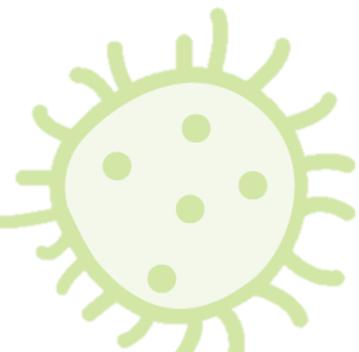


Covid-19 Insight Report: March to July 2020



At a glance...

We have:

- Published three online surveys, each seeking feedback from different groups, such as people under the age of 25 and people aged 50+ years and living alone.
- Launched an online survey asking people about how Covid-19 and the lockdown has impacted their mental health and wellbeing.
- Listened to people's feedback virtually, including a local carers group.
- Generally people feel informed about coronavirus and how to take care of themselves during this time, but there is concern about how clear communications from the Government have been and if it was provided to those who needed it, such as care home staff.
- Most people are getting information from TV and the internet.
- Carers are having a harder time managing lockdown, as they have additional responsibilities without any respite and the restrictions have made it more difficult for them to perform their day to day responsibilities. This becomes even more difficult when carers have to also shield or self-isolate.

Background

The way health and social care services operate has been affected by Covid-19 with non-urgent treatment postponed, face-to-face appointments reduced and care homes and services limiting public access.

For Healthwatch Slough, the outbreak has also resulted in changes to our work, with much of our planned public engagement and visits to services paused and an increased focus on providing advice and signposting, in addition to supporting the local response to Covid-19.

However, this does not mean that the work of Healthwatch to understand people's experiences has stopped. With a fast-moving Covid-19 response, real-time intelligence about the issues the public are facing is just as important as it has ever been. It is also important that services understand the impact these changes are having more broadly – especially when they concern people's safety or will have implications for when services begin transitioning back to normal.

Where is our insight coming from?

At present, our opportunity to directly engage with Slough residents is centred around video calls, social media, our website and responding to calls and emails.

We also launched three online surveys Slough residents could use to share their feedback on their experiences of accessing health and care information, services and support during this time. Each survey focused on a different group: residents aged under 25 years, residents aged 50+ and live alone, and carers.



We have also been asking 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. This report collates all these sources of insight received so far.

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 on our website, which includes all the latest national and local information and support. We have also been more active on social media, signposting people to local support and asking for feedback on health and care services.

Who we've heard from

Between March to July 2020, Healthwatch Slough heard from 78 people about how Covid-19 has impacted their health and care:

- 41 responses to our online surveys and counting
- 56 people have shared their feedback through other sources, including emails, face to face and virtual meetings with the public

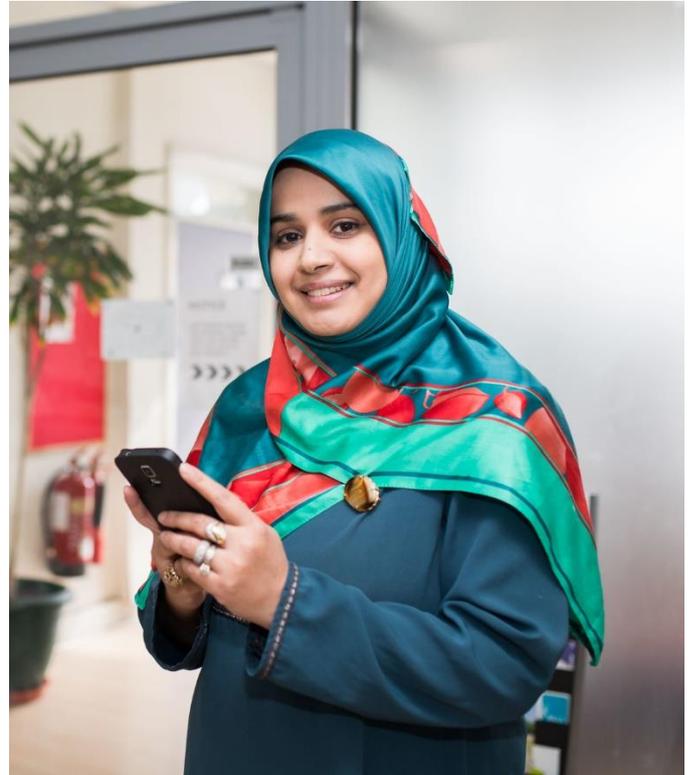
Out of the 78 people we heard from, 45 were carers who we have either spoken to or who completed our online Covid-19 survey.

