

CWMTAFMORGANNWG HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICE USER SURVEY 2020

*Considering the responses from those who have lived
experience*

Our views matter!



Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group

The importance of asking people what they think

What people think of the support they receive really does matter. In fact CwmTafMorgannwg Housing Support teams and the Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group are always keen to hear from people who have accessed housing support grant funded services.

The funding for this support comes from the Housing Support Grant that seeks to secure: *“A Wales where nobody is homeless and everyone has a safe home where they can flourish and live a fulfilled, active and independent life”*.

Those who have needed to use services funded through the grant come from a wide range of backgrounds and receive support on a range of different issues; the support they receive is person centred and aimed at supporting people to secure and maintain sustainable housing and to develop the skills needed to help them thrive.

Great importance is placed on engaging with people who use services both as an inclusive extension of the support service and as part of CwmTafMorgannwg's strategic needs assessment process. It is accepted that people who receive services are experts in these services, they have lived and experienced them and are in the best position to know what works, what doesn't and what improvements need to be made.

Along with other consultation mechanisms which are undertaken at a local level; an annual service user survey is promoted and providers of services are encouraged to promote and enable the people they support to complete the questionnaire.

This report provides an overview of the responses received to the 2020 annual service user consultation survey. The questionnaire was circulated widely during November and December 2020 and asked the following questions:

Q1 In which area of CwmTafMorgannwg do you live?

Q2 What type of service are you receiving?

Q3 Please tell us how you have received support during the last few months?

Q4 Please tell us in a few words about your experience of receiving support during lockdown and over the last few months?

Q5 Please tell us how you would like to receive your support in the future?

Q6 Did you find it easy to get help and support?

Q7 What activities have you received help and support with?

Q8 Were there any activities you would have liked help with, but which the support provider was not able to offer?

Q9 Do you think there are any barriers for people in need of housing related support?

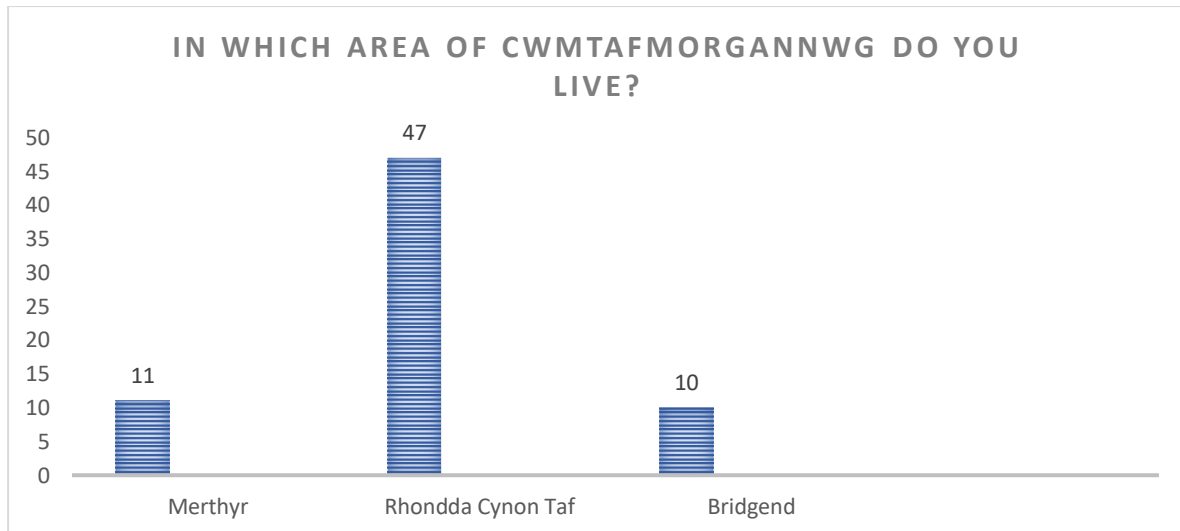
Q10 Is there anything that could be improved about the support you received?

Q11 Are there any other comments that you would like to make about your support service?

