

# Helplines Partnership COVID-19 Survey to Members – May 2020 – The Results



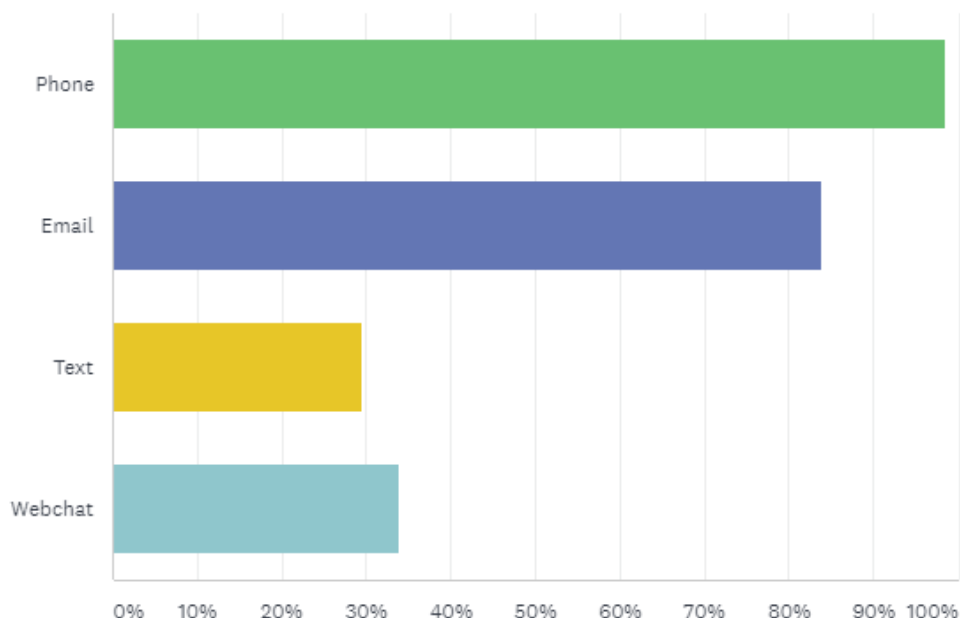
## Executive Summary:

Sixty-nine organisations, Helplines Partnership members and Our Community subscribers, responded to May's survey.

The results show:

- An increase in online support being offered through webchat, online meet ups and more online content.
- Helplines are particularly concerned about the wellbeing of their teams, funding and how to adapt their services as we emerge from lockdown.
- Over half of helplines have seen an increase in demand for the service since 1 April.
- Most helplines have not had to reduce their opening hours, less than 10% said they had reduced hours.
- Over 80% of helplines feel like they have enough staff and volunteers to cope with current demand.
- Essential helpline skills, followed by responding to suicidal callers, are the areas where there is the greatest demand for training for new helpline team members whether they are staff or volunteers.

## 1. Please list the channels your helpline currently uses



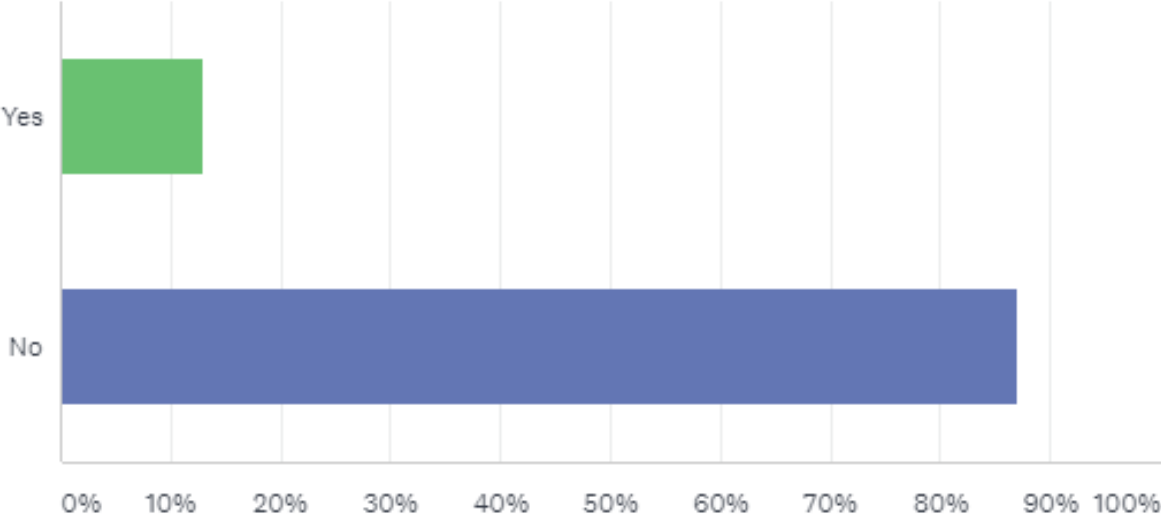
Other channels members reported using include:

