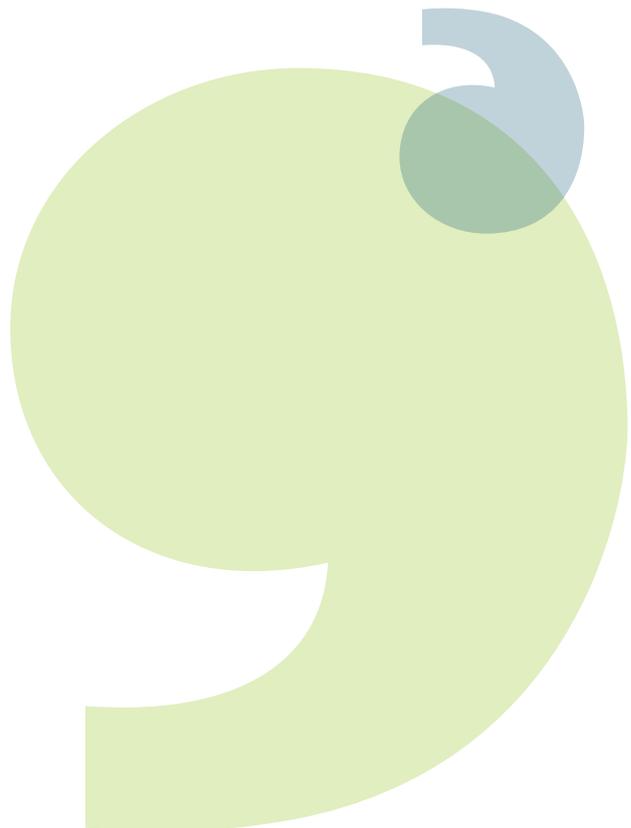




Life *in*  
**‘Lockdown’**

*Investigating the impact of a pandemic*

**October 2020**



---

# Introduction

---

Living amidst a pandemic is a new and unsettling experience for many.

In March 2020, the country went into ‘Lockdown’. Services closed their doors to all but the most urgent cases and concentrated efforts on responding to the Covid-19 crisis. Residents were confined to their homes and it prompted a substantial shift to remote access to work, education, and care. Covid-19 also presented an unprecedented challenge to front-line practitioners, managers, and policymakers.

We wanted to hear from local people about their experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic and life in ‘Lockdown’.

To find answers, we adopted a two-part process to gather insight from people living, working or using services in Camden:

- A questionnaire conducted online and by phone - ran from 22nd April until 31st of July.
- In-depth weekly interviews over 6 consecutive weeks to gather detailed personal stories from 8 residents about life under lockdown and how they were coping.

We were interested in how people were getting information to guide them and help them stay well. We were also interested in experiences of accessing health and care services under the new conditions and how people’s health and wellbeing was being affected.

## Project Aims:

- Add to evidence on people’s experiences during Covid-19 of the quality of health and care services and the effectiveness of information / support.
- Identify gaps in support to help prepare for potential future Covid-19 waves or other health crises.
- Provide a channel for people to have a voice about the impact of Covid-19 on their lives.

The final report, [‘Life in Lockdown’](#) documents the experience and views of 1,590 Camden residents on life in the early phases of Covid-19.



---

# What we found

---

## Finding information about Covid-19:

1. All groups relied most heavily on television (regardless of age, ethnic group or disability). Only small numbers reported getting information from the council, voluntary organisations or faith groups. There was an unmet need for information in accessible formats (e.g. languages, BSL, Large Print, Easy Read).
2. Although there were reported challenges of digital exclusion, use of WhatsApp groups by young and old alike challenges pre-conceptions about resistance of older people to communicating via technology.
3. Many people reported finding information about Covid-19 confusing and contradictory. People with long term health conditions or disabilities were more likely to report finding information difficult to understand.

## Changes to experience of health and care services:

4. The benefits of remote health services were embraced by the majority (across all ethnic and age groups). However, some reported serious dissatisfaction, including those with complex needs and mental health conditions.
5. Many people had routine or long-awaited appointments with NHS providers cancelled at the start of lockdown. People reported a subsequent lack of communication leaving many feeling they had been forgotten. People would have liked a phone call or remote appointments as an interim measure.
6. People have delayed accessing care they need for a range of reasons. Among those who hadn't used a health or care service, one in five people told us that they needed a service but felt their needs could wait amid the crisis, and 13% chose not to access care because of fear of contracting Covid-19.

## Concerns during 'lockdown':

7. Levels of concern about Covid-19 were high among all people in Camden. However, Asian<sup>1</sup> respondents were significantly more **worried about catching**

---

<sup>1</sup> Asian / Asian British / Southeast Asian



**the virus** (67%), and Black<sup>2</sup> respondents were slightly more worried (57%), compared to White counterparts (50%).

8. Black respondents were significantly more **concerned about job security** (33%) compared to White (22%), Asian (20%) and other respondents (24%).
9. Those under 65 reported higher levels of every Covid-19 concern other than catching the virus, compared to those 65 and older.
10. People with disabilities were more likely to report **concern about being lonely and isolated** (54%) than the general population (31%).

### Impact on health and wellbeing:

11. There is strong evidence of a significant negative impact of the Covid-19 crisis and lockdown on the general wellbeing of people in Camden. Sixty-eight percent of people reported a deterioration of mental health. Eighty-eight percent of 25 to 34-year-olds reported a detrimental impact on mental health.
12. A deterioration in mental health was reported by both those who were living with pre-existing mental health issues prior to the Covid-19 outbreak and those who had no history of mental health problems.
13. Increased use of open green spaces, exercise, reductions in travel and staying local were all cited as positive impacts. However, working from home while caring for school age children was a significant cause of stress for parents.

### Transitioning out of 'lockdown':

14. Four in ten felt lockdown was easing too soon or that it would trigger a second spike. Many people reported a lack of confidence in returning to work, school and other activities, some of whom were choosing to continue self-isolation.
15. One in four survey respondents were keen to see lockdown lifted.
16. A higher percentage of Black respondents looked forward to lockdown easing (53%) compared to other groups. In contrast, only 15% of Asian respondents said they were looking forward to lockdown easing.

---

<sup>2</sup> Black / African / Caribbean / Black British

---

## Next Steps

---

The national and local context of the Covid-19 pandemic is fast evolving. These findings represent an important point in time during the first six months of the UK response. The scale of the response to the survey may be indicative of the level of concern felt by local people about the Covid-19 pandemic and their desire to support health and care services through the crisis.

The sixteen key findings presented at the beginning of this report provide insight for the health and care system to inform preparedness and responses to future pandemics.

They also inform some suggestions for how things might be done differently and better if, or when, Camden faces a similar situation to that encountered in March 2020. It also informs some next steps for action and investment that will enable people who live and work in Camden to be more resilient to public health challenges in the future.

Since the survey's launch in April 2020, Healthwatch Camden has been proactively sharing emerging findings with various stakeholders in order to regularly feed resident experience into the coordination of the Covid-19 response. For example, we presented emerging findings at the June 2020 Health and Wellbeing Board and at Camden Council's inquiry into the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities. We also published 16 blogs which were either directly informed or inspired by what we were hearing in the survey responses.

Going forward, we plan to share the findings of this report widely across Camden, North Central London and beyond so that it has the greatest potential for impact. We will write a tailored and unique cover letter for each stakeholder and share insights and relevant suggested next steps and improvements.

In 2021 we will publish an 'Impact Report' which will showcase each unique cover letter and set of suggested next steps, with a corresponding update on how this report has inspired changes and improvements.

