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Children's Services Omnibus

Wave 1 Research Report

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NatCen Social Research



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List of abbreviations

CiN – Children in Need

CYP – Children and Young People

DCS – Director of Children's Services

DfE – Department for Education

EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan

FSM – Free School Meals

LA – Local Authority

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disability

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from the first wave of the new DfE Children's Services Omnibus Survey. The survey explored senior local authority (LA) leaders' perceptions on, and activities relating to, a range of policy areas. These comprised demand for, and commissioning of, children's social services; information sharing; support for adopters and special guardians; sufficiency of childcare places; and services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The questionnaire comprised a mix of open response questions and fixed category response questions.

The online survey was sent to all 152 upper tier LAs in England. In total, 101 LAs took part, representing an overall survey response rate of 66%. However, as indicated throughout the report, not all 101 LAs answered all of the survey questions. Analysis of questions with lower responses sometimes resulted in differences between groups that were not statistically significant; here we are not confident that the difference would have occurred had all LAs answered the question.

The research was carried out between 26 September and 28 October 2016. The key findings are outlined below.

Children's social care

Understanding demand for children's social care services

- Most LAs had a function or team that was able to analyse demand for children's social care (84%).
- A majority of LAs had a function or team that was able to identify unmet needs for individual children and families (71%).
- Three in five LAs had a function or team to compare the cost of different interventions (61%) and assess the impact of different interventions (61%).
- Local authorities tended to be confident that they were able to identify unmet needs for individual children and families. Overall, 86% were fairly or very confident, compared to the 11% that were not confident.

Commissioning of services

- One in five (21%) LAs operated statutory children's social care services jointly with another authority and a further seven per cent had plans to do so in development.
- Three in four (73%) LAs did not operate any statutory children's services jointly with another authority. However, 48% said that they planned to in the future.

- Almost three in five (57%) LAs commissioned a voluntary sector partner to deliver children's services, while a further seven per cent were considering doing so.
- Almost a quarter (23%) of authorities commissioned not-for-profit companies or trusts to deliver children's services and a further 14% were considering doing so in the future.
- Seven per cent of LAs commissioned mutuals to deliver aspects of children's services and a further 11% were considering doing so in the future.

Information sharing

- A large majority of LAs had multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals, either in place (91%) or in development (seven per cent).
- Among LAs with multi-agency processes already in place, most involved physically co-located teams (94%) and virtually all (96%) felt that the processes had helped improve information sharing.

Social care workforce

- Most LAs were confident that supervisors, senior practitioners and practice managers had the knowledge and skills to support social workers (90%), and that they would be able to maintain the usual number of practice placements offered to social work students over the next 12 months (89%).
- Just over half of LAs (56%) were confident that they would have sufficient numbers of permanent well-qualified child and family social workers to meet their needs over the next year.

Risks to service delivery

- LAs were asked to select up to three main risks to the effective delivery of children's social care services over the next 3 years from a list of six options; nine in ten (89%) authorities selected financial pressures as a risk.
- Staffing issues were also seen as a risk to delivery. Overall, 57% of authorities selected recruitment of high quality staff and 51% selected retainment of current staff as a risk over the next three years.
- LAs' top priorities for improving children's social care services over the next three years centred around improving the quality of social work practice (74%) and ensuring sufficient budget to maintain or improve children's services (72%).

Adoption and children in care

- Almost three in four (72%) LAs felt their relationship with the local judiciary over care proceedings was good, although 11% felt their relationship was poor.
- Just over one-third (34%) of LAs said that it was fairly or very likely that there will be sufficient care placements for all children in their authority over the next year.
- A large majority of LAs provide financial support beyond the Adoption Support Fund, both to adopters (95%) and to special guardians (91%).
- While 93% of authorities provide support groups for adopters, 55% provide support groups for special guardians.

Early Years and childcare

Early Years and childcare workforce

- Almost three in five (57%) upper tier LAs in England monitored the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce in their area.
- Three in five (58%) LAs supported Early Years providers in recruiting staff.
- More than half (55%) of LAs in England had a childcare provider portal in place to help providers to check eligibility for entitlements. A further 19% had a portal in development and 11% plan to in the future.

Assessing the sufficiency of places

- All LAs surveyed assessed the sufficiency of childcare places within the authority. Most LAs updated their assessment on an annual basis (56%), although one in five (21%) did this on a more regular, termly basis. Fewer than one in ten LAs updated the assessment less often than once a year.
- Three in five (61%) LAs had already assessed the sufficiency of childcare places with regards to the extended 30 hour entitlement for three and four year olds, and a further 34% were in the process of doing so.

Special Educational Needs and Disability

- All responding LAs offered support for parents with a disabled child in finding childcare. This support included publishing information about childcare options (91%); Families Information Services (91%); brokering childcare places with providers (79%) and providing help with transport (23%).

- LAs' key systems for monitoring progress in implementing the 2014 SEND reforms were multi-agency boards, internal staff meetings, stakeholder engagement and internal self-assessment.
- LAs monitored outcomes for children and young people with SEND at three main levels:
 - At the level of the individual child / young person, such as through monitoring outcomes in line with their Education, Health and Care Plan, or through on-going casework and formal Annual Reviews;
 - At provider (e.g. school) level, such as through school visits and data audits; and
 - At the level of the LA, such as through Quality Assurance Groups and centralised outcomes systems.

Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) is currently implementing a range of policies designed to strengthen and reform children's services. In particular, the commitments set out in the Children and Families Act 2014 signify an ambitious response to the challenges faced by local authorities trying to meet the needs of children and families.

Wide-ranging reforms to services include the expansion of funded early years' provision, workforce development for Early Years' professionals and social workers, testing new approaches through the Innovation Programme, greater integration between services, and the introduction of children's services trusts. Local authorities (LAs) play a pivotal role in these landmark reforms, assessing need, innovating, restructuring and delivering reformed services.

The Department has commissioned a new Children's Services Omnibus Survey to provide a clear and up-to-date understanding of the key issues facing children's services, and of local authorities' implementation of policy related to children's services.

The Omnibus is a survey of all 152 upper tier LAs in England. It has three aims:

- To gather information from senior leaders and managers in LAs on policy-related activity and explore their perceptions of these activities;
- To gain a greater understanding of the key issues affecting children's services and local authorities' delivery of them; and
- To consolidate ad-hoc LA surveys into biannual omnibus surveys.

This report presents findings from Wave 1 of the Children's Services Omnibus series, which took place between September and October 2016. The survey is contracted for two years.

Survey methodology

The first phase of Wave 1 involved a nomination stage in July 2016, during which the Director of Children's Services (DCS) for each LA was invited to nominate a single point of contact in their authority to be responsible for the survey. This approach was successful in obtaining contact details for a nominated point of contact for every higher tier Local Authority in England. Just over half (52%) of DCSs opted to remain responsible for the survey in their LA, either nominating themselves or their PA to be the point of first contact. In the remaining LAs, nominated points of contact included Group Managers, Service Directors and Data and Performance Officers.

Following the nomination phase, a sample of 20 LAs was selected to take part in a pilot survey. These were selected purposively to ensure a good spread of authority type and regions.

The questionnaire for the pilot was designed in stages. First, the relevant DfE policy teams submitted draft questions based on issues of interest. These were then refined into a first draft by NatCen in collaboration with the DfE. This draft was then reviewed by a specially convened independent Advisory Group of local authority staff to ensure the questions were relevant, meaningful and could be answered. Based on feedback from the Advisory Group, the questions were revised into a final draft for testing in the pilot.

As well as the substantive survey questions intended to be included in the mainstage survey, the pilot survey included a number of detailed probing questions that explored how respondents interpreted and went about answering specific questions, and how easy or difficult they found it to complete the survey overall. The pilot fieldwork ran from 2-26 August 2016. In total, 12 authorities took part in the pilot survey.

Following the pilot survey, the questionnaire was refined for the mainstage. All remaining LAs (including those sampled for the pilot who did not take part) were then sent an invitation email. This email included further information about the survey, a link to the web survey and a unique access code for the LA. An Excel spreadsheet copy of the survey questions was also provided to give respondents the opportunity to prepare answers in advance of accessing the online survey. In particular, this enabled the single point of contact for the LA to share the spreadsheet with colleagues within different teams who might help with collating data about the three policy areas.

During the mainstage fieldwork, all non-responding LAs were sent two reminder emails and received reminder calls from NatCen telephone interviewers. Invitation emails were also re-sent to existing and new points of contact upon request. The mainstage fieldwork ran from 26 September to 28 October 2016. In total, NatCen received responses from 101 LAs. This amounts to an overall response rate of 66 per cent. A total of 68 LAs fully completed the survey, and 33 partially completed the survey.

The response to each section varied, as demonstrated in Table 1. A full breakdown of response can be found in Appendix 1 – Response profile.

Table 1: Response rate by questionnaire section

Section	Complete responses (N)	Partial responses (N)	Response rate
Children’s Social Care	83	8	60%
Early Years and Child Care	81	4	56%
SEND	80	2	54%

Presentation and interpretation of data

It should be remembered at all times that a sample, and not the entire population, of upper tier LAs in England, responded to the survey. Further, the number of LAs is small (n=152), which means that care is required when interpreting the results. In consequence, all results were subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences were statistically significant.

All differences discussed in the report were statistically significant unless stated otherwise. Where differences were not statistically significant, these differences could be caused by chance. Where non significant findings were commented on, this was based on the identification of large or potentially notable differences which were tested but found not to be significant, and are clearly detailed as such. When testing results between two separate groups within a sample, we used a two sample t-test. Further discussion of statistical significance can be found in Appendix 2 – Guide to statistical reliability.

Minimal changes were made to the survey between the pilot and mainstage fieldwork, and so, where possible, pilot responses have been included in the final data.

In order to maximise analysis opportunities, all responses to each question were reported, meaning that base sizes differ slightly throughout the report.

Children's Social Care

This chapter presents key findings from the questions about children's social care. It begins by looking at the ways that LAs understood the demand for children's social care services in their authority. It then examines the arrangements that LAs had for commissioning and working with other services. Following this, the chapter turns to how confident LAs were about the short-term future of their own social care workforce. Next, the chapter looks at risks to service delivery, priorities for improving social care services, and barriers to adopting new models of provision. Finally, the chapter looks specifically at LAs' provision and experiences relating to adoption and children in care.

Understanding demand for children's social care services

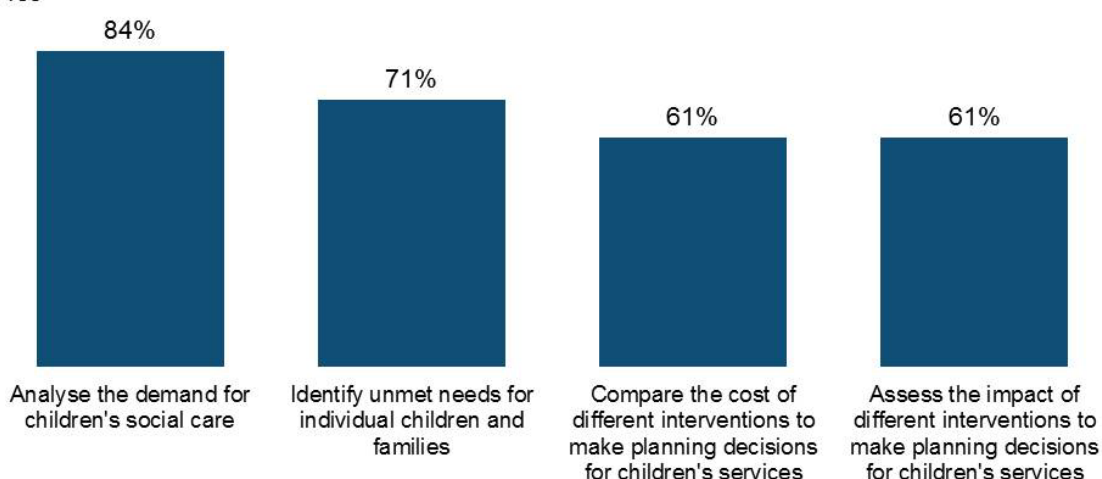
Analysing demand

Most LAs had a function or team that was able to analyse the demand for children's social care (84%). In addition, the majority had a function or team able to identify unmet needs for individual children and families (71%).

It was slightly less common for LAs to have functions or teams to compare the cost of different interventions or assess the impact of different interventions in order to inform planning decisions (both 61%).

Figure 1: Data and analysis of demand functions

Q. Does your local authority have a function or team that is able to...
% Yes



Base: All responding authorities (n=87)

The results indicate that authorities in the North were less likely to have a team able to compare the costs of interventions to inform planning decisions than those elsewhere in the country (41% in the North compared to 61% overall). They also suggest that authorities in the North might be less likely to have teams with the other capabilities. However, these differences were not statistically significant.

Wave 1 findings suggested that these sorts of functions and teams were likely to increase in the future. For example, 16% of LAs were currently considering whether to introduce a function or team to compare the cost of different interventions to make planning decisions for children’s services, while 15% were considering whether to introduce the capability to assess the impact of different interventions. One in ten authorities were considering whether to introduce a function or team to identify unmet needs for individual children and families (10%).

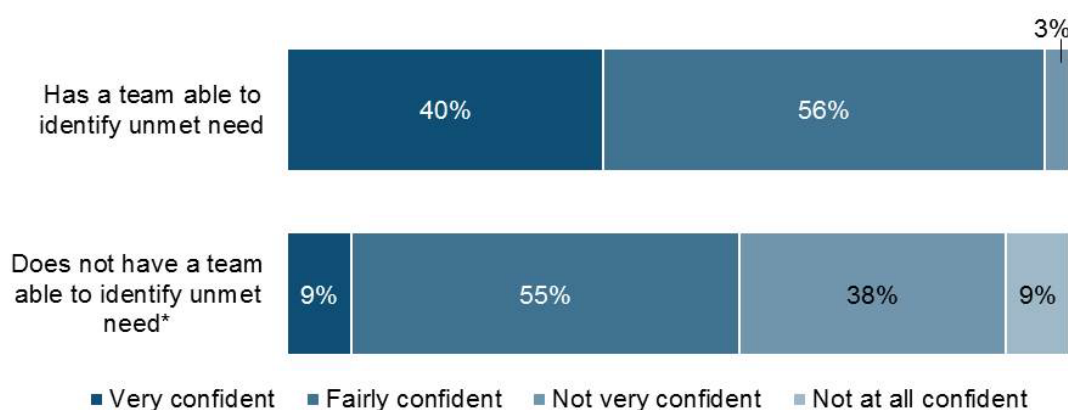
Identifying unmet need

Local authorities were also very confident that they were able to identify unmet needs for individual children and families. Overall, 86% were fairly or very confident, while just one in nine were not very or not at all confident (11%).

LAs with a team or function responsible for identifying unmet need appeared to be more confident in their ability to do so (Figure 2). Around a third of LAs (32%) without such a team were not very or not at all confident, compared to just three per cent of LAs that did have such a team.

Figure 2: Confidence in ability to identify unmet needs

Q. How confident, if at all, are you that... Your authority will be able to identify/has identified unmet needs for individual children and families?



