

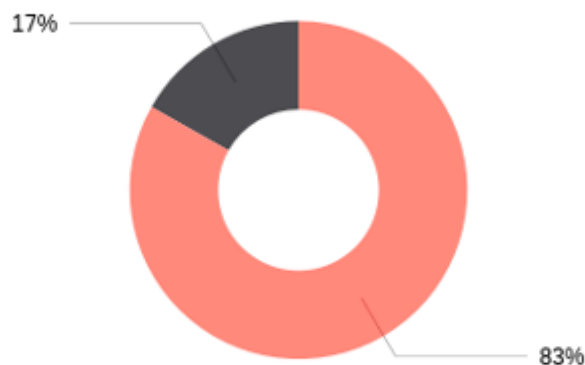
# The Independent Review of Children's Social Care: Polling Results Report

This report sets out the results from the second in a series of special polls for the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. In this poll, social workers were asked 8 questions and for the first time the poll was hosted on an external platform, Qualtrics, which enabled more functionality. The poll was open for 3 weeks in August 2021 and drew responses from 298 participants. This is an increase on the previous poll, which was answered by 186 participants, likely due to the fact the previous poll was open for less time (a week). This polling survey was exclusively quantitative and most questions asked respondents to scale or prioritise a series of options on topics including how they spend their time, what value different tasks add and whether there is enough training on different areas of practice.

## Do you work with children in care?

Social workers were asked whether they work with children in care. Out of 298 respondents, the majority (83%) of social workers reported that they currently work with children in care, with 17% of social workers stating that they do not.

### Do you work with children in care?



Source: WWCS Polling  
Base: 298 Social Workers,  
Polled online, 9-30 Aug 2021

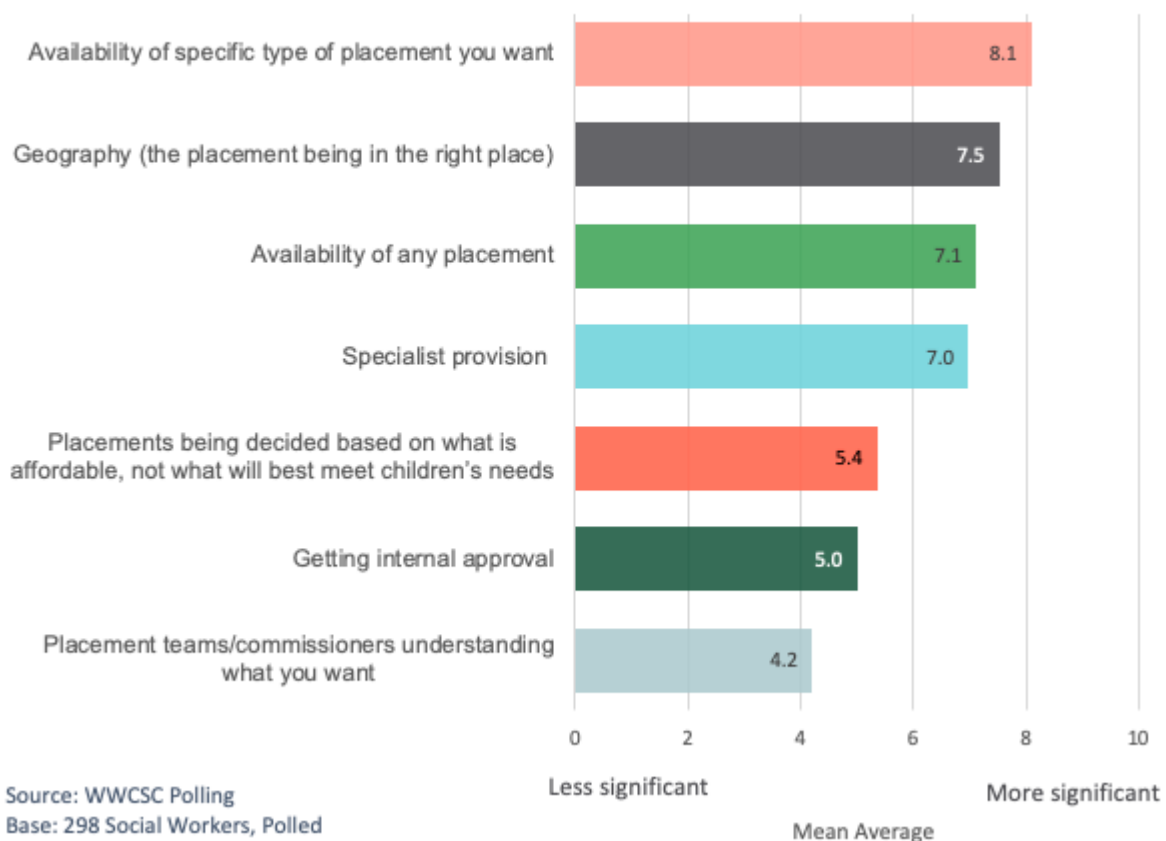
Yes No

**In your experience, how significant are the challenges below when finding placements for children within the local authority's care?**

