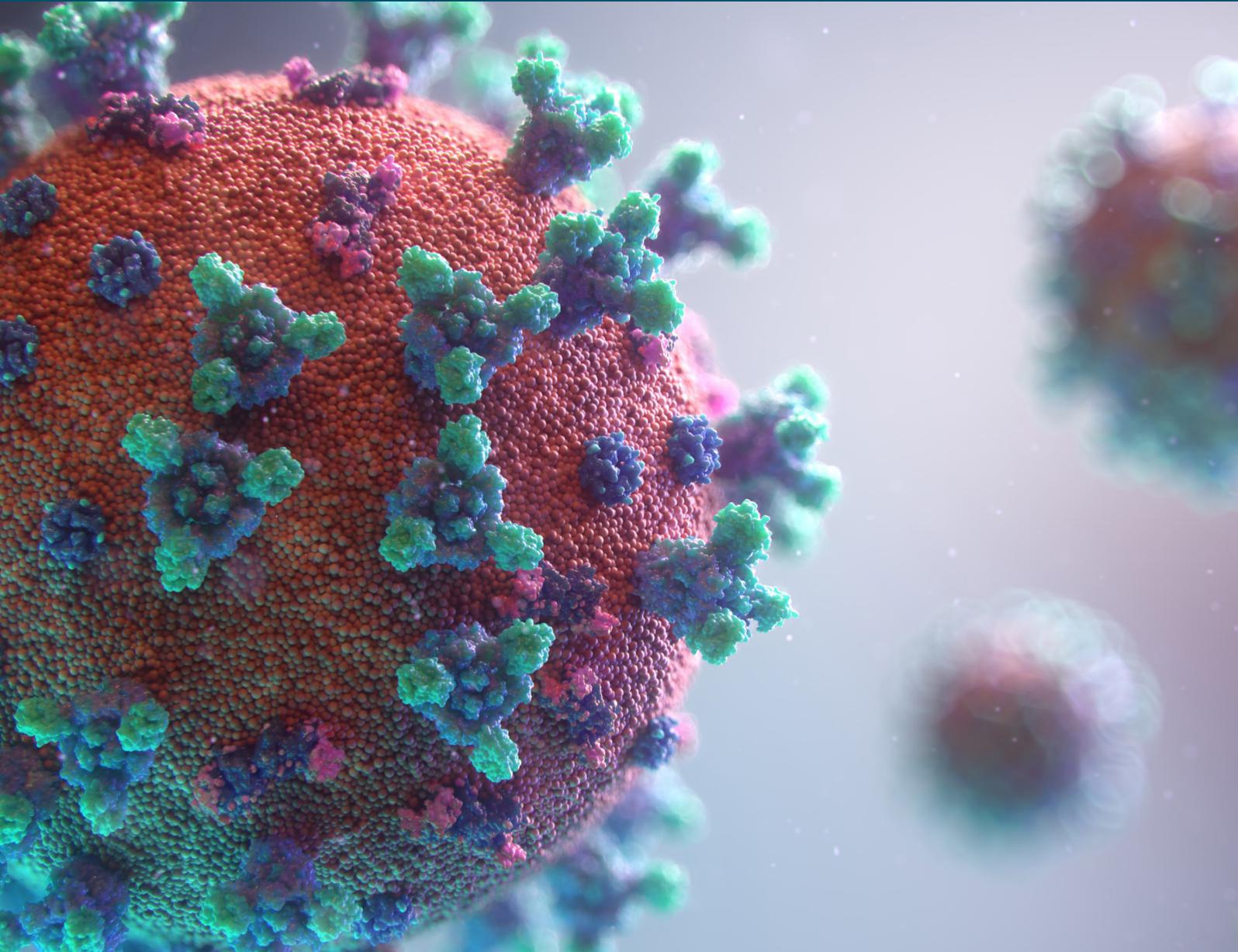


Covid-19 Insight Report



A summary of our findings
March - July 2020

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Our volunteers

Healthwatch Wiltshire has a team of committed, trained volunteers. Our volunteers supported this work sharing our survey and gathering views from their local communities across Wiltshire, by participating in virtual meetings to share feedback and ideas and by proofreading the final report.

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Report summary

What is this report about?

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, which began in March 2020, has meant that health and care services have had to rapidly change and adapt their services. This report looks at what local people thought about information, health and care services, community support and their wellbeing during this time.

What did we do?

Face-to-face engagement was not possible at this time, so we gathered information by:

- Running an online survey, in collaboration with Healthwatch Swindon and Healthwatch BaNES (Bath and North East Somerset).
- Asking our volunteers, who are spread across Wiltshire, to share our survey and the feedback they heard.
- Using our website feedback, social media and responding to calls and emails via our Helpdesk Hub Team to gather people's experiences.
- Subscribing to Care Opinion (an online platform where people can post their feedback on services) and monitoring feedback left there by people living in Wiltshire.

What were the key findings?

- Most people could find and understand the information they needed about Covid-19 but acting on and keeping up-to-date with changes was more difficult.
- There was a need for clear information about testing and looking after health and wellbeing.
- Virtual appointments with healthcare professionals had worked well for many people, but there were some circumstances and individuals where these were difficult or not possible.
- Some people were not accessing services due to fear of Covid-19, or fear of 'overloading' the service.
- There was understanding of the pressures on services. Appreciation was given of the commitment, dedication and kindness of health and care workers.
- As time has moved on, there has been more frustration expressed about delays to routine treatment and dentistry.
- The pandemic has affected people's mental health and wellbeing.
- Community groups, voluntary organisations and volunteers have been a valuable source of support to local people.

Conclusions and recommendations

The report draws conclusions from the views and experiences that have been shared with us and makes recommendations based on these. We recognise that services had to adapt rapidly. The recommendations make suggestions that aim to improve local people's experiences of health and care services going forwards, based on what they have told us.

Introduction and background

The way health and social care services operate has been affected by coronavirus (Covid-19) with non-urgent treatment postponed, virtual appointments taking the place of face-to-face ones for all but essential cases, and care homes and services limiting public access.

For Healthwatch Wiltshire, the outbreak has also resulted in changes to our work, with much of our planned public engagement and visits to services paused and a greater focus on providing advice to the public and supporting the local response to Covid-19.

However, this does not mean that the work of Healthwatch Wiltshire to understand the experiences of the public has stopped. With a fast-moving response to Covid-19, real-time intelligence for services about the issues the public are facing is valuable.

It is also important that health and social care services understand the impact these changes are having more broadly – especially when they concern people's safety or will have implications once services begin to emerge from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Our work providing information

Since the coronavirus outbreak, there has been a focus on information and signposting, to help people get the information they need from a trusted source.

We created dedicated coronavirus advice and information pages on our website to make them easier to navigate and find the information that people are looking for. These included:

- General government and Public Health England information, which has been updated regularly.
- A community support page providing information on the Wiltshire Wellbeing Hub and local voluntary groups.
- Information on how people can stay in touch with their loved ones who are currently in hospital.
- Dedicated pages for mental health support and for children and young people's mental health.
- Information to explain the difference between social distancing, self-isolation and shielding, which has been replaced with new advice on shielding as lockdown measures have eased.
- A dedicated page explaining the changes to local maternity services during the outbreak and where parents-to-be can get support.
- A dedicated page explaining the care you can expect to receive if you have cancer.
- FAQs on getting prescriptions from community pharmacies.
- Information on getting an NHS dental appointment and accessing urgent dental care.
- Updated information on Wiltshire advocacy services.
- Advice on wearing face coverings on public transport and exemptions.

Between 1 March and 12 July, our coronavirus advice and information pages have had **1,803** views. The most visited pages during this period were for community services (270 views), general information on coronavirus (242 views) and how to get urgent dental care (219 views).

We have also been sharing information and asking for feedback on health and care services on social media and these posts have reached **88,605** people.

We will continue to review and update our advice and information pages and share messages on our social media channels as the situation evolves.

Our approach to gathering views and experiences

During this time, it was not possible to carry out our usual face-to-face engagement events. Staff worked from home and meetings were carried out online. To ensure that we continued to gather the views of local people we used several different approaches:

- We continued to use our website feedback, social media and responding to calls and emails via our Helpdesk Hub Team to gather people's experiences of using health and social care services.
- We subscribed to Care Opinion and are monitoring feedback left there by people living in Wiltshire.
- We asked our volunteers, who are spread across the county, to share any feedback they heard locally with us.
- We asked local community and voluntary organisations including local Covid-19 response groups to be our eyes and ears so we can understand the experiences of those they support.
- Working in collaboration with Healthwatch Swindon and Healthwatch BaNES, we launched an online survey asking people to share their experiences of health and care during this period. This survey ran from 28 April to 12 July and was shared widely with voluntary and community groups and organisations. This survey was also able to be completed by phone for anyone who requested this.

Specifically, we asked people to share what is working well and where there are gaps within the provision and delivery of health and social care services.

These findings are a collation of all these sources of insight.

Have your say ▾ News & reports Get involved ▾ What we do ▾ Advice & information ▾ 🔍 Search

Coronavirus: advice and information

Coronavirus (Covid-19): what you need to do

Stay alert

We can all help control the virus by staying alert. This means you must:

- Stay at home as much as possible
- Work from home as much as you can
- Limit contact with other people
- Keep your distance from others (2 metres apart)
- Wash your hands regularly

For the most up to date information, visit [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

Know where to get advice and support on the issues affecting you.

We created a dedicated coronavirus advice and information section on our website to help people find the information and support they need

Who did we hear from?

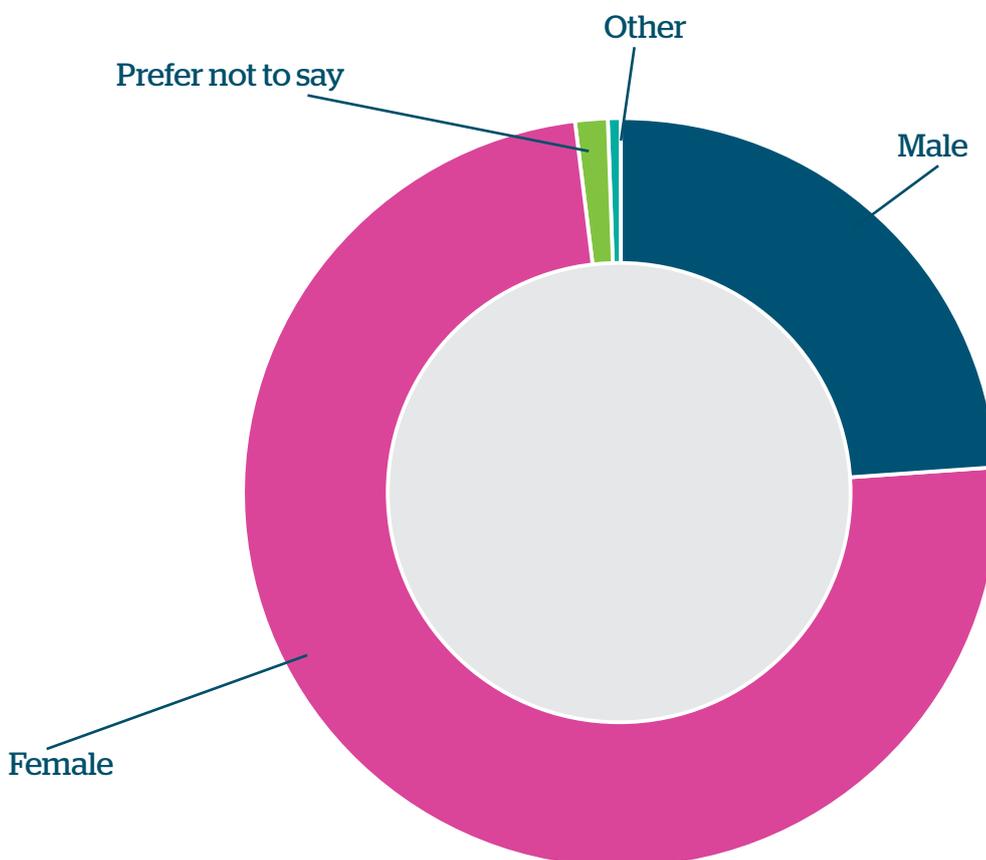
We gathered views from **375** people:

