



Health & Wellbeing Board

Healthwatch Lewisham COVID-19 Executive Summary

Date: 3 September 2020

Key decision:

Class:

Ward(s) affected: ALL

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Outline and recommendations

This executive summary provides an overview of the key findings and recommendations from the Healthwatch Lewisham COVID-19 report.

Healthwatch Lewisham developed an online questionnaire to understand the experiences of Lewisham residents during the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown. The survey focused on the issues of access to services, access to information and the impact on people's mental health.

The board is recommended to note the content of the summary and consider how the information complements other local intelligence and can inform future engagement plans.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

This paper is being submitted for consideration by the Health and Wellbeing Board.

1. Summary

This executive summary outlines the key engagement findings from the Healthwatch Lewisham COVID-19 report. The research project focused on the issues of access to services, access to information and impact on the population's mental health and emotional wellbeing. It also contains a set of suggested recommendations that could be implemented in response to the issues raised through the engagement.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. The board is recommended to note the content of the summary and consider how the information complements other local intelligence and can inform future engagement plans.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. In 2012 the Health and Social Care Act received Royal Assent. From April 2013, local authorities were required to commission a local Healthwatch organisation.
- 3.2. The Lewisham Corporate Strategy 2018 – 2022 has as one of its commitments that ‘all health and social care services are robust, responsive & working collectively to support communities and individuals’. Healthwatch Lewisham supports the Council to deliver its commitment to local people.

4. Background

- 4.1. Your Voice in Health and Social Care was awarded the contract to deliver Healthwatch Lewisham from April 2020
- 4.2. Healthwatch is a voice for children, young people and adults in health and social care living in Lewisham. Anyone, young or old can speak to us about their experiences of health or social care services and tell us what was good and what was not good. Healthwatch then ensures that service providers and commissioners hear this feedback to make changes to their services.
- 4.3. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on people’s ability to access the health and care support they need and on the organisations that provide those services nationally, regionally and locally. Healthwatch Lewisham carried out an engagement project to understand how the coronavirus outbreak and lockdown has affected Lewisham residents. The findings from the engagement would then inform the future recovery plans for the London Borough of Lewisham.

5. Healthwatch Lewisham COVID-19 Executive Summary

- 5.1. In June and July 2020, Healthwatch Lewisham shared an online questionnaire to understand the experiences of Lewisham residents during the coronavirus pandemic and lockdown. The survey focused on the issues of access to services, access to information and the impact on people’s mental health. We worked in partnership with the Lewisham Primary Care Commissioning Team to develop the content of the survey. In total, 1,030 responses were collected.
- 5.2. Key Findings:
 - There remains a considerable reluctance by residents to not access services because of the fear of catching COVID-19 or by being a burden on the NHS.
 - Respondents strongly feel there is a continued need for face to face appointments and for a wide range of available appointments rather than a “one size fits all model.”
 - 20% of respondents were unaware that their GP practice was open for routine appointments
 - In some cases, it is now easier to secure GP appointments than before the pandemic - with many accounts of 'fast and efficient' services received. The ability to send images for diagnosis has also worked well for many patients. However, we have also received evidence of patients experiencing long delays in phone queues until a receptionist was able to answer their call.

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- The COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown has had a substantial emotional impact on residents, with people experiencing issues such as bereavement, financial worries, social isolation and anxiety.

5.3. Key recommendations

- A significant percentage of respondents were unaware that their GP practices were offering routine appointments or did not want to access services in fear of catching the disease or being a burden on the NHS. There is a need for a local communication campaign by each practice, in view of their different access arrangements, that not only informs patients about what services are available, but also reassures them that services are carrying out social distancing and infection prevention measures.
- While it is acknowledged that digital services may be effective and resourceful, for many people, we feel there should always be an alternative. It is simply the fact that 'one size fits all' systems result in the further marginalisation of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups
- The COVID-19 outbreak and lockdown has had a substantial emotional impact on residents, including carers. Wide provision of mental health support services must be included in services' recovery plans to help those with existing conditions but also for those who have never previously sought support.

5.4. The interim findings from the Healthwatch Lewisham COVID-19 engagement are referenced within both the Lewisham Primary Care Recovery Plan and the Lewisham COVID Recovery Plan.

6. Financial implications

6.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from this summary.

7. Legal implications

7.1. The Health and Social Care Act 2012 requires local authorities to have a local Healthwatch service

8. Equalities implications

8.1. Our findings show that BAME respondents were more likely to be disadvantaged because of COVID-19. Further investigation and review will allow services to better understand and address issues and themes.

9. Climate change and environmental implications

9.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications from this summary.

10. Crime and disorder implications

10.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications from this summary.

11. Health and wellbeing implications

11.1. The summary highlights the experiences of Lewisham residents during the COVID-19 pandemic in relation to health and care issues. The report concludes with recommendations which, if implemented, can support further improvements in the health and wellbeing of the Lewisham population.

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12. Report author and contact

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