



Healthwatch **Together**

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

**Weeks 6 & 7 report
(4th - 18th May 2020):**

**How are you coping with the Coronavirus (COVID-19)
pandemic v2?**

Date report compiled: 05/06/2020

Report written by: Debbie Banks (HWC Research & Data Officer)

This report covers weeks 6 and 7 of the second version of the Coronavirus survey. It covers the period 04th May to 18th May 2020.

The demographic information is provided and an analysis of the responses to each of the open questions.

In total we received 143 responses during this period.

Rationale for research and updated questions:

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 report is based on the second version of the HWT survey (v2). The first version of the survey was designed to capture how people were feeling and coping with the pandemic during the first few weeks of lockdown. V1 ran for five weeks and produced four reports.

During May the situation in the UK remained fairly static, with lockdown restrictions only being partially lifted in England towards the end of the month. To reflect this there is a joint report for weeks 6 & 7.

Methodology:

The survey was launched on Survey Monkey and shared via HW websites, 'word of mouth', through HWT contacts across the region and social media.

Questions:

1. Where do you live? (Options - Cumbria, Lancashire - Blackpool, Lancashire - Blackburn with Darwen, Lancashire- other.)
2. How old are you?
3. Are you male/female/other?
4. Is your gender identity the same as on your original birth certificate?
5. How would you describe your sexual orientation?
6. What was your employment status before the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?
7. Including yourself, how many adults (18+) live in your household?
8. How many children (0-17) live in your household?
9. What is your ethnicity?
10. How would you rate your mental health prior to the Covid-19 pandemic?
11. Have you been diagnosed with, or do you feel you suffer from any of the following?
12. What impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on your mental health?
13. Have you been able to access support for your mental health?
14. What support have you accessed for your mental health?
15. Would you like to tell us more about this?
16. Has the pandemic affected you financially?
17. How?
18. Have you made any financial changes?

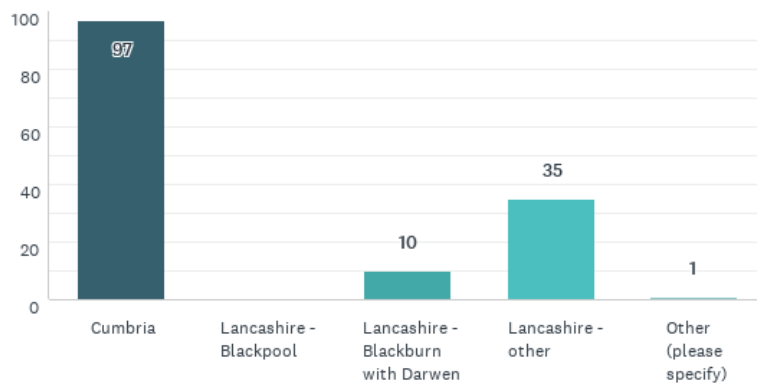
19. Would you like to tell us more about this?
20. Do you have an existing medical condition, including pregnancy, that requires treatment or care (that is not related to Covid-19)?
21. How has your treatment/care been affected?
22. Would you like to tell us more about this?
23. Have you had an appointment either by video or phone consultation?
24. How was your experience?
25. Would you use this service again?
26. Would you like to tell us a bit more about your experience?
27. Has your experience of social care services been affected by the pandemic?
28. How?
29. Are you a carer for someone else? Either paid or unpaid.
30. Before the pandemic, what support did you receive as a carer?
31. What support are you receiving now during the pandemic?
32. Would you like to tell us more about this?
33. We are aware that there has been an increase in 'hidden crime' in households due to the pandemic. Do you feel your safety has been compromised due to having to stay at home?
34. Do you know how to get help?
35. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?
36. Have you had a positive experience during the pandemic and lockdown that you would like to share with us?
37. Option to leave email address.

Results

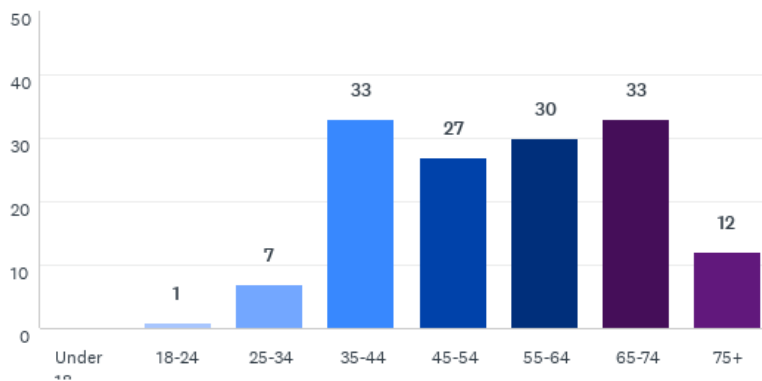
Demographics:

143 respondents.

