

Covid-19 Insight Report

18 April - 3 May 2020

At a glance

We have...

- Continued to update our advice and information pages on our website to make it easier to navigate.
- Identified that some people are finding it difficult to access information about testing, changes to health services, accessing repeat prescriptions and help for those who don't have access to the internet.
- Care homes and hospitals are using innovative ways to allow relatives to stay in touch.
- Mental health has been affected and people are seeking support from family and friends primarily.
- Phone consultations with GPs are working well.
- Volunteers from local groups collecting prescriptions is working well in most cases.

Background

The way health and social care services operate has been affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) with non-urgent treatment postponed, face-to-face appointments reduced and homes and services limiting public access.

For Healthwatch Wiltshire, the outbreak has also resulted in changes to our work, with much of our planned public engagement and visits to services paused and a greater focus on providing advice to the public and supporting the local response to Covid-19.

However, this does not mean that the work of Healthwatch to understand the experiences of the public has stopped. With a fast-moving response to Covid-19, real-time intelligence for services about the issues the public are facing is valuable. It is also important that health and social care services understand the impact these changes are having more broadly – especially when they concern people's safety or will have implications once services begin the return to normal.



Where is our insight coming from?

At present, our opportunity to directly engage with Wiltshire residents is limited to social media, our website feedback and responding to calls and emails via our Helpdesk Hub Team.

We've therefore asked our volunteers who are spread across the county to share any feedback they hear locally with us. We have also asked local community and voluntary organisations including local Covid-19 response groups to be our eyes and ears so we can understand the experiences of those they support.

We have also now launched an online survey asking people to share their experiences of health and care during this period. This survey went live on 28 April and has been shared widely with voluntary and community groups and organisations.

Specifically, we're asking people to share what is working well and where there are gaps within the provision and delivery of health and social care services.

This report is a collation of all of these sources of insight.

Advice and information

Since the coronavirus outbreak, we have had a greater focus on our information and signposting service, to help people get the information they need from a trusted source.

We have updated our dedicated coronavirus advice and information pages to make them easier to navigate and find the information that you are looking for. These pages include all the latest national and local information plus information about local support and community groups and a bereavement support page. We also have created specific pages in response to what we have heard from local people and groups, and nationally including:

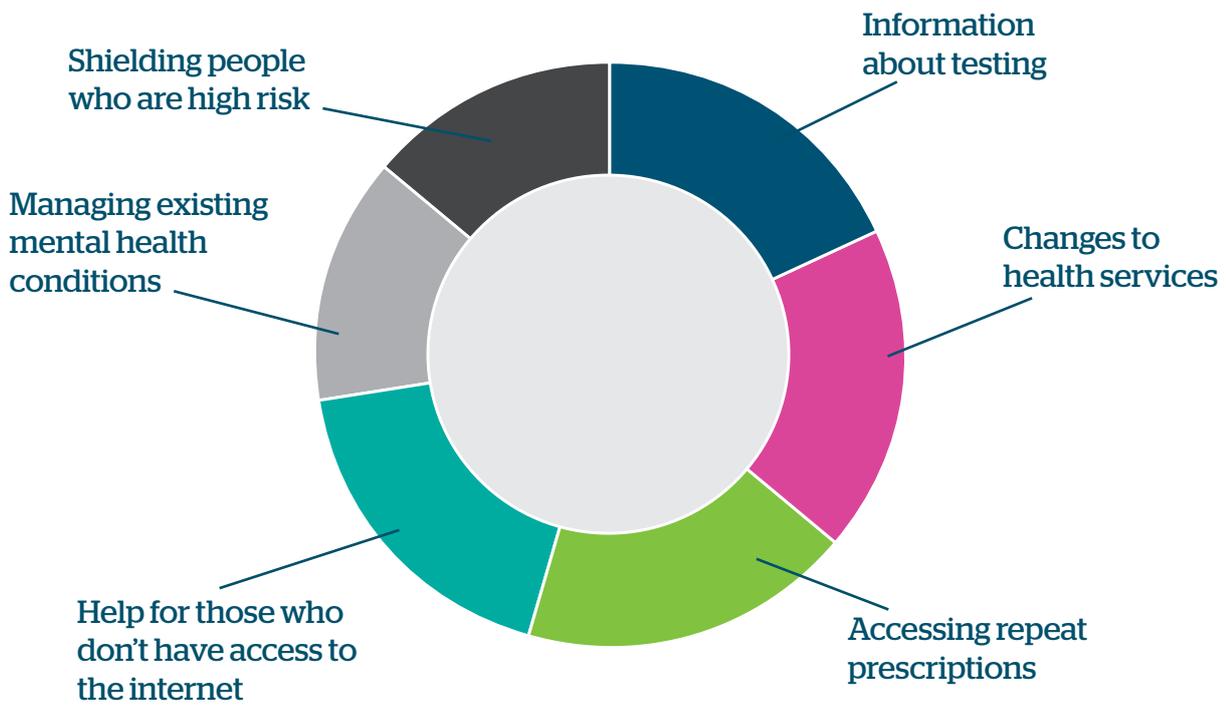
- A dedicated page giving information and advice on accessing dentists at this time.
- Information on how people can stay in touch with their loved ones who are currently in hospital.
- A dedicated page for mental health support and a page for children and young people's mental health.

