

# Children's Social Care Budgets

A survey of lead members for children's services

February 2019



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## Acknowledgements

The Local Government Association (LGA) Research and Information team would like to thank all the lead members for children's services who took part in this survey.

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## Summary

In February 2019, the Local Government Association (LGA) invited all lead members for children's services in England to complete a short survey about the current pressures facing children's social care in their local areas. The aim of the survey was to gather evidence ahead of an anticipated Spending Review in late 2019, and also to inform future work on the LGA's Bright Futures campaign which calls for properly-funded children's services. Lead members were invited to share their personal reflections on three key areas: social care budgets for children and young people; children looked after and child protection pressures; and budget confidence.

## Methodology

An online survey was sent to all lead members for children's services in England (152 local authorities). The survey was in the field between 15 February and 27 March 2019. A total of 76 lead members responded – a response rate of 50 per cent.

## Key messages

- **Budget savings:** In 2015/16, 59 per cent of councils had made savings that had impacted on their children's social care budgets to a significant degree (i.e. 'materially changed') – 57 per cent had done so in 2016/17 and 63 per cent in 2017/18.
- **Savings outcomes:** The material savings made by councils had resulted in a range of outcomes for children's social care – including better targeting of services (selected by 67 per cent of lead members for children's services) and better service efficiency (selected by 53 per cent of lead members for children's services).
- **Budget sufficiency:** 64 cent of lead members for children's services said their council's 2018/19 budget for children's social care was insufficient to meet actual levels of spending.
- **Risks posed:** The risk posed to children's social care due to budget shortfalls in 2018/19 was 'severe/significant', according to 47 per cent of lead members for children's services.
- **Confidence in delivery:** Based on current funding levels, lead members' confidence in the sufficiency of their council's budget to deliver all its desired children's services was considerably lower for 2021/22 than for 2019/20 – 24 per cent of lead members were 'very confident' or 'fairly confident' with regards to 2021/22, whereas the proportion was 61 per cent for 2019/20.
- **Number of cases:** 64 per cent of lead members for children's services said the number or complexity of need of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services had increased 'to a great extent' since 2015/16.

- **Contributing factors:** 81 per cent of lead members who reported a ‘great’ or ‘moderate’ increase in the number or complexity of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services attributed this rise to an ‘increase in family conflict’ (e.g. domestic abuse, substance misuse and offending) – and 70 per cent said an ‘increase in family hardship’ had played a part (e.g. poverty, poor housing and debt).
- **Main factor:** 31 per cent of lead members for children’s services said ‘an increase in family hardship’ had contributed most heavily to the increase in the number or complexity of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services – and 30 per cent felt the biggest contributing factor was an ‘increase in family conflict’.
- **Demand for looked after children services:** The increase in demand for looked after children services at the end of March 2020 was predicted to be ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ by 59 per cent of lead members working in councils that had undertaken work to project demand. The increase in demand for 2021 and 2022 was said to be either ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ by 42 per cent of lead members.
- **Demand for child protection plan services:** Increase in demand for child protection plan services at the end of March 2020 was predicted to be ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ by 55 per cent of lead members working in councils that had undertaken work to project demand. The increase in demand by the end of 2021 was said to be ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ by 40 per cent of lead members, and 36 per cent said it would be ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ by the end of March 2022.
- **Coping with demand:** 62 per cent of lead members who indicated a ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ increase in demand for looked after children and/or child protection plan services in the next five years felt their council would not have adequate resources to cope with this increase without cutting services.
- **Main pressure:** ‘Increased complexity of need’ was ranked as highest issue facing children’s social care budget in 2019/20.
- **Budget sufficiency:** A decrease was observed in lead members’ confidence in their council’s ability to meet five key duties (child protection, children in need, children leaving care and both targeted and universal early help) over the next three years, for example, confidence in the council’s ability to provide ‘a sufficient range of targeted early help provision’ dropped by 33 percentage points between 2019/20 and 2021/22.
- **Financial state of children’s services:** 46 per cent of lead members for children’s services were either ‘fairly pessimistic’ or ‘very pessimistic’ about the financial state of children’s services in their area over the next 12 months, whereas 32 per cent were ‘fairly optimistic’ and one per cent was ‘very optimistic’.

## Introduction

In February 2019, the Local Government Association (LGA) invited all lead members for children’s services in England to complete a short survey about the current pressures facing children’s social care in their local areas. The aim of the survey was to gather evidence ahead of an anticipated Spending Review in late 2019, and also to inform future work on the LGA’s Bright Futures campaign which calls for properly-funded children’s services. Lead members were invited to share their personal reflections on three key areas: social care budgets for children and young people; children looked after and child protection pressures; and budget confidence.

## Methodology

An online survey was sent to all lead members for children’s services in England (152 local authorities). The survey was in the field between 15 February and 27 March 2019. A total of 76 lead members responded (50 per cent response rate).

Responses were received from between 33 and 78 per cent of authority types (see Table 1). London boroughs represented the lowest proportion of responses, and shire counties the highest. Between 33 and 79 per cent of councils per region replied (33 per cent of London boroughs and 79 per cent of West Midlands councils) – see Table 2.

The information collected has been aggregated, and no individuals or authorities are identified in this report. Due to the size of the response, the results should be taken as a snapshot of the views of all local authorities in England, rather than as representative picture overall.

Sample size figures are shown in tables to allow readers to see the basis on which the figures have been calculated. Where sample sizes total less than 50, absolute numbers are reported alongside percentage values.

**Table 1: Response rate by authority type**

	<b>Number of responding councils</b>	<b>Total number of councils</b>	<b>Response rate %</b>
Shire County	21	27	78
English Unitary	27	56	48
Metropolitan District	17	36	47
London Borough	11	33	33
Total	76	152	50

**Table 2: Response rate by region**

	<b>Number of responding councils</b>	<b>Total number of councils</b>	<b>Response rate %</b>
East Midlands	5	9	56
East of England	8	11	73
London	11	33	33
North East	5	12	42
North West	9	23	39
South East	10	19	53
South West	10	16	63
West Midlands	11	14	79
Yorkshire and Humber	7	15	47
Total	76	152	50

# Children's Social Care Budget Survey

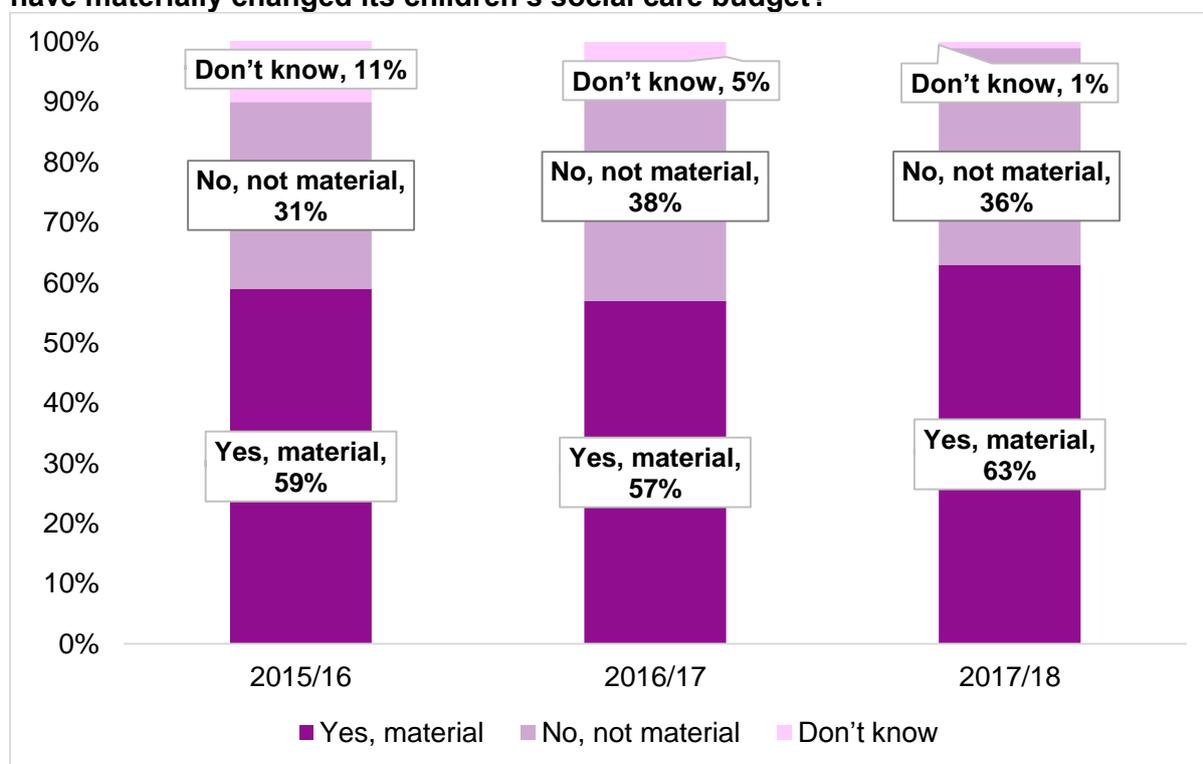
This section provides full results for each survey question.

## Social care budgets for children and young people

### Budget savings

Between 2015/16 and 2017/18, most responding councils had made savings that had impacted on their children's social care budgets to a significant degree (i.e. 'materially changed' this budget element).<sup>1</sup> Fifty nine per cent of lead members for children services said their council had made such savings in 2015/16, 57 per cent had done so in 2016/17 and 63 per cent had done so in 2017/18. See Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Thinking about the past 3 years, has your council made any savings that have materially changed its children's social care budget?**



Base: (all lead members) 2015/16 (75), 2016/17 (76), 2017/18 (75)

<sup>1</sup> This question asked about savings that reduced the services provided to children and young people. It is possible that a council may have made savings that did not reduce services, for instance, administrative changes.

## Savings outcomes

The material savings made by councils had resulted in a range of outcomes for children’s social care. Sixty seven per cent of the lead members who had indicated that material savings had been made said ‘services had become better targeted’, 53 per cent said ‘services had become more efficient’, whereas 47 per cent said the ‘numbers of children in care had increased’ (see Table 3).

**Table 3: In your view, what has been the result of these savings for children’s social care?**

	Per cent
Services have become better targeted	67
Services have become more efficient	53
Numbers of children in care have increased	47
Social worker caseloads have increased	35
Numbers of children on child protection plans have increased	33
Fewer people can access children’s social care services	12
Quality of life for local children is worse	11
Children in care receive lower quality support	4
Other (please state)	14
No or minimal impacts	0

Base: (all lead members who said material savings had been achieved) 57. (Respondents could give more than one answer.)

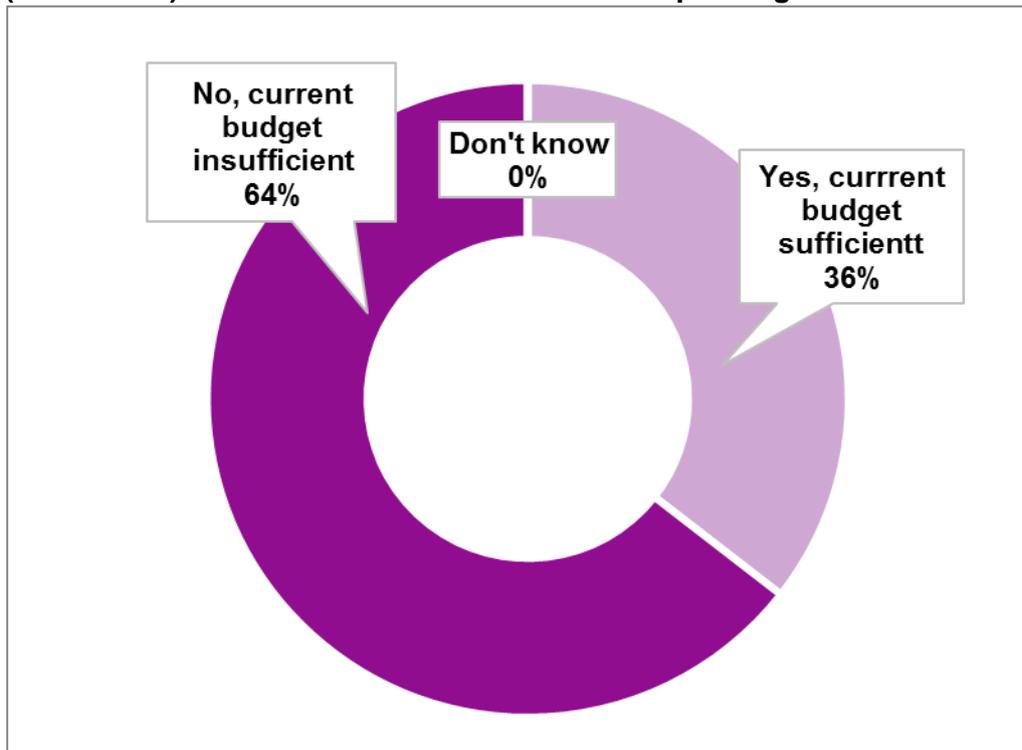
The ‘other’ results of material savings within children’s social care reported by lead members for children’s services were:

- “Effects overtaken by a change in direction.”
- “Positive impact on the quality of data.”
- “Numbers of children looked after have decreased.”
- “Whilst it cannot be directly linked to the effect of making savings, children in care have increased, child protection plans have increased as have caseloads.”
- “On-off funding has been used.”
- “Budget overspend.”
- “Savings have been hard to achieve, leading to budget overspends.”
- “More demand on children’s centres that have much tighter budgets, with staff feeling the strain of the increase in work.”

## Budget sufficiency

Councils' current budgets (2018/19) for children's social care were insufficient to meet actual levels of spending, according to almost two thirds (64 per cent) of lead members for children's services, compared to 36 per cent who said their council's budget was sufficient (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2: In your opinion, is your council's current budget for children's social care (i.e. 2018/19) sufficient to meet actual levels of spending?**

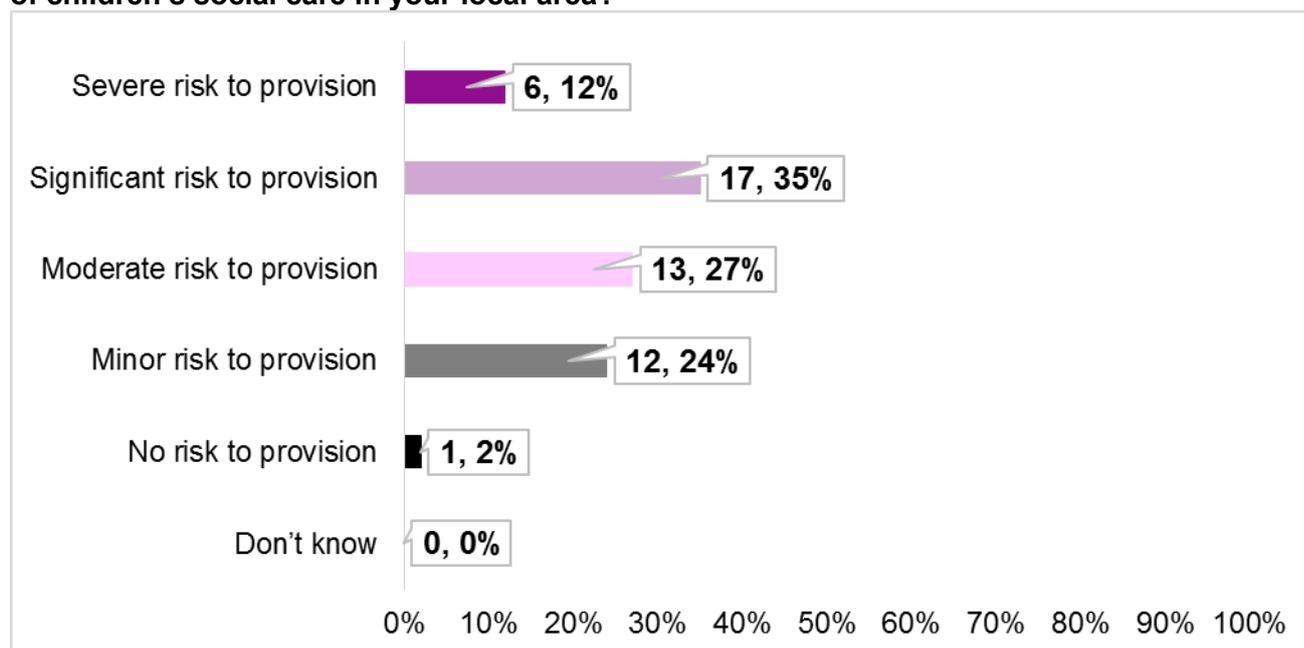


Base: (all lead members) 76

## Risks posed by budget shortfalls

There was a 'severe/significant' level of risk posed to children's social care locally, according to 47 per cent of those lead members for children's services who anticipated a budget shortfall in their council in 2018/19, compared to 51 per cent of lead members who anticipated 'moderate/minor risk' (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3: What level of risk does the anticipated budget shortfall pose to the provision of children’s social care in your local area?**



Base: (all leaders members who said their budget was not sufficient to meet actual levels of spending) 49

### Proposed savings

Looking ahead to 2019/20, a range of savings had been proposed by councils for children’s social care. For example, 79 per cent of councils were proposing ‘developing early help/edge of care services to reduce pressure on child protection services (demand management)’, 67 per cent of councils were proposing to ‘improve the commissioning of external providers’ and 66 per cent were proposing ‘changing the delivery of services’. See Table 4.

**Table 4: Looking ahead to the forthcoming financial year (i.e. 2019/2020), which of the following savings, if any, is your council proposing for children’s social care?**

	Per cent
Developing early help/edge of care services to reduce pressure on child protection services (demand management)	79
Improved commissioning of external providers	67
Changing the delivery of services	66
Doing more for less (efficiency)	51
Reducing non-statutory services (e.g. early help, youth services etc.)	36
Other (please state)	8
No savings proposals	8

Base: (all lead members) 76. (Respondents could give more than one answer.)

The 'other' proposed savings reported by lead members for children's services in the forthcoming financial year were:

- "Developing an innovation strategy with Barnardo's."
- "Investment is targeted at crisis care."
- "Moved to a digital operating model, new hardware rolled out, systemic social work practice training and cascading to all staff, liquid logic being installed and will be live October 2019, recruited permanent staff rather than locums."
- "Increasing the children and young people budget."
- "We have allocated £7.7m to recruit 160 new staff."
- "Reducing agency staff, increasing number of internal foster carers."

### **Pressures requiring efficiencies**

Lead members were asked to detail any pressures facing children's social care in 2019/20 that were likely to require efficiencies but unlikely to result in financial savings, for their council. Forty seven responses were received. The key themes were:

- **Increase in numbers and complexity of need:** Nine lead members identified the pressures they were experiencing as a result of the increasing numbers using children's services, including older children. Authorities mentioned a growth in need and the complexity of need, and also an increase in the number of children in care.
- **External and other placements:** Eight lead members mentioned the pressure of external placements, such as the pressure of managing placement costs and also in finding additional foster carers to meet the current demand. For example, one lead member said: "There are continuing risks associated with growing numbers of children in care (even though we are looking after fewer per 10,000 than similar authorities) and shortages of foster placements."
- **Looked after children and children in residential care:** Eight lead members said they were experiencing an increase in the numbers of children in care and the cost of these placements was mentioned as a pressure.
- **Increasing costs of social care:** Seven respondents mentioned the increasing costs of providing social care for a growing number in need. For example, a lead member said: "The increasing cost of social care is using up our reserves and having to be found from savings in other areas of the council."
- **SEND (special educational needs and disability) referrals:** Four lead members mentioned an increase in SEND referrals and the costs associated with these. A lead member referred to: "Cost shunts from education and health e.g. mental health, SEND."
- **Social workers:** Four lead members identified pressures around social workers such as a lack of qualified social workers, an inability to recruit

sufficient numbers and that increased capacity was needed to undertake children in need assessments.

- **Reviewing, improving and investing:** Three lead members said their councils were either investing in children's services to meet demand, had undertaken a review of services or were undertaking work to improve practice.
- **Asylum seeking children:** Three lead members mentioned the pressures of supporting asylum seeking children, including a shortfall in government funding for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC).
- **Reducing and stalling development of other services:** Three lead members said due to increasing pressure in children's services their councils had made savings by either not improving or developing other services or by reducing these.

Between one and two lead members reported pressures in the following areas:

- disabled children's services
- early help
- school transport
- education, Health and Care Plan
- demographic pressures
- recruitment and retention
- universal Credit
- foster care (agency costs)
- company development
- adult safeguarding
- out of county placement costs
- preventative work.

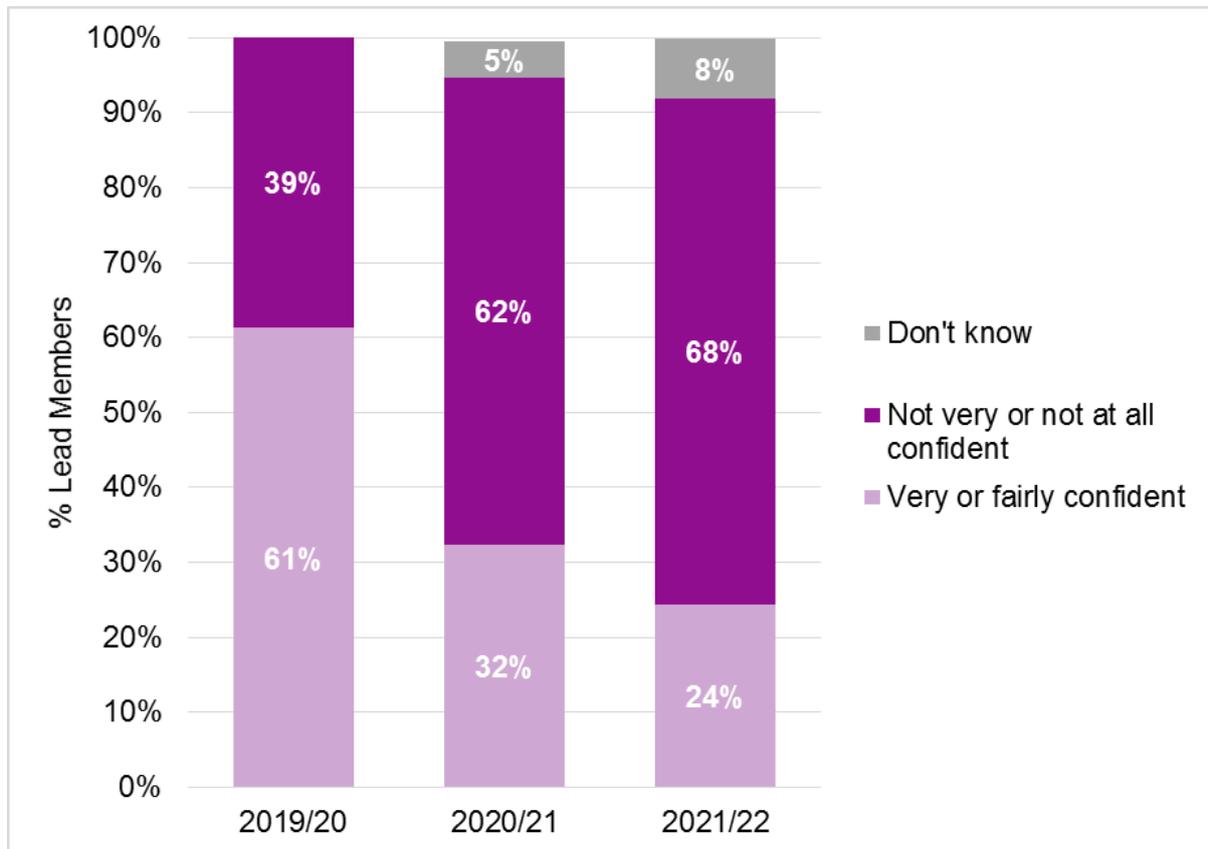
### **Confidence in delivery**

Looking ahead to 2021/22, 68 per cent of lead members for children's services were either 'not very confident' (35 per cent) or 'not at all confident' (32 per cent) that their council's budget would be sufficient enough to deliver all its desired children's services, based on current funding.<sup>2</sup> The figure was similarly high for 2020/21 – 34 per cent of lead members were 'not very confident' and 28 per cent were 'not at all confident'. Confidence was higher for 2019/20, with 17 per cent of lead members 'very confident' and 44 per cent 'fairly confident' (see Figure 4 and Annex B for full results).

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<sup>2</sup> The figure of 68 per cent is based on 50 out of 74 respondents, whereas the individual responses for 'not very confident' and 'not at all confident' appear to sum 67 per cent.

**Figure 4: On the basis of current funding, how confident are you, if at all, that your council's budget will be sufficient enough to deliver all its desired children's services in the following years?**



Base: (all lead members) 2019/20, 75; 2020/21, 74; 2021/22, 74

## Children looked after and child protection pressures

### Number of cases

The number or complexity of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services had increased 'to a great extent' since 2015/16, according to almost two thirds of lead members (64 per cent) – and 'to a moderate extent' in a further 30 per cent of responding councils (see Table 5).

**Table 5: Looking back over the past 3 years (i.e. since 2015/16), to what extent has your council seen an overall increase in the number or complexity of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services?**

	Per cent
To a great extent	64
To a moderate extent	30
To a small extent	5
Not at all	1
Don't know	0

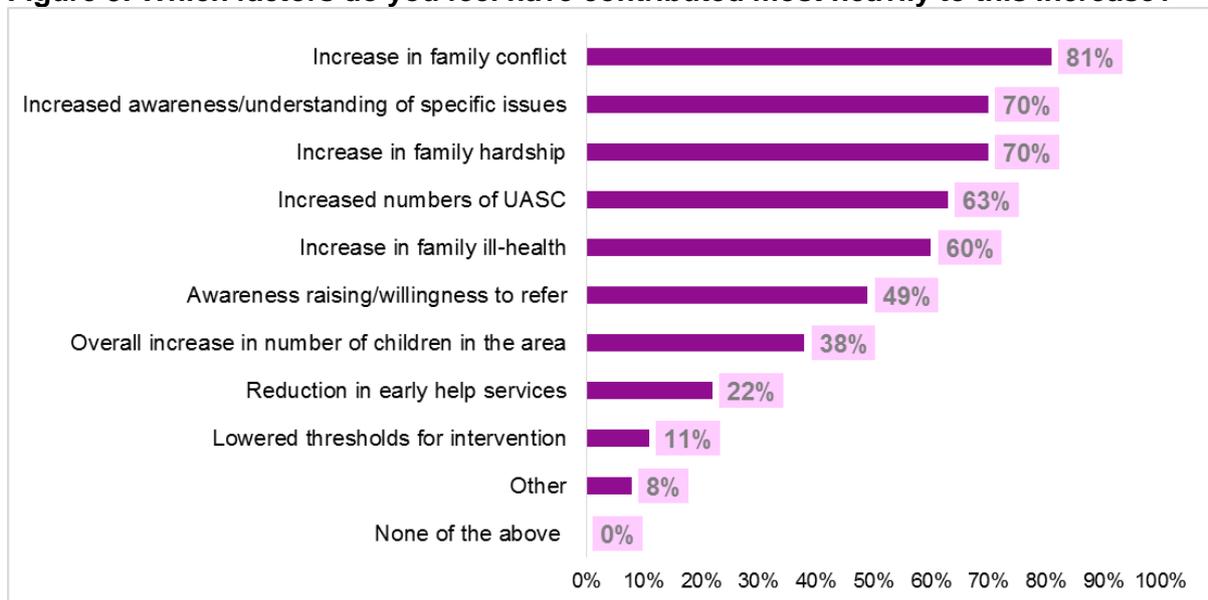
Base: (all lead members) 74

### Factors contributing to rise

Lead members who reported either a 'great' or 'moderate' increase in the number or complexity of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services were asked to select the factors that had contributed most heavily to this increase (see Figure 5).

Eighty one per cent attributed the rise to an 'increase in family conflict', for instance, domestic abuse, substance misuse and offending. Seventy per cent said 'an increase in family hardship' such as poverty, poor housing and debt had played a part. An 'increased awareness/understanding of specific issues' such as child sexual exploitation and county lines was also selected by 70 per cent of lead members.

**Figure 5: Which factors do you feel have contributed most heavily to this increase?**



Base: (all respondents who reported a great or moderate increase in those receiving child protection or looked after children services) 73

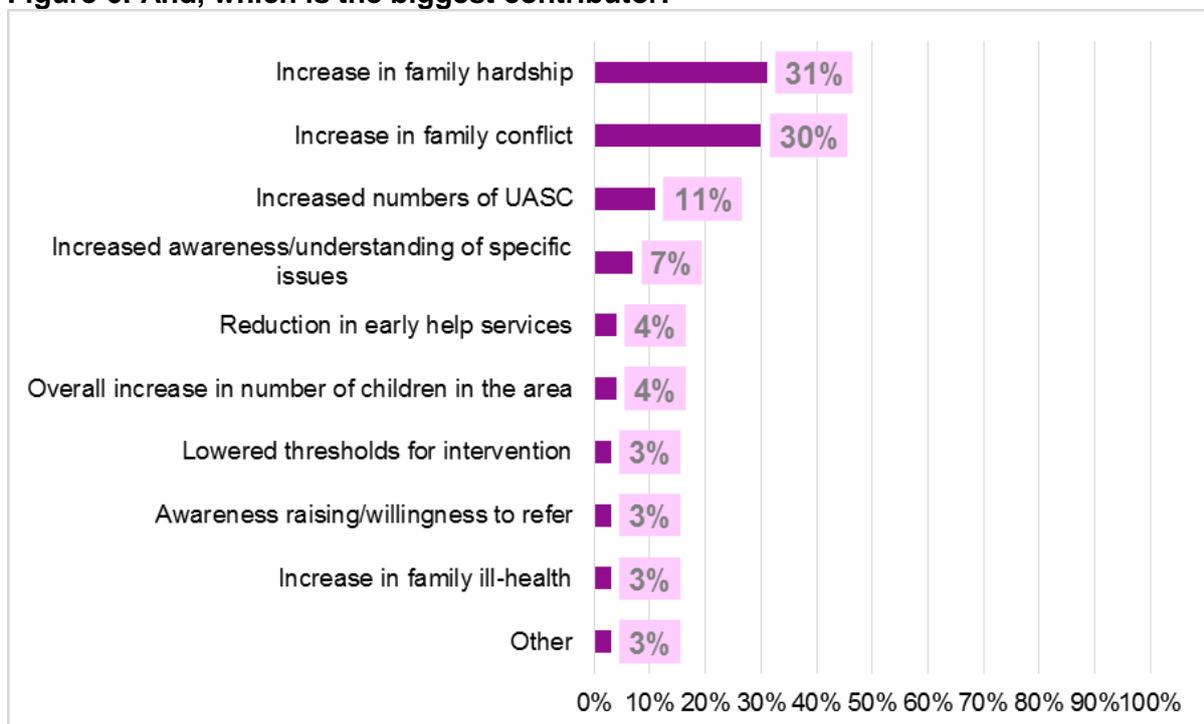
The ‘other’ factors which some lead members felt had contributed heavily to the increase in the number or complexity of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services were:

- “Being in intervention of Department of Education.”
- “Reduction in other services e.g. police, youth work (including voluntary sector).”
- “Poor practice in Early Help.”
- “The impact of the loss of community based early help services run by the voluntary community services.”
- “[Being a]...dispersal area for migrant families...”
- “Recruitment of social workers to process children through care system.”

### Main contributing factor

An ‘increase in family hardship’ – including poverty, poor housing and debt – had contributed most heavily to the increase in the number or complexity of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services, according to 31 per cent of lead members. A further 30 per cent of lead members felt the biggest contributing factor was ‘an increase in family conflict’ such as domestic abuse, substance misuse and offending, where 11 per cent selected ‘increased numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children’. ‘Other’ contributing factors were the recruitment of social workers and migrant family dispersal issues. See Figure 6.

**Figure 6: And, which is the biggest contributor:**



Base: (all lead members who indicated the factors most heavily contributing to a great or moderate increase in those receiving child protection or looked after children services) 70

## Future demand

More than eight out of ten (81 per cent) lead members for children’s services said their council had undertaken work to project demand for children’s social care across the next 5 years (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Thinking about children’s social care in the next 5 years, has your council undertaken any work to project demand for these services?**

	Per cent
Yes	81
No	9
Don’t know	9

Base: (all lead members) 74

## Demand for looked after children services

Lead members from councils that had undertaken work to project demand for children’s social care services were asked to specify the level to which demand was likely to change in the next five years, in their local area. Increase in demand for children looked after at the end of March 2020 was predicted to be ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ by 59 per cent of lead members. Increase in demand for the proceeding two years was said to be either ‘significant’ or ‘moderate’ by 42 per cent of lead members for both 2021 and 2022, see Table 7.

**Table 7: Please specify the level to which demand for children’s social care in your local area is likely to change in the next 5 years:<sup>3</sup> Looked After Children**

	31-Mar-18		31-Mar-19		31-Mar-20		31-Mar-21		31-Mar-22	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Significant increase	14	27	17	31	10	20	8	17	11	23
Moderate increase	22	43	13	24	19	39	12	25	9	19
Minor increase	7	14	13	24	10	20	11	23	10	21
No increase	7	14	7	13	7	14	6	13	6	13
Don’t know	1	2	4	7	3	6	11	23	12	25

Base: (all lead members in councils where work had taken place to project demand for services for looked after children and child protection plans) 31-Mar-18 (51), 31-Mar-19 (54), 31-Mar-20, (49), 31-Mar-21 (48), 31-Mar-22 (48)

<sup>3</sup> This date reflects the survey administration period of February to March 2019.

## Demand for child protection plan services

The increase in demand for child protection plan services at the end of March 2020 was predicted to be 'significant' or 'moderate' by 55 per cent of lead members. Increase in demand for the proceeding two years was said to be 'significant' or 'moderate' by 40 per cent of lead members by the end of March 2021 and by 36 per cent of lead members by the end of March 2022, see Table 8.

**Table 8: Please specify the level to which demand for children's social care in your local area is likely to change in the next 5 years:<sup>4</sup> Child Protection Plans**

	31-Mar-18		31-Mar-19		31-Mar-20		31-Mar-21		31-Mar-22	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Significant increase	12	23	15	28	10	21	7	16	8	18
Moderate increase	25	47	17	31	16	34	11	24	8	18
Minor increase	7	13	11	20	11	23	10	22	11	24
No increase	7	13	7	13	5	11	5	11	4	9
Don't know	2	4	4	7	5	11	12	27	14	31

Base: (all lead members in councils where work had taken place to project demand for services for looked after children and child protection plans) 31-Mar-18 (53), 31-Mar-19 (54), 31-Mar-20 (47); 31-Mar-21 (45); 31-Mar-22 (45)

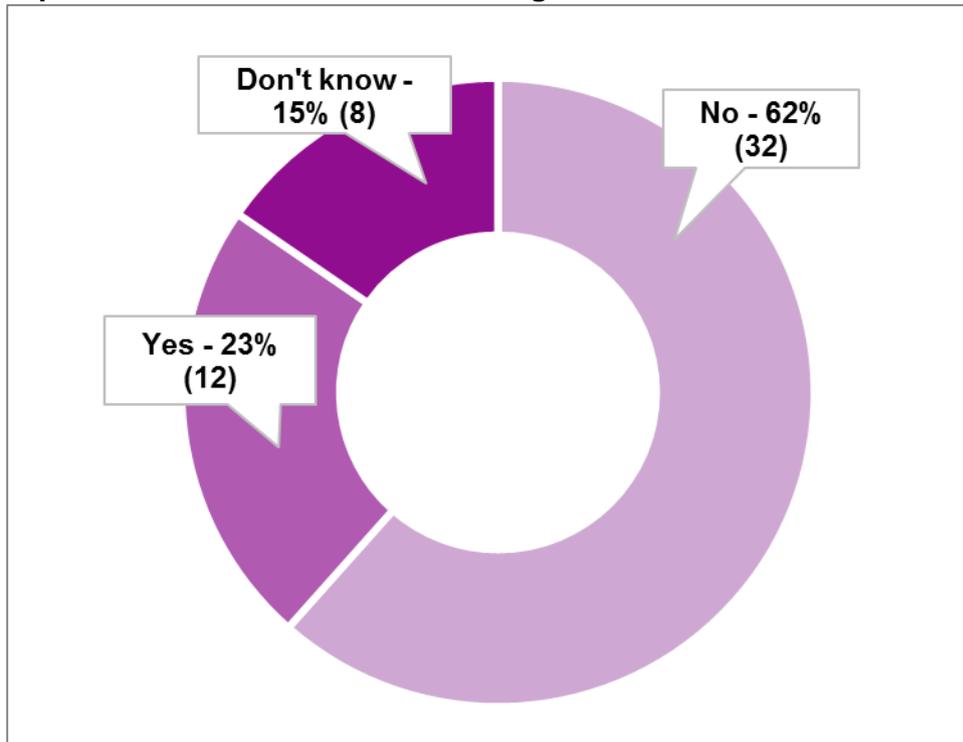
## Coping with demand

Lead members who indicated a 'significant' or 'moderate' increase in demand for either looked after children and/or child protection plan services in the next five years were asked if their council would have adequate resources to cope with this increase without cutting services. Sixty two per cent of lead members said their council would not have adequate resources to cope, whereas 23 per cent of lead members felt resources were adequate and 15 per cent of lead members were unsure (see Table 7).

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<sup>4</sup> This date reflects the survey administration period of February to March 2019.

**Figure 7: In your opinion, do you think your council will have adequate resources to cope with this increase without cutting services?**

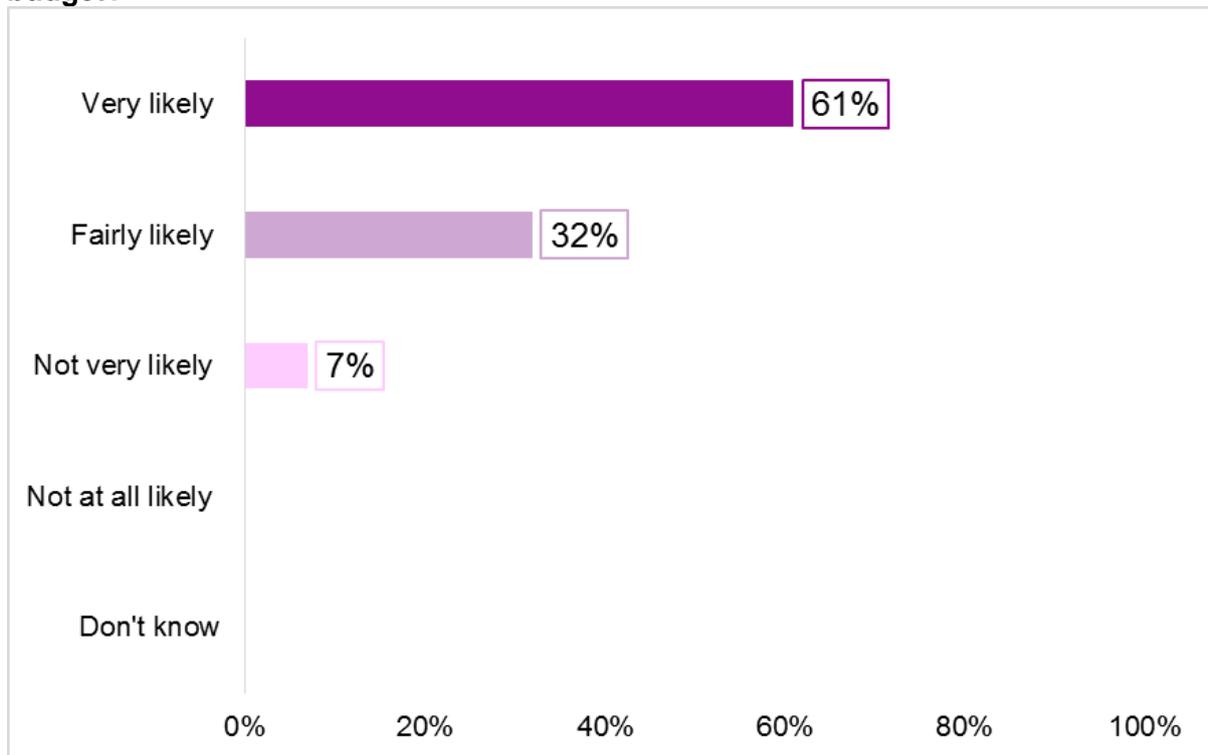


Base: (all lead members who indicated a 'significant' or 'moderate' increase in demand for either looked after children and/or child protection plan services in the next 5 years) 52

### Budget confidence

According to 61 per cent of lead members, the possibility of local councils facing financial pressures on their children's social care budgets in 2019/20 was 'very likely', and a further 32 per cent said such pressures were 'fairly likely'. Seven per cent of lead members said it was 'not very likely' their council would face financial pressure on its children's social care budget (see Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Thinking about the forthcoming financial year (i.e. 2019/20), what is the likelihood that your council will face financial pressures on its children’s social care budget?**



Base: (all lead members) 74

### **Main pressures**

'Increased complexity of need' was ranked as the highest issue facing children’s social care budget in 2019/20, according to the lead members for children’s services, followed by 'increased demand for child protection services'. Table 9 shows the average score for each item – the lower the score, the higher the pressure.

**Table 9: In terms of next year’s financial pressures, please rank the following items in order from 1 to 7.**

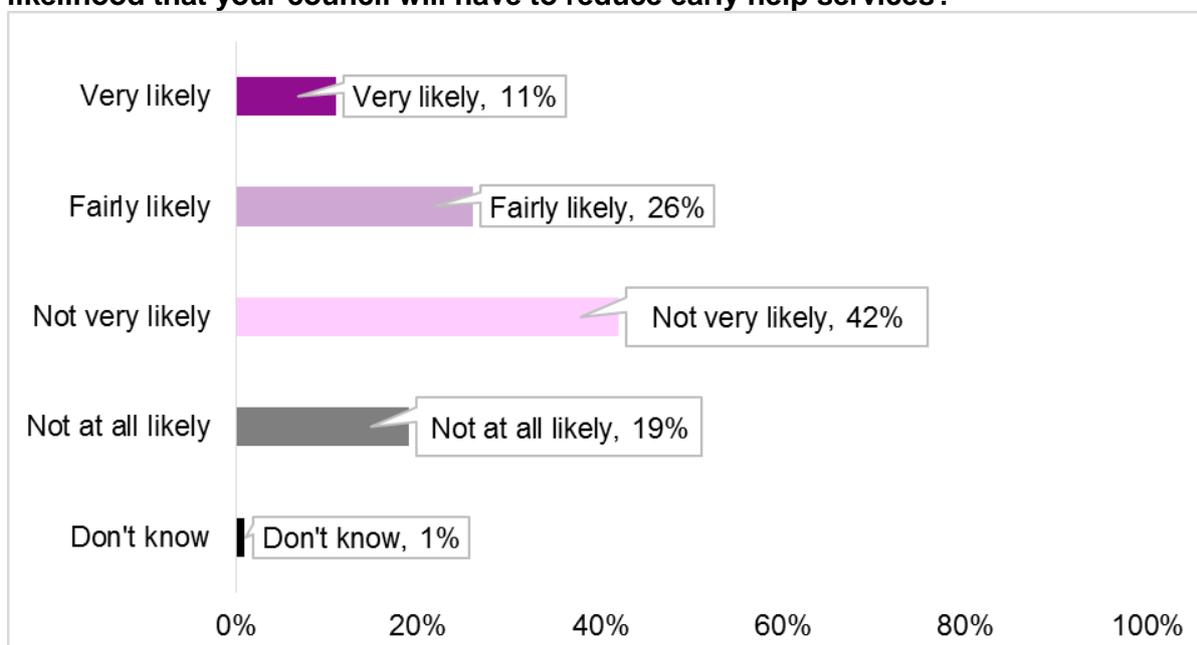
	Average score
Increased complexity of need	2.4
Increased demand for child protection services	3.4
Increased cost from unfunded (or underfunded) statutory requirements	3.8
Reducing capacity in the market driving up cost of external providers	4.1
Increased use of external placements	4.4
Demographic pressures (i.e. greater number of children and young people in the local area)	4.5
Increased use of temporary staff	5.5

Base: (all lead members who indicated that it was very or fairly likely that their council will face financial pressures on its children’s social care budget in 2019/20). 68. Respondents were asked to rank the financial pressures presented, with 1 being the greatest. The lower the score, the higher the pressure. Only respondents answering in full were included in the average score calculation.

### Reductions to early help

According to 37 per cent of lead members, it was ‘very likely’ or ‘fairly likely’ that their council would have to reduce early help services in 2019/20 – whereas 42 per cent said this scenario was ‘not very likely’ and 19 per cent said it was ‘not at all likely’ (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Thinking about the forthcoming financial year (i.e. 2019/20), what is the likelihood that your council will have to reduce early help services?**



Base: (all lead members) 73

## Examples of cuts to early help

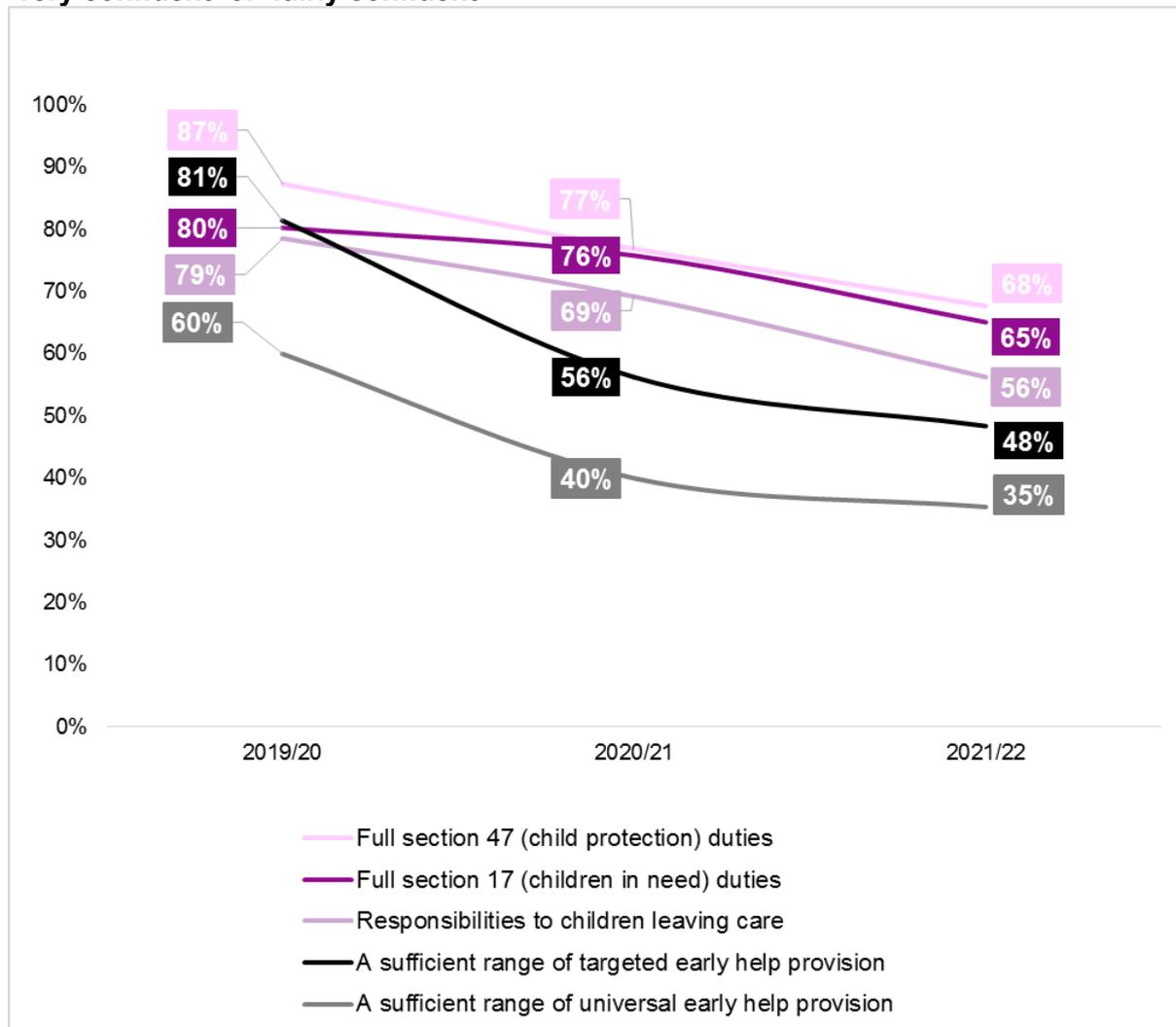
Lead members for children’s services who anticipated that their council would ‘very likely’ or ‘fairly likely’ have to reduce early help services were asked to provide examples of how the services would be reduced or stopped altogether. The free text responses received are shown in Table 10.

Table 10: Please provide examples below of any early help services that may be cut or stopped altogether:	
<b>Reductions to or cessation of physical sites:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Reduction in the number of children’s centres.”</li> <li>• “Likely that physical locations will be reduced i.e. children family centre, and more digital use will be use.”</li> <li>• “Reduced number of children’s centres and creation of fewer but larger children and families centres.”</li> <li>• “Some of the early help centres have already closed...”</li> <li>• “Reductions in the offer from family hubs.”</li> <li>• “Children’s Centres [cut]. No youth services. Less help for families. All statutory duties delivered using lowest common denominator.”</li> </ul>
<b>Closure of Troubled Families programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Our early help hubs (locality teams) are funded from the original Troubled Families budget and this is due to go in 2020. We have a £4m budget gap for children’s centres from 2020 that we will need to address. SEND provision is reducing as schools in particular cut staff.”</li> <li>• “The Troubled Families programme is under threat amid funding uncertainty in 2020.”</li> <li>• “Children’s centres, early help practitioner if troubled families programme ceases.”</li> </ul>
<b>Other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Reduction in targeted early help staff, reduction in one to one work with a focus on group work to maintain reach.”</li> <li>• “Likely to cease our Parents under Pressure programme as this is not considered cost-effective...”</li> <li>• “Divisional-based Intervention Service. Family Solutions. Family Innovation Fund. Reducing children with disabilities and respite provision for families.”</li> <li>• “Educational financial pressures linked to early years settings.”</li> <li>• “Early intervention.”</li> <li>• “Young people’s services, early years.”</li> <li>• “Sure Start and autism assessments.”</li> <li>• “We are reducing budget by 10 per cent.”</li> </ul>

## Budget sufficiency

Figure 10 shows the proportion of lead members who were ‘very confident’ or ‘fairly confident’ that their council’s budget would be sufficient to meet various duties within children’s social care between 2019/20 and 2021/22 (see Annex C for a full set of tables). Across all five duties, lead members’ confidence in their council’s ability to meet these dropped between 2019/20 and 2021/22. Confidence in the ability of the council to provide ‘a sufficient range of targeted early help provision’ dropped by 33 percentage points, and confidence in the ability of the council to provide ‘a sufficient range of universal early help provision’ dropped by 25 percentage points.

**Figure 10: In your opinion, how confident are you that your council’s budget will be sufficient to meet the following duties for the next 3 years – lead members who were ‘very confident’ or ‘fairly confident’**

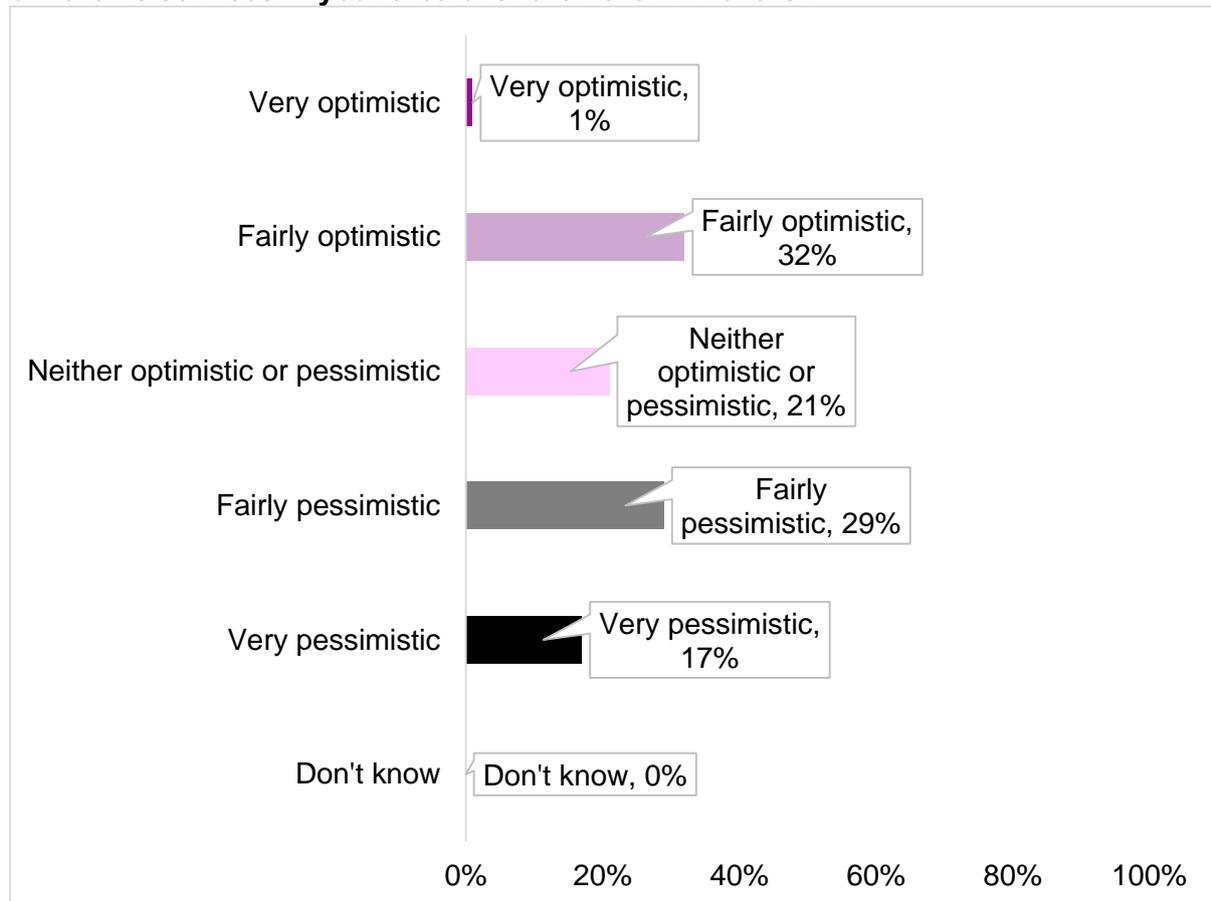


Base: (all lead members): see Annex C for full details

## Financial state of children's services

Forty six per cent of lead members for children's services were either 'fairly pessimistic' or 'very pessimistic' about the financial state of children's services in their area over the next 12 months, whereas 32 per cent were 'fairly optimistic' and one per cent was 'very optimistic'. A further 21 per cent were 'neither optimistic nor pessimistic' (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Overall, how optimistic or pessimistic are you about the financial state of children's services in your area over the next 12 months?**



Base: (all lead members) 72

## Annex A: Questionnaire

### Section 1: Social care budgets for children and young people

This section asks about:

- Savings and efficiencies
- Budget sufficiency and risks

1. Thinking about the past 3 years, has your council made any savings that have materially changed its children's social care budget?			
	Yes	No	Don't know
2015/16			
2016/17			
2017/18			

IF ANY SAVINGS ACHIEVED AT Q1 THEN
<b>1a. In your view, what has been the result of these savings for children's social care?</b>
<i>Please tick all that apply</i>
Services have become more efficient
Services have become better targeted
Fewer people can access children's social care services
Children in care receive lower quality support
Quality of life for local children is worse
Social worker caseloads have increased
Numbers of children in care have increased
Numbers of children on child protection plans have increased
Other (please state)
No or minimal impacts

2. In your opinion, is your council's current budget for children's social care (i.e. 2018/19) sufficient to meet actual levels of spending?
Yes
No
Don't know

IF NO AT Q2 THEN
<b>2a. What level of risk does the anticipated budget shortfall pose to the provision of children's social care in your local area?</b>
Severe
Significant
Moderate
Minor
No risk
Don't know

**3. Looking ahead to the forthcoming financial year (i.e. 2019/2020), which of the following savings, if any, is your council proposing for children's social care?**

*Please tick all that apply*

Doing more for less (efficiency)

Changing the delivery of services

Developing early help/edge of care services to reduce pressure on CP services (demand management)

Reducing non-statutory services (e.g. early help, youth services etc.).

Improved commissioning of external providers

Other (please state)

No savings proposals

**4. Please tell us about any pressures facing children's social care in 2019/20 that are likely to require efficiencies but unlikely to result in financial savings, for your council:**

--

**5. On the basis of current funding, how confident are you, if at all, that your council's budget will be sufficient enough to deliver all its desired children's services in the following years?**

	Very confident	Fairly confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know
2019/20					
2020/21					
2021/22					

**Section 2: Children looked after and child protection pressures**

This section asks about:

- Changes to the number/complexity of children and young people receiving children protection or looked after children services
- Future demand for children's social care services

**6. Looking back over the past 3 years (i.e. since 2015/16), to what extent has your council seen an overall increase in the number or complexity of children and young people receiving child protection or looked after children services?**

To a great extent

To a moderate extent

To a small extent

Not at all

Don't know

**IF ANY EXTENT AT Q6 THEN****6a. Which factors do you feel have contributed most heavily to this increase?***Please tick all that apply*

Overall increase in number of children in the area

Increase in family hardship (e.g. poverty, poor housing and debt)

Increase in family conflict (e.g. domestic abuse, substance misuse and offending)

Increase in family ill-health (e.g. mental health issues and long-term illnesses)

Awareness raising/willingness to refer

Reduction in early help services

Increased awareness/understanding of specific issues (e.g. CSE, county lines)

Increased numbers of unaccompanied asylum seeking children

Lowered thresholds for intervention

Other (please state)

None of the above

**IF ANY EXCEPT 'NONE' AT Q6a THEN****6b. And, which is the biggest contributor:**

Online survey will pull through answers given at Q6a

**7. Thinking about children's social care in the next 5 years, has your council undertaken any work to project demand for these services?**

Yes

No

Unsure

**IF YES AT Q7 THEN****7a. Please specify the level to which demand for children's social care in your local area is likely to change in the next 5 years:***Scale: Significant increase, Moderate increase, Minor increase, Minimal increase, No increase, Don't know*

	<b>Looked After Children</b>	<b>Child Protection Plans</b>
31 March 2018 (actual)		
31 March 2019 (if available)		
31 March 2020 (if available)		
31 March 2021 (if available)		
31 March 2022 (if available)		

**IF ANY INCREASE AT Q7a THEN****7b. In your opinion, do you think your council will have adequate resources to cope with this increase without cutting services?**

Yes

No

Don't know

### Section 3: Budget confidence

This section asks about:

- Specific financial pressures
- Reductions to early help services
- Confidence in meeting specific duties

<b>8. Thinking about the forthcoming financial year (i.e. 2019/20), what is the likelihood that your council will face financial pressures on its children's social care budget?</b>
Very likely
Fairly likely
Not very likely
Not at all likely
Don't know

<b>IF ANY LIKELY Q8 THEN</b>
<b>8a. In terms of next year's financial pressures, please rank the following items in order from 1 to 7.</b>
<i>Please rank 1 to 7, with 1 being the greatest financial pressure</i>
Demographic pressures (i.e. greater number of children and young people in the local area)
Increased demand for child protection services
Increased complexity of need
Increased use of temporary staff
Increased use of external placements
Reducing capacity in the market driving up cost of external providers
Increased cost from unfunded (or underfunded) statutory requirements

<b>9. Thinking about the forthcoming financial year (i.e. 2019/20), what is the likelihood that your council will have to reduce early help services?</b>
Very likely
Fairly likely
Not very likely
Not at all likely
Don't know

<b>IF VERY OR FAIRLY LIKELY AT Q9 THEN</b>
<b>9a. Please provide examples below of any early help services that may be cut or stopped altogether:</b>

<b>10. In your opinion, how confident are you that your council's budget will be sufficient to meet the following duties for the next 3 years:</b>			
<i>Scale: Very confident/Fairly confident/Not very confident/Not at all confident/Don't know</i>	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Full section 47 (child protection) duties			
Full section 17 (children in need) duties			
Responsibilities to children leaving care			
A sufficient range of targeted early help provision			
A sufficient range of universal early help provision			

<b>11. Overall, how optimistic or pessimistic are you about the financial state of children's services in your area over the next 12 months?</b>
Very optimistic
Fairly optimistic
Neither optimistic or pessimistic
Fairly pessimistic
Very pessimistic
Don't know

<b>12. Please indicate if you would be happy for the LGA to contact you about the themes covered in this survey:</b>
Yes, I'm happy to be contacted further
No, please do not contact me

Thank you for completing this survey. You are in control of any personal data that you have provided to us in your response. You can contact us at all times to have your information changed or deleted. You can find our full [privacy policy here](#).

## Annex B: Confidence in delivery – full tables

**A1: On the basis of current funding, how confident are you, if at all, that your council’s budget will be sufficient enough to deliver all its desired children’s services in the following years?**

	Very confident	Fairly confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don’t know
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
2019/20	17	44	17	21	0
2020/21	3	30	34	28	5
2021/22	3	22	35	32	8

Base: (all lead members) 2019/20, 75; 2020/21; 74; 2021/22; 74

## Annex C: Budget confidence – full tables

**A2: In your opinion, how confident are you that your council's budget will be sufficient to meet the following duties for the next 3 years:**

Full section 47 (child protection) duties	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Very confident	45	34	28
Fairly confident	42	43	40
Not very confident	7	14	17
Not at all confident	6	6	8
Don't know	0	3	8

Base: (all lead members) 2019/20 (71); 2020/21 (65); 2021/22 (65)

**A3: In your opinion, how confident are you that your council's budget will be sufficient to meet the following duties for the next 3 years:**

Full section 17 (children in need) duties	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Very confident	38	31	24
Fairly confident	42	45	41
Not very confident	11	15	19
Not at all confident	8	6	8
Don't know	0	3	8

Base: (all lead members) 2019/20 (71); 2020/21 (62); 2021/22 (63)

**A4: In your opinion, how confident are you that your council's budget will be sufficient to meet the following duties for the next 3 years:**

Responsibilities to children leaving care	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Very confident	37	28	19
Fairly confident	41	42	38
Not very confident	17	23	31
Not at all confident	4	5	5
Don't know	0	3	8

Base: (all lead members) 2019/20 (70); 2020/21 (65); 2021/22 (64)

**A5: In your opinion, how confident are you that your council's budget will be sufficient to meet the following duties for the next 3 years:**

A sufficient range of targeted early help provision	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Very confident	20	13	8
Fairly confident	61	44	40
Not very confident	14	31	32
Not at all confident	4	6	8
Don't know	0	6	11

Base: (all lead members) 2019/20 (70); 2020/21 (64); 2021/22 (62)

**A6: In your opinion, how confident are you that your council's budget will be sufficient to meet the following duties for the next 3 years:**

A sufficient range of universal early help provision	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	Per cent	Per cent	Per cent
Very confident	13	6	6
Fairly confident	47	34	29
Not very confident	29	40	35
Not at all confident	11	14	18
Don't know	0	6	11

Base: (all lead members) 2019/20 (70); 2020/21 (65); 2021/22 (65)



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