

Carers Assessment Evaluation Report

April 2017

Introduction:

Carers Assessments are a key tool for health and social care services to determine the needs of a Carer and to help establish how the Carer can be supported most effectively to maintain their caring role in a way that is most manageable for them. Carers assessments are undertaken by Carer Support Workers, Health and Social Care workers and trusted third sector providers and the quality of these assessments needs to be high to ensure needs are understood and met.

Torbay Carers Service undertook an evaluation into how the assessments were viewed by Carers, and the outcomes that resulted from them.

Summary findings:

- Carers tend to be comfortable with the location of the assessment, the time they had to wait for it, and that it covered everything important to them.
- Carers often had no information about the assessment before it took place.
- Carers were not satisfied with the extent to which the assessment covered support with caring or parental responsibilities or help with planning if anything were to happen to them or the person they care for.
- Everyone who had a copy of the action plan found it helpful, but only half of respondents had one.
- Sixteen percent of respondents did not know who to contact for further advice.
- Personal payments and respite were the most valuable services resulting from the assessment.
- Most respondents would recommend the assessment to others.
- When Carers were asked what would improve the assessment respondents said they would have liked a follow-up call or visit, more information on finances and a better explanation of the assessment before it takes place.

Background:

In autumn and winter 2016-17 Torbay Carers Service evaluated Carers' experiences of having a Carers' Assessment (some of which are Carers' Health and Wellbeing Checks). 58 Carers who had received assessments in the previous 12 months undertook an evaluation interview.

Carers were asked a range of questions about their experience of receiving their assessment and the support received afterwards. Assessments are undertaken by Carer Support Workers, Carers Aid Torbay, Zone Teams and mental health workers, so a range of Carers who received their assessment by each of these means were interviewed.

Methodology:

Carers who received a Carers Assessment in April, May and June 2016 were identified and Carer Evaluators were assigned a selection of Carers to approach by telephone or letter to ask if they would be happy to take part in the evaluation. Evaluators offered to undertake the evaluation interview in person either at the Carer's home or public venue or over the 'phone.

Carers completed 19 questions (some with sub-questions) in a structured interview format. If there was an evident need for signposting or referring for another assessment, the Carer Evaluators facilitated this.

Results:

Most respondents (83%) remembered having the Carers Assessment, but three out of the four respondents from mental health over 65 services did not remember.

Most of the assessments were completed in the carer's home and all but one respondent was happy with the location of their assessment.

Carers were not offered whether they wanted a combined assessment or a separate assessment on many occasions. Only 16% were offered both of these and of those who were only offered one type of assessment 39% were given a separate assessment and 32% were given a combined assessment.

Carers rarely had information about their assessment before it took place, apart from when these were organised by Carers Aid Torbay (both responses) and GP-based Carer Support Workers (nine out of 26 responses). Most of the people who had information prior to their assessment were given a leaflet on the help and support available to them. Seven respondents would have liked more information prior to their assessment (13%).

The waiting times for the assessment to take place varied considerably. While 73% of carers were assessed within 14 days ten carers responded to say they had to wait longer than that and one waited over 8 weeks. There was no clear difference in the time that people waited depending on the service conducting their assessment, but Carer Support Workers reflected the 14-day timescale at 73%, but one person had to wait over 8 weeks and another waited between six and eight weeks. Everyone who received their assessment from other services waited less than 28 days.

Most carers were happy with the length of time they waited to be assessed. 48% were very happy and 31% were happy. One person was very unhappy.

Carers were questioned about whether the assessment properly considered a range of areas that would support their caring role. There were average scores of less than 'moderate' for the following:

- Support with caring / parental responsibilities
- Planning ahead if something happens to you
- Planning ahead for the person you care for

Carers said the assessment covered everything that was important in 88% of cases, and 84% of Carers were given the opportunity to say what was going well for them.

Half of the assessments resulted in an action plan being made, and of those who had an action plan all found it useful, with 46% saying it was very useful. 63% received a copy of the action plan and more than half of those who didn't would have liked one. Of those who had a copy, half said it was useful and 29% said it was very useful.

Carers were asked if they know who to contact for further advice on their caring role, and 82% said they did, but 16% didn't. 22 respondents would contact their Carer Support Worker and nine said they would contact the Signposts for Carers advice line.

Carers expected to find out what support is available to them (8), to know there is support (5) and to have someone to talk to (3) as the most frequent answers. When asked if the assessment helped them to achieve their expectations, 21% said 'very successfully', but 15% said 'not at all'. Two of these were assessments carried out by Carer Support Workers, two by the Torquay Zone Team and another by the Paignton Zone Team.

Carers were asked if the services that were arranged for them as a result of the assessment were useful. The services that received the most positive responses were from the personal payments and respite.

Over two thirds of carers questioned would be 'very likely' to recommend the Carers Assessment to others and a further 21% who would be likely to do so. Four people would either be unlikely or very unlikely to do so however. While 64% of respondents who were assessed by Carer Support Workers would be very likely to recommend the assessment to others, two negative responses were from people who were assessed by Carer Support Workers. There was one person assessed by Torquay Zone and another by Paignton Zone who said they would be very unlikely to recommend the assessment to others.

Carers were asked what the best thing about the assessment was and twelve people replied that it was to know there is support, with a further eight saying it was 'talking to someone who understands' and five people saying 'learning about support'.

When asked how the assessment could have been improved, fifteen people said it couldn't have been improved, but those who responded with suggestions referred to the following:

- Follow-up phone call or visit
- More information on financial aspects
- Should have been explained better
- Joint assessment to improve communication
- Would be better if it came sooner
- More time was needed

Conclusion:

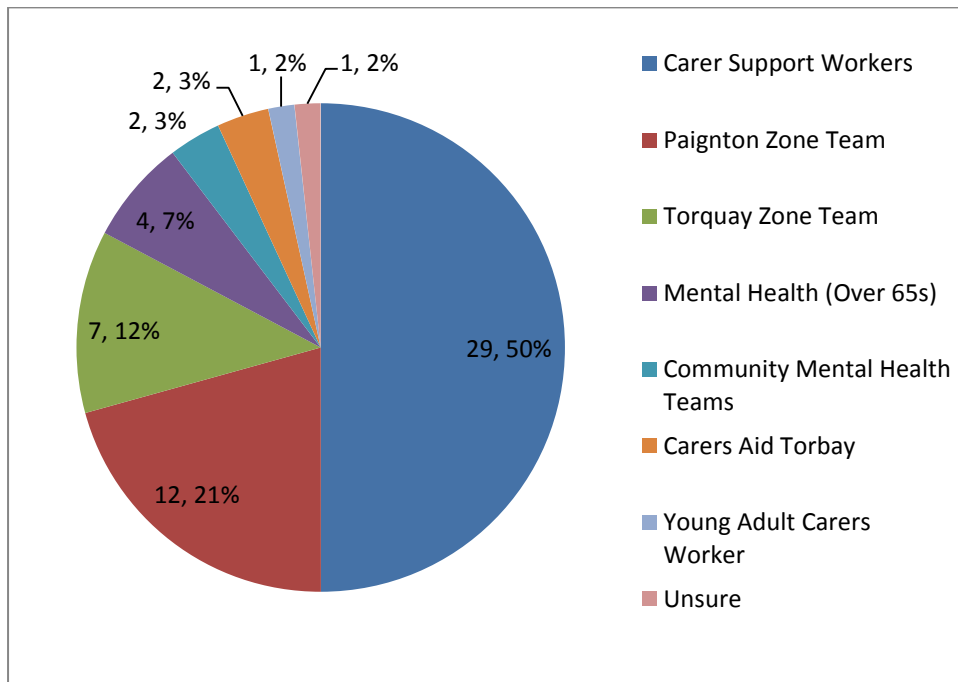
The majority of Carers felt positively about the assessment which they received, and most would recommend the assessment to others. This tells us that the assessment is valued in most cases, and facilitates positive developments for Carers. There were concerns that people didn't know a great deal about the assessment before it took place, and many Carers were unaware of who to contact in future if they needed support with their caring role after completing the assessment. Recommendations in response to the concerns raised in this evaluation appear below.

Recommendations:

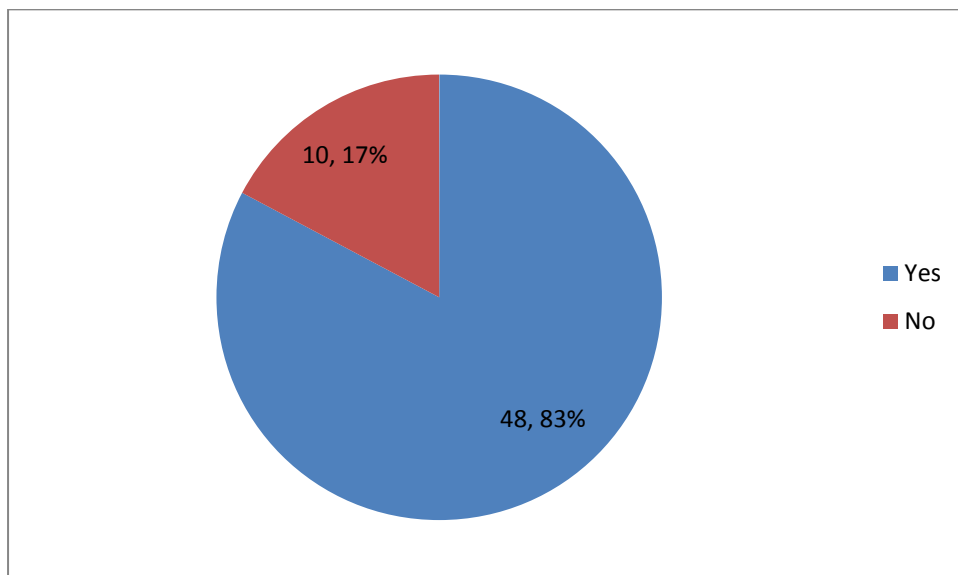
1. Processes should be embedded at the point of referral, to ask if Carers would like an individual or a combined assessment.
2. Assessment leaflets should be sent out at the point of referral so Carers understand what the assessment will consist of.
3. A renewed emphasis should be made on ensuring Carers get support with their caring or parental responsibility and with planning ahead both for if something happens to them and for the person they care for.
4. Carers should always be offered an action plan to take away with them after their assessment.
5. Carers need to know where to go for information and advice when they need it in the future so they should be given appropriate paperwork at the end of the assessment.

Appendix: Full responses to questions

In total there were 58 completed questionnaires, consisting of 29 Carer Support Workers from GP surgeries, 12 from Paignton Zone Team, 7 from Torquay Zone Team, 4 from Mental Health (Over 65s) services, 2 from the Community Mental Health Teams, 2 from Carers Aid Torbay, 1 from Young Adult Carers Services and 1 person was unsure who undertook their assessment.

