



# Healthwatch **Together**

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

**Week 5 report  
(27/04 - 04/05/2020):**

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

**Date report compiled:** 20/05/2020

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

This report covers the first week's responses to the second version of the Coronavirus survey. It covers the period 27 April to 4 May 2020.

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

In total we received 191 responses during this period.

Version 1 of the survey was closed on 26 April 2020 and had 306 responses.

**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.

The first version of the survey was designed to capture how people were feeling and coping with the pandemic during the first few weeks. As this pandemic was unprecedented we did not know how long the survey would need to run for, or what kind of experiences people would share with us. However, after five weeks it became apparent that we needed to update the questions to reflect growing concerns that were identified through people's experiences.

Some of the previous questions in version 1 no longer seemed relevant (such as 'how are you looking after your physical health?') as the answers we received remained consistent over the five week period and it was felt that there were no new insights to be gained.

Analysis and feedback from our partners across Cumbria and Lancashire suggested it might be beneficial to concentrate on emerging themes and concerns, such as mental health, carers and the financial impact of the pandemic. The new questions were composed to reflect this.

**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?

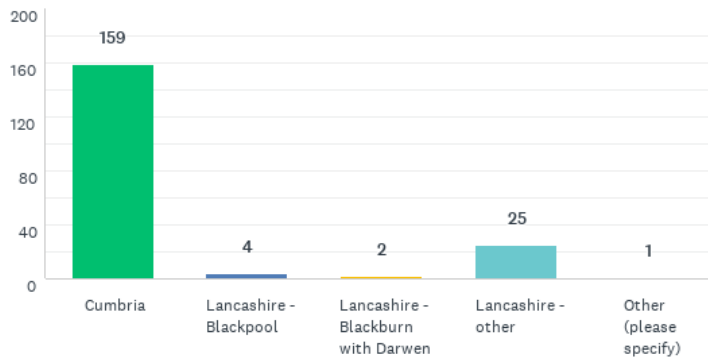
11. Have you been diagnosed with, or do you feel you suffer from any of the following?
12. What impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on your mental health?
13. Have you been able to access support for your mental health?
14. What support have you accessed for your mental health?
15. Would you like to 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

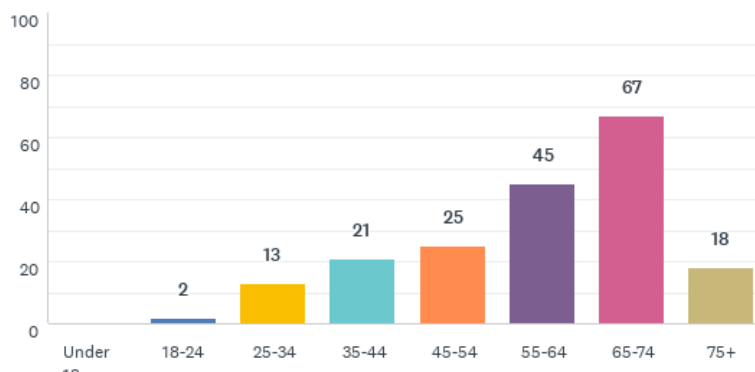
### Demographics:

191 respondents.

#### Q1 Where do you live?



#### Q2 How old are you?



68% aged 55+

Only 1% were 18-24

68% female

32% male

The questions about gender identity (q4) and sexual orientation (q5) were not added to the survey until the following week, so there are no responses to these questions during this time frame.

95% white British/white other

0.5% Asian/Asian British

0.5% mixed

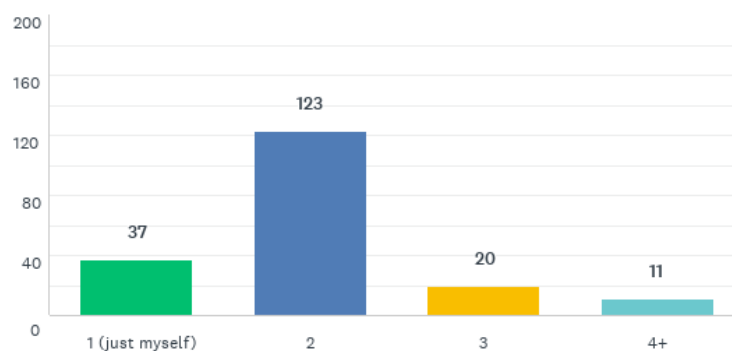
0.5% other

Employment status:

52% in employment

43% retired

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



78% 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 80, suggesting most respondents felt their mental health was between ok and very good, prior to the pandemic.

Further analysis showed that 21% of respondents scored their mental health between 90 and 100. Whilst 2% gave their mental health a score of below 30.

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

ADHD	0%
Anxiety	15%
Bi-polar Disorder	1%
Depression	13%
Eating Disorder	1%
OCD	0.5%
PTSD	5%
None	75%
Other	4%

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

- *“Living with cancer which affects mood and sometimes magnifies anxiety.”*
- Borderline Personality Disorder.
- Heart problems.
- Sleep disturbances.

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

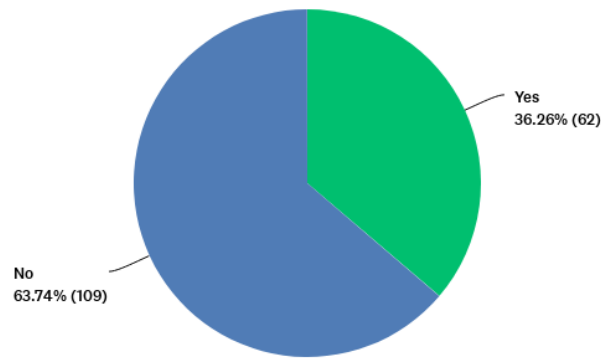
Respondents were asked to rate the effect on a scale of 0-100, with 0 representing no impact at all and 100 meaning the pandemic had had a significant impact.

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.

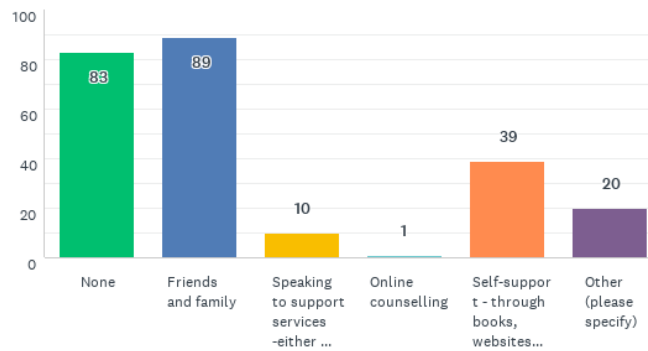
However, there were a smaller number of respondents for whom the pandemic has had a significant impact:

8% rated the impact on their mental health as 80-100.

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



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



Within the 'other' category people included:

- Running, yoga or other exercise.
- Speaking to their GP or a doctor.
- Speaking to their employer.
- *“Currently haven't needed to access. I feel less stressed at home!”*

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

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

*“I am having dreams/nightmares that I didn't have before. I have had one or two days when I felt very down and teary. All the negativity and point scoring in the press is not helping.”*

*“Feeling anxious going out. Work in general practice very stressful, I'm lead nurse. I'm managing my team no ones managing me!”*

*”I have a quite strict self management program, which has arisen from my diagnosis of bipolar and in later years PTSD, and I use it to keep a balance. I feel that this has worked even more to help me because the world has quietened down lately.”*

*”Working from home in complete isolation, family leaving the house at 7.30am returning at 6pm. Video conferencing very tiring not always effective, not being able to discuss things fully with colleagues, Colleagues furloughed. neighbours outside enjoying the sunshine, gardening, bbqs etc whilst you are inside working through a heavy workload.”*

*“I care for my wife who has Alzheimer's and can't understand what is happening and gets agitated this means I have to spend more time consoling her.”*

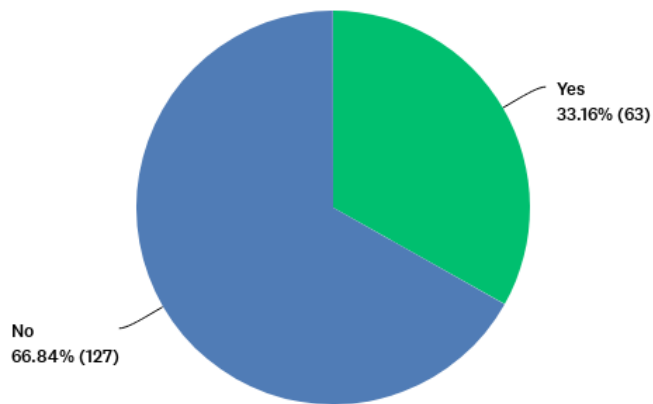
*“I felt incredibly anxious as we made a decision as a family that we needed to shield- weeks before I received a letter confirming this, and days before schools were closed. A few weeks of adjusting to our 'new normal', and whilst life is strange, monotonous and not as we'd like it, I'm thankful for being safe, well provided for by excellent local shops and friends, and we are comfortable and pretty settled at home.”*