Base: All responding authorities (All: n=82; Has a team: n=62; Does not have a team: n=20)

* = Small base size

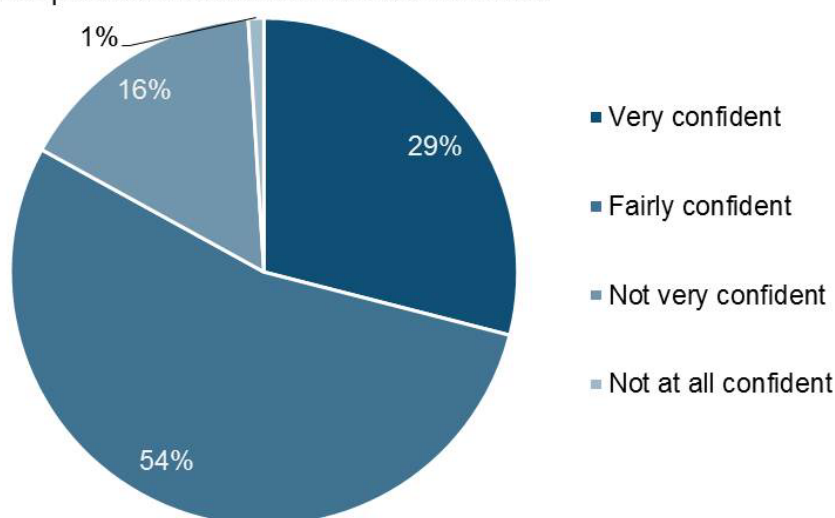
Impact of Early Help on demand for Children in Need services

Authorities tended to be positive about the impact of investing in Early Help. Overall, four in five (83%) LAs were confident that a greater focus on Early Help reduces demand on services for Children in Need. Indeed, 29% were very confident. However, a notable minority were not very confident that focusing on Early Help reduces demand (16%).

This confidence did not appear to be influenced by the Children in Need (CiN) rate in an authority. That is, those with a higher CiN rate were no more or less confident that a greater focus on Early Help reduces demand on CiN provision.

Figure 3: Impact of Early Help on demand on Children in Need

Q. Thinking about your own authority, how confident, if at all, are you that a greater focus on Early Help reduces demand on Children in Need?



Base: All responding authorities (n=87)

Commissioning of services

Joint commissioning

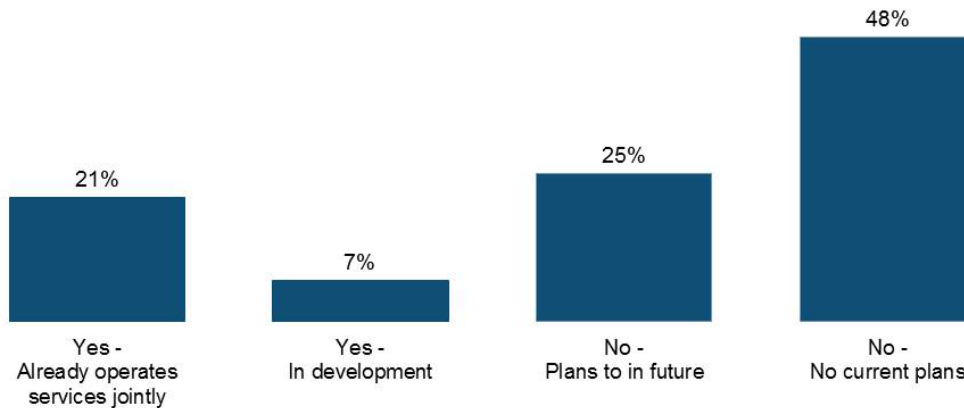
Most LAs (73%) did not operate any statutory children's social care services jointly with another local authority or group of authorities (Figure 4). However, one-quarter (25%) planned to in the future.

One in five LAs (21%) already operated statutory children's social care services jointly with another authority and a further seven per cent had plans in development.

LAs in London and the South were the least likely to operate statutory children's social care services with other authorities. Currently, three in five (60%) LAs in London and the South did not operate joint services and had no plans to in the future, compared to 36% of authorities in the North of England.

Figure 4: Operation of statutory children’s social care services with other authorities

Q. Does your local authority currently operate any statutory children’s social care services jointly with another local authority/group of authorities? Please do not include regional adoption agencies.



Base: All responding authorities (n=88)

Commissioning of alternative providers

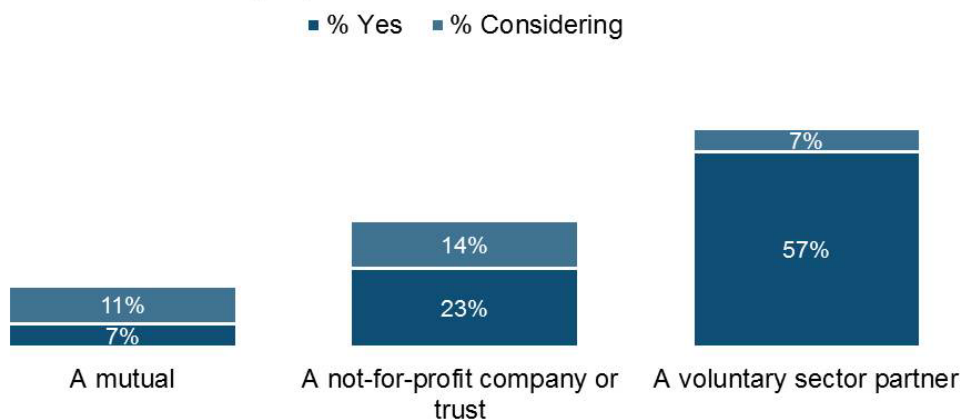
Almost three in five (57%) LAs commissioned a voluntary sector partner to deliver children’s services, while a further seven per cent were considering doing so.

Use of not-for-profit companies or trusts for delivery of children’s services was less common, although around a quarter (23%) of authorities currently commissioned such bodies. A further 14% were considering doing so in the future.

Comparatively few authorities commissioned mutuals to deliver aspects of children’s services, with just seven per cent currently doing this. However, more than one in ten authorities said that they were considering commissioning mutuals (11%).

Figure 5: Commissioning of alternative providers

Q. Does your local authority currently commission any of the following types of organisations to deliver any aspect of its children’s services?



Base: All responding authorities (n=88)

County councils appeared to be more likely to commission these types of partners. For example, almost half (47%) of county councils commissioned not-for-profit companies or trusts to deliver children’s services, compared to one in six (17%) unitary authorities. Further, 84% of county councils commissioned voluntary sector partners, compared to 49% of unitary authorities.

Information sharing and multi-agency referrals

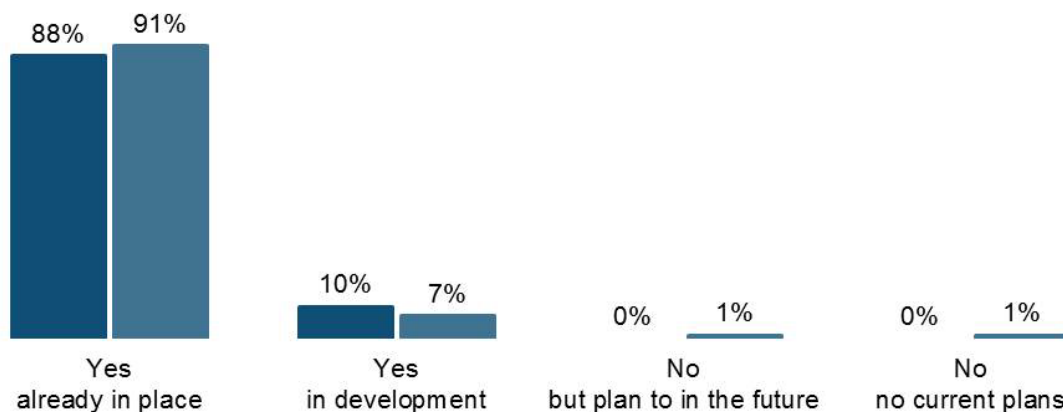
Almost all LAs that responded to this survey had a mutually agreed information sharing protocol regarding the sharing of information about vulnerable children with other local agencies either already in place (88%), or in development (10%).

A similarly high proportion of LAs had multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals. As Figure 6 shows, 91% of authorities had multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals in place, while seven per cent had them in development. Just two per cent of authorities did not have multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals in development.

Figure 6: Prevalence of information sharing protocols and multi-agency processes

Q. Does your local authority have...

- A mutually agreed information sharing protocol in place with other local agencies regarding the sharing of information about vulnerable children?
- Multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals?



Base: All responding authorities (n=91)

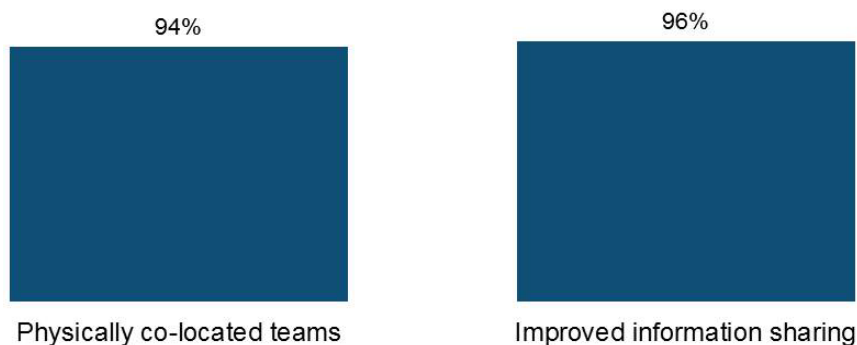
Among LAs with multi-agency processes already in place (Figure 7), a large majority involved physically co-located teams (94%). Unitary authorities appeared to be more likely than county councils to have physically co-located teams (97% compared to 83%), although this difference is not statistically significant.

Figure 7: Experiences of multi-agency processes

Q. Does this multi-agency process for dealing with child welfare referrals involve physically co-located teams?

Q. Do you think that this process has improved information sharing?

% Yes



Base: All who multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals already in place (n=82)

LAs tended to be very positive about the impact of multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals. Virtually all LAs with a multi-agency process in place felt that this process had improved information sharing (Figure 7).

LAs suggest a number of reasons behind the improved information sharing. Most commonly, LAs said that multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals had made access to information quicker and more efficient. Agencies were now more willing to share information.

“There is much improved information sharing as a result of the MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) arrangements, which enable information to be speedily shared and decisions made on the basis of this.”

Unitary authority

“Better shared understanding of the need to share information and multi-agency threshold training has contributed to this.”

Unitary authority

Some LAs also highlighted the improved relationships as a result of the multi-agency processes. They had resulted in greater shared understanding, with more open dialogue and debate. This, in turn, had improved the identification of risks.

“Easy access and co-location allows for quality dialogue, debate and discussion, facilitating timely quality multi-agency decision making. In turn this ensures proportionate protective measures are taken in timely manner.”

Unitary authority

“The quality and timeliness of information sharing has improved. It has become possible to identify and assess risks that would have previously remained hidden.”

Unitary authority

The small minority of LAs who did not feel that having a multi-agency process in place had improved information sharing expressed varying reasons for this. For instance, one view was that these systems brought about confusion and “*information overload*”. Another was that they were not expansive enough to include all professionals working with the child, including those with the best knowledge of their circumstances.

Social care workforce

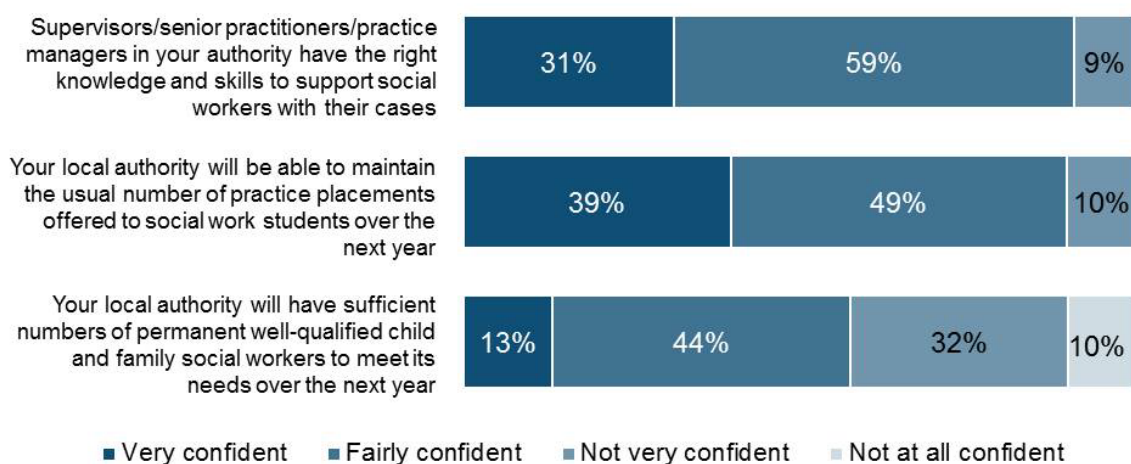
On balance, LAs were confident about the short-term future of their social care workforce, but a notable minority did have some concerns over whether they would have sufficient staff in the future.

Nine in ten (90%) were confident that supervisors/senior practitioners/practice managers had the knowledge and skills to support social workers with their cases and 89% were confident that they would be able to maintain the usual number of practice placements offered to social work students over the next year. Just over half (56%) were confident that they would have sufficient numbers of permanent well-qualified child and family social workers to meet their needs over the next year (Figure 8).

A large majority (91%) of LAs felt that social workers were able to keep up to date with the latest research on social work practice very or fairly well (Figure 9).

Figure 8: Confidence and sufficiency of social care workforce

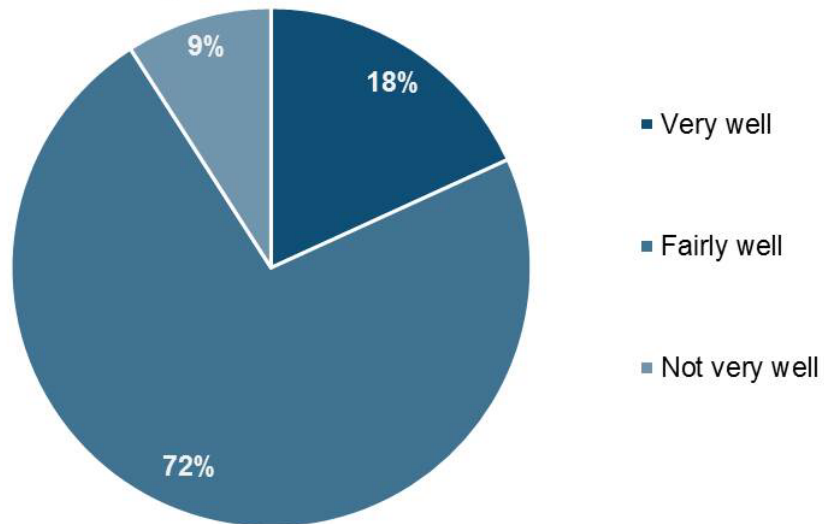
Q. How confident, if at all, are you that...



Base: All responding authorities (n=87)

Figure 9: Social workers' familiarity with the latest research

Q. How well, if at all, do you think social workers in your authority keep up to date with latest research on social work practice?



