

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

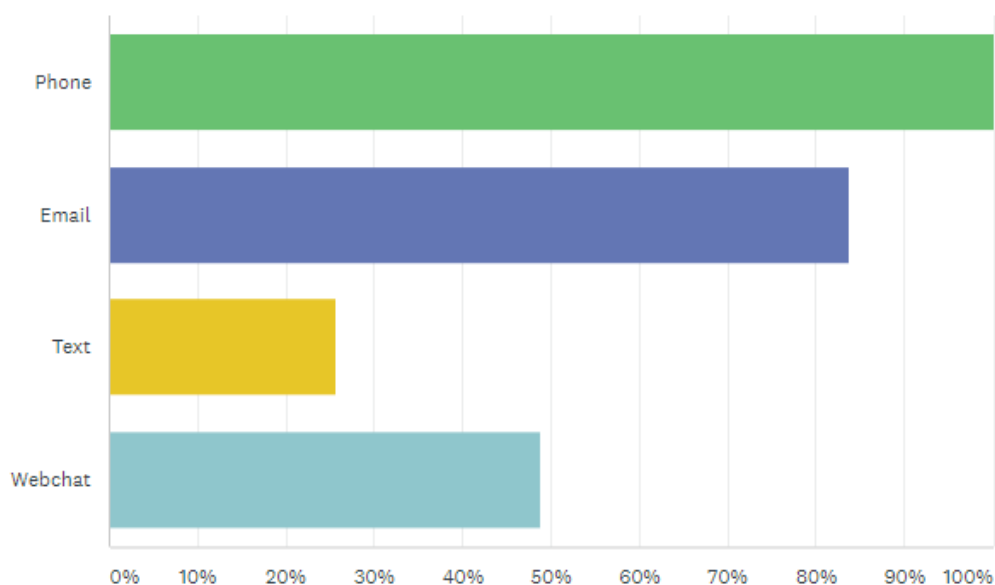
These are the results from June’s survey, sent to Helplines Partnership members and Our Community subscribers.

Forty-three organisations responded to June’s survey and the results show that many helplines are continuing to see demand for their service increase with some saying they have seen a 90% increase.

When asked about training, for the third month, essential helpline skills is still the most in demand training. This is now available as online training for member and non-member organisations. Digital helpline skills is another area there is demand with some members reporting an increase in text based, rather than phone, contacts.

Members reported concerns around safeguarding, as reflected in the number of organisations saying they are interested in safeguarding training, but also was one of the things mentioned in their top three concerns. Other areas to highlight are the wellbeing of helpline teams, funding, managing demand, confusion over government guidance, as well as different guidance in the regions, and issues with helpline technology and the implications if it fails or is unable to cope with increased demand.