Q1 Where do you live?



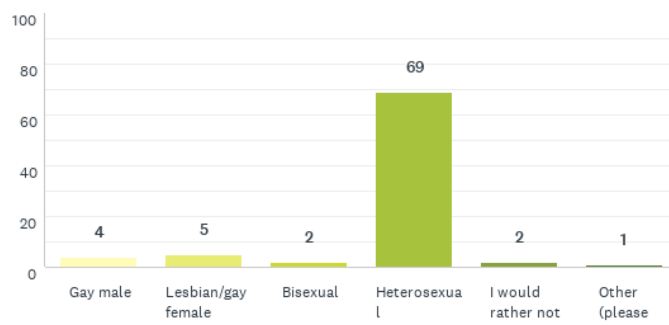
Q2 How old are you?



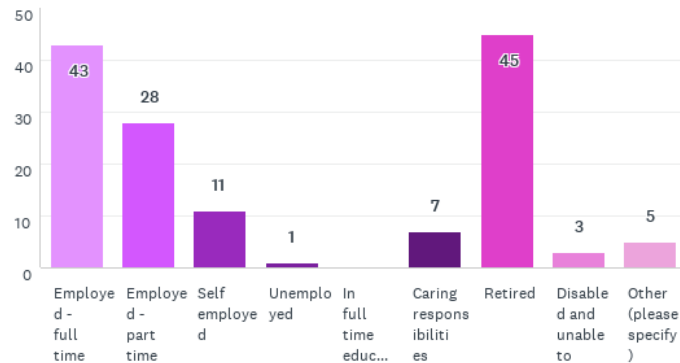
Compared to week 5, the respondents in weeks 6 & 7 represented a wider age range. They are still mainly female (75%) and of white ethnic origin (97%).

4% of respondents have a different gender identity to the one on their original birth certificate.

Q5 How would you describe your sexual orientation?

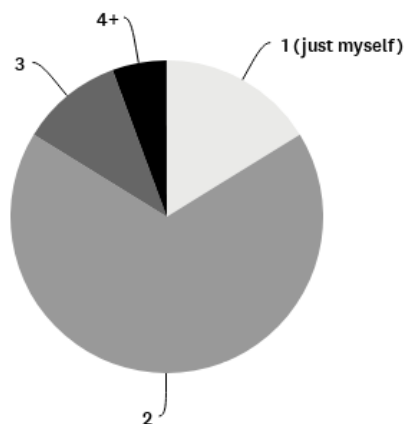


Q6 What was your employment status before the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?



58% were in work, 31% were retired.

Q7 Including yourself, how many adults (over 18) live in your household?



84% live with at least one other adult in the house. 16% are the only adult in the household.

72% of respondents had no children living in the household

Q.10 How would you rate your mental health prior to the Coronavirus pandemic?

Respondents were asked to rate their mental health on a scale of 0-100, with 0 being very poor, 50 being ok and 100 being very good.

The average score was 78, suggesting most respondents felt their mental health was good, prior to the pandemic. For week 5, the average score was 80 so this has remained fairly consistent.

Three people scored their mental health less than 10, with another four giving it between 10-30

Q11. Have you been diagnosed with, or do you feel you suffer from any of the following?

Condition	Week 5	Week 6 & 7
ADHD	0%	0.5%
Anxiety	15%	23%
Bi-polar Disorder	1%	2%
Depression	13%	14%
Eating Disorder	1%	3%
OCD	0.5%	1.5%
PTSD	5%	5%
Schizophrenia	0%	0%
Substance Abuse	0%	0%
Dementia	0%	0%
None	75%	68%
Other	4%	6%

Anxiety and depression continue to be the biggest mental health issues.

People gave the following responses in the 'other' category:

- A few people provided details of physical illnesses that are affecting them, including Parkinson's and cancer.
- Borderline Personality Disorder.
- Stress.
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Q12. What impact has the Coronavirus pandemic had on your mental health?

Respondents were asked to rate the effect on a scale of 0-100, with 0 representing no impact at all and 100 meaning the pandemic had had a significant impact.

The average score was 34, suggesting that for many of the people who responded to this survey, the pandemic has not had a significant impact on their mental health.

