



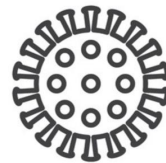
A year with COVID-19: Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic (January 2020 to March 2021)



July 2021

healthwatch
Kingston upon Thames

One year with Covid-19: Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the coronavirus pandemic (January 2020 to March 2021)



One year with COVID-19: Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic (January 2020 to March 2021)

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1. Introduction

Healthwatch Kingston continued its role alerting health and social care commissioners and service providers of any issues that relate to patient and service user safety throughout the Coronavirus pandemic. This report brings together experiences, views and concerns shared by Kingston residents about their access to NHS and social care, the quality of their care and any aftercare provided between 1 January 2020 and 31 March 2021.

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.

The [COVID-19 Tell us your experience report - August/September 2020](#) published by The Royal Borough of Kingston (RBK), asks a wider, less detailed set of health and access to healthcare questions across part of the Healthwatch Kingston reporting time period, so complements our report. 898 residents participated in this RBK survey.

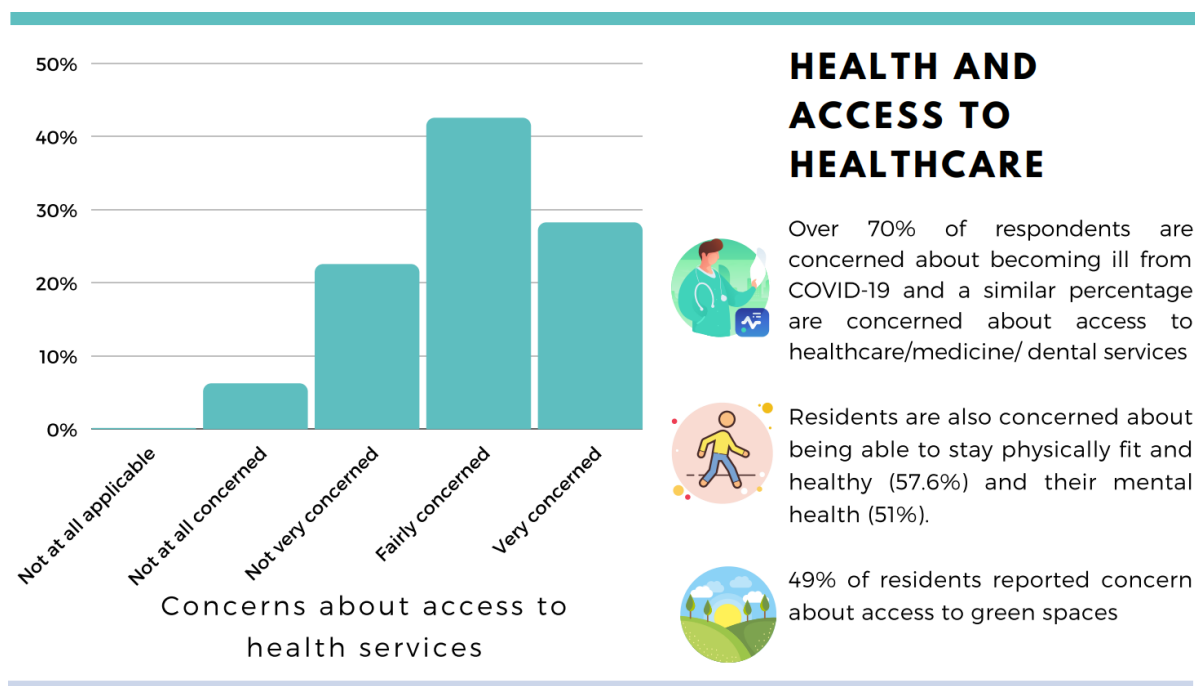
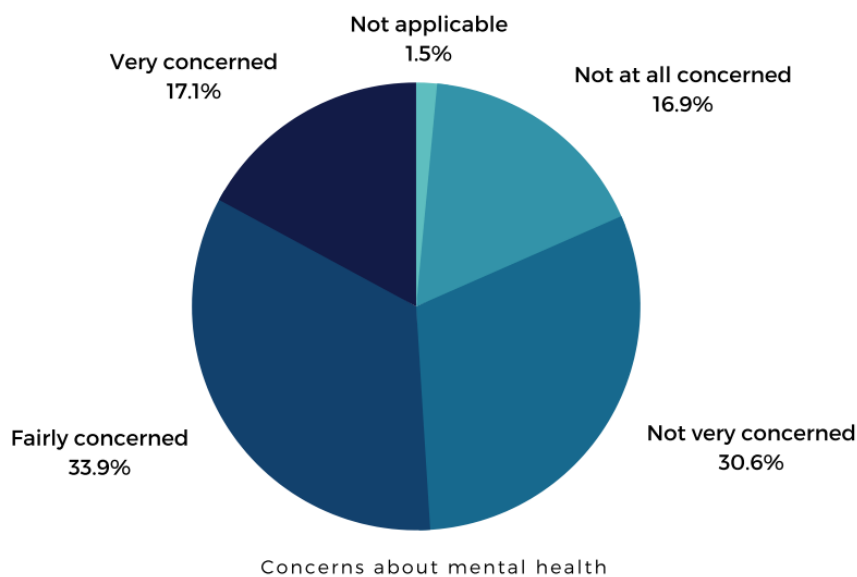
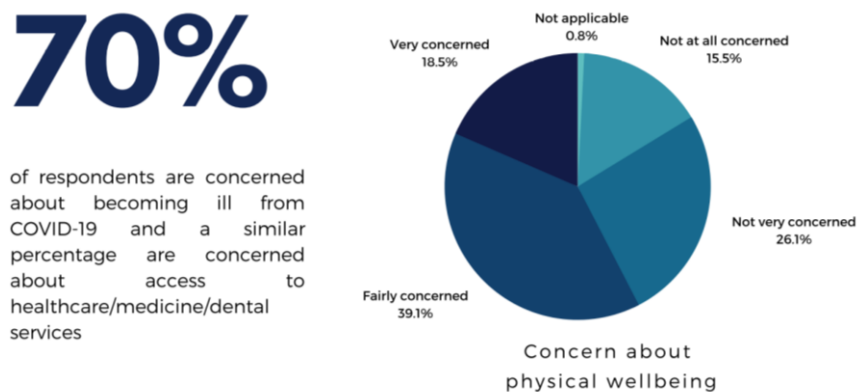


Figure 1: COVID-19 Tell us your experience report - August/September 2020 (published by RBK).

