

## “Will we ever return to normality?”

### Findings from Phase 2 (Oct – Dec 2020) of the Born in Bradford Covid-19 Adult Survey

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*Born in Bradford (BiB) have carried out surveys of BiB participants during the first national lockdown (April – June 2020) and at a second Phase (Oct – Dec 2020). A third survey took place between June – July 2021. Participants were from either the BiB’s Growing Up (GU) or Better Start (BiBBS) cohorts and had children in pre-school, primary and secondary school age groups. This report presents a summary of the findings identified in Phase 2 (29th October 2020 – 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020) of the Born in Bradford’s Covid-19 adult survey.*

**This report is to aid local policy and decision makers in Bradford to plan their response to Covid-19.**

**Further Information**  
**[www.bradfordresearch.nhs.uk/c-saq/](http://www.bradfordresearch.nhs.uk/c-saq/)**

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## Executive Summary

### Background

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This report provides a summary of the data collected from Phase 2 of the Born in Bradford (BiB) Covid-19 surveys completed by adults in the Born in Bradford Growing Up cohort or Better Start cohort. Data were collected between 29th October and 23rd December 2020. The parents had previously engaged in data collection during Phase 1 (10<sup>th</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020) of this research.

Overall, 737 mothers responded to the survey, and were representative of the Bradford population in terms of ethnicity and levels of deprivation. It is important to note that those participants who took part in Phase 2 were slightly less depressed (i.e., fewer individuals expressed symptoms of depression) and slightly less financially insecure (i.e., fewer individuals reported *finding it difficult or very difficult to manage* financially) than the individuals in Phase 1 who did not respond to Phase 2. It is possible therefore that these findings reflect those who are coping better at this time.

### Summary of key findings

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Overall there was little change in circumstances between the Phase 1 (April – June 2020) and Phase 2 (October– December 2020) surveys:

- A large number of mothers continued to report clinically relevant symptoms of depression (17%) and anxiety (13%) (compared to 19% & 15% in Phase 1).
- 32% reported feeling lonely some of the time and 12% most/all of the time (31% & 10% in Phase 1).
- 14% of respondents reported not doing any physical activity (12% in Phase 1).
- 23% were just about getting by and 7% finding it difficult/very difficult to manage financially (25% & 12% in Phase 1).

Employment circumstances had improved in Phase 2, which may in part explain the reduced number of families who were finding it very difficult to manage financially:

- 67% of main earners were employed and working (compared to 55% in Phase 1), 16% were self-employed and working (8% in Phase 1), 5% were on furlough (15% in Phase 1).
- 4% ( $n=32$ ) of respondents had lost their job, and 9% ( $n=71$ ) of respondents' partners had lost their job since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Whilst things appear not to have worsened, it is important to note that, aside from employment circumstances, things have also not improved. Families had spent over 9 months in challenging circumstances, which will have implications for their long-term financial security and their physical and mental health.

The free text questions in the survey (that asked about the mothers' three main worries, recent challenges and if anything had become easier during the pandemic) highlighted the impact of the

longevity of the pandemic with some reporting huge strains on finances, wellbeing and relationships:

*“Sometimes it is eat or heat”*

*“No, I hate it. I have anxiety and am not able to do the things I used to do as a coping mechanism”*

*“It’s been very difficult nothing has been easy. Husband and son lost their job, I have been ill it has taken an effect on our relationship”*

Fear and anxiety around respondents and their families catching Covid-19 continued to be the most common worry. In contrast to Phase 1, these worries were not just associated with health, but were also about the financial implications of having to self-isolate.

*“I don’t earn enough to get sick pay so I don’t want to get Covid coz if I don’t work I don’t get paid”*

Respondents were concerned about what the future held, but were not yet aware there was about to be a further wave of Covid-19 cases (and deaths) and a new lockdown in January 2021.

### ***Recommendations***

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*Our recommendations from Phase 1 remain highly relevant.* There is a need for policy makers and commissioners to continue to plan and provide services to support those most vulnerable families to enable them to manage financially and avoid them becoming homeless and living in debt and food poverty. There is also a need to provide support for a significant proportion of people who have suffered from depression and anxiety throughout the pandemic, enabling services for severe cases and preventative interventions for those with mild symptoms to stop these getting worse.

