

# The Independent Review of Children's Social Care: Polling Results Report

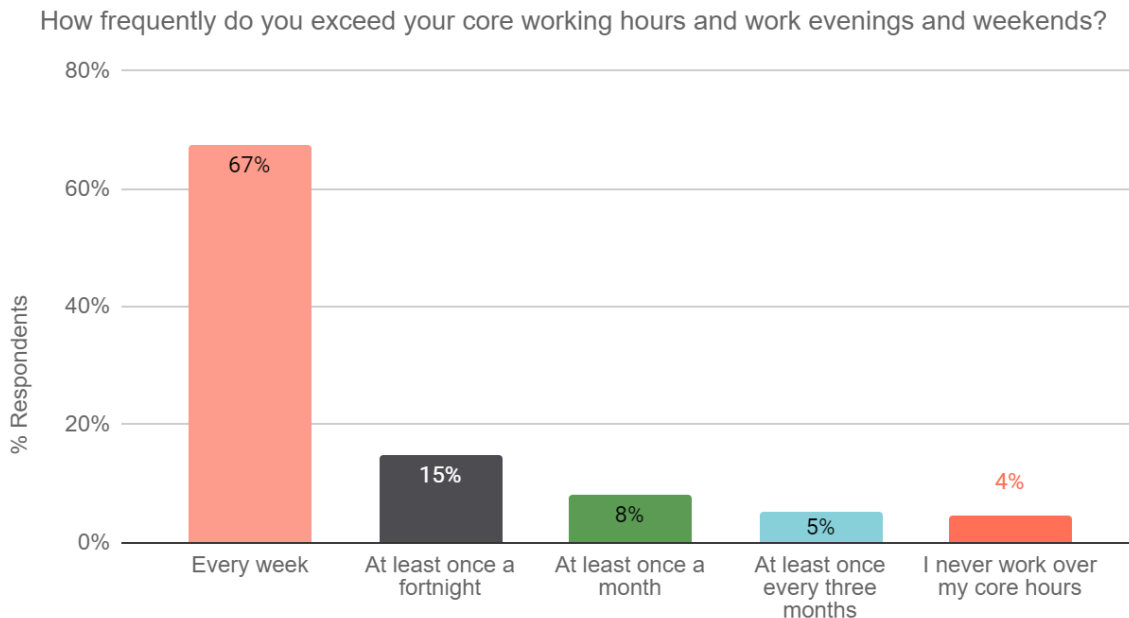
This report presents the results from the sixth in a series of special polls for the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. The poll was open for two weeks between 18th January to 1st February 2022 and asked social workers fifteen questions. These were centred around the experiences of social workers in the workplace covering a number of areas, as well as on advocacy services and information sharing with professionals.

Fourteen of the questions were multiple choice, of which one provided the option for additional free text responses. One question required a free text response. The survey was sent to 1237 registered social workers of which 135 responded and the analysis of their answers is presented below.

## **How frequently do you exceed your core working hours and work evenings and weekends?**

This question received responses from all 135 social workers completing the poll. The results showed that most social workers (67%) work overtime, either exceeding core working hours or working on weekends every week. What is more, 15% reported working overtime once a fortnight, followed by smaller groups who reported exceeding core working hours either once a month (8%), or at least once every three months. Only 4% of respondents reported that they never work over their core hours (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The proportions of social workers exceeding core working hours and working evenings and weekends

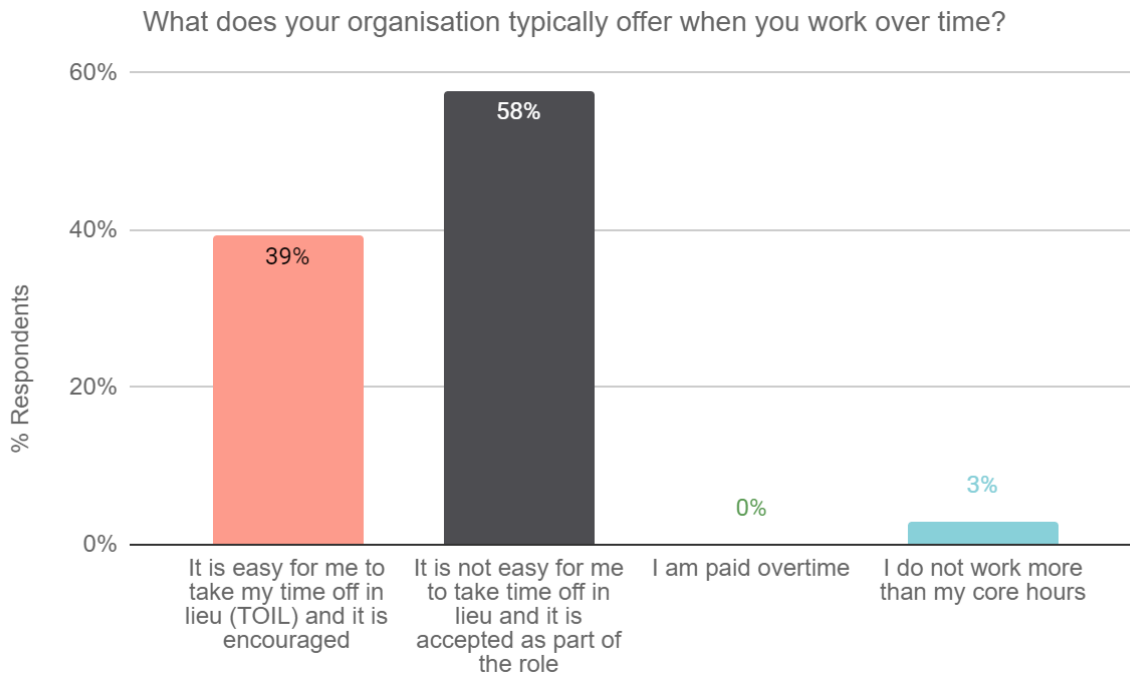


Source: WWCSC Polling  
Base: 135 Social Workers,  
Polled Online, 18 Jan - 1 Feb

