

August 2020

healthwatch

County Durham

News update - August 2020

Help health and social care services recover from COVID-19

Our NHS and social care services need help to know how to improve following the COVID19 crisis. We have the power to make change happen, but we need you to tell us about your experiences of care in County Durham so that we can help rebuild and reset our local NHS together.

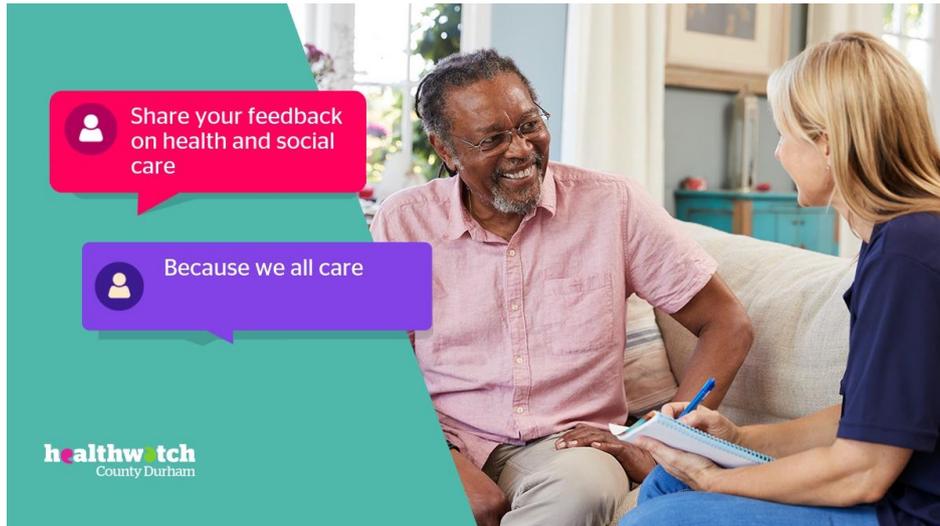
Healthwatch County Durham helps people have their say about local NHS health and social care services. To help us understand more about your experience of using these services during the pandemic we have launched an anonymous, online survey. It only takes five minutes- you can complete it [here](#).

You can also share your experience with us by:

 Calling us on **0800 3047039** (We can talk through the survey with you)

 Email us at healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net

 Text us on **07756 654218**



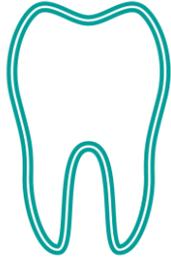
Join our online Board Meeting

The coronavirus outbreak has brought along numerous challenges, including changing the way many of us work. Like the majority of people, the Healthwatch County Durham team have been meeting remotely over the last few months to try and minimise the spread of the virus. Whilst we are still getting used to this new way of working, listening to the views and experiences of the public remains a top priority for us.

The Healthwatch County Durham Board independently contribute to the development and delivery of our strategic work plan, to help improve the health and social care outcomes of the County's residents. All decisions are made in line with the requirements of the Department of Health and Social Care and Healthwatch England, through clear governance, effective strategic planning, and good management. All of our Board members are volunteers with vast experience working in the third sector, health and social care.

If you would like to attend one of our online Board meetings, please email us at healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net or call us on 0800 3047039 and we will send you a meeting invitation. Alternatively, you can email us any experiences or questions relating to health and/or social care services, that you would like to be taken to the board.

Spotlight On Signposting



In July we have had clients contacting us with dental queries. These included people wanting to know when dentists are going to reopen to provide treatment rather than just emergencies. Although we are aware that they are starting to open, there could be a back log of patients that need to be seen. If you have any comments or concerns that you have encountered in the last few months relating to dental treatment, we would like to hear from you.

Contact us at healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net or call us on 0800 3047039

Have you left hospital during COVID-19?

To respond to coronavirus, hospitals in County Durham had to quickly change. Tell us how this has affected the care you or your loved one has received:

If you've been receiving care in hospital there can be lots to think about when you're getting ready to leave, such as any support you will need to help you manage your health and wellbeing. During the coronavirus pandemic the usual processes hospitals follow to discharge you from their care changed to help free up beds. Because of this, if you've been in hospital recently you should have:

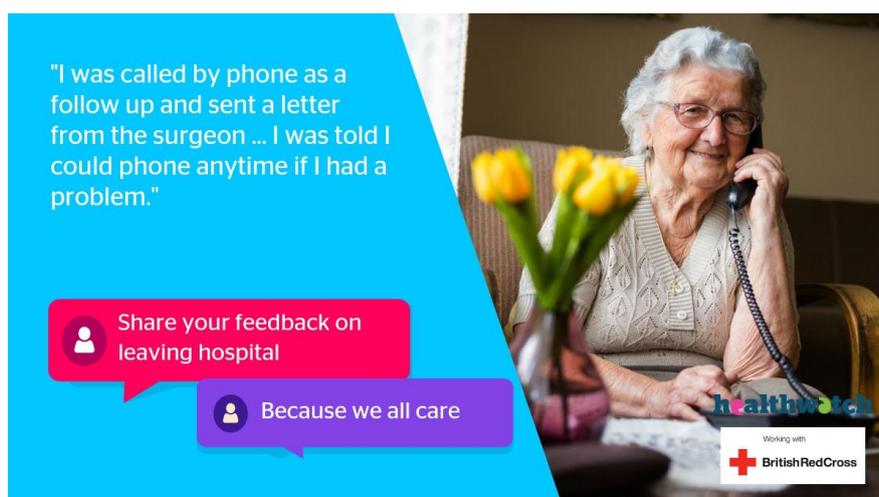
- been discharged within two hours, once you no longer need hospital care
- had your care and support needs assessed once you have left hospital
- been moved to the first available bed in a care home, if you cannot go home
- had any further care or support you need fully funded by the NHS

While these changes have successfully got people out of hospital and helped the NHS manage the demand created by coronavirus, we don't know how the new processes are working for both patients, their families and healthcare professionals.

NHS and social care staff are doing everything they can to support people through this pandemic, but they need your help to spot issues to make sure everyone receives good care. We're working with the British Red Cross to listen to your experiences of leaving hospital, so we can help the NHS and social care services understand how the changes brought in during COVID-19 are affecting people's health and wellbeing - both positively and negatively.

Please take ten minutes to tell us what happened when you or your loved one was discharged from hospital to improve care for everyone. You can also play your part in supporting the NHS to get back on track by sharing our survey with your friends, neighbours and networks.

Click [here](#) to take the survey or call us on 0800 3047039 to talk to us about your experiences- we can provide you with advice and information about local health and care services.



Face Coverings: Protect Yourself and Others

It is now a legal requirement to wear a face covering in shops, supermarkets and on public transport in England. This is to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, as the virus is spread predominantly by droplets from coughs, sneezes and speaking.

A face covering should:

- cover your nose and mouth while allowing you to breathe comfortably
- fit comfortably but securely against the side of the face
- be secured to the head with ties or ear loops
- be made of a material that you find to be comfortable and breathable, such as cotton
- ideally include at least two layers of fabric (the [World Health Organisation](#) recommends three depending on the fabric used)

- unless disposable, it should be able to be washed with other items of laundry according to fabric washing instructions and dried without causing the face covering to be damaged

For further official government guidance, including how to make your own mask and who are exempt from wearing one, please see [here](#)



Updated advice on Shielding

From 1 August, shielding advice is being relaxed further, allowing those shielding to do even more, such as visit shops and places of worship, provided they take particular care to maintain social distancing and minimise contact with others outside their household. People who are shielding will also be able to return to work if they cannot work from home- if you are concerned about returning to work please speak to your employer.

The food and medicine boxes facilitated by the National Shielding Service will stop as of 1 August, with everyone now being advised that they can visit shops and pharmacies.

Other forms of support, such as priority supermarket delivery slots and the NHS Volunteers Scheme - will continue. For further information and the latest advice, please visit the [government website](#).

If you need help you can self refer to the [NHS volunteer responders scheme](#) by calling 0808 196 3646, or you can call us on 0800 3047039 and we can refer you.



Update on Shotley Bridge Hospital

Work on Shotley Bridge hospital has understandably been disrupted due to the coronavirus outbreak. Staff from County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust (CDDFT) have been prioritising the frontline patient care that is required, as well as supporting their teams. Staff within the County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were also deployed to support primary care services during the peak of the pandemic locally where needed. This has meant that the work is now slightly behind the original schedule.

The health and care system across County Durham responded quickly and appropriately to the COVID-19 pandemic, but COVID-19 has not gone away. The challenge for the health and social care system is now to continue safely managing services and care for COVID-19 patients while restarting and recovering those services which had to be paused, to ensure there is safe, quality care available for all of our communities.

The CCG and other local partners are planning to undertake a further programme of engagement during the autumn of 2020. For the time being, the majority of information and opportunities to engage will be based online, by email, over the telephone or through the post to ensure adherence to national guidance on social distancing.

The CCG will be providing further information soon. Please see [here](#) for more details.



Tips for Remote GP Appointments

The pandemic has seen a shift in how we access medical appointments. Most surgeries now offer telephone or video consultations instead of a face-to-face appointment unless absolutely necessary. This is primarily to reduce the transmission of coronavirus, but also enables GPs to speak to patients who are unable to travel due to self-isolation, shielding, or public transport issues.

According to [Which?](#), it's likely that telephone and video appointments will be here to stay long after the current crisis has passed, now that GP practices and many patients have familiarised themselves with the technology.

Here are some simple tips and advice on how to have a successful remote GP appointment:

- when accessing a video appointment, a good internet connection and a device such as a laptop or mobile with a speaker is all you should need
- surgeries will typically send you a link via text or email when it is time for your appointment
- ensure you are in a quiet and private space
- take some notes before-hand including any symptoms, concerns or questions so that you are prepared with what you would like to say
- write down a list of your medicines - prescribed or otherwise so that you can inform your GP
- discuss important things first and stick to the point
- not clear on treatment plan? ask again before your appointment ends
- ask who to contact if you have any more questions
- unhappy? Ask to see another GP

It is important to remember that remote appointments aren't suitable for everyone such as individuals living with multiple conditions or complex health care needs. If you are

unable to access the appropriate technology or don't feel comfortable having a remote appointment, please contact your GP.

If you need any help accessing GP services please call us on 0800 3047039 or email us at healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net

NHS Test & Trace: Important Information

If NHS Test and Trace calls you by phone, the service will be using a single phone number **0300 0135 000**. The only website the service will ask you to visit is contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk.

Contact tracers will **NEVER**:

- ask you to dial a premium rate number to speak to us (for example, those starting 09 or 087)
- ask you to make any form of payment
- ask for any details about your bank account
- ask for your social media identities or login details, or those of your contacts
- ask you for any passwords or PINs, or ask you to set up any passwords or PINs over the phone
- ask you to purchase a product
- ask you to download any software to your device or ask you to hand over control of your PC, smartphone or tablet
- ask you to access any website that does not belong to the Government or NHS

Please be aware, look out for others and stay safe!



Keeping People Connected Durham

Do you/ someone in your household live with a learning disability and/or autism? If so, the Keeping People Connected Service is here to support you, keep you safe and well connected during these difficult times by:

- keeping you up to date with the latest government guidance and help you to understand it
- are available to chat if you are feeling lonely, isolated, worried, anxious or just need someone new to talk to
- staying in touch with you by phone, email, text, video call or on social media (they operate Monday - Saturday 10am-4pm)

You can self refer by calling the Keeping Connected Durham team directly on 01325 489999. If you'd prefer, you can call us on 0800 3047039 and we can refer you.

Keeping People Connected

Supporting adults with learning disabilities and autism across County Durham to keep safe, well and connected

- ★ We can keep in touch by phone, email, text and on social media.
- ★ We can help if you are worried or lonely
- ★ Support you to understand the latest government guidance and keep safe
- ★ Make friends, chat with others safely and take part in daily group video calls.

Call us on
01325 489999
Or email
connect@bridgecreative.org

D.I.A.D. Breaking Through Barriers
Include 'in' Autism
BRIDGE CREATIVE
Keeping Connected
Facebook

County Durham Homestay Service

Are any of these things worrying you?



- Finding suitable accommodation (including supported)
- Any housing issues (Homelessness/eviction processes/arrears etc...)
- Shopping/Food parcels/Prescriptions (for vulnerable people)
- Budgeting
- Debts
- Form filling

- Applying for benefits
- Utilities

If so, [County Durham Homestay service](#) can help by giving some free confidential advice and support. Please get in touch by calling them on 0191 332 4935 or email them GatewayDurham@homegroup.org.uk

Telephone Friendship Service



Age UK are offering a friendship service for people in later life who'd like to talk to someone. You don't need to be feeling lonely (though if you are, they'd like to help), and you don't need to live on your own. Sometimes it's just nice to talk! To sign up for their regular telephone friendship service, where someone calls each week, you need to:

- be over 60
- have your own landline or mobile phone
- be able to hear and be understood over the phone.
- commit to a regular call at the same time each week.

Please click [here](#) to sign up, or call 0800 434 6105

Cutting Down cuts your Risk



Quitting smoking reduces the risks of 16 types of cancer, heart disease and stroke, as well as reducing the risk of severe complications from COVID-19. There's never been a more important time to quit - to get started visit TodayistheDay.co.uk #QuitForCovid



Nearly two thirds of adults in the UK are overweight or living with obesity. Most people gain weight gradually over a long period of time and modern life doesn't always make it easy. Extra weight can make it harder for us to fight against diseases like cancer, heart disease and COVID19 - people living with obesity are twice as likely to be hospitalised with COVID-19. For help and support to lose weight, visit [nhs.uk/BetterHealth](https://www.nhs.uk/BetterHealth)

Be prepared this Flu Season

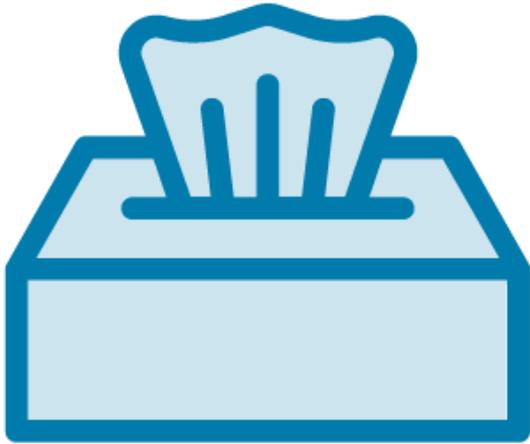
The most comprehensive flu vaccination programme in the UK's history has now been announced by the government. A significant new group will be eligible for the free flu vaccine as people aged 50 to 64 will be invited later in the season for a vaccination.



As part of an unprecedented drive, a free flu vaccine will also be available to:

- people who are on the shielded patient list and members of their household
- all school year groups up to year 7
- people aged over 65, pregnant women, those with pre-existing conditions including at-risk under 2s

You can take a number of precautions during the lead up to winter to reduce your risk of exposure to the flu virus including:



- getting vaccinated
- staying at home if you feel unwell
- wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds (use an alcohol-based hand rub if soap and water are not available)
- avoid touching your nose, mouth, and eyes.
- cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, or cough and sneeze into your upper sleeve(s)
- eat a healthy diet
- get plenty of rest, exercise, and relaxation

For further information on flu including symptoms, treatment and eligibility for the free NHS flu jab, please visit the [NHS website](#).



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