



**COVID Feedback from Kent**  
**June 2020**

it starts with  
**YOU**



# **Covid related public feedback monthly summary report**

## **Background**

Throughout June (29th May- 2nd July) we have gathered direct feedback from 167 people about their experiences of the Covid 19 pandemic and life under social distancing. We have combined this with anecdotal feedback from 72 organisations who support a wide range of Kent residents including people living with mental health, physical disability, sight loss and impairment, carers and those suffering domestic abuse. Together these organisations represented approximately 8000 people living in Kent.

50% of people we heard from were female, 22.5% identified themselves as being disabled and 5% told us they were carers. 10% told us that they were essential workers still undertaking duties, 62% said they were staying at home following governments guidelines, 10% said they were selfisolating to protect themselves or a vulnerable member of the family and 2.5% were selfisolating due to symptoms.

# Methodology

We have been running a series of social media adverts promoting an online survey. People were also encouraged to share feedback with our Helpline, either by phone, email or text.

To ensure more than one method of gathering data, Healthwatch staff and volunteers have established a regular phone interview with organisations. These calls enable us to capture the feedback that the organisations are hearing from their own clients and/or members. It is particularly important as it enables us to hear from communities who may find it harder to share their feedback such as people living with Dementia for example.

Every week we have been sharing a weekly insight report to provide a timely snapshot of how people are coping. These reports are shared directly with decision makers to help support their emergency and recovery planning.

This monthly report is based on the weekly snapshots, but to investigate the data further and strengthen the validity of reporting there has been a process of triangulation including:

- Wherever possible quantifying anecdotal comments to give a sense of weighting
- Analytics from social media posts to gauge subject areas creating most public interest
- National trends from other Healthwatches and Healthwatch England
- Kent wide discussions to sense check the snapshot data
- Desk based research with other parts of the system, to compare emerging data sets and trends

When reading this report please be aware that:

Week 9 relates to 29TH May-4th June

Week 10 relates to 5th-11th June

Week 11 relates to 12th-18th June

Week 12 relates to 19th-25th June

Week 13 relates to 26th June-2nd July

This report aims to summarise and reflect the changing experiences of people living and working in Kent and Medway during the Covid 19 pandemic. If you require more detailed reporting on a particular theme, please contact us, this is the third monthly report that we have produced. Our April & May reports can be found on our website <https://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk/news-and-reports/>



**healthwatch**  
Kent

**Have you managed to get a GP appointment during lockdown?**

**How was it? We want to hear your story, good or bad.**

**Tell us your story**





# Introduction

We have heard a range of issues over the last 5 weeks, and we have tried to weight these issues, according to how many people have reported being affected by them. Some of this weighting is related to the volumes of people affected as reported by organisations. This has enabled us to look at what issues have increased in volume and equally what has decreased during the month of June. To help you navigate this report, it has been broken into sections, exploring certain topics.

Section 1 (Page 4) looks at issues related to the impact of lockdown such as:

1. Finance concerns
2. Confusion in Government guidance and service availability
3. Shielding and vulnerability
4. Loneliness
5. Access to food, unwanted food and school meal vouchers
6. Relaxing lockdown and going outside
7. End of life, bereavement and funerals

Section 2 (Page 10) looks at issues related to mental health and wellbeing such as:

1. The domestic environment
2. General mental health and wellbeing
3. Secondary mental health services
4. Young peoples mental health
5. Mental Health and wellbeing of staff
6. Domestic abuse
7. Resilience

Section 3 (Page 15) looks at issues related to medication and physical health such as:

1. Access to medication
2. Access to GPs
3. Ongoing health treatment
4. Dental care

Section 4 (Page 19) looks at issues related to care and support packages such as:

1. Care packages
2. Care Homes
3. Ongoing care
4. Equipment
5. Discharge
6. PPE
7. PAs
8. Hidden carers

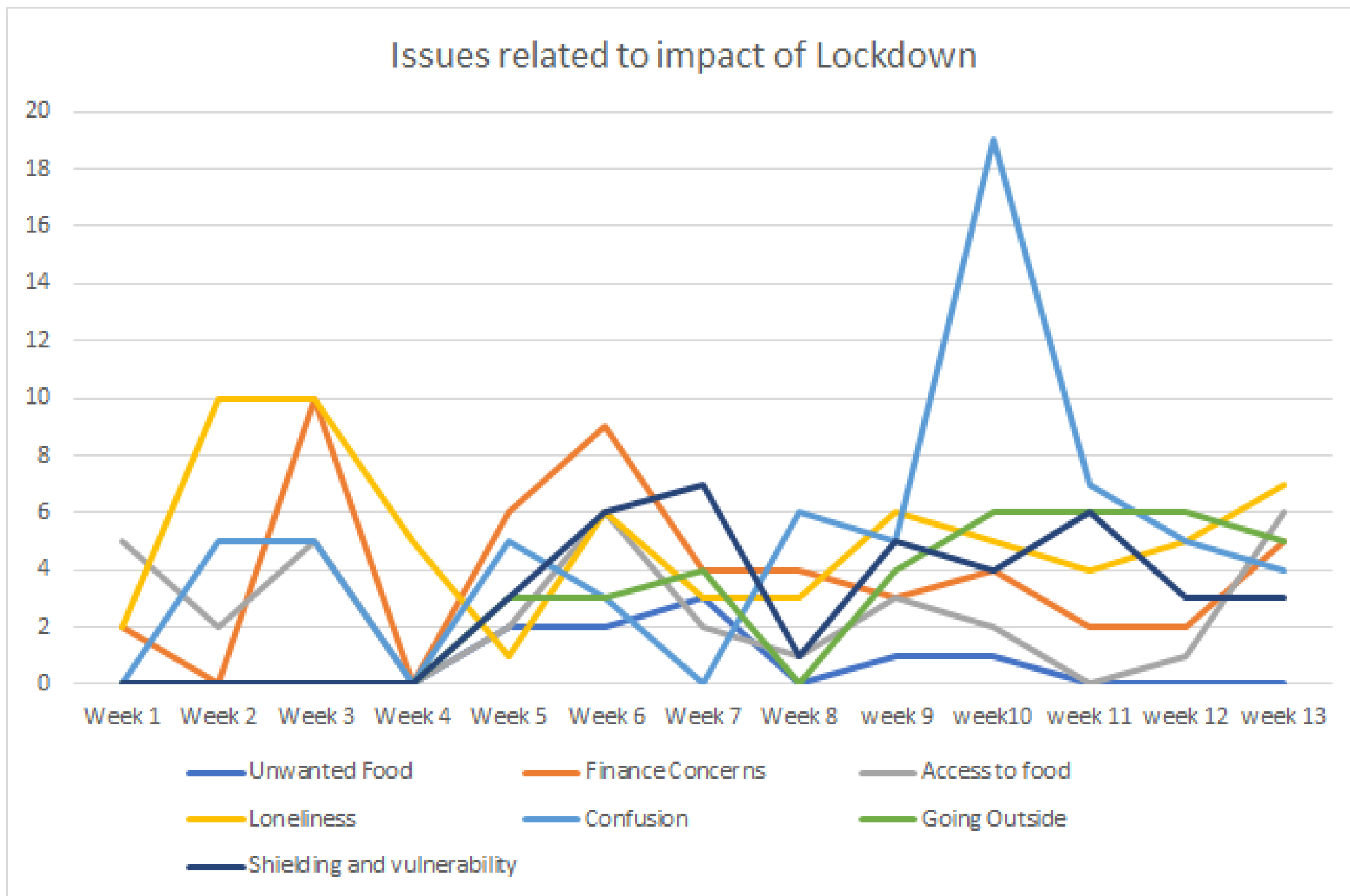
Section 5 (Page 23 ) looks at new issues we are hearing about

1. Education
2. Technology
3. Transport
4. Homelessness and housing

Section 6 (page 28) looks at issues around testing for the virus



# Topic 1 - Issues related to the impact of lockdown



There were 7 themes within this topic area:

1. Financial concerns
2. Confusion about Government guidance and service availability
3. Shielding and vulnerability
4. Loneliness
5. Access to food, unwanted food and school meal vouchers
6. Relaxing lockdown and going outside
7. End of life, bereavement and funerals

## 1. Finance Concerns

We continued to hear many issues around finance throughout June, with many people still on furlough and struggling to "make ends meet". Many of the organisations we spoke to told us that the volume of calls they received from service users were related to help with PIP applications. Many of their clients are struggling to make ends meet and are looking for help trying to work out entitlements. Some clients are struggling to manage their daily living costs while waiting for awards of Universal Credit (UC).

For many people, they are struggling because they need help to access money. We had multiple reports of people being unable to complete forms for PIP and UC because they required help and support, which they were unable to get because charities and support were unavailable. We also heard of service users who do not use online banking facilities, and are therefore reliant on cash, but have been unable to get to a bank and withdraw money; they are now running out of cash at home and are unable to access their money because they don't have a trusted friend or relative to do their banking for them.

A cancer support group told us that they are unable to visit their clients at home at present, so they are unable to see when someone is struggling to manage; one couple that they support had to make the decision whether to spend the money they have on food or rent. Another support group helping disadvantaged families told us that one family had lost their council tax concessions, the school hadn't processed the school meal vouchers and the disability living allowance had not been renewed. The family thought that other people were worse off than them and didn't want to make a fuss, however the only food they had for the children was from the food parcels and the parent had lost a lot of weight as they were only eating cereal.

We heard a few stories from people who are concerned that they are now on Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) because they are at home self-isolating or have displayed symptoms of Covid.

- We heard about one family who are struggling for money because one parent has COVID and is at home on statutory sick pay at £95 a week.
- An organisation supporting vulnerable families told us that one of their service users is panicking and worried about what to do next; their partner is ill with Covid symptoms and is isolating at home. Their partner's workplace said they can use a week of their annual leave and still get paid if they are ill with Covid. After that they will have to go on statutory sick pay and they won't be able to survive on that as they have too much debt.

We also heard issues from people who run their own businesses from home, but also claim UC; they have been able to increase their UC until the Government payment came in (the Self Employment Income Support Scheme). However, the families didn't realise that the 2 bulk payments would affect their UC, some families have lost around £870 per month which has been a big loss for them.

