



Barnardo's Quarterly Practitioner Survey (QPS)

Wave 12

19 April – 3 May 2022

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of Wave 12 of Barnardo's Quarterly Practitioner Survey.

The survey is open to all staff who work directly with children, young people, parents and/or carers. Its purpose is to systematically capture insights directly from Barnardo's practitioners on emerging issues and impacts on children and families, and to capture data to track long-term issues and trends.

The benefit of capturing this data spans into influencing activity with current and future commissioners, parliamentarians, and practitioners; the media profile of the charity; the ability to secure corporate sponsorship and individual giving; learning for internal initiatives; and the ability of the organisation to allocate resources into emerging vulnerabilities.

The data from the Quarterly Practitioner Survey is used by a variety of teams including Policy and Public Affairs in briefings to MPs, by Media and Fundraising for summer and Christmas campaigns, and Research and Evaluation in research reports.

Key Findings

Emerging Vulnerabilities

An increase in **mental health** and **wellbeing** issues continues to be the primary concern of practitioners in relation to the children, young people, and families they support.

Financial issues and **poverty** are other key concerns. Financial issues is cited by a significantly higher proportion of practitioners than in all previous waves of the survey. It is frequently mentioned in terms of the **cost of living crisis**, **finances being stretched**, and the **pressure** and **stress** this is causing for families.

A **lack of support** and resources also continues to be a primary concern and is still discussed in terms of a **lack of mental health support**, **long waiting times** for support, and the implications this has for **escalating mental health issues** and **delays in assessments** for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

Practitioners most commonly identify 'all children and families' and 'low income families' as most affected by these concerns.

COVID-19

Practitioners' main concern about the impact of COVID-19 on the children, young people and families they support continues to be the impact on their **mental health**. The proportion of practitioners citing this has risen steadily since October 2021. In terms of the long-term impact of COVID-19, practitioners continue to cite the impact on **mental health**, a **lack of support**, and a **loss of social skills/lack of socialisation**.

Pressure on Services

The proportion of practitioners reporting an **increase in the number of referrals** and an **increase in demand** for their service has increased significantly over the last three months and is at its highest level since this survey question was introduced in July 2020. The proportion of practitioners reporting an increase in the 'level or complexity of need' for service users has remained relatively consistent since October 2021.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Most practitioners (9 in 10) are supporting children, young people, and/or parents reporting an increase in mental health and wellbeing issues due to COVID-19 (which is consistent with April 2021). **Anxiety, reduced self-esteem, stress, and sleep dysregulation** remain key issues for children and young people's mental health. **Stress, anxiety, and depression** remain key issues for parental mental health.

Almost half of practitioners (47%) think the children and young people they support are not accessing appropriate support for their mental health and wellbeing at school.

Poverty

Three quarters of practitioners (75%) are supporting anyone who is in, or at risk of, being in poverty. The proportion of practitioners reporting this is significantly higher than in all other waves of the survey. While an **increased need for grants/financial support**; young people or families **experiencing reduced earnings due to job loss/reduced hours**; and an increase in young people or families **unable to pay bills/rent** remain the top concerns of practitioners, the proportion reporting this has declined since October 2021.

Emerging Vulnerabilities



An increase in **mental health** and **wellbeing** issues is the primary concern of practitioners in relation to the children, young people, and families they support. **Financial issues** is another key concern and is cited by a higher proportion of practitioners than in all other waves of the survey.

27% of practitioners said **an increase in mental health and wellbeing issues** is a key issue they are seeing for children, young people, and families (compared to 31% in January 2022)

17% of practitioners said **financial issues** is a key issue they are seeing for children, young people, and families (compared to 6% in January 2022)

Are there any new issues you are seeing emerging, or new things you are hearing from children, young people or families, over the last few months? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (172)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Increase in MHWB issues among CYP and families	47	27
Financial issues	29	17
Lack of support and resources	24	14
No change/nothing new	22	13
Poverty/changes to benefits system (incl. increased need for foodbanks)	17	10
Increased impact of digital	12	7
Education (incl. school refusal/exclusion/attainment)	11	6
Increase in housing issues (incl. homelessness)	8	5
Child development (incl. lack of social skills)/speech and language	8	5
Concern about conflict in Ukraine	8	5
COVID-19	7	4
Increase in CYP and families affected by substance misuse	7	4
Isolation (incl. loneliness, loss of social contact)	5	3
Increase in (diagnosis of) ASD & additional needs	5	3
More CYP & families affected by domestic abuse	4	2
Increase in enforced criminal activity/county lines	4	2
Increase in violent/challenging behaviour	3	2
Transition back to 'normality'/returning to school	3	2
Job loss/employment prospects	2	1
Increase in identity issues	2	1
Increase in bullying	2	1
Other	13	8

