

Review of Carers Strategy Engagement 2021

Introduction

An engagement period was held over the summer 2021 to gauge how Leicestershire carers feel about the current carers strategy and their caring situations.

There was a formal online survey which had 23 questions, the strategic planning officer met with 3 groups to discuss the strategy priorities, and there were additional thoughts sent in by the voluntary sector partners on behalf of carers who had been unable to attend the meetings.

This report outlines the findings from all of the above methods, combining findings from the survey and the groups using both quantitative and qualitative data.

62 respondents completed the online survey. 34 were present at the groups. (one of the focus groups contained a mixture of city and county residents, at least 4 were city residents – comments pertaining specifically to the city have been shared with city leads)

Summary

Key areas of focus drawn from this engagement for Leicestershire are

- **Definition** – Although carers seem to agree ‘Carer’ is the best term to use there is further work required ensuring that the definition used allows carers to easily recognise themselves, alongside allowing others to understand what a carer is and how this can impact their life. We will also be considering if the definition can be strength based to encourage positive associations with the ‘carer’ label.
- **Strategy Priorities** – Ranked in order of importance from respondents with any additional comments to take forward
 1. **Priority 7 -Carers can access the right support at the right time – Services and Systems that work for carers** Access to carer courses, support with health and wellbeing particularly mental health support for carers, need to ensure all carers know they can access the current MH services.
 2. **Priority 5 -Carers have a life alongside caring - Health, employment and financial wellbeing** It was felt that this priority was far too broad and the areas covered were each worthy of their own priorities, Health, Employment, Financial Wellbeing and Breaks/Time out should have a greater focus and even potentially be priorities of their own. It was accepted that carers do not get time to themselves, predominant reasons given were
 - Due to the level/amount of care provided
 - Difficulty getting respite
 - Unable to get appropriate support for the cared for
 - Due not having time for themselves carers we spoke to are neglecting their own health and wellbeing, putting off routine appointments and in some cases elective surgeries because they were unable to find appropriate support for the person they care for.

3. **Priority 2 -Carers are valued and involved - Caring today and in the future** the engagement indicates carers still do not feel valued, this was linked to not being recognised as a carer those that are identified as carers not being recognised as a key partner in the health and wellbeing of the cared for.
4. **Priority 1 -Carers are identified early and recognised - Building awareness of caring and its diversity** General feeling is identification is still an issue for carers linked to lack of understanding. Engagement identified the need for GP surgeries to improve identification of carers. Lack of recognition was cited as a barrier to being kept informed; this was mentioned as a particular issue in hospital settings.
5. **Priority 8 - Supporting Young Carers** – only one person responding to the engagement was under 18, this is interesting as it shows adults feel this is still a significant priority for the carers strategy.
6. **Priority 3 -Carers Are Informed - Carers receive easily accessible, appropriate information, advice and signposting**....as above lack of recognition was cited as a barrier to being kept informed, knowing where to look for required information was also noted as barrier for carers. Consideration needs to be given to some of the most prominent suggestions to help carers stay informed
 - hard copies/ alternative formats of information for carers who require it
 - GPs to cascade more information for carers
 - central register of carers to enable easier communication of information
 - pop up clinics carers can attend for advice and information
 - refresh of the internet pages to ensure information is clear, pages are easy to navigate and language used isn't "too corporate".
 - Including information on advocacy and getting carers voices heard
7. **Priority 4 - Carer Friendly Communities** use volunteers to support carers and make use of community venues, and local businesses such as garden centres etc to help identify and provide information to carers.
8. **Priority 6 - Carers and the impact of Technology Products and the living space** Not a high priority for those involved in the engagement, they acknowledge housing needs still exist, where properties aren't always suitable for somebody who is being cared for but there was recognition that that this potentially will be an issue for a particular type of carer i.e. those looking after someone with severe needs.

Of the five suggested potential other priorities from working insights **Older Carers** and **Parent Carers** were the highest placed and additions suggested by the respondents were

- **Carers finances-** access to correct benefits grants and income maximisation, this was a key issue raised in many responses and is reflective of the strain felt by carers during the pandemic.
- **Carers health** – recognising carers put themselves last and often at detriment to their own health and wellbeing.

