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for Education

Frontline 2022 cohort: surveys of applicants and qualifiers

Research report

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Executive summary

This research was undertaken by analysts in the Department for Education (DfE) to investigate recruitment and retention in the 2022 cohort of Frontline (now known as Approach Social Work).

Frontline (now Approach Social Work) is a graduate training programme to a career in child and family social work, offering intensive hands-on experience. It leads to a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in social work after fourteen months, allowing qualifiers to register with Social Work England (SWE) as a qualified social worker, and a master's degree after two years (for the 2022 cohort).

This report presents the headline findings from the survey of applicants to the Frontline 2022 cohort, who started the programme in summer 2022 and completed year 1/qualified with their PGDip in September 2023. It also presents findings from a survey of qualifiers at around 6 months after they qualified with a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in social work and a final survey of qualifiers about 18 months post-PGDip.

Methodology

Overall, 4,333 people applied to the Frontline 2022 cohort. The Frontline organisation provided DfE with details of 4,229 applicants from the first application window and online surveys were sent out by DfE to these applicants in May-July 2022. The survey was sent to all applicants including those who were successful and those who were unsuccessful at attaining a conditional offer of a place on the programme. An overall survey response rate of 15% was achieved, with 648 completed responses. For the applicant survey findings, statistical significance is represented with an asterisk (*) throughout this report.

The 6 months post-qualification survey was launched at the end of February 2024, approximately 6 months after the end of the first year of the programme (PGDip). Survey invitations were sent by Frontline to the 314 people who had completed the first year. This resulted in 127 completed survey responses with a response rate of 40%.

The 18 months post-qualification survey was also administered online by Frontline and the fieldwork period ran from 25th April 2025 to 23rd June 2025. The survey was sent out to all 314 qualifiers, and 86 survey responses were received (a response rate of 27%).

Due to the smaller number of respondents to the post-qualification surveys, statistical significance testing was not undertaken.

Summary of applicant survey findings

Social work courses

Overall, this survey revealed that the majority of respondents who were given a conditional offer on the 2022 cohort of the Frontline programme were planning on taking up their place (81%). 46% had never applied for a different social work course previously, 29% previously applied to Think Ahead, 15% to a previous cohort of Frontline, 12% to Step Up, 12% to a postgraduate social work degree, 3% to an apprenticeship and 3% to an undergraduate social work degree.

Career in social work

62% of respondents said that they had experience of working in jobs related to social work or social care prior to applying to Frontline. The most common experience was in caring personal services (30%), followed by welfare and housing associate professionals (24%). Similarly, 78% said that they had experience in another people-oriented career outside of social work/social care prior to applying to Frontline. The most common was teaching and childcare support occupations (19%), followed by teaching professionals (18%).

When asked whether they had considered social work as a career before they heard of Frontline, almost half of respondents (49%) said they had been considering social work for some time and 13% said they had always wanted to be a social worker. 23% said they had recently started to consider it. 14% of respondents said they hadn't considered social work as a career until they heard about Frontline.

Many of the respondents who had not already accepted a place on a social work course were still interested in pursuing social work in future. Of the 416 people who had not recently accepted a place on a social work course, just under half (46%) were planning to apply for a social work course in the future, 31% were unsure and 21% said they were not planning to.

Survey respondents who had not accepted a place on a social work course were asked what their future career plans were in an open text question with responses being coded into different categories. Many respondents intended to continue pursuing a career in social work, even though they had not accepted a place on a social work course.

Motivations

The majority of respondents said that their main motivation for embarking on a career in social work was to help people or make a difference (67%), followed by wanting to work with children and families (18%). Other frequently mentioned motivations included funding/bursary being available for the course (36%), wanting a stable job (35%), social work aligning with their political or ideological beliefs (34%), that they were working in a related area (33%), and having a long-term commitment to social work as a career (32%).

When asked in an open text question why they applied to Frontline specifically, over a third of respondents mentioned that this was due to financial reasons or the bursary, followed by the quality of the course and the mixture of theory and practice. Almost nine in ten respondents (89%) said that funding was 'extremely' or 'very' important to their decision to apply via this route.

Barriers

Respondents were asked about whether they faced any barriers to a career in social work. The main barrier mentioned by just under half of respondents (48%) was the financial cost of training. Other barriers commonly mentioned include the negative public perception of social work (34%), absence of information on routes into the profession (29%) and entry requirements (21%).

Summary of qualifier survey findings: 6 months post-qualification

At 6 months post-PGDip qualification the cohort were in year 2 of the Frontline programme, in a paid role as a newly qualified social worker, working towards their master's qualification.

Overall Satisfaction with Frontline

At 6 months post-PGDip qualification, the 2022 cohort qualifiers were largely satisfied with the Frontline programme. 93% said they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the programme and only 4% were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'. 90% said they would recommend the programme to others.

When asked why they would recommend Frontline to others, analysis of open text responses revealed several key themes, with the most frequently mentioned being that it was a good route into social work, the route prepared them well for practice, the programme was high quality, and it helped them to put theory into practice. A significant number of respondents mentioned the financial support offered throughout the course. Several respondents acknowledged that the Frontline funding enabled them to get into social work.

Financial support

Just over three quarters (77%) of respondents reported that they needed to seek additional sources of financial support in addition to the Frontline bursary in year 1. The most common alternative sources of funding were use of savings (47%) and support from family (43%). Only 19% of respondents said that they did not need to seek additional financial support. Respondents were asked to self-report their salary to the nearest thousand pounds. The mean income across all respondents was £35,000 (rounded to the

nearest thousand), and the median income was £35,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand).

Experience of social work following the Frontline programme

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their satisfaction with different aspects of their job. They were most satisfied with their job security, with 94% of respondents reporting they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with this. Respondents were least satisfied with the public respect for the work they do, with 37% responding that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', and 48% responding that they were 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'.

Summary of qualifier survey findings: 18 months post-qualification

At 18 months post-PGDip qualification, the cohort would have completed their second year of the Frontline programme and their optional social work master's degree 6 months ago.

Employment 18 months post PGDip qualification

Eighteen months after completing the PGDip, almost all respondents were in work or further study (97%). Among this group, 99% were employed and the vast majority of employed respondents (96%) said they were working in social work practice, with 97% of these working specifically as social workers. Of those in social work roles, 95% were in children's social work. Self-reported earnings showed most respondents earning between £35,000 and £44,000 (79%). The mean and median salary were both £40,000, an increase of around £5,000 compared with income reported at 6 months post qualification.

Satisfaction with Current Employment

Respondents were generally satisfied in their current employment. Most respondents felt confident in their practice (67% confident, 12% very confident) and agreed with the statement 'I am proud to tell people I am child and family social worker' (91% agreed or strongly agreed).

Respondents who reported working in social work were asked how likely they were to be working in social work in 12 months' time. Most respondents (59%) said they were 'very likely', a further 25% responded 'moderately likely', 5% responded 'slightly likely', 5% responded 'not at all likely' and 5% responded that they 'didn't know'.

In open text responses, many reported enjoying their current job, in particular how it aligns with their personal values and allows them to support children and families. Respondents also mentioned career development and positive working relationships as reasons they plan to stay in social work.

Challenges with current employment

Despite overall satisfaction with their employment in social work, respondents were likely to agree their workload is too high (34% agree, 32% strongly agree). Respondents were least satisfied with the public respect for the work they do (58% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied) and the number of hours they worked (61% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied). In open text responses, some respondents shared that they found the job and workload to be challenging and had some uncertainty about whether social work would be a good long-term career for them.

Introduction

This research was undertaken by analysts in the Department for Education (DfE) to investigate recruitment and retention in the 2022 Frontline cohort (now called Approach Social Work), hereafter referred to as Frontline as this was the name used at the time of the study.

Frontline¹ is a graduate training programme for those wanting a career in child and family social work, offering intensive hands-on experience in a local authority. For the 2022 cohort, the programme led to a Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) in social work after fourteen months, allowing qualifiers to register with Social Work England (SWE) as a qualified social worker, and a master's degree after two years.² Participants receive a tax free bursary of £18,000 outside London or £20,000 in London during the first year of the programme to cover living expenses and a salary from their local authority employer of up to £34,000 (depending on location) in year 2.

This report presents the headline findings from surveys of the Frontline 2022 cohort, who started the programme in summer 2022 and qualified with a PGDip in September 2023 and a master's in September 2024. The first survey was sent by DfE to all applicants to the 2022 Frontline cohort and in this report will be called the 'applicant survey'. The second survey was sent by Frontline to all those who qualified from the 2022 cohort at 6 months after completing the PGDip, and in this report will be called the '6 months post-qualification survey'. The third survey was sent by Frontline to qualifiers 6 months after they had finished their master's and this will be referred to as the '18 months post-qualification survey'.

This chapter sets out the background to the research and its aims and objectives.

Background

This study follows two previously DfE-funded research projects which focused on outcomes from earlier cohorts of Frontline. The most recent study was an independent tracking study which looked at retention and progression of Frontline Cohorts 1 to 5 and Step Up Cohorts 4 and 5 between 6 months and five years post-qualification (Scourfield et al, 2020³). At 18 months post-qualifying, attrition rates for Frontline cohorts were between 8-16%, compared with 18% for all social work graduates after 15 months (from HESA Destination of Leavers survey data). The report presents fast track attrition rates up to 5

¹ [Approach Social Work – Frontline](#)

² Under the new contract, the programme is now delivered on a 3-year basis. Participants complete a Postgraduate qualification in year 1, the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment in year 2 and start a Masters degree in year 3.

³ 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.

years post-qualifying, but there is no comparative data beyond 15 months (Scourfield et al, 2020).

An independent evaluation of the Frontline pilot assessed how successful the pilot was in attracting high quality graduates and how well it prepared participants to be social workers (Maxwell et al, 2016⁴). The study found that Frontline's recruitment process was effective in selecting 'high calibre' candidates. Analysis of simulated practice data rated Frontline participants significantly higher than students on mainstream programmes for the quality of their interviewing and written reflection. However, when matched with a sub-sample from the mainstream programmes who had the minimum academic requirements for Frontline, the difference in interviewing quality remained but the difference in quality of written reflection was no longer statistically significant (Maxwell et al, 2016).

Aims and objectives

The overall objective of this project is to investigate recruitment and retention within the 2022 cohort of Frontline. 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 Frontline?
- What are the key motivations, enablers, and barriers for those who apply to Frontline?
- Why did applicants choose to apply to the Frontline route into social work specifically?
- What are the differences in demographics and motivations between those who were offered a place on Frontline and those who were not?
- Would applicants have considered social work as a career if it hadn't been for the Frontline programme?
- What other social work courses did applicants apply to?
- What do Frontline applicants plan to do if they were not successful in their application?

The post qualification surveys focused on questions related to experiences of the Frontline programme and entering the social work profession.

- How satisfied were qualifiers with the Frontline programme and how well did they feel it prepared them for practice?

⁴ [Frontline pilot: independent evaluation - GOV.UK](#)

- 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, 4,333 people applied to the 2022 cohort of Frontline. DfE sent surveys to 4,229 people who applied to the first application window of the 2022 cohort of Frontline. This included all applicants, both those who received a conditional offer of a place and those who did not. An overall survey response rate of 15% was achieved, with 648 completed responses. The survey was administered online, and the fieldwork period ran from 18th May 2022 to 18th July 2022. Four email reminders were sent to encourage participation.

Post Qualification surveys

409 people started in the Frontline 2022 cohort and 346 completed their PGDip (Year 1). DfE worked closely with the Frontline organisation to agree a set of questions to add to their own online fellowship surveys. The surveys were administered by Frontline in line with their data protection arrangements, and to minimise survey fatigue and maximise response rates by avoiding sending out two similar surveys at the same time. Frontline provided the pseudonymised survey data to DfE for analysis.

The 6 months post qualification survey was launched online on 27th February 2024 and closed on 5th April 2024. The survey was sent out to the 314 active programme participants and 127 completed survey responses were received, creating a response rate of 40%.

For the 18 months post qualification survey, DfE provided a selection of questions to be included in the Frontline regular annual survey. The survey was administered online by Frontline and the fieldwork period ran from 25th April 2025 to 23rd June 2025. The survey was sent out to all 314 qualifiers and 86 survey responses were received, creating a response rate of 27%.