### What does your organisation typically offer when you work over time?

Following up on the first question, next, social workers were asked about how they are compensated for working over their core hours by their organisations. The majority of respondents (58%) reported that it is not easy for them to take time off in lieu (TOIL) and that working overtime is accepted as part of the role, whereas 39% responded that it is easy for them to take TOIL and that it is, in fact, encouraged. Fewer social workers reported that they did not exceed their core hours (3%) in comparison to the previous question. The 'being paid overtime' option was not chosen by any of the participants (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The proportions of social workers who are compensated for working overtime using different means of compensation

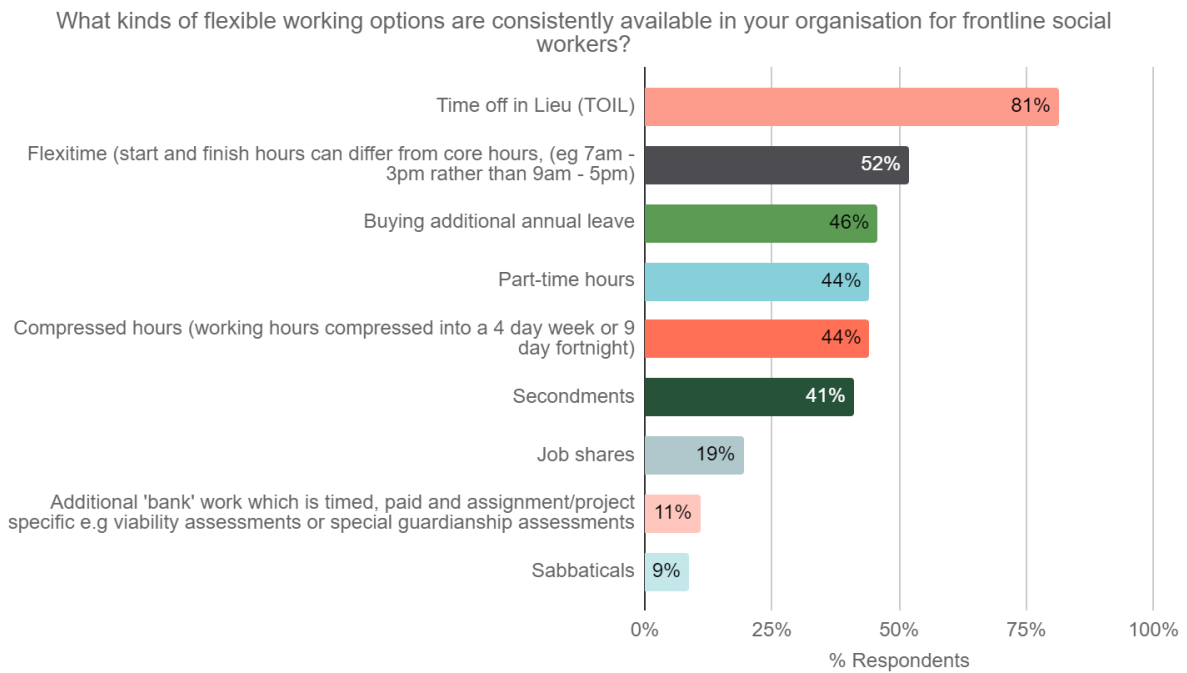


Source: WWCSC Polling  
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### What kinds of flexible working options are consistently available in your organisation for frontline social workers?

Next, social workers chose the kinds of flexible working arrangements that are most consistently available in their organisation. In this case, they were instructed to choose all the options that applied, therefore each participant could select multiple options. TOIL was the most frequently chosen option for 81% of respondents for flexible working. Over half (52%) of social workers also have access to flexible working hours, i.e. start and finish hours differ from the usual core hours. Next, similar proportions of respondents reported having access to buying additional annual leave (46%), part-time hours (44%), compressed hours (44%), and secondments (41%). Lastly, sabbaticals were the least available option of flexible working (9%) chosen by respondents (Figure 3).

Figure 3: The proportions of social workers who have access to different means of flexible working. Respondents were instructed to select all options that applied.

