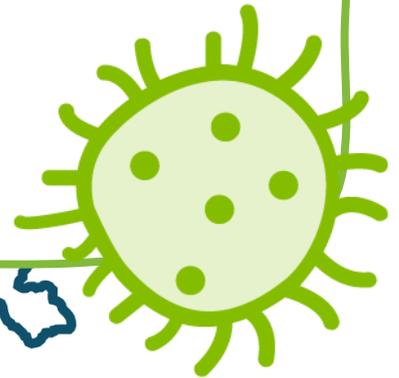


**How has Covid-19  
affected the health and  
wellbeing of people of  
Coventry and  
Warwickshire?**



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# Introduction

**In March 2020, the Government began a nationwide campaign to try and reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus (also known as Coronavirus). This resulted in many NHS and Social Care appointments being moved online, postponed, or cancelled and those who were classed as 'clinically vulnerable' were asked to shield. A period of 'Lockdown' was brought in on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 and restrictions still remain at the time of writing this report.**

## **Gathering the views of people in Warwickshire and Coventry**

**Every day Healthwatch Warwickshire and Healthwatch Coventry hear from people who share their experiences of using NHS and Social Care services. This report provides a summary of findings from a survey we ran from May-July 2020 and is informed by 1,117 people's experiences of services during the pandemic across Warwickshire and Coventry. As agreed by both Healthwatches, Healthwatch Warwickshire led on this piece of work, working alongside Healthwatch Coventry to roll out the survey asking the following key questions:**

- How local people accessed information to keep them safe during the pandemic and if the information needed to keep them safe given in a way they understood?
- What changes had been made to NHS, adult social care services, or support needed or received to keep them well during the pandemic?
- How the pandemic had impacted peoples' mental health and wellbeing? What services had been affected? And its impact to the person receiving support.

## What they survey told us

1,117 people told us about their experiences of health and care at the height of the pandemic. We received a good response rate from across both Warwickshire (72%) and Coventry (20%) (8% preferred not to say). From the information that we have gathered there are lessons that could be learned in several areas including: Maternity, Dentistry, Pain Management, Medications,

Mental Health and about how changes are communicated. More detail is provided within this report and is also available upon request.

Most of the responses to our survey were completed online, but we did receive several paper copy responses which were sent out by the Warwickshire County Council Shielding Hubs, Millbrook Healthcare, Apetito, and given out by Edible Links. We are concerned as a Healthwatch that we have not been able to actively seek more views of those who may be digitally excluded by our usual face-to-face methods but we are equally pleased to have had our highest response rate to an online survey.

### **What we have done already**

Healthwatch Warwickshire understood that we needed to share the information that we were receiving from the public with the NHS, Local Authorities, Clinical Commissioning Groups and other key stakeholders to ensure that they were hearing what was happening to local people whilst still at the height of the pandemic. Therefore, we produced bi-weekly briefings and sent them out to key stakeholders so they could understand the issues affecting those receiving care.

Healthwatch Warwickshire has also already presented the findings to groups including Transitional Place Board in South Warwickshire which has resulted in them including our findings in their future engagement strategy.

This report brings together all of the information shared as well as giving Healthwatch Warwickshire a challenge to ensure that we use the information gathered to inform services of what went well and what could be improved in the delivery of services locally.

We have shared the data for Coventry with Healthwatch Coventry who have now produced their own [briefing paper](#).

This report will look at an overview of the information gathered across Warwickshire and Coventry, but we will continue to work with key stakeholders to share more specific information related to specific conditions such as maternity, dentistry, mental health or cancer.

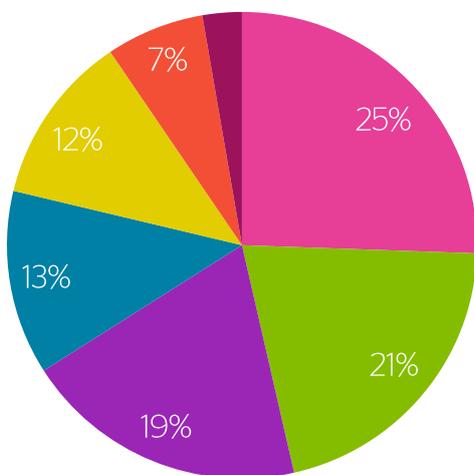
# Who are we hearing from?

1,117 people responded to our survey

1,102 surveys were completed online, the remainder were via post.

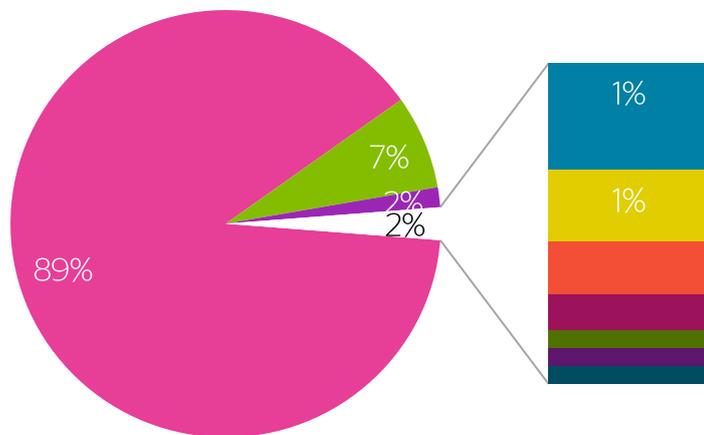
Not everyone answered every question.

## Residence



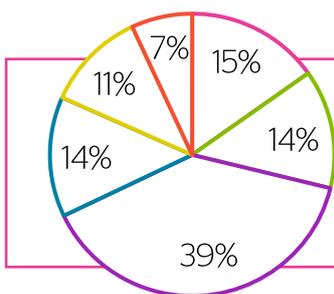
- Warwick/Leamington Spa
- Stratford-Upon-Avon
- Coventry
- Nuneaton and Bedworth
- Rugby
- North Warwickshire
- Other

## Ethnicity



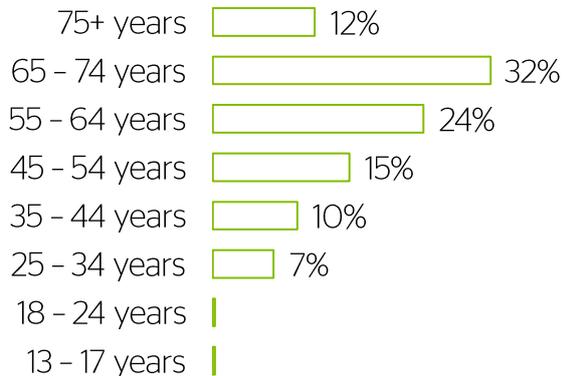
- White: British
- White: Any other White background
- White: Irish
- Asian / Asian British: Indian
- Black / Black British: African
- Black / Black British: Caribbean
- Another ethnic background
- Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Black African and White
- Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups: Asian and White
- Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi

Actual population of Coventry and Warwickshire



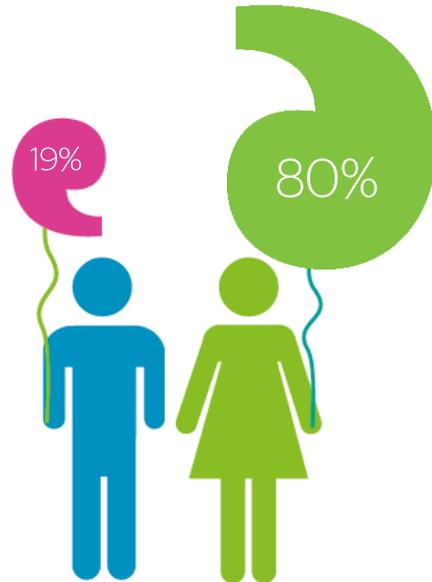
We aimed to hear from people across Coventry and Warwickshire. As shown, Coventry was under-represented and South Warwickshire districts were over-represented.

