



**Residents' experience of
Croydon's Care Homes
during 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 to learn more, we undertook a series of surveys with residents, friends and family and staff between 14 August and 6 November 2020. This was undertaken online and via paper surveys sent to a Freepost address.

This report considers the experiences of 54 residents, who completed the survey and gave 335 of comments via Healthwatch Croydon's online survey platform either directly or by paper survey which was later inputted.

We asked the following:

- Which care home are you resident in?
- How would you describe your care home experience a) before Covid b) after Covid
- Were there changes in staff because of Covid-19 that has affected your experience?
- Were you able to socialise with other residents and participate in group activities?
- Did you have contact with your doctor and access to medical care and medication when you needed it?
- Did you have to self-isolate?
- Have you been given the opportunity to speak to your friends or family, via phone or video call?
- Have you been visited by family members or friends in the last couple of months?
- For future planning, what one improvement would you like to see the care home undertake to support you?

These are our findings based on the responses from the survey:

- **90% (49) had a good experience before and this only dropped to 85% (46) after restriction came in:** However, some residents would like more support in accepting transition to new ways of social contact and understand more the guidance around use of PPE. (See pages 9-10 and 21).
- **70% (38) residents said that staffing changes had not affected their experience.** Some however had felt the affects of having staff they did not know, made more challenging by face mask which made recognition more difficult. (See pages 11-12).
- **42% (23) of residents were not permitted to socialise due to the restrictions:** While great efforts were made by those facilities that could enable socialising with resident, there were a significant number that could not socialise due to the rules applied. (See pages 13-14).
- **82% (44) felt that they had positive contact with their doctor and access to medication when they needed it.** Very few did not feel that could access their doctor or medication. (See page 14-15).
- **Some residents felt completely isolated because of self-isolation.** They did understand why but it affected them. (See page 17).
- **Friends and family calls were key for residents keeping in touch.** The only ones who did not make calls had no-one to call even if they had the opportunity. (See page 18-19).
- **Some residents consistently want more socialisation and stimulation.** While it is clear some facilities have made significant effort, this is one of the improvements residents would like to see. (See page 22-23).

These are our recommendations:

- **Support residents to transition to new ways of social contact.** This includes the use of easy read information for residents on how and why PPE is being used.
- **Share best practice across care homes network, where socialisation has been safe and effective.** (See page 10).
- **Focus on residents who do not have family and friendship links.** (See page 18-19).
- **Offer a variety of safe socialisation opportunities, utilise technology for group meetings such as Zoom.** (See page 18).

Please note that we also undertook at this time three other surveys with learning disabilities residents, family and friends, 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 the voice of local people. From improving services today to helping shape better ones for tomorrow, we listen to people's 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 provide 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 54 care home residents in Croydon to assess how well the service was delivered and to support future planning of care homes.

1.2 Rationale and Methodology

We ran a survey from 14 August to 6 November 2020 online. This survey was shared by the care homes themselves either virtually or by paper copies sent to a

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>

Freepost address and then entered into the online survey. We also offered a service where shielders could call our hub number and provide their answers over a phone conversation, but no respondent took up this route.

1.3 Method

Respondents received a letter with a link to Healthwatch Croydon's online survey platform, SmartSurvey, with the following questions:

- Which care home are you resident in?
- How would you describe your care home experience a) before COVID-19 b) after COVID-19.
- Were there changes in staff because of Covid-19 that has affected your experience?
- Were you able to socialise with other residents and participate in group activities?
- Did you have contact with your doctor and access to medical care and medication when you needed it?
- Did you have to self-isolate?
- Have you been given the opportunity to speak to your friends or family, via phone or video call?
- Have you been visited by family members or friends in the last couple of months?
- For future planning, what one improvement would you like to see the care home undertake to support you?

Limits of the research

Size of sample: We surveyed 54 residents from 14 care homes. This represents just 11% of care home in Croydon (127) and a very small number of overall residents.

Representation: We relied on care homes to share this with their residents. 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. The small number of responses also has a leaning towards certain care homes, with 26 of our responses were from three homes. Four homes had just two responses and three of the homes had a single response, see page 8.

Expression of responses: Some of those we surveyed seemed to have been supported by or had the survey completed by staff. This may mean those residents may not have been truly be able to express themselves.

Variation between homes: Satisfaction of homes varied widely on initiatives for activities and socialisation at the home. Resident experiences were contrasted with both excellent and not satisfactory.

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

These are our findings based on the survey responses we received, each new space or new line is a separate comment.