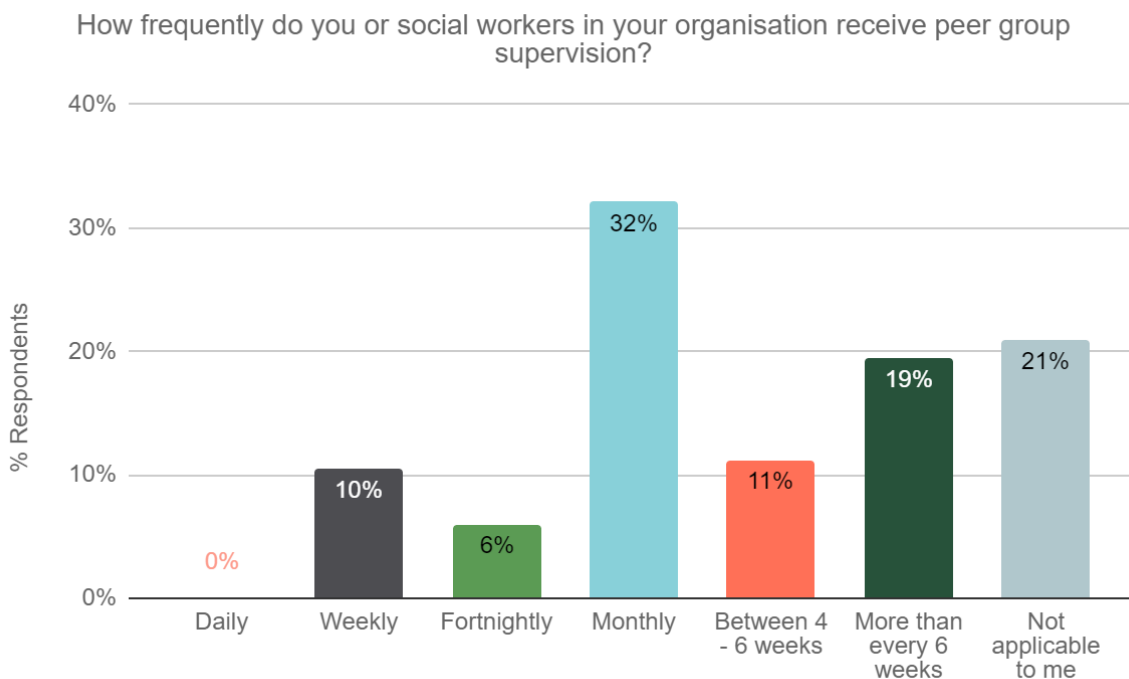


Source: WWCSC Polling  
Base: 129 Social Workers,  
Polled Online, 18 Jan - 1 Feb

### How frequently do you or social workers in your organisation receive peer group supervision?

The next question asked social workers about the frequency of peer group supervisions in their organisations. The most common response was that monthly peer group supervision was available (32%), followed by more than every 6 weeks (19%) and between 4-6 weeks (11%) sessions being provided. Small proportions of social workers reported having peer group supervision weekly (10%), or fortnightly (6%), whereas none can access it daily. This question was not applicable to 21% of respondents (Figure 4).

Figure 4: The proportions of social workers who receive peer group supervision with different frequencies

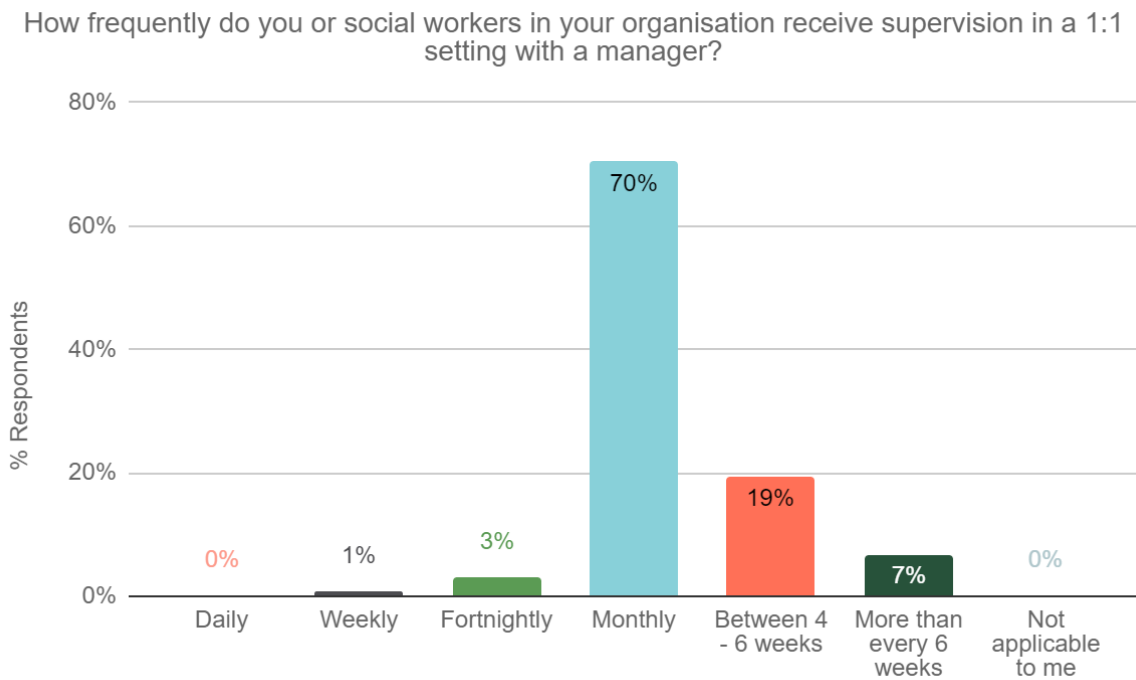


Source: WWCS Polling  
Base: 134 Social Workers,  
Polled Online, 18 Jan - 1 Feb

### How frequently do you or social workers in your organisation receive supervision in a 1:1 setting with a manager?

Social workers were also asked about the frequency of 1:1 supervisions with a manager. The vast majority of respondents (70%) reported receiving monthly 1:1 supervision sessions. Less frequent meetings between 4-6 weeks were reported by 19% of social workers, or more than every 6 weeks by 7% of social workers. Only 3% of respondents reported meeting their managers for fortnightly 1:1 supervision sessions, whereas 1% receive 1:1 supervision weekly (Figure 5).

Figure 5: The proportions of social workers who receive supervision in a 1:1 setting with a manager with different frequencies



Source: WWCSC Polling  
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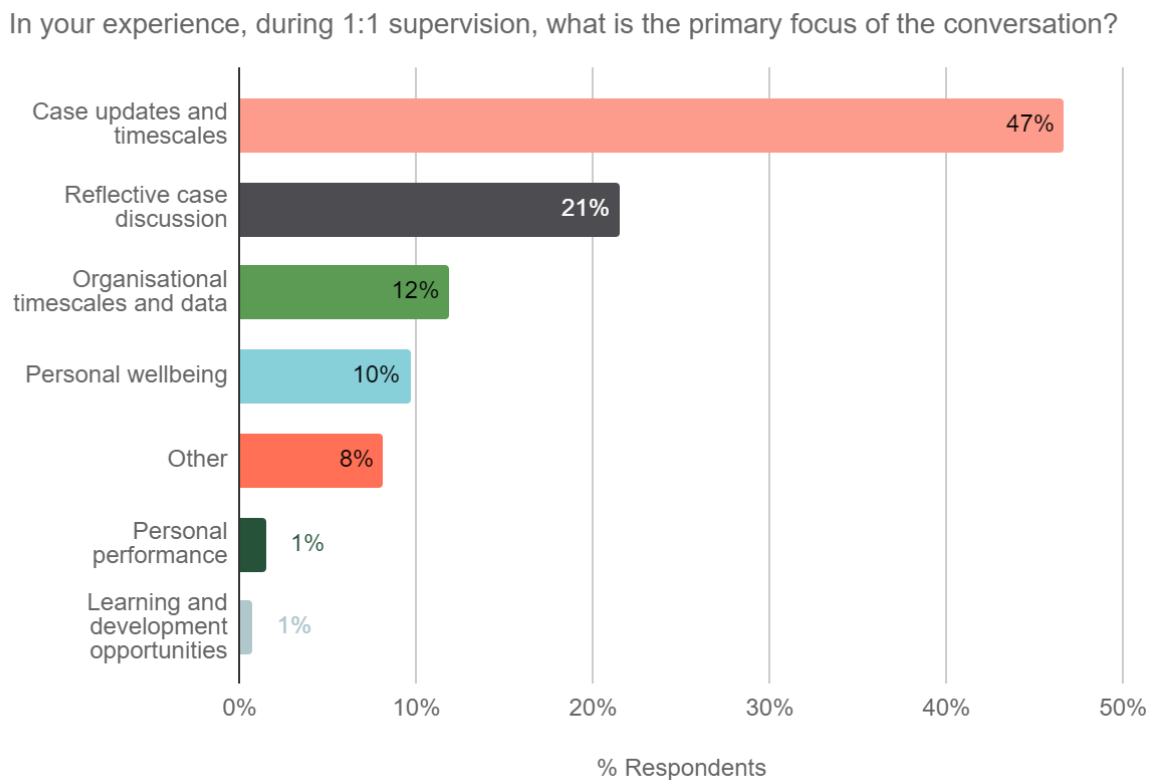
### In your experience, during 1:1 supervision, what is the primary focus of the conversation?

After establishing the frequency of 1:1 supervision, social workers were asked about the topics discussed most often during these sessions. For this question, several choices were provided, with an open text option for participants to describe any experiences not included in the list. The number of participants who chose to add their own responses is represented by the Other category in Figure 6.

The most prevalent topic reported by social workers as the primary focus of 1:1 supervisions was case updates and timescales, as reported by 47% of respondents. This was followed by reflective case discussions (21%). Fewer social workers reported focusing on topics related to their own situations, such as personal wellbeing (10%), personal performance (1%), or

learning and development opportunities (1%). Lastly, 8% of participants chose to describe their own experiences (Figure 6). Of these, the majority (8 out of 11) mentioned that during supervision the topics consist of a mix of all options provided and that “*priority varies according to personal/professional/organisational priorities.*” The rest approach topics such as their work plan, “*service development and support*”, or have a “*co-constructed agenda*”.

Figure 6: The frequency of different primary focus topics during 1:1 supervision



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Base: 135 Social Workers,  
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**How confident are you that managers and leaders in your organisation understand the reality of frontline practice and apply that knowledge to provide effective support to social workers?**

When asked whether they believed that managers and leaders in their organisation understand the reality of frontline practice and apply that knowledge to provide effective support, most social workers (41%) reported being confident and 16% were very confident. On the other hand, 19% reported feeling unconfident, whereas 7% were very unconfident. Lastly, 17% of respondents were neither confident or unconfident (Figure 7).

Figure 7: The proportions of social workers who believe that managers and leaders in their organisation understand the reality of frontline practice and apply that knowledge to provide effective support to social workers with different levels of confidence



