

# Mental Health Services - Report 1

7 January 2022 -  
7 February 2022



# Contents

Background \_\_\_\_\_ 3

Methodology \_\_\_\_\_ 4

What we found \_\_\_\_\_ 5-11

Summary of findings: discussion \_\_\_\_\_ 12



## Background

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent is the independent local champion for health and social care services in Stoke-on-Trent. A part of our role is to understand the experiences of people who are using the services and to give people an opportunity to speak up and have their voices heard.

Between April 2021 and August 2021 residents of Stoke-on-Trent shared their three areas of focus; one of these areas was mental health services. In consideration of this, Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent formed a Mental Health Project to find how the Coronavirus Pandemic has previously, or continues to, impact residents' mental health.

Between 7 January 2022 and 7 February 2022 Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent formed a public survey for Stoke-on-Trent residents to share if their mental health has, or is, being impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic. The survey was made up of 16 questions which targeted all Stoke-on-Trent residents who wanted to share their feedback on how the Coronavirus Pandemic has impacted their mental health. Survey questions relate to general mental health impact, the Covid-19 vaccination(s) and booster anxieties, family support, hobbies and activities, drug and alcohol usage and organisation support services. The survey was shared widely across the city through social media, our website, eBulletins, real-time outreach events and engagement with local groups and organisations.

On close of the Mental Health Survey part 1, 85 residents of Stoke-on-Trent completed a survey to share their own or a family members' viewpoints on how the broad complexities of the Coronavirus Pandemic has impacted their mental health.

This report details a background, methodology, what we found and a short discussion to conclude the feedback and findings identified.

For reader ease and understanding, the 'what we found' section mirrors the survey questions and provides a summary response per question with key figures and statistical evidence to outline key themes.



# Methodology

## Participants

Data sources and inclusion criteria consisted of residents in Stoke-on-Trent who preferred to share their feedback detailing how the Coronavirus Pandemic has impacted their mental health. We enabled residents to share wide-ranging feedback and broad open discussions about COVID-19 impacts on mental wellbeing.

## Data Collection

A qualitative research design was formed to collect all survey responses through subjective opinions or rating scales. From 7 January 2022 to 7 February 2022 real-time outreach, social media channels press releases, our website, eBulletins and virtual communication were targeted methods used to promote and share the survey to receive a comprehensive return of completed surveys.

## Data Analysis

All 85 survey responses were analysed through interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA). This was because of the diversity within question styles and subjective output. However, the overriding tool implemented to establish the analysis was grounded through Snap Surveys.

## Survey Overview

The Mental Health Survey part 1 consisted of 16 core questions. There was a mixture between multiple choice questions and open text for subjective comments and opinions. The structure of the survey is mirrored within the report discussion through a breakdown of headlines that each relate to respective survey questions.

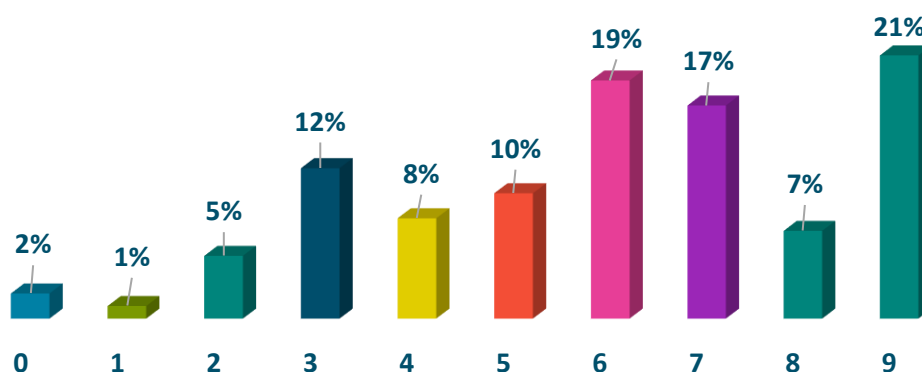


## What we found

**Has your mental wellbeing been impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic?**  
0 is none at all, 3 is a little bit, 6 is a lot and 9 is quite a lot.

