



# **Experiences of home care in Blackburn with Darwen**

December 2025

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## About Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen

Healthwatch was established under the Health and Social Care Act 2012 as an independent consumer champion to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

There are over 150 local Healthwatch across England. The role of a local Healthwatch is to:

- Listen to people, especially those who are most vulnerable, to understand their experiences and what matters most to them.
- Influence those who have the power to change services so that they better meet people's needs now and into the future.
- Empower and inform people to get the most from their health and social care services and encourage other organisations to do the same.

Find out more at: <http://www.healthwatchblackburnwithdarwen.co.uk>

## Background to Our Engagement

Blackburn with Darwen Council provides domiciliary (home) care for adults needing support with daily living, offering help with personal care, meals, household tasks, and accessing community facilities, accessible via an assessment through Adult Social Care Services. The care and support provided to each person will depend on what their individual adult needs assessment has identified as being needed to meet their needs and achieve their outcomes.

The Council currently commissions ten external providers to provide this service.

Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen were keen to engage with residents in receipt of domiciliary care in our 2025/26 workplan because this is a group from whom we receive little feedback about their care because of a range of factors including fear of reprisal, communication difficulties, and social isolation.

At the same time Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has developed its Adult Social Care Strategic Commissioning Strategy 2025-2027, which outlines how they will allocate resources over the next two years to support residents, with a priority of helping people to stay healthy and live in their own homes for as long as possible. The current model for domiciliary care is being reviewed with the aim of moving towards an integrated workforce model which is aligned with the multi-disciplinary neighbourhood teams.

The feedback gathered through this engagement will enable the start of a coproduction process with residents to share the new model for domiciliary care in the borough.

## Methodology

We designed a survey to collect feedback from those individuals in receipt of domiciliary care or where more appropriate their family members.

Questions were designed around key themes of expectations of the care provision, quality of care, skills and training of staff and ease of communication with the provider. We would like to thank Healthwatch Sunderland for their work with recipients of domiciliary care in 2023 and the structure they used for this engagement.

Blackburn with Darwen Council selected lists of twenty residents per provider which were then given to the providers to gain consent from the individuals or family members concerned. This resulted in a list of one hundred consenting individuals/family members, with one provider not issuing Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen with a list of names.

Our team then made telephone calls to all of these residents, gathering sixty-six responses in total. Learning from this approach was that vulnerable adults may not feel comfortable answering calls from unknown phone numbers and accessing family members during working hours can prove difficult. Another area of learning was that the majority of residents we spoke with were White British, therefore there may have been issues in gathering consent for interview from minority ethnic residents due to language barriers.

# Executive Summary

The aim of this engagement was to find out what is working well in domiciliary care in Blackburn with Darwen and what needs to be improved. This feedback will help shape the new model of domiciliary care in the borough.

## What is Working Well

**Care plans** – 83% of respondents stated that they had a care plan in place and 78% stated that the care received is as agreed in that plan.

**Carers' support** – 86% of respondents felt that they were treated with dignity and respect and 73% felt that they were listened to and spoken to in a way that they understood.

**Skills and training** – 75% of respondents felt that the carers had appropriate and sufficient skills and training to support them in their home.

**Contacting the care agency** – 75% of respondents found the head office staff to be friendly and helpful if they needed to contact the agency.

**Being happy with the service** – 91% of respondents were either happy or very happy with the service provided by the care agencies and 87% would recommend the agency to family and friends.

## Areas for improvement

**Knowing who will be visiting as carers** – 44% of respondents knew which carers would be visiting them and only 21% stated that they were told if there was a change of carer.

**Timing of visits** – Only 45% of respondents stated that their carers arrived on time and 34% were informed if the carers were going to be late.

**Length of visit** – only 58% of respondents stated that the carers stayed for the agreed amount of time on visits, but often felt that this was not the fault of the carers themselves.

# Findings

We received a total of 66 responses to the survey. 50 were from individuals who are in receipt of care and 16 were from a family member.

Please note not all respondents answered all questions in the survey.

## Visits from carers

Statement	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Not sure		Total
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	
I have a care and support plan put in place	83%	55	6%	4	2%	1	2%	1	5%	3	3%	2	66
My care and support plan is regularly reviewed to ensure it is correct and up to date	67%	44	6%	4	8%	5	5%	3	6%	4	9%	6	66
The care and support I receive at each visit is what is agreed in my care plan	78%	51	11%	7	3%	2	3%	2	3%	2	2%	1	65
It is important to me to know which carers will be visiting me	65%	43	23%	15	6%	4	6%	4	0%	0	0%	0	66
I know which carers will be visiting me	44%	29	27%	18	21%	14	6%	4	0%	0	2%	1	66
I am informed before my visit if there is going to be a change in who will be visiting me	21%	14	18%	12	14%	9	29%	19	17%	11	2%	1	66
It is important to me that my carers arrive on time	68%	45	24%	16	3%	2	5%	3	0%	0	0%	0	66
My carers arrive for my visit at the time that has been planned	45%	29	34%	22	14%	9	5%	3	2%	1	2%	1	65
I am informed before my planned visits if my carers are going to be late	34%	22	20%	13	14%	9	11%	7	16%	10	5%	3	64

Whilst the majority of respondents knew that they had a care plan in place, two-thirds were aware of this being reviewed to ensure that it reflected their current needs. There were significant variations between people's expectations around which carers would be visiting them and the times of visits and who was actually visiting them and when. Only 21% stated that they were informed if there was going to be a change in carer and only 34% were informed if the carers were going to be late.

Feedback from residents highlighted this variation in consistency of experience, relating to changes in carers or lateness of carers arriving at their home.

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"There seems to be a staffing problem. Three are not available due to school holidays. My normal one is on paternity leave. I'm told he won't be back for 3 months. It's a bit hit and miss at the moment. It's not the staff's fault but the management should have provided better cover. Yesterday someone arrived at 11.20am instead of 12.30pm and he apologised and came back - it's the scheduling that has errors not the staff. Up till the school holidays it was better."

"They text me to let me know when they're on the way, so they communicate well."

"They turn up at random times and only if they are really late that they will call. If I don't ring, we wouldn't find out."

"I'm not too bothered about them being a bit late because I know they're busy."

"They arrive on time no problem but sometimes the staff change quite a bit."

"His condition has altered and has prostate issues and in last few months had catheter fitted. They have changed the care to account for this, but I get the impression they are short on staff at the moment. Sometimes they have called in their carers from Burnley office which has been established for longer and they seem much more experienced."

"They've all been great and never been late."

"He has favourites and some carers will allow him to say no to changing the bed, but I've told them that this needs to be done. He just needs to get to know the carers better and them get to know him - it's early days for us. Structure is really important for him so them arriving on time is good."

"He likes the same people and most of the time he does get the same people which is good."

"Very good. They're all very good and very polite. I mainly get the one carer which is good."

"I see different people."

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## Quality of Care and Support

Statement	Always		Usually		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Not sure		Total
	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	
The carers who support me know me well and how I like and need to be supported	71%	47	23%	15	3%	2	3%	2	0%	0	0%	0	66
I feel that I am listened to and my carers talk to me in a way I understand	73%	48	18%	12	3%	2	3%	2	2%	1	2%	1	66
My carers involve me in how I would like my support to be provided	70%	46	15%	10	8%	5	3%	2	2%	1	3%	2	66
My carers treat me with kindness and in a compassionate and caring way	85%	56	11%	7	5%	3	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	66
They treat me with dignity and respect	86%	57	9%	6	5%	3	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	66
They help me to be independent	63%	41	12%	8	14%	9	3%	2	2%	1	6%	4	65

The majority of people felt that their care was person centred and that they were treated with dignity and respect. The lower percentage of people reporting being supported to be independent was predominantly due to lack of mobility or capacity amongst individuals receiving care.



"The original carers knew my mum well but I'm not sure the new ones will. She is pretty much bedbound so they cannot support her to be independent really."

"They're really good. They let me make the decisions about what I can and can't do and that can change from day to day if I'm not feeling too good."

"The only time we've had issues is when they send a male carer – we told them from the start that we don't want a male carer. They sent male carers twice in a row, so she refused. We've now got just female carers. A few just used to walk out and not support with the washing whereas some help."

"They're like extended family. At first, I didn't want the help, but I've accepted it."

"They don't really know him so well. I'm concerned he has not had a shower in ages but again that could be him pushing back and refusing to have one."

"They help me to do things myself and they know I'm independent and they have a laugh with me. They make sure I take my medication."

"There's some things that I need to ensure that they do in the home but it's generally good. It's probably because he's stopped him from doing things. They are really caring with him. It takes a massive pressure off me as his daughter."

"Sometimes I have to remind them about things especially with new carers. They have the right attitude towards him and do their best. Some are more senior than others and have more experience than others. I think one of them going on maternity leave has thrown them into chaos. I'm trying to get him to be more independent, and some encourage him to get involved in getting dressed."

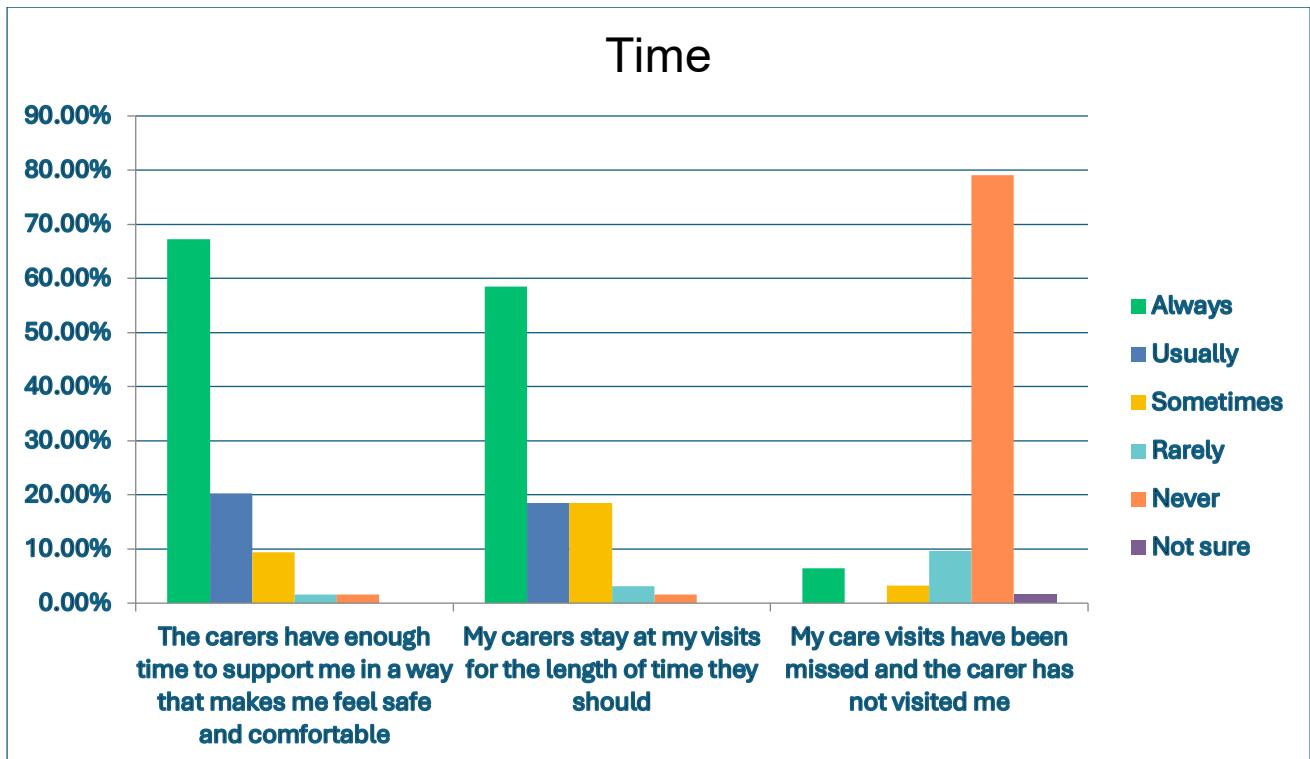
"They are all generally very good. I've started going out more now on bus trips, so I am more confident."

"Now they know how to work with her and her good days and bad days. It really helps having regular carers."

"They're really really good with me. Great to have people coming morning and night. They help me with jobs around the house. They've helped me get over depression."



## Length of Care Visits



Despite the majority of respondents stating that the length of visits is appropriate, the additional feedback presents more of a mixed picture.

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"Bit hit and miss. They've fixed my shower room, so I've now had half an hour less at lunchtime and added it on to the morning. That leaves just 15 minutes at lunch, and it takes up to 15 minutes just to give me my tablets."

"Some spend extra time with them, but some just spend 5-10 minutes and then go. They're meant to stay half an hour."

"I'm not bothered though about them not staying a long time though."

"She always spends enough time with me."

"They always stay to make sure I'm happy with everything."

"It can vary how long they stay for but that's more about what he wants at the time. He doesn't tell me much; that's his private time."

"They are good at waking him up and making sure he has his breakfast and medication, and they do stay and have a chit chat with him."

"I've raised this with them before because we have a camera in the home. One time they were there only 6 minutes, and it isn't often the full half hour. It might be because of him saying he doesn't need stuff doing but they could again be firmer with him."

"Sometimes they are rushed. There's not enough allowance for travel times between visits. I used to do this job when I was younger, I know what it's like!"

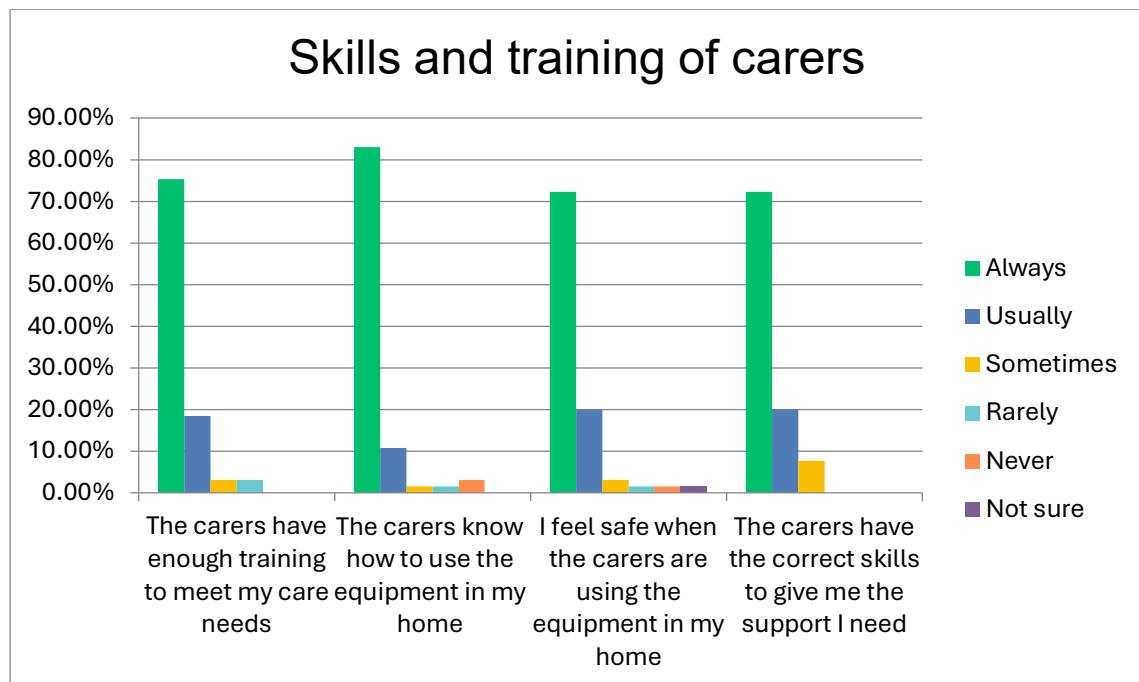
"My usual ones could do the tasks more quickly. They disappear as soon as they are done, they don't really stay and chat - there's only one who asked if he could stay and chat for the full-time allocation."

"Sometimes they're double booked but that's due to poor scheduling."

"They spend enough time washing him and helping him to dress."



## Skills and Training of Carers



The majority of respondents felt that carers had adequate skills and training to be able to support them in their home and felt safe with their support. However, when asked for further feedback, some concerns were raised about the level of training given to staff.

**6** “They're all trained well. My current carer is on annual leave, and I've got a cover but they're fine too.”

“They were brilliant after I had an operation and can use the equipment I need.”

“They don't have the training for equipment. I asked for a raised seat and the staff member said that they haven't been told how to use it and it was not part of their job.”

“With her dementia I've told them how she acts but not sure how much they know about dementia generally.”

“I've nothing but praise for them, they're like family.”

“It's usually someone new who struggles.”

"They help me to wash, I hate it, but it needs to be done! They're great."

"One of the carers who came out to change the night bag for him did not know how to do this, so I had to do this myself. I am concerned that they are doing training on their phones more than anything."

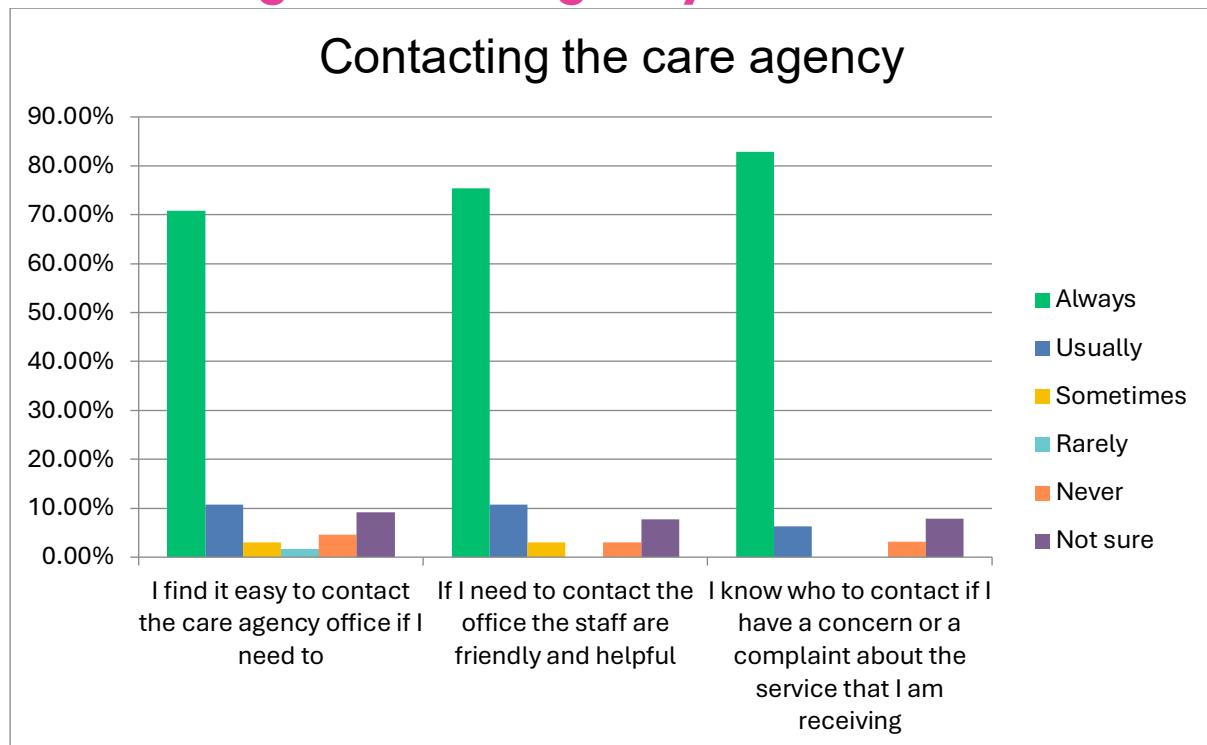
"Some are more skilled than others but that's the same as in any job!"

"No because of his health conditions but he now has district nurses coming in to check on his pressure sores. There isn't much equipment to use."

"Yes, they are highly skilled."



## Contacting the Care Agency



The majority of respondents felt that they could contact the agency easily, however when asked for further feedback, many had not actually contacted the agency office.



"It's easy to contact the office if I need to do so."

"We've not really needed to call much."

"I've never really needed to call the office other than at the start to get the arrangements set up and agree the consistency of visits."

"They're very helpful. I just ring them if I need to change a visit."

"They are very obliging."

"Yes. The one person is brilliant, and the others aren't as great, but I can manage."

"I've never had to complain."

"Heather is really friendly and we have a right laugh."

"Sometimes difficult at the weekend to contact them. She isn't taken out at all - need to contact adult social care to arrange package."

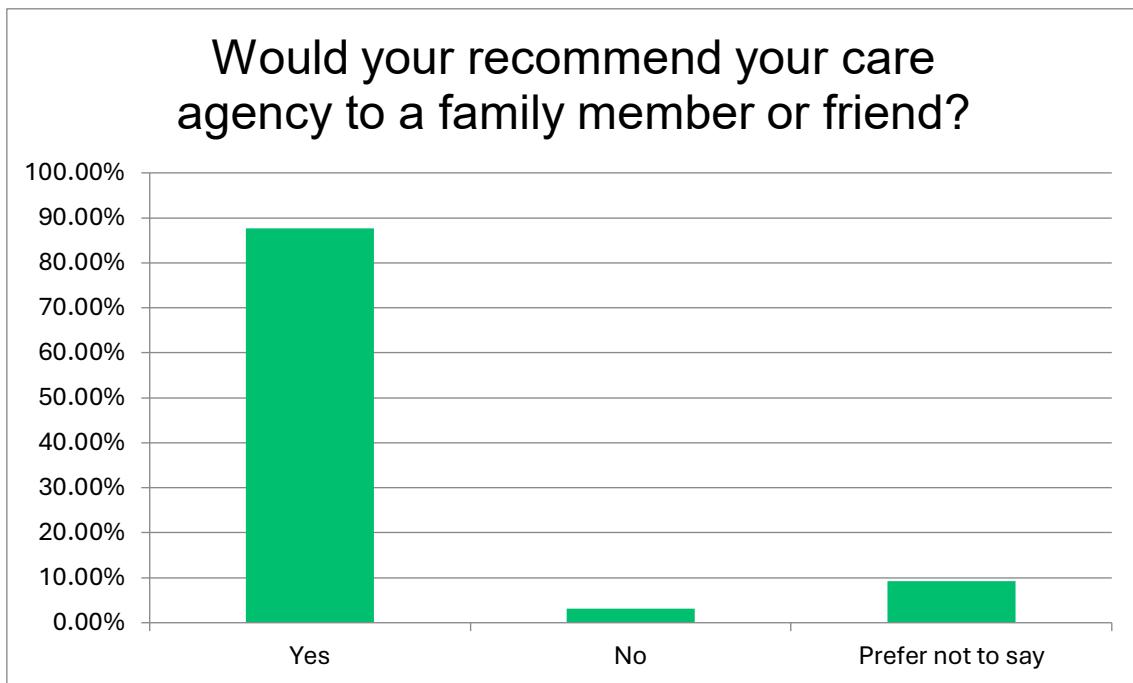
"It's a bit awkward due to the owner at the moment. There's one woman who is really lovely."

"Yes. The one person is brilliant, and the others aren't as great, but I can manage."



