

With warmer spells upon us and clearer skies, we hope that you are enjoying the short bursts of sunshine that we have been experiencing the past few weeks. This summer has been an especially busy period for us, at Healthwatch Hillingdon, and the Summer 2021 Newsletter aims to keep you up to date with our latest events, the NHS services that are available to you, as well as the latest COVID-19 news. With social distancing measures having come to an end, it is important to continue taking safety precautions, but also to savour this sense of normality that many of us have craved. We hope that you have a lovely summer and stay in the best of health.

## Pass it on...

Please forward this newsletter to your friends, family, and colleagues.

Join us and subscribe to Healthwatch Hillingdon's quarterly newsletter, to keep up to date with our latest events and the NHS Services that are available to you.

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Contact Us

## Healthwatch Hillingdon Events

### ► Virtual Drop-in Sessions

Making sure that our residents' voices are heard is at the heart of everything we do, which is why Healthwatch Hillingdon would like to hear about your experiences of accessing health and social care services at our virtual drop-in session.

Come along and talk to us about your experiences of local services or tell your thoughts and suggestions of what you think should be done to make services better. Your feedback can help to improve the way services are run for Hillingdon residents.

**When:** Thursdays

**Time:** 1:00pm - 2:00pm

**Where:** Zoom

For more information contact us at [office@healthwatchhillingdon.org.uk](mailto:office@healthwatchhillingdon.org.uk) or call 01895 272997.

### ► Latest Blog Post - The Key To My Wellbeing by Bethan Vickers



With the success of Healthwatch Hillingdon's previous Wellbeing days, we wanted to share a first-hand account from one of our volunteers of what can be expected on the day, as well as what you can achieve from joining us.

Sitting at my dining-table-come-desk, it couldn't be more obvious that working from home has been hard. I'm facing more screens than if I was on the Starship Enterprise. My back aches and I'm sure the numbers displayed in front of me are playing leapfrog. But just audible above the internal mayhem, I can hear people singing. Energising tones of my favourite singalongs echo out of the screen to my left and brighten my morning - I'm logged in to Healthwatch Hillingdon's online wellness day. Friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and strangers have come together to just . . . sing.

I can feel the knots unravelling in my shoulders as the day starts to seem that much lighter. I hadn't realised I'd missed spending time in the company of people, strangers, until the screen lit up. Not with work meetings but with something simple, maybe silly, and really, really needed.

As the day goes on, I drift in and out of various sessions: a talk on overcoming change, mindfulness meditation, relaxation music.

I participate as much as I can, or as much as I want - sometimes I just sit and listen. During the 'Getting Started with Gardening' talk I jump at the chance to learn about window box gardens. One knuckle deep in the soil and evenly spread, your seeds can become a wonderful herb garden on your own window ledge.

But why had my seeds never grown? My yearly ritual of popping sunflower seeds in a pot and praying had only ever brought false hope and white fuzzy soil. What was that mould? The radiator underneath the windowsill had killed the seeds for sure. But nope! To my shame I had been overeager and overwatering. But now I have the key to next year's success.

And *that* is the key to it all! - You might have been wondering up to this point what gardening has to do with wellness? The power of an outdoor space to sit with nature, to work it, learn and finally succeed. It builds confidence and a sense of purpose.

All of these sessions, whether I participate fully or let them wash over me, all contain pieces of the puzzle to help me look after myself.

# COVID-19 Updates

## ► Easing of COVID-19 Restrictions

Since March 2020, the UK, as well as countries around the world, have been in-and-out of lockdown, with restrictions easing at times and hardening at others. However, Monday 19th July promised something that this country had been waiting for - the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

With the removal of all remaining limits on social contact, large gatherings, and life events, such as weddings, life in the UK is finally regaining a sense of normality.

Despite this, it is crucial to remember that COVID-19 still exists, with over one hundred people testing positive daily in Uxbridge alone. You must ensure that you and your loved ones are vaccinated and continue to take precautions when it comes to your safety.



## ► Over 16s Eligible for Vaccines

COVID-19 vaccines are now available for:

- Everyone aged 16 or over
- Some children aged 12 to 15 who have a higher risk of getting seriously ill from COVID-19 or who live with someone at high risk of catching it

Find out more about who can get the COVID-19 vaccine [here](#).

## Getting a COVID-19 vaccine if you are not registered with a GP

You do not need to be registered with a GP or have an NHS number to get a COVID-19 vaccine. However, you cannot use the standard national booking system and will need to attend a walk-in service.

You cannot be refused a vaccine if you are not registered with a GP. Registering with a GP is an important thing to do as it allows you access healthcare services, but you should not be turned away from a walk-in site.

To find out more click [here](#).

## ► Vaccine Stories

Although over 50% of the UK population has successfully received full doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, we understand that it may be a daunting process for those that have yet to be vaccinated. Consequently, Healthwatch Hillingdon worked together with the North West London Clinical Commissioning Group to conduct four interviews with residents following their COVID-19 vaccinations, to find out more about their experiences.

To read the full article, including transcripts, or to watch the interviews, click [here](#).



