

Gloucestershire County Council

# Supporting Carers beyond COVID-19

Survey Summer 2020 report



## Background and context

Covid 19 has changed our lives and tested us all in ways we may never have imagined. The Carers UK Report 'Caring Behind Closed Doors' highlighted the increased pressure this has put on carers nationally. Carers, many of whom were already feeling isolated and lonely, found themselves even more strained with a lack of respite and a level of uncertainty that led many to feel anxious. Carers UK also estimate that Covid 19 has led to an increase of 4.5million carers countrywide so far. With carers providing so much support to our health and social care systems that are facing unprecedented pressures, we all need to identify, support and value carers in our county.

For the purposes of this report our main focus are the results of our local carer's survey that was live in August and September 2020. We were pleased by the level of response we had to this survey, with 273 carers responding. We were touched and humbled by the honesty with which carers replied. We would like to thank all of the carers who responded. We have listened and we continue to hear carers.

We have also drawn on the following reports:

- Caring Behind Closed Doors – Carers UK
- GP Patient survey – analysis of responses from carers in Gloucestershire
- Healthwatch Gloucestershire carers in Covid 19 focus groups
- Healthwatch Gloucestershire – carers of people with mental health issues report
- #shareyourstory – carers' responses
- Gloucestershire Carers Hub daily log of carers' concerns during lockdown<sup>1</sup>.



<sup>1</sup>A spreadsheet shared with commissioners highlighting the main concerns raised by carers the previous day. No carer names were shared

## Key statistics

- According to the 2011 census around 63,000 people in Gloucestershire are carers, which is 1 in 10 people.
- Carers UK have reported that nationally there are 4.5million new carers due to Covid 19, which means that our figures are probably now closer to 100,000 carers in Gloucestershire.
- The number of carers aged 65 and over is predicted to rise from 20,157 in 2020 to 25,077 in 2030, a rise of 24.4%, with the greatest increase predicted for 80-84 year-olds (53.35%).
- The majority of care provided doesn't come from the NHS or from care homes. It comes in the form of unpaid care which relatives, friends and neighbours provide, estimated nationally to be worth £132 billion a year.

## Purpose of this report

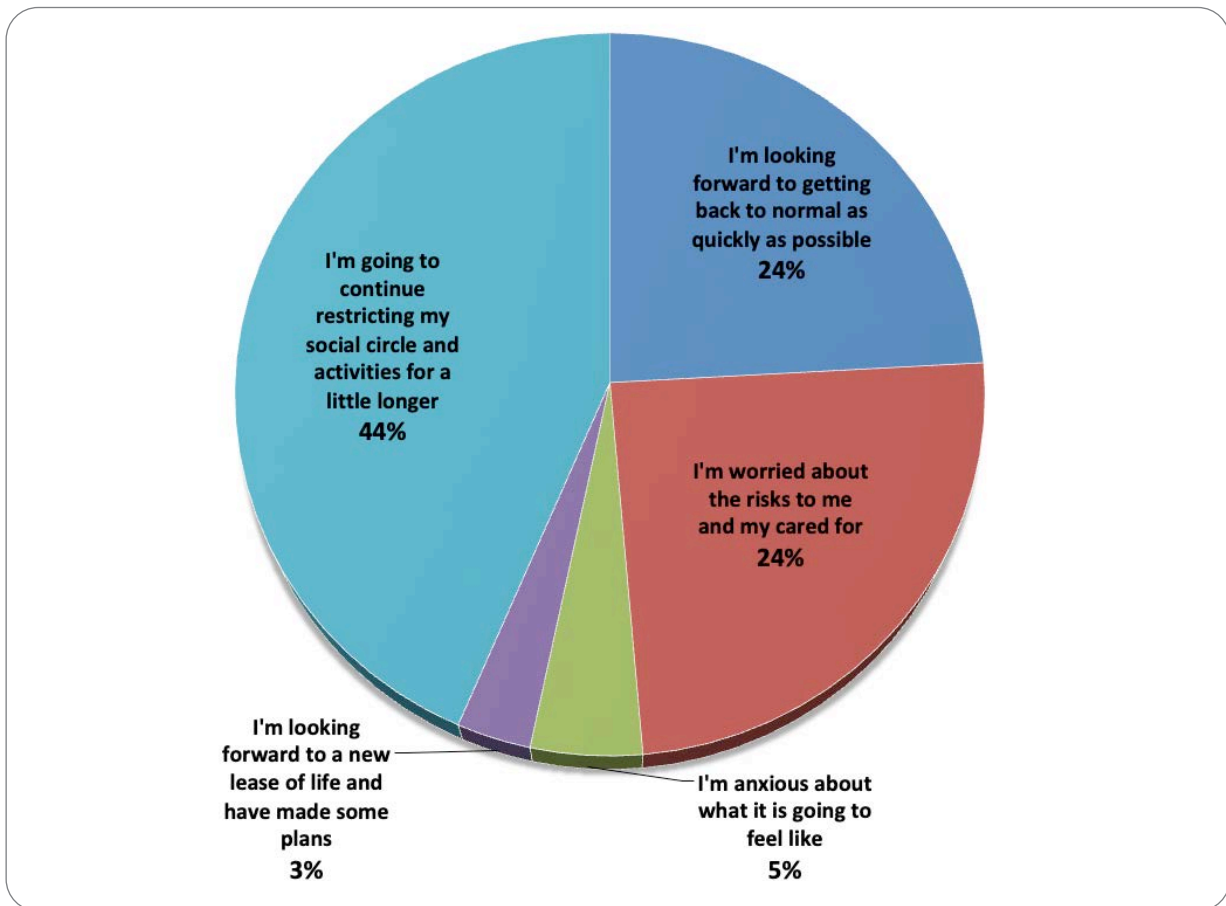
There are two main purposes for this report:

1. To amplify the voices of carers in Gloucestershire. We will share carers stories, experiences and concerns with people all across the health and social care system, as well as the voluntary and private sectors.
2. To ensure actions we take this coming year reflect what carers need and want. We have included a 'You said, we will' within this report, so people can see how we will directly respond to what carers said.



## Responses and Themes

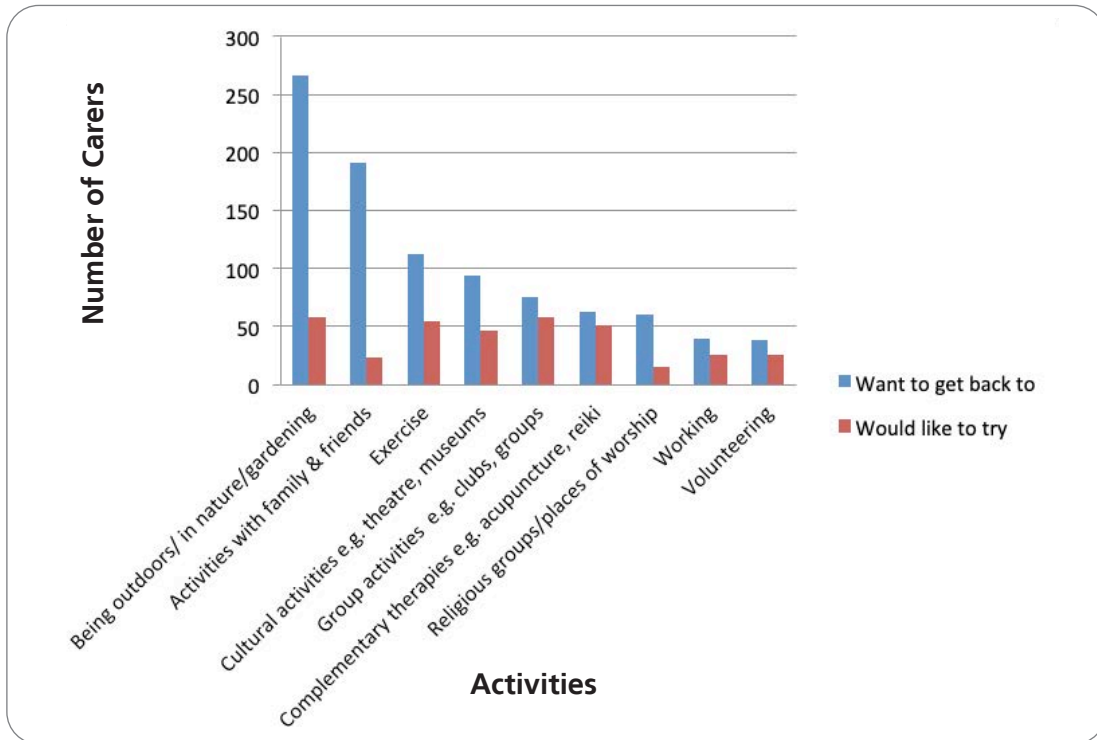
### 1. Which of the following best describes how you feel about the relaxation of lockdown?



