



National FRC Mental Health Promotion Project

Year in Review December 2020

1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of key findings from the **National FRC Mental Health Promotion Project** year in review survey 2020.

[Family Resource Centres](#) (FRCs) are based within some of the most marginalised communities across Ireland, where poverty, social isolation, deprivation and unemployment are weaved into the everyday lives of the communities FRCs support. The overall aim of the programme is to combat disadvantage within the community and improve the functioning of the family unit. FRCs work to achieve this by involving communities and representatives of those in need of support, and by working closely with a range of voluntary organisations and statutory agencies to develop co-ordinated responses and offer a wraparound support.

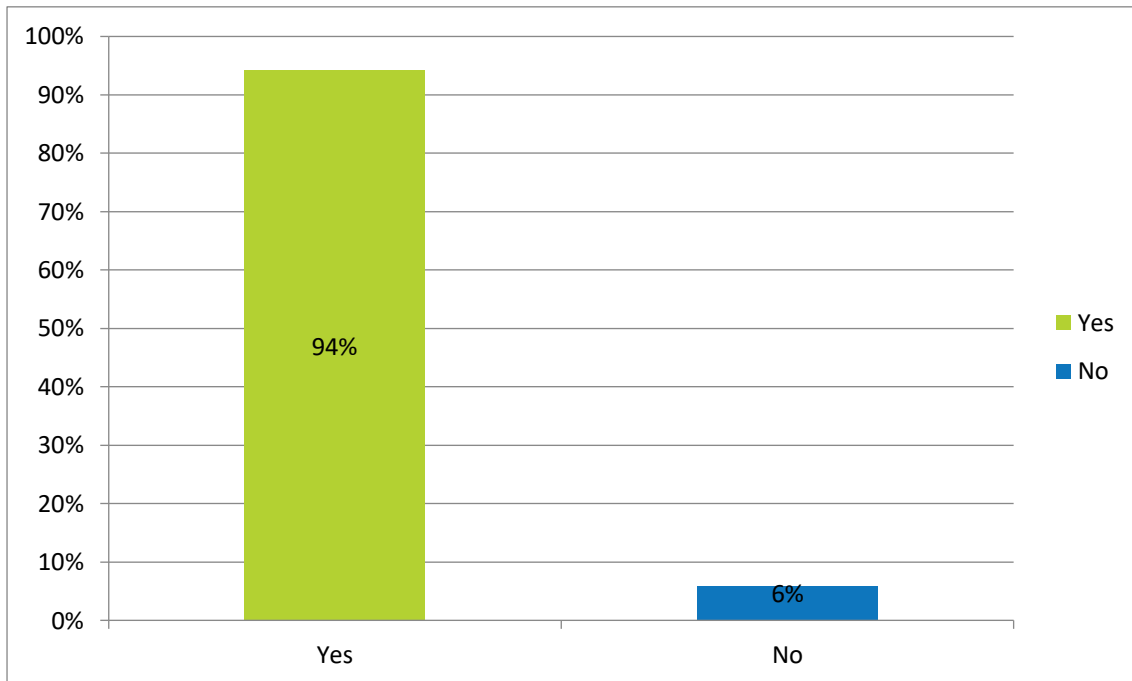
The National FRC Mental Health Promotion Project is a sub project of the National Forum of Family Resource Centres. The project is dedicated to providing education, training, support and best practice guidance to staff, volunteers and voluntary boards of all 121 FRCs across 9 regions, which will have a positive impact on their own mental health and the mental health of the communities they work in. Our Suicide Prevention Code of Practice and Staff Wellbeing Training programs ensure staff are equipped to identify, respond and appropriately support individuals who may be suicidal, while also ensuring they themselves have the tools to self-care.

The survey is a study of all Family Resource Centre staff, volunteers, and board members undertaken annually to provide trends in community demand for mental health supports and the wellbeing and professional development of FRC staff, volunteers and board members. The survey was sent by email to a database of FRC staff, volunteers, and board members in December 2020. 85 responses were received.