- **242** responses to our survey
- **119** people shared their views by phone or email
- **14** reviews left on Care Opinion

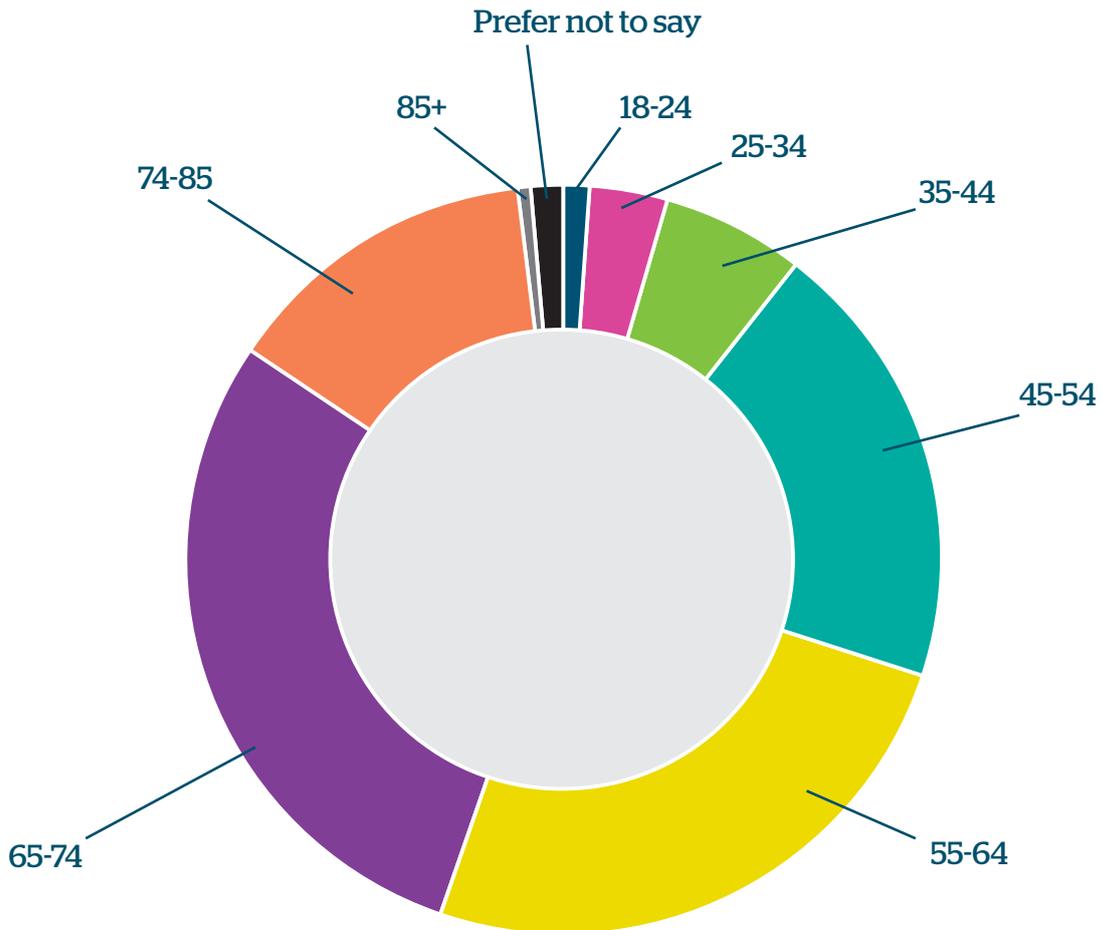
Some of those we spoke to told us about more than one service. In total we received **466** comments about health, care and community services.

The below charts show a breakdown of some demographic information about those who completed our survey and shared this information with us.

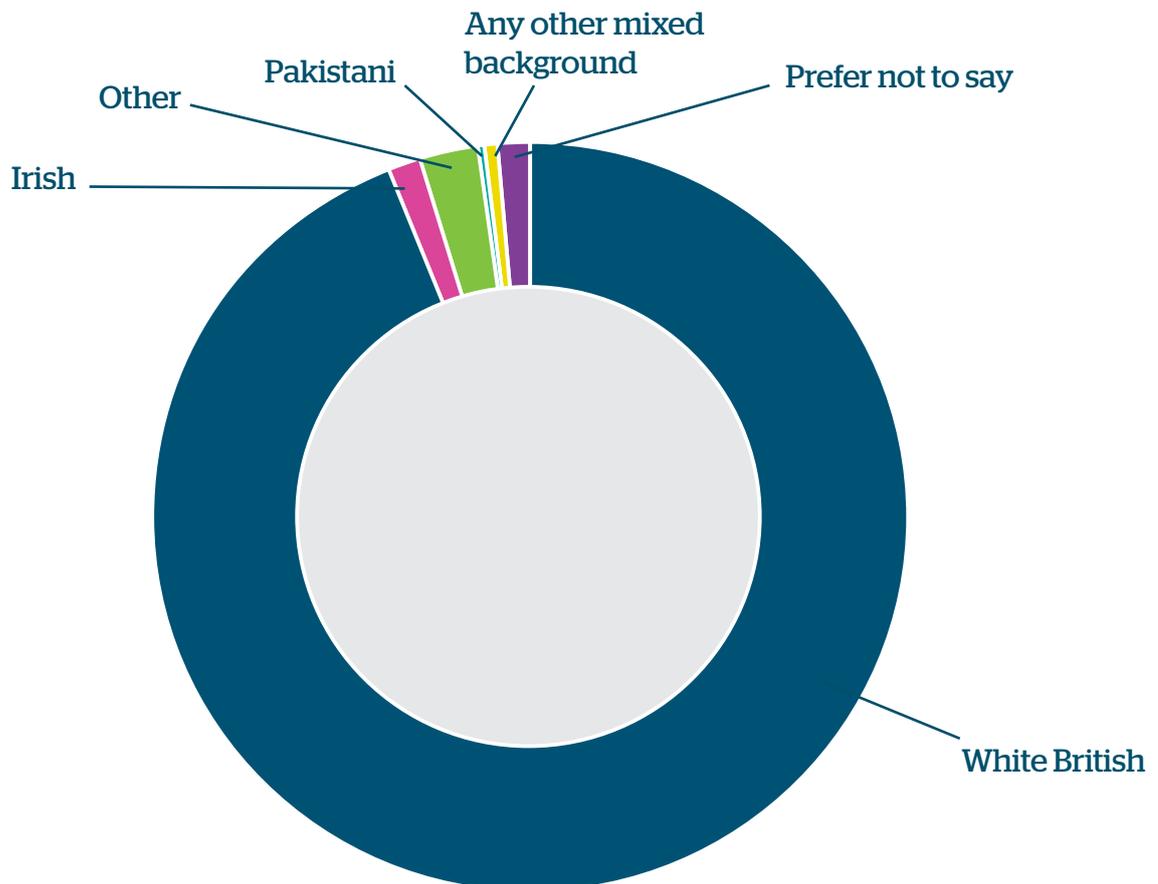
How would you describe your gender?



What is your age?



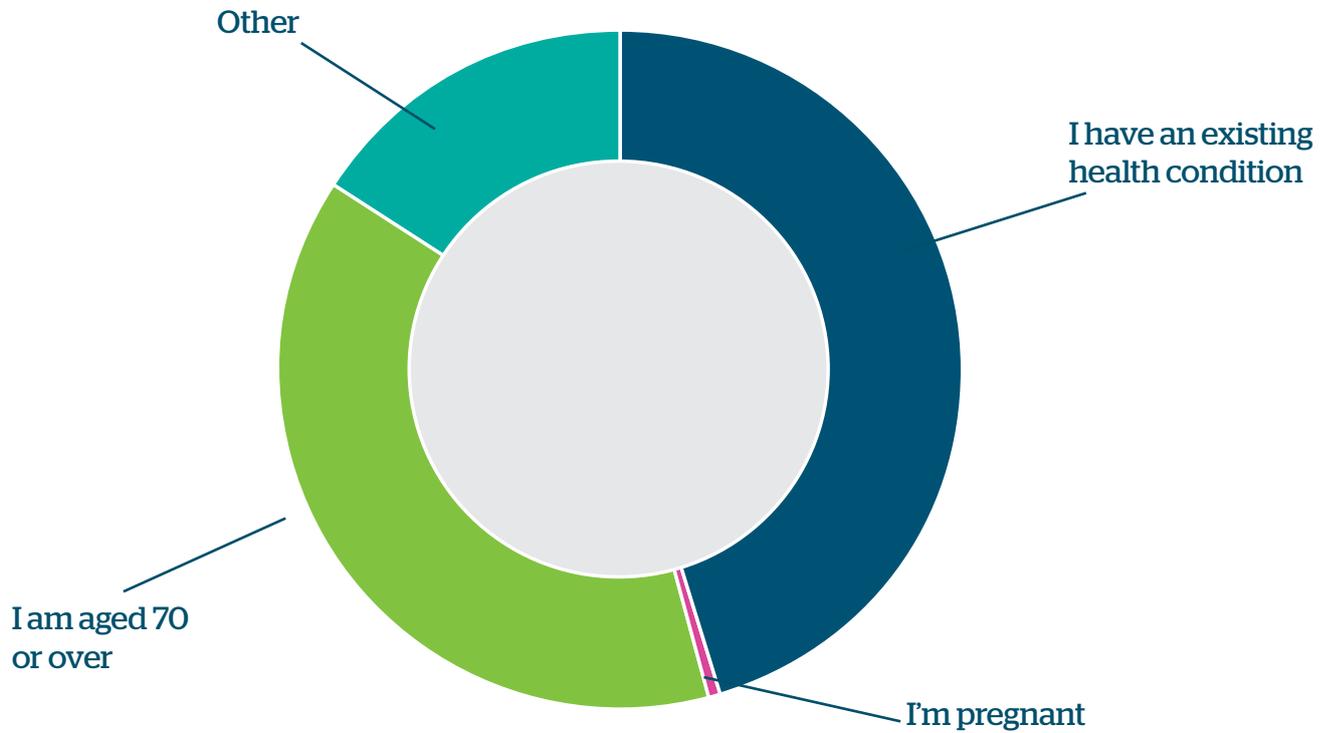
How would you describe your ethnic group?



