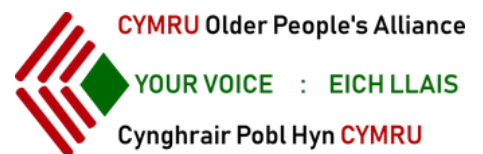


Experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales during the first Covid-19 lockdown, and the road to recovery

October 2020

'Age has never bothered me, but lockdown has made me feel old'

Female, aged 75-79, Cardiff



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About this research

Between 3 August and 1 September 2020 the joint forces of Age Cymru, Cymru Older People's Alliance (COPA), Welsh Senate of Older People, Active Wales, National Pensioners Convention Wales, and Pensioners Forum Wales came together to gather the experiences of people aged 50 or over in Wales during the first Covid-19 pandemic national lockdown, and their thoughts on the future recovery.

The survey was completed by 1114 older people in Wales, 942 completed it online and 172 offline. We also received 14 letters.

Of the older people who responded to the survey: The age ranged from 50 to 99, with 42% aged 70 or over, 66% are female and 33% are male, 26% are living with a disability, 3% described their ethnicity as Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic (BAME), and 4% identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual. In addition, during lockdown 23% of the respondents were part of a shielded group and 51% were self-isolating.

We're grateful to the 1128 older people who took the time to answer our call and provide us with this evidence. The feedback is honest, stark and lays out a picture of the impact the first Covid-19 national lockdown has had on older people in Wales.

There was some reflection on the positive experiences of lockdown with people enjoying the help from family and friends or from the local community, or having more time and less pressure. However, the picture for most people was that of difficulty, and concern for the future, whether this was trying to access healthcare, employment, issues with physical health and mental wellbeing, worries about engaging with the community again, being impacted by scams, or not seeing family and friends.

This report is a snapshot of the experiences and views of older people during this time. It provides evidence of the specific needs of older people; reflecting a diversity of views and experiences that policy makers and practitioners need to take into account when considering what should be done to ensure that older people can live well in the continuing pandemic and recovery.

This survey has been funded by Welsh Government.

'I feel lost, ignored. I'm finding it hard looking out my window and seeing people enjoying themselves and some on holiday, when my care has been cut back to the point, I can't leave my room. I'm struggling not to be bitter' **Female, aged 60-64, Pembrokeshire**

'The worst thing about lockdown has been the feeling of being abandoned because you are old.' **Female, aged 85-89, Swansea**

Experiences during lockdown

Challenges of lockdown

Access to healthcare



70% of older people had a negative experience of accessing healthcare during lockdown

'Anything to do with healthcare disappeared in a puff of smoke and locking of doors in March and have remained largely uncontactable until very recently.' **Female, aged 65-69, Powys**

'My father was informed that he had terminal lung cancer prior to lockdown and in my opinion, was abandoned by the NHS' **Female, aged 50-59, Swansea**

Older people told us that accessing the healthcare they needed to stay well was particularly difficult during lockdown and there was much confusion about where to go for support. People told us that this experience made them feel ignored and not important.

'I have lost all confidence in the way healthcare is delivered to my age group...and as for being that age with Alzheimer's, well I feel now that we are regarded as a bit of an embarrassment' **Female, aged 85-89, Swansea**

Cancelled appointments

The cancellation of healthcare appointments has been an issue for many older people during lockdown.



One in five older people had a healthcare appointment cancelled

There were a wide range of cancelled appointments mentioned including: blood tests; routine injections such as B12, Warfarin, steroids and to treat macular degeneration; hip and knee replacements; gall bladder surgery; dental, audiology and chiropody appointments; annual health checks for asthma, cancer, and diabetes.

'The lockdown was devastating as on the 20th of March I had a long-awaited appointment scheduled. I was on my way when the hospital rang to cancel. I am in dire need of an eye appointment, but the clinic is not open' **Female, aged 75-79, Isle of Anglesey**

Older people also told us about having dementia assessments cancelled including assessments for medication.