As you can see from the pie chart, most carers are worried and, therefore, are going to restrict their social circles and activities over winter. However, this does not mean that carers do not want contact. What this does mean is that we need to work hard to ensure carers do not feel isolated this winter. Further down through this report we have ideas about how we can work together to support this.



## 2. What activities are you looking forward to returning to, or would be interested in taking up, over the next couple of months?



As you can see from this bar chart the top 3 activities that carers are looking forward to either getting back to, or to trying, are:

1. Being outdoors/spending time in nature/gardening
2. Social activities with friends and family
3. Exercise

These 3 things are of great importance to anyone, especially during this time of anxiety, uncertainty and restriction. However, for many carers this is even more important. Non carers were able to go outside during lockdown, for the one hour allowed. Carers were not able to do this due to the reduced services to support their cared for. Most carers are already short on time, exhausted and in need of respite. Keeping social, active and looking after themselves is key to ensuring their own wellbeing as well as to ensure they can continue in their caring role.

The next three activities were: group activities, cultural activities and complementary therapies. All of these responses show that whilst many carers are concerned about returning safely to some form of normality, getting outdoors and retaining activities that keep them stimulated and connected are necessary during this time.

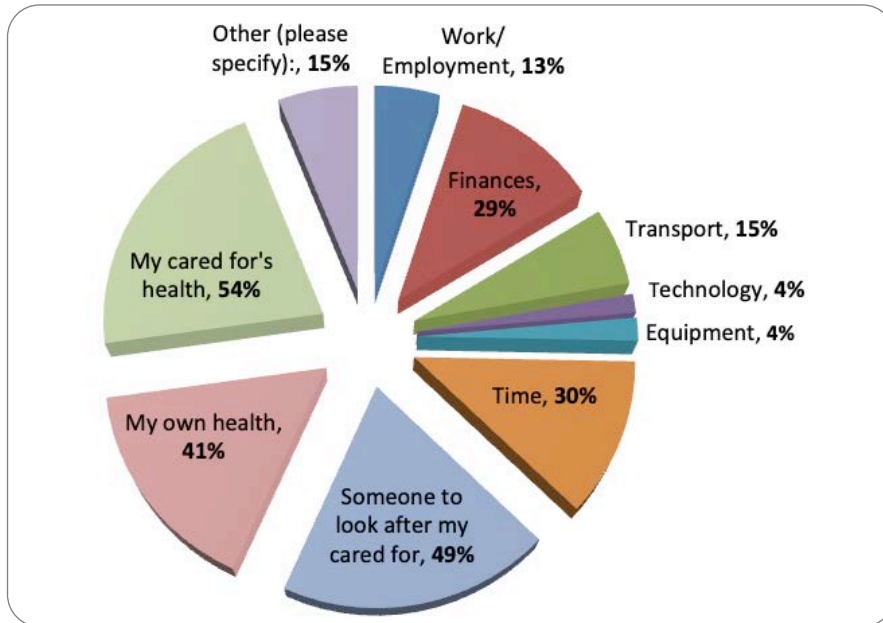
*"I have lost all of my respite. I long to be able to go somewhere by myself and have a day off!"*

*"I would love to go for walks and visit garden centres."*

*"I was hoping to take my Mum to some dementia clubs and activities so looking forward to trying these when it feels safe to do so."*

*"Being able access a GP. Have regular contact with medical professionals"*

### 3. What might stop you from doing these things?



\*please note that the % will not add to 100%, due to carers being able to choose multiple answers.

This pie chart shows the top three barriers to carers being able to return to these activities, or try something new:

1. My cared for's health
2. Someone to look after my cared for
3. My own health

One of the top concerns for carers was the risk of their cared for contracting Covid 19. Part of this concern is how people in local communities are acting, with people not adhering to social distancing, for example.

