

Barnardo's Practitioner Survey

Wave 14

30 January – 28 February 2023

Research and Evaluation Team

Contents

Executive Summary

Emerging Issues

Poverty

Support at Christmas

Exploitation

Online Safety

Mental Health & Wellbeing

Support for Refugees

Health

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Appendix

Methodology

Abbreviations Used

Sample Overview

Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of Wave 14 of Barnardo's 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 issues.

The data from the 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 Issues

Financial issues, poverty and the **cost-of-living crisis** are the primary concerns of practitioners in relation to the children, young people, and families that they support. The cost-of-living crisis was frequently mentioned in terms of **finances being stretched**, the **pressure** this is putting on families, and the impact it is having on their **mental health** and **wellbeing**.

The cost-of-living crisis was also frequently discussed in regard to children and families living in **cold**, **damp houses** and the associated **health risks** of this; the impact on children and young people's **access to services** or **activities** due to the cost of travel and/or activities; and an increased risk of **exploitation**.

An increase in **mental health** and **wellbeing** issues amongst children, young people and families continues to be a key concern of practitioners. It was frequently mentioned in terms of the **cost-of-living crisis**; a **lack of support** (specifically in schools); **school refusal** and **emotional based school avoidance**.

A lack of support and resources also continues to be a primary concern and was still discussed in terms of a lack of mental health support (specifically in schools), long waiting times for support, and a lack of support for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities.

Other issues mentioned more frequently in this wave of the survey, although only mentioned by a small proportion of practitioners, include a rise in **misogynistic views**, **children and young people vaping** (coded to an increase in CYP and families affected by

substance misuse), and an increase in young people questioning their identity or their gender identity.

Poverty

Over the last year, the majority of practitioners have **given service users food** and supported service users having to choose between having enough to eat and using electricity, heating or paying the bills. Over half of practitioners have **given service users clothing** in the last year.

Practitioners identify **food poverty**, an **inability to afford bills**, and the **impact on mental health** and **wellbeing** as the most common impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on the families they support.

Over two fifths of practitioners (45%) think that children and young people are at greater **risk of sexual** and/or **criminal exploitation** due to the cost-of-living crisis.

Online Safety

Over two fifths of practitioners (44%) think that the way young people access and consume pornographic material is changing, while almost a third (32%) think the type or nature of pornographic material is getting more severe.

Mental Health

The vast majority of practitioners (87%) think there has been an increase in the number of children and young people experiencing **mental health** and **wellbeing issues** in the last twelve months. The vast majority (82%) also think that children and young people do not have enough access to sports, creative, or leisure activities to support their health and wellbeing.

Emerging Issues



43% of practitioners said financial issues and the cost-of-living crisis are key issues that they are seeing amongst children, young people and families **27%** of practitioners said an increase in mental health and wellbeing issues is a key issue that they are seeing amongst children, young people and families

ll respondents (485)	n	%
Financial issues/poverty/cost-of-living crisis	207	43
Increase in MHWB issues among CYP and families (incl. stress)	133	27
Lack of support and resources	89	19
Education (incl. school refusal/ESBA/exclusion/needs not being met)	54	11
Increased impact of digital	33	7
Child development (incl. lack of social skills)/speech and language	24	5
No change/nothing new	23	5
Increase in housing issues (incl. homelessness)	22	5
Increase in CYP and families affected by substance misuse	19	4
Increase in (diagnosis of) ASD & additional needs (incl. SEND)	19	4
More CYP & families affected by domestic abuse	16	3
Increase in violent/challenging behaviour	15	3
Rise in misogyny/incel movement/influence of Andrew Tate	15	3
Isolation (incl. loss of social contact)	10	2
Increased risk of child abuse/exploitation	10	2
Increase in identity issues (incl. gender identity)	9	2
Staffing pressures (incl. lack of/frequent changes of social workers)	9	2
Increase in bullying	7	1
Increase in refugee and asylum seekers and associated support needs	7	1
Lower self-esteem, less resilience	6	1
Parenting issues	6	1
COVID-19	6	1
Family conflict/relationship breakdown (incl. placement breakdown)	5	1
Increase in crime/youth violence	5	1
Lack of foster carers/placements	5	1
Boredom/lack of activities for CYP	3	1
CYP & families not being listened to/heard	3	1
Transphobia/anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric	3	1
Issues around friendship	3	1
Job loss/employment prospects	2	*
Contextual safeguarding	2	*
Bereavement/loss	2	*
Other	32	7

