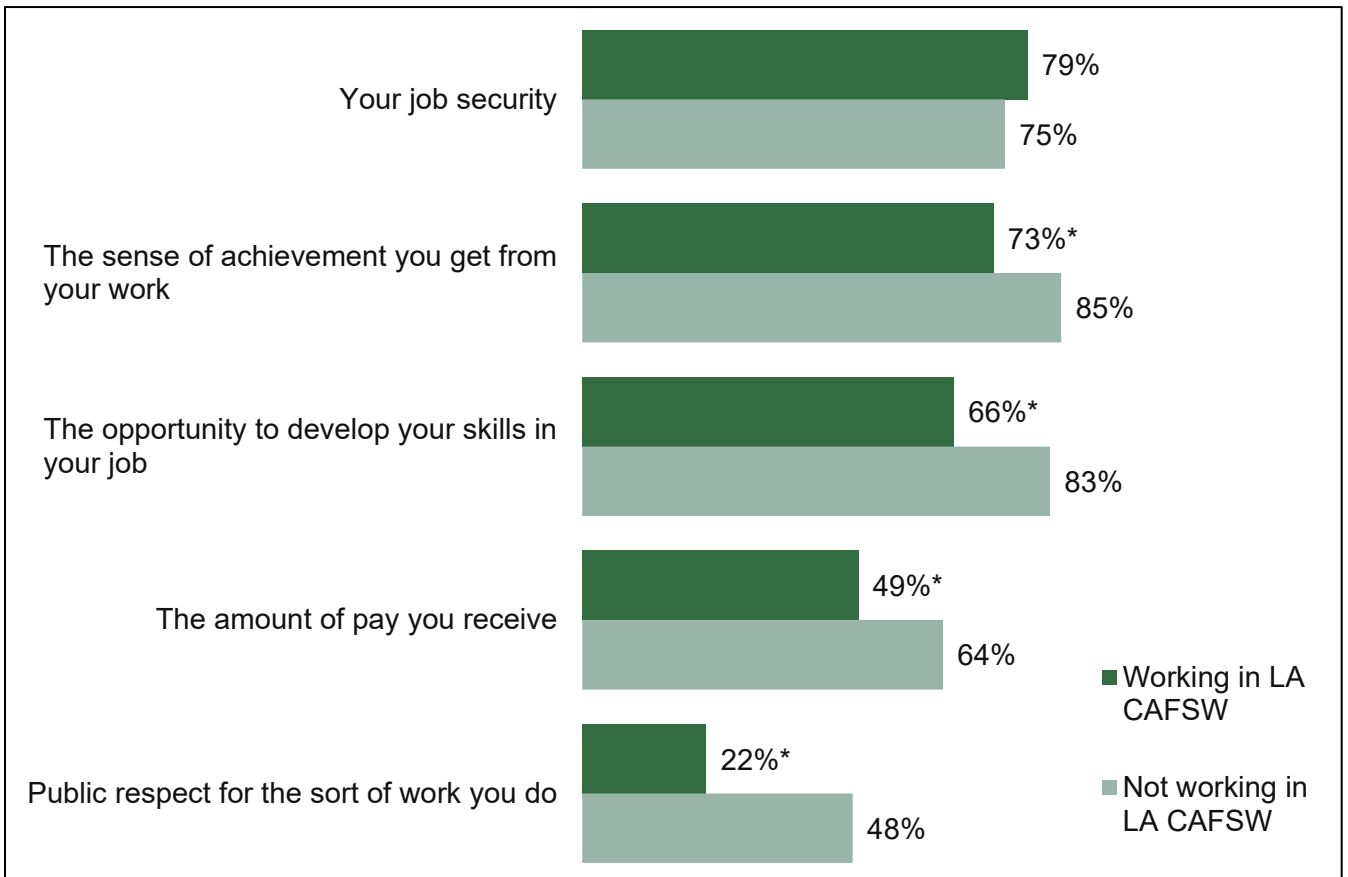
Comparing job satisfaction of those working inside and outside local authority child and family social work

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, 67% of those still employed in local authority child and family social work agreed that they found their current job satisfying, which is significantly lower than overall satisfaction among those working outside local authority child and family social work (82%).

Figure 6.5 indicates the proportion of participants working inside and outside child and family social work who were satisfied with each aspect of their job.

Figure 6.5 Proportion of participants working inside and outside of local authority child and family social work who were satisfied with each aspect of their job (Wave 5)



Base: All those working in LA child and family social work at Wave 5 (1,016); All those employed but not working in LA child and family social work at Wave 5 (161). *Denotes significant differences between results in those working in/not in LA CAFSW.

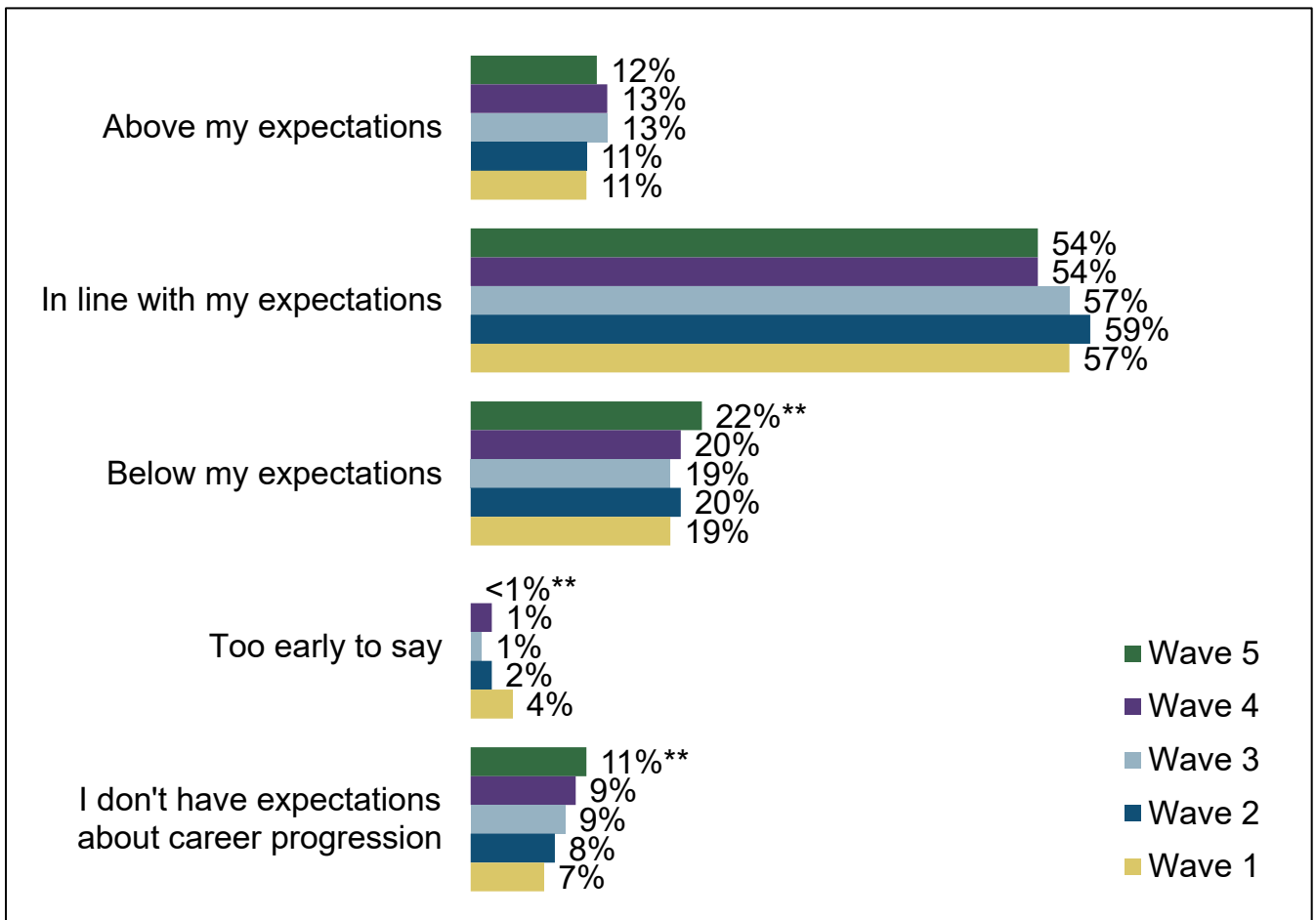
For all but one of the job satisfaction measures, there were significant differences between these two groups of participants. People who were not currently working in LA child and family social work were more satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work, the opportunity to develop their skills in their job, public respect for the sort of work they do and the pay they receive (there was no significant difference on this measure in Wave 4). The pattern of findings was similar to that found at previous waves, though at Wave 4 there was not a significant difference in levels of satisfaction with the pay received.

Views about career progression

Figure 6.6 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’ (22%) than ‘above’ (12%). These findings were broadly consistent with previous waves, however compared to previous waves there has been an increase from Wave 1 in the proportion of social workers who feel career progression is below expectations (22% in Wave 5 compared with 19% in Wave 1).

Social workers who had been promoted between Wave 4 and 5 were more likely to rate their career progression as 'above their expectations' than those who had not been promoted (24% compared with 8%).

Figure 6.6 Social workers' views on their career progression so far (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All currently working in LA child & family social work: Wave1 (5,508), Wave 2 (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,334), Wave 5 (1,016). **Denotes significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

As seen in Wave 4, those who were in more senior roles were more positive about their career progression. The proportion saying career progression was above expectations rose markedly from 3% of front line practitioners to 19% of practice supervisors, 21% of team managers, 30% of practice leaders and 26% of senior service managers / directors. Only 6% of senior service managers / directors felt that career progression was below their expectations, compared with 28% 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 23 years were more likely than average to feel that progression was in line with their expectations (67% compared with 54% overall). Those working for 610 years were more divided about career progression; they were more likely to feel career progression was either above their expectations (19% compared with 12%) or below their expectations (28%

compared with 22%). Less than half (43%) of those working in child and family social work for 6-10 years felt progression was in line with their expectations.

Variation could also be seen by practice area with those in prevention / early help services more likely than average to say that their career progression was above their expectations (23% compared with 12%) and those working in duty / first response / MASH more likely than average to feel that progression was below their expectations (32% compared with 22%).

In a change from Waves 3 and 4, there was some variation by LA Ofsted rating, with those in areas rated 'outstanding' more likely than average to feel progression was above expectations (18% compared with 12%).

In line with Wave 4, views on career progression also varied significantly with the following demographic characteristics:

- Age – those aged 25-34 years were more likely to feel that progression was above their expectations (15%, compared to 8% of those aged 55-64 and 2% 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 (38%, compared with 22% 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 (26% compared with 19% who did not have childcare responsibilities).
- 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 (33% compared with 19%). They were also less likely to think that career progression was in line with their expectations (41% compared with 57%).

In addition to this, at Wave 5, those who had entered into social work through the 'Step Up to Social Work' programme were more likely than those from other entry routes to feel career progression had been above expectations.²⁰

²⁰ Please note small base size (35 respondents had entered social work through the 'Step Up to Social Work' programme).

7. 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

- At Wave 5, the majority (84%) 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, in line with Wave 4. Two-thirds (67%) expected to be employed directly by a local authority and 17% to be working via an agency, which was a significant increase from Wave 4 (11%). Only one per cent expected to be working outside of social work altogether.
- The most commonly cited reasons given by those who were considering leaving local authority child and family social work in the next 12 months were high caseload (49%), the working hours in general (45%), the amount of paperwork (37%) and dislike of the working culture (32%). When combining factors related to overwork, such as the high caseload and the volume of paperwork, this is the most common single main reason for wanting to leave (34%) followed by 'it's just not the right type of job for me' (14%) and personal reasons (12%).
- The main factor that would encourage child and family social workers who were thinking of leaving the profession to remain was a more manageable workload in terms of caseload (42%), followed by higher pay (17%) and a more manageable workload in terms of administration and paperwork (13%).
- Nearly one in ten (8%) who were thinking of leaving at Wave 5 cited that nothing would encourage them to stay in the profession.

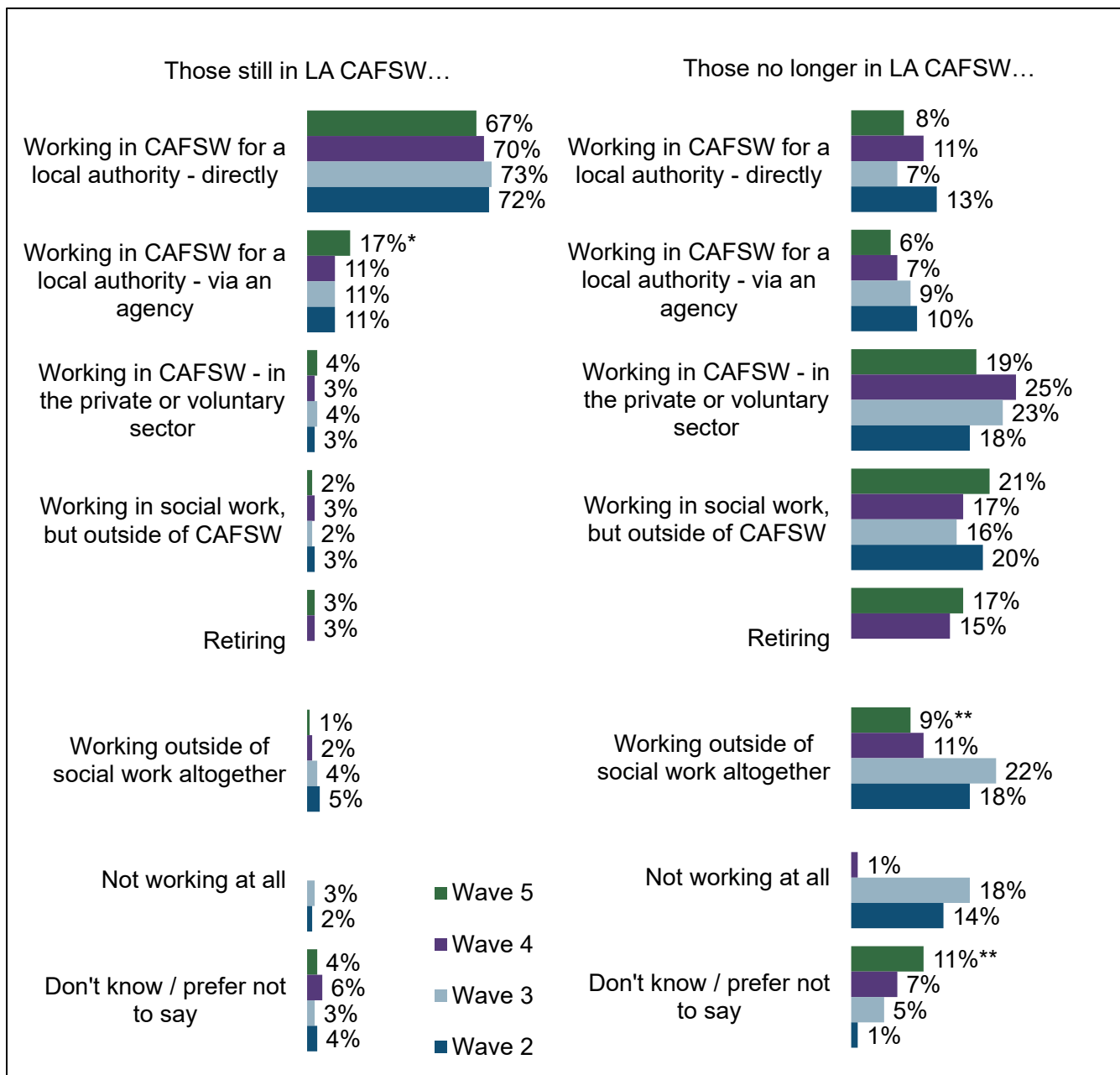
Social workers' career plans in the next 12 months

The survey asked all respondents what they anticipate their career plans will be in 12 months' time. As shown in Figure 7.1, as per previous years, of those working in local authority child and family social work in Wave 5 (including agency workers), the majority expected to still be doing so in 12 months' time (84%). Just over two-thirds (67%) expected to be working in child and family social work directly for a local authority in 12 months and one in six (17%) expected to be working via an agency, a significant increase compared to Wave 4 (11%).

People working in front line practitioner roles were less likely than those in senior service manager / director, 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 82%, 78% and 78% respectively).

Those currently working in local authorities rated by Ofsted as 'outstanding' were more likely to expect to remain working in child and family social work directly for a local authority in 12 months' time (85%, compared with 67% overall). Additionally those currently working in local authorities rated by Ofsted as 'inadequate' were more likely to expect to be working via an agency (29%, compared with 17% overall).

Figure 7.1 Anticipated employment situation in 12 months' time (Wave 2 to Wave 5)²¹



Base: All in LA child and family social work at Wave 2 (3,099), Wave 3 (2,001), Wave 4 (1,334) and Wave 5 (1,016); all those not working in LA child and family social work at Wave 2 (203), Wave 3 (239), Wave 4 (271) and Wave 5 (265). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 2; and * between Wave 5 and Wave 4.

Plans among those currently in local authority child and family social work

Among the 14% who were currently working in child and family social work at Wave 5 (including agency workers) but who thought they would not be in 12 months' time, plans were mixed. Four per cent expected to be in child and family social work in the private or voluntary

²¹ 'Retiring' was a new code added at Wave 4.

sector, 3% expected to be retiring, 2% working in a different area of social work, 1% working outside of social work altogether and; 4% unsure what they will be doing in 12 months' time.

The majority of those employed directly by a local authority (excluding agency workers) thought they would still be in the same situation in 12 months' time (79%), while 6% thought they would be employed via an agency.

Of those currently employed directly by a local authority (excluding agency workers), front line practitioner roles (77%) were the least likely to expect they would be directly employed by a local authority in 12 months' time, compared with senior staff (83% 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 (88% compared with 49%). Those currently working in local authorities rated by Ofsted as 'outstanding' were more likely to expect to remain directly in local authority child and family social work compared with those working in local authorities rated as 'requires improvement' (86%, compared with 76%).

The short-term career plans of agency workers were more varied. Seven in ten (70%) of those currently working at a local authority via an agency thought they would still be working for one in 12 months' time and one in six (16%) expected they would be employed directly by a local authority; this means 86% of agency workers thought they would still be in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time, compared with 85% of those directly employed by a local authority. A significantly higher proportion of agency workers at Wave 5 expected to still be working in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time than at Wave 4 (86%, compared with 71% in Wave 4). Overall, 9% of agency workers thought they would not be working in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time, compared with 7% of those employed directly.

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 who were not in local authority child and family social work in the past four waves either), expectations were more varied compared to those still in local authority child and family social work.

Figure 7.1 demonstrates that one-third (33%) thought that in 12 months' time they would be working in child and family social work again; 19% in the private or voluntary sector, 8% employed directly in local authority child and family social work and 6% in local authority child and family social work via an agency. The proportion who expected to be back working in child and family social work again has decreased significantly compared with Wave 4 (33% compared with 43%). One-fifth (21%) of respondents expected to be working in social work, but outside of child and family social work, whilst 17% expected to be retired in the next 12 months. Just under one in ten (9%) expected to be working outside the social work sector altogether, a significant decrease from Wave 1 (18%).

Reasons for considering leaving child and family social work

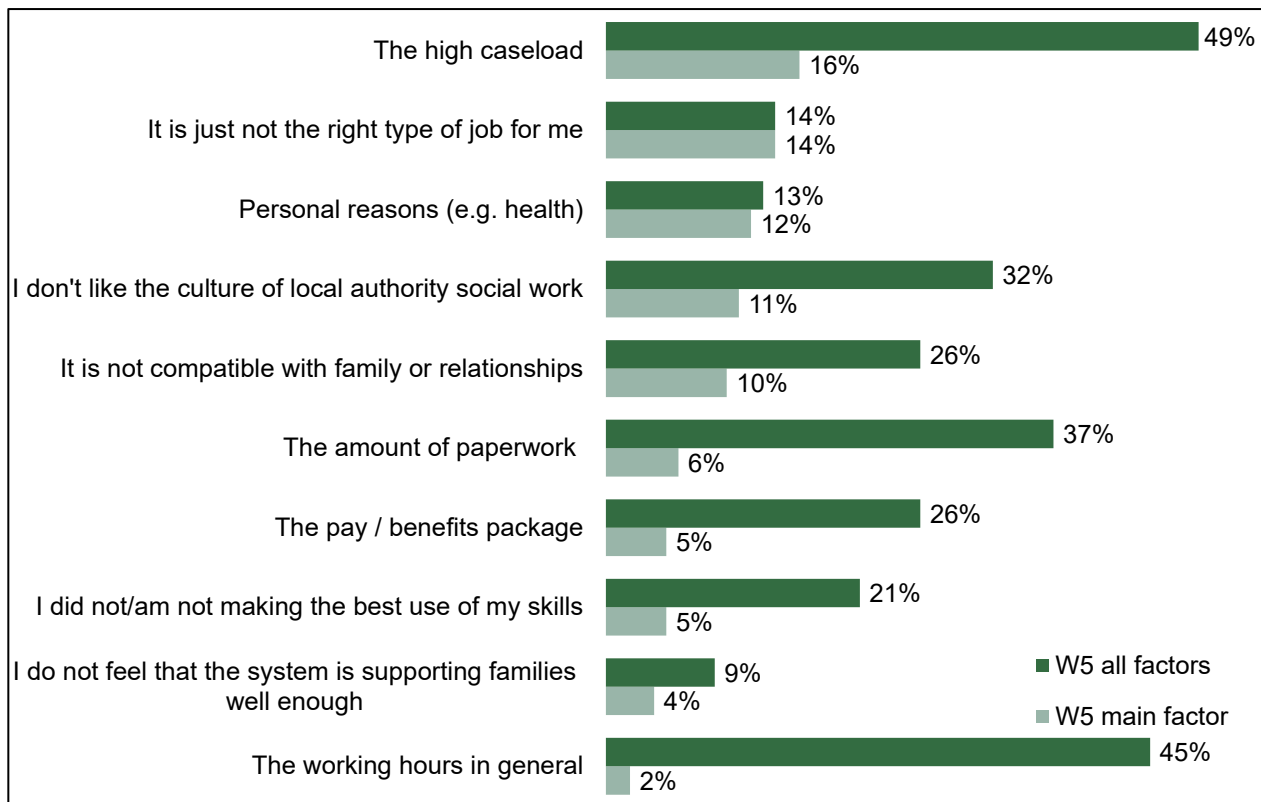
Of those still working in local authority child and family social work (including agency workers), 6% reported they were considering leaving child and family social work altogether in the next 12 months and this was consistent with previous waves²². Those who thought they would be working outside child and family social work altogether were asked why, and what might encourage them to remain in the sector.

The most commonly cited reasons for considering leaving child and family social work (Figure 7.2) were the working hours in general (45%), followed by nearly one-third (32%) who reported their dislike of the working culture. However, when combined, factors related to overwork such as the high caseload, working hours and the volume of paperwork, were most common (86%).

When asked to cite the main reason for considering leaving child and family social work, the most commonly reported individual reason was the high caseload (16%), followed by 'it is just not the right type of job for me' (14%), personal reasons e.g. health (12%) and dislike of the working culture of the local authority (11%). Additional individual factors relating to overwork were cited as the main reason for considering leaving (10% mentioned the work was not compatible with family or relationships, 6% the amount of paperwork and 2% the working hours in general). When these factors are combined with high caseload, they show that overwork was the most commonly cited main factor for considering leaving child and family social work (cited by 34% in total), similar to previous waves.

²² 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 7.2 Reasons for considering leaving child and family social work (all factors and main factor) (Wave 5)



Base: Social workers who are still in child and family social work but are considering leaving: Wave 5 (49). Multiple responses possible to 'all factors'. Top ten 'all factors' shown, ranked by main factor.