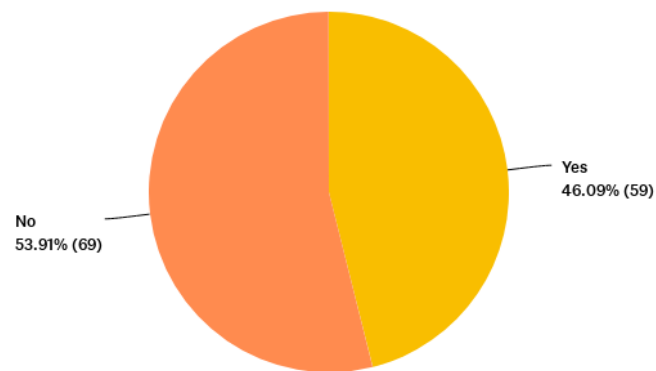
At the extreme ends of the scale:

9 people scored their mental health 80-99 meaning they are struggling as a result of the pandemic.

3 people scored it as 100, stating that the pandemic has had a significant impact on their mental health.

At the other end of the scale, 19 people (13%) gave their score as 0 as they felt that the pandemic has had no impact on their mental health at all.

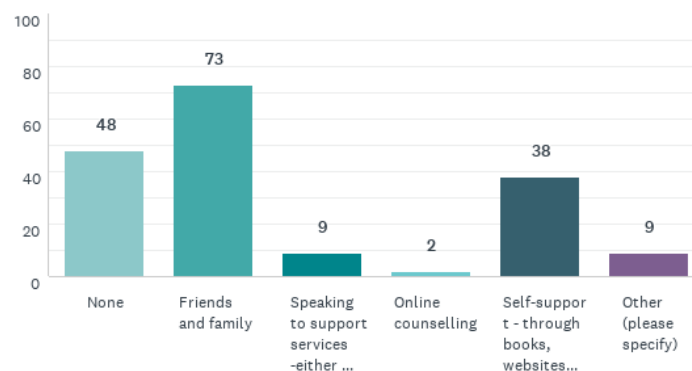
Q13 Have you been able to access support for your mental health?



Unfortunately the data in this graph may be misleading. Only 15 respondents did not answer this question, which means that people who do not need or use mental services have answered the question.

This question has since been updated to say - please skip this question if you do not normally access services for your mental health. Future analysis should now enable us to give a more accurate reflection of whether people who need to use these services are able to access them.

Q14 What support have you accessed for your mental health? Please tick all that apply



Most people continue to rely on friends and family for support with their mental health, followed by self-support.

Within the 'other' category people included:

- Walking, exercising and 'keeping busy'.
- Speaking to a psychotherapist.
- Medication.
- Headspace App.
- Church.

A couple of people also mentioned online or phone counselling services under the 'other' section, therefore the 'online counselling' bar on the chart above should be slightly bigger.

Q15. Would you like to tell us more about this?

"A WhatsApp group with health and wellbeing coach and one to one video calls, phone calls from my therapist weekly."

"Trying to cope by myself."

"I have two daughters, one is still at a special needs school and one attends an adult day services placement. Both girls have been home full time for the full 'lockdown' period, with no access to their day placements, overnight respite or direct payment / carer packages. We do receive weekly 'Welfare' calls from Adult Day Services and some from school. Contact with family and friends just by phone call or FaceTime."

"My surgery was cancelled & my dysphoria & depression has intensified. I've been self harming with food which has made things worse. I don't feel I can talk about this to professionals as I feel it may jeopardise future treatment and also doesn't feel important enough while other folks are fighting for their lives in a pandemic."

"My husband has just died of Covid 19 in a Dementia Care Home in Carlisle."

"I am managing and am aware I can self refer to Lancashire Women who were amazing when I needed help and their MINDFIT group helped so much as did the 1 to 1 therapy before that."

"I have been off all meds for anxiety for over 18 months and have had to access medication again during this crisis."

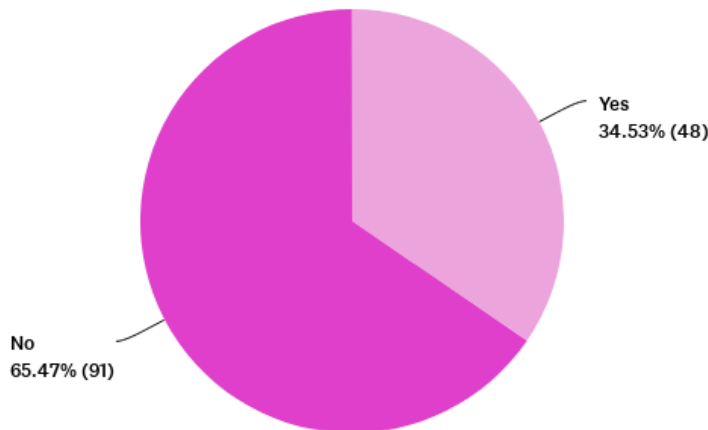
"I try to meditate every day, and now it seems more important to do this. I'm lucky enough to have a loving and listening partner who will discuss any anxieties or

concerns I have, and friends who live next door and close by that I can talk to face to face, or on zoom.”