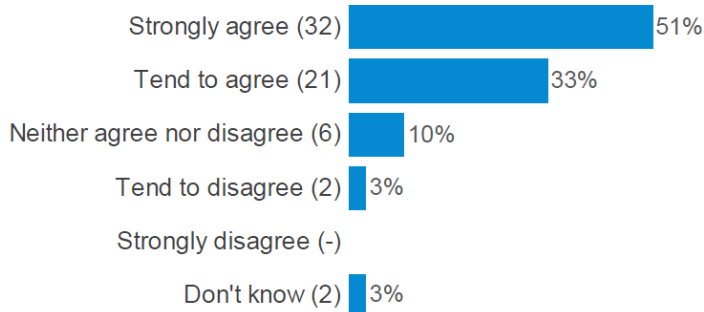
- **Wanting one point of contact** – with agencies that work together meaning carer isn't repeating their story or that of their cared for and that they aren't being passed from department to department.
- **Contact with LCC**- feedback on the satisfaction of carers after contact with LCC will be reported back to the relevant teams.
- **Passport Scheme** – Two thirds of those engaging aren't registered for a carers passport – consideration is to be given to access to the scheme and the referral process, more promotion is required to ensure scheme is widely recognised in communities. Although wider feedback on the scheme has been good, participants in the engagement did not echo this with most saying they hadn't used due to COVID restrictions. It is clear there is ongoing work required in this area.
- **Future Proofing** – The information provided about carers and the pandemic indicates more needs to be done around future proofing for carers. Carers along with most felt isolated however forgotten and unsupported are themes fed back from carers on their pandemic experience. Carers have used more technology but stressed this cannot be a replacement for face to face interactions in the long term. More needs to be done longer term to ensure carers always feel valued and supported. They have propped up our care system during the pandemic and now express they feel, used, and cast aside.
- **Demographics** - When completing formal consultation recommend ensuring male carers and a range of ethnic backgrounds are targeted specifically to respond alongside young and young adult carers.

These key areas will be shared with partner organisations across Leicester Leicestershire and Rutland in Nov 2021. We will collate common themes from all partners engagement, insights and reports to plan the full strategy refresh.

Survey Questions

Participants of the online survey were asked the following questions

1. 'Carer' is the best term to use to identify those who support another person who cannot manage without their help.



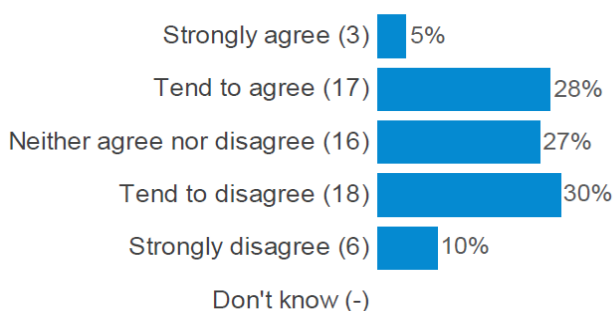
Survey respondents agreed this was the best term with 84% agreeing with the above statement.

Comments were invited about the term and in general carers agreed that it was easily understandable and recognised, however there were additional suggestions that the definition/ term doesn't acknowledge the different levels of caring someone provides in terms of range of support or amount of care they provide. This may not help to identify family carers where they see themselves as wife/husband mother/father etc, there were also calls for the term to be shifted to a more strength based definition.

To aid identification it is important this is a term/definition that carers can identify with.

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that people have become more aware of unpaid carers?

The current strategy has a focus on carer awareness, yet less than 35% respondents felt that people were now more carer aware.

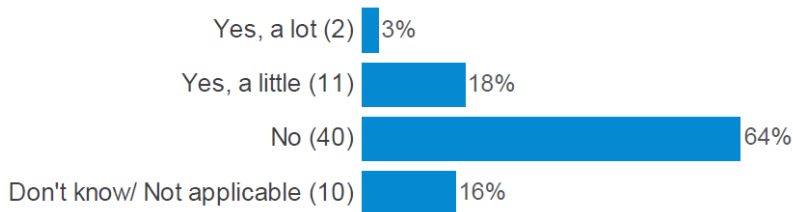


A lot of comments regarding awareness referenced people having a general lack of understanding of what a carer is and the impact this has on those that are carers. thus creating lack of recognition for carers and all they do.

3. What could help with getting unpaid carers recognised and identified earlier?

GP surgeries were cited as a key point for awareness to start with and all professionals to recognise carers and their value was also high on the responses as to what could help. Ensuring all hospital staff were carer aware was another reoccurring theme.

4. In the 12 months before the pandemic, had you noticed more information regarding carers in your GP surgery?



5. When needing support from Health and Social Care, to what extent do you agree or disagree that carers are kept informed about the person they are caring for?



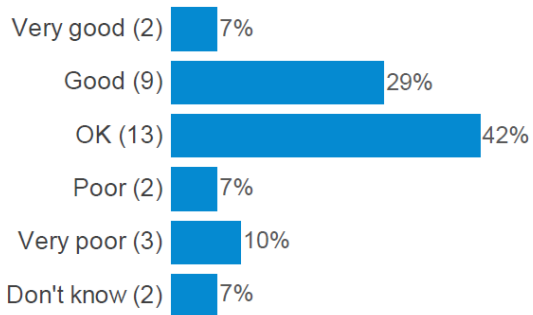
The comments in general indicate carers do not feel they are kept informed; many describe difficulties in gaining information even though they have been noted as the carer on files or on occasion have Lasting Power of Attorney in place. Both in Adult Social Care and Health carers report not being recognised and therefore not kept informed.

6. Are you aware of the carers pages on the Leicestershire County Council website?



Those that were familiar with the pages were asked

7. Overall, how would you describe the carers pages on the LCC website?



It's good to see there is a general positive response around the pages.

