



# Healthwatch **Together**

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

**Final report from V1 of the Coronavirus Survey  
(26/04/2020):**

**How are you coping with the Coronavirus (COVID-19)  
pandemic?**

**Date report compiled:** 11/05/2020

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This report contains the feedback HWT received from the Coronavirus survey from 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020 to the end of the first version (V1) of the Coronavirus survey on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020. The demographic information is provided and an analysis of the responses to each of the open questions.

In total we received 49 responses during this period.

This is the last week that this version of the survey will remain live. A full report covering the first 5-6 weeks of the pandemic and incorporating all the weekly

reports will be produced in May.

A new version of this survey (v2) has been created and is currently live. V2 was developed from the analysis of v1 and contains questions that focus on the themes that we identified.

V1 was closed on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2020 and had 306 responses.

V2 is currently still live and as of today (6<sup>th</sup> May 2020) has 282 responses.

### **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 4' report covers more than one week. As there were only 49 responses across the last couple of weeks it made sense to analyse them together, rather than split them into two separate reports of 24/25 each.

### **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 early weeks 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.)

### **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 49 respondents in total.

### Locality:

20% from Cumbria

76% from Lancashire

### Age range:

47% aged 45-64

33% aged 65+

72% female

28% male

92% white British/white other

6% Asian/Asian British

### Employment status:

57% in employment

24% retired

6% identify as disabled

### Family status:

61% live in a household with two adults

18% live in a household where they are the only adult

78% had no children living in the household

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

In the week 1 report responses were organised into the social, emotional and

practical impact of the pandemic (with the caveat that they overlap). Many of the comments people provided concerned social distancing, self-isolation and not being able to see family and friends - demonstrating that the 'social impact' is still the biggest impact of the Coronavirus pandemic and the resulting lockdown. As long as lockdown remains in force in this manner, these are likely to continue to have the biggest effect.

Looking at the 'emotional impact', there were fewer people reporting issues with anxiety and concerns over their own (or someone else's) mental health in response to this question. However, more people raised it as an issue in response to question 10. Those who did tell us about it demonstrate that for those who are suffering they are still suffering greatly.

*"Socially isolated. Feeling very alone. Sleep affected. Fear and panic attacks at night."*

Comments about the 'practical impact' have not changed significantly over the preceding weeks. People are still trying to home school while working, are concerned about their businesses and jobs and their personal finances. There is a slight increase in the number of people commenting about the cancellation of holidays and sports and social events (possibly because events as far away as the end of the year are now being cancelled.) For some respondents not being able to gather in groups results in not being able to attend family funerals or offer support to grieving friends and family, in the way that they would wish to.

*"Both adults working full time from home having to do evening work as have two kids under 4."*

*"Holidays cancelled, unable to meet with family and friends, unable to attend a family funeral, limited access to food shopping, unable to travel and exercise freely, unable to visit cafes, restaurants and pubs and socialising in general has ceased."*

Although some people are still having issues with being able to get shopping, overall during this period there were fewer negative comments about this.

*"Can't get food because disabled and vulnerable, and able bodied people are booking up the supermarket delivery slots, so loads of "food" stress."*

Noticeable features of the feedback for this period that were not present in earlier reports is the number of people reporting having the symptoms of the virus, have family members who are sick and knowing people who have died as a

result of the virus.

There are also concerns for key workers and from key workers, who are feeling the pressure to a much greater extent than most.

*“Struggling as I am working full time in a hospital and am classed as vulnerable due to underlying health problems but not vulnerable enough. Not being supported at work.”*

In general though it feels as though the ‘tone’ of many of the responses has changed over the weeks (this will be explored more thoroughly in the full report.) People are reporting the positives in their situation more frequently, with a few mentioning that they prefer the slower pace of life.

*“As a person with COPD I have been self-isolating but because I live in the country side I am able to go on walks along the country lanes.”*

*“All social activities and sports cancelled. No travel or meals out. Living a slower more peaceful life. Knitting, painting and gardening. Probably drinking a little too much and worrying about health issues even though I don’t have any!!”*

#### **Question 10: What are your three biggest concerns?**

1. The health of my family and friends.
2. My own health.
3. The future; the economic impact, life not returning to normal, how long the pandemic will last, impact on education and on employment.
4. The effect on my own and other people’s mental health.
5. The safety of key workers, access to PPE and testing.

The main concern is for the health of family and friends and people’s own health; this has remained consistent across all previous weeks. More people have started to worry about the financial and economic impact on the future and also when life might begin to return to normal. Mental health has remained a consistent concern.

