

The cost of coping: the emotional impact of financial constraints on those with mental health and other long term health conditions

In 2024, research from the Kings Fund found that people living in poverty had worse outcomes than those with higher incomes. Healthwatch England have cited a number of factors – such as the cost of digital healthcare and difficulties affording travel to health appointments – which impact this inequality. But what impact do financial concerns and constraints have on people's emotional wellbeing? We asked the people of Surrey...

What did we do?



39 people answered our survey, looking at if and how financial constraints and concerns impact physical and/or emotional health, the impact of long term conditions on finances and awareness of sources of support.



All but 1 of the people who responded to our survey had a physical or mental health condition. Of those who disclosed their age, **92%** were working age (25-64) yet **43%** were unable (or chose not) to work.

We also visited the **Leatherhead Community Hub** to chat to people face to face.

Financial concerns affecting people across Surrey

We spoke to people from **10** out of the 11 districts across Surrey.

Key results



Impact – financial constraints on physical and mental health

97% of people said that financial concerns currently impact their emotional health and wellbeing and mental health; **87%** said that financial restraints do.

- Financial concerns are **increasing stress and anxiety levels, causing sleep issues, relationship problems and their ability to parent their children.**
- Financial constraints impact on people's ability to leave the house and socialise, which in turn impacts mental health.
- Physically, people talked about **increased blood pressure, chest pains, headaches and "flare ups" of conditions such as fibromyalgia.**



I'm always worrying about money and not having enough to pay bills. I understand why people take their own lives over financial problems. It has a daily impact on me and my mental health."

Surrey resident



Impact – long term condition on financial situation

Over two thirds (68%) of people said that having a long-term health condition impacted their finances, with people not being able to work (or do as much work) and needing to pay for care and help with everyday living.

- Concerns around changes to disability benefits were something people shared with us.



"My PIP (Personal Independence Payment) is due for renewal and I'm so worried with all the government changes they will stop/cut my money. It's starting to make me ill – the panic and anxiety over how I will pay my bills."

Surrey resident



Awareness of financial help and support

Only half (50%) of survey respondents said they were clear about what help and support is available to them.

Financial concerns and emotional wellbeing: a vicious circle?

Having a long-term physical or mental health condition can be costly, and consequently have a negative impact on a person's financial stability, particularly if they don't understand what help and support they're entitled to. At the same time, concerns around finances can negatively impact both people's physical and mental health, exacerbating existing conditions or even creating new ones.