



Department  
for Education

# **Step Up to Social Work cohort 7: surveys of applicants and completers**

**Research report**

**January 2026**

**Authors: Kara Crees, Jessica Dunn and  
Amy Clay, Department for Education**



Government  
Social Research

# Contents

List of figures	2
Executive summary	3
Methodology	3
Summary of applicant survey findings	3
Summary of completer survey findings: 6 months post-qualification	4
Introduction	6
Background	6
Aims and objectives	7
Methodology	8
Applicant survey findings	10
Demographics and management information	10
Applying to social work courses	11
Career in social work	12
Motivations	15
Barriers	19
Completer survey findings: 6 months post-qualification	22
Demographics and management information	22
Satisfaction with the Step Up programme	24
Entering social work	30
Satisfaction with current job	31
Likelihood of remaining in social work in 12 months' time	32
Conclusion	35
Appendices	36
Appendix 1: Step Up cohort 7 applicant survey questions	36
Appendix 2: Step Up cohort 7 completer survey questions	50

## List of figures

Figure 1: Why did you decide you wanted to embark upon a career in social work, by whether offered a place or not	17
Figure 2: What are the key barriers that you faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work, by whether offered a place or not	21
Figure 3: Gender breakdown by completer survey respondents and Capita MI	22
Figure 4: Ethnicity breakdown by completer survey respondents and Capita MI	23
Figure 5: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your experience of the Step Up programme?	24
Figure 6: Did you need to seek additional financial support whilst on the Step Up programme in addition to the bursary?	26
Figure 7: Number of additional sources of financial support sought in addition to the Step Up bursary per person	27
Figure 8: How effective was the Step Up programme in preparing you to work as a social worker with children and families?	29
Figure 9: How confident are you in your social work practice in supporting children and families?	30
Figure 10: How likely are you, if at all, to be working as a social worker in 12 months' time?	33

## **Executive summary**

This research was undertaken by analysts in the Department for Education (DfE) to investigate recruitment and retention in the 2022 cohort of Step Up to Social Work (cohort 7), hereafter referred to as Step Up.

Step Up is a 14-month graduate training route into social work, with a focus on child and family social work. On successful completion, students are awarded a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Social Work, allowing them to register with Social Work England (SWE) as a qualified social worker.

This report presents headline findings from a survey of applicants to Step Up cohort 7 and a survey of completers six months after they qualified with a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip).

## **Methodology**

A total of 5,478 people applied to the 2022 intake of the Step Up programme (cohort 7), which commenced in January 2022 and finished in March 2023. Online surveys were sent to the 4,872 applicants who had agreed to be recontacted by the Department for Education (DfE) for research purposes. This included both those who were successful and unsuccessful in attaining a place on the programme. The fieldwork period ran from December 2021 to January 2022. The applicant survey received in total 1,156 completed responses (24% response rate).

The completer survey was sent to 586 people who had completed the Step Up programme and for whom DfE had contact details, at around six months after they qualified with a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip). The fieldwork period ran from September to November 2023. The survey received 234 completed survey responses (40% response rate).

## **Summary of applicant survey findings**

### **Prior interest in social work**

Around half (52%) of applicants said they had been considering social work as a career for some time before they heard about Step Up. Just under a quarter (24%) had always wanted to be a social worker, 15% had recently started to consider it and 9% hadn't considered social work until they heard about Step Up.

78% of applicants said they had previous work experience related to social work or social care before applying to Step Up. Common areas of experience included caring/personal services (32%) and welfare and housing associate professionals (30%).

## Future plans

Of the applicants who were offered a place on the Step Up programme, 91% of respondents planned to accept, while 8% did not plan to accept their place.

Of those respondents who had not recently accepted a place on any social work course, just over half (57%) said they planned to apply for a social work course in future while 28% were unsure and 13% had no plans to apply for a social work course in the future.

Other future plans included: pursuing a non-social work career, progressing in their current role, and pursuing education or training unrelated to social work.

## Motivations

Most applicants decided to embark on a career in social work because they wanted to help people and make a difference (88%) or wanted to work with children and families (78%). Other important factors selected by applicants included: that they were already working in a related area (46%), they have a long-term commitment to social work as a career (37%), and that funding/bursary was available for the programme (34%).

When asked an open text question about why they applied to Step Up specifically, applicants most frequently mentioned that this was due to financial reasons/the bursary, followed by the short duration of the course, and the mix of theory and practice. When specifically asked about the importance of funding, 91% of applicants said that the Step Up funding was extremely or very important to their decision to apply via this route.

## Barriers

Applicants were asked about the key barriers that they faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work. The main barrier was the financial cost of training (54%). This was followed by childcare/caring responsibilities (25%), absence of information on routes into the profession (24%), entry requirements (24%) and a negative public perception of social work (21%).

## Summary of completer survey findings: 6 months post-qualification

### Satisfaction with Step Up programme

There were high levels of satisfaction with the Step Up programme among cohort 7 completers, 91% of respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience of the programme. In open text comments, completers reported satisfaction with the programme as an effective way to enter the social work profession, the programme's short duration and the high quality of academic and practice provision.

89% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they are utilising what they learnt during their studies on the Step Up programme in their current work and 79% said that Step Up was very or moderately effective in preparing them to work as a social worker with children and families. 84% of respondents said they would recommend the Step Up programme to others looking to enter the social work profession.

In open text comments, respondents reported that the financial support offered by the programme was necessary and made the programme more accessible. However, most people (91%) needed to seek additional financial support in addition to the bursary in order to complete the programme.

## **Entering social work**

Almost all respondents (99%) reported being in some form of employment at six months after the Step Up programme. And 98% of those in employment considered themselves to be working in social work practice. The majority of those in social work (88%) reported working in children's social work, while 9% reported working in adult social work. 85% of those working in a local authority said they were employed in the same local authority where they participated in the Step Up programme.

## **Job satisfaction and retention**

Generally respondents were fairly satisfied with specific aspects of their current employment, in particular their job security (97% were satisfied or very satisfied).

69% of respondents said they were very likely to stay in social work employment for a further 12 months, 16% said moderately likely, 9% slightly likely, 4% not at all likely and 2% said they don't know.

For those who were less satisfied with their social work role and reported being less likely to continue working in social work, recurring reasons mentioned in open text comments included high or complex caseloads, the demands and pressure that come with the role and wider issues faced by the sector, including high staff turnover, local authority finances and dissatisfaction with public perceptions of social work.

## Introduction

This research was undertaken by analysts in the Department for Education (DfE) to investigate recruitment and retention in the 2022 intake (cohort 7) of Step Up to Social Work (hereafter referred to as Step Up).

Step Up is an intensive graduate training programme, with a focus on child and family social work. It runs every two years and takes 14 months to complete. Eligibility requirements include a 2:2 BA/BSc degree in any subject other than social work, and at least 6 months full time (or equivalent) experience of working with vulnerable children and/or families. On successful completion, students are awarded a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in Social Work allowing them to register with Social Work England (SWE) and practice as a social worker. The programme is employer-led; local authorities work with universities to shape the programme content and syllabus, with students having around 170 placement days to gain hands on social work experience. Participants receive a bursary during the programme to cover living expenses and there are no course fees. For cohort 7 (beginning January 2022), the bursary was £19,000. More details about Step Up can be found on the [Ways to qualify as a social worker](#) pages on Gov.uk.

This report presents the headline findings from two surveys which were completed with Step Up cohort 7. The first survey was sent to all applicants to cohort 7, whether or not they were successful in attaining a place on the programme and in this report will be called the 'applicant survey'. The second survey was sent to those who qualified from Step Up cohort 7, six months after completing the programme, and in this report will be called the 'completer survey'.

## Background

This study follows a series of previous DfE-funded research projects and evaluations which have focused on outcomes from earlier cohorts of the fast-track entry routes to child and family social work.

Smith et al (2013)<sup>1</sup> looked at effectiveness of recruitment, selection, allocation, and delivery in meeting the key objectives of the Step Up programme by exploring the experiences of regional partnerships, employers, and trainees. It found that background characteristics of early cohorts were not representative of the wider population or the overall cohort of social work postgraduates, especially in terms of age profile (weighted towards the younger end of the scale) and ethnicity of participants (over-representation of White-British in those offered places on the course). However, the rigorous recruitment processes resulted in selection of high quality and resilient candidates. Local authorities reported that trainees were consistently high quality, most gained employment with their

---

<sup>1</sup> Roger Smith, Jane McLenachan, Laura Venn, Hellmuth Weich & Denis Anthony (2013) [Step Up to Social Work Programme Evaluation 2012: the Regional Partnerships and Employers Perspectives](#). DfE Research Report June 2013.

host agency and recruitment processes and training materials were recognised as robust and fit for purpose.

Baginsky et al (2014)<sup>2</sup> captured feedback from cohort 1 and 2 Step Up trainees during their training. Although the majority of respondents said they had previously considered a career in social work, most would not have followed a social work career without the financial support offered by the programme. Almost all respondents in both cohorts (96% and 97%) considered they had been adequately prepared to practise as newly qualified social workers. By the end of the training, 82% of cohort 1 had accepted posts as social workers.

Smith et al (2018)<sup>3</sup> used a mixed methods design to obtain longitudinal information about career pathways and progression of cohort 1 and 2 Step Up graduates (and comparators) at 3 and 5 years after qualification; and qualitative evidence about the nature of early career experiences, the extent to which they felt prepared for practice, and how they were perceived by their employers. The retention rate in social work three years after qualification, was found to be 85% for cohort 1 and 80% for cohort 2. Five years after qualifying, the proportion of cohort 1 remaining in social work was found to be 73%.

Recent research also includes an independent tracking study of the fast track routes. This study looked at retention and progression of Step Up cohorts 4 and 5 between six months and five years post-qualification (Scourfield et al, 2020)<sup>4</sup>. At 18 months post-qualifying, attrition rates from the profession for Step Up were 12-13% compared with 18% at 15 months post-qualifying for all social work students who graduated in 2017/18 (Skills for Care, Social Work Education in England, 2021). The authors concluded that there was no evidence that rates of attrition for fast-track social workers are higher than those for social workers trained via mainstream programmes (e.g., university courses) at 18 months post-qualifying. The report also presents fast-track attrition rates up to 5 years post-qualifying, but there is no comparative data from other routes for the later timepoints.

## Aims and objectives

The overall objective of this project is to investigate recruitment and retention within the 2022 cohort of Step Up (cohort 7). The survey of applicants focused on research questions related to recruitment:

- What are the demographic characteristics, prior attainment, and employment backgrounds of those who apply to Step Up?

---

<sup>2</sup> Mary Baginsky and Jill Manthorpe (2014) [The Views of Step Up to Social Work trainees: cohort 1 and cohort 2](#). DfE Research Report, January 2014

<sup>3</sup> Roger Smith, Evgenia Stepanova, Laura Venn, John Carpenter and Demi Patsios (2018) [Evaluation of Step Up to Social Work, Cohorts 1 and 2: 3-years and 5-years on](#). DfE Research Report, May 2018

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Scourfield, Chloe O'Donnell, Evgenia Stepanova, Martin Elliott, Nell Warner, Nina Maxwell, Rebecca Jones, John Carpenter and Roger Smith (2020) [Social work fast track programmes: retention and progression Final Report](#). DfE Research Report, December 2021.

- What are the key motivations, enablers, and barriers for those who apply to Step Up?
- Why did applicants choose to apply to the Step Up route into social work specifically?
- What are the differences in demographics and motivations between those who were offered a place on Step Up and those who were not?
- Would applicants have considered social work as a career if it hadn't been for the Step Up programme?
- What other social work courses did applicants apply to?
- What do Step Up applicants plan to do if they were not successful in their application?

The survey of completers focused on research questions related to their experiences of the Step Up programme and entering the social work profession.

- How satisfied were completers with the Step Up programme and how well did they feel it prepared them for practice?
- What is their current job role? Are they still in social work/ child and family social work?
- If they are not still in social work, what were their reasons for leaving?
- How satisfied are they with their current job?
- What are their career plans for the next 12 months?

## Methodology

### Applicant survey

Overall, 5,478 people applied to cohort 7 of the Step Up programme (2022 intake). For the applicant survey, all 4,872 people who applied to Step Up cohort 7 and agreed to be recontacted by DfE for research purposes were invited to complete a survey. This included both those who were successful and unsuccessful at attaining a place on the programme. A total of 1,156 completed responses were received (a response rate of 24%). The survey was administered online, and the fieldwork period ran from 8th December 2021 to 31st January 2022. Three email reminders were sent to encourage participation.

### Completer survey

A total of 685 participants started on Step Up cohort 7 in January 2022 and 653 completed in or after March 2023. The 586 completers for whom the DfE had contact details were invited to complete a survey at around six months post-qualification and 234 completed

survey responses were received (a response rate of 40%). The survey was administered online, and the fieldwork period ran from 27th September 2023 to 23rd November 2023. Three email reminders were sent to encourage participation.

## **Analysis**

Across both surveys, findings were not weighted due to the small sample size. The census sampling approach may have resulted in some non-response bias, so findings are not necessarily representative of the views of all applicants or completers.

Both the applicant and completer survey responses underwent descriptive statistical analysis. The applicant survey was also analysed using significance testing as it achieved a larger number of responses. Chi-square tests of independence were performed on the applicant survey data to determine if there was a significant relationship between two categorical variables of interest after verifying its assumptions (the sample consisted of independent observations, and the count in each cell was larger than 5). A p-value less than 0.05 indicated statistical significance and is represented with an asterisk (\*) in this report. Where multiple comparisons were tested, a Bonferroni correction was applied.

Both applicant and completer survey open text responses were independently coded by several researchers using a conventional content analysis approach. These coded outputs were then brought together using an analysis framework and collectively discussed to create a consensus.

## Applicant survey findings

This section presents the findings from the Step Up cohort 7 applicant survey.

### Demographics and management information

The organisation that was contracted by DfE to run the recruitment of cohort 7 (Capita) provided DfE with aggregate management information (MI) for all those that applied. Analysis was conducted to determine how representative the respondents to the survey were of all people who applied to the programme.

- Of the 1,156 survey respondents, 362 (31%) were offered a place, 692 (60%) were unsuccessful and 99 (9%) withdrew before the offer stage, had not heard yet or were on the reserve list.
- Analysis shows that a higher proportion of those who were offered a place on Step Up cohort 7 responded to the survey compared with those who were unsuccessful (55% compared with 19%\*).
- A higher proportion of respondents were aged over 40 in the survey data compared with the proportion that applied to Step Up (49% compared with 37%\*). A lower proportion of survey respondents were aged 29 and under compared with the proportion that applied to Step Up (19% compared with 32%\*).
- There was a slightly higher proportion of white respondents in the survey data compared with the proportion that applied to Step Up (48% compared with 43%\*). And there was a slightly lower proportion of black respondents in the survey data compared with the proportion that applied (38% compared with 45%\*).
- There was no significant difference by gender in terms of proportion who responded to the survey (78% female and 21% male) compared with the proportions that applied to the programme (76% female and 23% male).

MI data was not available for all the demographic questions asked in the survey.

Therefore, the following demographic findings are from survey responses only.

- The majority of survey respondents (55%) said that they were not eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any point during their school years. Just under a quarter (23%) said they were eligible for FSM, 16% said that it was not applicable to them (they finished school before 1980 or went to school overseas), and 7% did not know or preferred not to say.
- Respondents were asked about the job of the main or highest income earner in their household when they were aged 14, to produce a metric on socio-economic

background (SEB)<sup>5</sup>. The highest proportion came from a professional background (45%) with 32% from a lower SEB, and 10% from an intermediate SEB.

- There was a relatively wide spread of respondents by the region in which they currently lived. The highest number of respondents were from Greater London (21%), followed by the South East (15%), Yorkshire and Humberside (10%), the South West (10%), North West (9%), West Midlands (8%), East Midlands (7%), East of England (7%), North East (7%) and 5% of respondents lived in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or outside the UK.

## Applying to social work courses

### Step Up programme

The majority of the survey respondents who were offered a place on the Step Up programme were planning to take up their place (91%), with only 8% not planning on taking up their place.

Of the 27 people who had decided not to take up their place, the most frequent reason given via open text was that they did not think the bursary was sufficient to cover their living expenses. Other factors mentioned included being unable to organise suitable childcare arrangements while training, personal reasons and being offered a job either related to or outside of social work.

### Other social work courses

Respondents were asked whether they had ever applied for a different social work course, either in the last 12 months or more than 12 months ago. The majority of applicants surveyed (59%) had never applied to any social work course before. The social work courses most commonly applied to previously were Frontline (now called Approach) (14%), a postgraduate social work degree (12%), and a previous cohort of Step Up (11%). A smaller number had made applications to an apprenticeship (4%) or an undergraduate course (4%).

---

<sup>5</sup> Using Social Mobility Commission advice on measuring socio-economic background (SEB), parental occupation at age 14 indicates the following: Higher managerial, traditional and modern professional occupations such as medical professional, lawyer, teacher = 'professional or higher SEB'. Intermediate professions such as small business owner, clerical worker, nursery nurse = 'intermediate SEB'. Routine and manual occupations such as gardener, labourer, train driver, hospitality staff = 'lower SEB'.

## Career in social work

### Previous jobs

Respondents were asked about their previous work experience. This was asked in an open text question and coded using version 6 of the Standard Occupational Classification 2020 (SOC2020) index<sup>6</sup>.

Over three quarters (78%) of respondents said that they had experience of working in jobs related to social work or social care (i.e. voluntary or paid work) prior to applying to Step Up. The most common experience was caring personal services (32%), followed by welfare and housing associate professionals (30%), welfare professionals (7%) and teaching professionals (6%).

The majority of respondents (89%) also said that they had experience in another people-oriented career outside of social work/social care (e.g., primary school teacher; nurse; childcare worker; police officer) prior to applying to Step Up. The most common jobs were teaching professionals (24%), teaching and childcare support occupations (13%), welfare and housing associate professionals (13%) and caring personal services (12%).

Finally, 66% of respondents said they previously had a different career (unrelated to social work or other people-oriented work) prior to applying for Step Up. The most common jobs were teaching professionals (8%), administrative occupations (7%) and caring personal services (7%).

### Prior consideration of a career in social work

A question was asked to determine how long respondents had been considering social work as a career before they applied to the Step Up programme. Just over half of respondents (52%) said they had been considering social work for some time, 24% had always wanted to be a social worker, 15% had recently started to consider it and 9% hadn't considered it until they heard about Step Up.

Further analysis revealed that a greater proportion of respondents who were offered a place had recently started to consider social work compared with respondents who were not offered a place (20% compared with 13%\*) and also hadn't considered social work until they heard about Step Up (12% compared with 7%\*). Conversely, a higher proportion of respondents who were not offered a place said that they had always wanted to be a social worker compared with those who were offered a place (30% compared with 11%\*).

---

<sup>6</sup> [SOC 2020 Volume 2: the coding index and coding rules and conventions - Office for National Statistics](#)

## Future career plans

The 796 respondents who had not already accepted a place on a social work course were asked whether they planned to apply for a social work course in the future. This revealed that just over half of these respondents (57%) were considering applying for a social work course in the future, 13% were not planning to and 28% were unsure.

Respondents who had not accepted a place on Step Up or any other social work course were asked to briefly explain their future career plans in the form of an open text question. The most common response was that they were still planning to pursue a career in social work, mentioned by almost half of respondents. A small number said they were planning to re-apply to Step Up. This suggests that many applicants to Step Up have a longer-term ambition for a career in social work. Other commonly mentioned plans were to pursue a non-social work career, to stay or progress in their current role, and to pursue education or training unrelated to social work.

Of those who said they were still planning to pursue social work, respondents mentioned that they would try again to get accepted on to a social work course or to gain experience in social work.

I wish to study for a qualification in social work and become a fully qualified professional. I will keep checking for opportunities in the area until I make it.

I [would] like to get more experience relevant to this profession even in voluntary place before applying again and be a successful social worker to change the life of most vulnerable people in the society.

Some mentioned that this will depend on whether they can afford to do this financially and a few said that not getting accepted onto the programme has affected their confidence.

The field of social work is something which I am keen to embark upon, however I am unsure of the route I will take due to financial commitments.

Still like to be a social worker however not being accepted on the course has knocked my confidence.

Many respondents either raised social work as their immediate plan or as something they are looking to pursue in the future.

Of those who said they would pursue a non-social work-related career, most people mentioned it as their immediate plan, with some mentioning that they would pursue this if they didn't get into social work or that they would pursue this now and hope to get into

social work at a later stage. Types of jobs mentioned mostly related to working with children, in children's services, education, or in a health and social care role.

I am going to be working in leaving care as a personal advisor and if there is an opportunity to progress to a social worker I will take this.

I would like to pursue a career working with and alongside children and families. This is a passion of mine and I will work hard to make this happen hopefully.

Others wanted to stay or progress in their current role. Many people who said this were working in allied professions or other roles with children and families. Some respondents accepted that they would continue in their current role instead of becoming a social worker while some said that they would continue in their current job for now but would look for opportunities to become a social worker in the future.

After being turned down for these Social Work programmes, I'm wondering if this is the right career path for me. I'm currently working for a university, doing research and teaching and may continue.

Currently I work as a tutor at a college. I enjoy the pastoral side of working with young people so might stick with pastoral school roles but haven't ruled out social work yet.

I've got a job as a family support worker. I'm still considering social work, however I would like to see where this job takes me first.

Further education or training unrelated to social work was another theme of responses. People mentioned a range of training levels including diplomas, Masters and PhDs. The subjects mentioned included nursing, mental health, law, probation officer training, psychology, counselling and teaching.

I am thinking about applying to a counselling course or try to become a CBT therapist.

Reapplying to Step Up was mentioned by a small number of respondents. Some respondents said they would like to reapply to Step Up next time or at some time in the future, once their children are older or they have sufficient funds. This was often mentioned alongside applying to other routes such as Frontline (now called Approach) and Think Ahead.

I still wish to apply for Step Up to Social Work next year as I wasn't successful this year. I hope to be successful next year.

I plan to save money to help cover my living expenses and then apply for Step Up again.

A small proportion of respondents said they generally wanted to do something that would make a difference to vulnerable children and young people, they were looking for a career change or new challenge or that they weren't sure what they wanted to do.

Looking at other opportunities to make a difference to the lives of vulnerable children in need of care and support to utilise my qualifications, knowledge, experiences and life skills.

I would like a complete change in career using my relevant skills.

Some respondents used this question as an opportunity to say how disappointed they were not to be offered a place on Step Up, that they felt they possessed the right skills and experience and that not being offered a place had put them off pursuing social work as a career.

I felt quite let down after my application. I felt that I possessed the right qualities and experience necessary.

Not as a social worker. Being rejected has put me off. I was willing and you hear SW are needed.

## **Motivations**

### **Embarking on a career in social work**

All respondents were asked what motivated them to embark on a career in social work. They were asked to select all the factors that they considered motivations and to identify the main factor. Their responses are presented in Table 1.

The biggest motivation for respondents was wanting to help people or make a difference. This was mentioned by 88% of respondents and was the main factor for 61% of respondents. The motivation to work with children and families was also important to respondents, with 78% saying it was a factor and 19% saying it was the main factor. Other important factors included having a long-term commitment to social work as a career, mentioned by 37% of respondents, that they were working in a related area, mentioned by 46% of respondents and that funding/bursary was available for the programme, mentioned by 34% of respondents.

**Table 1: Why did you decide you wanted to embark upon a career in social work?**

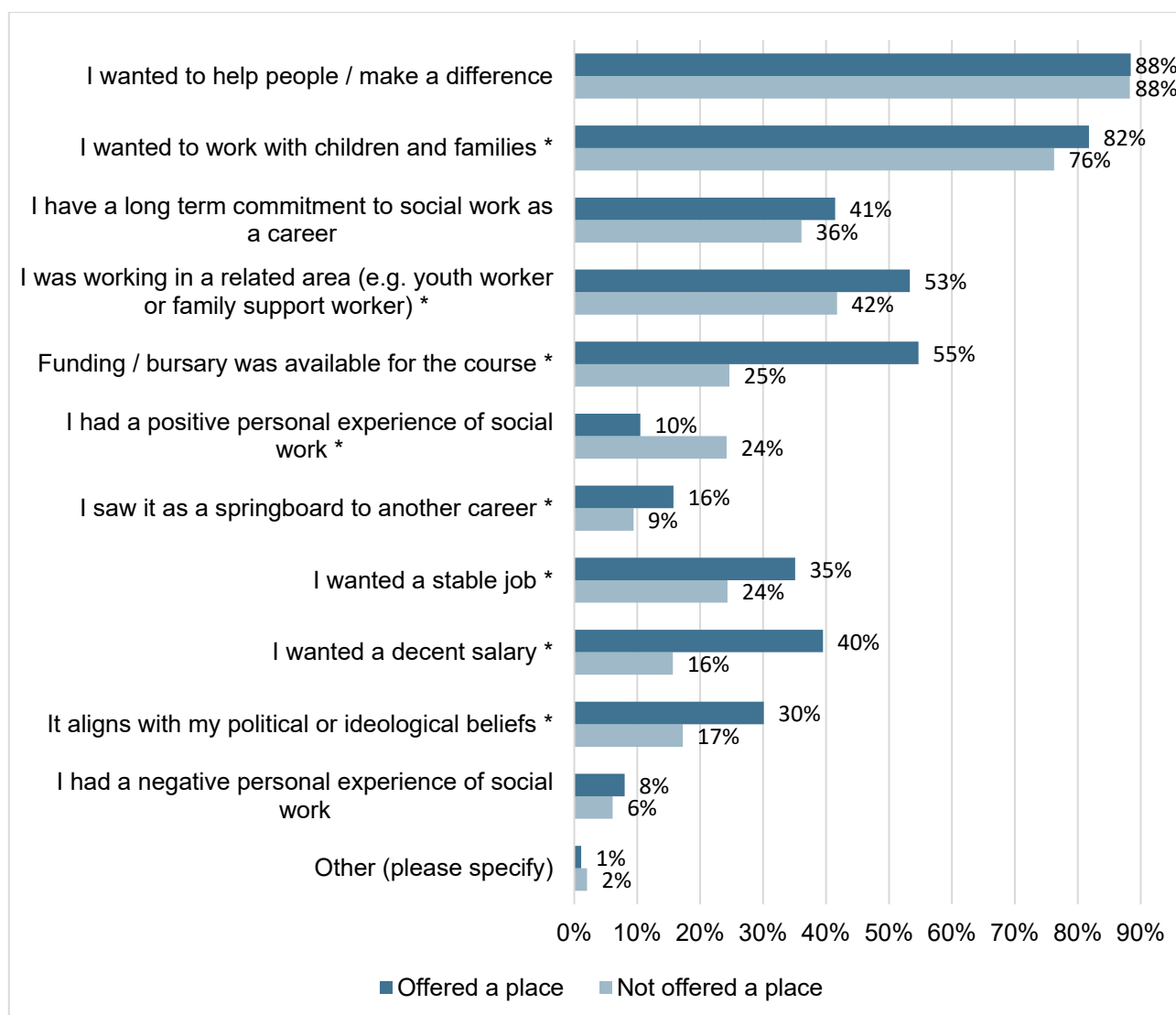
Motivation	Main factor	All factors
I wanted to help people / make a difference	61%	88%
I wanted to work with children and families	19%	78%
I have a long term commitment to social work as a career	5%	37%
I was working in a related area (e.g. youth worker or family support worker)	4%	46%
Funding / bursary was available for the course	3%	34%
I had a positive personal experience of social work	2%	20%
I saw it as a springboard to another career	2%	12%
I wanted a stable job	1%	28%
I wanted a decent salary	1%	24%
It aligns with my political or ideological beliefs	1%	22%
I had a negative personal experience of social work	<1%	7%
Other (please specify)	<1%	2%

Base: All respondents. Main factor (1141), All factors (1154)

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of all motivations by whether respondents were offered a place or not. Generally, respondents who were offered a place selected a larger number of motivations compared with those who were not offered a place. One of the main differences was for funding or the bursary being available for the course which was selected as a motivation by 55% of respondents who were offered a place and 25% of respondents who were not offered a place\*.