197 people answered this question and the most significant challenge social workers experienced when finding placements for children within the local authority's care was availability of a specific type of placement (which, on average, respondents scored 8.1 out of 10 - with 0 being 'not an issue I encounter' and 10 meaning 'very significant'. This was followed by geography i.e. the placement being in the right place (7.5 out of 10). Other challenges social workers rated highly were availability of any placement, which scored a 7.1 average, with specialist provisions closely following at 7.0. This highlights the importance of having the right placements available in the right location.

Other challenges we asked about were rated by social workers as less significant than factors due to available location. Social workers' average score for placements being decided based on what is affordable, not what will best meet the children's needs was 5.4 out of 10, which was closely followed by getting internal approval (5.0). Finally, placement teams/commissioners understanding what you want was reported as a less significant challenge (4.2).

**In your experience, how significant are the challenges below when finding placements for children within the local authority's care? (Rate each out of 10)**



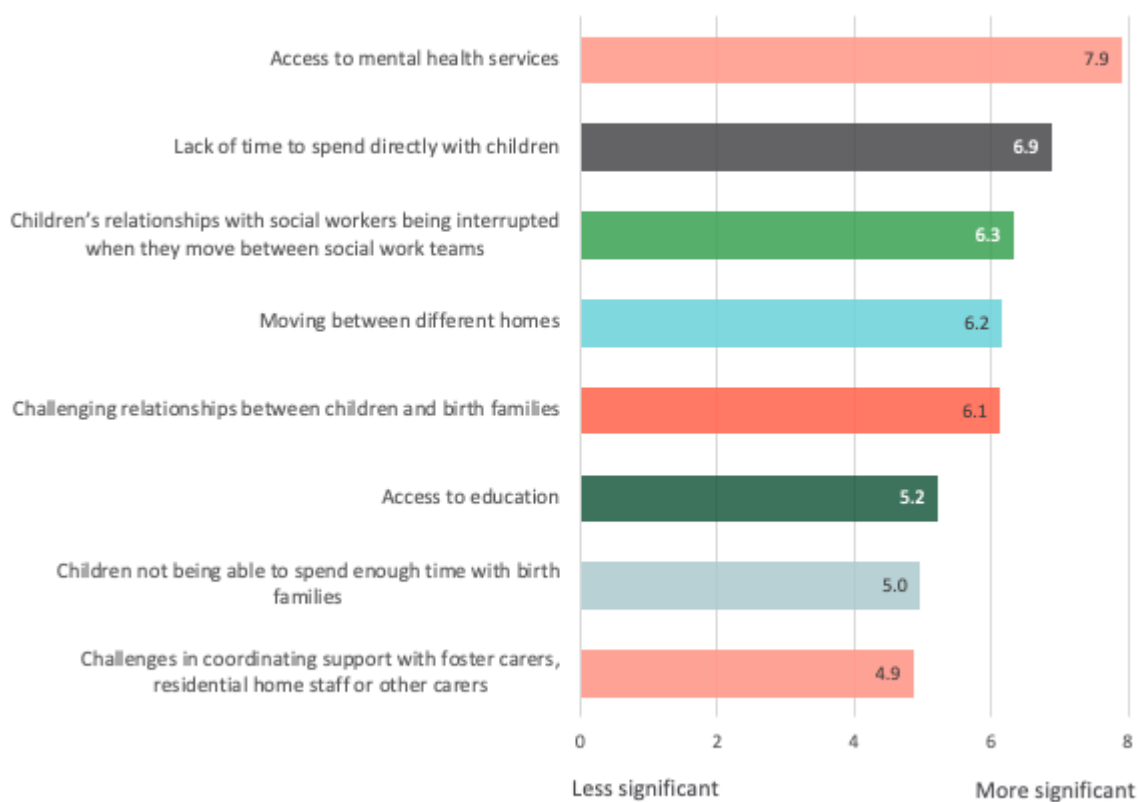
**In your experience, how significant are the challenges below when ensuring children in care are able to access the services and support that they need?**

When asked about ensuring children in care are able to access the services and support they need, access to mental health services was the most significant challenge (this was given an average score of 7.9 out of 10, with 10 being 'very significant'). This highlights the importance of having sufficient mental health resources for children in care.