“Currently I would say it has improved my mental health. The additional flexibility of work, and the lack of the 'usual' morning routine to get myself and 2 children up and out of the house in 1.5 hours is helping my stress levels massively. Alongside the lack of 2.5-3 hours spent travelling to and from work everyday.”

“I have seen numbers to call, but I don't trust that they would be helpful as I have been through the mental health system so many times and not got better.”

Q16 Has the pandemic affected you financially?



Q17. How?

Of those respondents who answered yes:

Someone in my household has been furloughed	27%
I have been furloughed	11%
I am self-employed and I have had to close my business	5%
Someone in my house has lost their job	4%
I have lost my job	1%
My benefits have increased	1%

I am at risk of homelessness/I have been made homeless	0
My benefits have decreased	0

One positive outcome is that across the three weeks of v2 of the survey, no one has said that their benefit payments have decreased, instead two respondents have reported an increase.

Being furloughed is still reported as the biggest financial impact. As government legislation and advice changes and the furlough scheme draws to an end we would expect to see this change. Although this may coincide with an increase in reported job losses and changes to state benefits.

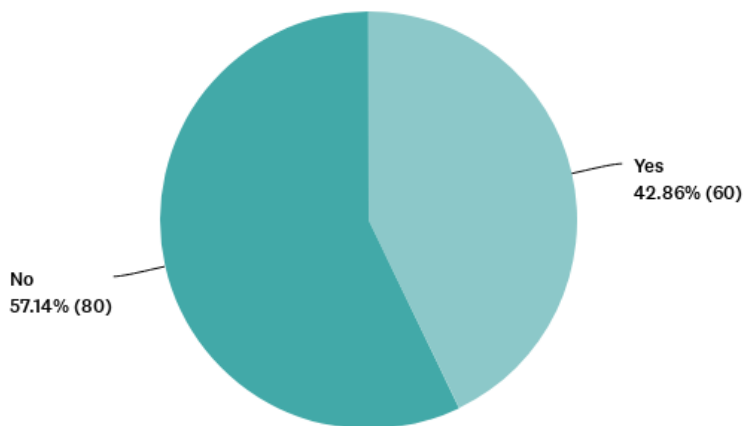
There were several people who are concerned over a reduction in their pensions and a loss of income from investments and rental properties.

Others have increased their working hours, so are earning more money.

A few respondents commented that they have been spending less, minimising the financial impact.

One person is working on a zero hours contract and is not entitled to furlough pay.

Q18 Have you made any financial changes?



Q19. Would you like to tell us more about this?

A lot of respondents told us that they are either spending less overall or they are spending differently (prioritising food). For some people, particularly families, they have noticed that as a result of many regular activities no longer taking place

(children’s activities, days out, nursery fees, etc.) they are actually financially slightly better off. There seems to be a ‘balancing out’ for some people, in that they have a reduced income but they also have fewer outgoings.

Buying food can now be more expensive, as there are the costs of delivery to factor in and not being able to look for bargains or buy ‘unbranded’ food. There is also the cost of having everyone in the house all the time; eating more food, using more gas and electricity and having to change broadband packages to accommodate the increased useage.

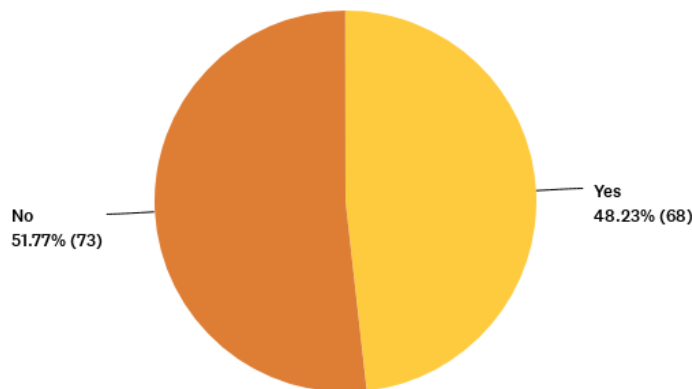
“My outgoings are considerably reduced as I am not buying petrol, eating out or socialising. Weekly grocery shopping bill has also reduced as I am shopping less frequently.”

“We allocate more to food shopping as we are buying from deliver to home local companies and they cost more.”

“I contacted a money advisor who supported me and gave me advice on options and what they meant in simple terms.”