Other motivations selected by a higher proportion of those who were offered a place include wanting a decent salary (40% vs 16%\*), social work aligning with political or ideological beliefs (30% vs 17%\*), seeing social work as a springboard to another career (16% vs 9%\*), working in a related area (53% vs 42%\*) and wanting a stable job (35% vs 24%\*). In contrast, a higher proportion of those who were not offered a place selected a positive personal experience of social work as a motivation (10% vs 24%\*). There was no difference by wanting to help people or make a difference.

**Figure 1: Why did you decide you wanted to embark upon a career in social work, by whether offered a place or not**



Base: All respondents who were offered or not offered a place. Offered a place (362), Not offered a place (690). \* Denotes statistically significant differences between respondents who were offered a place compared with those who were not offered a place.

Respondents were asked an open text question about why they decided to pursue a career in social work at this point in time. The most frequent types of response related to wanting to work with children and to help make a difference, particularly to the lives of vulnerable children and families. Many also mentioned that it was a ‘passion’ or that it aligned with their beliefs.

I wanted to make a difference to the lives of children in the social care system.

It is a career that aligned with my passion for helping.

The beliefs and purpose of social work closely align with my own.

The second most common set of responses related to having relevant skills or experience and some mentioned that becoming a social worker was the natural next step.

I have worked in social care for 10 years and this was the next logical step to take.

Wanting a change of career or a new challenge was the next most common set of responses, followed by the good career prospects, financial reward and job security offered by social work.

It will open many doors, create opportunities, and give me job security in the future.

A small number of people said that they thought social work was the right career for them, that it fitted with their personality or that someone had recommended that they would make a good social worker.

I believe I was born with the traits required to be a social worker.

Many people said the timing was right, either because their children had reached the right stage or for more general reasons such as a change in personal circumstances, for example they had relocated.

My personal circumstances changed so I could commit to the level of dedication the course required.

Financial reasons, including the provision of a bursary and being able to earn while learning were also mentioned. The quality and delivery of the Step Up programme was also discussed, such as the fact that it had a short duration.

A small number of people mentioned that they had been motivated to take up social work because of their own personal experiences of social workers, caring responsibilities or vulnerability.

I have lived through adverse experiences as a child and adult and aim to advocate for those who experience the same.

## **Reasons for applying to Step Up**

Respondents were asked why they applied specifically to Step Up, via an open text question. Just under half of respondents mentioned financial reasons such as the importance of the bursary available.

I wouldn't be able to qualify and manage a family financially without Step Up programme and the bursary it offers.

Around a fifth mentioned the duration of the course and the fact it combined theory and practice. A smaller proportion referred to their desire to become a social worker, the quality of their course, and to help others/make a difference.

The amount of practical on the job training appealed to me.

The training period is quite a short length of time as due to my age I wanted to qualify as quickly as possible.

Other themes included Step Up fitting in with their life stage/ lifestyle, for example, that the course is suitable for single parents, older applicants, people with mortgages, and people with children. Some respondents liked the fact that they could choose a local location. Also mentioned was having relevant skills/qualifications/experience, having the course recommended to them, improving their career prospects, gaining skills/experience and knowledge, and the focus on children and families.

It seemed to be for people like me, with extensive experience, but needing the qualification.

Step Up is the only programme I am aware of that is focused on working with children and families.

I saw this as a good integrating route compatible with my work, social and family balance.

## **Importance of funding**

Additionally, in a closed question, respondents were asked how important the Step Up funding was for their decision to apply via this route. Results showed that 68% of respondents said funding was extremely important, 23% said it was very important, 5% said it was moderately important, 1% said it was slightly important, 1% said it was not at all important and 1% of respondents said they did not know or preferred not to say.

## **Barriers**

Respondents were asked to select from a pre-coded list what they considered to be the key barriers, if any, that they faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work. The most commonly chosen barrier was the financial cost of training, selected by just over half of respondents (54%). Other barriers chosen by over a fifth of respondents included childcare or caring responsibilities (25%), an absence of information on routes into the profession (24%), entry requirements (24%) and a negative public perception of social work (21%). Findings can be seen in Table 2.

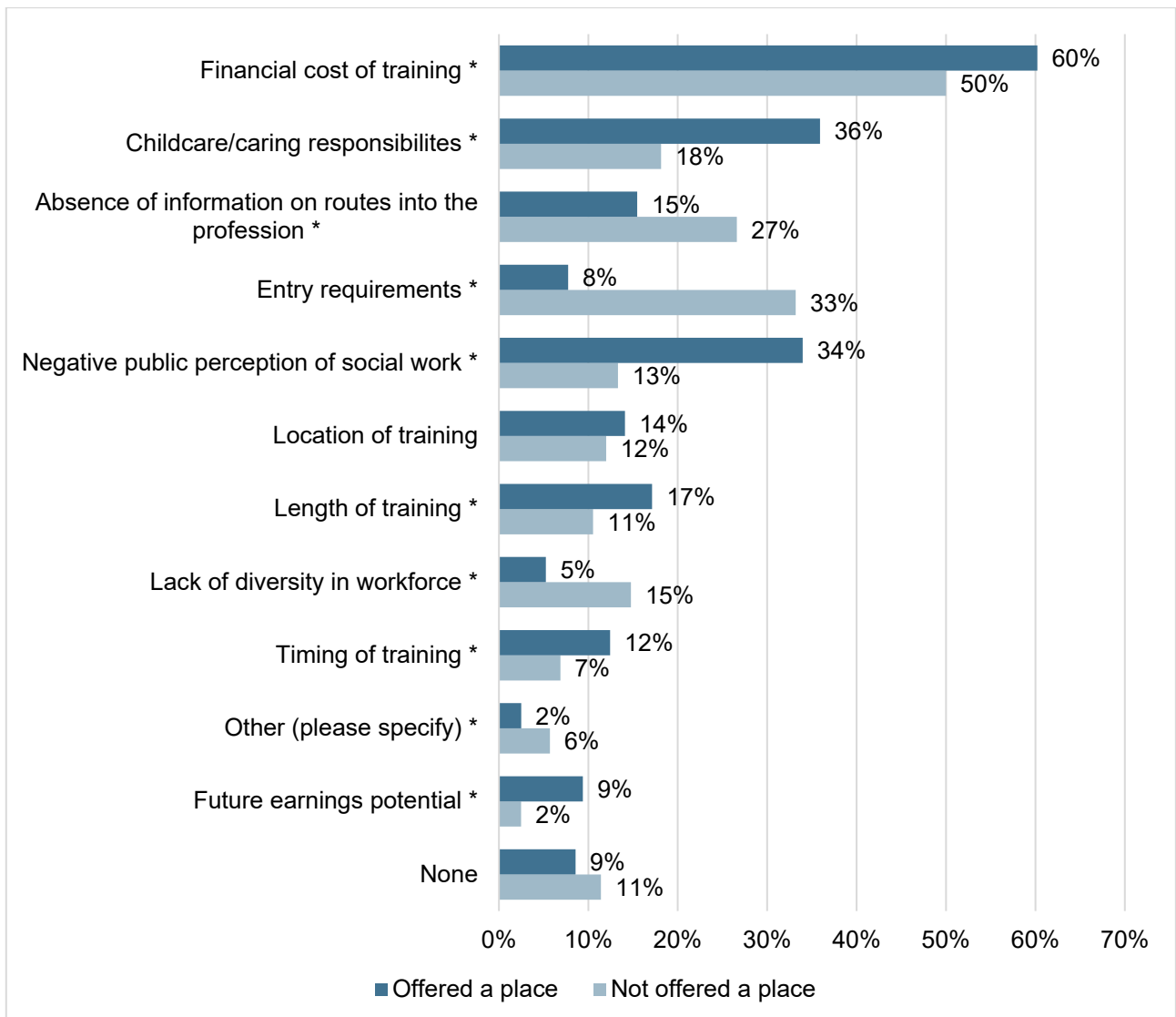
**Table 2: What are the key barriers that you faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work?**

<b>Key barriers to choosing to apply for a career in social work</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Financial cost of training	54%
Childcare/caring responsibilities	25%
Absence of information on routes into the profession	24%
Entry requirements	24%
Negative public perception of social work	21%
Location of training	14%
Length of training	13%
Lack of diversity in workforce	12%
Timing of training	9%
Future earnings potential	5%
Other (please specify)	5%
None	10%

Base: All respondents (1147)

Further analysis (figure 2) shows the breakdown of key barriers to choosing to apply for a career in social work by those who were offered and not offered a place. This revealed that a higher proportion of respondents who were not offered a place said that entry requirements were a barrier to social work compared with those who were offered a place (33% vs 8%\*). Similarly, a higher proportion of respondents who were not offered a place said that absence of information on routes into the profession was a barrier (27% vs 15%\*). In contrast, a higher proportion of those who were offered a place said that a negative public perception of social work (34% vs 13%\*), childcare or caring responsibilities (36% vs 18%\*), and financial cost of training (60% vs 50%\*) were barriers compared with those who were not offered a place.

**Figure 2: What are the key barriers that you faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work, by whether offered a place or not**



Base: All respondents who were offered a place or not offered a place. Offered a place (362), Not offered a place (684). \* Denotes significant differences between respondents who were offered a place compared with those who were not offered a place.

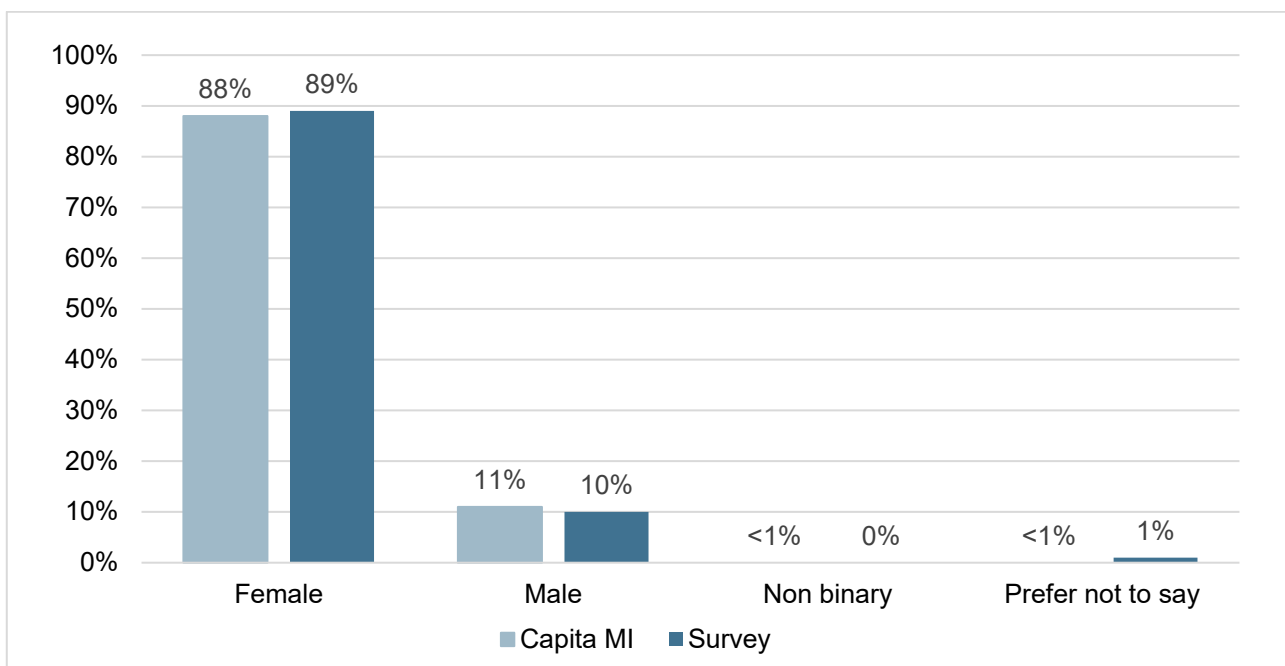
## Completer survey findings: 6 months post-qualification

The completer survey was launched about 20 months after enrolment, and approximately 6 months after completion of the Step Up programme (cohort 7). Survey invitations were sent to the 586 people who completed the programme and for whom contact details were provided. This resulted in 234 complete survey responses, with a response rate of 40%.

