Remote Mental Health Survey

Your experiences of telephone and video call support

July 2021

What was the project about?

Healthwatch Bucks has attended the Buckinghamshire Mental Health COVID-19 strategic response group since April 2020. From this we were able to identify remote appointments as an area lacking service user feedback.

We were also aware of an increase in complaints to The Advocacy People in Buckinghamshire around delays and lack of access to mental health support.

In our report Your experience of health and social care services during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, 60 people told us they had not been able to access support for their mental health and wellbeing.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic many people had their face-to-face mental health support stopped. To make sure people could still access support, remote support was offered.

We wanted to find out about the patient experience of remote support for mental health treatment from adult mental health services since April 2020.

What did we do?

We designed a survey, working closely with Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust. This Trust handles mental health services in Buckinghamshire. We ran the survey online during May and June 2021.

We wanted to find out:

- About the treatment people had received
- Any previous treatment they had
- Changes made to their treatment since COVID-19 pandemic
- Access to their support
- Their experiences of appointments

What did we find?

In total we received 54 valid responses.

About your treatment

We asked people what treatment they had received. People were allowed to choose more than one option.
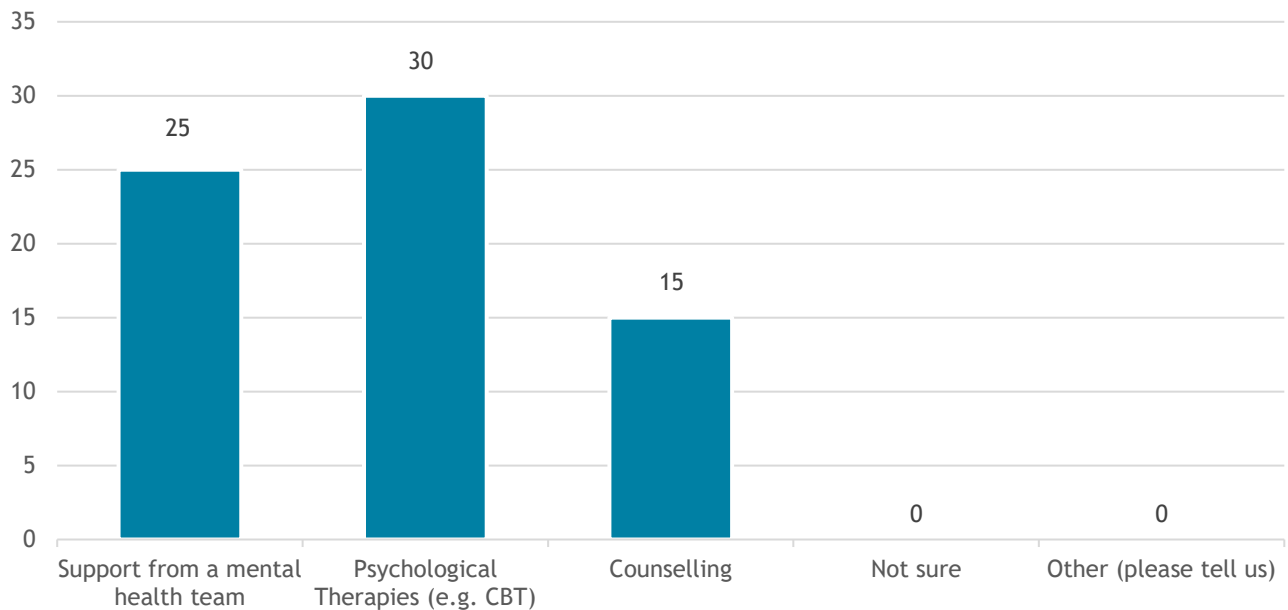
Figure 1 - What treatment have you received?

Most people told us that they had Psychological Therapies, followed closely by Support from a mental health team. Fewer people told us that they had counselling.

We included Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services so we could identify anyone that had transitioned between services in this period.

We asked people when they started their treatment. 17 people were not sure. For the 37 people who answered this question, we have grouped their responses, by year, in the table below.
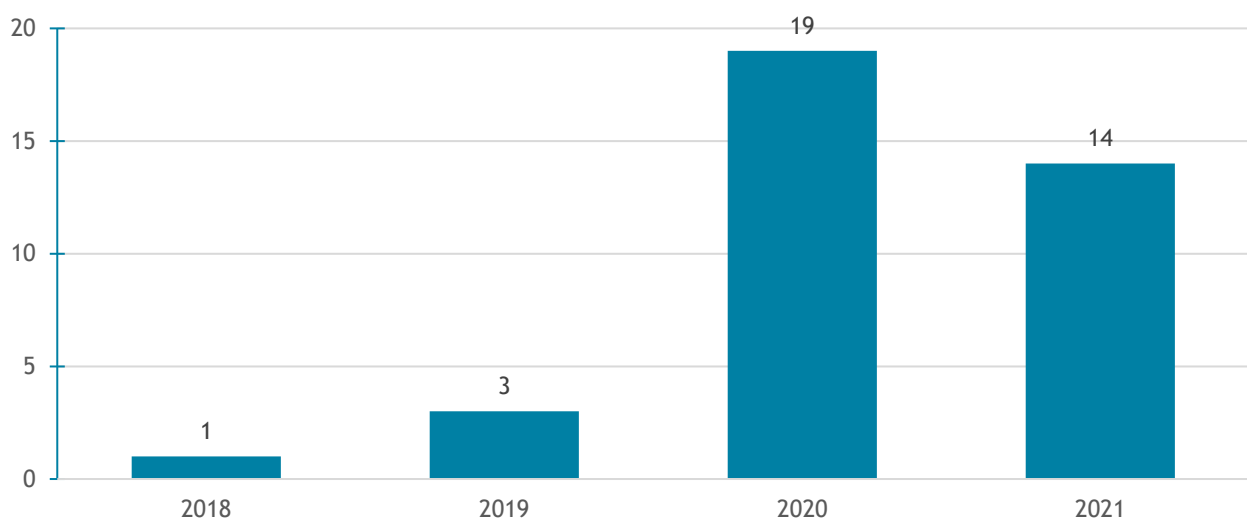
Figure 2 – When did you start your treatment?

When we looked more closely at the specific dates they started treatment, 27 people told us they started treatment between May 2020 to May 2021.

We asked what team people had support from. People were allowed to choose more than one option. A large majority of the people we spoke to told us that they had support from Healthy Minds.
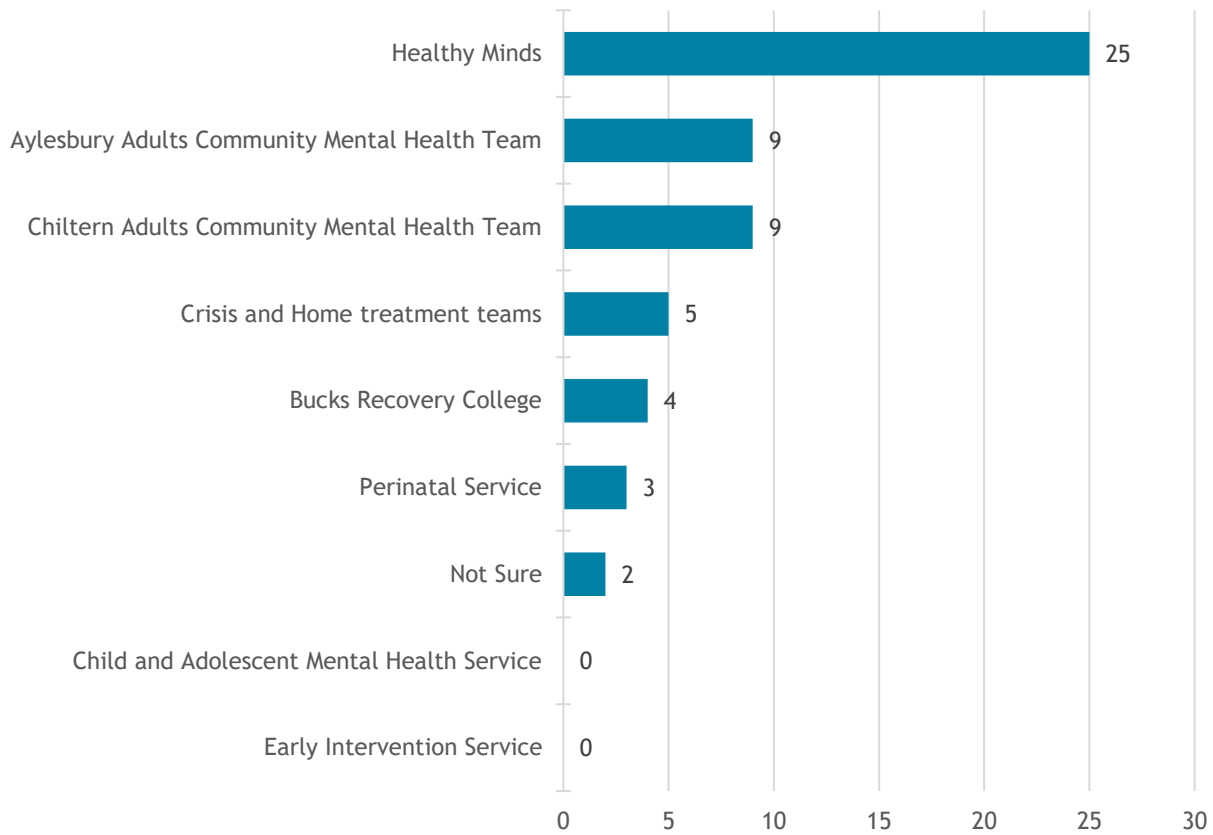

Figure 3 – What team did you have support from?

12 people told us they had support from "other". Their responses are in the table below.

"Other" Teams providing support	Count
Complex Needs Service (CNS)	1
Employee Assistance Programme	2
Health Assured (Employee Assistance Programme)	2
One Recovery Bucks	1
Private Service	4
Talking Therapies	1
Team providing care for employees of Buckinghamshire Council	1
Total	**12**

Table 1 – "Other" Support

We asked people what type of support they had received. People were allowed to choose more than one option. Most people (72%) told us they had telephone one to one.
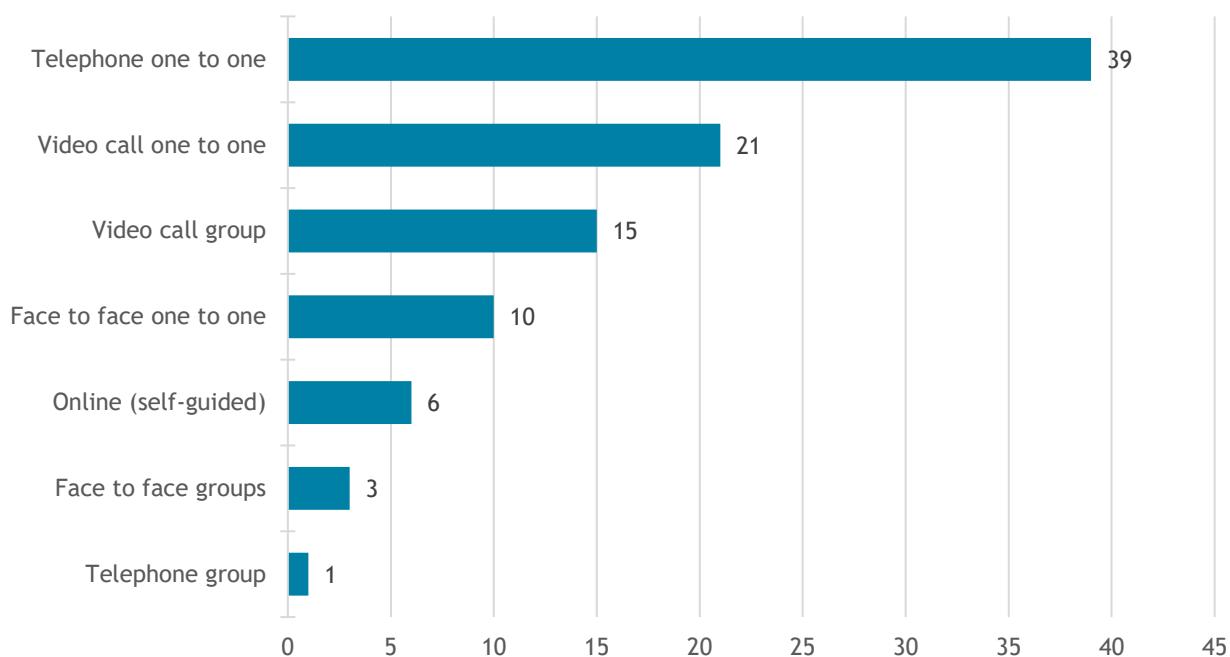

Figure 4 -Which types of support have you had during your current treatment?

We looked at the combination of answers people gave more closely. 43 people told us they had only had telephone, video or online (remote) support. 11 people told us they had a mix of support that included face to face. During our analysis we compared answers from these two groups (Mixed and Remote).

The most common combinations of treatment we heard about are shown in Table 2

Combinations of treatment	Mixed support	Remote only
Telephone one to one		15
Telephone one to one & Video call one to one		5
Video call one to one		5
Telephone one to one & Video call group		4
Telephone one to one & Video call one to one & Video call group		3
Telephone one to one & Online (self-guided)		3
Video call group		3
Telephone one to one & Face to face one to one	3	

Table 2 – Combinations of treatment

Changes to treatment

We asked people what changes were made to their treatment because of the pandemic.

We asked people if their treatment, from each Team, switched from face-to-face to remote sessions because of the pandemic.