What did people tell us?

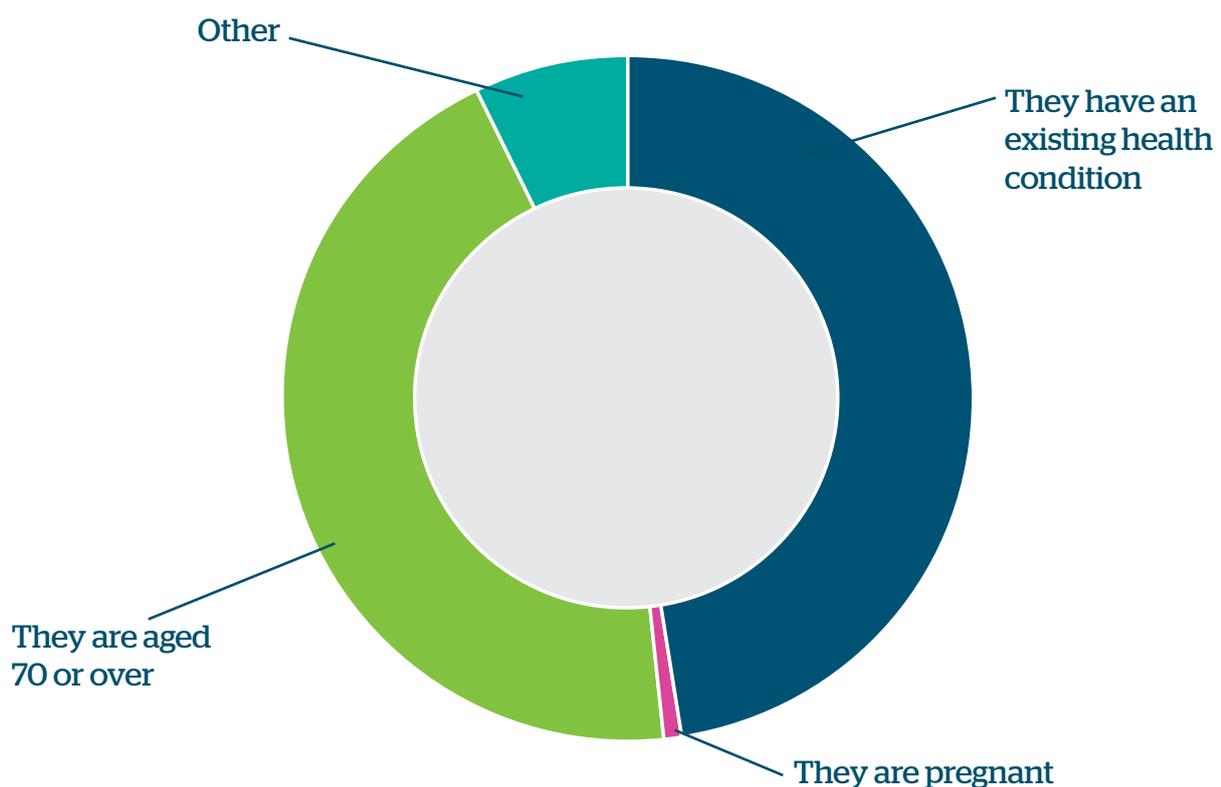
In our survey we asked if respondents considered themselves at high risk from Covid-19 and **47% (112)** said that they did for the reasons below. Of these, **37%** told us they had received a shielding letter.

I am high risk because...



We asked respondents if they cared for, supported or lived with someone, who is considered to be at high risk. **38% (92)** of said that they did, for these reasons: Of these, **27%** said that the person concerned had received a shielding letter.

They are high risk because...

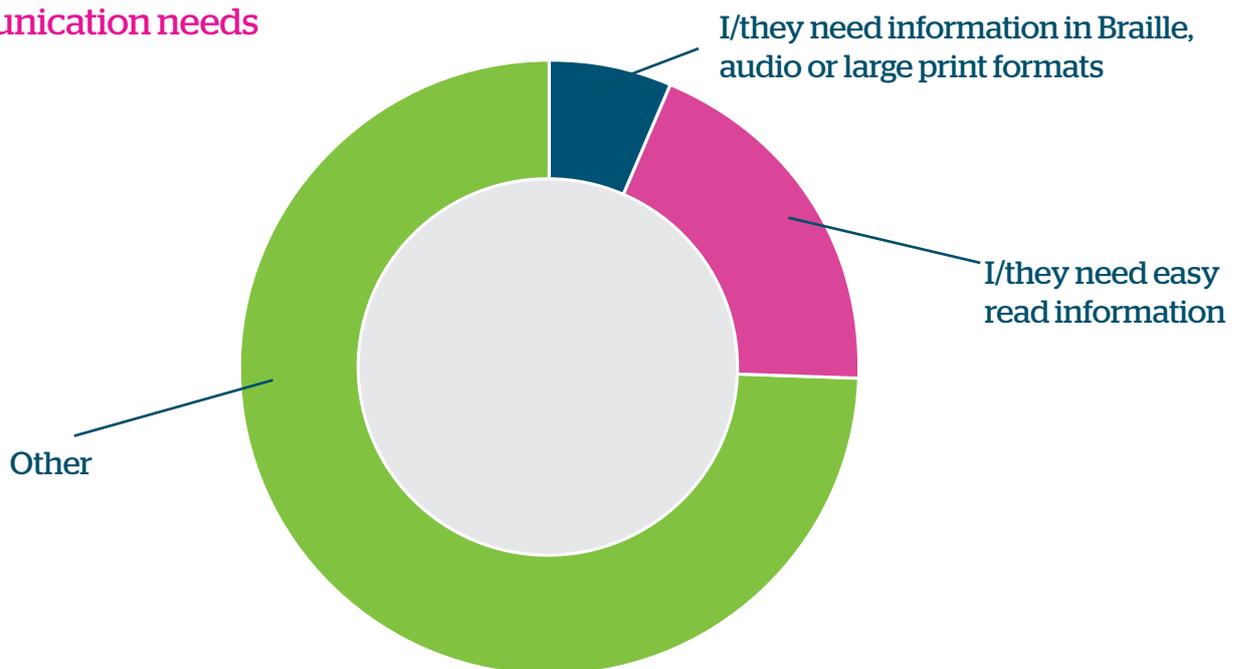


Those who answered Other, gave a variety of reasons why they thought there was a high risk.

- I have suffered 2-3 bouts of pneumonia in the past, am overweight and generally exhausted.
- I am a parish priest on frontline funerals.
- Working through the pandemic as a key worker.
- We support two families, one family over 70 with health conditions, the other family one with terminal cancer the other has mental health issues.
- Disabled and relies on care visits.

12% (27) of our respondents told us that they, or the person they care for had additional communication needs.

Communication needs



In Other, people mentioned hearing loss, dyslexia, learning disabilities and mental health issues.

- I am quite hearing impaired which makes communication with someone in a mask quite hard.
- Needs information translated into understandable language, simple terms.
- Due to health conditions I find it difficult at times to communicate my needs or things that need sorting.

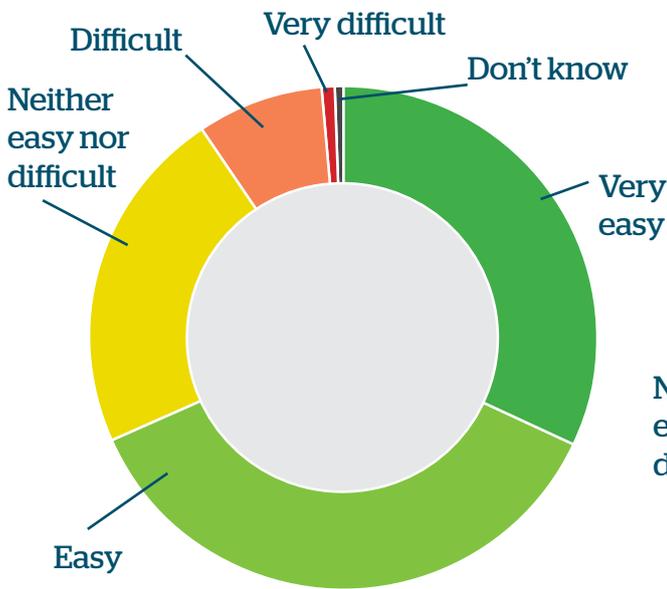
Of these 27 respondents, 22 (71%) said that they had been able to find information and advice in the format needed and 9 (29%) said that they had not.

Information

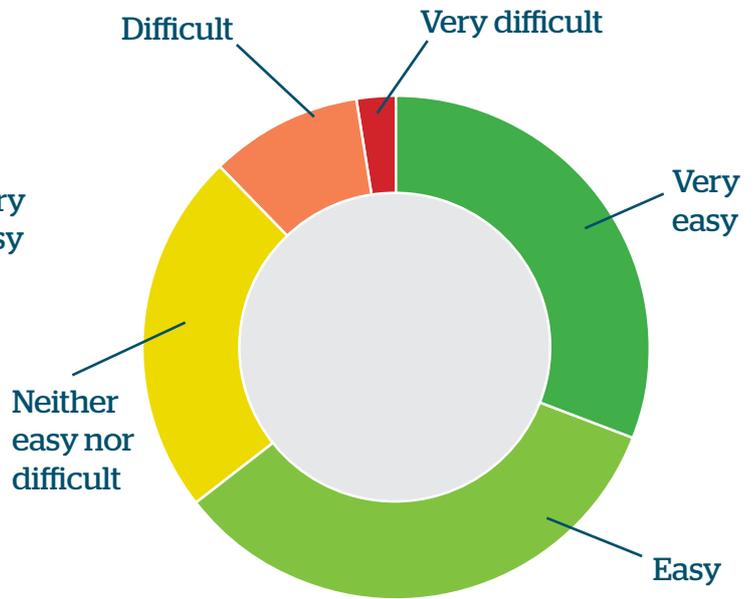
Our survey asked about respondent's experience of the information they needed about how to keep safe during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The majority said that they were able to find and understand information.

