

# Walley's Quarry Health and Impact Survey Report

**Aaron Bell MP**



**MAY 2021**

*"I have lived in Newcastle for over 30 years and it is frustrating to see this blight causing so many issues and not being able to hold someone responsible for controlling the odour.*

*I've shopped in Newcastle town centre for decades and even I don't want to go there when it stinks. And if I feel like that then the long term financial prospects for the town are not good and that saddens me so much."*

*S., Porthill*

## INTRODUCTION

The Walley's Quarry Health and Impact Survey allowed residents to provide their own assessment of the impact that the landfill at Walley's Quarry in Silverdale is having on both them and their family.

Responses were sought via Facebook, Twitter, and my newsletter; the survey was also widely shared to local Facebook groups. This ensured a wide range of replies covering a large geographical area – mostly constituents but some living in Stoke-on-Trent or elsewhere. There were some home addresses from out of the area who were reporting based on their experiences while at work in Newcastle.

*“Some days we feel like prisoners in our own home. Our windows are constantly closed. Nobody wants to go out and venture into town. Walks into the Apedale used to be enjoyable but not any more.*

*We try to avoid going to Newcastle. Night times are terrible, especially when the weather is warm as you cannot get fresh air into our home. My family members are getting headaches more often than normal along with sore eyes and blocked noses.”*

*I., Crackley*

*“I have family in the area. They cannot open their windows or dry washing outside. The smell is shocking and can be smelt as far away as Audley where I am resident.”*

*H., Audley*

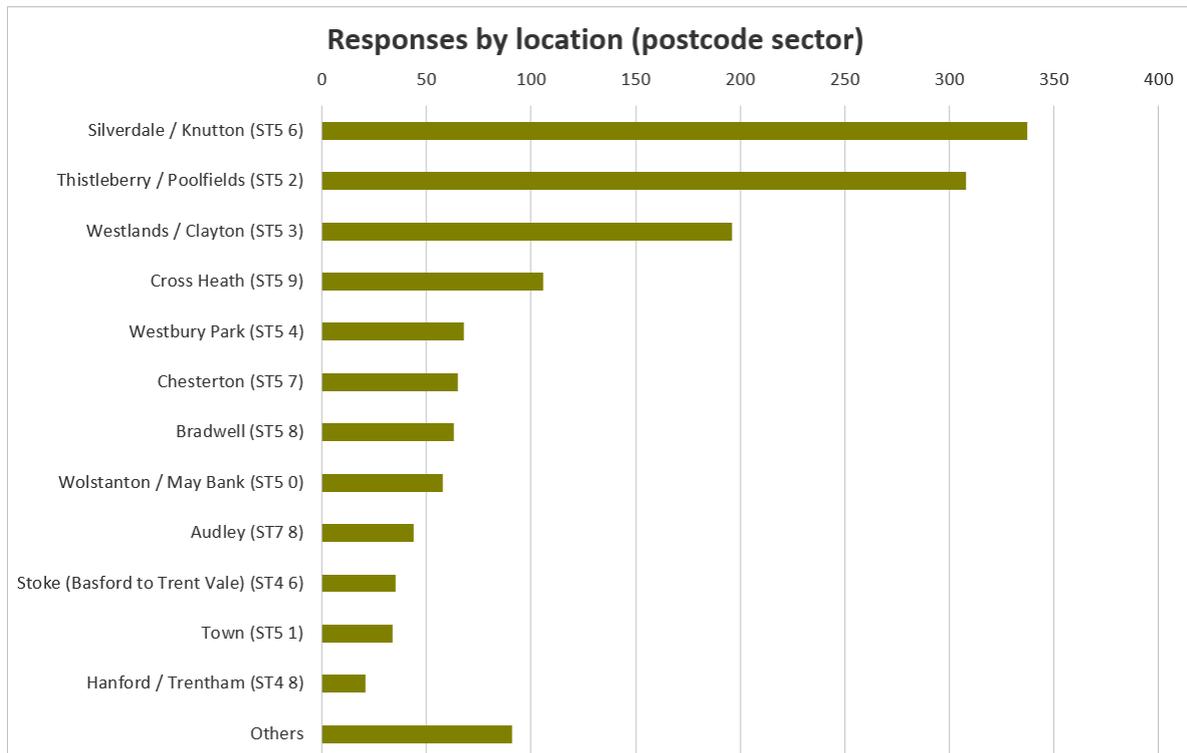
The survey went live on my website on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 and received over 988 responses within the first 24 hours. In total, this report outlines data received from 1,426 respondents.

