DO
DATAORCHARD

2018 HEREFORDSHIRE QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY RESULTS

FOCUS ON:
Managing Costs

4 DATA GOOD
BETTER DATA BETTER LIVES

Contents

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1. CONTEXT

1.1 Background

This report highlights results from the 'Quality of life' survey of Herefordshire residents undertaken in spring 2018, with a focus on **how residents manage their costs**. The survey is part of a project called 'Better data, better lives', and is unique, having been entirely driven and managed by the community and voluntary sector in Herefordshire. It will fill gaps where there is currently no recent data available for the county, so that hundreds of voluntary and community organisations can target their services and resources to the people and places most in need. Please see the headlines and other topical reports for more detail, which can be found on the Data Orchard website.

1.2 Aim

To provide evidence for voluntary and community sector organisations in Herefordshire to meet the needs of residents. For example, the emerging food poverty alliance.

2. Methodology

2.1 Random sample postal survey

The Quality of life survey was posted out to a random sample of 4,125 residential households in April 2018 to achieve a representative sample of Herefordshire's adult population. Any member of the household aged 16 years or over could respond anonymously and post the survey back in the Freepost envelope supplied. A reminder letter was sent after 3 weeks with a deadline of 6 weeks after the initial mailout. Postal returns were accepted up until 9 weeks after the mailout.

There were 644 responses, lower than the target but possibly a result of the partner organisations not being as well-known as Herefordshire Council, who ran the previous survey in 2012. It was also at the time that 'Cambridge Analytica' was in the news, which caused some anxiety about personal data as evidenced by some of the comments back from residents - despite this survey being anonymous.

2.2 Weighting

There was an over-representation of older respondents compared with the resident population, so the results were weighted to account for this and also size of the household. In other words, responses from younger respondents were given more weight to account for the lower number of responses from this age group. Larger households were weighted accordingly too. More detail on the weighting method can be found in the Technical report.

2.3 Confidence Intervals

This survey uses the views of the responses achieved from those sampled to estimate the views of the wider population, such as all adults aged over 16 in the county, or in some cases sub groups of the wider adult population, such as those adults who live in rural areas of the county. As such there is a margin of uncertainty about the result, known as a confidence interval which can be calculated. This confidence interval has been inflated to account for the effects of weighting and the effective sample size.

The worst-case inflated confidence interval for this survey when estimating the views of the adult population of Herefordshire = + / - 5.32%. This means that there is a 95% probability that the true figure for the views of the adult population lies within the range of the estimated figure plus or minus the 5.32%. More detail on confidence intervals can be found in the Technical report.

3. Results: focus on managing costs

3.1 MANAGING EVERYDAY COSTS

Q35. How do you find managing your everyday costs?

In terms of managing everyday costs, about 70% or more of respondents find energy, food, clothing and transport costs easily affordable or manageable but only half found mortgage/rent costs easily affordable or manageable (a third found them manageable). Higher proportions of respondents found energy and transport costs tight or unaffordable (over a quarter) compared to other types of costs. See the table and chart below.

% of each type of cost	Easily affordable	Manageable	Tight	Unaffordable/ struggling	Don't know	Base
mortgage/rental costs	17%	33%	18%	4%	28%	585
energy costs	18%	55%	22%	5%	0%	609
transport costs	22%	47%	23%	3%	6%	603
food costs	21%	57%	16%	5%	0%	609
clothing costs	23%	50%	20%	5%	2%	605