'I was told over the phone in March that my husband has dementia, but he has still not been assessed for medication' **Female, aged 75-79, Flintshire**

Others were anxious about cancelled health screenings such as for breast, bowel and cervical cancer.

Many people expressed concerns regarding when appointments, surgeries, and screenings would be reinstated, the likely long waiting lists to get the support they need, and the consequential impact on their physical and mental wellbeing, creating a future timebomb of health problems. One person told us that they paid almost £1000 privately in desperation to get a consultation.

We also heard from several people who've been unable to book non-emergency dental appointments with private practices but were still having to pay for monthly dental plans.

'No dentist still despite paying on denplan. No heart check-ups despite a heart condition. Thrown under the bus.' **Female, aged 60-64, Newport**

Accessing GP surgeries and appointments

We know that accessing GP appointments has been an ongoing issue for older people prior to the pandemic. However, this has been further compounded by the lockdown.

Older people told us that navigating online GP appointment systems has been difficult, and that there has been an over reliance on online interactions, such as emails, which they feel often don't get responded to. Others struggled with long waiting times on the phone or dealing with triage systems, often being told that a health issue was not urgent, and they would have to wait. They then didn't know where to turn for help.

One person described their experience:

'Dreadful! I have phoned my GP constantly for an hour and a half. Answers with the virus message and then the transfer to the reception results in a message, basically try later. I am still wishing to see my GP. Will try again next week. It is depressing!' **Female, aged 70-79, Carmarthenshire**

Getting appointments was particularly difficult for older people with no online access, or in areas with poor connectivity.

'I am not (and would never be) able to use a computer, consequently pre and during the lockdown, so many obstacles are in place, that many, like me, just go without treatment' **Male, aged 70-74, Newport**

People were concerned about the need to queue or receive injections outside GP surgeries, and queried what would happen leading into the winter months when they feel this wouldn't be appropriate.

Many people have struggled with the remote nature of appointments including having difficulties taking photos of ailments. They've also told us that they believe telephone appointments are inadequate for diagnosis and treatment of some conditions, with no facial or body language signals.

'Receiving diagnosis over phone from an unfamiliar doctor was a very traumatic experience' **Female, aged 60-64, Isle of Anglesey**

Worries about accessing health services

We've heard from older people who aren't accessing the health service support they need for fear of over-burdening the NHS.

Others told us that they wouldn't access healthcare because they were too worried about being exposed to the virus. One person told us that they didn't access support even when they had significant medical need.

'Scared of any appointments. Would not go to A&E even when we suffered from sustained propane poisoning!' **Female, aged 65-69, Powys**

Positive experiences

Of the 17% of older people who reported a positive experience of accessing healthcare during the lockdown, this was mostly regarding GP appointments with some preferring the move to online appointments and not needing to call the surgery.

'Needed to speak with my GP. I found it a better experience than before lockdown. The GP rang me back on an agreed time, didn't need to see me. So much easier and quicker than attending the surgery' **Female, aged 50-59, Torfaen**

One person told us how much easier it was to access sick notes from their GP during this time finding it more efficient to have the note sent to their mobile phone which they could then easily email to their employer. They're in the process of retiring early due to ill health so knowing that this system was efficient and streamlined was helpful.



Only 17% of older people had a positive experience of accessing healthcare during the lockdown

Of those who had a positive experience accessing GP surgeries, all had access to the internet, 50% were aged 65 or under, and most lived in either Swansea, Torfaen or Vale of Glamorgan, with the largest proportion, 22%, living in Torfaen.

Social care

Some older people told us that they had difficulties getting appropriate social care for them or their families, issues included; accessing home assessments after diagnosis, slow hospital discharge, limited contact from social workers, and care workers not complying with appropriate PPE.

'My social worker left, and a new one was appointed but she has only been in contact once to say nothing can be done until all returns to normal and who knows when that will be. Now they are not returning my calls' **Female, aged 60-64, Swansea**

One person told us that the council and the care company looking after their mother asked them to consider dropping her carer due to the lockdown. The family refused and the care continued.