Did your treatment switch from face-to-face to remote?	No, it was always face to face	No, it was always remote	Yes	Total
Chiltern Adults Community Mental Health Team	1	2	4	7
Aylesbury Mental Community Mental Health Team		2	7	9
Healthy Minds	1	18	6	25
Perinatal Service		2	1	3
Early Intervention Service				0
Crisis and Home treatment teams		4	1	5
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service				0
Bucks Recovery College			4	4
Total	2	28	23	

Table 3 – Did your treatment switch from face-to-face to remote?

23 people said Yes. 28 people told us that their support did not change.

We asked people the **main type of support** they had during the pandemic. Most people told us that they had telephone one to one.

Main type of support received	Count
Telephone one to one	46%
Video call one to one	22%
Video call group	17%
Online (self-guided)	7%
Face to face one to one	4%
No answer	2%
Telephone group	2%
Total	100%

Table 4-Main type of support received during the pandemic

We asked people if the person providing their treatment changed because of the pandemic.

Did the person providing your treatment change?	Yes	No	Don't know
Aylesbury Mental Community Mental Health Team	3	6	
Chiltern Adults Community Mental Health Team	1	5	1
Healthy Minds	1	19	5
Bucks Recovery College		4	
Crisis and Home treatment teams		5	
Perinatal Service		3	
Total	5	42	6

Table 5 – Did the person providing your treatment change?

For most people this did not change.

Previous mental health support

We asked people if they had ever had support for their mental health before their current course of treatment. 47 said "Yes". 7 people said "No/Don't know".

We then asked if their support was with the same service or a different one. 28 people told us it was with the same service, 18 people said it was with a different service.

We asked people who their support was with. People were allowed to choose more than one option.

Which team treated you previously?	Total
Other	12
Healthy Minds	3
Chiltern Adults Community Mental Health Team	2
Crisis and Home treatment teams	2
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service	1

Table 6 – Which team treated you previously?

Half of the people who chose 'other' told us they had used out of area services.

"Other" Teams	Total
Out of area services	6
GP	3
Private service	2
Complex Needs Service	1

Table 7 – "Other" Teams

We asked people which types of support they had previously. People were allowed to choose more than one option. Most people told us they had face to face one to one.
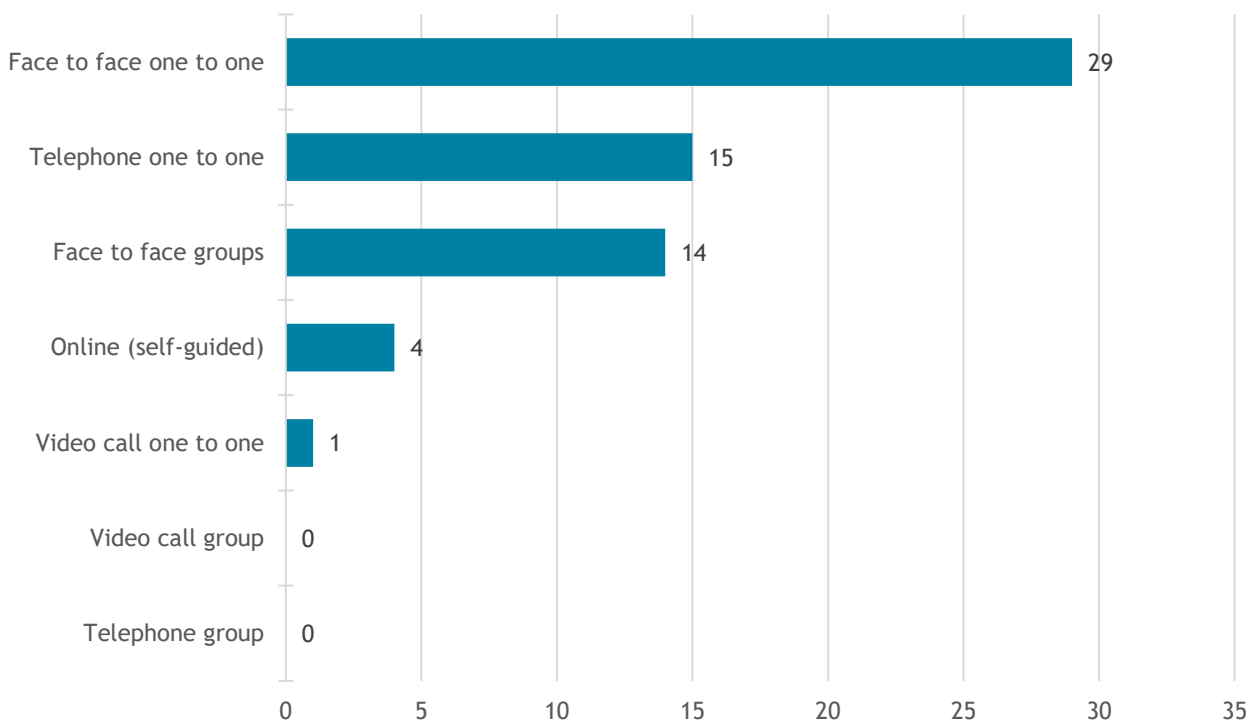

Figure 5 – Which types of support have you had previously?

