 The experiences of  
care home residents during the  
Covid-19 pandemic

Lancashire

June - July 2020



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## About Healthwatch Lancashire

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

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

the views of people who use health and care services in their local area, seeking to ensure that their experiences inform the improvement of services.

HWL are constantly listening, recording and reporting on the views of local people on a wide range of health and care issues, ensuring that people in the county are able to express their views and have a voice in improving their local health and care services.





## Executive summary

Healthwatch Lancashire (HWL) in collaboration with Lancashire County Council (LCC) Quality, Contracts and Safeguarding Adults Service, created three surveys. The surveys were designed to provide a 'snapshot' of the experience of people living in, working in and who had relatives in care homes in Lancashire during the pandemic.

The feedback from the surveys will inform quality improvements, identify outstanding needs and improve communication between care homes and families.

This report focuses on the feedback given by people resident in Lancashire care homes during the pandemic.

In total we received 15 responses from people in 8 different care homes.

All respondents told us that they felt safe, valued, respected, treated with dignity and were given the opportunity to speak to their friends and family.

Although most of the feedback was positive, five people told us that they felt bored, three people said they felt lonely, one person felt that they weren't listened to and another said that they did not feel informed.

Six residents left comments which were all complimentary about the staff and some respondents reaffirmed that they felt safe and looked after.



## Project rationale

As part of our remit to explore and understand the views and experiences of people in Lancashire, Healthwatch Lancashire (HWL) use an approach called 'Enter & View'. This is a method we use specifically to understand the experiences of people living in and working in care homes, as well as the views of residents' relatives and friends.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, HWL were unable to conduct any 'Enter & View' visits in local care homes. Instead, working in collaboration, HWL and Lancashire County Council Quality, Contracts and Safeguarding Adults Service created a series of questions designed to explore how care home staff, residents and relatives of residents were coping during the pandemic. It was agreed that there would be three separate questionnaires, one for care home staff, one for care home residents and one for the family and friends of care home residents.

Analysis of feedback from the surveys will provide both a 'snapshot' of life living in/working in/having a family member in a care home in Lancashire during the pandemic of 2020.

In turn this will:

- Inform short and longer term quality improvements.
- Identify outstanding needs, such as bereavement or mental health support.
- Improve communication between care homes and families.

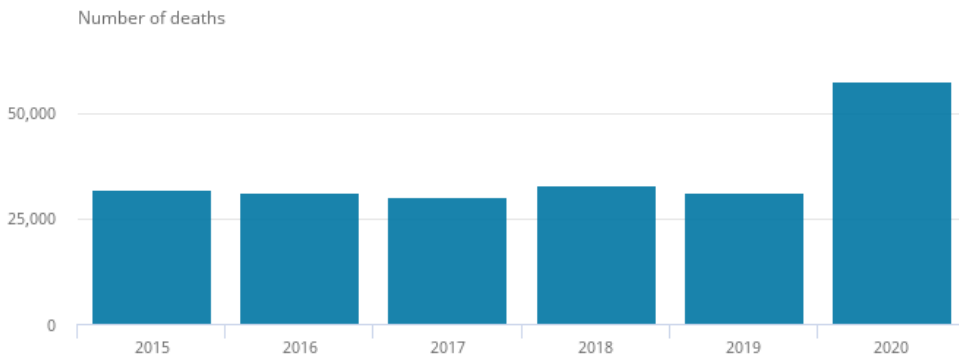
Responses to this survey suggest that life for all of those involved with care homes may be very different to the 'pandemic life' experienced by most people and that everyone involved is facing and dealing with a multitude of challenges. At the same time we were aware of some amazing examples of great service delivery under tricky conditions. We wanted to hear about these experiences and understand how people have managed (and are continuing) to manage during these unusual and difficult times.



## The national impact of Covid-19 on care home residents

Figure 12: The number of deaths occurring in care homes in 2020 was higher than deaths occurring in 2015 to 2019

Number of deaths in care homes from 2 March to 12 June 2020, registered up to 20 June 2020, 2015 to 2020, England and Wales