## Age

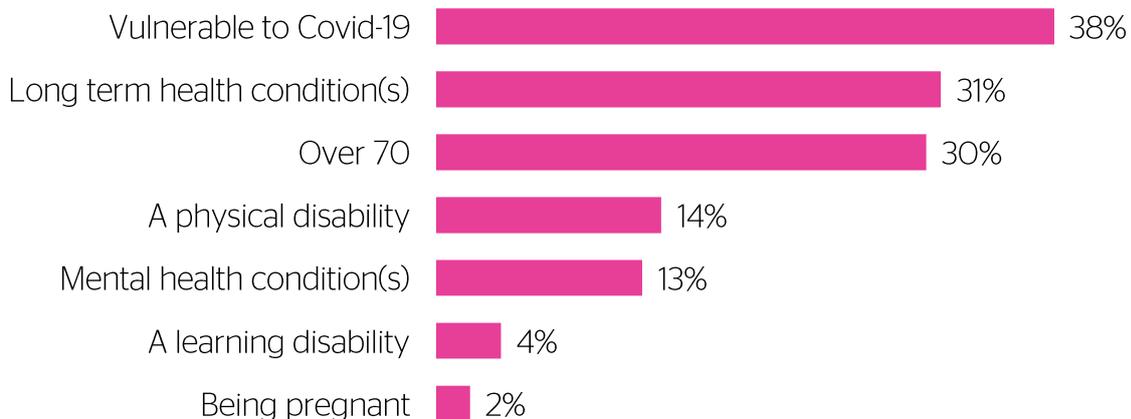


56% of respondents were of working age (above 18 and below 65)

## Gender



## Are you, or do you have, any of the following?



**Coventry** respondents differed the most compared to other areas, having a smaller proportion of over 70s (with the largest age group being 55-64). Except for age, all other categories were higher for Coventry residents, people with long-term health conditions being the largest group for Coventry (45%). Only 19% from Coventry answered that none of these categories applied to them (compared to 30% for Coventry and Warwickshire)

When we asked if participants wanted to tell us more about a condition, common answers shown to the right.

- Asthma
- Blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Anxiety or depression
- COPD
- Cancer
- Arthritis

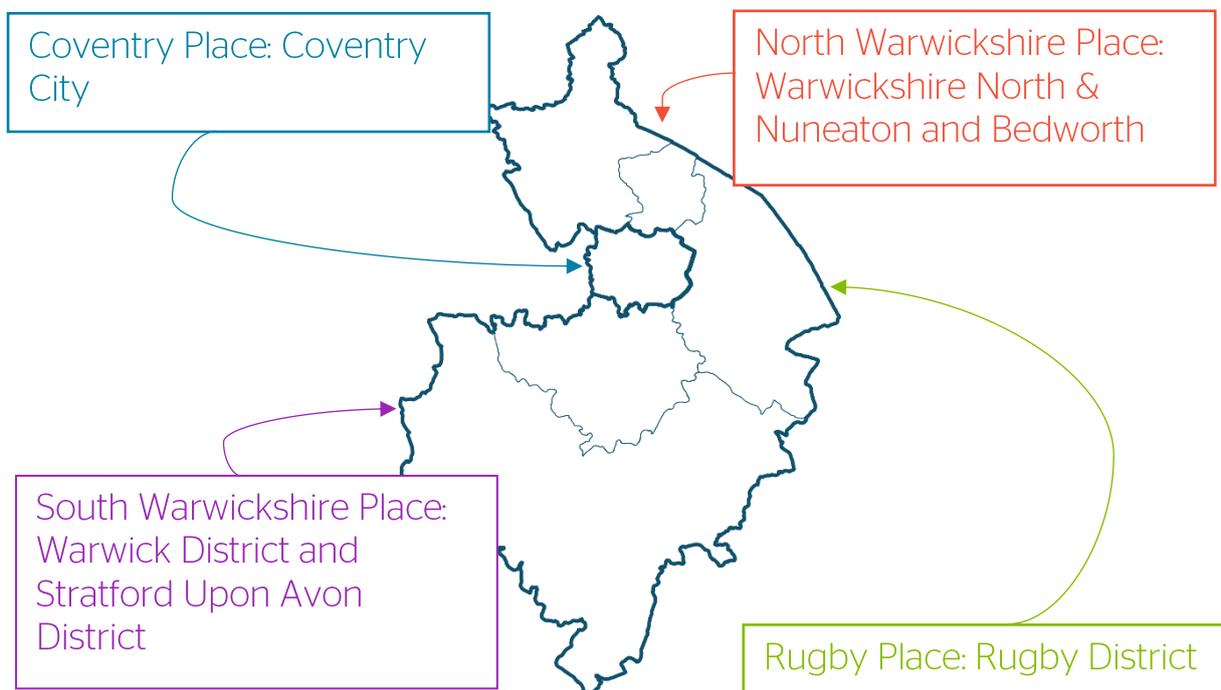
# Our Findings

## What we asked

We asked local people to answer a set of questions related to their experiences of finding accurate up-to-date information that was accessible to them and received in a timely fashion. We asked what changes to health and care had occurred during the height of the pandemic (including for Covid-19 specific care) and how it affected them, and we asked how people's mental health and wellbeing had been impacted as a result.