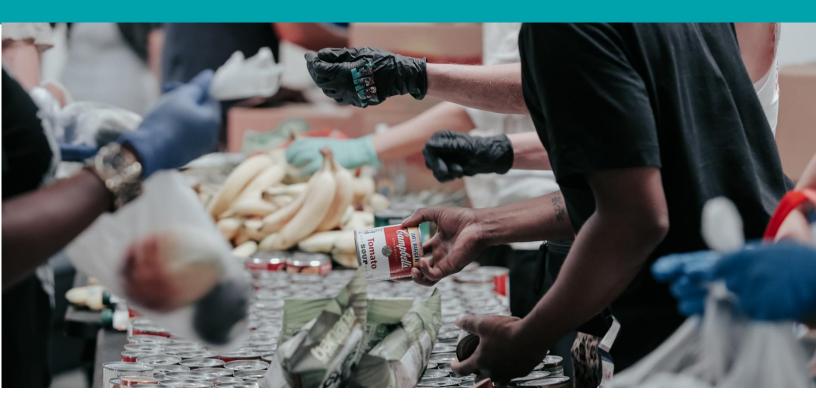
Are there any new issues you are seeing emerging, or new things you are hearing from children, young people or families, over the last few months? (Open text)

e: All respondents (510)	n	%
Financial issues/poverty/cost of living crisis	196	38
Lack of support and resources (incl. funding cuts)	131	26
MHWB issues among CYP and families	91	18
Education (incl. attainment, exclusion, needs not being met)	34	7
Increased impact of digital	22	4
Homelessness and housing issues	12	2
CCE/county lines	9	2
Child development (incl. speech & language delays)	7	1
Domestic abuse	6	1
Family/relationship/placement breakdown	6	1
Isolation (incl. loss of social/family contact)	5	1
Safety (non-specific)	5	1
Lack of foster placements	5	1
CYP/families affected by substance misuse	5	1
CYP & families experiencing problems relating to seeking asylum	5	1
COVID-19/lockdown (non-specific)	4	1
CYP & families not aware of/not being engaged in services	4	1
Physical health	4	1
Parenting issues	4	1
Staffing issues	3	1
Lack of opportunities/access to opportunities	3	1
Lack of resilience in CYP	3	1
Low self-esteem/low aspirations	3	1
Increase in violent/challenging behaviour	3	1
Trauma/abuse/ACEs	2	*
Exploitation (non-specific)	2	*
Child sexual abuse/exploitation	2	*
Job loss/employment prospects	2	*
CYP affected by parental/familial offending	2	*
Lack of hope for the future	2	*
Other	25	5
Don't know	1	*