2.1 What care home are you resident in?

Home	Responses
Highfield House	10
Mill House	9
Foxley Lodge	7
Thornton Lodge	5
Morven House	3
Lakeside	3
The Manse	3
The White house	2
Oval residential Home	2
Norcrest 2000	2
Roselands	2
Coombe Road	1
Esther	1
St Edwards close	1
Did not specify	3

2.2 How would you describe your care home experience a) before COVID-19 and b) after COVID-19?

- 49 residents (90.7%) described their care home experience as good before COVID-19, 4 (7.4%) said that it was neither good or bad and one respondent had a bad experience.
- Since COVID-19, 46 respondents (85.2%) described their care home experience as good, 7 (13.0%) said it was neither good or bad and one resident had a consistently bad experience both before and since COVID-19.

2.1. Before COVID-19?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Good		90.7%	49
2	Neither Good nor Bad		7.4%	4
3	Bad		1.9%	1

2.2. Since COVID-19?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Good		85.2%	46
2	Neither Good nor Bad		13.0%	7
3	Bad		1.9%	1

- Most residents reported continuous good care home experiences, with 37 providing positive comments regarding their experience before and since Covid-19. Residents have an appreciation of the pressures the homes are under.
- Seven residents did not expand on their answers.
- Four residents gave a mixed response.
- Three residents gave information without sentiment.
- Three residents commented with a negative sentiment.

Comments:

“All good because you did a lot of work here.”

“It’s alright because staff take care of me. They give me my cigarettes and money when I want it. I’m happy here.”

“Friendly and helpful staff, caring. They have done a brilliant job throughout crisis keeping home COVID free & residents & staff happy and healthy.”

“We are taken care of and measures have been put in place to keep us safe from contracting COVID-19.”

“I have been well supported by the staff and the manager I was given an easy read to explain about the lockdown and the reason why I could not go out for my activities.”

“Miss contact with other residents, but I do tend to stay in my room a lot.”

“Apart from not having visitors at first. All was good.”

“Because all the staff behaved respectfully, Because nothing appears to be to much trouble.”

“Very good, I like the home continue with my care, nail varnish, hairdo.”

“I have been following the covid 19 since March. Staff helped and supported me with all aspects of care. They were taking my temperature twice a day.”

“Do as good as they can during this time.”

“Isolation in a room. No visit from family or friends. No gym/physio or entertainment.”



“More personal hygiene. Go out more.”

“Because staff is too busy.”

“Been very restrictive but they done all they can.”

2.3 Were there changes in staff because of COVID-19 that has affected your experience?

- 16 residents (29.63%) reported that changes in staff affected their experience.
- 38 residents, or 70.3% said 'No'.

3. Were there changes in staff because of COVID-19 that has affected your experience?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		29.63%	16
2	No		70.37%	38

- Of those residents that said yes, four of these reflected that they were positive changes.
- Six residents reported negative changes.
- Two residents had mixed feelings about the changes.
- Four other residents did not expand on their answers.

Themes from comments:

“Lots left and new faces. The new staff are good.”

“The new staff are good. They look after me well. I like them.”

“As far as I know most staff continued to work throughout COVID.”

“Staff have always been caring and supportive towards me. I have no family but staff here are my family.”

“All the staff worked long days and did more hours. We were not short of staff. The Manager and the deputy worked as carers to cover the shifts.”

“My care has got better.”

“No problem with staff changes.”

“I don’t think about it.”

“Staff and management were working longer hours to cover the shifts.”

“All of them are still working. There have been one or two new staff.”

“No, no changes in staff.”

“I enjoy seeing different faces.”

“They always wearing masks and other kind of face covering. It is difficult to see their faces.”

“A lot of agency staff not much continuity of familiar faces. Some lacked confidence and experience.”

“Sometimes if I don’t know people then I really crossed afterwards.”

“Don’t know what staff are doing. Staff explain what they are doing.”

“Neither Yes or No.”



“Because they wear COVID PPE and new changes.”

“They are wearing masks.”

“Some staff have changed. But not affected me.”

2.4 Were you able to socialise with other residents and participate in group activities?

- 31 residents, or 57.41% of residents said yes, they were able to socialise with other residents and participate in group activities.
- 23, or 42.59% said no, they were not able to socialise and participate in group activities.

4. Were you able to socialise with other residents and participate in group activities?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		57.41%	31
2	No		42.59%	23

- 31 residents had reported positive experiences of socialisation and participation.
- 12 residents reported a negative sentiment.
- Six residents did not expand on their 'No' answer.
- Three residents gave a mixed response.
- Two residents gave information without sentiment.

Themes from comments:

“Yes but we followed the government guidelines by keeping the 2 metre social distancing. We carried out activities in small groups.”

“Dancing games video call.”

“Play games Lots of chatting I like it here Chat outside when I get my cigarettes. This is my favourite time. You get good meal.”

