



Staying Safe, Staying Home: telecare services in Buckinghamshire

March 2018



What was the project about?

We wanted to find out what people think about the telecare service they receive from Buckinghamshire County Council. This was also an opportunity to hear from a group of Bucks residents that we do not often reach. By telecare we mean the equipment and services that help people keep safe in their home and stay independent.

Why did we do the project?

Assistive technology is being used more and more but we receive very little feedback from people who use it in Buckinghamshire.

Our project was designed to reach this group of residents, who we may not otherwise hear from, to find out how effective telecare was from their perspective.

What did we do?

We asked for people's views on various aspects of the service and how telecare had helped them. We developed our survey with advice from the Buckinghamshire County Council telecare team and Carers Bucks.

In November 2017, we sent a letter and paper copy of our survey to 480 people. These people received telecare from the Council between May 2015 and May 2017. We included a pre-paid reply envelope and offered people the option of completing the survey online.

We received responses from 162 people. This included responses from people who used the telecare themselves and those who were replying on behalf of someone who used it. 141 people said they were happy for us to use their response to write this report.

What did we discover?

This section gives an overview of what we found. More details are in appendices 1 and 2.

Appendix 1 is an analysis of the responses and Appendix 2 is a summary of all those who responded by age, ethnicity and district council area.

Referrals and assessment process

People found out about the telecare service from a variety of people or organisations. The top five identified were:

- 1 Friends and relatives (26)
- 1 Social worker (26)
- 3 Occupational therapist (25)
- 4 Carers Bucks (21)
- 5 Buckinghamshire County Council (19)

We asked people about their experience of completing the referral form and their views on the assessment visit. Overall the feedback we received about the referrals process was very positive.

- Over 75% (64) of those who filled in the referrals form said it was Easy or Very Easy. Less than 5% (3) found it Difficult or Very Difficult
- 85% (89) of those present during the assessment visit were very happy or happy with the outcome
- 87% (88) felt that they were listened to during the assessment

What telecare people found helpful

The top three types of telecare that people who answered the question found helpful were:

- Pendant alarm (90%)
- Care alarm (eg Lifeline) (85%)
- Key safe (90%)

A small number of people said that they had this equipment but couldn't use it. For example, 6 people (5%) said they couldn't use the key safe.

How has telecare helped?

We asked how people felt telecare had helped them. The top five reasons that people who answered the question strongly agreed or agreed with were:

- It helps me to stay safe (98%)
- It gives peace of mind to me/my family members/carers (92%)
- It helps me to stay in my own home (90%)
- It helps me to be independent (90%)
- It gives me the confidence to carry on with my day to day activities (88%)

The responses to some statements were more mixed as the information below shows.

- It saves on the costs of carers - 46% (36) strongly agreed or agreed and 41% (32) strongly disagreed or disagreed
- It has reduced my need for help from carers, family or friend - 55% (42) strongly agreed or agreed and 31% (24) strongly disagreed or disagreed

People also gave us examples of how telecare has helped them. Some examples are:

“After 2 or 3 falls (stumbles) ...it's good to know that help is not far away.”

“I had a fall and the ambulance service got me up and gave me a check up to make sure I was unhurt.”

“To me it is a life line and makes me feel secure in my home.”

“I can go into the garden safely.”

“Made me feel relaxed when the button has been pressed by mistake - very quick response.”

“Telecare is brilliant. It has given my parent the confidence and peace of mind that then affects his physical abilities and enables him to relax and stay at home and as well as possible within the limits of his health condition.”

People were also very positive about the call centre response. 70% (78) of those who had a monitored service (and answered the question) said the call centre response was excellent and 21% (24) said it was quite good.

People also told us about their experience of the call centre response. Some examples are:

“It gives my daughter peace of mind if I have another fall and she is not around at the time.”

“Call centre staff are very understanding.”

“My emergency call was answered immediately and was reassured by the person on the other end.”

“....I check it every month and it works like clock-work. Very happy. “

“My pendant device gives me confidence in my home and garden. I have not had cause to use it, but once when it was pressed by mistake I was impressed with the speed of the response.”

“They always respond very quickly and are very pleasant when they speak.”

“Always listens to his needs and action, take time, liaise well with family.”

87% (108) of those who answered the question said that they would recommend the Buckinghamshire County Council telecare service.