## Background

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The Bradford Institute for Health Research Covid-19 Scientific Advisory Group (C-SAG) has done a large amount of work investigating the impact of the virus and of the lockdown measures in the City of Bradford – a deprived and multi-ethnic population.

As a part of this work, Born in Bradford (BiB) have carried out surveys of BiB participants at the beginning of the first national lockdown (April – June 2020) and at a second time (October – December 2020). A third survey is planned for May – July 2021. Participants were from either the BiB's Growing Up or Better Start cohorts and had children in pre-school, primary and secondary school age groups.

This paper presents the findings from the second survey (Survey 1 findings can be found [here](#)). The parents had previously engaged in data collection before the Covid-19 pandemic and during Phase 1 (10<sup>th</sup> April – 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020) of this research.

## Key findings

### Participant Demographics

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In Phase 2, a total of 767 adults responded to our questionnaire between 29<sup>th</sup> October – 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020. Within this group, respondents in the BiB Better Start cohort had children aged between 0-5 years, and respondents in the Growing Up cohort had children aged between 10-14 years. A total of 594 respondents in the Growing Up cohort were female and 37 were male, and a total of 136 respondents in the Better Start cohort were female and none were male. The response rate in Phase 2 was lower than in Phase 1 ( $n=2,144$ ).

**44%** of participants were of Pakistani heritage, **40%** were White British and **16%** were from other ethnic backgrounds. **44%** of respondents lived in the most deprived tenth of local areas in England. This is similar to the participant demographics in Phase 1 where 45% of participants were of Pakistani heritage, 38% were White British, and 17% were from other ethnic backgrounds. In Phase 1, 46% of participants lived in the most deprived area of deprivation in England.

Whilst the demographics are similar to Phase 1, it is important to note that those participants who took part in Phase 2 were slightly less depressed (i.e., fewer individuals expressed symptoms of depression) and slightly more financially secure (i.e., fewer individuals reported *finding it difficult* or *very difficult to manage* financially) than those who did not respond to Phase 2: 17% of those that took part in Phase 2 had clinically relevant depression in the Phase 1 survey (17%) compared to 20% from those that did not reply to Phase 2. Nine percent of those that did reply to Phase 2 were financially insecure compared to 13% in those that did not reply. It is possible therefore that these findings reflect those who are coping better at this time.

## **Local Area and Discrimination**

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Local area was defined as being within one mile or a 20 minute walk of your home. 62% ( $n=470$ ) are *very satisfied/satisfied* with their local area as a place to live, with 12% ( $n=93$ ) reporting that they were *very dissatisfied/dissatisfied* with their local area. Similarly, 57% ( $n=428$ ) of respondents reported being *very satisfied/satisfied* with the parks and green spaces in the local area, and 16% ( $n=124$ ) were *very dissatisfied/dissatisfied*. 72% ( $n=546$ ) of respondents have an outdoor space where their children can play safely but 27% ( $n=206$ ) reported there was no safe outdoor space for their children to play. During the day, 86% ( $n=651$ ) report feeling *very/fairly safe* in their neighbourhood. 4% of respondents ( $n=28$ ) stated that they feel *very/fairly unsafe* in their neighbourhood during the day.

At night however, only 59% ( $n=438$ ) reported feeling *very/fairly safe* in their neighbourhood. There was an increase in the number of individuals who reported feeling *very/fairly unsafe* (23%,  $n=161$ ) in their neighbourhood at night, compared with their reporting of levels of safety during the day.

Half of respondents (50%,  $n=361$ ) reported *never* feeling discriminated against due to race or religion, but 17% ( $n=124$ ) reported *sometimes* experiencing discrimination and 4% ( $n=30$ ) *often* felt that they experienced discrimination. Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, 73% ( $n=500$ ) of respondents reported feeling discriminated *less often*, but 17% ( $n=114$ ) reported they were experiencing *about the same* level of discrimination (as before the pandemic).

## **Social Support**

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32% of respondents ( $n=230$ ) reported feeling lonely *some of the time* during the last week, and 12% ( $n=84$ ) reported feeling lonely *most/all* of the time (comparable to Phase 1:31% & 10% respectively). 63% ( $n=452$ ) of respondents were confident in their ability to support their child learning at home which had reduced from Phase 1 (76%).

