



Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1



15 June 2020

healthwatch
Kingston upon Thames

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Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Research methodology, the aim of this report and learning.....	4
3. Who responded?.....	6
4. Summary of findings and other experiences	7
5. Detailed findings and other experiences.....	11
a. Access to care.....	11
b. Quality of care.....	15
c. Aftercare.....	17
6. Thank you, and next steps.....	18

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

1. Introduction

Healthwatch Kingston was set up by the Health and Social Care Act of 2012 to be the independent champion for local NHS and social care. We seek the views of patients, service users, carers and the public to help services work better for the people who use them. We play an important role bringing communities and services together. Everything we say and do is informed by what local people tell us. As well as encouraging those who run local services to act on what matters to people, we also share local views and experiences with Healthwatch England and the Care Quality Commission who make sure that the government put people at the heart of care nationally.

Healthwatch Kingston has compared experiences of NHS and social care services prior to and during the Coronavirus pandemic. This snapshot report presents information shared with us from before ‘lockdown’ and between the beginning of April to mid-June 2020.

A photograph of Kingston Hospital was sent to Healthwatch Kingston with the following caption: “I’m the only person in the non-COVID part of A&E!”. They told us they felt reassured that if it got busier, the hospital had taken steps to support “physical distancing” keeping people sat apart while waiting. They added they did not like the term ‘social distancing’.



Accident and Emergency Unit, Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (June 2020).

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

2. Research methodology, the aim of this report and learning

Healthwatch Kingston ran an initial ‘Have your say’ survey to gather experiences from people of local NHS and social care services from the beginning of January to the end of March 2020. We wanted to hear how services were working and how we could support meaningful improvements in the care that matters to local people.

To help us understand if people’s experience of NHS and social care services were affected during the COVID-19 pandemic, Healthwatch Kingston decided to run the same, previously run, ‘Have your say’ questions in a new COVID-19 survey.

This report aims to compare experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic. Healthwatch Kingston acknowledges it is a ‘snapshot’ analysis and report of surveys received during the identified periods (beg January to end March 2020 and 1 April to 15 June 2020), augmented by some additional non-survey experiences shared during this time.

Rates of completed COVID-19 ‘Have your say’ surveys received were slow to begin with (perhaps due to adjustments to lockdown measures in a fast-changing environment) but increased over the period. To boost response rates, we:

- Spot purchased social media advertising
- Increased our outreach to local groups and organisations (requesting they share the survey in their newsletters and other communications)
- Agreed that member organisations of the Kingston and Richmond Communication and Engagement Steering Group (including the NHS and the Royal Borough of Kingston) promote survey details through their comms, and not forgetting the simple things
- Created an Easy Read version of the COVID-19 ‘Have your say’ survey
- Added links to the COVID-19 ‘Have your say’ survey in our email signatures.



Share your experience during Covid-19

We want to know your experiences of NHS and social care services during the Covid-19 pandemic. This will help us understand how local services are working and what impact any changes may have had on you. For survey [click here](#).

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

As no COVID-19 ‘Have your say’ survey responses were received from the 13-17-year age group, we worked with young people and our partner (Healthwatch Richmond) to launch a Youth Out Loud! (YOL!) survey as part of Mental Health Awareness Week, to find out how lockdown during COVID-19 had affected the emotional and physical health and wellbeing of local young people. This was distributed to all schools across Kingston and Richmond via school safeguarding leads and over 100 surveys were received by Healthwatch in the first week. A joint report on the findings of this Healthwatch YOL! research will follow shortly.



Young People’s Wellbeing during the Covid19 crisis survey

To help organisations like the NHS and the Councils to better support young people, we want to know your experiences. We’ll make sure that no one can tell who you are from the answers that you give. Please spare five minutes to share your experiences of lockdown in our [survey](#).