*“My mental health has improved dramatically since lock down began, It turns out time away from work and other people was exactly what i needed in order to 'reset' my brain and body. I'm not suffering from feelings of depression and have been in control of my eating habits. I am now considering changing my job in order to work from home in the future.”*

*“I have good days mostly, but find it can be the small things that you struggle with, can feel very down.”*



Q16 Has the pandemic affected you financially?



Q17. How?

Of those respondents who answered yes:

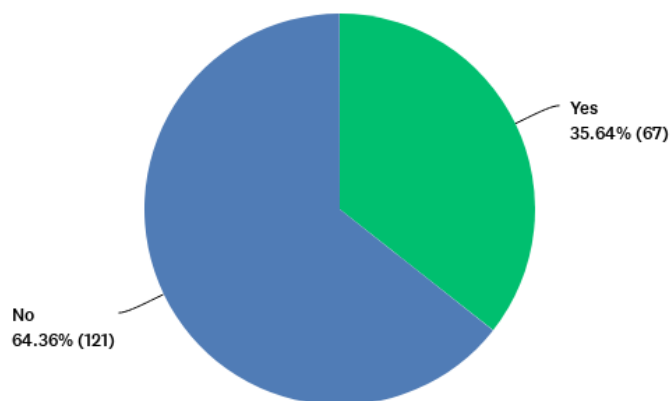
I have been furloughed	10 people
Someone in my household has been furloughed	10 people
I am self-employed and I have had to close my business	9 people
Someone in my house has lost their job	6 people
I have lost my job	1 person
My benefits have increased	1 person
I am at risk of homelessness/I have been made homeless	1 person
My benefits have decreased	0

*“I have had a chance to save, because I can’t spend the same way. Any debts I have I’ve dealt with and I feel I have a different relationship to the distractions which can come and cost more money than life needs to.”*

*“I am self employed, my business still exists, customers are waiting for me to start work again, but as I work in their homes, I cannot go back until lock down is over, so I currently have no income and have gone onto universal credit.”*

Several people also mentioned concerns over a reduction in their pensions and a loss of income from investments.

### Q18 Have you made any financial changes?



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

The main points to come out of this question were:

- People are spending less.
- People are spending differently (buying different things and spending less on some items and activities.)
- At least five respondents have taken a car/mortgage or loan holiday or had to take out a loan to cover living costs.
- Ten respondents said that they had made no changes to their spending.

*“Definitely reduced our spending as we don’t know how our pensions will be affected in the long run. And there’s not much to spend on!”*

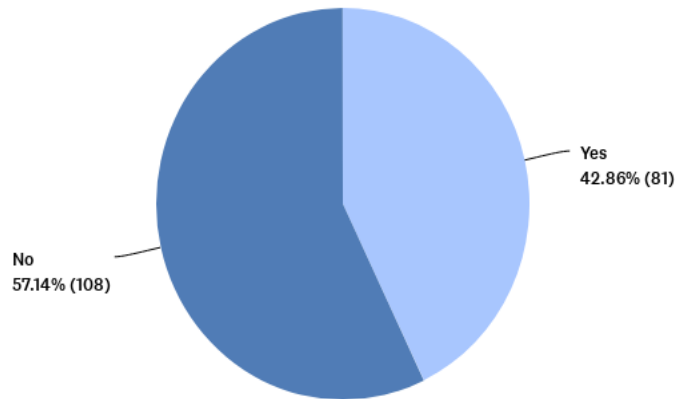
*“I have not spent as much money on things, I have not been able to go out and about and I have budgeted and prioritised differently. This has proven to me that it can be done. At least on temporary measures, which presumably can be repeated at times in the future. I will use this as part of my self management.”*

*“I have no income, I still have bills to pay, I have been given help with some of this,*

