

CLIMATE ADAPTATION EXTREME WEATHER

RAIN FLOODS WINDS STORMS FOG
HEATWAVES SNOW ICE

2025

Full Report

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About Healthwatch Blackpool

Healthwatch Blackpool was established in April 2013 as part of the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act (2012). Healthwatch Blackpool is the independent consumer voice for health and social care, listening to the views of local people on issues that matter.

Our ultimate aim is to ensure that local people have a voice, acting on feedback and driving change.



Thank you

Healthwatch Blackpool extends a heartfelt thank you to all the care home staff and residents who participated in our project.

Our approach



Our aims:

- Listening to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- Including everyone in the conversation – especially those who do not always have their voice heard.
- Analysing different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- Acting on feedback and driving change.
- Partnering with care providers, Government, and the voluntary sector – serving as the public's independent advocate.



Introduction

Climate adaptation relates to actions that reduce the risks from, and vulnerability to, the **impacts of climate change**, both now and in the future. As **greenhouse gas** emissions continue to **rise**, climate models project that the UK will experience warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers, more frequent and **intense weather extremes**, and increased **sea level rise**. These projected changes present significant challenges for places and populations that are already **vulnerable**.

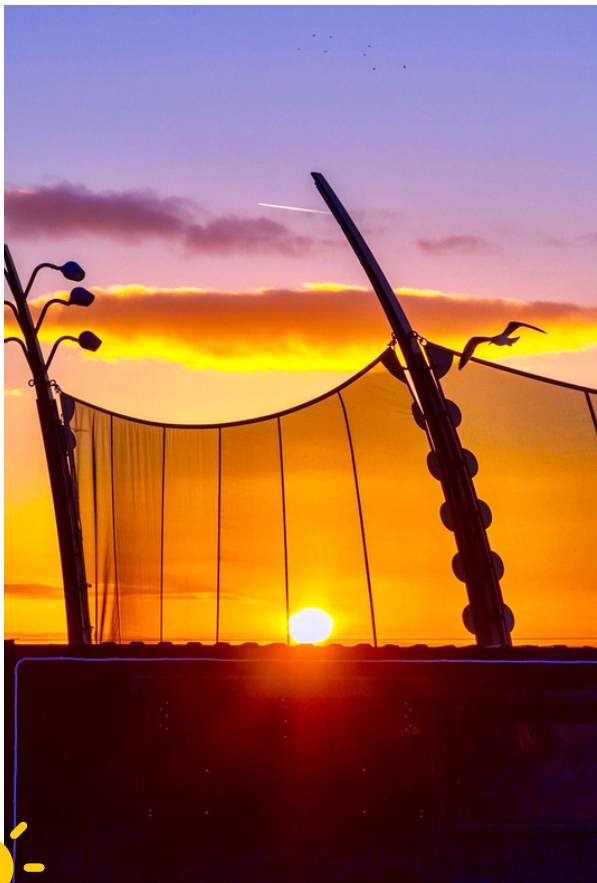
Blackpool is a **coastal town** on the Fylde Coast by the Irish Sea, and like many coastal areas, is particularly **vulnerable to climate change** impacts such as sea level rise, coastal erosion, and **extreme weather events**. Historic climate data collected at the nearest Met Office climate station (Squires Gate) indicates that the climate in Blackpool has already become slightly **warmer, sunnier, and wetter** on an annual basis. Over the past century, the town has experienced several **extreme weather events** with **detrimental effects**, including the summer heatwave of 2022, and a significant flooding event in November 2017. These events are likely to become **more frequent** and **intense** in the future.

As a **heavily urbanised town** with very **limited green and blue** infrastructure in the inner areas and town centre, Blackpool is particularly **vulnerable to climate impacts** such as extreme heat and flooding. These **physical vulnerabilities** are compounded by **social factors**. Neighbourhoods in Blackpool account for 8 of the 10 most **deprived** neighbourhoods nationally, indicating high levels of social and economic vulnerability, which significantly increases exposure to and impacts from **climate change**.

As a deprived coastal area with an **ageing population**, Blackpool is particularly vulnerable to **climate change**, including extreme weather events such as heatwaves, flooding, and storms. **Extreme heat** was identified as the **primary health-associated risk** for vulnerable people, due to its direct and immediate impacts on morbidity and mortality. **Ageing** is a **climate vulnerability** factor, with the 2022 Heat Mortality Report indicating that within the North West, there were **386 excess deaths** in the summer season of 2022 due to **extreme heat**. The recommendations state that, as a system, we should be working to **adapt and prevent** such deaths through **heat-health response plans**. These events pose significant risks to resident's **health and wellbeing**, whilst also testing the capacity of local services to respond effectively.

Through a **collaborative approach** between Healthwatch Blackpool, Blackpool Council and Dr Pedro Beltran-Alvarez of Hull University (Senior Lecturer, Co-Director MSc Health and Climate Change), this project aimed to understand the **impact of extreme weather**, particularly **heat waves**, on **care home residents and providers**, as well as including the effects on **health and social care settings** more generically. Having identified a gap regarding climate adaptation and health care strategies from a community perspective, specific consideration was given to **service preparedness**, given there is little work on the **direct impact** of climate change on **health and care delivery** locally.

This project aimed to assess the preparedness of **care home residents and providers** for **extreme weather events**, including the effectiveness of current response plans and approaches to facility management, staff training, and patient care. It was important to determine whether organisations have progressed beyond **emergency planning** to implement **proactive climate adaptation strategies**, whilst exploring the reasons plans may not be in place, identifying ways to **adapt service delivery models**. In doing so, this project focused on developing **practical climate adaptation strategies** for use at community and policy levels, as well as enhancing **Blackpool Council's** ability to evaluate **adaptation measures** in health and social care settings.



Research Questions

- What challenges do care home residents face during heatwaves, and how does it affect their health and wellbeing?
- What is the level of awareness amongst the community regarding climate adaptation, and how are these voices being heard?
- Are local health and housing care providers prepared for extreme weather events, and what adaptation measures are currently in place?
- What adaptations can be made to ensure continued service delivery during extreme weather, and how can these adaptations be implemented in an accessible manner for the local Blackpool community?
- How do health and social care providers perceive the feasibility of climate adaptation in their services, and what challenges exist in implementing new models of service delivery?



Methodology

This project was funded through the **Blackpool Researching Together (BRT)** seed funding scheme, part of the nationally recognised **Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC)**, hosted by Blackpool Council and supported by the National Institute for Health and Care Research. The seed funding scheme supports small scale projects to **build research skills**, develop proposals, and facilitate collaboration between **academics, council officers**, and **community members**.

Dr Pedro Beltran-Alvarez of Hull University acted as the project's academic supervisor, providing **expert guidance** on understanding the impact of **extreme weather**, particularly **heatwaves**, on care home residents, providers, and health and social care settings more broadly.

Funded projects strengthen local **partnerships**, create research opportunities for residents, and generate **insights to improve services** and help to reduce **health inequalities**. By placing the Blackpool community at the centre of research, the scheme helps ensure **local services** better meet the needs of those facing the greatest **health challenges**.

Research Design

This project adopted a **mixed-methods** approach to explore the impact of extreme weather, particularly **heatwaves**, on **care home residents, staff**, and broader **health and social care provision** in Blackpool. The study combined quantitative and qualitative data collection to provide a comprehensive understanding of how extreme weather affects **health, wellbeing**, and **service delivery** within care settings.

A **co-productive** approach underpinned the design, with two **Community Co-researchers** being recruited and trained to support **data collection** and **engagement**. Their involvement ensured that local voices were meaningfully embedded throughout the **research process** and that data collection remained **accessible** and **inclusive**.





Data Collection Methods

Survey

A single **survey** was utilised, tailored for both **residents** and **care home staff**. The resident branch explored **experiences of extreme weather**, **access** to healthcare, perceptions of **preparedness**, and suggestions for **improvement**, whilst the staff branch considered **training**, preparedness, building **adaptations**, emergency plans, and **confidence** in managing extreme weather events. Both branches combined closed and open-ended questions, and were distributed online and in person.

For **care home residents**, Community Co-researchers facilitated participation via a **creative activity**, designed to be both accessible and stimulating. Conducted via **focus groups**, this activity involved drawing a **map** of the home including the rooms residents use, discussing whether **certain spaces** are used depending on the **weather**, and engaging in casual conversation to **build rapport**. Co-researchers then asked the survey questions in a **conversational style**, whilst each resident shared their thoughts on a **post-it note**. These post-it notes were recorded and later inputted into the **survey**, using **colour coding** to identify **individual responses**. This approach allowed residents to share their experiences without feeling **'interviewed'** and captured insights in a **relaxed**, enjoyable, and **participatory** way.

Staff Checklists

A short **preparedness checklist** was distributed to **care home staff** to gather quantitative feedback, complementing the qualitative insights from other methods. The checklist captured information across two key areas; **responding to extreme weather** and **planning for extreme weather**. Staff were asked to indicate whether statements relating to emergency response, training, infrastructure, and planning were applicable to their care home. Responses were recorded using **categorical options** (Yes, No, Maybe, Not Sure), whilst an optional **open-text** question allowed further insights into staff **experiences**.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews, conducted by **Community Co-researchers**, were facilitated with **care home managers** to gain insights into operational challenges, preparedness levels, training, building adaptations, and investment in climate resilience.

Engagement

Engagement with local care homes took place between **August and October 2025**, utilising Healthwatch Blackpool's **existing networks** to introduce the project and encourage participation. Community Co-researchers **actively** contacted care homes by phone to **personally invite** them to take part in the project, ensuring they had a **clear understanding** of the aims and potential benefits. This initial contact was followed up with a **detailed email**, providing further information and guidance to support participation. The project was also shared via Healthwatch Blackpool's **social media** channels to **raise awareness** and encourage **wider participation**, helping to reach a **broader audience**.



Participants and Sampling

This project engaged care home **residents, staff, and managers** across Blackpool. According to Blackpool Council's most recent Local Market Assessment (2024), there are 64 registered residential and nursing care homes in Blackpool. For this project, 24 care homes were contacted in total, of which **11 participated**, representing approximately **17% of all care homes in Blackpool**. These 11 homes were predominantly **privately operated**, with only two run by voluntary or charitable organisations, and none directly owned or operated by Blackpool Council. 5 care homes declined to take part due to residents not having capacity to contribute, and/or limited time availability, whilst 8 did not respond.

Across the **11 completed visits**, data was gathered from **51 care home residents** via focus groups, **29 staff members** via a survey, **9 care home managers** via semi-structured interviews, and checklists were completed by **10 care home staff** members. Participation was voluntary, and consent was obtained prior to all engagements.

A range of homes were selected from **different areas** to capture a variety of building types, including detached, semi-detached and terraced. Visiting both **coastal** and **town centre** care homes ensured **inclusivity**, taking into account that extreme weather can affect **different areas** in **different ways**. Town centre homes are generally more exposed to the impacts of extreme heat due to **urban density** and **limited green space**, whilst coastal homes face a higher risk of **flooding** and **storm-related** events, making it important to assess adaptation needs across various areas.

Limitations

There were several **limitations** to the project that should be acknowledged. As the survey was completed in a **focus group session** within the home, some care home resident responses may have reflected **social desirability** or **loyalty to care providers**, potentially influencing **data accuracy**.

In addition, findings may have been influenced by **personal variability**, with some participants naturally feeling cold and others naturally feeling warm, making it **difficult to compare** responses consistently.

Proactive engagement was also a challenge, with some participants **falling asleep**, creating barriers to participation. Some participants limited their responses to **yes or no answers** without elaboration, highlighting **methodological constraints** that restricted the depth of **insights gathered**.

It should be noted that **varying levels of understanding** and **awareness** of climate adaptation and extreme weather may have influenced how participants **interpreted** and **responded** to questions, potentially affecting the **reliability** and **consistency** of responses. Taken together, whilst the findings remain valuable, these limitations should be **carefully considered** when interpreting the results.





Observations from Community Co-researchers: Sharon and Sandra

The following insights were gathered by Community Co-researchers during visits to care homes, reflecting the views and experiences of residents and staff. These observations capture nuances that did not always surface through the chosen engagement methods, but were commonly heard during conversations.

Residents frequently described relying on the television and social media as their main sources of extreme weather information, rather than staff updates. Their views on these topics often reflected what they had recently seen or read, rather than personal experience. Several residents noted that they were not always aware of the weather outside because they rarely went outdoors.

Discussions frequently centred on heating and the operation of heating systems. It was clear that maintaining a consistently comfortable temperature in communal areas was challenging. Often within the same care home, some residents felt too warm whilst others felt cold, highlighting the difficulty of meeting varied individual comfort needs.

In several homes, different types of heating systems were used in different parts of the building, resulting in differing temperatures, particularly in resident bedrooms. For example, one home had underfloor heating in certain areas that could not be regulated by residents or staff.

Only one resident reported having access to air conditioning. Some residents expressed an interest in having air conditioning implemented within the home, however others, including some staff, felt that air conditioning may not be suitable for everyone. Many residents preferred to rely on fans or open windows to help cool rooms during warmer weather.

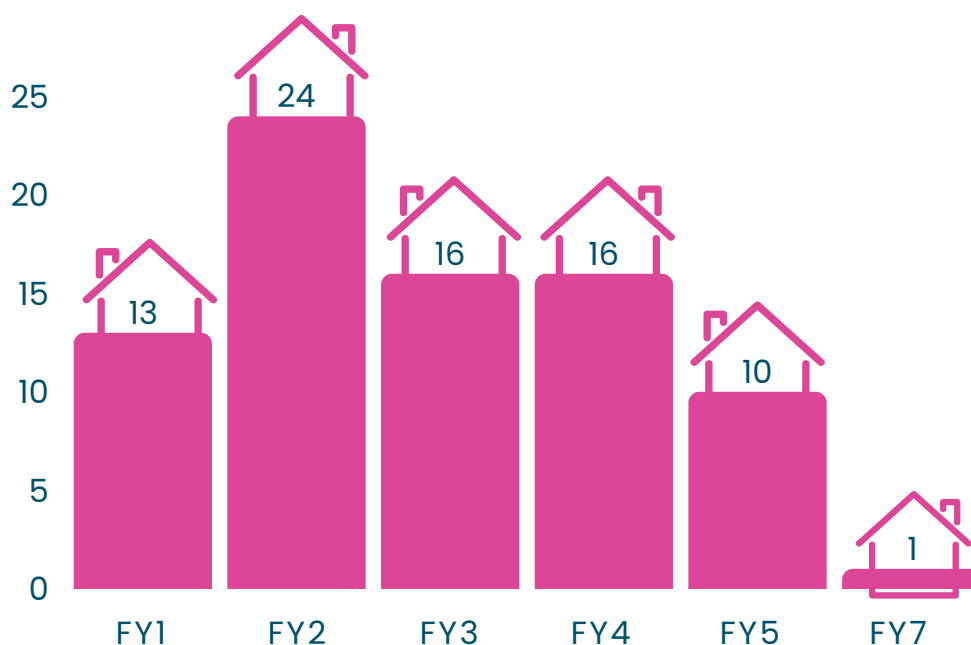
Cold drinks were widely accessible, and whilst residents were generally satisfied with meals, some suggested offering cooler food options, such as salads during the warmer months.

Overall, most residents stated they felt happy and well cared for, and they acknowledged that staff made efforts to ensure comfort as best as they could, though some residents raised concerns about limited staffing affecting continuity of support.

