

COVID-19 Survey Report

February 2021

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Introduction

Healthwatch Walsall are the independent voice of the public in health and social care services in Walsall. We gather feedback from members of the public about their experiences of using health and social care services. We use that feedback to work with service providers and commissioners to find ways of improving services for the public. One of the ways that we collect feedback is through carrying out a focused project around particular services, conditions or groups within the community.

With the Coronavirus pandemic and the unprecedented lockdown restrictions taking the world from normality to lockdown, we wanted to use this time to assess how changes to society and lockdown have impacted residents of Walsall in regard to their wellbeing and how they access health and social care services.

What we did

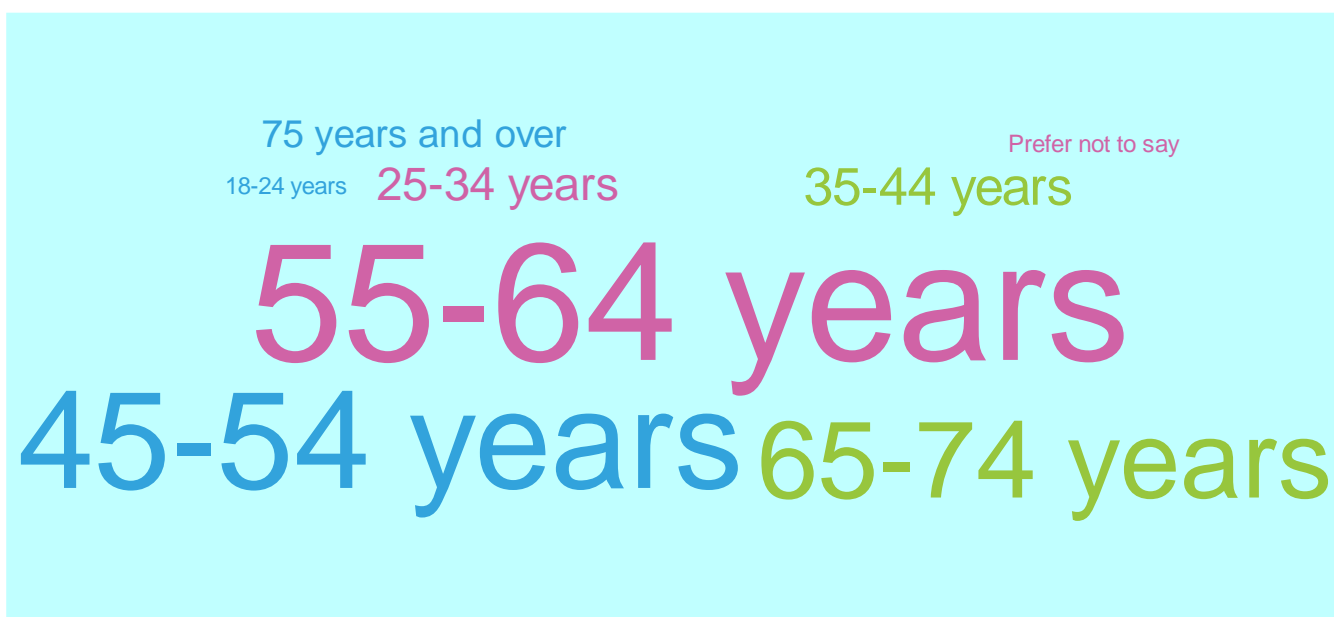
Feedback for this project was gathered using a survey, that was made up of 12 quantitative multiple-choice questions, and 10 open text questions that enabled respondents to expand on their responses. The survey was available online from Friday 3rd April 2020. The survey was closed to the public on Monday October 5th 2020.

Who took part

The survey was aimed at anyone who received health or social care services during the Coronavirus pandemic. There were 68 respondents to the survey who were asked for simple demographic information, they were asked their age, ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, whether they considered themselves to have a disability, and whether they are a carer.

Age

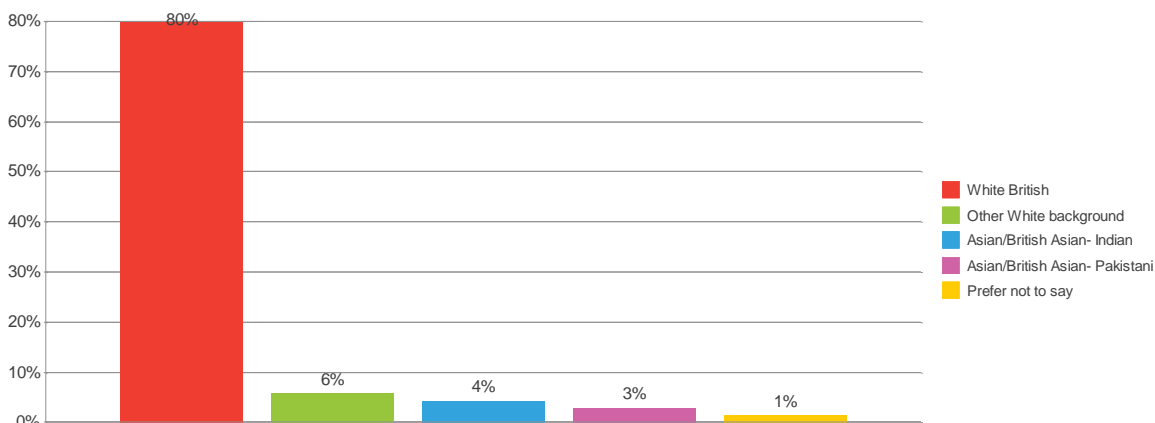
1% were 18 – 24 years old, 6% were 25 – 34 years old, 8% were 35 – 44 years old, 26% were 45 – 54 years old, 32% were 55 – 64 years old, 20% were 65 – 74 years old, 5% were 75 years or older, and 2% preferred not to say.



Ethnicity

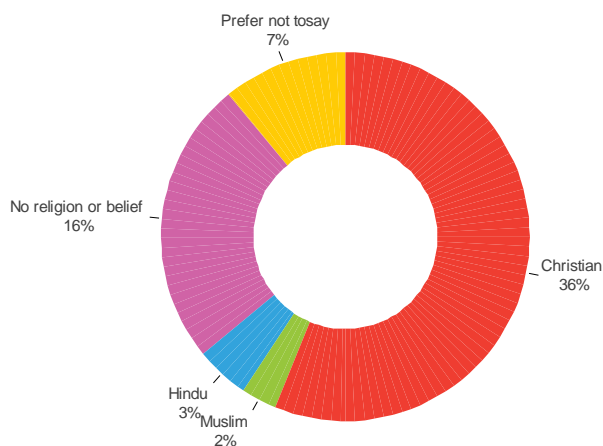
85% identified as White British, 6% identified as Other White Background, 5% identified as British Asian / Indian, and 3% identified as British Asian / Pakistani. 1% of respondents preferred not to disclose this information.

What ethnicity do you identify as?