As a positive, we heard that adults who have a PIP award coming to a review were being extended automatically and a face to face review would be arranged when restrictions were lifted. This allowed many adults, particularly those with autism, not to worry about their PIP being cancelled or withdraw.

## **2. Confusion in Government Guidance & Service Availability**

We heard a lot in May about the confusion that the public were experiencing with changing Government guidelines, and this is a theme that continued into June. On the 28th May it was announced that groups of up to 6 people would be able to meet outdoors (from June 1st) in outdoor spaces. It was also announced at the end of May that schools would welcome back certain year groups on the 15th June, which was also the date the face coverings would be mandatory on public transport. In week 10 we saw a spike in the number of stories reporting confusion and misunderstanding of the guidelines, with people telling us;

- An Age UK centre told us that 50% of their calls this week expressed confusion over whether guidelines now mean clients can meet 6 people in the day centre.
- "why is it safe enough to have 15 kids in a classroom with a teacher for 6 hours a day, but we aren't allowed to have more than 6 people sitting outside? The regulations don't make sense"
- "it is too early to let shops open, the R-value is still going up in the South East. XXXXX was full of people and traffic at the weekend. Lockdown has been eased too soon"
- "Why can we send our kids into a childminders house to mix with other children, share utensils and toys....but they aren't allowed to spend time with their own family?"
- "why are the government announcing that we must wear masks 3 months after the virus caused us to lockdown? Surely we should have been wearing them way back then? And why do we need to wait until the 15th June to wear a mask? Are we safe enough now to not wear one, but on the 15th it suddenly gets dangerous?"



We heard that people did not trust the new guidance, and felt that the Government should have been clearer with the advice issued.

We also heard that one organisation received 14 calls in week 10 from clients asking staff if they can reiterate what the new government guidelines are. The clients are very confused as to whether they can go out and where can they go etc.

A mental health support group told us that one member of the group received a 3 page letter. They are on the vulnerable list and they found the guidance very complicated to understand and follow. We were told that the service user is an intelligent person and used to own their own business, and felt that if they found the letter difficult to understand then how do other people cope with this kind of letter? They felt that written guidance should be simple and easy to follow.

The same support group told us that many of their clients have reported increased anxiety levels and they are trying to understand and keep track of all the current lockdown information that is given out; they have found it to be conflicting and very confusing.

Although the advice and guidance coming from Government was confusing, we did hear praise for local services and organisations;

- "I've found the amount of information from the council and local NHS on social media very helpful. There's so much fake stuff it's good to see things posted and reposted by local organisations we trust"

### **3. Shielding and Vulnerability**

We heard stories from those who are shielded, and people who were "clinically vulnerable" but did not receive a letter to say that they could shield. The concerns we heard reduced by the end of June, in line with the Government announcement on the 22nd June to say that the guidance around those who are shielding was going to ease on the 5th of July.

We heard from people who were struggling to deal with the ongoing shielding guidance, and they were finding it difficult to see people starting to get on with the relaxation of lockdown rules, whilst still staying at home;

- "We have all been staying safe at home as much as we can, getting shopping delivered after months of trying, am now worried about son having to return to work and use public transport.....what will he bring home with him?"

Although some people were told to shield, they never received a letter to confirm this, which meant that they could not get a supermarket priority slot or a Government food parcel. This made it particularly difficult to access food when they had been told to shield.

- "I have COPD and received a letter and numerous texts telling me I am extremely vulnerable and to stay at home on the first day of lockdown. I've not heard anything since then. I thought there would be more support"

During June we heard a small influx of stories of people who had been planning to stop shielding but had received a further letter or advise from a medical professional to continue shielding, which led to more frustration.

- “some people got texts to say their shielding had been extended. As I didn’t receive one, I figured that I no longer fall into the shielded category and am now just “vulnerable”. It’s very confusing for people to understand, I guess I stop shielding from now then?”
- “I’ve just received a letter from the hospital telling me to shield for another 12 weeks from 19th May. Beyond disappointed as the original release date was 30th June. I haven’t left my house since 13th March”
- “I’m supposed to be shielding but I’m going back to work after 30th June, I’ll lose my job if I don’t get back soon”
- “We have now received ANOTHER shielding letter and I just can’t face doing this again. It’s for another 6 weeks and I just don’t know how to keep going on like this”

Community hubs told us that they were continuing to support people who were shielded, but they noticed that around 12 people were being added to the list with each passing week. Calling those who are shielded has enabled the Hubs, and Council, to spot vulnerable people who would never have come to their attention before, which has meant that they can intervene and prevent many crisis situations.

#### **4. Loneliness**

Loneliness continued to be a common issue that the public and organisations were reporting back to us. Organisations had adapted to providing befriending and wellbeing calls as a way of connecting with service users, and checking on their needs however, many of the organisations told us that the phone calls were taking longer because clients wanted to stay on the phone for a chat and were just grateful to connect with someone else.

- A Community Hub told us that their clients have very quickly become very isolated. The demand for the befriending service has continued since the beginning of lockdown. 60 hours this week was spent on befriending, which was only slightly less than at the beginning. Befriending isn't just for elderly residents, it's for lots of people of all ages.

Some groups felt the isolation more than others;

- A dementia support group told us the mental health of clients with dementia is deteriorating as lock down continues. It has been very difficult to keep people at home, especially for those who are very isolated
- Involve told us that they currently have 219 carers requiring weekly phone calls to check in with them and emotionally support them due to their isolation and difficulty coping with lockdown and their caring roles. Many of these carers do not hear from anyone else in the week.
- An Age UK centre told us that they spoke to 50 people who said that they were feeling anxious, “low”, stressed and lonely, especially those clients who don’t have any next of kin. We also heard that for some people, they have no internet and are even more isolated and cut off.





## 5. Access to Food

Accessing food was a topic that we continued to hear about in June, however there was a decrease in the feedback regarding unwanted food after week 10. We heard that some older people were struggling to produce a meal with the produce that was in the food parcel, and that some groups felt that the food in the boxes were not always appropriate for age groups, such as pasta and bolognese sauce.

A Community Hub told us that the need for food parcels has dropped, and they decommissioned a food hub in the area as there was no longer a demand for it. They have gone from 100 parcels a week to around 40. The hub also told us that some people are being dropped from the shielding list but haven't been told about it, and the first they know is when their expected food parcel doesn't arrive.

Similarly, we had small amounts of feedback regarding the school meal vouchers;

- “why have the free school meal vouchers for those in reception, year 1 and year 6 STOPPED for the children who have not returned to school?”.

We also heard stories in support of school meal vouchers being extended throughout summer, to provide children with food during the holidays. A community hub told us that they are aware that many families have yet to claim their free school meals during the summer, as families had to make the school aware if they were entitled.

Age UK centres continued to tell us of the demand for their “Meals on Wheels” service, with one centre telling us that they are continuing to deliver 60 hot meals per day, and another centre having increased the amount of meals that they are delivering. Many people are still relying on volunteers to do their shopping for them and the shopping service is still busy. We heard that the weather affected this need, with vulnerable and elderly people not happy to stand in queues to access supermarkets when it's very hot or very wet.

## 6. Relaxing Lockdown & Going outside

Throughout June many of the lockdown restrictions were eased and shops, schools and services were resuming. The changes in restrictions generated a lot of feedback from the public.

- “why can we go to the pub but our kids can’t go to school to continue their education and develop social skills?”
- “when we went into lockdown we had 967 new cases in the country, we are at a stage now when the number is not that much different. It makes me nervous that the number back then was serious enough to lock us down, but the number now is somehow safe enough to open up the high street again. It can’t be both serious and safe”

We heard from many organisations who told us that despite the relaxation of lockdown, their service users were still afraid to leave the house and they didn’t agree with the speed at which shops were reopening and attracting crowds;

- A mental health peer support group told us that service users were reporting that they are worried & scared when they see crowded beaches on the news. They are concerned that more spikes of Covid will start up again in areas, and they have noted that the spikes seem to come in 2-weekly time schedules, so there are spikes 2 weeks after large gatherings and an increase in deaths.
- An Age UK centre told us that one client is worried about going out, they have lost their confidence and friends have reported that social distancing isn’t being observed properly in the supermarkets
- “I give it 1 week before schools show signs of covid and have to close their gates again”