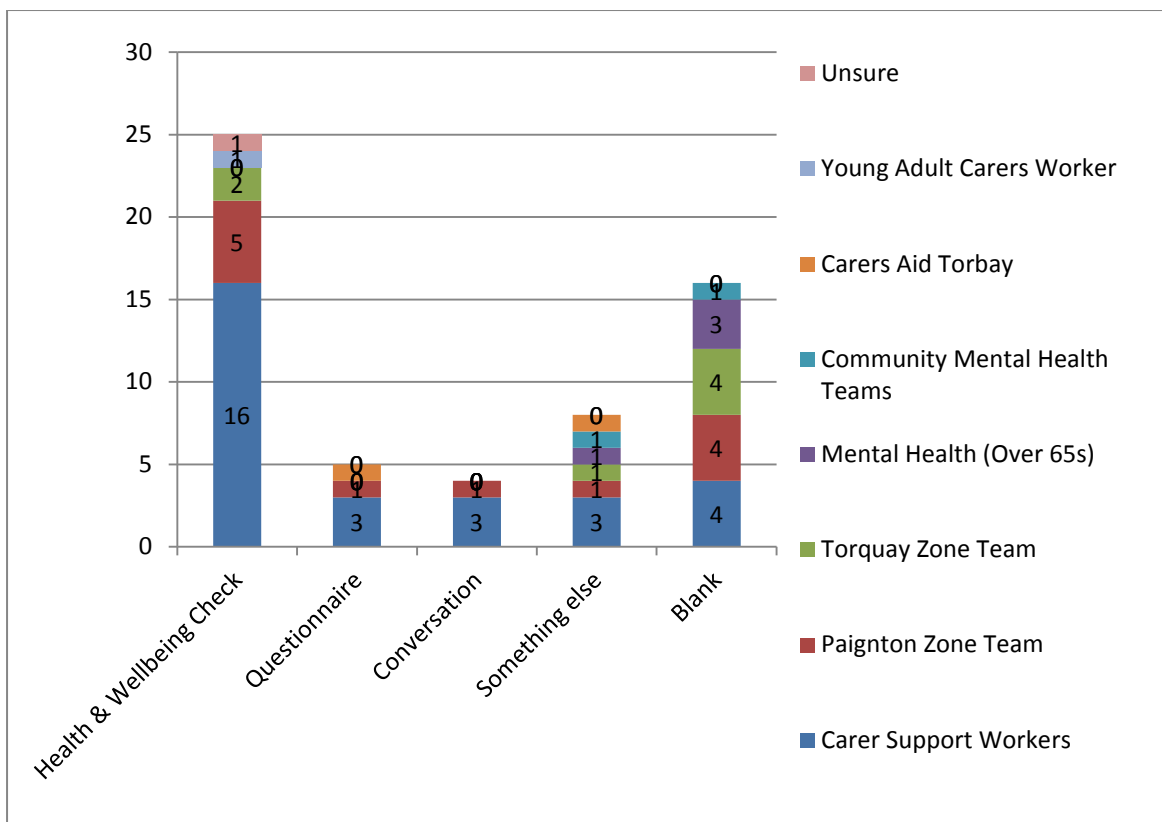
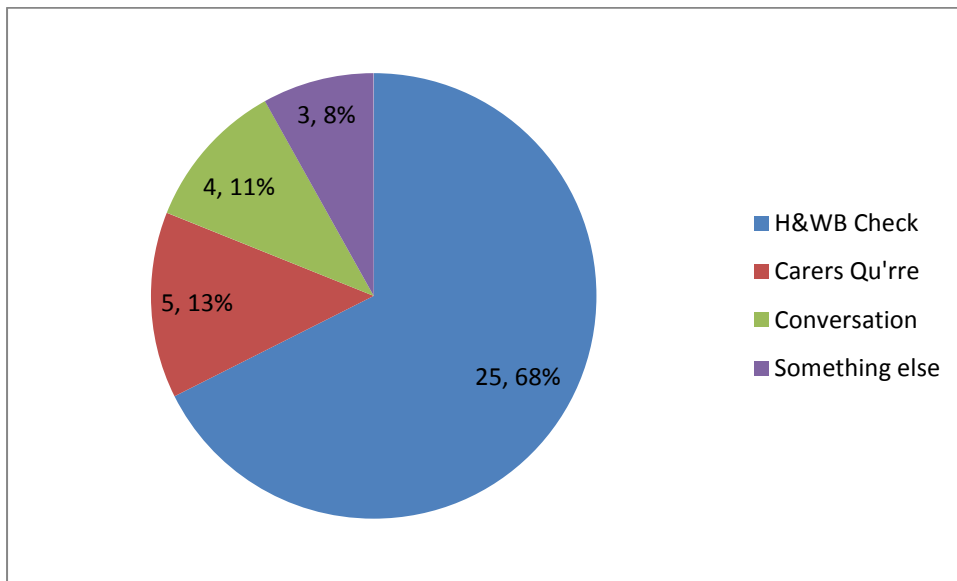


1) Do you remember having a Carers' Assessment?

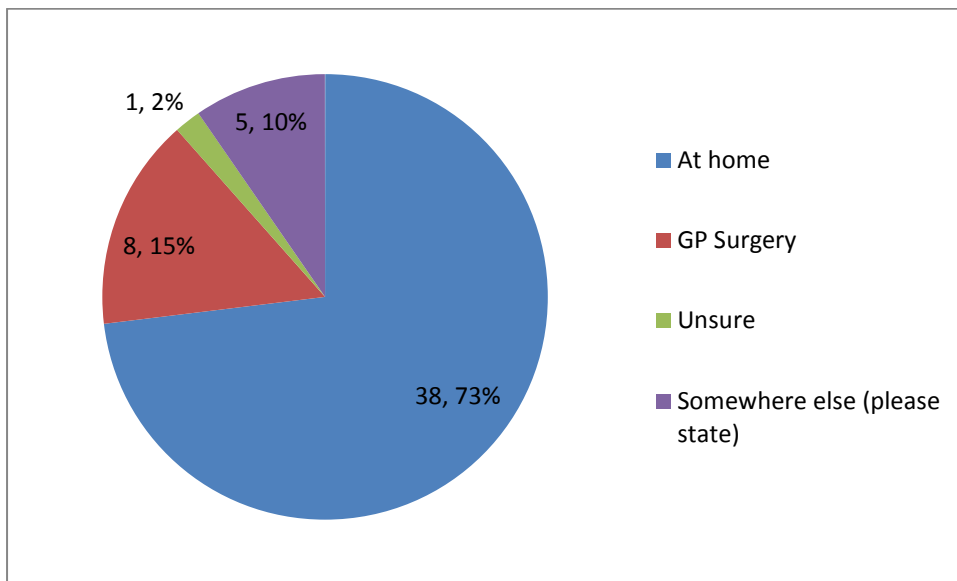


3x CSW (10%), 2x Paignton (17%), 3 x MHO65 (75%), 2x TQ (29%) did not remember

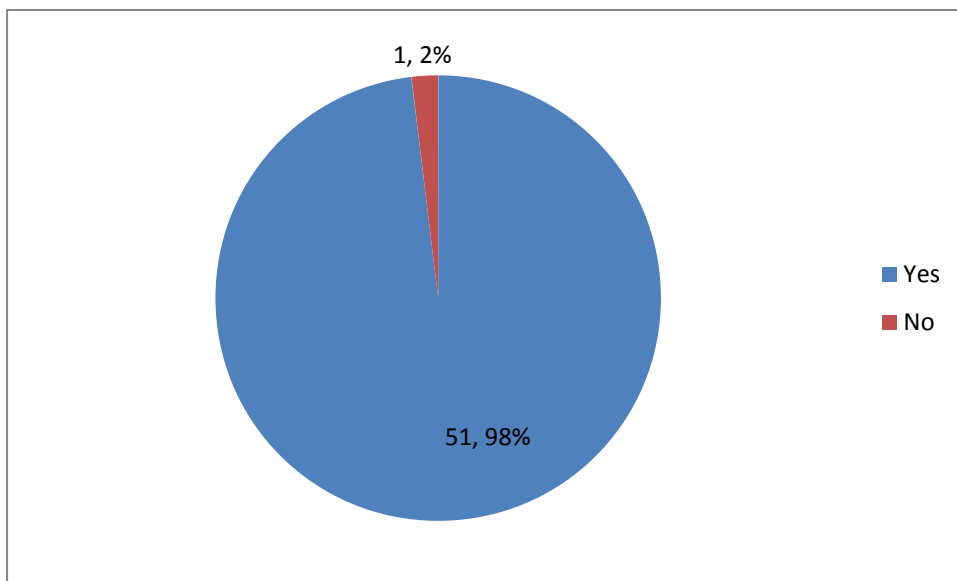
2) Do you know which type you had?



3) Where was it completed?



3a) Were you happy with that?

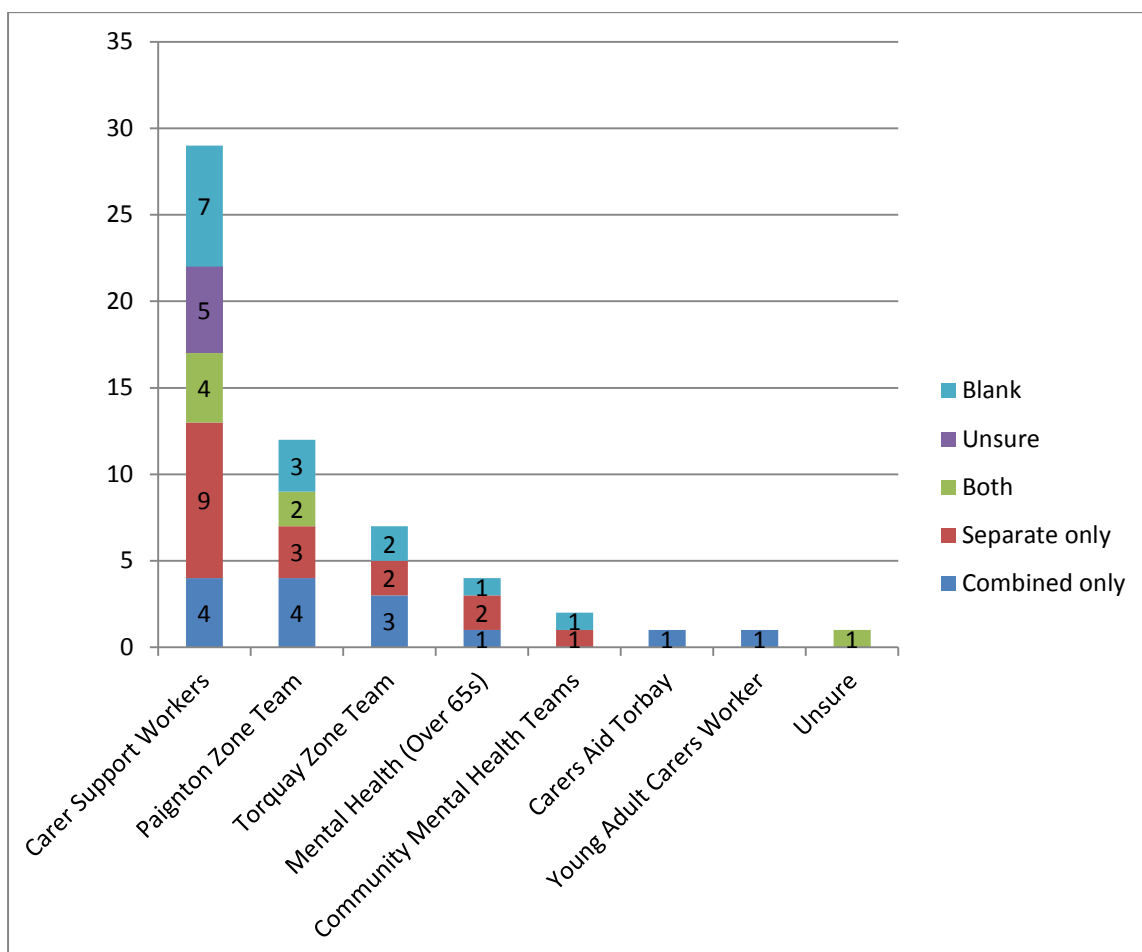
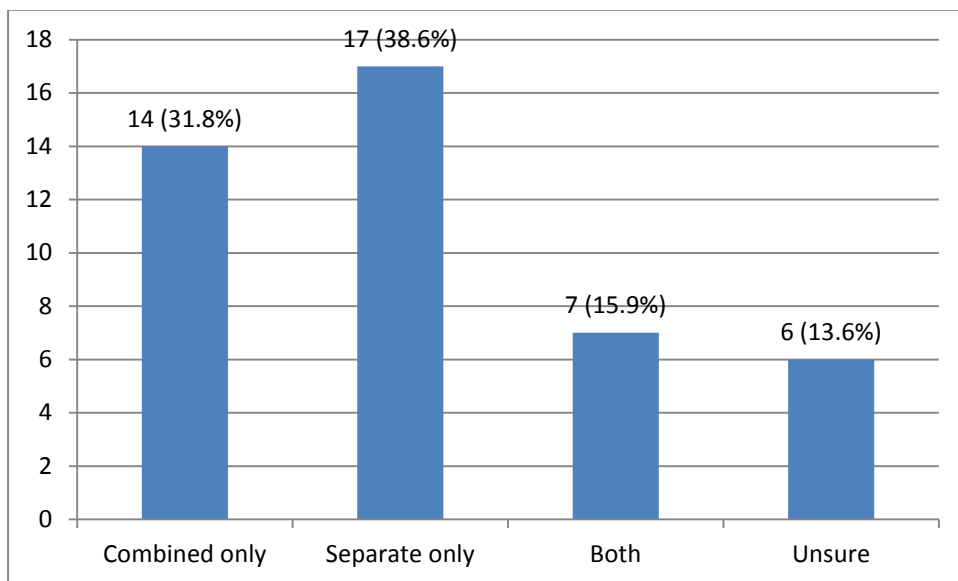


The person who was unhappy with the location of their Health and Wellbeing Check was also unsure where it was completed by the Torquay Zone Team.

