



Health Care, Social Care and Well-being services during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Survey responses:
9th April - 31st May 2020

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About Healthwatch Shropshire



**Healthwatch Shropshire is the independent
health and social care champion for local people**

We work to make your voice count when it comes to shaping and improving services. We use a variety of methods to find out what people like about services, and what could be improved and we share these views with those with the power to make change happen.

Our reports go to:

- the organisations who provide services
- the commissioners who pay for services (e.g. Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Shropshire Council)
- service regulators (the Care Quality Commission, NHS England)
- our national body Healthwatch England to let them know how services are working in Shropshire

We are not experts in health and social care and surveys are just one of the methods we use to put a spotlight on services and ask people to share their views with us.



Executive Summary

Towards the end of March 2020, as the reality of the Covid-19 pandemic hit, Healthwatch Shropshire could no longer do face-to-face public engagement. We could still speak to people by phone and had to rely on our website and social media to share Government and Public Health messaging. As we all started to work from home, we felt it was our responsibility to give people the chance to share their experiences during lockdown to help the health and social care system understand the impact locally and identify any gaps in information and services they might be able to fill. The survey questions were shared with colleagues in Shropshire Council and Shropshire Clinical Commissioning Group for their input and support in promoting it.

At the beginning of lockdown we did not know what impact Covid-19 would have in Shropshire and how challenging it would be for NHS and social care services so we asked open rather than direct questions to allow people to go into the detail they felt comfortable with. The majority of people recognised the challenges the pandemic placed on the system and told us that they valued the NHS and wanted to protect it.

We ran the survey on our website from **9th April to 31st May**. During this period, in order to help the system to be as responsive as possible, we produced four weekly interim reports to share our findings. This is the final overarching public report.

We received a total of 568 responses from people across the county and over the border. People were asked to share their demographic information to help us try and identify if responses were different for different groups, for example, people of different ages, people who were working (including key workers) and people with caring responsibilities.

Key findings

An average of 16% of survey respondents thought they had had Covid-19, increasing during the timescale of the survey. In May two people told us they had tested positive for the disease.

Accessible information

An average of 93% of people told us they had found it easy to find clear and understandable information about how to keep themselves and others safe, with the majority of people relying on messaging from National and Local Government and the NHS. Some people had found information from their workplace and voluntary and community sector organisations helpful. Most people were getting information from the television or radio but a significant number were also accessing information online through websites and social media (including local Facebook groups created during Covid-19).

When we asked people how confident they were that they could access support during the lockdown if they needed it, not surprisingly we identified a correlation between those people who said they were ‘not confident’ and those people who said they had not found it easy to find clear and understandable information. There was a call for better information around shielding, social distancing and use of personal protective equipment (PPE), especially masks. For example some people thought they fitted into the ‘vulnerable’ or ‘shielding’ category but had not received any notification that they did and this meant that some were being pressured to go into work and others, especially older people and carers, could not get priority services (e.g. food deliveries).

People expressed their frustration about a lack of detail/information around social distancing. People were anxious when they saw people who seemed to be breaking the rules and didn’t know what they could do about it (e.g. phoning the Police) without damaging relationships with neighbours, etc., leaving them feeling more vulnerable.

Impact on mental health

Not surprisingly, when we asked if the pandemic had affected people’s mental health and wellbeing the majority reported a ‘slight’ (51% average) or ‘significant’ (13% average) impact. 38 people gave detail about how the current situation had worsened their existing mental health condition indicating that most people did not have an issue with their mental health before lockdown.

Of the 283 people who went into detail, the top five reasons given for their increased anxiety were:

1. Lack of social interaction and loneliness (29%)
2. Worry about family member’s health and / or trying to support them (17%)
3. Work or finance related (13%)
4. Fear of catching the virus (11%)
5. Food / shopping worries (7%)

61% of people told us it was ‘very important’ for them to have contact with family and friends on a weekly basis while on average only 46% said this happened ‘very often’. This figure went down during the timespan of the questionnaire reducing from 53% to 40% by the end of May. 24% of people told us that in the past week they had had no one around to support them.

The responses showed that key workers and people working during the pandemic reported a greater impact on their mental health and wellbeing than those not working. Key workers were most affected with 18% telling us they had experienced a ‘significant impact’. Some people went into detail and explained their anxiety about their working arrangements, safety in the work place, redeployment and the risks of taking Covid-19

home to their families. As well as hearing from front-line workers we heard from teachers and Head Teachers about the stress they were experiencing due to workload, demands from parents and the need to continue to support students through the school holidays.

We asked people to let us know what caring responsibilities they had and this enabled us to identify that 20% of those people caring for an adult reported a 'significant' impact on their mental health and wellbeing compared to 14% of people caring for a child and 15% of people with no caring responsibilities. We also heard that four out of the five people who told us they were caring for both an adult and child/ren during the pandemic were experiencing a 'significant' impact on their mental health. People told us they had concerns about access to outside help (including carers) and not being able to attend social/support groups leading to the loss of routine, which is so important to people with Autism for example, and respite. Some people talked about the challenges of caring for an adult while also trying to home school their own children.

Impact on healthcare

40% of people told us that their healthcare had been affected by the pandemic, (49% of female and 39% of male respondents). 62% of these were concerned about secondary care (e.g. hospital services), 23% primary care (e.g. GPs) and 17% wanted dental services.

While many people understood why appointments had been cancelled, delayed or changed to a phone or video appointment during lockdown those people requiring check-ups, diagnostic tests or treatment were upset and worried, many reporting a deterioration in their condition or increased pain. This was made worse by the fear some people were experiencing about leaving the house or going to a hospital because they were concerned about catching the virus. Some people who were offered a face-to-face appointment had refused.

When we asked if healthcare for conditions other than Covid-19 had been affected 69% of people with a disability said 'yes' in contrast to 41% of people without a disability. This could be because those people with a disability require more regular appointments and treatment, possibly for a range of conditions, increasing the chance of them needing to use NHS services during the lockdown.

Impact on social care

On average 10% of people using social care services told us that their care had been affected by the pandemic, the highest figure being in May (16%).

29% of people affected reported interruptions or cancellation of normal care or support services. The greatest impact being felt by those people living in rural locations. We also heard that people who lived in these areas who relied on shopping deliveries before the

pandemic were struggling to get their shopping delivered when lockdown started and demand increased, further adding to their vulnerability and anxiety.

Some people described how they had made the decision to reduce the number of calls they received or asking carers not to come because they were afraid they would catch the virus.

People expressed concerns about relatives and friends in care homes who they were unable to visit, particularly those with dementia who did not understand the restrictions.

Coping strategies and self-care

We wanted to understand what people were doing to help them cope during the pandemic and the strategies they were using to support their health and well-being.

Frame of mind / attitude was important with many focusing on the positives and finding a new appreciation for their surroundings (e.g. the countryside where they lived, their garden), the people in their lives, pets and technology as a means of getting information and communicating with others.

Some people reported that life during lockdown was not greatly different from their normal every-day life, for example those who lived alone, or already worked from home. However the majority of people commented on the importance of contact with family and friends and wider support networks including faith groups, work colleagues and social groups/clubs.

Staying active and getting outdoors were key. As well as daily exercise, people told us about gardening, continuing with hobbies and doing DIY. Some people were maintaining their routine from before lockdown.

People told us that they had reduced how much news they were either watching or reading, choosing to focus on things unrelated to Covid-19, e.g. reading books, watching TV/films and doing academic courses. Some people told us they had found practicing mindfulness and yoga helpful.

Recommendations

Health and social care services across the Shropshire Telford and Wrekin Sustainability and Transformation Partnership work together to:

1. Provide the population with clear information about the services available and what is being done to make sure services are safe to ensure people feel confident to use them (e.g. GP practices and that people will be offered a face-to-face appointment if necessary, how to access emergency Dentist treatment).
2. Contact affected patients / service users to reassure them that they have not been forgotten and work is being done to re-start services and/or treatment and let them know when they will start. Help people to manage their expectations by giving realistic waiting times. Ensure all information meets the communication needs of individuals in line with the NHS Accessible Information Standard that also covers social care.
3. Develop the mental health offer to support people with anxiety and depression as a result of the pandemic, including those who have become reluctant to leave their home and access services.
4. Support carers by doing everything possible to meet their need for emotional support and practical help wherever possible, including supporting them to stay in contact with their support networks (e.g. social and support groups).
5. Promote public health messaging about self-care and healthy lifestyles in the context of the pandemic, including healthy eating, exercise and relaxation / mindfulness techniques both for staff and the general public.

What we did

The survey, please see [Appendix B](#) for full text, was published online on Thursday 9 April.

Publicity

Links to the survey were sent to our Associate Members, Volunteers, Board Members and newsletter recipients, 237 in all.

Details of the survey were shared with approximately 635 sector contacts in Shropshire, ranging across:

- General Practices
- Community Groups
- Patient Support Groups and Patient Participation Groups

- Housing Associations
- Local Authority staff
- NHS and Hospice staff
- Parish & Town Councils
- Pharmacies

A press release was sent out to the news channels across the county on Friday 17 April.

What we found out

Survey Responses



Period	Responses
9 - 14 April 2020	106
15 - 20 April 2020	49
21 - 26 April 2020	218
27 April - 3 May 2020	67
4 - 31 May 2020	128
Total	568

People were asked to share their demographical information:

- 74% were female and 20% male
- 78% considered themselves to have a disability
- 83% identified as ‘white British’, ‘white’, ‘British’, ‘white English’ or ‘white’
- 82% were aged between 45 and 84, 52% were aged 55 to 74
- 83% had no caring responsibilities
- 52% were not working, 19% identified as ‘key workers’ and another 15% were working

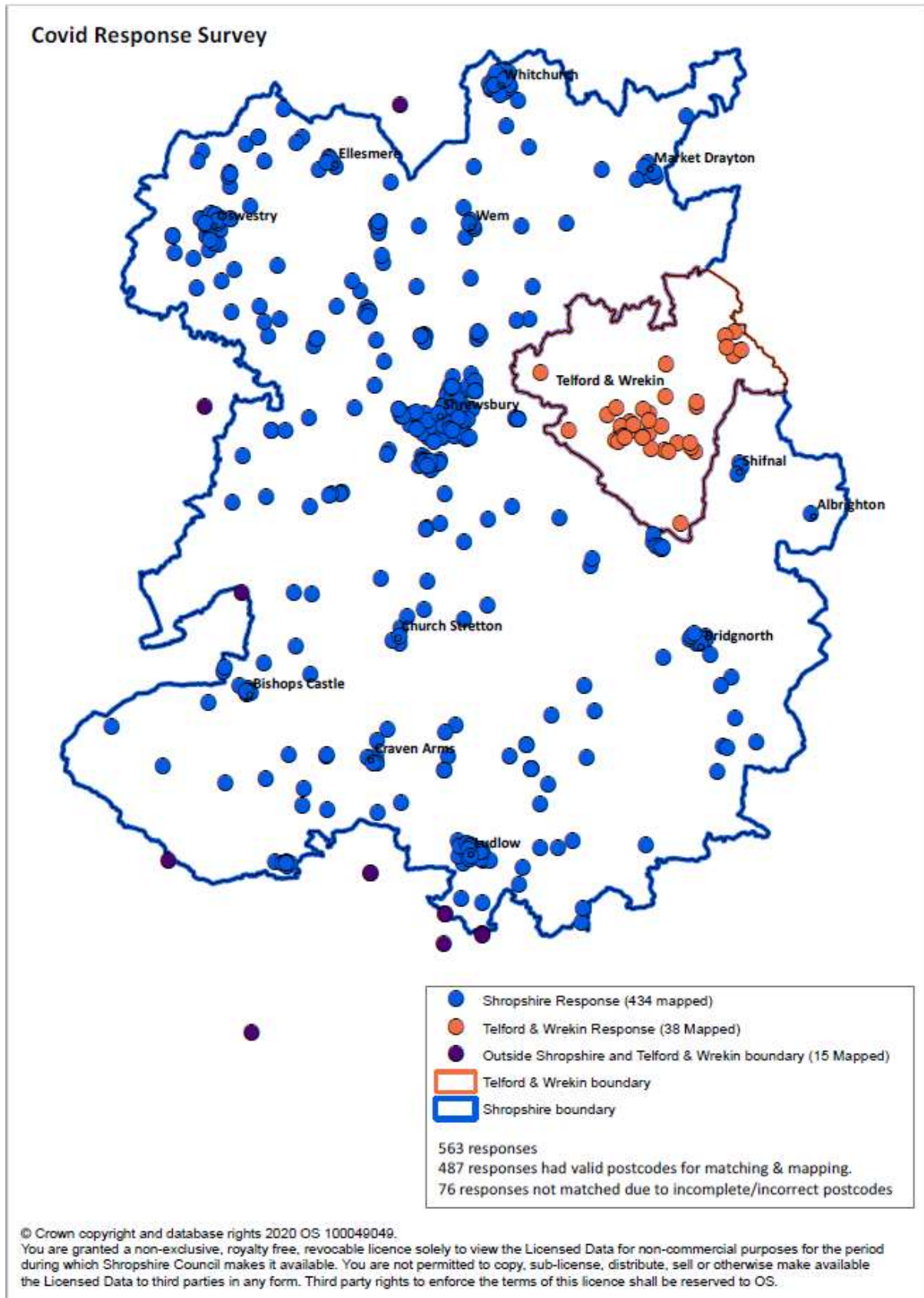
We also asked people to share their postcodes so we could try to compare responses across the Shropshire. Shropshire Council’s Information, Intelligence and Insight Unit supported us to analyse this information and categorise responses in relation to ‘urban’

(population of more than 10,000), 'rural' (less than 10,000) and 'sparse setting' (sparsely or less sparsely populated).

- 28% lived in an 'urban city or town'
- 50% lived in a rural area, e.g.
 - 17% lived in a 'rural town and fringe'
 - 13% lived in 'rural hamlets and isolated dwellings'
 - 10% lived in a 'rural village'

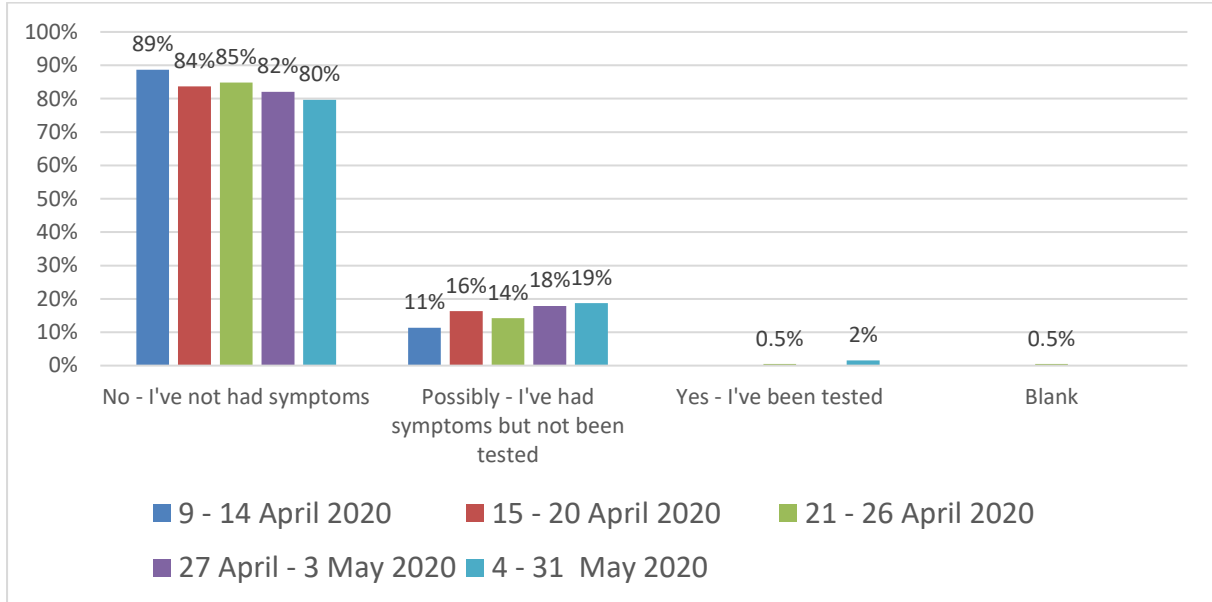
For full demographic detail please see [Appendix C](#)

The geographical spread of responses is shown below



Questions

1. Have you had Coronavirus / COVID-19?

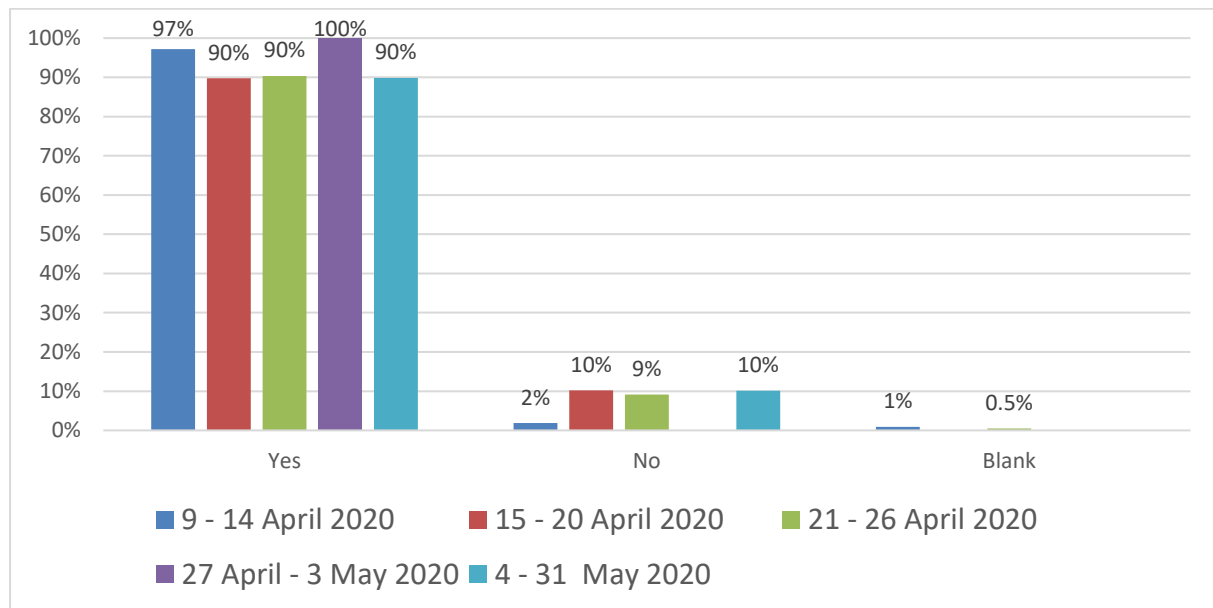


As time passed higher proportions of respondents felt that they had possibly had Covid-19

As time passed an increasing number of respondent thought they possibly had Covid-19 rising from 11% to 19% over the duration of the survey.

Of all 568 respondents, a total of 3 people had been tested and shown to have the disease.

2. 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?



Overall 93% of responses told us they had found it easy to find clear and accessible information.

Themes raised by those who gave more information

THOSE WHO ANSWERED 'NO'

Overall 40 people (7%) of people told us that they have **not** found it easy to find clear and understandable information; 33 people gave more detail.

The main issues mentioned:

1. Shielding, social distancing and personal protective equipment (PPE)

Nine people described the difficulties they faced understanding if they should be 'shielding', many of them thinking they should but they had not received a letter from their GP. For some confusion came because they believed they were 'vulnerable' or were told they were. Some of these were then feeling under pressure to go back into work.

Example comments:

- 'The 'at risk social distancing' category are advised to isolate for 12 weeks. The vulnerable category are told the same. However some of the 'at risk' workers are feeling pressure to work in the office.' (15-20 April)
- 'Initially I classed myself as a vulnerable person due to my 81 years and my CLL and COPD, yet these were not flagged up by either my GP or other bodies/officials. I decided to shield my wife and I some weeks before I was advised to.' (21-26 April)

- 'I haven't received any guidance, I have lupus, COPD, asthma and several other health problems. (4-31 May)
- '...conflicting data about whether or not masks are helpful. [] (21-26 April)

2. Social distancing

Four people were concerned that people did not understand social distancing. In the final weeks of the survey two people commented on the changing messages from the Government as lockdown restrictions were eased.

- 'There needs to be better information and guidance for unusual or different situations to the norm of all family members living in the same household. For example, divorced parents where one of them is shielding.' (9-14 April)
- 'I thought there was more emphasis about staying home and not enough about keeping away from others for instance.' (21-26 April)
- 'Everything was clear until the announcement about easing lockdown restrictions which just muddied the waters hugely.' (4-31 May)
- 'We feel unable to report to Police for fear the neighbours will turn on us and also do not think the police would have any power to rectify this situation. I therefore do not feel confident or safe within the current situation and worry about the safety of my family long term.' (4-31 May)

3. Accessible information

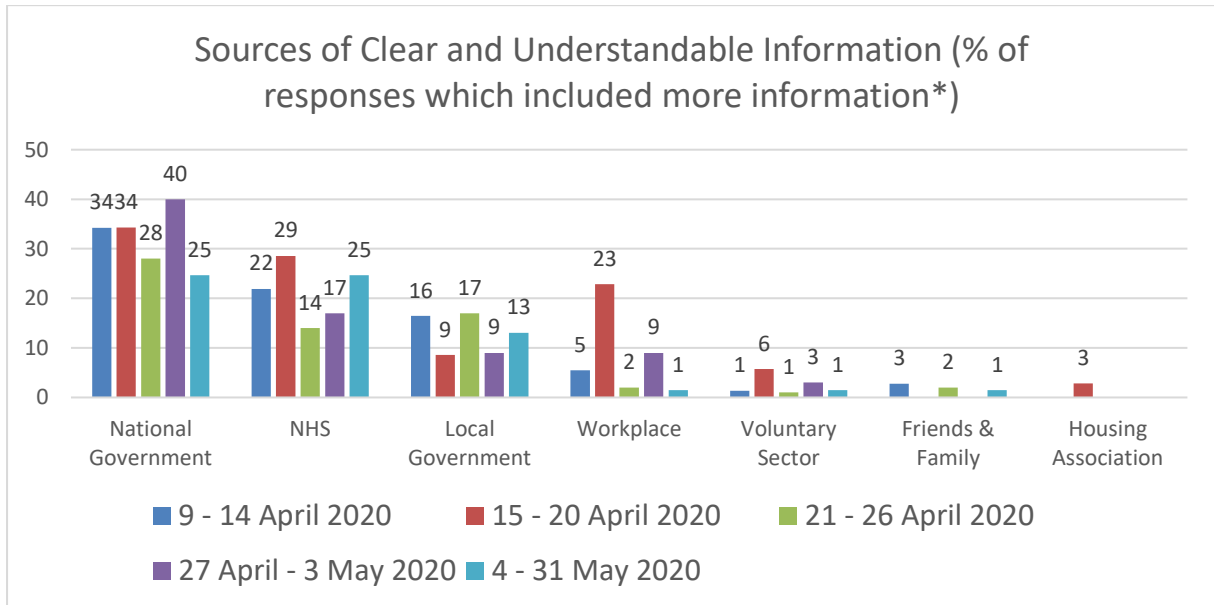
Two people told us that they had visual impairments and the letters being sent out did not meet their needs.