The Coronavirus Pandemic has enforced an inevitable huge strain on peoples mental health because of a variety of contributing factors, which will be explored in greater detail in later survey questions. To commence our mental health survey we asked responders to share feelings on how much the Coronavirus Pandemic has impacted their mental health.

**Grade to what extent the Coronavirus Pandemic has impacted your mental health:**



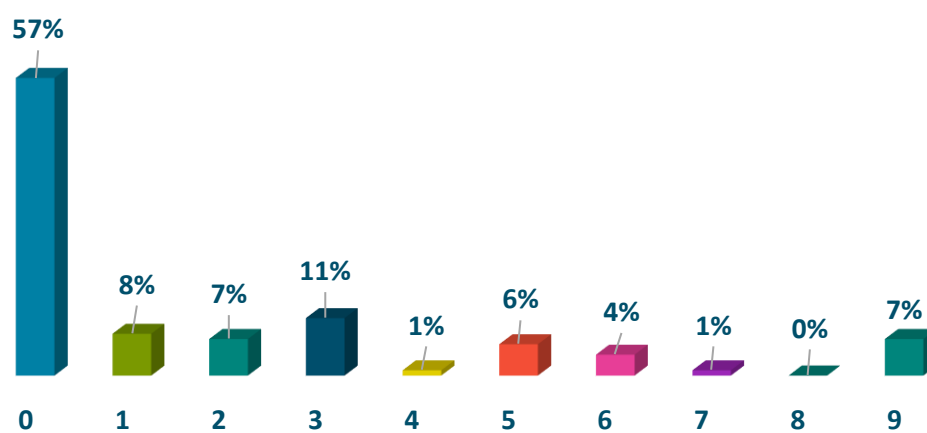
It is clear that responders believe that the Coronavirus Pandemic has deeply impacted their mental health. Responders clarified in greater detail explaining how the Coronavirus Pandemic has consequently impacted their mental health. The top 6 themes were:



Has choosing whether to have the Covid-19 vaccinations and now possibly booster jabs made you concerned or anxious? 0 is none at all, 3 is a little bit, 6 is a lot and 9 is quite a lot.

We explored COVID-19 related anxieties to further understand to what extent the COVID-19 vaccines (1 & 2) and booster vaccine had on levels of anxiety. Responders shared the following:

Grade to what extent the COVID-19 vaccines and booster vaccine has impacted your mental health:



Responders largely sided with the grade 0 to indicate very little anxieties around the COVID-19 vaccines or booster. However, in lower forms some responders highlighted a little apprehension. Some common themes that justify the respective grades are outlined below:

Social media has helped to weigh up a range of information and see reassuring messages

Positive trust in the NHS

Social media has increased anxieties for others as there can be inconsistent communication

Unclear side effects of the vaccines increased anxiety

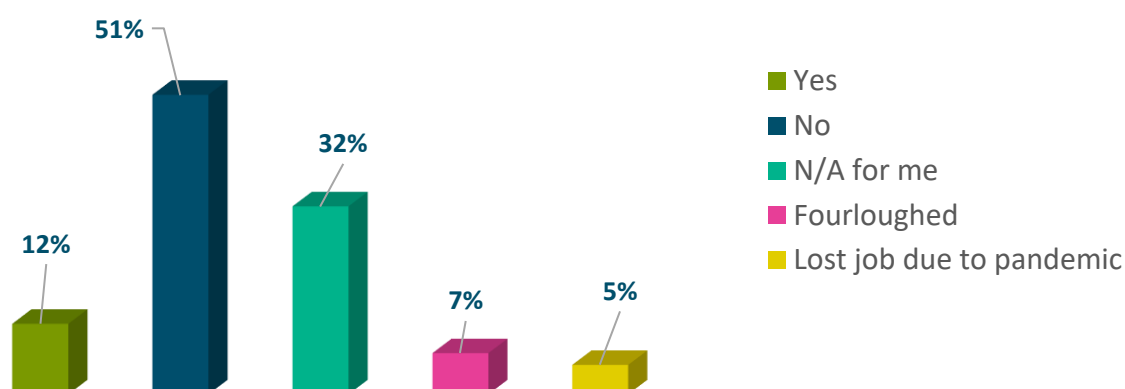
Generally happy to have the vaccine to resume normal life