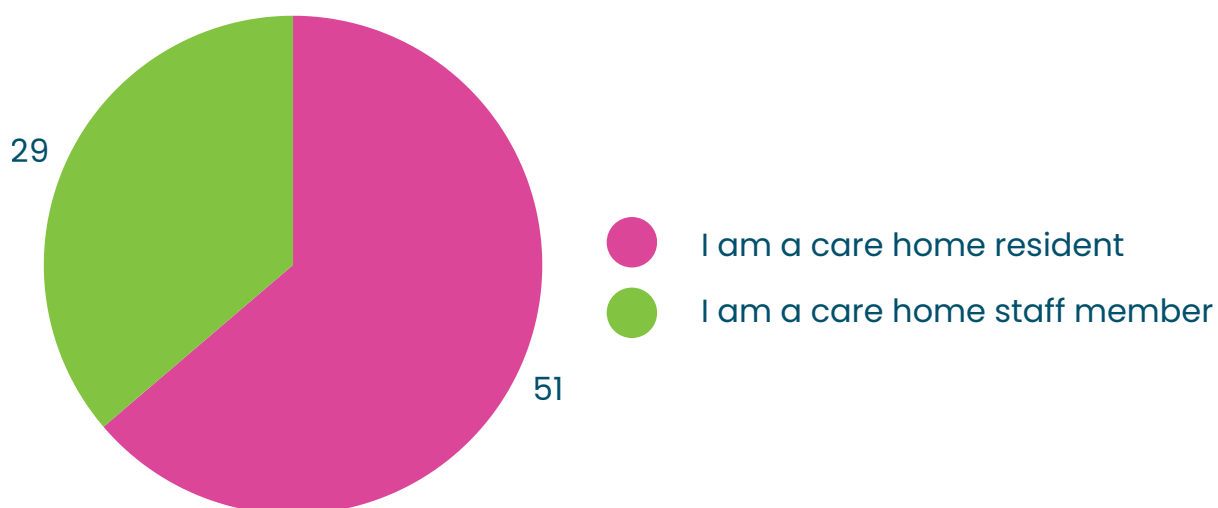
Demographics

The below demographics are derived from the care home staff and residents who completed our **online survey**.

What is your postcode area?



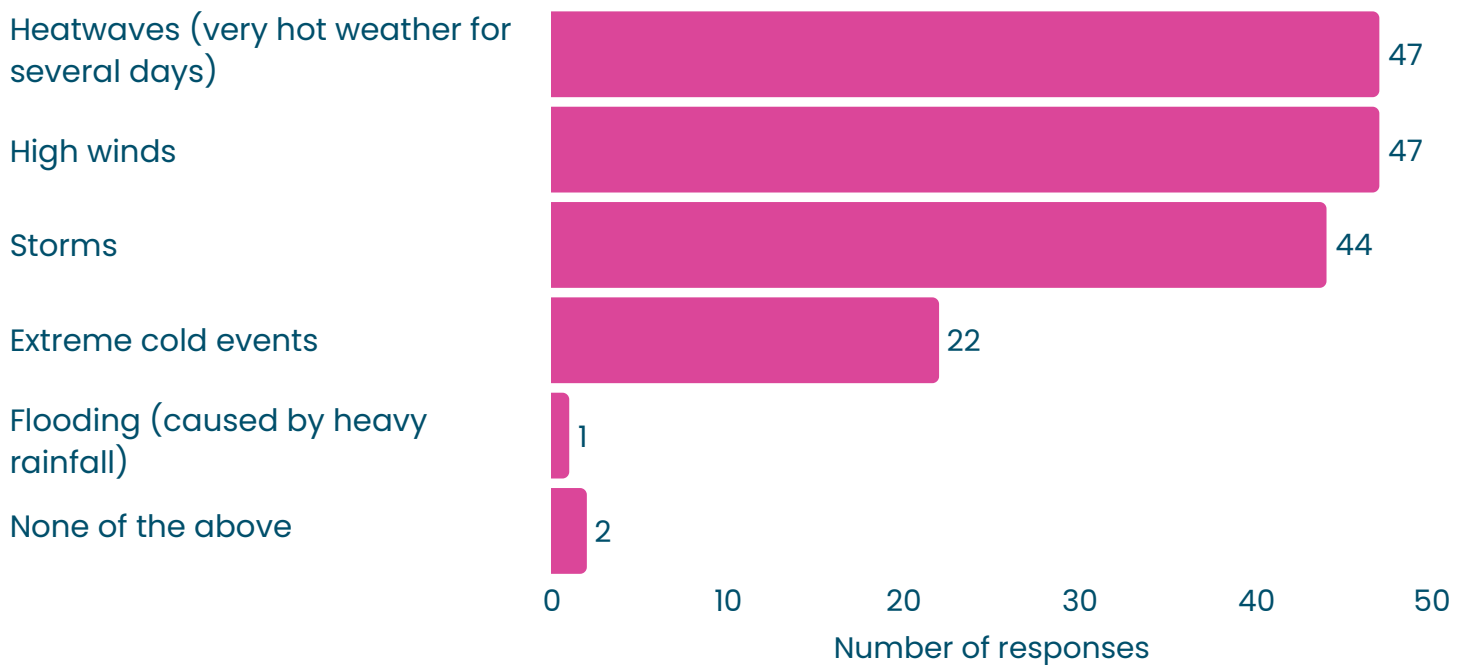
Please select one of the following which best applies to you?



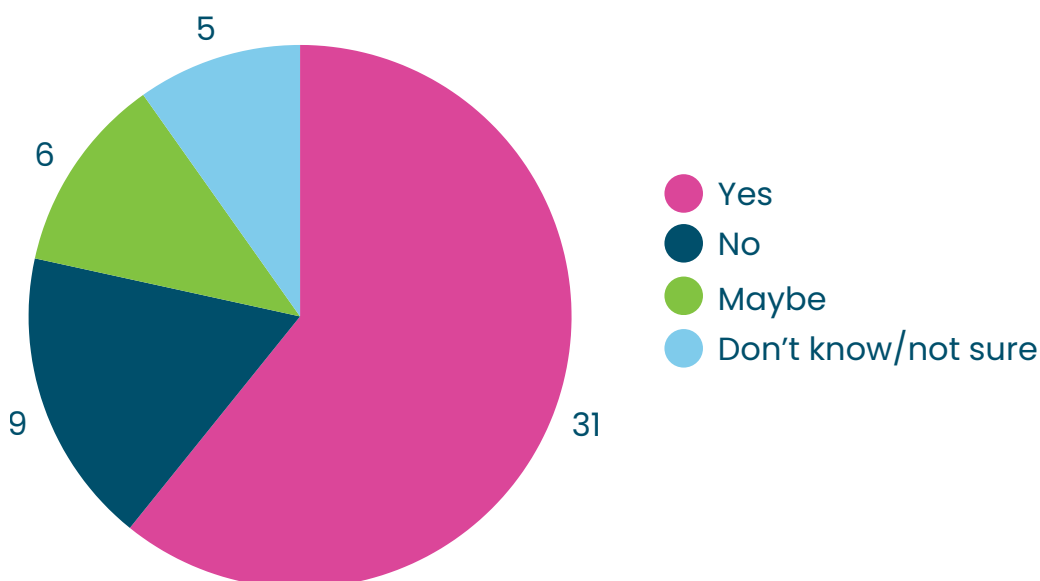


Resident Survey Feedback

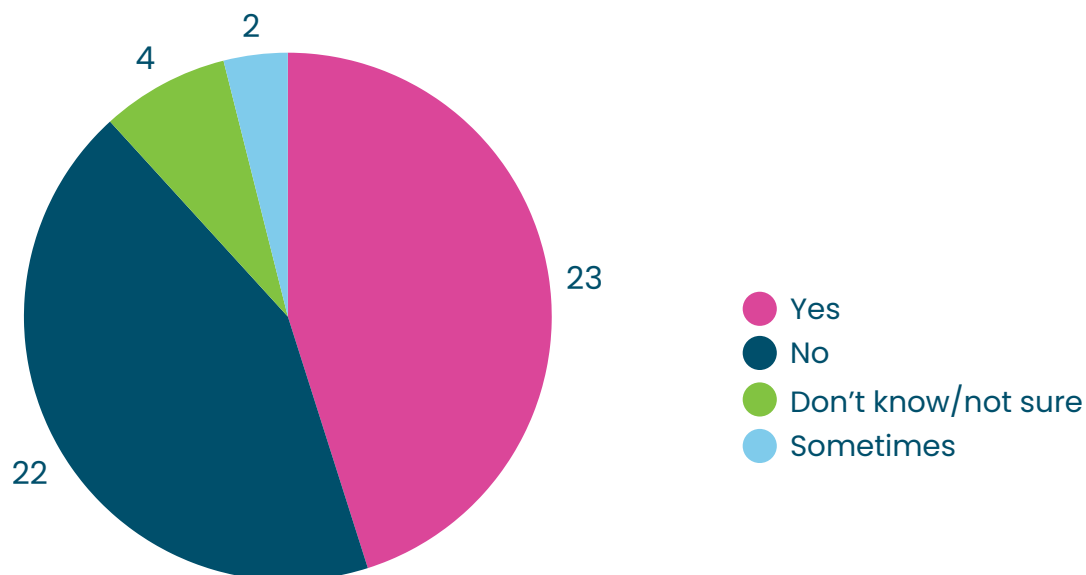
Have you experienced any of the following extreme weather events in recent years? Please select all that apply:



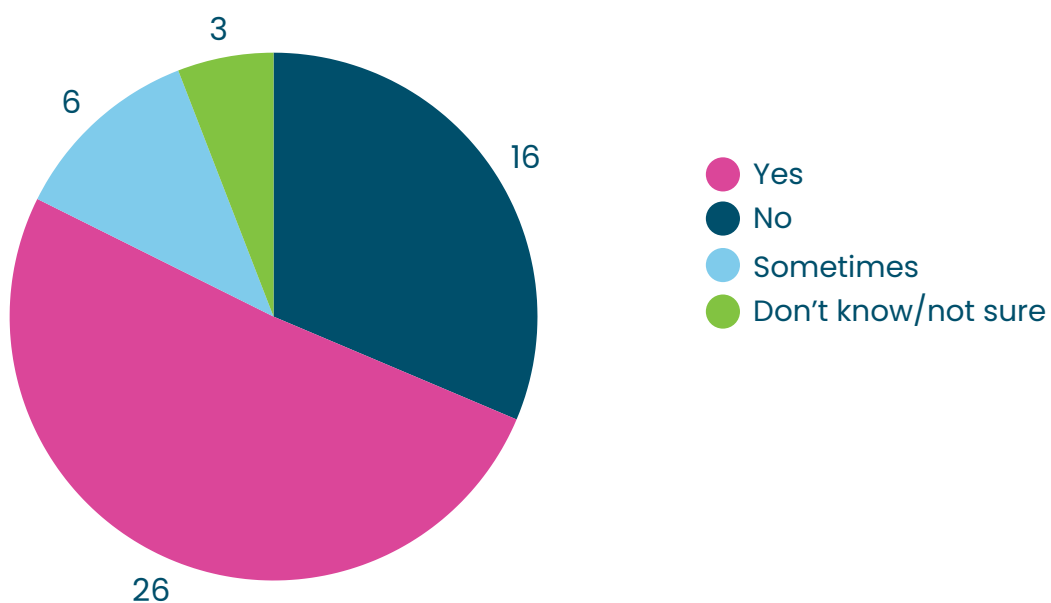
Do you feel these types of extreme weather events are happening more often now?



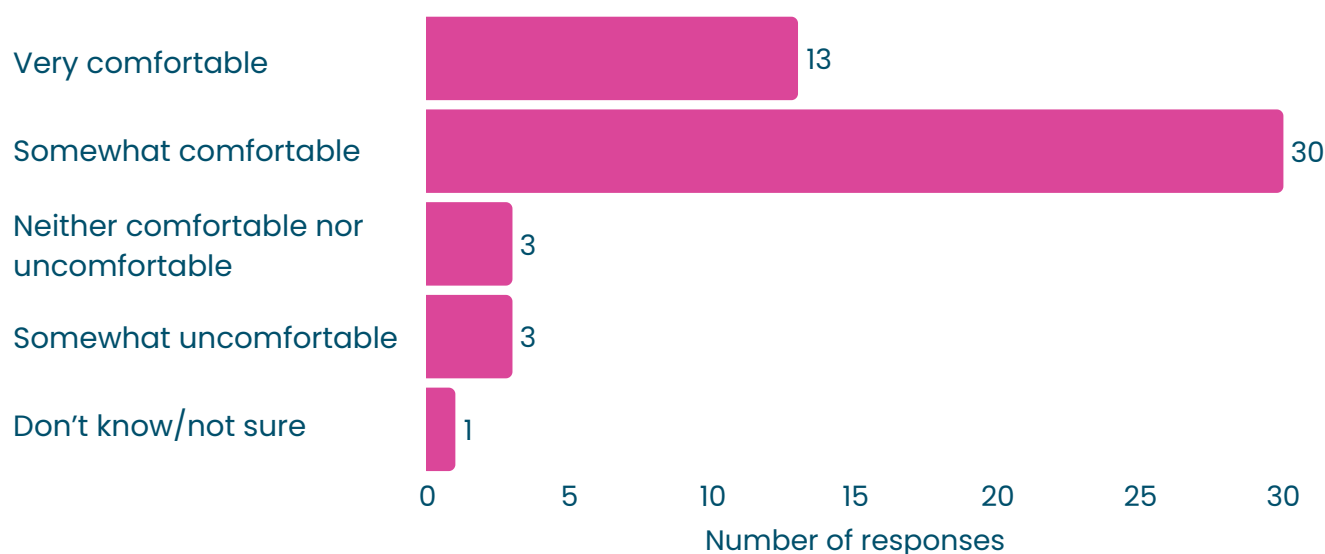
Do care staff tell you in advance when extreme weather is expected?



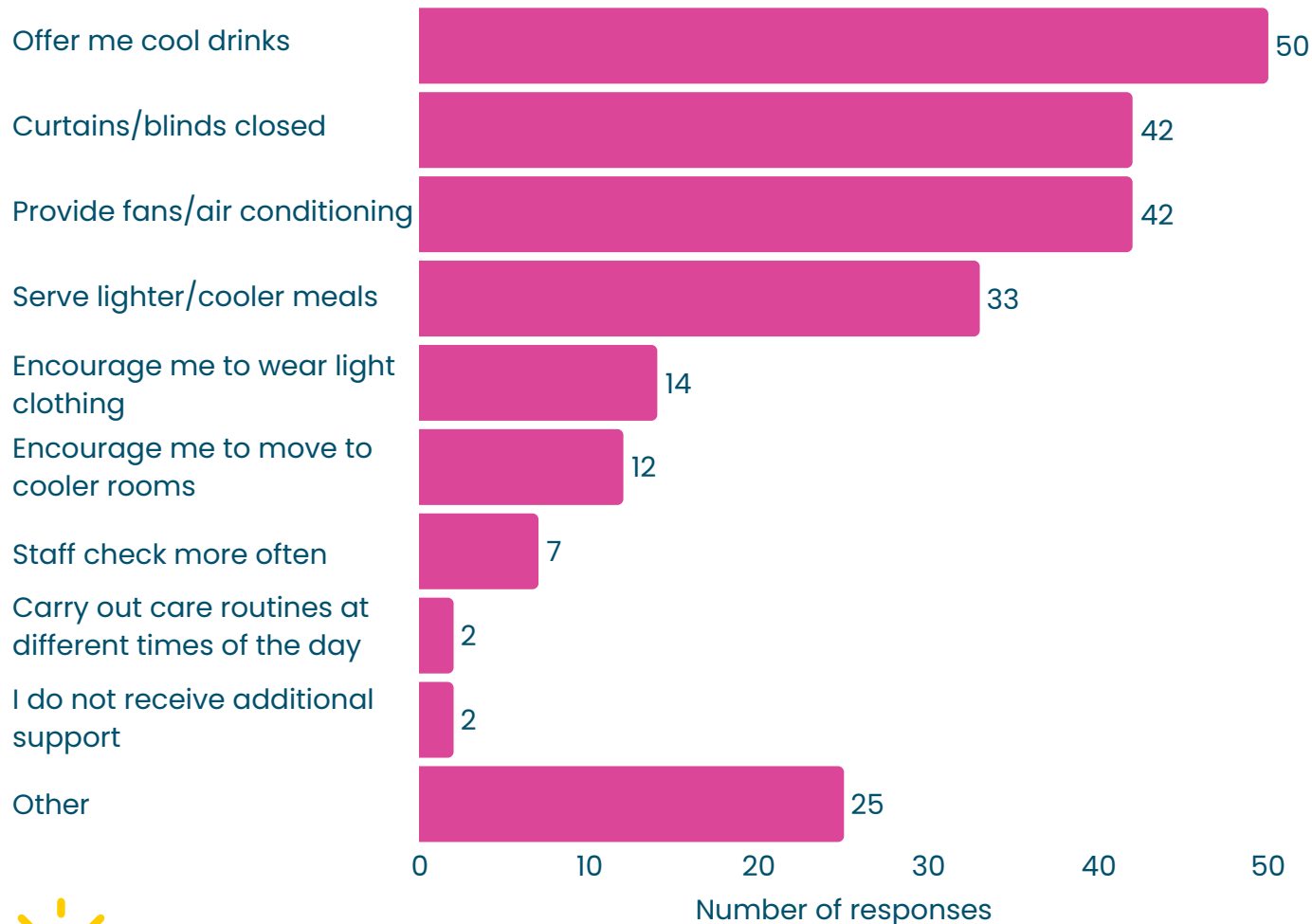
Do care staff explain what to expect and how to stay safe during extreme weather events?