Lack of time to directly spend with children was found to be the next most significant challenge (6.9 out of 10). Similar scores were given for children's relationships with social workers being interrupted when they move between social work teams (6.3), moving between different homes (6.2) and challenging relationships between children and birth families (6.1).

Challenges that were rated by social workers as less significant than the above included access to education which was rated 5.2 out of 10 on average, children not being able to spend enough time with birth families (5.0) and challenges in coordinating support with foster carers, residential home staff or other carers (4.9). 187 people answered this question.

**In your experience, how significant are the challenges below when ensuring children in care are able to access the services and support that they need? (Rate each out of 10)**



Source: WWCS Polling  
Base: 298 Social Workers, Polled online, 9-30 Aug 2021

Mean Average

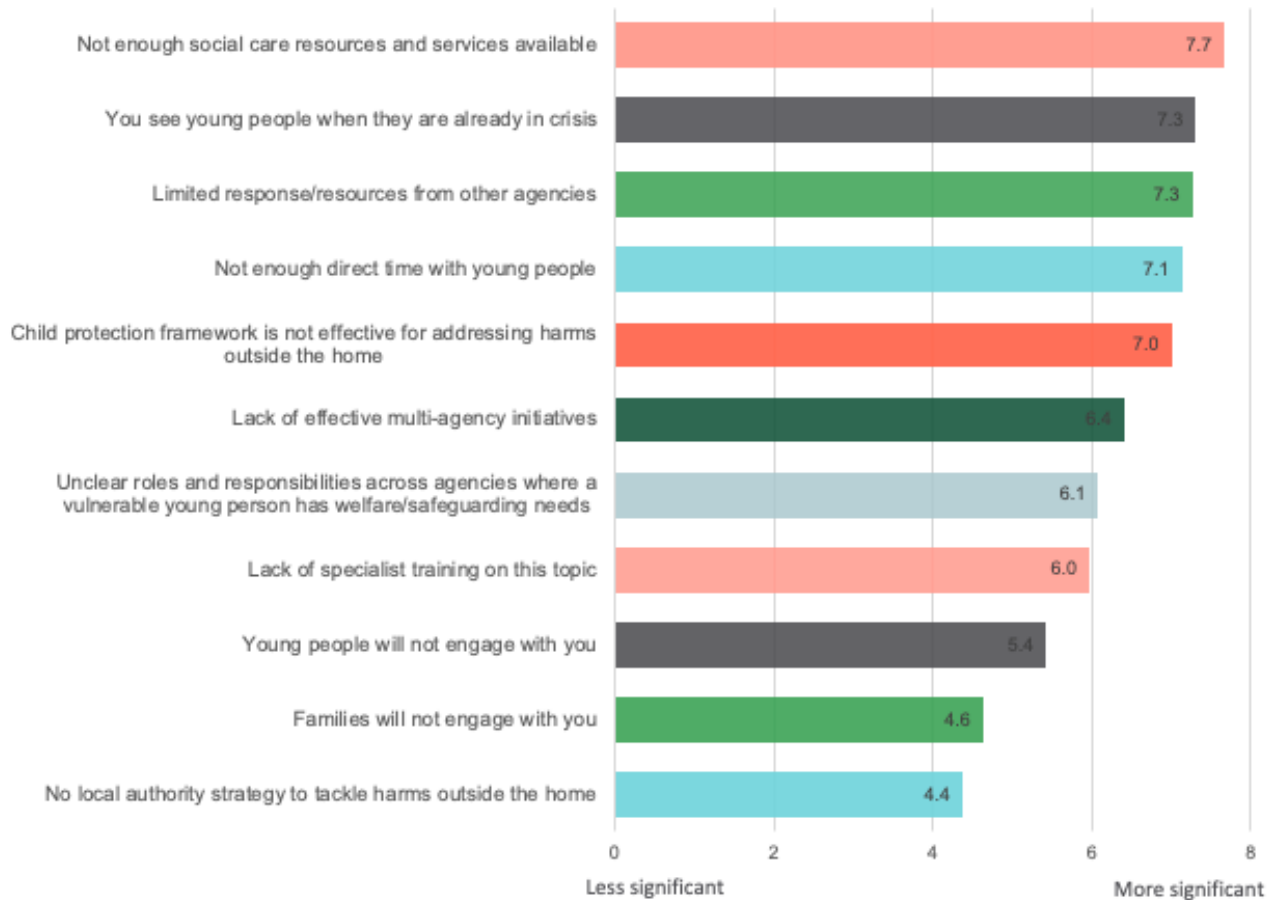
**In your experience, how significant are the challenges below when supporting and safeguarding young people from harms outside the home?**

