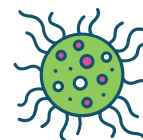


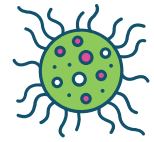
# **Covid-19 survey**

## **Coming out of lockdown**



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## Introduction

At Healthwatch Halton, we're here to work with local health and care services to make sure they are working as best they can for the people who use them.

We listen to the views and experiences of local people on the health and social care services that the use and feedback this information to the service providers and commissioners in order to improve health and social care services.

We wanted to hear how local people were being affected by the outbreak so that we could let services in Halton know what they're doing well during the pandemic, and where people feel their care and communication could be improved. In April 2020 we launched our first Covid-19 survey to find out how people were being affected by the outbreak, so that we could let services in Halton know what they were doing well and where people felt their care and communication could be improved.

The first survey was live online from 1 April 2020 to 20 May 2020 and a short report on the findings from the 192 responses was published on 21 May 2020. A summary of the feedback is shown below.

The report '*How are we coping?*' was shared with Halton Borough Council, NHS Halton CCG, Healthwatch England, Care Quality Commission and our local NHS Trusts.

### Covid-19 first survey '*How are we coping?*' - Part 1 results

Between 1 April and 20 May, 192 Halton residents took part in our first Covid-19 survey

**This a short summary of what they told us:**

**183 people told they had found it found it easy to find clear and understandable information about what to do to keep themselves and others safe during the pandemic.**

Those people who answered 'No', all expressed concern about the mixed messages coming from different sources in the first few weeks of the outbreak and lockdown.

**122 people said their mental health had been affected by the pandemic.**

Many people reported feelings of isolation, loneliness and lack of physical contact with relatives.

**80 people told us it had impacted their healthcare for other conditions.**

**90 people said it had not affected their healthcare for other conditions and 22 told us this was '*not applicable*' to them.**

We heard about a range of cancelled appointments such as cancer treatments, breast screening, colonoscopy and rheumatology appointments.

**21 people said their experience of social care had been affected.**

**82 said it had not, while 89 said it was '*not applicable*' to them.**

People told us about their relatives in care homes and the affect the pandemic had had.

We also heard from social care staff who explained how the pandemic was affecting their working environment.

**101 people told us what helped them cope day to day during the pandemic.**

Many people talked about volunteering in the community and making use of social media and online video calls to keep in touch with family and friends.

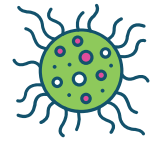
Some have been starting new hobbies and learning new skills.

Some others told us nothing really helped and their anxiety levels had 'gone through the roof'.

**An improved community spirit was highlighted by many.**

*'The Halton community have been amazing in the support we have received both in donations and the wonderful words of comfort.'*





## What we did

In July as the initial lockdown started to ease, we launched a second survey, based on a survey from Healthwatch England, to gather people’s thoughts, feelings and concerns on the pandemic.

The survey was hosted through Snap Surveys, our dedicated survey software system. We promoted the survey link through our e-bulletin and across our social media platforms. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions and a number of open-ended questions, allowing people to give their views in their own words.

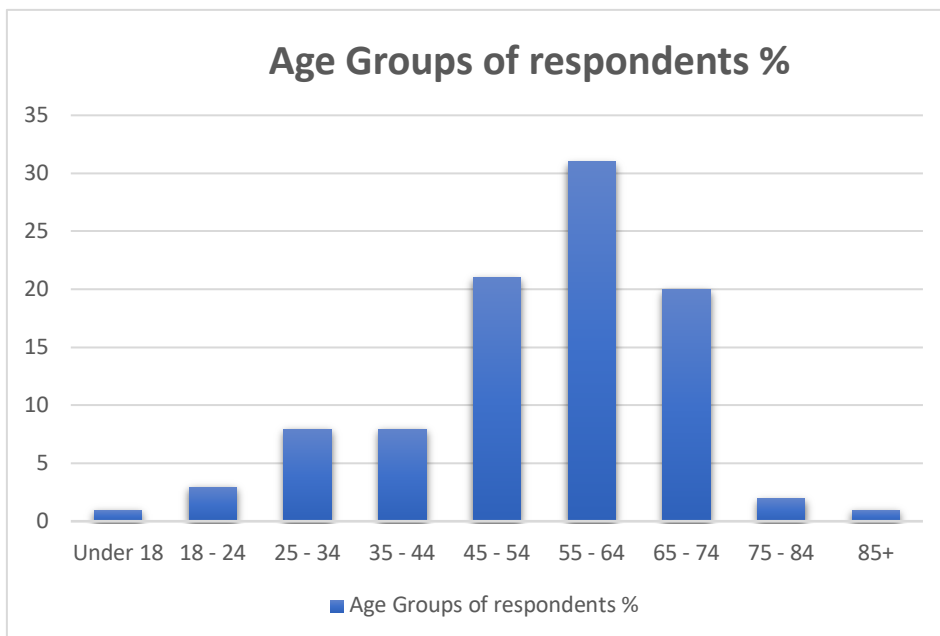
This survey closed on 9 August 2020 with **175** people having taken part in the survey.

## Responses

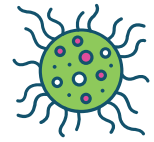
**175** people took part in this survey. Due to the number of people responding, this report can only be viewed as a snapshot of the views and experiences of those who have taken part in the survey.

We asked a number of basic demographic questions including age, gender and whether people considered themselves to have a disability.

- 78% of respondents were Female
- 22% of respondents were Male
- 29% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability.



**11%** of respondents were under 35 years of age. **67%** were aged between 35 and 64 with the remaining **22%** being in the 65-85+ age group.



Where respondents to the survey identified that they were working or volunteering to support people affected by Covid 19 there were a variety of types of roles.

Those that were in paid work were largely working in the NHS with one example given as working *'for the ambulance service providing frontline support'* and another saying there were *'NHS frontline caring for patients who are positive.'*

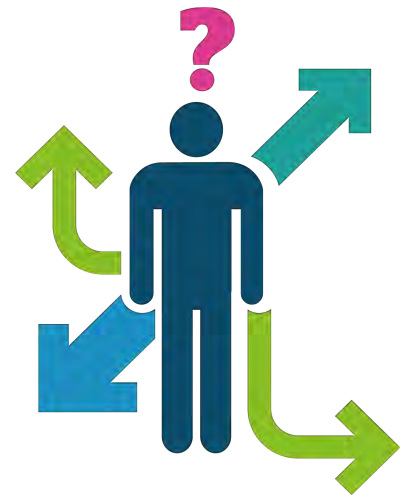
Others said that they worked for the local authority with one giving details of the work that they were doing as part of the *'Covid Hub'* saying that they had *'completed initial screening forms, and also contacted shielded individuals for mental health and welfare checks.'*

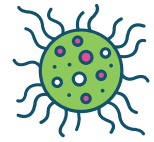
Another respondent who said that they worked for the local authority *'making calls to people on the shielded list'* adding that they had *'also been volunteering at the local foodbank.'*

Others who had been volunteering gave examples of the work that they had been doing with one saying that they had also been *'volunteering at the food bank'* as well as *'shopping for over 70's.'*

Another respondent also said that they were volunteering carrying out *'food deliveries for families struggling to feed the children.'*

One participant said that they were working in social care commenting that *'many of the residents that I am in contact with have either been shielding due to being high risk for a number of reasons or have contracted the virus.'*





## Themes

In addition to the statistical data from the survey, we have carried out a thematic analysis of comments from the data. This groups the responses that were made taken from across a range of survey questions and which cover similar themes in their content.