- WhatsApp
- WeChat
- Facebook groups
- Web enquiry forms
- Twitter
- Letters
- Chatrooms

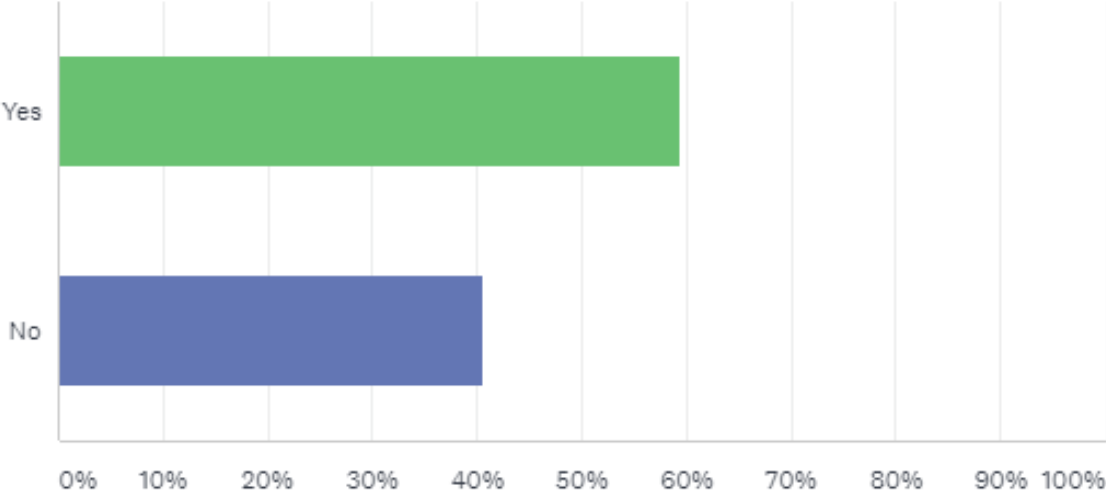
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- Instagram
- Forums