Personal beliefs and trust in the vaccine and underpinning medical science

## Have you had a break/been unable to work due to the Coronavirus Pandemic?

Many people across the country have had employment complications as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Locally, we investigated similar concerns to identify how peoples employment has been affected across Stoke-on-Trent. Responders told us:

### Have you had a break or been unable to work during the Coronavirus Pandemic?



For the majority of responders, it appears that the Coronavirus Pandemic has not resulted in being unable to work with a combined 83% not affected. That said, 24% of responders did indicate that they were affected. Consequently, some common themes spotlighting how this has impacted their mental health were as follows:

A number of responders felt the burden of not being able to work and sustain an income has had a negative impact on their mental health.

Other responders deemed the relentlessness of being at home more caused poor mental health.

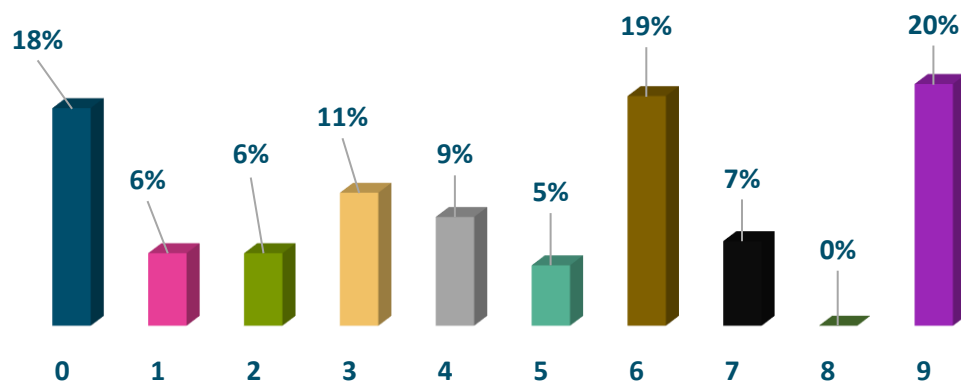
Relationships with work colleagues frayed because of additional pressures, which caused stress and anxiety.

Some positive points to reflect on centred on new work opportunities, larger breaks from work - these points supported mental wellbeing.

## Since the Coronavirus Pandemic began have you been more or less worried about your future?

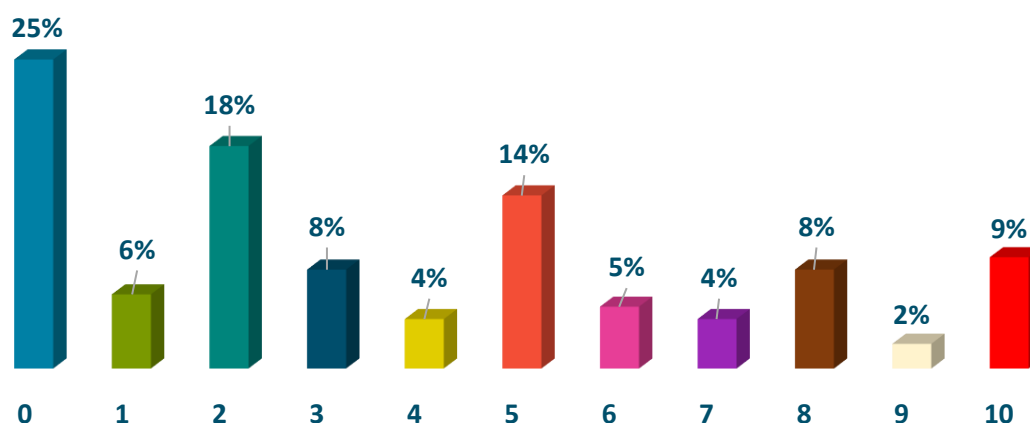
On reflection of responder responses in other questions some responders indicated the ideas around 'what the future entails' brought out some anxieties due to changes in jobs, finances and adaptations to social lives. This connective question is timely which offers further insight and presses further into how responders feel about the future and life beyond COVID-19. We identified the following:

### Since COVID-19 have you been more or less worried about your future? 0 is none at all, 3 is a little bit, 6 is a lot and 9 is quite a lot.