Using the telecare equipment

We asked whether people understand how to use their telecare. The responses were:

- 58% (76) said yes, definitely
- 37% (49) said yes, to some extent
- 5% (6) said no or don't know/not sure

Also:

- 32% (42) of those who responded didn't know or weren't sure how to make sure the equipment worked properly
- 37% (46) of those who responded didn't know or weren't sure who to contact if their equipment went wrong

People also said that:

“Would like the user guide in large print. Unsure what to do if the device goes wrong.”

“Not all NRS drivers / technicians know how to repair the telecare or carry the correct computer to do so.” [NRS Healthcare is the company that installs telecare for Bucks County Council]

“Equipment is very good and is regularly serviced.”

“Only one service since installation (2 year ago).”

“It is very untidy, in that I have wires everywhere.”

“The noise of connecting is disconcerting.”

“It has to be isolated from other telephone and internet equipment. The updated version of telecare equipment is more sensitive than the original.”

“Sometimes there is quite a wait but I think this is due to the volume of calls.”

“Regular check-ups on equipment would be good and helpful.”

“Efficient fitting team.”

“We want to make a change to the telecare provision and have been told that we can’t do it directly with telecare, it has to be done through BCC. But there is no one at BCC who has the time to talk with us or make the changes.”

Other comments about the telecare service

A couple of comments related to concerns about the possible cost increase.

“I am pleased that I have pendant, but hope the monthly price is not increased.”

“Worried fee is increasing if service is improved.”

“Good but too expensive.”

Conclusions

We were pleased to have had such a good response to our survey from a group of residents whose voices may not otherwise have been heard.

We were encouraged to see that most people had a positive view of their telecare equipment and the service provided.

In addition to responding to our recommendations below we would encourage Buckinghamshire County Council to seek feedback from people on the new assessment arrangements (now being delivered by NRS on behalf of the Council) to ensure that the positive experience is maintained.

Our recommendations

Every user and their relatives, without exception, should know how to use the equipment, how to check it is working and what to do if it goes wrong. This was not the case.

We recommend that Buckinghamshire County Council:

- put auditable processes in place to verify that all new and existing service users and/or their relatives know:
 - how to use their equipment
 - how to check their equipment is working

- who to contact if it goes wrong
- how to request changes to their telecare package
- check that information explaining how the equipment works and what to do if it goes wrong is available in formats that are accessible to all and have a process in place to confirm that users get this information in the best format for them

What are we doing to ensure these are delivered?

- We have shared our findings with Buckinghamshire County Council, the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Assistive Technology Partnership Board and asked for a response to our recommendations
- All our reports are shared with Healthwatch England as the independent national champion for people who use health and social care services

Appendix 1

Who responded

Appendix 1 is an analysis of the responses from people who said that they were happy for us to use their response. The number of responses are sometimes different from the number who responded because sometimes questions weren't answered or because some questions requested multiple responses

We randomly selected 480 people from all those who received telecare from the Council between May 2015 and May 2017.

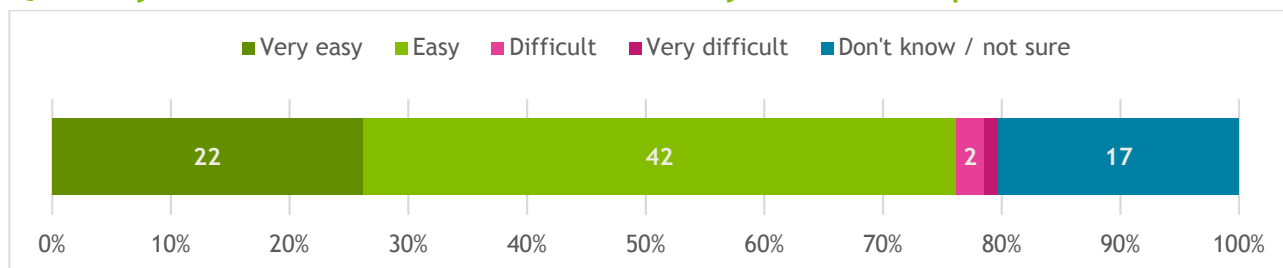
We posted 240 surveys on 9th November 2017 with a request to reply by 15th December and the second batch of 240 on 30th November with a closing date on 8th January.

The survey was available online from 9th November 2017 until 8th January 2018.

