



Healthwatch Central West London: Coronavirus Local Engagement

June 2020

Since the beginning of the coronavirus outbreak Healthwatch Central West London's work has been focused on:

- a) providing clear and accurate information and advice to local people and
- b) gathering feedback from local people about their needs and experiences in relation to COVID-19 and other services.

This briefing provides an overview of our key findings from data collected from the following Healthwatch CWL engagement:

- 206 responses to "Your Experience Matters" survey, mainly from RBKC and the City of Westminster, and H&F. Our Corona Matters survey was designed based on over 200 comments initially received from local residents.
- 81 responses to "Young People's Mental Health" from young people aged 11-25 who live, work or study in Westminster. The survey was designed by Young Healthwatch Westminster.

Overview of key findings

- Carers, parents with children with learning disabilities, people with long term health conditions and BAME groups have been highly affected by the outbreak.
- The impact on mental health and wellbeing has been significant; especially for the groups listed above.
- For people living in small flats, with no outdoor space and under poor housing conditions the pandemic has put strains in their own wellbeing and relationships.
- The impact on relationships has been significant with most people saying that they worry about the health of family and friends, have no privacy and it has created tensions with loved ones within and outside the household.

- Many residents told us that they have financial concerns about the future; while in a lot of cases they had to pick up work from furlough colleagues, fell through the gaps for the self-employment criteria, and were not able to access benefits.
- Staying in touch with other people via online platforms, texts and over the phone was the main thing that people found helpful during this period, besides a variety of other activities such as gardening, online learning, cooking etc.
- It is not clear how people were selected by the Government to shield as some received shielding letters when they thought they shouldn't and others with long term health conditions have not received a letter, although they believe they should.
- Most people told us that they turned to pharmacies for help while shielding or self-isolating, which they found helpful.
- Most planned NHS appointments (hospital, community services and mainly dental) were cancelled by the service provider with no communication for reschedule.
- The offer of alternative appointments in video consultation or phone format was well received.
- People delayed seeking help to not get infected and because there is a feeling of putting extra pressure to the NHS.

Carers and Parents

Carers told us that they feel unsupported. They found it difficult to explain the situation to the cared for person; that their caring responsibilities have increased; were not able to access further support; and social care teams were not responsive or flexible to their needs.

The situation was particularly difficult for **parents with children with additional physical, learning or mental health needs** that in addition struggled to keep their children indoors, especially without an outdoor space.

BAME Communities

BAME communities have been highly affected by the coronavirus outbreak. Compared to their white/white British counterparts, BAME respondents are more likely to be carers, unemployed and have a long term disability or mental health condition.

- 36% of respondents said that it was difficult and very difficult to stay indoors during shielding or self-isolation. This compares to 10% in W/WB responses.
- During self-isolation, respondents from BAME communities mostly used local pharmacy, family and GP for support. While this is comparable to their W/WB counterparts, the percentage of negative outcomes (“not helpful”) is much higher in BAME communities.

Mental Health

The impact on mental health and wellbeing has been significant across different ages and groups. In particular people told us that they experience negative feelings, isolation mood changes, anxiety and disturbance of sleeping patterns.

For people with **long term mental health conditions** it has been even more difficult, as they said they experience an escalation of their condition and triggering feelings. Specific problems were mentioned about sudden discharges from secondary care without further support.

Mental Health and Young People

- Young people said that there has been a lack of information and support from schools, while almost 35% have not heard of 8 listed national and local mental health support services.
- Most young people told us they would go to a friend for mental health support and only just over 25% of young people would go to their GP for support with their mental health.

Mental Health and BAME communities

- 50% respondents from BAME groups felt that changes to the way they live their life during coronavirus outbreak had impacted their emotional and mental wellbeing “a lot” or “a great deal”. This compare to 25% in their white/white British counterparts.
- 25% of young people from BAME communities said that COVID-19 has affected their mental health ‘a lot’, compared with only 9% of their non-BAME counterparts.
- One quarter of respondents from BAME communities reported losing a family member, neighbour and the corresponding emotional fallout compared with only 7% of young people from non-BAME communities

If you would like more information, please get in touch

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Our Advice, Guidance and Information on COVID-19 for residents can be found here: <https://healthwatchcwl.co.uk/coronavirus/>