

Agenda Item 10

Research Reports

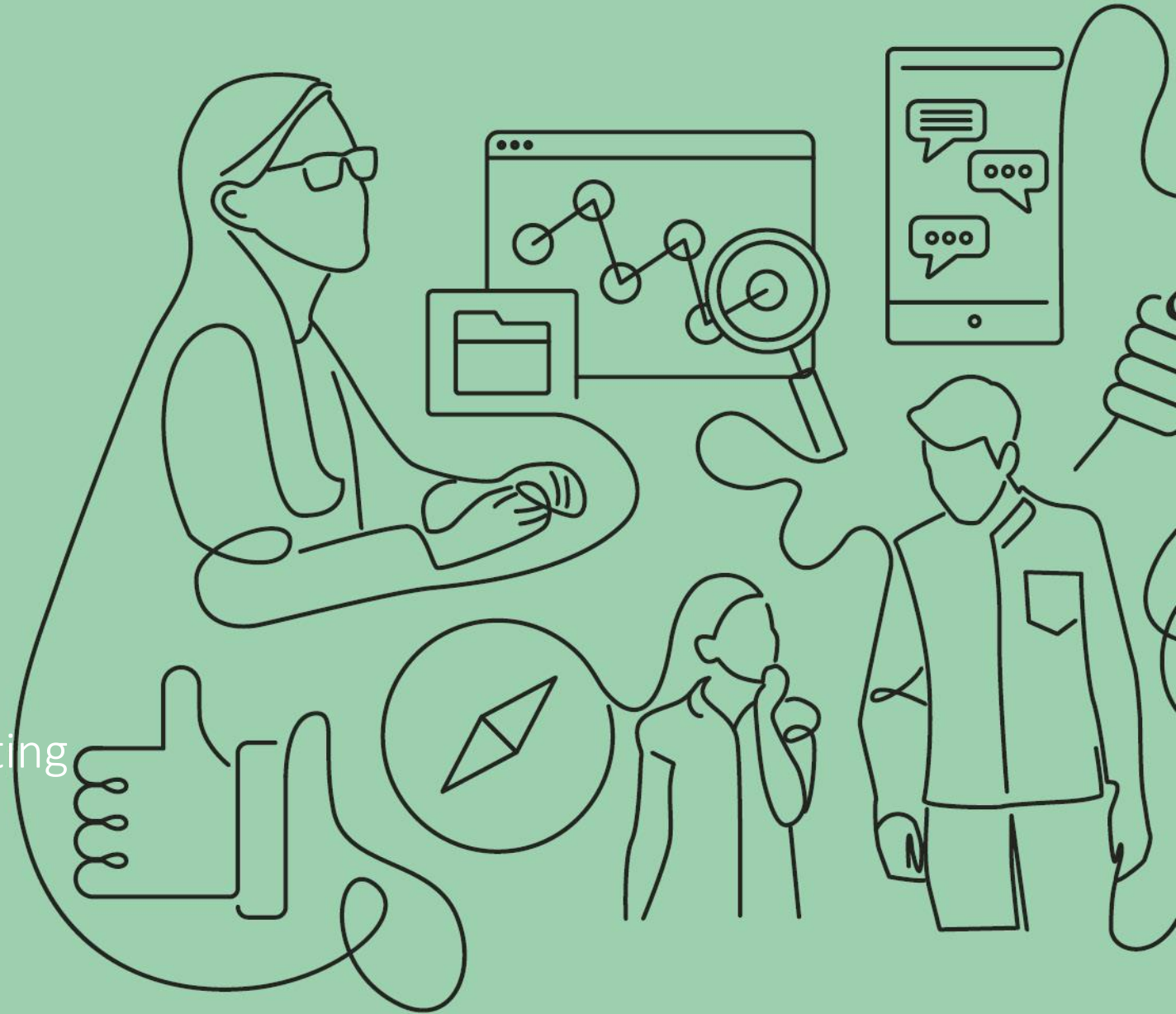
Author

Amy Soar, Head of Policy

Date

18 September 2020

This paper is for: Assurance and Noting



Research: two areas of focus

YouGov: Research into social work

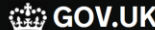
Research audience: social workers, students, course leaders

Aim: Snapshot of social workers' attitudes and perceptions at the start of our regulations. Includes motivations to join the profession, students experiences and career routes, uptake of ASYE, experiences of newly qualified, mid-career SWs and recent leavers.

Cragg Ross Dawson: Public perceptions survey

Research audience: public, people with lived experience

Aim: Explore and understand the knowledge, experiences and perceptions of social work among those who have been supported by social workers and the general public.