### Demographics and management information

Management information (MI) was provided by Capita for all 741 people who enrolled in Step Up cohort 7. Using this MI data, the demographic trends of the entire cohort were compared with those who responded to the completer survey. This comparison offers an indication of how representative the survey responses are relative to the wider cohort. However, due to the relatively small number of completed survey responses, it is not possible to test statistical significance in this comparison, so findings should be treated with caution. Similarly, it is important to note that some of those who enrolled did not actually start or complete the programme, and the completer survey was conducted around 20 months after initial enrolment, therefore some respondents may have changed how they report their demographic characteristics.

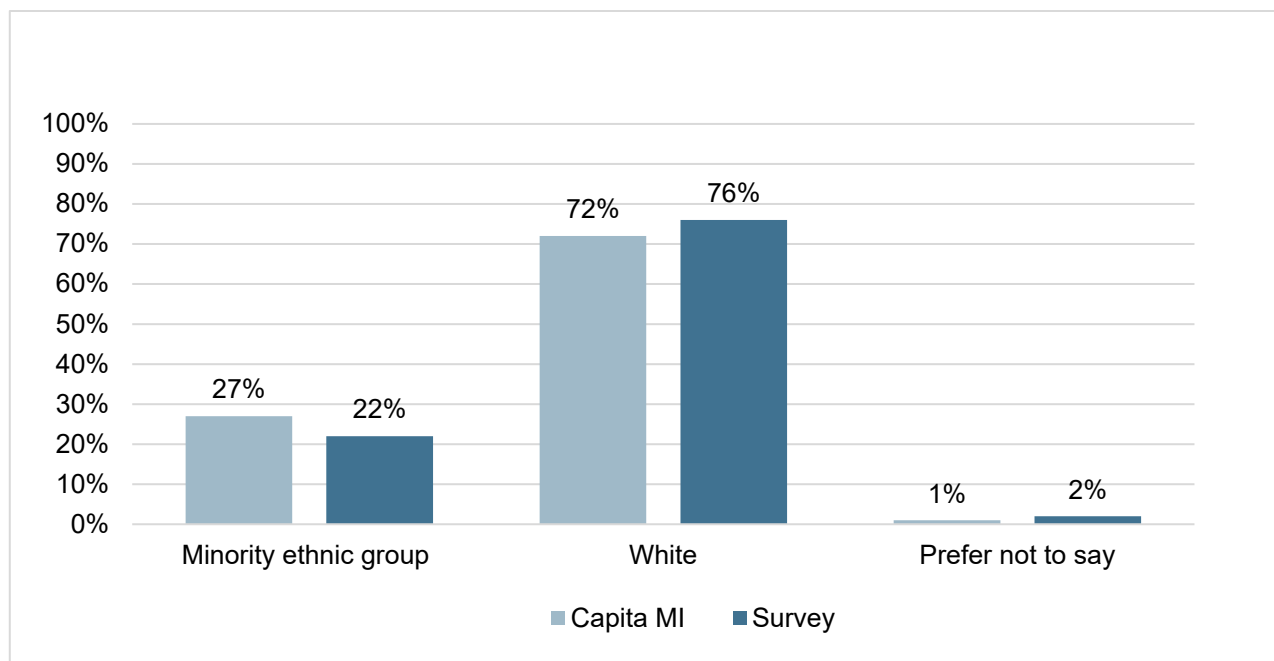
**Figure 3: Gender breakdown by completer survey respondents and Capita MI**



Base: Capita MI (741), Survey (232)

Figure 3 shows that 89% of survey respondents self-reported as female and 10% self-reported as male, this is very similar to the gender breakdown of the those enrolled in Step Up.

**Figure 4: Ethnicity breakdown by completer survey respondents and Capita MI**



Base: Capita MI (741), Survey (233)

As shown in figure 4, 76% of survey respondents self-reported as White, 22% as a minority ethnic group and 2% prefer not say. This shows a slight over representation of White respondents, and an under representation of respondents from minority ethnic groups in the survey.

Two percent of survey respondents were under 25 years old, 44% were between 25 and 34 years old, 34% were between 35 and 44 years old, 16% were between 45 and 54 years old and 2% were 55 or older. As the completer survey took place 20 months after enrolment, it is difficult to compare the enrolment ages with the completer survey age groupings.

MI data was not available for all the demographic questions asked in the survey. Therefore, the following demographic findings are from survey responses only:

- Just over half of survey respondents reported having caring responsibilities (54%). Of those who had caring responsibilities, 39% cared for children of school age, 11% cared for children of pre-school age, 3% cared for children with disabilities and 9% cared for other family members or friends.
- The majority of survey respondents (65%) said that they were not eligible for free school meals (FSM) at any point during their school years. 26% said they were eligible for FSM, and 8% said that this question was not applicable to them or preferred not to say.
- Based on responses about the employment of the highest earner in their family, 47% of respondents came from a professional background, 37% were from a lower

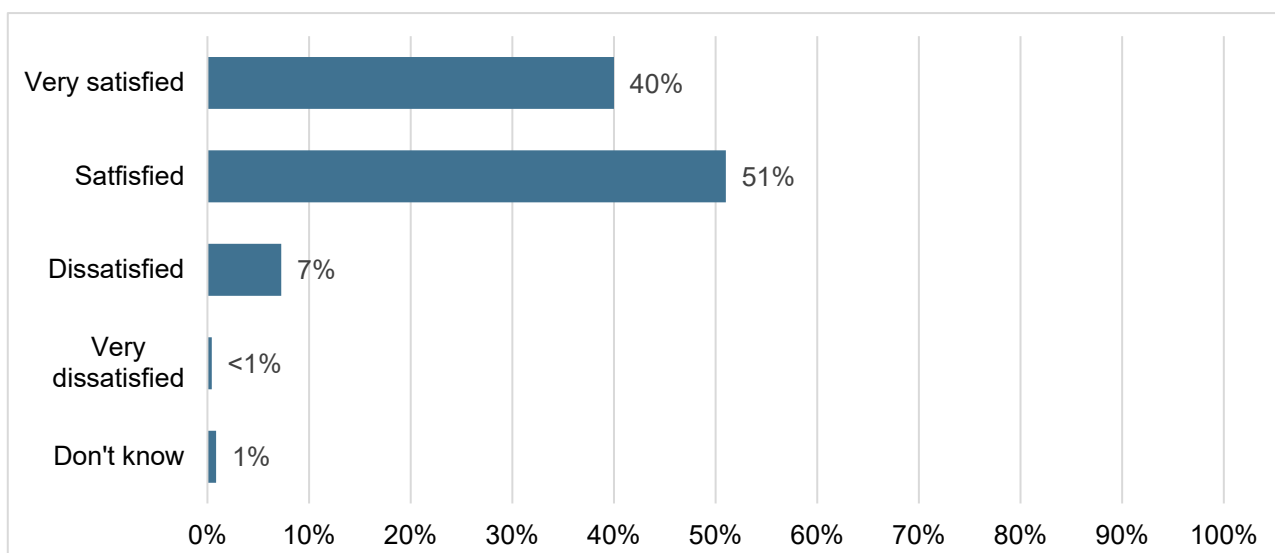
socio-economic background, 11% came from an intermediate background and 5% were unable to answer or chose not to say.

- 21% of respondents reported that they had physical or mental health conditions they expected to last 12 months or more, 76% reported they did not and 3% preferred not to say.
- 25% of respondents reported that they achieved a first class degree, 65% reported an upper second class and 7% reported a lower second class degree.
- The most common subjects studied by respondents were social sciences (38%) followed by education (13%), biological science (7%) and languages (7%).
- Respondents lived across England. The highest number of respondents were from Greater London (18%), followed by the South East (16%), Yorkshire and Humberside (14%), North West (12%), South West (10%), North East (9%), West Midlands (7%), East of England (6%), East Midlands (6%) and 2% said they prefer not to say.

## Satisfaction with the Step Up programme

Respondents were asked about their overall satisfaction with their experience of the Step Up programme (figure 5). The vast majority reported being either satisfied (51%) or very satisfied (40%) with their experience, 7% were dissatisfied and less than 1% reported being very dissatisfied.

**Figure 5: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your experience of the Step Up programme?**



Base: All respondents (234)

Respondents were also asked whether they would recommend the Step Up programme to others looking to enter the social work profession, 84% said they would recommend it, 7% said they would not recommend it and 9% said they didn't know. Respondents were then

asked to provide an open text answer explaining why they would or would not recommend the programme.

Of those who said they would recommend the Step Up programme, 181 provided an open text response. Thematic analysis of their responses revealed several key themes, with the most prominent being praise for the programme as a route into social work, the short duration of the course and the quality of the programme.

The course enabled me to become a registered social worker and as a direct result of the course I found a job in that role.

It enables people who have transferrable skills to qualify in a shorter timeframe.

I thought the course was excellent... I felt that we were given lots of opportunity to explore our understanding of each part of the course.

Within the broader theme of quality, respondents highlighted the high standard of teaching, positive placement experiences, how the course enables career changers and how it gives people the opportunity to gain a qualification.

Placement opportunities were outstanding.

It's a great way to gain the qualification and is more accessible than paying for a 3/4 year degree especially when used to working!

I have now had a complete career change and I love my job.

However, analysis of open text responses from those who did not know whether they would recommend the course (9%) or would not recommend the course (7%), indicated that perceptions varied based on individual experience. There was both positive and negative feedback about recurring themes, such as financial support, preparedness for practice, support provided while on the course and workload. These will be explored in more detail in the following sections.

## **Financial support during the programme**

When respondents were asked why they would recommend the Step Up programme, a significant number of respondents mentioned the financial support offered throughout the course. Respondents specifically mentioned that the bursary was essential to being able to complete the programme.

The bursary offered made it the only accessible route to complete my social work degree.

I wouldn't have been able to retrain without the bursary.

Respondents also noted that the shorter duration of the course reduced the financial burden often associated with adult learning.

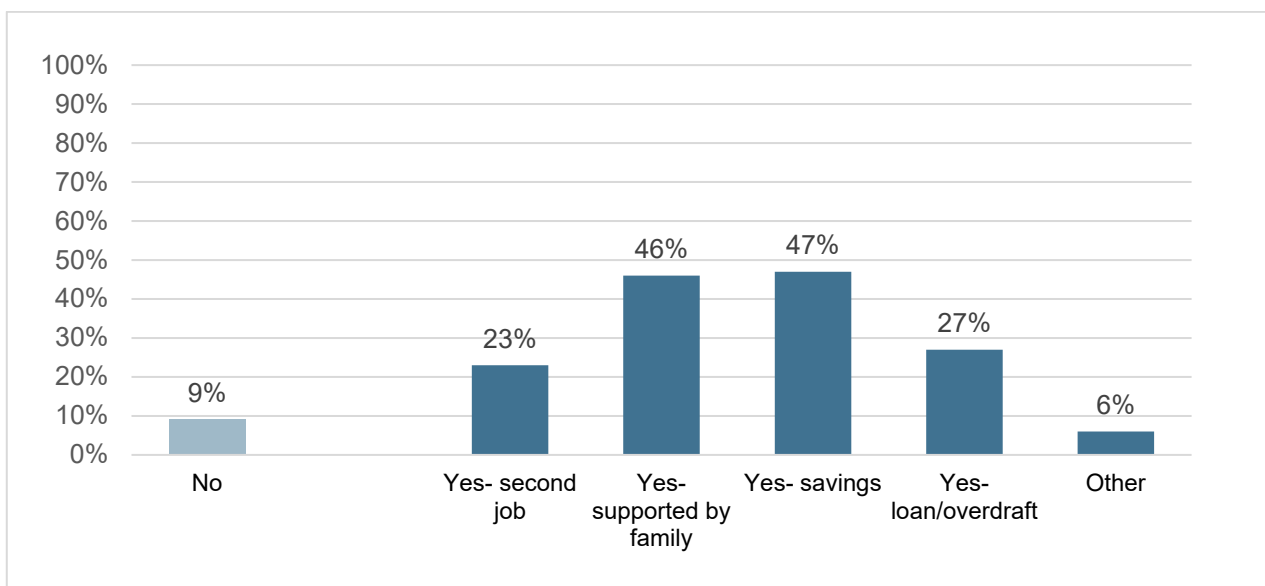
Due to the length of the course and the bursary it made it accessible whereas giving up work and completing a 3 year degree would not have been.

In addition, several respondents mentioned that Step Up was a good opportunity to gain a fully funded qualification.

However, despite many respondents praising the financial support provided as part of the Step Up programme, when asked whether they needed to seek additional sources of financial support in addition to the bursary, the majority of respondents (91%) reported that they did, while 9% of respondents said that the bursary alone was sufficient.

The most common alternative sources of funding were use of savings (47%) and support from family (46%), followed by use of a loan or overdraft (27%), second job (23%) or other unlisted options (6%) (figure 6). Respondents were able to select more than one source of funding.

