

The impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on Enfield people's health and wellbeing

May-June 2020

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Executive Summary

From mid-May to mid-June, we engaged with local people to hear about how the Coronavirus outbreak was impacting their health and wellbeing. Enfield residents shared their experiences with us by completing our online survey.

This report outlines the main issues that local people reported to us and summarises the support they want.

The information will be important when planning for the 'new normal', as we continue to recover from the peak of the outbreak. It should also inform preparation for a potential second wave, or more localised lockdowns.

Our evidence base suggests that themes previously raised about access to services have been compounded by the current situation, particularly concerns around mental health and social isolation, communication and support for long-term conditions.

- 1 in 3 individuals told us the main issues impacting them related to problems with mental health and/or not seeing family and friends. Other issues include isolation, shielding, difficulties accessing healthcare for long term conditions and/or stopping normal activities and routines.
- Half the people we spoke to, told us that they have experienced changes to their healthcare during the Coronavirus outbreak. Just under half of this group felt that these changes were not clearly communicated.
- On a positive note, most local people reported being able to find the information they need (86%). 1 in 3 told us that they are not getting the information they need about how to access 'normal' health services (33%). 13% feel they need more information about Coronavirus that is specific to individual health conditions.
- It was also re-assuring that the majority of this group of Enfield residents felt they were getting the support they need during the Coronavirus outbreak (80%). Of the 20% who did not believe they were getting the right support, almost 1 in 3 of them told us they are not getting the health support that they need for their general health (31%). Local people and specifically Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (17%) also felt they were not getting enough support and information from the Government about public health and the management of Coronavirus.
- 1 in 2 felt that in future, they would need further information and support on issues such as:

- more public health advice and government guidance (23%)
 - when 'normal health services' are to resume (20%)
 - mental health support (14%).
- Local people also told us they wanted more accessible information in different languages and formats.

We recognise the challenges that health and care services will face in delivering "normal" services alongside looking after individuals with Coronavirus, as well as the potential rise in demand with already overstretched services working to full capacity. In preparing for the future it will be important to take note of key messages from local residents. There is a clear need to better communicate and manage people's expectations around access to and availability of services, especially when it comes to the management of long term conditions.

Our evidence suggests that the positive comments around community support and the community helping one another, as well as support with prescription pick-ups and emergency food parcel deliveries should be maintained or recommenced should we enter a new wave of infection or localised lockdown. The various local initiatives were welcomed and made a difference to how people felt they were being supported.

Given the above we recommend that commissioners:

- Develop clear, simple, transparent and accessible information to inform local communities about the 'new normal', outlining any developments and changes
- Put systems in place to identify local people's priorities, particularly among disadvantaged groups and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities
- Proactively engage with local residents and the voluntary sector to develop sustainable, effective community support and strategies

Methodology

Between 20th May and 17th June 2020, Healthwatch Enfield engaged with 148 local residents to hear about how the Coronavirus outbreak was impacting their health and wellbeing.

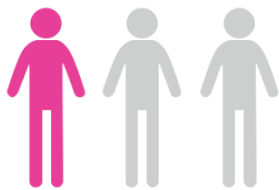
Individuals' views and opinions were collected via an online survey which was promoted via the Healthwatch Enfield newsletter and social media channels, in addition to local community groups such as The Palmers Green Community, Enfield Racial and Equality Council and Enfield Dispatch.

Due to the voluntary nature of individuals' participation in the conversations, a standard set of data was developed but a complete set was not collected for each individual. Therefore, the sample size varies depending on information provided. Not all data will tally due to rounding.

Issues

As other countries have been experiencing¹, mental health has featured as a major impact following pandemic lockdowns. Whilst the UK Government recognised this and allowed the public to, for example, exercise daily and go out to obtain essential supplies and medication, the evidence we have collected suggests that mental health remains a major concern for our residents.

Over 1 in 3 local people reported the main issues affecting their health and wellbeing during the Coronavirus outbreak are difficulties with their mental health and/or not socialising and seeing family or friends. This is significant, as our survey was aimed at the general population and not those already identified as having poor mental health.



1 in 3 are experiencing problems with mental health and/or are finding it difficult not seeing family and friends.

Difficulties with mental health (18%)

'I have experienced an increase in anxiety'

'I feel depressed'

'Lockdown has affected my mental health'

Not socialising and seeing family and/or friends (18%)

'It's hard being cut off from my children and grandchildren'

'Not being able to see friends or family has been hard'

'I have a new baby and haven't been able to see any family or friends'

On average, 1 in 10 local people felt they were mainly impacted by: isolation, shielding, difficulties accessing health care for long term conditions, and/or stopping normal activities/routines.