The screenshot shows a website page with the following elements:

- Header:** healthwatch Kingston upon Thames logo on the left, and a 'Contact us' button on the right.
- Navigation:** A menu with items: 'Have your say', 'News & reports', 'Get involved', 'What we do', and 'Advice & information'. A search bar is also present.
- Main Content:**
 - Title:** 'Mental Health Awareness Week - Youth Out Loud!' with a sub-date 'News - 20 May 2020'.
 - Text:** 'Our youth group - Youth Out Loud! (YOL!) have put together a fantastic set of resources which have been shared in schools for Mental Health Awareness Week.'
 - Image:** A central graphic titled 'Check out our short film for mental health awareness week!' featuring the YOL! logo and text: 'Youth Out Loud! (YOL!) are a group of young people aged 13-17, working with Healthwatch in Kingston & in Richmond, using their voices to make health and care services better for young people.' The graphic also includes sections for 'More resources for young people', 'Watch our video!', and 'Have your say on lockdown!' with a '#have your say' hashtag.
 - Text below image:** 'Youth Out Loud! (YOL!) are a group of young people aged 13-17, working with Healthwatch in Kingston & in Richmond, using their voices to make health and care services better for young people.'
- Social Media:** A vertical column of social media icons for Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Email on the right side.

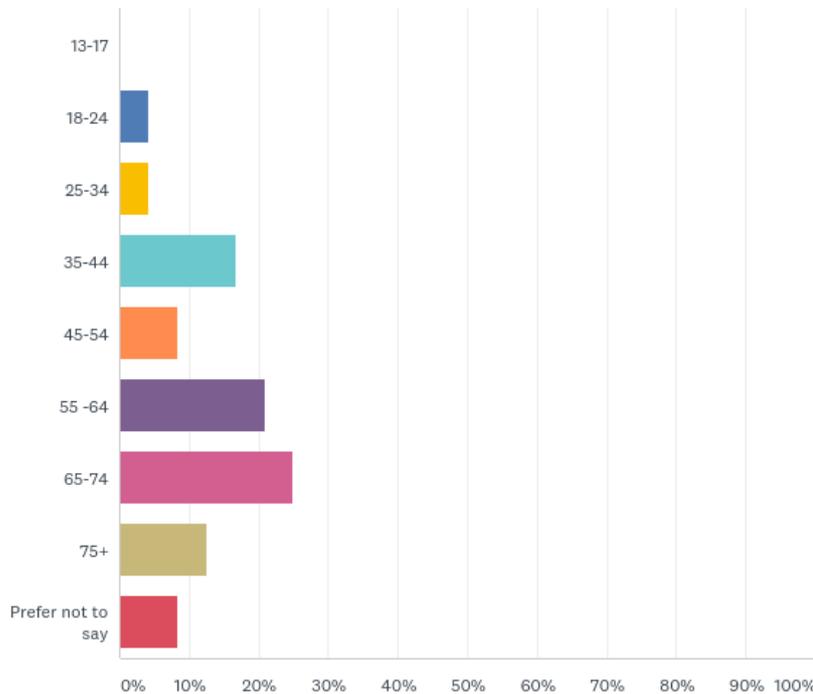
Online launch of the Youth Out Loud! ‘Wellbeing during COVID-19 crisis’ - Survey (20 May 2020).

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

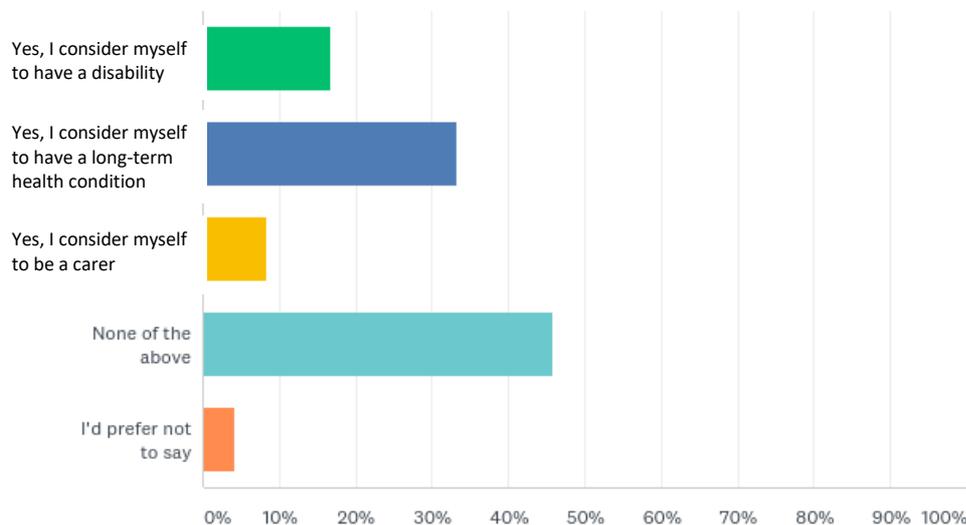
3. Who responded?