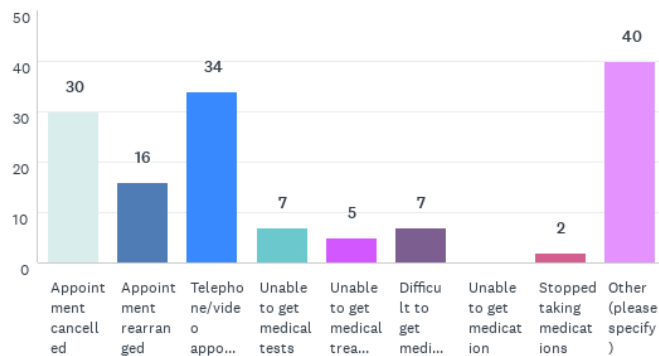
*I cannot claim anything because I have not got three years worth of books. I have very little income and I worry about my family and how they are, how the future is going to be. I try to look at the positives, there is always a reason for everything and I know this isn't only about the financial side, I hope we all learn this and get through.”*

*□”I am living out of my freezer as it is too costly to get the food I need locally and I have no one to support me locally. I am on the autistic spectrum and not good dealing with strangers so the local support worker I am wary of dealing with.”□□*

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? This also includes any treatment or care during pregnancy. Please tick all that apply



Responses to 'other' included:

- The system was more organised than before.
- Transport problems.
- *“My hospital treatment was cancelled without explanation and changed to home therapy with very little information about how this would happen. Yet I am still required to attend hospital for blood test by another dept.”*
- Difficulty getting to see a GP.
- Telephone and video appointments not appropriate for type of medical complaint (eye problem.)
- Although many people reported that they hadn't noticed any change or it hadn't affected their treatment or care.

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

*“I had not made my own appointment, and that surgery were worried about me so they called me up with an appointment already made. I turned up, it was very quiet I felt safe and everything was as normal. Just quieter. I had this experience with my mental health team, so eventually I started getting phone calls rather than visiting the mental health team. This has been suitable enough, and if I need to ring for any extra support I know I can.”*

*“I was pregnant and had my baby in January, so postnatal appointments have been cancelled or over the phone.”*

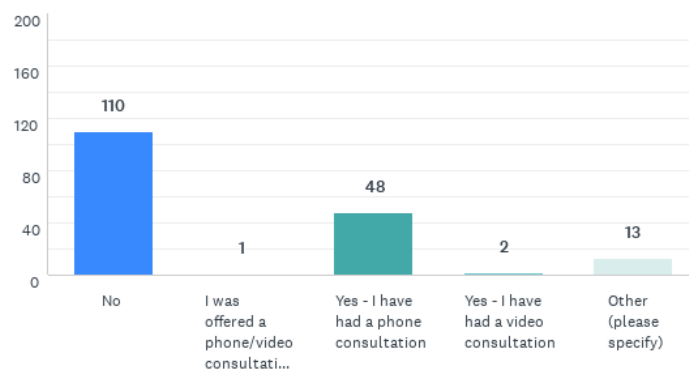
*“I should have had a post operative follow up but it was cancelled. I had major issues with an infected tooth because I believed dentists were closed and suffered pain and swelling until it was so bad, I was told I needed intravenous antibiotics. In the end we settled for 3g Penicillin powder sachets and I had to have the tooth removed a week later, it wasn't possible to save the tooth as the dentist said she was only allowed to extract.”*

*“Results of a biopsy was delayed, beginning treatment for basal cell carcinoma was delayed.”*

*“Turned up for an appointment having rung ahead that the clinic was still happening. The staff were coming from Newcastle. Arrived at the clinic to be told by a third party on their mobile phone that the clinic wasn't happening. This person had taken a day off work and had a round trip of 80 miles. My trip was 40. The receptionist at Penrith Hospital had not been informed and was extremely apologetic.”*

*“I am currently under the care of Oncology services in East Lancashire. My clinical team have been amazing and ensured that I have still been able to have appointments by telephone and where necessary, have arranged for me to receive my treatment at the Chemo Unit. District nurses have also played an active role in ensuring I can receive other treatment and blood tests at home. Considering the huge difficulties all my healthcare staff face, their organisation, response and care has been of the highest standard and I have not felt abandoned or forgotten about whilst they also deal with the Covid-19 situation.”*

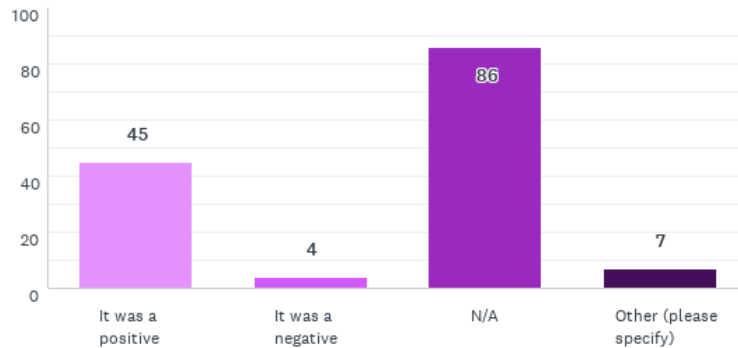
Q23 Have you had an appointment either by phone or video consultation? Please tick all that apply



Most of the comments left in the ‘other’ category concerned phone, video and face to face appointments that hadn’t yet take place.

