



Healthwatch Together

Blackburn with Darwen,
Blackpool, Cumbria and
Lancashire working
in partnership

Week 2 Report (28/03 - 03/04/2020): How are you coping with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

Date report compiled: 14/04/2020

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This report contains the feedback HWT received from the Coronavirus survey between the 28th March and the 3rd April 2020. The demographic information is provided and an analysis of the responses to each of the open questions.

In total we received 110 responses during this time period.

The survey is still live and we are continuing to receive responses. These will be analysed weekly to track any changes and to enable a comparison on a week by week basis as the situation in the UK continues to change in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

As of today (14/04/2020) we have a total of 254 responses, including the 110 that make up this report.

Rationale for research:

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, Healthwatch Cumbria, Healthwatch Lancashire, Healthwatch Blackpool and Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen (working as Healthwatch Together), created a survey to find out how the people of Cumbria and Lancashire are coping during these difficult times.

This Week 2 report covers the time period: 28/03 - 03/04/2020.

Methodology:

The survey was launched on Survey Monkey and shared via HW websites and social media.

It was developed as a ‘temperature check’ to ask people how they were feeling and coping during the initial days of the pandemic.

We limited the number of questions, (to keep the survey relatively short) and kept the questions open (to gather as much information as possible.)

As this report covers the second week the survey was live, we can now compare the findings of week 1 with week 2 to see if there are any noticeable changes. The demographic characteristics are similar across both weeks so they are comparable to some extent and can provide an idea of how the situation is changing. However, they are not directly comparable so we cannot say for certain that the people who responded in week 1 would necessarily change their answers to those given by respondents in week 2.

Questions:

1. Where do you live? (Options - Cumbria, Lancashire, other.)
2. What is the first half of your postcode?
3. How old are you?
4. Are you male/female/other?
5. What was your employment status before the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?
6. Including yourself, how many adults (18+) live in your household?
7. How many children (0-17) live in your household?
8. What is your ethnicity?
9. How have you been affected by the outbreak of Coronavirus?
10. What are your three biggest concerns?
11. What impact has social distancing had on your daily life?
12. How are you taking care of your physical health?
13. How are you taking care of your emotional and mental health?
14. What actions have you taken for yourself and others?
15. Where do you look to find information about Coronavirus?

16. What changes would help you cope?
17. What information would help to support you?
18. Are you currently receiving any medical care or treatment (not related to Coronavirus)?
19. If you are receiving any medical care or treatment, how has this care/treatment been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Results

Demographics: There were 110 respondents in total.

Locality:

24% from Cumbria
68% from Lancashire
8% other

Age range:

9% under 18
49% aged 35-54
23% aged 55-74

76% female
23% male
1% other

95% white British
3% white other
2% Asian/Asian British

Employment status:

63% in employment
12% retired

Family status:

58% live in a household with two adults
17% live in a household where they are the only adult
65% had no children living in the household
15% had one child living in the household
17% had two children

Q.9 How have you been affected by the outbreak of Coronavirus?

The responses have been categorised into practical, emotional and social impact.

1. Social impact:

The social impact has remained fairly consistent across both week 1 and week 2.

People have said they are continuing to self-isolate and that they are missing friends and family.

“Not being able to go out. Not talking to people it’s been so quiet just me and the radio.”

There were also some individual stories that demonstrate the real social impact that this has had on people's lives:

“We have a new baby and understandably have had our health visitor and GP appointments cancelled but we were still able to have the 8 week immunisations today. I myself have had health issues and needed medical care during this lockdown period and needed to visit hospital. I felt well looked after and definitely an extra level of caution before and during my visit. Whilst devastated my family are missing out on our baby's first weeks, missing their support and feeling robbed, I know we are luckier than some who are just having their babies now. Certainly counting down the days until we can put this behind us.”

2. Emotional impact:

People are continuing to feel anxious. In week 2, 12% of the respondents said they felt anxious, stressed or depressed.

Unfortunately, we do not know whether they already had a diagnosis of anxiety or depression, or if this is a result of the pandemic. This is something that we can investigate further in future versions of the survey.

“Anxiety is getting bad having to work from home with three children, trying to school two of them at same time is a disaster. I'm struggling not being able to see family, usually shop online due to hectic life but now can't get a delivery. Into my 4th week of isolation and it's really starting to get me down, crying and fed up. Have to keep reminding myself of the bigger picture.”

Concerns over what will happen with school or university (identified in week 1) have now become more practical issues. GCSE and A Level exams have been cancelled and there is general uncertainty over what will happen in the future in light of this.

"It's stressful. My teachers are trying their best but it's half my A levels over. My university application was supposed to start after Easter and now what? I'm so confused, upset, stressed."

There were several people who were living alone, were housebound and were feeling lonely, as well as several who have to isolate from members of their family, within the same house.

"I am confined to my house with two other people and we have to socially distance as they are in the vulnerable category. This is difficult and it takes a toll on how you feel as your norm is changed and this affects your mental health. Not seeing your family and friends, being able to hug people and going about your daily life is difficult. But I am safe and I have a home so for that I am grateful."

3. Practical impact:

- 13% of respondents have said that they are now working from home.
- 9% have said that either themselves or their partner have lost a job or a source of income.
- 6% said either themselves or their partner has been furloughed.

"My children are both with me all the time now so as a single parent, that can be stressful. Never having a break. Also, you can't take kids to the shops with you, but I can't leave them home alone (one is too young and has anxiety, the other has ADS). So I am completely reliant on other people and online delivery to survive."

- The reality of a 'lockdown' situation has started to have more of a practical impact during this time period, as well as social isolation there is the adjustment to new home, school and work arrangements. Parents are finding it hard to maintain a harmonious household as well as struggling to keep everyone inside.

"It is driving me crazy and it is having a big impact on my daughter as she is getting more and more angry and more and more frustrated not being able to go out."

"Staying at home is emotionally difficult with all the adults in the house it can get a bit much."

4. Illness:

None of the respondents mentioned this last week, but something that we would expect to see now (as the number of Coronavirus continues to rise across Cumbria and Lancashire) included an increasing number of respondents who have been ill themselves (six people).

5. Caring for the vulnerable:

Ten people raised concerns over how they can look after and care for the vulnerable.

- Four people are currently unable to provide care for an elderly relative who needs support.
- Three people are supporting an older child or young adult with learning disabilities.
- Two people are supporting an elderly relative.
- One person is supporting a ‘shielded person’.

“My eldest daughter has learning disabilities and a serious health condition that she takes chemo meds for. She has a letter to be shielded for 12 weeks. I have had to go on furlough at work to be able to stay home with my daughter and my youngest daughter also has to stay at home due to the risk of bringing the virus back into the home which could be disastrous for my eldest daughter.”

Question 10: What are your three biggest concerns?

1. The health of my family and friends.
2. My own health.
3. Concerns for the future (including the duration and severity of the outbreak and the economic implications.)

1 & 2 remain the same as week 1.

The following were also mentioned (they have been ordered according to how many people mentioned it):

4. My own and my family’s mental health.
5. Concern for the vulnerable.
6. My finances.
7. My education.
8. Concerns over getting shopping and medication.

“My health. My family. My income.”

“How to support family, how the world will recover, how to resist social media messages to be upbeat and busy.”

“Worried about my family in general what will happen to my grandchildren who are young if their parents become ill? Feel selfish asking others to put

themselves at risk for me.”

“When is this going to end? Am I going to have enough money? Is someone close to me going to die?”

Question 11: What impact has social distancing had on your life?

People are starting to adjust to life during ‘lockdown’. Most of the concerns over social distancing in week 1 centred on the potential impact in the future and the reality of a loss of physical contact with friends and family.

In week 2 there were still concerns, particularly around missing friends and family, but there were also more positive comments from people who feel they are successfully managing lockdown and social distancing.

The impact, listed in order of importance (determined by the number of people who mentioned it):

- Missing physical contact with friends and family.
- It isn’t having much impact and/or I’m ok with it.
- Restricted movement/having to stay at home.
- Changes to job/impact on job.
- I’m lonely.
- Shopping is difficult.
- Increased anxiety.

“It’s made me think more about the things that can make me happy and my passions.”

“I’m quite enjoying social distancing. The only aspect of this that stresses me out is shopping chaos.”

“It’s changed drastically as not being able to engage with others face-to-face which is how I thrive. I miss not being able to see my family and friends.”

“Found it pretty easy to do in all honesty. It is down to common sense and self discipline.”

“It has had a great impact as I am a very social person always out and busy.”

It seems that some people naturally find this situation easier to deal with than

others and that those with more active social lives are finding it harder to adjust. An exploration of the all the respondents who feel that they have successfully coped with the situation (once the survey is no longer live) may reveal further details.

Question 12: How are you taking care of your physical health?

1. Exercising outside, including walks and gardening - 46%
2. Exercising inside - 17%
4% said that they were making an effort to exercise when they could.
3. Eating healthily - 16%

12% of respondents said that they are finding it difficult to exercise and look after their physical health or were not managing to look after it at all.

“I’m going for walks around the city which can be scary as all the homeless people are out asking for money. Doesn’t make me feel very safe I would like to be able to go out more.”

“Due to my disability I struggle anyway.”

Question 13: How are you taking care of your emotional and mental health?

People are taking care of their emotional and mental health by:

1. Staying in regular contact with friends and family - 27%
2. Being accepting of the situation and trying to remain positive - 13%
(5% of people said that they use meditation, prayer and mindfulness to support their wellbeing.)
3. Exercise and keeping active - 9%
4. Using social media, TV, films and radio - 7%
5. Keeping to a routine - 7%
6. Limiting the amount of social media and news that I watch - 5%

“Just trying to accept it for probably the next six months.”

Most people use a combination of different approaches to supporting their emotional and mental health, rather than relying on one thing. That 13% of people are trying to be accepting of the situation and are trying to remain positive is reassuring. As are the healthy strategies that people say they are using to cope.

Many people also use creative activities to support their emotional and mental health;

- Games and puzzles - 5%
- Reading - 5%
- Writing, music and art - 4%

"I've been painting and putting up my paintings on the wall using bright colours keeps me happy and I can see my progress in each painting. Keeps me occupied."

Unfortunately there are 7% of respondents who are finding it hard to look after their emotional and mental health.

"I'm not doing too well with this at all- trying to avoid social media but am drawn back to the news sites and Facebook over and over; it really gets me down."

It may be useful in future versions of the survey to ask specifically what support people would find useful to help them look after their emotional and mental health.

Question 14: What actions have you taken for yourself and others?

The responses to this question have been themed into categories. They are listed in order of importance (determined by the number of people who mentioned them).

1. Staying at home and self-isolating

2. Supporting others

By helping with shopping and by staying in contact with vulnerable people as well as providing other methods of support.

"I go shopping for family and for elderly mother-in-law. Help set up shopping deliveries for mother-in-law by video call."

"I coach football so I have set challenges for my daughters, videoed and shared with the team to challenge them and get them out in the garden to try and stay fit."

3. Increasing hygiene activities

This includes increased hand and clothes washing.

4. Following government guidelines on what it is safe to do.

The responses are very similar to week 1, except for the increase in hand washing and other hygiene activities.

Question 15: Where do you look to find information about Coronavirus?

Listed in order of most popular:

1. TV news - 29%
2. BBC - 15%
3. Gov.uk - 13%
4. NHS website - 12%
5. Trusted website - 10%
6. Internet - 9%
7. Social media - 6%

This remains fairly similar to week 1.

Question 16: What changes would help you cope?

The answers to this question in **week 1** were:

27% better provision for online shopping.

21% nothing.

15% I'm not sure.

10% being able to see family and friends.

10% consistent and correct information.

In **week 2**:

1. 12% said they would like to see widespread and reliable testing available for Covid-19.
“Maybe more tests being done and also numbers on how many cases are in my area.”
2. 26% of people said they either didn't know what would help them cope, weren't sure about it or felt that they were doing ok.
3. 19% just want life to get back to normal. Included in this category were comments such as: the end of lockdown, it all being over, being able to go out and being able to see family and friends again.
“To know when this will end.”
4. 15% would like to see clearer information, such as a more consistent message from the government, less 'fake news', more positive news and stricter enforcement of lockdown rules.

"I think the media does not help by highlighting the negatives and I understand that this is what they do but it can scare people."

5. 12% would like to see changes to shopping, such as more delivery slots, it being a less stressful experience and getting help with shopping and collecting medication.
6. 12% feel that changes to work and finances would help them to cope: some want to get back to work, while others would like to be able to not work, 6% would appreciate some financial assistance.

