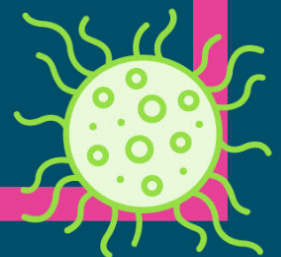


**Covid Wellbeing Report**  
**Healthwatch Warrington**  
**2020**



# Introduction

Healthwatch Warrington is the independent voice of the public in health and social care services. We gather feedback from members of the public using health and social care services about their experiences. The feedback that we gather is shared with service providers and commissioners in order to improve health and social care services.

With the global pandemic taking the world from normality to lockdown, we wanted to use this time to assess how changes to society and lockdown had impacted residents of Warrington in regards to their wellbeing and how they access health & social care services.

## What we did

The project made use of a survey to gather feedback from Warrington residents. The survey was hosted on our website via a form and was sent out in our newsletter, across social media platforms and shared in various online groups. We created a link and email banner to share our survey effortlessly. The survey was made up of multiple-choice questions as well as ones where users could answer in their own words. The questions were the same as other Healthwatch's in the region so that we may be able to use all the data for a regional report.

We would monitor the results regularly whilst it was live, and see common themes occurring. During this time we tried to target our audiences across our social media platforms, helping share information about loneliness and befriending services in Warrington as well as information about how to tackle lockdown anxieties.

## Who took part?

There were **246** responses to the survey, this means that the number of respondents cannot be seen as being representative of all residents

in Warrington and their experiences of COVID-19 and therefore, should be viewed as a snapshot of the views and experiences of those people who have taken part in the survey.

Survey respondents were asked some basic demographic questions including the age group, gender, and whether they considered themselves to have a disability.

**26%** identified themselves as Male

**72%** identified as Female

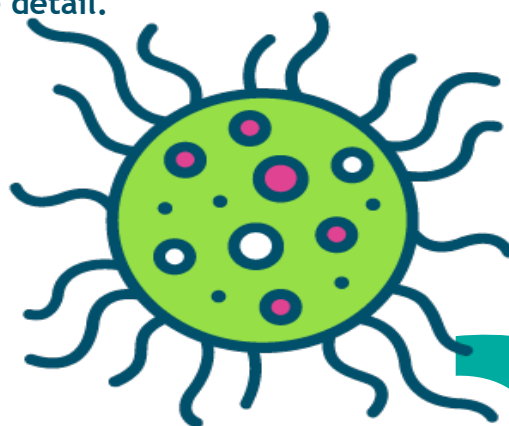
**2%** Preferred not to disclose.

**8%** of the respondents were aged **16-25** years old and **46%** were **26-49** years old. **37%** were **50-65** years old and **9%** over **65**.

**18%** of the respondents said that they considered themselves to have a disability.

As the sample size is small it has not been possible to provide meaningful analysis that considers any differences in feedback or experiences between different demographic groups.

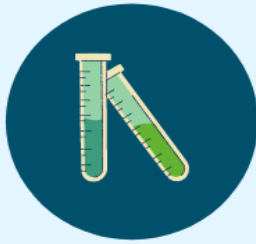
Before this report, we created a synopsis infographic with all the facts we found out from the survey, giving an insight into our findings. This report will explain our data in more detail.



# COVID-19 Survey

## Results

A brief insight to Healthwatch Warrington's COVID-19 Survey Results



**1%**  
Had been tested  
and diagnosed



**23%**  
Had symptoms but  
didn't get tested



**76%**  
Had no Symptoms and  
had not been tested.

Most common answers  
where Warrington residents  
got their information



92.7% people who answered our survey  
thought it was easy to find CLEAR,  
UNDERSTANDABLE Information



56.5% of those who answered thought their  
mental health & well being had been  
affected.

51.4% said that their healthcare for other conditions  
hadn't been affected- with many stating that  
"Primary Care was easier to access now."



