

September 2020

healthwatch

County Durham

News update - September 2020

Have your say on our Work Plan!

Here at Healthwatch in County Durham we are in the process of planning our work for the next 18 months. We have selected 7 topics, based on some of the things that have been happening with health and social care over the last few months. We would really like you to rank these for us, letting us know which ones are most important to you. To do this we have created a short survey which will run until 18th September. Please take a few minutes to complete our survey by clicking [here](#).

If you have any friends or relatives who you think might want to contribute but do not have access to the internet, then please call or email us and we can arrange to either ring them or send the survey to them in the post.

As a thank you, if you wish, you can add your contact details and be entered into a draw- one person will be selected at random to receive a £50 supermarket voucher which can be accepted or donated to a local foodbank/charity.

Always remember if there is anything you would like to share with us about your health or social care experiences you can always contact us:



 Call us on **0800 3047039**

 Email us at healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net

 Text us on **07756 654218**

Join Our Online Board Meetings



Like the majority of people, the Healthwatch County Durham Board and team have been meeting remotely over the last few months to try and minimise the spread of the COVID-19. 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.

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

We've taken several calls just recently from clients considering moving to another GP practice. If you are planning to register with another practice here are some helpful pointers for you:

It's always worth comparing different surgeries so that you are clear on what facilities and services they provide and how accessible they are. You can also look at their performance and how well they are doing. Talking to family and friends about their GP practice is worth doing too.

You do have the legal right to choose a GP practice that best suits your needs. The GP practice must accept you, unless there are reasonable grounds to refuse you. The practice cannot refuse you on the basis of race, gender, social class, age, religion, sexual orientation, appearance, disability or a medical condition.

Once you've chosen a new practice you'll have to submit a registration form to the practice.

Some of the reasons why the practice may refuse to register you include:

- a lack of capacity to take on new patients
- you don't live within the practice boundary
- because of your circumstances it may be inappropriate for you to register with a practice that's a long way from where you live

For more in-depth information please see [here](#), or call us on 0800 3047039

Taking Part in the COVID-19 Testing Research Study

Our Research & Information Officer, Denise, recently took part in the COVID-19 testing research study. Here she shares her experience:

"Last month I received a joint letter from Department for Health and Social Care, MORI, Ipsos and the NHS asking me if I would be willing to take part in a research study which would mean undertaking a COVID-19 test at home. At first I wasn't sure and left the letter on my coffee table for a few days. I then received a follow-up letter and thought that perhaps I should take part in the research as it might help with the bigger picture of infection rates. I was not experiencing any symptoms. I followed the instructions in the letter and logged on-line with my reference code and signed up. All the information tells you that it's important to understand you can change your mind about taking the test at any time. So, 4 days after signing up the kit was delivered, it consisted of the items below and a sealed container with the swab and the specimen bottle" :



"I read the instructions a couple of times and watched the YouTube video of using the testing kit and then booked my pick-up day. I had to be up early on the day of testing as it has to be completed before the courier arrives and that can be from 8am onwards. It was a little bit uncomfortable putting the swab on your tonsils and up your nose, but not too bad. I was careful to follow the instructions about keeping everything clean and washing my hands. Once it was done, it was popped in the fridge waiting to be picked up. I wasn't given a pick up time initially, but that morning I received a text message giving me a 2-hour pick-up slot, which was useful as I could make sure I listened for the courier. Off my sample went and 5 days later I received my results by email and text message, followed by a letter. I tested negative for the virus which means at the present time I do not appear to have COVID-19, but I still need to follow all the guidance to stay safe and protect others. I was also asked to complete a short online survey, which I did the same day after the test was completed. Anyway if you get randomly selected to take part, like me, you can consider whether you want to be part of the national survey."

If you would like to take part in COVID-19 research, the NHS are currently looking for people to sign up for *Coronavirus vaccine research*. For more information, including eligibility and how to get involved, please click [here](#).

Behind the Mask

One of our volunteers, Andrea, is currently carrying out a research project called 'Behind the Mask', which aims to discover the effects of personal protective equipment (PPE) and distancing on communication in health, social care and wellbeing services. Funded by Durham University Covid-19 Response Fund, it draws on the experiences of people who give and receive care under Covid-19 restrictions. The study learns from its participants to:

- identify the behaviours and technologies that break through the communication barriers caused by masks, remote consultations, and the denial of caring touch
- identify the limitations of care which lacks face-to-face contact and touch
 - identify any changes that have had the effect of improving the way we communicate in health and care.

If you are over 18 and living in the UK you can participate. Especially welcome are health and care service users and patients, family members and informal carers, and people who work in health and social care. The survey can be completed anonymously, but you can add your contact details if you'd like to be interviewed and/or take part in discussion groups.

It's simple to take part - just click [here](#) to complete the online survey.

The findings will shape recommendations for policy, practice and product development, with the aim of making communication easier in the delivery of health and social care during Covid and beyond.

If you would like further information about the study, or would like to know about Andrea's findings when all the data has been collected and analysed, please contact Andrea at andrea.r.lambell@durham.ac.uk. If you would like to withdraw from the study at any point, you can also contact Andrea.



Freephone line for those in Mental Distress

Whatever your age, if you are experiencing a mental health crisis you can call [Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust](#), free of charge on their freephone number **0800 0516 171**. The line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for those living in County Durham, Darlington, Teesside, North Yorkshire and York. People with learning disabilities and/or autism can also contact crisis services using this number.

Advice and information on what to do in a mental health emergency is available on their [website](#).

Call us free of charge...

in a mental health emergency.

Contact your local TEWV crisis service on

FREEPHONE. 0800 0516171

Advice on what to do in a mental health emergency is available on our website
www.tewv.nhs.uk/crisisadvice



Yoga 4 Health: Improve your Health and Wellbeing

The Yoga4Health Yoga on prescription 10-week programme supports NHS patients to gain self-care skills by learning yoga, breathing, relaxation and mindfulness techniques. No prior experience is needed, and the gentle stretching and strengthening yoga postures can be done in a chair or on a yoga mat.

Each of the ten two-hour sessions are led by an expert Yoga4Health teacher and include:

- breathing practices
- simple yoga postures
- meditation and mindfulness
- relaxation
- group discussion



The Yoga4Health evidence-based programme was commissioned by the NHS and created by the Yoga in Healthcare Alliance. It fuses the wisdom of ancient practices with modern medical science. The programme's benefits have been validated by Westminster University. Yoga4Health are inclusive and secular and do not promote any religious position.

There are two ways to join the programme:

1. Discuss with your GP or Social Prescribing Link Worker.

2. Self-refer by contacting your local [Yoga4Health](#) teacher directly.

Jacqui Gunnion is a Consett based yoga teacher and a local Yoga4Health instructor. You can email her at jgunnion@btinternet.com or text/call her on 07759990047 if you are interested in getting involved. Have a look at her [website](#) or [Facebook page](#) for more information.

Happiness Hubs Grant Scheme

Launched by County Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and managed by the Pioneering Care Partnership, 'The Happiness Hubs Fund' welcomes applications from Voluntary and Community organisations operating within County Durham and Darlington. These organisations must want to implement and deliver community based activities that will have a positive effect of mental health and emotional wellbeing, thus enabling residents to live a happier, healthier and safer life. Grants of between £500 - £5,000 are available and the project should be completed within 12 months.

To find out more and request an application, or join a Zoom Event contact Happiness.Hubs@pcp.uk.net or call Jane Cunningham on 07715 204462. The closing date for applications is Sunday 20th September 2020 at midnight.



Karbon Homes Silvertalk Volunteering Opportunities

[Karbon](#) runs a telephone befriending service for over 55's, Silver Talk. Since the coronavirus pandemic hit the UK 4 months ago the demand for Silver Talk has rocketed and the number of people who receive a weekly social call from one of their volunteers has tripled. As a result, Karbon are looking for people to help out to ensure that the service is able to continue.

Are you interested in becoming a Silver Talk volunteer?

The minimal weekly commitment needed would be 45 minutes, which would allow you to make one, up to 30 minute call, and have time to update notes on the system. However, the more time that can be committed each week the more service users you'd be able to help!

The volunteering can be carried out from home and a mobile phone will be provided. When it is safe to do so Karbon will be reopening their hub spaces in Stanley and Hexham for volunteers to make calls from, and come the time travel expenses to and from these hubs will be covered.

More information on volunteering, including a volunteer role description, can be found on their [website](#). Alternatively, Silverlink coordinators are happy to answer any questions and chat about the volunteer roles and the service. They can be reached via email, silvertalk@karbonhomes.co.uk, or by phone on 0191 223 8662.

My Wellbeing Space: Support for Cancer Patients

My Wellbeing Space is a new app, now launched within [County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust](#), which has been developed to help patients during and after cancer treatment by providing good quality information and support, whenever they need it. The free app contains links to resources and advice including:



- new diagnosis
- cancer treatments
- emotional wellbeing
- fatigue
- physical activity
- food and nutrition
- late effects of treatment
- financial concerns

Bite-sized video clips featuring real-life local people, including a patient, specialist nurse, GP, wellbeing practitioner and oncologist provide lots of advice to help those with cancer live well. As well as hints and tips to help improve wellbeing, the app provides details of organisations that can provide more support.

To register for the app, please speak to your hospital cancer care team, pop into one of the local Macmillan Information Centres (at Darlington Memorial Hospital, Bishop Auckland Hospital or the University Hospital of North Durham), call the Macmillan Information Centre on 01325 743008 or email cdda-tr.macmillanccddft@nhs.net. They will need your name, NHS number, date of birth, email address and mobile number (if possible) to get you started.

Horizon Young Carers Service



Horizon Young Adult Carers Service is a specialist Transitions support service for Young Adult Carers, aged between 14 -25 years in County Durham. The service ensures that Young Adult Carers are heard, able to access appropriate services, gain confidence, have choices in life and the opportunity to achieve their aspirations.

Horizon are currently providing virtual support via telephone support, Zoom support groups, text, e-mail, with a hope to restart more 1-1 in person contact in the near future (following Government Guidelines).

Contact Horizon Young Adult Carers Service on 01325 731160 or e-mail them at info@humankindcharity.org. All enquiries are welcome.

Local Outbreak Engagement Board



Durham County Council have a local outbreak plan in place to help control an outbreak of COVID-19. If you have any COVID related questions for the Local Outbreak Engagement Board, you can contact them at hwb@durham.gov.uk. Questions will be discussed at the meetings and responses will be posted online.

Please see [here](#) for more information.

New North East and North Cumbria Suicide Prevention Network Website



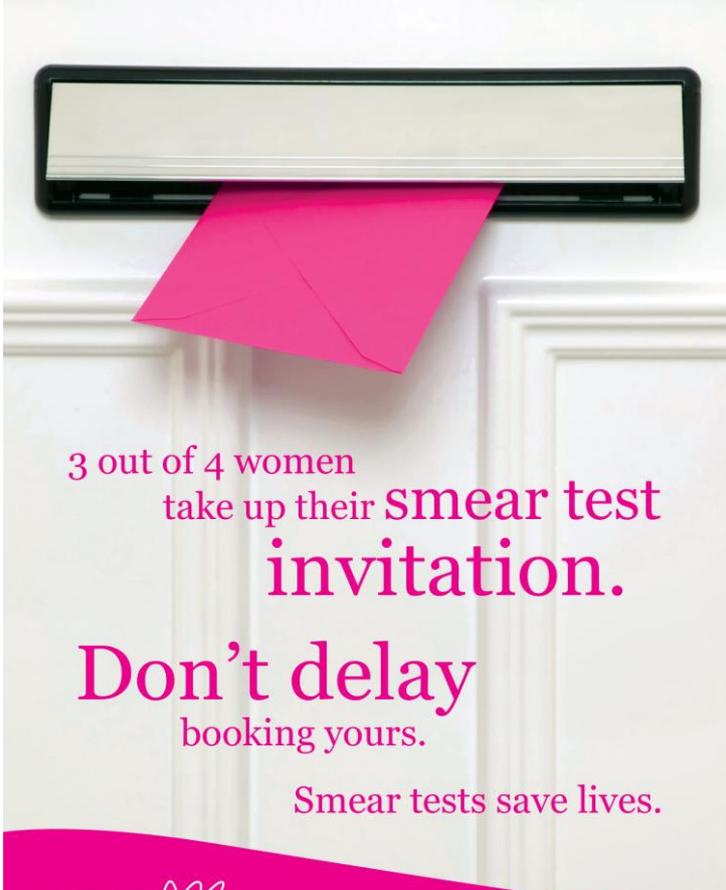
The North East and North Cumbria's Suicide Prevention Network website is now live, providing resources for people seeking help about suicide and mental wellbeing, and those working in suicide prevention. It also includes guidance for those who have been bereaved by suicide, making good information easily accessible to those that need it.

Please click [here](#) to find out more.

Cervical Screening: Don't forget to book yours!

The north east has some mixed rates when it comes to cervical screening with some areas as low as 60%, some as high as 90%. If you've missed your appointment over the last 6 months don't hesitate to re-book your screening. Safety measures have been put in place to ensure you are safe during your appointment- don't forget to wear your face covering (unless you are exempt).

For further information and advice visit the [Jo's Cervical Cancer Trust](#) website or call their helpline on 0808 802 8000.



3 out of 4 women
take up their **smear test**
invitation.

Don't delay
booking yours.

Smear tests save lives.

Jo's cervical
cancer **trust** 

Call our helpline:
0808 802 8000

Find us online:
jostrust.org.uk

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