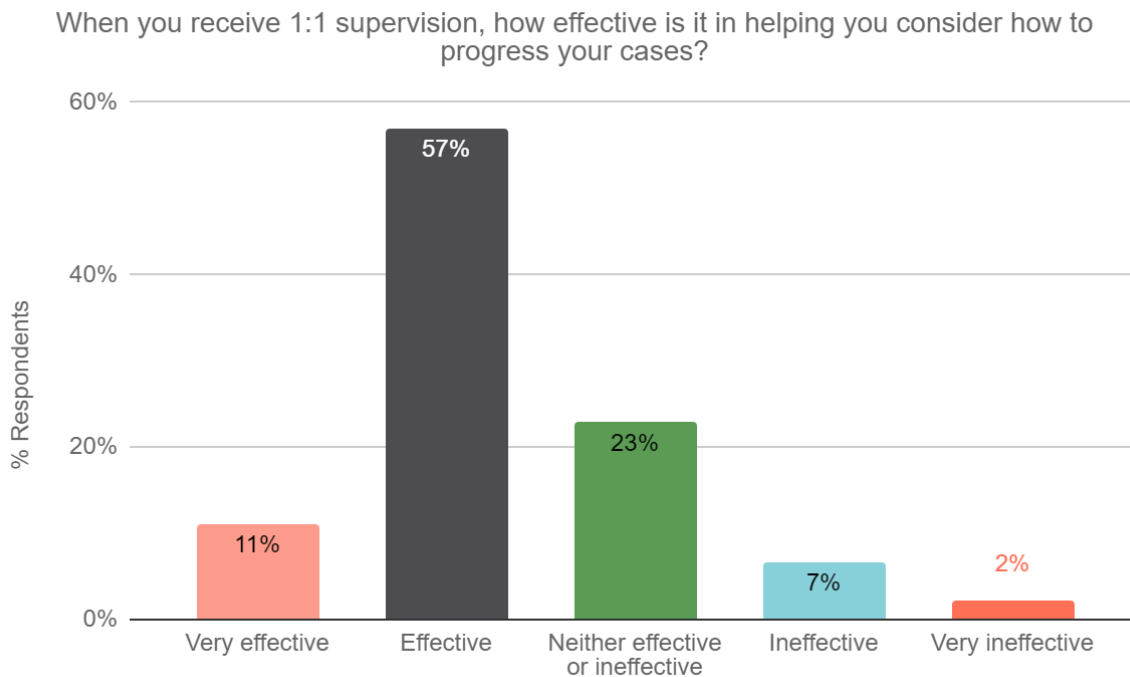
Source: WWCS Polling  
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### When you receive 1:1 supervision, how effective is it in helping you consider how to progress your cases?

Next, social workers were asked about the effectiveness of the 1:1 supervisions in making progress on their cases. Most of them provided positive feedback, with 57% of social workers considering the sessions effective, and 11% very effective, whereas significantly fewer do not benefit from these sessions, as reported by 7% of respondents who consider them ineffective, or 2% who reported them to be very ineffective (Figure 8).



Figure 8: The proportions of social workers who believe that 1:1 supervision is effective in helping them consider how to progress their cases with different levels of confidence



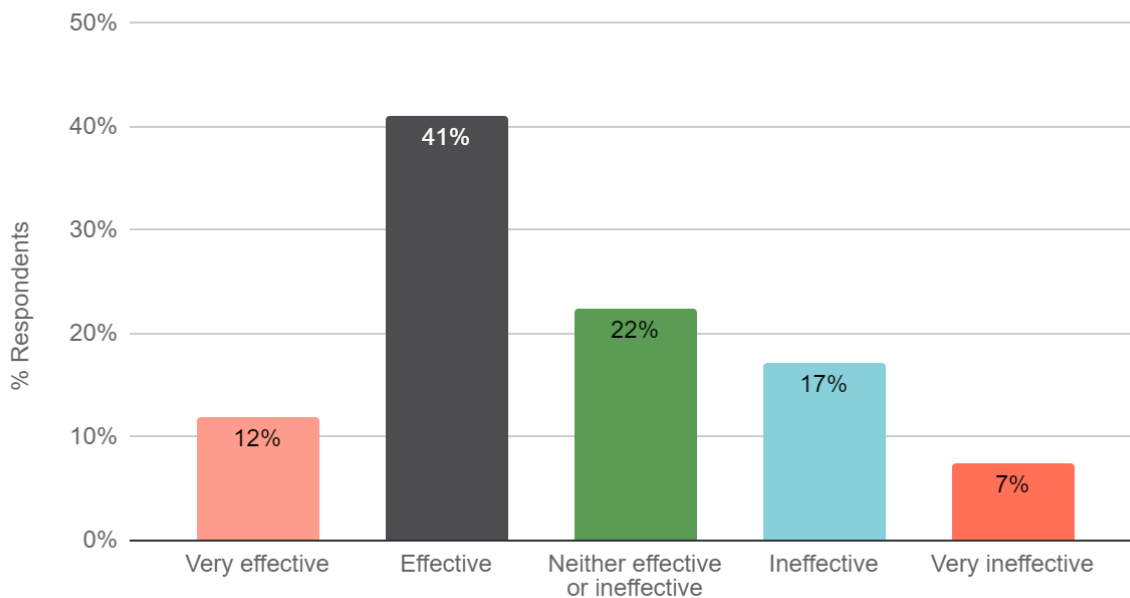
Source: WWCSC Polling  
Base: 135 Social Workers,  
Polled Online, 18 Jan - 1 Feb

### When you receive 1:1 supervision, how effective is it in helping you consider your personal wellbeing?

Social workers were also asked about the effectiveness of the 1:1 supervisions in helping them with their personal wellbeing. Similarly, 41% of respondents considered these sessions to be effective, and 12% of respondents described them as very effective, whereas fewer social workers provided negative feedback, as evidenced by the respondents who described them as ineffective (17%) or very ineffective (7%). Lastly, 22% of participants adopted a neutral position (Figure 9).

Figure 9: The proportions of social workers who believe that 1:1 supervision is effective in helping them consider their personal wellbeing with different levels of confidence

When you receive 1:1 supervision, how effective is it in helping you consider your personal wellbeing?