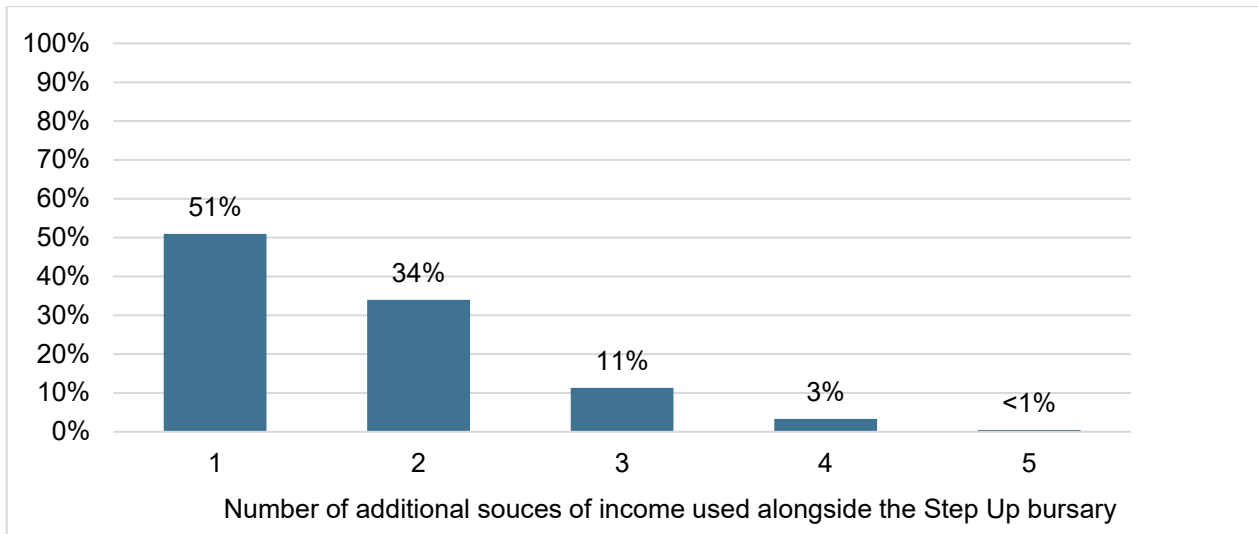
**Figure 6: Did you need to seek additional financial support whilst on the Step Up programme in addition to the bursary?**



Base: All respondents (234)

Just over half (51%) of those who needed to seek additional financial support whilst on the Step Up programme used one other source. 34% used two sources of additional financial support, 11% used three, 3% used four and less than 1% used five sources of additional financial support (see figure 7).

**Figure 7: Number of additional sources of financial support sought in addition to the Step Up bursary per person**



Base: Of those who reported they needed to seek additional financial support whilst on the Step Up programme in addition to the bursary (212)

In addition, in open text responses, several respondents specifically mentioned that insufficient financial support offered by the Step Up bursary would impact whether they would recommend the Step Up programme.

The bursary is not sufficient to live on in the current financial climate.

The finance part of it was a real struggle to survive.

Childcare costs were higher than bursary amount.

Several respondents also provided open text responses about their experience of seeking additional finances in order to complete Step Up.

I had to get a job working 25 hours per week alongside.

If my husband wasn't able to support me, I would not have been able to afford it.

I received Universal Credit, without this I would not have been able to complete the course.

These findings indicate that the bursary and fully funded nature of the Step Up course is a positive enabler for those looking to enter the social work profession, but the majority of participants had to supplement the bursary with other sources of funding such as savings, loans, second jobs and family support.

## Perceptions of support received throughout the programme

Respondents were generally positive about the support they received at different points in the Step-Up programme, however a small minority reported dissatisfaction or used open text boxes to share their experiences of not being adequately supported.

When asked about their overall satisfaction with the support they received whilst on placement, 39% reported being very satisfied, 43% reported being satisfied, 13% dissatisfied and 4% very dissatisfied, indicating a generally high level of satisfaction with the programme.

Respondents were also asked how they would rate the quality of the reflective supervision they received during the Step-Up programme. Just over a quarter (28%) rated the quality of reflective supervision as very good, 52% good, 16% poor and 1% very poor.

In open text responses about whether they would or would not recommend the Step Up programme, several respondents mentioned the level and type of support they received as a reason why they would recommend the programme.

I felt really supported and valued and my tutor made sure everything was ok on placement too. It felt like a family.

I felt supported and it increased my want to become a Social Worker.

Several respondents specifically mentioned that they were satisfied with the support offered by their placement organisation, or their higher education institution.

Fantastic academic staff, very supportive

During placement I was very well supported by staff and tutors.

However, a small number of respondents shared their experiences of not feeling supported while taking part in the Step Up programme, demonstrating that experiences of the programme will vary based on the individual, location and placement. This included experiences of not feeling supported around medical issues and instances of perceived bias or discrimination.

## Perceptions of the workload associated with the programme

When asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement “the academic workload on the Step Up programme was manageable”, 17% strongly agreed, 70% agreed, 10% disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed.

In open text responses, respondents reported that although the Step Up programme is intense and requires hard work, this is necessary for the course to remain a manageable length and equip participants to be ready for practice.

It offers an intense learning program that enables you to complete a social work degree in half the time and begin your career.

Although extremely difficult to complete, the learning experience and the intensity of the program equips experienced workers with the reality of social work.

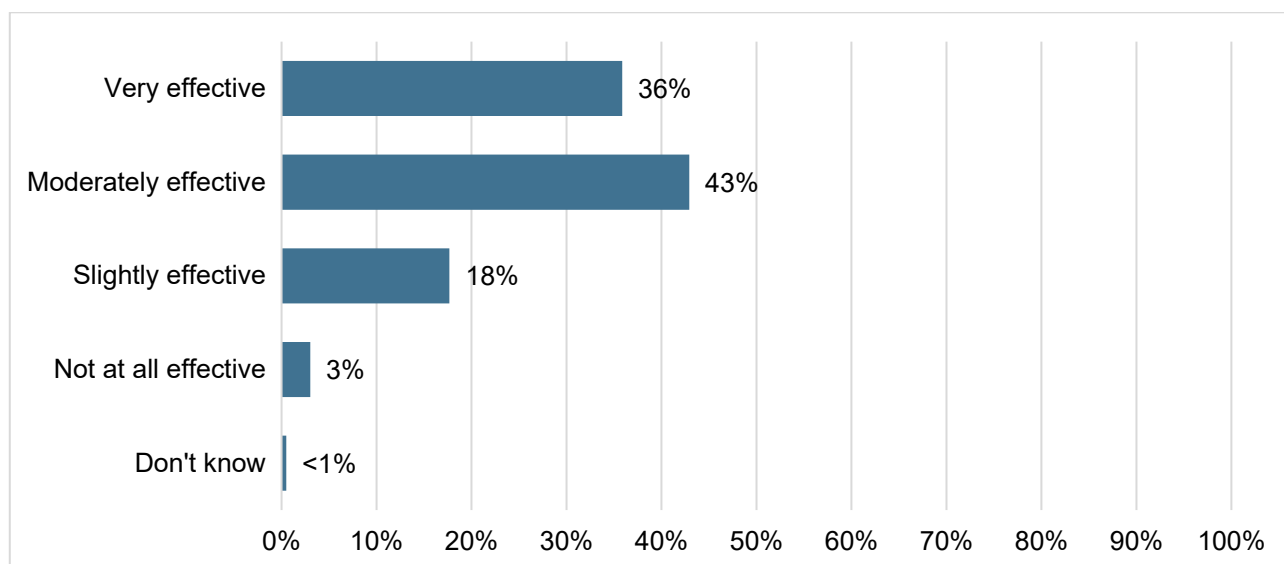
## Perceptions of how well Step Up prepared participants for social work

Respondents were mostly positive about how well Step Up prepared them for a career in social work. When asked to what extent they agree with the statement “the Step Up programme equipped me to practice in an inclusive way with children and families”, 32% of respondents strongly agreed, 59% agreed, 7% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.

Similarly, when asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “I am utilising what I learnt during my studies on the Step Up programme in my current work”, 43% of respondents strongly agreed, 46% agreed, 8% neither agreed or disagreed, 2% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.

Respondents who were working in children’s social work (88% of all respondents) were asked some more specific questions about this sector. When asked “how effective was the Step Up programme in preparing you to work as a social worker with children and families?”, 36% of respondents reported very effective, 43% moderately effective, 18% slightly effective and 3% not at all effective (figure 8).

**Figure 8: How effective was the Step Up programme in preparing you to work as a social worker with children and families?**

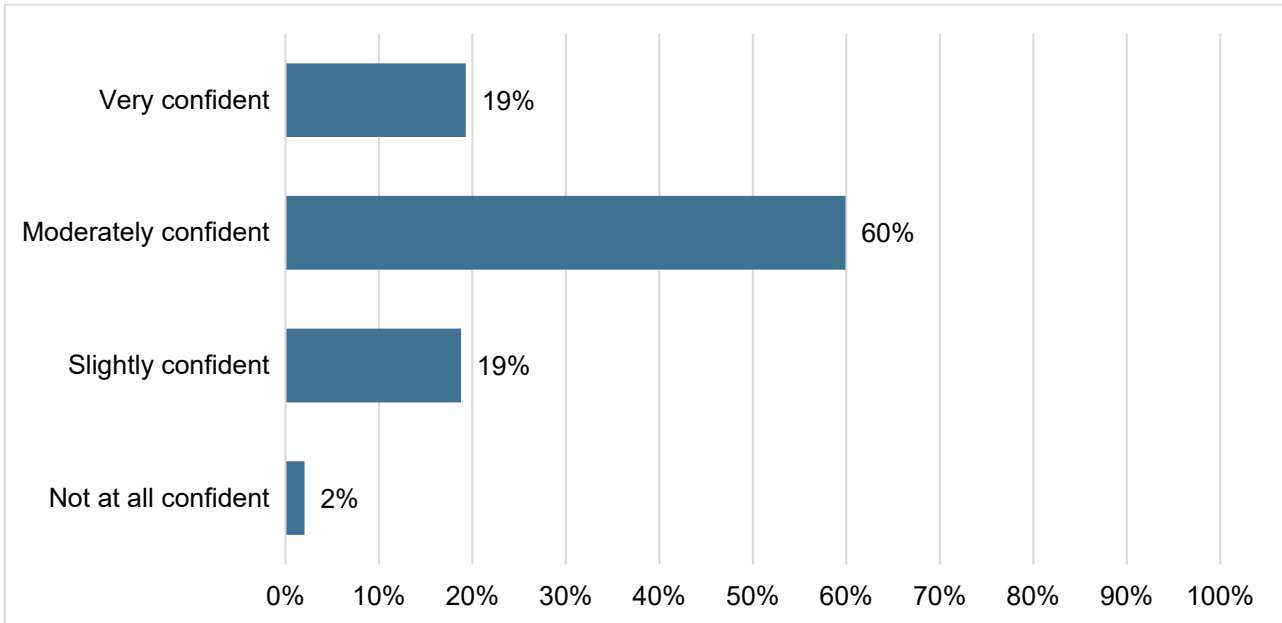


Base: All respondents who report working in children’s social work at the time of completion (198)

Respondents who were working in children’s social work were also asked “how confident are you in your social work practice in supporting children and families?” (figure 9). Around

a fifth (19%) reported they were very confident, 60% moderately confident, 19% slightly confident and 2% not at all confident.

**Figure 9: How confident are you in your social work practice in supporting children and families?**



Base: All respondents who report working in children’s social work at the time of completion (197)

Preparedness for social work practice was one of the themes regularly mentioned when respondents were given open text boxes to explain why they would or would not recommend the Step Up programme. Respondents used words such as: ‘equipped’, ‘prepared’, ‘real-life’ experience, ‘on the job learning’, and ‘confident’ to describe their experiences.

The Step Up programme, including two statutory placements allowed me to build on my experience to become a confident social worker.

The knowledge and work place experience is a great way to enter into the world of social work. It gives you a hands on true reflection of social work life.

However, it is worth noting that a small number of respondents said they felt they may have been more prepared if they had qualified through the more traditional route.

## Entering social work

When asked about their current employment situation, almost all respondents (99%) reported being in some form of employment (part time or full time) following the Step Up programme. The vast majority (98%) of those in employment considered themselves to be working in social work practice.

Of those respondents who consider themselves to be working in social work, 88% said that their main role was in children's social work, 9% said adult social work and 3% said other.

Almost all respondents who were working in social work (95%) said that they currently work in a local authority/Children's Trust. Of those who reported working in a local authority, 85% were still employed in the same local authority where they participated in Step Up.

Participants were asked whether they were carrying out any further study, 88% responded that they were not undertaking further study, 10% responded that they were undertaking part-time study and 1% were undertaking full-time study. The majority of those studying were undertaking a Masters in Social Work (some of them explained this was an additional dissertation module offered as part of their Step Up year 2).

High levels of social work employment amongst Step Up completers aligns with several respondents' open text responses that they would recommend the Step Up programme because it enabled them to enter employment in social work quickly.

I am really pleased with the quick progression into this career... my placement has kickstarted my employment as a Social Worker.