The RBK report highlights the link between concerns about getting ill and concerns about access to health services. The RBK report noted concerns from Kingston residents about

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physical wellbeing. According to the RBK report, feedback indicated c70% of respondents being concerned about access to healthcare, medicine and dental services and 50% were either very, or fairly concerned about their mental health with 16.4% saying they needed mental health or counselling support.



16.4%

of respondents said they need mental health or counselling support.

FEELING ISOLATED AND LONELY

- Two in five respondents reported feeling concerned about feeling isolated and lonely
- Respondents aged 16-24 were most concerned about feeling isolated and lonely followed by those who are aged 75-85

Figure 2: COVID-19 Tell us your experience report - August/September 2020 (published by RBK).

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2. Research methods and sources for this report

This compilation report covers feedback from Kingston residents across a 15-month period. It utilises a range of research methodologies and sources collected between 1 January 2020 to 31 March 2021 and collates analysis of **501** experiences, views and concerns received from **238** people.

We wanted to learn about how COVID-19 might be affecting services and how service providers had adapted in response to the coronavirus pandemic. This report provides examples of what local people have shared with Healthwatch Kingston.

Methodologies used to collect data for this compilation report included:

- Surveys (including Easy Read versions)
- Spot purchasing social media advertising
- Increasing outreach to local groups and organisations (requesting they share the survey in their newsletters and other communications)
- Promoting surveys through Kingston and Richmond Communication and Engagement Steering Group (which includes the NHS and Kingston Council) communications
- Engaging through [Healthwatch Kingston website](#), email and voicemail
- Virtual community events

Healthwatch Kingston reviewed data from the following sources for this compilation report:

1. **96** experiences shared by **48** people with Healthwatch Kingston through a non-COVID ‘Have your say’ survey about NHS and social care services before the coronavirus pandemic began - during 1 January to 31 March 2020.
2. **263** experiences shared by **163** people with Healthwatch Kingston through the ‘Share your experiences during COVID-19’ survey that ran between 1 April to 30 November 2020.
3. **142** additional experiences shared by **27** people with Healthwatch Kingston via our website ‘[Share your views](#)’ page, through emails, voice messages and during virtual Healthwatch Kingston engagement events between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

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3. Comparison of service access, quality of care and aftercare before and during the pandemic

During the first wave of the pandemic from March 2020, NHS, social care and voluntary sector services worked together to continue to maintain the delivery of services at a time of unprecedented demand. During the period they rolled out a new digital programme to ensure that urgent cases were seen without delay.

Later in 2020 health and care providers in Kingston worked collaboratively to recover services which had been stood down earlier in the year.

Throughout further surges of the Covid pandemic, providers have continued to recover services and meet new and emerging care needs, to put the needs of patients first.

Across this period, Healthwatch Kingston engaged with our local population. We have also worked collaboratively with a range of organisations including Kingston Council, NHS south west London and Kingston voluntary and community sector organisations to engage with Kingston residents about what the NHS and other providers needed to prioritise as they worked to re-focus services to deliver post-COVID recovery and sustainability plans.

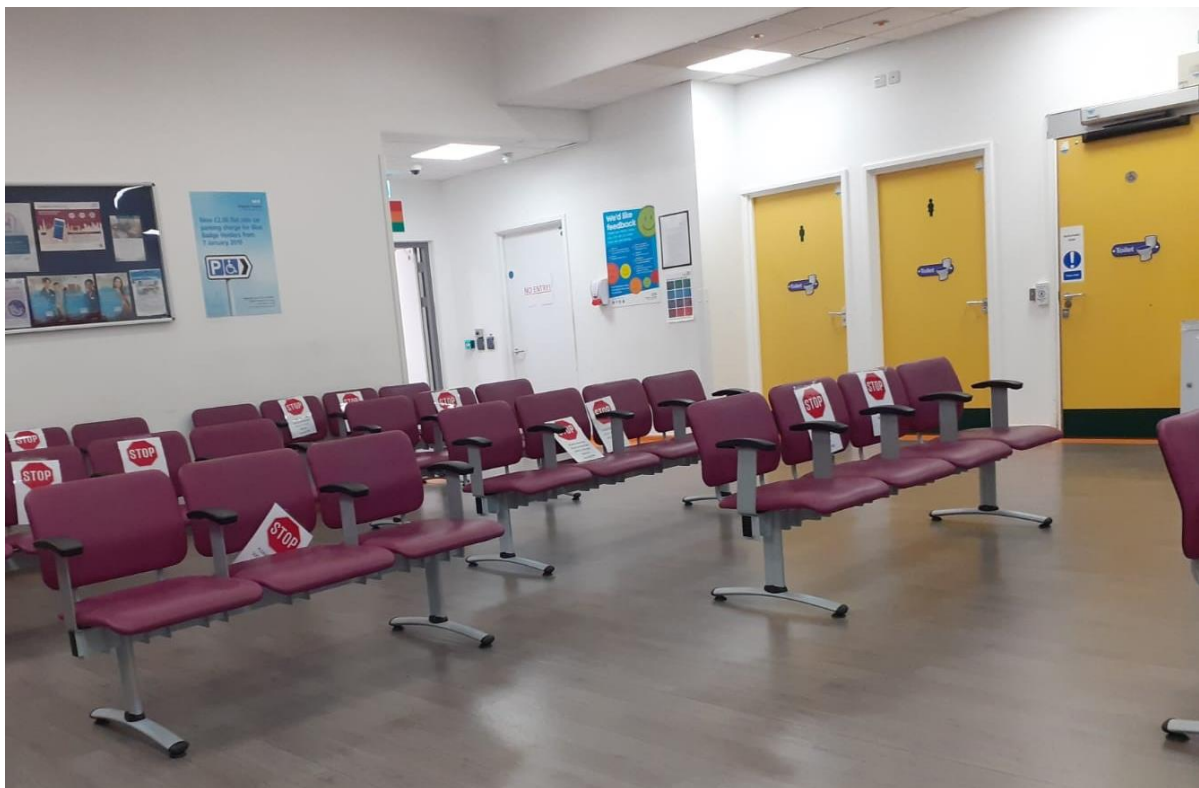


Figure 3: Accident and Emergency Department, Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in June 2020.

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Healthwatch Kingston asked if it was easy to access care from NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the pandemic.

