



Covid-19 briefing 1

Responses to the local Healthwatch Covid-19 survey
Feedback collected 28 May to 10 June 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 first briefing covers the period 28 May to 10 June when we received 535 completed responses.

We will be publishing two more briefings through the summer as data comes in, plus a final report in late September analysing all the responses received.

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 1 - Key messages

- 1. There was overwhelming support for NHS staff, care and other key workers from people across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. We received hundreds of positive messages and thank yous.**
- 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 252 people who had used health services in this period, four out of five of them said their experience was good or excellent.
 - ⇒ Where healthcare had changed, a third said the communication about the changes had been poor or very poor. Just over a third rated it good or excellent.
- 3. Cancelled services and procedures have led to uncertainty as to where people now are on waiting lists and whether they need to be re-referred. People wanted better communication to let them know what was happening with their care.**
- 4. People are worried that delays will have affected the progress of their illness and prognosis.**
- 5. A third of people put off seeking help for their health - for minor problems and potentially serious conditions - because they:**
 - ⇒ feared catching Covid-19 and the impact for themselves or family members
 - ⇒ did not feel important enough to bother staff
 - ⇒ thought the service they needed would be unavailable
- 6. People increasingly turned to their family, friends, neighbours and their local communities for both practical and emotional support as other services shut down.**
- 7. Three out of four people said their mental health or wellbeing had been affected in some way. There has been an impact on people's mental health where:**
 - ⇒ services suddenly stopped
 - ⇒ normal activities and support changed due to lockdown.
- 8. Nearly eight out of ten people (77%) were able to access information about keeping safe during the pandemic relatively easily. But some people have had little or no information about services available to them. Some people have found the information is unclear.**

What local people told us

People at greater risk and shielding

Six out of ten (62%) people who took our survey considered themselves, or someone they cared for, to be at risk of serious illness from Covid-19.

75 people were concerned for both themselves and someone they care for.

Over a third (36%) of people at greater risk had been advised to shield. A mixed picture has emerged with some getting help and shopping deliveries while others have struggled.

These are some of the things they told us:

‘My partner has been advised to shield. I am considered to be in the group with underlying vulnerabilities. We have been able to get click and collect shopping where I have gone to collect or have managed to get home delivery.’

‘My husband is being shielded. I have to go back to work soon as can’t afford food much longer.’

‘I said I didn’t need help, since getting priority delivery slots, however I have still been receiving the 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.

One in ten people told us they asked for support from the county-wide or a district hub. Of these, half used county-wide or district hub support, while the other half turned to local community groups.

Of those people who had not asked for support from a hub, over half (57%) told us that they had managed with support from family, friends and neighbours.

The help and support people had received included food shopping, picking up medication, advice about getting online and wellbeing phone calls.

These are some of the things people told us:

‘There is a list of community volunteers for our village on whom we could call. Our only prescription for the household has been delivered monthly by a volunteer. We have been helping our neighbours who are shielding with their shopping.’

People needed support with ongoing medical conditions. While some had good experiences, others had problems.

These are some of the things they told us:

‘My husband’s MS (multiple sclerosis) nurse has been available at all times on the telephone. The GP telephone service has worked magnificently.’

‘Newly diagnosed type 2, DESMOND (Diabetes Education and Self Management for Ongoing and Newly Diagnosed) and eye test, have heard nothing after these were cancelled.’

Using health services

Most people (87%) knew where to go to get help.

Just over 250 of the people taking part said they had needed to use a health service during the pandemic – some more than once. These included 180 people seeing a GP, 59 needing urgent and emergency care and 44 going to hospital.

Four out of five people rated their experience as good or excellent.

These are some of the things people told us:

‘My treatment for Lymphoma continued at PCH (Peterborough City Hospital) for which I am very grateful.’

‘Needed to talk to or see a doctor. Doctor rang me within 15 minutes. I was able to send photo. Need antibiotics. Prescription sent electronically to pharmacy. Minimum fuss. Better than normal service.’

‘I was seen in A&E with chest pain - it was due to having Covid pneumonia. Every member of staff was superb. I had bloods, X-ray and ECG. No treatment needed. Just told to go home and rest and that it would take time. Excellent care.’