There were positive comments including

"it's good to know it's there and must be better than not having anything"

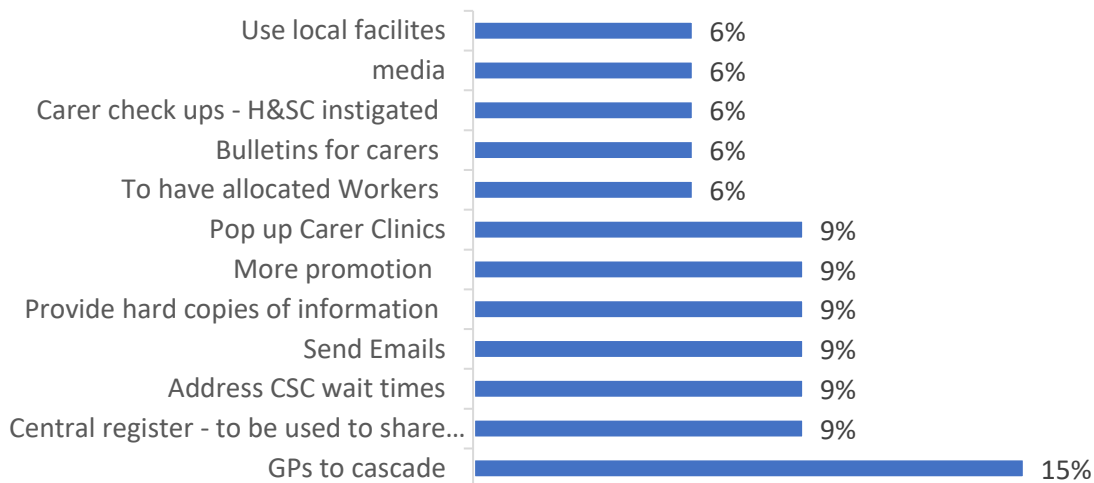
"Easy to read information"

"It's clear and easy to use and to follow"

However, there were comments around the information being too general, pages being wordy, not clear enough, difficult to navigate and language used too corporate. Additional comments were also made around the fact that the information was online and may not be accessible to all. The comments provided will be used to make improvements to the LCC pages.

8. **What else could be done to ensure carers are getting the information they need?**

What else can be done to ensure carers are getting the information they need?



There were a variety of suggestions as in the table, some of which are currently being worked on and others which should not be too difficult to implement. The need for hard copies of information has been voiced in a variety of responses.

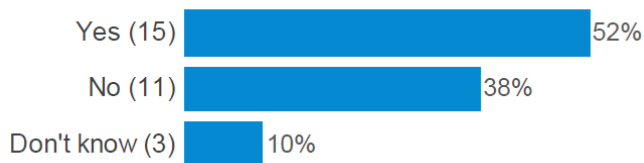
9. Have you contacted Leicestershire County Council in the last 12 months regarding a carer matter?



Don't know (-)

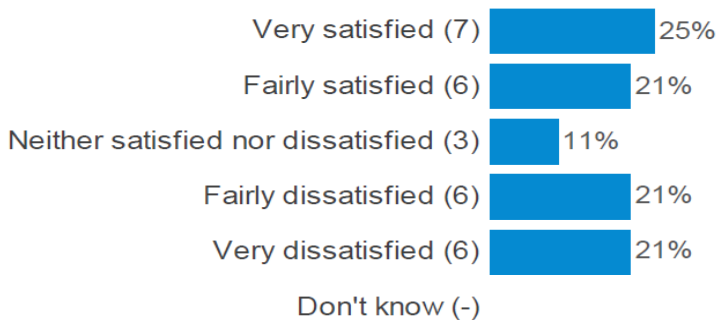
Less than half the respondents had contacted LCC in the last year for a carer matter. If they had they were asked....

10. Were you provided with appropriate information, advice or signposting?



50% felt they had received appropriate information advice or signposting, there wasn't an option for comment around this question and it was not discussed in the focus groups. However, we did ask the following question to gauge how satisfied people were with their responses which gave the chance for further comment.

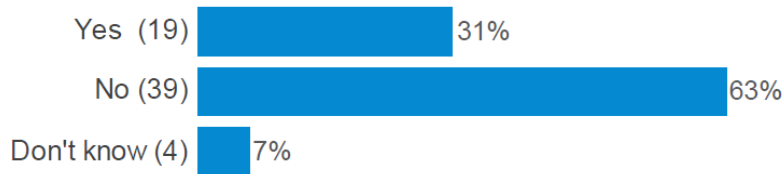
11. Thinking about the most recent time you contacted Leicestershire County Council regarding a carer matter, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the information, advice or signposting provided?



Of those that were very/fairly satisfied commented that they'd received good advice and support, staff were supportive, helpful and polite and that they'd received a comprehensive assessment.

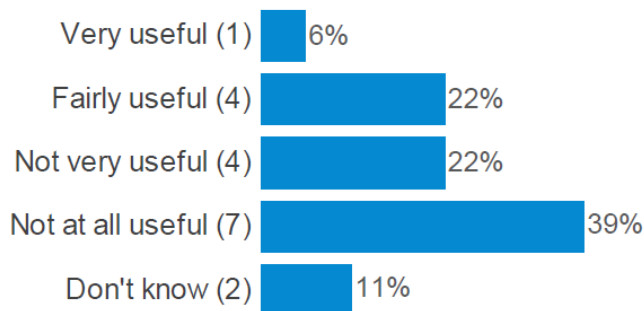
Those who were very/fairly dissatisfied said they hadn't received a response at all or those that had felt communication was poor, there was a lack of information/support provided and CSC wait times were challenging.