- 'I am ssi/blind and most letters are coming in mail and small print when you ask for all to be emailed so when you have no one to read it you can listen to it on a computer.' (21-26 April)
- 'Registered blind and all letters coming in the post from social services and council are all in unacceptable print.' (21-26 April)

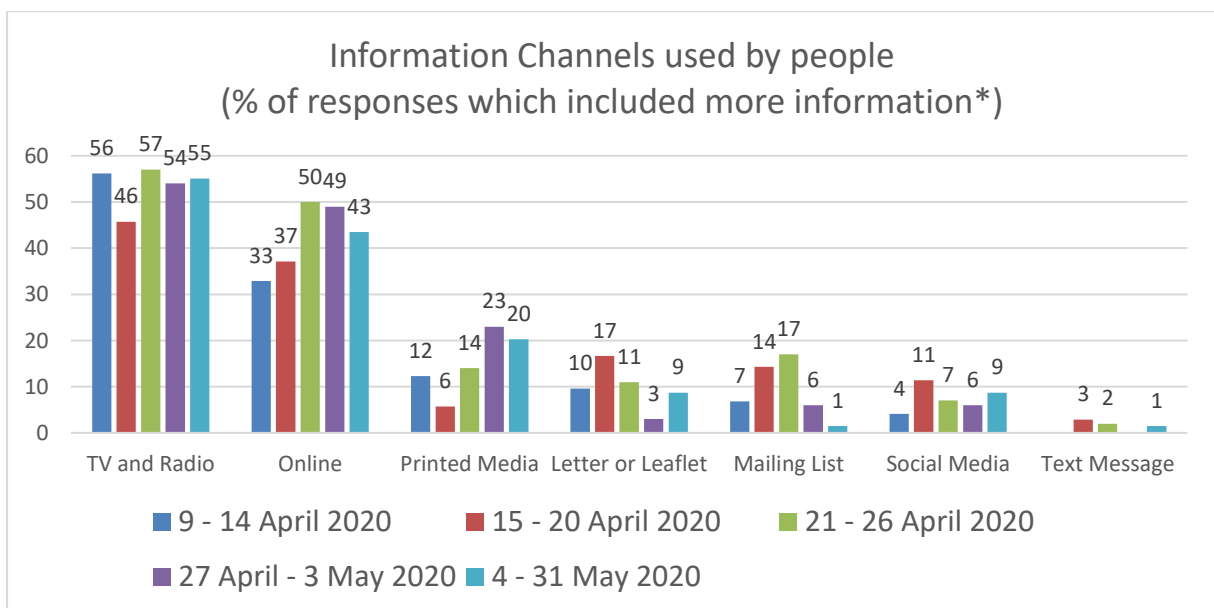
Full comments can be found in [Appendix A](#)

THOSE WHO ANSWERED 'YES'

Overall 526 people (93%) of people told us that they had found it easy to find clear and understandable information; 340 gave us more information about where they were able to find the information.



* Note: Many people gave more than one source so percentages will not add up 100%



* Note: Many people gave more than one channel so percentages will not add up 100%

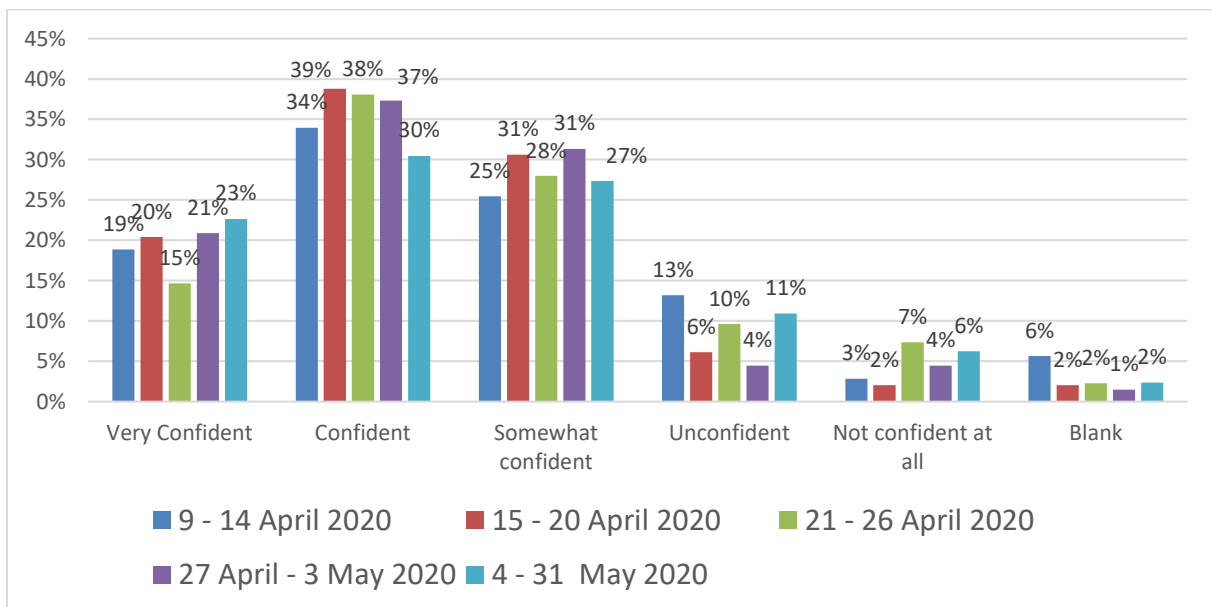
Supporting information (Would you like to tell us more about this, and where you were able to find this information?)

As well as the sources of information listed above, people went into detail, for example:

- ‘My local GP has been answering questions on our local Covid Facebook page, which is brilliant as you can be sure that information is reliable and also reassuring.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘I have been given quite clear information from the Police as I work with them.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘My Housing Support Officer has kept me informed and signposted me to Much Wenlock Mutual Aid who have helped me to keep safe.’ (15-20th April)
- ‘Parish email.’ (21-26 April)
- ‘Notices in shops’ (21-26 April)

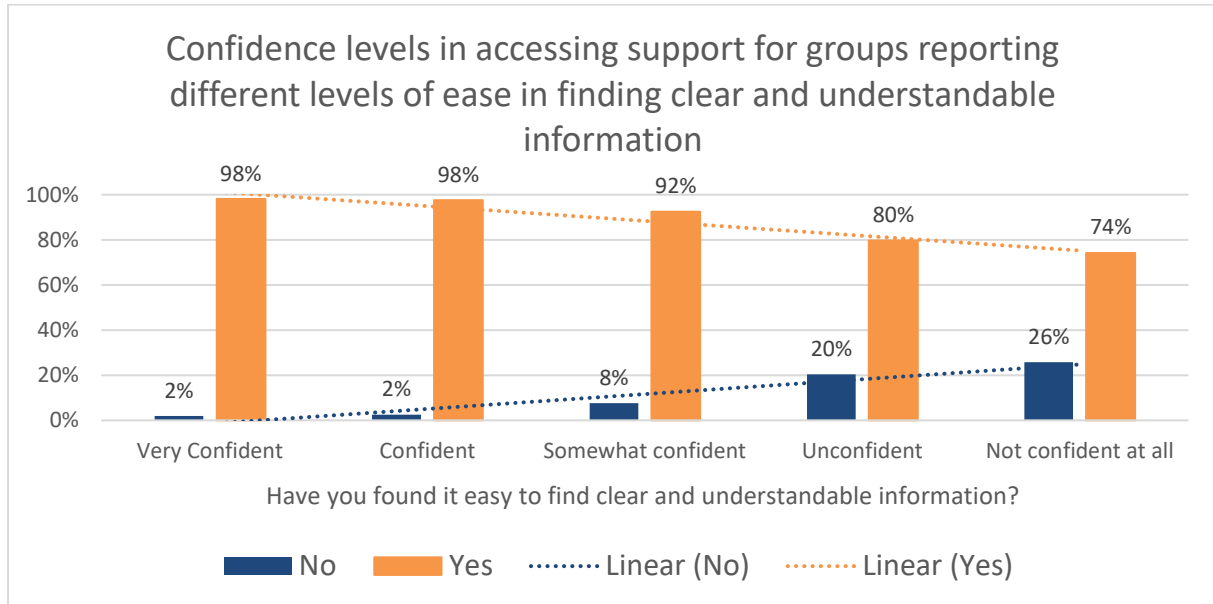
Full comments can be found in [Appendix A](#)

3. How confident do you feel that you could access support if you need it?



CONFIDENCE IN ACCESSING SUPPORT AND EASE OF FINDING INFORMATION

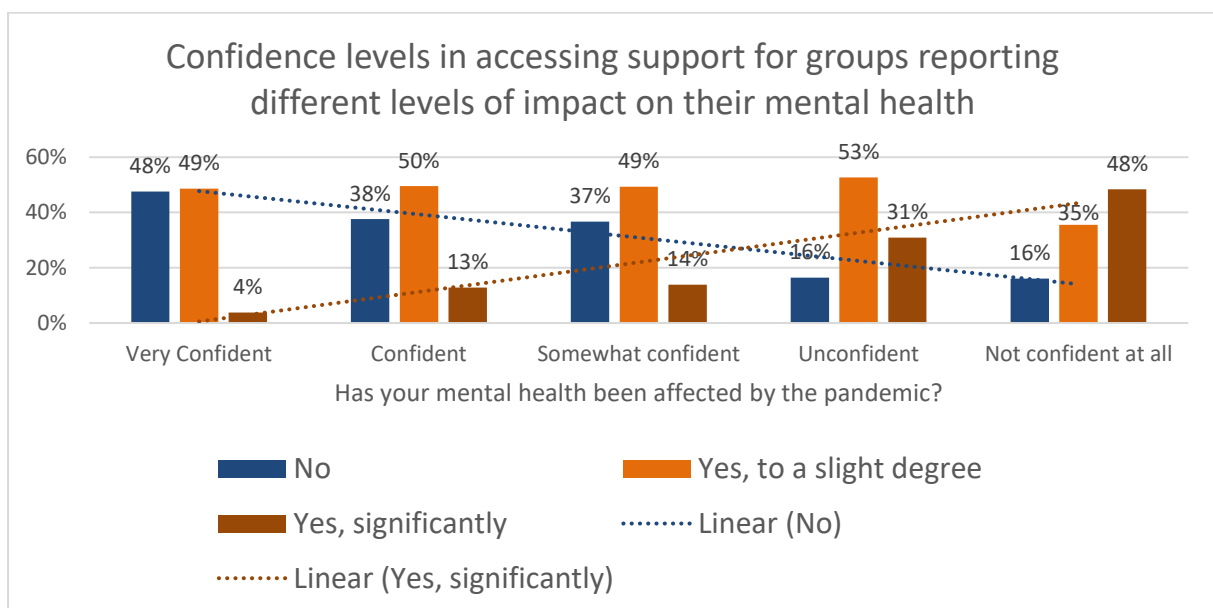
There appears to be a correlation between confidence levels and the ease with which people found clear and understandable information.



More of the people who told us they were less confident about accessing support told us that they had not found it easy to find clear information.

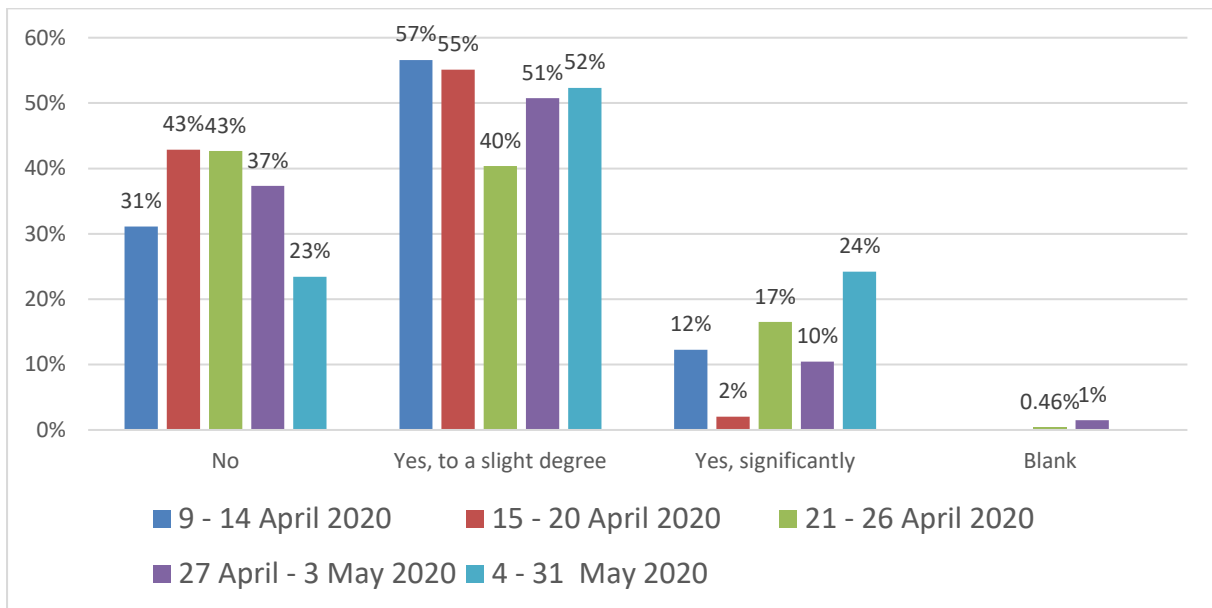
CONFIDENCE IN ACCESSING SUPPORT AND LEVELS OF IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

There also appears to be a correlation between confidence levels and the extent to which people’s mental health has been affected. (See question 4 for full details of the reported effects of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing).