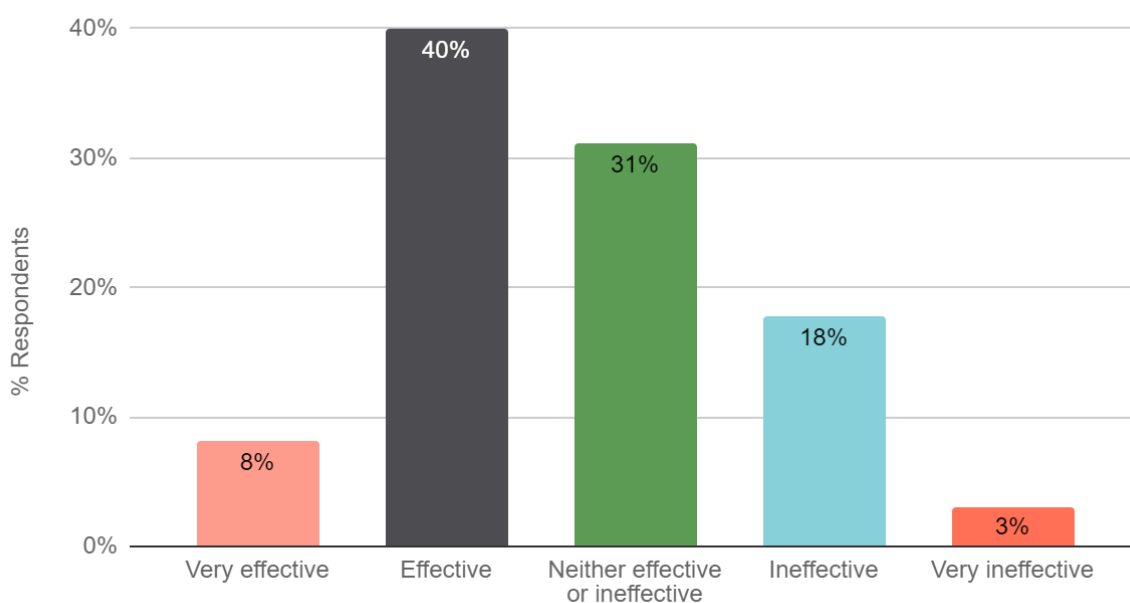
Source: WWCSC Polling  
Base: 134 Social Workers,  
Polled Online, 18 Jan - 1 Feb

### When you receive 1:1 supervision, how effective is it in helping you consider your learning and development opportunities?

On the same topic of the effectiveness of 1:1 supervision, social workers were also asked about how helpful these sessions were in helping them consider their learning and development opportunities. In this case, 40% of participants considered these to be effective and 8% very effective, whereas 18% described them as ineffective, and 3% as very ineffective. A proportion of 31% of social workers stated that they were neither effective or ineffective (Figure 10).

Figure 10: The proportions of social workers who believe that 1:1 supervision is effective in helping them consider their learning and development opportunities with different levels of confidence

When you receive 1:1 supervision, how effective is it in helping you consider your learning and development opportunities?



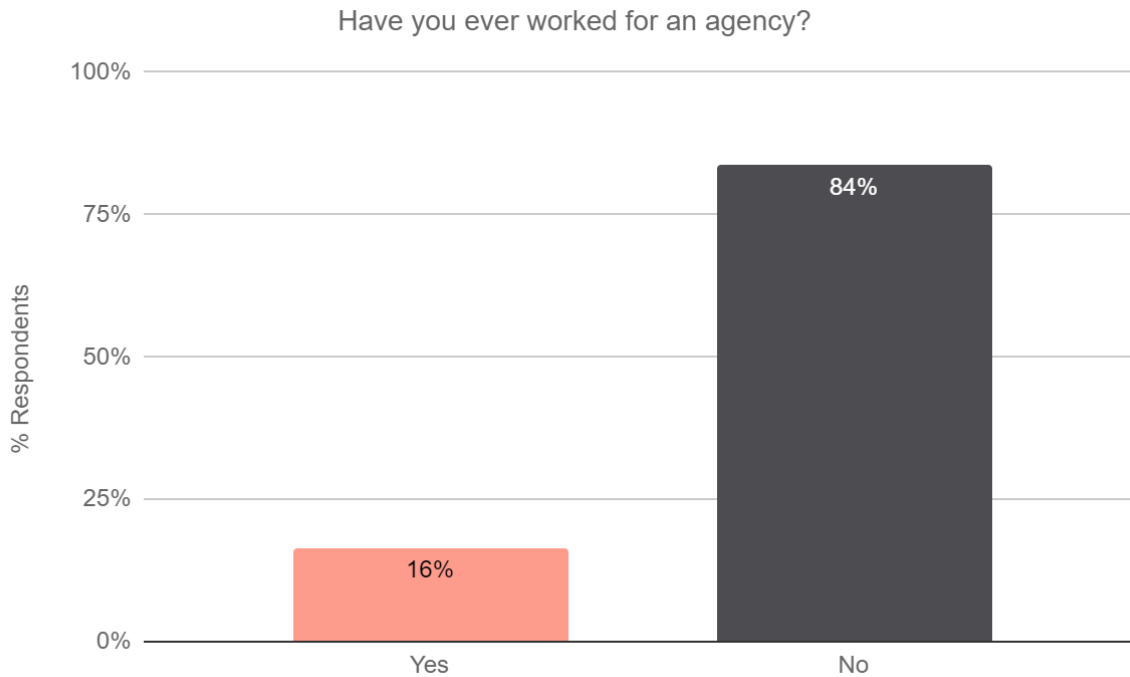
Source: WWCSC Polling  
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### Have you ever worked for an agency? If you have worked for an agency, what was your motivation?