## Common Themes



## Demographics



26% Male  
72% Female  
2% Prefer not to say



8% 16-25  
46% 26-49  
37% 50-65  
9% Over 65



82% Not disabled  
18% Disabled

All Data Collected by Healthwatch Warrington  
from March 2020-June 2020 from 246 Adults

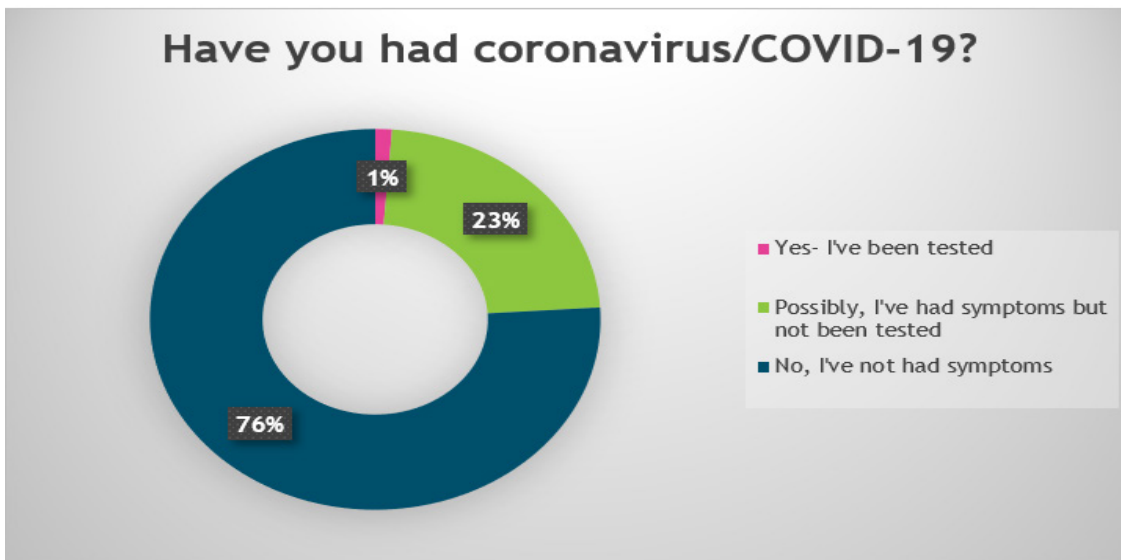
[www.healthwatchwarrington.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchwarrington.co.uk)

F:@HWWarrington T: @HWWarrington I:@HWWarrington  
Contact@healthwatchwarrington.co.uk

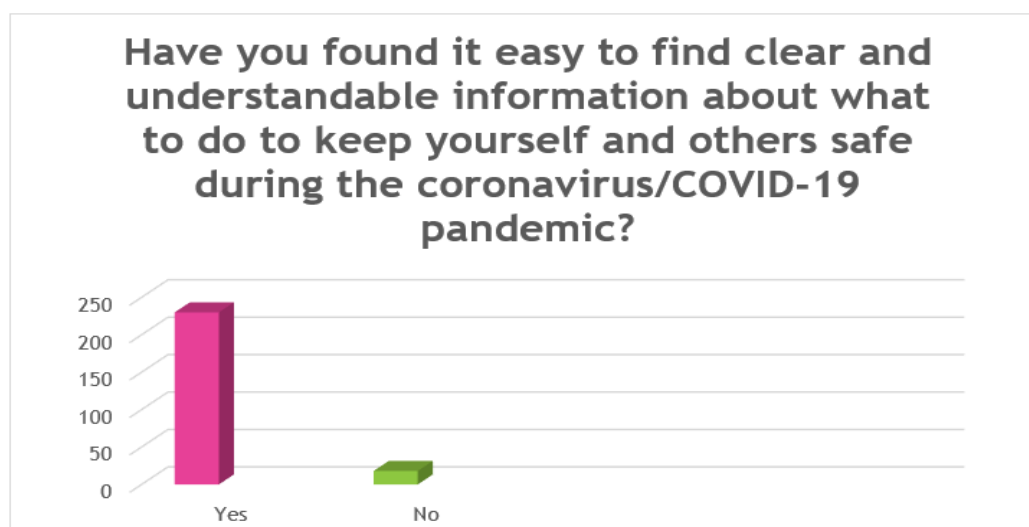
# Key findings

## Survey findings

Respondents were first asked if they had coronavirus/ COVID-19. **1%** of respondents had tested positive for COVID-19 with **23%** admitting they had suffered symptoms but hadn't been tested and **76%** not experiencing any symptoms.