## Communication

### Government messaging

Participants referred to the messaging from central Government on Covid-19 throughout the survey. This was in terms of where they were finding information from and also in terms of lacking trust in the information that they were receiving.



### Briefings

The daily Government press briefings that were held during the period of the country being in 'lockdown' were seen as a primary source of information. For example, one participant said that *'the government briefing has been most helpful as it has summarised the main information.'*

### Trust in messages

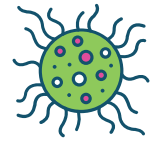
However, some said that they had little faith in the messages in the briefings from the UK Government. One spoke about how they had turned to the information given by the Scottish Government as they believed that to be more reliable saying *'the information from Westminster has been vague and their emphasis is on the economy rather than health. I decided to follow the advice from the Scottish Government due to their clearer direction.'*

Others felt that the messages that had been given by government had been muddled and contradictory. One participant commented that *'some of the government's information has been contradictory [and] therefore, confusing.'* Whilst another said that *'the government advice changes when they feel like it, and it's not clear. I don't listen to them anymore.'*

One participant commented that their *'greatest concern has been the timing and quality of messages/ rules being disseminated from the government- it times it has been difficult to determine what constitutes compliance with the lockdown rules.'*

However, other felt that the messaging from government had been more reliable than that from the media in general with one participant commenting that *'the daily briefing has been most helpful- hearing information from the horses mouth. Once the media get their teeth into info they twist it slightly and give misinformation.'*





Those that said that they had accessed information from websites, generally said that they had used the Government website, gov.uk, for information or that they had used NHS websites for information.

## Local agency messaging

Some participants said that they had used local agency messaging for information with one saying that the *'local council's site publishing local information, especially the mental health services and that from the health improvement team. That has been really useful in both my home and work life.'* Other participants highlighted information provided through the voluntary sector, with one saying that *'Halton & St Helens VCA have continually pulled together all local information and regularly updated and shared this.'*

However, others felt that there had been a lack of information on a local level from statutory agencies with one participant commenting that there had been *'very little coming from [the] local authority or the CCG'* and another said that *'information from [the] local authority sketchy.'*

## Social media

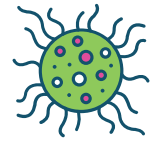
Social media was viewed as a source of good information for some, but others saw it as being unreliable. Those that viewed social media positively had made use of both national and local resources with one participant commenting that they had *'picked up information through social media linking to local and national websites. Local social media groups have been useful. They've shared information from the likes of Healthwatch, the CCG, Halton Borough Council and voluntary groups.'*

Another said that *'Healthwatch explained things on Facebook and could follow easily to more information.'*

## Digital exclusion

Whilst using websites and social media were acknowledged sources of information there were concerns raised about those who did not have access to the internet with one participant commenting that *'there is very little information coming out about changes to service if you do not have internet access or belong to one of the social media platforms.'*

Having access to online shopping was also raised as an issue by one participant who said that their relative that they lived with who was on the shielding list *'doesn't have an email address but thankfully because I registered [their] details it accepted my email address so we are able to get slots.'*



## Guidance and restrictions

When commenting on what concerned them the most there were some participants who were worried that other members of the public were failing to follow guidance and adhere to restrictions. One participant commented that they concerned about the *‘inability of a large sector of the population to properly understand the origins of Covid-19 and the most appropriate action to be taken in the circumstances.’*



Another person was *‘angry about neighbour who had not thought once about the neighbours, have family, friends around ...most nights and weekend’* ; whilst another said that they felt that *‘many people seem to be flouting the guidance and because of this I feel it will go on for longer.’*

However, one participant said that they felt *‘so proud of how the nation and our local area had pulled together.’*

## Shielding - access to essential supplies

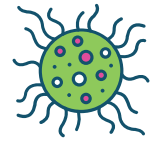


Some of those that had been shielding spoke about having access to essential supplies such as food. One participant commented that *‘single parent carers have been left high and dry. I’ve had to put my food online which has been difficult and more expensive.’*

Another participant told how they were *‘disabled with mobility issues which means I’m generally unable to get out. I live with my [relative] who is extremely vulnerable [due to health condition] which thankfully meant we could get our shopping online... However, if we didn’t have that and it was just me I don’t what I would have done because we don’t have family and our friends are over 70.’*

However, another participant told how they had *‘had a few food deliveries in the first few weeks of the lockdown, while waiting for a regular shopping slot with [the] supermarket. Government food delivery I mean, due to my condition and shielding. Very grateful for this service.’*





## Mental wellbeing

Some of the feedback that was received was about levels of anxiety due to the virus and the impact that it was having upon their lives and wellbeing.

One participant who was shielding told about their anxiety since the lockdown eased. They said *'before this I went out daily, I now find that after nearly five months indoors I am fearing going out again, this is not like me as I love socialising with others. I'm even scared to meet up with my grandchildren even though I miss their big hugs. I am scared that I may have, without knowing, the virus, which I could pass on to them...I fear I will never see them again.'*

Another told how they are *'terrified by this'* as the messaging and guidance did not take account of their visual impairment and limitations on being able to be alert.

Another commented that for those who had *'challenging mental health concerns, this will have been very difficult and may well have worsened their mental health considerably. I am concerned how those people and the already stretched services will cope with this.'*

However, others said that there had been positive outcomes for their mental wellbeing with one saying that *'the impact is positive'*; another said that they had had time to *'knit, crochet, read and catch up on jobs'* and this was a positive outcome for their wellbeing. Another told how the lockdown had *'provided me with the opportunity to explore online wellbeing practices and a slower pace of life which has reduced my stress levels.'*

## Access to health care services

### GP access - telephone and remote consultations

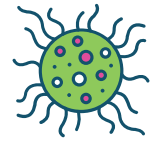
Participants spoke about accessing their GP practice with some saying that it had been challenging. One participant said that it had been *'difficult to speak to the GP'*; another told how there were *'no face to face appointments, telephone calls only. Being told that other illnesses would have to wait until everything settles down.'*

However, another said that *'I was able to easily access [the] GP service'*.

