

YOUR HEALTH AND CARE
INSIGHT INTO ACTION #5



COVID-19

Insight gathered
23 May - 12 June 2020

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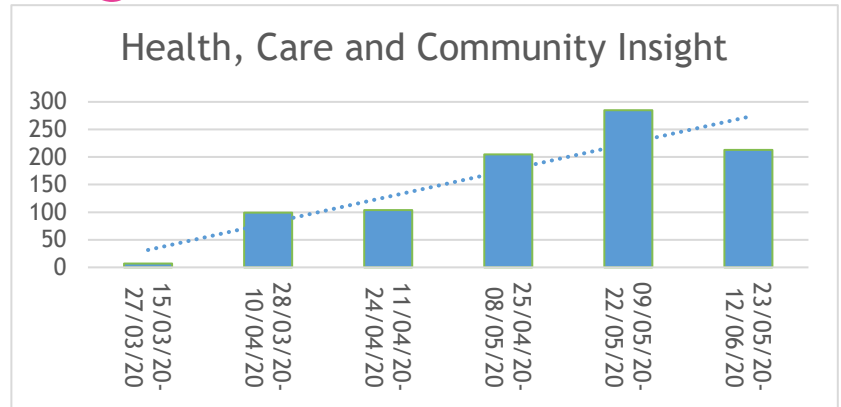


About

This is our fifth report in this series and covers a three week period. As detailed in previous reports we are working closely with numerous Health, Social Care and Community and Voluntary Sector organisations. We have focussed on issues being raised by individuals, families and friend carers, as well as the actions taken and outcomes from these.

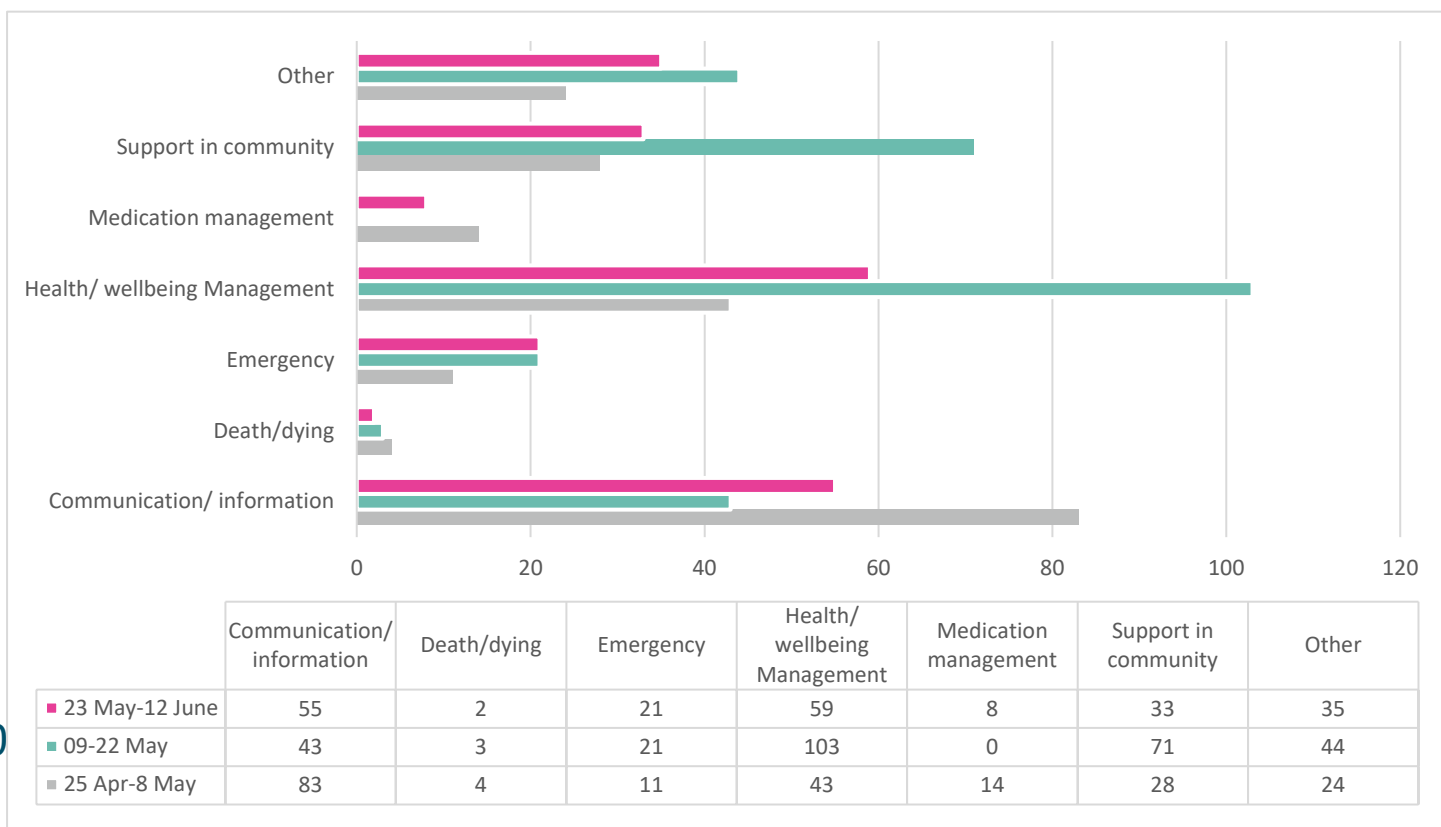
What are we hearing?