1. Please list the channels your helpline currently uses

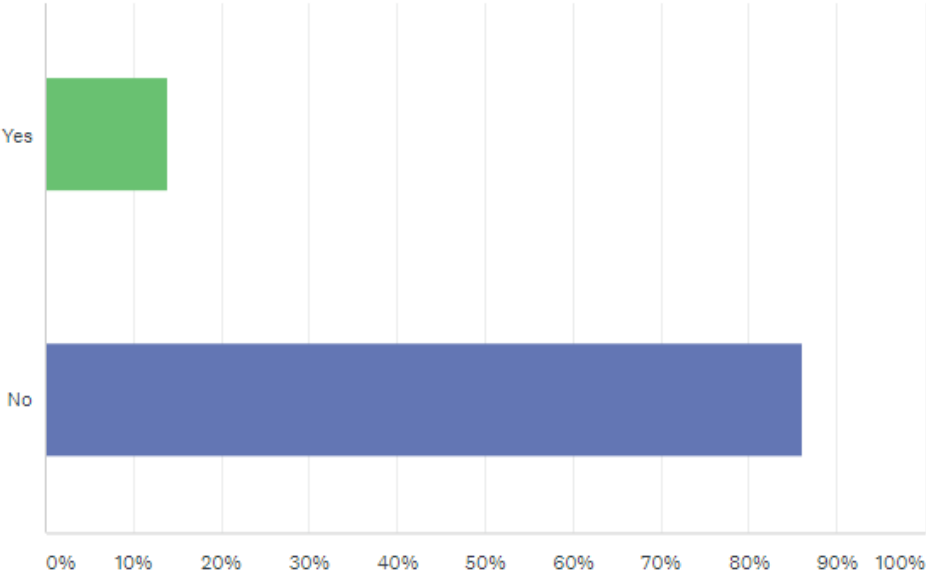


Other channels members reported using include:

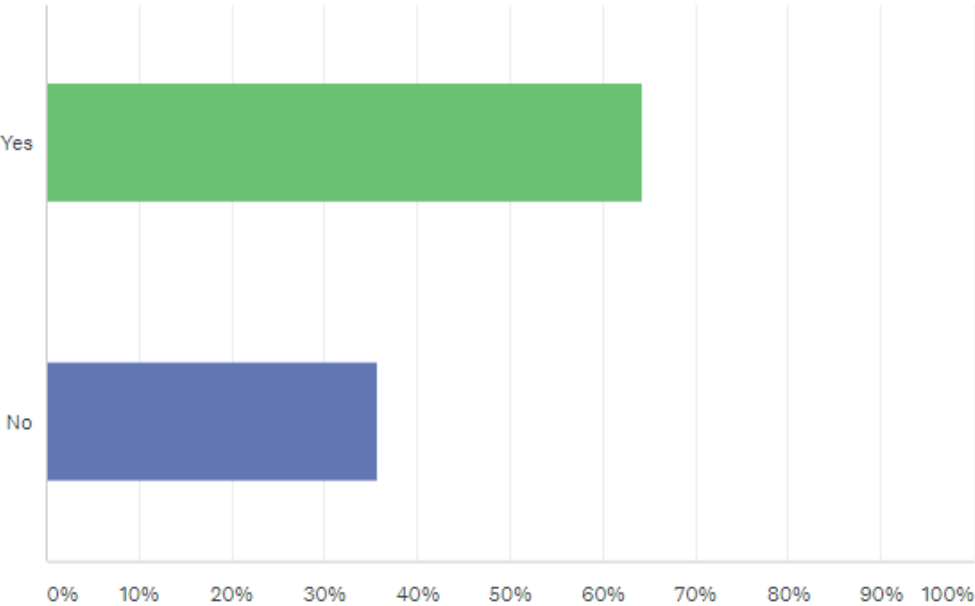
- Social Media support – Facebook, Instagram and Twitter
- Online forums
- British Sign Language – video link and text phone
- Chatrooms

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2. Does your service usually operate 24/7?