Section 1: Community Demand

Since the onset of Covid-19 restrictions, 94% of Family Resource Centres have experienced an increase in demand for mental health supports. Of those, a significant majority (77%) say demand has increased by more than 20%.

Q1. In your role, has there been an increase in demand for mental health supports in the last 12 months?

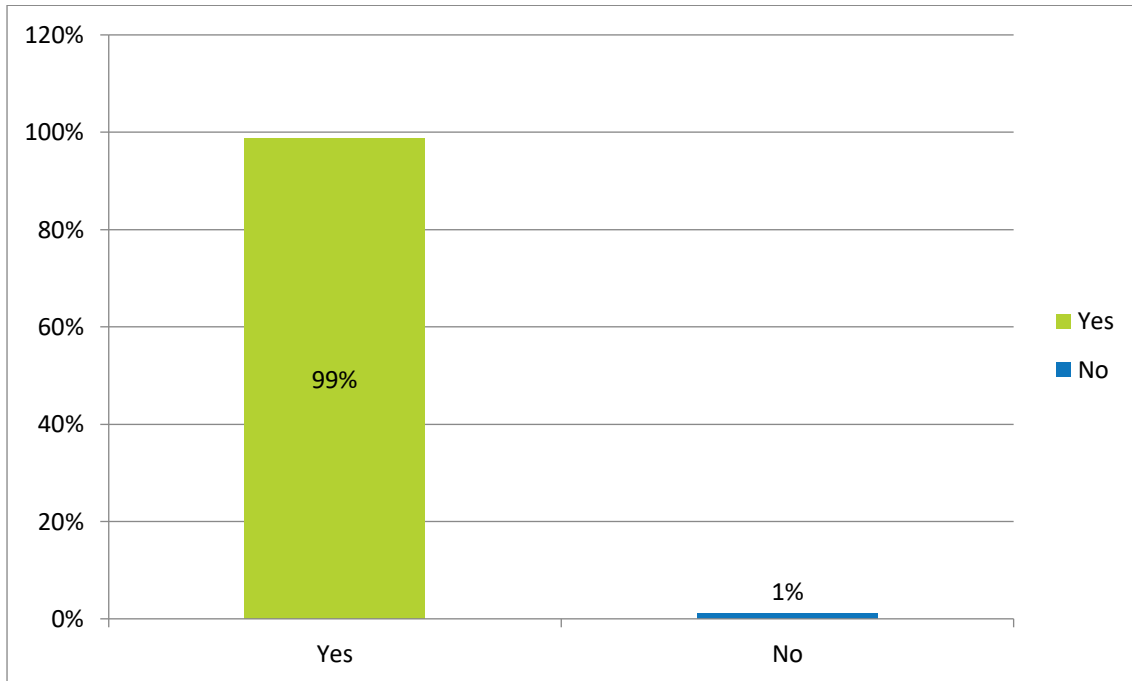


If yes, what estimate is the percentage increase in demand?

Increase on 2019	%
0-10% increase on 2019	5%
11-20% increase on 2019	11%
21-30% increase on 2019	16%
31-40% increase on 2019	22%
41-50% increase on 2019	9%
51-60% increase on 2019	10%
61-70% increase on 2019	5%
71-80% increase on 2019	2%
81-90% increase on 2019	2%
91-100% increase on 2019	6%
We did not see an increase	5%
I don't know	6%

99% of respondents felt that the wellbeing of their service users has been negatively impacted by Covid-19. Loneliness and isolation was the most common reason service-users contacted their local FRC, closely followed by anxiety about their mental health. The next most common reasons were anxiety about physical health and relationship difficulties. Bereavement was the least common reason for contact.

Q2. Do you feel Covid-19 has had a negative impact on the wellbeing of the service-users of your FRC?

