

Impact of Covid on Wigston/South Wigston from LAC point of view with input from the SPLW

As with most areas the impact has been great.

Mental Health

Both our caseloads have increased with referrals to support people around the issues of loneliness and isolation – even with the NHS volunteers doing a brilliant job.

Predominantly the people we support around this loneliness and isolation are older people however this has change to all ages and groups.

We have seen an increase in referrals for MH challenges as people are not able to attend their usual groups and support networks. Or the situation has sparked a range of MH conditions.

Telephone support brings its own challenges when trying to develop a therapeutic relationship and trust with new residents who are already facing isolation and loneliness due to lack of real human interaction

The Covid outbreak has highlighted the pockets of residents who do not have an online or technological presence and are unable to interact with the community in the same way.

Increase in concerns around going out, anxiety and mental health conditions.

Delays and worries around finances including Jobs, payments and benefits.

Many people on furlough from work have found coping with inactivity a challenge

Families being enclosed together for long periods of time have increased tensions.

Individuals living alone who have suffered a bereavement – either of a life partner or family member living away. Not being able to attend funerals or to benefit from the usual support mechanisms available ie. hugs, family visits, normal routines to focus on etc. has had a huge impact on many people that may last for a very long time.

Health /Diet

Food has been an issue as cost have increased – schools have been good at distributing free school meals vouchers however these can only be spent in Tesco's – some families have relied on a hot school meal and then provide a sandwich in the evening – so are finding budgeting an issue

Food parcels from the food bank only contain fresh fruit and veg occasionally – there has been an increase in the use of foodbanks however the smaller foodbanks have struggled as most people were directed to the Leicester South Food Bank via the Hub – we have addressed this issue with the Hub and ensured that they know that local food banks are operating as usual and providing emergency parcels if needed.

A lot of people have found they have lost the impetus to exercise but people are now leaving their homes to walk and to take young children to the park

Worries moving forward

Redundancies – a lot of people are on zero hours contracts so if they were furloughed only received 80% of 4 hours rather than the hours they usual did. People are worried about redundancy which will impact on all aspects of their lives.

People who would have been self-isolating or shielding may well find it difficult to build confidence in getting out and about and back in to a 'normal' life. (Being branded as 'vulnerable' will take its toll on peoples MH.)

People neglecting new, or ongoing low-level health issues due to not wanting to go to hospital or GP surgeries.

Changes in available support services that were a life-line to residents of the borough – there are a lot of questions as to what and how services will survive post lockdown eg. Age UK day care; parent and toddler groups; lunch clubs; local groups like SWAMM – the changing face of the VCS.

Good news

Volunteers

Partnership working

Community initiatives (Green spaces for meetings)

100 activity bags distributed via Step out to children

Elliott Hall initiative to fresh food bank (using leftover food from Tesco's)

Use of Social Media has improved