



**The experience of those using
shielding services in Croydon
due to COVID-19
December 2020**

Findings in brief

Food shopping and medication deliveries were most used

Friends and family met most needs

Organisation was not always consistent

Communication of services available could have been better

Mental health support is needed

Shielders were satisfied with the Council's service

Recommendations in brief

Do not change the service, enhance, and focus it

Improve communication with shielders

Ensure effective monitoring processes

Understand individual needs

Enhance mental health support

Focus on those alone

Executive Summary

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Croydon Council were required to lead the delivery of shielding services for over 8,000 residents. When the pandemic began, we asked One Croydon Alliance if there were any aspects that Healthwatch Croydon could provide independent insight and it was suggested this was an area where this could be useful.

We ran a survey from 29 August to 11 October 2020 online where we received 70 responses from 720 people across Croydon, who needed to be shielded. Emails were sent out in cohorts of 240 residents over three occasions by Croydon Council with responses collected on Healthwatch Croydon's survey platform.

We asked the following:

- What had been the respondents' experience of shielding?
- How effective the Council's actions had been in providing information about services?
- Whether shielders needed extra services beyond those initially suggested?
- Their experience now shielding has been paused, including the use of telephone and video consultations.

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

- **Food shopping and medication deliveries were most used:** For food and shopping, medication and information and advice shielders did get the information they needed in most cases, but this was less successful for befriending services, where a higher number did not get the information provided. (see page 14)

- **Friends and family met most needs:** Friends and family met most of shielders needs over a quarter relying on neighbours (see page 17). They also helped counter loneliness along with access to the phone and online services (see page 20). Community groups and volunteers through voluntary organisations were used less, with Croydon Council's service used by 3 in 7.
- **Organisation was not always consistent:** While for many the national government-led food boxes were welcome particularly if they could get supermarket slots, some received them who did not want them. Some also did not seem to receive early notifications. (see page 17)
- **Communication of services available could have been better:** Significant numbers were not aware of specific services but said they would have used them had they been told, suggesting a communications gap between services available and unmet need. This included 47% needing mental health support and 39% wanting befriending services, perhaps reflecting the impact of isolation and loneliness. Others would have welcomed accessing more practical help with 45% wanting advice with benefits, 37% needing support with social media calls, 30% help to access healthcare, 20% with shopping and 17% with medication. (see page 22)
- **Mental health support is needed:** After food shopping and pharmacy as the one item shielders needed, the next priority service was mental health support, reflecting the impact that lockdown has had. (see page 25)
- **Shielders were satisfied with the Council's service:** Most shielders are happy with the service they previously received and want to see no change. Some do wish to receive regular information on services and better communication as well as mental health support services. Some need support in accessing health services, while others want to make sure that food boxes work for all, especially those on restricted diets ie gluten-free. (see page 33). Those whose work was affected by having to shield also need support (see page 41).

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

- **Do not change the service, enhance, and focus it:** The service is much appreciated by shielders meeting their core concerns of food shopping and medication deliveries. However, there are more ways the service could be amended to meet peoples' expectations and avoid shielders getting service they do not need or that do not work for them.
- **Improve communication with shielders:** It was clear that there was significant demand for some services such as befriending, but not enough awareness of these services leading to low take-up. Some shielders also heard about services much later. Likewise, other services being offered by voluntary and community groups beyond the very local and informal street-based mutual aid were not so well used. Better communication could help with this. For many, family and friends have been the key support network, so find ways to work in partnership with them to ensure all shielders needs are met and this could be reflected in the communications.
- **Ensure effective monitoring processes:** To measure overall effectiveness, it is suggested that monitoring needs to be undertaken beyond the initial information giving stage to check communication and understanding on the part of recipients.
- **Understand individual needs:** It is understandable that in a project set up so quickly that there were going to be some process or delivery issues but understand each shielders need, such as whether they need a food pack or ensuring gluten-free food would help perceptions and expectation of the service. Those who have been unemployed or unable to work also need specialist support.
- **Enhance mental health support:** This came up a significant unmet need, and reflects the impact of first lockdown and the continued uncertainty around COVID19. With the plan to train people in Mental Health First Aid, some additional focus on shielders would be welcome.

- **Focus on those living alone:** For many family and friends have been the key support network. Find ways to work in partnership with them to ensure all shielders needs are met including communications. As family and friends have been key to shielder satisfaction, there may be a need to prioritise the needs of those living alone and ensure they have an effect package of services not just physical but also for mental health and to keep themselves occupied if lockdown returns in some form again.

1 Background

1.1 Context

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.

Context

As a result, on the COVID-19 pandemic, the government asked vulnerable people to shield from Monday 23rd March¹. Local authorities were asked to prepare services with lists coming from local NHS. This had to be delivered at speed.

This report looks back at the service user experience of shielders in Croydon to assess how well the service was delivered and to support future planning should shielding need to begin again.

1.2 Rationale and Methodology

We ran a survey from 29 August to 11 October 2020 online where we received 70 responses from 720 of the 8000 people across Croydon who needed to be shielded. Emails were sent out in cohorts of 240 residents over three occasions by Croydon Council with responses sent to the Healthwatch Croydon survey platform. The

¹ Shielding- What does it mean to you? <https://network.healthwatch.co.uk/guidance/2020-03-25/shielding-what-does-it-mean-helping-you-to-answer-publics-questions>

shielders were selected randomly from a number generator. No personal data was shared with Healthwatch Croydon prior to the survey results.

The guidance on use of shielded data has changed significantly. Any communications to people on the list had to be almost purely with relevance to provision of direct care and support and very carefully managed. Croydon Council's information governance team lead advised on how council officers should handle the personally identifiable data that the council had received from the NHS and, as part of this, they advised that only a sample of the shielded people could be contacted, and that they could not be contacted more than once.

1.3 Method

Respondents were emailed a survey with a link to Healthwatch Croydon's online survey platform, SmartSurvey, with the following questions. We also offered a service where shielders could call our hub number and provide their answers over a phone conversation, but no respondent took up this route.

Croydon's shielding service user experience survey

Please note that where there is an * this shows this was a mandatory question that needed to be filled in before the survey could be completed.

1. About our survey

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey. The questions asked here are for those who have used Croydon's shielding services during the COVID-19 period from March.

This will be analysed by Healthwatch Croydon and your responses shared anonymously with Croydon Council to inform shielding services, and wider health partners as appropriate. so they can improve their services in response to your views.

2. Experience of using the Shielding Service

1. After you registered on the shielding website, and had been contacted by Croydon Council, were you given information about any local services?

- Food/shopping
- Accessing medication

- Information and advice
- Befriending
- Other (please specify in text box as part of experience)
- If Yes, please tell us who supplied the services you used.

2. Have your overall needs been met over the period you've been shielding and by whom? *

- Friends or family
- Neighbours
- Community Groups
- Volunteers through voluntary organisations
- Croydon Council
- Other (please specify in text box as part of experience)

Please tell us your experience (If you stated volunteer organisation, community group or other please also state their name):

3. While you were shielding, what did you do to avoid loneliness or social isolation? *

3. In need of extra services

4. Here is a list of services that were available in Croydon, during shielding Please tick to indicate whether: a) you used this service; b) you were aware of but didn't need to use this service; c) you were not aware of this service but would have used it. *

- Shopping
- Cooked meal deliveries
- Prescription medication delivery
- Help to access healthcare
- Personal telephone befriending
- Help with social media eg video calls with family / friends
- Support for your mental health
- Advice about income/ benefits
- Other

5. If you do need more information or help to make use of a service, please leave your contact details and state what you need:

6. Of all services listed above, which one would make the biggest difference to your health and wellbeing and why? *

7. As a result of shielding, did you find you needed any health or social care assistance for the first time? * Yes/No

Tell us more why you now felt you needed help and support:

4. Experience now shielding is paused

8. Now shielding is paused, how likely are you to continue using services?
(If you have not used services answer 'Did not use services') *

- Very likely
- Likely
- Neither likely nor unlikely
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Did not use services

Please say why you chose this answer:

9. If there is an outbreak leading to the return of shielding in Croydon, how will you ensure you continue to get your supplies? *

10. If shielding returns in Croydon, what changes to the previous support service would you like to see? *

11. Have you had a telephone or video consultation with your GP (doctor) or another health service since March? *

- Telephone consultation
- Video consultation
- Telephone and video consultations (more than once)
- Face to face home visit
- Face to face visit in a health setting
- No

Tell us about your experience:

12. If you were offered a telephone or video appointment for GP (doctor) or health services in the future, would you use this?