Social workers were asked whether they had previously worked in an agency, and if so, what was their motivation. Only 16% of respondents had this experience (Figure 11). Of the 23 social workers who worked for an agency, 11 reported that they wanted to explore several options and accumulate varied experiences before settling in their role, in order to “*develop professional experience*” and “*to check the work conditions*” elsewhere. Others (6 out of 23) were motivated by the financial benefits, as working for an agency typically correlates with “*a higher rate of pay*.” Additionally, 5 other social workers preferred the flexibility of working in an agency, particularly in specific “*personal circumstances - needing to take breaks in*

*between assignments.” Lastly, other reasons described by participants included wanting to “remain apart from politics of the organisation”, or needing “quick, short term work.”*

Figure 11: The proportion of social workers who have worked for an agency

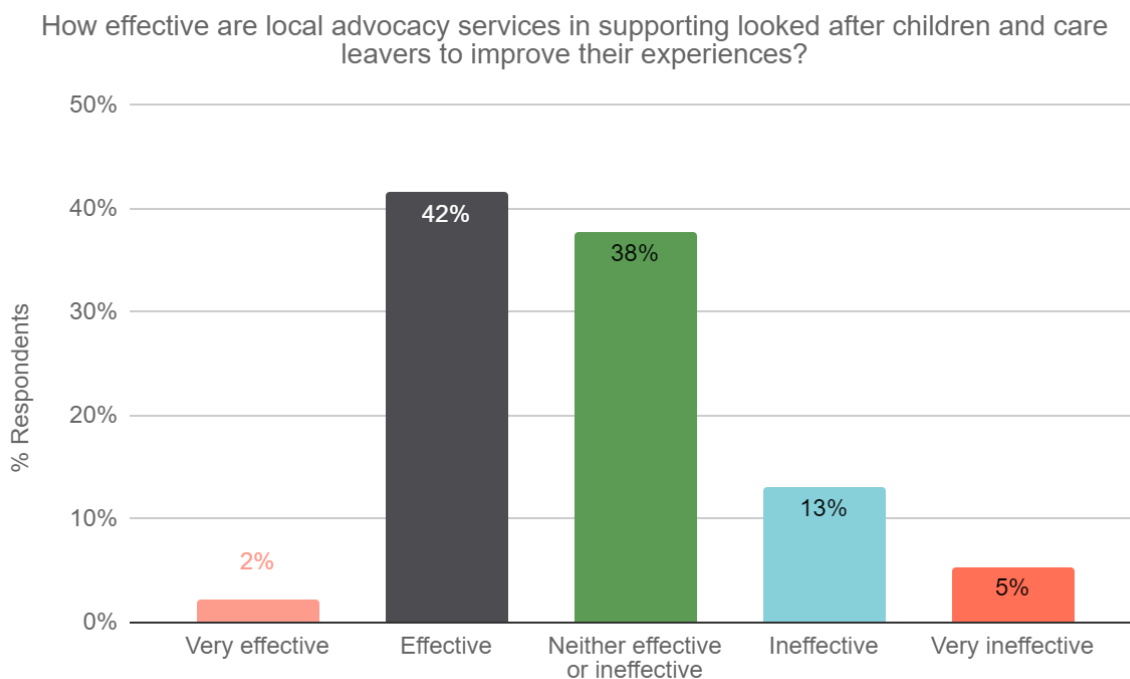


Source: WWCSA Polling  
Base: 134 Social Workers,  
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### How effective are local advocacy services in supporting looked after children and care leavers to improve their experiences?

Social workers were asked about the effectiveness of local advocacy services in supporting looked after children and care leavers to improve their experiences. Of all respondents, 42% considered these services to be effective, whereas 13% described them as ineffective. A proportion of 38% of social workers adopted a neutral position (Figure 12).

Figure 12: The proportions of social workers who believe that local advocacy services are effective in supporting looked after children and care leavers to improve their experiences with different levels of confidence

