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## Spotlight on mental health

It's the end of May, we are at the start of summer, and it's looking really lovely outside. However, outside now presents a new threat due to COVID-19, and that can be tough to deal with, especially for those with mental health conditions and for people who are most at risk.



With this in mind and to support Mental Health Awareness Week, our focus in May has been around raising awareness of mental health issues, shaping services for the better, and finding out about local people's experiences and needs during this challenging time.

17% of all enquiries to Healthwatch Dorset last year were about mental health services and this continues to be a common area of concern and complaint.

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## Improving mental health services for young people

Earlier in the year, Dorset NHS Clinical Commissioning Group launched a project to capture the views of young people and their families who use mental health services – the *Your Mind, Your Say* project.

We wanted to make sure that young people who don't always have a strong voice are given the opportunity to influence the development of mental health services. We spoke to young people from across Dorset, including those excluded from school, young offenders, care leavers, young asylum seekers and young people who are experiencing homelessness. [Find out what they told us...](#)

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## The highs and lows of 'shielding'

Lucy, our Engagement Officer, shared her experiences to give people an idea of what life is like having to stay home and shield because of coronavirus. Read about her week, the impact on her mental health and how she tackles the challenges this new lifestyle brings. [See more...](#)



## Is coronavirus affecting your mental health?

We are here to help with information about local services and support and to listen to your experiences. You can call us on 0300 111 0102 or visit our website for details of local support services and to complete our short online survey. [Read more...](#)

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## Do you live, work, or visit someone in a care home?

We are concerned about what is happening in care at the moment. We want to know what it is like for people who live and work in care homes during coronavirus, and for relatives and friends who have loved ones living in care.



We want to make your voice and your views heard by those responsible for delivering care in Dorset, to help make care better. If you would like to share your experience of life in care homes during lockdown, good or not so good, please do [get in touch](#) to have a chat, or [complete our online survey](#).



## Caring behind closed doors

Millions of people are providing care unpaid every day. During this national crisis, many carers have had to provide more care for their elderly, sick or disabled family or friends. A new report by Carers UK, Caring Behind Closed Doors, found 70% of carers are providing more care than before. Over a third are providing that care because of the closure or reduction of local services. Carers were already under pressure before, but now over half (55%) say they feel overwhelmed and are worried they are going to burn out in the next few weeks.

During **Carers Week (7-14 June)** we want to highlight some of the challenges faced by family carers, raise awareness of their needs, and help local services understand how to provide better support. We are also interested to hear about the challenges of caring while living in lockdown.

If you provide care for a family member or friend who cannot cope without your support due to illness, disability, a mental health issue or an addiction, share your story with us to help influence positive change. [Contact us...](#)

**Activity:** [Download and complete this word search](#) to find the hidden words that describe some of the things unpaid carers do and how they feel.

## Has your care been affected by coronavirus?

Tell us about your experiences of using health and social care services during the virus outbreak. Your feedback can help local NHS and social care services understand the steps they can take to improve care for you and your loved ones. [Complete our online survey.](#)



The [Intercom Trust](#) are seeking to find out how LGBT+ communities in the South West are being affected by the current coronavirus crisis to help to shape the support that is being provided. [You can complete their survey here...](#)

**We're here to help make health and care better for local people, so please get in touch, share your stories, and share our news.**

**Healthwatch Dorset** is the county's independent health and care champion. We exist to ensure that people are at the heart of care. Our dedicated team of staff and volunteers listen to what people like about local health and care services, and what could be improved. These views are then shared with the decision-making organisations in the county, so together we can make a real difference.



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0300 111 0102

Healthwatch Dorset · The Bridge · Chaseside · Bournemouth, BH7 7BX · United Kingdom

<https://www.healthwatchdorset.co.uk>