

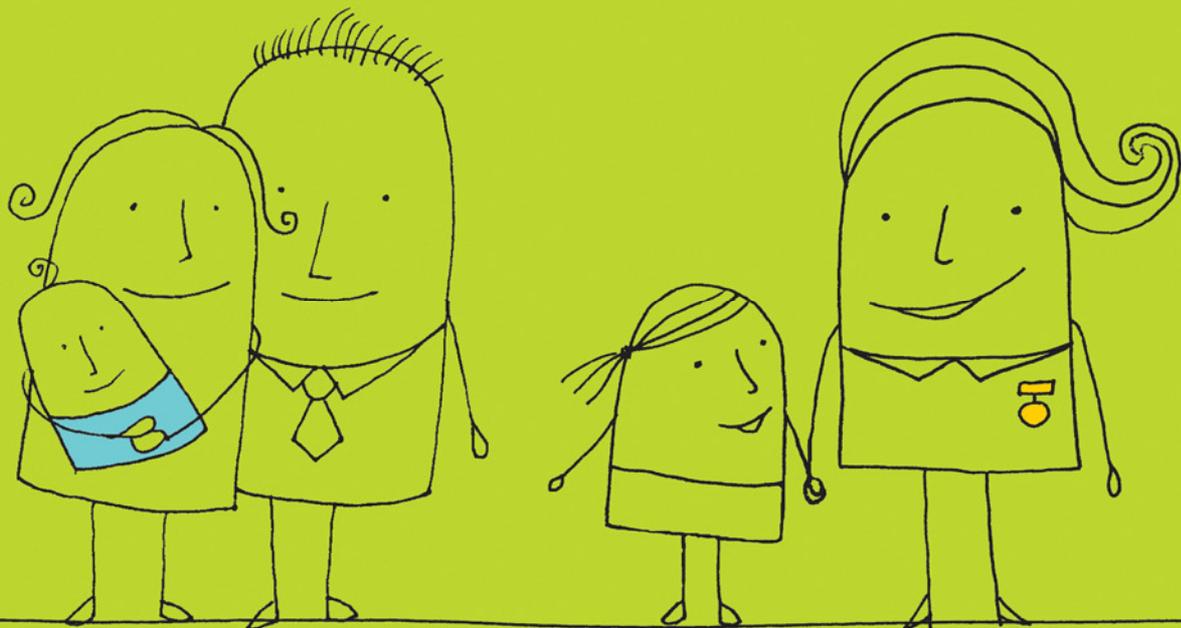
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Patient and Client Council

Survey on Swine Flu Information

The views of members of the public on the information available.

February 2011



Your voice in health and social care

This information is available in other formats

Table of Contents

1.0	Background and Purpose	3
1.1	The Patient and Client Council	3
1.2	What is the purpose of this report?	3
2.0	Our Approach	4
3.0	What People Said	5
4.0	Conclusions	9
Appendix 1		
	Transcript of Some Individual Responses	10

1.0 Background and Purpose

1.1 The Patient and Client Council

The Patient and Client Council was established on 1st April 2009, to provide a powerful, independent voice for people.

The Patient and Client Council has four main duties. They are to:

- listen and act on people's views;
- encourage people to get involved;
- help people make a complaint; and,
- promote advice and information.

1.2 Purpose of this Report

During 2010 the Patient and Client Council established a membership scheme as a way of enabling people and organisations to have a say on issues relating to health and social care. During January 2011 there was an outbreak of swine flu and people wanted information about the condition and what to do if they contracted it.

Information was provided by the Department of Health, Public Safety and The Public Health Agency through various channels including the internet, GP surgeries and the press. The Patient and Client wanted to understand how effective the information was and undertook a short survey. This report provides a summary of the responses given.

