



Healthwatch
Together

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



The impact of the Coronavirus pandemic

- Focus on people living in Millom, Cumbria

August 2020

About Healthwatch and Healthwatch Together

Healthwatch was established in April 2013 as part of the implementation of the Health and Care Act 2012.

Healthwatch England acts as the national consumer champion for all local Healthwatch organisations, enabling and supporting individual Healthwatch to bring important issues to the attention of decisions makers nationally.

A key role of each individual Healthwatch is to champion the views of people who use health and care services in their area, seeking to

ensure that people's experiences inform the improvement of services. Healthwatch are constantly listening, recording and reporting on the views of local people on a wide range of health and care issues, ensuring that people are able to express their views and have a voice in improving their local health and care services.

Healthwatch Together consists of Healthwatch Cumbria, Healthwatch Lancashire, Healthwatch Blackpool and Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen, working in collaboration together.



Healthwatch **Together**

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Rationale for research

This research project took place as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) and the subsequent lockdown that took effect in England in March 2020.

Healthwatch Together (HWT) quickly created a survey in response to the pandemic, with the aim of finding out how the people of Cumbria and Lancashire were coping during this difficult time.

The survey was developed as a ‘temperature check’ designed to find out how people were feeling and coping during the initial first weeks of this unprecedented pandemic.

We wanted to tell people’s stories, their personal experiences.

The initial survey (v1) was launched on Survey Monkey on 23 March 2020 and ran until 26 April 2020.

A second version of the survey (v2) was launched on 27 April 2020 and ran until 19 June 2020. This report is based on the findings of the v2 survey.

Findings from v1 of the survey

Report 1 (published by HWT in May 2020) provides full details of the demographics and an explanation of the issues raised by v1.

In brief, results of the v1 survey showed that most people across Cumbria and Lancashire were coping with the impact of the pandemic. However there were a minority who were really struggling and appeared to be disproportionately affected. This group included:

- + **Those with mental health issues.**
- + **Those with pre-existing medical conditions.**
- + **Those with caring responsibilities (for children with learning disabilities and/ or elderly relatives).**

Creating the questions for v2

Some of the original questions we developed were no longer relevant to the current stage of the pandemic. Other questions had provided us with such a wealth of data and feedback that we were able to move on to investigate the issues they raised.

Using the findings from v1 and working collaboratively with our partners in health and social care, we developed a new series of questions designed to find more detailed information about the groups who are disproportionately affected, the financial implications of lockdown and the increase in the use of video/phone consultations replacing face to face appointments.

After identifying a possible safeguarding issue, we decided to include a section where respondents could leave their email address so we could contact them to provide signposting. We also included links to support organisations for domestic abuse, child abuse and homelessness.

Survey for Millom

The questions and the format were exactly the same for the Millom version, except the survey had its own link on Survey Monkey and was distributed only to people who live in Millom.

This version was created at the request of Jenny Brumby. The link was sent out via the local Millom community newsletter ‘Around the Combe’.

Demographics

51 people responded:

88% were female, 12% male.

65% were aged between 55-74

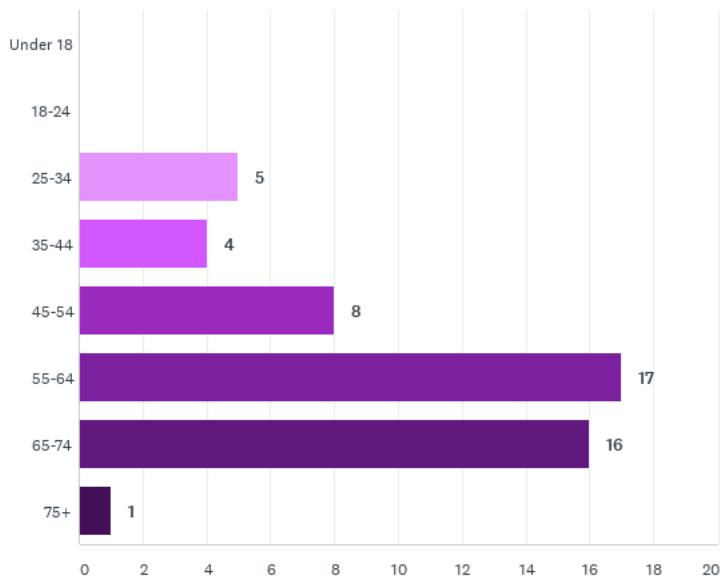
92% were heterosexual.