## 2. Does your service usually operate 24/7?

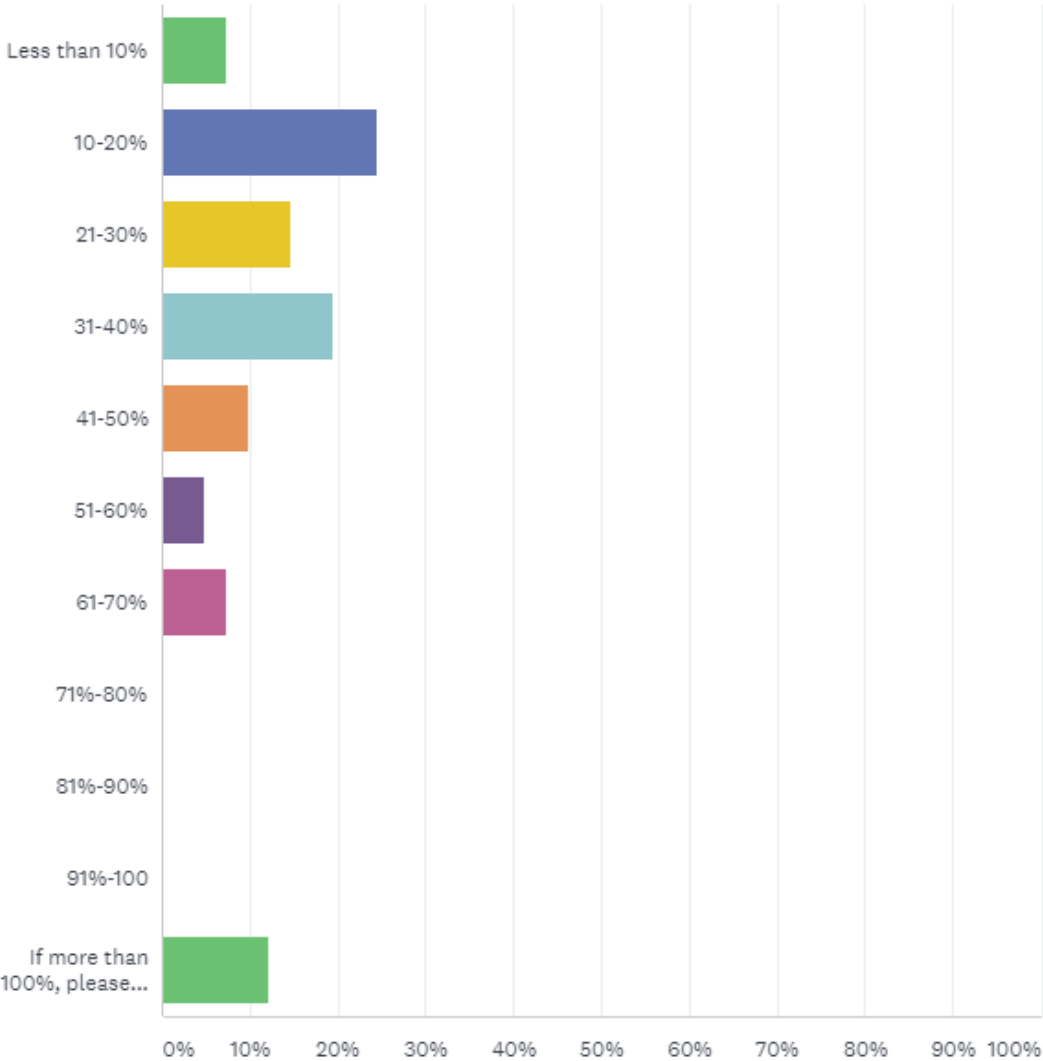


## 3. Have you experienced increased demand since 1 April 2020?



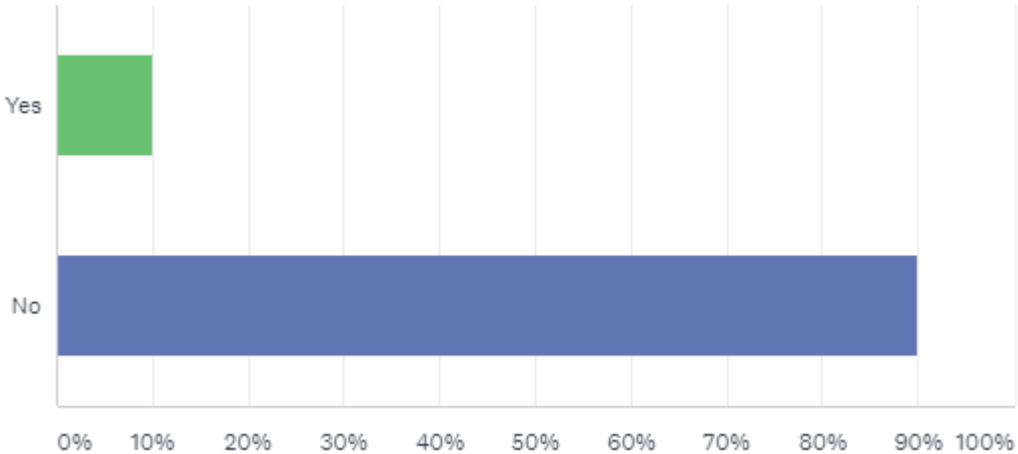
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## 4. If so, by what percentage?



- Five helplines reported contacts increasing more than 100% with increases ranging from: 121%, 150%, 170%, 300% and 313%.
- One also reported that their emails contacts were up 137%, text contacts up by 40% and web chats up by 346%.

