

Covid-19 Insight Report

18-31 May 2020

At a glance

We have...

- Continued to update our Advice and Information pages to make it easier to navigate.
- Added new information surrounding the Stay Alert government messaging.
- Added new Easy Read information in response to feedback about the need for this.
- Found that people's mental health and wellbeing continues to be affected, and they are mostly being supported by family and friends.
- Heard about people's experiences accessing appointments with GP services.
- Identified that community health services are keeping in touch with patients and providing advice.
- Heard about the experiences of some people with autism.
- Seen that local voluntary groups and organisations are providing a range of services and this have been a valuable source of support to people.

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:

- Updated information on staying alert and safe, in line with government messaging.
- Updated information on Wiltshire advocacy services.

Our coronavirus Advice and Information pages have had **138** views. 67 of these views were of the 'I need to see a dentist what I can do?' page, and 22 were of 'changes to maternity services.' We have also been active on social media, sharing information and asking for feedback on health and care services and these posts have reached **12,592** 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 of those who completed our survey over the past two weeks said that they were able to do this. For example, 67% of our respondents said they had found it very easy or easy to keep up to find the information they needed, and 33% said it was neither easy nor difficult. No one reported that it was difficult to find information, but one person said it was difficult to understand the information, one person said it was difficult to keep up with changes in information and three people said it was difficult to act on it.

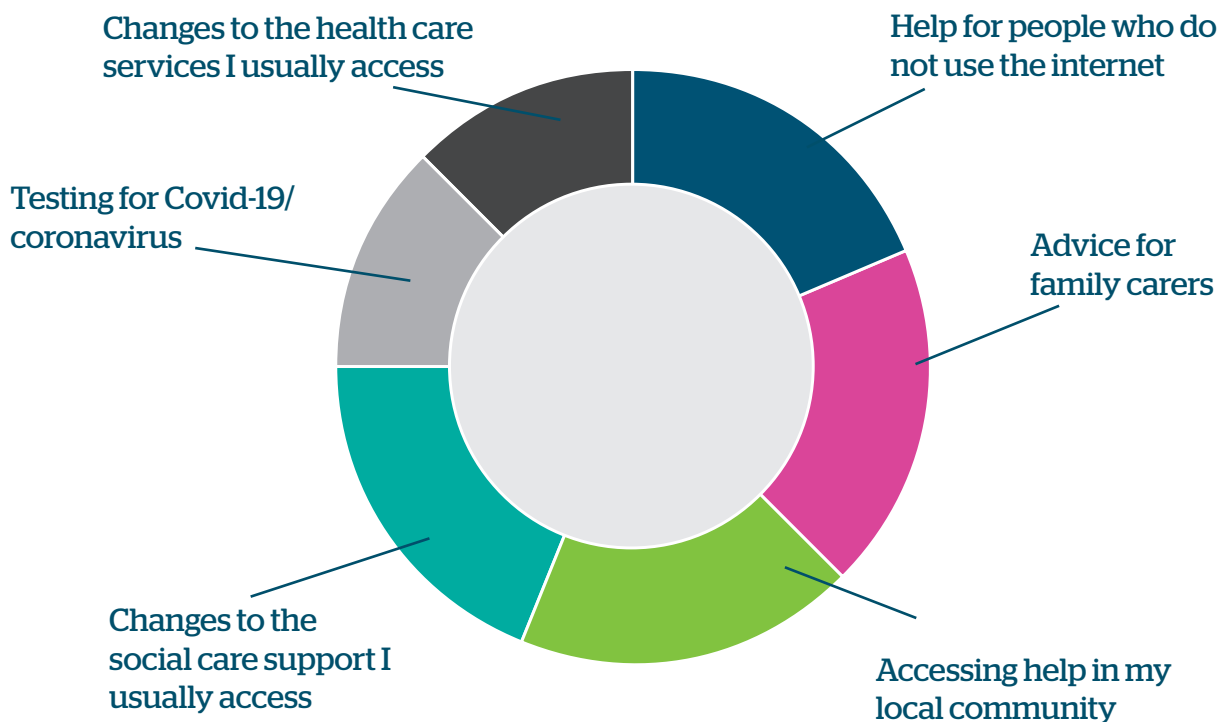
They found this information online through national and local websites and social media. 67% of respondents said they had used national internet sites to find information, via the national internet sites, 50% had used local websites and 77% news, newspapers and radio.

