Coronavirus Recovery Plan Consultation

March 2021

Oldham Council

Executive Summary

Participant Summary

- Over half of participants are aged 45-64 years.

- 70% of participants are female.

- Most responses have been received from two districts namely Saddleworth, St James and Waterhead and Royton Shaw and Crompton.

- Around 60% of participants are in employment.

- 90% of participants are White British. Consequently, the BAME population is significantly under-represented in this consultation.

Summary

- Over 80% of participants are still concerned about COVID 19 almost a year after the pandemic started.

- Responded reported a wide range of impacts that the pandemic has had on the people of Oldham, with social isolation, mental health and access to GP/Doctors being the primary impacts.

- Over half indicated a confidence that they would recover economically. A worrying 45% are either uncertain or are not sure yet.

- The key priorities across all participants are to be "Prioritising those most in need" "Creating safe and decent homes for everyone" and "Providing easy access to parks and green spaces".

- Most commonly participants have had to cancel or postpone GP/hospital appointments. Half of participants have ignored any wider health issues so as not to put pressure on NHS services.

- Over half have been furloughed and 30% have lost jobs or been made redundant. The same proportion have needed to borrow money or experienced increased credit borrowing.

Parents of school aged Children

- 78% parents are still concerned about Coronavirus.

- The following section focusses on all responses from parents of school aged children[1] (n97). All responses are based on known responses. Where responses do not total to the count of responses or percentages to 100% then multiple response have been made available.

- Figure 14 shows that a lower proportion of parents are concerned about Coronavirus (78%) than the overall response population.

- Parents are concerned about both their own and their child's mental health. Parents are concerned about their child's education. Parents are also concerned about feelings of social isolation.

- Parents noted providing easy access to parks and open spaces as their top priority (27%), closely followed by prioritising those in most need. Only 12% cited access to quality education. However, it is important to note the 20% of parents who stated the importance of supporting our children and young people.

- Around 40% of parents feel that they will recover economically from the pandemic.

Informal Carers

- 50 informal carers responded to the consultation. Most commonly looking after elderly relatives or friends.

- Over 80% are still worried about Coronavirus.

- Carers were most likely to agree that the pandemic had affected their ability to care for or support vulnerable or elderly people and had to feelings of social isolation.

- Only a third of informal carers responding to the consultation felt they would recover economically from the pandemic.

- Three in ten informal carers cited prioritising those most in need as their top priority. Other key priorities included providing easy access to parks and open spaces and creating good employment opportunities.

- 85% of informal carers stated the need to cancel or postpone GP or hospital appointments during the pandemic period, whilst two thirds ignored wider health issues to avoid putting pressure on the NHS. Over two-thirds of informal carers have self-isolated due to Coronavirus.

- 60% have been furloughed and 28% have unfortunately lost their jobs. Participants shared the need for financial support, the need to borrow money and the need for support from their local community.

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[1] Noted as Parents therewithin

Business owners and representative

- 47 businesses responded to the consultation.

- Three quarters of business owners responding to the survey are worried about Coronavirus.

- The main effects of the pandemic for business owners were impacts on mental health, finances and on feelings of social isolation.

- Only a third of participants are confident that they will recover economically from the pandemic.

- Business owners stated that prioritising those in most need should be Oldham Council's top priority. Only 15% stated the importance of creating employment opportunities. When asked for other priorities however, a quarter spoke about supporting businesses and the town more widely.

Background

Launched on 17 Feb 2021 the Coronavirus Recovery plan consultation seeks the views of those who live in, work in, and visit Oldham around the impact of the Coronavirus COVID-19, their views on vaccinations and priorities for the town once the pandemic eases.

About this report

There are 616 responses. The following report focussed on the key elements necessary for the development of the Coronavirus recovery plan. Further reporting will be developed around the following themes and will be delivered by no later than Friday 16 April.

- Impacts and future behaviours
- Exploring Vaccinations
- Stronger Communities including a BAME focus
- Campaign evaluation
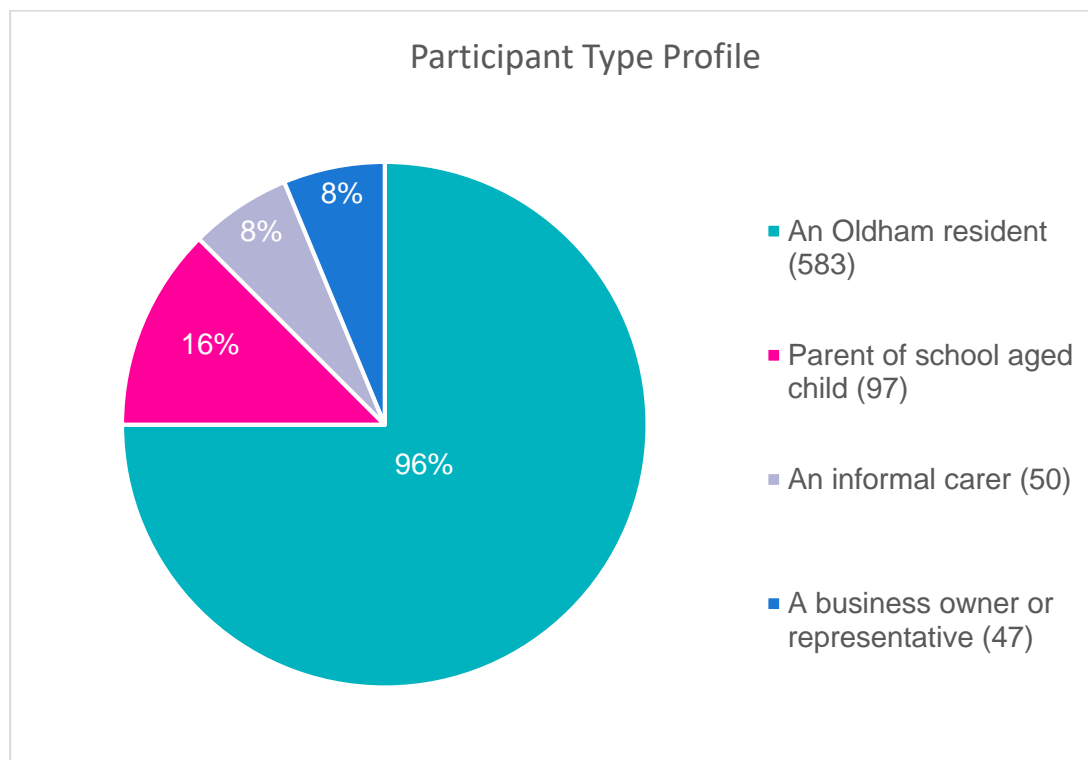- Youth Voice

Participant Summary

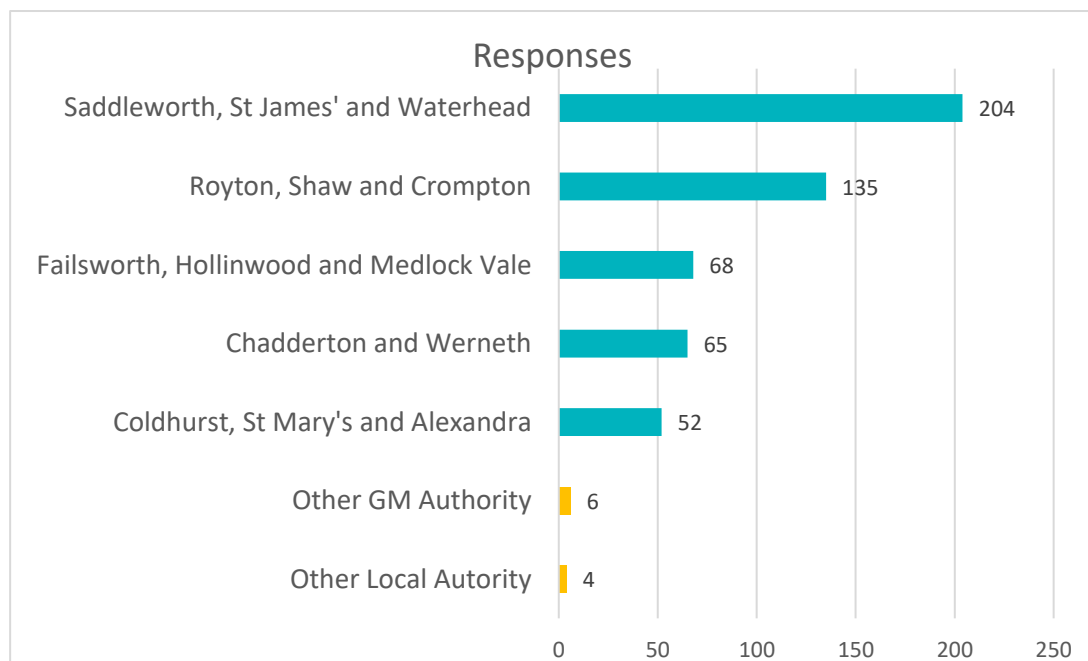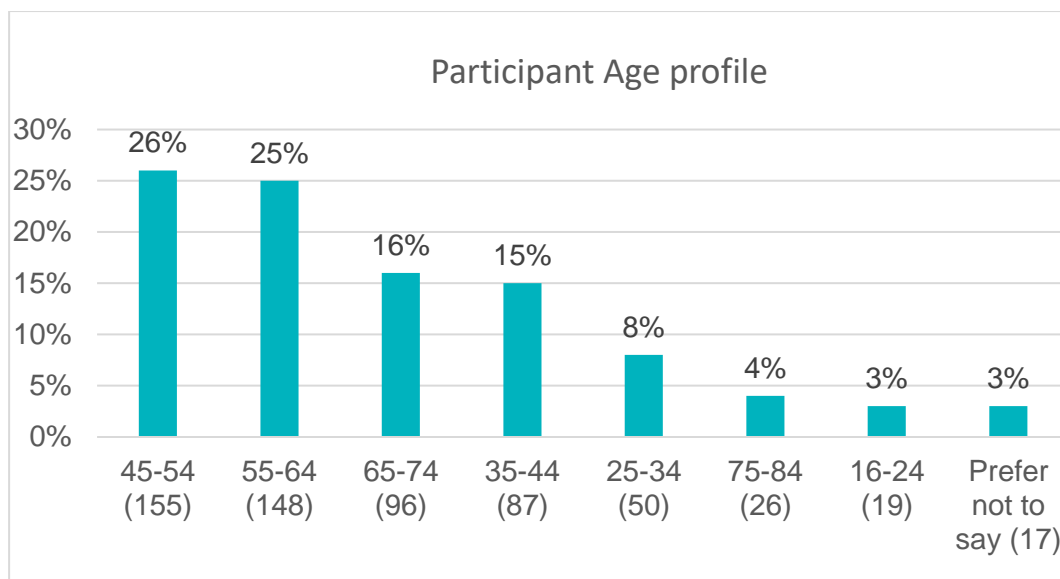Figure 1: Participant Profile: 'Are you responding as?' – Source: Q1
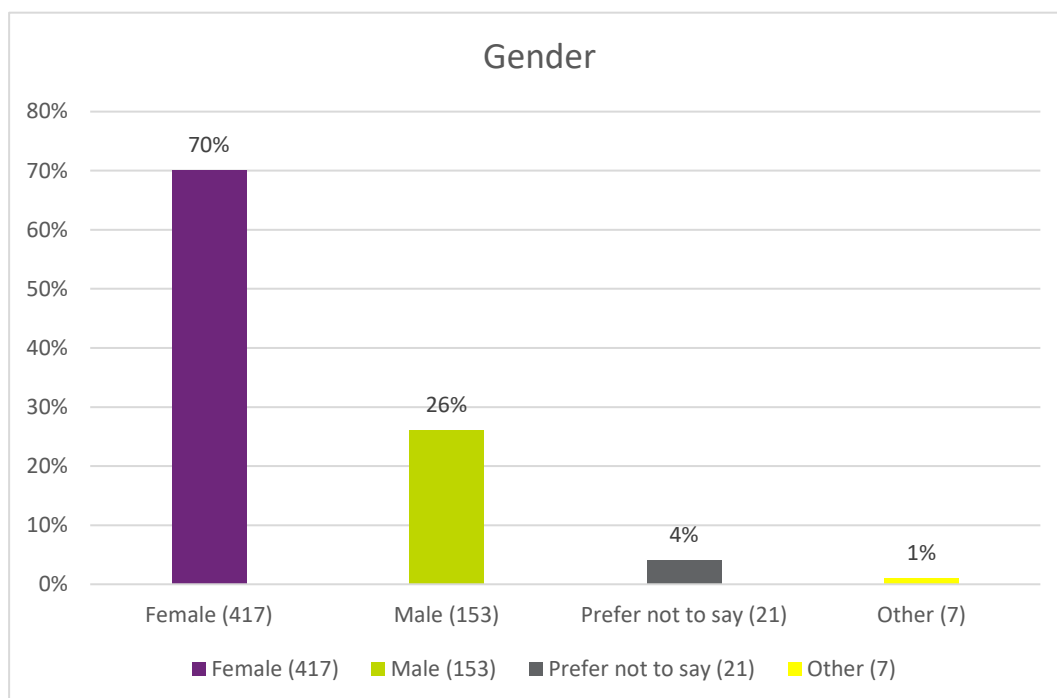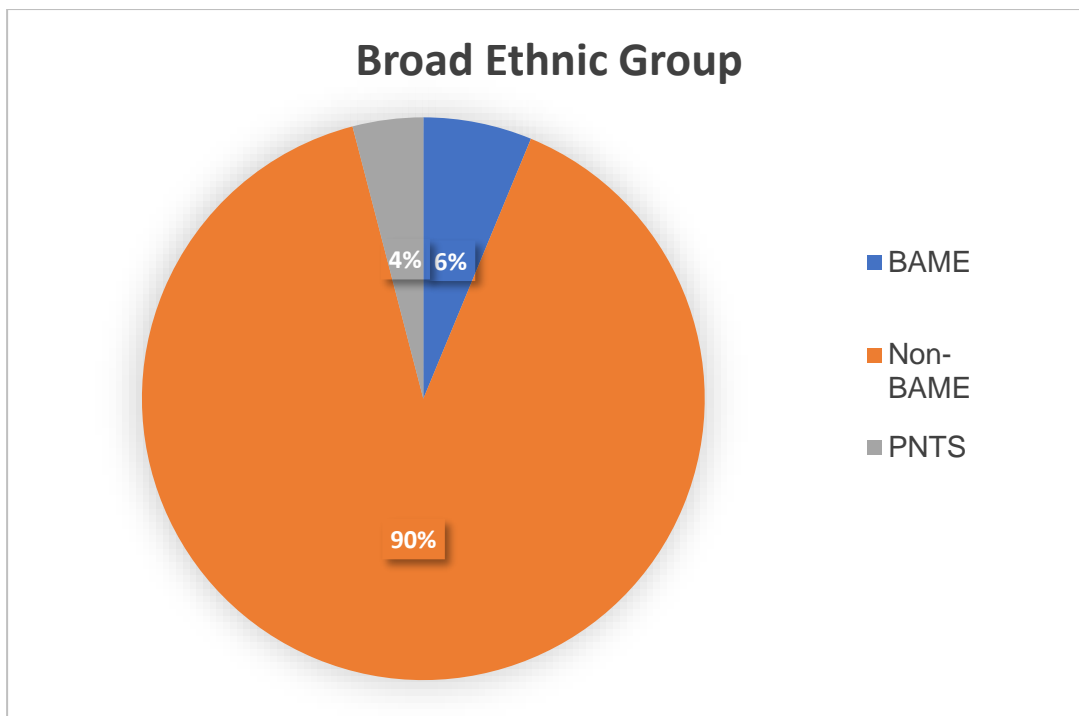

Figure 2: Participant Profile: 'What is your postcode?' – Source: Q20
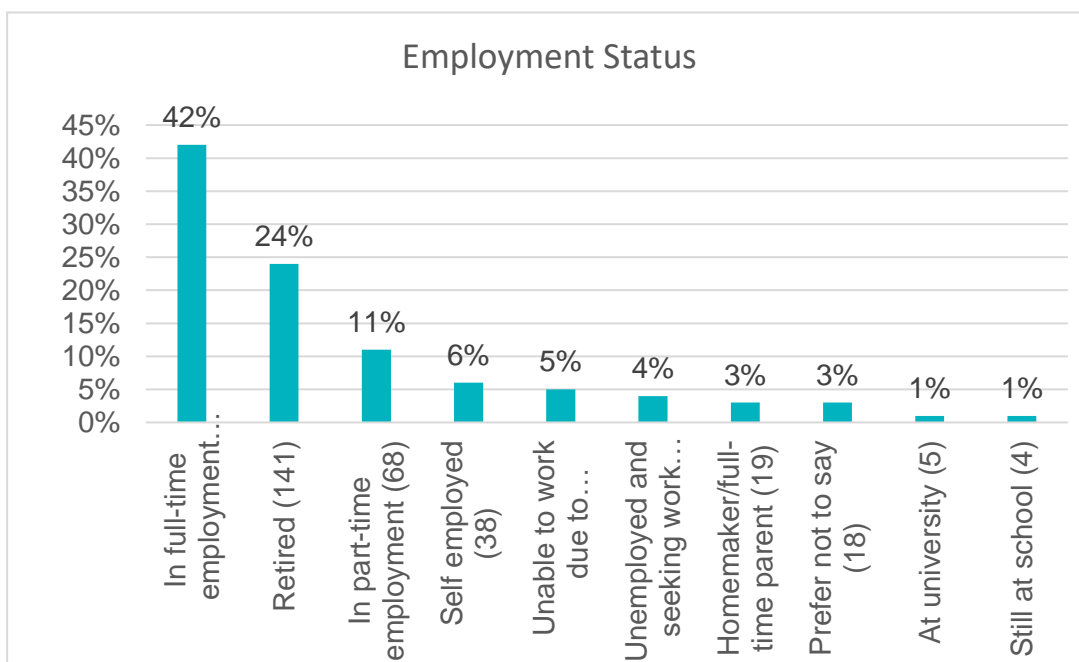
Figure 3:Participant Profile: 'To which of the following age groups do you belong?' – Source: Q21