Potential influences on retention

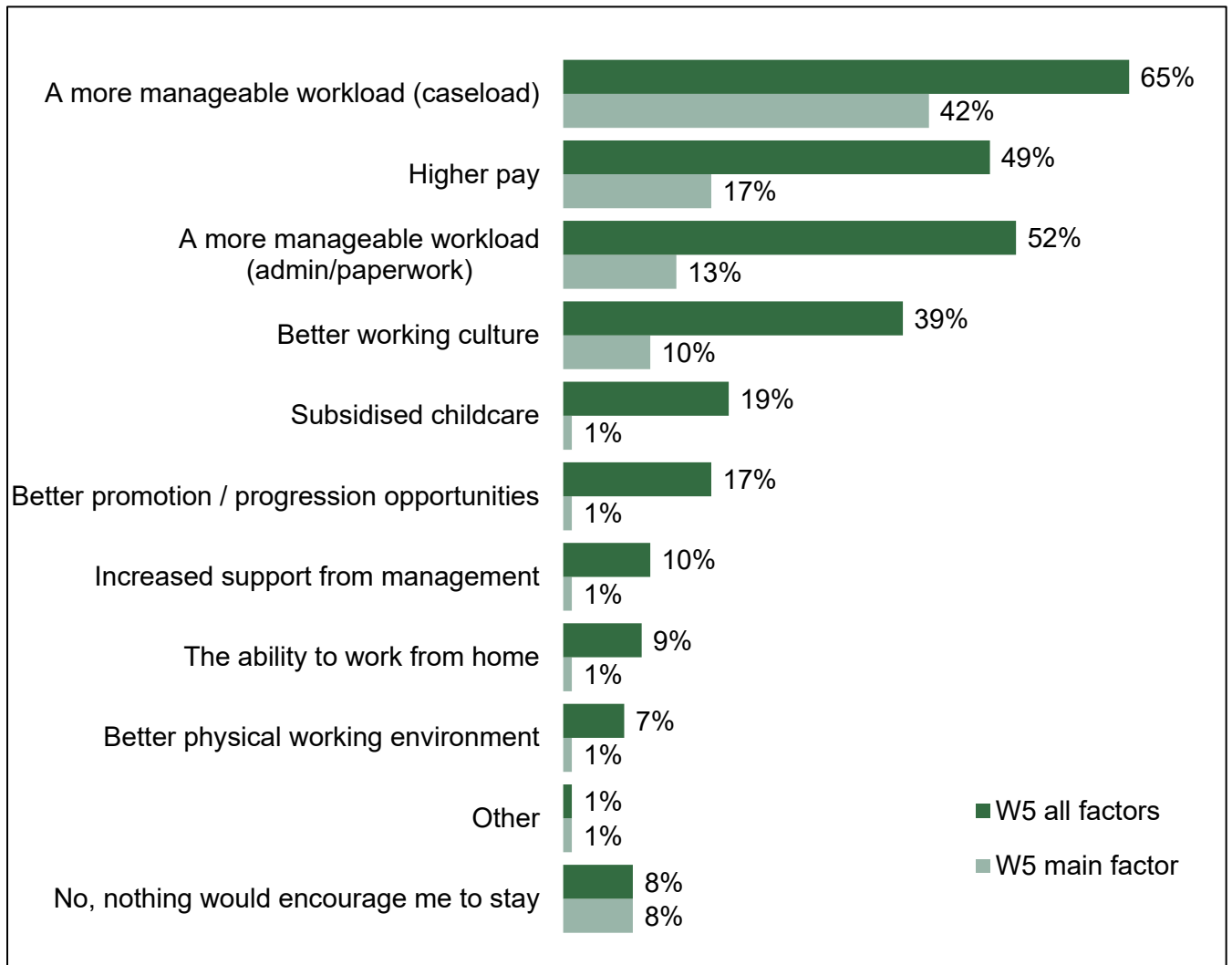
As well as factors that had led child and family social workers to consider leaving the profession, those thinking of leaving were also asked what would encourage them to stay in child and family social work.

As shown in Figure 7.3, and consistent with the factors that made social workers consider leaving the profession, when asked to cite changes that would persuade them to stay, a more manageable caseload was the most common (65%). Over half (52%) reported a more manageable workload in terms of administration and paperwork; just under half (49%) reported higher pay; and over two thirds reported a better working culture (39%). Other factors commonly mentioned but not cited as the main factor were other financial incentives (34%), improvements to IT systems and software (20%), a better / more training opportunities (15%) and flexi-time (12%).

When asked 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 (42%), followed by higher pay (17%), a more manageable workload in terms of

administration and paperwork (13%) and a better working culture at 10%. However, just under one in ten (8%) cited that nothing would encourage them to stay in the profession.

Figure 7.3 All and main factors that would encourage social workers thinking of leaving to remain in child and family social work (Wave 5)

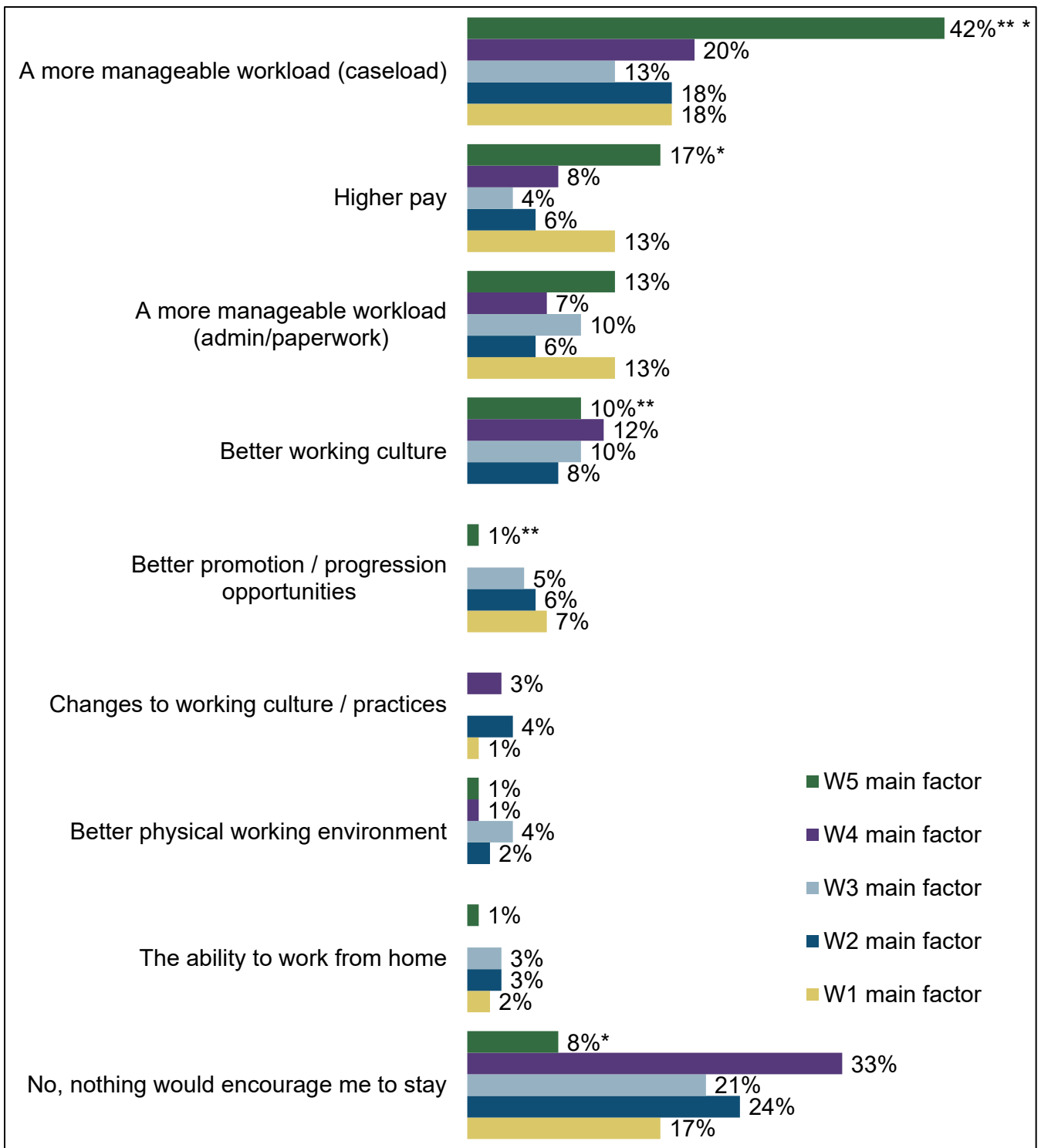


Base: Social workers who are still in child and family social work but are considering leaving: Wave 5 (50).
Multiple responses possible to 'all factors'.

As seen in Figure 7.4, the importance of promotion and progression opportunities as the main factor to encourage social workers to remain in the profession has continually decreased over time, with no respondents reporting it as a factor in the previous two waves, compared with 7% in Wave 1, 6% at Wave 2 and 5% at Wave 3. However, a more manageable caseload has become more important as the main factor that would encourage people to stay in the profession (42% at Wave 5, compared with 18% at Wave 1), and higher pay has also become more important as a factor that would encourage people to stay, when compared with Wave 4 (17%, compared with 8%).

Compared with both Wave 1 (17%) and Wave 4 (33%), the proportion of social workers considering leaving who cited that nothing that would encourage them to stay has fallen to less than one in ten (8%) at Wave 5, suggesting that actions could be put in place to dissuade them from leaving.

Figure 7.4 Main factor that would encourage social workers thinking of leaving to remain (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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) and Wave 5 (50). ** Denotes a significant difference between Wave 1 and Wave 5. * Denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 5.

8. 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 the minority of respondents who had left the child and family social work profession but were still active in the labour market, the most common main reason for leaving, cited by over one-third (35%) was that they did not like the working culture of local authority social work.
- As in previous waves, 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. Less than one in five (19%) of these respondents reported it was likely they would return to the profession within five years, whilst almost three-quarters (72%) of respondents thought it was not likely they would come back.
- When those who had left child and family social work were asked what might encourage them to return to the profession, just over one-quarter (26%) decided that 'nothing' would. Nearly three in ten (29%) felt a more manageable workload in terms of caseload was the primary factor that might encourage them back, while 15% reported a better working culture.

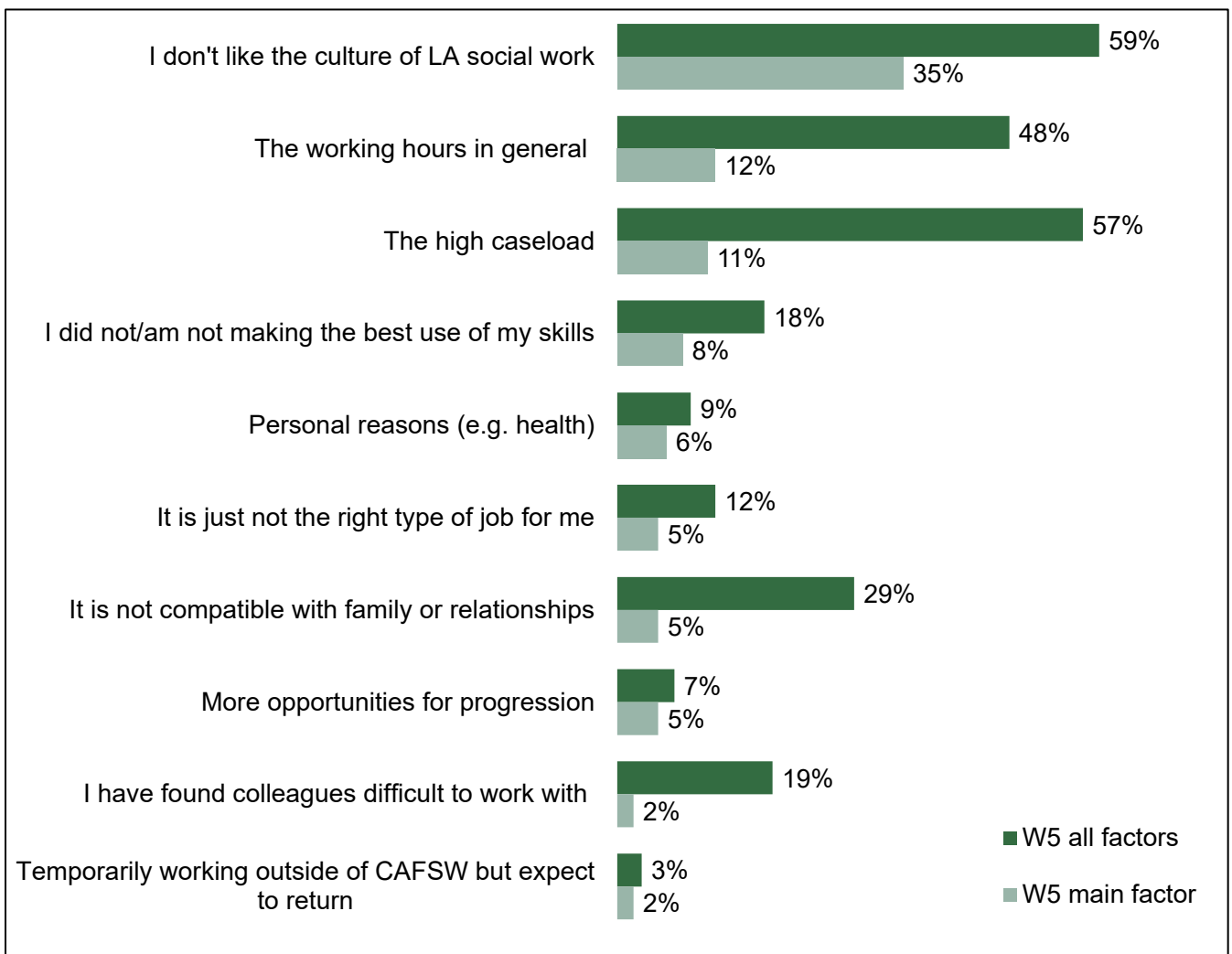
Reasons for leaving

Four per cent of respondents had left the child and family social work profession at Wave 5 to retire. Of those who retired, most had taken early retirement.

On the other hand, one in twelve (8%) of all respondents had left the child and family social work profession at Wave 5 but were still active in the labour market. These 105 respondents were asked their reasons for leaving and if multiple reasons were cited, their one main reason (Figure 8.1). The most common main reason for leaving, cited by over one-third (35%) of respondents was that they did not like the culture of local authority social work, followed by one in eight (12%) reporting the working hours in general – significantly higher than Wave 4 (2%). Other reasons commonly cited included not making the best use of their skills, personal reasons, more opportunities for progression outside of child and family social work, having found colleagues difficult to work with and public perception of the role.

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 one-quarter of respondents (57%, 48%, 35% and 29%). However, these factors were less commonly mentioned as the main factor for leaving (Figure 8.1). When combining these factors into a single ‘workload-related factors’ code, this becomes the second most commonly cited main reason, mentioned by 29% who have left the profession. In previous waves the combined ‘workload-related factors’ has come out as the most commonly cited main reason.

Figure 8.1 Reasons for having left child and family social work (all factors and main factor) (Wave 5)



Base: Social workers who have left child and family social work but still active in the labour market: Wave 5 (105). Top ten ‘all factors’ shown, ranked by main factor.

New job role

Of the minority (45 respondents) who were currently employed but no longer in any type of social work, only 15 were in roles related to social work (such as in education or health), whilst 28 were in roles not related to social work and two respondents were unsure.

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. The majority (29 out of 45) were contracted to work 36-40 hours per week, with the remainder working part-time. Additionally, they were significantly less likely to be working more than their contracted hours in their new roles. Only 11% (5 out of 45) said they did so all the time (compared with 44% of those still working in child and family social work), and 24% (11 out of 45) said they never worked over their contracted hours (compared with 3% 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.

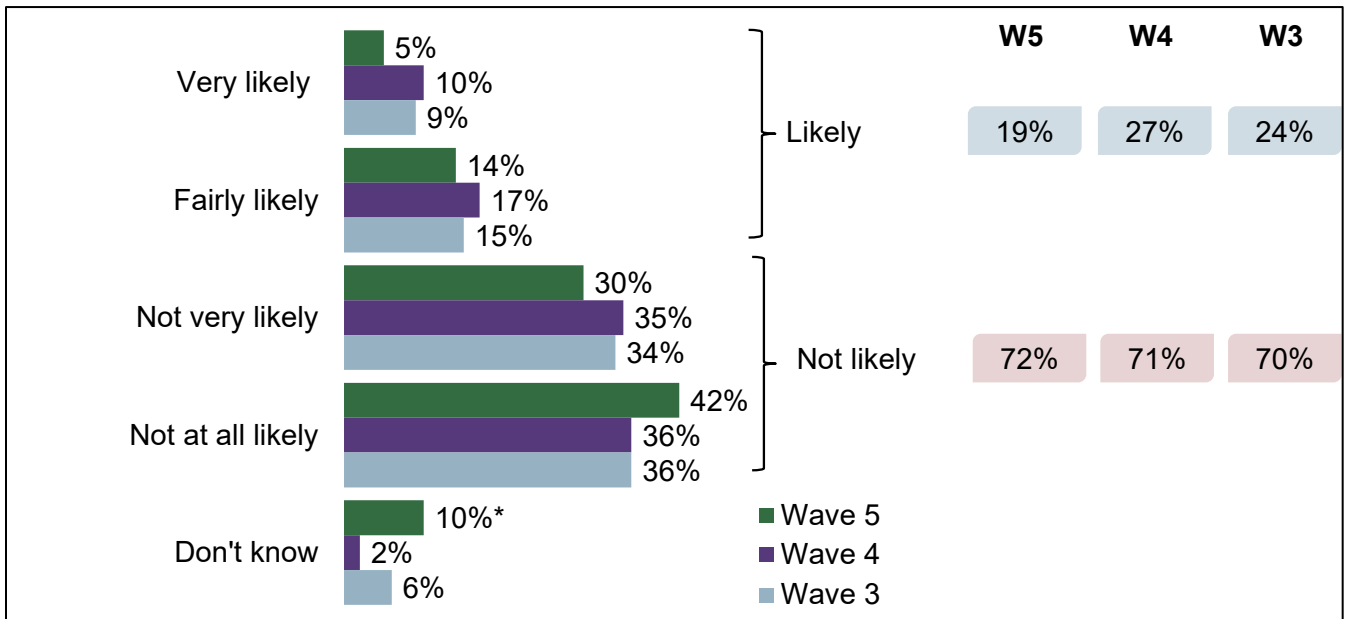
These 45 people who had left the social work profession altogether reported higher levels of overall job satisfaction compared with those remaining in child and family social work (76% (34 out of 45), compared with 67%).

Potential influences on social workers to return to the profession

Additionally, the 105 respondents who had left child and family social work but were still active in the labour market were asked how likely they would be to return to child and family social work in the next five years.

Nearly one in five (19%) reported it was likely they would return to the profession within five years' time (5% very and 14% fairly likely), whilst seven in ten (72%) thought it was not likely (30% not very likely and 42% not at all likely). As seen in Figure 8.2, there were no significant differences across waves. 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. Similarly to Wave 4, 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.

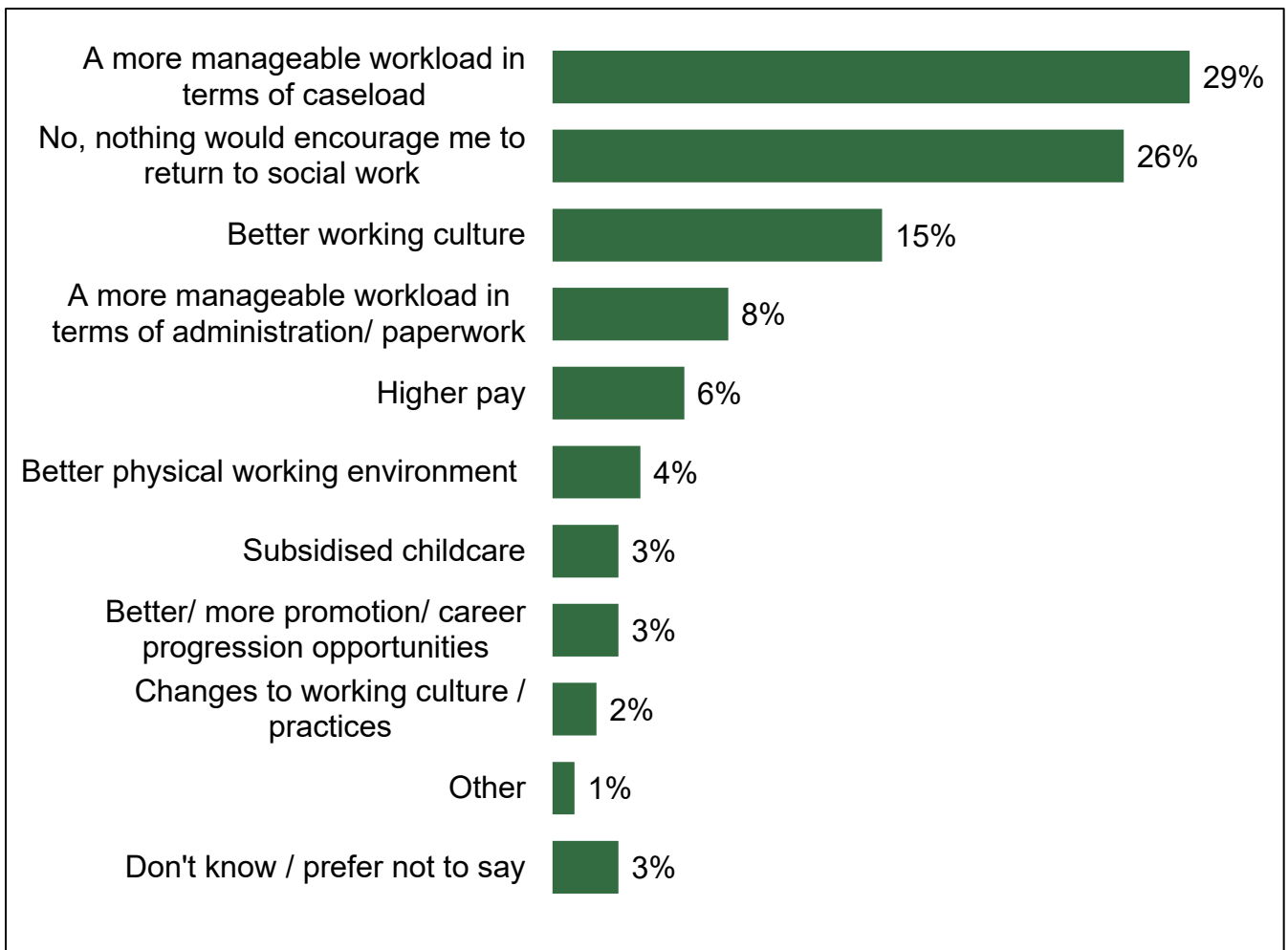
Figure 8.2 Likelihood of respondents returning to child and family social work in the next five years (Wave 3 to Wave 5)



Base: Social workers who have left child and family social work but still active in the labour market: Wave 3, (94) Wave 4 (101), Wave 5 (105). * Denotes a significant difference between Wave 4 and Wave 5.

The 105 respondents who were no longer in the child and family social work profession but were still active in the labour market were also 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 8.3). The most common main factor cited by nearly three in ten (29%) was a more manageable workload in terms of caseload. This was closely followed by just over one-quarter (26%) of respondents who stated that nothing would encourage them to come back to the child and family social work profession. As per previous waves, other responses echoed the reasons they left: almost one in seven (15%) said a better working culture and one in twelve (8%) cited a more manageable workload in terms of administration/paperwork. Other main factors were higher pay (6%) and a better physical working environment (4%). These proportions were consistent with those at Wave 4, apart from those reporting 'don't know' – this had significantly decreased from Wave 4 to Wave 5 (13% at Wave 4 compared with 3% at Wave 5).

Figure 8.3 Main factor that might encourage those who had left child and family social work to return in the future (Wave 5)



Base: Social workers who have left child and family social work but still active in the labour market: Wave 5 (105).

9. 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

Wave 5: starting ASYE between July 2021 and June 2022

In this chapter the views of the Wave 5 ASYE participants are reported, with comparisons to ASYE social workers in previous survey waves. It is worth noting that Wave 3 and Wave 4 cohorts 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 5 was similar to ASYEs in previous waves, except for an increased proportion of social workers from minority ethnic backgrounds compared to Wave 1.
- ASYE social workers in Wave 5 were less likely to disagree that their overall workload was too high in comparison to Wave 4 (34% vs. 25% respectively). The proportion who felt stressed by their job (58%) or that they are being asked to fulfil too many roles (45%) is in line with previous waves.
- Looking at all reasons mentioned for feeling stressed by their job, the top three were intertwined - with 65% saying it was because they had too much paperwork, 53% saying they had high staff turnover in their team or area of practice, and 52% saying they had insufficient time for direct work with children and families.
- In Wave 5, there has been a significant decrease in ASYEs who were satisfied with their pay (37%) in comparison with both Wave 4 (45%) and Wave 1 (47%). This is potentially linked to cost of living issues. Although still a minority, there has been an increase in the proportion of ASYEs who felt public respect the work they do in Wave 5 (29%) in comparison with Wave 1 (21%).
- While the majority (72%) of ASYE social workers planned to be working in local authority child and family social work in 12 months' time, this is a decrease on the previous four waves. Compared with previous waves, a similar proportion of Wave 5

ASYEs said they planned to be working in child and family social work for an agency or in the private and voluntary sector, rather than directly for a local authority (15% in Wave 5 compared with 12% in Wave 1, and 14% in both Waves 2 and 3).