What is your ONE biggest concern now for children, young people and families? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (188)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Lack of support and resources	45	24
MHWB issues among CYP and families	44	23
Financial issues	35	19
Poverty/changes to benefits system	30	16
Homelessness and housing issues	9	5
Increased impact of digital	8	4
Isolation (incl. loss of social/family contact)	7	4
Domestic abuse	6	3
Education (incl. attainment and exclusion)	4	2
Trauma/abuse/ACEs	4	2
Not listening to CYP & families	3	2
Family/relationship/placement breakdown	3	2
CCE/county lines	3	2
COVID-19/lockdown (non-specific)	2	1
Staffing issues/burn out	2	1

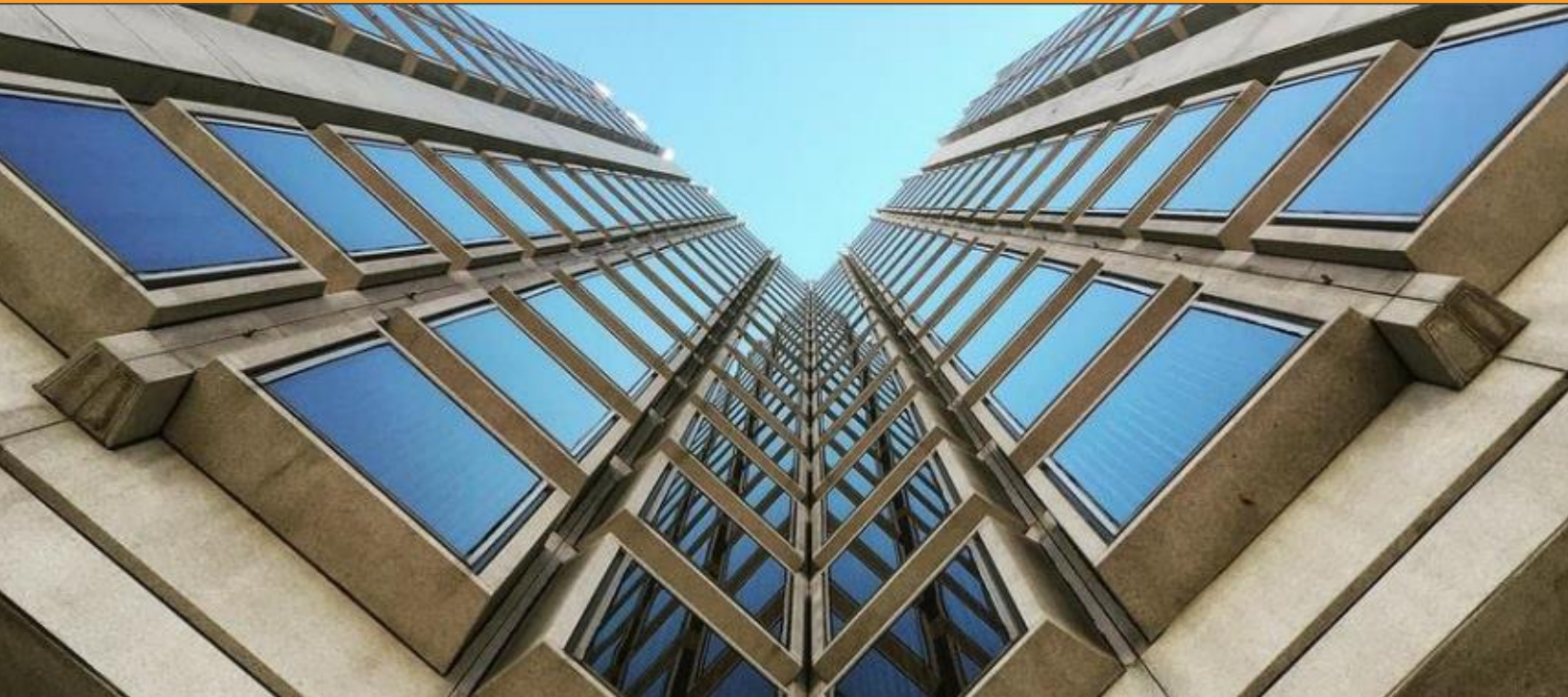
Lack of opportunities/access to opportunities	2	1
Other	15	8

Which groups of children, young people and families do you think are most affected by the concern you raised above? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (183)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
All children/families	53	29
Low income families/workless/reliant on benefits	42	23
Children aged 0-5	11	6
CYP & families affected by mental health and wellbeing issues	10	5
Refugee and asylum seekers/migrants/ESOL	10	5
Teenagers and children aged 16+	9	5
Children with additional needs (incl. ASD, SEN & SPD)	8	4
The most vulnerable children and families	8	4
Care leavers/care experienced YP	7	4
Lone/single parent families	7	4
Secondary school aged children	7	4
CYP & families with disabilities	6	3
Children in care	5	3
CYP & families affected by domestic abuse	5	3
New/young parents/families	5	3
CYP & families affected by substance misuse	4	2
Those in deprived areas	3	2
Primary school aged children	3	2
CYP with protected characteristics (LGBTQI+, ethnic minorities)	2	1
Other	14	8

Pressure on Services



There has been a substantial increase in the proportion of practitioners reporting an **increase in the number of referrals** and an **increase in demand** for their service over the last three months.

The proportion of practitioners reporting an increase in referrals and demand is at its highest level since this question was introduced to the survey in July 2020.

62% of practitioners said there has been an increase in the **number of referrals** to their service over the last 3 months (compared to 51% in January 2022)

76% of practitioners said there has been an increase in **demand for their service** over the last three months (compared to 69% in January 2022)

Has there been an increase or decrease in the number of referrals to your service over the last 3 months?

Base: All respondents (195)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Increase	120	62
Decrease	3	2
About the same	25	13
Don't know	34	17
Not applicable – new service	13	7

Do you feel that demand on services has increased or decreased over the last 3 months?

Base: All respondents (195)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Increase	149	76
Decrease	3	2
About the same	16	8
Don't know	21	11
Not applicable – new service	6	3

Has there been an increase or decrease in the 'level or complexity of need' for individual service users over the last 3 months?

Base: All respondents (195)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Increase	130	67
Decrease	1	1
About the same	31	16
Don't know	28	14
Not applicable – new service	5	3

To what extent do you feel able to meet demand? (Where 1 = can't meet demand and 10 = able to meet demand)

Base: All respondents (194)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1 - Can't meet demand	16	8
2	2	1
3	12	6
4	11	6
5	36	19
6	27	14
7	33	17
8	32	16
9	9	5
10 - Able to meet demand	16	8

COVID-19



The impact on **mental health** and **wellbeing** continues to be practitioners' main concern about the impact of COVID-19 on the children, young people, and families they support. The proportion of practitioners citing this has risen steadily since October 2021.

The impact on **mental health** and **wellbeing** also continues to be practitioners' main concern about the long-term impact of COVID-19.

42% of practitioners said the **impact on mental health and wellbeing** was their main concern about the impact of COVID-19 on the children, young people, and families they support (compared to 38% in January 2022)

42% of practitioners said the **impact on mental health and wellbeing** was also their main concern in relation to the long term impact of COVID-19 (compared to 44% in January 2022)

At present, what is your ONE main concern about the impact of the COVID-19 crisis/pandemic on the children, young people and families that you support? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (186)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Impact on MHWB	79	42
Isolation & Loneliness	26	14
Educational concerns	26	14
Lack of direct professional contact with CYP	24	13
Loss of social skills/impact on development	16	9
Economic/financial impact	13	7
Too much time online	7	4
Impact of getting COVID-19 (bereavement, illness)	4	2
Risk of increase in domestic abuse	3	2
CYP's confidence	3	2
Loss of hope for the future	3	2
Loss of protective environments/people	2	1
Workforce/staffing issues (incl. burnout, lack of staff, overstretched)	2	1
Other	13	7
Don't know	2	1

What is your ONE main concern about the long-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis/pandemic on the children, young people and families that you support? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (181)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Impact on MHWB	76	42
Lack of support	30	17
Loss of social skills/lack of socialisation	25	14
Educational concerns	22	12
Economic/financial impact	14	8
Impact on development	9	5
Loss of protective environments/increased vulnerability	8	4
Physical health	6	3
Poverty	5	3
Isolation	4	2
Lack of opportunity/impact on future	4	2
Readjusting to 'normality'/routines	4	2
Too much time online	4	2
Resilience	2	1
Other	11	6
Don't know	1	1

