



# COVID - ONE YEAR ON AND BEYOND

MARCH 2021



# INTRODUCTION

This is our third and final tranche of research into the effects of the pandemic on the people we support.

We know that data, knowledge and learning is essential for working out how to support disadvantaged and vulnerable people in Surrey. An organisation that does not understand how its users' lives are being affected by a crisis is an organisation that cannot help them through that crisis - and beyond. Learning is key in ensuring that the help we offer successfully meets people's needs and makes a real difference to their life chances.

Even before the pandemic, the people we support struggled in at least one way and our research has shown that in fact, that the majority struggle with five problems on average. Problems such as mental illness, unemployment, physical illness, educational needs, relationship breakdown, parenting challenges, and other examples of chronic or cyclical deprivation.

Our results show the sweeping effect of repeated lockdowns, national anxiety, suspended socialising, enforced isolation, and unprecedented economic crisis. Although the problems facing people are stark, thanks to the excellent work of the charity sector across Surrey, people who needed help and found it. Nearly two thirds of the people who took part in our research say that the Surrey Care Trust supported them with ALL of their problems for example.

We know there are more people that need support - those who haven't yet needed help and those who haven't found help yet. We also know that many of the people who we have already helped, will continue to need help even as the lockdowns lift and something resembling normal life resumes.

As the country moves forward, we want to ensure that no-one is left behind.



John Downing  
Chief Executive, the Surrey Care Trust

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We spoke to over 200 of our beneficiaries, taking a representative sample that includes 10% of all our mentees, every family supported by our Family Centre in Stanwell and the 14 to 16 year old students at our STEPS Learning Centre. This data sample therefore covers the whole county, it covers all age groups from families with young children up to older people, and it is split over the full range of disadvantages and deprivations that Surrey Care Trust supports.

## THE PANDEMIC HAS HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON OUR BENEFICIARIES' MENTAL HEALTH

85% of people say they  
have felt more anxious  
during the pandemic

80% of people say they  
have felt less confident  
during the pandemic

89% of people say they  
have felt more isolated  
during the pandemic

**Overall 97% of people say the pandemic has had an  
impact on their mental health**

"I am spending all my time in my room, worrying about my exam results. I don't go out because I can't see myself getting on public transport and wearing a mask. And I don't like seeing people in masks. I've missed trips with school and seeing my friends. It's been really difficult to come to terms with everything."

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I missed my friends during lockdown but even when I was able to see them, with social distancing it wasn't the same. We didn't have much to talk about anymore. So sometimes I don't even answer their text messages now.

"I am trying to keep myself busy, so I don't have to think about what might happen. I've stopped watching the news, as so much of it mentions redundancies and it worries me about what will happen after furlough finishes. I am drinking more, which I know is wrong, but sometimes I need to try to relax."

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## **We asked the people support to tell us what their biggest problem was over the last year.**

The three most prevalent themes were education (of self or children), isolation, and the impact on the beneficiary's family (often a specific family member). A third of people said their greatest concern was something to do with their education, employment or future chances.

Unsurprisingly, when looking just at young people (25 and under) this rises to 56%.

Only 7% of people said their greatest concern was their mental health. But our more molecular research shows that 97% of our beneficiaries have needed support for their mental health – a much higher percentage than for any other issue.

This is a massive discrepancy: very few people say that mental health has been their personal biggest concern; yet for our beneficiaries overall, it has far and away been the collective biggest concern.



My life felt chaotic and I have been miserably depressed"

Not having my friends in school. Not able to see my best friend.



I worry about exams....done mocks but still anxious about how the final grades will awarded. not knowing what's happening is a big problem



Isolation - someone to talk to

Loss of employment



## OVERALL, THE PANDEMIC HAS SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY

46% of people have found there are fewer opportunities for them during the pandemic.

57% of people have faced education or employment struggles during the pandemic. (Over 60% of adults)

48% of people have faced financial struggles during the pandemic (61% of adults)

41% of people have had to change or cancel their life plans due to the pandemic

**Taken together, 84% of people have needed help with opportunities and plans (either education/employment, finance, future plans or finding opportunities)**



Over 100 jobs applied for. Directly and with agencies. Full time, temp and perm. [I've] found it very disappointing.

"I am applying for supermarket jobs, warehouse jobs...but there are so many applicants."



Stressful, uncertain, disheartening. All efforts have gone to waste and opportunities ripped from under us.

## THE PANDEMIC RESULTED IN HIGHLY COMPLEX NEEDS

Only 7% of the people we support needed help with one isolated issue. The average number of problems people needed help with was five.

1 in 5 people were  
facing four distinct  
problems

1 in 5 faced five distinct  
problems

1 in 5 faced almost  
10 distinct problems

**Sophie told us her biggest concern this year was her child's behaviour changing because of her ASD.**

**But Sophie was already becoming increasingly anxious, less confident, more and more isolated, and struggling financially to feed or clothe her family.**

## HOW OUR SUPPORT MADE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH

96% of people who  
needed help feeling less  
anxious say our support  
helped

96% of people who  
needed help feeling  
more confident say our  
support helped

96% of people who  
needed help feeling less  
isolated say our support  
helped

**Overall 97% of people who said the pandemic had impacted their mental health agree that our support helped in at least one way.**



Having someone to talk to about my troubles is very helpful.

I feel like I can talk to my mentor at anytime through email, phone or zoom and she is lovely and always making me feel happy



Meeting my Mentor (out of lockdown) in a cafe helped my confidence in leaving the house and encouraged me to take some exercise, which I hadn't been doing.

Nital my outreach worker has been very good support for me



You've given me great feedback about my schoolwork. Feel more confident. Helped me express my creative ideas.

## HOW OUR SUPPORT HELPED TO IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY

83% of people who  
faced education or  
employment  
struggles say our  
support helped

66% of people who  
faced financial  
struggles say our  
support helped

64% of people  
who had to  
change or cancel  
their life plans say  
our support  
helped

89% of people who  
faced diminishing  
opportunities say  
our support helped

**Taken together, 100% of people who needed help with opportunities and plans say our support helped in at least one way.**



She's always there for me, encourages me to do my schoolwork. I try harder. I'm studying better.

Doing the maths exercises has improved confidence with shopping, being better able to round up item prices.



She encouraged me to speak to the debt counsellor which I am now doing and I am working on sorting out my debts.



## HOW OUR SUPPORT HELPED PEOPLE TO DEAL WITH MULTIPLE PROBLEMS

On average, each of our beneficiaries needed help with 5 distinct problems and our support helped with 4 or 5 of them (an average of 4.4 problems).

62% of people say  
our support helped  
with all of their  
problems

87% of people say  
our support helped  
with all  
or all but one  
of their problems

79% of people  
say we helped  
them to find  
additional support

**Taken together, 100% of people who needed help with opportunities and plans say our support helped in at least one way.**



My mentor talked to some people about trying to get free courses and she also helped me apply for a job by reviewing my CV and cover letter. She also helped with trying to get Counselling, which I am still waiting for

My outreach worker is always here to support me during any difficulties, she always listens and helps. During Lockdown she helped us get a family support worker and and personal assistantt to help with my child's needs.





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