



a future for all ages

Community Health Champion Consultation – Autumn 2021

Working in partnership with VAST supporting the Community Health Champions project and to ensure that health messages are effective and appropriate for older people, in October 2021 we undertook a consultation with BJF group members and volunteers.

Consultation took place over Zoom and in person, both in groups and individually. 36 individuals gave their feedback and the subject was discussed in eight different groups including: Bereavement Friendship Groups, Health and Wellbeing Groups, Dementia Peer Group and Volunteers Support Group.

Below is a summary of the feedback along with anonymous, direct quotes from group members.

We asked people to share how they currently feel about the Covid-19 pandemic:

We feel scared, confused, upset and angry.

People are not getting the message. The positive cases of Covid are on the increase and so are the hospital admissions and deaths, it's not over yet!

I am worried about the high infection rate and adding pressure to health services.

Older people are taking it seriously, but it doesn't seem as though young people are.

We remember what smog was like and having flu epidemics.

Large numbers of people are still dying and infection rates continue to rise. Our infection rates and deaths are much higher than France, Spain, Italy, Germany where they still have some restrictions in place and people are being respectful of the virus and others.

In this country the majority of businesses, hospitality, sporting, musical events etc. seem to have gone back to pre covid times and it appears there are no restrictions in place, the government preferring instead to rely on a vaccine as the only containment of the virus.

The Government should learn from the previous year and implement plan B now! One more death is just as important in the reporting of statistics.

I don't understand why they are not taking more measures and tightening restrictions.

Long covid is bad and is affecting a lot of people.

I do have concerns regarding the rising numbers of Nursing/Retirement homes in the area that have residents who have Covid and the effects this will have on their mental health.

Anyone over 80 years old must feel that their life isn't valued after those awful comments Johnson made.

I am feeling the benefit of the lifting of the restrictions regarding shopping, sports, music gigs, theatre and meeting family and friends, however I still wear a mask for shopping and events plus always carry my covid passport.

I think it's unrealistic to expect we can go back to the way we were before. I do think we have to live as normally as we can but accept that this virus isn't going away and can be deadly. Stay safe and respect others.

I think people have information fatigue. Most people are compliant when it's the law, but people now just want to get on with their lives. If you're going to get Covid, you might as well enjoy your life now, but you do need to still keep Covid safety in mind. It's still here.

People have got complacent; they're not taking it seriously anymore. For some people who've had the double vaccinations now, they think Covid is over, but it's not, especially for vulnerable people who are awaiting their booster vaccination.

My guide dog is good at social distancing, but members of the public are inconsiderate.

We asked people what they thought about the pandemic in relation to younger people:

Older people are more worried about health risks and see younger people being blasé about risk. For younger people, the messages aren't getting through, and they're not acknowledging how serious Covid is and they should be worried about Long Covid.

I'd hope that they realise the seriousness of the pandemic and that they think what effect their actions could have on others. Yes, a lot of people who have died have been older but not all, and all lives are important.

For young people, social media should be targeted as well as TV. These messages need to be young people's own personal experiences of the dangers of Covid.

Don't be selfish, don't listen to the anti-vaxers, get your jabs, think of others and think as a big team member and not an individual.

Speak out more about how Covid has affected you, your family and your friends.

Younger generation are more aware of the situation, can access all the information much more easily than some older people. Teenagers may need more education, some feel they are invincible and are spreading without knowing. Children are told to go to school but there is a risk, parents have no choice as they would be breaking the law if they kept them back.

We wanted to know how Covid messages and information were being seen:

We have had no clarity, everything has been very inconsistent e.g. masks, rules in shops and taxis. No-one knows what the current situation/rules are. The messages from media and government are confusing, it is constantly changing.

From the beginning we've had mixed messages which have then been overturned, brought back, changed so very few of us knew what we were supposed to do. You should lead by example and Johnson isn't a leader in my opinion, too much a people/voter pleaser and totally out of touch and Cummings and Hancock just summed up what they thought of the restrictions. All of this stays in people's minds.

Boris needs to get this timing right and not tell us at Christmas that Santa isn't coming this year.

They are leaving the responsibility to individuals, there need to be laws and more enforcement. If it's important to wear masks and social distance, the legal requirement should not have been lifted. People were then given a choice but possibly thought if it wasn't law then it wasn't necessary. I think this will be difficult to overcome now.