We also heard from an older person who is a personal assistant via the Direct Payment Scheme and their experience of providing support.

'I have been working 7 days a week keeping my clients who live with dementia safe at home. I have done this by supplying my own PPE and using people's strengths, capabilities and hobbies and interests to deter them from becoming scared and agitated. Really I have been left to use my own skills whilst working during Covid' **Female, aged 50-54, Isle of Anglesey**

Loneliness and isolation

'The loneliness experienced by people living alone...is even more detrimental than the fear of the virus and has long term mental and emotional effects' **Female, aged 50-54, Pembrokeshire**

We already know that many older people experience loneliness and isolation, this has been compounded by lockdown, with 78% of older people telling us that a difficulty they faced was not seeing family and friends.



One third of older people have been lonely during lockdown

Older people who told us that they were lonely were more likely to live alone, and almost twice as likely to have been self-isolating during lockdown.



55% of older people living by themselves were lonely during lockdown

'I live on my own and am very independent, but as I was no longer engaged daily with the usual activities, I was often lonely' **Female, aged 75-79, Vale of Glamorgan**

Those who were lonely were also more likely to report that their physical and mental health had been affected during lockdown.

Older people living with a disability were almost twice as likely to report being lonely as someone who isn't.



Half of older people living with a disability were lonely during lockdown

Physical health

We've heard from many older people that their physical health has been impacted by the lockdown.



30% of older people had difficulties with their physical health during lockdown

Many older people told us that they have seen a decline in their physical health during lockdown, with some worried that this will be permanent.

The issues older people have had accessing healthcare during the lockdown has had a direct impact on short and long-term physical health.

'A friend's surgery to save her sight [was cancelled], which means she will almost certainly go completely blind' **Male, aged 60-64, Wrexham**

Others are living with ongoing pain, or in limbo due to cancelled operations.

'My husband needs an operation to allow him to get on with his life as he cannot walk or stand for long but the NHS has deserted the non COVID patients' **Older person, aged 60-64, Wales**

'A friend I live with needs urgent gall bladder surgery and been refused. She is in a lot of pain and was admitted by ambulance but was refused the surgery she needed. That was March, she is still waiting for a date, she lives in much pain daily and can hardly eat' **Female, aged 65-69, Pembrokeshire**

Physical health issues have also been linked to the lack of face to face appointments with GPs.

'I suffered a perforated eardrum as 2 different GPs prescribed antibiotics without seeing me and it got worse' **Older person, Powys**

Several people have told us that their mobility has been affected by the lockdown, this has been due to a decrease in regular activity, but also the cancellation of treatments for knee or hip conditions or arthritis, or lack of access to chiropody appointments.

'Knee injections cancelled in March so difficult to manage pain or walk for 6 months - now told will have to wait a further 7 months so over a year wait for treatment' **Female, aged 55-59, Newport**

Many older people told us that being unable to access dentists during lockdown has led to them living with ongoing difficulties, pain, and anxiety about when they will be treated.

'I have had a grumbling dental abscess since end of March, several lots of antibiotics and a headache almost continuously for something that needs proper treatment' **Female, aged 65-69, Pembrokeshire**

Others told us about the issues they've faced not being able to get broken dentures repaired, in some cases leaving older people struggling to eat.

'My dentures broke so I have been without for 4 months making it difficult to chew food'.
Female, aged 75-79, Carmarthenshire

Lack of access to audiology services and to get equipment repaired has resulted with some older people struggling to hear so they can't use phones to stay in contact with relatives, or call services for support.

Mental wellbeing

'The whole experience has been mentally and emotionally destructive' **Female, aged 70-74, Powys**

Older people have told us of the toll the lockdown has had on their mental wellbeing.



44% of older people had difficulties with their mental wellbeing during lockdown

We heard from older people that the lack of social contact has had a huge impact. There has been an increase in anxiety due to the virus, as well as loss of confidence engaging with the outside world. Others told us that previous mental health conditions such as depression had resurfaced, and that mental health services have been severely disrupted.