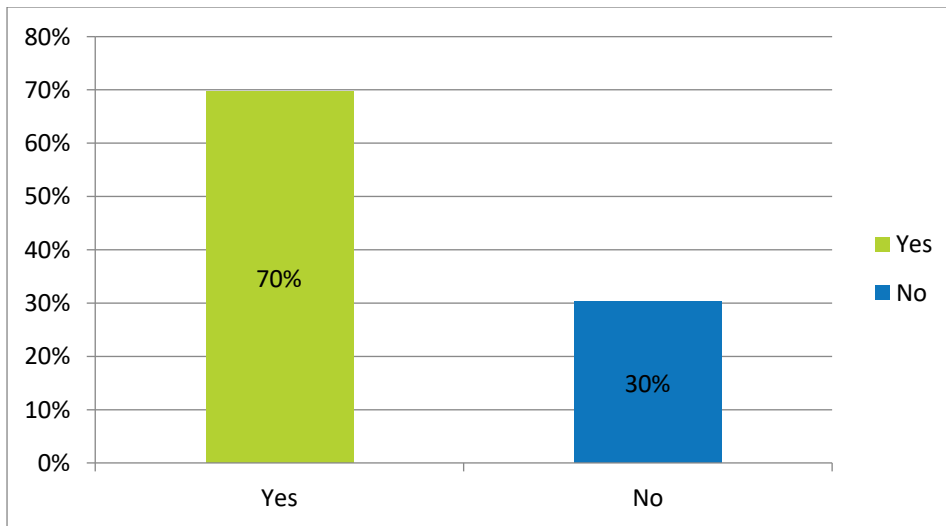


Q3. Of those contacting you for mental health and wellbeing supports, what is the most common reason for their contact? Please rate 1 – 5 with 1 being the most common reason and 5 being the least common reason.

	1	2	3	4	5	Score
Loneliness / isolation	37%	21%	22%	11.5%	8%	3.67 / 5
Anxiety about physical health	13%	24.5%	14%	18.5%	30 %	2.71 / 5
Anxiety about mental health	32.5%	32.5%	11.5%	15%	8%	3.66 / 5
Relationship difficulties	7%	18.5%	29%	27%	17.5%	2.7 / 5
Bereavement	10.5%	3.5%	23 %	27%	36.0%	2.26 / 5

Section 2: Professional Development

Q4. Have you completed the Suicide Prevention Code of Practice training?

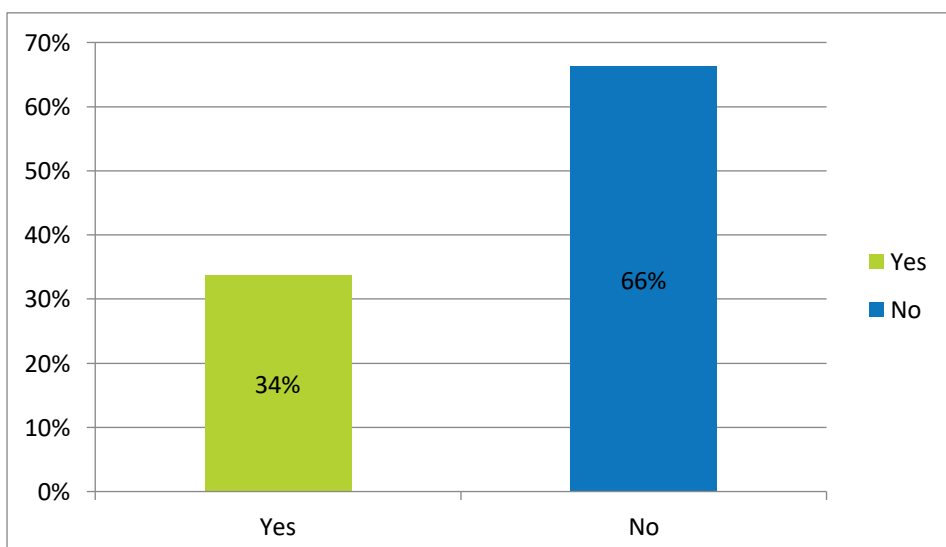


70% of respondents have completed the Suicide Prevention Code of Practice training. In their responses, they described aspects of the training that they found the most useful.