How comfortable do you feel during a heatwave?

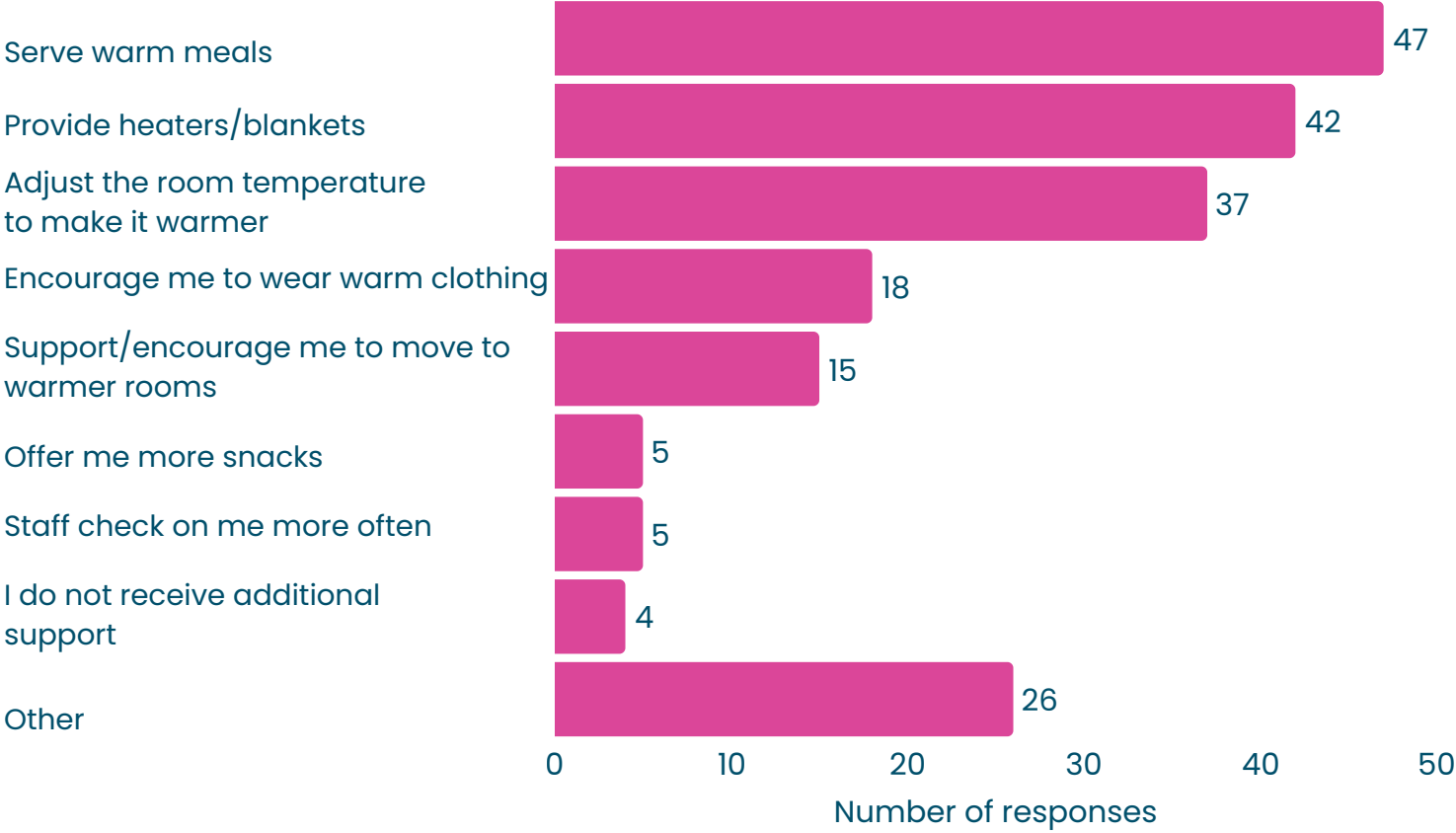


How do care staff support you to stay comfortable during hot weather? Please select all that apply:



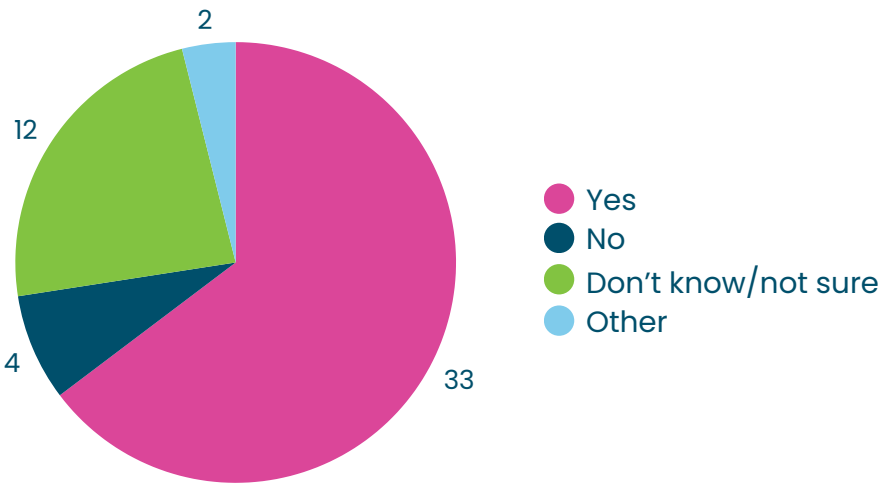
Other comments included "Glass of water by my bed," "Don't need staff to help as I can ask," "I can do things myself."

How do care staff support you to stay comfortable during cold weather? Please select all that apply:



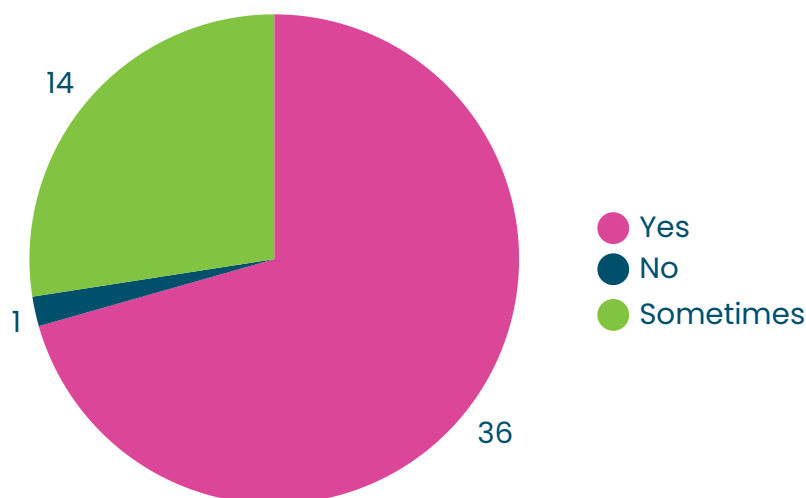
Other comments included "There's a snack table you can help yourself to extra snacks if you want."

Do you feel there are enough care staff to assist you during extreme weather events?



Other comments included "Myself and other residents have complained about the lack of staff, Sometimes there feels like not enough staff," "I can adjust the heating in my room and ask staff if I need anything to keep me warm," "I can choose what to wear and set my own temperature."

Is your room kept at a comfortable temperature during hot and cold weather?



Do you feel your care home is prepared for extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, cold spells or flooding?

20 residents were unaware if their care home is prepared for extreme weather events, highlighting a limited understanding of the current measures for adapting to heatwaves, cold spells, or flooding. Despite this, some residents were more confident when commenting on their own personal comfort, with 6 respondents stating they had no complaints and felt comfortable within the care home environment.

"I have no complaints."

"Comfortable, no complaints."

"They have plenty of fans and im comfortable."

"It's a modern building and seems ok."

"I'm happy with everything here."

"Everything seems to be in place."



12 residents responded 'yes' when asked whether their care home was prepared for extreme weather events. Residents expanded upon this, referencing access to fans, individual thermostats, heaters, and blankets.

"I like to be warm and they can do that."

"There's enough stock of heaters, blankets and fans."

"We have enough fans and blankets here."

"They have fans and we have individual thermostats in our rooms."

A further 7 residents assumed their home is prepared for extreme weather, however they were unable to provide specific details.

"As much as they can be."

"I presume so."

"I think they would try their best to do whatever I need."

6 residents shared general negative comments about the building condition of their care home, with their room being too hot. Others mentioned wanting blinds, windows to either be opened more or double glazed, and rooms having high ceilings, making their living environment colder in the winter.

"I would like blinds for the summer and winter."

"It's an older building needing repairs all the time."

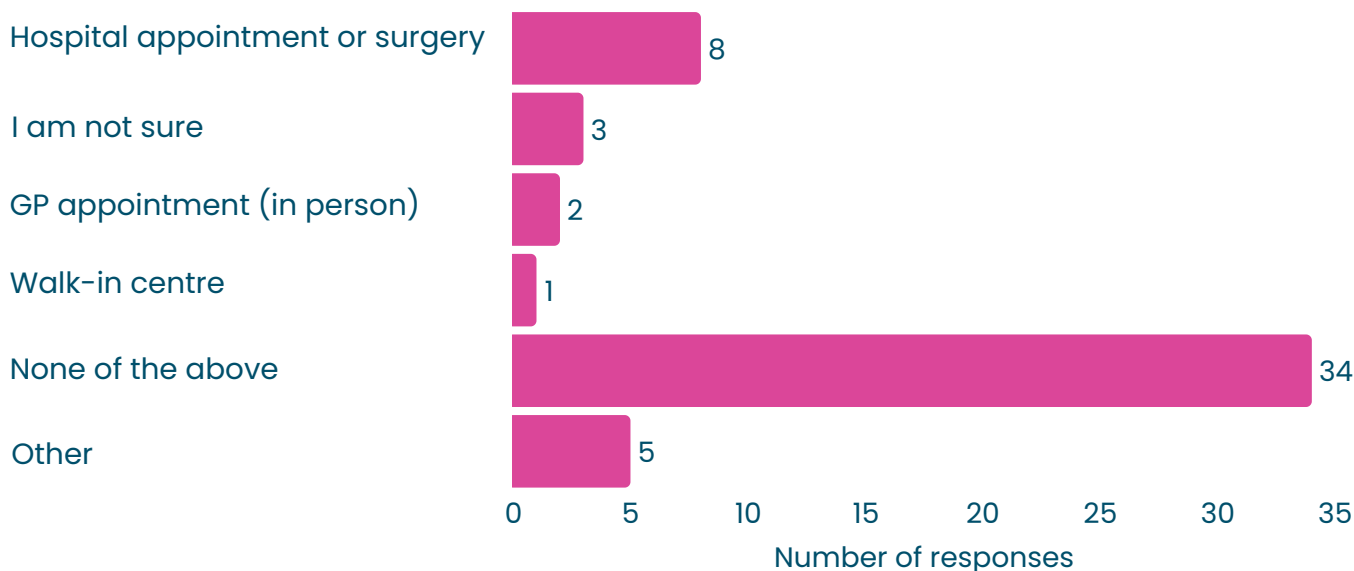
"My window needs to be open more, there's no air flow."

"My room isn't double-glazed, most aren't."

"My room has a very large ceiling so this can make it really cold during winter."

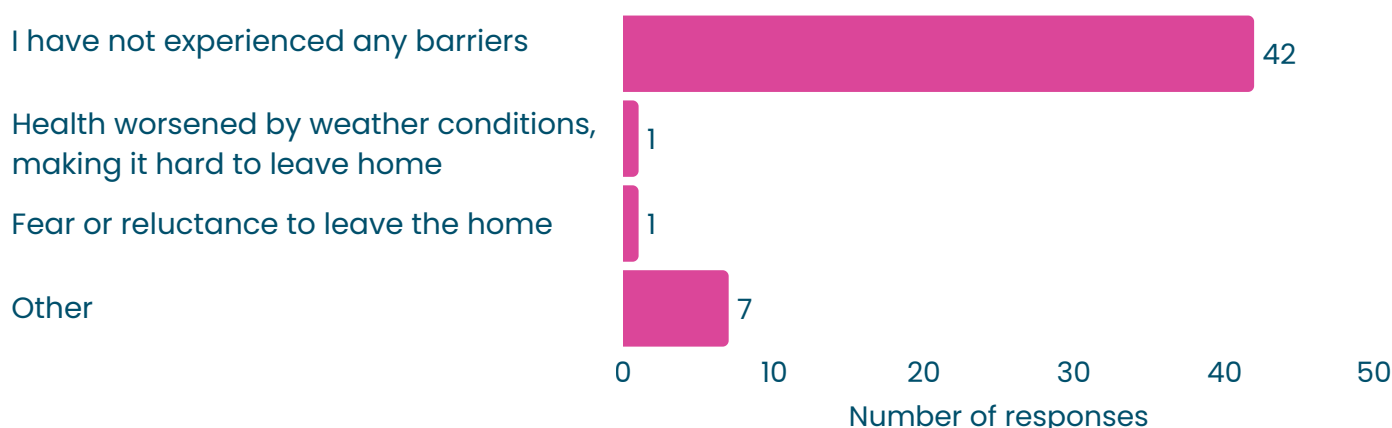
"My room gets too hot sometimes, as underfloor heating can't turn off."

Have you accessed any of the following services during extreme weather in recent years? Please select all that apply:

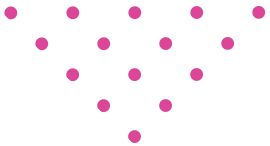


Other comments included "I only go out in the wind or when it's icy if someone is with me as I'm frightened of falling," "My daughter will take me to any appointments," "Someone goes with me," "Went out but not a bad day."

If any, which of the following made it difficult for you to access these services during the extreme weather event? Please select all that apply:



Other comments included "My son will take me to appointments even when it's icy," "Myself and other residents have complained about the lack of staff, sometimes there feels like not enough staff," "Ambulance takes me in my wheelchair," "The mini bus at the home takes me," "I can go on my own, not been in bad weather," "I wouldn't go in a gale, health or pain worsened by weather conditions, making it hard to leave home."



Is there anything that could be improved, if you feel uncomfortable during extreme weather events?

27 residents did not suggest any further improvements, with many simply stating “no” or “nothing I can think of.” Those who did provide additional comments said the care home was already well prepared and had adaptations in place to help residents feel comfortable, such as access to the garden, fans, and blankets.

“The home already has things in place to make me feel comfortable. We have thermostats in our rooms, blankets, fans, shaded areas in the garden.”

“I am very lucky, this place is great, they make sure we are comfortable.”

“Happy as things are.”

“There is always a breeze when we need it, and we can have fans when we need them.”

“We go in the garden if hot.”

“We have shaded areas in the garden.”