Carer Support Wiltshire, Wiltshire Council Updates, Salisbury Hospital were mentioned as useful local sources of information.

We asked people what topics they had found it difficult find advice and information about. 12% of respondents told us that they had all the information they need. The remainder mentioned a wide range of topics.

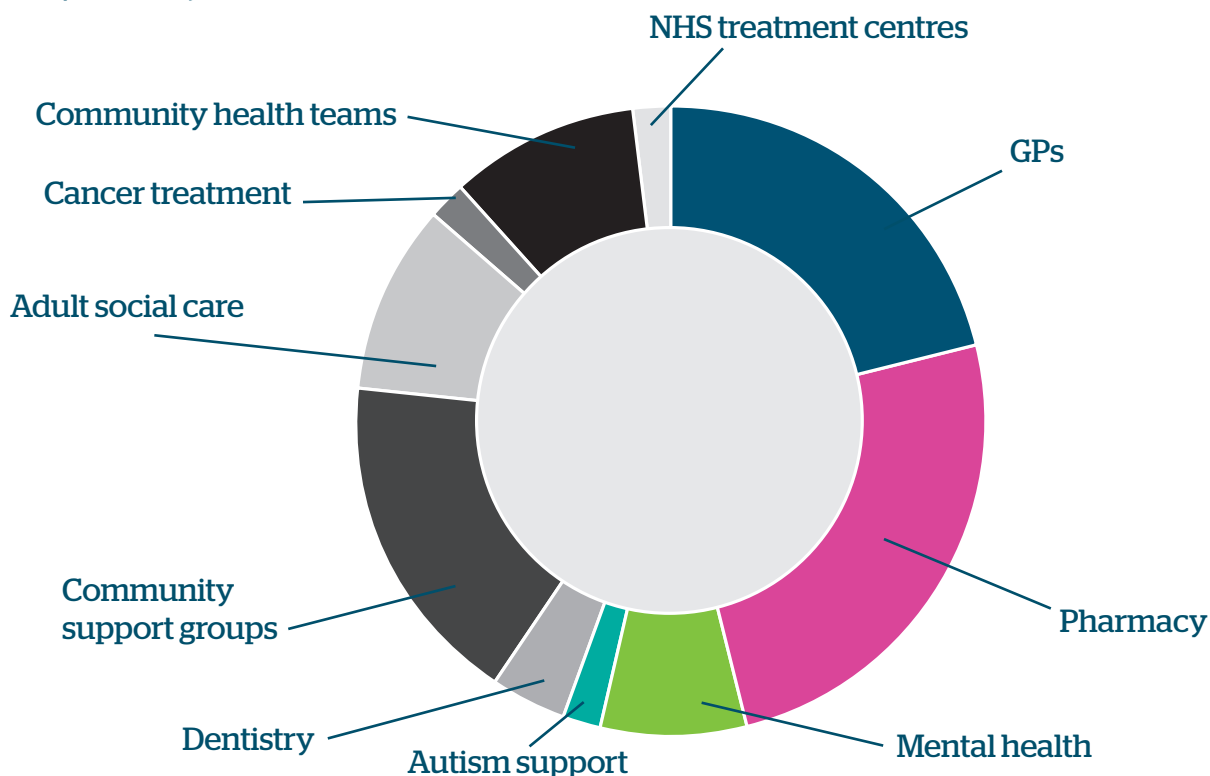
It was also commented here that “It has become more difficult since the changes to the regulations which took place last week.”

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



What are we hearing?

Between 18 and 31 May, we have received 52 comments about how health and care has been impacted by coronavirus.



Adult social care

We have heard about the commitment of care home staff to caring for their residents and the strong relationships they have formed with them, despite feeling some fear and anxiety.

We have heard that care homes have been supported to obtain the Personal Protective Equipment they need. We have heard of a lack of information and support to care homes in the early weeks. Issues with initial arrangements for testing were reported, although we've been told this has now improved.