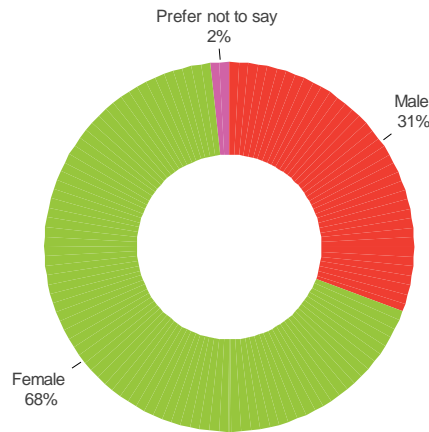
Religion or belief

56% of respondents identified as Christian, 3% identified as Muslim, 5% identified as Hindu, 25% stated they had no religion or belief, and 11% preferred not to disclose this information.



Gender

31% of respondents identified as male, 68% identified as female, and 1% preferred not to disclose this information.

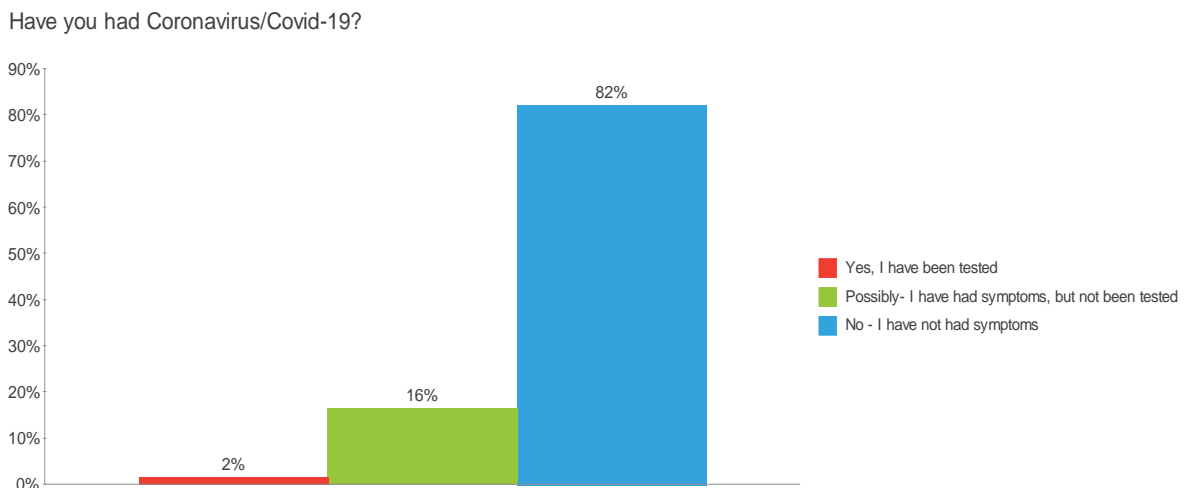


Further demographic findings showed that 57% of respondents consider themselves to have a disability or long-term condition, whilst 26% reported being a carer.

Findings

Question 1: Have you had Coronavirus / Covid-19?

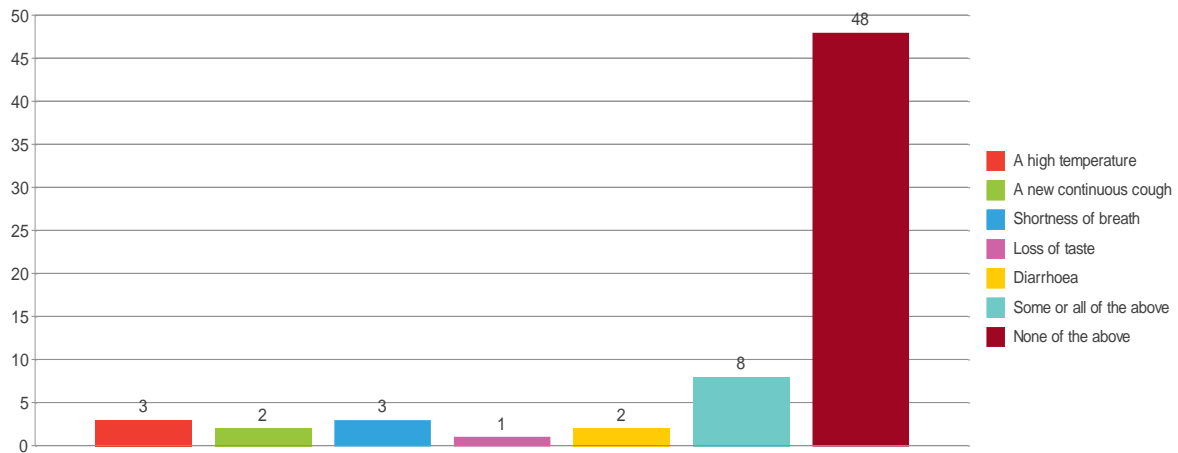
82% of respondents reported that they had not had any symptoms relating to Coronavirus, 16% reported that they had had symptoms but not been tested, and 2% reported that they had been tested as positive for Coronavirus.



Question 2: Have you had any of the following symptoms?

The options for this question were as listed in the chart below. The most common option selected was none of the above (71%), indicating that the majority of respondents had experienced no symptoms at all. 12% reported some or all of the symptoms, while the remaining respondents reported 1 symptom only.

Have you had the following?



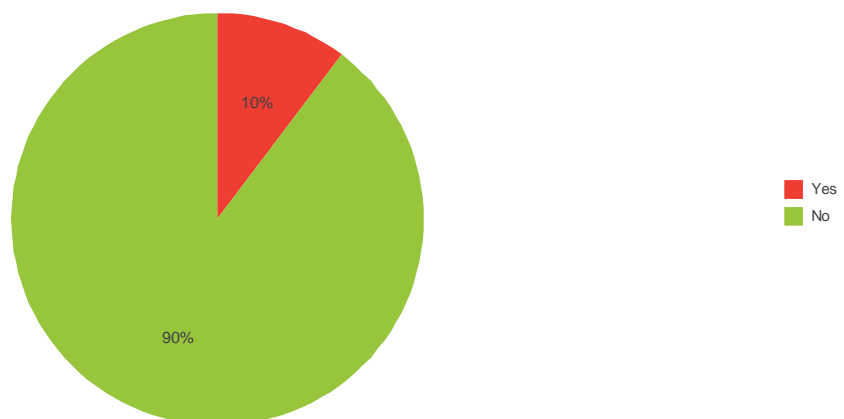
The word cloud below shows the most frequent options as the biggest and orders them in size according to the frequency that they were selected.



Question 3: If you think you may have had Coronavirus / Covid-19, did you seek medical advice or care whilst you had symptoms?