54% said that they were in employment (either full-time, part-time or self-employed), 36% were retired and 4% were disabled and unable to work.

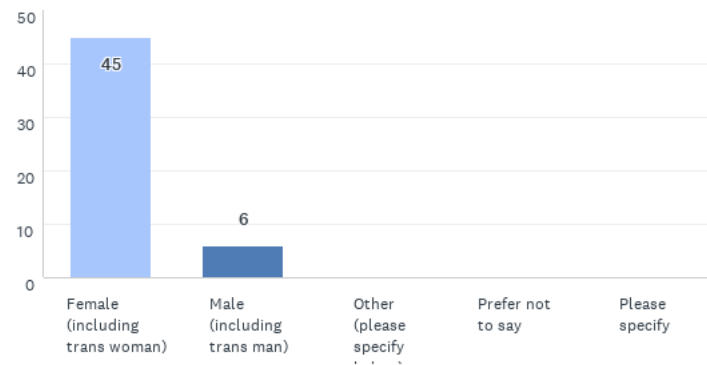
14% were the only adult in their household and 76% had no children living with them.

The respondents were 100% white British.

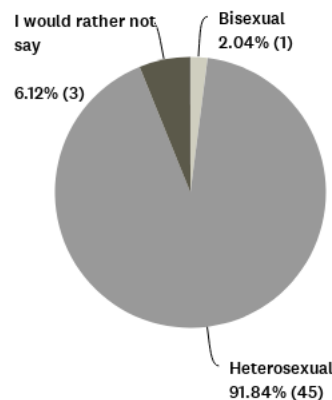
Q2 How old are you?



Q3 Are you



Q5 How would you describe your sexual orientation?





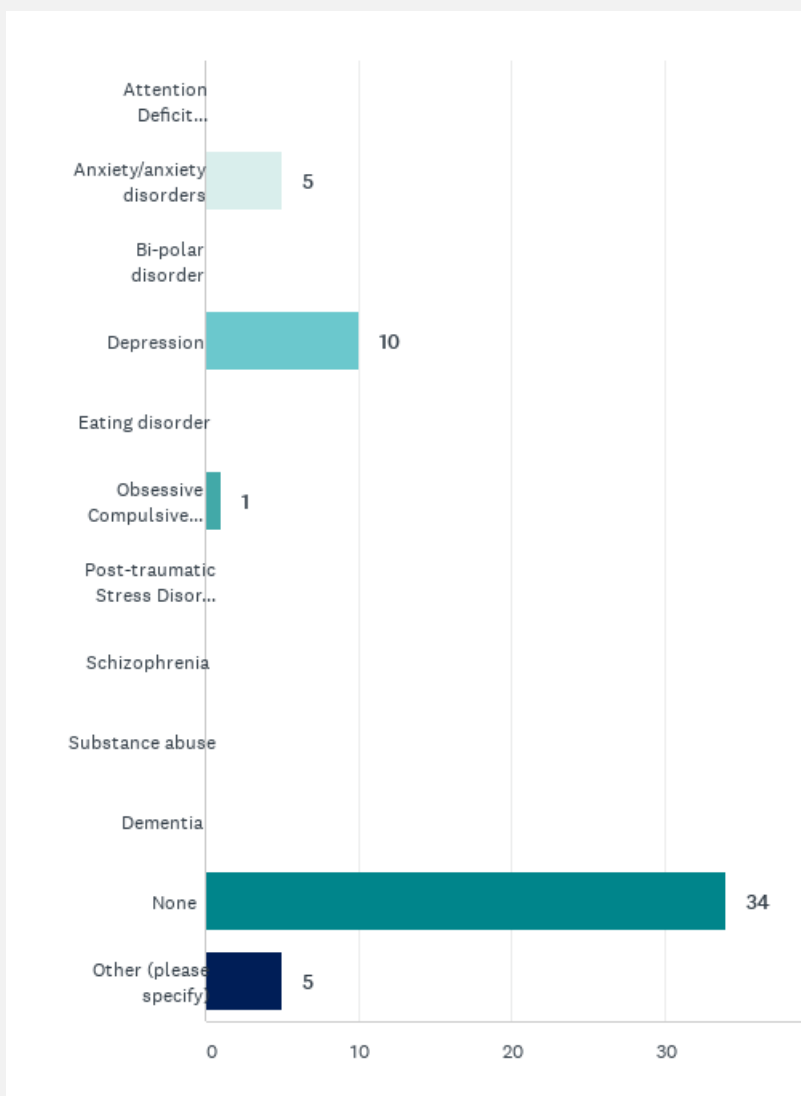
The impact of the pandemic on mental health

When asked how they would rate their mental health prior to the pandemic the average score for all respondents to this survey was 78 (good to very good). For respondents living in Millom, this is similar with the average score being 79.

