



healthwatch
Solihull

COVID19

What people told us
August 2020



How did we hear from Solihull residents?

Between March and July, 338 people completed our online Survey Monkey questionnaire. 27 people accessed our Feedback Centre to review services and 26 people spoke to us through our Information and Signposting line.

We regularly updated our website and social media in line with official information. We worked hard to ensure accurate information was being shared and worked with media and partners to reassure residents who had read fake information.

We updated our website using national and regional updates, sharing daily covid stats and health information.

Working together with health and social services to direct people to support

Our Community Officer used time in lockdown to network with local organisations and see how we could help. Including volunteering with Age UK Solihull and delivering essentials to vulnerable residents.

Our manager continued to attend stakeholder meetings virtually, as well as catching up with service providers regularly to discuss the feedback we were hearing.

Here are some examples of this way of partnering with health and social care organisations to support citizens:

1. Visiting relatives in care homes

A relative came to us as lockdown was easing, about visiting her mum in a care home and how the new ways of visiting should be adapted to improve the [experience of visiting](#).

I have just visited my vulnerable 95 year old relative at this newly opened facility, outside in the rain in accordance with current guidelines. Not an ideal situation. I'd like to ask them to consider erecting a covered gazebo - permanent or temporary - in the garden to better facilitate such visits

We contacted Solihull Council about this and was immediately reassured that they would honour the request and plans were in place to install outdoor equipment.

2. Volunteering as befrienders

We spoke with 12 people regularly during lockdown including Irene who wanted to normalise loneliness in the elderly during lockdown and worked with us and Birmingham

Mail to share her experience <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/ive-cabin-fever-its-better-18237746>

3. Delivering essentials to vulnerable residents

We volunteered with Age UK Solihull to ensure that residents in Solihull who were shielding and vulnerable still got their essentials whilst staying safe at home.

It's such a struggle at the moment but I couldn't be more grateful to Age UK Solihull And Scott from Healthwatch who have ensured I get everything I need.

What people told us

We asked people, **Have you found it easy to find clear and understandable information about what to do to keep yourself and others safe during the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic?** 75% answered **'yes'**.

Although, we received reports from residents who tried to access support when experiencing symptoms who felt pathways for support were difficult to navigate.

I phoned 111 for help as I felt I couldn't breath properly and felt so poorly, I was told they I didn't sound in any distress to them and more or less to call back when I couldn't breathe.

When I was recovering and called GP

I was still pointed back to NHS 111 then they pointed me back to GP. Felt sometimes process wasn't clear.

I literally gave up trying to get help when I was ill, I was passed from pillar to post, I don't think services knew what they were supposed to do.



The main theme from all of the feedback that we have received has been about GP surgeries and medical centres. The feedback highlights local people's concerns regarding gaining access to see a GP face-to-face. 12 of the people who completed the feedback stated that they found it difficult to get through to their GP surgery via the telephone and had to wait for a long time to get through to a receptionist.

Two people told us that their GP surgery had stopped the online appointment booking system, which also made it difficult to gain access to their GP. We received several pieces of feedback from two people who told us that they had managed to get through to their GP and was offered a consultation over the phone, only to not have anyone call them back.

Worry about not being able to see someone face to face & how long this will be for.

The length of time it takes to get through is ridiculous

In one instance, a lady who had discovered a lump in her breast, contacted her GP surgery to see advice and was told to use the NHS drive in service. When the lady attended the drive in service, she was told by one of the staff members there that the lady's GP should have seen her, as the drive in service is unable to make referrals.

We also saw from the feedback that 10 people told us that they had not been offered any information about Covid-19 or how to protect themselves or their family from the virus.

Didn't receive any advice or info regarding the Coronavirus pandemic, despite being asthmatic.

Very little information given from surgery.

No advice given by my GP. Couldn't even get through to ask for some.

However, four people told us that they have found the service at their GP surgery to be consistent and the staff to be supportive and helpful. Three other people stated that they found it easy to get a phone consultation and that staff at the surgery, especially the nurses, have been kind and extra supportive during this time.

Hospitals

Along with feedback about GP surgeries, we have also received feedback about local people's experience with the service delivered by the hospitals in Solihull, during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Unlike the feedback that we received about local GP surgeries, there isn't a specific theme that stands out regarding the service that patients have experienced from the local hospitals and there seems to be a relatively mixed rating when it comes to how well people feel that the hospitals have performed during the pandemic

However, three people stated in the feedback that they had to chase up initial appointments, due to long waiting times, with no correspondence from the hospital. Other people told us about appointment letters that had not arrived or had been sent to the person's previous address.

Appointment made for 2 year old for eye examination, only to be told that not only had it been cancelled and nobody had called me, but the people that we needed to see don't even work there.



Had to chase up initial appointment as it had been months and I hadn't heard from the hospital.

Mental Health Services

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we encouraged people to get in touch with us and share their experiences of how well they have felt supported with their mental health during the current crisis.



Out of the 24 people who shared their experiences of mental health, all 24 people stated that the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the lockdown, had caused a negative effect on their mental health.

However, out of those 24 people, only one person stated that they had used a mental health service during the period of the pandemic; with 21 stating that they had not sought professional support.

People stated that they felt very little support and was only offered more medication.

Other feedback we have received has been quite negative, with a common trend being long waiting times.

Was referred to Healthy Minds in July after a breakdown. I wasn't contacted for an appointment till February.

Contacted for counselling told 9 month wait still waiting after a year not heard anything at all.

I wouldn't know how to access support other than phoning doctor.

Care Homes

We also encouraged people to talk to us about care homes in Solihull.

From the feedback that we have received, people seem to be generally happy with the service that is being provided in care homes, during the pandemic.

They are caring for my Mom in a very good way kind caring staff.

They have been excellent during this pandemic can not fault them.

The care that my mom receives is generally fantastic.



What needs to be improved if we have another lockdown?

○ **Shielding advice**

During the lockdown, 5 people called us to say they never received a letter telling them to shield although they were extremely vulnerable.

2 of these people were classed as 'essential workers' and their employers were requesting copies of their shielding letter. In both instances they had been told by their GP that they did not provide the letters and could not help.

○ **Pathways for people experiencing symptoms**

People told us during lockdown that they felt passed around by services and were unsure how to get tested or get help when symptoms worsened.

○ **Communication with surgeries**

Residents told us through our information and signposting line that some GP receptionists had been unclear and unhelpful, leaving them unsure of what service there surgery was and was not offering.

What next? How Healthwatch Solihull will support citizens, and help improve services, over the next six months

It is our job to listen to everyone's experiences of health and social care. Some communities are less likely to share those views, and use our service, than others. We are therefore keen to continue developing new ways of reaching out to these communities. Our team is exploring ways of engaging virtually, but not missing out those who cannot be reached virtually.

During the pandemic we have enjoyed celebrating the positive feedback that we hear about services. As well as creating our 'Thank You NHS' video, which included photos from over 300 Solihull residents.

We will continue to share positive stories on social media' inviting service providers to respond to that feedback.

This feedback, alongside feedback that indicates the service could do better, will continue to be shared every three months with NHS and social care commissioners and the Care Quality Commission (who inspect NHS services).

We will also encourage health and social care providers and commissioners to listen to and use service user feedback to identify gaps in needed support during the previous lockdown.

And lastly, in order for Healthwatch Solihull to know that changes have been made to services based on service user feedback, we will continue to build our relationships with health and social care in Solihull through virtual meetings with leaders in these organisations. We will also continue to attend meetings where these changes are reported and share the positive impact we make using residents feedback.