## 7. Bereavement, End of Life & Funerals

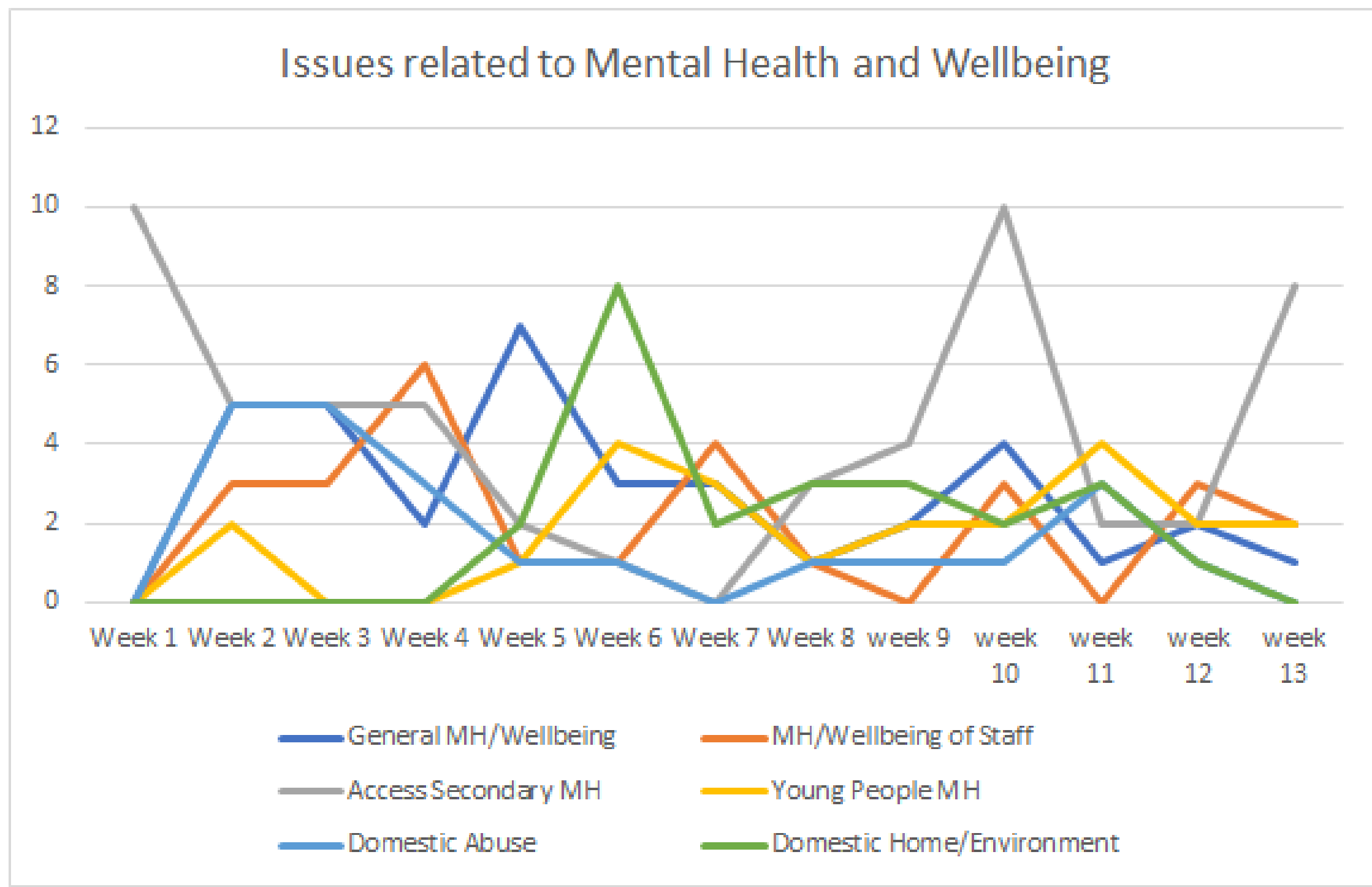
We heard a small amount of feedback in June about the losses people had suffered and the difficulties they faced grieving in lockdown;

- A dementia support group told us about families that they support who have needed bereavement counselling during the lockdown period.
- Our helpline spoke to someone who is under the care of the mental health team; “My adopted mother died from coronavirus and was buried last week. It has really affected me as I was not able to see her and my mental state is very fragile”
- “saying goodbye to loved ones has been very difficult. My grandma died last week, near enough everything is now open (clothes shops, card shops, pound shops) but I wasn’t allowed a church service for her. Only 10 people could come to the crematorium, my husband and children had to stand on the other side of locked gates”

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE WITH THIS FEEDBACK?

1. We continued to share feedback with the Health and Social Care Recovery Cell to inform their impact assessment.
2. We have shared the loneliness and isolation feedback with Kent County Council to help inform their plans for raising awareness and delivering the right support to people.
3. We will understand how the End of Life Strategy being developed across Kent and Medway addresses the feedback we have received in June as well as in the 2 previous monthly reports.

# Topic 2 - Issues related to Mental Health and Wellbeing



There were 8 themes within this topic area:

1. The domestic environment
2. General mental health and wellbeing
3. Secondary mental health services
4. Young peoples mental health
5. Mental Health and wellbeing of staff
6. Domestic abuse
7. Resilience

## 1. The domestic environment

### Custody

Throughout June we continued to hear a variety of issues relating to domestic issues, which were supplemented by continuing changes to Government guidance, with the relaxation of lockdown rules and return to school for many young people.

We continued to hear that estranged families were having difficulty getting access to their children when joint custody was meant to be in place, which then led to financial implications for some parents. Family courts were able to start working again, however the capacity was much reduced which was causing a backlog of cases. In some circumstances, the court case could be cancelled with only 24 hours notice, which caused distress to families already under pressure.



## **Work/Home balance**

People told us about the difficulties they were having in trying to work from home and look after their children, with one family telling us that the parents worked out a schedule that they might work at various points of the day whilst freeing up the other parent to do school work with their 5 year old, and also entertain their 2 year old.

## **Behaviour**

Families continued to tell us about the struggles they were having with their children's behaviour, and their struggles with behaviour management without their usual sources of support. An organisation supporting families with special needs told us that the families struggling the most were those whose children were in mainstream schools. Many parents were struggling with maintaining home-schooling with their children and struggled to get their children to remain focused and not have "meltdowns". We heard stories of parents who felt at breaking point and were desperate to go for a walk by themselves, just to have space away from their kids, and similarly we also heard that older siblings were struggling to cope with the tension and arguing within the house.

## **2. General mental health and wellbeing**

We continued to hear about the issues that people were having with their mental health and their general wellbeing. This peaked in week 10 after the Government announced changes to year groups returning to schools, and we had a small influx of parents telling us about the stress they have felt when making the decision whether to let their child return to school.

Parents told us that they felt bullied on social media for the choices that they made, with one person telling us about the "backlash and abuse" they had. Another parent told us that they were "bombarded with accusations". Support groups working with parents told us how much the parents have struggled with these personal choices, and how difficult it has made their lives.

We also heard from a mental health peer support group that group members have reported issues affecting their sleep, caused by lockdown, which has adversely impacted on their mental health.

We continued to hear about the impact on carers and their wellbeing, with one organisation telling us that they had 66 carers call them in week 12 just to talk about their mental health. We heard that the mental health of carers is intensifying.

- CROP told us that they received 5 new referrals this week, however the volunteers had difficulty engaging with the clients as they had very challenging mental health issues and so were not the usual type of clients that CROP deal with, which is people who are lonely and just want a chat.
- We spoke to an organisation who supports adults with autism and they told us about 2 people that had concerns around their mental health; generic CBT/counselling/talking therapies isn't enough. Autistic adults need specialist counselling, from a team that understand autism. The organisation believes that there is going to be a huge demand for this as time goes on.

### **3. Secondary mental health services**

In June we heard many stories of people struggling with their mental health and trying to seek help from their community mental health teams (CMHTs), local support groups, and those who needed ongoing support from their GP for their mental health. We heard many stories of people living with PTSD who are struggling during lockdown and need support but have been unable to access it and feel let down by the crisis team. Clients have asked “Do I need to take my life before I can get help?”

In particular, we heard a lot of feedback from carers who were struggling to access mental health support for themselves but found it difficult to get through to their contacts at CMHT. A carers support group told us that in one week, 58 carers tried to access their CMHT and were left agitated and had no support because they could not get a response.

#### **Suicide & Self-harm**

We continued to hear stories where people expressed suicidal thoughts and were actively self-harming. For one person, they were offered distraction techniques to help them with their self-harm tendencies, but there has been no other support offered and no follow up. Another person told us “I was referred to my CMHT by my GP because of my self-harming and suicidal ideation that's getting worse with lockdown. I was told that I wasn't accepted because I didn't meet the criteria and that I was being sent back to my GP”. A mental health support group told us that one of their service users has been deemed as high risk from their CMHT due to their suicidal ideation however the only support they get is a weekly welfare call.

We heard from some service users who were pleased with the support that they have been given during lockdown: "I've been really impressed with the help I've had from my CMHT during lockdown. I've been having a hard time with my anxiety and I've been getting regular phone calls and support to make sure I'm okay”

Some of our feedback originates from clients who access the mental health forums across Kent, who provide us with data on a monthly basis, accounting for a peak of data in week 10 and then again in week 13.

### **4. Young peoples' mental health**

We continued to hear more stories about young people throughout June, with many families telling us about their experiences of keeping their children safe at home during lockdown and the effect it was having on them to not see their friends at school, and other family members.

A lot of the feedback was linked to the Government's guidance to allow certain year groups back to school from June 15th, with many families supportive of the opportunity to have their child return to “normal” and see their friends. Other families felt nervous about disrupting the new routines that their children had settled into, particularly those families with special needs;



- A college told us that some students reported being bored at home and are excited to get back to normal. Other students are still anxious staying at home. The college reported a lot of mental health concerns around the return to college and trying to find a new routine to settle into.
- An organisation supporting disadvantaged families told us about a client whose child is self-harming and refusing to get up in the morning, stating that there is no point to life. The parent thinks that going back to school may help but the school have no space for the child.
- “my daughter is 8 and is undiagnosed, but certainly autistic. She has become very aggressive towards everyone in the family, including herself. She will snap at the slightest thing and punch her own face when she gets frustrated. The lockdown has made things much worse and brought on more anxiety. We really need to get her back to school where she has routine and support, but the school said they are prioritising key worker children first, and then bubbles of year groups”

We heard stories about young people who were due to sit exams this year and had real concerns about the validity of the estimated grade given from teachers. One mother had to get her daughter’s teacher to call the house to calm down her daughter, as she had been stressing so much about the predicted grade for her A-levels, having worked so hard during the school year.

A college also told us that they anticipate a lot of existing students to return to college next year, despite the students originally planning to move onto employment. The college have reported that students feel unprepared for employment and want to return to college for one more year to build up their confidence.

We also heard some stories about other young people, who were feeling the impact of the pandemic in other ways:

- “my son is autistic and washed his hands until he bled before lockdown. He is now paranoid that everything outside the house has germs on it and he refuses to leave the house. I will not force him to leave the house, his mental health is too fragile right now”
- We heard from a mental health support organisation about a mother who is trying to access counselling for her son, he has Asperger’s and struggles with anxiety. She needs to get support now because her son is struggling during lockdown.

## **5. Mental health and wellbeing of staff**

During June we heard less about the mental health impact on workers, however we did hear stories about their general wellbeing and the stresses that they were under. The stories that we heard reflected the struggle of maintaining a balance between working from home and taking care of children, however with many workplaces reopening, parents were concerned and worried about getting childcare:

- An organisation supporting families told us that key worker children will not have spaces in school in the summer as schools are deep cleaning and are having work done to allow them to take more children in September. This has caused concern as the usual holiday clubs in leisure centres and churches are not running so parents are really concerned about childcare whilst they work.
- “How are single parents going to get back to work without any childcare?”
- “are we now allowed to take our kids to work with us as there is no childcare provided?”