*“Fear of catching the virus and because my immune system is highly compromised I fear I would not recover. My mental health is suffering. I am relying on our neighbour for supermarket food deliveries as am unable to register for deliveries as have no letter from government stating I am high risk.”*

*“Will they find a cure? Fear of unknown?”*

*“Lack of PPE for NHS and Carers. Mental health Issues due to lockdown. Damage done to the economy.”*

*“I'm worried for the health of those who suffer with health problems. I'm concerned that people with mental health problems are getting worse as we can't go out for long periods at a time. I'm also worried for the workers at the hospital who are around the disease all the time.”*

*“Stigma of community if we get infected by Covid 19. Risk of getting infected by Covid 19. Financial insecurity.”*

*“Getting ill and being on my own and not allowed any family to visit if I become seriously ill or am dying. Not being in physical contact with my family, apart from my daughter bringing my shopping once a week and we have a 15 min chat over the fence, socially distanced. Using alcohol to cope with the stress in an evening- a glass of wine a day instead of maybe one or two at weekend.”*

One new issue identified during this time period, was concern over government advice. Some people felt that there was inconsistent monitoring of death rates, a lack of trust in the government and feeling that those in charge don't know what they are doing.

*“Have toothache, filling came out, dentist only seeing patients with 'life threatening situations ' i.e., abscess, told to take painkillers. Can't they have full PPE to enable them to treat patients? Obviously missing children. Government I feel are appearing to 'wobble', seem to be in limbo.”*

*“That people where I live aren't social distancing. Worried West Cumberland hospital can't cope as it's been depleted before this. How will I, my children and grandchildren be safe when things are in the hands of this government they can't even protect frontline workers. Should've lockdown weeks before and been prepared.”*

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

Responses to this question have remained consistent over the preceding weeks. Most people continue to miss spending time with friends and family and are worried about elderly relatives that they can no longer help.

There have been many positive comments demonstrating that some find lockdown less stressful than others, and have managed to adjust quite quickly. However for some individuals social distancing has had an enormous impact on their lives.

The following continue to be of greatest concern:

- Missing physical contact with friends and family.
- It isn't having much impact and/or I'm ok with it.
- Impact on social activities and individual freedom.
- Increased stress, anxiety and loneliness.

*"Not being able to have close contact with family- especially my 89 year old mother. I miss seeing other faces and different conversation."*

*"No play dates for kids. No work. Food shopping is a nightmare and supermarkets make me feel physically sick, can't always get food shop, have anxiety and supermarkets are very, very stressful situations."*

*"I was always up and about..meetings.. meeting friends etc.. very draining losing those contacts and tiring with no reason to get up and get on. Living alone. Long days."*

*"Not too bad. Have been able to work from home to a degree. Hard not seeing family."*

*"I miss being able to give my daughter a hug. I miss our frequent interactions. I miss being able to drive to the seaside for a walk on the beach. But I count my blessings in that we are all well and keeping each other sane."*

*"Have bonded more with my neighbours. Mastered working from home again. Can't walk my dog where I usually would."*

*"Not much really - we live in the countryside and are fairly self-sufficient anyway, so it has actually been much more peaceful and I've felt much more relaxed than usual. I love peace and quiet and being on my own."*

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

As with previous weeks, most people are managing to get some form of physical exercise (either outside or inside) and are continuing to make an effort to eat healthily. The most popular form of exercise is walking (either with or without dogs), followed by gardening, then YouTube exercise classes.

Some people have found innovative ways of continuing with group classes, despite social distancing - two people have been having karate lessons via Zoom.

There continues to be a minority of people who are struggling to look after their physical health.

One person said that they are drinking more alcohol as a result of being in lockdown, while another said that they were drinking less. A survey commissioned by Alcohol Change UK found that people's relationship with alcohol is more complicated than - we are all drinking more/less:

People in the UK are **drinking differently as a result of coronavirus**. But our research shows that we aren't all responding in the same way.

<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/blog/2020/covid19-drinking-during-lockdown-headline-findings>

This will be explored further in the full report.

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

People are continuing to take care of their emotional and mental health by staying in regular contact with friends and family, exercising and keeping busy. However, as with physical health, it is more challenging for some to take care of their emotional and mental health, and this has stayed consistent across the weeks.

One respondent told us that they endeavour to 'keep busy' by doing housework, continuing with their hobbies (or finding new ones), listening to music, reading, completing puzzles, meditating or spending time in prayer.

Sales of books have gone up during lockdown -

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2020/apr/23/britons-are-reading-more-in-lockdown-says-survey-for-world-book-night>

Future research will tell us if people managed to maintain their new habits and hobbies once lockdown is over. But it is a positive development that so many people are finding their own healthy coping mechanisms during this time.

*"Trying so very hard to keep stoical and positive in the face adversity and keeping a check on myself when I find myself worrying again."*

*"Trying to remember that it's the same for everyone. Getting on with life as far as possible and not sitting waiting for it to end."*

*"Limiting amount of media coverage. Having a routine even when working from*



*home, ensuring get up and dressed and breakfast. Making time for hobbies and trying to plan some things enjoy doing.”*

*“Not very, I am really struggling and have no support with this. My partner is not very understanding.”*

*“I’ve been watching the morning Mass most days from St Gregory’s church, Chorley. I find that period of quiet contemplation very soothing. Prayer has a lot in common with Mindfulness techniques, and meditation. Helping others is also a big factor in improving my own mental wellbeing. I’ve been cooking and baking for friends and neighbours, and our local Health Centre.”*

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

As with previous weeks, people report that the actions they have taken for themselves and others include following ‘the rules’ and government guidance by staying at home and self-isolating and supporting other people (helping with shopping and remaining in contact).

There have also been some people helping their local community by donating to the foodbank, sewing for the NHS and volunteering.

*“Maintained social contact by phone with family and friends. Helping the community by donating to local foodbank. Sewing scrub-bags for NHS staff. Ensuring the household is reasonably well stocked with food and maintaining daily routine.”*

*“Routine for the house. Flexibility - be flexible. Pj days if everyone is having a bad day.”*

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

Consistently over the weeks that the survey has been running people have looked to the following sources for information about Coronavirus: TV news, BBC, Gov.uk, NHS website, other trusted websites and social media.

### Question 16: What changes would help you cope?

Most people said that they are doing ok or that there are no changes that would help them to cope.

Comments that people left proposing changes that would help included:

- Being able to go out again and travel restrictions being lifted.
- Conversely some people would like to see more restrictions and a full lockdown (so it will be over sooner).
- An available vaccine.
- More masks and PPE.
- More food delivery slots.
- More honesty from the government.

*“Facemasks recommended and culture change that it’s ok to wear them.”*

*“Stricter measures in supermarkets. All well and good with distancing outside the store then once inside it’s a different story and often in my experience by supermarket employees.”*

*“If all the members of the government said the same thing and they told the truth.”*

*“If you could see friends on the way back from doing your essential shop. Not going inside but even just a talk through the window or just a wave.”*

*“I am content with my lot. Our Borough Council have been excellent in supporting vulnerable people. I would love lockdown to end, but in truth I believe it needs to last 3 months.”*

*“Bringing in some way that family can visit if I become ill or seriously ill or am dying - so that I am not on my own - my biggest fear. PPE procedures so that family can visit at home or in hospital.”*

*“A friend.”*

### Question 17: What information would help to support you?

More than half of respondents felt there was either enough information/too much information available, or weren’t sure what further information would help them.

Suggestions for helpful information included:

- Where can you get PPE?
- When and how will lockdown end?
- Where can I get up to date and accurate information?
- Where can I get information about vaccines?

*“A clear exit strategy.”*

*“Information from experts rather than politicians.”*

HW Together have begun to address the issues people have raised providing a Q&A on social media that provides answers and signposting to questions that people have asked.

Please visit our pages on Facebook and Twitter for more information.

[Healthwatch Cumbria Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

[Healthwatch Lancashire Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

[Healthwatch Blackpool Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

[Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)

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

40% yes

60% 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?**

Over half the people who answered the survey during this time period said that their medical or treatment has not been affected.

Of those who have noticed an impact:

*“Anxiety meds used to get at supermarket have changed to pharmacy can’t cope with supermarket.”*

*“Not at all but probably would have been to GP regarding worsening depression if could see one.”*

*“Hard as I have to have injections every two weeks for Asthma at a hospital not in my area and I have to find someone to give me a lift.”*

*“Well I did a test and it showed positive that I was pregnant. My doctors is closed so it’s hard for me to make an appointment so I can be 100% sure. It also means going to the hospital to have scans and blood tests with the risk of catching anything.”*

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

Most people said that they had nothing else they would like to tell us.

From those who did have something else to tell us, we received the following comments:

- *“Not everyone has access to the internet so there is a very large group not answering this survey.”*
- *“How beautiful is the natural world around us, in this time of spring awakening. I hope we will learn to appreciate the precious things in life more, and maybe take better care of each other and the natural world.”*
- *“The reason I brought mam up here is 3 different carers a day and week before they made a huge mistake with her meds I can’t trust them anymore.”*
- *“Yes, I really feel that rich have stockpiled, and ignored the needs of the poorest. I am stressed to high heaven over how I will manage to get food as I live in an isolated area and can’t get my usual supermarket delivery.”*
- *“Just that fear and loneliness are the hardest parts for me. I am intelligent and resourceful but finding the fear level round this deadly virus is scary and being on my own with no-one to reassure me at night-time is and must be the hardest part for people like myself, living alone and restricted.”*

#### **Conclusion**

As in previous weeks, most respondents to this survey are managing to cope during the pandemic, although many continue to miss friends and family and to find it a challenge to be in lockdown.

As we move through the pandemic there is an increase in the number of people reporting illness and the death of family and friends as well as concerns over a vaccine, the availability of PPE and when/how we will come out of lockdown. The ‘tone’ of responses also seems to be changing, as people have now adjusted to our new way of living, to some extent, although some people are now also starting to question the government’s response and the information that they provide.