¹ COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures impact on mental health among the general population in Italy, April 2020, [Research Gate](#).



On average, **1 in 10** are impacted by isolation, shielding, difficulties accessing healthcare for long term conditions and/or stopping normal activities and routines.

Isolation (14%)

*'I live on my own, I have had days where I have felt really lonely'
'Isolation is making me depressed'
'I am lonely and fear if I get ill no one will know'*

Difficulties accessing health care for long term conditions (10%)

*'I can't get help to treat my sons long term condition'
'My husband is having difficulty accessing vital hospital treatment'
'My hospital appointments have all been cancelled'*

Impact of Shielding (6%)

*'My husband is shielding, and I have no choice but to do the same'
'Being told to 'shield' and unable to actually get out, made it difficult'
'My partner is shielding so my daughter who is a front line worker has had to move out'*

Stopping normal activities and routine (6%)

*'I want to be free to travel into London. I'm going mad being cooped up!
'I cannot take my elderly mum out. I cannot take her to clubs and events'
'Not able to run my exercise classes which I have been doing for 55 years,'*

Local people also told us that they were experiencing difficulties with:

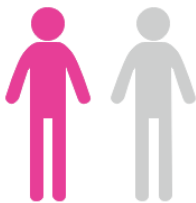
- Accessing dental services
- Caring responsibilities for children
- Controlling long term conditions
- Accessing Coronavirus testing
- Exercising
- Work and/or financial problems
- Getting paid carers
- Getting prescriptions

- Balancing home schooling and work
- Accessing PPE for carers
- Sleeping
- Getting supermarket deliveries
- Weight gain

Accessing health care during the Coronavirus outbreak

Due to health services being re-structured to support and deal with patients with Coronavirus, this inevitably had a negative impact on the management of local resident's long-term conditions. Over 1 in 2 local people who responded to our survey (56%) reported they had experienced changes to their healthcare during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Whilst the NHS were making great effort to inform the public to continue to seek medical advice, as the peak of infections started to reduce, as our evidence base suggests, the reality has been that it has been difficult for local patients to access "normal" services.



1 in 2 have experienced changes to their healthcare during the Coronavirus outbreak.

Cancelled appointments, tests, and treatments (26%)

1 in 4 reported they had experienced cancelled appointments, tests and/or treatment for current and/or existing long term conditions.

'Missed a needed hospital appointment, surgery closed. Missed annual eye-test. Missing diabetic reviews'

'My operation was postponed'

'I was due to have a colonoscopy as a follow-up to an operation for bowel cancer, as yet this has not been arranged.'

Difficulties accessing care (21%)

1 in 5 explained they have had difficulties accessing care, including accessing GP and dental services.

'There is no healthcare. Everything postponed'

'Not feeling able to access non-essential services and check-up's'

'It's very difficult to contact my GP Surgery'

Accessing care through telephone consultations (19%)

Almost 1 in 5 (19%) told us that they have accessed healthcare through telephone consultations. Feedback of these were mixed; some people felt that this was easier and more practical for them and others would have preferred to have accessed care via face to face consultations.

'I don't feel that is the same as actually seeing a doctor, letting them take my blood pressure etc. My hearing on the phone is not good,'

'I am unable to see a doctor and have to rely on phone calls. On the upside, phone appointments are easier to make. Normally I have to wait 2-4 weeks to see my doctor.'

'Not able to see a doctor but had an online telephone consultation. It's hard for me to explain it a doctor to understand if you can't see each other'

'I had an over the phone doctor's appointment and online asthma review (which saved me 2 in person appointments!!)'

'I had to have a phone call with my GP about a relatively minor issue, instead of a visit. but I have to say that worked as well as or better than having to go to the surgery.'

'Going online to my GP was a wonderful service and a doctor rang back that same day. Prescription sent to chemist and they delivered to me.'

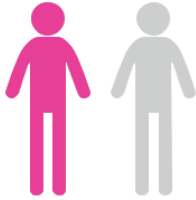
'That service should stay even after this pandemic.'

Other impact on health and care

Individuals have reported delays in getting their prescriptions and some people in receipt of home care have explained that Coronavirus has impacted the frequency of care that they receive, in addition to problems accessing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for carers. A small minority said that they have been afraid to use services due to the fear of contracting Coronavirus. Some people told us that they feel being in 'lockdown' has had a negative impact on their health due to not being able to exercise as they usually would and/or eating more being at home (15%).

Communicating changes to healthcare

Of those that have experienced changes to their healthcare due to Coronavirus, over 1 in every 2 of these individuals (57%) told us that these changes had been clearly communicated to them. These people told us that they have received a call, text message or letter to inform them of cancellations. 43% of individuals explained that they were not contacted and had to contact professionals/find out via word of mouth instead.



