

Carers' Direct Payments Evaluation Report

December 2021

Summary

In order to evidence the effectiveness of Carers' Direct Payments in meeting Care Act outcomes (see Appendix), recipients were asked a series of questions to understand how they used these payments and whether they had benefited from them.

The majority of respondents used the payments to facilitate a break from their caring role, either a physical break or to support hobbies and pastimes to enable time to focus on themselves.

These Direct Payments made many caring situations more sustainable, with Carers reporting either certain or possible prevention or delay in their caring situation breaking down. The payments helped to improve both emotional wellbeing and family relationships for most Carers and physical wellbeing for many of the Carers.

The payments helped almost all Carers feel supported to undertake their caring role.

Key findings

1. The Direct Payments gave 28 out of 35 respondents (80%), a break from their caring role, which were personalised and used in a variety of ways to reflect individual interests, needs and circumstances.
2. Of the remainder, four have not been used yet and three were not used in the intended way. These have therefore been excluded from the impact data and are being followed up.
3. There were significant improvements in health and wellbeing, with 21 out of 28 (75%) reporting an improvement in their emotional wellbeing, and 17 out of 27 Carers (63%) noting an improvement in their physical wellbeing.
4. Three quarters (75%) of Direct Payment recipients saw an improvement in their family relationships as a result of their break, and 63% an improvement in social isolation.
5. Five Carers reported that the payment actually prevented or delayed their caring situation breaking down and a further eight felt that it may have done so. Further to this, two people said that the payment avoided a residential care admission for the person they care for.
6. 27 out of 28 people (96%) said the payment helped them to feel supported as a Carer.

"This Direct Payment ... has had a massive impact on my emotional wellbeing.

[The person I care for] is extremely noisy and this is unrelenting.

To be able to get some silence probably saved my sanity."

Method

Torbay Carers Service undertook an evaluation into the use and benefit of Direct Payments for unpaid Carers in November 2021.

A Carer Evaluator (Carer/former Carer trained in evaluation and interview techniques) contacted 47 Carers who had received a Carer's Direct Payment between 1st to 30th April 2021. They were contacted via email, telephone or text message, with 23 completing the questionnaire online, five in paper form and seven completing it over the phone with the Evaluator inputting the information. In total, 35 out of the 47 potential respondents completed the questionnaire (74%).

The evaluation comprised a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions, often asking for a quantitative response with a section for comments. Some questions were quantitative only and, due to the value of the comments, future evaluations will incorporate comments for every question.

Breakdown of findings for each question

Question 1: What has been the main impact of this Direct Payment for you?

Carers reflected on the impact of the Direct Payment, with 16 referring to having a break as having the main impact. Other notable themes were four responses from people who used the payment to support them with a hobby, three used it to improve their physical health and three more felt the payment made them feel supported / valued.

Question 2: Did the payment give you a break from your caring role?

22 out of 35 respondents (63%) reported that the payment gave them a break from caring. The remainder said it hadn't, but it is evident from Question 2a that several responses were answered in this way due to their interpretation of what was considered a break. Six further Carers used their payments to take time to relax or undertake hobbies that gave them time to themselves rather than going away for a break. These responses have been included in the following questions that assess the impact of the payment.

Including those from Q2a, a total 28 out of 35 (80%) used the payment productively to enable them to have some sort of break from their caring role.

Question 2a: If 'no' above, what prevented this? How did you use the Direct Payment?

