

Polling results report: 21 July 2020

This report

This report covers the period between the 7 July and 20 July 2020. Participants during this period were asked their views on how they felt about returning to 'normal', caseload numbers and whether they felt there was recognition for their work in the media.

97 Social Workers responded to this poll, with some providing qualitative data.

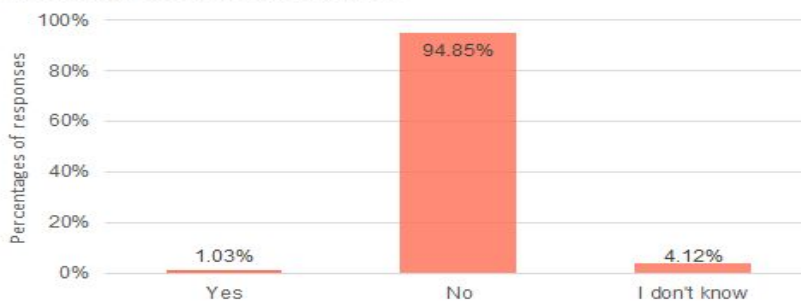
Media Support

Participants were asked their view on whether children's social care receives enough recognition in the media for all their hard work protecting children and families. As you can see from the graph below (fig 1), the majority of social workers did not feel they had been recognised.

Fig 1

POLL RESULTS:

Do you feel children's social care receives enough recognition in the media for all their hard work protecting children and families?

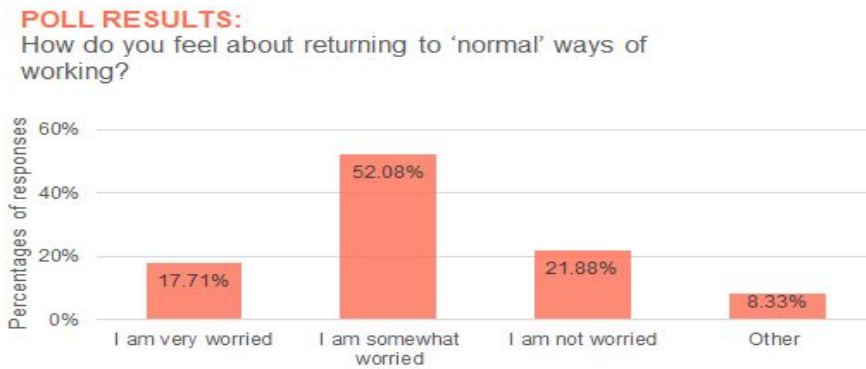


Returning to normal

As lockdown measures ease and work begins to return to normal, participants were asked how they felt about that. In Figure 2 you can see the results. The 'other' column is those that gave text responses, some of which are provided here.



Fig.2



The majority of social workers were somewhat worried about returning to office based work, home visits and travel to and from the office. Reflecting possibly the general population, people are still concerned about catching coronavirus and also of passing it on. Two practitioners expressed anxiety about a return to 'normal' ways of working. One person did not feel worried for themselves, but for some members of their team and for their family too. Another was anxious about contracting the virus, and the possibility of '*making others ill*'. This was contrasted however with a view that if one is careful, and with precautions in place, '*there should not be any issues*'.

There were some that suggested that they would like to continue with practices that have worked well; for example working from home and to have virtual visits with some young people. One practitioner said;

'I think working from home works well and would be happy just carry on, and undertake visits and meetings face to face'.

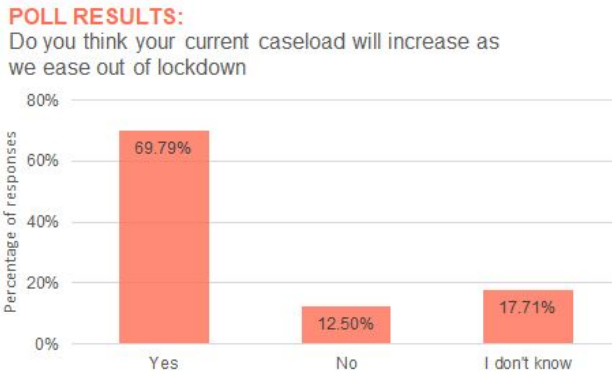
Just over 21% were not worried at all. Responses to this question may reflect on the circumstances of people's home lives especially if they have vulnerable dependents living with them.

Caseloads

Participants were asked whether they believed their caseloads would increase as we ease out of lockdown. The majority, just under 70% believed they would (see figure 3 below).



Fig 3



Some participants stated that they had already seen a rise in the number of cases they carried or were anticipating that they would.

For example, a manager of a fostering team commented:

'I am anticipating the numbers of children needing foster placements to go up'.

Others were already experiencing an increase.

"Referrals are gradually increasing which is resulting in more contacts needing to be dealt with'.

Another person states they are *'already experiencing the escalation'*, and the consequence of this is *'working long hours'* which they describe as *'unsustainable'*. One practitioner, working in learning and development, notes they are, *'aware of the service increase in demand already'*.

The documented rise of incidents of domestic abuse since lockdown started will have led to an increase in referrals where children are involved. Similarly with schools recently opening their doors to other age groups this will in turn lead to an increase in referrals as children become 'seen' again. This may explain some of the increased caseloads reported.

Participants were also asked about their current caseload, however due to large role variation among our cohort we were unable to draw a meaningful inference and so the findings have not been presented in this report.

Administration tasks

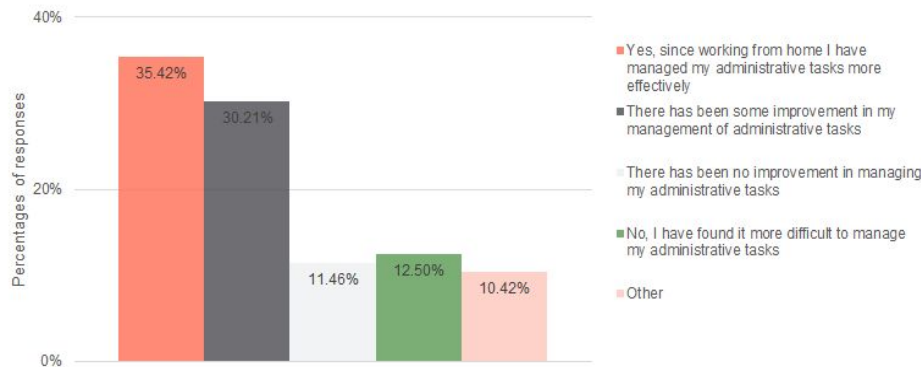
Finally participants were asked whether working from home had improved their ability to manage their administration tasks. Please see Figure 4 below. Please note that the 'other' column is those that gave text responses.



Fig 4

POLL RESULTS:

Since working from home do you feel you are more able to keep up to date with your administration tasks?



Overall most respondents felt that working from home had helped them to manage their administrative tasks more effectively. However for some the opposite was the case:

Some participants felt that their workload has increased giving them more administrative tasks to complete and in some respects reversed any positive effect they may have seen. *'our workloads increased so although it was helpful, the increase in workload did not make things easier'*.

In addition, one person describes how changes to workforce capacity has led to more tasks needing to be completed.

'it has been difficult with fewer members of staff' which has led to an 'increased caseload and taking on others' tasks'. Another describes that *'admin has increased since lockdown so [it's] more difficult to keep up'*.

The results presented here are only a snapshot from the social care sector. What has emerged over the past few weeks from polling results is that working from home has proved popular and effective for most participants. Local authorities will need to consider whether working from home becomes a very normal part of the working week for social workers rather than an exception.

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 815 social workers currently registered to participate.