Annex A: Methodology - Access Essentials

A.1 Research Design

This research project consisted of:
- Development of a tool to assess severity of "admin anxiety".
- An online survey of 2,078 people, carried out by Populus 11-13 May 2018, weighted to be nationally representative.
- A survey and focus group with members of Money and Mental Health's Research Community who have lived experience of mental health problems.

Further details on each component of the research are provided below

A.2 Admin Anxiety tool

To gauge levels of admin anxiety, we adapted questionnaires developed by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to assess severity of social anxiety disorder and specific phobias, to instead assess the severity of anxiety that people experience when dealing with essential service providers. We used the same indicators of anxiety as the APA questionnaires, slightly tweaking some statements so as to be relevant to essential services. Clinicians conducting DSM-5 field trials found that these tools were a reliable, easy to use, and clinically useful way to assess severity of social anxiety[1] and specific phobias.[2] Our tool should be similarly reliable, as it uses the same model, to assess anxiety in another specific context.

The adapted questionnaire asks respondents how often, if at all, they experienced 10 different signs of anxiety when dealing with essential service providers. Responses are placed on a five-item scale from 0 (never) to 4 (all of the time).

For each of the statements below, please indicate how often (if at all) you feel this way when dealing with essential service providers.

	Never (0)	Occasionally (1)	Half of the time (2)	Most of the time (3)	All of the time (4)
Felt moments of sudden terror, fear, or fright					

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[1] American Psychiatric Association. Severity Measure for Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia) - Adult. Available from: https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/educational-resources/assessment-measures.
[2] American Psychiatric Association. Severity Measure for Specific Phobia - Adult. Available from: https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/educational-resources/assessment-measures.

Felt anxious, worried, or nervous					
Had thoughts of being injured, overcome with fear, or other bad things happening					
Felt a racing heart, sweaty, trouble breathing, faint, or shaky					
Felt tense muscles, felt on edge or restless, or had trouble relaxing					
Avoided dealing with essential service providers					
Moved away from dealing with essential services providers or left abruptly					
Spent a lot of time preparing for, or procrastinating about (i.e., putting off) dealing with essential services providers					
Distracted myself to avoid thinking about dealing with essential service providers					
Needed help to cope with dealing with essential services providers (e.g., alcohol or medications, superstitious objects, other people)					

Our interpretation of this screener follows the standard approach of the American Psychiatric Association.

From these responses we calculate a total score for each respondent, from 0 (never experiences any of these signs of anxiety) to 40 (always experiences all of these signs of anxiety). For any respondent who answers at least 7 of the 10 questions, we take an average of their scores, to provide an indication of the severity of phobia that they experience when dealing with essential services providers. This gives a result on a on a 5-point scale from none (0) to mild (1), moderate (2), severe (3), and extreme (4). Participants who answered fewer than 7 questions are excluded, as this is insufficient information to reliably assess admin anxiety.

Average score	Result
x ≤ 1	None-Mild
1 < x ≤ 2	Mild-Moderate
2 < x ≤ 3	Moderate-Severe
3 < x	Severe-Extreme

For example, if someone *always* feels anxious and gets a racing heart, when they deal with essential service providers, and *occasionally* avoids dealing with providers or spends a lot of time procrastinating, but *never* experiences any of the others symptoms, this would produce an average score of 1, indicating a borderline case of mild phobia when dealing with essential service providers.

Other combinations of responses that would indicate a borderline case of mild phobia:
- *Occasionally* experiencing all of the signs of anxiety when dealing with essential service providers.
- Experiencing half of the signs of anxiety *half of the time*, but *never* experiencing the others.
- Experiencing three signs of anxiety *most of the time*, *occasionally* experiencing one other sign but *never* experiencing the others.

When reporting these findings, we describe any average score indicative of at least a mild level of phobia (1 or above) as significant admin anxiety. This should not be interpreted as a definitive medical diagnosis, but rather as a useful indication of the severity of distress that people experiencing when dealing with essential service providers. Anyone who is concerned that they might be experiencing anxiety should seek advice from a medical professional.

A.3 Populus survey

To assess the prevalence of accessibility problems across the country, we commissioned Populus to conduct an online survey of 2,078 over-18s across the UK, weighted to be nationally representative. This survey was carried out 11-13 May 2018, and included people with and without experience of mental health problems. Populus is a founding member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules. See www.populus.co.uk for more details.

We asked participants "have you ever experienced a mental health problem?" - and used this variable to compare outcomes between those who have and have not experienced a mental health problem.
- 704 had *ever* experienced a mental health problem
- 403 had experienced a mental health problem *in the last 24 months*
- 1247 had *never* experienced a mental health problem

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Participants were asked a series of closed questions about how easy they find it to deal with essential service providers, and were also taken through our admin anxiety questionnaire.

We combined these figures with the Office for National Statistics mid-2016 estimate of the population of over-18s in the United Kingdom (the most recent year for which these estimates are available),[3] to produce an estimate of how many people across the UK experience admin anxiety when dealing with essential services.

A.3 Research Community survey

Money and Mental Health collected data through an online survey of our Research Community, a group of more than 5,000 volunteers with personal experience of living with a mental health problem, or of supporting someone who does. Research Community members with lived experience of mental health problems were surveyed online between 13th April and 15th May 2018. Surveys were distributed by email, and through the secure online portal to Money and Mental Health's Research Community.

628 people with lived experience of mental health problems participated in the survey. A mix of closed and open survey questions asked participants about their experiences of dealing with essential service providers, and any difficulties they may experience when managing accounts, communicating with providers or dealing with problems. We also asked participants what impact, if any, these difficulties had on their mental health.

To avoid causing distress to participants, all questions were optional after initial screeners, which mean that the base size for questions varies. Where statistics from this survey are quoted in this report, we also provide sample size and a description of the base. This survey also contained a number of qualitative questions which were analysed thematically and used to develop the topic guide for our focus groups and to illustrate the report.

A.3 Research Community focus group

A focus group was held on 9th May 2018 to test evidence from the desk-based research and survey, and to draw out potential solutions. Participants all self-identified as experiencing mental health problems. There were six participants. The focus group was carried out online to maximise accessibility and protect participant anonymity. All focus group participants were offered a £30 Amazon voucher as a thank you gift for taking part.

The focus group considered the following:
- Which interactions between provider and customer are most difficult for people with mental health problems to manage, and why?
- How do difficulties with essential services impact on people's mental health?

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[3] Population Estimates for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2016. Office for National Statistics. 2016.

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- What could help to improve the accessibility of essential services for people with mental health problems?

A written transcript of the focus group was thematically coded. Emerging themes were used to formulate an understanding that was checked with other members of the research team, and cross-checked with data from both surveys and the literature.

These findings were used to inform policy recommendations, ensuring our recommendations were both grounded in experience and practical.