“Trying to clear existing debt in case situation worsens and either me or partner are made redundant.”

Q20 Do you have an existing medical condition, including pregnancy, that requires treatment or care (that is not related to COVID-19)?



Q21. If you answered ‘yes’, how has your medical treatment or care been affected by the pandemic?

Telephone or video appointment	27
Appointment cancelled	24
Unable to get medical tests	10
Appointment rearranged	9
Unable to get medical treatment	7
Difficult to get medication	5
Unable to get medication	1
Stopped taking medication	1
Other	26

Responses to ‘other’ included:

- As appointments were cancelled the respondent now needs to start the referral process from the beginning again.
- Operation later in the year, so not sure if it will be affected.
- Getting prescriptions is easier.
- Physiotherapy appointments cancelled.
- Waiting for a home visit.

Q22. Would you like to tell us more about this?

“Gender re assignment surgery cancelled until further notice.”

“Not had follow up appointment for asthma diagnosis.”

“I have a mole that is changing and possibly needs removing but the appointment was cancelled.”

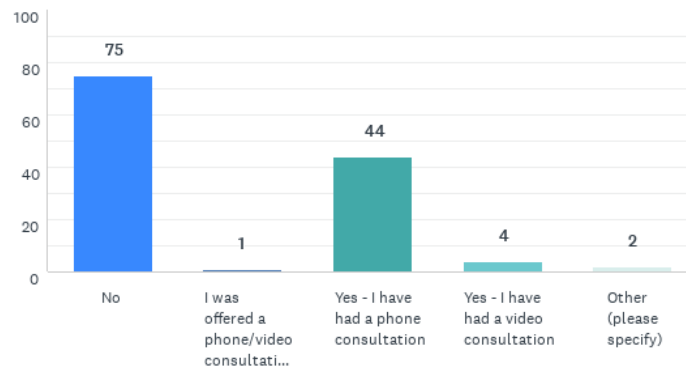
“I was told I needed an urgent scan but it was cancelled due to covid-19. This is increasing my anxiety as I don't know if there's something wrong that is getting worse.”

There have been general concerns raised by the UK media over a ‘ticking time bomb’¹ of delayed tests² and operations as a result of the pandemic. The evidence from our survey seems to support this.

“The new telephone or online prescription service linked to the delivery from the

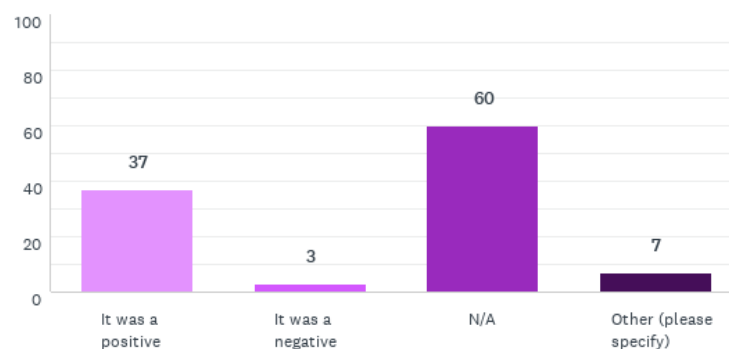
pharmacy is brilliant - no worries in getting medication in time."

Q23 Have you had an appointment either by phone or video consultation? Please tick all that apply



Only one person did not take up the offer of a video/phone consultation. In the 'other' category people told us that they are waiting for an appointment.

Q24 If you have had an appointment by phone or video consultation, how was your experience?



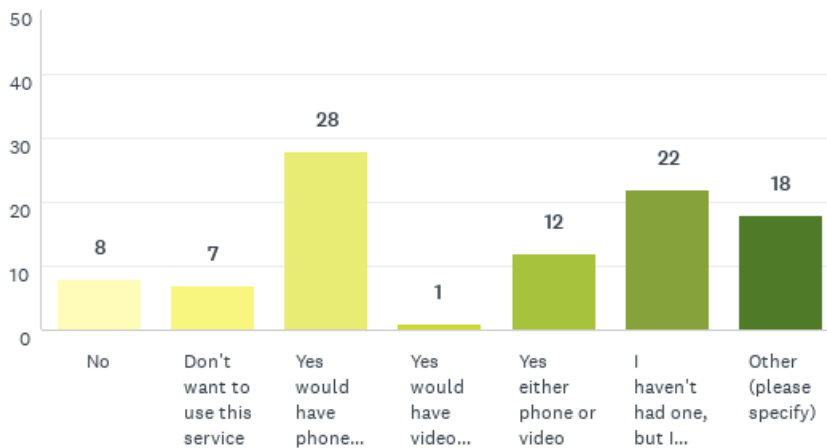
56% of the respondents had not had a phone or video consultation. Out of the 44% who had received one, 35% felt it was a positive experience.