## ***Financial Insecurity***

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When asked about current financial security, 23% ( $n=175$ ) of families were just about getting by (compared to 25% in Phase 1), and 9% ( $n=70$ ) were *finding it difficult* or *very difficult to manage* (compared to 12% in Phase 1).

14% ( $n=97$ ) stated that they *were not up to date* with bills.

## ***Food, Employment and Housing Insecurity***

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A high number of participants reported insecurities in food, employment and housing, 17% ( $n=122$ ) of respondents reported that the food they had did not last and they had no money to buy more (compared to 20% in Phase 1). 7% ( $n=52$ ) stated that adults in their household had to regularly cut the size of, or skip meals (compared to 9% in Phase 1), 14% ( $n=102$ ) could not afford to eat balanced meals and 4% ( $n=29$ ) reported being hungry but did not eat as they had no money to buy more.

67% ( $n=500$ ) of the main earner's within the household were employed and working, with a further 16% ( $n=120$ ) reporting that they were self-employed and working. 5% ( $n=31$ ) reported being on furlough/on the wage subsidy scheme. 8% ( $n=62$ ) reported that the main earner was unemployed at this time. This was very different to Phase 1 where 55% were employed and working, 8% were self-employed and working and 15% were on furlough. 4% ( $n=32$ ) of respondents *had lost* their job, and 9% ( $n=71$ ) of respondents' partners *had lost* their job since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. 6% ( $n=49$ ) of other household members *had lost* their job in this time.

24% ( $n=165$ ) of respondents were worried about the job security of the main earner, a reduction from 37% in Phase 1.

22% ( $n=151$ ) of respondents reported that they *expected* the income of the main earner to be unstable. However, 43% ( $n=300$ ) of individuals *did not expect* the income of the main earner to be unstable. These findings mirrored the strong belief that 63% ( $n=441$ ) held when they reported expecting the main earner to still have their job in 12 months' time.

2% ( $n=13$ ) of households were worried about losing their home (eviction/repossession), compared to 10% of households in Phase 1.

30% ( $n=225$ ) reported that they *disagreed* that they worried about paying their rent/mortgage, with only 6% ( $n=44$ ) *strongly agreeing* that they were worried about paying their rent/mortgage.

## ***Health / Wellbeing / Physical activity***

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29% ( $n=217$ ) reported that they had *fair/poor* general health (compared to 27% in Phase 1).

Depression and anxiety were measured using validated assessment tools. 42% ( $n=301$ ) reported symptoms of depression (43% in Phase 1), 17% ( $n=119$ ) had *clinically relevant (moderate/severe)* depression (19% in Phase 1).

37% ( $n=266$ ) reported symptoms of anxiety (39% in Phase 1), 13% ( $n=95$ ) reported *clinically relevant (moderate/severe)* anxiety (16% in Phase 1).

14% ( $n=110$ ) of respondents do no physical activity (12% in Phase 1). 34% ( $n=259$ ) reported that they did physical activity on 1 or 2 days a week. However, 43% ( $n=312$ ) of respondents' child(ren) did physical activity on most days.

Looking at measures of respondents' quality of life, 17% ( $n=130$ ) reported they had problems walking about, 6% ( $n=47$ ) had difficulties washing or dressing themselves, 17% ( $n=132$ ) had difficulties doing their usual activities and 46% ( $n=352$ ) experience some level of pain or discomfort.

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## Summary of key free text findings

The following section provides a summary of the free-text responses from three open ended questions asked in the survey:

1. *'What are your three biggest worries right now? Please write your biggest worry first'.*
2. *'Can you tell us about a challenge you have faced in the last two weeks?'*
3. *'Can you tell us whether there are any parts of your life that have continued to be easier or more enjoyable since lockdown first began in March?'*

Overall similar worries, challenges and positive experiences were reported in both Phase 1 and Phase 2. However, there is a change in the priority of these worries, challenges and positive experiences which is seen in the frequency of which they are reported. For example, in Phase 1, many shared concerns about home-schooling and the practicalities of doing school work and lessons at home, however, in Phase 2, education related concerns seemed to focus on concerns about school's closing (and the impact this could have on children's education) or worries around catching Covid-19 whilst being at school.

