

**YOUR HEALTH AND CARE  
INSIGHT INTO ACTION #4**



Insight gathered  
09 - 22 May 2020

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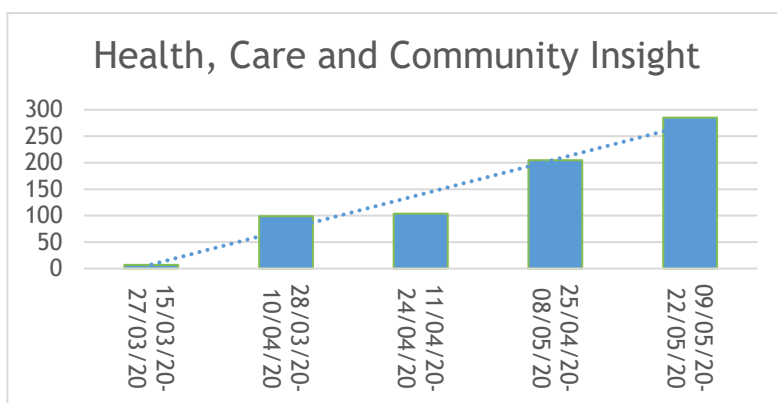
## About

This is our fourth report in this series, so we are confident you'll be familiar with how we are working with Health, Social Care and Community and Voluntary Sector organisations. We have focussed on issues being raised with us by individuals, families and friend carers and the actions taken and outcomes.

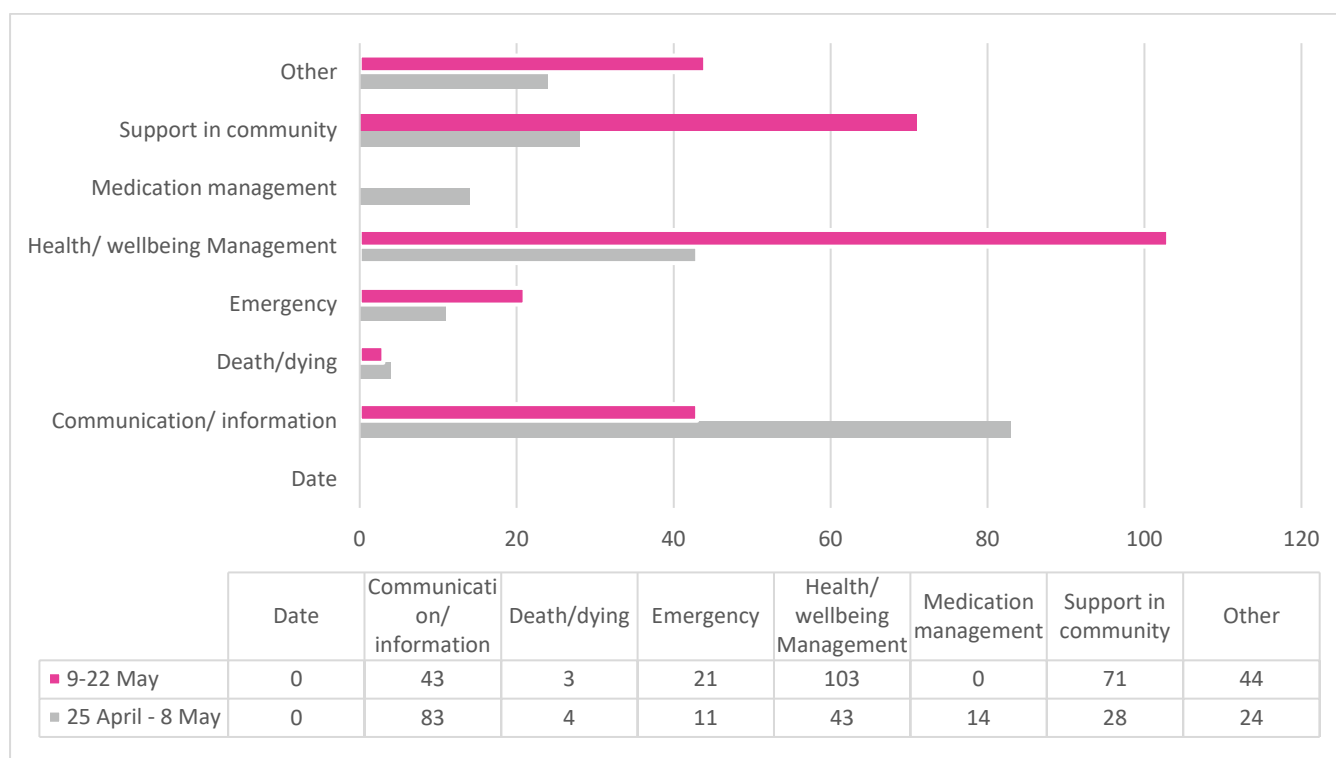
## What are we hearing?

This is a fortnightly report 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 us and to raise awareness of and what has been done as a result.

This graph shows the volume of insight we've gathered.



Below we show the change in insight by theme over the last four weeks as we see the move from initial emergency response towards individuals, families and communities dealing with ongoing “new normal”.





## Key message by issue

### Access to services for non-COVID-19 issues

- People continue to tell us that they are unsure about what to expect from the healthcare services they would usually access and how their needs will be met during this time.
- Our insight suggests there has been a lack of communication about these changes in some areas, or variation in service/treatment offer, for example regarding podiatry, vitamin B12 injections, coil removal/fitting and contraceptive and other community-based services.

We have asked for clearer **B12 treatment** information during COVID-19 to be added to the West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group so people can have a better understanding of what is available and why.

In the meantime, if you are due a B12 injection, do not understand the advice you have been given so far or are struggling with an alternative treatment, please contact your GP practice and ask for clarification.

- The situation also means that some woman/new mums have been left with no **contraception** - again contact your GP practices for support.
- **Dental** stories continue to feature throughout this time, but we are starting to see some positive comments about dentists proactively contacting people to let them know how they are available and to check on peoples' oral health.

People are reporting the dental service advice has been to contact 111 to be referred to an Urgent Dental Care Centre (as known as Dental Hubs) as they are not registered with the dentist.

People have shared they have been unable to get home dental kits over the last week.

Women have raised concern that their **maternity exemption certificates** will expire before they can access non-urgent dental treatment and will not be able to afford it once routine services are restored. We have escalated this issue to Healthwatch England to get clarity on this issue.

#### Our actions around dentistry:

**Our review of dentist websites** and out-of-hours answerphone messages - carried out between 11-15 May - looked at 67 providers across West Sussex. We found there isn't a consistent message or in many cases limited communication to help people understand what to do if they are having problems. We are therefore sharing examples of good communication to support and encourage other practices to update their information.



- We continue to provide information to people about how to access **urgent dental care** and have a **poster**/social media communication to support this.
- We've raised concerns over dental support through the Local Dental Committee and West Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, specifically:
  - advice to contact 111 to get a referral to an Urgent Dental Care Centre - experiences are not matching what commissioners understand to be happening
  - confused messaging around dental services - Government amended guidance (13 May) exempts dental services and podiatry from staying closed.

## Community response

- We continue to signpost people to services for help with getting food and medication deliveries, and see stories where people need support but are struggling alone. For example, a Crawley resident in their 80s had gone 3 days without food, too proud to ask for help.
- We continue to hear about the effect of the lockdown on loneliness, in particular how the loss of routine is impacting many but notably the more vulnerable in our society.
- We note people are subtly changing their lifestyles - either through increased shopping costs (4 bottles going into basket when previously it only one), or people commenting on enjoying a lunchtime drink. Luke shared ...

“I am now working from home due to COVID-19 and am finding myself drinking more than usual. It is so easy to have a drink with lunch and then one in the evening and before you know it you have a big problem. This will be happening with others too, as we change our normal behaviour from out and about to home alone with eating and drink behaviours.

”

We are pulling together a series of supportive guides offering realistic tips for combating issues that are affecting many of us from enforced changes to our lives.

## Hospital care

- It is clear that for some, people remain reluctant to go to hospitals for urgent or emergency care, some seeing their need as putting a burden on the NHS, and in other cases fear of perceived exposure to the COVID-19. All of our hospitals have put in place measures to minimise risks for those attending. If you need urgent or emergency care you should go to hospitals who are well prepared to treat you.



- Whilst until recently we have received limited feedback about **hospital discharge** during the pandemic, we are now starting to hear more about this issue. Our evidence suggests that in some cases, discharge arrangements have sometimes been rushed, or not sufficiently organised to meet people's ongoing care needs.

We have shared insight with the health and care system to raise awareness of the vital importance of involving and communicating well with people's next of kin so that they understand what care is needed and people are able to cope and have adequate support at home after they have been discharged.

## Praise

- We continue to hear how thankful people are to health and social care professionals when they or their family receive kind, compassionate care. People have shared with us what a difference this can make - especially in difficult and upsetting situations.

## Shielded people

- People have told us that there are still issues around government food parcels, both for eligibility and when it is not needed - people are fearful that cancelling the parcels will mean they will lose their delivery priority status at supermarkets.
- Nationally, local Healthwatch are starting to hear more questions about what will happen next, after the first 12-week shielding period has passed - including for parents who are shielding with children who may soon be expected to go back to school. We have similarly heard a little of this too.

## Transport

- Following our escalation of concern that pregnant women are struggling to attend maternity appointments due to transport issues, it has been confirmed that expectant mothers, who cannot afford taxis but need to attend a maternity health appointment, are now eligible to book [Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service](#).

## Testing

- Some people are starting to receive a letter asking a member of their household to take part in antibody testing. There were several online conversations sparking debate with some people believing it was a scam - and recommending people ring the GP to check. Other people had worries that their DNA may be stored and about Government testing programs.

People were confused by the random nature of selection. Many implied they may be supportive if they knew more. Overall, what we are hearing from those who have been contacted indicates there is not enough or clear enough information regarding this trial.



09-22 May 2020

## 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](mailto: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.



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