Respondents who left a comment under the 'other' section felt that the reason for their appointment did not necessarily lend itself well to a phone or video

appointment, such as a physio appointment. A phone consultation also can't provide an opportunity for further investigation.

One person said that they struggle to use the phone, so the phone consultation had caused them anxiety.

Q25 Would you use the phone/video consultation service again?



Yes I would have a phone consultation again	28
I haven't had a phone/video consultation, but I would try this service	22
Yes I would have either a phone or video consultation again	12
No I wouldn't use this service	8
I don't want to use this service	7
Yes I would have a video consultation again	1

Q26. Would you like to tell us a bit more about your experience?

“Easy, saves time, quick that's for telephone appointment, video was not available.”

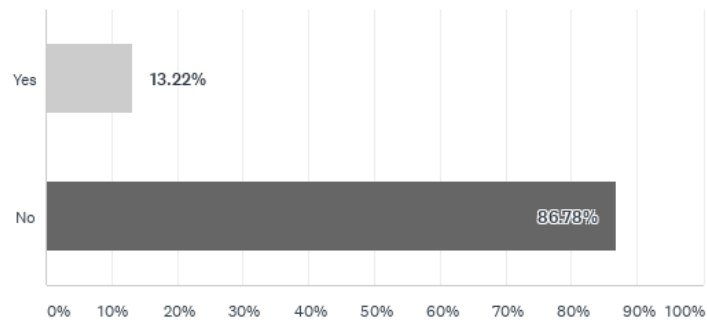
“Was simple as my health problems are on going everyone involved was helpful.”

“Not sure a phone consultation would work for a problem with a mole but I would try it for other conditions.”

“Maternity appointments have been over the phone. This is fine apart from not being able to listen in on the baby to get reassurance everything is ok.”

“Very easy to arrange via my local GP and I got an appointment the next day.”

Q27 Has your experience of social care services been affected by the pandemic?



Q28. How?

“My husband has MSA Parkinson’s disease and all my usual support services have been parked. He has not been able to stay with other family members to give me a break.”

“I work within adult Social Care, so the way in which I work has changed. Telephone/online support.”

“Lack of compassion, empathy and consideration I feel has dropped. Efficiency in hospitals is poor. Care has decreased.”

“We have no access to our School and Adult Day Services placements. We are not accessing our booked overnight respites and our Carer’s have not been working with our girls as their usual support of accessing activities and ‘social distancing’ has not been possible due to the level of support and care they require.”

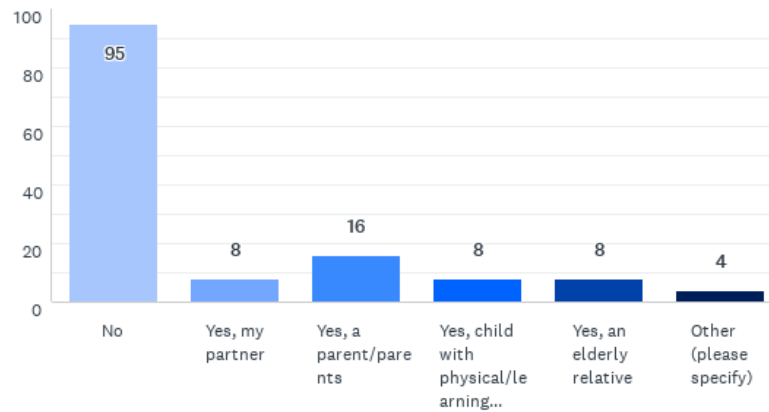
“I was unable to be with my mother during her last hours as she died in a care home.”

“My father has Alzheimer’s & has had difficulty with care. I was telephoned by the helpline to ask if I would go to his house to wash him !!! The carers come at different times than usual & this confuses him. Some are in full PPE some have none.”

“No response, not classed as vulnerable despite long term MH problems including agoraphobia. No family & rurally isolated, no help with accessing shopping, meds

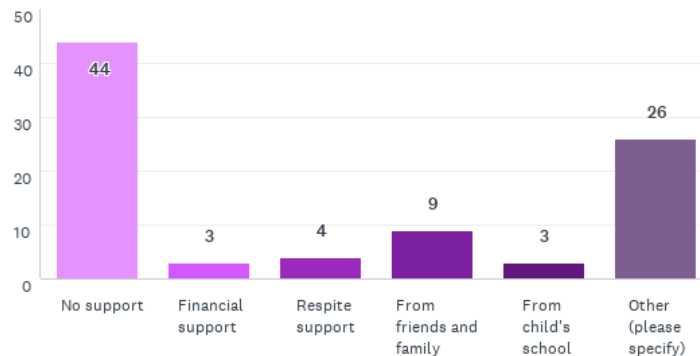
etc. I could be dead of COVID & no one would know.”