## 5. Have you had to suspend any channels due to coronavirus?

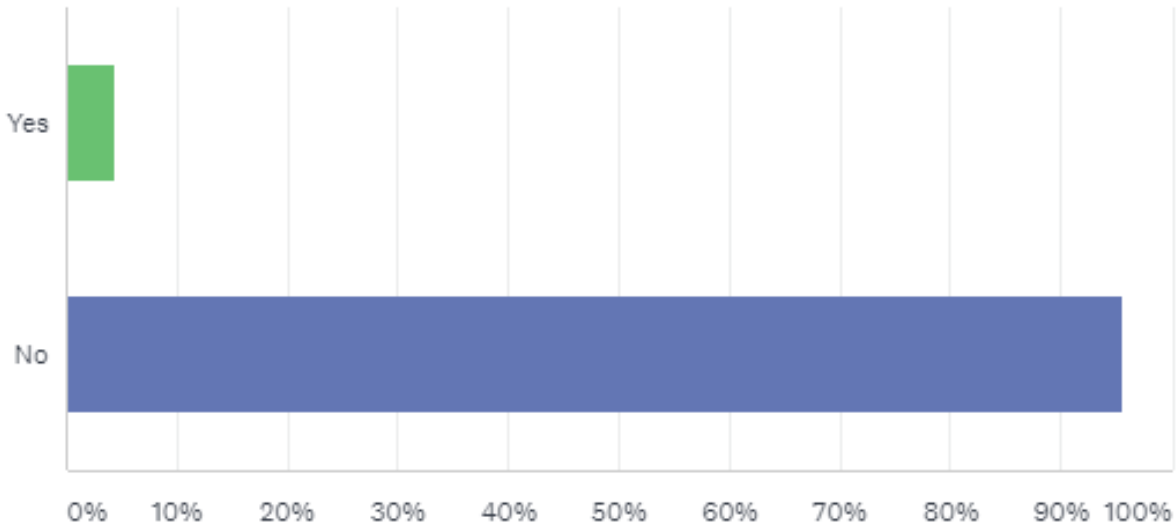


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Ten organisations added comments to their response sharing the changes they have made:

- Peer support meetings, training courses and face-to-face meetings with carers.
- Face-to-Face counselling and group therapy.
- Letters.
- We are currently unable to perform outreach within the community to promote the services of the helpline.
- Phone and in person.
- We have had to suspend our in-person support groups but are offering online support groups now.
- We have expanded our channels by adding webchat and more online content.
- Phone.
- We have changed how we answer the phones. As we are working from home, we don't take calls directly. Messages are left on voicemail and we ring people back.
- In fact, we have expanded and now run online meetups.

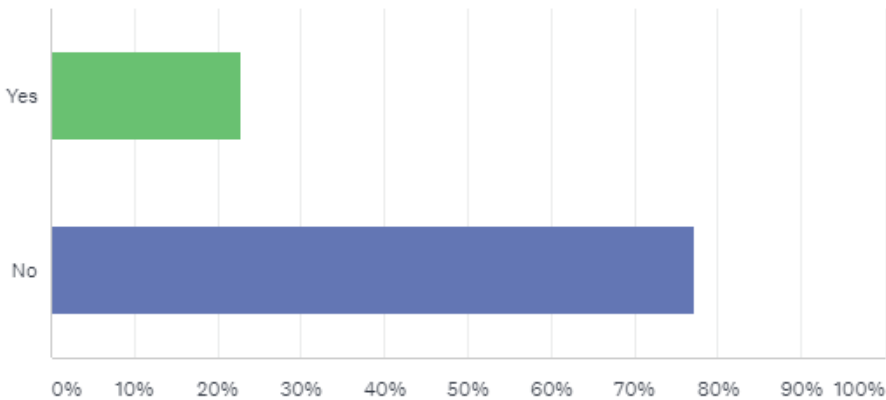
## 6. Have you had to reduce the hours your helpline operates due to the coronavirus?



Those organisations that have reduced their hours shared by how much:

- 10am to 6pm instead of 10am to 8pm.
- Our phone provider is not efficient at diverting calls to the 'helpliner' at home and some days we have not been able to provide a service.