Ease of finding information

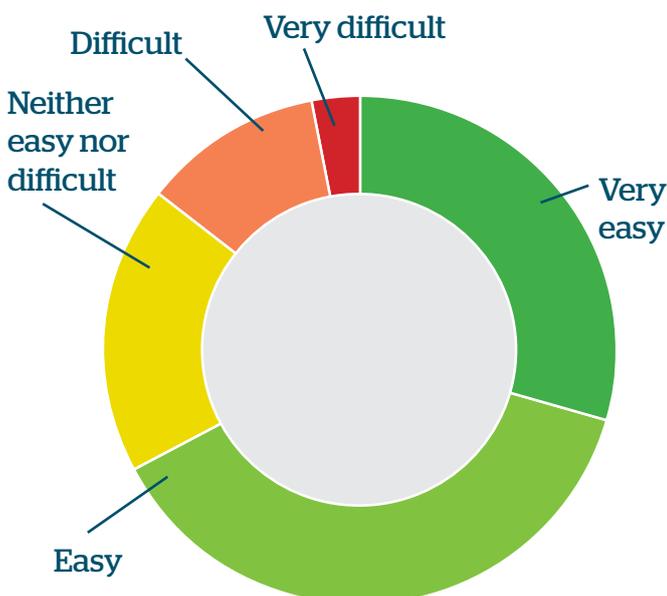


Ease of understanding information

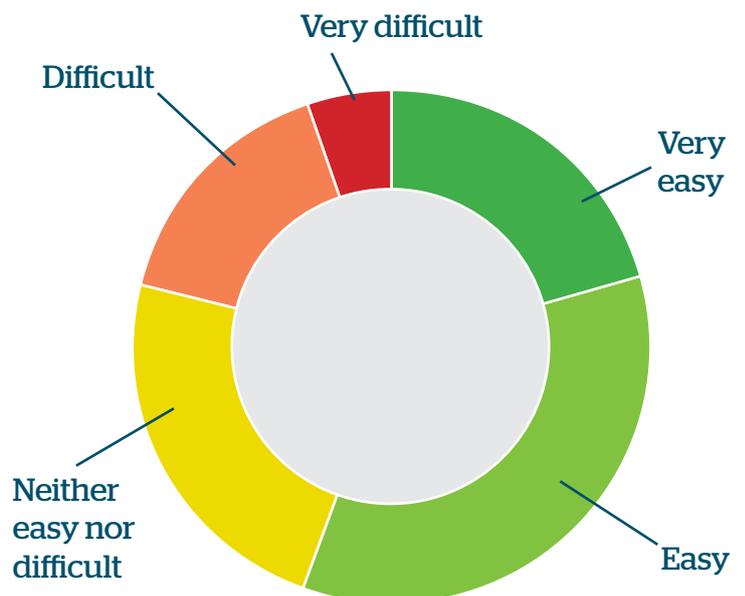


When compared to finding and understanding information slightly more respondents said that it was harder to act on information, and the aspect of information that the most people found difficult (20.9%) was keeping up to date with changes in information.

Ease of acting on information



Ease of keeping up to date with changes

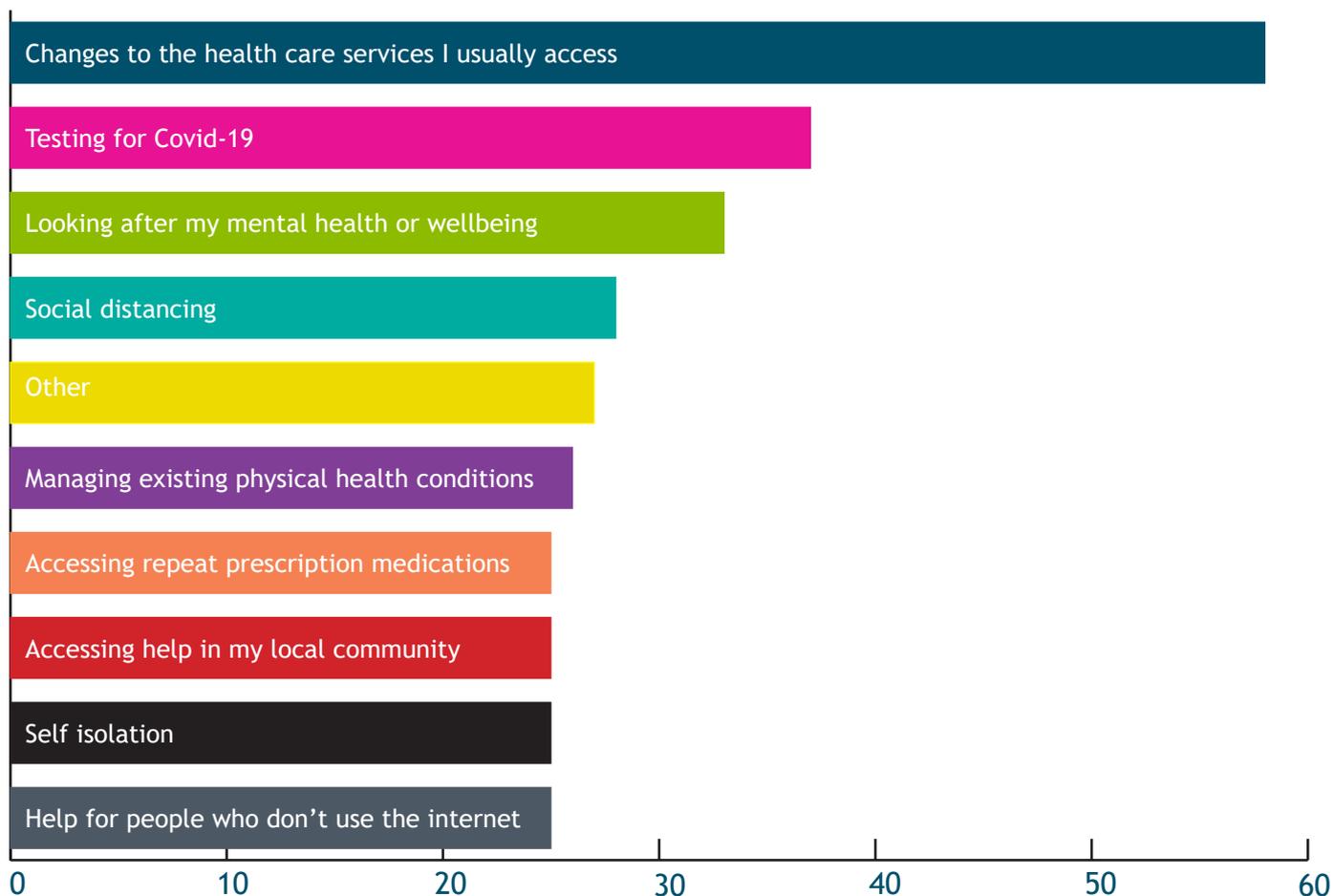


What topics did people have difficulty getting information about?

Nearly a third of our respondents (32%) told us that they had been able to get all the information they need.

Of the remaining 68%, below are some of the topics they said were difficult to get clear information or advice about. Others not shown in the chart include visiting friends or family in hospitals or care homes, shielding people who are at very high risk of coronavirus, advice for family carers and changes to social care support I usually access. Respondents could tick more than one option.

Top 10 of topics people had difficulty getting information about



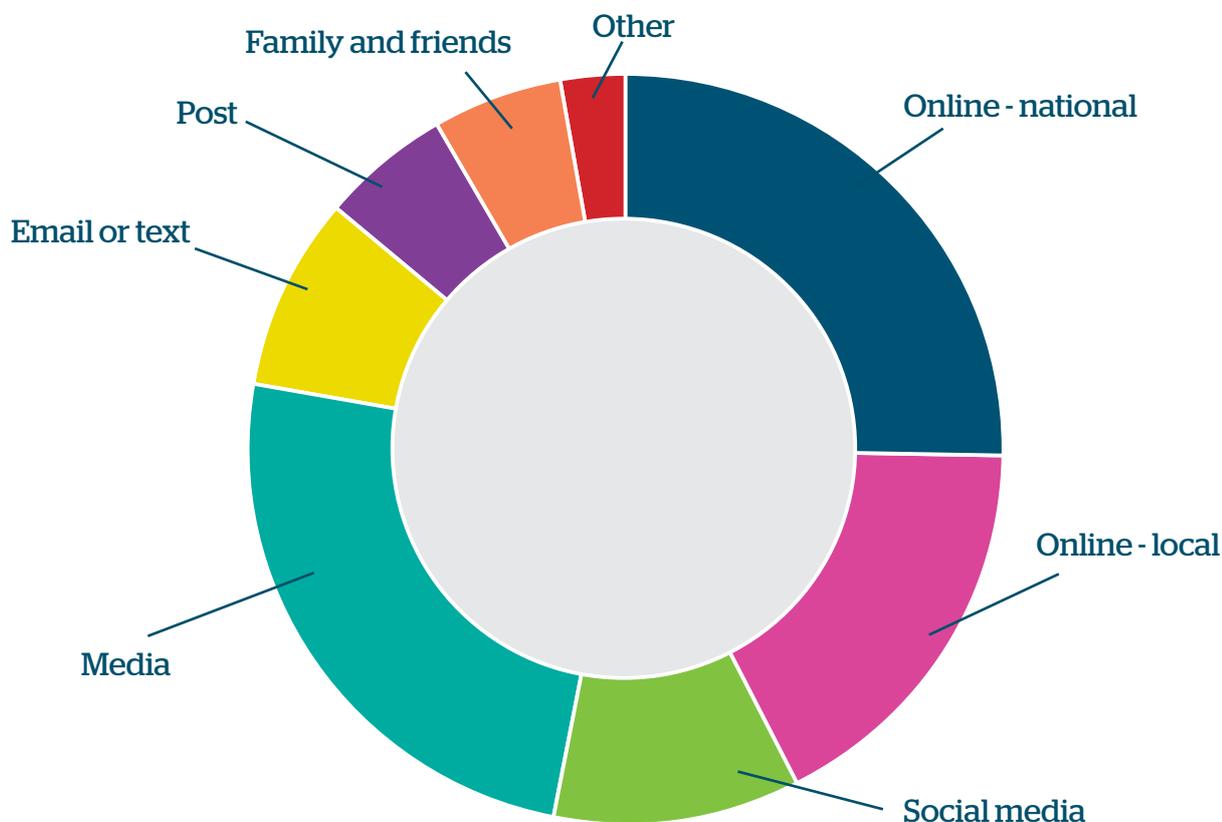
Huge lack of info at the start... much better now. But still no clarity on what PPE carers I employ using social care funding need and any new procedures. Lack of advice regarding caring roles for family we don't live with when we are high risk and self isolating and they are shielding.

The Stay at Home message is easy to understand for people with autism. The Stay Alert message and guidance changing day to day – what you can and can't do – is difficult. Especially when you manage best with clear rules and routine.

At first very easy then as the Government messages became confused, more difficult.

We asked where people had found information or advice about the Covid-19 pandemic. Responders were asked to identify all their sources and therefore could pick more than one option. The top sources of information were online and through other media (TV, radio or newspaper).