Although one person did comment that as someone who is hard of hearing, trying to have an appointment over the phone was difficult.

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



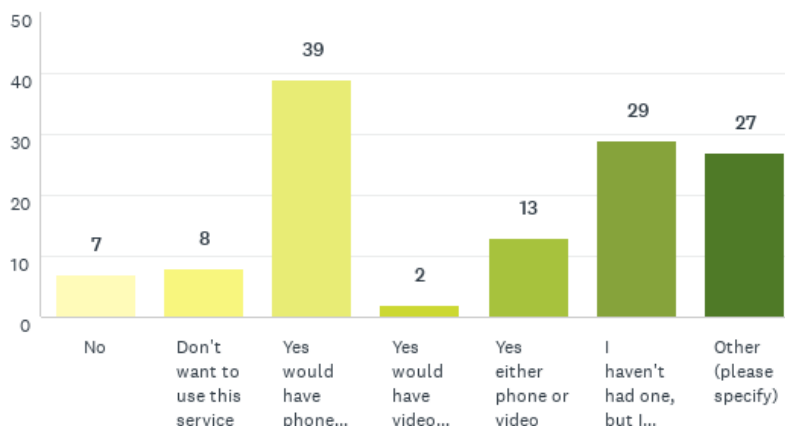
On the whole, people who left a comment under the ‘other’ section felt that the reason for their appointment did not necessarily lend itself well to a phone or video appointment.

*“Mixed - physio over the phone is somewhat hard. Video much better.”*

*“I felt that it could have been better.... I didn't feel I got all the time i needed to speak to my oncologist, but at least I DID get to speak with him. Would have preferred a video-conference but it most likely isn't an option.”*

*“Not as effective as a cancer examination.”*

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



Only 7 respondents who have had either a phone or video appointment said they would not like to use the service again. 39 would be happy to have a phone consultation again, 2 would have a video consultation again and 13 would be happy

to have either.

The low number of positives for video consultations may be a result of fewer video consultations having taken place, compared to phone consultations.

Out of the respondents who have not used this service, 7 said they would not like to try it. But 29 people said they would be happy to try the service.

Most comments left under the 'other' section were confirmation that people had not used this service.

Other useful comments included:

*“Although I think one to one face-to-face appointments are better, perhaps these videos or telephone appointment could be used more often as they have proved for myself at least to work and they must save some amount of time and are focused appropriately if it works between the consultant - member of staff and the client or patient.”*

*“Experience not really a formal consultation but a helpful telephone chat.”*

*“Hard due to wifi / internet speed.”*

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

No respondents left a negative comment about their phone or video consultation and there were many positive comments. Queries and concerns were centred on how these consultations would work after the pandemic.

People also felt that some medical issues can't be dealt with over the phone or by video. Whilst others reported that they found their issues could be dealt with via phone or video (such as reassurance or issuing prescriptions.)

*“I would imagine that this telephone or video experience works better when the patient has a good relationship and an already ongoing one with the member of staff, it could be harder if people don't know each other very well. Although I also think that the more individuals on either side get used to this technology then they will start to get the best out of it and appreciated more - always appropriately of course. If it is not appropriate then it should not be used as a second best.”*

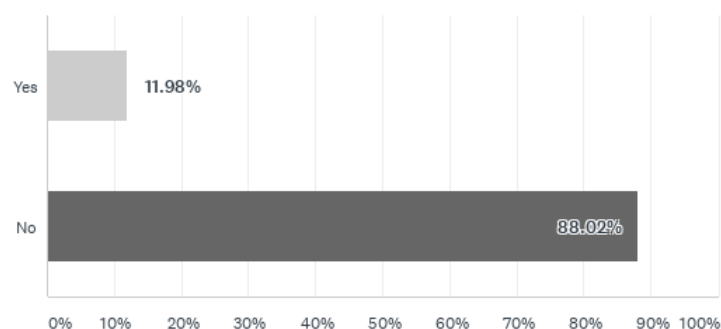
*“Due to pregnancy - limited check ups. Physical examinations not taking place so would be unaware if there were any issues.”*