**"other people's lack of understanding regarding social distancing and staying safe."**

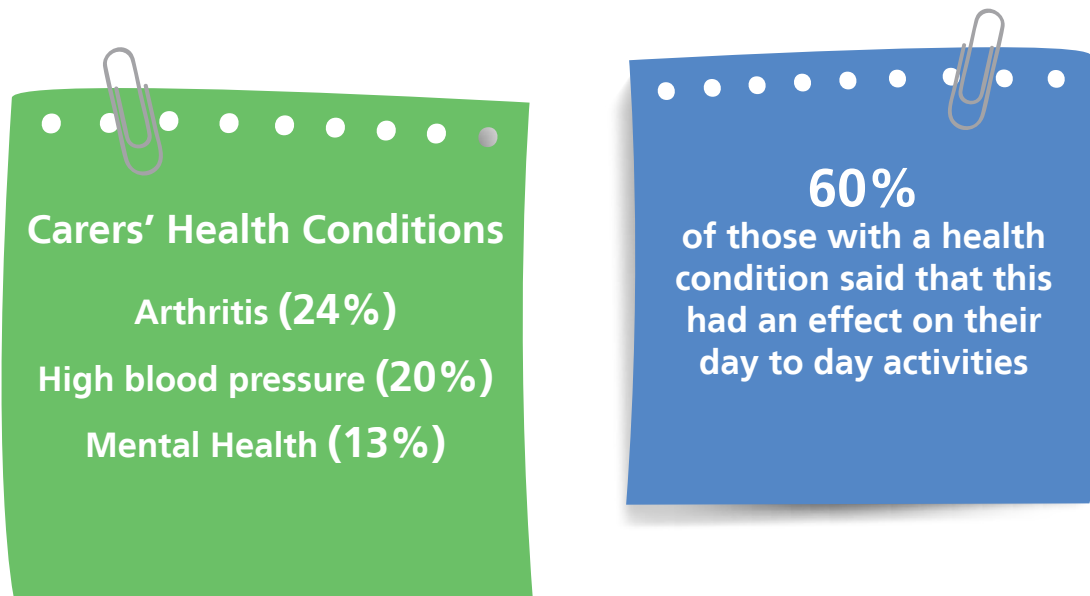
**"Risk of infecting cared for"**

We are looking at ways to support carers' situations alongside the health of their cared for. Where there are care plans in place, carer's voice should be heard and carers need to understand the help and support available for the person they care for. It is also important for carers to have time for themselves to pursue activities that support their own wellbeing and carers' breaks need to be adaptable, flexible and individualised to ensure they work for people on a personal level.

The carers' own health being cited as a barrier highlights the need for carers to look after themselves, as many carers have their own health issues. This is supported by the GP Patient Survey data for carers nationally and locally.

### **GP Patient survey Gloucestershire – Carers Health**

The full General Practice Patient Survey results were published 2020. Within Gloucestershire, 1,349 carers took part in the survey. A detailed review of this survey was taken to understand carers who are registered as a carer with their GP Surgery.



When asked if carers have had a discussion with their GP to discuss their condition, 54% said no. Of those that did (approximately 344 individuals) only 64% of those agreed a plan to help manage their condition. However, of those who had been given a plan, 95% considered it to be helpful.



Within the Gloucestershire Carers Survey, carers also referred to activities which have been closed or reduced. Sometimes carers have chosen to stop activities, but many carers referenced activities being shut. This has had an impact on the cared for and the carer.