Sources of information



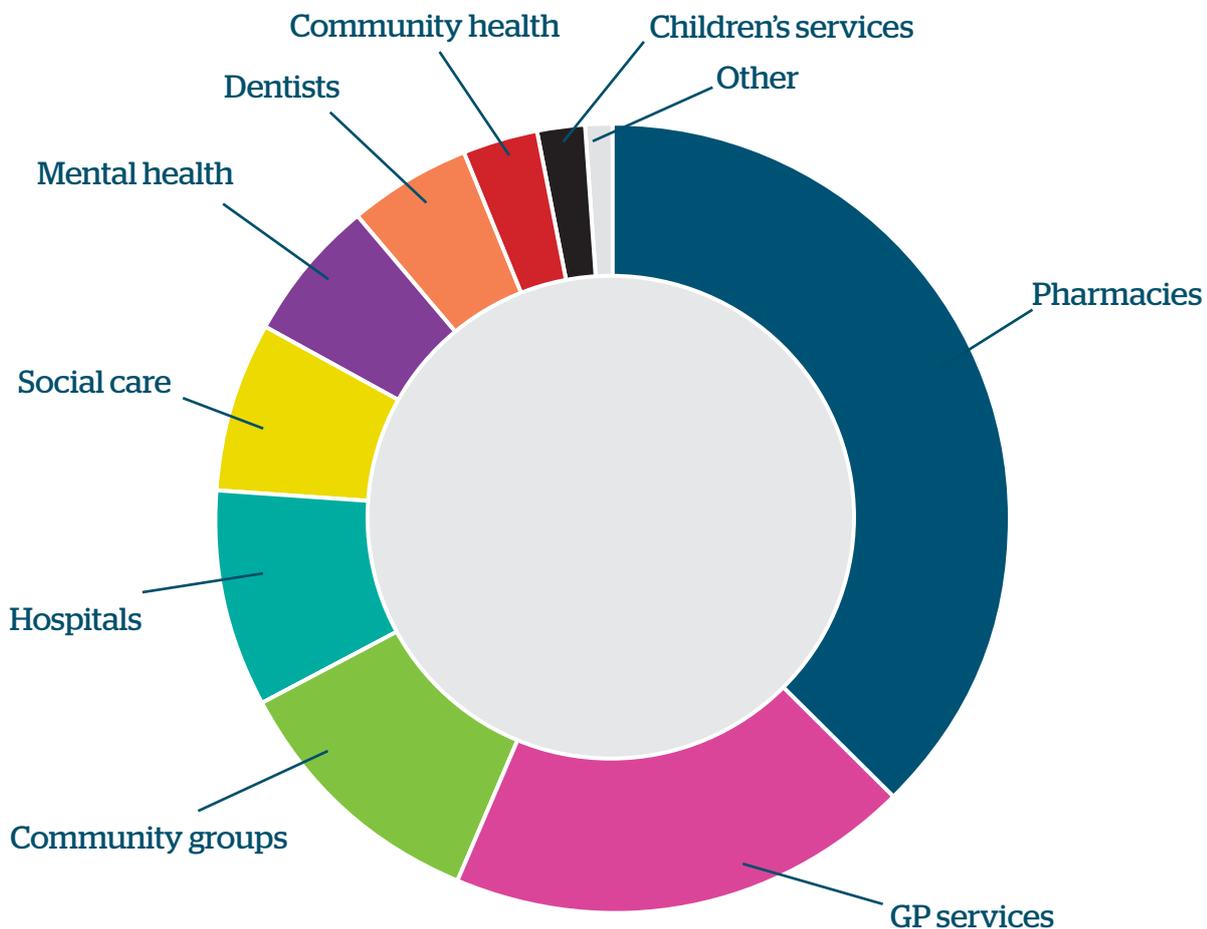
We also asked if people had found any sources of information particularly useful and 37% (87) identified some. Of the responses identifying these, there were 14 mentions of resources from Wiltshire Council. Other sources mentioned were NHS websites, the World Health Organisation, family members, and a range of local voluntary and community organisations.

- Information from Wiltshire Council Wellbeing Hub was very useful and was information about Covid support groups.
- NHS online. Copied and shared emails. Facebook notifications.
- Local gov info. Local friends and family suggesting suitable food delivery contacts. Next door North Bradley answered shopping request.
- Some information from the media, and friends, what, and where to get the help with things that had changed, like ordering repeat prescription, getting someone who could be trusted to pick them up.

Using health, care and community services

From 1 March-12 July we gathered a total of **466** comments about people's experience of different health, care and community services. The chart below shows the breakdown of the services people told us about.

Services people told us about



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Coronavirus and community pharmacies: Your questions answered

Advice and Information – 20 April 2020

Swindon and Wiltshire's Chief Officer of Community Pharmacy answers your frequently asked questions.



Twitter Facebook LinkedIn RSS Email

Pharmacies drew the most comments from the public and we worked with Swindon and Wiltshire's Chief Officer of Community Pharmacy to create this web page to answer frequently asked questions.

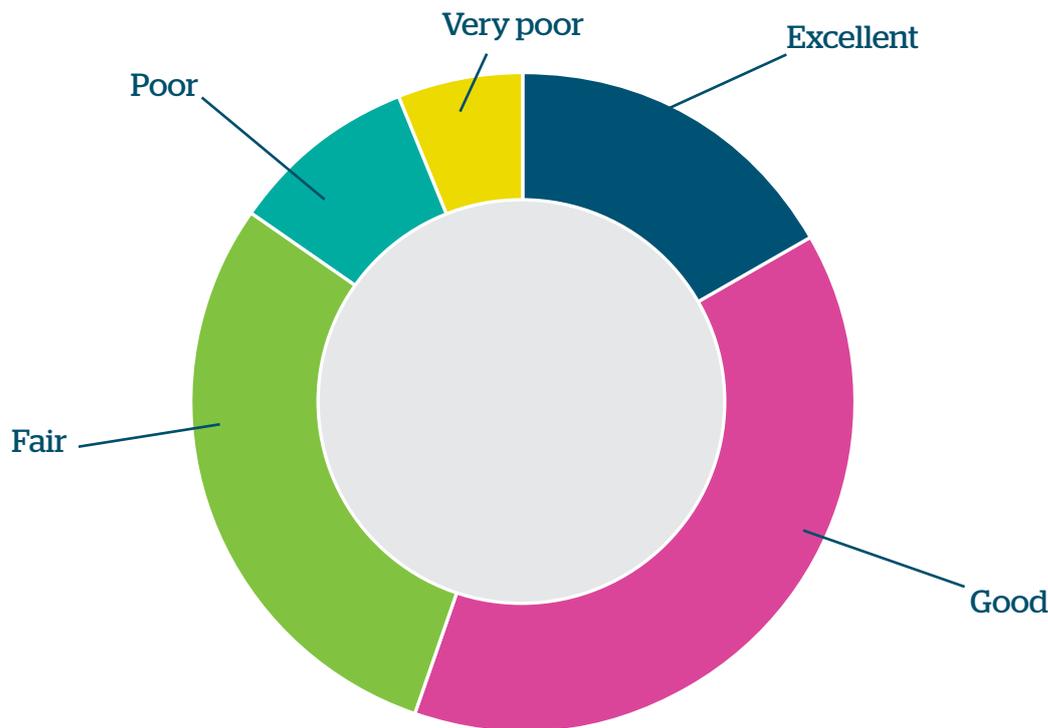
Healthcare services

Changes to services

In our survey we asked if people had used any healthcare services since the beginning of the pandemic and **62% (147)** of our respondents told us that they had. **80%** of these told us that they had experienced changes to their healthcare due to the pandemic.

About two thirds (**66%**) of these rated the communication about the changes as excellent or good. From the responses we received it was clear that people understood the need for changes during the pandemic and the pressures that healthcare services and their staff were working under during this time.

Communication about changes to health services



Just over half of comments (**52%**) we received about healthcare services were about GP services, just over a quarter (**27%**) about hospital services, with the remainder about a mix of other services including dentists, community healthcare services, and the ambulance service.

Virtual and phone appointments

We asked people if they had been offered a video or telephone appointment instead of a face-to-face appointment and two thirds (**67%**) of respondents said that they had. Most comments we received about video and phone appointments were positive. However, some people expressed concern that it was harder for practitioners to make a diagnosis in this way and others mentioned that these appointments did not work well for them.

Excellent, prompt video calls when necessary.

GP surgery was easily accessible by phone and the triage consultation, plus use of photos taken on smartphone, was excellent.

I had to first have a virtual appointment. Then take photos of the issue and provide them. After two weeks the prescription had not worked. I had to have another virtual appointment before I managed to get an actual appointment. After another three weeks and a further failed prescription I had to have another virtual appointment. I then got the treatment that was required.

The initial consultation was on the phone with cardiac nurse. I would have preferred to discuss with the specialist surgeon, but I understood the fact that he was on the “front line” and that was fine! I have no complaints; the nurse was so helpful and understanding!

I was given clear advice about what medication to start, what side effects to be mindful of and when to stop and reassess my symptoms.

GP services

People told us about their experiences accessing GP services, including changes to the services offered. Most people told us that they were able to access services, and they shared their experiences of both virtual and face-to-face appointments.

There were a few comments from people who had found accessing services more difficult. Comments about the quality of treatment and service received were, in general, positive, and there were many positive comments about the approach of GPs and other staff employed in primary care.

The negative comments we received mostly concerned difficulties with access, communication and information about what was available. Some people told us that they had cancelled their appointments either due to concerns about catching the virus or placing additional pressure on services.

Very quick response to my request – doctor’s call within one hour. Next day home visit from GP (I was offered a visit later the first day if I was concerned). GP arranged home visit for blood test and phoned me with results. This is considerably better service than I would have expected before the crisis.

Difficulty in getting blood test or to see a Doctor. Only telephone consultations. No in-person appointments.

Too many changes, you can only phone a week before you need blood appointment, can only make telephone appointment to speak to doctor on day not in advance.

We have had updates on internet, text but I do think letters will have been needed for some patients.

A huge thank you to all the staff at the surgery during such a difficult time. I have had four telephone consultations during the Covid-19 outbreak and cannot fault the service. The receptionists making the appointments were efficient and kind and the appointments offered quickly and in amazing time! One of the appointments was made at 4.30pm and I received the GP call at 4.38.

They were moved to another surgery so that their original building could become a Covid hub, this place would have required me to leave two hours before my appointment to reach by bus as it was two buses which were on severely limited schedules and the timings did not match up well. The return journey would've been the same, meaning I would've been out for 4.5 hours for a 10 minute appointment – to have a routine medical injection that only health professionals are able to administer.

I cancelled my blood test myself as I hadn't heard anything, I've not heard anything yet about what will happen.

The following day, Monday, the GP phoned me at 9.30am and we discussed my symptoms. He arranged an appointment at the main surgery for 11.30am that day. I was told to stay in my car until the doctor phoned me and he then let me in via the main door which he unlocked. He wore a mask, gloves and apron and asked me to spray my hands with disinfectant. We then went into a consulting room where he examined me and confirmed the diagnosis of shingles and gave me advice about it. The whole experience was very efficient but allowed for all the necessary Covid-19 precautions.

I think the assumption of most people was that the local hospital and GP surgeries were closed or too busy to deal with other problems than Covid related ones. Maybe more should have been explained about how people could access ordinary care.

Almost impossible to get through to the practice. In desperation I tried 111 but that was even worse.

GP practice using telephone triage which worked well.

Clearly communicated. Clearly carried out. Simple. Friendly!

Hospital care and treatment centres

We were told about experiences of hospital care. Some people said that their care had been able to continue. People have spoken positively about safety measures in place if you need to visit the hospitals, and of the new measures put in place to stay in touch with friends and family.

My husband had a brain tumour and awaiting proton beam. His scans and hospital appointments have all gone ahead with extra care and precautions. I was not allowed in with him, but they included me on a conference call.

Social distancing, temperature taken on arrival, staff using protective clothing and masks, plenty of hand sanitiser.

I sent a message to my friend who was in Salisbury Hospital using the service set up by the hospital to send a message to your loved ones. I had a lovely message from PALS to say the message had been received. I replied and said what a lovely gesture it was and they said I was welcome, they enjoyed doing it. Unfortunately my friend passed away yesterday. It was comforting know that she knew how much we loved and missed her as none of us will be able to go to her funeral due to self-isolation.