*“I have had a persistent eye infection. My doctor gave me a phone consultation and prescribed treatment. The best thing was that it was my own GP - who I have rarely been able to see in the past. I would like to know how this would work if blood pressure or some other procedure was needed however.”*

*“I needed to speak to my GP about whether we ought to shield, and if there was anything else I ought to be doing in light of covid due to my Rheumatoid Arthritis and asthma. I phoned for a phone discussion, and she was incredibly helpful, compassionate and understanding of my concerns and questions. She’s a lovely GP.”*

*“I often have to regularly travel to local hospitals or my GP surgery every few weeks to receive my treatment and have my Oncology appointments. It has actually been a wonderful experience to have a phone consultation and has taken all the stress out of driving to the appointment, finding a parking space, paying for parking and then having to wait for long periods of time (usually waiting times in my Oncology service are at least 1 - 2 hours as appointments often run over). Face to face appointments would still be needed in the event of any change in my condition and I think that these would still be needed every so often but for the most part, on a stable and settled treatment plan, phone consultations have suited me very well.”*

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



Q28. How?

Most people responded to say that this was not relevant to them.

*“I have a support worker through our private support worker provider, originally through the social services. I have been speaking to them each week rather than receiving visit, but because of the financial situation at work as had to leave the company and I am not sure if I want to start with someone you again, particularly at*



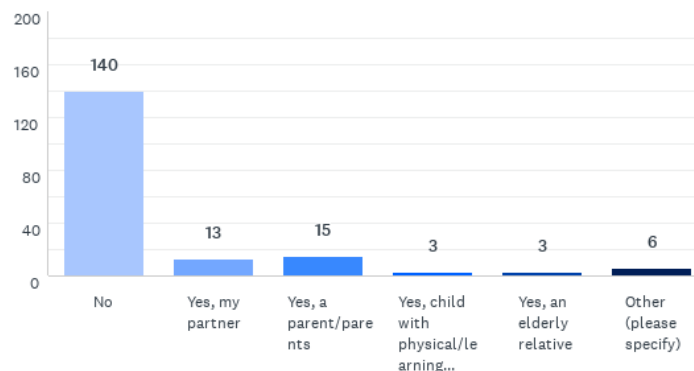
*the moment as phone calls are not obviously the best way to get to know somebody when dealing with something so personal and complicated as a care plan.”*

*“I work with them and it's been a lot easier to work with as there's less bureaucracy as people just try to get things done rather than faff about.”*

*“Not being able to get practical assistance in the home and have to wait till lock down has been lifted.”*

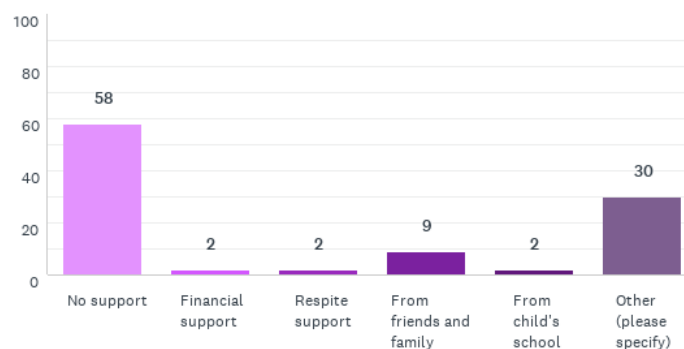
*“My mother had carers calling four times daily. I stopped this service and am caring for her myself.”*

Q29 Are you a carer for someone else (either paid or unpaid)? Please tick all that apply



In the 'other' category were people who normally had caring responsibilities but were unable to carry them out as a result of lockdown and one person who was a foster carer.

