



**What people told us about their
experiences during the COVID-19 Pandemic in
January 2021**



The survey

Healthwatch Barnsley wants to understand people's experience of accessing health and social care services during the COVID-19 Pandemic and consider how this is affecting their everyday lives.

Methodology

A survey was designed using Survey Monkey, to gain the views of the public about what they believe is working well during the pandemic, and where they think things could be improved. We shared the draft survey with our partners via the Barnsley Intelligence Group, and incorporated their suggestions into the survey. Data collected from the survey is included in this intelligence report, which we will share with our stakeholders.

Key findings and summary

There were 149 respondents to the survey of which the majority 124, were female.

We asked - Do you think you have/had Coronavirus?

Of the respondents to this question, the majority, 120 said no they had not experienced any symptoms.

We asked - Have you had the flu vaccination?

Of the respondents to this question, the majority, 104 had received the flu vaccination.

We asked - Where have you found USEFUL information/advice relating to Coronavirus?

The majority of respondents, 114 have found the most useful information through national online websites, followed by 78 through media, e.g. TV, Radio, Newspaper, and 63 finding useful information on local statutory online websites, and a further 21 finding local voluntary and community group websites useful. 31 respondents found useful information on online social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

We asked - Since the beginning of the pandemic, have you done any of the following? (Appendix1 Question 5)

Of the 117 respondents to this question, online services had been utilised 141 times to access health and social care services, and telephone support accessed 119 times. In addition, 19 respondents helped someone to access health and social care services because the person was unable to use online services, and 19 did not have access to the relevant technology.

We asked - Has the Coronavirus pandemic affected your mental health and wellbeing?

Of the 142 respondents to this question, 95 said they were worried about the health of friends and family members and 57 felt socially isolated, with 54 worried about their own health more now than before the pandemic. 16 respondents were worried about their job or financial security, and 11 respondents said that relationships with people they share a house with are tense or unpleasant. Of the respondents 34 said that their mental health had not been affected.

We asked - Have you experienced additional stress or anxiety due to the pandemic?

Of the 144 respondents, 96 had experienced additional stress or anxiety during the pandemic.

We asked - Have you found any positive ways to manage additional stress or anxiety?

Of the 109 respondents, 31 had not found positive ways to manage additional stress or anxiety, whilst 75 respondents gave examples of the ways in which they were managing their stress and anxiety. The majority of respondents were benefitting from some form of exercise with walking being favoured by 31 people followed by “regular exercise” which included yoga, Pilates and horse riding. Some respondents had benefited from having regular communications with friends / family and colleagues and was achieved through a variety of different means including social media, Zoom and Teams. Other respondents felt the need to restrict their use of social media and watching the news because of negative messaging. Some of the respondents were volunteers, and some worked and found this helpful. Hobbies were cited by some of the respondents as proving helpful: painting, crafts, online choir, knitting, cross-stitch, cooking, and reading. Some respondents were benefitting from using relaxation techniques and cited mindfulness and meditation.

We asked - Have you been able to access support from mental health services (e.g. psychotherapy, community mental health team, support groups)?

Of the 132 respondents, 102 do not require mental health support currently, 16 respondents were getting support and 11 had used online website or App to support their mental health. 9 respondents have been unable to access the support they feel that they need and 3 respondents became unable to access the support they were getting before.

We asked - Has the current pandemic affected your access to healthcare for other conditions? Please select all that apply

Of the 137 respondents, 48 had not required access to healthcare whilst 51 needed a GP appointment and were provided with a telephone / skype or email appointment, with 17 people needing a GP appointment who were unable to get one at all. Of the respondents, 17 had not contacted their GP even though they had experienced symptoms, which would normally result in attendance, and 2 respondents had not attended A&E even though they had experienced symptoms, which would normally result in attendance at the hospital. 7 respondents said that their regular hospital based treatment was disrupted whilst 13 had planned procedures cancelled. 3 people could not get prescription medication and 7 people could not find over the counter medication. 23 respondents required a dental appointment and could not get one.

We asked - Are you more or less likely to get help for a health concern during the pandemic?

Of the 146 respondents, 1 said that they were more likely to get help, with 60 less likely and 85 the same.

We asked - What would give greater confidence/make you feel safe to seek help for a health concern?

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Of the 127 respondents, 40 said being able to access face-to-face support and 19 said knowing that support is there when I need it, 15 said that they wanted more information about what was available

We asked - Do you think that there needs to be more support for people who are struggling with poor physical or mental health because of the pandemic?

Of the 147 respondents, 92 said yes, 49 were unsure and 6 said no.