We also heard from people who were in the teaching profession who were still working 2 days per week in school, and at home for 3 days, but also had to look after and home-school their own children; “She’s a trained teacher and finding it hard, how are other parents managing?”

School staff told us that “staff need a rest; it has been relentless”, telling us that they had worked throughout school holidays and bank holidays, and they were now concerned that they had not received any information if schools should continue to open during summer holidays.

Other people told us that “Some colleagues resent that I’m working from home to shield, which has been upsetting”. We also heard from people who are keen to back to work and re-establish their routine but are unable to because they are caring for someone who is unable to return to day centres, which is causing worry.

## **6. Domestic abuse**

We continued to hear a small but consistent volume of feedback with regards to domestic abuse, with stories ranging from controlling behaviour, withholding money and aggression;

- A voluntary organisation told us that they received a call from a parent of 4 children; prior to lockdown the caller’s spouse was very controlling and would only allow certain friends and family to visit. Now no-one is allowed to visit, and the caller can’t get out. They are very isolated and need help.
- The same organisation also told us that one call they received was from someone who was in a controlling and abusive relationship. The abuser has taken control of their money, and this has resulted in the client having money worries and debt to pay off.
- An organisation who supports families with special needs told us about a family that they support; the client and their partner disagree on all aspects of parenting and they think their partner needs to move out but they got aggressive when it was mentioned it so the client is just "sucking it up" for now. The client’s partner allows them a budget, but it isn't enough to do a family shop. The client has had to resort to credit cards to buy food and pay bills.

## **7. Resilience**

We continued to hear similar stories as we did in May, with carers having concerns about what happens as lockdown eases. Many clients have been used to having volunteers deliver their prescriptions, do shopping for them and call weekly for a chat, there is concern that many of the clients have come to depend on these services and volunteers are now returning to their usual workplaces and are unable to dedicate their time anymore.

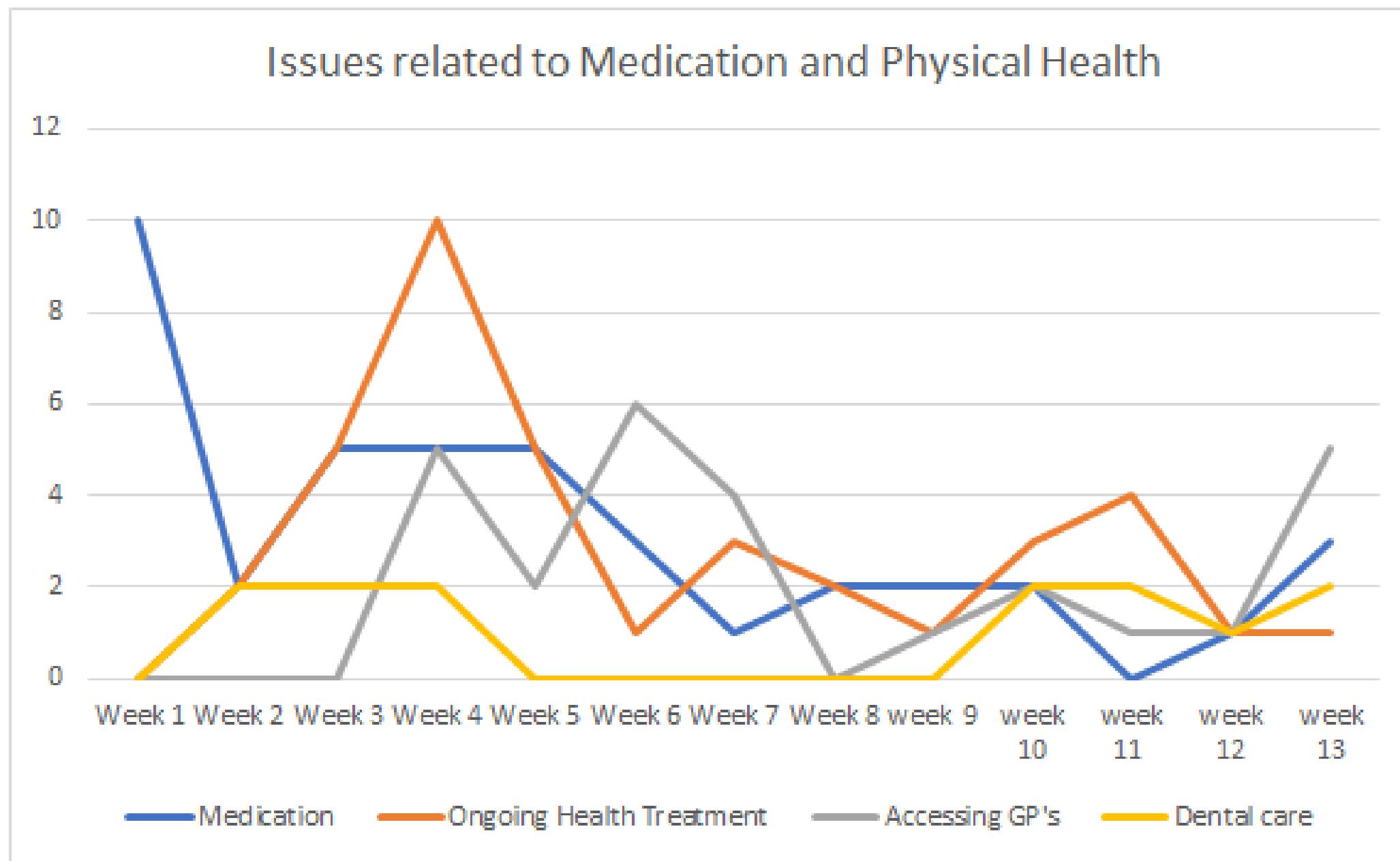
We also continued to hear about children struggling with separation anxiety, particularly for children who did not manage to return to school when some year groups were able to go. Parents are particularly concerned about their child becoming a “school refuser” when they get nearer to September and the academic year resuming.

## **WHAT HAVE WE DONE WITH THIS FEEDBACK?**

1. We continue to share feedback with Mental Health Commissioners and into the Mental Health impact assessment as part of the work of the Health and Social Care Recovery Cell.
2. We also continue to share with Children’s commissioners to help inform their recovery plans.



# Topic 3 - Issues related to Medication and Physical Health



There were 4 themes within this topic area:

1. Access to medication
2. Access to GPs
3. Ongoing health treatment
4. Dental care

## 1. Access to medication

In weeks 9-13 we consistently heard about the issues people were having accessing medication. Community Hubs told us their biggest area of demand was still to collect prescriptions and deliver them to those that were still shielding. Some people had to find alternatives to their usual medication until supplies returned:

- An organisation supporting families with special needs told us about a parent who had difficulty getting medication from the Children's assessment centre (for epilepsy); the centre is shut, and the answerphone won't allow you to leave a message. The family had been emailing the secretary, but she was on annual leave and medications were getting low. They eventually got hold of a pharmacy manager at a hospital who helped them.
- "Is anyone else having trouble trying to re-order medication through XXXXX? I have been trying for the last 2 weeks on the phone line and I can't get through to speak to a human for any help. It gives an email address which keeps coming back as not in use, then phone hangs up on me. I desperately need my medication now and am so frustrated"
- Our helpline spoke to a client who is 83 and is caring for his wife who has cancer. He is only able to get 10 days worth of cancer medication at a time. He continues to go to the pharmacy every 10 days to collect the medication, but is concerned that he is putting himself, and his wife, at risk by going out frequently.

We also heard that some people have been able to organise their prescriptions remotely, which has been a huge relief.



## 2. Access to GPs

We continued in June to hear a mixture of stories of people accessing their GP surgery. We heard in week 9 of the reluctance and fear that people had of requesting a GP home visit:

- An Age UK centre told us that a carer delayed seeking help for their spouse via GP as they were fearful of the virus being brought into their home

Similar concerns rolled over into week 10, with the added element of confusion over who were “eligible” to see GP’s:

- An Age UK centre told us that some of their clients have not been going to doctors or local hospitals as they feel they are unable to. One client had a fall and would not call the GP. They were encouraged to speak to their doctor but they thought that their GP was only seeing Covid patients

In Weeks 11-13 we continued to hear the difficulties that people had trying to get an appointment, and trying to get an accurate diagnosis:

- “It’s impossible to get an appointment with the GP. When I call the surgery, it goes to voicemail and then I’m asked to call a number if it is an emergency. They are so far from getting back to normal”
- “when are Dr surgeries going to open? I want a face to face appointment with my GP, not over the phone”
- An organisation who supports carers told us that carers are wanting to have face to face appointments with their GP. Around 40 calls this week were about getting appointments at their surgery, with some saying “why is my GP not available, Covid has gone?”
- “my GP wouldn’t see me in person, insisted on a phone consultation he told me I had a chest infection. Within days I was rushed into hospital and had to have a blood transfusion and an iron infusion. It had nothing to do with a chest infection, if he saw me in person, I would have had more accurate treatment”

We also heard praise for the new way that GP surgeries were able to communicate, with people commenting on how much better an improved the service was:

- A community Health and Social Care worker reported that GPs are responding and acting on emails and this has been better than normal.
- A mental health support group told us about someone who had a phone consultation with their GP. The GP offered a video conference so they could see the problem for themselves. This greatly helped them and allowed them to get the proper treatment they needed.
- “It’s been much easier to get hold of my GP since lockdown started. I’d have to phone early in the morning and usually wouldn’t get through. Now it’s really easy to get to speak to someone.”
- Our helpline spoke to a lady with an ear infection; she has been told to contact her GP and have an examination of her ear through a videocall. She said that it was a quick and easy method of contacting her GP. The GP felt that the client should be seen by a specialist at the hospital; within minutes the GP had arranged an appointment at XXXXX hospital in 3 days time. The client said “The whole process of being seen and referred was a lot quicker and easier virtually. After the surgery opens again, I would like to continue to have the choice to be seen virtually”

An addiction support group told us that some of their clients have been struggling to contact their GP because they haven’t got a phone and surgeries are closed. This has meant that they haven’t been able to call for an appointment or get a GP to follow up on their concerns.



### 3. Ongoing health care

We heard consistently during Weeks 9-13 about the issues that people had with their ongoing care and planned treatment, with many people telling us about postponements, particularly with cancer treatments;

- "I'm waiting for my cancer surgery and I told the cancer nurse that I thought I had tonsillitis. I was tested and it came back positive for Covid! I will have to wait 3 weeks before I can get retested, and then wait to get another slot for surgery"
- "Since I was first diagnosed, my Cancer has got worse and more and more painful. I have still not had the mental health support I need to keep me motivated. There are only six Macmillan Nurses at XXXXX Hospital (I believe) and these are just regular nurses with extra training. All but one was used to help with the Covid crisis. I just want my Cancer treated, then I can get on with living my life"
- "After waiting since July 2019, I finally got to have full screening and a colorectal camera examination in January 2020. It was confirmed that I have a tumour in my lower bowel. I saw a surgeon in February 2020 and prepared myself for an operation. Then ...nothing. I did not hear from XXXXX Hospital for nearly two months, so I contacted them. My operation was put on hold due to the Covid 19 pandemic. I understood this, but why? Apparently, they needed all of the ventilators to treat Covid patients and could not perform surgery without them"

Other organisations told us about cancellations and postponements, with some patients looking to go to the private sector for their healthcare needs:

- "At present I am waiting for surgery, my surgery got cancelled due to the virus. The lady who rang was very rude and did not listen to my questions and told me there were people worse off than me! I have emailed to find out any further information of which there is none. I feel like we have been forgotten about. There has been no communication and if waiting times are too long then I will have to look to pay for my surgery"
- "my husband had an appointment for a colonoscopy in March, it was cancelled due to Covid. There should be some hospital procedures still available. I am worried and angry about this delay, we are going to be a nation of very sick people because of this virus"

We did hear from people who had medical treatments and continuation of their hospital care;

- "Every 4 weeks I need an infusion as I have rheumatoid arthritis. At the start of Covid19 the ward was moved to another part of the hospital, away from the Covid19 wards as we are all immunosuppressed. The care I have received is excellent - we were provided with masks and the staff wore masks, social distancing was maintained, and it felt very safe. Upon entering the hospital, checks were made to ensure our safety (most recently our temperatures were taken) and only 1 person was allowed in (the patient). I also really appreciate that the parking was free at XXXXX"
- "it's so unfair that my partner can't come to an ultrasound scan of our baby, but he can go to Primark and touch something that 20 other people have probably touched"

We also heard from people who questioned how their ongoing health needs were going to be managed, with one patient telling us that they needed a physical health check 1 year after having a stroke, and they questioned how this was going to be effectively carried out if the only option was to have a virtual appointment.

- "my driving licence was taken away when I had a stroke 6 months ago and I'm still fighting them on this. I need a hospital eye test to confirm that I meet the "exceptional criteria" which means I would be eligible for a DVLA "driving assessment". I need the eye appointment ASAP but because of Covid, the hospital are prioritising other people first"

## 4. Dental care

There has been a steady stream of people sharing feedback about dental treatment from Week 9 to Week 13 which includes people telling us about their wait for dentists to open, and how they have coped in the wait for reopening:

- “My dentist is opening today. I’m on the priority list, finally an end in sight, or at least someone to check the damage. 11 weeks and counting...I’m relieved! My anxiety has been through the roof worrying about sepsis and not meeting the criteria”
- “I’m currently on antibiotics & painkillers for a suspected infection in my bottom left jaw, my dentist won’t be set up for face to face consultation for another week or two”
- “My grandson had unrelenting toothache for 2 months. Antibiotics provided no relief, maximum dose paracetamol plus Nurofen gave no relief. He’s only 10 years old and is begging his mother to knock him out to stop the pain. No one will see him”
- “I am currently shielding as I have a heart condition and diabetes and am at risk. Recently I developed an abscess in my tooth that needed treatment on a Friday. I rang 111 to try to get some antibiotics but they sent me to A&E. I did not want to go to A&E because of the risk catching Covid-19 in the hospital. I had to wait until Sunday afternoon before I was able to get some antibiotics by which time I was in extreme pain. I had to suffer with extreme toothache until I was able to obtain some antibiotics”
- “I had to pull my own tooth out, I couldn’t get an appointment with my dentist and when I phoned for advice, he suggested I pull it out myself”

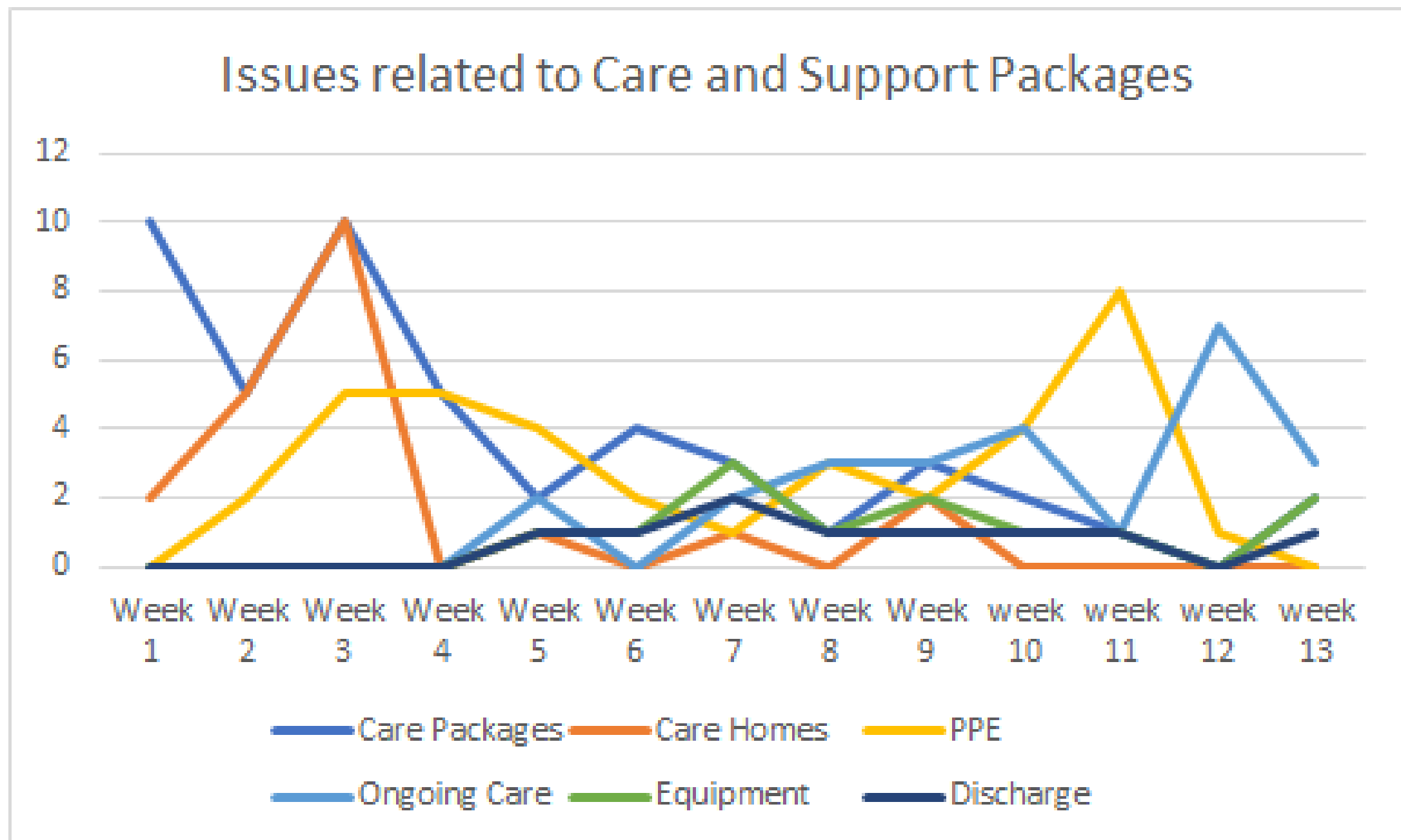
With dental practices reopening from 8th June, the British Dental Association advised the public that there would be a smaller number of appointments available daily to allow for cleaning and social distancing between appointments. They also advised that not all procedures would be available right away, some practices had a low supply of essential PPE (particularly certain masks) which would dictate whether a dentist can offer aerosol-generating procedures.

In addition to these issues, we also heard 2 stories about school vaccinations, and the concerns from parents that planned vaccinations might not take place if pupils were not in attendance.

### WHAT HAVE WE DONE WITH THIS FEEDBACK?

1. We will work to understand plans for the school vaccination programme and if and how that might be adapted.
2. We are collating information regarding dental stories to raise greater awareness of the issues around access. Healthwatch England have also been raising this at a national level after collating feedback from the network (including ourselves).
3. We are working with the Kent Dental Helpline to ensure we are giving people up to date information on their options for dental care.
4. We are monitoring Kent and Medway restart plans, encouraging leads to gather and use feedback from the public where there are opportunities to do so.

# Topic 4 - Issues related to Care and Support Packages



There were 8 themes in this topic area:

1. Care Packages
2. Care Homes
3. Ongoing Care
4. Equipment
5. Discharge
6. PPE
7. PAs
8. Hidden Carers

## 1. Care packages

Feedback regarding care packages continued to reach us in small numbers in June, with people telling us of the difficulties they were having trying to get assessments carried out at home;

- A carers support organisation told us that home care services need managers to get care packages signed off, the process has been slowed down significantly or, in 31 cases they heard this week, it hasn't happened at all. Carers at home are already struggling, they need a care package put in place
- An Age UK centre told us that they received 8 calls regarding care assessments at home; re-assessments and new ones. Some are not being done and some are not in place at all. The centre thought that this may be due to staffing, a back-log or not being done at all due to risks of infection.



We also heard that for some people, their care package had been cut. For three individuals, their packages had been cut because they were receiving less care since the start of lockdown and social services had reduced their hours of care. A full review of care needs for daily living had not been completed.

Similarly, we heard from an organisation who had reported that 10 people had been asked to increase their personal contributions towards their care, and that there had been no consultation or clarification about the increase.

## **2. Care homes**

We didn't hear much feedback from organisations this month about care homes. What we did hear about was that some care homes in certain areas of Kent were not taking any new referrals due to the pandemic and the risk of infection.

On the other hand, we also heard in a different part of Kent, that 3 families were struggling to cope looking after a loved one, and felt the need to place them in a care home for respite.

In June Healthwatch Kent conducted a piece of research into how care homes in Kent have managed through the pandemic. We spoke to 37% of the care homes in Kent (204 homes) and you can read about what we found here; <https://www.healthwatchkent.co.uk/report/2020-08-06/kent-care-homes-covid-reality>

## **3. Ongoing care**

One of the most frequently raised concerns in June was access to personal care such as bathing, ear syringing and chiropody.

For many people, they have been unable to bathe since the start of lockdown, and they are continuing to ask when services like this (provided at some Age UK centres) will be up and running again. We heard that many people are asking Age UK for services that they previously received from their usual care companies, who now do not have enough staff to spend on bathing & showering. One Age UK centre told us that they have noticed a change in attitudes regarding health, hygiene and domestic care, with clients having to pay people to come into their home to bath them. Another issue that was frequently raised was the need for haircuts, something that service users also used to access at Age UK centres.

The biggest issue was again access to chiropody services, with many people saying that they were only able to wear slippers because they were unable to get appropriate footwear on. One Age UK centre received 23 calls in one week and another centre received 16 calls, all asking when the service would be reinstated.

By the end of June, some Age UK centres had been able to source PPE and had been able to reinstate some of their much-needed services, but at a much-reduced capacity than normal. Clients were reported to have been delighted to have a bath after such a long time, and relieved to have appointments for nail cutting confirmed.

#### 4. Equipment

We didn't hear as much about equipment in June as we did in May, but we continued to hear that issues with accessing hearing aid batteries was still a common complaint.

We heard from an organisation supporting people with hearing impairments that due to people staying indoors and self-isolating, they have seen an increase in demand for TV listening devices.

An independent living organisation told us that they have heard concerns from 2 individuals about Access to Work and not being able to make a new claim during the pandemic. All the Access to Work staff have been redeployed to other areas of the business. The clients are concerned that without the adaptations they can't start new jobs and if there is no funding, the company they are joining may withdraw their job offers. One other person had made an application but had no response.

We spoke to an organisation who supports families with special needs and they told us about the difficulties one family faced in accessing incontinence pads; they are struggling to get the pads for their child (with special needs) and the provider is going to review the situation and get back to them. The parent was told that pads would be provided on proven need, which they can prove as they have kept a diary. The CCG state that everyone should get what they need, the incontinence team say it's only a basic service and families should use DLA to top up. The organisation told us that 'this is an issue that has been around for some time and if you have the energy to challenge it you get what you need but there are likely to be parents just topping up pads through their own funds'

How is COVID-19 affecting you and your family life. Tell us your story so we can make emergency changes to services.





## 5. Discharge

As with the data from May, we continued to hear a small amount of feedback about hospital discharges in June, with some stories highlighting the issues raised in our report about discharges from hospital into care homes;

- An organisation who supports carers told us that some patients are being discharged from hospital directly to a care home and the families are needing emotional support. They are worried because they could not visit their relative in the hospital and now they cannot visit at the care home and they feel that they may never see their relative again
- “My dad is in XXXXX hospital, receiving end of life care (not due to Covid) but is on the main Covid ward after contracting the virus whilst in the hospital. The Discharge team are working on moving him out to a care home within days, with or without a negative Coronavirus test. He will not be accepted into the home he had moved into 10 days prior to hospital admission, because (quite rightly so) they are not accepting positive testing patients. We don't want him moved anywhere without our consent and are very worried we won't be able to see him face to face again. We are also disgusted that homes are accepting positive testing patients”

A carers support organisation told us that they have noticed an improvement in hospital discharges, with regards to care being in place at home however they felt that some cases are not being flagged early enough. They were aware of 2 cases of hospital discharge that they needed to raise a safeguarding alert.

By the end of June, we heard from an organisation that they were noticing a slow improvement in discharges from hospital.

## 6.PPE

We heard a modest amount of feedback regarding access and costs to PPE in June.

A carers support organisation told us that their clients were not confident about the PPE that domestic staff were wearing, compared to the PPE that personal care staff wore. Another service user told us that their dentist was going to charge triple their normal fee, to cover the cost of PPE.

People told us that they struggled to get facemasks for personal use, telling us that boxes of 50 masks is unaffordable to many people, considering they are disposable. Vulnerable people told us that they struggled to get a face mask. Another person told us that they can't afford to buy a mask, and because public transport demands that you wear a mask, they cannot get to where they want to go now.

We had an upturn of feedback related to face masks and face coverings in week 11; the Government announced that face masks/coverings should be worn on public transport from the 15th of June, which accounts for the increase in feedback that we heard.

- The Kent Autistic Trust told us that for many of their clients there are sensory issues related to wearing masks; the feel of the mask fibres, the elastic round the ears, feeling claustrophobia, being hot and sweaty within the mask. However, for others, they have habitually worn the masks (as well as other extreme forms of PPE) to protect themselves.
- Kent Autistic Trust also told us that there have been issues around the quality of masks; the government gave advice on using headscarves and basic face coverings, but many people want the accredited medical grade mask, to make sure they are safe. We heard that many people with autism feel reassured having a quality checked medical grade mask.



We also heard about the difficulties that people had when trying to make sure they adhered to guidelines, and felt safe themselves;

- “I spoke to the hospital today about wearing masks. I asked if the team seeing me could wear a shield rather than a mask so that I can lipread. I was told no, I could defer my appointment until later in the year when masks wouldn’t be required to be worn”
- “KCC asked that my child wears a face covering when he is in the taxi going to school this week, but I refused. The taxi driver understood, as my child is autistic and won’t tolerate it”

## **7. Hidden carers**

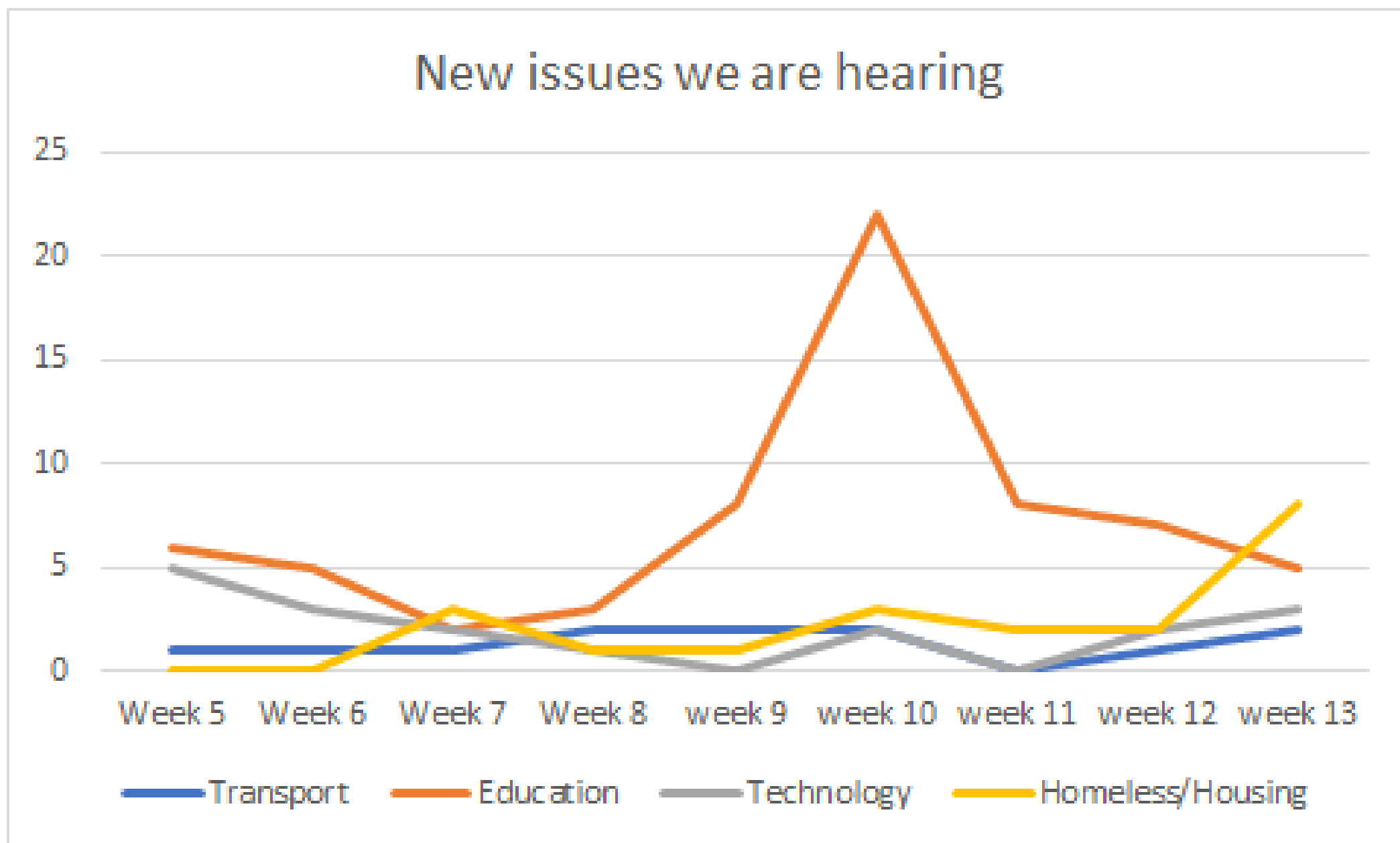
Even though people did not identify themselves as carers, they were still providing help and care for those close to them, with some people even moving into a family member’s home to stay with them whilst they were shielding. With lockdown lasting longer than some people expected, some frustrations and struggles were becoming evident;

- “I moved in with my mum at lockdown, she has Alzheimer’s. I’m finding it hard because I’ve lived on my own for so long and now I’m sharing a house with someone that I can’t even have a conversation with. This covid is definitely accelerating the Alzheimer’s. Mum knows there’s something scary out there, but doesn’t quite understand what, so she comes looking for me in the house if she hasn’t seen me for an hour. She’s 89 with Alzheimer’s, leukaemia and arthritis”
- “I like to think of myself of sound mind but I am at home looking after my 89 year old Mum and 87 year old Aunt and it’s driving me crackers. I have to get out and walk the dog to get away”

## **WHAT HAVE WE DONE WITH THIS FEEDBACK?**

1. We will share feedback about Access to work through the Department of Work and Pensions .
2. We will explore the issues of increased Care package cost with Kent County Council and the commissioned care organisations.
3. We have shared our information and feedback regarding school transport issues with Kent County Council, who are preparing to send a newsletter to parents ahead of schools returning in September, as many parents have concerns with face coverings and social distancing on funded transport.
4. We will investigate how the experiences of local people are being used in the work happening to review discharge processes within the Ageing Well Task and Finish Group (linked to the Health and Social Care Recovery Cell).
5. We will ensure that support to unpaid carers is considered in the Health and Social Care Recovery action plan.