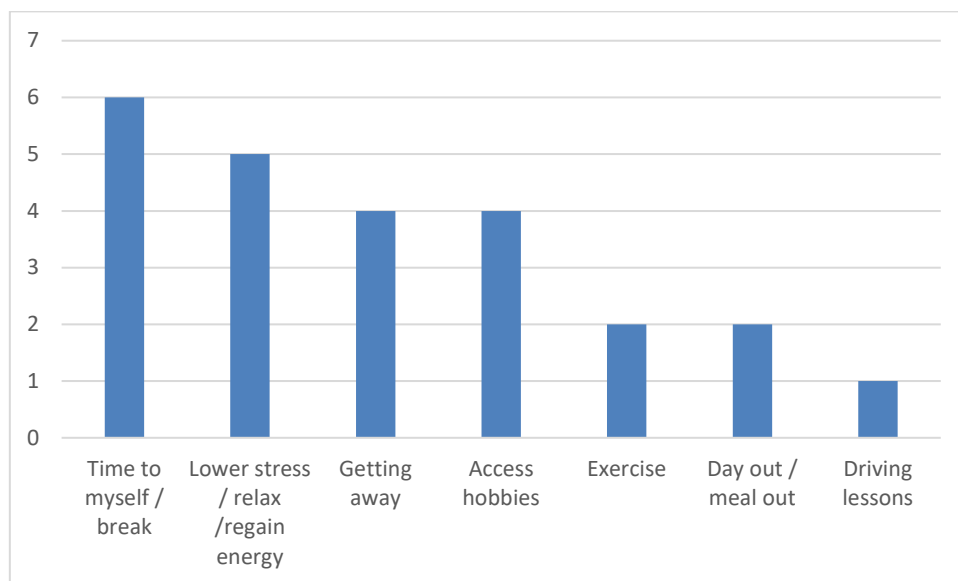
There were 13 respondents who answered 'no' to the payment giving them a break, but it is clear from the responses that the bulk were used as a break, but the Carer didn't see it as such. People used the payment as a different type of break than they originally planned. From the responses to this question:

- Four used it for a different type of break, with two enabling them to exercise, one buying plant pots and another towards their hobbies.
- Three used it to help pay for a hobby (one also used it to enable them to exercise, causing the double counting).
- Three used it for shopping / household items / bills. These responders are excluded in the data for the remaining questions as they have not used it for the specified purpose. (NB These are being followed up, including to ascertain if they need support with their financial situation. Going forward, Carers Services will sample Carers Direct Payments to ensure that they are being spent as planned.)

- Two used it to buy something for the person they care for, but with a view to improving the caring situation. One of these was for a rise and recline chair which then enabled the person to be more independent, reducing the impact on the Carer. The other was used to extend a patio to enable the person they care for to sit outside. We will follow up with the person who extended the patio to understand if that helped them to have a break.
- Four haven't used the payment yet, with one referring to COVID concerns as a reason not to take a break away. These responses are also omitted from ongoing data as the impact hasn't yet been seen.

Question 2b: If 'yes' above, how did the break help you?

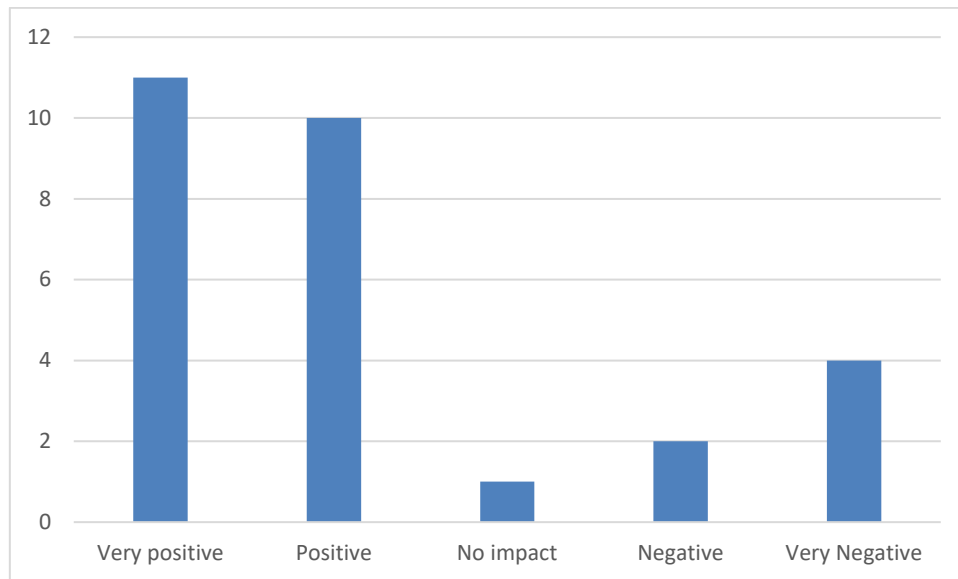
21 respondents reported that they had taken a break from their caring role, and these were used as follows (three commented that it helped them in more than one way):