Comments:

All eleven comments were positive about the location of their assessment. Three stated that it was easier or much easier.

4) Were you offered a choice of having an assessment on your own or with the person you care for (combined)?

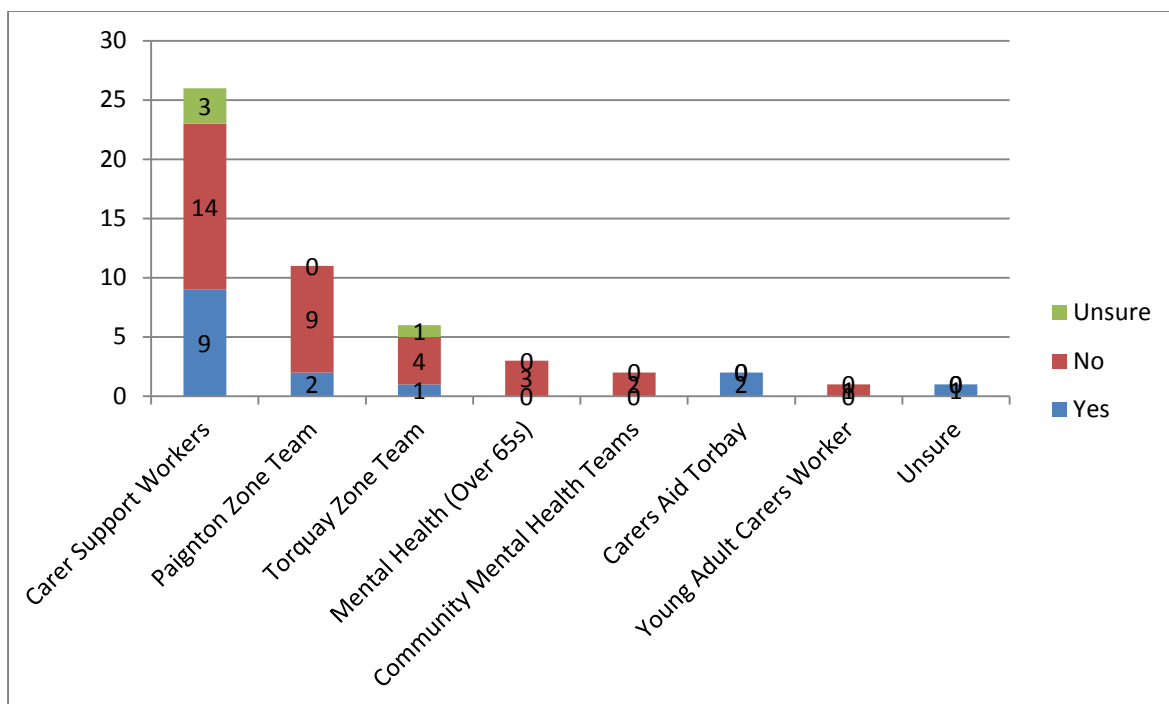
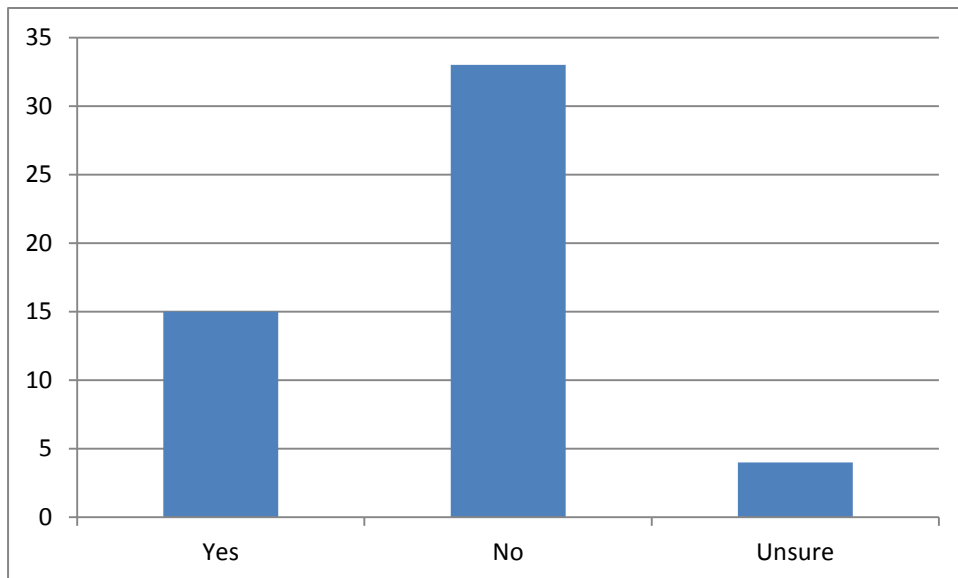


Comments:

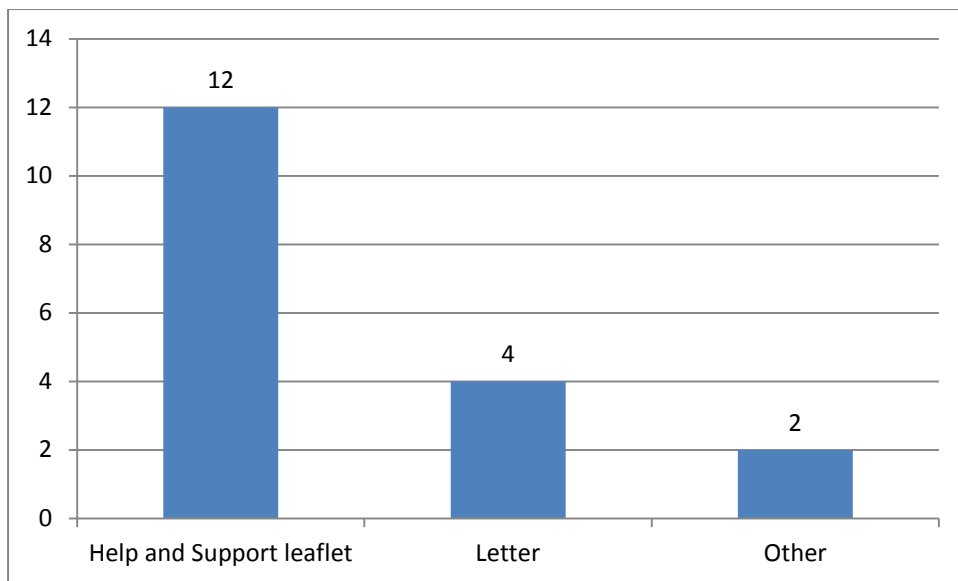
Twelve people said they had no choice whether to have their assessment alone or combined with the person they care for. Three said the type of assessment they had suited them, with three more

saying they had been given the option. One person completed the assessment on their own and one more stated they completed the assessment on the spur of the moment when they called in to their surgery.

5) Did you receive any information before the assessment?



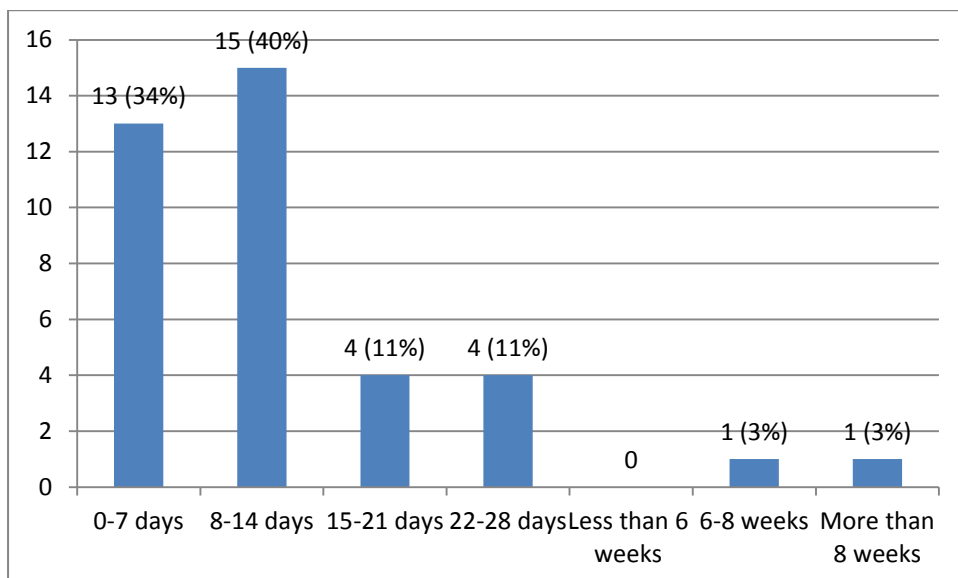
5a) If so, what?

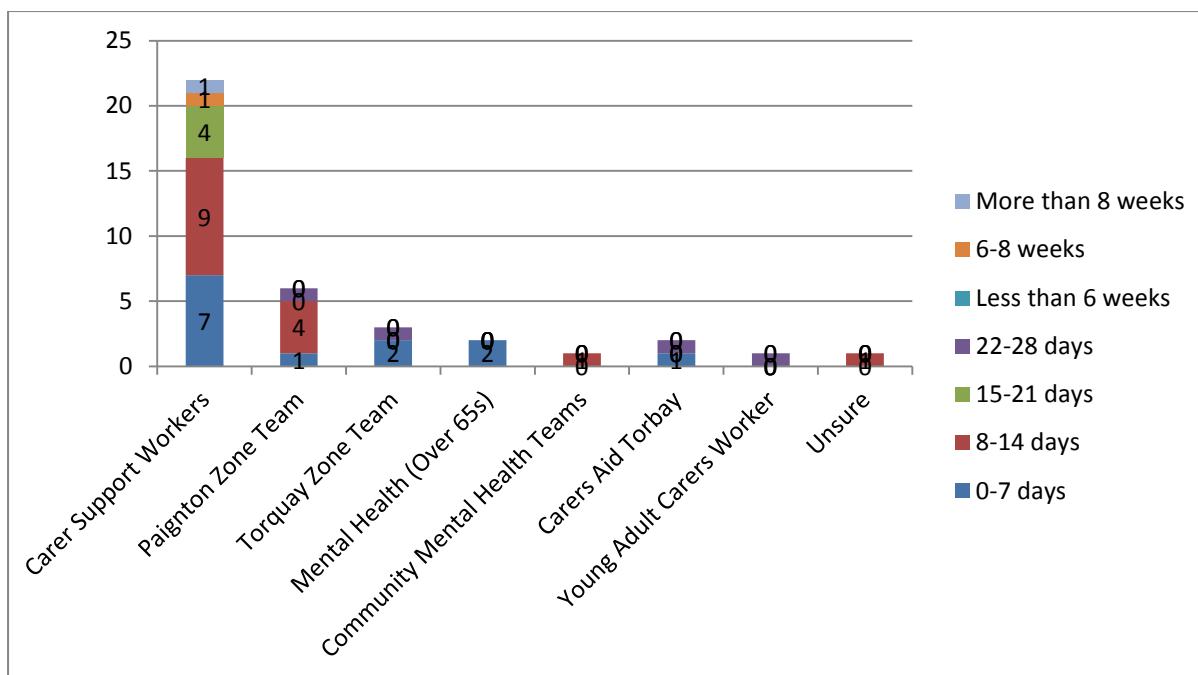


5b) Would any other information have been useful prior to assessment?