12. Have you registered for the carers passport scheme across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland?



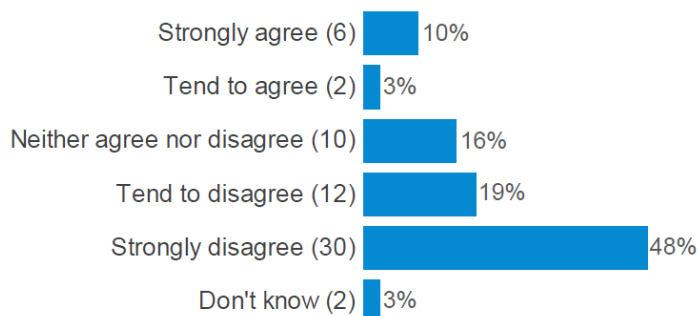
This was an unexpected result as the strategy engagement survey had been promoted in the same places as the carers passport. At the focus groups the majority were aware of the passports but some had not registered for one. Reasons for not registering were that they are being supported by a non-commissioned service in the city and expressed they had enough to do without contacting another agency for the passport, they felt one should be given automatically.

13. Overall, how useful, if at all, have you found the scheme?



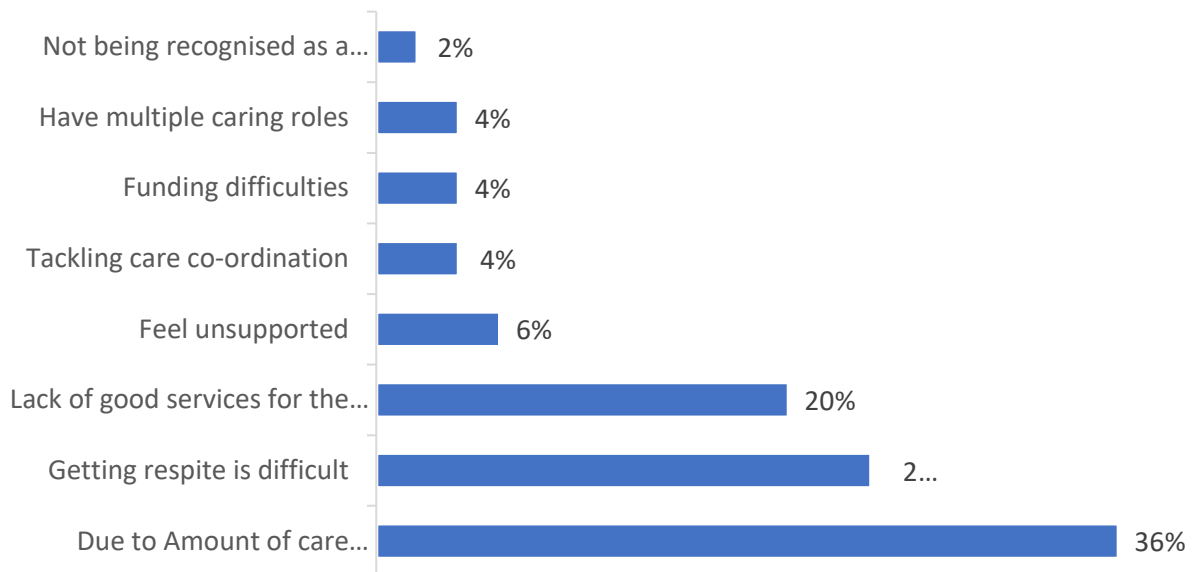
Of those that haven't found it useful comments were that they haven't had chance to use it due to COVID or that they have registered but not received it, there was also a comment about the passport not being widely recognised however this is an ongoing focus for the Carers Delivery Group to promote and ensure organisations recognise the scheme.

14. To what extent do you agree or disagree that carers are able to have enough time for themselves?

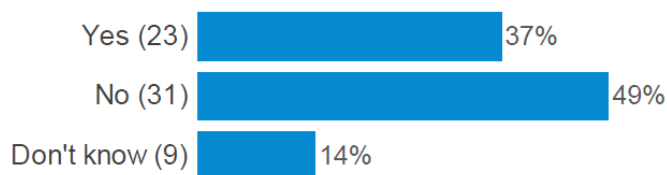


Respondents were then asked why they felt this way, the most common responses are shown below.

Why carers dont get enough time to themselves



15. Are you aware of young carer support?



There were a variety of ways the awareness came about some had actively sought the information, some had come across it on the LCC web pages and others had been informed by the commissioned Support for Carers service or friends and family.

