



Healthwatch **Together**

Blackburn with Darwen,
Blackpool, Cumbria and
Lancashire working
in partnership

Week 1 Report (23-27/03/2020): How are you coping with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?

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Report written by: Debbie Banks (HWC Research & Data Officer)

This report contains the feedback HWT received to their Coronavirus survey between the 23-27/03/2020. The demographic information is provided, then an analysis of the responses to each of the open questions.

In total we received 87 responses during this time period.

The survey is still live and we are continuing to receive responses, these will be analysed weekly to track any changes and to enable a comparison on a week by week basis as the situation in the UK continues to change in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

As of today (03/04/2020) we have a total of 198 responses, including the 87 that make up this report.

Rationale for research:

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, Healthwatch Cumbria, Healthwatch Lancashire, Healthwatch Blackpool and Healthwatch Blackburn with Darwen (working as Healthwatch Together), created a survey to find out how the people of Cumbria and Lancashire are coping during these difficult times.

This Week 1 report covers the time period: 23 - 27/03/2020

Methodology:

The survey was launched on Survey Monkey and shared via HW websites and social media.

It was developed as a 'temperature check' to ask people how they were feeling and coping during the initial days of the pandemic.

We limited the number of questions, (to keep the survey relatively short) and kept the questions open (to gather as much information as possible.)

Questions:

1. Where do you live? (Options - Cumbria, Lancashire, other.)
2. What is the first half of your postcode?
3. How old are you?
4. Are you male/female/other?
5. What was your employment status before the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic?
6. Including yourself, how many adults (18+) live in your household?
7. How many children (0-17) live in your household?
8. What is your ethnicity?
9. How have you been affected by the outbreak of Coronavirus?
10. What are your three biggest concerns?
11. What impact has social distancing had on your daily life?
12. How are you taking care of your physical health?
13. How are you taking care of your emotional and mental health?
14. What actions have you taken for yourself and others?
15. Where do you look to find information about Coronavirus?
16. What changes would help you cope?
17. What information would help to support you?
18. Are you currently receiving any medical care or treatment (not related to Coronavirus)?
19. If you are receiving any medical care or treatment, how has this care/treatment been affected by the Coronavirus pandemic?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Results

Demographics: There were 87 respondents in total.

Locality:

47% from Cumbria

48% from Lancashire

5% other

Age range:

46% aged 35-54

34% aged 55-74

86% female

92% white British

Employment status:

57% in employment

34% retired

Family status:

52% live in a household with two adults

21% live in a household where they are the only adult

62% had no children living in the household

Q.9 How have you been affected by the outbreak of Coronavirus?

The responses have been categorised into practical, emotional and social impact.

1. **Social impact:** this includes a lack of physical contact with friends and family, feeling isolated and being isolated (including having to 'self-isolate').

"As I live alone it's lonely."

"I'm unable to see my grandchildren or children. Unable to do my voluntary work. Can't walk my dog where I like."

- 2. Emotional impact:** many people said that they are experiencing an increase in stress and anxiety; they feel useless, trapped or scared. They are concerned over what will happen with school or university. There are also worried about friends and family who are key workers.
“My mental health is bad. Can’t cope. Don’t know how much I can cope anymore.”
“My son hasn’t had any of his appointments. I’m feeling very lonely and isolated, concerned for my son’s welfare, disability and health”.
- 3. Practical impact:** the majority of responses focused on the change to work situations, including the loss of a job, having to close down a business, working from home and not being able to work from home. There has also been an impact financially for many people. There are practical implications in the new home-schooling/working/childcare arrangements as well as a loss of independence for many people as a result of restricted movement. Several people also mention the impact on their existing medical treatment.
“The lack of availability in the supermarket (my child has special needs and only eats a limited range of foods).”
“Can’t get my flat cleaned or washing done as I buy those services, can’t do it myself.”

Although the data has been divided into three categories, realistically they all overlap and influence each other. This distinction was made only to highlight areas that people have identified as currently having an impact.