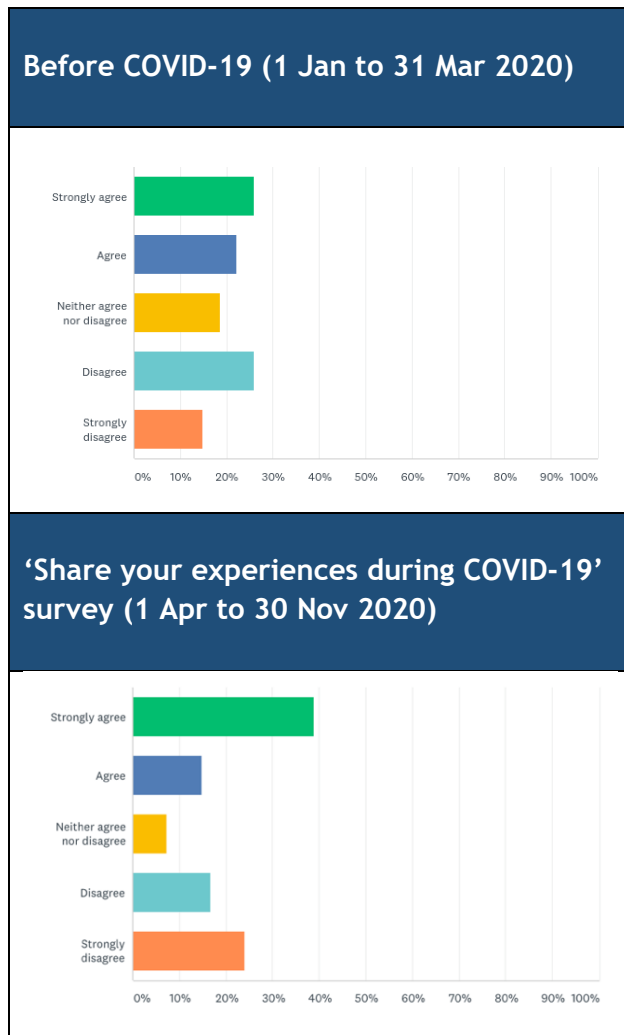


Figure 4: Comparison of access to services before and during the pandemic.

Access to NHS and social care services in Kingston

Comparing data in Figure 4 suggests that, for most people who shared experiences through the Healthwatch Kingston surveys, access to care improved (combining those that 'strongly agreed' and those that 'agreed') by the end of November 2020. The data, however, also indicates an increase in the percentage of respondents that 'strongly disagreed' with access to care improving.

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Healthwatch Kingston asked how satisfied people were with the quality of NHS and social care services they received in Kingston before and during the pandemic.

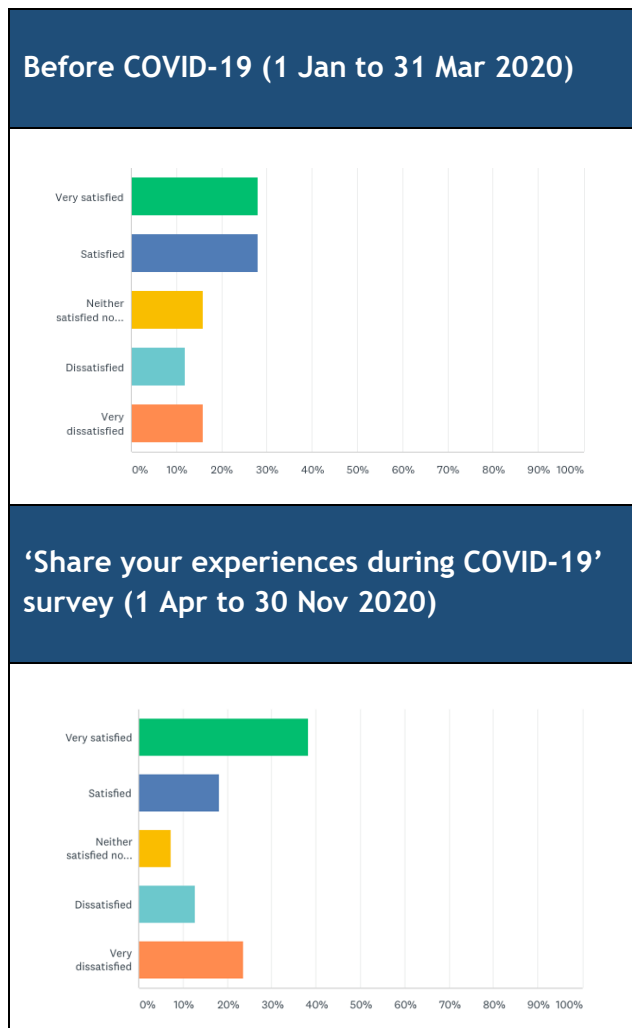


Figure 5: Comparison of the quality of care before and during the pandemic.

Quality of care provided by services in Kingston.

Comparing data in Figure 5 indicates that a higher percentage of respondents were 'very satisfied' with their quality of care by the end of November 2020 than they were before the pandemic. The data, however, also indicates fewer respondents feeling neutral about the quality of NHS and social care they received, with an increase in the percentage of respondents that were 'very dissatisfied' with the quality of their care.

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Healthwatch Kingston asked how satisfied people were with their aftercare from NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the pandemic.

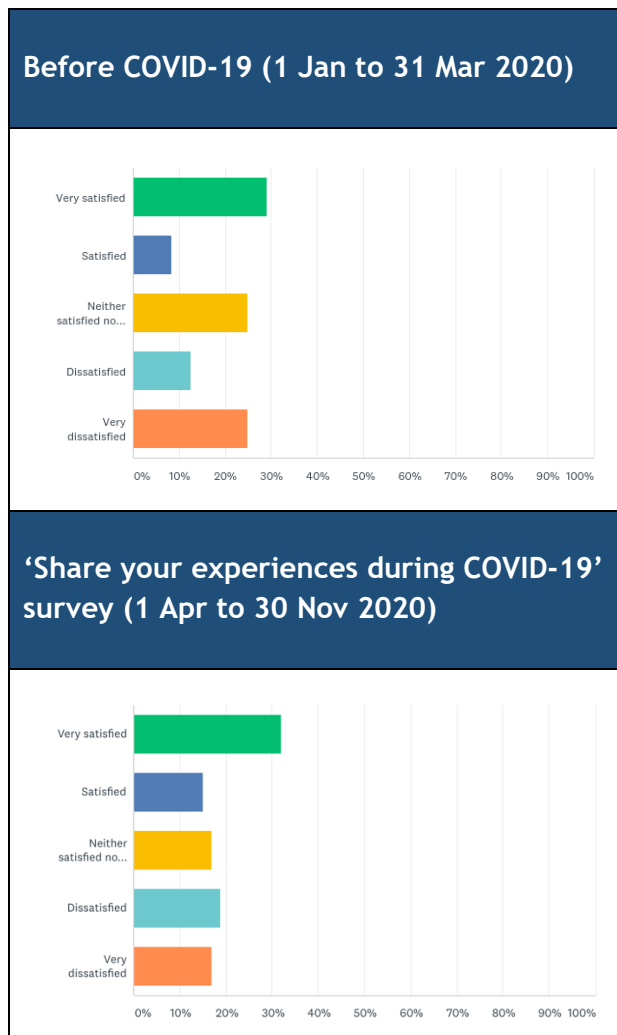


Figure 6: Comparison of service aftercare before and during the pandemic.