*“My son is having weekly nose bleeds, my whole family is suffering with dry skin, throat and eyes. We are staying in the house much more than we usually would with the doors and windows shut as the smell outside is horrendous. My heating bill has increased.*

*“We only moved into the area in December 2019 and we are greatly regretting this move. We had been saving for 16 years to move into a house like this. It was our dream home and now that has all been ruined.”*

*C., Silverdale*

## LOCATION OF RESPONDENTS



As can be seen from the above table, the most individual responses were received from Silverdale / Knutton (337 responses or 24% of those who completed the survey). This was closely followed by Thistleberry / Poolfields which provided 308 responses (or 22%).

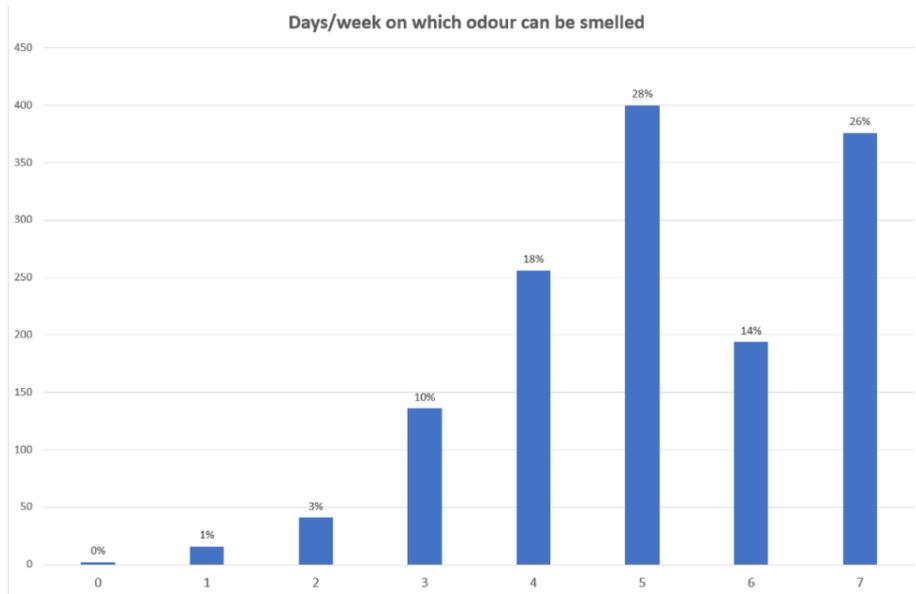
Therefore, when taken collectively, these two locations (the postcodes closest to the landfill) provided some 45% of the total responses (645 out of 1,426), with the remaining 781 responses (55%) coming from further afield. This distinction is used for some of the later analysis in this report.

*“We moved to Newcastle 14 years ago and felt that this was a highly regarded residential area. For the last 12 months specifically the smell has blighted our living experience.*

*At the moment we can not open the windows, I get up in the night and the house stinks, I let the dog out and have to close the door quickly so as not to let the smell in. There have been occasions overnight when you literally are breathing the smell in and that is a horrible feeling. Not knowing when this will be resolved is a very stressful situation.”*