The profile of ASYEs in LA child and family social work

Gender, age and ethnicity

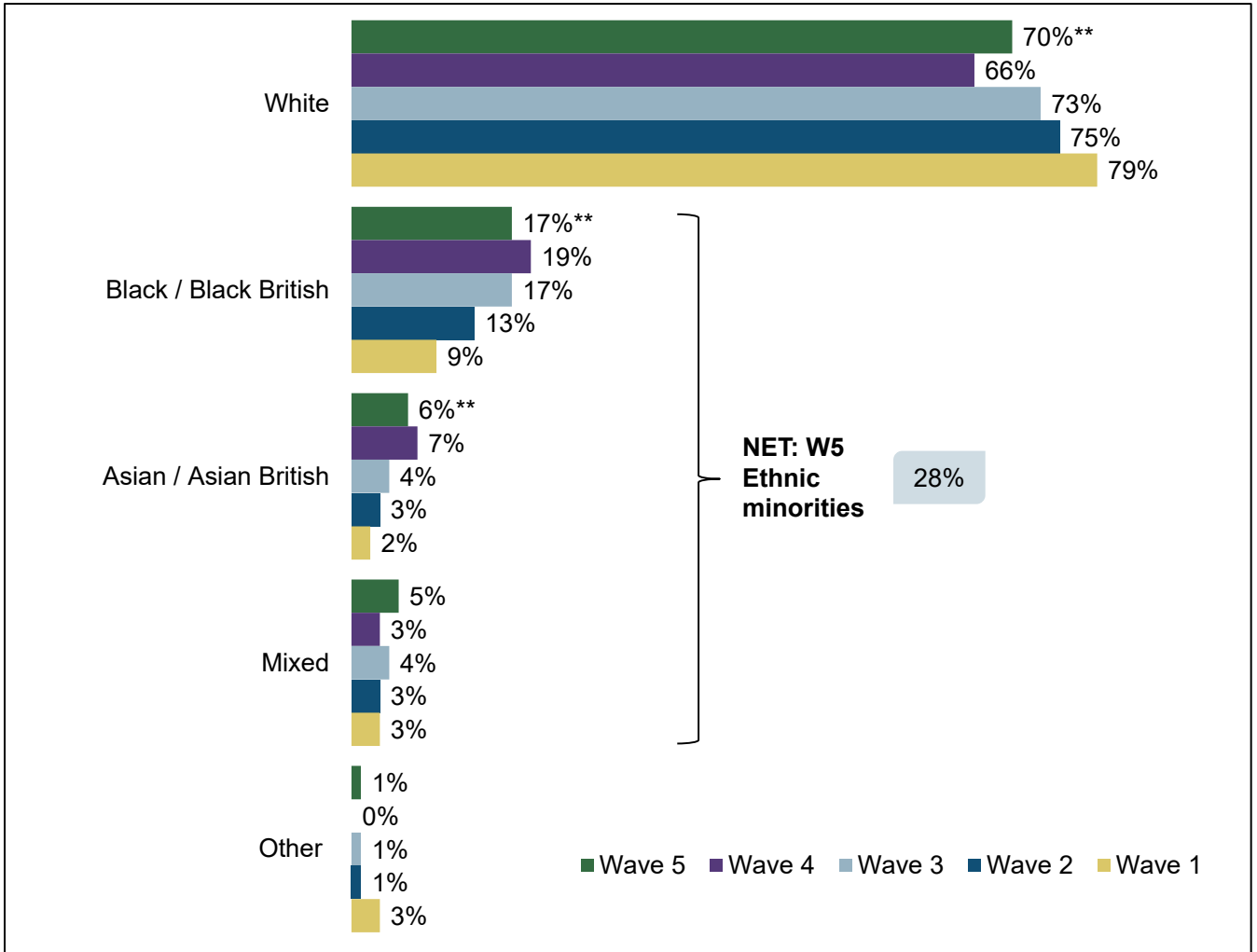
Consistent with previous waves, the majority of ASYE social workers who participated in the survey were female (88%), with around one in ten (11%) being male (1% preferred not to say, and less than 1% identified as 'other'). This is closely aligned with the overall population for child and family social workers²³. As with the gender profile, the age profile of Wave 5 ASYE cohorts was also similar to previous survey waves, with over a half (61%) below the age of 35, and 33% above the age of 35 (5% preferred not to say)²⁴.

In Wave 5 and as shown in Figure 9.1, seven in ten ASYE social workers were White (70%), with most of the remainder Black / Black British (17%). Fewer ASYE social workers were Asian / Asian British (6%), or of mixed ethnicity (5%).

²³ [Children's social work workforce, Reporting Year 2022 \(DfE\)](#)

²⁴ The full distribution was: 20% < 25 years, 41% aged 25-34, 14% aged 35-44, 19% aged 45+.

Figure 9.1 Ethnicity of ASYE child and family social workers who participated in the survey (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (283), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (245). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

Disability or long-term health condition

In Wave 5, 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 (79%) 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 half (53%) of ASYE social workers who took part in the Wave 5 survey had some form of caring or childcare responsibilities. Most commonly, these social workers cared for school-aged children (30%), followed by other family members or friends (10%), pre-school aged children (9%) and children with a disability (4%). This pattern has increased by 10

percentage points since Wave 4, where just over four in 10 (43%) ASYE social workers had a caring responsibility.

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:

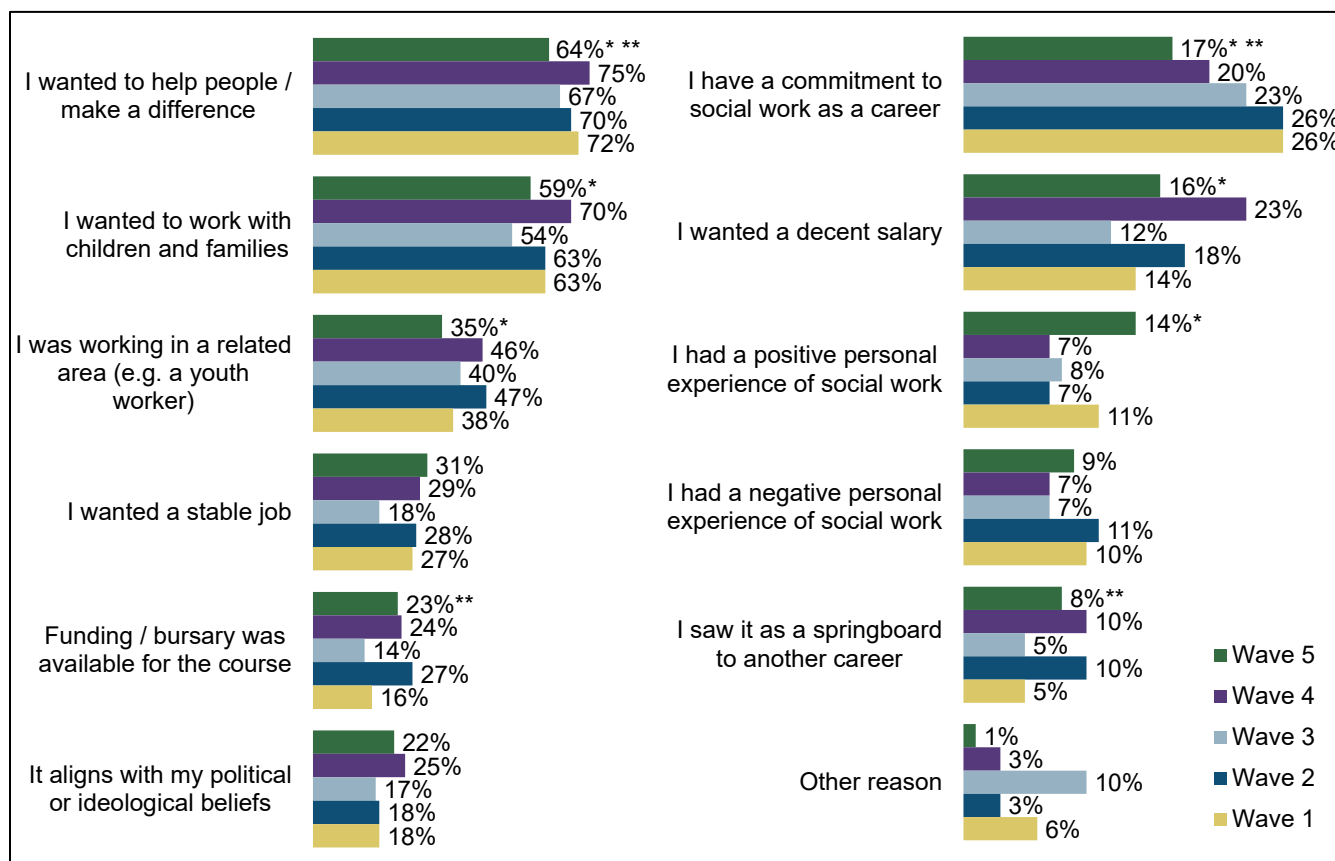
- motivations for becoming a child and family social worker among the latest ASYE cohort;
- qualification entry routes into the profession and their perceived effectiveness in terms of how well-prepared people felt for the role, and;
- whether ASYE social workers came straight into the profession after 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 9.2, in line with previous waves of the research, the most common reasons were wanting to help people / make a difference (64%), wanting to work with children and families (59%) and already working in a related area (35%). However, the proportion citing each of these has fallen since Wave 4.

Other important reasons for wanting to become a social worker were wanting a stable job (31%), and alignment with political or ideological beliefs (22%). Almost one-quarter (23%) of ASYEs were motivated to enter child and family social work due to the availability of funding/bursary, which was a more common motivation in Wave 5 than in Wave 1 (16%). Whilst almost one in five (17%) were motivated to enter child and family social work because they had a commitment to social work as a career, fewer cited this as a motivation in Wave 5 compared with in Wave 1 (26%). Based on this, commitment to social work as a career appears to be declining over time as a reason for entering the profession.

Figure 9.2 Reasons for entering social work among new ASYEs (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (283), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (245). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1; and * between Wave 5 and Wave 4.

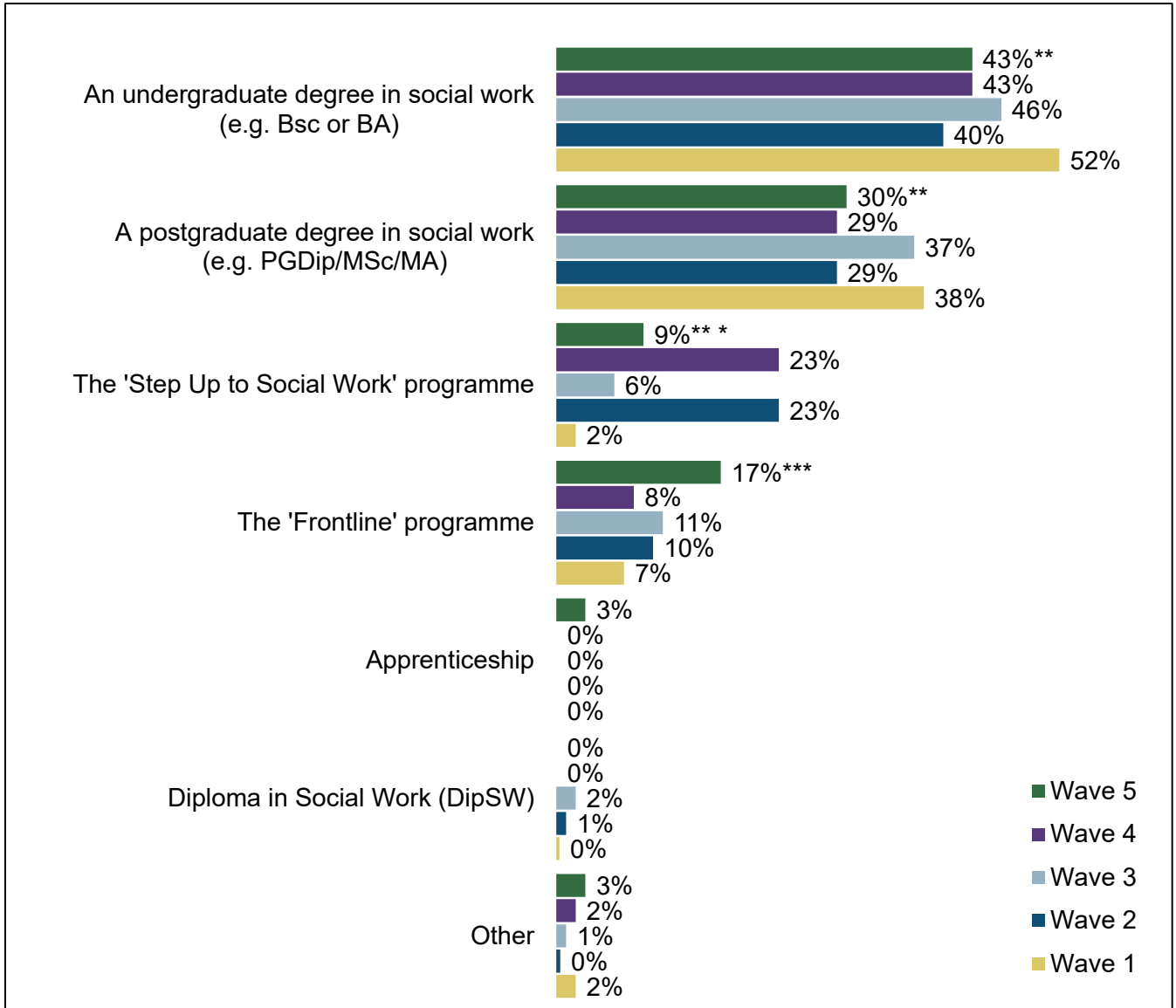
Qualification routes into the profession

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 9.3, the most common entry route into child and family social work at Wave 5 was through a degree, either undergraduate level (43%) or postgraduate level (30%). Just under one in ten (9%) entered via the ‘Step up to Social Work’ programme, and 17% entered via the ‘Frontline’ programme. A few other mentions were given, with 3% mentioning apprenticeships (a relatively new, degree-level course).

The proportion entering through the ‘Step Up to Social Work’ programme at Wave 5 was more similar to Wave 3 than to Wave 4. This reflects the structure of the programme which takes new cohorts every two years. There was a significant increase in the number of ASYEs who entered via the ‘Frontline’ programme in Wave 5 in comparison with all previous waves.

Figure 9.3 Entry route into child and family social work among new ASYEs (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (283), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (245). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1; and * between Wave 5 and Wave 4.

For Wave 5 ASYE social workers who entered the profession with an undergraduate degree, attainment levels in their first completed social work qualification were similar to those found in Wave 4: 28% achieved a first-class (30% Wave 4), 54% had a 2:1 degree (45% in Wave 4), 16% achieved a 2:2 (19% in Wave 4), and no one had a 3rd class degree. There was a similar pattern amongst those that entered the profession with a postgraduate degree: 23% achieved a distinction (22% in Wave 4), 30% achieved a merit (35% in Wave 4), and 19% achieved a pass (16% in Wave 4).

As in previous waves, just over half (56%) 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 4 was 57%. Amongst this group, a whole range of different undergraduate degrees were studied, but the most common (grouped) subject area

in Wave 5 was social studies (35%), followed by biological sciences including psychology (16%) and education (13%).

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 rankings in 2023, even if the social worker attended the institution several years ago. ASYEs who responded to the survey most commonly attended low tariff (39%) institutions, with one-quarter respectively attending either medium tariff (25%) or high tariff (24%) institutions. The proportion of ASYE respondents that had attended a high tariff institution was significantly higher in Wave 5 than in Wave 4 (13%).

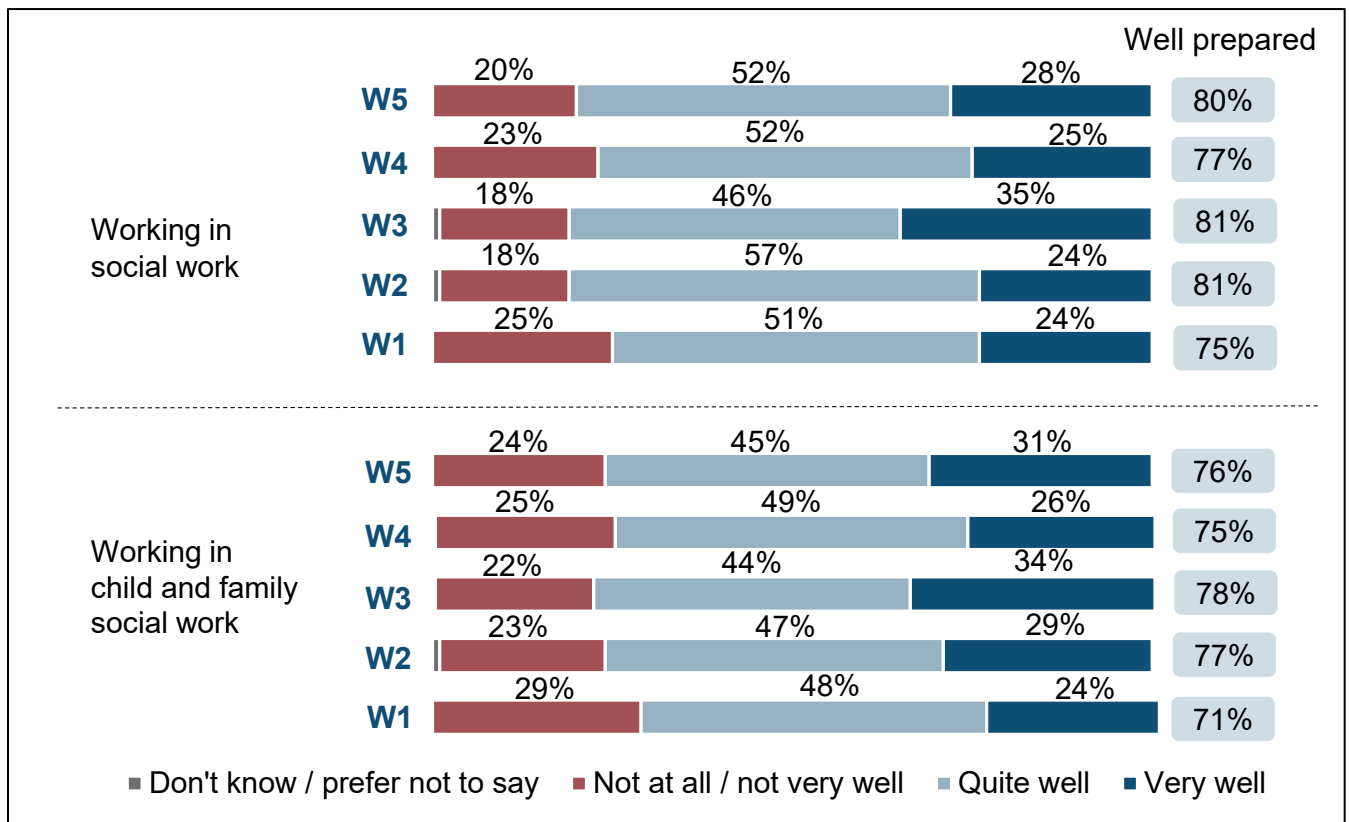
Views on the effectiveness of different qualification routes

ASYE social workers were asked 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 9.4, most typically felt well-prepared for a career in social work (80%) and for a career in child and family social work specifically (76%). There has been no change in the proportion of ASYEs who felt well-prepared for their careers compared with previous waves. In the context of Covid-19 and its aftermath, it is encouraging that the majority of ASYEs have consistent views and have felt well-prepared for their careers.

When comparing how well-prepared ASYEs felt by entry route, those who entered via the Frontline programme felt more prepared for social work in general (98%) than those who entered via an undergraduate degree (77%) or a postgraduate degree (69%). A similar pattern was seen when comparing how well-prepared ASYEs felt for working in child and family social work specifically. Those who entered via the Frontline programme felt more prepared (98%) than those who entered via an undergraduate degree (71%) and a postgraduate degree (68%). ASYEs who entered social work via the Step Up to Social Work programme also felt more prepared for working in social work generally, and working in child and family social work specifically, than those who entered via an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. However, the base sizes for both Frontline and Step Up to Social Work are too small to be considered statistically²⁵.

²⁵ The base size is <30, which is too few to be considered statistically.

Figure 9.4 ASYE child and family social workers' views on how well they felt their entry route prepared them for social work (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



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), Wave 5 (245). No significant differences were found between Wave 5 and Wave 1, or Wave 5 and Wave 4.

Current employment and career history

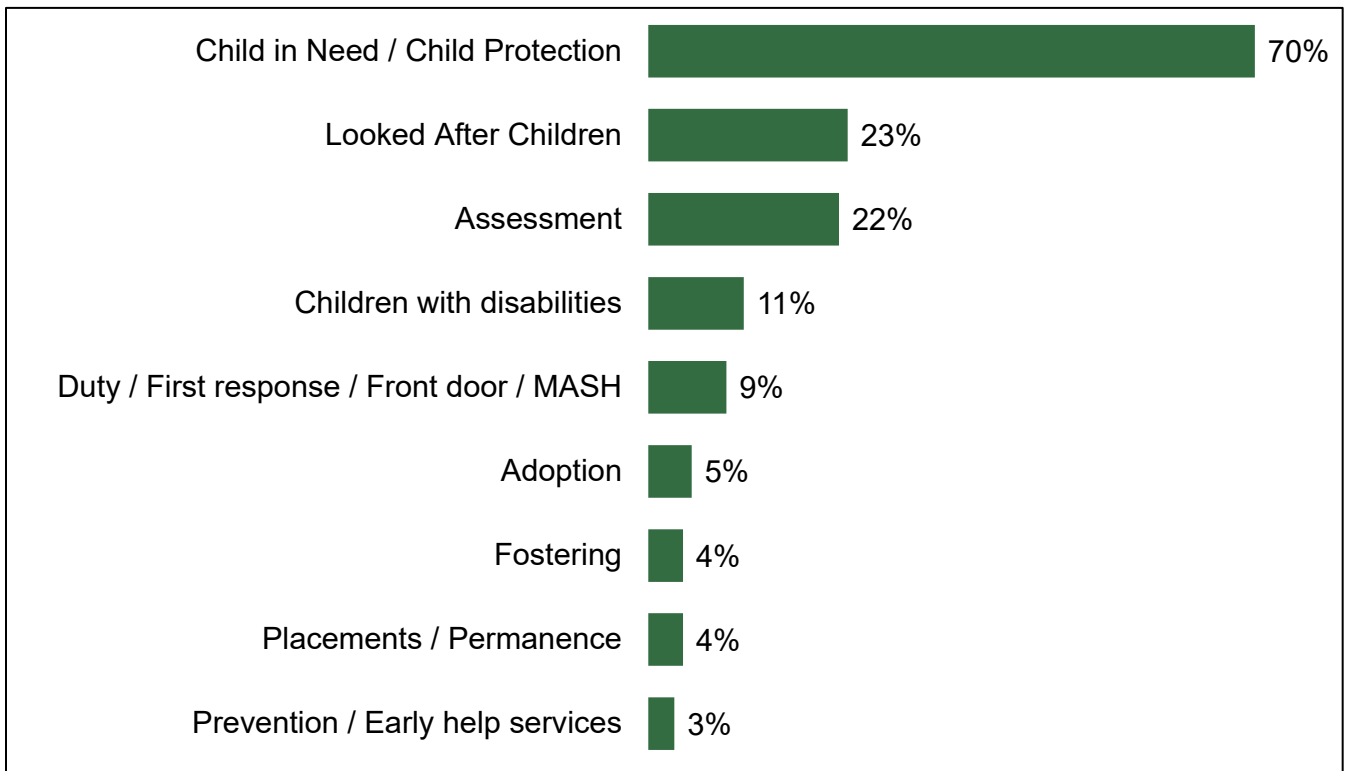
This section explores the employment status and the main focus of the work of ASYEs, as well as their history with their current employer.

Current employment

Of the 245 Wave 5 ASYEs who responded to the survey, 99% worked in child and family social work for a local authority. Of these 240 respondents, 32% had completed their ASYE within 6 months of taking part in the survey, while 68% were on their ASYE at the time of the survey. These figures are in line with previous waves.

When asked about the main focus of their work, Figure 9.5 shows that children in need and child protection (70%) was by far the most common response, followed by looked after children (23%), and assessment (22%). Please note that multiple responses were allowed to this question.

Figure 9.5 Main focus of the work of Wave 5 ASYEs



Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 5 (240). Responses less than 3% not charted.

Workplace wellbeing

This section explores ASYE wellbeing by considering working hours and caseloads, reported stress levels and workload demands, views on 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 5 ASYE respondents (94%) said they went straight into child and family social work. This was a similarly high rate as in previous years (92% in Wave 4 and 95% in Wave 1). Among ASYEs who took part in the Wave 5 survey, nearly half had been working in child and family social work for one to two years (45%). Just under one-quarter each had been working in social work for less than six months (23%), or between six months and one year (24%).

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.

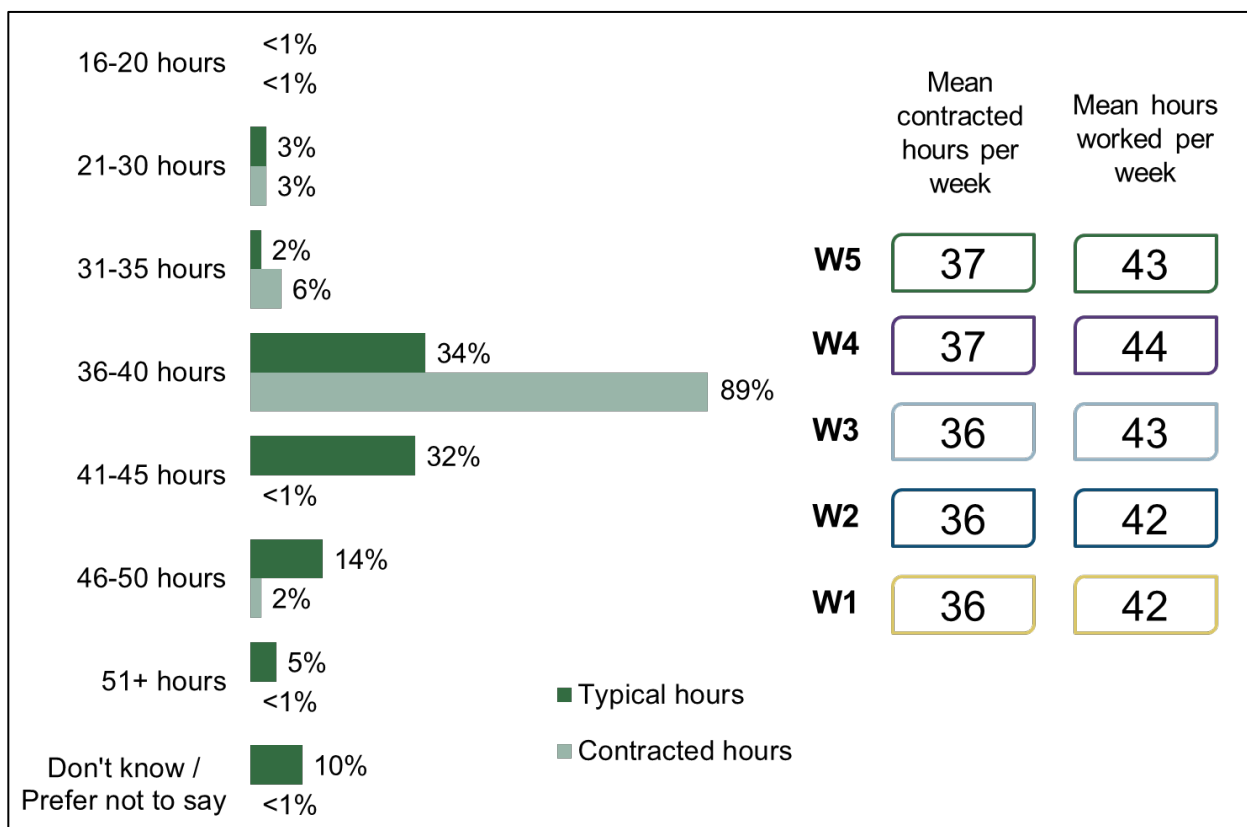
Most Wave 5 ASYE social workers were contracted to work full-time, with 89% contracted to work 36-40 hours per week. The remaining minority were contracted to work 31-35 hours (6%)

or 16-30 hours (3%). Contracted hours were consistent with previous waves and continued to be higher than the main survey, where part-time working is more common.