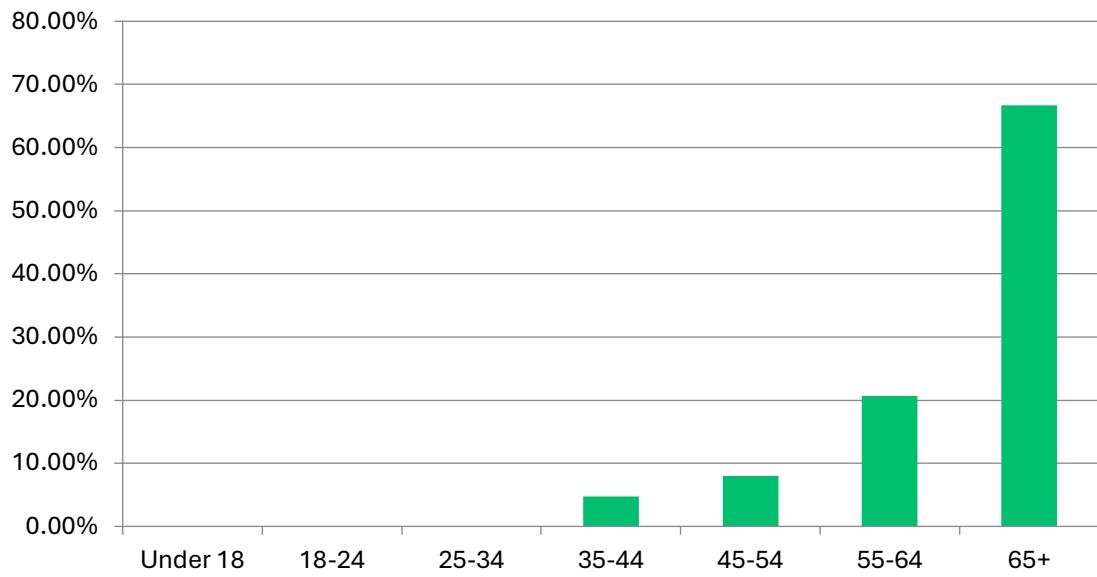
## How Happy or Unhappy Are You with the Service You Receive?

Very unhappy	Unhappy	Neither happy nor unhappy	Happy	Very happy	Total
0%	0%	9%	47%	44%	64