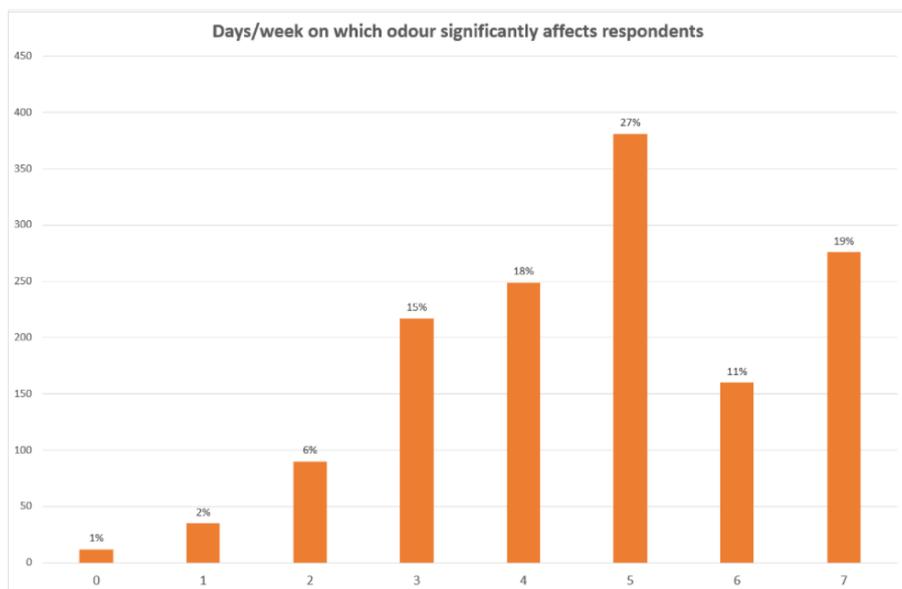
*C., Thistleberry*

## ODOUR – Days detected



Some 970 respondents (68%) reported that they can smell an odour from the quarry on 5 or more days per week, with 376 respondents (26%) saying that they can smell the quarry every day.

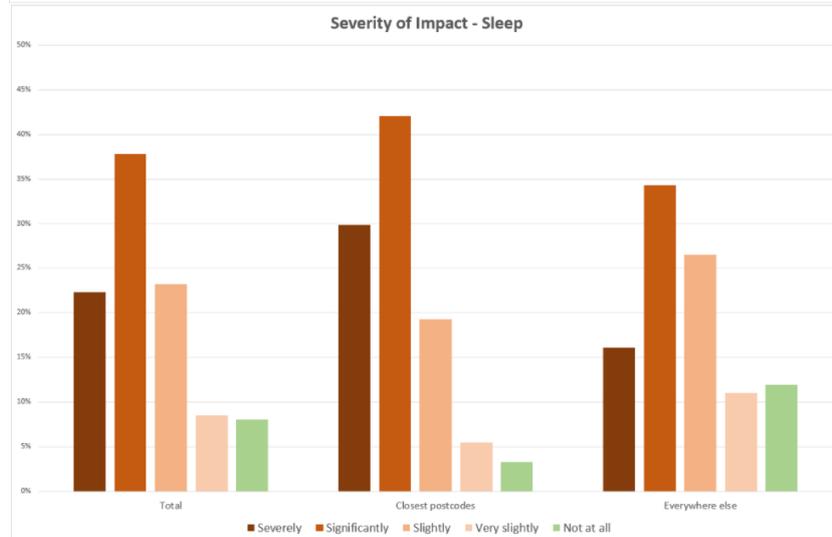
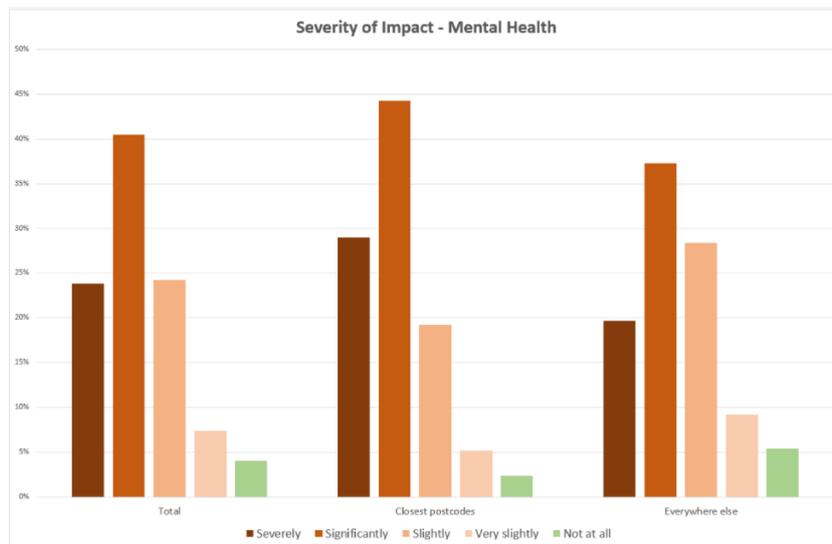
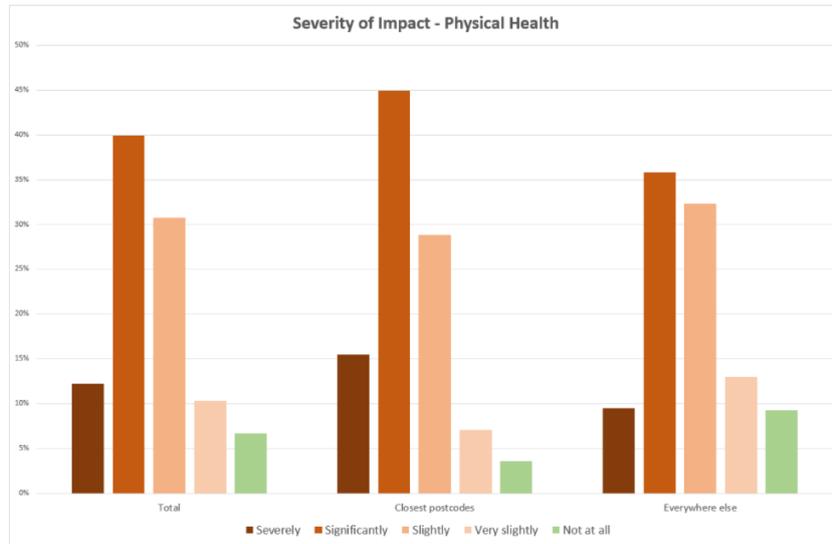
The data further indicates that the mean number of days per week that respondents reported being able to smell odour from the quarry was 5.2 days.