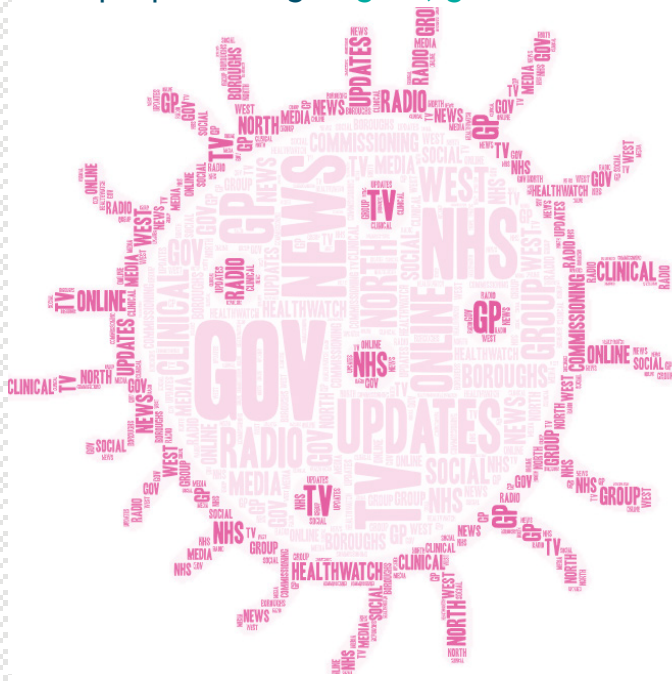
When asked whether they had found it easy to find clear and understandable information about how to keep safe during the pandemic, **230** respondents stated it was easy to find with just **18** saying they found it difficult.



Those that had found it easy listed, .gov website, NHS, GP Practices, Social Media, and Clinical Commissioning groups to find their information.



Some people stating “A good, general knowledge about how viruses are spread, and how to protect myself and family.” Others found that the Government guidelines sometimes “has been confusing, lacking clarity, poorly timed and lacking common sense.” Most ways to access information was online with people stating, “It would’ve been difficult without internet access”. Some respondents stated that the information on tv was mainly negative and “scaremongering”



When asked whether or not respondents thought they had COVID-19 symptoms and whether they had sought medical advice, for 73% this was not applicable, however out of the people that responded 8% sought medical help and 19% self-isolated without medical intervention

If you think you may have had coronavirus/COVID-19, did you seek medical advice or care whilst you had symptoms?



■ Yes ■ No ■ Not Applicable

When asked to provide feedback on their experiences accessing medical help or care during the pandemic, the most popular answers included that they used advice to *self-isolate* if they thought they had symptoms.



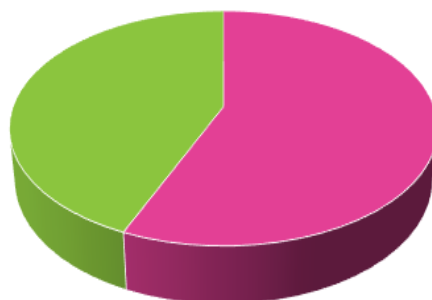
If they did seek medical advice, they would call **119**, **eConsult** and **Supportive health visitors** helping them out. *“Due to being asthmatic I completed a survey from my GP surgery on my asthma and received a call within 24 hours to discuss my symptoms. From this a new inhaler was prescribed but I found out on the same evening I had tested positive for COVID-19. The symptoms for me were similar till they progressed and became worse. I stayed at home in bed to make it easier to breath and I am currently still having problems breathing but taking my inhalers and meds to aid recovery.”*

Feedback regarding health visitors was extremely mixed as some found they were helpful where others found they couldn't contact or had heard from them. *“My husband is type 1 diabetic and he received no special information from health services. I have mild asthma and got a letter with gp & local council calls about support. I have ended up shielding my husband after discussion with gp. Seems confusing messaging to be honest.”*

Many mentioned that they only realised they may have had the virus when the second lot of symptoms were mentioned (**fatigue, fever chills, lack of smell and taste**) they had thought they just had another **“viral infection”**. *“I do think it took too long to make the other possible symptoms known though as when I had symptoms they didn't include a temp and cough which now is seen not needed to be there too.”*

Mental Health has been a ongoing concern during he pandemic, we asked **“has your mental health and wellbeing been affected by the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic?”** For example, through increased anxiety, as a result of social isolation, or a lack of access to community groups and activities?) **56%** of respondents stated that their mental health had been affected

Has your mental health and wellbeing been affected by the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic?) For example, through increased anxiety, as a result of social isolation, or a lack of access to community groups and activities?)