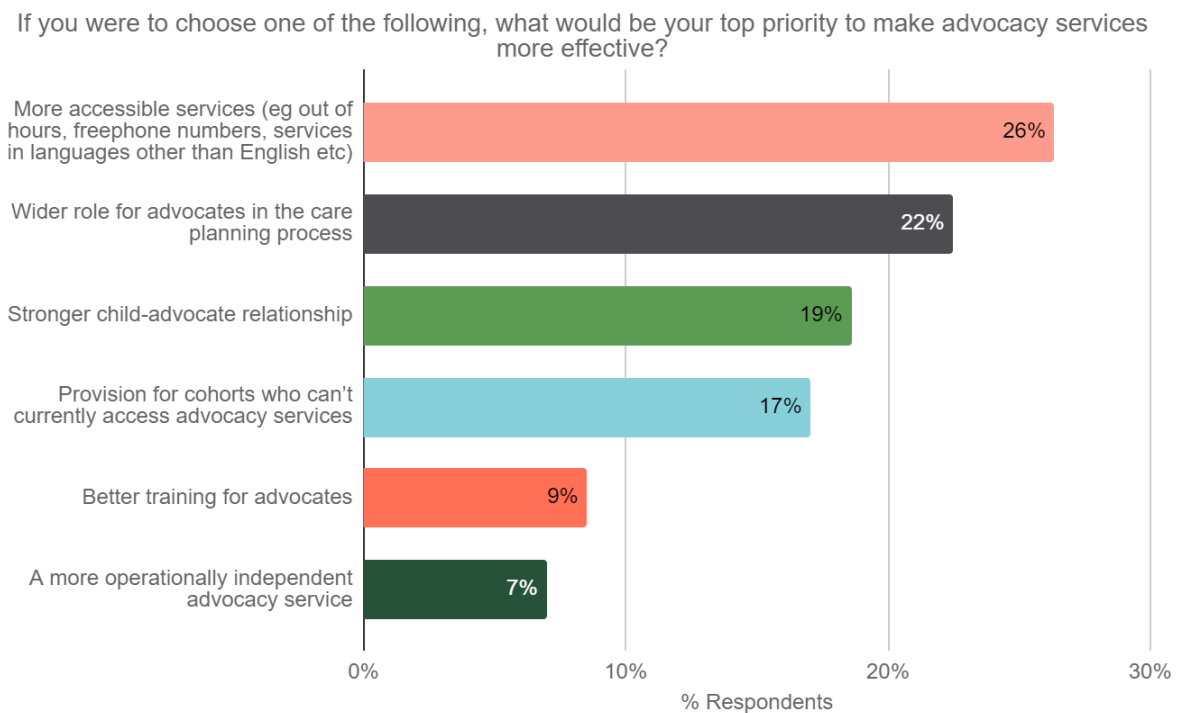


Source: WWCS Polling  
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Polled Online, 18 Jan - 1 Feb

### If you were to choose one of the following, what would be your top priority to make advocacy services more effective?

Social workers were then asked to choose from several options provided what aspect of their work they would improve in order to make advocacy services more effective. The most frequently selected answer suggested that social workers would like to increase accessibility of the services provided (26%), whereas 22% would assign a wider role for advocates in the care planning process and 19% would work on building stronger child-advocate relationships. Social workers considered a more operationally independent advocacy service to be the lowest on the list of priorities (7%) of the options provided (Figure 13).

Figure 13: The frequency with which social workers would choose to improve several aspects of their profession in order to make advocacy services more effective

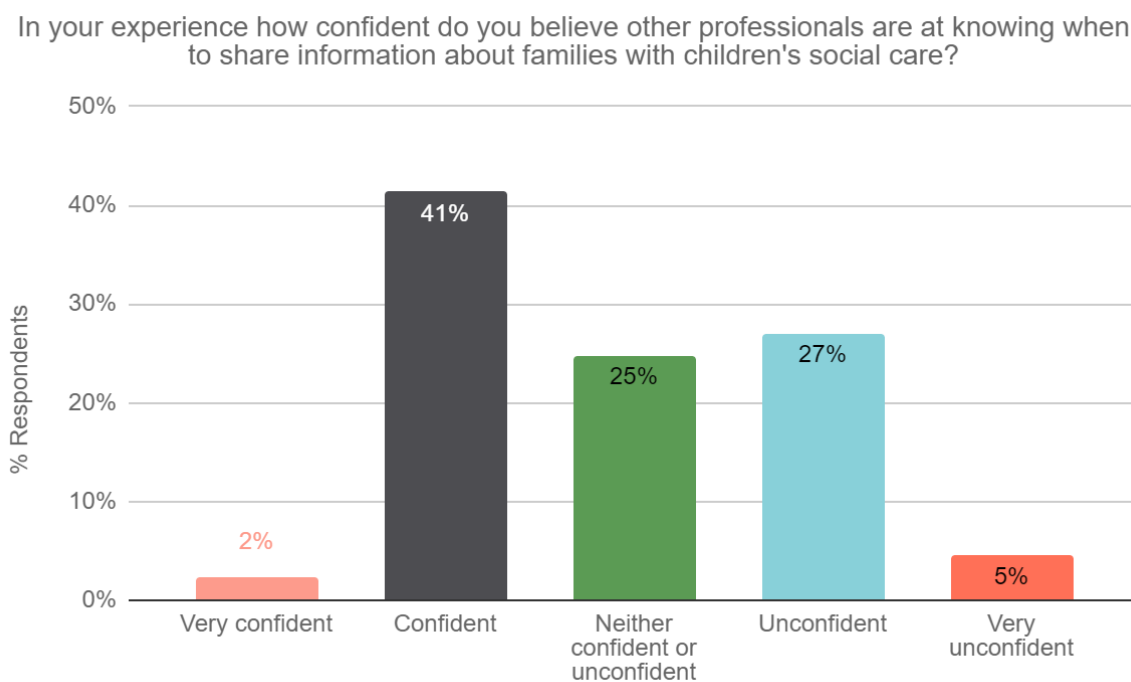


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**In your experience how confident do you believe other professionals are at knowing when to share information about families with children's social care.**

The last question asked social workers about their perception of other professionals' understanding of when to share information about families with children's social care. Most social workers reported feeling confident (41%), whereas 27% of respondents were not. A quarter of respondents chose a neutral position, being neither confident or unconfident (Figure 14).

Figure 14: The proportions of social workers who believe that other professionals know when to share information about families with children's social care with different levels of confidence



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### About WWCSC Polling

What Works for Children's Social Care runs regular polls with social workers who have registered with us. Social workers registered with us are currently employed in a range of organisations and we canvas their opinions about our current and future research agenda as well as current affairs, wellbeing and social work practice. We would like to thank you all for taking the time to complete the polls and also ask that you encourage your colleagues to [sign up](#).