

## How does it feel for me during Covid 19? - real-time report

### Week Commencing 5<sup>th</sup> October

#### How does it feel for me?

Since last year we have been following the journeys of people with multiple health conditions by having conversations with them each month about their experiences of health and care. Before lockdown, we had been doing this by filming them in their homes and this obviously had to stop. However, we have been able to continue the project by phoning people. Joyce has kindly shared her experiences with us every month since March and her updates about her and her husband Edgar's experiences give a really valuable insight into how things have been for people living in the community who continue to need to access services under lockdown. You can read Joyce's monthly updates by going to <https://healthwatchleeds.co.uk/our-work/how-does-it-feel-for-me/> and clicking on 'Joyce'.

**We are currently looking for more participants for the project, so if you are able to share the following text around your networks, we would be very grateful:**

**Do you have multiple health conditions and want to get your experiences of health and care services heard by people at the top?**

We're looking for people with multiple health conditions and/or their carers who would be willing to talk to us once a month over a 6 month period to record their story. We can record your experiences in a way that works for you (eg recorded phone or video call, socially distanced filming or working with you keep an audio/video diary). Find out more by visiting our website <https://healthwatchleeds.co.uk/our-work/how-does-it-feel-for-me/>

#### Armley Helping Hands

A charity that provides support for older people in Armley and Wortley

AHH's services users' mental wellbeing has been knocked by the prospect of the pandemic entering a second wave, prolonging their isolation. They feel as though they don't see anyone anymore, which has been depressing for some. Its members aren't generally digitally aware, and take-up of digital service offers have been low. Some are perhaps frightened off by stories they hear in the media. AHH has been working with its members to get them out for their flu jabs.

#### Leeds Older People's Forum

Supports over 100 voluntary sector organisations working with older people across Leeds.

The picture is quite variable in terms of LOPF's service user wellbeing. Some people are fearful and generally fed up with the situation. Others are feeling lonely and are desperate to get out and interact with other people. Members are finding it harder to access medical appointments on the whole, often due to difficulties with getting through to surgeries on the phone. This is leading to anxiety for some.

<p>Changes in government advice has caused confusion</p>	<p>Lots of LOPF's members are having difficulties navigating remote health and care services; for example, this is often the case for people with dementia. The pathway doesn't feel as smooth as it might have done, and they might have barriers such as not having home WiFi or the right technology.</p>
<p><b>Older People's Action in the Locality</b> Supporting older people within the Cookridge, Tinshill, Adel and Bramhope areas to live safe, healthy, independent lives without isolation.</p> <p>Generally OPAL's service users' mental wellbeing has suffered over lockdown, although problems lessened when some lockdown measures were eased. However, members still feel anxious and low about what might be around the corner. They are less confident about going out, which has hampered their mobility. Some voice frustrations about the situation, but others have remained positive, especially when they receive a lot of input from their families.</p> <p>Some people are now attending socially distanced lunch clubs, albeit in smaller numbers than before the pandemic. Phone buddying has been a real positive for members.</p> <p>Members have found it difficult to get through to the GP, spending long periods of time on hold.</p> <p>OPAL has worked to communicate with members about changes to how they access services. Its member newsletters have been welcomed and appreciated. For some older people, learning new digital skills has helped them feel more in touch with family members.</p>	<p><b>Leeds Mind</b> Promotes positive mental health and wellbeing, and provides help and support to those who need it.</p> <p>A lot of their service users are feeling anxious and confused. Many are socially isolated and feel depressed. There is a sense of dread with winter approaching and even less opportunity for social interaction.</p> <p>All fundraising for Leeds Mind has been cancelled and additional support for their crisis team is needed. They feel that more support for Samaritans is also needed, especially at night and the weekend as calls are increasing.</p> <p>A large percentage of their service users are struggling with the switch to digital - 80-90% don't use online for anything and those that do have the capacity don't have the technology.</p> <p>People are really missing face to face interaction, feeling like they don't actually 'see' anyone anymore.</p> <p>On a positive note, telephone befriending has been implemented and works well - it's the only thing some people have. The Leeds Mind team have been working well with regular meetings where they can air their concerns.</p>
<p><b>Moor Allerton Elderly Care</b> Supporting people over 60 in the Moor Allerton, Alwoodley, Shadwell and North Moortown area of Leeds</p> <p>Following extra risk assessments, all current activities have been paused this week due to the new restrictions in place. Service users are scared and confused - they don't know what a bubble is and what it all means.</p> <p>There are worries about not getting the flu jab when items on the news have said places like Boots have run out.</p>	

There has been some variance with regards their service users embracing the switch to digital, with the older group (80 and above) really struggling due to physical or sensory problems and finding it all very stressful. The younger cohort of older people have embraced it though and MOEC have supplied some of the technology they've needed. However, they have all said they want face to face back.

