

Polling results report: 01 September 2020

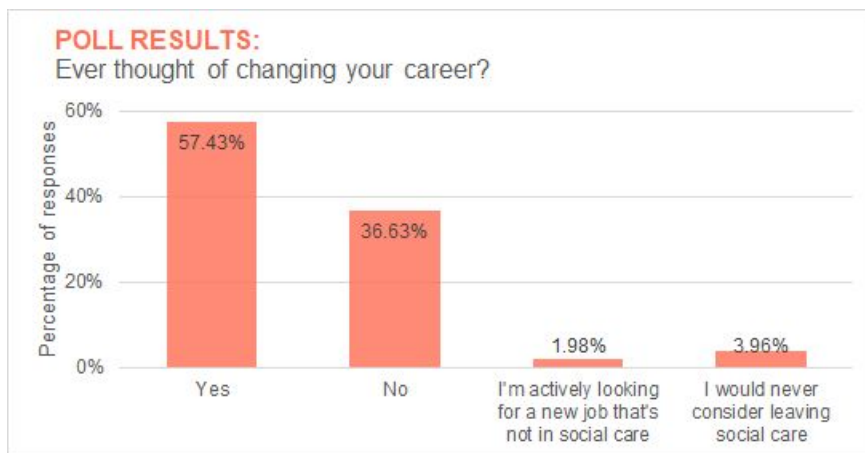
This report

This report covers the period between the 18 August and 01 September 2020. Participants were asked about whether they had considered leaving social work, if so why? and what career might they choose instead.

Ever considered a change of career?

Participants were asked whether they had considered leaving the social work profession in the last six months. Please see results in Fig 1:

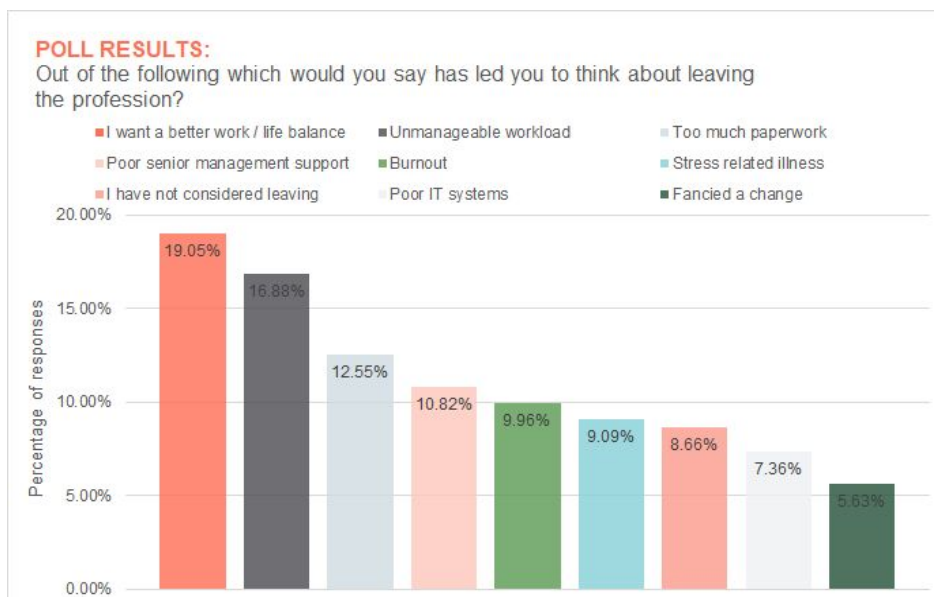
Fig 1



Reasons for considering leaving

Participants were then asked to choose from a list of reasons those that might lead them to consider leaving. They could choose as many on the list as they wanted from fig 2 below;

Fig 2





The most popular reason chosen for leaving the profession was to achieve a better work/life balance at 19%, with 17% the second for unmanageable workloads.

Happier, healthier professionals (HHP2) looks at light touch interventions to improve social worker well being and is currently offering the opportunity for local authorities to participate in a trial to ease administration burden using dictaphone software: <https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/funding/>. This is to establish whether this will improve well being, sickness levels and retention if successfully implemented.

Alternative careers

Thirty eight practitioners gave free text responses. Several practitioners said they weren't sure what they would do if they didn't do social work. However, a common theme throughout the responses is a want to continue working with people, using their transferable skills in allied professions.

Therapy or Teaching

The most frequently cited career change from social work was specialising in mental health e.g. becoming a counsellor, psychotherapist, or psychologist; eight practitioners noted this. The second common career change was teaching with five practitioners stating this.

Research/ Academia

Two practitioners said they would consider research roles: 'complete PHD (social work) then have social work research role.' Respondents also mentioned 'academic roles' or 'lecturing' would be of interest to them.

