

Questions raised by a member of the public to Healthwatch Northumberland Board on 23 June 2020

What are your services looking like pre and post Covid?

Immediately before the lockdown we were busy with our Annual Survey. We had over 800 responses which gave us a good snapshot of people's experience of health and social care over the last year. We will be publishing the findings soon.

In January we made 4 grants to organisations working with groups we hear from less often. The Your Voice Fund supported projects with refugees and people seeking asylum, people with sight loss, people with learning disabilities and young people. The results will be reported over the year.

We suspended all face to face engagement in March but continued to offer a telephone and email information and signposting service. We developed a comprehensive bank of COVID related information with a dedicated website page which was promoted through our social media and regular newsletters. We launched a 'Tell Us Your Story' initiative to capture what happened to people during the lockdown period.

We are now planning how we start face to face engagement again when it is safe to do so.

Have you moved to a internet/social platform service to run your day to day services?

People can still contact us on our website, Facebook and Twitter, by phone, use our feedback forms or write to us.

However we have developed online forums which members of the public can attend using the ZOOM platform. Topics covered so far are dementia services, maternity services, adult social care, mental health and Special Education Needs and Disabilities. These will continue through 2020/21 and we are happy to receive ideas for topics to discuss.

We are mindful that not everyone has access to digital technology, and we are trying different ways that we can reach out to people, including through community groups, the telephone, and leaflets. We are encouraging people and communities to let us know of any local publications or other ideas of how we might reach people in their area.

With the clients and services that you work with have you seen a change to the social landscape and delivery of services, do you see any gap?

It is too early to give a definitive answer, although we have had some feedback about access to GPs through online consultations. We know that services will change because of COVID and we will continue to listen to people's experience through the ways mentioned above and pass that on to service commissioners and providers.