



News update - May 2021

Spotlight on Signposting: Dental Appointments

We are currently receiving a high volume of queries regarding access to dental treatment. Please see below for the latest advice and guidance:

Dentists are currently still prioritising vulnerable patients or those with urgent dental needs; it is therefore unlikely that routine dental care such as dental check-ups will be available at this time. You should only visit your practice if you have an appointment and telephone to book an appointment only if essential.

Toothache should initially be managed with over the counter pain relief until an appointment can be made. Chemists are open and a Pharmacist can advise you what is the best pain control to meet your needs. Lost fillings, crowns or bridges, broken teeth or braces are not deemed to be clinically urgent and patients are advised to contact their local dental practice when they reopen.

Only ring NHS 111 out of hours when your dental needs cannot be met by self-care and cannot wait till your practice is open to contact them for advice.

If you are unsure about any dental queries and need some advice, you can call our signposting team on 0800 304 7039 and we will help where possible (we are open Monday-Thursday 9am until 5pm, and Fridays 9am until 4.30pm).



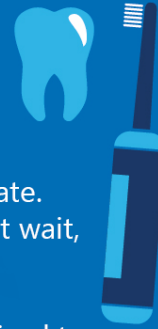
Accessing dental care



Dental Practices are open, however practices will need to prioritise patients with the most urgent need.

If you need help from a dentist:

- Contact your regular dentist or if you do not have one, call any NHS dental practice
- You will be given advice or offered an appointment if appropriate.
- For urgent dental care, out of hours or at weekends that cannot wait, please ring NHS111



Please do not visit your dental practice unless you've been advised to. This will ensure the practice can continue to provide essential care safely.

LGBT+ Survey

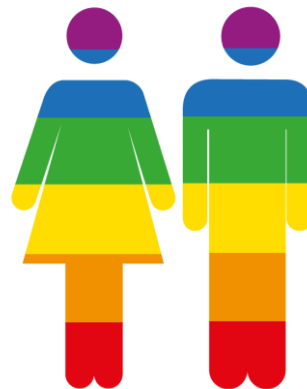
If you are part of the LGBT+ community and have used GP services during the pandemic, we are really keen to hear from you. Take our short survey [here](#) to have your views heard.

Or, you can get in contact with us directly to share your experiences:

📞 Call 0800 3047039

➡️ Text 07756 654218

📧 healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net



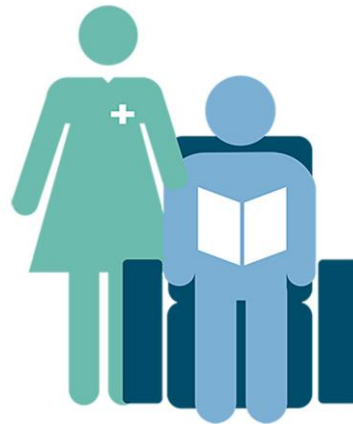
Care Home Link

Our volunteer coordinator, Claire, has been keeping in contact with various local care homes during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Jen Palmer, manager of Springfield Lodge Care Home has updated Claire with some changes that have been introduced in the green outdoor space of the care home. The outdoor space was originally created following an Enter and View visit in 2019 and has allowed residents to enjoy time outdoors. The space is going to be further developed into a herb/potting area and Jen has promised to share some pictures of this, when complete.

Jen has also kindly shared our Homecare services survey with residents and their families where appropriate, to help gather further local intelligence and experiences.

If you would like to share your experience of receiving support from Homecare services during pandemic, you can complete our short survey [here](#).



Join our virtual Board Meetings

In line with government guidance, the Healthwatch County Durham Board and team are continuing to meet remotely, via Zoom, to help minimise the spread of COVID-19. Listening to the views and experiences of the public remains a top priority for us, to help the people of County Durham get the most out of local health and social care services.



If you would like to attend one of our virtual Board meetings, please email us at healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net or call us on **0800 3047039** and we will send you a meeting invitation via email.

Mental Health Awareness Week 2021

From Monday 10th May- Sunday 16th May it is Mental Health Awareness Week, and this year's theme is nature and the environment- click [here](#) to find out why.

We can do lots of little things to help our mental health, even a walk, or a chat with a friend can make us feel better. Take a look at the Mental Health Foundations tips on how to look after our mental health [here](#).

Below are some photos from our staff team, showing what we have been getting up to outdoors and in nature to help maintain our mental wellbeing:



You can take the quick 'Every Mind Matters' quiz to get your [own mind plan](#), which suggests ways you can support yourself and others around you.

Our local NHS Mental Health Trust, Tees Esk and Wear Valley (TEWV) have a 24/7 freephone number **0800 0516 171** for anyone, including children, experiencing mental health distress. Find more information [here](#) on what to do in a mental health crisis.

If you are having thoughts of suicide, are harming yourself or have thought about self-harm, it is important to tell someone. You can contact your GP, [The Samaritans](#), or if there is an immediate danger to life call 999 and ask for the ambulance service.



Nature and the environment



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK
10-16 MAY 2021

Dementia Action Week 2021

Dementia Action week starts on Monday 17th May until Sunday 23rd May and is an opportunity to highlight the problems within the social care system and take action to improve the lives of people affected by dementia.

Right now, the broken social care system means that in the UK, nearly 1 million people with dementia, by far the majority of social care users, and their families are struggling to get the support and dignity of care that they deserve. Decades of underfunding and neglect have led to a care system that's difficult to access, costly, inadequate and deeply unfair. And the coronavirus pandemic has exposed these failings like never before. Until things change, a dementia diagnosis will continue to claim more than one life, as the families facing dementia feel its destructive effects.

It doesn't have to be this way. **Sign the petition [here](#) to help the Alzheimer's Society call on the Government to provide quality social care, that is free and easy to access, no matter where you live.**

If you need dementia support please call the Alzheimer's Society's [Dementia Connect support line](#) on **0333 150 3456** to speak with their expert advisers. You can also join the conversation with other people affected by dementia in their online community, [Talking Point](#). For further [information on health and social care](#), they have printed and digital factsheets available.

Dad's dementia is killing me



Sign the petition to reform social care



Covid-19 Lateral Flow Testing Sites open across County Durham

Durham County Council have launched their Lateral Flow Device (LFD) Community Testing programme, where regular rapid Covid-19 tests are now available for people without symptoms of coronavirus.

Residents who wish to take part in regular testing can book a slot at one of the 14 new LFD sites across the county. Walk-in slots are also available. The tests can be taken at:

- Annfield Plain Library, DH9 8EZ
- Belmont Library, DH1 2AA
- Brandon Library, DH7 8NN
- Chilton Library, DL17 0EX
- Easington Colliery Library, SR8 3PN
- Lanchester Library, DH7 0NT
- Newton Aycliffe Youth Centre, DL5 4HT
- Pelton Library, DH2 1HS
- Spennymoor Leisure Centre, DL16 6DB
- Teesdale Hub, DL12 8TD
- Trimdon Library, TS29 6PY
- Willington Library, DL15 0PG
- Wolsingham Library, DL13 3AB

- Woodhouse Close Library, DL14 6JX

All of the above LFD testing sites are registered as Community Collect sites for home testing kits. Local pharmacies have also signed up to become a collection point. Home testing kits can also be ordered for residents who would prefer to take a test from home. These can be delivered to home or collected from the nearest Community Collect site.

Those who wish to take part in the scheme are encouraged to take a test twice a week. Residents who will be taking their tests at home can take their first test at one of the LFD testing sites, where staff will be on hand to give helpful guidance to feel more confident testing at home.

If you do NOT have [Covid-19 symptoms](#), you can book a LFD test [here](#) or contact County Durham Together Community Hub on 03000 260 260 if you have no internet access. For further information please see [here](#).



Getting the COVID-19 Vaccination Saves Lives

Every COVID-19 vaccine dose gives us hope of getting life moving again and protecting our friends and family from the virus. Join the millions across the UK who have safely received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination.

When invited, get your vaccine from a site near you. You can book or manage your vaccination [here](#) (only when it is your turn to do so).

The second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine helps to provide longer-term protection so it's important to keep your second vaccination appointment when it is offered to you.

All steps in the usual vaccine development process were rigorously followed for the COVID-19 vaccine. This includes clinical trial phases that are standard in the UK. There is also no scientific evidence that the COVID-19 vaccine affects fertility.

To find out about who is eligible to have a coronavirus vaccination please see [here](#)



The Big Ask

The Children's Commissioner for England is currently undertaking the largest survey of children and young people aged 4-17 with 'The Big Ask'. It's an opportunity for you and your children to tell the government what you need to live happier lives.

The survey is split into different age groups, so you can fill in a version appropriate for your age. There's also easy-read 'accessible' versions as well as a version for care leavers. The survey will only take you 5-10 minutes to complete- click [here](#) to get started (Closes on Wednesday 19 May).



Carers Supported by Mental Health Trust's Charter

A new NHS mental health Trust Carers charter has been developed to make sure carers and families are fully involved in their loved one's care and treatment from day one with their knowledge and experience of the patient taken into account.

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), which provides mental health and learning disabilities services in County Durham, Darlington, Teesside and most of North Yorkshire, developed the carers charter with the Trust's Carers Working Group. The group brings together carers on a regular basis to talk about carers' needs and to see where improvements can be made to better support and work with carers to help provide more effective care.

The charter encourages carers and staff to work together and support one another to provide the best possible care. It lists a range of commitments that carers can expect from staff when involved in the care and treatment of their relative or friend. This includes making sure carers are involved in decision making about care and treatment, receive information about services and have the opportunity to help develop personalised care plans.

Staff on inpatient wards and in community teams across the Trust area receive carers awareness training to help them work with and support carers, understand their needs and involve carers in patient care. This training is developed with carers' input and often co-delivered by carers. The new Carers charter will form part of Trust staff training and

will be displayed on wards and community services areas across the Trust.