Strategy Priorities

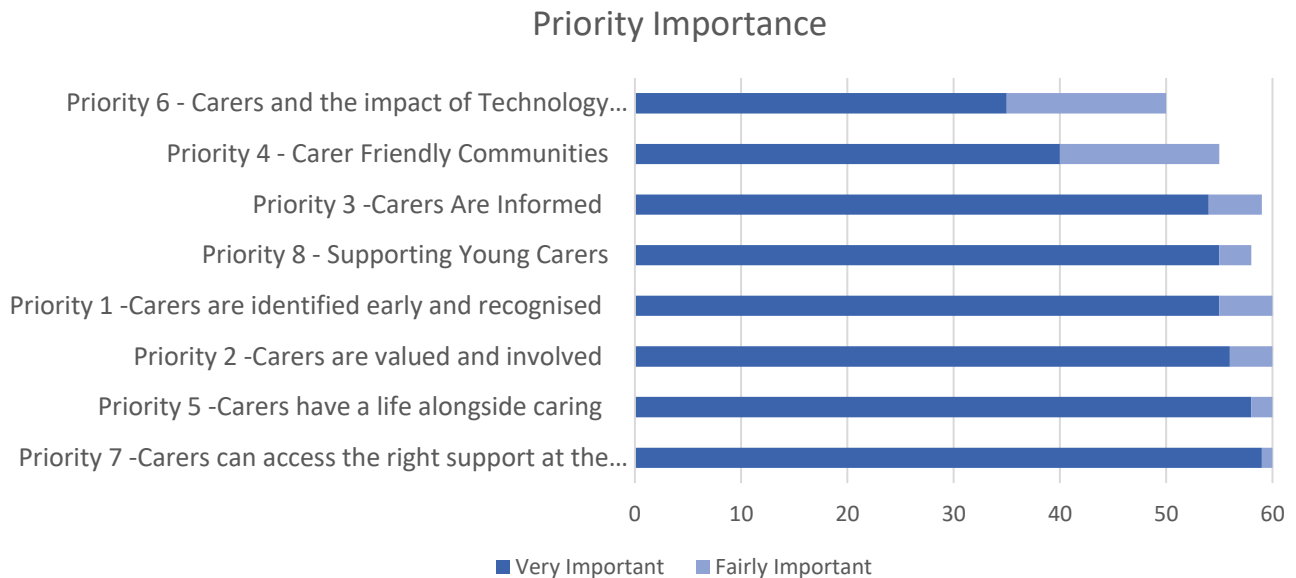
Looking at how carers feel about the current strategy priorities and considering are they still relevant to the new strategy.

16. How important, if at all, are the current strategy priorities?

Respondents were asked to rate the priorities as either

- Very important
- Fairly important
- Not very important
- Not at all important
- Don't know

There were no responses of 'Not very important' or 'Not at all important' the table below shows the total positive responses of either very or fairly important.



The focus groups reflected the online findings in terms of priority importance however the groups expressed they felt '*Priority 5 Carers have a life alongside caring*' was too large a priority and the elements of Health, Employment, Financial Wellbeing and Breaks/Time out should have a bigger focus and even potentially priorities of their own.

When asked if there are other priorities we should consider? reoccurring themes were

- **Carers finances**- access to correct benefits grants and income maximisation
- **Carers health** – recognising carers put themselves last and often at detriment to their own health and wellbeing.
- **Wanting one point of contact** – with agencies that work together meaning carer isn't repeating their story or that of their cared for and that they aren't being passed from department to department.

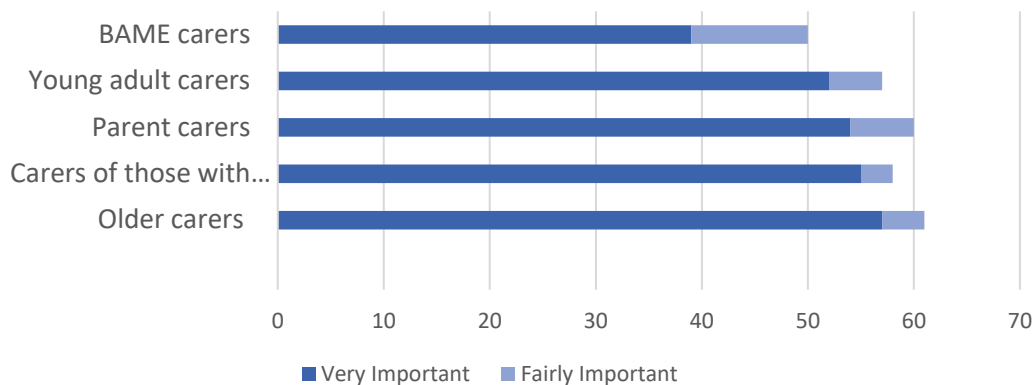
Through working with carers being a partner of the Carers Delivery Group insights show consistent themes arising. We asked respondents if any of these themes should be specifically identified within the strategy.

17. How important, if at all, is it for us to specifically identify the following types of carers and their challenges within the strategy document?