## 7. Have you had to increase the hours your helpline operates due to the coronavirus?



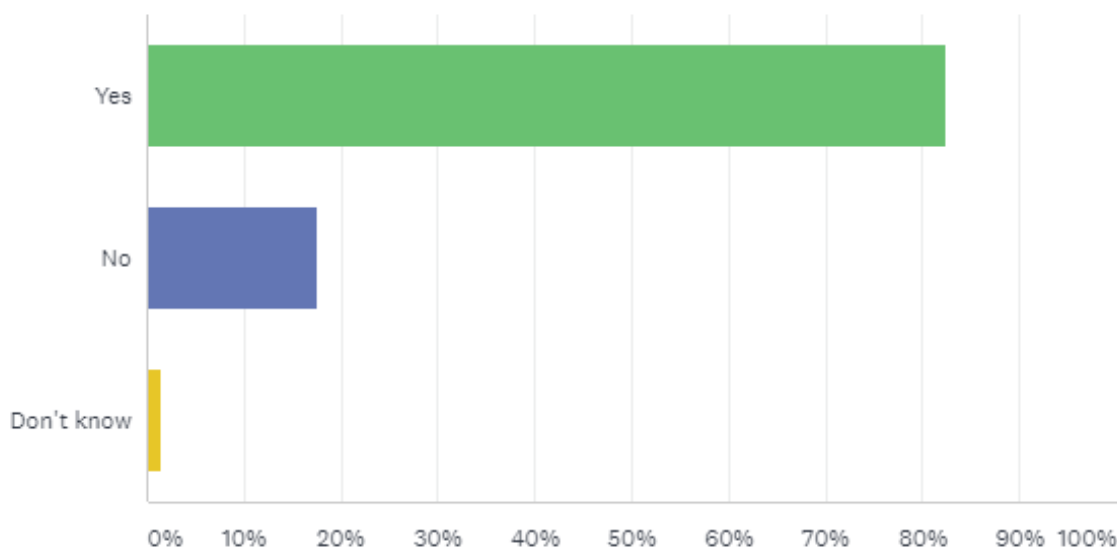
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### If yes, by how many hours a week?

The 12 organisations who have increased their hours shared by how much and how they are managing it.

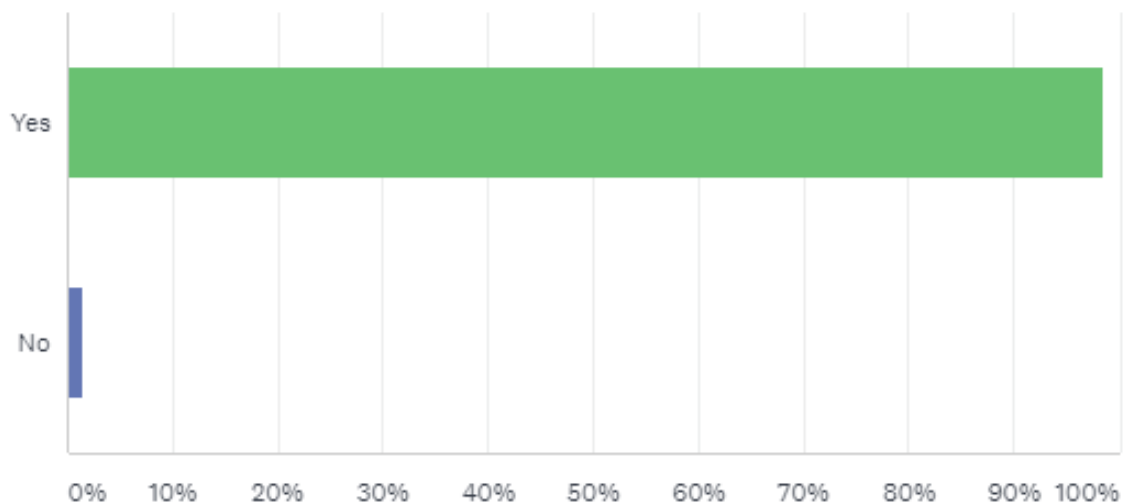
- 5 hours.
- 14 hours also expanded to cover other areas i.e. Black Country not just Dudley.
- We have tried to add additional staff to existing hours e.g. two advisers per session instead of one but we have limited extra capacity.
- Increased capacity - same number of hours per week, but challenges of home working mean staff are doing shorter shifts, and we have an additional six staff covering to make up full hours.
- Saturday and Sunday service will reopen from 10am to 1pm in May.
- 14 hours.
- 10 hours.
- Extra 42.5 hours per week (on top on usual 40 hours per week).
- 35 hours per week - now open 2pm - 11pm daily.
- 4 hours.
- For the first few weeks of the lockdown we opened on Sundays to be available to shift working and weekend contacts.
- 4 hours.