More of the people who told us they were less confident about accessing support told us that their mental health had been significantly affected by the pandemic.

4. Has your mental health and wellbeing been affected by the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic?



Looking at all the responses we have received, 283 of those people who reported a ‘slight’ or ‘significant impact’ told us more about the effect on their mental health and well-being, a number of these gave reasons for the impact they reported.

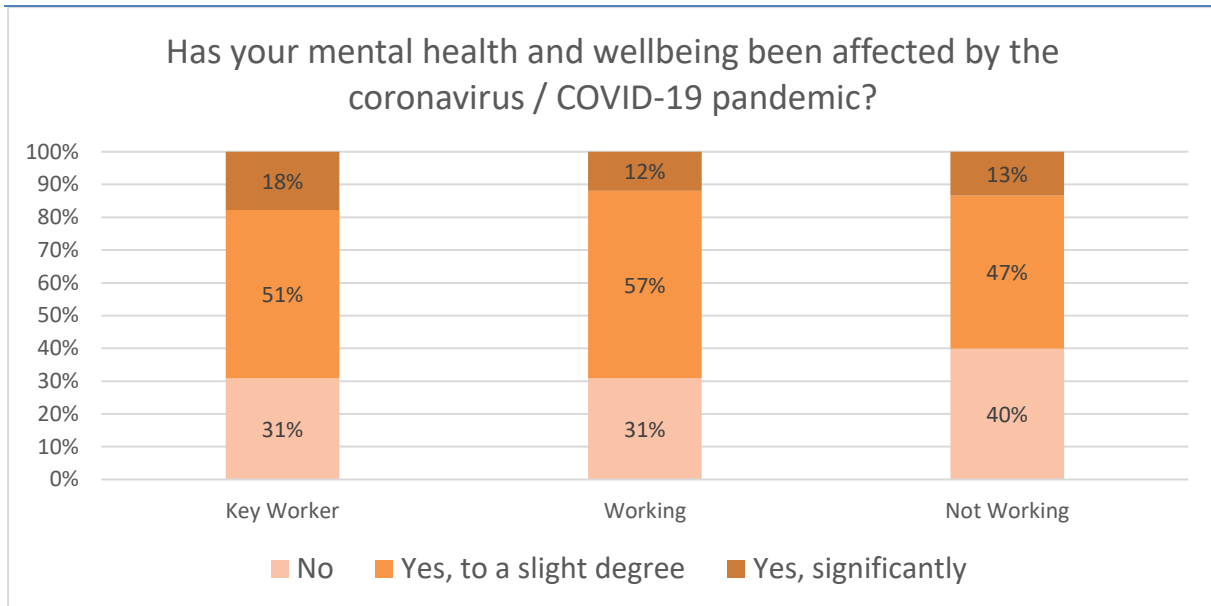
Of these 283 people 38 (13%) indicated that they had a pre-existing mental health issue and that it had be affected negatively during the pandemic.

For a breakdown of issues experienced please see the next table. Of these some themes came out, for example housing:

- ‘I am a widow with no children or near family. I live on rental income and have allowed two of my biggest tenants three months’ rent payment delay - I can live off my savings for quite a while but I need all my mental strength to stay optimistic about the economic situation.’ (21-26 April)
- ‘Anxiety has gone through the roof and now totally depressed after Shropshire Council issued a must repair to property within 28 days or they will do it and charge us, cannot afford that and husband is 72 with previous pulmonary embolism, so can’t repair the garden wall. How on earth do they expect us to find a builder?’ (27-3 May)
- ‘Like all other residents here who also feel abandoned. We were told this was going to be supported accommodation and that’s what we were paying for what a sham... How elderly & vulnerable people were abandoned’ (27-3 May)

Reasons given for impact on Mental Health and Well-being	Significant Impact Group					Slight Impact Group					Total
	9 - 14 April	15 - 20 April	21 - 26 April	27 April - 3 May	4 - 31 May	9 - 14 April	15 - 20 April	21 - 26 April	27 April - 3 May	4 - 31 May	
Number of people giving reasons (people may have given more than one reason)	10	1	28	5	28	45	23	70	22	56	283
Lack of social interaction and loneliness	1		5	1	11	9	10	27	3	15	82 (29%)
Worry about family members' health and/or trying to support them	3	1	2		4	15	5	6	1	11	48 (17%)
Work or finance related	1	1	3	2	2	12	2	4	2	9	38 (13%)
Fear of catching the virus	3		2	1	5	2	4	8	3	3	31 (11%)
Food / shopping worries	1		1		1	7	2	7			19 (7%)
Lack of treatment for existing health condition			4		1	2		4	2	4	17 (6%)
Worry about the future					1			6	4	2	13 (5%)
Lack of support services			2		3			1	2	3	11 (4%)
Lack of ability to exercise			1		1		2	3	1	2	10 (4%)
Stress of home life, including home schooling					1		3	4		2	10 (4%)
Inconsistent or incomplete Information					1			3		5	9 (3%)
Others not adhering to social distancing rules								4	3		7 (2%)
Lack of Routine			1					4		1	6 (2%)
Lack of outside space	1				2	2		1			6 (2%)
Grief over a recent death			1	1	1	1	1			1	6 (2%)

WORKING STATUS AND IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



A higher proportion of key workers and workers reported that their mental health having been affected, 69% as opposed to 60% of those not working. A higher proportion of key workers reported a significant impact.

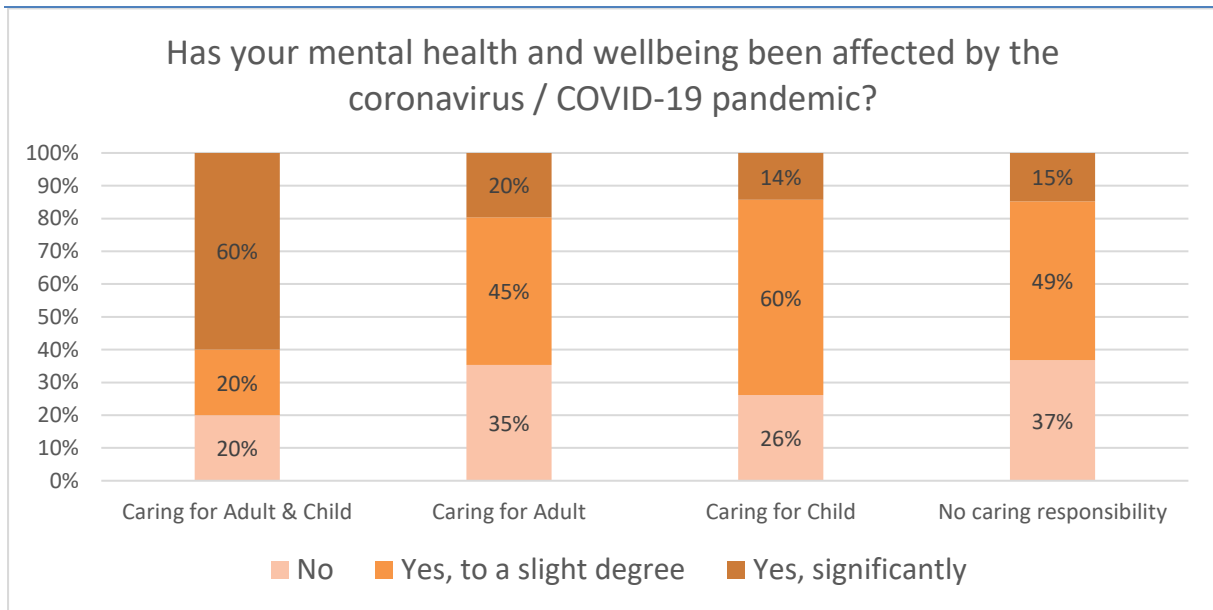
Some people went into detail, for example:

- ‘I have been sent to things with people who are not paying attention to the rules. I have four children at home and I could take them back the virus. I have also had people threaten to cough on me because of my job.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘I am in the shielding group and as an NHS worker I feel overwhelming guilt that I am not at work... I fear my colleagues have little recognition of the role I am trying to play at home. Working over and above contracted hours. Although my NHS colleagues are so stressed in the workplace, at least they have social interaction and an ability to share the stress and support each other... I fear the long term effects of this on my mental health.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘Management of redeployment has been very stressful and poorly managed.’ (15-20 April)
- ‘Teacher working from home, getting stressed by enormous expectations and demands made by some parents.’ (27-3 May)
- ‘I am scared. I feel with my role I have to lead or show strength. This has at times been difficult especially when people I have known have died.’ (27-3 May)
- ‘I have had such bad anxiety I was unable to work. I felt unsafe at work. I felt compelled to go in and ended up handing my notice in so I could stay at home. (4-31 May)
- ‘As a head teacher, I have had to make key decisions “on the go”. I have not felt fully informed. I have worked in school throughout the Easter holidays and will

work in school during May half term too. Teacher’s health and wellbeing is not on anyone’s agenda. We’re in schools and it is accepted that primary children cannot socially distance. As one 5 year old said to me, “What’s a two metres?” (4-31 May)

- ‘I was made redundant at the end of Feb and the situation has me very worried about when or if I will find a job that pays my bills.’ (4-31 May)

CARING STATUS AND IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



The group with the highest incidence of reported impact on their mental health were those caring for both adult and child but it should be noted that the number in this group was 5 people.

A higher proportion of carers for adults reported that their mental health and well-being had been significantly impacted than those either caring for children or with no caring responsibilities. Although the combined proportion of those reporting significant or slight impact was higher in those looking after a child (74% compared with 65% in those looking after an adult and 64% in those with no caring responsibility) this might be put down to the need for parents to home school.

