

BASW
Cymru

The professional association for
social work and social workers



Professional
Support Service

Social Work Professional Support Service

Performance report to Welsh Government

Date of Report: 21 March 2022



The Professional Support Service in Wales was launched on 17th November 2021, it offers a peer-to-peer listening service, in which trained volunteer coaches can support colleagues in confidence. It is here to help social workers debrief and reflect upon concerns in a safe space.

This report is based on data collected between launch date and end of February 2022, including a summary of activities and analysis of emerging themes during this short period of implementation.

We currently have nine coaches based in Wales and one is able to deliver sessions in the Welsh language. There is strong appetite to become a coach and there is currently a waiting list of six. Social workers reported that they appreciate this as a rare and valuable opportunity for personal and professional development.

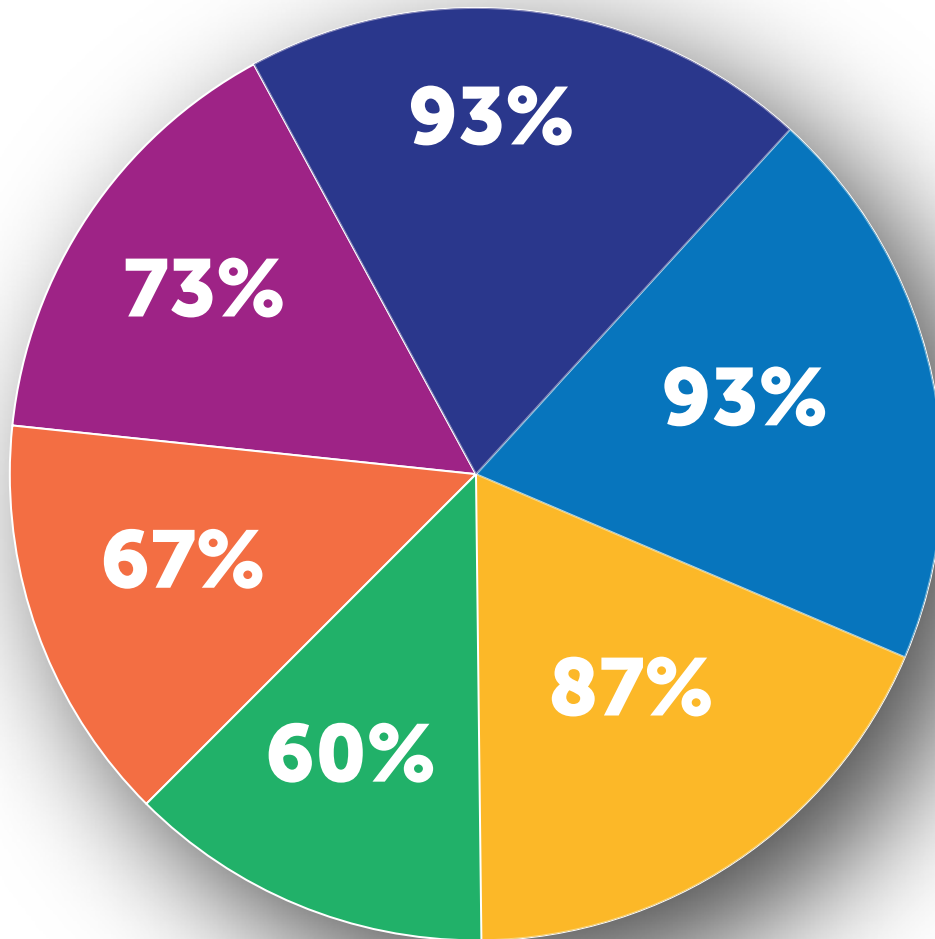
This is a snapshot of the types of issues being raised with our Welsh volunteer coaches during their sessions with 'coachees'. The information is extracted from record-keeping forms that coaches are required to complete at the end of each contact.

- Emotional and physical impact of current work.
- Increased responsibilities coupled with personal and workplace issues.
- Extra pressure due to covid.
- Difficult transition into new senior job roles.
- Reflection to manage issues related to team culture.
- Coping with family bereavement and own ill health.
- Being taken through disciplinary procedures at work.
- Loss of confidence.
- Coping with isolation.
- Reflection for enhanced wellbeing.
- Reflection to clarify priorities/goals.
- Reflection to help with a good work – life balance.

What do 'coachees' say about the service?

Feedback from users of the Professional Support Service who took part in a survey between January 27th-3rd February 2022

What matters to you about the Professional Support Service?



■ Independence of the service from my employer **93%**

■ Coaches are social workers **93%**

■ The skills of the coaches **87%**

■ It offers coaches from my practice area **60%**

■ It offers coaches from my level of practice (manager, PSW, team manager, front line manager) **67%**

■ It's a free service **73%**

Anonymised outcomes achieved from sessions

Strengthening Practice held some focus group sessions for people who have used the service. Feedback was very positive and no issues around access or the quality of service arose.

‘Part of my issue was with a manager, so it was good to have input from someone with management experience.’

‘Brilliant safe space to work with an experienced coach as sounding board for your prevailing issues - Makes you feel valued and listened to which helps you to consider solutions to move issues forward.’

‘Accessing independent professional advice which is social work focused and builds confidence.’

‘Helps you to focus rather than mulling things over in one’s head without any resolution. It gives you confidence in your abilities to make effective changes.’

‘I found coaching experience validating and supportive. Being self-employed I do not have access to professional supervision, the session helped me to reflect and plan for my future. I felt comfortable.’

‘Really helpful and gone away with new ideas.’

A new bi-monthly podcast around the service has been developed which adds value to the service. The first episode is [here](#).

Geographical location of those using the service

Welsh Registrations – Postcode Location (Nov 21 – Feb 22)

Cardiff: 14	Llanelli: 3	Flintshire and Wrexham: 2
Aberdare: 1	Ceredigion: 1	Gwynedd: 4
Glamorgan: 6	Llandysul: 1	Long Sutton, East
Barry: 4	Haverfordwest: 1	Midlands: 1
Gwent Valleys: 2	Central Valleys, West	Birkenhead: 1
Blaenau Gwent: 3	Wales: 2	Chester: 2
Cwmbran: 1	Powys: 5	Cheshire: 2
Swansea: 6	Clynderwen: 1	Crewe: 1
Carmarthenshire: 3	Denbighshire: 5	

*It is interesting to note the registrants who live in England but are practising/studying in Wales.

Statistics on users of professional support service between November 2021 – February 2022

Registrations	Nov 21	Dec 21	Jan 22	Feb 22	Total	Total %
Female	8	24	14	13	59	81.94%
Male	2	4	1	1	8	11.11%
Not reported/ Prefer not to say	0	3	2	0	5	6.94%
Total	10	31	17	14	72	100.0%
Sessions						
Sessions Booked	2	6	10	11	29	100.0%
Sessions Delivered	1	6	9	10	26	89.66%
Sessions Cancelled	1	0	1	1	3	10.34%
Sessions No Shows	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Ethnicity						
African	1	1	0	0	2	2.78%
Caribbean	0	0	0	1	1	1.39%
English	2	5	3	2	12	16.67%
Indian	0	1	0	0	1	1.39%
Scottish	0	1	0	0	1	1.39%
Welsh	6	15	8	10	39	54.17%
Other	1	2	3	1	7	9.72%
Not reported/ Prefer not to say	0	6	3	0	9	12.50%
Total	10	31	17	14	72	100.0%
Age						
18-29	2	3	1	6	12	16.67%
30-39	0	7	3	5	15	20.83%
40-49	5	10	8	3	26	36.11%
50-59	3	6	3	0	12	16.67%
60+	0	3	0	0	3	4.17%
Not reported/ Prefer not to say	0	2	2	0	4	5.56%
Total	10	31	17	14	72	100.0%
Employer						
Local Authority	8	27	9	3	47	65.28%
Independent Sector	1	0	1	0	2	2.78%
Self Employed	0	1	0	0	1	1.39%
Student	0	0	6	11	17	23.61%
Third Sector	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Other	0	3	0	0	3	4.17%
Not Reported	1	0	1	0	2	2.78%
Total	10	31	17	14	72	100.0%

Length of Qualification						
Student	0	0	6	11	17	23.61%
Less than 1 year	1	5	4	1	11	15.28%
1-5 years	3	6	4	1	14	19.44%
6+ years	6	20	3	1	30	41.67%
Not reported	0	0	0	0	0	0.00%
Total	10	31	17	14	72	100.0%
Job Roles Supported						
Student	0	0	6	11	17	23.61%
Frontline Social Worker	8	25	8	3	44	61.11%
First Line Manager	2	3	1	0	6	8.33%
Middle or Senior Manager	0	1	1	0	2	2.78%
Not reported	0	2	1	0	3	4.17%
Total	10	31	17	14	72	100.0%
Area of Practice						
Adults	3	11	4	3	21	29.17%
Children & Families	5	17	4	0	26	36.11%
Justice	0	0	1	0	1	1.39%
Mental Health	1	3	0	0	4	5.56%
Other	1	0	1	0	2	2.78%
Not Reported	0	0	1	0	1	1.39%
Student	0	0	6	11	17	23.61%
Total	10	31	17	14	72	100.0%
Disability Declared	0	0	0	1		

What does the data tell us?

- The number of men and women accessing the service is consistent with the social work demographic Wales with a ratio of 4:1 women to men.
- Highest use of the service is in the 40-49 age bracket and this also reflects the average age of social workers in Wales at 46 years.
- Most users of the service work in a local authority
- After frontline social workers, the highest use of the service is from the student population.

Risks and challenges

Awareness of the service is increasing but we need to maintain this. We continue to reflect on our branding, media communications pack and digital asset development. Having engaged with a wide range of stakeholders we will focus on some specific areas of practice if our funding continues. Social Care Wales Wellbeing Hub has excellent resources on it, but we remain in conversation about making the social work professional support service more visible on the platform.

- **Booking additional sessions**

We have started recommending to coaches to book next sessions at the end of the first session with people using the service as this improves the number of additional sessions taken up.

- **2022-23**

This service is the only support service in Wales specifically for social workers. Its value lies in the delivery of that service through social workers themselves. Since the service started in November 2021 uptake of the service is growing incrementally.

BASW Cymru would hope that the Welsh Government will agree to fund the service for an additional year, especially as we move into post covid recovery at a time of increasing global unrest and a cost-of-living crisis, both of which are likely to bring even greater challenges to the profession.

In initial discussion with BASW's Head of Business, a reasonable estimate of the resource that would be required to deliver the service in the next financial year sits at £95,000 plus VAT. Kate O'Regan will deliver a business case to Welsh Government by the beginning of April, outlining this.

Communication strategy

We continue to liaise with stakeholders and plug the service on a regular basis, sharing revised media packs for promotion amongst their respective networks as appropriate.

Social Care Wales and Association of Directors of Social Services, Cymru promoted the service via their e-bulletin communications on a regular basis. We believe this was a significant support and increased numbers of registrations for the service.

On social media platforms, content detailing the recruitment of Welsh coaches was engaged with the highest, alongside graphics that shared quotes from people who have used the service. This suggests that future comms should model a similar approach, with social workers engaging particularly with quotes from peers.

We have not yet explored the development of service ambassadors to raise the profile of the service but intend to do this, particularly in local authorities and social work qualifying programmes if we receive onward funding.

Our objectives for 2022/23

- 1** Promote and increase access to the service for all social workers.
 - 2** Develop our messaging to encourage more people to be willing to accept coaching support as part of a healthy working life.
 - 3** Focus the service on the specific needs of newly qualified and student social workers to support retention and recruitment.
 - 4** Explore possibilities to frame the service as also supporting leadership development
 - 5** Bring a business case funding for the service for 2022-23 to the Welsh Government.
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