We have also received comments about the difficulties for people living with autism during this time, who are struggling with the changes they have had to make in their daily routines. We have heard about support provided by local voluntary organisations to some of these people, but concerns have been expressed that there remain some isolated people living in the community who are not getting help because they are not asking for it, due to autism or other mental health issues.

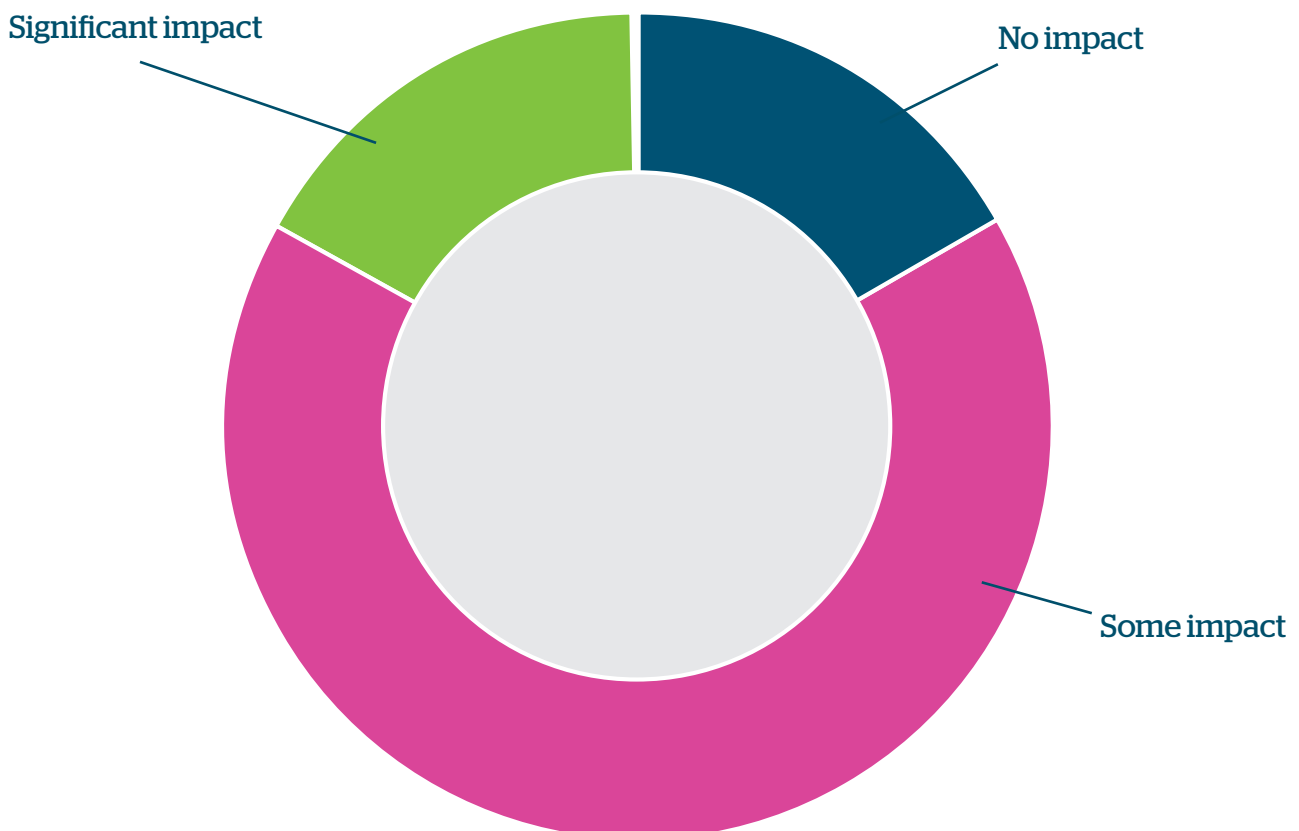
We have received comments that day support being cancelled has affected unpaid carers and people who use these services:

The lack of day centre is a major impact on my and my mother's life.

Mental health

Most people we spoke to told us that the pandemic had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

What impact is the pandemic having on people's mental health?



Most people told us that they were getting support from friends and family. A few people mentioned other sources of support.

Have also used Unmind – which is provided through my employer.