Analysis

Findings are 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 qualifiers.

Both applicant and post-qualification surveys underwent descriptive statistical analysis of responses using the statistical packages SPSS and R. The applicant survey was also able to be analysed using significance testing as it achieved a larger number of responses. Chi-square tests of independence were performed on the 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 post-qualification 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 Excel analysis framework and collectively discussed to reach a consensus.

Applicant survey findings

This section will present the survey results from the Frontline 2022 cohort applicant survey.

Demographics and management information

Analysis was conducted on the management information (MI) about applicants which was provided to us by Frontline, to determine how representative the respondents to the survey were of all people who applied to the programme.

- Overall, 41% of all survey responses were from people who had received a conditional offer and 58% were from those who had not received a conditional offer, withdrawn, or had not heard yet. However, analysis shows that those who received a conditional offer were more likely to respond to the survey compared with those who had not (41% responded compared with 11%*).
- There was a lower proportion of respondents who were aged 24 and under in the survey data compared with the proportion that applied to Frontline (26% compared with 45%*). Likewise, there was a higher proportion of respondents aged 35 to 44 (23% compared with 15%*) and 45 to 54 (15% compared with 7%*) compared with the proportion that applied to Frontline.
- The only difference by ethnicity was a slightly lower proportion of Asian respondents in the survey data compared with those that applied to Frontline (7% compared with 11%*). Most applicants and survey respondents were white, followed by black, Asian, and mixed ethnicities.
- There was no difference by gender in terms of proportion who responded to the survey compared with the proportions that applied to the programme. Most applicants and survey respondents were female.
- There was no difference by free school meal eligibility in terms of proportion who responded to the survey compared with the proportions that applied to the programme. Just over half of applicants and survey respondents were not eligible for free school meals at any point during their school years.

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

- Respondents were asked about the job of the main earner in their household when they were aged 14, to produce a metric on socio-economic background (SEB). The highest proportion came from a professional background (49%) with 34% from a lower SEB and 7% from an intermediate SEB.
- There was a relatively wide spread of respondents by the area in which they currently lived. The highest number of respondents were from Greater London

(19%), followed by the West Midlands (15%), North West (14%), Yorkshire and Humber (11%), South East (11%), South West (10%), East Midlands (7%), North East (5%) and East of England (5%). 3% of respondents currently lived in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or outside the UK.

Applying to social work courses

Frontline programme

The majority of the 263 survey respondents who were made a conditional offer to Frontline were planning on taking up their place (81%), with only 14% not planning on taking their place.

Of the 14% of respondents who were not planning on taking up their place, the most frequent reason given was that they were offered a job outside of social work. Other reasons include that the bursary was not sufficient to cover their living expenses and that they did not meet the conditions of the offer.

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. Just under half of respondents had never applied to a social work course before (46%). The social work courses most commonly applied to previously were Think Ahead (29%), a previous cohort of Frontline (15%), Step Up (12%), and a postgraduate social work degree (12%). A smaller number had previously applied to a social work apprenticeship (3%) and an undergraduate social work degree (3%).

Career in social work

Previous jobs

Respondents were asked about their previous experience in different types of careers. This was asked in an open text question and coded using version six of the Standard Occupational Classification 2020 (SOC 2020) index⁵.

Over half (62%) 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 Frontline. The most common experience was in caring personal services (30%), followed by welfare and housing associate professionals (24%).

⁵ [SOC 2020 Volume 2: the coding index and coding rules and conventions - Office for National Statistics](#)

Around three quarters of respondents (78%) 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 Frontline. Respondents mentioned a range of jobs. The most common was teaching and childcare support occupations (19%), followed by teaching professionals (18%), and welfare and housing associate professionals (12%).

Finally, almost two thirds (64%) of respondents said they had previously had a different career (unrelated to social work or other people-oriented work) prior to applying to Frontline. The most common job was as a sales assistant and retail cashier (9%), followed by sales, marketing and related associate professionals (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 a career in social work before they applied to the Frontline programme. Just under half of respondents (49%) said they had been considering social work for some time, 23% had recently started to consider it, 14% hadn't considered a career in social work before they heard about Frontline and 13% had always wanted to be a social worker.

Further analysis revealed that a greater proportion of respondents who were made a conditional offer hadn't considered social work as a career before they heard about Frontline (19% compared with 11%* of those who were not given a conditional offer). Conversely, a higher proportion of respondents who were not given a conditional offer, said that they had always wanted to be a social worker (18% compared with 8% of those who were given a conditional offer*).

Future career in social work

The 416 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. Just under half (46%) were planning to apply for a social work course, 21% said they were not planning to and 31% were unsure.

Survey respondents who had not accepted a place on a social work course were asked what their future careers plans were in an open text question with responses being coded into different categories. Many respondents intended to continue to pursue a career in social work, even though they had not accepted a place on a social work course. This included reapplying to social work courses, gaining more experience or pursuing a social work qualification. A small number of respondents mentioned reapplying to Frontline specifically.

I am looking at options for progressing as a social worker, I am still very eager to make the next steps to become a social worker.

I plan to apply for a post graduate social work programme and I will also reapply to the Frontline programme one more time after researching with others how to be successful in getting an offer.

Around a third of respondents expressed that they plan to pursue a non-social work career, they often mentioned careers supporting children and young people such as teaching, pastoral work, or counselling. Several participants also expressed an interest in working in the charity and public sector including criminal justice services, healthcare, law and policy.

I would like to work with children, I have an interest in safeguarding children. So, something in this capacity would be my goal.

Some respondents were planning to stay or progress in their current role, for example to continue working as a teaching assistant, or aiming to get a promotion in their line of work. Whilst others were interested in pursuing further education, training or a graduate scheme in an area unrelated to social work. Some examples include working towards a PhD, applying for a graduate scheme in the civil service or the NHS.

A small number of respondents were unsure of their future plans or expressed their general disappointment about not being offered a place. Some said that they had a general desire to have a career that helps people or makes a difference.

I hope to move to a career where I am able to work more closely with people and try to make a difference in people's lives.

Motivations

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

The biggest motivation was wanting to help people or make a difference. This was mentioned by 93% of respondents and was the main reason for 67% of respondents. The motivation to work with children and families was also important to respondents, with 82% selecting it as a factor and 18% selecting it as their main reason. Other important motivations included funding/bursary being available for the course (36%), wanting a stable job (35%), social work aligning with their political or ideological beliefs (34%), that they were working in a related area (33%), and having a long-term commitment to social work as a career (32%).

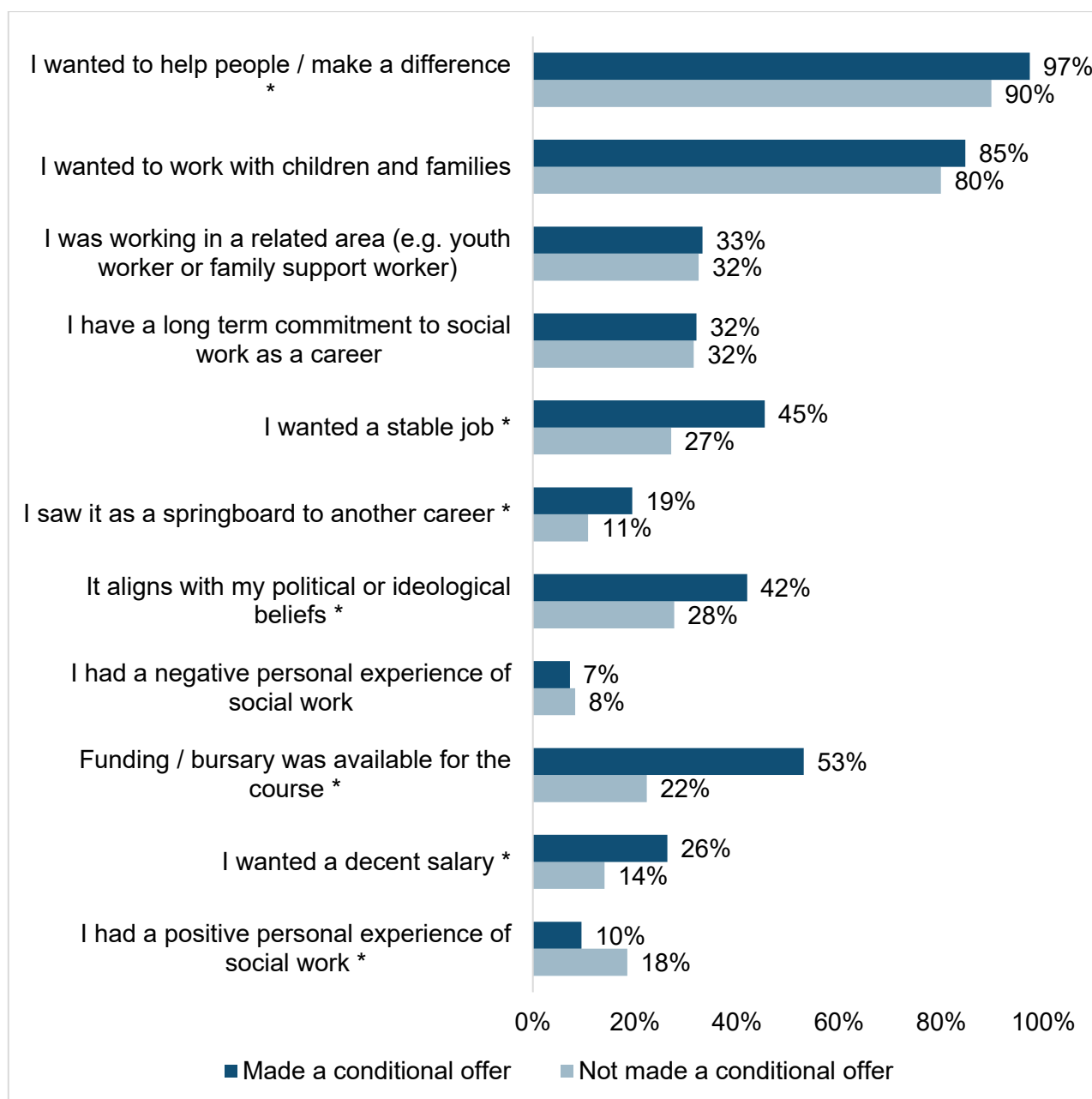
Table 1: Motivations for embarking on a career in social work

Motivation	Main factor	All factors
I wanted to help people / make a difference	67%	93%
I wanted to work with children and families	18%	82%
I was working in a related area (e.g. youth worker or family support worker)	3%	33%
I have a long term commitment to social work as a career	3%	32%
I wanted a stable job	2%	35%
I saw it as a springboard to another career	2%	15%
It aligns with my political or ideological beliefs	2%	34%
I had a negative personal experience of social work	<1%	9%
Funding / bursary was available for the course	<1%	36%
I wanted a decent salary	<1%	21%
I had a positive personal experience of social work	<1%	16%
Other (please specify)	<1%	2%

Base: All respondents. Main motivation (641) All motivations (646)

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of motivations by whether respondents were made a conditional offer. 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, this was selected by 53% of those who were made a conditional offer and 22% of those who were not made a conditional offer*. Other motivations selected by a higher proportion of those who were made a conditional offer include wanting a stable job (45% vs 27%*), social work aligning with their political or ideological beliefs (42% vs 28%*), wanting a decent salary (26% vs 14%*), seeing social work as a springboard to another career (19% vs 11%*), and wanting to help people or make a difference (97% vs 90%*). Contrastingly, a higher proportion of those who were not made a conditional offer said that they were motivated by having a positive personal experience of social work (18% vs 10%*).

Figure 1: Why did you decide you wanted to embark upon a career in social work, broken down by whether the responded was made a conditional offer or not



Base: All respondents who were made or not made a conditional offer. Made a conditional offer (262) not made a conditional offer (314). * Denotes significant differences between respondents who were made a conditional offer compared with those who were not.

Respondents were asked an open text question about why they decided to pursue a career in social work at this point in time. Respondents most frequently reported wanting to become a social worker to make a difference, particularly for children and families. Many referred to this as their 'passion'. This was mentioned by just over half of respondents.