- Seven responses reflected on their break as 'time to myself' or 'a break from my caring role'.
- Five used the break as a means to lower stress, relax or regain their energy. One used the break to enable them to get a good night's sleep (although they didn't explain how).
- Four Carers used the break to get away and take a short holiday or visit family.
- Four Carers used the payment to enable them to focus on hobbies. The people who recorded spending their payment on hobbies did not see this as spending the money on a break, as with the following answer on using the money to help them to access exercise.
- Two Carers used the payment to access exercise and improve their fitness.
- Two Carers used the payment to take days out / meals out.
- One Carer used the break for driving lessons to help with the goal of gaining more freedom.

Question 3: What was the impact on your emotional wellbeing as a Carer?

The responses to this question offered predominantly positive outcomes.



The 'very negative' responses were actually about the caring role rather than the Direct Payment, with one saying they needed the payment sooner, and another reflecting on the emotional strain of caring generally. One respondent reflected that they 'constantly worried if they had done enough or the right thing'. The final 'very negative' respondent referred to the circumstances where they became a Carer. All Carers who had given negative responses to this question were positive about the Direct Payment, e.g. one said they used it to get out and that it was something positive to do. These responses do not appear to be negative despite the choice of quantitative response.

Themes from the comments to positive responses were as follows:

- Four Carers said the payment provided them with an emotional boost.
- Three reflected on the payment as making them feel valued and appreciated for what they are doing.
- Two referred to the benefit of being able to take time to for themselves.
- One Carer said it gave them time to wind down and relax.
- One respondent said that seeing his wife feeling better emotionally improved his mental health (he and his wife spent time away visiting family together).

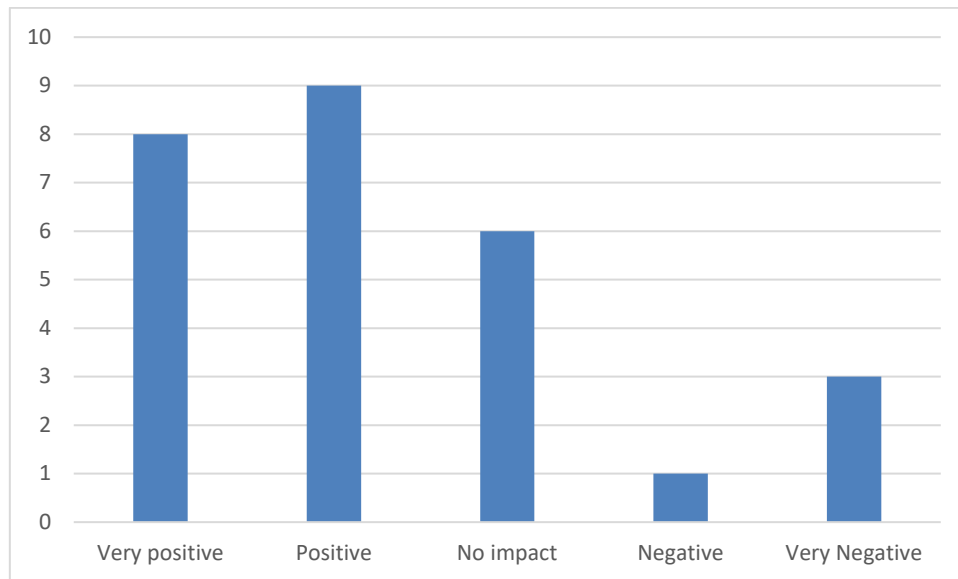
Two direct quotes appear below:

"I was very touched that someone was asking after my health and wellbeing rather than focusing on my husband"

"This Direct Payment ... has had a massive impact on my emotional wellbeing. [The person I care for] is extremely noisy and this is unrelenting. To be able to get some silence probably saved my sanity."

Question 4: What was the impact on your physical wellbeing as a Carer?

The 27 responses to this question were mostly positive (63%).