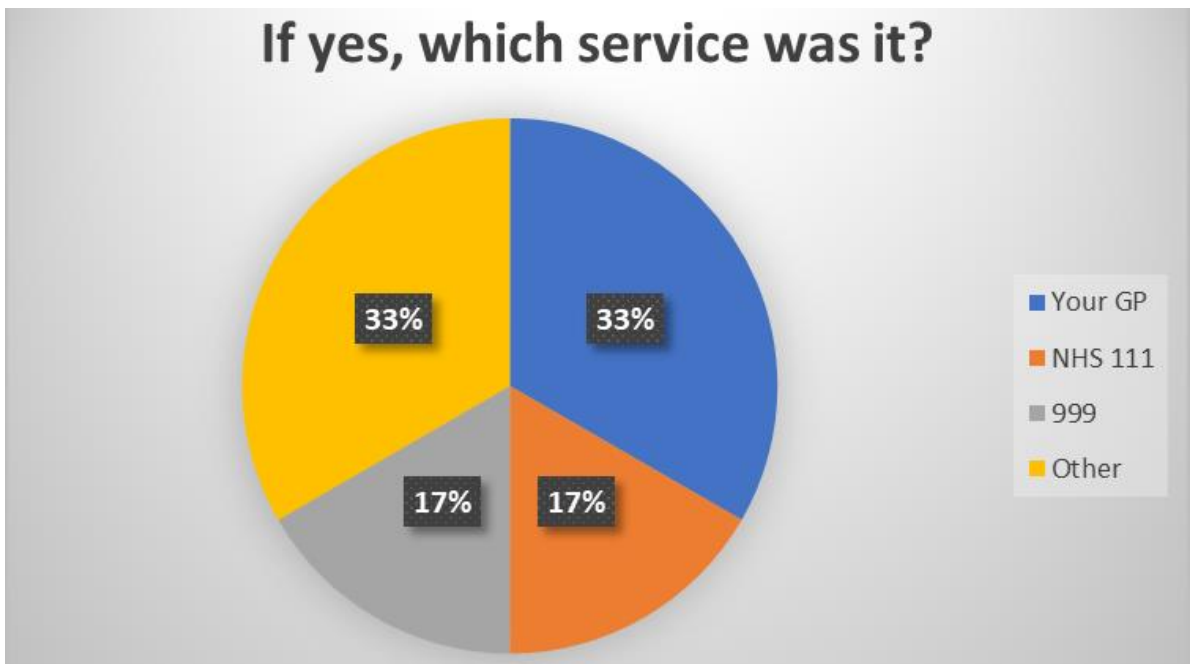
There was a total of 39 responses to this question which was directed only at people who thought they may have had Coronavirus, this suggests that 57% of all respondents to the survey thought that they may have had Coronavirus. Of these respondents, 90% indicated that they had not sought medical care or advice and 10% indicated that they had.

If you think that you may have had Coronavirus/Covid-19, did you seek medical advice or care whilst you had symptoms?



Question 4: If yes, which service was it?

This question relates to question 3 and asks the respondents that indicated that they had sought medical advice or care whilst they had Coronavirus symptoms and which services they sought that advice or care from. 33% of respondents reported that they had used their GP service, 17% reported they had used the NHS 111 service, 17% reported that they had used the 999 service, and 33% reported that they had used a different type of service.

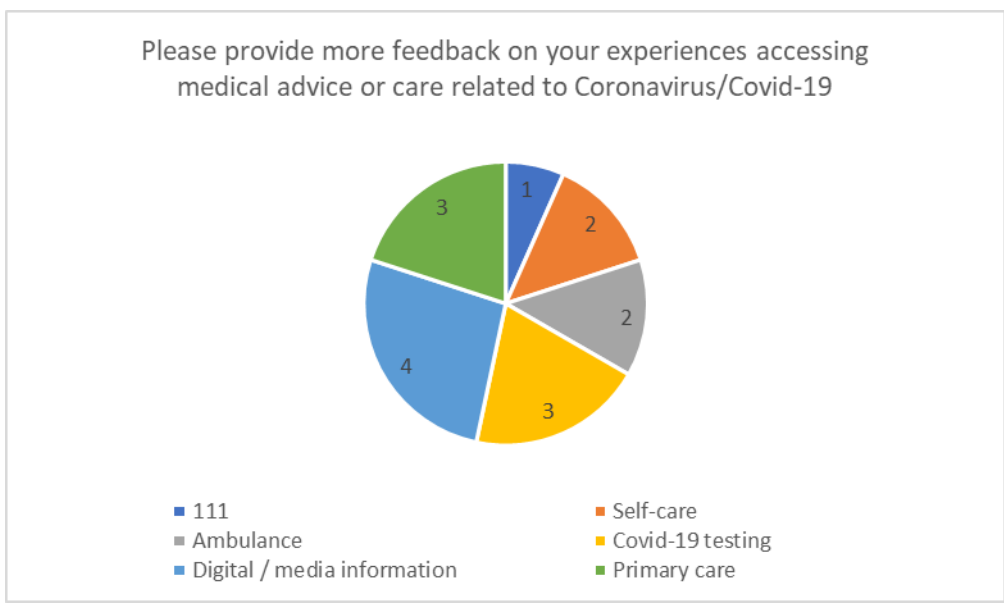


Question 4b: If you indicated other to question 4, what service did you use?

There were 2 valid responses to this question and both of these reported that they had used an 'internet' or 'online' service but did not specify which website they had used.

Question 5: Please provide more feedback on your experiences accessing medical advice or care related to Coronavirus/Covid-19

There was a total of 15 comments made in response to this question, and 6 themes emerged from the analysis. The themes are NHS 111, ambulance, digital / media information, self-care, covid-19 testing and primary care. The chart below shows you the distribution of comments amongst the themes.



4 people reported seeking advice or information through digital / media sources, one person told us **'at that time it was just basic information on the news - temperature and cough'**.

There was mixed sentiment about Primary care services, for example, one respondent commented that they **'didn't get much help or guidance from my surgery, just told to isolate myself'** and another reported that they **'had problems with cancelled appointments and getting medicines from GP, pharmacy'**, whilst another reported that they **'had a home visit by the red clinic'**.

When discussing Covid-19 testing one person told us that they **'ordered the test kit home, got tested and result negative'**, another stated that they **'asked about testing told to book online'** while another reported that they **'organised testing for my staff who have had symptoms. This was easy to do with staff that could drive, and they gained the results within 24 hours, the home testing was not good, the member of staff had completed their self-isolation and returned to work prior to getting the results'**.

Respondents who made comments relating to the Ambulance service were wholly positive, one person told us that they **'had a home visit by the ambulance service'** and another said **'paramedics were calm and sat with me and talked me through'**.

