

Healthwatch Harrow Newsletter, August 2020 (Text Only Version)

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New Story: We Want to Hear from You!

Have you used a local health or social care service recently?

If so, we want to hear your stories, good and bad.

By sharing your experience with us, we can identify what is working well, and what needs to work better so that local services truly reflect the needs of local people.

Do you work at a community organisation or front line service? We'd also like to hear from you!

Please share your experiences and perspectives, to give us a better view of services as a whole.

Contact us today, in confidence on 020 3432 2889 or info@healthwatchharrow.co.uk. Story End.

New Story: "When This is All Over"

A local person with a learning disability has written a poem, reflecting on the pandemic and current environment.

Entitled 'When This is All Over', it is a piece of real inspiration. View now! [👉 More](#)
Story End.

New Story: 'Next Stage' Covid-19 Survey

Throughout June, our 'next stage' Covid-19 survey recorded local views on the lifting of lockdown and easing of restrictions.

What did people tell us?

When comparing results with the initial survey (March - May 2020), we find that spirits have been lifted, with many pleased at being able to visit and reconnect with family and friends.

One respondent says "Some part of me is relieved, and other parts of me still stressed. But nice to be able to see grand children and my son

with learning difficulties who has been indoors for 10 weeks. He can be taken out in the fresh air to visit his sister whom he cannot understand why he couldn't see.”

There are also widespread fears about infection, and a possible second wave. One person says “Loosening lockdown is very concerning - there are very good signs of a second wave coming in October and having many more due from this. The economy can always be recovered but human lives cannot.”

Many accounts of social isolation are reported, with carers, vulnerable people and those shielding much more likely to be isolated. We also find that communication has not been effective, with ‘mixed messages’ adding to confusion and uncertainty.

The full report is available online. [👉 More](#)
Story End.

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New Story: Residents Encouraged to Attend GPs & Hospitals

Doctors and nurses in North West London are encouraging local people to attend GP and hospital appointments.

The move comes as the NHS starts to restore services as part of the ‘recovery’ phase of the Covid-19 pandemic (more on page 4).

Dr Mohini Parmar, GP Chair of Ealing Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and primary care lead for North West London, said:

“Please contact your GP if you need medical advice. You may be offered a telephone, video or online consultation, as they are now all available across North West London practices.

If you are called in for a face-to-face consultation, please follow the guidance your practice will provide, so that your care is as safe as we can make it. We have learnt a lot from these new ways of working and they will be a part of how you access your GP in the future.”

A local chief nurse adds “If you are called for a hospital appointment, please make sure you attend.

It's vital that patients get the treatment they need, so that problems do not get worse. Hospitals have put in place rigorous infection control measures to keep patients and staff safe.” ➡ [More](#). Story End.

New Story: Proposed Merger of North West London CCGs

The eight NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) in North West London have put forward a proposal to merge into a single CCG. The eight CCGs are: Brent, Central London, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hillingdon, Hounslow and West London.

The eight CCGs have been discussing the proposal of a merger for over a year, with plans now in place for this to take effect in April 2021. Engagement with the public took place last year and the CCGs will be discussing further with local people and organisations over the next six weeks.

The next steps will be to consult with the local councils in the area, all eight CCG governing bodies and local GP members.

Jo Ohlson, Accountable Officer for the North West London CCGs said:

“All eight CCG governing bodies agreed last year that this was the right direction of travel. Going forward we will retain a focus on managing key relationships locally, working closely with our GPs, hospitals, local councils, Healthwatch and voluntary organisations.

Each borough will continue to have its own team to ensure that the right services are provided for local needs.”

Find out more on the website. ➡ [More](#)
Story End.

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New Story: Covid-19 Third Phase NHS Response

In a recent letter, the NHS has outlined its aims to return services to 'near' pre-Covid-19 levels.

Hospitals/Outpatients: Services have been told to speed-up the return of non-Covid services, making full use of the time between now and winter.

Cancer Services: There is a strong focus on getting cancer services - both diagnosis and treatment - back to normal levels through a range of activity such as ensuring that sufficient testing capacity is in place in Covid-19-secure environments.

In doing this, there is a requirement to support any groups of patients who might have unequal access to diagnostics and/or treatment.

Surgery: Elective surgery should be planned to be at 90% of last year's activity by October 2020 (80% by September and 70% by August).

Self-isolating before surgery: For many patients, the need to isolate for 14 days before surgery will be removed following new guidelines from NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence).

Remote consultations: The letter reminds trusts about the opportunities for remote consultations, and includes the Healthwatch report 'The Doctor Will Zoom You Now' as a useful resource to help clinicians support patients.

Community Health: General practice, community and optometry services are expected to restore activity to usual levels "where clinically appropriate".

General practice: All GP practices must offer face-to-face appointments at their surgeries as well as continuing to use remote triage and video, online and telephone consultation wherever clinically appropriate - whilst also considering those who are unable to access or engage with digital services.

Mental Health: Investment in mental health services should continue to increase. IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) services should fully resume, and locally developed 24/7 crisis helplines for all ages should be retained - to become part of a national programme.

Learning Disabilities: For people with a learning disability, autism or both, the expectations include a reduction in the number of children, young people and adults in specialist inpatient settings by providing

better alternatives. GP practices should ensure that everybody with a learning disability is identified on their register and receives annual health checks, and appropriate screenings and vaccinations.

The letter also addresses preparations for winter, locking in some of the benefits learned through the pandemic, and tackling inequality to make sure that ‘nobody is left behind’. ➔ [More](#). Story End.

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New Story: Mental Health Community Services Survey

The Harrow Community Mental Health service would like to understand your experience of accessing mental health services during the pandemic and lockdown.

The Coronavirus pandemic has brought about some significant changes to how people access health services and Harrow Community Mental Health Services have had to change ways in which they offer care and support to people.

As they look into the future they are seeking feedback that will help them to plan and communicate better with people living and accessing mental health services in Harrow.

They are asking you to take part in a short survey as they want to listen to your experiences and understand how they can meet future needs.

The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes and your responses are confidential and anonymous. All views are important. ➔ [More](#). Story End.

New Story: Your Views On Hospital Discharge?

During the Coronavirus pandemic, the usual processes that hospitals follow to discharge people from their care changed to help free-up beds.

While this has helped the NHS manage the demand created by Coronavirus, Healthwatch England wants to know how this is working for patients and their loved ones.

What are they doing?

Working with the British Red Cross, they will be collecting people's stories of hospital discharge through a dedicated survey over the next four weeks.

If you have recent experiences of hospital discharge, good or bad, please take a moment to complete the online survey. ➡ [More](#). Story End.

New Story: Harrow Carer's Card Consultation

Harrow Council, Harrow Carers and Harrow Mencap are working together to update the current carers card (currently called the CESS card).

They would very much like to gain your opinions as to the design of the card and benefits of having this in your possession.

They kindly ask for your help by completing their short survey. ➡ [More](#) Story End.

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New Story: Upholding Face-to-Face GP Appointments

In a recent article, the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has urged GPs to retain face-to-face appointments for patients who need them.

Chair, Professor Martin Marshall writes "Throughout the pandemic GPs and our teams have been working differently to normal delivering care to patients with both Covid and non-Covid conditions.

Whilst most care has been delivered remotely during lockdown, to help stop the spread of the virus, and keep practice staff and other patients safe, face-to face-appointments will have been offered where necessary."

Martin goes on to say "A totally, or even predominantly, remote general practice service wouldn't be in anybody's best interests long-term.

Remote consultations can be convenient for patients, and GPs have reported they have found them to be an efficient way of delivering care.

But we know that many patients prefer seeing their GP in person, and many GPs prefer this too, particularly for patients with complex health needs who really value the relationship-based care that GPs excel at delivering.

Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) should work with practices to ensure that any patient who needs a face-to-face consultation with their GP is able to have one." [➡ More](#). Story End.

New Story: Electronic Records at Ambulance Services

As part of the London Ambulance Service's 'digital transformation strategy' they will be replacing the paper-based patient record form with an electronic patient care record (ePCR) across the service.

The move will reduce waste and is a shift in the Trust's ability to triage and treat patients. The chosen product, Cleric ePCR, has been tried and tested by a number of Trusts across the UK to share information electronically. ePCR will enhance the ability to integrate patient care with the wider NHS and care system in London.

They have started an engagement process and will be providing regular general updates during the next few months. To find out more, get in touch on Londamb.ePCRfeedback@nhs.net. Story End.

New Story: A Message for Unpaid Carers!

Are you providing unpaid care and support to a vulnerable person living in Harrow?

If the answer is yes, then Harrow Council's Carer Lead Allie Brice would appreciate the opportunity to send you information, advice and updates relating to your caring role. You can also get in touch with any carer related queries: on carers@harrow.gov.uk
Story End.

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New Story: Flu and Covid-19 Vaccines 'At the Same Time'

The government is exploring the possibility of co-administering the flu vaccination with a Covid-19 vaccine during the 2020/2021 flu season, draft minutes from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) have revealed.

The minutes also show that the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) considered products not currently licensed in the UK when looking to procure extra vaccine supplies for the 2020/2021 flu season.

It was noted that the safety of any new vaccination programme would be under constant review.

Rekha Shah, the London Pharmacy Lead for vaccinations said “Providing the Covid-19 vaccine is ready in time, and so long as the two vaccine types are able to be co-administered safely and without loss of efficacy – and this can only be known after some studies/pilots are done – then to offer the two jabs together at the same time would create many efficiencies to the programmes.

Community pharmacists have been delivering seasonal flu jabs along with pneumococcal jabs at the same time to patients that may be eligible to have and need both for nearly nine years.

“Making every contact count applies very much here.” ➡ [More](#). Story End.

New Story: Report on Mental Health Services & Covid-19

Covid-19 has, and will continue to have huge implications for mental health providers and the individuals they support.

During the peak of the crisis, there was a 30-40 per cent reduction in mental health referrals.

Since the lift in lockdown restrictions, providers anecdotally report that referrals are rising to above pre-Covid-19 levels. They are seeing patients with more significant needs; a higher proportion of patients are accessing services for the first time; and there are increased Mental Health Act presentations.

The additional £2.3 billion of funding for mental health announced in 2019 to implement the NHS Long Term Plan was widely supported. But there are serious concerns this will no longer be enough to cover the increases in demand and costs that providers now face following the pandemic.

The impact of Covid-19 on the mental wellbeing of staff has been substantial.

Mental health services have not yet seen the peak of demand and there are serious concerns over staff burnout, particularly among BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) staff who are at greater risk.

Find out more in the full report, compiled by the NHS Confederation. [➡ More](#). Story End.

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New Story: What are People Telling Us About Covid-19?

Healthwatch England, which supports the network of Local Healthwatch organisations, reports on key themes and trends related to Covid-19.

Based on feedback across the country, they report that: As the lockdown restrictions started to reduce, people were unsure about the new rules. In particular, people who were shielding said they felt vulnerable and confused about what these changes meant for them. With NHS services restarting, people have expressed concerns about how services can reopen safely. They would be reassured by better communication about the measures taken to reopen services.

There are also questions and concerns about how the backlog of postponed appointments will affect waiting times for care. This is particularly frustrating for people whose referrals, tests or treatment had already been delayed before the pandemic started. For people attending hospital appointments, we've heard how important it is for staff to provide clear information and reassurance about what will happen and how safety is being maintained. We continue to receive mixed views about remote care. While some people value not having to visit the service and sit in a waiting room, others are wary of services becoming entirely digitalised. Story End.

New Story: 'My Right to Healthcare' Cards for the Homeless

A message from our colleagues at Groundswell, a national homelessness charity:

"As a result of unprecedented measures being put in place to deal with Covid-19 our research has found that many people experiencing homelessness have found it difficult to register with a GP and access primary care services. In response we've been working with Healthy London Partnership and the GLA to make 20,000 'My Right to Healthcare' cards available to people across London. I wanted to let you know we still have lots available, so if you can help distribute them to people experiencing homelessness please contact us.

The card is designed to help adults who are homeless to register and receive treatment at London GP practices; where people are often wrongly turned away for not having ID or not having a fixed address. Cards have been delivered to shelters, hospitals, day centres, food banks, drop in centres and other organisations across London but we need them to reach more people. The cards can be displayed by organisations for people to pick up or can be directly distributed by staff or volunteers; dependent on how your service is working in the current circumstances.

Please do pass this message onto your colleagues and networks across London who may benefit from having the cards. Together we have also produced a short, accessible guide on registering with a GP and what services they provide; accessible guide on registering with a GP and what services they provide; these are designed to be printed on a standard printer or can be viewed online." [➡ More](#)

To find out more, get in touch on
stephan.morrison@groundswell.org.uk. Story End.
Story End.

This is the end of the newsletter. Thankyou for listening!

For more information about this newsletter contact the office:

Phone 020 3432 2889 or email info@healthwatchharrow.co.uk