## How we looked at the information received from the public

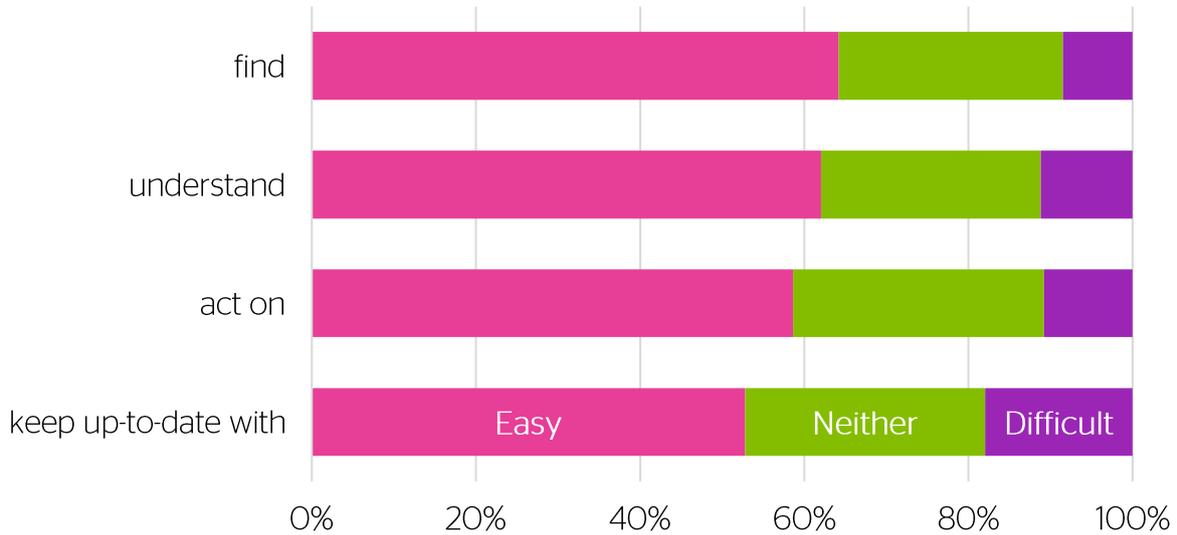
To ensure that we provide relevant and insightful information that is useful to key stakeholders such as local NHS providers and Local Government we looked at this data in a few ways. One of these ways was looking at the data both across Warwickshire and Coventry (reflecting the wider health and care system) but also on a more local level, known as 'Place'. There are four 'places' across Warwickshire and Coventry, as shown here:



We have used the colours above throughout the report when referring to 'place'. Where it was not possible or practical for this summary report to look at the data by 'place', we looked for themes in what people told us such as sentiment, services, and conditions of the individuals' feedback.

# Access to advice and information

We asked how local people had found it to access, find, understand, act on, and keep up-to-date with information during the height of the pandemic:



Whilst on average 60% of people said that they had all the information that they needed to stay safe during the pandemic there was a notable North South divide. In [South Warwickshire Place](#) 19% of people said that they found it difficult to keep up to date compared to 38% in [Coventry Place](#).

We have looked at what people found difficult to find information on. Here are the Top 5 which range from 27% to 16% reporting finding it difficult to access information:

- 1 Changes to usual healthcare services
- 2 Help for people who don't use the internet
- 3 How to look after your Mental Health and Wellbeing
- 4 Accessing Community Support
- 5 What 'high risk' people should do

Overall, respondents from **Coventry Place** reported finding it difficult to access information on many subjects such as *managing physical health conditions* (21%), *managing mental health conditions* (18%) and *information on looking after physical health* (18%) more frequently selected. They also reported it being difficult to *access information on usual health care services* (38%) and *managing existing mental health conditions* were particularly higher than in the other areas.

Conversely, **South Warwickshire Place** found it less difficult to find *information on changes to usual health care services* (19%) and **Rugby Place** reported less difficulties in *accessing information on managing existing mental health conditions* (6%).

**North Warwickshire Place** respondents found it more difficult than the other areas to access information on several topics relating to Covid-19 symptoms, including *what you should do, if you or someone in your household has them* (11%).



“Being told to do one thing and then it changes to something else.”

“Not sure with my {condition} if I should be “shielding”?”

“What NHS services are still available & when others may resume”

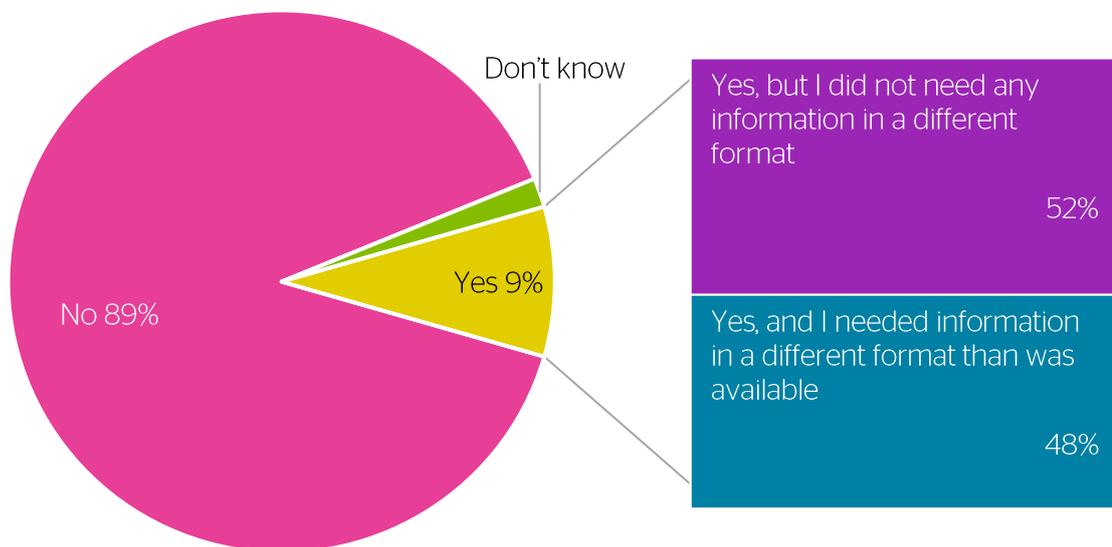
“No specific advice for children with learning disabilities”

We asked people where they found their information to keep them safe during the height of the pandemic. Most people said that they used national websites like the Government website and NHS. **North Warwickshire Place** and **Coventry Place** were less likely to use national organisations. **Rugby Place** and **South Warwickshire Place** used more social media and local information sources.

# Additional communication needs

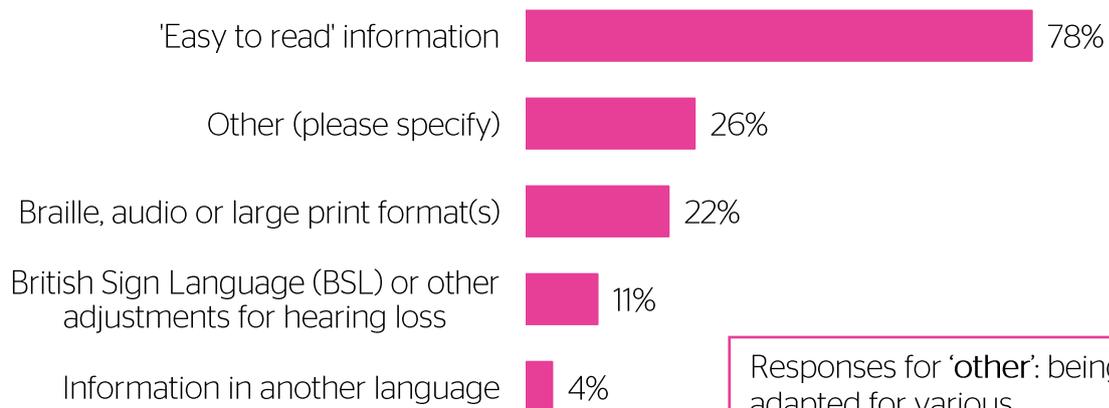
As a local Healthwatch we understand that there are people in our communities that may have barriers to accessing advice and information when they need it most. Some of these barriers are because of additional communication needs people may have (due to a learning disability, sensory impairment, and so on). We wanted to find more out about the experience of these individuals to see if their needs were being met.