We asked - Has the current pandemic affected your experience of social care? This might include visits from care workers, social workers, family support Workers, district nurse or access to residential/nursing care etc.

Of the 43 respondents, 19 had not needed home care since the start of the pandemic. 2 said that their home care had not changed whilst a further 2 had experienced inconsistencies. 6 had received the same level of family support, whilst 4 received less and 5 received more. 2 had experienced less support from their mental health support worker.

We asked - How has the current pandemic affected your work?

Of the 146 respondents, 59 were working from home and 17 felt that their workload had increased, with 5 respondents saying that they felt unsafe in their workplace or travelling to work.

We asked - Do you feel that you are more or less active than before the pandemic?

Of the 148 respondents, 100 stated that they were less active, 25 were more active and 23 doing the same.

We asked - Have you found it more or less difficult to follow a healthy diet than before the pandemic?

Of the 128 respondents, 80 found it more difficult and 48 found it less difficult.

We asked - If you are a smoker have you found that you are smoking more or less since the pandemic?

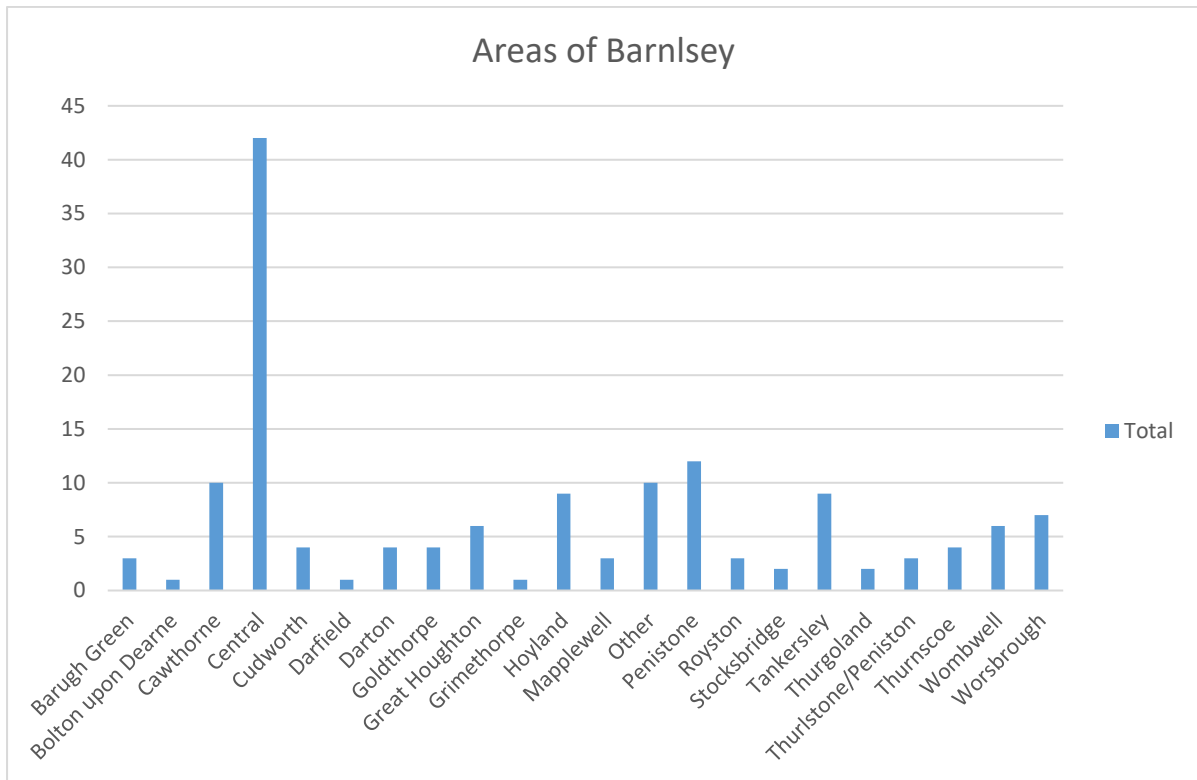
Of the 13 respondents, 9 were smoking more. Of these 2 did not know where to get help to stop or reduce smoking.

We asked - Are you drinking more alcohol since the pandemic?

Of the 133 respondents, 99 were not drinking more whilst 34 were drinking more. Of these 19 did not know how to access help to stop or reduce alcohol intake if needed.

Appendix One

Q1 Where do you live?



Q2 Do you think you have/had Coronavirus?