Aftercare provided by services in Kingston.

Comparing data in Figure 6 suggests there was a slight improvement in satisfaction (combining those that were ‘very satisfied’ and those that were ‘satisfied’) with aftercare by the end of November 2020.

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4. One year with Covid-19: What residents told us

PLEASE NOTE: This 15-month report brings together experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston through two surveys we ran between 1 January 2020 and 30 November 2020, along with additional experiences, views and concerns shared via the [Healthwatch Kingston website](#), received in voice messages, emails and during virtual engagement events between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Healthwatch Kingston initially surveyed **48** people about access to NHS and social care services, the quality of the care they received, and any aftercare experiences, views, and concerns before the pandemic, which we previously reported in our '[Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston: Snapshot report #1](#)'.

Our work continued through the 'Share your experiences during COVID-19' survey, that ran between 1 April and 30 November 2020, where **163** people commented on eight different NHS and social care service areas in Kingston. Of those that responded to the survey, 70% were over 55 years old with only 1 respondent under 25 years. This supports the continued need for targeted engagement with young people. Healthwatch Kingston does this through [Youth Out Loud!](#) by supporting young people to share their experiences views and concerns about health and care.

'Share your experiences during COVID-19' survey: 163 people shared 263* experiences, views and concerns about eight NHS and social care service areas:

- 34 experiences about **mental health care** e.g. community mental health, mental health crisis service, child and adolescent mental health services.
- 63 about **hospital care** e.g. accident and emergency, inpatient care, outpatient clinics and complaints.
- 14 about **social care** e.g. care homes and homecare.
- 7 about **community support services** e.g. advocacy and safeguarding.
- 21 about **NHS dental services**.
- 20 about **pharmacy services**.

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- 70 about **GP services**.
- 29 about **Kingston Stronger Together** (Kingston's response to COVID-19).
- 5 about **Other services** (1 on maternity services, 1 on care for older people, 1 on direct payments/personal budgets, and another on '111' service and sexual health services).

* Respondents to the survey were invited to share experiences, views and concerns about more than one service.

a. MENTAL HEALTH CARE (e.g. community mental health, mental health crisis service and child and adolescent mental health services)

In summary: Responses to the 'Share your experiences during COVID-19' survey (1 April to 30 November 2020) indicated that mental health care services in Kingston during the pandemic performed poorly. Respondents to Healthwatch Kingston said they struggled to access mental health services, and when they managed to access their mental health care, the quality of their care was not deemed satisfactory. Many respondents reported poor communication, lack of support, problems with their medication and diagnosis. A number of respondents shared that there had been no aftercare and they were frustrated with the lack of follow-up. The Community Mental Health Team was the most mentioned service and also had the most negative comments from respondents.

Experiences of mental health services shared during this period with Healthwatch Kingston resonate with responses to national research completed by the Care Quality Commission between 1 September and 30 November 2020.

The [2020 Care Quality Commission community mental health survey](#) received feedback from 17,601 people. The report showed that people are consistently reporting poor experiences of NHS community mental health services, with few positive results. For example, poor experiences were reported for crisis care, accessing care, and involvement.

Of those that responded to our 'Share your experiences during COVID-19' survey, 19 people reviewed mental health care services.

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Access to mental health care services in Kingston

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

Answered: 19 Skipped: 15

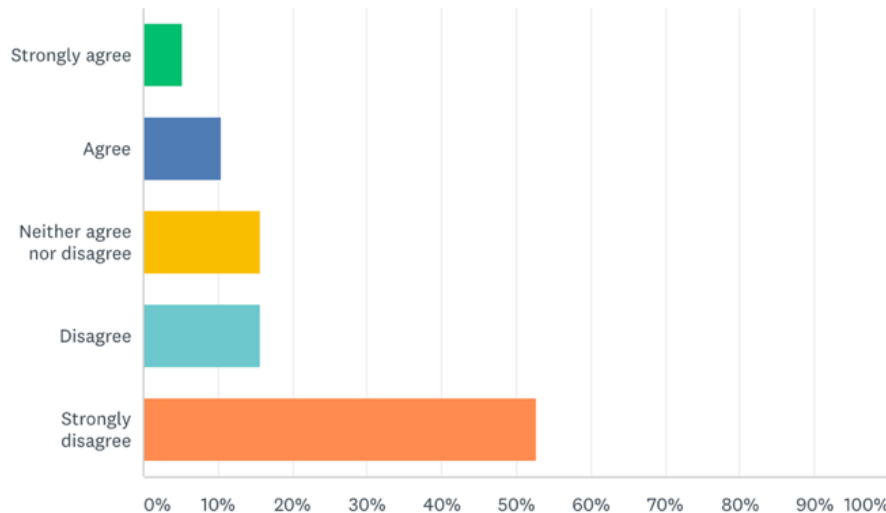


Figure 7: How respondents rated access to mental health care in Kingston.

Figure 7 shows that out of the 19 respondents who answered this question, 10 (52%) respondents strongly disagreed, 3 (15%) disagreed, 3 (15%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 2 (10%) agreed and 1 (5%) strongly agreed that it was easy to access the help they needed from Kingston’s mental health care service providers during the coronavirus pandemic.

Some experiences of poor access to care from mental health services

About iCope:

- “I have waited 9 months for my first session.”



I was supposed to start on a CBT group course on 12 March 2020 which was cancelled because of the pandemic.”

About Tolworth Community Mental Health Team:

- “There is no help during this time.”
- “I could contact CMHT and psychiatrist and care coordinator, but not enough time was allocated for support.”
- “It has taken a very long time to get an assessment.”

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I had to chase up to have telephone appointments. I had to have support from Hestia to speak to the correct professional on numerous occasions.”