Our Covid-19 surveys for young people, residents aged 50+ living alone and carers

In our online survey, we heard from 40 people:

- 12 young people aged 25 and under
- 13 residents aged 50+ and living on their own
- 15 carers, all except one carer care for an older person or someone who has a long-term health condition

People told us that:



- Generally, people feel informed about coronavirus and how they can take care of themselves during the Covid-19 pandemic, with a couple of people concerned that information was not as clear as it should be or was not being provided to those who needed it, such as care home staff.



“Sometimes information is mixed up”

“I would like to know if I’m included in older people for shopping. I’m over 65 and suffer from a long-term illness (that hasn’t really been made clear) as well as anxiety.”

“Getting plenty of information from the television and government text messages and emails”

“A lot of rubbish circulating on Facebook”

“I am only looking at trusted and reliable sources”

“I feel 100% well informed”

“Yes. My family also helps with giving information.”

“No informative help from adult social care or mental health teams whom my 98 year old grandfather is under the care of. Support and guidance should be given to the carer as they take the pressure off the local authority in these pressing times.”



- People are primarily getting their information from TV, followed by the internet and then social media. A small group are getting their information from the radio and carers mentioned they also get their information from other sources, such as their GP, family members and people they know who work at a hospital.



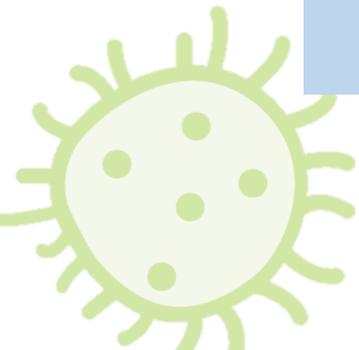
“Mostly TV news”

“Daughter works at hospital and gets first hand information”

“Too much coverage and scaremongering over WhatsApp”

“Yes. My family also helps with giving information.”

“NHS”



“BBC Asian channel. I do get information from the internet but I don’t believe all of it.”

“Family have a big input.”

- Young people reported they were taking measures to protect themselves, primarily ensuring they were washing their hands for at least 20 seconds with hot water and soap several times a day. They were also ensuring they social distanced and were avoiding public gatherings. Most young people also told us they did not live with any elderly or vulnerable people.
- When residents aged 50+ who live alone and carers were asked what additional support they needed, most people didn’t feel they needed more support. For those who did, the following areas were of concern:
 - Lack of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for teachers
 - Where to get mental health support
 - Unclear information about criteria for people who should shield
 - Where to get support if you have a disability, such as with groceries
 - Concerns about income and financial support
 - Supporting patients who have dementia but need to remain indoors 24 hours a day
 - Feeling a lack of support from services
 - Children missing time outside
 - Caring for family members who have certain conditions or disabilities, such as dementia, blindness, heart disease, glaucoma, autism, depression, learning difficulties and/or being bed bound



“But I am required to go to work as I am a Teaching Assistant in a local senior school. Thereby reducing mine and my colleagues opportunity to self isolate.”

“No protective clothing or equipment will be provided for staff at school. That should be mandatory!”

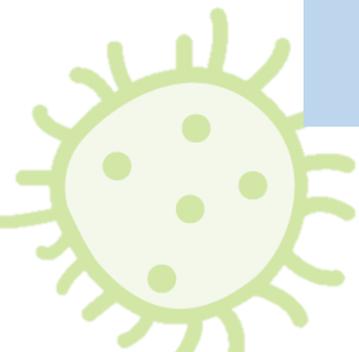
“Shopping as disabled and can’t get around a supermarket quickly.”

“I have lots of support from friends. But have no information on who to contact if I need support.”

“Worried. Where will it end.”

“I am ok at this moment. But do not know what is round the corner.”

“Not enough covering information for pensioners.”



“Can’t get groceries easily. My husband is blind, so doesn’t fall under the ‘highly at risk’ group, but is unable to do any shopping or leave the house without my help. I’m diabetic and trying to isolate as much as possible”

“The money just isn’t enough to live on. I know it will be slightly increased but I’m struggling.”

Effects of Covid-19 on mental health

We recently launched a new [online survey](#) seeking feedback from people to understand how they have coped with their mental and emotional wellbeing during lockdown and if they received support they needed.

Initial feedback from 11 people has been generally mixed with people telling us:

- Almost half felt they had been very affected by coronavirus and the lockdown, while a little over half felt they were a little or not really affected. Despite their overall rating, many felt anxious, upset, sad and/or lonely to varying degrees. Some of the comments people shared included:

“I have been upset and angry at this virus for causing disruption to everyone in the world and furthermore the people not taking it seriously.”

“Being restricted to the house, cut off from family and friends and recently bereaved feel lost and unsure what to do.”