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

ase: All respondents (499)	n	%
All children/families	139	28
Low-income families/workless/reliant on benefits	91	18
Children with additional needs (incl. ASD, SEN & SPD)	45	9
Teenagers and children aged 16+	35	7
The most vulnerable children and families	33	7
Children in care	28	6
CYP & families affected by mental health and wellbeing issues	23	5
Secondary school aged children	22	4
Primary school aged children	17	3
Lone/single parent families	15	3
Children aged 0-5	14	3
CYP & families with disabilities	14	3
Refugee and asylum seekers/migrants/ESOL	14	3
Those in deprived areas/from deprived backgrounds	14	3
Working parents/families	14	3
Care leavers/care experienced YP	10	2
Young people (non-specific)	10	2
CYP & families with limited/no support network (incl. isolated)	9	2
CYP with protected characteristics (LGBTQI+, ethnic minorities)	8	2
All CYP our service/Barnardo's works with	6	1
Young carers	6	1
Children aged 8+	6	1
CYP & families affected by substance misuse	5	1
Young people living independently	5	1
CYP & families affected by domestic abuse	4	1
CYP/families with health conditions	4	1
CYP & families living in unsuitable housing/homeless	4	1
CYP affected by parental/familial offending	4	1
New/young parents/families	3	1
CYP & families impacted by trauma	3	1
Boys/men	3	1
Young people influenced by digital/technology	3	1
Larger families	2	*
CYP & families not known to services/not under social care	2	*
CYP/families who do not meet thresholds	2	*
CYP with violent/challenging behaviour	2	*
Other	16	3
Don't know	3	1

Poverty



67% of practitioners have given service users food in the last year (compared to 62% of practitioners who had given service users food or provided access to foodbanks in July 2022)

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

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

Base: All respondents (521)	n	%
Yes	347	67
No	174	33

In the last year, have you given service users clothing because you're worried they will be cold or don't have enough suitable?

Base: All respondents (521)	n	%
Yes	278	53
No	243	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 (517)	n	%
Yes	340	66
No	78	15
Don't know	99	19

How is the cost-of-living crisis impacting the children, young people and families that you support? (Open text)

se: All respondents (464)	n	%
Food poverty (incl. need for foodbanks, malnutrition, poor quality food)	136	29
Unable to afford bills/living in cold houses	116	25
Impact on MHWB	86	19
Family stress (incl. worry/conflict)	66	14
Limiting opportunities/experiences/access to services (e.g. activities)	62	13
Unable to afford basic essentials (other than food)/basic needs going unmet	54	1
Unable to afford clothes/school uniform	38	8
Choosing between eating and heating	36	8
Impacting a lot	36	8
High travel/fuel costs	18	4
Families getting into debt	18	2
Impact on physical health	16	Э
Lack of access to support (incl. budgeting)	13	Э
Unable to budget	12	3
Increased risk of exploitation/abuse/neglect (incl. domestic abuse)	11	2
Impact on education/educational outcomes	10	2
Not seeing an impact	10	2
Housing/homelessness issues	9	2
Benefits/wages not stretching far enough	9	2
Unable to afford Christmas/birthday presents	5	1
Impact on future opportunities/reaching potential	5	1
Impact on child development	4	1

Widening pre-existing inequalities	3	1
Isolation/Ioneliness	3	1
Impacting on care leavers	3	1
Other	20	4
Don't know	6	1

To what extent is the cost-of-living crisis compounding other pressures and stresses experienced by children, young people and families?

Base: All respondents (516)		n	%
	A lot	420	81
	A little	46	9
	Not at all	2	*
	Don't know	48	9

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

Base: All respondents (521)	n	%
Yes	332	64
No	96	18
Don't know	93	18

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

Base: All respondents supporting a child, young person or family experiencing poverty (327)	n	%
Energy (e.g. heating, fuel, electricity)	310	95
Food	290	89
Clothing	172	53
Rent/mortgage payments	169	52
No/lack of access to technology (e.g. mobile phones, internet)	99	30
Childcare costs	80	24
Health/medicine costs	34	10
Other (please specify)	38	12

What longer-term impacts of poverty are you seeing on children and young people's lives?

(Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents supporting a child, young person or family experiencing poverty (326)	n	%
Impact on mental health and wellbeing	321	98
Impact on educational outcomes	252	77
Impact on physical health	228	70
Impact on school exclusions	135	41
No longer-term impacts	1	*
Other (please specify)	23	7

Support at Christmas



77% of practitioners said their service provided children, young people or families with **food or food vouchers** during the Christmas period or in the run up to Christmas

religious holidays negatively affected by the cost-of-living crisis?			
Base: All respondents (509)		n	%
	Yes	221	43
	No	42	8
	Don't know	246	48

Have the children, young people and families you support had their Christmas or other

Did your service provide children/young people/families with food or food vouchers during the Christmas period/in the run up to Christmas?

