



**How is COVID-19
affecting Croydon
residents?**

Stakeholder Report 1 – 30 April 2020

Reporting period:

7 to 23 April 2020

About this report

About Healthwatch Croydon

Healthwatch Croydon works to get the best out of local health and social care services responding to the voice of local people. From improving services today to helping shape better ones for tomorrow, we listen to people's views and experiences and then influence decision-making. We have several legal functions, under the 2012 Health and Social Care Act.

Introduction to the insight

At present, our opportunity to directly engage with Croydon residents is limited to surveys, our website feedback, social media and responding to calls and emails via our Helpdesk Hub Team. On 3 April, we launched our survey *How has COVID-19 affected you*, which you can view at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/covid-19-what-are-your-views-we-want-to-hear-your-experience/

Context and aim of the report

This report gives an overview of what we have heard from the first 63 respondents of our survey between 3 April and 23 April. You can see more about the sample at the back of this report. This report presents the experiences that Croydon residents have shared and what we suggest could be done to improve their experience. The experiences have been analysed into themed sections reflecting the key issues raised, along with a selection of the wide range of responses we have received. We have then suggested some actions that could be undertaken in response to these comments.

As a key stakeholder in the delivery of health and social care services, we want you to consider these comments and suggested actions, and to take action to improve the service responses where possible.

Reporting timescale

We are producing this report every fortnight to provide local insight to you, Croydon's health and social care stakeholders.

Feedback

This report is here to support the work you are undertaking. We welcome your feedback so we can ensure future editions provide the insight you need. You can email your comments directly to Gordon Kay, Healthwatch Croydon Manager gordon.kay@healthwatchcroydon.co.uk.

Accessing information

We asked Croydon residents about their information usages and needs.

Main information sources such as the nhs.uk and gov.uk websites as well as BBC News have been the main source of accessing information. Local sites such as Croydon Council, Croydon Health Services NHS website and Healthwatch Croydon have not referred to by many. Requests for more information broken down into:

- 1) information about the virus, symptoms, what to do when infected etc.
- 2) information about national policy, when will the lockdown might end and concerns about non-compliance by some.
- 3) information about local provision and how to get help.

“Accessing information; Immunity, test those who have had it. Who got over it? why? What are the markers for immunity/resilience? Most important to know if you have had it/got over it. Could you still be a carrier? Need to know how to stay safe, especially for health service, high risk.”

“Specific in what their intentions are. Small children to not know what's going on. It's going to affect child development. Opportunities affected. Climate of fear. Not encouraging in a positive way. Conflicting information. Are we prolonging it by how we are dealing with it? Unclear.”

“Will cancer treatment take place? Why is Purley hospital refusing to do out of area blood tests when many in South of borough attend hospitals out of area and need regular blood tests resulting in needless visits to major hospitals out of area at high risk.”

“Protection- avoiding infection. Guidance - following expert advice. Awareness - of symptoms. Other people following expert guidance. Government protecting all front line essential workers. Honesty from all giving advice and information.”

Suggested actions: Healthwatch Croydon is producing a regularly updated factsheet of information on national and local resources - which will be available by next week at www.healthwatchcroydon.co.uk/news/keeping-calm-and-carrying-on/. Please send us any relevant updates on services you are providing so we can ensure we produce the most up to date list of activities and support. We welcome you to share this within your networks.

Impact of COVID-19

We asked Croydon residents to tell us how the impact of the coronavirus outbreak have affected you so far. These have been the key issues:

Food supplies

We have heard from residents about difficulties in getting food; not able to get online delivery slots; problems queuing when they have a disability or frailty; problems carrying food home when don't drive; and being scared of lack of social distancing on public transport.

“Food shortage, I had to be bold and go to the front of the queue as I was so unwell, I couldn't wait. Staff and locals were understanding and helped me.”

“Regards to shopping, sometimes a friend offers and sometimes we ask if it's possible, I am relying on their good will. If they were to get ill, I would be devastated.”

“We can try and get home delivery but slots are difficult, we have gone without some things.”

“3 weeks without food delivery. No help from Croydon Council.”

“My anxiety has hit the roof. I do not know how I am going to cope with food shopping for my children as I can no longer get a delivery slot for food delivery.”

“Being in a lock down with a disable person who is used to lead a very active social life is very difficult. Moreover, despite of his conditions he has not been included in the vulnerable government list so we can't get priority deliveries from the supermarket. Not having a car and not wanted to really use public transports, coupled with the long queuing, means that's shopping has become extremely difficult and stressful.”