2.0 Our Approach

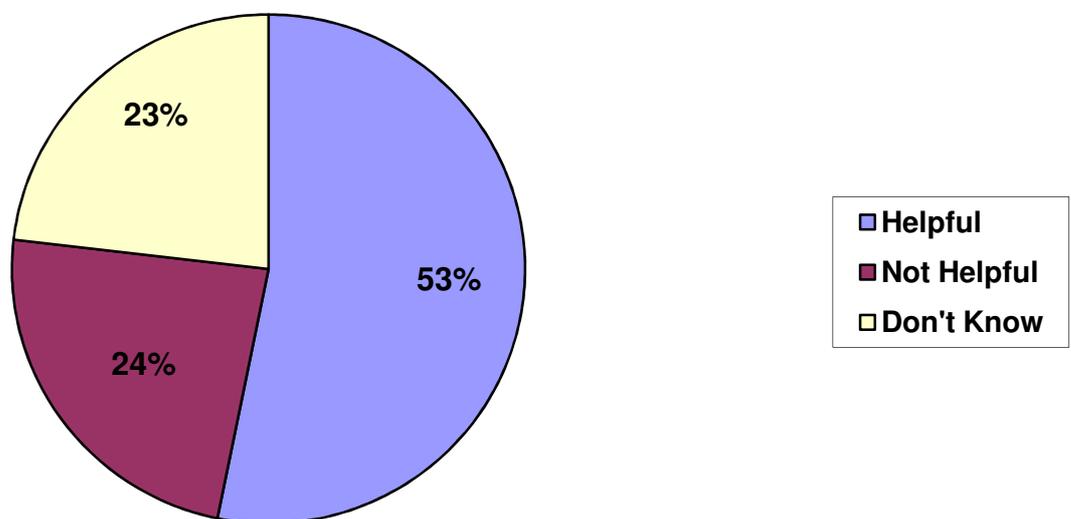
A short questionnaire was hosted on the Patient and Client Council website. The questionnaire was advertised on the home page of the Patient and Client Council website for visitors. It opened on Friday **14th January 2011** and closed on **20th January 2011**. An email was also sent to **535** people on the Patient and Client Council membership scheme asking for their participation. The questionnaire took the form of two multiple choice questions, and a third free-text field. **203** people have taken part and their responses are detailed below.

3.0 What People Said

Question 1

**“Do you think the available information on swine flu is:
(Helpful / Not Helpful / Don’t Know)?”**

Figure 1 details the results. A total of **108 people (53%)** thought that information currently available about swine flu was helpful, **48 people (24%)** felt that it was not helpful, **47 people (34%)** didn’t know.



**Figure 1 – “Do you think the available information on swine flu is:
(Helpful / Not Helpful / Don’t Know)?”**

Question 2

“Do you have enough information on swine flu?”

Participants had a choice of answering Yes, No or Don't know.

Figure 2 shows that **94 people (46%)** said they had enough information. **89 people (44%)** felt that they did not have enough information, and **20 people (10%)** were unsure.

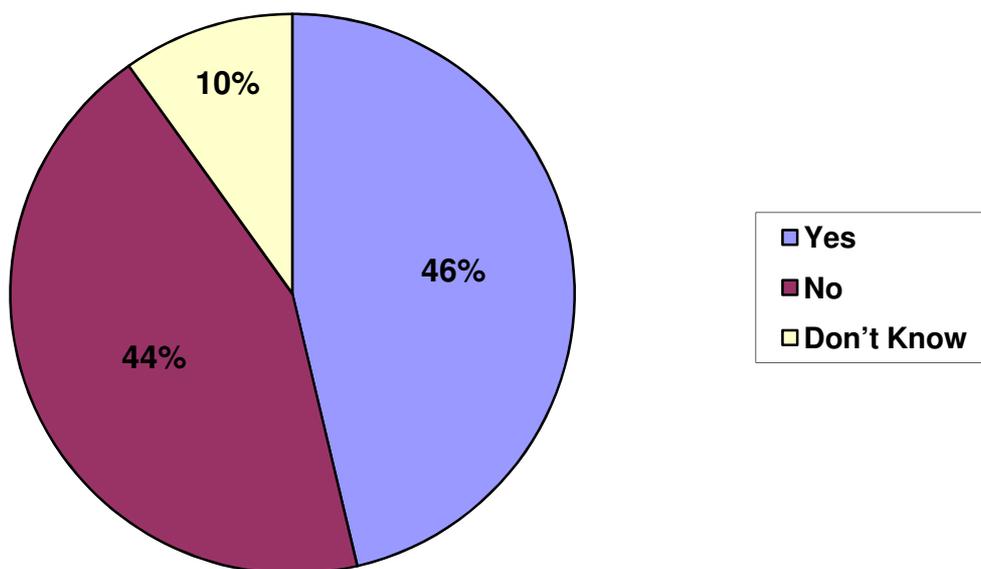


Figure 2 – “Do you have enough information on swine flu?”

Question 3

“What other information would you like on swine flu?”

Detailed below are the top recurring themes in the answers that people provided.

1. No more information required (**68 people, 33%**).
2. More information required on signs and symptoms (**54 people, 27%**).
3. More widely available statistics on swine flu in Northern Ireland (**40 people, 20%**).
4. Swine flu related stories should be more factually publicised in the media (**33 people, 16%**).
5. More information should be given on the swine flu vaccine, including side effects, efficacy and stocks/supplies (**30 people, 15%**).
6. Why is the vaccine not being given to young children? (**14 people, 7%**).
7. How you should look after yourself if infected? (**11 people, 5%**).
8. What are the effects on people with pre-existing conditions, and what defines ‘at-risk’ groups? (**11 people, 5%**).
9. Health and Social Care organisations should release more information regarding swine flu related deaths (**8 people, 4%**).

4.0 Conclusion

This survey was small and was limited by both a short period of time and to those people who have access to the internet. However, the results show that although many people who responded felt that the information that was available on swine flu was helpful, a number of people would prefer to have some additional information, particularly about the signs and symptoms of the virus as well as more detail about who is vulnerable and who should be vaccinated. The disparity between the level and frequency of information provided last year in comparison to this year was noted by some respondents. In addition, the way information is provided by the media was an issue for some people.

The Patient and Client Council therefore recommends that the Department of Health, Public Safety and Social Services and the Public Health Agency consider the findings of this report when developing information services in the future.

The Patient and Client Council will undertake in-depth work on the provision of information and advice in next year's plan of work.

Transcript of Some Individual Responses to Question 3:

- *“Although there was a leaflet issued to all homes last year people seem to have forgotten what to do this time. Is there enough vaccine for all who feel they need it? Perhaps there could be a slot on local radio to make people aware of the situation.”*
- *“As a nurse, I am fully aware of all symptoms, etc of the condition, but for a lot of people the only way to get this info, is on the internet, or scare stories on the news, or leaflets. I do think it would be beneficial if more TV ads were broadcast, giving the facts, and explaining the differences between swine flu, and ordinary flu, preventions etc.”*
- *“How dangerous is it really? And is it possible for carers to get vaccinated? When is this epidemic likely to stop? Why are apparently healthy people dying? And why are young children not being vaccinated especially as nurseries and schools are a breeding ground for all diseases?”*
- *“How this year compares to last year - information provided on a more regular and less sensational manner.”*
- *“I think the vaccine should be available to everyone. It would cost less in the long run but then I don’t think the DOH can see further than the end of its nose.”*
- *“Last year there was loads of information but this year the information is limited on the virus and how to look after yourself...”*
- *“More information on how to avoid contracting swine flu, how to minimise the risk of spread of this flu. In addition last year from working in a leisure environment we were directed to have customers wash hands and use alcohol based washes to prevent spread of this flu. This year we have had no directive or guidance.”*
- *“I am happy to look on the internet for information.”*
- *“I would like simpler language with information which is accurate and does not pander to scaremongering.”*
- *“If you don’t have access to the internet or go to your GP often the only information you get is on the news. Information should be wide spread and even basic information publicised everywhere.”*
- *“Signs and Symptoms. Why the government has kept a low profile regarding swine flu this year, when last year it was all over billboards, TV, radio and magazines?”*
- *“Why was there so much media attention last year and this year it has been swept under the carpet - last year all we got was pandemic, pandemic, pandemic, this year nothing and the Daily Mail article on the child dying really frightened me. I don’t know now what exactly a vulnerable group is.*

Remember you can contact your local office on
Telephone 0800 917 0222

or email info.pcc@hscni.net

Belfast Area

1st Floor, Lesley House
25-27 Wellington Place
Belfast BT1 6GD

Northern Area

Houston's Mill Site
10a Buckna Road
Broughshane
Ballymena BT42 4NJ

Southern Area

Quaker Buildings
High Street
Lurgan
Craigavon BT66 8BB

Western Area

'Hilltop'
Tyrone and Fermanagh Hospital
Omagh BT79 0NS

South Eastern Area

1st Floor, Lesley House
25-27 Wellington Place
Belfast BT1 6GD