Comparing the two weeks:

- People are less concerned about shopping and food, although some people are still finding the process difficult.
- Concerns over a lack of testing for Covid-19 was the largest single category, mentioned by 12 people. It wasn't mentioned at all during week 1.
- The findings of week 2 suggest that now people have adjusted to life in lockdown, they are looking forward to when life can return to normal.
"A cure! Hearing more about success rates during all of this and not just the worst news surrounding it. Hearing that there is light at the end of the tunnel and that we will actually come through this."
- Clearer and more consistent information is still a high priority for many people, across both weeks. In week 2 there are concerns about fake news that were not mentioned in week 1.

Question 17: What information would help to support you?

In **week 1** respondents said that they felt they already had enough information to support them (42%) or weren't sure what would help (23%).

The findings from **week 2** were similar in that 34% felt there was enough information available and 22% weren't sure or didn't know what changes would help to support them.

However, 10% of the respondents in week 2 asked for further information and support that is already available. For example; how to volunteer, what they should do if they get ill and how to support others. This suggests that the relevant information is either not being disseminated widely enough, or that people don't know how to access it.

7% of respondents would like more information that is relevant to their local area and the local impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Specific local information as well as having the national picture."

7% felt that they were not being told the ‘truth’ about the pandemic and that the government is holding back information and is not always clear in the information that it does produce.

“The truth about what is actually happening and a less sensationalist and contradictory approach from the media.”

Question 18: Are you currently receiving any medical treatment or care (not related to Coronavirus)?

36% yes

64% no

Question 19: If you are receiving any medical care or treatment, how has this care/treatment been affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

The findings remain fairly consistent across both week 1 and week 2:

Week 2

38% a change to appointments
(including cancellations)
31% not been affected yet
17% issues with prescriptions
14% phone/video appointments

Week 1

38% appointments cancelled
29% not affected yet
18% issues with prescriptions
15% phone/video appointments

Question 20: Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

72% said that they had nothing else they would like to tell us.

“I cannot think of anything but I think it took everyone by surprise. Its like something out of Science fiction book/film.”

The remaining 28% who left a comment tended to focus on:

- Appreciation of the work that key workers are doing.
- Worried about the safety of key workers.
- Wish that the general public would follow government guidelines.
- Feel that there has been a ‘slow response’ to requests for help.
- They were glad to have an opportunity to give their opinions through this survey.
- A few people felt that we are not being told the whole truth about the pandemic.

“Give us the full picture, some of us prefer to know what’s really

happening rather than fake news or half truths.”

Conclusion

During week 2 the people who responded to this survey have continued to self isolate and are missing seeing friends and family. Emotionally, lockdown is starting to take a toll, with 12% reporting feeling anxious, stressed or depressed. People are worried about the future and the financial impact of job losses, being furloughed or losing their business or state benefits. As the weeks roll on and families continue to follow instructions to stay at home, many are struggling to maintain harmony within the household, while others have become reliant on other people and have lost their independence.

There was a rise in the number of people reporting that they had been ill, during week 2 and in those who were finding it difficult to look after the vulnerable.

Most people are concerned about their own and other people's health and about what the future will bring, wishing that the pandemic was over and life could get back to normal.

Respondents are social distancing and most felt that they were managing this ok, but were missing family and friends.

Physical health is being maintained through exercise and healthy eating. People are trying to maintain their emotional and mental health through a combination of approaches, with 13% managing to 'accept the situation'. Unfortunately 7% of respondents said they are struggling with their mental health.

In week 2 there was an increase in the number of people taking extra hygiene measures (such as hand washing, cleaning and washing clothes).

Where people look for reliable information has been consistent across both weeks, with 29% watching TV news, 15% turning to the BBC and only 6% getting their information from social media. Although most people use a combination of various sources of information.

Changes that respondents would like to see introduced include more testing for Covid-19, life getting back to normal, concerns over 'fake news' and feeling that they are not being given the 'full picture'. People would also like to see more local information and more positive news stories.

Many people felt that they had enough information. Interestingly 10% asked for information that is already available, raising questions about why can't they and aren't they accessing it?

People are continuing to see changes to appointments for their existing medical treatment and care (such as rearranging, cancelling or phone/video appointments.)

The analysis for week 3 of the survey will continue to compare the findings from previous weeks and track any changes to how people are coping with the pandemic.