Figure 4:Participant Profile: 'Do you identify as?' – Source: Q22

Figure 5: Participant Profile: 'Which of the following categories would best describe your ethnicity?' – Source: Q23

Figure 6: Participant Profile: 'What is your employment status?' – Source: Q25
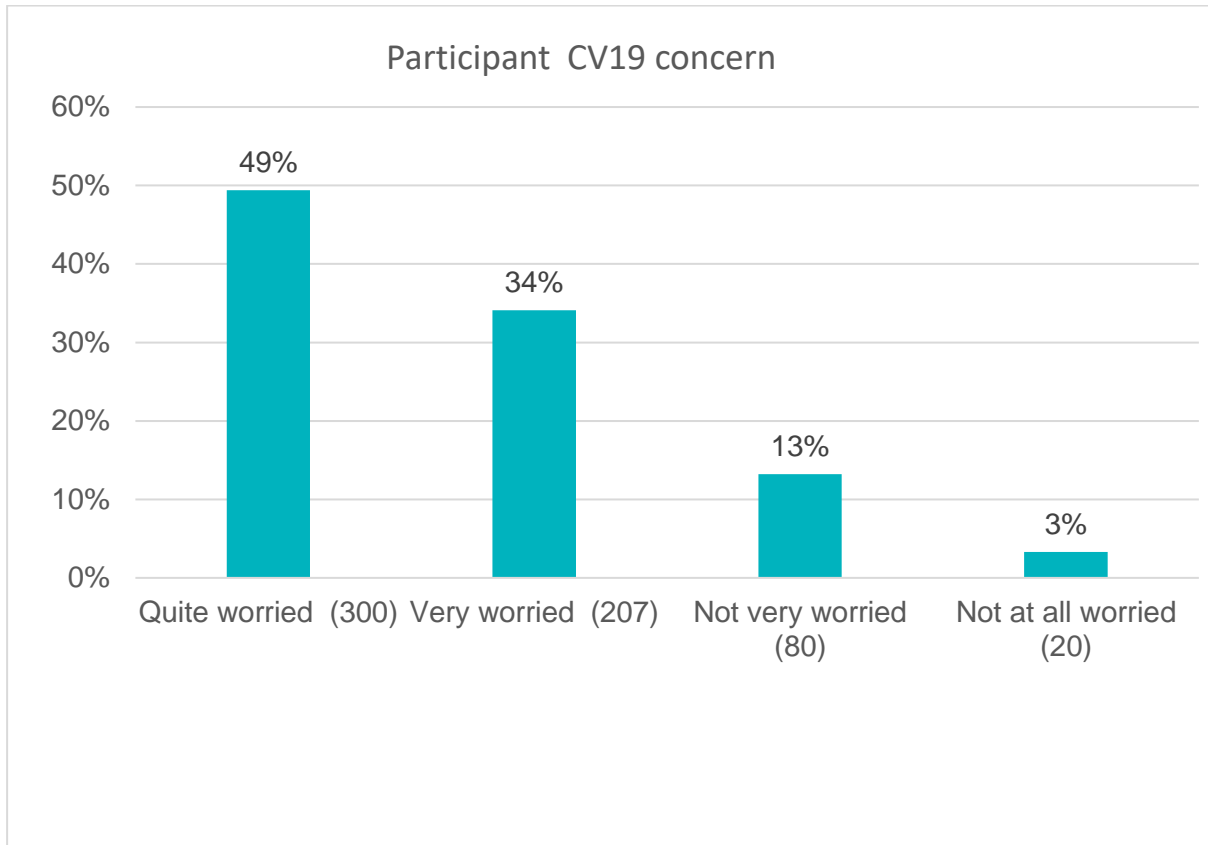
Findings Summary

The following section focusses on all responses (n616), subsequent sections will filter these responses by participant type. All responses are based on known responses. Where responses do not total to the count of responses or percentages to 100% then multiple response have been made available.

All Responses

Figure seven illustrates that over 80% of participants are still concerned about COVID-19 almost a year after the pandemic started.

<figure>

Participant CV19 concern

Category	Percentage
Quite worried (300)	49%
Very worried (207)	34%
Not very worried (80)	13%
Not at all worried (20)	3%

</figure>

Figure 7: All Participants: 'Overall, how worried are you about Coronavirus?' – Source: Q4

Figure eight shows the wide range of impacts that the pandemic has had on the people of Oldham, with social isolation, mental health and access to GP/Doctors being the primary impacts.
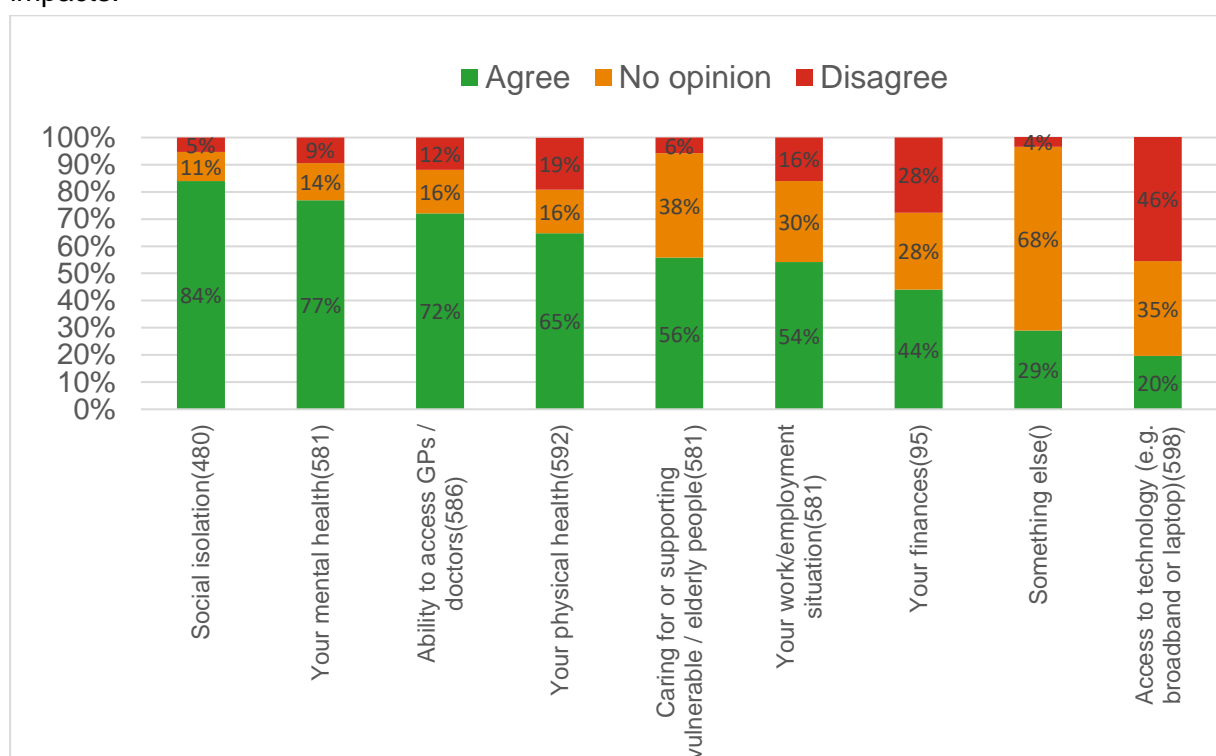
Figure 8: All participants: 'To what extent do you agree that the Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the following aspects of your life?' – Source: Q5

Figure nine shows the themes around the other concerns that participants have about the coronavirus pandemic. It shows that the most prominent themes that came out of participants' comments were concerns around mental health and being worried about the impact on communities and businesses. It is also important to note that many of the individual comments contained several different themes. A selection of comments to this effect can be found below.

Mental Health

> "Get help for my mental health as a frontline staff it's even harder to find placements in the NHS and work to provide for myself and family it is making us all feel suicidal and really affecting us all"

> "employers should prioritise our mental health, assess formally whether we must be in work right now, alternative mental health support, ideas for social isolation worries, stress and anxiety, the uncertainty, community feel, maybe online platform or virtual coffee clubs or something"

> "the longer it goes on, the harder it is to work as the team is fraying at the edges. I can see myself disengaging from social contact, such as it is, and never managing to get this back so expect a much lonelier old age. I won't be able to see family in 2021, even my son in London. I am losing hope of anything left to enjoy in life. I also see the inequalities in the country becoming so much worse, meaning a dreary atmosphere for years."

Communities and businesses

"Because people have been using the internet to buy goods, I am concerned that the future of the high street shops who have had to close and may not be able to recover the business when allowed to reopen."

"I feel Oldham has been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus. We are a deprived town with a diverse community. Many people cannot afford to take time off work to isolate and the financial aid just hasn't been good enough. I have real concerns about the economic impact the coronavirus pandemic will have on our already strained town."

"Concerned about the impact it will have throughout the community and businesses"
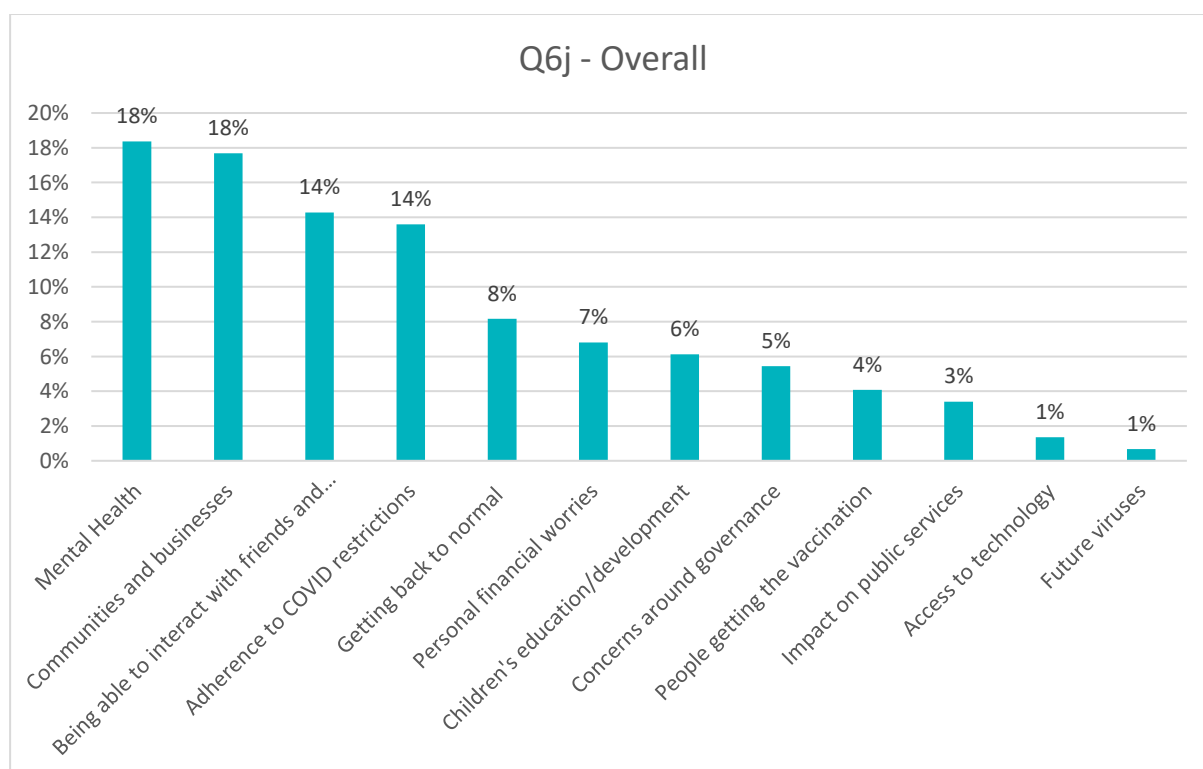
Figure 9: All Participants: 'Please tell us briefly about any other concerns you have in light of the Coronavirus pandemic' – Source: Q6j

When asked a little over half indicated a confidence that they would recover economically. A worrying 45% are either uncertain or are not sure yet.
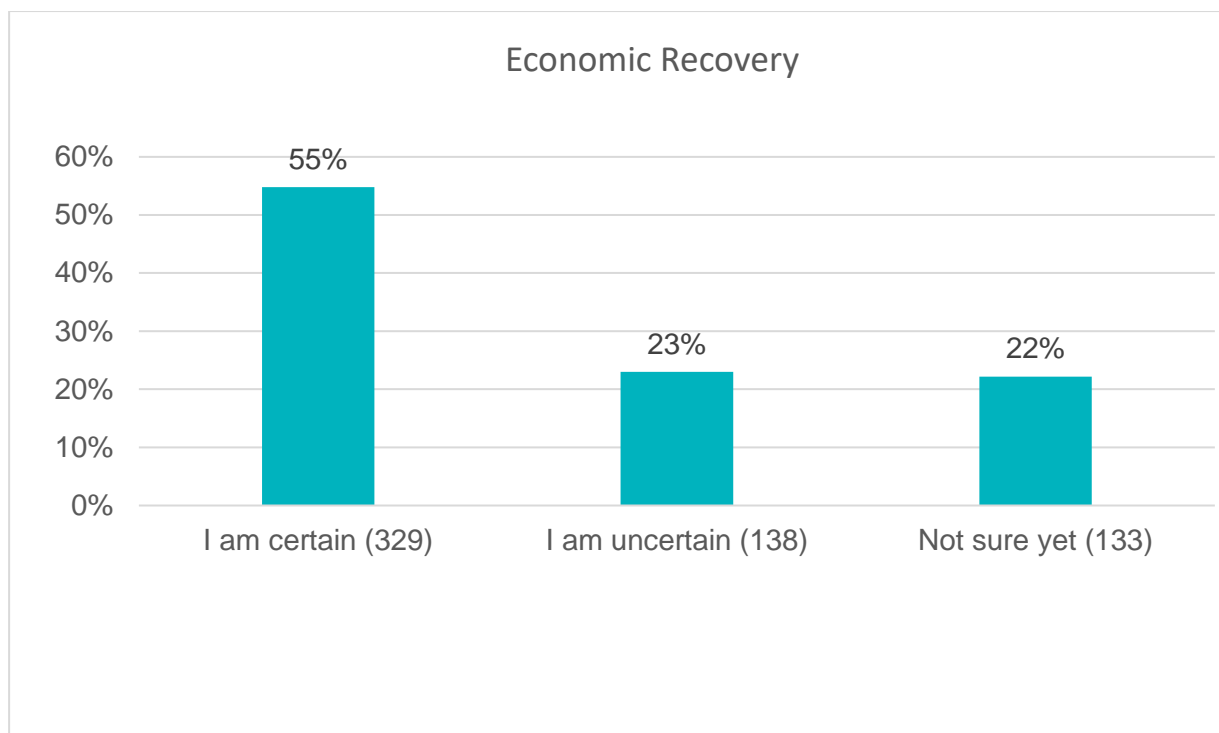
Figure 10: All Participants: 'How certain are you that, you personally, will be able to recover economically after the Coronavirus pandemic is over?' – Source: Q8

Priorities

Oldham Council has along with other contributors outlined some proposed priorities for the upcoming Coronavirus Recovery plan until 2022. Figure 11 shows the key priorities across all participants to be "Prioritising those most in need" "Creating safe and decent homes for everyone" and "Providing easy access to parks and green spaces".

Figure 12 shows some of the other priorities outlined by participants. 30% of participants spoke about the importance of being able to safely enjoy spending time with friends and family, cultural and leisure activities and travel. Supporting communities and tackling deprivation featured in 24% of responses, and 19% of participants mentioned the need for supporting businesses and the town more widely.