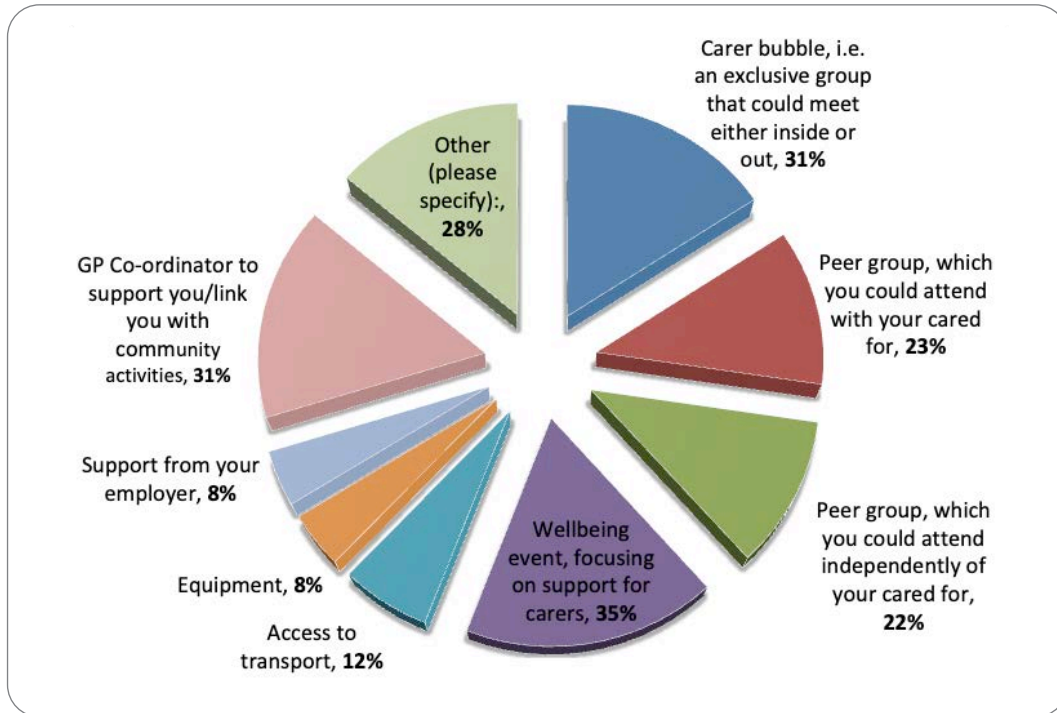
**“Many if not all activities have been mothballed due to covid19 so I’m keen for anything to restart so my husband can have more social interaction”**

**“Not feeling confident to use {paid} carers at this time”**





## 4. What support could be put in place to help you achieve these ambitions?



\* please note that the % will not add to 100%, due to carers being able to choose multiple answers

Over one third of carers who responded would like a carers wellbeing event, focusing on support for carers. We are planning this event for late November 2020. Around one third of carers also stated they would like a GP co-ordinator to support them and connect them to community activities. We are going to work with social prescribing colleagues to ensure the Community Wellbeing Service and GP Link Workers are known, accessible and available to more carers. Finally, carer bubbles and peer support groups also rated highly. We will work together to ensure support for these areas is developed.

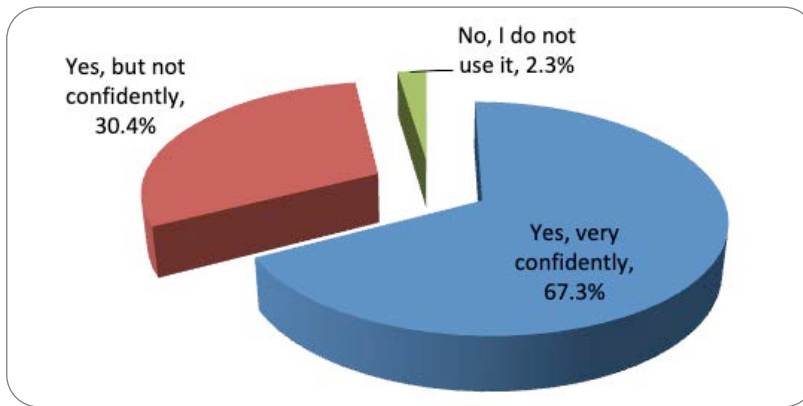
Again, respite was mentioned in many of the comments for this question and we acknowledge that carers need respite to access many activities and ensure their own good and stable health and wellbeing.

