

Child and family ASYE survey

Summary of survey results (March and September 2021)

About the survey

This short paper summarises the findings of two online surveys conducted by Skills for Care following ASYE online events held in March and September 2021. The focus of the surveys reflects the range of activity that Skills for Care has been involved in / supported over the past twelve months and explores experiences of both working during the Covid-19 pandemic and issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. These surveys were utilised in lieu of an annual ASYE survey in 2021 to avoid over-burdening the sector during the pandemic response. We plan to reinstate the standalone annual survey in 2022/3.

The survey builds on those undertaken in previous years and where applicable comparisons have been drawn. The survey was distributed via email to all 159 attendees of the events. 57 unique responses have been analysed, including include 39 social workers working in child and family services and 18 working in both adult and child and family services.

The analysis includes all 69 responses but, where meaningful and statistically significant comparisons between those who work only in adult services and those who work in both adult and child and family services were identified, this has been noted.

Key messages from the survey

In summary, the key messages from the survey are as follows:

- Levels of understanding of the current arrangements for the assessment of the ASYE (adults) against the PQS (formerly KSS) are high
- Around three in five respondents (59%) said that the line manager is providing assessment (41% said another registered social worker is providing assessment). Around four in five respondents (82%) said the line manager is providing supervision (18% said another registered social worker is responsible for providing supervision)
- Most organisations have minimum requirements for their ASYE assessors and are confident in their capability
- Assessor forums/briefings and peer support were the most popular support mechanisms for the development of ASYE assessors
- Most organisations are confident in the capability of ASYE supervisors and said that ASYE supervisors are working to the post qualifying standards

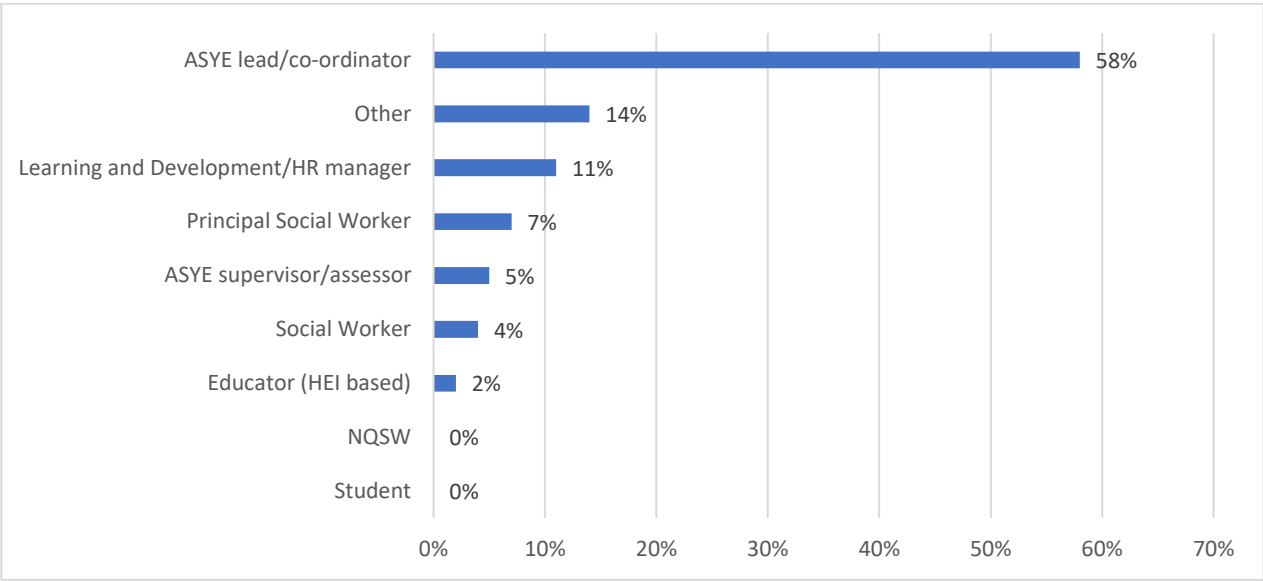
- ASYE programme-related workshops/briefings and professional supervision/ coaching/mentoring were the most popular support mechanisms for the development of ASYE supervisors
- The ASYE has had a positive impact on managing the performance of NQSWs about whom there is a concern on NQSW recruitment and retention as well as on outcomes for people who receive care and support
- The biggest challenges in the coming 12-24 months are embedding the PQS (formerly KSS) across the workforce, putting in place the support arrangements for the ASYE, improving the capacity of assessors and supporting leaders and managers
- While more than half of organisations record the protected characteristics of NQSWs, only one third incorporate anti-racist practices in the delivery of the ASYE programme
- The majority of respondents reported that they feel comfortable discussing issues around racism with their colleagues and talking about their background in their organisation, although almost half felt that their colleagues make assumptions about them based on their appearance
- Almost all respondents said that social workers had adapted well to new ways of working during the COVID-19 pandemic, although 90% said that social workers had experienced higher levels of stress and anxiety
- The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted workloads, direct observations and CPD
- Support provided by Skills for Care in the form of tools, resources, support and guidance has been well received

Detailed findings and analysis

About the respondents

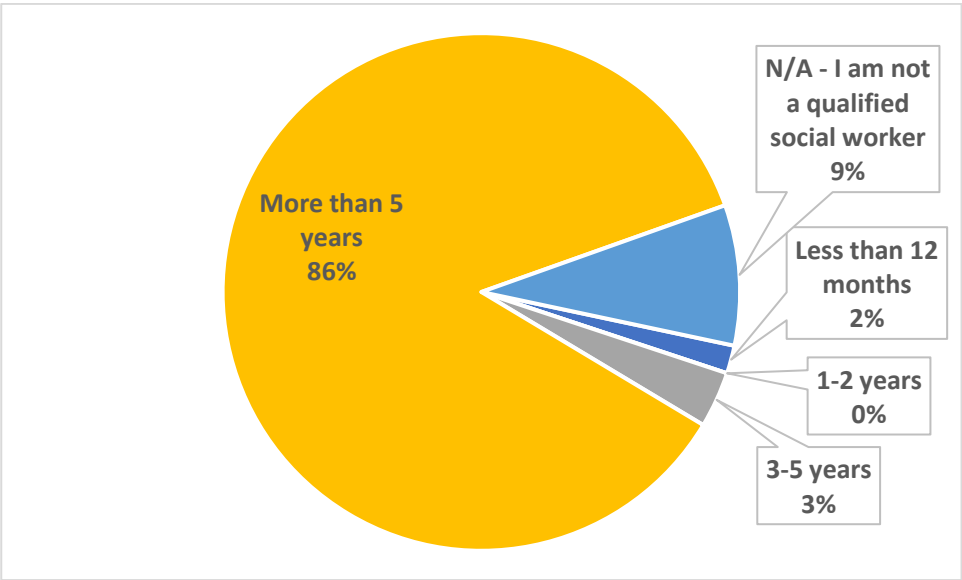
Three quarters of respondents (74%) were likely to have organisational responsibility for ASYE being either ASYE coordinators, ASYE assessors or Learning and Development/HR Manager. One in ten (11%) were Social Workers of which two thirds were Principal Social Workers [see Chart 1].