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Research into Social Work in England

SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND

Open opportunity - This means that the contract is currently unfulfilled but active, and the buying department is looking for potential suppliers to contact them with bid applications.

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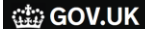
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Closing date: 29 November 2019

Contract summary

Industry

- Research services - 73110000
- Social work and related services - 85300000

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Public Perceptions Research

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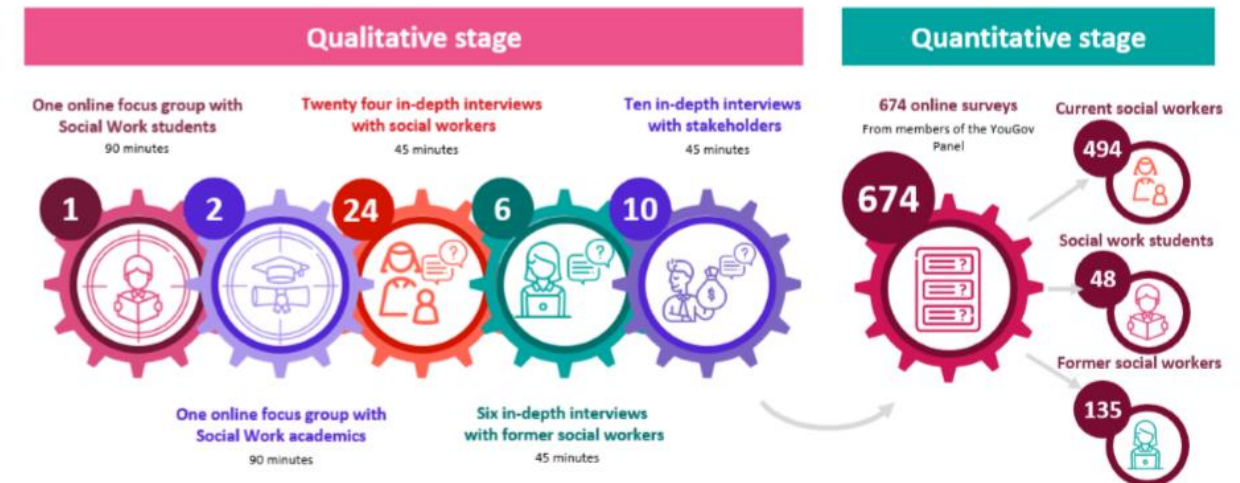
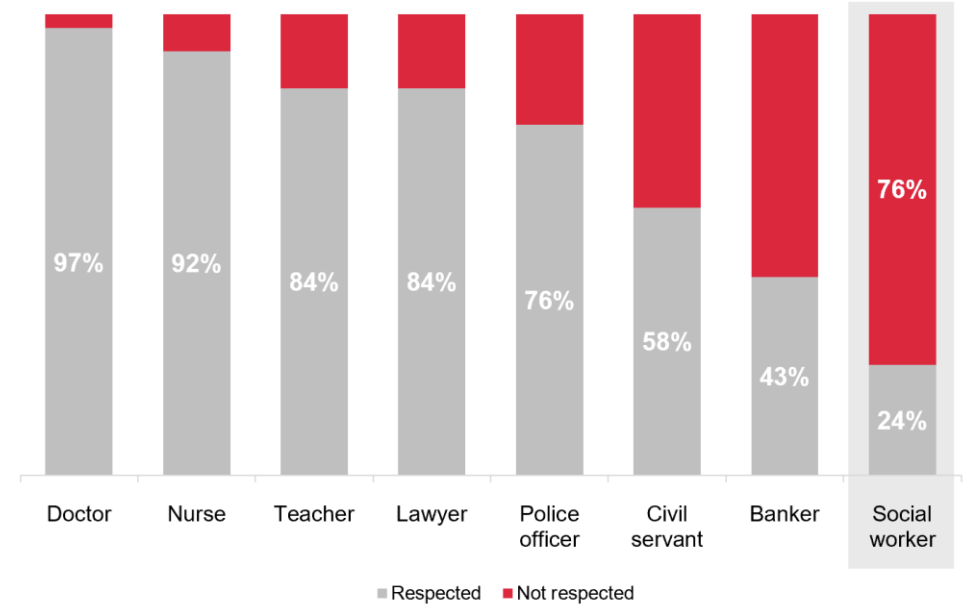
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YouGov: highlights