Those that had accessed their GP practice were likely to have had a remote appointment such as by telephone. One participant said that *'I have a severe hearing impairment, and this resulted in needing my ten year old [child] to communicate for me.'* Another said that they had found *'telephone consultations impersonal and cold'*.

However, there was positive feedback on the use of remote appointments with one participant saying that they had been *'speaking to doctors via online consulting service with quick response.'* Another said that *'GP appointments were really good, use of email really helped.'*





## Dental care



Not being able to access dental care both at dentists and for hospital dental treatment was raised by participants. One participant told how they needed *‘a tooth extraction but waiting for the hospital to do it...my dentist has helped me twice so far with the pain, prescription wise, to help whilst I wait. Very grateful to them.’* Another said that *‘the dentist just cancelled the appointment and said they hoped the condition would not get worse but if it did phone the surgery and listen to the message.’*

Another told how a relative had *‘found it difficult to get [their] prescription... due to the specialised dental service not operating and the practice would not do a... prescription. I had to escalate it to the practice manager.’*

## Maternity care

Two of the participants raised concerns about maternity care during the Pandemic with one saying that postnatal care *‘in hospital [was] poor in contrast to the prenatal [care].’ It was also commented that ‘nothing after the birth of the baby in anyway helped to fill the gaps created from the lack of antenatal provision due to Covid... Breast team no visits of face to face appointments...’*

Not being able to provide family support after the birth of a baby was raised by one of the participants as an issue saying *‘my first grandchild arrived at the beginning of lockdown. My daughter had to have an emergency c-section. My biggest challenge has been not being able to see them properly or support them.’*



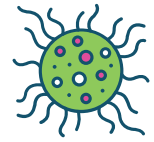
## Cancer

The diagnosis and treatment of cancer were commented on by some of the participants. One participant commented that they were *‘very concerned about all of the people with health concerns and possible symptoms of cancer who have waited even longer than they might have so cancers will be diagnosed later which is a worse prognosis for them and a bigger pressure on the cancer services.’*

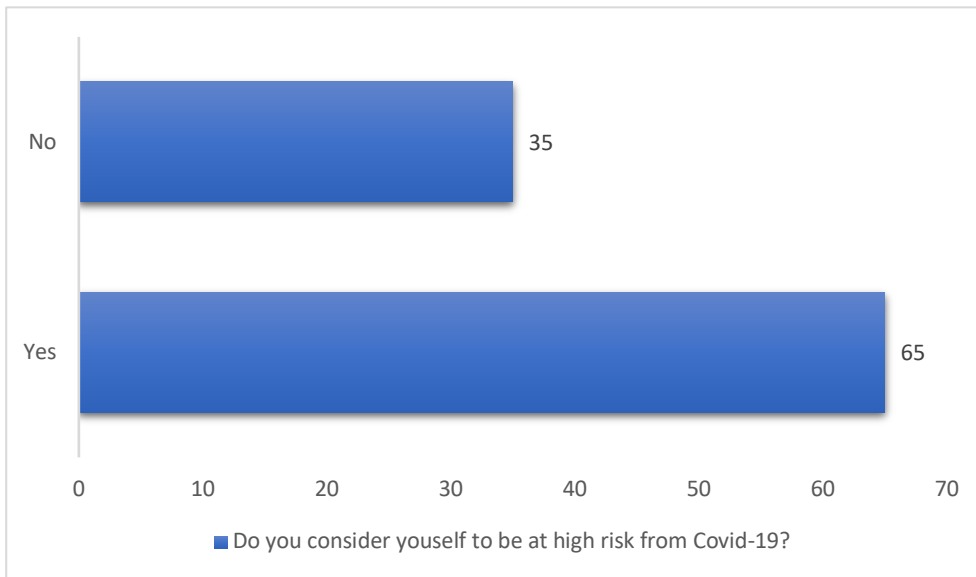
Another told how they had been *‘waiting on biopsy results since early March- had no communication at all.’*

One told of how they had been receiving treatment but that the *‘Consultant basically said all such treatment was ‘paused’ during the Pandemic. Tell that to the metastases.’*

Another participant gave details of an annual check-up conducted over the phone, *‘The female doctor did her best to reassure me, but it is now another 12 months before a face to face check-up’.*