People reporting a positive impact commented as follows:

- Felt refreshed.
- Positive as it made me get out and about.
- Gardening gave physical exercise, coupled with a sense of achievement.
- My ... chosen activity led to me accessing the outdoors and getting exercise I wouldn't otherwise have had.
- Being able to rest my body from physical strain.

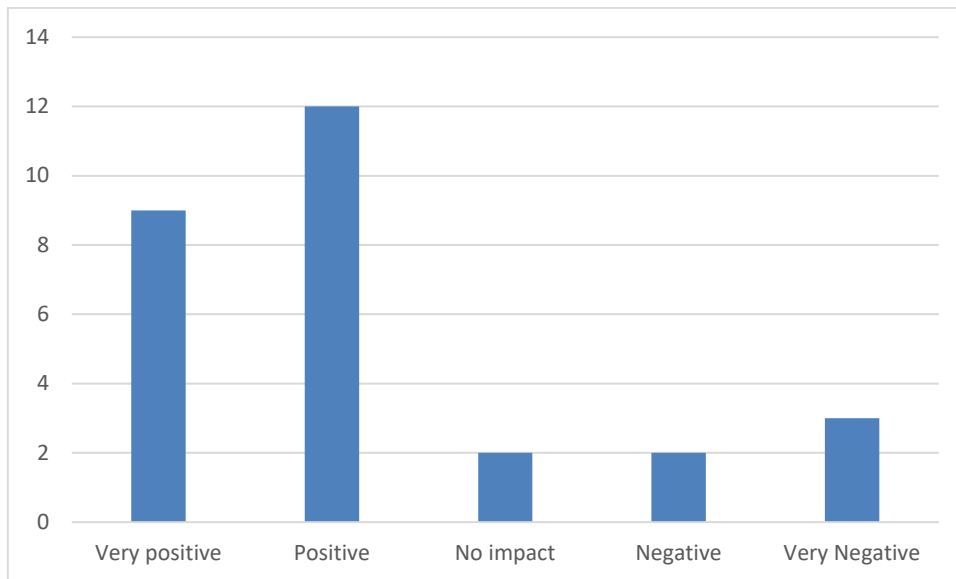
People who reported a negative or very negative impact responded as follows (where they completed the comments section):

- Constantly feeling stressed, never relaxed.
- Feeling so isolated and low I stopped going out and went without regular exercise. I gained weight because of this [which] impacted on my emotional wellbeing.
- A reflection on personal circumstances, with the pressure of caring and impact on wellbeing recorded in their answer.

All four people who responded as negative or very negative to this question were the same respondents who responded in that way to the previous question. Their responses all reflected on their caring situation generally and not on the impact of the Direct Payment.

Question 5: What was the impact on your relationship with your family?

21 responses out of the 28 (75%) were either positive or very positive.

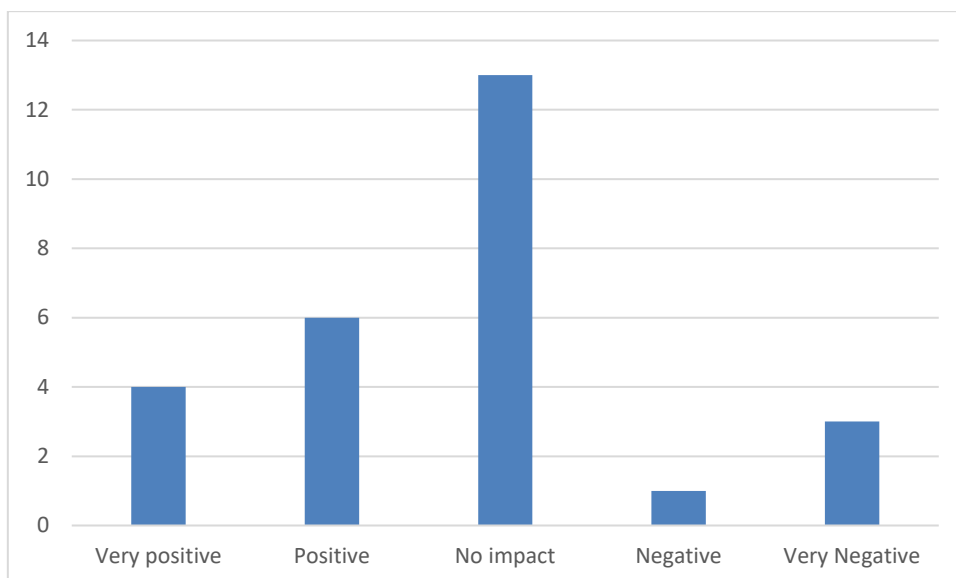


There were no additional comments to this section as this was not required in the questionnaire. Future evaluations will include an option to comment on this question.