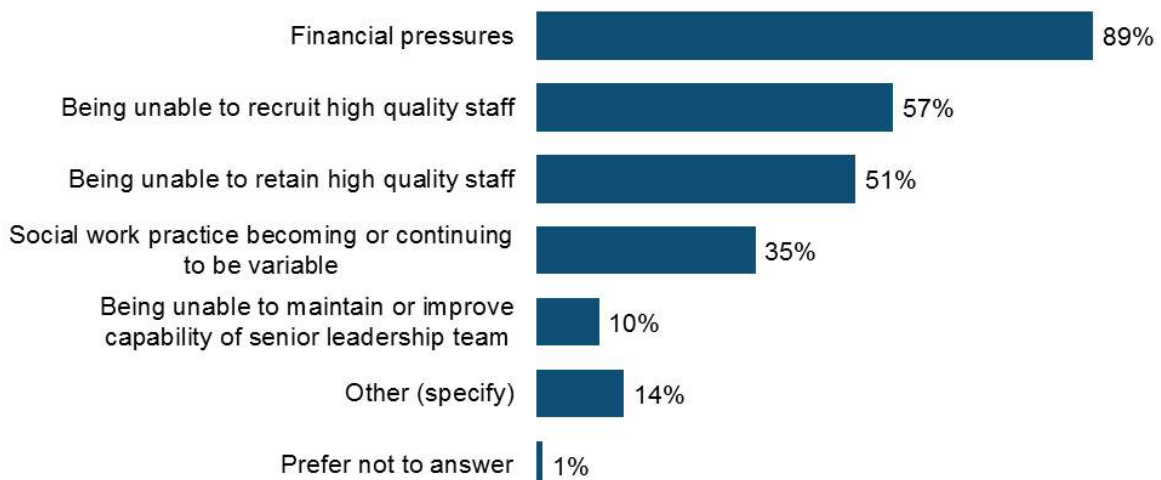
Base: All responding authorities (n=87)

Risks to service delivery

Local authorities were asked to select up to three main risks to the effective delivery of children's social care services over the next 3 years from a list of six options (financial pressures; being unable to recruit high quality staff; being unable to retain high quality staff; social work practice becoming or continuing to be variable; being unable to maintain or improve capability of senior leadership team; other). 89% of authorities selected financial pressures as one of the main risks (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Main risks to delivery of children's social care services

Q. In your opinion, what are the main risks to the effective delivery of children's social care services in your local authority over the next 3 years? Please select up to 3.



Base: All responding authorities (n=88)

More than half of authorities selected recruitment and retention of staff as risks to the effective delivery of children’s social care services in their LA. Overall, 57% of authorities selected recruitment of high quality staff and 51% selected retention of current staff as risks.

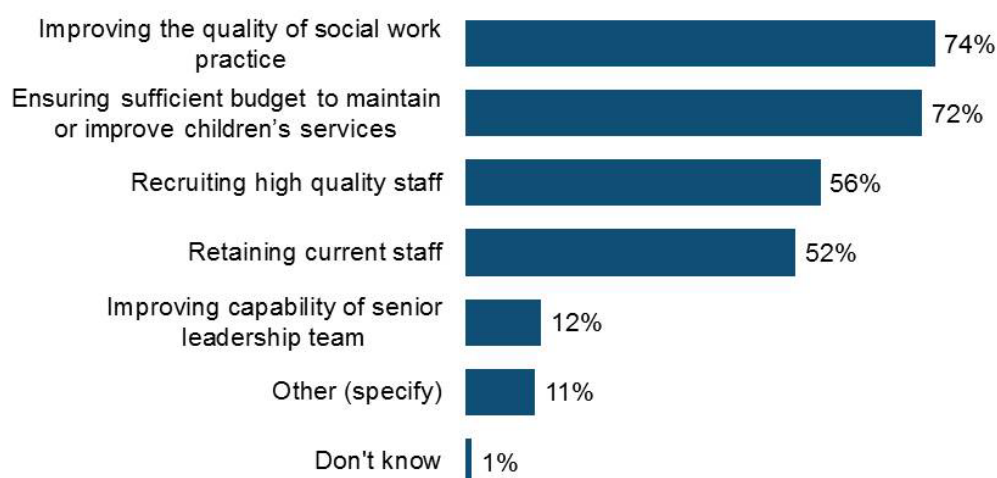
The variability of social work practice (35%) and the ability to maintain or improve the capability of the senior leadership team (10%) was less commonly selected as risks to effective delivery. 'Other' risks that LAs expressed concerns about included increasing demand (both as a result of increasing need and of changes to the legislated scope of LA services), and upskilling of current staff.

Priorities for improving services

LAs’ top priorities for improving children’s social care services over the next 3 years centred around improving the quality of social work practice (74%) and ensuring sufficient budget to maintain or improve children’s services (72%). Recruiting (56%) and retaining (52%) high quality staff were each a priority for around half of authorities.

Figure 11: Top priorities for improving children’s social care services

Q. In your opinion, what are your local authority’s top priorities in improving children’s social care services over the next 3 years? Please name up to 3.



Base: All responding authorities (n=89)

A number of LAs suggested that central government needed to ensure that local government had sufficient funds to meet increasing demand.

“Ensuring local government has sufficient funds to adequately staff children’s social care departments, based on a workforce with low case levels. Increasing the support for the step-Up to Social Work Programme. Funding of initiatives which support academic links to NQSW Academies. Supporting evidence

based practice initiatives, e.g. Signs of Safety. Reconsidering proposed accreditation scheme in light of NQSW/AYSE existing requirements.”

Unitary authority

“Additional funding to respond to increased demand. Action to reduce the impact of case law and statements of the president of the family division on LA e.g. use of Section 20.”

Unitary authority

“Ensure enough budget to enable us to provide good statutory services and targeted support. Further reductions in targeted support and early help results in greater pressure at the front door and escalation of risk.”

Unitary authority

However, financial issues were not the only areas that authorities highlighted. One common theme was that LAs would like the government to take measures to promote the role of social work, improve its image and increase respect in it as a profession. Related to this, authorities mentioned steps that could be taken to make agency work less attractive.

“Promote the profile and increase the respect of front line practitioners and social work.”

Unitary authority

“The recognition of social work as a quality professional service that is doing a good job safeguarding children [...] funding to embed good practice and develop the profession.”

Unitary authority

“Use the accreditation of social workers as a means within which to make agency work less attractive.”

Unitary authority

Other suggestions included reducing the demand, expectations and administrative burden on local authorities and being more flexible in supporting innovative practice. Authorities would also like to see Government do more to share examples of best practice.

“Allow for a less process driven system and greater professional discretion, and reform Ofsted so that it becomes a vehicle to support learning and improvement in practice.”

Unitary authority

“Being flexible in terms of statutory guidance around social care assessment processes to reflect innovative practice (as per Family Group Conferencing/Restorative Practice Model).”

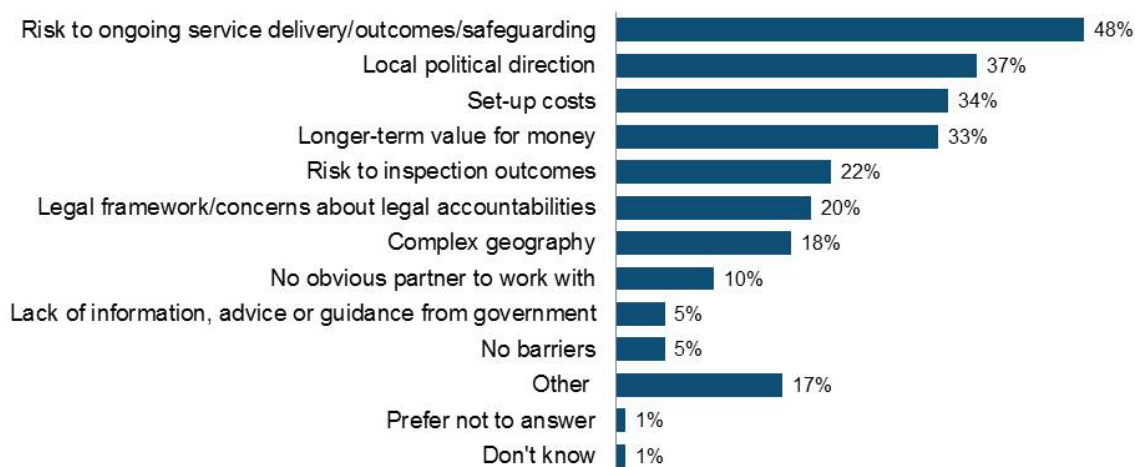
Unitary authority

Barriers to adopting new models of service delivery

Five per cent of LAs experienced no barriers to adopting new models of service delivery for children’s social care services (Figure 12). The remaining 95 per cent of LAs reported a range of barriers.

Figure 12: Main barriers to adoption of new models of service delivery

Q. What do you think are the biggest barriers to your local authority adopting a new model of service delivery for any of its children’s social care services?
Please select up to three options.



Base: All responding authorities (n=87)

The most common barrier appeared to be (perceived) risks to current practice. Almost half (48%) of LAs said that the risk to ongoing service delivery, outcomes or safeguarding was a barrier to adopting new models of service delivery. The range and prevalence of other barriers to innovation shown in Figure 12 suggested that risks differ fairly significantly across different authorities.

Adoption and children in care

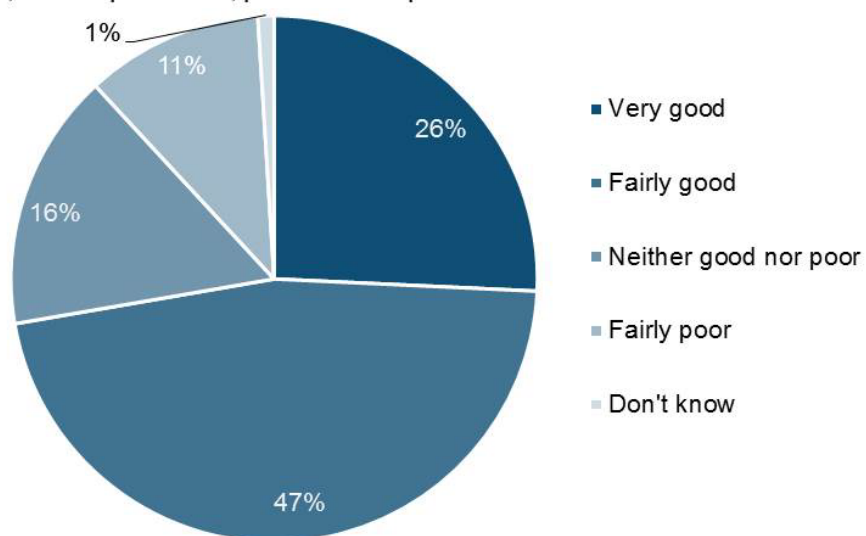
Care proceedings

When thinking about the quality of their relationships with local judiciaries over care proceedings and, in particular, permanent options for children, most LAs (72%) felt that their relationship was good. Indeed, 26% felt that their relationship was very good.

While no authorities rated their relationship with the local judiciary as very poor, one in nine (11%) felt that it was fairly poor (Figure 13).

Figure 13: LA relationship with local judiciary

Q. How would you rate your local authority's relationship with the local judiciary over care proceedings, and in particular, permanent options for children?



Base: All responding authorities (n=86)

Sufficiency of care placements

Just over one-third (34%) of LAs felt that it was fairly or very likely that there would be sufficient care placements for all children in their authority over the next year (Figure 14). A further 19% either didn't know or felt it was neither likely nor unlikely there would be sufficient care placements over the next year.

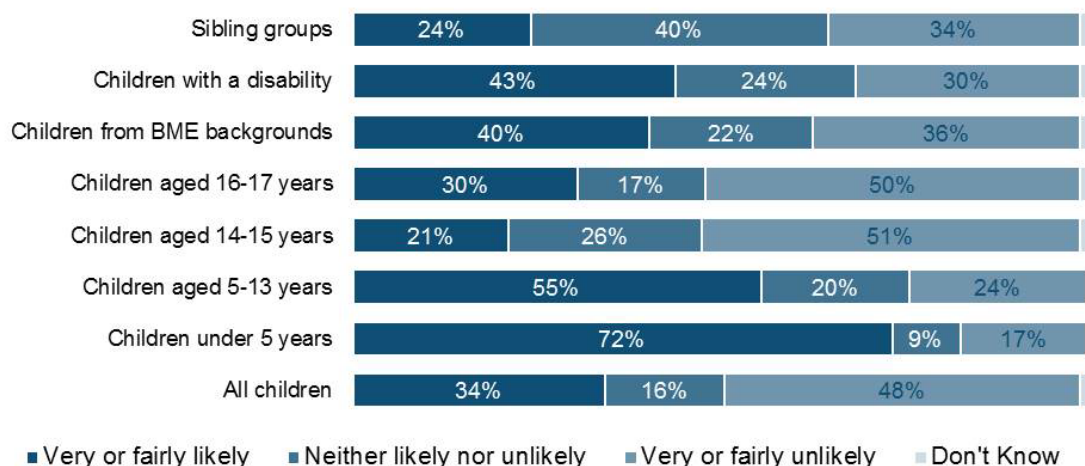
LAs were less confident about the availability of care placements for older children. While 72% of LAs thought that it was fairly or very likely that there would be sufficient care placements for children under 5, this decreased to 55% for children aged 5-13, 21% for children aged 14-15 and 30% for 16-17yrs.

Sufficient care placements for children from BME backgrounds (40%), children with a disability (43%) and sibling groups (24%) were each anticipated to be fairly or very likely by less than half of LAs.

The results suggested that authorities in the North of England tended to be less confident that they would have sufficient care placements over the next year. However, the differences were not statistically significant.

Figure 14: Likelihood of meeting project need for care placements

Q. In your opinion, how likely, if at all, is it that your local authority will have sufficient care placements to meet projected need over the next year for:



Base: All responding authorities (n=86)

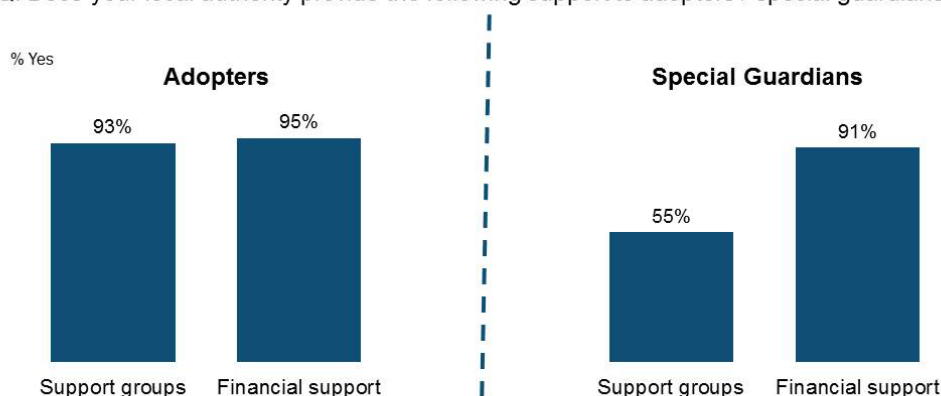
Support for adopters and special guardians

A large majority of LAs reported that they provided financial support beyond the Adoption Support Fund, both to adopters (95%) and to special guardians (91%).