The top two areas of training that respondents found most useful were knowing how to speak to someone initially and the steps to take in supporting clients with mental health issues and 'finding secure support pathways for people who need support'. Simply put, knowing 'what to say', using 'the correct language', 'knowing the language and approach that is best, and how to respond to 'the different scenarios' was a common amongst respondents.

Other areas of the training that respondents found useful include: knowing how to implement the code of practice; maintaining boundaries and 'realisation that we cannot be responsible for the decisions others take'; the resources provided; the protocols to follow, and knowing the 'importance of being open, honest, direct and non-judgemental.

Q5. Have you used the Suicide Prevention Code of Practice in the last 12 months?



If yes, how many times have you used the Code of Practice?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5	10	5	2	3	2	0	0	1	1

Q6. Have you completed any additional mental health training? Please tick all that apply.

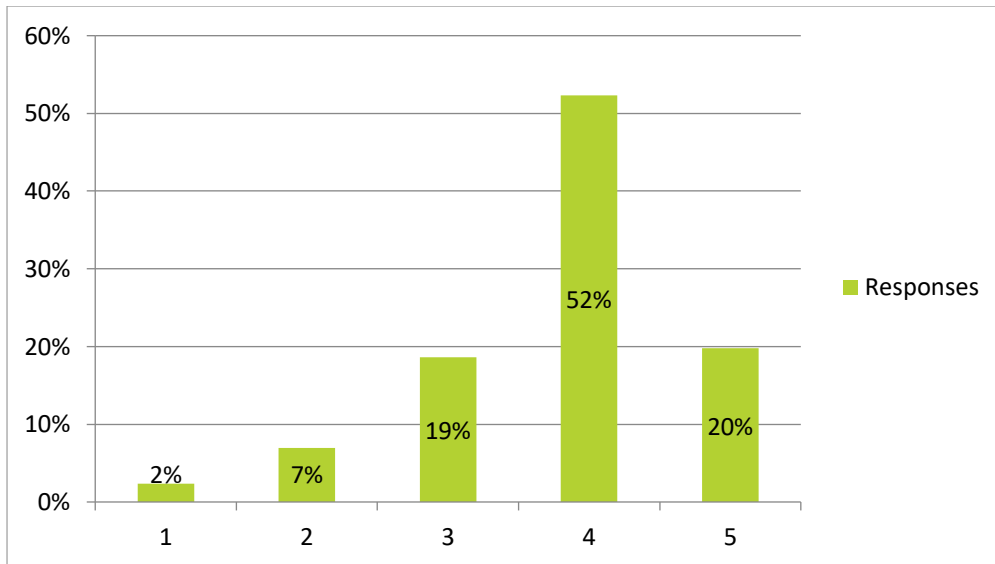
Answer Choices	Responses
SafeTalk	64% (55)
Asist	56% (48)
START	3.5% (3)
Understanding Self-Harm	23% (20)
WRAP	17% (15)
I have not completed any	15% (13)
Other (please specify)	20% (17)

Other mental health training included Psychological First Aid and Mental Health First Aid; Mind Out; STORM; Decider Skills; Five Ways to Wellbeing; Hidden Harms; as well as psychotherapy and counselling training.

