

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

This report sets out the results of the fourth in the series of polls for the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. In this poll, social workers were asked four questions covering important themes about children's social care. The poll was hosted on the external platform Qualtrics. The poll was open for 18 days between 4th-21st October 2021. An invitation to participate in the poll was sent to the 1,237 social workers registered on our polling site, with 158 participating. This is an increase on the previous poll, which was answered by 141 participants. However, the sample size is still small, so findings should not be viewed as a representative sample of social workers in England.

The questions included in the poll were mainly quantitative and asked respondents to scale or prioritise a series of options on topics, including how aware they were of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care; how they thought certain agencies understood local thresholds; whether they referred children to services provided by community led organisations; and whether they would remain in employment with their local authority if it received an inadequate Ofsted rating.

## How well do you think the children's social care workforce are aware of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care?

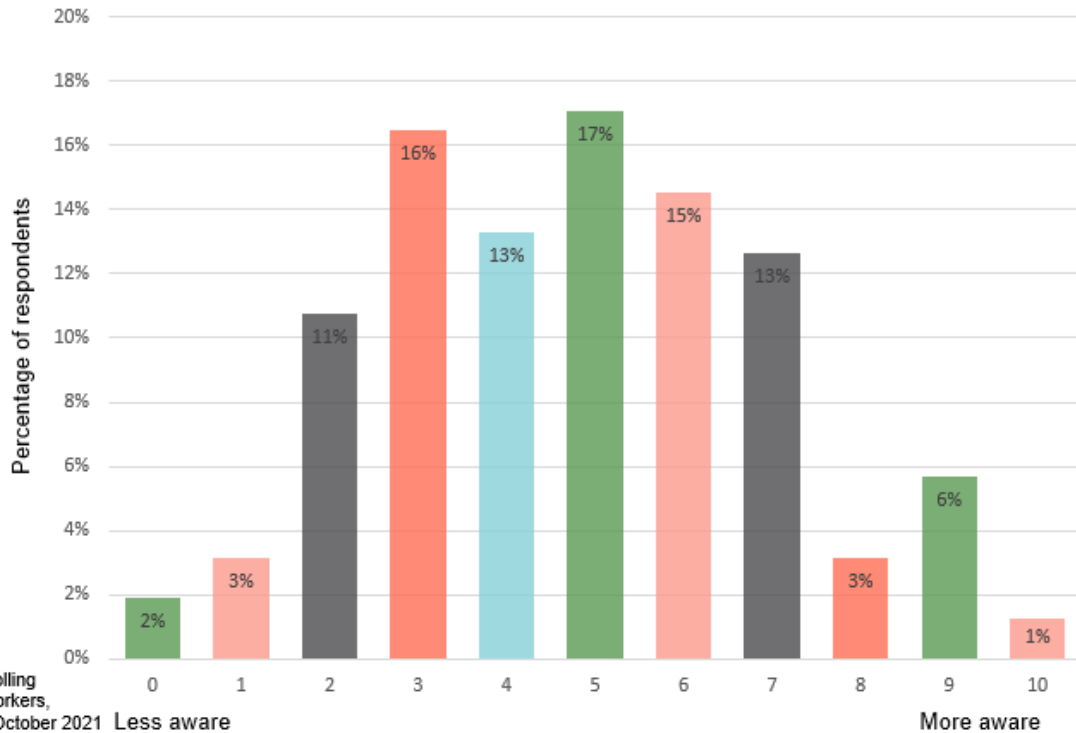
Social workers were asked how well they thought the children's social care workforce were aware of the Independent Review of Children's Social Care (refer to figure 1), on a scale of 0-10 with 0 being least aware and 10 being most aware. Opinions about how aware the workforce was about the Review were split. Very few social workers polled estimated awareness to be very high or very low, with three quarters (74%) ranking awareness as between 3 and 7 on the scale. Slightly more respondents believed that there was low levels of awareness in the sector about the review than those who believe there was a high level of awareness (45% vs 38%). The findings are similar to the results reported in the first care review polling report in July 2021 where 67% of social workers surveyed reported the profession's awareness of the Review at 5 or below on the scale (i.e. less aware), compared with 62% of respondents in this survey.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that respondents across both polls could be from entirely different individuals, as individual respondents are not tracked across polls.