These ratings were on a scale of very poor (0) to very good (100).

There was also a much lower incidence of mental health disorders, with 70% telling us that they don't suffer from any mental health issues.

Have you been diagnosed with, or do you feel you suffer from any of the following:



Responses under 'other' included:

- Menopausal
- A bit low sometimes
- Aspergers
- Borderline Personality Disorder

"I've had a few conversations via phone with my clinical psychologist."

"I feel nervous when going out shopping."

"Actually having phone conversations via Skype has helped enormously."

"Just get down sometimes. I've been looking after my husband and not been able to get out until the last two weeks."

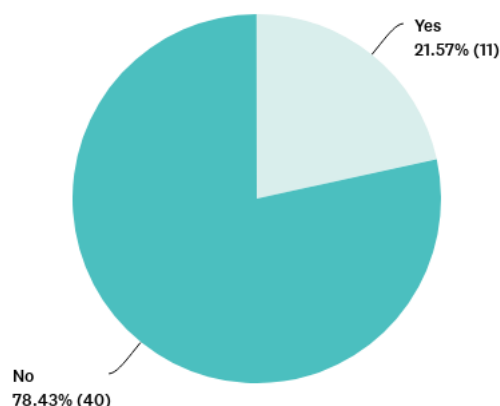
When we asked respondents from Millom what impact they felt the pandemic had on their mental health with 0 being no impact and 100 being a huge impact, the average score was 47. In comparison, the average score across all respondents was 37.

Next we asked whether people who normally accessed support for their mental health were able to continue doing so. Seven people said they usually accessed support, out of this group, four said that they were currently not able to access their usual support. People still rely mainly on friends and family for mental health support, followed by phone or online support services.



The financial impact of the pandemic

Q16 Has the pandemic affected you financially?



Impact	Number of respondents
Someone in my household has been furloughed	5
I have been furloughed	3
I am self-employed, my business has closed	1
Someone in my household has lost their job	1
I have lost my job	1
My benefits have increased	0
I have had housing problems	0
My benefits have decreased	0
I am at risk of homelessness	0

72% told us that they have not made any financial changes as a result of the pandemic. Of those who have made financial changes, the main change was spending less.

“Careful what I spend, also receiving food boxes from local food pantry.”