One in three people told us they had avoided getting help for a health problem because of Covid-19.

‘I delayed treatment for an infection in my central line because I thought I’d be sent to A&E.’

‘Detached retina follow up, although appointment has been postponed, the condition has got worse, but I haven’t contacted the eye clinic’

People have shared their concerns for their health because treatment and investigation for a condition has been delayed or cancelled.

190 people told us that healthcare had changed for them or a person they care for. Of these, a third said the communication about the changes had been poor or very poor. Just over a third rated it good or excellent.

'I was due a colonoscopy just before everything shut down and it was cancelled. Now I don't know when I will have it.'

'I haven't had to chase up results from microbiologist as the GPs have contacted me.'

Some people receiving support to control their diabetes told us they had been badly affected by diabetes services stopping abruptly.

'The care of my diabetes has been impacted by the fact that the DSN (Diabetes Specialist Nurse) I was seeing to improve my management of the condition has been re-deployed and I can no longer talk to her.'

'I have felt let down by all the diabetes services that have been withdrawn. Although it is understandable in the circumstances, I feel that diabetes support to just end has made me anxious. I have type 1 and ... had a condition which has led to kidney damage.'

Social care and support services

Half of the people who said they - or someone they care for - received help with daily activities had experienced a change to the care. Of these, a third thought the communication about the changes was good or excellent but two thirds said their experiences of the changes were less than good.

Some people struggled to get adequate carer support because of carers having to isolate themselves. And the difficulties of hiring new carers during lockdown.

Those affected included children with autism whose support has stopped and people with dementia who have been upset by services closing.

Others told us about good care, including people with family members in care homes.

These are some of the things people told us:

'I have two children with additional needs and challenging behaviour and my options for help, support or respite disappeared overnight.'

'I managed to get my wheelchair fixed safely (via wheelchair services) - that was a pleasant surprise.'

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 ten said the impact was significant.

Whilst feeling varying degrees of impact, over half (57%) said they had not needed any support. Of those that did need help, more than a quarter were supported by family and friends. Whilst others sought help from a variety of organisations, including telephone and online.

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 was the most popular place to find out what was on offer.

Some people have not known where to go for help or have had support withdrawn, postponed or delayed.

Being in lockdown has had a positive effect for some people, allowing them more time to talk to family and relax.

These are some of the things people told us:

‘Was a few phone calls at beginning from son’s mental health....have been left to cope. That’s it. So disappointing.’

‘My daughter had waited 18 months for support....they stopped it after one week of starting.’

‘Increased vulnerability due to the pandemic and the lack of care particularly in relation to mental health, with no planned follow ups when starting on new medication.’

Who we've heard from so far

People from all over the county and of all ages including seven between the ages of 15 and 18. Three quarters of people (76%) were aged 45-plus.

The biggest number of responses came from Huntingdonshire and Peterborough.

Nearly eight out of ten (78.2%) of our respondents were women.

Most people who told us about their ethnicity identified as White British (89.9%). And almost one person in ten (9.6%) was from a Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.

Nearly half (45%) of people said they had a disability or long-term health condition.

A third of people taking the survey (30.2%) said they had caring responsibilities.

And 2.6% of people identified as Lesbian, Gay or Bisexual. A further 0.6% identified as Transgender.

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 28 May to 10 June.

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

'I want to thank all people who have continued to work to care for others during this time, regardless of which job they did. The wheels kept turning because so many continued to work for the good of others.'

'We may stop clapping on Thursdays but there is a whole generation of the public who will now live with a new respect and deepened gratitude to those in every job who have kept us safe. We will not forget and I hope we will stand up to support you in your future needs.'

'Thank you to everyone who is working from all NHS staff, carers, social workers, all emergency staff, teachers and all school staff, all shop workers, all delivery drivers, all farmers and agricultural staff, all utility staff, all food growers and grocery manufacturers, all utility staff and everyone else that I haven't mentioned. Thank you'

'My mother in law is in a St Ives care home and they have bent over backwards to ensure safe care continues. The NHS staff are my heroes. These are the people who deserve gongs and financial recognition.'

'Our Heroes'

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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