

6th October 2020

To whom it may concern.

FEEDBACK FOLLOWING THE COVID-19 FINDINGS REPORTS

The findings from the Healthwatch Survey of local people's experiences of Health and Social Care services during the pandemic will support the ongoing partnership work around the Sunderland Covid Health Inequalities Strategy. The survey findings will add to the local intelligence around the effects of coronavirus on local people.

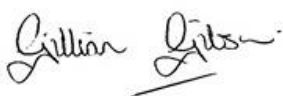
In particular, the issues in relation to the difficulties experienced by those with hearing impairments due to people wearing face coverings and the issue of digital inclusion will all need to be considered as we implement the Health Inequalities Strategy.

Mental wellbeing is also a key issue in relation to Covid inequalities and again we need to try and mitigate some of these issues as we develop plans to support both the Healthy City Plan and the Covid Health Inequalities Strategy. Previous research in Sunderland has suggested that there is a correlation between poor mental wellbeing and risky behaviours, This would seem to fit with the findings of this survey which found that for some the pandemic enabled positive health behaviour change but for many it was outweighed by more stressors resulting in smoking more, drinking more, doing less exercise and putting on weight. Of course, often these unhealthy behaviours lead to long term conditions and so it is a particular concern that people did not know how to manage their existing conditions.

The Covid-19 Health Inequalities Strategy aims to raise awareness of the importance of health inequalities in both the response and recovery from Covid-19. We know that people facing the greatest deprivation are experiencing a higher risk of exposure to Covid-19 and existing poor health puts them at risk of more severe outcomes if they contract the virus, therefore the finding from the independent survey reports 'keeping yourself well' and 'mental health and wellbeing' will be important when addressing health issues.

The strategy details a range of actions organisations can take to help to mitigate the differential impact of COVID-19 on local communities and has several strategic objectives within the report. Over the coming months the Council will engage with key partners such as Healthwatch to develop a local action plan and the results of this survey we will use to shape this. As the pandemic continues to unfold, it might be helpful to repeat the survey to see if the changes in restrictions have had an impact on people's wellbeing.

The Sunderland Covid-19 Health Inequalities Strategy and supporting annexes can be found at www.sunderland.gov.uk/healthinequalities



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