



**Family and Friends Experiences
of Croydon's Care Homes
under COVID-19
June 2021**

Executive Summary

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Croydon's Care Homes had to respond quickly to protect their residents, and the staff that look after them. To understand more about the challenges they went through and learn more, we undertook a series of surveys with residents, friends and family and staff between August and October 2020. This was undertaken online and via paper surveys sent to a Freepost address

This report presents the experiences of family and friends of residents in Croydon's care homes, where we received the views of 94 people representing 19 homes between August and November 2020.

We asked respondents the following:

- Which care home their family member /friend were resident in.
- If they felt their family member/friend was safe in the care home since COVID-19 began.
- How they would rate the care home before and after COVID-19.
- Whether the care home kept them informed of their family member /friend.
- If they felt they had enough time to speak with their family member /friend via phone or video call.
- Whether the care home supplied them with PPE when they last visited their family member/friend.
- What improvement for future planning would they like to see the care home undertake to support their family member /friend.

These are our findings:

- **Nearly all family and friends were safe:** 98% of the respondents felt family and friends were safe in care homes, whilst a very small percentage had thought it was not. Family and friends understood the difficult decisions that had to be made, recognised the work taking place and the procedures they put in place to allow face-to-face contact where possible. (See page 9-13).
- **Care homes are rated as good before and after COVID-19:** Before the COVID-19 pandemic 97% had rated the care homes as good, under COVID-19 this increased to 98%. Nearly every comment expressed how well they felt residents had been looked after citing level of care and the communication with the family and friends. The few concerns were about the new regulations and processes taking time away from certain details such as ensuring a deaf resident uses their hearing aid, and haircuts. (See page 14-18).
- **97.87% felt care homes kept them informed of their family:** Most Care homes published regular newsletters with lots of activities of what residents were doing. Some respondents had received emails from the care homes with photos of their family members and friends. (See page 19-21).
- **87% felt they had enough time to speak with a family member via phone or video:** Of the 12% who could not hold longer conversations, this was due to deteriorated hearing conditions and as a result prevented them speaking for too long. Residents with health conditions such as dementia also fell into this category. It may be that care homes were not able to organise this effectively including encouraging residents who seemed unsure about this form of communication. (See pages 22-24).
- **Most could visit but a quarter were not supplied with personal protective equipment:** 82% said they had visited their family members with 75% supplied with PPE as well as taking the necessary precautions. Some care homes supplied PPE; others expected visitors to have it. There were many ways care homes adapted to allow visiting with some examples of good practice. (See 25 and 27).

These are our recommendations based on insight and direct suggestions by family and friends (see pages 28-32)

- **Schedule more time for family member or friend:** While many felt they could see their family member or friend, visiting time was limited for some. It would be good to explore provide better and convenient methods at which both family member and friends would find it easier to communicate within the specified time frame allocated for both parties.
- **IT assistance and preparation:** Since video calls are a key method of keeping connected, care homes need to ensure they prepare and have effective space and staff time to enable this. Some care homes are doing this very well so good practice should be shared.
- **Look at ways at maintaining closer contact within the regulations:** Many family and friends would be prepared to wear more PPE and meet other regulations to be able to get closer to the residents. Some would also like to see more dedicated meeting spaces.
- **Communications:** There is a variance between care homes with some communicating well with emails and newsletters and some less so both about general issues and specific updates about residents. Again, some good practice could be applied to ensure consistent and relevant communications across the care home market.

Please note that we also undertook at this time three other surveys with residents, learning disabilities residents, and staff. There is a report for each of these at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/ as well as an overall report which draws together the overall themes of the experiences of using, visiting, and working in care homes in Croydon.

1. Background

1.1 Context

About Healthwatch Croydon

Healthwatch Croydon works to get the best out of local health and social care services responding to your voice. From improving services today to helping shape better ones for tomorrow, we listen to resident and service user views and experiences and then influence decision-making. We have several legal functions, under the 2012 Health and Social Care Act.

Context

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, care homes had to respond to protect their residents and well as providing information and access for family and friends and support their staff. Local authorities as commissioners of care home services were asked to coordinate and support care homes.¹ (Department of Health and Social Care, 2020).

This report looks back at the user experience of friends and family of care home residents in Croydon to assess how well the service was delivered and to support future planning of care homes. We wanted to know their experiences so we can feedback to the care homes and help make the residents' experience better, be it through good practice or by understanding things that could be improved.