Sample comments, caring for adults:

- ‘I care for my husband and my son who has suffered a stroke and has had to live with us at the moment [] It has been very stressful at time as both my husband and I are retired and it has been difficult at times trying to sort out support for our son.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘I am the main carer for my parents who are both in their 90s with multiple co-morbidities and I have been concerned about keeping them safe and mentally well - they don’t have access to the internet so their ability to network with family and friends is very restricted.’ (9-14 April)

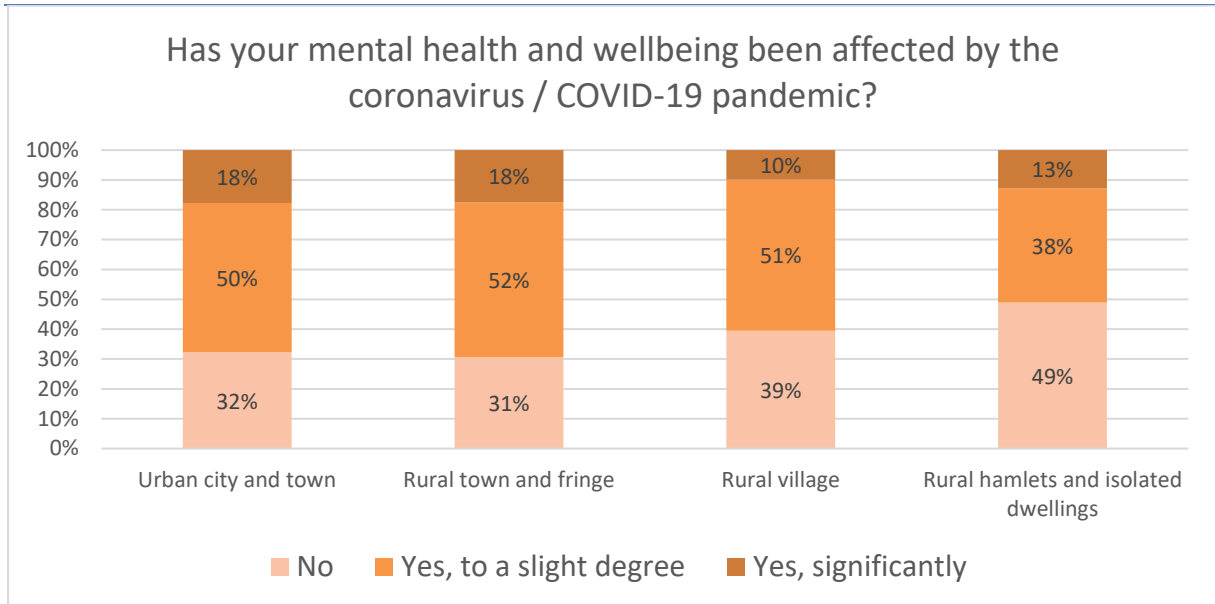
- ‘Worrying about my father (92 and on his own) and son (on his own and has mental health issues) I am carer to both. Husband in vulnerable group (77 and disabled) - so am I but don’t feel I am (66, Diabetes, T2, arthritis).’ (9-14 April)
- ‘My husband is very frail and I am concerned he will not get the help he needs. I am worried when the district nurse comes in she may give us coronavirus.’ (21-26 April)
- ‘My one daughter is pregnant and I can’t reassure her worries in person and my other daughter has a 10 month old so who I am worried about, she has anxiety and depression and not being there to support her in person is particularly hard.’ (4-31 May)

Caring for children, including grown up children:

- ‘I am a carer for a son with enduring mental health illness. I usually keep my head above water in terms of coping with my role by being engaged with the outside world both socially and by work. The shut has resulted in this means of coping being taken from me.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘I have four children at home and I could take them back the virus.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘I am very worried about catching the virus as I have a 10 year old son.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘Shielding my daughter has been a struggle. We have a care agency providing 24/7 care but they could not guarantee carers who were not doing domiciliary calls, i.e. Increasing risk to our daughter, so initially I did all the care. It took a phone call to Continuing Health Care (CHC) who spoke to the agency and this was rectified. We also have a young son with autism to look after as well as both being key worker parents working from home. Having two children with autism who both only eat and drink certain foods due to sensory issues is problematic when you can’t go out to shop and supermarket delivery limits you to 3 of the item that is not enough for them for the week. Both are unable to go to Condover specialist college and Severndale school which provide the care they rely on during the week so they are socially isolated.’ (4-31 May)
- ‘Anxious for my partner, he is a delivery driver, for myself as I am a care worker, and our daughter as she has special needs that meant the school felt they were unable to safely care for her, meaning I have had to change my work hours.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘Feeling worried for my 2 children particularly my 10 year old son, missing his friends, social interactions. Trying to work from home and look after the child. Worrying about my mum who is on her own and has Parkinson’s.’ (9-14 April)
- ‘Home with 3 boys trying to home school them whilst keeping our businesses and therefore life afloat is pretty hard going.’ (15-20 April)
- ‘We support our adult son living at home with a learning disability, autism and challenging behaviour. His routine has been severely compromised inevitably by the lockdown and as a result the demand on us as his carers has increased. The

lockdown has also set our son back quite a bit and still there are no local services able to help.’ (4-31 May)

RURAL / URBAN LOCATION AND IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

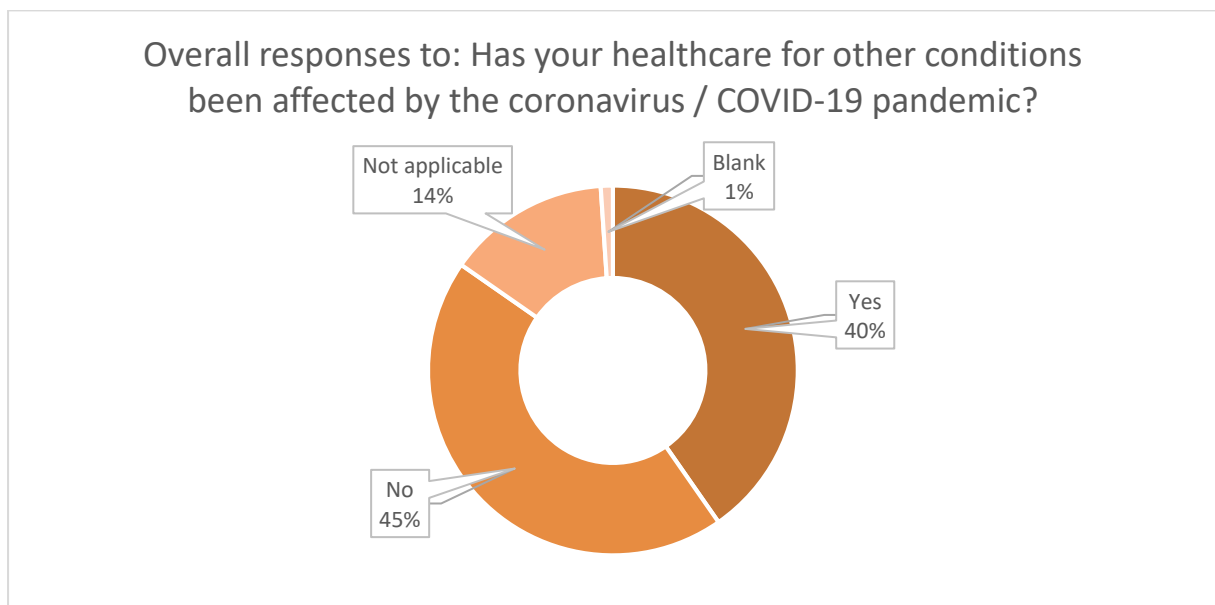


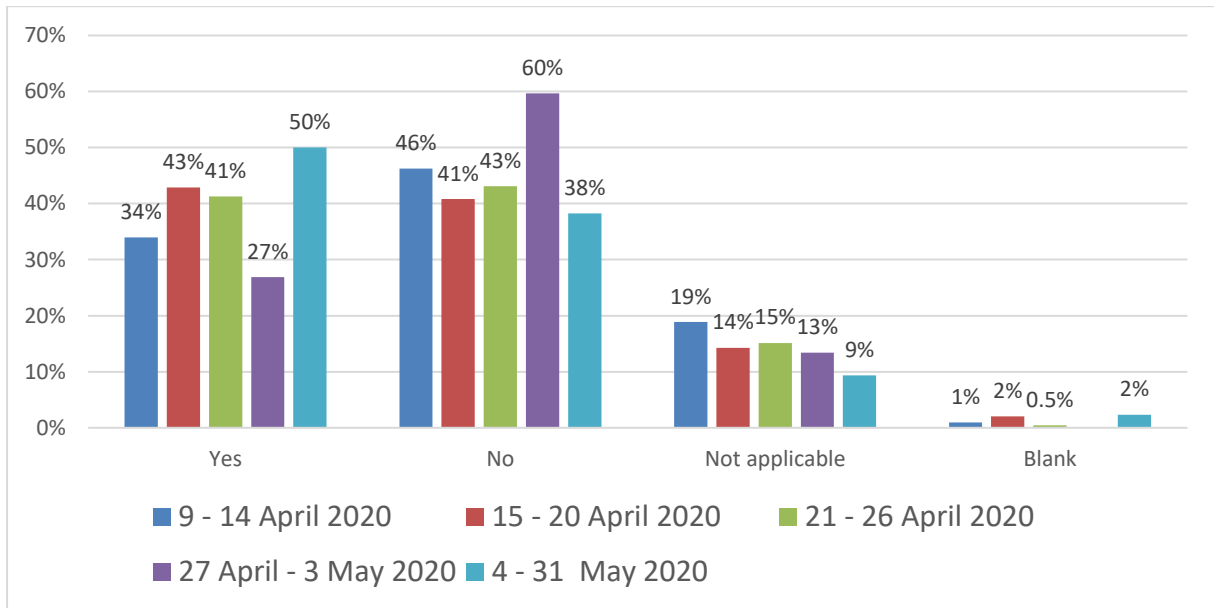
Looking at postcodes we have identified that a higher proportion of those living in towns reported an impact on their mental health than those in villages or hamlets. The least impact was reported from those living in rural hamlets and isolated dwellings.

Supporting information (Would you like to tell us more about this?)

Full comments can be found in [Appendix A](#)

5. Has your healthcare for other conditions been affected by the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic?





A higher proportion of those responding in May reported that their healthcare had been affected.

Would you like to tell us more about this?

278 people gave more information about their experiences:

- 65 who said their care had not been affected
- 213 who said their care had been affected

Of the 65 who answered ‘no’ their healthcare had not been affected, many described different ways of accessing healthcare, remote consultations, and these were mainly positive descriptions:

No	Positive					Neutral					Negative				
	9 - 14 April	15 - 20 April	21 - 26 April	27 April - 3 May	4 - 31 May	9 - 14 April	15 - 20 April	21 - 26 April	27 April - 3 May	4 - 31 May	9 - 14 April	15 - 20 April	21 - 26 April	27 April - 3 May	4 - 31 May
General Practice	7	1	5	1	7			1	1	3					
Secondary care	2	1	2		2	1	2	2		4	1				
Community Pharmacy	2	2	2	1	6	1		2	2	1	1				
Dentist								2	1						
Optician			1												

Interim Report - Not for

Of the 213 who answered 'yes', this was mainly negative comments about accessing services:

Yes	Positive					Neutral					Negative				
	9 - 14 April	15 - 20 April	21 - 26 April	27 April - 3 May	4 - 31 May	9 - 14 April	15 - 20 April	21 - 26 April	27 April - 3 May	4 - 31 May	9 - 14 April	15 - 20 April	21 - 26 April	27 April - 3 May	4 - 31 May
General Practice	2		1		5		3	5	4	2	4	4	13	2	4
Secondary care	1	1	2		2	7	6	9	6	18	15	5	33	6	17
Community Pharmacy		1	2				3	2			6	2	7		1
Mental Health Services											1		1		1
Dentist							1	5	1	4	5	2	11		4
Optician			1								1		2		

Of the people who said their health care had been affected, the overwhelming majority of comments were about access, cancelled appointments, operations or tests. A number of people shared their concerns over delays to tests and treatment, for example:

- 'I've had 2 referrals refused by the hospital and an urgent referral accepted but the appointment is not until September. The GP has said if my condition deteriorates then the only option will be to admit me to hospital which I feel could be avoided if I could be seen and an appropriate test carried out at a hospital clinic.' (21-26 April)
- 'Ongoing investigations and possible treatment about her serious back condition is on hold causing her much anxiety and chronic pain.' (21-26th April)
- 'I'm upset that my cancer treatment hasn't gone forward as quickly as I would like. I was told the scan results on 18th March and am now only just starting my treatment.' (21-26 April)
- 'A member of our household is awaiting a vital cancer check-up procedure which is now overdue and also awaiting a phone appointment from a Cardiologist via GP referral, we've waited over three weeks for this and are still waiting.' (4-31 May)

A number of people commented on lack of access to dental treatment:

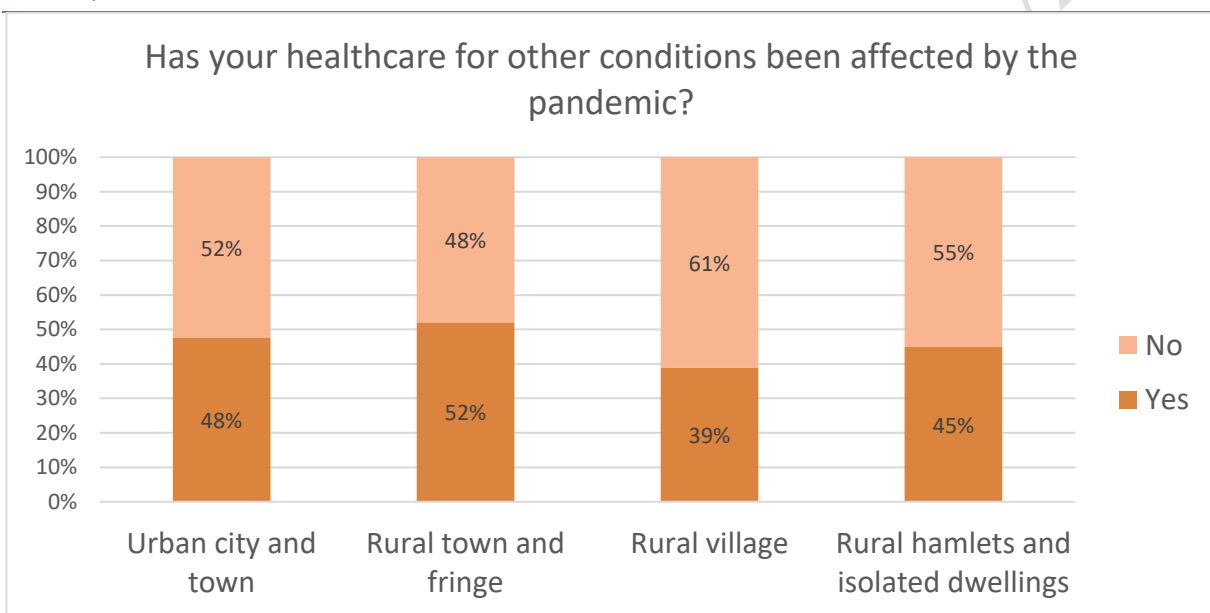
- 'I have an acute tooth/gum infection. I called my dentist on Wednesday 15 April and got triaged by reception. Then the dentist called me back and told me there was no emergency provision at all, all I could have was advice over the phone and a prescription for antibiotics, which I accepted. He seemed quite distressed. I am now on 2nd day of antibiotics, it's Friday evening, and my swelling has not got down or got less tender and painful. I contacted the Community Health trust via Twitter who told me to call 111. I haven't done this yet as I can't believe they will get me to a dentist.' (15-20 April)
- 'I now need dental treatment due to a broken tooth. Waiting to hear back from my dentist. It took me a day of trying even to speak to the receptionist at the dental surgery.' (21-26 April)
- 'Unable to visit a dentist for a broken tooth, and no support from the dental practice other than an offer of a pain relief prescription. They had no idea when/if they would get PPE, and no information on care hubs - told the hospital would not be able to help. I have no idea where the urgent dental care centres are in Shropshire, no information.' (21-26 April)
- 'Dentist cancelled, problems getting temporary filling, constant pain.' (21-26 April)

Nine people, out of the 213 who told us more about how their healthcare had been affected, commented that they had cancelled or refused appointments because they were worried about going to a site which may put them at risk of catching Covid-19.

- 'Worrying about contacting GP for an ongoing problem as I don't particularly want to leave the house.' (15-20th April)

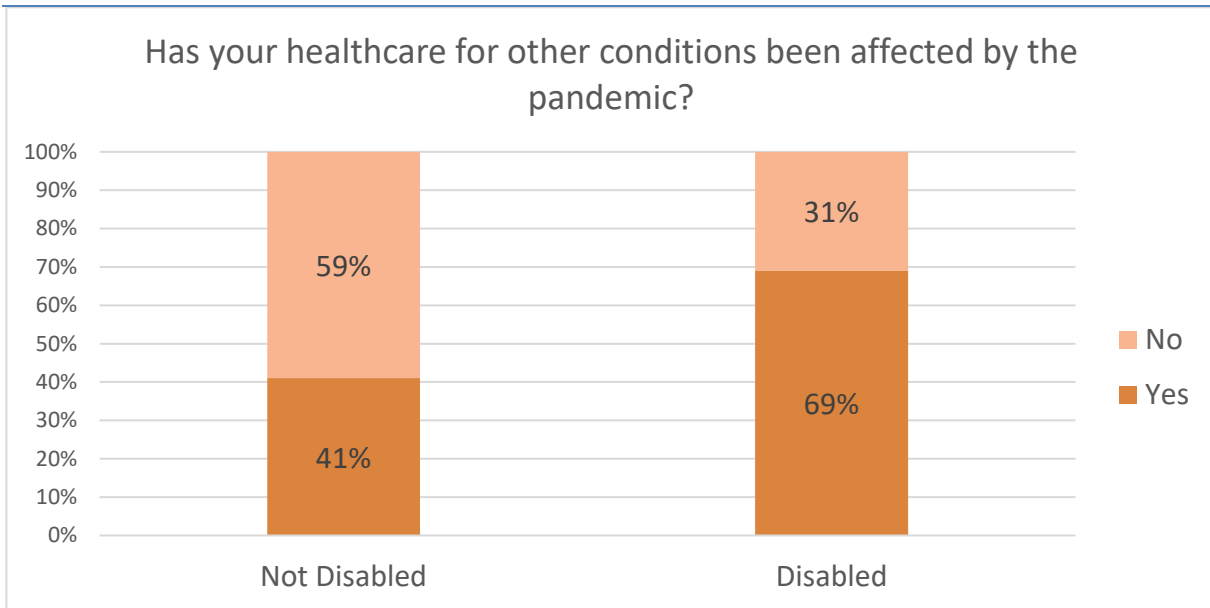
- ‘Had nasty fall outdoors, didn’t feel could contact doctor.’ (15-20th April)
- ‘Being too scared to go for my annual blood tests to check thyroid levels as with suffering from health anxiety I’m afraid to go out especially to medical centres.’ (21-26th April)
- ‘Had cystoscopy cancelled and I was contacted 2 days ago about rebooking but I refused to make an appointment because I am so scared of going to a hospital and contracting the virus.’ (21-26th April)
- ‘I cancelled elective surgery as I was afraid of catching Covid in hospital.’ [Cancer patient] (4-31st May)

RURAL / URBAN LOCATION AND IMPACT ON HEALTHCARE FOR OTHER CONDITIONS



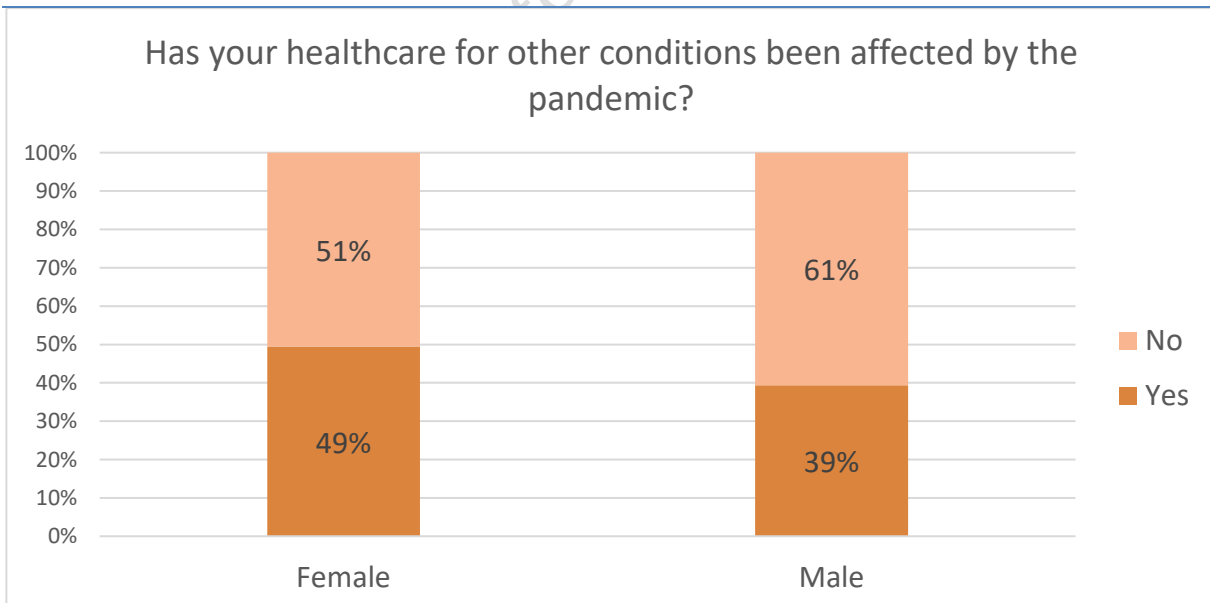
Those with health conditions living in rural villages reported the lowest incidents of healthcare being affected during the pandemic.

EFFECTS ON HEALTHCARE FOR THE DISABLED



Of all those who indicated that they were receiving healthcare for other conditions the responses showed that the healthcare of over two thirds of those with a disability had been affected compared with 41% of those without a disability.

EFFECTS ON HEALTHCARE FOR MEN AND WOMEN¹

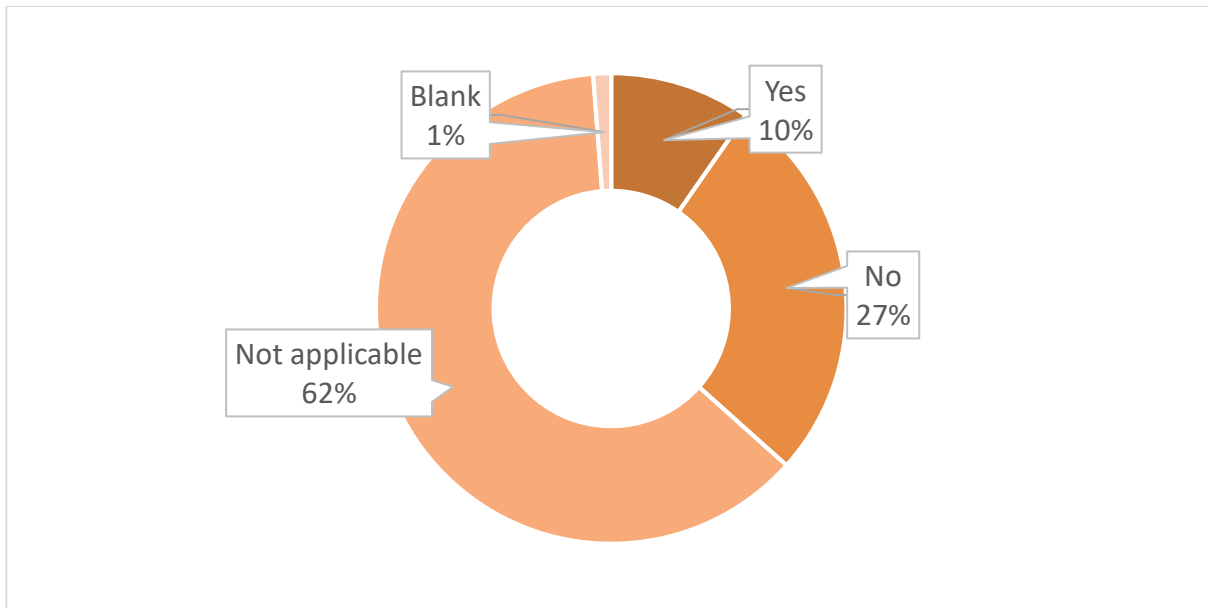


¹ Please note only 1 respondent who shared their gender described themselves as non-binary

Supporting information (Would you like to tell us more about this?)

Full comments can be found in [Appendix A](#)

6. Has your experience of social care been affected by the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic?



205 people indicated that they had experience of social care, 150 (73%) told us that it had not been affected by the pandemic, 55 (27%) told us that it had.

