

# The Results: Helplines Partnership | Tracking the impact of Covid-19 – August 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.

Results show that well over three quarters of members saw an increase in demand for their services in the previous month.

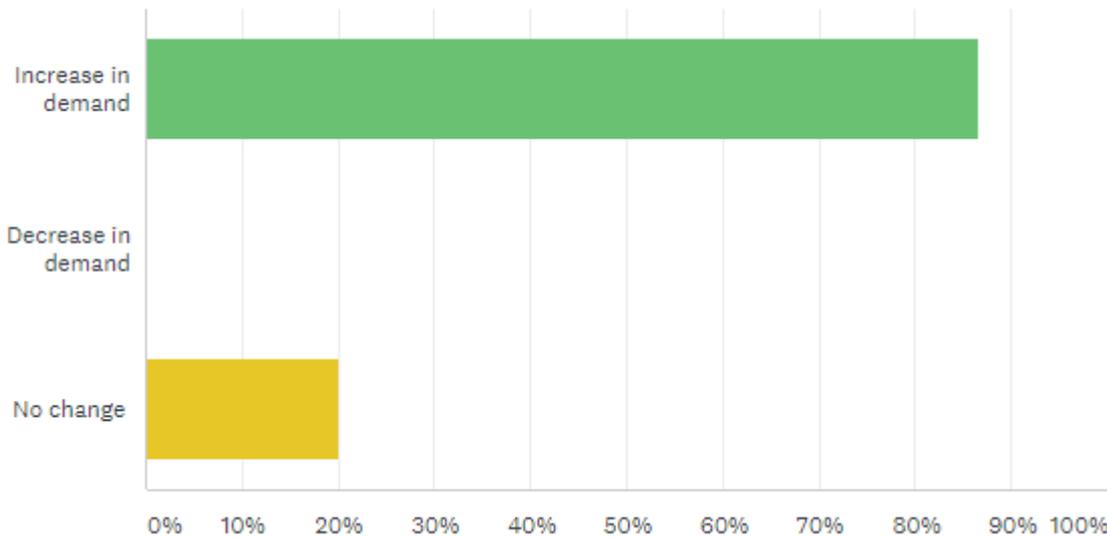
The percentage of organisations saying they are now considering remote or homeworking on a more permanent basis was slightly higher this month than in July. Although one of the concerns expressed by members was around supporting staff working remotely and the risk of vicarious trauma for teams working from home.

Most helplines, (80%), said they are seeing trends in the types of contacts they are receiving to their service through their contact channels. Several organisations said they are starting to see more questions about how Covid will impact access to services. Stress, isolation, anxiety and loneliness continue to be themes that members report as prominent in their contacts this month.

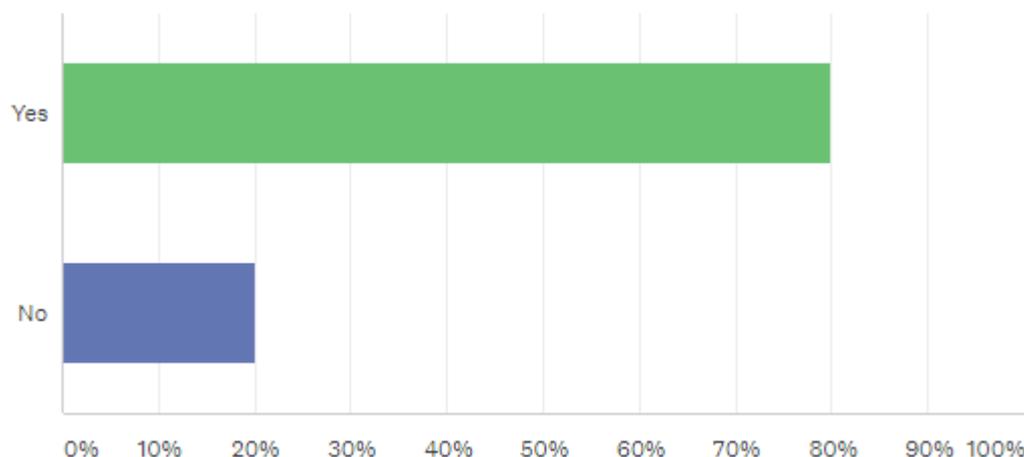
Just over half the members, (53%), who responded said they have been able to access new funding as a result of coronavirus. However, funding continues to be a concern for helplines with some reporting difficulty in accessing government funds.

## Full results

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



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



The trends members reported were in broad themes:

around anxiety COVID face concerns increased calls  
people issues isolation lockdown health support

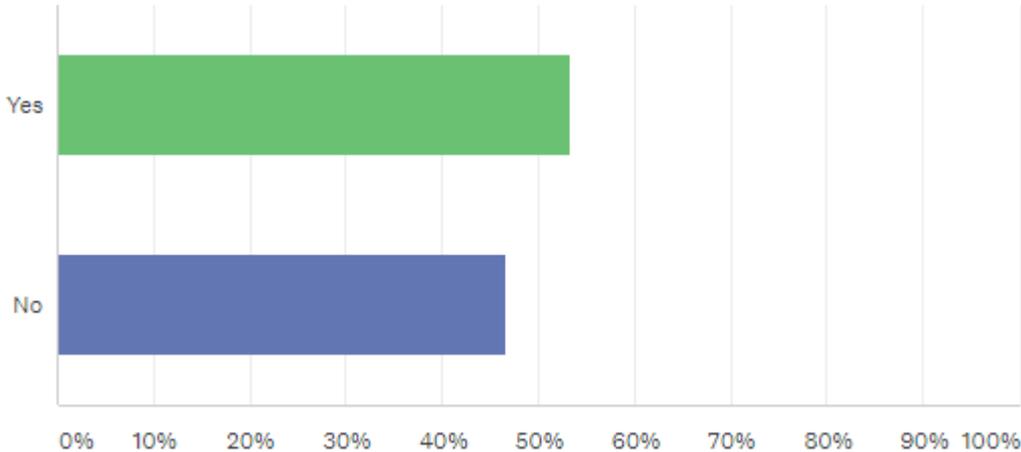
Some organisations shared more details about the trends they have noticed in the calls and contacts to their service:

- Health concerns and focus on symptoms arising from traditional NHS referral routes being paused during the pandemic.
- Fewer calls specifically about COVID since April-May time, and more calls on 'normal' issues. However, COVID calls are related to going back to work following shielding - so a different theme to previous COVID calls.
- People requesting general advice re Covid-19 increased concerns from survivors, and people with anxiety, depression, isolation.
- Fewer contacts mention coronavirus and there is a sense of now asking for the support they would have asked for normally before the lockdown.
- Not a major trend, but within the calls about Covid we have seen questions shift from the effect/risk of the virus on individuals to its effect on the services to support their condition.
- Child access and mental health are the two main issues for our domestic abuse helpline.
- The nature of our calls has changed. We're receiving more calls around bereavement and isolation than before. More safeguarding concerns have cropped up than ever before.
- Families carers needing clarity around current Government advice, some find the information confusing e.g who is exempt from wearing face masks, what happens to support bubble if lockdown is reinstated. Concerns re how to get a diagnosis (mental & physical health); many GPs are not allowing face to face appointments yet.
- Lockdown period has exacerbated the abuse callers are receiving within the home.
- We are taking more calls around housing/homelessness issues and have seen a steep increase in calls from service-users looking for refuge accommodation.
- People developing PVFS following COVID-19.

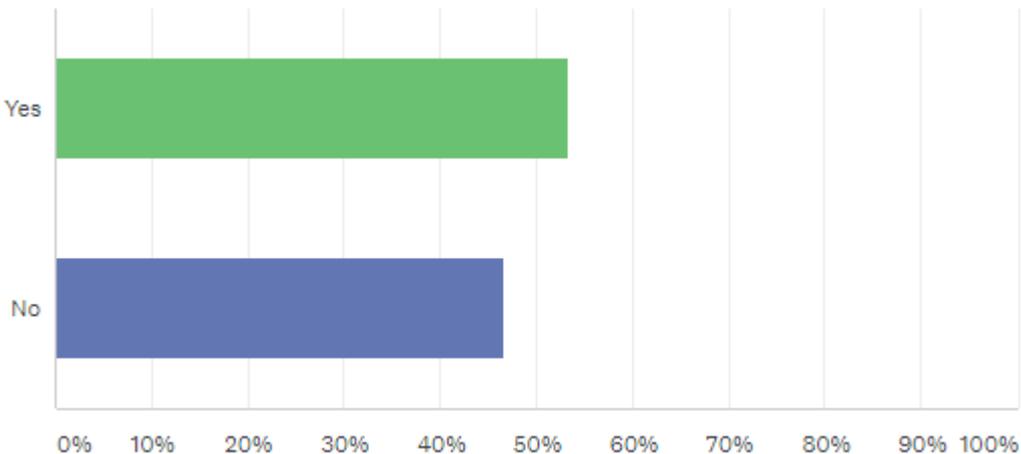
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- We've extended hours on the Line. Callers more distressed in the evening. Many concerns around COVID as lockdown eases - a lot of anxiety, people struggling with isolation and relationship issues.