Telephone consultation Yes/No

Video consultation Yes/No

Please tell us why you give this answer:

5. Just a few short questions to help finish our survey...

This section asks a few questions about you so we can see that we are getting views from a wider range of Croydon residents. You do not have to give an answer to each question, but the more you do give an answer to, the more effective our analysis can be. This helps provide insight to help deliver better services.

13. Has shielding impacted on your employment? *

Yes/ No/ Not applicable/ Prefer not to say

If so, in what way?

14. What is your age?

15. What is your gender?

16. What is your ethnicity?

17. Do you live on your own or with others?

18. What is your postcode? (This helps us know which part of Croydon you are living in)

19. What is the name of your GP practice?

Not registered with a GP or don't know? Please tell us more:

20. What health and/or disability conditions do you have?

21. Does the experience of shielding raise issues that are urgent and need to be shared directly? (If yes please see details at the end of the survey about how you can get more information and support). *

Limits of the research

Size of sample: We only received 70 responses, when we had aimed for a target of 120. There were limits concerning the way we could contact those who were shielding. Croydon Council could only send the email once and not follow up with any chase since the shielders could not unsubscribe from the email.

Representation: We also received a relatively few number of shielders over 60, which bearing in mind the cohort was unusual. It may be that the method of email does not work so well for older populations and therefore this sample may be under representative of the older age range. We did offer an option where respondents to give their answers over the phone, but no one took this up.






Distance from shielding: Shielding ended in July, so we are asking people to reflect some months after the service finished. This may affect recollection or perception of the service as this is reliant on memory.






2 Insight results






These are our findings based on the survey responses we received, each new space or new line is a separate comment.






2.1 After you registered on the shielding website, and had been contacted by Croydon Council, were you given information about any local services?






- For food and shopping, medication and information and advice shielders did get the information they need in most cases, but this was less successful for befriending services, where a higher number did not get the information provided.
- Themes that came up from text showed a variance in experience. Most found information useful and relevant, but when it came to get services this was more challenging for some and reliance came from informal sources such as friends and family and neighbours. Some also knew how to get the best out of the system but were concerned others may get overlooked. Expectations also need to be managed, for example over gluten-free food.

1.1. Food/shopping			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I did get the information I needed		49.5%	51
2	I did not get the information I needed		8.7%	9
3	I did use the support offered		27.2%	28
4	I did not use the support offered		10.7%	11
5	Not applicable		3.9%	4
			answered	103

1.2. Accessing medication			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I did get the information I needed		50.6%	45
2	I did not get the information I needed		9.0%	8
3	I did use the support offered		15.7%	14
4	I did not use the support offered		12.4%	11
5	Not applicable		12.4%	11
			answered	89

1.3. Information and advice			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I did get the information I needed		55.2%	48
2	I did not get the information I needed		10.3%	9
3	I did use the support offered		11.5%	10
4	I did not use the support offered		17.2%	15
5	Not applicable		5.7%	5
			answered	87

1.4. Befriending			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I did get the information I needed		23.2%	19
2	I did not get the information I needed		15.9%	13
3	I did use the support offered		2.4%	2
4	I did not use the support offered		26.8%	22
5	Not applicable		31.7%	26
			answered	82

1.5. Other (please specify in text box as part of experience)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I did get the information I needed		16.9%	13
2	I did not get the information I needed		10.4%	8
3	I did use the support offered		7.8%	6
4	I did not use the support offered		7.8%	6
5	Not applicable		57.1%	44
			answered	77

Comments:

“My GP, my pharmacy and local community group. There was help available but it took time to fall into place and there was a lot of confusion at beginning. My first concern was medication but initially pharmacy was refusing to deliver. Turned to a postal delivery service but they must have been overwhelmed. In the end my GP surgery sorted it out and put me on to a new delivery service from pharmacy. Normally do food delivery but until supermarkets got organized it was impossible to get a slot : neighbours and relatives helped. Ultimately I was fine but obviously there was not enough initial planning. GP surgery did a good job in appointing a Covid focus person who was able to point to sources of support and help.”

“Croydon council were brilliant we got a food slot at Tesco and were sent food parcels which we did not need but they sorted that for us as well.”

“I received a letter from Croydon Council detailing the support available, which I appreciated. However I did not use the services as I was already registered with Sainsburys for grocery online delivery slots and with Fisher Chemist for my repeat prescriptions.”

“I used Iceland home delivery mainly because I always got priority shopping slots. The other supermarkets were hit and miss. My pharmacy delivered most of my drugs. The information provided by the Council was helpful. Local information on the internet and through Covid broadcasts.”

“Croydon council were excellent and rang to check I was ok. Our postman was also excellent and posted parcels for us.”

“Pharmacy delivered medications whenever they were ready. Help with priority supermarket delivery slots and food boxes were appreciated.”

“Did get information on getting shopping on line but could never get a spot for delivery. Was given information about getting medication delivered but could not get it delivered as chemist said it was so busy with others and had staff off.”

“The contact from Croydon Council was 4 weeks too late we were not offered any extra support as carers we felt very let down and felt we did not count or matter.”

“I contacted myself the Croydon Voluntary Society and only received 2 phone calls - I am quite "savy" (sic) so managed to eventually get on the Risk group for Food delivery but it took a lot of time and effort! Had I been an older person I would not have known where to turn to.”






“Croydon Council did not contact me or my husband once despite (sic) us being extremely valuable (sic). When I and my son and sister in law tried to contact them we were just sent back to the main phone line that told us to go online. They are useless.”






“I am completing this on behalf of my parents who in 80s and not computer aware. If I was not here they would not have had access to deliveries or much needed medication - both disabled, one has pacemaker other heart/kidney failure. We needed someone to collect medication - were told not able but fortunately a neighbour was able to do it for us.”






“I was advised that if I contacted Croydon Council they could help with gluten free products with regard to the government food parcels. I was informed by Council that they were not part of that scheme. Disappointing (sic).”






2.2 Have your overall needs been met over the period you've been shielding and by whom?






- Friends and family met most of shielders needs over a quarter relying on neighbours.
- Community groups and volunteers through voluntary organisations were rarely used, with Croydon Council's service used by 3 in 7.
- While for many the food boxes were welcome particularly if they cannot get supermarket slots, some received them who did not want them. Some also did not seem to receive early notifications.






2.1. Friends or family			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very / fairly well		70.0%	49
2	Some of the time, but not always		14.3%	10
3	Often not		8.6%	6
4	Not at all		4.3%	3
5	Did not use/ not applicable		2.9%	2
			answered	70

2.2. Neighbours			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very / fairly well		27.1%	19
2	Some of the time, but not always		27.1%	19
3	Often not		2.9%	2
4	Not at all		21.4%	15
5	Did not use/ not applicable		21.4%	15
			answered	70

2.3. Community Groups			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very / fairly well		7.1%	5
2	Some of the time, but not always		2.9%	2
3	Often not		4.3%	3
4	Not at all		35.7%	25
5	Did not use/ not applicable		50.0%	35
			answered	70

2.4. Volunteers through voluntary organisations			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very / fairly well		8.6%	6
2	Some of the time, but not always		7.1%	5
3	Often not		2.9%	2
4	Not at all		27.1%	19
5	Did not use/ not applicable		54.3%	38
			answered	70

2.5. Croydon Council			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very / fairly well		27.1%	19
2	Some of the time, but not always		15.7%	11
3	Often not		10.0%	7
4	Not at all		22.9%	16
5	Did not use/ not applicable		24.3%	17
			answered	70

2.6. Other (please specify in text box as part of experience)			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Very / fairly well		7.1%	5
2	Some of the time, but not always		2.9%	2
3	Often not		2.9%	2
4	Not at all		10.0%	7
5	Did not use/ not applicable		77.1%	54
			answered	70

Themes from comments:

“Croydon Council sent me food boxes three times. Did not need and it was full of food I do not eat as I am trying to lose weight. Gave away to neighbours, relatives and food bank. Think we should have been asked whether we needed it. Asked Council to stop them and they did after 3 weeks.”

“Used the Covid 19 local road group.”

“When we did ask for extra support we were made to feel like we should be able to cope and got the third degree why we need extra support. Got food parcel 4 weeks after the lockdown.”

“Found that community groups set up on line vis Facebook platform was a great source of information. And brought a great community spirit back to society, sadly this has seemed to lost momentum since the lockdown restriction have eased.”

“I received notification from the council just 2 weeks before shielding ended. At the beginning we had no food deliveries for over 4 weeks and our freezer had broken down! Friends were able to help and I managed to get the freezer repaired after 2 weeks. The council offer for help was far too late as I had been advised to self isolate 2 weeks before lockdown started because of my medical condition.”

“No contact from council until first letter arrived as shielding (sic) was coming to an end.”

“Medication delivered by my normal pharmacy - Croy-Chem pharmacy, 38, Lower Addiscombe Road, CRO6AA. Very prompt and helpful also offered delivery of any other products sold in pharmacy.”

“My main problem was accessing supermarket deliveries. I did not know I had to say yes to free food parcels to get priority slots. I just thought there were people more in need of free parcels as I had intended to order what we needed. In the end I rang Tesco to say I had been told I was extremely vulnerable and the chap I spoke to did arrange weekly priority slots for me. Such a relief or I would have had to go to the supermarket.”

“I didn't ask for any help. L (sic) received (sic) the food parcel from the council until I managed online shopping.”

2.3 While you were shielding, what did you do to avoid loneliness or social isolation?

- Not surprisingly those with family and friends found they avoided loneliness by connecting with them and having a partner at home was also mentioned as significant. Being still able to work helped as well.
- Along with going online be it for gaming, videos or social media. Phone for many was still important as it was having hobbies and interests be it gardening, music or TV. Most of the activities were ones which people could do easily in their home without the need for external support beyond a phone call and internet link

Coded responses

Q4	Avoiding loneliness
Family	25
Friends	19
Online	13
Phone	11
Reading	9
Partner	8
Garden	8
Work	7
TV	7
Hobbies	6
Music	5
Children	2

“I read books and called my friends and family.”

“Set up an online book club (belong) to 3; lots of online contact with friends who can't come to the house, attended online political events, attend online cancer support group sometimes, walked in the park with neighbours, socially distancing, 5:00 or 19:30, sometimes speak to family on the phone.”

“Connected with friends, family and church via Zoom and Facebook Live.”

“As 2 of us were shielding out of 5, the whole household shielded. So we had each other. We did use zoom to speak with relatives and friends further away and our closer friends would walk by and talk to us from the end of the drive briefly.”

“I exercised everyday - met on my drive at a social distance with my neighbours who kept an eye on me! I love reading and got through 12-13 novels in the time.”

“Gardening. Going to our allotment. Talking to friends and family on WhatsApp. Reading.”

“Zoom meeting with family and friends. Wrote letters. Exercises fitness.”

“I did online courses and kept in touch with my family and friends.”

“Talk to friends/family, listen to music, watch films.”

“Read, play music, chat to family and friends, limited exercise (amputated right leg), watch TV, and sleep.”

“No issues as live with family.”

“Play on line bridge twice a week. Talk to family regularly round the world using video calls. Keep in touch with professionals by attending zoom meetings.”

“We kept in touch with family and friends by phone and internet. There is always something to do to keep busy so not a problem.”

“Social media and zoom chats.”

“Lots of Skype video calls. YouTube exercise classes. Continue to work from home.”




“I worked from home all the time during shielding and had regular Virtual catch-ups with my team, virtual coffee and socials. I don't live alone was not lonely and we also had regular virtual catch-ups with family and friends.”




“Zoom meetings with family. Cooked for neighbours. Shared online shopping with friends so can send them through the window.”




“Calls, online quizzes and groups.”




2.4 Here is a list of services that were available in Croydon, during shielding Please tick to indicate whether: a) you used this service; b) you were aware of but didn't need to use this service; c) you were not aware of this service but would have used it.



- Shopping and medical prescriptions were used the most, but not by most respondents. One in seven got help with using social media. Very few used cooked meal deliveries or help to access healthcare, or wanted support with benefits, or support with mental health. No one used the befriending service. In most cases majority of people had an awareness of each service even though they did not use it.
- However, significant numbers were not aware of specific services but say they would have used them, suggesting a communications gap between services available and unmet need. This included: 47% wishing needing mental health support and 39% of wanting befriending services, perhaps reflecting the impact of isolation and loneliness. Others would have welcomed accessing more practical help with 45% wanting advice with benefits, 37% with support social media calls, 30% help to access healthcare, 20% with shopping and 17% with medication. A larger number would have also welcomed home-cooked meals (42%), but this is not clear if this would have been the meals on wheels service or some other source of hot food.




4.1. Shopping			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		27.1%	19
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		52.9%	37
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		20.0%	14
			answered	70




4.2. Cooked meal deliveries			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		2.9%	2
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		54.3%	38
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		42.9%	30
			answered	70




4.3. Prescription medication delivery			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		37.1%	26
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		45.7%	32
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		17.1%	12
			answered	70




4.4. Help to access healthcare			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		10.0%	7
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		60.0%	42
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		30.0%	21
			answered	70

4.5. Personal telephone befriending			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		0.0%	0
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		60.6%	43
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		39.4%	28
			answered	71

4.6. Help with social media eg video calls with family / friends			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		14.3%	10
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		48.6%	34
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		37.1%	26
			answered	70

4.7. Support for your mental health			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		2.8%	2
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		50.7%	36
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		46.5%	33
			answered	71

4.8. Advice about income/ benefits			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		2.9%	2
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		51.4%	36
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		45.7%	32
			answered	70

4.9. Other			Response Percent	Response Total
1	I used this service		2.9%	2
2	I was aware of but didn't need to use this service		40.0%	28
3	I was not aware of this service but would have used it		57.1%	40
			answered	70

Comments on other services

“The prescription medication delivery is something I was not aware but I would have found incredibly helpful.”

“The Tesco priority shopping slots and delivery was excellent.”

“It took over 4 weeks to get priority shopping from supermarket.”

“We used educational psychologist and social workers as well as CAHM. However CAHMS was not readily available as the team were moved elsewhere.”

“Over all the entire time I received 6 letters - one from my GP one from the Hospital and the rest all too little too late and after the event from Local Authority to Government!!”

“I was not contacted at all by Croydon Council or by my GP.”