The hospital didn't really give any further information, but I had already determined not to go too early, as I normally would have had to get parking, etc as I did not want to be in contact with other people. The appointment was on time and I was finished very quickly, everyone was very conscious of taking precautions, but they had not said I would need a mask before going into the hospital. There was a nurse at the entrance with disposable ones for those who did not bring one.

Going to hospital was very quick and easy for a standard cancer check.

Mask wearing, reduced waiting room. Timed appointment at doctor's hospital was efficient. Spaced out waiting room, masks. But no delay in doctor's and hospital appointments. It was important to get checked out and it was business as usual. Very comforting.

Want to express my thanks to all involved with me being able to continue to receive my cancer treatment. I will be eternally grateful.

We also heard from some of our respondents how they have had video or telephone calls instead of face-to-face appointments and most reported that these seemed to be working well.

I was due to have a further respiratory appointment at RUH yesterday. The physical tests weren't possible but I did have a telephone consultation from a specialist doctor at an agreed time who, while working from home, had all the information about my condition. Given the particular pressure on that department I was grateful and impressed.

We heard about treatments that had been stopped and appointments and surgery cancelled as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, those who have shared their experience with us generally seemed understanding of this. However, as time has progressed, there have been comments from some expressing frustration regarding delays and the lack for information about this.

My partner who is an extremely vulnerable person has had his cancer treatment stopped due to his poor kidney function. I suspect that this would be because the RUH would not want to admit him should this deteriorate. We are totally in agreement with this decision.

Treatment booked was cancelled due to Covid-19. No communication about reinstatement of treatment. Still waiting for the treatment.

It would be helpful to receive appointment updates from RUH or services using Devizes Community Hospital. Obviously, we appreciate there are challenges for the staff but some appointments are now well overdue.

Frustration as to why these services at the treatment centre can't start again as it is not a medical facility that would deal with Covid patients. However, it may be that staff are required elsewhere. It is the lack of any messaging that is most frustrating.

Routine surgical procedure postponed – have ongoing pain but not urgent.

Hospital discharge

We have heard from some people of their experience of hospital discharge and onward care and their feedback about this has been mixed.

Care given at Salisbury District Hospital at the beginning of the outbreak was fantastic. Arrangements were made and supplies of all necessary drugs and equipment was rapid to say the least, as I was more at risk of catching something in hospital. Both the Respiratory department and Rheumatology department are only ever a phone call away. I have been assured that I am to contact them if I become unwell or have any concerns.

My father was in Swindon hospital for aspiration pneumonia from February until the end of March where he was deemed 'medically fit' to leave as the virus had hit the hospital and they wanted him transferred to a local care home for some rehab and physiotherapy.

He was taken to [a] care home in Wootton Bassett. He never received his physiotherapy or saw the occupational therapist or his social worker as the care home at this stage was not allowing external people into the care home. Dad was making great progress and walking to and from the dining hall for meals. We were making plans to discharge him from the care home as he was fit and ready to go home.

That same week the care home had 'written' to us (I never received a call or letter) to notify us that the virus was in the care home. I received no information and was told it was all confidential. I asked to speak to the acting regional director at this stage (07/04/20) and she informed me they had four sections to the care home and two sections had the virus. A day later my father came down with a temperature and a cough. An on call doctor contacted me on the 9 April to let me know they were not taking my dad to hospital but offering him palliative care only. He died a day later.

Dentists

We have heard about routine dental treatment has been postponed, and that people were having difficulties accessing treatment and information about how they could get emergency treatment.

I cracked a tooth and half of it has fallen out. I have spoken to my dentist who is wonderful but he isn't allowed to treat me and isn't able to tell me where I can get treatment.

It was very difficult to get information about where to get emergency dental care before my dentist reopened.

Dentist – zero dental treatment available even though it is part of the NHS!

As a result of this feedback we created a dedicated information and advice page on our website about access to emergency treatment, and we have shared information about it on social media.

Community health services

We have heard that community health services are proactively keeping in touch with those registered with them by telephone and that this support is valued. It has also been raised that these staff don't always have all the up to date information.

I had a call from the practice nurse to do an asthma review over the phone. It was good that they had contacted me, but the information they had about my condition and medication was very out of date, and they were not able to access my latest medical record. This made it very complicated as I kept having to tell them about changes that had taken place. For example, they told me that if I got Covid-19, I mustn't take a certain medication, but I haven't been taking that medication for some time.

The respiratory nurses have been in touch to make sure that I am alright, and I have everything I need. They have offered support and answered any questions. I feel they are there for me if I need help.

I am being contacted every two weeks by phone by the diabetic specialist nurse. They are excellent and I feel that they would be there for me if I needed help.

Medical professionals have provided remote check ins regarding physical and mental health and planned face to face consultations are due to resume in august.

The screenshot shows the healthwatch Wiltshire website. At the top left is the logo 'healthwatch Wiltshire'. At the top right is a 'Contact us' button. Below the logo is a navigation menu with items: 'Have your say', 'News & reports', 'Get involved', 'What we do', and 'Advice & information'. A search bar is located on the right side of the navigation menu. The main content area features a white box with the title 'I need to see a dentist - what can I do?' and the subtitle 'Advice and Information - 22 April 2020'. The text below the title reads: 'A network of new urgent dental treatment centres has been created across the South West to provide treatment while high-street surgeries have their doors closed due to Covid-19 (coronavirus)'. Below the text is a photograph of a dental professional wearing a blue surgical mask. To the right of the white box is a vertical stack of social media sharing icons: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Print, and Email.

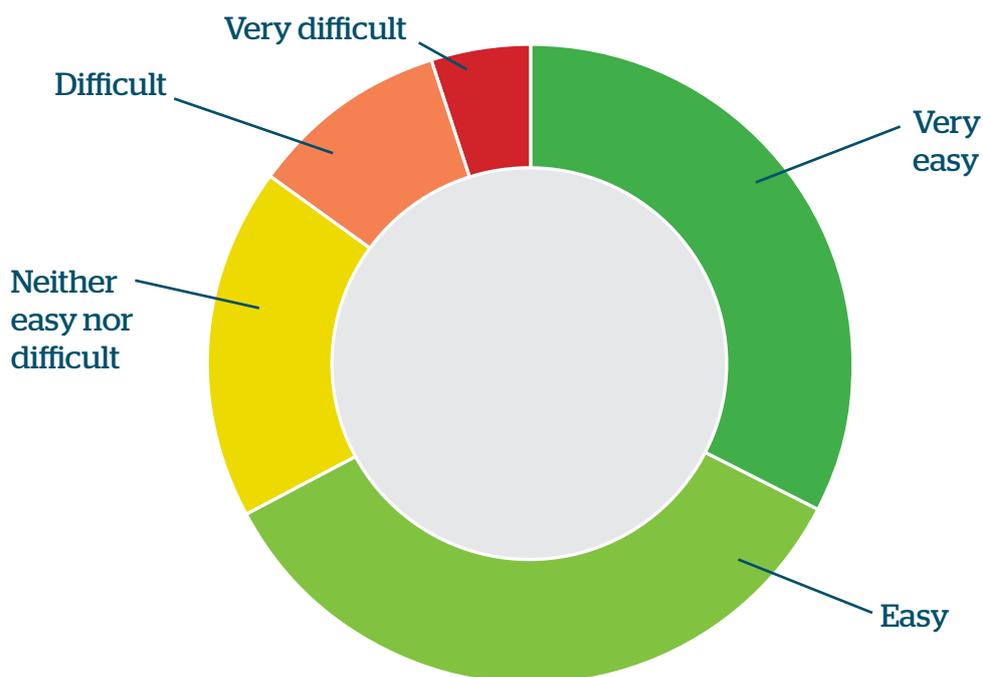
Our web page providing information on how to get urgent dental care during the lockdown was one of the most visited pages, with 219 views.

Pharmacies

In our survey we asked people if they had been able to access the medication they required. Of the 173 respondents who this was applicable to, 96% (166) said that they had, and 4% (7) said they had not. Most of those who said they had not referred to specific types of medication they couldn't get including some medications for asthma and HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) patches. A few people said that they could not access their medication due to not being able to renew their prescription in time.

We asked our respondents how easy it had been to access their medication and the majority told us that they found this easy.

How easy have you found it to access your/their medication?



We're registered for online repeat prescription ordering which makes things easier. Just have to collect them, of course. Great, simple system for collection because nobody was allowed in the building. I think that was an awesome idea! Reduces the risk of infection straight away.

Doctor phoned back had chat, medication ready two days later.

I use the patient care app to request a prescription, the doctors send it to the pharmacy and I collect. Easy!

Routine meds are requested on doctor's website. Chemist then brings them up. It's taking a bit longer as to be expected but we just order at the first date rather than last minute to give plenty of time.

Repeat prescriptions easily available via doctors and pharmacy.

However nearly **14.9% (31)** said that they found this difficult or very difficult. We were given a range of reasons for this including problems relating to the supply of some medications, delays getting prescriptions and difficulties collecting medication from pharmacies. Some of our responses suggest that these problems eased as time went on and systems were put in place.

Local pharmacy became nightmare so now use [online pharmacy]. The only thing I still can't get is my HRT patches.

First time was in a very long queue, sun beating down, no shade, should have worn a sun hat! No water offered. Very difficult especially with my condition.

The designated pharmacy which I used was Lloyds within Sainsbury's supermarket. Hence had to visit the supermarket, and queue along with shoppers to access pharmacy. One tablet was unavailable for several weeks (the pharmacist was very helpful – even tried to cut higher dose tablets, without success), at the point of running out, and having to discuss alternate drug with GP, the tablet was in stock.

The first two weeks of lockdown were difficult with very long (socially distanced) queues at the pharmacy which initially replaced our normal pharmacy. After that everything was very straightforward and easy.

Mixed. First batch long wait at chemist. Second easy, delivered by volunteer.

There was positive feedback about the support of volunteer groups to collect medication for people who were shielding.

Warminster Action Group collected and delivered my meds once and then sorted out a friend's help and my daughter, also no delay on any repeat meds for me.