- **Older carers**
- **Carers of those with dementia**
- **Parent carers**
- **Young adult carers**

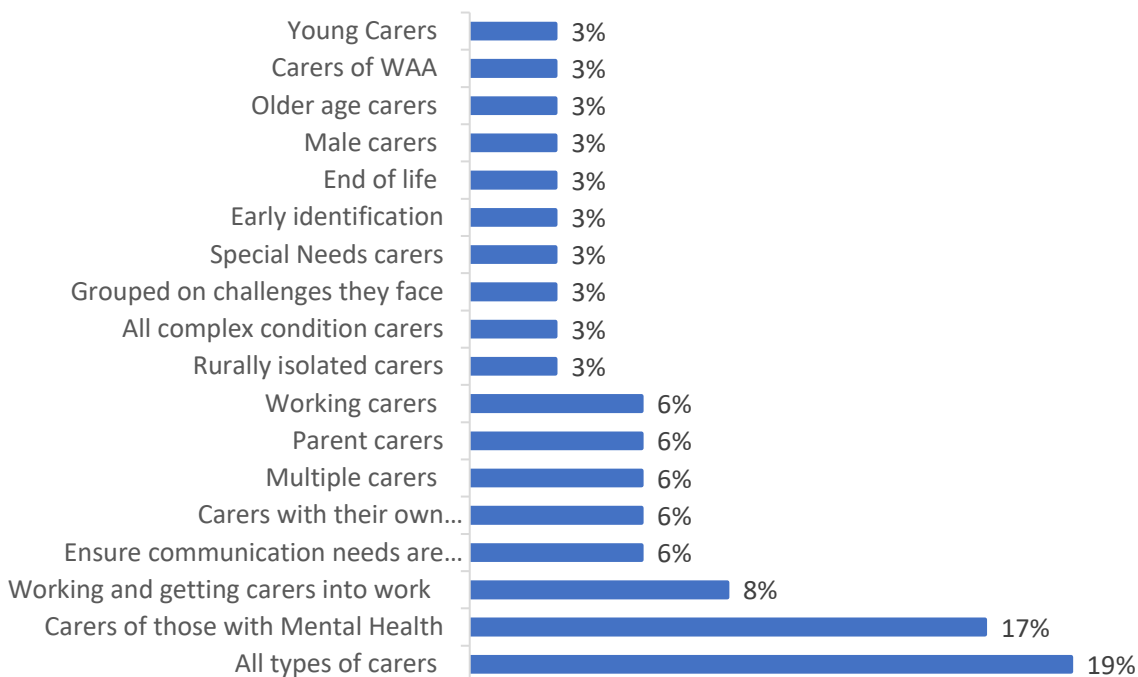
- **BAME carers**

Potential Additional Priorities



18. What, if any, other types of carers and challenges should we specifically identify within the strategy document?

Carers and Challenges to recognise

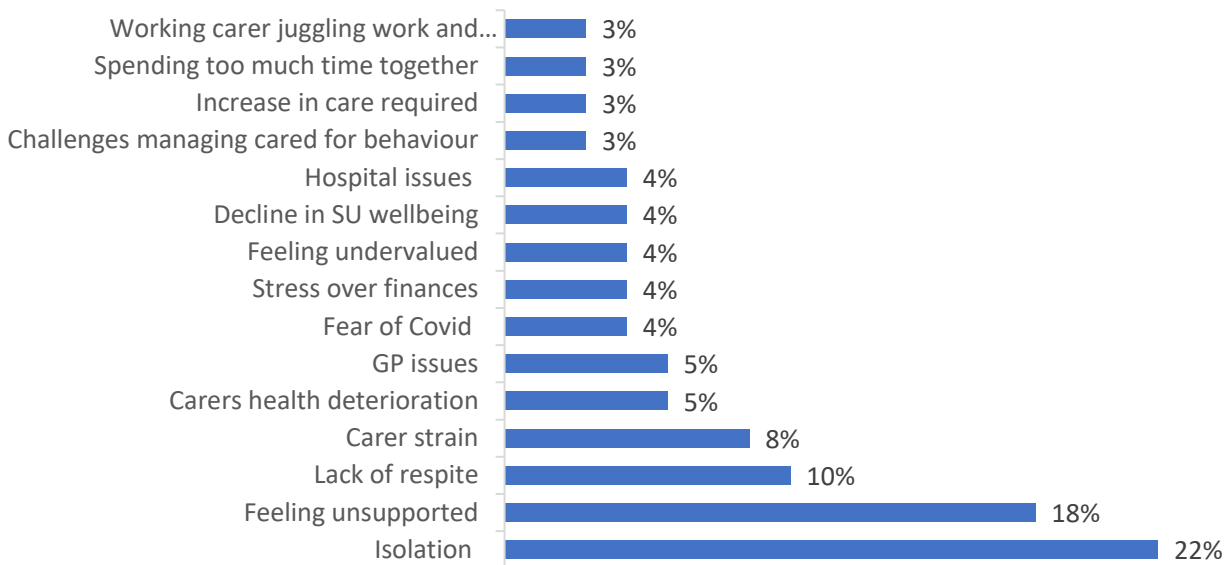


Answers were themed to allow responses to be shown in a table.. A common theme was wanting to recognise all carers irrespective of their cared for diagnosis and recognising carers who support those with mental health problems.