Of those 55 people 45 gave us more information. Thirteen of the 45 (29%) told us about their concerns over not being able to visit relatives or friends in care homes. Thirteen people (29%) also reported interruptions or cancellation of normal care or support provision. Five of these reported that telephone contact had been put in place, this was seen mostly in a positive light.

Sample comments:

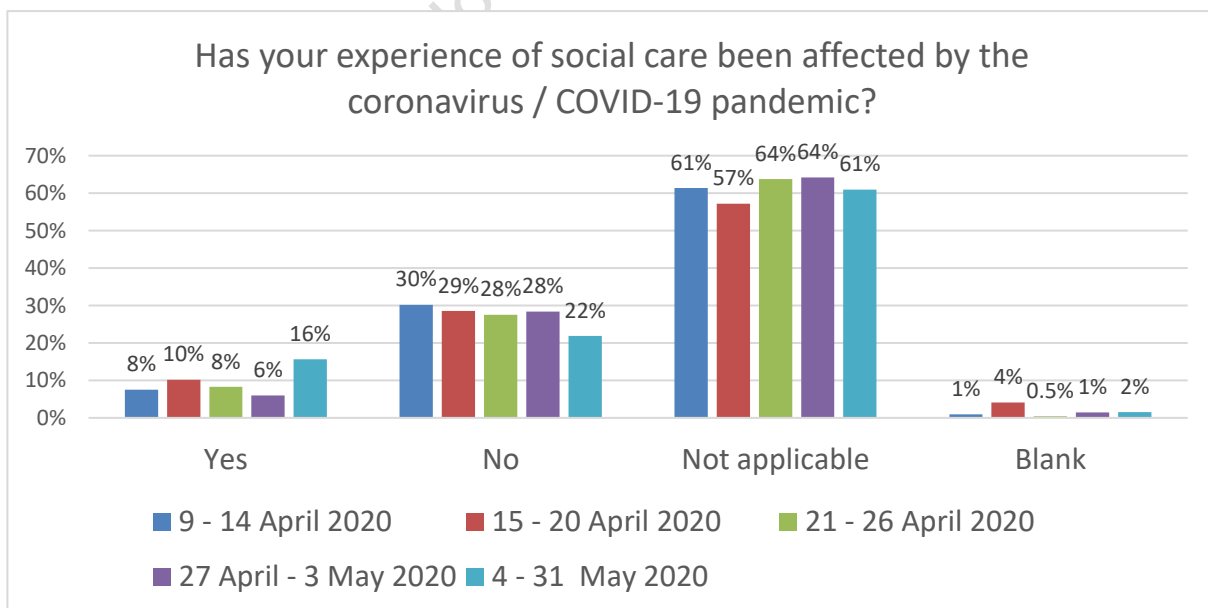
- 'We have less time [with the carers] because longer need to go shopping to find food and time needed to walk guide dog for me. One has to isolate on occasion as she works in a school and comes into contact with possible virus so needs to keep away sometimes just in case.' (15-20 April)
- 'Am currently unable to contact care worker.' (15-20 April)
- 'Our son should be having physio and attending Headway but this has all stopped due to the situation. We have no idea when this will start up again. I was due a telephone conversation with social care today but for some unknown reason it has not happened.' (15-20 April)

- ‘I don’t have social care it has been stopped I understand because of virus. I should have full time care, washing, changing clothes, meals. My hygiene has gone from bad to worse with no help which I lost all my sensory brain disease in 2008.’ (4-31 May)
- ‘My Mother is in a care home and she’s been without visitors for 10 weeks, she is living with dementia and finding the situation difficult.’ (4-31 May)
- ‘Care agency could not provide carers who we not doing lots of domiciliary call and who would therefore be high risk of bringing virus into our shielded daughter. The care agency are still struggling to source and provide PPE for staff, their newsletter last week confirmed this. We have had to buy PPE ourselves to keep safe. We have no respite since before lockdown began - as this is usually provided by grandparents whom we cannot now see.’ (4-31 May)

Four people reported issues they faced working in the sector.

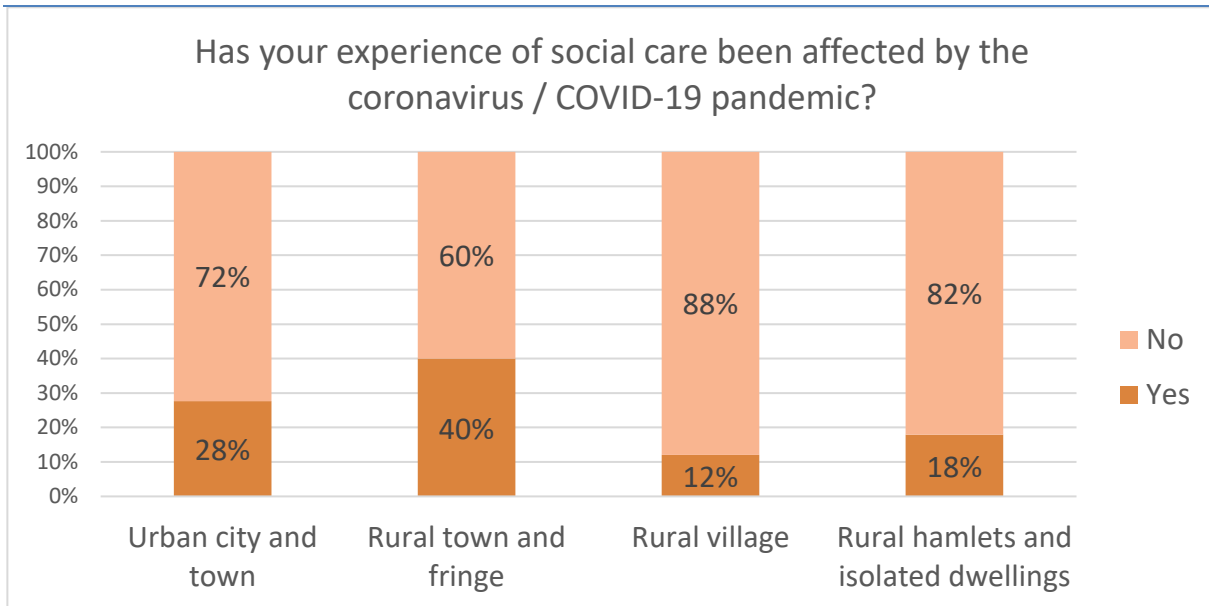
Sample comments:

- ‘Difficulty as social workers working from home - they and myself in my job role have been unable to do face to face discussions with the elderly who have been in hospital and maybe the decision is that they do not return to supported living but go into a nursing home. At times difficult to speak to hospital staff due to the volume of work they are involved with but this has a knock on effect for relatives wanting to know how their next of kin are.’ (15-20 April)
- ‘As a community nurse, I see patients being discharged too early from hospital.’ (15-20 April)



The proportion of people reporting that their experience had been affected was highest in May.

RURAL / URBAN LOCATION AND IMPACT ON SOCIAL CARE



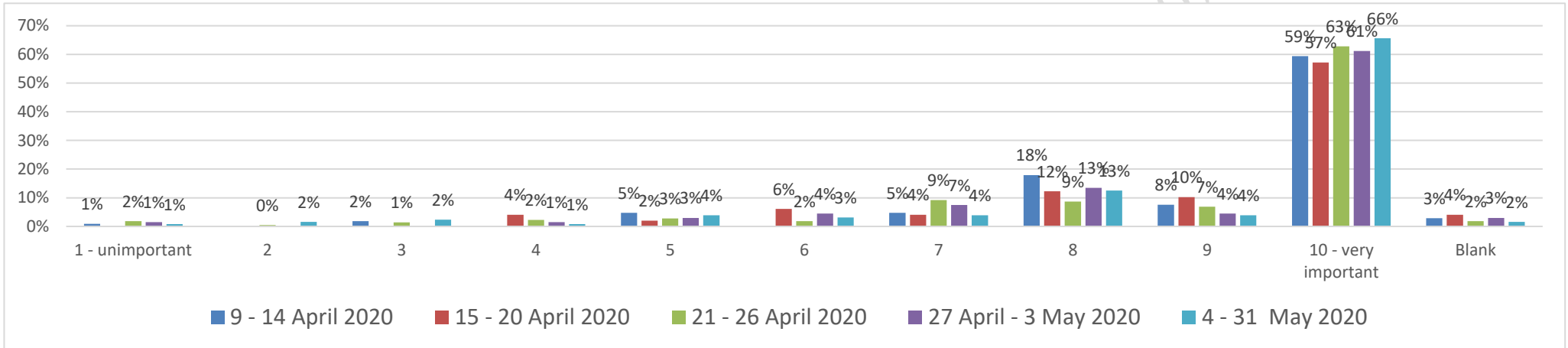
Those with experience of social care living in rural villages reported the lowest incidents of it being affected during the pandemic.

Supporting information (Would you like to tell us more about this?)

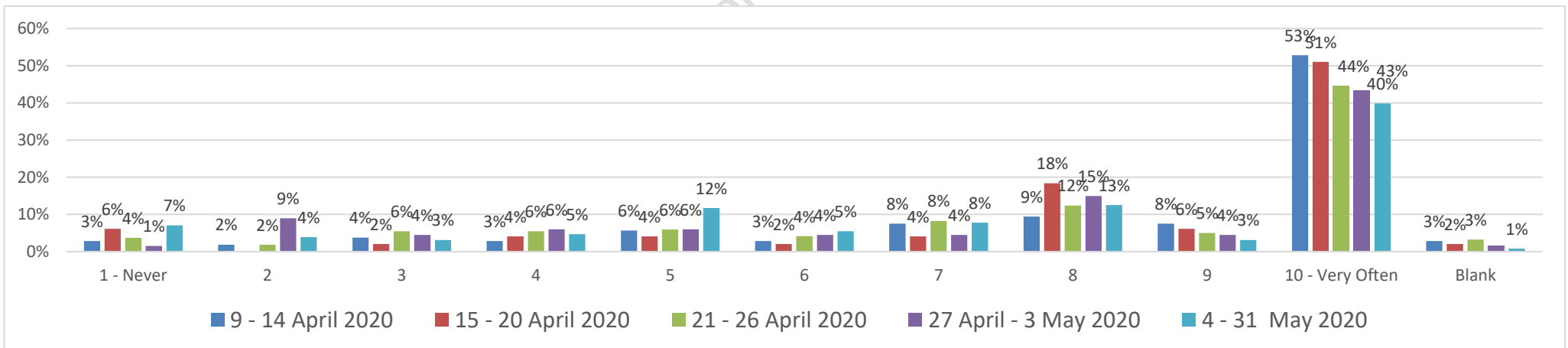
Full comments can be found in [Appendix A](#)

Interim Report - Not for publication

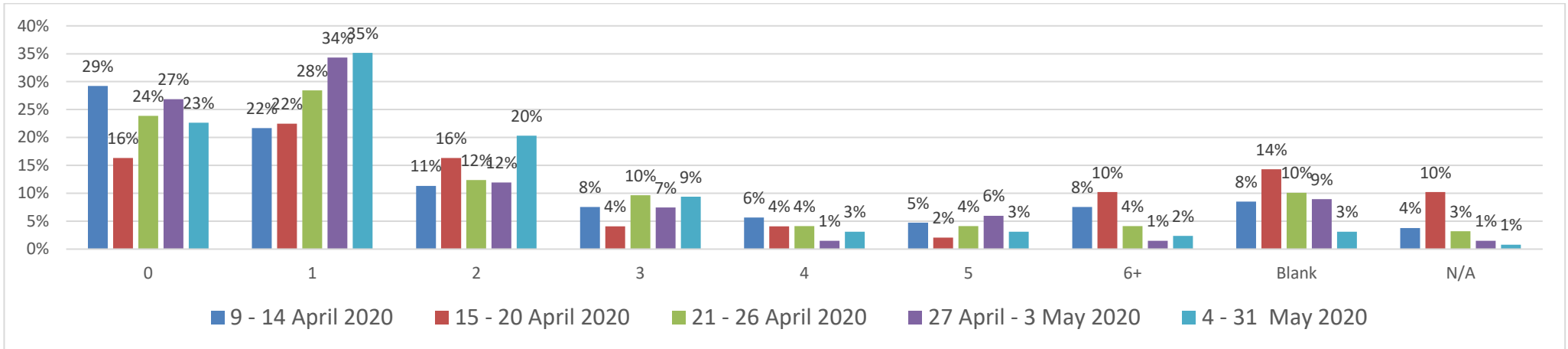
7. How important is it for you to connect with family and friends on a weekly basis?