Different area of practice

Others mentioned changing to a 'different area of social work'. For example, CAFcass, Ofsted, 'or something to do with government (local or national)'.

Why leave?

Some social workers choose to leave due to working conditions in some local authorities:

'I leave 2 years after I started. I had high hopes but local authority social work is woefully underfunded and it's crushed me' – Social Worker

The social worker above is leaving local authority social work to work for a private fostering agency. Others cite retirement as a reason to leave the profession: 'I want to retire and leave the profession completely. I've had enough'.

Implications for practice

These free text responses have highlighted which careers social workers might consider if they were to leave the profession, with mental health and teaching being frequently cited career choices. Other areas of note were: research or academia, development work, or moving between areas of social work practice.

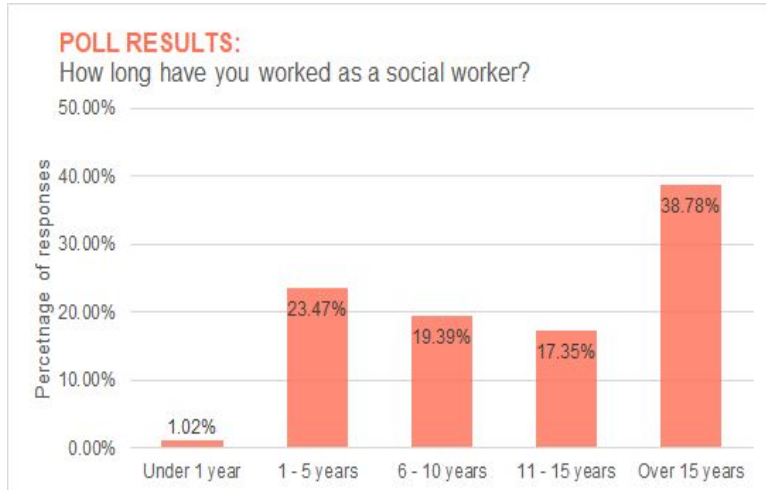


WWCS's research prioritisation exercise found that having a 'stable workforce' is a priority area for both senior leaders and professionals and multi-agency partners working in CSC. Therefore, this is an area of practice we seek to prioritise in our future work.

Length of time qualified

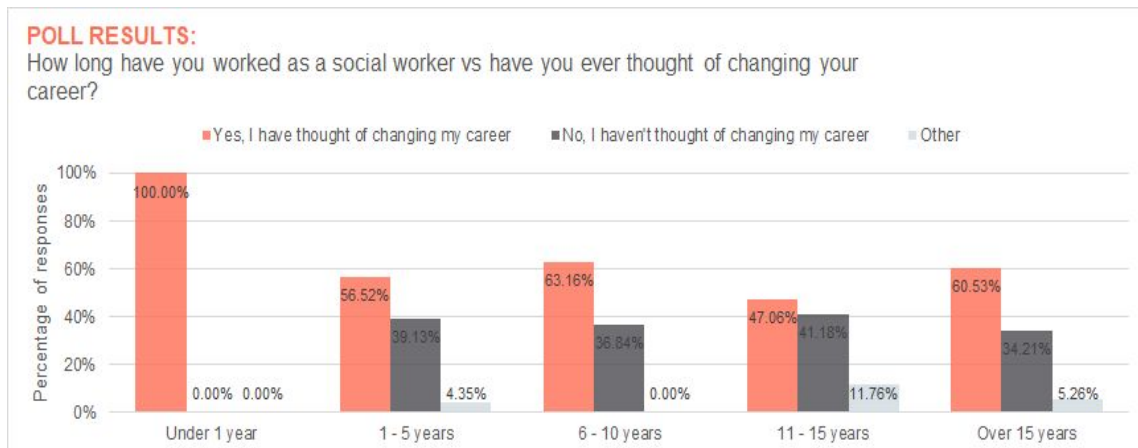
Participants were finally asked to report on how long they had been qualified. This question has been asked previously, however it felt necessary, in order to see if there was any relationship regarding time served in the profession and wanting to leave. Please see below;

Fig.3



In Fig. 4 below length of service and considering leaving are compared

Fig.4



In every length of service group the majority have considered leaving the profession. There is only one participant in the under 1 year group so the result is not representative but concerning that they have only worked as a social worker for under one year and have already considered leaving. 63% in the 6 -10 years qualified range, the second largest response appears to support the data that average 'shelf life' for a social worker is approximately 7 years in the profession.



About WW-CSC Polling

What Works for Children's Social Care runs regular polls with social workers who have registered with us. Social workers are currently employed in a range of organisations and we canvas their opinions about our current and future research agenda as well as topics impacting on social work practice. There are 820 social workers currently registered to participate. 98 Social Workers responded to this poll, with 38 participants providing qualitative data on their views on registration criteria.