I have always had a great passion for helping people, particularly vulnerable children.

The second most common response was that respondents felt they had the relevant experience or skills to be a social worker, this was mentioned by around a fifth of respondents. This mostly referred to respondents having gained experience working in a related area, such as education, children's services, early help and family support.

Working as a teacher and a foster carer led me to pursue a career-focused more on providing care and empowerment for vulnerable children in society.

The next most common response referred to wanting a change of career or a new challenge. Some said that they wanted a more public facing role or that they wanted a move from education.

I have considered a career that is more directly impactful and public-facing for a while. Having worked at charities & social impact agencies, I wanted a more practical career than behind a desk.

Some respondents also mentioned that the nature and quality of the Frontline programme was a reason they pursued social work. Some of these comments were specifically related to it being a route into the social work profession, such as it being a quick route into social work. Some related to elements of the programme itself, such as the qualification gained and the training programme.

The programme was a fantastic opportunity to continue my education, work to gain experience and get paid via bursary.

A number of respondents said that the timing was right for them to apply. Some respondents mentioned this in terms of being ready professionally, such as having enough confidence and life experience. Others mentioned that it was the right time in terms of their personal life, mainly regarding childcare responsibilities being reduced due to children being older.

My children are all at school now so I can focus on (my) career again.

Some respondents also mentioned that they applied because they had just graduated or wanted a postgraduate qualification to help them take the next step into their career.

I had recently graduated from University and was looking at what I wanted to do next. I had been interested in pursuing a career in social work for a little while, so it felt like a natural next step.

Others also mentioned that social work has good career prospects and this motivated them to apply. This included the chance to progress, job security and that it provides more opportunities. A small number of applicants said that the programme would be a stepping stone to another career such as a psychologist.

It just felt like the right move professionally. I'm almost 40 and want a good career with progression options.

Some respondents reported that their previous experiences motivated them to apply. For some this referred to their own personal experiences with social services and for some this related to past work experiences, these were both positive and negative.

I had a positive experience growing up in care and so wanted to give something back/ replicate the good experiences for others in need.

Having had social services involved myself with my family & receiving non empathetic & unsupportive social workers I wanted to become a social worker I never had.

A small number of respondents said that they thought social work was the right career for them and fits with their personality.

I feel I have the qualities and attitude to make a difference to children and young people's lives (sic).

Finally, some respondents mentioned that wider contextual factors encouraged them to apply such as high poverty rates, the Covid-19 pandemic, high profile cases in the media and a lack of social workers.

Reasons for applying to Frontline

Respondents were asked why they applied specifically to Frontline, via an open text question. Responses were coded and analysed.

The most commonly mentioned response was related to financial reasons and the bursary. This theme was mentioned by over a third of respondents. This was either given as a sole reason or combined with other motivations. Many respondents reported that the provision of a bursary/funding was what enabled them to study social work. Some mentioned this regarding their financial responsibilities, such as having a mortgage or being a single parent. Some also mentioned the financial benefit of having a funded master's degree and not having to take time out of work to study.

The funding for the programme made social work accessible, I could not afford to apply for a course without funding due to needing to give up work.

Quality of the Frontline course and the combination of theory and practise offered by Frontline was reported as a motivation by just under a third of respondents. The development of leadership skills was an attractive feature of the course content mentioned by respondents. Many applicants valued the 'hands-on' or 'on-the-job' approach offered by the Frontline alongside the more academic aspects of the course. Other aspects mentioned include the structure of the programme and that it was well organised.

It gives you practical hands-on experience. I still wanted to study after

my undergraduate degree but I wanted to work full-time too and Frontline gives you both!

The alignment of Frontline's values with applicants' personal values was frequently mentioned.

The Frontline values and approach seemed holistic and sought to break red tape of the social work sector and put children and their families first in decision making where possible.

Their mission and beliefs aligned with my own.

It ... aligned well with my ideological and political beliefs, with its people-led focus.

Hearing a personal recommendation of the Frontline course was a motivation for several applicants.

I had spoken to social workers who had completed the course who highly recommended this as a method to become a social worker.

The short duration of the course was also seen as a benefit, often mentioned alongside the benefits of the programme being funded and of gaining experience.

I liked that it was more of an on-the-job approach and was an intense but shorter course.

The focus on children and families was also given as a reason, particularly where the applicant had personal experiences of social care.

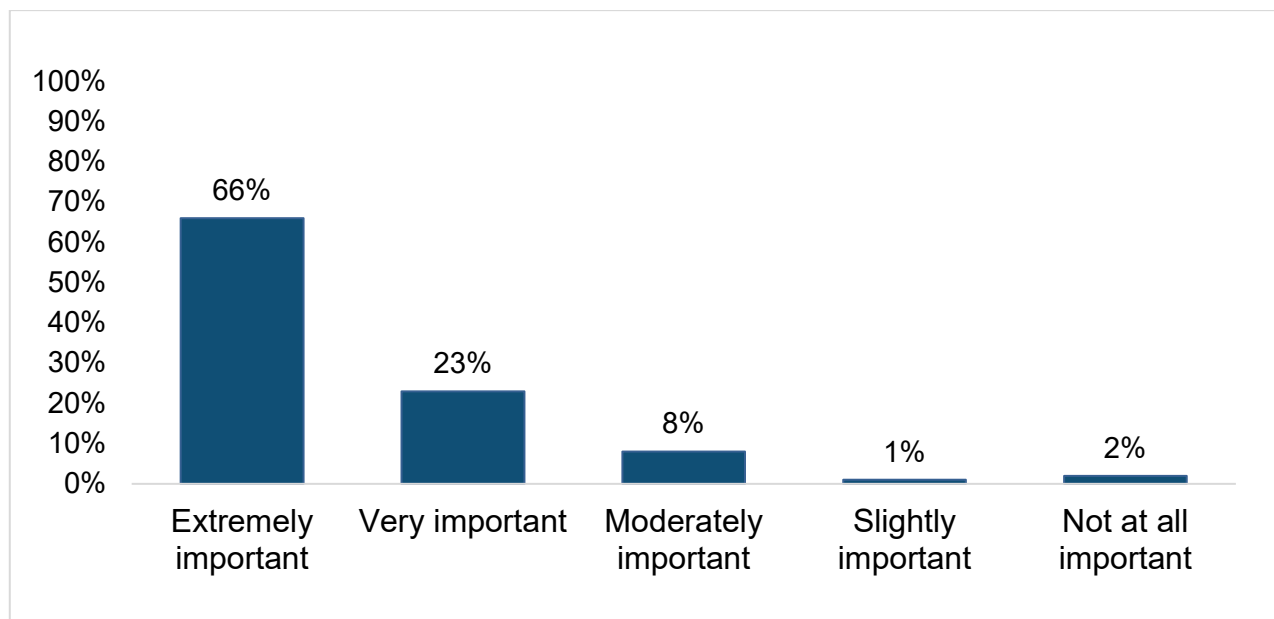
I liked that Frontline was focused towards working with children and families, I have personal experience of abuse and neglect in childhood and felt that I could help others like myself.

Some respondents also gave more generic responses such as to become a social worker, to help others and to make a difference. Respondents also saw Frontline as a way into social work for those without direct previous experience.

Importance of funding

Respondents were asked how important they considered the Frontline funding in their decision to apply via this route in a closed question. Results showed that funding was extremely or very important to 89% of respondents (Figure 2).

Figure 2: How important was the Frontline funding for your decision to apply via this route?



Base: All respondents (647), 'Don't know'/'Prefer not to say' <1%

Barriers

Respondents were asked 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 common barrier was the financial cost of training, mentioned by just under half of respondents (48%). Other barriers commonly selected include the negative public perception of social work (34%), absence of information on routes into the profession (29%) and entry requirements (21%). Findings can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Key barriers faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work

What were the key barriers, if any, that you faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work	Percentage
Financial cost of training	48%
Negative public perception of social work	34%
Absence of information on routes into the profession	29%
Entry requirements	21%
Childcare/caring responsibilities	19%
Location of training	18%
Future earnings potential	15%
Length of training	14%
Lack of diversity in workforce	10%
Timing of training	9%
Other (please specify)	7%
None	10%

Base: All respondents (644)

Further analysis shown in Figure 3 shows the breakdown by those who were made a conditional offer and those who were not made a conditional offer. This revealed that a higher proportion of respondents who were made a conditional offer compared with those that were not made a conditional offer agreed that the negative public perception of social work (49% vs 21%*), future earnings potential (23% vs 8%*), financial cost of training (55% vs 45%*), childcare/caring responsibilities (23% vs 13%*), length of training (19% vs 10%*), and location of training (20% vs 14%*) were barriers. Conversely, a higher proportion of those who were not made a conditional offer said that entry requirements (27% vs 12%*), and lack of diversity in the workforce (13% vs 8%*) were barriers.

Figure 3: In your view, what are the key barriers, if any, that you faced in choosing to apply for a career in social work



Base: All respondents who were made a conditional offer and not made a conditional offer. Made a conditional offer (260) not made a conditional offer (314). * Denotes significant differences between respondents who were made a conditional offer compared with those who were not.

Qualifier survey findings: 6 months post-qualification

Demographics and management information

The 6 months post-qualification survey was launched at the end of February 2024, approximately 6 months after the end of the first year of the programme (PGDip). Surveys were sent by Frontline to the 314 active programme participants. This resulted in 127 completed survey responses with a response rate of 40%.

Frontline provided management information for individuals who were given a conditional offer. Using this data, the demographic trends of the entire cohort were compared with those of the post-qualification survey respondents. This comparison offers an indication of how representative the survey responses are relative to the wider cohort. However, it is important to note that some of those who enrolled may not have completed the programme. In addition, the post-qualification survey was conducted over 18 months after initial enrolment, therefore some respondents may have changed how they report their demographic characteristics. Below is a breakdown of the demographic characteristics included in the post-qualification survey:

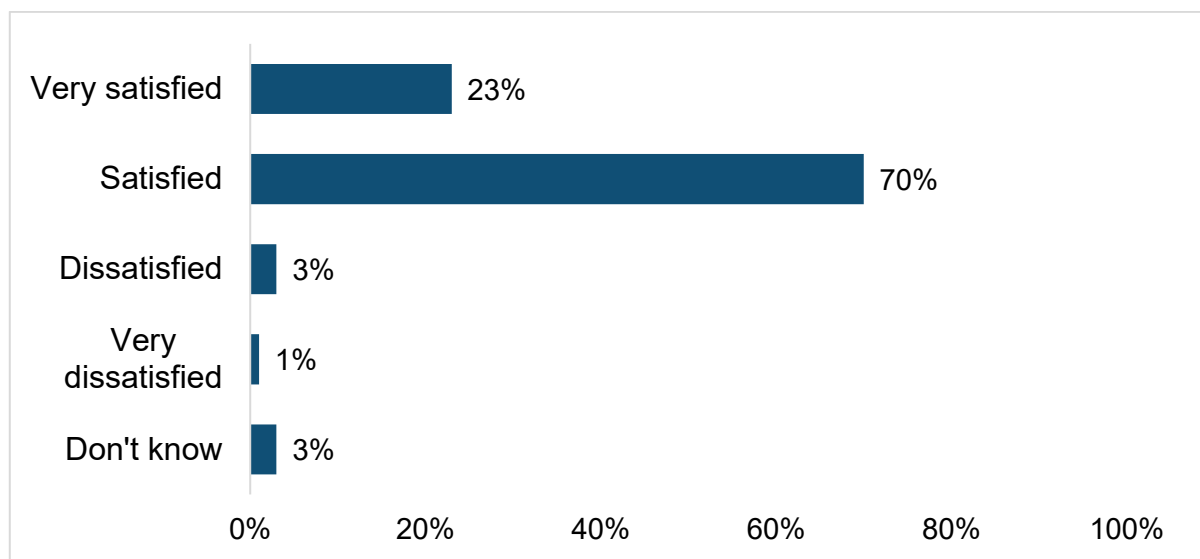
- The survey had a similar gender breakdown to the Frontline MI data, 83% of survey respondents self-reported as female (compared with 83% of Frontline MI data) and 12% self-reported as male (compared to 15%)
- The survey sample had a slightly higher proportion of people who were not eligible for Free School Meals (71%), compared with the MI data (61%)
- The survey sample had a slightly higher proportions of people with a first class (35% compared with 29%) or 2.1 degree classification (60% compared with 56%).
- Of the survey respondents, 29% were aged 24 and under, 53% were aged between 25 and 34 years old, 12% were 35 to 44 years old and 6% were 45-54 years old. As the post-qualification survey took place eighteen months after enrolment, it is difficult to directly compare the enrolment ages with the post-qualification survey age groupings.
- Respondents were also asked about their caring responsibilities, the majority of survey respondents (77%) did not have any care or childcare responsibilities. 10% had caring responsibility for school aged children, 2% for pre-school aged children and 9% for other family members or friends.