We raise and escalate the issues we hear as soon as we hear them. These reports then collate issues and trends to enable our developing Integrated Care System to plan and adapt to changing needs. Originally this was a fortnightly report but as we have moved from dealing with the initial pandemic crisis, we are gradually stepping down the



reporting with this edition covering 3 weeks and the next issue planned to cover 4 weeks (15 July). Our aim is to enable the public, our partners and those that are accountable for health and care support and services to gain insight from what people have shared with us and to raise awareness of and what has been done as a result.

This graph shows the volume of insight gathered. We are also currently analysing intelligence gained from our in-depth conversations with community organisations and support groups and any additional themes will be reported separately.





Key message by issue

Mental health

- We continue to hear about the impact of the pandemic on peoples' mental wellbeing. This is due to a variety of reasons, including loneliness and social isolation, employment, living with pain and anxiety about both COVID-19 and other health conditions.

“An older resident who has been shielding has shared that she feels so lonely that she is telephoning the *speaking clock* just so she can hear a human voice.

You would think I would be used to it, as I've been on my own now for over 13 years since my husband died. I'm finding it hard not being able to go out for tea and a chat or to meet others as I used to. It's such a long day.

- Community and Voluntary Organisations have shared how they are preparing for some staff to return, and are risk assessing and planning for a return to face-to-face activities, as many recognise the impact lockdown is having on the people they support.
- We have also heard about the additional mental stress for people living with learning difficulties and autism - for example, when faced with situations such as admission to a hospital without being accompanied by their family/friend carer (due to visiting restrictions), or the prospect of going back out into public areas.

“David is a young man with learning difficulties, who recently experienced an accident, leaving him with a head injury. His family took him to hospital but because they were not allowed in the hospital with him, he went through his hospital journey without support. This experience ended in him being in a *desperate state - agitated and alone*.

David discharged himself after having a scan. The hospital rang to say the scan was showing damage to his skull. His mother then struggled to get the support he needed because of consent issues and she was unable to wake him to gain this for a few days.

I am worried as going out on my scooter to have my diabetic blood test I have put off for 5 months. What if someone walks straight at me on the pavement? I can't get down the kerb to avoid them.



Access to face-to-face NHS service

- The infection control measures in place for patients who need to see a clinician in person, are clearly in place, but organisations are interpreting the guidance in many different ways, some seem at odds with good patient care. For example, one GP practice is asking people who need to come in for a blood test to *not speak to staff whilst on site*.

We understand why measures are in place, but now more careful thought needs to be given to make sure patients are supported, particularly those who do not come in a car.

“ Frank shared his experience. *I pressed the door intercom and the receptionist asked me to stand outside and I was told the nurse would come and get me. I said I was very unsteady on my feet and she told me to lean against the wall, which isn't ideal. However, I did as she asked and my wife (who is also my carer) helped me to stay stable during the wait. After 10 minutes the nurse came through the door...*

- People have expressed frustration about a lack of clear and consistent communication about what they can expect from the services they would usually access. This is adding to the stress of living with the virus and economic threat. They feel ignored because they do not know if their appointments will go ahead, and if not, what will happen next.
- Routine podiatry visits, needed for maintaining mobility, are a growing issue and we have asked the Clinical Commissioning Group to advice on what NHS services are open and how people can access these.
- We also continue to work locally to encourage GP practices not to take a blanket approach to treatment needs for B12 and are pleased our Clinical Commissioning Group have provide GPs with refreshed guidance. Our latest [Frequently Asked Health and Care Questions Answered](#) has more information on this.