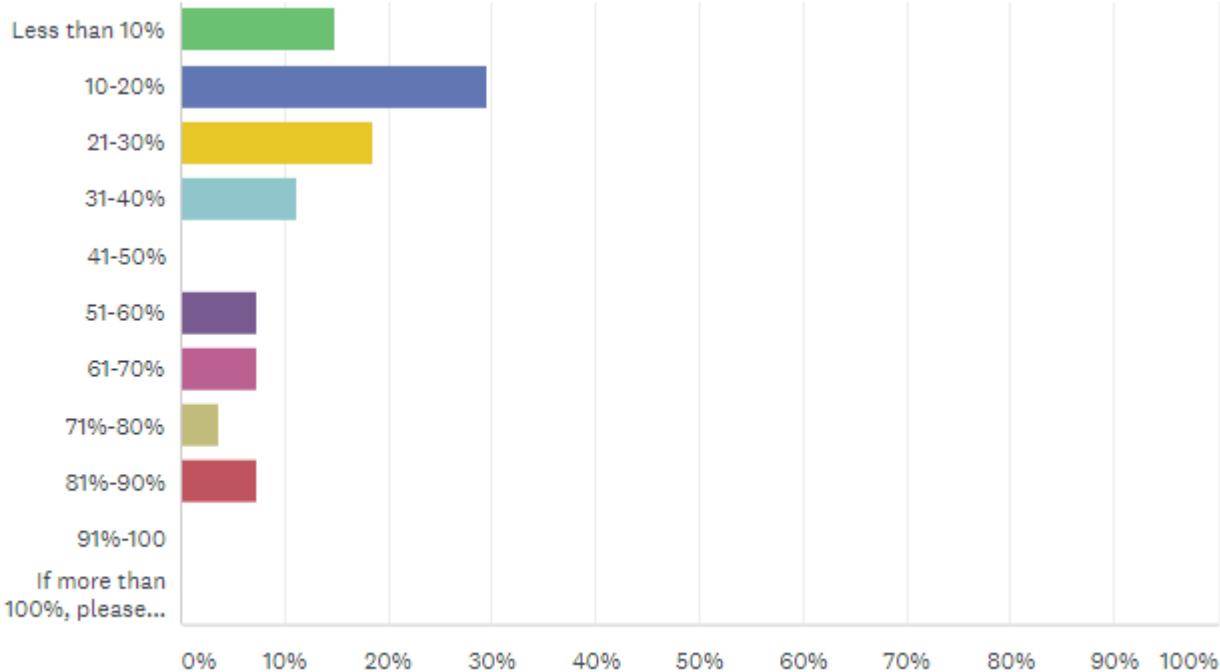


3. Have you experienced increased demand since 1 May 2020?

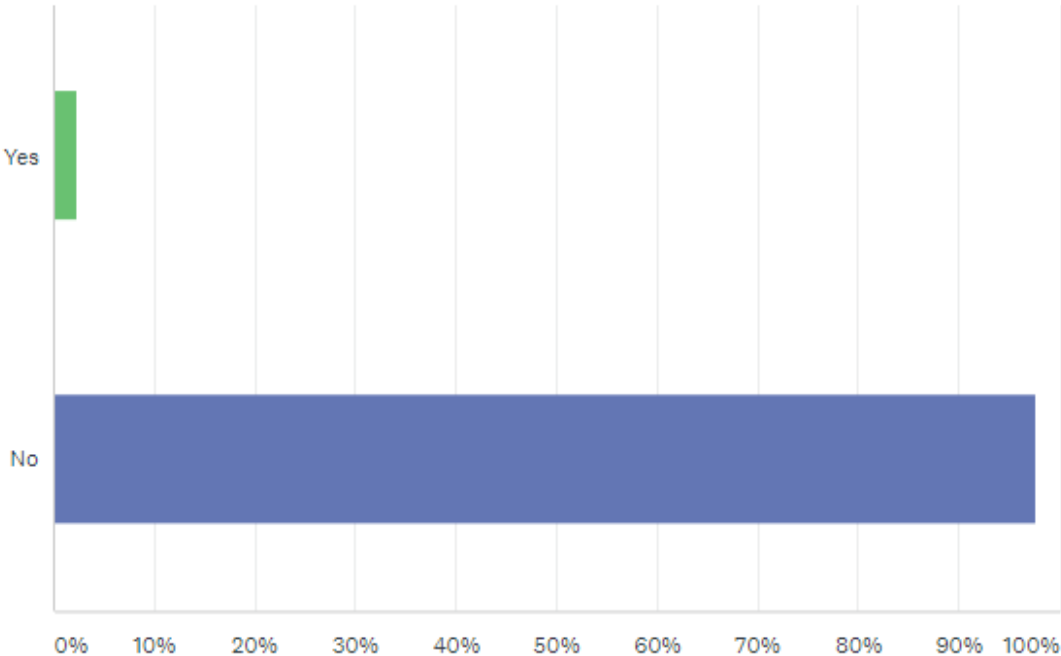


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4. If so, by what percentage?