Our coronavirus advice and information pages have had **371** views. We have also been more active on social media, sharing information and asking for feedback on health and care services and these posts have reached **14,948** people.

In our survey, we asked people how easy they had found it find, understand and keep up to date with information around coronavirus. Most survey respondents said that they found it easy to find and understand the information. They found this information online through national and local websites and social media. 92% said that they had found information via the news, newspapers and radio.

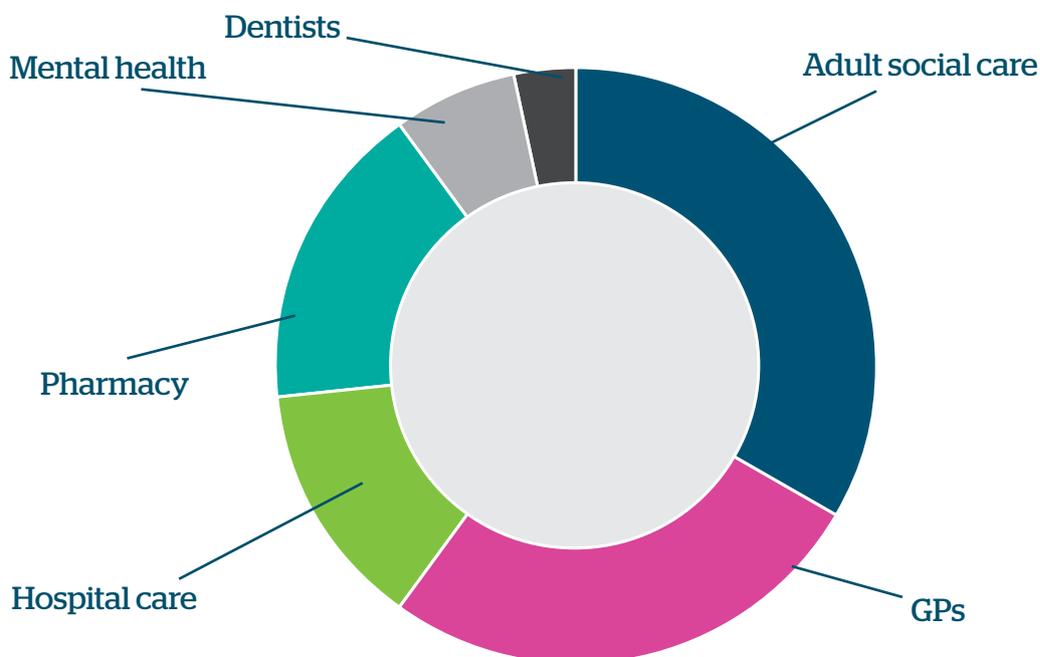
We asked people what topics they had found it difficult find advice and information about. Testing, changes to services, accessing repeat prescriptions and help for those that don't have access to the internet were most frequently mentioned.

What topics are people finding it difficult to find information about?



What are we hearing?

Between 18 April and 3 May, we have received **53** comments about how health and care has been impacted by coronavirus. **25** of these have come through our online survey, and **28** through our volunteers and the voluntary and community sector.



I think the needs of patients without Covid-19 are just as valid and their treatment should not be delayed because of Covid-19.

Only thing really is not being as able to manage long term conditions as effectively, and fear conditions worsening as a result of not being able to manage them as effectively as usual.

Adult social care

We have received comments from family members of residents of care homes, and also a resident with a learning disability and autism who lives in supported living. We have been told how care homes are keeping family members informed and up to date and how they have been keeping in touch via phone or Skype.

The care home went into lockdown in mid-March and we have been allowed to either call or make a Skype call. No visitors allowed. They initially didn't have any PPE equipment but a local headteacher had produced some PPE equipment specifically for my mother's care home.

Contact with social care is easier.

We have also heard how care homes are being used in different ways, for example to support discharge from hospital. However, it seems that this hasn't worked for some people due to ongoing therapy not being available as planned and poor communication with relatives.

My father was in Swindon hospital for aspiration pneumonia from February until the end of March where was deemed 'medically fit' to leave as the virus had hit the hospital and they wanted him transferred to a local care home for some rehab and physiotherapy.

He was taken to [a] care home in Wootton Bassett. He never received his physiotherapy or saw the occupational therapist or his social worker as the care home at this stage was not allowing external people into the care home. Dad was making great progress and walking to and from the dining hall for meals. We were making plans to discharge him from the care home as he was fit and ready to go home.

That same week the care home had 'written' to us (I never received a call or letter) to notify us that the virus was in the care home. I received no information and was told it was all confidential. I asked to speak to the acting regional director at this stage (07/04/20) and she informed me they had four sections to the care home and two sections had the virus. A day later my father came down with a temperature and a cough. An on call doctor contacted me on the 9 April to let me know they were not taking my dad to hospital but offering him palliative care only. He died a day later.