“Support organisation to re-establish groups safely but not virtually”

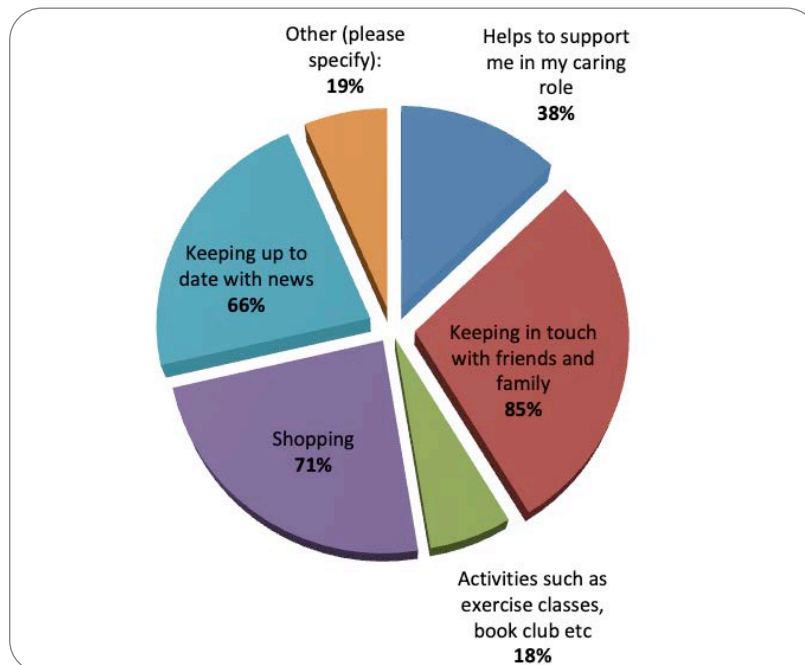
“Regular respite needed”

“I frankly have no idea I am almost too tired to think about it”

## 5. Are you able to use equipment such as computers, laptops, mobile phone, virtual digital assistant (Amazon Echo etc)? What do you use it for?



We acknowledge that this survey was placed and advertised online. Whilst paper copies were available and carers were able to phone Gloucestershire Carers Hub to answer the survey over the phone, we appreciate that the answer to this question will be skewed by the fact that Covid 19 meant we were not able to capture the views of many carers who did not have access to the internet. However, this pie chart shows that almost one third of the carers who responded are not confident in using technology. We acknowledge that the term ‘confident’ is subjective and that some people are confident using technology but still want paper options.



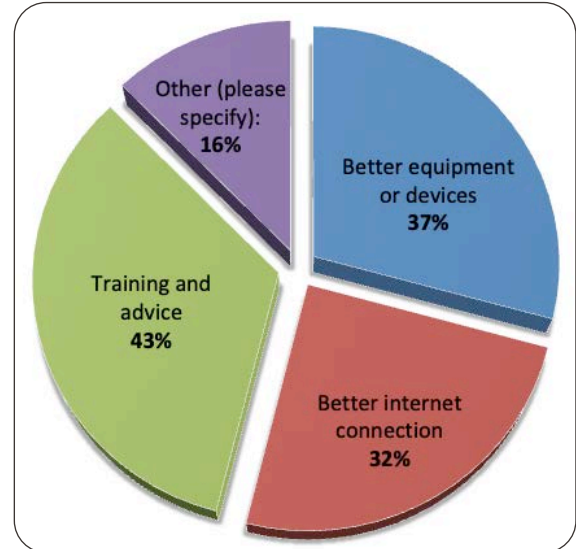
\* please note that the % will not add to 100%, due to carers being able to choose multiple answers

We were pleased to see that many carers who responded are utilising technology to keep in touch with friends and family. It is also interesting to note that very few carers who responded use technology for activities such as exercise and book clubs. We are planning to showcase how to use technology for such activities at our online carers event from 23 November 2020, in conjunction with Gloucestershire Carers Hub. We are also planning to work together to see how we can better utilise technology to support carers in their caring role.

## 6. What help would you need to be able to make more use of this equipment?

We know that technology is not for everyone. Nor can it replace face to face contact for everything. We are social beings and have not yet adapted to allow for 100% digital company! However, where carers want support with utilising technology we want to help them to do so. We will work with colleagues to provide training and advice for carers to use technology to make a positive difference in their lives.

\* please note that the % will not add to 100%, due to carers being able to choose multiple answers



"I consider myself fairly lucky to already have relatively good equipment and enough knowledge to reap the benefits. Without technology I think life would have been virtually impossible because as a carer I would have been entirely dependent on outside help even for the most simple things such as shopping."

"I would like to know how to join groups online, eg Zoom etc."

"I just don't like it!!"

## 7. Are you aware that some carers are eligible for a free flu vaccination? Are you intending to have a flu vaccination this year?

