



Cost-of-living crisis research

February 2023

healthwatch



The impact of the cost-of-living crisis

This presentation aims to set out some of our findings from our research into the cost-of-living crisis.

We have been asking people about how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting them and their well-being over the past months.

- So far 53 people have taken part in the survey
- 19 people responded to questions about the cost of living crisis in our other work.
- We spoke with 5 more people at an online workshop with a group from Wandsworth Cares' Centre

Research in September 2022

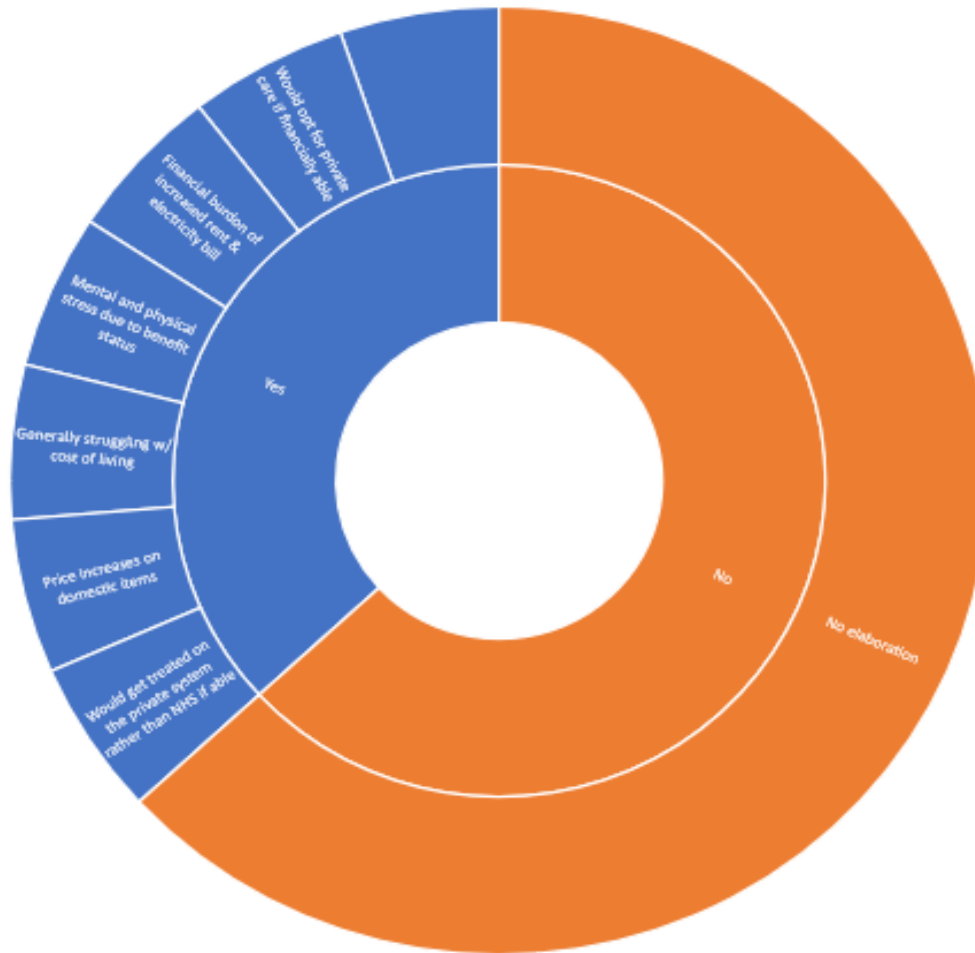
In our September 2022 'Health and Social Care Service Stories' survey we also asked about the impact of the cost of living

19 people took part in this online survey and answered the question 'Is the cost of living affecting your ability to manage your daily care, or get the health care you need?'

- 12 said that their daily care and health were not affected by the cost-of-living crisis.
- The other 7 people said that they were already affected or concerned about being affected.

Research in September 2022

Impact of the cost of living



Of the 7 people who said they would be affected by the cost-of-living crisis there were some elaborations including:

- General struggles with the cost-of-living
- Mental and physical stress due to benefit status
- Would opt for private care if they could afford
- Financial burden of rent and bills
- Concern for finances in case of an emergency

Research in December 2022

Healthwatch Wandsworth was invited by Wandsworth Cares' centre to talk with the Adults with Learning Difficulties peer support group about the impact of the cost-of-living on their ability to access health and social care services and their general well-being in December 2022.

Four carers attended the online workshop with a member of staff who shared experiences on behalf of the carers who could not attend the session.