While ASYE social workers were contracted to work 37 hours per week (on average), they reported working 43 hours per week (on average), around a day per week beyond their contracted hours. This was similar to the pattern seen in Wave 3 and 4 (reporting an extra seven hours above their contracted hours) and in line with Waves 1 and 2 (each reporting an extra six hours).

Figure 9.6 illustrates the contrast between contracted hours and actual hours worked in a typical week and shows that over half (51%) 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 4, when 55% reported working more than 41 hours. Sample sizes 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. Working more than their contracted hours was also seen in the main survey, though generally ASYE social workers reported working more hours than their non-ASYE counterparts.

Figure 9.6 ASYE actual hours worked in a typical week versus contracted hours (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 5 (240). No significant differences were found between Wave 5 and Wave 1, or Wave 5 and Wave 4.

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 they reported spending 6-10 hours on direct work (38%), in line with Wave 4 (40%). Around one-quarter (26%) were working 11 hours or more on direct casework, which is comparable to Wave 4 (27%). 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.

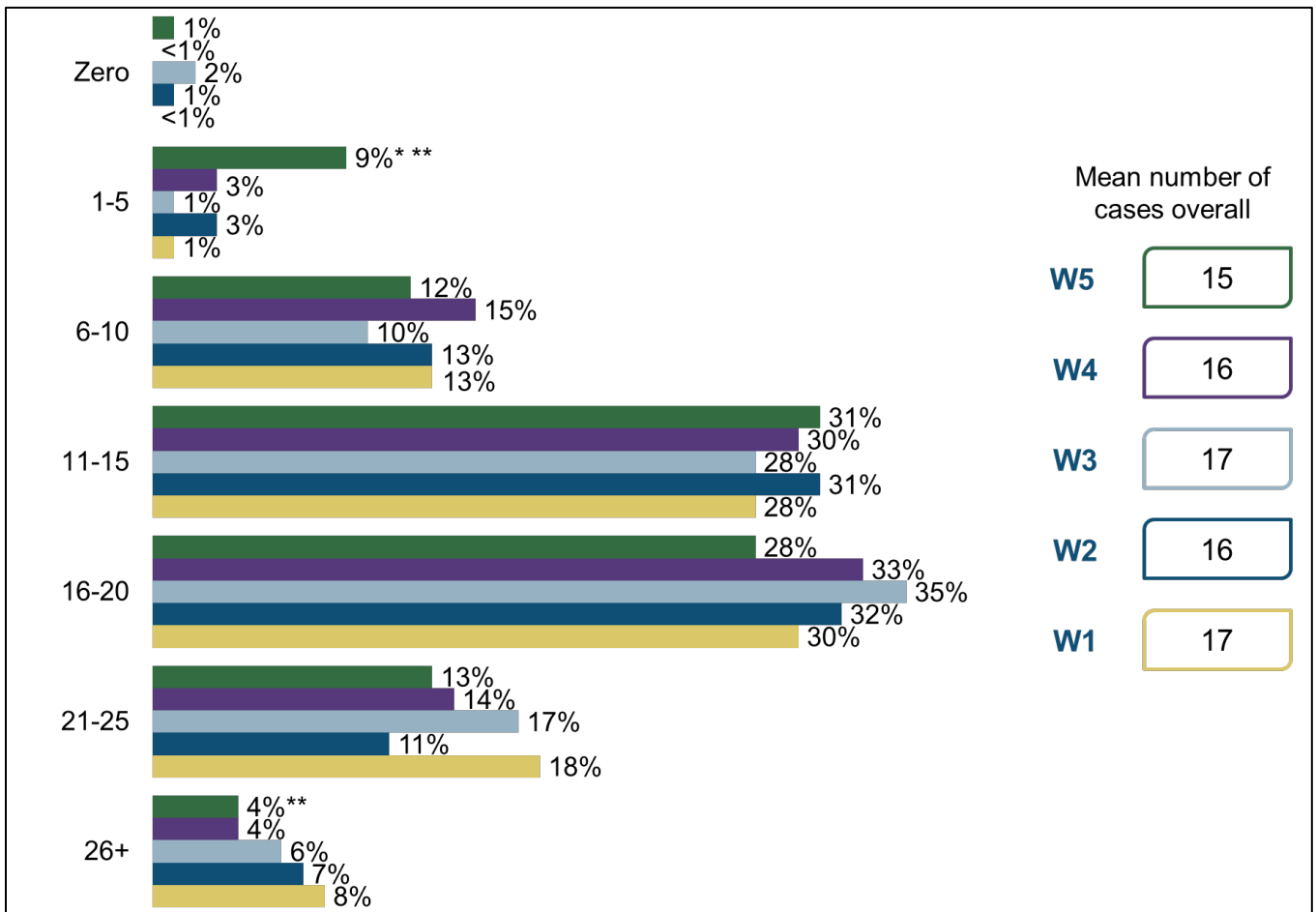
In terms of the split of direct work with children and families between face-to-face contact and remote contact (e.g., by telephone or videoconference), the weight was towards face-to-face contact. Over half (59%) said that 81-100% of their direct time was spent face-to-face, with an average of 85% of direct work being face-to-face contact. Conversely, over half (55%) said that just 0-20% of their direct time was spent via remote contact. Compared to figures in Wave 4 (61% of direct time spent face-to-face and 14% spent remotely) and Wave 3 (51% face-to-face and 29% remote), this suggests a continued increase in face-to-face contact since the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Caseloads

ASYE social workers were asked how many cases they were currently allocated²⁶. A broad span of answers was given, ranging from none to 26+. However, most said their caseload was in the range of 11-20 (59%), and the mean was 15. The number of cases allocated to ASYE social workers was similar to previous waves.

²⁶ 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.

Figure 9.7 ASYE caseloads (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1; and * between Wave 5 and Wave 4.

Time spent completing case-related paperwork

ASYE social workers were asked to estimate the number of hours in a typical week that they spent completing case-related paperwork. Around half (51%) reported that they spent more than 20 hours on this. Around one-quarter (27%) reported working 16-20 hours, 14% reported working 11-15 hours, while 7% reported working 10 hours or less on case-related paperwork. Overall, ASYE social workers spent an average of 25 hours per week on case-related paperwork, which was similar to non-ASYE social workers (24 hours on average). This may be because more ASYEs work in child protection (70% of ASYEs report this as the main focus of their work), where more paperwork is required than other practice areas, or possibly because they are newer to the job and take longer to complete paperwork.

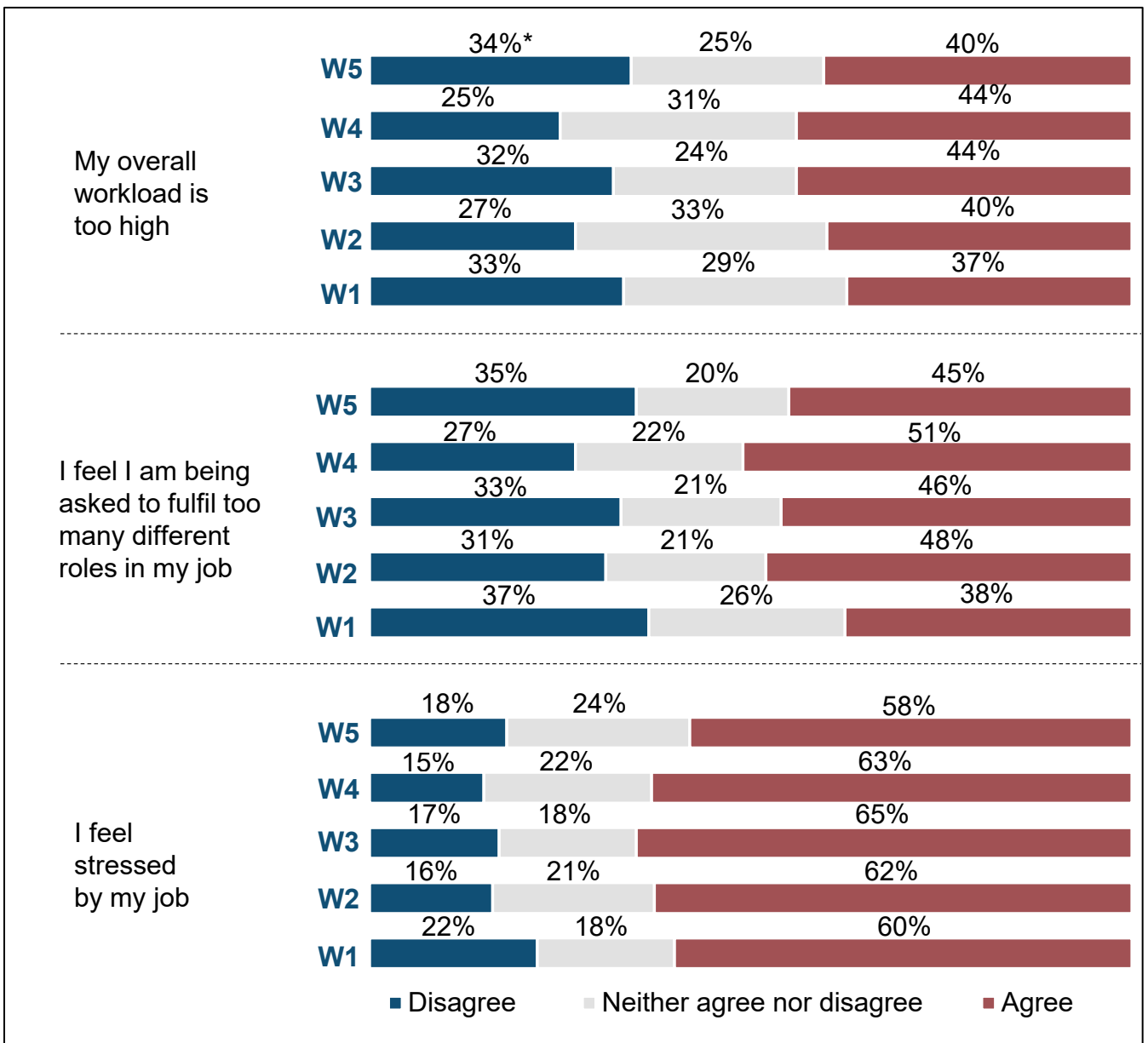
Stress levels and workloads demands

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'.

Figure 9.8 shows that agreement was highest for 'I feel stressed by my job', with almost six in ten (58%) ASYE social workers agreeing this was the case. Thereafter almost half (45%) agreed that they were being asked to fulfil too many different roles in their job, and four in ten (40%) agreed that their overall workload was too high. Strength of feeling was highest for feeling stressed by the job, with one-quarter (24%) of ASYE social workers 'strongly agreeing'.

Figure 9.8 ASYE agreement levels regarding stress and workload demands (Waves 1 to 5)



Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). * Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 4.

Agreement levels regarding stress and workload demands were similar to other waves. That said, Wave 5 ASYEs were significantly more likely to disagree that their overall workload was too high in comparison to Wave 4 (34% vs. 25% respectively).

ASYE child and family social workers were more positive about some aspects of workplace wellbeing than found in the main Wave 5 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.

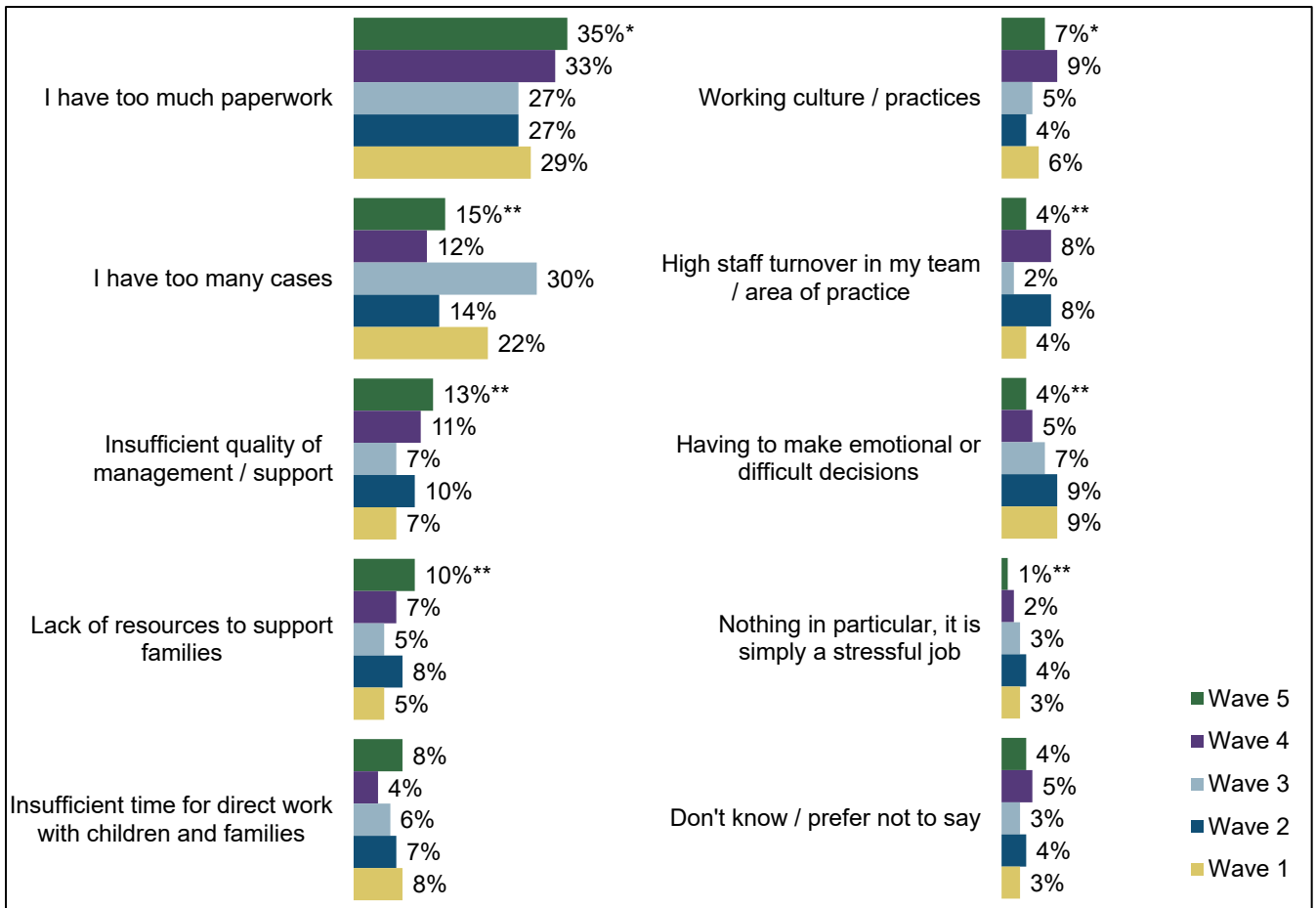
Looking at the reasons mentioned, the most common was having too much paperwork (65%), followed by high staff turnover in their team or area of practice (53%) and a lack of resources to support families (52%). Generally a host of reasons were given, and other common mentions included: insufficient time for direct work with children and families (49%), having too many cases (36%), having to make emotional / difficult decisions (31%), working culture / practices (29%)²⁷, insufficient quality of management / support (22%) and lack of administrative / business support (20%).

In comparison with Wave 4 several of these areas had decreased, most notably having too much paperwork (down 12 percentage points in Wave 5). Other areas which have decreased in Wave 5 include insufficient time to work with children and families (58% in Wave 4 vs. 49% in Wave 5), working culture / practices (38% in Wave 4 vs. 29% in Wave 5), and lack of administrative / business support (31% in Wave 4 vs. 20% in Wave 5).

Figure 9.9 presents the single main factor identified by ASYE social workers for feeling stressed by their job across all waves. In Wave 5 the main reason, cited by just over one third (35%) of ASYEs, was that they had too much paperwork. This was also the most commonly cited reason in previous waves. Thereafter reasons were varied, although other main cited reasons included having too many cases (15%), insufficient quality of management and support (13%) and lack of resources to support families (10%).

²⁷ 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.

Figure 9.9 Main reason why ASYEs feel stressed by their job (Wave 4 and Wave 5)



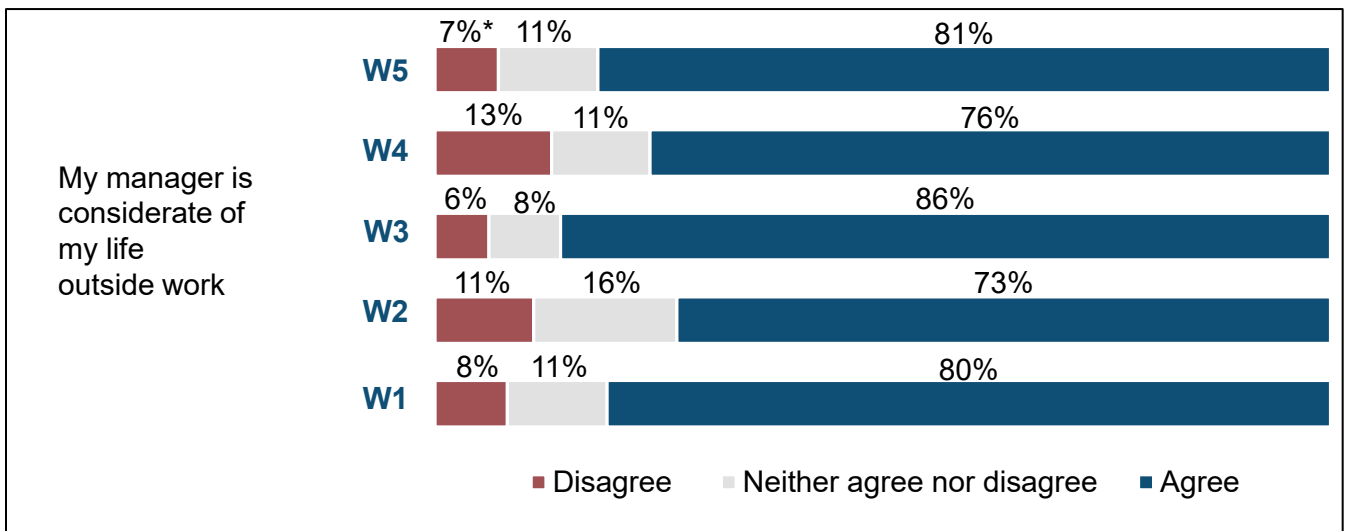
Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). Answers above 1% in Wave 5 shown. **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1; and * between Wave 5 and Wave 4.

Manager consideration of work-life balance

Although a high proportion of ASYE social workers reported they were working more than their contracted hours (93%), most (81%) still felt that their manager was considerate of their life outside of work. Respondents were more likely to 'strongly agree' (52%) than 'agree' (29%) with this statement.

As shown in Figure 9.10, the proportion of ASYEs disagreeing that their manager is considerate of their life outside of work has fallen from 13% in Wave 4 to 7% in Wave 5, returning to levels seen in Wave 1 (8%).

Figure 9.10 Extent of ASYEs' agreement that their manager is considerate of their life outside of work (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). * Denotes significant differences between results in Wave 5 and Wave 4

Views on employer, manager and working environment

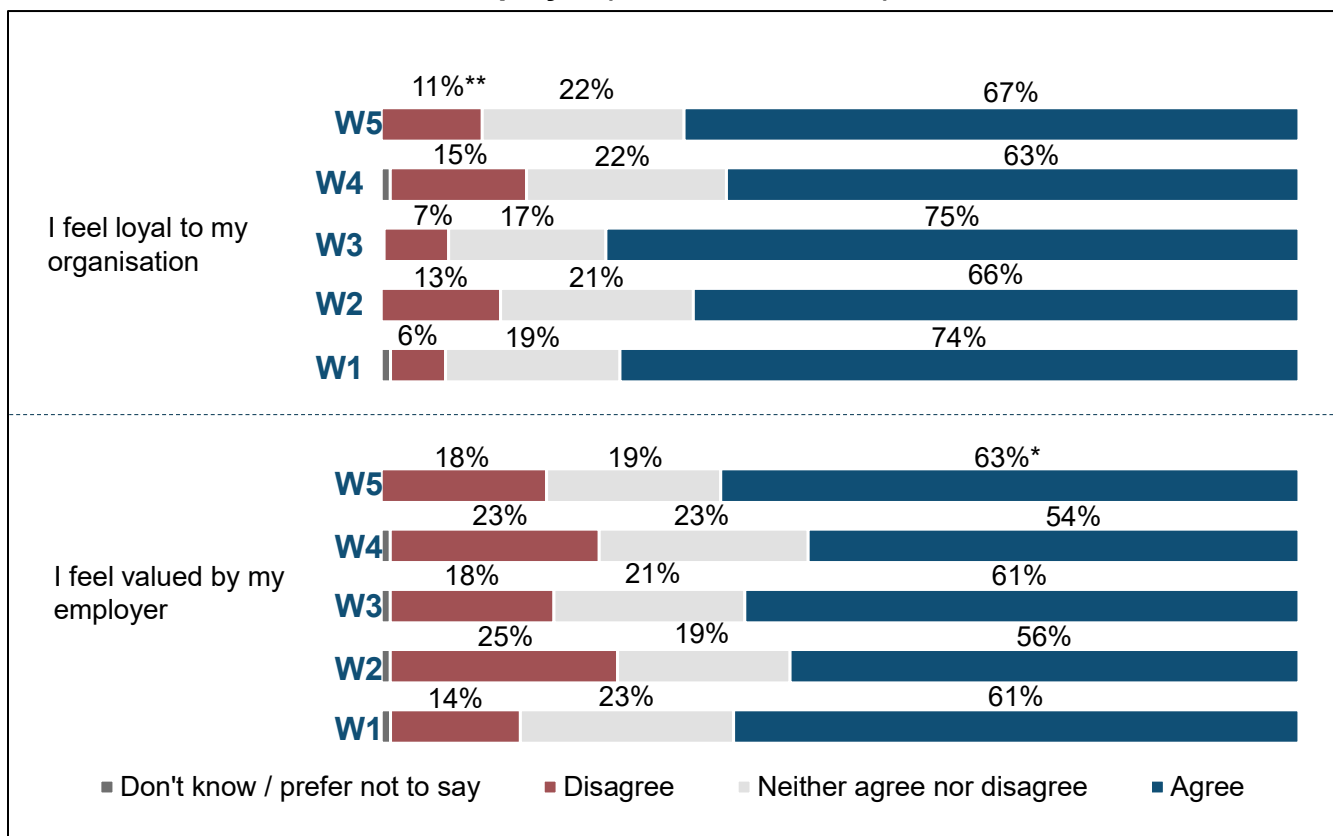
This section explores ASYE social workers' day-to-day experiences in terms of feeling loyal to and valued by their employer; relationship with their managers; experiences of receiving reflective supervision; access to the right learning and development opportunities, and views on the resources at their 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 9.11, the majority of ASYEs said they felt loyal to their employer in Wave 5 (67%), which was consistent with previous waves. However, more disagreed with this statement in comparison to Wave 1 (up five percentage points, from 6% in Wave 1 to 11% in Wave 5). That said, Wave 5 ASYEs felt more valued by their employer than those in Wave 4.

Similarly to Wave 4, there was a strong correlation between ASYE social workers' sense of loyalty and the Ofsted rating of the local authority. Over 8 in 10 (84%) of ASYEs at 'outstanding' local authorities agreed that they felt loyal to their employer, significantly higher than those that worked at local authorities rated 'good' (65%) or 'requires Improvement' (62%). There was a similar pattern with their sense of feeling valued by their employer. Over three-quarters (79%) of those at 'outstanding' local authorities agreed that they felt valued by their employer, compared with 57% at those rated 'requires improvement'.

Figure 9.11 ASYE social workers' perceptions of loyalty to and feeling valued by their employer (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1; and * between Wave 5 and Wave 4.

4.

Views on line management

ASYE social workers were asked about various aspects of their relationship with their line manager(s). In Wave 5 (as in previous waves) they were generally very positive. Agreement levels were greatest in respect to having confidence in their manager's decisions (87%), their manager encouraging them to develop their skills (88%), recognising when they had done their job well (85%), and being open to ideas (83%).