We asked people whether they or someone they supported had additional communication needs



Overall, 46 people told us that they had a communication need and that they would have liked information in another format. Slightly more people in **North Warwickshire Place** (14.3%) and **Rugby Place** (13.5%) reported having, or supporting someone with, an additional communication need.

When we asked which format they would have liked information in, the responses were as follows:



Responses for 'other': being adapted for various conditions/audiences. Verbal, and videos were among the most common responses.

Several people commented on the use of face masks being ineffective for deaf people or lipreaders and that there was a lack of clear accessible information in English for people with learning disabilities (particularly for children).

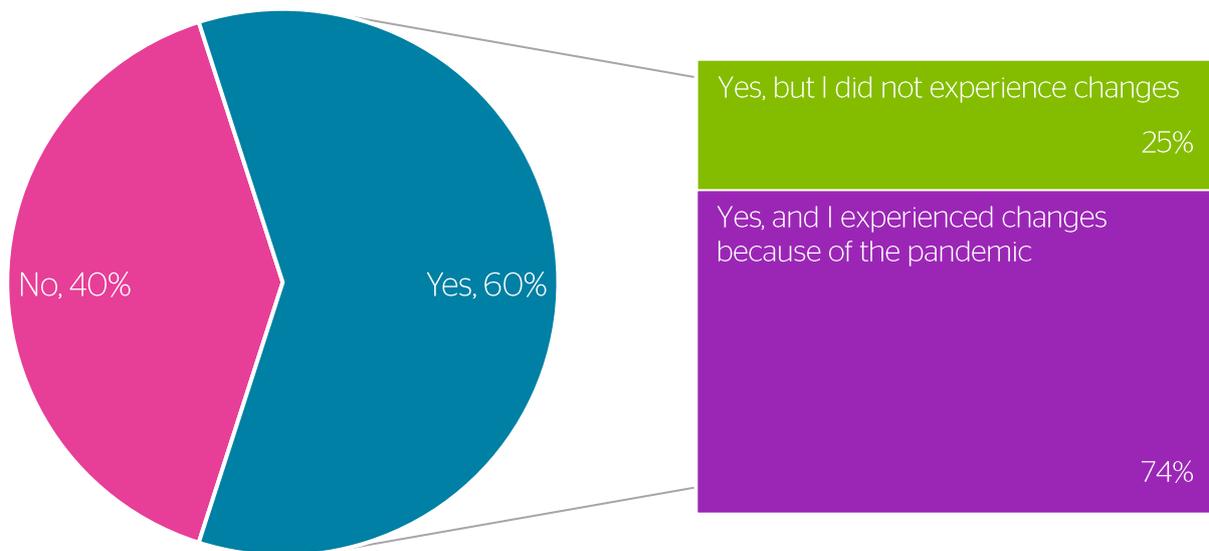


“My Dad is blind. Written information is useless, he has had no information in a way that would have helped him. He is also over 80 but has been forgotten about, without family support he and my Mum would have starved”

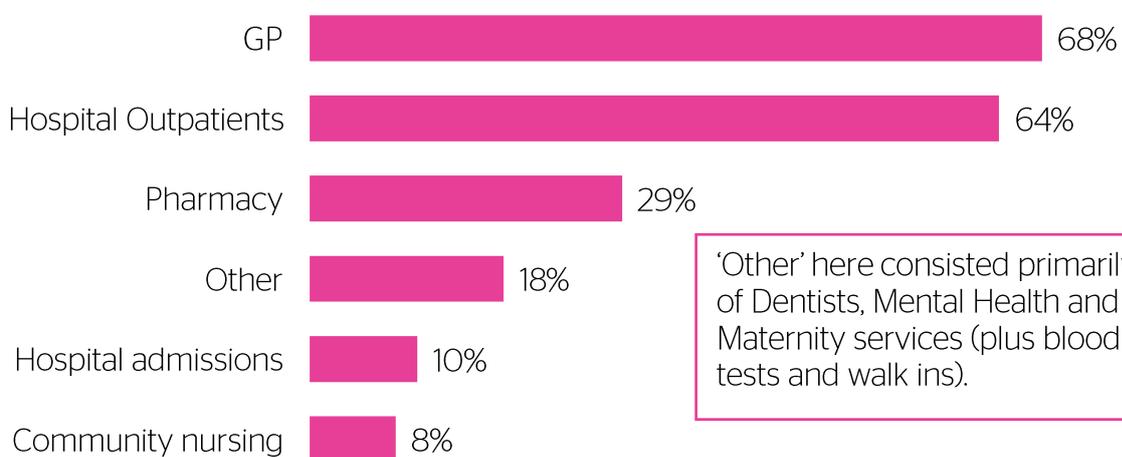
# Changes to Healthcare

We wanted to find out about the changes people had experienced because of the pandemic and how it had affected them. So, we started by finding out who had both needed to use healthcare services and experienced changes.

Have you used healthcare services and have you experienced changes to them?

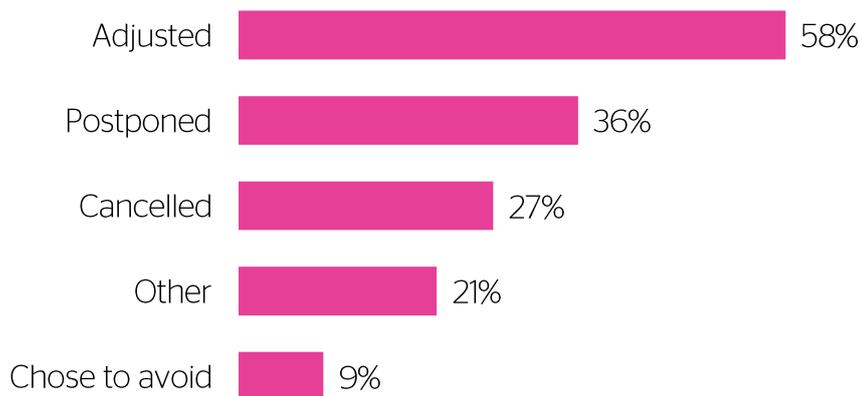


In total **401** people told us they had experienced changes to their healthcare. Outlined below are the services that had most affected the people who responded to our survey:



'Other' here consisted primarily of Dentists, Mental Health and Maternity services (plus blood tests and walk ins).

People told us that these services were:



When we looked at the information by 'Place' we noticed that people in **Coventry Place** were less likely to avoid services and more people at **Rugby Place** had services cancelled. The information we collected showed that when it came to hospitals there were more postponements and cancellations, compared with all other services where people primarily experienced adjustments.

## People's experiences of Healthcare

**272** people told us more about their experiences of healthcare. Of these most were negative, many were neutral (because they were simply describing the change and not indicating their feelings about it) and the remaining quarter were either positive, mixed, or unclear.

In addition to experiences of GP, hospital, outpatients, maternity, dentistry pharmacy, and mental health (as shown in the previous questions) respondents here also told us about their access to services such as blood tests, eye health, cardiology, and surgery.