Chart 1: Job role (n=57)



The majority (86%) of respondents have been qualified as a social worker for more than 5 years. One in ten (9%) respondents said they are not qualified as a social worker [see Chart 2]

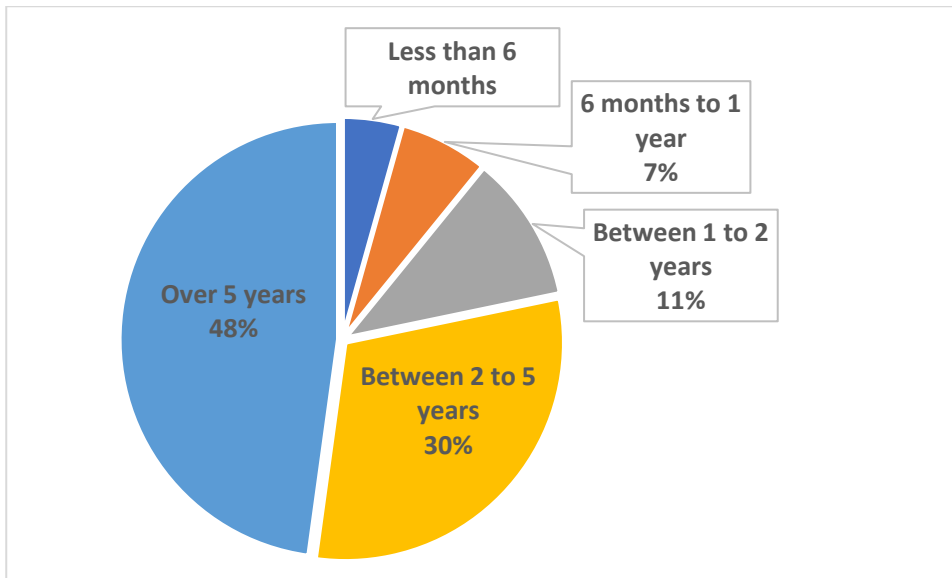
Chart 2: Length of qualification as social worker (n=57)



One third (30%) of respondents still work for the same organisation as they did when they took their ASYE, whereas two thirds (70%) have since left the organisation.

Half of respondents (48%) have been involved with the ASYE for more than 5 years. One third (30%) have been involved between 2 and 5 years [see Chart 3].

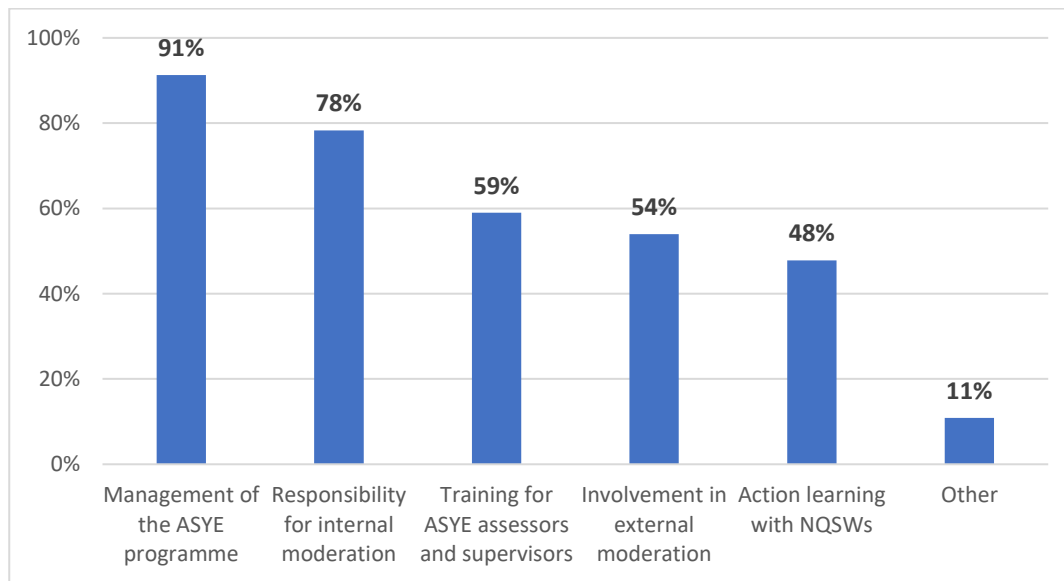
Chart 3: Length of involvement with ASYE (n=48)



Of those who have been involved with the ASYE, nine in ten (91%) are responsible for the management of the ASYE, and three quarters (78%) have been responsible for internal moderation. [see Chart 4].

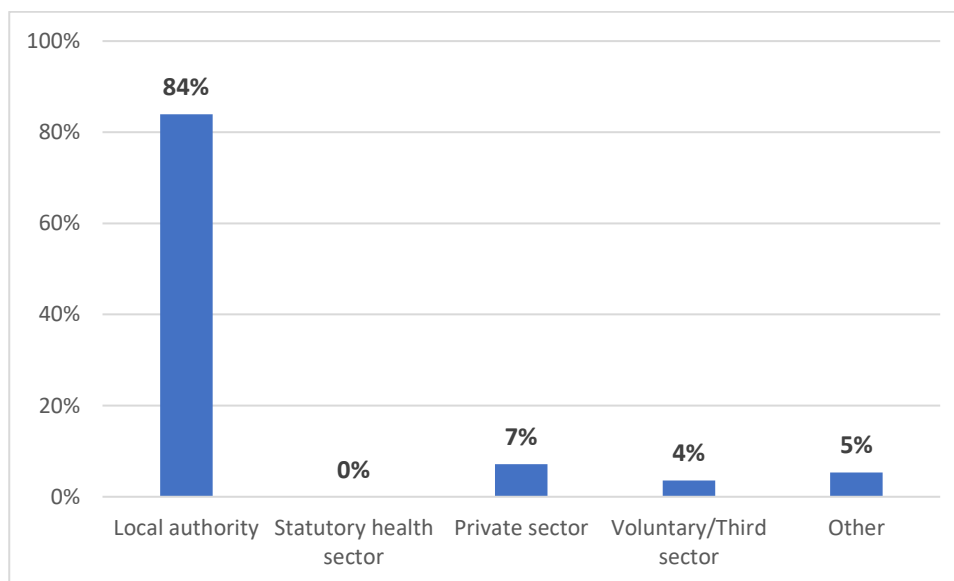
There were statistically significant differences between child and family social workers and those who work in both adult and child and family social services. Whereas 87% of child and family social workers were involved in external moderation, 39% of combined social workers were involved in external moderation.

Chart 4: What does your role with the ASYE incorporate (n=46)¹



The majority of respondents work for a Local Authority (84%). The remainder work in the statutory health sector, or the voluntary/third sector [see Chart 5].

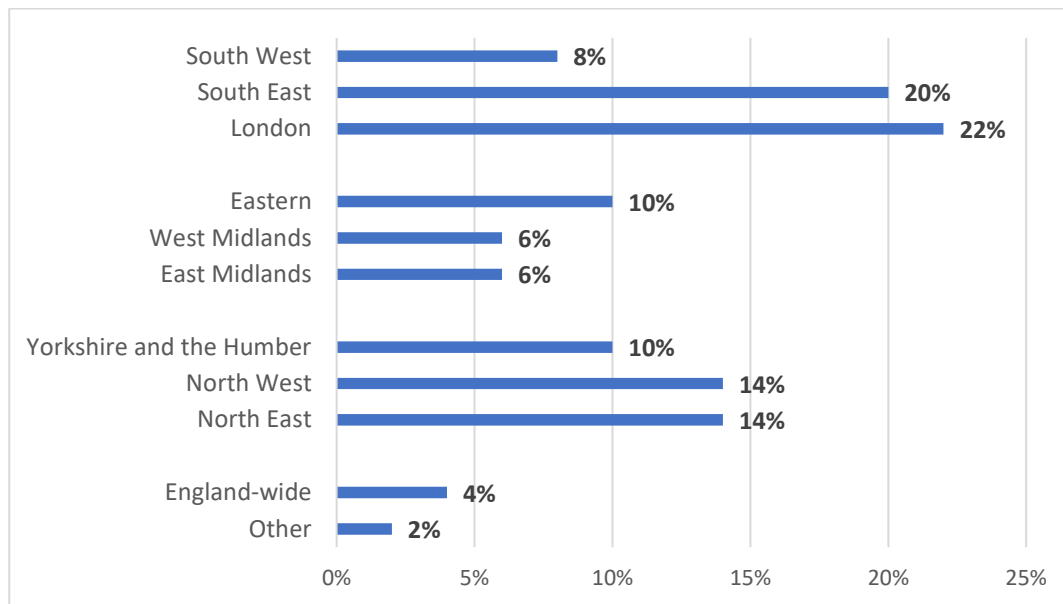
Chart 5: Type of organisation (n=56)



Half of respondents (50%) work for organisations that operate in the South of England, almost two fifths (38%) work for organisations operating in the North and one in five (22%) for those operating in the Midlands [see Chart 6].

