

Insight into action

Report #1
March to 15th May 2020



At a glance

We have ...

- Produced dedicated Covid-19 information and advice resources on our website including:
 - [Accessing dental services during Covid-19](#)
 - [What to do when someone has died](#)
 - [Support for new parents during Covid-19](#)
 - [Pregnancy and the coronavirus](#)
 - [Ramadan and Covid-19 information](#)
 - [Community pharmacies in Wokingham](#)
 - [Developed and published a Covid-19 FAQ](#)
- Completed our research on Perinatal Mental Health - to be published
- Launched our [“Eyes and Ears”](#) campaign with voluntary sector partners
- Launched our [Covid-19 survey](#)
- Shared and raised issues of high concern for the public, specifically:
 - Dentistry
 - Pharmacy
 - Learning Disability - hospital passports - NOMAD packs - annual GP Health check
 - Community nursing visits
- Worked collaboratively with other Healthwatch partners in Reading and West Berkshire
- Represented Healthwatch strategically with locality CCG’s, Hospital Trusts and the Integrated Care System
- Engaged in community group forums e.g. ZOOM weekly meeting with CLASP

Background

The way health and social care services operate has been affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) with non-urgent treatment postponed, face-to-face appointments reduced and homes and services limiting public access.

For all of us here at Healthwatch Wokingham, the outbreak has also resulted in significant changes to our work, with much of our planned public engagement and visits to services paused and a greater focus on providing advice to the public (especially hard to reach groups) and supporting the local response to COVID-19. We have adapted and will continue to do so in order to meet the needs of the people and communities of Wokingham.

However, this does not mean that the work of Healthwatch to understand the experiences of the public has stopped. With a fast-moving response to COVID-19, real-time intelligence for services about the issues



the public are facing is valuable. It is also important that health and social care services understand the impact these changes are having more broadly - especially when they concern people's safety or will have implications as services begin the return to normal. Healthwatch Wokingham is therefore clear that feedback we provide can help the NHS and social care services during this time by helping them spot and address issues caused by the COVID19 crisis.

Our priorities

During this time, we believe Healthwatch services can play the most useful role by:

- Providing advice and information to the public
- Supporting NHS and social care services in their communications with the public
- Alerting services to issues that could impact on the safety of people or their experience of care
- Supporting the wider community response to COVID-19
- Supporting communities who find it hardest to be heard or get the support they need

This briefing aims to provide a snapshot of activity and our impact from the middle of March to the 15th May.

Advice and Information

Since the Coronavirus outbreak, we have had a greater focus on our information, advice and signposting service, to help people get the information they need from a trusted source. We have also utilised our social media presence to keep the public informed and updated regarding government and local health and social care services and where to get help and support from the voluntary and community sector.



Our website - 1840 page views and 740 new users



Facebook - our posts reached over 6000 people



Instagram - our posts reached over 1500 people



Where is our insight coming from?

At present, our opportunity to directly engage with Wokingham residents has had to change due to social distancing requirements.

Our telephone based signposting service has remained open throughout the period and the helpdesk team have been responding to calls and emails from the public.

We also continue to actively seek insight about health and social care experiences through our website, newsletters, social media and through digital meetings with communities.

Community and Voluntary organisations are playing an even bigger role in being our partners and are currently supporting our “eyes and ears” campaign so we can capture and understand the experiences of those they support.

What have people been telling us and what action have we taken



We have created a specific Covid-19 [frequently asked questions](#) document, working with stakeholders, based on what we are asked by the public and community and voluntary sector partners. This has been a real success and we continue to publish and update it on a weekly basis.

Health and Care Issues in the learning disability community

We have been joining the weekly CLASP (Learning Disability Group) zoom meetings for some weeks now because we want to hear about issues related to learning disability community. Below is summary of the issues that have come up. We have been offering advice and information and where necessary escalating to CCG, NHS England, Pharmacy Network etc.