Mental Health



90%

of practitioners are supporting children, young people, and/or parents reporting an **increase in mental health issues** due to COVID-19 (compared to 90% in April 2021)

For **children and young people**, this includes an increase around:

- **Anxiety**
- **Reduced self-esteem**
- **Stress**

For **parents/carers**, this includes an increase around:

- **Stress**
- **Anxiety**
- **Depression**

In your role as a practitioner, are you supporting any children, young people or parents who are reporting an increase in mental health issues due to the COVID-19 crisis?

Base: All respondents (194)

	<i>n</i>	%
Children/young people	47	24
Parents	22	11
Both	107	55
Neither	18	9

Does this include an increase in issues around...? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents supporting children, young people, or parents reporting an increase in mental health issues (171)

	CYP		Parents	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Anxiety	151	88	116	68
Reduced self-esteem	122	71	73	43
Stress	110	64	121	71
Sleep dysregulation	98	57	55	32
Depression	97	57	100	58
Self-harm	82	48	28	16
Suicidal thoughts/attempts	67	39	36	21
Eating disorders	58	34	20	12
OCD behaviours	52	30	36	21
Phobias	48	28	24	14
Paranoia	28	16	24	14
Psychotic episodes or delusions	19	11	16	9

Are the children and young people you support accessing appropriate support for their mental health and wellbeing at school?

Base: All respondents (188)

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	45	24
No	89	47
Don't know	54	29

What more should schools be doing to identify and support children and young people with mental health and wellbeing needs? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (162)

	<i>n</i>	%
Provide more (access to) support/resources	60	37
Have dedicated roles/leads for MH support	20	12
Train staff to identify/recognise/respond to MH problems	18	11
Raise awareness/improve education around MHWB	13	8
Implement more trauma-informed practices	12	7
Improve links to/work with other support agencies (e.g., CAMHS, Barnardo's)	9	6
Improve sign posting/referrals to support	9	6
Early intervention	9	6
Reduce stigma/create open dialogue around MH problems	6	4

Work with parents/family	5	3
Reduce pressure on schools/support staff so they're not overstretched	5	3
Greater funding for schools	4	2
Schools are doing well/providing MHWB support	4	2
Person centred support/tailored to needs of CYP	4	2
Reduce academic pressure on CYP/provide more recreational activities	4	2
Mentoring programmes	2	1
Pastoral care	2	1
Adopt whole school approaches	2	1
Outreach support/get CYP back to school	2	1
Other	7	4
Don't know	4	2

Trauma-informed Practice



Most practitioners who have supported children, young people, or parents who have experienced trauma feel confident in **recognising signs of trauma** and **responding in a trauma-informed way**. The proportion reporting this has remained stable over the last 12 months.

97% of practitioners feel very or fairly confident in **recognising signs of trauma** (compared to 98% in April 2021)

95% of practitioners feel very or fairly confident **responding in a trauma-informed way** (compared to 95% in April 2021)

Over the last 12 months, there has been a small decline in the proportion of practitioners who feel Barnardo's **understands** and **supports** staff 'a lot' with the emotional impact of direct work with children, young people, and parents.

67% of practitioners feel Barnardo's **understands staff** 'a lot' (compared to 69% in April 2021)

49% of practitioners feel Barnardo's **supports staff** 'a lot' (compared to 54% in April 2021)

Over the last year, have you supported any children, young people or parents who have experienced trauma?

Base: All respondents (191)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes – Children/young people	52	27
Yes – Parents	17	9
Yes – Both children/young people and parents	104	54
No	10	5
Don't know	8	4

How confident do you feel in recognising signs of trauma?

Base: All respondents supporting CYP/P experiencing trauma (172)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Very confident	53	31
Fairly confident	114	66
Not very confident	4	2
Not at all confident	1	1

How confident do you feel responding in a trauma-informed way?

Base: All respondents supporting CYP/P experiencing trauma (172)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Very confident	67	39
Fairly confident	96	56
Not very confident	8	5
Not at all confident	1	1

To what extent do you feel that Barnardo's (i) understands and (ii) supports staff with regards to the emotional impact (e.g. burnout, vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue) of direct work with children, young people and parents? (Select a response on each row)

	<i>Understands</i> (187)		<i>Supports</i> (186)	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
A lot	125	67	91	49
A little	49	26	80	43
Not at all	6	3	8	4
Don't know	7	4	7	4

To what extent do you feel trauma-informed values are reflected in the way you are treated by Barnardo's as a member of staff?