'I have lost my voluntary work and classes and am on my own 24/7. Often feel suicidal.' **Female, Pembrokeshire**

'I have been prescribed anti-anxiety medication to help me move out of lockdown. I am concerned that GP services are not moving back to normal.' **Female, Cardiff**

Difficulty accessing healthcare, and the uncertainty of not knowing when appointments, surgeries or screenings would be reinstated are causing many older people ongoing worry and anxiety.

'Unable to get any medical help (non-urgent) my GP's system was so difficult to access and put my anxiety off the scale' **Male, aged 50-54, Merthyr Tydfil**

Some older people have developed issues due to not having access to in-person GP appointments.

'Lack of access to face to face consult with GP that meant problems developing went on longer than necessary leading to depression on top of original issue' **Female, aged 70-74, Powys**

Accessing food, prescriptions and cash

Particularly in the early part of lockdown accessing food and prescriptions was an issue for many older people. For those unable to access shops themselves or gain slots for food deliveries, there was a need to rely on family or friends, or volunteers in the local community.



23% of older people found accessing food a challenge during lockdown

Those who didn't have online access particularly struggled, with some using phone books to find numbers of local retailers who could deliver food. Without the internet to discover who could deliver locally, and who would take orders over the phone, people found it difficult to get the food they needed.

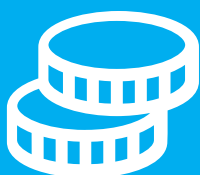
Some older people told us that they had difficulties getting prescriptions for medication. They told us that they experienced co-ordination issues between GP surgeries and pharmacies regarding re-ordering, collecting or getting prescriptions delivered, were left without prescriptions when medications were in short supply, or were left without medication because of errors in the GPs system. They found this hard to rectify as it was difficult to get through to the GP surgery.



16% of older people found accessing prescriptions a challenge during lockdown

We found that accessing prescriptions was more likely to be an issue in Flintshire and Swansea.

Accessing cash was also a challenge for older people.



12% of older people struggled to access cash during the lockdown

'My bank is 15 miles away. Nearest food store 5 miles. I depend on offers from neighbours'
Female, Gwynedd

It was particularly an issue for those aged 80-99 who were almost three times more likely to have a problem accessing cash during the lockdown, but it was less of an issue in the Cardiff area for this age range.

We also heard about the issues accessing banks during lockdown due to their reductions in some local areas.

Lloyds bank Pontypool closed last November and this has been the most inconvenient for people who have to rely on public transport to go to Cwmbran to go to the bank for reasons other than drawing cash' **Female, aged 75-79, Torfaen**

Caring for a spouse, friend or relative



16% of older people struggled with caring for a spouse, friend or relative during lockdown

Many older carers have told us how they faced an increase in their responsibilities, caring for longer and needing to provide more personal care due to reduction in support from care agencies.

'No relief in any way for 24-hour care. I have cared for my husband without any help at all since 17 March 2020. The strain is immense' **Female, aged 85-89, Swansea**

Many have struggled with lack of respite from their role, ceasing of support and activity groups, and not having access to their usual support networks.

'My spouse has Alzheimer's; it gets to me as [I have] no free time' **Female, aged 70-74, Vale of Glamorgan**

'Carer for husband who has Parkinson's. All his interventions by phone only. Group activities not possible so pressure on me to come up with things to do. Felt isolated.' **Female, aged 70-74, Conwy**

Some carers told us that they were worried about being invisible to services and support, and the person they care for being missed.

'I look after my 98-year-old grandmother and I was terrified she'd be forgotten' **Female, aged 50-54, Neath Port Talbot**

Scams and abuse



One in ten older people have experienced scams or abuse during lockdown

Scams and abuse experienced included an increase in phone scams during lockdown and one person who told us that they had experienced spousal abuse.

We heard from some older people who told us that they were experiencing scam phone calls but felt confident at recognising and dealing with them.

We found that those who have experienced scams or abuse were more likely to live alone, and more likely to be self-isolating.