This ‘snapshot’ report is informed by 272 experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston during the period identified in this report. 45 people responded to the Healthwatch Kingston ‘Have your say’ survey (run in January to March 2020) and 88 people responded to the COVID-19 ‘Have your say’ survey (1 April and 15 June 2020). The different experiences shared in these surveys have been combined with other non-survey experiences received between 1 April and 15 June.

Age



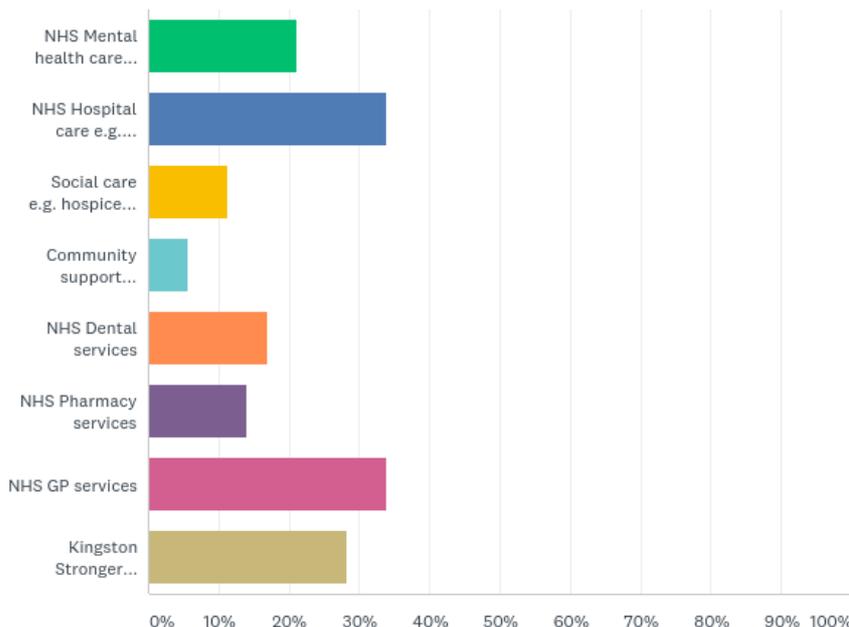
Do you consider yourself to be a carer, have a disability or a long-term health condition?



Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

4. Summary of findings and other experiences

We asked about access to care, quality of care, and aftercare experiences during the Coronavirus pandemic. People commented on a range of different services within the Kingston borough as demonstrated by the breakdown below.



Overall satisfaction

Analysis of the data showed, just over half of the respondents are satisfied with the level of service they have received from NHS and social care services in Kingston both before and during COVID-19 (to date). Satisfaction levels have not drastically changed considering the crisis.

Kingston Hospital

Kingston Hospital’s response to COVID-19 has been praised, including making sure patients felt safe when attending routine appointments and non-COVID related procedures. Staff have been complimented for their supportive attitude and the A&E department has been described as efficient, with clear protection in place for patients and staff. People spoke of quick, easy access to care and good follow-ups.

Additional non-survey experiences of Kingston Hospital during this reporting period:

“For the most part, I was the only person in the A&E waiting room. I have never seen the waiting room so empty. It was only as I left through the main entrance

of the emergency department that I noticed how busy the Red zone (COVID area) was. I was pleased to see that even though it was busy the hospital had still managed to respect physical distancing. The only negative point about my experience was there was no hand soap in the toilet and considering COVID advice, I did find this surprising.”

“All of the vending machines had been put out of service because of COVID, I can understand why but as you are not allowed anyone with you in the waiting rooms, anyone in there for a long time or unable to walk, does not have a way of getting even a bottle of water. Apparently, Costa was open, but my condition meant I couldn’t really walk and had no one there to help me.”

“In the emergency room of Kingston Hospital, I noticed a nurse about to send an elderly gentleman home who had broken his shoulder. He was slightly distressed as he told me he did not know how he was going to take care of himself and his 90-year-old wife. The staff did not seem to offer any support at first and were about to order him a cab. No one really explained the help or support he could get. Is there any info for people in this situation and if so, should the hospital be giving this out before a patient goes home?”

GP services

There was a mixed picture of people’s experiences accessing GP services. Many people said they were unable to get through the GP services on the phone and found it difficult to make appointments. Some people said a lack of information was being made available online. Once people received appointments over the phone, most people felt the care they received was adequate given current circumstances. There seemed to be a lack of follow-up calls with some people not hearing back after being promised a call, having appointments and tests cancelled and still waiting on referrals.

A non-survey experience of a GP surgery received by Healthwatch Kingston during this reporting period:

“It can still be difficult to get an appointment at Chessington Park Surgery however, I was pleased with the way the doctor handled a very sensitive issue over the phone. Sending a photo or video when a condition is very personal, and of your child, makes you feel very uncomfortable. The doctor took the time to discuss the issue and found a way around having to go through this process. I really appreciated the respectful manner and accurate diagnosis without having to send images.”

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

Kingston Stronger Together

All comments and experiences of the local [Kingston Stronger Together](#) response were good according to survey respondents. Vulnerable people appreciated being called and several people expressed gratitude for food parcels which were delivered when they were facing difficulties.

Additional non-survey feedback about Kingston Stronger Together:

“Just want to say a massive thanks to the Kingston Stronger Together service. They have been exceptionally helpful during lockdown; their packages of food have been a lifesaver. Whilst I really appreciate the support originally, I had only asked for help getting a delivery slot and not free food. The boxes have been great, but I did notice that there is only ever one tin of meat and whilst we were more than happy to make do for a few weeks a heavy diet of carbs is a struggle with Irritable Bowel Syndrome.”

“Is there a way that the service (Kingston Stronger Together) could support cases people in need of delivery slot that do not fit the criteria? My father was in a vehicle accident two weeks ago and during lockdown his unique circumstances meant he still needs that extra help?”

“I have asthma, I don’t drive and am a single mum with two kids. Getting to a shop was practically impossible. I felt bad taking food when I could have paid for it, I just didn’t have a way to pay? PS. we did laugh when we kept getting men’s razors and shaving kits in the packages (as I said I am a single mum).”

Pharmacies

Most comments regarding pharmacies were positive, saying staff were helpful and that measures had been put in place to protect staff and visitors. Some people expressed difficulties in accessing delivery services for medications especially towards the beginning of the crisis but say that this seems to be running efficiently now.

Mental health services

We only received negative comments regarding access to mental health services with many people saying they felt they had been left with no support despite the **Community Mental Health Team** knowing they were vulnerable. Others expressed difficulties in accessing services at **Tolworth Hospital Adult Mental Health Unit**. Others said waits for assessments had been further delayed due to the crisis.

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

Additional mental health experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston:

One person said they were pleased to have received a text from the NHS which “finally” showed some support for those with more severe mental health issues.

A local community organisation shared that they are seeing a trend of more people experiencing suicidal ideation.

Some people with mental health issues told us that they have coping strategies already in place as they are used to being in panic mode. They said it is as if their mental health issues have prepared them to cope with this scenario.

Others are finding respite in not having to have so many interactions and social pressures and having a slower pace of life. However, this is not the case for all, and some are struggling with it all as it feels like it is an extra weight on top of the already heavy burden of their mental health issues.

Dental services

Many people expressed frustration at not being able to access dental services due to most surgeries being close and not offering a telephone service.

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

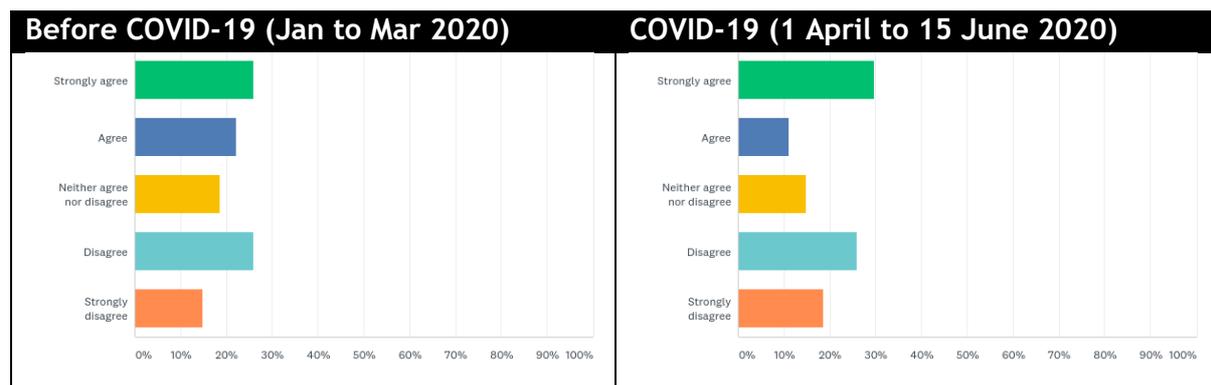
5. Detailed findings:

a. Access to care

Commenting on how easy it was to access care during the pandemic, 29.63% respondents to this question strongly agreed that they were able to access the help and support they needed, 11.11% agreed, 14.81% neither agreed nor disagreed, 25.93% disagreed and 18.52% strongly disagreed.