At this stage in the pandemic the respondents to our survey are feeling the social impact of isolation, they are missing the freedom to see friends and family as well as other regular social opportunities and social interaction that most of us (until now) have taken for granted.

There is an increase in worry and anxiety, both about the current situation and also for the future. Many people are more worried about their friends and family than about themselves.

On a practical level people are adjusting to new home and working arrangements. This data was collected during a period of readjustment across the UK - schools had only just closed and some people were already working from home, whilst others were still travelling to work. Government guidance at this point was not clear about whether the self-employed could claim any lost earnings. There was already a financial impact for some people, with reduced working hours and the threat of job losses.

The interconnectivity of society has resulted in some people losing their independence and having to rely on others (to collect prescriptions and shopping) as well as those who are suffering because they already rely on other people and

services that may no longer be available (such as having a cleaner, or relying on respite support.)

Question 10: What are your three biggest concerns?

1. That my family and friends will contract the virus.
2. That I will contract the virus.
3. Financial concerns and a shortage of food.

Overwhelmingly people were concerned over the health impact of Coronavirus. Other concerns included: the impact on employment, how long will the pandemic last, will life ever get back to normal and worries over mental health (own and others.)

“The health of my family. The state of the economy after the crisis. The NHS.”

“A member of my family catching the virus. How long it will be before I can visit family. The pandemic getting so bad that there are very few police and other emergency services.”

“My husband has lost his job. My two kids have Autism and are out of school/college. Have had to cancel their carers.”

These concerns may change as the weeks progress.

Question 11: What impact has social distancing had on your life?

During the week when we collected these responses ‘social distancing’ was still a relatively new term, the UK government hadn’t introduced a total lockdown so people were still trying to understand what the term meant and what it meant for them personally.

The impact, listed in order of importance (determined by the number of people who mentioned it):

- Missing physical contact with friends and family.
- Having no social life anymore.
- Feeling increasingly anxious or sad.
- Having to contact friends and family via phone or facetime apps.
- Being stuck inside.
- Now working from home.

“Not being able to see family, not being able to do usual weekend activities, working from home, supermarket trips take much longer.”

“Due to my mental health issues and social distancing I have become more anxious; I'm also starting to feel cut off from my usual support. Trying to keep my teenagers indoors is causing arguments at home.”

“No socialising, no work, a significant reduction in exercise and not being able to support my parents who I normally see numerous times in a week. Shopping also a problem as people have just been selfish and stockpiled despite there being no reason to.”

It should be noted that at this point there were also a number of people who said that it hadn't really had much of an impact for them.

Question 11: How are you taking care of your physical health?

Most people were managing to go for a walk or take some form of physical exercise everyday - Joe Wick's online workouts were mentioned many times. There were a wide variety of approaches to exercise, some people go out walking, others followed workout routines, trampolining, gardening, yoga, walking around the living room and lifting weights.

Lots of people were making the effort to eat well and take extra vitamins. However, almost the same number said that they were unable to do any exercise, mainly because it was difficult for them.

“Making sure I take my medication and sticking to normal mealtimes.”

“I'm not.”

“I'm finding it hard because going outdoors is hard for me.”

Although everyone is potentially affected by restricted movement (outdoors) and the closure of clubs, leisure centres, pools and classes, some people are in a better position to still continue exercising. Those who were already limited in the exercise available to them, those who are unable to leave the house, people with limited mobility or who have to care for others and those without much room in their home or who do not have access to a garden are likely to be affected disproportionately.

Question 13: How are you taking care of your emotional and mental health?

People are taking care of their emotional and mental health by:

1. Staying in regular contact with friends and family - this was by far the most popular response.
2. Using exercise, meditation, gardening and finding ways to 'just keep busy'.
3. Quite a few people commented that they found turning off the news was helpful.

"Talking on facetime with family. Keeping in touch with friends on social media."

"Try to avoid too much media."

Worryingly, 10% of respondents during this week said that are not or are unable to look after their emotional and mental health and admitted that they were struggling. This might be a trend that grows as we continue to live through the pandemic. We will be able to compare the results of this week, with those of subsequent weeks to see if this does get worse.