Question 5: Did this delay or prevent the person you care for going into residential care? If so, would it have been temporary or permanent?

Two respondents out of 25 to this question (8%) said the break prevented admission to residential care. Both were unsure as to whether it would have been a temporary or permanent placement.

Question 6: What was the impact on your access to Community Services?



While most respondents stated that the Direct Payment had no impact on their access to Community Services, ten said this was either positive or very positive, with comments referring to:

- An additional ability to carry out the caring role when feeling frustrated and anxious.
- It has been of help to me.
- It was good to learn about the services that are available, should we need them.

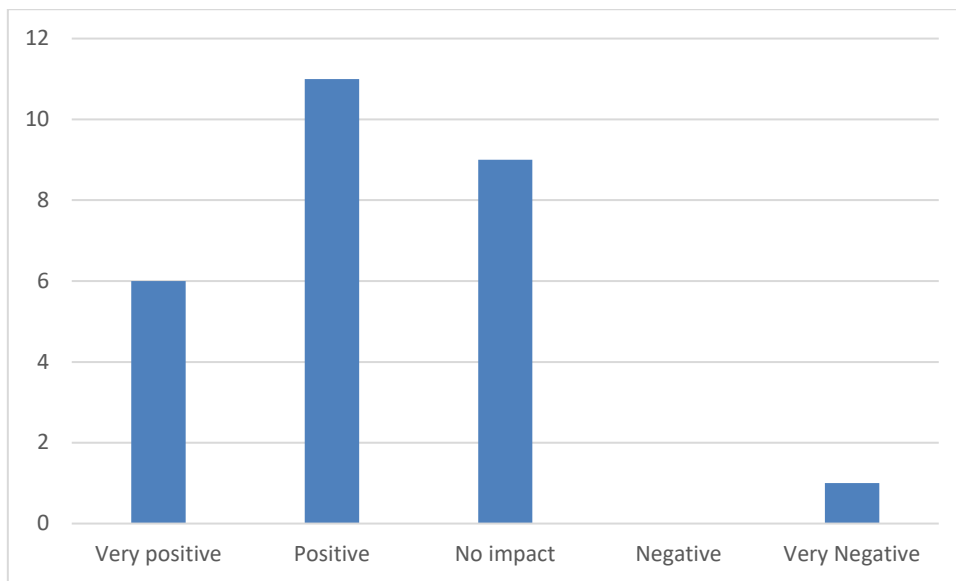
Negative comments referred to the following:

- Cannot interact in any of my own personal community choices due to my caring role
- The support I had financially ... was very beneficial.
- Had stopped accessing community services as a complaint was handled badly by Torbay*.
*This seems to be referring to social care services for the cared for person.

The negative comments did not reflect on the Direct Payment, but more generally on services to support the person they care for or the caring role. One referred to the financial support being beneficial, but how their financial situation meant they could not get the Social Care support they needed.

Question 7: If you felt socially isolated, did the payment have any impact on this?

The Direct Payments had a positive impact on 17 Carers’ social isolation (63%).