We have also heard how support for people with a learning disability and autism has adapted to meet the needs of residents.

She has some 1-1 funded hours which have continued over the phone to help her learn how to use YouTube and BBC iPlayer. She said that she has watched lots of things now including church services. Usually, she goes out independently but at the moment she is supported by staff. She has been out for a few walks but mostly stayed at home. Staff are currently doing her shopping for her. She said that she was a bit stressed at the start as she didn't know what was happening but now thinks she is coping well. She is managing to keep in touch with people including her local vicar by telephone.

Mental health

We have heard from people how their mental health has been affected during this time. Most people told us that they have been getting support primarily from friends and family.

Out of the 25 people who have replied to our survey so far, **15** said that the coronavirus outbreak has had either some or a significant impact on their mental health.

Messages and video calls with friends have been helpful for my mental health and contact with people on social media.

We have also heard how, in some instances, support and treatment has been stopped or isn't available as usual.

My son has a severe mental health condition (complex PTSD). His treatment was starting when the lockdown happened and unfortunately he is not now getting the treatment that he so desperately needs. We have no idea when his treatment will start.

GPs

Many people have shared their experience of using GP services and how they have adapted. Several people have been offered phone consultations and these seem to be working well in most cases. We have also heard how temporary patients have been able to register easily to get their medications and how surgeries have adapted to meet specific needs of patients.

Tried to order her medication via POD but couldn't get through even though they tried all day. She found this difficult to cope with. She now has an arrangement with her GP surgery so she can go once a month and order her prescription and they come to the door and she then collects the next day. These allowances have been much better for her and this has made the situation easier to cope with.

My daughter, who is with us during lockdown but normally lives in London, had to register as a temporary patient in order to get her regular prescriptions for asthma inhalers. She went to the local branch of the Bradford on Avon practice in Winsley and one of the staff gave her the form to fill in. She returned it with a photocopy of her prescription.

In just over a week she had not heard anything so she rang the practice. The pharmacist said she had her prescription but the GP wanted to speak to her. Half an hour later the GP rang, had a brief chat with my daughter about her asthma and her prescription and said she would now authorise the pharmacist to dispense the inhalers she needed. The GP also said my daughter could now just fill in a repeat prescription form if she needed more while she was still with us. My daughter then went to collect them a day later.

GP surgery was easily accessible by phone and the triage consultation plus use of photos taken on smartphone was excellent.

Dentists

We have heard how routine dental treatment has been postponed and people are having difficulties accessing treatment.

I cracked a tooth and half of it has fallen out. I have spoken to my dentist who is wonderful but he isn't allowed to treat me and isn't able to tell me where I can get treatment.

Our actions

- Created a dedicated advice and information page on our website.

The screenshot shows the Healthwatch Wiltshire website. At the top left is the logo 'healthwatch Wiltshire'. At the top right is a 'Contact us' button. Below the logo is a navigation menu with items: 'Have your say', 'News & reports', 'Get involved', 'What we do', and 'Advice & information'. A search bar is on the right. The main content area features a white box with the title 'I need to see a dentist - what can I do?' and the date 'Advice and Information - 22 April 2020'. The text below reads: 'A network of new urgent dental treatment centres has been created across the South West to provide treatment while high-street surgeries have their doors closed due to Covid-19 (coronavirus)'. Below the text is a photo of a dentist wearing a blue surgical mask and glasses. A 'Privacy settings' button is overlaid on the bottom right of the photo. To the right of the photo are social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Email.

Pharmacies

Most people have told us that they are finding it easier to access medications, some with support from local voluntary groups. However, some people have found it difficult to access this support.

Although collecting prescriptions was slower in the beginning, we have no issues now.

Online ordering and local volunteer collection works well.

We asked the village Covid support group but they refused to collect from the next town, so we rang the town support group but they refused to bring it out to the village. We have had to rely on a good neighbour.

Hospital care

People have spoken positively about safety measures in place if you need to visit the hospitals, and of the new measures put in place to stay in touch with friends and family. Some treatments have also stopped as a result of the coronavirus outbreak but those who have shared their experience with us seemed understanding of this.

Social distancing, temperature taken on arrival, staff using protective clothing and masks, plenty of hand sanitiser.

I sent a message to my friend who was in Salisbury Hospital using the service set up by the hospital to send a message to your loved ones. I had a lovely message from PALS to say the message had been received. I replied and said what a lovely gesture it was and they said I was welcome, they enjoyed doing it. Unfortunately my friend passed away yesterday. It was comforting know that she knew how much we loved and missed her as none of us will be able to go to her funeral due to self-isolation.

My partner who is an extremely vulnerable person has had his cancer treatment stopped due to his poor kidney function. I suspect that this would be because the RUH would not want to admit him should this deteriorate. We are totally in agreement with this decision.

How this insight will be used

We recognise that all health and care services are under pressure at this time and have had to adapt their ways of working. We will share this report with the local NHS, council and providers to help them identify where things are working well and services are adapting to meet people's needs, and to help them identify any gaps.

For help, advice and information

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