"I'm not coping well, I've always had bouts of depression and I'm already feeling low."

Question 14: What actions have you taken for yourself and others?

The responses to this question have been themed into categories. They are listed in order of importance (determined by the number of people who mentioned them):

- 1. Looking after yourself and others**
This includes taking extra hygiene measures, social distancing, not going out, keeping children inside and ordering food online.
- 2. Looking after friends and family**
Remaining in social contact with people.
- 3. Supporting the wider community**
Volunteering, offering support to others, supporting vulnerable people and

checking on elderly neighbours.

4. Following government guidelines on what it is safe to do.

Question 15: Where do you look to find information about Coronavirus?

Listed in order of most popular:

1. 35% said TV news - mainly the BBC, followed by Sky News
2. 17% said Gov.uk and 17% said the NHS website
3. 12% said internet websites (not specified which ones)
4. 7% said social media
5. Trusted and reliable websites (such as BBC, WHO)
6. Radio and newspapers

It is reassuring to see that people are looking for reliable information from recognised and trusted sources such as the BBC. Although this could be the result of the older age range of the respondents. Boris Johnson's tea time speeches were mentioned several times (this was prior to his diagnosis with Coronavirus and self-isolation.)

Question 16: What changes would help you cope?

This question gave people the opportunity to say what they think would help them and also provides another opportunity to find out what their current priorities are.

Listed in order of importance:

1. **22% - Better provision of online shopping**
This includes more delivery slots, the prioritisation of some groups in society and being able to order/have prescriptions delivered.
(Some of these measures have since been introduced.)
2. **21% said nothing**
3. **15% said 'I'm not sure'**
Some people responded with resignation to the situation, whilst others felt they were doing ok and didn't need any changes.
4. **10% said being able to see friends and family**
Although most acknowledged this couldn't happen.

5. 10% said getting consistent and correct information

Testing only came 6th in order of importance during this week, but may feature more prominently in future weeks.

“There are changes which could help me cope, but would not be beneficial to the situation, e.g. more flexible about seeing friends.”

Overall most people seem resigned to the situation and are coping as best they can.

Question 17: What information would help to support you?

42% of respondents said that they felt they already had enough information.

23% said that they weren't sure what further information would help to support them.

This could be a result of a regular stream of information through news sources and again, this may change as the pandemic continues.

Question 18: Are you currently receiving any medical treatment or care, not related to Coronavirus?

49% said yes

51% said no

Question 19: Has your medical treatment or care been affected?

29% of people said that they hadn't been affected yet.

38% said that their routine appointments had been cancelled.

18% had noticed a change in ordering and collecting prescriptions.

15% had video or phone consultations with their doctor/GP, in place of a face to face visit. The feedback from these consultations was very positive.

“My little girl had a video appointment with the GP today, they should carry on with video appointments after the outbreak is over.”

Responses to the survey taken in subsequent weeks may start to show a bigger impact on medical treatment and care as NHS resources become stretched.

Question 20: Do you have anything else you would like to tell us?

Most people said that they didn't have anything else to tell us.

There were some specific complaints about neighbours and about supermarkets. But some of the concerns raised:

- Such as panic buying, have since been addressed by the supermarkets.
- People not obeying social distancing guidelines, has also been addressed.
- People ignoring government guidelines, is continuing to be addressed (police have been given advice on enforcing the guidelines since these comments were made.)

Overall there were a wide range of responses to this question, covering a range of social issues. There were no obvious themes among the responses, but below are some heartfelt quotes to give an idea of what people are worried about.

“I'm worried about my family being ill while I'm still ill.”

“I feel lonely.”

“All the emergency services and delivery people, post office etc., are doing a great job.”

“I wish for the whole world that it's over sooner than expected. Keep safe everyone and be very kind.”

“I am in the habit of praying for lots of people every day, and have now starting a special coronavirus notebook where I note down people with special needs as a result of the pandemic.”

Conclusion

A conclusion will be provided once the responses from subsequent weeks has been collected and analysed and a comparison can be made.