Satisfaction with the Frontline programme

Respondents were generally positive about their experiences of the Frontline programme in the 6 months post-qualification survey.

They were asked about their overall satisfaction with their experience of Frontline (Figure 4). The vast majority (93%) reported being either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their experience. Almost a quarter (23%) reported being 'very satisfied' and 70% being 'satisfied' with only 3% being 'dissatisfied' and 1% 'very dissatisfied'.

Figure 4: Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your experience of the Frontline programme?



Base: All respondents (127)

90% said they would recommend the Frontline programme to others looking to enter social work. 2% said they would not recommend it and 8% said they 'didn't know' or 'preferred not to say'.

Of those who said they would recommend the Frontline programme, 83 provided an open text response. Thematic analysis of their responses revealed several key themes, with the most frequently mentioned being that it was a good route into social work, the route prepared them well for practice, the programme was high quality and it helped them to put theory into practice.

It's been a brilliant opportunity, and I would do it again in a heartbeat. I think the course overall is great.

It's been the highest quality of education that I've received...I've loved the teaching and feel that I have gained so many skills.

This programme allowed me to gain valuable on-the-job training which has put me in a more confident position to go into my first year of practice.

The skills and models we are taught are helpful to my practice and the way that I support children and families.

I feel more equipped than other students doing other courses due to the emphasis on systemic practice and social graces.

Respondents were also asked how they would rate satisfaction with their current placement. 83% agreed or strongly agreed that they found their current placement satisfying and 13% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Financial support during the programme

Of the 83 respondents who provided an open text response explaining why they would recommend the programme, a significant number mentioned the benefits of the financial support offered throughout the course. Several respondents acknowledged that the Frontline funding enabled them to get into social work.

Without the bursary and Frontline funding... traditional social work university programmes would not have been an option for me.

However, a small number of respondents reported that the financial support, particularly in the first year, was insufficient.

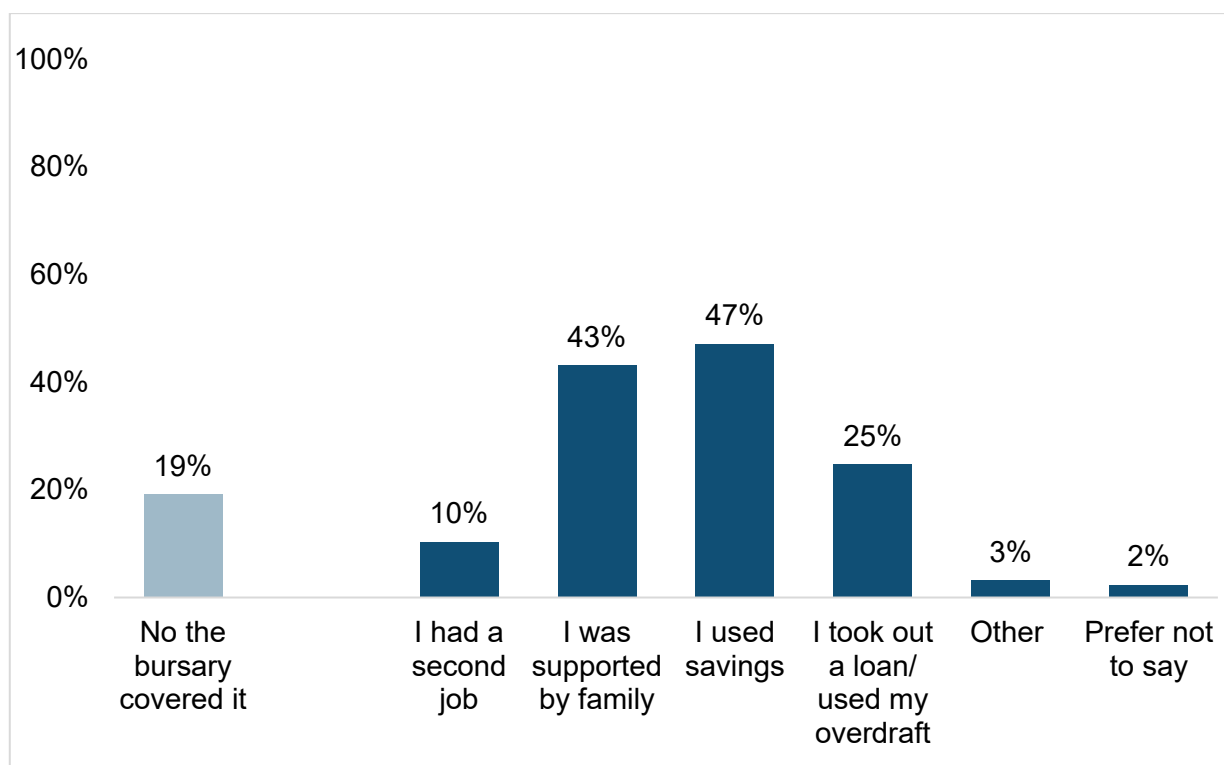
It was one of the most intense years of my life. Exacerbated by the size of the grant which was not enough to cover living expenses and I had to have a second job in hospitality. I almost burnt out.

Financial strain appeared to be worse for some respondents with caring responsibilities.

I think that the programme is incredibly beneficial for attracting career changers with different lived experiences, but the practicalities of the programme are more difficult for career changers who tend to have more family and financial commitments.

Though many respondents reported that they would recommend the Frontline programme because of the financial support it offers, 77% of respondents reported that they needed to seek additional sources of financial support in addition to the Frontline bursary in year 1 while 19% of respondents said that they did not need to seek additional financial support. The most common alternative sources of funding were use of savings (47%) and support from family (43%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: During the first year of the Frontline programme, did you need to seek additional financial support in addition to the bursary? (Please select all that apply)



Base: All respondents (125)

Perceptions of support received throughout the programme

When asked how they would rate the quality of reflective supervision they had received while on the programme, the majority (83%) reported that the reflective supervision they received during the Frontline programme was good or very good and 9% reported that it was poor or very poor.

When asked why they said they would recommend the Frontline programme, some of the respondents cited that it was because of the support that was offered throughout the course.

I think the structure and support offered by the programme is second to none.

Even when days get more challenging, I am always so well supported.

However, a smaller number of respondents stated that the support they were offered by the programme was insufficient.

There was little support around assignments and practice tutors being able to read and support more.

Not enough is done around the wellbeing of students.

This demonstrates that the experience of the Frontline programme varies between individuals and some respondents acknowledged this in their open text responses.

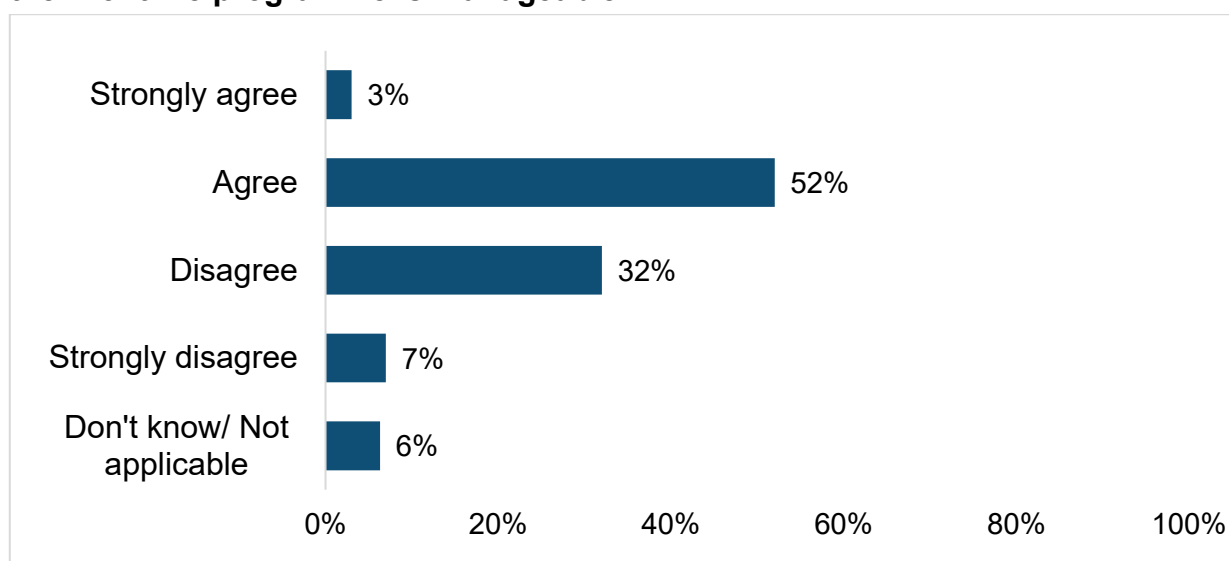
I am not sure everyone has had a consistent experience, though I have had a positive experience.

I have had a very positive experience which is mainly due to the quality of my consultant social worker. Others I know have had very different experiences.

Perceptions of the workload associated with the programme

Just over half (55%) of respondents reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The academic workload on the Frontline programme was manageable”. 32% disagreed and 7% strongly disagreed with the statement (Figure 6).

Figure 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree that the academic workload on the Frontline programme is manageable



Base: All respondents (127)

In open text responses, some respondents outlined how intensive the programme had been and some mentioned challenges with balancing their workloads.

I don't think it's possible to have a work life balance whilst doing the first year.

The workload can be very challenging as some LAs have less resources and this can affect your ability to complete assignments.

The transition into year 2 is a big leap, and to juggle ASYE, master's and caseload is a BIG commitment that can be very, very difficult to juggle.

Perceptions of how well the programme prepared qualifiers for social work

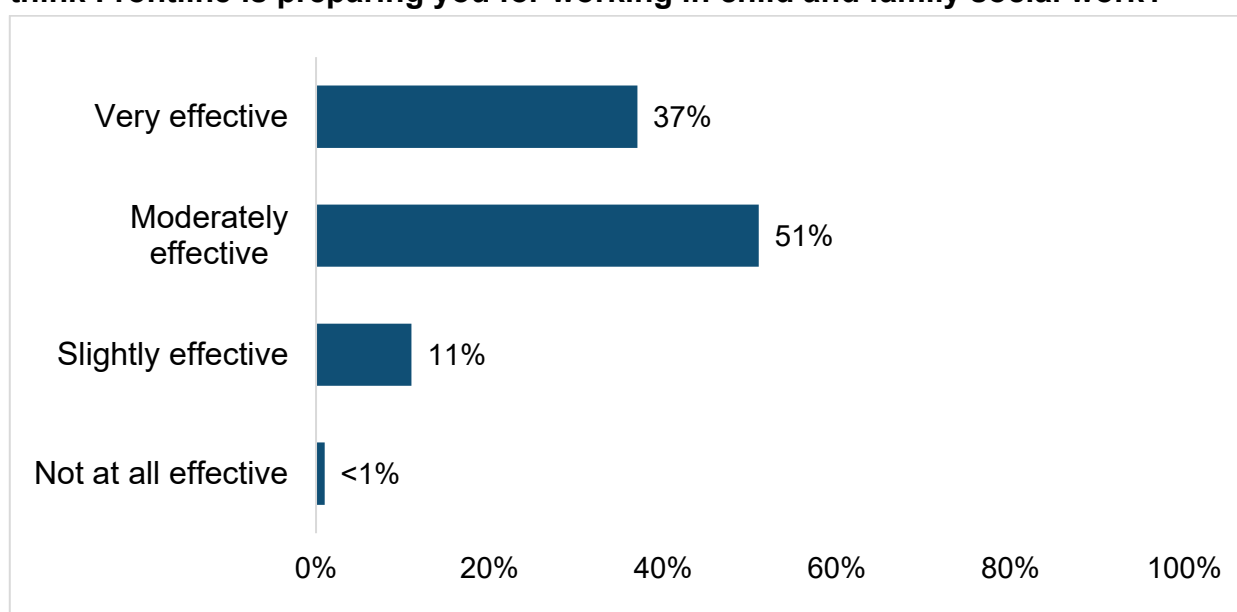
Respondents were very positive about how well Frontline prepared them for a career in social work. When asked to what extent they agreed with the statement “the Frontline programme equipped me to practice in an inclusive way with children and families”, almost

all agreed or strongly agreed with the statement (59% and 37% respectively). Only 2% disagreed.