Participant Priorities

- Prioritising those most in need (111): 24%
- Creating safe and decent homes for everyone (93): 20%
- Providing easy access to parks and open spaces (76): 16%
- Creating good employment opportunities (62): 13%
- Access to a quality education (49): 11%
- Protecting our health services (47): 10%
- Something else (27): 6%
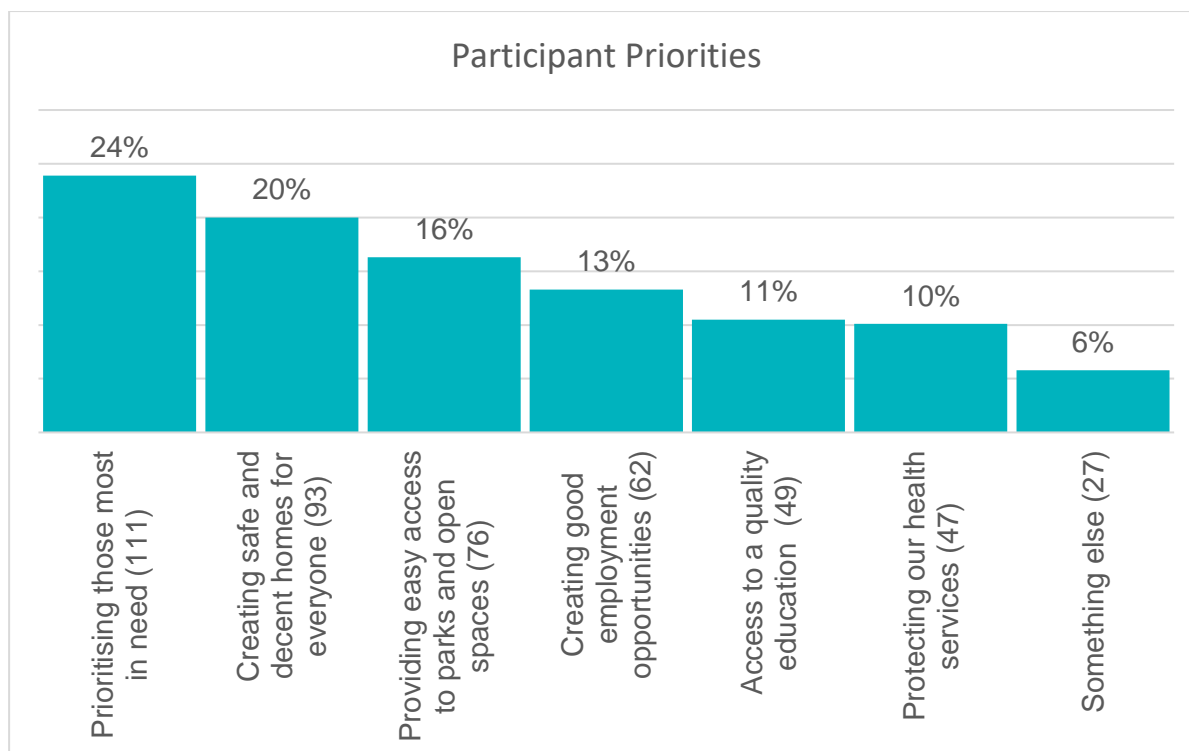
Figure 11: All participants: 'As we look forward to life after the Coronavirus pandemic, how important are the following priorities for Oldham?' – Source: Q9

What other things are important to you as we look forward to life after the pandemic?

- Safe socialising/culture/leisure/travel (203): 30%
- Supporting communities/tackling deprivation (164): 24%
- Supporting businesses/town/culture/services (126): 19%
- Supporting children/young people (55): 8%
- Being clear/transparent/supporting democracy (51): 8%
- Creating/supporting green spaces/supporting the environment (51): 8%
- Supporting older/vulnerable people (27): 4%
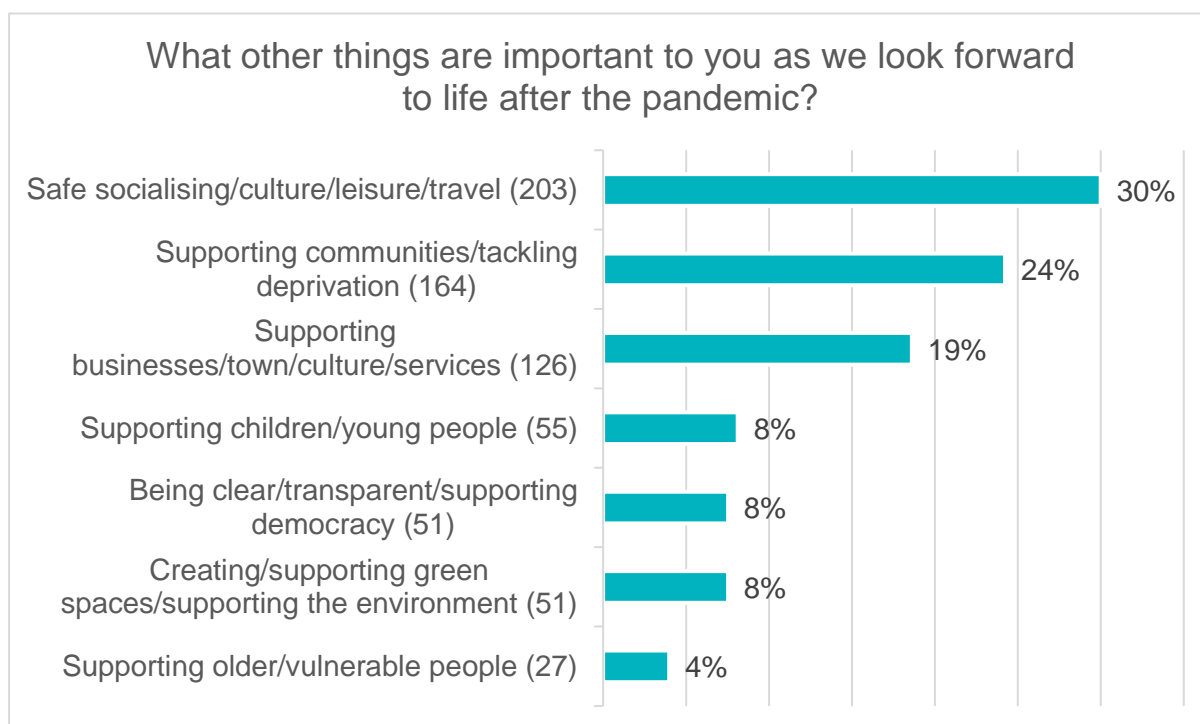
Figure 12: All Participants: 'What other thing or things are important to you as we look forward to life in Oldham after the Coronavirus pandemic?' – Source: Q10

Below is a selection of quotes taken from participants

Safe socialising/culture/leisure/travel

'Being able to see family and friends in a safe environment. Being able to go on holiday.'

'Being able to see family and friends in a safe environment. Being able to go on holiday.'

'Opening up public places, pubs, theatres, libraries etc.'

'being able to socialise with friends and family again and actually go to places that aren't within walking distance'

Supporting communities/tackling deprivation
'Look after the areas that are slowly becoming slum areas this has a big impact on people's wellbeing'

'Poverty is the main thing that must be resolved, our citizens should not have to go to food banks (thanks that they are operating) in 21st century Britain.'

Creating a cleaner, safer and much more sustainable way of life for everyone'

Supporting businesses/town/culture/services
Lower rents for shops to bring shops back to the town centres so people can visit, better markets again so people can shop local, better health centre and facilities in Shaw rather than just letting it run down into ruin'

'Something needs to be done to boost footfall in the town centre, maybe more community events at weekend to attract people (Brass Monkeys, Food Festivals, Farmers Markets, Carnival Parade etc).'

Supporting children/young people
'Support for young adults who have left education and have not been able to progress or experience the start of adult life.'

Being clear/transparent/supporting democracy

'Truth and openness about covid 19 strategy from Our elected Oldham officials, A clear, open strategy for moving forward'

'It is vital that ALL of the civil, public and private freedoms and rights previously enjoyed by society are reinstated'

'A local realistic road map over the next 5years out of this pandemic'

Creating/supporting green spaces/supporting the environment
'Stop building on green belt land. Utilise convert derelict properties/mills instead. Find a solution in certain rural areas to limit traffic and hordes of visitors who are overwhelming certain areas (Greenfield/ Diggle.) Keep on with up-keep and care of all local parks and recreational areas.'

'Redevelopment of brown field sites with affordable housing, whilst protecting our green field sites for everyone'

'Minimising climate change and biodiversity loss. If this is not done, things will be FAR WORSE than the coronavirus pandemic.'
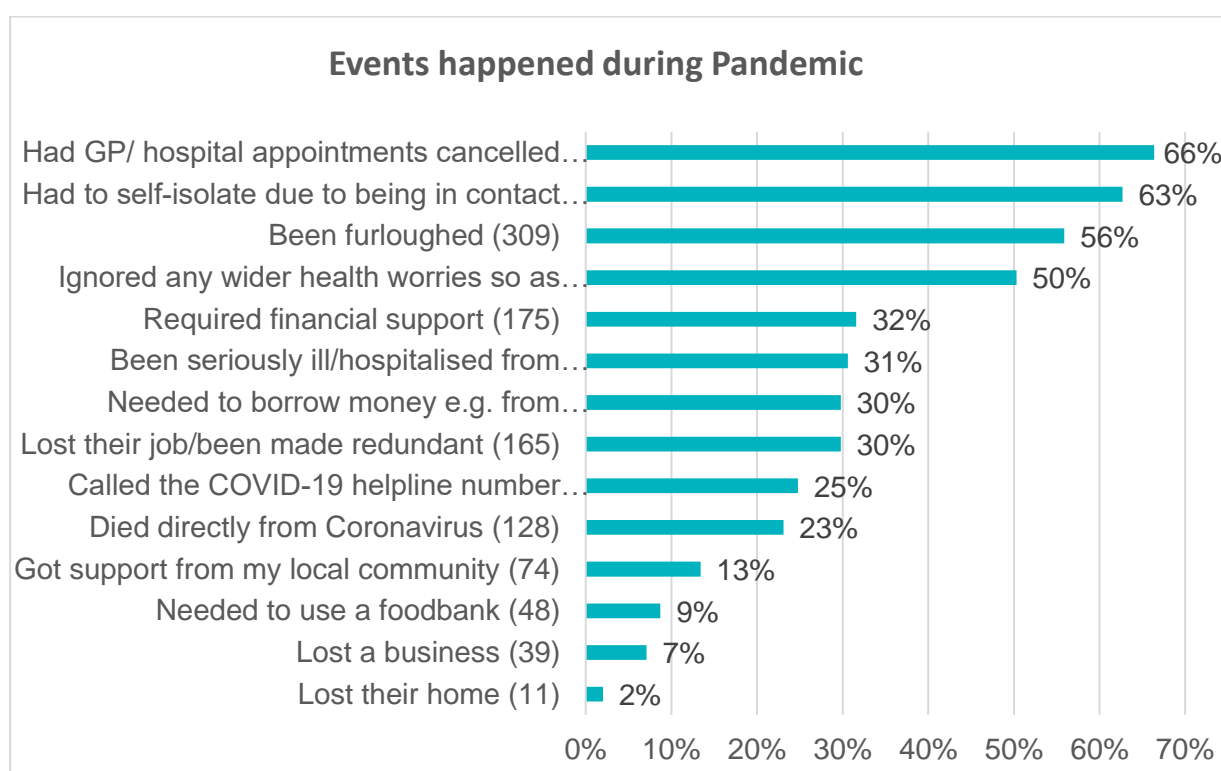
Supporting older/vulnerable people

'Mental health of vulnerable'

'That we carry on looking after the elderly vulnerable'

'Improving social care, especially for the elderly and those with dementia.'

Figure 13 highlights the events that have occurred to participants during the nearly 12 months of the Coronavirus pandemic. Most commonly having to cancel or postpone GP/hospital appointments. Half of participants have ignored any wider health issues so as not to put pressure of NHS services**.** Over half have been furloughed and 30% have lost jobs or been made redundant. The same proportion have needed to borrow money or increased credit borrowing.

Events happened during Pandemic

| Event	%
Had GP/ hospital appointments cancelled…	66%
Had to self-isolate due to being in contact…	63%
Been furloughed (309)	56%
Ignored any wider health worries so as…	50%
Required financial support (175)	32%
Been seriously ill/hospitalised from…	31%
Needed to borrow money e.g. from…	30%
Lost their job/been made redundant (165)	30%
Called the COVID-19 helpline number…	25%
Died directly from Coronavirus (128)	23%
Got support from my local community (74)	13%
Needed to use a foodbank (48)	9%
Lost a business (39)	7%
Lost their home (11)	2%

Figure 13: All Participants: 'Have any of the following happened to you, someone else in your household, or a close relative or friend as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic?' – Source: Q7
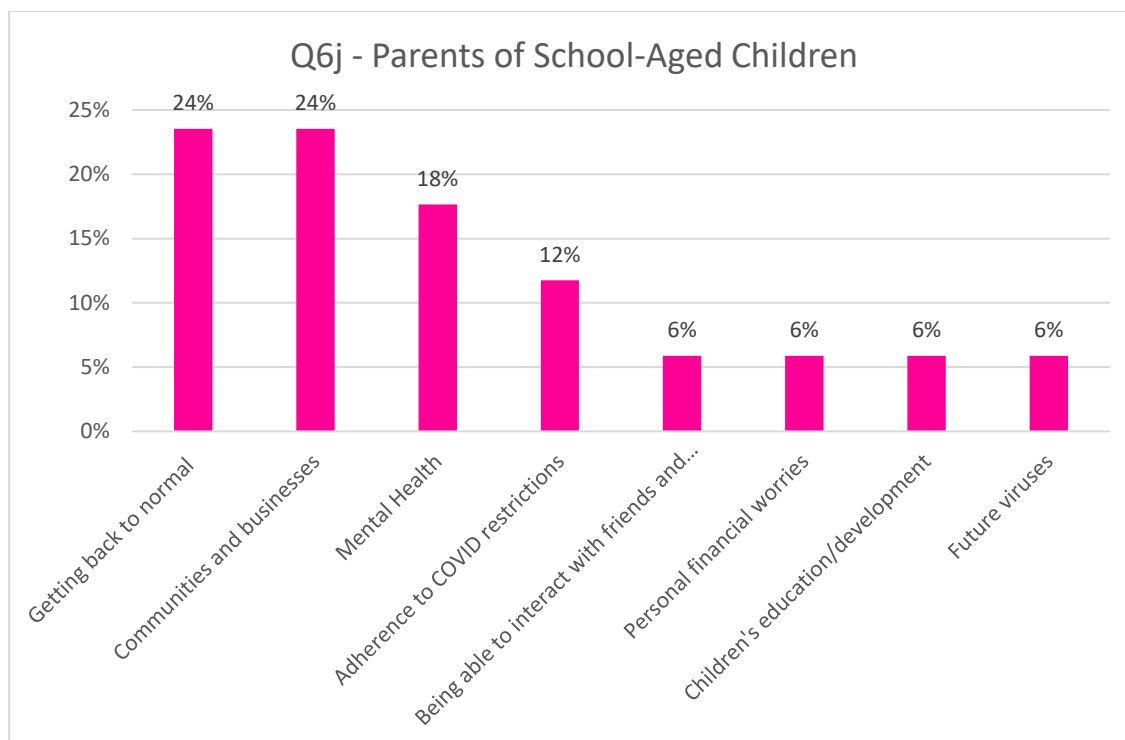
Parent of School Aged Child
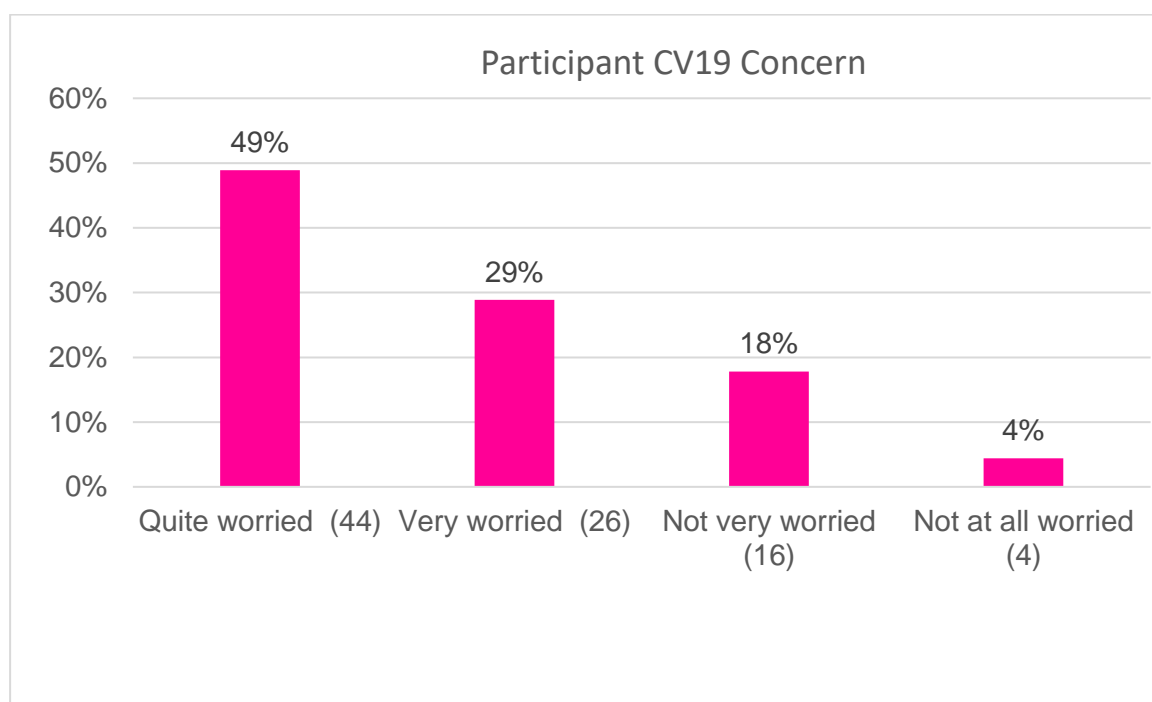
Figure 14: Parents: 'Overall, how worried are you about Coronavirus?' – Source: Q4/Q1

Parents are concerned about both their own and their child's mental health. Parents are concerned about their child's education. Parents are also concerned about feelings of social isolation (Figure 15).
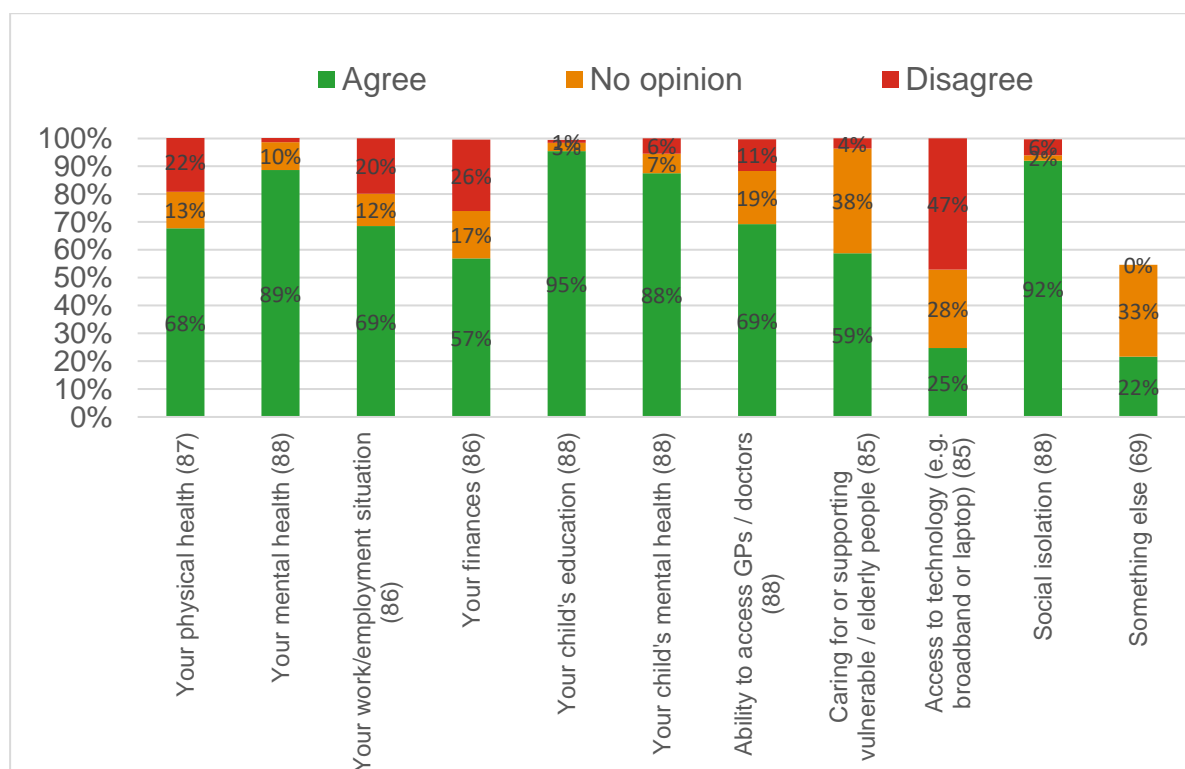
Figure 15: Parents: 'To what extent do you agree that the Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the following aspects of your life?' – Source: Q5/Q1

Figure 16: Parents: 'Please tell us briefly about any other concerns you have in light of the Coronavirus pandemic' – Source: Q6j/Q1

Figure 16 shows the other concerns that parents of school-aged children had as a result of the pandemic. It shows the two main themes that came out of their concerns were a focus on getting back to normal, and a worry around communities and businesses. A selection of their comments can be found below.

Getting back to normal

"Will things ever be back to the way we were, will we ever be free to live our lives as we once did? Will our children ever catch up on all this missed time from education? Will the NHS ever be able to catch up with routine and undiagnosed issues?"

"I'm afraid that it won't go away completely and that this is now our normally way of life that we have to get used to that there is always going to be one virus or another that's going to send the country into chaos"

"Will it ever end ? Other than over 75s I feel we were locked down for nothing"

Communities and businesses

"For people under 70, and for healthy people of any age, COVID-19 is almost never fatal, and generally produces only mild symptoms. My concerns are not with this virus - which in many other countries has caused no more damage than a bad year of seasonal flu - so much as with the catastrophically incompetent handling of the crisis by the UK government, which has not only failed to limit the damage - our death rate has been one of the worst in the world - but has wrecked our national economy."

"My husband's mental health. Vulnerable family. What will happen to the economy?"
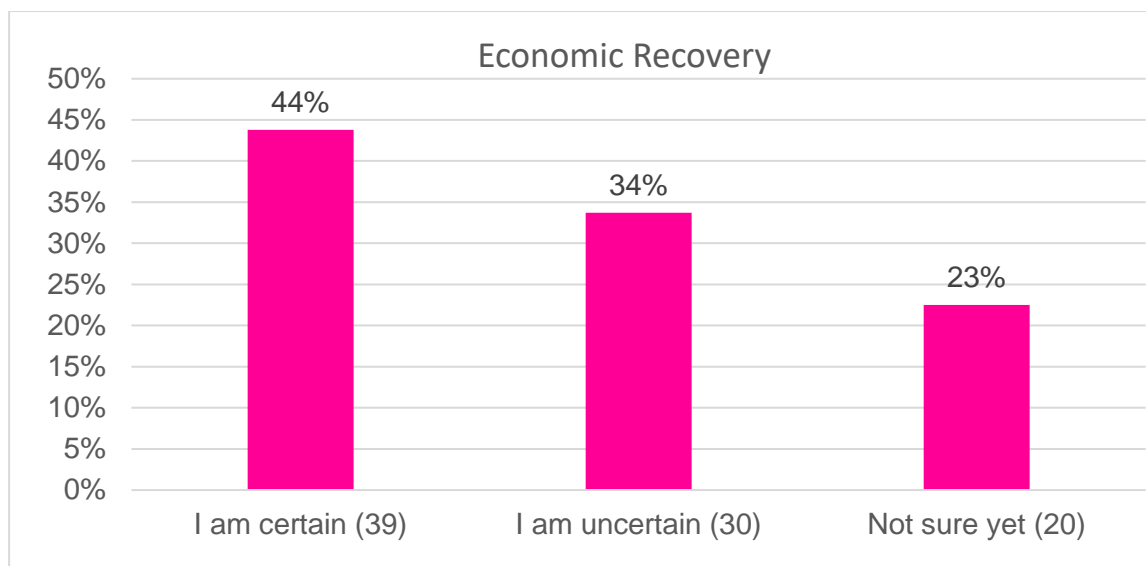
Figure 17: Parents confidence to recover economically – 'How certain are you that, you personally, will be able to recover economically after the Coronavirus pandemic is over?' – Source: Q8/Q1

Figure 17 shows that around 4 in ten parents feel certain that they will recover economically from the pandemic.
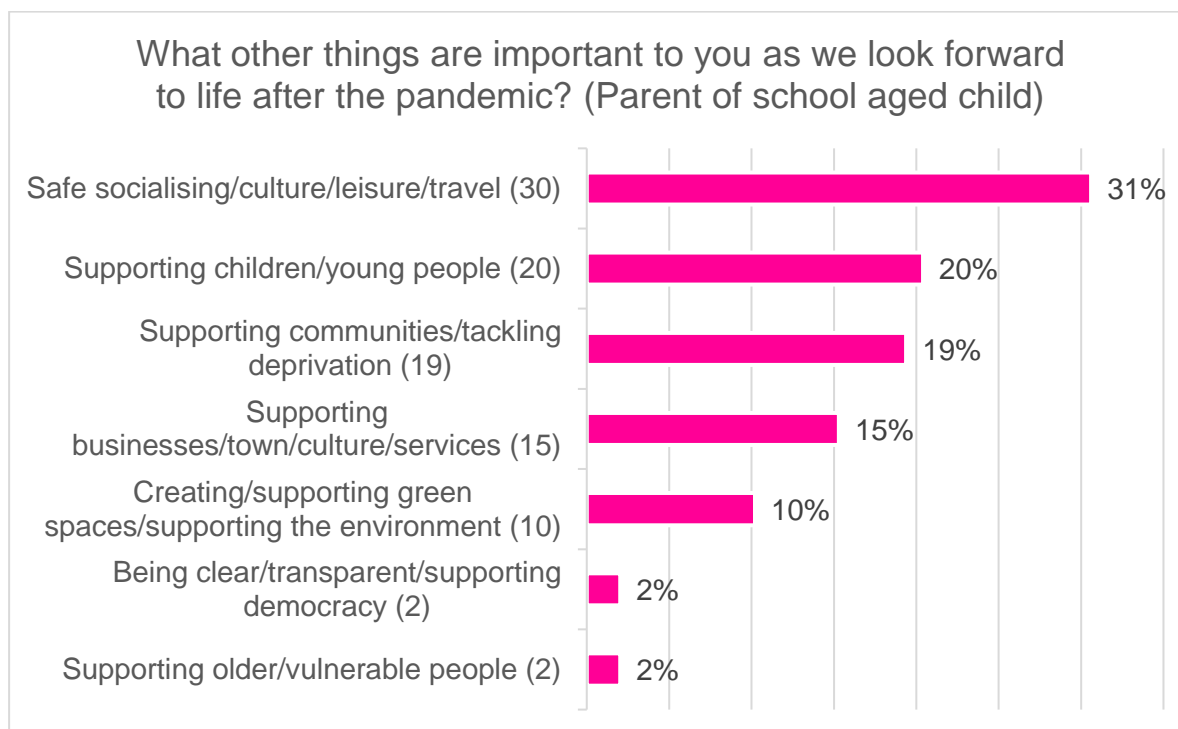
Priorities

Parents noted providing easy access to parks and open spaces as their top priority (27%), closely followed by prioritising those in most need. Only 12% cited access to quality education. However, it is important to note the 20% of parents stated the importance of supporting our children and young people.(figure 18)

31% of parents of a school aged child mentioned being able to safely enjoy spending time with friends and family, cultural and leisure activities and travel. Supporting children and young people featured in 20% of responses, and 19% spoke about supporting communities and tackling deprivation. (figure 19)
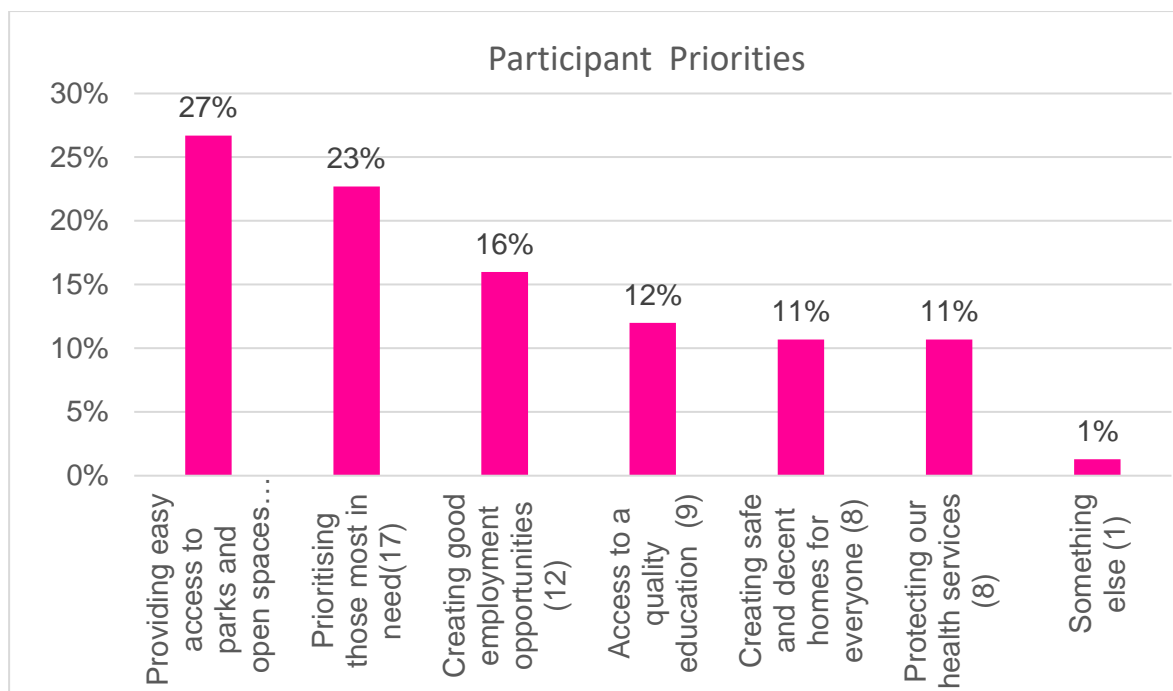
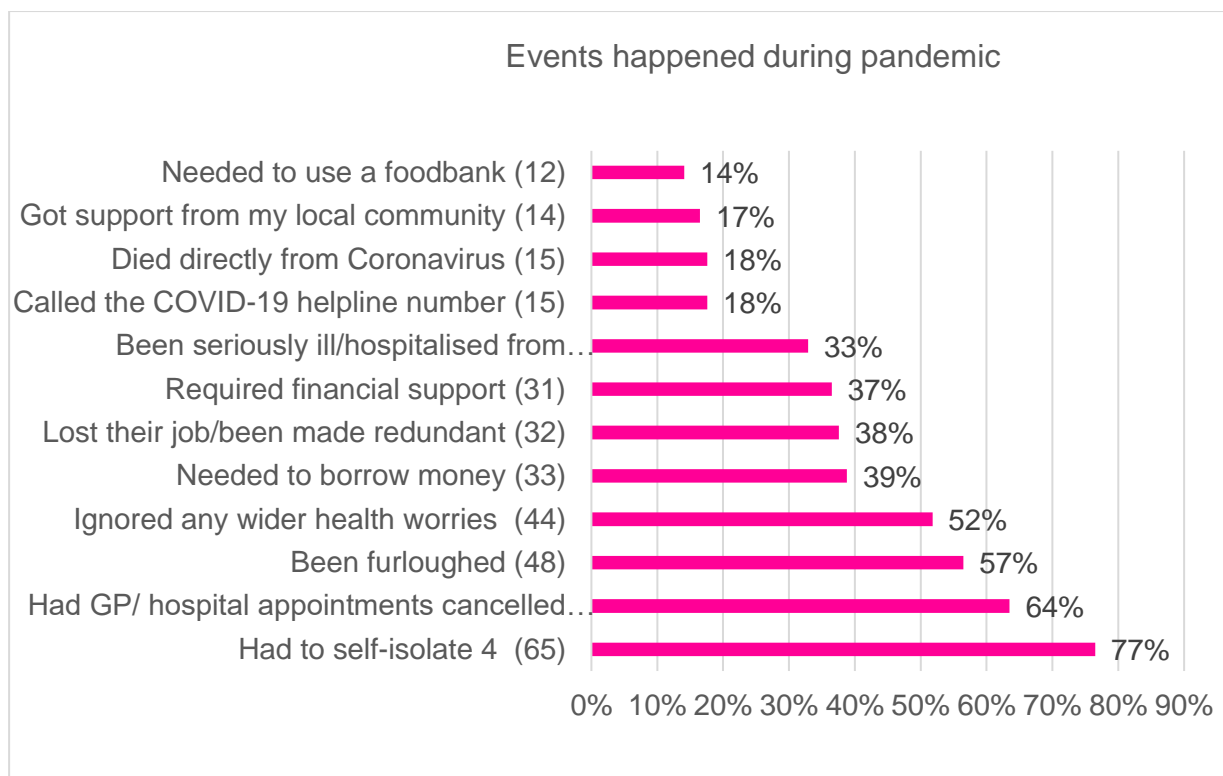**Figure 18: Parents priorities – 'As we look forward to life after the Coronavirus pandemic. How important are the following priorities for Oldham?' – Source: Q9**

Figure 19: Parents, other priorities – 'What other thing or things are important to you as we look forward to life in Oldham after the Coronavirus pandemic?' – Source: Q10

Figure 20 shows that most commonly parents were affected by the need to self isolate.