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

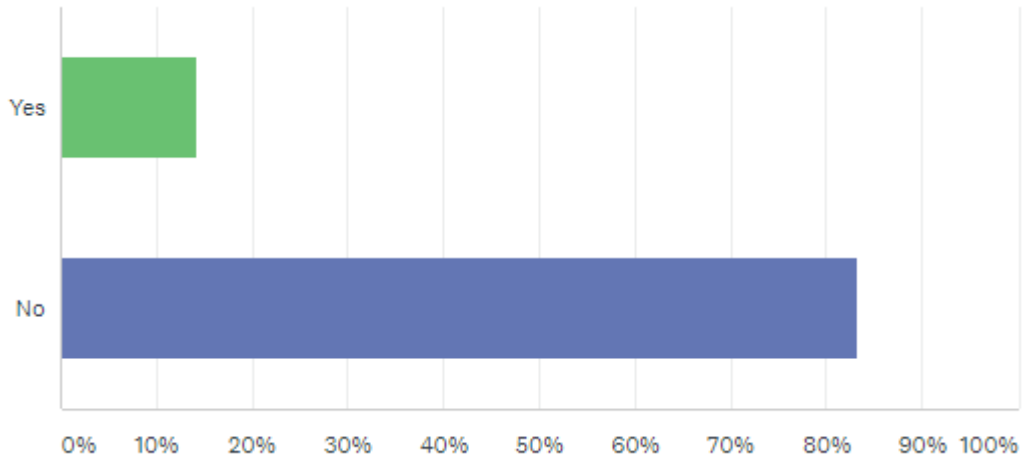


Two organisations added comments to their response sharing the changes they have made:

- Face-to-face Peer support meetings, training courses and face-to-face meetings with carers.
- Still take phone calls, but due to working from home the initial contact is with an answerphone rather than direct to the enquiry service.

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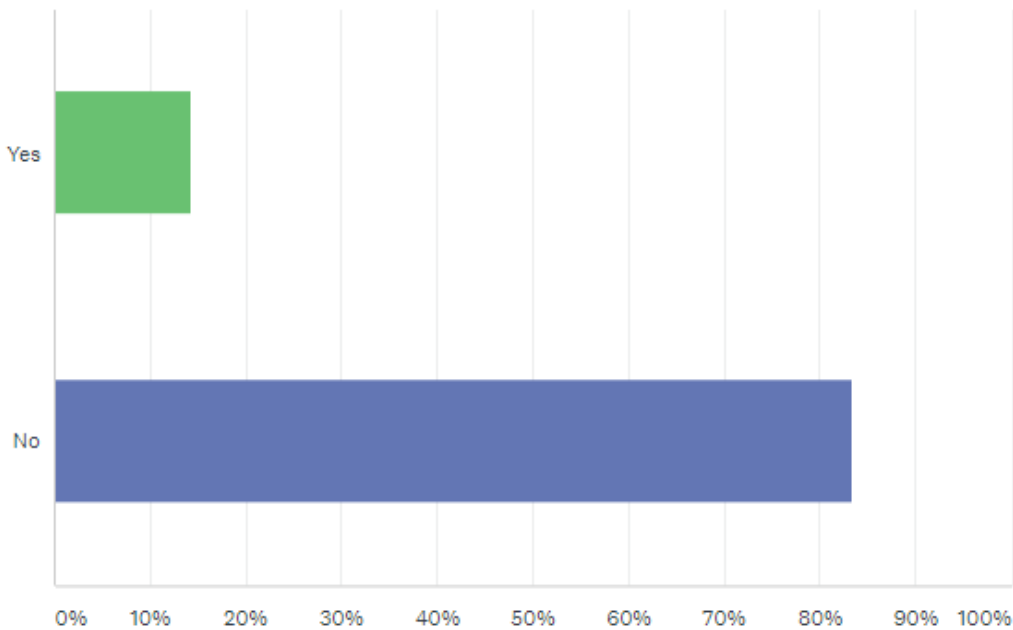
6. Have you had to reduce the hours your helpline operates due to the coronavirus?