Base: All respondents (513)	n	
Yes	397	
No	69	:
Don't know	47	

Did your service host a party for children/young people/families at Christmas?

Base: All respondents (513)	n	%
Yes	177	35
No	291	57
Don't know	45	9

Did your service provide children/young people/families with presents or vouchers to buy presents at Christmas?

Base: All respondents (513)	n	%
Yes	387	75
No	84	16
Don't know	42	8

Did your service enable children/young people/families to have anything else at Christmas that they wouldn't otherwise have experienced?

Base: All respondents (513)	n	%
Yes	190	37
No	138	27
Don't know	185	36

Exploitation



45% of practitioners feel that children and young people are at greater risk of sexual and/or criminal exploitation due to the cost-of-living crisis

Do you feel that the children and young people you support are at greater risk of sexual and/or criminal exploitation due to the cost-of-living crisis?

Base: All respondents (506)	n	%
Yes	230	45
No	46	9
Don't know	230	45

Online Safety



44% of practitioners think the way that young people access and consume pornographic material is changing (compared to 41% in July 2022) **32%** of practitioners think the type or nature of pornographic material accessed by young people is **getting more severe** (compared to 31% in July 2022)

Yes	221	44
No	26	5
Don't know	261	51
How is it changing? (Open text)		
Base: All respondents who think the way young people access and consume	n	%
pornographic material is changing (218)		
Easier to access/greater access	172	79
Difficult for parents to monitor/parents not aware of internet security/safety	21	10
YP sharing/creating own content	21	10
Normalised	20	9
Being accessed at a younger age	17	8
Negatively influencing behaviour/understandings of sex and relationships	17	8
Accessed through accidental exposure (ads and pop ups)	16	7
Lack of regulation/YP bypass controls or blocks	16	7
Accessed through video games/gaming	7	3
Peer pressure/peer manipulation	5	2
Increased risk of exploitation	5	2
More extreme/explicit content	4	2
Lack of education	2	1
Accessed through the dark web	2	1
Other	5	2

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

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

Base: All respondents (506)	n	%
Yes	161	32
No	6	1
Don't know	339	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 sexual activity with children (i.e. adult actors pretending to be children) would make... % n

Base: Al	l respondents	s (506)

Base: All respondents (508)

buse. An respondents (500)		70
No difference to children and young people	15	3
Some positive difference to children and young people	195	39
A big positive difference to children and young people	202	40
Don't know	94	19

%

n

Mental Health & Wellbeing



87% 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 (compared to 88% of practitioners in July 2022)

82% of practitioners think that children and young people do not have enough access to sports/creative/ leisure activities to support their health and wellbeing

experiencing mental health and weinbeing issues in the last twelve months:		
Base: All respondents (503)	n	%
Increased	437	87
Stayed the same	40	8
Decreased	1	*
Don't know	25	5

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?

Do you think that children and young people have enough access to sports/creative/leisure activities to support their health and wellbeing?

Base: All respondents (503)	n	%
Yes	42	8
No	412	82
Don't know	49	10

Social prescribing enables primary care professionals to refer children and young people for sports/creative/leisure activities to support their health and wellbeing.

Do you think that national expansion of social prescribing for health and wellbeing would make...