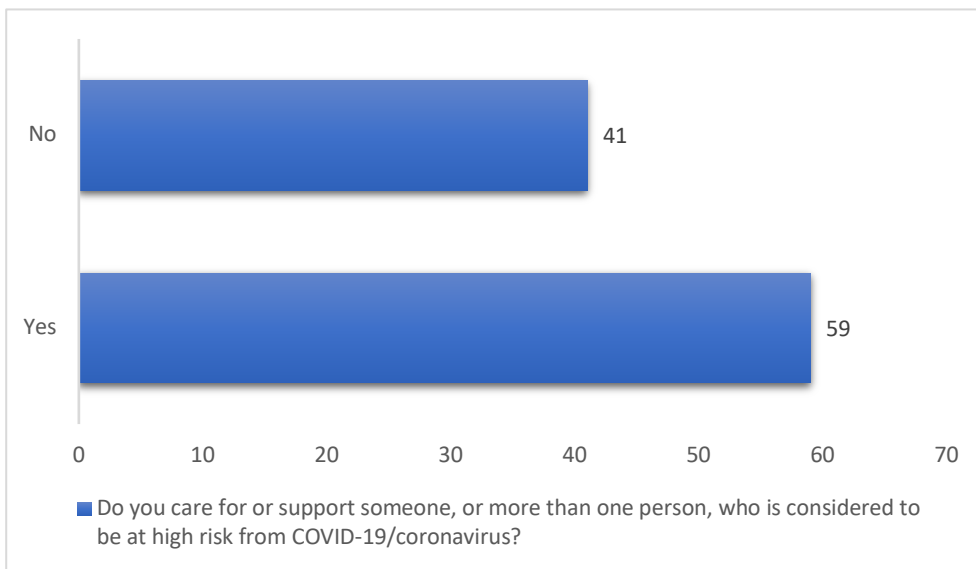


## Survey results - What did people tell us?



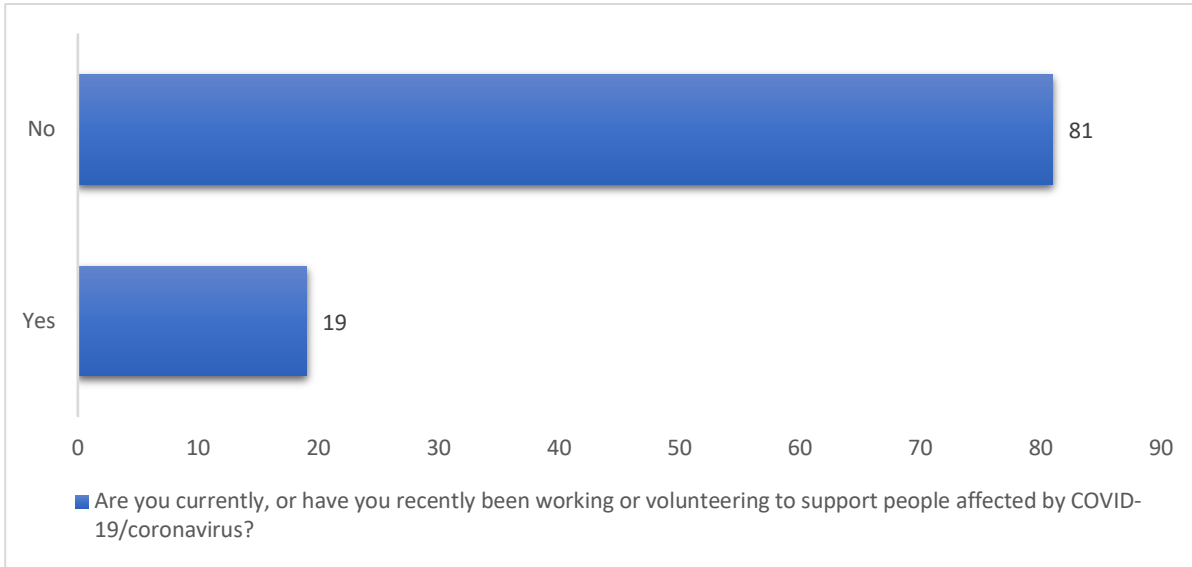
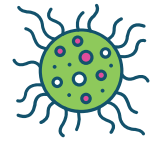
Respondents were first asked if they considered themselves at high-risk from Covid-19. Almost 2 in 3 people, 65%, did not consider themselves to be at high risk.

Of those who did feel they were at high risk, the vast majority, 87% said this was because they had underlying health conditions. Only 50% of those who felt they were at high risk said they had received a letter or text message to advise them to shield.



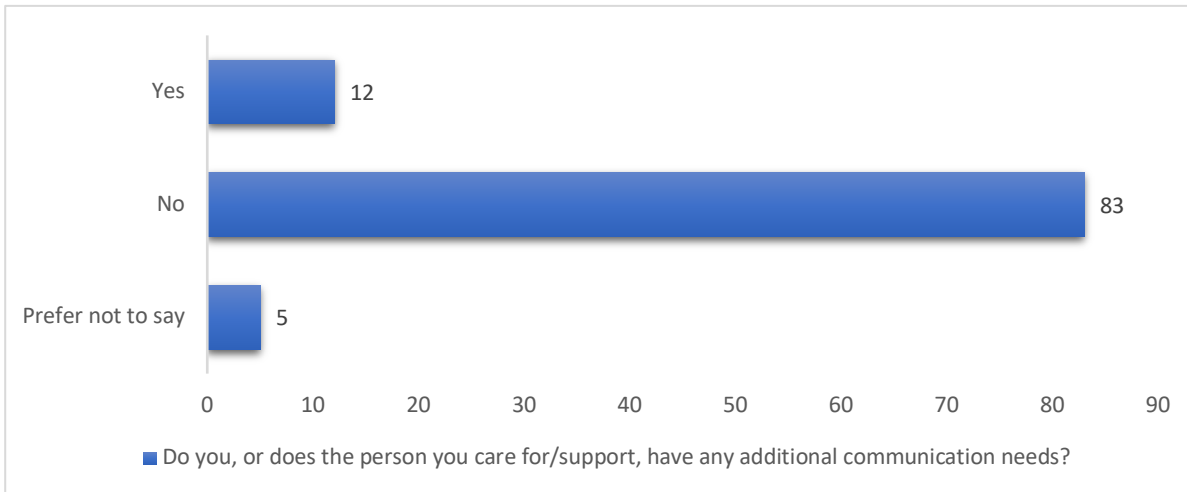
**Do you care for or support someone, or more than one person, who is considered to be at high risk from COVID-19/coronavirus?**

41% told us they supported a high risk person, with just over a third of these, 37%, saying they had also received a shielding letter /text for themselves.



**We asked participants if they were or had recently been working or volunteering to support people affected by COVID-19/coronavirus?**

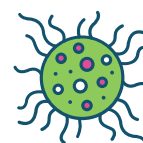
Just under 1 in 5 people, 19%, told us they were working or volunteering to support people affected by COVID-19.



**Participants were asked to say if they or the person they care for/support, had any additional communication needs?**

Just twenty-one people, (12%), reported that they or the person they cared for had additional communication needs.

Eighteen of these twenty-one respondents told us they had been able to find the information or advice in the format they needed. One person with BSL needs said they'd been unable to find information in this format.



**Which statement best describes how you are feeling today?**

Concerned for those who are vulnerable or weak	21.7%
Impatient to get back to normal life	12.6%
Happy to spend time with family	11.4%
Curious about how this is impacting the world	11.4%
None of the above (include any other comments below)	11.4%
Anxious about my health	10.3%
Inspired by how people are adapting	9.1%
Hopeful to see how the environment is improving during this time	9.1%
Angry about the restrictions on my freedom	1.7%
Lonely	1.1%