I am a volunteer with Victim Support charity and use the tools available to me for supporting others.

We have also heard of some people being discharged early from inpatient mental health services and that unpaid carers and relatives had reported concerns about information and arrangements for funding and ongoing care.

GPs

Several people shared their experience of using GP services. They told us that they were able to access GP services although there had been changes to the services offered.

People told us that they had been offered phone or video consultations, the feedback about these was generally positive.

Some people reported that it had been a difficult process to get a face to face appointment. For example, we were told it took three calls for a person to be able to be seen so that they could get treatment for psoriasis, as they were having to speak to different people. Once they had an appointment they were seen and got the treatment they needed.

However, there were more positive comments than negative ones from people who needed to be seen face to face. We were told that one person had been contacted by their GP promptly after using Doctor Link to fill in symptoms and were happy with the service they had received.

The following day, Monday, the GP phoned me at 9.30am and we discussed my symptoms. He arranged an appointment at the main surgery for 11.30am that day. I was told to stay in my car until the doctor phoned me and he then let me in via the main door which he unlocked. He wore a mask, gloves and apron and asked me to spray my hands with disinfectant. We then went into a consulting room where he examined me and confirmed the diagnosis of shingles and gave me advice about it. The whole experience was very efficient but allowed for all the necessary Covid-19 precautions.

Another respondent told us their experience of getting a home visit.

Very quick response to my request – doctor's call within 1 hour. Next day home visit from GP (I was offered a visit later the first day if I was concerned). GP arranged home visit for blood test and phoned me with results. This is considerably better service than I would have expected before the crisis.

Hospitals and treatment centres

Some respondents told us that would like more communication about appointments that had been cancelled.

It would be helpful to receive appointment updates from RUH or services using Devizes Community Hospital. Obviously, we appreciate there are challenges for the staff but some appointments are now well overdue.

Delays to minor operations at treatment centres were mentioned, including the lack of communication.

Frustration as to why these services at the treatment centre can't start again as it is not a medical facility that would deal with Covid patients. However, it may be that staff are required elsewhere. It is the lack of any messaging that is most frustrating.

Community health services

We have heard that community health services are proactively keeping in touch with those registered with them by telephone and that this support is valued. It has also been raised that these staff don't always have all the up to date information.

I had a call from the practice nurse to do an asthma review over the phone. It was good that they had contacted me, but the information they had about my condition and medication was very out of date, and they were not able to access my latest medical record. This made it very complicated as I kept having to tell them about changes that had taken place. For example, they told me that if I got Covid-19, I mustn't take a certain medication, but I haven't been taking that medication for some time.

The respiratory nurses have been in touch to make sure that I am alright, and I have everything I need. They have offered support and answered any questions. I feel they are there for me if I need help.

I am being contacted every two weeks by phone by the diabetic specialist nurse. They are excellent and I feel that they would be there for me if I needed help.

We have also heard about cancer services.

Want to express my thanks to all involved with me being able to continue to receive my cancer treatment. I will be eternally grateful.