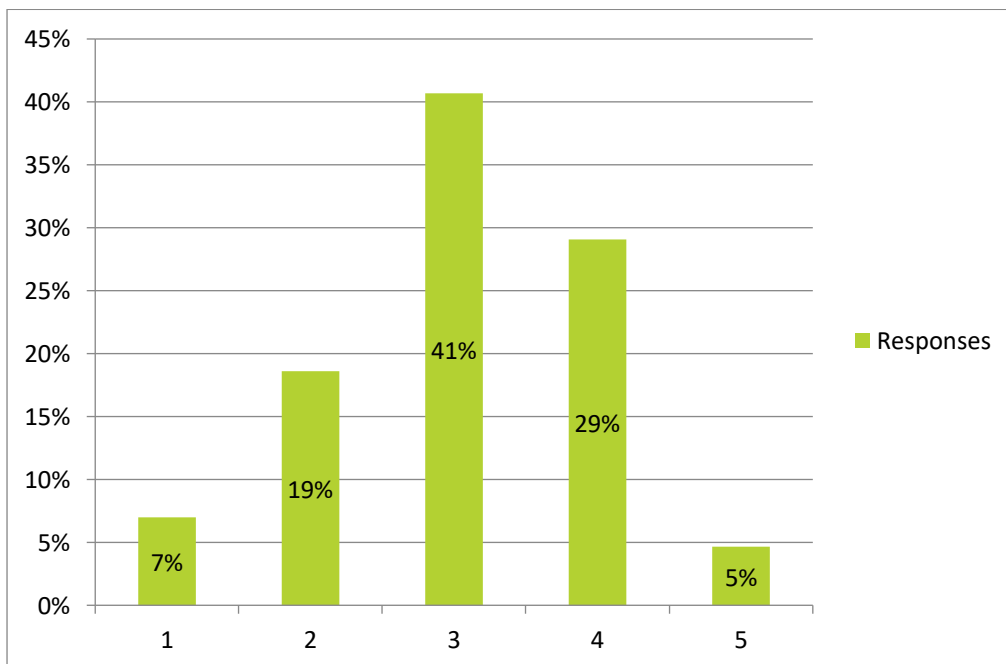
Section 3: Wellbeing

Respondents were asked to rate their overall wellbeing in 2019 and in 2020. In 2019, 72% of staff and volunteers that completed the survey reported their own wellbeing was good or excellent in 2019. This figure dropped to just 34% in 2020.

Q7. How would you rate your overall wellbeing last year (2019) with 1 being poor and five being excellent.

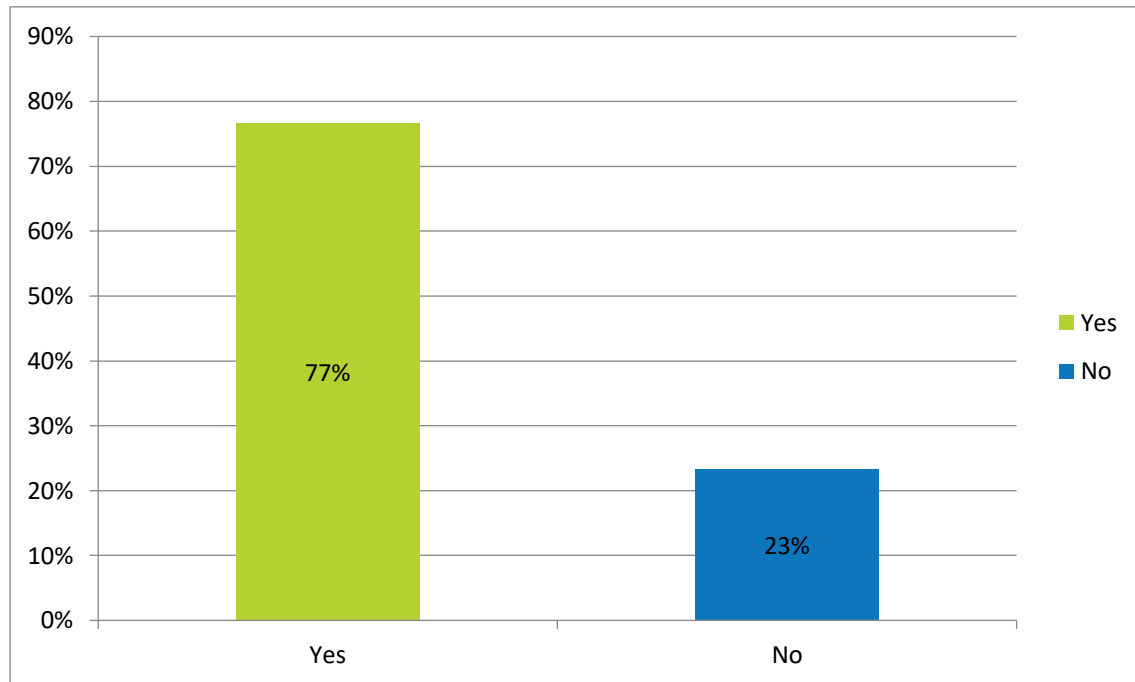


Q8 How would you rate your overall wellbeing last year (2020) with 1 being poor and five being excellent.