Summary of responses received

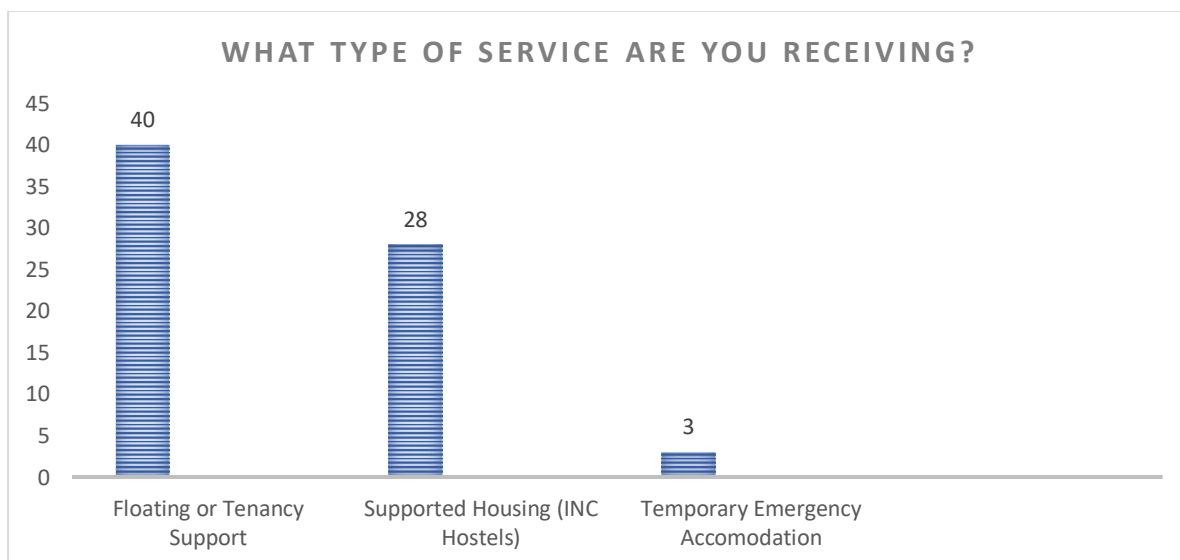
In total 66 people responded to the questionnaire.

Question 1:



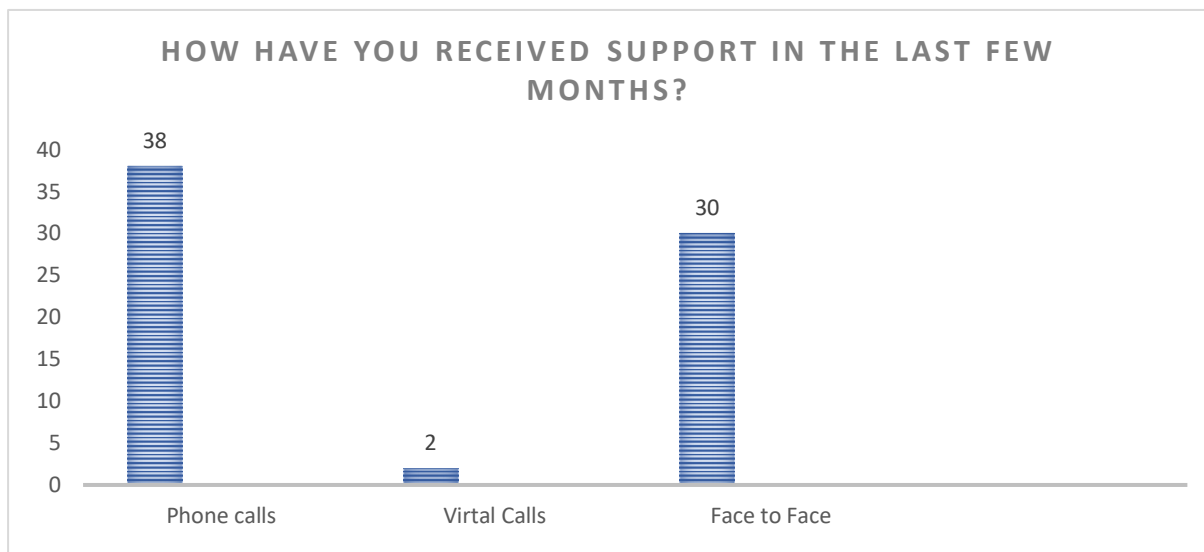
Responses were received from people accessing services in all CwmTafMorgannwg local authority areas.

