

COVID related Public Feedback

Monthly Summary report

COVID-19

November 2020

Throughout November, Healthwatch Medway have worked to gather direct feedback from people about their experiences of the Covid 19 pandemic and life under social distancing. We have combined this with anecdotal feedback from organisations who support a wide range of Medway residents.

Its purpose is to enable decision makers and planners to understand how people are coping during the COVID epidemic.

Methodology

We have been gathering feedback through a number of routes:

1. The number of calls to our Helpline has steadily increased since March
2. People also share their experiences with us via our website, email or text
3. We've been running a series of social media campaigns to capture feedback
4. Regularly talking to community groups and voluntary organisations to understand how their clients and members are coping

Since March, Healthwatch staff and volunteers have been building relationships with voluntary organisations and community groups. This has enabled us to hear from communities who may find it harder to share their feedback such as people living with Dementia.

What are we going to do with the feedback?

Every month, we bring together all the feedback from the multiple sources into one report. This is then shared with decision makers to provide a timely snapshot of how people are coping.

What are we trying to achieve?

This report aims to summarise and reflect the changing experiences of people living and working in Medway during the Covid 19 pandemic.

Our aim is that the feedback is used to support emergency and recovery planning across the health and social care system in Medway.



Things to remember when reading this report

- The comments in italics are direct quotes from people. They are peoples' personal views, not the view of Healthwatch Medway. Other comments are anecdotal pieces of feedback from organisations
- This is a snapshot of feedback over a month – it is not intended to replace an organisations own responsibility to gather feedback from the public
- Wherever possible we are raising issues and sharing feedback directly with relevant organisations.
- You may read some worrying stories. Some of these have come directly from the public and if they have given us contact details, we are following up with them and escalating if necessary. However, not everyone will give us contact details. Where organisations have shared concerns with us, they are following their own safeguarding and escalation protocols.
- The previous months reports are available on our website
- Thanks to everyone who contributed!

What are the headlines?

This is a long report with a wealth of information. We would encourage you to take the time to read all the feedback.

The headlines from this month are:

- Delays in stroke rehabilitation services
- Ongoing concerns about Covid within schools and universities
- Positive reaction to the news visitors were permitted at the Maternity Unit
- Concerns about hospital care
- Challenges to get GP appointments



STROKE SERVICES

Medway Stroke Association told us that there has been a threefold increase in referrals to them. They reported that stroke patients are not routinely being offered mental health support or information to understand why a stroke may have happened.

We heard that stroke patients are still struggling to get GP appointments. They report that if they do get an appointment, they rarely see the same GP twice which causes them issues.

Specialist stroke consultant appointments are taking between three and six months to be arranged we were told. We heard particular cases where patients had not been seen by a stroke nurse for six months. We also heard delays in physiotherapy appointments due to the physios being seconded to other departments in the hospital.

Medway Stoke Association reported that they are spending significantly more time helping people to complete forms in enable financial support. They told us Carers are struggling to complete the forms themselves.

DEMENTIA SUPPORT

Medway Dementia Peer Support Group told us that many families and those living with dementia are still isolating as they feel unsure of what they can and cannot do and what they should and should not do.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR THE YOUNG AND VULNERABLE

Nucleus Arts told us about a teenager who had been missing school and had attempted suicide. They reported that the child had tried but not found any support.



NHS 111

"I contacted 111 and was put through to a different surgery to my own as mine was busy. The GP surgery prescribed medication and arranged for me to collect it the following day. When I looked at the surgery address, it was a long way from my home and not easily accessible by public transport. I rang the surgery to see if the prescription could be sent to a pharmacy near me, or to my surgery, but the surgery had no record of me contacting them. I rang NHS 111 and they too said they had no record of me contacting them and so I had to begin the whole process of diagnosing again. Because my symptoms had changed an ambulance was called and I was admitted to Medway Maritime Hospital. The treatment I received in hospital was good".

SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY

Age UK told us that meal services have increased from around 15 a day prior to lockdown, to a peak of 150 during lockdown. They currently have 75 people who are reliant on hot meals (in November). They believe this is because people don't have technology to book online food deliveries or can't get a delivery slot. Reasonings for this rise are either not being able to get online shopping delivery slots or not having the technology to even try.

EDUCATION

At the beginning of November parliament voted on the new covid national restrictions. The public shared their thoughts and experiences with us.

"It's the right decision, although I think that the universities should be closed".

"Schools should close. My daughter is self-isolating for the second time now since they have been back because of positive cases in her classes. So that's another 4 weeks off of school on top of the 5 months they lost earlier in the year & still she's expected to sit her A-levels next June".

"For the lockdown to be effective, we should never have sent the students back to university and we should have taken the tough call and shut the schools over an extended half term. That may have slowed the spread".

"As a teacher, I am struggling to understand why schools are still open. If it is because children are a low risk and then why are they included in the rule of 6? Where is the protection for us adults in schools? Education is important but all schools are on limited staff due to shielding, having covid or isolating. So, to cover the shortfall of staff, teachers are having to mix in more classes. Teachers are not in bubbles! By the end of this week, I would have taught 750 secondary school age children. Bar a few classes these will be mostly made up of a different class every lesson. All these children are in their bubbles in school but outside the gates they are mixing and there is nothing we can do about that".

"Three kid's, three different schools. They all have cases with teacher's and pupils having it. Was going to keep them off but told I will be fined, It's all messed up".

FLU JAB

"I contacted my GP as I had not had a call about getting my flu jab. I was told I could not have the jab because I was not on the list, but my health condition is rare".

HOSPITAL CARE

Care and dignity

We heard from someone whose father had been in hospital. They felt they had been neglected and uncared for at Medway Maritime Hospital. They didn't get the physio they needed and staff didn't do what they had said they would. He was given laxatives even though the family requested them not to. He was given incontinence pads rather than being helped to the toilet. He wasn't told when food was delivered despite being visually and hearing impaired. This meant that he didn't eat the food and lost weight. The family told us that he was 'dropped' when being moved from his bed to the chair, he had another fall when he tried to take himself to the toilet because the staff ignored the buzzer. He was in hospital for 7 weeks.

Ambulances

"I had to have an ambulance come from Dartford for my son as there were no ambulances in Medway. It has taken 5 hours just to get a him to the hospital".

Infection control

"My husband came home from Medway Maritime Hospital after a week. He entered the hospital with a negative test but come out positive".

"I was admitted to Medway Maritime Hospital with a blood clot near my lung onto a Covid ward, even after a negative test! I was up all night helping with dementia patients (I only had a mask, no PPE). There were never any nurses available to assist them".

Delays in test results

"My wife who is 88 years old, recently had a scan at Medway Maritime Hospital but did not receive the results for two months. The GP and the hospital were phoned to try and obtain the results. The hospital advised that the results had been sent to the consultant and there would be a 4/5-week further delay. Whilst we understand the process, this is very frustrating for those who are unwell and looking for support and their results".

A&E

"I needed to attend A&E at Medway Maritime Hospital as I broke my foot. From being dropped off to having an X-ray and leaving the plaster room was little over an hour. Absolute terrific service. I applaud all of them".

"I heard a Doctor at Medway Maritime Hospital tell a dementia patient (who was crying for her husband) that if she stops breathing, they would not be resuscitating her. I am glad to say I was there when she was discharged".

Medway maternity unit

At the beginning of November, the Medway Hospital re-instated visiting at the Maternity Unit. The public shared their thoughts and experiences:

"This is amazing news! Well done and thank you to the Medway Foundation Trust".

"Honestly, I was upset when the news broke that the visiting had been cancelled but Medway deserves so much recognition for this and for listening to everyone's concerns. They have been so good throughout my pregnancy even though it has been a really odd time with scans and appointments alone".

"I'm due at any moment and this has brought me such relief".

"Thank you, I'm looking forward to having our baby girl with you guys soon".

"I'm due in 7 weeks and have terrible anxiety about my husband not being with me the whole time but these updates are making me feel slightly at ease".

OUT OF HOURS GP

A member of the public told us that their relative had attended an out of hours appointment because they had diarrhoea. The doctor on duty asked a few questions before bluntly telling them that they had stomach cancer and gave a prescription for omeprazole. The person was distraught at hearing this. They have since visited their own GP and were found to have a stomach bug for which they were given antibiotics.

ACCESS TO MEDICATION

We heard about a man who discharged himself from Medway Maritime Hospital. They needed an urgent prescription and the hospital referred them to their GP. The GP said they could not issue the medication until they had seen the patient themselves. However the patient was too ill to attend the surgery. In the end, the patient had to return to the hospital.

**Thanks to everyone who shared their story
with us this month.**



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