There has been feedback about the information that gets provided - too much and a lot of it conflicting, the language used isn't accessible (jargon) or easy to read.

The team at MOEC are pulling together exceptionally well though and are well supported by their Manager.

### How is it for people in the LS25 and LS26 areas of the city?

We are working together with LS25 & LS26 [Local Care Partnership](#) to find out how Covid-19 has impacted people's lifestyle in Garforth, Rothwell, Woodlesford and surrounding areas.

We've had over 1500 responses to the survey so far and it is due to close on Friday 30th October. The easy read version will launch on Wednesday 7th October.

Below is a very brief snapshot of what people are telling us so far:

People are telling us that they enjoy living close to beautiful parks, nature reserves and the countryside. They feel safe and appreciate the community atmosphere and friendly neighbours. Several people mention that there is a range of local amenities and medical facilities in the area and although semi-rural there are good transport links by rail, bus and car.

20% of respondents were identified as clinically vulnerable to COVID-19 and had been previously asked to shield. Over 80% of respondents have not shown any symptoms of COVID-19.

More than 75% of respondents have said their current overall health and well-being is average, good or excellent.

In the current climate people feel comfortable walking, cycling, gardening, and doing online home workouts.

Over half the people have said their activity levels have been impacted by COVID-19. *"At the start of lockdown, because of all the confusion in regard to rules and guidelines, a lot of people weren't sure if they were permitted to enjoy a simple walk in the park or visit gyms etc"*.

There have been some negative impacts of lockdown that have affected people's lifestyles. It appears that people are consuming alcohol differently and some have been drinking more frequently since the lockdown. *'Drinking at home on an afternoon'*. Not being able to visit family and friends has affected people's mental health.

Many people have taken up new activities or are doing more of what they enjoy (which has been a positive aspect of lockdown), such as growing their own vegetables or spending more at the allotment or gardening.

Those that are working from home have appreciated spending more time with their family and have more time for exercise. Only 10% of respondents so far have had a negative experience with health and care appointments by phone or online. However, more than half of the people would like services to continue to offer a mixture of digital/phone services and face to face.

### Healthwatch Leeds Enquiry Line

Healthwatch Leeds has continued to hear from people whose health and care experiences have been affected by the pandemic. Here are some of the things which people have told us:

- Positive experience at the urgent treatment centre (St George's) in Middleton: *"The quality of care was excellent in the current Covid 19 climate and even though infection control measures are now in place this has not compromised the quality of care, in fact it has enhanced it. The child had been anxious about visiting the St Georges but both parent and child were very reassured that suitable precautions are in place and would have no hesitation going back if needed. These new COVID changes have positively improved the service as the family used to dread the long wait on previous visits."*
- Another 17 dental related enquiries in two weeks, with people not being able to be seen for treatment.
- We have had a couple of enquiries relating to how the pausing of services is having an impact on people - including issues with testing and the delay this can cause to treatment/care.
- A person with MS told us that they called the GP 5 times to ask for a flu jab (that they have had for a number of years) and when they eventually got through to the practice they were told that they were not eligible.
- However, there are a large number of positive comments on Care Opinion about Flu Clinics and how organised and efficient that have been: *"The drive through flu jab clinic is a stroke of genius and I hope you keep this process in the future. Fast, convenient and safe. Happy days! 5 star rating!!"*
- We are also getting more non-COVID related enquiries as more people are accessing health and care. This is also apparent on Care Opinion where it is notable that there is often a real variance of experiences at different GP practices.

**These reports are designed to support decision makers during this time. If you find them useful, we would love to hear from you! Please do drop us a line at [info@healthwatchleeds.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchleeds.co.uk) to tell us what you have found most useful.**