# Topic 5 - New issues we are hearing



In May there were 4 clear new themes that we heard about and this continued into June:

1. Education and schooling
2. Using technology to access services
3. Transport
4. Homelessness and housing

## 1. Education

The biggest amount of feedback that we received in June was concerning education. Much of the feedback we received in May was concerning the support that parents and children were receiving from schools during lockdown, and the themes that we heard shifted to the reopening of schools and the difficulties parents were having with some year groups returning. We did continue to hear about school support for those students who stayed at home. The Government announced at the end of May that schools would continue to welcome vulnerable pupils and children of key workers, but would also welcome back students in reception, year 1 and year 6.

We had a rise in education related feedback in weeks 9 and 10, when schools welcomed back certain year groups, and we continue to hear how children and young people have coped with their adjusted school learning both at school and at home.

## **Lack of school support**

We heard stories from parents who felt cut off from their child's school, with no support to help with planning of home schooling. Parents told us that schools provided work to do at home but made no attempt to contact families during lockdown to check on student's progress.

- "I've not heard anything from our school since they closed. They haven't rung to see how we are doing, if we need help with homework ideas/activities, or general wellbeing"
- "we are 12 weeks in and we are slowly losing the battle of schoolwork at home. It has become too much to handle without proper support from the school"

## **Returning to school**

Following the announcement to allow some year groups to return to school, we received a mixture of feedback with parents concerned about the status of the pandemic and the safety measures that schools might have in place.

- "my child is in reception and I have chosen not to send her back to school. The school have refused to provide any communication/support/guidance for "any children who choose not to come back" as their "priority is the children in school". Is this fair to cut all communication and penalise my child because I have chosen to keep her at home?"
- "I'm so worried my child will be at a disadvantage and spend the following years playing catch up for lost learning. I feel really strongly that the poor support and advice around school return is affecting parents' mental health"
- "There was never much point in sending kids back to school before September, it's just too much worrying for parents. Some children are going to need extra help when they do go back, and schools will have to be sensitive to children's anxiety"
- "My daughter went back to school this week and hated it. The staff are obviously doing all they can, but the children are so restricted about who they see and what they can do and touch. Kids have been told not to wear uniform; this is so that teachers can monitor what kids are wearing and make sure they are wearing fresh clothes every day. The only reason my daughter is going back is because she gets to wear her own stuff. She wouldn't be happy going back, otherwise"

## **Children with special needs**

- "my son has a 1:1 assistant in school due to his learning needs, how is this going to work if I send him back? The school have not been able to give me an answer yet, so I won't be sending him in"
- "Children with special needs don't have a legal right to the provision in their EHCPs at the moment. They can only expect 'reasonable endeavours'. We are definitely keeping our son at home for now"
- SNAAP told us that a lot of the families they support had been back to school (if they are in year 1 and 6). Some are part time, a few are full time but those who are full time are 1 week at school, 1 week off school to allow for more children to have a space.



## Exams

- “my daughter has stressed so much about her A-levels...to the point that I had to ask her teacher to call her and calm her down. She wanted the chance to prove herself and was looking to the final exam to top up the grade (from her coursework). She doesn't know if they will give her a grade she wanted”
- “it is cruel that a teacher could guess my daughters' grade, and this will effect if she goes to college or not. She feels that secondary school has been 5 years wasted, now that she can't sit her exams. Why can't they sit them in school halls and socially distance to do the exams?”

## Impact on parents

The added pressure on parents to home school as well as work at home proved very difficult to balance, as well as the decisions parents faced when they had to make a choice to send children back to school. Many parents felt that the pandemic was still very much active and did not want to risk sending children back, others needed respite from home schooling every day; we heard that parents were criticised and their parenting was questioned over the decisions that they made.

- “what has saddened me is the backlash and abuse I'm getting in social media groups for saying I've sent my child back to school. One parent even said I have so many children I clearly didn't care about losing one whereas her children are so precious she would never put them at risk. Another parent even said I should be reported to social services for neglect”
- An organisation who supports families with special needs told us that many of the calls this week have been about managing conflict over returning to school and feeling overwhelmed and bullied about their decisions.
- “my daughter in law is teaching 2 days in school and 3 days online from home because the teachers work on a rota system in her school now. She also has to home-school her own 2 sons”
- “I am a headteacher and have a lot of staff asking if we will be expected to work during the summer holidays. We have been open throughout lockdown including holidays, even bank holidays. If there is going to be an expectation to do so we need time to plan for it and need to know very soon. I don't think we should be open. Staff need a rest; it has been relentless. Staff are not contracted or paid to work over summer holidays. Are the government going to offer pay for staff to work?”

## **2. Technology**

Many of the organisations we spoke to had altered their service and were able to offer virtual support. Not everyone in their client group were able to access these services though, and it highlighted how many people were unable to have access to help.

One of the issues that we heard about was completing forms; although some clients had access to technology and were able to gain access to online forms, sometimes these forms had to be printed, completed and posted back. Without printers, they were unable to complete the forms, before lockdown they were able to get volunteers to print the forms for them at the organisation's office.

A hospice told us that they are carrying out reviews and health checks on patients virtually, however many of their patients have no access to technology, and do not have the tech skills to navigate video conferencing and social media platforms. This has increased their isolation. The hospice has also been continuing their bereavement support groups virtually but again, many people are unable to access the support because of lack of technology.

An Age UK centre told us that they receive many calls about technology, with clients saying that they are unable to use video conferencing and photo sharing, so they feel discriminated against when contacting their GP.

## **3. Transport**

We heard feedback about transport issues that had been experienced throughout June.

A Community Hub told us that they are starting to have enquiries about transport to hospital appointments as service users are going back for outpatient appointments. People in need seem grateful for a community transport registered personal service.

We heard that some members of the public were concerned about using public transport because the schedules and timetables had changed. One person said that some services had been suspended and they were afraid that they might not be able to get back home.

In particular, we had feedback from vulnerable groups of people who had medical conditions that made their immune system suppressed, and they were concerned about having to use public transport to get to vital hospital appointments. They said that they faced the choice of going on public transport and risk exposure to the virus, or to cancel hospital appointments.

## **4. Homelessness and housing**

We continued to hear feedback about social housing, housing complexes and homelessness but had an increase at week 13.

### **Supported Living**

- An Age UK centre told us that there were 4 calls made to them saying that some supported living schemes had withdrawn their scheme managers due to Covid-19. Clients said that they've had no contact with any one from council, some clients are very isolated. Apparently, no provision has been made to implement another system.
- We spoke to a hospice who told us that they are aware of several patients who have a dire need to access council or supported living. Most agencies have said this is not possible during lockdown. This has affected 2 clients this week, but it is an ongoing problem during the pandemic.
- A volunteer service spoke to us and told us about a residential sheltered living-type complex that has enforced a no visiting rule. This includes enforcing social distancing within the grounds of the complex. Residents have complained to their volunteers as they are missing their families and friends.