Covid-19 Lockdown and Carers

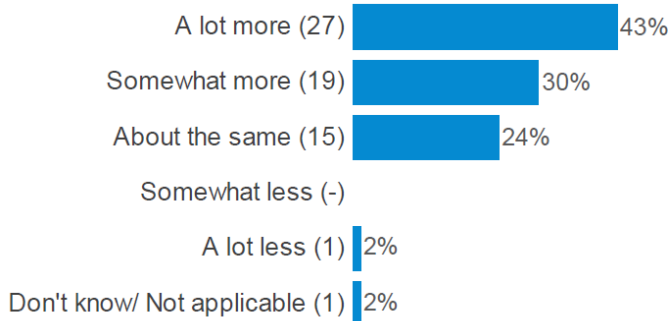
19. Please tell us about the biggest challenges you have faced over the last year.

Carers biggest challenges during COVID-19 pandemic



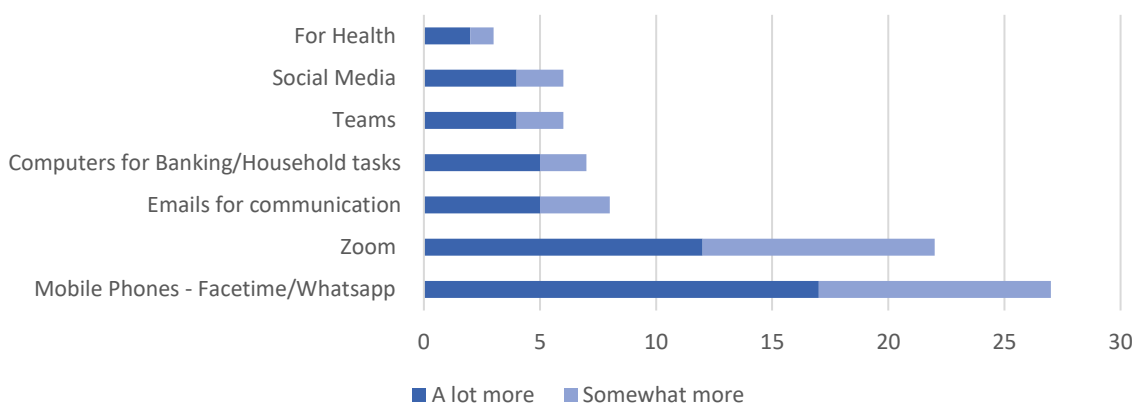
The table shows the reoccurring themes of answers, with no surprise being the biggest challenge for carers was isolation, many responses spoke of feeling forgotten and unsupported.

20. Have you used technology more over the last year?



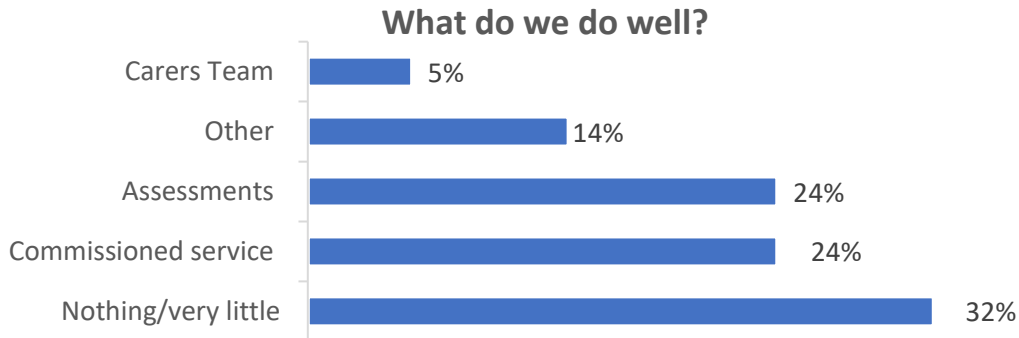
Carers indicated they has used more technology and for a variety of reasons as shown below.

What technology has been used more



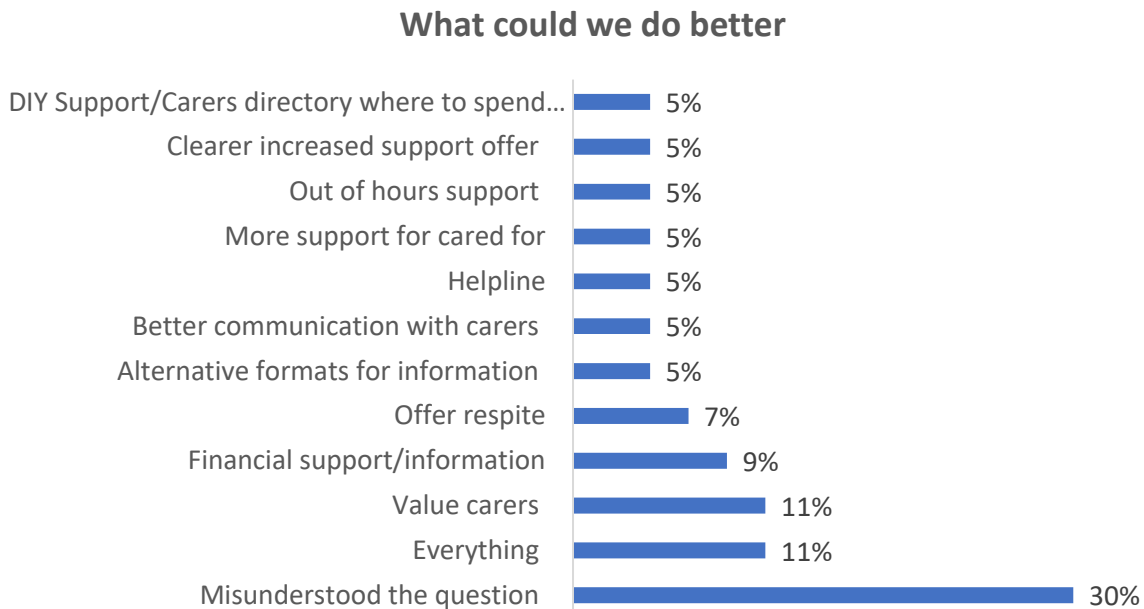
The biggest rise in use of technology was to allow carers to stay in contact with family and friends and join virtual groups to socialise.