¹ Department of Health and Social Care (2020) Coronavirus (COVID-19): adult social care guidance. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-social-care-guidance>

1.2 Rationale and Methodology

We used smart survey and designed an online questionnaire which ran from August - November 2020. We received 94 responses from people across Croydon who shared their experiences. For us to capture the segment of people who might be digitally excluded, Healthwatch Croydon sent the paper version of this survey which could be returned via Freepost.

1.3 Method

All respondents were emailed a link to the Croydon Care homes family and friends survey designed via SmartSurvey platform. We reached out to those not online and sent paper versions of the questionnaire.

We asked them the following questions:

1. Which care home is your family member/friend resident in?
2. Since COVID-19 began in March, do you feel your family member/friend has been safe in your care home? Tell us why:
3. How would you rate the care home for your family member?
3a: - Before COVID-19, 3b: - Since COVID-19, 3c: - Tell us more about why you gave this rating:
4. Did the care home keep you informed of your family member/friend? Please tell us more.
5. Do you feel you had enough time to speak to your family member or friend, via phone or video call? Please tell us more.
6. Which services positively or negatively impacted on their health and wellbeing?
7. Some questions on visiting family members: Have you visited your family member or friend in the last couple of months? If yes, were you supplied with PPE and were other precautions taken? Please tell us more.
8. For future planning, what improvements would you like to see the care home undertake to support your family member/friend?

Limits of the research

Size of sample: We received a response from 94 friends and family from 19 care homes. This represents just 15% of care homes in Croydon (127) and is just small sample of the wider number of family and friends of care home residents in the borough.

Representation: We relied on care homes to share this with their residents' family and friends. Those facilities that were open to this will have been supportive, but there are limits in representing those who did not share this with their residents family and friends. The small number of responses also has a leaning towards certain care homes, one home receiving 23% of the responses and four care homes receiving 66% of the responses, so comments may lean towards these homes, see page 8.

Context: Questions were written to gain views on the impact of the first lockdown which ended in July. There may be time lag in responses as some were completed in late October

2. Insight results

2.1 Which care home is your family member/friend resident in?

Croydon Care Homes	No of residents in Care Homes
Aarren court	1
Achieve Together	2
Callum House, Coulsdon	1
Esther care home	2
Gate Lodge	4
Hghfield House	4
Hill House	15
Hollybank Residential Home	4
James Terry Court	22
Lakeside Nursing Home	12
Norbury Avenue	1
Norbury Avenue	1
Norcrest Home 2000 Ltd	1
Roselands residential care home	4
St Edwards' Close	2
The Eadmund	2
The whitehouse care home	1
Warminster road	1
Whitworth lodge, south Norwood	2
Wilhamina House, Whitgift Trust	11
Wilhelmina House	1

The graph shows that the survey centred around 21 different care homes in Croydon where family member/friends were resident in. Nearly a quarter comes from James Terry House and 47 overall from three homes.

2.2a Since COVID-19 began in March, do you feel your family member/friend has been safe in your care home? Tell us why?



Healthwatch Croydon asked respondents if they felt their family member /friend were safe in the care homes since COVID -19 and approximately 98% had said yes whilst 2% did not feel their family/friend was safe since the pandemic.

87 people shared a variety of positive and neutral views.

Family and friends understood the difficult decisions that had to be made. There is a recognition of the early action that was taken to ensure safety of residents. They also welcome the continued work taking place and the procedures they put in place to allow face-to-face contact where possible.

2.2b Tell us why:

Respondents shared their views on why they felt the care homes were safe or not safe and we themed the responses into two sentiments - positive and neutral as follows:

Selective positive views

“The manager locked down a week before the national lockdown occurred, not allowing visitors to the home. I know this was a difficult decision to make but was the correct reason to safeguard the residents and staff.”

“We've been kept well informed of procedures. The care home did have one or two patients discharged to them from hospital who were Covid-19 positive but managed to keep them completely isolated and no staff or residents have been infected. I think that speaks volumes for their professionalism and expertise.”

“The nursing home has gone to great lengths to protect both its staff and its residents. On 2 occasions they adopted 'barrier nursing' measures to isolate residents who had tested positive for COVID, using dedicated staff. Relatives have had to abide by very strict constraints to avoid them passing infection to the residents. The management of Hill House appear to have been thoroughly organised and professional in their response to the pandemic.”

“I was totally impressed by the prompt response to the virus shown by the Admin and all members of staff at the home. They acted independently and made important decisions while the ineptitude and ‘bumbling’ of the Government was very apparent! They have maintained strict procedures despite delays in testing. Considering the way the virus has been handled in the UK they have been truly brilliant and I and my family are so thankful that my 98 year old mother is a resident there.”

“The care home have been in regular contact with the relatives to explain the procedures that are being put in place to ensure our relatives stay safe. PPE was used by staff as soon as it became available and we were alerted to the fact that all staff had temperature checks before taking up their duties each day.”

“The care has continued to be of a high standard throughout this time with staff very aware of the fact that residents are missing their normal family contact. Nursing practice & all the extra procedures required have been strictly adhered to it would seem in all departments & detailed checks on visitors when we have been able to have a socially distanced garden visit.”

“Staff took early action and locked down the home before the rest of the country to shield the residents. They also stocked up on PPE. I believe some of the staff moved in and others walked to work rather than take public transport.”

“The care has continued to be of a high standard throughout this time with staff very aware of the fact that residents are missing their normal family contact. Nursing practice & all the extra procedures required have been strictly adhered to it would seem in all departments & detailed checks on visitors when we have been able to have a socially distanced garden visit.”

“The home has taken great care to ensure my mother is very happy in these difficult times and have taken every effort to allow us restricted visiting.”

“Caring, dedicated staff, and management who always have residents' best interests at heart, Strict hygiene rules, and regulations always.”

“Before lockdown a particular Care Home took all the necessary precautions to ensure that all the residents and staff were protected, and instigated an excellent regime of isolation for any suspected cases or new arrivals.”

“On a personal note. This Care Home have allowed us to communicate with my father over the phone and by video link up on a regular basis throughout lockdown, and now we are allowed to visit him in the garden following all the strict safety protocols, which is wonderful.”

“Finally, we cannot praise this home enough, and our sincerest thanks go out to all the staff and carers that look after him.”

“They are well cared for. <Named facility> have put into place the proper procedures. The staff follow the procedures and practices laid down. Nobody is allowed into the House. Visitors, such as myself, have to make an appointment so that numbers of visitors are controlled. We complete a form on arrival, and have a temperature check. We meet our relative/friend (suitably distanced) in the back garden. We wear a mask, and we sit 2 metres apart. I feel that my sister is safe at <Named facility>.”

“<Named facility> have been active in instituting weekly covid tests for all staff and monthly for residents. They have all permanent staff and do not employ casual/agency/temp staff so cross infection risk reduced to a minimum. Personal visits allowed in garden. Every visitor temperature checked, wear masks and well supervised. Pro active management; if they did it from day one why couldn't others? Too many homes focussed on profit and cost?”

Neutral views (Please see individual comments in quotes)

“On balance - yes. The early approach of allowing visits (in common with other care homes in the UK) appeared to me to be unwise, and subsequent 'lock down' proved the point. Since these early stages I get the impression that much has improved. However, the cases involving my mother being sent to the local hospital causes concern as the dangers of picking up Covid there (and other ailments) are significant. Of course, that is a decision that only the care home can make, but I hope it is viewed not as a first resort, but perhaps more a last resort, since the dangers of it are fairly high.”

However, the garden visiting scheme is sensible and well run and it is only a pity that worsening weather will reduce the efficacy of that approach.”

2.3a How would you rate the care home for your family member?

3. How would you rate the care home for your family member?				Create Chart
	Good	Neither Good nor Bad	Bad	Response Total
Before COVID-19?	96.8% (91)	3.2% (3)	0.0% (0)	94
Since COVID-19?	97.9% (92)	2.1% (2)	0.0% (0)	94
Tell us more about why you gave this rating: (82) View				
View Matrix Charts			answered	94
			skipped	0

The graph above shows that majority of the respondents rated the care homes as good. Before the COVID-19 pandemic 97% had scored the care homes their family members reside in as good. Since COVID-19, the rating of care homes went up a percentage to 98%

82 respondents shared their views and reasons why they awarded the above ratings as regards the Care Homes. Nearly every quote expressed how well they felt residents had been looked after both before and now during COVID-19. There were many comments of the level of care and the communication with the family and friends. Where there were concerns, they were because of the new regulations and processes taking time away from certain details such as ensuring a deaf resident has her hearing aid in, or aspects such as haircuts, or levels of cleanliness and in some cases communication on arranging visits.

2.3b Selected comments on why they rated the care homes.

“The staff and the managers are great they treat my dad like family and you can see and feel the love they have for him.”

“The home has made it possible to stay in contact with my father via video calls or phone calls and have continued to update the families of the residents in every decision made. They have also consulted with the families about decisions concerning visiting and other matters and have taken our responses into account.”

“Staff and management have always demonstrated high level of care.”

“Good care provided, seem to develop residents abilities and work to their strengths.”

“Great staff. Relative content. Very well managed.”

“I'd like to give excellent! My father has been so much better in himself since moving to Hill House (he'd gone there direct from hospital after a suicide attempt). They've looked after him amazingly well. He is now getting more frail but that's age and nothing to do with their care which has always been excellent.”

“The standard of care has been and continues to be highly professional, respectful, caring and pleasant from all those involved.”

“Nothing that I have seen or heard has been other than good.”

“The staff have been very good in very difficult circumstances.”

“Care for Residents a priority.”

“I visited the home regularly prior to lockdown and i know how hard the staff work at looking after the residents.”

“The overall care demonstrated in the home and the communication with residents.”

“Compared to previous home, much greater focus on health, safety and wellbeing. More activities for residents. Generally well organised and managed.”

“They continually maintain high standards and treat residents (and as far as I can see, staff) with the utmost respect and consideration. A home is only as good as the staff who run it and they should be rewarded and appraised for all they do.”

“Before Covid 19 mum always looked well cared for but since the onset of lockdown staff are obviously finding it more difficult to ensure her hair is washed and that she is dressed appropriately. Also the fact that mum is no longer mobile means that she is totally reliant on staff to help her with the little things like sorting her cupboards, unwrapping presents etc. I appreciate their time is limited but things that we, as family would normally help mum with, staff are not able to do. We find this very frustrating. Mum has become increasingly deaf during this time, but unless asked, staff did not ensure she had her hearing aid in. She has, however been kept clean throughout and all her physical needs attended to.”

“This is a well run care home with staff who are well organised and motivated. It is a genuinely caring environment where the residents are happy.”

“Nursing & general care has always been of an excellent standard & this situation has not changed during the challenging current circumstances.”

“They are caring . No place is perfect but the dedication and caring aspect of the home is very good.”

“Excellent communication between staff and every precaution taken. We are very reassured in every way.”

“They are fantastic, The residents have come first the whole time and the staff have worked tirelessly to make sure that all measures are kept up at all times.”

“I have been able to see my friend after the lockdown and she looked well and relaxed.”

“The owners and especially staff were very “ hands on” dealing with the situation, and keeping relatives informed.”

“The care given to my father is better than good. It is excellent.”

“The staff are always so attentive to my friend and the care she receives is second to none”

“Excellent care and attention given to the resident. The resident has no conversation or interests. The staff are very concerned to supply her needs.”

“Staff at the home seem very caring and turnover is low which must be a good thing. They seem to have a good system in place for recruiting and retaining staff. It is more difficult to know what's going on in the home and I think cleanliness may have dropped a bit - my sister witnessed this when she was required to gown up and be there for my mum when she had her ears suctioned but a private external hearing specialist. Obviously things like hair cuts have been affected as the external sessional staff are not going in.”

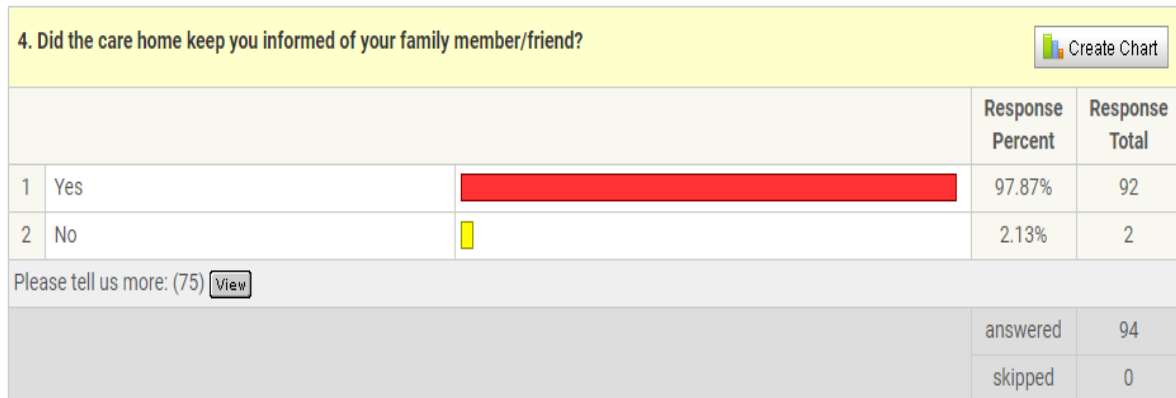
“I have found the people at <named facility> to be very caring. They seem to have a good understanding of Dementia. Also even though my sister's mental condition hasn't improved, her general health is much better. I feel this is due to the care and good healthy meals. The staff seems to always be cheerful and have a sense of humour (which they probably need).”