All activities had to be done one to one basic to minimise the risk of infection. None tac tie activities were omitted but gentle exercise and music were encourage during the pandemic. During the lockdown visitors were no allowed to visit instead all communication were done vis social media. During the pandemic (Care Home X) manage to celebrate 2 residents 100s birthday (sic). They both receive cards from Her Majesty We had to big parties and we follow the social distancing protocol. Relatives were able to participate either social media and around 21 families members attended and we watched from the garden.”

“We goes out nearly every day in our house car for daily activities in the house I enjoyed the sensory room and the art and craft room which I love a lot.”

“Yes if I wanted but I prefer to stay in the room and have one to one.”

“We were talking and holding conversations a lot. We used to watch a lot of tv, gentle exercise and listening to music...Staff made us feel very much loved.”

“Before the COVID, I socialise with staff and resident, but when I caught COVID, the staff have one to one in my bedroom. They never leave alone for too long.”

“Stayed in room.” “I tend to stay in room most of the time but since March have remained here.”



“No activities to participate in.” “The staff haven’t been telling us.”

“Because of this corona, I love activities and want to do more.”

“Yes before the virus.”

2.5 Did you have contact with your doctor and access to medical care and medication when you needed it?

- 44 respondents (81.48%) positively felt that they had contact with their doctor and access to medication when they needed it, 10, or 18.52% felt that they did not.

5. Did you have contact with your doctor with access to medical care and medication when you needed it?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		81.48%	44
2	No		18.52%	10

- With further analysis, we saw that residents interpreted the question differently. Some did not require health services or medication during the survey period but stated that it was available if requested.
- Four residents answered 'No, Not Applicable'.
- Four residents answered 'No' and explained they did not need to.
- One resident answered 'No', with 'No comment'.
- One resident answered 'No' but did not expand on their answer.
- We can conclude that two residents may not have had contact with their doctor or access to medical care/medication when they felt they needed it.

Themes from comments:

“We can call the GP and they can do a telephone assessment. If its serious and requires a blood test a nurse is being sent to take the bloods and we are wearing masks and other PPE as advised.”

“Phone call to hospital about my leg. GP spoke to me on the phone.”

“If I want it I could have it. I had infection in my gum and manager got me antibiotics. And I got better.”

“Home Manager arranged to speak to our GP by phone if any one of us is unwell or arranged the medical reviews.”

“G.P. did home consultation via what’s up and telephone. The home also contacted tele medicine at other times prescription was sent electronically which were delivered at the front door (infection control were followed.”

“Luckily not required during this period just usual medication.”

“Yes my doctor has been calling every Thursday and if I need to see my staff will arrange for it.”

“I get all my medication but I did not see the doctor. I am still going to Hospital for all my appointments.”

“Staff does that for me.”

“I don’t take any medication and I did not have to see a Doctor. I am fit and active.”


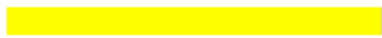
“There was no need for me to see my GP.”

“I don’t have to talk with my doctor I have a nurse who I talk to if I need anything to say.”

“Yes apart from waiting for an assessment for dementia- this will be dealt with when safe.”

2.6 Did you have to self-isolate?

- 17 residents had to self-isolate, or 31.48%, 37 residents, or 68.52%, reported that they did not have to self-isolate.

6. Did you have to self-isolate?			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		31.48%	17
2	No		68.52%	37

Themes from comments:

“I had to stay on the house as I can’t go out because of the virus. Lots of people are dying.”

“I can’t go out because of the virus.”

“I was stopped from going home to visit my wife and two children.”



“One residence and one member of staff had to be isolated at different times. Covid19 protocol were followed. The residence that to self isolate themselves for 14 days.”

“Several staff chose to lockdown with residents and home is COVID free due to this I’m sure.”

“I contracted COVID, went to hospital. Stay there for a week. Return back to the home, isolate for 14 days. The staff support me well. I am aware of the procedure during COVID” I was very ill . Staff were monitoring me closely and was under observations every half an hourly.. I had a radio and tv in my room which kept me occupied. Staff used to come and talk to me and reassure me at all times.”

2.7 Have you had the opportunity to speak to your friends or family, via phone or video call?

- 51 residents (94.44%) reported that they had the opportunity to speak to their friends and family, three residents (5.56%) said no.

7. Have you been given the opportunity to speak to your friends or family, via phone or video call?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		94.44%	51
2	No		5.56%	3

- A further analysis of the responses revealed that two did not have anyone to contact during this time and one did not expand on their answer.
- Of those who answered 'Yes', four went on to say 'Not Applicable' in the comment box, and four others gave a dash.
- Potentially, 11 residents had no one to contact but their 'Yes' scores indicate that were given the opportunity to do so.

Themes from comments:

“ Video call. My sister came to the door. See her inside the care home and she stays outside.”