Events happened during pandemic

Event	Percentage
Needed to use a foodbank (12)	14%
Got support from my local community (14)	17%
Died directly from Coronavirus (15)	18%
Called the COVID-19 helpline number (15)	18%
Been seriously ill/hospitalised from…	33%
Required financial support (31)	37%
Lost their job/been made redundant (32)	38%
Needed to borrow money (33)	39%
Ignored any wider health worries (44)	52%
Been furloughed (48)	57%
Had GP/ hospital appointments cancelled…	64%
Had to self-isolate 4 (65)	77%

Figure 20: Parents: 'Have any of the following happened to you, someone else in your household, or a close relative or friend as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic? – Source: Q7/Q1

Focus group summary

A chance for parents of school aged children in Oldham to share their view on the impact of COVID 19

About this Event

Coronavirus (COVID 19) has affected the people of Oldham in many ways. Now, although the pandemic is on-going, we need to understand and prioritise what is important to the people of Oldham as we start to emerge from the pandemic. This element of the research is designed to ensure that we capture the voice of those who live and work in the borough.

**MAR
04**

Coronavirus Recovery Plan - Parents Voice

by Oldham Council Research Engagement and Consultation Team

Following

Free

Sales Ended   Details

Date And Time

Thu, 4 March 2021
19:00 – 20:00 GMT
Add to Calendar

Location

Online Event

Source: https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/coronavirus-recovery-plan-parents-voice-tickets-143076879799

A virtual focus group was conducted on Thursday 4th March 2021 with several research participants who were parents of school-aged children. The focus group was conducted by the Oldham Council Research, Engagement and Consultation Team using the Microsoft Teams applications.

The following results are the views of a very small, selective sample of the Oldham population. It is important to bear in mind that only a limited number of people will have the necessary digital tools and feel comfortable taking part in virtual focus groups. Views might not, therefore, be representative of the wider Oldham population.

Confident of recovery
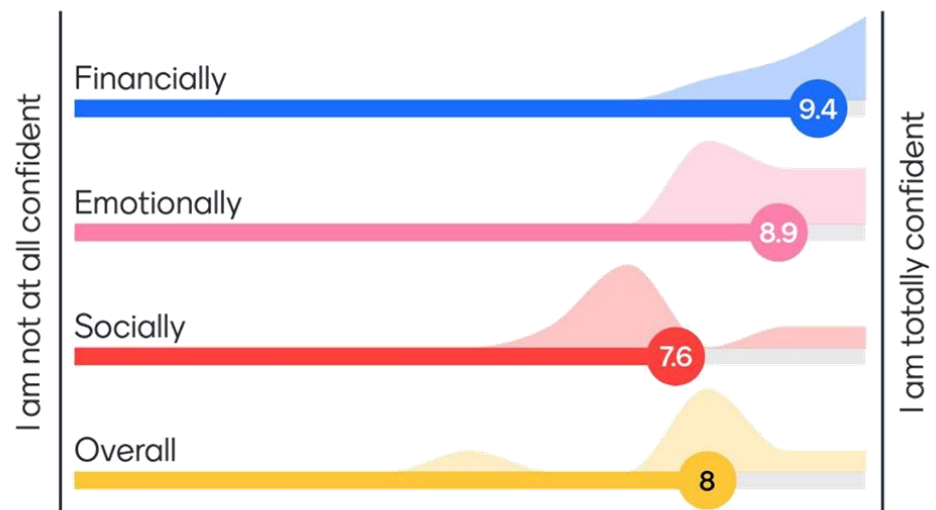
Figure 21: Parents Focus group: Recovery Activity Summary

Participants were asked to consider whether they were confident they could recover after lockdown ends – financially, emotionally, socially and overall – on a 1-10 scale. As can be seen from the chart below, the parents were almost totally confident they could recover financially after lockdown but were less confident they could recover socially. (figure 21)

Prioritising Policy Aims
As with the main survey, participants were asked to rank certain policy aims in terms of priority, the results of which can be seen in the chart below. Perhaps unsurprisingly from the perspective of parents, 'access to a quality education' was ranked as the highest priority, followed by 'creating good employment opportunities. (Figure 22)
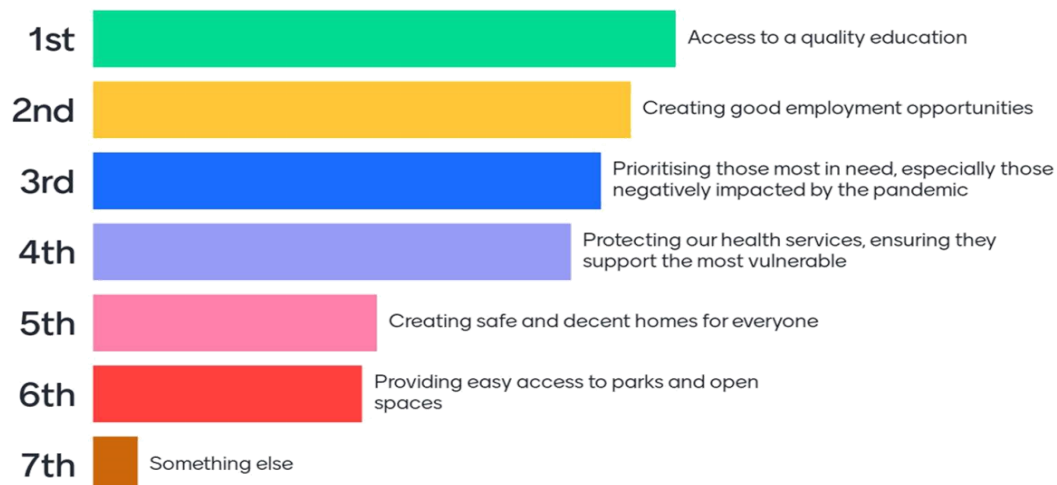
Figure 22: Parents focus group priorities

What other things matter to you when we come out of lockdown
The parents were asked to list three things that mattered to them as we come out of lockdown
– the subjects they listed can be seen in the word cloud below (Figure 23)

Figure 23: Parents focus group: Other priorities

social bonding	employment opportunities for all	training and support
education	rifts in society	What does the recovery phase look like?

What challenges do you face as we come out of lockdown?
Participants were also asked what challenges they believed they faced, as parents and as citizens, as we come out of lockdown. Their headline responses can be found in the figure below.

Challenges as a parent
In addition, several participants highlighted the challenges around social relationships, particularly around children that have been away from schools and clubs. There was a feeling among the parents that those children that had missed out on this would be lacking in the development of the social side of their personality. This was in addition to the general educational challenges that will be faced by children who have been removed from in-school education because of the pandemic.

There was also a worry about the school offer being universal to all pupils – as some children are more suited to home-schooling, they will have developed (educationally) at a different rate to those for whom home-schooling is less suitable. A few participants raised concerns around this, and how those who have developed less at home will be brought back up to the average level, without holding back the more developed children.

One parent pointed out a particular problem for the borough of Oldham – as Oldham has been in lockdown and schools have been closed for longer than other parts of the country, how can Oldham make sure that children from the borough will be able to catch up with the national average in terms of educational development.

Challenges as an individual
When asked about the concerns that they had around coming out of lockdown, several the focus group participants highlighted the area of employment as a worry.
One parent who was made redundant in August 2020 highlighted the problem that there is a shortage of jobs for people lines of work (e.g. construction). As a result, the participant had noted that people were frequently taking jobs for which they were not suited in order to pay the bills.

There were also concerns around what the 'new normal' would look like regarding work and the wider society. One participant mentioned that their mode of getting to work had changed as they were less willing to take public transport now, while another said that they were concerned their employer had not taken the opportunity to make the workplace compliant with social distancing guidelines.

More generally, participants highlighted what they saw as growing divides in society that might never be healed (e.g. between those who had adhered to the rules and those that hadn't), while another believed that the pandemic had knocked people's financial confidence, which would go on to affect the economic negatively in the long-term.

What things would help you when we come out of lockdown?

Organised fun social activities	extra curricular activities	enhanced mental health support

more social activities

The final question that the parents were asked were what support they needed as we come out of lockdown. This question was primarily answered through the viewpoint of being a parent, and the responses below indicate a need for enhanced mental health support for their children and more social/extracurricular activities.

More widely, however, participants agreed that enhanced mental health support was required for people of all ages, however they've been affected by the pandemic. One individual believed that this would be worse for Oldham than it would be nationally, as the situation in the borough 'was bad anyway but will have been made worse'.

It was also discussed that employment schemes such as 'Get Oldham Working' will become important as young people look for work, and these things should be marketed more widely so young people are aware of the available support.

Finally, one participant mentioned that what should be put in place was a period of adjustment, so people have time to adapt to changes in how life is lived, whether this be returning to how things were before the pandemic or to a 'new normal'.

GMDPP Meeting Summary

A meeting was held on Thursday 3rd March between members of the Oldham Council REC team and members of the Greater Manchester Disabled People's Panel around issues and challenges that disabled people would face as we come out of lockdown.

From this meeting it emerged that employment and going back to workplaces were a cause of anxiety for members of the panel. It was recommended by a member of the panel that a period of adjustment should be put in place, from the "slightly more flexible ways that happened under the pandemic back to kind of how things were before".

Another worry was the anticipated ending of the shielding process in March. Some shielding members had raised concerns around this and believed that local authorities would need to step in in the "interim between end of March, and…end of June" if those who had been shielding had any requirements for support.

Informal Carers

The following section focusses on all responses from informal carers (n50). All responses are based on known responses. Where responses do not total to the count of responses or percentages to 100% then multiple response have been made available. Figure 24 summarises the caring responsibilities of these informal carers.
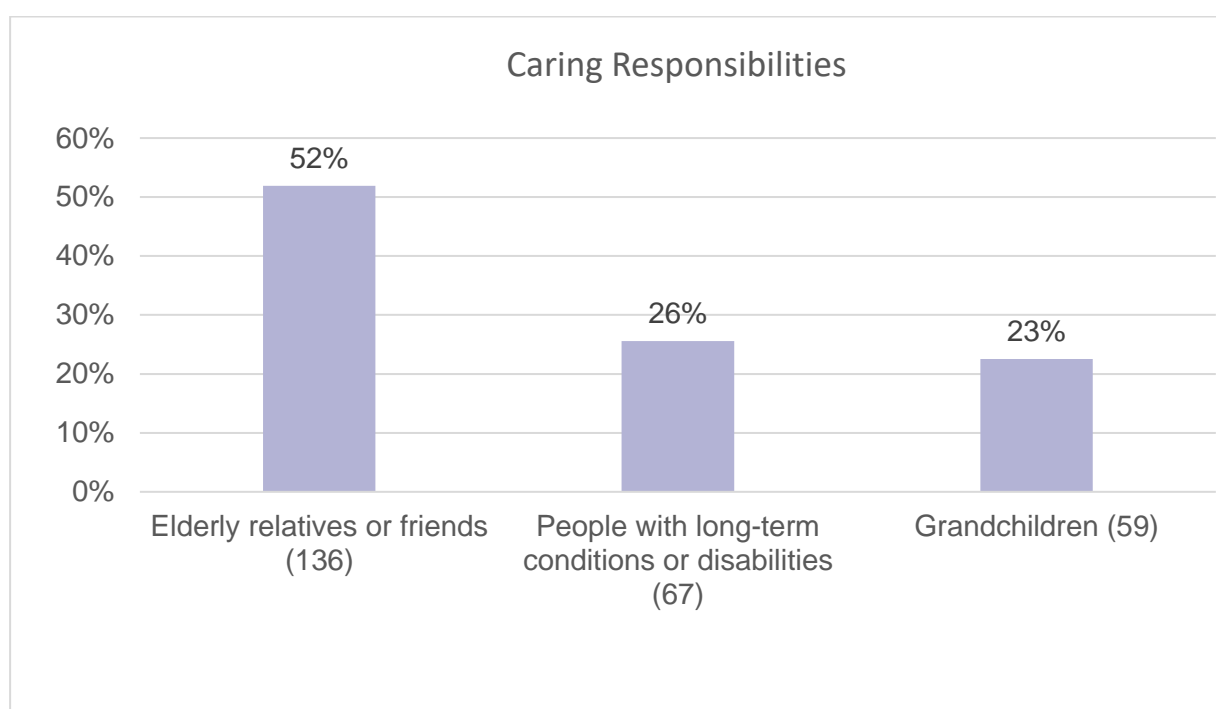
Figure 24: Informal Carers caring responsibilities

84% of informal carers are worried about Coronavirus (Figure 25).
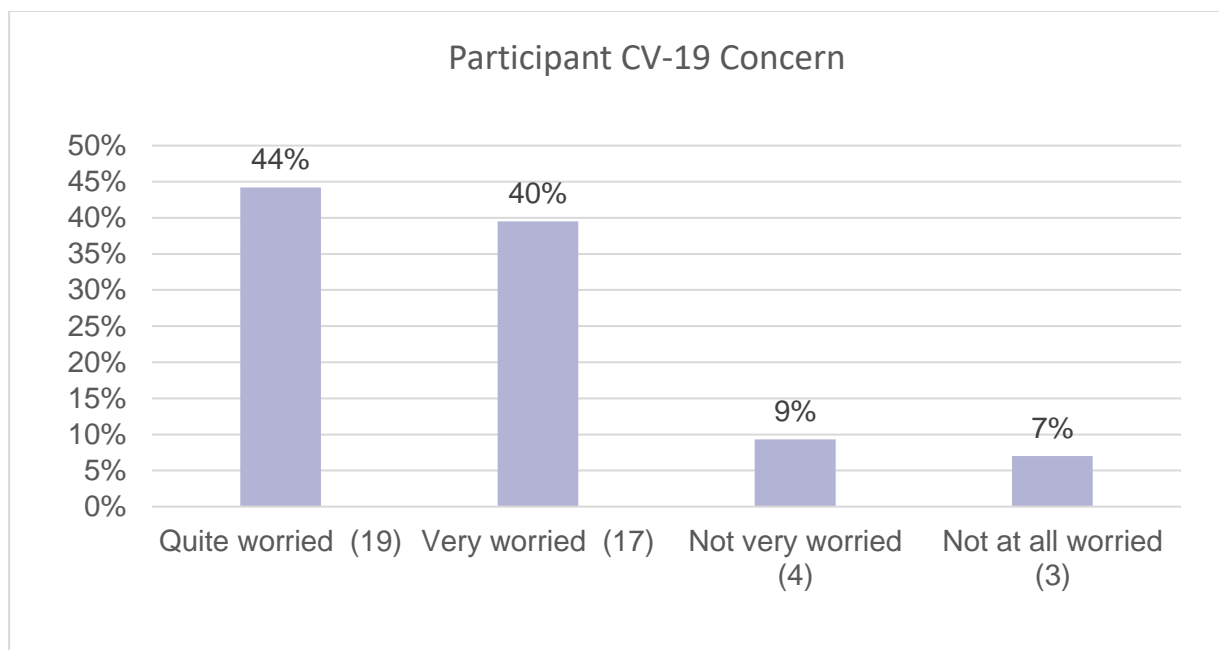
Figure 25: Informal carers: 'Overall, how worried are you about Coronavirus?' – Source: Q4/Q1