Q29 Are you a carer for someone else (either paid or unpaid)?



In the 'other' category were people who normally had caring responsibilities but had been unable to carry them out as a result of lockdown.

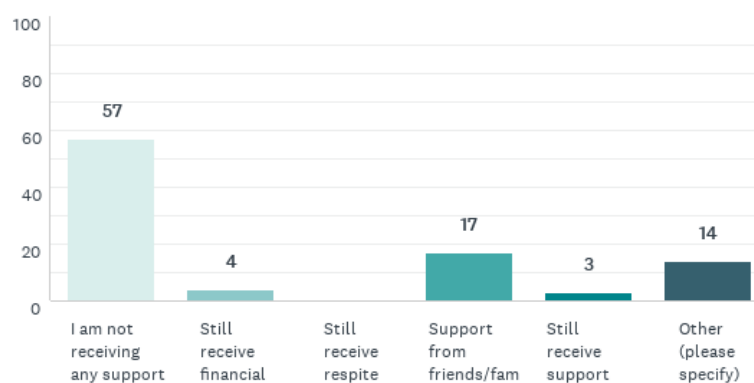
Q30 Before the pandemic what support did you receive as a carer? Please tick all that apply



Other forms of support include:

- Support group (Parkinson's)
- Adult Day Placement
- Macmillan

Q31 What support are you receiving now, during the pandemic?



Four people are now receiving financial support (compared to three who were receiving financial support prior to the pandemic.) These results seem to show that carers are not losing out financially during the pandemic.

More people are being supported by friends and family than prior to the pandemic. School support remains the same. No one is receiving respite care.

Q32. Would you like to tell us more about this?

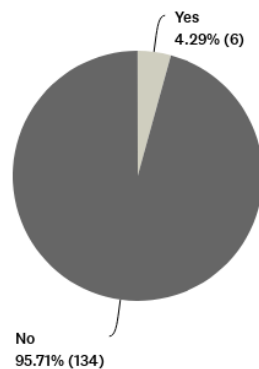
“As my husband is over 70 and gradually losing his faculties, all responsibilities fall to me. I usually have the help of a cleaner, a gardener and he sometimes goes to stay with his daughter. None of this has been possible. I am the only driver now, so I have to leave him alone while I pop to the shops etc.”

“Despite having an EHCP for my youngest daughter, she isn’t able to attend school due to lack of staffing issues. My older daughter cannot attend her Adult day placement as the center is closed. Both our Adult and Child overnight respite providers have limited or no working staff and are not accessible. Because of the restrictions of lockdown we have not been able to use our carers that we employ through our direct payments package.”

“As a single parent I relied on my sister for help with child care - but she has had to shield herself due to underlying health conditions and we cannot have any contact with her. I am therefore looking after my daughter with special educational needs full time on my own, trying to work part time from home so we continue to have an income. My daughter has significant sleep problems (so my own sleep is disturbed) and she used to stay over with my sister at least one night a week to give me a break and catch up on sleep - this is obviously not happening at the moment.”

“My Social Worker says I am eligible for Attendance Allowance but I am still waiting for contact details 2 months later. I have applied for my home help subsidy to be increased. I am still waiting 3 months later.”

Q33 We are aware that there has been an increase of ‘hidden crime’ in households due to the pandemic. Do you feel that your safety has been compromised due to having to stay at home?

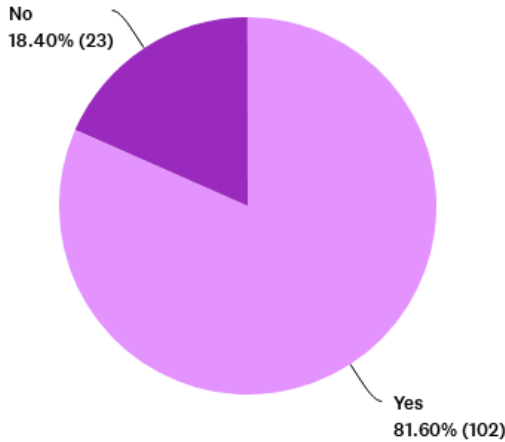


During this period six people reported to us that they felt their safety had been compromised. The respondents consisted of five females and one male. Two people said they did not know how to get help.