We heard

People with a learning disability were being admitted to hospital but not all had health passports which are key to communication and their care, especially with the restriction on family visitors or those that support them.

We did

Via the weekly digital meeting with CLASP we highlighted the issue. Working in collaboration with CLASP a health passport was developed and circulated to the group and individuals are now completing their individual health passports.

We heard

Person collected their medication from a Broad Street pharmacy in Wokingham. When they arrived home they discovered the medications packaging had changed and so had the shape and colour of the tablet. The individual was not made aware of the change by the pharmacy.

We did

We raised the issue with Thames Valley Pharmacy Committee stressing the need for pharmacists to know who their vulnerable patients are and to communicate with them accordingly about their medication and any changes that they might find confusing.



We heard

An individual contacted us reporting they were feeling unwell but were scared to contact the GP because they didn't want to waste the GP time.

We did

Healthwatch highlighted that NHS advice is to call your doctors when you feel ill and that this was not time wasting. The individual contacted us again to say they now had an appointment.

We heard

Individual enjoys independently managing their own medication. The pharmacy withdrew their NOMAD pack and the automatic re-ordering of their medication. This caused distress for the individual due to the change in routine and lost independence.

We did

Healthwatch reported to CCG and NHSE Pharmacy Lead who informed us the NOMAD should not have been removed. Now liaising with NHS South East Community Pharmacy and have asked them to intervene.

We heard

Individual has been feeling anxious and not sleeping due to global pandemic. Individual is used to a system of support which is now different. The change of routine being a difficult adjustment.

We did

Healthwatch signposted the individual to talking therapies and they now have an appointment. Additionally, as others were talking about anxiety and difficulty in sleeping, we suggested the involvement of a sleep consultant. The consultant attended one of the CLASP meetings and gave advice free of charge.

Dentistry

We heard

Lack of clear information and communication about dentistry during COVID-19. People on emergency lists after triage but not being informed of appointment at emergency dental hubs.

We did

Healthwatch have updated their FAQ and increased social media postings about emergency dental treatment.

CAMHS

We heard

Ongoing feedback regarding CAMHS, specifically lack of funding and 2 year waiting time for assessment.

We did

Healthwatch have contacted BHFT CAMHS. No response yet but will continue to monitor.

Pharmacies

We heard

- Issues with availability of some medications at beginning of virus pandemic: insulin and asthma.
- Some pharmacies reducing NOMAD packs with one pharmacy making blanket decision to withdraw ALL of their NOMAD packs and supply no patients. Before this is done an assessment of the individual is meant to be carried out.

We did

Healthwatch have discussed with Thames Valley Pharmacy organisation who have confirmed there is now good availability of medications.

Complete withdrawal of NOMAD from one pharmacy reported to NHS South East Community Pharmacy



Post Natal Checks and Health Visitor Checks

We heard

Reports that post natal checks at GP being cancelled. Also health visitor baby checks and baby weighing being cancelled causing anxiety in parents.

We did

Healthwatch to raise with CCG

Communication with GP Surgeries

We heard

We are hearing that it is difficult to get answers to questions now that you can't walk into a GP surgery to make a query at reception. Some finding it difficult to get past the receptionist when telephoning.

A individual contacted us saying they were advised in a phone call with a GP that because their partner and son had severe asthma the family should be shielded. The individual also needed to be furloughed from work. The individual never received the shielding letter from GP and their employer would not furlough them without a doctors letter. The individual tried several times to speak to the GP doctor to request a letter but could not get past the receptionist.

We did

Healthwatch contacted the GP practice manager to resolve the issue.

Feedback from patient

"Hello Nicholas, Thank you so much for your help, shielding letter received from GP practice this morning. This is a huge relief, thank you so much..."

For help, advice and information or to share your experience

We're the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure their views shape the support they need. We also help people find the information they need about services in Wokingham Borough.



Here to help you on the next step of your health and social care journey

We've the power to make sure that the government and those in charge of services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.

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