- We asked: Is the cost-of-living affecting your ability to manage your daily care or access the health care you need?
- Two participants spoke about their difficulties with juggling their children's care needs and feeling unsupported in this.

Research in December 2022

- We asked the group if the cost-of-living crisis directly affects their health or their well-being (including their emotional or mental health).
- Many of the carers at the centre had been talking about how they were afraid to put the heating on and voicing a lot of confusion about the energy bill cap and what support might be available.
- Warm hubs were discussed and it was noted that there didn't seem to be any hubs specifically for people who have Learning Disabilities.
- Some people were having to visit food banks, sometimes for the first time as they can't struggle with rising costs.

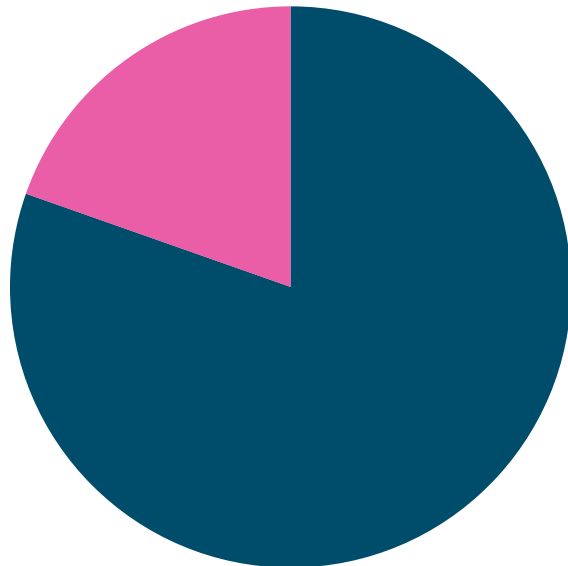


Insight from surveys



Impacts on health and well-being

In our Cost-of-living survey, we have been asking people in Wandsworth whether the cost-of-living crisis has been affecting their well-being.



- In the last 6 months the cost-of-living crisis has affected my emotional well being and physical health
- In the last 6 months the cost-of-living crisis has NOT affected my emotional well being or physical health

80% of people who took part in the survey said that their health and well-being were impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. This includes emotional and mental well-being.

Impact on emotional well-being

Stress and mental health concerns repeatedly emerged throughout the survey responses.

- Many people said that they were feeling a lot of anxiety due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- People told us about a range of stresses impacting their mental health including feeling anxious about their illnesses, paying for food, rent, transport, and paying their energy bills.
- Four respondents spoke specifically about anxiety, six about worry and 19 respondents spoke about feeling stressed.



I have a chronic anxiety diagnosis and it's hard to wind down from this kind of anxiety and stress about being ill and the cost-of-living crisis.

Anonymous survey participant



Impact on physical well-being

For some people who took part in the survey stress and anxiety are causing their other conditions to worsen.

One person described how they have been having seizures due to increased stress and another spoke about the negative impact that stress has been having on their blood pressure.

- Some people have spoken to us about how having to have the heating on less has meant that their home is cold which has negatively impacted existing conditions.
- One person said that they were concerned about their arthritis being affected by the cold whilst another person said that the cold in their house was already worsening their arthritis meaning that they couldn't grip things as their fingers were swollen.



Impacts on self-care

Some people talked about how they have stopped doing things that they usually would like seeing friends or doing self-care activities due to the cost of living crisis.

These kinds of small things tend to support people with emotional well-being, but as people are struggling to meet their basic needs things like self-care and socialising are harder to do.

It is stressful managing rent and bills and I am not turning the heating on. I need to keep money in the back of my mind all the time, every penny spent is stressful.

Anonymous survey participant



Financial impacts

We have been asking questions about how the cost-of-living crisis has been impacting people's finances.

Most people who took part in the survey said that their financial situation has changed in the last 12 months.

- Twelve people spoke about how the cost of food, transport and bills has gone up.
- A small number of people had been affected by losing their livelihoods either due to reduced hours at work, losing their job or their businesses shutting down.
- Three people spoke about how the financial support that they receive through benefits is not enough to have an adequate quality of life.
- Additionally, some people are having to take on multiple jobs or more hours to support themselves. One person spoke about relying on family for support and another person said that they had to go rely on charitable initiatives to get by.