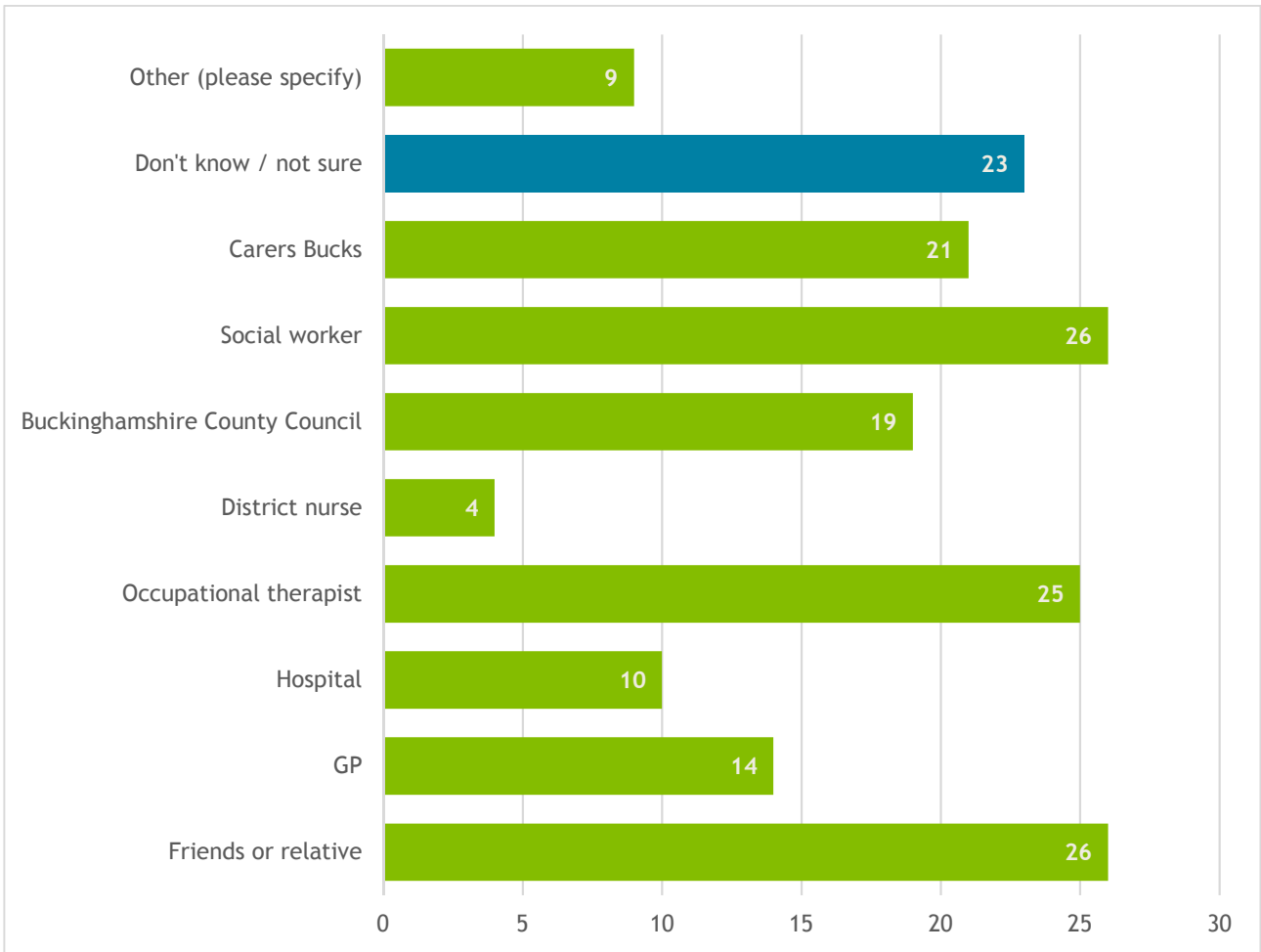
147 responses were returned by post and 15 completed online. Of those completed online 2 replied in response to our letter.