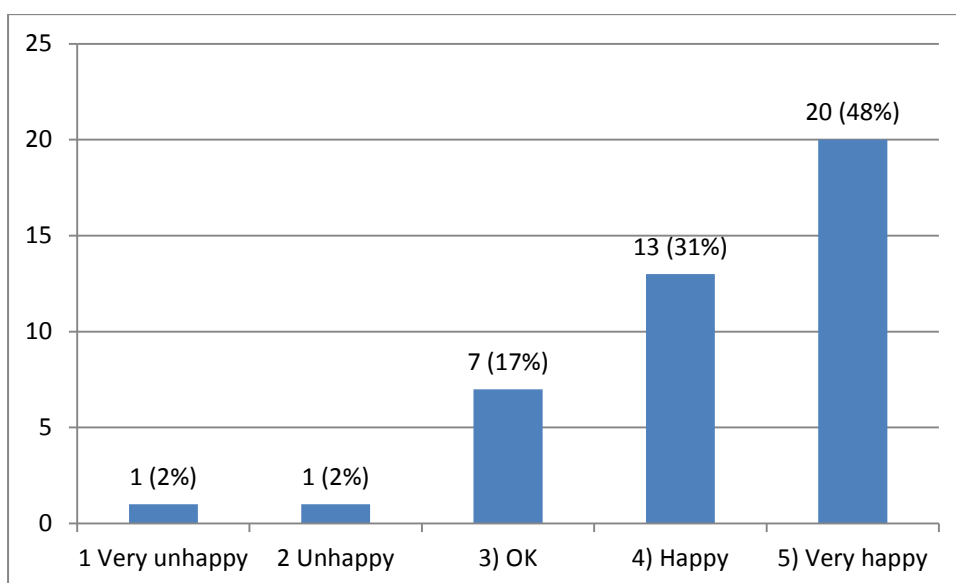
Four people simply answered yes to this question, but in addition to this, one person said “everything I’m entitled to”, one said “any information”, another “yes, to know I was having an assessment”. One more person replied “possibly” and another “I don’t know”.

6) How long did you wait for your assessment?

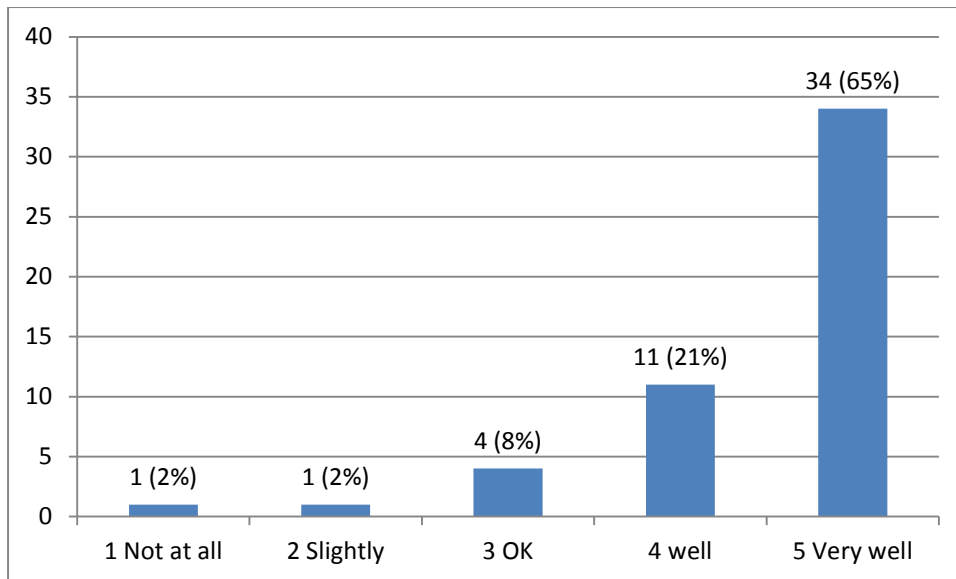




6a) How happy were you with the length of time you had to wait?



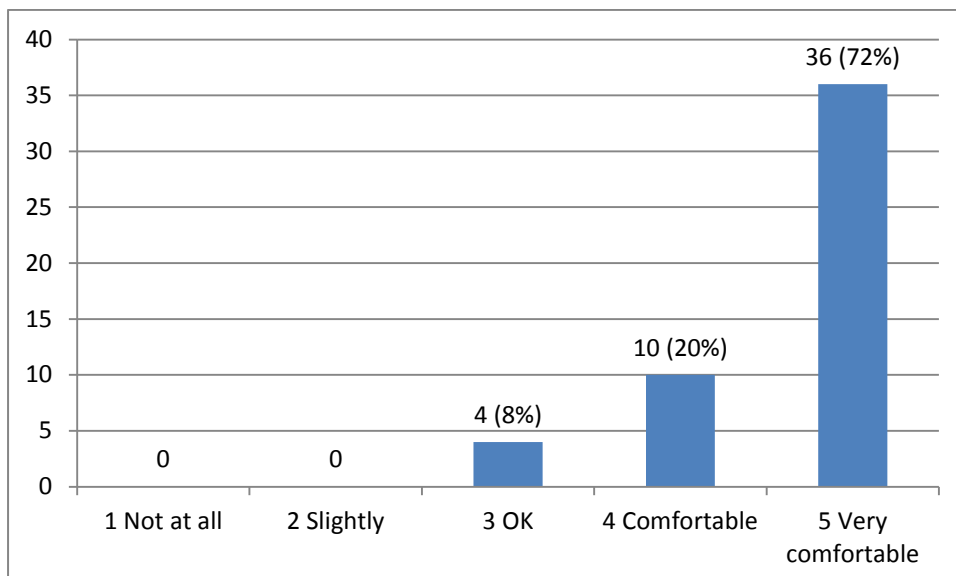
7) How well do you feel that the assessor understood your needs?



Comments:

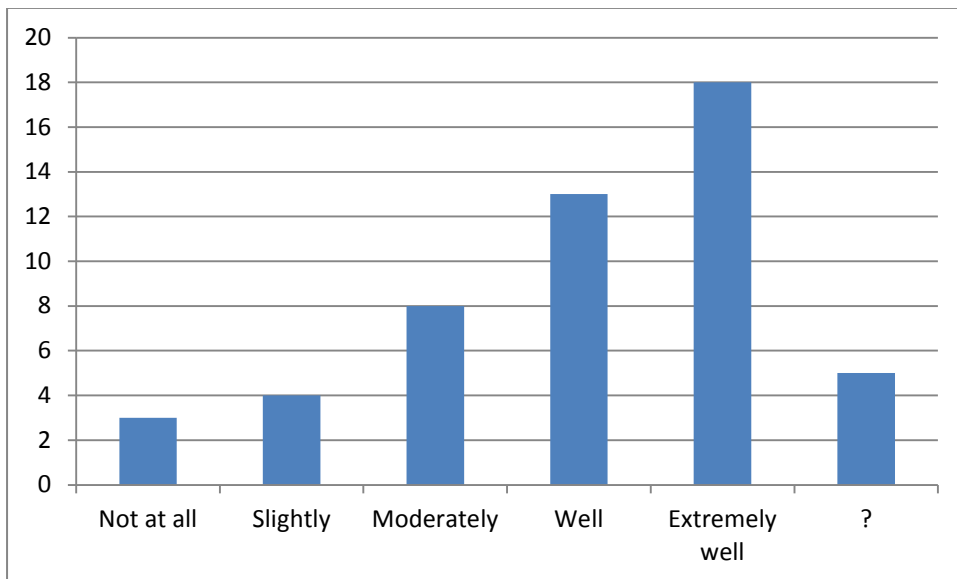
There was a wide range of positive responses to this question, with “very good”, “she was brilliant”, “very easy to talk to”, “very empathic, understanding and supportive and acknowledged how much I do”, “very understanding”, “very experienced and competent” and “understood difficulties” among the comments. There were also two negative responses, one saying “unless you are in our shoes you can’t appreciate what we go through” and another “useless. Waste of time. Can’t get respite”.

8) How comfortable did you feel about discussing things openly with them?

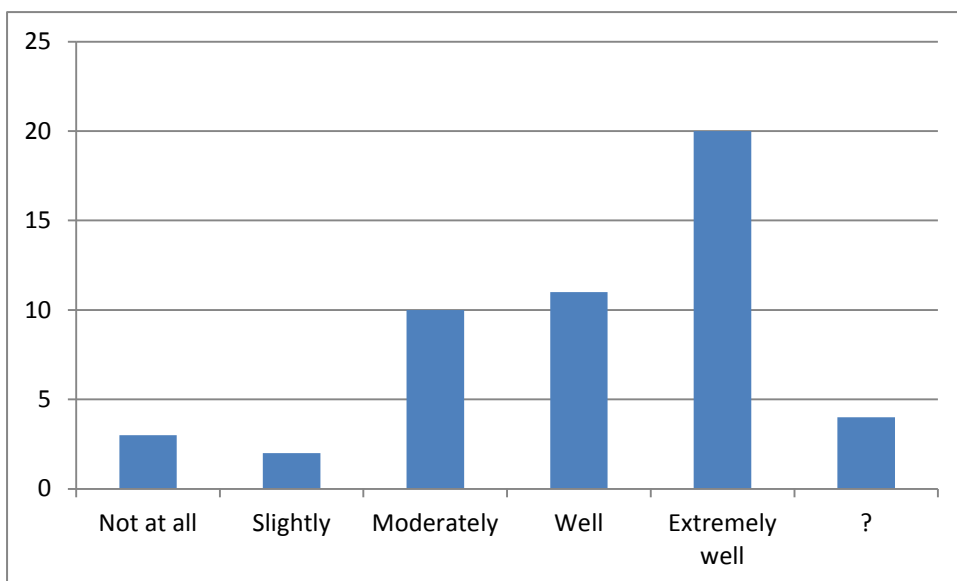


9) Do you feel that the following areas were properly considered?