### Positive experiences during the pandemic

People told us positive experiences of using phone consultations but there were also good examples of increased service efficiency, excellence in implementing Covid-19 distancing measures and general good service:

"My husband had jaw pain. I was able to speak to our dentist on the phone, he accessed my husband's records and diagnosed an infection. He sent a prescription for antibiotics to our pharmacy. The pain subsided. Very pleased with service."





“The service I have experienced throughout, particularly from the haematology department has been fantastic. Haematology have gone above and beyond to provide while ensuring I was protected due to having to shield. There has been no reduction in the incredibly high standards of care provided!”

“It was very well organised when entering the practice, seating far apart, hand gel and face masks given at desk. The nurse refrained from unnecessary contact (but it was an injection). Upon exiting I was to dispose of mask and hand gel upon exit. It was very good and felt ok.”

“Saved 60-mile round trip for check-up”

### Neutral comments about their experiences

We received many neutral comments simply stating the changes which occurred such as needing to attend different locations to usual or showing an understanding of the measures that are being taken during the pandemic:

“They have not impacted me. I ran into some difficulty as I had shoulder surgery, but my GP video called me and arranged for me to go to the {outpatient} services. My physio was cancelled but I was able to email the physiotherapy team when I was struggling, and the Physiotherapist phoned me. My follow up appointment for my surgery was cancelled but the surgical {team} telephoned me instead and all was fine.”

“Instead of blood test at {GP surgery} had to go to {elsewhere}. Repeat prescriptions accessed by telephone instead of leaving at {GP surgery 2}.”



## Virtual Consultations



“It was better to have appointments by telephone than not at all. We didn't want to visit the hospital or GP surgery because of covid virus”

Experiences of virtual consultations were predominantly over the phone but also included video consultations. These experiences were very mixed, positive feedback we received included:

“This has been a great addition and I hope the surgery will continue to use this platform (e-consult) post covid-19.”

“I feel the Psychiatrists actually listen better on the phone as they do not get distracted”

“Telephone consultations - worked very well. Would be interested in having video calls in future...where appropriate”

Experiences of poor communication, concerns of missed diagnoses or incorrect treatment for certain conditions, and not feeling comfortable talking over the phone were common among the negative experiences:

“The appointments are over the phone which has caused anxiety as it's felt it will delay any treatment required.”

“My 2-year-old's development meeting was done over the phone, while helpful that we were still able to have the conversation, I feel it wasn't thorough enough...”

“Triage by GP receptionist meant incomplete information/lack of opportunity to ask questions so possible unnecessary trip to A&E”

“Outpatient support for my eating disorder has moved... to the telephone. This is not nearly as effective as in person. This also means I haven't been weighed which makes my eating disorder worse as its not being monitored”

“... I think a physician will pick up other things about a patient by face to face consultation that otherwise go unseen when on the phone. ... given the choice I would have preferred an actual in person meeting despite the current situation.”

## Negative experiences of changes to healthcare during the pandemic

Negative experiences during the height of the pandemic made up most of the comments. We have grouped these into some of the common themes

### The impact of not being seen face to face:

“If these changes hadn’t occurred, I’d have been physically assessed by a G.P. referred for physio and given a steroid injection. I’ve had pain for 7 weeks now.”



### Changes being communicated poorly or not at all

“No letter/text to say the appointment was cancelled”

“George Eliot failed to tell me in time that I would receive telephone consult with cardiologist. I therefore had an unnecessary journey to the hospital”

“Neither my doctor nor the consultant at the hospital knew who was responsible for letting me know I should be shielding...”

“No info from Central Surgery about changes to, or how to access, appointments. Could have gone on website.”

### And people feeling ‘left in the dark’

“My physio has been postponed indefinitely as has the ortho appointment I should have had in early May. I am left trying to manage on my own in pain until who knows when.”

“My imminent knee replacement was postponed. No new date. Mobility worsening. Not expecting anything anytime soon but anxious about returning to work with surgery still not done and badly affecting mobility and pain.... On potentially additive pain killers for longer and longer and concerned about issues this might cause.”



## Lack of access to services, particularly when a condition was previously described as “urgent” but it is now “not urgent enough”

“They’re all either running slower (care coordination) or not accepting new referrals which has meant that I’ve had to find money to go private for a health condition that has meant I’ve had to be signed off work and I keep almost causing myself harm from collapsing/ falling over.”

“Had to stop my medication because needed to change and ongoing monitoring of a new drug would be difficult. Consequently, have had debilitating increase in symptoms and found it very slow to be able to access urgent help (2-3 days waiting time not good when you are in pain which prevents sleep).”



## Issues with medication



“...chemists unable to get medication and difficulty in getting replacement I was chasing round on the day before I ran out all together!”

“Repeat prescriptions for my moderately severe asthma have been challenging - I asked a family member to collect for me, but it all went wrong. I was then missing several medications that I need for several weeks due to poor communication and poor processes. My asthma is triggered by tree pollen (and many other allergies), and I was without necessary allergy meds for around a fortnight”

## Maternity

Considering the small number of respondents experiencing maternity, we received many responses about perinatal issues which crosses some previous themes particularly around communication of changes and anxiety around healthcare.



“UHCW have implemented huge restrictions in how pregnant women can access services, preventing partners from attending scans, inductions and postnatally. I gave birth during the pandemic May, I was never directly communicated with about the changes. Human rights states a women should have a birth partner with them during their labour. I ended up needing an induction {and} when I went into labour there was not an available delivery suite so I was in active labour for 6 hours on an antenatal ward without my husband.... I feel like I have PTSD as a result of the experience.”

“Had no preparation for birth now causing anxiety. Birth expectations class could have been done virtually via zoom/facetime etc.”

“I had a baby 2 days before lockdown so been unable to have midwife visits. 1st appointment for heel prick test was carried out but felt rushed. All other contact has been over the phone.”

## Dentistry

“My daughter is in middle of now abandoned orthodontic treatment and is struggling with her teeth all moving out of line again- could spiral into a mental health issue”

“I was not able to get emergency dental treatment”

“Not been able to see a dentist for tooth abscess”

“Broken dental plate has affected eating and mental well-being”



**Consequences of Covid-19 healthcare measures:** increased pain, worry, deteriorating condition.

“Because I can't have this surgery it may be too late for me to now ever have children.”

“... resulted in my Dad going into hospital hours later than he should. He subsequently passed away. I will never know whether this delay impacted his recovery.”

“My wife's dementia has deteriorated during lock down”



“The appointment for my husband to have a cardio monitor fitted was cancelled in the very early days at the end of March, and has not been rebooked. It is a slight worry that he could have a heart attack.”

“Operation was postponed- now suffering from chronic pain and looking after a toddler”

“Not being able to see my GP regularly for my mental health and physical issues has impacted deeply on my mental health.”



“Have broken my elbow very badly and can only talk to physio on phone so he can't assess my progress properly. I feel this may have impacted on my recovery”

“On the whole services have been available but require blood tests and scan as advised by my GP for my daughter but under current circumstances not available. I am concerned re my daughter and situation she is in.”

