



Healthwatch **Together**

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

Week 3 Report (04 - 15/04/2020):

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

Date report compiled: 16/04/2020

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This report contains the feedback HWT received from the Coronavirus survey during 4th - 15th April 2020. The demographic information is provided and an analysis of the responses to each of the open questions.

In total we received 58 responses during this period.

This is the last week that this version of the survey will remain live. A brief report covering the full 3-4 weeks of the pandemic and incorporating all the weekly reports will be produced in May.

A new version of the survey focusing on the themes identified during the first 3-4 weeks will go live during the week commencing 20th April 2020.

As of today (16/04/2020) we have a total of 258 responses, including the 58 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 3 report covers the time period: 04 - 15/04/2020. (These dates cover more than one week, but this period includes the Easter bank holiday weekend when we received only a few responses.)

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.)

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 58 respondents in total.

Locality:

70% from Cumbria

30% from Lancashire

Age range:

53% aged 45-64

81% female

19% male

100% white British/white other

Employment status:

66% in employment

16% retired

7% identify as disabled

Family status:

56% live in a household with two adults

16% live in a household where they are the only adult

69% had no children living in the household

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

The previous two reports demonstrated that almost everyone is feeling the practical, emotional and social impact of being in lockdown. Previous findings have also highlighted certain issues that some people are struggling with, these include:

- Mental health, particularly anxiety and depression.
- Financial worries.
- Difficulty supporting vulnerable people, including the elderly and children

or adults with learning difficulties and/or ASD.

- Impact on those with existing medical conditions or pregnancy.

The following comments show the range of issues that people are dealing with, making it obvious that for many who were already in situations that were difficult, the lockdown has exacerbated their problems.

“Not in any physical health way but it has affected my mental health. I feel worried and anxious - at times tearful and fighting off panic attacks.”

“Having to both work from home and take on board the impossibility of juggling a child with additional needs plus other child to undertake elder child’s secondary education. Mentally depleted and emotionally drained. This is due to the vulnerability of our situation with our child who struggles and not linked to Covid 19. However school has not been interested in supporting us. Our external support has mainly ceased due to social distance and therapy ceased. As parents we feel extremely alone. Self care is vital with our child but it is impossible to maintain.”

“Two possible jobs now on hold. Having to look after parents due to them cancelling carers that were going in because of the infection risk. Care agency were sending different people all the time (had always done this) so that increased the infection risk substantially. Parents were getting deliveries from Tesco but can no longer get these due to many other people ordering. One parent only getting telephone consultation with GP when a physical examination was really needed.”

“My normal routine has changed, during the first week I felt lost, I was suddenly ripped from my colleagues and was working at home. My colleagues are like another family to me, the daily banter is uplifting and funny. Now I was at home, trying to have a zoom meeting with colleagues and it was different, worrying and strained. Our relationship has never been strained. Luckily we have a strong close knit family. My husband and I rarely argue and my children have been uplifting. My son was furloughed but has found his creative side. Painting, cooking, cutting and colouring hair, and getting very good at making cocktails. He said to me yesterday, isn’t it good we all get on! The youngest likes to be busy, otherwise she can be a nuisance. She’s been stripping wallpaper, helping in the garden and even been biking most days, so she’s managing. The middle daughter has suffered the most. She’s stayed in her bedroom most days and not been engaging with us, or wanting to do anything. But she’s probably lost the most. This was her GCSE year, she can’t do exams, she can’t have a leavers party, her prom won’t be happening and she hasn’t said goodbye to her friends, who she is missing. She is starting to engage a little better each day, so we are encouraging

her. Overall we are coping, we do have ups and downs, especially thinking about the future securities. My husband is self employed but doesn't fit the criteria for any payments from the government. My role was a temp contract which ends this April, so not sure what will happen there. Our positive thoughts are that we are a strong and close family, we are creative, and we have our health."

"I'm absolutely terrified of anyone coming near me."

"Partner not able to come to prenatal scans and appointments, no contact from midwife, feeling very alone and in the dark regarding my care."

"My household is luckily well (so far), so I am doing shopping for 3 other households on a regular basis. Recently had a missed miscarriage; going to my maternity scans and D&C alone was tough."

Question 10: What are your three biggest concerns?

1. The health of my family and friends.
2. My own health.
3. The financial impact, both personal and for the economy.
4. How will life get back to normal, how long will the lockdown last and what is the exit strategy?
5. Mental health.

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 impact and also when life might begin to return to normal. Mental health has also remained a consistent concern.

*"1. Myself or a family member / friend becoming ill with covid-19
2. Myself or family member / friend becoming ill with something else and difficulty being treated / not being able to see family if emergency happens
3. Effect on economy and people's mental health."*

"Mental health. Transition back to school - will potentially be awful as nothing in place now to keep in touch when staff are not busy. Holding our jobs down and not losing them over the impossibility of working full time (husband) and part time (me). It's harder than being in lock down with securely attached children with no additional needs, we have to parent Olympic style in a regular pre-covid 19 world. Now the added pressures make it far worse."

"Disappearing in an ambulance... or seeing my partner disappear into an ambulance. Children or grandchildren reacting badly to infection. High risk sister, living alone becoming ill."

"Falling behind with bills / mortgage, passing the virus onto family, increase in mental health issues, stress and anxiety."

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

Responses to this question have remained consistent over the last 3-4 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.
- Restricted movement/having to stay at home.
- Changes to job/impact on job.
- I'm lonely.
- Shopping is difficult.
- Increased anxiety and stress.

"Can't self-care. Miss getting out of home to escape being a special needs parent. Used to get a break when school was on. Not even a drive to work to calm down after a stressful morning. Miss human contact hugely. Youngest child is destabilised due to huge upheaval and teenager's anxiety is heightened."

"We lost a nephew in March. The funeral is not until tomorrow. We have not been able to support his mam and dad. Funeral will be difficult with distance and no way of celebrating his life."

"Essentially, not being able to do what makes life worth living."

Checking on elderly parents, can't go into the house to check they are keeping on top of housework. Having to order prescriptions on line, trying to set that up being visually impaired was difficult. Not being able to access the face to face support."

"Not huge... I actually like the quietness without tourists."

Some people are more affected by social distancing, beyond 'missing friends and family' this includes those caring for children with special needs, those with elderly relatives and people who need (and normally receive) care and support themselves.

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

As with in 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.

Although anecdotal evidence suggests some people are drinking more alcohol during this time, a study in [The Guardian newspaper](#) found that 1 in 3 people have reduced or are reducing their alcohol consumption.

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

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 hour a day outside - not enough. Work stress hard to escape (busier than ever contingency planning) everyone talks about it endlessly - pretty inescapable."

"Having telephone counselling speaking with family and friends when I am able to."

"Struggling but trying to just get on with things."

"Trying to tackle new tasks - yesterday we learned how to use Facetime/messenger/skype thingy! This way we can stay in touch a bit better & SEE our (younger) relatives & friends."

"Staying positive not listening to the world and his wife online, Listening to Radio Lancashire. Community stories empower. Keeping busy with things I can do, knit and bake."

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

Actions that people have taken includes, staying at home and self-isolating, supporting other people (helping with shopping and remaining in contact) and volunteering. This week there were many more people who said that they had given money to charity and have set up local support groups to help those who are vulnerable.

There has been a 'change in tone' in some of the responses that we have received recently, with people talking about 'keeping spirits up', trying to be positive and being polite and kind. As there is recognition generally that even though we are all in lockdown, it is considerable harder for some individuals and families than it is for others.

There are some people and families that don't feel they are in a position to help others as they are struggling themselves and don't feel they have received the necessary support.

"Doing shopping for friends and family who are unable to leave the house. Along with some other neighbours, we have put a flyer through the doors of all houses on our street with contact details for anyone who may be struggling practically. We have done shopping for people and got their prescriptions for them."

"I am disinfecting all surfaces regularly and all clothing, bedding etc. I am adding Dettol to the wash to ensure clothing is disinfected."

"I keep out of the way as much as possible, follow the rules. Try to keep my friends spirits up by checking in on them. I have taken shopping for friends who aren't able to get out."

"Keeping in touch with family and colleagues, tried to find humour in the situation."

"Kept routines. Kept my family busy around the house. Talk, talk & talk."

"Our neighbour was admiring our recently planted pots/troughs - we have arranged to collect some plants from Aldi for her at next week's shop."

"We are in survival mode as a forgotten special needs family."

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?

Responses to this question included:

- Widespread testing for Covid-19.
- Better provision for online shopping.
- Being able to see family and friends again.
- Other people adhering to government guidelines.
- Knowing when life will start to get back to normal.
- Reliable and consistent information from the government.

Although many people said they were coping ok or that they couldn't think of any changes that would help them to cope.

“More transparent information from Govt. - real testing, real financial support, real information.”

“I am coping well, I am happy with government and what they set out.”

“Increase in delivery or click and collect slots in supermarkets. I'm avoiding going out as much as possible, and this is the only time I'm forced to go out (especially as I'm shopping for 4 households). I'd love to avoid this, but there are no slots available. It would also be helpful to have stricter enforcement of social distancing in the community. On my one walk I often am stuck trying to avoid people who are too close (eg, cyclist or runners coming up behind me). It's also difficult taking the dog out as some owners don't keep their dogs on leads in areas where there are others; there have been a few occasions where people have had to come up close to me to get their dog who is refusing to come back when called.”

