

# The Results: Helplines Partnership | Tracking the impact of Covid-19 – July 2020

## Summary

Each month since March 2020, we have been working with our members to track and record the impact of Covid-19 on the services they provide, their teams and how they operate.

In July, we revised and streamlined the questions to make sure that we are still gathering useful and relevant data.

Nineteen organisations responded to July's survey and the results show that well over half of them saw an increase in demand for their services in the previous month.

Almost 80% said they are seeing trends in the types of contacts they are receiving to their service through their contact channels. Key themes were around economic, social and mental health issues including isolation and loneliness, fear, domestic abuse, employment and unemployment and, access to services.

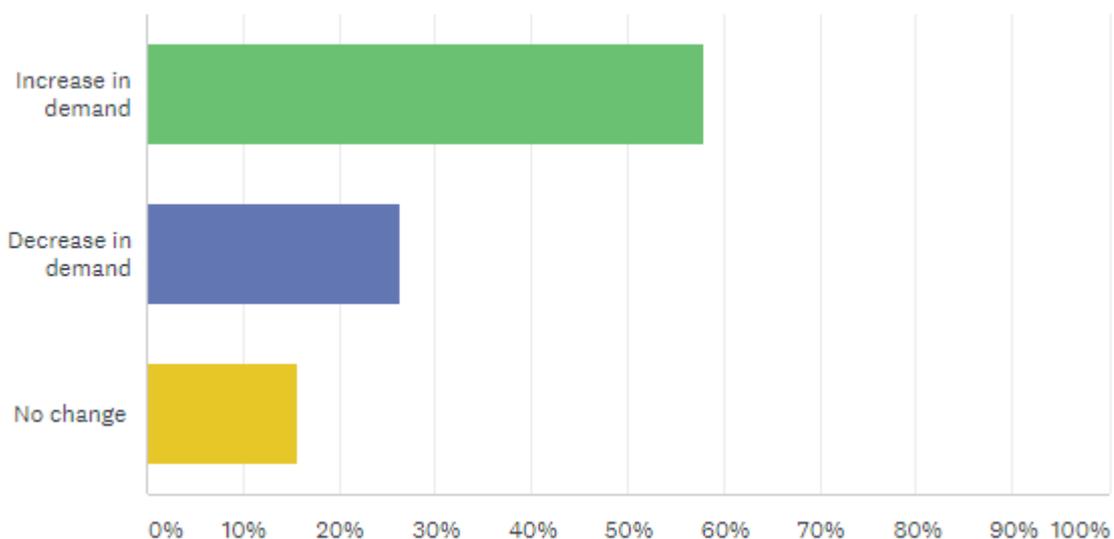
There is also a high level of concern for the wellbeing of helpline teams, staff and volunteers, with just under 70% of members saying they had concerns for their wellbeing. This was echoed by members when asked about the single biggest concern for their organisation.

Homeworking has afforded teams greater flexibility, with over half of the organisations that responded saying their teams now work from home and over 70% saying they are considering making a move to homeworking as standard. Some members said people were enjoying the flexibility it afforded while other said it was having a detrimental effect as individual team members began to feel more isolated.

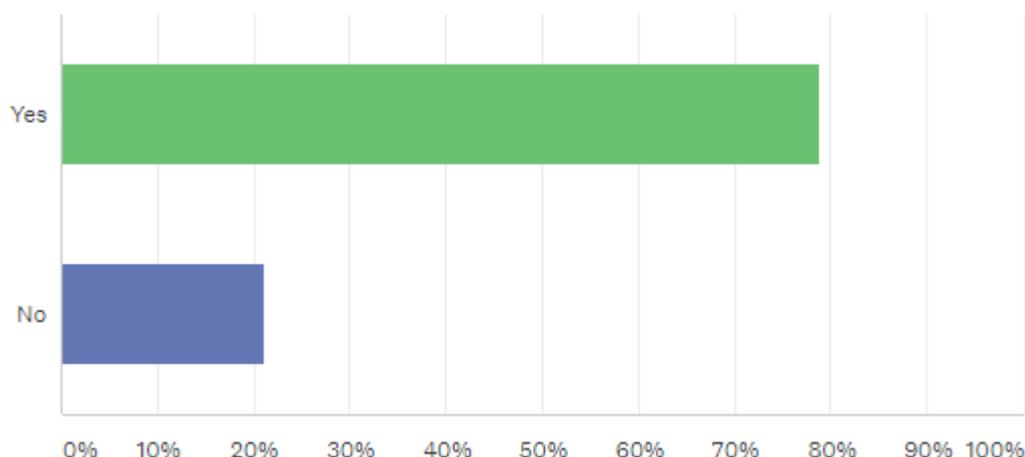
Over half the members who responded said they have been able to access new funding as a result of coronavirus funding to secure service delivery is still one of the areas that is of concern for members.