(Figure 1.)

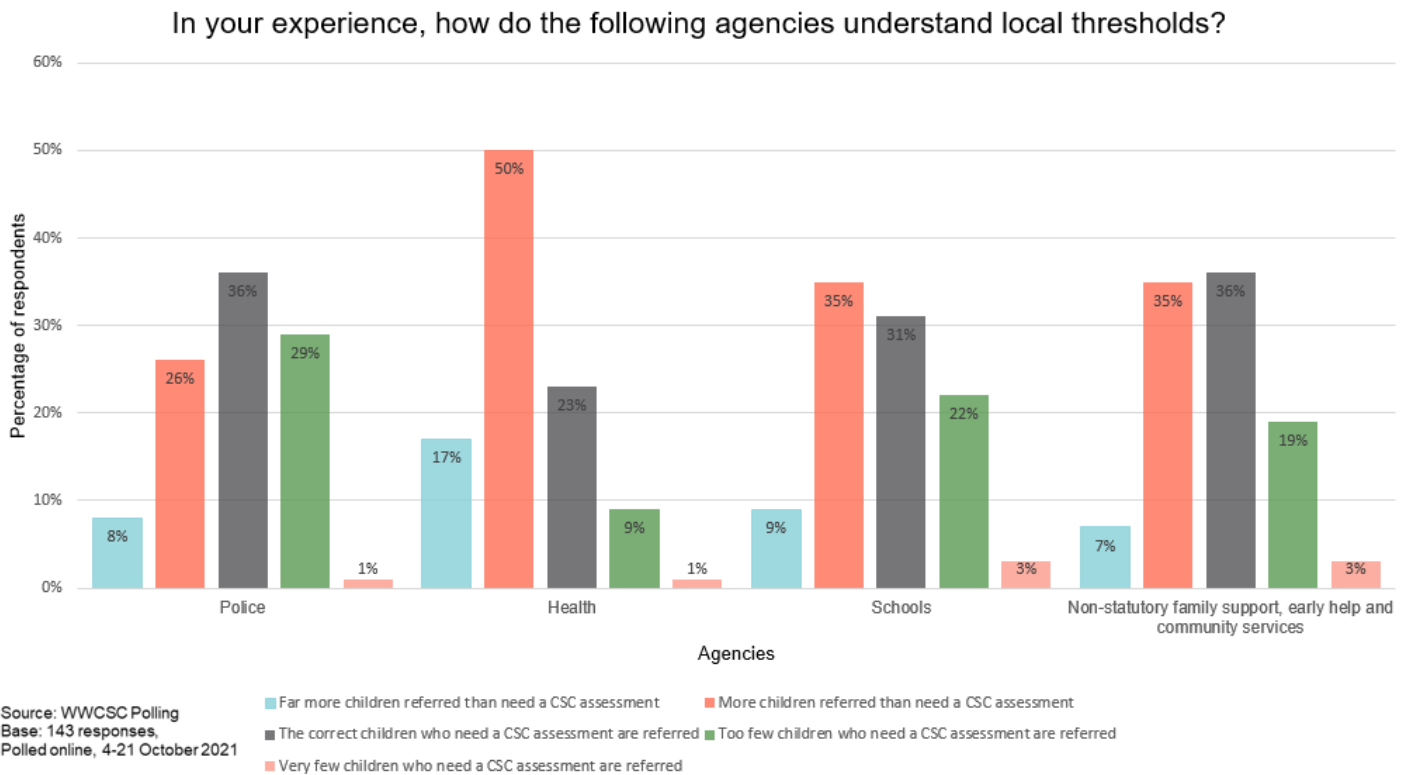
How well do you think the children's social care workforce are aware of the independent review of children's social care? (Rate from 0-10)