77% of respondents felt that the pandemic had a negative impact on their own wellbeing. Factors like the lack of ability to deliver services remotely and the increased demand for services having the biggest impact.

Q9. Has the Covid19 pandemic had a negative impact on your wellbeing?

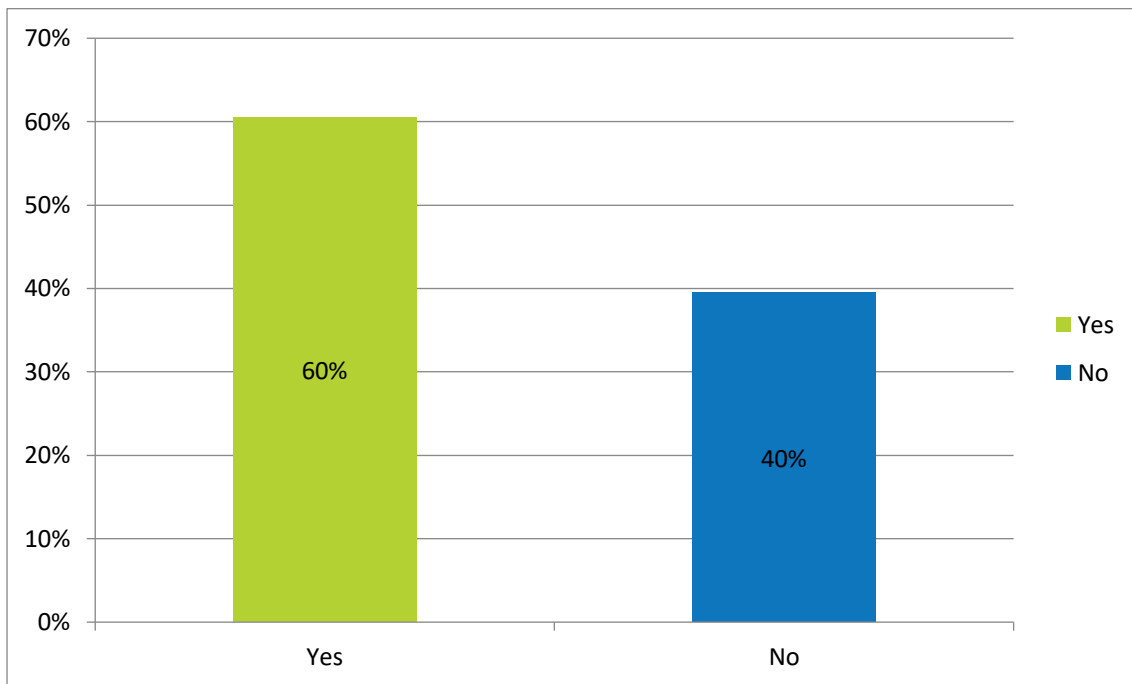


Q10. What factors, if any, are negatively impacting on your wellbeing? Rate these from 1 to 5, where 1 is the issue having the most negative impact on their wellbeing, and 5 is the issue having least impact.

	1	2	3	4	5	Score
Lack of ability to deliver your services remotely	36%	10%	24%	15%	14%	3.41 / 5
Increased demand from service-users of your FRC	29%	19%	19%	19%	14%	3.3 / 5
Worry about your service-users	15%	32%	21%	21%	11%	3.19 / 5
General anxiety about Covid-19	12.5%	17%	24.5%	17%	28.5%	2.68 / 5
Financial constraints at your FRC	8%	21%	13%	25%	32%	2.46 / 5

The lack of ability to deliver services remotely was identified by respondents as the factor that most negatively impacted their wellbeing while financial constraints at their FRC had the least impact. Increased demand from service-users at the FRC and worry about them also negatively impacted staff and volunteer wellbeing. FRC staff and volunteers also experienced general anxiety about Covid-19.