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

- By 3.5 hours.
- From 52 to 32 hours per week.

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



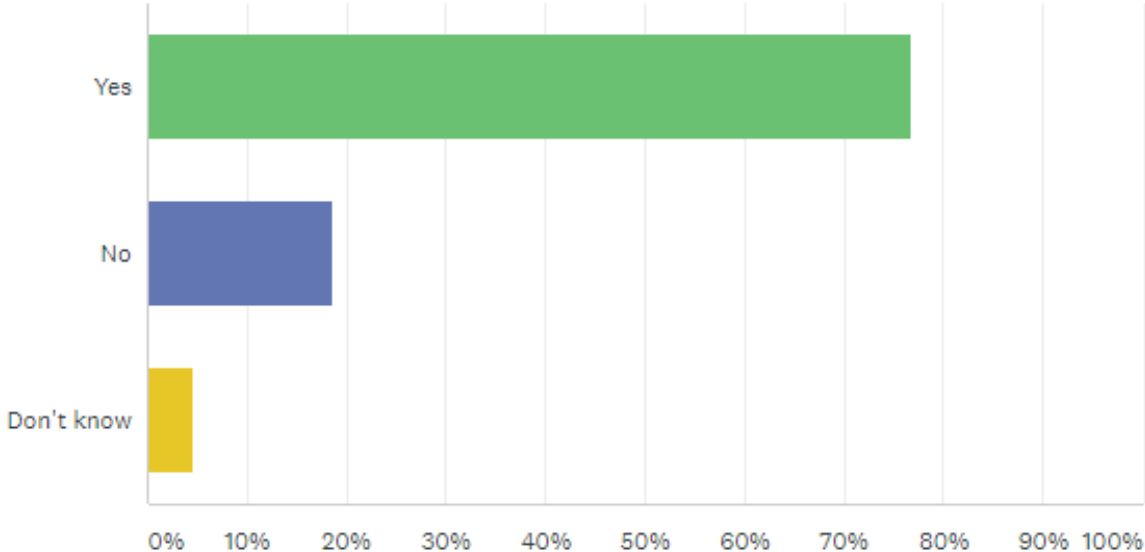
If yes, by how many hours a week?

Seven organisations shared how their hours have increased, by how much and how they are managing.

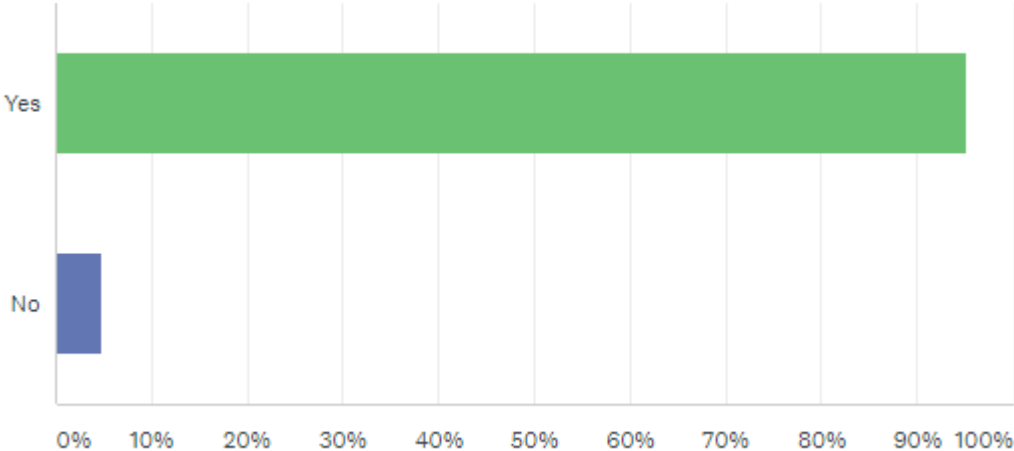
- 42.5 extra (82.5 total).
- 8 hours.
- 6 hours (one extra day – Sunday).
- We did in March and the start of April, but now back to normal.
- 22 hours.
- We are 24/7 but have expanded staffing capacity.
- Would have but number of staff and volunteers dictates work ethics.