**Participants were asked to describe how they were feeling at the time of completing the survey.**

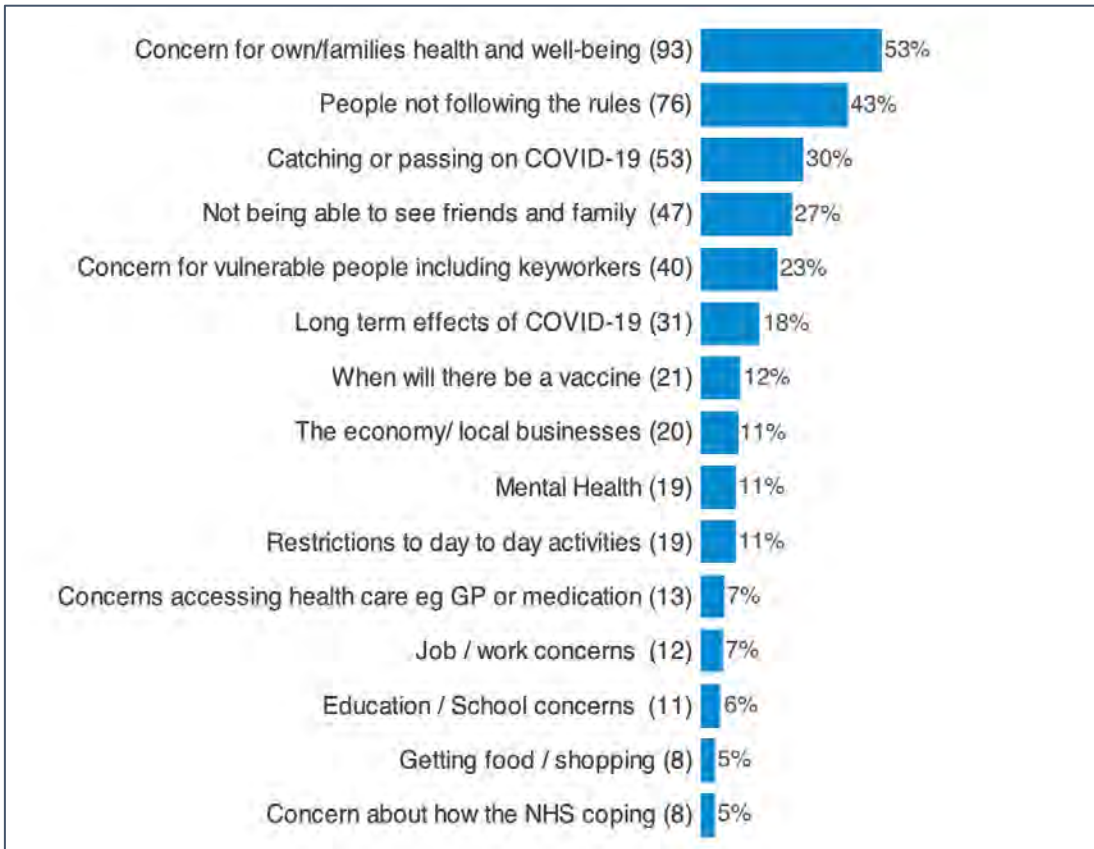
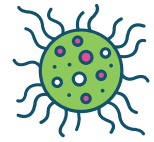
Almost 22% told us they were most concerned for those who are weak and vulnerable. One person told us, *'I find it hard to believe how many people are eager to resume exactly the kind of contact with others that will certainly spread the Covid-19 virus, possibly with fatal results...'*

A small number of people said they were unhappy about the restrictions in place during the pandemic, with one person saying, *'I worry that all people's health and medical treatments are impacted by the current restrictions on health support'*.

Another respondent was, *'Furious that indoor sport was not allowed at yesterday's briefing from PM having worked hard to achieve this on National Sports committees...'*

Other respondents were curious about how Covid-19 was impacting the world, while many some people were inspired by how people were adapting to the situation.

One respondent summed up the comments of many when they said, *'I am a mix of these. I am inspired by how people are adapting and also anxious about the long-term impact on mental and physical health. I think we will learn lots of valuable lessons about appreciating our NHS, services available to us, each other and our world and I hope some of those lessons remain. I am concerned for lonely, vulnerable people and I think our local council, health services, voluntary sector and general neighbourly response has been remarkable, almost overnight!'*



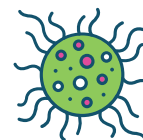
**We asked people to tell us their three biggest concerns.**

Just over half of people, 53%, told us they were concerned for their own and their family’s health and well-being during the pandemic, with one participant saying, *‘I have 1st hand experience of family members being let down by healthcare service restrictions due to the virus which has caused significant repercussions. Very worrying & still ongoing I believe’.*

People ‘not following the rules’ was highlighted as a concern by 43% of respondents, while just under 1 in 3 people, 30%, said they were concerned about catching or passing on Covid-19. One person commented, *‘I regret the inability of a large sector of the population to properly understand the origins of Covid-19 and the most appropriate action to be taken in the circumstances.’*

Another commented they were, *‘Angry about a neighbour who has since it started has not thought once about the neighbours. They have family and friends around for BBQ and drinking most nights and weekends...’.*

We heard from another participant who told us about their worries about catching or passing on Covid-19, saying, *‘I’m worried that when I can go out I’ll be too afraid to do so’.*



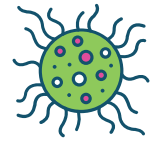
How easy have you found it to	Very Easy	Easy	Neither easy or difficult	Difficult	Very Difficult	Don't know	N/A
Find the information you need about how to keep yourself and others safe during the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic?	34.9%	<b>36.0%</b>	20.0%	6.9%	1.1%	0.6%	0.6%
Understand information about how to keep yourself and others safe during the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic?	34.3%	<b>34.3%</b>	19.4%	9.1%	1.1%	1.1%	0.6%
Act on information about how to keep yourself and others safe during the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic?	24.0%	<b>41.7%</b>	22.3%	9.1%	1.7%	0.6%	0.6%
Keep up to date with the changes to information about how to keep yourself and others safe during the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic?	24.6%	<b>36.6%</b>	14.9%	17.1%	4.6%	1.7%	0.6%

We then asked participants to answer a number of questions on the information they needed to keep themselves or others safe during the pandemic.

The majority of people told us they found it easy to find, understand and act, on the information they needed, although 1 in 5 replied that it was difficult to keep up to date with the changes. One participant highlighted a concern over contradictory messages from government, saying, *‘A lot of the information is vague, open to interpretation, contradictory and confusing’*.

Another person felt that *‘The Govt advice changes when they feel like it, and it’s not clear- I don’t listen to them anymore’*.





None, I have all the information I need (69) 39.4%	Managing existing physical health conditions (25) 14.3%	Advice for family carers (11) 6.3%
Changes to the health care services I usually access (e.g. GP practice, pharmacy, hospital outpatient appointments, community nursing visits) (44) 25.1%	Testing for COVID-19/coronavirus (22) 12.6%	Self-isolation (11) 6.3%
Shielding people who are at very high risk of severe illness from COVID-19/coronavirus (26) 14.9%	Help for people who do not use the internet (21) 12.0%	Other (Please specify below) (10) 5.7%
	Social distancing (18) 10.3%	Looking after my physical health (9) 5.1%
	Looking after my mental health or wellbeing (16) 9.1%	Managing existing mental health conditions (8) 4.6%
	Accessing repeat prescription medications (15) 8.6%	Accessing help in my local community (e.g. getting groceries or picking up medication) (7) 4.0%

We asked what, if any topics, people had found it difficult to get clear information about.

39% of respondents told us that they had all the information they needed.

One in four people had had difficulties in getting clear information about changes to their health services.