Of those who told us that they had experienced scams or abuse there were higher numbers living in Cardiff, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea.

Finance and employment

Older people told us of the issues that they had with the cost of living, and employment during lockdown



10% of older people found the cost of living a challenge during lockdown

We heard about declining income caused by the pandemic, from those who had lost their job but were ineligible for help, and concerns about not being able to return to their chosen industry after furlough. People also expressed their frustration at the lack of support to get older people back into work.

'There are a lot of older people who need to work. There is no support for these people to help obtain jobs...I have a voice and I want to be heard but no one is listening!!!!'

Female, aged 60-64, Caerphilly

Some people told us that due to having to shop in different ways such as online or relying on volunteers, they were having to pay more money for their food shopping than they would normally.

'I can only access one supermarket since which is expensive and just increased charges for delivery significantly....food is costing me much more and my diet re fresh fruit and veg has significantly reduced' **Female, aged 55-59, Torfaen**

Of those older people in employment and not able to work from home, some told us of their concerns regarding being safe from the Covid-19 virus at work, being pressurised by their employer to go back to work when they don't feel safe, and worries about going back to work so soon after shielding ended.

'I have continued to work during [the] Covid lockdown as a frontline community OT. Support was limited from managers initially with mis-information and lack of appropriate PPE which increased my anxiety.' **Female, aged 60-64, Conwy**

'Anxiety caused by one day shielding and then next day work!! Maybe easing back to normal gradually would have been kinder' **Female, aged 55-59, Torfaen**

We also heard from older people who were worried about keeping loved ones at home safe from the virus when they had to go out to work.

One person told us that they had to give up their job to keep their family member safe.

'I live with my wife and have 102-year-old father and disabled stepson at home. My job involved visiting customers, 10 a day at their homes. I have had to quit and am now unemployed in case I brought the virus home and have stopped stepson's carer visits in case of virus infection.' **Male, aged 65-69, Swansea**

For those who had moved to working from home, they told us how they were struggling with working longer hours, and with less direction. We also heard from people who were worried about having to work from home due to their poor internet access in rural Mid Wales.

Bereavement and loss



One in ten older people struggled with bereavement and loss during lockdown

We heard from a number of older people who had difficulties dealing with bereavement and loss during the lockdown. This was both regarding loved ones who had died during the pandemic but also those who were struggling with a bereavement prior to the pandemic, compounded due to the loneliness and isolation of lockdown.

*'My wife died of cancer on 4 July 2017 and I miss her more than words can ever convey. Next Saturday (15th July) should have been our golden wedding. My wife's ashes are scattered in the cemetery of the village in which she was brought up. I usually visit the cemetery every six to seven weeks but since it is some 50 miles away from our home, I was until recently unable to do so because of the lockdown rules. Of all the various lockdown restrictions, I found this the most distressing and reflecting a lack of humanity. I also feel certain that there have been others in this situation'. **Male, aged 75-79, Swansea***

We found that older people who were dealing with bereavement and loss were more likely to be lonely, have physical and mental wellbeing difficulties, have problems exercising their rights and more likely to report experiencing scams or abuse.

Transport

Older people told us about the issues they had with transport during the lockdown, particularly regarding the reduction of local bus routes.



14% of older people had difficulties with transport during the lockdown

'The local bus route has reduced again, the first bus leaves at 8 which means we cannot get into town or work without having a car use. They have also cut the night-time provision. Cardiff council needs to readdress this. I live on a bus route and the buses were constantly empty during lockdown and it seems we have lost provision because of this. We have the oldest population in Cardiff and yet again this is an inequality issue as not all are retired or have access to a car' **Female, aged 55-59, Cardiff**

We found that older people who struggled to access transport during lockdown were more likely to have problems accessing food and prescriptions, report having their physical health impacted during lockdown, and were twice as likely to find the cost of living a challenge.

We found that those living in Cardiff, Gwynedd and Newport had particular issues accessing transport.

