

Insight into action

Report #1
April- June 2021

At a glance

We have ...

- Produced information and advice resources relating to Covid-19 and a variety of subjects on our website including:
 - [Covid-19 Keeping Older Adults Active At Home](#)
 - [Covid-19 Anxiety With Returning To School](#)
 - [Covid-19 Local Pop Up Vaccination Clinics](#)
 - [Covid-19 Vaccination Mobile Health On The Move Van](#)
 - [Making Carers Visible](#)
 - [What To Expect When Being Discharged From Hospital](#)
 - [Eating Disorders Awareness](#)
 - [Diabetes Week Awareness](#)
 - [Talking About Mental Health - Mens Mental Health Week](#)
 - [Help Those With Dementia Live Better Lives](#)
 - [Get Back To Nature - Support Your Mental Health](#)
- We carried out our 'What Matters Most' survey. We used this survey to highlight residents priorities in health and social care and along with the insight we have gathered from peoples feedback throughout the year it informed our priority setting for the year ahead.
- We have been writing our 'Carers Experience During Covid' project report and this will be ready to share in September.

We also:

Shared, raised issues of concern for the public with service providers:

- Continued problems finding an NHS dentist.
- Queries relating to first and second vaccines.
- GP access issues particularly for vulnerable.
- Lack of easy read information for learning disabled regarding key advice and information
- Issues related to CAMHS waiting times.
- Worked collaboratively with other Healthwatch partners in Reading and West Berkshire and voluntary and community sector groups.
- Represented Healthwatch strategically with locality Clinical Commissioning Groups, hospital trusts and the Integrated Care System.
- In this reporting period Healthwatch Wokingham were represented on 18 different boards, project and strategic groups.
- We attended the second vaccination event at the Aisha Mosque and together with a small group of Voluntary and Community Sector organisations used the opportunity to share advice and information and signposting with the Mosque members.

Background

During COVID-19 the work of Healthwatch, to understand the experiences of the public, has not stopped. With a fast-moving response to COVID-19, real-time intelligence for services about the issues the public are facing is valuable.

It is also important that health and social care services understand the impact these changes are having more broadly - especially when they concern people's safety or will have implications as services begin the return to normal. Healthwatch Wokingham is therefore clear that the feedback we provide can help the NHS and social care services during this time by helping them spot and address issues caused by the COVID19 crisis.

Our priorities

During this time, we believe Healthwatch services can play the most useful role by:

- Providing advice and information to the public.
- Supporting NHS and social care services in their communications with the public.
- Alerting services to issues that could impact on the safety of people or their experience of care.
- Supporting the wider community response to COVID-19.
- Supporting communities who find it hardest to be heard or get the support they need.

This briefing aims to provide a snapshot of activity and our impact from April to June 2021.

Advice and Information

In the last 3 months we have continued to have a greater focus on our information, advice and signposting service, to help people get the information they need from a trusted source. We have continued to utilise our social media presence to keep the public informed and updated regarding government and local health and social care services and where to get help and support from the voluntary and community sector. The number of interactions on our website and on social media has in general increased since the previous report figures.