Following on from the previous question, social workers were asked about the significance of challenges of supporting and safeguarding young people from harm outside the home. 215 social workers responded, 28 more than the previous answer. Not enough social care resources being available was reported as the most significant challenge (it received an average score of 7.7 out of 10). After this, seeing young people when they are already in crisis and limited response/resources from other agencies were identified as equally as challenging (7.3). This was closely followed by not enough time with young people (7.1) and child protection framework is not effective for addressing harms outside the home (7.0). This highlights the importance of having appropriate guidance and sufficient resources to identify this type of need early and provide support, both within children's social care and from other agencies.

After this, lack of effective multi-agency initiatives was the next most significant challenge, with an average score of 6.4 out of 10. Unclear roles and responsibilities across agencies where a vulnerable young person has welfare/safeguarding needs (6.1) and lack of specialist training on this topic (6.0) were closely rated.

Engagement of young people and families, as well as having a local authority strategy, were rated as less of a significant concern for social workers, as compared to the other factors listed. The next challenge was young people will not engage with you, for which respondents on average scored 5.4 out of 10. The two less significant challenges were, families will not engage with you (4.6) and no local authority strategy to tackle harms outside the home (4.4).

**In your experience, how significant are the challenges below when supporting and safeguarding young people from harms outside the home? (Rate each out of 10)**



Source: WWCS Polling  
 Base: 298 Social Workers,  
 Polled online, 9-30 Aug 2021

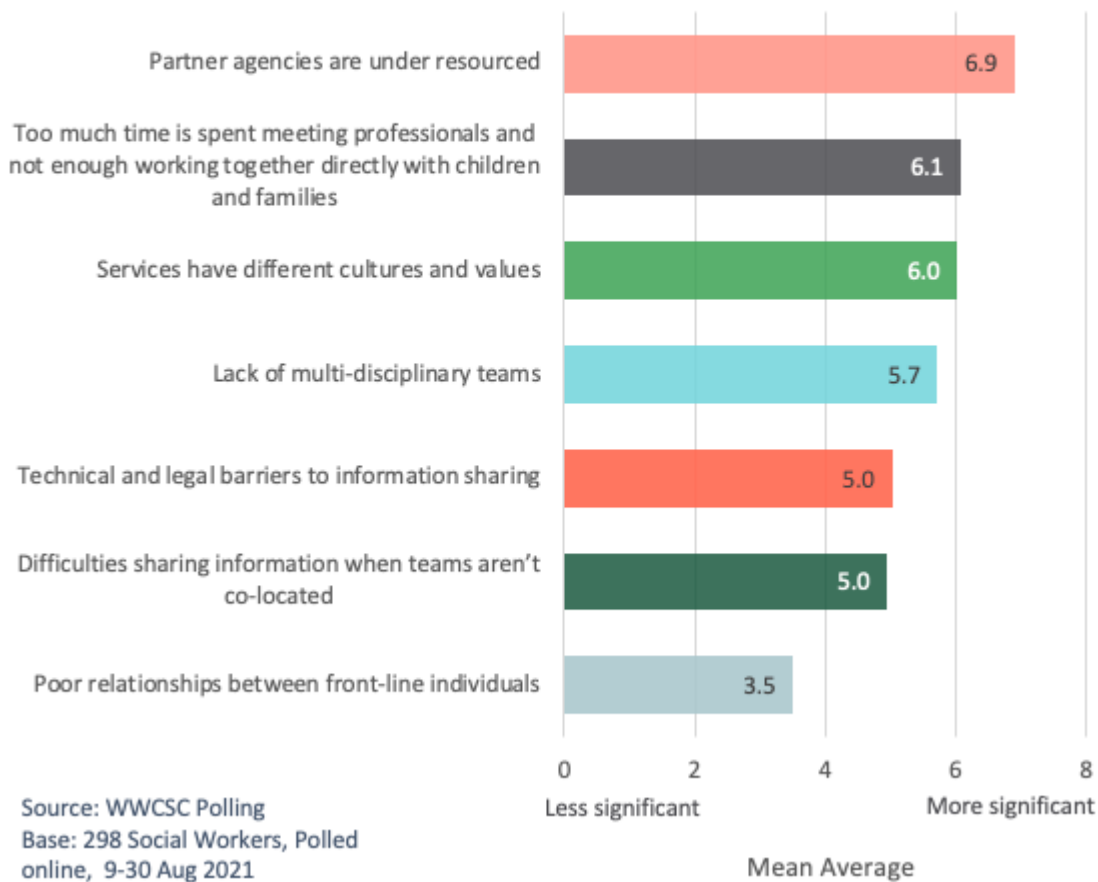
**In your experience, how significant are the challenges below when working with other agencies?**

