

healthwatch

County Durham

News update - April 2020

Coronavirus important information

The latest advice from the UK Government which is regularly updated can be found on their website [here](#).

Action Fraud have reported a 400% increase in Coronavirus related fraud in March and updated figures show there have been 105 reports to Action Fraud since 1 February 2020, with total losses reaching nearly £970,000.

Further information regarding current scams relating to Coronavirus can be found [here](#).

If you or someone you know could be vulnerable to scams, you can find out more at www.durham.gov.uk/scams or help protect your community from scams and support victims by becoming a Friend Against Scams [here](#).

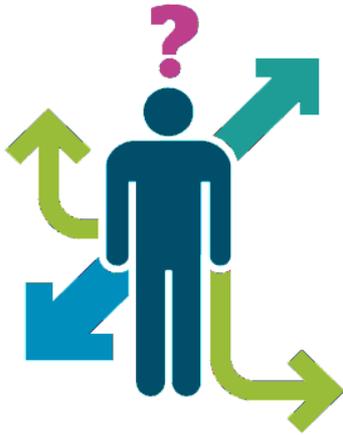
Further information from National Trading Standards can be found [here](#)

Durham Community Action has produced two guides to assist voluntary and community organisations at this unprecedented time:

[Covid-19 Advice for Volunteers](#)

[Covid-19 Good Practice Guide for Volunteer Involving Organisations](#)

Spotlight on signposting



A client called to advise that he had been prescribed the same medication twice in different coloured boxes with the same information on each box. He had not realised and had taken double the amount of medication for 21 days. He contacted the local pharmacy and raised the issue who apologised and followed it up with a letter.

This has had a detrimental effect on the family as the client's wife is his carer and she has now lost all confidence in providing her husband with his medication.

We contacted the lead for the Local Pharmaceutical Committee who advised our client to follow the complaints procedure and to put his complaint in writing with an explanation on how this has impacted on his family.

World Downs Syndrome Day #LotsOfSocks



Our team showed their support for **World Down's Syndrome Day** this year by wearing brightly coloured, odd socks! #LotsOfSocks

Why the odd socks?! Chromosomes actually look a bit like socks!

People with Down's syndrome have an extra copy of the 21st chromosome and wearing bright coloured and mismatched socks is a great way to open up conversations and help raise awareness.

More information on Down's Syndrome can be found [here](#) and local support can be accessed through the Together 21 [group](#) in Newton Aycliffe.

Coronavirus: Your Mental Health



Coronavirus has led to a lot of uncertainty, especially with so much news coverage dominating the TV, radio and social media.

All of this has the potential to impact on your mental health, particularly if you have pre-existing conditions such as anxiety and OCD.

There are actions that you can take to protect yourself though:

- **Stop scrolling** - if you know that the news is increasing your anxiety levels, reduce your exposure, switch off notifications and consider 'unfollowing' for a short while
- **Keep talking** - if you are in self-isolation, or working from home, make sure you keep in touch with friends and colleagues on a daily basis. Most people will feel the same way, so share any concerns you may have
- **Seek the information you need** - inevitably you need to keep up to date with the latest advice and guidance. Restrict yourself to only seeking this information from a reputable source (such as government and NHS websites) and at a specific time of day so that you are not continuously exposing yourself to news updates
- **Keep active** - this can be both physical and mental. You can still do things at home - you can exercise and keep your mind active through reading, doing puzzles and any other hobbies that you may enjoy taking part in
- **Ask for help** - if you are struggling with your mental health, support and advice can still be accessed through the usual means, such as your GP or Support worker, even though their working practices may have been changed

For more information on help and support, visit [mental health.org](https://www.mentalhealth.org) and [Mind](https://www.mind.org.uk).

Could YOU help our NHS?



The NHS is “rallying the troops” for the war on coronavirus, with volunteers being called up to help vulnerable people stay safe and well at home.

The nation is looking for up to 250,000 volunteers to help up to 1.5 million people who have been asked to shield themselves from coronavirus because of underlying health conditions.

Members of the public can sign up quickly and easily at [here](#) to become NHS Volunteer Responders, and can be called on to do simple but vital tasks such as:

- **delivering medicines from pharmacies;**
- **driving patients to appointments;**
- **bringing them home from hospital;**
- **making regular phone calls to check on people isolating.**

A message from your local pharmacy ...

As the UK responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, community pharmacies in Co Durham and Darlington are working tirelessly to ensure that everyone's medicines and healthcare needs will be met over the coming days and weeks.

Pharmacy teams are a critical part of the NHS and in the past weeks they have seen demand for Over-The-Counter (OTC) medicines, other products, advice and reassurance soar.

Pharmacy teams are under intense pressure at the moment, working on the front line of the health service often without any protection for their own health.

To help pharmacies to cope under the increasing pressure, today the Co Durham and Darlington Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC) is asking patients and members of the public to:

- **Avoid pharmacies** if you are showing symptoms of COVID-19: If you have a dry, persistent cough, fever or shortness of breath, please avoid entering your local pharmacies as you would any other healthcare setting.
- **Be patient:** All pharmacies are under immense pressure and working around the clock to ensure that you get what you need.
- **Order medicines as normal:** There is no need to stockpile medicines. Ordering extra prescriptions and buying more over the counter medicines than you need will contribute to disruption to the medicines supply chain, which is otherwise robust.

Pharmacies will remain open wherever possible, but you may see that some are now having to reduce the hours during which they can admit members of the public. This is to ensure that pharmacy teams can carry out tasks such as preparing medicines and restocking shelves so that these vital services can continue safely.

Most pharmacies can be contacted by phone and email, and some have their own websites and social media channels - please use these methods to contact your pharmacies if you are displaying the symptoms of COVID-19.

Greg Burke, Chief Officer of the LPC said:

“Community pharmacy teams are a really important part of the NHS, and like all other NHS workers they are under immense pressure at the moment. We are today asking patients and members of the public to take some very simple steps to help protect these teams so that pharmacies can continue to carry out their critical roles and ensure that everyone continues to get the medicines, help and support they need, when they need it”.

A message from Macmillan ...

**EVEN IF WE'RE NOT HERE
WE CAN STILL HELP**

SEE BELOW FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW YOU CAN ACCESS SUPPORT

The Macmillan Information and Support Centres in County Durham and Darlington NHS Trust are now closed for face-to-face support. However they are still providing support over the phone or by email.

Please do not hesitate to contact one of the numbers below:

01325 743008

01388 455230

0191 333 2815

Please leave a message and they will get back to you as soon as they can.

Or you can email: cdda-tr.macmillancddft@nhs.net

They will aim to get back to you within 24 hours Monday to Friday.

The Macmillan helpline is also open between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday on 0800 808 0000, visit their [website](#) for more info.

Painkillers Don't Exist Campaign



The continued reduction of prescribing of Opioids is an ongoing national focus due to the growing evidence that they are not the best way to treat persistent pain, and can cause significant risk.

Examples of these medications are Morphine, Oxycodone, Codeine, and Pregabalin.

The aim of the campaign, set up by Clinical Commissioning Groups in Durham and Magpie, aims to raise awareness of the issues, dangers and effects of high dose, long-term painkillers, with a 'call to action' to discuss concerns with their GP, for patients on painkillers or suffering with persistent pain.

If you would like more information about painkillers, addiction or the campaign, you can have a look on their [website](#).



Every 15 minutes someone is diagnosed with bowel cancer and it's the UK's second biggest cancer killer but it shouldn't be.

It's treatable and curable especially if diagnosed early. Nearly everyone survives bowel cancer if diagnosed at the earliest stage however this drops significantly as the disease develops.

Early diagnosis really does save lives. Being aware of the key symptoms and visiting your GP if things don't feel right can help increase chances of an early diagnosis.

The symptoms of bowel cancer can include:

- Bleeding from your bottom and/or blood in your poo
- A persistent and unexplained change in bowel habit
- Unexplained weight loss
- Extreme tiredness for no obvious reason
- A pain or lump in your tummy

Most people with these symptoms don't have bowel cancer. Other health problems can cause similar symptoms. If you have one or more of these, or if things just don't feel right, see your GP.

You can find out more info [here](#).

Get involved ...



Mental Health and Insurance Survey

Mental Health UK is running their annual insurance survey, and would like to know your experiences and thoughts on accessing insurance and disclosing a mental health condition.

You can fill in the survey [here!](#)

Available until the 17th April!!



Join your local Parkrun

Parkrun organise free, weekly, 5km timed runs around the world. They are open to everyone, free and are safe and easy to take part in.

You can run or walk and they are a great way to meet new people, do something fun and get fit - all for free!

As this year marks the International Year of the Nurse and Midwife you can join your local parkrun on **May 2nd** with thousands of others to celebrate our wonderful nurses and midwives.

Find your local parkrun [here](#).

Press release: Merger of NHS commissioning groups in County Durham formally approved

The merger of the two collaborating NHS commissioning organisations in County Durham has been formally approved.

NHS England's formal approval means that, as of 1 April 2020, NHS County Durham CCG will replace NHS Durham Dales, Easington & Sedgefield CCG and NHS North Durham CCG.

The new CCG will serve a population of around 550,000 people with a budget of approximately £1bn.

Dr Neil O'Brien has been confirmed by NHS England as the Accountable Officer for the new NHS County Durham CCG as well as for NHS South Tyneside CCG and NHS Sunderland CCG.

Dr Neil O'Brien said: "The merger of the two Durham CCGs into a single 'coterminous' CCG with Durham County Council will harness our already strong record of working closely together for the benefit of the local population.

"We will continue to prioritise our work in transforming services that reduces health inequalities and unnecessary duplication and that will improve efficiency to enable greater investment in frontline services."

The new CCG will retain a focus on local people and local services. This will be driven by the Governing Body, which will continue to have representation from GP practices, lay membership for public and patient involvement, local clinical leaders and senior managers. The CCGs' new [website](#) will launch From 1 April.



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