Base = row total

How do you find managing your everyday costs?
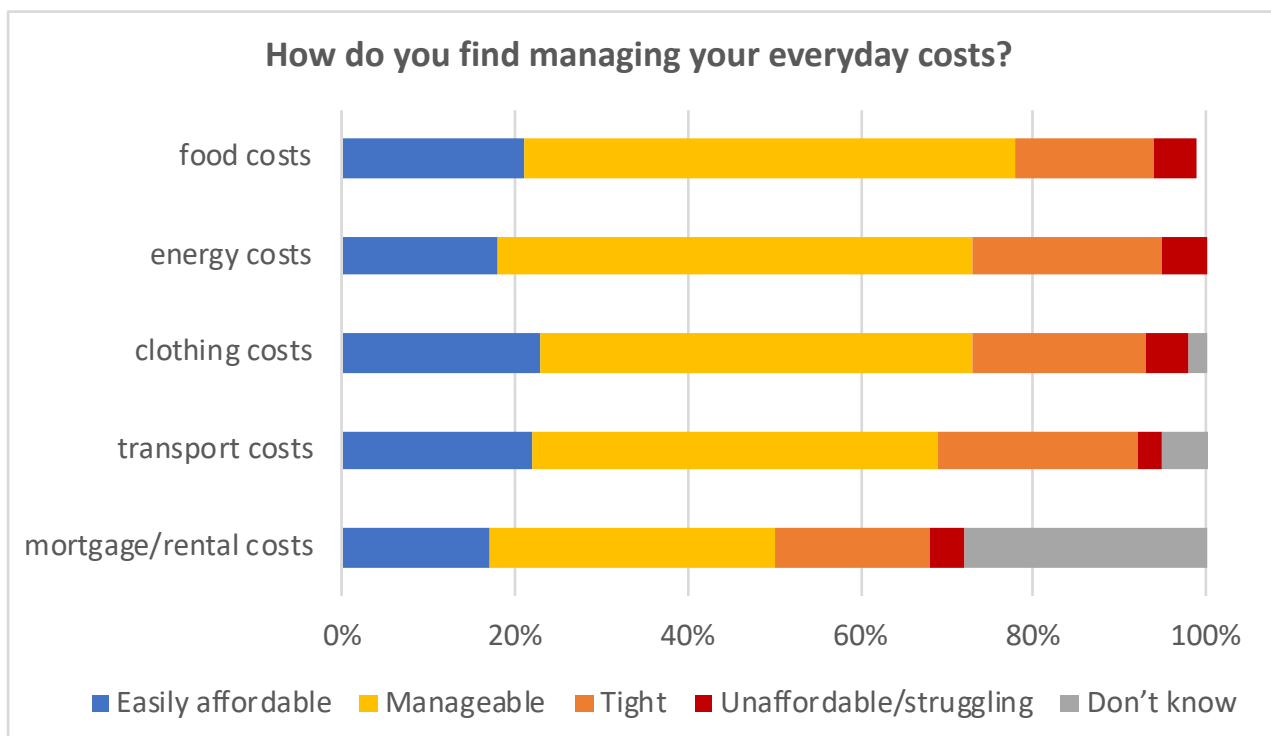
3.1.1 Differences by age, geography and disability

There were no significant differences found between responses depending on age, geography or disability but the numbers were small so confidence intervals were high. However, there is an indication from the data that mortgage costs may be more manageable and not as easily affordable in the market town and fringe areas compared to other areas; and that respondents who live in hamlets and isolated dwellings find mortgage costs more easily affordable than other areas. Similarly the data indicates (but again it is not a significant difference) that transport costs were more manageable but not as easily affordable in market town and fringe areas compared to other areas.

Q36. Have often have you had to choose between paying the above costs?

In terms of managing everyday costs, 63% of all respondents never have to choose between paying mortgage/rental costs, energy costs, transport cost, food and clothing costs. However, 16% did have to choose about once a year, 15% did so monthly and 5% had to choose between these costs weekly or daily. See the table below.

	Count	%
Daily	*11*	2%
Weekly	*19*	3%
Monthly	*86*	15%
About once a year	*95*	16%
Never	*366*	63%
Base	*577*	

There were 52 valid comments giving further details, which are shown in the following table. The most common response (about a quarter) was effective budgeting and leaving within your means; 9 comments mentioned not having enough money to buy new clothes, 6 mentioned energy costs and 5 mentioned doing without good food.

How often have you had to choose between paying the above costs?	Please give details if you can:
About once a year	"Surprise" energy bill
About once a year	Because I work for myself my income is sporadic
About once a year	Car running costs sometimes difficult insurance etc.
About once a year	Daughter requires financial help as she is at university - I am a single parent
About once a year	Fixed pension
About once a year	Fuel over winter: big outlay versus other essentials.
About once a year	Had to decide whether to buy more oil or wood
About once a year	I don't buy many clothes