■ Yes ■ No

with many stating that the lack of human contact and those living alone found the loneliness unbearable. Many people were stressed and anxious and found it hard to want to go outside. *“Very shocked with lack of help social service can provide and can only provide a sign posting service. If you need help you have to go out of your way to find it, if the support is still even in place due to COVID. I have felt very isolated and at times at the end of my tether. I already felt isolated in my caring role before lockdown and the weekly cares support group kept me going but since lockdown the isolation feels*

*worse and whilst the country is working out how they can get children back in school and workers back into work, which is important, i feel carers have been overlooked and left to fend for themselves. I have had to care for dad and do things that a daughter wouldn't normally have to do just because the services are closed”*



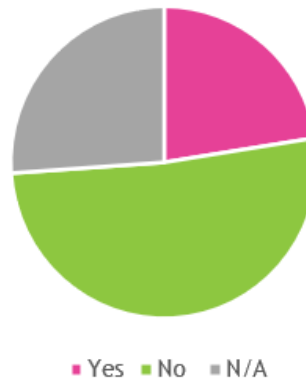
Some started to shy away from watching the news due to the negativity of reports adding to their anxiety *“Find the negativity of the news reporting very depressing so have made the decision not to listen to much of it. Especially when you are isolated for minimum of 12 weeks.”*

In particular carers found it extremely isolating as their support groups ceased at the beginning of the lockdown restrictions *“All of the carer support groups have been cancelled and I have been shocked at the lack of support available, fortunately I had numbers for 2 people from*

*my carers support group and we have been in touch regularly, I don’t know what I would have done without them, they have been my lifeline throughout this.”*

We asked if respondents had any other health conditions had their healthcare been affected, for example cancelled operations, appointments or obtaining prescriptions. **51%** of all respondents said that it hadn’t and in fact most people stated that contacting primary care has been easier due to the pandemic *“I’ve been able to access my GP, Surgery HCA, and pharmacy (phone/online/ eConsult etc), but have never struggled for support when I’ve needed it.”*

Has your healthcare for other conditions been affected by the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic? For example, through cancelled operations or appointments, difficult obtaining prescriptions or medication, difficulty making GP appointments?



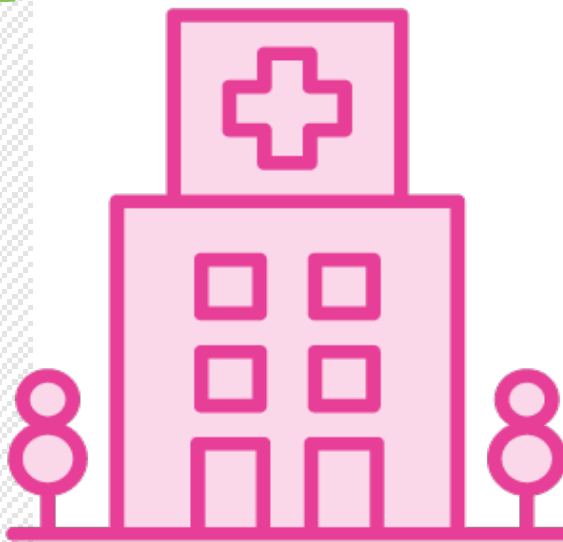
**22%** had experienced changes to their access such as cancelled appointments, pre ops cancelled. Cancer patients were worried as their treatment had been halted. Whilst they understood why they had been suspended it added to their anxiety as mentioned in the previous question. Maternity was a very big topic of discussion in our survey, with many new mothers being discharged and having little to none, postnatal care from community midwives. *“Recently discharged from hospital with newborn and found out I have a congenital heart problem. I wasn’t able to have my normal follow ups. Also developed hyperthyroidism and only able to speak to consultant on the phone”*



Has your experience of social care been affected by the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic? For example, visits from care workers, access to residential or nursing care homes, etc.