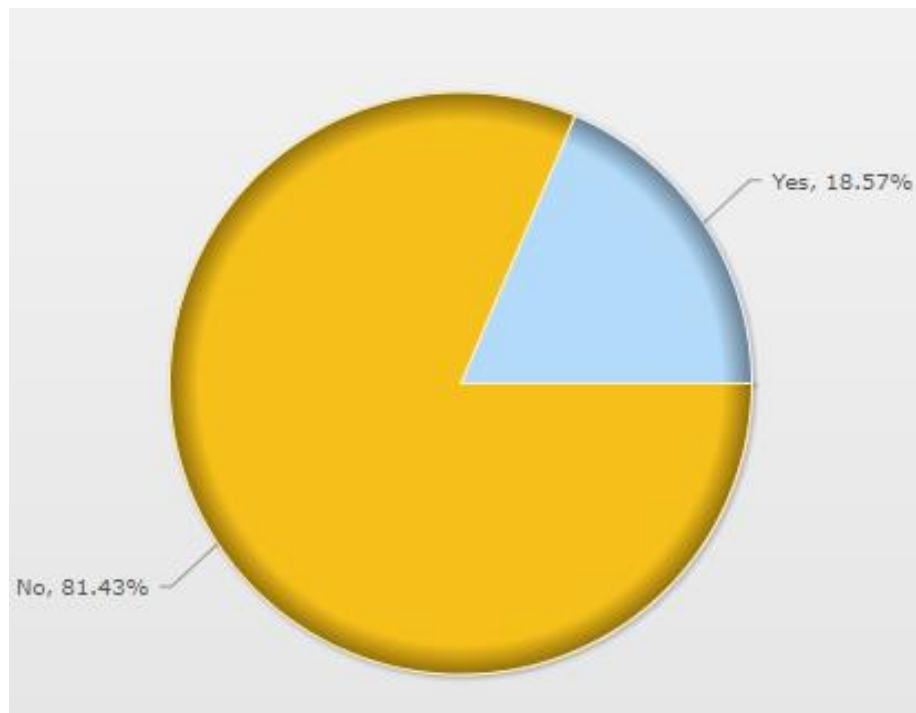
2.5 Of all services listed above, which one would make the biggest difference to your health and wellbeing and why?

- Food shopping or shopping came up as the one item that makes the biggest difference, followed by pharmacy and then mental health support. There was a varied range of other support needed with much smaller numbers.
- While food and pharmacy delivers were very much of the previous offer, mental health support was perhaps not considered a top priority as practical physical issues were more important. There is a definite need to provide effective mental health support if we return to shielding.

Coded responses:

Q6	Biggest difference
Food Shopping/Shopping	17
Pharmacy/ medication deliveries	15
Mental health support	12
Financial advice	3
Early or better communication	3
Hot meals	3
Food package delivery	2
Appropriate food	2
Befriending	2

2.6 As a result of shielding, did you find you needed any health or social care assistance for the first time?



Most had used support before but for nearly 1 in 5 this was the first time.

Responses to explain more why they felt they needed help and support:

“With my mental health because last October my daughter took her life then COVID-19 came made me very anxious.”

“Help was invaluable, especially early on in the lockdown when no general services were available. Croydon Council did a great job.”

“I needed support before because of cancer and received it as stated above from my pharmacist, GP, A&E Croydon Hospital, and Royal Marsden.”

“Our son is going through diagnosis of autism and our eldest has mental health needs and possible autism. Having them at home and both of us working whilst trying to provide education was a very stressful thing for the whole family.”

“My anxiety and depression got worse and now on anti-depressants.”

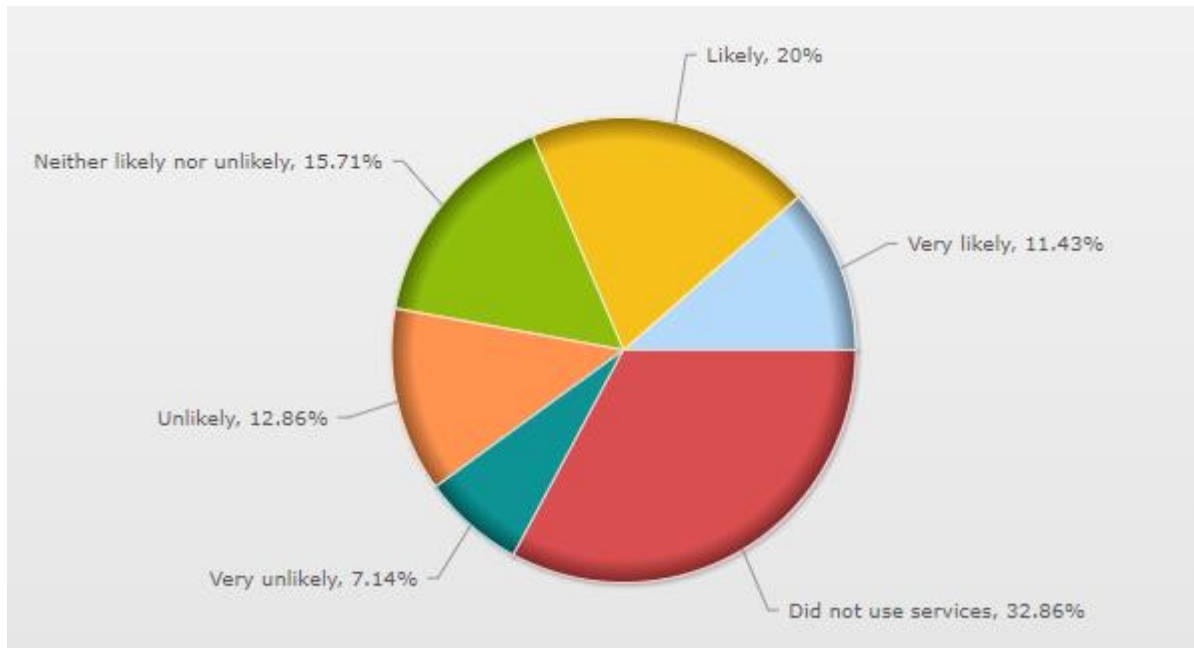
“I didn’t but my daughter, who is severely disabled has become a bit withdrawn and is having more seizures.”

“Although I got my shopping on line I could have done with help with things I couldn’t get on line.”

“I had online and telephone counselling.”

“As we could not leave our home at all it would have been a great help to have been able to be on a list to get priority shopping, we just got left off the list of extremely valuable (sic) people and even after getting the government code number still got no help.”

2.7 Now shielding is paused, how likely are you to continue using services?



Total: 70

- 31% were likely or very likely, 20% unlikely or very unlikely, while 32% did not use services at all.
- Those very likely to use services saw the benefit and was focused on medication and shopping delivery.
- Those unsure of using services again specified the uncertainty of whether shielding or restrictions would return.
- Those unlikely to use services again have stated a determination to be independent again, with some feeling that they did not get much help last time. There was similar sentiment for those who had not used services.

Very likely:

“Pharmacy delivery is convenient and my pharmacy is very crowded.”

“I refer to the services I have used as listed above, I will need continuing help for quite a while yet.”

“I will continue to use online shopping at Sainsbury’s.”

“Because Croydon its a brilliant service.”

“As in other answer. I am vulnerable and need my medication delivered due to precedented times still.”

“Shopping delivery is great.”

Likely:

“Still have slot at supermarket.”

“I normally have my prescriptions delivered.”

“Because it was beneficial to me.”

“As the virus is still present so we do not want to go into the supermarkets and put ourselves at unnecessary risk.”

“That’s in the event of the virus infection getting worse. That would mean I’ll have to be more careful and go out less or not at all.”

“Being highly vulnerable and not being able to go shopping the food boxes really helped.”

“If I could get help with shopping I couldn’t get on line.”

“For shopping purposes as it is convenient.”

“Medical deliver (sic).”

“As i am vulnerable with organ transplant.”

“Online shopping. We will continue whilst Covid-19 is around and we can minimise contact with people.”

Neither likely nor unlikely:

“If I have to I will, as & when necessary, with 'stay alert' mindset.”

“I can get around in my car and I am comfortable with my own company.”

“However I am aware my condition will deteriorate so may need to call on council services.”

“Depending on the spread of the virus.”

“Didn't use much.”

“This is too vague as none of know what the future holds let alone what next week will bring forth!” “Hopeless trying to book a Covid test!!”

“I didn't know services were still available.”

Unlikely:

“Because I have to get on with my life and go back to work.”

“Because I can do shopping online.”

“Before pandemic we were totally independent and find that we are now returning to that state.”

“Not helpful at all no (sic).”

Very unlikely:

“No longer need to shield so able to be self sufficient.”

“Online shopping is available.”

“We did not feel anyone cared about how we were and how we were coping.”

“Because we didn't get any help.”

“See above. I would need convincing that the service had greatly improved.”

Did not use:

“Did not use services.”

“I wasn’t contacted by anyone in Croydon. I received my information from the NHS.”

“No communication.”

“We have friends family and good neighbours.”

“Did not use services as was not sure how to access them.”

“I do have a very good support from my neighbour and my local pharmacy.”

“I felt capable of sorting things for myself.”

“Had to do it ourselves and we are still shielding as much as we can since health issues are getting worse.”

“I felt I managed quite well and thought that there were many others that would benefit from your services rather than me taking up a slot that can be used by someone else more needy.

Didn’t use during the initial lock down and found ways to cope....”

2.8 If there is an outbreak leading to the return of shielding in Croydon, how will you ensure you continue to get your supplies?

- Online shopping is the one area that a majority of shielders are relying on current online shopping arrangements to get their supplies. Family and registering again with the government or Croydon Council are the second most likely source of getting supplies. Only a few are relying on neighbours.
- Some just hope that the services provided will be the same as last time but have not made any other preparations. Some do not know and only one said they were 'had procedures prepared.'

Q9 How do you plan to get your supplies?	Support
Online shopping	28
Family	12
Register again with govt or council	12
Pharmacy/ medication deliveries	6
Hope things will be the same again for shopping and/or pharmacy	6
Don't know	4
Neighbours	2
Already prepared	1

“Procedures already in place and help of neighbours.”

“I will look at the offers you, Croydon Council will offer to help but as before I will do my best to do online shopping and my neighbours for important needs.”

“I'm not actually sure.” “Family members will do the supply for me.”

“We shop online and I hope the pharmacy will continue to deliver.”

“I have maintained home delivery of food which is the greatest help.”

“Register again on the government website for supplies or contact Croydon council. I lost my job during the lockdown and it's not easy life without a job.”

2.9 If shielding returns in Croydon, what changes to the previous support service would you like to see?

- Most shielders are happy with the service they previously received and want to see no change.
- Some do wish to received regular information on services and better communication as well as mental health support services.
- Some need support in accessing health services, while others want to make sure that food boxes work for all, especially those on restricted diets ie gluten-free.

Q10 Changes you would like to see to shielding	Support
No change/ More of the same	28
Regular Information on services/ better communication	6
Mental health support	4
Access to health services or care packages	3
Improvements to food parcels/ gluten-free	3
Regular contact/ check ups/ door knocking	3
Benefit advice	2
Shopping services	2
Volunteer identification	1
Funding is ringfenced for this	1

- **Selected comments:**

“More info about income support and volunteer groups. And mental health support groups.”

“Regular email or letters informing of entitlements.”

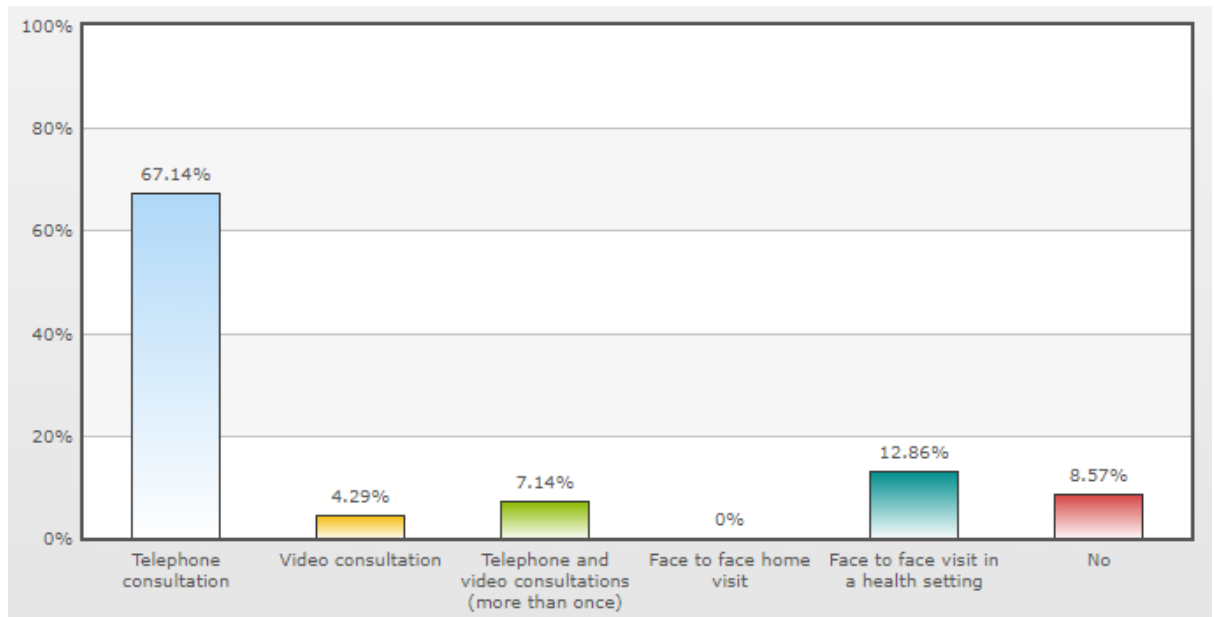
“The change I would like to see is the choice of not receiving free weekly food parcels but still be put on the priority supermarket list.”

“More frequent phone calls and for the service to ring back with an answer when they say they will.”

“I think Croydon council did very well during the pandemic. Maintain the same level of support to the needy.”

2.10 Have you had a telephone or video consultation with your GP (doctor) or another health service since March?

- Over two-thirds have had a telephone consultation, only 7% had a mix of telephone and video and 4% had video only. 13% had attending a traditional face to face meeting. The experience of telephone is mixed, but the few that undertook video found it beneficial. Those meeting face-to-face under new environment were satisfied particularly at the Royal Marsden Hospital.



Telephone consultation:

“The Gp was extremely good.”

“It was fine.”

“My telephone and video appointments have gone well. Clear and concise.”

“Follow up appointments via video and verbal only re existing medical conditions.”

“Attended nurse at doctors surgery for flu injection.”

“Satisfactory on the whole. Woodcote medical have been there online and available- although speedy conversations allow you to actually talk through mental health needs and then you can’t get back to the same person twice which can be frustrating.”

“Ok. But gp must follow up either with sending a recording of the conversation or a letter re the appointment.”

“It was ok.”

“Not good, difficult to speak to or get a visit to GP.”

“Very good.”

“Easy and efficient.”

“Croydon hospital. Staff amazing as always. Shame about the buildings”

“This is much better than the previous way appointments were given. This should definitely continue. I am always nervous even before covid, to go sit in a waiting room of sick people and potentially catch something that could put me in hospital!”

“Croydon talking therapy - over the telephone”

“I have a good relationship with my GP surgery and the chest clinical at Guy’s and St Thomas’, I had one episode of a serious asthma issue and they responded quickly with the necessary prescriptions so I could remain at home.”

“Experience was good and I find online consultation to be lot more helpful and time saving.”

“The wrong co (sic) consultant rang so my appointment was rebooked. No (sic) happy!”

“Efficient and helpful.”

“I had my COPD review over the phone.”

“My daughters consultant phoned, it was fine.”

“It was very personal.”

“Not satisfactory.”

“Doctor referred me for physiotherapy and I then had a phone “diagnosis” with a therapist and recommended treatment with proposed follow-up. The App worked for less than a week and I have had no follow up although it was promised after 6 weeks.”

“It was very good and helpful which my doctors always are.”

“It's not as good as face to face appointments. Felt it was like a tick box exercise on their part.”

“This is common practice for me.”

“Very frustrating getting through to surgery as the App surgery uses does not help me due to the nature of my medical condition.”

“That was ok not good or bad.”

“My GP and Consultant were really good and helped with any health problems.”

“I have a cardiac nurse come to see me but she comes from Guys hospital and as her workload is building feel more isolated and at risk.”

“It went well.”

“Worked very well - sorted my problem very quickly and left me satisfied about the situation.”

“Just like a blind person feeling an elephant with different pictures of the animal depending where you feel it. How can a gp diagnose remotely without seeing or feeling the patient.”

“Unsatisfactory. I attend hospital regularly for treatment and in close contact with medical staff. Yet a GP is not allowed to see me.”

“Great.”

“Was very easy and under the current situation I felt that the consultation was as good as being face to face. “

“A bit deflated, when told to take aspirin and don't go out!!!!

“My experience was good. No waiting, consultation in the home, and points covered more quickly than face to face. However, clearly not appropriate for some medical problems.”

Video consultation:

“I have had a video conference appointment with my transplant consultant. It was very good, efficient and had my blood taken at my GP practice.”

“It was a very good experience to know the GP giving us the best and good advice on how to keep ur (sic) health and being controlled.”

“Was okt (sic).”

Face-to-face under new environment:

“Very good GP.”

“Simple issues so both were satisfactory.”

“The Marsden were very good/”

“It was fine. I have 4 weekly check ups at the Royal Marsden for my mesothelioma. Also my diabetes checks were fine by telephone.

“Regular blood test.”




“Hospital appointment very organized.”




“Had a pneumonia vaccine at my doctors surgery.”

“Other than treatment at Royal Marsden as previously mentioned, have had telephone conversations with my GP and a face to face consultation as needed further blood tests following Chemotherapy and Radiotherapy treatment.”

“Very well organised both at GP surgery and Croydon Hospital.”

2.11 If you were offered a telephone or video appointment for GP (doctor) or health services in the future, would you use this?

12.1. Telephone consultation			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		90.0%	63
2	No		1.4%	1
3	Don't know		8.6%	6
			answered	70

12.2. Video consultation			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		68.6%	48
2	No		14.3%	10
3	Don't know		17.1%	12
			answered	70

- Nine in ten welcome telephone consultations, and only one person stating that they did not want this.
- Video is more cautious but still over two-thirds welcome the idea of video consultation even if they have not yet used it. One seventh, are against the idea and 17% are unsure.

Yes to both telephone and video consultations:

“Give it a go until there becomes an issue that can't be sorted using this method.”

“Because it takes so long to get to my GP.”

“For some consultations these are appropriate.”

“It was easy to do rather than go to the doctors.”

“I would prefer video conference but happy to do other the telephone if that was the only option.”

“To avoid unnecessary contact with others with potential Covid 19.”

“Because it help alot (sic).”

“The GP has my history and happy to discuss by phone or video call.”

“It was a very good experience.”

“It’s the way forward.”

“As above, it’s safer for me and my son as we are so vulnerable.”

“It would be safer for myself and doctors.”

“I am confident using them both, but would hope that they did totally replace face to face appointments.”

“But I would prefer face to face with a GP of my choice rather than anyone in the Practice who may not know my specific medical history.”

“I think some contact is preferable and video is better than the phone.”

“I only had telephone conversation which was very helpful.”

“If it can help, and to avoid Certain Problem with CoronaVirus.”

“I need to see or hear a health professional when I need care. I get my phone appointment next week for the first time. Those people shielding or are at high risk, also are entitled to care.”

Yes to telephone but no to video consultations:

“Needs additional technology. Croydon health care seems to be straight out of the 70s. Don't think it could cope.”

“Do not like video contact.”

“In view of the current circumstances I would not take a face to face appointment except in extreme circumstances so as to leave an appointment open for someone in more need.”

“Hate video.”

“I am mindful of people working in the health service also needing protection, and I receive face-to face help from my cancer team, I have not felt that problems were not noticed and feel well looked after.”

“Only if/when necessary.”

“Have often had telephone consultation pre-Covid. Don't mind not having to visit surgery.”

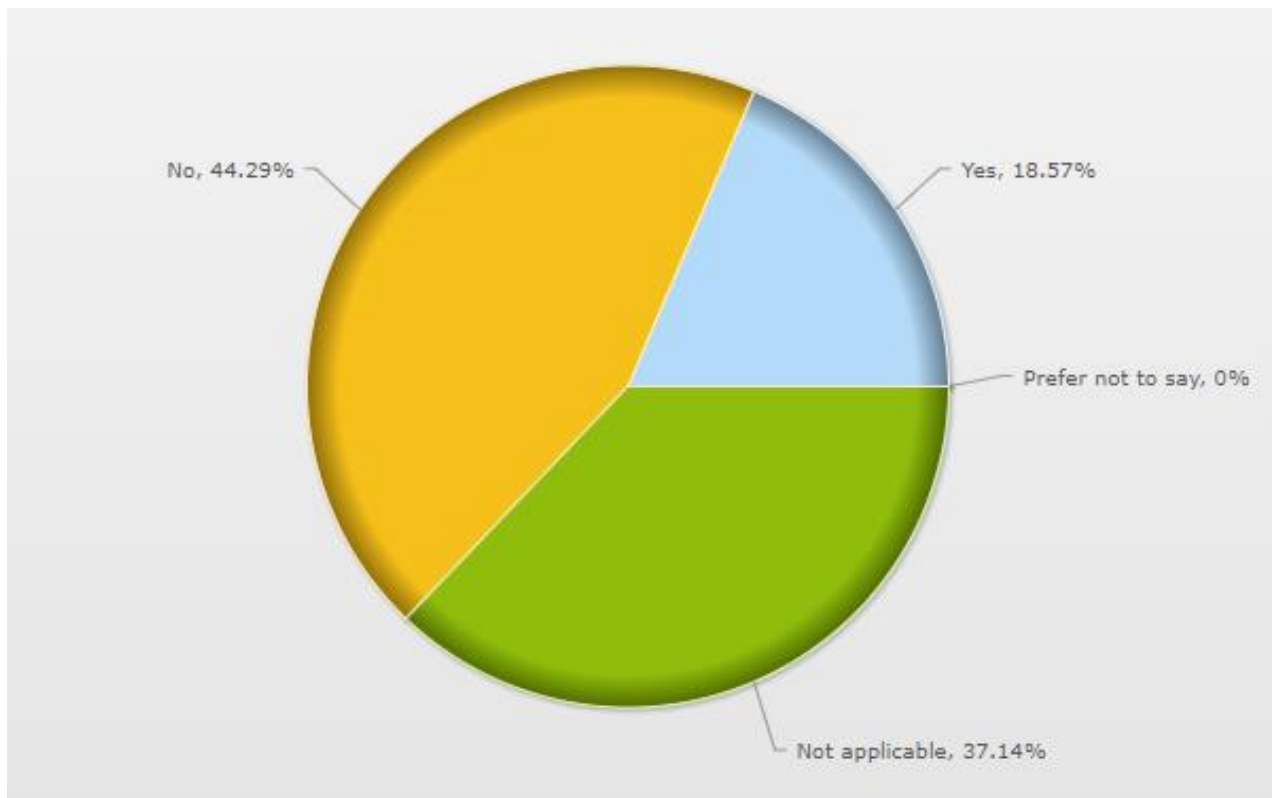
“I am used to telephone consultation but not video.”

“It is not the same as they cannot see what is wrong with you or even examine you properly.”

“Better to be able to talk to them rather than nothing even if it would be better to see them face to face as things aren't always easy and it's better to talk to someone in person.”

2.12 Has shielding affected your employment?

- Of those affected many found problems in finding work as they lost jobs or feeling safe to return to work. Support for shielded people of working age needs to be considered.



“I was made redundant. As I am a healthcare worker that sector was not entitled to the furlough scheme.”

“I have struggled to find further employment because no one will hire a nurse who has to shield. It is the first question on a lot of application forms including Croydon university hospital. This is discrimination because I have asthma.”

“I have had no salary for the past 10 months and no help from the Government.”

“Furloughed.”

“I lost my job at the beginning of the lockdown (not due to shielding) but the shielding made it harder to gain work(I have secured work now but was unemployed for 5 months).”

“Have worked from home since March, this has had a mental impact on myself.”

“I had no income and never got any help from the government.”

“I was able to work from home.”

“Im broke.”

“Income.”






“Access to in person advice and office supplies.”

“As a patient facing nurse at the end of shielding (sic) I was instructed back to work without as full risk assessment. When this was done I was asvised (sic) that I should work from home. I am currently left in limbo as no one from work is making contact to discuss my options.”

“My work involves a higher risk of infection because of my Health conditions, so I decided not to continue to work at the same job.”




3 Demographics

Age

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	under 18		0.00%	0
2	18-24		0.00%	0
3	25-34		4.29%	3
4	35-59		48.57%	34
5	60-74		34.29%	24
6	75-84		8.57%	6
7	85+		0.00%	0
8	Prefer not to say		4.29%	3
			answered	70
			skipped	0





The sample is unusually focused around the 35-59 age group and we would have expected greater take up from 75+. This may reflect the limited method of online survey via email.

Gender

1	Male		27.14%	19
2	Female		70.00%	49
3	Prefer not to say		2.86%	2
4	Other (please specify):		0.00%	0
			answered	70
			skipped	0












The respondents were significantly more female than male.

Living with others or on your own

			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Living alone		22.86%	16
2	Living with family or friends		67.14%	47
3	Caring for another person in household		5.71%	4
4	Prefer not to say		4.29%	3
			answered	70
			skipped	0

Most were living with family and friends with just over a fifth living alone. A small number also cared for others while shielding themselves.

Ethnicity

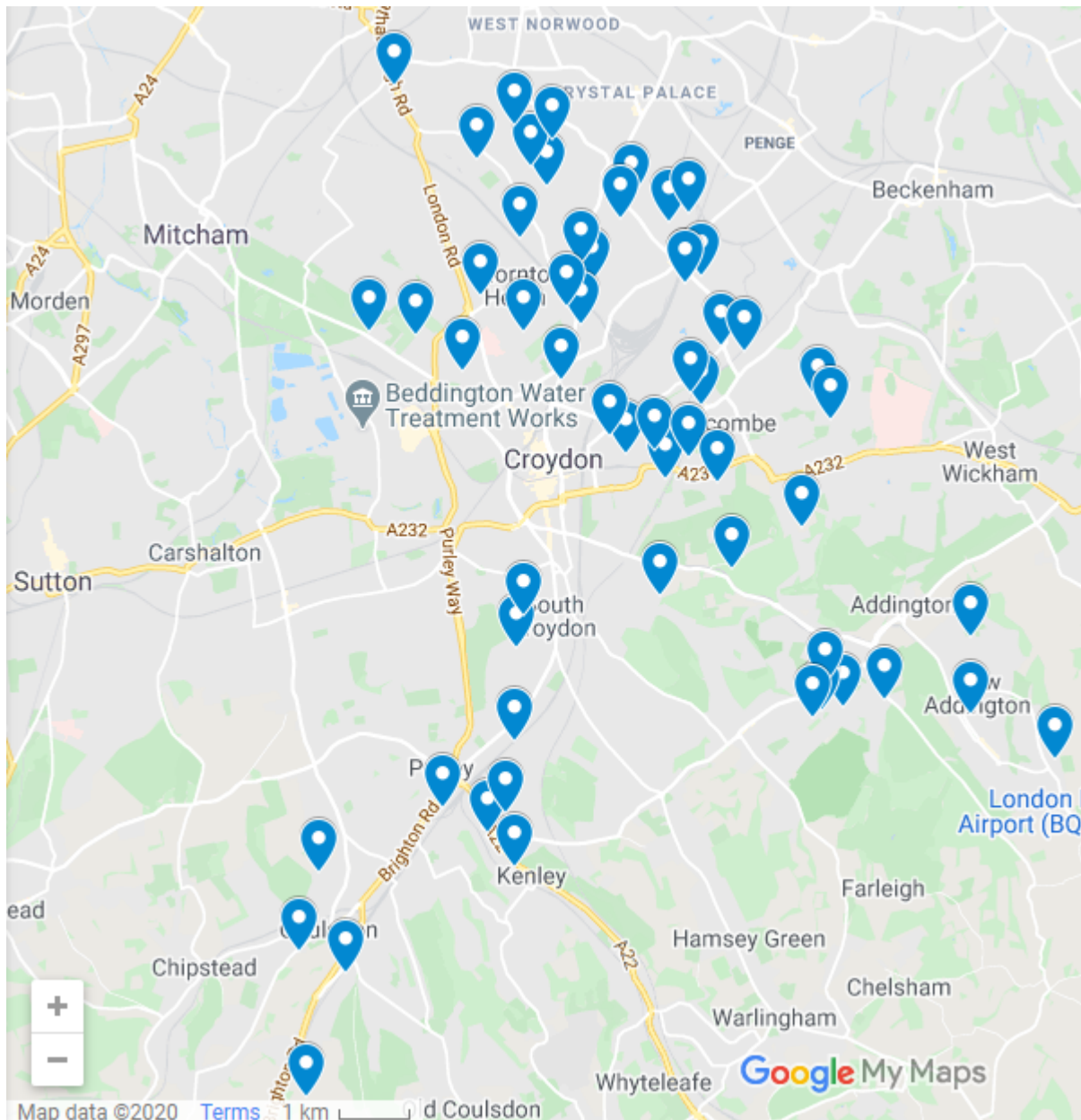
			Response Percent	Response Total
1	British		47.83%	33
2	Irish		2.90%	2
3	Other		2.90%	2
4	Indian		7.25%	5
5	Pakistani		0.00%	0
6	Bangladeshi		0.00%	0
7	Any other Asian background		0.00%	0
8	White and Black Caribbean		2.90%	2
9	White and black African		0.00%	0
10	White and Asian		1.45%	1
11	Any other mixed background		0.00%	0
12	Caribbean		14.49%	10
13	African		11.59%	8
14	Any other black background		2.90%	2
15	Chinese		1.45%	1
16	Any other Ethnic Group		0.00%	0
17	I do not wish to disclose my ethnic origin		0.00%	0
18	Prefer not to say		4.35%	3
			answered	69

Nearly half of respondents were British, with significant numbers of Caribbean and African respondents. There were few Indian subcontinent and Asian responses.

Health Conditions and Disabilities

Illness/ disability	No of respondents
COPD/ Lung	15
Asthma	12
Arthritis	11
Cancer	11
Diabetes	7
Blood Pressure	6
Heart	6
Kidney	5
Mental health	3
Renal	3

Respondents by Postcode


















This shows the postcode of the respondents which shows a good range across the borough

GP surgeries

Likewise, quite a good range across the GP surgeries.

1	Addington Medical Practice	■	2.86%	2
2	Ashburton Park Medical Centre	■	1.43%	1
3	AT Medics - Parkway Health Centre	■	1.43%	1
4	AUCKLAND SURGERY	■	1.43%	1
5	Birdhurst Medical Practice	■	1.43%	1
6	Bramley Avenue Surgery		0.00%	0
7	Brigstock & South Norwood Partnership	■	1.43%	1
8	Brigstock Family Practice	■	1.43%	1
9	CASTLE HILL SURGERY		0.00%	0
10	Country Park Practice	■	2.86%	2
11	DENMARK ROAD SURGERY		0.00%	0
12	Dr Avinash Kumar Sennik		0.00%	0
13	Dr B Baskaran & Partners		0.00%	0
14	Dr Marilyn Graham		0.00%	0
15	East Croydon Medical Centre	■	7.14%	5
16	Eversley Medical Centre	■	2.86%	2
17	Fieldway Medical Centre		0.00%	0
18	Friends Road Medical Practice	■	1.43%	1
19	Gravel Hill Surgery	■	1.43%	1
20	Greenside Group Practice		0.00%	0
21	GREENSIDE MEDICAL PRACTICE	■	1.43%	1
22	Hartland Way Surgery	■	1.43%	1
23	Headley Drive Surgery	■	1.43%	1
24	Keston Medical Practice	■	2.86%	2
25	Leander Road Surgery		0.00%	0
26	London Road Medical Practice	■	1.43%	1
27	MERSHAM MEDICAL CENTRE		0.00%	0
28	Mitchley Avenue Practice	■	1.43%	1
29	Morland Road Surgery	■	1.43%	1
30	Norbury Health Centre	■	2.86%	2
31	North Croydon Medical Centre	■	2.86%	2
32	Northway Road Surgery		0.00%	0
33	OLD COULSDON MEDICAL PRACTICE	■	2.86%	2
34	PARCHMORE MEDICAL CENTRE	■	1.43%	1

35	PARKSIDE GROUP PRACTICE		1.43%	1
36	Portland Medical Centre		10.00%	7
37	QUEENHILL MEDICAL PRACTICE		2.86%	2
38	Rainbow Health Centre		0.00%	0
39	Brigstock Primary Care Centre		0.00%	0
40	Selhurst Medical Practice		1.43%	1
41	Selsdon Park Medical Practice		2.86%	2
42	Shirley Medical Centre		2.86%	2
43	South Norwood Hill Medical Centre		2.86%	2
44	Southway Practice		0.00%	0
45	ST JAMES MEDICAL CENTRE		1.43%	1
46	Stovell House Surgery		0.00%	0
47	The Addiscombe Surgery		0.00%	0
48	The Farley Road Medical Practice		4.29%	3
49	The Forestdale Branch		0.00%	0
50	The Haling Park Partnership		0.00%	0
51	The Moorings Medical Practice		0.00%	0
52	The Whitehorse Practice		0.00%	0
53	The Woodcote Group Practice		1.43%	1
54	Thornton Heath Health Centre		2.86%	2
55	Thornton Road Surgery		1.43%	1
56	Upper Norwood Group Practice		2.86%	2
57	Valley Park Surgery		0.00%	0
58	Violet Lane Medical Practice		0.00%	0
59	Woodcote Medical		2.86%	2
60	Your GP not shown? Please mention below: <input type="button" value="Hide"/>		10.00%	7
1	09/09/2020 22:22 PM ID: 147975906	Information withheld		
2	16/09/2020 11:29 AM ID: 148315054	moorings		
3	16/09/2020 14:07 PM ID: 148330120	Haling Park Medical Practice		
4	16/09/2020 14:32 PM ID: 148330362	Parkway Health Centre		
5	25/09/2020 17:31 PM ID: 148906649	Station Road Surgery West Wickham		

4 Responses to our research

Councillor Jane Avis, Croydon Council's cabinet member for homes and Gateway services:

“During the first lockdown the council worked hard alongside community and voluntary across the borough to provide food, medication and wider support to those in need, including those classed as shielding. It is therefore reassuring that Healthwatch has found that those shielding were generally satisfied with the service provided by the council.

“As the pandemic continued we and our partners have improved our joint response, from offering a more tailored service to local people to improving access to information both on the council's website and for those not on the internet. With Covid-19 restrictions in place for the foreseeable future, we will continue to work with Healthwatch and our partners in the community to get help to those in need.”

5 Quality assurance

Does the research ask questions that:

Are pertinent? The insight asks residents their experience of the shielding service that was offered to them between March and July 2020.

Increase knowledge about health and social care service delivery? This research helps both commissioners and providers of services both in the health and social care sectors, about a service that suddenly had to be set up and operated and is likely to be needed again.

Is the research design appropriate for the question being asked?

a) **Proportionate:** Yes a sample of the 8,000 responded.

b) **Appropriate sample size: Has any potential bias been addressed?** There was a challenge with the sample which was planned to be 120 with 20 in each locality. Information governance advice limited the ability to increase the sample, but 70 is a reasonable size to give an indication of the impact of the service on its users.

Have ethical considerations been assessed and addressed appropriately?


Beyond the usual standards of anonymity, we did have to limit responses. We could not follow up emails or extend beyond the agreed cohort.

Has risk been assessed where relevant and does it include?

a) **Risk to well-being:** None.

b) **Reputational risk:** That the data published is incorrect and not of a high-quality standard. We carefully analyse the data that come directed to respondents' answers on the Smart Survey platform.

c) **Legal risk:** Have appropriate resources been accessed and used to conduct the research? There was no need to refer to legal resources for this research.



Where relevant have all contractual and funding arrangements been adhered to? This has come from Healthwatch Croydon's core funding. The local leadership board agreed to taking this project forward in line with our priority matrix.

Data Collection and Retention

Is the collection, analysis and management of data clearly articulated within the research design? Yes.

Has good practice guidance been followed? Yes.

Has data retention and security been addressed appropriately? Yes.

Have the GDPR and FOIA been considered and requirements met? Yes.

Have all relevant legal requirements been adhered to ensure that the well-being of participants has been accounted for? ie the Mental Capacity Act. None required for this research.

Has appropriate care and consideration been given to the dignity, rights, and safety of participants? Yes.

Were participants clearly informed of how their information would be used and assurances made regarding confidentiality/anonymity? Introductions and conclusions of the survey explain its use.

Collaborative Working

Where work is being undertaken in collaboration with other organisations have protocols and policies been clearly understood and agreed, including the development of a clear contractual agreement prior to commencement? We worked with the Shielding team within Croydon Councils Adult Health and Social Care Team. Since this was assessing their service, they proposed a series of questions which we considered, revised, and agreed with them. At all times, Healthwatch Croydon's independence was considered and respected.

Have any potential issues or risks that could arise been mitigated? These are shown below:

Risk factors	Level of risk	Contingency
Cannot get enough responses	Medium	Extend to a further cohort
Question set does not work with group	Low	Co-written with team and informally tested by likely group
Data is seen as being out of date	Low	Report to be completed within a month of insight undertaken.

Has Healthwatch independence been maintained? Yes, this research is shared with partner organisations before publication for their comment, but only factual inaccuracy would be reviewed. This does not affect the comments of experiences we receive.

Quality Controls

Has a quality assurance process been incorporated into the design? There was a proper process of scoping with Croydon Council and board members

Has quality assurance occurred prior to publication? Data collection was checked and re-checked.

Has peer review been undertaken? No peer review was undertaken. It was not required for this research project.

Conflicts of Interest

Have any conflicts of interest been accounted for? This project was decided upon by Healthwatch Croydon in discussions with the council. At all times, board and manager is satisfied that its independence and neutrality has been maintained through this project.

Does the research consider intellectual property rights, authorship, and acknowledgements as per organisational requirements? The research is owned by Healthwatch Croydon, who are managed by Help and Care. Other organisations support has been recognised and suitably referenced.

Is the research accessible to the public? It appears on our website as of 23 December 2020.

Are the research findings clearly articulated and accurate? To the best of our knowledge, we believe they are.

6 References

Healthwatch England (2020) *Shielding - What does it mean to you?*

<https://network.healthwatch.co.uk/guidance/2020-03-25/shielding-what-does-it-mean-helping-you-to-answer-publics-questions>



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