These respondents did not leave any further comment, except one person who said they had found it difficult to report crime online. None of them left their email address.

Included within this question were links to relevant support services that are able to support people experiencing ‘hidden crime’. It is hoped that these six respondents, particularly the ones who did not know how to get help, used the links to find the help that they need.

Q34 Do you know how to get help?



Q35. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Most people said that they didn't have anything else to tell us.

A selection of the comments that people did leave are given below.

"I feel I am invisible. I am glad that I don't need financial support, but that means that you don't appear on anyone's radar. I miss not seeing my sons."

"I feel like communication from hospitals has been poor to family members. My family member has been moved between hospitals and resulted in me having to track down which hospital and where they have been moved to. I have had to chase hospitals every day to find out about my loved one. Having spoken to my loved one they feel the care has been poor and that this is because no one is allowed to visit that it can't be viewed or highlighted that anyone is checking on the care and care levels. No positive experience of the health care systems or social care during this pandemic. Feels as though corners are being cut and no one is monitoring quality of care. Seems to be a lot of questionnaires about people's experiences and thoughts during these pandemics but no actions from it."

"Just that the struggle of caring 24 hours/ day for two young people with profound learning disabilities and health needs is exhausting and mentally, emotionally and physically challenging. My girls have no understanding at all about what is happening, their normal routines have completely disappeared and obviously they are struggling to cope with everything too."

“I have really struggled with being so isolated during lockdown. We live away from family and don't have many friends (like many LGBT people) and this has had a significant impact on us. We are also now worried that when lockdown starts to be lifted, this will be restricted to the local area which means that our families will be able to spend time together without us as we won't be able to travel. I already felt on the 'outside' of my family before this and those feelings have been exacerbated.”

“Heavy reliance on access to the internet. Would be difficult for people without it to know who to go to. Would be hard for someone to ring for support if an abuser is also in the house.”

“It is impossible to report crime online I have tried repeatedly to sign up it does not work. 101 is a joke.”

“I've fallen through all the gaps. I feel lonely, forgotten, unimportant, and insignificant.”

“Being at home during the day working from home has meant I have been able to be more aware of how little my husband actually copes while I am at work.”

Q36. Have you had a positive experience as a result of the pandemic and lockdown that you would like to share with us?

Enjoying live neighbours important local spend working home time reflect
things improved able less good garden family people
time relaxed work much home roads community life
exercise commute appreciate helped Yes quieter roads time spent

“My garden looks amazing.”

“We get to wear our velvet lounge suits all day.”

“Improved exercise regime. Better diet. Lower alcohol intake.”

“The community response is wonderful.”

“I am more productive working from home.”

“In the main people have been very kind and respectful of each other.”

“I have thoroughly enjoyed the slower pace of life, spending much more time with my children.”

“The kindness of volunteers in the village.”

“Making us think about what is important and what is not.”

Conclusion

There were 143 responses over these two weeks covering a range of different age groups, though still predominantly female and of white ethnic origin. We also received several responses from the LGBTQ+ community, which is a positive step towards ensuring all our research is inclusive.

The average mental health score prior to the pandemic was 78, which is rated as very good. The average rating for the impact of the pandemic on mental health was 34 (not much of an impact) which again is very positive. However there were 43 people, which is about 1/3 who identified as having mental health issues. For this sub-group their average scores were much lower for mental health and they felt the pandemic had resulted in a more profound and negative impact.

Analysis seems to suggest that there are huge benefits to having close relationships with family and friends. People who reported these close relationships also tended to say that they were coping well. Those who felt isolated and alone were more likely to tell us that they were struggling. One respondent told us *“family is key to having strong mental health.”*

An issue raised by responses to the medical appointment questions is the impact of delayed testing and treatment, particularly for cancer. There is growing awareness that some people are being put ‘on hold’ with no confirmation of when they will be seen.

Overall the responses to phone and video consultations has been very positive, although some people pointed out that they are not suitable for all types of condition and appointment.

An issue we have consistently identified, through analysis of the survey, is the struggle for people with caring responsibilities; for elderly relatives, children with learning difficulties and relatives with dementia. The limited support they may have been able to access prior to the pandemic may now be non-existent, leaving them on their own to cope.

The survey findings continue to demonstrate how many people across Cumbria and Lancashire are managing to cope with a changing situation, however, it does also show that there are a minority who are disproportionately and negatively affected by any change in their circumstances.

References

¹<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-cancer-screenings-nhs-uk-covid-19-surgery-chemotherapy-radiotherapy-a9542146.html>

²<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/may/28/cancer-undiagnosed-for-nearly-2000-people-in-uk-every-week>