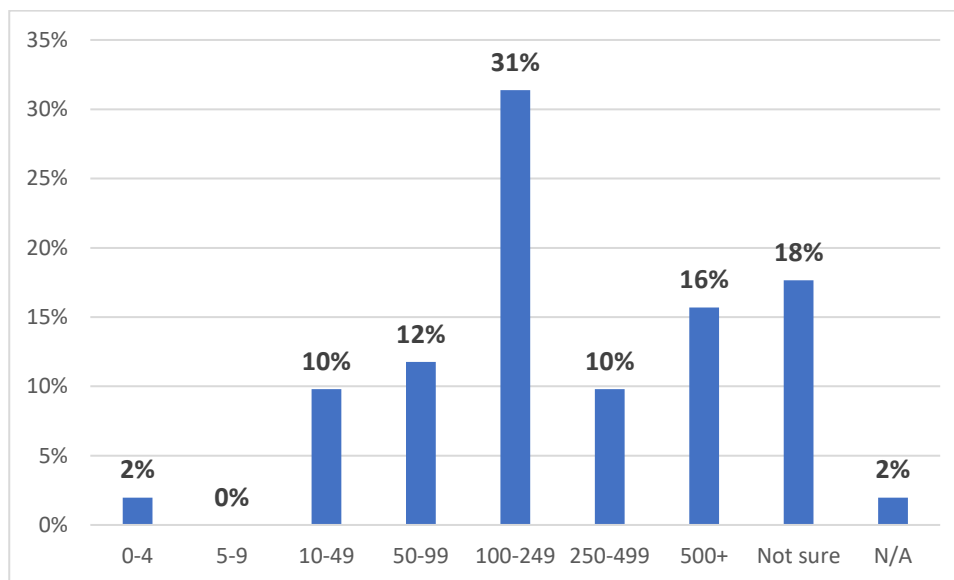
¹ Respondents could select more than one option, therefore the total number can be higher than 100%

Chart 6: Geographic location (n=51)



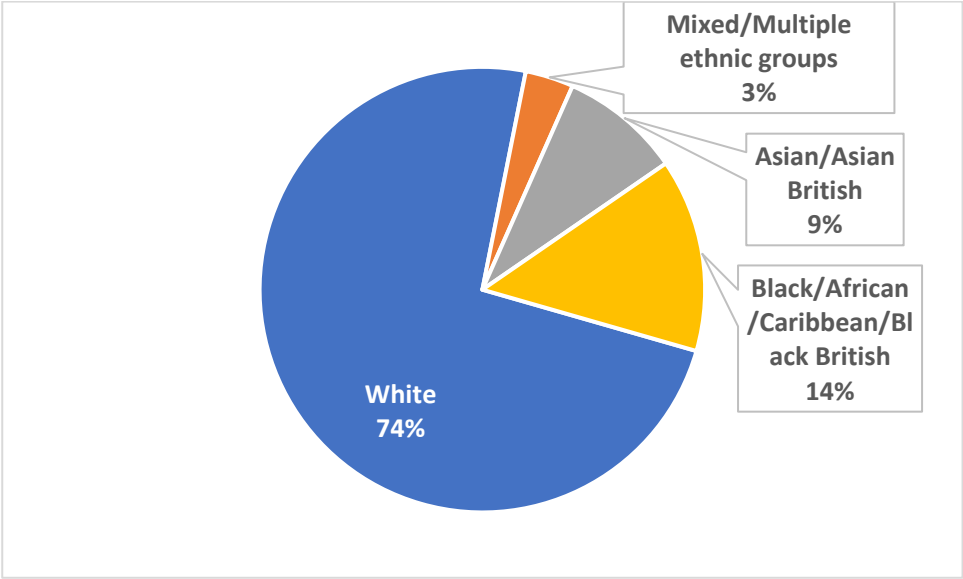
One in ten respondents (12%) work for organisations employing up to 50 social workers, one in ten (12%) work for organisations employing 50-99 social workers and around one third (31%) for organisations employing 100-249 social workers. One quarter (26%) work for organisations employing more than 250 social workers, and a fifth (18%) were not sure about the number of social workers in their organisation [see Chart 7].

Chart 7: Number of Social Workers employed (n=51)



Three quarters of respondents (74%) describe themselves as White. One sixth (14%) describe themselves as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British [see Chart 8].

Chart 8: Ethnicity of respondents (n=57)

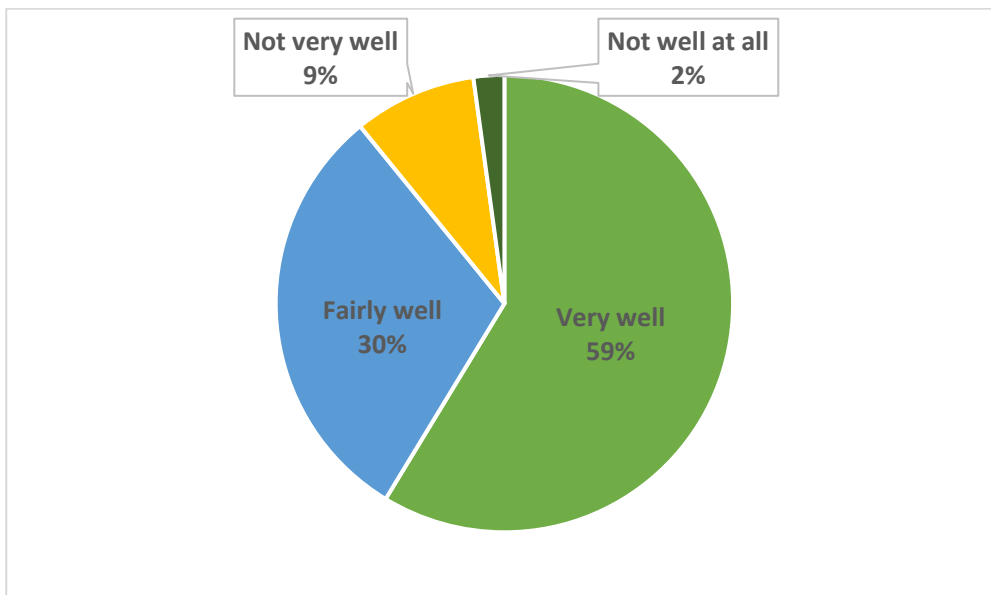


The survey results

Assessment of the ASYE against the PCF and the PQS (formerly KSS).

We asked a question to explore understanding of the current arrangements for the assessment of the ASYE (adults) against the KSS. Nine out of ten respondents (89%) said that they understood the arrangements either 'very well' or 'fairly well' [see Chart 9].

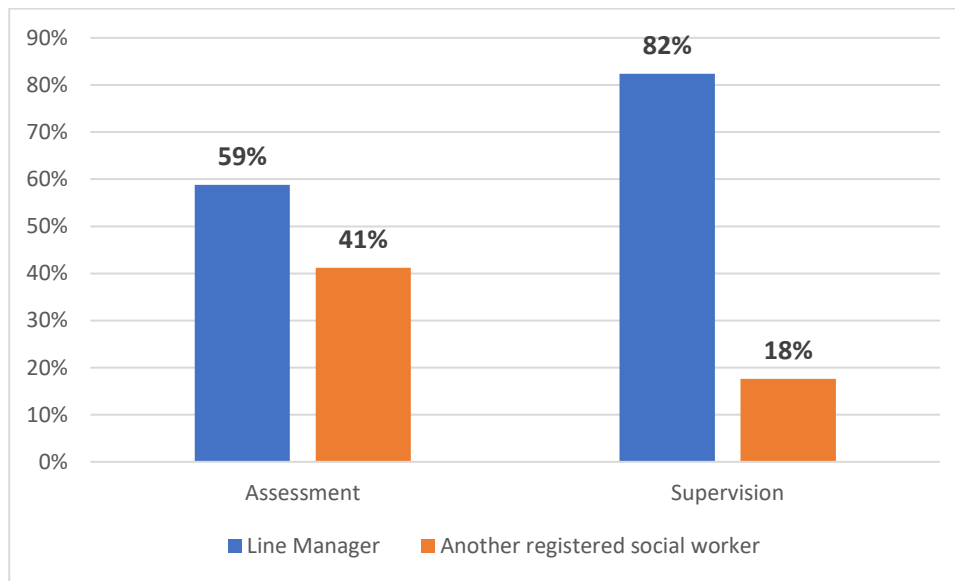
Chart 9: How well do you understand the current arrangements for the assessment of the ASYE (adults) against the PQS? (n=46)



This question has been asked in the annual surveys 2016 and 2017, when 92% of respondents said they understood the arrangements 'very' or 'fairly well'. This year, the level of understanding has remained stable.