Yes, I have tested positive and I am currently experiencing symptoms	0
Yes, I have been in hospital with COVID-19 (confirmed by test) but am now discharged	2
Yes, I have been tested; but I am now recovered or no longer experiencing symptoms	8
Possibly, I am experiencing symptoms but have not been tested	0
Possibly, I have experienced symptoms (now recovered) but have not been tested	18
No, I have not experienced symptoms	120
Total respondents	148

Q3 Have you had the flu vaccination?

Yes	104
No	43
Total respondents	147

Q4 Where have you found USEFUL information/advice relating to Coronavirus?

Online - National organisation websites (e.g. Government/NHS England, 111)	114
Online - local statutory organisation websites (e.g. Barnsley Council/Barnsley Hospital)	63
Online - local voluntary and community group websites	21
Online - social media (e.g. Twitter/Facebook) Please specify where from e.g. BMBC	31
Media e.g. radio/TV/newspaper	78
Received by email/text/post	17
From family/friends	23
From a healthcare professional e.g. District nurse	12
Total respondents	144

OTHER SUMMARY

111	1	BBC / BBC website	2
Covid 19 App	1	Counsellor	1
Covid 19 test & trace App	1	Reporting study App	1
Dr John online	1	Age UK Barnsley	1
Post from BMBC	1	Dr Joshua Wolrich on Instagram	1
Covid 19 by Zoe App	1	Follow variety of political posts on Twitter	1
I won't look at things related to it	1	BMBC	1

Q5 Since the beginning of the pandemic, have you done any of the following?

Called 111	24
Used 111 online service	11
Looked up my symptoms on a different website	29

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Had a telephone consultation with a GP, practice nurse or clinical pharmacist	69
Had an online consultation with a GP, practice nurse or clinical pharmacist	10
Spoke to another professional on the phone (e.g. midwife, hospital nurse, consultant)	26
Spoke to another professional online, including text based chat and video calls (e.g. midwife, hospital nurse, consultant)	11
Ordered a repeat prescription online	70
Downloaded DrLink App	4
Accessed my test results or medical referrals online	6
Helped someone to access health and social care services because they are unable to use online services	19
Helped someone to access health and social care services because they don't have the relevant technology	19
Total respondents	117

Q6 Has the Coronavirus pandemic affected your mental health and wellbeing? Please select all that apply

Feel socially isolated	57
I worry about my own health more now than before the pandemic	54
I worry about the health of friends or family members	95
It has not affected my mental health	34
I worry about my job or financial security	16
Relationships with people I share a house with are tense or unpleasant	11
Total respondents	142

Q7 Have you experienced additional stress or anxiety due to the pandemic?

Yes	96
No	48
Total respondents	144

Q8 If yes to Q7, have you found any positive ways to manage additional stress or anxiety? If yes, please tell us more in the space provided

No	31
Yes	3
If yes, please specify	75

RESPONSE SUMMARY

Benefiting from some form of exercise which included yoga, Pilates and horse riding	18	Prescription Medication	3
Walking	31	Regular communications with friends, family & colleagues using social media, Zoom and Teams	19
Some people restricted use of social media and watching the news because of negative messaging	3		
Volunteering	4		
Hobbies were cited by some of the respondents as proving helpful: painting, crafts, online choir, knitting, cross stitch, cooking, and reading	19		
Respondents were benefiting from using relaxation techniques and cited mindfulness and meditation	11		
This survey	1		
My Best Life	1		

Q9 Have you been able to access support from mental health services (e.g. psychotherapy, community mental health team, support groups)?

Yes, I was using mental health support services before and continue to do so	5
Yes, I started needing mental health support after the start of the pandemic and was able to access it	4
I have been seeing my GP for support	7
No, I became unable to use the mental health services I was using before	3
No, I think I need mental health support but cannot access it	9

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I have used a website or app to support my mental health (e.g. mood tracker or meditation apps, meditation YouTube tutorials, mental health support groups on social media)	11
I am not able to use a website or app to support my mental health	2
I do not require mental health support currently	102
Total respondents	132

Q10 Has the current pandemic affected your access to healthcare for other conditions? Please select all that apply

I needed a GP appointment and was provided with a telephone/skype or email appointment	51
I needed a GP appointment and could not get one at all	17
I have not attended or contacted my GP even though I have experienced symptoms which would normally require my attendance at my local surgery	17
I have not attended Accident and Emergency even though I have experienced symptoms which would normally result in my attendance at the hospital	2
I needed a dental appointment and could not get one at all	23
I could not get my prescription medication	3
I could not find over the counter medication I needed in shops or pharmacies	7
My regular hospital based treatment was disrupted (e.g. dialysis, chemotherapy, physiotherapy)	7
Planned procedures (e.g. elective surgery) that I needed to have were cancelled	13
I have not required access to healthcare	48
Total respondents	137

Q11 Are you more or less likely to get help for a health concern during the pandemic?