6 respondents praised the care home staff for being proactive and caring, ensuring residents comfort. They noted that staff regularly monitor residents temperatures and respond appropriately, using fans or providing warm jumpers as needed.

“They try and come round to make sure we’re not too hot or cold and they will sort us out.”

“They are really good, when they get us dressed they think about the weather and are willing to get us a jumper.”

“Staff are good and helpful if I need it.”

“They make sure we are comfortable.”

“Staff do all they can to make to keep me comfortable.”

“Nothing, I like it here staff are really good.”



Other residents suggested that heating systems could be improved in some care homes. Some residents recommended that having greater control over the temperature, in both bedrooms and communal areas, would be beneficial. Others noted that the underfloor heating in some homes cannot be adjusted, whilst a minority expressed a preference for more traditional heating systems.

“We have underfloor heating in some parts of the home that can’t be regulated, so the rooms tend to get too hot.”

“I prefer traditional heating.”

“My room is cold but I can’t adjust the temperature.”

“Better heating, I want a normal radiator I can adjust.”

“The heating is electric storage heating and tends to go off later in the day.”

“I would like a hot water bottle in bed my room is cold and I can’t adjust the temperature, staff have to do it.”

“Blankets in room, sort out draughts.”

Some residents raised concerns about airflow and ventilation, suggesting improvements such as installing blinds, upgrading windows, or providing additional fans to help keep rooms cooler. Very few rooms in the care homes we visited had air conditioning, yet 4 respondents said it would increase their comfort. Only 1 resident mentioned that their lounge had air conditioning. Another resident highlighted discomfort caused by plastic bedding protectors.

“Maybe air con if it gets too hot.”

“My plastic protector on bed makes me sweat, especially in the summer, would prefer something different.”

“Some residents don’t like the main doors to rooms open due to draughts, but we need air flow and better ventilation.”

“Maybe a blind on the window.”

“My own fan.”

“Better windows.”



Do you have any further feedback?

8 respondents shared that having fans, fridges, and shaded garden areas help them stay cool during hot weather. Additionally, some residents mentioned that staff adapt to changing conditions by adjusting central heating, ensuring residents remain comfortable and well cared for.

“I have a fan in my room so I can put that on.”

“I have a mini fridge in my room to keep my stuff cold.”

“Lots of shade in the garden and trees.”

“There are lots of different areas to go to and it is spacious and airy.”

“I’ve always felt alright, never too warm and never too cold.”

A further 8 residents suggested improvements related to thermal comfort, greater individual choice and control, dietary preferences, and staffing levels. This feedback indicates that the current heating and ventilation systems may not fully meet residents individual needs.

“A better heating system that can be individually controlled.”

“Sometimes my room gets too hot but I can’t turn the radiator down.”

“Some rooms are too hot, need to open windows.”

“Would like to be warmer.”

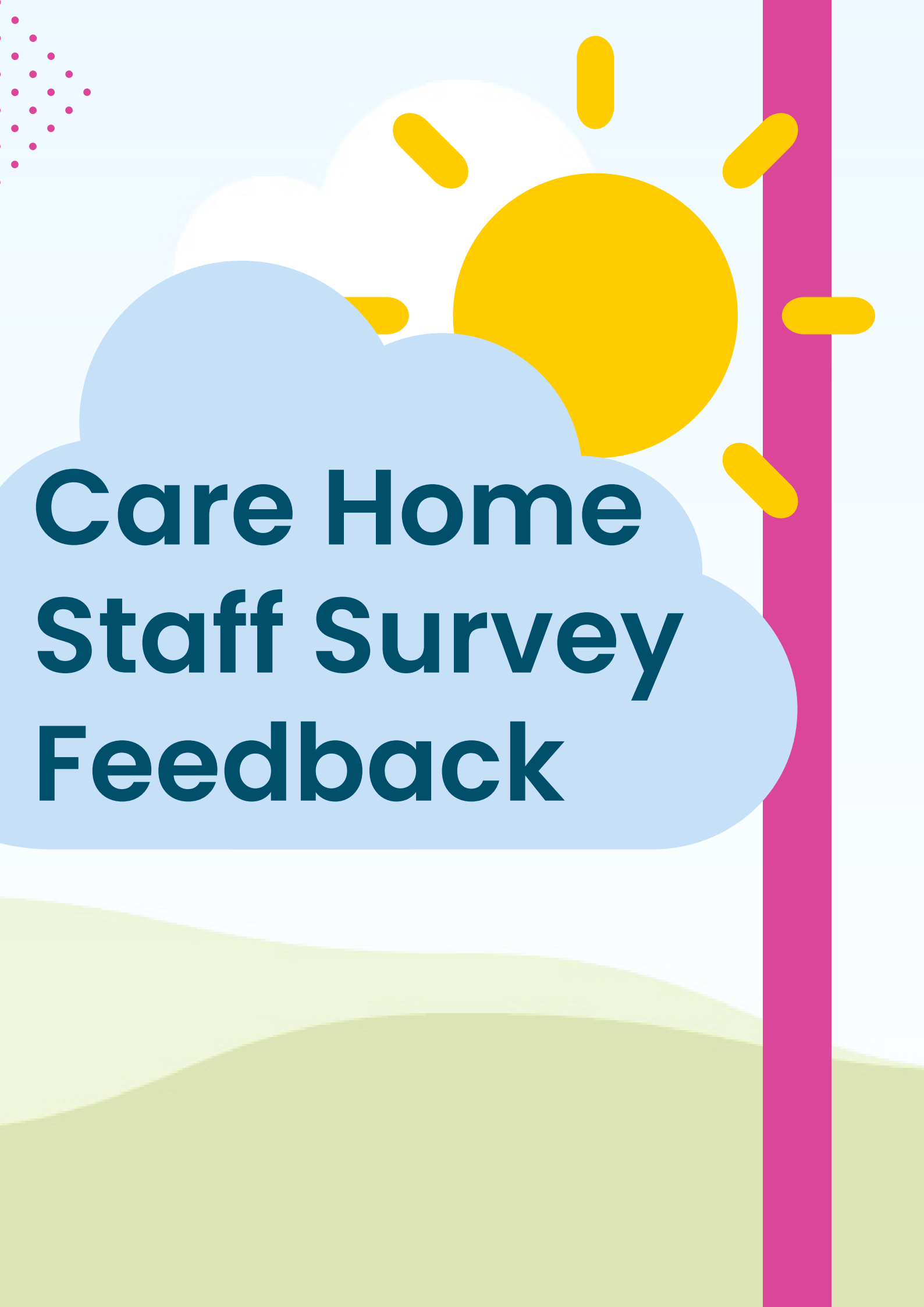
“I would like to be able to have a salad in summer.”

“They don’t give us sun hats; we have to use our own.”

Other respondents shared that it is up to each individual to raise concerns with staff, that weather changes are unpredictable, and that they personally do not feel affected by the weather. One resident noted that staff make every effort to care for them during extreme weather conditions.

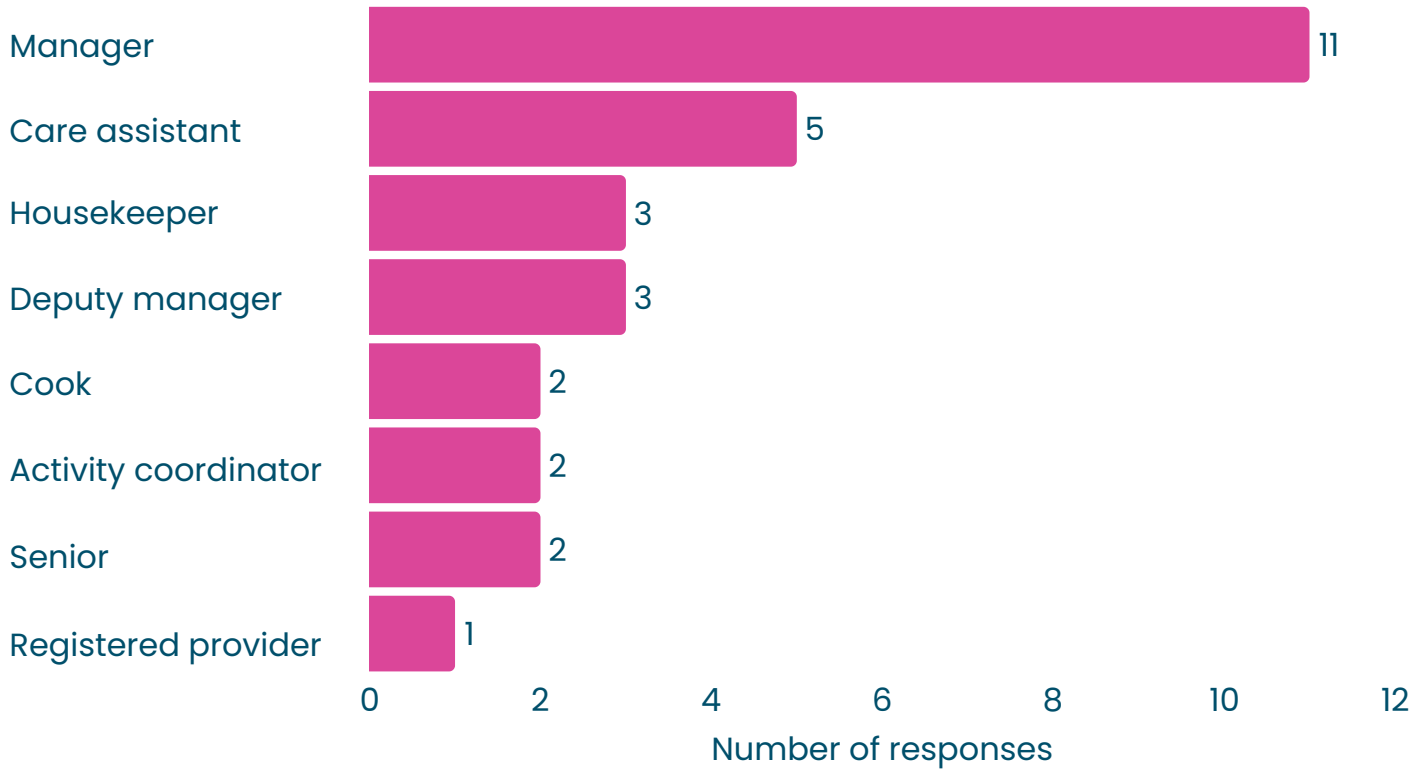
“We can’t control the weather.”

“I think the weather is more haphazard now. The seasons aren’t as defined.”

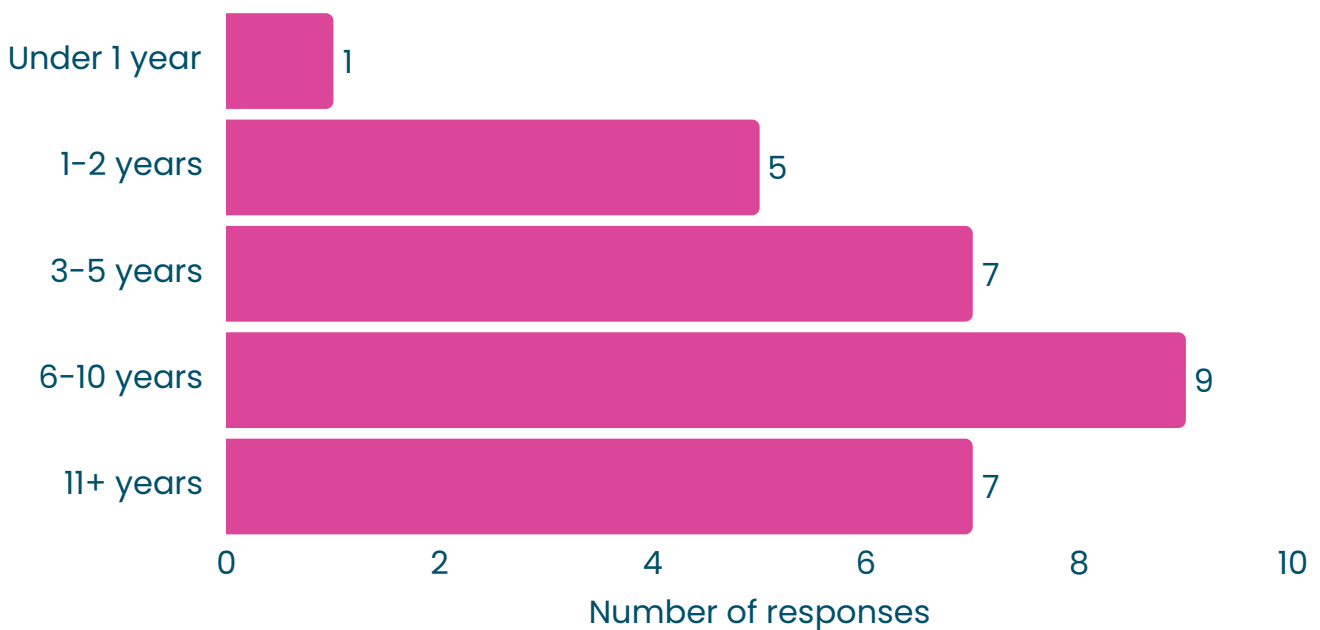


Care Home Staff Survey Feedback

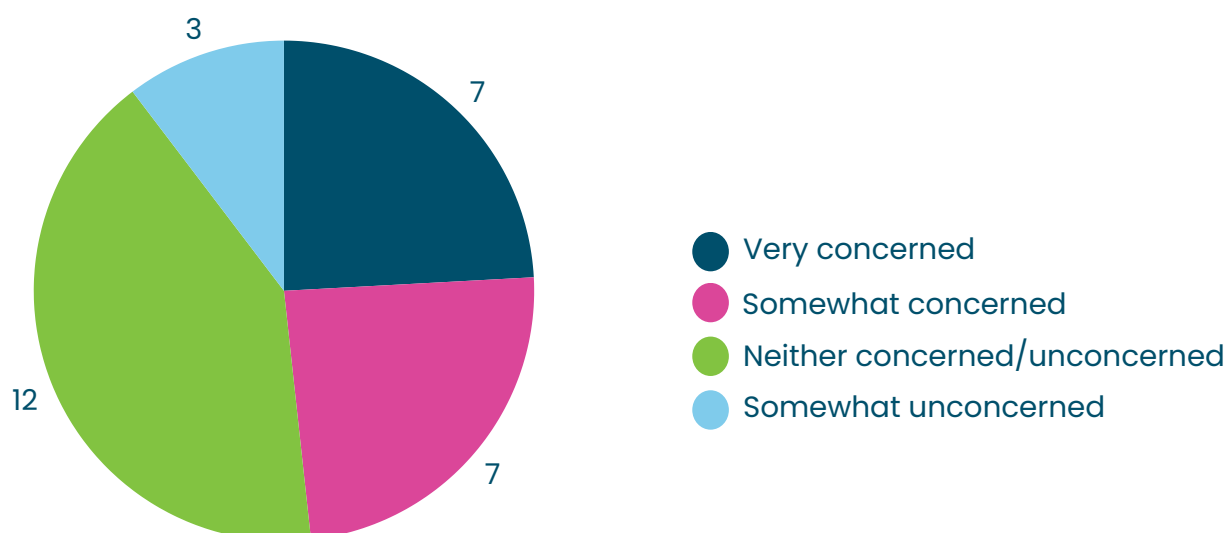
What is your role within the care home?