We were so pleased that over 90% of carers were aware that they could be eligible for a free flu vaccination. Over 85% of carers are either 'definitely' or will 'maybe' have the flu vaccination this year.



## Next Steps

- We are presenting the results of this survey at various groups within the health and social care system. We will also use a communication plan to ensure this report is shared widely across Gloucestershire.
- We will continue to listen to carers to understand and develop support for carers across Gloucestershire.
- We have already started to implement some of the activities identified in the 'You said, we will' table below.

## You said, we will ....

You said...	We will...
<b>I am worried about returning to normal activities in the immediate future.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue, through the Gloucestershire Carers Hub, to make wellbeing calls and reprioritise key cohorts over winter.</li> <li>• Continue weekly communications to carers from Gloucestershire Carers Hub. They will be informative, interactive and stimulating including activities that carers may enjoy.</li> <li>• Encourage more interaction with partners such as the voluntary and community sector and libraries to ensure all community support is accessible and available to carers.</li> </ul>
<b>I am looking forward to more time outside, getting back into nature, gardening and exercise.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with the Local Nature Partnership to see how we can facilitate this.</li> <li>• Research accessible outside space for carer bubbles.</li> <li>• Look at gardening, exercise and training ideas for indoors and outdoors activities to support carers.</li> </ul>
<b>I want more social activity with friends and family.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gloucestershire Carers Hub will expand their online exercise, activity and social programme including supporting carers to access these.</li> </ul>
<b>I sometimes struggle with these activities due to the health of my cared for, someone to look after my cared for and my own health.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with healthcare professionals to promote the triangle of care in writing care plans for the cared for.</li> <li>• Work with health and social care partners to develop a contingency planning framework for carers in Gloucestershire.</li> <li>• Work with carers on personal wellbeing action plans.</li> <li>• Work with healthcare professionals to ensure they consider carers health and wellbeing as well as the cared for. This may mean carers have their own care plan in place too.</li> <li>• Work with partners to look at developing more flexible options for carers breaks.</li> </ul>

You said...	We will...
<p><b>I am would like a GP carer co-ordinator, a wellbeing event and carer bubbles/peer support groups to support me.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with colleagues in the NHS in order to better link carers with social prescribing and Community Wellbeing Services.</li> <li>• Plan winter wellness events as well as an online wellbeing event to coincide with Carers Rights Day in November.</li> <li>• Develop packs to enable carer support groups to form and to be sustainable.</li> <li>• Work with local partners to identify carers to form a carer bubble to meet safely face to face and/or online to support each other.</li> <li>• Trial some carer support groups out of hours, for carers who cannot attend events during the day.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I am mostly confident with technology but may need some support.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with local partners and Gloucestershire Carers Hub to support as many carers as possible (and who want to) to get online. This includes phoning The Hub for support, simple help guides and linking with libraries and Adult Education.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I tend to not use technology for social activities or help with caring role.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold an event to highlight how technology can be used for a variety of activities including exercise, social clubs, arts and crafts.</li> <li>• Work with partners to see how we can develop technology for carers to help in their caring role.</li> </ul>
<p><b>I would like more support for IT training and advice on how to use.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run technology training and advice surgeries including door step digital support. We will also link with partner agencies that provide this to ensure they are carer aware.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The challenges I face in my caring role and support needed are:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>I don't know what support is available</b></li> <li>▶ <b>My mental health is suffering</b></li> <li>▶ <b>Lack of breaks/respite/day care and support</b></li> <li>▶ <b>Lack of support from medical profession</b></li> <li>▶ <b>Feeling of abandonment and isolation</b></li> <li>▶ <b>I am worried about Covid 19 Worried about my own health and feeling exhausted</b></li> <li>▶ <b>As a parent carer I feel a lack of support, especially when cared for unable to attend school/placement</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve communication around what support is available for carers e.g. via radio, social media, as well as information condensed to find quickly.</li> <li>• Work with mental health colleagues to ensure services are accessible to carers.</li> <li>• Work with colleagues and partners to look at day centre options and more flexible carer breaks.</li> <li>• Develop carer aware training to be delivered to health and social care professionals.</li> <li>• Reinstate wellbeing calls for carers over winter.</li> <li>• Continue sending up to date information through the weekly carers communication email.</li> <li>• Work with healthcare professionals who can support carers' own care plans, if needed. Also work with carers on developing personal wellbeing action plans.</li> <li>• Work with partners, such as Gloucestershire Parent Carers Forum, to understand what support we can help put in place.</li> </ul>