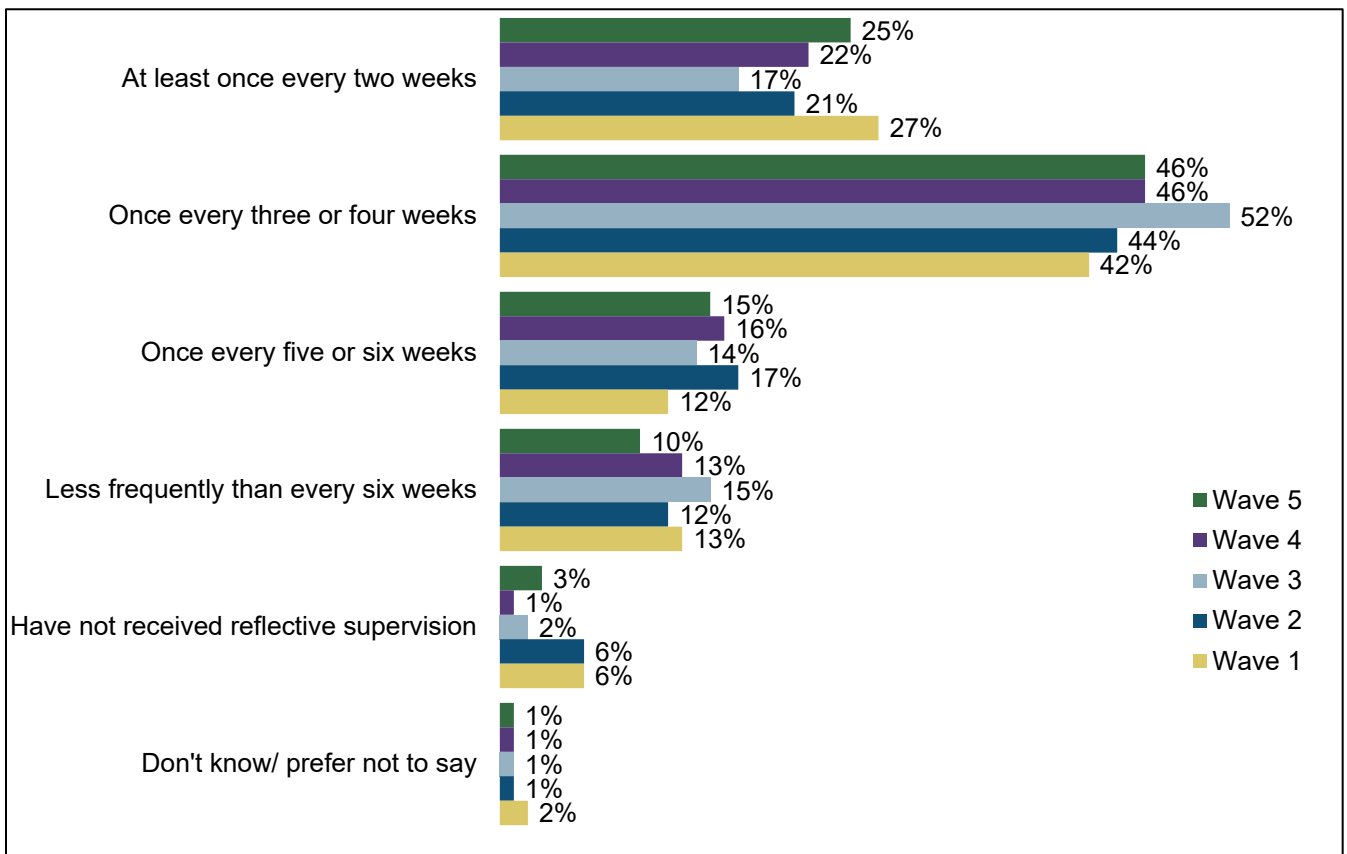
ASYEs were also positive about the performance management and feedback components of line management in Wave 5: 82% agreed that they received regular feedback on their performance, and 83% that the feedback helped them to improve their performance. Further, 85% agreed that their manager motivated them to be more effective in their job. This latter figure has increased significantly since Wave 4 (75%).

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 9.12). Almost half (46%) said they received reflective supervision once every three or four weeks, with 25% who said they received it more frequently, at least once every two weeks. A quarter (25%) said they received reflective supervision less regularly – either every five or six weeks (15%) or less often than every six weeks (10%). Only 3% said they had not received any. There were no significant differences compared with previous waves.

Figure 9.12 Frequency of receiving reflective supervision among ASYEs (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). No significant differences were found between Wave 5 and Wave 1, or Wave 5 and Wave 4.

Quality of reflective supervision

Wave 5 ASYE social workers who had received reflective supervision were asked their views on its quality. Around one-third (34%) rated it 'very good', 55% 'good', 7% 'poor' and 1% 'very poor'. These scores were broadly consistent with the pattern in previous waves.

The 20 respondents who stated that the quality of the reflective supervision they received was poor were asked why. The most common responses were 'the supervision is not reflective (e.g., it is managerial, just monitoring progress)' (16 out of 20), 'the reflective supervision is

not helping me improve my skills' (7 out of 20), 'it is not long enough / it is rushed' (6 out of 20), and 'my manager is poorly prepared / does not ask the right questions' (6 out of 20).

Perceived effectiveness of the ASYE

ASYE social workers were asked how effective or ineffective they found the ASYE programme in supporting them to make the transition from training to practice. Six in ten (59%) regarded it as effective (including 23% who thought it was very effective). Almost one-quarter (23%) felt it was neither effective nor ineffective, with fewer (16%) saying it was ineffective.

There were 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 effective (77%²⁸, compared with 54% of those who did not have a health condition). There was also a link to overall satisfaction: two-thirds (66%) of those who were satisfied with their job overall found the ASYE programme to be effective, compared with 39% of those who were dissatisfied.

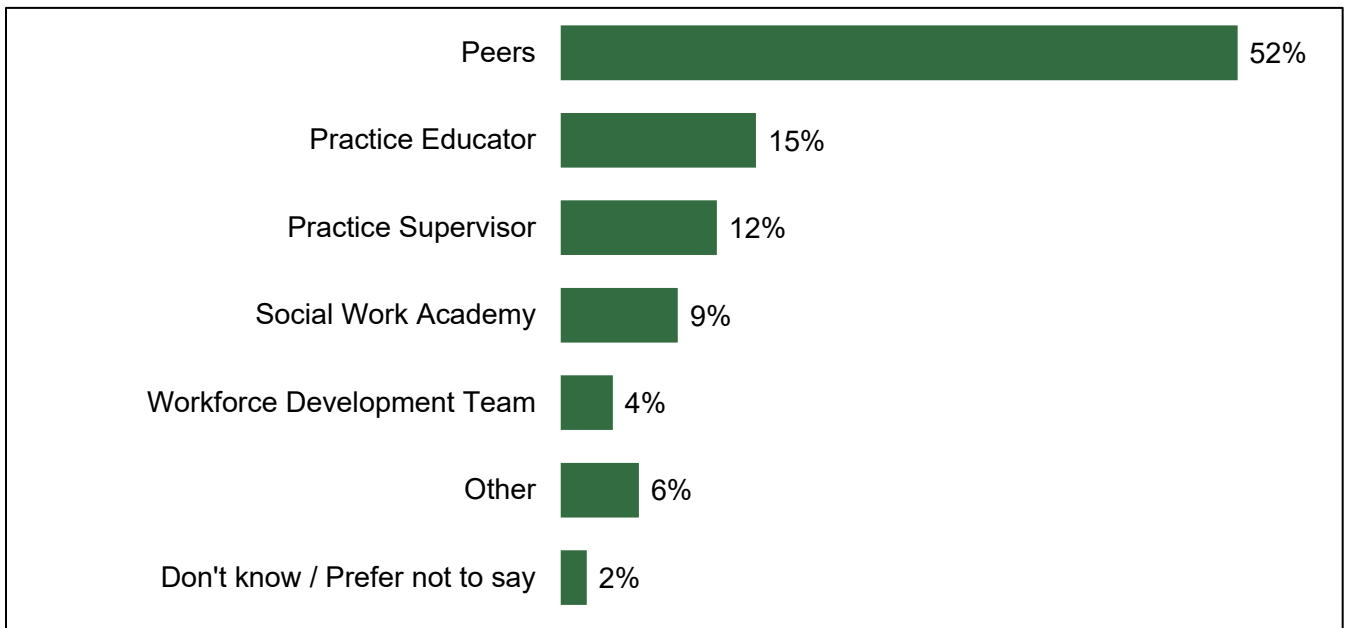
The minority (43) who found the ASYE to be ineffective were asked what could make it more effective. The most common responses were the need for more support, followed by the need for more relevant training. Other important factors included less bureaucracy and a greater consideration for balancing caseload with ASYE obligations.

Most valuable support

ASYE social workers were asked, excluding their manager, which of the sources of support was most valuable during their ASYE. Over half (52%) felt the most valuable support came from their peers. Full responses are shown in Figure 9.13.

²⁸ It is important to note that the base size is 40, therefore findings should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 9.13 Most valuable sources of support for Wave 5 ASYEs

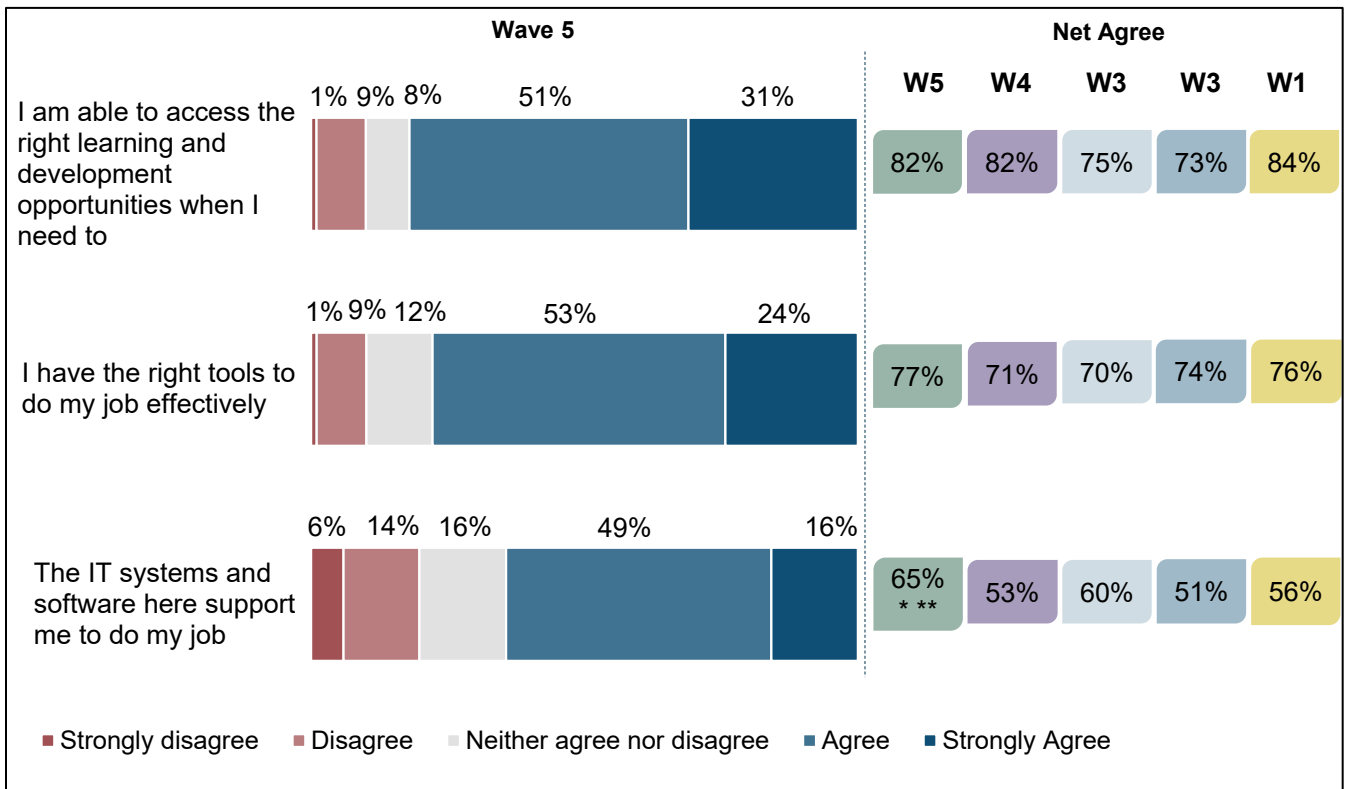


Base: All ASYE child and family social workers: Wave 5 (240).

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 9.14). As in previous waves, in Wave 5 they 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 (77% agreed). However, and in line with the pattern in previous waves, fewer agreed that IT systems and software supported them to do their job (65%), although this had increased significantly compared with both Wave 1 (56%) and Wave 4 (53%).

Figure 9.14 ASYE views on tools and resources (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256); Wave 3 (279); Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1; and * between Wave 5 and Wave 4.

4.

Access to training or other learning and development activities

ASYE social workers were asked to estimate the number of hours in a typical week that they spend participating in training or other learning and development activities, including continuing professional development (CPD). Most commonly ASYE social workers reported that they spent 1-2 hours per week on this (49%). Around one-third (31%) spent 3-5 hours, one in ten spent 6-10 hours (8%), and 2% spent 11 or more hours. ASYE social workers spent an average of 3 hours on training or other learning and development activities (compared with an average of 2 hours among non-ASYE social workers).

Job satisfaction

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

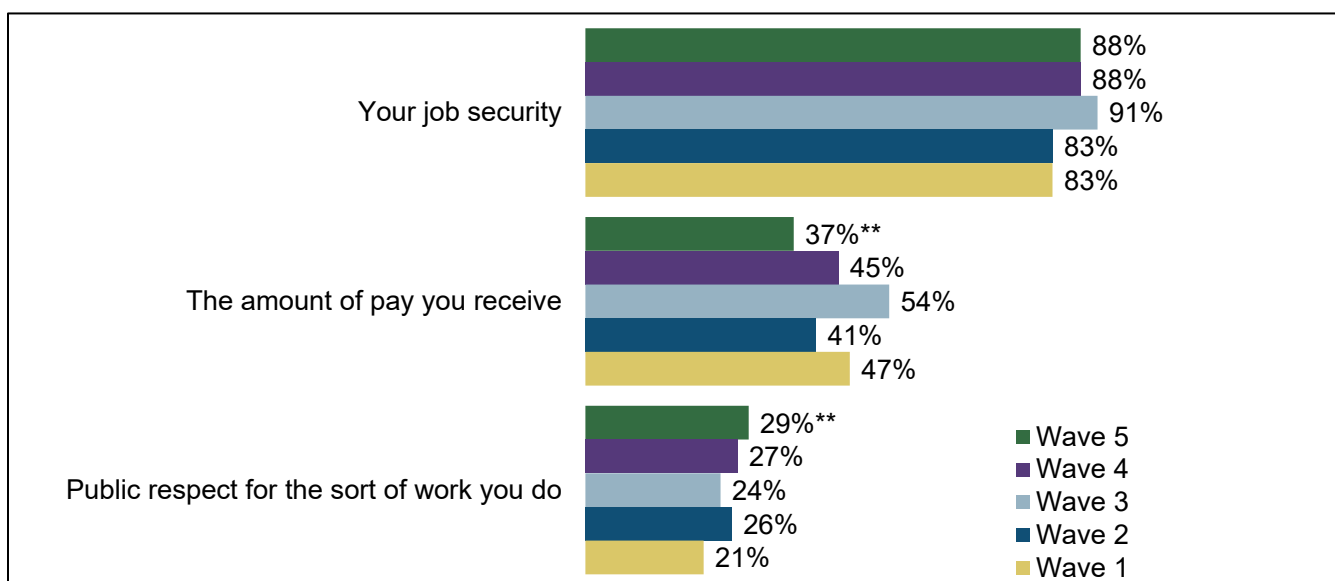
Aspects of the job

Wave 5 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 9.15), almost nine in ten (88%) were satisfied with job security, but this fell to just over one-third (37%) satisfied with the amount of pay received and three in ten (29%) with public respect for the work they do.

The results here were broadly consistent wave-on-wave, although there has been a significant decrease in ASYEs who were satisfied with their pay in Wave 5 (37%) in comparison to Wave 4 (45%) and Wave 1 (47%). This may be linked to the cost of living situation and rising inflation. At the same time, there has been an increase in ASYEs who feel satisfied with public respect for the work they do (29% in Wave 5 in comparison to 21% in Wave 1).

Figure 9.15 Percentage of ASYE social workers' who agreed that they were satisfied or very satisfied with key aspects of their job (Wave 1 to Wave 5)

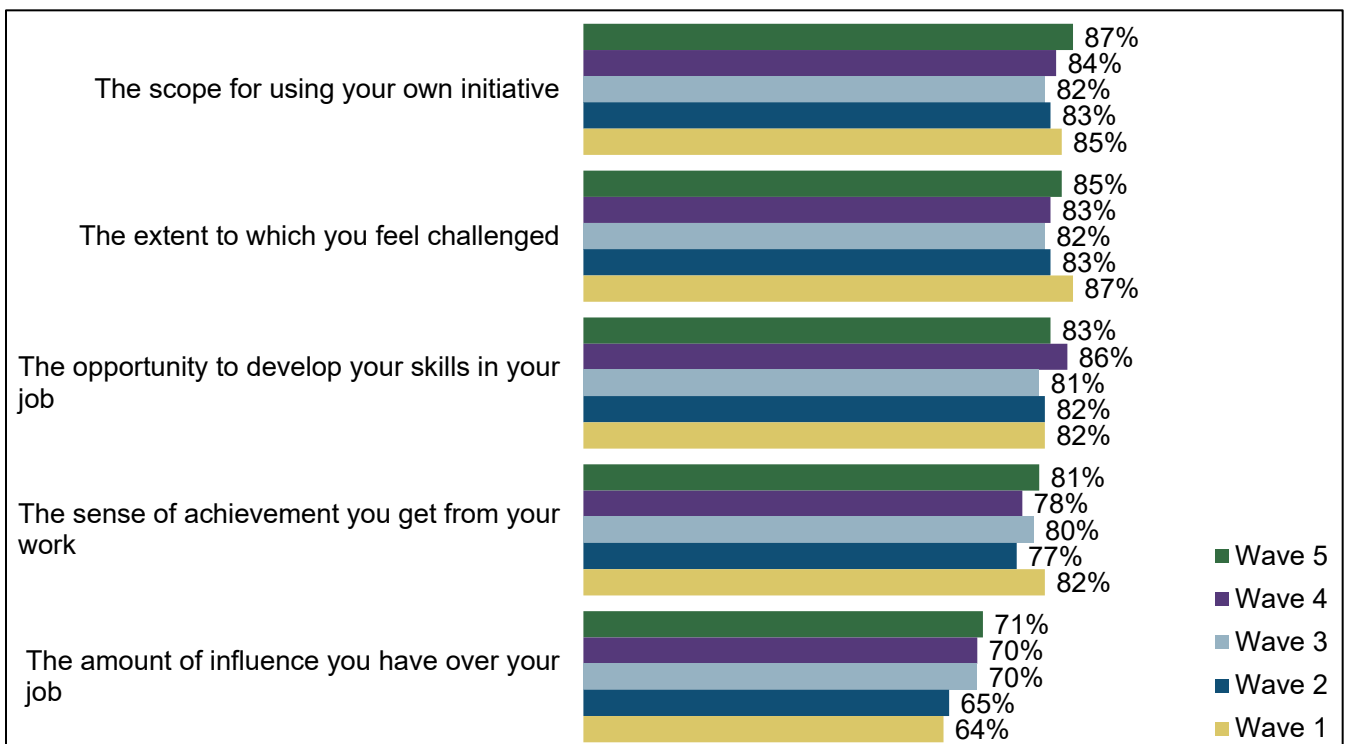


Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers: Wave 1 (338) , Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

On aspects of how they carry out their job (Figure 9.16) levels of satisfaction were high: 87% were satisfied with the scope they had to use their initiative; 85% with the extent to which they feel challenged in their role; 83% with opportunity to develop their skills; 81% with the sense of achievement they receive from their job; and 71% were satisfied with the amount of influence they have over their job.

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

Figure 9.16 Percentage of ASYE social workers' who agreed that they were satisfied or very satisfied with key aspects of their job (Wave 1 to Wave 5)

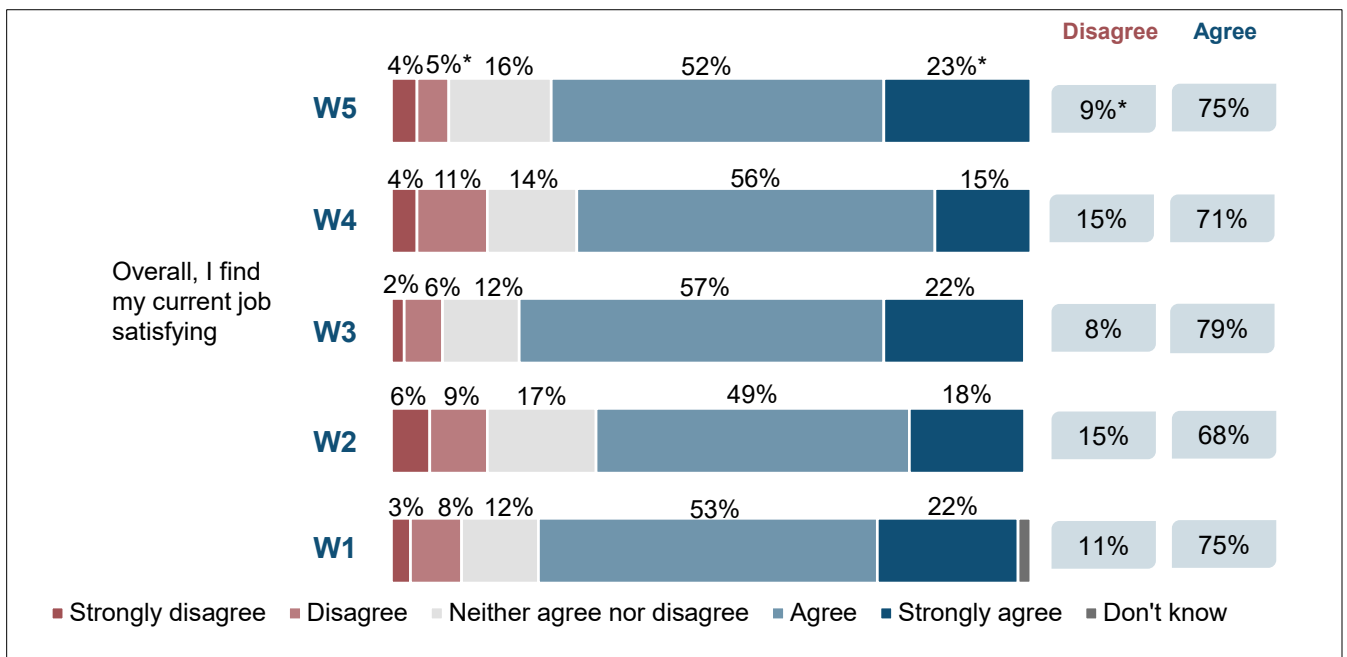


Base: All ASYE Child and Family Social Workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). No significant differences were found between Wave 5 and Wave 1, or Wave 5 and Wave 4.

Overall job satisfaction

ASYE social workers were asked the extent to which they agreed that they found their current job satisfying overall. In Wave 5, three-quarters (75%) agreed (23% 'strongly agreed' and 52% 'agreed'), whilst 9% disagreed (4% 'strongly disagreed' and 5% 'disagreed'). ASYEs in Wave 5 were less likely to disagree (9%) that they were satisfied with their jobs in comparison to Wave 4 (15%). Furthermore, Wave 5 ASYEs were more likely to 'strongly agree' that they were satisfied with their jobs in comparison to Wave 4 (15%).

Figure 9.17 ASYE social workers' overall job satisfaction (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE LA child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). *Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 4.