Digital and telephone care

- We continue to receive mixed feedback about digital and telephone care. Whilst many are having positive experiences of accessing services such as GP appointments online, we know that this kind of remote care does not work for everyone.

Given the positive potential for the future, this is an area we are keen to understand in more detail and Healthwatch in Sussex are working on a survey, which will be made available digitally and by contacting people over the phone and through our community partners.



Test and Trace

- Concerns have been raised about the accessibility of home testing kits for organisations supporting people with learning disabilities and this has been escalated nationally.
- Local people have reported more positive experiences of the testing site and the instructions on how to self-administer the test appear to have been improved.

Dental care

- As reported previously, dental stories continue to feature in much of our insight and even just a few days ago, we have seen continued concern over the lack of access to treatment for broken teeth and toothache.
- We continue to signpost people to emergency dental care in their area. People are not always aware of how to access this service, which can cause additional stress when they are experiencing acute dental pain or other concerning symptoms.
- We are aware that dental practices have been advised they can reopen for face-to-face care from 8 June, provided they have the necessary infection prevention and control measures and PPE available. We are learning that for some dental practices this is not the case.

We have shared with the Local Dental Committee (LDC) how challenging it was last week for a young adult who has been living with pain for many months, to get to the point of completing an application for NHS treatment in the future. Despite many calls he has only been able to find a dentist willing to see him possibly in August, but this is half an hour away from where he lives.

We have also shared recent insight along with a supportive best practice checklist to the LDC to support local practices.

Cancer treatment

- Since hearing concerns from local people over delays to their cancer treatment, we have been working with the Sussex Cancer Alliance and hosted an informative and interactive Cancer Webinar on 11 June, with over 100 attendees.

If you were not able to attend or have concerns about your treatment plan have a look at the [presentation and FAQs](#) from this event.

- Local experiences, over the last six months, are being shared with the Sussex Cancer Board this week and we will continue to support the cancer care and support providers in communicating to patients.

03 “ I had one more session of chemo treatment left before the Lockdown, I was told that all treatments would be stopped. I do not know if I will ever receive this last session or not and do not know how this delay will affect my future health. ”



Care homes

- There has been much media attention on care homes, and we are looking at what our local homes are doing to stay in contact with family and friend carers. We have seen some creative ideas emerging and are creating an independent forum for people to come together, to safely share what has worked well and where there are gaps.

Our first online event is scheduled for 9 July (more details on flyer below). [Click here to sign up to the event.](#)

healthwatch
West Sussex

Carers Support
West Sussex

Raising coffee cups to carers

If you have a friend or relative living in residential care, we would like to invite you to our virtual coffee morning!

Thursday 9th July, 11-12pm

We are hosting this event to give you a safe and supportive space to share your experiences, during the coronavirus lockdown. We are keen to understand how homes are supporting you to stay in touch with your loved ones, or if you have struggled with this.

Our aim is to give you a voice and to support homes, care providers and the health and care system to really understand what is working well and what could be done differently.

We are working with our partners from Carers Support West Sussex to host this event and there will be plenty of opportunity for you to share your views, ask questions, find out about other support that is available and chat to others. We hope to see you there!

Join us: www.eventbrite.com/e/carers-coffee-morning-webinar-tickets-109323371146



Praise

- We continue to hear some fantastic stories of how health and social care professionals have supported them or their loved ones and what a difference this has made.

Similarly, people have shared how supportive local people have been and how some communities have come together to keep people safe and supported.

Shielded people

- People are sharing their confusion as new guidance emerges. Many have also questioned what is going to happen as the 12 week shielding period is coming close to ending.

We would encourage people who have been shielding and are worried about what to do next to have a conversation with their GP about their personal situation.



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Talk to us

If you have questions about the content of this update, please either call 0300 012 0122 or email katrina.broadhill@healthwatchwestsussex.co.uk

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, local Government and other providers to help them understand where things are working well and services are adapting to meet peoples' needs, and to help them identify any gaps.

Our local mental health, cancer and maternity insight has been shared nationally to inform the discussion at the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Committee taking place w/c 27 April.

For help, advice and information or to share your experience

We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to find out what matters to people and help make sure their views shape the support they need.

We also help people find the information they need about health, care and community and voluntary health and care support services in West Sussex.



Here to help you on the next step of your health and social care journey

We have the power to make sure that the government and those in charge of services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.



0300 012 0122



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