When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement: “I am utilising what I learnt during my studies on the Frontline programme in my current work”, 54% ‘agreed’, 38% ‘strongly agreed’, 4% ‘disagreed’ and 2% ‘strongly disagreed’.

When asked: “thinking about your career in social work to date, how effective was the Frontline programme in preparing you to work as a social worker with children and families?”, 37% of respondents reported ‘very effective’, 51% ‘moderately effective’, 11% ‘slightly effective’ and less than 1% ‘not at all effective’ (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Thinking about your career in social work to date, how effective do you think Frontline is preparing you for working in child and family social work?



Base: All respondents (127)

Respondents were also asked “how confident are you in your social work practice in supporting children and families?”. 16% said they were ‘very confident’, 60% said they were ‘moderately confident’, 23% said they were ‘slightly confident’ and 2% said they were ‘not at all confident’ in their practice.

In open text responses, preparedness for practice was one of the themes regularly mentioned by Frontline qualifiers. Several stated they felt more prepared than their peers who entered social work through another route.

Frontline prepares you very effectively for the challenges of social work.

I feel more prepared and competent than other ASYE colleagues who didn’t do Frontline.

I [also] think that it prepares you for social work in a way that other routes don’t, such as completing a university course.

However, other respondents felt that there was a disconnect between what is taught in the Frontline programme and the reality of practice in the local authority.

I would also say it is not necessarily a true taste of the reality of social work, and I'm not sure any training provider can really offer that.

Programme teaches skills that are not used and had a focus on learning for family therapist not for social workers, feels the teaching is very far from practice.

The workload is not always manageable and at times can feel disconnected from local authority practice.

Experience of social work following the programme

Respondents were asked a series of questions about their satisfaction with different aspects of their job. Their responses have been presented in Table X, in order from most satisfied to least satisfied. Job security and leadership/management 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?

Aspect of your current job	Satisfied or very satisfied	Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	Don't know, or prefer not to say
Job Security	94%	3%	3%
Leadership/Management	71%	20%	9%
Flexibility of hours worked	70%	22%	8%
Opportunities for career advancement	62%	25%	25%
Quality of supervision	67%	26%	7%
Income	64%	29%	7%
Caseload	61%	34%	5%
Numbers of hours worked	48%	47%	5%
Public respect for the work they do	37%	48%	15%

Base: All respondents (126).

Salary

At 6 months post-PGDip, the 2022 cohort of Frontline participants were in year 2 of the programme, in a paid role as a newly qualified social worker, working towards their master's qualification.

Respondents were asked to self-report their salary to the nearest thousand pounds. Of the 114 respondents who provided their salary, the vast majority (85%) of reported incomes fell between £30,000 and £39,999 with 15% earning £40,000 and over. The mean income across all respondents was £35,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand), and the median income was also £35,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand).

Qualifier survey findings: eighteen months post-qualification

Demographics and management information

The 18 months post-qualification survey was launched at the end of April 2025, approximately 18 months after the end of the first year of the programme (PGDip). Surveys were sent by Frontline to the 314 qualifiers. This resulted in 86 completed survey responses with a response rate of 27%.

Frontline provided management information for individuals who were given a conditional offer. Using this data, the demographic trends of the entire cohort were compared with those of the 18 month post-qualification survey respondents. This comparison offers an indication of how representative the survey responses are relative to the wider cohort. However, it is important to note that some of those who were given a conditional offer may not have started or completed the programme. In addition, the post-qualification survey was conducted over 3 years after offers were given, therefore some respondents may have changed how they report their demographic characteristics. Below is a breakdown of the demographic characteristics included in the post-qualification survey.

- Of the survey respondents, 87% of survey respondents self-reported as female and 12% self-reported as male, this is similar to the gender breakdown of the those who were given a conditional offer on Frontline.
- The survey sample was fairly representative on eligibility for Free School Meals and undergraduate degree classification. The survey sample had a slightly lower proportion of people who were not eligible for Free School Meals (52% compared to 61%).
- The majority of survey respondents (73%) did not have any care or childcare responsibilities. 24% had caring responsibility for school aged children. This information is not currently included in the Frontline MI data.

Employment status at 18 months post-qualification

When asked about their current employment status, almost all respondents (97%) reported that they were currently working or carrying out further study, of this group 99% reported being in some form of employment 18 months post-PGDip qualification from Frontline, and 5% reported undertaking part-time or full-time further study. Of those in employment, 95% reported working in a local authority or Children's Trust, and 85% reported working in the same local authority where they participated in Frontline.

The vast majority (96%) of those in employment considered themselves to be working in social work practice, of this group 97% reported working as a social worker. Of those who reported working as a social worker, 95% reported working in children's social work, while 4% reported working in adults social work and 1% reported working another form of social work. When those in children's social work were asked about the specific area they worked in, 71% reported they worked in Child in Need/ Child Protection team, 9% were in a looked after children team and the remaining respondents were spread across a range of teams including Access/MASH, adolescent, assessment, children with disabilities, family help, fostering, youth offending and other.

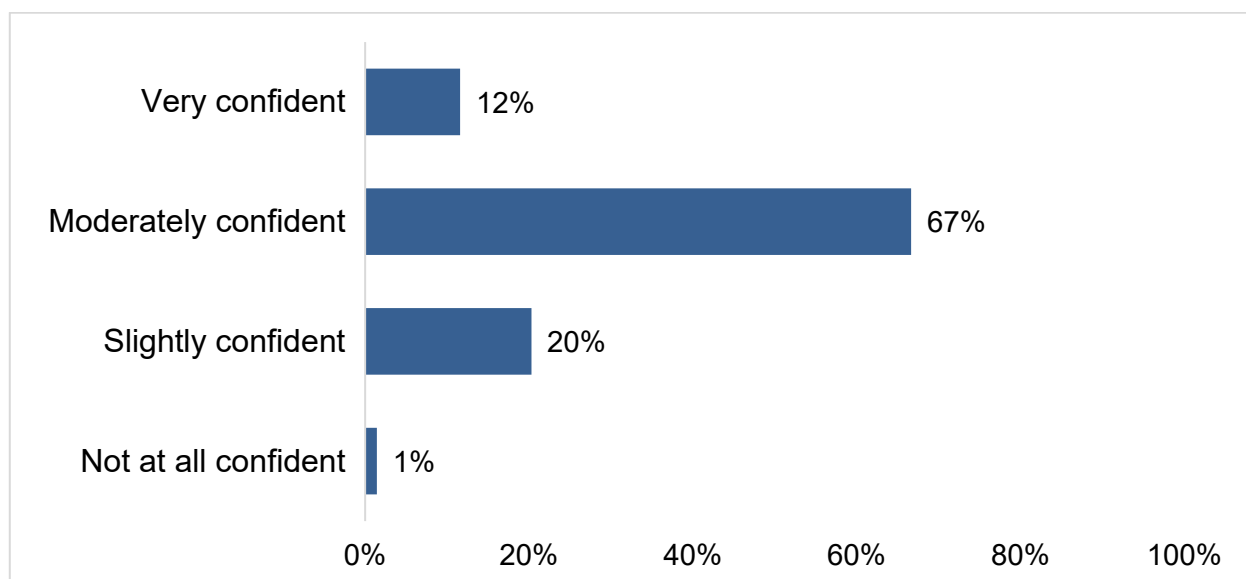
Salary

Respondents in employment were asked to self report their annual salary to the nearest thousand pounds. Of the 80 respondents who provided their salary, the majority reported earning between £35,000 and £39,000 (40%) or £40,000 to £44,000 (39%). The mean annual income across all respondents was £40,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand), and the median annual income was also £40,000 (rounded to the nearest thousand). This is an increase of around £5,000 in comparison to the mean annual income at 6 months post qualification.

Satisfaction with current employment

Respondents who self reported working as social workers were asked a series of questions about their experience in their current role. When asked how confident they were in their social work practice, the majority of respondents were 'moderately confident' in their social work practice (67%) or 'very confident' (12%), 20% were 'slightly confident', and 1% 'not at all confident'.

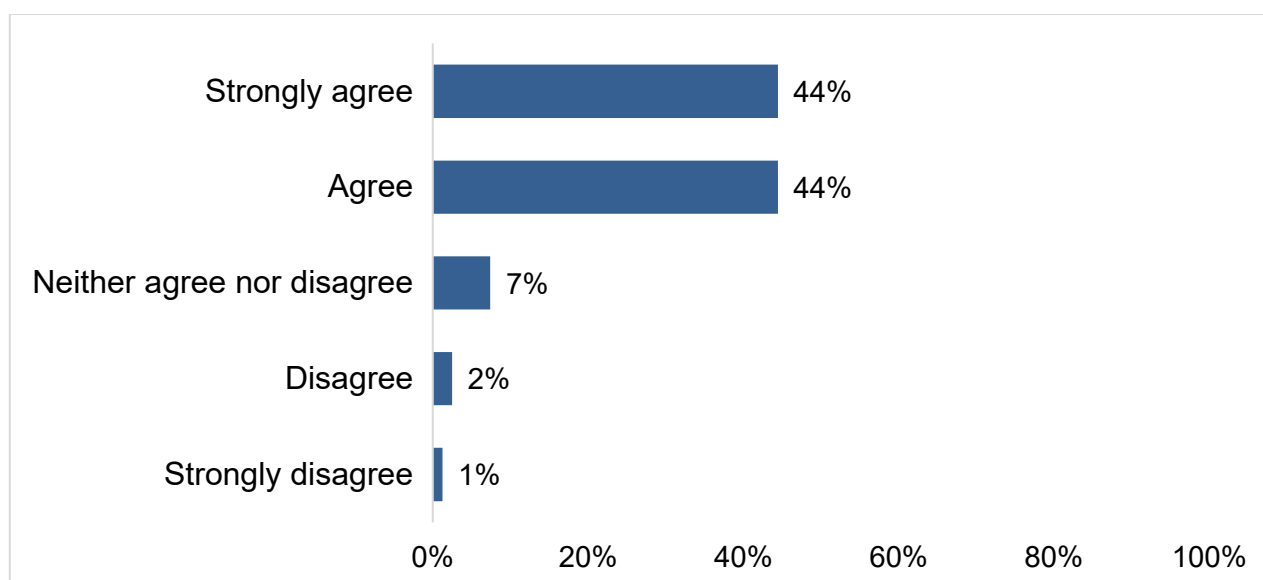
Figure 8: How confident are you in your social work practice?



Base: Respondents who describe themselves as working as child and family social workers (69).

Respondents were also asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the statement 'My current work is meaningful'. The vast majority reported that they 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with this statement (88%), 7% 'neither agree nor disagree', and 2% 'disagree' and 1% 'strongly disagree'.

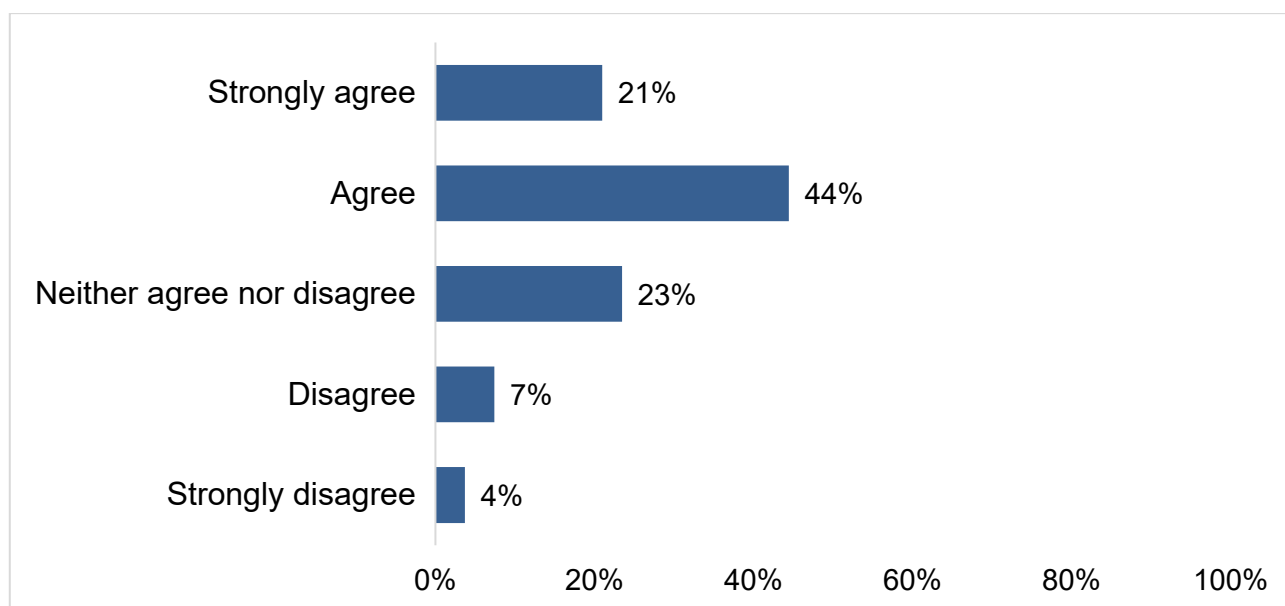
Figure 9: To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement 'My current work is meaningful? You can think about this in terms of how meaningful your work / study / activities are to you, to others or to society at large.'



Base: All respondents in employment (81).

When asked to what extent they agree with the statement 'I feel valued by my employer', 65% agreed or strongly agreed, 23% neither agreed nor disagreed, 7% disagreed and 4% strongly disagreed.

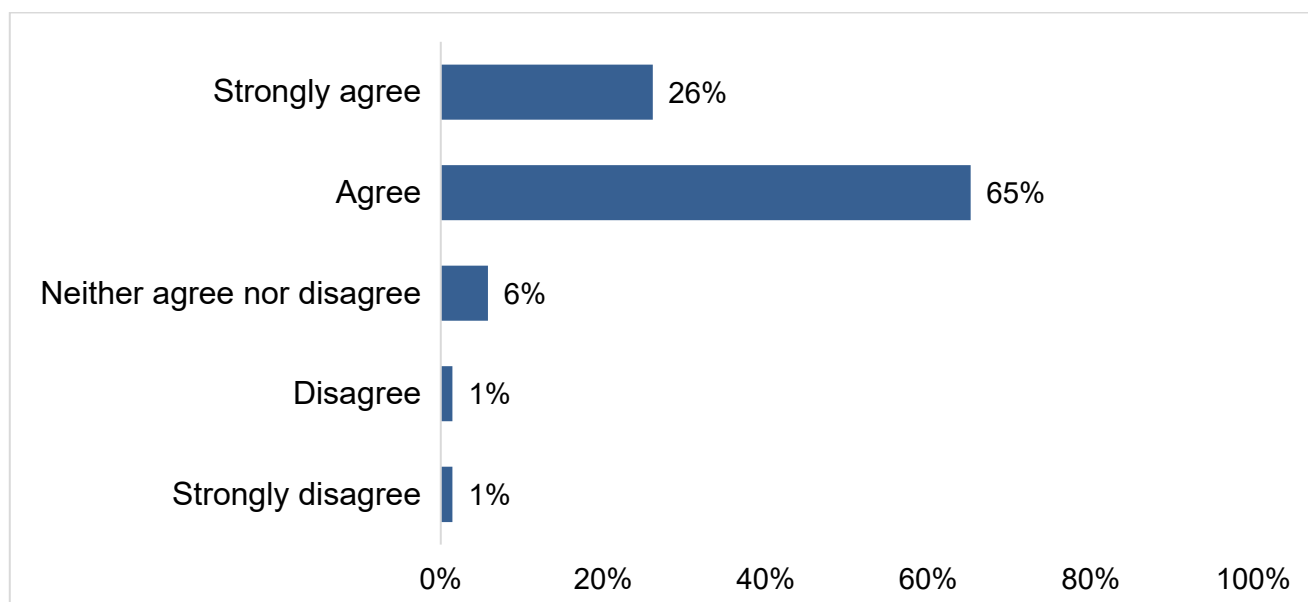
Figure 10: To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement 'I feel valued by my employer'



Base: All respondents in employment (81).

When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I am proud to tell people that I am a child and family social worker', 91% agreed or strongly agreed, 6% neither agreed or disagreed, and 2% either disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Figure 11: To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement 'I am proud to tell people that I am a child and family social worker'



Base: Respondents who describe themselves as working as a child and family social worker (69).

Respondents were also 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 respondents were most satisfied with and numbers of hours worked and public respect for the work they do were the aspects they were least satisfied with.

Table 4: How Satisfied are you with the following aspects of your job?

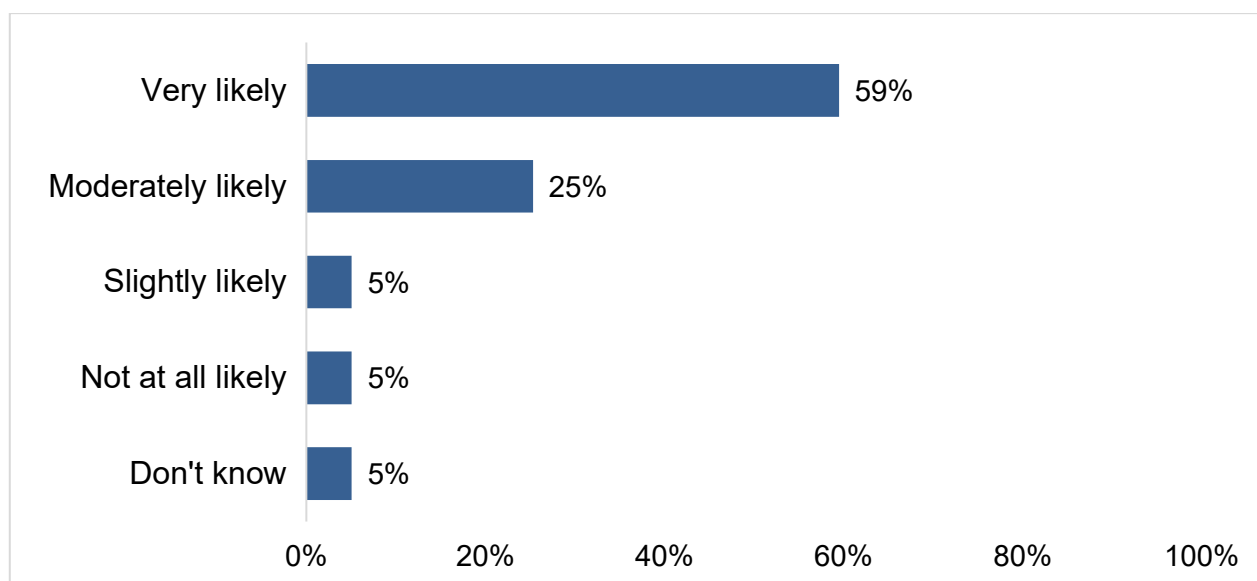
Aspect of your current job	Satisfied or very satisfied	Dissatisfied or very dissatisfied	Don't know
Job security	99%	0%	1%
Relationships with colleagues	95%	5%	/
Training opportunities	90%	10%	/
Income	79%	20%	1%
Leadership/management	79%	21%	/
Opportunities for career advancement	76%	15%	10%
Flexibility of hours worked	74%	25%	1%
Quality of supervision	73%	26%	1%
Your caseload	52%	46%	2%
Number of hours worked	38%	61%	1%
Public respect for the sort of work you do	33%	58%	10%

Base: All respondents in employment (81).

Likelihood of remaining in social work in 12 months' time

Respondents who are currently working in social work were also asked how likely they were to be working in social work in 12 months' time. Most respondents (59%) said they were 'very likely', a further 25% responded 'moderately likely', 5% responded 'slightly likely', 5% responded 'not at all likely' and 5% responded that they didn't know.

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



Base: Respondents who report working as social workers (79).

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. 68 respondents provided an open text response.

Many respondents referenced their enjoyment of their job as a reason they are likely to stay in social work, this included enjoyment of the specific role they are in as well as social work more generally.

I enjoy my role as a social worker and there are lots of avenues to practice social work which I like.

I love my job and feel passionate about what I do.

Others also highlighted how social work aligns with their values.

It's great to be working in a role which parallels my personal ethics and values and in which I can contribute to a fairer society.

It aligns with my values and I am confident that this is the long term career for me.

In particular, many respondents highlighted that being able to support children and families is a significant motivator for staying in social work.

I enjoy supporting children and their families, and having the privilege to see them make positive changes, and to see children's lived experiences improve.

I love the job I do and the difference it makes to families and children.

Similarly, some respondents shared their desire to contribute to improving the social work system and bring about positive changes.

I have thought about the way Frontline teaches and the fact that change won't happen for the families if we all end up leaving.

I love working with families and want to help the system get better.

Some respondents mentioned their career plans, and a desire to develop their skills as a reason for remaining in social work.

I want my practice and experience to develop and know that the only way this happens is by keeping at it.

I'd like to develop my career within the social work sector.

The profession is incredibly diverse and the training will allow me to experience multiple team and aspects of social work.

Respondents also included positive views on job security and income, this aligns with the findings in Table 4:

There are huge positives to social work - job security, pay...

I enjoy the job, stable work and good pay.

Some respondents also shared their views on their team, or location, or specific role they were in. For some this was a reason to stay in their role, for others this was a reason why they had already moved or were seeking to move to a different team or location.

I love my job, this is contributed to by the great team I am in with a supportive manager.

I have recently moved to [a new team] which is offering me more of a work-life balance than my previous role.

Challenges in current employment

Those who said they were only slightly likely or not at all likely to continue being a social worker in 12 months' time provided open text answers about why they are considering leaving children and families or social work altogether.

Some respondents reported that the challenging nature of social work and the stress it can produce is a reason why they are looking to leave the profession.

The job is extremely hard and taxing on wellbeing.

I sometimes struggle with the emotional weight of the job and feeling like I'm not doing a good enough job for people.

Other respondents specifically mentioned that their workload load was too high.

The case load is unsustainable and unmanageable.

Child protection team including court work has felt unmanageable in terms of allocations and expectations which I cannot continue with, hoping to change to a different team that will be more manageable.

A small number of respondents described experiencing burnout.

I am really feeling burnt out but hope that I will keep being a social worker

I have recently resigned from my job as a social worker ...and am currently taking a career break to recover from burnout. I am not yet sure what I will be doing next.

A small number of respondents highlighted that they feel the social work system as a whole is under strain that make it difficult to do their job to the highest standard.

I left social work due to not feeling able to support the families I worked with due to a lack of resource.

There are still retention and recruitment issues that make it difficult for management to relieve the burden.

Some respondents reported that they were considering a career change either within or outside of social work, because they felt this wasn't the right role for them.

I am still unsure if this is where I am meant to be.