### In your experience, how do the following agencies understand local thresholds?

The poll suggests that social workers who responded to the survey do not believe that agencies they regularly work with (police, health, schools and non-statutory family support, early help and community services) have a good understanding of local social care thresholds (refer to figure 2). The majority of social workers surveyed did not believe that any agency was referring the 'correct' number of children for a social care assessment. The social workers felt that all agencies were referring more children for assessment than were needed. Two thirds of respondents believed that health services referred too many children for assessment than was needed. Health services also scored the lowest of the agencies for referring the correct children for assessment (23%). Compared to health services and schools, more social workers polled thought that police and non-statutory family support referred the correct children, but at 36% it is far from a majority of social workers who think they are getting it right. The police were the only agency where the proportion of respondents who thought the police referred too many children was similar to the proportion who thought they referred too few children.

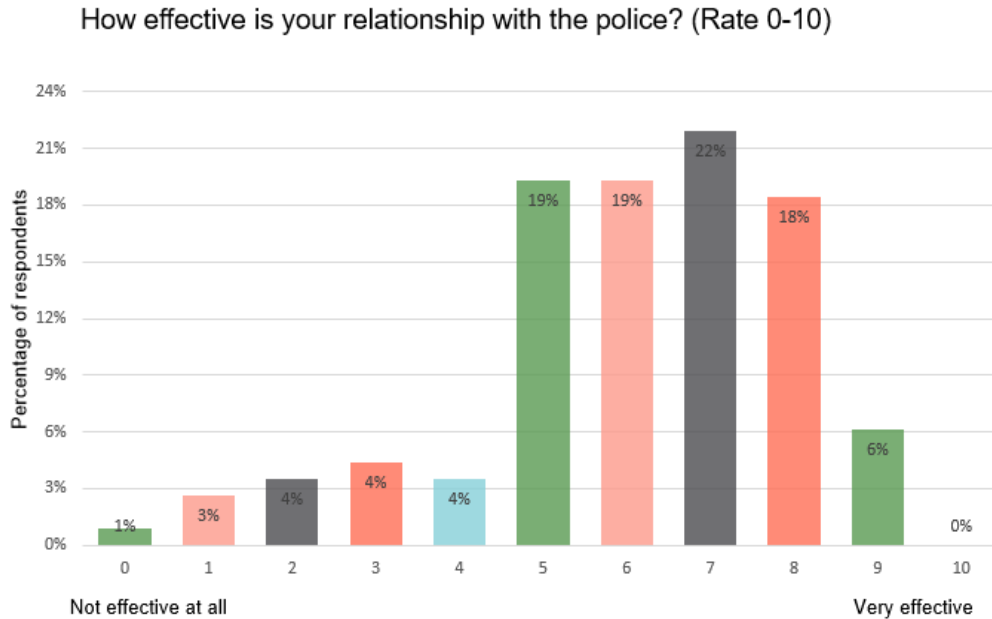
(Figure 2.)



### How effective is your relationship with the police?

114 people answered this question on a scale of 0-10, with 0 being not effective at all and 10 being very effective (refer to figure 3). Nearly two thirds of respondents (65% - those who scored between 6-10 on the scale) believed that they had an effective relationship with the police. However, no respondents scored a 10 on the scale. For 16% (those who scored between 0-4 on the scale) of respondents they believed that they did not have an effective relationship with the police, with 1% of respondents rating their relationship with the police as not effective at all.

(Figure 3.)

