



Barnardo's Quarterly Practitioner Survey (QPS)

Wave 13

7 July – 28 July 2022

Research and Evaluation Team

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of Wave 13 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 is a key concern of practitioners in relation to the children, young people and families they support.

Financial issues is a concern. This is frequently mentioned in regard to families experiencing financial difficulties due to the **cost-of-living crisis**, **finances being stretched**, and the impact this is having on **mental health** and **wellbeing**.

A **lack of support** is a primary concern and is discussed in terms of **long waiting times**, particularly for **mental health support** and support for children and young people with **additional needs and disabilities**.

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

Pressure on Services

The proportion of practitioners reporting an increase in the 'level or complexity of need' for service users has increased over the last three months and is now also at its highest level since July 2020.

Poverty

In the last year, the most practitioners report having **given service users food/ provided access to foodbanks** and **given service users access to clothing/signposted to somewhere they could get clothing**.

Almost half of practitioners (49%) have supported children, young people or families who have had to **choose between having enough to eat and paying the bills**, in the last year.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

The vast majority of practitioners (88%) think there has been an increase in the number of children and young people experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues in the last 12 months.

Pornographic Material

Two fifths (41%) of practitioners think the way young people **access and consume pornographic material is changing**. Almost a third of practitioners (31%) think **the type or nature** of pornographic material accessed by young people is **getting more severe**.

Emerging Vulnerabilities



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 (consistent with 27% in April 2022)

18% of practitioners said **financial issues** is another key issue they are seeing for children, young people and families (compared to 17% in April 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 (408)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Increase in MHWB issues among CYP and families	109	27
Financial issues	75	18
Lack of support and resources	66	16
No change/nothing new	64	16
Poverty/changes to benefits system (Incl. increased need for foodbanks)	39	10
Education (incl. school refusal/exclusion/attainment)	25	6
Increase in housing issues (incl. homelessness)	19	5
Child development (incl. lack of social skills)/speech and language	19	5
Increase in violent/challenging behaviour	18	4
More CYP & families affected by domestic abuse	14	3
Increase in CYP and families affected by substance misuse	13	3
Increase in identity issues	13	3
Issues worsened/more complex	13	3
Increased impact of digital	12	3
Isolation (incl. loneliness, loss of social contact)	9	2
Increase in (diagnosis of) ASD & additional needs (incl. SEND)	8	2
Staff under more pressure/struggling to cope with issues presented	8	2
COVID-19	9	2
Increased risk of child abuse/exploitation	7	2
Home Office practice/rights of asylum seekers	5	1
School (summer) holidays	5	1
Changes to services/funding	5	1
Increase in number of children impacted by trauma	4	1
Parenting issues	4	1
Family conflict/relationship breakdown	3	1
Increase in CYP impacted by CSA/E	3	1
Increase in bullying	2	0.5
Increase in HSB	2	0.5
Increase in referrals	2	0.5
Lower self-esteem/motivation	2	0.5
Increase in crime/youth violence	2	0.5
Concern about conflict in Ukraine	2	0.5
Police involvement/response to CYP	2	0.5
Other	23	6

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

Base: All respondents (410)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Lack of support and resources (incl. consistency of support)	138	34
Financial issues	87	21
MHWB issues among CYP and families	76	19
Poverty/changes to benefits system	41	10
Homelessness and housing issues	17	4
Trauma/abuse/ACEs	8	2

Education (incl. attainment and exclusion)	7	2
Isolation (incl. loss of social/family contact)	7	2
Child development (incl. speech & language delays)	7	2
Increased impact of digital	6	1
Staffing issues/burn out	6	1
Victims of abuse and exploitation not recognised/overlooked	5	1
More pressure on CYP/families	5	1
Domestic abuse	4	1
Family/relationship/placement breakdown	4	1
Lack of resilience in CYP	4	1
CYP & families experiencing problems relating to seeking asylum	4	1
CYP & families not accessing/aware of services	4	1
Lack of opportunities/access to opportunities	3	1
Safeguarding (non-specific)	3	1
Lack of foster placements	3	1
CYP/families affected by substance misuse	3	1
Lack of understanding of trauma/how it impacts CYP	3	1
Summer holidays	3	1
Schools not meeting CYP's needs	3	1
COVID-19/lockdown (non-specific)	2	0.5
CCE/county lines	2	0.5
Safety (non-specific)	2	0.5
Lack of funding	2	0.5
Commissioning processes causing limitations to support	2	0.5
Criminalisation of CYP	2	0.5
Other	36	9
Don't know	3	1

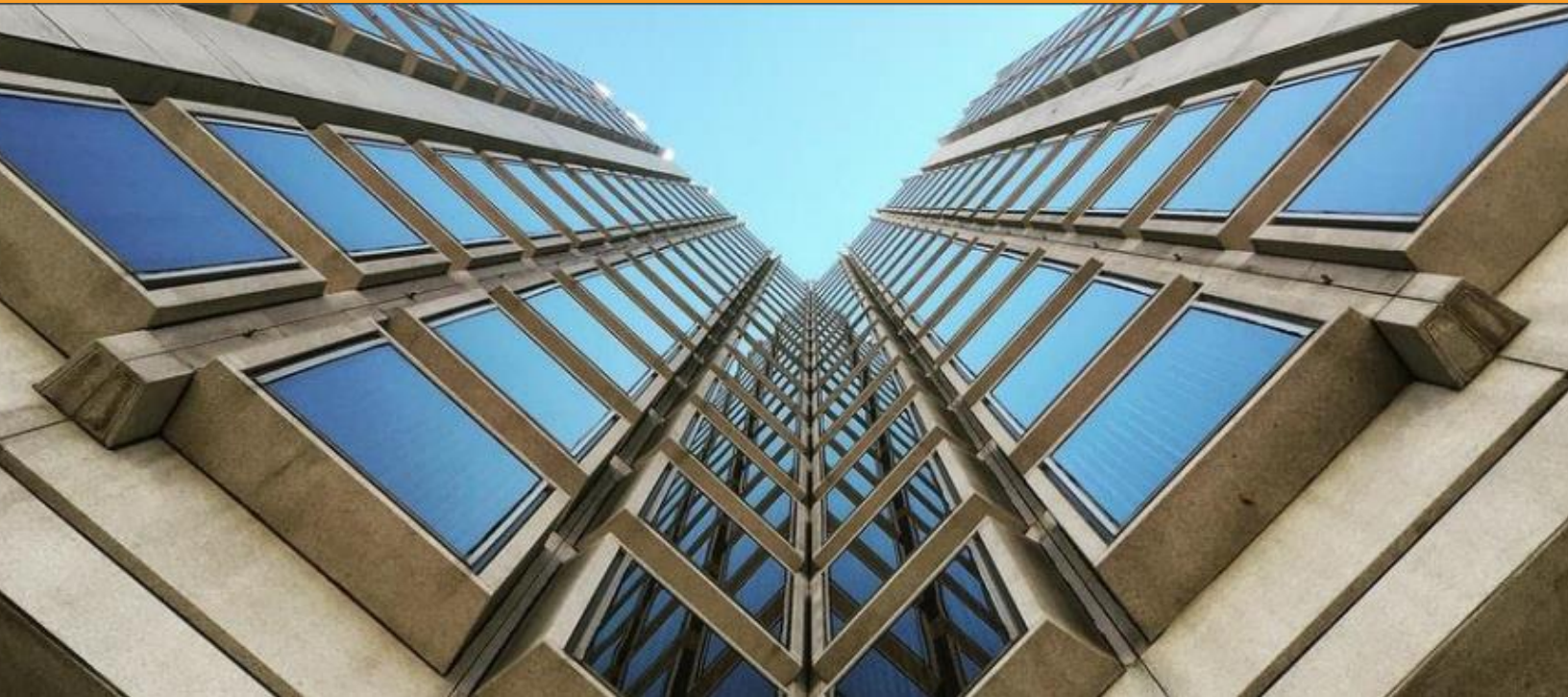
Which groups of children, young people and families do you think are most affected by the concern you raised above? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (398)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
All children/families	122	31
Low income families/workless/reliant on benefits	54	14
Children with additional needs (incl. ASD, SEN & SPD)	31	8
The most vulnerable children and families	23	6
Teenagers and children aged 16+	22	6
CYP & families affected by mental health and wellbeing issues	21	5
Children in care	20	5
Care leavers/care experienced YP	17	4
Primary school aged children	17	4
Secondary school aged children	16	4
CYP & families with disabilities	14	4
Children aged 0-5	13	3
Lone/single parent families	13	3
All CYP our service/Barnardo's works with	13	3
Those in deprived areas	11	3

CYP & families affected by domestic abuse	9	2
Refugee and asylum seekers/migrants/ESOL	9	2
CYP & families affected by substance misuse	8	2
CYP with protected characteristics (LGBTQI+, ethnic minorities)	7	2
CYP & families impacted by trauma	7	2
New/young parents/families	6	2
CYP & families with limited/no support network	6	2
Larger families	5	1
CYP & families not known to services/not under social care	4	1
Young carers	2	1
Bereaved CYP & families	2	1
CYP/families with health conditions	2	1
Young people living independently	2	1
CYP & families living in unsuitable housing/homeless	2	1
CYP affected by parental/familial offending	2	1
Other	27	7
Don't know	1	0.3

Pressure on Services



While the proportion of practitioners reporting an **increase in the number of referrals to their service** over the last three months has remained consistent since April 2022, the proportion of practitioners reporting this is still 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 increased over the last three months and is also at its highest level since this question was introduced 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 (consistent with 62% in April 2022)

72% of practitioners said there has been an increase in the **level or complexity of need** for service users in the last 3 months (compared to 67% in April 2022)

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

Base: All respondents (471)

	<i>n</i>	%
Increase	292	62
Decrease	19	4
About the same	64	14
Don't know	78	17
Not applicable – new service	18	4

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 (471)

	<i>n</i>	%
Increase	339	72
Decrease	-	-
About the same	63	13
Don't know	59	13
Not applicable – new service	10	2

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 (467)

	<i>n</i>	%
1 – Can't meet demand	18	4
2	13	3
3	31	7
4	29	6
5	80	17
6	62	13
7	89	19
8	83	18
9	27	6
10 – Able to meet demand	35	7

Poverty



62% of practitioners have **given service users food** or **provided access to foodbanks**, in the last year (compared to 59% of practitioners who had given service users food in January 2022)

53% of practitioners have given service users **clothing/signposted to somewhere they could get clothing**, in the last year (compared to 43% of practitioners who had given service users clothing in the last year in January 2022)

49% of practitioners have supported children, young people or families who **have had to choose between having enough to eat and paying the bills**, in the last year

58% of practitioners are currently supporting a child, young person or family **experiencing poverty** (compared to 61% in July 2021)

In the last year, have you given service users food or provided access to foodbanks because you're worried they are hungry, or will have nothing to eat?

Base: All respondents (429)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	267	62
No	162	38

In the last year, have you given service users clothing and/or signposted to somewhere they can get clothing for free because you're worried they will be cold or don't have enough suitable?

Base: All respondents (429)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	229	53
No	200	47

In the last year, have you supported children, young people or families who have had to choose between having enough to eat and using electricity/heating/paying the bills?

Base: All respondents (427)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	210	49
No	112	26
Don't know	105	25

Are you currently supporting a child, young person, or family experiencing poverty?

Base: All respondents (429)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	247	58
No	100	23
Don't know	82	19

What support around poverty does your service provide? (Open text)

Base: All respondents supporting CYP/F experiencing poverty (234)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Access to food (foodbanks, vouchers, parcels)	150	64
Signposting/referrals to support	99	42
Financial support (incl. access to grants/loans, debt relief orders)	68	29
Financial advice/budgeting support	38	16
Clothing/school uniform	32	14
Access to essential items (e.g. white goods, toiletries, baby equipment)	31	13
Support with accessing benefits	21	9
Support with bills	16	7
Fuel/travel costs	11	5
Emotional/wellbeing support	8	3
Vouchers (non-specific)	5	2
Liaising with schools	4	2
Activities/resources (during school holidays)	4	2
Housing support	3	1
Family/parent support	3	1
Job/employment support	2	1

Provide Christmas presents	2	1
Other	8	3
Don't know	3	1

What is the most common concern of service users experiencing poverty? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents supporting CYP/F experiencing poverty (239)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Food	210	88
Energy (e.g. heating, fuel, electricity)	207	87
Rent/mortgage payments	119	50
Clothing	102	43
No/lack of access to technology (e.g. mobile phones, internet)	61	26
Childcare costs	42	18
Health/medicine costs	18	8
Other (please specify)	20	8

To what extent is deepening poverty compounding other pressures and stresses experienced by children, young people and families?

Base: All respondents supporting CYP/F experiencing poverty (241)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
A lot	215	89
A little	17	7
Not at all	-	-
Don't know	9	4

Do you think removing eligibility criteria and offering free school meals to all primary school pupils, to help families through the cost-of-living crisis and improve children's health, wellbeing and educational attainment, would make...

Base: All respondents (421)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
No different to children and young people	9	2
Some positive difference to children and young people	126	30
A big positive difference to children and young people	275	65
Don't know	11	3

Do you have any other feedback on this proposal? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (214)

Key themes:

- Should be offered to all families/it's a good proposal
- Would ensure all CYP have access to at least one meal
- More families are struggling financially, it would reduce this pressure
- Current thresholds need reducing/working families are struggling financially
- Would reduce stigma attached to receiving free school meals
- It would help but doesn't go far enough (additional support/provision needed)
- Should be means tested/only available to those who need it
- Clarity needed on how this would be funded

Christmas



93% of practitioners are concerned about how the **cost-of-living crisis** may impact children, young people and families this Christmas

Are you concerned about how the cost-of-living crisis may impact children, young people and families this Christmas?

Base: All respondents (422)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	393	93
No	9	2
Don't know	20	5

Ukraine

6% of practitioners are supporting refugees from Ukraine. **Providing access to services/support**, providing **financial support**, **signposting** refugees to support, and **supporting with housing** are the most common forms of support these practitioners are providing.

Are you currently supporting any refugees from Ukraine?*Base: All respondents (422)*

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	27	6
No	368	87
Don't know	27	6

What type of support are you providing?*Base: All respondents supporting refugees from Ukraine (25)*

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Providing access to services/supports	13	52
Financial support/fundraising	6	24
Signposting to support	5	20
Hosting families/housing support	5	20
MHWB/emotional support/counselling	4	16
Medical support	2	8
Other	1	4

Mental Health



88% of practitioners think there has been an **increase** in the number of children and young people experiencing **mental health and wellbeing issues** in the last 12 months

72% of practitioners think increasing the rollout of mental health support in schools would make a **big positive difference** to children and young people

Do you think there has been a change in the number of children and young people experiencing mental health and wellbeing issues in the last twelve months?

Base: All respondents (419)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Increased	369	88
Stayed the same	24	6
Decreased	-	-
Don't know	26	6

Do you think increasing the rollout of Mental Health Support Teams and other school mental health support such as counsellors to every school in the UK would make...

Base: All respondents (420)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
No difference to children and young people	6	1
Some positive difference to children and young people	107	25
A big positive difference to children and young people	303	72
Don't know	4	1

Do you have any other feedback on this proposal? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (238)

Key themes:

- This would be beneficial as more support is needed
- It would help to reduce pressure on CAMHS and waiting times for support
- Early intervention and preventative work is crucial
- It would help to reduce stigma surrounding mental health
- It's a good start but short term provision is not enough/more specialised provision and follow up (long-term) support is also needed
- Provision needs to be wider (for children and young people not engaging in education)
- Greater mental health support outside of schools/support for parents is needed
- There is currently not enough mental health support/long waiting lists
- Mental Health Support Teams should form part of a wider team/network of support
- There needs to be more trauma-informed work in schools/training for teachers

Pornographic Material



41% of practitioners think the way young people **access and consume** pornographic material is changing

31% of practitioners think the type or nature of pornographic material accessed by young people is **getting more severe**

Is the way young people access and consume pornographic material changing?

Base: All respondents (421)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	172	41
No	15	4
Don't know	234	56

How is it changing?

Base: All respondents who think the way young people access and consume pornographic material is changing (164)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Easier to access/greater access	138	84
YP sharing/creating own content	17	10
Being accessed at a younger age	16	10
Normalised	15	9
Negatively influencing behaviour/understandings of sex and relationships	13	8
Accessed through accidental exposure (e.g. ads and pop ups)	11	7
More extreme/explicit content	10	6
Difficult for parents to monitor/parents not aware of internet security/safety	10	6
Lack of regulation/YP bypass controls or blocks	9	5
Accessed through video games/gaming	6	4
Lack of education	5	3
Peer pressure	4	2
Accessed through the dark web	2	1
Other	8	5

Is the type or nature of pornographic material accessed by young people getting more severe?

Base: All respondents (418)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Yes	131	31
No	6	1
Don't know	281	67

Do you think regulating online pornographic material in the same way as offline material (e.g. making content that's illegal on DVD also illegal online) to reduce depictions of harmful activity would make...

