

HARC Client Survey 2021



HARC

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Chief Executive's Foreword

I would like to pay tribute to the exceptional team of people I am privileged to work with. As in previous years, this survey paints a picture of the tremendous work they do with such compassion and dedication, all routinely going the extra mile for clients. I was pleased that 95% of people described us as excellent, and that no-one rated our service as less than good. Despite the excellent feedback on our service, my team and I are not celebrating as these survey results again tell a dark story of our clients' ongoing struggles with the benefits system.

We still have people telling us explicitly that the welfare benefits system itself drove them to the edge of suicide. One person directly attributes a heart attack to his experiences. We have five people surveyed telling us that without our help they would be dead. This is a reduction of two on last time; but until the figure is back at zero (as it was when we first began undertaking these surveys in 2010) and we are not hearing that the system itself is driving people to suicide and worsening their physical and mental health which we were not hearing when we first began these surveys, we must keep pushing for the system to change. Demanding for it to be fair for people who find themselves in need of the safety net that welfare benefits are meant to be. It is devastating to me that despite three years of concerted effort since our last survey, the benefits system continues to badly malfunction and hurt the people it is meant to help.

For every five people that tell us they have been suicidal, there are likely to be at least another five who did not disclose this to someone they are talking to for the first time. My team were not employed to save lives. They were employed to help people navigate the benefits system. That the two things now regularly go together is devastating.

We welcome the fact that DWP are currently consulting over how the benefits system responds to the needs of sick and disabled people and **we urge any clients or professionals with experience of the medical assessments to respond to this green paper and explain your experiences** (the relevant section is chapter 4). **HARC is continuing to call for DWP to take medical assessments in house**, where civil servants can be held to account for poor or negligent decision making, in a way contractors cannot.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/shaping-future-support-the-health-and-disability-green-paper>

Covid has forced us, like others, to modify and adapt our services. Our offices remained open throughout the pandemic for booked, socially distanced appointments and we had an advisor doing home visits when needed. Clients who had the technology and know-how pivoted to zoom, others we worked with by phone / in person as they needed. This survey asked our clients for the first time whether they could access services online, 47% said they could not and 3% said they would need support to do so. Whilst online services work for many, it is also clear that for our clients, a hybrid offer of online and other more traditional methods of service delivery is necessary and what we must keep advocating for.

Jacky Everard CEO

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Survey Methodology

100 people who had used HARC's service for more than 30 minutes of one-off advice were interviewed by telephone in the first 7 months of 2021.

This survey is an adaptation of previous years' surveys (HARC have been running these surveys every 1-3 years since 2010) and for long term trend analysis includes many questions that were included in previous surveys. That said, we have had the biggest overhaul of questions since these surveys began in 2010, primarily to reflect the fact that Covid has impacted on how HARC, DWP and the independent tribunals are operating, and to understand how **the trend towards online services** is affecting our clients.

The results of the last survey conducted in 2018 showed things were going seriously wrong in the welfare system. Most notably, our clients told us that the **medical assessments** they were compelled to undertake for sickness related benefits were not working well, or fairly. Indeed, many clients accused the staff undertaking them of either explicit dishonesty in the reports produced or of omitting crucial evidence that they and their medical team provided. Given the consistency of reporting of this across our client base, we started asking about this midway through the last survey, and have this time been explicit in asking about this from the outset.

We were also told that these systems failures were impacting significantly on the mental wellbeing of our clients and were shocked at the number of people who cited feeling suicidal as a result in 2018. We have therefore asked a direct question about how the welfare system impacts on the **mental wellbeing** of clients in this survey.

This survey reduced the number of questions on the impact of living on a very low income as this an area that is now widely understood within and beyond our team, we also omitted a previous question about how people manage money as previous surveys have shown consistently that our clients are typically excellent at this through necessity, and we omitted a previous question about debt, to keep the survey length manageable.

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Executive Summary

- ❖ 95% of people interviewed rated the service as excellent and no-one rated the service as less than good.
- ❖ 78% of people could not think of anything to improve HARC's service.
- ❖ 96% of people said HARC achieved or more than achieved the result they wanted.
- ❖ 5 people said that they think they would be dead had they not had support from HARC and 3 people said that they think they would have had a breakdown or ended up in hospital.
- ❖ Half of the people surveyed said that they cannot access online services (47) or could not without support (3).
- ❖ 29 people surveyed had children living with them.
- ❖ Over two thirds of people who had been through a medical assessment (50 / 74) said that they felt the assessment was unfair, and 2 people said that were unsure if it was fair.
- ❖ 38 people would prefer to have a tribunal hearing by telephone (a new option introduced because of Covid).
- ❖ People surveyed had on average, more than 4 of the chronic health conditions we ask about.
- ❖ 80% of people said that their experience of the benefits system itself had a severely negative (60%) or quite negative (20%) impact on their mental health.
- ❖ 27 people surveyed have received food or fuel vouchers from a foodbank in the last 6 months.
- ❖ 100% of the people who answered (99 people) said that they would recommend HARC to others.

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Please rate your overall experience of HARC's Service

Excellent	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor
94	5	1	0	0

These results are very similar to those achieved in 2018 although more people rated the service as excellent this time (94 compared to 89 in 2018).

What people using the service said:

- I just feel like they are there for me when I need them.
- They listened...No one else was offering any help or even any solutions. It wasn't intrusive or aloof. I didn't feel as though I was lesser for asking for help.
- It was an absolutely superb service, we wouldn't have done it without their help.
- If it wasn't for HARC I don't know what I would have done.
- They gave good advice and support, even when I wanted to give up.
- I had great support. I wouldn't have been able to do it without them.

2. What did HARC do well?

Answer	Number of clients
Professional / Knowledgeable	46
Filled in / supported me to fill in forms	17
Helped me understand the paperwork / process / prepare	16
Everything	32
Supported me / compassionate / understanding	36
Kept me informed / updated	6
Appeal papers / representation	6
Listened / I felt understood	11
Home visits	1
Gave me confidence to appeal	2

What people using the service said:

- The whole service is brilliant I couldn't ask for anything more.
- I just feel like they are there for me when I need them.
- I am really, really happy. They have been amazing.
- Without them I probably wouldn't be where I am today.
- They seem to have a specialist understanding of situations and how it impacts the individual.
- They actually cared.

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3. What could HARC do better?

Answer	No of clients
Nothing / really can't think of anything / don't know	78
Improve telephone access / return calls more quickly / complete forms quicker	7
Accompany clients to tribunal	1
Quicker appointments	1
Adviser was irritable once on telephone	2
Keep updated / follow up	2
Have more funding / advertise more	8
No answer given	1

Again, results here are broadly comparable with 2018, although more people felt telephone access could be improved (7 in 2021 compared to 3 in 2018). This is likely to reflect the increase in clients accessing support in general, and by telephone rather than in person due to Covid 19; coupled with the fact that during Covid half of the team were always working from home to allow for a socially distanced office. This impacted on capacity to answer calls and pass on messages. There was also an increase in the number of people who said they wanted to see HARC have more funding, which suggests that people felt the service felt under pressure/ could have been more efficient, as is the fact that 2 people said that they wanted to be kept updated which didn't appear as an answer in 2018. In 2018, 4 people said that they wanted longer appointments which did not feature as an answer in 2021, potentially due to Covid

There was one person who said that they wanted HARC with them at tribunal, which has consistently arisen in every survey as an issue for a tiny minority over the last 3 surveys. HARC decided not to routinely attend with clients when tribunal services relocated to Ashford and Brighton. It may be that the shift towards telephone appointments and more local hearings, if sustained as a choice for people; enables HARC's advice team to again support the clients who would most benefit from this.

What the people using the service said:

- They do such a good job, they've been fantastic.
- They did everything that I needed... They met my expectations.
- I can't see what they could do better - they were fantastic. 5 stars all the way.
- Get more funding; I feel bad for contacting them as I know they are probably overwhelmed and underfunded.
- They provided an excellent service. I would fully recommend to anybody.
- Investment would be very good to better improve HARC's working capability.
- I can't fault them. The communication was excellent. They rang. They turned up to come with us to appointments. They didn't overstep their mark. They supported but they didn't take control, they allowed me and James to speak up.
- They are exemplary.
- They are excellent. They have been a godsend. They have kept a roof over our heads.

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4. What difference did the service make to your life?