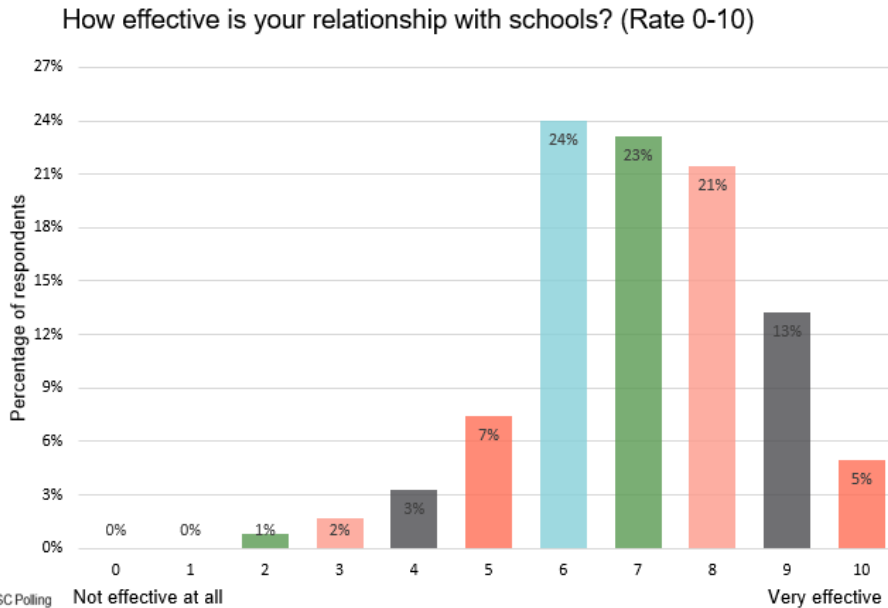


Source: WWCS Polling  
Base: 114 Social Workers,  
Polled online, 4-21 October 2021

### How effective is your relationship with schools?

121 social workers answered this question on a scale of 0-10, with 0 being not effective at all and 10 being very effective (refer to figure 4). The vast majority of respondents (86% - those who scored between 6-10 on the scale) believed that they had an effective relationship with schools. Additionally, 6 (5%) respondents scored a 10 on the scale, which means they believed they had a very effective relationship with schools. Only 6% (those who scored between 2-4 on the scale) of respondents believed that they did not have an effective relationship with schools. There were no respondents rating a 0 or 1, indicating that none of those surveyed believed their relationship with schools was not effective at all.

(Figure 4.)



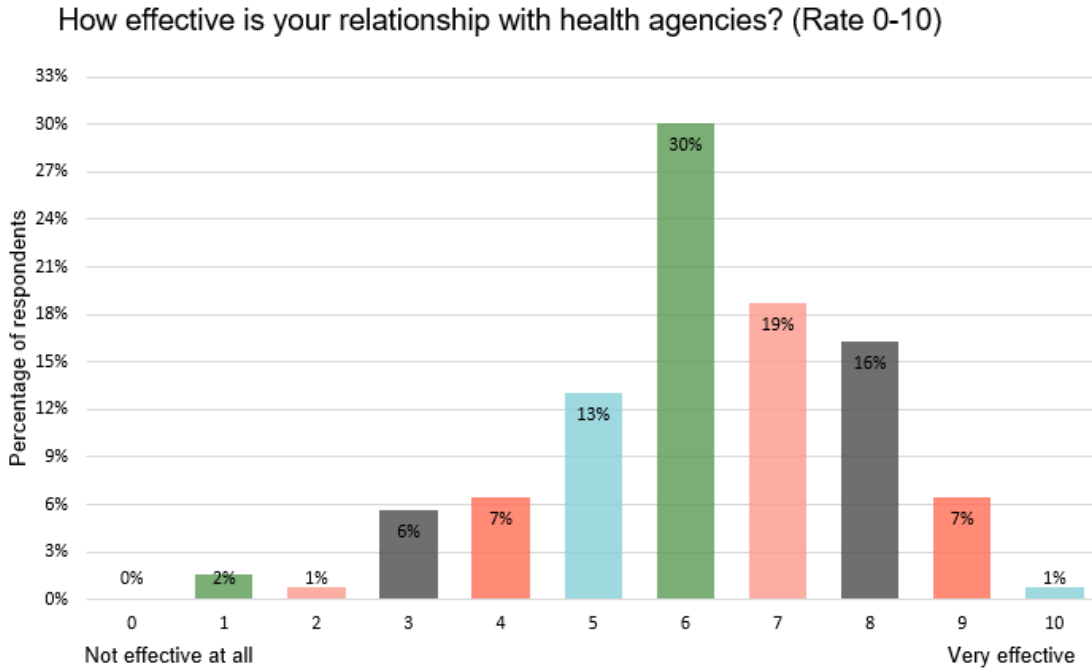
Source: WWCS Polling  
Base: 121 Social Workers,  
Polled online, 4-21 October 2021