“As above, the hands-on staff are generally good but the management side has been poor in their communication. My relative is content at the home but dealing with management has been frustrating in facilitating visits, once permitted.”

“Since Covid 19 the facilities department have put in place a visiting room so that family's can visit relatives in a safe environment. It is without hesitation that I would say that so much effort has been put into this room that it could be considered the benchmark for the care home industry.”

“Always kept in touch with calls, emails and newsletters.”

2.4a Did the care home keep you informed of your family member/friend?



98% confirmed that the care home kept them informed of their family/friends whilst 2% said they were not informed.

The analysis shown below shows that that care homes kept respondents properly informed of their family member either through WhatsApp, telephone call, video calls or newsletters. 75 respondents shared experiences of the variety of methods they used to reach out to their loved ones at the care homes .

2.4b Selected comments from respondents who said the care homes kept them informed of their family member /friend.

“We are regularly updated with all aspects of our family members care health and socially. I am extremely happy with how my father’s care is given by the staff and management.”

“I have always been kept up to date and informed.”

“Phone calls, e mails, what’s app photos and videos , two way, from family to home/ resident and from home to family.”

“Whenever they have concerns the staff get in touch with us.”

“Regular emails to report on measures affecting all residents and very informative feedback in response to telephone calls.”

“Weekly newsletter and telephone calls to keep informed.”

“They publish a regular newsletter with lots of news about activities at Hill House and they include lots of references to the residents and who has been doing what.”

“Staff have us informed of my mums care & any concern they have raised.”

“Kept in touch by email and phone plus they have started issuing monthly newsletters with photos to show what the residents have been doing. Regular updates and newsletters.”

“Regular phone calls, video calls.” “Contact by phone or e-mail.”

“If there is ever a problem, like mum being put on antibiotics for a UTI, the staff will contact us and let us know.”

“The staff at Hill House always phoned us and kept us updated.”

“They have been keeping us updated with emails and organised a family/friends meeting via zoom.”

“They let us know her Covid tests were negative. We visit regularly (about twice a week) so can chat to staff if we have any concerns , also by phone).”

“Care home phones re-visiting arrangements and a request to purchase clothing for the resident.”

“We communicated with the home by telephone and emails.”

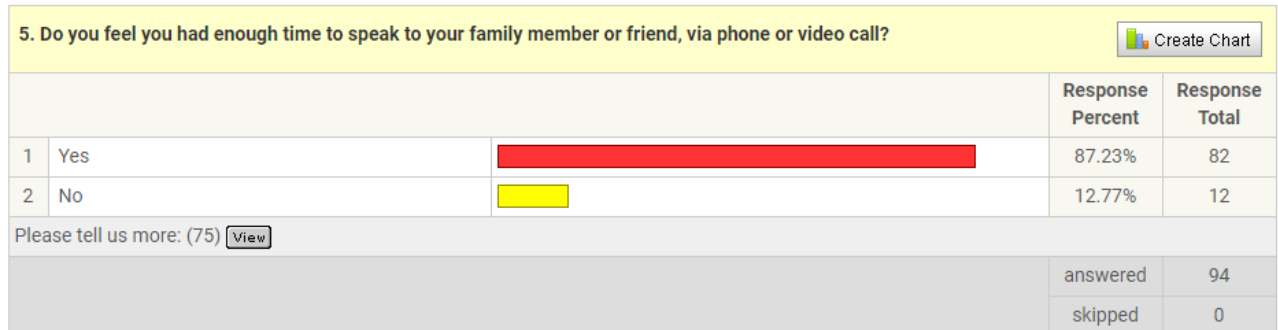
“It did take some time for <<named facility>> to give us details of how they were managing the situation and quicker contact / notification would have been reassuring.”

“I've had many emails and I can phone when I want.”

“I received E- mails a few times a week . Phone calls . Regular updates . I received photos of my husband. There was always some one there to talk to if I needed to phone. Whenever a visit to Croydon University Hospital was required, we were informed.”

“They sent me photos and kept me updated with the visiting issues.”

2.5 Do you feel you had enough time to speak to your family member or friend, via phone or video call?



When we asked respondents if they had enough time to speak to their family either via phone or video call, 88% said yes and were positive but 12% said they did not have adequate time to speak with their family. We received 75 comments of respondents who shared their experiences on whether they had adequate time communicating with their loved ones. Most were able to, but some did find it difficult. It may be that care homes were not able to organise this effectively including encouraging residents who seemed unsure about this form of communication.

Selected comments from respondents who felt they had enough time to speak to their family member or friend via phone or video call.

“ I can call anytime and I am able to talk to my father for any length of time.”

