



# Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel

## 25 September 2019

<b>Report title</b>	Children's Workforce Health Check 2019	
<b>Cabinet member with lead responsibility</b>	Councillor John Reynolds, Children's Services	
<b>Wards affected</b>	All	
<b>Accountable director</b>	Emma Bennett, Director of Children's Services	
<b>Originating service</b>	Children's Services	
<b>Accountable employees)</b>	Louise Haughton	Principal Social Worker
	Tel	01902 555534
	Email	<a href="mailto:louise.haughton@wolverhampton.gov.uk">louise.haughton@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
	Jennifer Rogers	Advanced Practitioner for Quality and Improvement
	Tel	01902 555704
	Email	<a href="mailto:jennifer.rogers@wolverhampton.gov.uk">jennifer.rogers@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report has been considered by</b>	Children's Services Management Team	11 July 2019
	Social Work Development Board	12 July 2019
	SEB	13 August 2019

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### Recommendations for action:

The Panel is recommended to:

1. Note and comment on the findings of the Children's Workforce Health Check for 2019
2. Provide comment and challenge on proposed actions to improve the health of children's service's workforce

## 1.0 Purpose

1.1 The City of Wolverhampton Council (CWC) carries out an online survey each year to check the “health” of its social workers. This year the survey was also sent out to the wider children’s workforce. This was an action from the engagement action plan in 2018. This report presents an overview of the findings of this survey and concludes with areas identified for improvement and to improve practice in the city.

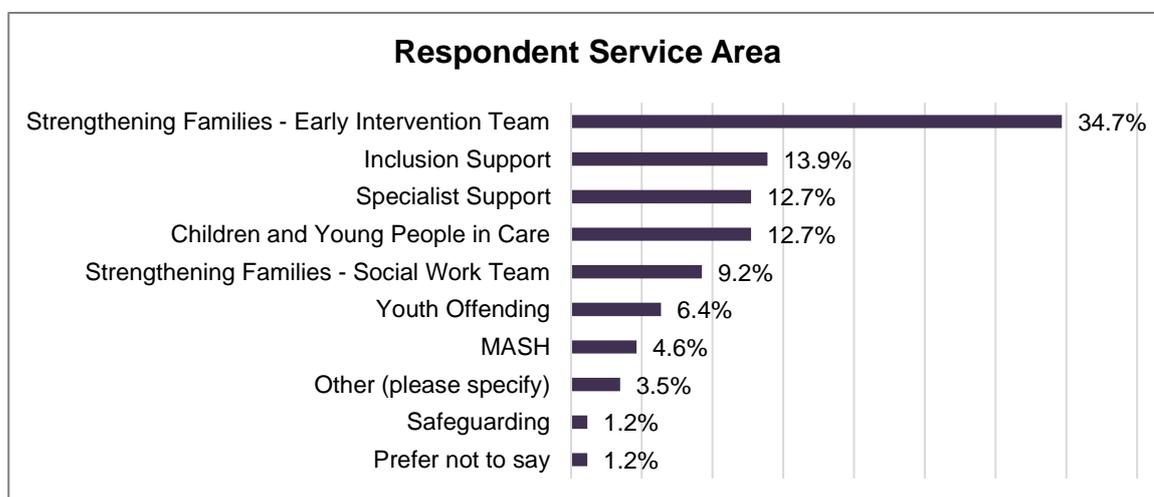
## 2.0 Background

2.1 Good practice carried out by a “healthy”, motivated workforce can lead to improved outcomes for people and families as well as reduced demand and costs. The national Social Work Task Force final report, published in November 2009, recommended a framework to assist employers and practitioners to assess the “health” of their organisation on a range of issues affecting the workload of social workers and to support the implementation of a set of national Standards for Employers and Supervision Framework.

