

Covid-19 Insight Report

1-28 June 2020

At a glance

We have...

- Continued to update our Advice and information pages, adding new information about changes to shielding and visiting the dentist
- Heard about people's experience of accessing GP services and treatment
- Found that people's mental health and wellbeing continues to be affected
- Heard about people's experiences getting prescriptions and medication
- Seen that local voluntary groups and organisations are providing a range of services that people have found useful
- Identified that many people continue to be involved in volunteering.

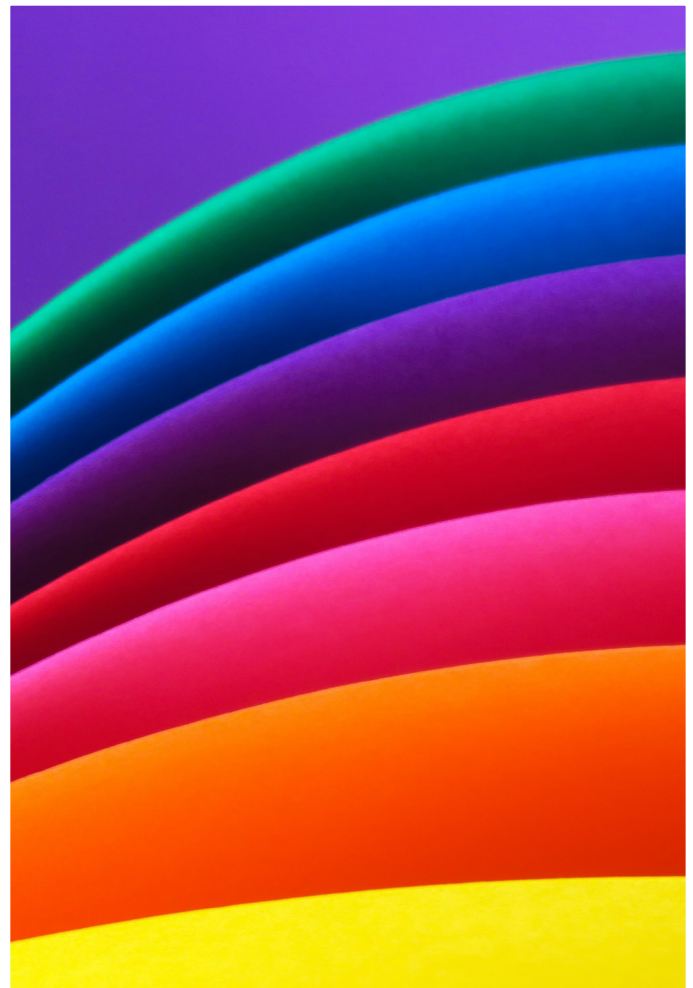
Background

The way health and social care services operate has been affected by coronavirus (Covid-19) with non-urgent treatment postponed, face-to-face appointments reduced and homes and services limiting public access.

For Healthwatch Wiltshire, the outbreak has also resulted in changes to our work, with much of our planned public engagement and visits to services paused and a greater focus on providing advice to the public and supporting the local response to Covid-19.

However, this does not mean that the work of Healthwatch to understand the experiences of the public has stopped. With a fast-moving response to Covid-19, real-time intelligence for services about the issues the public are facing is valuable.

It is also important that health and social care services understand the impact these changes are having more broadly – especially when they concern people's safety or will have implications once services begin the return to normal.



Where is our insight coming from?

At present, our opportunity to directly engage with Wiltshire residents is limited to social media, our website feedback and responding to calls and emails via our Helpdesk Hub Team. We are also now subscribed to Care Opinion and are monitoring feedback left there by people living in Wiltshire.

We've therefore asked our volunteers who are spread across the county to share any feedback they hear locally with us. We have also asked local community and voluntary organisations including local Covid-19 response groups to be our eyes and ears so we can understand the experiences of those they support.

We have also now launched an online survey asking people to share their experiences of health and care during this period. This survey went live on 28 April and has been shared widely with voluntary and community groups and organisations. Specifically, we're asking people to share what is working well and where there are gaps within the provision and delivery of health and social care services.

This report is a collation of all of these sources of insight.

Advice and information

Since the coronavirus outbreak, we have had a greater focus on our information and signposting service, to help people get the information they need from a trusted source.

We have continued to update our dedicated coronavirus advice and information pages to help people find the information they are looking for. These pages include all the latest national and local information plus information about local support and community groups and a bereavement support page. We also have created specific pages in response to what we have heard from local people and groups, and nationally. Over the last four weeks we have:

- A new page on how to get an NHS dentist appointment
- A page outlining the new guidance for shielding
- Updated our general coronavirus information page
- Updated our page on community support

Our coronavirus Advice and Information pages have had 340 views. 70 of these views were of the maternity services page. We have also been active on social media, sharing information and asking for feedback on health and care services. We have made 66 posts and they have reached 15,525 people.

In our survey, we asked people how easy they had found it find, understand and keep up to date with information around coronavirus. Most of those who completed our survey over the past two weeks said that they were able to do this. For example, 77% of our respondents said they had found it very easy or easy to find the information they needed, 16% said it was neither easy nor difficult and 7% said that it difficult or very difficult. However, 20% of respondents said that they found it difficult to act on the information.

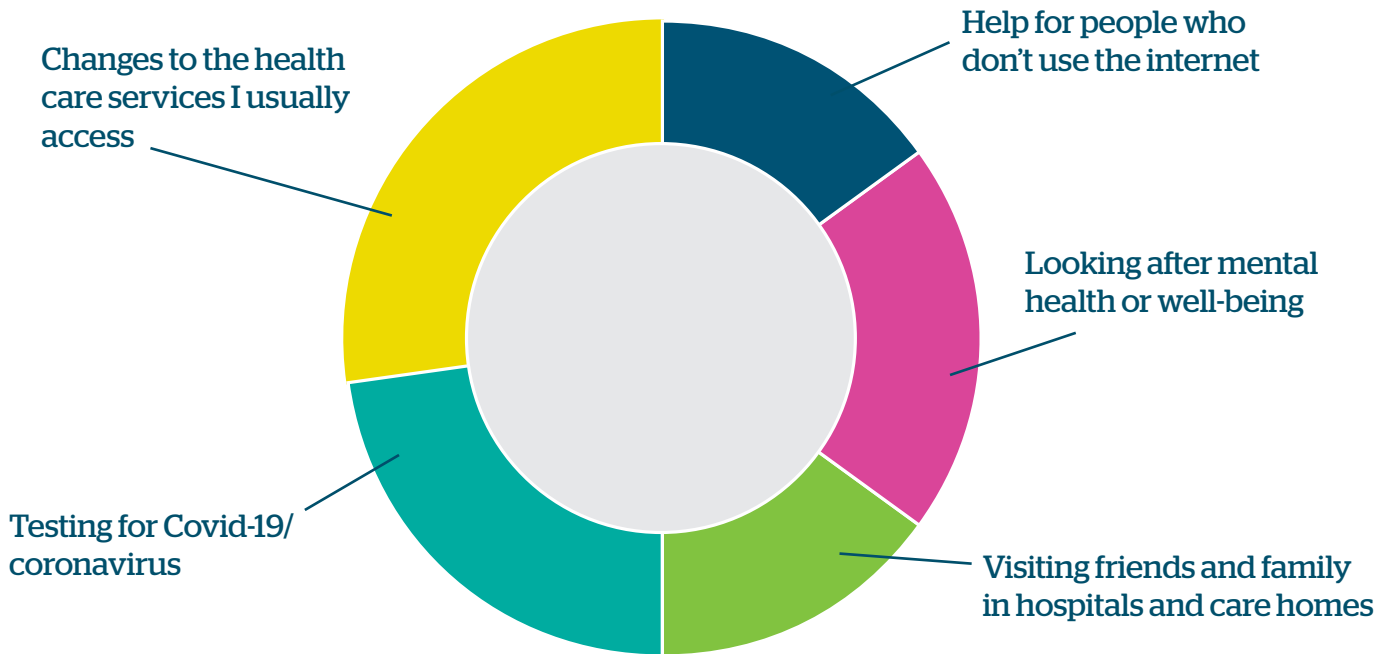
Online information through national and local websites and social was the most frequently cited source of information, with news, newspapers and radio being the next most frequently used.

Wiltshire Parent Carer Council, Wiltshire Council, and local Parish Councils were mentioned as useful local sources of information.

Wiltshire Parent Carer Council has been amazing at keeping us informed and providing information on their website, Facebook and weekly newsletters. Don't know what we would do without them!!!!

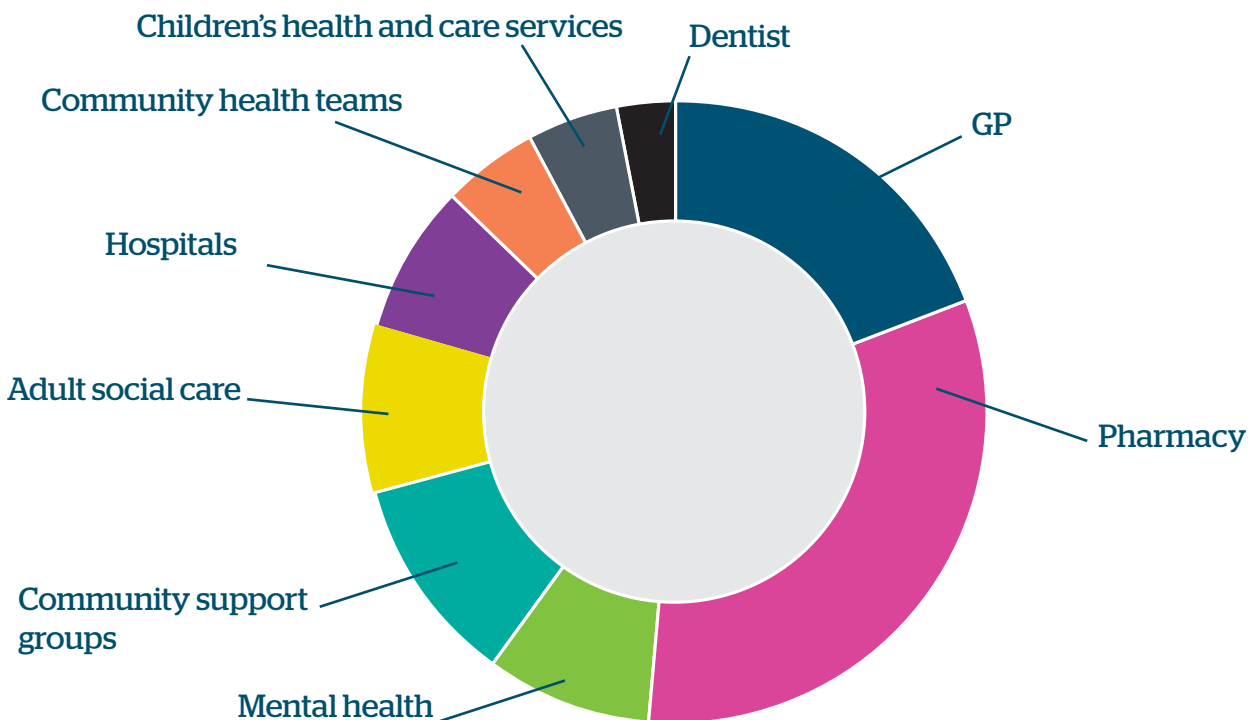
What topics are people finding it difficult to find information about?

We asked people what topics they had found it difficult find advice and information about. 12% of respondents told us that they had all the information they need. The remainder mentioned a wide range of topics. We asked people what topics they had found it difficult find advice and information about. 34% of respondents told us that they had all the information they need which is an increase from previously. The remainder mentioned a wide range of topics. Most frequently mentioned were:



What are we hearing?

Between 1 and 28 June, we have received 103 comments about how health and care has been impacted by coronavirus.



Adult social care

We have heard from relatives of people living in care homes and they have told us that although visiting has stopped, they have been kept in touch with how they are, and felt that they were well cared for.

My mum went into care just as lockdown happened, therefore we were not able to help settle her in. Although normal activities and visits were stopped the care home was great at informing us of what was happening and keeping mum active and well.

Sister-in-law in a local nursing home where care and communication were of the highest standard.

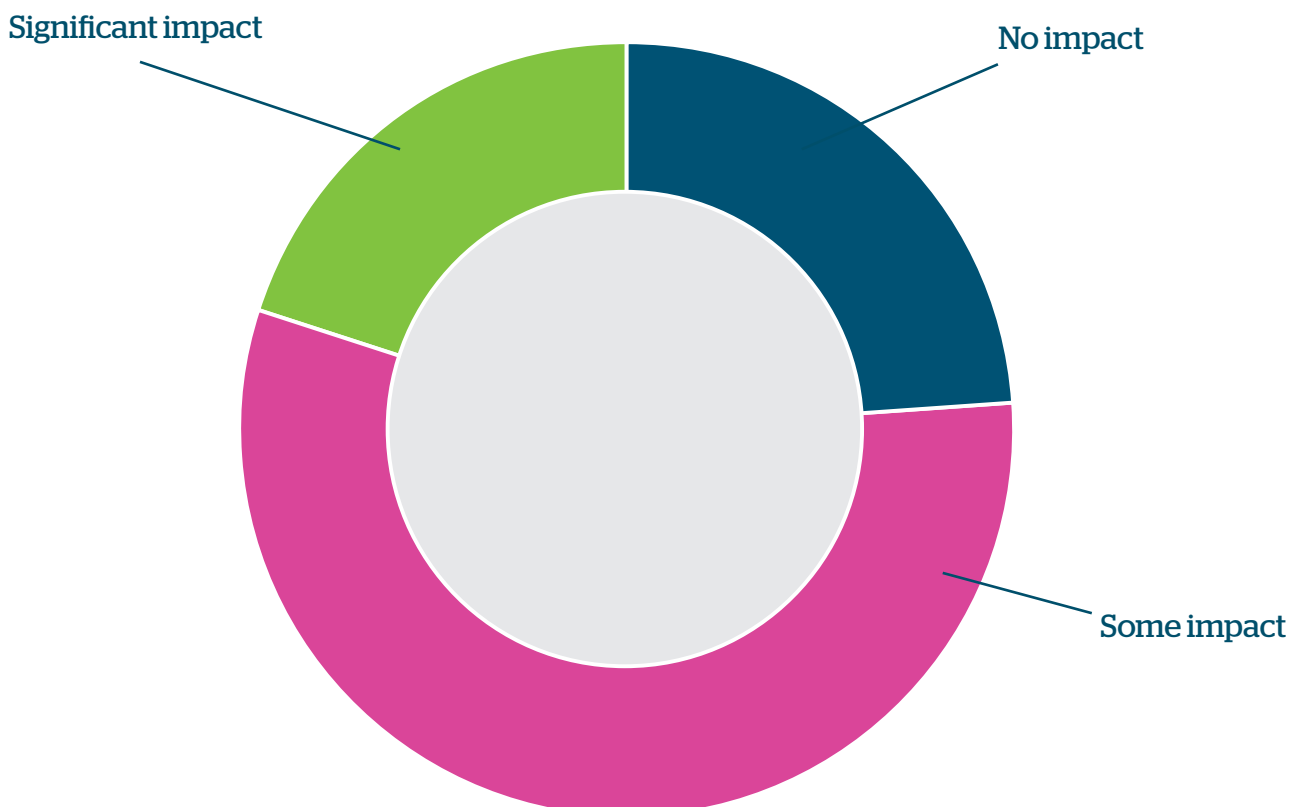
We have also heard of the impact on carers when home care provided by personal assistants has been stopped or reduced.

The PA stopped working when lockdown was introduced. This meant only five hours commissioned service continued. This increased the support I had to provide whilst continuing to work full time.

Mental health

Most people we spoke to told us that the pandemic had an impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

What impact is the pandemic having on people's mental health?



Many people told us that they were getting support from friends and family. A number of these mentioned that keeping in touch with others by video chat was helpful. Other sources of support were online apps, websites, colleagues, employers and through phone conversations.

Weekly Zoom with cousins. Regular contact with friends by phone. Membership of support group of itself gives support. Hobby Zoom sessions.

I had what may have been coronavirus late March/early April. My husband remained well. We're both over 70. Our three daughters take it in turns to phone every day and that has been hugely supportive. It's been difficult not seeing any of them. We don't have a car and shouldn't use public transport at the moment. Zoom and phone and email and WhatsApp have all helped.

14% of our respondents told us that they had not been able to access the support they needed.

We have also heard of some people who have used mental health services and the feedback about these has been mixed.

I had phone calls with my usual psychologist, as well as a charity I've been involved with for two years for various mental health conditions.

My community nurse left. Replacement appalling... made it known twice when I've spoken to them, they are busy. I have been completely abandoned by the mental health team during this crisis.

CAMHS [Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services] have phoned me weekly plus GP surgery have phoned few times check up on me.

GPs

Several people shared their experience of using GP services. They told us about their experiences accessing GP services, including changes to the services offered. Most people told us that they were able to access services, although there were a few comments from people who had found it more difficult.

Almost impossible to get through to the practice. In desperation I tried 111 but that was even worse.

They were moved to another surgery so that their original building could become a Covid hub, this place would have required me to leave two hours before my appointment to reach by bus as it was two buses which were on severely limited schedules and the timings did not match up well. The return journey would've been the same, meaning I would've been out for 4.5 hours for a 10 minute appointment – to have a routine medical injection that only health professionals are able to administer.

We were told about a range of consultations by phone, video consultations, and face to face. The feedback about these was mostly positive.

I need to have regular blood tests at the GP surgery and of course this is now very different and takes a lot longer than before. The Health care at home service have been very good, email communications and very safe non-contact delivery.

I was given clear advice about what medication to start, what side effects to be mindful of and when to stop and reassess my symptoms.

Clearly communicated. Clearly carried out. Simple. Friendly!

A huge thank you to all the staff at the surgery during such a difficult time. I have had four telephone consultations during the Covid-19 outbreak and cannot fault the service. The receptionists making the appointments were efficient and kind and the appointments offered quickly and in amazing time! One of the appointments was made at 4.30pm and I received the GP call at 4.38...

Hospital care

We were told about people's experiences of outpatient hospital care. Some people said that their care had been able to continue.

My husband had a brain tumour and awaiting proton beam. His scans and hospital appts have all gone ahead with extra care and precautions. I was not allowed in with him, but they included me on a conference call.

Medical professionals have provided remote check ins regarding physical and mental health and planned face to face consultations are due to resume in August.

One respondent talked about treatment that had stopped and a lack of information about when it would restart.

Ongoing treatment for analysis of essential nutritional functionality, urology, physio and occupational therapy has ceased with no information about when and how these NHS services will return.

Another respondent mentioned communication issues between hospital and GP after discharge from inpatient care.

An hour before discharge (about a week ago) the hospital changed its mind about whether she should go on injecting when she got home and finally said she should not do so. Today she was called by her GP who said he had received two conflicting letters from the hospital about her medication, so he needed to ask her as the patient what she was actually taking! The hospital communications to the GP just hadn't caught up.

Dentists

We have not received many comments about dentists over the past four weeks, but we did hear that one person had accessed treatment from their dentist that had been opened, and that one person was concerned about access for routine treatments.

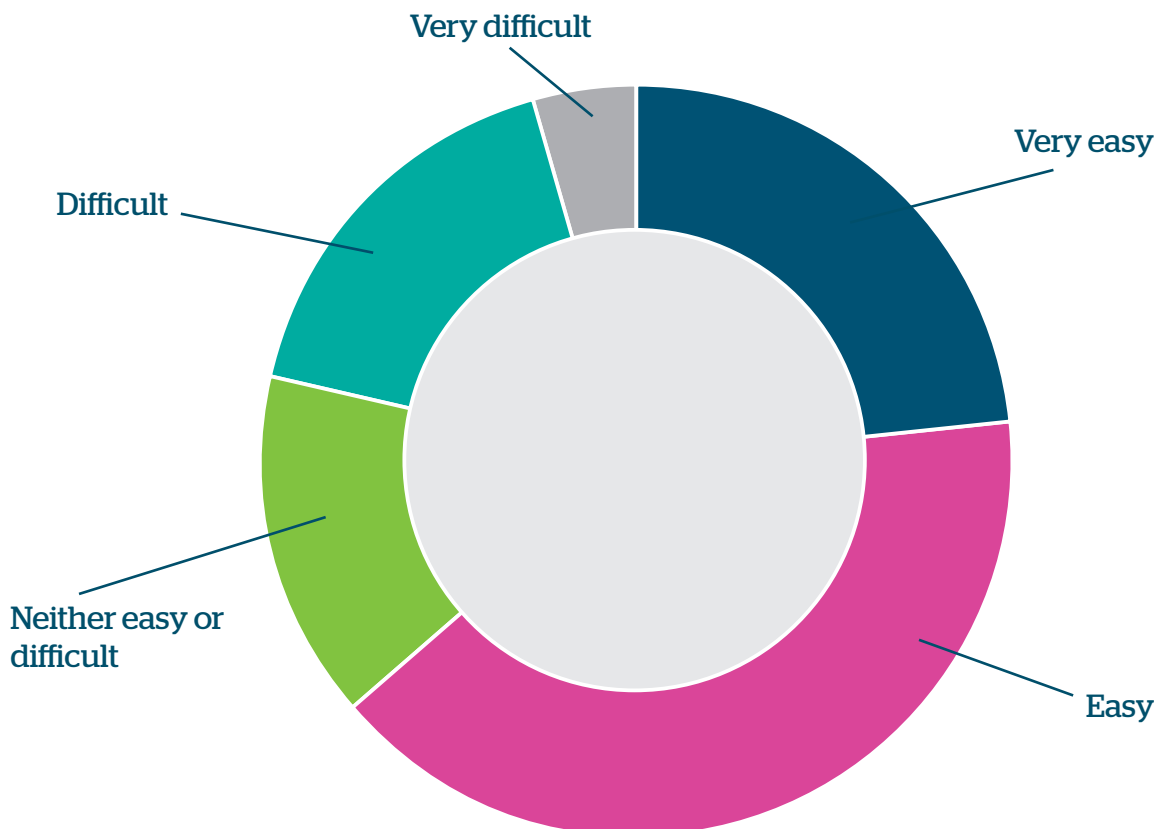
We have not received many comments about dentists over the past four weeks, but we did hear that one person had accessed treatment from their dentist that had been opened, and that one person was concerned about access for routine treatments.

Had cracked tooth removed on first day dentists reopened.

Pharmacies

Most people said that they had been able access the medication they required. However, there were more responses that said this had been difficult over the last four weeks, than previously.

How easy have you found it to access your/their medication?



The difficulties that people reported included delays with ordering and supply of medication and long waiting times at pharmacies. We were also told of specific types of medication that people had not been able to access including some medications for asthma and HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) patches.

Overall, the feedback about experiences of ordering and getting prescriptions was mixed.

First time was in a very long queue, sun beating down, no shade, should have worn a sun hat! No water offered. Very difficult especially with my condition.

Local pharmacy became nightmare so now use Pharmacy 2U. The only thing I still can't get is my HRT patches.

Doctor phoned back had chat, medication ready two days later.

I am staying home so needed to rely on others to collect my prescriptions. My chosen pharmacy now routinely delivers my prescriptions.

We're registered for online repeat prescription ordering which makes things easier. Just have to collect them, of course. Great, simple system for collection because nobody was allowed in the building. I think that was an awesome idea! Reduces the risk of infection straight away.

Voluntary and community support organisations

We were told about the different types of support that people had accessed and found useful such as advice, information, social support, collecting prescriptions and shopping.

Local and national organisations and groups were mentioned including Alzheimer's Support, Barnardo's, NHS Responders, Wiltshire Council Wellbeing Hub and local support groups in Calne, Hullavington and Bradford on Avon. They included advice, social support, and collecting prescriptions and shopping.

They are always available on the phone and I can email them. They have been running virtual coffee mornings to support us and have continued to ask us about our experience of services through surveys etc.

Help with getting prescriptions, food from the local shop to the door.

Zoom contact for my teenager instead of his usual clubs. Means such a lot to my child.

Volunteering

Nearly 40% of people who completed the survey said that they had volunteered to support people affected by Covid-19.

Member of the local support group, so have shared responsibility for cascading relevant advice in our village. That means the group and me as a member spent much time searching out and understanding where to find advice and support.

My work in disability arts done on a voluntary basis makes me acutely aware of how people with disabilities have been forgotten in mainstream responses to Covid-19.

I am a volunteer at Amesbury Coronavirus Hub, collecting prescriptions from chemists and delivering to people shielding at home.

I've been delivering food parcels to a couple of vulnerable elderly people in my neighbourhood.

General comments

We received some further general comments.

The answers I have given are all very positive – however I found the whole experience extremely unsettling and like many people was moved to try and create a sense of balance in my life. Baking, exercise, routines were put in place simply to give me back a sense of control which I lost in the first few weeks of the crisis. I consider myself a strong, independent, self-motivated individual but I still feel anxiety when going about simple things such as shopping.

I think there needs to be more thought in the future given to those without a car, especially those who are key workers and, in this situation, also. I have friends who work as paramedics, social care workers, and in other key areas who had no reliable way to get to work when they were so much busier than usual and I felt incredibly sorry for the stress they were under.

Concern over children not getting their education. Concern at people not being able to go to work. I think the BIGGEST concern are mental health issues which I feel is as big if not bigger than the virus. We have been blessed (and I don't choose that word often) with good weather so have been able to get into the garden which has been my lifeline.

How this insight will be used

We recognise that all health and care services are under pressure at this time and have had to adapt their ways of working. We will share this report with the local NHS, council and providers to help them identify where things are working well and services are adapting to meet people's needs, and to help them identify any gaps.

For help, advice and information

01225 434218

info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk



Freepost RTZK-ZZZG-CCBX
Healthwatch Wiltshire
The Independent Living Centre
St. Georges Road
Semington
Trowbridge
BA14 6JQ

www.healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk

01225 434218

info@healthwatchwiltshire.co.uk



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