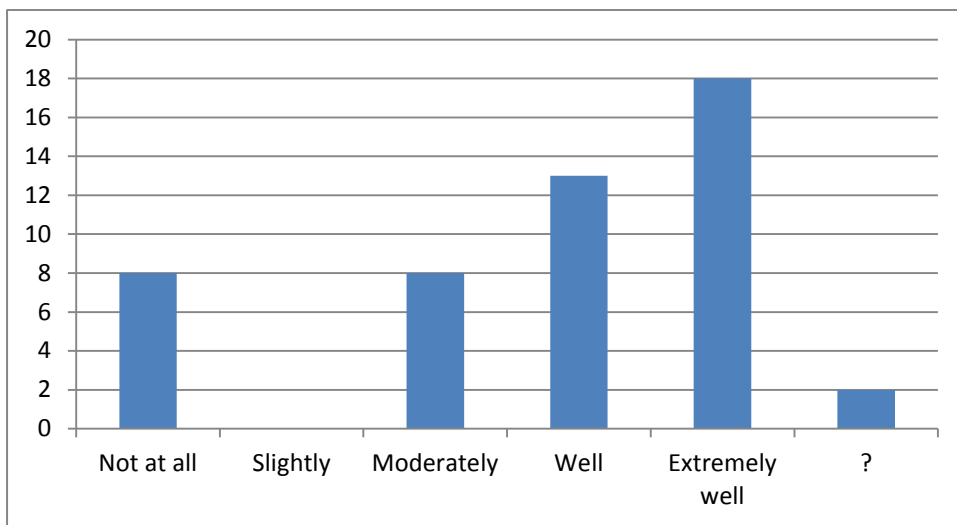
Support for your caring role



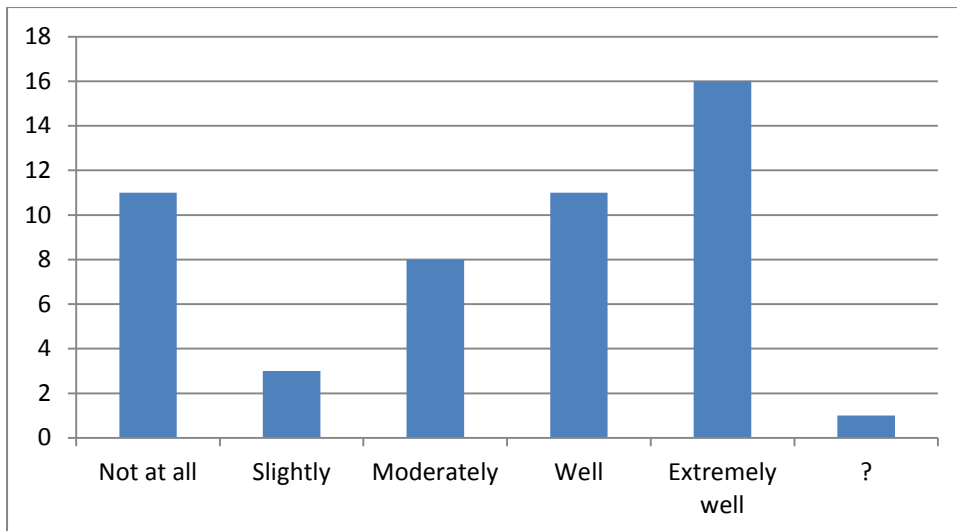
Support for the person you care for



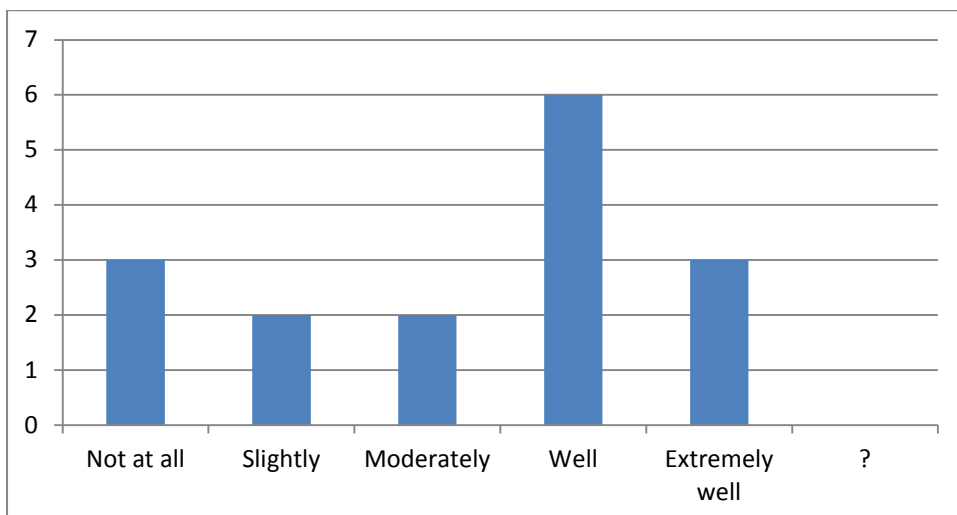
Support for your physical health



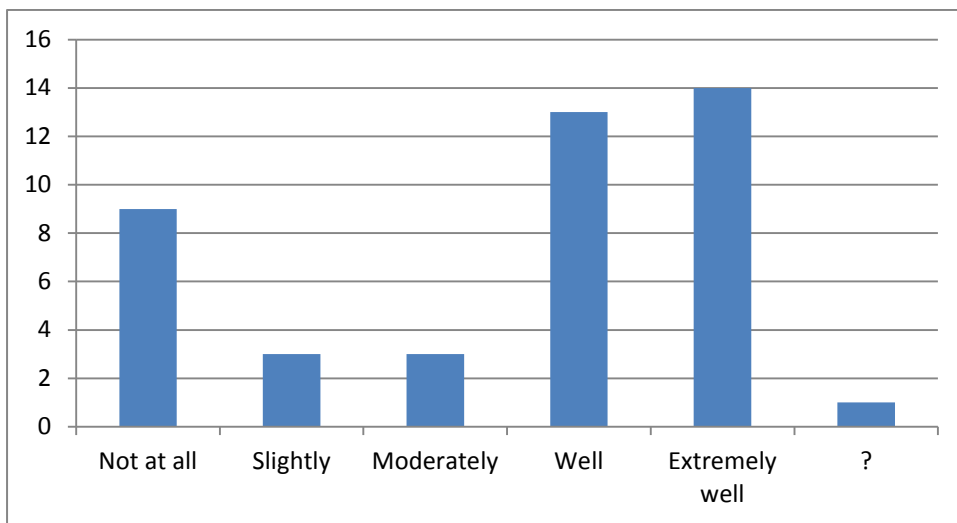
Support with mental / emotional health



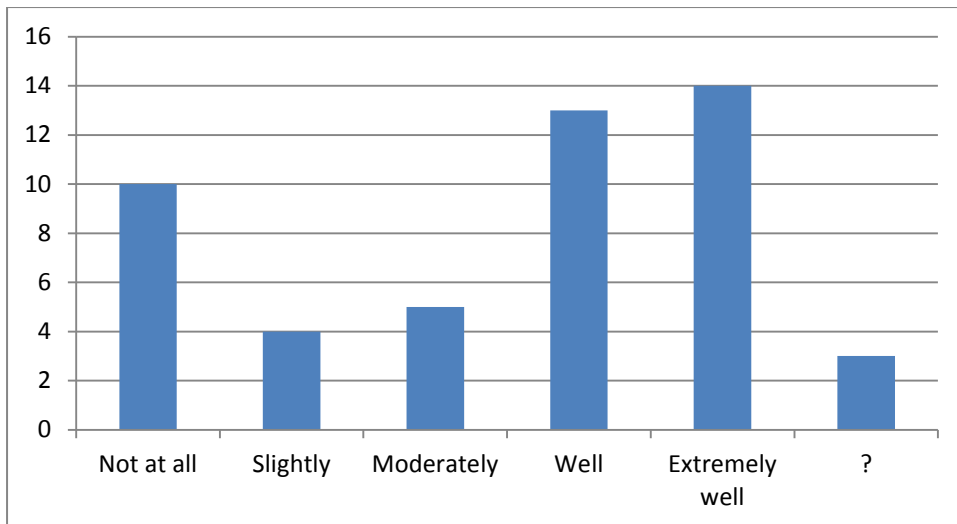
Support with employment / training / education



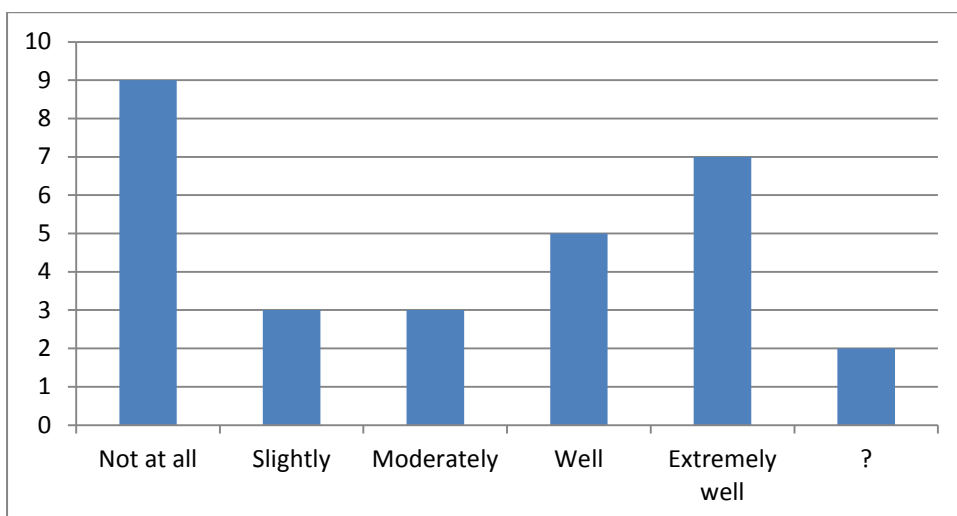
Support with finances / benefits



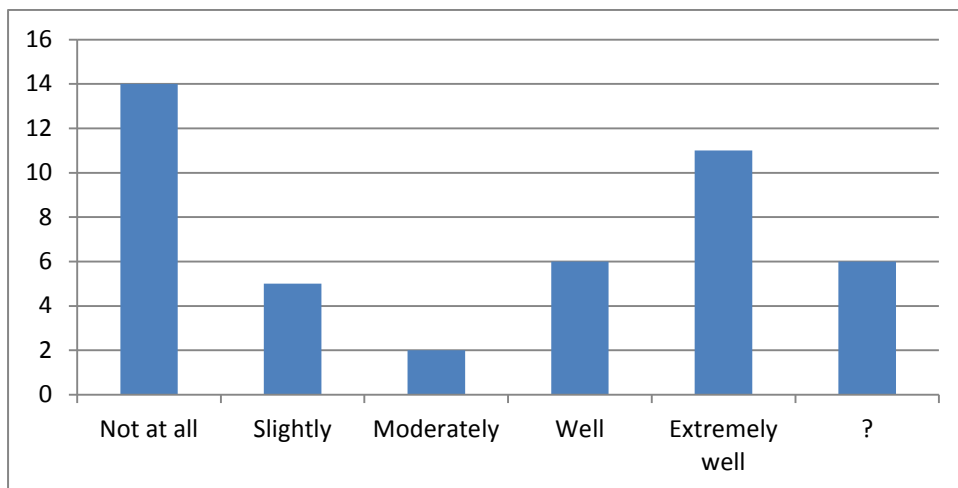
Support with a break / time to yourself



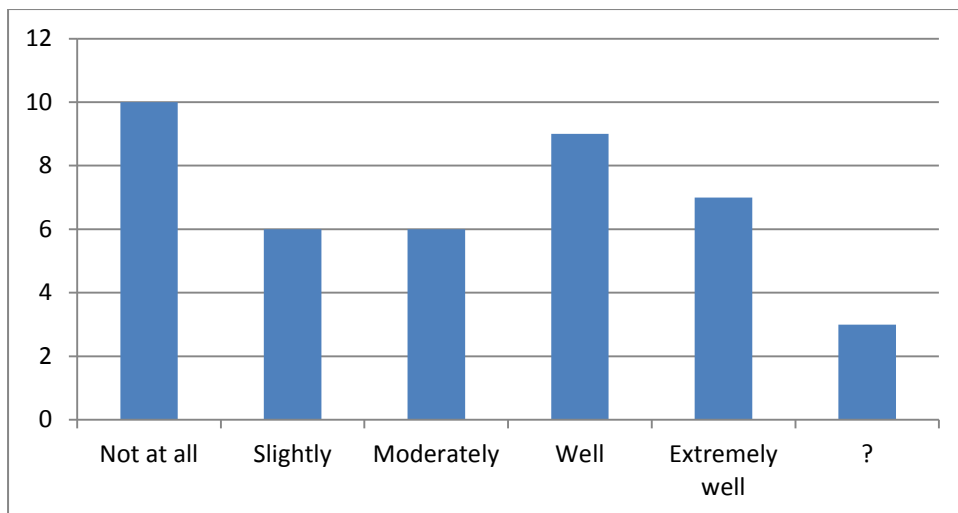
Support with caring / parental responsibilities