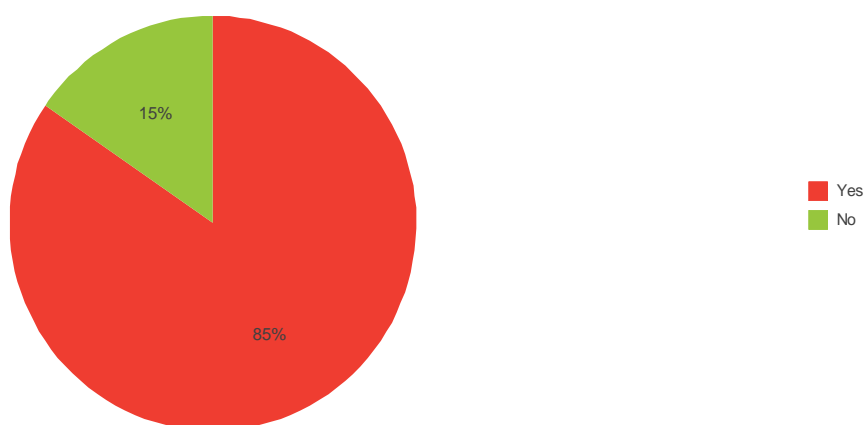
There were 2 respondents who indicated that they had used self-care, one person told us that **'I didn't access medical services because I knew what I needed to do'** and another reported that they **'self-isolated for 7 days'**.

Only 1 respondent indicated that they had used the NHS 111 service, and they reported that they **'used online NHS 111 which was reassuring and gave clear information'**.

Question 6: Have you found it easy to find clear and understandable information about what to do to keep yourself and others safe during the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic?

85% of respondents reported that they had found it easy to find clear and understandable information about what to do to keep themselves and others safe during the Coronavirus pandemic, while 15% of respondents reported that they had not.

Have you found it easy to find clear and understandable information about what to do to keep yourself and others safe during the Coronavirus/Covid-19 pandemic?



Question 7: Please tell us what information and where you were able to find this information? (Please include organisations and websites)

As question 7 is a 2-part question, asking what information participants had found, and where they had found it, the responses have been split into *Information* and *Source* for the purpose of the analysis.

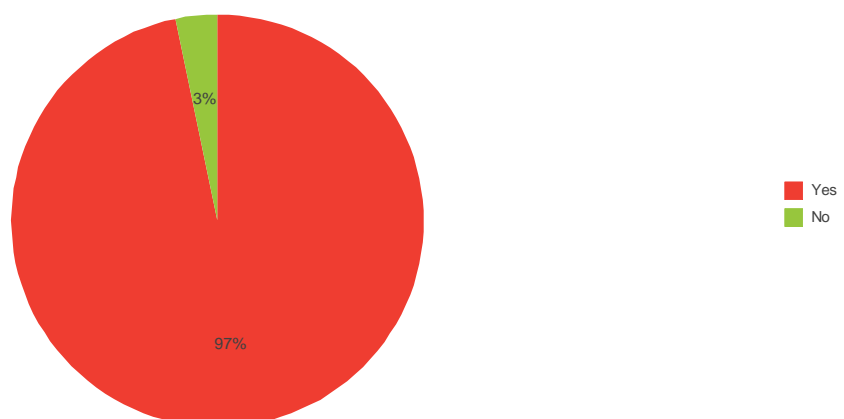
All sources and the frequency that they were mentioned can be seen in the table below.

Source of information			
Source	Frequency	Source	Frequency
Healthwatch	3	Wolverhampton Council website	1
Government website	15	One Walsall	1
BBC	8	Telford and Wrekin Council website	1
TV	13	Mind	1
Internet	11	Dudley carers forum	1
Radio	2	Walsall neighbourhood watch	1
NHS England website	6	Welfare rights agencies	1
Newspapers	3	The Sanctuary Hub	1
Walsall Council website	4	Church of England website	1
Leaflet through the post	3	111	1
NHS texts	1	Hospital	1
YouTube	1	School	1
Facebook groups	3	Shielding letter	1
Holistic health websites	1	Community hub	1
Rethink	2	Public Health England website	2
DWP	1	CQC website	1
West Midlands police	1	Primary care	2
Dudley Council website	1	Covid 19 website	1

Question 8: Was the information in a language(s) that you needed?

97% of respondents indicated that the information was in a language that was needed, whilst 3% indicated that it was not. There was a follow up question to this, asking participants who had indicated the information was not in a language that they needed, what language would it have been useful to have? There were no responses to this question, so it has been omitted from the analysis.

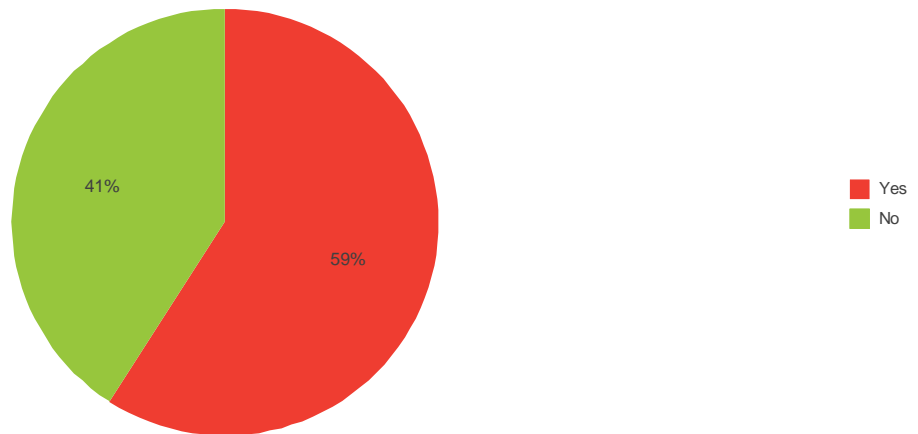
Was the information in a language(s) that you needed?



Question 10: If you had a pre-existing condition(s) such as Diabetes, Respiratory, Autoimmune conditions, Heart or other conditions where you were previously receiving care, support or visits, did this continue?

Participants who received care, support or treatment for conditions prior to the Coronavirus pandemic were asked if this continued during the pandemic. 59% of respondents reported that it had, whilst 41% of participants reported that it had not continued.

If you had a pre-existing condition(s) such as Diabetes, Respiratory, Autoimmune conditions, Heart or other conditions where you were previously receiving care, support or visits, did this continue?



Question 11: If no, please tell us how you managed and what effect it has had on your condition and you?