“My relative is unable to communicate due to his condition.”

“Resident has been able to communicate to the home when he would like to speak to family.”

“Wouldn’t want to have call for too long as staff have lots of extra work to do keeping the home clean.”

“My father calls us himself quite regularly. I have had a video call with him on one occasion when the staff were concerned about his wellbeing, although as his eyesight is very bad I think that was more of benefit to me than to him.”

“Since my mother has advanced dementia we talk to the staff looking after her instead.”

“They are always very caring and willing to discuss Mum's condition,”

“Garden visits or Skype sessions.”

“My family member does not find phone calls easy - they like to receive them but can't hold much of a conversation. We had a couple of video calls.”

“Phone calls are always met with positivity from the staff who do all they can to ensure a conversation can take place freely.”

“Video call time was unlimited but as mum's hearing had deteriorated these calls were not very productive. The best scenario was when a care worker supported mum during the call but most of the time mum was just left with the phone. She was unsure how to use it so sometimes needed help. Also she rarely had her deaf aid in so that didn't help the conversation.”

“Zoom video calls upon request, albeit difficult due to hearing and sight difficulties of relative.”

“Zoom calls were very frustrating, some staff not very good at setting it up & screen would be facing my fathers chest & not his face !! Very very frustrating & I've giving up on zoom & just call now.”

“Only by request and it was not always possible.”

“My friend is sometimes unavailable owing to acute tiredness on toileting care etc. However it is sometimes very frustrating when many calls remain unanswered - presumably owing to staff being very busy.”

“There are special facilities available for a video (Skype) call, always willingly arranged.”

2.6a Have you visited your family member or friend in the last couple of months? If yes, were you supplied with PPE and were other precautions taken?

6. Some questions on visiting family members: Create Chart			
	Yes	No	Response Total
Have you visited your family member or friend in the last couple of months?	81.9% (77)	18.1% (17)	94
If yes, were you supplied with PPE and were other precautions taken?	74.5% (70)	25.5% (24)	94
Please tell us more: (79) View			
View Matrix Charts		answered	94
		skipped	0

We asked some questions on visiting family members and 82% said they had visited their family members in the last couple of months. Those who had not made any visitations was 18%.

The above graph also indicates that 75% were supplied with PPE and took the necessary precautions although 24% claimed they were not given PPE. Personal Protective Equipment is equipment such as gloves, masks, and gowns worn by people who are at risk of injury or infection.

79 have shared their views explaining the different ways each home adapted, using the garden where possible and protective screens. Some care homes supplied PPE; others expected visitors to have it.

2.6b Selected Comments from respondents who visited your family member or friend in the last couple of months and use of PPE.

We had our own PPE and were shown to a room that we could access from the outside and that had been redesigned with a secure perspex divider allowing my mother to be safely taken in through a door from the home on the other side. There were microphones either side. Visits had to be pre-booked and the room was thoroughly cleansed and left for a period of time between visits. There was even a separate visitor's toilet of the visitor's side of the room."

"There are no visits to the home at present."

"No visits have been undertaken."

"Dropped items off at the door. Did not enter the home. spoke to staff from safe distance."

"Answered no as haven't visited but am sure home would provide PPE."

"Just recently I've been a couple of times. I hadn't realised how safely & easily we could visit via the balcony (in a sense, my only complaint was that I wasn't told this was an option). I have said yes to being supplied with PPE, in fact we brought our own, but I'm sure they could have provided if need be. We sat on the balcony while my father sat in his room."

"When visiting mum we were requested to bring in our own PPE which we did. Visits were limited to 20 minutes in the garden or, in bad weather, with mum inside and us on the outside."

"My temperature is checked and I am required to sign a check list. I take P.P.E with me."

“Took my own mask. Hand washing and sanitizing requested when I arrived. Temperature taken and questionnaire completed before I was allowed access.”

“This is the garden visiting scheme. This works well. I do not think a visiting scheme inside the home would be acceptable. I had my own mask, so did not need PPE.”

“I supplied my own PPE; the social distancing and infection control measures were well thought through and well-explained.”

“I was able to visit my mother in the garden at the home for prearranged 20 min visits on a few occasions. I brought my own PPE although there was some available by the door of the home.”

“Used personal PPE as required by the house. Temp taken and questionnaire completed each visit detailing relevant info.. Seating arranged to provide safe distance with resident.”

“I have visited twice in the last fortnight. They have a table outside in the front garden with a screen. I have to book in, have my temperature taken on arrival and fill in some forms about my health etc. I bring my own mask. Sanitiser is provided.”

