

## How is COVID-19 impacting Sheffield's Chinese community, and how can we improve our communications with this group?

In March 2020, Healthwatch Sheffield awarded a grant to the Sheffield Chinese Community Centre to support engagement work with the people who use their services. Together, we wanted to explore the impact of COVID-19 on the Chinese community in Sheffield – in particular, how people find information and guidance about the virus (and how they would prefer to receive this). We also wanted to understand people's worries about the situation in Sheffield and its impact on the community in a broader sense.

39 telephone and email interviews were carried out by staff members at the Chinese Community Centre. This included a broad range of ages, from 16 to over 80 years old. It also included Chinese students living in the city for their studies, as well as people who have been Sheffield residents for much longer.

### Key messages from the responses:

#### How do you stay informed about the current Coronavirus situation?

- The majority of younger respondents (16-25 years old) report getting most of their news about the pandemic from the app Wechat the social media site Weibo.
- Many older respondents find their news online e.g. BBC News or watch news programmes on television. This helps them to feel informed about the national situation but does not provide much information about Sheffield specifically.
- A wide range of people report getting most of their news from friends, family, and their local community.

I don't really know a lot about the coronavirus situation in Sheffield, other than what I may hear from the national or local news channels.

#### What is the best way for you to get updates on the Coronavirus situation?

- Many people would prefer to hear news through a trusted organisation such as the Sheffield Chinese Community Centre. Younger respondents also refer to the Sheffield Chinese Students and Scholars Association as a trusted news source.
- Many people expressed a desire for regular local news from Sheffield City Council.
- Some respondents highlighted language barriers as a real obstacle for them accessing information and advice.

Emails, phone calls and text messages from the Chinese community centre.

Any bilingual support [...] available for the community?

### How is the situation in Sheffield affecting you and your community?

- None of the respondents had accessed health services in Sheffield for coronavirus-related care. However, where people commented on their recent NHS care (GP and hospital) all reported a positive or neutral experience.
- Respondents who commented on the situation in Sheffield specifically are worried due to high case numbers compared to other cities.
- A number of people reported concerns about their mental wellbeing – citing anxiety and a sense of isolation.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) was discussed by some respondents. There were concerns that health professionals in the city don't have access to the PPE they need. A number of respondents also reported that they felt wearing face masks in public should be happening more widely or even be compulsory.
- Other concerns raised by respondents include: worries about anti-Asian racism and discrimination which lead to fears of going for walks, to the shops etc; difficulty shopping due to stockpiling; worries about the impact on their studies; the need for communities to have dedicated support to return to normal living once lockdown/social distancing measures are lifted.

Anxious and nervous.  
Don't sleep well at night.

[Worried about] increased discrimination and attacks on all people of East Asian origin.

Concerns for the impact it has on the Chinese community: their mental, physical and social wellbeing due to the language barrier.

### Recommendations:

Sheffield City Council/local NHS Trusts to consider:

- Exploring new communications platforms such as Wechat and Weibo to share information in the same way that they do Facebook and Twitter, which are less widely used in the Chinese community.
- Working with or supporting organisations that have been identified by the Chinese community as trusted sources of information (such as the Sheffield Chinese Community Centre or Sheffield Chinese Students and Scholars Association) to ensure wider spread of factual and accessible information.
- Whether current advice and information (articles, posters, videos etc) is easily accessible by those in the Chinese community. For example, we know that the Council is sharing regular updates and information, but it appears that some people haven't been able to access this information. Perhaps it are not being distributed through the channels that some people would prefer to access.
- Translating some advice and information into community languages.
- Planning how to support Sheffield's diverse communities to return to normal living, especially where existing inequalities have had bigger consequences for certain groups.