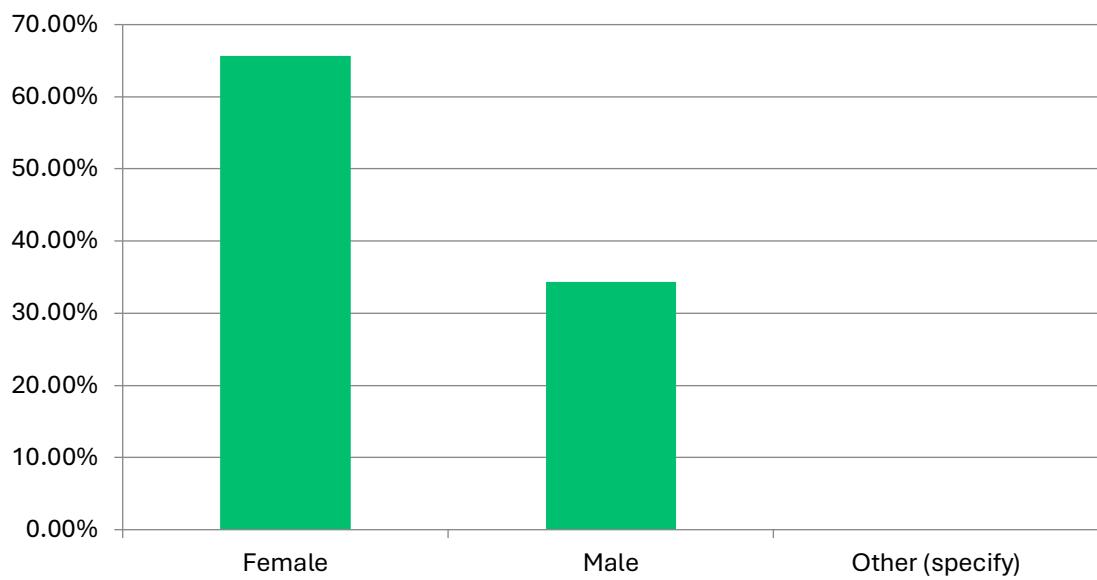


# Demographics

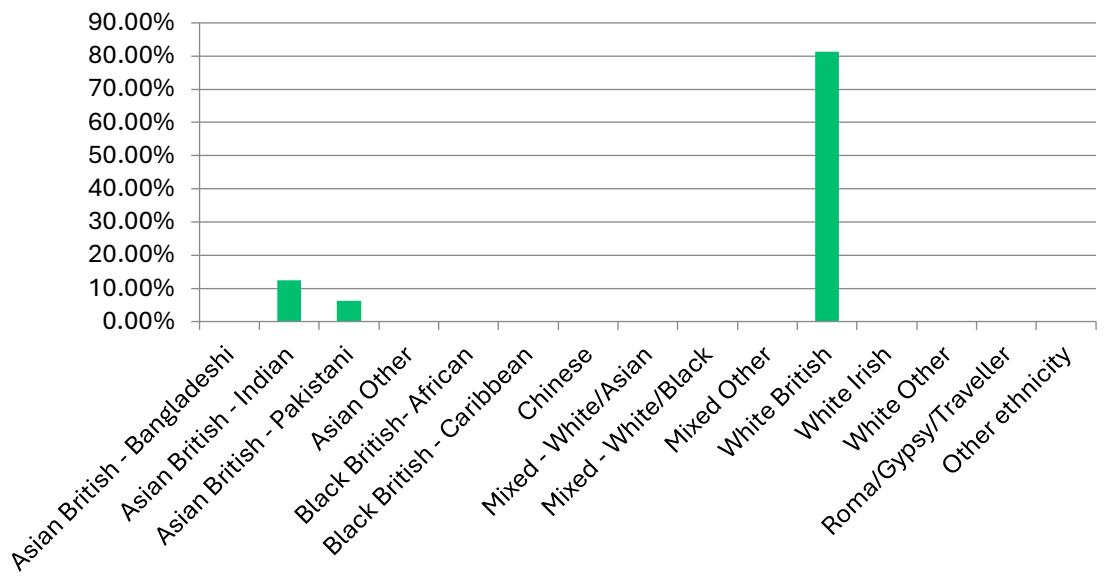
What is your age?



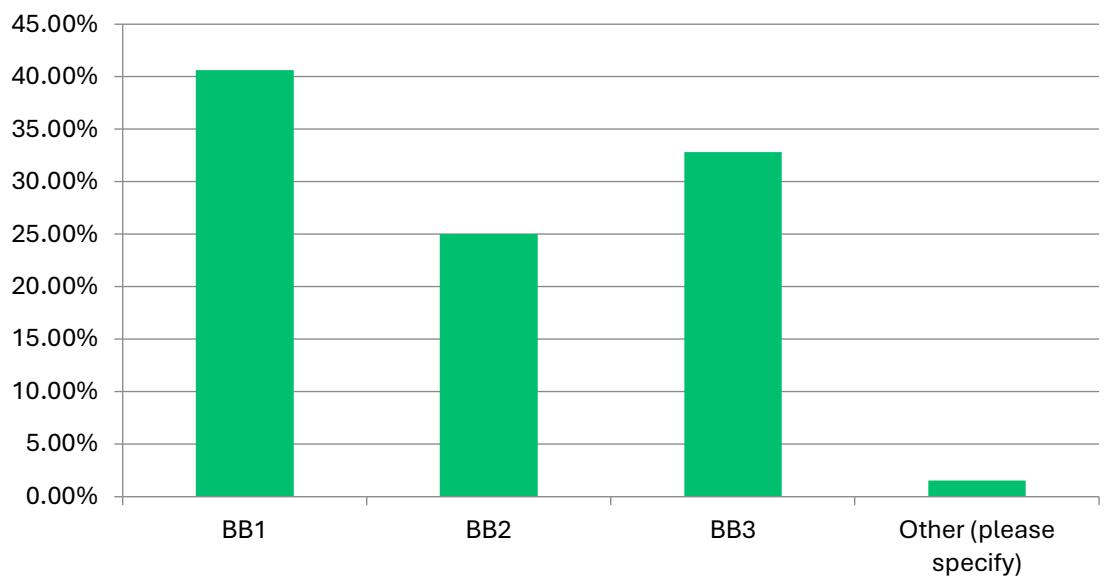
What is your gender?



## What is your ethnicity?



## What is the first half of your postcode?



# **Appendix – List of currently commissioned providers of domiciliary care in Blackburn with Darwen**

These are the providers who were in the scope of this survey:

- Cherish UK Care and Support Services
- Choice Care
- Curantis Health Care
- Delta Care Ltd
- Guardian Homecare
- Homecare for You
- I Care Group
- Orchid Home Care Support Ltd
- Premier Care Blackburn Branch
- Willowbrook Homecare