We compared the data we received before the pandemic with regards to how easy it was to access services and it would appear, based on the responses we have received to date, that there is no significant change as demonstrated below.

Question: It was easy to access the help and support I needed from this service



Kingston Hospital and A&E

There were lots of positive comments about Kingston Hospital and A&E with patients saying the hospital responded well to the crisis. Example comments:

“I was seen quickly and received a rapid diagnosis”.

“A&E was smooth running and well organised for COVID-19 patients”

“A&E was well set up with social distancing in place.”

“I felt reassured as I managed to see a consultant on the ward.”

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

“The phone consultation from the Diabetic clinic was reassuring and easy to access.”

“Information was clearly available on the website, meaning I was well prepared for my mammogram at the Sir William Rous Unit at Kingston Hospital.”

“Eye services and blood testing are working normally.”

“My 98-year-old neighbour was taken to hospital and returned home the same day for his own safety. He tested negative for COVID-19.”

The only negative comment was regarding the Wolverton Centre, where a patient was frustrated that their appointment had been cancelled. They did receive a follow-up phone call but are still waiting on treatment.

GP services

There were more negative comments regarding access to GP services than positive ones. Positive comments included:

“**Kingston Health Centre** has been very accommodating during my pregnancy and following the birth. They have offered video calls and had access to PPE when appointments are needed. I have really appreciated the ongoing support at the practice.”

“Telephone appointment was easy to obtain”

“**Claremont Medical Centre** rang me to check I was ok and had everything I needed which I really appreciated.”

Negative experiences regarding access to GP services centred around not being able to get appointments, lack of information available on websites, longer than usual waiting times to get through on the phone and no follow-up on referrals.

“I was not able to speak to, or get an appointment with, a doctor at **Fairhill Medical Practice** when I was in a mental health crisis.”

“I couldn’t get an appointment at **Berrylands Surgery** for my one year old who had a temperature without going through 111, despite being confident that it was not COVID-19.”

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

“I wasn’t aware that the process was that I had to phone to get a telephone consultation and so tried to do it online as I did not want to burden the service. I was not able to make the appointment online via patient access and there was no information available on the website to explain what the process was.”

“GP online or phone consultations were an effort to get at **Surbiton Health Clinic**. I felt like I was being fobbed off.”

“Was promised a physio appointment before COVID-19 struck but have heard nothing since.”

“Clearer explanation online of alternative service provision and what to expect would be good.”

Kingston Stronger Together

We had several positive comments regarding the Kingston Stronger Together response with one person saying: “They helped me when I had difficulties with my son.” Another person said they found the information from the council advising them to call Careline useful.

Pharmacy

Positive experiences of NHS pharmacies included clear social distancing, staff well protected and efficient, and reassuring. More negative experiences centred around difficulties in getting medication delivered to their homes with pharmacies appearing reluctant or unable to offer a delivery service.

Mental health

Many people spoke of their frustrations in gaining access to mental health services during the crisis or having delays added to already long waiting times before the crisis began. Comments included:

“It has taken a very long time to get an assessment from the **Community Mental Health Team**”

“No access to **Tolworth Hospital Adult Mental Health Unit**”

“I was able to contact the **Community Mental Health Team** Psychiatrist and Care Coordinator but was not given enough support.”