2.3 The framework identifies five key topics to support organisations to undertake a self-assessment to identify current strengths and areas that require improvement. The five key topics are:

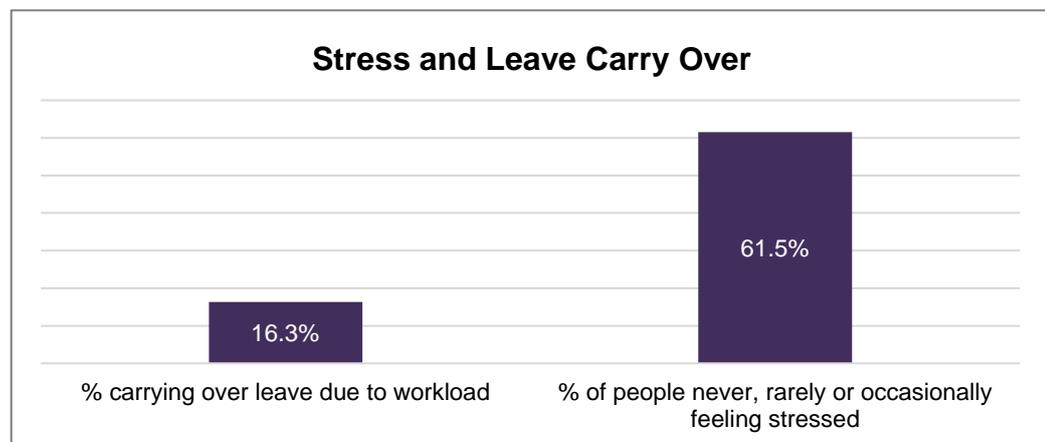
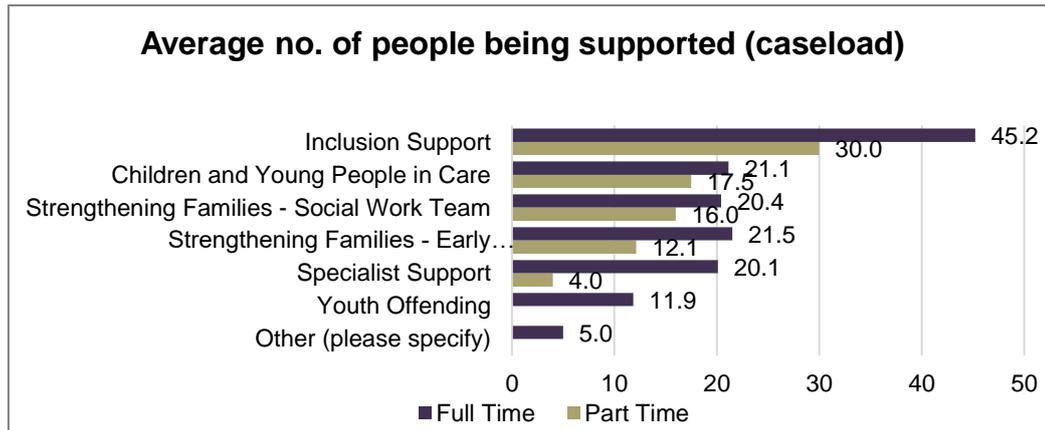
- Effective workload management
- Pro-active workflow management
- Having the right tools for the job
- A healthy workplace
- Effective service delivery

2.4 The survey was sent out to 301 employees between 1 April – 15 May 2019. Non-social work qualified employees at grade five and above who work directly with children and young people or manage teams that do were invited to complete the survey. This is a very diverse workforce and is made up a variety of roles such as Educational Psychologists, Family Support workers, the Virtual School team and Strengthening Families Workers. There was a total of 173 responses (57%) from across all of the service areas.