Q11: Have you participated in staff wellbeing workshops over the last 12 months?



Positively, staff and volunteers were proactive about minding their own mental health with 60% of respondents participating in staff wellbeing workshops over the last 12 months.

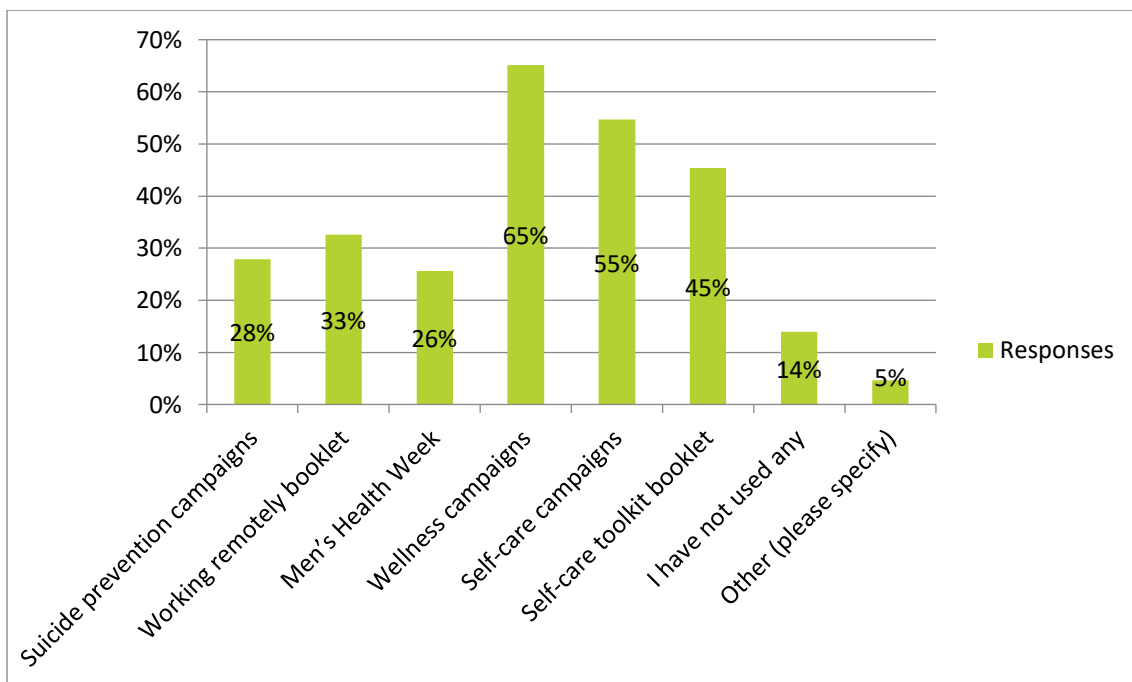
The 30 Minutes for Me Zoom sessions hosted by the FRC Mental Health Project were beneficial to respondents. As one noted: *“These have been really good and have helped to commit to taking the time to focus on myself. As it has been scheduled into my workday and encouraged by my manager it has meant I have felt ok to take half an hour out for it.”*

Further information provided by respondents on staff wellbeing workshops included mindfulness and relaxation sessions arranged by FRC managers. The online nature of the wellbeing sessions did not suit some respondents while some respondents recognised the importance of the sessions but found it difficult to make time in their workday.

Section 4: Resources

Q12: Which of the following resources have you used over the last 12 months?