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## Worries and Challenges

74% of respondents ( $n=570$ ) gave at least one response to the worries question. 53% ( $n=408$ ) provided responses to all three worries. 61% ( $n=465$ ) of respondents answered the challenges question.

Many challenges reported were similar to the worries so the two questions have been analysed together and are presented in this section. Some specific challenges that came up frequently were finding balance, not seeing family or friends and keeping safe as lockdown eases.

### Catching Covid-19

Similar to Phase 1 of the BiB Covid-19 survey, the most prominent worry was around them or loved ones catching Covid-19:

*"That me and my family remain safe from Covid"*

*"My family becoming ill or worse from coronavirus"*

*"My elderly parents catching Covid and dying"*

*"Keeping my family safe & looking after my father that lives on his own & in our support bubble"*

*"Worried about daughter catching the virus as she is classed as high risk"*



Whilst lockdown restriction easing was welcomed, many participants had safety concerns around catching Covid-19. There were also worries about the impact contracting Covid-19 could have on their household (e.g., in terms of the impact it would have on childcare or food shopping):

*“Catching Covid, I am pregnant and have concerns about the risk of contracting the virus. I also work within the NHS so am exposed to positive cases”*

*“Who will care for my children if I am ill or hospitalised?”*

*“Getting too unwell not being able to look after my kids”*

Parents expressed particular concern for their children’s safety within schools and the potential for their children to bring the virus home:

*“Schools are still open. I feel they are the main hub as many children are together from different families. There are currently 90 children in 1 year group. That’s 90 families”*

*“Schools- how safe they are from Covid-19 there. Seen lack of social distancing and lack of mask wearing from parents”*

*“Kids getting virus from school (getting [messages] every day about one or more positive cases at school)”*

*“do not agree with schools being open because children can come home and spread the virus.”*

## **Children’s Education**

Children’s education and the impact the pandemic has had on their education was a prominent worry. Unlike the Phase 1 survey, the Phase 2 survey was distributed when schools were open for all children. As a result, there were fewer worries about home-schooling compared to Phase 1. However, some respondents were worried that their children had fallen behind, lacked motivation and engagement and were concerned about the short and long-term effects of schools being closed:

*“Whether my son with autism will be able to successfully transition to his new school”*

*“Children lost a lot of educational time, missed good 6 months of crucial time, how will they catch up with their curriculum when they take exams soon”*

*“The children missing out on key development stages in their life”*

*“My children’s education- covid has resulted in valuable school time being missed”*

There were also concerns around the uncertainty of not knowing how long schools would remain open or if children would be sent home from school due to Covid-19 cases in their bubble:

*“Ensuring that my children are not prevented from going to school to get their education”*

*“Schools shutting again”*

*“My children becoming behind in their education through the need to self-isolate / bubbles collapsing”*

Worries were voiced about their children’s educational and employment future. These included the negative impact that reduced schooling would have on future exams and their ability to get a job:

*“My older son (18) finding an apprenticeship”*

*“Year 11 child taking exams and the effect on her future”*

*“My children missing out on opportunities education because of Covid”*

*“Children’s education and exams. Children’s future being destroyed”*

### ***Financial Concerns and Job Uncertainty***

Financial concerns were a prominent theme. At the time of the Phase 1 survey, the financial strain of the pandemic was starting to be felt; when we administered the second survey in autumn 2020 there was still no end in sight for the pandemic and families had been experiencing financial strain for much longer. Uncertainty and financial difficulties were evident for many families:

*“Money - I’ve been given at risk redundancy notice”*

*“Being able to afford to pay our mortgage and all our monthly bills and provide for our children put nice and good food on the table and packed lunches for the kids”*

*“Sometimes it’s eat or heat”*

*“Financial future is unstable for next year”*

The Government’s furlough scheme had been extended to the end of October 2020 at which point another extension to March 2021 was introduced. At this time, it was hoped people would be able to return to their jobs. However, these extensions resulted in further job loss and additional job insecurity for many:

*“Our business is closed again because of the latest restrictions, I worry that we’ll miss our much needed trade”*

