



The health and social care experiences of the people working in health and care in Kirklees during the Covid-19 outbreak

August 2020

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Our work at a glance

This report is to be viewed in conjunction with our service users and carers engagement report. For further information and to find out about our next steps please [click here](#).

Health and care services changed dramatically and with little or no prior notice during the Covid-19 outbreak. In an unprecedented and constantly changing situation, services and their workforce had to respond and adapt rapidly. As the United Kingdom was put into a 'lockdown' situation, people were asked to only leave their homes for essential journeys. However, throughout this time, people still needed to complete their roles as keyworkers.

Our role at Healthwatch Kirklees is to listen to and make sense of what members of the public tell us about their experience of using health and care services, then use that knowledge to make health and care better for everybody. As Covid-19 has resulted in enormous changes to health and care services, Healthwatch knew that we had to capture people's views who worked in health and care services throughout the lockdown period.

To gather a full understanding of the experience of staff working in health and care services during the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthwatch Kirklees used a variety of different engagement approaches and tools such as a survey and focus groups. We also asked people to share their experiences with us in creative ways such as stories, pictures, poems and word clouds.

There were 35 responses to the Kirklees staff survey.

The responses were as follows: 7 from CCG, 7 from hospital trusts or NHS, 5 from GP surgeries, 5 from care providers, 4 from council departments, 2 from the third sector; 2 from a pharmacy; 1 from Locala. Two responses were disregarded.

Overall, the comments are divided as follows:

- Very positive: 12
- Moderately positive 33
- Moderately negative: 22
- Very negative: 16

Feedback indicates 5 main themes, they are:

- Staff wellbeing
- Service delivery
- PPE
- Staff attitudes
- Digital

Staff wellbeing

35 responses related to staff wellbeing.

Positive: comments about supportive managers and colleagues featured heavily.

“Manager asks everyday how I am.”

“I have been advised to work from home by my employer due to health reasons and advise from my doctor. The council have been very supportive of this and have provided me with everything I need to work from home.”

“Having the whole team working from home just shows that it can be done, work is still carried out and meetings can still take place so having the option for more home working would be a bonus as this doesn't seem to disrupt the way the service is delivered.”

Negative: staff commented about how ‘stressful’ it had been transferring to work from home and the negative impact on their wellbeing, plus getting the work/home life balance right.

“Work has been more stressful than normal and concerns with getting ill with Covid-19 or bringing it home to the rest of the family.”

“Anxiety levels have increased.”

“Shift patterns a little difficult for me due to limited childcare but worked around this.”

“I was over worked.”

Improvements or ideas for the future: changes in service delivery and flexible working were both suggested.

“What stands out to me the most... was our staff working in the testing pods and our health centre were amazing, they not only explained everything and made me feel comfortable throughout they also used the time to check I was safe and that I wasn't experiencing domestic abuse at home. I think this is a great thing for them to include as there has been an increase in cases since lockdown happened...”

“I would like to continue to work from home regularly. It helps to manage childcare/home life. Flexible working really works for me.”

Service delivery

39 responses related to staff wellbeing.

Positive: comments focused on how teams adapted to continue delivering a service.

“Really positive, supportive staff and managers. Providing training for Kirklees staff who have been deployed or need upskilling in these strange times.”

“Some things we tried didn't work, but we adapted as we went on, were willing to try a range of approaches, adopted and amplified what worked and stopped what didn't.”

“The Covid-19 situation has proved just how resilient and resourceful people and communities can and have been. It would be amazing if this momentum could continue and be fostered and promoted within Kirklees.”

Negative: comments focused on the impact of postponed appointments, support from other organisations and working hours.

“Postponed routine appointments such as dental and podiatry.”

“Very stressful and very under supported from PHE and infection control.”

“I would like to close one hour for lunch as we did at the start of the crisis.”

“Long hours; workload huge.”

Improvements or ideas for the future:

“We would like to include more special days and events at the home. We do some already but would like to make it more of a theme leading up to the event.”

“A mixture of home working and office-based working.”

Anything else? We received one comment relating to engagement and the impact of virtual versus face-to-face conversations.

“It’s been my observation that there was a notable difference in engagement with support during face-to-face work, in that it improved. This may not be the case for all of course, but I suspect the ‘realness’ of face-to-face relationship offers something that is more beneficial that cannot always be found within a virtual relationship, an aspect of young people’s lives that has hugely increased during the lockdown period. I have reflected that these virtual relationships, which do not even involve the ‘human’ aspect of hearing another’s voice, but which rely on a form of written language and emoji images, whilst keeping young people connected in some way, they are no substitute for genuine inter-personal development found from being with people (particularly important to the developing personality of a young person). The pandemic has exacerbated this problem for some young people and can be unhelpful to their progress in terms of their psychological wellbeing.”

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

20 responses related to PPE

Positive: quick response to implementing PPE and safety measures were cited.

“Being able to put plans in place to restrict contact and increasing social distancing to stop the spread of the virus but still being able to provide a service was good

“We had to implement safe and social distancing. Put screens up and work wearing PPE.”

Negative: most comments about PPE related to difficulties obtaining suitable items quickly.

“Lack of PPE, having to buy our own to feel safe in our jobs.”

“I am a pharmacist working in a community pharmacy setting. At the start of the outbreak it was very difficult with the lack of PPE.”

“We struggled to get adequate PPE so ended up bringing my own in at the start and was probably one of the first members of staff who started wearing it before there was any changes with the rules.”

“PPE has been patchy, with local groups and individuals donating supplies such as face shields, hats, scrubs, face visors, goggles, washing bags for uniforms - without these, we would have been compromised, with only access to gloves, plastic aprons and surgical masks. These last 3 items have been difficult to get on order at times due to demand.”

Improvements or ideas for the future: communicating the rules and changes are the two suggestions for improvement.

“There have been many changes within the trust organisation, full on PPE, constant hand washing and mask changing.”

“Better PPE usage and better guidelines.”

Staff attitudes

20 responses related to staff attitudes

Positive: staff proactively responding to change quickly was cited.

“Excellent team work, embracing new ways of working virtually and going with what we have... Being positive.”

“Every day I learned a lot as we were being briefed by staff and this made us more confident.”

“Support within own team has been outstanding, with support for emotional aspects of the situation.”

“Staff have worked together brilliantly throughout and ensured they have worked to new guidelines to ensure they are giving the best care whilst ensuring clients and colleagues have remained safe.”

“My team rose to the challenge of Covid-19 and worked tirelessly and effectively under pressure. Fantastic bunch of brave people who presented for work to put others first.”

Negative: there were no negative comments relating to staff attitudes.

Improvements or ideas for the future:

“Staff volunteering to work in different roles as part of Mutual Aid arrangements. Moving at pace to share information between organisations so that better support can be provided. And in general, the huge amount of willingness to move at pace, take on new ways of working, and hard work that has been done.”

Digital

12 responses related to digital

Positive: use of digital services to continue to provide a service was highlighted.

“Having transitioned our services well to digital online services all our client service users were thankful our support services continued.”

“Our services went digital and we were still able to do face to face support with secure counselling rooms.”

“Microsoft Teams has been very helpful for holding meetings both for internal staff meetings/catch ups and externally with providers.”

Negative: one comment highlights the issue of how some patients may not be able to access services via digital methods.

“Introduction of virtual consultations - video consults with patients, being able to text two way with patients, sharing photos and videos of wounds, have all made delivering care within social distancing/shielding confines has been a huge bonus and the majority of patients have embraced this. There have been restrictions for those not confident with the virtual world and those that do not have access to the resources, but we have provided face to face clinics still, adapting to circumstance and delivering 'care in cars' even.”

Improvements or ideas for the future: flexible working and access to office equipment were suggested.

“Professionally, it would be great to be able to continue with virtual consultations with patients.”

“Working from home full time has been strange, everything being done on email and not having access to everyday things like printers.”

Comments about specific services:

Care homes:

Day centre staff from Bridgewood have dispersed throughout the homes to help work shifts while the day centres are closed. My staff team have adapted extremely well to the change in rota shifts, thinking of crafts and activities, following the guidance in and out of work and supporting each other throughout all this. Examples of entertainment and activities... we've had a beach party including themed food, games and craft activities the week leading up to decorate rooms beach style. we have also had a Ravensknowle Gala with gala games such as spinning plates and hula hoops, gala king and queen and again activities leading up to prepare for this.

“My staff team have been fantastic at keeping safe themselves and protecting the residents. They have been amazing at having ideas to keep everyone entertained and informed. we thank Healthwatch for offering an Ipad to zoom families, and we thank Kirklees for offering the Facebook portal to do the same.”

Mental health:

“Quicker decision making, rapid procurement of MH helplines for both patients & staff.”

Pharmacy:

“Our customers absolutely loved our service provision and I believe that the pharmacy profession standing has been elevated and even more respected after Covid-19 outbreak.”

“From a community pharmacy perspective, there was an increase in workload with GP's deferring queries to pharmacists (e.g BP checks, blood glucose checks etc). With the surgeries not operating as normal we had many members of the public coming to us asking for advice. As rules and processes became more defined we enforced social distancing, pick-ups from outside, face masks etc.”

Huddersfield Royal Infirmary A&E:

A mother explains how she had to take her son to A&E due to an accident:

“...we arrived and I felt so safe at HRI, the safest I ever felt, the whole staff team were great in their roles, trying to keep things normal for my boy. He ended up having his head glued and he was safe and stuck back together.”

Partners:

Comment from a care home:

“We have pretty much been left to our own devices, from the start we have kept residents informed and they have been excellent at staying indoors keeping safe in line with their shielding guidance. We have been keeping up to date with the newest guidance through emails from CQC, checking the gov website, Kirklees contracts, Kirklees collab communication etc. GP have kept in contact each week, as have the CLDT (*Community Learning Disability Teams*) to check on us and offer PPE if needed.”

Kirklees Council:

“The council have been very supportive with bringing me equipment to support me working from home. I am updated on a regular basis of what is happening at work and have not felt alone. It is quite difficult not been at work as I miss the residents and the staff but I know that I am been protected for my own health and cannot fault the council for this.”

CCG:

“From working in a contracting team at the CCG to working on the front line is very different to what I am used to.”

General NHS:

“The teams I have worked with are great. I've worked with redeployed staff from finance to sexual health. Staff have been really welcoming, helpful and reassuring.”