817 respondents (58%) reported being “significantly affected” by the odour on 5 or more days per week, with 276 (19%) reporting that the landfill has a significant effect on them every day. The mean number of days per week that respondents reported being “significantly affected” by odour from the quarry was 4.7 days.

## IMPACT ON HEALTH

The survey sought to establish what impact the landfill was having on residents' health and sleep.



### **i. Physical Health**

The landfill has clearly had a profound impact on the physical health of a majority of all respondents, with 52% assessing Walley’s Quarry as impacting their physical health either “severely” (173 respondents) or “significantly” (564 respondents).

Only 7% of all respondents (95) reported suffering no effect on their physical health.

*“Since October last year, I have started to have shortness of breath, something I had not experienced before. I have been diagnosed with COPD, but I am convinced the landfill gases are seriously impacting my health.”*

*A., Silverdale*

As expected, those residents whose homes are closest to the landfill have suffered the greatest impact on their physical health, with 60% of the residents in the adjacent areas grading the impact as “significant” or “severe”.

### **ii. Mental Health**

The mental health impact of the landfill has, if anything, been more profound. I have frequently encountered residents who report having suffered a detrimental impact to their health & wellbeing as a direct result of living with the odour.

The percentage of all respondents who reported that their mental health had suffered “severely” as a result of the landfill was 24%. This is double the percentage of all respondents who reported that their physical health had suffered “severely.”

*“It’s getting me very down personally. I’ve never been ill before but I’m going to work where I drive trains for up to 10 hours feeling drained some days.”*

*“My wife suffers from migraines which have intensified since Christmas and also increased in frequency.”*

