



Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham

Project Work Reports,
Health Scrutiny Committee
3rd November 2021



Dental Services During COVID-19

What we did...

As COVID-19 restrictions were eased, a number of local residents who were struggling to access both urgent and routine dental care contacted Healthwatch Barking and Dagenham.

Healthwatch created an online survey seeking the views of local people who had experienced dental services at this time and looked into these areas:

- Issues with registering with a dental practice.
- The experiences of anyone who has accessed dental practices during the pandemic.

Healthwatch engaged with local people sharing their experiences through the local community Facebook page, and recorded their comments.

Carried out mystery shopper calls to 19 dental practices in Barking & Dagenham, to find out if they were registering new patients and offering appointments.



Dental Services During COVID-19

What we found...

- 73% of individuals that needed treatment were either referred to NHS 111 or informed that a practice wasn't taking on new patients because of COVID-19.
- 75% of people trying to get reliable information about access to their local dental practice, indicated that they struggled to do so.
- 89% of dental practices in the Borough offer NHS services; 73% offer both NHS & privately paid services.
- 67% of people said there was no availability for an appointment.
- 67% of people said their health, both physically and mentally; was affected by not being able to get a dental appointment.



Dental Services During COVID-19

What we found...Mystery Shopper Calls

- All but one practice offering NHS services, were either not registering new patients, citing the coronavirus pandemic; not offering any appointments until weeks and months ahead because they were fully booked; referring patients back to NHS 111 to book emergency appointments only or telling people to try another Dentist.
- One practice offering both NHS and Private services declined to take anymore NHS patients; but offered to give a same day appointment when told the patient was so desperate, they were willing to pay for a private service.
- All but one of the NHS services were telling people to contact another practice, effectively directing people into other local practices telling them to do the same thing.
- Practices were using a voice message as the first point of contact for patients. **“Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the practice is restricted in the dental service we can provide and the amount of patients we can provide face to face treatment for. Patients will be assessed over the phone and urgent patients will be treated as priority. Outside of practice working hours, patients should call NHS 111.”**



Dental Services During COVID-19

What we also found...

- On the NHS England Website it clearly states that dental patients do not need to register with a dental practice.



Care Home and Domiciliary Care Staff Wellbeing During COVID-19

What we did...

Healthwatch developed a questionnaire to gather the views of local domiciliary and care home staff.

The staff were given the option at the end of the survey to take part in one to one interviews with Healthwatch, enabling the team to explore in more detail, their personal experiences of health and well-being whilst working during the pandemic.

During the interviews, each participant was asked the same three open questions:

- What is your experience of working in your caring role during the pandemic?
- What effect did it have on your health and wellbeing?
- If you needed support for how you were feeling, where did you get it from?



Care Home and Domiciliary Care Staff Wellbeing During COVID-19

What we found...

- There are approximately 45,000 people working in adult social care in North East London who are from BAME backgrounds.
- 50% of the staff that responded locally identified as being from a BAME background.
- From across both care settings, 90% of staff said they had been treated very well or well enough by their managers and colleagues when needing support.
- When looking to access mental health and wellbeing services, 80% of staff were either supported by their employer (50%) or found out where to go to seek help of their own volition (30%).
- For 60% of respondents, the impact of COVID-19 had a massive effect on their lives.



Care Home and Domiciliary Care Staff Wellbeing During COVID-19

What we found...

- Looking at better ways that would benefit and support them and their colleagues, 80% of all staff felt that all that was being done was as well as it could be.
- Emerge from the interviews with social care staff, shine a light on the immense stress and anxiety the pandemic and lockdowns caused for those individuals.
- Staff told Healthwatch they were in a frightening situation with not much information available at the start of the pandemic lockdown.
- Evidence from interviews also reveals the impact on staff's mental health and wellbeing, and how their home lives became affected.



Community insights on disabled residents and the Covid vaccine in North East London

What we did...

There is great interest and value in understanding the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of those who use health and social care services.

It is of particular importance that the experiences of those who have any kind of disability are explored and understood. COVID-19 has exposed or created difficulties and problems in the system for people who are disabled, but also evidence is showing that it may also be true that, for some, services have actually improved.

Barking & Dagenham Healthwatch worked with seven other local Healthwatches across North East London, to hear, explore and understand the views and experiences of disabled people during the pandemic restrictions and the people that provide care support to them. There was 64 people that responded from Barking & Dagenham.



Community insights on disabled residents and the Covid vaccine in North East London

What we found...

- The majority of respondents were people with physical disabilities.
- Most individuals revealed that they were shielding.
- Respondents were diverse in terms of care needs and living circumstances, ability to work, leaving their home and using online services.
- Mass-media were the most popular sources of info about COVID-19
- People with learning disabilities or sight impairments may struggle with online and mass media messages.
- BAME respondents rely more on word of mouth and less on online sources for staying informed.