209 social workers responded to this poll and on average they rated partner agencies' lack of resources as the most significant challenge of working with other agencies (6.9 out of 10).

After this, the next challenge was too much time spent meeting professionals and not enough time working together directly with children and families. (6.1), this is followed by services having different cultures and values (6.0). Lack of multi-disciplinary teams was scored on average 5.7 out of 10.

Information sharing and relationships were rated by social workers as less significant challenges than other factors. Technical and legal barriers to information sharing and difficulties sharing information when teams aren't co-located were rated as equally as significant (5.0 out of 10). Poor relationships between front-line individuals was rated the least significant (3.5 out of 10).

**In your experience, how significant are the challenges below when working with other agencies? (Rate each out of 10)**



**Please indicate how far you feel each activity listed in the table below adds value to your work with children and other families**

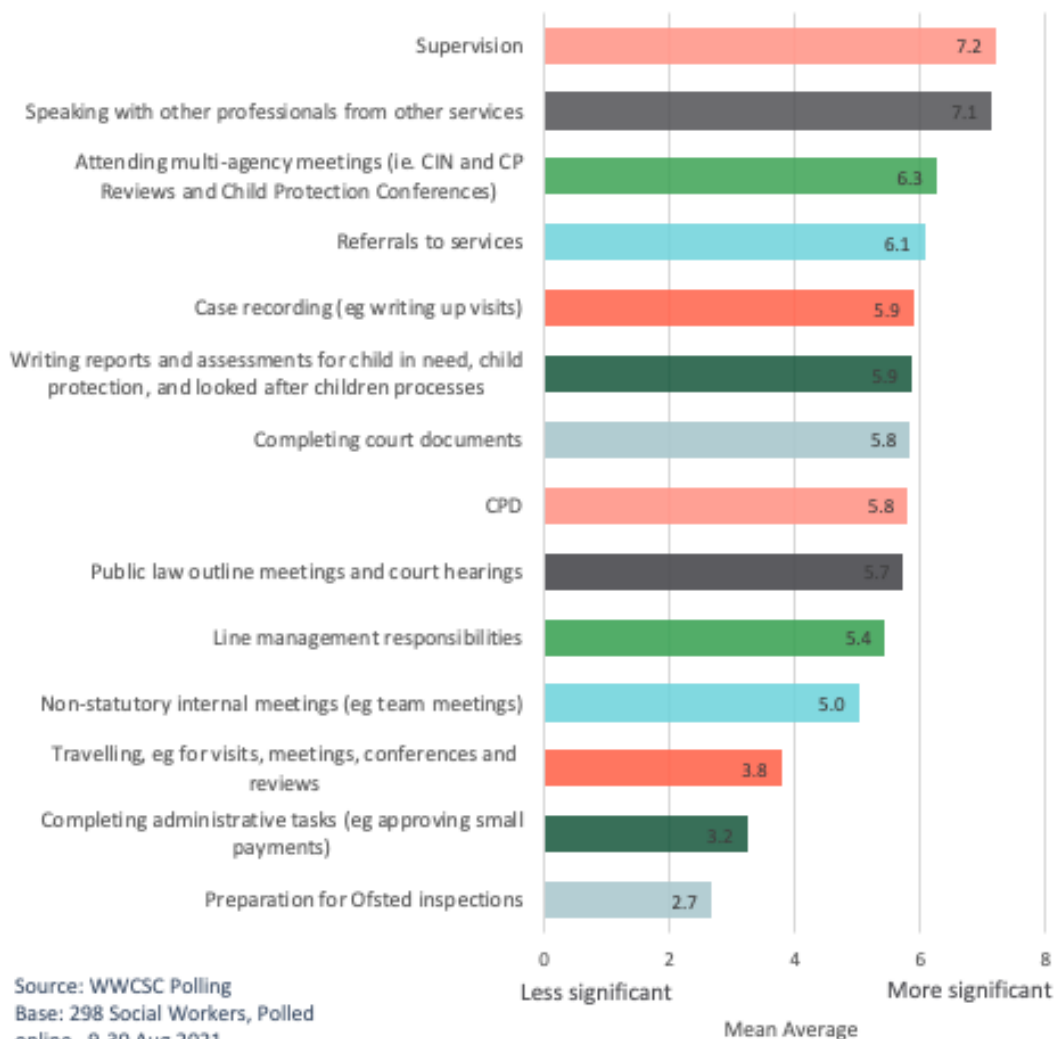
Social workers were asked to rate the value added to their work by different activities. 196 social workers responded. The average scores from the ratings indicate that social workers view supervision (7.2 out of 10) as the most significant activity that adds value to their work with children and families. This was followed closely by speaking to other professionals from other services (7.1). This suggests the opportunities to discuss cases with others were particularly important to social workers.