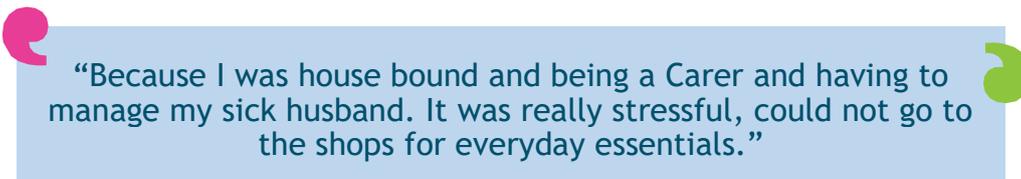
When asked of their experience being affected by Covid-19, one person said they “have become very quiet. Avoid socializing. TV and radio on but not listening to either. Get irritated easily.” They added in another response, that staying home makes them “feel lonely” and they “avoid contact with others.”

Another person told us that while they missed seeing their family, they have “been busy with a baby that been placed with us for adoption. So lockdown has given us time to build attachment” and the “...recession of 2008, taught me to have a buffer. Will start panicking as the buffer runs out, god willing should be OK for a few more months.”

- For those who did not feel very affected, they felt they had enough support at home or through friends and family.



- Despite almost half of people feeling very affected, only one person reached out for support, getting help from a social worker.
- A few people had concerns about finances.
- Six out of 11 people said they were a carer for someone who is vulnerable, elderly or has a disability. For some carers, the effects of Covid-19 and the lockdown worsened difficult conditions they were working in. For example, when asked if their mental health and wellbeing had been affected since the start of the lockdown, one carer told us the following, noting in another answer that her husband had just passed away:



“Because I was house bound and being a Carer and having to manage my sick husband. It was really stressful, could not go to the shops for everyday essentials.”

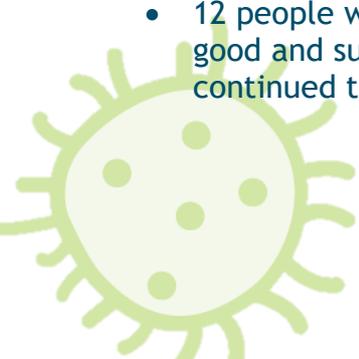
Just over half of people were aged 60-69 years with others varying in age and six out of 11 people identified as Asian or Asian British with some specifying their ethnicity, including Pakistani and Indian.

These initial findings are a taste of what people are experiencing in terms of their mental health and wellbeing. We will be sharing more information as we receive it.

Other sources

We received feedback from 62 people through other sources, including Care Opinion’s website, emails and group interviews. 53% of responses were of a positive nature, with most of these responses coming from feedback about a care home we reviewed and some from a local carers group we spoke to. 23% of people gave us negative feedback and 25% had mixed or neutral feedback. Topics raised by people included:

- Feeling well supported by nurses
- Receiving quality care and support from their GP
- Long waiting time to get a prescription, which may have been lost by the pharmacy
- Worry and concern about students remaining in schools during the Covid-19 pandemic
- Not wanting support from services despite painful arthritis
- Seven carers from a local carers group said they felt well informed about Covid-19 and how to take care of themselves
- 12 people with loved ones at Oxford Care Nursing Home felt the service provided was good and supportive, with a couple people commenting the quality of their services continued to remain high throughout the lockdown



How this insight will be used

We recognise that all health and care services have been under pressure at this time and have had to adapt their ways of working. We will share this report with the local NHS, Councils and providers to help them identify where things are working well, what can be improved, any gaps and what needs to be considered as part of our community's response to building back better.

What we will be doing next

To gather further insight about people's experiences at this time we are:

- Asking Slough residents to complete [our online survey](#), focussing on mental and emotional well-being during lockdown and whether they received the support they needed when they needed it.
- We are also encouraging people to give their feedback on health and care, which is supported by Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission's public campaign, [Because We All Care](#), encouraging people to do this. Findings will be disaggregated to local areas and shared when available.
- Increasing our monitoring of social media for relevant feedback.
- Continuing to have an 'eyes and ears' approach, working with other community and voluntary organisations, including Special Voices, C o-production and Community One Response, to gather their feedback on people's experiences.
- Keeping a watching brief on other surveys and intelligence gathering that is being carried out e.g. on mental health issues, virtual appointments, from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities.
- Conducting further enter and view visits.
- We will also collate and share this insight with the local NHS, the council and providers.

For help, advice and information

Healthwatch Slough

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Email: enquiries@healthwatchslough.co.uk

Website: www.healthwatchhampshire.co.uk