Base: All respondents (502)

Base: All respondents (502)	n	%
No difference to children and young people	6	1
Some positive difference to children and young people	193	38
A big positive difference to children and young people	278	55
Don't know	25	5

Support for Refugees



8% of practitioners are supporting refugees from Ukraine. Providing access to services/support, providing financial support, and supporting with housing are the most common forms of support that these practitioners are providing to refugees from Ukraine

11% of practitioners are supporting refugees living in hotel accommodation. **Mental health, access to support** and **children's education** are the biggest concerns that practitioners have for refugee families living in hotel accommodation

Are you currently... (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents (503)	n	%
Not supporting refugees living in hotel accommodation	372	74
Supporting refugee families with children living in hotel accommodation	45	9
Supporting unaccompanied child refugees living in hotel accommodation	14	3
Supporting adult refugees living in hotel accommodation	11	2
Don't know	74	15

What type of support are you providing? (Open text)

Base: All respondents providing support for refugees in hotel accommodation (53)

/			
	Providing access to services/supports	24	45
	Family support	14	26
	Signposting to support	7	13
	Financial support/fundraising	7	13
	Hosting families/housing support	6	11
	Schooling/education	6	11
	Advocacy	5	9
	MHWB/emotional support/counselling	4	8
	Medical/health support	4	8
	Other	2	4

What do you feel is the biggest concern for the refugee families that you support who are living in hotel accommodation? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents providing support for refugees in hotel accommodation (55)	n	%
Mental health	40	73
Access to support services	34	62
Child's education	33	60
Food	27	49
Physical health	22	40
Employment	20	36
No/lack of access to technology (e.g. mobile phones, internet)	11	20
Other (please specify)	8	15

Are you currently supporting any refugees from Ukraine?

Base: All respondents (502)	n	%
Yes	39	8
No	431	86
Don't know	32	6

%

What type of support are you providing? (Open text)

Base: All respondents providing support for refugees from Ukraine (38)	n	%
Providing access to services/supports	20	53
Financial support/fundraising	6	16
Hosting families/housing support	6	16
Signposting to support	5	13
MHWB/emotional support/counselling	5	13
Schooling/education	4	11
Medical/health support	2	5
Food/access to foodbanks	2	5
Supervision to staff	2	5
Other	2	5

Health



33% of practitioners are 'very confident' that the Barnardo's service where they work is able to **effectively support children, young people, or family health**

62% of practitioners said they are seeing mental health and wellbeing needs in their service(s) for children, young people and families How confident are you that the Barnardo's service(s) where you work is able to effectively support child, young person and/or family health? (Where 1 = not at all confident and 5 = very confident) %

Base: All respondents (489)	n	%
1 – Not at all confident	2	*
2	23	5
3	120	25
4	169	35
5 – Very confident	163	33
Don't know	12	2

What has helped you to feel confident about your or your service's ability to support child, young person and/or family health now or in the future? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents (484)	n	%
Working with/alongside health practitioners, or being supervised by them	272	56
Having online resources to support this work	249	51
BU learning modules/training and development options	161	33
Knowing that we have a Health Team to contact	101	21
Being part of a Community of Practice relating to this area	96	20
Health Space information, resources and knowledge	84	17
Access to clear health related policies and guidance	84	17
Having clear guidance on clinical governance	80	17
Having new model(s) of practice to work to	60	12
Nothing	49	10
Being involved/attending Lunch & Learn sessions	37	8
Direct involvement in a Health Pilot	14	3
Other (please specify)	53	11

What emerging health needs are you seeing in your service(s) for children, young people and families? (Open text)

Base: All respondents (370)	n	%
MHWB needs/lack of MHWB support	228	62
Diet/nutritional needs	35	9
Lack of support/long waiting lists (incl. for assessment/diagnosis of additional needs)	34	9
Oral health issues (incl. lack of access to dentists)	30	8
Lack of support from/access to GPs & health visitors	26	7
Additional needs (incl. ASD, SEND, ADHD)	22	6
Developmental delays	20	6
Weight issues	15	4
Lack of physical activity/exercise	12	3
Substance misuse/addiction	12	3
Long term/complex health needs	12	3
Sleep issues	10	3
Trauma	9	3