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

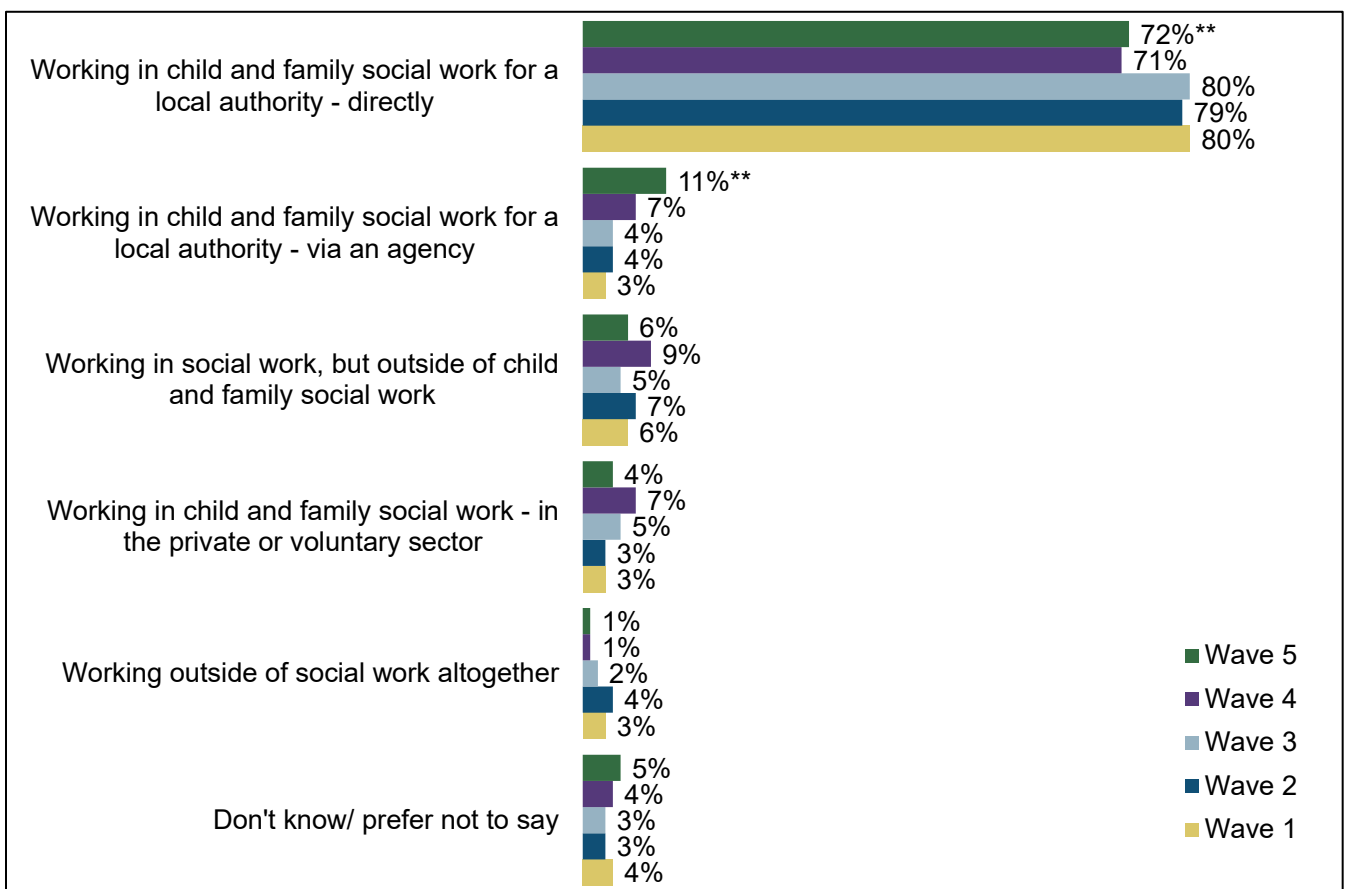
Identifying ASYE social workers' short-term career plans and reasons for leaving or considering leaving their current positions is important to help to understand how retention might be improved. This section details career plans over the next 12 months and whether these have been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, 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 9.18 shows that 72% planned to still be working directly in local authority child and family social work a year hence, a decrease on Waves 1, 2 and 3. Eleven per cent were planning to be 'working in child and family social work for a local authority, but via an agency', which was an increase in comparison to Waves 1, 2 and 3. Six per cent were planning on 'working in social work, but outside of child and family social work', and 4% were planning on 'working in child and family social work, but in the private or voluntary sector'. Only 1% of respondents were planning on 'working outside of social work altogether'. When combined, compared with previous waves, more Wave 5 ASYEs said they planned to be working in child and family social work but not directly for a local authority (21% in Wave 5 compared to 12% in Wave 1, and 14% in both Wave 2 and 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, 81% of ASYEs reported that they worked overtime 'most weeks' or 'all the time' (compared with 62% expecting to be employed directly by an authority); 62% agreed that their workload was too high (compared with 33%); 65% agreed they were asked to fulfil too many roles (compared with 40%), and 80% agreed that they felt stressed by their job (compared with 50%). 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 47%, compared with 87% of those still expecting to be employed directly.

Figure 9.18 Where ASYE social workers see themselves in 12 months' time (Wave 1 to Wave 5)



Base: All ASYE LA child and family social workers: Wave 1 (338), Wave 2 (256), Wave 3 (279), Wave 4 (231), Wave 5 (240). **Denotes a significant difference between Wave 5 and Wave 1.

Reasons for leaving or considering leaving child and family social work

The 19 respondents in Wave 5 that were considering leaving or had left local authority child and family work were asked why, followed by their main reason if they provided more than one. Most likely to be mentioned as reasons were 'the amount of paperwork' (11 out of 19 respondents), 'the working hours in general' (10), 'I don't like the culture of the local authority'

(9), 'the high caseload' (8), and 'it is not compatible with family or relationship commitments' (6). In comparison, at Wave 4 'I don't like the culture of the local authority' 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' (5).

Potential influences on ASYE retention

Wave 5 ASYE social workers who said they had left or were considering leaving (19 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 better working culture' (10 out of 19 respondents), 'a more manageable workload in terms of caseload' (10), 'a more manageable workload in terms of administration / paperwork' (9). These were the same factors which came up most commonly at Wave 4.

When asked for the single main factor that might encourage them to return to, or remain in, child and family social work in the future, their responses largely mirrored the general reasons. The most common main factor they identified was 'a more manageable workload in terms of caseload' (4 out of 19 respondents), 'a more manageable workload in terms of administration / paperwork' (2), 'higher pay' (2), or 'other financial incentives such as overtime pay' (2).

Attrition from social work among ASYEs

In March 2023 IFF conducted an exercise to ascertain whether ASYEs from previous waves were still social workers after a period of one, two and three years. This was assessed through a combination of survey responses at Wave 5, or, if they had not taken part in Wave 5, 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 Wave 1 ASYEs, 10% of Wave 2 ASYEs, 13% of Wave 3 ASYEs and 13% of Wave 4 ASYEs it was not possible to determine whether or not they were still in social work, primarily because they did not provide their name.

Tables 9.1 and 9.2 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), Wave 3 (columns c & d) and Wave 4 (columns e & f). As the table shows, the attrition rate one year after ASYE (including unknowns) was 11% for Wave 2 to Wave 3 ASYEs, 9% for Wave 3 to Wave 4 ASYEs, and 10% for Wave 4 to Wave 5 ASYEs. Excluding unknowns, the rates were 12%, 10% and 11% respectively.

Table 9.1. Proportion of ASYE social workers who had left the profession one year after their ASYE, based on survey responses and SWE register (including unknown)

Still in social work or on the SWE register? Including Un-known	W2 to W3 (n) a	W2 to W3 (%) b	W3 to W4 (n) c	W3 to W4 (%) d	W4 to W5 (n) e	W4 to W5 (%) f
Yes	203	79%	221	78%	178	77%
No	27	11%	25	9%	23	10%
Un-known	26	10%	37	13%	30	13%
Total	256	100%	283	100%	231	100%

Table 9.2. Proportion of ASYE social workers who had left the profession one year after their ASYE, based on survey responses and SWE register (excluding unknown)

Still in social work or on the SWE register? Excluding Un-known	W2 to W3 (n) a	W2 to W3 (%) b	W to W4 (n) c	W3 to W4 (%) d	W4 to W5 (n) e	W to W5 (%) f
Yes	203	88%	221	90%	178	89%
No	27	12%	25	10%	23	11%
Total	230	100%	246	100%	201	100%

Tables 9.3 and 9.4 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), at Wave 2 (columns c & d) and Wave 3 (columns e & f). 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, and 13% for Wave 3 to Wave 5 (including unknowns). Excluding unknowns, the rates were 16%, 16% and 15% respectively.

Table 9.3. Proportion of social workers who had left the profession, two years after their ASYE, based on survey responses and SWE register (including unknown)

Still in social work or on the SWE register? Including Unknown	W to W3 (n) a	W1 to W3 (%) b	W2 to W4 (n) c	W2 to W4 (%) d	W3 to W5 (n) e	W3>W5 (%) f
Yes	244	72%	191	75%	210	74%
No	47	14%	36	14%	36	13%
Unknown	47	14%	26	10%	37	13%
Total	338	100%	253	100%	283	100%

Table 9.4. Proportion of social workers who had left the profession, two years after their ASYE, based on survey responses and SWE register (excluding unknown)

Still in social work or on the SWE register? Excluding Unknown	W1 to W3 (n) a	W1 to W3 (%) b	W2 to W4 (n) c	W2 to W4 (%) d	W3 to W5 (n) e	W3 to W5 (%) f
Yes	244	84%	191	84%	210	85%
No	47	16%	36	16%	36	15%
Total	291	100%	227	100%	246	100%

Tables 9.5 and 9.6 shows the results of this analysis for attrition from social work three years after ASYE, which was conducted on those who were doing an ASYE at Wave 1 (columns a & b), and Wave 2 (columns c & d). The table shows that the attrition rate three years on from the ASYE was 16% for Wave 1 to Wave 4, and 17% for Wave 2 to Wave 5 (including unknowns) and 19% for both time periods excluding unknowns.

Table 9.5. Proportion of social workers who had left the profession, three years after their ASYE, based on survey responses and SWE register (including unknown)

Still in social work or on the SWE register? Including Unknown	W1 to W4 (n) a	W1 to W4 (%) b	W2 to W5 (n) c	W2 to W5 (%) d
Yes	236	70%	185	73%
No	54	16%	42	17%
Unknown	47	14%	26	10%
Total	338	100%	253	100%

Table 9.6. Proportion of social workers who had left the profession, three years after their ASYE, based on survey responses and SWE register (excluding unknown)

Still in social work or on the SWE register? Excluding Unknown	W1 to W4 (n) a	W to W4 (%) b	W2 to W5 (n) c	W2 to W5 (%) d
Yes	236	81%	185	81%
No	54	19%	42	19%
Total	291	100%	227	100%

10. Challenges and opportunities for social work

Social work practitioners interviewed in the qualitative follow-up interviews were asked to describe the challenges and opportunities for children and family social work, at present and for the next twelve months, within their local authority and across the social work profession as a whole. They were also asked to consider what constitutes becoming an ‘experienced’ social worker and how experienced social workers could be better deployed and retained within the workforce.

Perceived challenges

Across all areas of practice, challenges could be categorised into four broad themes:

- Recruitment and retention
- Resources
- Nature of the work
- The increased cost of living and the impact of this on both families and the workforce.

In addition, child protection practitioners identified external factors such as government policies, the economic climate, social work leadership, industrial action in allied professions, and media representations as key challenges. The following sections explore the four thematic areas, and the additional ‘external factors’ theme.

Recruitment and Retention

Social workers in child protection roles and other areas of practice alike identified shortages in their workforce. They expressed concern that the shortage of qualified workers nationally could lead to local authorities recruiting more inexperienced staff, which in their experience then had an impact on the stability of the team and added pressure to existing workers.

It’s a really difficult climate, so we’re very understaffed, we can’t recruit, and when we do recruit, the people that we are recruiting are not, maybe, experienced enough to deal with the stuff we need them to. [Practice Supervisor, CP]

Alongside challenges of recruiting experienced workers, retention was also seen as problematic.

We are losing hand over fist, amazing trained social workers, they are haemorrhaging, literally haemorrhaging. I mean one or two a week, literally one or two a week, really. [Practice Leader, Other]

Recruitment and retention issues are inextricably linked to what was perceived by workers as a heavy reliance on agency workers. This was recognised across both groups, but most

frequently by child protection practitioners. Here, a child protection service manager explains that the shortage of workers now extends to agency workers, and the impact this has on the workforce.

I think the agency situation has become outrageous. The local authorities are completely held to ransom, and it was poor enough when we were all competing from the same pool and paying increasing amount of salaries, and as that's evolved so that we can now only recruit agency teams is making that even more challenging. We have to provide, sort of, offers of capped caseloads for these teams that we can't provide assurances to our permanent members of staff. [Service Manager, CP]

Resources

In addition to the inequity of offering more favourable terms to agency workers, the perceived over-reliance on this temporary workforce was seen as impacting budgets, due to their higher salaries and agency fees.

My local authority lost 15 social workers in about a three-month period, because they all went agency. It's a lot more money than if you're permanent. It's a cycle that I can't see a way out of, because we lose 15 social workers, because they've all gone agency, we need to recruit 15 social workers quickly because we've lost them, and the only people we can recruit are agency, which then feeds the market for agency social workers, if you see what I'm saying. [Team Manager, CP].

Some social workers suggested that the impact on budgets was creating a challenge to good work with children and families.

...there's lots of people that are able to do really good work, but sometimes the resources around make it really hard to work in, like an ideal way. [Practice Supervisor, Other]

Another key resource issue for social workers, especially those outside of child protection, was the lack of placements for children and young people.

You've got nowhere for the child to go. I've been in situations where I've been literally driving around with a young person in the car, and we've not found an emergency placement until 8 o'clock at night. [Front line Practitioner, Other]

Nature of the work

Practitioners across child protection and other practice groups raised issues relating to the changing nature of their work. Some described their working environment as becoming increasingly challenging. They referred to increasing caseload, growing complexity of the work undertaken, stress and wellbeing, what they perceived to be poor management within their organisation, and a lack of progression or continuing professional development opportunities. In addition, child protection practitioners reported the pressure of inspections from Ofsted especially where the results of this were disappointing.

Social workers suggested that both the size of their caseload and the complexity of issues facing families had increased since Covid-19. Stress and wellbeing were reported as challenges for practitioners across both groups, with child protection practitioners identifying this more frequently.

Interventions are really tough on families and children. But they're also really tough on practitioners. It's really hard. It takes a huge amount of time. It's incredibly stressful. It's hugely emotionally draining. [Advanced Practitioner, CP]

In relation to local authority strategic management, practitioners found conditions particularly challenging when decisions that impacted their working conditions were made without consultation.

I think they need to be more open with us when they're going to do something or make changes. I think that's what gets people angry about changes which are happening or decisions which are made, there's no consideration about how that would impact the person. [Front line Practitioner, CP]

For example, some practitioners described having no access to training because of budget decisions made by the management of their employing local authority.

Our training budget has been frozen, all training is frozen until April, so I can't apply for any training through {LA} unless it's deemed absolutely essential. [Assistant Team Manager, CP]

Cost of living issues

The increase in cost of living is an overarching theme and is connected to all the above themes, with recruitment and retention, resource shortages and increasingly challenging working environments being perceived by practitioners as being the result of the national economic context. Where cost of living issues were identified as a specific challenge, social

workers recognised the impact of this financial pressure on both families and practitioners themselves.

One frontline practitioner described the difficult situation for families they worked with.

I've got quite a few families in hostels at the moment because they can't afford housing and were made homeless just before Christmas. Cost of living, I've got a lot of families...on food parcels because they can't afford to eat which is really, really sad. Can't afford presents or are referring to charities that are obviously supplying presents. I would probably say the worst one is cost of living. [Front line Practitioner, CP]

Another predicted the impact this would have on families within the next twelve months.

I think what we'll see over the next 12 months is physical health as well. If people aren't able to put the heating on or you know, make food for themselves, their physical as well as their mental health is going to significantly decline. [Front line Practitioner, Other]

Practitioners themselves were also feeling these financial pressures. Some commented on the difference in pay between the social care workforce and other fields of employment, in particular for those in support roles whose work was emotionally demanding but lower paid. This is important to social workers themselves because it relates to the perceived 'value' of the profession more broadly.

Sometimes, when we've had a person in post, who'd known the job, you know, well, they've actually found it frustrating that they're doing quite a responsible role for a low wage...I've heard comments that, rather than be doing the work that they're doing, which is quite a responsible role and handling lots of personal data, they would be earning the same salary if they were stacking shelves in a supermarket. [ASYE, Other]

External factors

Although the Covid-19 lockdown was mentioned as a factor in the increased complexity of their work, practitioners more frequently identified the political context and profile of the profession as problematic, and outside of their immediate control. Issues raised included changes in government (which some found destabilising) and lack of funding.

So you know that there's lots of changes happening...So I think it's a really unsettling time at the moment for the profession as a whole. I think it probably is most of the time, but specifically now. [Practice Leader, CP]

Practitioners identified that the social work profession was not always presented positively in the press, and was often absent from public debate, which they thought impacted on public awareness of and respect for the profession.

At the moment we're completely rudderless. We haven't got very good PR at the moment. I don't think we have. I don't think the general public believes in us. I think we're left out really from everybody's view...Well, we haven't [gone on strike]. [Practice Leader, Other]

Perceived opportunities

The opportunities identified by practitioners across child protection and other practice areas, within their own organisations and across the sector, can be divided into five common themes:

- Continuing professional development
- Hybrid working and new work patterns
- Internal organisational support
- Recruitment and retention
- New ways of working with families.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

The move to online training opportunities, secondments, training academies and specialist training sessions are included in this theme, alongside more informal managerial support, which is discussed later, under 'internal organisational support'.

A front line practitioner described the development of an online learning forum in their organisation as a good opportunity to learn in a more informal way.

...they do, [online training] every week and it's during a lunch hour and you can bob in and out of that, it's not mandatory, but if there's a guest speaker you might like to listen. [Front line Practitioner, Other]

In addition to online learning opportunities making training more accessible, practitioners identified newly developed Social Work Academies in their organisations as a good source of professional development. For example, a respondent explained how one authority has integrated a second supported year in employment into this model as a way of supporting newly qualified practitioners.

They've got an absolutely amazing learning academy and they very recently started the second supported year of employment, obviously following on from the ASYE. I think there's huge amounts of support for workers at all levels. [Team Manager, CP]

Diversifying development opportunities for practitioners who did not want to follow a managerial career trajectory was perceived as a good opportunity for both CPD and retention. Offering secondment opportunities was one way that local authorities were meeting this need.

There's a secondment opportunity to try different roles, so if you're a permanent member of staff, you can go into a different team for a year, and I suppose that keeps people within our local authority, but gives them opportunities elsewhere, which means that you keep the member of staff because they don't go to a different place. [Team Manager, Other]

Some respondents explained how prioritising CPD was also recognised as important for agency workers in their local authorities. For example, one described how a local authority is supporting agency staff to complete the practice educator awards.

I've just completed the Stage 1 and Stage 2 Practice Education Course, where I supported two students in their final year placements as a qualified social worker, and that was something [name of authority] supported me with, although I'm not a permanent member of staff. [Agency front line Practitioner, CP]

Hybrid working

The move to online engagement was not only identified as an opportunity for CPD. Some recognised this new model of working as an opportunity to work more dynamically, working from home more often to save time commuting or travelling between visits to families. Some practitioners believed that this hybrid model enabled them to respond more quickly to families.

Our response to child protection matters is, I would say, arguably quicker than what it was. We can have a meeting, and my social worker can go out on a visit, within an hour, whereas previously it might have been three hours. That's a benefit of it. [Team Manager, CP]

This was viewed as particularly useful in more rural locations, and in larger local authorities where practitioners would otherwise have to travel a significant distance to meetings.

Social workers described meeting virtually as a useful way to engage with families where they might be reluctant to attend a meeting in person.

I think it's actually helped engagement as well, because people that would have been, you know, reluctant to actually come to a meeting in person, get around the table... Teams and even access on phones has broken down barriers for people. [Front line Practitioner, Other]

Respondents also recognised the benefits for those who had family overseas. Here a practice leader explains how virtual meetings have been used to increase family networks.

We're running network meetings with families that have got family in Australia and you know people who can't come to a meeting but can still be involved, so we've been able to improve our family network in that way as well. Just by having been forced to use technology more. [Practice Leader, CP]

The benefits of hybrid working extended to practitioners themselves, with respondents at all levels describing support from their employing organisations to ensure they had the appropriate equipment to work successfully from home.

[LA] have become really flexible and were really supportive of working from home like, I got a desk, I got a lamp, I got a chair. Anything that I needed to make working from home, doable and maintainable. [Practice Supervisor, Other]

Where respondents acknowledged that working from home had the potential to be isolating, they described new ways of engaging with colleagues to overcome this.

I like being able to have flexibility, [it is] sometimes quite isolating and I do miss having that team interaction. But we work to do that in different ways anyway so we have get-togethers regularly. [Agency front line Practitioner, CP]

Internal organisational support

Opportunities for practice were frequently connected to strong internal leadership, with several respondents identifying one or more elements of the support provided by authorities as an important aspect of their experience as an employee. Within this theme practitioners identified responsive senior leadership, effective communication strategies and appropriate responses to the Black Lives Matter movement.

One assistant team manager described the use of celebrating successes within their local authority as a strategy for improving morale, and although this approach was recognised as 'not for everyone', generally, practitioners saw the benefits of good communication between front line social workers and senior leadership and were motivated by visible and passionate senior leaders.

Internally there's a lot of drive and passion within the LA to make things better. [Team Manager, CP]

A few respondents explicitly identified organisational responses to the Black Lives Matter movement as an important opportunity for practitioners to learn, but also for the whole local

authority to improve, with new roles being developed to promote anti-racist practice. The importance of these roles and learning opportunities was acknowledged in local authorities independent of the ethnic diversity of the region. Here a practitioner describes the recruitment of a permanent worker to reinforce anti-racist practice.

They have a specialist anti-racist practice lead within the local authority, which is a permanent role. They do a lot of work to promote anti-racist practice. [Team Manager, Other]

New recruitment and retention strategies

The introduction of new strategies focussing on recruitment and retention were seen as an opportunity to stabilise the social work workforce. Here practitioners referred to the introduction of incentives for permanent staff, engaging with ASYE programmes, changing recruitment practices and utilising exit interviews to improve employee experiences as positive approaches.

Amongst the strategies mentioned were including social workers on recruitment panels, employing social workers from successful student placements, a rolling recruitment model for permanent social work posts, and prioritising good, supportive ASYE programmes.

We have got a really good student programme. We have an academy, so students come in. We also have a very good ASYE programme, so we are recruiting and retaining our own social workers. [Practice Supervisor, CP]

In conjunction with innovative recruitment strategies, some respondents highlighted how their local authorities were also exploring different ways to retain permanent workers. For example, incentives were being considered as a way of retaining experienced workers in permanent roles.

One way of informing new recruitment and retention strategies was to utilise information from exit interviews. This practice leader described directing the focus of these interviews as a useful source of feedback:

One thing we've been doing as well is offering exit interviews to all of our staff who leave a social work post with a particular focus on recruitment retention...and that's provided some pretty insightful feedback so that's been something that's been good. [Practice Leader, CP]

New ways of working with families

Many respondents recognised the challenges of working with families in relation to both the availability of services and the increased costs of living. Practitioners did, however, identify

opportunities for practice that had developed from the challenging financial context. The ability to engage with families through technology has been discussed already, and in addition to this, respondents described service advancements and the need to be more creative.

Some practitioners identified that their local authority was well resourced, however, when raising this, respondents referred to their organisations as 'lucky', recognising that resources were not equally available nationally.

I think we're really, really lucky in our like authority...We've got all those resources back on board; we've got an excellent early help service. We've got access to loads of domestic abuse services and support Youth Services. Things like that. I think we're really well resourced. [Practice Supervisor, CP]

Practitioners offered suggestions about use of resources, in response to challenges such as the shortage of placements for children and young people. They suggested moving to more community-led projects as another way to make provisions more sustainable.

I think that they could invest more resources around family group conferencing and family finding, to really dig down and explore people who are in the network and who are in the family. Often people say there isn't anyone but when you work that through with them, there normally is. Most children are connected to other people in some way or another. [Team Manager, Other]

The role of experienced social workers

This section explores how respondents in the qualitative research described how experienced social workers are used, valued and rewarded in their local authorities. Not surprisingly there was a high level of consistency in responses across both practice groups in how they talked about an 'experienced social worker'. Definitions included having a range and variety of experience, with increased complexity of cases, supported by CPD and effective supervision. Working autonomously and being confident to mentor and support colleagues with a good knowledge base was valued. Some raised that exposure to working across different local authorities enhanced the depth of experience.

Defining 'experience'

A team leader who manages a team of ten social workers and is an experienced practice educator, had a clear view of what an 'experienced worker' looks like:

An experienced worker has autonomy, the confidence to be able to run with situations....[have] the element of resilience, self-esteem, just being able to be equipped to be able to deal with different situations, but also

being very risk averse, you know, knowing about the little tell-tale signs, you know, being really aware that something's going on here. Follow your hunches, follow your intuition, but being able to write very comprehensive work. [Team leader, Other]

This was echoed by another team manager in a frontline child protection team who raised the contention that time spent in the role did not equate to becoming an 'experienced' worker:

I think that's a really tricky question because I don't necessarily think it's down to years qualified. I guess I would see an experienced social worker as being able to adequately risk assess and sort of be coming up with ideas for an intervention without a manager telling them what to do, and I think that is your role as a manager is to encourage and inspire social workers to come up with the solutions like we try and do with families..... I also think an experienced social worker would be one that uses theory in practice and whatever that theory might be. Social work isn't just a chat, it is actually a therapeutic intervention. [Team leader, CP]

Most participants said that the number of years served for an 'experienced worker' to be in post varied from over two years to five years. Pre-qualification experience was valued along with the context of final level placement. Practitioners in front line child protection contexts voiced a consistent message that exposure to and confidence in court work was an essential component of 'experience'. One deputy team manager said:

If someone came to interview who'd done child protection for two or more years, I would be thinking of them as experienced absolutely in this climate, when child protection after your ASYE means you're holding multiple sets of care proceedings. Our senior practitioner became a senior practitioner after about two years... that shouldn't be, but that is what I consider experienced. [Deputy Team Manager, CP]

'Feeling' experienced

The transition from ASYE role to 'experienced worker' was discussed by several respondents in the earlier phase of their career. One social worker reported that on completing their protected ASYE year in a child protection team they had been expected to immediately change their email signature to 'experienced social worker'. The impact of this was significant on their sense of professional identity.