Question 2:



The greatest number of people who responded were receiving floating or tenancy support i.e. support that is delivered in their own home. Those who responded to say they lived in supported housing includes those who live in accommodation with onsite support such as hostels. The smallest number of responses was from people living in temporary accommodation which would include bed and breakfast and other emergency accommodation. The largest number of services currently commissioned across CwmTafMorgannwg are floating support services.

Question 3:



Virtual calls include e.g. Messenger, Facetime, Whats app

It is positive that 46% of those who had responded had received some face to face support.

Question 4:

Please tell us in a few words about your experience of receiving support during lockdown and over the last few months.

When asked about the experience of receiving support during lockdown. People generally felt well supported by their support workers and the regular phone calls and face to face meetings had helped to relieve some of the isolation of lockdown for many. It was very clear from the responses what a difference housing support had made.

People generally found it easy to contact their support worker, that support was readily available and that the regular contact had been "a godsend"; as well as being a lifeline. It was clear that the regular contact and support had helped a huge number of responders maintain their mental health and had helped to combat isolation and loneliness. One person advised that "I would not of been able to manage without your support through lockdown and feel that i would not be here now if the support was not there.

Some people felt that their support workers had gone above and beyond to help them under very difficult conditions:

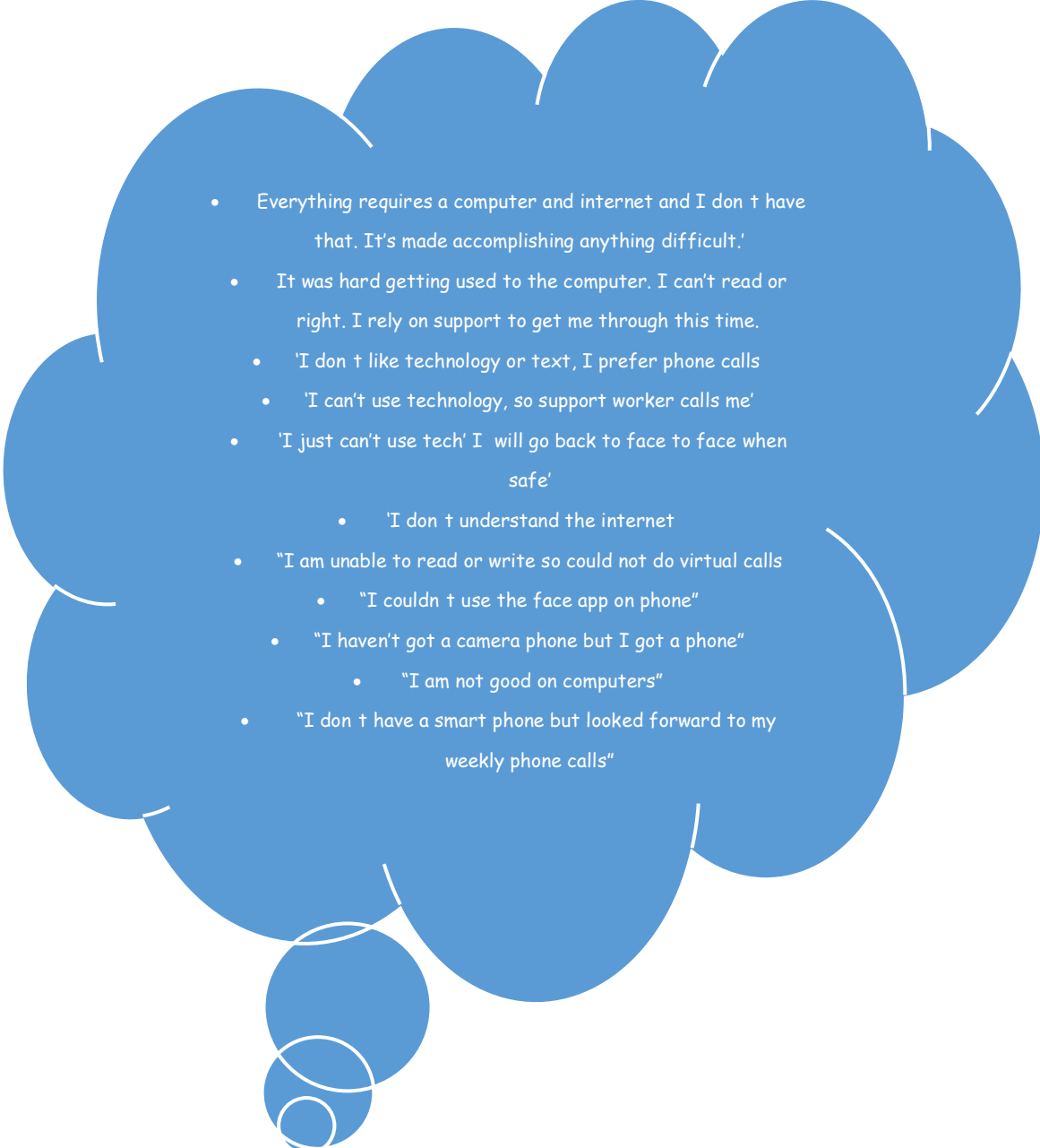
- People in temporary accommodation were supported with benefits, rent entitlements, food vouchers, housing needs, access to private rented, rent entitlements and social housing.
- People who struggle to read and write were helped to fill forms and understand letters and correspondence
- People with housing issues were encouraged and supported to fill in housing application forms, to bid for properties and supported to move on to longer term sustainable accommodation.
- People need a new home were assisted to access training allowing them to proceed with Move On.
- People benefited from around the clock support from the project they lived in.
- People were assisted to recover from flooding and were supplied with items such as a bed and bedding.
- People were supported to access health appointments and to access medications through their local pharmacy
- People had food parcels delivered that helped them survive comfortable during lockdown.