“PPE equipment was not required as the visits have been socially distanced and outdoors. The home has recently adopted visits via speaker-phone and a glass door partition. Face masks have always been encouraged.”

“Unfortunately the room used is very hot and my mother doesn't like or understand why we have to be kept apart. I supplied my own face mask.”

2.7 For future planning, what improvements would you like to see the care home undertake to support your family member/friend?

No improvements needed:

“I am happy with what they are doing.”

“I am completely satisfied with the service provided by the management and staff to my father and other residents.”

I don't have any specifics. They always seem to think of everything.”

“At the moment I cannot think of anything. Mum seems to be very well cared for.”

“None they have met all the criteria required.”

“I am satisfied that the care home staff will do whatever is necessary in all circumstances.”

“They have done really well and have recently resumed walks in the neighbourhood. My family member gets bored easily and they have done their best to provide activities to keep them entertained and busy. I'm not sure what more they could have done really.”

“I can't think of any. They are doing all they can under the current circumstances and sadly they will probably be hard pressed to change their procedures before a vaccine is found.”

“I can't think of any improvements that can be made over what the staff are already doing to safeguard residents, visitors and staff.”

“The Care home has done everything it can at present to prevent the virus entering the home. It is an excellent care home and I am confident that it will introduce any measures it considers appropriate and necessary. This is despite the government's lamentable response to the support it has given to care homes.”

“Am happy with the this crisis has been handled.”

“They should carry on with their good work as it is.”

“I understand that further improvements are to be made to allow less formal meeting but I do NOT wish to impinge on the running of the home; they are the experts in this. I have every confidence in the management of the home to put in place those measures which they feel is appropriate having due regard to the changing guidelines from the Government.”

“My relative has been happy with the way everything has gone so far. Everything possible has been done to ensure that there has been minimal impact on the physical and mental well being of the residents and the management is always open to any constructive comment and suggestions from individual relatives (and residents).”

“I am satisfied with the current procedures.”

“I feel arrangements have been extremely well thought out and the system feels very safe for all concerned.”

“I think what they're doing now is very good so they should just continue with that approach.”

More engagement with friends and family:

“Maybe more photos. As we are unable to visit it would be so good to see her.”

“Better microphone in visiting room.”

“I am concerned about how future visits will be possible as the autumn approaches & we are no longer able to see family outside.”

“For the winter months hoping contact is allowed to continue in some way as the cold weather may be a problem. Hopefully this can be resolved.”

“It would be lovely if the home visits could continue, as they have proved extremely successful.”

“More assistance for residents with IT as many college course are going online due to covid. Staff need to be able to help them access things like zoom and MS Teams.”

“To touch my parent and talk directly into their ear. I am happy to have my temperature taken, to wear a mask and gloves. I'll do anything. I think that's it's likely that I have come into direct contact with fewer people than most of the staff simply so that I can continue to visit.”

“I feel, with full PPE, we should be able to get closer. With hearing & sight difficulties & dementia, visits are difficult at distance but better than none at all! I do appreciate that the priority is keeping residents safe.”

“I would however, be prepared to pay for PPE if it meant I could just hold my mother's hand.”

Better communications and information

“Send some information like newsletters.”

“I would like more updates on the progress my sister is doing she can be a right pain sometimes when she can't get her own way but i need to know if she is behaving herself.”

“More regular individual resident updates, a better room for meeting residents in.”

“Somehow more communication with the residents family? Even with zoom calls ... need to be set up properly & we need more visits per week.”

“To continue communication and be kept updated.”

“Inform me by email in advance of my mother requiring replacement of items of toiletry.”

Other points:

“To revert to having two people visit at a time. It is very difficult keeping to just one family member.”

“A safe outside visiting area that we could access without going into the home.”

“To ensure mum has her hearing aid in and has time to make herself presentable before being taken downstairs. To give her a little more control over what happens during the course of her day rather than just being dressed and taken into the lounge. To be asked if she requires anything from her room before leaving it in the morning.”

“If funding is available, it would be good to have a window to see relative from the pavement outside the home. This would mean making changes at the front of the building.”

“As residents isolated in their rooms 24 hours a day for there to be more time spent interacting with the residents by staff not just when feeding/toileting etc.”

“To revert to having two people visit at a time. It is very difficult keeping to just one family member.”

“I feel, with full PPE, we should be able to get closer. With hearing & sight difficulties & dementia, visits are difficult at distance but better than none at all! I do appreciate that the priority is keeping residents safe”.

“A safe outside visiting area that we could access without going into the home.”