## Have you spent more or less time with your family/friends since the start of the pandemic? 0 is a lot less time, 5 is the same amount, 10 is a lot more time.

Responders were asked to summarise if they had spent more or less time with family and friends since the start of the Coronavirus Pandemic. The results breakdown and reflect responder opinions which spotlight a range of variations in how time has been spent:

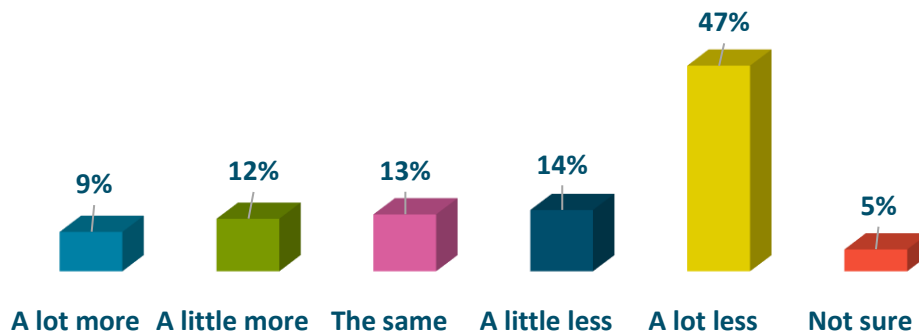




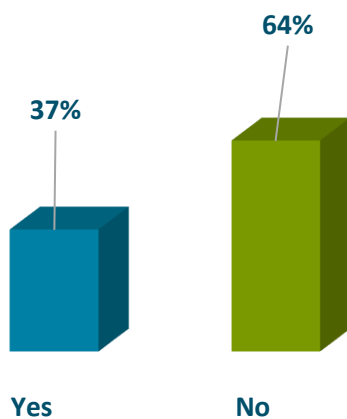
## Have you spent more or less time doing your favourite hobbies/activities/sports since the start of the pandemic?

Due to COVID-19 measures and limitations on lifestyles, we explored how this may've impacted peoples time spent on activities, as it is clear there is a correlation between physical activity and better mental health. When considering time spent on activities or hobbies, the majority of responders indicated a lot less time spent on activities and hobbies. In addition, we asked if responders had started a new hobby since COVID-19, which was fairly spilt between yes and no. In greater detail responders shared the following:

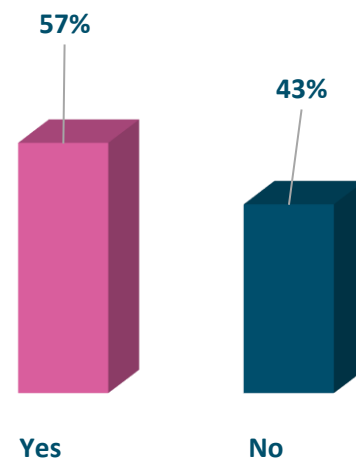
Time spent of activities & hobbies



A - Have you started a new activity & hobby?



B - If yes, are you still doing the activity or hobby?



## Have you adopted a healthier lifestyle/work/life balance since the pandemic began?

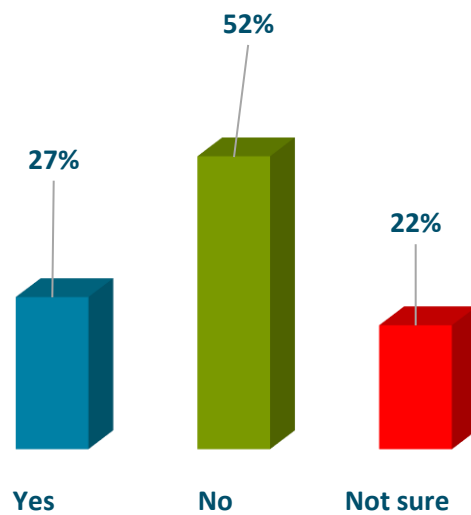
The survey examined if responders had developed a healthier lifestyle which includes a better work-life balance since the Coronavirus Pandemic began.