The following word cloud provides an overview of many of the positive responses received to this question:



Some support providers found innovative ways of delivering support and these efforts were received as positive experiences by those responding to the questionnaire.

The difficulties that people experienced during this period were mainly in relation to their digital skills or lack of access to technology. Some of the responses included:

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- 'Everything requires a computer and internet and I don't have that. It's made accomplishing anything difficult.'
 - 'It was hard getting used to the computer. I can't read or right. I rely on support to get me through this time.'
 - 'I don't like technology or text, I prefer phone calls'
 - 'I can't use technology, so support worker calls me'
 - 'I just can't use tech' I will go back to face to face when safe'
 - 'I don't understand the internet'
 - "I am unable to read or write so could not do virtual calls"
 - "I couldn't use the face app on phone"
 - "I haven't got a camera phone but I got a phone"
 - "I am not good on computers"
 - "I don't have a smart phone but looked forward to my weekly phone calls"

One person advised that the phone calls were good but "I don't have broadband and am not able to put much credit on my phone" another said that "For me it's been hard as I struggle talking on phone but everyone has done their best."

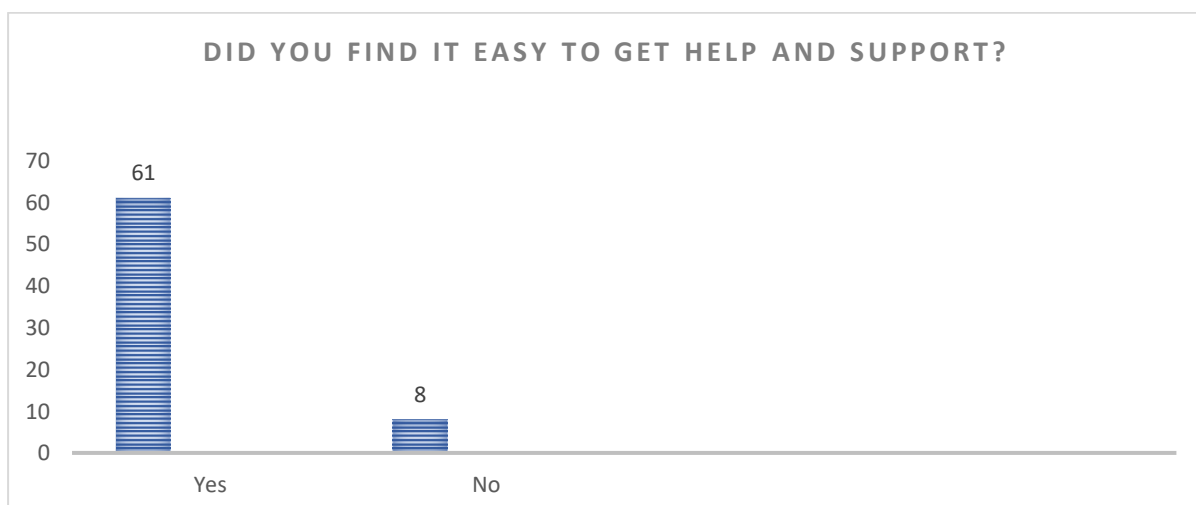
Other difficulties that people experienced were mainly in relation to not being able to have face to face support with 12 people who responded to the questionnaire advising that they missed not being able to see their support worker.

Question 5:



In line with the previous question which highlighted the difficulties people had with accessing support digitally; overwhelmingly people would like to receive future support either face to face, by phone or as a combination.

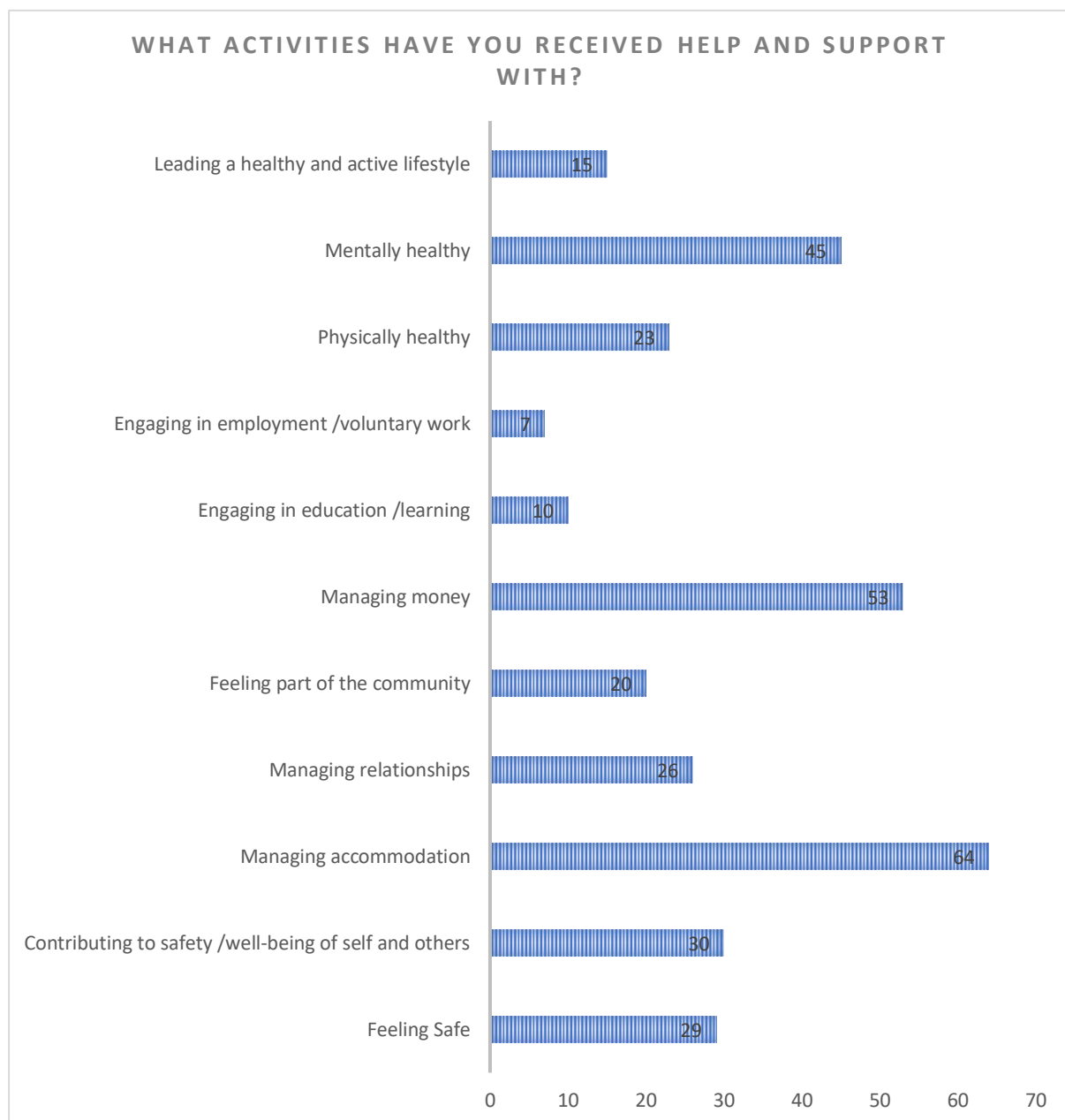
Question 6:



The reasons given by those who struggled to receive support are as follows:

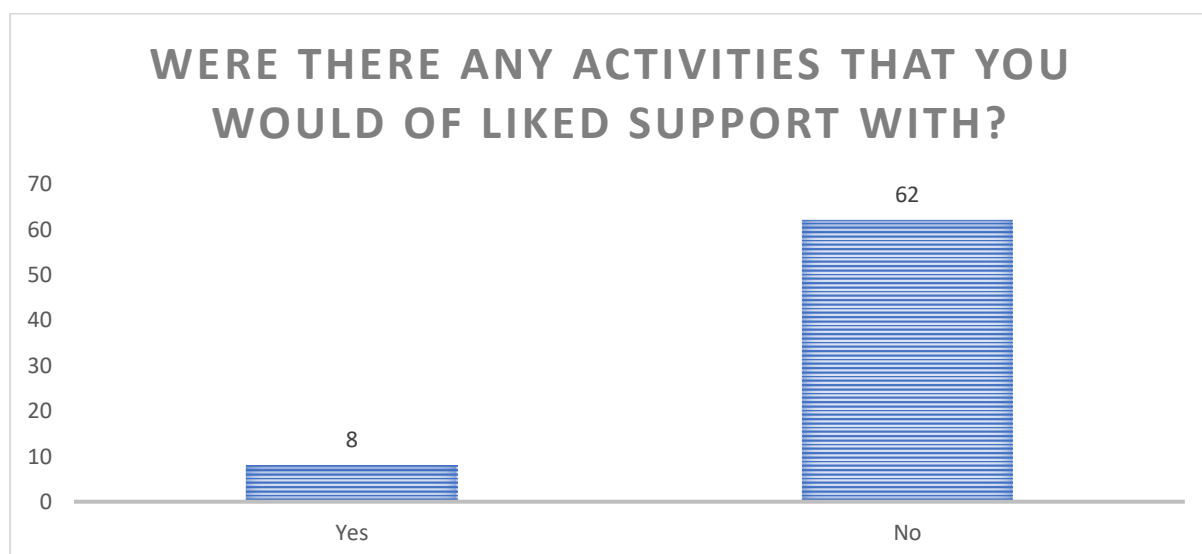
- I struggle with depression
- I was told there is a long waiting list.
- Housing was harder to get hold off as were other services
- When I was trying to find appropriate support initially it was not easy.
- Before I lived at Kerrigan, I found it difficult, but now I find it easy.
- Some places like banks and dentists have been hard to get help from.
- Found it very difficult and experienced a lot of fighting and arguments at home.
- I want to be re housed in assisted living which social services are assisting in.
- I was struggling so phoned my support worker and she started supporting me again.

Question 7:



People responding were widely supported with the current housing support grant outcome areas; it is no surprise that the elements that people received the least support with were engaging with employment/ voluntary work or engaging in education/learning. These areas have been severely restricted due to the lockdown measures implemented with many agencies and learning establishments closed or on restricted hours. Managing money and managing accommodation were areas that the greatest number of people who responded to the questionnaire received support with. Mental health issues were challenging and people struggled with loneliness, fear based issues and trauma.