Same as before	85
More	1
Less	60
Total respondents	146

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IF LESS PLEASE TELL US THE REASON FOR THIS SUMMARY

Not for minor health issues	1	GP's don't listen & not interested	1
Don't want to waste GP's time/take up appointment	4	Phone consultation feels like a tick box exercise	1
Would be concerned about catching Coronavirus so would weigh up the risks unless it's my children	1	Things not getting followed up by Health	2
Reluctant to go to GP practice	1	GP surgery so busy and to get an appointment is done on basis of who phones first, not on a triaged needs basis. GP does not have an app for symptom checking	1
More likely to wait longer	2	I really need to see a dentist but because I don't have emergency needs, my staple diet seems to be paracetamol and sensodyne	1
Because you just can't get beyond the receptionist to be able to get any help, and if you do they ask you to travel miles to another surgery which I can't do. So it's a waste of time trying to get an appointment.	1	GP practice not helpful. Didn't pick up my calls always either engaged or not answering which is very distressing when so ill. This actually cause symptoms to worsen due to the anxiety	1
Not want to put additional pressure on the system	14	Cannot get through to surgery by phone On the occasion I have spoken to reception, after a really long wait, they said the GP would not see me	1
Drs at my surgery won't see you / phone consultation	3	I cannot get through to Huddersfield Road surgery at all - many attempts calling - can't leave a message either	1
Lack of appointments	5	In person appointments are limited, hospital appointments hard to move forward with	1
Don't want to risk going out unless urgent	1	General difficulties	2
Fear of catching the virus	7	Using doctor link is a complete nightmare and when you've gone through all the questions it still doesn't offer an appointment and just says what it thinks is wrong with me	1
Shielding	1	Appointments restricted to urgent only	1
Queueing on the telephone to get through to G.P / Have to be available all day for a return call (which can be up to a week later) which may not even be from a G.P. May not even be seen face to face	2		

Q12 What would give greater confidence/make you feel safe to seek help for a health concern?

More information about what is available	15
Knowing support is there when I need it	19
Being able to access face to face support	40
Being able to access online and telephone support	7
Out of hours support (after 5pm and on weekends)	13
Single point of access - one phone number	4
Website that can direct me to the right service for what I need and when I need it	13
Other - please state in the box provided	16
Respondents	127

OTHER SUMMARY

Facility to send photos to GP	1	To be able to telephone for appointment not use DR Link	1
Facility for live video call with GP	1	More positive messaging	1
Concerned not to burden a busy system	2	An easier system to speak to or see a GP including for workers	1
Seeing the Pandemic figures reduce	3	Knowing that other people are adhering to the rules around masks & distancing	1
Vaccination	4		
Being able to get through on the phone to GP surgery or out of hours service	2		
End of the virus	1		
Simplifying online prescriptions	1		

Q13 Do you think that there needs to be more support for people who are struggling with poor physical or mental health because of the pandemic?

Yes	92
No	6
Unsure	49
Total respondents	147

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IF YES WHAT MIGHT THIS LOOK LIKE SUMMARY

More GP availability / Quicker access including someone answering the phone or to leave a message	6	Resume face to face mental health support	2
Increased / improve communication / positive messaging required	7	Telephone calls to elderly & vulnerable or number they can ring	5
Check in phone call from GP surgery	4	Gyms should not have been shut	1
Online resources, recovery college and creative art classes	4	Available appointments to discuss	1
GP home visits	1	Mental health support for front line staff	1
Help with shopping	1	Age appropriate consultations	1
More face to face support (safely)	9	No treatment now - problems later	1
Digital support	1	Concern that Covid testing can delay antibiotic treatment for chest infections	1
Peer support groups for long Covid	2	More information / support on managing symptoms of Long Covid	2
Support for people to contact people who can help	1	Services should be available regardless of pandemic	2
Video group chat facilities	1	More therapists / counselling	4
More appointments to talk professionals	1	More telephone contact from mental health professionals /support groups	4
Remove the stigma of mental health	1	Group sessions	2
Telephone befriending / befriending	2	Easier access to IT equipment	1
Local & instant support	1	Better visibility of local services	2
Better financial support from government for those who need it	1	Voluntary organisations have been amazing / food parcels etc.	1
Paper copies of information as to how support can be accessed	2	More low level access for people with low mood, especially those shielding	1
More support / activities for older people / 1-1 interaction	2	Utilising volunteers who have come forward to offer non - medical support	1
Additional online resources provided by the NHS, including simple exercise videos	1	Online advice how to deal with stress, and diagnostic questionnaires	1
Extra provision	1	Support for children and young people	1

Q14 Do any of these describe you?