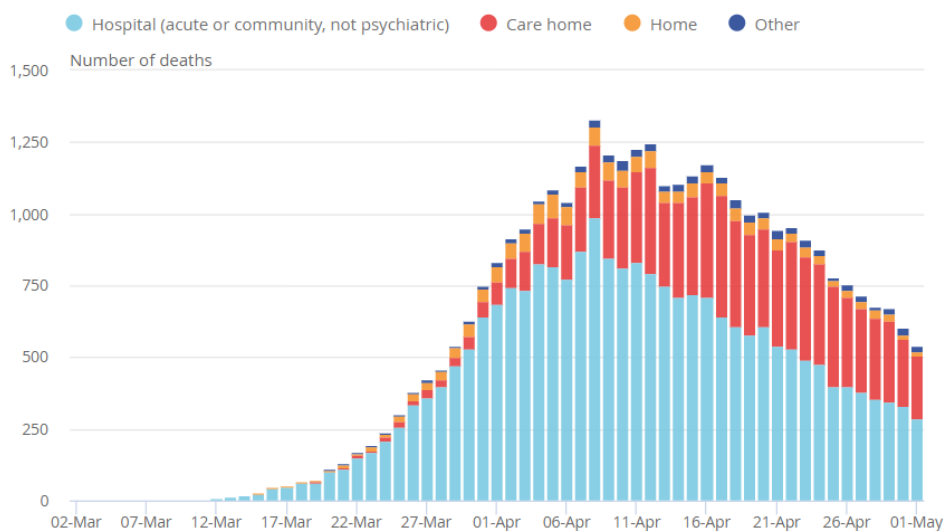
Source: Office for National Statistics – Deaths involving COVID-19 in the care sector

*Since the beginning of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic (between the period 2 March to 12 June 2020, registered up to 20 June 2020), there were 66,112 deaths of care home residents (wherever the death occurred); of these, 19,394 involved COVID-19, which is 29.3% of all deaths of care home residents.<sup>1</sup>*

Care home residents have been disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 virus in terms of the number of deaths. According to the BBC<sup>2</sup>, 1 in 3 deaths from Covid-19 were in people aged 85 years+, despite this age group representing only 2% of the population. At least 60% of the elderly care home population are over 85.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics show the increase in care home deaths during the pandemic<sup>3</sup>.

3 Number of deaths by actual date of death registered up to 9 May, by the place the death occurred and per day for England and Wales, 2020





## Methodology

A letter explaining the purpose of the surveys, was sent to all care home managers in Lancashire (a copy of the letter is available in Appendix 1).

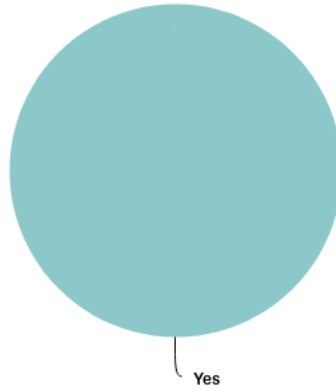
It was agreed that the three surveys would be presented as part of an online survey distributed to the managers of care homes within Lancashire. Generally the questions would focus on:

- How are staff managing to continue providing a quality service? What are their challenges?
- What is different and the same for residents?
- What challenges are the families of residents facing?

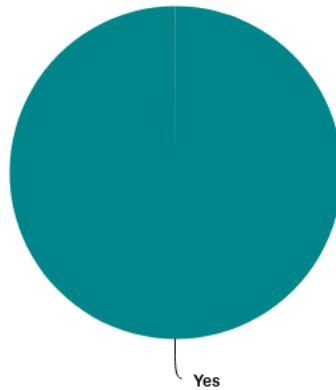
Given the statistics for death and illness in care homes during the pandemic, we felt it was timely and important to understand the concerns and experience of people living in care homes at this time. We asked residents the following questions:

1. During the pandemic and lockdown period, have you felt safe?
2. Have you felt valued?
3. Have you felt bored?
4. Have you felt lonely?
5. Have you felt listened to?
6. Have you felt respected?
7. Have you felt treated with dignity?
8. Have you felt informed (about the action necessary during the pandemic)?
9. Have you been given the opportunity to speak to your friends and family, via phone or video call?
10. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about?
11. Please tell us the name of the care home you live in.

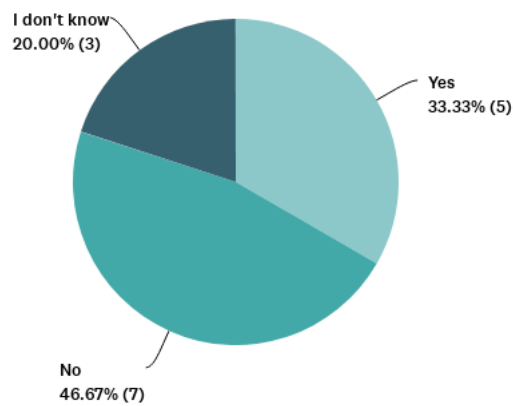
Q1 During the pandemic and this lockdown period, have you felt - safe?



Q2 Have you felt - valued?

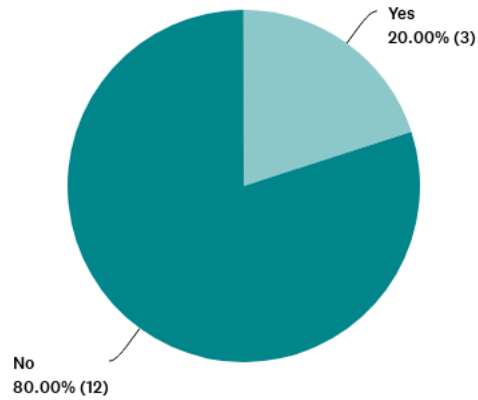


Q3 Have you felt - bored?

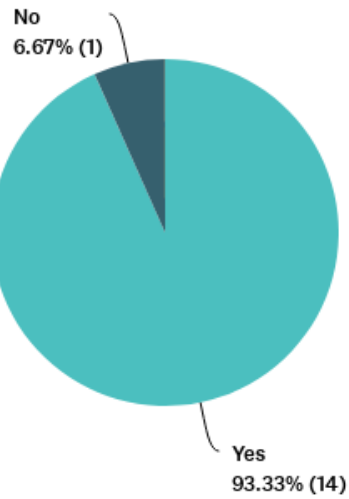




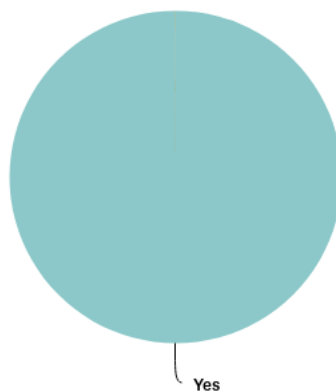
Q4 Have you felt - lonely?



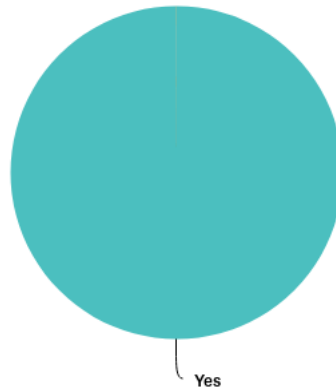
Q5 Have you felt - listened to?



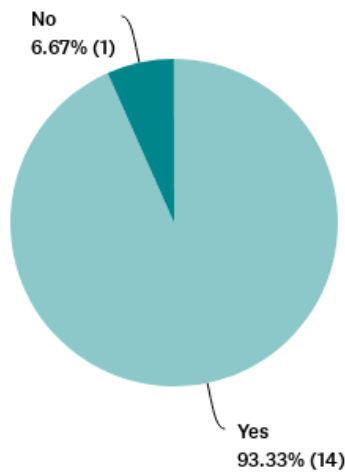
Q6 Have you felt - respected?



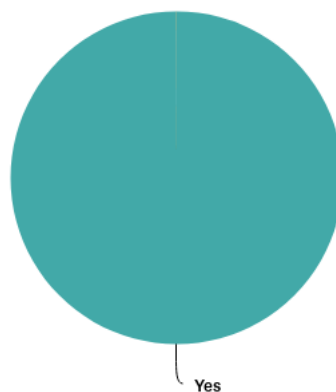
Q7 Have you felt - treated with dignity?



Q8 Have you felt - informed (about the action necessary during the pandemic)?



Q9 Have you been given the opportunity to speak to your friends or family, via phone or video call?





## Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

As there were only six comments we have enclosed them in full.

*“We have missed our families, but we have spoken to them and seen them on the phone, garden or through the window. Staff have been very good, we have had a lot of activities, had a barbecue in the garden, that was lovely.”*

*“I feel I live in a safe place and I am well looked after.”*

*“No complaints great respect from the staff. Cleanliness and procedures 100%.”*

*“As a home I think we have done extremely well.”*

*“This is from the residents: ‘The staff have been marvellous and nothing has been too much trouble we feel safe and loved and this is a perfect home to live.’*

*“We have a tuck shop as we can’t go to the shop for our snacks. I hope we can get out soon as I like to go to the shops and cafes.”*

Nine respondents skipped the question or said ‘no’ they had nothing else to tell us.



## Conclusion

We received 15 responses to this survey across 8 different care homes. Although this can't be considered a representative sample of residents of care homes in Lancashire, it does provide us with the experience of 15 people and adds to the overall picture created by the analysis of all three surveys combined.

### All residents who completed the survey told us that during lockdown they:

- Felt safe.
- Felt valued.
- Felt respected.
- Felt that they were treated with dignity.
- Were given the opportunity to speak to friends and family.

Most respondents felt that they were kept informed and listened to.

### Boredom

Seven respondents said that they did not feel bored, but five told us they were. During previous Enter & View visits conducted by HWL, residents have reported that they sometimes felt bored, so the findings from this current survey may reflect residents' feelings about their general experience of living in a care home rather than specifically during the lockdown. Unfortunately none of these respondents gave us any further information that we could use to clarify whether this was the case.

### Loneliness

Three people told us that they felt lonely. Unfortunately they did not leave any comments that would help us understand whether their loneliness is as a result of lockdown and no visitors, or if it was a more general experience for them.

One person who said they felt lonely also told us that they did not feel listened to, but left no comments.

Another respondent said that they did not feel informed, but left no comments to tell us more about this.

### Other comments

Six residents left comments at the end of the survey, they were all very positive and complimentary about staff, though one lady said she was looking forward to being able to go out again.



## Recommendations and response from Lancashire County Council

### **Limitations of this methodology**

As these results have demonstrated, survey research under certain conditions can often provide limited findings. As HWL staff did not have direct access to residents and many residents needed help to access the survey, completion relied heavily on staff having time to support residents to complete it. Staff have already told us of the stress and difficult conditions they were working under during the pandemic, many will not have had the time to support residents to complete an online survey.

One further limitation is that in asking staff to support residents to complete the survey, residents may not have felt able to be completely honest in their feedback.

### **Recommendations**

HWL would recommend further investigation into the experience of care home residents during the pandemic, once it is safe for HWL staff to visit care homes again to speak to residents. This could be included as part of an Enter & View visit.

### **Lancashire County Council accepted the findings of the report and responded to the recommendations as follows:**

Initiate discussion with HWL to explore other opportunities to gather care home resident experience during the pandemic. Potential to focus on certain aspects such as care home visitor arrangements.

LCC to continue to promote gathering of care home resident experiences during contract and quality monitoring exercises.



## References

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/deathsinvovingcovid19inthecaresectorenglandandwales/deathsoccurringupto12june2020andregisteredupto20june2020provisional>

<sup>2</sup><https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-52284281>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.channel4.com/news/factcheck/factcheck-coronavirus-in-care-homes>



## Appendix 1: copy of letter sent to care home managers

Dear Colleague,

I'm writing to you today as the Director of your independent local health and social care champion, Healthwatch Lancashire. We are an independent organisation that gathers, explores and amplifies the experiences of people who access health and social care services. We use this information to drive improvements and service design.

One of our key functions is the carrying out of Enter and View visits. This is an opportunity for our staff to get a feel, first hand, for what it's like to live in a particular care home. We do this by undertaking a site visit in which we talk to managers, staff, residents, families and carers about their experiences.

In the context of Covid we have suspended Enter and View visits for the safety of staff and residents. However we know sharing experiences and being heard is perhaps more important now than ever before. We realise that life for all those involved with care homes is very different from the norm and that everyone is facing and dealing with many challenges. And we know that there are many fabulous examples of great service delivery under difficult conditions and examples of exciting innovations.

With this in mind, we have agreed with Lancashire County Council (LCC) to create and share three online surveys to find out about how everyone is coping in the current climate. These surveys look at topics such as:

How are managers and staff managing to continue to provide a quality service?

What is different/the same for residents?

What challenges are families facing?

Through the links below, you will see that we have designed separate surveys for managers and staff, one for residents and one for families/carers.

[Family of Residents](#)

[Residents](#)

[Care Home Staff](#)

To share these surveys as far as possible we will be promoting via our social media channels. However, we would also greatly appreciate your support in sharing and completing these surveys. By responding yourself, by circulating this letter and these links as widely as possible amongst the care home staff, residents and families and perhaps also by offering support to those who may need it to respond, you can help us to hear the experiences of care home communities.

Responses will greatly help Lancashire County Council and its partners to better understand your experience of COVID 19; the Council has told us that they are really keen to hear what it has been like and have offered their commitment to using your feedback to help their work now and in the future. Our Research and Data officer will independently analyse the results and provide a report which we anticipate could inform:

- A snapshot of what it's been like managing/living in/having a family member in a care home during COVID 19
- Short and longer term quality improvements
- Outstanding needs - possibly bereavement support, MH support for staff etc.
- Improved communication between homes and families

The surveys will go live on Wednesday 3rd June and you will have until midnight on Sunday 28th June to respond. This is your chance to have your experiences and the experiences of your residents heard. We are aware that Public Health England (PHE) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) are due to conduct a separate, nationwide study of COVID-19 and care homes. Where the PHE and ONS survey looks to gather national trends, by completing our survey you will help us to understand, specifically, the challenges faced within our county.

The raw data gathered will remain confidential unless there is a need to address a specific safeguarding or quality issue, in which case normal processes will be applied. The final report for LCC will not link themes and/or issues identified to individual homes. However, where innovative and best practice has been highlighted, permission to name the particular home will be agreed with the home prior to the report being finalised.

If you have any questions, or if we can help you in anyway, please contact me or the wider Healthwatch Lancashire team.

Kind regards

Sue Stevenson

Director of Healthwatch Lancashire

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