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

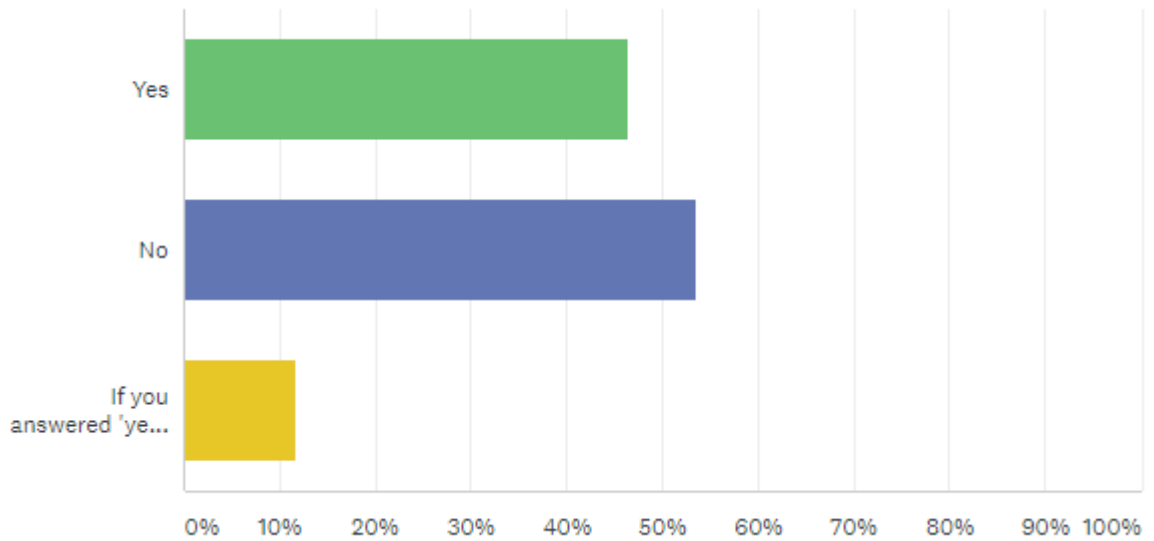


9. Do you have the provision and systems in place to transfer your helpline staff or volunteers to work from home?



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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?