About Tolworth Hospital:

- “There was no access to Tolworth Hospital Adult Mental Health Unit.”

About St George’s Mental Health Trust:

Our urgent referral was ignored and had to be chased up a month later.”

Quality of mental health care services in Kingston

How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 16

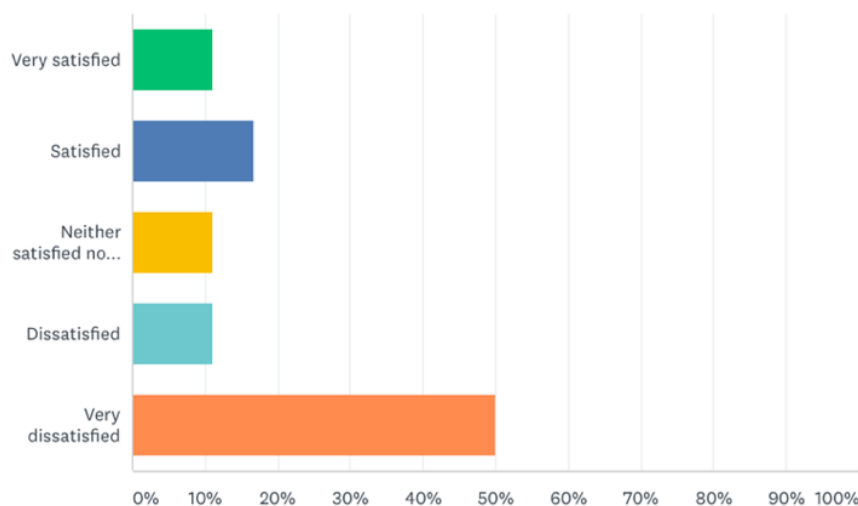


Figure 8: How respondents rated the quality of mental health care in Kingston.

Figure 8 shows that out of the 18 respondents to this question, 9 (50%) were very dissatisfied, 2 (11%) were dissatisfied, 2 (11%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 3 (17%) were satisfied and 2 (11%) were very satisfied with the quality of care provided by mental health services in Kingston during the pandemic.

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Some experiences of poor-quality care from mental health services

About Tolworth Community Mental Health Team:

- *“There was an agreed medication increase about six weeks ago, but this hasn't happened, despite chasing numerous times. I feel like I have been completely let down by the mental health services. I am vulnerable and shielding and no one contacted me for the first two and half months of lockdown.”*



I have just been left with no support whatsoever.”

- *“It is hard to get an appointment. I had to complain to get decent help in form of talk therapy. I never hear back after appointments. In the ADHD clinic I was seen by four different doctors in a year which is a lot. There was always an issue with the room we met in, not having correct facilities, e.g. a computer, blood pressure measurer. I didn't feel informed. I was offered an email with information I never got on several occasions.”*
- *“I suffer with poor mental health and no one has even thought of contacting me to see how I am doing in this lockdown. No one from the mental health team in Kingston has even thought to make contact with me. I know this is a difficult time with COVID-19, but it feels like no one is interested.”*

About South West London St George's Mental Health Trust:



Negligent, safeguarding risks, staff were rude, failed to refer to medical notes for history, ignored advance directive and LPA. Failed to provide appropriate medication for a month as inpatient. Inappropriately removed section placing me as a voluntary patient, failed to notice when I left the ward for 8 hours, missing 2 rounds of medication whilst I was severely manic, putting me at serious risk and also my family.”

About iCope:



After a long wait, the service so far has been a great experience, however, it feels strange as the appointments are all done by telephone call.”

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Mental health care services aftercare

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

Answered: 18 Skipped: 16

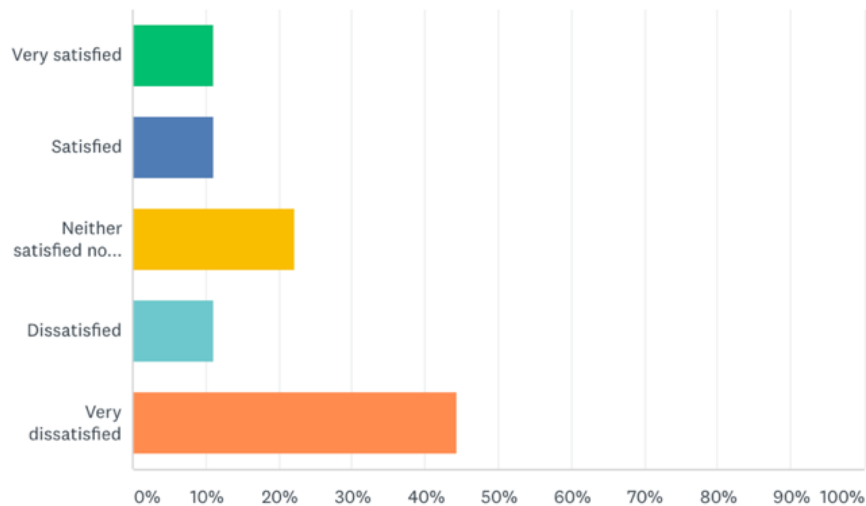


Figure 9: How respondents rated mental health service aftercare in Kingston.

Figure 9 shows that of the 18 respondents to this question, 8 (45%) were very dissatisfied, 2 (11%) were dissatisfied, 4 (22%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 2 (11%) were satisfied and 2 (11%) were very satisfied with the aftercare provided by mental health services for Kingston residents.

Some experiences of poor aftercare from mental health services

About Tolworth Community Mental Health Team:

- “I was discharged with no discussion. I have telephone anxiety and usually have a support worker to help make calls. There is no email address for my team, and I heard nothing from them at all.”
- “Medication still hasn't been increased. It is now three months outstanding.”
- “There was no care in the first place, never mind aftercare.”



I think these services can do so much better for vulnerable people, there should be more communication between the two services as my neurodiversity impacts my mental health. Disappointing there was no help after an ADHD diagnosis, just

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left to navigate a difficult world with a new label. I am waiting for an ASD assessment and I am certain there will be no help after that either. It's a lot to take in, with little help, no signposting to other services at all. Now I've been transferred back to my GP. I feel this should also be communicated to the mental health team and my 'fictional care coordinator'. I feel the information needed is not clear or accessible or signposted. A line of communication needs to be established, perhaps it's a funding issue? There is just so much room for improvement."

About St George's Mental Health Trust:

- "No aftercare was provided."

ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH EXPERIENCES SHARED from other HWK sources:

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 were seeing a trend of more people experiencing suicidal ideation.

Another person said they had coping strategies already in place as they were "used to being in panic mode". They felt it is as if their mental health had prepared them to cope with the pandemic.

Other people shared they found respite in not having to have so many interactions and social pressures and were more comfortable with a slower pace of life. However, this was not the case for all, and some had struggled as it felt like an extra weight on top of the already heavy burden of managing their mental health.

"I suffer with mental health and no one has even thought of contacting me to see how I am doing in this lockdown no one from the mental health team in Kingston has even thought to make contact with me. I don't understand how that is allowed I know this is a difficult time with Covid-19 but during this time there are other people with other illnesses and medical conditions like myself, but no one is interested in that at all I think it is disgusting. I will even go as far to say I phoned the mental health crisis support line recently as I was in a crisis and was feeling suicidal and the operator who spoke to me said I would be safer to be at home due to Covid-19. How do you work that one out?"

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“I have twice self-referred to [Kingston] iCope. Neither time has resulted in therapy. I recently contacted them; it feels time limited now. They took two months to respond, and then I received a letter telling me there is a [one] year waiting list. I couldn’t bear the thought of being the way I am for another year, with the offer of help being a year away, so I asked to be taken off the waiting list.”

“I am struggling with my mental health and waiting for assessments and nothing is offered to help me.”

Healthwatch Kingston sources:

- *‘Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1’*
- *Additional (non-survey) NHS and social experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston website, in emails, telephone interviews and during virtual engagement events between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.*

b. HOSPITAL CARE (e.g. accident and emergency, inpatient care, outpatient clinics and complaints)

In summary: Kingston Hospital received mostly positive feedback for their response during the coronavirus pandemic. Respondents to the ‘Share your experiences during COVID-19’ survey (1 April to 30 November 2020) mentioned, “excellent care and service provided by staff”, “efficient safety procedures and precautions in place to safeguard against the virus”, along with an acknowledgement of “a smooth-running A&E department”. There was also praise from respondents for maternity and cancer services, the Royal Eye Unit, elderly care, and the diabetic clinic.

Poor experiences of hospital services shared by respondents included delays in access to diagnostic appointments, “they also said that they were not supposed to be booking anyone in for the urgent scan pathways as this was meant for cancer patients only and follow-up care”, getting results from tests, relatives struggling to communicate with patients who were in hospital (one specifically in the case of a patient who had dementia). Another patient provided feedback about their mixed experience while in hospital maternity care, saying, “a few maternity staff were amazing” but then, “many midwives were disengaged, often seeming to lack basic knowledge and empathy”. There was also a negative experience reported about the aftercare one patient had received from an occupational therapist at the hospital, which may be an issue with the Discharge to Assess policy. If so, it has not been explained to the relative or implemented very well.

For more information about experiences of discharge read, Healthwatch England’s [‘590 people’s stories of leaving hospital during COVID-19’](#) report, published in October 2020.

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Some other access, quality of care and aftercare experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston about Kingston Hospital services during this reporting period, however, indicated service quality can differ between health disciplines and between episodes of care. Some respondents noted frustration about the lack of communication about hospital appointments, some hospital staff not listening to and understanding patient needs, and the lack of refreshments and food for visitors having to wait for relatives.

Some respondents also shared they would have felt safer accessing the care they needed at their GP surgery rather than having to visit hospital for their care. Others were concerned about the negative impact on health that the focus on patients with COVID-19 was having on the delayed provision of previously planned elective care.

Access to hospital care

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

Answered: 36 Skipped: 27

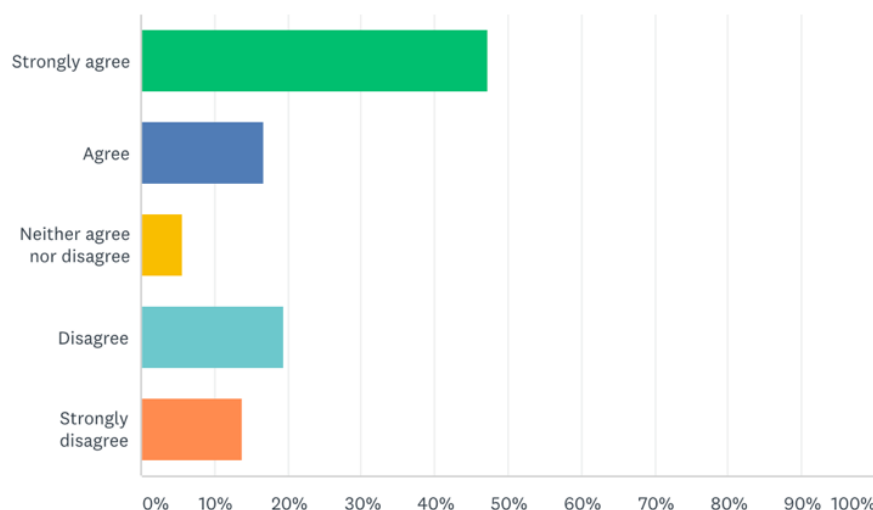


Figure 10: How respondents rated access to Kingston Hospital.

Figure 10 shows that out of the 36 respondents to this question, 16 (44%) strongly agreed, 6 (17%) agreed, 2 (6%) neither agreed nor disagreed, 7 (19%) disagreed, and 5 (14%) strongly disagreed that it was easy to access the help and support they needed from Kingston Hospital.

Some experiences of good access to care at Kingston Hospital

About Kingston Hospital generally:

- “My husband was getting treatment for Covid-19 in Kingston Hospital for 8 days. All staff including doctors and nurses were amazing in their care and support both to

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my husband and in giving feedback to us over the phone about his health. We cannot thank them enough.”

- “1st class speedy service whilst tests to find out what was wrong.”

About Kingston Hospital Breast Cancer services:

- “I attended a Monday morning walk in clinic by appointment where I was given a mammogram and ultrasound in one morning and managed to see a consultant at the same time. Not only were the doctors at initial diagnosis extremely frank but also considerate but the MacMillan nurse to whom I was assigned was extremely helpful. The nurses and staff in the chemotherapy department are always cheerful, welcoming and reassuring. They do an amazing job. After diagnosis I was impressed with the speed with which follow up investigative appointments were made both within Kingston Hospital and at the Royal Marsden Hospital, in Sutton. Overall, I think the breast cancer services at Kingston [Hospital] are excellent.”
- “Despite the pandemic I was referred immediately to the breast unit and seen two days later. Throughout my diagnosis and treatment, appointments have been prompt and clinical staff available by phone. Excellent care.”