Notably no-one selected group video and telephone calls. This compares to 15 people who said they had group video calls during their current treatment.

Access to support

We asked people about access to their telephone or video call support.

We asked people how long they have been accessing support for mental health. Most people told us that they had been having support for 1 year or more.

How long have you been accessing support?	Count
1 year or more	34
6 months to 1 year	6
Less than 6 months	12
blank	2
Total	**54**

Table 8 – How long have you been accessing support?

We asked people if they were told how sessions would work before they started remote appointments. The majority said "Yes". This means 17 people did not know or were not sure how their sessions would work.
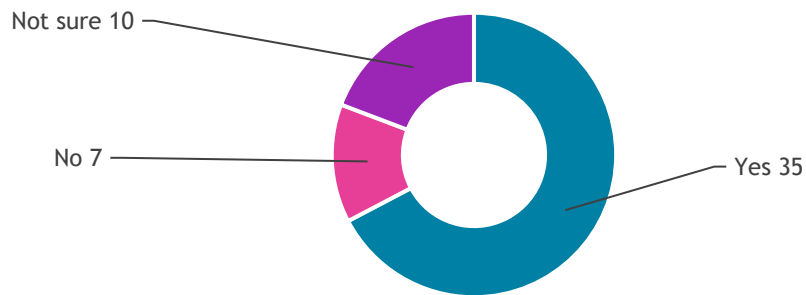

Figure 6 – Were you told how sessions would work before you started remote appointments?

We asked the people who said yes to the previous question, how this was communicated. People were allowed to choose more than one option. Most people told us that they were told over the telephone.
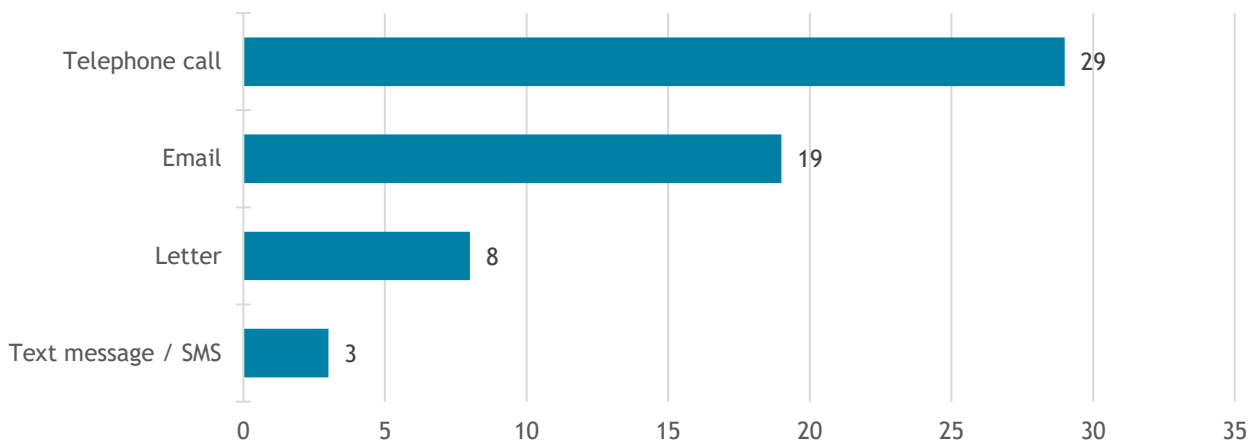

Figure 7 – How was this communicated?

We asked people how they would rate the information they received about how their remote session would work. Most people told us the information was either "excellent" or "good". 6 people told us the information was either "fair" or "poor".

Figure 8 – How would you rate the information you received?

We asked people if they were able to have appointments at a time that suited them. Most people said "Yes". We asked people who ticked "No" the reasons why.