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

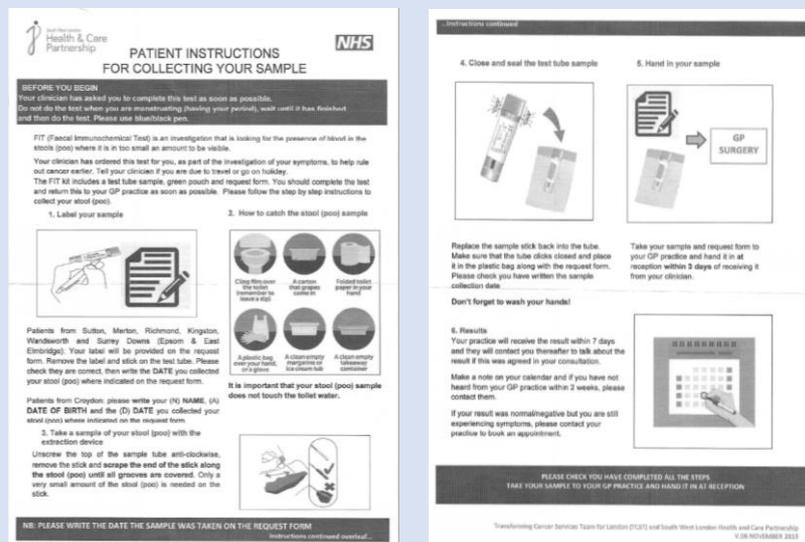
“I suffer with poor mental health and no one from the **Community Mental Health Team** has made contact with me during the crisis. I phoned the mental health crisis support line recently as I was in a crisis, but still did not feel supported.”

Dental

A few people mentioned their frustration at not being able to gain access to dental services due to most dental surgeries being closed and no alternative telephone service available.

Cancer screening leaflet feedback to Healthwatch Kingston:

A local resident contacted us about an NHS South West London Health & Care Partnership leaflet with saying, “This leaflet (below) was given to me when a sample of my stool had to be sent for testing at the hospital. I thought it was very badly set out. Not being able to see very well, it took me ages to work out what I was supposed to do.”



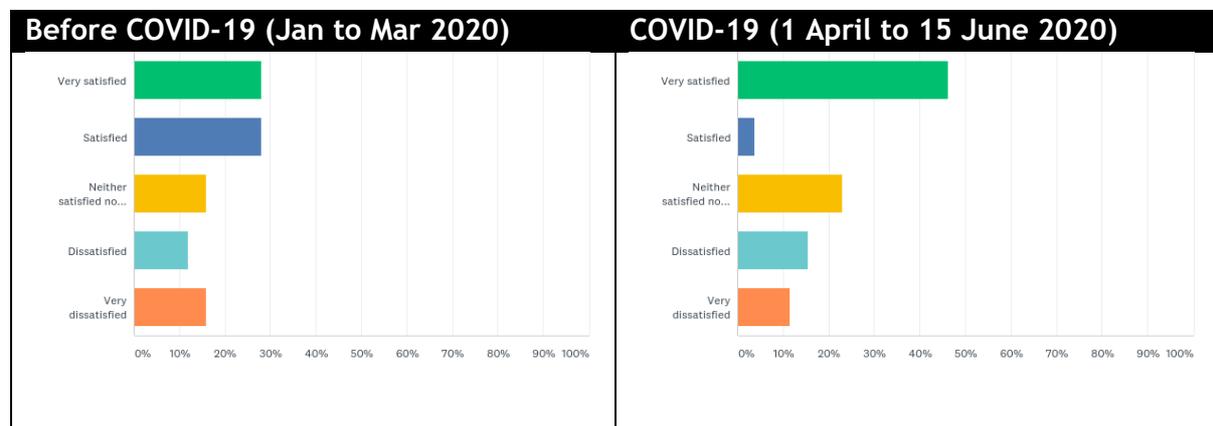
Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

b. Quality of care

Commenting on the quality of care people received during the crisis, 46.15% of respondents were very satisfied, 3.8% were satisfied, 23.08% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 15.38% were dissatisfied and 11.54% were very dissatisfied.

Question: How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Comparing the data to pre-COVID-19, based on responses to our surveys, people appear to be more satisfied with the care they have received during the pandemic.



Kingston Hospital and A&E

There was a lot of praise for Kingston Hospital and A&E especially regarding the staff. Comments included:

“Everybody was very friendly and explained the procedures to me.”

“Amazing staff!”

“Reassuring, knowing that I would be seen as soon as face to face appointments allow. Diabetic nurse was really good and calm.”

“Lots of precautions taken, empty clinic, quick care.”

“Excellent A&E doctor who gave confidence to patients.”

“Admitted to Derwent ward and level of care was very good whilst staffing levels were stretched.”

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

“I was very impressed with how my procedure was carried out. I had concerns prior to the appointment about social distancing but all precautions excellent.”

GP services

There were mostly positive comments about the care received from GP practices once people were able to access the service.

“When I finally managed to get an appointment at **Berrylands Surgery** the phone call we had with a doctor was brilliant and very helpful, and I appreciated the offer of a follow up video call.”