### How effective is your relationship with health agencies?

123 people answered this question on a scale of 0-10, with 0 being not effective at all and 10 being very effective (refer to figure 5). The vast majority of respondents (73% - those who scored between 6-10 on the scale) believed that they had an effective relationship with health agencies. Additionally, 1 (1%) respondent scored a 10 on the scale, indicating they believed they had a very effective relationship with health agencies. 16% (those who scored between 0-4 on the scale) of respondents believed that they did not have an effective relationship with health agencies, with no respondents rating a 0, which means nobody believed their relationship with health agencies was not effective at all.

Overall, social workers were more likely to think they had a more effective relationship with schools (86%) compared with health agencies (73%) and the police (65%). On average, respondents believed they had a more effective relationship with schools (an average rating of 7) compared with health agencies (an average rating of 6.2) and the police (an average rating of 6.1).

(Figure 5.)



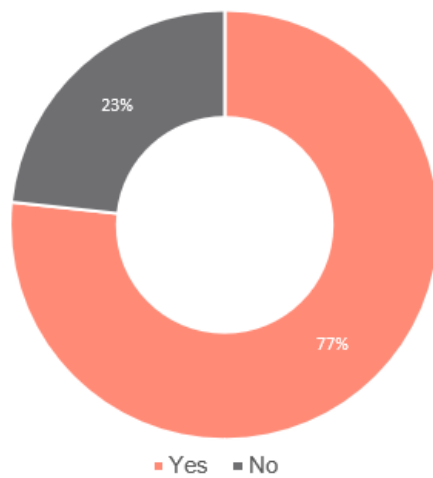
Source: WWCSC Polling  
Base: 123 Social Workers,  
Polled online, 4-21 October 2021

### Do you refer children to services provided by community-led organisations?

More than three quarters of respondents (77% or 102 of the 133 respondents) refer children to services provided by community-led organisations (refer to figure 6).

(Figure 6.)

#### Do you refer children to services provided by community-led organisations?



Source: WWCSC Polling  
Base: 133 Social Workers,  
Polled online, 4-21 October 2021

### **What are the challenges, if any, to making referrals to community-led organisations?**

With the majority of respondents referring children to community-led organisations, it is important to understand some of the challenges faced when making referrals to such organisations (refer to figure 7). Respondents were able to choose multiple options and add additional free-text responses. In total, 286 responses were recorded.

