

Covid-19 Insight Report

1 March - 17 April 2020

At a glance

We have...

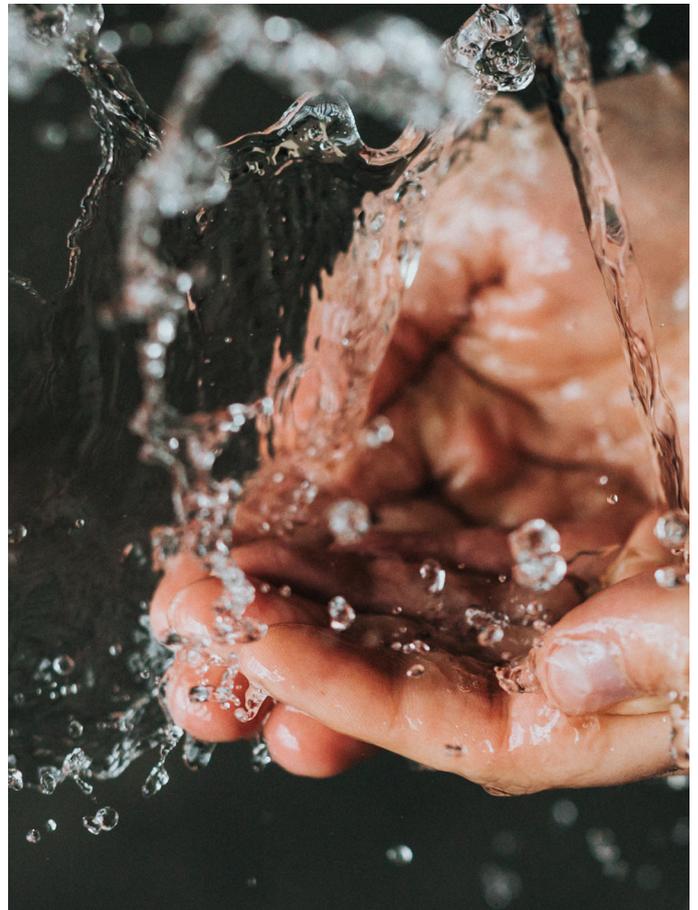
- Created dedicated coronavirus information and advice pages on our website.
- Asked local voluntary and community groups, including local Covid-19 response groups, to help be our eyes and ears to hear people's experiences of health and care services at this time.
- Received comments about pharmacies, hospital care and dementia and how services are adapting during this time.
- Shared and raised issues specifically around the collection of prescriptions.
- Heard how video appointments are working well for people.
- This report will be shared with the local NHS, council and providers so they can hear where things are working well, and help them identify any gaps.

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. Our Eyes and Ears email has been sent to over **420** organisations and groups, with some of these also sharing within their own networks.

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 created dedicated coronavirus advice and information pages which include all the latest national and local information. They also include 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.

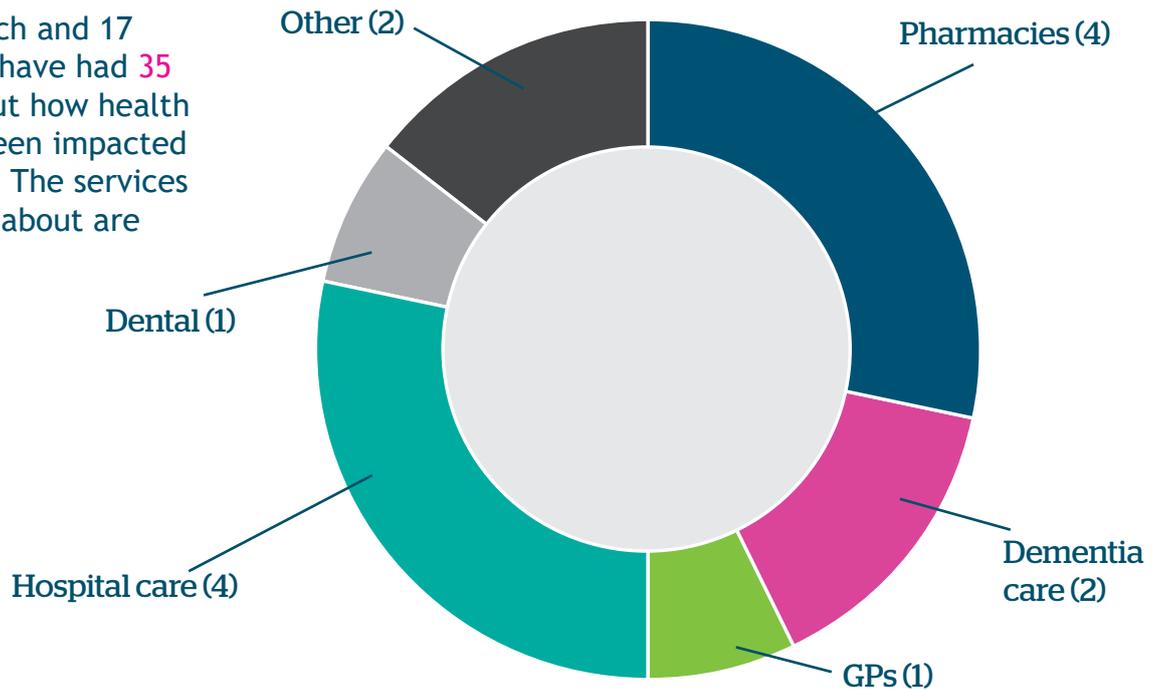
Our coronavirus advice and information pages have had **394 views**.

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 **23,009 people**.