If you care for someone receiving care and treatment from Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust and would like to get involved in helping the Trust develop further support for carers, please contact Anthea Motson, carer experience officer on anthea.motson@nhs.net. For more information about support for carers please see [here](#).

Helpline for Health and Care Staff

Stressed or burned out? Exhausted? At breaking point? Worried about how much more you and your team can give? There is strength in asking for support.

The [North East and North Cumbria Staff Wellbeing Hub](#) team are here and ready to help you. Their confidential helpline is staffed by expert NHS psychological practitioners, who understand what you're going through.

**It is open to all health and care staff. If you need to talk, call them on:
0191 223 2030**

The helpline is available seven days a week including Bank Holidays, from 7am-9pm.

Therapists are available between 12-6pm Monday to Friday; if you call outside these hours and need to speak to a therapist, helpline staff will arrange for a therapist to call you back at the soonest suitable time.

The Hub team can offer a range of physical and psychological wellbeing support, including:

- Someone to listen, support and advise you, who knows the pressure you're under
- Help navigating existing local support offers, to find the right one for you
- Access to experienced therapists and evidence-based treatments
- Support and coaching for managers to help you look after your team
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Group and individual support

We're here to help you while you are helping others.
If you need to talk, call our confidential helpline:

 **0191 223 2030**

#HubsTheWord **Staff Wellbeing Hub**



Community Mental Health and Learning Disability Connector Grant open!

The Community Mental Health and Learning Disability grant is now open from the County Durham Community Foundation. The fund will provide grants for voluntary organisations and community groups that are providing mental health and wellbeing support to the population of County Durham.

Deadline for application is Thursday 6th May 2021 by 11pm. To apply or to see the Grant Guidelines, visit their County Durham Community Foundation's [website](#).



Carer Friendly Employer Award

On average 1 in 7 employees also has a caring role. Many of us know someone who is in employment who also provides unpaid care, for a friend or family member and [Durham County Carers Support](#) (DCCS) has supported 'unpaid carers' for over 25 years. However, this year has been extremely busy with more carers needing support through the pandemic, particularly those carers who are struggling to manage employment alongside their caring role.

Now DCCS has received funding from both Durham and Darlington Councils to increase awareness, within the business community, of the needs of 'working carers'. Jenni Wood (CEO) said:

"This is a great opportunity for businesses to look at simple and cost-effective ways to support valuable staff who also have caring responsibilities; it's a win-win situation".

Do you know how many carers are in your workforce? Can you afford to lose them?

The project offers awareness raising for staff and managers and the opportunity for senior managers to explore support options, within the constraints of the business. Those businesses who participate receive a Carer Friendly Employer Award and 12 months free access to the 'Employers for Carers' toolkits. The project is free, flexible and virtual. For further information about the project and how we can tailor it to your business requirements, please contact:

Durham: Fiona Kaley at fiona.kaley@dccarers.org or call **07824 467 440**

Darlington: Diane Williams at diane.williams@darlingtoncarers.org or call **07803 409**

626



Sign up for Diabetes UK's free, online 'Get Moving' classes

Diabetes UK are running free, online 10-week physical activity classes designed for people living with diabetes who are doing less than 30 minutes of movement a week, starting in May.

From chair boxercise to Tai chi and movement to music, each weekly class focuses on a different gentle activity, so you can try new ways to get active and find what you prefer. There are chair-based classes and ladies only classes. Plus, there are Q&A sessions at the end of each class with clinical experts and guest speakers and you'll be able to chat and share experiences with other class participants.

Find out more about the classes on offer and register your interest [here](#)



Understanding Sensory Processing: Workshop

Free online sessions for parent or carers in the North East:
(Hosted by Contact in partnership with Sensory Worx on behalf of North Cumbria and North East ICS (NHS England and NHS Improvement))

- Wednesday 5th May 2021 19:30 - 21:30 - [Book here](#)
- Tuesday 18th May 2021 13:00 - 15:30 - [Book here](#)

These online Zoom workshops will be presented by Claire Stirland of Sensory Worx. Claire is an Occupational Therapist and Sensory Integration Therapist with over 14 years experience in the NHS. This session will give you an opportunity to:

- learn more about sensory processing and sensory integration
- reflect on your child's sensory needs (and your own) and how these might change over time
- consider the impact of sensory needs on other family members/care givers and in different environments
- identify new approaches to supporting the challenges and opportunities of sensory issues
 - explore how you can obtain further help and guidance if you need it
- hear from other parents, sharing as much or as little as you wish about your own situation

This is an accessible session - you are welcome to stay muted or off camera and the team are understanding if you have any distractions. For further details please

contact jaimedowling@contact.org.uk





Contact us:

Healthwatch County Durham
Whitfield House
St Johns Road
Meadowfield Industrial Estate
Durham
DH7 8XL

Freephone: 0800 3047039

Text: 07756 654218

Email:

healthwatchcountydurham@pcp.uk.net



[Facebook](#)



[Twitter](#)



[Website](#)



[YouTube](#)



[LinkedIn](#)

