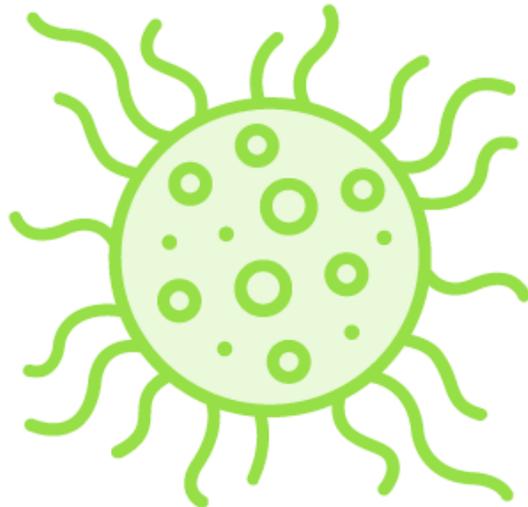


COVID19 Vaccination Report

In response to COVID-19, the NHS has launched one of the largest public vaccination programmes ever. To help local services and national policymakers understand how they can improve the vaccination programme, Healthwatch County Durham circulated and promoted a survey, developed by Healthwatch England in February 2021. Our latest report looks at what people in County Durham think about the vaccination programme, as well as offering some recommendations following people's feedback. You can read the report [here](#)



Spotlight on Signposting

A client contacted us as she felt that her son should have been called for his Covid-19 vaccine. He is 35 and has autism but it was more about what medication he is on. She called 119 and they advised her to call his GP practice. She did, and they advised that he would be in priority 11 because of his age and not about the medication that he is on which she thought would make him be in the priority 6 category which covers clinically extremely vulnerable people. This is when she contacted us.

We called the GP practice on her behalf and after they had a discussion with the GP it was confirmed that the immunosuppressant that he was taking had been prescribed by the hospital and therefore had not been highlighted on the system. This has been

rectified and the practice confirmed that he would be asked to come for his first vaccine within the next couple of days. The client was very happy with the outcome.

If you would like help with a health or social care query, our dedicated signposting and information team are available to listen, help and advise:

☎ Call 0800 3047039

✉ Text 07756 654218

✉ healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net



Finding out about your experiences of receiving support from homecare services since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

Last year we asked the public to vote on the services that they thought Healthwatch County Durham should look at in more detail. Homecare services in County Durham was one of the priorities selected and we are pleased to be able to give service users an opportunity to share their views and experiences.

If you receive care and support in your own home we would really like to hear from you and/or your family about the support you have received since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. This includes things like what has worked well and also if you think there is anything that could have been better, as well as finding out about how isolated you feel you have been. Any information you share with Healthwatch County Durham is confidential and will not be passed on. Please complete our short survey [here](#)

Alternatively, you can complete our survey over the telephone. Call us for free on **0800 304 7039** (Please leave a voicemail if we miss you, and we will call you back).

Wishing you a Safe and Happy Easter!

The government lifted the 'stay at home' order on 29th March, meaning that we are now able to enjoy a little bit more freedom over the Easter weekend. You are now allowed to:

- Meet outdoors either in a group of 6 (from any number of households), or in a group of any size from up to 2 households (a household can include an existing support bubble, if eligible)
- Take part in formally organised outdoor sports with any number of people (outdoor sports venues and facilities will be able to reopen)
- Childcare and supervised activities are allowed outdoors for all children
- Formally organised parent and child groups can take place outdoors for up to 15 attendees. Children under 5 will not be counted in this number

However it is vital we continue to follow the many restrictions that remain in place. You must not socialise indoors with anyone you do not live with or have formed a support bubble with. You should continue to work from home if you can, 'stay local' and minimise the number of journeys you make where possible. You should [get a test](#) and follow the [stay at home guidance](#) if you have COVID-19 symptoms. And please continue to follow the 'hands, space, face' rules. To read the latest Coronavirus guidance about what you can and cannot do, please see [here](#).

We will be closing for the Easter weekend at 5pm on Thursday 1st April 2021 and will reopen at 9am on Tuesday 6th April 2021. Although this Easter may still be a different one, we hope you manage to have a happy and healthy break!



It's Bowel Cancer Awareness Month

Every 15 minutes someone is diagnosed with bowel cancer in the UK. It's the second biggest cancer killer. But it shouldn't be, as 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. Being aware of the key symptoms and visiting your GP if things don't feel right can help increase chances of an early diagnosis, and could save your life. 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, but if you have one or more of these, or if things just don't feel right, see your GP. For more information visit bowelcanceruk.org.uk

Feeling stressed, anxious or depressed?

If so, Talking Changes can help

Talking Changes is an NHS-led self-help and talking therapies service that specialises in helping individuals to overcome common mental health problems such as stress, anxiety and depression. They are committed to improving the mental health of those living in County Durham & Darlington and aim to provide the highest quality of care to all of their patients.

Talking Changes is currently running online depression and anxiety courses via Microsoft Teams*. Each Course session is 75 minutes long and occurs weekly, over 6 consecutive weeks. The Courses aim to provide you with the necessary knowledge, skills and techniques to better understand and cope with your difficulties. The course is based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, which is proven to be clinically effective in reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression. Although this is not group therapy and there is no expectation to disclose personal details regarding your individual problems. Active

participation in the 'interactive' workbook-based exercises is expected and there will be opportunities to ask questions and provide feedback throughout. *Please note as Microsoft Teams is used to broadcast/deliver the courses live, patients are able to attend anonymously (i.e. you will be able to see the presenters however nobody will be able to see or hear you).

You can self-refer into the service via their [website](#) or by calling **0191 333 3300**. When you call into the service, the admin team will book you into a 30-40 minute telephone assessment call. If the assessor feels that the online depression or anxiety course would meet your needs for the difficulties you are experiencing, you will be offered a place. They may discuss alternative options with you if it is felt that the Courses or the service would not be suitable for you currently.



Act F.A.S.T.

A stroke is a serious life-threatening medical condition that happens when the blood supply to part of the brain is cut off. Strokes are a medical emergency and urgent treatment is essential. The sooner a person receives treatment for a stroke, the less damage is likely to happen. **If you suspect that you or someone else is having a stroke, phone 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance.**

The main symptoms of stroke can be remembered with the word FAST:

- **Face** - the face may have dropped on 1 side, the person may not be able to smile, or their mouth or eye may have dropped.
- **Arms** - the person with suspected stroke may not be able to lift both arms and keep them there because of weakness or numbness in 1 arm.

- **Speech** - their speech may be slurred or garbled, or the person may not be able to talk at all despite appearing to be awake; they may also have problems understanding what you're saying to them.
- **Time** - it's time to dial 999 immediately if you see any of these signs or symptoms.



Support for Key Workers in County Durham and Darlington

If you are a key worker in County Durham or Darlington and need emotional or mental health support, help is out there. Across our area, there's a range of telephone, email and online support available. Pick up the phone, email or go online and talk to emotional and mental health experts about how you are feeling and get the right support you need as soon as possible. The [North East & North Cumbria Staff Wellbeing Hub](#) offers wellbeing support, various events and training opportunities. Further support options can also be found [here](#)

MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR KEY WORKERS IN COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON



Create memories using the power of the arts!

[Unforgettable Experiences](#) is a new virtual service, with an innovative approach to supporting older people with dementia, those with neurological conditions and/or mental health concerns. The service aims to connect people with the arts, culture and heritage sectors, supporting their self-care, improve their emotional wellbeing, reduce isolation and improve their quality of life. If you are interested, or knows someone who may be, now is the time to begin your/ their journey:

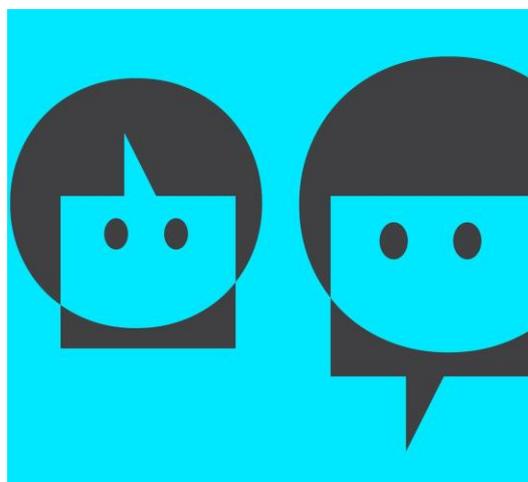
1. **Simply get in touch**- Once they hear from you, the service will organise a call to understand your needs and explain how they can help.
2. **Receive Technical Support**- They find out what technology help you might need and match you with our Digital Activity Buddy to help you each week.
3. **Participate in an artistic session of your choice**- Choose from art, music, creative writing, history, photography and performing arts. Join their therapeutic sessions twice per week with or without your loved one.

It's that simple! Contact Unforgettable Experiences on **01325 238007** or email them at info@unforgettableexperiences.org.uk. More information about the service is also available on their [website](#)



Kooth: Support for Young People

Kooth is a web based confidential support service, commissioned by the NHS and Local Authorities, for young people aged 11-18. It is a safe and secure means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support and is designed specifically for young people. For more information please visit their [website](#) or visit [Durham Locate](#). Other support services for children, young people and their families are detailed [here](#)



Aspire Womens' Support Services

Weekly and Social Support Groups:

- Mature Friends- friendship group for women over 50
- Monday Social- informal chat & networking group for all women
- Positive Progress- structured peer support, sharing ways to cope
- Positive Changes- coping with Covid changes together

Appointments for One to One Support:

- Confidential Listening Service- talk with a trained listener
- Check In + Chat- telephone befriending with a regular catch up call

Monthly All About Drop Ins:

- Domestic Abuse & Violence- support facilitated by volunteer DVA champions, first Friday of the month
- Suicide & Self-harm- support facilitated by volunteer Stay Safe Champions- third Friday of the month

Available for Collection:

Themed essentials pack to support the needs of women affected by lockdown, poverty and trauma, including domestic violence and abuse.

All services are risk assessed and operating under strict social distancing or online. For more information or to register please email sisters@aspire-northeast.co.uk or call their support team on 0191 389 1504



Rollercoaster Support Group

Are you a parent or carer supporting a child or young person with any kind of emotional or mental health difficulty?

The Rollercoaster Support Group offers practical advice and support, training opportunities and regular meetings.

Contact can be made with the team by calling them on **07377 213**

952, emailing support@rollercoasterfs.co.uk or following them on their [Facebook page](#)



Understanding Sensory Processing: Workshop

Free online sessions for parent or carers in the North East:
(Hosted by Contact in partnership with Sensory Worx on behalf of North Cumbria and North East ICS (NHS England and NHS Improvement))

- Friday 16th April 2021 10:00 - 12:00 - [Book here](#)
- Wednesday 5th May 2021 19:30 - 21:30 - [Book here](#)
- Tuesday 18th May 2021 13:00 - 15:30 - [Book here](#)

These online Zoom workshops will be presented by Claire Stirland of Sensory Worx. Claire is an Occupational Therapist and Sensory Integration Therapist with over 14 years' experience in the NHS. This session will give you an opportunity to:

- learn more about sensory processing and sensory integration
- reflect on your child's sensory needs (and your own) and how these might change over time
- consider the impact of sensory needs on other family members/care givers and in different environments
- identify new approaches to supporting the challenges and opportunities of sensory issues
 - explore how you can obtain further help and guidance if you need it

- hear from other parents, sharing as much or as little as you wish about your own situation

This is an accessible session - you are welcome to stay muted or off camera, and the team are understanding if you have any distractions. For further details please contact jaime.dowling@contact.org.uk



Council Tax discounts for persons who suffer from a severe Mental Impairment...

Did you know that council tax bills could be reduced for people who are severely mentally impaired?

If you have been diagnosed by your doctor as suffering from a condition or illness that is classed as a severe mental impairment or care for someone who does, you may be entitled to receive a reduction or exemption on your council tax. This can include people who suffer from illnesses such as Alzheimer's, Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's or other similar conditions and those with severe learning difficulties.

Those living alone don't pay any council tax at all, while those living with another person - often their carer - qualify for a 25% reduction. To find out more and to make an application please see [here](#)

Change, loss and bereavement: Mental Health Foundation Support

During the coronavirus outbreak we have all been through enormous change, and some of us are experiencing loss of different types, including the profound loss experienced when someone close to us dies. The Mental Health Foundation have a dedicated [page](#) on

their website with information and advice around change, loss and bereavement. Some things that they suggest may help are:

- Allowing yourself to feel your feelings
- Contact a bereavement charity
- There is no time limit to grief
- Take care of your body
- Do something that is going to make you feel good
- Give to others
- Be honest with children
- Different ages and cultures may react differently to change and loss

To access the page in full, including who to contact if you feel you need further support, please see [here](#)



NHS gives women Human Papillomavirus Virus (HPV) home testing kits to cut Cancer deaths

More than 31,000 women will be offered kits to carry out smear tests in the privacy and convenience of their own homes in a trial, NHS England has announced. The swab tests will be posted to women or given out by a GP to increase take-up of screening for the Human Papillomavirus Virus (HPV), which can lead to cervical cancer.

The home swab is a simple way for women to do the test themselves, rather than have one done for them by a general practice nurse. They will go to women aged 25-64 years who are 15 months overdue for a check and live in Barnet, Camden, Islington, Newham and Tower Hamlets where screening appointment attendance is low. It is the first time home smear tests have been trialled in England and is being rolled out through 166 GP practices, as part of the national NHS Cervical Screening Programme.

Research has shown that embarrassment is often a key underlying reason for women not attending a smear test appointment, as well as cultural barriers and fear about what it involves. The YouScreen study will run until December 2021. For more information about the study, please see [here](#)



Ongoing Advice and Support: Diabetes UK

Anyone affected by diabetes can continue to access information and support through the following channels:

- Regional [Facebook Group](#) - Diabetes Chat: Your friend in the North.
- Diabetes UK's Helpline: Call: **0345 123 2399** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm) or email: helpline@diabetes.org.uk
- Coronavirus advice web pages: please see [here](#)
- Diabetes UK's Learning Zone: please see [here](#)
- Diabetes and exercise page: please see [here](#)
- Exercise and blood sugar levels page: please see [here](#)

NHS England have updated their online booking system for Covid-19 vaccine appointments. If you are in vaccine priority group 6 (including all adults with diabetes) and live in England, you can now book an appointment to receive your vaccine via the [NHS website](#)

Get Involved...

Persistent Musculoskeletal Pain? - Share your Views!

Persistent musculoskeletal pain is common and researchers at Teesside University are keen to understand your beliefs about this subject. We have agreed to share this 5-10 minute survey which forms part of a PhD study at Teesside University. The results of this anonymous survey can be shared with our local healthcare services who may consider the findings when reviewing current services for persistent musculoskeletal pain. Further study details and contact details for further questions can be found [here](#)



User testing of App designed to detect early signs of Dementia

As part of a growing movement to help restart dementia research at University College London (UCL) following COVID-19, Dr Jonathan Rohrer and his team are launching 'Ignite' - a cognitive assessment app that is designed to detect early signs of dementia. UCL researchers are searching for healthy participants to test Ignite app designed as a new tool to detect early signs of dementia. The app has the potential to reach a large number of people as it can be done at home without the assistance of a researcher.

Ignite tests a wide range of cognitive domains, from attention and problem-solving to emotion recognition, through to fun, game-like thinking tasks. By utilising remote methods of testing, Ignite has the potential to reach a large number of people as it can be done at home without the assistance of a researcher. Before Ignite can be used to detect early signs of dementia, the app needs to be validated in a healthy control population.

“We are asking as many people as possible from the general population to help test Ignite by downloading the app and completing the assessment at home” explained Dr Jonathan Rohrer, Principal Investigator at the Dementia Research Centre.

Ignite takes 30 minutes to complete, and participants need to have an iPad and be aged between 20 and 80 years old. The Ignite app could be extremely important, not only in helping to restart dementia research at UCL following COVID-19, but as a new tool that can detect early signs of dementia.

If you would be interested in supporting this work or know someone who would be please share this information. The app can be downloaded [here](#)



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Meadowfield Industrial Estate
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DH7 8XL

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