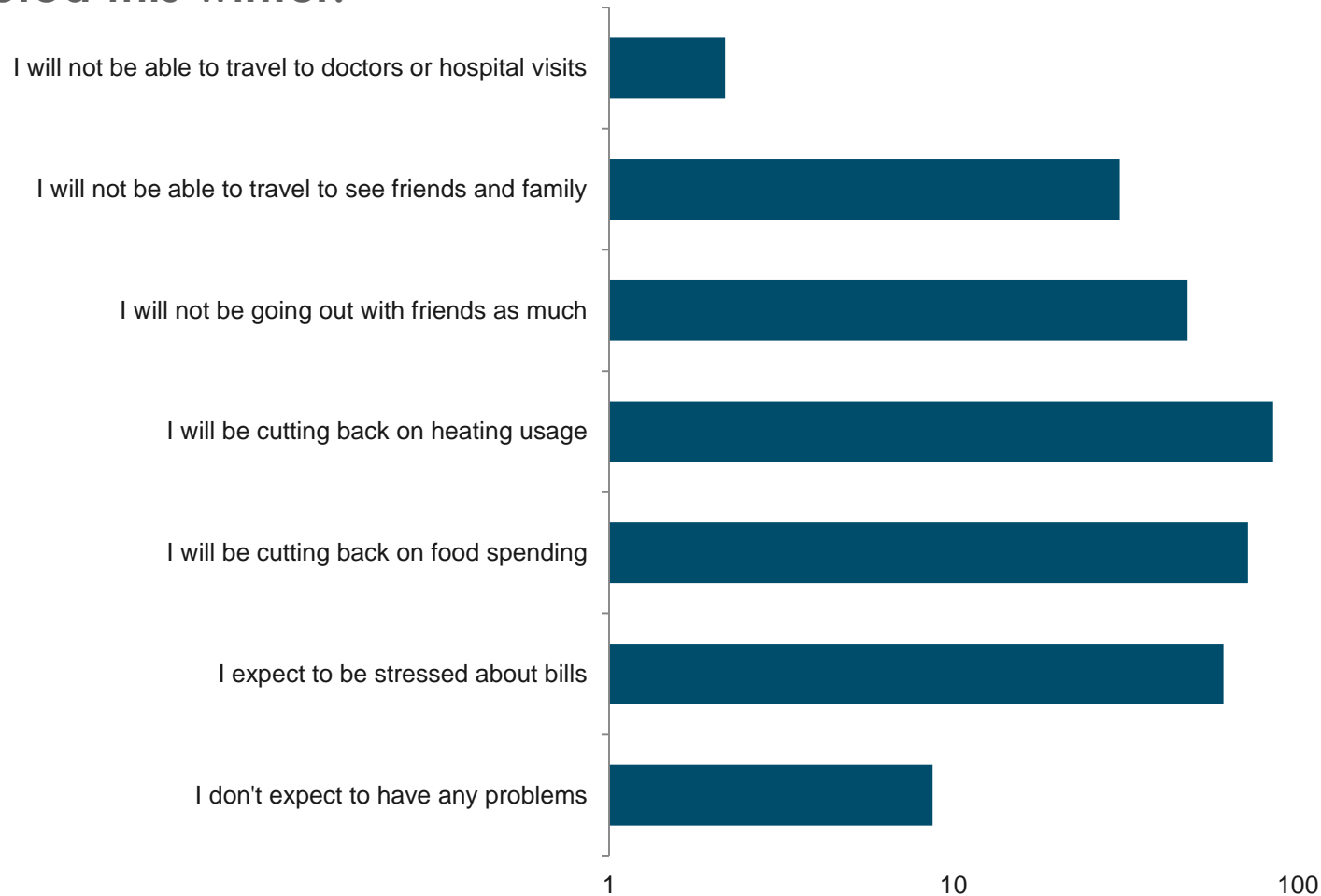
I have to work two jobs to pay for rent and food. Sometimes I don't have anything left to buy food and have to come to a food bank, it is very stressful.

Anonymous survey respondent



Impact on lifestyle

Almost everyone we spoke to said that their lifestyle would be affected this winter.



Conclusions so far

At this stage, a few things can be drawn out of and concluded from our survey data.

Next steps

Following this mini-report presentation, we have plans to

- Continue talking to people about how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting people in Wandsworth.
- When we have some more data we will write a full-length report about the cost-of-living crisis and how it is affecting people's health and well-being in Wandsworth.

An overwhelming amount of respondents talked about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on their mental health. This is in part due to the changes in people's lifestyles and quality of life, and the stress of managing during the cost-of-living crisis. Additionally, people who were already vulnerable, for example, those on benefits and people with existing conditions have been highly impacted by rising costs and caps on benefits.