However, there was a discrepancy in the support groups available. While 93% of authorities provided support groups for adopters, 55% provided support groups for special guardians (Figure 15).

Figure 15: Support provided to adopters and special guardians

Q. Does your local authority provide the following support to adopters / special guardians?



Base: All responding authorities (n=87)

Engaging care leavers in service development

When thinking about what their authority did to seek to take account of the views, thoughts and feelings of care leavers in the development of services for care leavers and looked after children, it seemed that Children in Care Councils were widely used across authorities.

“The Children in Care Council provides effective feedback on the experiences and challenges faced by Care Leavers.”

Unitary authority

“Members of LA’s Children in Care Council are involved in activities and events and consultations which contribute to service design for children and young people.”

Unitary authority

“Care Council - a monthly meeting of looked after children and care leavers aged 13+ to express their wishes and feelings about being in care”

Unitary authority

In addition to Children in Care Councils, authorities listed other mechanisms for including care leavers. For instance, some authorities had a care leavers group, while others mentioned young people’s panels, care ambassadors, or Children’s Rights Officers. Another key strategy was to provide opportunities for care leavers to communicate with senior leaders within the LA, and to participate in important decision-making including the appointment of LA staff.

Early Years and Childcare

This chapter reports on key findings of Early Years and Childcare. It begins by analysing the ways in which LAs monitored and supported the sufficiency of the Early Years and childcare workforce in their area. It then reports on the range of ways in which LAs engaged with Early Years providers. Finally, it looks at how LAs assessed the sufficiency of childcare places in their authority, particularly with regard to the free child care allowances for some two, three and four year olds.

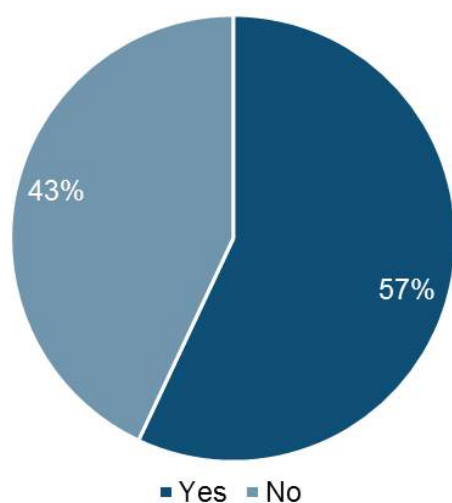
Early Years and childcare workforce

Monitoring workforce sufficiency

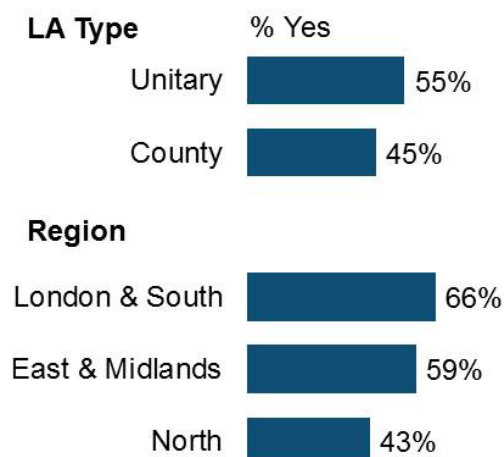
A majority of upper tier local authorities in England monitored the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce in their area (57%). However, a relatively large minority did not have any mechanism to monitor workforce sufficiency (43%).

Figure 16: Whether LAs monitor the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce

Q. Does your local authority monitor the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce in your local authority?



Base: All responding authorities (n=85)



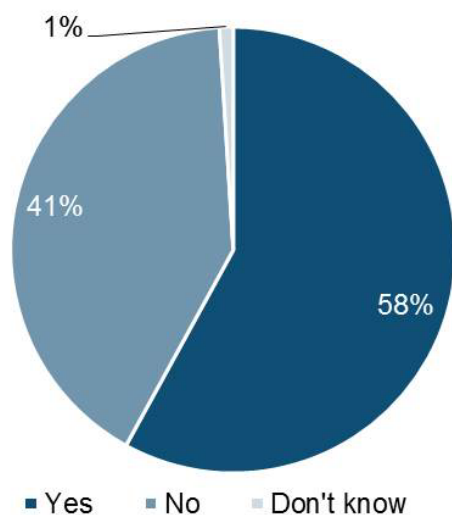
The results indicated that there was a potential geographic discrepancy when it came to monitoring the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce. Local authorities based in London and the South were the most likely to monitor the sufficiency of their Early Years workforce (66%), with authorities in the North the least likely (43%). However, very small base sizes for local authorities mean that this difference was not statistically significant and should therefore only be treated as indicative of a possible trend.

Recruitment support for Early Years providers

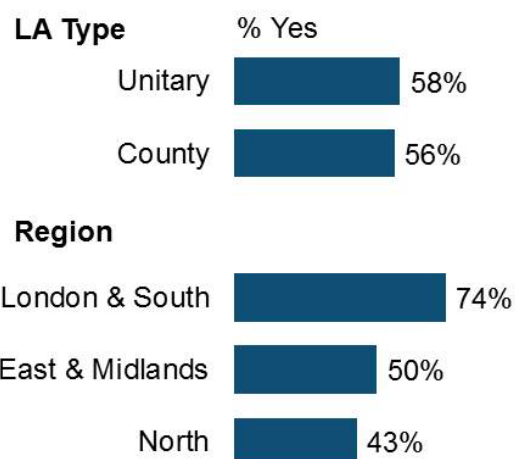
A similar proportion of LAs supported Early Years providers in recruiting staff (58%). However, support in recruiting staff did not appear to be linked to monitoring the sufficiency of the workforce. Of the 49 authorities surveyed that supported Early Years providers in recruiting staff, 29 monitored the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce while 20 did not.

Figure 17: Whether LAs support Early Years providers in recruiting staff

Q. Does your local authority support Early Years providers in recruiting staff?



Base: All responding authorities (n=85)



Support for Early Years providers in recruiting staff did not appear to be influenced by the type of authority. However, authorities in London and the South were significantly more likely to provide support for Early Years providers in recruiting staff than those in the North (74% compared to 43%).

Most LAs that did support Early Years providers in recruiting staff reported recruitment difficulties (Figure 18). In particular, three in five said that providers found it difficult to recruit Level 2 staff (61%), four in five reported that providers found it difficult to recruit Level 3 staff (80%) and seven in ten said that providers found it difficult to recruit Early Years teachers (71%)¹.

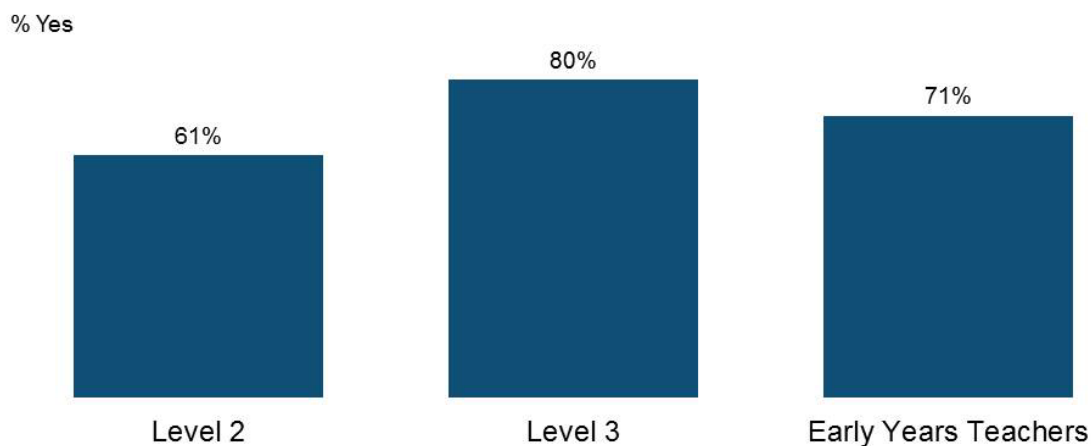
The 49 LAs who supported providers in their area were asked if providers found it difficult to recruit staff at the following levels: level 2, level 3 and early years teachers. Twelve per cent of these authorities that supported Early Years providers reported that providers in their area had no difficulties in recruitment. Sixteen per cent reported that providers

¹ For details of the different qualification levels, see [the Early Years Qualification List](#).

experienced difficulties in recruiting staff at one of these levels, 18% reported that providers experienced difficulties in recruiting staff in two of the three levels, and just over half (53%) reported that providers experienced difficulties at all three levels.

Figure 18: Difficulty in recruiting Early Years staff

Q. In your experience, do Early Years Providers in your local authority find it difficult to recruit staff at any of the following levels?

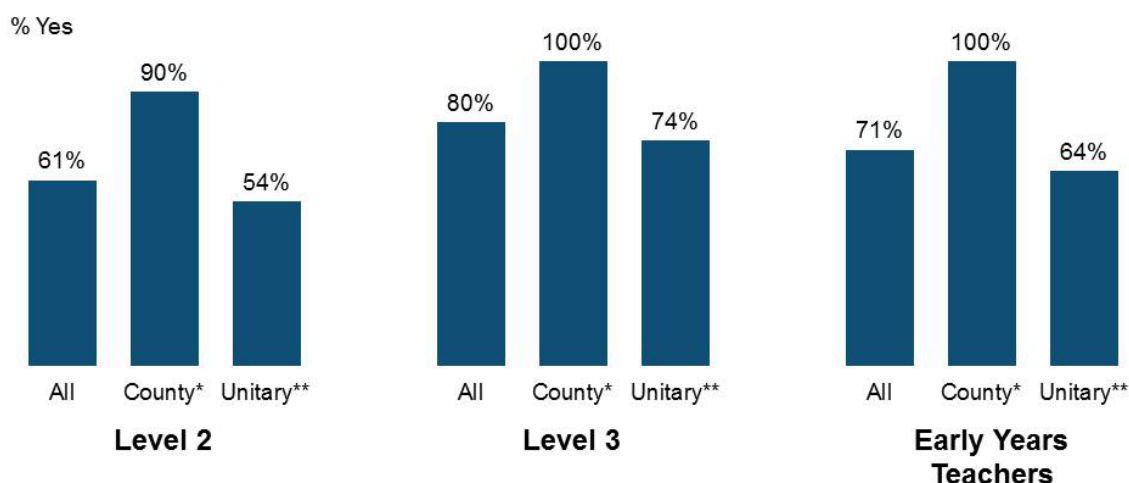


Base: All who support Early Years providers in recruiting staff (n=49)

The findings suggest that recruiting staff was particularly difficult for county councils, with all surveyed reporting difficulty in recruiting Level 3 staff and Early Years teachers (Figure 19). However, the base size for this group was very small, so the results should be treated as indicative of a possible trend only, and were not statistically significant.

Figure 19: Difficulty in recruiting Early Years staff – by authority type

Q. In your experience, do Early Years Providers in your local authority find it difficult to recruit staff at any of the following levels?



Base: All who support Early Years providers in recruiting staff (All: n=49; County: n=10; Unitary: n=39)

* = Very small base size ** = Small base size

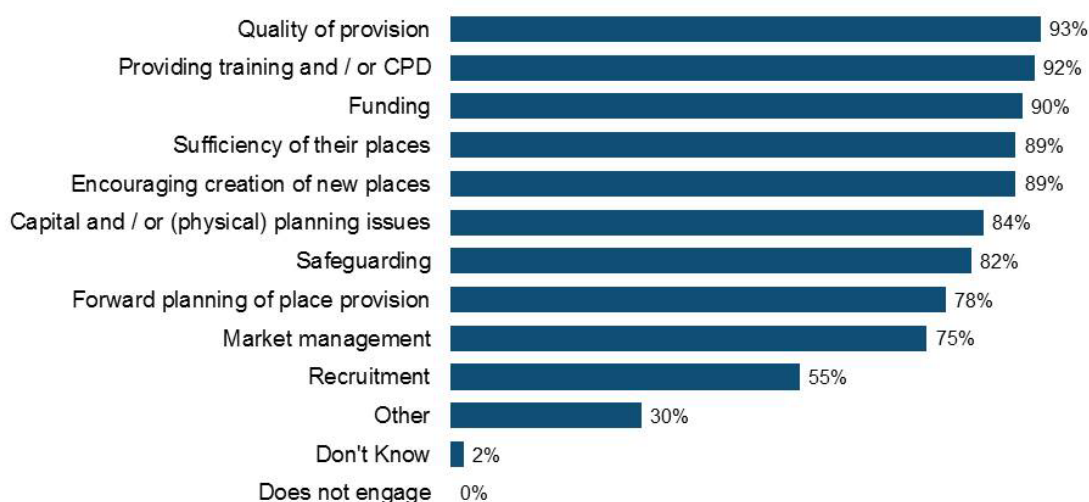
Engagement with Early Years and childcare providers

All participating LAs engaged with Early Years and childcare providers in their area. The most common areas for engagement were on the quality of provision (93%), providing training and/or CPD (92%), funding (90%), the sufficiency of places (89%) and encouraging the creation of new places (89%).

The full list of issues on which authorities engaged with Early Years and childcare providers is provided in Figure 20 below.

Figure 20: Issues on which local authorities engage with Early Years and childcare providers

Q. On what issues does your local authority engage with Early Years and childcare providers? (Select all that apply)



Base: All responding authorities (n=83)

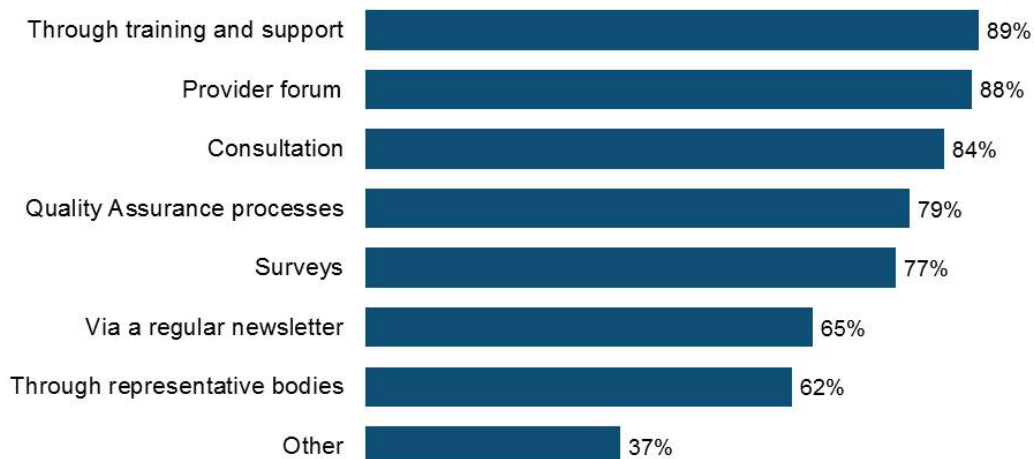
Local authorities used a number of different modes to engage with Early Years and childcare providers (Figure 21). Around nine in ten engaged via training and support (89%) or through a Provider forum (88%).