Respondents were asked to self-report their annual salary to the nearest thousand. Of the 222 people who gave their salary, the majority reported incomes that fell between £30,000 and £34,000 (60%) and £35,000 and £39,000 (33%). The mean income across all of the respondents was £34,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand), and the median income was £33,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand).

## **Satisfaction with current job**

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their satisfaction with different aspects of their current job. Their responses have been presented in table 3, in order from most satisfied to least satisfied. Job security and opportunities for career advancement were the aspects they were most satisfied with and public respect for the work they do was the aspect they were most dissatisfied with.

**Table 3: How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your job?**

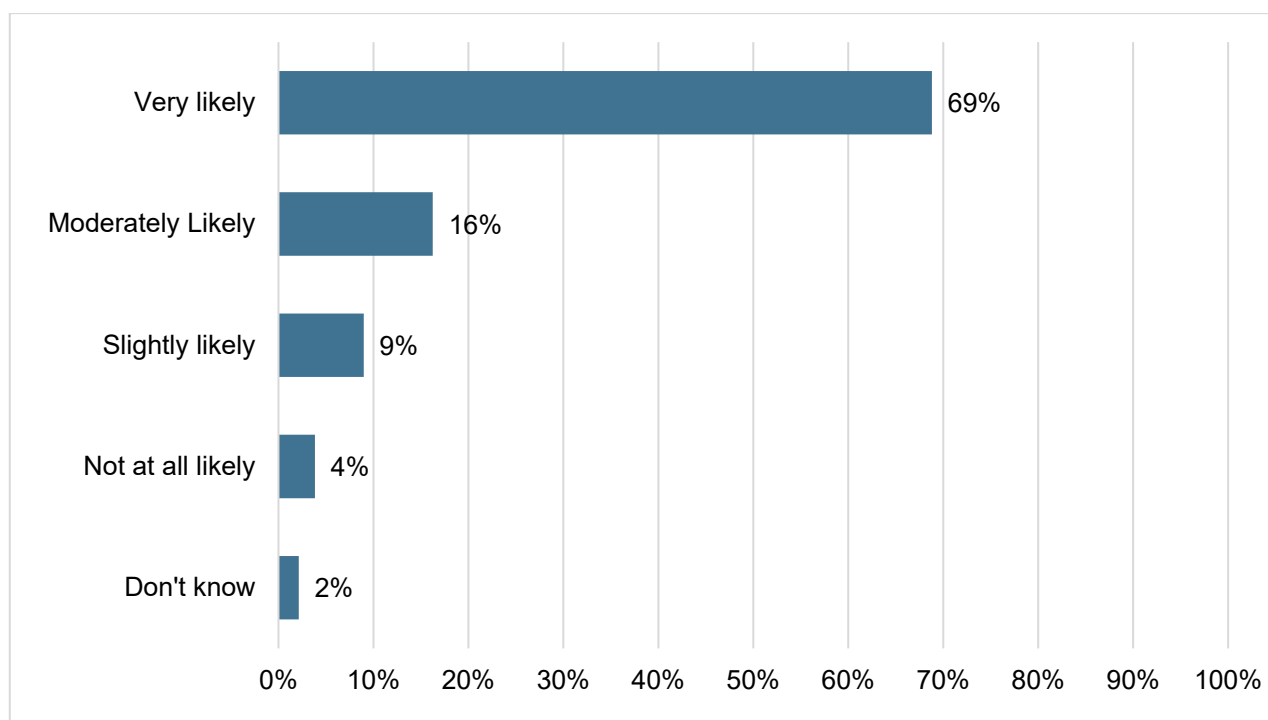
<b>Aspect of your current job</b>	<b>Satisfied or very satisfied</b>	<b>Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied</b>	<b>Don't know or Not applicable</b>
Job security	97%	2%	<1%
Opportunities for career advancement	84%	5%	10%
Flexibility of hours	83%	16%	2%
Quality of supervision	82%	16%	2%
Leadership and management	80%	16%	3%
Caseload/ workload	72%	28%	<1%
Number of hours worked	67%	31%	<1%
Income	67%	32%	<1%
Public respect for the sort of work you do	50%	45%	4%

Base: Job security (229), Opportunities for Career advancement (230), Flexibility of hours (231), Quality of supervision (230), Leadership and management (230), Caseload/ workload (232), Number of hours worked (232), Income (232), Public respect for the work you do (231).

## **Likelihood of remaining in social work in 12 months' time**

Respondents who were currently working in social work were asked how likely they were to be working in social work in 12 months' time (figure 10). Most respondents (69%) said they were very likely, a further 16% responded moderately likely, 9% responded slightly likely, 4% responded not at all likely and 2% responded that they don't know.

**Figure 10: How likely are you, if at all, to be working as a social worker in 12 months' time?**



Base: All respondents (234)

Respondents were asked in an open text question to explain the reasons why they said they are likely, or unlikely, to still be working as a social worker in 12 months' time. 146 people provided an open text response.

Almost half of these responses referenced enjoyment of the job as a reason to stay in social work.

I feel I have found my purpose and niche and I'm enjoying it.

Before joining the cohort I was very passionate about social work, this passion has only increased since becoming qualified.

There is a saying "find a job you love and you will never work a day in your life". I have found that in my role as a social worker.

A third of responses referenced career path as a reason to stay in social work. The desire to complete the ASYE (assessed and supported year in employment) programme came up, referring to the fact that they were still new to social work, or had just qualified from the Step Up programme, so it made sense to remain. Some mentioned that they wanted to give themselves time to feel settled or to give social work a chance before considering whether to change career. Some respondents mentioned that they wanted to stay in social work because it makes sense for their future career progression.

[I] see clear career progression within my Local Authority.

I will complete my ASYE year in April 2024, where I will be a Level 2 SW  
- I hope to progress as quickly as possible to Level 3.

There were also references to the hard work and time it has taken them to get to the point of qualifying as a social worker and wanting to build on this.

I've worked hard for my qualification and would like to build up my experience.

Multiple respondents also referenced the importance of being part of a good team and feeling well supported by their employer, colleagues and managers.

I have started my ASYE year and feel fully supported and ready to practice. I have stayed with the LA that I was on my final placement with because I am valued.

I do believe the happiness of your social work years very much depends on the team you are in and the support you have by your employer to mitigate burn out and compassion fatigue.

Those who reported being less likely to stay in social work in 12 months' time provided more negative responses about the profession, such as difficult working conditions, high and complex caseloads, the challenge and demands of the role, not being able to spend enough time with children and families and too much paperwork. They also mentioned wider issues faced by the social work sector such as high levels of staff turnover and funding pressures.

The morale is very low, caseloads are not manageable and sadly there is not enough social workers for the amount of children in need.

Some respondents mentioned their wellbeing and mental health, saying for example that the role did not allow them to have a good work-life balance and they felt burnt out, stressed or overwhelmed. This contributed to a feeling of low morale. A few mentioned that the lack of focus on mental health might push them to leave social work.

I would like to continue however have seen how stressed my colleagues are with caseloads. If my mental health and emotional well-being is compromised by my workload, I will leave social work.

## Conclusion

The findings from the Step Up to Social Work cohort 7 surveys offer valuable insights into both the motivations and experiences of applicants and completers. The applicant survey highlights a strong pre-existing interest in social work among candidates, with many drawn to the programme due to its financial support, practical structure and accelerated timeline. However, financial barriers and limited information about entry routes were some of the challenges for cohort 7 applicants.

The completer survey reveals high levels of satisfaction with the programme and strong employment outcomes, with most respondents working in children and families social work within the same local authority at 6 months post-qualifying. While the funding/ bursary was essential to accessing the programme, many completers said they also needed to seek additional sources of financial support while on the programme. Retention rates in child and family social work and satisfaction with many aspects of the job at 6 months after programme completion appear promising, though concerns were raised around workload, systemic issues, and public perception of social work.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Step Up cohort 7 applicant survey questions

### Step Up cohort 7 applicant survey

Thank you for your interest in this survey on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE), which seeks to understand why people apply for a career in child and family social work. It should take about 10 minutes to complete.

The survey is anonymous so we are not able to identify who has participated.

Full details about how your data will be used are set out in the Privacy Notice.

Please click on the arrow to start the survey.

-----  
Q1 Were you offered a place on the Step Up programme?  
(Please select one)

- Yes
- No
- Not heard yet / I'm on the reserve list
- I withdrew before the offer stage
- Prefer not to say

If Q1 = Yes

Q2 Do you plan on taking up your place on Step Up?  
(Please select one)

- Yes
- No
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

If Q2 = No

Q3 Why are you not planning on taking up your place on Step Up?

(Please select all that apply)

- I am taking up a place to train as a social worker elsewhere
- I am taking up a place to train in a different subject area (not social work)
- I have been offered a job related to social work
- I have been offered a job outside of social work
- I decided to stay in my current job (related to social work)
- I decided to stay in my current job (not related to social work)
- I decided that the bursary isn't sufficient to cover living expenses
- I was unable to organise suitable childcare arrangements while training
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

If Q2 = No

Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "Q3"

Q4 What is the MAIN reason for not planning on taking up your place on Step Up?

(Please select one)

- I am taking up a place to train as a social worker elsewhere
- I am taking up a place to train in a different subject area (not social work)
- I have been offered a job related to social work
- I have been offered a job outside of social work
- I decided to stay in my current job (related to social work)
- I decided to stay in my current job (not related to social work)
- I decided that the bursary isn't sufficient to cover living expenses
- I was unable to organise suitable childcare arrangements while training
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q5 Had you considered social work as a career before you heard about Step Up?

(Please select one)

- No - I hadn't considered it until I heard about Step Up
- Yes - I have recently started to consider it
- Yes - I have been considering it for some time
- Yes - I have always wanted to be a social worker
- Don't know / Prefer not to say

Q6 Why did you decide to pursue social work as a career at this point in time (when you applied for Step Up)?

Please do not include any personal details which could be used to identify you in your response.

---

---

---

---

Q7 Apart from applying for Step Up this year, have you applied for any other social work course **in the last 12 months?** (Please select all that apply)

- Frontline
- Undergraduate social work degree
- Postgraduate social work degree
- Think Ahead
- Social work apprenticeship
- Other social work course (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

**If Q7 = Frontline**

Q8a You said you applied for Frontline in the last 12 months, were you offered a place?

- No
- Yes - but I did not accept the place
- Yes - I accepted the place
- Not heard yet
- Prefer not to say

**If Q7 = Undergraduate social work degree**

Q8b You said you applied for an undergraduate social work degree in the last 12 months, were you offered a place?

- No
- Yes - but I did not accept the place
- Yes - I accepted the place
- Not heard yet
- Prefer not to say

**If Q7 = Postgraduate social work degree**

Q8c You said you applied for a postgraduate social work degree in the last 12 months, were you offered a place?

- No
- Yes - but I did not accept the place
- Yes - I accepted the place
- Not heard yet
- Prefer not to say

If Q7 = Think Ahead

Q8d You said you applied for Think Ahead in the last 12 months, were you offered a place?

- No
- Yes - but I did not accept the place
- Yes - I accepted the place
- Not heard yet
- Prefer not to say

If Q7 = Social work apprenticeship

Q8e You said you applied for a social work apprenticeship in the last 12 months, were you offered a place?

- No
- Yes - but I did not accept the place
- Yes - I accepted the place
- Not heard yet
- Prefer not to say

If Q7 = Other social work course (please specify)

Q8f You said you applied for  $\${Q7/ChoiceTextEntryValue/6}$  in the last 12 months, were you offered a place?

- No
- Yes - but I did not accept the place
- Yes - I accepted the place
- Not heard yet
- Prefer not to say

Q9 Have you ever applied for Step Up or another route into social work **in previous years?** (Not including in the last 12 months)

(Please select all that apply)

- Step Up
- Frontline
- Undergraduate social work degree
- Postgraduate social work degree
- Think Ahead
- Social work apprenticeship
- Other social work course (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- None of the above

Q10 If you have not recently accepted a place on a social work course, do you plan to apply for a social work course in future? (Please select one)

Yes

No

Unsure

Prefer not to say

Not applicable - I have accepted a place on a social work course

If Q10 = Yes

Or Q10 = No

Or Q10 = Unsure

Or Q10 = Prefer not to say

Q11 Please can you tell us briefly about your future career plans?

Please do not include any personal details which could be used to identify you in your response.