Suggested actions: We suggest raising the profile of community and voluntary services that are available locally to support vulnerable people to access the support they need in gaining food supplies. There also appears to be a need for clearer information on what assistance people should reasonably expect can reasonably be expected by council and community services to manage expectations. For example, what support is available to those who are deemed vulnerable due to age or long term conditions but not extremely vulnerable.

Accessing healthcare

We have heard from residents about being frightened of attending out-patients or Accident and Emergency because they may catch the virus; being told not considered extremely vulnerable but have long term conditions and feel frightened; confusion about difference between vulnerable and extremely vulnerable and what people should do and should not do; lack of access to dental care, GP, specialist nurses, and podiatry; hard to get diabetic food, unsure about what exercise people should aim to have: health professionals working in very different ways, some of them dealing with Covid-19 24/7.

“Had an endoscopy on 13th March and was in agony, I had complications from the procedure but couldn't wait at A&E as it was getting busy/risky.”

“When would I know that I need to call an ambulance, can't get through to 111. Nothing to guide you. No advice that I have found specifically for my condition and coronavirus, its more general. my condition gives me some of these symptoms of coronavirus so how would I distinguish. If I did go to hospital and didn't have it, I could catch it!”

“I have friends who have died from this virus who have no underlying health conditions and didn't have a cough or fever. I do not feel like enough is being done to spread awareness of ALL symptoms and I do not think support is there for everyone. Considering 40% of those who have died were not old or ill prior to this, it is clear that those of us who do not know of any underlying health conditions are being out at risk and our lives are being played with. It has become extremely difficult and stressful.”

“I have not been able to go to podiatry about my feet re diabetes. Cannot see stoma nurse re damage to area near stoma due to a fall. Can't get my ears seen to as I have gone dead in one ear with tinnitus. Due to falls my teeth started to crumble was going get in touch with dentist in March but lockdown put kibosh on that.”

Suggested actions: We suggest that clearer information needs to be distributed on when and how people with specific conditions, can access services if at all, and get the support they need. Clearer messaging is also needed about being able to contact 111 for advice about health concerns, and that people can still consult their GP. Residents would like more details on specific changes taking place, for example access to emergency dentistry. Information on how access to less urgent but still debilitating conditions that affect people's lives such as blocked ears and podiatry would also be welcome.

Social isolation

We have heard from residents saying they are missing the social aspects of work; voluntary work, clubs and activities; missing seeing family, friends, feeling trapped; lonely, no holidays (to look forward to), working from home; fear of dying without being able to say goodbye.

“I haven't been able to attend my volunteer job, when I go to work I socialise so I miss that but I have had to accept it.”

“Having to work, and then keep a distance from my mother. The worry of not knowing if I may become infected- and the impact this may have domestically. Not being able to see my wife, who lives outside of Croydon.”

“Financially, not been able to seek work. Universal Credit, bedroom tax. Live in a flat, no access to green spaces, perhaps lockdown should have been restricted to a needs basis. Effect on vulnerable families and children is a huge concern as they have no voice.”

“Left working as work place non complaint with social distance or use of gloves/ masks. I was not prepared to take risk of developing virus or passing this on to family.”

“My partner who works part time has been signed off for 12 weeks. We choose to self isolate to protect ourselves, and in the hope we are protecting frontline workers.”

“Low mood, tearful, sad at how it's affecting the world. Disappointed that my holidays have been postponed.”

“I'm at risk and could die, it mentally heart wrenching that I wouldn't get to say goodbye to my children and grandchildren.”

Suggested actions: Providing support for the impact on mental health due to isolation, loss of work and income, and fear of contracting coronavirus. Are there inexpensive or free, online ways of being connected that could be effectively communicated? Are there low cost WiFi provision options that enables residents to access platforms such as WhatsApp, Zoom and Skype. What more can service providers do to overcome this challenge?

Mental health

We have heard from residents that they worried and anxious, scared because of health concerns, worried about becoming infected, worried about using public transport, lack of mental health support depression, weight gain, difficult sleep and told not go to A&E.

“Worried and anxious but coping”

“I’ve been very anxious.”

“Worry for me and family. Death of friend but his family not able to say goodbye. Fear to go out even greater for a walk or to shop. Daily deaths frightening. Can’t sleep properly. “

“It has also made me more isolated from friends and family which has affected my mood and restricts my ability to keep physically healthy.”

“Seeing healthy people / residents dying, it has taken a lot out of me, emotionally and mentally.”

“Have been frightened, don’t know if we will get it. mental side, living in fear.”

“Mental Health has been effected (sic) and there is bugger all help for anyone in desperate need. For those people who live alone and are healthy otherwise should be allowed to go out or to go for a walk with a friend. Living alone is very different to living even with one other person or a family.”

“Huge impact on my mental health. Feeling very depressed. Weight gain as my routine has changed. Sleep has become difficult. Awake most of the night. The children have anxiety issues, lack of social interaction with others their age.”

“Maudsley MH did contact me with a phone number if I have a MH crisis and told me to stay away from A&E.”

Suggested actions: There is a real need for effective mental health support, not just for those who previously had conditions, but those who have been affected by the lockdown. While much work has gone into addressing people’s practical and physical needs, there is likely now to be a major legacy of unmet psychological and emotional needs resulting from people’s isolation, and the uncertainties around Covid-19 and the future. How will these needs be assessed, planned and met going forward?

Financial issues

We have heard from residents saying they can't work causing financial stress: insecure income because self-employed; loss of business and financial impact; borrowing to get by; no income, no savings, so cannot pay bills, in private rented accommodation and cannot pay rent; and the impact of Universal Credit and the bedroom tax.

"Can't work, financial stress. Can't attend my usual groups. Family life, I can't see my Mum and friends. It has impacted my mental health, had some moments, but tend to think positively."

"I haven't been able to work as that would mean using public transport, not a key worker. Financial stress, borrowing."

"I have a vulnerable letter stating I should stay in for 12 weeks. I'm a bit worried about going out and so far have only ventured to the supermarket. Some people are being extreme and I find that a little unsettling."

"Loss of business and the financial impact of that. On ones mental health."

"Financially, not been able to seek work. Universal Credit, bedroom tax."

"It has affected me financially and mentally."

"Financial, I can't work."

"No income as husband was self-employed. And worked in restaurants. I am a carer if my disabled son. In private rent house. So, we have no income and no savings and can't pay bills."

"My son who has mental health issues is I would say, more anxious. I am not supported in getting benefits for him."

Suggested actions: Providing support for the impact on mental health due to isolation, loss of work and income, and fear of contracting coronavirus. Needs to provide information about where people can seek advice about financial support, assistance, housing advice websites, benefits advice and food banks.

Children and families

Croydon residents have said that education has been affected for children, young people and adults as there has been the impact and adjustment of home schooling as learning online relies on having the IT kit and broadband connections. Also, children missing friends and missing mixing with own age group; adverse effect on vulnerable families and children many of whom are living in flats with lack of green space; and no respite for family carers.

“Effect on vulnerable families and children is a huge concern as they have no voice.”

“The children have anxiety issues, lack of social interaction with others their age.”

“As a wife and mother, it has impacted my family, my husband is working from home, one son has had his A-levels cancelled, one son has had his GCSEs cancelled and all three of my sons are schooling from home.”

“I am aware that I am expected to put myself and my children in harm’s way by going to the supermarket to shop for food.”

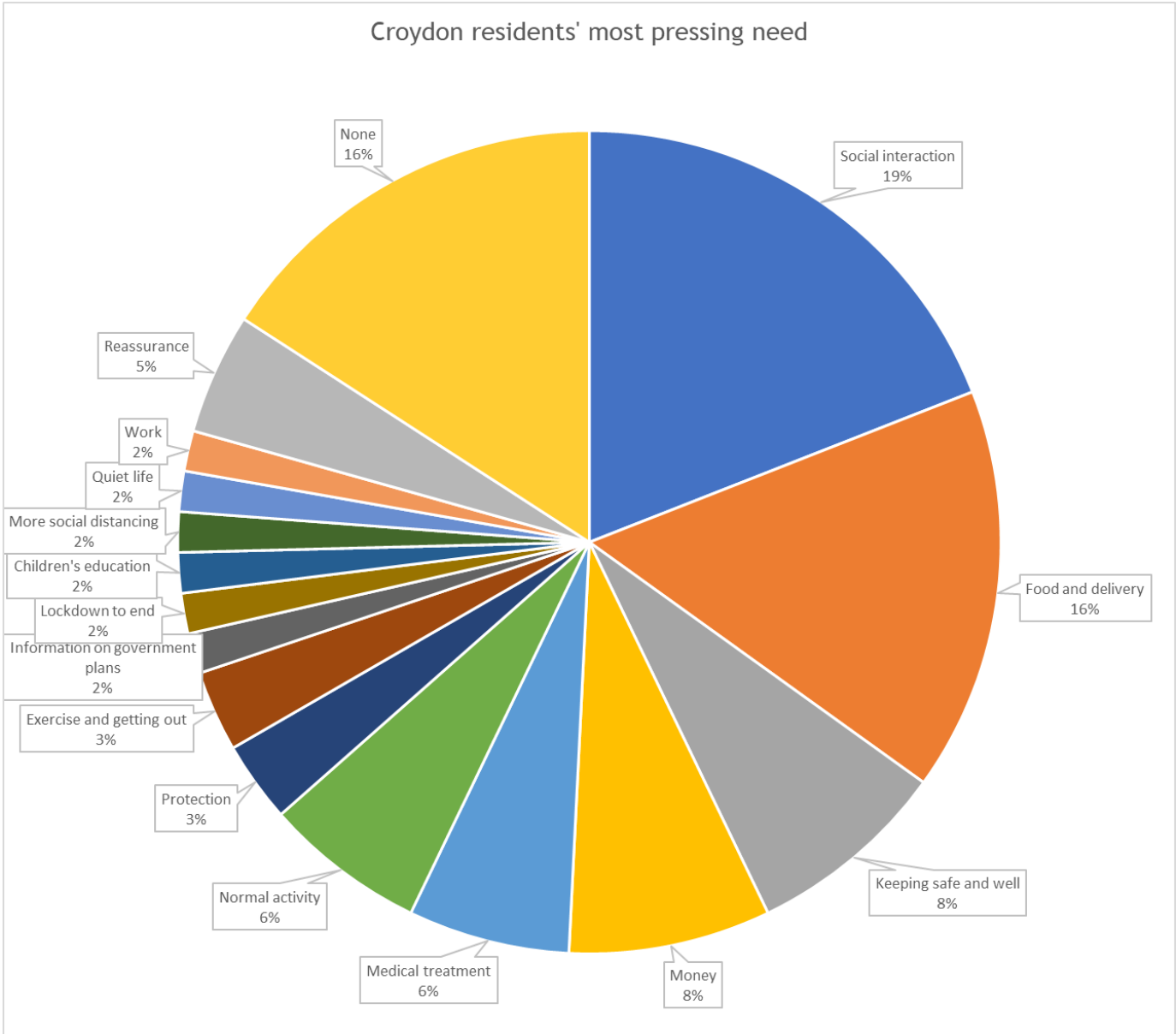
“Women and children living with volatile people in domestic abuse.”

“My sick daughter left home and is now in hospital. I worried she would get the virus but so far she has a different problem and is being cared for.”

Suggested actions: It would be good to promote the initiatives taking place to support families and children through the lockdown, educationally and financially.

Croydon residents' most pressing need

We asked Croydon residents what overall their most pressing need is. Here are the results:



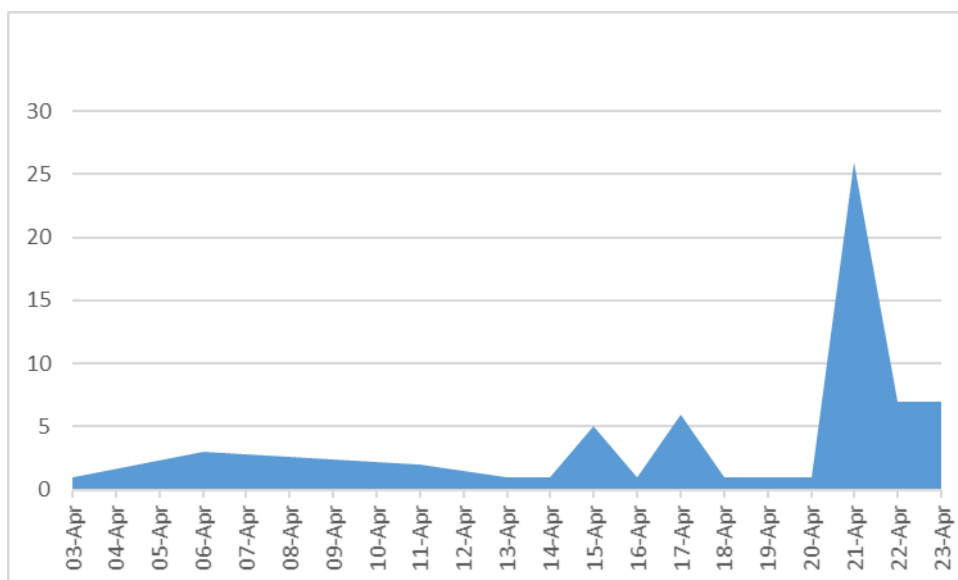
Total= 63

Not surprisingly, social interaction was the highest need, with food and deliveries of food second, other significant numbers were concerned about keeping safe as well, money, accessing medical treatment and being able to undertake normal activity like getting a haircut.

This suggests that services that an enable social interaction, or manage the impact of social isolation are important, as well as ensuring residents can access food easily and support people with money issues and concerns about keeping safe and well.

About the insight

Number of responses received by day



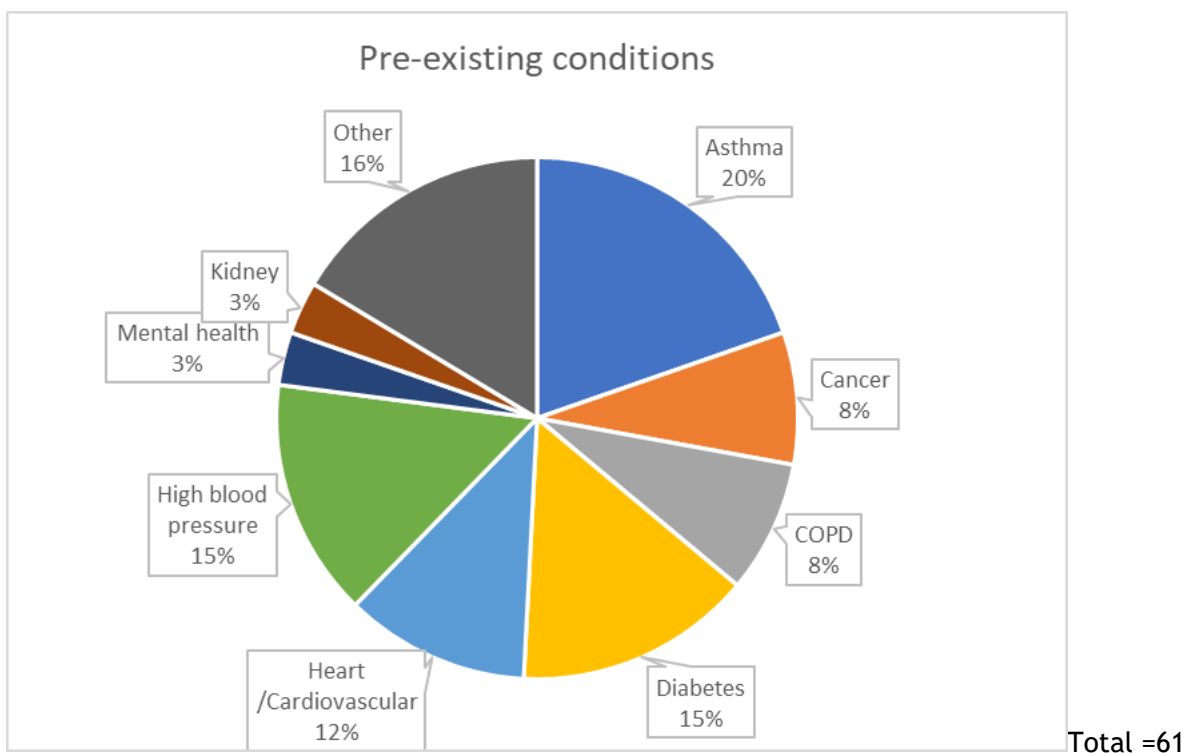
Age of respondents or those they care for

1. What is your age? (or the age the person you are caring for)			
			Response Percent Response Total
1	0-9		0.00% 0
2	10-19	█	1.59% 1
3	20-29	█	1.59% 1
4	30-39	█	15.87% 10
5	40-49	█	11.11% 7
6	50-59	█	17.46% 11
7	60-69	█	23.81% 15
8	70-79	█	26.98% 17
9	80-89	█	1.59% 1
10	90-99		0.00% 0
11	100+		0.00% 0

Pre-existing health conditions of respondents, or those they care for



2. Do you, or the person you are caring for, have a pre-existing health condition that may affect your/ their response to coronavirus?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		60.32%	38
2	No		39.68%	25





Carers as respondents

3. Are you responding to this survey as a carer of someone who is vulnerable as a result of coronavirus?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		28.57%	18
2	No		71.43%	45

Understanding of coronavirus

4. Do you understand what coronavirus (COVID-19) is?

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		95.24%	60
2	No		4.76%	3



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