

Intelligence Report

March 23rd – April 15th 2020

March 2017

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, the outbreak has also resulted in significant 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 (especially hard to reach groups) 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.

85% of the feedback we received between March 23rd and April 15th is directly related to the effects of Covid-19 (as demonstrated in graph above).

**Pharmacies:** Initially, there were high volumes of people concerned about long waits at pharmacies (particularly in Ventnor and Sandown). We escalated concerns to NHS England and spoke to local councillors to establish volunteers to deliver medication to vulnerable people. Feedback now suggests that the situation has improved.

**Dentists:** several peopleshared their experience of being in extreme pain and distress with cracked teeth, abscesses and or infection. NHS England is supporting the development of urgent care dental hubs to provide emergency treatment when required.

**Cancer patients:** Concerns over whether to attend screening appointments, scans or radiotherapy have been raised. People are concerned with the risks associated with travelling by ferry, particularly now that the Red Jet is not running.

Mental health: Many people describe a deterioration in their mental health with an increase in anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts.

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.

“Does anyone know if you are able to see a doctor for a non virus related problem at all?”

“My relative is due to start Radiotherapy in Southampton next week and where his immune system is low at the moment I’m getting anxious about travelling over there.”   
 “I woke this morning feeling emotional with thoughts of suicide in mind.”