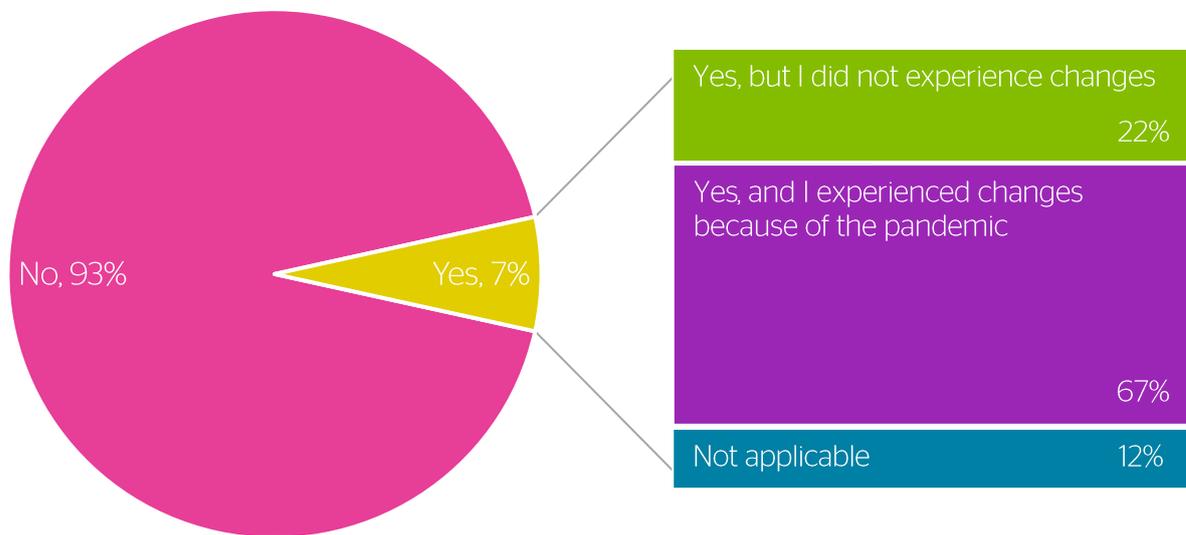
“I am a wheelchair user and I am desperate to get my ear syringed It doesn't sound much but now I am deaf in my left ear. I can only get out of the house by ambulance transfer.”

# Changes to social care

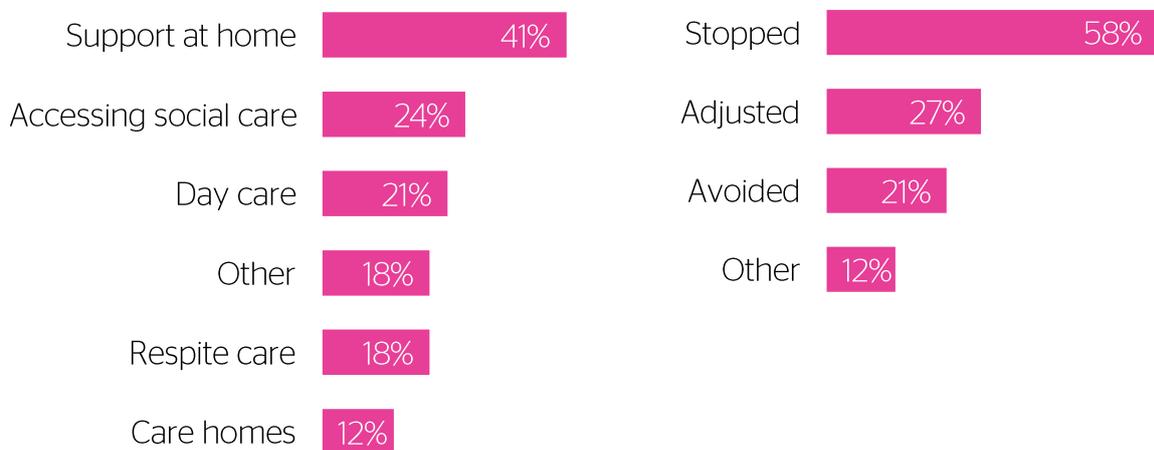
We wanted to find out about the changes people had experienced because of the pandemic and how it had affected them. So, we started by finding out who had both needed to use social care services and experienced changes.

Of Coventry and Warwickshire, **Warwickshire North Place** (12%) reported needing care during the pandemic the most and **South Warwickshire Place** (3%) the least.

Have you used social care services and have you experienced changes?



In total **40** people answered 'yes' to both questions. Outlined below are the services that had most affected the people who responded to our survey (left) and how they were affected (right), mostly care was ceased:



## People's experiences of Social Care

"We have been left totally on our own"



We heard about a comparatively small number of experiences for social care. Themes concern Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), caring and concerns over deteriorating conditions:

"We decided to manage on our own. I usually have a carer come to the house each morning but the carer suggested other people require help 4 times a day when my husband and I could manage without. We have struggled on."

"The carers we arranged privately had no access to PPE"

"Initially - care was stopped. Had to argue to get put back in. No risk assessment undertaken. {Local Authority} once alerted were good. Still lack of PPE"

"My {Mother-in-Law} thinks she's been put in prison and not allowed out... She has deteriorated because of lack of stimulation... {Mother-in-Law} cannot understand why her family have abandoned her. She can't use a computer and can't remember if they ring her."

"Elderly, deaf, slight dementia, incontinent, semi-mobile relative isolated in room, less movement and less verbal/social contact. I do not know what the answer is but for 7 weeks she has deteriorated, and it is difficult to do anything about it."

We also heard about services which had helped people:

"Grapevine is now supporting me via Zoom calls and {NHS service} is supporting me via phone calls. I chose to leave {support service} to stay with my parents"

"Been in isolation, received food parcels which has been a great help."

# Experiences using NHS services for Covid-19

12% of respondents, **108** people, said they had used the NHS for Covid-19, most experiences described as good. Generally, the comments praised the services and professionals but were more critical of NHS 111. This was due to not getting through, receiving contradicting advice and missed symptoms.

<p>Poor, 14%</p>	<p>“A 10-mile drive to access a Covid swab test”</p> <p>“Phone line engaged for a long time and conflicting information to what the GP had said”</p>
<p>Fair, 24%</p>	<p>“Going round a loop from GP advice through 111 and back again when describing Covid symptoms”</p> <p>“Hard to get through to 111”</p> <p>“My husband only had a very high temperature and 111 said it was unlikely he had C-19. However, when I eventually called 999, the paramedics said I ought to have called a week earlier.”</p>
<p>Good, 64%</p>	<p>“All services, NHS111, emergency services, A&amp;E and GP were all exceptional.”</p> <p>“...admitted to hospital not related to covid 19. Was tested on arrival and discharge informed by the hospital all good no signs of covid. Staff at hospital very good as were the paramedics.”</p> <p>“My husband has been in ICU at Warwick hospital on life support as he has covid 19 and they have been brilliant”</p> <p>“Using the 111 website was straightforward and easy”</p> <p>“Was unsure about symptoms and they were extremely useful.”</p> <p>“I received amazing care and support while in ICU in University Hospital Coventry with Covid”</p> <p>Good at GP, 999, ambulance/paramedics and Hospital level. 111 service not good as did not answer call after 35mins wait”</p> <p>“The test itself at the Ricoh arena was well managed”</p> <p>“My GP via video excellent. Nurses &amp; Drs at University Hospital excellent ICU excellent”</p> <p>“GP support was excellent”</p>

# Mental Health and Wellbeing

74% said the Covid-19 pandemic had some effect on their mental health or wellbeing, with 19% saying it had impacted them greatly:



Overall, respondents from **Coventry Place** reported a greater impact to their wellbeing than **South Warwickshire Place** (80% vs 70% reporting having either some or great impact).

When looking at those who self-identified as being **vulnerable to Covid-19** (therefore should have been shielding or taking greater care), the impact on mental health and wellbeing only slightly more than that shown above, and seemingly mattered less than where people lived.

However, the greatest differences could be seen for those who told us they had a **pre-existing mental health condition (110 people)**, where nearly half reported a great impact, over 94% having some impact:



This was the group who reported being impacted the greatest closely followed by Pregnancy (18 people) and Learning Disabilities (30 people).

Conversely, the **over 70s (278 people)** reported the least impact to their mental wellbeing with nearly half reporting no impact at all:



## Peoples' experiences of wellbeing

We received almost **500** comments from people about how the pandemic had affected their wellbeing, reflecting a number of themes which we will describe below using quotes from those who said it has greatly impacted them, somewhat impacted them and not impacted them.

Many reported:

- increased feelings of anxiety and depression
- use of coping strategies
- worry about Covid-19 itself
- the impacts of working from home and parenting
- the uncertainty of the pandemic. having to care for loved ones with a lack of support.



“I have struggled to motivate myself ... If I didn't have a young family I possibly wouldn't get up in a morning. They have forced me to keep going. I have put on weight due to comfort eating. I have high stress/anxiety levels due to fear of the virus and keeping my family safe, fear of losing our jobs, trying to juggle home schooling two children as well as trying to work from home...”

“Having to work from home and care for my 81-year-old mother 24/7 after she left hospital early April, almost killed me. She wasn't sleeping due to pain. I felt completely unsupported for quite a few weeks before an OT made contact. I almost just walked away from it all.”

Worsening mental health was a big theme, whether people had struggled with mental health previously or not.

“Increasing my anxiety and not sure if I will be able to go out normally again when we can”

“Depression is much worse”

“The changes and lack of information and reassurance has caused me to experience anxiety and worry that I was not experiencing beforehand.”

“Feeling stressed, anxious, difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping. Restrictions on exercise were understandable but this impacted on ability to help with mental health”

“Not slept properly for over 3 months due to anxiety and stress. I find the loss of outside interests and the company of friends and relatives particularly hard to deal with.”

And many struggled being in the at-risk categories, either due to worrying about Covid-19 or the impacts of shielding.

“Being a key worker and coming into work. Myself and partner have underlying health conditions and one of us is over 70.”

“Shielding was not a problem while there was general lockdown. As the rules have been relaxed for others it has become harder to cope with the isolation. Inability to exercise has led to weight gain and worsening back pain.”

A great number of respondents also talked about the impacts on their social life, and of not being able to see friends and family.

“I’m struggling not going out or seeing my family I miss them terribly”

“Feeling slightly low due to being unable to do the usual things I do like meeting friends and going out to places.”

“No routine and not able to see family/friends for support during pregnancy. Not feeling like I’m able to enjoy being pregnant. Depressed because of these things.”

Anxiety and apprehension around tasks such as shopping were also prevalent as well as a fear of themselves or a loved one catching Covid-19.

“I have been concerned about shopping and keeping social distance. I do not have severe asthma so get no additional support.”

“I find I am very anxious when around other people, even when taking exercise in the park in the early morning when not many people are around. I now avoid grocery shopping because I found I was getting really wound up when people came too close to me in a more confined space. I am not normally an anxious person.”

“Worried greatly about family members especially elderly parents...I have been shopping for parents and doing errands. Every time I go to their home, I’m scared I’ve taken the virus to them.”

“I suffer from anxiety and in the past agoraphobia and these have increased and returned during lockdown”

“Disturbed sleep pattern, more anxious than is normal due to worrying that family members may become ill. In fact, during this pandemic, my younger brother died though not from COVID-19. Also, I have real concerns of how families will cope during the expected financial recession.”

...as well as difficulties dealing with the consequences of catching Covid-19.

“One of our sons was very unwell with {Covid-19} which caused a great deal of stress and anxiety...”

“My husband who was fit and healthy 37-year-old before getting the virus is now left with a life changing health condition severe heart failure this has had a great impact, but with support from family and friends we are getting through it and trying to remain positive.”

“I have been made housebound, had my operation cancelled leaving me in continued pain , had to have painkillers increased, fed up due to isolation, lack of social stimulation, death due to virus causing sadness across whole family, no one able to come and assist me causing frustration. Fear of contracting the virus.”

Impacts of shielding, parenting, caring, and working from home were also frequently described.

“Being shielded has meant I haven't had any visitors at all so it has been extra lonely. The phone has been my lifeline.”

“Having to balance childcare responsibilities and expectation to maintain workload. Lack of family 'downtime' due to turn taking with childcare and work. Having my home 'safe space' infiltrated by work upsetting my usual work/life balance. Having to use annual leave to manage childcare. Having negative interactions with school regarding key worker support with childcare. All of the above increasing stress levels..”

“My jobs are very social so miss all that too as I'm sure many are feeling the same”

Many also had concerns about the uncertainty of the pandemic including job security.

“Worries keeping awake at night - family losing employment”

Though it should be said not all comments were negative, some positive comments came from those who said there was no impact, though these were exceptions.

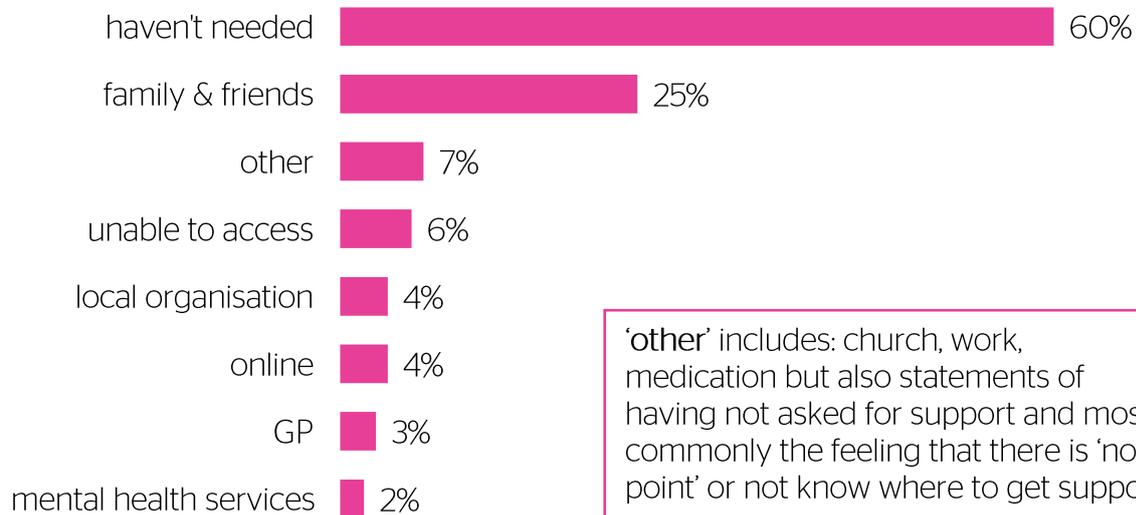
“I have remained physically and mentally active almost as normal but within a much smaller geographical area.”