Quality of life survey: Spotlight on managing costs

How often have you had to choose between paying the above costs?	Please give details if you can:
About once a year	I have invested heavily in solar & air source heat pump & reduced my heating from £6000 to £3200 but electric power is £320/month
About once a year	If bills are high, can't buy clothes or lots of good <food>?
About once a year	Live simple life. Don't eat out.
About once a year	My business is seasonal so before the season starts funds run low.
About once a year	Oil for house heating
About once a year	Only buy clothes when excess amount left in the monthly budget
About once a year	Times of high car costs, I have to watch other spending.
About once a year	We own another property elsewhere in Warwickshire which we are trying to sell for past two years - unsuccessfully so far
About once a year	When cash is low
Daily	£147.00 pension does not go far enough
Daily	Health costs come first
Monthly	Becoming a widow. Difference in taxable income
Monthly	Being self employed in one job cleaner once a month
Monthly	Have not bought new clothes for a while
Monthly	In order to pay bills the food & clothing costs are often cut.
Monthly	Last week food and fuel. Both low earners working in care
Monthly	Work out what can afford to eat rather than what would like to eat
Monthly	More money going out - less coming in, spend what you can
Monthly	Moved home as can't afford living costs
Monthly	Very rarely buy new clothes
Never	Asset rich, cash poor
Never	Budgeting no borrowing
Never	By living within my means
Never	Difficult to manage in early years of married and family life. Now improved
Never	Direct debits for all bills go out first
Never	Frugal, save money, don't waste, insulate house etc.

How often have you had to choose between paying the above costs?	Please give details if you can:
Never	I have never owed anybody anything. Have just worked in the evenings if necessary.
Never	I live within my means
Never	I manage my money well!
Never	I pay all my bills monthly by direct debit
Never	I pay my way but have to be careful
Never	Not since children left home
Never	Respondent written "own property" by mortgage costs
Never	very rarely.
Never	We budget with care
Never	We saved enough to fund our own modest pensions
Weekly	Fuel costs especially, I'm in private rent and costs are huge fir a single parent
Weekly	No longer afford parking charges - park long way away and walk to hospital (regular) town centre. Mat clothes/underwear unaffordable mostly went without never had heating on before baby born
Weekly	We struggle to afford running our household due to cost of living increasing and no salary increase.
	I keep within my budget limits
	Limited savings being used up
	Prefer not to answer
	I do not buy a lot of clothes
	You start with what has to be paid and if no money left for clothes you make do

3.2 ACCESS TO SERVICES

High proportions of respondents found green open space, shops and postal services **easy to access**. Services that respondents found **difficult** to access were banking services, museums, art galleries, cultural/heritage centre and cinema, film or theatre. The table below shows more detail.

	Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy	Don't know	Service not used
Postal services	2%	17%	48%	28%	0%	1%
Banking services	16%	28%	39%	11%	1%	1%
Shop	1%	10%	51%	33%	0%	0%
Public transport facilities (bus, train etc.)	12%	17%	36%	16%	4%	11%
GP, dentist (NHS services)	6%	24%	51%	12%	2%	1%
Community transport	4%	10%	16%	4%	19%	41%
Cinema, film or theatre	10%	22%	43%	9%	2%	9%
Museums, art galleries, cultural/heritage centre	11%	24%	33%	6%	7%	15%
Recreational area	3%	7%	49%	19%	4%	12%
Leisure centre (gym, swimming pool etc)	5%	14%	48%	15%	3%	11%
Green open space	3%	2%	46%	39%	2%	4%
Help and advice	5%	18%	18%	2%	26%	23%

3.2.1 Differences by age, geography and disability

Respondents who live in hamlets and isolated dwellings reported higher levels of difficulty accessing a shop compared to those living in other areas; and those living in the City, towns and fringe areas found it easier to access a shop.

3.2.2 Barriers to accessing services

Q13. If appropriate, what are some of the barriers to accessing the following services? Please tick all that apply

The survey also asked about barriers to accessing services. Getting there and back (transport), opening or operating hours and parking availability and cost were the most common barrier.

3.3 ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

The majority (56%) of respondents felt their health was **good**, a quarter thought it was **fair and** 20% reported their health to be **bad.**

Other demographic information about all the respondents:

- 644 residents of Herefordshire returned the questionnaire. There was an over-representation of older respondents compared with the resident population, and results were weighted to account for this.
- 90% identified as white British (compared with 94% at the 2011 Census)
- For nationality, 61% identified as English and 24% as British (compared with 72% as English and 21% as British in 2012).
- 94% identified as heterosexual or straight.
- 60% identified as Christian and 28% had no religion/belief (compared with 68% as Christian and 23% as no religion/belief in 2012).