Answer	No of clients
Huge difference /big difference / enormous difference	48
Reduced stress / anxiety / improved mental health/ took pressure off	26
Improved finances	10
Made life easier	4
Got benefits I was entitled to / helped me claim or appeal	30
Gave me my life back / improved quality of life / turned life around	1
Gave me the confidence to challenge a wrong decision	3
Gave me space to concentrate on my health	3
Can buy mobility aids / other equipment we need now	2
Meant I could get out and about	1
Meant I could eat properly	1

What people using the service said:

- A lot of difference. Huge. I always get very anxious when I fill out any forms and them taking the pressure off was a huge help.
- It got me the money I needed to live.
- They pushed me out of the darkness.
- Hell of a lot of difference. Before I was struggling, going without food to pay bills ...they got all that sorted out.
- Just having someone behind you...that makes a difference I believe.
- It made me feel that I wasn't alone. That I had somebody on my side supporting and someone who understood my position.
- What it meant was that my son had benefits income as opposed to me, a pensioner, having to pay for everything.
- Invaluable...I can't speak highly enough of them.

5. How did you find out about HARC'S services?

Friend or family	24
Walk in / live locally / heard of them before	9
Local community group	13
- Project Art Works	
- Dementia Info Group	
- SEN Charity	
- Aspirations	
- Caring Community	
- MS Society	
- Activate	
- Seaview	
- Oasis	
- Education Futures Trust	
Key worker / Job Coach / Social worker	7
MS Nurse / Hospital Consultant	6

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Charity Shop	1
Used them before	7
Citizens Advice Bureau	6
Solicitor	1
Online	2
Hastings and Bexhill Observer article	1
Foodbank	1
Through work	4
Leaflet	1
Local council / Job Centre	2
Can't recall	12
No answer given	5

This is the first time that this question has been asked in the last ten years, so relevant comparative data is not available. The variety of answers here shows that even without much active marketing, HARC is well-known and the breadth of people making referrals signals they are widely trusted and respected.

The high number of people who cannot recall where they heard of us is understandable given 4 clients recalled they suffer with dementia and many more of our clients suffer from memory loss. Other clients may have known about us or heard about us, over many years.

6. What would have happened if you hadn't received help from HARC?

Answer	No of clients
Wouldn't have got my benefits / would have messed up forms / appeal.	42
Would be suffering / problems / health would have got worse	4
My mental health would have suffered / downward spiral / stressed	4
I don't know / I really don't know where I would be / I can't think about that	15
Nothing / not much / I would have managed	4
I would be in debt / struggling financially	6
I think I would be dead / I doubt I would be here / I would have killed myself	5
Life would be more difficult	3
I would have given up on the process	6
I would have had to appeal or apply independently/ I would have got there in the end, but it would take years or be more difficult	6
I would have had a breakdown / ended up in hospital	3
I wouldn't have been able to cope	1
I would have gone elsewhere for help	2
I would have ended up homeless or in a shelter	4
I would have returned to my country of origin	1

Results here are similar to 2018, with the exception of the answers on physical and mental health. In 2018, 34 people said their physical health would have deteriorated, and 33 people said their mental health would have deteriorated; 17 times higher than the 4 people in 2021.

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This is likely to reflect the fact that in 2018, welfare reforms were still being implemented, and for many people, they were in a completely different system with e.g. medical assessments being contracted out of DWP. This time round people with long term conditions are likely to be used to the system and arriving with realistic expectations, unlike 2018. It also reflects that when the survey was conducted medical assessments had stopped, Universal Credit increased and clients were not required to prove they had been job seeking; due to covid.

That said, as the comment below (h) shows and later questions on the medical assessment and mental health impacts of the benefits system reinforces, there are still many people who are traumatised by the benefits system itself.

There were fewer people in 2021 who said that they were at risk of losing their home without support (4 as opposed to 7 in 2018), which may reflect the safeguards put in place during Covid that made it harder to evict tenants and repossess homes.

What people using the service said:

- a. I honestly don't know, probably would've ended up on the streets.
- b. Having HARC behind me made it happen. He's working at the moment, and this wouldn't have happened if he hadn't had PIP... His life is so changed...He's starting to live a life.
- c. I wouldn't have been able to do the appeal, I would've let it go.
- d. I would've probably killed myself.
- e. I think I would've slipped into depression.
- f. I think he would've gone downhill even further and he would've been homeless.
- g. I am almost 100% sure I wouldn't have had my benefits claim accepted.
- h. I already tried to commit suicide because of this. I would be dead.
- i. My mental health would be in a state...I'd be running to the doctors. I'd be so stressed because I wouldn't know what the forms mean.

7. Thinking about what you wanted when you approached HARC, was this achieved?

Achieved more than expected	Achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved	Result not yet known	Can't recall
8	88	1	1	1	1

Results here are markedly different to 2018 when 60 people achieved more than they expected and 28 people achieved what they expected. However only 1 person did not achieve what they wanted (compared to 2 in 2018) and only one person partially achieved what they wanted compared to 4 in 2018. The huge reduction in people who achieved more than they expected may be symptomatic of a tougher benefits system and / or it may be that people have more knowledge of what the outcome is likely to be than in 2018.

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8. Why did you approach HARC for help?

To help with an appeal	22
PIP/Universal/Attendance Allowance/Universal credit forms	56
General advice	13
Financial assistance	7
Gas/Electricity voucher	2
Can't recall	2

This is a new question in 2021 so no comparative data is available.

9. Are you working?

Yes	No	No answer given
10	90	0

The number of clients working is higher than in 2018 (10 compared to 6) and higher than in previous surveys. Of those not working, 2 people told us they were at college, and 2 people told us they were carers (although as this was not a specific question numbers for both those studying, and caring may be higher). The difference here may reflect the fact that the benefits system currently is designed in favour of finding people capable of work where previously they may have been deemed too ill to be expected to work. This may also reflect a rise in in-work as opposed to out of work benefits because of Covid 19.

10. Are there children in your household?

Yes	No	No answer given
29	69	2

Results here show an increase in clients with children compared to previous surveys (18 in 2018). Again, this is likely to reflect the impact of Covid pushing more families into poverty. It may also be that parents were more likely to need assistance from HARC in claiming benefits due to periods of lock down and home schooling.

11. Which benefits is your household in receipt of?

Benefit	Number of clients in receipt
Attendance Allowance	7
Carers Allowance	14
Child Tax Credit	7
Council Tax Reduction	4
DLA	12
ESA	24
Income Support	3
Housing Benefit	14
Child Benefit	9
JSA	1

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Other	8
Pension Credit	2
PIP	69
State pension	9
Private pension	2
Universal Credit	36
Working Families Tax Credit	11
Couldn't remember all benefits	2
No answer given	2

The results to this question are broadly to be expected, there are far more Universal Credit claimants than in 2018 (36 as opposed to 6 in 2018), which reflects the fact that this was in the early stages of roll out in 2018 in most of East Sussex. There are a higher number of people on Working Families Tax Credits (11 compared to 2 in 2018) which is likely to reflect the issues resulting from the transition from legacy benefits to Universal Credit.

12. Some benefits can now only be claimed online. Could you do this?

Yes	No	Yes with assistance	Unsure / No answer given
49	47	3	1

12 b) if answered 'no' above, why?

Technology	22
No broadband / computer	7
Due to age	1
Due to health condition	6
Need help from family member / HARC	3
Unable to read / dyslexic	4
Unable to use internet / doesn't know what to do	2
Language barrier	1
Lack of confidence	1
Unable to cope emotionally or mentally	2

This is a new question in 2021 to reflect the move towards online services during Covid.

Whilst we have always known that people on very low incomes are most likely to be digitally excluded, the extent of this demonstrates that there is a clear need to provide alternatives to online services for people in receipt of welfare benefits.

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13. If you had a healthcare assessment, what was your experience of this? Do you think it was fair?

Unfair	Fair	Not sure	Not applicable
50	22	2	30

Note: The total is over 100 as several people said they have had fair outcomes and unfair outcomes (for separate experiences), so in those instances both fair and unfair boxes were ticked.

This is a new question in 2021 arising from the 2018 survey results and feedback on the medical assessments at that point, although we did ask people to talk about their experiences when this was highlighted as an issue in 2018.

As in 2018, most people surveyed who have undergone a medical assessment (69%) felt the results were unfair.

What the people using the service said:

- It wasn't fair. The reports said I could do a lot of things I couldn't do. They didn't take a lot of things into consideration. It made you feel like you weren't believed.
- It was chaotic. No-one knew what was going on.
- It was the most excruciating thing I have ever been through. I actually had a heart attack.
- They do make me feel really uncomfortable. Really scrutinised. They seem pleasant and then they write something completely different about you. Half of what you say, they don't write down.
- I have been to an appeal before it frightened the life out of me. I wouldn't go through it again.
- Horrendous. Deeply unfair. I am still recovering really.
- My recollection of the assessment was - you just have to go. I threw up 3 times on the journey and I threw up 3 times inside the venue. The anxiety builds up. I wanted to run away. And apparently, I was mentally fine.
- I had only been recently diagnosed with MS. They had a non-specialist interviewing you for a condition that they may not even understand for which the assessment criteria is woefully inadequate.
- It was dreadful. I think it was discriminating if I'm honest because they expect people to look a certain way for mental health problems. It's unfair really.
- [The experience] without HARC, absolute depression. With HARC, absolute joy.
- They are pretty daunting, you always come out feeling like a criminal.
- To be honest it is very ableist. They judge you by how clean you are and how you are dressed. I don't all of a sudden stop who I was before [I was disabled] just because I have a disability.