### 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?

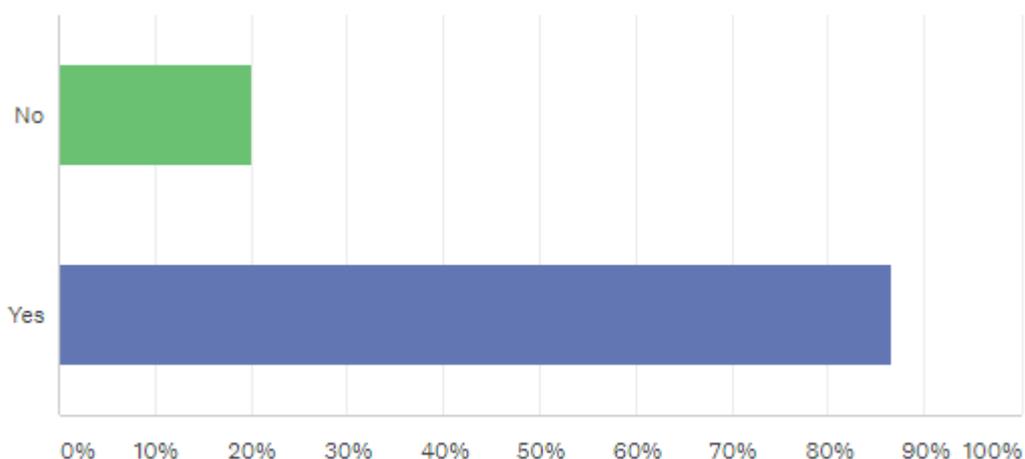


### 5. If your organisation furloughed staff what percentage have now returned from furlough?

Organisations responded to this question showing a mixed picture with some s having all furloughed staff back while others reported having between 70 – 17% of staff back and one saying no one had returned full time yet.

- Four said 100% of staff had now returned
- One reported 70% of staff back at work now
- One reported 50% of staff being back
- One reported 17% returned from furlough
- One said some temporary, short-term returns but no one full time back yet
- Two said it was not applicable to them

### 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?

Organisations that chose to share their concerns fell into broad themes:

support Helpline funding also staff hours calls level

More detailed concerns included:

- Fundraising continues to be a concern - demand for support rising during pandemic and whether this will continue at a similar level, necessitating more staff and training.
- Providing up to date information for the front-line team and making sure they feel supported.
- Having staffing levels to deal with any future spikes in calls.
- To maintain funding.
- Staff shortages.
- Running the service when all staff reduce their hours (and pay) to help us manage the drop in income. The helpline will maintain its current opening hours.
- Long term funding. Only received funding for 1 project from our local PCC. Turned down for funding from the Home Office Covid Fund.
- The wellbeing of our staff on shift during lockdown and with limited staff and an increase in calls.
- Raising money as a charity and staff burnout.
- The team working from home and vicarious trauma as a result of calls being taken.
- Matching demand.
- Trying to plan ahead in such uncertain times.
- Small lack of qualified volunteers.
- Funding.

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

Two organisations added additional comments the focus was around the learning opportunities that Covid has presented, funding concerns and to be able to provide more nuanced answers to some of the questions asked in the survey.

- By putting our service under stress, the situation has highlighted weaknesses that need addressing and strengths that need protecting. It has also highlighted our priorities in a way that theoretical thinking and planning can achieve.
- Government funding process unrealistic. Funds must be spent by 31 Oct when we know the impact will go on far longer. Application process very complex - excluding small charities who do not have an army of finance people to support the application. No confidence that the funding distribution was impartial. Money went to the same big players.