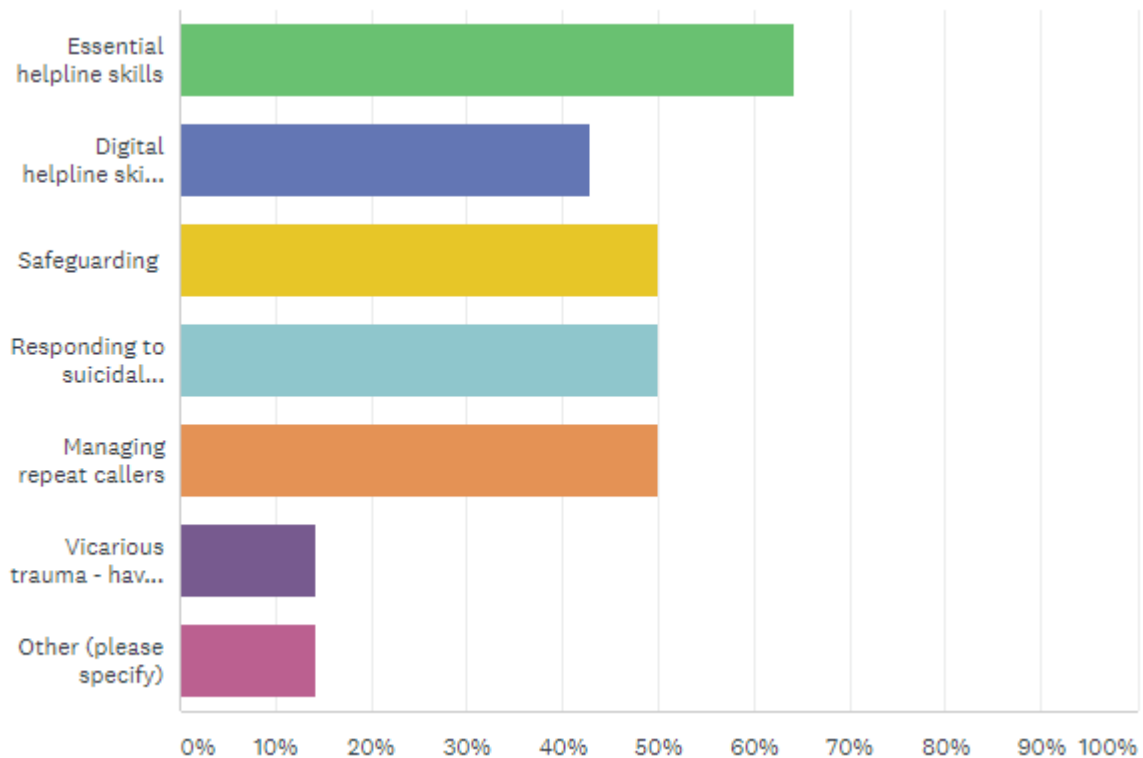


If you answered yes, would you be interested in online training from HLP?

Five organisations responded to this question as follows:

- A proportion said they were interested.
- Three organisations said, 'not at the moment' with one saying 'long term they are face/face counsellors who are just supporting when necessary.'

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?



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Two organisations added comments under other saying:

- We are able to deliver training in house as we train all of our telephone advisors.
- We support families that have loved ones in addiction to drugs and alcohol.

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

Thirty-eight organisations shared their top three concerns – this is a summary of the key concerns:

- Helpline team's wellbeing and welfare – volunteers and staff and risks of vicarious trauma
- Funding to maintain services
- Funding when planned fundraising events are cancelled
- Increased demand for services – capacity
- Confusion over government guidance
- Different government guidance across the regions
- Mental health of callers
- Remote working technology
- A second peak and the increased demand that will lead to
- Not being able to recruit for lost staff
- Noticeable reduction in people contacting the helpline – people needing help not coming forward
- Training new staff and volunteers
- Supporting extremely vulnerable people in 'difficult' situations e.g. the pressure to return to work and people's rights around this
- Safeguarding
- Impact of social distancing and having enough staff in the office to respond to calls
- Impact on furloughed staff – feeling disillusionment and exclusion
- Having to support callers beyond the remit of the service
- Change in the way people are contacting services – increase in webchat where it is harder to build up a rapport

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

Twenty one organisations added comments about additional resources:

- Knowing the revised opening hours of other helplines
- Upgrading our phone system – working from mobiles at the moment
- Providing a peer community for me to network with is important
- Would welcome a manager's peer support group e.g. via Zoom
- Ideas on how to adapt training from group work to experiential online
- 11 organisations said no, not at the moment and can't think of anything
- Zoom training sessions for small groups of staff team that can be transferred to the wider staff team
- Some information on vicarious trauma would be helpful to cascade to colleagues who may not have considered that this is an issue which may affect them
- More virtual 'free' training
- As a volunteer-led organisation any help on fundraising, regular giving etc would be great. As well as statistics, remote working systems