We then asked who provides assessment and supervision to NQSWs. Three in five respondents (59%) said that the line manager is providing assessment, whilst two fifths (41%) said another registered social worker is providing assessment. Four fifths of respondents (82%) said the line manager is providing supervision, whilst a fifth (18%) said another registered social worker is responsible for providing supervision [see Chart 10].

Chart 10: Who provides the following to your NQSWs? (n=17)²



Respondents were asked to describe the arrangement in more detail if assessment and supervision is undertaken by different people. The most common arrangements were:

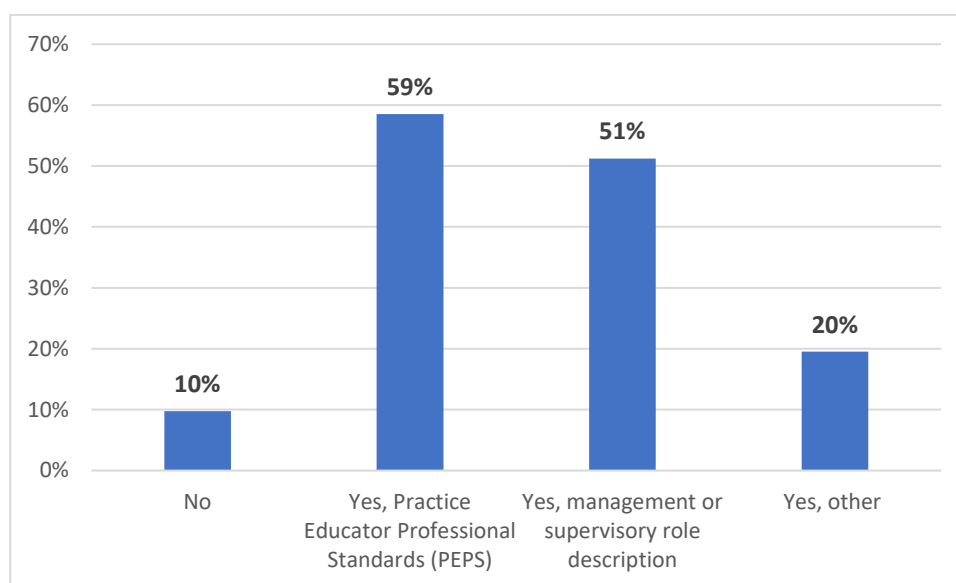
- ASYE assessors provide assessment and reflective supervision to NQSWs, whereas line managers provide day to day support and case management supervision (3 responses)
- Another qualified social worker provides supervision in multi-disciplinary teams (2 responses)
- Supervision provided by ASYE coordinators (2 responses)
- Buddies or mentors to support NQSWs (1 responses)

² The number of respondents is lower, as this question was only asked after the event in September, but not after the event in March

Capability of Assessors

Respondents were asked whether their organisation has minimum requirements / standards for ASYE assessors. The majority (90%) do [see *Chart 11*]. This question was asked for the first time and thus, there was no comparison possible with the surveys in 2016 and 2017.

Chart 11: Whether organisations have minimum requirements/standards for ASYE assessors (n=41)³

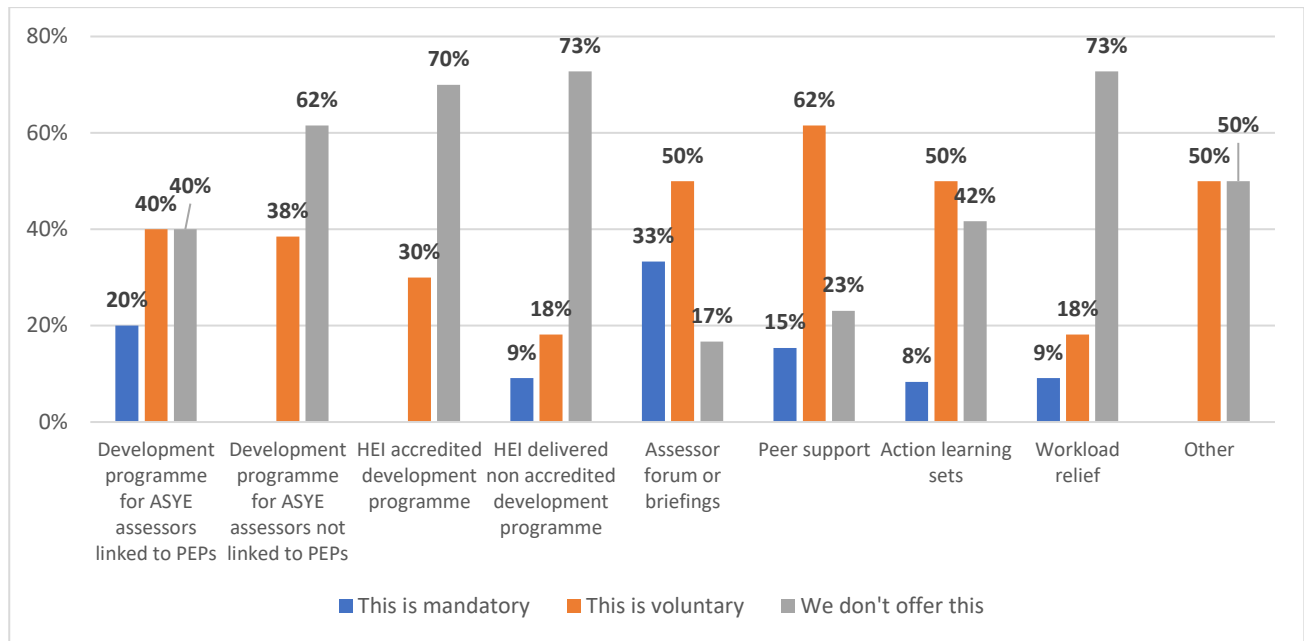


Respondents reported being 'fairly' (52%) or 'very confident' (48%) in the capability of the assessors in their organisation. This question was not asked in previous surveys, therefore no comparison was possible.

There are a number of ways that organisations are supporting the development of their ASYE assessors. The most popular support mechanism is Assessor forums / briefings (87%), followed by peer support (77%). An additional question revealed that a quarter of respondents (15-33%) said that both peer support and assessor forums/briefings are mandatory, whereas half (50-62%) said they were voluntary.

³ People could give more than one answer, therefore the total can be higher than 100%

Chart 12: How the development of ASYE assessors is developed and whether it is mandatory/voluntary (n=2-15)



Two fifths of respondents said that they were planning and delivering assessor development as an ASYE partnership (43% compared with 57% who said that they were not doing this). This question was not asked in previous surveys, therefore no comparison was possible.