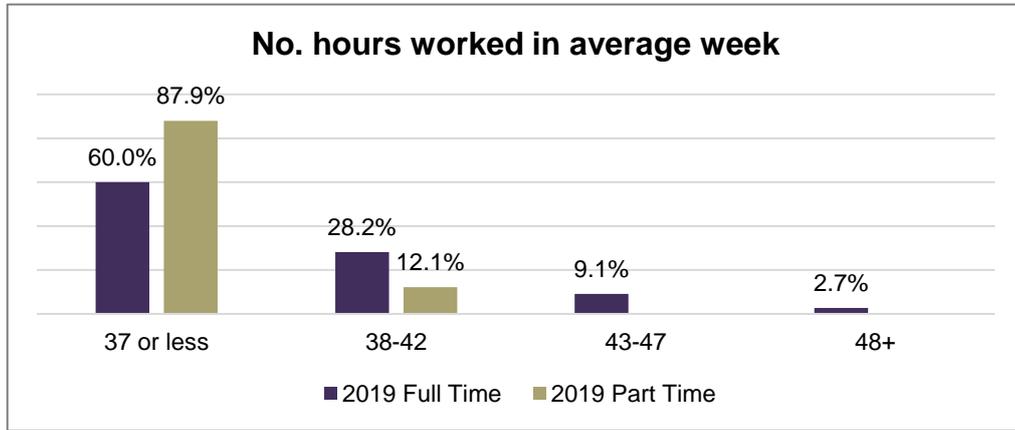


### 3.0 Overview and key findings

3.1 The average number of people being supported (caseload) varies because of the variety of job roles. As this is the first survey of the non-social work qualified workforce this will provide a benchmark for monitoring future trends as it is not possible to draw comparisons between the different service areas. Nearly 85% felt that their workload is manageable and the majority never, rarely or occasionally experience stress. Sickness due to stress at work was not particularly high. Most do not carry over annual leave because of the demands of their job.

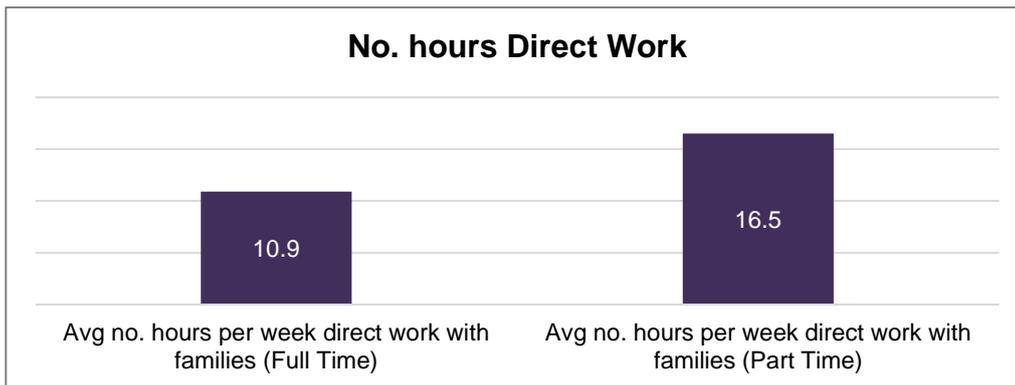


3.2 There were a number of respondents who stated that they work over their contracted hours to keep up with their workload. The average hours worked by full time employees was 38.9 hours a week, however part time employees averaged 6.9 hours over their contracted hours. Just over 12% of part time employees work between 38-42 hours, which is high.



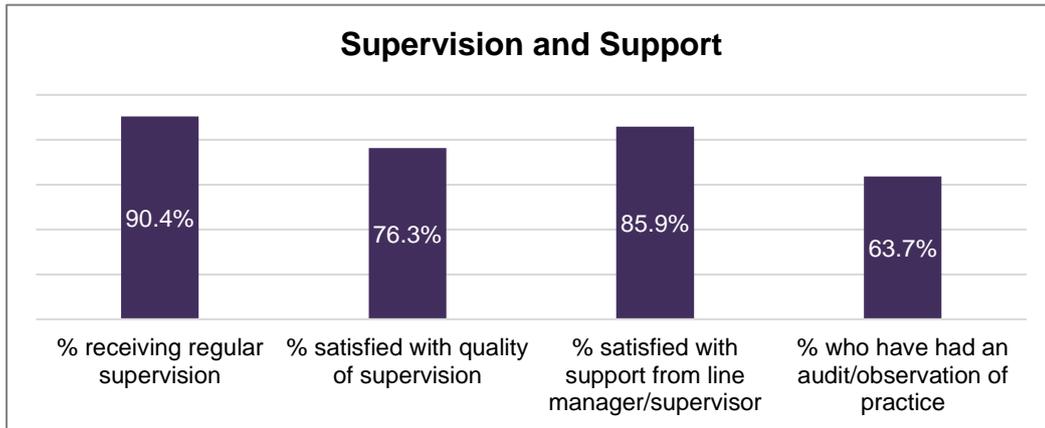
3.3 The average number of hours spent working directly with children, young people and families is 16.5 hours for full time employees and 10.9 hours for part time employees. Due to the diversity of roles it is difficult to draw conclusions about these results but will provide a benchmark for future surveys. However, a number of respondents indicate that they spend a large proportion of their time inputting data onto systems. When asked what they would change about their job if they could common responses included:

- More time for direct work
- Less paperwork
- Fewer systems

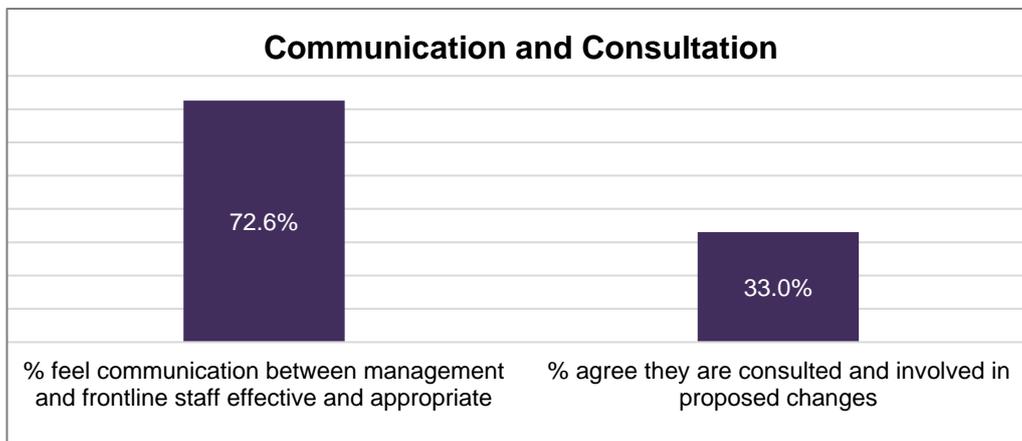


3.4 Almost all respondents said they receive regular supervision. The vast majority are satisfied with the support they receive from their manager and with the quality of discussions in supervision, with only 2% saying they are dissatisfied with this. Over 60% have had an observation of practice as part of practice weeks and 85% of those who had been observed said they found it a positive experience. Some said that it provided them with an opportunity for reflection and to get some independent feedback.

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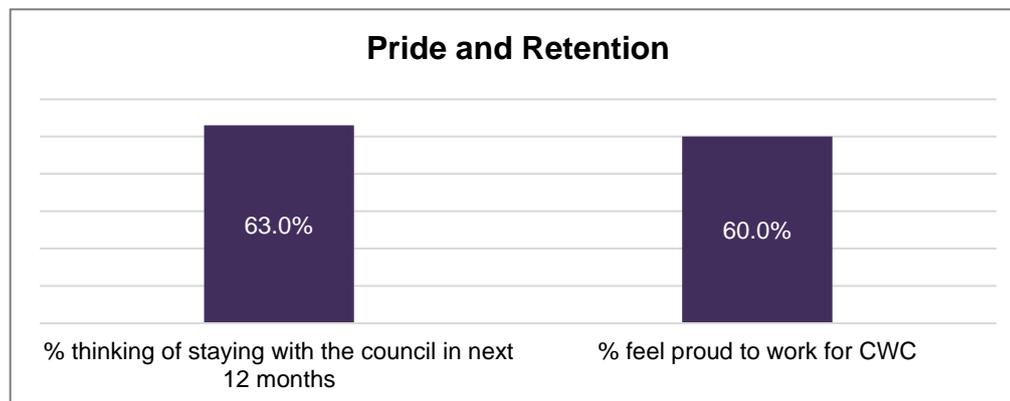
- 3.5 Over 70% felt that there is effective and appropriate communication between frontline staff and management and responses indicate that team meetings are generally taking place either monthly or weekly. Just over 90% said that they felt able to contribute to their team meeting agenda. 33% agreed that they are involved in and consulted about proposed changes and about the same number disagreed with this, with the majority neither agreeing or disagreeing with this statement. A lot of work has taken place in the last 12 months to improve communication with the children's workforce, including the introduction of coffee and conversation sessions, the publication of a fortnightly e-bulletin and increased visibility of senior managers in teams. However, this is an area that will continue to be developed as part of the Engagement Plan which was finalised in June 2019.