Referrals and assessment process

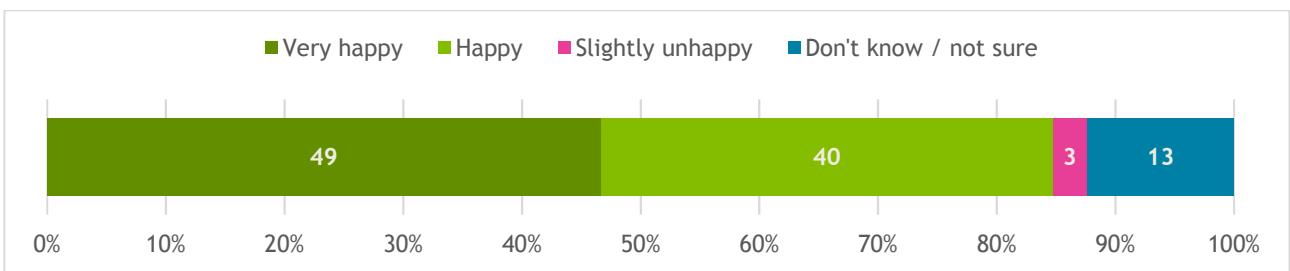
Q4 If you filled in the referrals form how easy was it to complete?



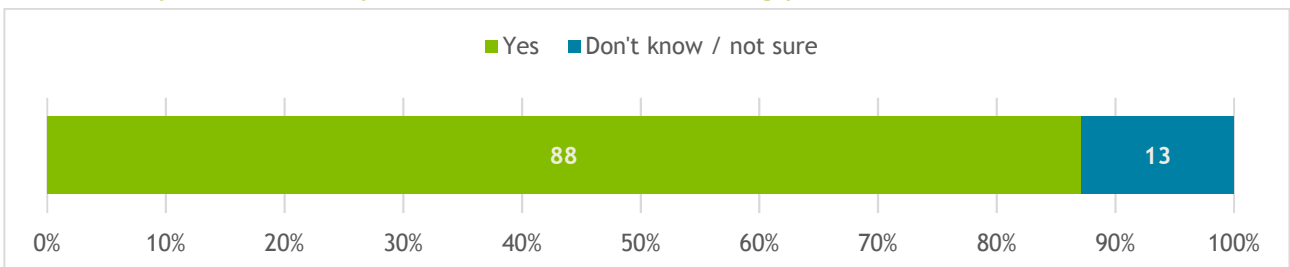
Q5 How did you find out about telecare?



Q6 If you were present during the assessment visit, how happy were you with the outcome?

