



healthwatch
Bexley

Covid-19 Report Update August - September

2020

October 2020



Introduction

This is an update to the Healthwatch "Coronavirus Update Report of June-July 2020" and "The Impact of Covid 19 on Bexley Residents" report of July 2020. As lockdown measures ease further, residents have told us they are feeling scared or unsure of exactly what the rules are. This report looks at how people are feeling and their concerns as life starts to get back to a "new normal". The information we collected to produce this report was gathered before further restrictions were imposed in October 2020 and the borough went onto high alert.

What You Told Us:

Some residents have started to use public transport and are visiting supermarkets, cafes and restaurants more. People have started to return to the workplace if safe to do so, whilst others remain working from home. However, there are feelings of apprehension as we move out of lockdown and the rules are eased. Residents are concerned about people not following the rules and guidelines and that the changes are happening too fast. Residents have told us that whilst it is key to get businesses up and running again people must not get complacent.

There are fears about a second wave and what the winter months will bring. Schools re-opening are another concern and what impact this will have on the rate of infection.

People understand the Test & Trace system and the current rules regarding the length of time for self-isolation. The idea of localised lock downs if the number of cases in any one area was to rise significantly was welcomed.

"I'm concerned that a lot of people think we can just go back to normal and that is not the case. I feel we won't see normal life again until we have a vaccine."

"Some people seem to think the pandemic is over, and I don't think that is the case..... I like to see things opening up again but people still need to be careful and I don't think they are. I wish there were more police resources to enforce the rules."

"This is too fast. There are clear signs the R rate is increasing and the focus is on business not on lives."

Social Distancing

Residents told us that Social distancing rules are an area of concern as people appear to be disregarding the advice, not keeping to the 2-meter rule and meeting up in groups larger than the guidelines advise. Parents told us that others do need to be aware that for some people it can be difficult to understand social distancing such as those with learning difficulties or that people may be exempt from wearing a face covering.

"Many people are ignoring the seriousness of the situation and not socially distancing".

"Catching COVID - people walking too close to me"

".... It is hard for children with special needs and young children to understand when we are out and there have been incidents where my daughter has not socially distanced adequately, people loudly tut or worse shout at me."

Face Coverings

Most residents have been wearing face coverings as directed by the government and that they are generally purchased from high street shops or online. Most people find them uncomfortable. Some residents commented on the abuse they have received or felt they might receive for not wearing a face covering. There was also frustration about other people not wearing a face covering correctly or not wearing a face covering at all and not being challenged.

"I don't like it but if it helps keep others safe and help prevent more cases then I'll happily wear one."

"It's hot, stuffy and uncomfortable but it seems logical to wear one."

"I just wish that others would be considerate with regards to wearing face masks. I realise that a few people can't wear them because of extreme medical conditions but I don't believe all the people I see in supermarkets and other shops not wearing them can all be exempt....."

".... I don't need the abuse that I feel I would get if I didn't wear one. I also think the Government should have issued exemption certificates to those people who were shielding."

"My eldest daughter is exempt due to learning disabilities however on the practice bus journeys that we have done to prepare her for going back to school she wears hers and will do on all future journeys because she has been questioned as to why she is not wearing one. I don't want her to become upset on the bus/ have a meltdown when going to school.... it's taken me four months to get her to even leave the house since lockdown."

"Verbal abuse and general nastiness even when wearing a sunflower lanyard".

Health and Social Care Services

For some residents, the fear of Coronavirus is impacting their willingness to access health & social care services. Some commented on worrying that if they visited a hospital, they may catch the virus. There is concern about services being suspended and treatment being delayed for new or existing, non-Coronavirus related illness. Some residents are under the impression that GP practices are closed and face to face appointments are not happening. Better communication is needed around GP appointments to reassure residents that GP practices are open and working in a new way.

".... I've been discharged by clinics not because I've had treatment and improved but because of COVID (actually told this and get re referred and go on the waiting list again later). Another has suspended everything and no one knows how long for..."

"I would like GP surgeries and hospitals to offer appointments and re start MSK services as soon as possible as people are suffering."

"Why are GPs not doing any face to face appointments when nurses hospital and UCC doctors are. I feel very vulnerable."

"I am disgusted at the lack of GP care ,phone appointments are ridiculous {how many people will have missed illnesses from this and die) i have had a dentist appointment today and cannot see why GPs cannot do the same."

"I only go in emergencies. All regular appointments have either been cancelled or are via phone."

"I visited a specialist just as lockdown began and never got a follow up consultation which may have been of benefit. Obviously didn't want to rock the boat during a crises, would rather wait till things quieten down."

Mental health

People continue to struggle with their mental health and wellbeing, worries about a "second wave" missed schooling and exams can have had an effect. The Mind in Bexley Wellbeing Line continues to be busy with an increased number of more complex calls.

"Many people ignoring guidance is leaving me very isolated & mentally ill"

"People have become very socially isolated during lockdown and it has affected their mental health greatly. My eldest daughter has learning disabilities and her only socialisation was going to school... It has taken me four months to get her to leave the house again.... I have been working throughout lockdown as a keyworker.... I'm struggling to do 5 days' work in 3 days, home school 2 kids - 1 with learning disabilities..... I'm on 4 hours sleep currently to fit everything in. I feel like I'm going to have a nervous breakdown soon. I'm literally shattered. This corona virus must end soon. Things need to go back to normal."

"I have just started year 11 at school and am worried about my GCSE exams next year."

Going Forward

We will continue to get feedback from residents as Government restrictions are now tightened again and we move into the Autumn and Winter months.