



Understanding the impact of COVID-19
Results of Surveys
August 2020

Introduction

In response to COVID-19, Healthwatch City of London (HWCoL) decided in April to run a series of surveys to obtain the views and experiences of City residents on the provision of Health and Social care during the pandemic.

This report covers the results of HWCoL's first three surveys that ran from 1 April until 17 August 2020. The last responses we received for these surveys were on the 13 July 2020.

Purpose

HWCoL's objective was to understand whether residents felt informed about COVID-19 and their experiences of using and accessing services during the pandemic.

The results will be shared with the City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), the City of London's Department of Community and Children's Services and the City of London Health and Well-being Board with the aim of contributing to their understanding of the impact of the pandemic on residents of the City. The results will also be shared with Healthwatch England and the residents of the City via HWCoL's website.

Survey design and methodology

HWCoL used SurveyMonkey for the questionnaires. Questions were designed to be clear, straight forward, and relevant to the subject of the questionnaire. They were a mixture of simple yes/no questions, multi-choice and open-ended/free text questions that respondents could use to expand on their experience.

In total over the three surveys, the number of questions asked totalled 52; however, each survey included the same three questions on Gender, Ethnicity and Age. The number of questions which featured only once in any of the surveys was 46.

The first questionnaire was also used to understand the community's awareness of HWCoL. The subsequent questionnaires provided respondents with the opportunity to be further engaged with the organisation.

Survey response and demographics

The surveys were held on-line only. They were available via our website, newsletters and bulletins. The newsletters and bulletins have a total reach of 1,600. In total we had 34 responses. While some respondents may have completed more than one survey, we are confident that we received responses from at least 20 different individuals. On the assumption that everyone who

completed the survey was in receipt of the newsletter, the proportion of the readership who completed at least one of the surveys was 1.25% . To put the response rate in context, it should be borne in mind that the number of City residents is around 7,500.¹

The surveys were designed to be completed within a short time.

The Community Feedback survey consisted of seven questions taking an average of two minutes to complete with a 94% completion rate and 18 responses.

The Experience of Using NHS 111 survey consisted of 19 questions taking an average of five minutes to complete with a 100% completion rate and seven responses.

The Access to GP Surgeries survey was designed differently, with respondents being asked only to complete sections relevant to them. There was a total of 26 questions taking an average of four minutes to complete with a 100% completion rate and nine responses.

Fourteen respondents identified themselves as female with four respondents being male. Two respondents did not define their gender. The male respondents all defined themselves as white with an age range of 40-49 or 60 and above. Eight of the female respondents defined themselves as white, three black, one Asian, one 'other' and one who preferred not to say. The age ranges were from 21-29, 35-44, 45-54 and 60 or older. Two respondents did not define their ethnicity or age.

The demographic profile of those respondents who provided a definition for their ethnicity shows that the number of white respondents was 70.6%, which is reflective of the proportion of white residents in the City's population. The number of Asian respondents was 5.9%, which is lower than the approximately 13% of Asian residents in the City's population. The number of Black respondents at 17.6% was significantly higher than the 4% of Black residents in the City's population. The number of respondents who defined themselves as 'other' 5.9% reflects the City figure of 4%

Healthwatch City of London's level of confidence in the results

The results from the three surveys provide some insight into the community's experience. Due to the number of responses, they cannot be read as representative of the experience of all City residents. In total we had 34 responses of which we are confident that at least 20 individuals completed the

¹ The City of London Corporation in its report 'City of London Resident Estimates and Projection, June 2020' estimates there are 7,561 residents of the City of London.

surveys as some respondents may have completed more than one survey. Neither the Experience of Using NHS 111 survey nor the Access to GP Surgeries survey was a sample survey of people using these services during the pandemic. They were, however, completed by people who self-selected as having using these services.

Respondents' Experience

Respondents' insight experience is shown for each of the surveys.

Community Feedback Survey

The purpose of this survey was to understand if the community had access to the right information to stay healthy.

1) Do you feel you have access to the right information to stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic?

70.5% agreed or strongly agreed

23.5% were neutral

6% were strongly opposed

2) Following up to the previous question, why do you feel that way?

All the responses to this question are quoted below in the terms in which they were entered on the survey. These respondents either agreed or were neutral in their answers to the statement in Question 1. There was no comment from those strongly opposed.

Agree

'There was a lot of information from gov and radio and at the start some text messages from the Neaman practice GP but nothing from the City for a number of weeks until a letter arrived in April I think?'

'By watching television news broadcasts and reading newspapers'

'Because I know what symptoms to lookout for and what to do if I am ill'

'Information obtained on media'

'Plenty of information re. Virus but sadly no support on other things.'

'There's is a lot of conflicting advice and information, and the governments decisions are often not clearly explained. What does 'Keep alert' mean???''

'Because I have had very great help from my GP and also the Royal London Hospital & St Barts Hospital'

'I receive information. My husband is contacted by telephone to ask if we need help etc.'

'I get lots of emails from various organisations'

'Clear information available online from the NHS about Covid 19. Not always clear how care for other conditions is being affected e.g. hospital appointments scheduled before the pandemic broke out.'

'I feel I get enough information to make my mind up on what exercise to take'

'the receptionist at GP surgery would not take a prescription renewal request for me and insisted I used the email system which is very difficult to navigate.'

Neutral

'Too much information'

'Haphazard support. Conflicting information'

'A lot of info in how to stay safe not on how to stay healthy within in a budget, and based on availability'

'I can't be sure we are being told everything by the government.'

3) How do you keep updated on the latest advice on staying healthy?

The responses have been ranked from most popular to least.

On-line news: 22%

Other: 22%

TV: 22%

Radio:17%

Newspaper: 11%

Social Media: 6%

Word of mouth: 0%

Respondents who answered 'Other' were asked for more information, from which it appeared that these respondents used the BBC App, google search, emails and all of sources listed. Using this information, the use of On-line news was the most popular choice.

4) Where you aware of Healthwatch City of London before completing this survey?

55.5% were aware

44.5% were not

Experience of Using NHS 111 Survey

The purpose of this survey was to understand residents' experience of NHS 111 as this service took a prominent role in the response to COVID-19

1) Were you aware of NHS 111 before you used the service?

All respondents to the survey were aware of the service before using it.

2) It is helpful for us to know who NHS 111 provided a service to

71.5% themselves
28.5% their partner

3) Did you use NHS 111 because you could not contact a GP?

57% yes
43% no

4) Did you use NHS 111 because you could not contact NHS out of hours service?

14% yes
86% no

5) Who were you advised you to use NHS 111 by?

There were 11 possible answers to this question including: GP, Pharmacist, Neaman Practice Website, Other Website, Nurse, Carer, Other Health Professional, Partner, Family Friend and Other. 14% responded that they were advised by the Pharmacist and 86% by Other. There was no follow up option for this answer.

6) How did you access NHS 111?

86% telephone
14% on-line.

7) Why did you use NHS 111?

The responses have been recorded by popularity

43% COVID-19 Symptoms

29% Emergency but not 999

14% Other medical condition

14% Regarding a prescription

8) If you used NHS 111 by telephone, text phone or BSL. Did the person handling your call understand your condition?

The responses have been recorded by popularity:

72% yes

14% not sure

14% not applicable

0% No

9) Please rate the advice provided?

86% found the advice helpful

14% were neutral

10) What was the outcome of the call or on-line access?

43% were referred to a GP

28.5% were connected to a nurse

28.5% recorded 'other'.

11) For your answer to Question 10 Please tell us more in the Text box provided. For example, if you were advised to visit a hospital which one were you advised to visit?

All the responses to this question are quoted below in the same terms in which they were entered on the survey

'NHS 111 split in to public health to refer general covid-19 questions. it was a great service at 11pm'

'Advised to make an appointment with my GP'

'Albeit doctor's telephone call was late at night, I needed prescription for antibiotic for celluliice (my own GP forgot to send it to pharmacy). Antibiotic was put through my letterbox at 4am that morning (I was wake)'

'I got no advice'

'I was advised to visit the GP as the person on the line was unsure what my issue was'

'Advised to visit Torbay Hospital A&E (we were staying in Devon at the time)'

'We were connected to a nurse who then arranged for a call back from a doctor from our GP practice. This came within an hour'

12) Your overall impression of NHS 111?

72% excellent service

14% neutral

14% very poor service

13) How do you think NHS 111 could be improved?

All the responses to this question are quoted in the same terms in which they were entered on the survey

'If I could have spoken to a nurse or doctor for the same information'

'I had an excellent experience. But I understand that sometimes there is a long wait'

'By responding more proactively'

'To have actual clinicians to talk to / maybe a video service'

'The service provided on this occasion was very good, so no suggestions for improvement resulting from this experience.'

'We called at 4 a.m. and were impressed and reassured by the response given - no improvement in this situation required!'

Access to GP Surgeries during Covid-19 survey

The purpose of this survey was to understand residents' experiences of accessing GP surgeries during COVID-19

1) Have you accessed primary care services (GP services) since the new access rules came in due to Covid-19?

100% yes

2) Which GP surgery have you contacted?

89% Neaman Practice
11% Valentine Practice

3) How did you find out about accessing your GP during Covid-19?

67% telephone
22% website
11% text

4) The following questions are about the website, if you have not accessed the website during Covid-19 please go to Question 10. If you used the website to find out details about accessing GP services how easy to use? (All those that answered the questions on the website used the Neaman)

25% easy
75% difficult or somewhat difficult.

5) Did the website have the right information for access to services?

50% some of the information
25% most
25% all

6) Was the information easy to find on the website?

50% No
25% fairly
25% Yes

7) Was the information on the site accurate?

50% yes
50% fairly

8) What did you think of the advice on the Covid-19 Pandemic?

50% They provided enough information for me
50% They provided some advice I needed

9) Did you think there was enough information on how service delivery has changed due to Covid-19?

25% yes
75% partially

10) Have you phoned the surgery during Covid-19 If no, please go to Question 14

100% yes

11) Could you get through on the phone to arrange an appointment (If no please go to Question 14)?

89% yes
11% no

12) How quickly was your call answered?

22% Within 30 seconds
11% Under 1 minute
33.5% Between 1 & 2 minutes
33.5% Between 2 & 5 minutes

13) Did you get through to the right person?

100% Yes

14) What was the nature of your enquiry?

67% New Medical condition
11% COVID-19
11% Repeat prescription
11% One off prescription

15) The next couple of questions are on GP or nurse appointment. If you were referred to another service, please go to Question 18 How quickly did you get access to the GP or nurse?

86% on the day
14 % within one hour

16) What type of GP or nurse consultation where you offered?

72% call back
14% on-line consultation
14% appointment in the surgery.

17) How easy did you find the method of consultation?

86% easy or very easy
14% neutral

18) What service were you referred to?

40% received a prescription
60% no other service

19) When you contacted the service, did you feel that?

50% received excellent care and support
50% were happy with the service they provided

20) Overall, do you feel that you received a service that was?

100% a very caring service

21) Do you think the support offered to you had changed as a result of Covid-19?

60% yes

40% partially

Analysis

The Community Feedback Survey

The majority of respondents to the Community Feedback survey felt they had the right information to remain healthy during the pandemic. The survey evidenced the importance of on-line services for the provision of news. The total of respondents who recorded On-line, Other and Social Media was 50% used this as their source for advice on staying healthy, only 6% of this number used Social media. Traditional sources TV, Radio and Newspapers still remained important during the pandemic. Newspapers however were only used by just over 10% of the respondents.

Respondents reported that there was plenty of information on the virus, although some of it was conflicting, with one respondent feeling they could not trust the Government, and another concerned about lack of explanation on the Government's decisions.

Individual respondents were positive about support from the NHS, text messages from the Neaman, help from GP and hospitals as well as clear information on the NHS website. A concern was, however, raised about how care for other conditions was being affected.

There were comments about the lack of support on other areas for example remaining healthy on a budget. Support was seen to be haphazard by one respondent and another reported a lack of information from the City until April. One respondent commented that there was too much information.

Over half of those completing the survey had heard of Healthwatch City of London although 45% had not.

Experience of Using NHS 111 Survey

All of those completing the NHS 111 survey were aware of the service before using it. Over 70% were commenting on their own experience of the service. The majority used it because they were unable to contact a GP. 14% of respondents said that they were advised to use NHS 111 by the pharmacist. The survey was not able to identify who advised the remaining 86% who answered 'Other', as there was no follow up option on the Other answer. The majority of respondents accessed NHS 111 by telephone with the most common reason for using the service (given by 43%) being for COVID-19 symptoms.

The majority of the respondents (72%) felt that the person dealing with them understood their condition and that the service was helpful and none said that the person dealing with them did not understand their condition.

The respondents recorded that 43% were referred to a GP, 28.5% were connected to a Nurse. A Nurse was able to arrange a GP call back within an hour in one case and a late-night telephone call resulted in antibiotics being delivered through the caller's letterbox at 4am that morning. When asked to say how the service could be improved, suggestions were for a more proactive service and actual clinicians to talk via video service. 50% of those commenting did not think the service needed to improve. 86% of respondents said that their overall impression of NHS 111 was that it provided an excellent service, though it is striking that 14% rated the service as very poor.

Access to GP Surgeries during Covid-19 Survey

Of those accessing GP services 89% of them used the Neaman Practice and 11% the Valentine Practice. Telephone was the most popular way of finding out how to access the GP, with 75% responding that the Neaman Practice website was difficult to use. Half thought that the website had some of the right information for accessing services and the other 50% thought that most or all of the right information was there. 50% thought the information on the website was correct with the remaining 50% thinking it was fairly correct. When asked if there was enough information on how service delivery has changed due to Covid-19, 25% responded yes and 75% partially. However, only 25% of respondents said that the information was easy to find on the website, with the remainder split equally between those who thought it was fairly easy to find and those who thought that it was not easy to find.

All respondents had telephoned their surgery during Covid-19, with 11% not being able to get through to arrange an appointment. The majority of the calls (66.5%) were answered within two minutes or under. A third of the callers, though, had to wait between two and five minutes for an answer. All respondents felt they got through to the correct person, with 86% of those who were given a GP or nurse appointment getting access to the GP or nurse on the day, and 14 % within one hour. For 72%, the consultation was via a call back, while 14% had an on-line consultation and 14% an appointment in the surgery. 86% of respondents said that they found the method of consultation easy or very easy.

Overall, 100% of the respondents responded that they received a very caring service, with 60% believing that the support offered had changed as a result of Covid-19 and 40% partially.

Comment

The results show that, for the City, the most popular means of accessing health information is via on-line means, supported by TV and radio. Respondents thought there was enough information, but concern was shown about lack of information on other conditions. There was also concern about the support available during the pandemic.

NHS 111 was considered to be an excellent service by the majority of respondents, with most respondents using the service as they could not contact their GP or NHS out of hours service. For 71.5 % of respondents, the outcome of accessing the service was that they were referred to a GP or Nurse, with several examples of good practice being recorded.

Of those accessing GP services, 89% used the Neaman Practice. It is striking that 75% of respondents found the Neaman's website difficult or somewhat difficult to use. This needs to be addressed urgently if the Neaman's website is going to meet residents' expectations as a dependable means of obtaining information about accessing GP services. Although the pandemic did increase pressure on GP services, the fact that a third of respondents had to wait between two and five minutes for their call to be answered is not acceptable and needs to be addressed. Overall, respondents recognised services had changed but they still received a caring service.

Follow up action

The Neaman Practice

This report will be shared with the Neaman Practice. We will be requesting a formal response to the issues raised regarding the website and call response times. In the response we will expect to see an action plan for improvement.

City and Hackney CCG

The survey will be shared with the CCG, requesting that they note the issues identified with the Neaman practice. We will also be asking them to note the comments around the lack of information on other services and requesting that they address these concerns in future emergency action plans.

City of London's Department of Community and Children's Services

This report will be shared with the City of London's Department of Community and Children's Services and we will be asking them to note the comments around other support and in particular the length of time it took for information to come out from the City. We will be writing to them asking for a formal response to the issues raised.

Healthwatch England

The report will be shared with Healthwatch England, we will be emphasising the experience of NHS 111 and the comments on trust and reliability of information provided by authorities. We will also be emphasising the comments on the amount of information available on other services. This report will be used by Healthwatch England as part of their formal response to the pandemic.

City Residents

As our city residents are our principal audience, we will be asking for their feedback on the report using the following email address

info@healthwatchcityoflondon.org.uk