



## **Interim Report on Results from Covid-19 Survey for Quality Committee, July 2020.**

In March this year, the Cheshire & Mersey Healthwatch network agreed it was important to understand what people in our local areas were experiencing when trying to access health care for long-term conditions and any other health concerns, not related to Covid-19.

The Cheshire & Mersey local Healthwatch network includes Cheshire East & West, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Warrington and Wirral. This is an established network that has worked in collaboration on many joint pieces of work, including work around the NHS Long Term plan and A&E attendance.

We would like to express our appreciation to Healthwatch Liverpool who developed a survey which they shared with the rest of the network in order that what we were doing was consistent but the questions could be adapted as required.

Healthwatch St Helens would like to make it clear that this survey was intended to allow local people to voice their concerns and providers and commissioners to understand what challenges they might encounter further down the line, as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. It was, in no way, intended to criticise or put providers under added pressure, during this unprecedented time.

The survey was made available on our website and was promoted widely via Twitter, Facebook, our monthly newsletter and our various usual communication channels. Initially the response was not particularly impressive until we sent a link to the survey out to all St Helens GP practices who sent out the link to the survey, to all their patients, in a text message.

As of 30th June, we had received over 2500 responses to the survey, with some people asking us to contact them, either to tell us more or to offer support in some way. The Healthwatch team are working their way through and providing support as appropriate.

The following quotes are a sample of what people are telling us and have been lifted directly from the survey results:

In response to the question: **How has this affected your mental health?**

- Out of routine for ASD daughter, appointments changed to phone consultations or postponed. Lack of support - cannot have extended family supporting. Husband is key worker so having to look after both children with ill-health myself.
- Depression and anxiety much worse. Very little of my toolkit available to me. Living alone, without my family is hard, though friends are good. Using social media far more than is healthy.
- Being stuck in a house with no money and 3 kids to feed has been hard especially if you haven't got internet i couldn't even reply to my doctors and haven't been able to get my medication because everything is done online and if they don't answer the phone how can i get my next prescription? I can't sleep, I can't concentrate, I'm forgetting things, my life is rubbish and yet apparently the only help is on the internet, #poorlivesmatter.
- I was low & depressed before the outbreak & now I'm very low & so isolated. My carer off the council, (Direct Payments) the funding has been taken away so, I have no carer now. I used to have one for 15hrs a week now I have nothing. Nothing nothing nothing! The funding has been snatched away from the council in St. Helens BC. I now don't have carer to cheer me up. It's not fair.
- Being over 70 and pre-existing conditions, I had one urology clinic cancelled and an endoscopy gastrointestinal procedure cancelled. To add to this GP appointments are difficult to obtain. I have a current UTI as I type this. I feel quite helpless with regards to managing my conditions. I have absolutely no confidence with any social distancing and am quite frightened at the prospect of lockdown easing. My wife is the same. I find it difficult to sleep because of the situation and have to wait literally until I am exhausted before I can go to bed. I frequently get so anxious that I visibly shake.

In response to the question: **Has it been easy for you to access medical support for any other health condition you may have?**

- The doctors refuse to see you so how can they correctly diagnose anything?
- No. I rang the GP over something else and they kept referring to coronavirus, saying it didn't sound like I had it....I didn't think I did and the call was not relating to that.
- Yes it was easy as the information and signposting is on the GP's website.
- No. I'm newly diagnosed type 2 diabetic. All appointments have been cancelled understandably, but I have not had any advice at all.
- No. Medical support is always difficult to get - coronavirus or not. It is near impossible to get into our GP's surgery.

**A full report will be available later in the year. A more comprehensive list of comments is available to Quality Committee members on request.**

Jayne Parkinson-Loftus, June 2020