

**COVID-19: health and social care
experiences in Newcastle and Gateshead
Survey report May 2020**

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About Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle are two of 152 local Healthwatch organisations established throughout England on 1 April 2013 under the provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2012. We are the independent voice and champion of users of a range of NHS services and social care for adults, children and young people. We have a dual role to champion the rights of users, and to hold the system to account for how well it engages with the public.

We collect feedback on services from people of all ages and communities. We do this through our network of voluntary and community sector organisations; during events, drop-in sessions and listening events at a range of venues across Gateshead and Newcastle; online through the feedback centre on our websites; via social media; and from callers to our information and signposting helplines. As part of the remit to gather views, we also have the power to ‘enter and view’ services and conduct announced and unannounced visits.

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle are part of Tell Us North CIC (company no. 10394966).

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1. Introduction

A priority at both Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead is to invite patient experiences and stories during the COVID-19 pandemic so that these can be used to inform how services change and adapt to patient needs and experiences during this unprecedented time.

We launched a survey on 21 May 2020 titled 'COVID-19: your experiences of health and social care'. We promoted this via our social media platforms, websites and newsletters. We also got in touch with other organisations seeking support to promote the survey including:

- Voluntary and community sector organisations
- Various stakeholders we have worked with
- GP practices
- Care homes

Our Champions (volunteers) have also been promoting the survey on our behalf.



As the survey is online only, we are also offering phone calls to people who do not have access to the internet so we can call them and complete the survey over the phone.

The survey remains open but we feel it is important to regularly share any key themes with commissioners and service providers as we progress through the COVID-19 pandemic.

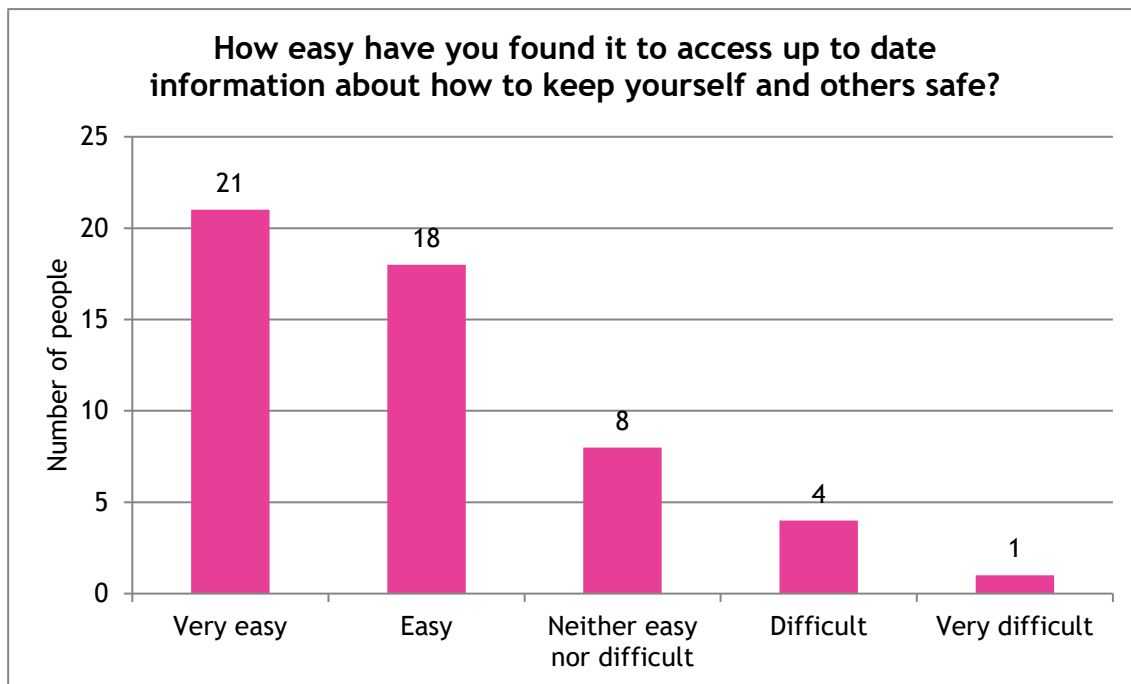
2. Findings

This report presents data gathered between 21 May to 31 May 2020.