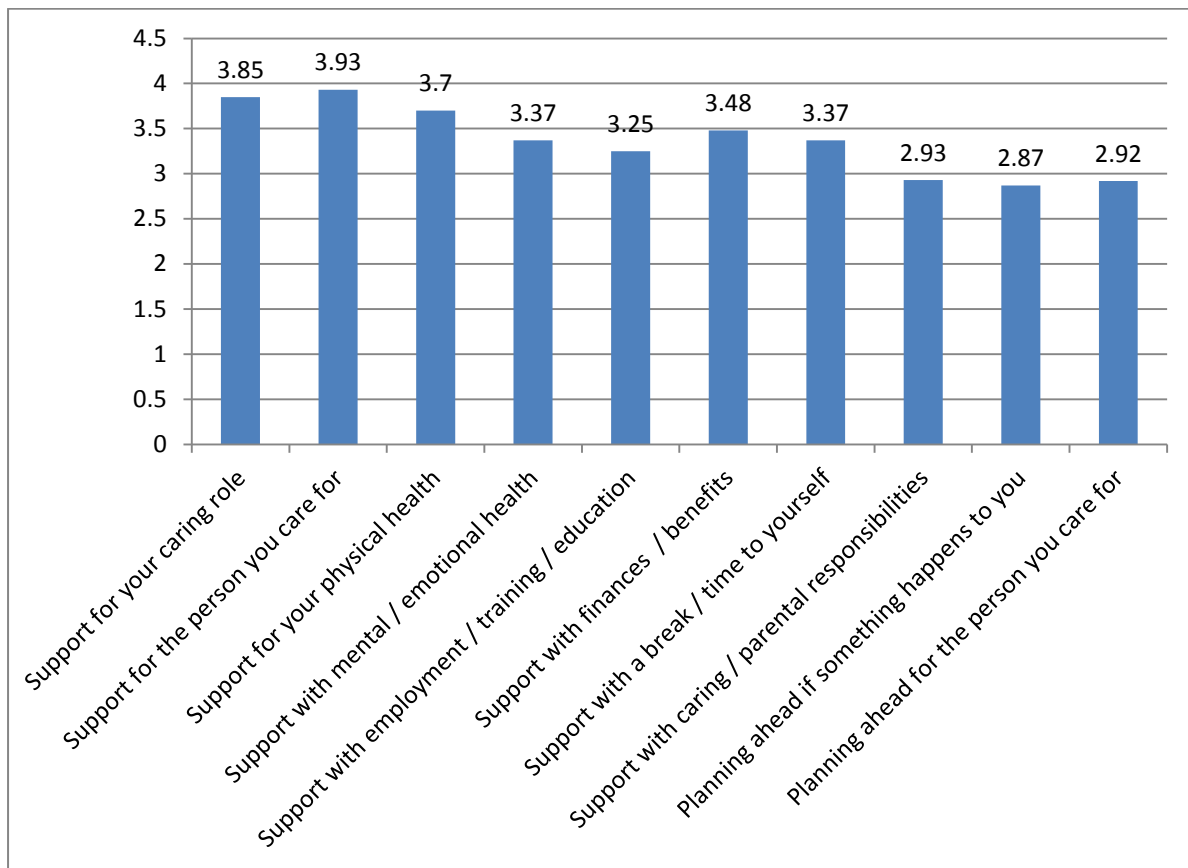
Planning ahead if something happens to you



Planning ahead for the person you care for



Overall scores:



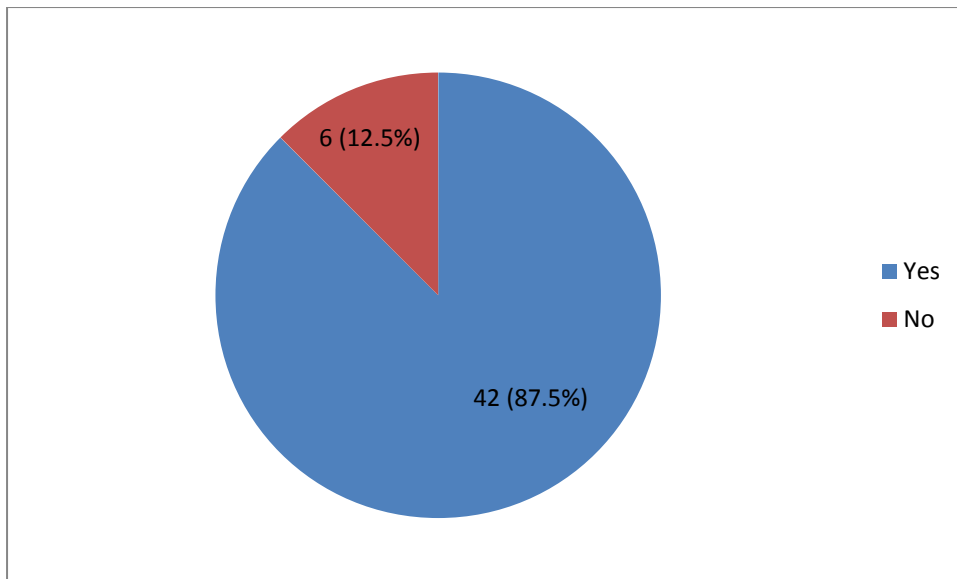
With a score of 4 being equal to an average response of 'well' and a score of 3 being an average score of 'moderately' several elements received scores close to 'well', but others had an average score falling beneath 'moderately'. Areas that received these lower scores were:

- Support with caring / parental responsibilities
- Planning ahead if something happens to you
- Planning ahead for the person you care for

Comments:

There were many comments that resulted from this question, but they did not have any clear themes. Two people were dissatisfied with Social Services and there were several positive comments about the services provided and the Assessment conversation.

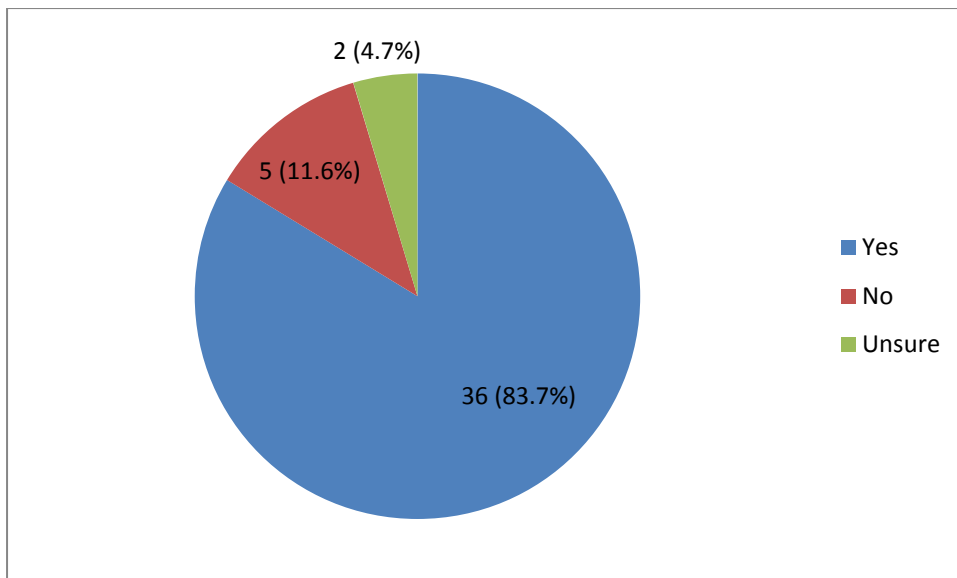
10) Did the assessment cover everything that was important to you?



10a) If not, what would you have liked to discuss?

A range of responses were received, including help with finances for prescriptions and travel, respite, medication, what exercises the person they care for could do. One response pointed at the brief nature of the interaction (10 minutes) and the fact they wanted a discussion they couldn't have.

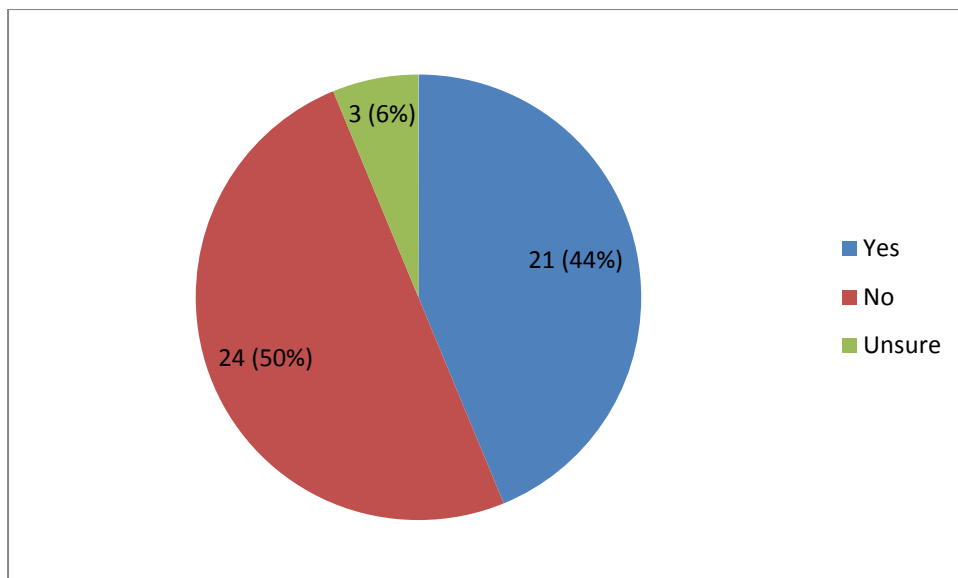
11) Were you given opportunities to say what was going on well for you?



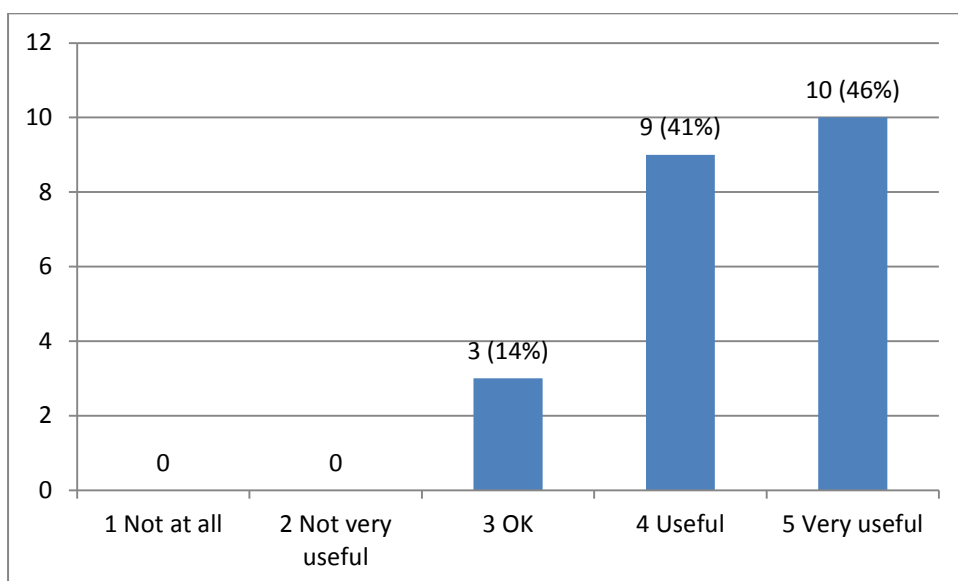
Comments:

Four people relied that nothing was going well. One respondent said they were always able to phone Pennie, another was asked if anything needed revision. One person discussed the things they struggled with and another mentioned the Power of Attorney as being positive.

12) Did you and the assessor make an action plan as part of the assessment?



12a) If yes, how useful was this?