*“Losing my job or income”*

*“My job - I have been made redundant, but now doing a temp contract”*

*“I’m a hairdresser and worry the industry will close again”*

*“My partner’s job (reduced hours and income)”*

*“I graduated in 2019, and have unable to gain employment due to schools been closed and lack of childcare. I worry by the time this is over, I will struggle to find a job”*

*“Stability of husband’s job he is self-employed and business is not doing well”*

Worries around contracting Covid-19 were not just about being unwell; some expressed concerns about the impact testing positive for the virus could have on their ability to work and their income. Some reported they would not receive any sick pay if they were off work due to being ill or having to isolate due to being exposed to Covid-19:

*“I don’t earn enough to get sick pay so I don’t want to get Covid coz if I don’t work I don’t get paid”*

*“Unpredictable effect of coronavirus on our household income. For example not getting paid while isolating & less job security than before”*

*“Finance - worried I may have to take time off work if I have to isolate- as it would be unpaid”*

Quite a few responses referred to how jobs had changed, usually becoming more stressful, including the risk of catching Covid-19 in the workplace (e.g., in a hospital or supermarket); changes to job roles/responsibilities (e.g., as a result of employee absence) or adjusting to working from home:

*“Work is changing constantly due to current situation and is very busy”*

*“Dying patients at work”*

*“My safety at work”*

*“High levels of work pressure”*

*“Work has been especially busy and working from home full time has made it a bit more difficult”*

## ***Mental Wellbeing***

Wellbeing was frequently mentioned, including worries about personal mental health and wellbeing being affected by isolation, existing mental health concerns or feeling overwhelmed with trying to find balance:

*“Mental health of me + family”*

*“Just fed up with the whole thing now”*

*“Social anxiety”*

*“My mental health”*

*“I feel like since March i have lost my identity and my confidence. My anxiety has increased exponentially”*

*“We are in third lockdown, I have 4 kids age 10 years old, 8 years old, 3 years old and 1 year old managing life in a tiny house not outdoor space, home schooling and daily house work is quite a challenge!”*

Participants were also worried about their family and friends' mental wellbeing:

*“Protecting my children's mental health and allowing them to enjoy their childhood as much as they can despite the restrictions”*

*“My children's mental health due to not being able to see friends /family”*

*“Friends struggling with their mental health”*

*“Partner's mental health”*

*“Nation's wellbeing”*

The uncertain nature of the pandemic and the changing rules and restrictions also affected wellbeing. Participants worried about the future and when the pandemic would be over:

*“Will we ever return to normality?”*

*“Uncertainties about the situation/ how long will it last for”*

*“Will Covid still be an issue this time next year”*

*“Uncertainty in near future”*

*“Christmas on hold...disappointed family”*

*“Not knowing what to expect next from the pandemic”*

### ***Impact on the wider society***

Some respondents worried about the impact the pandemic has had on their community and wider society. There was a wide range of concerns here; from the economy, the Government's handling of the pandemic, to climate change:

*“The economy collapsing”*

*“how the economy is going to recover from this pandemic”*

*“Economic long term effects of Covid. How it will impact our future and finances.”*

*“State of the community - resilience of people - financially people losing jobs and the worry of what’s happening”*

*“How can I make changes to help others to help me feel like I’m not just watching the world go by with so many people struggling.”*

*“Not trusting government, with the measurements in place”*

*“Government ability to handle Covid”*

*“Climate change”*

*“My community”*

*“Wider community struggling financially + increase of food bank needs/ mental health support”*

### ***Finding Balance***

Finding routine and a balance was a challenge for some. This seemed to be because of changing demands in work, balancing home schooling, managing mental health and the pressures of daily life, some of which described as being the ‘new normal’:

*“Juggling work and parenting is always difficult but being pulled to cover Covid wards on top of my usual job has been more challenging”*

*“Having to work from home and home school as well”*

*“Doing everything right, husband is abroad. A lot of responsibility, trying to do everything”*

*“School bubble and work bubble closes and too much pressure at home, Meeting goals set from school”*

*“Managing a full time job and looking after my children under 10 years old”*

### ***Not seeing family or friends***

Parents reported that it was a challenge not being able to see their family or friends. Many felt sad and frustrated that they were unable to provide help or support to family/friends that lived far away. For some it was because their friends and family were not in their household bubble and for others it was because there was a significant geographical distance between them and their family/friends:

*“Helping the children deal with a new lockdown- not seeing friends & family”*

*“Children getting upset about not seeing family”*

*“It has been a year since I have been able to see my parents”*

### **Keeping safe as lockdown eases**

A challenge was trying to keep safe as lockdown restrictions eased. The main concern was around sending children back to school. There were also concerns about being at the shops or in work with people who do not follow social distancing measures or wear masks:

*“Sending children to school as unsure about cases in the school and their contact with other people”*

*“People not complying with rules of Covid”*

*“Returning to work under difficult circumstances”*

*“The children were isolating because of a case in school. I was not able to work”*

*“Children bringing the virus home and it affecting elderly relatives”*

*“I am high risk and very weary about other people being around me during corona virus. I feel like the guidelines are not being followed. People are not wearing masks in schools and mosques”*

*“I worry that the extra cleaning done for COVID is good enough to protect my family”*

### **Positive experiences of Covid-19**

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65% ( $n=500$ ) gave at least one response to this question, with some 10% ( $n=75$ ) reporting more than one aspect of their lives had been made easier or more enjoyable.

Please note below is a summary of all responses to the questions from the Growing Up ( $n=631$ ) and the BiBBS participants ( $n=155$ ).

#### ***It is not more enjoyable***

Some respondents were clear that nothing had been made easier or more enjoyable since lockdown began. This highlights the level of disruption that the pandemic and restrictions had had on people's lives:

*“No everything is harder. I've not seen my parents in months, we are stuck in all the time. I can't take the childminding children to play group. It makes my job very lonely”*

*"No. I hate it. I have anxiety and am not able to do the things I used to do as a coping mechanism. My son is autistic and challenging and I am unable to have quality 'me' time"*

*"Life not been easier. Key worker supermarket store manager. This year been tough trying to juggle full time & more at work + trying to home school & keep everything normal at home"*

*"It's been very difficult nothing has been easy. Husband and son lost their job, I have been ill it has taken an effect on our relationship"*

*"Life becomes harder in pandemic because you can't travel. You can't visit your loved ones"*

*"No - Gave me depression and not nice feeling."*

*"Continue attending my university because I cannot study at home because of my little ones. They don't let me do anything and that's why i remain frustrated."*

### **Spending time with family**

As in Phase 1, the most common response was that lockdown enabled people to enjoy spending time with family:

*"Spending more time as a family"*

*"Spending more time together as a family, appreciating what we have. The children learning more life skills instead of all the academic learning"*

*"My husband is at home more to do thing he normally doesn't have time to do or is just too tired to do after working and helping me"*

*"My husband is now home based which has made me and my son happy and when the weather is bad my husband picks our son up."*

*"Watching my toddler learn so much. I put all my spare time into teaching my toddler new things"*

One way in which some families enjoyed time together was spending more time outside walking and enjoying time in nature:

*"Have had lovely walks and chats with my son"*

*"I've enjoyed the outdoor spaces near my home"*

*"More fresh air and walks"*

*"When weather was nice long countryside walks was more enjoyable"*

## ***Slower place***

Some reported they were able to enjoy a slower pace of life since the introduction of the lockdown restrictions. This included not having to commute to their workplace, not having to rush around to get their children to extra-curricular activities and having less social pressures:

*“Less stress getting children to clubs etc. Slower pace of life. More walks. Less obligations”*

*“Less busy, e.g. fewer social engagements, children's activities”*

*“Taking a step back from busy life, more calm”*

*“Eased pressure on myself to do stuff, less social pressure”*

*“Working from home has made my life less rushed and given me more time with my toddler”*

Overall, the free-text responses from Phase 2 highlighted similar concerns to those identified in Phase 1 – catching Covid-19, children’s education, financial concerns, job instability and mental health. Amongst the things that have been easier/more enjoyable, spending time with family was found to be the most frequently identified factors, as it had been in Phase 1. Although similar concerns and factors that have made life easier have been identified between Phases 1 and 2, the detail surrounding these concerns, and the frequency with which they have been identified has differed between the two time points. The struggles that people have expressed remain present in Phase 2, which highlights that difficulties persist for many households within our Bradford community.



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