By 31 May we had heard from 52 people in total. A summary of the findings is below.

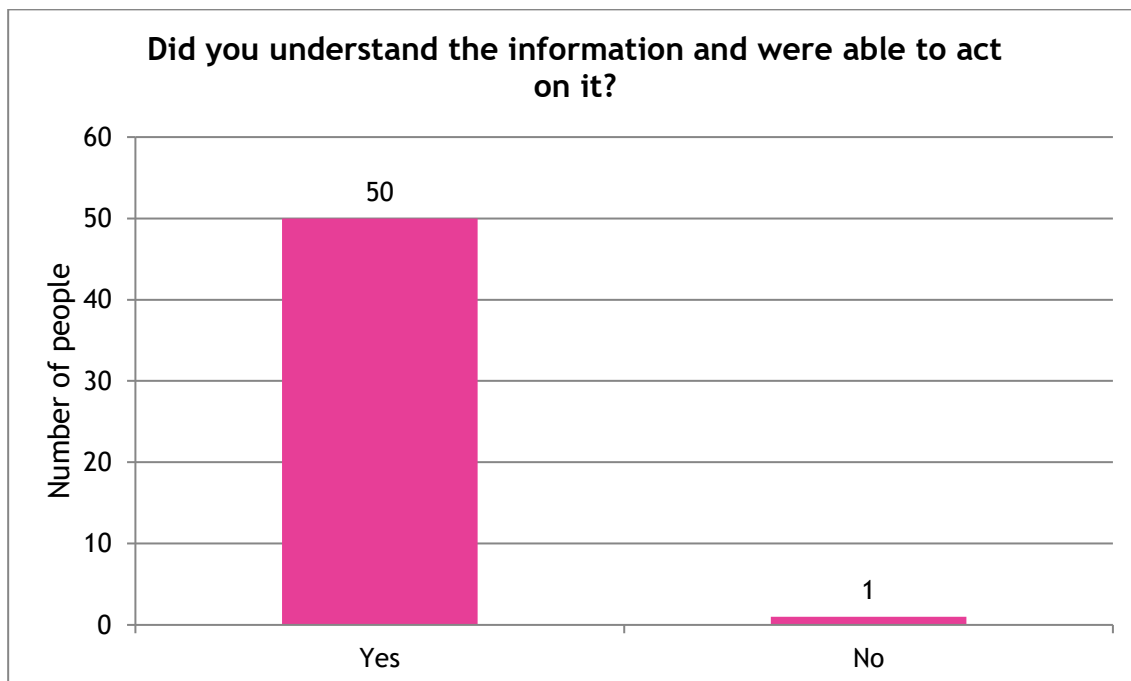
Question one

This graph shows that most people (39) have found it 'very easy' or 'easy' to access information about how to keep themselves and others safe.



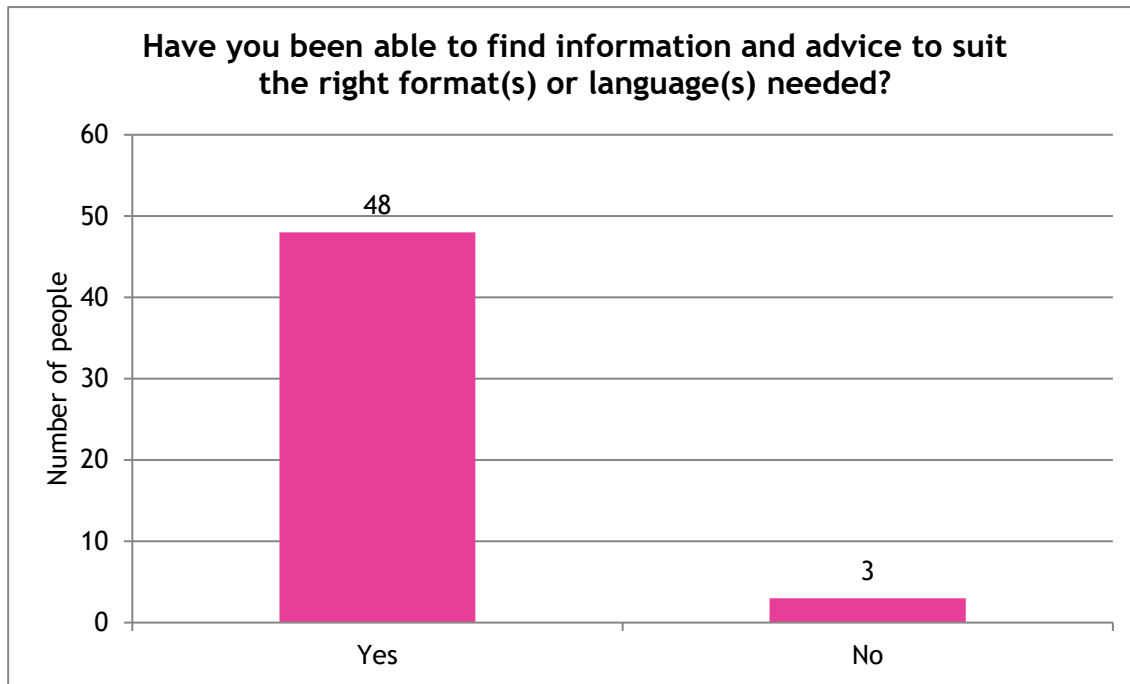
Question two

This graph shows that once people had accessed information, most people were able to understand and act on it. One person skipped this question.



Question three

This graph shows that most people were able to access information in the format they required. One person skipped this question.



Question four

We asked the people who had answered 'no' to question three (three people) to tell us more about their information needs or the information needs of the person they care for.

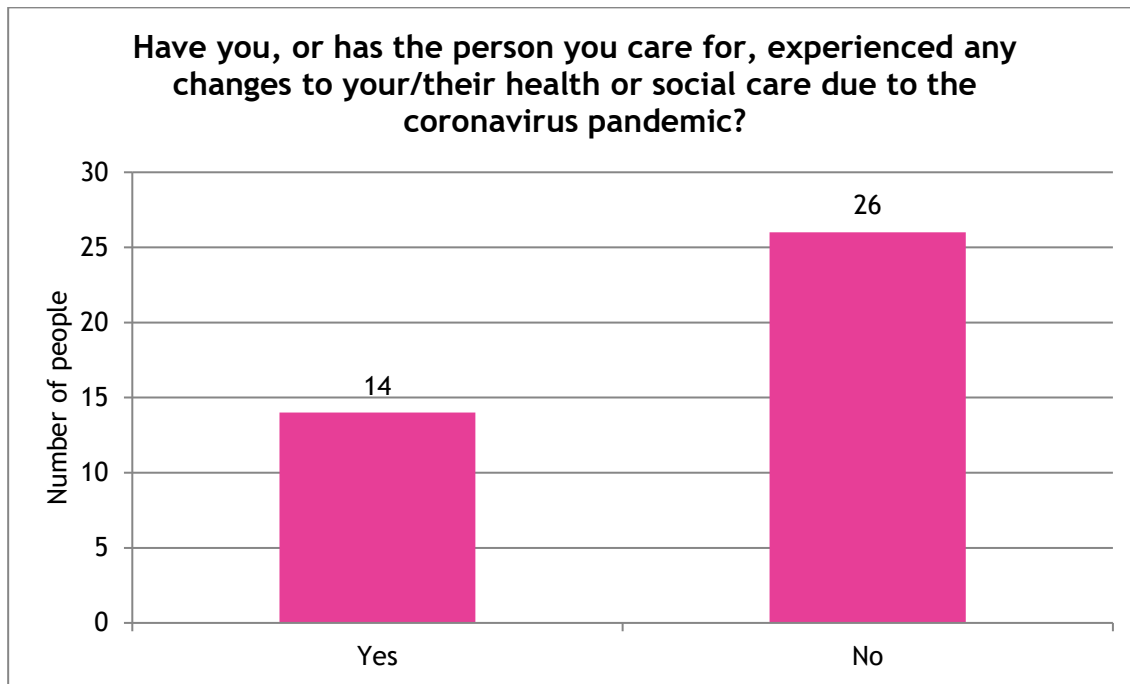
One person needed information in easy read, another required information in another language. The third person specified 'other', stating:

'Language from British government during COVID-19 to be understandable.'

Question five

This graph shows that most people (26), or the people they care for, have not experienced any changes to their health or social care services due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Twelve people skipped this question.



Question six

This question asked people to name the health or social care service where they had experienced changes to their care. As of 31 May, no one had responded to this question.

Question seven

This question asked people to tell us more about their experiences of health and social care services during the coronavirus pandemic.

Eighteen people shared their experiences, while the remaining 34 skipped this question.

Ten of these people told us about the changes they were experiencing in their care. These experiences covered:

- Having remote consultations with GPs (four people).
- Changes to the organisation of prescriptions (i.e. all done via phone or internet and either delivered to their home or collected while abiding by social distancing rules) (three people).
- Relocation of clinics (two people).
- Changes to carers coming into their home (one person).
- Not being able to go to a day centre any more (one person).
- Not being able to get an eye test (one person).

None of these people highlighted any concerns or complaints. In fact, two people noted that their remote GP consultations were good, quick, easy to get and resolved the issue.

In terms of changes to hospital services and clinics, one person highlighted that changes were very well coordinated and helpful, with no issues.

Three people talked about concerns they had about the closure of dentists and opticians. This suggests that it may be useful to do more work to communicate how dental and optical services are working right now.

Two people highlighted that their hospital appointments had been cancelled. These appointments were non-urgent and these people did not express any dissatisfaction with this.

One person highlighted a concern about their mental health and the mental health of the two people they were caring for.

One person over the age of 65 highlighted that they had been contacted by their council to see if there was anything the council could do to support them and the people they care for. This was appreciated. Unfortunately, we don't know which council the respondent was referring to.

Question eight

This question asked people to give us their contact details if they wanted to discuss their experiences with us in more detail. As of 31 May, only three people had completed this question.

At the time of writing, we have not yet been in touch with these people due to our staff capacity. In future reports, any findings from these and other calls will be detailed here.

3. Summary of results so far

At the time of writing the survey had been open for 11 days so the sample size was small. However, some themes are starting to emerge and it will be interesting to see if they continue to do so as the sample size gets bigger.

So far it appears that services have proven very capable to change and adapt to the needs of the population and the pandemic quickly and effectively. This is a testament to the staff working within health and social care.

However, it may be useful for NHS England and local optical and local dental committees to consider how to communicate more widely about how local dental and optical services are working right now. So far, this is the only concern highlighted in the responses.

4. Demographics

The table below shows the demographics of the respondents so far. The survey had only been live for 11 days before looking at the first batch of data.

We do not expect the sample to be fully representative right now but can see that it would be beneficial to do targeted work with men, young people, students, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.

Gender		Sexuality	
Male	8	Heterosexual	35
Female	28	Bisexual	1
Transgender	0	Gay man	0
Unknown	16	Gay woman	0
Age		Other	0
17 and under	0	Unknown	16
18-24	1		
25-49	11	Ethnic groups	
50-64	15	British	36
65-79	8	Irish	0
80+	1	Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
Unknown	16	Other white background	0
Disability		Indian	0
Yes	7	Pakistani	0
No	28	Bangladeshi	0
Unknown	17	Chinese	0
Carer		Other Asian background	0
Yes	8	White & Black Caribbean	0
No	27	White & Black African	0
Unknown	17	White & Asian	0
Employment status		Other mixed background	0
Student	1	Caribbean	0
Employed/self-employed	24	African	0
Not in paid employment	5	Other Black background	0
Retired	6	Arab	0
Unknown	16	Other ethnic background	0
Marital status		Unknown	16
Single	9		
Divorced	4		
Married	17		
Civil partnership	2		
Living with partner	0		
Widow	3		
Unknown	17		

5. Contact details



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