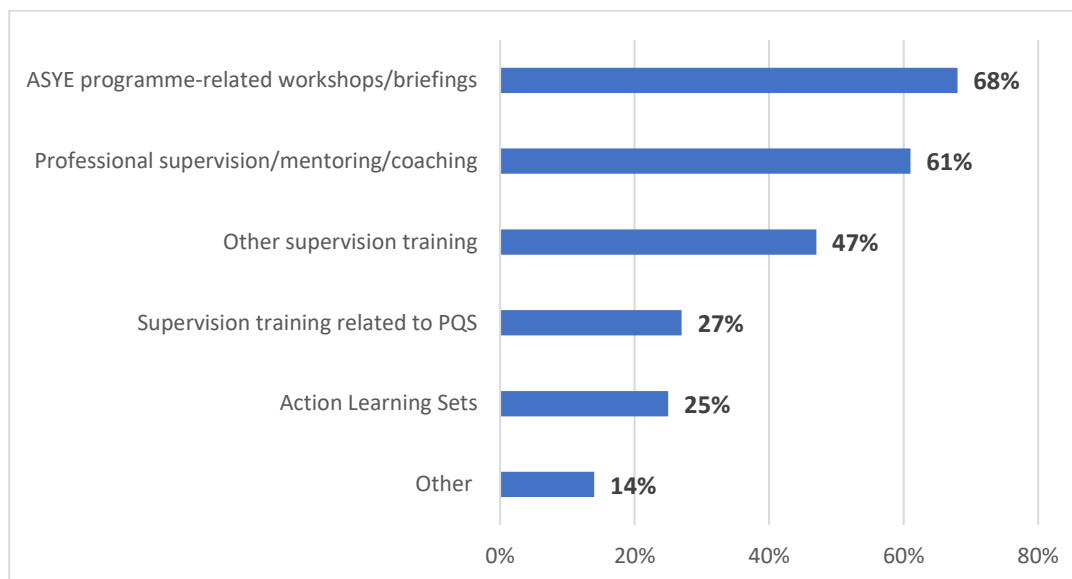
Capability of Supervisors

Respondents reported being 'fairly' (59%) or 'very confident' (41%) in the capability of the supervisors in their organisation.

The survey in September 2021 also included a question about the post qualifying standards of ASYE supervisors. Two thirds of respondents (67%) said that ASYE supervisors are working to the post qualifying standards, and almost two fifths (38%) said that ASYE supervisors are evaluated against the post qualifying standards.

There are a number of ways that organisations are supporting the development of their ASYE supervisors. The most popular support mechanism reported were ASYE programme-related workshops/briefings (68%), followed by professional supervision/coaching/mentoring (61%).

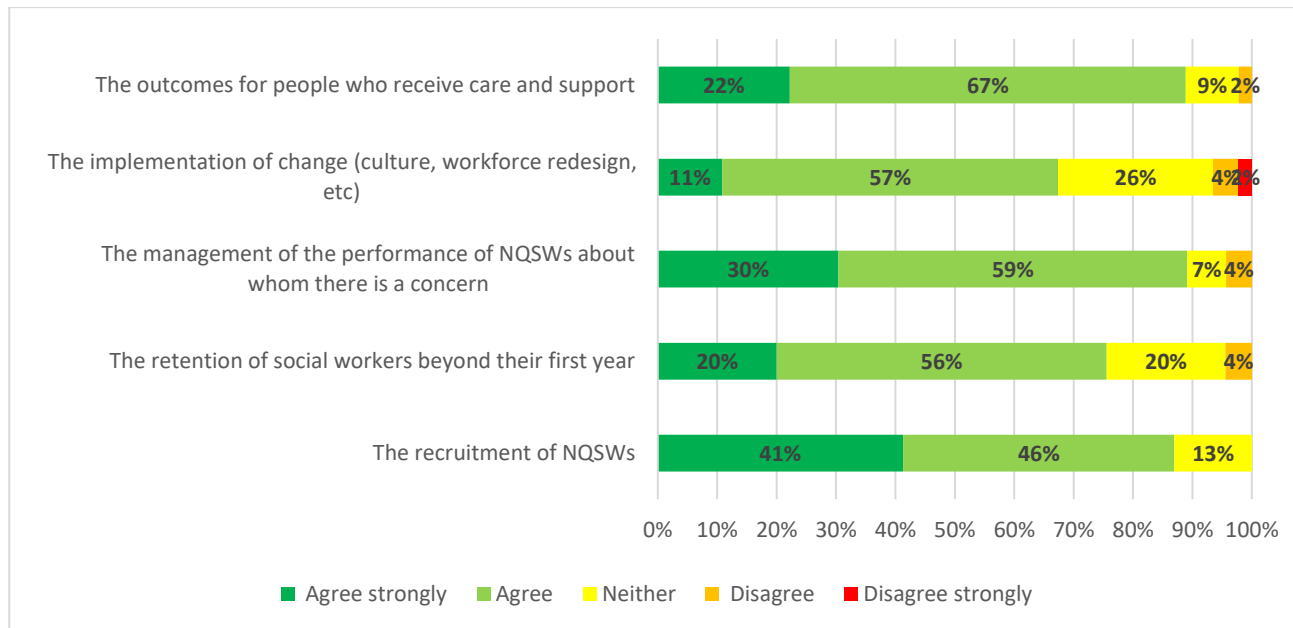
Chart 13: How the development of ASYE supervisors is supported (*n* = 26 – 48)



The impact of the ASYE

The most positive impact of the ASYE seems to have been in relation to the management of the performance of NQSWs about whom there is a concern as well as in relation to the outcomes for people who receive care and support (89% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with both of those statements). This was closely followed by it having a positive impact on the recruitment of NQSWs (87%). Three quarters of respondents (76%) also agreed that the ASYE had a positive impact on the retention of social workers beyond their first year. Two-thirds (68%) of respondents agreed that the ASYE had had a positive impact on the implementation of change [see *Chart 14*]. This question was not asked in previous surveys, therefore no comparison is possible.

Chart 14: Agreement with the statement: *The ASYE has had a positive impact on...* (n=45-46)



Respondents were asked to consider the challenges facing their organisation over the next 1-2 years. This question was not asked in previous surveys, therefore no comparison was possible.

In relation to the **ASYE** the challenges are:

- Putting in place the support arrangements for the ASYE (61%)
- Improving the capacity of assessors (58%)
- Participation in internal and external moderation (45%)

There were statistically significant differences between child and family social workers and those who work in both adult and child and family social services. Whereas 29% of child and family social workers thought improving the capacity of assessors was a challenge, 90% of combined social workers considered it a challenge over the next 1-2 years.

Other challenges noted by respondents included:

- *Workforce issues, e.g., supply of internal assessors/recruitment of SWs and retaining NQSWs after their ASYEs (x4)*
- *Capacity in system to support a large NQSW cohort (x1)*
- *Identifying teams that NQSWs can go into to only have one per team (x1)*
- *Ensuring that staff have time to complete the requirements (x1)*

In relation to the **Continuing Professional Development** the challenges are:

- Embedding the PQS (formerly KSS) across the workforce (78%)
- Supporting leaders and managers (57%)

In relation to the **Other areas** the challenges are:

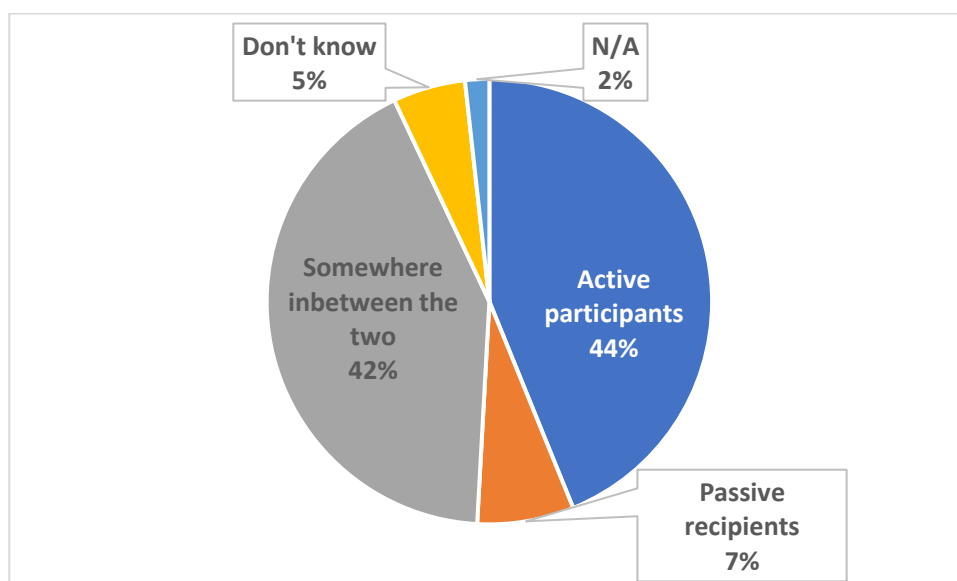
- Planning and developing an integrated workforce (56%)
- Participation in teaching partnerships (29%)
- Recovery from the pandemic (16%)

Other challenges noted by respondents related to recovery from the pandemic included:

- Impact of post pandemic changes to working arrangements / return to 'normal' (i.e. pre-pandemic) ways of working (x3)

Respondents were also asked to describe how active/passive NQSWs are in their organisation. Almost half of respondents (44%) said NQSWs in their organisation are active participants, whereas two-fifths (42%) said NQSWs were somewhere between active and passive. Less than one in ten (7%) said NQSWs were passive [see *Chart 15*]. While we collected data on respondent's job roles, the number of NQSWs was too low to allow for any meaningful comparisons with employers.

