

## Survey 19: Myths and language around continence - Key findings

This report summarises key findings from the nineteenth Hampshire Perspectives survey, which explored understanding of myths around incontinence, and use of language around the topic.

The survey was completed by 538 forum members between 26 July and 22 August 2022. A further 148 Hampshire residents from the wider public were also invited to participate, bringing the total number of responses to 686. The findings are being used by Hampshire County Council's Public Health and Adults Health and Social Care teams as part of work to develop information to help people maintain their urinary continence and encourage those who experience urinary incontinence to seek help early. Addressing some of the barriers that can prevent people seeking help on this sensitive topic will help people remain active and independent for longer, with less reliance on health and social care services.

Key findings were as follows:

- 1. There is some good understanding around the topic, but some areas where knowledge is not as strong.** When presented with nine 'myths' around incontinence and asked whether they were true or false, just over half of the survey respondents got at least six correct. The most common incorrectly believed 'myths' were "After giving birth to children a bit of incontinence is inevitable", "It's always best to go for a wee 'just in case'", followed by "The less I drink the less I will need to go to the toilet" (all are actually false).
- 2. The one statement most likely to make people think differently about incontinence was "It's always best to go for a wee 'just in case'"** - this appears to be a habit that was either taught in childhood (and is in turn passed on to children), or one which seems intuitive... and is reinforced by fear of quality / quantity of public facilities. The correct information\* has the potential to make an impact on behaviour  
  
\*That being in the habit of regularly going to the toilet when you don't need to (rather than just on occasion before a long journey) can increase the risk of incontinence
- 3. There is appetite for information - all overall sets of text explored were seen as valuable** (myth busting, top tips and phrases of encouragement around seeking help), regardless of whether someone had experienced incontinence. There are many small lifestyle changes that will help those with incontinence that not everyone was aware of.
- 4. Exploration of language showed an overall preference for messaging to reflect the language used with friends and family** (e.g. 'going to the loo', 'going to the toilet', 'not getting to the loo on time'). However, there are nuances by gender and age group. Understanding this meant that so we were able to identify the right language for supporting text depending on the target demographics for campaign and website development.

**The overall findings are being used to shape content for a new website and advertising designed to help people live healthier and independent lives for longer.**