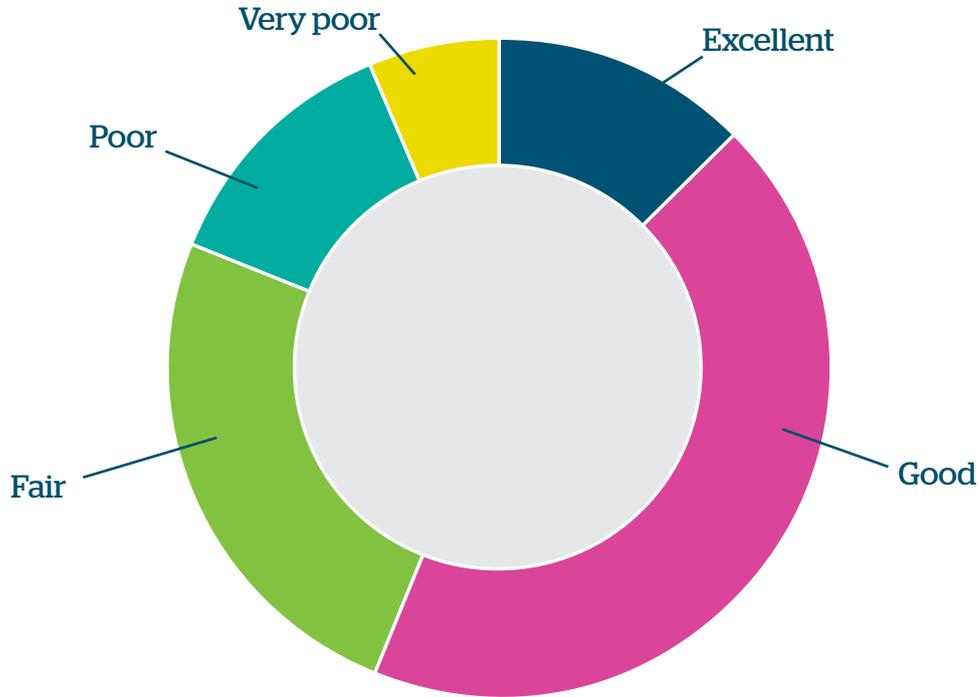
Used our local volunteers to pick up prescriptions, they were really helpful.

Collections from the pharmacy were organised by our Parish Council.

Social care services

9.7% (23) of our survey respondents said that had used social care services during the pandemic. Of these, 64% of these said that they had experienced changes to their care. We asked how people rated the communication about the changes:

Communication about changes to social care services



Care homes

We have heard from people living in supported living, from relatives of people living in care homes and from some care home staff. We have been told about a range of experiences. The feedback we have received suggests there is a variation in experiences throughout the pandemic.

However, there were also more some very difficult experiences reported early in the pandemic, and more recent comments have been much more positive. We have heard from individuals, relatives and care homes about how they are using phone and virtual meetings to keep people in touch with their loved ones and that this has been a source of comfort to people.

My mother is in a specialist dementia care home currently surrounded by residents with suspected Covid. I am trying every day to distract myself from worry, nausea and a feeling of helplessness.

The care home went into lockdown in mid-March and we have been allowed to either call or make a Skype call. No visitors allowed. They initially didn't have any PPE equipment but a local headteacher had produced some PPE equipment specifically for my mother's care home.

My mum went into care just as lockdown happened, therefore we were not able to help settle her in. Although normal activities and visits were stopped the care home was great at informing us of what was happening and keeping mum active and well.

[The care home] went into lockdown straightaway, kept me fully informed of changes and husbands' circumstances. Been very careful, no Covid cases.

Sister-in-law in a local nursing home where care and communication were of the highest standard.

We have heard about the commitment of caring home staff to caring for their residents and the strong relationships they have formed with them, despite feeling some fear and anxiety. We have heard that care homes have been supported to obtain the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) they need. We have heard of a lack of information and support to care homes in the early weeks. Issues with initial arrangements for testing were reported, although we've been told this has now improved.

Care and support for people at home

We received a few comments from people who had care provided at home:

One of the people we support has terminal cancer. She now has carers go in and has a special bed and a recliner chair and regular visits from the community nursing team.

Contact with social care is easier.

We also heard from adults who organise their own care either privately through direct payments who highlighted a some of the difficulties they were facing. These particularly concerned a lack of information early in the pandemic.

Direct payment (DP) users who employ their own PA/carers were pretty much ignored/ forgotten about at the start. Information is now there but incomplete. Lack of support with PPE – masks, aprons, gloves and hand sanitiser sourcing and funding... prices hugely increased and more needed than normal. Lack of proactive support, eg some councils allowed all DP users to use account for PPE or checked on their 'clients'.

We were told about the impact on unpaid carers when home care provided by personal assistants (PA) has been stopped or reduced.

The PA stopped working when lockdown was introduced. This meant only five hours commissioned service continued. This increased the support I had to provide whilst continuing to work full time.

PA/carers employed by me but funded by social services. Without information at the start it was safest to cancel as many shifts as we could manage, putting workload onto my husband and many times going without eg meals, showers. But as an employer with the information not there at the start I had a duty to keep carers safe. But also to keep us safe as we self-isolated. Sadly my health deteriorated then my husband's until we couldn't manage. But now we have better info (although still incomplete) I have my carers back and am stabilising.

We have received comments that day support being cancelled has affected unpaid carers and people who use these services:

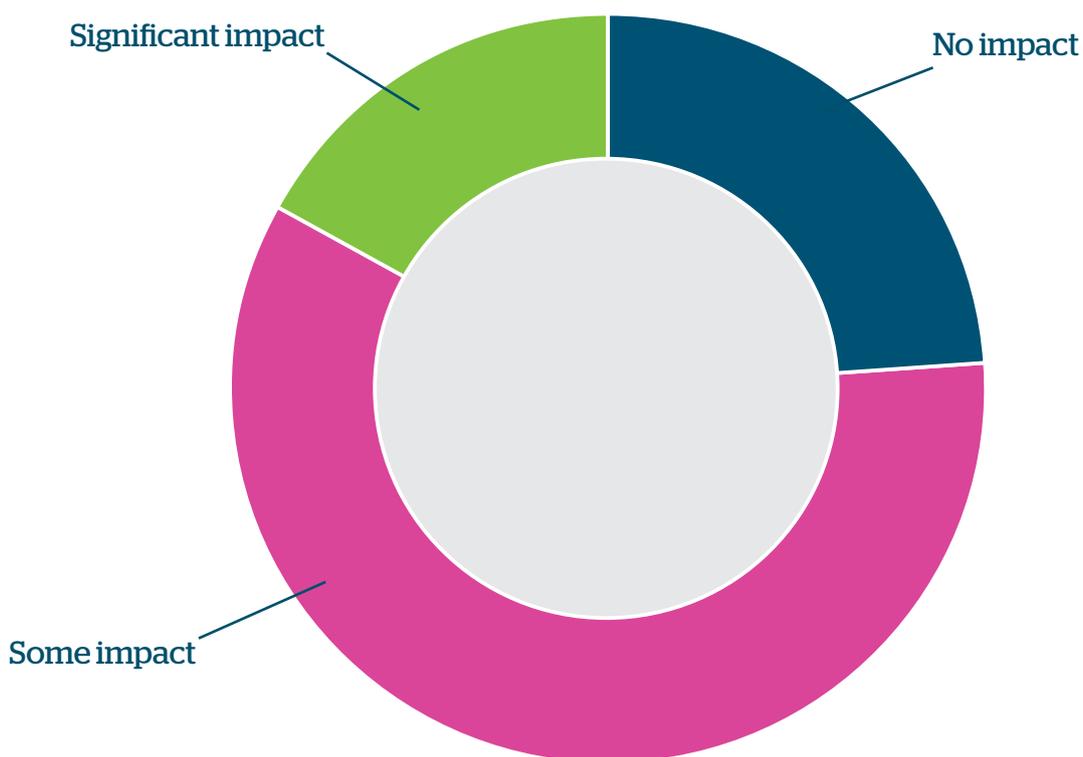
The lack of day centre, is a major impact on my and my mother's life.

We were also told about the difficulties for people living with autism during this time, who are struggling with the changes they have had to make in day to day routines. We have heard about support provided by local voluntary organisations to some of these people, but concerns have been expressed that there remain some isolated people living in the community who are not getting help because they are not asking for it due to autism or other mental health issues.

Mental health and wellbeing

We asked people about the impact of Covid-19 on their mental health and wellbeing, and **79%** (180) of our respondents told us that it had impacted their mental health and wellbeing.

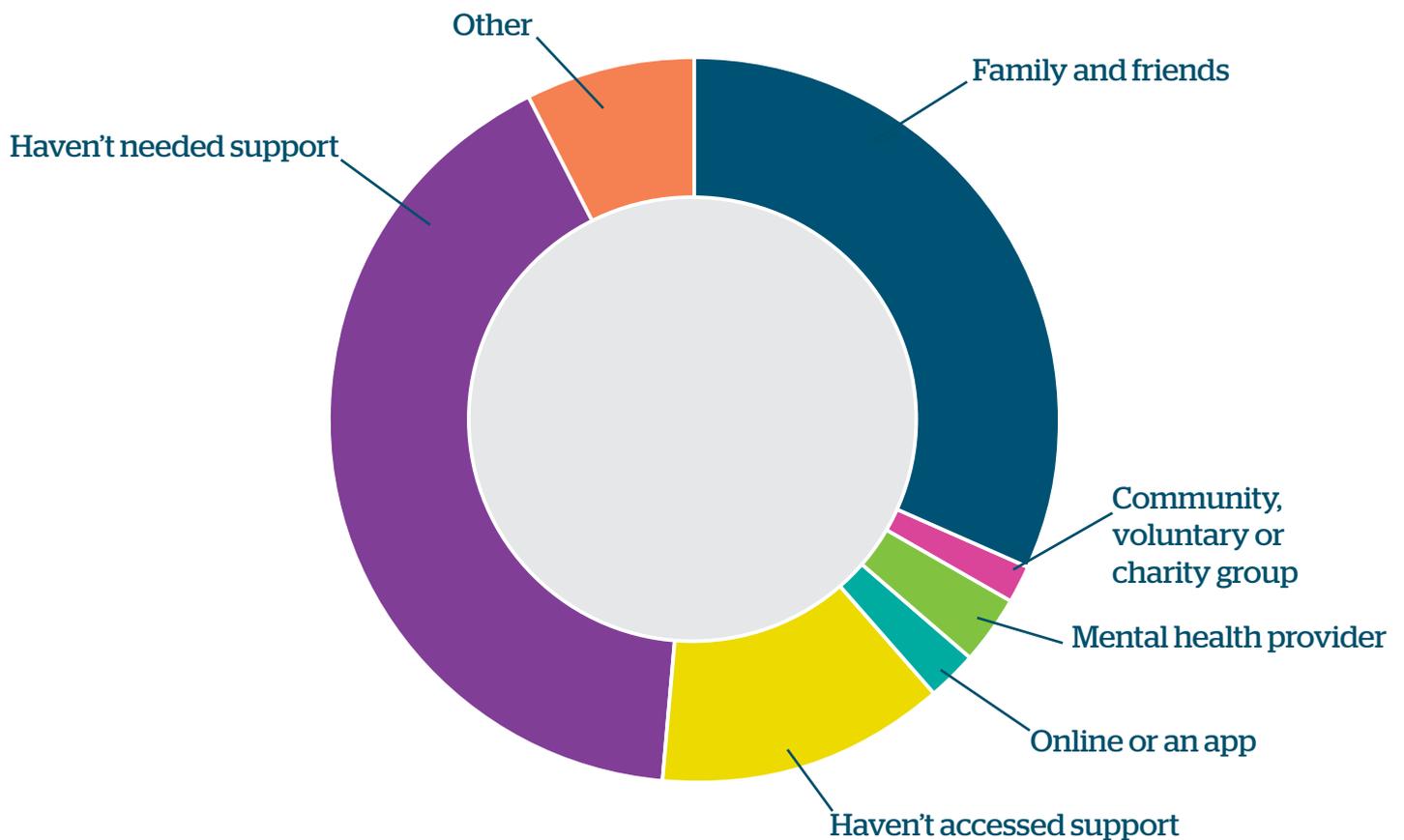
What has been the impact on your mental health and wellbeing?