## Full results

### 1. Have you experienced a change in the level of demand for your service since 1 June?



## 2. Are you seeing trends emerging in the calls and contacts you are receiving?



The trends members reported were in broad themes:

isolation calls related covid-19 issues government people  
lockdown Increased family mental health  
domestic abuse support needed loneliness changed

Some organisations shared more details about the trends they have noticed in the calls and contacts to their service:

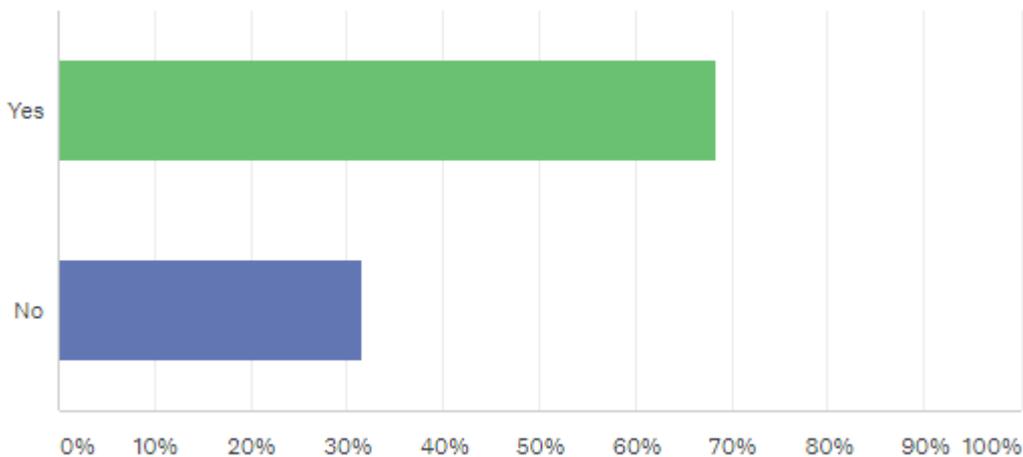
- People are worried about going out and about after they have been in lock down for so long.
- Post covid recovery - physical and psychological.  
Grief. Loss of work/fear of redundancy  
Isolation/loneliness/lack of usual activities  
Fear of uncertainty/change/future  
Sleep problems  
Financial issues  
Neighbour/flatshare/family issues  
Lockdown  
Juggling homeworking with childcare
- Less about coronavirus directly (although it is still mentioned) but young people seem to be struggling more with access services (e.g. GP, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, etc).  
Increased Anxiety  
Depression and self-harm.
- Insecure accommodation because of not having work due to covid-19.  
Increased levels of stress callers have because of worrying about covid-19.  
People feeling trapped in a situation that isn't healthy for them.
- The trends correlate with the changes implemented in line with Scottish Government Covid-19 guidelines.
- People going back to self-harm after many years; increased isolation.
- Callers more anxious and distressed.  
Concerns related to CV19 including. loneliness and isolation, mental health and illness, family, finance, unemployment.

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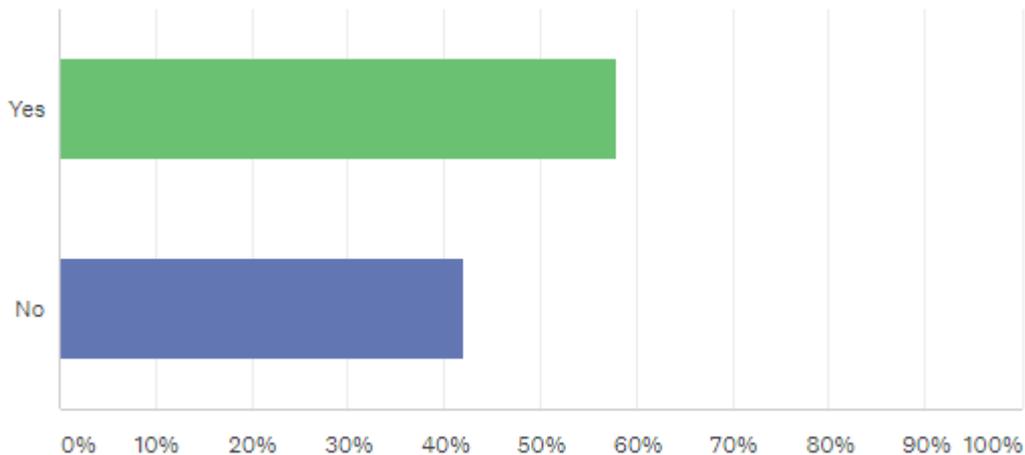
Calls have changed from the beginning with physical health concerns, having now moved to economic, social and mental health related.

- Increased safeguarding. Increased number of calls from people confused by government guidance.
- More complex cases Increase in mental health issues Increase in risks re domestic abuse.
- A lot of general enquiries relating to the virus and people struggling with mental health issues, domestic abuse and support needed for survivors of childhood abuse.  
Also calls relating to loneliness and needing help with food provisions.
- COVID19 remains a major theme. Uncertainty around government guidelines for easing lockdown procedures. Lockdown continues to exacerbate mental health symptoms, particularly anxiety (social and health) and depression (loneliness, burdensomeness and feeling trapped).  
We are still hearing that vulnerable people don't have any direct mental health support from services and that online support isn't meeting their needs.  
Domestic abuse and family turmoil are prevalent also.
- Increased levels of distress in clients, feeling unable to access support elsewhere, significant increase in presenting with unmet mental health issues.

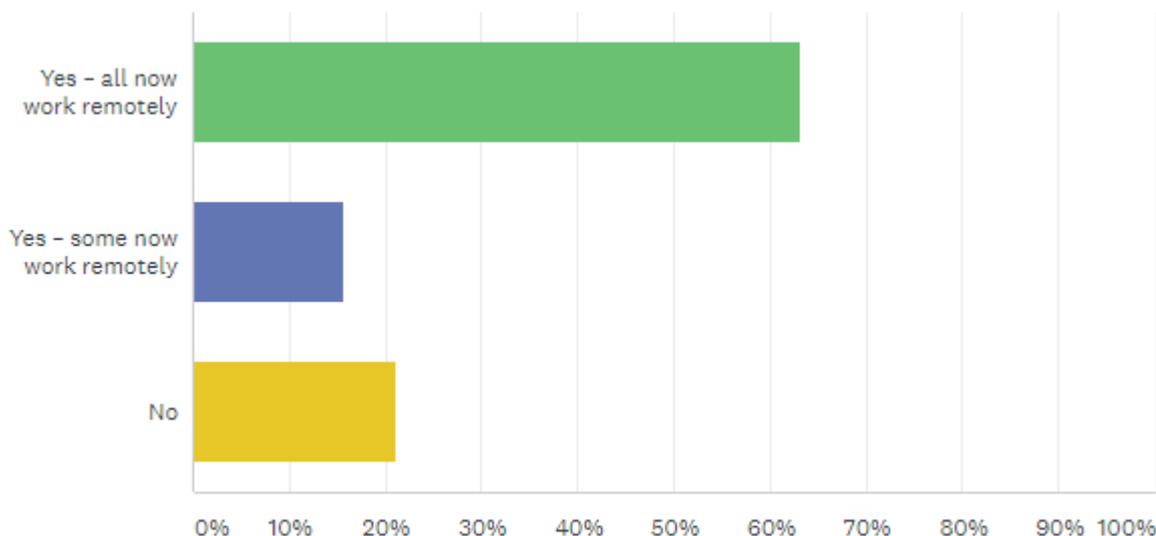
### 3. Do you have concerns about the wellbeing of your helpline team?