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14. If you had a tribunal, would you prefer it to be:

In person	On telephone	Either	Unsure / No answer given	Video / Email
28	38	12	20	2

This is a new question. As clients typically have multiple conditions and very poor health, it is understandable that they may wish to avoid the stress of travelling to and appearing in person at hearings. This may also reflect a fear of Covid when this survey was conducted which was before many people had been fully vaccinated.

15. Please can you tell us if you are affected by any of the following conditions?¹

Condition	Number of clients affected
Anxiety (diagnosed)	62
Anxiety (undiagnosed)	15
Autism	11
Cancer	9 (plus 2 in remission)
Chronic back pain	32
Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) including ESKD End Stage Kidney Disease/Renal failure	1
Crohn's Disease	1
Colitis	2
COPD	12
Coronary Heart Disease (CHD) including Heart Failure (HF)	10
Dementia	4
Depression	65
Diabetes	11
Epilepsy	6
Fibromyalgia	11
High blood pressure (Hypertension)	17
HIV	0
Hypothyroidism	8
Long term neurological conditions	15
Mobility Issues	62
Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME)	3
MS	4
Osteoporosis	7
Rheumatoid / Osteo Arthritis (RA / OA)	24
Schizophrenia	1
Other psychiatric conditions	11

¹ The complexity and severity of the health issues listed gives a clear indication that HARC are clearly a service effectively targeted at those in greatest need.

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Note: this does not include other conditions not on our list of medical conditions.

Results compared to 2018 showed that typically clients receiving a case work service from HARC have more conditions on our list than in previous surveys. In 2018 and 2015 clients reported an average of 3.15 conditions listed and this has risen to over 4 conditions on the list in 2021. This is likely to reflect the fact that it is increasingly difficult to obtain out of work rather than in work benefits, and people who have a lower number of serious conditions are less able to access out of work benefits. It may also be a reflection of the fact HARC are only able to offer a casework service (rather than advice / information service) to clients with the most serious, and complex health issues and that people who would traditionally have benefitted from this service are being squeezed out by the increased workload that covid has brought. Finally, it reflects the fact that for some clients, the stress of what are often inaccurate assessments, and appealing those, means that they simply give up and resign themselves to living without sickness related benefits for which HARC believe they qualify.

16. How do you feel that the benefits system has impacted on your mental health and wellbeing?

Extremely stressful/ severely affected mental health	Quite stressful	Did not affect mental health	Not applicable/no answer given
60	20	15*	5

*Note: of the 15 who said it didn't affect their mental health and wellbeing, 3 said they weren't affected due to HARC's help.

What the people using the service said:

- It was horrendous. It's upsetting me now just talking about it... I shouldn't have had to fight to get that.
- I lost my hope...I have all these health issues, I can't work... They cut off your benefits for a year... It's not fair.
- It has had a big impact because I have had these problems since I was a child. I feel the system thinks they (the symptoms) will go away or I will get better in 2 years and increasingly things have got worse since I have got older...it is such a challenge to go through this process.
- I find it all frustrating. I don't like having to claim. And having to keep following it up...I find that really quite depressing. It's hard.
- It's absolutely horrendous. It has reduced my income. It's scary.
- It's stressful – really, really stressful. I'm trying to do my PIP at the moment. It's hanging over you for weeks and weeks. It's like living in limbo land. They called on a Saturday and said your benefits are going to stop here and now. It's stressful always renewing things.
- The process [of claiming] definitely impacted my health and I wouldn't have been able to do it without support from HARC.
- I've been suffering for the last 10-11 years. I've been suffering mental-wise. Throughout all of that time I have been consistently knocked back for benefits. I haven't worked and got any benefits at all. Until last year I got PIP. That is the

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only benefit I have ever had. Since receiving the PIP it has made a humongous difference to my life.

- The process...it basically brings my anxiety and also everything else into chronic stage. The actual support of the money means I can pay my carers. The process of going through all the forms and people coming to assess you, whether you will be ok opening the door or not, whether you'll be able to talk the person...means the anxiety goes sky high.
- I'm just happy that woman from HARC has sorted it... I have a little flat...and my health is balanced now.
- It nearly pushed me over the edge to be honest.
- Well it's hard. It's difficult. It's embarrassing and it reminds me that I'm not the person I used to be unfortunately.
- HARC helped me - they took away the stress.
- An absolute trauma each time it comes along - and I'm the well person. The trauma caused blackouts and seizures for my partner.