21. Thinking about carers, what do we do well?



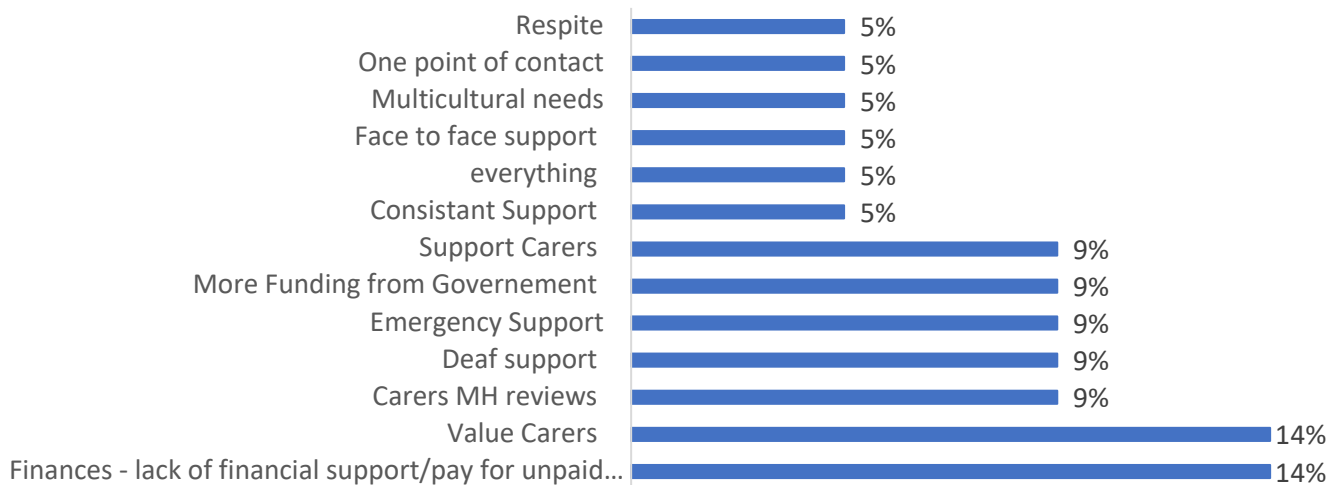
A third of responses were negative however it is good to see the commissioned service, Carers Assessments and the carers team being cited as things we do well. Those grouped as 'Other' included positive comments around being there when needed, engagement and aiding to get carers vaccinated earlier.

22. Thinking about carers, what could we do better?



23. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

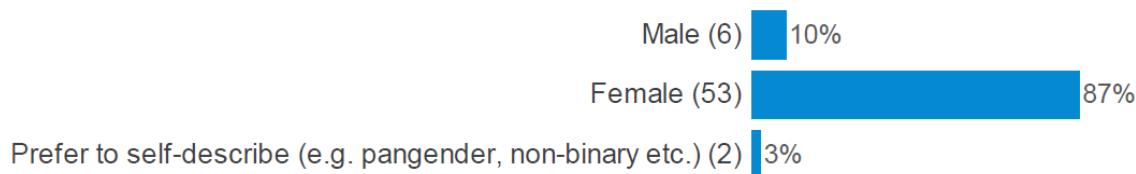
Other comments or suggestions



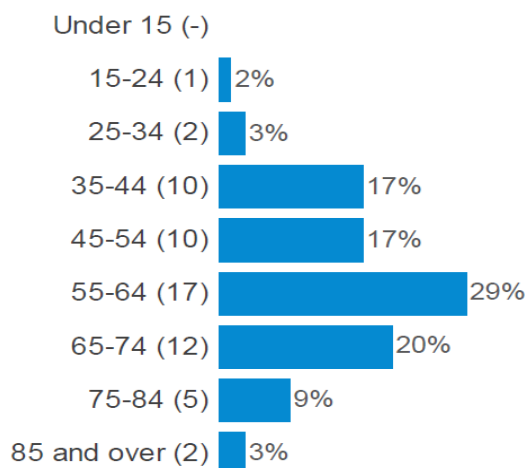
Equalities Data Summary

The majority of respondents were female, there were a good range of ages, and approximately half have an illness disability or infirmity. The majority of respondents were of white ethnic background. When completing formal consultation recommend ensuring male carers and a range of ethnic backgrounds are appropriately represented.

Gender



Age



Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?**What is your ethnic group?**

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