**Our website - over
21,870 page views.**



**Facebook - our posts
reached over 20,842
people.**

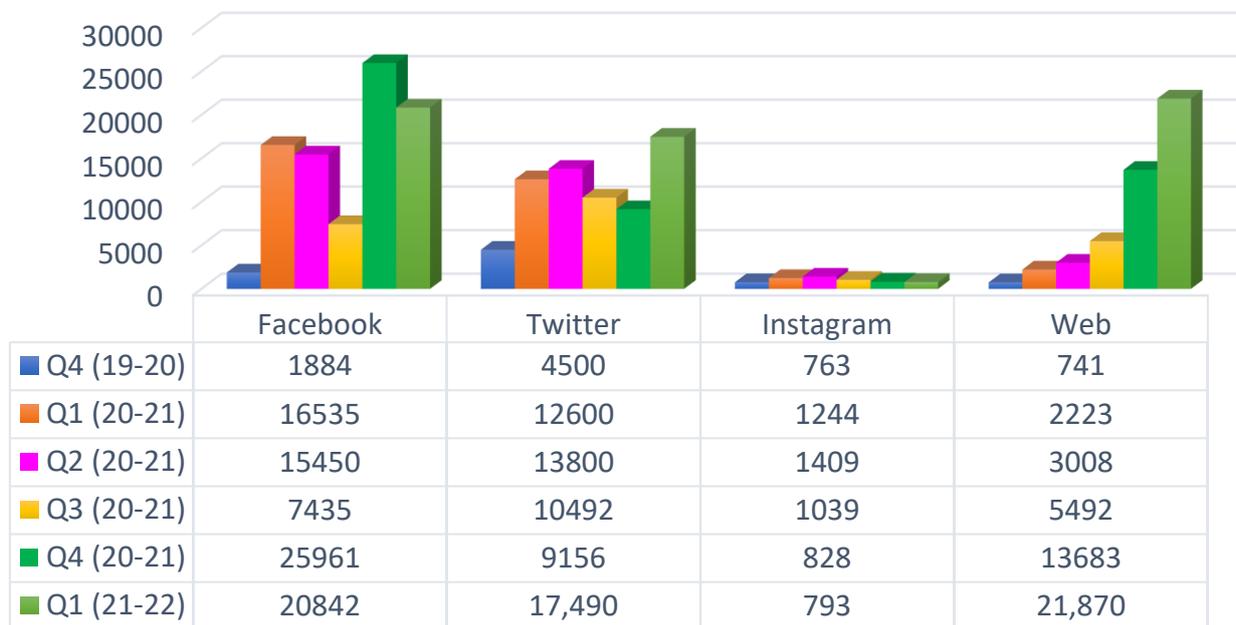


Instagram - our posts reached over 793 people.



Twitter - our posts reached over 17,490 people.

Social Media and Website Reach



Additionally, we share information with the public via our monthly article in the Wokingham Paper. The paper's average weekly readership is around 18,000 of the print edition, there are around 130,000 unique users of their website.

healthwatchwokingham
Joanna Dixon
www.healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

Giving unpaid carers a voice during the pandemic

MANY unpaid carers in Wokingham Borough became unpaid carers overnight when lockdown was imposed in March, increasing their responsibilities to look after older, disabled or seriously ill loved ones and relatives instantly. With some services changed or reduced, some carers found themselves in a particularly challenging position.

Healthwatch Wokingham is launching its Caring During Covid-19 campaign to give unpaid carers a voice.

We want to hear what caring during the pandemic has been like and how things need to change going forward, particularly with the virus still in circulation.

Koel Bolton Heaton, head of Healthwatch Wokingham, said: "Many unpaid carers have already told us their stories about caring during covid, these have included issues accessing services, medications and general support but also that their caring responsibilities have increased."

"Through our project Caring During Covid-19 we want to have a greater understanding of the support they face and would encourage all those caring for a family member or loved one to come forward and speak with us".

One of the people who contacted our helpline said: "I had to remove my family member from his extra care housing due to issues there. I am now his sole carer which is not ideal and am trying to find him new care, but he has been living with me through lockdown."

It is thought that 4.5 million additional people have taken on caring for older, disabled or seriously ill relatives or friends since the Covid-19 pandemic started. Many of those people are also juggling work and family life alongside unpaid care work and finding it very difficult.

The national figures were revealed as part of Carers Week and the six charities - Carers UK, Age UK, Carers Trust, Motor Neurone Disease Association, Dementia UK and British Mental Health - are calling on the UK Government to recognise and raise awareness of the role unpaid carers are playing during the pandemic and ensure they are supported through it and beyond.

Another parent carer told us: "Unfortunately the 'regular' I usually have when my son with special needs is at school was not happening and his mental health as well as others in the family deteriorated."

"This led to extra worry and difficulty with working and maintaining a routine for the other children."

We encourage all unpaid carers to take part in our survey and share their experiences with us.

Our aim is to:

- Identify the issues affecting unpaid carers since the pandemic began.
- Find out what needs to be done differently to support carers going forward.

Carers can take part in our survey in a number of ways:

- Complete the survey online via our website: www.healthwatchwokingham.co.uk
- Call us on 0118 418 1418
- Email us: carers@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk
- Contact us via our social media channels Facebook, Instagram (@healthwatchwokingham) or Twitter
- Write to: Healthwatch Wokingham, Town Hall, Market Place, Wokingham, RG40 1AS.

Signposting

Signposting residents to information, guidance, help and to VCSe and other organisations who can help them based on their enquiry, is a key part of our offer. In the period April to June 2021 we signposted:

1,581 people

Examples of some of the organisations we have sign posted resident to for help, include:

- Oral Health Foundation
- CQC
- Advocacy People
- Wokingham Borough Council
- One Front Door
- General Dental Council
- Wokingham Food Bank
- Macmillan Cancer Support
- NHS Complaints
- TuVida Carers Support
- ASD Family Help
- Crossroads Care
- Age UK Berkshire
- Link Visiting Scheme
- CLASP Adult Learning Disability
- AvMA Action Against Medical Accidents

Where is our insight coming from?

At present, our opportunity to directly engage with Wokingham residents has had to change due to social distancing requirements.

Our telephone based signposting service has remained open throughout the period and the helpdesk team have been responding to calls and emails from the public.

We also continue to actively seek insight about health and social care experiences through our website, newsletter and social media, digital meetings and through our surveys with communities.

Community and Voluntary organisations are playing an even bigger role in being our partners and sharing insight and members health and social care experiences with us.

What have people been telling us and what action have we taken?

We have created specific COVID-19 advice and information documents, in addition to other advice and information on our website, working with stakeholders, based on



what we are asked by the public and community and voluntary sector partners. We review our advice and information weekly to ensure it is current. We have also used social media to highlight advice and information to the public. Below are some examples of what people have told us:

Dentists

We heard

We still continue to hear about residents difficulties in accessing dental appointments and registering as a new patient with an NHS dentist. This applies to adults and children.

We did

We regularly update our advice and information pages as the situation changes. Some limited additional NHS appointments have been commissioned by the NHS across the South East for some dental practices who expressed an interest. This is ongoing and changes from time to time and all updates are added to our web site, shared with our help desk.

We continue to share local peoples experience with Healthwatch England. They have met with NHS England to share peoples experiences and raise concerns.

Covid Vaccines

We heard

We continued to hear from residents wanting up to date local information about the vaccine roll out. Some residents told us they hadn't been called forward for their vaccine at the time they expected to. We also heard from some residents who had their vaccine cancelled without a clear explanation about why or and information about a reschedule date.

We did

We resolved vaccine issues either directly with GP surgeries or through our membership of the CCG Covid Vaccine Action Group. We updated advice and information articles on our web site about local vaccine roll out plans, pop ups dates and locations, this was also shared via social media.

Mental Health

We heard

We have heard about peoples concerns for their mental health. This was also highlighted as a priority in our survey 'What Matters Most'.

We did

We created various advice and information articles on our web site relating to mental health. This included advice on things individuals can do themselves to boost their mental health. We also signposted people to local and national support services.

GP Access

We heard

We continue to hear that some residents are finding it difficult to get a GP appointment. As restrictions have lifted there has been a large increase in patients trying to get an appointment with their GP, in some cases, for various reasons, having put off contacting their GP earlier in the pandemic. Those who are digitally enabled and digitally competent can navigate the difficulty by booking through eConsult. Equally Those who have the resilience determination will eventually get through the surgery phone system. Those who are vulnerable or not digitally enable struggle to get through. This is continually reported to us by organisation like Age Uk Berkshire and Link visiting scheme.

We did

Where we are informed about a vulnerable individual not being able to get an appointment, we have been contacting their GP surgery manager and asking them to make contact with the patient.

We have raised the concerns with the CCG and they are looking at various initiatives to try and relieve the pressure not only on GP practices but also A & E. These include clearer, standardised phone messages across surgeries. Some surgeries are planning updated telephony systems.

We are setting out plans for a Wokingham Borough GP Access survey.

This is a national issue and we have passed on our residents insight to Healthwatch England.

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 services in Wokingham Borough.



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.

Telephone: 0118 418 1418

Email: enquiries@healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

Facebook: @Healthwatchwokingham

Twitter: @HWwokingham

Web: www.healthwatchwokingham.co.uk

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