Other popular modes of engagement were consultations (84%), Quality Assurance processes (79%) and surveys (77%). In addition, around two in three authorities engaged via a regular newsletter (66%) or through representative bodies (62%).

Indeed, authorities tended to use multiple modes of engagement with Early Years and childcare providers. As Figure 22 shows, more than three in four authorities used at least five different modes of engagement.

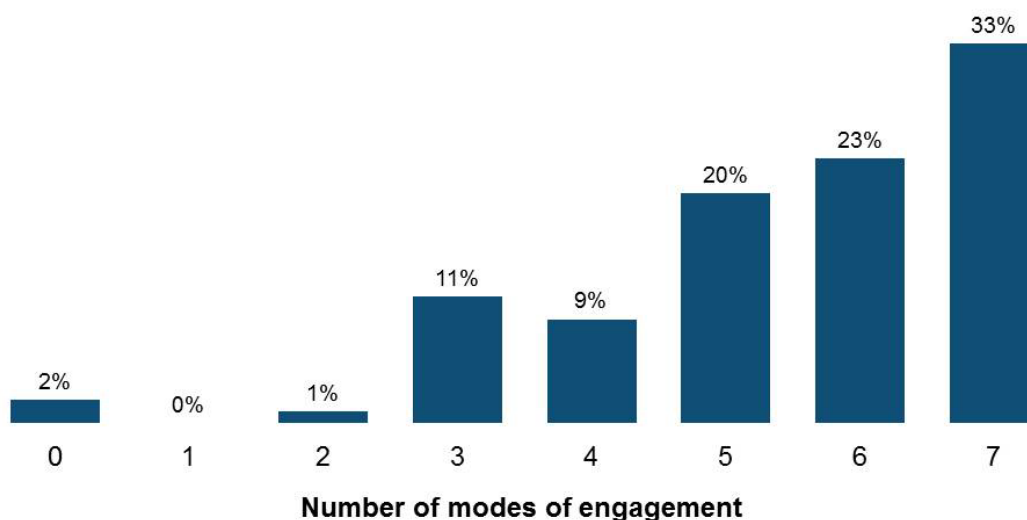
Figure 21: Modes of engagement with Early Years & childcare providers

Q. In what ways does your local authority engage with Early Years and childcare providers? (Select all that apply)



Base: All responding authorities (n=81)

Figure 22: Number of modes of engagement with Early Years & childcare providers

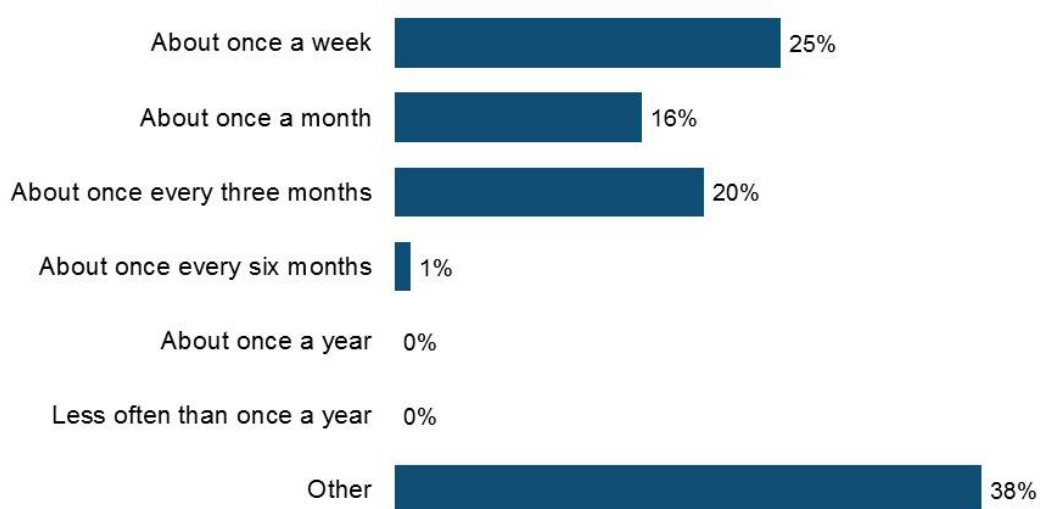


Base: All responding authorities (n=81)

Many LAs were unable to quantify how frequently they engaged with Early Years and childcare providers (Figure 23). While a quarter said that they engaged about once a week (25%), 16% said they engaged about once a month and 20% said they engaged about once every three months, a large proportion gave an alternative response (38%).

Figure 23: Frequency of engagement with Early Years & Childcare providers

Q. How often does your local authority engage with Early Years and childcare providers?



Base: All responding authorities (n=81)

This lack of certainty tended to be because engagement is flexible and changes based on the needs of the provider².

“New providers and those preparing for an Ofsted inspection get weekly visits over a short period [...]. Others generally are visited termly. Our update meetings are held termly and we engage with other providers through training events and an annual conference.”

Unitary authority

“Frequency depends on individual settings needs, current issues, priorities etc. We are in contact with settings across the region as a whole on a daily basis. Different tasks, actions, consultations etc. take place at varying intervals e.g. termly, monthly, annually etc.”

Unitary authority

“Contact with providers happens on a daily basis across the team and sometimes several times a day if a provider identifies a particular issue that requires support. Monthly training sessions take place, termly SENCO forums, termly PVI network

² The following quotes are verbatim ‘Other specify’ responses to the question ‘How often does your local authority engage with Early Years and childcare providers?’.

events and other ad-hoc events such as current 30 hour workshops.”

Unitary authority

We have a regular dialogue with our providers on any of the above issues. In terms of a balance of support we use a graduated response to level of need which is reviewed each term and shared with the providers. We have a proactive and highly regarded team of support officers. We hold a termly forum for all providers of funded early education.

Unitary authority

Further, authorities used different modes of engagement at different times. Authorities often had regular formal engagement mechanisms, such as training sessions, forums, networks and events, as well as informal engagement processes. It appeared that authorities would often provide daily access to informal communication channels – such as telephone and email – with more formal methods provided at scheduled times.

“Providers have daily access to a dedicated EY and childcare team by telephone and email. Advisors will visit each provider every term if required and more frequently if the provider has a less than good Ofsted inspection outcome or has specific difficulties requiring more targeted support. Training is provided approx. every 2 weeks. Cluster meetings take place each term.”

Unitary authority

“[We are] available all the time for social media and early years helpline; weekly to fortnightly for emailed newsletter; termly for provider briefing events; ongoing for training.”

County Council

“We have constant engagement with providers through information gathering and support visits which could be as frequent as once a week, provider meetings are on a termly basis and conferences once a year. We also engage with providers through task and finish groups, cluster meetings and others on an ad hoc basis.”

Unitary authority

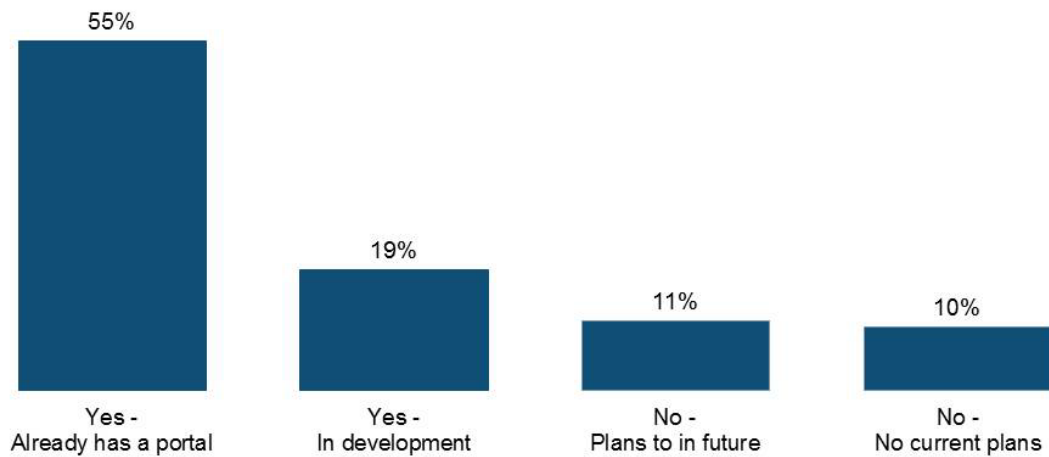
Three in four local authorities had, or were developing, a childcare provider portal to allow providers to check the eligibility of children for Early Years Pupil Premium, Free

School Meals and childcare funded provision (74%). More than half had a portal already in place (55%), while one in five had a portal in development (19%).

One in five LAs did not have a childcare provider portal (21%). Around half of these planned to introduce one in the future, while the remainder had no current plans to do so.

Figure 24: Childcare provider portals in local authorities

Q. Does your local authority have a childcare provider portal?



Base: All responding authorities (n=81)

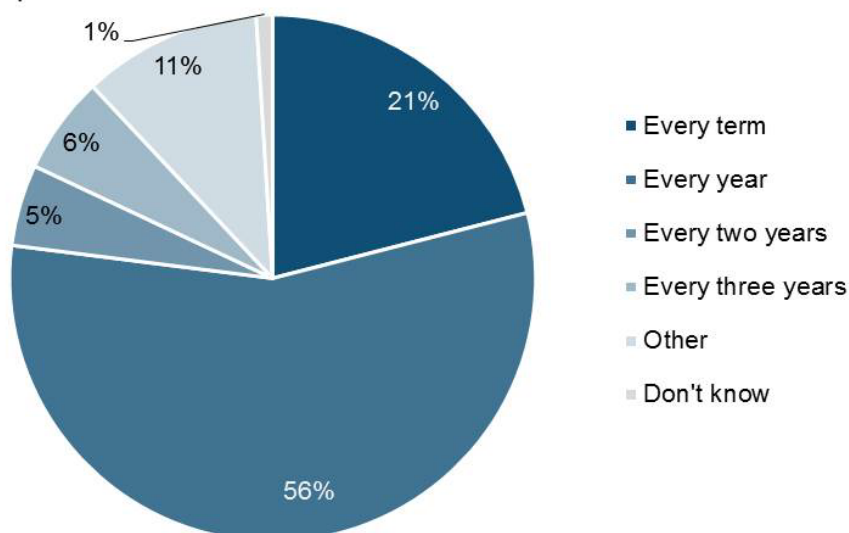
The results suggest that childcare portals were more common among authorities with a higher Children in Need rate. However, due to small base sizes, this difference was not statistically significant and therefore should be treated as indicative of a possible trend only.

Assessing the sufficiency of childcare places

All LAs surveyed assessed the sufficiency of childcare places within the authority (Figure 25). Most LAs updated their assessment on an annual basis (56%), although one in five did this on a more regular, termly basis. Fewer than one in ten LAs updated the assessment less often than once a year.

Figure 25: Assessing the sufficiency of childcare places in the LA

Q. How often, if at all, does your local authority update its assessment of sufficiency of childcare places?



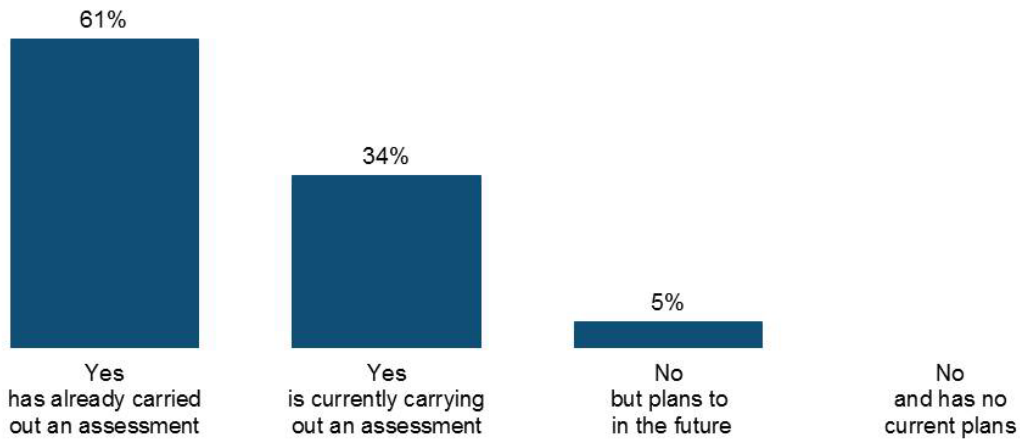
Base: All responding authorities (n=84)

'Other' responses included updating the assessment on an ongoing, 'live' basis, conducting the assessment annually or once every three years but reviewing it more on a more regular basis, and having different arrangements for different areas within an authority.

Further, most LAs had already assessed the sufficiency of childcare places with regards to the extended 30 hour entitlement for three and four year olds (61%), and an additional one-third of LAs (34%) were in the process of doing so (Figure 26). Five per cent of local authorities had not carried out an assessment to date, and all of these said that they planned to do so in the future. Indeed, no local authorities said that they had no plans to assess sufficiency with regard to this change.

Figure 26: Assessing sufficiency of childcare places for the extended 30 hour entitlement

Q. Has your local authority carried out an assessment of the sufficiency of childcare places in your authority with regards to the extended 30 hour entitlement for three- and four-year-olds?

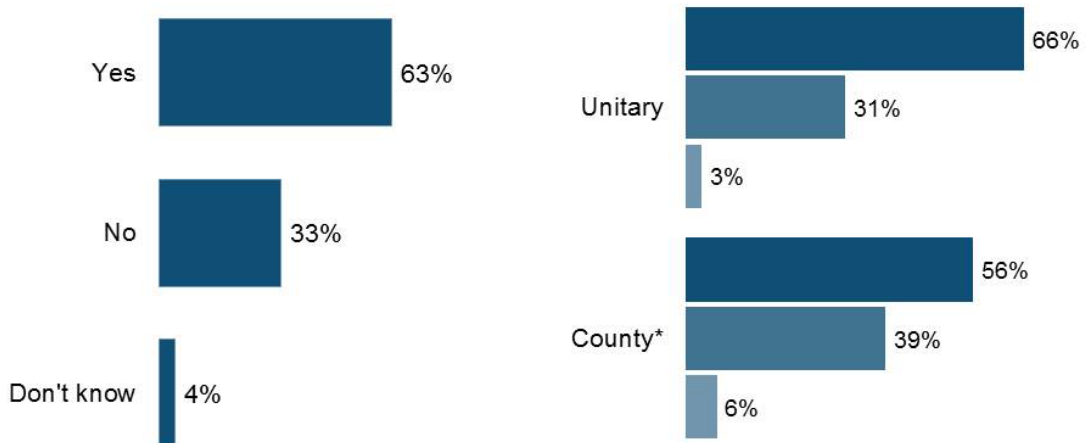


Base: All responding authorities (n=82)

More than three in five (63%) DCSs had scrutinised their LA’s plans for providing the extended 30 hour entitlement. However, in a third of LAs, the DCS had not scrutinised these plans (33%). DCS scrutiny of plans appeared to be more common in Unitary than in County authorities (Figure 27). However, small base sizes mean that this difference was not statistically significant and should therefore only be treated as indicative of a possible trend.

Figure 27: DCS Scrutiny of plans for the extended 30 hour entitlement

Q. Has your Director of Children’s Services (DCS) scrutinised your authority’s plans for providing the extended 30 hour entitlement for three-and four-year-olds?