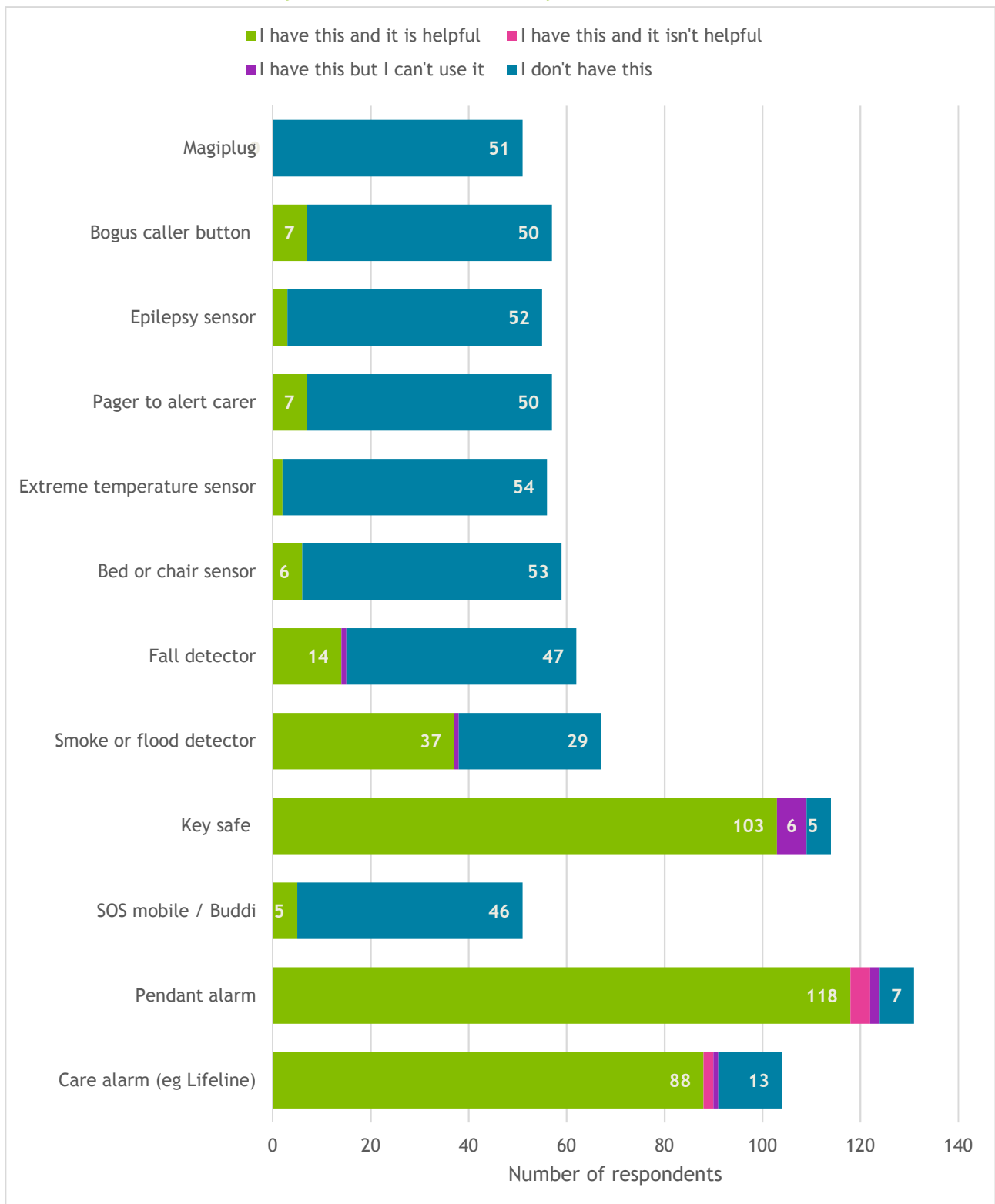


Q7 Did you feel that you were listened to during your assessment?