It is noticeable that over half of responders believe they have not developed a healthier lifestyle, some deemed they had and others could not settle on a decision.

Themes around positive habits included self-education, reading, additional family time, and various opportunities to reflect and consider future life pathways.

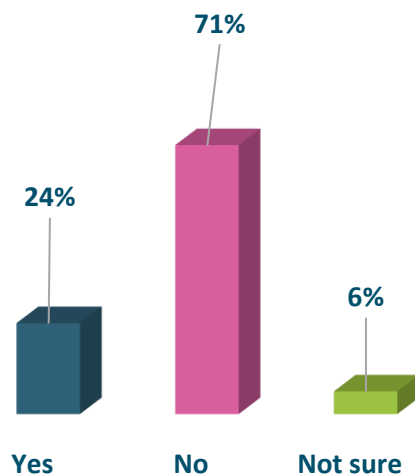
Themes around bad habits included less active due to working from home, excessive alcohol, less socialising and heightened screen usage.

Have you adopted a healthier lifestyle including a better work life balance since the pandemic began?

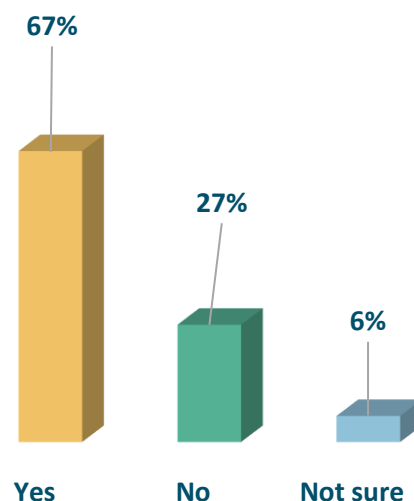


Within the survey we asked some questions that focussed on alcohol, new and emerging feelings of worry, being heard by providers and seeking support from services.

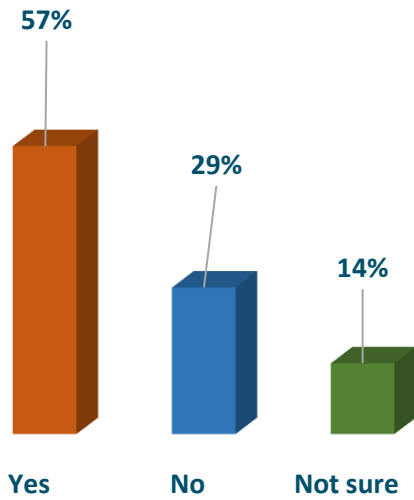
Since the first lockdown began has your alcohol/durg use increased?



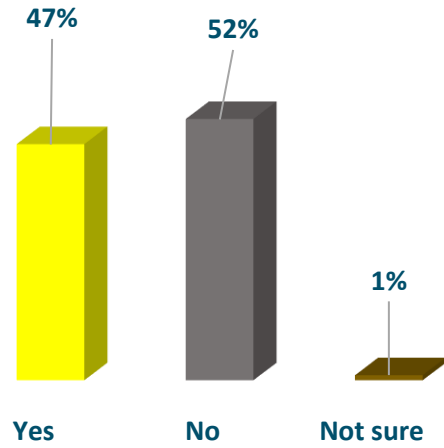
Have you become scared or worried about things?



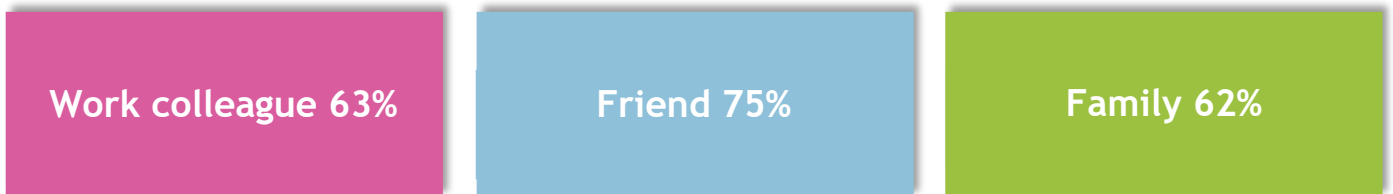
Have you felt like you needed to be heard or listened to about how you felt?