Attending multi-agency meetings (6.3 out of 10) and referrals to services (6.1) were then rated as the next most value-adding, highlighting the importance of multi-disciplinary support for children and families.

Respondents then answered that case recordings and writing reports, and assessments for child in need, child protection and looked after children were equally as significant (5.9 out of 10). In addition to this, completing court documents and CPD were also rated similarly (5.8). Public law outline meetings and court hearings followed closely in how much value it adds (5.7). These highlight the importance of some of the processes that are in place to support work with children and families.

Work that was less directly linked to their cases were rated by social workers who answered the survey as adding less value than the above factors. This included line management responsibilities (5.4 out of 10 on average) and non-statutory internal meetings (5.0). Travelling (3.8), completing administrative tasks (3.2) and preparation for ofsted inspections (2.7) were rated the least significant activities that add value to their role.

**Please indicate how far you feel each activity listed in the table below adds value to your work with children and other families (Rate each out of 10)**



**Please also indicate whether you feel you spend about the right amount of time, too much time, or not enough time on activities listed in the table below.**

The majority of the 196 respondents that answered this question responded that they spend too much time preparing for Ofsted inspections (68.9%), completing administrative tasks (64.3%), writing reports and assessments (53.1%) and completing court documents (42.9%). Overall this suggests social workers feel they spend too much time on administrative and report writing tasks.

