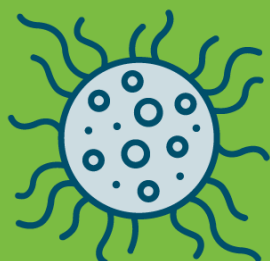


healthwatch

What are people telling us about COVID-19?

Key messages from our evidence – 3 April 2020



About

Healthwatch England has been gathering insight from the Healthwatch network about information and advice requested and views expressed by members of the public regarding COVID-19. The following insight is informed by data from **92** local Healthwatch – via responses to two surveys, findings from public engagement carried out by local Healthwatch, and our usual processes for gathering intelligence from the network.

This regular internal briefing aims to provide an update for national health and social care stakeholders about the COVID-19 related:

- information and advice the public are asking us about,
- experiences people have shared about care with us.

Updated key findings from the data gathered are as follows:

Timely and accessible information

Local Healthwatch have continued to highlight the need for timely accessible information – both in other languages and formats (e.g. BSL, Easy Read) – particularly in the current context where guidance and information are changing frequently.

Healthwatch England has received further insight highlighting the challenges faced by deaf people who also have complex needs. These include difficulties accessing BSL interpreters, and a lack of other reasonable adjustments to meet communication needs.

Access to services

People who do not use the internet are having difficulty accessing primary care services – in particular requesting repeat prescriptions.

People continue to tell Healthwatch that they are struggling to get through to their GP practice on the phone, as well as experiencing long waits to get through to NHS 111.

People are contacting their local Healthwatch with queries about the services they would usually access, and what to do or expect in the current situation.

Shielding

Some people with existing health conditions are finding it difficult to understand which advice applies to them. This includes people who have received a shielding letter when they were not expecting to, and others who believe they should be shielding but have not received a letter.

People who are shielding that rely on patient transport have raised the issue of accessing hospital treatment or appointments that are going ahead, when the transport service cannot guarantee sufficient distancing from other people.

Access to social care support

We continue to hear concerns about social care support – particularly surrounding information about and provision of PPE for care support workers, as well as people getting the support they need if they use direct payments to employ a PA and their PA needs to self-isolate.

Access to help

Local Healthwatch continue to signpost people to the relevant local voluntary/community services for help with getting food shopping and picking up medications.