



**Coronavirus Survey - Interim Report  
Summary**

**Liverpool residents' experiences of health, social care, and  
wellbeing during the Coronavirus pandemic**

**May 13 2020 - August 30 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 were eased in Summer 2020, although a second-wave of infections has seen some restrictions re-imposed both locally and then on a national scale, with Liverpool moving into 'Tier 3' local restrictions on October 14<sup>th</sup> and England re-entering a national lockdown on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

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 23<sup>rd</sup>. We launched an online survey, hosted on our website, to obtain people's feedback. We received a significant number of responses, which confirmed the significant impact of COVID-19 on people's mental health, health care, and social care. This report looks at the survey responses we received between May 12<sup>th</sup> and August 30<sup>th</sup>, when this survey closed. An earlier report, [available on our website](#), looks at responses between April 1<sup>st</sup> and May 12<sup>th</sup>. Following the closure of our initial survey we launched a second survey on September 1<sup>st</sup> with more detailed/focused questions, largely informed by the public's responses to the first survey, and we will continue to publish reports summarizing the feedback we receive.

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 used 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 own services.

We have also provided information to Liverpool's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), who plan the type of health services provided locally. Our CEO has reported 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 have also fed 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 May 12<sup>th</sup> and August 30<sup>th</sup> 2020:

- 194 people living in the Liverpool area responded to our survey.
- 27 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.
- 160 people (82% of respondents) told us they found it easy to find clear and understandable information about how to keep themselves safe during the pandemic. 34 people (18% of respondents) 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.
- 139 people (72%) said their mental health had been affected by the pandemic. 54 (28%) people said it had not. Most people told us the effect on their mental health had been negative, with increased anxiety being the most commonly reported mental health impact.
- We also heard from people struggling with isolation, bereavement, and depression. People with pre-existing mental health conditions and mental

illnesses about how the pandemic had affected their ongoing care for these conditions.

- We also heard back from people who were recovering from Coronavirus/COVID-19 about the impact this had on their mental health. People who had been hospitalised or were experiencing ‘long COVID’ told us about the significant impact their illness had on their mental health and wellbeing.
- 89 people (47%) said that their healthcare for other conditions had been affected and 80 people (42%) said their healthcare for other conditions had not been affected by the pandemic.
- Concerns raised about healthcare by respondents included cancelled appointments, difficulty making GP appointments, and inability to access telephone appointments or unsuitability of telephone or remote appointments for specific kinds of care. The impact of changes to healthcare seems to be more significant for those with ongoing care for long-terms conditions.
- We also heard from people who were satisfied with how their care had been delivered during the pandemic, and were still able to be seen (remotely or, where appropriate) quickly and were satisfied with their treatment.
- We also heard from a number of people who had difficulty accessing dental care, for both regular and emergency dental treatment.
- 42 people (22%) said their experience of social care had not been affected by the pandemic and 12 (12%) 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.
- 117 people 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, particularly 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. We also heard from informal carers about the additional stress they faced during the pandemic.

## Learning Points

Following analysis of responses to 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.

- It is clear, both through our survey response data and data that is being collected and published nationally, that 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 a negative healthcare impact as a result of the pandemic.
- A number of people who reported having COVID-19 said there had been a significant impact on their health and mental health which continued for many weeks after their initial illness.
- 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. They were also more likely to report negative impacts on their ongoing healthcare. When issuing advice and guidance, decision makers should not assume that generic advice is suitable for everyone. Care providers should also consider the impact of delays to care on those with long-term conditions as they return to more 'normal' service-delivery, or in making plans for further waves of widespread COVID-19 transmission.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a clear and wide-ranging mental health impact on Liverpool residents. As the mental health impacts of COVID-19 are diverse and stem from a range of factors, a one-size-fits-all approach to dealing with these mental health impacts would be inappropriate.
- 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 or for all forms of treatment, and particularly affect people with disabilities such as hearing impairments or autism, alongside those who are digitally excluded.

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).