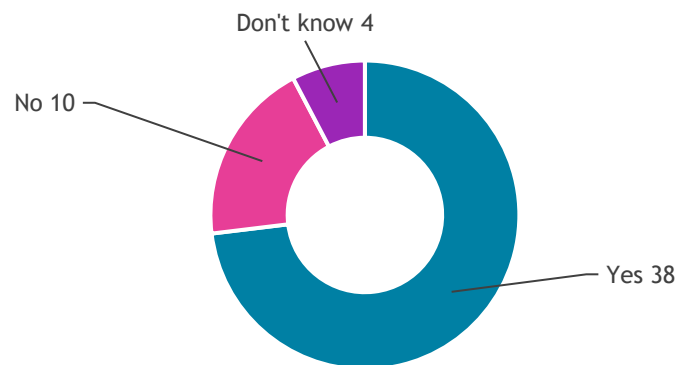**Figure 9 – Were you able to have your appointments at a time that suited you?**

> "I had no choice but to do the online self-guided option because the other options were completely inflexible. With a baby to look after and a husband working different shifts each week I wasn't able to commit to 2 hours at the same time each week."

> "They were very busy, so they were limited on times."

> "It was decided by care provider."

We asked people what they used to access their support. People were allowed to choose more than one option. Most people told us they used "Mobile (phone/tablet/iPad)".
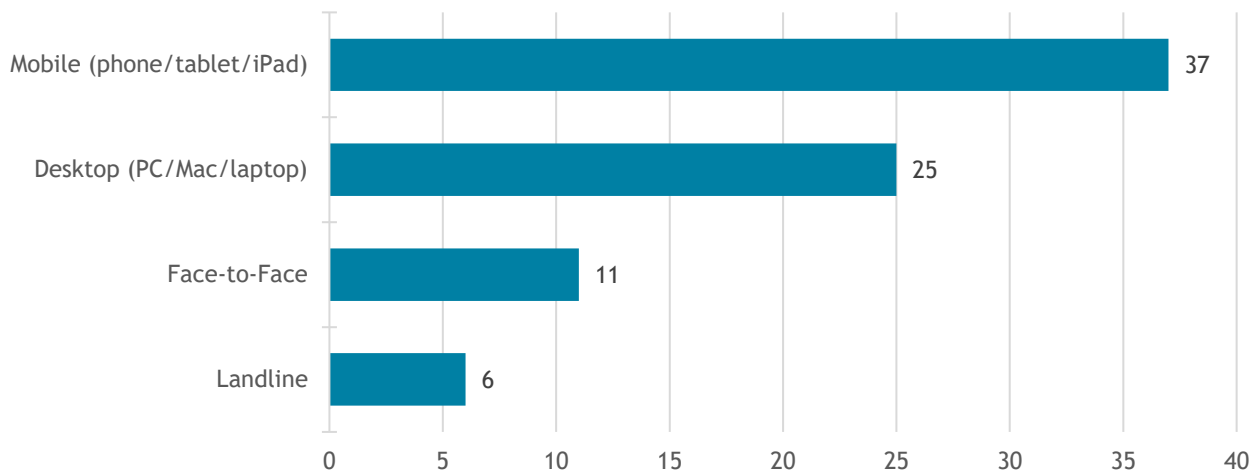

Figure 10 – What did you use to access your support?

We asked people if they had any issues with using the above. Most people said No, with a smaller among saying Yes.
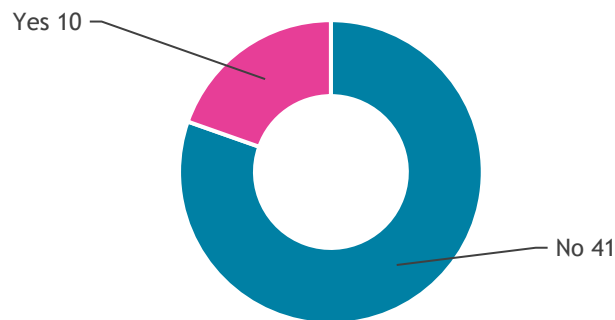
Figure 11 – Did you have any issues using the above?

We asked the ten people who answered "Yes" to tell us more about the issues they had. One person told us they had issues because they were hard of hearing, however most people told us about issues relating to technology.

> Microsoft teams didn't work properly. I could not see a split screen and missed seeing everyone's reactions. I could only see the person who was talking

> Call wouldn't connect; couldn't access call from calendar invite; frequently one of us was late to sessions because of these issues and I didn't know if it was because the therapist was late, because the tech wasn't working or because one of us had done something wrong. This caused a lot of anxiety, and there was never an answer

We asked people if they knew what to do if you had technical problems during the session.

Did you know what to do if you had technical problems during the session?	Count
Yes	28
No	14
Not sure	8
Total	50

Table 9 – Did you know what to do if you had technical problems during the session?

+ Of the ten people who had problems during the remote sessions, only 2 knew what to do if they had technical problems.

Your experience of appointments

We asked people if they felt their **support met their needs**. In this question, people scored how they felt with a slider scale. Zero was the lowest score and six was the highest. The default was three. This was in the middle of the slider and was described as "To some extent."