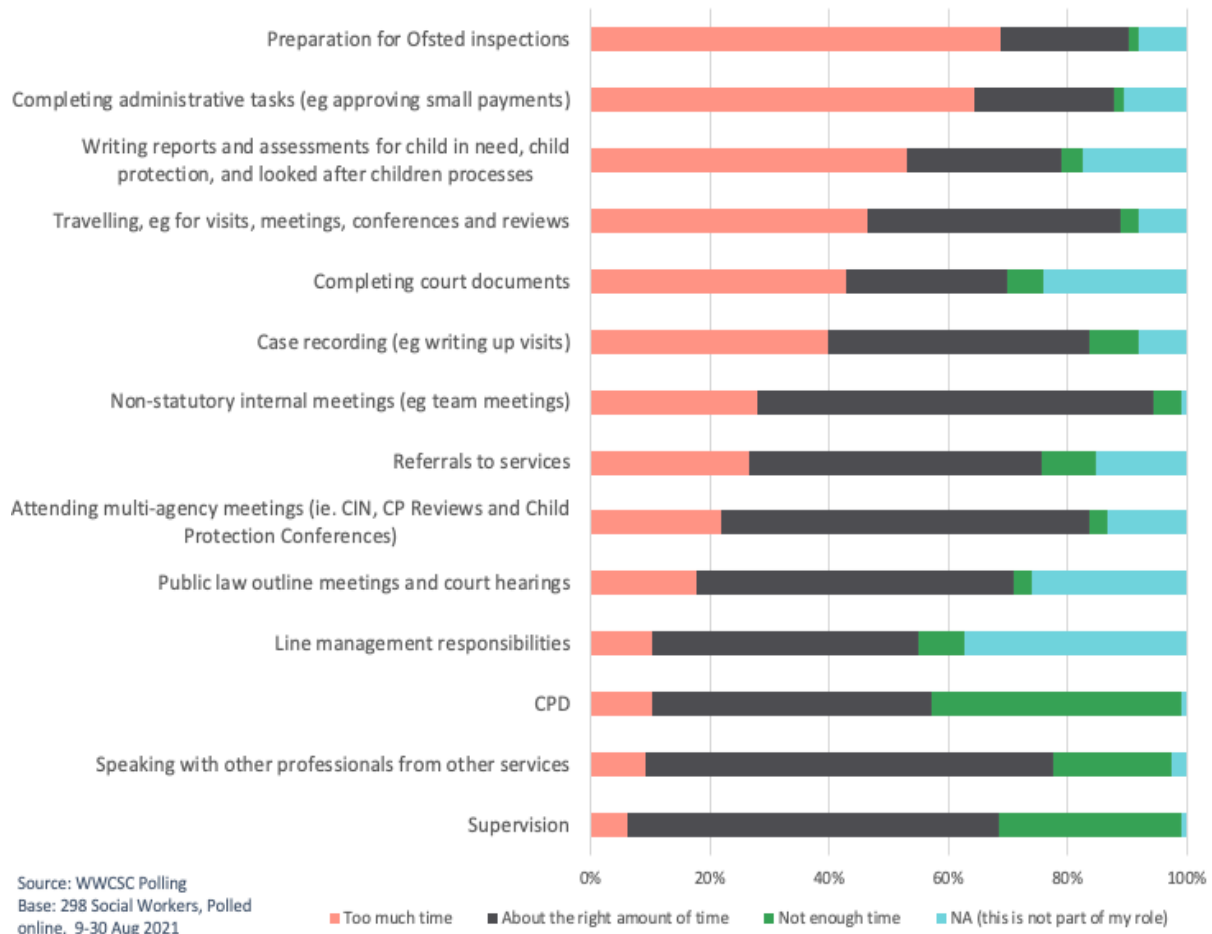
There was a close response for travelling as 46.4% voted that they spent too much time and 42.3% voted that they spent the right amount of time. This was also found with case recording, 39.8% voted that they spent too much time and 43.9% voted that they spend the right amount of time. This suggests that some social workers would want to spend less time on travelling and case recording, but an approximately equal number are content with the amount of time they spend on these areas.

The respondents reported that they spend about the right amount of time on the following tasks: non-statutory meetings (66.3%); attending multi-agency meetings (61.7%); public law outline meetings and court hearings (53.1%); referrals to services (49%); and line management responsibilities (44.9%). Although, for the last two tasks there were (26%) and (37.2%) that reported that this was not a part of their role.

For CPD, 46.9% of respondents say they spend about the right amount of time but many other respondents feel that they do not spend enough time (41.8%). The majority of respondents found that they have about the right amount of time to speak with other professionals from other services (68.4%) and supervision (62.2%) but after CPD these also had the largest responses for social workers feeling they didn't spend enough time on these tasks (30.61% and 19.9% respectively). These suggest there are a proportion of social workers who would want to spend more time on CPD, supervision and speaking with professionals in other services.



**Please also indicate whether you feel you spend about the right amount of time, too much time, or not enough time on activities listed in the table below.**



**Do you feel you have enough training on the risk factors in the table below? Please select one option for each risk factor.**