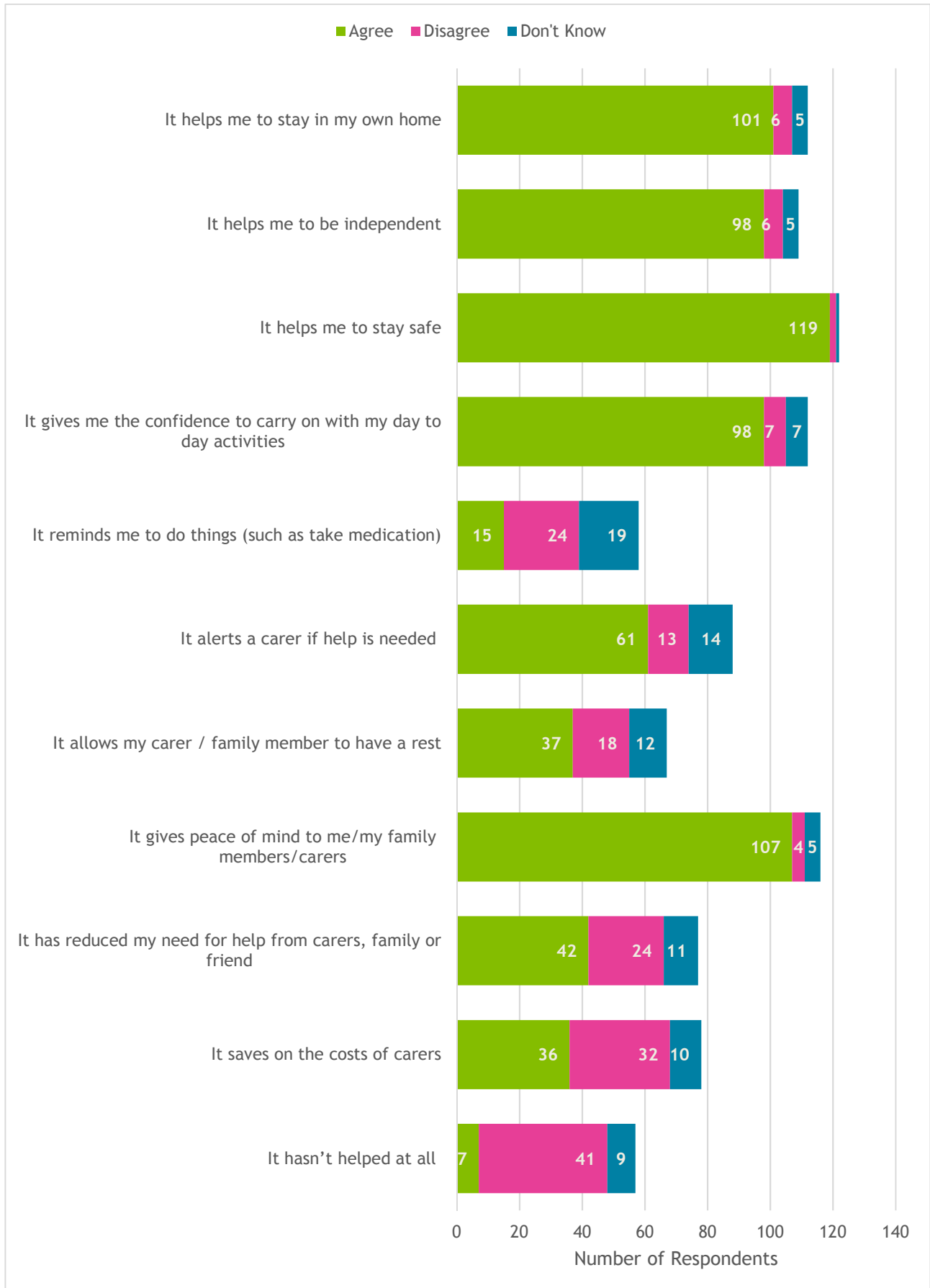
Using telecare

Q9 What telecare do you have and what do you think of it?



Note: Fewer than 5 responses are not recorded on the bar on this chart.

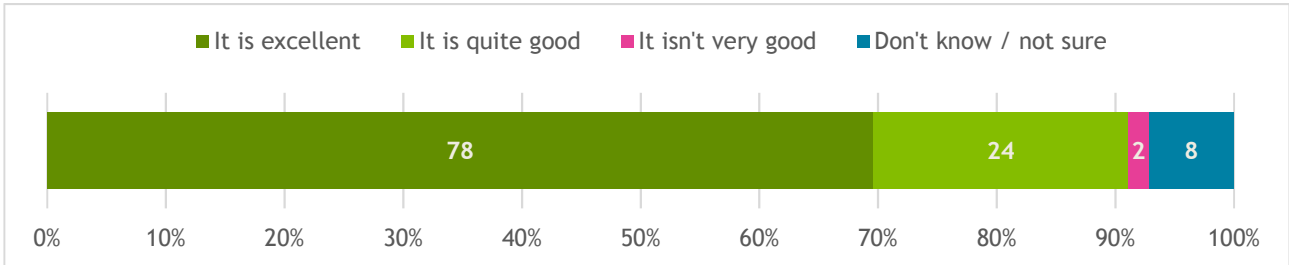
Q9 Please tell us how you feel telecare has helped you.



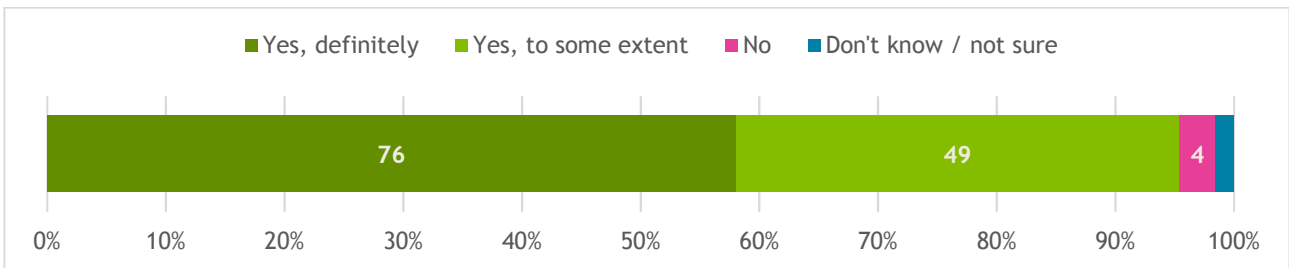
Q10 Please tell us about any other ways telecare has helped you.

A number of qualitative response were given and examples of these are included in the body of the report.