---

---

---

---

**The next few questions are about your undergraduate degree.**

Q12 What undergraduate subject area did you study? (Please select one)

**Medicine & dentistry** - including Pre-clinical medicine, Pre-clinical dentistry, Clinical medicine, Clinical dentistry, Balanced combination

**Subjects allied to medicine** - including: Anatomy & Physiology, Pharmacology, Pharmacy, Nutrition, Ophthalmics, Audiology, Nursing, Medical technology, Other medical subjects, Balanced combination

**Biological sciences** - including Biology, Botany, Zoology, Genetics, Microbiology, Molecular biology & biophysics, Biochemistry, Psychology (not solely as social science), Other biological sciences, Balanced combination

**Veterinary sciences**

**Agriculture & related subjects** - including Agriculture, Forestry, Food science, Agricultural sciences, Other agricultural subjects, Balanced combination

**Physical subjects** - including Chemistry, Materials science, Physics, Archaeology as a physical science, Astronomy, Geology, Oceanography, Geography studies as a science, Environmental science & other physical sciences, Balanced combination

**Mathematical sciences** - including Mathematics, Statistics, Other mathematical sciences, Balanced combination

**Computer science**

**Engineering & technology** - including General engineering, Civil engineering, Mechanical engineering, Aeronautical engineering, Electrical engineering, Electronic engineering, Production engineering, Chemical engineering, Other engineering, Balanced combinations, Minerals technology, Metallurgy, Ceramics & glasses, Polymers & textiles, Other materials technology, Maritime technology, Biotechnology, Other technologies

**Architecture, building & planning** - including Architecture, Building, Environmental technologies, Town & country planning, Other architectural studies, Balanced combination

**Social, Economic & Political Sciences** - including Economics, Sociology, Social policy & administration, Social work, Anthropology, Psychology (without significant element of biological science), Geography (unless solely as a physical science), Balanced combination, Politics, Other social studies

**Law**

**Business & administrative studies** - including Business & management studies, Operational research, Financial management, Accountancy, Marketing & market research, Industrial relations, Catering & institutional management, Land & property management, Transport, other business & administrative studies, Balanced combination

**Librarianship & Information science** - including Librarianship, Information science, Communication studies, Media studies, Publishing, Journalism, Balanced combination

**Languages** - Linguistics, Comparative literature, English, American studies, Celtic languages, literature & culture. Latin, Ancient Greek, Classics, Other ancient lan-

guages & related studies, Balanced combination, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Latin American, Scandinavian, Russian, Slavonic & East European, Other European, Chinese, Japanese, Other Asian, Modern Middle Eastern and African languages, literature & culture. Other language studies, Other or unspecified modern languages

**Humanities** - including History, Economic & social history, History of art, History & philosophy of science, Archaeology, Philosophy, Theology & religious studies, Other humanities, Balanced combination

**Creative arts & design** - including Fine art, Design studies, Music, Drama, Cinematics, Crafts, Beauty & hairdressing, Art & design other, Balanced combinations

**Education** - including Teacher training, Physical education, Academic studies in education, Techniques in teaching children, Techniques in teaching adults, Education for those with special needs, Technology in education, Management & organisation of education, Other topics in education, Balanced combination

**Combined**

**Other (please specify)** \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know/prefer not to say

I didn't study for an undergraduate degree

Q13 What classification did you achieve for your undergraduate degree? (Please select one)

First class

2:1

2:2

3rd class

Other

Prefer not to say

N/A

Q14 Do you have any of the following higher qualifications? (Please select all that apply)

Diploma or certificate

Postgraduate diploma or certificate (including PGCE/PGDE)

Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA)

Higher degree, mainly by research (e.g. PhD, DPhil, MPhil)

Professional qualification (e.g. ACA, Chartered Institute of Marketing)

Other, please give details \_\_\_\_\_

None of the above

**The next few questions are about your previous experience**

Q15 Broadly speaking, did you have any social work/social care experience (i.e. voluntary or paid work) prior to applying for Step Up?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Prefer not to say

Q16 Have you previously had experience in any other people-oriented career (outside of social work/social care) prior to applying for Step Up?

E.g. primary school teacher; nurse; childcare worker; police officer etc.

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Prefer not to say

Q17 Have you previously had a different type of career (unrelated to social work or other people-oriented work) prior to applying for Step Up?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know / Prefer not to say

**If Q15 = Yes**

Q18 You answered that you previously had social work/social care experience (i.e. voluntary or paid work)...

What is (was) your latest full job title?  
Only give one specific job title. Please don't give your grade or pay band.

---

---

---

---

**If Q16 = Yes**

Q19 You answered that you previously had another type of people-oriented career (outside of social work/social care)...

What is (was) your latest full job title in that career? Only give one specific job title. Please don't give your grade or pay band.

Here are some examples of main job title: primary school teacher; police officer; psychological wellbeing practitioner.

---

---

---

---

If Q17 = Yes

Q20 You answered that you previously had a different type of career...

What is (was) your latest full job title in that career? Only give one specific job title. Please don't give your grade or pay band.

Here are some examples of main job title: HR coordinator; IT project manager; catering assistant etc.

---

---

---

---

Q21 Why did you decide you wanted to embark upon a career in social work? (Please select all that apply)

- I wanted to help people / make a difference
- I wanted to work with children and families
- I wanted a stable job
- I saw it as a springboard to another career
- I was working in a related area (e.g. youth worker or family support worker)
- It aligns with my political or ideological beliefs
- I had a positive personal experience of social work
- I had a negative personal experience of social work
- Funding / bursary was available for the course
- I have a long term commitment to social work as a career
- I wanted a decent salary
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

*Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "Q21"*

Q22 Which ONE of these factors is the main reason you chose to embark on a career in social work? (Please select one)

- I wanted to help people / make a difference
- I wanted to work with children and families
- I wanted a stable job
- I saw it as a springboard to another career
- I was working in a related area (e.g. youth worker or family support worker)
- It aligns with my political or ideological beliefs
- I had a positive personal experience of social work
- I had a negative personal experience of social work
- Funding / bursary was available for the course
- I have a long term commitment to social work as a career
- I wanted a decent salary
- Other (please specify)

Q23 Why did you decide to apply for Step Up specifically as a route into Social Work?

Please tell us what it was about this route that particularly attracted you to the programme.

Please do not include any personal details which could be used to identify you in your response.

---

---

---

---

Q24 In your view, what are the key barriers, if any, that you have faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work? (Please select all that apply)

- Childcare/caring responsibilities
- Negative public perception of social work
- Absence of information on routes into the profession
- Location of training
- Timing of training
- Length of training
- Entry requirements
- Lack of diversity in workforce
- Financial cost of training
- Future earnings potential
- None
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q25 How important was the Step Up to Social Work funding for your decision to apply via this route? *(Please select one)*

- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important
- Don't know / prefer not to say

**Thank you for your help with this survey so far. We'd like to end by asking you a few questions about yourself, to help us in our analysis.**

Q26 What best describes your gender? *(Please select one)*

- Female
- Male
- Prefer to self-describe
- Prefer not to say

Q27 Is the gender you identify with the same as the sex you were assigned at birth? *(Please select one)*

- No
- Yes
- Prefer not to say

Q28 What is your age? *(Please select one)*

- 24 and under
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60+
- Prefer not to say

Q29 What is your ethnic group? (Please select one)

White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British

White - Irish

White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller

White - Roma

Any other White background, write in \_\_\_\_\_

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African

Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian

Any other Mixed or Multiple background, write in \_\_\_\_\_

Asian or Asian British - Indian

Asian or Asian British - Pakistani

Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi

Asian or Asian British - Chinese

Any other Asian background, write in \_\_\_\_\_

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - Caribbean

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - African

Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background, write in \_\_\_\_\_

Other ethnic group - Arab

Other ethnic group - Any other ethnic group, write in \_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to say

Q30 Were you eligible for free school meals at any point during your school years?

Free School Meals are a statutory benefit available to school- aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits and who have been through the relevant registration process. It does not include those who receive meals at school through other means (e.g. boarding school).

(Please select one)

Yes

No

Not applicable (finished school before 1980 or went to school overseas)

Don't know

Prefer not to say

Q31 Thinking back to when you were aged about 14, which best describes the sort of work the main/ highest income earner in your household did in their main job? (Please select one)

**Modern professional occupations** such as: teacher/lecturer, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, welfare officer, artist, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer

**Clerical and intermediate occupations** such as: secretary, personal assistant, clerical worker, office clerk, call centre agent, nursing auxiliary, nursery nurse

**Senior managers and administrators** usually responsible for planning, organising and co-ordinating work and for finance such as: finance manager, chief executive

**Technical and craft occupations** such as: motor mechanic, fitter, inspector, plumber, printer, tool maker, electrician, gardener, train driver

**Semi-routine manual and service occupations** such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, receptionist, sales assistant

**Routine manual and service occupations** such as: HGV driver, van driver, cleaner, porter, packer, sewing machinist, messenger, labourer, waiter / waitress, bar staff

**Middle or junior managers** such as: office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, warehouse manager, publican

**Traditional professional occupations** such as: accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil/mechanical engineer

**Short term unemployed** (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for a year or less)

**Long term unemployed** (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for more than a year)

**Inactive** (excluding those that are retired)

Retired

Not applicable

Prefer not to say

Q32 Please select the area in which you currently live

- East Midlands
- East of England
- Greater London
- North East of England
- North West of England
- South East of England
- South West of England
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and Humberside
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- Outside the UK
- Don't know / prefer not to say

If Q2 = Yes

Q33 What region will you be training in for Step Up to Social Work?

- East Midlands
- East of England
- Greater London
- North East of England
- North West of England
- South East of England
- South West of England
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and Humberside
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- Outside the UK
- Don't know / prefer not to say

Q34 Outside of work, do you have any care or childcare responsibilities? *(Please select all that apply)*

- Yes: for school aged child/children
- Yes: for pre-school aged child/children
- Yes: for child/children with disabilities
- Yes: caring for other family member or friends
- No
- Don't know / prefer not to say

**This is the end of the survey.**

## Appendix 2: Step Up cohort 7 completer survey questions

### Step Up cohort 7 completer survey

Thank you for your interest in this survey on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE), which seeks to understand your experience of the Step Up programme and what you are doing now.

It should take about 10 minutes to complete. You will be able to see your progress on the bar at the top of the screen.

Full details about how your data will be used are set out in the Privacy Notice.

Please click on the arrow to start the survey.

---

Q1 This survey is for people who have completed Cohort 7 of the Step Up programme.

Please can you confirm that you have successfully completed Cohort 7 of the programme, which started in January 2022? Please note that this is the only mandatory question in the survey, all other questions are optional. (Please select one)

Yes

No

**First we want to ask you some questions about your experience on the Step Up programme.**

Q2 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your experience of the Step Up programme? (Please select one)

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Q3 To what extent do you agree or disagree: The academic workload on the Step Up programme was manageable. (Please select one)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Q4 To what extent do you agree or disagree: The Step Up programme equipped me to practice in an inclusive way with children and families. (Please select one)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

Q5 How would you rate the quality of the reflective supervision you received during the Step Up programme? (Please select one)

- Very good
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor
- Don't know

Q6 Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the support you received whilst on placement? (Please select one)

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

Q7 Did you need to seek additional financial support whilst on the Step Up programme, in addition to the bursary? (Please select all that apply)

- No - the bursary covered it
- Yes - I had a second job
- Yes - I was supported by family
- Yes - I used savings
- Yes - I took out a loan / used my overdraft
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Prefer not to say

Q8 Would you recommend the Step Up programme to others who would like to enter social work? (Please select one)

- Would recommend
- Would NOT recommend
- Don't know

If Would you recommend the Step Up programme to others who would like to enter social work? (Please... = Would recommend

Or Would you recommend the Step Up programme to others who would like to enter social work? (Please... = Would NOT recommend

Q9 Please briefly explain why you said you "[\\${Q8/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}](#)" the Step Up programme?

---

---

---

---

**Next we want to ask you some questions about what you are doing now.**

Q10 Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)? (Please select one)

Yes

No

Q11 Are you carrying out further study? (Please select one)

Yes - Full-time

Yes - Part-time

No

If Are you carrying out further study? (Please select one) = Yes - Full-time

Or Are you carrying out further study? (Please select one) = Yes - Part-time

Q12 What is the name of the course you are studying?

---

---

---

---

If Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)? (Please select one) = No

And Are you carrying out further study? (Please select one) = No

Q13 You stated that you were not in employment or further study, please briefly indicate what you are doing now:

---

---

---

---

If Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)? (Please select one) = Yes

Q14 Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one)

Yes

No

Don't know

**For the following questions, please answer about your main social work role.**

If Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one) = Yes

Q15 Please indicate below if your main social work role is in children's social work, adult's social work or another type of social work.

(Please select one)

Children's social work

Adult's social work

Another type of social work (please specify)

If Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one) = Yes

Q16 In your current role, do you work at a local authority / Children's Trust?

(Please select one)

Yes

No – but it is a public-sector organisation (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

No – it is a private or voluntary sector organisation (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

If In your current role, do you work at a local authority / Children's Trust? (Please select one) = Yes

Q17 Are you in employment in the local authority where you participated in the Step Up programme? (Please select one)

Yes

No

If In your current role, do you work at a local authority / Children's Trust? (Please select one) = Yes

Q18 Are you in employment in a different local authority? (Please select one)

Yes

No

If Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one) = Yes

Q19 Please select from the list what best describes the seniority of your role

(Please select one)

Social worker

Senior social worker

Consultant social work

Independent review officer

Assistant team manager

Team manager

Service manager

Principal social worker

Head of service

Assistant director

Director

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Prefer not to say

If Please indicate below if your main social work role is in children's social work, adult's social... = Children's social work

Q20 Which of the following best describes the type of team your role is in?

(Please select one)

Access

MASH team

Assessment team

Child in need/child protection team

Children with disabilities team

Looked after children team

Fostering team

Adoption team

Leaving care team

Adolescent team

Youth offending team

Family help team

Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

If In your current role, do you work at a local authority / Children's Trust? (Please select one) = Yes

Q21 How would you describe the employment status of your main social work role.

