

How lockdown has affected me

Luke's story

Five months ago, 41-year-old Luke was diagnosed with Crohn's disease, a long-term condition where the gut becomes inflamed. He was prescribed immunosuppressants, and because he also has asthma he has been advised to shield. He talks about how the coronavirus pandemic, and being in the vulnerable group, has impacted him and his family's life.

"I was diagnosed with asthma from the age of six months. It was quite severe; I remember being in and out of hospital and having a nebuliser in my room. But as I've got older it has become more manageable and I'm able to use my inhaler just once a day now. Two years ago, I was diagnosed with gout, a condition which causes sudden swelling and severe pain in the joints.

I'm on medication for gout and unfortunately it needs to be managed very carefully when combined with the medication I'm taking for Crohn's. Because of this, for the first 6 months, blood tests are required. I had my first 4 blood tests done before the lockdown was announced. My subsequent tests were put on hold due to the pandemic, but I was kept informed by the hospital.



“At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was sent a letter from the NHS informing me I was in the vulnerable group due to being on immunosuppressants for Crohn's and having asthma, so I've been isolating since the beginning.”

I've had GP consultations on the phone during lockdown and my experience of digital consultation has been positive. I also haven't had any issues with getting medication. Initially, my wife had to collect my prescriptions from our local hospital, but they had a drive-through pick up service which meant she didn't have to go into the hospital. This was good because it meant she didn't have to expose herself if there were coronavirus patients at the hospital.

Now my medication can be prescribed through my GP rather than the hospital which means I've been able to order it via a pharmacy app. I have to allow one-week for delivery, but they have always arrived on time. I'm receiving regular text messages from the NHS on updates regarding shielding but following the advice is mentally challenging as it means limiting physical contact with my family.

“This whole experience has been a wake-up call, it has made me think about what would happen to my kids if I died.”

It has also made me feel that due to being vulnerable, I'm limiting the amount that my wife and kids can go out, in case they catch the virus and transmit it to me.

When I was diagnosed with Crohn's five months ago, I was shocked but a bit blasé about the coronavirus. However, since lockdown and being advised to shield because I'm in the vulnerable group, I've realised just how seriously the virus could affect me.”

If you would like information, advice and support on health and social care services in Surrey, please visit our website or contact our Helpdesk on 0303 303 0023. We also have a dedicated page on our website listing [Changes to health care services during COVID-19](#) and a [Coronavirus help & support page](#), which provides information on voluntary and community groups in Surrey who are providing support to local people.

If you would like to share your own experience of accessing health or social care services, please get in touch via phone (0303 303 0023), text (07952 787533), email (enquiries@healthwatchesurrey.co.uk) or by completing our [online feedback form](#).