When asked if their experience of social care had been affected over the lockdown, **60%** of people who took our survey this wasn't applicable, the remaining **40%** who were privy to social care services only **6%** had experienced change. From our research the people affected where carers as respite services stopped and those who had family members in care homes. *"As I'm not directly in receipt of social care, I've not seen the effect myself, but my clients who have PAs, agency carers, and such have seen a lot of challenges - difficulty interviewing newly recruited staff online/telephone, difficulties finding alternative cover staff hours due to childcare needs of existing staff (due to school/nursery closures), unavailability of staff due to shielding/self isolation, home infection risks or confirmed cases requiring 14 days isolation, and a complete suspension of respite placements. The list goes on."*



The final question on our survey was about wellbeing and health, whether the pandemic had impacted them in general. Whilst most of the feedback was positive regarding community Spirit, **being proud of our NHS** and keyworkers **coming together and supporting each other**, there were reports that people had lost trust with the government over the way they had reacted, the lack of PPE and the facts that they had gained weight during the period. This time was particularly hard for new mothers, who felt isolated and alone and had no one to turn to. One person stated that whether or not you had tested positive, everyone has been affected, *"I only know a couple of people that have tested positive for the virus, but every person I know has been personally affected in some way whether financially, medically, emotionally."*





## Conclusion

In these unprecedented times, new processes have been created. No one could predict how much 'normal' life would change, and therefore services would ultimately be adversely affected due to COVID 19.

The Warrington community have embraced the use of new processes that the NHS and CCG's have introduced to help reduce A&E waiting times, including increased use of the online econsult portal, the 111 non-emergency number and better local pharmacy advice. These processes may prove to be more convenient for patients in the future, long after the current pandemic is over.

However, there are some issues that have been brought to light;

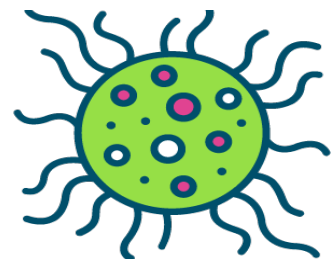
Reduced maternity aftercare service. When community staff were seconded over to COVID wards, we have been informed that many mothers were left with no, or very limited support from their midwives. With social distancing and lockdown measures, new mothers reported that they were isolated with no help from family and friends.

This group particularly can be very vulnerable, with the possible threat of post natal depression.

Respite services and Carers have been severely disadvantaged through the pandemic. Their support significantly reduced, causing those who care to be on hand 24 hours for their loved ones without the respite option and physical support from other family living outside of their bubble.

Mental health and wellbeing had deteriorated as loneliness and isolation had accelerated anxiety levels.

Even though we are a generation of online and instant information users, there are still some people who are not aware or unlikely to use these methods, so have been forgotten in our technical age.



## Recommendations

- The report to be shared with HWE, Health and Wellbeing Board, ICTB, CCG, Social Care and all stakeholders and providers including third sector
- Our report will be shared with Cheshire and Mersey to see if there are any shared themes
- Meeting to be held with CCG to discuss future improvements
- To investigate how the confusion with regards to 'who should be shielded' occurred
- To investigate how information regarding Health Visitors services should have been communicated
- To consider how local comms can communicate with Warrington general public, to dispel the negative national press/media. Discuss with CCG.
- Carers were significantly affected, due to cancellation of respite care and closure of support groups, meet with Carer providers to assess how this can be improved
- 22% of the sample of people had changes to their appointments, have all appointments now been rescheduled?
- 6% of the sample of people said that social care had been affected, however this may be due to the demographics, as 9% were over 65, 37% aged 50-65yrs, 46% 26 -49yrs and 8% 16-25 years
- 18% of the sample of people had said that they have a disability, it would be good practice to meet with WDP to see how their data compares to our survey results.

# THANK YOU

We are staying in  
for you.

Religious Staff  
Nurses  
Charities  
Social Workers  
Police  
Public Service  
Waste Disposal and Recycling  
Childcare  
Food Production  
Fire Service  
Stay Inside  
Farmers  
Midwives  
Postal Staff  
Broadcasters  
Armed Forces  
Supermarket Staff  
Carers  
Utilities  
NHS  
Love  
THANK YOU  
Delivery Drivers



#thankyoukeyworkers

STAY AT  
HOME

PROTECT  
THE NHS

save  
lives

healthwatch  
Warrington

**healthwatch**

Healthwatch Warrington  
The Gateway  
Sankey Street  
Warrington  
WA1 1SR

[www.healthwatchwarrington.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchwarrington.co.uk)  
t: 01925 246 893  
[contact@healthwatchwarrington.co.uk](mailto:contact@healthwatchwarrington.co.uk)  
tw: @HWWarrington  
fb: Healthwatch Warrington