

Coronavirus (COVID 19) - Guidance Document

Latest advice and guidance help us, Healthwatch Rochdale, take steps to protect the public, our volunteers, staff and stakeholders

Introduction

The coronavirus is affecting work and lives everywhere. As a precaution, and following advice from Healthwatch England, we are currently reviewing our current public engagement work planned for the next three weeks, particularly where this:

- Involves service visits or events with people who are elderly and/or who have underlying health conditions.
- Risks placing additional burdens on NHS or social care services

Currently, we have agreed that some of our events or visits will be rescheduled.

Work Plan

Healthwatch Rochdale is currently involved in several engagement activities which could involve people who might be at greater risk. As the situation is likely to change over the next few weeks it is important to keep abreast of local circumstances and the advice of local agencies (e.g. Public Health Rochdale, NHS and social care providers) to ensure that we are making an informed risk assessment when it comes to our work.

Actions

- As a precautionary measure to protect the public, Healthwatch staff and volunteers, Healthwatch Rochdale are going to postpone any face to face events that were due to take place until **Sunday 29th March 2020**.
- If events cannot be held, they will be rescheduled for a later date if possible.
- If you are booked onto an event, the organiser will contact you directly to confirm what action is being taken.
- We will update you on any events due to take place after the **Sunday 29th March 2020**, ideally giving participants' two weeks' notice of any decision to postpone the event.
- We are advising our staff to where possible hold events virtually and work from home.
- Recruitment of staff and volunteers into the organisation will be placed on hold until **Sunday 29th March 2020**.

Work to be continued:

- Healthwatch Rochdale will continue to attend local statutory meeting. This will be reviewed on **Friday 20th March 2020** and a discussion will be had with local commissioners in light of the current situation.

What is our role during the outbreak?

- We will provide up to date information and advice on the outbreak.
- We will update our website with all the information the general public need to support them during the outbreak.
- We will share information and advise on how people can start to '[Social Distancing](#)' themselves.
- We will support local providers and commissioners to pass information out to the public, specifically seldom heard groups of the borough

Healthwatch has a key role when it comes to providing information for the public. We will be fully supporting the Government's public information campaign and prioritise this activity through our social media channels to raise awareness of how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection, what symptoms to look for, and what to do if someone becomes unwell.

Guidance to help you

The [Government](#) has produced a range of guidance which you may find useful, including:

- For employers
- For professionals working in social and community care and residential settings; and
- For professionals who provide advice to the public.

The National Centre for Voluntary Organisations ([NCVO](#)) has also collated guidance from a range of organisations to help think through the following questions:

- What do you need to do to protect staff, volunteers and visitors?
- Should your employees take sick leave?
- Should you postpone your events?
- How you can develop a contingency plan and how will your insurance be impacted?
- Will there be financial implications?
- How are charities helping?
- How can you support your beneficiaries/service users?
- What's the best way to prevent the spread of the virus?
- How you can develop a contingency plan and how will your insurance be impacted?
- Will there be financial implications?
- How are charities helping?

Sharing information

It is possible that the situation could change rapidly, so we will regularly revisit the advice we are providing.