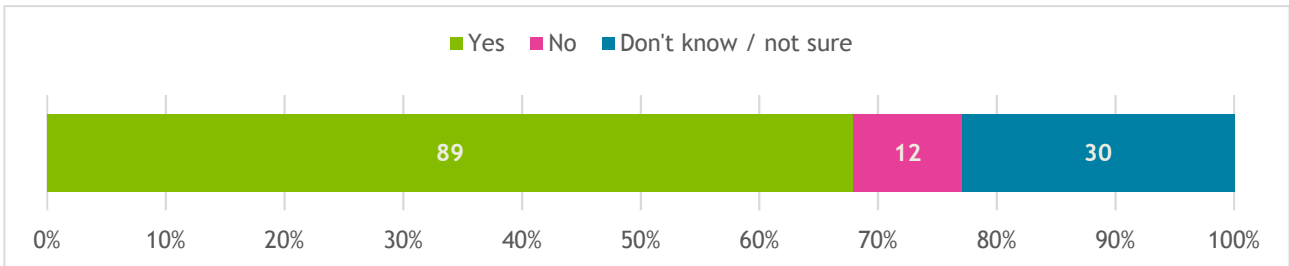
Q11 If you have a monitored service (eg Lifeline), what is your view of the call centre response?



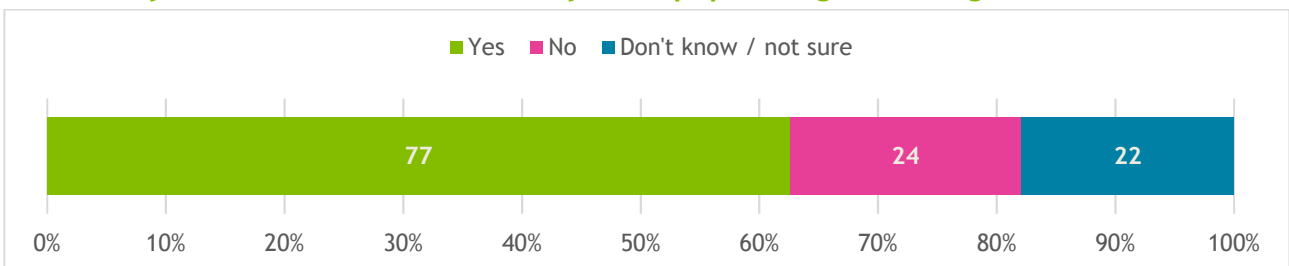
Q12 Do you understand how to use your telecare?



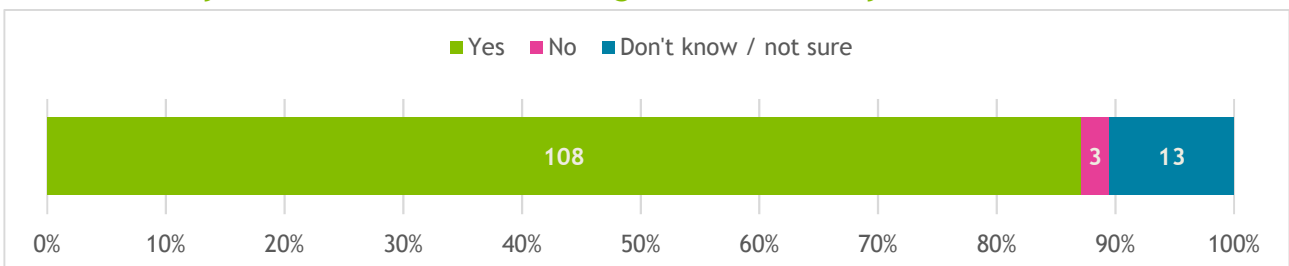
Q13 Do you know how to make sure your equipment is working properly?



Q14 Do you know who to contact if your equipment goes wrong?



Q15 Would you recommend the Buckinghamshire County Council telecare service?



Appendix 2 - Information about the users of telecare

Summary of all those who responded (162) by age, ethnicity and district council area

Age

16-25	2
26-35	2
36-45	1
46-55	9
56-65	9
66-75	13
76-85	49
85+	54
Blank	23

Ethnicity

Asian / British Other	1
Asian / British Pakistani	1
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	1
White British	121
White Irish	2
White Other	8
Would prefer not to say	2
Blanks	26

District council area lived in

Aylesbury Vale	55
Chiltern	25
South Bucks	18
Wycombe	40
Don't know	2
Blank	22

Why do you have telecare?

Some people gave multiple responses to this question so the total is greater than the number of those who replied.

Physical disability	65
Sensory disability / impairment	11
Cognitive impairment / Dementia	21
Learning disability	4
Long term health condition	60
Frail / vulnerable / history of falls	58
Would prefer not to say	0

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

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