For comparison, we grouped the scores into low, medium and high:

- Low – 0 or 1
- Medium – 2, 3 or 4
- High – 5 or 6

Overall, a quarter (26%) gave a low score and 30% gave a high score, as shown below.

Score	Mixed	Remote	Total
Low	20%	27%	26%
Mid	20%	51%	45%
High	60%	22%	30%

Table 10 – Did you feel the support met your needs?

However, there were obvious differences when we compare the "Mixed" and "Remote" groups. 60% of the people that had Mixed support scored it high verses 22% of the people who had Remote support.

We asked if people felt their **support helped to improve their mental health** using the same slider scale as above. Our findings were almost the same.

Score	Mixed	Remote	Total
Low	20%	24%	23%
Mid	20%	51%	45%
High	60%	24%	32%

Table 11 – Did you feel the support helped to improve your mental health?

People scored Mixed support higher than Remote support.

We asked people if there were any benefits to them from being given support remotely.

The themes that came up were not having to travel, the comfort of your own home, flexibility and no stress to find parking.

> "More comfortable and felt easier to begin therapy rather than going to a new place meeting strangers face to face."

> "I personally prefer remote support and find it easier to be open with the professional were as face to face I struggle to be open."

> "I prefer it than changing my routine hugely to travel to a venue. It saves lots of time!"

We asked people if there were any difficulties to them from being given support remotely.

The themes that came up were technology, rapport and relationships, lack of flexibility and privacy.

> "It felt less personal and less challenging because I had my own space and thus could withdraw more easily. This, a 4-month gap in treatment due to the pandemic, seriously limited how effective the treatment was."

> "I am not comfortable talking about my mental health on the telephone. I was very apprehensive at first about remote face to face but got used to it but would always prefer actual face to face. I found the remote peer support groups frustrating and inclined to make my depression worse. I couldn't type into the chat fast enough to participate."

> "It felt like I was having support from a call centre worker with an algorithm. I previously had CBT for an eating disorder which was fantastic and very effective. This CBT for perinatal anxiety and depression was a bit useless to be honest. I sought private video counselling which was much better."

We asked people what type of support they prefer. In this question, people were asked to rank each option from 1 to 4, with 1 being the most favoured. Using these rankings, we calculated a total and average score for each option (see

Appendix 2 – Ranking Scoring). The average was based on how many ranked each option.

Overall, "Face to face" was the most preferred option. A "Mixture", "Telephone" and "Video calls" were all around the same with the biggest gap between "Mixture" and "Video Calls". Video call was the least popular option.

We then compared between people who had Mixed support and those that had only Remote support. "Face to face" was still the preferred option but there were slight differences on the other options:

+ The people who had Mixed support much preferred Mixture over either Telephone or Video.
+ The people who had only Remote support were much more uncertain about the other three options, with Mixture just beating Telephone.

Video call was the least popular option in both groups, based on average score.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

We asked people if they would like to tell us anything else.

Themes

Length of time

> "It's brilliant and even though it wasn't CBT, think it was person-centred it has been so helpful. Too few though- I can only have 6. Only really beginning to reflect deeply enough to work on issues after 4 or 5 as initially you're so anxious and confused. Would be nice if the minimum were ten and obviously you could cease before if necessary."

Relationship and rapport

> "Forming a rapport with people is really important to me, continuity with the same GP makes such a difference and I wish this could be recognised so that you don't have to explain to receptionist and if GP is not working you can forward book an appointment with them."

> "I think it is REALLY important to keep face to face appointments for many reasons - connection, body language, getting out of the house/building confidence going to a different setting to home, reducing isolation."

Options for treatment and support

> "The treatment should be individualised. Not just told that this is the route you have to follow."

Change to remote support

> "When I changed from group to telephone due to the pandemic, the support from my therapists was very good, they kept in contact with me frequently."

> "No consideration for those struggling with social anxiety and a change to video support making us feel very uncomfortable."

> "I have been surprised how well remote appointments have worked. The professionals in the Bucks perinatal team have been amazing and we've developed really positive working relationships despite not having face to face contact. I'm so grateful to them for all their support."

Discharge from service

> "The service is excellent but the transition out of treatment needs to be improved. I had improved by end of first course of treatment but not sufficiently to be discharged."

> "Discharged via a group zoom call. Not appropriate for an autistic person."

Review

> "I had a psychiatric review on 25/2/2021 which was reported on 25/3/2021, but I have had no subsequent follow up which has been upsetting."

Our recommendations

We recommend that Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust:

- ensures that service users know what to do if they have technical problems during a remote session.
- maintains a mixture of delivery types and notes the low preference for video calls.
- ensures service users know what further support is available to them after their treatment has ended.
- ensures service users who have come to the end of their course of treatment are informed of this in a format appropriate to their individual needs.
- continue to gain patient feedback around remote support, particularly for service users who feel remote support does not fit their needs.