### 8. Have you got enough staff and or volunteers to cope with the current demand?

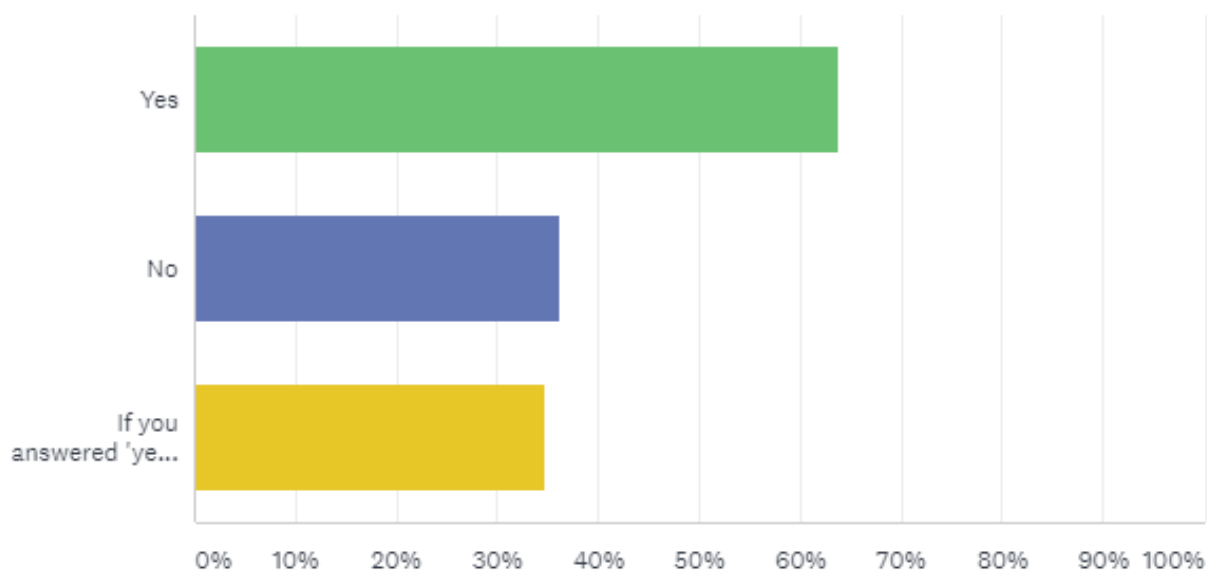


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### 9. Do you have the provision and systems in place to transfer your helpline staff or volunteers to work from home?



### 10. As an organisation, do you have access to any existing non-helpline staff or volunteers who could be trained to provide extra support for your helpline?