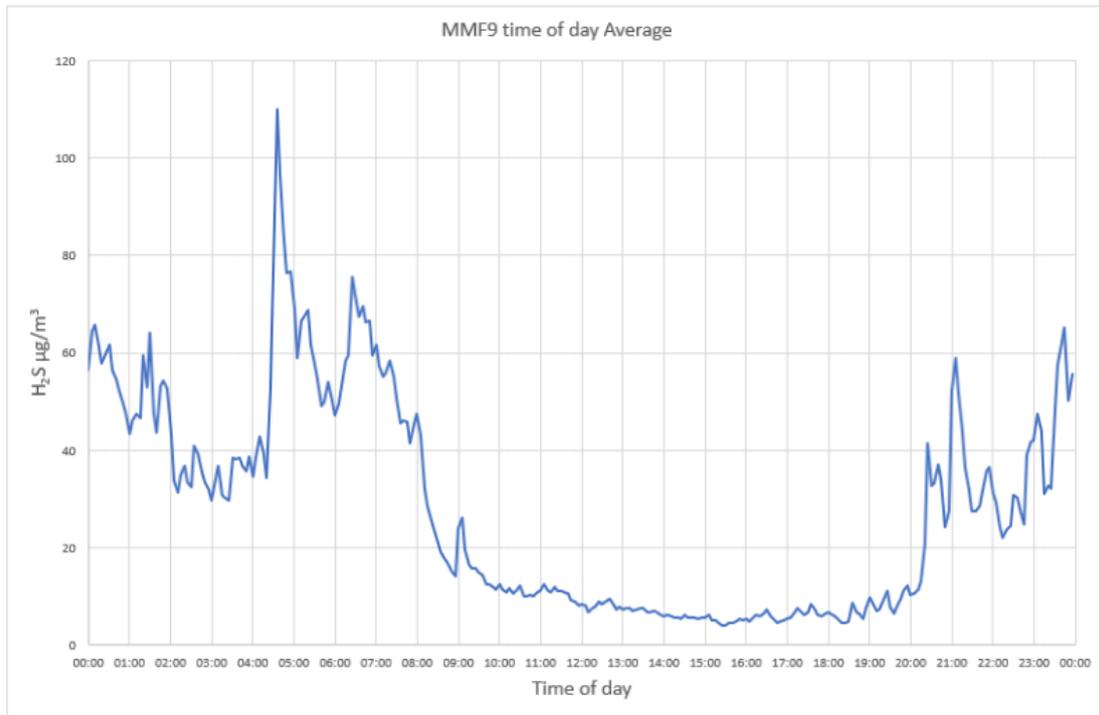
*D., Thistleberry*

As expected, those residents whose homes are closest to the landfill have also suffered a greater impact to their mental health, with 73% of respondents in the adjacent postcodes reporting a “significant” or “severe” impact, as opposed to 57% of other respondents.

For further information relating to the specific mental health issues of anxiety, stress and depression, see Reported Symptoms on page 8.

### iii. Sleep

The odorous emissions from Walley’s Quarry have been especially bad during the night, as evidenced by Figure 3 from the PHE report which shows hydrogen sulphide levels at the Galingale View monitoring station<sup>1</sup>:



Many residents have informed me that the landfill has impacted on their ability to sleep. This has consequently affected their daily lives with people being tired during the day. Following the count for the recent local elections on 6<sup>th</sup> May, I walked through the Galingale Estate at approximately 3am and the odour was extremely strong.

Over one in five of all respondents (22%) reported that the landfill had “severely” impacted their sleep. A further 38% reported that their sleep had been “significantly” affected. Only 8% reported no impact.

Again, as with the impact of the landfill on both mental and physical health, those residents whose homes are closest to the landfill have also suffered the greatest impact on their sleep, with 72% of nearby residents reporting “significant” or “severe” effects, as opposed to 50% of respondents from further afield. Only 3% of nearby residents reported no effect.

For further information relating specifically to insomnia, please see Reported Symptoms on the next page.

