

28 September 2020

Dr John T Dean
Chairman
Healthwatch Sunderland
By email

Dear Dr Dean,

Thank for you sending the CCG a copy of the findings from your recent Healthwatch survey to understand the health implications of Covid-19 and for the opportunity to provide feedback on how we will use these findings.

We were pleased to note the survey achieved 712 responses from Sunderland residents or people who use Sunderland services. By gaining a better understanding of the health implications of the pandemic on this cohort of people, we can provide feedback to our health and social care providers to help identify what is working well and highlight those areas that need to be improved. The CCG very much welcomes the opportunity to learn from the research findings from this piece of work and will share these findings with our providers to for them to take on board.

It was reassuring to read how the majority of respondents to the survey found it easy to find, understand, act upon and be kept up-to-date with Covid-19 related information. It was also reassuring to read the feedback had indicated over eight out of ten respondents rated the healthcare services as good or excellent and to read the positive verbatim comments about GP appointments.

However, we have reflected on the feedback for more information around access to GPs, prescriptions and managing existing conditions. We are committed to communicating clearly with patients and will feed this back to our GP practices through our All Together Better alliance arrangement for out of hospital care.

We are constantly looking for new and creative ideas to communicate with our patients and have developed an animation, letting people know how they can access GP appointments during the ongoing pandemic restrictions and to reassure patients that face-to-face appointments are still available for those who need them. This has been shared through the CCG's webpage, social media and with GP practices to share via their website and social



media channels. For your information, a copy of the animation can be viewed on the following link: https://youtu.be/HvfDj0G7_Yk

We have engaged with a wide range of people to understand people's thoughts and experience of using digital GP appointments, including reaching out to VCSOs to understand any barriers for their service users. The results from these activities, along with the other involvement activities we are undertaking, can be found on the involvement page of our website.

We have also recently commissioned some research to better understand the main health impacts of the pandemic and this has shown that mental health is one of the main issues identified. Your survey also identified approximately half of respondents had experienced poor mental health and half of these had accessed mental health support, either through friends and family, VCSOs, or through NHS services. The CCG is developing a programme of involvement work over the next few months and we will use the findings from our research and your survey to feed into how mental health services will be delivered and the support available.

Your survey findings also identified that people have increased some unhealthy behaviours as a result of the pandemic and we will be using this to inform our activities in the coming months. We understand how physical health can contribute to improved mental health, including eating a healthy diet, reducing alcohol intake, exercising more and looking after yourself. We are working with our partners across the City to develop a range of healthy activities to promote more local exercise, encourage healthy eating as well as promoting self-care.

Once again thank you for sending us the findings from your survey and hope I have provided some assurance that we have taken this on board and will be using it to inform our involvement activities and quality processes going forward.

The CCG very much values the work of Healthwatch and are committed to continuing to work with you during these uncertain times to ensure we provide the best possible care and support to our local residents.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Chandler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

David Chandler
Deputy Chief Officer and Chief Finance Officer