But the second I completed it was like ohh you're pretty qualified. You're experienced now and it just hit me like I don't know what.... the expectation I think when you change that signature on your name to "experienced social worker", it's almost like people have such high

expectations that you know everything because they think you're really experienced. And actually, I was completely fresh. [Social Worker, Other]

Another social worker who had been in a child protection team for over two years who did not identify themselves as 'experienced', as they had not had enough court work, defined an 'experienced worker' as:

It's going to sound really bad - so basically if you pass your ASYE you're classed as an experienced social worker so as long as you've done a year and you've done all your paperwork on top of that to do your ASYE; you're a qualified social worker. [Social Worker, CP]

This ambivalence about being identified as 'experienced' was echoed by one senior practitioner who had moved from their front line child protection role into a specialist project, and initially hesitated when asked if they were an experienced worker despite being promoted and recognised for their experience, support and innovative project work. They then acknowledged and valued their own experiences.

Yes. Do you know what? I'm going to own it. And I'm going to say yes. I probably am. And that's probably changed in the last year or so. Oh, I think it's somebody that has a breadth of understanding and who is able to mentor and support the others around them successfully without disempowering the person that they're helping. [Senior Practitioner, Other]

Progression

An agency worker reflected that progression from ASYE to becoming an experienced worker was like 'jumping through hoops' saying:

So, some people, in my eyes, should not become experienced social workers, even if they've been with the local authority for, you know, ten, twenty years, because they just can't develop that depth of understanding of social work. And I think, because of the high turnover of managers, there is no rigorous process to check anybody's level of understanding to progress. And it's just like a conveyor belt system, that you're in, 'Oh, you're still here? Right, now, you're an advanced social worker. 'Oh, you're still here / well, now, you can be a team manager. And you're still here? You can be a service manager'. [Agency Social Worker, CP]

Most participants who commented on the assessment processes used for progression talked about the capability criteria, which in a few cases was tested by portfolio submissions or professional development interviews. Pay increases and incremental rises linked to progression were commented on by a small number. The supervision context was identified

by the majority of respondents as where conversations take place about opportunities to enhance experience or to encourage progression:

When I'm supervising my social workers now, I'm asking them about their career development and where they want to go, and if there's anything that I can do, as a team manager, or the local authority can do, to support them in that development. [Team Manager, CP]

Several respondents talked about being encouraged to apply for the 'experienced role'. One social worker acknowledged that this approach had resulted in better retention in their locality compared to other authorities. Whilst identifying that they were 'experienced', this person had not yet applied due to the time and commitment required to complete the documentation. Despite this, they felt valued by being encouraged to apply in every supervision session.

At the senior level, in child protection, progression included criteria around court paperwork, confidence in attending court, and having a good grasp of thresholds. One respondent in a front line team explained that the usual trajectory for someone to become a senior social worker was to have over four years' experience; however when they indicated they were considering leaving for an agency post, they were offered an interim team manager role after four years (hence moving up two grades). They were keen to point out that such decisions were the direct result of retention issues.

Team composition

Participants were asked to talk about the staffing in their team and to identify the numbers of ASYE and 'experienced' social workers, advanced practitioners, team managers and other colleagues. There were differences noted between responses from social workers in child protection and those in other areas of practice.

Of those who responded to this question, those in 'other' practice areas, for example, specialist areas or fostering and adoption, said that their team was made up of workers with over three years' experience. Most of these teams were described as stable, with staff remaining in post for over five years. Respondents said that agency workers were less common in these teams, although some respondents mentioned that agency staff were needed elsewhere in their local authority due to the shortage of experienced workers in child protection teams.

That's where newly qualified get roles, then move into assessment, then permanence and then fostering. There's a very short shelf life in terms of what people will be able to manage in that [CP] role long term. [Social Worker, Other]

Those working in front line child protection services highlighted the far-reaching challenges of recruitment and retention. There was wide variation in the composition of their teams. A senior

service manager working in a city said that it was difficult for them to recruit experienced staff, which impacted the balance of experienced and less experienced staff in social work teams across the service.

Different areas of the city have, kind of, more experienced workers. It's just because those workers have stayed in those posts, and they haven't wanted to move, and they're quite content and happy. Whereas you have some areas of the city where there's a big turnaround, all the time. So it goes in roundabouts a little bit. [Service Manager, CP]

Shortage of experienced social workers

Child protection was identified by social workers in both practice groups as having a particular shortage of experienced social workers. This comment from a manager who had moved out of child protection was typical:

Child protection. Child in need. It feels like everybody does a couple of years and then they get promoted. And because that's the place to get all your experience, people become experienced social workers and move on. In my opinion, that's where we have a massive bottleneck for never really having that stability. [Team Manager, Other]

A child protection service manager reiterated that often colleagues are doing work beyond their experience due to recruitment issues. In response, they explained how their local authority had brought in an experienced agency team, but these staff were working in isolation and permanent staff were not benefiting directly from their experience.

Part of the difficulty we currently have is because we can't recruit permanent or individual agency members of staff who are experienced, we're having to bring in these agency teams that don't operate within our teams. They operate in isolation with their own back office and everything. So, I think we currently have about thirteen social workers in one of these teams. They should be thirteen social workers that are spread out over our workforce that would be there to support our less experienced staff. [Service Manager CP]

Keeping experienced, permanent staff in child protection teams was seen as a significant challenge. Losing them was not just about losing practice skills and expertise, but also institutional knowledge.

The other issue we've got is that we're losing, and it's not so much an area of service, it's around the local knowledge that people have. When you lose social workers who have worked {named local authority} for 25 years, you don't just lose somebody who can pick up 30 cases and is

really confident at doing it. You lose somebody who has all of the knowledge of the local services that are here, how things are done in {named local authority} in terms of what things need to look like. [Team Manager, CP]

Use of experience to support colleagues

Respondents in the qualitative interviews were asked an open question about how experienced staff support their less experienced colleagues, and talked about formal approaches initiated and/or supported by employing organisations, as well as informal, ad hoc, day to day support.

Formal strategies and approaches

Local authorities have developed a strategic approach to support for new staff with a small number of respondents mentioning apprenticeship schemes for work-based learning, whilst the majority discussed the ASYE programmes. Several respondents identified the significance of the role of the ASYE coordinator to track progress, provide group and reflective support and ensure portfolio outcomes were achieved. The majority reported the use of advanced practitioners or senior social workers to provide formal support for ASYEs via regular supervision combined with an informal model of team support for newly qualified workers as exemplified by a senior practitioner with a lead role in a CP duty and assessment team.

I'd say that everybody gets involved in supporting in ASYEs, you know, shadowing opportunities, if people need help on a visit, everybody is there and is willing to support.[Senior Practitioner, CP]

'Semi-formal' mentoring was often made available to new workers to provide more individual and immediate support. The model was positively promoted by the participants as a win for both the mentor and the mentee, enabling their experience to be shared and building confidence for both parties. Several respondents described a 'buddy system', whereby a more experienced social worker is identified to support a new or recently qualified social worker.

I had a buddy whilst I was in ASYE. Found it really useful for the silly little questions I didn't want to ask anyone else and I am now a buddy to a couple of people and I really like that role because I know exactly how it feels to be starting out and learning everything at once. [Social Worker, Other]

Pairing up for observations, coworking and mentoring cases, were methods of learning, organised both formally and informally but were time dependent given case management demands. The mentoring role was viewed as a means of testing out taking a student and doing the practice educator training via the Practice Educator Professional Standards route which requires support from a local authority to attend training and then take a student social

worker. This was viewed as a strategic way to gain experience for management potential or to enhance their role and attract financial payment.

A number of participants talked about specialist roles within their local authorities, with experienced social workers working as 'practice champions' or 'practice innovators', developing expertise and knowledge in specific aspects of practice such as child sexual abuse, child exploitation and substance misuse, and then cascading this to others via training or sharing resources. Another example given by an interviewee was that their local authority introduced a 'family practitioner' role - an experienced worker who acts as a consultant to the team, including doing joint visits to provide their perspective and facilitate monthly case discussion groups.

A respondent mentioned a new initiative introduced last year by their authority, involving short lunchtime sessions, delivered on a virtual platform, that provided focus for training and peer support. Another interviewee mentioned that their local authority promoted 'practice weeks' which involved training and feedback from different practice areas to share experience.

Informal support

Practitioners valued informal office-based conversations with colleagues, especially more experienced colleagues. Some commented that following the pandemic, the impact of hybrid working and caseload demands reduced those more informal opportunities for conversations.

On the other hand, the lockdowns had contributed to the development of new approaches to work, including access to informal support, such as ad hoc informal supervision and check-ins with colleagues via virtual platforms, for example, Teams calls and WhatsApp groups. Participants were appreciative of team managers who were positive towards this kind of exchange between colleagues, and who acknowledged the importance of 'coffee conversations' and virtual check-ins between colleagues. One respondent noted that they were encouraged to add these sessions into their calendar as peer supervision sessions, and commented that this flexibility was respected by staff.

Organisational use of experienced social workers

Respondents were asked about how their local authorities built experience and made effective use of their staff.

CPD and training

Most respondents across both practitioner groups said that effective training and CPD was important to develop experience across all levels of practice in terms of developing knowledge and therapeutic outcomes. Respondents highlighted the use of secondment and shadowing opportunities to develop expertise in practice areas, alongside more formal and accredited training opportunities. Examples included anti-racist training prompted by the impact of the Black Lives Matters movement on their local authorities and specialist training to promote

development into managerial roles, such as facilitating attending leadership training with both time and travel costs.

Nevertheless, opportunities to be considered for training varied. For one practice supervisor there had been a very positive response from their local authority, and they were currently engaged in a Master's programme at their local higher education institution.

I've never been told no if that makes sense, like it's never been like, no, you can't do that. If I have a suggestion or something, it will always be considered. And I just think, yeah, always pushing people to try new things and go out and comfort zones and stuff. [Practice supervisor, Other]

In contrast, a second team manager in another authority said that CPD had to be asked for, and persistence was required to achieve what they wanted to do:

There are definitely professional development opportunities. For example, you can have the opportunity to do training, you can get a specialist area, You get those opportunities, but only if you put your hand up long enough. We don't go out and shower these opportunities on everyone. It's who comes forward, essentially, and makes that known in things like personal supervision. [Team Manager CP]

Supporting the development of Newly Qualified Social Workers

In addition to CPD opportunities, respondents across both practitioner groups outlined specific examples of how their local authority made best use of experienced workers to support newly qualified staff in the formal stages of their development.

For example, one respondent described how their local authority utilised the same ASYE coordinator to continue to track progress and experience of colleagues in the early stages of their careers creating a positive culture that experiences were understood, and progress encouraged.

Another outlined how their local authority has created a team for newly qualified social workers supported by a practice supervisor who works alongside them, teaching the authority strategic approach to practise. The respondent, also a practice supervisor, provides workshops and training for the new team, alongside regular supervision for members of her own specialist team. They reported their role also includes giving feedback on written work, plus ad hoc support including being available for debriefing after visits up to 9pm (on a rota) to facilitate this. Their assessment is that staff stay in the local authority because they can build their experience by getting opportunities to move around the county.

Elsewhere, one respondent described how their local authority had a structured approach to supporting staff by giving them a broad understanding of different services across the authority:

ASYEs here complete a year of ASYE where they're supported so they'd be mentored ... They would be supported so they had two to one on a child protection case. They would go with somebody to court etc., and do it two to one.... they would come and they would do evening visits with us. And they'd go to all the different teams as well within {local authority} and have a good, robust introduction around {local authority}. [Practice leader, Other]

Specialist roles

An example of the innovative use of advanced practitioners was provided by one Practice Leader who explained how their local authority developed specialist teams to support 'struggling' services, whose role was to go in to teams needing targeted or time-focused support.

The value of building experience was acknowledged by respondents as a win for local authorities in terms of retention and for developing expertise in roles and responsibilities. One senior practitioner was positive about how their authority made good use of experienced workers, at the same time scaffolding opportunities for promotion.

So they have the senior practice lead roles, which are really quite competitive to get, people are quite ambitious I suppose and I guess that's because there is this culture of people stepping up in the organisation. They recognise that if people have gone for those roles and haven't got them, they offer them quite specialist training, it's happened quite a lot and then they have become champions within that specific area, and then support staff. [Senior Practitioner, CP]

There was recognition by respondents across both practice areas that for some social workers the management route was not what they wanted to pursue. A senior service manager said that their local authority had created an advanced practitioner role as a step between social worker and manager to make sure practitioners' experience was valued rather than go into a management role:

Sometimes social workers step into management roles in terms of their kind of seniority. They haven't always had the experience of managing staff ... So I think some of it is their skill set, is their ability to manage complex cases. Look at risk, work with the network and look at what needs to change for that child's life. [Service manager identified as CP but 'other']

Social workers' views on changes to support, retain and make best use of experienced social workers

Social workers who were interviewed in the qualitative research were asked to talk about what they would like to see change to support, retain and make best use of experienced social workers and they overwhelmingly focused on financial and practical packages. Whilst several respondents did mention that feeling appreciated and valued was significant, thirteen out of the forty respondents commented explicitly on issues relating to pay: inadequate salaries, retention schemes, comparison with agency salaries, the need for agency pay caps and other financial incentives.

The impact of cost of living was mentioned by a number of respondents. One respondent suggested that a positive gesture would be the introduction of a hardship fund to cover emergencies e.g., car repairs, as their salary does not cover these additional sorts of payments. Another raised that social workers needed to be paid a living wage to feel valued, particularly as agency staff are paid more:

Well, why are we not on a liveable wage as a council. There's people within our service that can't afford to run their house to feed their kids, and we're supporting families that also can't feed the kids, can't afford to run the house - and you've got employees that are the exact same. [Social worker, CP]

There was a strong perception that the numbers of agency social workers had increased, and that staff were moving to these roles because of unsatisfactory salary levels for permanent staff. An agency social worker spoke about the need to increase salaries to retain staff, referring to their personal experiences of trying to make ends meet:

I think the reason a lot of people are jumping ship to agency is because you do get a little bit more money...it's about making ends meet and not struggling, not worrying - Oh, do I have enough petrol in my car to go and do this piece of direct work? And that's the worry that I've had before. I've got to go out and visit. I don't have diesel in the car. I don't have money in the bank but don't get paid for another week and. How am I supposed to go and do my job? [Agency social worker, CP]

The pull of agency working was raised by a senior social worker who reported a concern that there is no agency pay cap in their region, which in their view has increased movement. The discussion on reinstating regional agreements for agency payments was reiterated by an interim manager, where agency staff have moved to better paying authorities.

Some respondents identified that their local authorities were addressing the challenges of retention through a range of retention pay awards, for example in one case, a salary addition

for all social workers beyond ASYE level; or were explicit about annual/biannual retention payments for those in front line roles.

These incentives were variable –a few respondents mentioned that retention schemes were currently in place, but for others they had been withdrawn the previous year due to financial pressures on the local authority; the impact illustrated by an advanced practitioner:

At the moment, we're all struggling for staff so it is just bums on seats, get the work done, but ...money would help, I think. That's a big thing for everybody. We used to have a retention scheme for the hard-to-retain teams, which went up to, at some points they got £4,000 a year, after being with us for so long, and that stopped this year. [Advanced practitioner, CP]

Such retention schemes were not always successful. One senior practitioner had moved out of a front line post as a means of managing her working hours, despite the availability of a £5,000 retention package over two years, for all child protection staff. Notwithstanding the support and financial package, some experienced workers, tended to move into project roles or seek promotion rather than stay in front line, case management posts. If promotion did not work out, some participants said that colleagues moved to neighbouring local authorities in preference to staying in child protection roles over the longer-term.

Valuing staff

Respondents across both practice groups gave examples of local practices of appreciation demonstrating that they were valued as staff members, including team awards, recognition of positive achievements with gifts such as chocolates, or team sweatshirts. Such gestures were often appreciated, but did not compensate for inadequate salaries.

And a reason that people give on the exit interview for leaving the local authority, people will often say that they're seeking, higher payments for the work from agencies or neighbouring local authorities. [Senior Practitioner, Other]

However, one team manager said that although their local authority has started to match local pay scales, they would like to see additional incentives including high street vouchers and cinema cards, so that workers would feel appreciated.

Like I said, sometimes you might have a pay increase that's good, but then if you don't feel valued or they don't feel appreciated or feel a sense of belonging, no matter how much pay you get, if you're unhappy, you're unhappy. [Team Manager, identified as CP, but Other]

There was significant affirmation across child protection and other practitioner groups that changes to the system were required given the far reaching challenges of recruitment and retention. One front line agency social worker highlighted a typical perspective that this could be overcome by decreasing workloads and increasing staff morale.

I think that if you address some of the issues that I've highlighted, the caseload, they'd actually see an increase in staff retention and an increase in worker satisfaction as well because social workers love their jobs, otherwise they wouldn't do it. It's really difficult, it's just they need those bits of support and appreciation to make life better. And they wouldn't leave the profession. [Agency social worker, CP]

11. Conclusions

The findings in this report provide a comprehensive picture of the issues facing local authority child and family social workers and the factors influencing job satisfaction and retention over time. As this five-year study draws to a close, it is important to revisit the study objectives and look back across the waves to address them.

Motivations for becoming a child and family social worker and views on whether their training path (and ASYE) have prepared them for this career

Evidence from Wave 1 and ongoing evidence from the ASYE surveys has found that most people who become child and family social workers are motivated by altruistic reasons of wanting to help people / make a difference and work directly with children and families, and the majority of social workers are satisfied with the sense of achievement they get from their work (although this has declined over the five years of the study). This is important when considering how social workers spend their time. At Wave 5, social workers reported spending an average of 24 hours on case-related paperwork in a typical week compared with 10 hours on direct work with children and families.

Looking back, the majority of social workers at Wave 1 felt their entry path had prepared them well for a career in social work, and to a lesser extent in child and family social work, this was highest among those who had entered via work-based training routes such as Step into Social Work and the Frontline programme. Among ASYEs, the majority thought that the ASYE was effective overall, although the minority who found it ineffective would have liked more support and training.

Career aspirations and progression

Of those who have taken part in all waves of the survey, around one-third had been promoted during this period, and at Wave 5 around one in five respondents reported they had been promoted in the past 12 months.

Over the course of the study, most social workers have regarded their career progression as being in line with their expectations, although the proportion who regarded this as below expectations had increased by Wave 5 (while still in the minority). Throughout the study, the qualitative research has found that career progression is not always linked to promotion, and that social workers regard progression in other ways as being important, in terms of being able to develop specialisms or move into new roles in different practice areas.

Performance management and access to learning and development

Whilst the majority of social workers have consistently been positive about their manager encouraging them to develop their skills and giving regular feedback on their performance, this has declined over time and was significantly lower at Wave 5 than at Wave 1.

Similarly, compared with Wave 1, reflective supervision appears to have become less frequent. Although the majority of social workers have continued to think the quality of reflective supervision is good, where it is considered poor (by around one in five social workers) the same reasons have consistently emerged from both the survey and qualitative interviews – it is not sufficiently reflective, strays into the realms of being managerial supervision or a monitoring of progress, and is too rushed.

Support for learning and development, getting regular feedback and reflective supervision, and access to opportunities for training and CPD, are all associated with higher job satisfaction among child and family social workers.

Specific issues facing particular groups, roles and areas of practice

Across the study there have been many findings specific to particular groups, roles or areas of practice, and the qualitative research in Wave 4 specifically focused on the experiences of social workers from minority ethnic groups. Many of those interviewed raised the importance of seeing ethnic, 'racial' and cultural identity as part of a broader and more intersectional conversation and felt that limited ethnic diversity within the workforce was an issue, especially at more senior levels.

Overwhelmingly, participants in the Wave 4 qualitative interviews 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.

What has been particularly noticeable is that social workers in their first 2-3 years after qualifying have consistently reported higher levels of stress and felt their workload is too high. This is in part linked to practice area as those working in child in need/child protection roles report similarly high levels of stress and workload demands, and tend to be younger and newer to the profession.

The impacts of Covid-19

The impacts of Covid-19 on social workers' experiences are still challenging in terms of more complex cases, and depleted relationships with colleagues and to a lesser extent, service users. Although views on the latter have improved compared with Waves 3 and 4, the impact of Covid-19 on worsening relationships with colleagues (half of social workers still thought this had a negative impact at Wave 5) remains potentially concerning given the importance of these relationships as a protective factor in boosting resilience, which has emerged strongly from previous rounds of the qualitative research. The proportion who consider that Covid-19 has impacted on the complexity of cases has continued to increase in Wave 5, which shows that the pandemic is still having long-lasting consequences for social workers and the families they work with.

Push and pull factors influencing decisions to leave, and what would encourage more people to stay in the profession?

The majority of child and family social workers plan to continue working in the profession, although an increased proportion at Wave 5 are considering moving into agency work (including among ASYEs) where the appeal has consistently been higher pay and to a lesser extent, increased flexibility about work. This appeal seems to have increased and may be influenced by cost of living pressures at Wave 5 which were not present in previous waves.

Among those considering leaving child and family social work in the next 12 months at Wave 5, the most common main reasons have related to dislike of the working culture of local authority social work and overwork (a combination of high caseload, working hours, volume of paperwork and incompatibility with family or relationships), followed by retirement.

Workload and working culture have all been among 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 has consistently 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.

The Wave 5 qualitative research has shed further light on these areas, underlying the findings in previous waves that the number of cases is often less important than their complexity, the emotional toll they have and the amount of paperwork they require, combined with the level of support that social workers have to help them to deal with this.

Looking to the future, the qualitative interviews revealed social workers' views about the challenges and opportunities facing their profession in the future. There was a strong sense that some pressures have intensified due to current economic conditions, including the 'pull' of agency work, and recruitment and retention difficulties. However, interviewees also provided examples of what they regarded as positive strategies to make better use of experienced social workers, to broaden opportunities for career progression through more senior practitioner routes, and to support and develop less experienced staff.

Considering the value (and limitations) of this study

The value of this study has been the capacity to measure and explore the views and experiences of local authority child and family social workers over time, both at aggregate level – to get at the 'big picture' on factors influencing job satisfaction and retention – and individually, using the qualitative interviews to delve more deeply into different aspects of social workers' working lives and career experiences. Findings from the study have provided strong evidence on social workers' career development and issues around recruitment and retention, which informed workforce recommendations in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care and have been used in DfE's economic analyses and policy development.

In terms of limitations, the primary one is attrition within the sample and in particular, what happens to those social workers who have not taken part in subsequent waves. Is this because they have left social work altogether, and no longer feel inclined to participate, or for some other reason? Topping up the sample with fresh entrants each year has been a successful way to maintain the integrity of the study as a cross-sectional survey, but if the study were to be re-run in future, it might be useful to consider further ways of minimising attrition among the longitudinal group who first took part, for example through the use of incentives or other methods to reward participation. That said, the response rates have been fairly robust, and Wave 5 achieved the highest response rate of the whole five-year study.

Finally, we know from the qualitative interviews that participants themselves welcomed the opportunity to share their experiences of working in child and family social work and some even considered participation as a cathartic process. As one said:

The people who are so overworked and so tired, and probably the people who have the most to say, are probably the ones who feel they don't have time to participate. And so I guess I worry a little bit about their voices. But no, it's been an interesting thing to participate in and I'm hopeful it will create some change maybe. [Agency social worker, CP]

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, conducted across five years from 2018/19 to 2022/23. The fifth wave of the survey, conducted between September and December 2022 comprised two elements:
 - Wave 5 longitudinal survey. All respondents who completed the Wave 4 survey and consented to be re-contacted 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 July 2021 and June 2022.
- At the end of the Wave 5 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 child protection and other roles, at varying levels of experience, and including some who were employed via agencies.

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 / Children's 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 5 survey comprised social workers who were recruited through this method, who completed the Wave 1, Wave 2, Wave 3 and Wave 4 surveys and consented to being recontacted to take part in the Wave 5 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 be

recontacted were added to the main sample at Wave 5 and were invited to take the Wave 5 survey.

Table A.1 Number of local authorities / Children's Trusts in England invited to participate in the main survey (Wave 1) and number agreeing

Number invited	152
Number agreed	95
<i>LA sending invitations</i>	31
<i>IFF sending invitations</i>	64
% of LAs agreed to participate	63%
Declined to take part	40

Table A.2 Number and percentage of local authorities / Children's 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 / Children's 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 5. This exercise was similar to the approach taken to building the original survey sample in summer 2018 and the Wave 2, Wave 3 and Wave 4 ASYE supplementary sample in summer 2019, 2020 and 2021. Local authorities / Children’s Trusts that took part in previous waves were contacted by Skills for Care²⁹, who were able to utilise their links with local authority ASYE leads. IFF wrote to the Directors of Children’s Services (DCS) at local authorities / Children’s Trusts that did not take part in previous waves to invite them to take part in the ASYE strand. Local authorities / Children’s Trusts sent all ASYE contact details directly to the research team at IFF³⁰.

Local authorities / Trusts were asked to provide contact details for ASYE staff who had started in their role between July 2021 and June 2022. This timeframe was chosen to minimise overlap between ASYE staff who took part in the Wave 4 ASYE survey and the Wave 5 ASYE survey – the sample for the Wave 4 ASYE survey was collected for those who began their ASYE between July 2020 and June 2021. One hundred and ten (110) 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, 28 provided contact details of their in-scope ASYE staff and 82 agreed to circulate the open link survey on IFF’s behalf.

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 70 local authorities, indicating that in 39 local authorities / Children’s 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.

Table A.4 Number of local authorities / Children’s Trusts in England invited to participate in the ASYE survey and number agreeing

Number invited	149
Number agreed:	109
LA sending invitations	82
IFF sending invitations	27
% agreed to participate	73%
Declined to take part	2

²⁹ Skills for Care is the strategic workforce development and planning body for adult social care in England. It oversees the ASYE programme which has a unified framework for adult and child and family social work.