Resource	%
Suicide prevention campaigns	28%
Working remotely booklet	33%
Men's Health Week	26%
Wellness campaigns	65%
Self-care campaigns	55%
Self-care toolkit booklet	45%
I have not used any	14%
Other (please specify)	4%



Other resources include Action for Happiness calendars and information on positive mental health and parenting supports during Covid-19.

Q13: How do you think the Mental Health Promotion project can support the wellbeing needs of staff/volunteers?

In their survey responses, staff and volunteers described how the Mental Health Promotion Project can support their wellbeing needs.

Respondents welcomed 'any support, networks, seminars, workshops or information around mental health is always helpful' and noted that 'the contact and interaction of the Mental Health Promotion Project with FRC's has been excellent'.

Specific ideas offered by respondents included:

- Practical online self-care / wellbeing sessions with an option to log-in and watch it at any time. One respondent suggested a DVD as a way of doing this for those with poor broadband access while another suggested more dates for live sessions.
- A workshop on boundary setting, particularly when working from home.
- Ideas for care packages for service users that can also be used by staff.
- Counselling.
- Updates on services available and those coming online.
- Allocated time in work to participate in events.
- Provision of information to Boards of Management to help them support staff wellbeing.
- Acknowledgement that FRC staff are frontline and essential workers.
- Group sessions with staff and volunteers to share their experience during the pandemic; learn more about the services offered by the FRC Mental Health Project; allow staff to 'let off steam'; and 'share some of our concerns and come up with solutions with the support of the project'.
- When allowed, in-person wellness day to meet other staff and volunteers.

Section 5: Innovations during Covid-19

Q14: Did you or your FRC do anything differently during the Covid19 pandemic that supported the mental health needs of the community.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, Family Resource Centres throughout Ireland played a key role working on the ground supporting communities by broadening their range of services, liaising with local voluntary Covid-19 groups, and responding to the direct needs of some of the most vulnerable in society. Innovations included:

- **Physical health** supports including food parcels and food banks, winter clothing packs, yoga and wellbeing classes, care packages to families and older members of the community, and outdoor activities and nature walks.
- **Educational and parent** supports including parent support helplines, parenting programmes via Zoom, establishing a play therapy service for children and brief interventions for young people, and therapeutic, activity, and mindfulness packs for children.
- **Social supports** including providing books, CDs and DVDs free for people to collect from outside the centre, a toy appeal, art and cookery competitions, regular care calls, winter 'pick me up' packs, online knitting classes, running errands, home and doorstep visits, a buddy system, writing letters to people living alone, Zoom coffee and cake mornings, packs for children for the Late Late Toy Show, photography competitions, and moving the befriending service online.
- **Mental health** supports including delivering counselling over Zoom, bereavement support, online group anxiety sessions with therapists for young people, online mental health talks, and producing mental health packs.

3. Conclusion

Since the onset of Covid-19 restrictions, 94% of Family Resource Centres have experienced an increase in demand for mental health supports. Of those, a significant majority (77%) say demand has increased by more than 20%. 99% of respondents felt that the wellbeing of their service users has been negatively impacted by Covid-19.

Loneliness and isolation was the most common reason service-users contacted their local FRC, closely followed by anxiety about their mental health. The next most common reasons were anxiety about physical health and relationship difficulties.

The increase in demand was met by highly trained staff and volunteers who developed innovative solutions to maintain service delivery.

However, staff and volunteers experienced a negative impact on their own wellbeing with factors like the lack of ability to deliver services remotely and the increased demand for services having the biggest impact. Positively, staff and volunteers were proactive about minding their own mental health with 60% of respondents participating in training and wellbeing workshops.

During an exceptionally challenging period for FRC staff and volunteers, they demonstrated their resilience and unwavering commitment to provide vital services in their communities.



National FRC Mental Health Promotion Project

Ballinfoile Castlegar Neighbourhood Centre,
Headford Road,
Galway

Find out more:

Email: support@frcmentalhealthpromotion.ie

Website: www.familyresourcementalhealth.ie

Follow on **Twitter** [@FRCHealth](https://twitter.com/FRCHealth) and **Facebook**