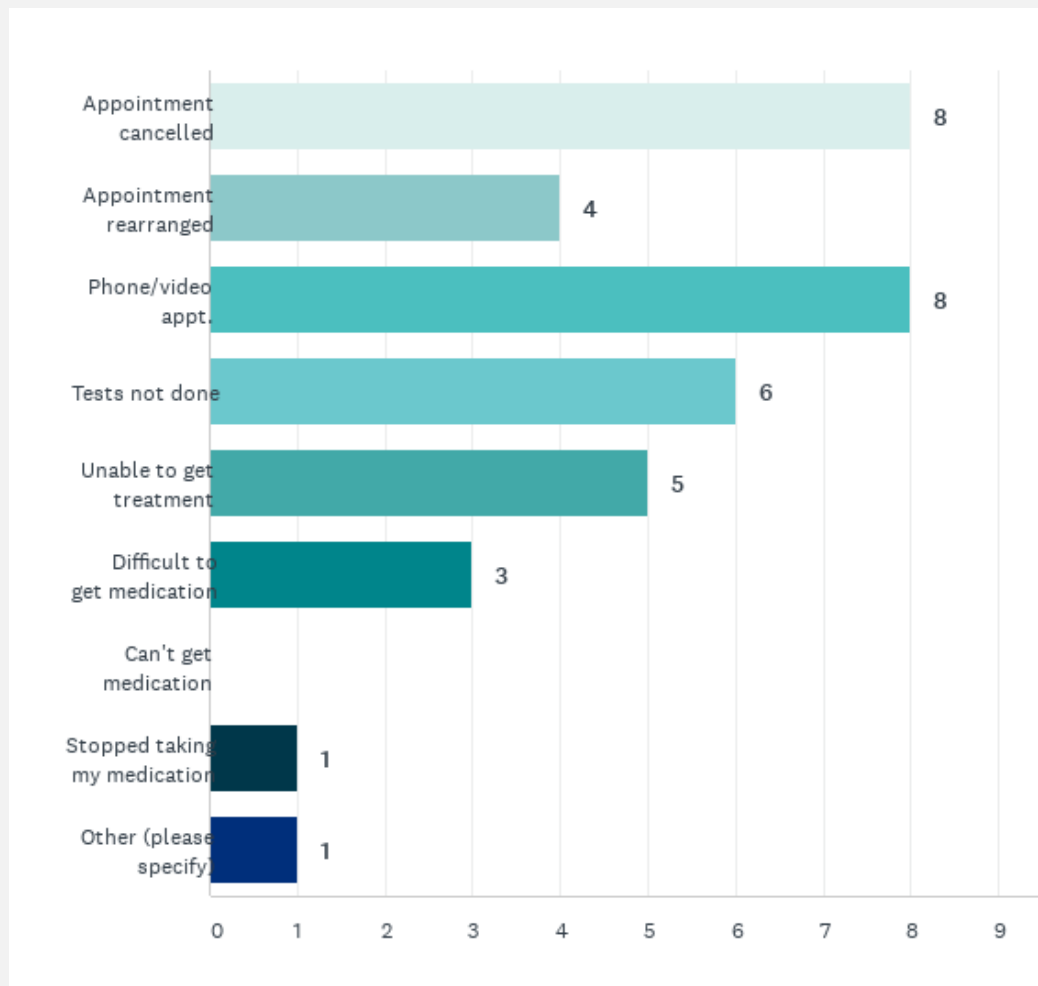
“Had to cut back and be prepared for higher utility bills coming in.”



The impact of the pandemic on pre-existing medical conditions

In answer to the question, do you have a pre-existing medical condition (including pregnancy) not related to Coronavirus: 50% said yes

We asked respondents which of the following they had experienced:



Other:
- Not needed anything.

“Everyone else seems to be able to carry on working apart from anyone at the doctors.”

“My cancer surgery was put back 6 weeks!”

“I require an operation to remove a lump in my armpit this was cancelled and had no news as yet to next appointment. Also suffer with my eyes so eye appointment also cancelled.”

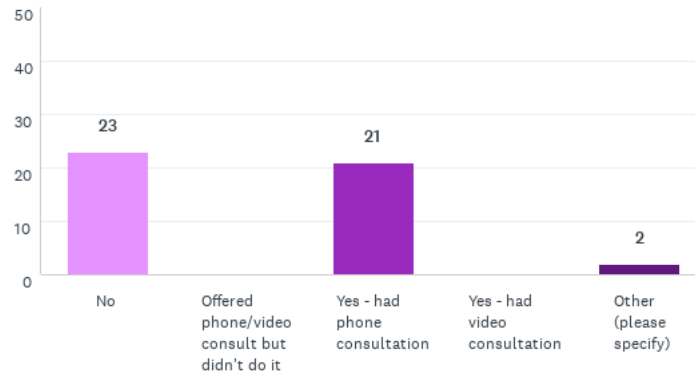
“Being classed as elderly and vulnerable it was awkward getting my inhalers as I was not supposed to go out to the chemist but they started a delivery service. They did however have difficulty sourcing one of my inhalers but got one in the end.”

“Need a knee operation, leg is painful. Can’t walk too far, hence not a lot of activity .”



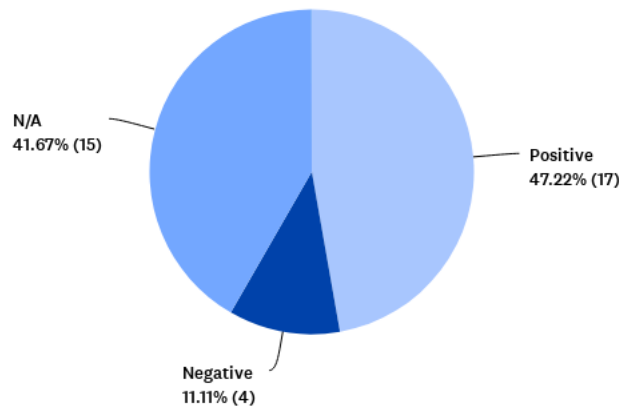
People's experience of phone & video consultations