³⁰ 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).

Table A.5 Number and percentage of local authorities / Children’s 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	13	57%
Yorkshire and the Humber	15	6	40%
East Midlands	9	3	33%
West Midlands	14	5	36%
East of England	11	5	45%
South East	18	8	44%
South West	15	6	40%
Greater London	31	8	26%
TOTAL (ENGLAND)	149	109	73%

Table A.6 Number of Local Authorities / Children’s 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	11	61%
2 (Good)	55	47	85%
3 (Requires improvement)	53	37	70%
4 (Inadequate)	19	14	74%
TOTAL (ALL CATEGORIES)	149	109	73%

Social worker invitations

Where the sample was provided directly 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.

Wave 5 soft launch

A soft launch of each survey was conducted 6th - 9th September 2022, with 5% of the total sample for the Wave 5 survey (70 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 5 survey as it was largely based on the Wave 1 questionnaire, which had been piloted three times prior to its launch.

Wave 5 mainstage

The mainstage online survey for Wave 5 launched on 13th September 2022 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 11th November 2022. A final email reminder was sent to all who had yet to respond on 2nd November 2022.

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 5 survey response rate was 73% of the starting sample, 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 5 survey)

		Online <i>[valid emails provided]</i> n	Online <i>[valid emails provided]</i> %	Telephone <i>[approached via telephone]</i> n	Telephone <i>[approached via telephone]</i> %	Total response <i>[Online and telephone]</i> n	Total response rate <i>[Online and tele- phone]</i> %
Overall		870	49%	413	24%	1,283	73%
Region	North East	62	46%	39	29%	101	75%
	North West	69	48%	33	23%	102	71%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	82	57%	23	16%	105	72%
	East Midlands	87	53%	35	21%	122	74%
	West Midlands	70	48%	36	24%	106	72%
	East of England	114	50%	62	27%	176	77%
	South East	139	51%	71	26%	210	77%
	South West	98	60%	35	21%	133	82%
	Greater London	149	49%	79	26%	228	75%
Ofsted	Outstanding	147	51%	79	28%	220	77%
	Good	351	58%	135	22%	460	76%
	Requires improvement	290	51%	152	27%	416	73%
	Inadequate	82	37%	47	21%	169	76%

Table A.8: Response by local authority region and Ofsted rating (ASYE survey, Wave 5)

		Sampled re- sponses: 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
		<i>[valid emails pro- vided]</i> <i>n</i>	<i>[valid emails provided]</i> <i>%</i>	<i>[approached via telephone]</i> <i>n</i>	<i>[approached via telephone]</i> <i>%</i>	<i>[Online and telephone]</i> <i>n</i>	<i>[as % of starting sample]</i>	Online	Total ASYE responses
Overall		63	13%	49	14%	112	22%	133	245
Region	North East	5	11%	2	5%	7	15%	13	20
	North West	16	12%	11	10%	27	19%	13	40
	Yorkshire and the Humber	10	13%	4	13%	14	18%	19	33
	East Midlands	0	0%	4	0%	4	25%	8	12
	West Midlands	2	5%	6	23%	8	21%	10	18
	East of England	0	0%	5	31%	5	28%	3	8
	South East	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	26	26
	South West	4	12%	2	7%	6	18%	19	25
	Greater London	22	21%	19	24%	41	36%	22	63
Ofsted	Outstanding	5	12%	1	6%	6	14%	16	22
	Good	19	12%	21	20%	40	24%	57	97
	Requires improvement	25	12%	22	13%	47	22%	41	88
	Inadequate	8	9%	3	6%	11	13%	19	30

Telephone sample outcomes

Table A.9 shows the outcomes from the telephone component of the survey. For the Wave 5 survey, the telephone response rate was 51% overall. As a proportion of usable contacts (n=700), this equates to 59% adjusted response rate.

Table A.9: Telephone survey outcomes (Wave 5 survey)

	n	As % of total starting sample
Total starting sample	808	-
All confirmed unusable sample	108	13%
Unobtainable	65	8%
No longer works at LA and no forwarding number given	21	3%
Requested to complete online	4	1%
Wrong / invalid number	10	1%
Not available during fieldwork	8	1%
All confirmed usable sample	256	32%
Soft appointment	14	2%
Other live sample (general call backs)	242	30%
Completed contacts	444	55%
Refusals	21	3%
Breakdown	10	1%
Completed via phone	413	51%

Analysis

Wave 5 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 2018³¹, at the time the research began (before Wave 1), where possible.

After comparing the profile of the Wave 5 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 4. In Wave 5, weighting by ethnicity was also applied, which helped to correct for higher non-response among Black/Black British social workers in this wave.

³¹ [DfE Children's social work workforce 2018](#)

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 5 compared with 2018 DfE workforce statistics

Demographic		Survey (n)	Survey (%)	2018 DfE statistics
Gender	Male	175	14%	14%
	Female	1102	86%	86%
	Other	2	0%	-
	Prefer not to say	4	0%	-
Agency worker WEIGHTED	Yes	199	16%	15%
Region of LA WEIGHTED	East Midlands	103	8%	8%
	North East	77	6%	6%
	South East	180	14%	15%
	East of England	128	10%	9%
	Greater London	205	16%	16%
	North West	180	14%	14%
	South West	115	9%	9%
	West Midlands	141	11%	11%
	Yorkshire and the Humber	154	12%	12%
Ofsted rating of LA ³⁸	Outstanding	226	18%	9%
	Good	486	38%	37%
	Requires improvement	442	34%	41%
	Inadequate	129	10%	13%
Ethnicity ³⁹ WEIGHTED	White	982	77%	79%
	Mixed	45	3%	3%
	Asian/Asian British	71	5%	5%
	Black/ Black British	160	12%	11%
	Other Ethnicity	13	1%	1%
UNWEIGHTED BASE		1283	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 all previous waves, ASYE data was weighted by ethnicity, using the latest population statistics from Skills for Care (2021-22), 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 weighting by this variable was not necessary.

Statistical significance

In terms of statistical confidence in the findings, the confidence interval for the main survey is +/- 2.7 percentage points, and for the ASYE top-up survey 6.3 percentage points. This means we can be 95% confident that the true figure lies within + or – 2.7 or 6.3 percentage points of the survey findings for the Wave 5 and ASYE top up surveys respectively, based on the whole sample answering the question and a finding of 50%.

Qualitative follow-up research

Respondents were asked separate questions about willingness to be re-contacted for the qualitative follow-up interviews. There was a high level of agreement, particularly for the Wave 5 survey respondents, the target of the qualitative interviews: 89% of Wave 5 survey respondents agreed to be re-contacted for the qualitative follow-up.

The qualitative interviews took place between December 2022 and January 2023 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 5, including ten interviews with agency workers. The qualitative sample included a broad distribution of participants by: years spent in child and family social work, whether working in child protection or a different practice area, agency staff, seniority of job role and Ofsted rating of employing LA.

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.

Non-responders at Wave 5

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. Of the 1,605 who completed the Wave 4 survey, 554 (35%) did not participate at Wave 5. Over the course of the study, the final achieved sample at Wave 5 (including additional entrants from ASYE top-up waves who

transferred into the main survey from Wave 3 onwards), was 23% of the achieved sample at Wave 1.

The rest of this section details key differences between those who completed the Wave 5 survey and those who had dropped out of the research between Wave 4 and Wave 5, by demographic information, employment characteristics and attitudes towards their working lives, as captured through the survey. The data in this section is from Wave 4 of the survey as this was the last point at which there was directly comparable data for Wave 5 responders and Wave 5 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.

Demographic and employment characteristics

Overall, demographic characteristics of Wave 5 non-responders were fairly similar to the Wave 5 responders. However, non-responders were more likely to: be aged between 25-34 years old (30% compared with 18% of Wave 5 responders); be front line practitioners (62% compared with 47%); have been at their employer for 2-3 years (32% compared with 13%), and be from a local authority in the North West (12% compared with 7% of Wave 5 responders).

There was very little variation in employment situation between the two groups, although non-responders were slightly more likely to not know what they expect to be doing in 12 months' time (9% compared with 6%) and less likely to think they would be directly employed by a local authority in 12 months' time (61% compared with 68% of Wave 5 responders).

Attitudes

Surprisingly, Wave 5 responders and non-responders did not significantly differ for any of the attitudinal measures.

Table A.14: Wave 5 non-responders, compared with Wave 5 responders (Wave 4 data)

Demographic/ characteristic (unweighted)		W5 Respon ders	W5 Respon ders	W5 Non- respon ders	W5 Non- respon ders
		W4 data (n)	W4 data (%)	W4 data (n)	W4 data (%)
Age	Under 25 years	<5	<1%	15	3%
	25 – 34 years	191	18%*	166	30%*
	35 – 44 years	290	28%	127	23%
	45 – 54 years	258	25%	114	21%
	55 – 64 years	254	24%	111	20%
	65 years +	47	4%	18	3%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	9	1%	<5	1%
Gender	Male	144	14%	92	17%
	Female	903	86%	459	83%
	Other	<5	<1%	0	0%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5	<1%	<5	1%
Ethnicity	White	860	82%	445	80%
	Mixed	36	3%	26	5%
	Asian	23	2%	16	3%
	Black	49	5%	40	7%
	Other	41	4%	12	2%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	42	4%	15	3%
Region	East Midlands	101	11%	40	8%
	North East	72	8%	44	9%
	South East	161	18%	62	13%
	East of England	131	14%	71	14%
	Greater London	156	17%	91	18%
	North West	64	7%	58	12%*
	South West	85	9%	45	9%
	West Midlands	76	8%	42	9%
Ofsted	Yorkshire and the Humber	67	7%	39	8%
	Outstanding	133	15%	86	17%
	Good	391	43%	181	37%
	Requires improvement	285	31%	178	36%
Agency worker	Inadequate	104	11%	47	10%
	Yes	53	5%	39	7%

Table A.14: (continued)

Demographic/ characteristic (un-weighted)		W5 Responders	W5 Responders	W5 Non-responders	W5 Non-responders
		W4 data (n)	W4 data (%)	W4 data (n)	W4 data (%)
Job role	ASYE	0	0%	8	2%
	Front line practitioner	397	47%	289	62%*
	Practice supervisor	73	9%	20	4%
	Practice leader	40	5%	17	4%
	Team manager	175	20%	52	11%
	Senior service manager/ director	87	10%	27	6%
	Other	81	9%	50	11%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	0	0%	<5	0%
Length of time at employer	Less than 6 months	40	5%	32	7%
	6 months to 1 year	33	4%	16	3%
	1 year	53	6%	33	7%
	2 to 3 years	108	13%	149	32%*
	4 to 5 years	151	17%	67	14%
	6 to 10 years	177	21%	62	13%
	More than 10 years	291	34%	105	23%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	0	0%	0	0%
Satisfied with career to date	Agree	695	71%	360	69%
	Disagree	139	14%	87	17%
	Neither agree nor disagree	145	25%	77	15%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5	<1%	0	0%
Loyal to employer	Agree	588	69%	322	69%
	Disagree	96	11%	64	14%
	Neither agree nor disagree	168	20%	80	17%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5	<1%	2	0%
Valued by employer	Agree	483	57%	267	57%
	Disagree	209	24%	120	26%
	Neither agree nor disagree	158	19%	75	16%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5	<1%	<5	0%
Stressed	Agree	510	60%	267	65%
	Disagree	171	20%	120	19%
	Neither agree nor disagree	169	20%	75	16%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5	<1%	<5	0%
Workload is too high	Agree	508	60%	303	57%
	Disagree	176	21%	87	23%
	Neither agree nor disagree	168	19%	76	19%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	<5	<1%	0	1%

Table A.14: (continued)

Demographic/ characteristic (un-weighted)		W5 Responders	W5 Responders	W5 Non-responders	W5 Non-responders
		W4 data (n)	W4 data (%)	W4 data (n)	W4 data (%)
Expected situation in 12 months' time	Working in child and family social work for a local authority - directly	699	68%	339	61%*
	Working in child and family social work for a local authority - via an agency	61	6%	43	8%
	Working in child and family social work - in the private or voluntary sector	68	7%	32	6%
	Working in social work, but outside of child and family social work	45	4%	42	8%
	Working outside of social work altogether	39	4%	15	3%
	Not working at all	59	6%	31	6%
	Don't know / prefer not to say	59	6%	52	9%*
Current employment situation	Yes – still working in LA child and family social work	862	82%	472	85%
	No - But I'm still in child and family social work	58	6%	18	3%
	No - adult social work	9	<1%	6	1%
	No - but still in social work	23	2%	13	2%
	No - I am employed, but have left social work altogether	29	3%	15	3%
	No - I am unemployed and looking for work	<5	<1%	<5	0%
	No - I am undertaking full-time further study. Please note: if you were studying part-time	<5	<1%	<5	0%
	No - I am on a career break (for example, travelling, caring responsibilities etc.)	10	1%	5	1%
	No - I am doing something else (for example retired, ill-health etc.)	51	5%	22	4%
Don't know / prefer not to say	0	0%	0	0%	

* in the W5 non-responders (%) column indicates a statistically significant difference compared with the W5 responders, at a 95% confidence level.

Appendix 2: Wave 5 longitudinal 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)

ASK CORRECT RESPONDENT (S1 = 1 OR 2)

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 are now in the final year of this 5-year survey, so this will be your last chance to contribute your insight to this important research.

We understand that your employment situation may have changed since the last wave of the survey. 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.

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: 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	
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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 survey (IF W4 SAMPLE: around a year ago) (IF W3 SAMPLE: around two years ago) and at that time you agreed we could re-contact you to see whether any of your circumstances or views have changed.

We are now in the final year of this study, so this will be your last chance to contribute your insight to this important research.

We understand that your employment situation may have changed since the last wave of the survey. We would still like to hear from you, 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 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.**

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. <i>Please note: if you were studying part-time alongside work, then please select from the relevant work option (either option 1, 2 or 3)</i>	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	11	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
To pursue a new interest	10
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
I am currently between jobs	12
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)

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 contracted 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

1-2 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 face to face versus working with them remotely or virtually?

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)

B18 3) Completing case-related paperwork?

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.**

WRITE IN	
Not applicable – I don't do any case-related paperwork	1
Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF DON'T KNOW AT B18 (B18=2)

B18a Please could you estimate the number of hours in a typical week you spend completing case-related paperwork?

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

1-2 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 ALL STILL IN CAFSW (B1=1)

B19 4) Participating in training or other Learning and Development activities, including CPD?

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

WRITE IN	
Not applicable – I don't take part in any training, learning or CPD activities	1
Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF DON'T KNOW AT B19 (B19=2)

B19a Please could you estimate the number of hours in a typical week you spend participating in training or other Learning and Development activities, including CPD?

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

1-2 hours	1
3-4 hours	2
5-7 hours	3
8-10 hours	4
11-15 hours	5
More than 15 hours	6
Not applicable	7

IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8
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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)

- **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
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 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
REMOVED AT W5						

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=4-5)

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 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

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

E11 REMOVED AT W5.

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

F10 REMOVED AT W5

F11 REMOVED AT W5

ASK ALL STILL IN CAFSW (B1=1)

F3 Overall, 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”.**

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 TELEPHONE 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

ASK ALL CURRENTLY IN LA CAFSW (B1=1)

H4 **To what extent do you think the complexity of cases has increased, decreased or stayed the same as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

SINGLECODE.

	Increased a lot	Increased a little	Stayed the same/ No impact	De-creased a little	De-creased a lot	IF TELE DISPLAY : “(DO NOT READ OUT)”: Don’t know / prefer not to say
Complexity of cases	1	2	3	4	5	6

ASK ALL WHO CURRENTLY HAVE A CASELOAD (IF 1 CASE OR MORE AT B10, OR ANY CODE 1-7 AT B10a)

H6 Do you feel that the average number of hours you spend on each case has increased, decreased or stayed the same over the last 5 years?

IF ONLINE: PLEASE TICK ONE ONLY

IF TELEPHONE: SINGLE CODE. READ OUT.

Increased	1
Stayed the same	2
Decreased	3
Don’t know / prefer not to say	4

ASK IF THINKS HOURS HAVE INCREASED (H6=1)

H7a **Why do you think the number of hours you spend per case has increased?**

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

Impact of Covid-19 (please specify)		1
Increased paperwork / forms to fill out		2
The severity of the issues experienced by children and families has increased		3
Not enough staff to support with administration		4
Not enough early intervention/ prevention work is happening		5
Not enough social workers /too few posts/ too many vacancies in my team		
High turnover/ shortage of experienced and stable staffing in my team		6
Not enough supervision / managerial support		7
Cuts to other public services have increased the burden on social work		8
More cases requiring legal/ court work		
Other reasons (specify)		9
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY “(DO NOT READ OUT)”: Don’t know / prefer not to say		10

ASK IF MORE THAN ONE RESPONSE AT H7a, ONLY SHOW RESPONSES FROM H7a

H7b **And which ONE of these is the main reason the number of hours you spend per case has increased?**

Impact of Covid-19 (please specify)		1
Increased paperwork / forms to fill out		2
The severity of the issues experienced by children and families has increased		3
Not enough staff to support with administration		4
Not enough early intervention/ prevention work is happening		5
Not enough social workers /too few posts/ too many vacancies in my team		
High turnover/ shortage of experienced and stable staffing in my team		6

Not enough supervision / managerial support		7
Cuts to other public services have increased the burden on social work		8
More cases requiring legal/ court work		
Other reasons (specify)		9
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say		10

ASK ALL STILL IN LA CAFSW (B1=1)

H8 Thinking about the paperwork/ administrative tasks that you have to complete within a working week.

What, if any, type of these tasks do you find most burdensome and why?

WRITE IN	
Not applicable - No aspect of the paperwork/ administrative tasks is burdensome	1
DO NOT READ OUT: Don't know / prefer not to say	2

ASK ALL CURRENTLY IN LA CAFSW (B1=1)

H5 To what extent have the following aspects of your job improved or worsened 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

11a **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 11 IF NEEDED. SINGLE CODE.

DISPLAY ANSWERS FROM 11 (WITH DON'T KNOW)

	11	12
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

14 ASK ALL LEFT / CONSIDERING LEAVING CAFSW (B1=3/4/9/10 OR F1=4-6)
 [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
 14a **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)

- 15 **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*

IF TELEPHONE: *READ OUT AND SINGLE CODE*

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 REMOVED AT W5

ASK ALL

K2 Your views are even more valuable to us at this final wave of research. We will 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 K2

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)

ASK CORRECT RESPONDENT (S1 = 1 OR 2)

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 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. We are interested in your experiences, even if you are thinking of changing your job or of leaving the profession.

This is the final year of a 5-year study. We have invited child and family social workers who started their ASYE in July 2021 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:**

- 4) A copy of your data
- 5) Amending your data
- 6) 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 final year of a 5-year study. We have invited child and family social workers who started their ASYE in July 2021 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	

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 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. <i>Please note: if you were studying part-time alongside work, then please select from the relevant work option (either option 1, 2 or 3)</i>	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	4	CONTINUE
No – completed my ASYE longer than six months ago	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 contracted 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 DK 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 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

1-2 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 face to face versus working with them remotely or virtually?

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 WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND/OR FAMILIES (IF (B1=1))

B18 3) Completing case-related paperwork?

WRITE IN	
Not applicable – I don't have any case-related paperwork	1
Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF DON'T KNOW AT B18 (B18=2)

B18a Please could you estimate the number of hours in a typical week you spend completing case-related paperwork?

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

1-2 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

B19 4) Participating in training or other Learning and Development activities, including CPD?

WRITE IN	
Not applicable – I don't take part in any training, learning or CPD	1
Don't know / prefer not to say	2

IF DON'T KNOW AT B19 (B19=2)

B19a Please could you estimate the number of hours in a typical week you spend participating in training or other Learning and Development activities?

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

1-2 hours	1
3-4 hours	2
5-7 hours	3
8-10 hours	4
11-15 hours	5
More than 15 hours	6
Not applicable	7
IF TELEPHONE DISPLAY: "(DO NOT READ OUT)": Don't know / prefer not to say	8

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/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. MULTI-CODE.

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 first 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 before 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 TELEPHONE: 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)

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
REMOVED AT W5	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)

E5 **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=4-5)

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

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 TELEPHONE 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 **REMOVED AT W5**

F11 **REMOVED AT W5**

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 TELEPHONE 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

I1 This 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

14 ASK ALL LEFT / CONSIDERING LEAVING CAFSW (B1=2/3/4 OR F1=4-6)
 [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.

14a ASK IF MULTICODE AT I4
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...

16 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 **What would make the ASYE programme more effective?**

WRITE IN

Don't know / prefer not to say

1

ASK ALL

I8 **Not including the support you get from your manager, which of the following have provided the most valuable support to you during the course of your ASYE?**

SINGLE CODE

Practice Educator	1
Practice Supervisor	2
Workforce Development Team	3
Social Work Academy	4
Peers	5
Other, please specify	6
Don't know / prefer not to say	7

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

K1 **REMOVED AT W5**

ASK ALL

K2 **Your views are very valuable to us. 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 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: Topic guide

Researcher notes

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 explore participants' assessment of the key challenges and opportunities facing children and families social work and the impact of these on their intentions to remain or leave children and families social work, or their current role within it
- to explore their views about the value of the administrative/recording requirements of the job and about whether/how these requirements might be changed and
- to consider how experience in children and families social work is recognised, used and rewarded.
- to ask participants about their career intentions.

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.

Participant introduction – 2-3 mins

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.

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.

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.

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.

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?

Yes CONTINUE

No THANK AND CLOSE

Don't know READ ASSURANCES

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Discussion guide (40 minutes)

Section 1: 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 5 survey.

- When you completed the W5 survey in Autumn 2022, you told us that you were < you currently working in a Local authority/ Trust in child and family social work >. 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)
- This is the fifth and final year of the study, and in these interviews, we are exploring children and families social workers' plans for the future and the factors that might influence these plans.

The rest of the interview will look at four areas

- Your perceptions of the key challenges and opportunities facing children and families social work and the impact of these both for children and families and for social workers.
- Your views on the administrative/recording requirements of the job and whether/how these requirements might be changed.
- Your views on how experience in children and families social work is recognised, used and rewarded in the organisation where you work.
- Your career intentions

Section 2: Current Challenges and Opportunities for Children and Families Social Work

Looking to the next 12 months what do you think are the key challenges for children and families social work at this time?

What opportunities do you think there are?

- Impact of the current economic situation on children and families
- Staffing
- Resources
- Practice developments e.g. new ways of working
- Any changes to attitudes to diversity eg impact of Black Lives Matters
- Any changes to attitudes towards staff well-being

What, if any, actions have been planned or implemented by your local authority to address these challenges/develop opportunities?

How are these challenges/opportunities influencing your intentions to remain in or leave your role/the profession? For example, how might these affect:

- Job satisfaction
- Career planning & ambitions
- Managing stress/ work life balance
- Well-being

Section 3: Administrative and recording practices

'Paperwork' – i.e. the administrative and recording requirements of the job - has been identified as unduly time-consuming and as a source of stress in previous waves of the study. We would like to understand more about this.

Has your team got effective admin support?

- If so what is their role?
- What tasks do they perform to support social workers? How could admin support be improved, or better deployed?

What aspects of administrative work/recording do you think is totally unnecessary and what is unnecessary to be done by a social worker, and why?

- What specific tasks do you think could safely be changed?

- How do you think this change could be operationalised? (e.g. could recording systems be improved to prepopulate information; could these tasks be completed by staff other than social workers?)

Can you estimate how much time such changes might save you, and tell us how you would use that time?

How do you think such changes would affect your well-being and job satisfaction?

Section 4: The Role of Experienced Workers

We would like to explore your views on how experienced social workers are used, valued and rewarded in your organisation.

Can you tell us how you would define an 'experienced social worker'?

- What 'counts' as experience in your team/service area/organisation?
- How do workers become experienced? How could/does your employer support this process?
- Do you consider yourself to be an experienced social worker? Why/why not?

Please provide us with the context of your team makeup so we understand the balance of staff.....

- How many newly qualified or less experienced social workers are there (ASYE to entry level social workers) ?

How many people in your team/service area/organisation would you describe as 'experienced social workers'? What roles do they have (e.g. colleague, advanced practitioner, team manager etc?)

How do experienced staff use their experience to support the work of the team?

- Formal – e.g supervision, practice educating, supporting ASYEs
- Informal – e.g. providing advice, co-working, reflective conversations, support wellbeing
- Do you think there is an area of practice that has a particular shortage of experienced social workers? If yes please explain.

Do you think your organisation makes best use of its experienced social workers? If yes/no, please explain.

What, if anything, would you like to see change to support, retain and make best use of experienced social workers in your organisation?

Section 5: Career Intentions

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?
- Are you planning to seek a change of post, role or promotion? If so what would you like to do and where?
- If considering leaving your current LA what are your reasons? What would encourage you to remain?
- If agency worker – how long have you been an 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? Have you a plan in place? What would encourage you to remain or to return at a later date?

Finally, we would like to thank you for your contribution today, and to the most recent survey and previous years of research.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about recruitment and retention, career progression or how being a child and family social worker has changed over the period of your involvement in the study?

SIGNPOSTING SUPPORT IF NEEDED:

Support for mental health/stress:

Home | Mind, the mental health charity - help for mental health problems

<https://www.mind.org.uk> Information/support line: 0300 123 3393

ADMINISTER INCENTIVE, THANK AND CLOSE



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