“I spoke to (X) and (X) on the video phone.”

“My sisters telephoned me once in a while to see how I am getting on.”

“Phone calls as often as we liked and then some video calls via phones. Home then accessed as 'Portal' so better video calls. However still not ideal for someone of all with dementia.”

“oh yes loads of time via Whats up video call and the portal.”

“Skype was set up.”

“Do not have any family but I was told that I could do so.”

“I spoke to my family on the phone through my bedroom window, also the manager set up Zoom meeting with our family.”

“Video call / phone whenever I wanted.”

“Very accessible to do so.”

“Yes on the screen thing.”


“Neither Yes or No.”

“I do not have any friends nor close family.”

“I do not have family or friend around in London area. My family lives in (another area).”

2.8 Have you been visited by family members or friends in the last couple of months?

- 37 residents (68.52%) had the opportunity to receive visitors in the last couple of months, 17 (31.48%) did not.
- 35 of these visitors were supplied with PPE (Personal Protective Equipment).

8. Have you been visited by family members or friends in the last couple of months?				
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		68.52%	37
2	No		31.48%	17

- Residents made 35 positive comments about visits and PPE.
- Three residents had mixed sentiments.
- Of those who said 'No' two residents expanded on their answer.
- One resident provided information without sentiment.

Themes from comments:

“ We have PPE at our entrance and a temperature check which is carried out before you access the building. ”

“My sister stays 2 m distance from me.”

“I visit now three times a week to my family.”

“Specially segregated area with plastic screen. Sanitiser, health/info forms. Booking system for visits.”

“They were given access via a specific room which has a glass screen in front of us and access to antibacterial handwash.”

“Visiting with precautions was offered but I chose not to visit for my families safety.”

“Yes, my brother was given a face mask when he came to visit me and all other precautions were taken by the Home.”

“My sister came twice to see me. We have to go outside n a tent. I don't like that very much. They were wearing a mask or other face coverings.”

“They visited me outside the home in the garden under the gazebo. Yes the staff gave them mask, gloves and aprons and told them no physical contact. No touching.”

“I don't feel comfortable to sit on a wheel chair and sit in a tent (gazebo) outside. They told me visiting is outside. I don't like that.”

“Yes all PPE.” “Visits minimal and restrictive timewise.”

“Yes for my birthday only. No mask or gloves.”

“No not yet.” “Neither Yes or No.”

“When my daughter came to see me she wears a mask. She looks different. There's a tent outside in the front so me and my daughter can see each other but there is always a member of staff there.”

2.9 For future planning, what one improvement would you like to see the care home undertake to support you?

- Residents were given the option to state anything they like here, which we grouped into themes.
- 18 residents answered that they did not know or commented 'N/A'.
- 18 residents were positive that there were no improvements that the home could make and were keen for the standard of care and support that they were receiving to stay as it was at the time of the survey.
- 12 residents made comments around socialisation and activities which were a constant theme through out the survey.
- Three residents felt that there could be improvements around staff training.
- Two residents wanted more information.
- One resident said they would like better healthcare.

Themes from comments:

“ I don't think so. I'm alright.”

“I cannot think of anything else as they supported me in anything.”

“Nothing at the moment the care home is great.”

“I have been supported by all members of staff since I moved to (care home X)
The staff are very good and gives me the right care.”

“None. They are good and meet all my care needs.”

“Just keep on giving us tender loving care as before.”

“I don't think there is anymore they could have done.”

“No it is excellent already.” “More activities.”

“I am happy with everything.” “Missed group activities in the home.”

“I don't think there is anymore than they do. They seems to be easing
lockdown outside that I think they could ease it in bit more in the home.”

“Visitors to be able to come in the rooms.”

“I want to go home for Christmas. Please can you arrange this.”

“More outings would be great.”

“Better communication, e.g; newsletter to keep up to date with activities, staff
changes, entertainment. Especially in current situation where I'm not going into
Home to talk to staff and see other residents. Facebook or emails.”

“More information on testing in care home.”

“The medical care. The politeness of the workers.”

“To train staff to deal with the patient. Activities especially.”

“I would like to be more independent, more party (sic). More staff help with
personal hygiene.”

3. Responses to our research

Croydon Council/ One Croydon Alliance

Please note that we also undertook at this time three other surveys with learning disabilities residents, family and friends, 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 residents experiences of using 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 staff experience 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 of Croydon's care home residents as possible.

b) Appropriate sample size: Has any potential bias been addressed? We aimed to speak to as many as possible - we heard from 54 residents from 24 out of 127 care homes which was 11% of the market. There was a bias in responses from some facilities with 26 responses coming from three homes.

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. The residents themselves were encouraged to reply with anonymity but may have been helped by staff in some way. 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
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 is 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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