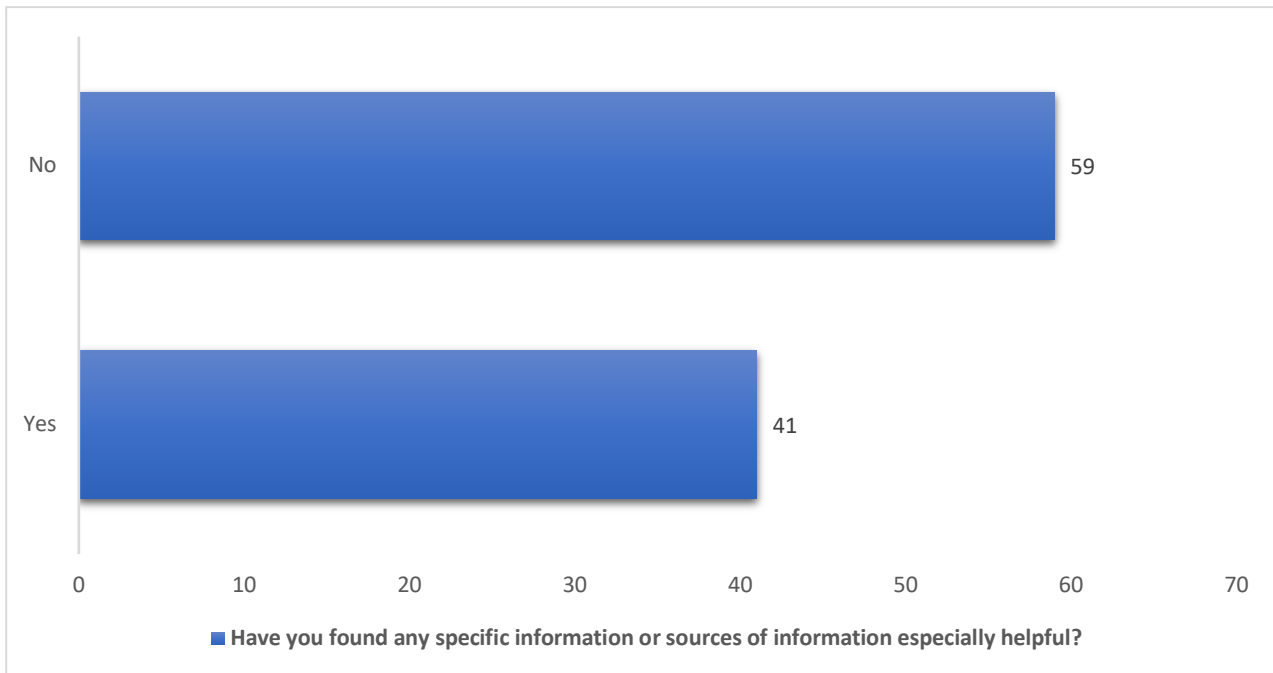
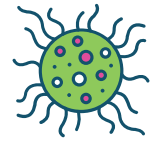
One carer highlighted the confusing amount of information they had to deal with, telling us, *‘I’m managing the care of the person for whom I am the sole registered carer. I now receive one set of letters and lockdown instructions from the DHSC/MHCLG, another from the NHS and a third from a hospital that treats my blood cancer. They all give different lockdown dates and conflicting instructions, some of them enforceable by the police’*.

Online – national organisations’ websites (e.g. Government, NHS) (139) 79.4%	Online – social media (Facebook groups etc.) (64) 36.6%	Other (please specify) (5) 2.9%
Media (e.g. television, radio or newspaper) (109) 62.3%	Received by email or text message (38) 21.7%	Nowhere. I’ve not found any information (1) 0.6%
Online – local organisations’ websites (e.g. Council, CCG, Healthwatch, voluntary/community organisations) (86) 49.1%	From family or friends (27) 15.4%	
	Received by post (23) 13.1%	

When we asked participants where they found information or advice about the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic almost 80% of participants said they used national online sources for their information such as the gov.uk and nhs.uk websites.

62% also used media, TV/Radio and newspapers as a resource.

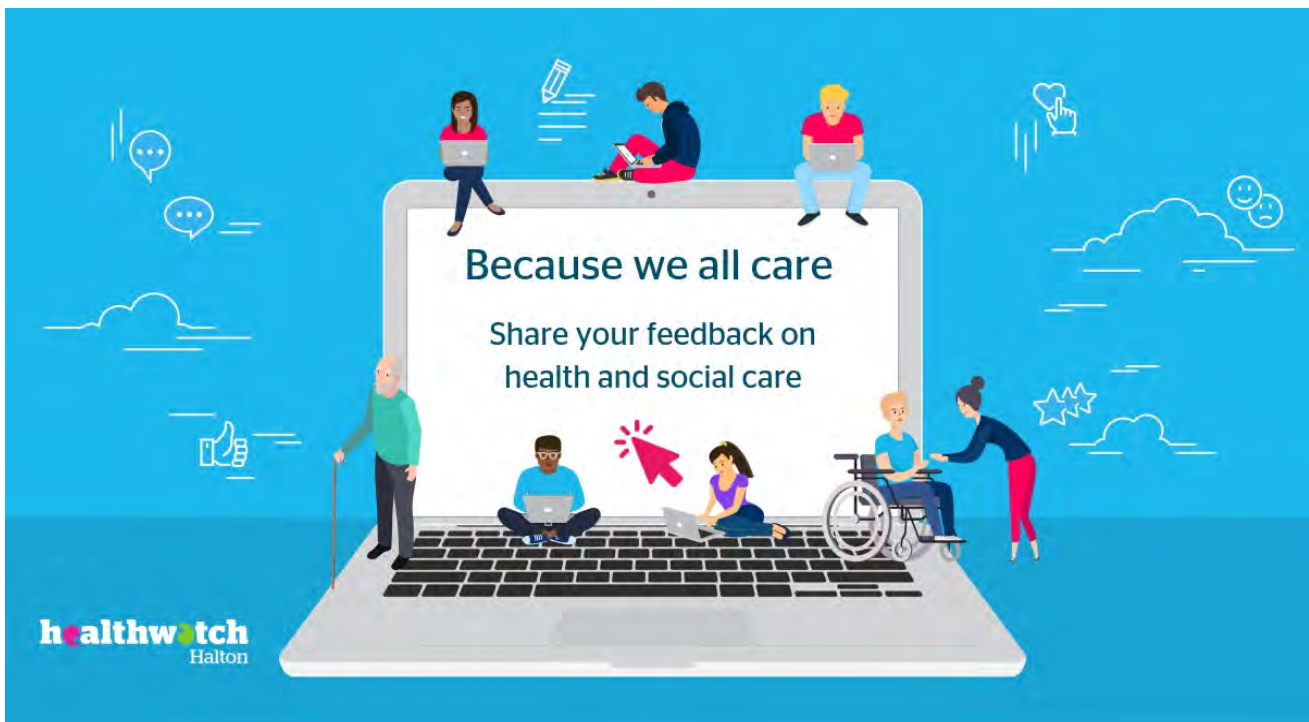
Almost half of respondents said they also used local sources of information, such as Healthwatch, voluntary sector organisations and the local authority.

