



Tees Valley
Clinical Commissioning Group

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Jennifer Metcalfe
Healthwatch Stockton-on-Tees
Catalyst House
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Dear Jennifer

Re: Report on living with Covid-19

Thank you for sharing the report with the Clinical Commissioning Group. This is really timely and will assist us in understanding the experience of local people during these unprecedented times. We are particularly interested in experiences of the necessary changes to the way health services are accessed and this report will help inform our plans on recovery following the initial phase of the pandemic.

It is perhaps to be expected, but powerful nonetheless to read that people stated that they were experiencing increased levels of anxiety, low mood and the worsening of pre-existing mental health conditions. This is certainly something that is understood and is being discussed nationally and locally.

Details of where people sought advice and information from was interesting, and we can consider this when we are seeking to communicate and engage with local people – this is really helpful intelligence. Similarly, what has helped keep people well and helped them cope during this time is also really useful and has provided valuable insights for us.

With regards to the recommendations, please see our response below:

1. North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Trust to consider providing residents with health and wellbeing guides. The guides in booklet format can be delivered through the post to residents homes

We note that you are already aware that local residents have received the Wellbeing and Mental Health during Covid-19: A guide to looking after yourself and others developed for the region by Cumbria, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust in partnership with Every Life Matters.

2. Those delivering health and social care services need to make it clear why appointments, treatments and service provisions are being cancelled.

We have worked with Trusts to understand how we can move towards recovery following the initial urgent response stage of managing Covid19. Significant consideration has been given to understand how we can safely and effectively reinstate routine treatments and interventions that were required to pause during the initial phase of the Covid19 response. All services should now be available to local people.

3. Services need to be in regular contact with all women receiving antenatal and postnatal care.

We have worked closely with maternity services and health visiting services to understand how they were keeping in touch with women in relation to their antenatal and postnatal care. Based on the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and Public Health English guidance non-essential face to face contacts were reduced and the service provided:

- Telephone contacts with all women prior to 16 week appointment
- Verbal and written information provided
- Website with key links and downloaded information leaflets
- Advice line

4. Maternity services to promote and encourage the use of mental health support services and information and guidance to support mothers and those who are expecting with their mental health and wellbeing.

Women are assessed at their booking appointment where notes are added to the patient records if anything is raised. Subsequently, at every contact the woman has after the booking appointment, they are asked about their mental health and domestic violence. Not all women need perinatal mental health support; some are referred to Alliance talking therapy. There is also an advice line that is available for women if they need help or support.

As you will appreciate the response has been rapidly changing, with new guidance being issued. The guidance referred to in your report at the time of writing has since developed and a number of further iterations have been published.

5. Pharmacies to engage with local volunteer organisations such as the Stockton COVID Community Support Team (01642 524500) who can support with the collection and delivery of medications for those who are vulnerable, self-isolating or have been asked to shield.

We trust that you have shared this recommendation directly with pharmacies. We will highlight the recommendation to NHS England/Improvement who is responsible for commissioning community pharmacy services. Additionally we will highlight with our medicines optimisation teams who work closely with GP practices and primary care networks and link in with community pharmacy directly and indirectly via the LPC – Local Pharmaceutical Committee.

Thank you again for sharing this report with us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Houghton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michal Houghton

Director of Commissioning Strategy and Delivery