



Support Line insights

Q1 -3, April 2020 - December 2020

Introduction

Our Carer Support Line was open in June 2019, with the aim of providing quality support, information and advice to carers and anyone wishing to support carers. When the Support Line first opened it was mornings 8.15am – 12.30pm. However, with the Covid pandemic starting in December 2019, we realised that carers would now more than ever need access to support, information and advice. In March 2020 we extended our Support Line opening hours to 8.15 – 3pm Monday to Friday. With the help of our funders, including HealthWatch BaNES, we have been able to continue these extended hours to provide this much needed lifeline to carers throughout the pandemic.

This report looks at our Support Line usage since April 2020. It aims to analyse the data we have collected indicating why carers and those around carers are calling the Support Line, what help they needed and what support has been provided to help them. This report will also identify themes of issues and gaps which may need addressing.

Our Carer Support Line is open to everyone, not just carers. We aim to provide advice to carers, professionals, carer's families, friends and anyone else wishing to better understand and support carers in their community.

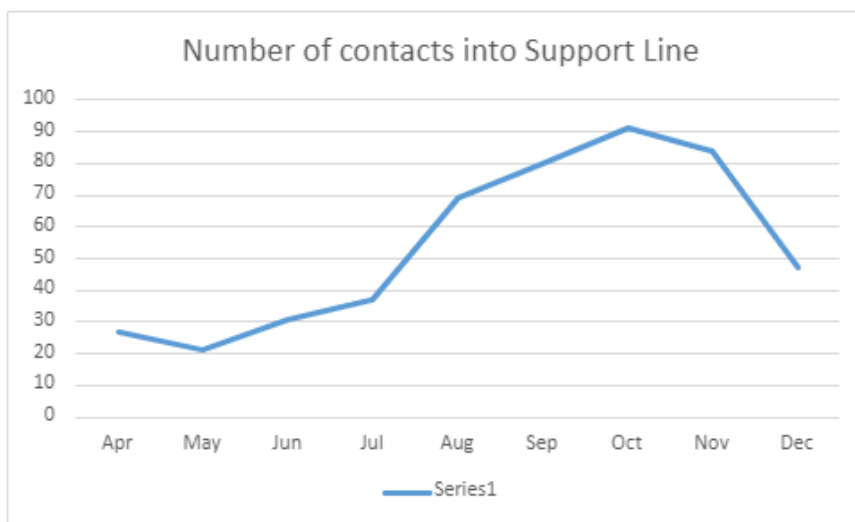
Support Line usage

Carers can contact our Carer Support Line using Phone or email. Over the period we have seen an overall increase in the number of contacts into the Support Line, though we saw a drop in December, which is not unusual for the Christmas period.