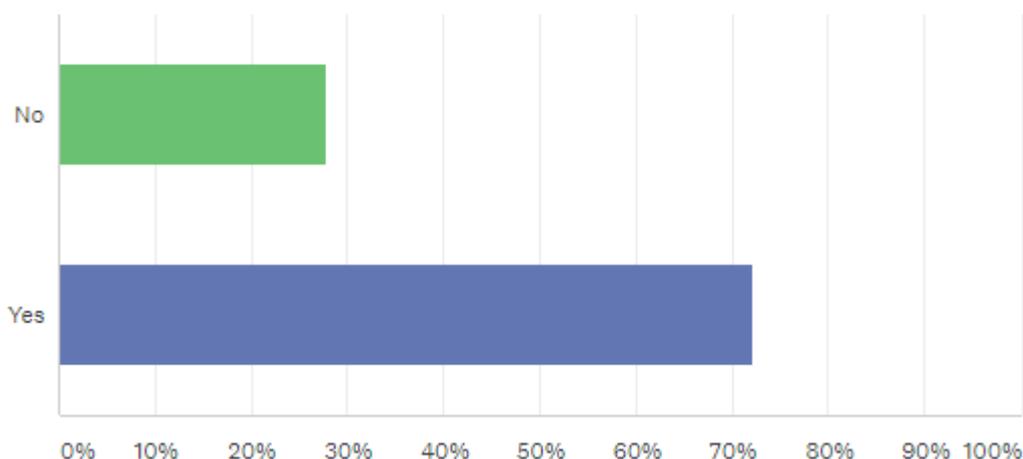
### 4. Have you received or been able to access new funding as a result of coronavirus?



5. Have you changed where your team works since lockdown?



6. Are you considering remote or homeworking for your team on a more permanent basis?



7. Thinking about your service what is your single biggest concern?

Fourteen organisations chose to share their concerns and they fell into broad themes:

training challenge service demand funding volunteers team

More detailed concerns included:

- Continuing funding.
- The intensity of the last few months with no incoming volunteers in the immediate future. The challenge of training volunteers from application to lone working at home without our tried and tested training programme.
- Getting enough funding to continue developing our service to research the huge demand we get.
- Funding the service.
- The transition from home to office working.
- Coping with pace and scale of change on an ongoing basis.

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- Volunteer burnout retaining enough capacity to cope with demand.
- Ensuring the teams wellbeing.
- Staff welfare/Safe return to workplace.
- Maintaining funding coming into the charity.
- Capacity whilst a third of the team are on furlough (particularly as we hit the holiday season).  
Financial sustainability once furlough ends.
- NHS provision for our service users was already poor and we are expecting a further deterioration due to the NHS having to catch up after the lockdown.  
This has a knock-on effect on our helpline (i.e. when people struggle to access services).
- Funding - being such a niche service means we find it very difficult to access government pots of money. Covid19 hindering our growth across communication channels and extending our opening hours.
- Meeting demand is a significant challenge, and while additional funding is allowing us to grow our team, providing induction and training wholly remotely is challenging.

### 8. Do you have any additional comments that you would like to share?

Seven organisations added additional comments the focus was working from home with some saying they already work from home, so this has not been something they have had to adapt to. Whereas other comments were about a possible move towards more flexible working in the future and the challenges of remote working and its impact on individual wellbeing.

- Generally, our helpline staff are getting used to working from home and are saying that they would like to have this increased flexibility after lockdown is over. We are answering more call than we ever have before and there is no reason why we can't allow our staff to have this increased flexibility.
- Team struggling with isolation of working from home, this is impacting on their emotional wellbeing. Additional support and supervision have been put in place; however, this does not replace support from peers/colleagues on an instant/daily basis.  
Difficult to allocate tasks against limited resources when staff working remotely.