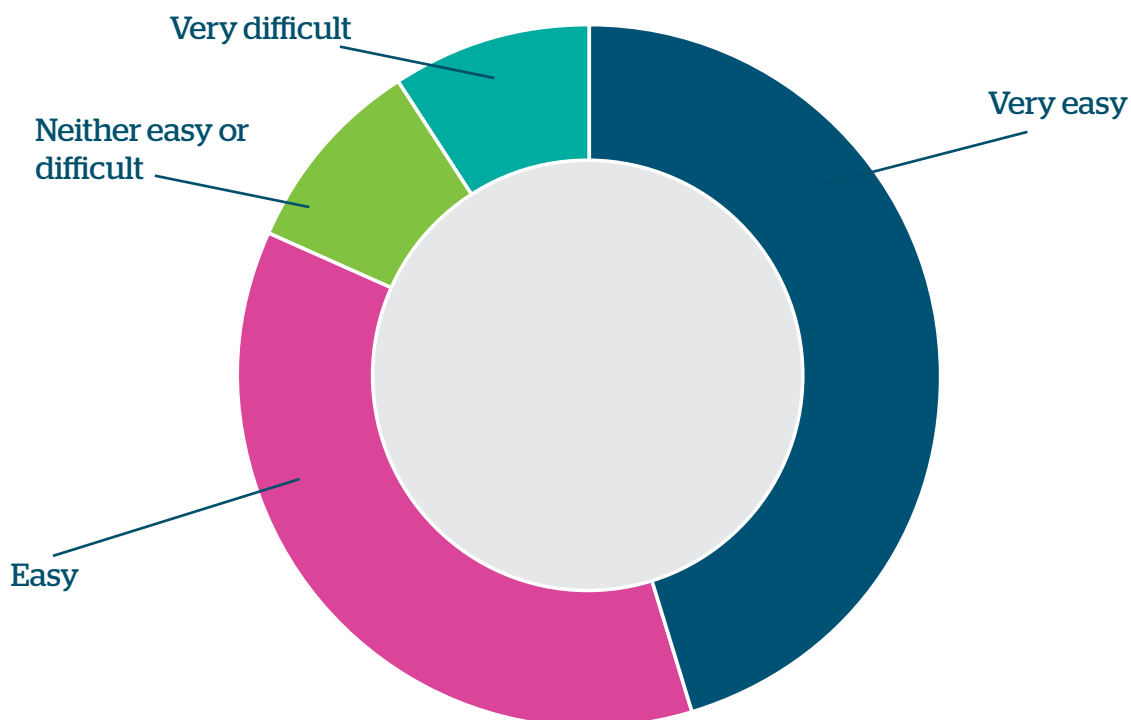
Dentists

We have not received many comments about dentists over the past two weeks, but we did hear that one person had received good communication about changes to services from the dental access centre.

Pharmacies

Most people said that they had found it easy to access the medication they required. A few people reported difficulties which were related to the supply of some of their tablets. There was positive feedback about the support of volunteer groups to collect medication for people who were shielding.

How easy have you found it to access your/their medication?



The designated pharmacy which I used was Lloyds within Sainsbury's supermarket. Hence had to visit the supermarket, and queue along with shoppers to access pharmacy. One tablet was unavailable for several weeks (the pharmacist was very helpful – even tried to cut higher dose tablets, without success), at the point of running out, and having to discuss alternate drug with GP, the tablet was in stock.

Went online for repeat medication. Email to say when ready for collection. Text following week from Boots Chemist to say meds ready for collection.

Prescription ordering and collection is continuing to go smoothly. Ordering from the surgery and the local volunteer group picking up for people who are shielding is working well. It may take a few days longer, but it is all happening, and people are getting the medicine they need.

Voluntary and community support organisations

Our respondents told us about several local voluntary organisations and community groups that they had used and said that these had been helpful. They mentioned a range of different support including wellbeing calls, advice and information, befriending, collecting prescriptions and delivering medication and shopping, and music sessions.

My mother attended Alzheimer's Support meetings before the crisis. We now attend Zoom music sessions, organised by them two or three times a week. Also, mum receives a phone call to check welfare.

Carer Support Wiltshire (I was already registered with them) provide newsletters by email, and occasional phone call to check my welfare. Provided information about emergency plans.

My mother attended day centre at King Alfred's Hall (Riverhouse friendship). The organiser phone's mum weekly to check her welfare.

Collecting prescription and medication, shopping from Marks and Spencer. It was excellent. A really efficient and helpful service.

General comments

We have also received some general comments.

The vulnerable list should have opportunities by right to gain assistance without feeling like they need to persuade people to help them. I understand creating food boxes for shielding costs money but could the people on the vulnerable list not get a code for a shopping delivery slot? And help with collecting medicine without feeling like a charity case or that you have the embarrassment of explaining your personal circumstances?

For many people in Wiltshire their healthcare is being managed as well as it can be during Covid. I had no issues contacting my surgery, ordering my prescription, and it was picked up for me by a friend. It all went very smoothly.

Help from Devizes Covid Support group was brilliant.

All resources good humoured, helpful and smiling!

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

01225 434218

info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk



Freepost RTZK-ZZZG-CCBX
Healthwatch Wiltshire
The Independent Living Centre
St. Georges Road
Semington
Trowbridge
BA14 6JQ

www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

01225 434218

info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk



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