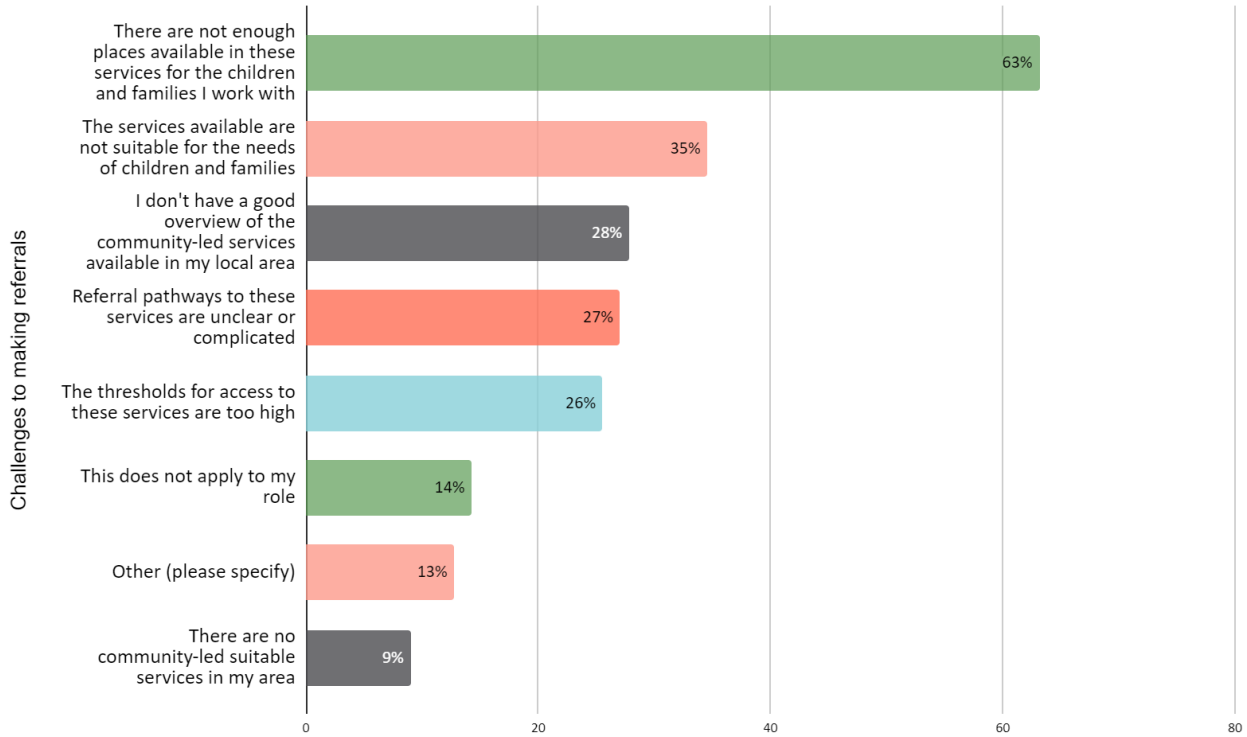
The biggest barriers to making referrals were around issues of availability and suitability of services or places. Nearly two thirds (63%) of all respondents cited a limited availability of places in services for their children and families as one of the challenges. A lack of suitability of the services for the needs of children and families was mentioned by over one third (35%) of respondents as the second most cited challenge.

A lack of overview of the community-led services available, unclear or complicated referral pathways and thresholds for access being too high all polled similarly high with 26%-28% of respondents identifying each as one of the challenges to making referrals. A lack of community-led services in the area polled lowest at nine percent, suggesting that the challenges to making referrals for the majority of respondents do not stem from a lack of services in the area.

Of the 16 free-text 'other' responses, six main areas emerged from the social workers who responded. Firstly, a lack of resources to manage workload was seen as a challenge to making referrals to community-led organisations. Secondly, limited or restricted services by organisations was seen as a challenge. For example, stating that some services were not accepting referrals for children in social care including those on Children in Need or Child Protection Plans, while other services had reduced availability or had closed down, or services were only accepting referrals for children with less complex issues. Thirdly, waiting lists were seen as a challenge to making referrals to community-led organisations. For example, two respondents stated that waiting times to access services were too long. Fourthly, having no long term plans in place was seen as a challenge. For example, two respondents mentioned that services were tailored towards immediate needs rather than creating a plan for long term requirements. Fifthly, funding was seen as a challenge to making referrals to community-led organisations, with two respondents stating that services were either disappearing due to lack of funding and/or securing funding for services was always an issue. Finally, transport access for families to services was also described as a challenge to making referrals.

(Figure 7.)

What are the challenges, if any, to making referrals to community-led organisations?