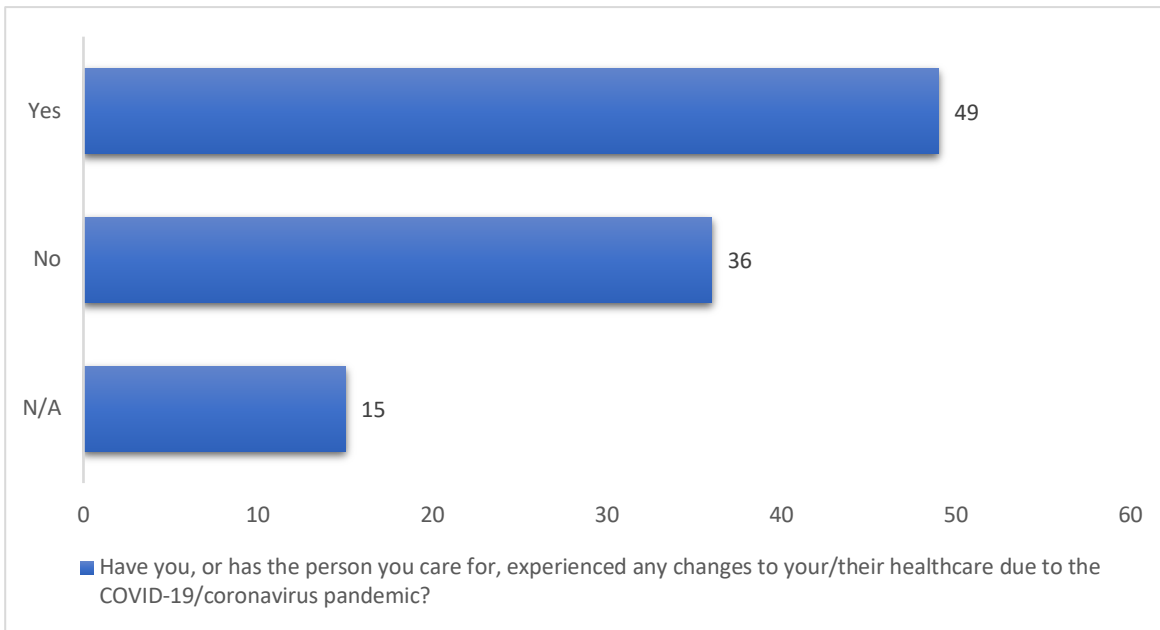
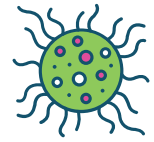


When asked if they had found any specific information or sources of information especially helpful, 41% of participants said they had.

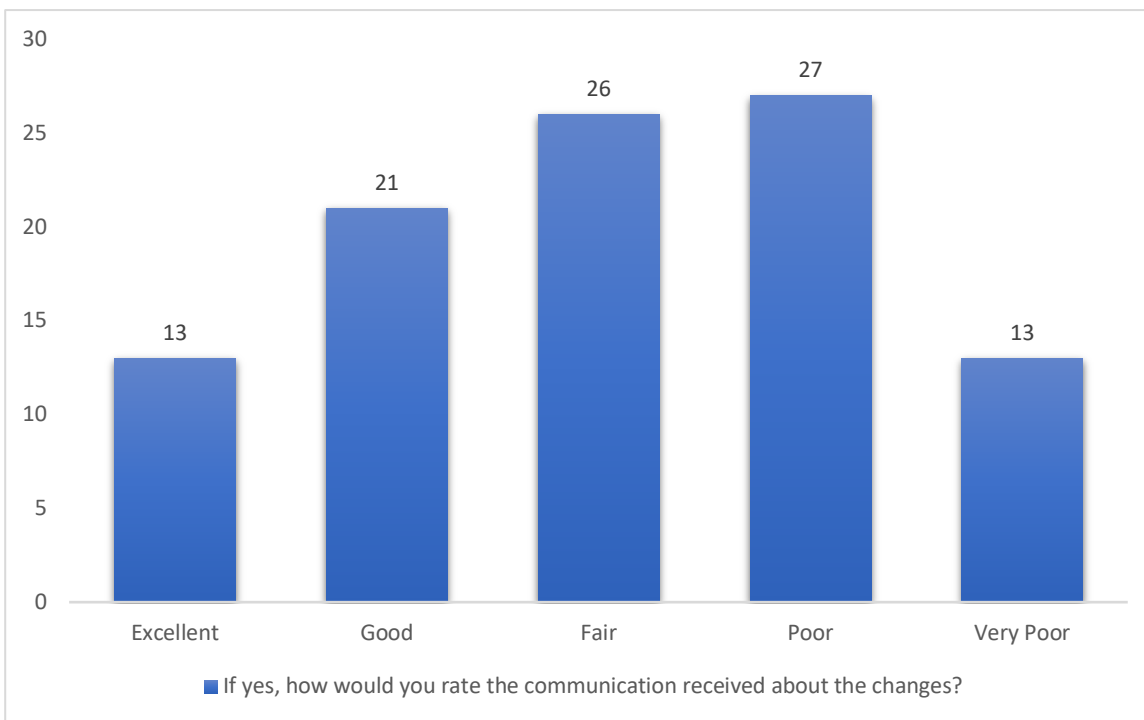
While national information sources, such as gov.uk, nhs.uk and the BBC were mentioned by many, local sources were also highlighted.

One participant praised local efforts, saying, *‘There will be lots of lonely people without access to the internet or people who can help them, but the council, CCG and voluntary sector services have found ways to reach people and I have complete confidence that there has been a lot of work to combat this.’*