Question 8:



Were there any activities that they would have liked support with, but which the support provider was not able to offer?

Overall people whom appear to have received the support they needed; the activities that they would have liked support with which the support provider could not provide are listed here:

Day trips

Budgeting

Help with courses

I don't go out any more and i miss meeting up with friends and my support worker

Cookery sessions

Psychological support

Not allowed to have my girlfriend for an overnight stay.

It would be nice to have some face to face contact when it is possible

Just be nice to have some face to face support when things settle down

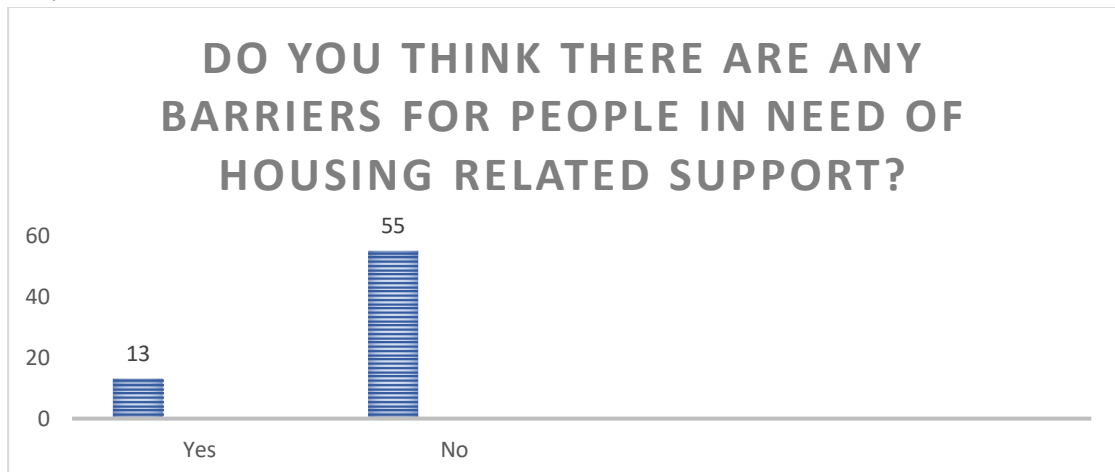
I miss shopping, going to the bank, getting out in the community.

Just be nice to have some face to face support when things

Would have like support with being part of the community and further education

I could do with some debt help

Question 9:



- I think the data protection rules made everything harder, my support worker would come back to me and say she had tried but that I needed to talk to the person. It was very difficult.
- I would like the move on panel and home-finder process not to delay and give us a chance to move on sooner, as we are ready to move on to independent living
- I had difficulty accessing Legal advice or aid - i was referred to Citizens Advice and they passed me on to someone else. I didn't feel I had support in this area
- There are not enough temporary accommodation placements.
- Yes there are barriers but I think is more to do with funding and the government.
- Would have like support with being part of the community and further education but due to Covid lockdown these could not be done.
- I need Psychological support, but I have been referred to GP.

Question 10:

Is there anything that could be improved about the support you received?



55 people took the time to advise that there was nothing that could be improved about the service they have received from a total number of 68 responses to this question. Ten people responding to this question advised that receiving face to face support would improve the service they received. Other improvements made included more funding for more support workers or more staff and more funding for services.

Question 11 Are there any other comments that you would like to make about your support service?

51 people comments on this question

- Good, fair play
 - excellent support
 - Really helpful service
 - God bless you all for your hard work
 - I like this service
 - My support worker is very good
 - The staff in here are really good with us
 - I'm going forward here
 - No improvement necessary.
 - Staff are pretty good here.
 - Very happy with my support
 - Very good support service. Second to none
 - Staff, do everything that is needed to do.
 - I really appreciate everything you've done to help.
 - I struggle to get on with most people, due to my mental health. No nothing can be improved
 - Staff are absolutely amazing. I couldn't have asked for better support, they put me back on the right track.
 - Just having support has helped and having regular contact has made a difference
 - Support worker gives all the support he can during this difficult time
- And so on..... there are many more*

The CwmTafMorgannwg Housing Support Teams and the Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the annual survey.



