

# DIMINISHED OPPORTUNITIES: THE IMPACT OF CORONAVIRUS ON THE PEOPLE WE SUPPORT



During the summer, we surveyed our clients to find out the effect of the pandemic and lockdown. Our respondents told us overwhelmingly that they had been affected by either mental health issues, family breakdown or financial worries or a combination of these.

Five months later, we carried out a follow-up survey to see how the pandemic had affected the life opportunities of the troubled young people and disadvantaged families we support.

We found that the pandemic has significantly reduced opportunities for the most vulnerable members of our community. Almost 90% feel that there are fewer education or employment opportunities available to them now.

The restrictions and uncertainties of Covid are affecting the lives and the livelihoods of many people, but they are disproportionately harmful for people in crisis and those already struggling to cope – like the families, individuals and young people we support.

Our latest survey shows how the ripples of the pandemic's aftershocks are proving ruinous for those on the margins of our communities.

John Downing Chief Executive, the Surrey Care Trust

Total number of people interviewed was 63. On some occasions, different respondents answered different questions. Sample sizes for each question therefore vary from 61 to 15, with an average of 37 respondents per question.

# THE PANDEMIC HAS HAD A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON OUR BENEFICIARIES' EXISTING EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION SITUATIONS

77% of our beneficiaries are worried they may lose their job (or have their hours/salary reduced).

Of those who were in employment at the start of the pandemic, 87% have already seen their employment status change, with 40% of these now on reduced hours or shifts, 40% made unemployed and 20% furloughed.

"I had been surviving on the informal economy of drinks, favours, barters and trades, but of course that all revolves around social interaction. It felt like all normailty had gone."

79% of all our adult beneficiaries are now on a reduced salary.

52% have had to access additional support (38% accessing a foodbank and 38% accessing mental health support).

"With everything shut down there aren't many avenues for activities that are conducive to progression"

#### THE PANDEMIC HAS DISRUPTED PLANS AND ASPIRATIONS, WITH A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CAREERS, EDUCATION AND INCOME

58% of our beneficiaries (rising to 70% of those in employment) have had to abandon plans or ambitions because of the pandemic

Of those who were in education, 39% have struggled to move onto their next step, such as going to college or getting a job.

"I wanted to look into education etc but have been unable to, as nothing has been [available] on the websites"

#### In a crowded and stagnant job market, 24% of our beneficiaries have had to apply for a new job since March.

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

### THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT HAS HAD A KNOCK-ON EFFECT ON MENTAL HEALTH - AND VICE VERSA

72% of our beneficiaries say the pandemic has impacted their mental health, and 31% of adults say this has, in turn, affected their education/employment.

Additionally, 30% of adults say their employment/education situation, worsened by the pandemic, has had a negative effect on their mental health.

"I'm unsure if I have the courage to attend [college] now"

"My life felt chaotic and I have been miserably depressed"

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

86% of our respondents say there are fewer opportunities available to them now.

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

62% identify education opportunities as specifically diminished, and 24% highlight reduced employment opportunities.

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

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