Exercising individual rights



9% of older people had difficulties exercising their individual rights during lockdown

We found that those older people who told us they struggled to exercise their individual rights during the lockdown were twice as likely to be caring for a spouse, friend or relative, were more likely to be dealing with bereavement and loss, be lonely, and more likely to have experienced issues with their mental wellbeing and physical health.

We also heard that older people were twice as likely to have struggled with the cost of living, be impacted by scams and abuse, access prescriptions and have issues accessing cash.

Older people who had difficulties exercising their individual rights during lockdown were almost twice as likely to live in Cardiff, and more than twice as likely to live in Gwynedd.

Additional challenges

There were several other challenges that older people faced during lockdown.

Some older people told us of their distress at not being able to visit their loved ones living in a residential care home, or in hospital.

'Worst thing is not being able to see my 100-year-old mother who is in a nursing home'
Female, aged 55-59, Conwy

Others struggled with a lack of access to local community services, the removal of all social activities, lack of adherence to social distancing from other members of the public and the closure of public toilets with the latter two both making shopping an uncomfortable experience.

We also heard from older people who have struggled due to the loss of help to do domestic chores.

'Please, please don't leave people of my age, 88, without a cleaner again. We are too old to have our total support network stopped dead. We can't bend to clean basic needs like the shower. When beds need changing it takes all day. Old ladies like me have done wonders. I'm tough, but an action replay of the last 20 weeks will kill me' **Female, aged 85-89, Swansea**

Communication

Where older people accessed information and updates

Information and updates were changing rapidly during the first national lockdown. We asked older people how they accessed information and updates during this time to keep themselves informed.



80% of older people accessed information and updates on the lockdown via TV news

The TV news was the most heavily relied on source of information and updates, followed by online sources.



Two thirds of older people accessed information and updates online

41% of older people gained information from the radio, and 38% of older people got updates from newspapers, 23% from national newspapers and 15% from local newspapers.

Other outlets were; from care workers, directly from Welsh Government and Public Health Wales, workplaces, older people's groups, support and social groups, the BBC's red button and community councils.



3% of older people didn't access any information or updates

Reliance on information via TV news increased with age from 82% in the 50-64 age group to 96% in the 80-99 age group.

This was corresponded with a decrease in information and updates accessed online with an increase in age, from 87% of those aged 50-64 gaining their information and updates online to 34% in the 80-99 age group.



96% of people aged 80-99 accessed information and updates during the lockdown via TV news

Improvements to communication

Older people told us what they thought would improve communication regarding information and updates.

Clarity and consistency of reporting between the different nations and having more information relevant to Wales.

Many people felt that reporting regarding the different nations is not clear enough and causes a lot of confusion, and that this is largely due to the reporting via news outlets, particularly the TV news. Some people told us that at the beginning of the pandemic information was clear and easy to understand, but felt it had become more confusing, getting worse rather than better.

'UK media focus on England and Scotland but not enough about Wales unless we access regional sources, this has caused confusion' **Female, aged 65-69, Denbighshire**

People also requested more information relevant to localised areas, and a tailored approach to information and updates

'A one size fits all approach will not engage and inform across communities - younger adults need to be reached using social media (and other) platforms and language that they use daily. We need to offer incentives (positive psychology approach) rather than punitive concepts. e.g. if we all observe safe social distancing etc we can go to shops / re-join education rather than the N England "Don't kill granny" approach. We do need clarity at times, and maybe reach older people who are not online by informal call in Q&A sessions on local and BBC radio stations' **Male, aged 65-69, Merthyr Tydfil**

People were largely positive about the communication from Welsh Government and the briefings from First Minister Mark Drakeford. They felt that Welsh Government was clearer in their information than the UK Government and that the lunchtime briefings were useful, although it was unhelpful when they were cut short by the UK news.

'The Welsh Government handled things very well, but there did not seem the same level of clarity and consistency coming from the UK Government' **Male, aged 75-79, Powys**

More information for those who don't have online access

Many older people were frustrated by the over reliance of online information. This included the continual references on the TV news and radio to find out further information on the internet.

