



healthwatch
Bexley

Covid-19 Report Update June- July 2020

September 2020



Introduction

This is an update to the Healthwatch Coronavirus Report of May 2020. As lockdown measures started to ease and the Government message changed from Stay at Home to Stay Alert, we looked at Bexley resident's views of the ongoing Coronavirus situation.

What You Told Us:

Getting an appointment/talking to a health care professional

Bexley residents are finding it harder to get GP appointments. Many are still afraid to visit hospitals or GP's, for fear of catching Covid-19 and told us they would only go if they really needed to.

"I needed to attend urgent care, A&E and was an in-patient. I was treated wonderfully but did want to get out as quick as possible due to the increased risk with Coronavirus infected patients on my ward."

Backlogs

People with pre-existing health conditions have found it harder to get the treatment or support they need. Appointments have been cancelled or postponed and now services are trying to return to a new normal there may be long wait times.

"My husband's cancer ongoing treatment did not go ahead in April. It has been given the go ahead for mid-July now. He has experienced a great deal of pain and his condition has worsened."

"Hard to access GP services, therefore needed to use urgent care and A&E."

"Only able to have telephone consultation with GP. Needed referral to Memory Centre. Took four weeks and having to be hospitalised before this happened then Memory Centre did not want to make an appointment for me due to backlog."

Communications

Residents generally continue to find Government messages easy to understand but are frustrated when they see people clearly flouting the guidelines. However, there is some confusion regarding how many people can meet, under what circumstances and about the vulnerability of children and if they can catch Covid-19. Anti-Covid-19 conspiracy theories and messages from people who do not believe Covid-19 exists are also causing confusion for some people.

Communication needs to be improved between healthcare services and patients. Clear messages on how to access a GP or hospital service are needed particularly for those without digital access.

"Trying to speak to a doctor, not everyone can use the internet.....was terrified of going into hospital and getting covid-19.said a doctor would phone me back, that was over 6 weeks ago I have never received that call."

Dentists

Getting a dental appointment or finding a dentist has been difficult. Healthwatch Bexley has seen an increase in the number of residents calling to find out what is available and how to access dental

services. Although dentists could reopen from June 8th many have not been able to safely do this or are restricted in what they can offer.

Carers

Carers are under increasing pressure and are finding it hard to cope with restriction to services due to Covid-19. Mind in Bexley Carers support have found carers are struggling to cope with caring day and night without any respite.

"I feel the support for carers is appalling and always has been. When requesting a District Nurse visit for my mother even for once a month, it has been refused and I have been told that this is considered the carer's job. I am an only child I'm beginning to feel the impact of this. When I do go away, I have nobody else to call on to look after mum.....it is unacceptable..."

"I have 3 children, a teenager, a 13 year old with severe special needs (Autism, ADHD, learning difficulties and severe speech delay) and a 9 year old with learning difficulties, possibly dyspraxia and a heart condition! Some days have been really hard and other days have been easier. We have had lots of support from social worker, teachers, Bexley Snap, and the repute centre."

"I am 93 years old; my daughter (who is 63) has to look after me all the time. Without her, I would have not known how to get help or have groceries delivered. She has had to take on this burden 100% as she is told it is the carer's (i.e. her) job to sort everything out. I have increasingly failing memory so I am unable to look after myself. I really worry about my daughter and how she copes as I am sure she must struggle with it all."

Mental health

People are struggling with their mental health and wellbeing. The Mind in Bexley Wellbeing Line, set up to offer people support during the pandemic, has seen an increase in calls with high risk and complexity.

"Mind in Bexley was very helpful in trying to provide support during these unpredictable times of Covid-19."

"My child has struggled with mental health and its near on impossible to see anyone from CAMHs. Told to keep an eye on her and wait and see."

Phlebotomy

Drop-in phlebotomy services have changed to appointments only with less sites providing the service. This has put a strain on the phone lines resulting in long waiting times and frustration for those trying to get an appointment.

People have appreciated the help that is available.

"The food supplies from the government/bexley council has been fantastic and absolutely amazing Thank you so much."

Going Forward

We will continue to get feedback from residents as we return to a new normal and the Coronavirus continues.