The following are short stories of people who have experienced support in
CwmTafMorgannwg:

E *I was street homeless and when I became pregnant, I moved into a private rented property, I could not have a council house because I had a lot of arrears and debt. The property I moved into was in an awful condition, but I put up with it as I had nowhere else to go. My daughter was now 1yrs old and the damp and mould were affecting her health. I was constantly stressed and anxious. The property was condemned by environmental health and I had to move. My Worker was amazing, she found us a property which was close to my family. She spoke to the landlord and helped me with grants and all the paperwork. She helped me to set up my gas and electric and even applied for a water scheme. We also had help to get furniture because what I did have was ruined in my last place because of the damp. I am now settled in a much better place and have set up payment plans which I can afford. I know the problems were mine, but my Support Worker took the weight off my shoulders and helped me every step of the way. I now see a future for myself and my daughter.*

J I am a single parent with a 6-year-old son. I went to the Drop In for help with my housing because I was at the end of my tether with harassment from my neighbour. My Support Worker tried everything to resolve the disputes with the neighbour and spoke to my landlord, but the harassment continued. I suffer Bipolar Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder and severe Anxiety and Depression which were getting worse.

The only option was to move. My Support Worker found me another property and sorted out the bond and rent in advance as I did not have the money to be able to move. She helped me to set up all my bill and we done a plan to help me budget my money properly. They even helped me change my Doctors and referred me for help with my Mental Health.

I feel safe and happy where I am and cannot thank my Support Worker enough, she was excellent. Me and my son would still be living in fear if we had not had help.

AR I became homeless after being evicted from my property due to rent arrears. My confidence was low at the time and on reflection I can see that my ability to keep myself safe was not good. I found the courage to speak out about my mental health issues at the time of my housing assessment.

I was lucky to receive 24-hour support working towards the goal of independent living. Whilst living at Chaplins I have worked alongside my support worker on managing money, debt, rent arrears managing my accommodation and leading a healthy and active lifestyle. I have worked at being more aware of my situation and learnt through reflection that I can identify my own ideas of improvement.

My support worker helped me address my rent arrears and a reconsideration was submitted to housing benefit to address £1279 debt from previous tenancy. I am so relieved that Housing Benefit awarded the back date for these rent arrears and I can now place bids on social housing again.

I am proud to say that I have worked towards gaining skills in tenancy management and completed all tenancy related training Tenancy Ready Course with the goal of achieving my own independence. I have made an effort to engage in all activities provided by staff and outside agencies which has helped to develop my confidence and self-belief. I kept myself to myself initially but now I am engaging with other residents at the hostel.

I been assisted to engage with the Activewoods project and attended outdoor activities learning new skills. I was referred to the resilience project mind and by being supported I worked on my Anxiety and Hoarding issues.

As I need supported accommodation to move on I have been referred to Housing First and am happy to be accepted for move on accommodation once a property can be identified.

Now at last I see a bright future and I want to be in my own accommodation with ongoing support. My support has turned my life around and I am very grateful that they believed in me and gave me a chance to find myself.

This is a short write up of my journey since being released in April 20, and details of the support and guidance that I have been given.

I was released in April 20 to a P.I.P.E. Hostel in Leicester to which I resided for 6 months. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic the hostel was not running at full capacity but it still offered me plenty of support and guidance at all times.

The staff were very consistent in ensuring that pro-social behaviours were adhered to at all times. The clinical lead (Damian) was a very nice fella who would go out of his way to ensure all was well at all times.

I left Leicester November 20 to go to Quay House approved premises, (Swansea) to which I stayed until Jan 21.

January 21 I arrived at Garth Villas. Due to my anxiety and depression I was very quiet for a few days but once I came around I got chatting to the staff (who I must say) are the best that I have come across. Very understanding, friendly, and good at making you feel at ease.

Thank You to the service users and support provider for sharing these stories, and to the remarkable support workers who have helped people improve their lives of those engaging in our support services.

Contacts to refer into a Supporting People service:

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On behalf of Merthyr, Bridgend and RCT Housing services and the CTM Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group.