Figure 26 shows that carers were most likely to agree that the pandemic had affected their ability to care for or support vulnerable or elderly people and to feelings of social isolation.
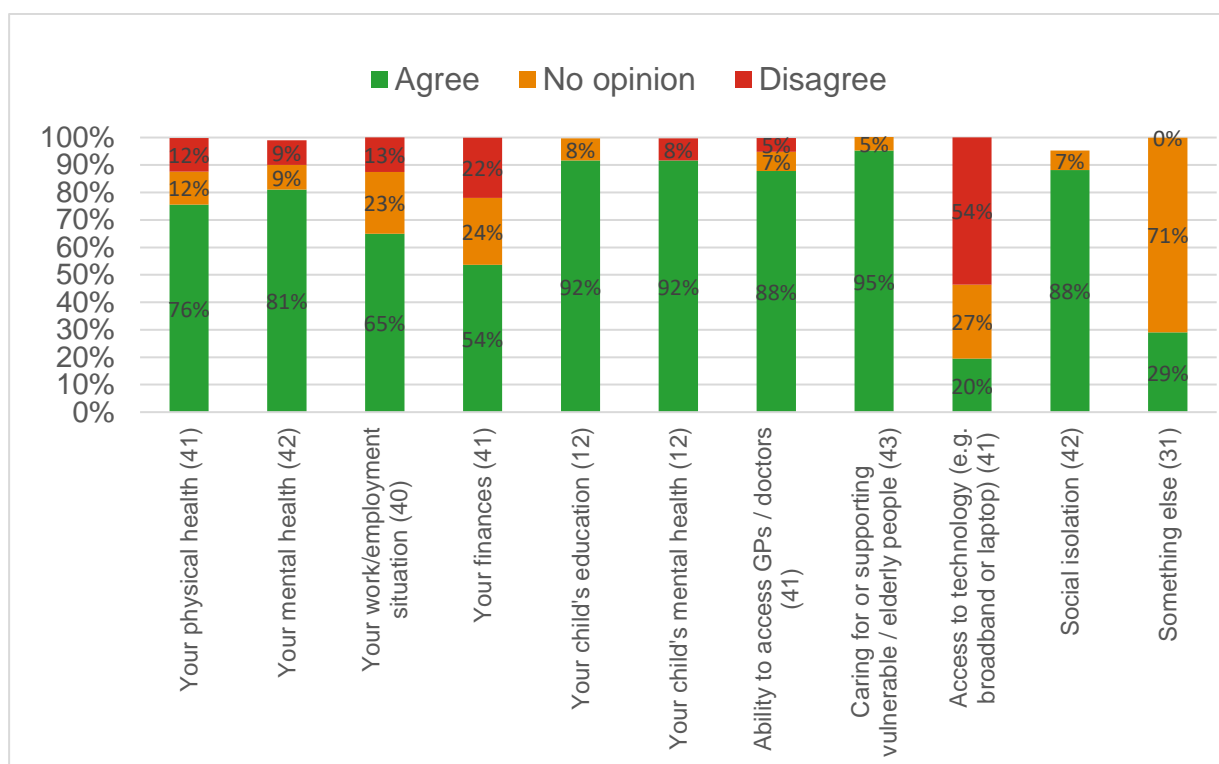
Figure 26: Informal Carers: 'To what extent do you agree that the Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the following aspects of your life?' – Source: Q5/Q1
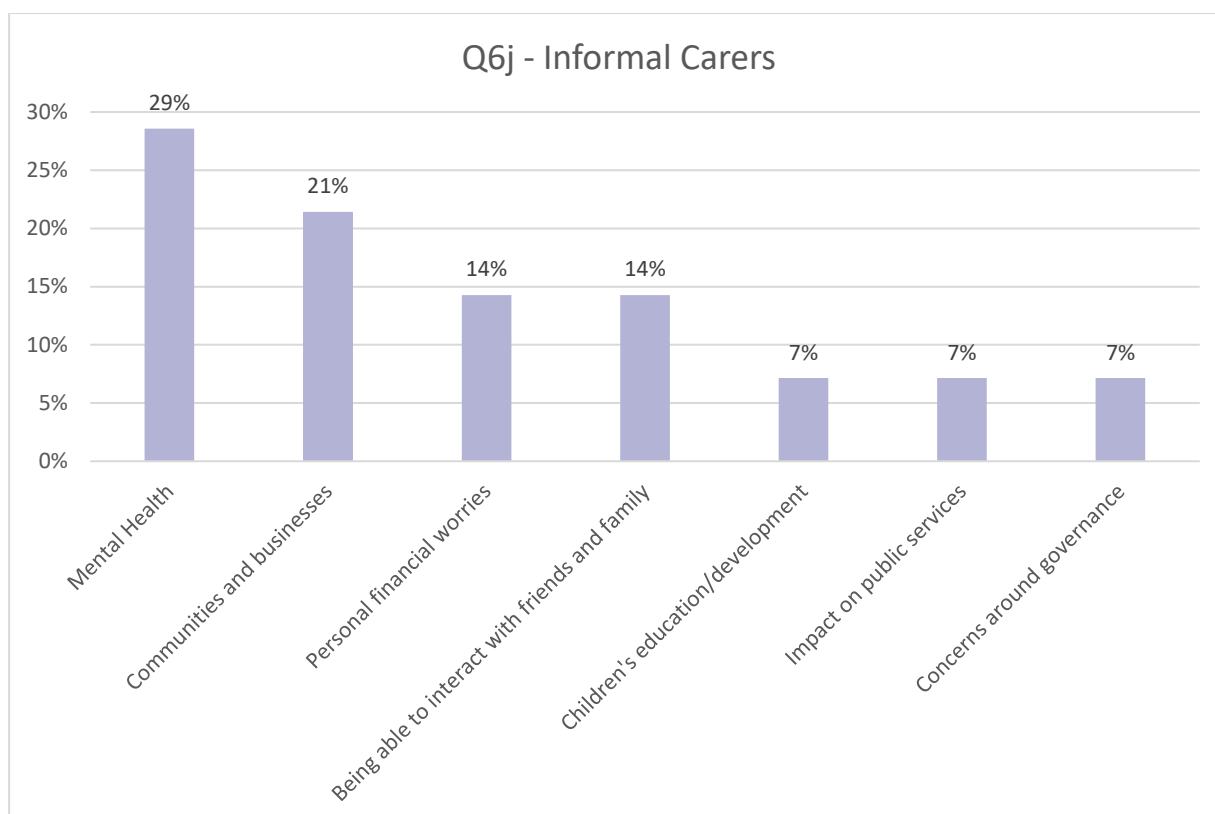
Figure 27: Informal Carer: 'Please tell us briefly about any other concerns you have in light of the Coronavirus pandemic' – Source: Q6j

As can be seen in figure 27, the concerns of those identifying as informal carers were most prominently labelled under concerns around mental health and concerns about the effect on communities and businesses. A selection of their comments can be found below:

Mental health

"isolation, not seeing people for so long, getting so used to life as it is and the struggle to get back on track to what it was, worry when things will really be safe to access, when will business pick up for those struggling, when can I see my children and grandchildren and give them a hug - it's been a year"

I feel like it will never end ,I'm also concerned about the £20 uc being removed, it is causing me a lot of anxiety. I'm also worried about the government's decision to leave 12 weeks instead of 3 as recommended between vaccine doses"

Communities and businesses

"Family relationship breakdowns."

"The destruction of jobs and the economy because of the completely excessive and prolonged lockdown. There will be many more people dying or with ruined lives because of lockdown, due to failure to offer treatment to patients with serious life-threatening illnesses (like cancer), obesity, alcoholism, suicides, homelessness, unemployment, educational underperformance, family breakdowns, domestic and child abuse, plus a massive tsunami of mental illness, especially amongst young people and children."

Only a third of informal carers responding to the consultation felt they would recover economically from the pandemic (Q28).
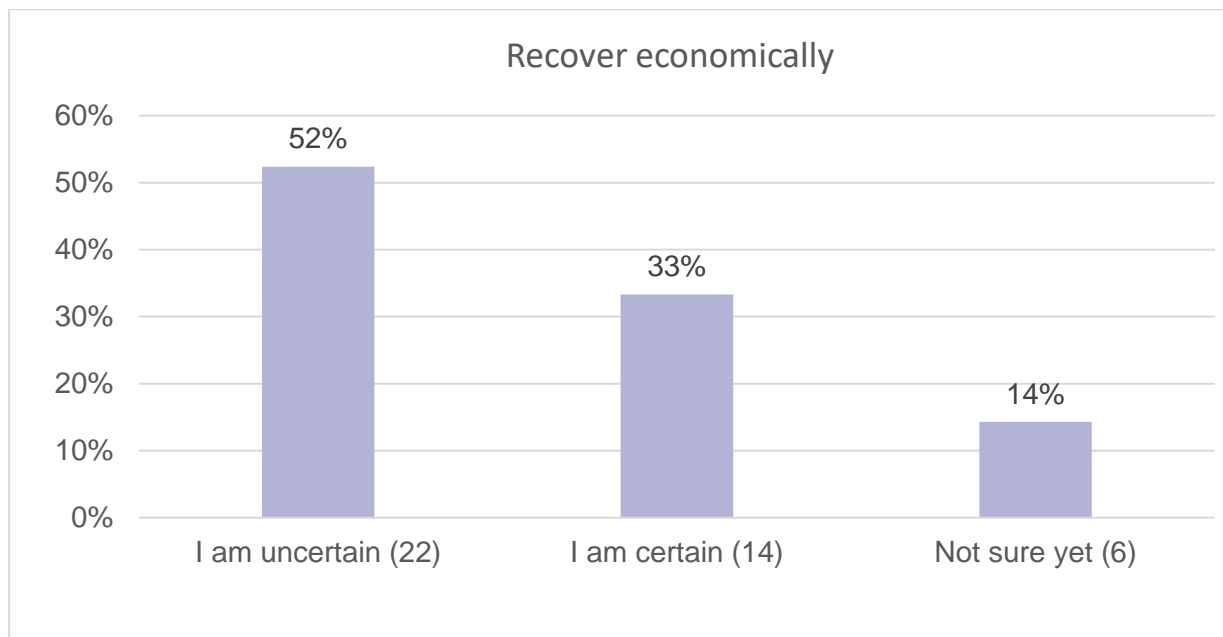
Figure 28: Informal Carers: 'How certain are you that, you personally, will be able to recover economically after the Coronavirus pandemic is over? – Source: Q8

Priorities
Three in ten informal carers cited prioritising those most in need as their top priority. Other key priorities included providing easy access to parks and open spaces and creating good employment opportunities. (figure 29)

24% of informal carers spoke about supporting communities and tackling deprivation, and another 24% mentioned being able to safely enjoy spending time with friends and family, cultural and leisure activities and travel. Supporting businesses and the town more widely featured in 21% of responses.
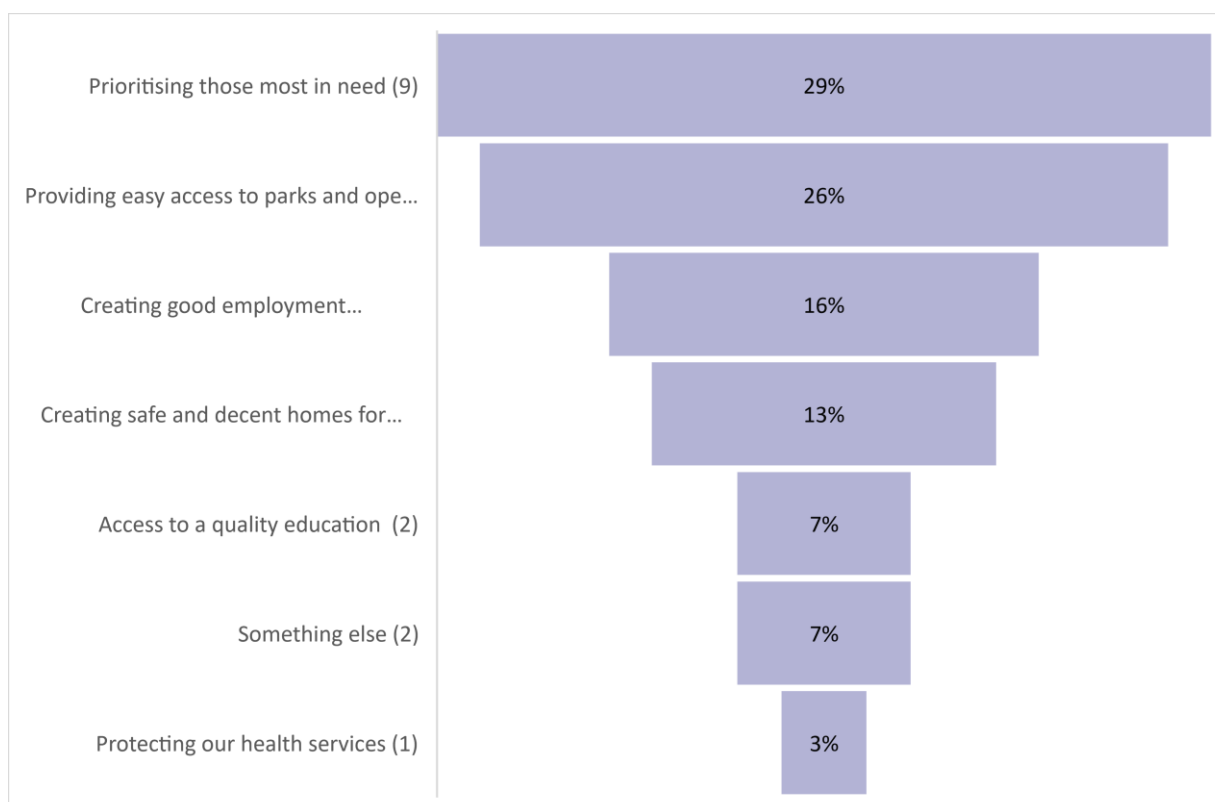
Figure 29: Informal Carers priorities: 'As we look forward to life after the Coronavirus pandemic. How important are the following priorities for Oldham?' – Source: Q9/Q1

What other things are important to you as we look forward to life after the pandemic? (An informal carer)

Supporting communities/tackling deprivation (14)	24%
Safe socialising/culture/leisure/travel (14)	24%
Supporting businesses/town/culture/services (12)	21%
Being clear/transparent/supporting democracy (6)	10%
Supporting children/young people (6)	10%
Creating/supporting green spaces/supporting the environment (4)	7%
Supporting older/vulnerable people (2)	3%
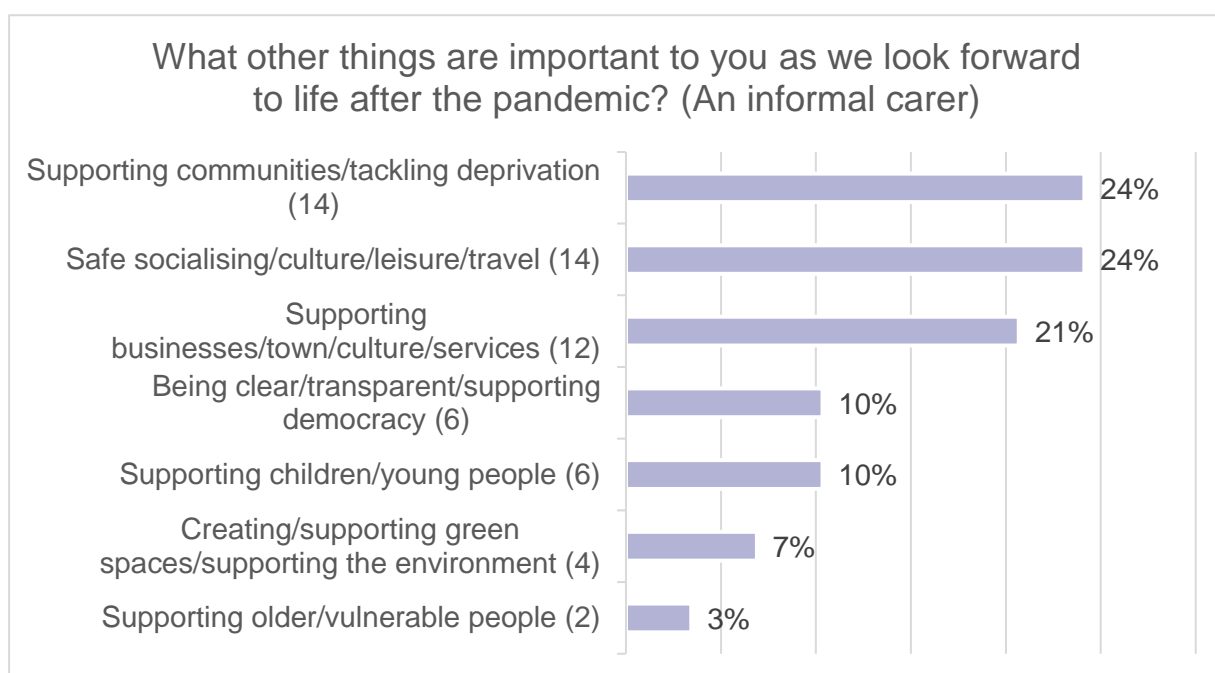
Figure 30: Informal Carers, other priorities: 'What other thing or things are important to you as we look forward to life in Oldham after the Coronavirus pandemic?' – Source: Q10/Q1

Figure 31 shows that when looking at the health impact of the pandemic 85% of informal carers stated the need to cancel or postpone GP or hospital appointments during the pandemic period, whilst two thirds ignored wider health issues to avoid putting pressure on the NHS. Over two-thirds informal carers have self-isolated due to Coronavirus.

Economically, 60% have been furloughed and 28% have unfortunately lost their jobs. Participants shared the need for financial support, to borrow money and the need for support from their local community.

Happened during pandemic

| Category	Percentage
Needed to use a foodbank (3)	8%
Got support from my local community (5)	13%
Died directly from Coronavirus (8)	20%
Called the COVID-19 helpline number (8)	20%
Lost their job/been made redundant (11)	28%
Been seriously ill/hospitalised from…	38%
Required financial support (16)	40%
Needed to borrow money (17)	43%
Been furloughed (24)	60%
Ignored any wider health worries (25)	63%
Had to self-isolate (27)	68%
Had GP/ hospital appointments…	85%

Figure 31: Informal Carers: 'Have any of the following happened to you, someone else in your household, or a close relative or friend as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic?' – Source: Q7/Q1

Business Owner or representative

The following section focusses on all responses from business owners or representatives (n47). All responses are based on known responses. Where responses do not total to the count of responses or percentages to 100% then multiple response have been made available.

