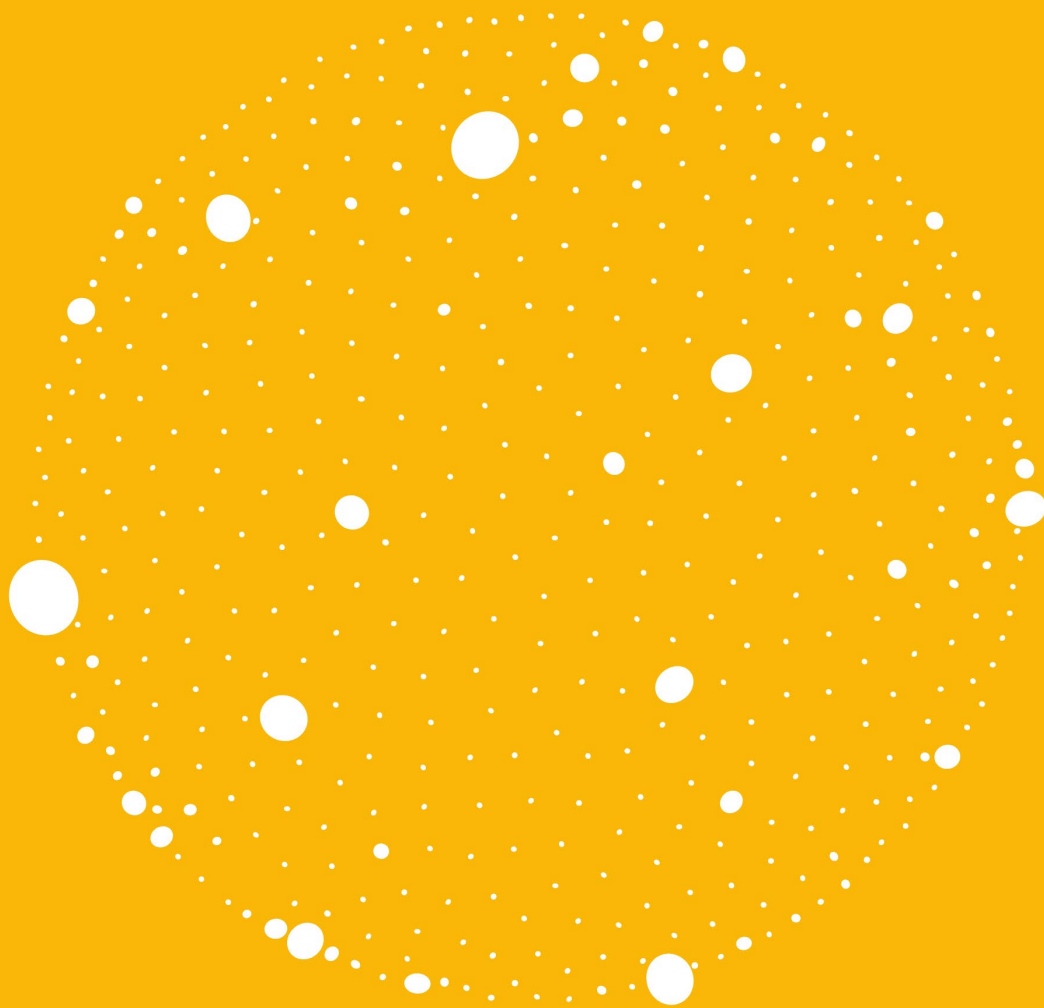




East Ayrshire Covid Resilience Research

Executive Summary

August 2022



Executive Summary

Background and Original Drivers

The coronavirus pandemic has hit communities hard right around Scotland. Some people and organisations have done well while others, often those with less resources in the first place, have done less well. A consortia of East Ayrshire organisations came together in early 2022 to identify the impact of the pandemic on people in their communities and identify the best way to support people to recover and thrive.

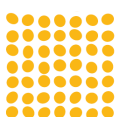
The Consortia

The partnership is supported by The CORRA Foundation and made up of the following grass roots organisations:

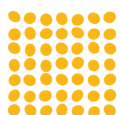
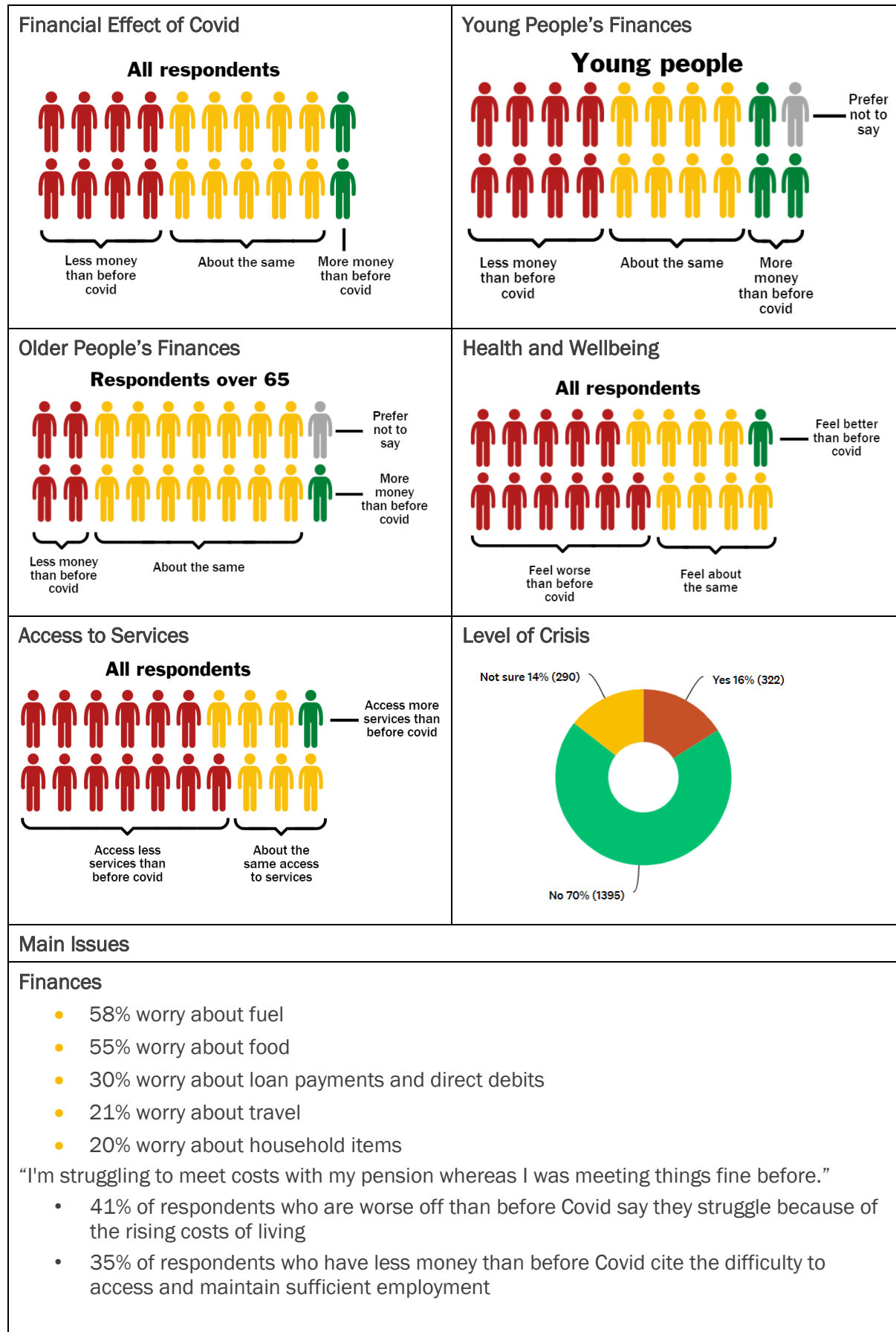


What We Did

The key methodology was to undertake a survey face to face using trained local volunteers and staff in the partner organisations. This was highly resource intensive but enhanced the qualitative nature of the research and the validity of the results. The process can be summarised as follows:



What We Found Out



Wellbeing

- 42% of people who feel like their health and wellbeing have been negatively affected by Covid report worsened mental health
- 16% of respondents report a significant level of anxiety due to their financial issues
- 15% of respondents with worsened health and wellbeing report feeling lonely
- 9% of respondents report having faced physical health issues

“I can’t seem to get over lockdown and am nervous about going back out into the world.”

Access

- 83% of respondents who report a lower access to services say that access to GP appointments is lower than it was before the pandemic. In addition, 55% of respondents struggle to have access to a dentist and 30% have an issue accessing other health services
- 21% of respondents to this question have less access to local authority services, and 16% have a lower access to community-based services

“It’s like we don’t have a GP service.”

Support

In the past two years the importance of Scotland’s voluntary sector has been underlined, with the co-ordination of food and grocery delivery, the support in areas of mental health and wellbeing (such as befriending), digital inclusion and the reduction of isolation as well as partnership work with the NHS and other agencies.

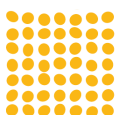
Crisis

1. Most people who said they were in crisis report that their financial situation is worse than before Covid (74%)
2. Their health and wellbeing are worse than before Covid (87%)
3. Their ability to access services is worse (76%)
4. 92% report that they struggle to have access to a GP, 70% struggle to access a dentist and 42% have issues access local authority services and other health services
5. 43% of those respondents are unemployed, which is double the proportion of unemployed people among all respondents
6. Covid had a disproportionately devastating effect on people in areas of deprivation
7. There is a close synergy between practical challenges brought on by the pandemic and mental health issues, particularly anxiety and isolation
8. Stigma is a significant barrier to those in need accessing the support that is available

Cost of Living

This research was undertaken post covid but before the current severe cost of living crisis. The price cap has increased in April 2022 and again significantly in September 2022. Aligned with this is a massive increase in all prices and which will considerably worsen the situation for the people we spoke to. CPAG has issued research estimating that around half the UK population will be in fuel poverty by January 2023¹

¹ <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/fuel-poverty-updated-estimates-uk>



Recommendations

To address this we recommend that

1. A cross sector East Ayrshire Task Force be set up to address the adversely negative situation that areas of relative deprivation find themselves in in East Ayrshire
2. A Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery Fund be provided in innovative ways to fund vital public services delivered by local community anchor organisations to meet the needs identified in this report. Direct funding of trusted partners should be preferred over a competitive process.
3. Health agencies come together to consider how to improve access to basic health services (GP and Dental appointments etc.)
4. Mental health services are properly promoted, resourced, available and accessible
5. A collaborative approach is taken to focus on those most vulnerable to negative events such as covid which is now compounded by the cost of living emergency. This will include, but is not restricted to;
 - Working Families – those who have limited disposable income now struggling with the “Cost of Living Crisis”
 - Elderly and people with long term limiting health conditions
 - Unemployed or underemployed
 - Single Occupancy Households
 - Lone Parents
6. There is an equitable re-distribution of East Ayrshire Council’s Community Welfare resources (staffing and services) to increase and improve access and availability for the most vulnerable residents particularly living in rural communities