“I need my medication. The mental health team in Lancaster are currently passing-the-buck regarding my essential medication prescribing. I have Agoraphobia with Panic Disorder, PTSD, BPD and schizophrenia yet my prescriptions are repeatedly delayed, exposing myself & others to infection. I am close to a mental illness crisis, thus burdening the NHS & other key workers further.”

“Knowing if and how many had had it, the tests for having had it, and the test for having the virus to be given to all the sick so we know true figures.”

“More understanding by police of the needs of people with disabilities who may need to travel further than their immediate neighbourhood.”

“Being able to see my friends and family even if limited. Being able to go further afield to exercise not just from my front door. Knowing that the government will give a basic income not just UC which is very little to live on.”

Question 17: What information would help to support you?

Nearly half of respondents felt there was either enough information/too much information available, or weren't sure what further information would help them:
“None, we live in a great country and by and large people are doing their best. Lots of info out there.”

Those respondents who did suggest what information would help them, included questions about the future:

“An idea of what could be next... a lot of focus on responding to emergency but what about our recovery from the economic chaos?”

“More information about what happens next.”

“Just information on getting back to normal.”

They would like to see less 'fake news':

“Not sure really - less posts on social media without knowing the facts as can be misleading.”

And more locally focused information:

“I think people's experiences of actually going through it.”

“More information on how widespread in Cumbria.”

“It would also help if individual deaths were reported in the press so that people know it is happening in their area and so that people that might have been in contact with them know they may have been infected. This would make people take restrictions more seriously.”

More positive news stories:

“More good news, so much depressing news.”

There were also requests for specific information and a need for better signposting:

“Mental health support...How to manage a toddler, working from home and not feel stressed/anxious?”

“Information about what exactly disabled peoples rights are during this crisis.”

“Where to go locally / who to contact if things are needed like forward planning if I get ill, who will deliver son’s food and meds?”

“How as an agoraphobic I cannot obtain food, essential psychiatric medication or hygiene products without endangering myself or others?”

“How to access Health care needs to be better explained.”

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

35% yes

65% 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?

People who have had their care or treatment affected are finding that their appointments have been cancelled or rearranged (hospital and GP). This finding has been consistent across all the weeks the survey has been running.

Apart from one person mentioning the queue at the pharmacy, there were no complaints about difficulties getting prescriptions (in weeks 1 & 2 nearly 1/5 of respondents had struggled with prescriptions).

There are a number of people who have not had their care or treatment affected, but out of those who have:

- Mental healthcare is currently on hold.
- Difficulties getting dental treatment - *“mum broke a tooth last week, up to*

now it isn't causing her pain, BUT there are no dental services in Rossendale available! and how do we get an immobile 86 year old to an emergency dentist (if it comes to it)?”

- Cancer tests are not being done.
- At least one respondent has stopped taking their medication - *“I have recently stopped my medication as one of the side effects is a lowered immune system; I was worried about being on this and the effect it may have should I get COVID-19.”*

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 positive comments:

- *“Although a terrible situation I feel lucky to have this family time and the break from work stress. I would consider changing jobs for a simpler life.”*
- *“NHS have been brilliant and hope everyone gets a pay rise and recognition from the government.”*
- *“I think that that other key workers in the community need some recognition as it’s not just nurses and medical staff that are keeping things going, domestics, cooks, admin, drivers, supermarket staff and many more.”*
- *“Stay safe and stay at home to save lives.”*

Other comments that people left:

- *“You have forgotten the carers and the parents of children with additional needs who struggle and isolated in the normal world but who are now ultra isolated.”*
- *“It can be very, very lonely, makes you cry sometimes.”*
- *“Being furloughed has made me feel un valued by my employers and that my contribution to my workplace was/is irrelevant especially as other colleagues are still working. This has affected my mental health quite badly.”*
- *“Mental health has been ignored.”*
- *“I look after my 100 year Mum who lives with us and my 76 year old husband as well as being a part time carer for my disabled daughter who lives close by.”*

Conclusion

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.

What this survey has highlighted is the minority who are disproportionately affected by the pandemic and lockdown. Mainly people who were already struggling with mental health issues or pre-existing medical conditions, as well as those who were (and still are) caring for elderly relatives or their own children who have learning difficulties or autism.

Recommendations

1. Healthwatch Together (HWT) will develop a new version of this survey that will focus on the themes that have been identified through v1: the financial impact, mental health, supporting the vulnerable and treatment or care for existing medical conditions.
2. HWT will produce a report covering the full period of v1 of the survey.
3. HWT will publish a Q&A based on issues people have raised through the survey. This will be published on a regular basis via the individual HW websites and through social media. This will enable us to be responsive to questions and problems and to signpost people to the relevant services.