17. Thinking about the last 6 months, can you tell me whether the following statements are true or false for yourself?

Statement	True	False	No answer/na
I am in debt	32	64	4
I regularly borrow money to pay for basics (food, fuel, housing)	15	81	4
I have had no gas / electricity due to an inability to pay for fuel	9	87	4
I have been unable to afford essential transport	16	80	4
I commonly run out of money before the end of the month]	34	61	3
I have been unable to afford to give myself or my family a balanced diet	20	78	2
I have been unable to afford to give myself or my family, 3 meals a day	19	79	2
I have been unable to afford a winter coat, shoes, or other basic items for myself or my family.	17	78	5
I am unable to afford broadband.	9	88	3
I am unable to afford a phone.	4	93	3
If they have children – I have been unable to afford the basics needed to home school my children	4	20	76

Results here are broadly consistent with the last survey, around a third of people surveyed are in debt and just over a third of people do not have enough money to get through the month.

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18. In the last six months have you had a Food or Fuel Voucher from one of the Foodbanks?

Yes	No	No answer given
27	72	1

This question shows a 33% increasing reliance on food banks and charitable support (27 compared to 18 in 2018), likely due to rising food costs, and Covid.

19. Would you recommend HARC to others?

Yes	No	I already have	No answer given
89	0	10	1

This answer reiterates what previous surveys have shown, that word of mouth is a highly effective referral route for HARC.

What people using the service said:

- Thank you to HARC for all of the fantastic work they have done.
- My advisor was just an amazing lady. She was the most thoughtful. Rung up to see how we were. Really appreciate it.
- They really did save my life. Things were just getting so dire. I don't like getting in debt and that it was just so horrible. It was when I had cancer they cut the money back...now you're doing this to me when I need it more. I had to fill in all these forms [for DWP] and I said well that's it, I may as well go home and slit my throat...It is just like you're a number, that's it. Keep up the good work. Thank you so so much.
- I am thankful for the help we got. Without them I would've just given up and struggled on.
- They've been brilliant, amazing.
- I'm just so grateful...don't ever go anywhere HARC!

20. We are going to do some case studies to present to DWP and other policy makers. Would you be willing to have another conversation with us or potentially have another conversation recorded with us in order to help HARC demonstrate why they are needed?

Yes	No	Not sure
80	18	2

What people using the service said:

- I can only say it was nice to have someone helping you...it was a really scary time.
- Give HARC my thanks. Without them I wouldn't be here.

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- It's a valuable service. It felt extremely valuable to have HARC as support and to not feel alone beginning that journey through the adult benefit system. It's making sure he has that entitlement for his future, not just the here and now.
- I was very grateful... I think they do wonderful work.
- I have nothing but praise for them.... I was quite concerned about HARC's funding and where it came from. I wasn't able to make a donation for the service we received - anything I can do to help. My advisor was absolutely caring and understanding.
- They've been fantastic - we wouldn't be here without them.
- It's a service that is greatly needed.
- Can't sing their praises enough.
- I can't put into words how helpful they were. 10 out of 10, five stars.
- HARC are my heroes.

HARC Client Survey 2021

Recommendations

1. That HARC use the results of this survey to highlight issues their clients face and to continue to alert DWP, policy makers, ministers, the public and local politicians to the significant issues within the medical assessments used for people who have chronic conditions.
2. That HARC use the results of this survey to keep calling on DWP and other service providers to ensure that services when offered online, maintain offline options to cater for the sizable number of clients who face digital exclusion.
3. That HARC encourage people to respond to the current green paper on how people with disabilities or illness access benefits.
4. That HARC continue to call for DWP to take the medical assessments in house.
5. That HARC share the results of this survey with the tribunal service and has a conversation with them around establishing a choice of how people access hearings, and request that as a minimum, people can choose between a telephone, video conference or in person hearing. The accessibility and location of venues also needs to be a consideration for many HARC clients.
6. If the tribunal service indicate Covid adaptations are to be maintained, HARC consider supporting people who have telephone assessments, where proving illness or disability is likely to be harder than when people appear before the tribunal in person.
7. That HARC monitor outcomes and any difference in them, between in person (includes Zoom) and telephone tribunal hearings although comparison will be impeded as face to face hearings will be extremely limited as all medical assessments are still being conducted by telephone.

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