



# Covid-19 briefing 2

Responses to the local Healthwatch Covid-19 survey  
Feedback collected 11 June to 1 July 2020

**healthwatch**  
Cambridgeshire

**healthwatch**  
Peterborough

## Introduction

The coronavirus pandemic has meant many changes to health and care services across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough as hospitals and local authorities respond to the situation.

Part of our role at Healthwatch, as a statutory body, is to safeguard the rights and wellbeing of people who use health and social care services.

So we invited people across our area to complete a survey to find out the impact of service changes on their health and care.

We asked them about:

- ⇒ health and care services they had experienced
- ⇒ information they needed to stay safe and well
- ⇒ help and support they had received

We also invited messages for local NHS and care staff and other key workers.

This second briefing covers the period 11 June to 1 July when we received 252 completed responses.

Our survey will run until 31 August 2020. We will be publishing one more briefing during the summer as data comes in. And a final report in late September.

## What will happen to our findings?

Our survey results are being shared with local service providers and planners to help them to continue to deliver good quality care across our area.

The reports will also go to Healthwatch England to help inform the national response to the pandemic.



Call 0330 355 1285 or visit one of our websites to share your experience

## Briefing 2 - Key messages

- 1. We continued to receive many messages thanking NHS staff, care and other key workers. People also told us of their concerns which included adequate safety, health and wellbeing of staff, and resources for staff to carry out their jobs.**
- 2. The impact of the pandemic has meant that using health services has led to both better and poorer experiences for people.**
  - ⇒ Out of the 154 people who responded to us about using health services, four out of five of them said their experience of care was good or excellent.
  - ⇒ One in four people said that communication about healthcare changes had been good or excellent, a third said it had been poor or very poor.
- 3. People are worried about managing their health conditions where treatment has been paused. They are struggling to find answers as to how long the delays will be and the effect this will have on their illness and prognosis. People have found the NHS campaign urging them to use healthcare services to be confusing where services have not been running.**
- 4. Nearly a third of people put off seeking help for their health - for both minor problems and potentially serious conditions.**
- 5. Over half of those who needed support turned to their family, friends, neighbours. A third were able to manage without additional support. Online shopping services have proved beneficial.**
- 6. Changes affected just over half of all people who receive social care or support services for themselves or someone they care for. Nine out of ten rated their experiences of the changes as less than good.**
- 7. Three out of four people said their mental health or wellbeing had been affected in some way. A quarter of people who needed help had not been able to access any.**
- 8. People have found it harder to keep up to date with the changes to information and advice around how to keep safe. Although they have said that it is still relatively easy to know where to find the information.**

## What local people told us

### People at greater risk and shielding

Nearly two out of three (65%) people who took our survey considered themselves, or someone they cared for, to be at risk of serious illness from Covid-19 for one or more reasons. This included being over 70, having a long-term health condition and / or being pregnant.

As with the previous briefing, over a third (34%) of this group had been advised to shield. A mixed picture has continued to develop with some getting help and shopping deliveries whilst others have struggled.

**‘Told by hospital should be on vulnerable patients list. No letter received and rang doctor’s surgery and was told that unless I was having cancer treatment, or had a transplant I was not eligible.’**

**‘I have been very grateful to the shielding programme and that my work has been understanding and also for my weekly food parcels.’**

### Getting help and support

The people who consider themselves or someone they care for to be at greater risk of Covid-19 told us more about their experiences of getting help.

Around one in eight had asked for support from the countywide or a district hub. Of those who had asked for support, half got countywide or district hub support, whilst the other half turned to local community groups.

Of those people who had not asked for support from a hub or community group, one in three people (33%) had supported themselves. Over half (58%) told us that they had received support from family, friends, and neighbours. One in seven (15%) had used home deliveries or click and collect for shopping.

The help and support people had received included food shopping, picking up medication, keeping in touch with family and friends by using online video chat platforms. We have heard some positive experiences from being in lockdown.

**‘Done my own shopping etc. Exercising regularly. Staying away from others. Zooming friends and relatives...’**

**‘Family member from another household and next door neighbour has shopped for us.’**

**‘Skype sessions to try to keep disabled daughter in positive mood.’**

**‘We have managed lots of laughs together during this lockdown as well as the expected wobbles.’**

But others have had difficulties getting the support they need during this time.

‘Very little support for the first few weeks. I care for a disabled young adult family member and the care and support became very onerous because their education was stopped.’

‘I ended up even contacting my MP because of difficulty in obtaining supermarket delivery of food.’

15 people told us they or someone they care for has additional communication needs, such as a visual impairment or needing information in a different language. Half of them told us they had a difficult time finding information.

## Using health services

154 people, nearly two thirds, needed help with a health problem. Most people (84%) knew where to go to get help.

Over half of the experiences were about using a GP service. Of these, four out of five people said they had received good or excellent care. Less than one in ten rated it as poor or very poor.

Other services used included urgent and emergency care and visits to hospital. Overall, across all health services, four out of five people rated their experience as good or excellent.

‘The minor injuries unit at Ely has been excellent, we have been three times during the pandemic. Each time we have felt completely safe and reassured.’

‘The person I help has had telephone consultations from cardiology, rheumatology and GP. These have all been very reassuring.’

‘The complete shutdown of dental services...has been a disaster, much worse handled than changes to other medical services. I lost a dental crown in the first week of the lockdown and had to keep it patched up...for 12 weeks.’

Three in ten people (30%) said they had avoided getting help for a health problem because of Covid-19. Whilst some of these were minor, others were potentially serious, including a lump on the breast, a fall and a cancelled glaucoma clinic appointment.

‘My husband fell over due to his brain condition and low sodium levels. Didn’t want to call an ambulance as I didn’t want to bother them.’

