

Learning about Croydon's residents' views on the COVID-19 Vaccine

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- Most were positive about vaccines and trusted the information and its sources. Main drivers were protecting themselves, family and vulnerable people.
- Around 1 in 5 were COVID vaccine hesitant with concerns about safety and not trusting the intention. Some also believed COVID-19 did not pose a risk for them.
- There were limitations in the sampling as this was a general online survey making the case for more focused work with specific age groups and communities to understand their views more.

During the COVID pandemic, Healthwatch Croydon was commissioned through Healthwatch England to conduct a piece of work to around the public views towards to new COVID Vaccine, along with several other Healthwatch organisations across England. We asked questions about vaccines in general, views on accepting the COVID vaccine, main reasons for wanting it, motivations for refusing it and views on the information received about the vaccine and where this was sourced from.

These are our findings based on the 155 responses from the survey:

- **Most were positive towards the COVID-19 Vaccine and to vaccines in general.** 78% said that they had already taken the vaccine. 91% said they were positive to vaccines in general.
- **Protecting themselves, their family and friends and vulnerable people were the main reasons for wanting the vaccine:** Helping get society get back to normal, protecting the NHS were also higher considerations. Professionals recommending it and getting back to work were lower scored drivers to take it.
- **Over one in five respondents were COVID-19 vaccine hesitant:** Around 20% of the respondents had negative opinions concerning the COVID-19 vaccine, Highest scoring reasons were that people did not trust the intention behind it, as well as concerns

around the safety of the vaccine and its ingredients. Some did not think COVID-19 posed as risk to them.

- **Barriers to receiving the COVID-19 vaccine included booking, distance, and time of appointments:** For the few who had not had it but wanted it having to book the appointment itself would be a barrier. The distance of the vaccination location/centre as well as the timings of the appointments may present itself as another reason.
- **NHS and government websites were seen as best source of information about the COVID vaccine:** NHS and government websites scored highly as well as TV and radio, newspapers, and online news websites. Social media, Croydon Council and government press conferences scored well. Community organisations, including Healthwatch scored lowest. Most respondents 72% felt that information about the vaccine was delivered clearly and effectively but 18% did not find it so. Most found sources positive, with only a few finding sources negative.
- **Limitations in sample, on gender, age, and ethnicity:** Respondents were more likely to be female, between 55 and 75 and White British, showing the limitations of representing diverse Croydon through a general online survey.

These are our recommendations which are relevant to provider and commissioners:

- **Ensure the vaccine is more accessible to members of the community from a multitude of ways:** At the time of the survey, there were some issues concerning access and booking for some - bringing vaccination close to where people live and with walk-in services should overcome these challenges.
- **Communicate the risks as well as the benefits in a more effective way:** Of the 20% who had not accepted the vaccines, concerns about trust and safety around the vaccines garnered the highest proportion of responses. These concerns need to be understood and steps to be taken to understand their reasoning.
- **Continue conversation with those unsure about the vaccine:** It is important to respect the attitudes and views of the public, even if their perspective is not aligned

to medical advice. Those that are vaccine hesitant should have the opportunity to engage with a clinician who can respond to their concerns to feel heard and listened to. This way some of the myths and fake information can be unpacked and better information provided.

- **Strategise how to reduce the fake and misleading news on the vaccine:** 70% of respondents said that the news regarding the vaccine was positive, however 30% said that the information was either mixed or negative. Develop communications strategies to combat this which could include finding dependable ambassadors representing a range of background and ethnicities.
- **Wider studies are needed on specific ages, gender, ethnicity, and other demographics:** We acknowledge the limitations of this general online survey. There is a need to conduct specific studies with those more likely to be hesitant in an open environment where people can express their experiences, views, and concerns.

You can view the report here:

<https://www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/learn-more/our-reports/>

Gordon Kay, Healthwatch Croydon Manager, said: “The COVID-19 pandemic brought many changes and challenges to residents. The swift adoption of a new vaccine was one of these. Our report helps give some local insight from Croydon residents’ perspective showing that 4 in 5 were in favour of the vaccine.

“However, we know that Croydon has been behind national averages in COVID vaccine adoption, showing the limits of our sample. While our report does show views of those who did not accept the vaccine, we note that more work needs to be done to understand the concerns and needs of specific demographic groups concerning the vaccine.

“We note the significant effort by Croydon’s health, social care, and voluntary partnerships to engage with communities. This enables individuals to be best informed to make decisions for themselves on what is an ethical issue. We welcome their continued engagement focusing on listening and understanding views to build trust with communities on this issue.”

Croydon Health Services NHS Trust Chief Executive and Place-Based Leader for Health, Matthew Kershaw, said: “Listening to the voices of our community is central to everything we do. This new Healthwatch Croydon report explores the challenges that have been, and continue to be, at the heart of monumental efforts across the borough to protect people from COVID-19.

“We were London’s first hospital vaccination hub and, since then, almost a million vaccinations have been given to residents through our walk-in centre, GPs, pharmacists and community vaccinators.

“It’s never too late to get your jab and we are continuing to engage with local faith leaders, community groups and residents in our borough to help people make an informed choice with pop-up clinics and convenient appointment times and culturally sensitive information that meets the health needs of our diverse population.”

Rachel Flowers, Croydon’s director of public health, said: “We welcome these findings from Healthwatch Croydon on the Covid-19 vaccination uptake. It provides some useful insight into how our residents have responded to the rollout of these important vaccinations. We continue to encourage people to have their first and second dose and booster jabs as this is still your defence against getting seriously ill from the virus.

“Croydon Council is currently running a training programme for residents to be Covid-19 community vaccination champions. The champions will further support our successful work with the local NHS and partner organisations to get more people to have the vaccine, to protect themselves and others so that we can all live safely with the virus. Anyone who still has concerns or questions about the vaccines should speak to a healthcare professional to make an informed decision going forward.”

Editor's notes

Healthwatch Croydon is here to improve the experience that Croydon people have when they need to use health and social care services. We believe that the best way to do this is by listening to patients and service users.

There is a local Healthwatch in every local authority area in England.

Our role is to make sure that that local health and social care services, and the local decision makers, put the experiences of people at the heart of their care.

We are a statutory body - this means that we have a legal status to exist within the Health and Social Care Act 2012. This means decision-makers should listen to us when we give them feedback and make suggestions.

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