Source: WWCSC Polling  
Base: 133 social workers with 286 responses,  
Polled online, 4-21 October 2021

Percentage of respondents

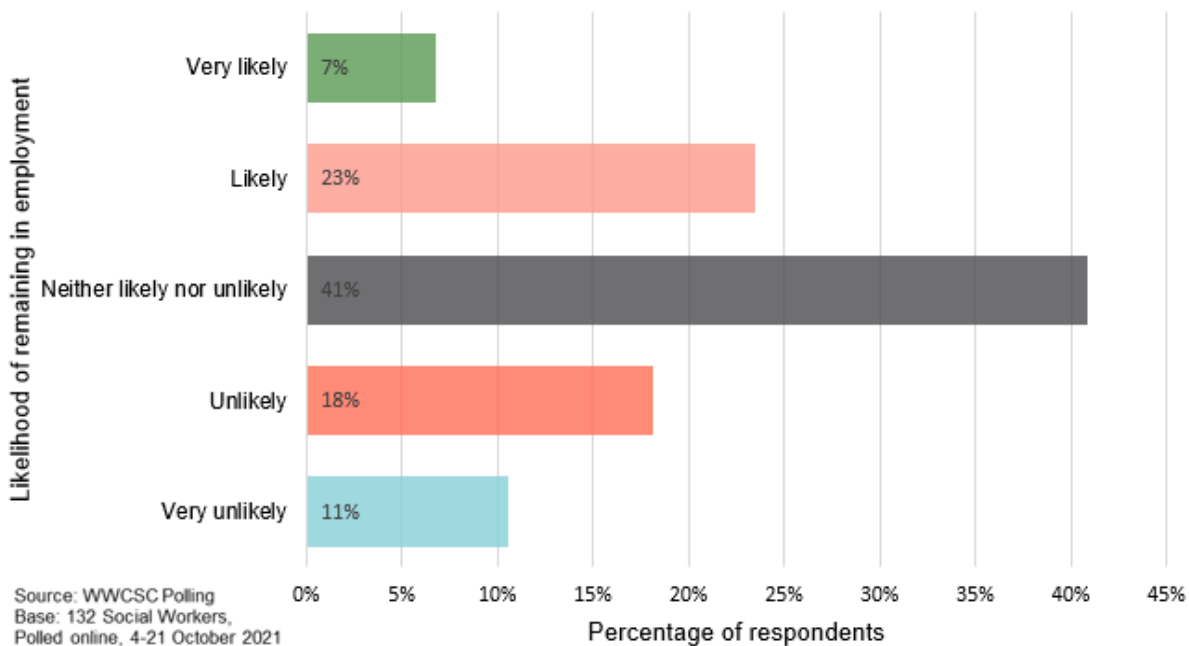
**If your LA received an inadequate Ofsted rating, how likely would this affect you remaining in the employment of that LA?**

This question was answered by 132 people, using a 5 point scale ranging from very likely to very unlikely (refer to figure 8). Of these responses, four in ten (41%) indicated that if the local authority where they worked received an inadequate rating by Ofsted, it would neither likely nor unlikely affect their decision to remain in employment there. Three in ten (30%) felt it would affect their decision to remain in employment in the local authority, with a similar number (29%) claiming it would not impact their decision.



(Figure 8.)

If your Local Authority received an inadequate Ofsted rating, how likely would this affect your decision to remain in the employment of that LA?



**Which reasons would influence your decision to remain in the employment of your Local Authority if it received an inadequate rating (Subsample: respondents who selected that an inadequate rating would 'likely' or 'very likely' influence their decision)**

This question further explored potential reasons that would influence respondents' decision to remain in a local authority after receiving an inadequate rating (refer to figure 9). The answers displayed are limited to the 40 respondents that had selected that an inadequate rating would 'likely' or 'very likely' influence their decision in the previous question.

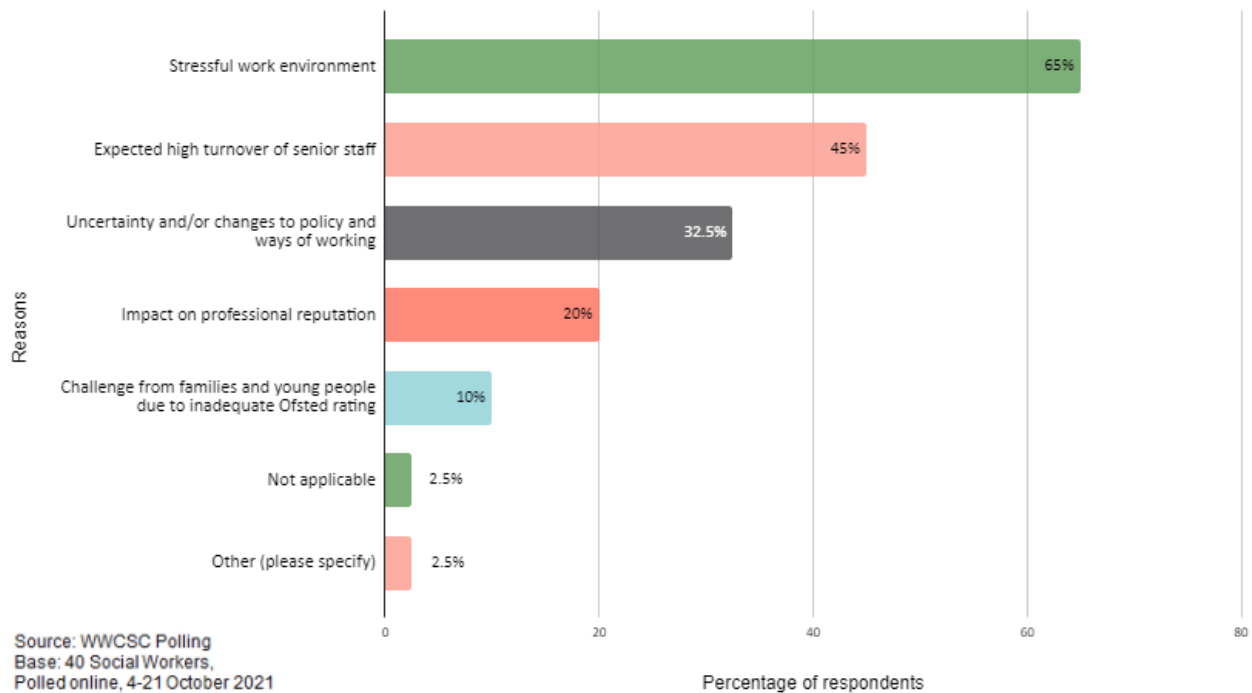
Most respondents (65%) seemed to be worried about a stressful work environment following an inadequate rating, followed by an expected high turnover of senior staff (45%). Uncertainty and/or changes to policy and ways of working were also cited by nearly one third of respondents (32.5%). One in five respondents (20%) believed the impact on professional reputation would influence their decision, and 10% felt that challenges from families and young people due to the inadequate Ofsted rating would influence their decision to remain.

Of those that chose 'other' five responses were grouped under recruitment and resourcing. For example, high numbers of vacancies (due to staff leaving as a result of the rating) would increase workload and then subsequently influence their own decision to leave; and the local authority's poor

reputation would 'exacerbate existing gaps in teams' as staff would eventually leave or be 'pushed out' and recruitment would become more difficult.

(Figure 9.)

Which reasons would influence your decision to remain in the employment of your Local Authority if it received an inadequate rating (Subsample: respondents who selected that an Inadequate rating would 'likely' or 'very likely' influence their decision)



### About WWCSC Polling

What Works for Children's Social Care runs fortnightly 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. The number of social workers who are sent the polls fluctuates due to sign-up and bounce-backs. This poll was sent to 1237 social workers registered with us for polling surveys. Due to small sample sizes the polls should not be treated as a representative sample of social workers in England.

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](#).