# Our Changing World: Executive Summary

## Introduction

A **report** on the experiences of **disabled people and people with mental health challenges** in **Gloucestershire** during the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

In **April, May and June 2020**, Barnwood Trust did a study.

The study looked at **the impact of Covid-19** on **disabled people and people with mental health challenges**.

This document presents the **main findings** in Easy Read.

Over **40 local organisations and representatives** from the statutory sector **took part**.

Disabled people and people with mental health challenges also shared **case studies**.

There were **two main challenges** that lots of people talked about.

**Uncertainty**, about the virus and the response to it.

The **impact** on **mental health**, of the pandemic and the lockdown.

## Information Provision

**Provision** and **accessibility** of **clear information** was a **common challenge**.

There were concerns that **people** were **not aware of the support available** or were **unaware of important government guidance**.

**Accessible information** is important, especially for people with **sensory impairments** and **learning disabilities**.

**Clear information** and **communications** were needed.

**Including important government information** about who is on the shielding list and who is on the vulnerable list.

**Exposure to too much negative information** about the pandemic was **affecting people's mental health**.

## Accessing Practical Goods

People have experienced **difficulties accessing basic things**.

Such as **PPE**, **medication**, **food**, **white goods** and **technology**.

For some people this was because **social distancing measures weren't accessible** when visiting shops.

It was also because the **criteria** for booking **shopping slots** didn't cover some people that needed them**.**

## Unpaid Care and Parenting



Challenges were highlighted **for parents and unpaid carers** of disabled children and adults.

Some **parents** also **experienced mental health challenges** themselves.



Parents of disabled children were managing lots of **demands** and **extra pressures**.

Some parents experienced feelings of **isolation**.

For some parents, this had an impact on their **mental health**.



**Demand** for **parent support services** has **increased**, with organisations specialising in supporting children now **supporting whole families**.



In some cases, there has been a **deterioration** in **disabled children's behaviour and mental health**.

## Increased Financial Pressure



This has been a period of **financial concern** for a lot of people, with current financial challenges made worse.



Some people did **not have enough money** to pay bills or to obtain essential items, as well as extra household costs.
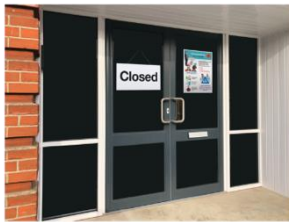


Other effects of **not having enough money** were impacts on people's **mental health**, more **stress**, more **tension** at home, and a **higher risk of abuse**.

## Increased Risk of Domestic Abuse



Increased **tension**, prolonged **isolation**, being cut off from sources of **safe intervention** has led to a **higher risk of domestic abuse**.



**Services** have been **restricted** in their **ability to provide support**.

**Specialist organisations** provided **remote services,** but these were **not always accessible to all**, especially where people were living with an abuser.

## Accessing Services

Being **unable to access services** during the lockdown had **immediate and longer-term impacts**.

There were **challenges** to accessing ongoing or adapted **service provision**.

Especially for those **not already connected** in with services. Also **online activities** are **not accessible to all**.

There were barriers to accessing **digital support** for some people with **sensory impairments** or with a **lack of IT equipment**.

**Online provision may not be appropriate** for those experiencing significant **mental distress or domestic abuse**.

**Routine therapies** that are important for managing conditions **were stopped** for many people.

Some **people** reported suddenly being **discharged** from **mental health services**.

## Isolation and Connection

**Social isolation** is one of the key causes for concern about the **impact** of the Covid-19 crisis on people's **mental health**.
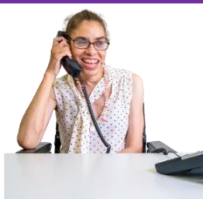
**Disabled people experienced lockdown very differently** depending on their individual circumstances.

**Organisations working with young people** have been very concerned about a **rise in mental health challenges**.

Lots of people couldn't do activities where they used to connect with other people: going to **work**, **volunteering**, participating in **activities**, and attending **social groups or** gatherings.

People said lots of **creative work was being done** to try and **stop social isolation**.

It is valuable to lots of people, but it **hasn't been accessible or available to everyone**.

## Perceptions

**Perceptions prevented** people from **accessing support**.

**Individuals' perceptions** were important:

People might **not see** themselves as **needing support** and some people were **not happy** to **accept 'charity'**.

**Other people's judgements** about who needs support and/or is 'vulnerable' were also important:

**Assumptions** about **who will and will not need support** resulted in people not being offered the help **they** needed.

People with visible impairments thought they might be judged by others for going outside, even if they were not at high risk from Covid-19. This could **stop them from living as independently** as they did before the pandemic.

## Future Concerns



Fear that different people would need to follow **different rules** as **lockdown eases**, and that the community response would reduce as people return to 'business-as-usual'.
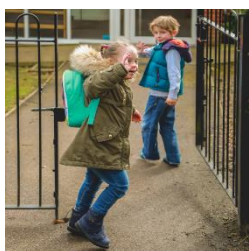


An expected **increase in demand** for **mental health services.**

**This included** people with **pre-existing** and people with **new** mental health challenges



**Organisations** were worried that they could become **overwhelmed** as more people seek support.



**Children and young people** have been **missing out** on **support** provided by **schools**.

And that people who were disadvantaged before the pandemic are becoming more disadvantaged.



**Uncertainty** was linked to all of the above concerns.

There is a need for **clear** and **accessible information** and **guidance** going forward.

## Immediate actions to address existing inequalities



Provide **clear**, **timely**, and **accessible information** about Covid-19 and sources of support.



**Reduce barriers** to **accessing services digitally and remotely,** but this type of support may not be appropriate for all.



**Offer routine therapies** and **treatments** for people with physical impairments again.

Give **more money** to ensure that support is provided to people as soon as possible.



Provide **extra money** for **mental health services** and **support**.

Recognise the **impact of the pandemic** and **disruption to treatment** for those with current mental health challenges.

Consider the expected **increasing numbers** of people needing **mental health support**.

Ensure Covid-19 response plans can **provide continued support to individuals and communities**, and that these are co-ordinated across sectors.



Make sure that **systems and services** that **support vulnerable people** include people who are socially vulnerable.

People who may **be socially vulnerable** include people with mental health challenges, learning disabilities and sensory impairments.



**Provide PPE** and make **respite care available** for families and carers of disabled adults and children.



Continue to **provide essential statutory services** to disabled people and people with mental health challenges.

**Clearly communicate** any **changes** to service provision.

## Contact us

If you would like to **speak to us** about any of this information please **email** Georgia Boon, Director of Partnerships at Barnwood Trust:

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