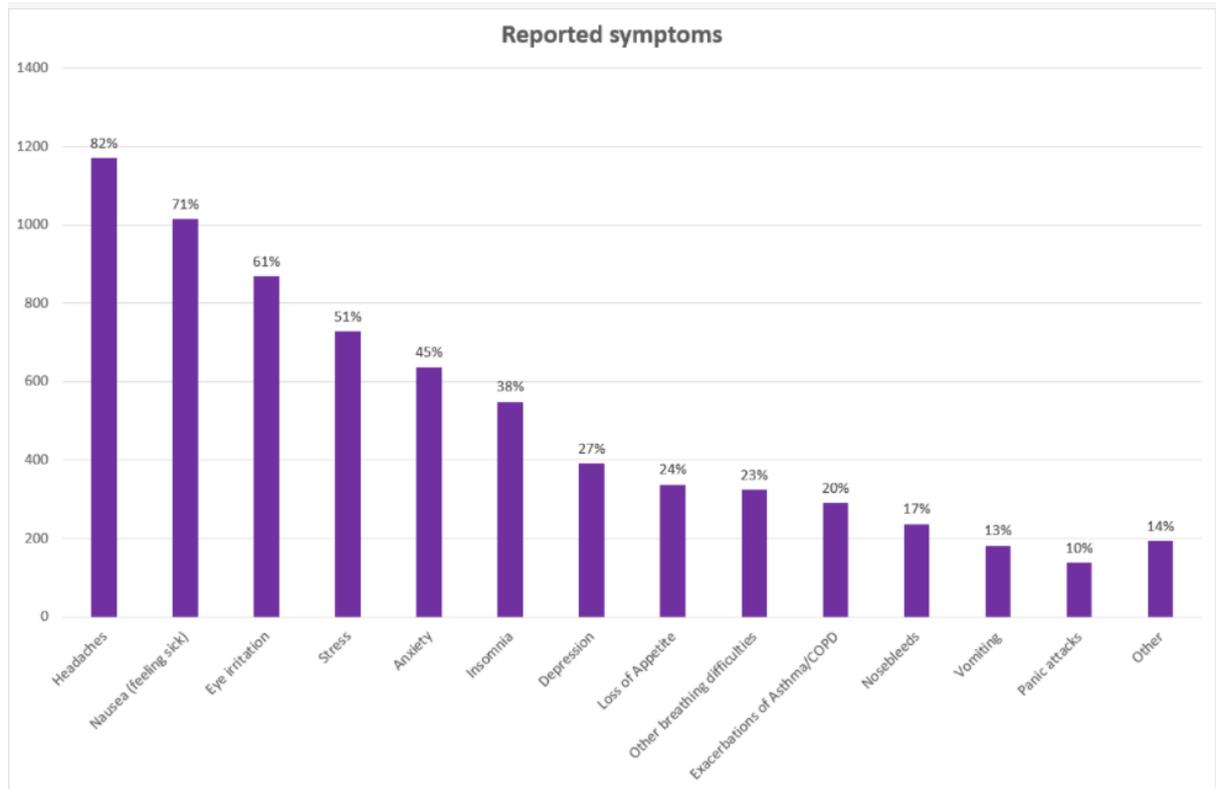
*“The smell is putrid, pungent and nauseating. It makes me want to leave the area. Even with the windows and doors shut the smell seeps into the house. At night it prevents me from sleeping and makes me feel sick as if I want to vomit...”*

*O., Newcastle-under-Lyme*

<sup>1</sup> [https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/walleys-quarry-landfill-sliverdale/user\\_uploads/210429-health-risk-assessment-of-air-quality-monitoring-results-from-mar....pdf](https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/walleys-quarry-landfill-sliverdale/user_uploads/210429-health-risk-assessment-of-air-quality-monitoring-results-from-mar....pdf)

## REPORTED SYMPTOMS

In addition to the impact on residents’ health (both mental and physical) and sleep, the survey also obtained data on the specific symptoms that residents have experienced.



As the table indicates, over four in five respondents (82%) report having suffered from headaches and over seven in ten respondents (71%) report having suffered from nausea.<sup>2</sup>

*“My children’s eczema has flared up dramatically. I feel like I’m being poisoned. I get really bad headaches and I am also always feeling sick. I have nosebleeds and feel like I’m going to pass out as a result of being constantly lightheaded. We all have really bad eye irritation and sore throats.”*  
*K., Poolfields*

Over six in ten respondents (61%) report suffering from eye irritation and almost one in five (17%) informed me that they have suffered from nosebleeds.

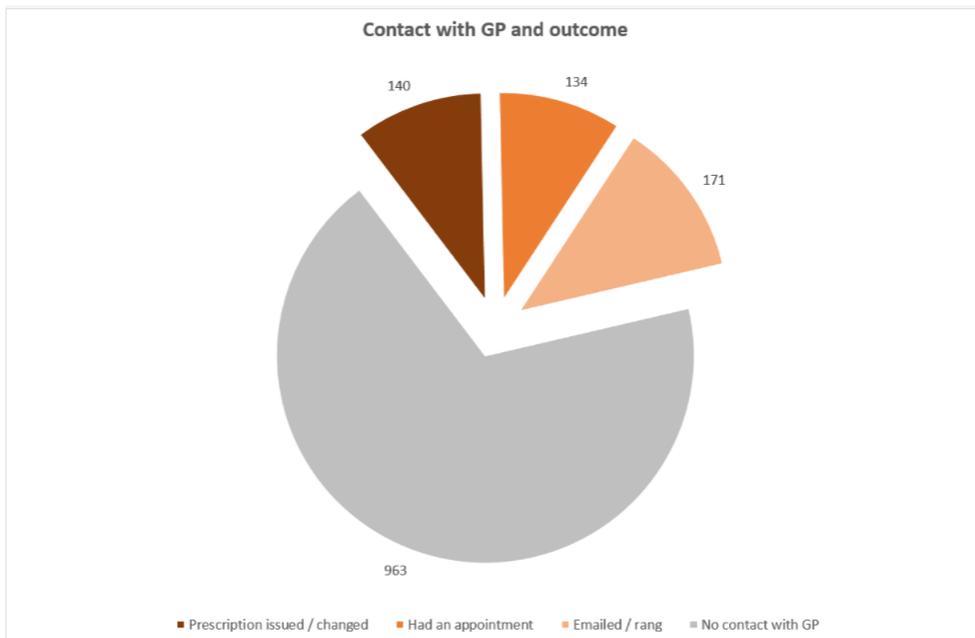
Concerning the impact on respondents’ mental health, many note having suffered from a range of mental health issues. For example, over half of respondents (51%) inform me that they have suffered from stress as a direct result of the landfill, with almost as many (45%) having suffered from anxiety. Notwithstanding, over a quarter of respondents (27%) have become depressed due to the effects of the landfill and 10% detail having suffered panic attacks.

<sup>2</sup> Whilst 71% reported having felt sick, only 182 respondents (13%) reported having actually vomited.

Respondents have also reported an array of respiratory issues with 20% informing me that they have suffered an exacerbation of their asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and 23% detailing that they have suffered from other breathing difficulties.

## MEDICAL TREATMENT

Many constituents have felt it necessary to consult their GP to discuss the symptoms that they have suffered as a result of the landfill.



According to the responses received, although 68% of respondents have not thought it necessary to seek medical advice, some 32% have approached their GP and 10% (140 people) have had to have either a prescription issued or changed due to the landfill.

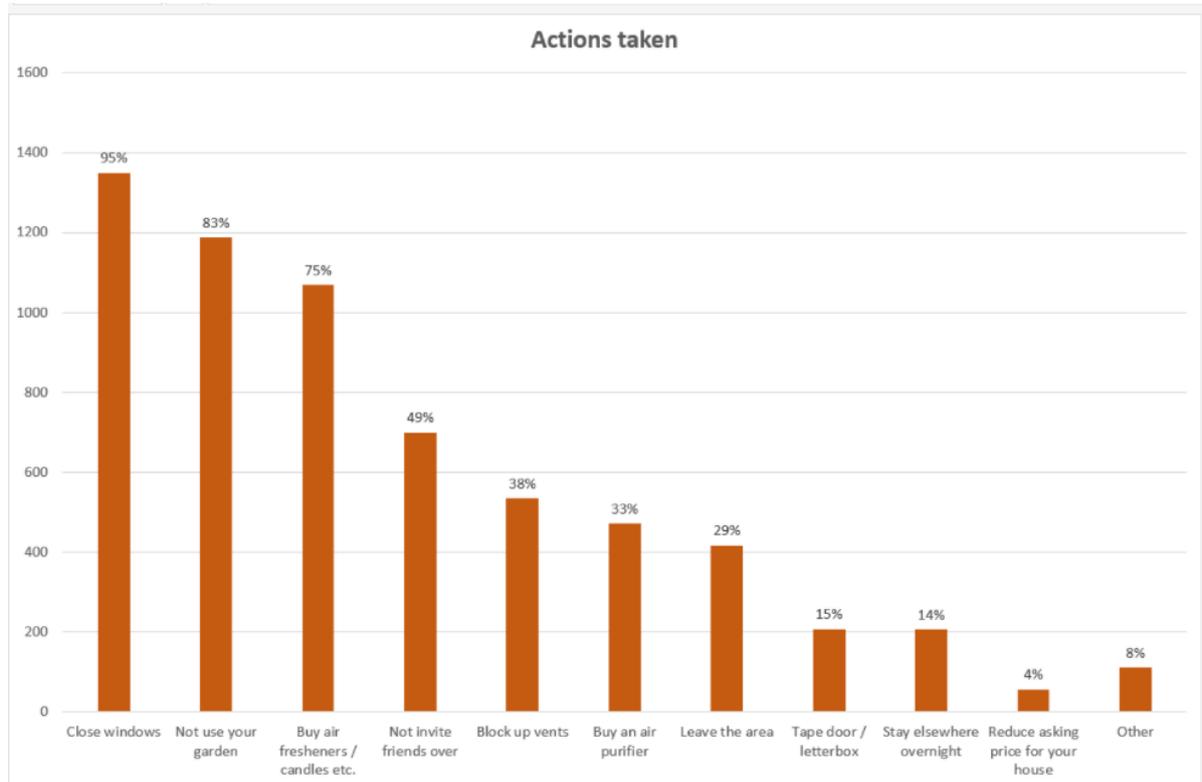
The data therefore not only indicates that residents' health is suffering as a result of the landfill but that it is placing a heavy burden on local health services. The local GP surgery in Silverdale have made their own concerns about the effects on public health – both physical and mental – very clear.