“Prompt call from GP with careful questioning to diagnose the issue and clear advice provided.”

“**Claremont Medical Centre** ensured I was registered as extremely vulnerable immediately. It made my life so much easier. The care I have always received from this surgery has been so professional, caring, and supportive. First class!”

Kingston Stronger Together

We received positive comments about Kingston’s local response to COVID-19 with one person saying, “They called me to offer help in a difficult time.” Another person said: “They helped at a difficult time and delivered food to us. We appreciated the kindness they showed us at this time of uncertainty. Thank you.”

Pharmacy

Services from pharmacies were applauded with people saying they received a friendly service despite noticing how busy staff were.

A few people who were unable to access the delivery service initially said that once the service was established it became routine.

Mental health

We received several comments from people who felt they did not receive any support from the **Community Mental Health Team**. An example:

“I have just been left with no support whatsoever.”

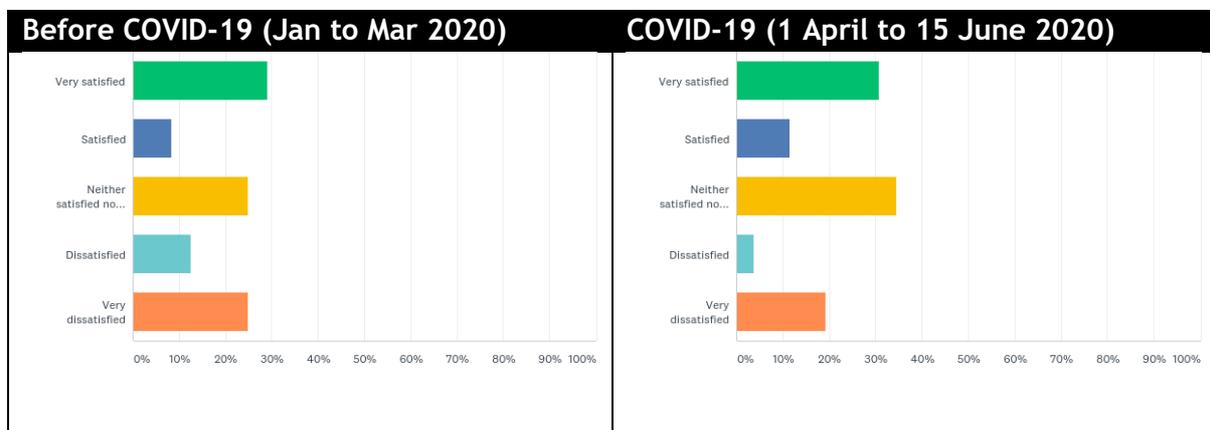
Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

c. Aftercare

Commenting on the aftercare people received during the crisis 30.77% of people were very satisfied, 11.54% of people were satisfied, 34.62% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 3.85% were dissatisfied and 19.23% were very dissatisfied.

Question: Were you satisfied with any further treatment/care/support that you were offered?

Responses in satisfaction before and during COVID-19 with regards to aftercare were, to date, similar.



Kingston Hospital and A&E

The people who responded to this question were pleased with aftercare and arrangements made by the hospital including follow-up appointments and phone calls having been followed through.

GP services

There were mixed reviews about GP services with some patients saying they felt well supported and that test results and hospital appointments were followed up on. One patient felt the follow up process and filling in of forms was poorly explained with another person expressing frustration that their tests were cancelled.

“After three telephone consultations with the GP I was finally referred to a specialist but was told this would take at least two weeks and would be a telephone consultation only.”

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1

6. Thank you, and next steps

Healthwatch Kingston would like to thank everyone that has shared their experiences with us. Everything we say and do is informed by what local people tell us.

Healthwatch Kingston will continue to run our 'COVID-19 Have you say' survey and produce subsequent 'snapshot' reports that share local people's experiences of NHS and social care services. These will form the basis of a future report on the impact of COVID-19 on services across the whole period of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Many NHS and social care services have been reduced or stopped so that resources could be re-focused to support communities and to respond to the emergency health needs of people with life-threatening conditions due to infection with COVID-19. Healthwatch Kingston is working closely with a range of organisations including South West London NHS colleagues to consult with people in Kingston on what the NHS needs to prioritise as it begins to re-open its range of services. This snapshot report and subsequent reports from Healthwatch Kingston will contribute to this consultation.

Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1



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