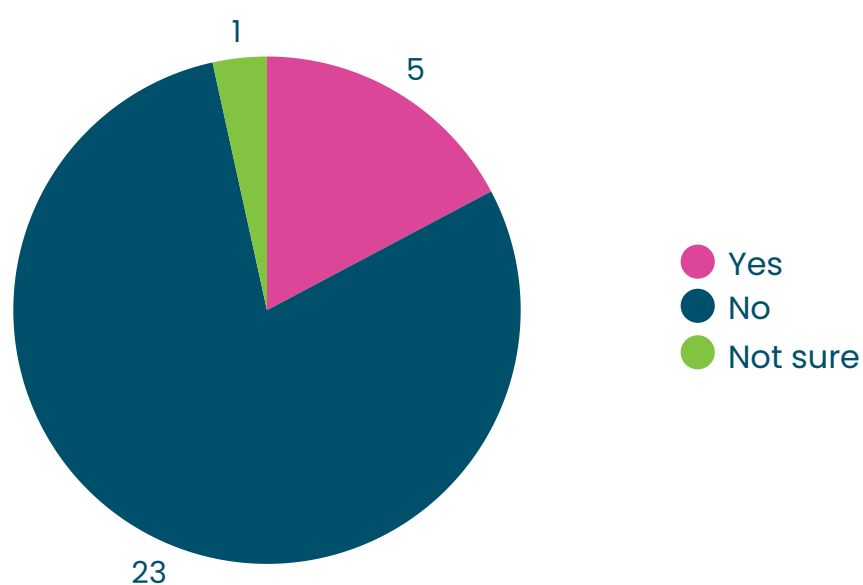
How long have you worked within the care home setting?



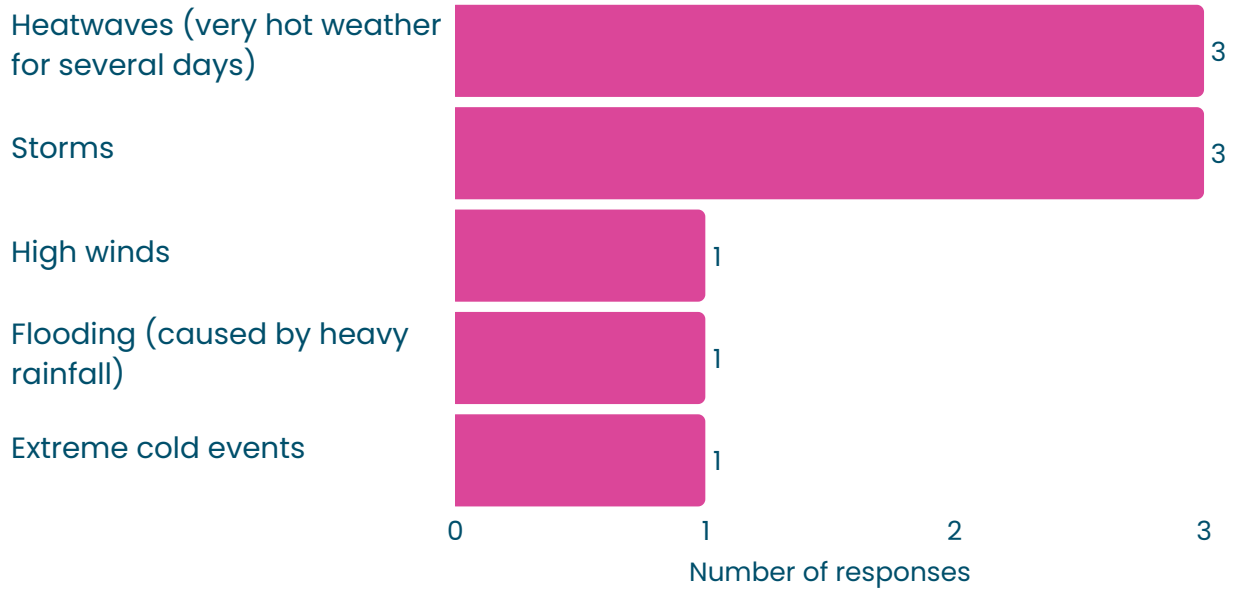
How concerned are you about frequent extreme weather conditions impacting the care home?



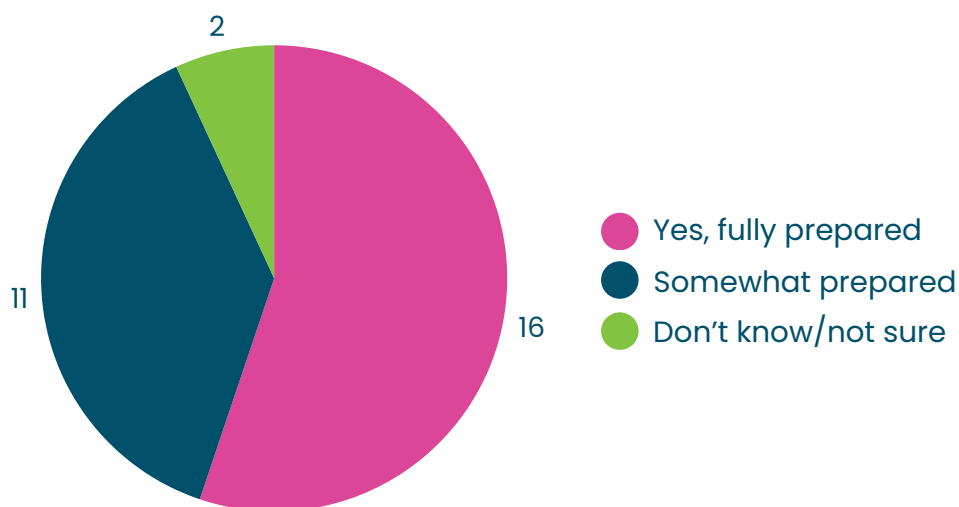
Has the care home experienced any disruption due to extreme weather?



Which type of extreme weather has disrupted the care home? Please select all that apply:



Do you feel the care home is well prepared for extreme weather events?





Please provide further information as to why:

Feedback indicates that the majority of care home staff feel well prepared to manage the impact of extreme weather, prioritising resident safety and comfort. 16 out of the 29 responses expressed confidence in their internal policies and contingency plans, highlighting measures such as risk assessments, emergency supplies, regular staff training, and consistent communication with family members regarding resident wellbeing.

“The care home has a comprehensive extreme weather policy in place, including risk assessments, contingency plans, and emergency supplies. Staff receive regular training on responding to heatwaves, cold snaps, power outages, and flooding.”

“I think we are quite knowledgeable as to the effects of all the weather conditions and how to respond to them in emergency situations.”

“We have dedicated staff in the head office who are responsible in providing support when we need extra support when there is extreme weather that affect the home’s daily operation. We have updated contingency plan in case of the event.”

“We also monitor weather alerts and adjust care delivery accordingly, such as hydration monitoring during heatwaves or extra heating checks in cold weather.”

“Check weather forecast put into place ways to stop the weather compound on the individuals we support.”

“We have risk assessments and business plans in place which means we have a plan, should there be a disruption such as floods, power outages, fires.”

During periods of extreme heat, 12 staff members reported taking a proactive approach to ensure residents feel comfortable. Feedback noted the regular use of fans, as well as patio doors/windows being opened to improve airflow. Hydration stations providing cold drinks was also mentioned, along with the distribution of ice lollies and ice cream, whilst sunscreen, hats, and shaded areas were available to residents. Before next Summer, some staff are hoping to purchase additional fans and air conditioning to enhance resident comfort during heatwaves.

“Not to be complacent but winter comes every year, we make sure we have enough supplies such as food etc, limit appointments outside the home, taking a sensible approach if the weather is very bad. Making sure the heating is in good working order, having blankets on hand, ensuring the residents are dressed appropriately. Keep windows closed, curtains closed to keep the warmth in in the bedrooms. You need to take a common sense approach, most people we support today lived with no central heating, had outside toilets etc as did. Monitor your residents for symptoms of low body temperatures. If the weather is really bad, a day in bed where it is warm won't do them any harm.”

“We use fans throughout the home. We make sure they are hydrated and have sun cream on and hats if they are going outside.”

“We have a supply of fans and ice in stock. Ice-lollies/ice cream readily available for hot weather. Any resident who wishes to sunbathe in our gardens is asked to use sun cream and minimise length of time in the sun. Sun hats are readily available.”

“We have extra heating and extra blankets and duvets if required; we ensure all doors and windows are kept closed.”

“Heat: we arrange drinks stations/buy ice lollies/have extra drinks rounds and allocate staff to monitor more vulnerable/close rooms up early.”

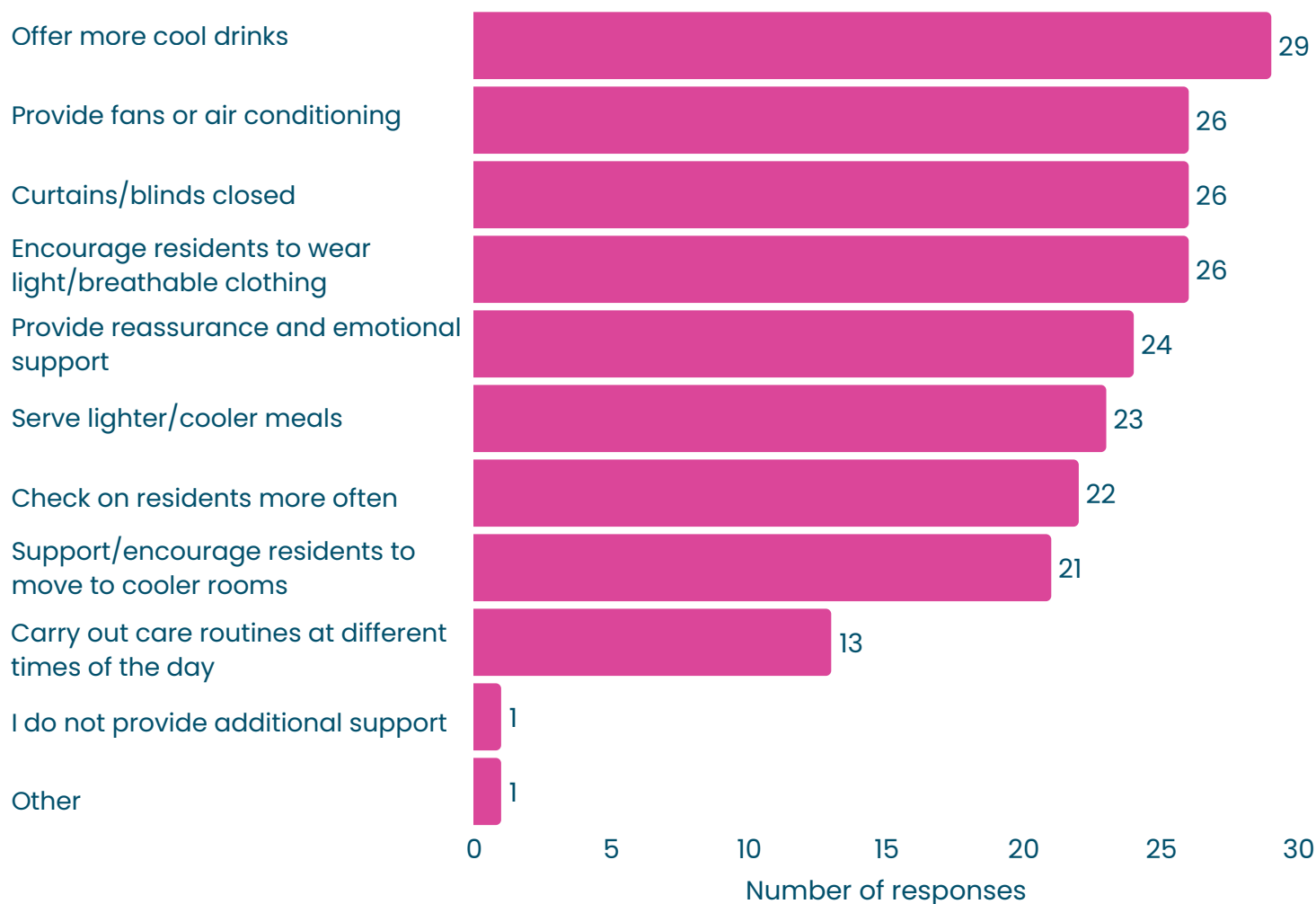
1 individual stated that the gardener and maintenance team ensure pavements and car parks are regularly salted, and 1 staff member described having measure in place, but have an appetite to do more.

“We have additional heaters and equipment and a contingency plan in place but we could always do more.”

“We have a gardener and maintenance man who in the winter months will have a stock of salt for the pathways and car parks.”



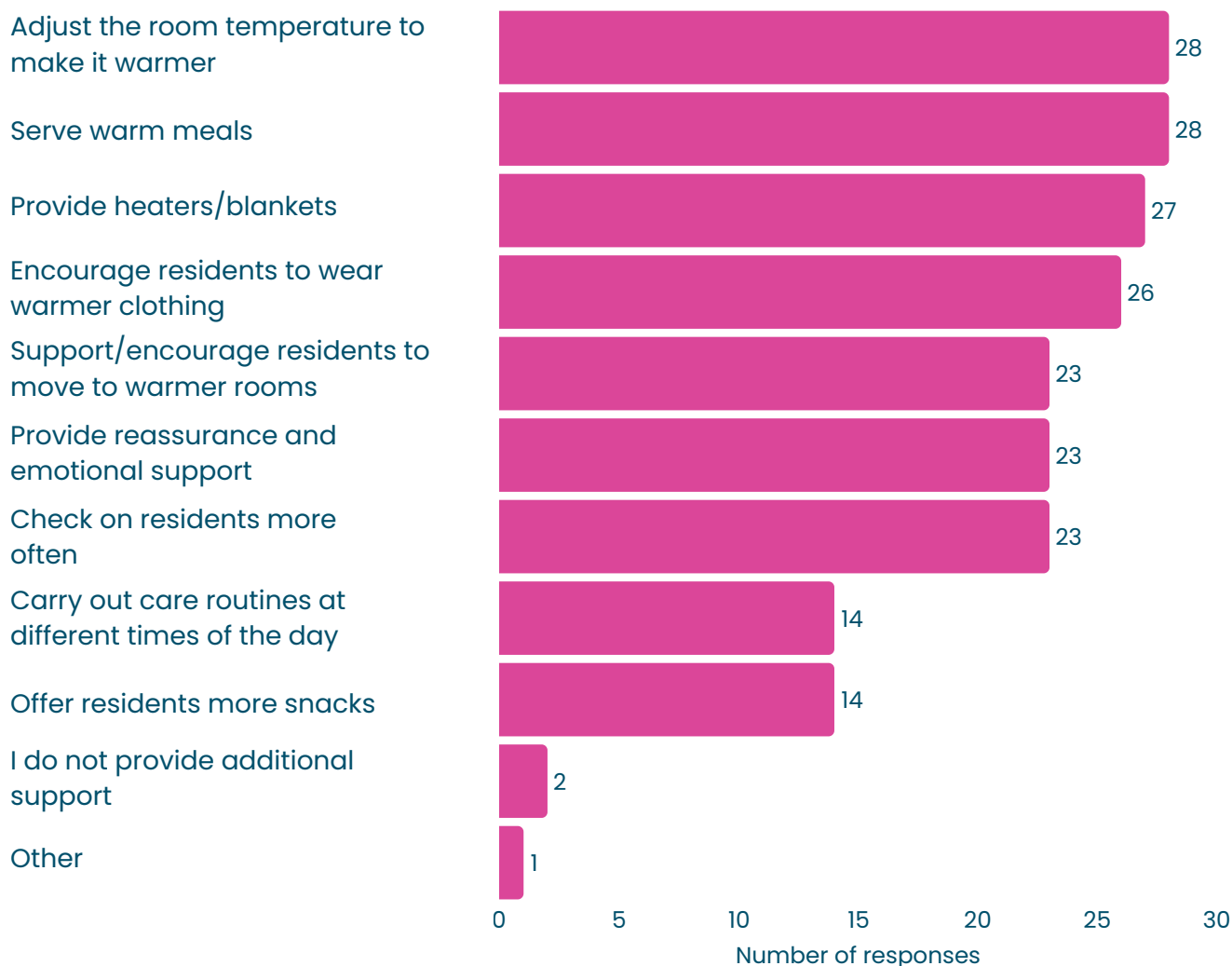
How do you support residents to stay comfortable during hot weather? Please select all that apply:



Other comments included "Provide ice lollies, more ice cream and sun cream when outside."