## Who responded

### Would you describe your caring role as:

Answer Choice		Response Percent
1	Adult Carer (you are 18+ and provide care for someone 18+)	82.9%
2	Parent Carer (you are 18+ and provide care to a disabled child for whom you have parental responsibility)	16.3%
3	A child's carer (non-parent) (you are 18+ and provide care to a disabled child for whom you do not have parental responsibility, such as a grandparent).	0.4%
4	Young Adult Carer (in this context, if you are 18-25 and provide care)	0.4%

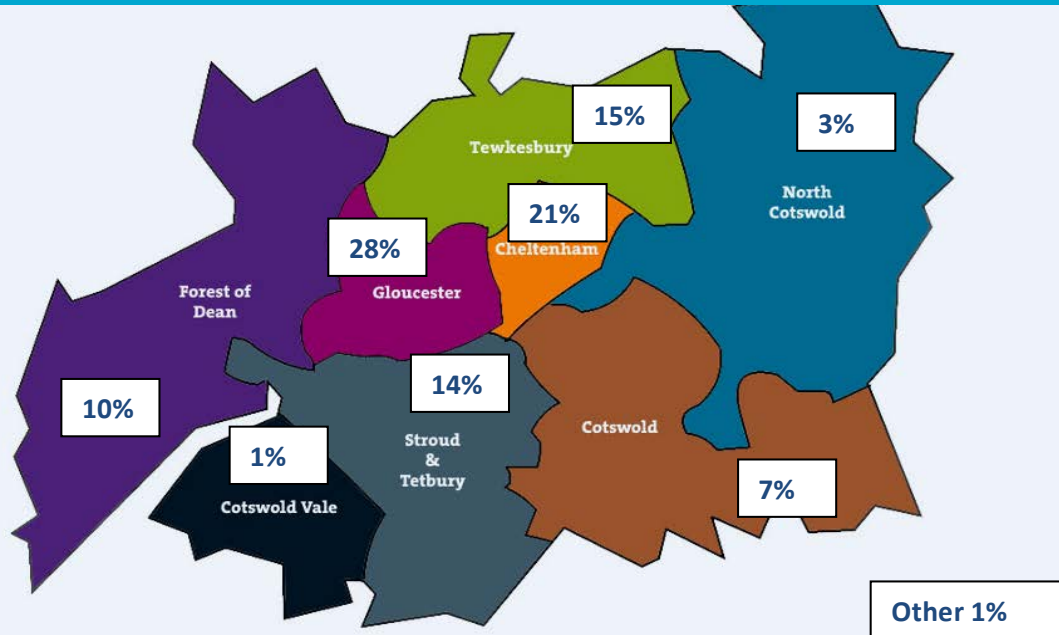
### Are you?

Answer Choice		Response Percent
1	Male	24.8%
2	Female	74.8%
3	Prefer not to say	0.4%

### Which age group are you:

Answer Choice		Response Percent
1	Under 18	0.4%
2	18-25	0.4%
3	26-35	2.0%
4	36-45	12.9%
5	46-55	22.3%
6	56-65	22.3%
7	66-75	20.7%
8	Over 75	17.6%
9	Prefer not to say	1.6%

### Postcode (% of those who completed Carers Survey in that District):



### Which best describes your ethnicity?

Answer Choice	Response Percent
1 White British	89.9%
2 White Other	2.3%
3 Asian or Asian British	3.1%
4 Black or Black British	0.8%
5 Chinese	0.4%
6 Mixed	0.4%
7 Prefer not to say	1.9%
8 Other (please specify)	1.2%

### Which of these best describes what you are doing at present? If more than one of these applies to you, please choose the main one only

Answer Choice	Response Percent
1 Full-time paid work (30 hours or more each week)	14.6%
2 Part-time paid work (under 30 hours each week)	13.0%
3 Full-time education at school, college or university	1.2%
4 Unemployed	4.3%
5 Fully retired from work	40.2%
6 Looking after the family, or home	22.4%
7 Prefer not to say	4.3%