## Service of the Quarter

At Healthwatch Hillingdon our aim is to support our residents and to provide you with the help you need, which is why our newsletters will spotlight a service or organisation that may be useful to you. For this quarter, we will be focusing on the **Hillingdon Stroke Association**, an organisation built to support and provide information for people following a stroke.



The Stroke Association works to prevent stroke, support everyone touched by stroke as well as fund research while campaigning for the rights of stroke survivors of all ages. Two of the services they offer are The Hillingdon Stroke Recovery Service and the Communication Support Service.

### ► Hillingdon Stroke Recovery Service

This service provides practical advice, emotional support and high-quality information following a stroke. The Coordinators work with the stroke survivor, carer, or family member to identify and address their needs and provide support to rebuild their lives.

Coordinators are able to provide support in a variety of ways, either via a telephone call, video call, or a home visit depending on our clients' needs and their preferences.

### ► Communication Support Service

This service works with stroke survivors who are

living with communication difficulties, such as aphasia.

Support can be provided either in a group setting or on a one-to-one basis by the Coordinator and trained volunteers. Stroke survivors will have the opportunity to practise their communication skills and gain confidence to deal with everyday situations.

During the pandemic they have been meeting in groups on zoom every week but with restrictions easing are now looking forward to resuming their groups in person from July.

If you would like access to information, videos and peer support for this can be found through the My Stroke Guide:

<https://mystrokeguide.com/>. It is straightforward to register and gain access to this valuable resource.

If you would like support from their coordinators, please call:

Humaira Ahmad - Stroke Support Coordinator  
0203 873 5722

Anita Ambasna - Stroke Support Coordinator  
07515 596961

Jacqui Guyett - Stroke Support  
Coordinator 07515 596 959

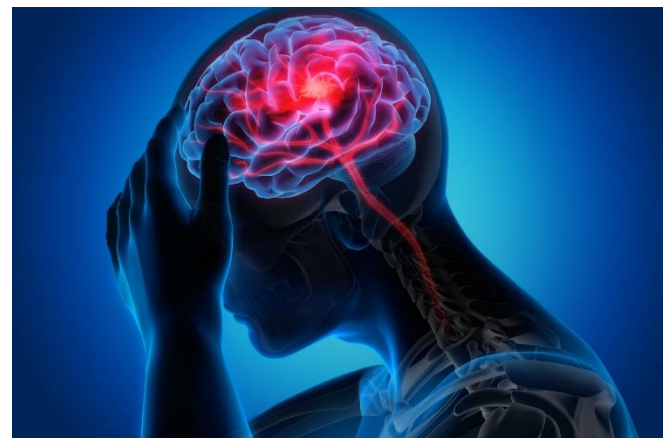


Image via Carrus Health



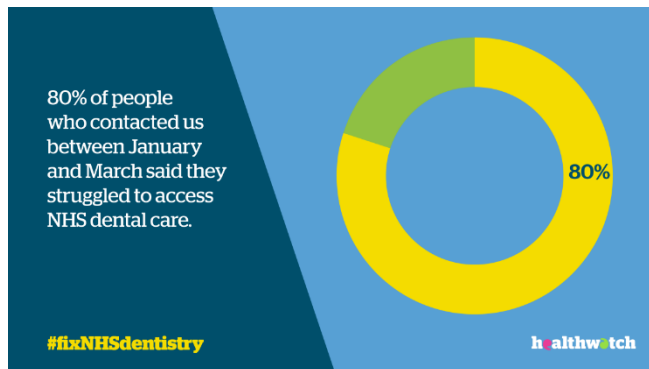
# NHS Dental Care Updates

## ► NHS Dental Care Twin Crisis and Findings

Although all NHS services have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, after extensive research Healthwatch England has found that the dental care crisis shows no signs of slowing, with four in five people across England (80%) struggling to access timely care between January and March 2021.

Many members of the public have voiced their concerns over the affordability of dental care, with 61% saying dental charges are too expensive. Consequently, this has resulted in the increase of untreated dental problems, which can lead to greater issues in the long run.

the same groups who have been worst hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Reform of dentistry has been underway since 2009 and earlier this year it was announced that NHS England would be taking over the process from the Department of Health and Social Care, but reform plans have yet to be announced.

Thank you to everyone who shared their experience of NHS dentistry with us. Your feedback is part of our new findings which we are sharing with decision makers.

Healthwatch Hillingdon prioritises the healthcare of our residents which is why we are sharing these findings to call for greater ambition and urgency from NHS dental reform plans to create more equitable and affordable dental care.

To find out more about Healthwatch England's findings and further information, visit their [website](#).

## ► Talk to us

Have you struggled to access NHS dentistry in Hillingdon over the last 18 months? Tell us your experience. Contact Healthwatch Hillingdon on **01895 272 997** or email [office@healthwatchhillingdon.org.uk](mailto:office@healthwatchhillingdon.org.uk).



Through Healthwatch England's surveys, it is clear NHS dentistry is facing a twin crisis of access and affordability, as a result of which many people are not able to access timely care - and the poorest are hardest hit.

A review of 1,375 people's experiences shared with local Healthwatch found some people were asked to wait up to three years to get an NHS appointment, whilst private appointments were available within a week.

Demographic groups who have been affected the most by the lack of NHS dental appointments and NHS dental fees include people on low incomes and those from ethnic minority groups -