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

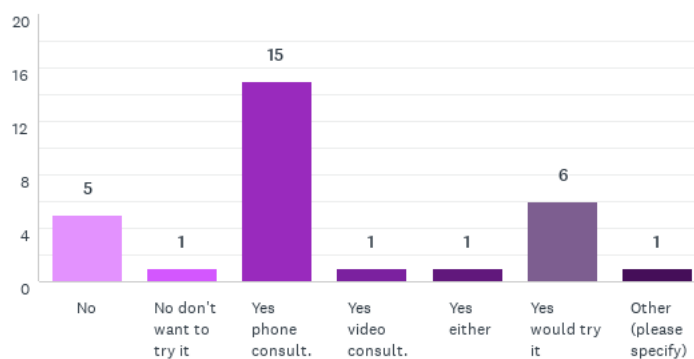


There were two comments left under 'other', both concerned relatives who had had phone consultations.

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



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





People's experience of phone & video consultations - in their own words

People told us why they did not want to use video or phone consultations again:

“Much better to see doctor face to face.”

“Not able to talk properly with others in the home who could listen.”

Reasons that were given for why some respondents liked this service:

“I described my symptoms of asthma and the Dr asked many questions which I was able to answer.”

“Using video and phone service first may help to get us as patients seen quicker or to the correct department quicker.”

“Just very prompt call back from doctor he asked many questions and diagnosed and medication started and will follow up if no improvement.”

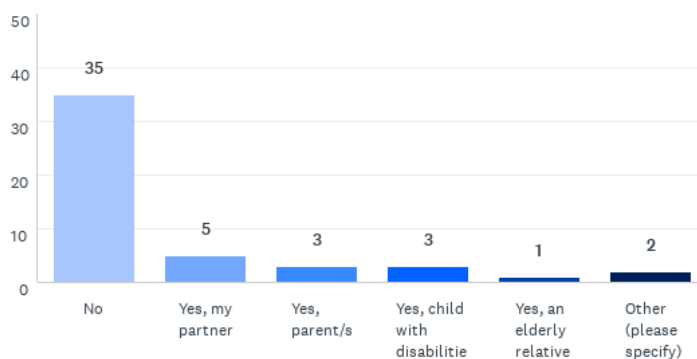
“Because of shielding it is impossible for me to go to hospital for my normal tests and consultation. Speaking by phone is the only alternative.”



People's experience of social care services and being a carer during the pandemic

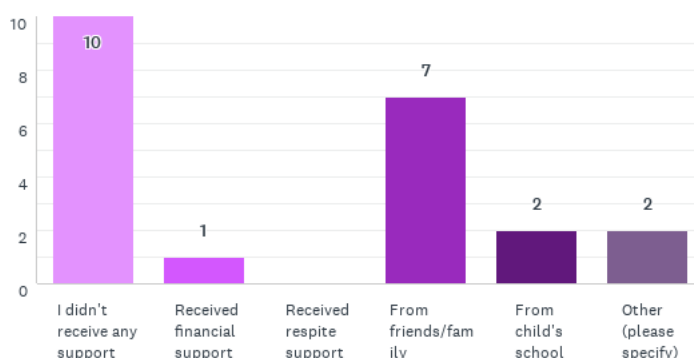
We asked people to tell us more about their experience of social care at this time. Everyone told us that their experience of social care services had not been affected during the pandemic.

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



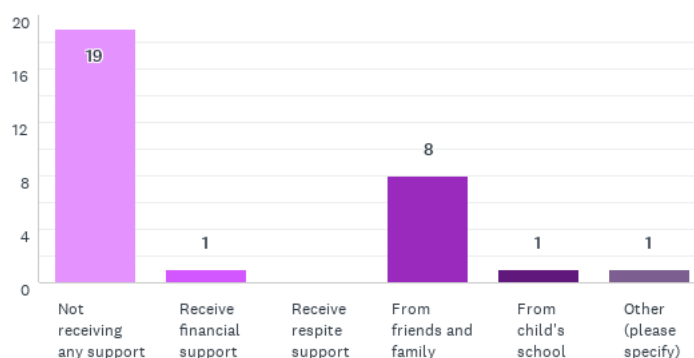
'Other': employed as a support worker, and carer for a friend.

