

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Produced by the Research, Intelligence and Consultation Team
(Part of Insight & Intelligence)

Social Worker Health - Check Survey, 2016

Children's team

September 2016



Contents

Executive summary	3
Summary	4
1. Background	7
2. About the respondents	8
3. Your role and work life balance	9
Survey responses	
4. Your role and work life balance	10
5. Having the right tools to do the job	13
Further comments.....	16
6. Learning and development	17
Further comments.....	20
7. Supervision and performance management	21
Further comments.....	27

Executive Summary

Our Annual Health Check was completed in July 2016 and I wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for your valued contributions and feedback. Your views matter and through your commitment to the Health Check we are together able to shape and develop the Service to safeguard and improve outcomes for our children and young people. Through this we are able to ensure we are approaching and responding to the needs of the workforce in a meaningful way that makes a difference to your working life and professional development.

This is our second Health Check and through your valued contributions we have been able to draw a comparative analysis of the areas of strength within the service and areas that we want to develop further. Through this we have seen an increase in a number of areas of growth and improvement across the service:

- *98% advised that you have access to technology to support mobile working*
- *89% of you are proud to work for Cheshire West and Chester & feel valued and invested in by your manager and feel supported by managers at all levels.*
- *You have also said that we have high standards, good work ethic, improved culture and good for learning and development.*

We have taken on board your responses and comments and want to continue to build upon all the strengths within the service. We have already started to progress some of the key issues you have identified:

- **Improved work life balance:** We are committed to having a service where flexible and mobile working is an intrinsic part of how we work, so that you benefit from a greater work-life balance wherever possible. We have already discussed this at Operational Management Team about how this could work for you and work has started on putting together some principles to underpin this approach.
- **Secondment Opportunities:** We recently launched the Developmental Framework to support and invest in your development to help you gain wider knowledge and skills across the service. Please consider this as part of your professional development and wider team discussions.
- **Retention of staff:** We have enhanced our Social Work offer and introduced new approaches to invest, develop and support you, including the Aspiring Programmes and the ASYE increment. Our revised SW Offer will be shared with you all. We are also running a targeted Recruitment Campaign to strengthen how we recruit and retain our workforce.

One of the key areas that stand out is how committed and passionate you are and how you take pride in your work, keeping the child as the focus. This makes a difference and improves the lives of our children and young people. I look forward to updating you further on the key developments through the Social Work Forums in 2017.



Emma Taylor
Director of Children's Social Care



Summary

The respondents

Cheshire West and Chester Children's Social work team were asked to complete an online survey for the 'Social Worker Health-Check'. This team consists of 157 members of staff which include social workers of varying level, including managers.

Of the 157 members of the team 98 completed the survey and submitted it before the closing date in August 2016, this compares to 83 who responded to the 2015 survey. As there were 98 respondents the results can be reported as percentages, which are statistically robust.

Your role and work life balance

Almost three quarters (73%) of the respondents have less than five years of experience working with Cheshire West and Chester, this is significantly more than in 2015, when the figure was 57%. Over one third (42%) have fewer than five years' experience as a social worker in total, this figure was 43% last year. Almost one fifth (18%) of respondents have worked with Cheshire West and Chester or it's former authorities for over ten years, this is significantly less than 34% last year. The majority (84%) of the 98 respondents have a permanent contract with Cheshire West and Chester, although this is significantly less than 94% last year.

The majority agreed that they felt proud of the work that they do at Cheshire West and Chester and that they were able to use their skills, knowledge and initiative to good use within the organisation (between 84%-93%). This range was similar to last year's which was between 79% and 92%. There was also a belief that managers valued and recognised the work that they did.

However, the majority also mentioned that they have a poor work/life balance. Most (82%) work more than their contracted hours most weeks and over a third (38%) said they were rarely or ever able to take it all back as time in lieu.

Having right tools to do the job

Most have access to mobile phone, laptop, and a lockable drawer in order to carry out their role. No one commented about not having the equipment to carry out their role but some believed that newer equipment such as smart phones and newer laptops would help in completing their job more efficiently.

There were complaints of difficulties in accessing IT from different locations. It was suggested that Liquidlogic performs slowly, and that there was poor signal when using their SMART phones.

Liquidlogic training that is provided could be refreshed as comments included; training was rushed, training was not specific to each team and that training keeps getting cancelled. Ideas to help improve training included; 'on hand' trainers, refresher courses are needed and that each individual's training needs should be reviewed annually.

When asked how to improve Liquidlogic, respondents suggested; focus more on the needs of the service, should only have to record information in one place/online form, faster running equipment, better support services, user friendly forms to help families understand and more training.

Learning and development

Almost half (47%) thought that Cheshire West and Chester social care services has improved as a learning organisation over the last 2 years, significantly higher than last year (32%). It was suggested that there is a good starting ethos with ASYEs at Cheshire West and Chester and that there are good opportunities for progression within the organisation along with good training opportunities.

Almost half (47%) were very satisfied with learning and development opportunities that are on offer to them at Cheshire West and Chester, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 13%.

Over a third (35%) strongly agreed that learning and development at Cheshire West and Chester improves outcomes for children, significantly higher than the figure of 14% in 2015.

However, there was a strong feeling amongst respondents that there was too little time for learning and development, including training, because of large caseloads that each member of staff had.

The majority mentioned a poor work/life balance and that to have some time ring fenced by managers in order to complete training/courses was very much needed.

More secondments to other teams and mentoring opportunities would be welcomed by a number of staff, including team managers. They thought that a separate appraisal scheme should be used for social workers as they are already working to the level of 'exceeding'.

Comments suggested that progression should be at managers' discretion rather than following the successful completion of courses at University.

Supervision and performance management

Almost all (92%) of ASYE's had weekly supervision in their first six weeks, then fortnightly for six months, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 80%.

The majority (83%) were satisfied with opportunities for practice development, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 69%. Almost three quarters (73%) were satisfied with mentoring opportunities within supervision, this is significantly higher than 56% last year.

The majority of respondents (81%) agreed that communication between staff and senior managers is regular and effective, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 55%.

Almost half (45%) agree that they feel more positive about their role with Cheshire West and Chester children's services than they were a year ago, this is significantly higher than the figure of 26% last year.

The majority of respondents (62%) agreed that staff were consulted and involved in proposed changes about children's social services, which is significantly higher than last year's figure of 21%.

Comments regarding supervision and performance included; respondents had a clear view of what was expected of them, senior managers listen more and managers have a positive approach and a good understanding of job roles.

What Social Workers like most about working at Cheshire West and Chester

Respondents reported that they enjoy their role and how their work can affect the lives of young people and their families. There were no negative comments about the teams in which people work, all believed that their team supported them well. There was also a great deal of pride in the work that respondents did and in the findings of the recent OFSTED report.

There was also praise for line managers and the support that they provided to all levels of staff.

Cheshire West and Chester as an organisation to work for was described as; having high standards and a good work ethic, with a recently improved culture and good for learning and development opportunities.

What Social Workers would most like to improve about working at Cheshire West and Chester

A popular suggestion was to reduce the caseload to allow for a better work/life balance. Many thought that work expectations placed upon the individual were often unrealistic. Smaller caseloads would also allow staff more time to complete training and university courses to help career progression.

Secondments between teams could help individuals learn new skills and encourage better interaction. There also needs to be more supportive, consistent and strong management.

There should be the provision of more reliable IT equipment, including newer laptops.

Staff retention issues need to be addressed as there is a high turnover of staff. There needs to be more stability for staff working in Childcare teams. More opportunities for staff to progress in their career and there should also be more permanent contracts for staff in order to help reduce the regular turn-over of staff on agency contracts.

Comparisons between the 2015 and 2016 Health Check surveys

There were many similarities between the comments for things that the organisation does well and things that it could improve in the 2015 and 2016 surveys which are mentioned in this report.

There is also a more 'positive' outlook amongst respondents that can be seen within some sections of the survey. There were some differences between the two years surveys that may be partly explained by the different profile of respondents. In 2016 there were much fewer responding with 10 or more years' experience with Cheshire West and Chester or its former authorities.

1. Background

Introducing the Social Worker Health-Check Survey

The health-check is an important tool in supporting and delivering effective social work. It is a key element and covers the requirement to have a 'clear social work accountability framework'. The Local Government Association document (Delivering standard 1: The social work health-check; LGA, November 2014) states that:

"All employers should: complete, review and publish an annual 'health-check' or audit to assess whether the practice conditions and working environment of the organisation's social work workforce are safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led."

The health-check is an important barometer of workflow and barriers to effective practice. The health-check can be an important part of an employer's retention and recruitment strategy because it means social workers feel that they are listened to and that the employer is pro-active in tackling the issues that affect them at the front-line.

It is also a way of enabling employers to provide well led professional environment as well as enabling social work professionals to maintain their professionalism and to practice more effectively.

As part of its final report in 2009 the Social Work Task Force (SWTF) recommended the development of standards for employers of social workers setting out the support and working conditions they should provide. In preparation for that, the SWTF included a 'health-check' process for assessing practice conditions: covering five areas:

1. Effective workload management
2. Pro-active workflow management
3. Having the right tools to do the job
4. A healthy workplace
5. Effective service delivery

In April and May 2015, the first Health Check survey was completed by the Cheshire West and Chester Children's social work team, the results of which were published in July 2015.

Social Worker Health-Check – a local consultation

The second social workers health-check was open to members of the Cheshire West and Chester Children's social work team over a five week period during June, July and August 2016. The survey was available to complete on the council's online consultation page via a link in an email sent to all those (157) working within the team.

Of the 157 who make up the Children's Social working team, 98 responded with a completed survey, this gives a response rate of 62%. This is higher than last year's response rate, which was 54%.

Reporting results

To protect the anonymity of the respondents, no personal questions were asked in the survey, though we do know the current job role of each respondent. As the number of respondents in this survey was 98, the use of percentages within this report is statistically valid.

Percentages may be described as 'significantly higher/lower' than last year, this shows that the figures between the two years reflect a 'real' difference in the result. Where there is no significant difference in the result, then the phrase 'compared to' is often used.

2. About the respondents

Current job roles of respondents

Current Role	Number of respondents	Percentage of all respondents
ASYE	9	9%
Student social worker	1	1%
Social Worker	55	56%
Senior social worker	2	2%
Senior practitioner lead	11	11%
Social work team manager	15	15%
Senior manager	1	1%
IRO	0	0%
Other	4	4%
Total	98	100%

- Of the 98 who responded over half were social workers, all other job role types had lower numbers responding.
- More respondents were ASYE level in 2016, 9 (9%) respondents compared to 4 (5%) in 2015.
- Fewer (4%) of respondents categorised their job role as 'other' in 2016, this is significantly lower than the figure of 13% in 2015.

3. Your role and work life balance

This section gave the respondents the opportunity to tell us a little bit about themselves and their work history and how their job role affects their work/life balance.

Experience as a social worker

Duration	Experience as a qualified social worker working at CWAC or its former authorities	Percentage with experience as a qualified social worker working at CWAC or its former authorities	Total experience as a qualified social worker	Percentage with experience as a qualified social worker
Less than 1 year	27	28%	13	13%
1-5 years	44	45%	28	29%
6-10 years	9	9%	25	26%
Over 10 years	18	18%	31	32%
N/A	0	0%	1	1%

- The majority of respondents (73%) have worked at Cheshire West and Chester for 5 years or less, this is significantly more than 57% last year.
- Around one fifth (18%) of those that responded have worked for CWAC for over 10 years, this is significantly less than 34% last year.
- Of those who responded who are qualified social workers, just over half (58%) have been a qualified social worker for 6 years or more, this is similar to last year's figure of 57%.
- 42% have been qualified for 5 years or less, this was the same figure in 2015.