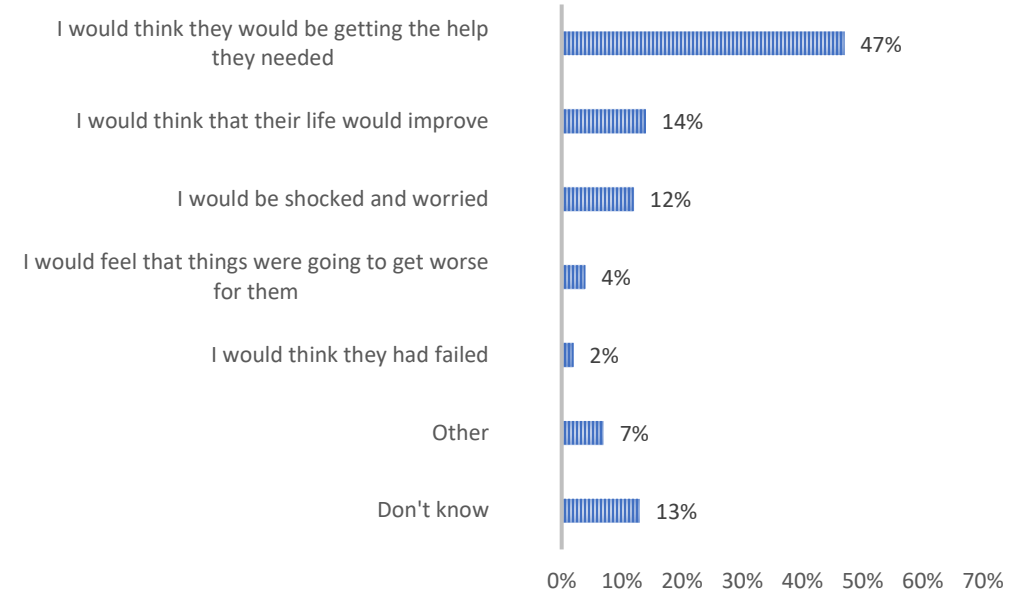
- The vast majority of respondents (89%) are either very proud (48%) or fairly proud (41%) to be doing their job.
- Social workers ranked the public perception of their profession as the lowest when compared to 7 other professions, including bankers, civil servants and the police.
- Concerns of high caseloads and burnout were reported throughout the survey. A large proportion (85%) of current social workers reported that the job makes them either very stressed or fairly stressed.
- The majority (79%) of respondents rate the quality of their education and trainings as either 'good' or 'very good'. Social workers who believe they were well trained are more likely to have a positive view of the regulator.
- Morale is substantially higher among men than women: nearly two-thirds (63%) of men say their morale is high compared to 36% of women.
- Those who understand what the role of a social work regulator is are more likely to report high morale: those who understand the role a great deal or somewhat are nearly twice as likely to have high morale.
- Two fifths of respondents expect to leave within the next 5 years (39%).

Public's respect for professions



CRD: highlights

- 5 focus groups, an online omnibus survey (1751) which included 142 people who had experience of social work, 23 depth interviews conducted face-to-face with people who had experience of social work interventions in the last three years.
- People with social work experience (direct or indirect) were consistently more positive and less negative about social work than those without experience.
- Social workers were generally well regarded: 78% agreed they want the best for the people, 70% agreed that they make a big difference in improving people's lives.
- There was a more critical minority: disagreed that social workers are objective and neutral (28%); agreed that social workers tend not to believe the people they work with (19%).
- Views of people with lived experience of social work were generally better than expected. Three groups were dissatisfied : 1) people who felt they were in a low priority group (e.g. adults with disabilities); 2) people who believed social workers had been inefficient or ineffective in handling their case; 3) people who thought social workers had been judgmental and hostile – typically men in domestic abuse cases.
- Initial wariness of social work tends to dissipate in the light of good experiences. The reality of receiving a social work intervention and support is often a revelation, and overcomes negative perceptions.
- Regulation of social work is largely unknown but the principle of it is welcomed. Though the detail of what it involves is rarely thought through, in general it is regarded as a way of ensuring that social work procedures are followed correctly and consistently, and practices are monitored.