8. How often are you connecting with family and friends on a weekly basis?



9. Over the past week how many people have you had around you that provide you with support on a regular basis?



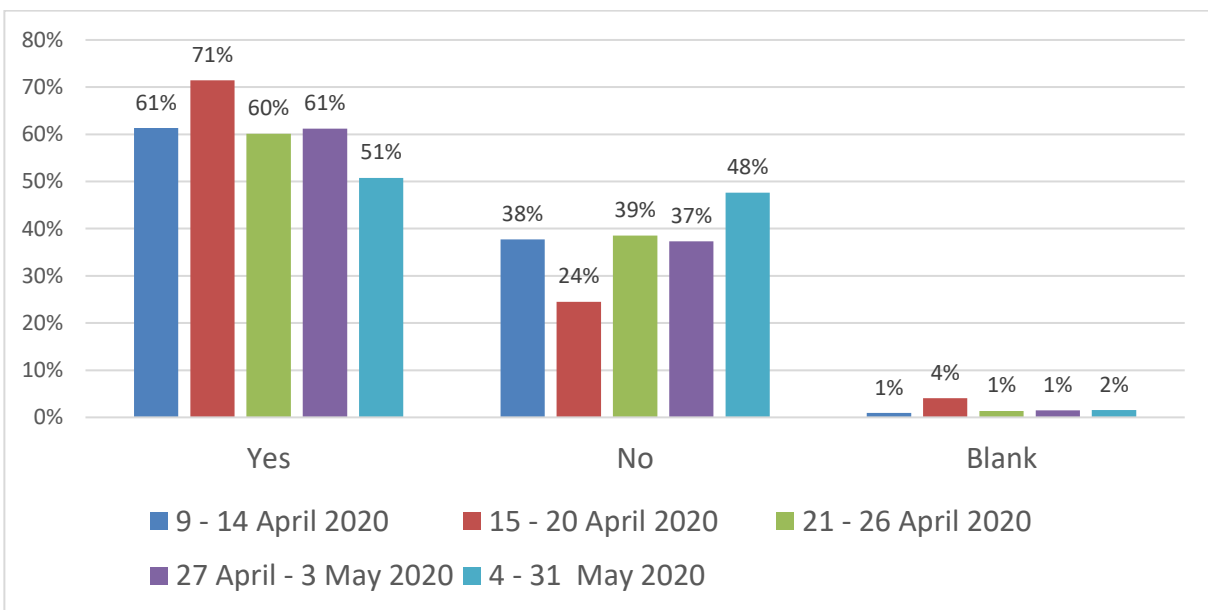
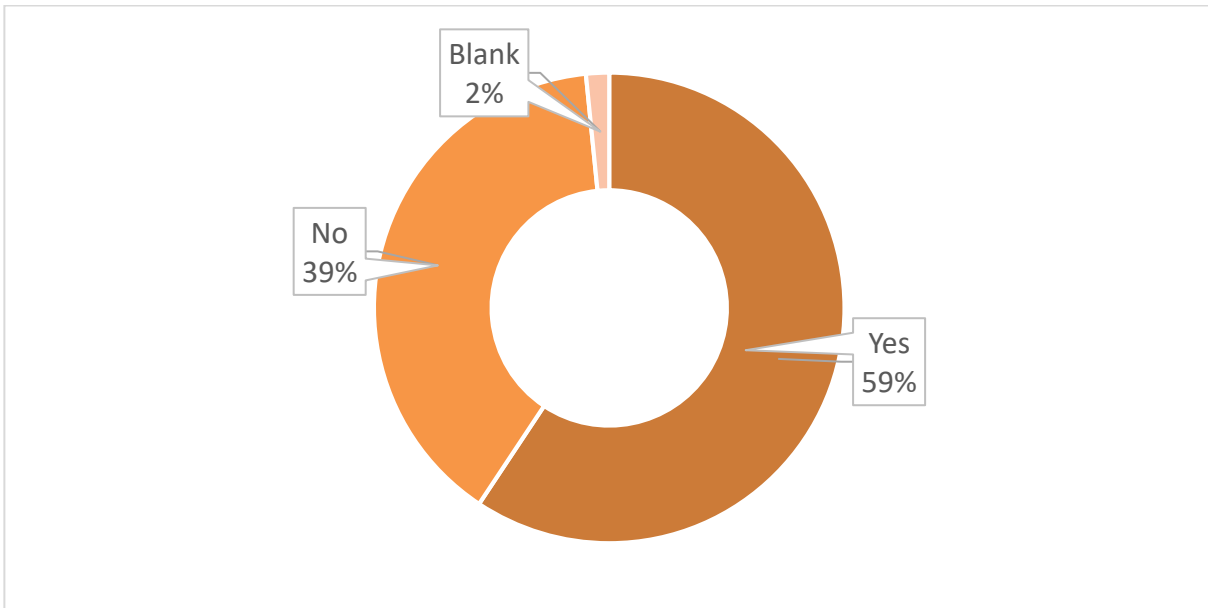
Over the time the survey was carried out the proportion of those who felt connecting with friends and family was 'very important' grew from 59% to 66% while the proportion of those who were connecting with families and friends 'very often' decreased from 53% to 40%.

ARE THOSE WHO FEEL THAT INTERACTING WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY IS IMPORTANT ACHIEVING THAT INTERACTION?

Just over three quarters (76%) are. Nearly 9 out of 10 people (89%) told us that interacting with friends and family was important (ranking it between 7 and 10 on a scale of 1 - unimportant to 10 - very important). Of these people, 76% report that they are frequently connecting with friends and family (ranking it between 7 and 10 on a scale of 1 - Never to 10 - Very often). However 10% of this group told us that they were not frequently connecting with friends and family (ranking the frequency between 1 and 3).

Interim Report - Not for publication (20/4/2020)

10. Has anything helped you cope day-to-day during the pandemic?



The lowest level of people reporting that they had something that helped them cope during the pandemic was during May.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

358 people who gave supporting information to this question:

- 9 - 14 April, 67
- 15 - 20 April, 39
- 21 - 26 April, 138
- 27 April - 3 May, 46
- 4 - 31 May, 68

	Number of People who indicated the theme											
	9 - 14 April		15 - 20 April		21 - 26 April		27 April - 3 May		4 - 31 May		Total	
Things that help day-to-day		%		%		%		%		%		%
Sharing with family and friends / neighbours	26	39	15	38	47	34	8	17	20	32	116	32
Physical activity (Inc. gardening)	15	22	12	31	30	22	12	26	15	24	84	23
Contact from support networks	5	7	5	13	15	11	7	15	7	11	39	11
Mindfulness	8	12	4	10	9	7	1	2	4	6	26	7
Hobbies / skills	3	4	1	2.6	10	7	5	11	7	11	26	7
Culture (reading, TV, etc.)	4	6	4	10	12	9	2	4	3	5	25	7
Shopping Support	-	-	-	-	11	8	7	15	7	11	25	7
Outside Space	-	-	3	8	12	9	3	7	4	6	22	6
Faith	5	7	1	2.6	14	10	1	2	-	-	21	6
Work Team support	1	1.5	10	26	4	3	0	0	5	8	20	6
Volunteering	5	7	3	8	6	4	3	7	3	5	20	6
Information	1	1.5	4	10	8	6	3	7	3	5	19	5
Reduced news	3	4	5	13	4	3	4	9	3	5	19	5
Contact from existing social groups (clubs etc.)	7	10	2	5	6	4	1	2	1	2	17	5
Social Media	1	1.5	4	10	6	4	6	13	-	-	17	5
Pets	0	0	5	13	6	4	1	2	3	5	15	4
Maintaining a routine	0	0	2	5	6	4	3	7	4	6	15	4
DIY	4	6	0	0	4	3	1	2	1	2	10	3
Good weather	-	-	-	-	6	4	1	2	-	-	7	2
Self-resilience	1	1.5	1	2.6	3	2	0	0	-	-	5	1.4
Education Support	-	-	-	-	4	3	0	0	-	-	4	1.1
Supply of PPE	-	-	2	5	1	0.7	0	0	-	-	3	0.8
Being isolated (feeling safe)	-	-	-	-	2	1.4	0	0	-	-	2	0.6
Financial security	-	-	-	-	1	0.7	0	0	-	-	1	0.3

Supporting information (Would you like to tell us more about this?)

Full comments can be found in [Appendix A](#)

Sample comments:

- 'I'm reassured by the speed of which my local community set up a support scheme.' (9-14 April)
- 'Covid 19 updates from employer.' (15-20 April)
- 'The pop-up shop so we don't have to go out of the village.' (15-20 April)
- 'My doctor have provided an e-doctor which makes me feel better should I need to contact the doctor about anything.' (21-26 April)
- 'Telephone advice has been reassuring from medical staff.' (21-26 April)
- 'Our church has been wonderful and has kept in contact with us.' (21-26 April)
- 'Shropshire Council offering advice...' (21-26 April)
- 'The Access and Crisis Team 24/7 availability is important. I am impressed with the redeployment of Shropshire Council's staff in providing helpful services and signposting via the new helpline.'
- 'Short academic courses online.' (21-26 April)
- 'I've volunteered with the local authority, and see people being kinder and more friendly.' (21-26 April)

11. Is there any other way that you feel your health, care, or wellbeing has been affected by the coronavirus / COVID-19 pandemic that you would like to tell us about?

Full comments can be found in [Appendix A](#)

Sample comments:

- 'The government view is that people should help themselves by using technology but that is no use to people who do not have access to technology!' (9-14 April)
- 'People should not underestimate the anxiety, disorientation and depression generated or made worse by the crisis. Fear too - about dying, loss of social order, economy crashing, loss of one's job/income, not being able to get food or fuel to keep warm, and so on. A feeling of 'what's the point?' (9-14 April)
- 'There are people in the community who don't reach the threshold to access mental health services but who are pretty borderline at the best of times.' (9-14 April)
- 'I would like to have known whereabouts the people live who have been affected. I think knowing if your local town/village had cases would make people respond better to the situation.' (9-14 April)
- 'I was unable to speak to my GP just signposted to 111 who were very helpful. My family also contacted 999 as I collapsed and couldn't be roused however I was not

- offered a test even though I work for the NHS and I feel my recovery would have been enhanced by having a test.’ (15-20 April)
- ‘I worry how people will cope and feel when the support they’ve had from neighbours and the community stops.’ (15-20 April)
 - ‘I actually feel very well taken care of. I’ve received phone calls from my GP and the council ensuring that I am OK and have everything I need.’ (15-20 April)
 - ‘I am putting on a lot of weight!!!’ (15-20 April)
 - ‘The only thing I would like is information being put out from GP surgeries on what type of service they currently run for their patient list, e.g. is there ANY circumstances when a GP may be seen or called out.’ (15-20 April)
 - Maternity services could offer online tours of maternity departments. Midwives could do q & answers online. Also what to pack etc. Also pictures of who pregnant women will meet on arrival. Good practice can be found on Bucks maternity Facebook/online. (27-3 May)
 - ‘Finding I am drinking more alcohol which is not good!’ (4-31 May)
 - ‘I feel unbelievable heavy guilt from being unable to support my dearest friend at her husband’s funeral. I am very afraid I will never forgive myself and our friendship of more than 60 years will be damaged and never the same again.’ (4-31 May)
 - ‘I feel that me cancer is not relevant.’ (4-31st May)

Get in Touch

Please contact Healthwatch Shropshire to share your views and experiences of this service or any other health and social care service in Shropshire. We gather comments anonymously and share them with service commissioners and providers to highlight areas of good practice and identify areas for improvement.

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