1 in 2 who experienced changes to healthcare were told about the changes.

'I didn't know until I tried to contact my doctor t the information was confusing'

'We are depending on hearsay'

'My doctors did not inform me'

'No, felt unclear'

'I had to seek and find out this information myself. I wasn't informed directly'

'Nurse done everything she could as soon as I contacted her'

'I had texts cancelling my appointment & telling me I would have a telephone consultation on a particular day.'

'Initiative was taken by GP'

'Received I think letter or text message informing me the doctor would call me.'

Accessing information during the Coronavirus outbreak

What was interesting and positive to note, whilst a significant minority of those who responded to our survey felt they changes to their care were not effectively communicated, 86% of local people who responded to our survey said that they are finding the information they need during the Coronavirus outbreak.

The most popular ways to access this information are:



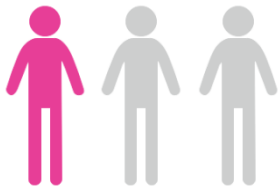
The media: e.g. television, radio or newspaper (72%)



National organisations' websites: e.g. Government, NHS and local organisations websites: e.g. Enfield Council, local hospital, voluntary and community organisations and our own Healthwatch Enfield website (63%).

Other sources of information include social media, family and friends, email, text messages and letters via the post. Some individuals also told us that they source information from their personal care assistants, care providers and work.

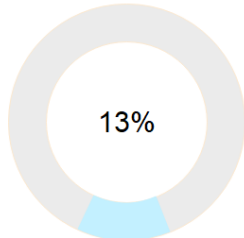
Of those who reported they are not finding the information they need:



1 in 3 are not able to access information about how to access 'normal' health services (33%).



1 in 3 have concerns relating to the Government's response to Coronavirus and/or feel that the guidance and information published by the Government is not clear or sufficient. (33%).



13% feel they need more information about Coronavirus that is specific to individual health conditions.

*'I need information on how to access normal NHS services'
'I want to know what is happening re my other hospital appointments?'
'Too much main media - facts are not being provided to the public. We are only being told what the Government want us to hear. Stats are not meaningful.'*

*'Government has hidden figures and peddled misinformation'
'Plenty of general information but very little specific info regarding our health problems.'*

'All health services should have been giving people specific info on their health problems especially when they are ones that increase of our risk'

Individuals also report that they want more information about:

- Shielding
- Accessing testing for individuals who do not drive
- The local 'R' rate in Enfield

Local people also said that they would like information in accessible formats such as:

- Information in different languages
- Information that is accessible to those who are Deaf

Getting support during the Coronavirus outbreak

80% of local people who completed our survey felt they are getting the support they need during the Coronavirus outbreak..

Individuals told us that some of this support has come from the local community, including neighbours, family and friends. Local people have told us how ‘amazing’ it has been to see the local community ‘come together’, and the ‘amazing acts of kindness towards others’. The Enfield community has been described as ‘very very strong’ with a ‘great community spirit’ and people have explained that it has been ‘heart-warming’ to see ‘neighbours look out for each other’.

Of those that report they are not getting the support they need:



Almost 1 in 3 feel they are not getting the health support that they need for their general health (31%).



Almost 1 in 5 feel they are not getting enough support and information from the Government about public health and the management of Coronavirus, in the general population and Black and Ethnic Minority Communities (17%).

‘I need access to my GP’

‘There is no care for non COVID issues’

‘It’s no use shielding from the virus if something else is waiting to kill me!’

‘I need clear information. There is so much we are not informed about.’

‘Proper official guidance on what to do and when’

‘Need more information from public Health England on what’s happening in the BAME communities’



1 in 10 feel they are not getting the support they need to manage their long term conditions.

1 in 10 feel that they are not currently getting the mental health support they need (10%).

I do think diabetic nurse or doctor should contact their patients or send information out.'

'Could do with attending a therapist group or one to one'

'More free mental health support: my issues around mental health are affecting daily life but not enough to get free support'

Local people also told us that they feel there is not enough:

- Support for disabled people
- Befriending support to have contact from someone
- Advice in different languages
- Information about post-natal support
- Support from work
- Support for carers
- Information about local 'R' rates in Enfield

'More befriending support would be well received.'

'As we have many cultures here, I think guidance should be in different languages.'

'Post-natal support - no access to midwives/baby clinics closed etc.'

'I find support at work is very limited.'

'My surgery is not thinking of disabled people when they lock their front door. You have to phone to get in which I'm unable do.'

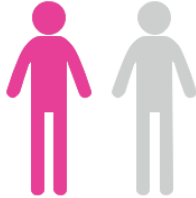
'Would like to receive more locally sourced accurate information on risks locally'

'Localising the virus outbreak. Where is most dangerous.'

Information and support needed moving forward

Given the potential for either a second wave or further, more localised lockdowns, it's important that decision-makers are not only planning ahead but also ensuring they are taking the views of local residents into account, if we are to successfully navigate through this next period and minimise any further impact on either our health or the local economy.

Clear communication, as well as support, to manage existing conditions, being clear what patients can expect going forward, is vital. In addition, building capacity and resilience in our local community's mental health and emotional well-being will be equally important to avoid specialist services being quickly over-whelmed.



1 in 2 told us they need more support and/or information moving forward (50%).

More public health advice and Government guidance (23%)

Almost 1 in 4 told us they will need more public health advice and/or government guidance.

'Clear advice on what we are doing and how we can protect ourselves'
'Clear and simple instructions on the next steps/actions to take including any safety measures to be put in place'
'Yes make it clear what we can do, and what we can't. Separating rules for normal people and those who are vulnerable, as you don't know what applies to you.'

'Normal' health services to resume (20%)

1 in 5 told us that they will need 'normal' health services to resume so that they can access the healthcare they need, If this is unlikely to happen in reality with long wait lists, then this information needs to be clearly shared and communicated in the meantime.

'Knowledge of when elective surgery and routine health check will be resumed.'
'Access to Drs surgery and hospital facilities'
'When will I be able to access regular GP services'
'What backlog is there for future treatments and care'

Mental health support (14%)

14% of those who responded from the local community reported they think they will need mental health advice and support.

'Mental help for stress/anxiety'
'Bereavement counselling'
'It would be useful to have more mental health advice and support services.'

Local people also told us they think they will need:

- More information about shielding
- Accessible information in different languages and/or formats
- Befriending and/or 'someone to talk to'
- Condition specific advice about Coronavirus for long term conditions
- More information about contact tracing
- Financial advice
- Advice on how to use public transport
- More information about testing
- More information about local 'R' rates in Enfield
- Information about resuming homecare and access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Information about resuming respite care

'To be updated as to how those shielding can slowly get out more and start to 'live'.'

'Most people in Enfield suggested that they should have information in their mother language'

'I'd just like to talk to someone'

'More information about how the contact tracing app works,'

'I would like financial support'

'Travelling safely on buses and tubes. I have asthma and don't know whether I need to shield or not. The governments guidelines are rather confusing'

'Information about a follow-up test to see if I had the virus/have antibodies.'

'Where exactly in Enfield are the virus hotspots'

'Would like to know at least weekly what the R rate for Enfield is'

'At some point we require more information on respite care as I will need a break cannot leave mum and other members of the family cannot cope.'

'Long term planning for care agencies to have sufficient PPE'

Conclusion

Our evidence base suggests that themes previously raised about access to services have been compounded by the current situation, particularly concerns around mental health and social isolation, communication and support for long-term conditions.

We recognise the challenges that health and care services will face in delivering "normal" services alongside looking after individuals with Coronavirus, as well as the potential rise in demand with already overstretched services working to full capacity. In preparing for the future it

will be important to take note of key messages from local residents. There is a clear need to better communicate and manage people's expectations around access to and availability of services, especially when it comes to the management of long-term conditions.

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Given the above we recommend commissioners:

- Develop clear, simple, transparent and accessible information to inform local communities about the 'new normal', outlining any developments and changes
- Put systems in place to identify local people's priorities, particularly among disadvantaged groups and Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities
- Proactively engage with local residents and the voluntary sector to develop sustainable, effective community support and strategies

Demographics of survey respondents

Gender	
Male	18%
Female	82%
Other	0%
Prefer not to say	0%

Age	
Under 18	0%
18-24	0%
25-29	1%
30-34	1%
35-39	5%
40-44	4%
45-49	10%
50-54	7%
55-59	7%
60-64	14%
65-69	11%
70+	41%

Sexual Orientation	
Heterosexual	94%
Gay or lesbian	2%
Bisexual	1%
Queer	0%
Prefer not to state	3%

Religion	
Buddhist	0%
Christian	50%
Hindu	2%
Jewish	8%
Muslim	13%
Sikh	0%
No religion	37%
I'd prefer not to say	8%

Ethnicity	
Asian/Asian British	5%
Indian	1%
Any other Asian Background	1%
African	3%
Black/Black British	4%
Caribbean	4%
White and Black Caribbean	1%
Any other mixed background	2%
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	72%
Irish	1%
Any other white background	8%

Disability	
Yes	28%
No	72%

Carer	
Yes	22%
No	78%

This report can be made available in alternative formats, such as easy read or large print, and may be available in alternative languages, upon request.

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