	-	-
Physical health needs	8	2
Respiratory conditions	7	2
Poor/inadequate housing impacting on health	7	2
Sexual health needs	5	1
Social isolation	4	1
Neglect	3	1
Other	13	4
Don't know	6	2

What are the main ways in which you would like to see Barnardo's services develop further to provide integrated health and social care solutions to problems facing children and families? (Select all that apply)

Base: All respondents (482)	n	%
Mental health support for children and young people	433	90
Mental health support for families, parents and carers	393	82
Integrated support to help children with disabilities	292	61
Integrated early years support	246	51
Integrated perinatal support	189	39
Support for childhood obesity	161	33
Other (please specify)	35	7

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion



26% of practitioners said they are involved 'quite a lot' in supporting children, young people or families who are experiencing issues related to their ethnicity

33% of practitioners said they are involved 'quite a lot' in supporting children, young people or families who are experiencing issues related to their gender

33% of practitioners said they are involved 'quite a lot' in supporting children, young people or families who are experiencing issues related to their sexual orientation

38% of practitioners said they are involved 'quite a lot' in supporting children, young people or families who are experiencing issues related to their **disability**

	A lot		Quite a lot		Not much		Not at all		Don't know		Base	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	
Ethnicity	28	6	125	26	210	45	75	16	34	7	472	
Gender	37	8	153	33	181	38	65	14	35	7	471	
Sexual orientation	27	6	158	33	196	41	58	12	35	7	474	
Disability	95	20	178	38	142	30	33	7	25	5	473	

To what extent are you involved in supporting children, young people or families who are experiencing issues related to their... (Select a response on each row)

Please give examples of the support/signposting you provide (Open text)

Base: All respondents providing support related to any of these issues (238)

Key themes:

- Signposting to specialist services and local organisations
- Delivering or developing own specialist service
- Mental health and wellbeing support, including counselling and 1:1 support
- Advocacy
- Providing a safe and open space for young people
- Supporting young people and families with related day to day needs such as education and finance

Appendix

1. Methodology

- The survey was administered via Survey Monkey, 30 January 28 February 2023
- In total, 711 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 <u>laura.parkes@barnardos.org.uk</u>

2. Abbreviations Used

ACEs	Adverse childhood experiences
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CCE	Child criminal exploitation
CYP	Children and young people
ESBA	Emotionally based school avoidance
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
HSB	Harmful sexual behaviour
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex +
MHWB	Mental health and wellbeing
SEN	Special educational needs
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
SPD	Sensory Processing Disorder
YP	Young people

3. Sample Overview

Service	users	supported
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Service users supported Base: All respondents (711)		n	%
	Children and/or young people	237	33
	Parents/carers	77	11
	Both	397	56

Region/nation worked in Base: All respondents (650)		n	%
	Cymru	60	9
	England - North	155	24
	England - Central	59	9
	England - South West	81	12
	England - South East	133	20
	England - London	24	4
	Northern Ireland	48	7
	Scotland	87	13
	Other (please specify)	3	0.5

ervice type Base: All respondents (650)	n	%
Youth Work (including Youth Justice)	14	2
Education, Training and Skills (ETS)	45	7
Care leavers/Accommodation Support	40	6
Advocacy, Children's Rights and Participation	32	5
Refugee and Asylum Seekers	7	1
Child Protection (e.g. Domestic Abuse)	26	4
Child Abuse and Exploitation (e.g. CSE, Missing, Trafficking, HSB)	46	7
Looked After Children (e.g. Family Placement, Residential Care)	42	6
Disability/Health	47	7
Mental Health	106	16
Family Support Services (e.g. CAPI, Young Carers)	77	12
Early Support (e.g. Children's Centres, Parenting Programmes)	162	25
Other (please specify)	6	1

Length of time working with CYP/families

Base: All respondents (650)		n	%
	Less than 1 year	94	14
	1-2 years	102	16
	3-5 years	79	12
	More than 5 years	375	58