Live in a care home or nursing home	0
I live in sheltered or supported accommodation	1
I receive care at home from care workers	2
I receive care at home from family members or friends	6
Total respondents	9

Q15 If yes to Q14 how would you rate the communication you received about changes to social care services because of the pandemic

Poor - no communication	5
Fair - very basic information provided	4
Good - an acceptable level of communication	2
Excellent - a high standard of information supplied, including telephone calls from services explaining the changes	1
Total respondents	12

Q16 Has the current pandemic affected your experience of social care? This might include visits from care workers, social workers, family support workers, district nurse or access to residential/nursing care etc.

Have been able to contact social care	2
I have been unable to contact social care	1
My home care has not changed since the pandemic	2
My home care has been inconsistent since the start of the pandemic	2
I have not needed home care since the start of the pandemic	19
I have received the same level of family support since the start of the pandemic	6
I have received less family support since the start of the pandemic	4
I have received more family support since the start of the pandemic	5
I have had contact with my mental health support worker during the pandemic	0
I have had less contact with my mental health support worker during the pandemic	2
Total respondents	43

Q17 How has the current pandemic affected your work?

I am currently working from home	59
My workplace is temporarily closed and I am not being paid	1
My hours and pay have been cut	0

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I have been made redundant from my job	2
I have my own business but I have lost profit and/or clients	6
I had my own business and I have had to permanently close it	1
My workload has increased	17
I feel unsafe in my workplace and/or travelling to work	5
I am furloughed	6
I am part furloughed	0
I am retired	47
Other, please state in the box provided	25
Total respondents 146	

OTHER SUMMARY

In-between Jobs	1	Cannot do usual voluntary work	1
Redundant (2 re-employed)	3	Unable to homework - no equipment	1
Volunteer	1	Unemployed & can't get back into work	1
Disabled	1	No PPE used as it's childcare	1
Sick	2	Keyworker	1
Early retirement due to pressure home working	1	Semi-retired homeworking	1
Full time carer	1	Supermarket worker - guidance not followed	1
Achieved work/life balance	1	Working in office & at home	3
Unemployed but studying	1	Still having to go into work but most staff homeworking	1
Home Carer	1	Working with PPE	1

Q18 Do you feel that you are more or less active than before the pandemic?

More active	25
Less active	100
Doing the same amount as before	23
Total respondents 148	

Q19 Have you found it more or less difficult to follow a healthy diet than before the pandemic?

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Less difficult	48
More difficult	80
Total respondents 128	

PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY SUMMARY

More Difficult		Less Difficult	
Boredom	15	Same as before	6
Lack of motivation	8	Not having takeaways	2
Issues with getting shopping	15	More time to eat mindfully	1
Stress & Anxiety	8	Benefited from having more time	5
Lost appetite	3	Wider choice of food working at home	2
Snacking / Comfort eating	24		
Less focused	1		
Closure of gyms / pools etc.	7		
Baking more	6		
Drinking more	2		
Increased use of takeaways	2		
Eating excess Christmas food	2		
Isolated	2		
Depressed	1		

Q20 If you are a smoker have you found that you are smoking more or less since the pandemic?

Smoking more	9
Smoking less	4
Total respondents 13	

Q21 If you are smoking more and this is a concern for you, do you know how to access help to stop/reduce smoking?

Yes	11
No	2
Total respondents 13	

Q22 Are you drinking more alcohol since the pandemic?

Yes	34
No	99

Total respondents 133

Q23 Do you know how to access help to stop/reduce your intake if needed?

Yes	60
No	19

Total respondents 79

Q24 Which of the following do you identify as

Male	21
Female	124
Prefer not to say	2
Other	0

Q25 Which of the following do you identify as?

White British	141
White Irish	0
White Other - Polish	0
White Other - Romanian	0
Any other Bulgarian	0
Roma or Traveller	0
Any other white background	1
Asian - Bangladeshi	1
Asian -Pakistani	0
Asian - Indian	1
Asian - Chinese	0
Asian - Vietnamese	0
Any other Asian background	0
Black - Somali	0

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Black - African	0
Black - Caribbean	0
Any other black background	0
Latin American	0
Mixed	1*
Other	0
Other (please specify)	3*
Total respondents	148

*English

*3 Half British half Polish

Q26 How old are you?

Under 18	0
18-24	0
25-49	43
50-64	66
65-69	16
70+	21
80+	3
Total respondents	149