

## Insight Bulletin: February 2021

One of the statutory duties of Healthwatch Surrey is to listen to the views of local people about their health and social care and to share these with the organisations who make decisions about local services.

This bulletin highlights some of the themes we've heard about recently. It is not a scientific exercise - people report to us what happened in their own words, and we hear over 100 unique experiences every month. Our Insight Bulletin is intended to add insight and enrich understanding of the citizen and service user journey.

*When we hear a case of concern regarding patient safety we immediately signpost the sharer to the appropriate body and escalate with the provider/commissioner.*

### Praise and Thanks

This touching experience of Covid vaccination says it all:

*"Last week my 78-year-old husband received through the post an invitation to vaccination from the NHS... Today we found Epsom very well organised...we were asked if we had or needed a wheelchair, there were many staff to meet and direct - all very friendly and polite. At the check-in I was asked if I had received a vaccination too, or would I like one? I was delighted to accept! ...*

*When I entered the grandstand building and I saw the huge space, well planned and teeming with volunteers I felt overcome and slightly tearful. Having confined ourselves for most of the past few weeks the occasion brought home the enormity of what everyone has been dealing with and how people have coped - whether helping others, volunteering, inventing vaccines, NHS and care workers..... it just goes on. Here's hope!"*

## We are hearing slightly less about Covid vaccinations, and what we are hearing has changed

As the programme has rolled out and the amount of hard and soft information available to people has increased, we've heard fewer worries about 'my' vaccination or about logistics. However, we are beginning to hear more about two topics:

### Phasing of vaccinations within households

We are hearing comments about different family members receiving their vaccinations at different times, and especially about carers receiving vaccinations later than the people they care for:

*"It's more important for me to be done because I occasionally go out - what would happen to my husband's care if I were to fall ill?!"*

*"It makes sense if only 2 of you are living together, that both people get the jab together. When my husband had his invitation, I felt resentful almost that my son and I who are more vulnerable had not received ours! How can my son with cancer be lower down the list than my husband who's had a stroke?"*

*"I guess the only criticism I have is whilst they were immunising my husband it would have been handy for me to get it done as his carer. I'm not a registered carer - my husband is still independent in many ways."*

### Queries about the second vaccination

*"On 8th Jan we received a text telling us that the appointment second jab was being postponed, with a request not to call the surgery about this...We would have liked to have known from someone we trust, such as our own surgery as to what protection we now have and whether there is any negative effect to the extended delay."*

*"If the experts truly cannot give definite answers yet, we are all old enough to be told that too."*

*"I had an early dose of Pfizer on 17th December. I don't know when I'm having my 2nd dose or who to contact about it as my 2nd dose got cancelled. The 1st one was arranged by my surgery but the second was someone called 'Prolife' or something."*

*"I am now concerned as I hear the 2nd booster is more likely to give side effects and I will be having that in 12 weeks."*

In response to the increase in queries about second vaccinations, Healthwatch Surrey is running a brief survey asking people what questions they have before their second vaccination. Our aim is to contribute to communications planning and reduce the burden of phone calls to providers. We will feed back what we hear as soon as a picture emerges.

## What do you want to know about your 2nd vaccination? - Healthwatch Surrey Survey

We will be very happy to see the survey distributed as widely as possible - please share the link below or contact [tessa.weaver@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk](mailto:tessa.weaver@healthwatchsurrey.co.uk) for a QR code or to embed the survey in a website.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HWSy2ndVaccination>

## Detriment caused by delays to treatment

People have come to accept that some assessments and treatments will be delayed. However, it's important to remember the consequences of these delays to people's health:

*"[baby] also has eczema so we're exploring possible allergies. They decided we should go to the allergy clinic at St Peter's. It took 3 months to get an appointment and his prick test was inconclusive so we had to take him off dairy formula. The switch to other formula milks is hard as my baby doesn't like them and I wonder if I should totally wean him off. My GP...keeps wanting to refer us to St Peter's but the allergy clinic there is super busy and it's impossible to get in."*

*"One of my knees started playing up during lockdown 1... [my GP] has written a letter of referral to the surgeon he considers the best. I'm not holding my breath! I can limp slightly more quickly now, but walking more than the odd half mile results in increased pain. I can't see myself being operated on until next autumn at the earliest."*

*"My husband was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in January. Treatment has been arranged, cancelled, re-arranged. In a phone consultation an oncologist asked him how he was getting on with radiotherapy. When my husband pointed out that it had been cancelled three weeks previously, the oncologist advised he didn't have my husband's notes."*

*“On New Year’s Eve my heart went bonkers again - If [drug therapy] doesn’t work out this time I’ll have to get on the long waiting list and hope that they can bring me up the list again they’re not doing cardioversion at the moment at East Surrey they usually do it weekly on a Friday.”*

## Dentistry: six-fold increase in experiences year on year

Between August and December 2020 60 people contacted us with queries or experiences relating to dentistry: this compares with just 10 for the same period the previous year.

As a response to this substantial rise, we have published a report on Dentistry in Surrey, covering what we’ve heard between August 2020 and January 2021.

<https://www.healthwatchesurrey.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Healthwatch-Dentistry-Summary-February-2021.pdf>

We receive a continuous stream of requests for help finding an NHS dentist:

*“I am trying to find an NHS dentist in my area (I live in Weybridge) that is taking on new adult patients. I have contacted a lot of the ones that are on the NHS website, but they all say they aren’t taking on new patients. Could you please point me in the right direction of one that has availability?”*

However, we have also heard about:

- Availability of appointments during Covid
- Lack of communication and access
- Practices opening for private appointments but not NHS appointments
- Payments/Charges
- Specialist dementia care

Healthwatch England have published a report reviewing over 1,100 people’s experiences between October and December 2021. Sir Robert Francis QC, Chair of Healthwatch England, said:

*“Access to dental care is currently neither equal nor inclusive, leading to traumatic experiences for many people.*

*“This provides yet more evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the human impact of years of structural issues in NHS dentistry and is now pushing it to crisis point. We are hugely concerned that this will have detrimental effects to the nation’s health for years to come...the Department of Health and Social Care must prioritise the*

*importance of oral health and commit to improving access to dentistry for everyone who needs it.”*

<https://www.healthwatch.co.uk/news/2021-02-08/warnings-dentistry-crisis-public-concerns-continue>

## Healthwatch Surrey

### How we gather our insight

We actively seek people’s reports through our contacts, our partners and online. We distribute flyers, online groups, and initiate focus groups.

The topics we hear about and the people we hear from are not controlled by Healthwatch Surrey. The number of people we hear from varies from month to month, and the topics covered depend on the groups we engage with. As such our insights should always be treated as qualitative.

### How we share our insight

If we hear a case of concern regarding patient safety, we immediately signpost the sharer to the appropriate body and escalate the case with the provider/commissioner.

We share our wider themes with Trusts, CCGs, Adult Social Care, Public Health, CQC, and in various boards and groups across Surrey.

### For more information

If there is a topic you would like to hear more about, please contact [kate.scribbins@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk](mailto:kate.scribbins@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk)

If you would like to be added to or removed from the distribution list for this Insight Bulletin, please contact [laihan.burrdixon@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk](mailto:laihan.burrdixon@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk)

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

### Thanks

We would like to thank all health, care and support staff who are working to keep Surrey safe and supported. Much of the feedback we hear is positive and a key message throughout the pandemic has been ‘please say thank you’. We hope that our insight will help to inform recovery in our local area.