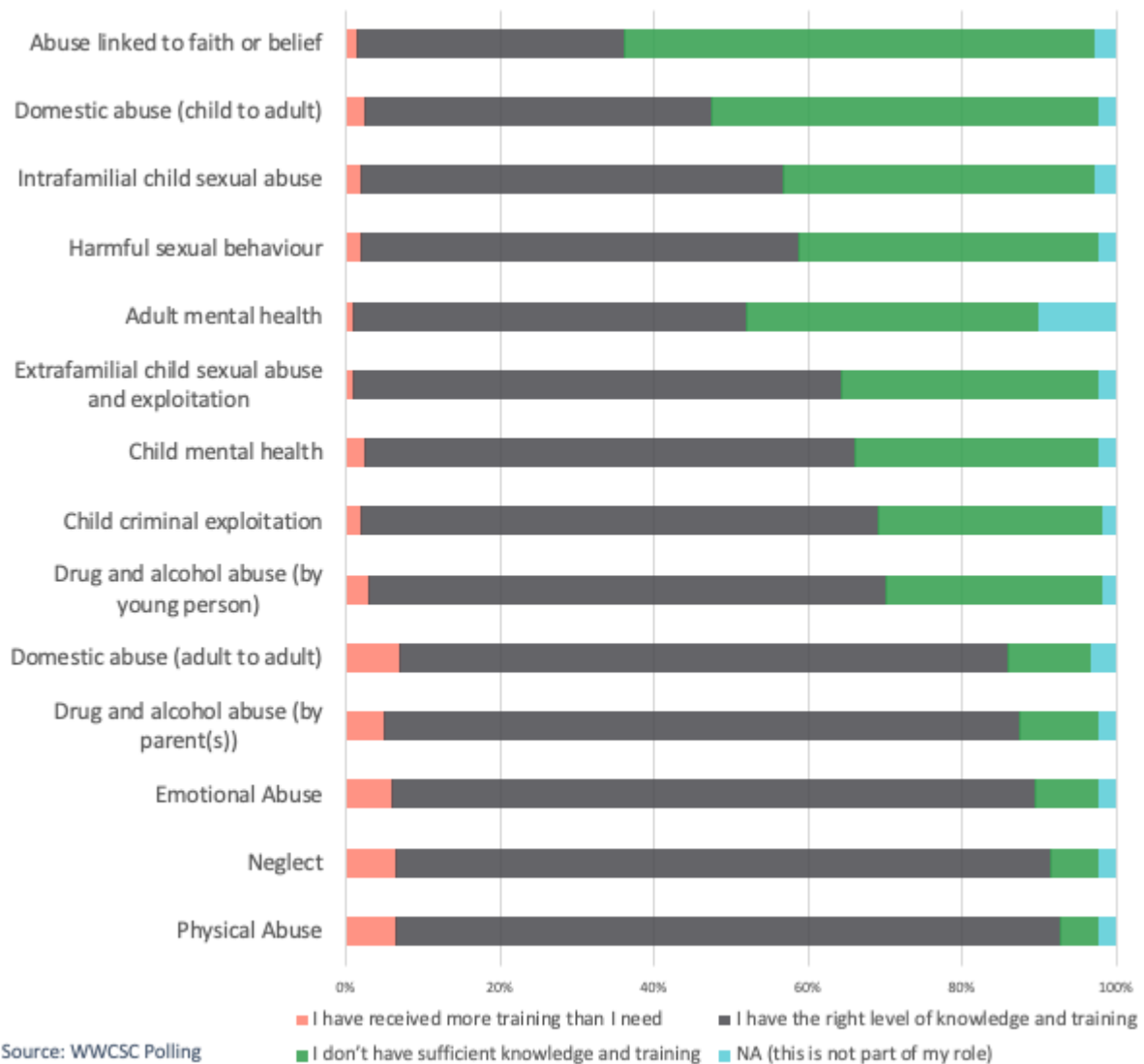
195 participants answered this question. The five risk factors that the most social workers reported to have ‘the right level of knowledge and training on’ were: physical abuse (86.2%); neglect (85.1%); emotional abuse (83.6%); drug and alcohol abuse (by parent(s)) (82.6%); and domestic abuse (adult to adult) (79%). This suggests that the training provided in these areas at the moment is sufficient for the majority of social workers polled.

This was then followed by drug and alcohol abuse (by young persons) (67.2%), child criminal exploitation (67.2%), child mental health and extra familial child sexual abuse and exploitation (both rated as the right level of training by 63.6% of respondents). These findings suggest that while a slight majority of social workers polled feel they have the right amount of training in these areas, a substantial proportion of respondents felt they lacked training and knowledge on these risk factors. Indeed, approximately 1/3 of participants felt that they didn’t have enough training in these areas.

51.3% of respondents felt they have the right level of knowledge and training on adult mental health, 56.9% on harmful sexual behaviour and 54.9% on intrafamilial child sexual abuse. This suggests that more could be done to improve the amount of training on these topics.

The majority of social workers polled feel they don't have sufficient knowledge and training on child to adult domestic abuse (50.3%) and abuse linked to faith or belief (61%). This suggests these could be priority areas to consider delivering more training for.

**Do you feel you have enough training on the risk factors in the table below? Please select one option for each risk factor.**



**About WWCS 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. 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](#).