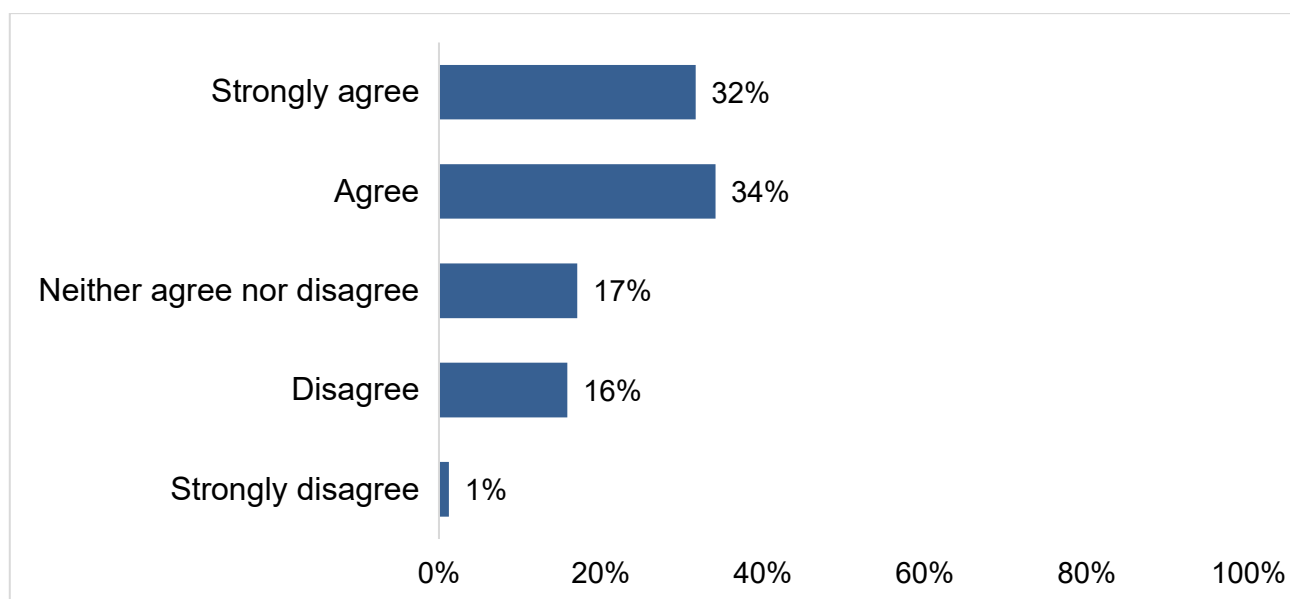
I do not want to work in a frontline social work role any longer.

I am looking to change roles but still want to be a social worker - I may go into adults though.

Others shared personal reasons for leaving such as seeking a job in a better location for them or taking a career break to go travelling.

These open text responses are echoed by other findings from the survey. Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'My overall workload is too high'. The majority either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (66%), with 17% remaining neutral, 16% disagreeing and 1% strongly disagreeing.

Figure 13: To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement 'My overall workload is too high'.



Base: All respondents in employment (81).

Respondents were also asked to select from a list of options the one main thing that causes them stress in their job. The most commonly selected answer was 'I have too much paperwork' (34%), followed by 'I have too many cases' (15%). Table X shows a breakdown of all responses.

Table 5: Select from the following: Which of these do you feel is the ONE main thing that is causing stress?

Option for 'one main thing that is causing stress'	Percent of responses
I have too much paperwork	34%
I have too many cases	15%
Insufficient time for direct work with children and families	10%
Nothing in particular, it is simply a stressful job	10%
Having to make emotional or difficult decisions	9%
Working culture/practices	5%
Insufficient quality of management/support	4%
Lack of resources to support families	2%
I do not feel stressed	6%
Other	6%

Base: All respondents who are currently in employment (82).

Conclusion

For applicants to the 2022 cohort of Frontline, their interest in social work was often driven by altruistic motivations, with the majority of respondents stating a desire to help others and work with children and families. Financial support via the bursary played an important role in enabling access to the Frontline programme, especially for those with existing responsibilities. While many applicants had prior experience in related fields, nearly half had not considered social work before hearing about Frontline, highlighting the programme's role in attracting new entrants to the profession. Key barriers included the financial cost of training and negative public perceptions of social work.

6 months after their PGDip qualification most respondents said they were satisfied with their experiences of the programme. However, many said they had found the bursary insufficient, especially those with caring responsibilities. Whilst most respondents rated reflective supervision on the programme positively, some reported challenges with the academic demands of Frontline and inconsistent support across placements. Although some respondents noted a disconnect between programme content and real world practice, self-reported preparedness for practice was generally strong.

Eighteen months after their PGDip qualification, almost all respondents reported being in employment, and most of them report working as a social worker. Respondents were largely satisfied with their current employment, in particular the job security. However, many respondents also reported that their current workload is too high, and the challenging nature of the job can cause strain. Despite these challenges, the majority of respondents reported they were likely to remain in their current role for at least 12 more months, for many this was due to their passion for helping children and families.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Frontline 2022 cohort applicant survey questions

Survey of Frontline 2022 applicants

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 made a conditional offer on the Frontline programme?

(Please select one)

Yes

No

Not heard yet

I withdrew before the offer stage

Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If Were you made a conditional offer on the Frontline programme?
(Please select one) = Yes

Q2 Do you plan on taking up your place on Frontline?

(Please select one)

Yes

No

Don't know

Prefer not to say

Display This Question: If Do you plan on taking up your place on Frontline? (Please select one) = No

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

(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)

Display This Question:

If Do you plan on taking up your place on Frontline? (Please select one) = No

Carry Forward Selected Choices - Entered Text from "Why are you not planning on taking up your place on Frontline? (Please select all that apply)"

Q4 What is the MAIN reason for not planning on taking up your place on Frontline?
(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 Frontline?
(Please select one)

- No - I hadn't considered it until I heard about Frontline
- 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 Frontline)?

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

[Open text response]

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

Step Up to Social Work

Undergraduate social work degree

Postgraduate social work degree

Think Ahead

Social work apprenticeship

Other social work course (please specify)

None of the above

Display This Question:

If Apart from applying for Frontline this year, have you applied for any other social work course in... = Step Up to Social Work

Q8a You said you applied for Step Up to Social Work 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

Display This Question:

If Apart from applying for Frontline this year, have you applied for any other social work course in... = 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

Display This Question:

If Apart from applying for Frontline this year, have you applied for any other social work course in... = 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

Display This Question:

If Apart from applying for Frontline this year, have you applied for any other social work course in... = 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

Display This Question:

If Apart from applying for Frontline this year, have you applied for any other social work course in... = 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

Display This Question:

If Apart from applying for Frontline this year, have you applied for any other social work course in... = Other social work course (please specify)

Q8f You said you applied for [insert previous selection] 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 Frontline or another route into social work in previous years? (Not including in the last 12 months)

(Please select all that apply)

Frontline

Step Up to Social Work

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

Display This Question:

If If you have not recently accepted a place on a social work course, do you plan to apply for a soc... = Yes

Or If you have not recently accepted a place on a social work course, do you plan to apply for a soc... = No

Or If you have not recently accepted a place on a social work course, do you plan to apply for a soc... = Unsure

Or If you have not recently accepted a place on a social work course, do you plan to apply for a soc... = 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.

[Open text response]

Section break 1 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 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

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

Section break 2 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 Frontline?

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 Frontline?

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 Frontline?

Yes

No

Don't know / Prefer not to say

Display This Question:

If Broadly speaking, did you have any social work/social care experience (i.e. voluntary or paid wor... = 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.

[Open text response]

Display This Question:

If Have you previously had experience in any other people-oriented career (outside of social work/so... = 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.

[Open text response]

Display This Question:

If Have you previously had a different career (unrelated to social work) prior to applying for Frontlin = 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.

[Open text response]

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

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 Frontline specifically as a route into social work? Please tell us what it was about Frontline that particularly attracted you to the programme. Please do not include any personal details which could be used to identify you in your response.

[Open text 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 Frontline 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

Section break 3 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, please specify

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, please specify

Asian or Asian British - Indian

Asian or Asian British - Pakistani

Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi

Asian or Asian British - Chinese

Any other Asian background, please specify

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - Caribbean

Black, Black British, Caribbean or African - African

Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background, please specify

Other ethnic group - Arab

Other ethnic group - Any other ethnic group, please specify

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

North West

South East

South West

West Midlands

Yorkshire and Humber

Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or outside the UK

Don't know / prefer not to say

Display This Question:

If Do you plan on taking up your place on Frontline? (Please select one) = Yes

Q33 What region will you be placed in for Frontline?

East Midlands

East of England

Greater London

North East

North West

South East

South West

West Midlands

Yorkshire and Humber

Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or outside the UK

Don't know yet

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

Appendix 2 - Frontline 2022 cohort 6 months post qualification questions

Introduction

This survey covers your experience of year 2 of the programme from September until now. This survey should only take about 15 minutes.

Your answers will be treated confidentially and only relevant Frontline staff involved in analysis will see individual responses linked to your name. Data will then be aggregated or otherwise anonymised and shared with key audiences, including your dissertation supervisor, coach, local authorities and funders, but you will not be individually identifiable. If we have any specific concerns due to the nature of any comments you leave, we will always get in touch with you first to discuss them and any implications.

Our Privacy Statement provides detailed information on why we collect this data and who we share it with. It also explains your rights under GDPR and the Data Protection Act (2018).

If you have any questions or concerns relating to this survey, or the wider evaluation processes at Frontline, please email the Evaluation Team.

Thank you in advance for your time and continued support.

Supporting the DfE

We are supporting the Department for Education (DfE) in their evaluation of retention in fast-track social work programmes. You may recall being invited to take part in the first round of this research just after you applied to the Frontline programme. The second part of their research aims to understand your experiences of the Frontline programme now that you have gained your postgraduate diploma qualification.

To save you time and make sure we aren't sending you multiple surveys, the DfE have asked us to include some additional questions within this survey. These questions will be clearly signposted "DfE" as you move through the survey and are voluntary. Your responses will be shared pseudonymised - you will not be individually identifiable to the DfE.

If you'd like more information on this project and to see the full list of questions please see the Privacy notice sent in the email invitation to this survey. For support or queries please contact the Evaluation Team

Please enter your full name and email below.

Full name
[Open text response]

Email
[Open text response]

Overall experience

These questions about your experience will help us improve the programme.
Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your experience of the Frontline programme?

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

If you are happy to, please outline the main reasons for your response.
[Open text response]

Please describe one aspect of the programme that has been the most helpful so far.
[Open text response]

Please describe one change you would suggest we make to help improve the programme.
[Open text response]

Content & delivery

Overall, recall days are helpful to my practice with children and families

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

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. If they do not apply to you, please select 'Not applicable'.

‘Overall, recall day teaching is high quality’

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don’t know
Not applicable

‘The academic workload on the Frontline programme is manageable’

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don’t know
Not applicable

‘The action research I am undertaking is helping me improve my practice’

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don’t know
Not applicable

‘My dissertation supervisor provides helpful support and tutorials’

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don’t know
Not applicable

‘Reflexive groups are a helpful contribution to my learning’

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don’t know
Not applicable

‘Coaching helps develop my practice leadership skills’

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
Not applicable

What could Frontline do to improve these elements of the programme?
[Open text response]

Communication

Considering support and information from central Frontline teams, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Note: Central Frontline teams are those you contact aside from your Practice Tutor. This may include registry, digital learning or suitability.

'Central Frontline teams respond to my queries effectively and in a timely manner'

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
Not applicable

'Frontline keeps me well informed about any programme updates'

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know
Not applicable

In what way could we improve our support?
[Open text response]

Inclusivity

We want to be active in our efforts to ensure that the programme is as inclusive as possible to participants; in the design of the content and how the programme is experienced. Please let us know to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements about the inclusivity of the Frontline programme.

(DfE) 'The Frontline programme equips me to practice in an inclusive way with children and families'

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

'The programme content is actively inclusive'

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

'The programme experience is actively inclusive'

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

Please provide any feedback on the inclusivity of the programme.

[Open text response]

Feedback for LA

These questions about working in your local authority will help us improve the experience for future participants.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your experience in your local authority?

- Very satisfied

Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

If you are happy to, please outline the main reasons for your response.
[Open text response]

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:

'My line manager provides sufficient time for supervision'

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

'My line manager provides high quality, reflective supervision'

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

(DfE) How would you rate the quality of the reflective supervision you have received during the Frontline programme?

Very good
Good
Poor
Very poor
Don't know
Prefer not to say

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following:

'I felt supported during my transition to year 2'

Strongly agree

Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

'My LA actively supports me to complete my dissertation'

Strongly agree
Agree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

How likely do you think you are to continue to work in your current local authority after the Frontline Programme ends?