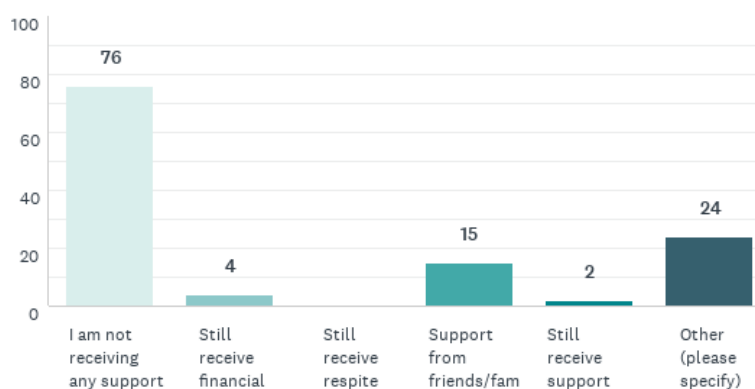
Q30 Before the pandemic what support did you receive as a carer? Please tick all that apply



Most people who responded in the 'other' category, put that this was not applicable to them.

*"I am not an official carer, but my husband has reached the 'confused' stage, and needs my help more than he used to. This worries me greatly."*

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



The categories from the chart above (reading left to right) read:

76 people are not receiving any support.

4 are still receiving financial support

15 people said they are still receiving support from friends and family.

2 are still being supported by their child's school.

Only 2 people said that they were receiving financial support (in answer to q.30) but 4 people said that they are continuing to receive financial support (q.31). It's not possible to determine whether this is as a result of increased financial support.

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, although one respondent said that they have had a phone call with respite staff.

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

*"A good friend helps me but she is unable to come in my house and I am struggling."*

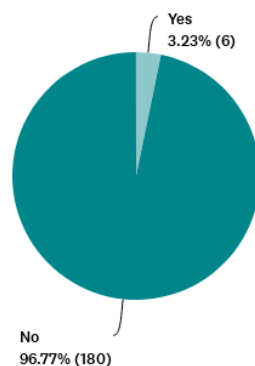
*"I don't need more support - my partner does but doesn't get it."*

*“I have an 84 year old aunt who lives on her own, 300 miles from my home. Before the virus I would go down every few weeks, take her shopping and do jobs she needed done. I am her next of kin and nearest relative. Now it is a nightmare, I managed to get two online delivery slots for her but despite trying for the last 3 weeks, every night for up to two hours I have failed. Worse case scenario will mean my buying food in Cumbria and using a delivery firm to deliver it to London. I can't get her on the vulnerable list, I've tried registering with Sainsbury's and GOV.UK.”*

*“My partner had moved into sheltered housing, he decided to come back home during the pandemic and is still here, this has caused all sorts of problems.”*

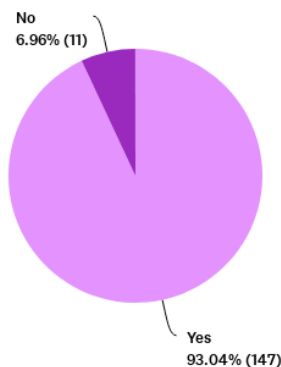
*“Carers can no longer come to the house or take my son out due to the Coronavirus.”*

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?



Six people felt that their safety has been compromised. Out of these, five knew how to get help. One person stated that they did not know how to get help. Unfortunately none of these respondents provided any further information about the 'hidden crime' they were experiencing or the compromises to their safety. There was the option to leave their email address, so that we could provide further help and advice, but none of the six respondents left theirs.

Q34 Do you know how to get help?



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

Most of the respondents said that they did not have anything further to tell us. A selection of the comments that were left are provided below.

*“Thank you for the chance to fill in this survey/questionnaire. I found it very therapeutic.”*

*“I feel very insecure as I believe that this shielding will go on for months yet as I have a condition that makes me susceptible to respiratory infection particularly. I did voluntary work for several organisations and all of this has gone. I miss my youth work and the different things that I did, I miss my art classes and travel to meetings - some in London. There seems little chance that I will be able to return to any of this for the foreseeable future and a vaccine is many, many months away, if it even works in my case.”*

*“Am concerned that plans for the shielded group will be discriminatory - there should be more in place for us to help maintain our physical well being, I no longer have access to pool, gym etc. I need some basic exercise equipment - for example an exercise bike - as soon as possible.”*

*“Yes I would like to know when we will be able to take a home Covid 19 test by post or the like.”*

*“I would like clearer definition about spending time with, say, a friend or neighbour, as long as we are outside in an open space, and approx 10 feet apart, chatting. Surely this is not frowned upon?”*

*“I am a positive self supporting person usually. The frustration of not being able to get the medical/psychological support I need and the potential costs of taxis to*

*access hospital visits is demoralising and disempowering.”*

*“Hopefully some really great changes to working practice for the NHS and County Council services will come out of the pandemic!”*

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

Common experiences included a more relaxed pace of life, quality time spent with family and time to spend on creative pursuits and hobbies. People also mentioned a feeling of community spirit and hope for the future.