I don't think it's any use relying on people to make an informed decision on whether it's an enclosed space and mask and social distancing applies. Shops and venues should be told what the restrictions

are and put in place signs etc. There is no social distancing in any supermarket, shop, cafe I've been in recently and all the floor signs disappeared months ago. Sadly, I believe lots people will not wear masks etc. unless they are legally required to do so.

The Government should make mask wearing a law. Your choice not to wear a mask has an impact on my health. People should wear a mask at the very least in public places, but they don't have to now. People are being very irresponsible.

Too many people are misinformed – listening to the wrong messages, the anti-vaxers are getting stronger.

There's a lot of misinformation in the tabloids and social media about vaccines changing your genes, giving you COVID etc. and people will read this and believe it. Perhaps their headlines are more attention grabbing than the edicts from the government and local authorities.

Government message seems to be 'let the bodies pile high'

Education and information needs to be better and more forceful.

People don't seem to understand that masks and social distancing are needed to protect others, not just ourselves. Visually Impaired cannot see who is and is not wearing a mask.

I am fed up, I have turned the media off.

We asked for ideas on how to get a clearer message across:

Use trusted people to deliver the message, personalities, footballers, young people – not politicians. Masks - "Wear it for me". Vaccine - "Don't do it for yourself, do it for everyone".

It is a community virus; it doesn't just impact on individuals. "We need to take care of one another"

We need more information about hospitalisations regarding people not vaccinated, age groups, underlying health issues. Highlight young people who are vulnerable.

We need more stories about the realities. Not slogans, real life examples

Messages in supermarkets should say "please wear a mask to protect others"

A tee shirt "I am wearing this (mask) to protect you"

I think occasional national briefings on the BBC, as before, to spread the message especially now as we are close to plan B.

Better stats on the world situation and how the UK is helping to eliminate the pandemic in poorer countries.

There needs to be one rule that is stuck to, to avoid confusion. Could our local MP provide us with a leaflet with local guidance on? Right at the start when the PM was doing announcements, everyone tuned in and followed guidance – should this still happen so people get the same message?

Broadcasts should be following Medical/scientific guidance not just government.

Messages should be more hard hitting:

Maybe we need pictures and video clips of Covid illness to convey how serious the consequence of Covid can be. A poster of someone who is ill with caption "I didn't think that vaccination was important"

Highlight the numbers in hospital and especially numbers of patients on ventilators who have not been vaccinated. Have messages from people in hospital.

Say how many young people have died.

A media campaign should include a short, sharp shock for people like images of Covid patients in hospital.

Slogans should appear like 'Do you prefer to wear a mask and live or provide a grave for yourself?'

"I can only think: - anyone reporting to a medical practice, a hospital, or self-isolating who hasn't had the jab is given a suspended jail sentence, fined one thousand pounds and forcibly inoculated either in the court room or in jail if they do not comply with the procedures."

The truth – hard hitting, plain and simple.

People had ideas on where and how the messages should be shared:

Find ways to advertise the right messages at the heart of the community.

Public health broadcasts – hard hitting

TV adverts – don't rely on social media

I only use Facebook and the only information I've seen on there is a pop up government one but I think the format is out of place and it's easy to ignore.

Newspapers

Leaflets from recognised local sources could be produced as long as they are punchy and not jargon heavy. Pin them up wherever people stand to queue, by magazines at the checkout, on virtual boards, in banks, bus stops and on buses, GP surgeries, hospitals....

I receive regular Covid email updates from Staffs CC and to be honest they don't grab my attention and I'm interested in what's happening. Perhaps having a local face running out these messages would grab people's attention. Live feeds can be useful and give people the opportunity to join the discussion.

Summary

It is clear from these responses that older BJJ members are very concerned about the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and are worried that the general public are not taking steps to reduce risks to themselves and others. As older community members they are acutely aware of the impact of severe illness and death and feel that the government and public health messages need to be clearer and more effective.

We hope that some of their ideas on messages and information sharing can be used to update current Covid-19 health publicity. BJJ will be using this feedback to influence our current positive aging and health and wellbeing projects, ensuing publicity and support is appropriate and impactful.

The BJJ aims to promote the voices of older people and to recognise the wisdom and valuable contributions they make to our society, we will work alongside older people in our community as they live through Covid-19 and beyond.