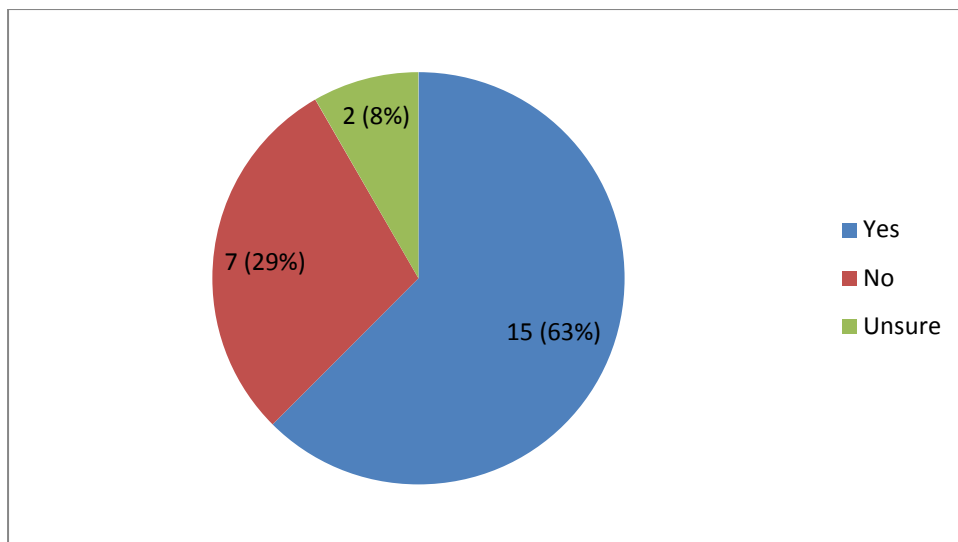


Comments:

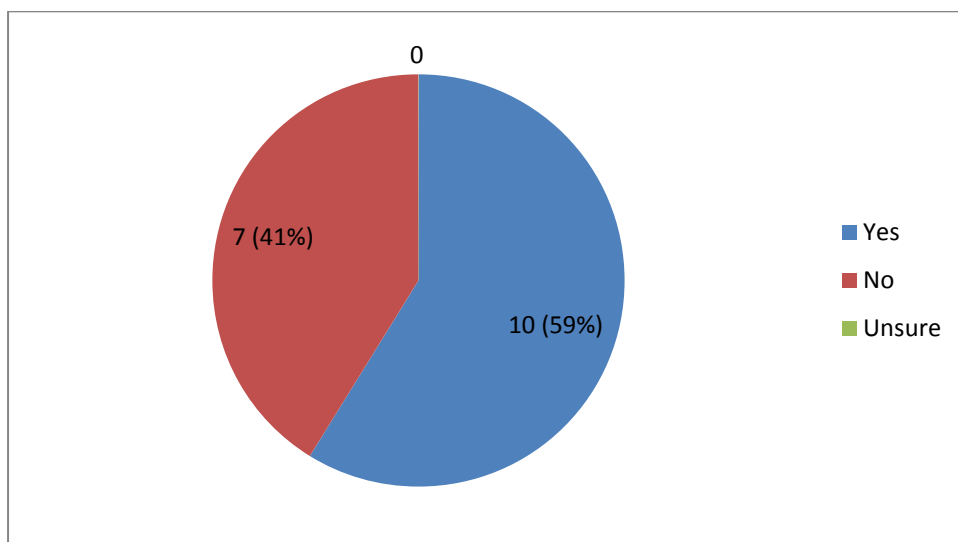
Responses were as follows:

- The plan was good, but the actions didn't happen
- Peace of mind as I didn't know half of it existed
- Everything is in place
- Sorting things personally
- Couldn't see the point

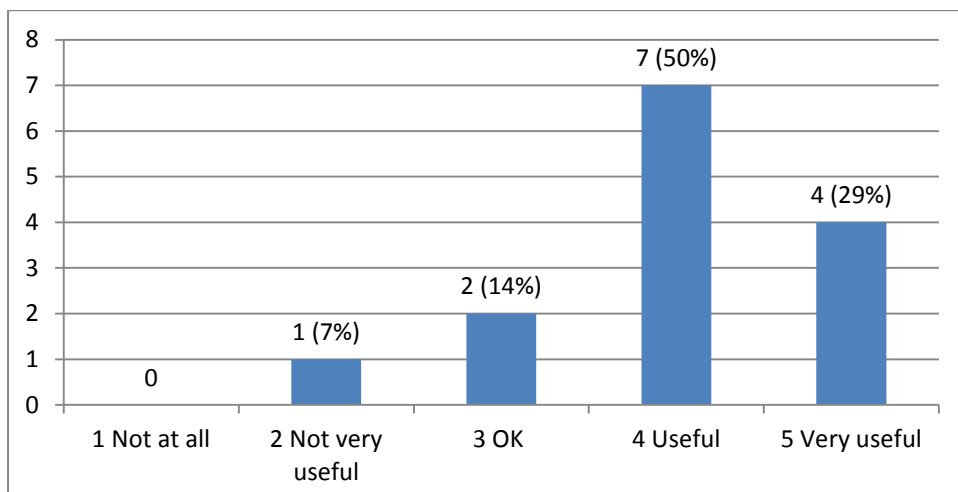
12b) Did you get a copy of the action plan?



12c) If not, would you have liked one?



12d) If yes, how useful was it to get a copy?

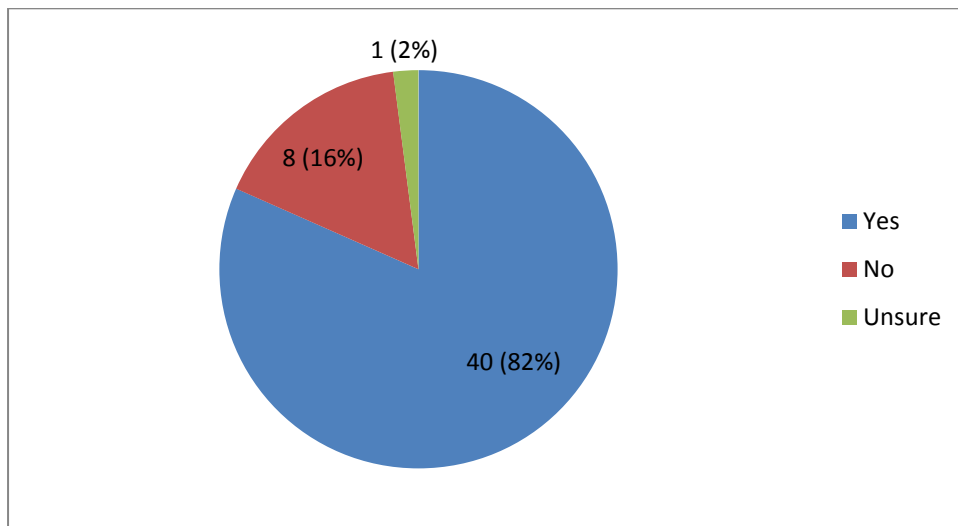


Comments:

- Everything was discussed. Signposted and telephone numbers given
- Didn't include much
- We could check of actions occurred

Two people said it would have been helpful if they could have had a copy.

13) Do you know who to contact if you want further advice in your caring role?

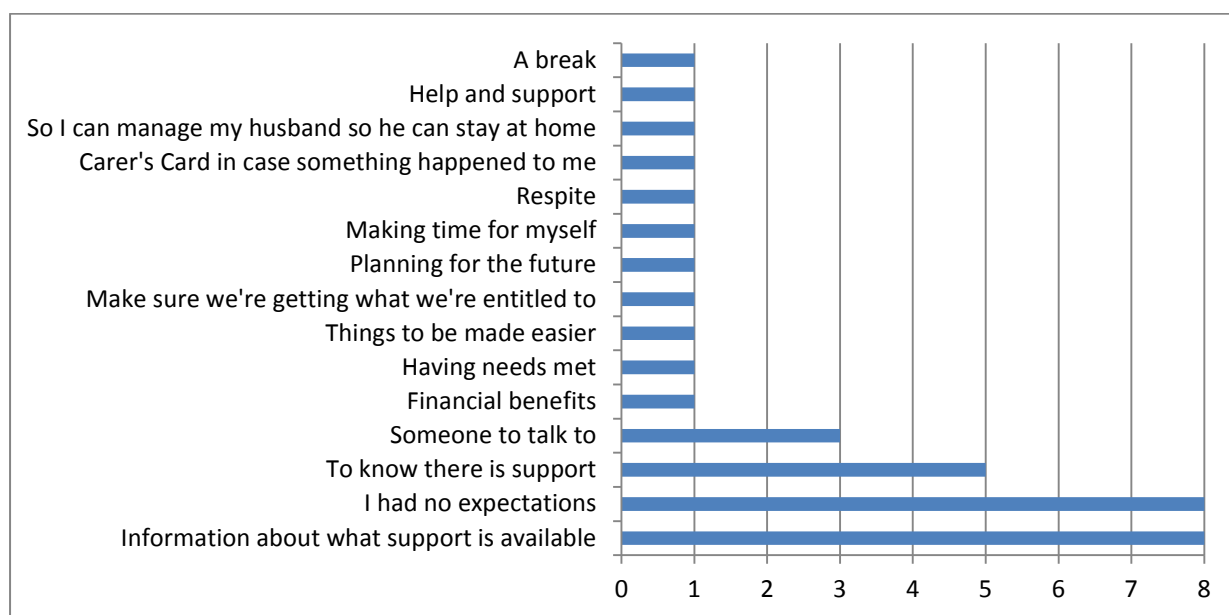


Who?

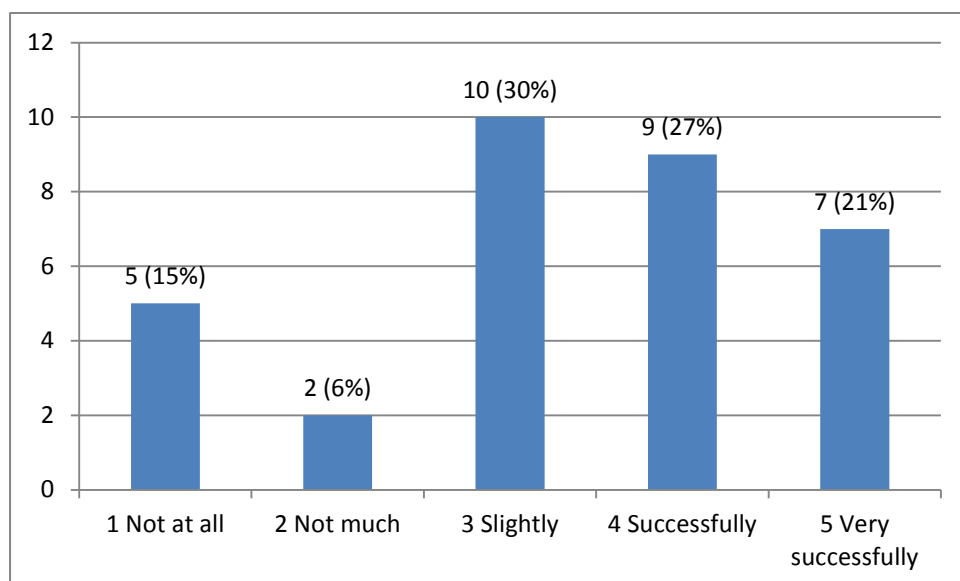
There were 22 people who responded with their Carer Support Worker. In addition to this nine people would contact Signposts for Carers, four people would contact their Social Worker, three would contact Chadwell and otherwise there was one response for the following:

Carer's Card number, GP, Carers Group, Red Cross Navigators, Mencap, Palm Tree Café and Alzheimer's Society. One person said they had a folder full of contact numbers.

14) What outcomes did you want from the assessment?



14a) Did the assessment help you achieve these outcomes?



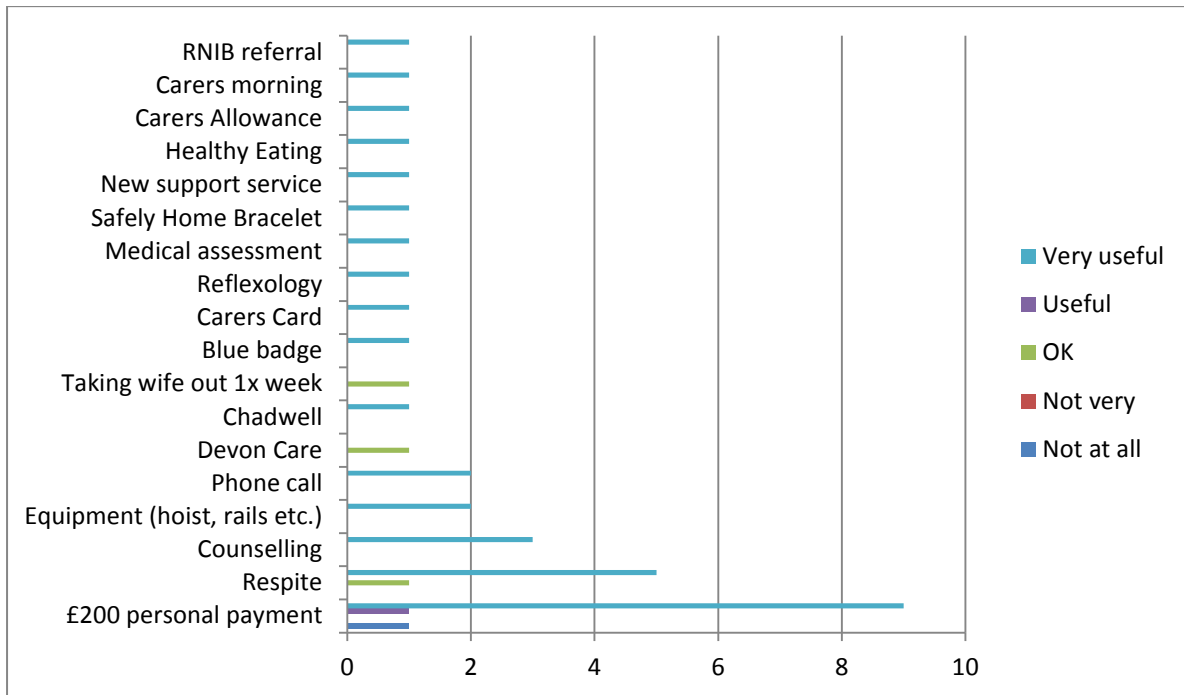
Comments:

Two people replied by saying they didn't realise it was an assessment, and otherwise one person replied with each of the following:

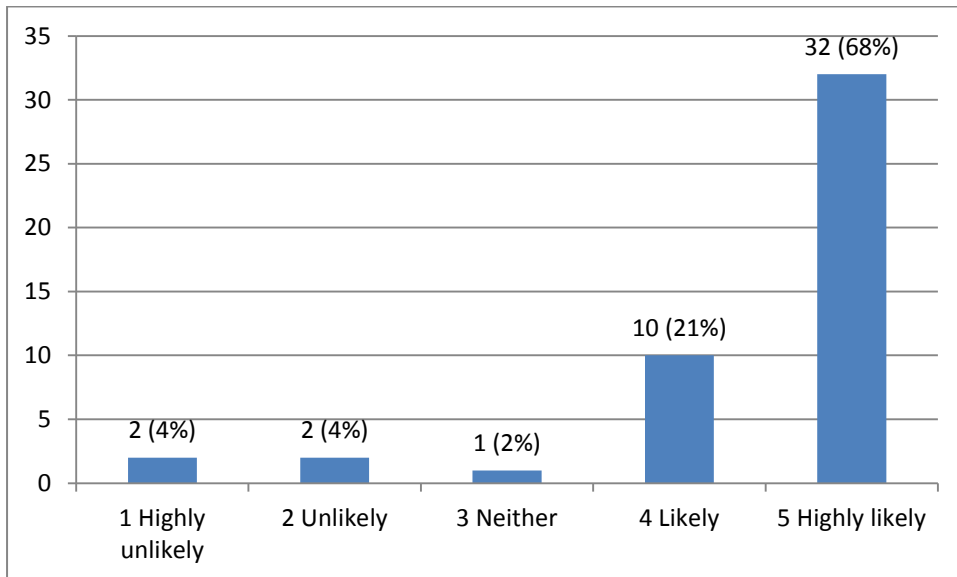
- I prefer to cope myself, but like to know where to get support if necessary
- I didn't expect anything
- Put my mind at rest
- Ongoing
- Knowing there is support there if I need it
- Useless

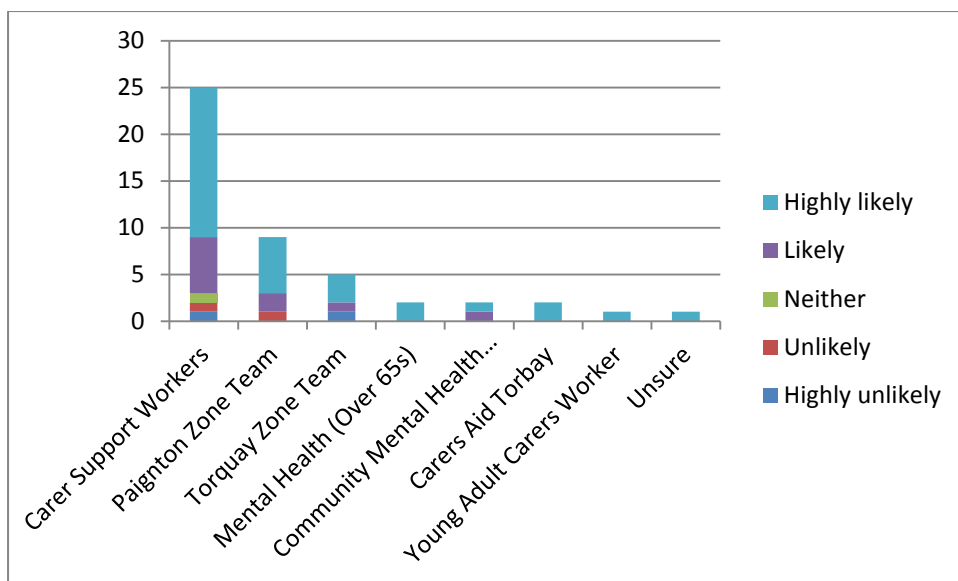
- 100% fantastic

15) If services were arranged as a result of the assessment, how useful were they?

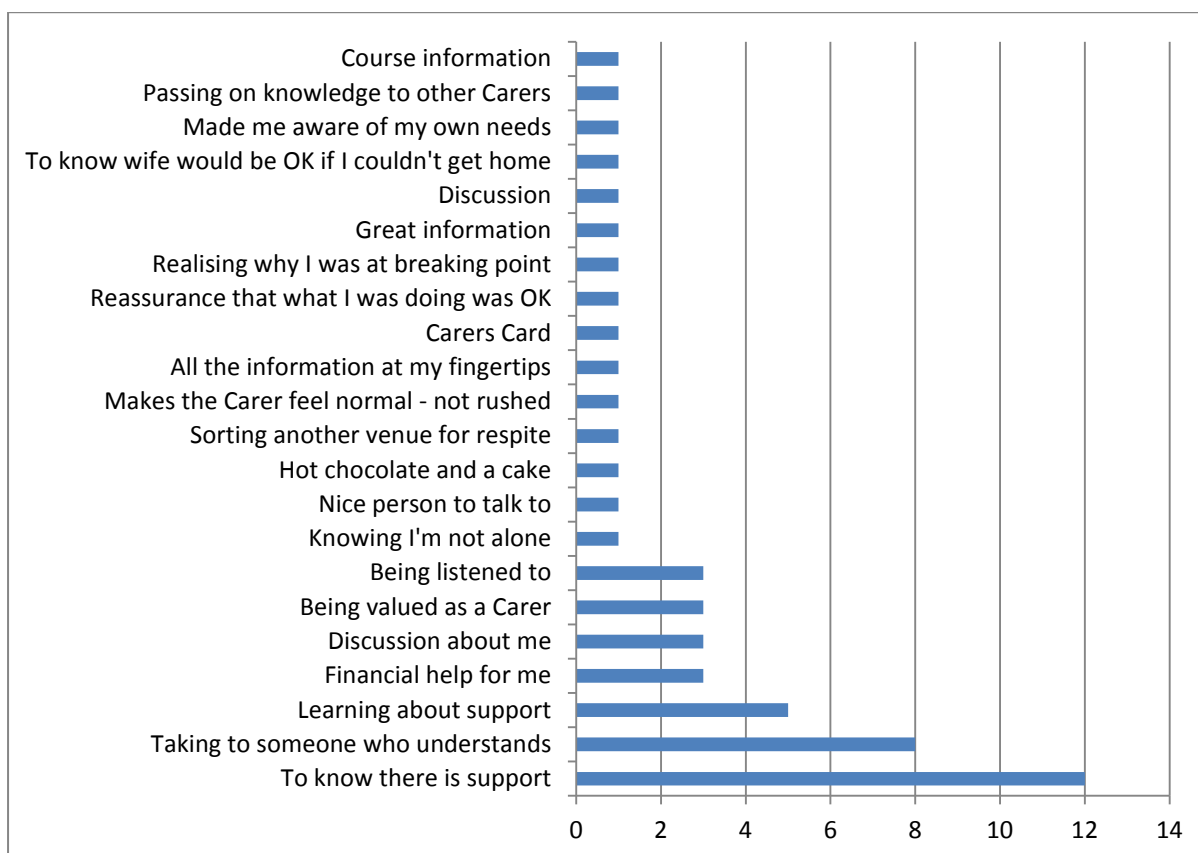


16) How likely would you be to recommend a Carers Assessment to other carers?

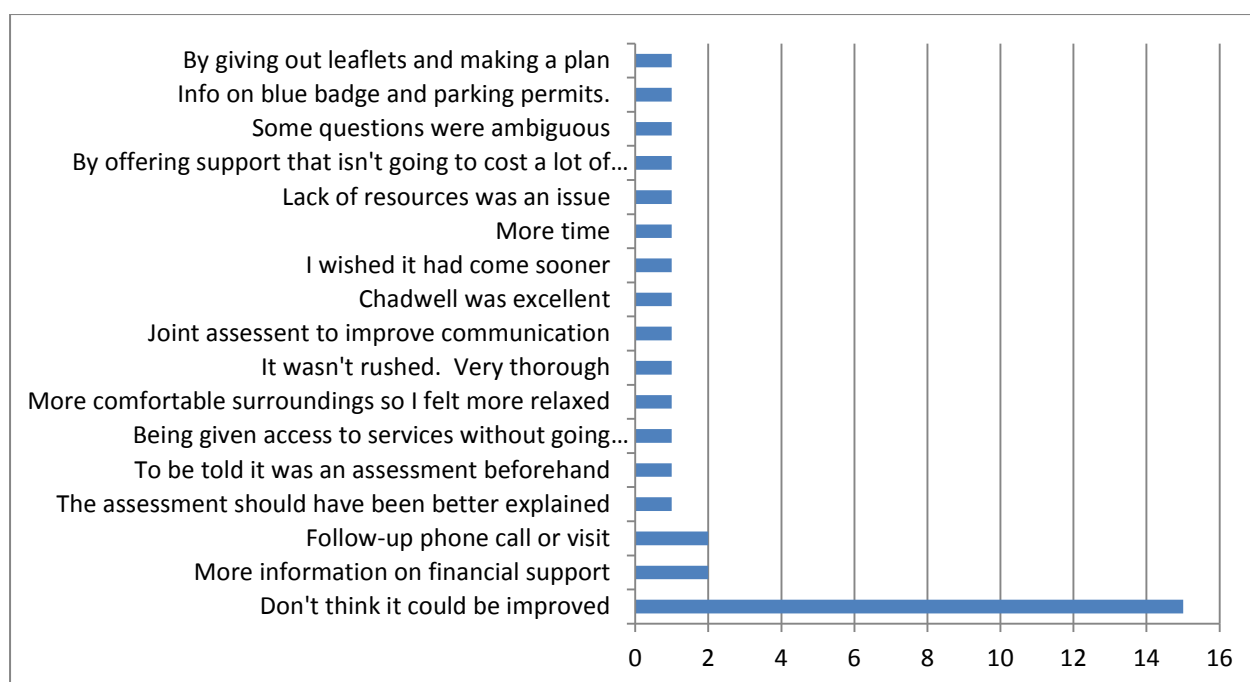




17) What was the best thing about the assessment?



18) How could the assessment have been improved?



19) Is there anything else you would like to tell me?

- Impressed with support but resources & communication between departments weak. GP's knowledge of support should be stronger.
- Fair at the time, but things have changed recently
- Not getting the Signposts Magazine
- Bureaucracy causes unnecessary delays and costs with things that are simple and straightforward
- Sally was so positive and empathic. The perfect lady for the job
- Not happy with the manner and attitude when dealing with the stopping of money etc.
- Would like another assessment as 2 years later things have changed
- It's been great to have the support.
- It would be nice to have a follow up. Could a follow up call be arranged?
- I must complete form for Carers' Register.
- It was a positive experience and I got valuable help.
- Carer has to deal with aggressive behaviour. Social services are letting them down. They have different doctors & CSWs.
- Lost £100 per week and can't manage. CSW trying to help
- Extremely happy for the chance to do an assessment.
- I belong to older carers' group run by Caroline Saunders - great.
- Asked for additional support from government
- CSW did everything she could and things are working fine right now.
- We are very lucky to have all the help we have. Very impressed.
- I like face to face talking. Not getting help from MEARS as promised. See notes on sheet.
- Thank you for listening.
- Regular annual assessments.
- Being aware of the Carer. Everybody is different.
- Carer didn't know she could use her carers' card to park at Torbay Hospital.
- It is good to know I have a contact. I have been caring for a long time.

- Yes. I was diagnosed with Autism myself and enjoy caring for my mum.
- If I hadn't had the assessment, I wouldn't have known about these things.