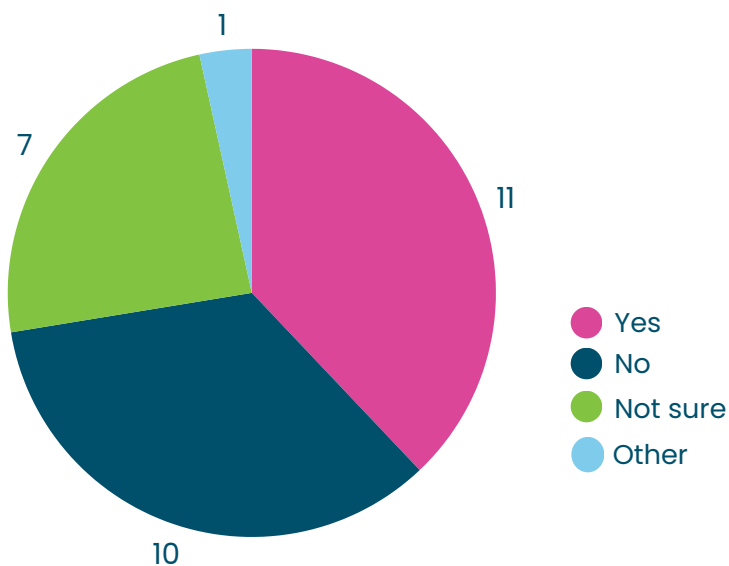


How do you support residents to stay comfortable during cold weather? Please select all that apply:



Other comments included "Turn heating up to constant."

Have you received training on supporting residents during extreme weather?



If no or not sure, do you feel this is something you would benefit from?

6 care home staff reported that they had not received specific training on supporting residents during extreme weather, and felt that such training would be beneficial. 1 staff member noted that they are always looking for ways to improve services during extreme weather, and would welcome additional training. However, 4 staff members felt that responding to extreme weather relies on "common sense," suggesting that further training was unnecessary.

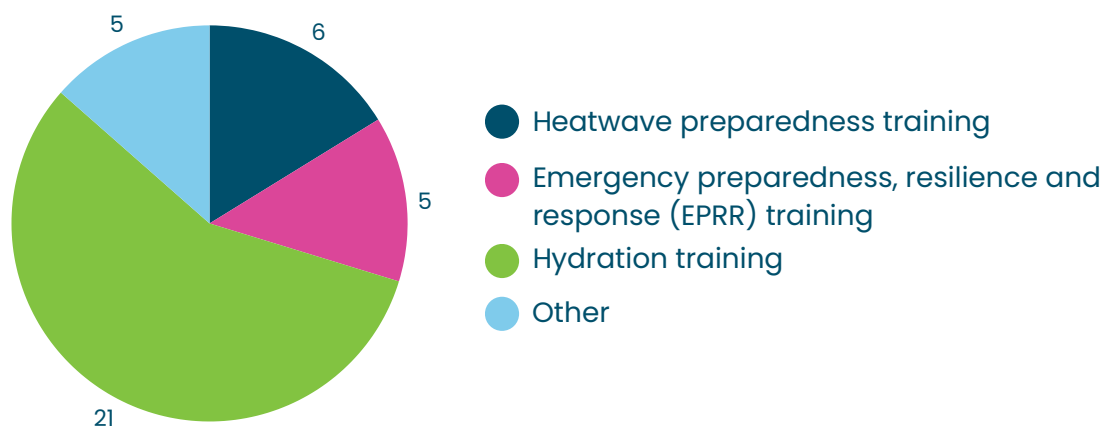
"Yes, all staff could benefit from additional training."

"We are always looking to improve our service so if this is something that would help we would be willing to partake in training."

"No, it's part of parcel and common sense with guidance from alerts and policies."

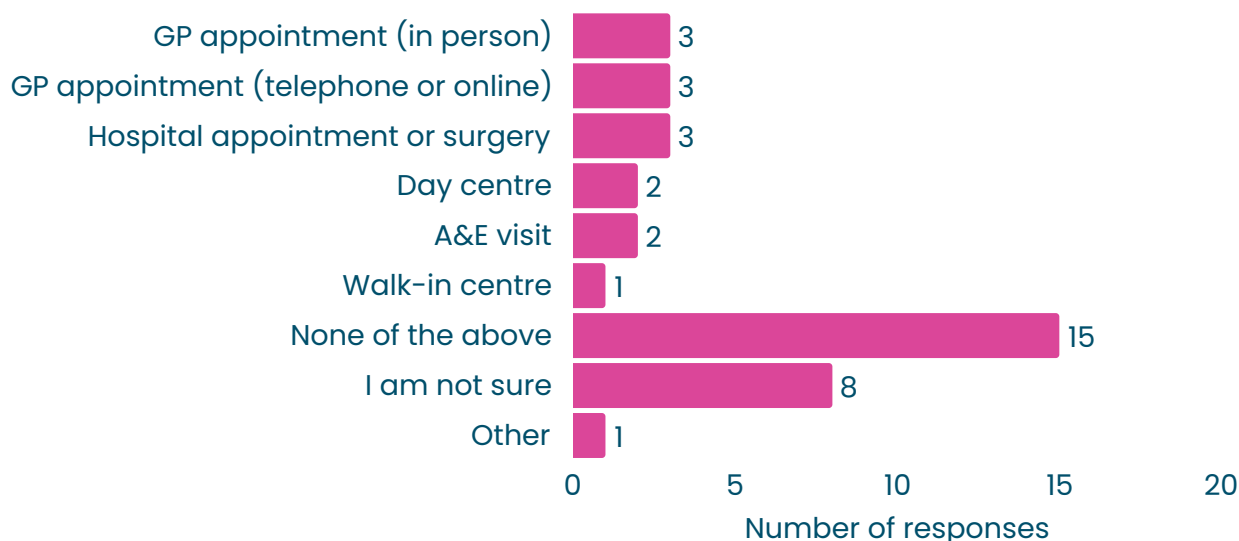
"No, if you cannot work out how to keep someone warm in the winter and cool in the summer then you should not be working in care."

What training have you received to support residents during an extreme weather event? Please select all that apply:



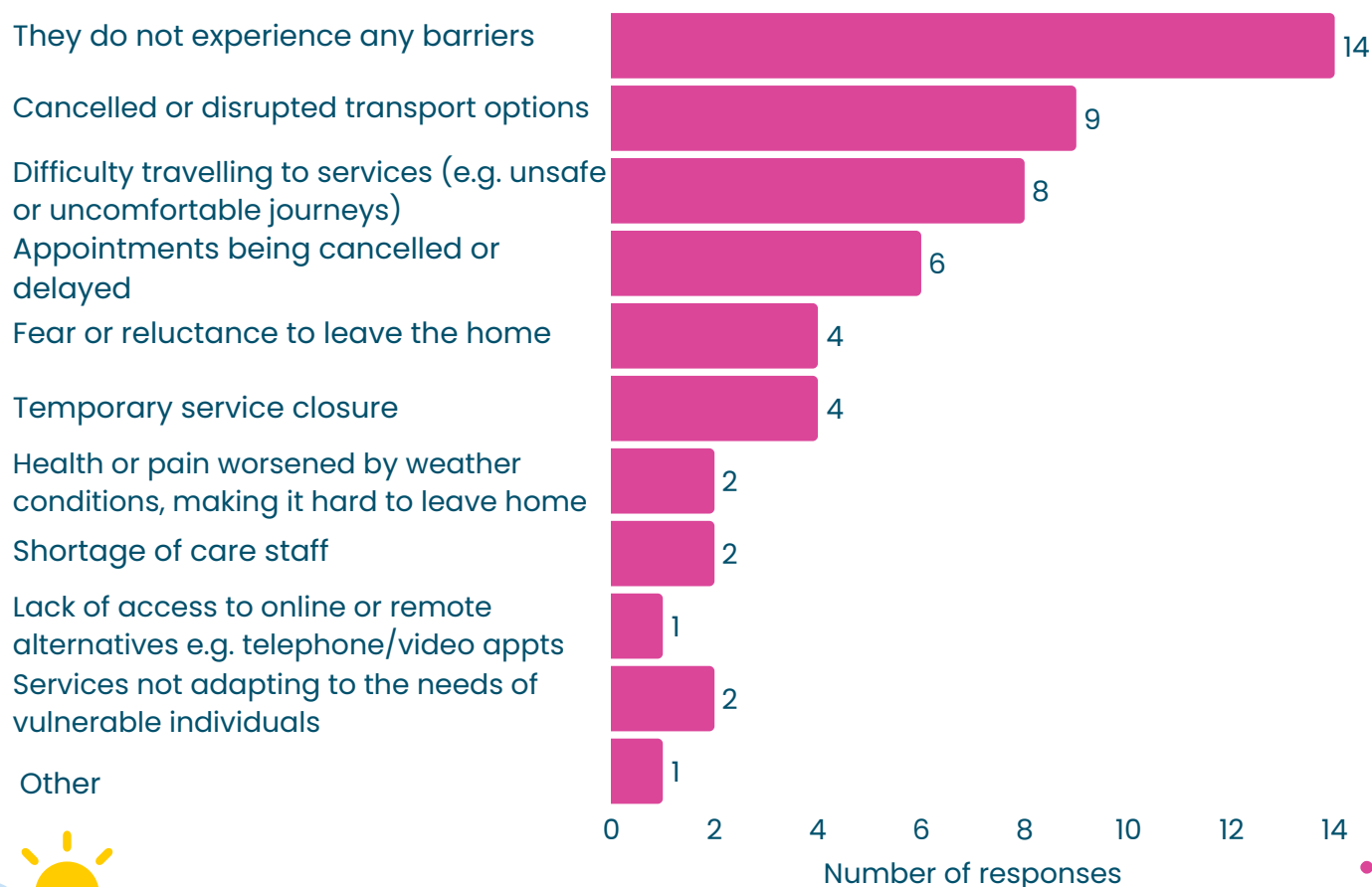
Other comments included "It is assessed when we are aware of extreme weather," "Government information," "Nutrition - Hydration - Risk Assessments," "No training apart from written guidance," and "Not sure, possibly."

Have residents struggled to access any of the following services during extreme weather? Please select all that apply:

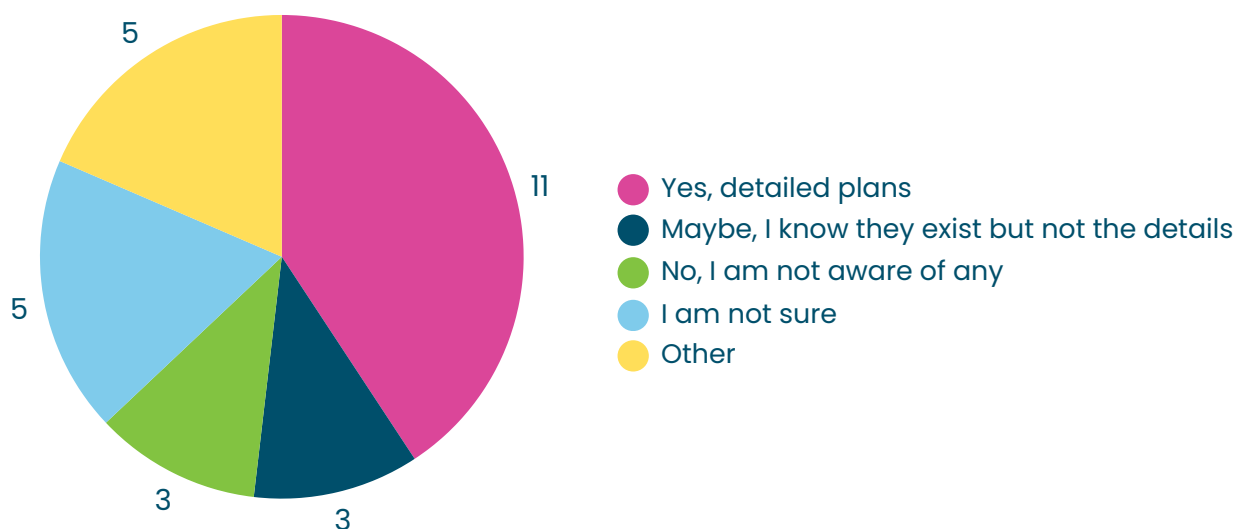


Other comments included "if a resident was due to go for an appointment in severe weather, it would be risk assessed."

If any, which of the following made it difficult for residents to access these services during the extreme weather event? Please select all that apply:



Are you aware of any plans the care home has in place for dealing with extreme weather?



Other comments included "Advising residents not to sit outside for long periods of time," "Hot weather extra drinks, ice lollies, themed drinks days, air-conditioning, we check room temps during any weather," "We have a heatwave policy," "We discuss at handovers 3 times a day and on our staff communication page," and "written guidance sent from Blackpool Council."

Please can you provide further details:

14 staff members reported they have contingency and continuity plans in place to manage extreme weather, as well as business plans. These include heatwave and cold-weather action plans, and they generally felt prepared and confident in their roles. Some described their plans as comprehensive, containing all relevant information and guidance. 1 staff member cited guidance from Blackpool Council.

"We have received written guidance from Blackpool Council about extreme weather conditions."

"Contingency plan holds all relevant information on all kinds of weather and plans that can be taken."

"Business Continuity Plans. Risk Assessments. Policy. Regular weather updates. Public Health information."

"We have regular updated contingency plan in case of the event of weather disruption in the daily operations."

"Heatwave and cold weather action plans."

"We have covered everything we can to support our individuals."

"They exist, we know what to do."

Some staff described the practical measures used to help residents manage temperature changes. Warmth was commonly increased through blankets, thermostat adjustments, and hot drinks, whilst cooling aids such as extra fluids, fruit pots, fans, and ice lollies were offered in hot weather to prevent dehydration.

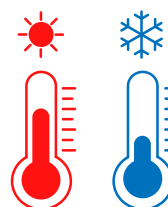


“Providing fluids, fruit pots, during hot weather condition to improve hydration and make sure the residents stay hydrated.”

“Increased cold or warm drinks, fans, ice lollies, blankets, individual thermostat in all bedrooms.”



5 members of staff emphasised the importance of training and regularly updating risk assessments when responding to extreme weather. Some staff shared they receive training on implementing contingency measures, as well as specific training on nutrition and hydration. Others prioritised additional checks on residents and their environment, ensuring safety and comfort, as well as having emergency numbers available.



“Staff are trained on how to implement these plans, and risk assessments are reviewed seasonally to ensure our response remains effective.”

“A form in the kitchen.”

“All emergency numbers for all contractors available to all staff.”

“Providing necessary training for staffs as regards to nutrition and hydration.”

“We put more checks in place during extreme weather, we offer more fluids to prevent dehydration, we try and avoid peak times of day during the hot weather to stop us from being at risk of heat stroke.”

“Regular environmental checks.”



If applicable, what do you think could improve safety and comfort during extreme weather?

4 care home staff identified potential improvements to enhance residents safety and comfort during extreme weather. Suggestions included providing more cold drinks, additional blankets, installing air conditioning in various areas to support staff during long shifts, ensuring the facilities are safe for residents to navigate, and allowing health services to conduct home visits. Despite this, 6 staff members felt no further improvements were necessary, noting existing measures were sufficient.

"Offer more cold drinks."

"Warm blankets."

"Air con in some places of the building for staff as it gets very warm in the building. When working 12 hour shifts, it can be a struggle when it's so hot. "

"Ensure paths and driveways are gritted."

"Safety for our service user is staying in the home during cold weather during extreme hot weather – the home has portable electric fans and IC installations."

"All wearing hats and suncream."

"I feel we do all we can."

"No, I think we do all that we can."

"I do what the manager instructs."

"Home visits from other professionals."

"By staying informed i.e weather alert keeps you ahead of conditions/make you aware of future weather conditions. Timing activities wisely by avoiding outdoor activities during extreme weather conditions. Wearing breathable clothing for residents during hot weather conditions."