‘I had an appointment at the glaucoma clinic at Addenbrooke’s to evaluate changes to my vision resulting from PVD (posterior vitreous detachment), but chose to postpone this in order to avoid contact with others at the hospital.’

Over a third of people (37%) had experienced a change to their healthcare or for a person they care for. People reported mixed experiences, with two in five (39%) saying the change was good or excellent.

And a slightly smaller number (36%) saying it was poor or very poor. This is similar to the findings in our first briefing.

Ratings for communication at GP services varied widely too.

‘Our GP Surgery implemented an e-mail contact service, and people using it found it gave a quicker service than before.’

‘Local GP - website suggests you can only contact them for Covid related problems.’

Services for ongoing health conditions that have been cancelled or stopped suddenly have caused anxiety for some people.

‘Diabetic healthcare team, my children who are type 1 and adults have not received any contact or advise from the team.’

‘My elderly mother had two procedures postponed due to the crisis. It has been very difficult for her to keep her spirits up and keep mobile.’

‘I keep seeing posters/signs to urge people to still seek advice for health problems, however my procedure has been cancelled with no advice from professionals as to what to do with ongoing issues.’

## Social care and support services

22 people said they received care for themselves or someone they care for. Just over half of them were affected by changes in care they received.

Most of these, 11 out of 12 people, said their experience of changes to care and support was less than good. However, the communication around these changes was rated slightly better with 8 out of 12 people rating it less than good.

Problems were highlighted where paid carers were cancelled due to risks of catching Covid-19, leaving people to seek help from family or manage on their own.

People told us that where services have stopped, this has caused them difficulties. This has been eased where services were able to provide email and video support.

‘Cleaner cancelled for months due to Covid. As I am vulnerable.... I have really struggled as too unwell to do it myself.’

‘Had to cancel paid care for our daughter and had to supply care ourselves - she became very dependent on us.’

**‘My three year old was diagnosed as autistic. Every single piece of support has been stopped.’**

## **Mental health and wellbeing**

Three out of four people (75%) said their mental health or wellbeing had been affected. About one in four said the impact was low. Around one in eight said the impact was significant. The findings are similar to briefing 1.

Again, echoing our findings in briefing 1, whilst feeling varying degrees of impact, over half (56%) said they had not needed any support.

Of the three quarters of people that were able to get help, nearly two in three (60%) were supported by family and friends. Whilst one in ten had help from mental health services others sought help from a variety of charitable organisations, telephone helplines and online services.

Just over one quarter (27%) of people were not able to access support. The main reasons given were that support services were too busy, cancelled or that they did not consider themselves a priority.

These are some of the things people told us this time:

**‘She had to threaten to kill herself. That was the only way she could get some help. The mental health team did not want to know!’**

**‘My daughter is with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and all sessions were cancelled.’**

**‘I do not consider myself a priority, so I have not asked.’**

Over half the people told us that they had not seen information about mental health and wellbeing services currently available. Of those that had, social media, followed by TV or radio were the most popular places to find out what was on offer.

These are some of the things people told us about mental health and wellbeing:

**‘NHS mind matters, I have a plan that has been updated already.’**

**‘CPFT (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust) mental health workers (adult locality team) were brilliant throughout: Covid meant my counselling was cut short but they gave me crystal clear communication.’**

**‘...member of the household who contacted the GP for mental health advice was given some anti-depressants and told she would have telephone counselling...no counsellor has contacted her.’**

## Who we've heard from so far

As part of this project, we aim to listen to the experiences of a wide range of people from across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. In particular, those who are most likely to be affected by Covid-19 and changes to services since the pandemic started. This data is from the people we heard from between 11 June to 1 July.

We heard from people from all over the county and of all ages with 10% under the age of 35. Nearly four in ten (39.4%) were aged 65-plus.

The biggest number of responses came from Cambridge City and Peterborough.

Three quarters (74.8%) of our respondents were women.

Most people who told us about their ethnicity identified as White British (85.8%). One person in ten (10.4%) was from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.

Nearly half (48%) of people said they had a disability or long-term health condition.

Nearly a third of people (28.3%) said they had caring responsibilities.

And 4.6% of people identified as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. A further 1.2% identified as Transgender.

## In their own words ... people's messages to key-workers

**'The NHS staff and carers I have seen and been in contact with have been amazing. Especially the ambulance service who helped me.'**

**'They are low paid, work long and antisocial hours and have had the stress of travel to vulnerable people - but they are an absolute lifeline for so many people, keeping people in their homes. Thank you to all domiciliary care workers!'**

**'They are doing their best under very difficult circumstances and severe under funding.'**

**'Continue your amazing work. Be aware that when people do start coming back to hospital they may be nervous and may need reassurance.'**

**'Key workers, we couldn't have kept going without you during lockdown. You have kept the country running and supported our mental health by keeping services/supply chains open! Thank you.'**

**'Thank you very much for all hard job you are doing. Please, stay safe and take care of yourselves too.'**

## Fill in the survey

### How has the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown affected you?

Take our survey and help our local NHS and care services.

It's really important that we hear from a full range of people, including those with long-term health conditions, people who have been shielding, people with disabilities or those experiencing mental health difficulties.

The survey takes 10 minutes and is anonymous. So you can share your or your family's experiences in confidence. Good and bad.

Visit either of our websites to have your say. You can also fill in the survey over the phone or contact our office and we will send you a paper copy.

### Can you help?

Please help us reach as many people as possible by sharing our survey with those you know, such as on Facebook. Do get in touch if you can put an article in your group or organisation's newsletter.

We are also very keen to hear from people who are not online. Please get in touch if you can help us distribute surveys to people who don't use the internet.

## Contact us

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