Base: All responding authorities (All: n=82; County: n=18; Unitary: n=64)

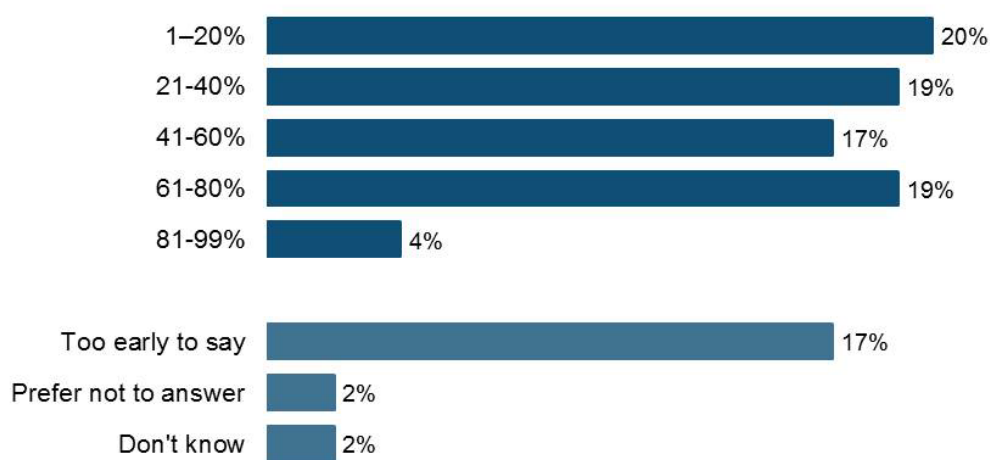
* = Small base size

When considering what proportion of childcare providers in their authority offered to stretch the current (15 hours) entitlement of funded hours over more than 38 weeks, around one in five (20%) LAs said that they did not know, or that it was too early to say.

Among those LAs that did have an idea of the proportion of providers offering to stretch the hours, there was no great consistency in estimates. As Figure 28 shows, the proportion was spread fairly evenly between up to one-fifth and four-fifths of providers. No LAs reported that none of or all of their providers offer to stretch the hours.

Figure 28: Proportion of providers offering to stretch funded hours over more than 38 weeks

Q. What proportion of childcare providers in your local authority currently offer to stretch funded hours (the 15 hour entitlement for three- and four-year-olds, and for some two-year-olds) over more than 38 weeks?



Base: All responding authorities (n=81)

Special Educational Needs and Disability

This chapter reports on findings from the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) policy area. Following on from the previous chapter, it begins by reporting on the support that LAs offered for families with a disabled child in finding childcare. It then turns to look at the systems that LAs had in place for monitoring SEND provision. Finally, it explores the ways in which education, health and social care services worked together to fulfil their duties for SEND under the Children and Families Act

Support for families with a disabled child in finding childcare

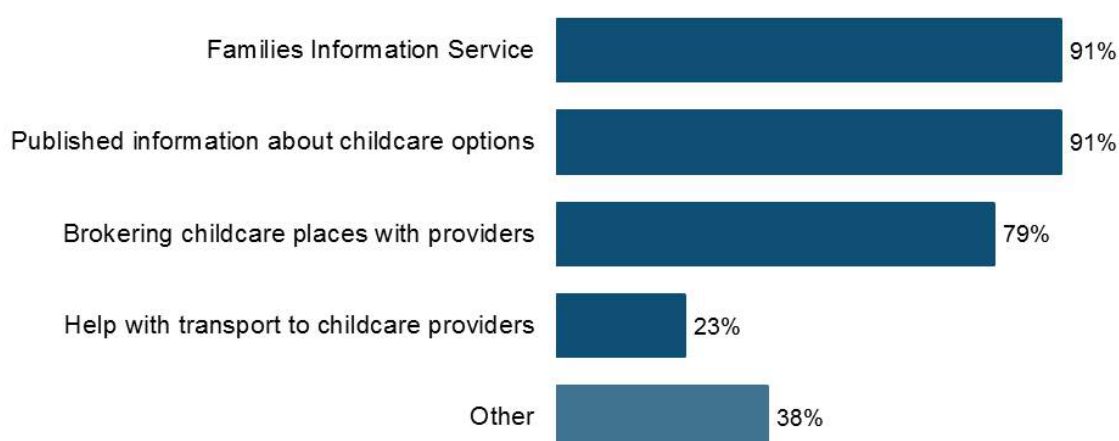
All responding LAs offered support for parents with a disabled child in finding childcare (Figure 29). Nine in ten (91%) LAs published information about childcare options, and the same proportion supported these parents through their Families Information Service.

A significant majority (79%) brokered childcare places with providers for families with disabled children. Almost one in four (23%) LAs offered help with transport to childcare providers for disabled children.

A significant minority (38%) of LAs also reported offering “other” support for families with a disabled child in finding childcare. Key areas of support included funding for childcare places and for disabled children, one-to-one support (e.g. through SEND teams) for parents navigating the provision landscape, and printed and online guidance about the local offer.

Figure 29: Support for families with a disabled child in finding childcare

Q. What support, if any, does your local authority offer parents with a disabled child in finding suitable childcare?

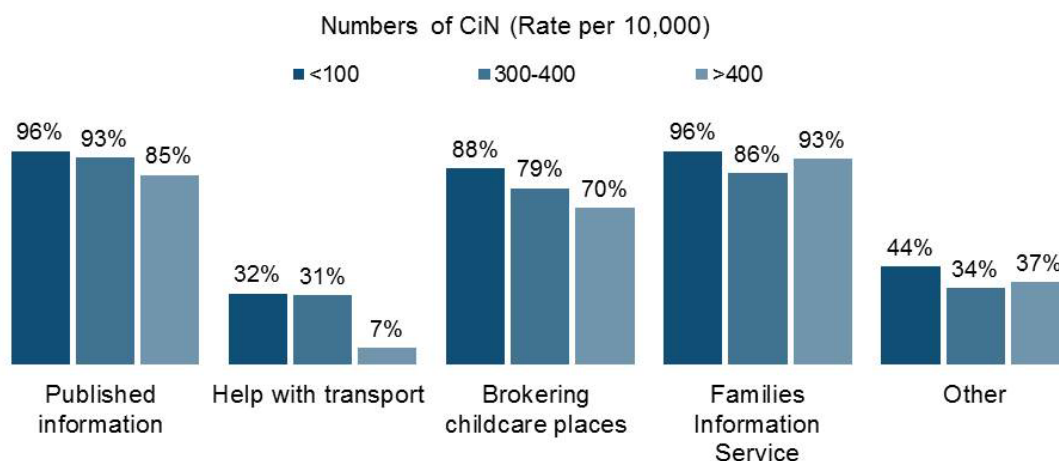


Base: All responding authorities (n=81)

It appeared that LAs with higher rates of Children in Need (CiN) were less likely to offer parents with a disabled child some forms of support in finding suitable childcare, possibly reflecting the higher demand they receive for other services (Figure 30). In particular, LAs with the highest rates of CiN were significantly less likely to offer help with transport to childcare providers.

Figure 30: Support for families with a disabled child in finding childcare by rate of CiN

Q. What support, if any, does your local authority offer parents with a disabled child in finding suitable childcare?



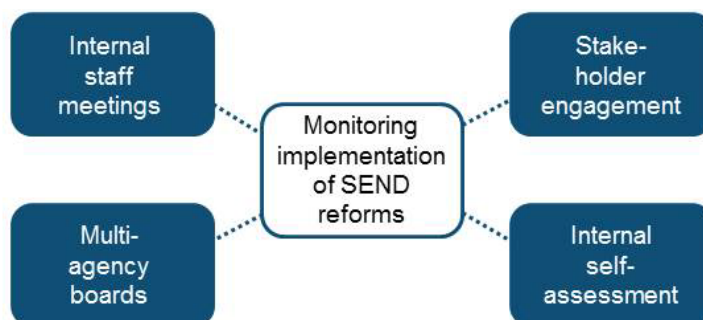
Base: All responding authorities (All: n=81; <300 = 25; 300-400 = 29; >400 = 27)

Monitoring SEND provision

Systems for monitoring progress in implementing SEND reforms

LAs described a range of systems used to monitor progress in implementing SEND reforms, summarised in Figure 31 below.

Figure 31: Key systems used to monitor progress in implementing SEND reforms³



³ Key themes identified through analysis of open-ended responses to the question: 'What systems, if any, does your local authority have in place for monitoring SEND issues, particularly with regard to progress implementing the SEND reforms?'

Multi-agency boards for monitoring progress included SEND Partnership, strategy, improvement and implementation boards, which brought together external (usually professional) stakeholders to drive strategy and implementation. These groups could cover SEND as a whole, or focus on specific sub-issues. They could also be sub-groups of wider boards such as the Schools Forum.

“A multi-agency SEND Board is in place - meets quarterly, links to other bodies [...] LA and health work together in shared cycles of assess-plan-do-review.”

Unitary Authority

Internal staff meetings provided regular opportunities for SEN managers, Directors of Children’s Services and other relevant internal staff to monitor progress and to identify and offer solutions to any issues arising.

“Monthly meetings of an SEND implementation group have been in place throughout the process and continue.”

Unitary Authority

“Regular communication between SEN management departmental managers.”

Unitary Authority

LAs also **engaged with stakeholders** including service users, parents and educational institutions to monitor progress. This engagement included surveys, consultations and focus groups, as well as inviting parents to be part of the multi-agency boards described above.

“Customer feedback surveys and questionnaires; followed up with in depth conversations with our service users.”

Country Authority

“Engagement and co-production with children and young people and their parents and carers at earliest stage has been central to [our] implementation of the reforms.”

Unitary Authority

Finally, LAs described developing frameworks such as scorecards and spreadsheets to **self-assess** progress, including building on Ofsted self-assessment frameworks and the monitoring information returned to DfE on a termly basis. One approach was to monitor this data internally, while an alternative approach was to use the data submitted to DfE to compare the LA’s progress with progress in other LAs.

“A key outcome from these [multi-agency / stakeholder] meetings has been the production of a self-assessment which set out strengths and areas of improvement [...] This self-assessment is helping to prioritise areas for developments around SEND reforms and operational practice [...] a Peer Review is being planned for December 2016.”

County Authority

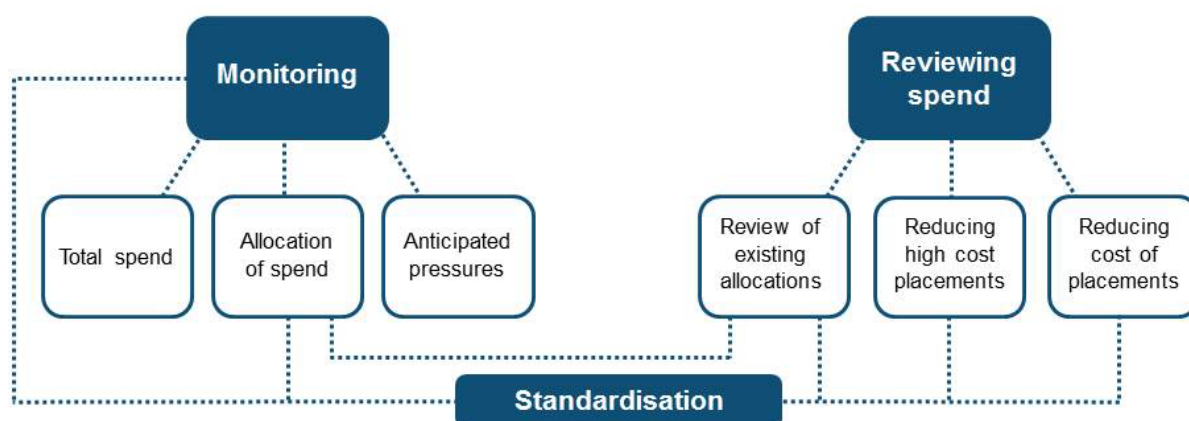
“The LA completes the termly survey to the DfE and uses the returns and information feeding into those to compare against previous returns.”

Unitary Authority

Systems for monitoring pressures on high needs budgets

LAs had a number of systems in place to monitor pressures on their high needs budgets, and to review and indeed reduce spend where possible (Figure 32).

Figure 32: Systems for monitoring high needs budgets⁴



Firstly, finance departments tended to be responsible for **monitoring total spend, allocation of spend and anticipated pressures** (e.g. through waitlists). These teams reported to Directors of Children’s Services, Directors for Education, SEND commissioners and Heads of Services, as well as to Schools Forums and other external stakeholders. Casework teams and monitoring teams were in turn expected to be required to report to these Finance teams.

⁴ Key themes identified through analysis of open-ended responses to the question: ‘What systems, if any, does your local authority have in place for monitoring SEND issues, particularly with regard to pressures on high needs budgets?’

Further, a number of LAs described developing internal **proformas to standardise and increase the accuracy of their reporting data**, and also to standardise the allocation of budgets to individual cases.

“During the past nine months significant work has gone into place and provision planning, accuracy of data and the analysis of quality of provision. The review and monitoring of this budget is under close scrutiny at AD and Director Level.”

Unitary Authority

“Regular SEND finance meetings ensure that costings are correct and any savings can be identified. Pro forma system set up ensuring that finance aware of any changes to placement costs.”

Unitary Authority

LAs also sought to minimise pressures on high needs budgets by **reviewing and reducing spend**. One common strategy was a **periodic review of existing allocations** (including requiring educational institutions to complete rationale forms for continued allocations) to feed into decisions around the allocation of spend. Other strategies mentioned include **establishing panels** to review high cost placements and to develop strategies to reduce both the number and costs of individual packages/placements, such as prioritising non-residential solutions.

“Internally we meet on a weekly basis to discuss all hard to place young people. We have a placements action team to look at how best to reduce the cost of placements and look at creating creative packages.”