Employment contract type

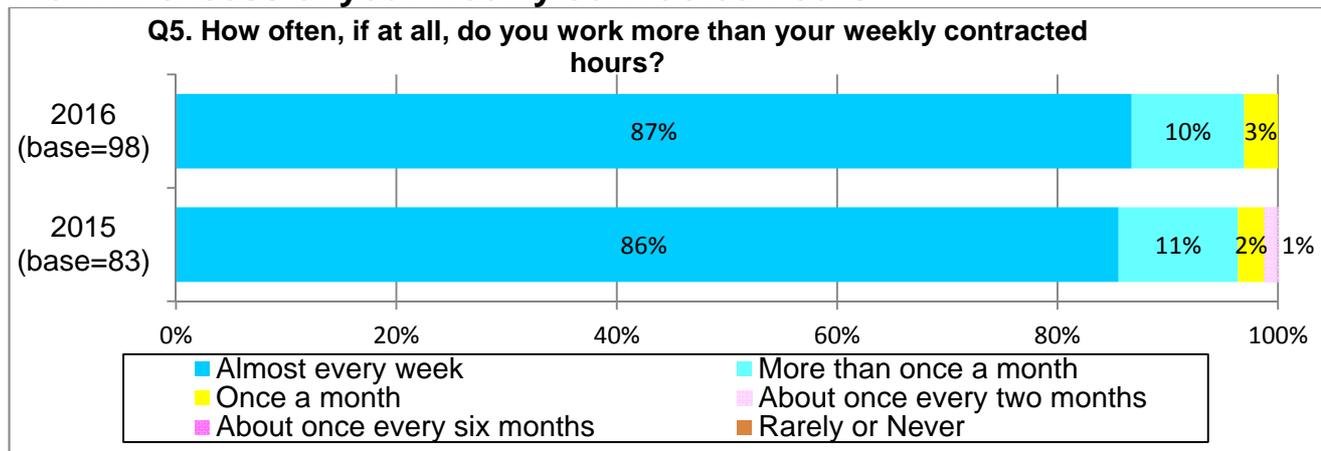
Contract	Number employed	Percentage employed
Permanent contract	82	84%
Fixed term contract	3	3%
Via an agency	13	13%

- The majority (84%) of all respondents are employed on a permanent contract. However, this is significantly less than in 2015, when 94% of respondents were employed on a permanent contract.

4. Survey Responses

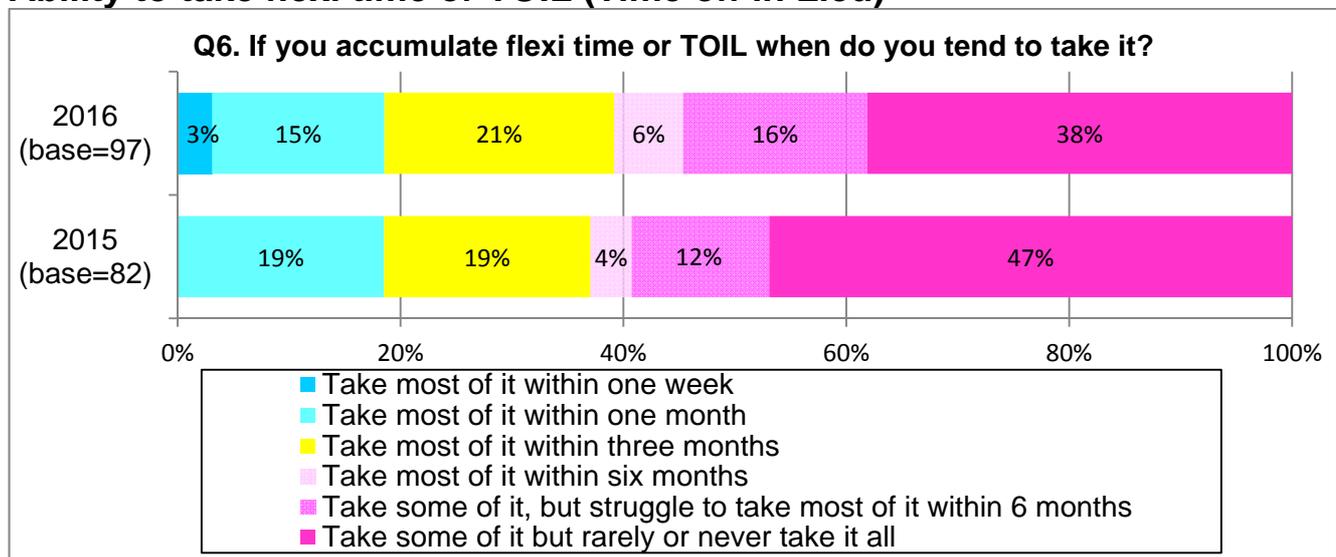
Your role and work life balance

Work in excess of your weekly contracted hours



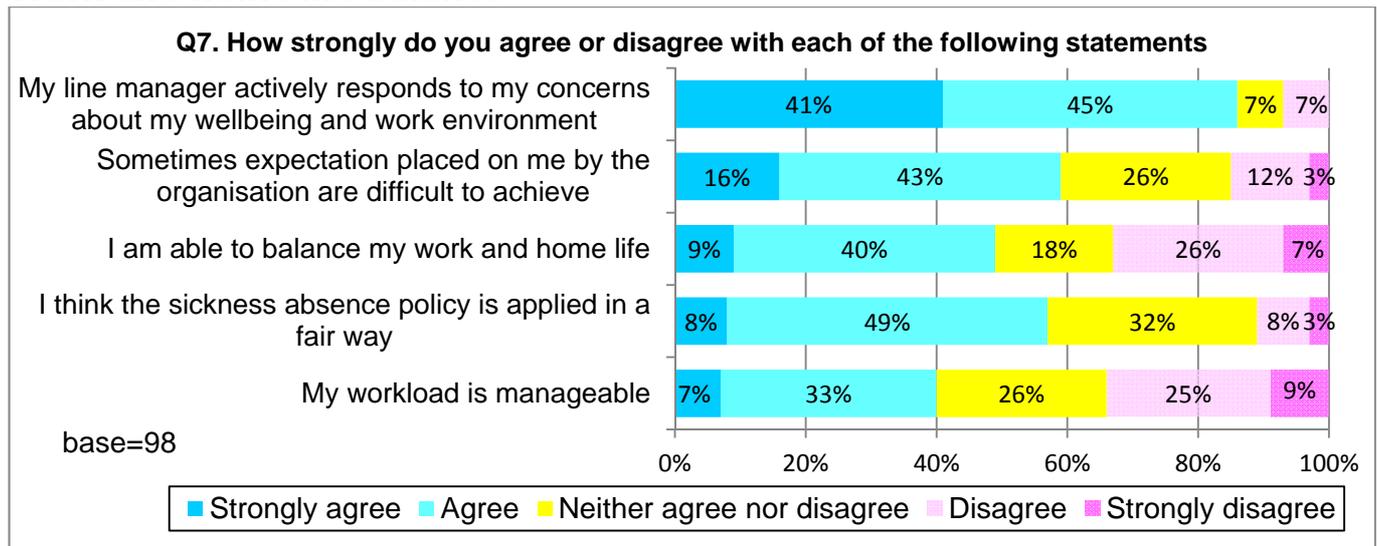
- The vast majority of respondents (87%) work more than their contracted hours ‘almost every week’, compared to 86% last year.
- 8 of the 9 ASYE respondents say that they work over their contracted hours almost every week.
- 46 of the 55 respondents categorising their job role as ‘social worker’ work over their contracted hours almost every week.
- 95 out of the 98 respondents reported that they work more than their contracted hours ‘More than once a month’.

Ability to take flexi time or TOIL (Time off in Lieu)



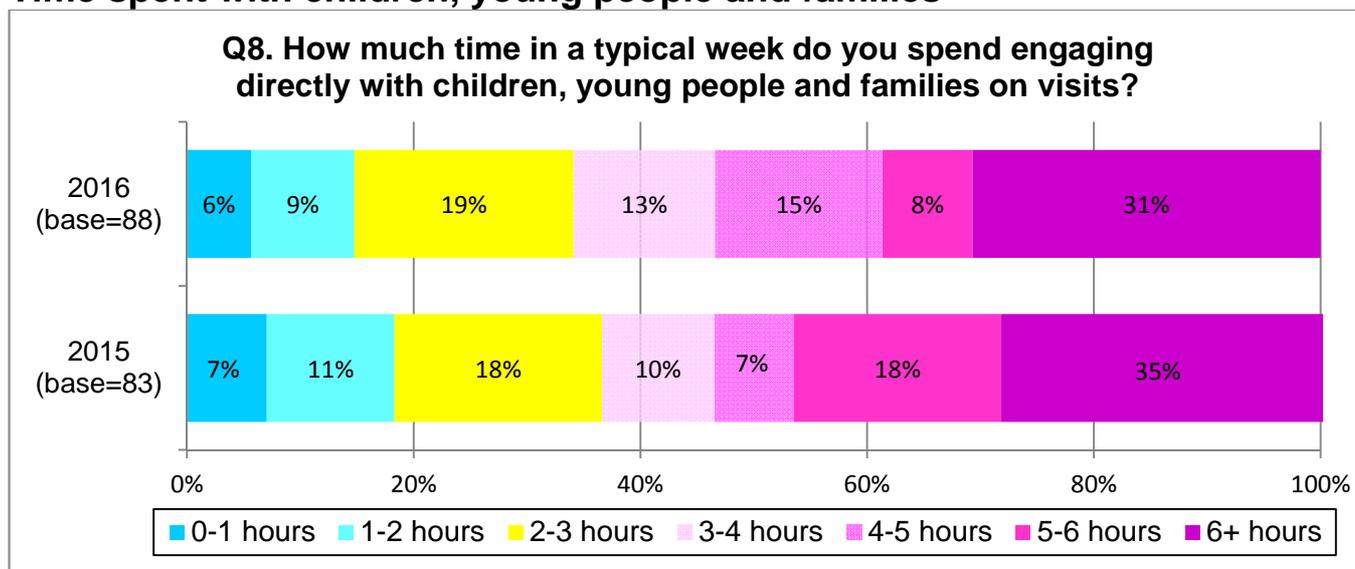
- Over a third (38%) of respondents manage to ‘take some of it but rarely or never take it all’, compared to 47% last year.
- Over half (54%) ‘struggle to take most of their flexi within 6 months’ or ‘rarely/never take all their flexi’, compared to 59% last year.
- 39% were able to ‘take most of it within three months’, similar to the 2015 figure of 37%.

Work and home life balance



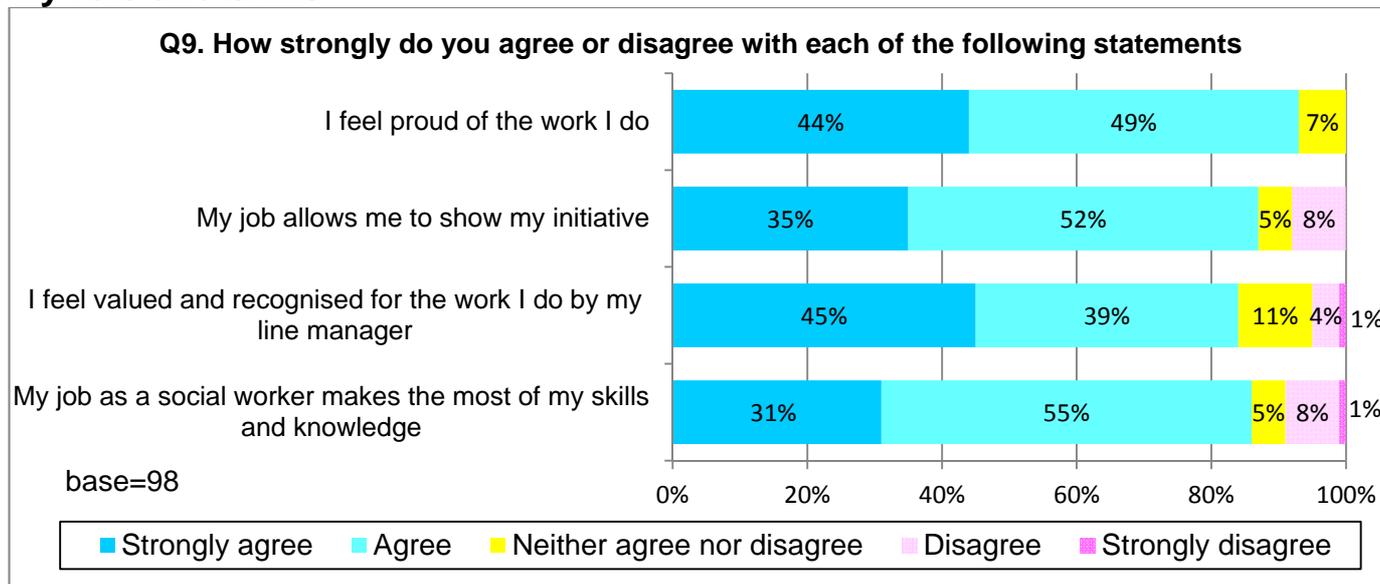
- The vast majority (86%) agreed that their line manager is active in responding to their concerns about their wellbeing and work environment, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 72%.
- There were some (7%) who believed that their line manager was not active in responding, this is the same as last year.
- Over half of respondents (59%) agreed that the organisation placed expectations on them that are difficult to achieve, compared to 72% last year.
- Almost half (49%) of respondents agreed that they were able to balance work and home life, this is a similar figure to last year (46%).
- One third (33%) of respondents disagreed and said that they were not able to balance work and home life, this is similar to last year's figure of 37%.
- The majority (57%) of respondents agree that the sickness absence policy is applied in a fair way, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 40%.
- 40% of all respondents believe that their workload is manageable, compared to 29% last year.
- Around one third (34%) of respondents say that their workload is not manageable, compared to last year's figure of 46%.

Time spent with children, young people and families



- Approximately one third (31%) of respondents spend 6 or more hours engaging directly with children, young people and families on visits in a typical week, compared to 35% last year.
- Over half (54%) spend more than 4 or more hours per week engaging with children, young people and families in a typical week, compared to 60% last year.

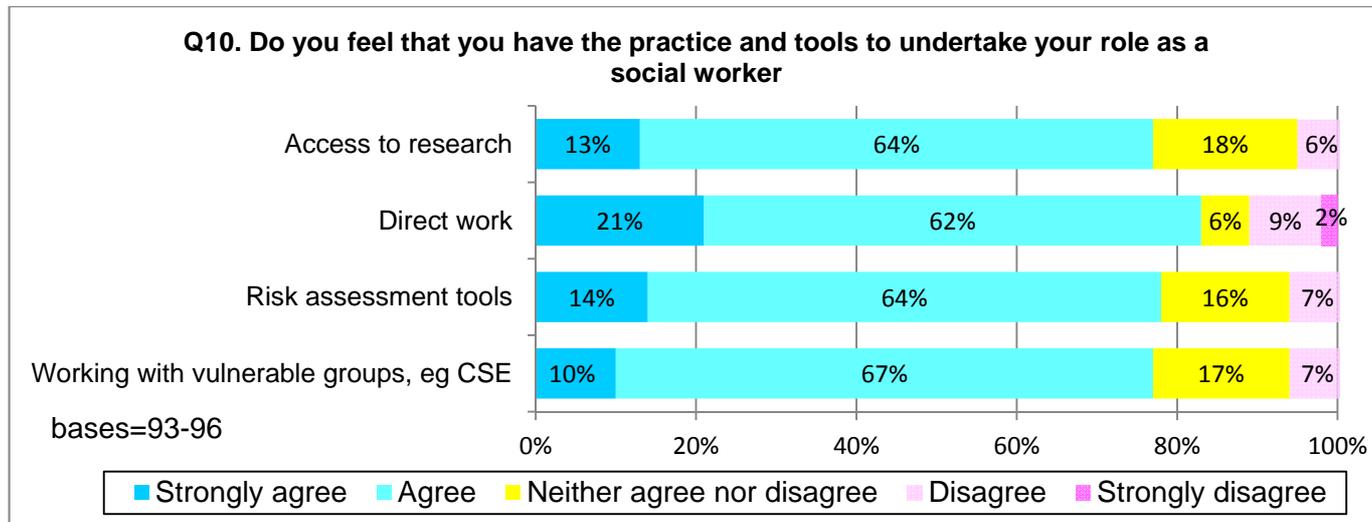
My role and skills



- The overwhelming majority (93%) are proud of the work that they do with little disagreement, a similar figure to last year, which was 92%.
- The vast majority (87%) said that their job allows them to show their initiative, compared to 80% last year.
- The majority of respondents (84%) agreed that they felt valued for the work that they do by their line manager, this figure was 79% last year.
- The majority (86%) believed that their job as a social worker made the most of their skills and knowledge, compared to 79% last year

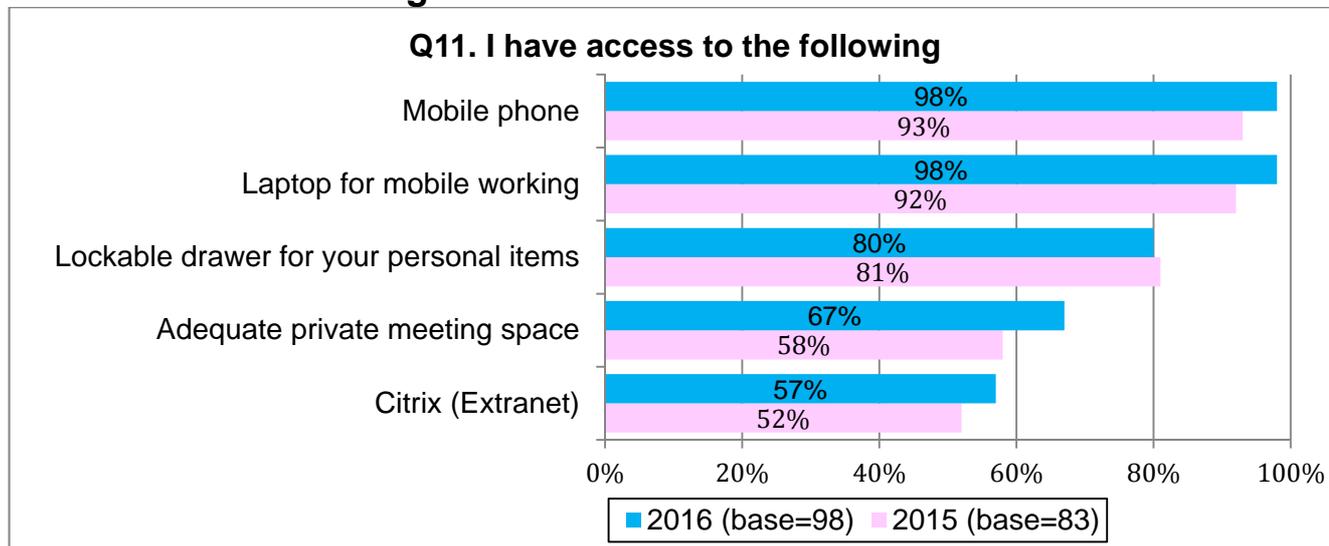
5. Having right tools to do the job

Do you feel that you have the practice and tools to undertake your role as a social worker..?



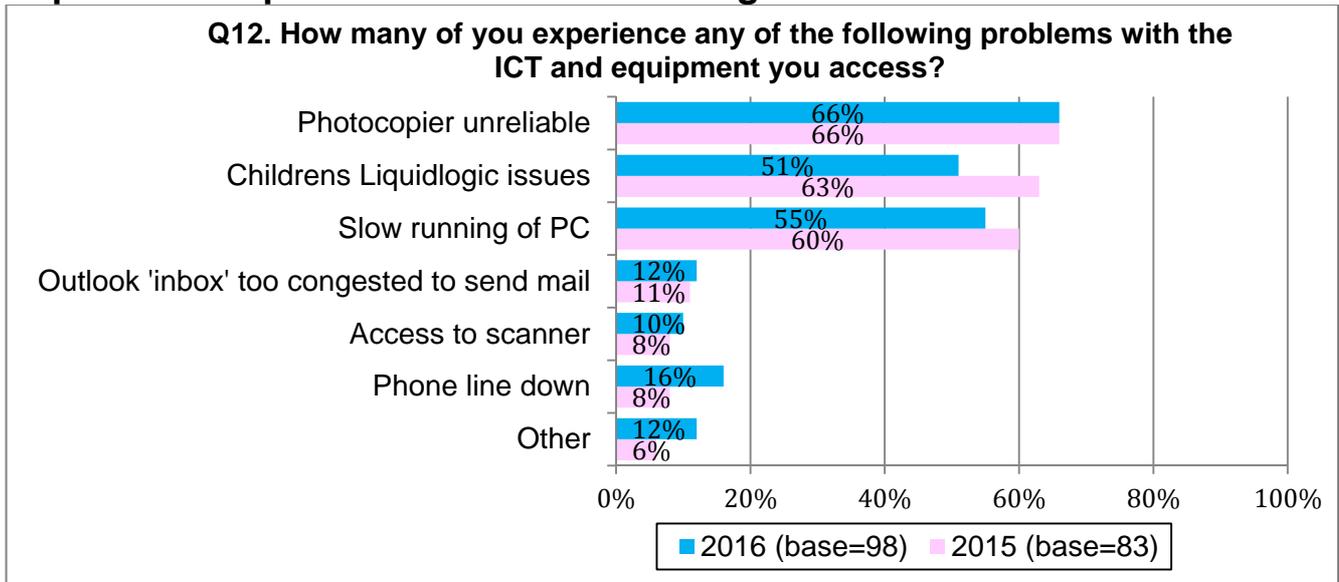
- Over three quarters of respondents (between 77% and 83%) agree that they have the practice and tools to undertake their role as a social worker, in regards to access to research, direct work, risk assessment tools and working with vulnerable groups, eg. CSE (Child Sexual Exploitation). This compares to a range of 68% to 74% last year.

Access to the following



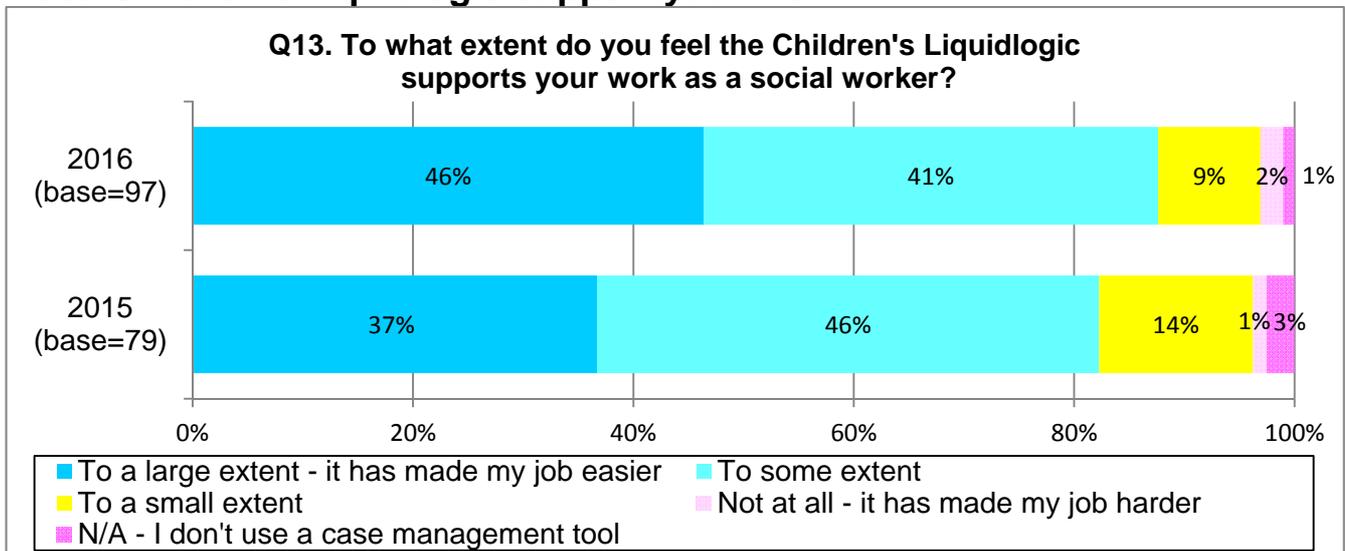
- Almost all respondents have a mobile phone and a laptop for mobile working.
- The majority can access a lockable drawer for their personal items.
- Over two-thirds (67%) have access to adequate private meeting space, compared to 58% last year.
- Just over half (57%) of those responding have access to Citrix (Extranet).

Experience of problems with the following



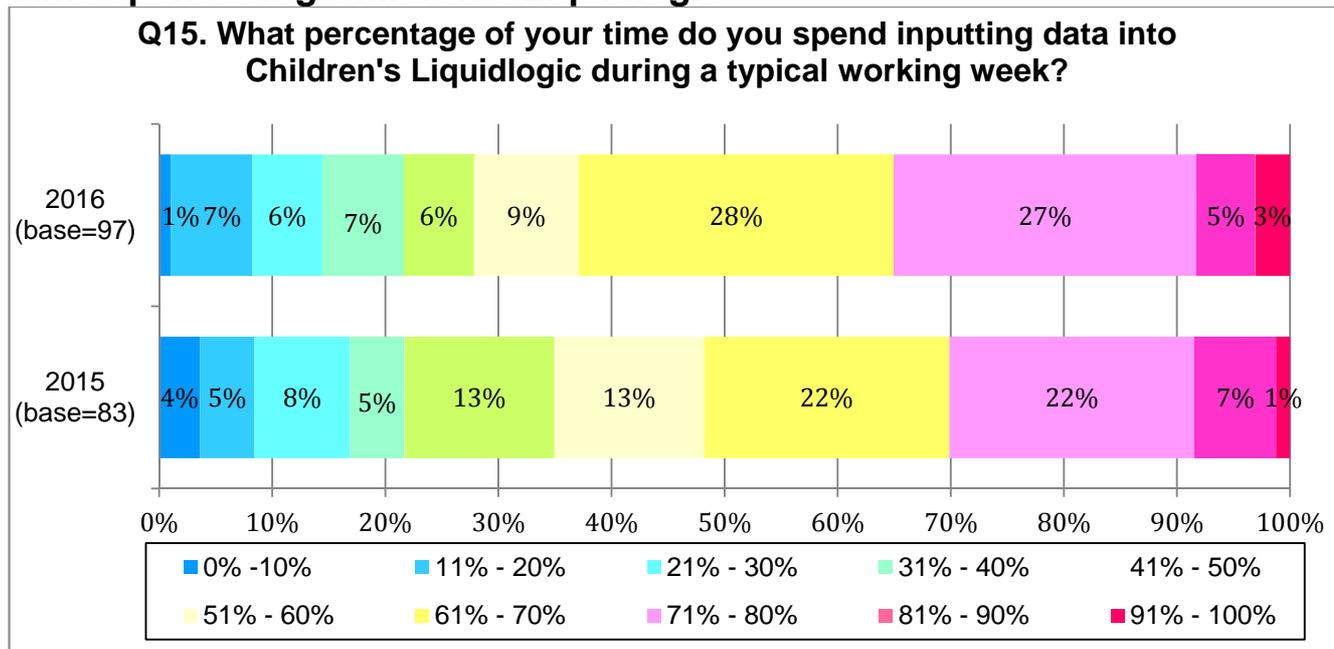
- Over half had problems with a photocopier being unreliable, slow running of their PC or issues with Children’s Liquidlogic.
- A few respondents said they had problems with; Outlook ‘inbox’ too congested to send mail, phone line being down, access to a scanner and other problems.

Does Children’s Liquidlogic support your work?



- Almost half (46%) believed that Children’s Liquidlogic supports their work ‘to a large extent’, compared to 37% last year.
- The majority (87%) believed that Children’s Liquidlogic, supports their work as a social worker, to some extent or large extent, compared to 83% last year.

Time spent using Children's Liquidlogic



- Respondents spend a wide range of time on Children's Liquidlogic. However, over two thirds (72%) spend half of their time or more using the system, compared to 65% last year.

Further comments:

Below is a summary of additional comments made regarding IT:

Problems with IT equipment:

- Email connection is slow or does not connect
- Smart phone signal is poor
- Old laptop/laptop software could be updated
- Cannot connect laptop to a larger monitor
- Liquidlogic slows performance
- Poor seating position because of incorrect equipment
- Printer is unreliable
- Server goes down
- Still using paper files for supervision of carers

What could be done to improve Liquidlogic:

- Should only have to record information in one place/online form
- A more efficient/simple system is needed
- Faster running equipment
- Take into account RAS/parenting assessments/pre-birth assessments
- More training
- Better access to reports
- Better reliability
- Better support services
- User friendly forms to help families to understand

What could be done to improve training for Liquidlogic:

- Focus training on the needs of the service
- More training is needed
- Better to learn from colleagues 'on the job'
- Refresher training is needed
- Training was too short/basic, the trainer went through things too quickly
- No access to a skilled trainer whilst 'on the job'
- Training in certain teams kept on getting cancelled
- Each individual's training requirements should be reviewed annually
- Training should be given when you start and also at 2 months (when you have 'live' cases)

Comparisons between the 2016 and 2015 survey:

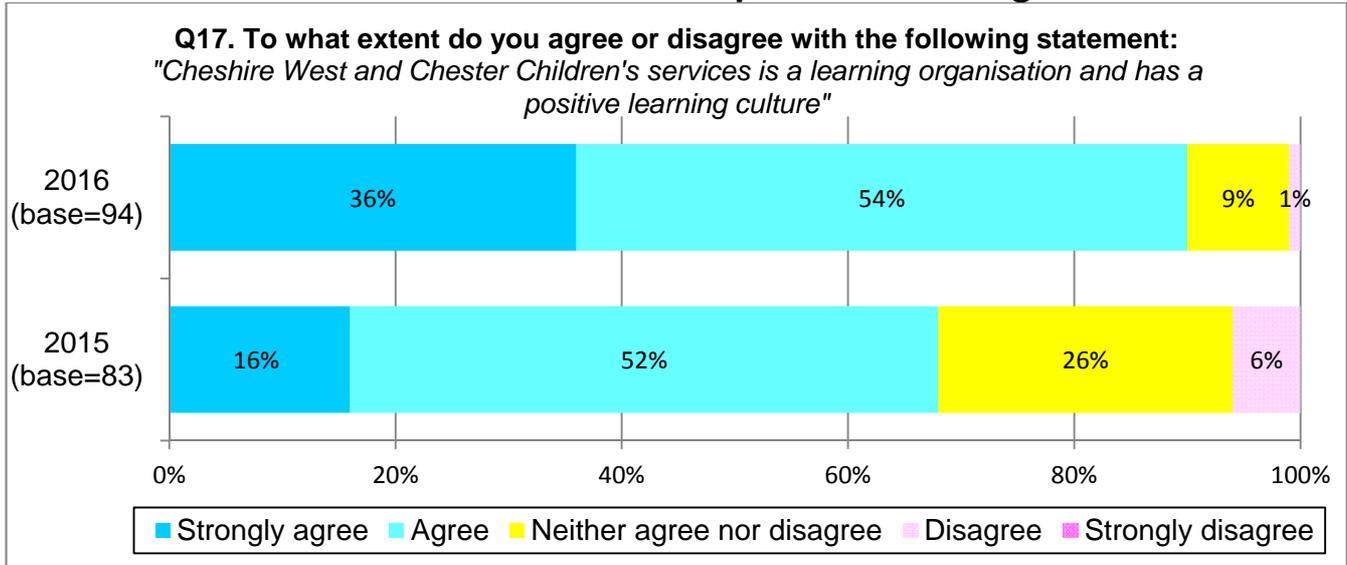
Comments were similar in nature to last year's, however there were fewer relating to needing newer IT equipment, despite inadequacies in equipment used. There was mention, again, of poor connection when trying to work from different locations.

More training was mentioned as it was last year, as was a quicker more efficient system with easier ways to access systems/reports.

Of the training mentioned, it was mentioned that refresher training was needed, as was 'on hand' training and that training had been 'rushed', these comments mirror those made in 2015.

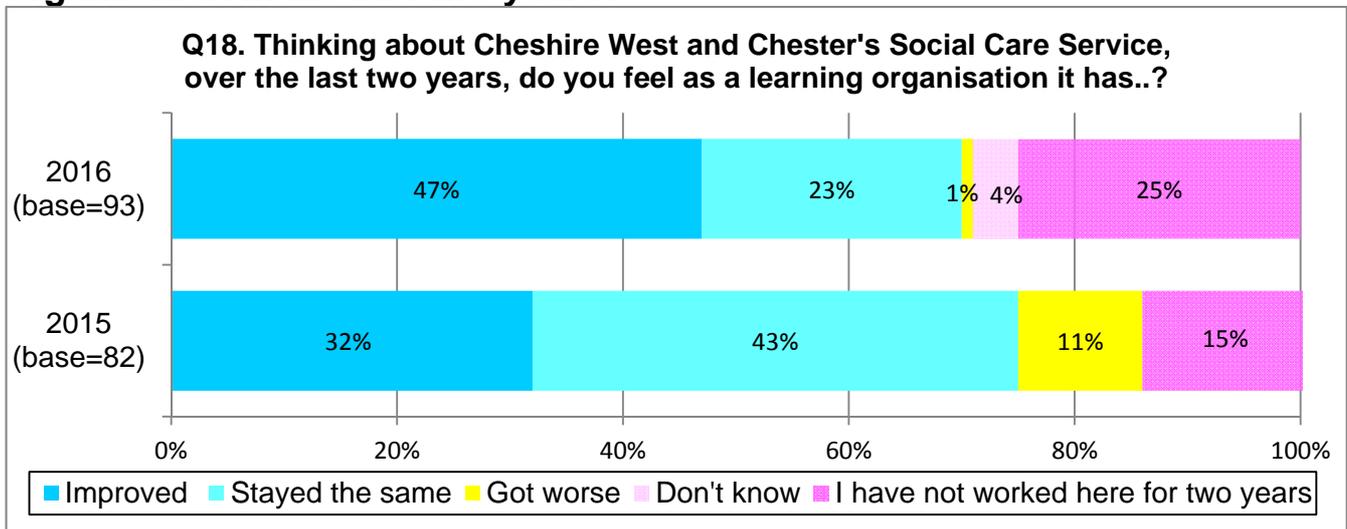
6. Learning and development

Does Cheshire West and Chester have a positive learning culture?



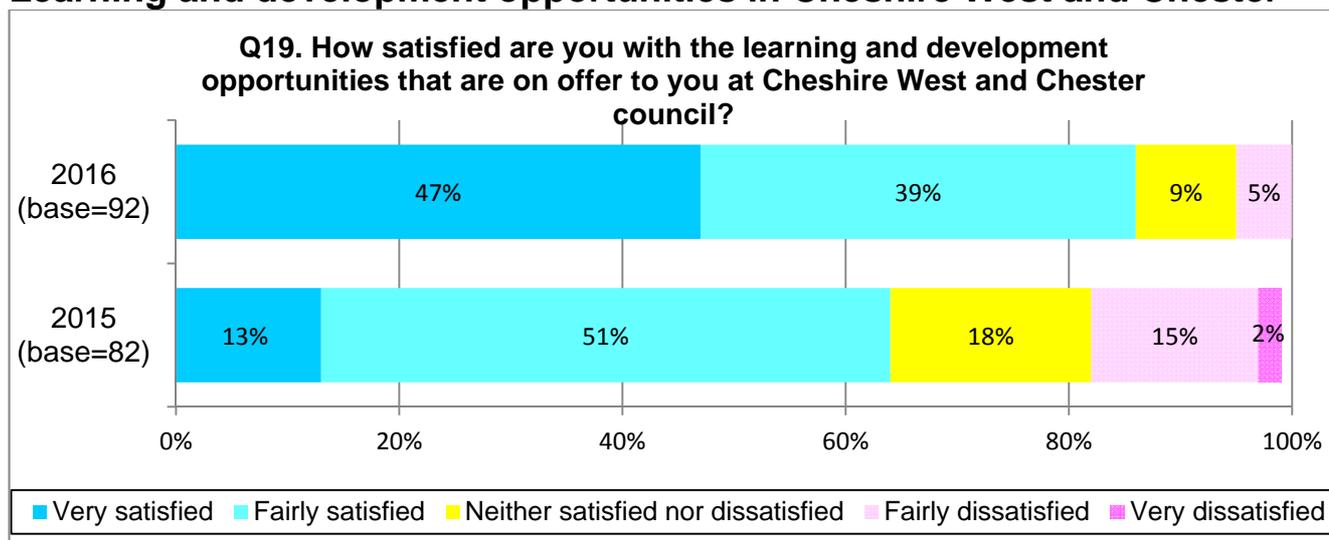
- Over one third (36%) strongly agreed that Cheshire West and Chester is a learning organisation and has a positive learning culture, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 16%.
- The majority (90%) of respondents agreed that Cheshire West and Chester Children's services is a learning organisation and has a positive learning culture with little disagreement. This is significantly higher than the figure of 68% last year

Has Cheshire West and Chester's social care service improved as a learning organisation in the last two years?



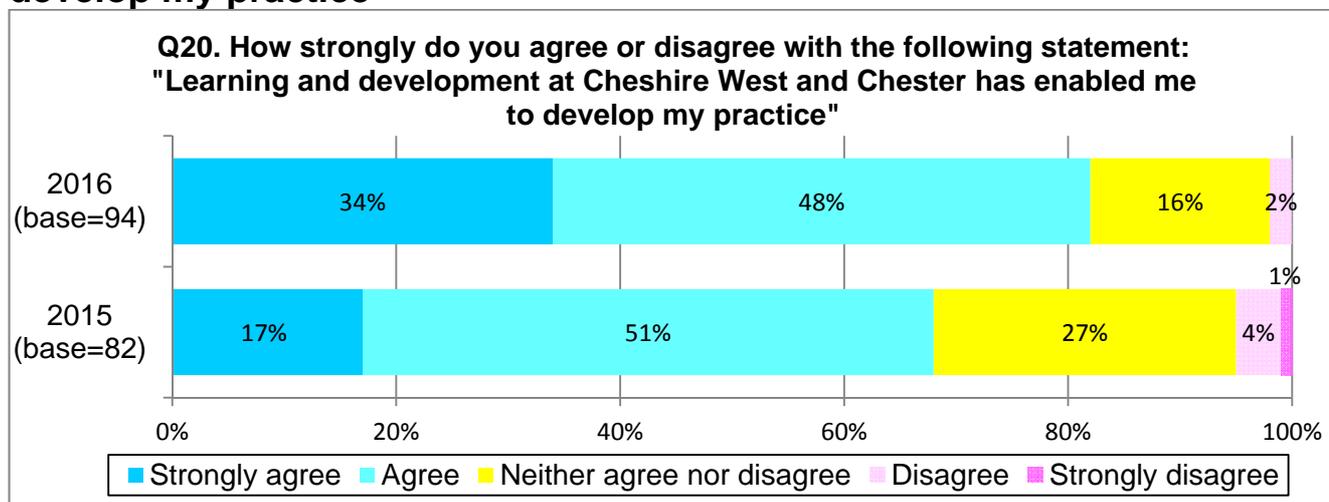
- Almost half (47%) believed that Cheshire West and Chester Social Care Service has 'improved' as a learning organisation over the last two years, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 32%.
- There was agreement that Cheshire West and Chester social care service as a learning organisation had improved over the last two years, regardless of the number of years' service with the team.

Learning and development opportunities in Cheshire West and Chester



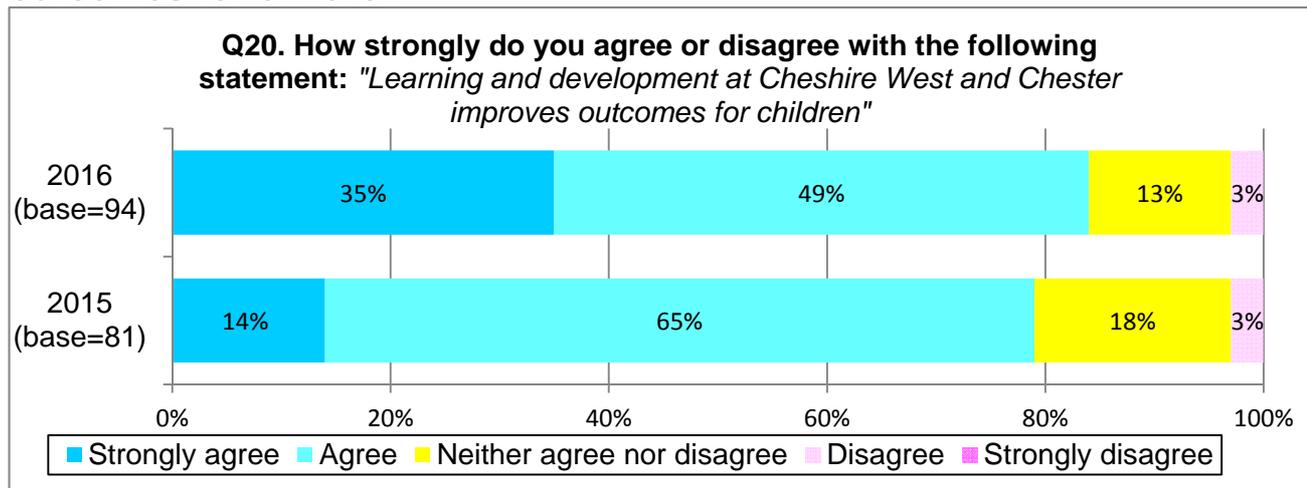
- Almost half (47%) of respondents are 'very satisfied' with learning and development opportunities at Cheshire West and Chester council, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 13%.
- The majority (86%) are satisfied with the learning and development opportunities that are on offer to them at Cheshire West and Chester council, this is significantly higher than the figure of 64% last year.

Learning and development at Cheshire West and Chester has enabled me to develop my practice



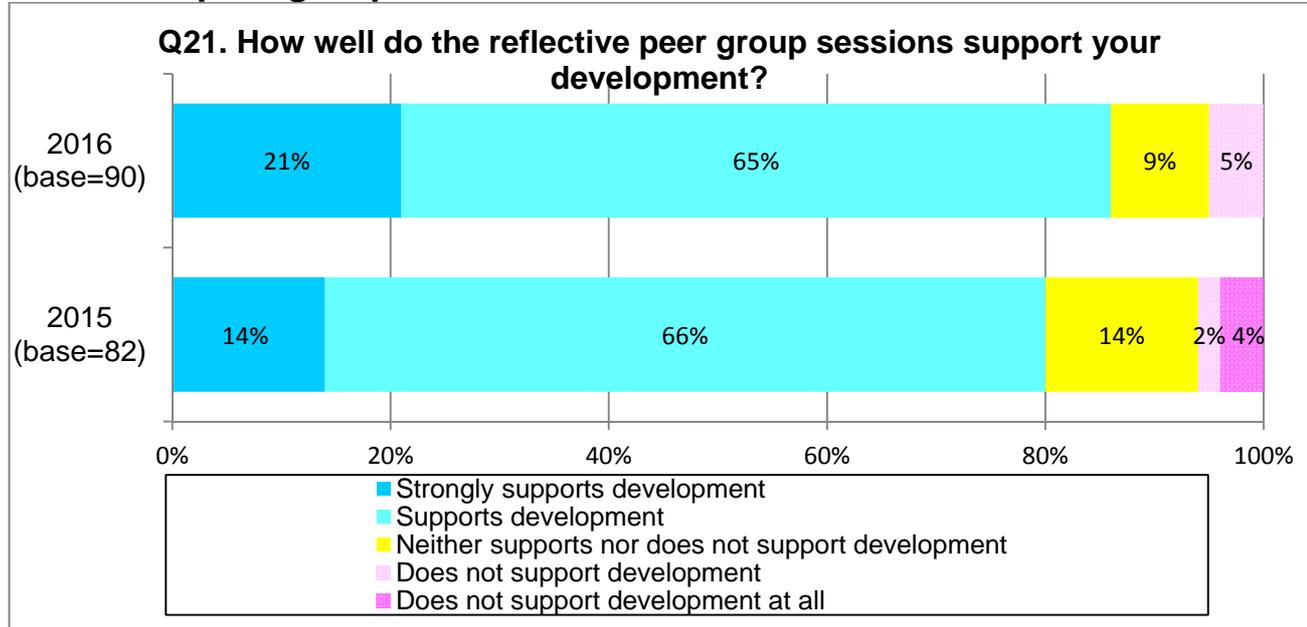
- Over one third (34%) 'strongly agreed' that learning and development at Cheshire West and Chester had helped them to develop their practice, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 17%.
- The majority (82%) agreed that Cheshire West and Chester has enabled them to develop their practice, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 68%. There was little disagreement (2%).

Learning and development at Cheshire West and Chester improves outcomes for children



- Over one third (35%) 'strongly agreed' that learning and development at Cheshire West and Chester improves outcomes for children, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 14%.
- The vast majority (84%) of those that responded agreed learning and development at Cheshire West and Chester improves outcomes for children with little disagreement, compared to 79% last year.

Reflective peer group sessions



- The majority (86%) believed that reflective peer group sessions supported their development, compared to 80% last year. There was some disagreement 5% believed that it did not support development.

Further comments:

Below are additional comments regarding the learning culture at Chester West and Chester Children's services:

Positive experiences:

- Good training
- Encouraged to engage in training and peer reflection
- Managers are open to suggestion
- Senior practice leads beneficial in fostering teams
- Learning and development opportunities are good
- Personal Educational Plans (PEPs) and school involvement
- Research in Practice (RIP) is promoted at the Social Work forum
- Good support
- Equity of opportunities

Areas for improvement:

- More time needed for training, reading and research
- Training times often clash
- More notice should be given prior to training dates
- More training for team managers
- Mentoring from staff from other departments
- More training in therapeutic working/Research in Practice (RIP) resources
- Over focus on basic tools
- There has been no Senior Practice Lead (SPL) for some time
- More opportunities for managers to progress to senior managers
- Secondment opportunities in other teams
- Consistency in expectations for progression
- Use a separate appraisal scheme for Social workers, as they are already working to the level of 'exceeding'
- Should be a management decision on a Social Worker's progression, and not on their ability to complete university work
- Is there any possible progression for Senior Practice Leads (SPLs)?

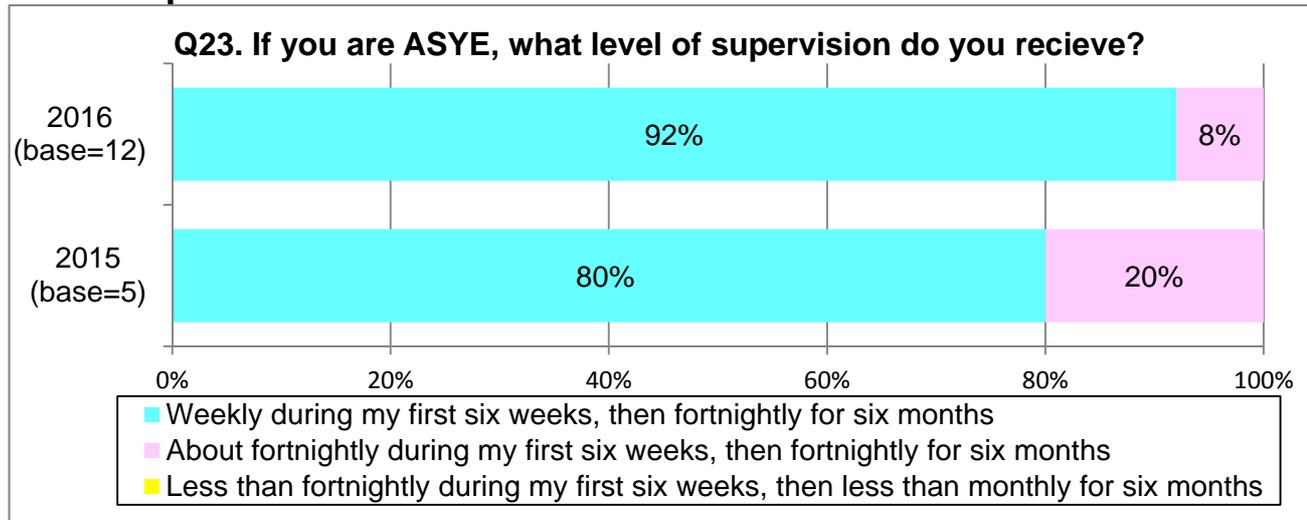
Comparisons between the 2016 and 2015 survey:

Positive comments similar to 2015 include; good training and progression for social workers and that the organisation promotes learning. In 2016 PEPs and RIP are also mentioned as being positive experiences.

Comments that were similar between 2016 and 2015 include; not enough time for learning and development, more secondments within teams, mentoring and more opportunities for managers to be able to progress in their career.

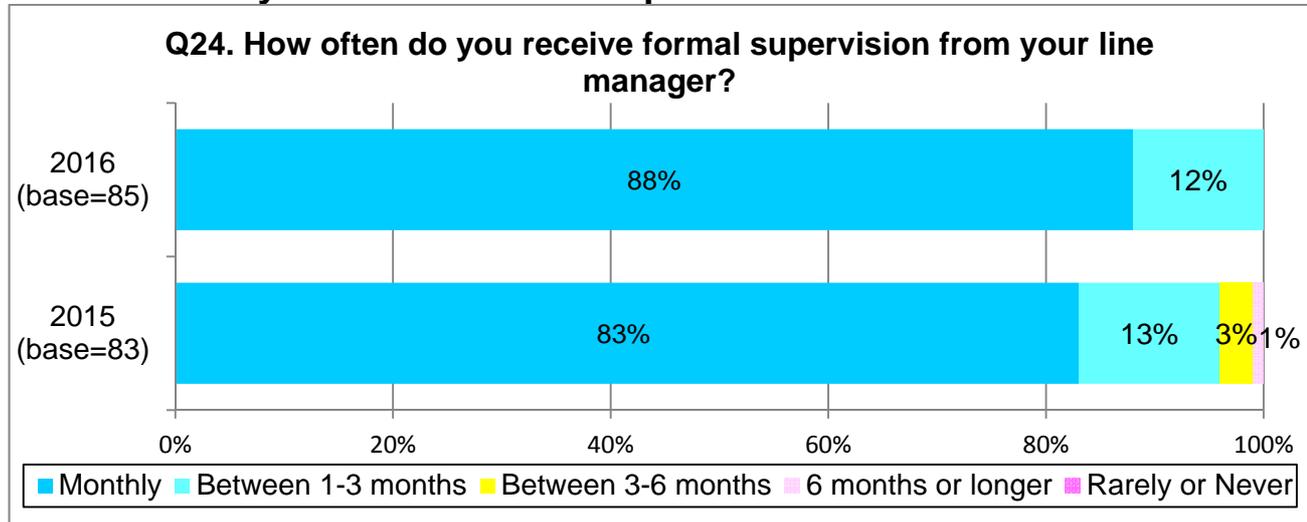
7. Supervision and performance management

ASYE supervision



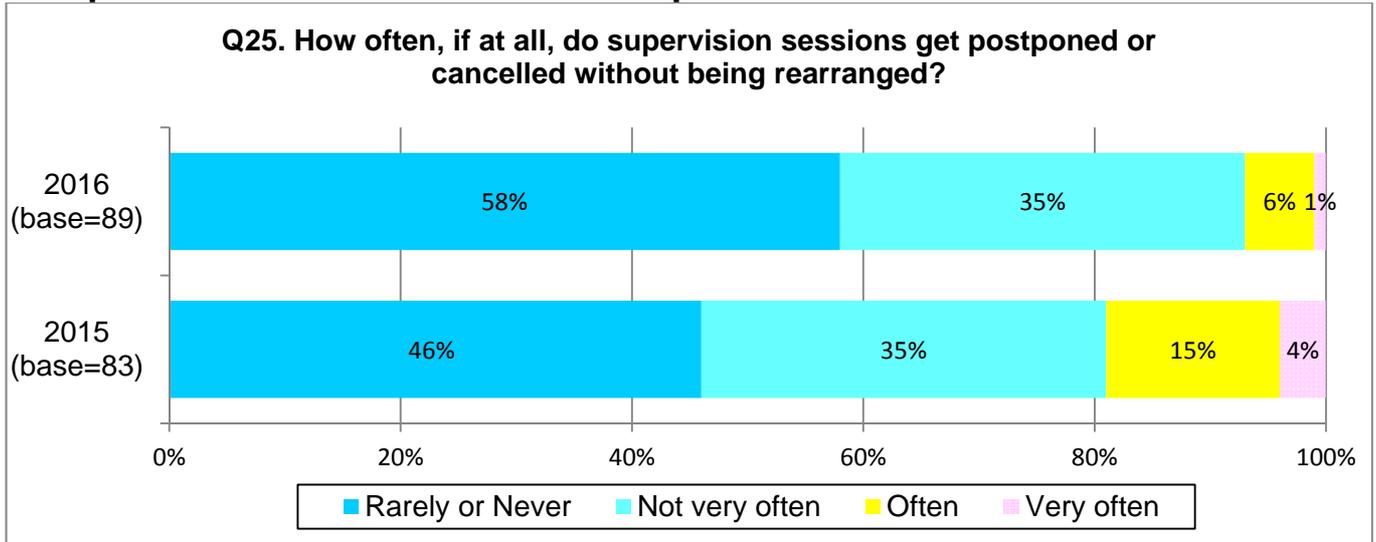
- Almost all (92%) of ASYE's had weekly supervision in their first six weeks, then fortnightly for six months. This is significantly higher than last year's figure of 80%.
- All ASYE social workers had either weekly/fortnightly supervision in their first six weeks followed by fortnightly supervision for the next six months.
- However there were some comments that meetings were sporadic and often cancelled.

How often do you receive formal supervision



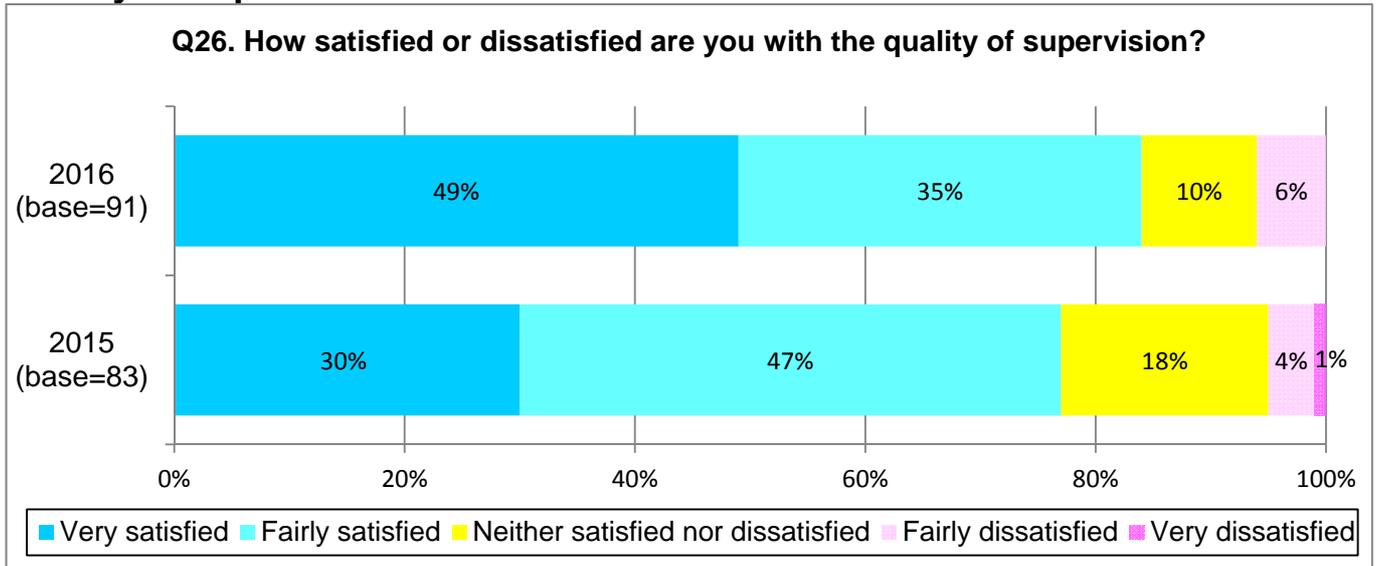
- Of all respondents the vast majority (88%) have formal supervision from their line manager on a monthly basis, this is similar to last year's figure of 83%.

Postponement and cancellation of supervision sessions



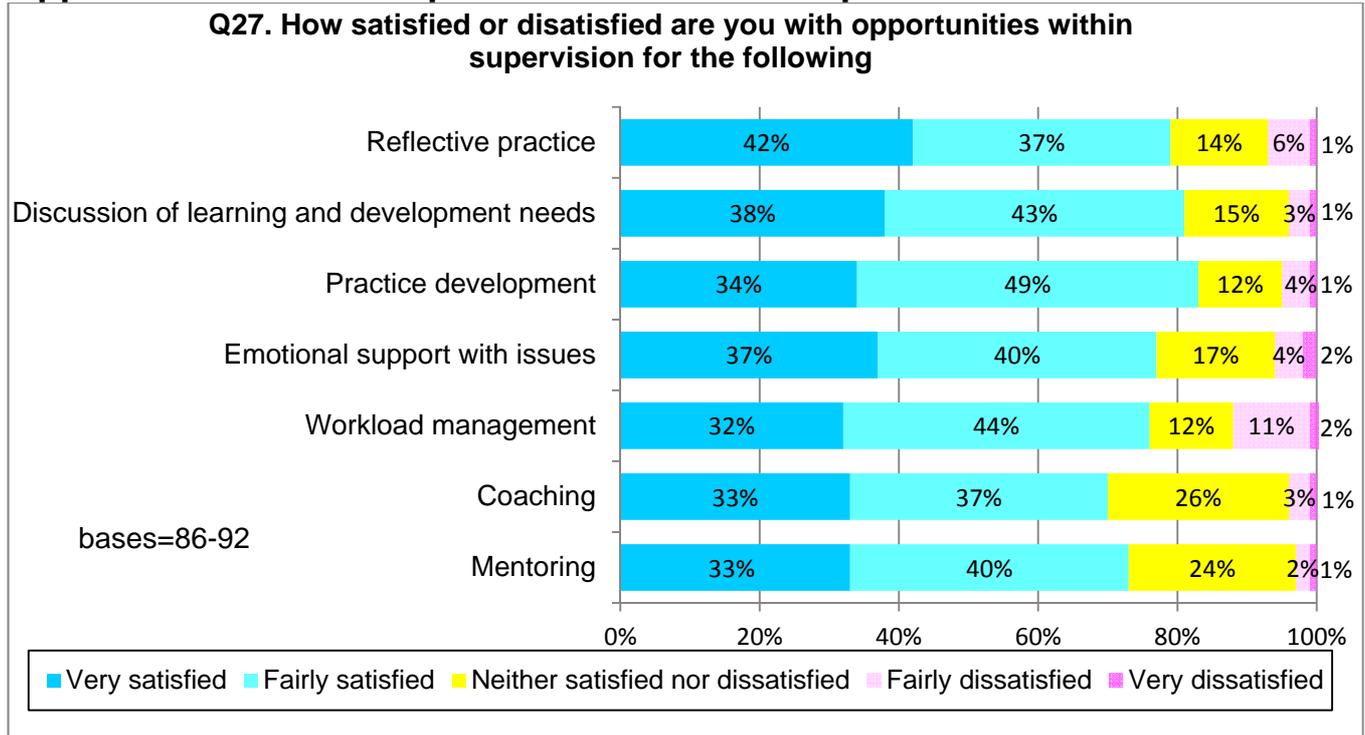
- The vast majority of respondents (93%) reported that ‘rarely or never’ or ‘not very often’ do they have their supervision sessions postponed or cancelled without being rearranged. This figure is significantly higher than 81% last year.

Quality of supervision



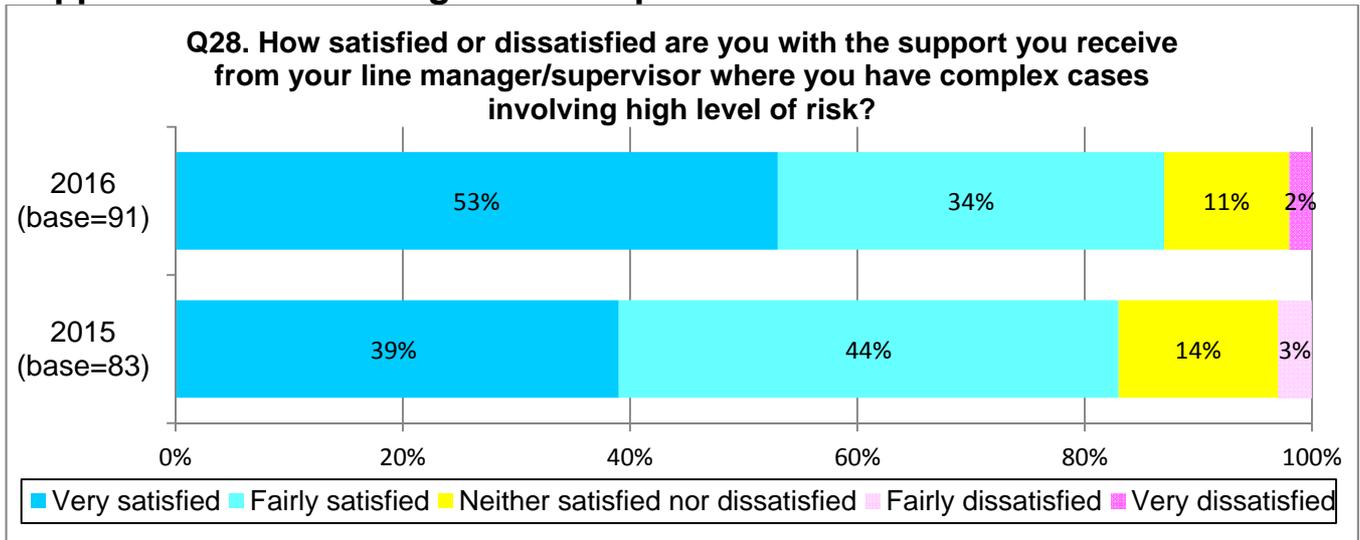
- Almost half (49%) were very satisfied with the quality of supervision that they received, this is significantly higher than last year’s figure of 30%.
- The vast majority (84%) of respondents are satisfied with the quality of supervision with little disagreement, this is compared to 77% last year.

Opportunities within supervision for reflective practice



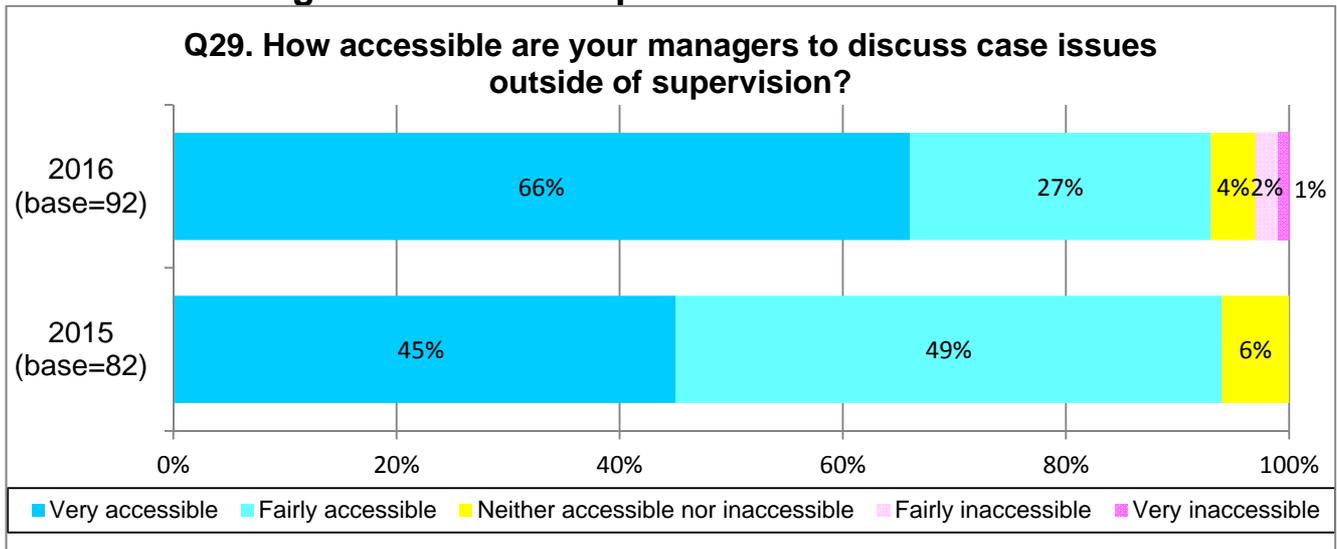
- The majority, over two thirds, are satisfied with opportunities within supervision for: reflective practice, discussion of learning and development needs, practice development, emotional support with issues, workload management, coaching and mentoring.
- A majority (83%) were satisfied with opportunities for practice development, this is significantly higher than last year's figure of 69%.
- Almost three quarters (73%) were satisfied with mentoring opportunities within supervision, this is significantly higher than 56% last year.
- All other categories' figures for satisfaction were higher than last year's figure, but not significantly so.

Support from line manager for complex cases



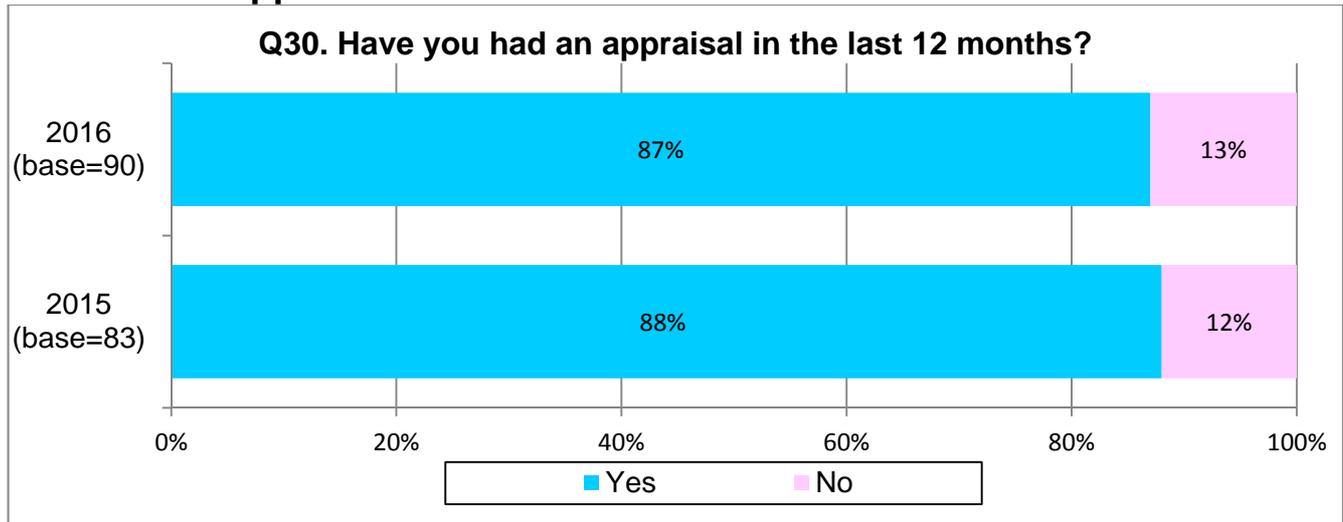
- The vast majority (87%) were satisfied with the support that they receive from their line manager/supervisor where they have complex cases involving a high level of risk, with little dissatisfaction reported. This figure compares to 83% from last year.

Access to managers outside of supervision



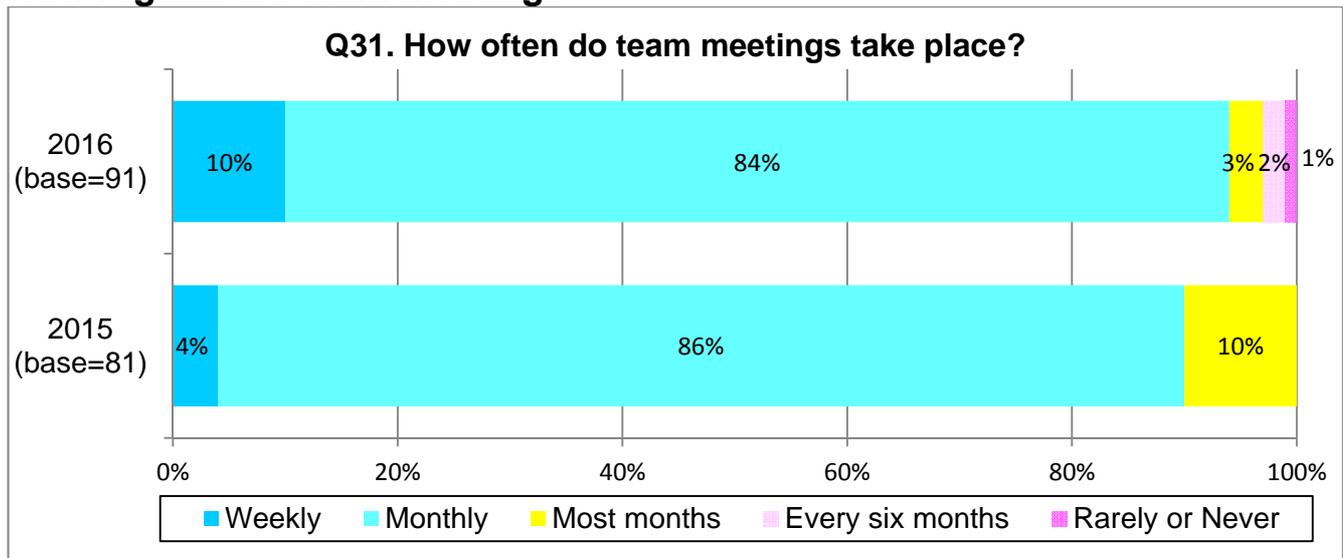
- Two thirds (66%) believed that their manager was ‘very accessible’ to discuss case issues outside of supervision, this is significantly higher than last year’s figure of 45%.
- The vast majority (93%) believe that their managers are accessible to discuss case issues outside of supervision, with no reports of managers being inaccessible. A similar figure to 94% from last year.

Most recent appraisal



- The vast majority (87%) have had an appraisal in the last 12 months. This is similar to last year's figure of 88%.

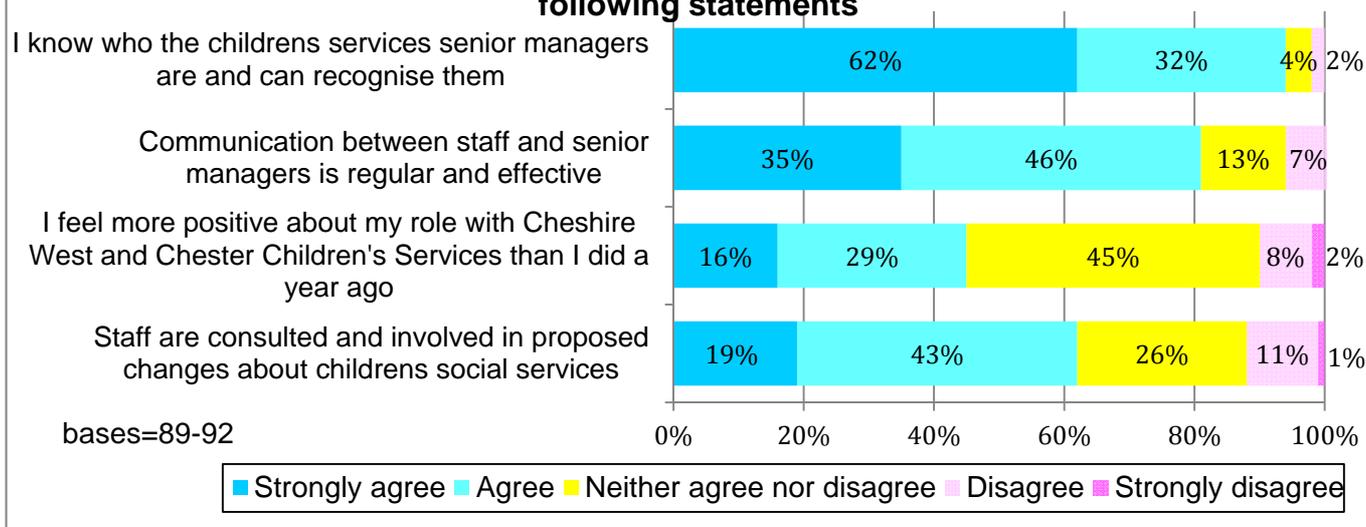
How regular are team meetings



- The vast majority (84%) of respondents have team meetings on a monthly basis with some reporting team meetings on a 'weekly' or 'most months' basis, which is similar to last year's figure of 86%.
- Few (3%) have team meetings 'every six months', or 'Rarely or Never', this compares to 0% last year.

Communication with senior staff and my role

Q32. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements



- The vast majority (94%) agreed that they know who the children's services senior managers are and can recognise them, with little disagreement. This compares to 88% last year.
- The majority of respondents (81%) agreed that communication between staff and senior managers is regular and effective. This figure is significantly higher than 55% last year.
- Almost half of respondents (45%) agree that they feel more positive about their role with Cheshire West and Chester children's services than they were a year ago. This is significantly higher than 26% last year.
- The majority of respondents (62%) agreed that staff were consulted and involved in proposed changes about children's social services, which is significantly higher than 21% last year.
- Just over a tenth (12%) disagreed that staff were consulted and involved in proposed changes about children's social services, this compares to 8% last year.

Further comments:

Below is a summary of additional comments made regarding respondent's role:

Reasons for feeling more positive about my role than 12 months ago:

- I have progressed within the organisation
- I feel more valued within the organisation
- Development and promotion opportunities are good
- I feel more settled and confident at Cheshire West and Chester now
- I have a clear view of what is expected of me
- I have had a change of role
- Senior managers listen more
- There is more understanding of other roles/teams
- Managers have a positive approach and good understanding of job roles
- The OFSTED findings

Reasons for feeling less positive about my role than 12 months ago:

- Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) changes are unsettling

Comparisons between the 2016 and 2015 survey:

Similar positive comments to the 2015 survey include; that respondents still feel 'valued' within the team, that their manager listens to them and that their role has changed/evolved.

Comments mentioned in 2016 suggest that there is better communication from managers and more clarity with what is expected of them in their role since the 2015 survey.

Further comments:

Q33. Please say what you most like about working as a social worker for Cheshire West and Chester Council?

My role:

- The autonomy that the role offers
- The ability for mobile working
- Interesting and challenging work
- I feel valued by my manager and team
- I make the difference to the lives of children
- I am proud of the work that I do
- I feel safe, most of the time

My team:

- I work within a supportive team
- The administrative and legal teams are excellent in the support that they provide
- Management are 'visible' and are aware of practice working
- Good case management and working procedures
- Good team structures

Cheshire West and Chester:

- A good organisation to work for
- Good development opportunities
- High standards and a good work ethic
- Good learning environment within the organisation
- Recent OFSTED report outcome is very important to the organisation
- An improved culture within the organisation recently
- Working therapeutically

Q34. What would you most like to improve about working as a social worker for Cheshire West and Chester Council?

My role:

- More time dedicated to direct work with clients
- Less time spent on form filling and paperwork

My team:

- To have 'team building' away days to improve team cohesion
- More access to family/targeting support services
- To have closer working with complex level 3 cases
- Quicker access to the Gateway team and Parenting programmes is needed
- More consultation is needed with Social Work teams regarding changes
- Secondments within teams to aid with learning and help with personal development
- There is an 'over focus' on Children in Need (CIN) team
- More support is needed to help manage the adoption support fund

Working conditions:

- A more manageable workload in order to achieve a better work/life balance
- More flexibility in working hours to allow working outside 9-5, to help those with families
- A more understanding/supportive/strong/consistent manager
- Better work prioritisation and support, including where paperwork and court work can get in the way of normal case load
- Being given 'essential car user' status, as we could not do our job without a car
- More car parking facilities
- Time to develop work related skills and training
- A lot of our time is spent travelling between different areas of the authority
- Internal meetings should start and finish 'on time'
- More meeting rooms to be made available
- The whole team to be located in one place to aid communication and working

Equipment:

- More reliable IT equipment to be able to complete our jobs

Staffing:

- Recruit more staff, in order to alleviate workload
- Staffing to be in-line with Children in Need (CIN) and Children in Care (CIC) teams
- More stability for staff in Childcare teams
- Create the role of Senior Practice leads (SPLs) in the fostering service
- More opportunities for staff to progress in their career
- Staff changes are too frequent which makes continuity of care for families difficult
- Staff retention issues must be addressed
- More permanent contracts for staff, to avoid the regular turn-over of staff on agency contracts

Cheshire West and Chester:

- The organisation should forge a better relationship with the Police
- A more strategic view of improving services

Comparisons between the 2016 and 2015 survey:

The similarities between the two surveys for what respondents like about working for Cheshire West and Chester include; the autonomy of the role, making a difference to the lives of children, their team is supportive, good team structures, a positive work ethic and good development opportunities.

The recent OFSTED report was mentioned in comments in the 2016 survey as being a great outcome for the organisation.

Similarities in comments about how to improve working for Cheshire West and Chester between 2015 and 2016 include; need more time with clients, less time spent inputting data/filling in forms, more secondments between teams, better use of flexible and mobile working, passes to council car parks, more reliable IT equipment, recruit more staff, staff retention issues need to be addressed, less agency staff so that there is more consistency with families keeping the same social worker.

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille, Large Print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

Pokud byste požadovali informace v jiném jazyce nebo formátu, kontaktujte nás

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ନେହିଁବ ନାହୁଁରାଣୀ ବ୍ରାୟଲ୍ ବା ଅନ୍ୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଭାଷାରେ କିମ୍ବା ଅନ୍ୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଫର୍ମାଟ୍ରେ ଚାହୁଁନ୍ତି, ତାହା ପାଇଁ ଆମକୁ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ କରନ୍ତୁ।

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

Türkçe bilgi almak istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو براۓ مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔

Tel: 0300 123 8 123 **Textphone:** 18001 01606 867 670

email: equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

web: www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

If you would like further information about this report, please contact the Research, Intelligence and Consultation Team
Judy Parry, Principal Research Analyst, telephone: **01244 972446**

Glenn Hodgkinson, Research Officer, telephone: **01244 977033**

Email: research@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

Research, Intelligence & Consultation Team, HQ, 58 Nicholas Street, Chester CH1 2NP