If anything, what could health and care services do to ensure they remain accessible during extreme weather?

When asked how health and care services could remain accessible during extreme weather, 4 care home staff members recommended that nurses and other healthcare professionals visit the care homes directly, reducing the need for residents to travel in unsafe conditions. 1 staff member felt that being prepared was key to accessibility.

"Come to the home so residents don't have to travel in extreme conditions."

"Be proactive in preparing for extreme weather instead of being reactive!!"



Care Home Staff Checklist Feedback

Care Home Staff Checklist Feedback

A short **preparedness checklist** was distributed to **care home staff** to gather quantitative feedback, complementing qualitative insights.

The checklist captured information across two key areas; **responding to extreme weather** and **planning for extreme weather**. Staff were asked to indicate whether statements were applicable to their care home.

The figures below represent the **number of staff** who chose each response, along with any comments. Staff checklists were completed by **10 respondents** in total.

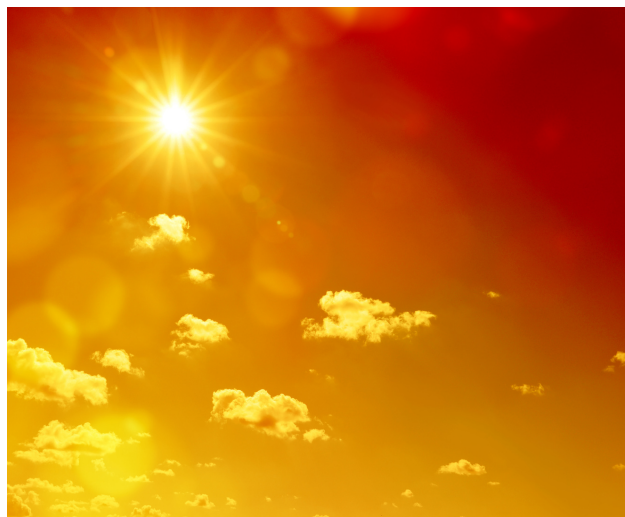
Responding to extreme weather

Statement	Yes	No	Maybe	Not sure
Our care home has an emergency response plan for heatwaves.	10			
If yes to the above statement, are you following any advice from the UK Health Security Agency's Adverse Weather and Health plan, and/or the Inclement Weather Risk Assessment?	9		1	
Staff have received training on caring for residents during extreme weather such as heatwaves, e.g. staff are aware of the effects of heatwaves on health, and how some medications can impact the response of the body to heatwaves.	8 1 - extreme weather policies	1 - no official training		
We have systems in place to ensure that working conditions for staff are safe, and allow for them to continue to provide a high level of care during extreme weather (e.g. appropriate heatwave plan/guidelines for staff).	10			
We have systems in place for medication and equipment to ensure continuity of care during extreme weather (e.g. risk assessments, medication reviews when temperatures rise above 25oC, equipment checks etc).	10			
Residents are able to attend GP or hospital appointments safely during extreme weather (e.g. heat, storms).	7		2	1
We have made building modifications to improve temperature control (e.g. blinds, ventilation).	9	1		
There are clear procedures in place to check on residents more frequently during extreme weather, e.g. during heatwaves or cold spells.	10			

Care Home Staff Checklist Feedback

Planning for extreme weather

Statement	Yes	No	Maybe	Not sure
We currently consider changing weather and climate conditions a key factor in care planning and delivery.	4	2	3	1
We have plans to ensure that we are safely staffed during extreme weather.	10			
We are improving how people can continue to access services and support during extreme weather.	5	2		3 (N/A)
We are investing in changes to our buildings so they can withstand extreme weather better.	4	4	1	1
We have groups in our organisation which are planning action on climate adaptation.	1	4	3	1 1 - no answer
We feel confident that our care home is prepared for future extreme weather events.	8	1	1	
We are interested in receiving support to improve our strategy for dealing with extreme weather events.	8		2	





Care Home Staff Checklist Feedback

Responding to extreme weather

In response to the checklists completed by care home staff, all respondents reported that their home has an emergency heatwave response plan, and most confirmed that they follow national guidance. Staff also indicated that systems are in place to protect both residents and workers during extreme conditions, including procedures for safe working environments, and increased resident monitoring during heat or cold spells. Nearly all care homes have made building adaptations to improve temperature control, such as adding blinds or enhancing ventilation.

Despite this, there were some signs of inconsistency. Whilst most staff stated that they had received training or guidance on caring for residents during extreme weather, one respondent noted that no formal training exists. Additionally, only seven respondents felt confident that residents could safely attend external medical appointments during extreme weather, with three unsure, highlighting potential vulnerabilities related to transport and risk assessment.

Planning for extreme weather

Responses relating to planning for future extreme weather challenges were far more varied, suggesting that long-term planning for climate adaptation is less developed. Although all respondents stated that their home has staffing plans for extreme weather and most expressed confidence in their overall preparedness, fewer responses indicated that changing weather is currently considered a key factor in care planning. Investment in building resilience is inconsistent, with staff evenly divided on whether their organisation is making such improvements. Similarly, whilst some homes are working to improve access to services during extreme weather, others are not, or consider it not applicable. Perhaps most notably, almost no respondents reported having organisational groups dedicated to climate-adaptation planning, indicating that structured strategic work in this area is rare.

Staff checklist conclusion

Across both sections, a consistent theme is that staff feel generally prepared for present day weather challenges, but there is less evidence of coordinated planning for the longer-term impacts of extreme weather. Encouragingly, many staff expressed a clear interest in receiving further support to enhance their strategies, suggesting a strong appetite for building more resilient and proactive systems in the future.

The background features a stylized illustration. At the top, a bright yellow sun with several yellow rays is partially obscured by a light blue cloud. Below it, a darker blue cloud contains the text. The bottom of the image shows rolling green hills. A vertical pink stripe runs along the right edge. In the top left corner, there is a cluster of small pink dots.

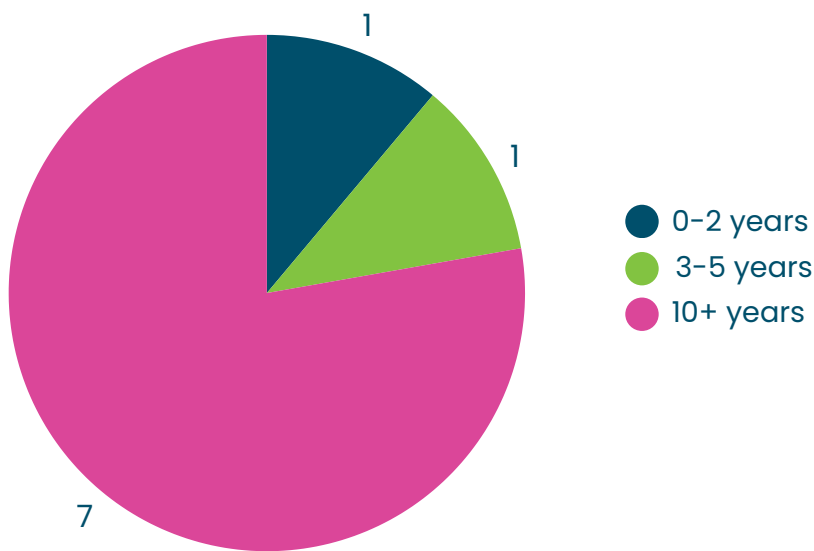
Care Home Manager Interview Feedback



Care Home Manager Interview Feedback

Semi-structured interviews, conducted by **Community Co-researchers**, were facilitated with **care home managers** to gain insights into operational challenges, preparedness levels, training, building adaptations, and investment in climate resilience. Interviews were completed by **9 care home managers** in total.

Approximately how long have you worked within the care home?





Has the care home experienced any disruption due to extreme weather?

Several managers reported that homes had experienced damage due to storms and wind in January 2025, ranging from minor issues to more serious incidents. 1 home described a blocked downpipe that caused internal flooding. Roof repairs and maintenance issues were also highlighted, such as “tiles, roof, pointing to brickwork” needing attention.

1 manager noted that extreme heat can affect daily care routines, and highlighted challenges with encouraging residents to drink more fluids.

3 homes reported minimal or no weather related disruptions.

“Roof needed to be repaired, and one side window blew in.”

“Storm January 2025, roof removed, trees down, electrical and fire protection damaged.”

“Yes, when hot it’s hard to push fluids with the residents.”

“Yes, flood on 1st floor two winters ago – down pipe blocked on flat roof.”

“Yes, storm January 2025.”

Do you feel your organisation proactively prepares for extreme weather management? Or is it rather responsive (reactive, as opposed to proactive) to extreme weather events?

Managers felt they largely took a proactive approach to managing extreme weather. 2 homes stated they have formal emergency and/or contingency plans in place.

3 homes focused on meeting resident’s immediate needs, maintaining resident comfort through heating, cooling, and hydration. Strategies included fans, air conditioning, extra fluids, ice-lollies, sunscreen, and initiatives like “Watermelon Wednesdays.” Cold-weather preparation involved extra heaters, warm clothing, and blankets.

Communication and resource planning were also deemed as essential to preparedness. 1 home shared weather alerts from the council, ensured 24/7 maintenance support, and installed adaptive infrastructure (weather-responsive blinds). Another home noted that during hot weather, some rooms were not cooling properly, and upon investigation, pipes needed to be replaced before winter.

“For hot weather we promote extra drinks – watermelon Wednesday. We would shut curtains if too hot and use air conditioning. Extra heaters in rooms if cold.”

“We have an emergency contingency plan in place and needed this to manage the events in Jan 25 with storms and summer 25.”

“Proactive: new heaters sourced this summer to prepare for winter, new electric fans sourced ore summer in preparation following desk of supplies. We have adequate storage for ice. Sunscreen always available when weather becomes warmed – ice lollies bought in bulk and frozen lollies available.”

“Yes, very proactive. Chimneys removed as they were causing damp walls in bedrooms.”

“Yes, always plenty of different fluids, fans when hot.”

“Information is always placed in hallway, allowing staff and residents to be proactive in care planning.”

“Provider, manager shares alerts from council re weather warnings, portable aircon, fans, heaters, maintenance on call 24/7, weather adaptive blinds (cooler in summer, warmer in winter), summer uniform.”



Are you aware of the communication circulated from the contracts team when there is extreme weather?

9 care homes reported being aware of communications circulated regarding extreme weather from the Contracts Team.

Several homes noted that this guidance was read out and actioned, with key points discussed in both staff and resident meetings. 1 staff member highlighted that notifications were shared with the team, particularly during high winds.

What resources, equipment, or support would help your staff manage and respond to extreme weather more effectively?

Managers highlighted cooling measures as the main support needed for managing and responding to extreme weather, including fans, air conditioning, neck fans, and cooler uniforms. Monitoring equipment, such as thermometers, were also suggested, along with drink dispensers and outdoor shading for residents. 1 care home manager noted they were already well-stocked and could purchase additional items if required, whilst another was unsure.

"Fans, drink dispenses, thermometers."

"Staff air conditioning, residents more shade in garden."

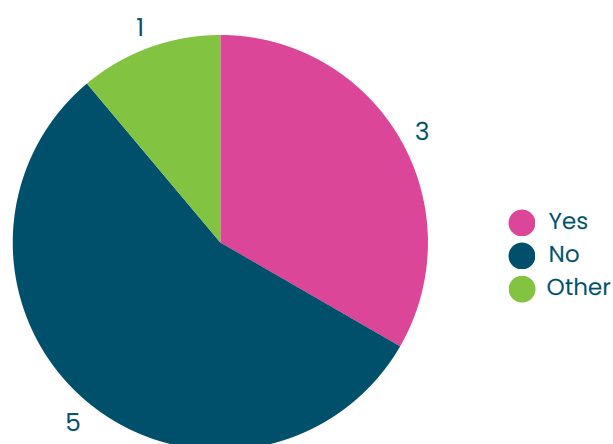
"Mobile air conditioning machines in extreme weather- cost prohibitive."

"We are well stocked and if anything needed I can purchase."

"Neck fans for heat, cooler uniforms."

"Thermometer in rooms and commercial areas."

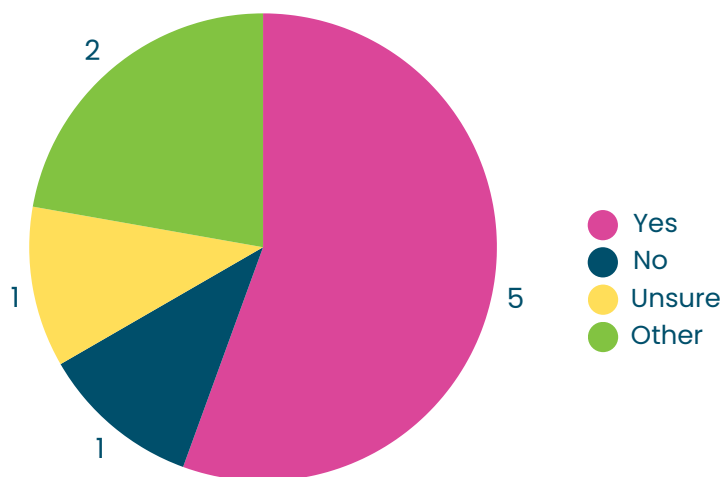
Have you received training on supporting residents during extreme weather? If so, what training have you received?



Other comments included "Common sense."

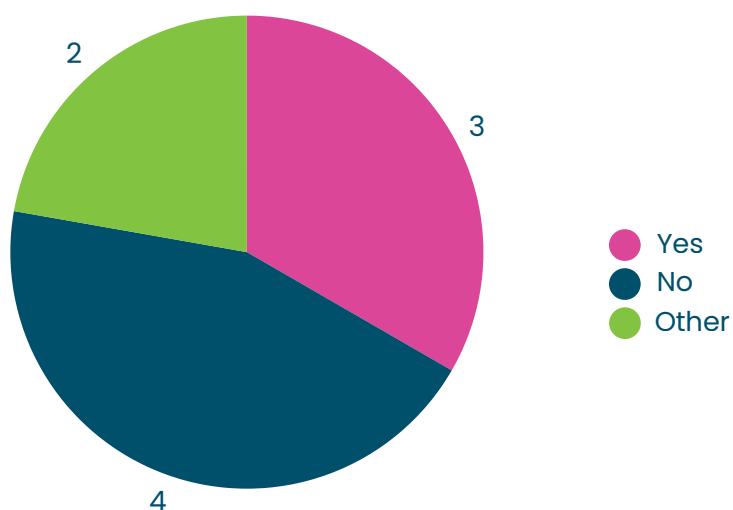
5 managers stated they had not received any formal training on supporting residents during extreme weather. Despite this, 1 care home manager reported they had completed "care management training", whilst another stated "nutrition/hydration". 2 care home managers take a "common sense approach", whilst another said that "staff are encouraged to feel residents skin that are non-verbal or lacking capacity."

To your knowledge, does your organisation consider extreme weather risks when making decisions about building design, refurbishments, or service changes?



Other comments included "To some extent but could do more," "We are a purpose built home which ensures that we have the ability to open doors – feel a breeze and have adequate numbers of heaters."

Have you been involved in planning meetings about adapting buildings or service delivery to cope with extreme weather? If so, what was your role and what did you do?



Other comments included "Have been in planning and refurbishment meetings on grade II listed", "We do not have any adaptations."



Do you feel you have effective communication channels to influence long-term decisions, such as building upgrades, to make the home more resilient to extreme weather? If so, how responsive do you find this to be?

7 care home managers reported strong and well-established communication channels for influencing long term decisions. Many homes highlighted regular meetings with directors, ongoing collaboration with homeowners and clear pathways through maintenance teams or the head office. Overall, managers described these channels as responsive and supportive, allowing them to raise any concerns.

“Owners are very good, but I have never approached this subject.”

“Yes - weekly meetings with directors plus an audit system.”

“It would be our head office.”

“We refer these to our maintenance department.”

“Yes - company very responsive”

“Yes, work daily with homeowners.”