Have you approached anyone or an organisation for support as a result of how you were feeling in the last 2 questions?

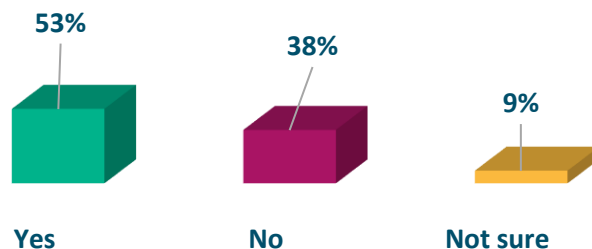


On reflection of who responders approached for additional support. Interestingly, it appears that responders largely found their support from colleagues, friends and family rather than professionals such as GPs or nurses. Although some responders did seek help from dedicated hospital services such as Harplands and the Sutherland Centre.



To conclude the Mental Health Survey part 1, we aimed to take note of the current mental state of responders. To achieve this, we asked if responders are still feeling anxious. Responders shared the following:

Are you still feeling down or anxious?



## Summary of findings: discussion

Like with all health and social care services, it should be acknowledged that COVID-19 has placed additional pressures upon mental health services, which has resulted in a greater demand for access of respective services. It should also be acknowledged that while there has been a range of constructive feedback shared by responders, there was positive applause and compassion cited for mental health services across Stoke-on-Trent.

It is clear that responders' mental health has been affected by the Coronavirus Pandemic. Increased stress and anxiety, social isolation and bereavement were commonly noted factors that impacted responders' mental health. However, in contrast, choosing whether to have the COVID-19 vaccinations and booster vaccines appeared to have less of an impact on responders' mental health; on a scale of 0 - 10 (low to high) over half of responders rated 0. In some cases the reason for this was because of the trust in the NHS and belief in the communication strategies applied by the NHS.

Over half of responders stated they did not have a break in employment during the Coronavirus Pandemic, for the smaller minority who did have a break in employment which coincidentally had a negative knock on impact on their mental health, financial hardship and strained relationships with colleagues were particular challenges responders faced.

When asking responders to contemplate future feelings, selected answers were paradoxical as some responders believed the Coronavirus Pandemic has created extra anxieties when thinking about their future but others were less concerned and others somewhere in the middle. Despite this, responders did share a more common feeling that they were more scared or worried about life in general. Therefore, it does seem that overall, the Coronavirus Pandemic has increased widespread anxiety levels. Responders shared that they have spent less time with family and friends since the beginning of the Coronavirus Pandemic, which resultantly caused loneliness and less confidence in social situations. Likewise, responders spent less time on activities and hobbies which supports the idea that the Coronavirus Pandemic has caused greater loneliness.

Overall, over half of responders concluded by sharing that they do not believe they have a healthier work-lifestyle since the Coronavirus Pandemic began. Although, it is clear that this does not relate to increased alcohol or drug usage. On balance, it could be argued that this lesser healthier work-life balance is because of greater social isolation, not being provided professional support or by simply not being heard extensively to openly talk and offload personal feelings. All of which was highlighted within the report and it should be noted that the main sources of emotional support came as a result of networks across family, friends and work colleagues. Unfortunately, though large numbers of responders had some means of support a considerable number of responders stated they were still anxious and worried.

# About us

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent  
The Dudson Centre  
Hope Street  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST1 5DD

[www.healthwatchstokeontrent.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchstokeontrent.co.uk)

t: 01782 683080

e: [info@healthwatchstoke.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchstoke.co.uk)

Twitter: @Healthwatchst

Facebook: [@Facebook.com/Healthwatchstoke](https://www.facebook.com/Healthwatchstoke)

Instagram: @Healthwatchstoke

---

The contract to provide the Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent service is held by Engaging Communities Solutions C.I.C.

[www.weareecs.co.uk](http://www.weareecs.co.uk)

t: 01785 887809

e: [contactus@weareecs.co.uk](mailto:contactus@weareecs.co.uk)

@EcsEngaging



Engaging  
Communities  
Solutions