“The shutdown has been beneficial less traffic, more contact with local neighbours. Much greater community spirit.”

“Realising that I can survive by myself for so long.”

We wanted to know how people who had struggled had sought or received support. How people responded is shown below.

### Where support has been accessed during the pandemic



'other' includes: church, work, medication but also statements of having not asked for support and most commonly the feeling that there is 'no point' or not know where to get support.

### Coventry Place and North

Warwickshire Place reported being *unable to access services* they needed more (12% and 8%). Coventry Place also had lowest proportion of people saying they *haven't needed any support*.

Like the previous findings, those with **existing mental health conditions** and **learning disabilities** fared worse, with only 22% in both groups saying they *hadn't needed support*, compared to over 70% of the **over 70s**. They were instead most likely to have said they used *family and friends* for support (37% and 41%) compared to only 19% of over 70s.

"Support, in the form of "talking therapies", is difficult to access at the best of times."

"My GP phoned me to support me with my mental health issues, but it's not the same"

"Just told my friends and family I didn't feel myself, they kept checking in (by phone/messages) until they saw I was back to my usual self."



# Summary

These findings are from the height of the pandemic, as we asked for experiences in May and June. We hope they provide insight in terms of recovery but also in terms of preparation should there be need of the covid measures again.

## Access to information and advice:

Most people felt that they had access to information they needed however people did find it increasingly difficult to keep up to date with information and reported finding it confusing. Information in an 'easy to read' format was requested. We also identified issues surrounding lip reading both as part of this survey and externally

## Health and social care:

We heard a lot more about peoples' experiences of healthcare during the pandemic than social care. While some had positive experiences to share about the quality of services, they have received during the pandemic we also received many less positive comments which ranged in severity to being an understandable nuisance to having very severe consequences. The key themes included:

- Poor communication, for instance concerns of a missed diagnosis or not having appropriate communication about changes that were made to services.
- Concerns of treatment being delayed including Coping with pain or a deteriorating condition.
- Lack of access to services or medication.

We received many examples of consequences the lack of treatment or Covid-19 measures more broadly have had. While there were a range of conditions, maternity and dentistry services were frequently mentioned. Within these responses we heard a lot about experiences with virtual consultations (or remote consultations including phone consultations).

We also heard about peoples experience of healthcare specifically for Covid-19, the majority of which were positive but there were some concerns about NHS111 waiting times and communication.

## Mental health and wellbeing:

Around  $\frac{3}{4}$  of people felt there had been some negative impact to their wellbeing, and while this didn't vary much by area it was much worse for those who already had a mental health condition for example compared to those who were over 70. Lots of people told us how their mental health and wellbeing had been affected and about their experiences seeking support. The main themes were:

- Increased anxiety and depression
- Concerns around catching covid
- Coping with responsibilities such as caring, parenting and working from home during the pandemic

## There were a few limitations to this survey.

Firstly, we did not hear much about social care meaning it was difficult to draw conclusions about the whole of Coventry and Warwickshire. We have tried to compensate for this in new plans of work around discharge and care homes.

Secondly, despite sending out several hundred paper copies through (through several means), we predominantly heard back from individuals online. During the height of the pandemic it was difficult to reach people in ways other than online, as it was important to prioritise public safety, but we tried to mitigate this bias by encouraging people to complete the survey on behalf of someone they knew.

Finally, we could not breakdown this wealth of information both as quickly and as in as much depth as we would have liked in the timeframe. However we have already been using the data in a number of ways and will continue to work with partners, producing bespoke information for them to ensure this information is used as we continue to listen to patients throughout this pandemic.

## Next Steps

Just as the pandemic is urgent, continuing, and constantly changing we see this work and information as on-going, indeed we have already begin using and implementing the information.

### We have:

- Shared 4 fortnightly real time reports with key stakeholders and services providers (people who need to know)
- Presented the data at South Warwickshire Patient and Public Participation Group, George Eliot Hospital Patient forum
- Presented to South Warwickshire Place Transitional Board in included in their future engagement strategy
- Contributed to the Coventry and Warwickshire Covid-19 impact assessment
- Shared information to inform mental health and cancer teams of patients' perspectives on services during the pandemic
- Used data in conversations with North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth communities' partnerships

### We will:

- Share this report and present it to our partners including Warwickshire County Council and local NHS.
- Share it with wider public and continue to collect their views as the pandemic continues.
- Continue to use the data on request if stakeholders would like to know more about specific demographics or services (anonymously).
- Use it to ensure lessons learned if there is a second wave

## Thank you!

We would like to thank Healthwatch Coventry along with the great many partners who helped to share our survey both online and by paper. By no means least we would also like to thank the over 1,000 people who took the time to share their experiences with us to help make a difference!

## Want to know more? get in touch!

Contact us for more information on any of the above. As discussed, we had hoped to provide more robust breakdowns by things such as 'place'. However with various restrictions we realised this would not be possible. Still, we would encourage you to get in touch to discuss our findings more or see if we can provide you with any data, statistical or anecdotal.

[Link to Coventry Report](#)

[Link to HWE latest report](#)

# Healthwatch Warwickshire and our role during the Covid-19 pandemic

During the Covid-19 pandemic Healthwatch Warwickshire moved quickly to focus our role in providing the public with up-to-date accurate information on how to remain safe and well and informing local people what services were available should they need support. Alongside this we decided to work with Healthwatch England and other local healthwatches to design a survey that could help us capture the experiences of local people at the height of the pandemic.

[Healthwatch Warwickshire](#) is an independent organisation that was set up to listen to and champion the views of people who use, or may use, health and social care services in Warwickshire. As well as seeking views we also encourage health and social care services to involve people in the decisions that might affect them.

There is a Local Healthwatch in every Local Authority in England; Healthwatch Warwickshire is Warwickshire's Local Healthwatch. It is accountable to Warwickshire County Council Public Health, with Healthwatch England providing guidance and resources.

Healthwatch was set up by the Government in 2013 as part of the [Health and Social Care Act 2012](#), to ensure that people are at the centre of health and social care services such as; dentists, GP practices, hospitals, pharmacies and residential care homes.

The national network of local Healthwatch comes under the umbrella of [Healthwatch England](#), which is the national independent consumer champion for health and social care across the country and its role is to advise the Department of Health about concerns raised by local Healthwatch organisations.

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Do not hesitate to contact us today if you have any questions about the report or would like any further information:

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