Telephone calls – 514

Emails - 78

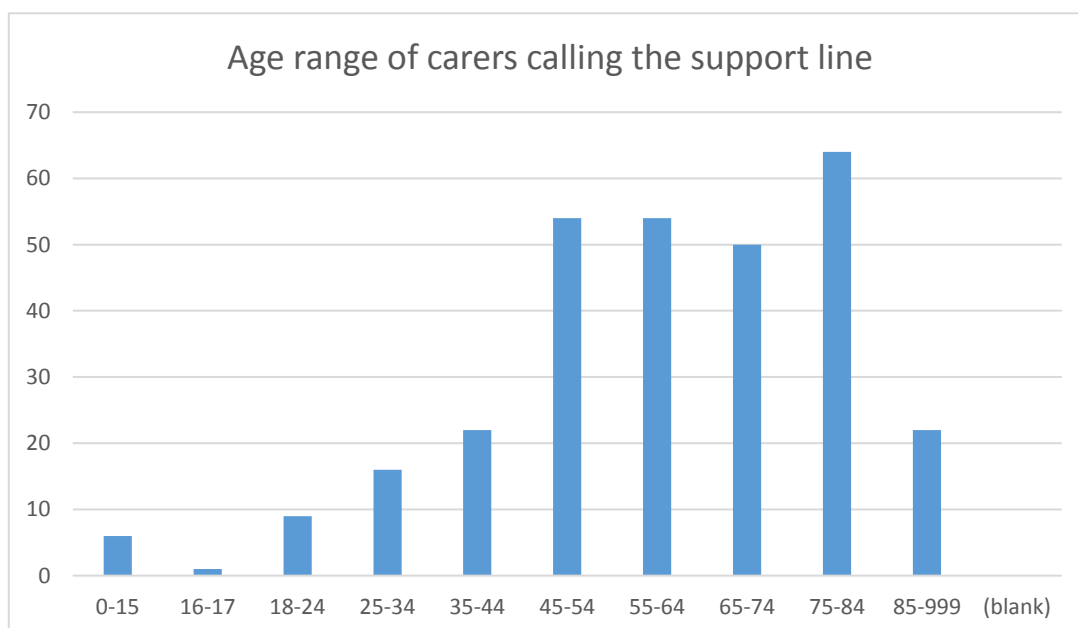
Total number of contacts – 593

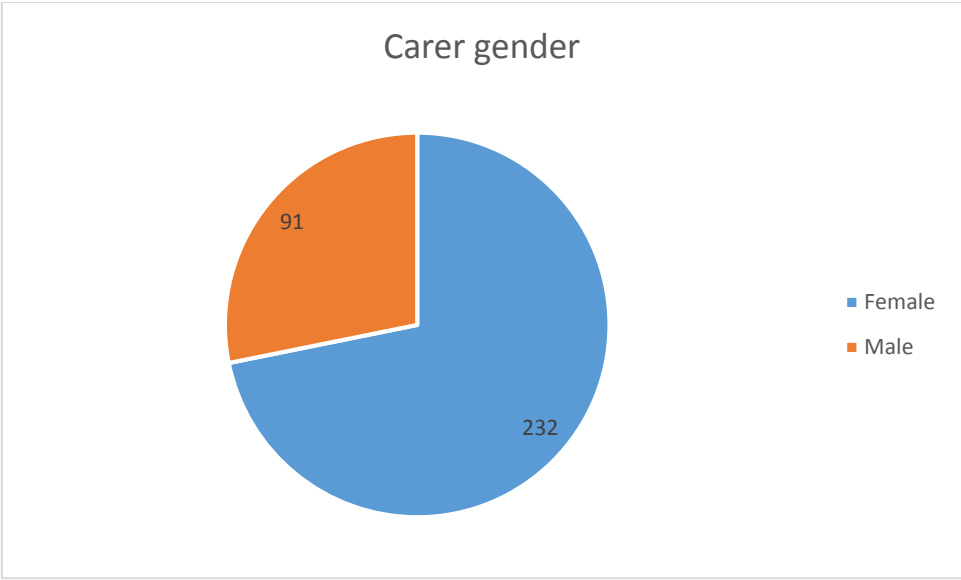


Of the **593** contacts, **80** were unregistered carers or carers wishing to remain anonymous. **79** were anonymous professionals, and **319** were individual registered carers. The other **115** were carers making repeat contacts to the service.