Do you feel there is adequate investment from the wider organisation in long-term climate adaptation measures? Why or why not?

Care home managers expressed mixed views on the organisational investment in long-term climate adaptations. 3 respondents revealed taking positive steps towards this by exploring solar panels, upgrading systems and adding electric vehicle charging points, indicating a growing organisational commitment. 2 managers highlighted financial constraints, limiting their ability to implement broader climate resilience measures.

“Yes, looking into solar panels it’s being tried in other home.”

“Yes, continuing to upgrade systems.”

“Directors aware and monitoring sustainability. Electric charging points now in car park.”

“No, cost prohibitive. Would like support to harbour sun energy e.g. Solar power.”

“Funding is always tight.”



Personally, have you taken any planned actions to support climate adaptation in your care home, and do you feel confident that you know what actions you could take?

Managers reported taking a variety of personal actions to support climate adaptations, such as improving insulation, upgrading furnishings, implementation contingency plans, and adjusting staff practice during extreme heat. Some also noted supportive providers and regular meetings that help guide action. Some care home managers stated that no specific steps had been taken, but overall, many felt confident in the actions they can take within their role.

“We hired heaters from smiths when the heating failed. Loft insulation and new glazing to windows to protect from drafts.”

“Yes, upgrading furnishings.”

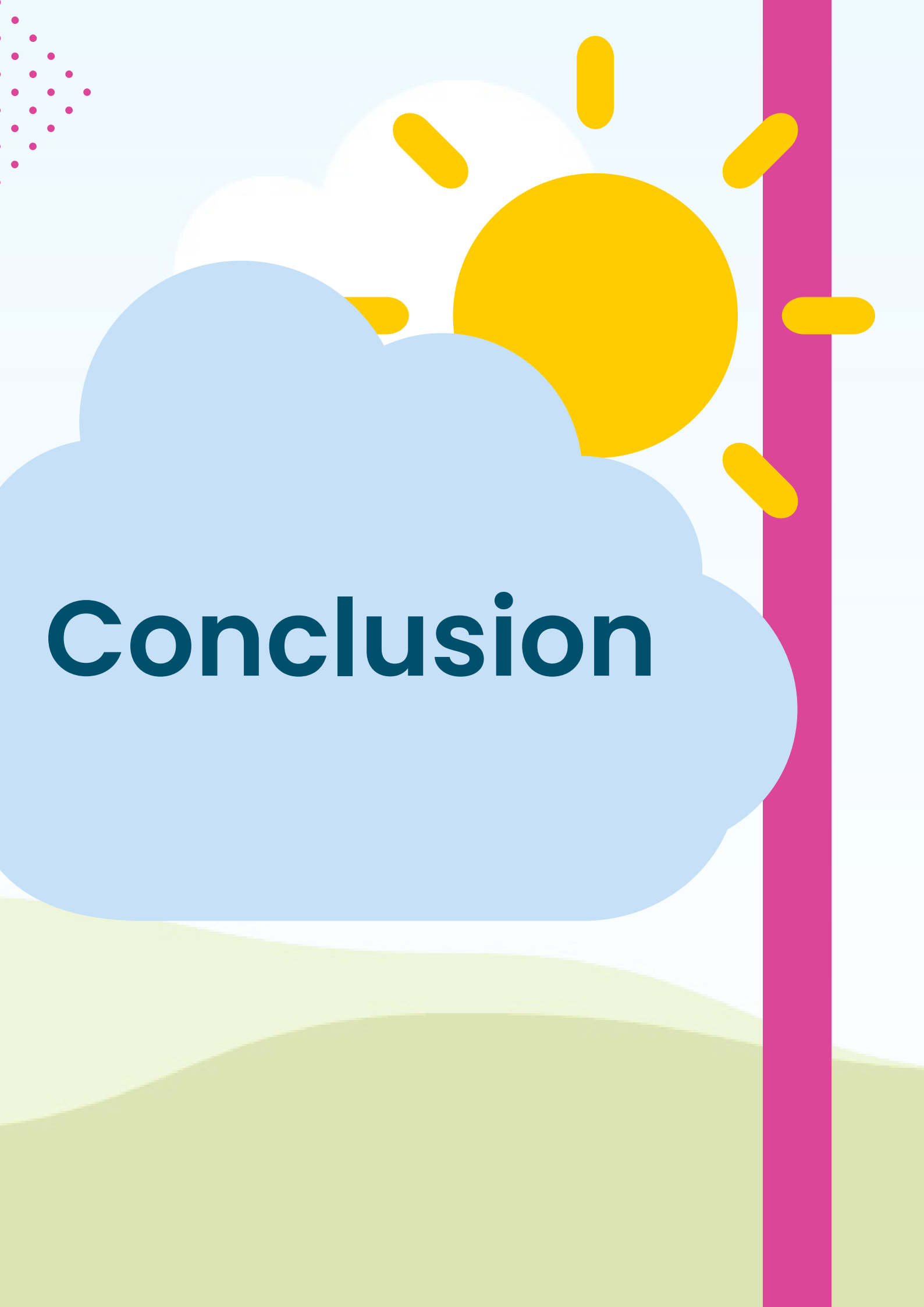
“Yes, contingency emergency plan in place in event of.”

“During extreme hot weather – staff need to be considered- extra breaks, during stations (review working practices).”

“Yes the providers are open to change, and we have manager meetings regular (3 monthly).”

“No actions taken at present.”





Conclusion



Conclusion

This project aimed to assess the preparedness for extreme weather events within care homes, including the effectiveness of current response plans, approaches to facility management, staff training, and patient care, with a particular focus on climate adaptation.

Resident experiences

Residents generally expressed satisfaction with the efforts made by staff to maintain comfort during extreme weather as they felt their immediate needs were met, highlighting measures such as hydration stations, fans, ice-lollies and sunhats, with some care homes having access to shaded outdoor spaces. Despite this, feedback also revealed inconsistencies in thermal comfort, with some residents reporting that rooms were too hot or too cold, often due to limitations in heating and ventilation systems. It was noted that some homes had underfloor heating that could not be adjusted, a lack of air conditioning and poor airflow, with residents consistently raising these as concerns. As a result, some residents hoped for greater individual control over room temperature to enhance their comfort.

Whilst most residents felt safe and cared for, many were unaware of formal preparedness plans, indicating a need for clearer communication and education about existing measures. From a climate adaptation perspective, this suggests that current practices address immediate comfort needs, but do not empower residents to engage with long-term resilience planning.

Care home staff experiences

Care home staff demonstrated a strong commitment to prioritising resident wellbeing during extreme weather, employing practical strategies such as hydration monitoring and providing cooling aids. Some staff highlighted challenges in maintaining their own comfort during heatwaves, suggesting improvements such as air conditioning, as well as cooler uniforms.

Some homes had contingency plans in place and typically followed national guidance, yet formal training remained inconsistent. Some staff members reported relying on “common sense” rather than structured training, yet others expressed an interest in receiving additional guidance on managing climate related health risks, indicating an opportunity to embed climate adaptation knowledge into standard operating procedures. Despite this appetite for improvement, the consensus from care home staff was that enough is being done to manage extreme weather.



Conclusion

Whilst some emergency response plans were in place, long-term climate adaptation planning was far less developed. Very few care homes considered changing weather patterns as a key factor in care planning, and investment in building resilience, such as improved ventilation or temperature control, was inconsistent. Almost no organisations reported having dedicated groups for climate adaptation, highlighting the absence of strategic and coordinated action. Managers acknowledged the importance of proactive measures, yet resource constraints and cost considerations often limited implementation. Feedback from manager interviews revealed that whilst care homes responded effectively to immediate challenges, structural improvements and future proofing remained limited.

Key themes

Findings suggest that the care homes visited felt generally prepared for present day weather challenges, but lacked comprehensive strategies for long-term climate resilience. Comments largely focused on mitigation, with adaptation not considered a major concern at present. Most homes focused on meeting residents immediate comfort, rather than proactively planning for the future, with only one home investing in solar panels. Residents were generally happy with this approach, as their immediate needs were met. Most homes used blinds and fans to manage temperatures, although some had invested in weather adapting measures, such as reflective windows and thermal curtains. Staff were responsive to residents needs on a day to day basis, but longer-term planning or proactive climate adaptation was limited.

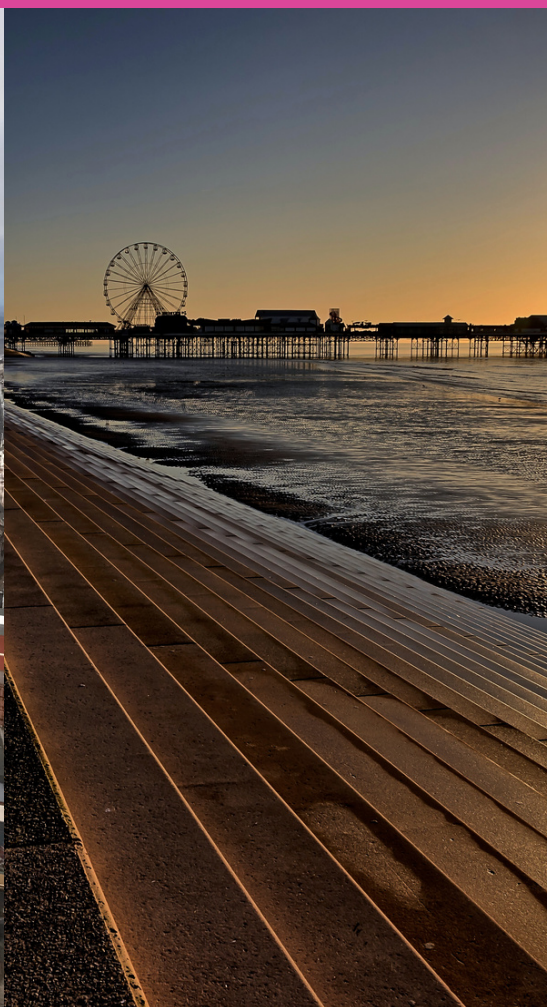
There was an appetite among some staff and managers for further support, training, and investment to enhance preparedness. Despite this, staff felt that adaptation measures were limited by costs, insurance, or lack of available grants. Findings indicated a significant gap in long-term resilience planning, which was often perceived as a senior management responsibility, rather than an operational priority. Although feedback indicated a desire for further improvements, care home staff generally felt that sufficient measures were already in place to manage extreme weather.

Most care home managers prioritised individual circumstances, overlooking opportunities to resolve recurring issues through improvements to the fabric of the building. Whilst some staff developed practical workarounds to manage any discomfort, these measures focused on short-term mitigation, rather than addressing the structural causes of this. This is significant, as the majority of the

Conclusion

temperature issues were building related, having the potential to exacerbate other heat related risks. There was little recognition of building performance as a strategic issue, and minimal discussion of fabric level adaptation as a priority. Implicitly, this reinforces a reactive approach that prioritises coping mechanisms over proactive investment in long-term climate resilience.

Overall, the lack of strategic focus could be a cause for concern, given clear evidence of accelerating climate trends: the UK has experienced its five warmest years since 2000, and recent data from the Met Office shows October 2023 to March 2024 was the second wettest such period on record. These patterns highlight the urgency for proactive measures, including investment in infrastructure, staff training, and clear governance structures for climate adaptation. Without senior level dialogue and coordinated planning, care homes risk remaining reactive, leaving residents vulnerable to increasingly severe weather events.





Recommendations



Recommendations

Establish senior level governance for climate resilience and preparedness:

- **Strategic leadership:** Create a formal governance structure at senior management level to oversee climate adaptation planning, ensuring it is treated as a strategic priority, rather than an operational afterthought. Introduce transparent reporting to track adaptation measures and hold leadership accountable for implementation.
- **Integrate climate adaptations into planning:** Embed climate adaptations into organisational decision-making, including investment, building design, and service delivery models at a senior level. Factor extreme weather resilience into refurbishment, maintenance, and new build projects to future proof facilities.
- **Form a Climate Resilience Committee:** Bring together senior leaders, managers, residents, loved ones, and staff representatives to promote open conversations and co-design long-term strategies, ensuring the people who know what is really happening on the ground help guide these decisions. Collect regular feedback from residents and staff on comfort and safety during extreme weather, and use this to refine strategies and identify gaps.

Strengthen communication and resident awareness:

- **Resident education:** Residents often reported limited understanding of extreme weather plans and relied mainly on TV or social media for updates. Develop clear, accessible materials (posters, leaflets, noticeboards and verbal updates at resident meetings), explaining what extreme weather events mean, what measures are in place, and how residents can stay safe.
- **Staff briefings:** Ensure regular updates and reminders about contingency plans during seasonal changes, using staff communication boards as a means of communicating this message. Include extreme weather updates in daily handovers, resident meetings, and activity sessions.
- **Family engagement:** Share preparedness plans with families to build trust and ensure they know how residents will be supported during extreme weather.



Recommendations

Enhance staff training and confidence:

- **Mandatory training:** Training was inconsistent, with some staff relying on “common sense”, rather than structured guidance. Introduce mandatory training with regards to extreme weather, ensuring this is completed annually. This should focus on heat health risks, cold weather health impacts, hydration, medication considerations, and extreme weather response. Incorporate climate adaptation awareness into induction programmes for all new staff.
- **Staff wellbeing:** Formulate guidance on maintaining staff comfort during extreme weather (e.g. cooler uniforms, hydration stations, portable fans and additional breaks where capacity permits).
- **Share best practice:** To maintain long-term resilience, ongoing evaluation is essential. Share best practices across Blackpool care homes through networks or forums, including the Residential Provider Forum, and monitor progress against climate adaptation goals within the local authority.

Improve temperature control and building adaptations in care homes:

- **Individual temperature control:** Thermal comfort was one of the most consistent issues raised, with rooms being too hot, too cold, poor ventilation, unregulated underfloor heating, or limited cooling options. Prioritise upgrades where cost permits, that allow residents to adjust heating in their own rooms (e.g. adjustable thermostats or adjustable radiators). Review and upgrade existing heating systems, particularly underfloor heating that cannot be controlled by residents or staff.
- **Improve ventilation and airflow:** Improve ventilation systems and consider installing blinds, reflective window films, or thermal curtains to regulate indoor temperatures, in homes where this has not already taken place.
- **Cooling measures:** Explore cost effective cooling solutions, in addition to the use of fans, such as portable and fitted air conditioning for residents and staff during periods of extreme heat, facilitating resident autonomy over the desired temperature.



Recommendations

Develop and strengthen long-term climate adaptation planning:

- **Develop contingency plans:** Most homes felt prepared for today's weather, but few had strategic plans for future climate impacts. Require each care home to develop or update a Climate Adaptation and Extreme Weather Plan, covering floods, storms, heatwaves, and power outages, aligned with UK Health Security Agency guidance.
- **Regular reviews:** Update risk assessments seasonally and after major weather events to incorporate lessons learnt. Conduct an annual review of building adaptation needs, training levels, emergency supplies, and equipment maintenance, alongside seasonal audits to identify cold spots, overheating areas, and draught prone locations.
- **Seek out additional funding opportunities:** Financial pressures were a recurring barrier to making improvements. Encourage providers to explore funding opportunities for green energy, solar panels, insulation improvements, and sustainable building upgrades. Explore grant opportunities through local government, public health programmes, and national schemes focused on climate resilience.
- **Long-term resilience in designs:** Incorporate climate risk considerations into refurbishment and design decisions, including insulation improvements and double glazing.

Promote resident choice and personal comfort:

- **Promote resident choice:** Many residents expressed desires for more control over their environment and daily routines in response to weather changes. Increase resident choice in meals (e.g. cold options in summer, warm snacks in winter), and offer personal comfort packs including fans, blankets, hot water bottles, cooling sprays, or hydration bottles.
- **Promote resident comfort:** Allow residents more autonomy over opening windows, adjusting room temperatures, and using personal cooling/heating devices where safe to do so. Ensure bedding materials are comfortable and breathable, and remove plastic protectors that cause overheating, unless essential.



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Thank You



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