



**Coronavirus Survey -  
Interim Report Summary**

**healthwatch**  
Liverpool

**1 April - 12 May 2020**

# Background

Throughout the early months of 2020, COVID-19 (commonly known as Coronavirus) spread across a significant number of countries globally, and has emerged as a major new disease and health issue. The spread of COVID-19 in the UK became increasingly prevalent in March 2020. Throughout March 2020 the UK government and the NHS announced a number of measures to reduce the spread of the virus and create more capacity in the NHS to treat people with COVID-19. These measures included postponing pre-planned, non-emergency surgeries to increase bed space in hospitals; asking retired NHS staff and final-year medical students to join the NHS workforce; advising elderly people, and those with long-term health conditions to self-isolate for 12 weeks to reduce their risk of contracting the virus; and imposing a 'lockdown' across the country, under which people would be encouraged to stay home and only leave their home to go to work, obtain food or medication, seek healthcare, or provide care to a vulnerable person. Some of these restrictions are now being eased.

At Healthwatch Liverpool, we were aware that COVID-19 could have a potentially significant impact on local people's health, wellbeing, and access to health and care services, particularly after the UK government announced its 'lockdown' on March 23rd. We launched an online survey, hosted on our website, to obtain people's feedback. This report looks at the survey responses we received between April 1st, when the survey went live on our website, and May 12th. We will be releasing another report to cover responses received after May 12th at a later date.

We would like to thank everyone who has responded so far for their openness in sharing their experiences with us during these difficult and unprecedented times.

## Where we've used your feedback

We've been using your responses to our COVID-19 survey to feed into how the health and social care sector is responding to the pandemic both locally and nationally.

Nationally, we've contributed to evidence provided by Healthwatch England on cancer, mental health, and maternity service provision during the pandemic to an enquiry organized by the UK Parliament Health and Social Care Select Committee. You can read that evidence online, on the UK Parliament website.

Locally, we've provided information to individual NHS trusts to give them both a general overview of the information we're receiving from patients locally, and also to let them know anonymised feedback about their services.

We have also been providing information to Liverpool's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), who plan what health services are provided locally. Our CEO has been reporting on our survey to the CCG Governing Body. Additionally, when we saw the number of respondents discussing the negative impact the pandemic was having on their mental health, we sent a summary of this feedback to the mental health service commissioners at Liverpool CCG to make sure they were aware of it. We have also shared this feedback with Liverpool's Mental Health Strategy Steering Group.

We are also feeding in to the city's Health and Social Care recovery group. This is a senior group with representatives from Liverpool City Council, Liverpool CCG, Public Health, and the University of Liverpool who meet regularly and can ensure that public feedback shapes the response of health and social care services locally, as they deal with the ongoing effects of the pandemic and begin to return to normal.

# Summary of findings

Between April 1st and May 12th 2020:

- 436 people living in the Liverpool area responded to our survey.
- 50 people told us they sought medical advice or care for possible COVID-19 symptoms. People sought advice or care from NHS 111, their GP, 999, or through A&E.
- 387 people told us they found it easy to find clear and understandable information about how to keep themselves safe during the pandemic. 48 people said they had not found it easy to find clear and understandable information about this. People who did not find it easy to find clear and understandable information were more likely to report having a pre-existing condition, disability, or were otherwise more vulnerable to COVID-19, and reported that they found it difficult to access information relevant to their particular situations and needs.
- 304 people said their mental health had been affected by the pandemic. 132 people said it had not. Of those who said their mental health had been affected, 280 people said it had been affected negatively.
- People who said they had a disability were more likely to say their mental health had been affected by the pandemic than those without a disability, and were also more likely to report a negative mental health impact than those without a disability.
- The most common negative mental health impacts on people were anxiety (mentioned by 141 respondents), isolation (mentioned by 89 respondents), and depression or low mood (mentioned by 57 respondents). A number of people told us they had been affected by bereavement, and we also heard from people with mental health conditions and mental illnesses about how the pandemic had affected their ongoing care for these conditions.
- 229 people said that their healthcare for other conditions had been affected and 152 people said their healthcare for other conditions had not been affected by the pandemic.
- Respondents told us about 287 cancelled appointments across various healthcare services, including planned surgeries, dental appointments, injections, blood tests, cancer care, maternity care.
- Other concerns raised about healthcare included difficulty making GP appointments, difficult obtaining correct prescriptions or ordering online, and inability to access telephone appointments or consultations. A number of people reported not seeking healthcare when they otherwise would to avoid placing an additional 'burden' on NHS services.
- 111 people said their experience of social care had not been affected by the pandemic and 53 people said their social care experience had been affected.
- Feedback about social care came from people with relatives in care homes; people whose social care support had been reduced during the pandemic; and informal carers who were providing more unpaid care.
- 289 told us about things that had helped them cope day-to-day during the pandemic. The three most common responses were family and friends, exercise, and internet access/social media.
- People also gave us feedback about other issues, including the impact of the pandemic on children and young people, including those with special educational needs and disabilities; employment, and how anxiety around work and income is affecting some people's mental health; and the impact on key workers.

# Learning Points

Following analysis of responses in the first six weeks of our survey, we have identified the following areas that we believe local decision-makers should take into consideration when planning their ongoing responses to the pandemic, and their plans for how health and social care services can return to a more 'normal' mode of operation.

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unequal impact on communities across the UK. Within our survey, we have identified that disabled people are more likely to experience both a negative mental health impact and a negative healthcare impact as a result of the pandemic.
- People with existing health conditions were less likely to be able to find clear and understandable information about how to keep themselves and others safe during the pandemic.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a clear and wide-ranging mental health impact on Liverpool residents.
- There has been a significant impact on many people's access to health care during the pandemic, particularly for people with disabilities or who are receiving ongoing treatment for chronic health issues.
- Whilst telephone and video appointments have allowed NHS services to stay in contact with some patients during the pandemic, these forms of remote appointments are not suitable for all patients, and particularly affect people with disabilities such as hearing impairments or autism.

A full and more detailed version of this report is available to read on our website, at [www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk](http://www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk).