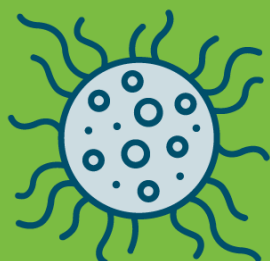


healthwatch

What are people telling us about COVID-19?

Key messages from our evidence – 27 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 **110** 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 are as follows:

Community response

Local Healthwatch continue to signpost people to services for help with getting food and medication deliveries.

Many are highlighting the impact of the lockdown on people's general mental wellbeing – particularly for those who live alone and/or have limited access to technology.

GP services

Whilst we receive mixed feedback about how helpful people are finding their GP surgeries at this time, since our previous update we have received more positive feedback about the adapted digital and telephone systems that are in place:

“As a registered patient, I booked online for a video appointment... A text arrived from the doctor at my appointment time. I clicked on it, was able to use the video app in seconds, and there was my doctor on my phone! I never thought it would work. He liked it as he could see me which might help a bit with diagnosis. He issued a prescription which was sent electronically to the chemist for me to collect same day. Very lucky to have this service!”

Shielding communications

People continue to be confused about whether or not they should have received a shielding letter. We have also heard that some people have received text messages advising them to shield, but

are unsure as to why, where this message has come from, what they should do and whether they should still expect a letter.

Access to services for non-COVID-19 issues

People also continue to raise queries and concerns about the services they would usually access, and what they should do or expect now. In particular, people continue to ask how they can access emergency dental care.

We have heard from people who are struggling with pain management, as they are unable to access their usual exercise activities (e.g. swimming), or their planned treatment, scans and operations have been postponed.

We have also heard that some people with mental health conditions are struggling to get the support they need to help them cope.

Transport

Access to hospital appointments that are going ahead continues to be an issue, when the transport options available to people are reduced or inappropriate – particularly for those that are shielding.

Social care

Concerns about social care are ongoing – particularly in relation to people who rely on home care and care home residents getting the support they need.

Local Healthwatch continue to highlight the impact of changes to social care provision on family carers – particularly for those caring for people with mental health conditions or dementia.

PPE

Worries about inadequate provision of PPE have been reported by people regarding a wide range of services, including dentistry, care homes, community nursing, home care, and for volunteers and staff from community organisations.

Praise

We continue to hear how much people appreciate health and social care professionals when they or their family receive great care.

“I would like to say thank you to all the care staff at [relative’s care home] ... They keep us up to date, support us when we visit outside the window, and have rung twice during the evening when concerned about my relative’s breathing – allowing one of us to see her for a short time as we potentially say goodbye. We think they are all doing an amazing job and tonight at 8pm I will be clapping for them and those like them in other homes across the city, looking after our precious family members.”