'Information through the TV always signposts to a website which excludes those not on the internet' **Male, aged 60-64, Rhondda Cynon Taf**

People requested that there was more written information about local helpful organisations and voluntary groups from councils for those with no online access. This lack of information made people feel forgotten.

Additionally, it was suggested that local free newspapers could be delivered to households to help keep people who don't use the internet at home informed of local services and where to obtain help within their community.

Some older people also called for information from Welsh Government via letters or leaflets through the post with more information in different languages so everyone can understand the situation.

Simpler statistics and plainer language

Older people told us that not everyone understands the information that's being reported. There needs to be more accurate use of statistics and analysis of what they mean for people, and more information regarding the reasoning behind decisions being made.

'Avoid incomprehensible and use of acronyms without any previous explanation'
Female, aged 80-84, Pembrokeshire

Positive experiences of lockdown

Through our feedback we also gathered the positive experiences of older people during the lockdown.



The help received from family and friends was the highest reported positive experience for older people during lockdown

Older people found that they liked having more time, less pressure, and enjoyed the peace and quiet and time to appreciate their home, with a few people telling us that this meant they had an improved quality of life.

Others told us about the community spirit they saw displayed during the lockdown appreciating the local council, community and neighbours coming together to support each other.

*'Our local services and the community in general have shown kindness and great care during very difficult circumstances...but really, this has been an extension of the normal life of our village. We are so fortunate' **Aged 75-79, Pembrokeshire***

For those in employment and now working from home, some people told us that they were enjoying the opportunity to see more of their family, travelling less, taking more breaks from work when they needed to, and being able to do more of the things they like.

*'Working from home suits me, able to foster more dogs. No need to travel and nicer environment, less disruption and can work any time' **Female, aged 55-59, Vale of Glamorgan***

However, several older people fed back that there was nothing positive about lockdown, and they became more lonely, depressed and isolated, and it just had to be endured.

Views on future recovery

Challenges of moving out of lockdown

We asked older people what will be the most challenging for them moving out of lockdown.

Feeling safe

Many older people told us that they will need clear reassurance about the guidelines and protocols in place to safeguard against Covid-19 transmission. This includes reminders for the public about social distancing and ensuring that measures are being adhered to in all public settings.

Confidence

Older people also told us that their confidence in engaging with the outside world, and their faith in the appropriate behaviour of others had decreased during lockdown. They told us they would need help to build that confidence and to be able to participate in society again.

'Don't feel confident going outside, it would be really scary to touch anything and use transport or public toilets as some people don't follow the rules' **Female, aged 80-84, Cardiff**

Worries about access to services

We were told that access to public toilets and public transport will be a significant challenge alongside worries about adapting to changes in services needed such as banks, libraries and healthcare.

'People need easier access to cash. More open post offices or banks' **Female, aged 50-54, Ceredigion**

Return of social activities

Older people told us of the importance of social activities returning but recognised the challenges that this may present.

'I feel confident going back to doing social activities unfortunately many people do not, so it will take a long time for these activities to resume' **Female, aged 70-74, Rhondda Cynon Taf**

Returning to work

For those in employment people told us of their worries about commuting and returning to office spaces. Others who have lost jobs are concerned about the difficulties they'll have finding another role close to retirement, and the lack of support for older jobseekers.

'Employer putting pressure on me to return to work even though I don't feel safe returning. I work in a local Estate Agent and the only protection they have are yellow tapes on the floor. The office gets many non-local visitors' **Female, aged 60-64, Ceredigion**

Accessing health and social care

Being able to access health and social care as lockdown eases will be essential, particularly considering the difficulties so many older people have had accessing the support they needed during lockdown.

Older people told us that they need:

- Clear and simple information and guidance about available services and how to access support
- The reinstatement of hospital appointments and routine medical appointments and clarity regarding how long they'll have to wait until they get a new appointment
- Better access to GP appointments both in terms of ease of making appointments, but also reduced waiting times, and a balance between online and face to face appointments to suit differing needs
- Better transport to hospitals
- Shorter wait times for assessment from social care, more visits from social workers, and reassurance regarding measures to protect against transmission of coronavirus in health and social care settings
- Better guidance for those who live alone and have had home care reduced due to the pandemic about how to self-isolate before surgery.