### **Homelessness**

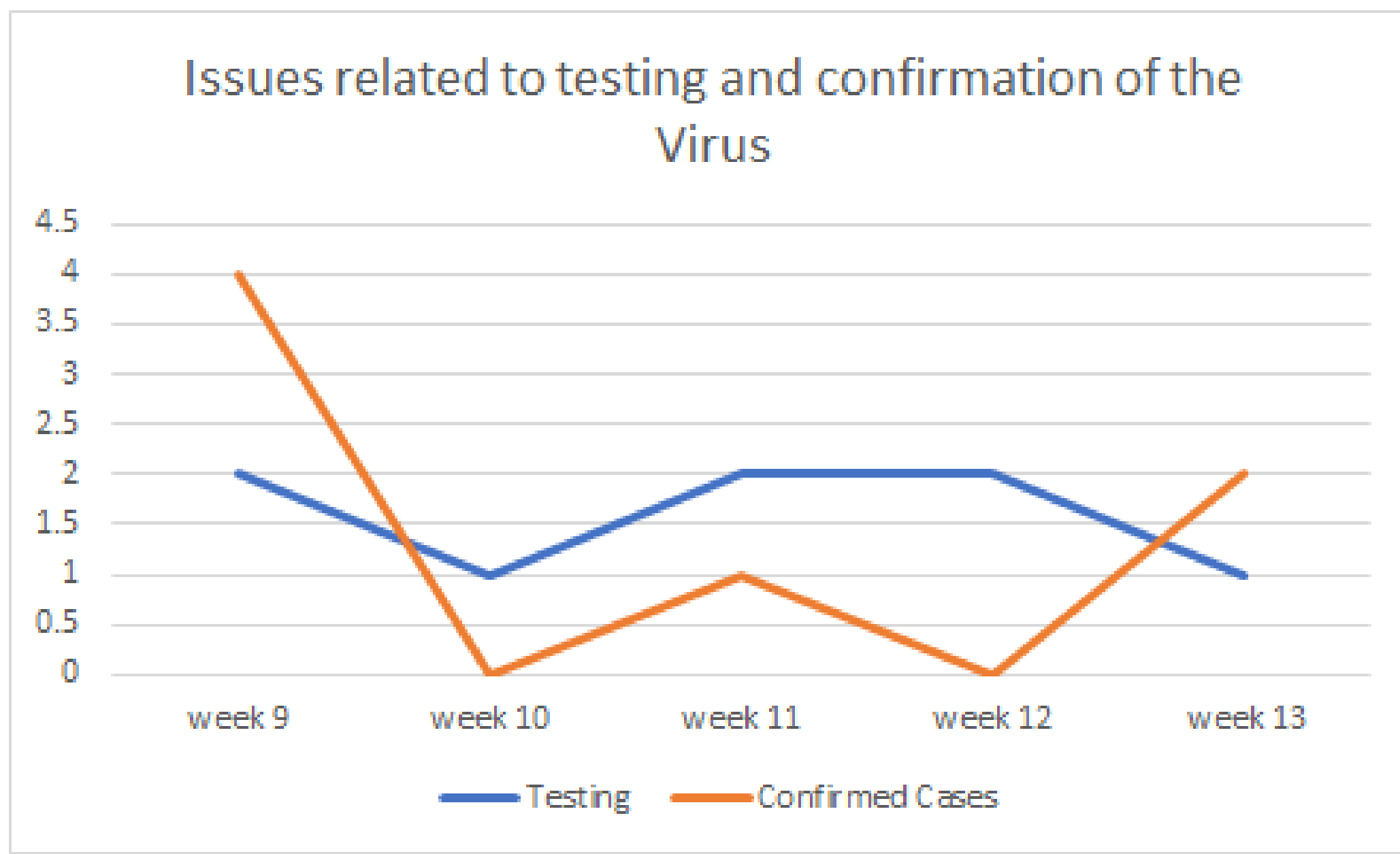
- A Community Hub told us that they are seeing homeless people from London being placed into towns in Kent, despite an agreement that this would not happen during lockdown. One person was sent to XXXXX from London with no information or support, they were just told to call the community hub once they arrived.
- A drug and alcohol recovery support group told us that they knew of six service users who are sleeping rough, some of whom were doing this before Covid. They told us that the district council haven't deemed them a priority. The service users mainly sleep in a tent and have no safe space to withdraw to during Covid. The organisation told us that lots of councils have taken care of their homeless, but they have a group of people in XXXXX who weren't.

## **WHAT HAVE WE DONE WITH THIS FEEDBACK?**

1. We will continue to share our intelligence related to education with Kent County Council.
2. On our workplan for 2020/21 we will undertake a project looking at remote appointments in GP surgeries, building on the existing feedback that organisations have already gathered.



# Topic 6 - ISSUES RELATED TO TESTING AND CONFIRMATION OF THE VIRUS



## Testing & Confirmation of the Virus

Because testing became easier for members of the public to access, through online requests and postal returns, we started to hear more stories from people who had been tested and had received results. We also heard stories of precautionary checks being made before letting someone into a building;

- “I was emailed from my daughter's nursery last week to say that she could come back today. We got to nursery this morning and they were taking children's temperatures before letting them in. I had to take her hearing aid out to get the ear thermometer in. The hearing aids make her inner ear hot and sweaty. The thermometer gave a high reading because of this and the nursery have turned us away! The reading was high because of the aids, but we were told to go back home! That's a false positive temperature result. Now I need to explain to my employer that I cannot go back to work next week because the nursery is refusing entry. I complained to the manager and they called me back later but are still not letting me send my daughter” (9)

We also heard about one sheltered housing scheme who had confirmed cases of Covid in the building, with one resident passing away from it. Services that needed regular access to the scheme, in particular an Age UK centre, were both told of the outbreak in the home. This meant that any Age UK staff or volunteer who had accessed the building had to then be tested and isolated for 2 weeks. Despite GDPR, the Age UK staff believe that they should have been made aware of the outbreak at the complex.

## Testing

- A carers support organisation told us that 3 care homes told them they weren't able to get Covid testing done. They reported that there's no testing in certain parts of Kent, the only testing is in Ebbsfleet and staff can't spare the time to go there or don't have the facilities to travel there.
- "8 weeks since my Covid test and I've still had no result. I've been to the drive thru 3 times and never saw people being tested"
- An organisation who supports vulnerable families told us about a family whose husband was sent home from work with a temperature of 39.9 and sore throat on Wednesday. He had a test on Wednesday evening but didn't hear anything back. He got worse on Friday, by this time he heard that his test was lost so had to do another one. He developed a headache and a horrible taste in his mouth. He is sure that he has Covid as one of the symptoms is a change to sense of taste.

## Confirmed cases

- "an extended family member went to hospital, unrelated to Covid 19. He was in hospital for a week and contracted covid 19. He is no longer with us"
- "I got sick with Covid in mid-April. While I wasn't hospitalised, I was in bed most of the time for 5 weeks and I still have "relapse" days where low fever comes back, or I can't breathe very well, or I just feel exhausted. I was already at the high end of my normal weight spectrum and since getting sick I have put on 12lbs. I just want to get back to a gym so that I can feel healthy again, and exercise at my own pace"

## WHAT HAVE WE DONE WITH THIS FEEDBACK?

1. We raised an issue that a member of the public reported, to one of the testing sites and they informed us that an investigation was going to take place.



# Appendix 1

Ethnicity	
English / Welsh / Scottish / Irish	73%
Any other White background	0%
White & Asian	2%
Any Other Mixed / multiple ethnic	2%
African	
Prefer not to say	23%

Age	
0-15	2%
16-24	2%
25-34	15%
35-44	20%
45-54	22%
55- 64	10%
65-74	7%
75- 84	5%
85+	
Not say	17%

CT1	Canterbury (south and city centre)	5
CT2	Canterbury (north), Harbledown, Rough Common, Sturry, Fordwich, Blean, Tyler Hill, Broad Oak, Westbere	
CT3	Wingham, Hersden	
CT4	Canterbury (east and south west), Chartham, Bridge, Nackington, Lower Hardres, Patixbourne, Bekesbourne, Chartham Hatch, Part of Harbledown and Rough Common	
CT5	Whitstable, Seasalter, Tankerton, Chestfield, Swalecliffe, Yorkletts	
CT6	Herne Bay, Herne, Broomfield, Greenhill, Eddington, Beltinge, Reculver	
CT7	Birchington-on-Sea, St Nicholas-at-Wade, Sarre, Acol	
CT8	Westgate-on-Sea	
CT9	Margate, Cliftonville, Birchington	
CT10	Broadstairs, St Peters, Thanet	1
CT11	Ramsgate	
CT12	Northwood, Minster-in-Thamet, Cliffsend, Monkton, Manston	
CT13	Sandwich, Eastry, Woodnesborough, Great Stonar, Richborough	
CT14	Deal, Walmer, Kingsdown, Ringwould, Sholden, Great Mongeham, Worth, Ripple, Tilmanstone, Betteshanger	
CT15	Alkham, Lydden, Eythorne, St Margaret's at Cliffe, Elvington	
CT16	Whitfield, Temple Ewell	
CT17	Dover (west), Tower Hamlets, River	3
CT18	Hawkinge, Lyminge, Etchinghill, Capel-le-Ferne, Densole, Newington	
CT19	Folkestone (north), Cheriton	
CT20	Folkestone (south), Sandgate	1
CT21	Hythe, Saltwood, Lympe, Postling, Newingreen, West Hythe, Westenhanger	
DA1	Dartford, Crayford, Barnes Cray	
DA2	Dartford (east), Stone, Wilmington, Bean, Hawley, Darenth	
DA3	Longfield, Hartley, New Ash Green, New Barn, Fawkham	
DA5	Bexley, Bexley Village, Blendon, Albany Park, Joyden's Wood	
DA6	Bexleyheath, Upton	
DA7	Bexleyheath (north), Barnehurst	
DA8	Erith, Northumberland Heath, Slade Green	
DA9	Greenhithe, Stone	
DA10	Swanscombe, Ebbsfleet	
DA11	Gravesend (west), Northfleet, Gravesham	1
DA12	Gravesend (east), Chalk, Shorne, Cobham	





# Appendix 1

ME1	Rochester, Burham, Wouldham	
ME3	Rural, Hoo Peninsula, Higham	
ME5	Walderslade, Blue Bell Hill, Lordswood Luton	
ME7	Gillingham, Rainham, Hempstead, Bredhurst	
ME8	Rainham, Twydall, Parkwood, Hempstead, Wigmore	
ME9	Sittingbourne, Teynham, Iwade and Rural	
ME10	Sittingbourne, Kemsley, Milton Regis, Swale	4
ME11	Queenborough, Rushenden	
ME12	Isle of Sheppey, Minster, Sheerness, Eastchurch	
ME13	Faversham, Boughton under Blean, Selling and rural area	
ME14	Maidstone, Bearsted, Grove Green	5
ME17	Hollingbourne, Huckling, Harrietsham, Lenham, Boughton Monchelsea, Linton, Coxheath, Chart Sutton, East Sutton, Langley, Kingswood, Sutton Valence	
TN3	Tunbridge Wells, Langton Green, Groombridge, Frant, Speldhurst, Lamberhurst	
TN4	Royal Tunbridge Wells, Rusthall, Southborough	
TN8	Crockham Hill, Edenbridge	
TN9	Tonbridge	
TN10	Tonbridge	
TN12	Paddock Wood, Staplehurst, Brenchley, Horsmonden, Marden, East Peckham	
TN13	Sevenoaks	1
TN15	Kemsing, Ightham, Plaxtol, Wrotham, Sevenoaks Weald	
TN17	Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Benenden, Frittenden	
TN23	Ashford (town centre), Kingsnorth, Singleton	
TN24	Willesborough, Kennington, Boughton Aluph, Goat Lees	7
TN25	Challock, Wye, Stowting	
TN26	Bethersden, Hamstreet, Shadoxhurst, Woodchurch	
TN27	Headcorn, Biddenden	
TN28	New Romney, Greatstone-on-Sea, Littlestone-on-Sea	
TN29	Lydd	
TN30	Tenterden, Wittersham	