About the Royal Hospital Eye Unit at Kingston Hospital:

- “I got booked in easily for same day with one call.”
- “I was given very clear instructions about what to do prior to my operation and who to contact if I had any questions. It was the same after the op.”

About Kingston Hospital A&E:

- “No waiting to be seen and rapid diagnosis.”
- “Smooth running, well organised in A&E for Covid-19 patients.”
- “Well set up at [Kingston] Hospital with social distancing in place.”

About Kingston Hospital Diabetic Clinic:

- “I needed to know when my insulin treatment would start. It should have been early May but now booked as soon as possible in June. Phone consultation was reassuring and easy to access.”


Some experiences of poor access to care at Kingston Hospital

About Kingston Hospital A&E:


- “When I asked quite reasonably, as I had waited for some time, if it were possible to have a little bit of supper and take some necessary tablets with it, I was angrily shouted at by two members of staff that they were very busy and couldn't do anything.”

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About Kingston Hospital Outpatients:

 *There were delays in confirming when diagnostic X-rays and Ultrasound scans will take [place] even though the condition needing these examinations is suspected of being serious.”*

About Kingston Hospital Derwent Ward (for patients with Dementia):

 *Communication with this ward was horrendous when my partner was admitted for 3 weeks. This is an elderly care ward and although he has vascular dementia this ward was depressing. He has short term memory loss and can't retain any important information regarding his care from either doctors or nurses. Despite advising everyone of this we still had to constantly chase the ward for updates on his care. The phone was rarely answered and when it was, the person I needed to speak with was never there. I waited over 2 weeks to speak with a doctor despite requesting every other day. He was very bored, very depressed and with being short sighted and having dementia, he is not able to watch TV on a tablet. I was only able to visit for 1 hour a week and he thought we had all forgotten about him and this really affected his mental health.”*

About Kingston Hospital Outpatients:

 *Still waiting for diagnostic examinations. Long delays waiting for appointments and lack of communication about when they might be. Very stressful as my condition is getting worse by the day causing great pain and restricting movement.”*

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Quality of hospital care

How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Answered: 36 Skipped: 27

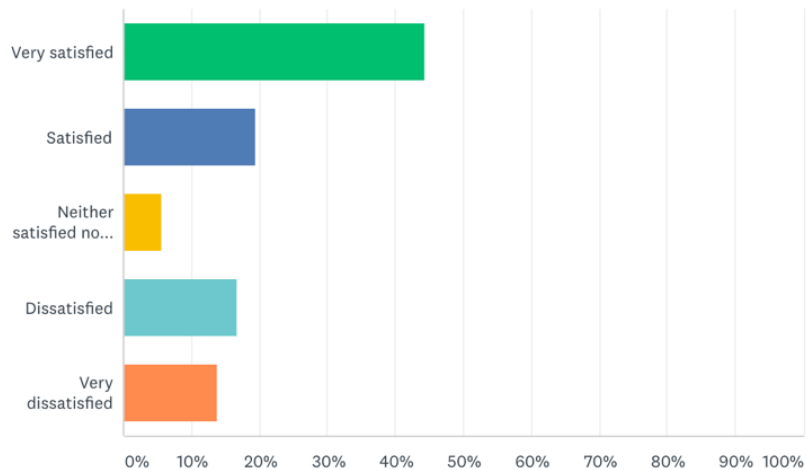


Figure 11: How respondents rated quality of care at Kingston Hospital.

Figure 11 shows that out of the 36 respondents to this question, 16 (44%) were very satisfied and 7 (19%) were satisfied with the care they received from hospital services in Kingston during the pandemic. 2 (6%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 6 (17%) were dissatisfied and 5 (14%) were very dissatisfied with the care they received.

Some experiences of good quality care at Kingston Hospital

About Kingston Hospital generally:

- “Kingston Hospital staff, doctors and nurses went further beyond standard health care, they were all outstanding and caring.”
- “The doctors offered fast treatment and kept us informed every step by telephone.”

About Kingston Hospital Sir William Rous Unit (Breast Cancer Unit):

“All options for surgery were offered despite pandemic, including immediate breast reconstruction. Excellent and seamless teamwork between Kingston and the Royal Marsden Hospital.”

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- “Lots of precautions taken, empty clinic, quick care. Very impressed with how the mammogram was carried out. I had concerns prior to appointment about social distancing but all precautions were excellent.”

About Kingston Hospital Maternity services:

- “Staff and midwives are friendly and helpful. My birth plan was taken into consideration.”

About Kingston Hospital Kennet Ward (Elderly Care):

- “My mother was well looked after. The nurses on Kennet ward were great, Face Timing us with my mother as we weren’t allowed to visit.”


About Kingston Hospital A&E Department:

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

About Kingston Hospital Diabetic Clinic:

- “It was reassuring to know that I would be seen as soon as face to face appointments allow. Diabetic nurse was really calm / helpful on the phone.”

About Kingston Hospital Eye Unit:

 *I felt very cared for right from the decision with the optometrist, through the preoperative test and right through the operation. All staff were professional and knowledgeable. I felt very safe.”*

Some experiences of poor-quality care at Kingston Hospital

About Kingston Hospital Maternity services:

- “A few maternity staff were amazing but the majority of my maternity experience both in the hospital and in-home, was horrific. Many midwives were disengaged, often seeming to lack basic knowledge and empathy. I'm grateful for the NHS in many respects, however, there were major mistakes made with my care and a refusal to engage with my physical health needs throughout the pregnancy and also in labour, which has had long term negative consequences on my health and the health of my baby. In addition, maternity staff in general were surprisingly ignorant about safety measures needed during lockdown.”

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About Kingston Hospital A&E Department:



Patient is only 48 but has vascular dementia. Because he doesn't look 'old enough' to have dementia they assumed he didn't have it. He didn't understand what was going on and couldn't answer their questions with any authority/truth, but this was never questioned.”