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

Please select the main factors that are influencing your decision:

High workload / caseload
Lack of support or resources within local authority
Poor management / leadership within local authority
Unable to practice in the way you want with families
Stress, burnout or mental health concerns
To gain other skills and experience
Relocation (due to where you were placed on the Frontline programme)
Relocation (due to personal reasons)
Salary
Other

You selected 'other', please specify:

[Open text response]

Please provide any further feedback about what your local authority has done well and how they could improve.

[Open text response]

Programme outcomes

These questions about your learning will help us understand whether the programme is achieving its desired outcomes.

Thinking about your career in social work to date, how effective do you think Frontline is preparing you for working in child and family social work?

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

How confident are you in your social work practice in supporting children and families?

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

How regularly, if at all, do you apply each of the practice models taught on the Frontline programme in your direct work?

- Systemic practice
- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Don't know

Motivational interviewing

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Don't know

Trauma-informed parenting interventions

- Regularly
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
- Don't know

(DfE) To what extent do you agree with the statement:

"I am utilising what I have learned during my studies during the Frontline programme in my current work". You can think about this in terms of both the subject matter and other skills gained, namely everything you have learned on the programme.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

Which statement most aligns with your experience:

- 'I ensure I regularly consider how the social graces apply to my practice'
- 'I occasionally try to consider how the social graces apply to my practice but I do not always have the space or support to do so'
- 'I rarely have the opportunity to consider how the social graces apply to my practice'

(DfE) Would you recommend the Frontline programme to others who would like to enter social work? (Please select one)

- Would recommend
- Would not recommend
- Don't know
- Prefer not to say

(DfE) Please briefly explain why you said you "would/would not recommend" the Frontline programme

[Open text response]

Employment

(DfE) What was 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 (£).

[Open text response]

(DfE) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

‘Overall, I find my current placement satisfying’

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Prefer not to say

‘My current work is meaningful’ (You can think about this in terms of how meaningful your work / study / activities are to you, to others or to society at large.)

Strongly agree

Agree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

Don't know

Prefer not to say

(DfE) Please indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the following aspects of your job:

Income

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Don't know

Prefer not to say

Job security

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Don't know
Prefer not to say

Number of hours of work

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know
Prefer not to say

Flexibility of hours of work

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know
Prefer not to say

Your caseload

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know
Prefer not to say

Quality of supervision

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know
Prefer not to say

Opportunities for career advancement

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied

Don't know
Prefer not to say

Public respect for the sort of work you do

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know
Prefer not to say

Leadership/management

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know
Prefer not to say

(DfE) During the first year of the Frontline programme, did you need to seek additional financial support 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

You selected 'other', please specify:
[Open text response]

To better understand retention in social work over time we would invite you to provide your Social Work England registration number below. Please note that we may in future link the status of your SWE registration with your responses to this survey through a unique ID for the purpose of sharing with the DfE. This unique ID will not be able to identify you and your personal data will not be shared. If you are happy to share your SWE number for the purposes outlined above please input it below.

[Open text response]

Demographic questions

(DfE) What best describes your gender?

Female

Male

Other

Prefer not to say

(DfE) What is your age?

[Select from dropdown]

What is your ethnic group?

[Select from dropdown]

Please select the area in which you currently live

[Select from dropdown]

(DfE) 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).

Yes

No

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

Prefer not to say

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?

[Select from dropdown]

(DfE) What classification did you achieve for your undergraduate degree?

[Select from dropdown]

Appendix 3 – Frontline 2022 cohort 18 months post qualification questions

We would like to know what you're doing now after having qualified as a social worker through Frontline. Hearing from you will provide us with essential information for our funders and local authority partners and for wider social work research.

This survey covers the following topics:

- Current employment
- Your current practice
- Reflections on the Frontline programme

Please answer the questions about what you are doing as of March 2025. Please note, if you are about to change roles, please put your current role, not what you will be doing later.

Your answers will be treated confidentially and only relevant Frontline staff will see your individual responses linked to your name. An anonymised version of the data set, from which you will not be identifiable, may be shared with researchers. Aggregated data will be shared with key audiences but again will not be individually identifiable. Our Privacy Statement provides detailed information on why we collect this data and who we share it with. It also explains your rights under GDPR and the Data Protection Act (2018).

We may reach out to you following this survey if we have additional questions or concerns. However, please do not use this survey to share something personal or sensitive for which you require specific action or support from Frontline.

Thank you in advance for your time and continued support.

Has your gender changed since you started the Frontline programme?*

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? (The Equality Act defines disability as “a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out day to day activities.”)

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

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

Prefer not to say

What is your religion/belief?*

No religion or belief

Atheist

Buddhist

Christian (all denominations)

Hindu

Jewish

Muslim

Sikh

Any other religion or belief

Prefer not to say

How would you describe your sexual orientation?*

Bisexual

Gay

Lesbian

Heterosexual

Other

Prefer not to say

Do you have any caring responsibility?*

None

Primary carer for a child/children (under 18)

Primary carer for an adult (over 18)

Secondary carer

Prefer not to say

Are you pregnant, on maternity or paternity leave or returning from maternity/paternity leave?*

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

Are you married or in a civil partnership?*

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Employment

Please answer the following questions about your employment status as of March 2025.

Are you currently working or carrying out further study?
(answer 'yes' if working or studying full or part-time)

- Yes
- No

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

[Open text response]

Are you carrying out further study?

- Full-time
- Part-time
- None

Your further study

What is the name of the course you are studying?

[Open text response]

What level is the qualification? (leave blank if not sure)

[Open text response]

Are you currently employed (part-time or full-time)?

- Yes
- No

Which of the following regions best describes where you are currently working in (if you need help working out which region you'll be in, check here)

- East Midlands
- East of England
- Greater London

North East
North West
South East
South West
West Midlands
Yorkshire and Humber
Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland or outside the UK
Don't know / prefer not to say

Area of work

We are interested to know whether you are working in a role that is aligned to Frontline's mission, whether that is in social work practice or otherwise.

Frontline's mission is: To make life better for children at risk of harm, by improving the services that support them.

Do you consider yourself to be in a role that's aligned to Frontline's mission?

Yes
No
Not sure

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

Yes
No
Not sure

Is it a public sector organisation?

Yes
No
Not sure

Please tell us more about the public sector organisation you work for.

[Open text response]

Is it a private sector organisation?

Yes
No
Not sure

Please tell us more about the private or voluntary sector organisation you work for.

[Open text response]

Please tell us more about the organisation you work for.

[Open text response]

In which area of work would you classify yourself as working? (please select the most relevant)

[Response options as per dropdown selection]

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

As of March 2025, were you in employment in the local authority where you participated in the Frontline Programme?

Yes

No

What was your main reason for leaving your local authority?

High workload / caseload

Lack of support or resources within local authority

Poor management / leadership within local authority

Unable to practice in the way you want with families

Stress, burnout or mental health concerns

To gain other skills and experience

Relocation (due to where you were placed on the Frontline programme)

Relocation (due to personal reasons)

Salary

Other

N/A

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

On this date, were you employed in a different local authority?

Yes

No

Please enter your local authority below (different to your Frontline LA)*

[Open text response]

If you work within a specific locality within a local authority, please specify here:

[Open text response]

Would you consider yourself to be working in social work practice?

Yes

No

Not sure

Social work role

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 a bank staff

Other contract or employment arrangement (please specify)

None of the above

You selected other contract or employment arrangement, please specify:

[Open text response]

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

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

Don't know

Prefer not to say

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

Please write the name of your employer (not a local authority):

[Open text response]

Please write your primary job title

[Open text response]

Do you have secondary employment?*

Yes

No

Secondary employment

Please write the name of your secondary employer

[Open text response]

Please write your secondary job title

[Open text response]

Are you currently employed as a social worker?

Yes

No

Employment

Employment type

Please indicate below if you work in children's social work, adult's social work or other employment.

Please select all that apply.

Children's social work

Full-time

Part-time

Neither

Adult's social work

Full-time

Part-time

Neither

Other social work

Full-time
Part-time
Neither

About your children's social work role

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

[Response options as per dropdown selection]

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

Please select from the drop down list what best describes the seniority of the role

[Response options as per dropdown selection]

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

Your social work practice

Please answer the following questions about your current practice and your reflections on learnings from the Frontline programme.

I am proud to tell people that I am a child and family social worker

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

How confident are you in your social work practice?

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

How regularly, if at all, do you apply each of the practice models taught on the Frontline programme in your direct work?

Systemic practice

Regularly
Sometimes
Rarely
Never
Don't know

Motivational Interviewing

Regularly
Sometimes
Rarely
Never
Don't know

Trauma-informed parenting interventions

Regularly
Sometimes
Rarely
Never
Don't know

Which statement most aligns with your experience:

I ensure I regularly consider how the social graces apply to my practice
I occasionally try to consider how the social graces apply to my practice but I do not always have the space or support to do so
I do not / rarely have the opportunity to consider how the social graces apply to my practice

What learning from the programme have you found to be most effective for working with children and families?

[Open text response]

In what way could the programme do more to prepare you to work with children and families?

[Open text response]

Which statement most aligns with your experience:

The knowledge I have acquired through the Frontline programme has enabled me to contribute to positive change for children and families through my work
I sometimes feel like I have contributed to positive change for children and families through my work but the Frontline programme could have done more to enable me to do this
The Frontline programme has done little / nothing to enable me to contribute to positive change for children and families

About your adult's social work role

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

[Response options as per dropdown selection]

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

Please select from the drop down list what best describes the seniority of the role

[Response options as per dropdown selection]

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

How likely are you, if at all, to continue working as a social worker in six months' time?

Very likely

Moderately likely

Slightly likely

Not at all likely

Don't know

What do you enjoy the most about being a social worker?

[Open text response]

You said you were in another type of social work. Please tell us a bit about the type of social work you are in.

[Open text response]

About your non-social work role

Which of the following best describes the function of the role?

[Response options as per dropdown selection]

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

Please select from the drop down list what best describes the seniority of the role. (Please select one)

[Response options as per dropdown selection]

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

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

A social work qualification

Yes

No

Don't know

SWE registration

Yes
No
Don't know

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

[Response options as per dropdown selection]

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

What was your main reason for leaving social work?

High workload / caseload
Lack of support or resources within local authority
Poor management / leadership within local authority
Unable to practice in the way you want with families
Stress, burnout or mental health concerns
To gain other skills and experience
Relocation (due to where you were placed on the Frontline programme)
Relocation (due to personal reasons)
Salary
Other
N/A

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

Is there anything you would like to add about what you're doing now?

Yes
No

Please tell us a bit about what you are doing now.

[Open text response]

How likely are you, if at all, to be working as a social worker in twelve months' time?

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

Please can you briefly let us know the reasons for this answer.

[Open text response]

Work conditions

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 (£).

[Open text response]

My overall workload is too high

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

I feel stressed by my job

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

Which of these do you feel is the ONE main thing that is causing this stress?

- I have too much paperwork
- I have too many cases
- Insufficient quality of management/support
- Working culture/practices
- Having to make emotional or difficult decisions
- Insufficient time for direct work with children and families
- High staff turnover in my team/area of practice
- Lack of administrative/business support
- Lack of resources to support families
- Studying for the Masters
- Other
- Nothing in particular, it is simply a stressful job
- I do not feel stressed

You selected other, please specify:

[Open text response]

On a scale of zero (extremely unhappy) to ten (extremely happy), how happy did you feel yesterday?

0 - 10

On a scale of zero (not at all anxious) to ten (extremely anxious), how anxious did you feel yesterday?

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

Income

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

Job security

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

Number of hours of work

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

Flexibility of hours of work

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

Your caseload

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

Quality of supervision

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

Relationship with colleagues

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

Training opportunities

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

Opportunities for career advancement

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

Public respect for the sort of work you do

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

Leadership / management

Very satisfied
Satisfied
Dissatisfied
Very dissatisfied
Don't know

I feel valued by my employer

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement:

'My current work is meaningful?'

You can think about this in terms of how meaningful your work / study / activities are to you, to others or to society at large. (Please select one)

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree nor disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

'I am utilising what I learnt during my studies 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



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