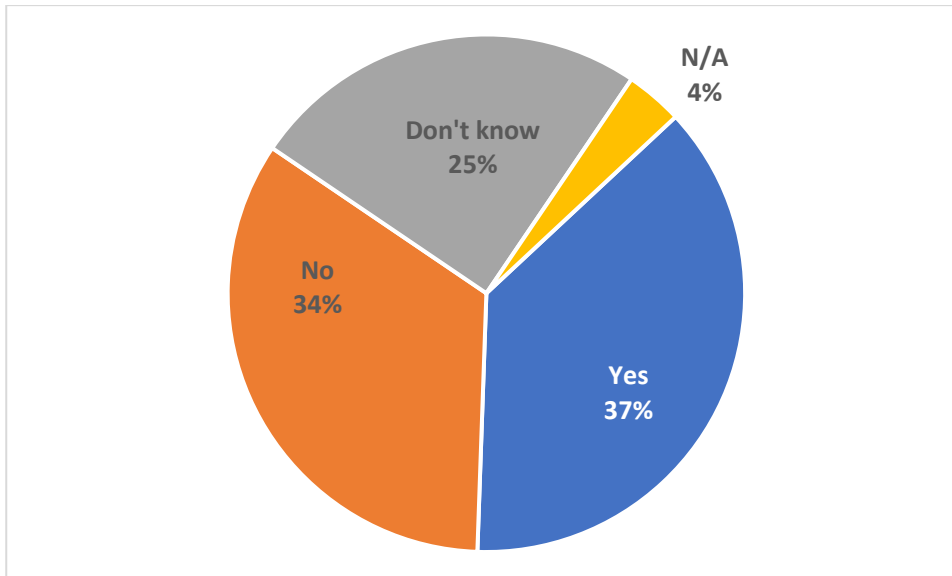
Chart 15: which of the following best describes NQSWs in your organisation / you as a NQSW? (n=57)



Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

Respondents were asked whether their organisation specifically incorporates anti-racist practices in the delivery of the ASYE programme. Respondents' answers were quite evenly distributed: Almost two-fifths (37%) said they do incorporate anti-racist practices, whereas one-third (34%) said they don't, and a quarter (25%) said they didn't know [see *Chart 16*].

Chart 16: Does your organisation specifically incorporate anti-racist practices in the delivery of your ASYE programme? (n=56)

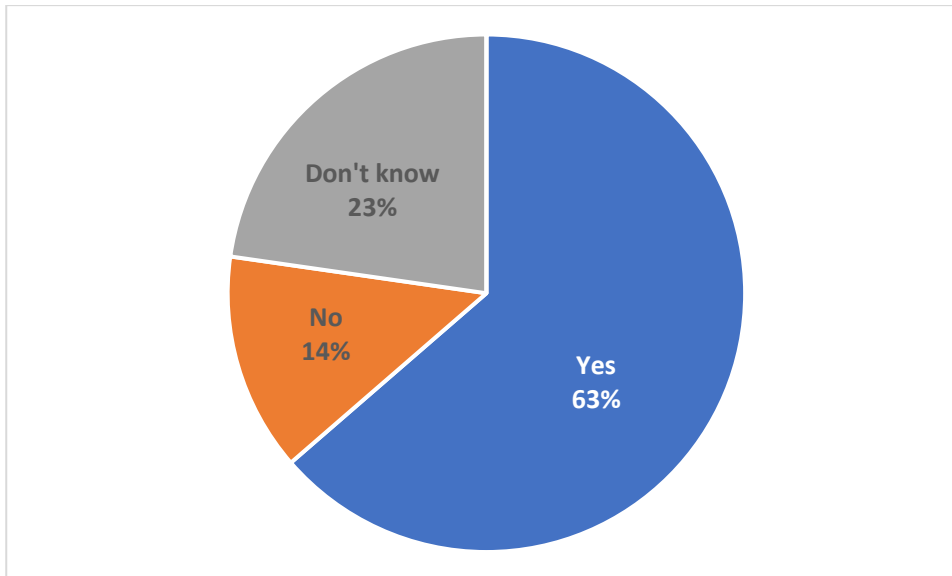


Examples provided of anti-racist practices include:

- Workshops on anti-racist practice/anti-racism training (x5)
- Anti-racist practice addressed in reflective supervisions (x3)
- Anti-racist practice as a specific theme at ASYE forums (x2)
- Standing agenda item at internal moderation (x1)

Two thirds of respondents (63%) said their organisation records the protected characteristics of NQSWs undertaking the ASYE programme. One sixth (14%) said their organisation doesn't record it, and one quarter (23%) said they didn't know [see *Chart 17*].

Chart 17: Does your organisation record the protected characteristics of the NQSWs undertaking your ASYE programme? (n=22)



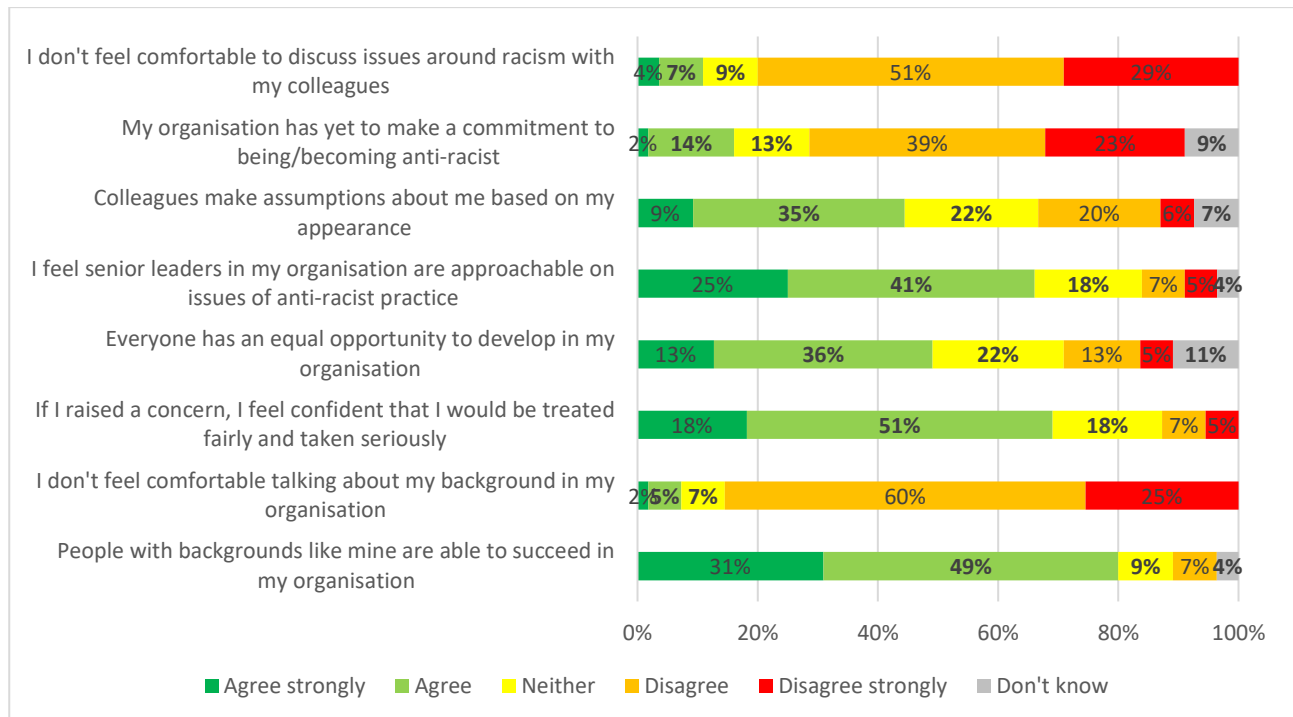
In this year's survey a question was added to gauge progress on how respondents evaluate the aspects of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) at their workplace. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements relating to EDI [see *Chart 18*].