We asked people if they had been able to access support for their mental health and wellbeing during this time. **41%** of our respondents told us that they hadn't needed any support, **13%** said they had not been able to access support, and **46%** said that they had accessed support.

Of those who had accessed support, most said that they had been supported by family and friends. Other sources mentioned included mental health providers, private therapy, community groups, websites and online forums, through doing voluntary work, and from employers.

Where have you got support for your mental health?



Our family set up a daily check-in to a WhatsApp group so we all knew that we were well. A daily phone call from my son was invaluable and keeping in touch with family and friends by phone, internet or letter has been wonderful.

I had phone calls with my usual psychologist, as well as a charity I've been involved with for two years for various mental health conditions.

Have also used Unmind – which is provided through my employer.

My stepdaughter has been very caring by phoning every day and taking me to hospital or the doctors.

My Quaker Meeting friends have been very supportive at a distance.

Regular phone/video calls, help to locate and access online services.

I am doing a counselling course and used that and private personal counselling.

Kept in touch with friends and family via phone calls, weekly zoom catch ups. Work colleagues, had team meetings every morning Mon-Fri etc, general common sense, looking out for each other.

Online tuition courses have been very helpful and absorbing (art, exercise). Also technology apps (WhatsApp, Zoom) have allowed me to contact groups I was in contact with before – poetry, choir, art.

I also used online apps for advice and meditation ideas.

Concerns about mental health

There were many comments throughout our survey and other engagement that related to mental health and wellbeing.

We heard from those who had been using mental health services during the pandemic. Some of these had been offered virtual support. Overall, the feedback about these services was mixed with a range of both positive and negative comments.

My son has a severe mental health condition (complex PTSD). His treatment was starting when the lockdown happened and unfortunately he is not now getting the treatment that he so desperately needs. We have no idea when his treatment will start.

My community nurse left. Replacement appalling... made it known twice when I've spoken to them, they are busy. I have been completely abandoned by the mental health team during this crisis.

CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] have phoned me weekly plus GP surgery have phoned few times check up on me.

Due to closures of almost everything, my autistic daughter's mental health has plummeted. Her routine worked hard for 18 months to establish and help keep her relatively on an even keel has stopped dead, which she is unable to cope with and as a result, self-harming, attacking staff and myself. My concern for her has also had a major impact on my own long-term depression and wellbeing. Can't get consultation with psychiatrist or consultant neuropsychiatrist to discuss worsening epilepsy. Just feel abandoned!

I had a very positive interaction with the Memory Clinic at Green Lane. My dad-in-law is nearly out of his dementia meds and is due a three-month review any day now, so I gave the Memory Clinic a ring to work out a way forward to help him stay well during the current Covid 19 crisis. Within half an hour of my call, they got back to me twice, took a history of his symptoms, conferred with his clinician and arranged for a supply of meds to be delivered to his home, with a follow-up appointment to be made in six months as well. This is such a relief, as it could have become very complicated.

We also heard concerns about how people's health and wellbeing had, and might continue to be, affected by the pandemic.

Our usual existence is very limited so Covid has not made a huge difference to the people I care for, but it has limited my life even more and at times that has been suffocating.

No support sought because lockdown merely exacerbated an escalation of an existing issue.

I haven't sought it (support) as I presume grief is 'normal' as my husband died.

The impact of social isolation and removal of ability to see friends has been the worst impact of this pandemic.

I am concerned that we are all putting quantity in front of quality, ie from being socially active I am now redundant. My partner who has the health condition has adapted far better than have I as his quality of life has been reduced for some years, whereas my activities have totally stopped. Nothing to be done about it I realise, but tough all the same.

My husband is scared all the time. I am exhausted from months of 24 hour a day reassurance and comforting. My HRT is unavailable and I now have terrible hot flushes, insomnia and anxiety. I have no one to talk to because my husband is always there, and I can't complain over the phone to a friend in his hearing because it distresses him, he has become increasingly clingy and frightened and is always at my side... all day, every day... I am exhausted.

Feeling very lonely and isolated and found people don't really want you to say anything other than "I'm OK", even when you are not.

Concern over children not getting their education. Concern at people not being able to go to work. I think the BIGGEST concern are mental health issues which I feel is as big if not bigger than the virus.

Community groups

In our survey we asked if people had received any additional support from local voluntary and community groups and **17% (40)** of our respondents said that they had. We received very positive feedback about experiences of the support offered by these groups and people said that they had found them very useful.

There a few comments that some people were not covered by groups due to where they lived, and the distance volunteers may need to travel. One of these people said that they were subsequently referred to the NHS responder service who were able to help them.

Several different types of support were mentioned including wellbeing calls, advice and information, befriending, collecting prescriptions and delivering medication and shopping, and virtual music, art and poetry sessions. We heard about the range of local and national organisations and groups who were providing support including Barnardo's, Wiltshire Council Wellbeing Hub, Alzheimer's Support, Wiltshire Parent Carer Council, NHS Responders, and many local Covid-19 support groups, and church groups.

The benefits that some of the volunteering and support provided to isolated people was mentioned and it was suggested that it would be of value to continue this after the pandemic.

This group have been a lifesaver. They have collected groceries before we could get priority deliveries, repeatedly picked up prescriptions, organised to collect food that we wanted to donate to vulnerable people struggling who were in need and generally been there to help by just letting us know that we were welcome to ask and it was no trouble at all. The organisers and volunteers of this group deserve a medal!

Zoom contact for my teenager instead of his usual clubs. Means such a lot to my child.

It was excellent. A really efficient and helpful service. It is good to see younger people involved with volunteering and befriending isolated people. I hope that this continues after the pandemic is over.

Just being able to chat to someone who knows my situation and being able to laugh about it to lighten the load, also to discuss my mother's worsening condition and the support available to me.

The WPCC is too good for words. They are excellent and there is nothing they won't try to do to make things easier for parents of children with needs.

Advice, information and signposting. Online exercise classes on Swindon Parkinson's website.

Good advice and signposting.

The Devizes Covid-19 Support Group was up and running before lockdown, instigated by a local vicar and run with the help of Town Council staff and Councillors from the Town Hall. Over 250 volunteers shopped and collected prescriptions and gave telephone support to all who needed it in the immediate Devizes area. I used it myself a couple of times before I found out about [an online pharmacy service]. It has been very successful in helping the community, as has the local group, ARC. I don't know how we would have managed without them, as supermarket delivery slots were almost impossible to get until they started priority slots for shielders.

The In Need! Salisbury Facebook group have provided invaluable physical and emotional support throughout, by collecting groceries and prescriptions. They have been truly amazing.

Although stressful at the quick pace this had to be set up by, it did seem to bring the community together more than in the normal day to day events. Hopefully this can be continued into the new normal.

Volunteering

We also asked people if they had been working or volunteering to support people affected by the virus and **29% (70)** of our respondents told us that they had. Many of these told us about their volunteering roles.

Organised a support group in our (small) village, allocated four main contacts for people to request help from (based on geographic location in the village). Sent out weekly updates to all the 50+ volunteers in the support group, maintained a log of requests and responses. Wrote monthly updates in the parish magazine, including details of local suppliers who offered fresh food and takeaway meals. Occasionally collected shopping and prescriptions as well as organising responses as one of the four main contacts.

I volunteer at Chippenham Food bank (run by Salvation Army) three times a week. I'm a member of my village support group. I am an NHS responder.

I've been delivering food parcels to a couple of vulnerable elderly people in my neighbourhood.

Medical runs food drops pastoral care drop-ins at distance through window communication mental health support.

Conclusions and recommendations

From what local people have told us we draw the following conclusions and make these recommendations:

- Most people could find and understand the information they needed about Covid-19 but acting on and keeping up-to-date with this was more difficult. As there are further changes that may be locally based, it will be important that there is prompt and clear messaging about this.
- We were told that it was difficult to access information in some areas. Consideration should be given about the best way of providing and disseminating information about testing and looking after health and wellbeing, especially for those who do not use digital platforms.
- We heard that those who arrange their own care either privately or via a direct payment had difficulty getting information and knowing how to arrange their support. Clear information will be needed about this, particularly as guidance changes, so that these groups can receive the care and support they need.
- Phone and video appointments had worked well for many people and it is positive that this allowed people to be able to have appointments. The use of these should be evaluated to ensure that their benefits can be utilised.
- There were a number of people who told us that virtual appointments did not work for them for a variety of reasons, and we are aware of other groups who are digitally excluded. Careful consideration will need to be given, and actions taken, to ensure that these groups are able to access services and are not disadvantaged.
- Some people did not attend appointments due to fear of either overburdening the system or of the virus. Healthcare services will need to provide information to people about the process of assessing the need for a face-to-face appointment and what they can expect when they attend. This could support people who may have serious conditions that need attention to have the confidence to request and attend appointments.
- It is clear that Covid-19 has had an impact on mental health and wellbeing. Consistent mental health support should be provided for those already known to mental health services and those referred to them for the first time.
- Many of our respondents told us that friends and family were a source of support for their mental health and wellbeing. Consideration should be given as to how people can get advice and information on supporting those around them. This might be through raising awareness of how people can ask others for support, providing information on the ways people can support their loved ones, and helping them understand when to get professional support.
- There needs to be clear communication about any changes to social care services. The impact of changes on unpaid carers needs to be recognised. Consideration needs to be given as to how carers can be supported and be provide with respite.
- Most people who completed our survey were white British (**94%**). Given the increasing evidence that Covid-19 has had a bigger impact on people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups, Healthwatch Wiltshire, working with other organisations, should undertake some more targeted engagement to reach different ethnic groups as well as other minority

groups and understand their experiences. Information should also be provided to these groups regarding health and care services during the pandemic.

- We were told by many people about how valuable and community and voluntary organisations and volunteers were to them. They told us that this helped with practical tasks and had benefits for their wellbeing and mental health. Consideration should be given as to how these groups can be supported to continue to provide these services.

What will do with this information?

We will share this report with our stakeholders across Wiltshire including the council, the Clinical Commissioning Group, NHS services and our voluntary sector colleagues, to highlight what has worked well during the pandemic and what could be improved upon.

Thank you!

Thank you to all the individuals that stopped to share their honest thoughts. To the many health, care, community and voluntary organisations who shared our survey. Thanks also to our volunteers who gave their time to take part.

Response

 Tracey Cox, Chief Executive of BaNES, Swindon and Wiltshire CCG 

In these unprecedented times of Covid-19 we have had to make many changes to the way we provide services.

Various organisations across Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire have been undertaking surveys to seek people's views on the impact Covid-19 has had on their lives and this will help us to understand what is positive about the interim changes we have had to make and what we need to improve for example, many consultations taking place by telephone, online or via video, instead of face-to-face.

The CCG will be working with Healthwatch Wiltshire, along with other partners and

 **We need to ensure shaping services for the future reduce the inequity gap** 

relevant providers of services to review the information gathered from this survey, the CCG's Citizens Panel (Our Health Our Future) and other surveys to plan health services for the local population, ensuring our plans reflect what interim changes can remain or where further changes are needed, however, we do need to ensure shaping services for the future do reduce the widening inequity gap which has been highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic.



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