'Need to get NHS back to "business as usual" concerned that the wait lists are going to be huge for a number of years. Some clarity on how long we have to wait until we get a new appointment' **Female, aged 50-54, Cardiff**

Engaging with local communities

Reconnecting with local communities will be important for older people when lockdown eases, and people told us what would help them to do this.

Clear and accessible local information

Older people told us that local information was essential to re-engage with their local area, and that this must be available for those off-line as well as online. This is inclusive of local facilities, current local Covid-19 guidance, information about local shops and food delivery services, and local transport timetables.

‘Not everyone relies on, has access to or interest in the internet, it is particularly difficult when local buses are amended at short notice and changes only posted online’

Female, aged 65-69, Conwy

Reopening of facilities, and places of worship

The re-opening of community venues, libraries and places of worship were important to many older people to enable the resumption of social groups, leisure activities, support groups and access to computers. These facilities all provide a vital community hub and are often used by older people to connect with people, socialise, and host groups for people living with health conditions and their carers to connect, support each and provide respite. They’re also an important community hub for publicising local information, health campaigns and ensuring that the voices of older people are heard in their local community. Older people told us that venues will need clear guidance, support and reassurance to be able to open safely.

‘[I am looking forward to] the libraries being open again, being excluded from the internet has been terribly isolating’

Female, aged 70-74, Vale of Glamorgan

Reinstatement of full bus timetables

Some local bus routes were reduced during the pandemic, older people told us that they need these reinstated so they can better access their local community. They also need to facilitate the ability to give change, as it's increasingly difficult to access change in shops, and not all older people have access to a contactless bank card or bus pass.

'Bus driver forced me to pay my entire £10 for a £1.50 bus trip because I was unable to get a smaller amount of cash out! Cash machines only give notes, there are no high street banks, I can't get to a post office without a bus trip and my shopping is done mostly online. Haven't been out using public transport since. Very upsetting experience' **Female, aged 50-54, Ceredigion**

Support to improve confidence

Many older people told us that they have lost confidence and ability to engage with people and their local community and will need support to regain this confidence.

'Living a solitary life has been made more solitary by the lockdown. I don't know how to re-connect with community' **Female, aged 70-74, Flintshire**

Opening of public toilets

Older people told us that it was important to ensure that public toilets remained open. Lack of toilets made it difficult for some older people to go shopping or engage locally, and not being assured that there will be toilets available prevented some people from leaving the house.

'Don't feel confident about going into shops, worried about using public toilets and knowing whether they are open' **Older person, aged 65-69, Gwynedd**

Looking forward to moving out of lockdown

As older people look towards recovery, they told us what they were most looking forward to.



85% of older people are looking forward to seeing family and friends as lockdown eases

This was closely followed by having a haircut, opportunities to travel, and going shopping.

'I look forward to going pleasure shopping with my Age Cymru carer, I am in need of new shoes and trousers' **Female, aged 90-94, Gwynedd**

In addition, older people were looking forward to visiting a podiatrist or similar appointments, getting house maintenance and help with the gardening and getting proper care.

Being able to re-join social and leisure activities such as exercise, community groups, 50 plus forums and places of worship, and having access to day centre services were also important to many people.

Others were looking forward to visiting loved ones living in a care home, earning an income, going to live music, events and museums, and being able to volunteer again.

With many telling us that they can't wait to return to some kind of normality and freedom.

'Whenever possible, we would all like to get back to some form of normality and freedom. A chance to re-join our social groups as soon as it is deemed safe' **Female, aged 75-79, Swansea**

To sum up how some older people feel they have been treated during the lockdown, one person commented that they're looking forward to:

'Not being made to feel a burden on society and only worthy of being allowed to die, should the virus become a personal illness' **Male, aged 70-74, Carmarthenshire**

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