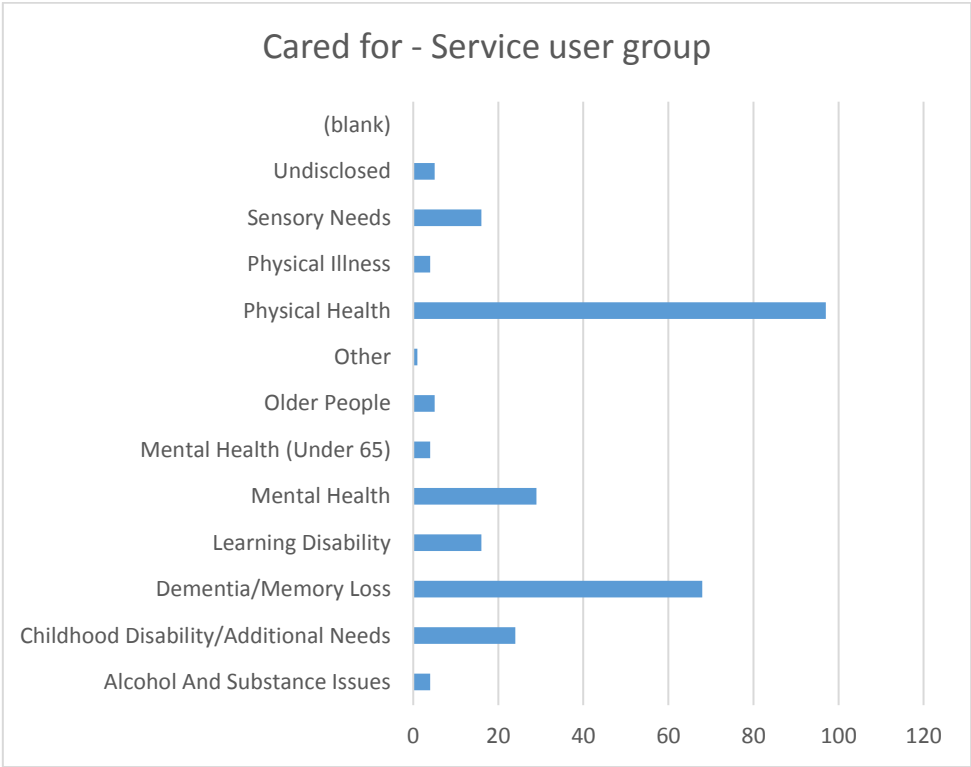
Carer demographics

We recognise that we still have some way to go in collecting the right demographic information for the carers we support. The information we have, gives us a snapshot view of those carers who are using the Support Line service and is not complete information. We also need to consider that some people who contact our support Line are not registered with us, or prefer to remain anonymous. We do not hold demographic data for any of these contacts.

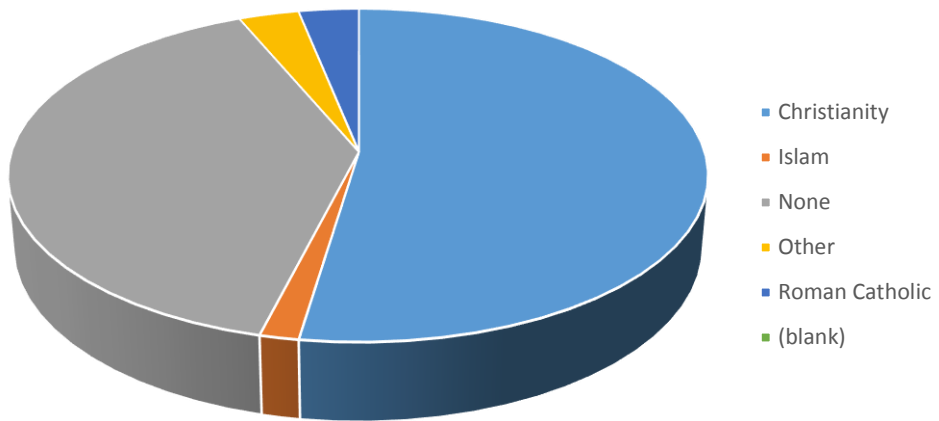




The number of males using our Support Line is slightly under the representative demographic of our carer community as a whole. 29% using support Line vs 35% overall. This suggests that females are more likely to use this service.



Religion



Types of queries

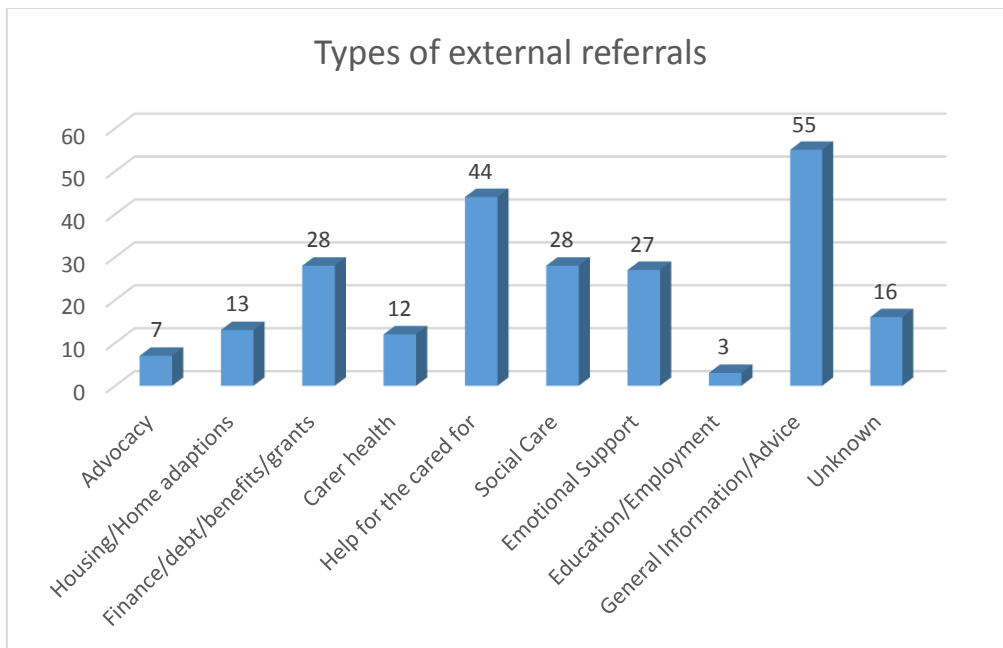
Type of query	Total
Unknown	2
Accessing Peer Support	3
Digital support	3
Carer Health	4
Housing	6
Employment	6
Our general offer	10
Young Carer query	13
Emergency Planning	17
Carers Assessments	19
Professional general queries	20
Advice about supporting a carer in the community	21
Bereavement	23
Taking a break	26
Covid related	28
Admin queries (Req CC, removals, change of address, feedback)	30
Registering	51
Care needs/Care homes/replacement care	58
Support to access other services	59
Emotional support/mental health needs	66
Finance/benefits help	91
Other	13
Grand Total	569