Country Authority

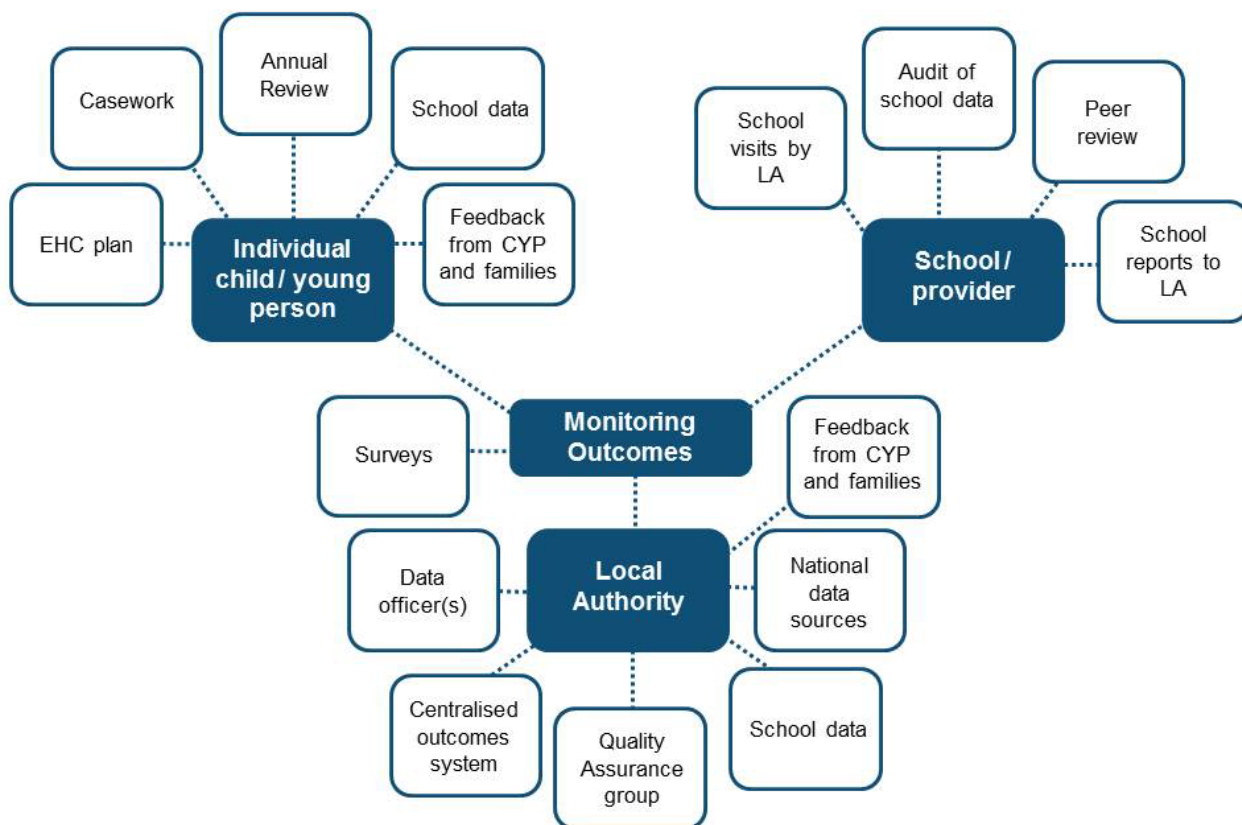
“[The LA has an] established ethos that local options should always be explored first [...] relatively few independent placements especially post-16.”

Unitary Authority

Systems for monitoring outcomes for children and young people with SEND

LAs monitored outcomes for children and young people (CYP) with SEND at three main levels: at the level of the child / young person; at provider (e.g. school) level; and at the level of the LA (Figure 33).

Figure 33: Systems for monitoring outcomes for CYP with SEND⁵



Processes at the level of the individual child / young person included monitoring key outcomes in line with their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and gaining more qualitative feedback from the child / young person and their family. Progress was also monitored through ongoing casework as well as formal Annual Reviews, and LAs also reported looking at educational data for individual cases.

⁵ Key themes identified through analysis of open-ended responses to the question: 'What systems, if any, does your local authority have in place for monitoring SEND issues, particularly with regard to outcomes for children and young people with SEND?'

“This is part of the fabric of the job. On a statutory level, obviously there is the EHC process [...] we also have meetings with SENCOs, parents and teachers to plan and review outcomes for children and young people. We then review our input in supporting these outcomes through a pupil-by-pupil review sheet filled out by school staff (monitoring our usefulness).”

Unitary Authority

At the **school / provider level**, processes for monitoring outcomes for CYP with SEND included school visits and data audits of data by LA staff (e.g. the School Improvement team) as well as regular reporting by schools to the LA. In some areas, LAs made data available to schools to encourage them to monitor their progress on outcomes for CYP with SEND, and to compare this progress with national benchmarks and with local schools. LAs also facilitated schools to identify best practice among other institutions in their area and provided “*critical friends*” to encourage transformation.

“The LA produces data packs for each school showing their data for pupils with SEND and how they have performed compared with other schools in their neighbourhood - this helps those schools who would like support know where the best practice is within their community.”

County Authority

LAs reported that they themselves were accountable to SEND Partnership boards and Schools Forums, as well as local Quality Assurance groups with regard to outcomes for CYP with SEND. Systems for monitoring outcomes at the **LA level** included centralised systems for recording and analysing outcomes, including against frameworks co-designed with service users and parents, and surveys of CYP with SEND and care-leavers. LAs also analysed data on attainment and attendance provided by schools, and nationally published information such as school census data and NEET figures.

Some LAs expressed concern that they had no procedures in place to systematically review outcomes for CYP with SEND, and/or reported plans to implement such systems.

“This is an area that the local area are reviewing currently. Outcomes are reviewed on a regular basis at child level but there is no system in place currently on capturing either quantitative or qualitative data.”

Unitary Authority

“Outcomes for children with EHCPs are monitored via annual review. We currently we have no system in place to be able to

collate this information, and no system of gathering outcome information about children at SEND support.”

Unitary Authority

“The local authority is in the process of commissioning a new management information system to enable it to improve the monitoring of outcomes set out in EHC plans at a strategic level.”

County Authority

Working together to fulfil duties for SEND

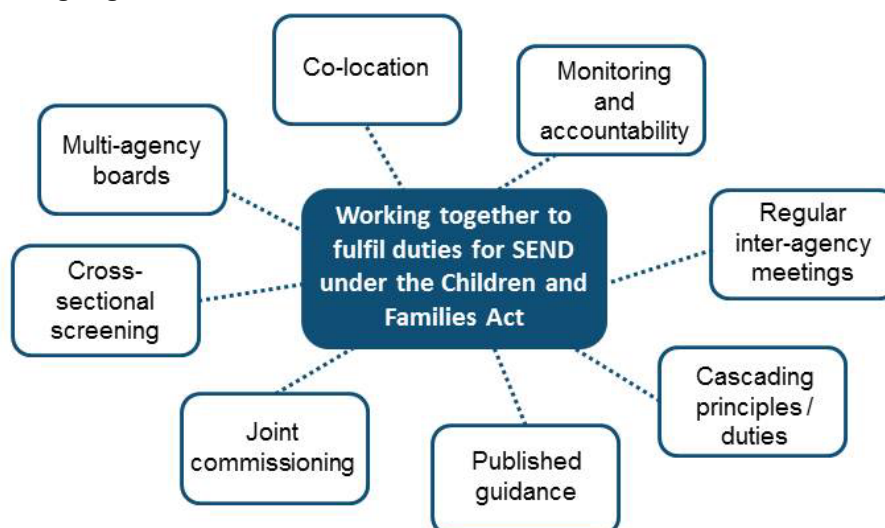
LAs reported that the accountability brought about by the monitoring systems discussed above helped them to ensure that education, health and social care services worked together to fulfil their duties for SEND under the Children and Families Act.

“A well-established stakeholder forum [...] meets quarterly to consider all aspects of improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This ensures a co-ordinated and unifying approach to implementing the reforms.”

Unitary Authority

Other systems to ensure effective joined up working are summarised in Figure 34.

Figure 34: Working together to fulfil duties for SEND under the Children and Families Act⁶



⁶ Key themes identified through analysis of open-ended responses to the question ‘How, if at all, does your local area ensure that education, health and social care services work together to fulfil their duties for SEND under the Children & Families Act?’

LAs described joined up working through multi-agency forums such as Education, Health and Care panels, SEN assessment and SEND teams and Quality Assurance groups.

“All Local Area services contribute to strategic SEND group and are held to account through monitoring of progress [...] joint quality assurance processes and regular liaison with all partners via local meetings including parent carer forum and SENCO forum.”

Unitary Authority

“The SEN reform steering group brings all areas (education, SEN, Health and Social Care) together to assess, monitor and review at operational level.”

County Authority

Outside of these established boards, LAs also emphasised the importance of regular meetings and communications and, in some instances, co-location of services or teams. Joint commissioning was a common theme, and some LAs reported a move towards integrating all commissioning and strategising.

“There is an aim to fully integrate all commissioning, strategic and supply management functions. This will include the day to day management of strategic planning development, Performance Evaluation, Business Intelligence, Supply and Contract Management, procurement and micro-commissioning.”

County Authority

Elsewhere, screening tools had been co-designed in order to assess CYP’s needs relating to the different services.

Finally, LAs highlighted the importance of cascading the duties and priorities enshrined in the Act to all concerned staff, and some reported publishing recommendations or “guidebooks” for residents and professionals.

“There are several meetings at which senior/strategic managers work together to fulfil their duties for SEND under the Act. There is then a cascading down to operational managers who are expected to work with their teams to ensure that the Act's principles are put into practice.”

County Authority

Appendix 1 – Response profile

This survey aimed for a census of upper-tier local authorities in England. As such, all 152 authorities were invited to take part. There were three sections to the survey, with the response rate for each outlined in Table 2.

Table 2: Response rate by questionnaire section

Section	Number of complete responses	Number of partial responses	Response rate
Children’s Social Care	83	8	60%
Early Years and Child Care	81	4	56%
Special Educational Needs & Disability	80	2	54%

A total of 68 of LAs fully completed the survey, and 33 partially completed the survey meaning that 101 LAs took part. This amounts to an overall response rate of 66 per cent.

Following the close of the survey, NatCen analysed the sample profile based on four key variables: authority type, region, the percentage of pupils claiming free school meals (FSM), and the rate of children in need (CiN).

To avoid overly small base sizes, LAs were divided into three regional categories (see Table 3). The FSM rate reflects the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for claiming FSM, as per the January 2016 school census⁷. The CiN rate refers to the number of children per 10,000 assessed as being in need of children’s social services, as per the November 2016 CiN census⁸.

⁷ Children known to be eligible for and claiming FSM, as per the [January 2016 school census](#).

⁸ Children assessed as being in need of children’s social services, as per the [CiN census, November 2016](#).

Table 3: Regional distribution of Local Authorities

Region	Local Authorities
East & Midlands	Bedford Borough Council Birmingham City Council Cambridgeshire County Council Central Bedfordshire Council Coventry City Council Derby City Council Derbyshire County Council Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council Essex County Council Herefordshire Council Hertfordshire County Council Leicester City Council Leicestershire County Council Lincolnshire County Council Luton Borough Council Norfolk County Council Northamptonshire County Council Nottingham City Council Nottinghamshire County Council Peterborough City Council Rutland County Council Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Shropshire Council Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Staffordshire County Council Stoke-on-Trent City Council Suffolk County Council
East & Midlands (cont.)	Telford & Wrekin Council

	<p>Thurrock Council</p> <p>Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council</p> <p>Warwickshire County Council</p> <p>Wolverhampton City Council</p> <p>Worcestershire County Council</p>
London & South	<p>Barking and Dagenham London Borough Council</p> <p>Barnet London Borough Council</p> <p>Bath & North East Somerset Council</p> <p>Bexley London Borough Council</p> <p>Borough of Poole</p> <p>Bournemouth Borough Council</p> <p>Bracknell Forest Council</p> <p>Brent London Borough Council</p> <p>Brighton & Hove City Council</p> <p>Bristol City Council</p> <p>Bromley London Borough Council</p> <p>Buckinghamshire County Council</p> <p>Camden London Borough Council</p> <p>City of London Corporation</p> <p>Cornwall Council</p> <p>Council of the Isles of Scilly</p> <p>Croydon London Borough Council</p> <p>Devon County Council</p> <p>Dorset County Council</p> <p>Ealing London Borough Council</p> <p>East Sussex County Council</p> <p>Enfield London Borough Council</p> <p>Gloucestershire County Council</p> <p>Hackney London Borough Council</p>
London & South (cont.)	<p>Hammersmith & Fulham London Borough Council</p>

	Hampshire County Council
	Haringey London Borough Council
	Harrow London Borough Council
	Havering London Borough Council
	Hillingdon London Borough Council
	Hounslow London Borough Council
	Isle of Wight Council
	Islington London Borough
	Kensington & Chelsea Royal Borough Council
	Kent County Council
	Kingston Upon Thames Royal Borough
	Lambeth London Borough Council
	Lewisham London Borough Council
	Medway Council
	Merton London Borough Council
	Milton Keynes Council
	Newham London Borough Council
	North Somerset Council
	Oxfordshire County Council
	Plymouth City Council
	Portsmouth City Council
	Reading Borough Council
	Redbridge London Borough Council
	Richmond Upon Thames London Borough
	Royal Borough of Greenwich Council
	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead Council
	Slough Borough Council
	Somerset County Council
	South Gloucestershire Council
London & South (cont.)	Southampton City Council

	<p>Southwark Council</p> <p>Surrey County Council</p> <p>Sutton London Borough Council</p> <p>Swindon Borough Council</p> <p>Torbay Council</p> <p>Tower Hamlets London Borough Council</p> <p>Waltham Forest London Borough</p> <p>Wandsworth Borough Council</p> <p>West Berkshire Council</p> <p>West Sussex County Council</p> <p>Westminster City Council</p> <p>Wiltshire County Council</p> <p>Wokingham Borough Council</p>
North	<p>Barnsley Council</p> <p>Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council</p> <p>Blackpool Council</p> <p>Bolton Council</p> <p>Bradford Metropolitan District Council</p> <p>Bury Metropolitan Borough Council</p> <p>Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council</p> <p>Cheshire East Council</p> <p>Cheshire West and Chester Council</p> <p>City of York Council</p> <p>Cumbria County Council</p> <p>Darlington Borough Council</p> <p>Doncaster Council</p> <p>Durham County Council</p> <p>East Riding of Yorkshire Council</p> <p>Gateshead Council</p>
North (cont.)	<p>Halton Borough Council</p>

Hartlepool Borough Council
Hull City Council
Kirklees Council
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Lancashire County Council
Leeds City Council
Liverpool City Council
Manchester City Council
Middlesbrough Council
Newcastle City Council
North East Lincolnshire Council
North Lincolnshire Council
North Tyneside Council
North Yorkshire County Council
Northumberland County Council
Oldham Council
Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Salford City Council
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Sheffield City Council
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Sunderland City Council
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council

	Warrington Borough Council
	Wigan Council
	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

As Table 4 shows, the profile of LAs which completed the survey is largely in-line with the overall profile. It appears that county councils were marginally more likely to take part than unitary authorities, while those in the East and Midlands were more likely to take part than those in the North, or London and the South. Based on this profile, it was decided not to weight the data.

Table 4: Response rate by authority type and region

Variable	Sub-variable	Full sample (N)	Full sample (%)	Took part (N)	Took part (%)	Response rate
Authority type	County	27	17.8%	21	20.8%	77.8%
	Unitary	125	82.2%	80	79.2%	64.0%
Region	North	50	32.9%	32	31.7%	64.0%
	East & Midlands	34	22.4%	26	25.7%	76.5%
	London & South	68	44.7%	43	42.6%	63.2%
% Pupils eligible for and receiving FSM	0-20	10	6.6%	5	5.0%	50.0%
	20-30	24	15.8%	17	16.8%	70.8%
	30-40	37	24.3%	24	23.8%	64.9%
	40-50	37	24.3%	25	24.8%	67.6%
	50-60	24	15.8%	18	17.8%	75.0%
	60+	9	5.9%	6	5.9%	66.7%
Numbers of CiN (Rate per 10,000)	100-300	49	32.2%	31	30.7%	63.3%
	300-400	53	34.9%	36	35.6%	67.9%
	400-500	34	22.4%	23	22.8%	67.6%
	500+	16	10.5%	11	10.9%	68.8%

Appendix 2 – Guide to statistical reliability

The respondents to this research were only a sample of the total population of upper tier local authorities in England. We cannot, therefore, be certain that the figures obtained are exactly those we would have if all authorities had responded. We can, however, predict the variation between the sample results and the ‘true’ value from knowledge of the size of the samples on which the results are based and the number of times that a particular answer is given.