Four-fifths of respondents (85%) said that they feel comfortable talking about their background in their organisation and feel comfortable discussing issues around racism with their colleagues (80%). However, almost half (44%) feel that their colleagues make assumptions about them based on their appearance.

Two thirds of respondents (66%) reported that senior leaders in their organisation are approachable on issues of anti-racist practice, a sixth (16%) said that their organisation has yet to make a commitment to being/becoming anti-racist.

While we collected data on respondent's ethnicity, the number of other than white respondents was too low to allow meaningful comparisons with white respondents regarding differences in evaluating aspects of EDI at their workplace.

Chart 18: Thinking about your own ethnic background, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (n=54-56)



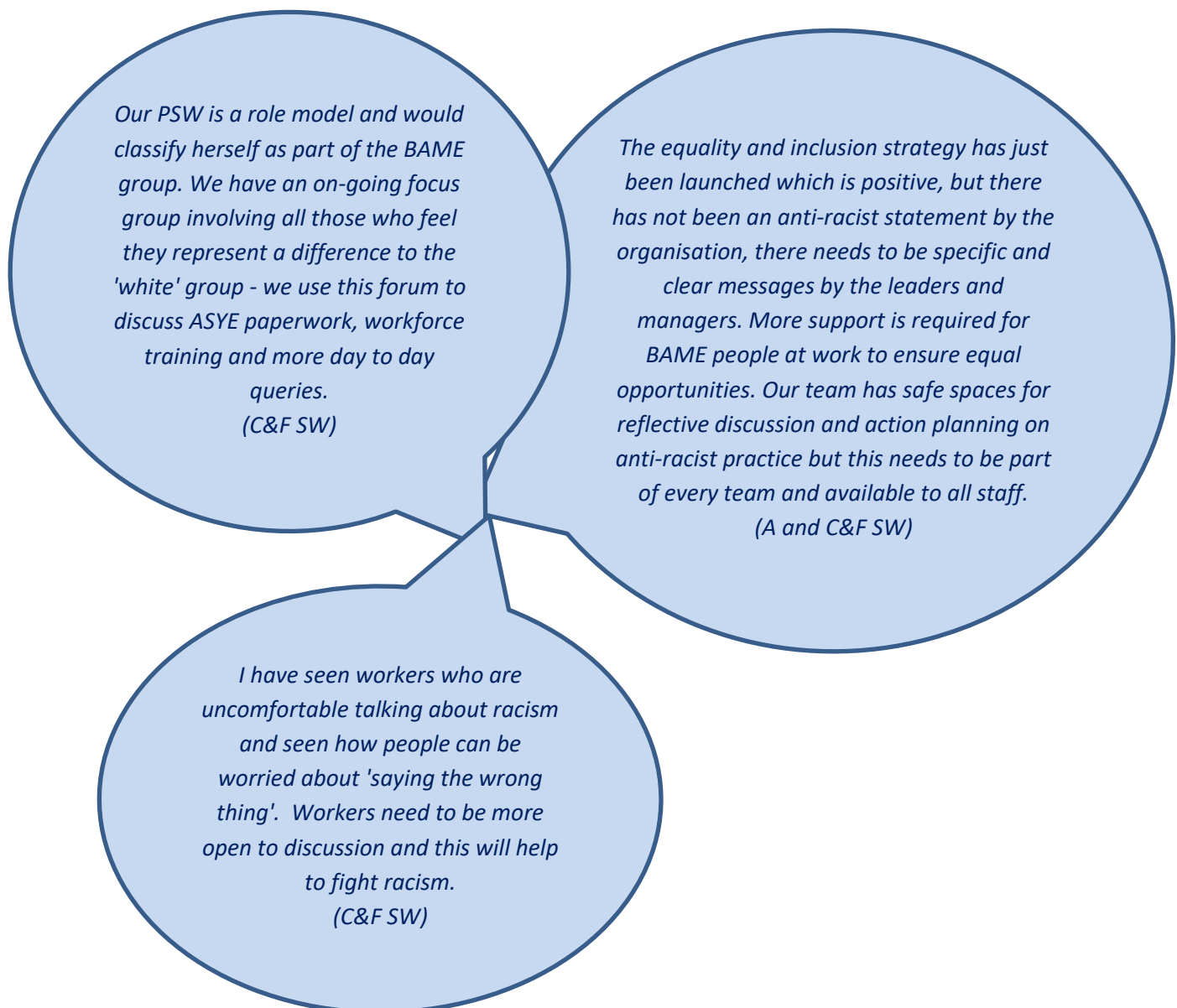
Respondents were asked whether they would like to share concerns or examples of good practice in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion (and specifically anti-racist practice) in their workplace. Respondents reiterated the different approaches to include anti-racist practices in their organisations (as mentioned above), but also highlighted that they feel they are only at the beginning of the journey and more needs to be done.

Positive things shared about EDI at their workplace included:

- Having established an equalities forum based on feedback from NQSWs or a diversity and inclusion board (with staff members from across the service)
- Having developed specific support for NQSWs with English as a second language

Negative things shared about EDI at their workplace included:

- Lack of commitment/support from senior managers to prioritise EDI issues



Additionally, respondents could share what they would like to see the sector do to respond to EDI issues. The most common thoughts were:

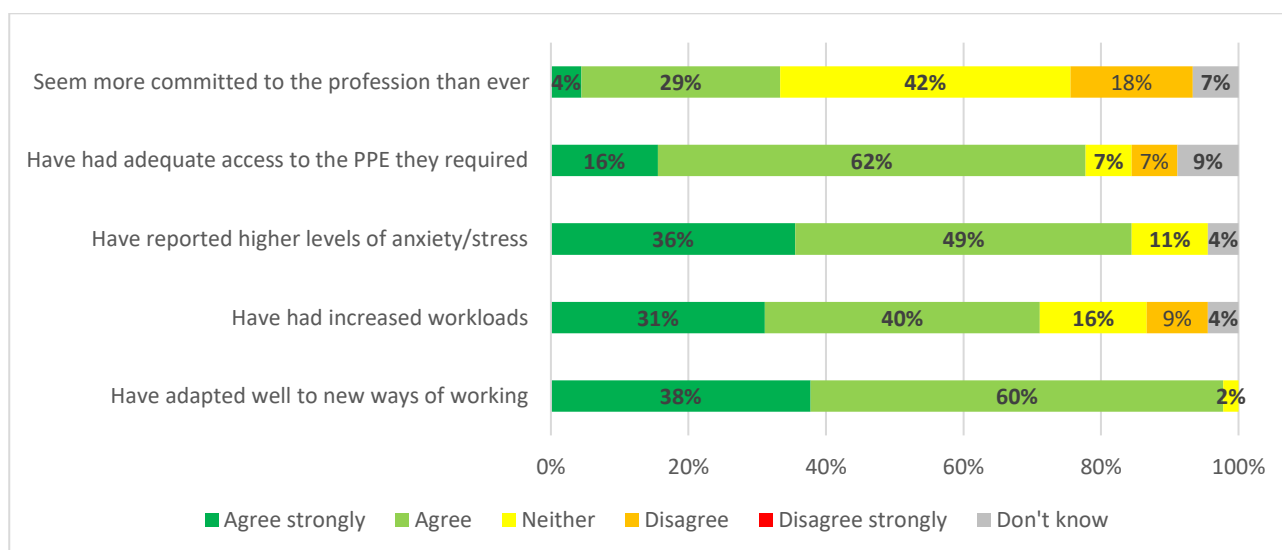
- More training/workshops (x5)
- More diverse workforce, also within senior leadership (x3)
- More open discussions about inequality and inclusion, as well as continuously raising awareness of these issues (x3)
- Participating in research and sharing good practice (x2)
- Introducing specific policies that facilitate long-term change, such as the anti-racism commitment framework for social workers (x2)
- Including and recording anti racist practice during supervision (x1)