Somewhat unsurprisingly, the category with the highest number of queries during this period have been around accessing financial advice and benefits. The age group most concerned in this area was 45-65 year olds*, totalling at least 25% of the total. This also includes asking the Carers Centre to provide support in obtaining grants, and we have seen an increase in these requests from carers as the criteria for 'personal budgets' has become more challenging.

We also see a high amount of calls from Carers looking for emotional support. Again the most likely age group to need support in this area is 45-65 year olds*. Many of these Carers have been offered emotional support through one of our services, such as Coping with Caring, Counselling, befriending or peer support. We have also referred a number of carers to services such as Age UK; Community Wellbeing Hub; Bath Mind; AWP; among others. There were a number of carers struggling to find sufficient support for their own emotional wellbeing and mental health, and found accessing these services challenging.

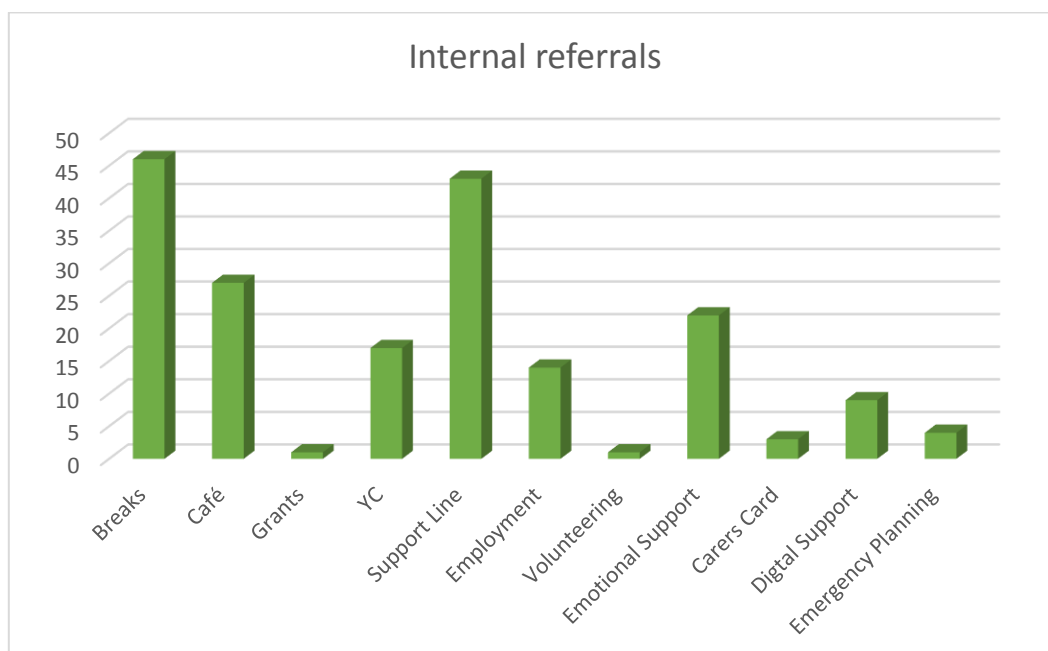
**This may be a reflection of our carer demographic as a whole and needs to be investigated further.*

External referrals



The information in this set of data has been based on which service the carer has been referred to, however they may have been a number of reasons for the referral. From now on, we will be looking to categorise these in this manner from the time that they are referred, improving the accuracy of this information.

Internal referrals



Our Carer cafes, Support Line and emotional support offer (counselling, Coping with Caring course, tele-befriending) all offer a level of emotional support, noted above as the second most common reason for contacting our Support Line, so these results are not surprising. The number of queries around carer breaks would not normally have been so high, as there is a direct line for breaks queries, such as cancellations, confirmations etc. However, due to Covid-19, this line is currently out of action and all calls are diverted through our support line.

We do not currently offer financial advice or support, apart from help in applying for Carer grants, and as mentioned earlier we have seen a large increase in carers looking to apply for grants in this period. Between 1st April and 31st December our Support Team have helped carers apply for a total of £5194.81, across 20 grants. This starts to uncover the growing issue of financial concerns for carers.