Base: All respondents (189)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
A lot	97	51
A little	64	34
Not at all	17	9
Don't know	11	6

Please tell us why you think this (select all that apply)

Base: All respondents (188)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
I feel adequately/well supported	104	55

It's dependent on individual line managers	89	47
I have personal experience of lack of, or no, support	21	11
Senior staff/managers are more informed, but knowledge not yet put into practice	16	9
Not enough people have attended training	11	6
I've not heard of trauma-informed values before	5	3
Don't know	3	2
Other (please specify)	15	8

What one resource could Barnardo's provide that would assist you in being able to provide an enhanced trauma-informed approach in your work? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (160)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
More training/upskilling of staff	61	38
More resources/support (incl. practical examples)	22	14
Nothing/things are already in place	15	9
(Clinical) supervision/support/check-ins	11	7
More time/time for reflection away from workload	9	6
Support/resources for wellbeing	6	4
Reduced pressure/workloads/flexible working	6	4
(Managers) modelling the model/putting it into practice	5	3
More staff	5	3
Access to comfortable spaces/buildings	5	3
Regular updates on trauma-informed approaches	4	3
Sharing knowledge/good examples	2	1
Other	6	4
Don't know	14	9

What one thing could Barnardo's do to ensure you felt increased trauma-informed support for staff? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (141)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
More training/upskilling of staff	30	21
Supervision/support/check-ins	19	13
Nothing/things are already in place	15	11
Support/resources for wellbeing	14	10
Modelling the model/putting it into practice	12	9
Reduced pressure/workloads/flexible working	8	6
More (visible) resources/support	8	6
Time for reflection/de-briefs	6	4
More face-to-face contact with colleagues	5	4
Better pay/rewards/recognition days	4	3
Ensure policies are trauma-informed	3	2
Regular updates on trauma-informed approaches	3	2
Other	7	5
Don't know	14	10

Poverty

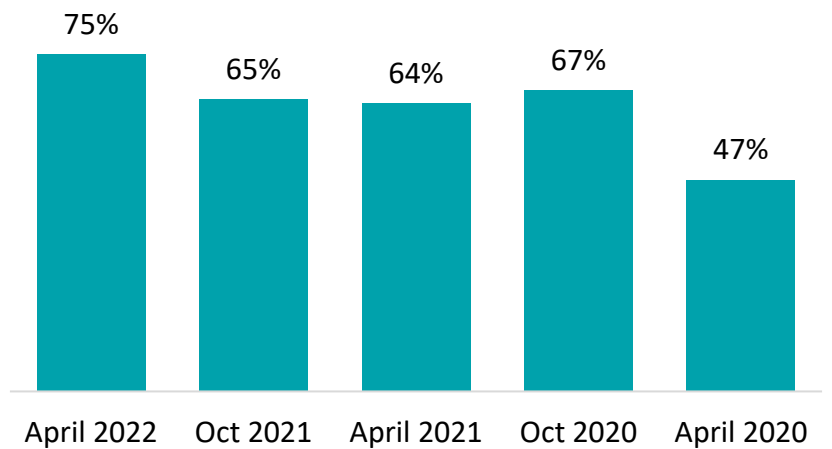


75%

of practitioners are supporting someone who is in, or at risk of, **being in poverty**

The proportion of practitioners reporting this has increased since April 2020

Proportion of practitioners supporting someone in or at risk of poverty



Are you supporting anyone who is in, or at risk of, being in poverty?

Base: All respondents (187)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	140	75
No	25	13
Don't know	22	12

In the last 12 months, have you experienced...? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents (169)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Increased need for grants/financial support	117	69
YP/families experiencing reduced earnings due to job loss/reduced hours	110	65
Increase in young people or families unable to pay bills/rent	105	62
Increased need for budgeting help	100	59
Young people or families with difficulties accessing foodbanks	69	41
Increase in those affected by waiting times for benefits	65	38
Young people or families unable to access the application process for benefits	47	28
Other (please specify)	8	5

Summer Holidays



50%

of practitioners support children or young people at **risk of harm** during the summer school holidays

81%

of these practitioners said the children and young people they support are at **increased risk of harm** during the summer school holidays

Do you support children or young people who are at risk of harm during the summer (school) holidays?

Base: All respondents (185)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	93	50
No	65	35
Don't know	27	15

Are the children or young people you support at increased risk of harm during the summer (school) holidays?

Base: All respondents supporting children or young people at risk of harm during the summer holidays (97)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	79	81
No	6	6
Don't know	12	12

What types of risks are reported more often by children and young people during the summer holidays? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents supporting children or young people at increased risk of harm during the summer holidays (72)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Neglect	52	72
Domestic abuse	44	61
Criminal exploitation	29	40
Sexual abuse online	22	31
Sexual abuse outside the home	14	19
Sexual abuse at home	12	17
Other (please specify)	13	18

How do you help young people who are at risk of harm during the summer holidays? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents supporting children or young people at increased risk of harm during the summer holidays (88)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Holistic (family) support	56	64
Providing someone they can trust	54	61
Building self-esteem and confidence	54	61
Advice	47	53
Counselling	12	14
Training industry professionals	8	9
Other (please specify)	24	27

Without your service, would the children or young people you support be at greater risk of harm during the summer holidays?

Base: All respondents (184)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	113	61
No	23	13
Don't know	48	26

Ukraine

23% of practitioners said the conflict in Ukraine is leading to an increase in **anxiety** and **mental health** and **wellbeing** concerns amongst the children and young people they support

How is what is happening in Ukraine impacting on the children and young people you support? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (155)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Increased anxiety/MHWP concerns	36	23
Increased worry/fear/stress/concern	26	17
Hasn't affected them/not seen an impact	23	15
Concerns about a world war/nuclear war	14	9
Distressing things in the media	10	6
CYP have an awareness/are talking about it	9	6
CYP don't understand what is happening/the impact	7	5
CYP do not talk about it	6	4
Concerned for people they know who are directly affected	4	3
Cost of living/financial/poverty crisis	4	3
CYP want to help	2	1
Other	7	5
Don't know	19	12

Are you currently supporting any refugees from Ukraine?

Base: All respondents (177)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	3	2
No	170	96
Don't know	4	2

Appendix

1. Methodology

- The survey was administered via Survey Monkey, **19 April – 3 May 2022**
- In total, **250 practitioners** responded
- Where percentages do not sum to 100, this is due to computer rounding or inclusion of multiple responses
- An asterisk (*) represents a value of less than one half of a percent, but not zero; a '-' represents a value of zero
- 'All respondents' refers to the total number of respondents who answered a question
- 'Open text' refers to questions where respondents provided a response in their own words
- For any queries about the survey or the data presented in this document, or to request any further breakdowns of data, please contact sultana.choudhry@barnardos.org.uk

2. Abbreviations Used

ACEs	Adverse childhood experiences
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CAMHS	Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCE	Child criminal exploitation
CSE	Child sexual exploitation
CYP	Children and young people
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex +
MH	Mental health
MHWB	Mental health and wellbeing
OCD	Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
SEN	Special educational needs
SPD	Sensory Processing Disorder
YP	Young people

3. Sample Overview

Service users supported (<i>Base: All respondents 250</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Children and/or young people	89	32
Parents/carers	24	9
Both	137	49

Region/nation worked in (<i>Base: All respondents 233</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Cymru	29	12
England - North	31	13
England - Central	37	16
England - South West	36	15
England - South East	20	9
England - London	8	3
Northern Ireland	41	18
Scotland	31	13

Service type (<i>Base: All respondents 233</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Youth Work (including Youth Justice)	5	2
ETS	6	3
Care leavers/Accommodation Support	14	6
Advocacy, Children's Rights and Participation	11	5
Refugee and Asylum Seekers	6	3
Child Protection (e.g. Domestic Abuse)	20	9
Child Abuse and Exploitation (e.g. CSE, Missing, Trafficking, HSB)	12	5
Looked After Children (e.g. Family Placement, Residential Care)	13	6
Education	16	7
Disability/Health	10	4
Mental Health	33	14
Family Support Services (e.g. CAPI, Young Carers)	37	16
Early Support (e.g. Children's Centres, Parenting Programmes)	50	21

Length of time working with CYP/families (<i>Base: All respondents 233</i>)	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Less than 1 year	34	15
1-2 years	25	11
3-5 years	27	12
More than 5 years	147	63