The 17 positive comments (63%) focused on the following:

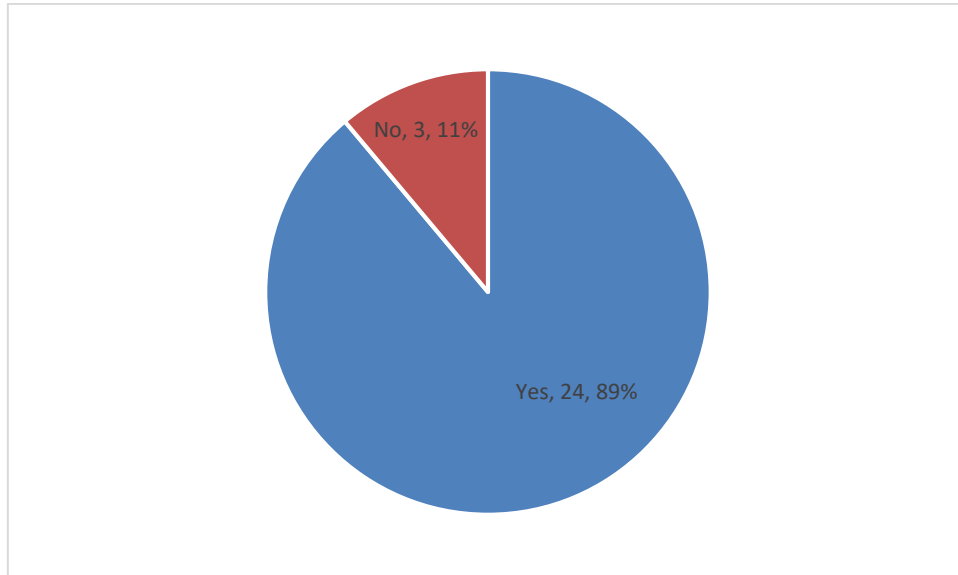
- Two Carers were able to focus on their hobbies.
- Two were able to be pampered / indulge themselves.
- Two were glad to be able to get away
- Others referred to having time to browse, socialise with family.
- One Carer referred to how the recognition of their caring role helped them feel less isolated, and supported.

“The recognition of the role made me feel less isolated, and the call from the co-ordinator meant I felt supported”

There was one 'very negative' comment commented "It did not change how I feel / felt" and could have been recorded as 'no impact' based on that information.

Question 8: Did the Direct Payment enable you to have time for yourself?

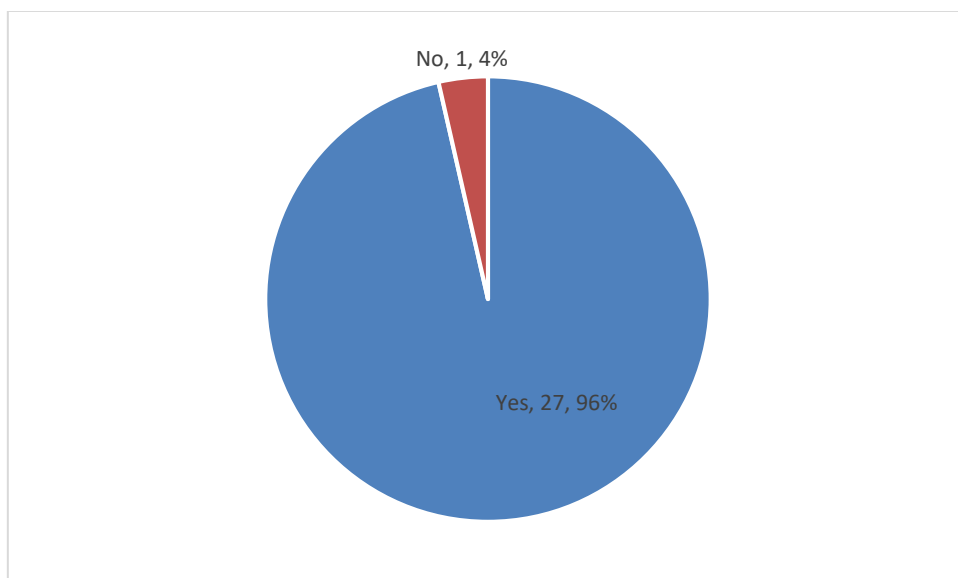
24 out of the 27 respondents (89%) said the payment had enabled them to have time to themselves.



The questionnaire did not ask for comments to this question. Future questionnaires will seek to find out more about answers to the quantitative questions.