(Please select all that apply)

Employed directly by a local authority or children's trust

Working through an agency

Self-employed

Working as a contractor

Working as a locum

Working as bank staff

Other contract or employment arrangement (please specify)

None of the above

If How would you describe the employment status of your main social work role.  
(Please select all th... = Working through an agency

Q22a You said you were working through an agency. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If You said you were working through an agency. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addi... q://QID64/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

And You said you were working through an agency. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addi... != Don't know

And You said you were working through an agency. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addi... != Prefer not to say

Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "You said you were working through an agency. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)"

Q22b And which ONE of these is the main reason why you're doing this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly with a local authority? (Please select one)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify)

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If How would you describe the employment status of your main social work role.  
(Please select all th... = Self-employed

Q23a You said you were self-employed. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If You were self-employed. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, bei...  
q://QID66/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

And You said you were self-employed. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, bei... != Don't know

And You said you were self-employed. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, bei... != Prefer not to say

Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "You said you were self-employed. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)"

Q23b And which ONE of these is the main reason why you're doing this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly with a local authority? (Please select one)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If How would you describe the employment status of your main social work role.  
(Please select all th... = Working as a contractor

Q24a You said you were working as a contractor. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If You said you were working as a contractor. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in additi... q://QID68/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

And You said you were working as a contractor. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in additi... != Don't know

And You said you were working as a contractor. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in additi... != Prefer not to say

Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "You said you were working as a contractor. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)"

Q24b And which ONE of these is the main reason why you're doing this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly with a local authority? (Please select one)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If How would you describe the employment status of your main social work role.  
(Please select all th... = Working as a locum

Q25a You said you were working as a locum. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If You said you were working as a locum. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to... q://QID70/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

And You said you were working as a locum. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to... != Don't know

And You said you were working as a locum. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to... != Prefer not to say

Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "You said you were working as a locum. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)"

Q25b And which ONE of these is the main reason why you're doing this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly with a local authority? (Please select one)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If How would you describe the employment status of your main social work role.  
(Please select all th... = Working as bank staff

Q26a You said you were working as bank staff. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? *(Please select all that apply)*

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If You said you were working as bank staff. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition... q://QID72/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

And You said you were working as bank staff. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition... != Don't know

And You said you were working as bank staff. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition... != Prefer not to say

Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "You said you were working as bank staff. Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that apply)"

Q26b And which ONE of these is the main reason why you're doing this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly with a local authority? (Please select one)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If How would you describe the employment status of your main social work role.  
(Please select all th... = Other contract or employment arrangement (please specify)

Q27a You said you were working under a different contract or employment arrangement.  
Why did you decide to do this instead of, or in addition to, being employed directly by a  
local authority? (Please select all that apply)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

If You said you were working under a different contract or employment arrangement.  
Why did you decid... q://QID74/SelectedChoicesCount Is Greater Than 1

And You said you were working under a different contract or employment arrange-  
ment. Why did you decid... != Don't know

And You said you were working under a different contract or employment arrange-  
ment. Why did you decid... != Prefer not to say

Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "You said you were working under a  
different contract or employment arrangement.Why did you decide to do this instead of,  
or in addition to, being employed directly by a local authority? (Please select all that ap-  
ply)"

Q27b And which ONE of these is the main reason why you're doing this instead of, or  
instead of, being employed directly with a local authority? (Please select one)

The pay is better

I have more flexibility about when I work

Better work-life balance

More opportunities to gain experience of different roles

I am less accountable / have less responsibility

I have more professional autonomy

Lack of available local jobs

Dissatisfaction with permanent employment

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know

Prefer not to say

**For the following questions, please think about your main job.**

If Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one) = No

Q28 What is your full job title? (Here are some examples of job titles: primary school teacher; family support worker; retail assistant).

---

If Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one) = No

Q29 Please select from the list what best describes the seniority of your role. (Please select one)

- Entry level
- Senior level
- Manager level
- Director level
- Vice-president
- Owner
- Partner
- CxO
- Other

If Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one) = No

Q30 Does the non-social work role that you are in require the following?  
(Please select all that apply)

- A social work qualification
- SWE registration
- Neither
- Don't know

If Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one) = No

Q31 Why are you currently not working as a social worker?  
(Please select one)

- I am currently applying to be a social worker
- I am planning to apply to be a social worker in the future
- I have not yet decided whether I want to be a social worker
- I do not want to be a social worker
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Q32 How likely are you, if at all, to be working as a social worker in 12 months' time?  
(Please select one)

- Very likely
- Moderately likely
- Slightly likely
- Not at all likely
- Don't know

If How likely are you, if at all, to be working as a social worker in 12 months' time?  
(Please selec... = Very likely

Or How likely are you, if at all, to be working as a social worker in 12 months' time?  
(Please selec... = Moderately likely

Or How likely are you, if at all, to be working as a social worker in 12 months' time?  
(Please selec... = Slightly likely

Or How likely are you, if at all, to be working as a social worker in 12 months' time?  
(Please selec... = Not at all likely

Q33 You said you were "[\\${Q32/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}](#)" to be working as a social worker in 12 months' time. Please can you briefly let us know the reasons for this answer.

---

---

---

---

If Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)? (Please select one) = Yes

Q34 What is your annual pay for your main employment to the nearest thousand before tax?

Please write as a number with no commas, decimal places or symbols (£).

---

If Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice? (Please select one) = Yes

**Q35 Next we are going to ask you some more questions about your experiences in your main social work role.**

If Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)? (Please select one) = Yes

Q36 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Overall, I find my current job satisfying. (Please select one)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)? (Please select one) = Yes

Q37 To what extent do you agree or disagree that: My current work is meaningful. You can think about this in terms of how meaningful your work activities are to you, to others or to society at large. (Please select one)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)? (Please select one) = Yes

Q38 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement: I am utilising what I learnt during my studies on the Step Up programme in my current work.

You can think about this in terms of both the subject matter and other skills gained, namely everything you learnt on the programme. (Please select one)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

If Please indicate below if your main social work role is in children's social work, adult's social... = Children's social work

Q39 How effective was the Step Up programme in preparing you to work as a social worker with children and families? (Please select one)

- Very effective
- Moderately effective
- Slightly effective
- Not at all effective
- Don't know
- Not applicable

If Please indicate below if your main social work role is in children's social work, adult's social... = Children's social work

Q40 How confident are you in your social work practice in supporting children and families? (Please select one)

- Very confident
- Moderately confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident
- Don't know

If Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)? (Please select one) = Yes

Q41 Please indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the following aspects of your job.

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know / not applicable
Income	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job security	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Number of hours of work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Flexibility of hours of work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Your caseload/workload	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of supervision	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunities for career advancement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public respect for the sort of work you do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Leadership/management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Thank you for your help with this survey so far. We'd now like to ask you some questions about yourself.**

Q42 What best describes your gender? (Please select one)

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Q43 What is your age? (Please select one)

- 24 and under
- 25-29
- 30-34
- 35-39
- 40-44
- 45-49
- 50-54
- 55-59
- 60+
- Prefer not to say

Q44 What is your ethnic group? (Please select one)

- White
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Asian or Asian British
- Black, Black British, Caribbean or African
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

Q45 Please select the area in which you current live (Please select one)

- East Midlands
- East of England
- Greater London
- North East of England
- North West of England
- South East of England
- South West of England
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and Humberside
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- Outside the UK
- Don't know / prefer not to say

Q46 Were you eligible for free school meals at any point during your school years?

Free School Meals are a statutory benefit available to school-aged children from families who receive other qualifying benefits and who have been through the relevant registration process. It does not include those who receive meals at school through other means (e.g. boarding school).

(Please select one)

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable (finished school before 1980 or went to school overseas)
- Don't know / prefer not to say

Q47 Thinking back to when you were aged about 14, which best describes the sort of work the main/ highest income earner in your household did in their main job?

(Please select one)

**Modern professional occupations** such as: teacher/lecturer, nurse, physiotherapist, social worker, welfare officer, artist, musician, police officer (sergeant or above), software designer

**Clerical and intermediate occupations** such as: secretary, personal assistant, clerical worker, office clerk, call centre agent, nursing auxiliary, nursery nurse

**Senior managers and administrators** usually responsible for planning, organising and co-ordinating work and for finance such as: finance manager, chief executive

**Technical and craft occupations** such as: motor mechanic, fitter, inspector, plumber, printer, tool maker, electrician, gardener, train driver

**Semi-routine manual and service occupations** such as: postal worker, machine operative, security guard, caretaker, farm worker, catering assistant, receptionist, sales assistant

**Routine manual and service occupations** such as: HGV driver, van driver, cleaner, porter, packer, sewing machinist, messenger, labourer, waiter / waitress, bar staff

**Middle or junior managers** such as: office manager, retail manager, bank manager, restaurant manager, warehouse manager, publican

**Traditional professional occupations** such as: accountant, solicitor, medical practitioner, scientist, civil/mechanical engineer

**Short term unemployment** (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for a year or less)

**Long term unemployed** (claimed Jobseeker's Allowance or earlier unemployment benefit for more than a year)

**Inactive** (excluding those that are retired)

Retired

Not applicable

Don't know / prefer not to say

Q48 What classification did you achieve for your undergraduate degree? (Please select one)

First class

2.1

2.2

3rd class

Other

Not applicable

Don't know / prefer not to say

Q49 What undergraduate subject area did you study (Please select one)

**Medicine & dentistry** - including Pre-clinical medicine, Pre-clinical dentistry, Clinical medicine, Clinical dentistry, Balanced combination

**Subjects allied to medicine** - including: Anatomy & Physiology, Pharmacology, Pharmacy, Nutrition, Ophthalmics, Audiology, Nursing, Medical technology, Other medical subjects, Balanced combination

**Biological sciences - including Biology, Botany, Zoology, Genetics, Microbiology,** Molecular biology & biophysics, Biochemistry, Psychology (not solely as social science), Other biological sciences, Balanced combination

**Veterinary sciences**

**Agriculture & related subjects** - including Agriculture, Forestry, Food science, Agricultural sciences, Other agricultural subjects, Balanced combination

**Physical subjects** - including Chemistry, Materials science, Physics, Archaeology as a physical science, Astronomy, Geology, Oceanography, Geography studies as a science, Environmental science & other physical sciences, Balanced combination

**Mathematical sciences** - including Mathematics, Statistics, Other mathematical sciences, Balanced combination

**Computer science**

**Engineering & technology** - including General engineering, Civil engineering, Mechanical engineering, Aeronautical engineering, Electrical engineering, Electronic engineering, Production engineering, Chemical engineering, Other engineering, Balanced combinations, Minerals technology, Metallurgy, Ceramics & glasses, Polymers & textiles, Other materials technology, Maritime technology, Biotechnology, Other technologies

**Architecture, building & planning** - including Architecture, Building, Environmental technologies, Town & country planning, Other architectural studies, Balanced combination

**Social, Economic & Political Sciences** - including Economics, Sociology, Social policy & administration, Social work, Anthropology, Psychology (without significant element of biological science), Geography (unless solely as a physical science), Balanced combination, Politics, Other social studies

**Law**

**Business & administrative studies** - including Business & management studies, Operational research, Financial management, Accountancy, Marketing & market research, Industrial relations, Catering & institutional management, Land & property management, Transport, other business & administrative studies, Balanced combination

**Librarianship & Information science** - including Librarianship, Information science, Communication studies, Media studies, Publishing, Journalism, Balanced combination

**Languages** - Linguistics, Comparative literature, English, American studies, Celtic languages, literature & culture. Latin, Ancient Greek, Classics, Other ancient languages & related studies, Balanced combination, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Latin American, Scandinavian, Russian, Slavonic & East European, Other European,

Chinese, Japanese, Other Asian, Modern Middle Eastern and African languages, literature & culture. Other language studies, Other or unspecified modern languages

**Humanities** - including History, Economic & social history, History of art, History & philosophy of science, Archaeology, Philosophy, Theology & religious studies, Other humanities, Balanced combination

**Creative arts & design** - including Fine art, Design studies, Music, Drama, Cinematics, Crafts, Beauty & hairdressing, Art & design other, Balanced combinations

**Education** - including Teacher training, Physical education, Academic studies in education, Techniques in teaching children, Techniques in teaching adults, Education for those with special needs, Technology in education, Management & organisation of education, Other topics in education, Balanced combination

**Combined**

**Other** (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Don't know / prefer not to say

I didn't study for an undergraduate degree

Q50 Do you have any of the other following higher qualifications?

\*Please exclude qualifications gained on the Step Up programme

(Please select all that apply)

Diploma or certificate

Postgraduate diploma or certificate (including PGCE/PGDE)

Higher degree, mainly by taught course (e.g. MA, MSc, MBA)

Higher degree, mainly by research (e.g. PhD, DPhil, MPhil)

Professional qualification (e.g. ACA, Chartered Institute of Marketing)

Other, please give details \_\_\_\_\_

None of the above

Don't know / prefer not to say

Q51 Outside of work, do you have any care or childcare responsibilities? (Please select all that apply)

Yes: for school aged child/children

Yes: for pre-school aged child/children

Yes: for child/children with disabilities

Yes: caring for other family members or friends

No

Prefer not to say

Q52 Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expecting to last 12 months or more?

(Please select one)

Yes

No

Don't know / prefer not to say

**This is the end of the survey.**



Department  
for Education

© Department for Education copyright 2026

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](https://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3).

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

**Reference: RR1597**

**ISBN: 978-1-83870-740-8**

For any enquiries regarding this publication, contact [CSC.Research@education.gov.uk](mailto:CSC.Research@education.gov.uk) or [www.gov.uk/contact-dfe](https://www.gov.uk/contact-dfe).

This document is available for download at [www.gov.uk/government/publications](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications).