



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

SOCIAL WORKER OF THE YEAR AWARDS REPORT: Individual and Team Surveys

Developed by:
Prof Robin Miller
Dr Jason Schaub
Daisy King
March 2020

Introduction

This overview report provides analysis of the survey responses by previous winners of a Social Worker of the Year award, with surveys of both individual and team winners.

Surveys were completed by 8 team and 54 individual award winners. The team survey included 32 questions, and individual survey had 28 questions.

Outline of Report

This report outlines the findings and responses from both surveys. The first section outlines the individual award winners and is followed by the team award survey responses and analysis.

Individual Award Winners

Individual respondents generally described raised confidence, increased motivation and improved promotional opportunities as a result of winning the award. For example, 'One of the best days of my 40 year career in social work...'; and 'This was a very proud moment for me and my family. I have been in social work for 20 years and have faced many challenges but having won my award I feel privileged and honoured to continue.' In relation to promotion and career progression, one respondent suggested that, 'Since that the award validated the achievements attained leading to the award, encouraging me to apply for further promotion from the achievements in the role.'

Team Award Winners

Team responses identified that the award had raised the profile of the winning team, increased team morale, and promoted good practice. For example, 'The team has become more valued in the council, rather than being a specialist team, we are now called upon much more widely to advise practitioners.' A further respondent mentioned the impact the award had on recruitment, 'Employee's coming into the Local Authority made reference to the award and spoke about the positive profile of the service.'. Another finding was that respondents felt that the awards had a positive impact that lasted longer than the annual cycle for example, 'Winning the award was a significant moment for the service, having a positive impact that was longstanding, well after the event'.

Ambassador role

The majority of individual award respondents suggested they would be interested in being contacted about the 'Social Worker Award Ambassador' role, with 73.2% stating yes.

Conclusion

This survey suggests that the Social Worker of the Year awards are highly valued by recipients, have a positive impact on personal career opportunities, boost team morale, and raise the profile of good social work practice. Developing the role of 'Ambassador' may lead to further strengthening of these individual and collective impacts.

Individual Award Winner Survey

The individual award winner survey included five consent questions and three demographic questions, these were followed with eight multiple choice and free text questions that explore respondent’s experience of winning an award, and how they felt the award impacted on their career. Some late responses have been included in individual questions where they have not skewed the data, which means some questions have numbers greater than the total number of respondents.

Demographic Questions (Q 6-8)

Respondents: **54**

The demography of respondents broadly follows what we would expect for British social work, with a higher proportion of women than men, with the vast bulk of respondents between 30-60 years old, and the highest proportion between 50-60 years old. The ethnicity profile also matches that of the broader profession (DfE, 2019; Skills for Care, 2017)

Age	
20-30	5
30-40	11
40-50	11
50-60	17
60-70	7
70-80	1
Prefer not to say	2

Ethnicity	
African	2
Caribbean	1
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	46
Indian	1
Irish	1
Other Asian / Asian British background	2
Other White background	1

Gender	
Male	8
Female	46

Ethnicity percentages: 82.6% White; 17.4% BAME

Experiential Questions (Q 9 – 17)

The following section outlines the responses to the remaining survey questions. There were a range of free text responses which bolstered the multiple-choice answers. These qualitative answers allowed for a more in-depth understanding of respondents’ experience.

Most respondents described the award as having a positive impact; with 74% suggesting between moderate and a great deal (n=40). These respondents frequently suggested the award increased their confidence, helped them feel able to address complicated practice issues, and several mentioned they felt the award was influential in securing a promotion. For example, typical responses were similar to these quotes: *‘It helped me to feel more confident, I noticed that senior managers valued my opinions.’*; *‘I found that having won the award, it has given me the confidence to apply for jobs which I might have normally waited a*

little longer to apply for. Those who suggested little or no impact from the award often had an external factor, such as being retired.

Another general finding was respondents' belief that the awards promoted the profession of social work. One respondent stated, 'I think what I took away from the awards is that it helps to play a part in valuing the social work profession and it is an opportunity to share success and feel positive about our work with colleagues across the country.'

Of note is the pressure on funding and time experienced by social work services, and the impact on their employees, which directly affects their engagement with the awards. One respondent suggested that, 'My [local authority] struggled to justify the funding involved in attending the awards ceremony and haven't publicised the awards or encouraged workers to nominate.'

Q9 - Are you still employed in a social work-related role?

A majority of respondents are still employed in a social work role (92%, n=48), with a significantly smaller percentage responding negatively (8%, n=6).

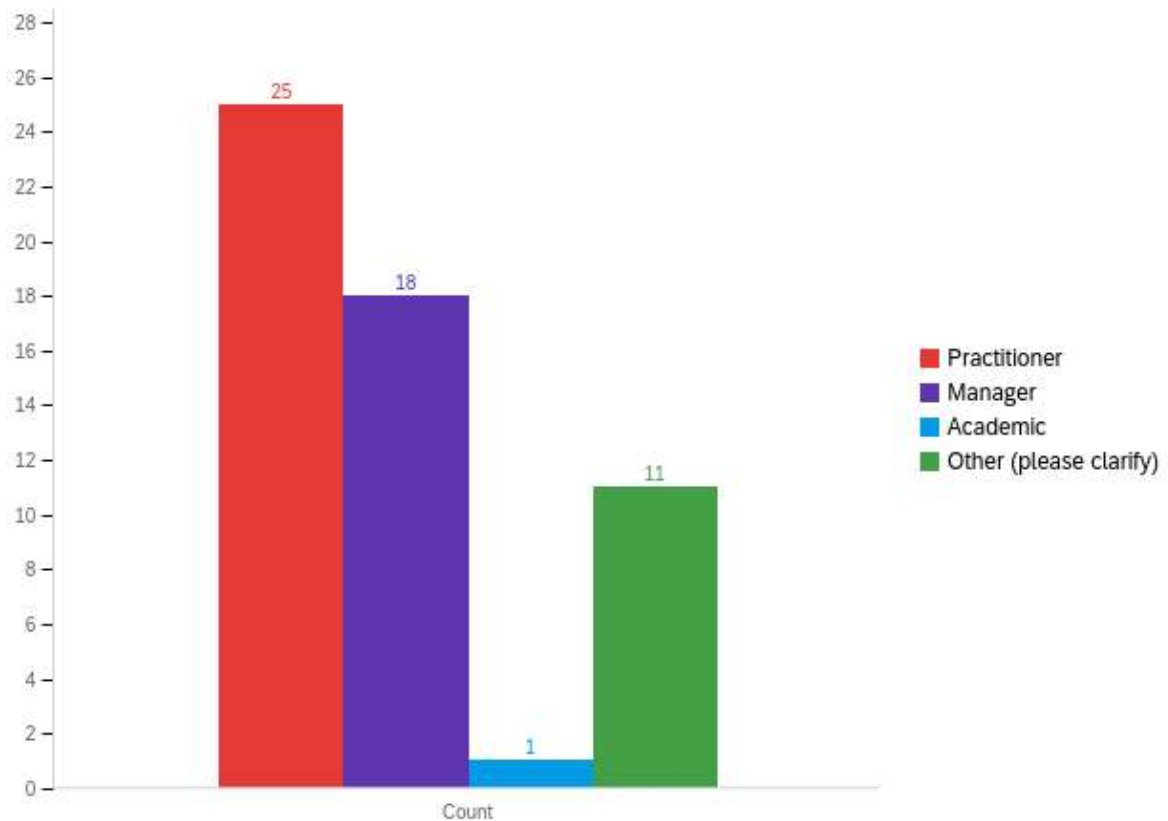
Q9a Are you still employed in the same role as when you won the individual award?

Respondents described being in a wide range of roles from front-line practice to Principal Social Worker and academic roles. Respondents that have left practice were most often retired.

No Answers given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retired (x3 response) • Semi-retired, in a related occupation • career break 	6
Yes Answers given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic (x 1) • Manager (x15) • Practitioner (x23) • Other (x11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Senior Practitioner – Social Worker - children's – Independent Child Protection Chair – Workforce Lead – Professional Advisor – Social work practice lead – Principal Social Worker/Practice Development – Practice Educator (x2) – Consultant/ Associate 	48

Social Worker of the Year Awards Survey

Q9a - If yes, please select the answer that best describes your current position



Q 10 What year did you win an individual award?