The confidence with which we can make this prediction is usually chosen to be 95% – that is, the chances are 19 in 20 that the ‘true’ value will fall within a specified range.

The table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different percentage results at the ‘95% confidence interval’ for the different survey sections.

Section and sample	Sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% / 90%	30% / 70%	50% / 50%
Children’s Social care (91 out of total universe of 152)	3.9%	6.0%	6.6%
Early Years and Child Care (85 out of total universe of 152)	4.3%	6.5%	7.1%
Special Educational Needs & Disability (82 out of total universe of 152)	4.4%	6.8%	7.4%

For example, on a question where 50% of the sample responding to the Children’s and Social Care section responded with a particular answer, the chances are 95 in 100 that this result would not vary by more than 6.6 percentage points, plus or minus from a complete coverage of the entire population using the same procedures.

However, while it is true to conclude that the ‘actual’ result (95 times out of 100) lies anywhere between 43% and 57%, it is proportionately more likely to be closer to the centre of this band (i.e. at 50%).

Similarly, the table below illustrates the predicted ranges for different percentage results at the '95% confidence interval' for the different local authority types and regions.

Section and sample	Sampling tolerances applicable to percentages at or near these levels		
	10% / 90%	30% / 70%	50% / 50%
County Council (21 out of total universe of 27)	6.3%	9.6%	10.5%
Unitary authority (80 out of total universe of 125)	4.0%	6.1%	6.6%
North (32 out of total universe of 50)	6.4%	9.8%	10.7%
East & Midlands (26 out of total universe of 34)	5.8%	8.8%	9.7%
London & South (43 out of total universe of 68)	5.5%	8.5%	9.2%

Comparing percentages between subgroups and the overall totals

When results are compared between separate groups within a sample, different results may be obtained. The difference may be 'real', or it may occur by chance (because not all LAs responded). To test if the difference is a real one - i.e. if it is "statistically significant", we again have to know the size of the samples, the percentage giving a certain answer and the degree of confidence chosen. If we assume the 95% confidence interval, the differences between the two sample results must be greater than the values given in the table below:

Samples compared	Differences required for percentage levels significance at or near these		
	10% / 90%	30% / 70%	50% / 50%
Unitary authority vs County Council (80 and 21)	7.5%	11.4%	12.4%
North vs East & Midlands (32 and 26)	8.6%	13.2%	14.4%
North vs London & South East (32 and 43)	8.5%	12.9%	14.1%
East & Midlands vs London & South East (26 and 43)	8.0%	12.2%	13.4%

For example, when comparing the results between unitary authorities and county councils (80 from a total universe of 125 compared to 21 from a universe of 27), where 30% give a particular answer, a difference of 11.4% is required for it to be considered to be statistically significant.

Appendix 3 – Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this important survey on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE).

This survey includes questions on your views and experiences of three main policy areas: Early Years & Child Care; Children’s Social Care; and Special Educational Needs & Disability.

You may feel that you can answer all of the questions yourself or may wish to send this link to one or more of your colleagues for them to respond to questions on certain policy areas. At the start of the survey, we will ask you to select the first policy area that you wish to answer about. After you have finished that section of the survey you will be asked whether you wish to complete any other sections.

The survey should take no more than 15 minutes in total to complete.

NatCen assures you that all the information we collect will be kept in the strictest confidence and we will not disclose individual responses to the DfE without your permission.

If you have any further questions, or any problems completing the survey, please contact the NatCen research team at childrens-services@natcen.ac.uk or on 0800 652 4569.

To talk to someone at DfE about this research please contact xxxx at xxxx or on xxxx.

QSelect

Please select the policy area you would like to answer questions on.

After completing each section of the survey, you will return to this page to select any other section that you would like to complete. Once you have answered all of the section(s) that you are able to, please simply exit the survey by clicking “stop” and closing your browser.

1. Children’s Social Care
2. Early Years & Childcare
3. Special Educational Needs & Disability

Section 2: Children's Social Care

The following set of questions is about Children's Social Care in your authority.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

InfoShare

Please think first about safeguarding and child protection.

Does your local authority have a mutually agreed information sharing protocol in place with other local agencies (e.g. schools, the police, the health service, VCS organisations) regarding the sharing of information about vulnerable children?

1. Yes – already in place
2. Yes – in development
3. No – but plan to in the future
4. No – no current plans

WelPlace

Does your local authority have multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals (e.g. a Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or similar)?

1. Yes – already in place
2. Yes – in development
3. No – but plan to in the future
4. No – no current plans

If yes-already in place (1) to WelPlace

WelTeam

Does this multi-agency process for dealing with child welfare referrals involve physically co-located teams?

1. Yes
2. No

If yes-already in place (1) to WelPlace

Wellinfo

Still thinking about this multi-agency process for dealing with child welfare referrals, do you think that this process has improved information sharing?

1. Yes
2. No

If yes (1) to Wellinfo

WellInfoWhy

In what ways has this process improved information sharing?

String (Free text box)

If no (2) to Wellinfo

WellInfoWhy2

Why do you think that this process has not improved information sharing?

String (Free text box)

If Yes – in development (2) to WelPlace

WelPlaceWhen

When do you expect multi-agency processes for dealing with child welfare referrals to go live in your local authority?

1. Within the next 3 months
2. In more than 3 months, but less than 6 months
3. In more than 6 months, but less than 9 months
4. In more than 9 months, but less than a year
5. Over a year, but less than two years
6. Over two years, but less than three years
7. Longer than three years

2.2 LA strategy, performance and intervention in children's social care

Ask All

SocRisk

In your opinion, what are the main risks to the effective delivery of children's social care services in your local authority over the next 3 years?

Please select up to 3.

1. Financial pressures
2. Being unable to recruit high quality staff
3. Being unable to retain high quality staff
4. Being unable to maintain or improve capability of senior leadership team
5. Social work practice becoming or continuing to be variable
6. Other (specify)

SocImprov

In your opinion, what are your local authority's top priorities in improving children's social care services over the next 3 years?

Please name up to 3.

1. Ensuring sufficient budget to maintain or improve children's services
2. Recruiting high quality staff
3. Retaining current staff
4. Improving capability of senior leadership team
5. Improving the quality of social work practice
6. Other (specify)

GovSoc

And in your opinion, what would be the most helpful actions that the Government could take to facilitate / remove barriers to the delivery of good children's social care services in your local authority?

String (Free text box)

2.3 Childrens social care reforms and the child protection taskforce

SocJoint

Does your local authority currently operate any statutory children’s social care services jointly with another local authority/group of authorities? Please do not include regional adoption agencies.

1. Yes – already in place
2. Yes – in development
3. No – but plan to in the future
4. No – no current plans

ComOrg

Does your local authority currently commission any of the following types of organisations to deliver any aspect of its children’s services?

	1. Yes	2. No	3. Considering	4. Don’t know
(a) A mutual (an organisation that is owned by, and run for, the benefit of its members)				
(b) A not-for-profit company or trust				
(c) A voluntary sector partner				

SocData

Does your local authority have a function or team that is able to...

	1. Yes	2. No	3. Considering	4. Don’t Know
(a) Analyse the demand for children’s social care?				
(b) Compare the cost of different interventions to make planning decisions for children’s services?				
(c) Assess the impact of different interventions to make planning decisions for children’s services?				
(d) Identify unmet needs for individual children and families?				

BarDel

What do you think are the biggest barriers to your local authority adopting a new model of service delivery (e.g. operating with another local authority or commissioning a voluntary or other organisation to deliver services) for any of its children's social care services? Please select up to three options.

1. Complex geography
2. Set-up costs
3. Longer-term value for money
4. Local political direction
5. Lack of information, advice or guidance from government or elsewhere
6. Legal framework/concerns about legal accountabilities
7. Risk to ongoing service delivery/outcomes/safeguarding
8. No obvious partner to work with
9. Risk to inspection outcomes
10. No barriers [exclusive code]
11. Other barrier(s) (please specify)

2.4 Social Work Reform

The next questions are about social work in your authority.

SocWork

How confident, if at all, are you that...

	1. Very confident	2. Fairly confident	3. Not very confident	4. Not at all confident
(a) Supervisors/senior practitioners/practice managers in your authority have the right knowledge and skills to support social workers with their cases?				
(b) Your local authority will have sufficient numbers of permanent well-qualified child and family social workers to meet its needs over the next year?				
(c) Your local authority will be able to maintain the usual number of practice placements offered to social work students over the next year?				
(d) Your authority will be able to identify/has identified unmet needs for individual children and families?				

KnowSocWork

How well, if at all, do you think social workers in your authority keep up to date with latest research on social work practice?

1. Very well
2. Fairly well
3. Not very well
4. Not well at all

2.5 Children’s Services Expenditure

CINExp

Thinking about your own authority, how confident, if at all, are you that a greater focus on Early Help reduces demand on Children in Need?

1. Very confident
2. Fairly confident
3. Not very confident
4. Not at all confident

2.6 Adoption and children in care

The next questions are about adoption and foster care in your local authority area.

RelationLaw

How would you rate your local authority’s relationship with the local judiciary over care proceedings, and in particular, permanent options for children?

1. Very good
2. Fairly good
3. Neither good nor poor
4. Fairly poor
5. Very poor

SupGroup

Does your local authority provide the following support to Adopters?

	1. Yes	2. No
(a) Support groups		
(b) Financial support (not including use of the Adoption Support Fund [ASF])		

SupGroup2

Does your local authority provide the following support to Special Guardians?

	1. Yes	2. No
(a) Support groups		
(b) Financial support (not including use of the Adoption Support Fund [ASF])		

SufCare

In your opinion, how likely, if at all, is it that your local authority will have sufficient care placements to meet projected need over the next year for:

	1. Very unlikely	2. Fairly unlikely	3. Neither likely nor unlikely	4. Fairly likely	5. Very likely
a) All children					
b) Children under 5 yrs					
c) Children aged 5-13 yrs					
d) Children aged 14-15yrs					
e) Children aged 16-17yrs					
f) Children from BME backgrounds					
g) Children with a disability					
h) Sibling groups					

ViewServices

What, if anything, does your local authority do to seek and take account of the views, thoughts and feelings of care leavers in the development of services for care leavers and looked-after children?

String (Free text box)

Nothing [other option]

Section 3: Early Years and Child Care

If Qselect=2

These questions concern Early Years and Childcare provision in your authority.

3.1 Childcare providers, parents and regulation

MonEarlyYear

First, please think about the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce. By sufficiency, we mean having enough Early Years staff with the right skills.

Does your local authority monitor the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce in your local authority?

1. Yes
2. No

If yes (1) to MonEarlyYear

ContactDept

The Department for Education would like to contact authorities who monitor the sufficiency of the Early Years workforce in their area to understand how it is undertaken. Would you be willing for your contact details to be passed on to the DfE for this purpose? Please note, the DfE would not have access to your responses to any other questions in this survey.

1. Yes
2. No

RecruitEY

Does your local authority support Early Years providers in recruiting staff?

1. Yes
2. No

If yes (1) to RecruitEY

RecruitChal

In your experience, do Early Years Providers in your local authority find it difficult to recruit staff at any of the following levels?

	Yes	No	Don't know
a) Level 2			
b) Level 3 (Early Years Educators)			
c) Early Years Teachers (specialist grads)			

SufChPlace

How often, if at all, does your local authority update its assessment of sufficiency of childcare places?

1. Every term
2. Every year
3. Every two years
4. Every three years
5. Less often than every three years
6. Never
7. Other (please specify)

{Ask all}

WhatEng

On what issues does your local authority engage with Early Years and childcare providers?

(Select all that apply)

1. Market management
2. Sufficiency of their places
3. Forward planning of place provision
4. Quality of provision
5. Providing training and / or CPD
6. Capital and / or (physical) planning issues
7. Funding
8. Encouraging creation of new places
9. Recruitment
10. Safeguarding
11. Other (please specify)
12. Local Authority does not engage with Early Years and childcare providers [exclusive code]

If <11 to WhatEng

EngProv

And in what ways does your local authority engage with Early Years and childcare providers?

(Select all that apply)

1. Via a regular newsletter
2. Consultation
3. Surveys
4. Provider forum
5. Through representative bodies
6. Through training and support
7. Quality Assurance processes
8. Other (please specify)

If <11 to WhatEng

FreqEngProv

How often does your local authority engage with Early Years and childcare providers?

1. About once a week
2. About once a month
3. About once every three months
4. About once every six months
5. About once a year
6. Less often than once a year
7. Other (please specify)
8. Don't know/can't remember

3.2 Early Years entitlement and affordability

The next questions are about the provision of funded childcare hours in your local authority.

Over38Week

What proportion of childcare providers in your local authority currently offer to stretch funded hours (the 15 hour entitlement for three- and four-year-olds, and for some two-year-olds) over more than 38 weeks?

1. None / 0%
2. 1–20%
3. 21-40%
4. 41-60%
5. 61-80%
6. 81- 99%
7. 100%
8. Too early to say – not yet completed assessment

EarlyYrAssess

Has your local authority carried out an assessment of the sufficiency of childcare places in your authority with regards to the extended 30 hour entitlement for three- and four-year-olds?

1. Yes – has already carried out an assessment
2. Yes – is currently carrying out an assessment
3. No – but plans to in the future
4. No – and has no current plans

DCS30hr

Has your Director of Children's Services (DCS) scrutinised your authority's plans for providing the extended 30 hour entitlement for three-and four-year-olds?

1. Yes
2. No

SupDisCh

What support, if any, does your local authority offer parents with a disabled child in finding suitable childcare?

(Tick all that apply)

1. Published information about childcare options
2. Help with transport to childcare providers
3. Brokering childcare places with providers
4. Families Information Service (FIS)
5. Other support [specify]
6. No support offered [exclusive code]

Portal

The childcare provider portal is provided by the Local Authority to allow providers to check the eligibility of children for Early Years Pupil Premium, Free School Meals and childcare funded provision.

Does your local authority have a childcare provider portal?

1. Yes – already in place
2. Yes – in development
3. No – but plan to in the future
4. No – no current plans

Section 4: Special Educational Needs & Disability

If Qselect=3

These questions are about Special Educational Needs and Disability provision in your local authority.

SendMon

What systems, if any, does your local authority have in place for monitoring SEND issues, particularly with regard to:

- A. Progress implementing the SEND reforms**
- B. Pressures on high needs budgets**
- C. Outcomes for children and young people with SEND**

String (Free text box- one separate box after each statement)

SendDut

How, if at all, does your local area ensure that education, health and social care services work together to fulfil their duties for SEND under the Children & Families Act?

String (Free text box)

Section 5: Thank you

Bye

Thank you for taking the time to respond to this survey. Your answers are vital in helping DfE to understand the key issues facing children's services, and local authorities' experiences of implementing different policies in these areas.

This research will take place twice a year, so we will be back in touch in early 2017 about the next wave of the survey, and to tell you about the results from this wave.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please visit www.natcen.ac.uk/childrens-services, email childrens-services@natcen.ac.uk or call 0800 652 4569.



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