Base: All respondents (416)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
No difference to children and young people	17	4
Some positive difference to children and young people	132	32
A big positive difference to children and young people	196	47
Don't know	71	17

Do you have any other feedback on this proposal? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (141)

Key themes:

- It is hard to regulate and censor material/young people will find a way around restrictions

- Parents need support with monitoring/regulating young people's online activity
- Greater restrictions are needed to reduce access to harmful material
- Greater education is needed on healthy relationships and the negative impacts of pornographic material
- There should be greater focus on stopping the creators/distributors of harmful content

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



When asked what equality, diversity and inclusion challenges the children and young people they support are facing, practitioners most commonly identify **issues due to identifying as LGBTQI+, poverty** (leading to reduced opportunities), and a **lack of support/access to services**.

More support/resources; greater **awareness raising and learning** about equality, diversity and inclusion; and **more training for staff/professionals** are most commonly identified by practitioners as the type of learning they and the children and young people they work with need in respect to equality, diversity and inclusion.

What equality, diversity and inclusion challenges and opportunities are the children and young people you work with experiencing?

Base: All respondents (315)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Facing issues due to identifying as LGBTQI+	38	12
Poverty (leading to reduced opportunities)	30	10
Lack of support/access to services	27	9
Exclusion, discrimination, marginalisation	24	8
Lack of support at school/access to education	23	7
Lack of support for children with additional needs	22	7
Racism and hate crime	20	6
Lack of/unequal access to opportunities	18	6
None/not aware of any challenges	17	5
Language barriers	15	5
Lack of MH support/needs not being met (incl. stigma/lack of understanding)	13	4
Having a protected characteristic	8	3
Services not meeting needs/being difficult to access	7	2
Bullying	7	2
Lack of support for refugees/UASC	7	2
Stigma	6	2
Not being listened to/heard	6	2
Barnardo's/service offer support around EDI	5	2
Sexism	4	1
Lack of understanding about trauma/behaviour	4	1
Peer pressure/acceptance	3	1
Other	35	11
Don't know	21	7

What kind of support or learning do you and the children and young people you work with need in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion?

Base: All respondents (270)

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
More support/resources (incl. access to translators)	56	21
Awareness raising/learning	32	12
Training for staff/professionals	30	11
Support and education in schools	25	9
Safe spaces for discussion/talking/listening	24	9
Value and promote EDI (incl. greater tolerance/acceptance)	20	7
Personalised support/tailored to needs	11	4
Support for staff (to enable effective support for CYP/families)	9	3
Equal opportunities	6	2
Following legislation/reviewing policies and procedures	5	2
Having staff from diverse backgrounds	5	2
CYP/staff/Barnardo's are aware and are inclusive	4	1
Signpost/referring to support	3	1
Integration	3	1
Better understanding of EDI	3	1
A greater understanding of mental health problems	2	1

Work with/promote EDI amongst partner organisations	2	1
Other	32	12
Don't know	29	11

Appendix

1. Methodology

- The survey was administered via Survey Monkey, **7 – 28 July 2022**
- In total, **497 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 or laura.parkes@barnardos.org.uk

2. Abbreviations Used

ACEs	Adverse childhood experiences
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
CCE	Child criminal exploitation
CSA/E	Child sexual abuse/exploitation
CYP	Children and young people
EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
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
SEN	Special educational needs
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
SPD	Sensory Processing Disorder
UASC	Unaccompanied asylum seeking children
YP	Young people

3. Sample Overview

Service users supported	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Base: All respondents (497)</i>		
Children and/or young people	172	30
Parents/carers	51	9
Both	274	48

Region/nation worked in	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Base: All respondents (483)</i>		
Cymru	48	10
England - North	150	31
England - Central	53	11
England - South West	54	11
England - South East	78	16
England - London	20	4
Northern Ireland	43	9
Scotland	34	7
Other (please specify)	3	1

Service type	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Base: All respondents (483)</i>		
Youth Work (including Youth Justice)	10	2
ETS	3	1
Care leavers/Accommodation Support	41	8
Advocacy, Children's Rights and Participation	16	3
Refugee and Asylum Seekers	8	2
Child Protection (e.g. Domestic Abuse)	26	5
Child Abuse and Exploitation (e.g. CSE, Missing, Trafficking, HSB)	28	6
Looked After Children (e.g. Family Placement, Residential Care)	41	8
Education	12	2
Disability/Health	35	7
Mental Health	105	22
Family Support Services (e.g. CAPI, Young Carers)	62	13
Early Support (e.g. Children's Centres, Parenting Programmes)	95	20
Other (please specify)	1	0.2

Length of time working with CYP/families	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Base: All respondents (480)</i>		
Less than 1 year	60	13
1-2 years	62	13
3-5 years	66	14
More than 5 years	292	61