The screenshot shows the Healthwatch Wiltshire website. At the top left is the Healthwatch Wiltshire logo. At the top right is a pink '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 located on the right side of the navigation menu. The main content area features a blue header with the title 'Coronavirus and community pharmacies: Your questions answered' and the subtitle 'Advice and Information - 20 April 2020'. Below the title is a short paragraph: 'Swindon and Wiltshire's Chief Officer of Community Pharmacy answers your frequently asked questions.' A photograph shows a pharmacist in a white coat and tie talking to a customer in a pharmacy. On the right side of the page, there is a vertical stack of social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Email.

What are we hearing?

Between 1 March and 17 April 2020, we have had 35 comments about how health and care has been impacted by coronavirus. The services we have heard about are shown here.



Pharmacies

Much of the feedback we have received to date has been linked to pharmacies and the collection of prescriptions. Long queues and wait times have been reported across the county and shortages of over-the-counter medicines, such as paracetamol.

We have also been made aware of issues that local Covid-19 voluntary groups have had with collecting prescriptions. In some areas this seems to be working well and the local groups have good links with the pharmacies, whereas in other areas some groups are now no longer able to collect prescriptions.

Collecting prescriptions is a lengthy process with long queues involved and I had to change my usual pharmacy as apparently it cannot deal with any more patients, just hope this isn't widespread as home delivery is not an easy alternative and travel unwise.

The Specialist Diabetic Nurse has been fantastic. She had to start me on insulin, got it prescribed by the GP, but when my husband went to collect it from the pharmacy, as he walked in they were closing up (early). When he explained what he was there for the pharmacist just said ring 999 and they can sort it out! My daughter drove 20 miles to bring me some of hers which was the same.

My monthly collection of drugs is now due and I phoned the village support group to see if they could help but they refused. I was informed quite curtly that one volunteer had waited three hours last week and when they got to the head of the queue they were turned away without the prescription. So I was told to contact my GP and get another prescription done and sent to the village chemist (which I dislike using). I was very surprised when a motorcyclist arrived with my monthly supply of drugs from Salisbury District Hospital pharmacy and delivered to my house. I tried about three or four other organisations to attempt to get my normal drugs from the pharmacy and I have had to ask a neighbour and happily he is able to do this for me.

However, we have also heard where things have worked well, staff have been helpful and even have gone above and beyond to help patients get the medicines they need.

My mother, who is elderly, takes soluble paracetamol prescribed by her doctor. I have been unable to trace any for a few days, however, I managed to track some down at Boots in Chippenham who kept them behind the counter for me to collect. The pharmacist there was very helpful.

We were on the Lloyds pharmacy online delivery waiting list, and they have emailed to say they are now accepting orders. I then phoned our surgery to change from Gompels to Lloyds online, and the receptionist then said, as we would be on her way home, that she would drop off our prescriptions. She then requested them for us so they would be ready for her to pick up and bring round this evening. Wow! Great service. It really does depend on who you speak to, as when I rang Gompels first time they were unhelpful, the second time when asking how to move to online, they recommended the national volunteers and gave us the number.

Our actions

- We have created a pharmacies information page on our website with FAQs to help explain changes to the public.
- We have shared a poster created by our colleagues at Healthwatch West Sussex highlighting what volunteers will need if they are collecting prescriptions for others.
- We have asked for clarification on why a volunteer may only collect one prescription at a time and shared this on the pharmacies page.
- We continue to link in with the local NHS and Community pharmacy to share what we are hearing.

Hospitals

Another area that we have been hearing about is hospital care. We have heard how some appointments and surgeries have been cancelled, however generally people seem to be understanding of this. People have also shared with us how they have had video or telephone calls instead and these seem to be working well.

I was due to have a further respiratory appointment at RUH yesterday. The physical tests weren't possible but I did have a telephone consultation from a specialist doctor at an agreed time who, while working from home, had all the information about my condition. Given the particular pressure on that department I was grateful and impressed.

Routine surgical procedure postponed – have ongoing pain but not urgent.

Care given at Salisbury District Hospital at the beginning of the outbreak was fantastic. Arrangements were made and supplies of all necessary drugs and equipment was rapid to say the least, as I was more at risk of catching something in hospital. Both the Respiratory department and Rheumatology department are only ever a phone call away. I have been assured that I am to contact them if I become unwell or have any concerns.

Other services

Other services we have heard about include dementia services, dentists, and problems with getting hearing aids and batteries.

Support from the memory clinic and Alzheimer's Support has been praised but there has been concerns raised about people with dementia that live alone who struggle with the disruption of usual community support groups. It was also shared that it was difficult to encourage people to stay in, as they would often forget and so as a result were still going out frequently.

We have also been told of how carers of people living with dementia have set up a WhatsApp group so that they can stay in touch and share ideas on how to stay occupied and explain the situation. This seemed to be working well and offering mutual peer to peer support.

There is still an issue about getting hearing aids and hearing aid batteries, which can be a serious problem for people with severe hearing loss, especially if they are isolated and their only means of contact is the telephone.

I had a very positive interaction with the Memory Clinic at Green Lane. My dad in law is nearly out of his dementia meds and is due a three month review any day now, so I gave the Memory Clinic a ring to work out a way forward to help him stay well during the current Covid-19 crisis.

Within half an hour of my call, they got back to me twice, took a history of his symptoms, conferred with his clinician and arranged for a supply of meds to be delivered to his home, with a follow-up appointment to be made in six months aswell. This is such a relief, as it could have become very complicated. Fingers crossed it all works.

I would also add that Alzheimer's Support ring us every week to make sure we are coping and to offer any assistance we might need. They are very mindful that if we are ill, my dad in law will have no carers. Outstanding service and such a relief to know we have someone to call on in an emergency.

The local surgery also issued my husband with two month's supply of his prescription instead of one, to reduce the number of visits he has to make to the pharmacy.

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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