3. Responses to our research

Croydon Council/ One Croydon Alliance

Please note that we also undertook at this time three other surveys with residents, learning disabilities residents, and staff. There is a report for each of these at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/ as well as an overall report which draws together the overall themes of the experiences of using, visiting, and working in care homes in Croydon.

This report will include the overall response and action plan from commissioners and stakeholders

4. Quality assurance

Does the research ask questions that:

Are pertinent? Yes, they ask friends and family about their experiences of visiting residents in Croydon care home services since COVID-19 lockdown in March.

Increase knowledge about health and social care service delivery? This research helps both commissioners and providers of services both in the health and social care sectors about the family and friends experience of visiting residents which will help future planning.

Is the research design appropriate for the question being asked?

a) Proportionate: Yes, the aim was to gain the views of as many friends and family of residents as possible.

b) Appropriate sample size: Has any potential bias been addressed? We surveyed 94 friends and family from 19 care homes. This represents 15% of care home in Croydon (127) and is just small sample of the wider number of family and friends of care residents in the borough. We relied on care homes to share this with their residents' family and friends. Those facilities that were open to this will have been supportive, but there are limits in representing those who did not share this with their residents' family and friends. The small number of responses also has a leaning towards certain care homes, one home receiving 23% of the responses and four care homes receiving 66% of the responses, so comments may lean towards these homes, see page 8.

Have ethical considerations been assessed and addressed appropriately?

Beyond the usual standards of anonymity, we had to rely on care home facilities themselves in communicating the survey to their residents' family and friends. Freepost options of written surveys were used.

Has risk been assessed where relevant and does it include?

- a) **Risk to well-being:** None.
- b) **Reputational risk:** That the data published is incorrect and not of a high-quality standard. We carefully analyse the data that come directed to respondents' answers on the Smart Survey platform.
- c) **Legal risk:** Have appropriate resources been accessed and used to conduct the research? There was no need to refer to legal resources for this research.

Where relevant have all contractual and funding arrangements been adhered to? This has come from Healthwatch Croydon's core funding. The local leadership board agreed to taking this project forward in line with our priority matrix and in response the situation because of COVID-19.

Data Collection and Retention

Is the collection, analysis and management of data clearly articulated within the research design? Yes.

Has good practice guidance been followed? Yes.

Has data retention and security been addressed appropriately? Yes.

Have the GDPR and FOIA been considered and requirements met? Yes.

Have all relevant legal requirements been adhered to ensure that the well-being of participants has been accounted for? ie the Mental Capacity Act. None required for this research.

Has appropriate care and consideration been given to the dignity, rights, and safety of participants? Yes. Anonymity was assured including a Freepost reply option.

Were participants clearly informed of how their information would be used and assurances made regarding confidentiality/anonymity? Introductions and conclusions of the survey explain its use.

Collaborative Working

Where work is being undertaken in collaboration with other organisations have protocols and policies been clearly understood and agreed, including the development of a clear contractual agreement prior to commencement? We worked with Croydon Council’s care homes commissioners and the wider Care Homes Strategy Group to gain their views in shaping the project and testing the questions.

Have any potential issues or risks that could arise been mitigated? These are shown below:

Risk factors	Level of risk	Contingency
Cannot get enough responses	Medium	Encourage the care homes to share with their residents’ family and friends.
Question set does not work with group	Low	This was tested with Care Home Strategy Group before the launch.
Data is seen as being out of date	Low	Initial top lines to be shared within a month of survey closure. Full report to follow up when effective analysis is complete.

Has Healthwatch independence been maintained? Yes, this research is shared with partner organisations before publication for their comment, but only factual inaccuracy would be reviewed. This does not affect the comments of experiences we receive.

Quality Controls

Has a quality assurance process been incorporated into the design? There was a proper process of scoping with Croydon Council and board members.

Has quality assurance occurred prior to publication? Data collection was checked and re-checked.

Has peer review been undertaken? No peer review was undertaken. It was not required for this research project.

Conflicts of Interest

Have any conflicts of interest been accounted for? This project was decided upon by Healthwatch Croydon in discussions with Croydon Council care home commissioners and the Care Home Strategy Group. At all times, board and manager are satisfied that its independence and neutrality has been maintained through this project.

Does the research consider intellectual property rights, authorship, and acknowledgements as per organisational requirements? The research is owned by Healthwatch Croydon, who are managed by Help and Care. Other organisations support has been recognised and suitably referenced.

Is the research accessible to the public? It appears on our website as of 24 June 2021.

Are the research findings clearly articulated and accurate? To the best of our knowledge, we believe they are.

5. References

Department of Health and Social Care (2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19): adult social care guidance*.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-social-care-guidance>



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