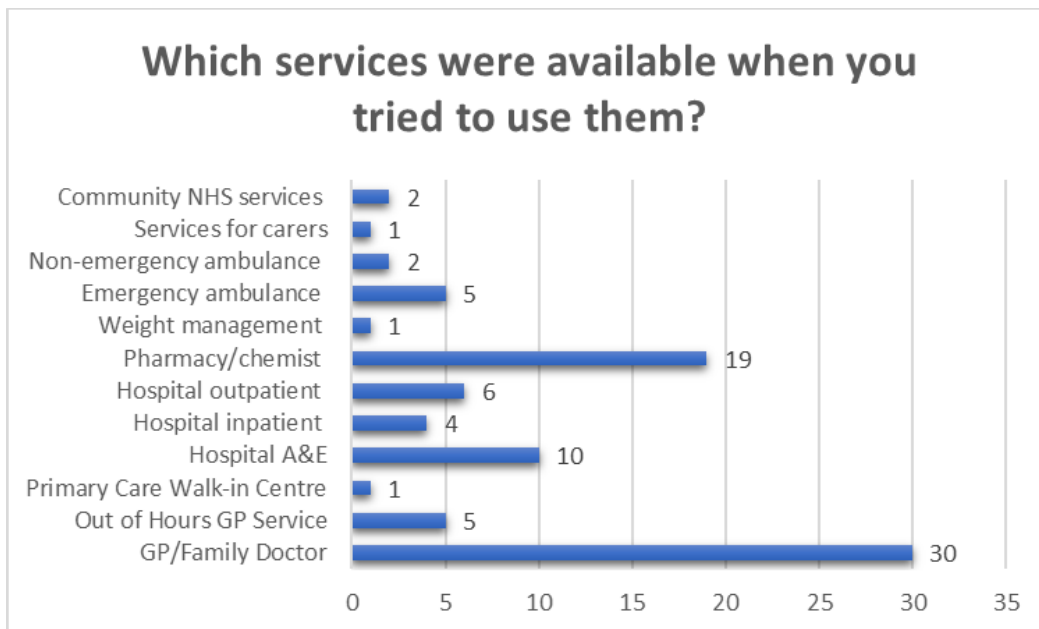
This question was posed to the respondents who had selected the no option to question 10 and we received 10 responses. The feedback largely related to cancelled hospital appointments or treatment, one person told us that they **'take medication for a heart condition but have not been contacted by my doctor from the General practice or the Manor hospital'**, another stated that they were **'due appointments that I could not rebook. Still have not received any update on recent scan and doctors say they don't have results.'**

More positively one person told us that despite having a hospital appointment cancelled they have **'since had a new appointment come through'**, and another spoke positively about their GP stating **'Drs have called the same day when I've phoned'**.

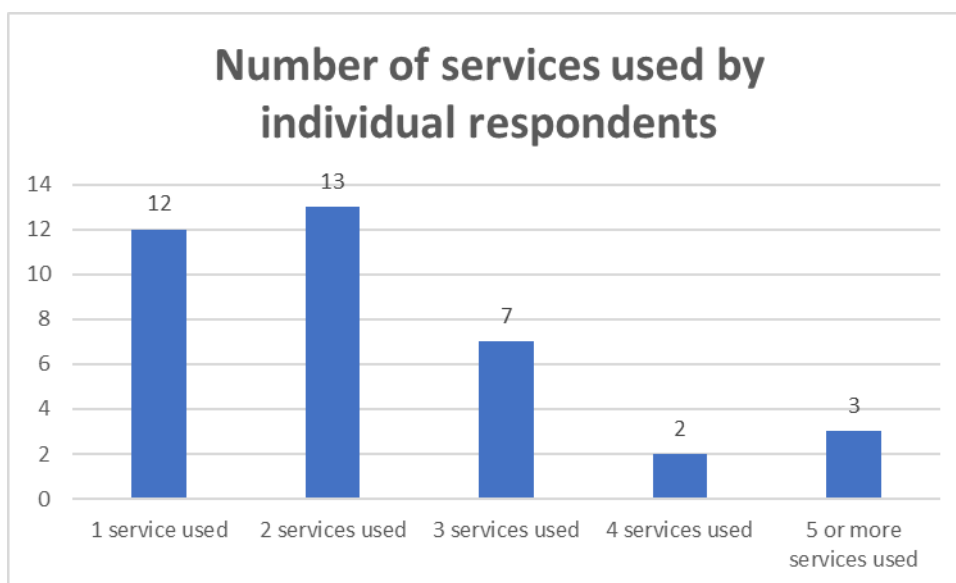
Question 12: Which services were available when you tried to use them?

This question allowed respondents to select multiple responses which enabled the data to be analysed to show which services were available to respondents, and the number of services used by individual respondents.

The most frequently selected response option was GP / Family Doctor, these services were available to 30 respondents. The second most frequently selected response option was Pharmacy / Chemist which was available to 19 participants. Other frequently selected options were Hospital A&E, Hospital outpatient, Emergency ambulance, and Out of hours GP services, the chart below shows all of the services that were selected by respondents and the frequency that they were selected.



The number of options selected by each respondent was also analysed to show the number of services that were used by individual respondents. Findings show that 12 people used 1 service (33%), 13 people used 2 services (35%), 7 people used 3 services (19%), 2 people used 4 services (5%), and 3 people used 5 or more services (8%).



Question 13: Which service did you feel that you needed during Covid-19 pandemic?

As this question asked only what service(s) was needed, we cannot assume that these services were available to respondents when they needed them.

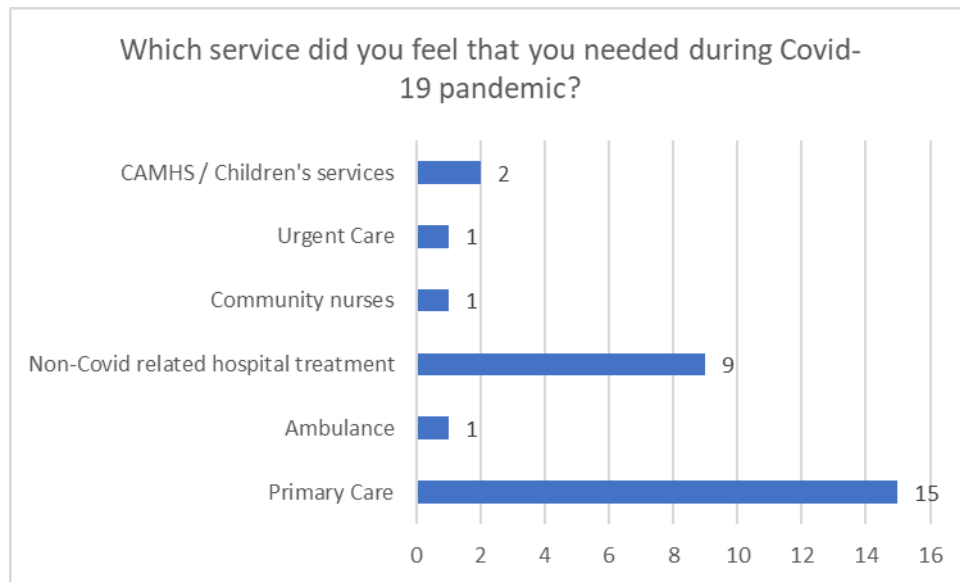
The comments made by respondents were themed into the type of service that was reported as needed, some respondents listed more than one option for this question.

The most needed type of service was primary care with 52% of the total comments relating to GP and pharmacy services, 15 respondents made comments about primary care services, one person told us that they benefitted

from their **'Doctors reassurance'**, and another told us that their **'GP service would be there to support me'**, another person stated that they **'needed to stay in contact with my chemist about my medication'**.

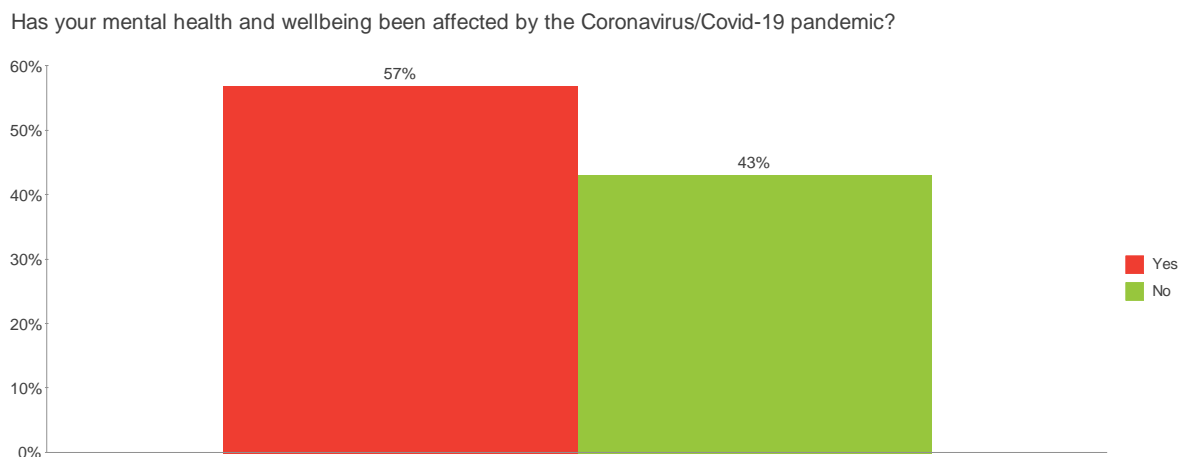
Nine respondents told us about needing to access non-Covid hospital treatment, and some had encountered issues getting access to the hospital. One respondent told us of needing routine blood tests but that **'due to Covid-19 have not been able to have them'** whilst another told us that **'my wife needed to go to New Cross Hospital, but they refused to send her'**.

The remaining 4 themes that were identified from the respondent comments can be found in the chart below, CAMHS / Children's services received 2 comments (7%), and Urgent Care, Community Nurses, and ambulance all received 1 comment each (3.3%). Comments made in these themes were largely answers relating to health service job titles only, so for this reason the frequency represents sufficient data.



Q14: Has your mental health and wellbeing been affected by the Coronavirus / Covid-19 pandemic?

57% of respondents indicated that their mental health and wellbeing had been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic, whilst 43% indicated that there had been no change.



Question 15: If yes, please tell us more about this.

A total of 34 respondents answered this question, many of whom described more than one change to their mental health and wellbeing since the Coronavirus pandemic started. 68% of participants described new symptoms that had presented since the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent lockdown restrictions, whilst 32% reported a deterioration of existing mental health conditions.

The comments made have been themed according to the symptom described by respondents and 9 themes were identified, these can be found in the chart below with the frequency that they were reported.



The most frequent symptom reported by participants was depression / low mood, one person told us that **'due to continued social isolating I have felt quite despondent at times'**, whilst others put their symptoms down to **'low mood due to no being able to go out or see people'**, others spoke about the lockdown conditions and stated that **'it has made me depressed'**.

Social isolation was also reported frequently, and people told us that mental health and wellbeing are affected by the **'lack of social contact/interaction with others'** or **'not being able to see family and friends'**, and that **'like everyone the social isolation as a huge impact on mental health'**.

Anxiety was also reported frequently, one person told us that this was due to a lack of support during lockdown, they told us that they had **'anxiety that I had to self-manage'**. Others reported new or increased anxiety due to lockdown, shielding and the uncertainty it creates, one told us that they have **'increased anxiety due to the uncertainty of situations'**, another said **'I suffer from anxiety and lockdown has not helped'** whilst another told us that **'shielding has caused me to have anxiety'**.

Worry / fear was reported by 5 respondents, all of these identified the cause of their worry of fear to be risk of catching the virus, one describes that **'I feel afraid and unsafe out in the outside world'**, and another states that they are **'aware that anyone can pass by coming into close constant, it's playing on my mind'**.

Stress was reported by 5 respondents, one described being under **'increased stress due to financial pressures'**, whilst others stated that they are **'not sleeping well due to the stress'** and are generally suffering **'increased stress'**.

Respondents who reported sleep problems stated that they had **'poor sleep'** or were **'unable to sleep'**.

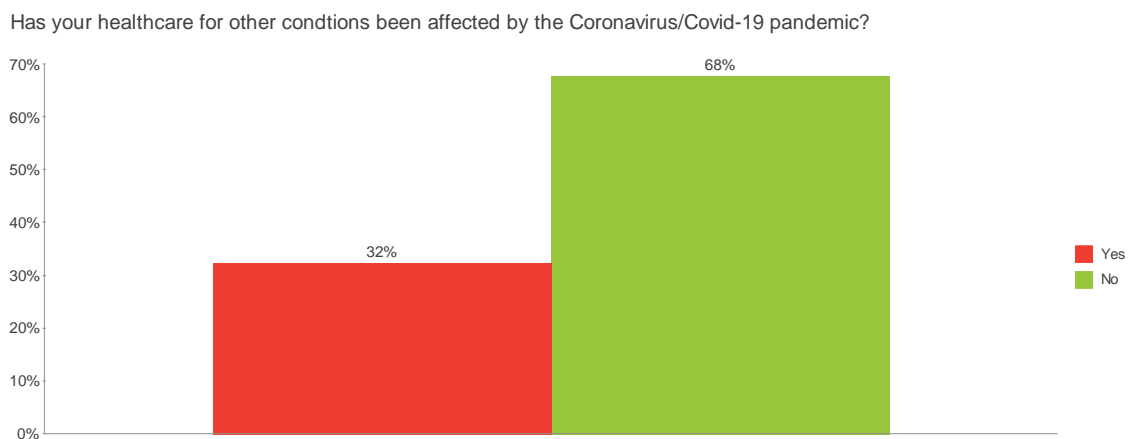
Grief was reported by 3 respondents, one stated that **'this has affected me more than anything else'** and another reported **'I am struggling to concentrate and keep myself positive'**.

2 respondents reported experiencing paranoia, one stated that they **'have experienced increased paranoia'** and another stated they **'felt more paranoid'**.

1 respondent reported a pre-existing trauma-related mental health problem that they had been awaiting treatment and support for prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, this person stated that **'I've been on the waiting list for complex trauma which has been delayed until goodness knows when, the fact that my care has been dropped has exacerbated this significantly'**.