Craig Ross Dawson

Case Study: Female, experienced, left the profession

Role and experience	Perception of role	Training and support	Perceptions of SWE
- Qualified in 2005, left in 2015. In this time, she moved between different locations and teams - Role involved doing initial assessments for children, and working alongside the police - Towards the end of her experience, she was struggling and had taken a month off due to burn out - Now works for a charity, where the skills she learnt as a social worker are highly valuable	- Overall she had a love / hate relationship with the profession. With an overall feeling that she was not making enough of an impact - Some key challenges included dynamics with management, lack of time on cases and too much paperwork - These issues lead to both physical and mental exhaustion - The negative public perception of social work also had a negative impact on her feelings towards the role	- She had completed a degree in social work, as well as receiving a diploma - She stated that her managers' interpersonal skills were poor - Though training tended to work well, there were gaps, largely around resilience and decision making. Overall it was felt to be more important to have the practice than the theory	- No awareness of SWE - Had knowledge of HCPC and assumed that it was being replaced - Heard that you needed to re-register with the new regulator which sounded 'like a nuisance'

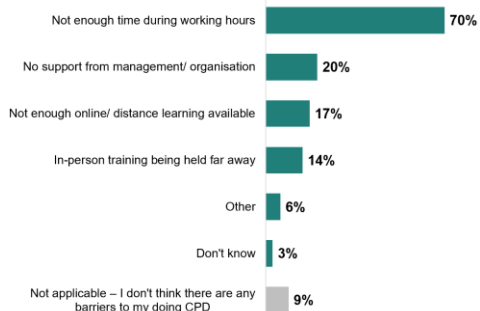
“It was a **stressful environment**, I didn't get on with my manager and I would be **threatened by families**.. I had a month off to stop me **burning out**.

“Leaving was partly **down to workload and the complexity of cases**, as well as the travel time between the office / home / in home visits.



The key barrier to doing CPD is the high workloads, with the majority citing a lack of time during working hours

Barriers to CPD



“Time can be a **limiting factor** to what training you can do...The management don't really give us any spare time for CPD. You have to do it, but you're **not encouraged or supported to do it**, you have to do it in your own time.” (Social worker, mid-career)

“We do have a **lot of training** you can tap into, but **hard to find the time**. For example, court writing is two days. No time for that.” (Social worker, early career)

Case Study: Male, CEO, Local Authority

Perception of role	Training and support	Perceptions of SWE	Recommendations for SWE
- Given the funding cuts for local authorities over the last 10 years, the participant believes the work differs massively based on location - Thinks the public misunderstanding of social work stems from the sensationalist news reporting that portrays social workers negatively - Recognises there are huge strains in the form of high caseloads and funding cuts	- Thinks there's very little diversity in the background and experience of social workers; many Russell Group universities are not drawn to Social Work - In the past there was less learning on the job - CPD now is better, but it can be improved - There is a blame culture for when things go wrong and frustrations arising from underfunding: too much work and not enough workers	- He is aware of SWE as the new regulator, doing quality control and leading on CPD, support, recruitment and retention - Better than HCPC which never wanted to regulate social work - SWE have the opportunity to improve the sector from the bottom up	- Improve work conditions for social workers: proper supervision, access to CPD - Level up the profession so that everyone gets the same treatment - Give public confidence of the profession - Focus on the wellbeing of social workers as they are dealing with difficult things and it impacts their emotional health

“Newspaper reporting of social work tends to be **sensationalist** and pretty much always focuses on when **something terrible has happened**, which happens in a very small percentage of cases.

“It would be nice to have a **national campaign**. It would show that the profession matters, that someone bothered. Change the world, come and change these children's worlds - we need to do that with social work



What have we got from this?

- A benchmark for professional and public perceptions of regulation and Social Work England as the new specialist regulator.
- Case studies from students, newly qualified, current and former social workers.
- An initial line of enquiry into attitudes and behaviours of social workers undertaking CPD which will form the basis of our research this year.
- Independent research and statistical data that supports the themes we hear consistently through our engagement.
- A more diverse range of accounts of people with lived experience of social work, including 23 in-depth interviews with people who have received an intervention in the last 3 years.
- A good understanding of the pressures the profession is facing and data around retention and workforce sustainability.
- Positive uptake of the launch in Community Care, Care Knowledge and through social media channels.

Next steps

- Hold the mirror up: this is the first piece of research that independently reflects what the profession and people with lived experience have been telling us.
- Mine the data and insight for the Social Work in England first interim report, due to published at the end of the year.
- Consider any emerging risks and include them for consideration in our evolving approach to regulatory risk (paper to follow).
- Include relevant findings as evidentiary support for our future strategy work.
- Use initial insight into learning social workers undertake to inform deeper research exercise into social workers' attitudes and behaviours to CPD.



The background is a solid teal-green color. It is decorated with abstract white line art. On the left side, there is a vertical line that starts near the top and ends near the bottom. To the right of this line, the word "Questions" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. On the far left and far right edges, there are long, flowing, wavy white lines that resemble calligraphic flourishes or stylized waves.

Questions