Almost all respondents had at least one positive experience that they could share, despite many people struggling on a daily basis.

*“Makes one more aware of the beauty on short walks eg flowers and birds. And appreciative of all the contacts and activities that I had and look forward to renewing.”*

*“Neighbours looking out for each other much more than before. Cleaner air. Less traffic. I religiously go out for my walk everyday. I have birds nesting in my garden for the first time. It is nice to see families all out doing their exercise together which they did not before. The clapping for key workers has brought everyone on the street together.”*

*“People like the postal workers have been very supportive- offering to run errands etc. Local shops have also been really helpful. Am disappointed with the lack of pace and visibility of support from local government and central government. It took over a month before I was able to register for supermarket deliveries. I am very concerned about those who do not have internet access, am worried their experiences and concerns are going unrecorded.”*

*“I feel that life has slowed down, my stress levels have slowed down and decreased. I have been able to catch up with things that I had got behind with in a world which is so fast, which at least for the moment has found a new set of priorities. Having been disabled by my mental health problems for a long period of time I feel that this peace is the world I would much prefer to live in, although I know realistically as it will not remain this way. I think that we should take six weeks out of every year to do a similar thing when things return to a so-called normal. I think it would do us all some good - isolation is created by the issues which we seem to talk about rather more at the moment such as solidarity and compassion and thoughtfulness. If there were more of these things at all times that would be less isolation, and the fact that it has been changed so quickly for a lot of people including a national*

*attitude shows that it can be done. When it is not seen as such a priority that is a deliberate act, and if it returns to the way things were before the lockdowns then we ought to feel ashamed and guilty. Those of us who have been left behind and written off before we know what people who are experiencing anxiety and lack of purpose now feel for the first time: Life always goes on, but it is nice to know that there are people who care and want better things for us all.”*

*“We have benefited from lots of unhurried time together as a family. Our children are adopted, and although they enjoy school in many ways, it causes a great deal of anxiety and stress for them. They are benefiting from not having separation from us to manage each day, and not needing to manage the stress of school means they are calmer and more ready to learn. I am trained as a teacher, so I have been able to support their learning. Whilst we are shielding and that is hard at times, there is much we are thankful for.”*

## **Conclusion**

We had an overwhelming number of responses to second version of the survey, during this first week. As there are a number of different questions to the previous version, we have been able to enquire into areas of concern such as mental health (prior to and during the pandemic) and carer responsibility.

Over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of respondents were from Cumbria and nearly  $\frac{3}{4}$  were aged over 55 years and were female. Half were in employment prior to the pandemic. Respondents to the survey continue to be predominantly from a white ethnic background.

The average rating for mental health prior to the pandemic was very good, although a minority of people gave their mental health a very low score. Most people also responded that the pandemic has not had much of an impact on their mental health, but there remains a minority for whom it has had an enormous effect.

When looking for mental health support most people turned to family and friends or self-support, with only a few accessing online services.

A third of respondents said that the pandemic has affected them financially, predominantly as a result of being furloughed and a reduction in investments and pensions. A third have made financial changes as a result of this, mainly by spending less or spending their money differently.

Nearly half of respondents said they have an existing medical condition (not related to Coronavirus). The impact of the pandemic on their existing conditions has been

cancelled and rearranged appointments and an increase in video and phone consultations. A third of people who had received a phone/video consultation said that it was a positive experience and would use it again. There were a large percentage of respondents who said they have not used this service but would be happy to try it. The main issue with phone and video consultations is that they are not suited to all medical issues and complaints.

10% of respondents have had their experience of social care experience affected by the pandemic.

Nearly 20% of respondents to this survey have caring responsibilities, with the majority receiving no support.

3% of respondents felt that their safety has been compromised during the pandemic. Although only one person said they don't know how to get help, this is still very concerning. In response HWT will publicise where to get help for 'hidden crime' through our Q&A social media posts.

We also offered the opportunity for respondents to leave their email address so that we could contact them about any issues that they have raised.

Almost everyone had a positive experience that they could share with us, which demonstrates that during these really tough times people are still able to find hope and joy in some form, no matter how small. And that for many people there has been an opportunity to enjoy nature, hobbies, creative projects, exercise and communicating (by various means) with loved ones.