Majority of respondent's answers ranged from 2011 – 2019, with one response of 1998.

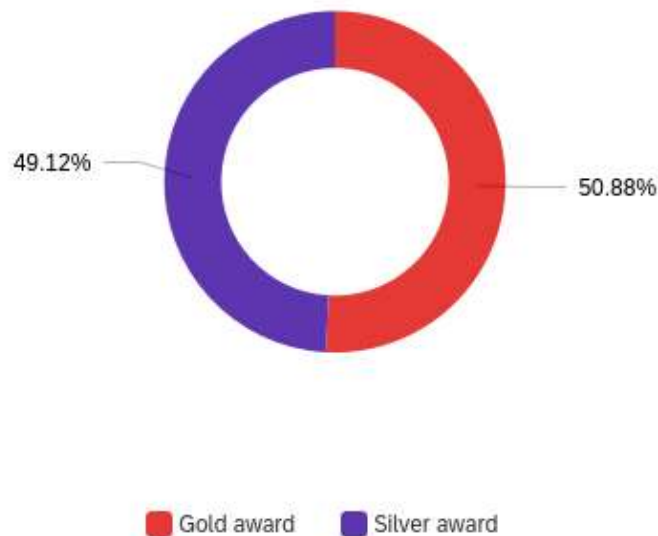
Year of award:	Count
2019	2
2018	9
2017	9
2016	6
2015	5
2014	8
2013	4
2012	1
2011	1
1998	1
No answer	8

Social Worker of the Year Awards Survey

Q 11 Did you win a Gold or Silver individual award?

Answers to this question were roughly equal between Gold and Silver award winners.

Q11 - Did you win a Gold or Silver award?



Q12 Which category did you receive the individual award?

Answers to this question ranged across the different types of awards presented, with a higher amount for NQSW (adults) than any other single group (n=8), followed closely by Practice Educator/Practice Teacher of the Year (n=7).

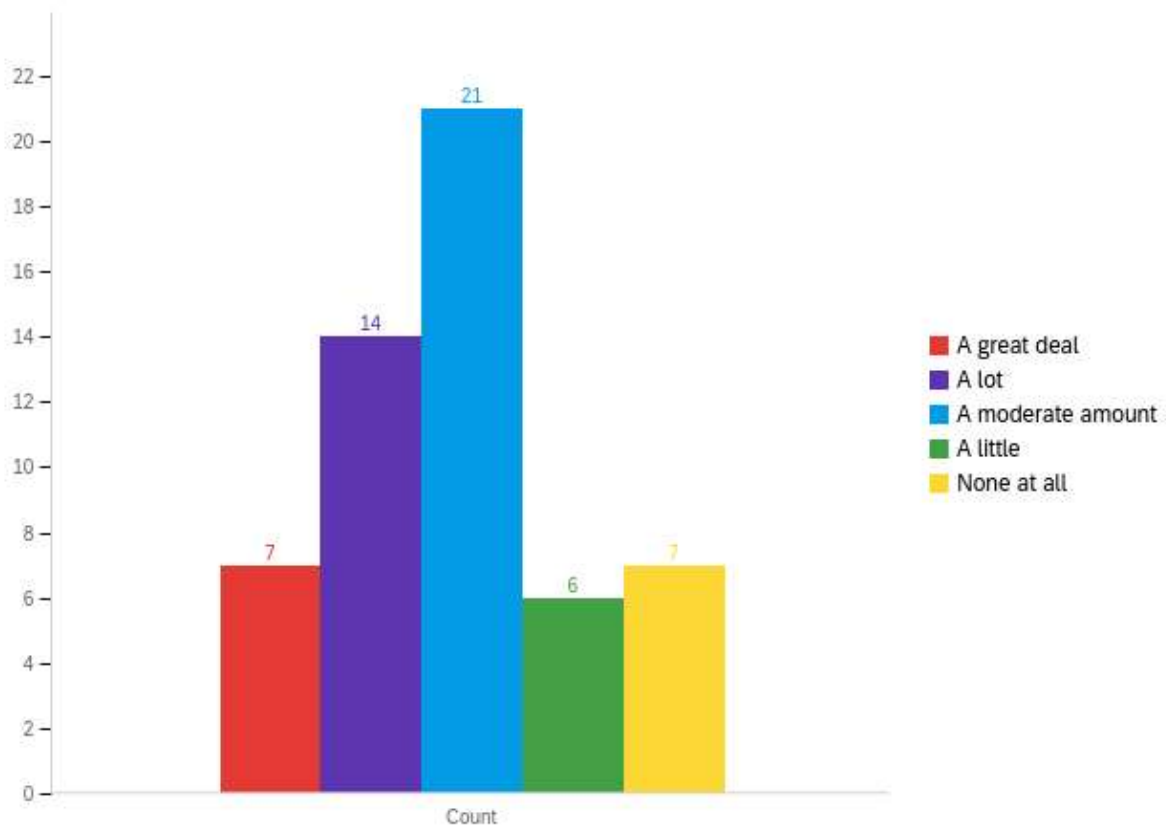
Award given:	
Adult Social Worker of the Year	5
Championing Social Work Values	2
Children's Social Worker of the Year	5
Lifetime Achievement	5
Making a Difference	2
Mental Health Social Worker of the Year	5
Newly Qualified Adult Social Worker of the Year	8
Practice Educator/Practice Teacher of the Year	7
Principal Social Worker of the Year	1
Student Social Worker of the Year	4
Team Leader of the Year, Adult Services	5
Team Leader of the Year, Children's Services	5
Overall Social Worker of the Year (<i>both respondents also won a further award included above</i>)	2

Social Worker of the Year Awards Survey

Q 13 How much difference has winning the individual award made to your career development?

The vast majority of respondents suggested that winning the award has made an impact on their career, with 65% suggesting the award impact ranged from moderate to a great deal. This amount increases to 85% when including responses that suggested the award made even 'a little' difference to their career development.

Q13 - How much difference has winning the award made to your career development?...



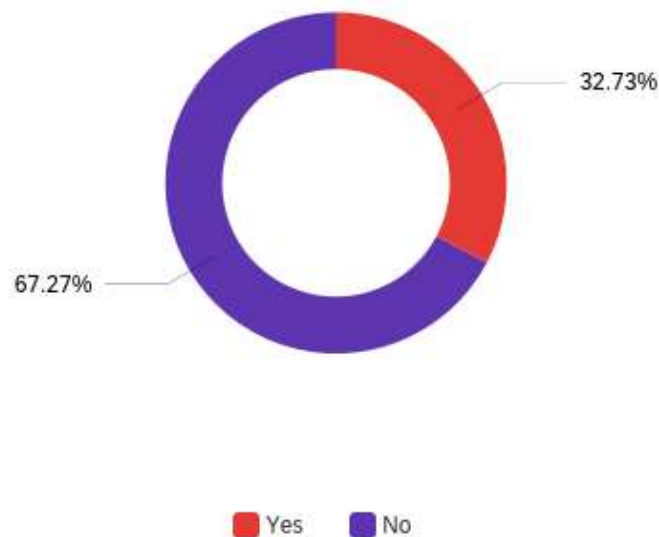
How much difference has winning the award made to your career development? For example, has it helped in getting a promotion or improved your confidence?	
A great deal	7
A lot	14
A moderate amount	21
A little	6
None at all	7
No response	0

Free text responses to support their answer were generally about raising confidence and recognition, with one respondent stating '*Winning the award not only increased my confidence, it raised my profile locally and nationally giving me the opportunity to raise the profile of our profession even wider. It opened a wider network of influence enabling me to take part in national research.*' The small number of respondents that answered 'none' mentioned that they were already grounded in their practice, with one commenting, '*I was*

working as an independent social worker at the end of my career and it made no difference to the amount of work coming in.'

Q14 - Has your approach to work or individual practice changed?

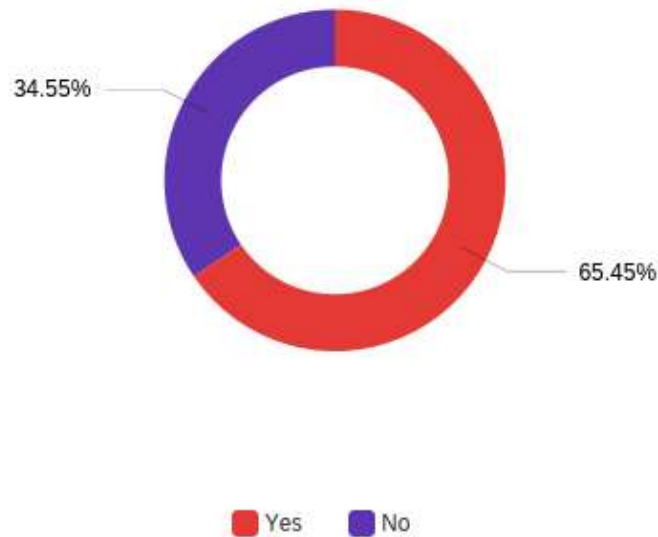
Respondents generally suggested that their practice has not changed, with 67.3% suggesting their practice is the same.



Free text responses to support their answer generally suggested that the award encouraged respondents and they felt rewarded as a result of the award, with one suggesting *'I have had a long career in social work and the award both recharged my resolve and reignited my desire to do deliver a service based on 'doing what matters principles'*. Respondents that felt the award did not change their practice generally described they thought they were committed to good practice before winning the award. Several respondents commented with statements like, *'I wouldn't say that my approach to my work has changed. I have always seen every opportunity I have, be it in practice or a managerial position, to effect change for the better.'*

Q15 Have you felt more valued by your organisation as a result of winning an individual award?

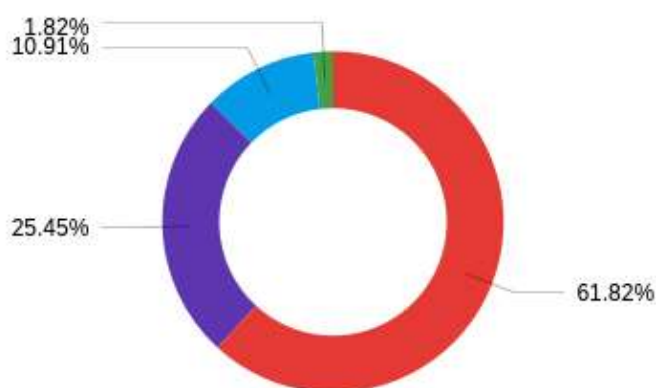
A majority of respondents suggested they felt more valued by their organisation as a result of winning the award, with 65.5% stating yes.



Several positive responses felt that the award had raised their profile and created more opportunities for them, with one commenting 'My success was recognised by my colleagues, my manager and by more senior managers and at local government level. As a result of this award I was recognised for an award in our own council awards and I was put forward by my employer for an MBE which I received in 2015.' Generally comments were positive, such as *'Am finding people are impressed and value these National awards more than I expected.'* Respondents that did not feel they were valued, often felt that this had lessened over time, many because of staff turnover, such as *'At the time yes but the leadership team above me has changed many times since 2014. I don't suppose that any of them would even know that I received this award.'*

Q 16 How likely would you be to encourage colleagues to nominate themselves or others for a Social Worker of the Year Award?

The majority of respondents (61.8%) suggested they would be 'very likely' to encourage a colleague to nominate. If we include 'quite likely', this percentage increases to 87.3%. Only 1.8% of respondents suggested they would discourage a colleague from nominating, and no-one respondent that this was 'very unlikely'. It is important to note that 10.9% suggested they were neither likely nor unlikely to encourage.



Very likely Quite likely Neither likely nor unlikely Quite unlikely Very unlikely

Free text responses suggested respondents felt pleased with the award, and encouraged others to nominate themselves and colleagues, with one respondent stating *'It was an honour to be nominated and then receive an award; it makes you feel valued by the profession as a whole; beyond the boundaries of your organisation.'*, and another that *'The silver award for my team is viewed by them as the pinnacle of their career achievements. I believe the award raises the standards and would encourage anyone to be involved.'* Respondents that were neither likely nor unlikely made comments such as *'My [local authority] struggled to justify the funding involved in attending the awards ceremony and haven't publicised the awards or encouraged workers to nominate.'*

Q 17 Please provide any further feedback about your overall experience of winning a Social Worker of the Year Award

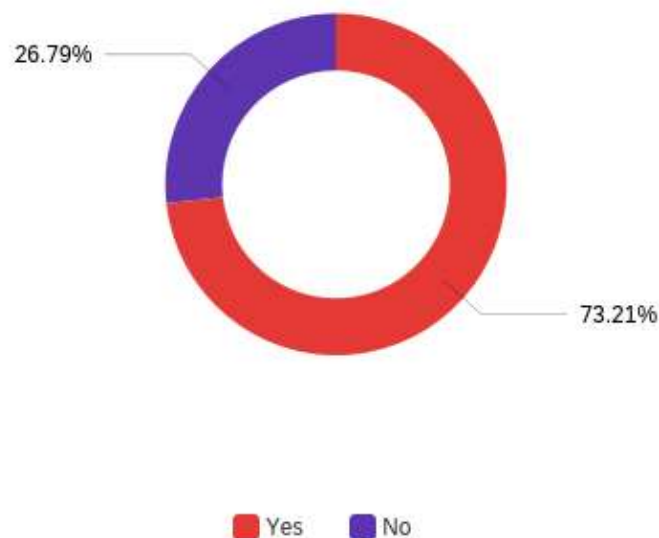
This question only allowed free text answers. Many respondents were positive about the evening, and the lasting impression winning the award has made on them and their career, with one commenting, *'Being nominated and winning the award was a complete surprise for me but it was really lovely for the profession to be recognised in this way and I really enjoyed and valued being part of this and achieving this. This achievement is still recognised by my colleagues today and I do feel that this increased peoples respect for what I did within the organisation... I believe that this is a really valuable event and something I still look back on with fond memory and had an excellent time on the night.'*

Several juxtaposed winning with award with the general lack of attention given societally to social work, and a prevailing lack of recognition, with one stating *'In an area of work that often doesn't have an opportunity for individuals/teams to shine and feel good about it, this stands out.'*; another stated *'There aren't many opportunities to gain formal recognition or celebrate each other's and our own achievements. Therefore a formal award and occasion to celebrate can be very encouraging for practitioners.'*

A range of comments described the award as culminating a career, and a focal memory for them, such as *'It was a wonderful experience, one that I will cherish for life as all my hard work over the years was recognised'*, and *'A really positive experience which made me realise how my career had been valued by colleagues.'*

Q. 18 Would you be interested in finding out more about the Social Worker Award 'Ambassador' role?

The majority of respondent suggested they would be interested in being contacted about the 'Social Worker Award Ambassador' role, with 73.2% stating yes, and 26.8% responding no. Those that responded yes were asked to provide their emails, which have been itemised in an appendix (Appendix One).



Team Award Winner Survey

Introduction

The team award winner survey included five consent questions, three demographic questions, followed by 14 multiple choice and free text questions that explore publicity, public awareness and team experiences.

Demographic Questions (Q 6-8)

Demographic responses followed the pattern of social work managers, with a higher proportion of men, older and White respondents than in the general workforce.

Gender	
Male	3
Female	4
Prefer not to say:	1

Age	
30-40	1
40-50	2
50-60	2
Prefer not to say	3

Ethnicity	
English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British	7
Prefer not to say	1

Experiential Questions (Q 9 – 22)

Q 9 Are you still employed in the same role as when you won the award?

The majority of respondents to this question are still in the same role (n=6; 75%), with only two respondents (25%) having changed roles, both receiving promotions.

Yes Answers given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager (5x responses) • Learning & Development Manager 	6
No: Answers given: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion: more senior management role • Promotion: Service Manager 	2

Q 10 What year did your team win an award?

Respondents were broadly spread equally across the years 2011-2018, with only one respondent not providing an answer, and 2012 having two respondents.

Year of award:	
2018	1
2017	1
2016	1
2014	1
2012	2
2011	1
No answer	1

Q 11 Did your team/organisation win a Gold or Silver award?

The vast majority of respondents (n=7; 87.5%) stated they won a Gold award, with only one respondent (12.5%) stating they won a Silver award.

Q 12 Which category did your team/organisation receive the award?

There were more respondents from 'Team of the Year' (n = 5; 2 Adult services; 3 Children's Services), with one respondent each for the further categories of 'Best Social Work Employer'; 'Creative and Innovative Social Work Practice'; and 'Championing Social Work Values'.

Award given:	
Team of the Year – Adult services	2
Team of the Year – Children's Services	3
Best Social Work Employer	1
Creative and Innovative Social Work Practice	1
Championing Social Work Values	1

Q 13 Was your award win publicised by you or your communications team?/ Q 13a If your award win was publicised by you or your communications team, how was this done?

The vast majority (n=7; 87.5%) of respondents had their win publicised, either by themselves or their communications team, with one 'I don't know' response.

Yes	7
No	0
I don't know	1

When describing the types of publicity used by their organisation, respondents describe a range of types. This question allowed respondents to select more than one type of publicity. Respondents described a range of publicity types, with 4-5 respondents each suggesting social media, internal comms, and local press as options. Only one respondent stated that their organisation held an event for publicity, although this was selected in addition to other publicity types.

If 'yes', how?	
Social Media	4
Internal comms	5
Local newspaper/magazine	5
Events	1

Q 14 Did winning an award raise public interest in social work and lead to more media interest via social media/press/radio?/ Q 14a Can you describe how you became aware that this happened?

The majority of respondents (n = 4; 50%) suggested the award resulted in greater public interest. A significant minority of respondents were unaware whether the award led to greater public interest. Only a single respondent suggested the award did not raise public interest.

Yes	4
No	1
I don't know	3

Free text answers to the follow-up question of 'how did you become aware that this happened' suggested that several respondents experienced contact from external people, with one stating *'Employee's coming into the Local Authority made reference to the award and spoke about the positive profile of the service.'*

Q 15 Do you think the winning of a team award led to greater interest of local elected members/other organisations in your locality and improved any partnership working?

The majority of respondents (n=6; 75%) thought that winning the award led to greater interest of local members or improved partnership working. Only 25% (n=2) stated that the award did not have this effect.

Yes	6
No	2

Q 16 Do you think the publicity attached to winning a team award assisted in the recruitment of staff to work for your team/organisation?

More respondents (n = 4; 50%) believed the award assisted in recruitment, with a significant minority (n=3; 37.5%) responding that they did not know whether this happened. Only one respondent (12.5%) stated they thought the award did not assist in recruitment of staff.

Yes	4
No	1
NA	3

Q 17 Do you or have you previously highlighted the team award in an induction programme for new starters into your team/organisation?

The majority of respondents (n=6; 75%) highlighted the award in an induction programme, with a small minority (n=2; 25%) not doing so.

Yes	6
No	2

Q 18 What difference (if any) has winning the team award made?

Almost all respondents (n=7; 87.5%) suggested that the award had several effects; raising the profile of team or organisation and boosting team morale (n=7; 87.5%). A majority of respondents (n=6; 75%) thought that the award raised the profile of good practice. Almost half of respondents identified that the award improved staff retention and created new opportunities (n=3; 37.5%). A single respondent also thought the award had an added benefit stating that the award '*encouraged families who wish to adopt to pick us*'.

Free text answers to support the above responses suggested respondents found the award helped publicise their organisation and helped with recruitment as key outcomes. One respondent wrote '*It helps publicise [our local authority] as a comparatively small [local authority] as an employer of choice and we are still popular choice for NQSWs wishing to start their career.*'

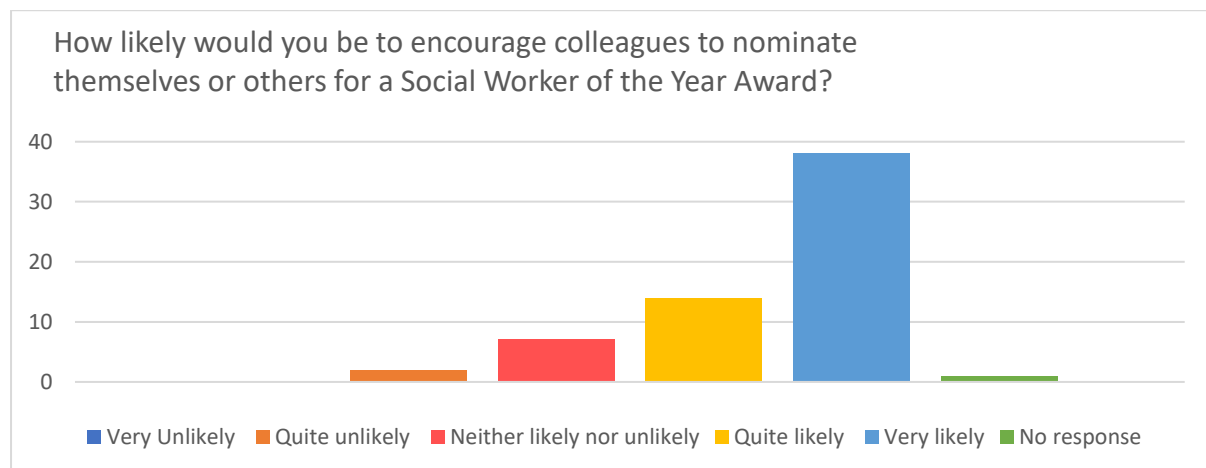
Q 19 Has your team felt more valued by your organisation as a result of winning the award?

The majority of respondents (n=6; 75%) felt more valued by their organisation as a result of the award, with a small minority (n=2; 25%) not doing so.

Yes	6
No	2

Q 20 How likely would you be to encourage colleagues to nominate themselves or others for a Social Worker of the Year Award?

A majority of respondents suggested they would encourage others to submit nominations, with 75% (n=6) suggesting they would be 'quite' or 'very likely' to do so. A minority of respondents (n=2; 25%) suggested they were either neither likely nor unlikely or quite unlikely to do so. No respondents identified that they were very unlikely to encourage others to nominate.



Free text answers suggested that respondents felt that nominations were an important way to recognise good practice and boost morale, with one respondent stating *'Being part of and winning the award had a positive impact on the service and plays an important role in terms of celebrating successes that otherwise may go unnoticed.'*

Further Feedback

Respondents highlighted the positive effect of the awards, boosting team morale and juxtaposed this sentiment along the need to improve public perception of social work. One respondent stated *'It meant a lot to the team, the service continues to get attention and more respect internally, we mention it in our adverts for new jobs, along with our other achievements'*; and another suggested that *'The awards does play an important part of celebrating success within a profession that deserves better praise and positive profiling.'*

More of respondents (n=4; 50%) were willing to be kept up-to-date with the Awards than not (n=3; 37.5%). The provided emails are detailed in an appendix (Appendix One).

References

- Department for Education (2019) *Social workers for children and families*. London: Department for Education.
- Skills for Care (2017) *NMDS-SC Headline Social Worker Statistics*. London: Skills for Care.

Appendix One

Individual Award Winners: Ambassador interest

lynn.lock@achievingforchildren.org.uk
patricia.stubbs@derbyshire.gov.uk
caroline_5868@hotmail.co.uk
jamiemq1@gmail.com
rebecca.taylor@essex.gov.uk
Sedge24@hotmail.com
gary.spencerhumphrey@ymail.com
tracy.caton@islington.gov.uk
suzannahrockett@barnsley.gov.uk
lindseywanless@hotmail.com
c.colins@nhs.net
estellethain@googlemail.com
dee.belford@birmingham.gov.uk
h.pye@nhs.net
AJMillett@somerset.gov.uk
cpearson384@btinternet.com
jenni.randall@btinternet.com
steele_vicki@hotmail.com
Maureen Roscoe-Goulson@suffolk.gov.uk
francesca.rye@norfolk.gov.uk
louise.walker@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk
sivanesan32@gmail.com
victoria.ingham@stockton.gov.uk
michelle.newman@plymouth.gov.uk [work]
shelleynewman@live.co.uk [home]
karenmaude@icloud.com
davidthomasswl@aol.com
Shantiboafor@gmail.com
nicola.mahony@hants.gov.uk
joy.rickard@nhs.net
penatnumber9@hotmail.com
joanne.e.lowe@birmingham.gov.uk
sivanesan32@gmail.com
jane.haywood@derby.gov.uk
louise.purser@gmail.com
zwilliamson1990@hotmail.com
shaira.makorie@achievingforchildren.org.uk
Petersmith.uk@ntlworld.com
elliehal-fead@southend.gov.uk
bernadette.johansen@calderdale.gov.uk
nicky.skinner@devon.gov.uk

Team Award Winners: Contact Emails

ray.halford@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
kltaylor@worcestershires.gov.uk
simon.shreeve@norfolk.gov.uk