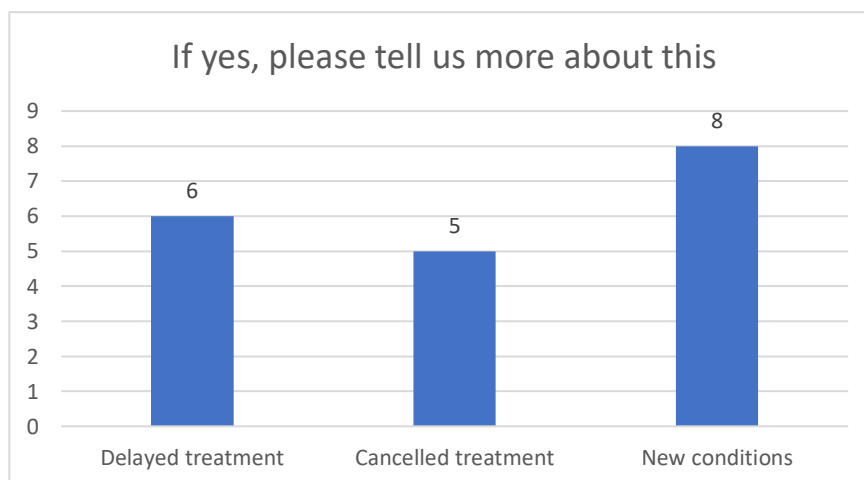
Question 16: Has your healthcare for other conditions been affected by the Coronavirus / Covid-19 pandemic?

Almost a third of respondents to this question reported that their healthcare for other conditions has been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic (32%), the remaining 68% of respondents reported that there had been no change due to the pandemic.



Question 17: If yes, please tell us more about this.

There were 19 responses to this question, and these have been analysed into 3 themes - Cancelled treatment for existing conditions, Delayed treatment for existing conditions, and New conditions. The chart below shows the frequency that each theme was discussed by participants.



The theme that was discussed most frequently by respondents was new conditions, some people spoke about their GP appointments, stating that they find it **'difficult to get doctor's appointments, getting near GP surgery almost impossible'**, and that they are now **'unsure how to seek specific advice'**. Some people stated that they find **'telephone consultations difficult when not able to show the doctor what is concerning you'**.

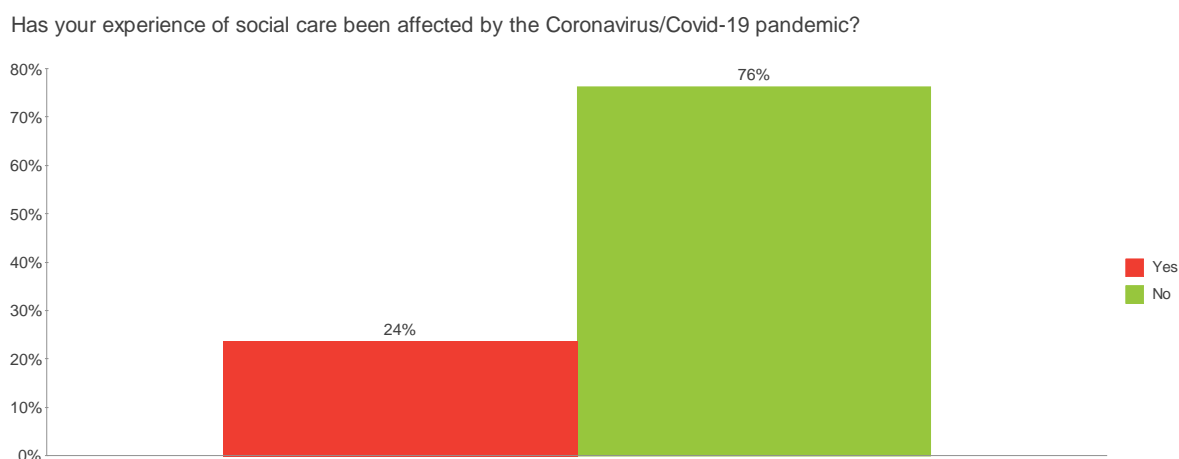
Other comments related to the availability of dental services, reporting that they were **'unable to get dentist appointment'**.

When discussing delayed treatment, people reported issues with various services, one person stated that **'outpatient appointments been forgotten for follow ups, I had to chase up an appointment which should have taken place in March'**, and another reported that **'services became patchy for a while and Heart Care got shutdown'**. One person reported that when trying to contact their GP they were **'unable to get proper GP appointments for existing conditions hard to explain over a phone call'**, whilst another stated that there was **'little support for the mental health issues'**.

Similarly, when discussing cancelled treatment, people reported issues with various services, one person stated that were **'not able to progress hearing loss test'**, another stated that **'a colonoscopy was cancelled'**, while another reported they were **'due to have physio for hip and knee pain which was cancelled'**.

Question 18: Has your experience of social care been affected by the Coronavirus / Covid-19 pandemic?

The majority of respondents to this question indicated that their experience of social care has not been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic (76%), the remaining 24% indicated that their experience had been affected.



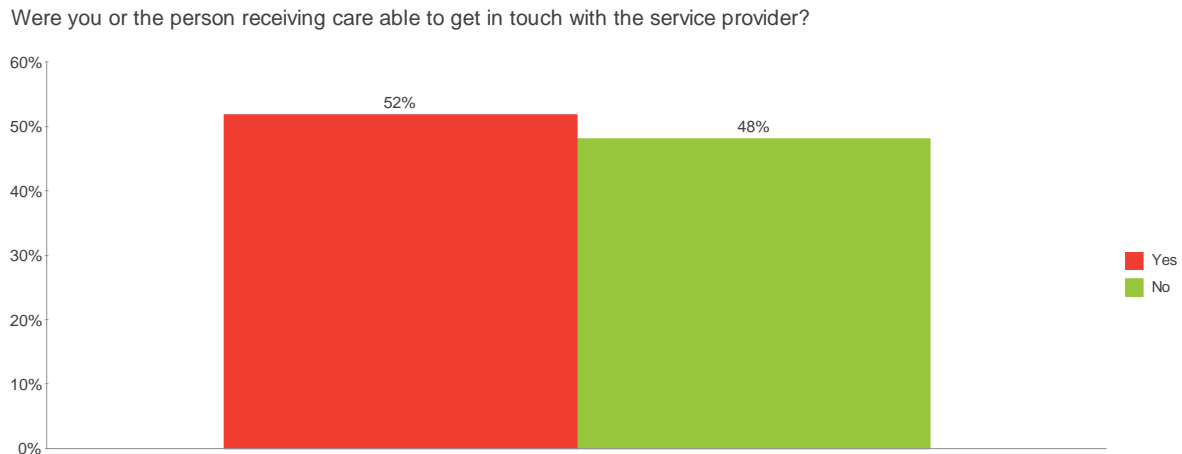
Question 19: If yes, please tell us about how it affected you or the person receiving care?

There were 6 responses to this question, 5 comments related to a lack of contact, support or care from social care providers during the Coronavirus pandemic, one person stated that their **'social worker not bothered'** and another stated that they had received **'no visits/ no face-to-face appointments'**, while another reported that **'My sons respite care closed, I have not had a proper sleep since February'**.

There was 1 comment however, that was favourable towards social care involvement on a professional level, this person reported that **'social care had to step in to support some of the people I support through my work'**.

Question 20: Were you or the person receiving care able to get in touch with the care provider?

There was a fairly even response to this question with 52% of respondents reporting that they were able to get in touch, and 48% of respondents reporting that they were not able to get in touch with the service provider.



Question 21: Please tell us about your experience of contacting the service provider.

There was a total of 9 comments made in response to this question, 5 of these comments contained a negative sentiment, whilst 4 comments contained a positive sentiment.

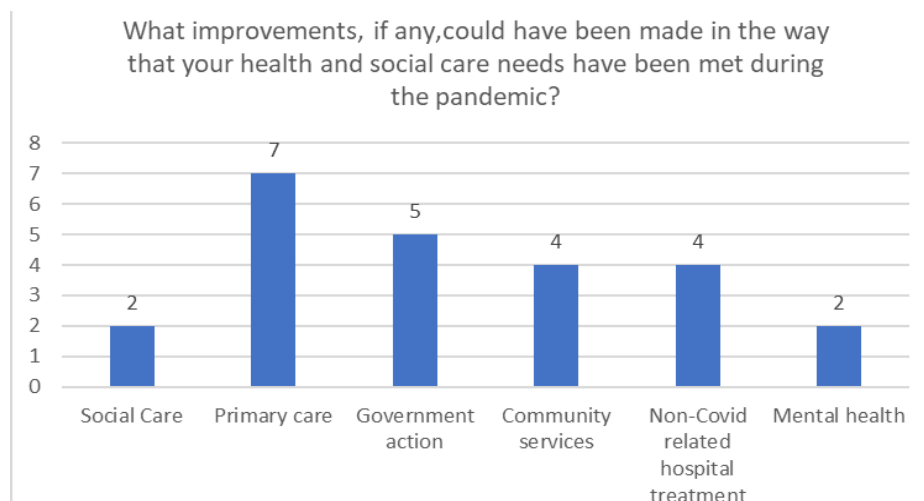
One person described their experience of contacting social care as **'excellent, good response in difficult circumstances - homelessness team, safeguarding team, initial contact team'** and another stated that they had received a **'quick response. Unambiguous answers'**. Other people reported that their contact had been **'positive'** and that **'they contacted me'**.

People who gave negative feedback reported issues with contacting service providers, one person stated that it was **'difficult due to lack of knowledge about telephone number'**, and another told us that they found that there was **'lots of options on phone not clear'**. One person reported that they were **'still waiting to hear from them'**.

Other people discussed the response they received when having contact with service providers, one person stated that the service provider they contacted **'said it is not their problem'**, while another reported that **'the manager of the care place had no answers was only supposed to be closed for 3 weeks and it has been 7 months!'**.

Question 22: What improvements, if any, could have been made in the way that your health and social care needs have been met during the pandemic?

This received a total of 25 comments and 6 themes have been identified from the analysis.



The most common theme arising from the feedback we received to this question is Primary Care. People told us that **'the online GP consultation forms were just lengthy, tedious and then took a few days to be actioned'**, and that **'my surgeries website was confusing, giving the impression that no appointments were available, and all contact had to be via Emed and a long online form'**. Other people told us they had issues with medication or pharmacy, reporting that **'medication got difficult for a while with our pharmacy closing without notice. Essential critical medicines became unavailable - that took some sorting out and caused some great disruption and anxiety. Would like to see better pharmacy cover'**.

Government action was also discussed frequently, some people discussed Covid-19 testing, advising that **'easier information on how to get tested, clearer instructions on .Gov for test and more test stations'** would have been beneficial, while other spoke about lockdown and PPE provision, one person advised that **'better earlier lock down, PPE stock pile, stock of sanitiser and paracetamol'** should have been in place. Others spoke about food shopping, stating that there should have been **'clear guidance on accessing online shopping for those like myself, who are under a stricter lock down but do not fall into the tightly defined vulnerable group. Anxiety over no slots being available and so no food is a considerable worry'**.

Non-Covid related treatment was seen to have been less of a priority during the pandemic, and one person stated **'whilst it is understandable that Covid-19 is very important and needs to be acted on, it is disconcerting that disabled people with chronic and long-term health conditions appear to have been abandoned! I fear many people will have conditions such as cancer not diagnosed early enough to receive a good prognosis'** while another reported that there should have been **'a better balance between COVID and other conditions'**. Some people discussed communication and appointments with one stating that there should have been **'greater communication, and phone appointments to replace the seven appointments I've had cancelled'**.

Respondents spoke about how they valued community services and one person stated that **'I've loved having the Bloxwich hub contact me every week to make sure I'm okay, with a quick chat. Loved the wellbeing box'** but another person advised that there should have been **'more information about what services were/are running'**.

People who received support from social care providers told us that domiciliary care providers **'should have more support with PPE, none worn when caring for my mom. They should have more acknowledgement of the importance of the role they play'** while another told us that **'we have just been left to get on with it told by social worker that we just going to have to cope'**.

People who mentioned mental health services discussed exclusively their lack of availability, one person stated that there was **'no real thought of services seemed to exist for mental health changes'** while another told us that **'more support for mental health in under 16s is needed'**.

Conclusions

In these unprecedented times, services have adapted, and new processes have been created. No one could predict how much 'normal' life would change, and thus services would be adversely affected due to COVID 19.

The Walsall community have embraced these changes and adapted to the new processes that the NHS and CCG's have introduced, which may prove to be more convenient for patients and service providers in the future, long after the current pandemic is over.

However, there are some issues that have been brought to light.

Mental health: Over half of the respondents said that their mental health had been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. Whilst we know that there is work being undertaken both locally and nationally to understand and meet the mental health need resulting from the pandemic, our findings show that this is something that needs to be explored further.

Other languages: 3% of respondents said that the information they sought regarding Coronavirus was not in the language that they needed. Although we have no information on what other languages were needed, this is something that needs to be reviewed.

GP appointments: Patients told us that there is some confusion or lack of information about how to access a GP appointment, and that online forms and patient apps can be misleading. There should be clearer information and guidance for patients.

Non-Covid related treatment: Patients are not clear about what types of non-Covid related treatment will continue, and what plans are in place for care and treatment in the future. Patients should be informed about their treatment.

Social care: Almost a quarter of social care service users told us that their care or support had been affected by the pandemic, and almost half told us that they had not been able to contact their social care service provider. Service users should be kept informed about their care and support.

Recommendations

- Review provision of direct access support for those with low mood, anxiety, social isolation, etc.
- Explore the need for provision of Coronavirus information in other languages.
- GP practices to review and update the appointment booking information that they provide to patients so that it is clear and accessible.
- GP practices to review the online forms and patient apps and provide clear and accessible information and guidance on using them where necessary.
- Provide clear information to patients about what non-Covid related treatment can continue, what cannot and why, and what plans are in place to provide treatment in the future. Regular communication should be maintained with patients so that they are kept informed.
- Provide clear information to social care service users or their carers about what care and support can continue, what cannot and why, and what plans are in place to provide care and support in the future. Regular communication should be maintained with service users and their carers so that they are kept informed.

If you wish to comment on the report above, then please, Email: info@healthwatchwalsall.co.uk
Or Tel: 0800 470 1660.

healthwatch Walsall

To share your patient experiences contact us on
Telephone: 0800 470 1660
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