Three quarters of business owners responding to the survey are worried about Coronavirus.
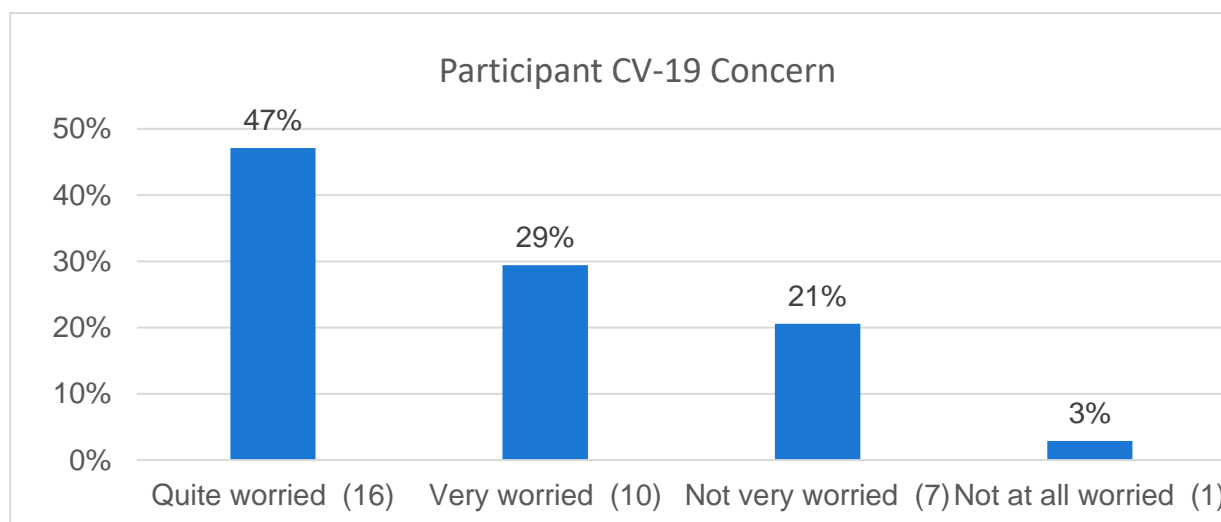
Figure 32: Business level of concern: 'Overall, how worried are you about Coronavirus? – Source: Q4/Q1

Business owners reported that the pandemic had affected their work situation (90%) and three quarters that the period had affected their mental health. The same proportion reported that they had felt socially isolated (figure 33).
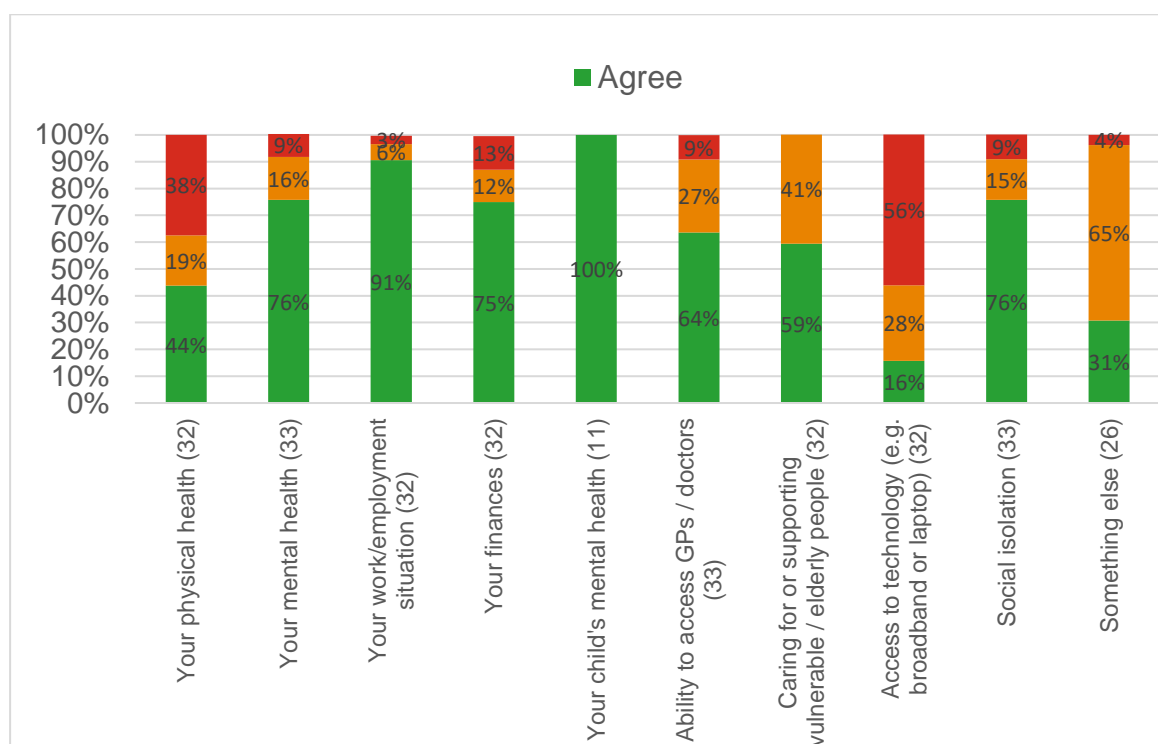
Figure 33: Business Coronavirus effects: 'To what extent do you agree that the Coronavirus pandemic has had an impact on the following aspects of your life?' – Source: Q5/Q1

Q6j - Business Owner or Representative
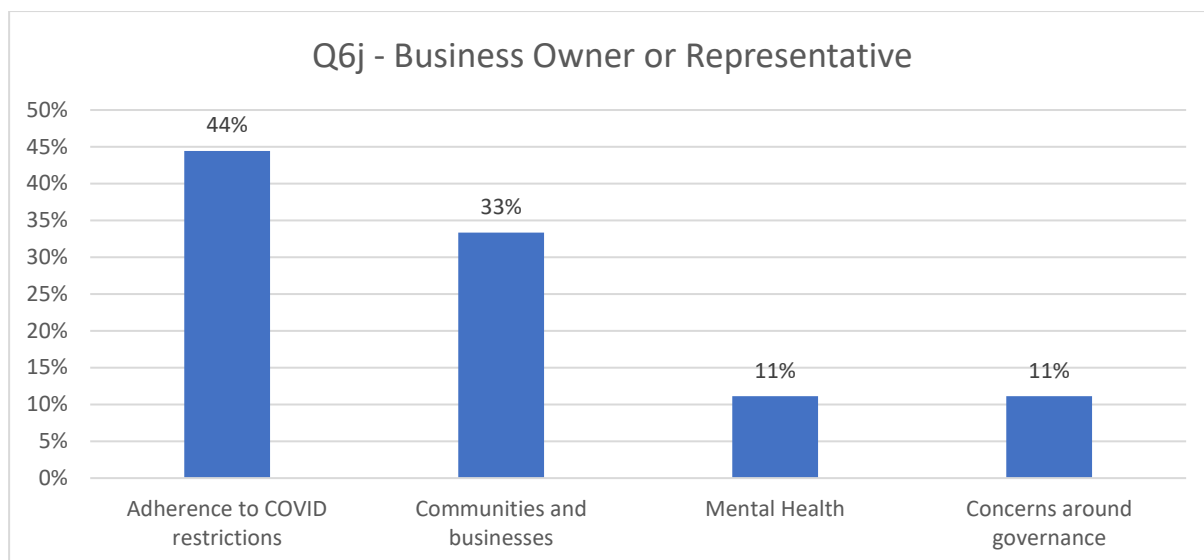
Figure 34: Business other pandemic effects: 'Please tell us briefly about any other concerns you have in light of the Coronavirus pandemic' – Source: Q6j/Q1

As can be seen from figure 34 the most prominent concerns from those who own or represent a business were around adherence to COVID restrictions and the threat the pandemic poses to communities and businesses. A selection of their comments can be found below:

Adherence to COVID restrictions

"My only concern is with others not abiding by set out rules, it so hard and frustrating to be following all the guidelines when others aren't."

"It has been very worrying with regards to the ignorance, stupidity and selfishness of other people at this time. I thought they were a minority but have come to regard these people as the majority."

"Needed more policing people openly flouting rules no social distancing inside shops and most staff feel threatened when asking public to step back or not to be in close proximity, personally was sworn at when asking a person to step back and staff member just walked away"

Communities and businesses

"As a business I do not know how, or when, we will recover. It is a very worrying time."

"my concern is the high street. we have seen the collapse of major high St retailers' top shop and Debenhams to name but a few and if the government doesn't do something to help the high street, I feel we will lose the high street for ever. if the government places an extra duty on online orders this might get people back out shopping on the high street which will help the big retails and the small business who can't compete with online retailers."

Only a third of participants are confident that they will recover economically from the pandemic (Figure 35).

Recover Economically
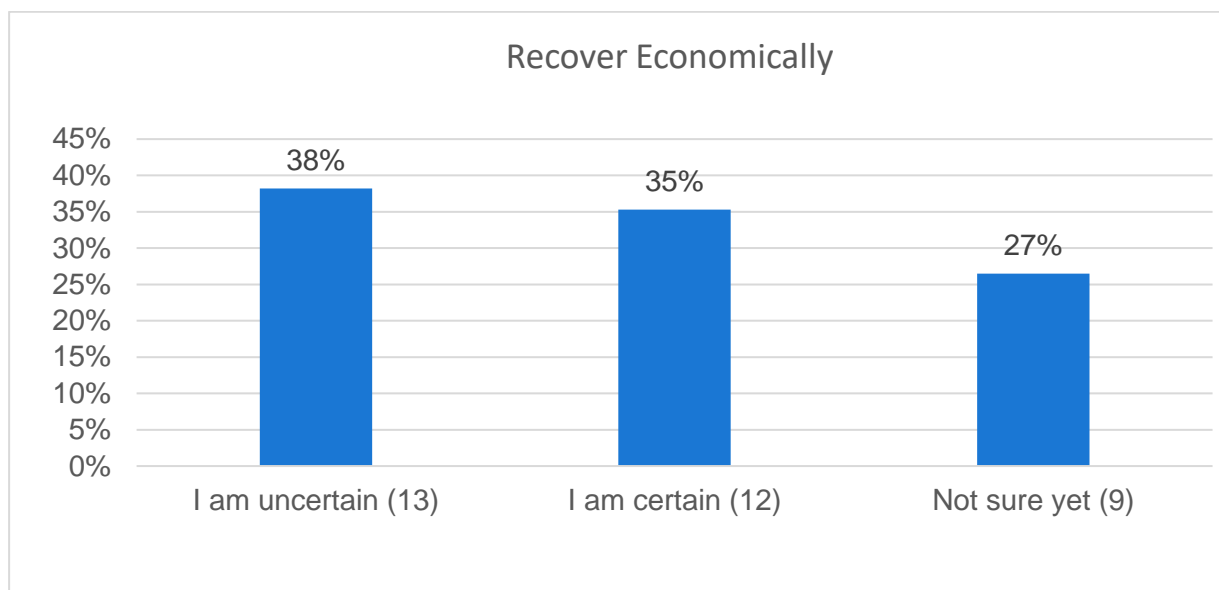
Figure 35: Business ability to recover economically: 'How certain are you that, you personally, will be able to recover economically after the Coronavirus pandemic is over?' – Source: Q8/Q1

Priorities
Business owners along with other groups stated that prioritising those in most need should be Oldham Council's top priority. Only 15% stated the importance of creating employment opportunities. When asked for other priorities however, a quarter spoke about supporting businesses and the town more widely. (Figure 36)

31% of business owners or representatives mentioned supporting communities and tackling deprivation, and 20% of responses featured being able to safely enjoy spending time with friends and family, cultural and leisure activities and travel.
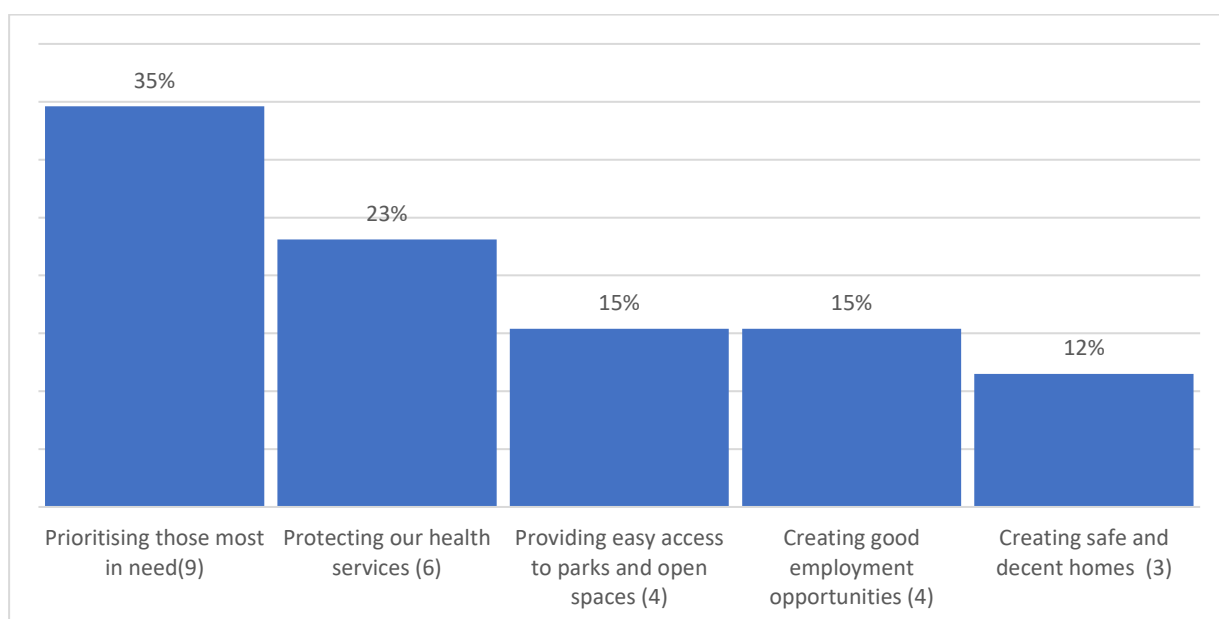
Figure 36: Business priorities: 'As we look forward to life after the Coronavirus pandemic. How important are the following priorities for Oldham?' – Source: Q9/Q1

What other things are important to you as we look forward to life after the pandemic? (A business owner or representative)

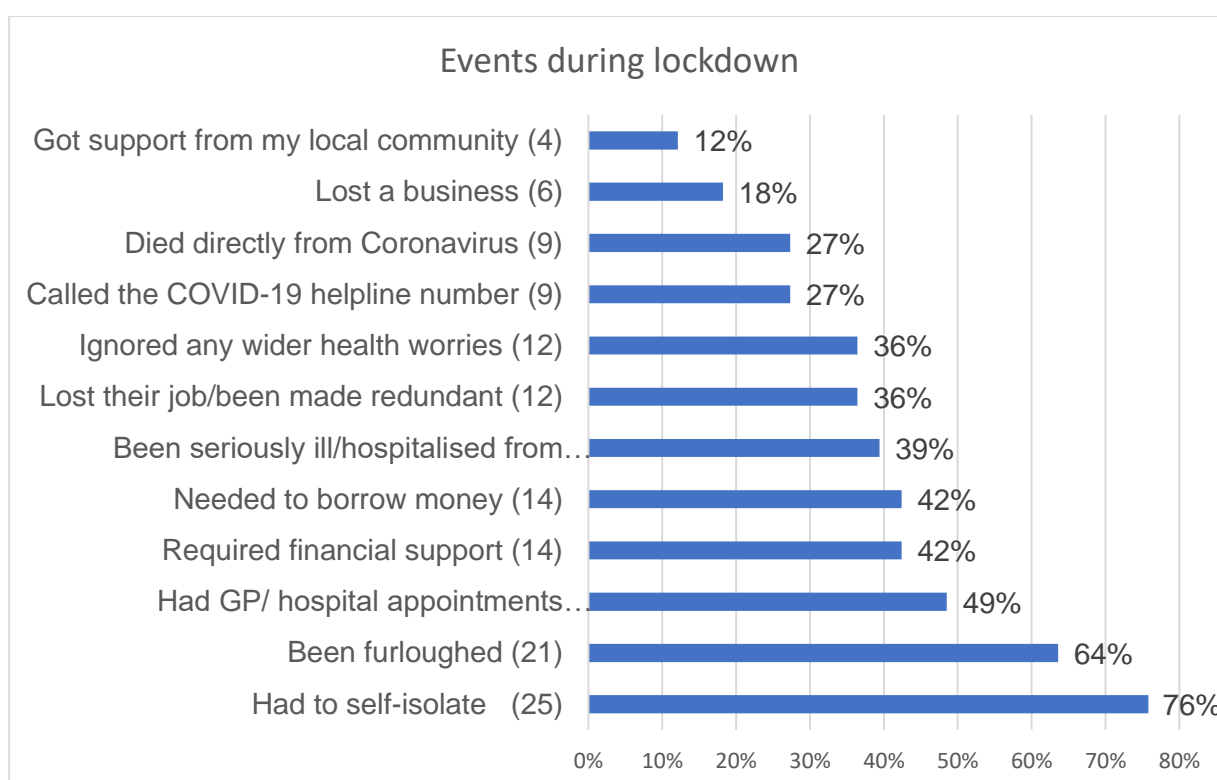| Category	Percentage
Supporting communities/tackling…	31%
Supporting…	24%
Safe socialising/culture/leisure/travel (12)	20%
Creating/supporting green…	10%
Being clear/transparent/supporting…	7%
Supporting children/young people (3)	5%
Supporting older/vulnerable people (2)	3%
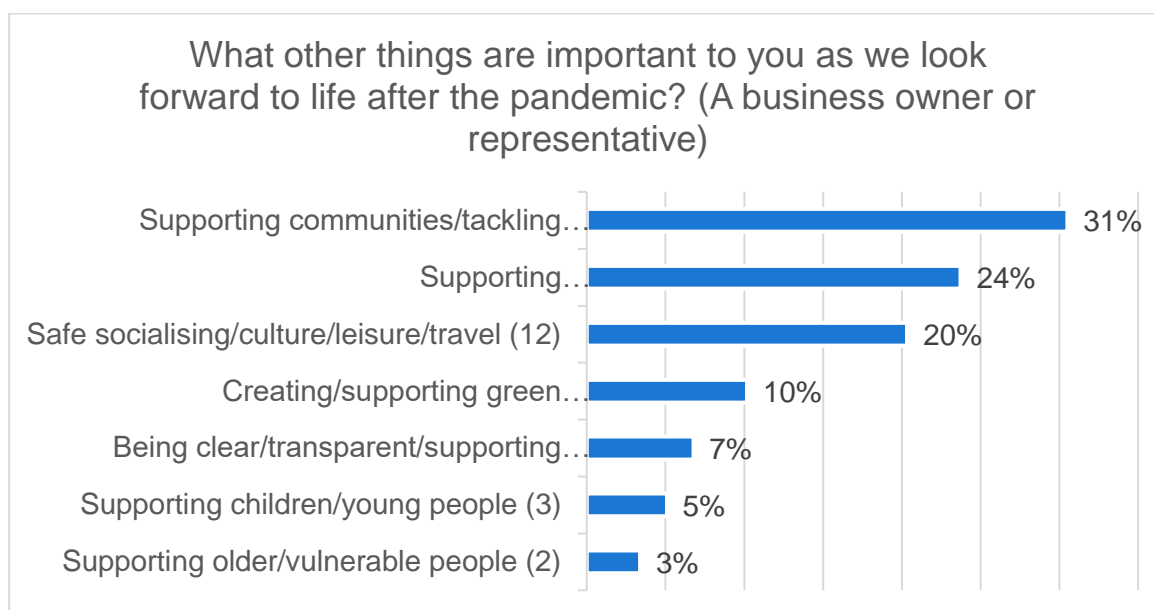
Figure 37: Business other priorities: 'What other thing or things are important to you as we look forward to life in Oldham after the Coronavirus pandemic?' – Source: Q10/Q1
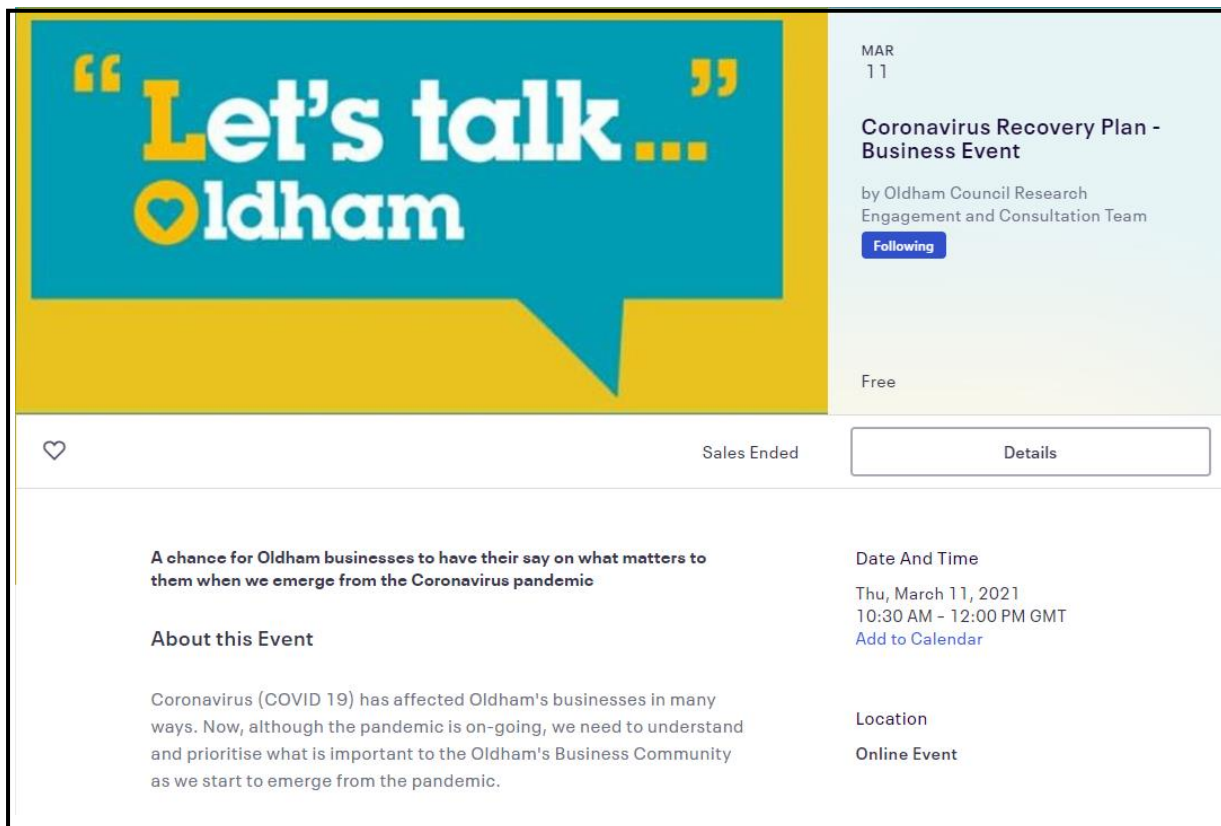
Figure 38 shows that during the pandemic three quarters business owners or representatives had to self-isolate.

Events during lockdown

Category	Percentage
Got support from my local community (4)	12%
Lost a business (6)	18%
Died directly from Coronavirus (9)	27%
Called the COVID-19 helpline number (9)	27%
Ignored any wider health worries (12)	36%
Lost their job/been made redundant (12)	36%
Been seriously ill/hospitalised from…	39%
Needed to borrow money (14)	42%
Required financial support (14)	42%
Had GP/ hospital appointments…	49%
Been furloughed (21)	64%
Had to self-isolate (25)	76%

Figure 38: Business impacts: 'Have any of the following happened to you, someone else in your household, or a close relative or friend as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic?' – Source: Q7/Q1

Coronavirus Recovery Plan Consultation

Business Focus Group Summary

Let's talk... Oldham

MAR 11

Coronavirus Recovery Plan - Business Event

by Oldham Council Research Engagement and Consultation Team

Following

Free

Sales Ended   Details

A chance for Oldham businesses to have their say on what matters to them when we emerge from the Coronavirus pandemic

About this Event

Coronavirus (COVID 19) has affected Oldham's businesses in many ways. Now, although the pandemic is on-going, we need to understand and prioritise what is important to the Oldham's Business Community as we start to emerge from the pandemic.

Date And Time

Thu, March 11, 2021
10:30 AM – 12:00 PM GMT
Add to Calendar

Location

Online Event

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/coronavirus-recovery-plan-business-event-tickets-143114718977

A virtual focus group was conducted on Thursday 11th March 2021 with several research participants who were business representatives. The focus group was conducted by the Oldham Council Research, Engagement and Consultation Team using the Microsoft Teams applications.

The following results are the views of a very small, selective sample of the Oldham population. It is important to bear in mind that only a limited number of people will have the necessary digital tools and feel comfortable taking part in virtual focus groups. Views might not, therefore, be representative of the wider Oldham population.

Prioritising Policy Aims

Like question 9 in the main survey, participants were asked to rank certain policy aims in terms of priority, the results of which can be seen in the chart below. Business representatives ranked 'Prioritising those most in need, especially those negatively impacted by the pandemic' and 'Creating good employment opportunities' the highest.

In relation to 'something else', one participant mentioned the importance of encouraging people back into the town centre.

1st	Prioritising those most in need, especially those negatively impacted by the pandemic
2nd	Creating good employment opportunities
3rd	Protecting our health services, ensuring they support the most vulnerable
4th	Something else
5th	Creating safe and decent homes for everyone
6th	Providing easy access to parks and open spaces
7th	Access to a quality education

The importance of apprenticeships was mentioned by participants from personal and wider volunteering experience.

Describe the impact of COVID on your business in three words

The participants were asked to list three things way in which the coronavirus pandemic had impacted upon their business – the subjects they listed can be seen in the word cloud below.

resourceful
innovating online
complete physical closure
making for good   challenging
unprecedented

Participants noted that despite being slow to adapt at the beginning of the pandemic, the ways of working both employed had changed for the good – e.g. utilising online meetings more than previous, adapting to the new needs of customers and members.

In three words describe how you see your business after COVID?
Participants were also asked to list three ways in which they saw they businesses go after the end of lockdown. Their headline responses can be found in the figure below.

strategic

finances stretched

attendance levels damaged

lots of risks

pressured

different

In terms of how the participants saw their businesses after the lockdown has ended, the participants were confident that they could recover economically, although this was tentative and there was agreement the economic recovery might be more of a long-term thing. The participants agreed that their businesses would look different after COVID, as they had made changes to adapt to lockdown and it was likely that at least some of these changes would remain permanently.

Participants mentioned having to continually adapt their businesses to changes in customer numbers, behaviours and confidence, business operation, income and legislation. As a result of the pandemic they foresee a potential shift in how they interact with customers and how physical spaces will be used. Financial pressures might result in structural changes in how businesses operate. Focus on legislation such as GDPR has increased with remote working becoming more the norm.

What at do you feel needs to happen to support you and your business?
The final question that the participants were asked were what support was needed as we come out of lockdown.

In response to this, one participant mentioned establishing local business networking opportunities, like BID in Manchester. Another theme was the importance of ensuring financial support goes to the right recipients – especially businesses which support employment, development of businesses, training. Continuing investment in the town centre and helping people feel confident to visit again were also mentioned. Town centre events provide real opportunities for raising a business's profile, according to one participant.

Apprenticeships, placements, volunteering and job-based learning were mentioned as important tools to support young people and local industry. Working with local schools and businesses and tying in with wider GMCA initiatives could have a huge impact. One participant mentioned that their business represented a big opportunity for Oldham Council to get more involved in the offering of apprenticeships.

Women only Focus Group Summary

3 women's-based focus groups were also held, at which they participants were asked what was important to them coming out of lockdown, what challenges they believe they faced and what support they required.

Many of the comments echo those received from other participants as to the challenges faced through lockdown, although two of the groups placed an emphasis on being involved in decision-making and the decision-making process as we come out of lockdown:

"*We all need to be brought along…you can only fix [broken systems] if you include people*'

In particular, participants wanted women to have a central voice in decision-making: '*I would like to see a specific focus on women … we need a dedicated person in the LA to champion this so we ensure the right support is developed that women want going forward*'.

The notes taken from these meetings can be found in the appendices to this report.

Mitigation

Who You are asking - Stakeholder Group e.g. residents, businesses, service users etc	How information is received e.g. via questionnaire, focus groups, letter, phone call, email etc.	Feedback (if possible specific details, including any concerns about the proposals)	Action proposed in response to feedback, including any proposals for mitigation
Participants	Surveys	BAME population is heavily underrepresented in this consultation.	Further work should be conducted to engage the population for this consultation.
Participants	Surveys	Although there is wide agreement with the laid-out priorities there are a range of other suggestions that those developing the recovery plan should consider	It should be showed that these have been considered alongside those determined pre consultation
Participants	Surveys	Participants have been impacted in a range of ways including financially, mentally and their health and wellbeing	Those developing the plan should take care to involve those across team Oldham with the appropriate expertise
Participants	Focus Groups	We should proactively seek to involve our residents in decision making post Coronavirus	Work should be conducted to ensure this done
Parents	Focus Groups	We should consider the social and mental health impacts for both adults and parents. We should also consider the	Further work to under the impact on communities

Coronavirus Recovery Plan Consultation

	potential social divides that have become evident since the pandemic

APPENDICIES

Notes on the women's-based focus groups

Group 1 - (16 participants, 2 facilitators)

Impact of lockdown

Participants spoke about their experiences of lockdown and its emotional impact.

Isolation/loneliness

Many participants mentioned feeling isolated and lonely during lockdown and reflected on how this experience negatively impacted on their mental health.

> 'I live on my own, it was very bad …I couldn't see my grandchildren, it was really awful … it made me really bad, I used to cry'
> 'I can't see my family anymore, usually they come to see me … they can't come here, I can't go there … I started losing hope in life, there's nothing to hope for'
> 'I couldn't go out, two weeks in isolation waiting for the results [of the test], it was draining'

Illness/bereavement

Some participants spoke about either contracting the virus themselves or having loved ones, friends or colleagues who got ill.

> 'I did have the virus… it was horrible to have the virus'
> 'seven colleagues had Covid at the shop'
> 'it was so unexpected, losing close friends and family'
> 'I lost my brother'

Lack of support

Several participants commented on the lack of support during the pandemic.

> 'support is not there for those shielding, people who have no access to public funds are forgotten'
> 'health services are poor, primary care, people are really poorly but there is no help for them'
> 'how to educate with no device, how to home-educate'

Fear

Some participants reflected on the fear of contracting the virus.

> 'the first lockdown was the worst, I didn't know what was happening, everybody was scared'
> 'What if I get ill, who will look after my children'

Positives

One participant reflected on positive aspects of lockdown.

'it made me more appreciative of the small things in life'

Coming out of lockdown

Participants spoke about the support they would like to see and the support they could offer help Oldham recover.

Being part of the solution

Many participants mentioned wanting to be involved in decision-making and actions.

'I want to add to the community, to help the community, be useful, I want to be part of what's going on'
'we need to have dialogue with the local authority, to have needs met'
'no decision made without me … consider communities, what we want, what the group wants'
'understand what people in locality need, meet their needs'
'people got skills, energy, contacts … develop, harness the connectivity, energy, skills'

Group 2 - (12 participants, 3 facilitators)

Challenges coming out of lockdown

Challenges reported by participants centred on readjusting and access to services.

Readjusting

Anxiety was mentioned when considering coming out of lockdown and readjusting. Some parents/carers also voiced concerns in relation to their autistic children. 'They got used to the routine, they don't want to go out' and 'when they get used to something, it's hard to get back to how things were'. Parents/carers envisaged it being difficult to facilitate the change.

Access to services

Participants mentioned concerns around accessing services. They commented that certain services might have ceased altogether, such as community groups/centres, and others might be strongly competed over, such as GPs and dentists. They requested signposting to available services and funding/funding signposting for community groups.

Support for coming out of lockdown

Joint decision-making and supporting community groups/centres were reflected on as support opportunities.

Joint decision-making

Participants stated that they wanted to be involved in decision-making. 'We all need to be brought along' and 'you can only fix [broken systems] if you include people' were key comments. In particular, participants wanted women to have a central voice in decision-making: 'I would like to see a specific focus on women … we need a dedicated person in the LA to champion this so we ensure the right support is developed that women want going forward'.

Support community groups/centres

Community groups/centres were considered anchors in the community and needed to be supported. Participants mentioned how groups/centres help to 'point people in the right direction' and 'build self-esteem'. One participant reflected that joining a community group supported them to feeling 'like I'm getting my old self back'. Funding to keep groups/centres open was requested and Spindles suggested as a useful location to provide physical space.

Group 3 (15 participants, 2 facilitators)

What is important coming out of lockdown

Participants reflected on support for residents and socialising opportunities as important.

Support for residents

Many participants mentioned the importance of support, including financial, mental health, physical health, employment, family and child support. Peer-mentoring and investment were suggested as ways to support businesses affected by lockdown.

One participant highlighted the need to support residents with continuing to follow the safety measures and rules.

Opportunities to socialise

Community centres, social groups for children and for adults and play areas were listed by participants to encourage residents 'to get together and socialise'.

Challenges coming out of lockdown

Challenges reported by participants centred on feeling safe and needing support.

Feeling safe

Many participants reflected on feeling safe as a key challenge. They spoke about the importance of public spaces being sanitised, workplaces being risk assessed and social distancing being followed. Protecting loved ones was a central concern.

Support for residents

Participants spoke about the need for financial and employment support, as well as social support for elderly people and mothers. The importance of culturally appropriate activities and events, in community languages was highlighted.

Readjusting

Participants mentioned anxiety as a challenge. 'Getting used to going out again and commuting' and 'returning to work' were mentioned, as was 'social anxiety, getting back into a routine'. Community events, groups and centres were listed as supportive spaces and should receive more funding.

Support for coming out of lockdown

Bringing people together and support for residents were reflected on as support opportunities.

Bringing people together

Opportunities for residents to enjoy leisure time was frequently mentioned. These included 'places families can go', 'a central play area', 'bowling', 'outdoor exercise machines', 'more developed parks' and 'more events, outdoor activities. Activities should be aimed at all age groups.

Support for residents

Support for residents was another suggestion. Financial support, support for businesses, promoting mental and physical health, classes for all ages (e.g. maths/English, mindfulness/wellbeing, advice for parents), support for teenagers, growing your own. Local facilities were highlighted as key.

Feeling safe

Participants mentioned the importance of feeling safe. A clean and safe environment, with more bins and less litter was requested, so residents can 'get[…] out but safely' .