*“My son has a low platelet disorder and any bleeding can be fatal as it takes longer to stop. I am worried about how the constant nose bleeds when the smell is really bad is going to affect him and have discussed this with his specialist.”*

*B., Knutton*

## ACTIONS TAKEN

Residents have undertaken a range of measures, at their own expense, to help combat the odour and its impact on their lives. Members of the local community have fundraised to purchase air purifiers for residents whose homes are within close proximity to the landfill and, as has already been outlined, are suffering the most from the operations there.



As the above data shows, some 1,350 respondents (95%) reported having to close their windows in an attempt to avoid smelling the landfill; whilst 1,188 (83%) reported not being able to use their gardens due to the odour.

In addition, three quarters of respondents (1,068) have felt it necessary to purchase air fresheners / candles etc. and a third of respondents (472) have felt obliged to purchase an air purifier or purifiers.

*“We have moved from the Silverdale area within the past few months with the landfill issue being a large factor. I suffer with anxiety and asthma which I have found improved since moving from the area ...”*

*A., Clayton*

Other actions taken by respondents include not inviting friends over (700 or 49%), blocking up vents (535 or 38%), and taping their door and/or letterbox (208 or 15%).

Notwithstanding, some respondents have thought it necessary to take more drastic action. Of those surveyed, some 206 respondents (14%) have had to stay overnight in an area away from the odour. A further 417 respondents (29%) have taken the decision to leave the area altogether and 57 respondents (4%) have felt it necessary to reduce the asking price of their property in an attempt to sell.

*"I work at the Royal Stoke. At work I can smell it in the building which is horrible for patients and staff. It prevents me spending time outside whilst I am at work (e.g. lunch break)."*

*K., Stone*

## FINANCIAL COST TO RESIDENTS

As already outlined, some of the actions taken by residents to reduce the impact of the odour have come at a financial cost.

Of those surveyed, 1,036 respondents estimated that the landfill had cost them money, with the total estimate being £637,589. Even when discounting 7 responses which made estimates in excess of £10,000 each (due to house prices or moves), the total surpassed a quarter of a million pounds (£252,589).

This equates to £245 per respondent for 2021 alone. This is an underestimate as many residents reported answers such as "At least £500"; "Too much to even think about"; or "Hundreds". See footnote<sup>3</sup> for details of coding.

*"It is depressing, having to put up with this vile stench week in and week out, my sleep and eating patterns are all over the place due to the stink."*

*"I'm quite a strong person, but this is really getting to me in terms of not being able to open windows and doors to let fresh air into the house and just to breathe."*

*K., Westbury Park*

**Aaron Bell MP, Newcastle-under-Lyme**

**19th May 2021**

<sup>3</sup> All comments of "at least" or "+" etc. were discarded and the core number taken; range estimates were treated as midpoints (£100-200 = £150), "hundreds" = £200, "thousands" = £2000, monthly figs were multiplied by 4 and weekly figs by 17 to provide an estimate as of the end of April.