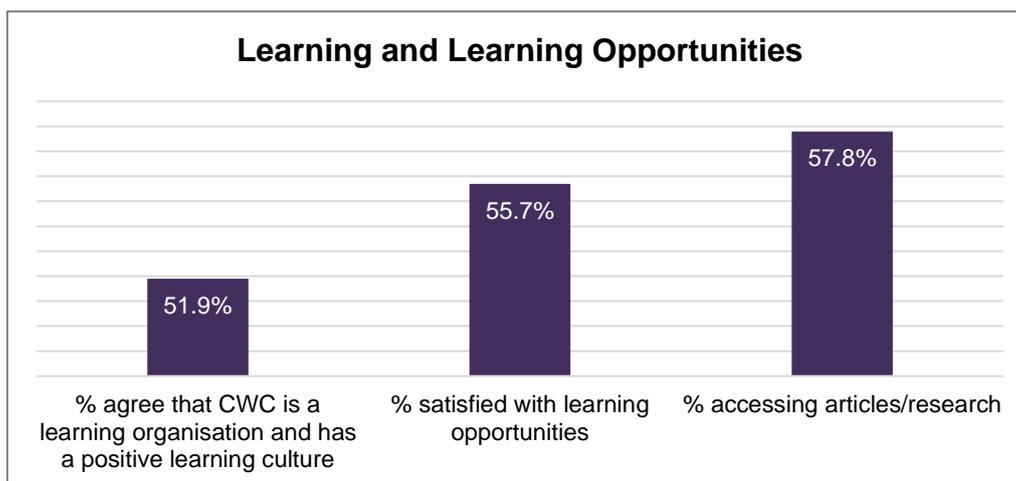
- 3.6 The majority of respondents (70%) said they are enthusiastic about their job, feel their skills are being utilised effectively and are proud to work for CWC. Most are planning to stay with CWC in the next 12 months, with only 18% thinking of leaving to start a new job/career. Some comments about what made them feel positive this year included:

- Good learning and development opportunities
- Supportive colleagues

- “Senior managers are more accessible and seen at ground level (e.g. coffee mornings)”



- 3.7 Most agreed that CWC is a learning organisation with a positive learning culture and over 55% said they were satisfied with the learning and development opportunities available. However, about 20% of respondents said they were not satisfied and would welcome more learning and development opportunities and time to undertake training. A significant number (35%) neither agreed nor disagreed.



## 4.0 Recommendations and actions

- 4.1 An action plan has been produced as a result of this survey to address the key areas highlighted in this report. This plan will be overseen and reviewed by the Children's Workforce development board. The findings of the Health Check and actions will be shared with teams and will inform workforce development plans for the coming year. The plan incorporates improvement actions including:
- Supporting the roll out Eclipse later in 2019 to reduce the amount of time spent inputting onto systems and more proportionate recording which should help to achieve a better work / life balance
  - Ensuring robust workload discussions take place in supervision to ensure workloads are manageable and working hours are reasonable. The quantity and quality of supervision will be monitored through audit and dip sampling.

- Implementing the Engagement Plan to further improve communication with the workforce
- The workforce development team will continue to work with Heads of Service to explore training needs and further opportunities for the workforce. The introduction of the social work apprenticeship programme offers the opportunity for those eligible across the children's workforce to apply to gain a professional / recognised qualification.
- The Principal Social Worker's team will support with the delivery of a development day for non-social work qualified roles and service areas

## **5.0 Financial implications**

- 5.1 Sickness, unplanned absence from work and difficulties recruiting and retaining staff could all result in additional expenditure for the Council. The total approved budget for Children's services is £51.5 million of which the staff related element is £31.1 million. The expenditure on agency staff has reduced from £2.9 million in 2016-2017 to £2.4 million in 2018-2019.  
[JB/06082019/T]

## **6.0 Legal implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report.  
[TC/02082019/X]

## **7.0 Equalities implications**

- 7.1 Social Care is a diverse profession and the makeup of the social care teams in Wolverhampton is largely representative of the local community. The diversity of the children that are supported by Child in Need / Child Protection and Children and Young People in Care teams are also largely representative of the diversity of the city as a whole.

## **8.0 Environmental implications**

- 8.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising out of this report.

## **9.0 Human resources implications**

- 9.1 There are no human resource implications arising out of this report.

## **10.0 Corporate landlord implications**

- 10.1 There are no specific corporate landlord implications arising out of this report.

## **11.0 Schedule of background papers**

- 11.1 Appendix A: Children's Workforce Health Check 2019 Dashboard

Click link below to see full Children's Workforce Health Check Survey Report 2019



Children's  
Workforce Health Cl