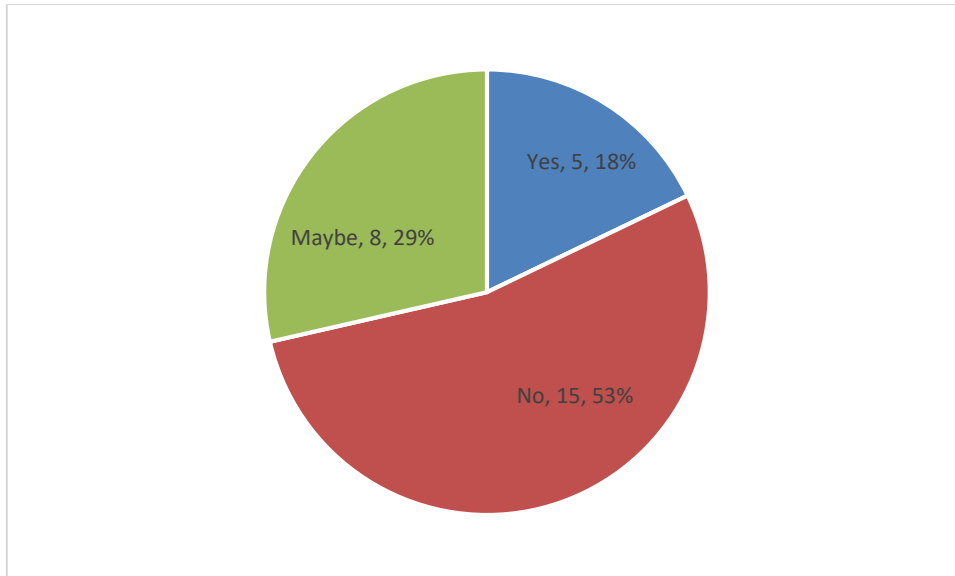
Question 9: Did the payment help make you feel supported as a Carer?

96% (27 out of 28 respondents) answered 'yes' to this question.



Question 10: Did this payment prevent or delay your caring situation from breaking down?

The payment was reported to have prevented or delayed the caring situation from breaking down in five cases (18%) and eight people (29%) replied saying 'maybe'.



Question 11: If you wish to provide us with further information please add here.

There were a number of positive reflections on the Direct Payments (three) and on support from Carers Services (three). Other unique comments were as follows:

- Reference to the strain of caring and impact on family life.
- Carers breaks are welcome, make Carers feel valued and have tangible outcomes which will save Social Care money in the long-term. With Carers breaks, we can decide what we need to enable us to re-charge.
- It would be nice to have free or discounted facilities for Carers, such as gyms or other wellbeing classes.
- There were missed opportunities to have the break sooner, specifically by Social Care and a feeling the situation should not have got to such a difficult stage before a break was offered.

Conclusion

Direct Payments to support unpaid Carers to have a break from their caring role are highly valued by the Carers who receive them. They have helped the majority to improve their physical and mental wellbeing as well as improving family relationships.

The consequence of the breaks resulted in two residential care placements being avoided and five certain (18%) and with eight possible (29%) breakdowns of the caring situation.

The questionnaire will require some amendments next time this evaluation takes place, in particular to request comments after each of the quantitative questions, particularly to identify how breaks have resulted in the impact on family relationships.

Of those who used them, Direct Payments had a significant positive impact on the Care Act outcomes, their health and wellbeing. Enabling Carers to have a break makes a real difference, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when replacement care is so limited. Carers breaks have a positive impact on the caring situation and Carers' wellbeing, and make caring roles more sustainable.

Appendix

Care Act: Carer Support Outcomes

To be eligible for support the Carer must be providing 'necessary care' and there must be an impact on either

- their health and wellbeing OR
- any of the eight Carer's outcomes below

Carers Outcomes

- (1) carrying out any caring responsibilities the carer has for a child
- (2) providing care to other persons for whom the carer provides care
- (3) maintaining a habitable home environment
- (4) managing and maintaining nutrition
- (5) developing and maintaining family or other significant personal relationships
- (6) engaging in work, training, education or volunteering
- (7) making use of necessary facilities or services in the local community
- (8) engaging in recreational activities

Therefore, Carer Support should be targeted at reducing the impact of caring on the Carer's health and wellbeing or those outcomes.