What are we doing to ensure these are achieved?

- We have sent our report and findings to Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust and have a meeting with them to discuss all the findings in further detail.
- We will also send our findings to Healthwatch England as the independent national champion for people who use health and social care services and CQC.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to all the organisations who helped to share our survey and to all those who responded. Thank you to Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust with their support in designing the survey.

Disclaimer

Please note this report summarises the views of those who responded and does not necessarily reflect the experiences of all service users.

Appendix 1 - Who did we hear from?

Age Group	Count
20 to 29 years	10
30 to 39 years	15
40 to 49 years	9
50 to 59 years	7
60 to 65 years	6
(blank)	7
Total	54

Gender	Count
Man	5
Woman	42
(blank)	7
Total	54

Is your gender identity the same as the sex you were assigned at birth?	Count
Yes	47
(blank)	7
Total	54

Sexual orientation	Count
Asexual	3
Bisexual	4
Gay man	1
Heterosexual / Straight	35
Lesbian / Gay woman	1
Pansexual	1
(blank)	9
Total	54

Ethnicity	Count
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Any other Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups background	1
Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White	1
White: Any other White background	1
White: British / English / Northern Irish / Scottish / Welsh	42
(blank)	9
Total	54

Religion	Count
Buddhist	1
Christian	18
No religion	26
Other religion (please specify)	1
Wiccan	1
(blank)	8
Total	54

Marital Status	Count
Cohabiting	3
In a civil partnership	2
Married	25
Single	15
Widowed	1
(blank)	8
Total	54

Please tell us if any of the following apply to you (tick all that apply)	Count
Currently pregnant	1
Currently breastfeeding	3
Given birth in the last 26 weeks	2
Not applicable	41

Are you a carer?	Count
No	36
Yes	10
(blank)	8
Total	54

Do you consider yourself to have any of the following long term conditions?	Count
Asthma, COPD or respiratory condition	15
Blindness or severe visual impairment	0
Cancer	0
Cardiovascular condition (including stroke)	1
Chronic kidney disease	1
Deafness or severe hearing impairment	1
Dementia	0
Diabetes	4
Epilepsy	1
Hypertension	4
Learning disability	0
Mental health condition	27
Musculoskeletal condition	4
Other (please specify)	6

Do you consider yourself to have any of the following disabilities?	Count
Physical or mobility impairment	5
Sensory impairment	1
Learning disability or difficulties	1
Mental health condition	26
Long term condition	11
Other (please specify)	1

Appendix 2 – Ranking Scoring

We counted how many times each rank was selected for each option:

Overall	1	2	3	4	blank	Non-blank Total
Face-to-Face	25	9	8	5	7	47
Telephone	10	13	7	18	6	48
Video Calls	2	13	19	13	7	47
Mixture	12	11	13	11	7	47

People with Mixed support	1	2	3	4	blank	Non-blank Total
Face-to-Face	5	3	1		2	9
Telephone	1	3	1	5	1	10
Video Calls		1	6	2	2	9
Mixture	4	2	1	2	2	9

People with only Remote support	1	2	3	4	blank	Non-blank Total
Face-to-Face	20	6	7	5	5	38
Telephone	9	10	6	13	5	38
Video Calls	2	12	13	11	5	38
Mixture	8	9	12	9	5	38

We then multiplied each rank by the number of times it was selected and summed the results. For example, for Overall Face to face support:

(25x1) + (9x2) + (8x3) + (5x4) = 87

This gave us a total score. We then divided this score by the number of people that ranked that option (the "Non-blank Total). Continuing the Overall Face to face support example:

87 / 47 = 1.85

This results in the following where lower scores mean higher preference. Each table is sorted from lowest to highest score.

Overall	Score	Average Score
Face-to-Face	87	1.85
Mixture	117	2.49
Telephone	129	2.69
Video Calls	137	2.91

People with Mixed support	Score	Average Score
Face-to-Face	14	1.56
Mixture	19	2.11
Video Calls	28	3.11
Telephone	30	3.00

People with only Remote support	Score	Average Score
Face-to-Face	73	1.92
Mixture	98	2.58
Telephone	99	2.61
Video Calls	109	2.87

If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us.

Address: Healthwatch Bucks

6 Centre Parade,

Place Farm Way,

Monks Risborough,

Buckinghamshire

HP27 9JS

Phone number: 01844 348 839

Email: info@healthwatchbucks.co.uk

Website URL: www.healthwatchbucks.co.uk

Twitter: @HW_Bucks

Facebook: HealthWatchBucks

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