COVID-19

In the 2021 surveys we included questions to explore experiences relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Respondents were asked to consider a number of statements about social workers in their organisation in light of the Covid-19 pandemic [see *Chart 19*]. There was almost universal agreement that social workers had adapted well to new ways of working (98% agreed/agreed strongly). Nine out of ten (85%) said that social workers had reported higher levels of stress/anxiety and eight out of ten (78%) respondents that social workers had adequate access to the PPE they required.

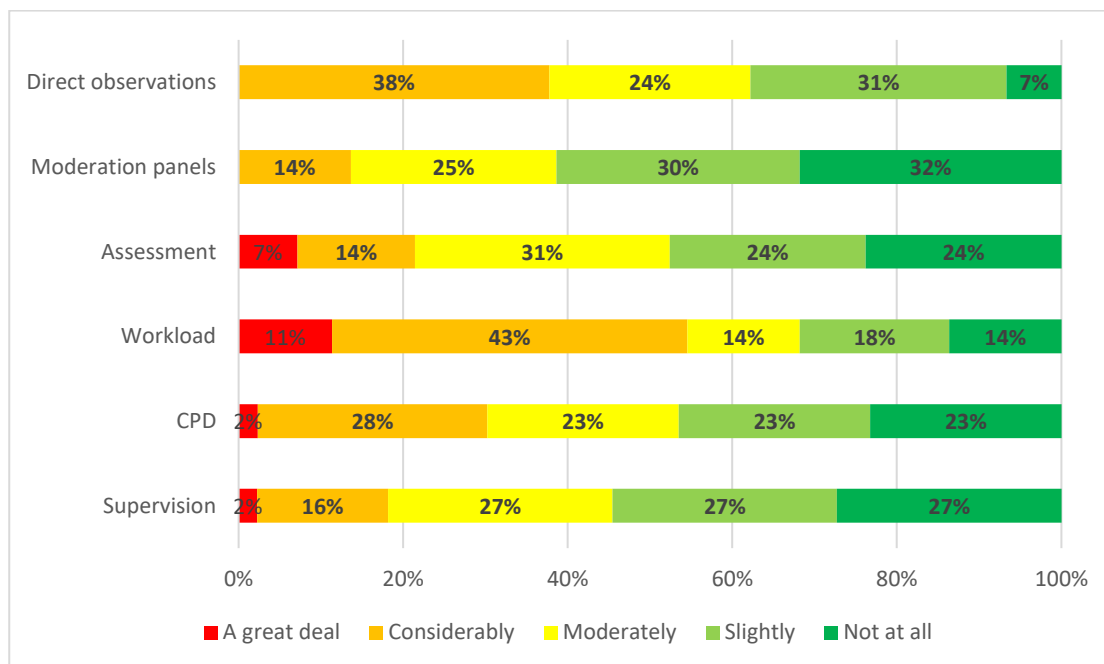
Chart 19: Impact of COVID-19 – To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (n=45)



Respondents were also asked to what extent various elements of the ASYE programme have been disrupted by COVID-19 [see *Chart 20*]. More than half of respondents (54%) said COVID-19 had a considerable impact on their workload. Four fifths (38%) said direct observations were considerably disrupted and around three in ten said CPD (30%) and assessments (21%) were disrupted by COVID-19.

Those who work in both adult and child and family social services were more likely to report that COVID-19 considerably disrupted assessment compared to those who work only in child and family social services (54% vs. 7%, respectively).

Chart 20: Disruption of ASYE programme by COVID-19? (n=42-45)



Examples of how COVID-19 disrupted the ASYE programme include:

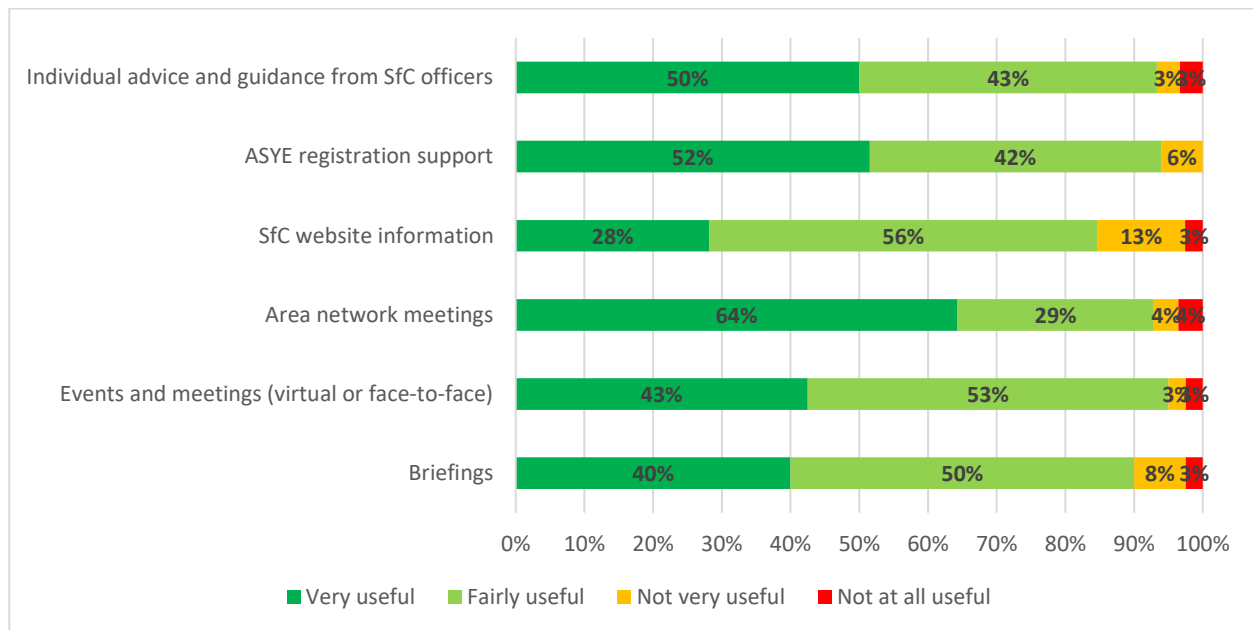
- Direct observations taking place virtually, i.e., lack of face-to-face contact with people using services, which can undermine building rapport (x6)
- Less opportunities for informal learning/development opportunities for NQSWs, e.g., shadowing/working alongside others (x5)
- Students and NQSWs are missing face to face visits and being in a team (x5)
- Higher workloads, and using new methods of engagement takes time (x3)
- Reduced supervision for NQSWs as well as regular staff (x2)
- Not all training providers were able to deliver training online (x1)

Support from Skills for Care

Skills for Care offers a wide variety of support to the sector, and it is useful to check that it is meeting a need. Whilst not all respondents have used all of the support on offer, feedback across the range overall is very positive. The only support that scored below 90% was the Skills for Care website [see Chart 21].

The least accessed types of support were 'individual advice and guidance from SfC officers' and 'area network meetings', which were accessed by 67% and 64% of respondents, respectively.

Chart 21: Usefulness of various Skills for Care support over the past 6 months (n=44-45)



The perceived usefulness of Skills for Care’s resources remains on a high level. The surveys in 2016 and 2017 showed similarly positive results. The results were not statistically different to the current survey,