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



'Other': Support not needed, n/a

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



'Other': n/a



Have you had a positive experience you would like to share?

Although there is no denying that the pandemic has caused upheaval and affected almost everyone in some way, people have also taken positives from this experience. Below are a selection of the comments that people left telling us about their positive experiences. Although several people did say that they had not experienced any positives from this period.

“Volunteered to help others in need and have gained a lot from it .”

“Yes I see the local community stepping up in so many ways, which is both inspiring and reassuring, to know people care..”

“More time to relax and enjoy hobbies instead of being heavily committed to involvement in different organisations. Also the realisation that family can be taken for granted and being separated from them geographically through lockdown has made them top priority in the future. I've discovered that I do a lot of non essential shopping and shopping once a week is all that is needed really. My fitness has improved through daily walks and occasional runs.”

“We both work full time and the children normally do lots of extracurricular activities so it has been lovely spending more time together.”

“The Millom community came together and ensured that no one had to struggle. There was a lot of volunteering across Millom from making face masks to food parcels and everything in-between this was in no small part to excellent organisation.”

“I started to work from home during lockdown. I have an underlying health condition so didn't go into shops only went for exercise, a family member got my shopping. I volunteered for the Around the Combe group helping people in our area. I ring 4 ladies every other day and chat to them, see how they are and if they need any help. Doing this voluntary work has been very rewarding, I have made some lovely friends who I will keep in touch with even after the pandemic ends.”

“Community groups...without them I couldn't have managed.”

“Our community is very close and we have a fantastic network of volunteers who have been providing support and assistance to vulnerable people in our community.”

 **Summary****Demographics**

We received 51 responses from people who live in Millom, between 26th June and 2nd July 2020. The responses were overwhelmingly from white, older women.

Mental Health

These respondents rated their mental health as very good, with an average score of 79 (0 = very poor, 100 = very good.) 70% said they don't suffer from any mental health issues.

When asked to rate the impact of the pandemic on their mental health, the average score came out as 47 (0= no impact, 100 = huge impact.) The average score for the general population (to version 2 of the survey) was 37.

This seems to suggest that although respondents from Millom rated their mental health as very good generally, and fewer respondents suffered from mental health issues, they feel as though the pandemic has had a greater impact on their mental health, in comparison with the general population of Cumbria and Lancashire (as determined by v2 of the survey). Although this is just an average score, individual scores varied widely.

Out of the seven respondents who said they would normally access support for their mental health, four said they were unable to do so during the pandemic.

Financial impact

22% said that they have been affected financially as a result of the pandemic. As a result most were spending less. Five people had been furloughed. No one was at risk of homelessness or had had issues with housing.

Pre-existing medical conditions

50% told us that they have a pre-existing medical condition, which may be due to the older demographic of respondents.

59% have had their appointment rearranged or cancelled.

38% have had a phone or video consultation/appointment.

24% have been unable to get necessary treatment.

One person had stopped taking their medication.

One person also told us that their cancer surgery had been delayed by six weeks.

Appointments

46% of respondents had a phone consultation, no one had a video consultation.

47% said it was a positive experience, 11% said it was a negative experience. Only 17% said they wouldn't use this service again. 20% would be willing to try it.

One of the reasons a respondent gave for being unwilling to use the service is a lack of privacy within their home. Some situations may require face to face appointments for confidential, safeguarding or other personal reasons, so phone or video consultations may not be appropriate in these circumstances.



Summary

Social care

No one had had their experience of social care affected. No one provided any further information about this.

Support for carers

Ten people told us they didn't receive any support prior to the pandemic. This rose to 19 during the pandemic. One person stopped receiving support from their child's school. But more people received support from family and friends during the pandemic.

Hidden violence within the home

Q33 asked people whether they had experienced or were at risk of increased violence within the home. No one answered to say that they felt they were at risk or their safety was compromised. Three people said they didn't know how to get help (if they were at risk), but signposting was provided within the survey to support agencies.

There were no responses left in answer to the question - is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Positive experiences

Although not everyone had any positive experiences during lockdown, those who had were willing to share them with us. Most centred around more time spent with family and the community spirit that had sprung up during this time, as well as a more relaxed pace of life.



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