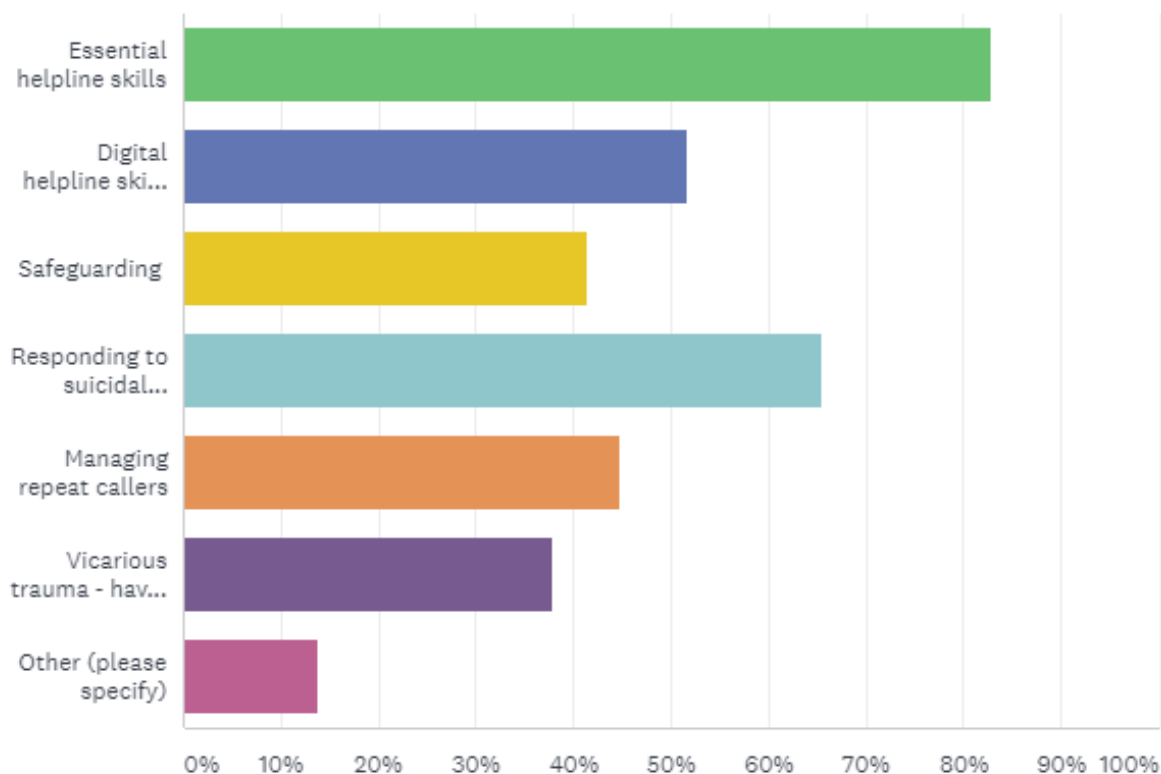
#### If you answered yes, would you be interested in online training from HLP?

24 organisations responded to this question with responses as follows:

- Nine said 'yes' with the following comments: if it is in short 'bite-size' sessions, we cannot afford to increase capacity any further financially.
- Three said 'possibly' with the following comments: for online access to further training for potential new volunteers, currently using inhouse training but in future if needed, would be happy to explore options .
- Eleven said 'no'.

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### 11. If you answered 'yes' to Q.11, what topics would you want new helpline teams, staff or volunteers, to be able to access through online training?



Four organisations added comments under other:

- Dealing with emotional content.
- We are training trainers to train new volunteers through online platforms.
- This would all be included as part of our own training package.
- The repeat callers option has not been ticked because the nature of our service is that we do support people on a regular basis as well as those wishing to have "one off" support/information/signposting.

### 12. Thinking about your helpline and coronavirus, what are your top three concerns?

63 organisations shared their top three key concerns – here is a summary:

- Service provision after lockdown – with new working requirements
- Caller wellbeing
- Helpline demand and capacity
- Moving to home or remote working, support and technology
- Wellbeing of helpline teams – volunteers and staff
- Digital recruitment
- Funding
- Keeping up to date with advice, information and legislation
- Changes in type of calls
- Unable to offer 'usual' services
- Deteriorating mental health
- Resourcing, impact, sustainability and funding
- Not being able to provide answers to the most common questions – due to lack of information from government
- The speed of the changes required

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- Unable to get messages out to people – Covid-19 has taken over all information
- Confidential information being stored at home (because people are having to work from home)
- Lack of other organisations for signposting

### **13. Thinking about your helpline, are there any additional resources that HLP could help you with at this time?**

Fifty organisations added comments about additional resources. Twenty-three organisations said they didn't need any at the moment but shared the sentiment that "it's good to know you are there when we do".

Five key themes emerged from the other responses:

- Training and online training.
- Fundraising and funding.
- Access to specialist expertise and knowledge including digital, financial and technical.
- Signposting to support.
- Awareness raising of helplines and the support they can offer.