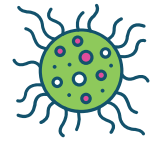




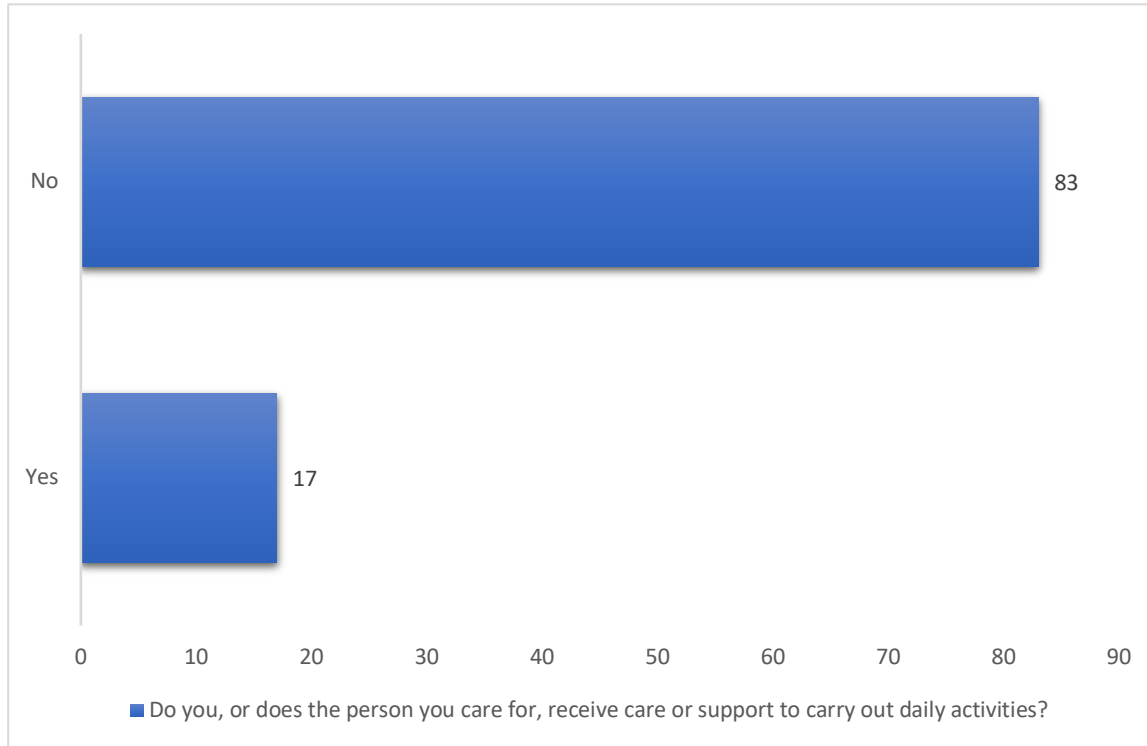
When asked if they or the person they cared for had experienced any changes to healthcare due to the COVID-19/coronavirus pandemic 49% of participants said 'Yes'.



Of those people who had seen a change to their healthcare, just over 1 in 3, 34%, told us they'd had an excellent experience of healthcare under the pandemic. A slightly higher percentage, 40%, cited their care as poor or very poor



## Social Care



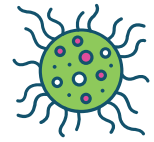
Twenty-nine people, (17%), told us that they, or the person they cared for, received support to carry out daily activities. Of these, 14, (48%) had experienced changes to the care or support received.

People’s views of the communication on the changes was mixed.

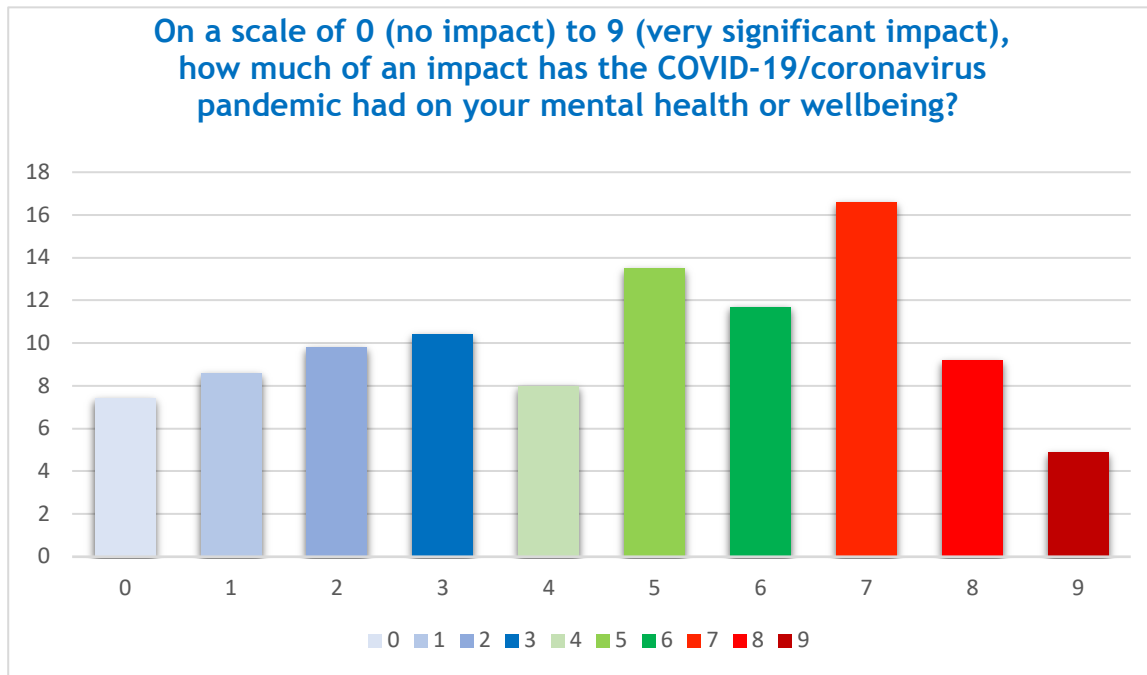
13 out of the 14 people gave their views, with 4 rating the communication they received as good/excellent while 4 people also rated their communication as poor/very poor. The remaining 5 people rated it as fair.

We didn’t receive the names of services used by these respondents, so we are unable to highlight which services communicated well or not so well.

Respondents	How would you rate the communication you received about these changes?				
	Very poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
<b>13</b>	2	2	5	3	1



# Mental Health and Wellbeing



We asked participants to rate on a scale of 0 (No impact) to 9 (Very significant impact), how much of an impact COVID-19 has had on their mental health or wellbeing?

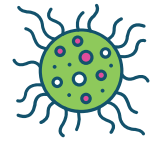
The mean rating for the impact the pandemic had on participants mental health or wellbeing was 5.63 out of 9.

Have you been able to access support for your mental health or wellbeing?	
No	10.3%
I haven't needed any support	49.4%
Yes - from family and/or friends	29.3%
Yes - from a community, voluntary or charity group/organisation	1.1%
Yes - from a mental health care provider	3.4%
Yes - online or from an app	2.3%
Yes - other (Please specify below)	4.0%

We asked participants if they had been able to access support for their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. Almost 50% said they hadn't needed support.

Of those people who had needed support, the most common source was from family and friend at 29.3%.





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## And finally!

We asked participants to tell us anything else about their experiences of care during the pandemic. What comes across in people's final comments is a sense of frustration, again often linked to a lack of information or guidance.

One participant, who was shielding at the time said, *'Large numbers of people are not "socially distancing" but they have freedom to go out. It is very annoying that this is allowed to happen'*.

Another participant said, *'I feel everyone has been abandoned by the health services! no dentist, no smears. other essential medicine not allowed!'*

## Conclusion

We'd like to thank to everyone who took the time to take part in the survey.

This report will be sent to Healthwatch England, Care Quality Commission, Halton Borough Council, One Halton, NHS Halton CCG and our local NHS Trusts. It will also be published on our website, <https://healthwatchhalton.co.uk/research-reports/>

We hope the information provided in this report will be of interest to local commissioners and providers of services. We also hope that the issues and themes highlighted will be considered when looking at the provision of future services and support for the people of Halton.



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