About Kingston Hospital Astor Ward (Emergency Surgical):

- “The care in A&E was good but my husband was in severe pain without pain relief for about an hour. Otherwise the care on both occasions was good. Care in the ward [Astor] was patchy. Some of the nurses were excellent but a couple treated my husband (a retired consultant who had deep understanding of his condition) like a child and refused to listen to his suggestions. His intestinal obstruction settled and then recurred after unsuitable feeding was restarted. He was in pain and vomiting for several hours overnight. The SHO on duty refused to allow the nurses to replace the naso gastric tube, as my husband rightly suggested they should, without coming to see him. When the consultant saw him the following morning the Nurse on duty said he had refused an NG tube (a lie). A tube was then passed giving relief of his symptoms. On another day his cannula came out at about 5 am and he had no fluids until a line was eventually fitted by an anaesthetist around 1 pm. He is in renal failure and this was dangerous. The nurses said they were very short staffed due to Covid when a communication from our MP assured us, they had been told this was not the case. The Filipino nurses (all excellent) said they were very anxious about the lack of adequate PPE as they knew they were particularly at risk. The other comment I would make, noted on his previous admissions, is about continuity of care as he was in the care of at least three consultants over the period of 12 days. Contact with doctors was very brief and he was not seen by any physician despite being in both renal and cardiac failure. I would like to think this was due to the enormous pressures the pandemic put on hospital staffing, but the lack of cross disciplinary care has occurred in previous admissions too. To the credit of the Ward care, he did not contract Covid while in hospital, which was a great relief.

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Hospital aftercare

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

Answered: 36 Skipped: 27

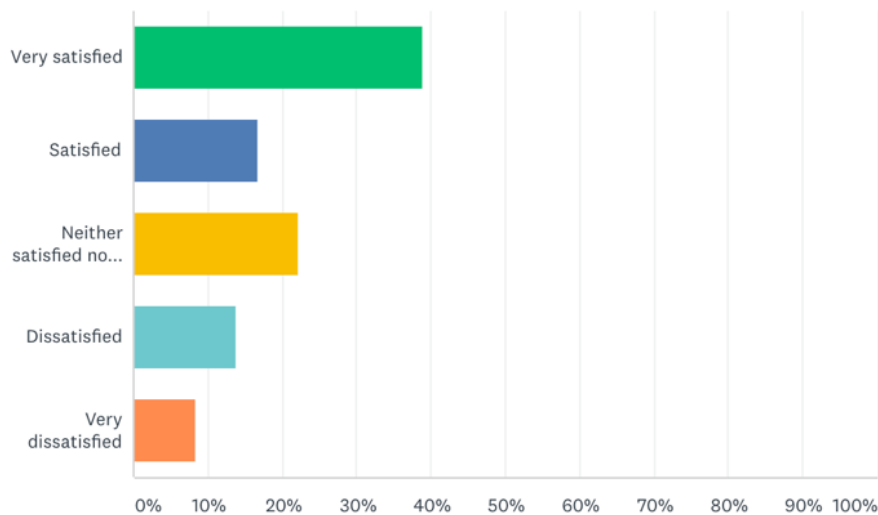


Figure 12: How respondents rated Kingston Hospital aftercare.

Figure 12 shows that out of the 36 respondents to this question, 14 (39%) respondents were very satisfied with their aftercare, 6 (17%) were satisfied, 8 (22%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 5 (14%) were dissatisfied and 3 (8%) were very dissatisfied with the aftercare offered by Kingston Hospital.

Some experiences of good aftercare at Kingston Hospital

About Kingston Hospital generally:

- “Everything was followed up quickly and tests were done one after another.”
- “Follow-up has worked effectively.”
- “We had letters after each appointment with the main results so we could track changes.”
- “Before discharge my husband was seen twice by an excellent dietitian who sent him some suitable fortified drinks, for which we were most grateful.”

About Kingston Hospital Kennet Ward (Elderly Care):

 *The reablement team supported my mother when she was discharged.”*

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About Kingston Hospital A&E:



I have fractured my foot and they gave me a lovely support shoe to wear.”

Kingston Hospital and Royal Marsden Hospital Cancer Services:

- “Blood test results were followed up with a phone call from the consultant outlining the situation and treatment plan.”

About the Royal Eye Unit at Kingston Hospital:

- “No further treatment needed but they did send me a letter which I could show to my optician.”

About Kingston Hospital Maternity Services:



Yoga pregnancy class, after birth home unit - Staff were well informed and knowledgeable of my situation.”

Some experiences of poor aftercare at Kingston Hospital

About Kingston Hospital generally:


- “After years of repeated hospital trips due to my allergies and asthma, they offered me an appointment with the respiratory team. I'm very grateful for the referral however can't help but ask why I haven't been offered this referral previously.”
- “Medication given was not sufficient for the period they stated it was needed so became a hassle to get more.”



Physiotherapy was extremely limited, which no doubt was due to the Covid crisis. As result of 12 days in bed with virtually no food my husband had extreme muscle wasting and weakness by the time, he was brought home.”

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About Kingston Hospital Derwent Ward (for patients with Dementia):

 *Communication is appalling and although we appreciate what the doctors and nurses do, they are clearly overworked and under paid. Better provision needs to be put in place for hidden illness. My partner with dementia ended up with Pneumonia a few days after he left hospital so clearly, he was not on antibiotics for long enough.”*

ADDITIONAL KINGSTON HOSPITAL EXPERIENCES SHARED from other HWK sources:

“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. At first, the staff did not seem to offer any support 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?”

“My (adult child) has profound learning disability and was admitted to Kingston Hospital in late December [2020] with an acute chest infection. I was not allowed to be with them and did not speak to a doctor for 20 hours after they were admitted despite many calls asking for information. X was initially treated for suspected Covid despite my telling paramedics that we had been shielding for months. X developed sepsis and was treated with IV antibiotics and had 3 negative Covid tests. X recovered and came home once this treatment was completed. During my first discussion with a doctor, the doctor sought my views on whether X should be resuscitated if that became necessary. I told her that X was a healthy person with a dodgy left lung who enjoyed a good life. It would depend on the reasons and the circumstances and should not be an automatic

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assumption based on X's disabilities. The doctor told me that a consultant had already placed a DNR notice on X's notes. I challenged the clinical reasons for this pointing out there had been no discussion with the family or GP. The doctor agreed to seek advice and change the wording to reflect our conversation. When X was discharged, I checked that the notice had been removed and was told it had. Although the discussion I had was about resuscitation, I believe it was really about what treatment X would receive for Covid, whether they would get intensive care or not, whether they would be ventilated or not which would of course affect whether they would live or die. I am saddened but not surprised that such decisions contribute to the high numbers of people with learning disabilities dying of Covid...My biggest worry is for those who do not have family members to challenge such practice. This is the practice of our local NHS Trust. I am pretty sure that the Coronavirus Act is behind this."

"In February [2020] my 84-year-old parent was admitted to Kingston Hospital suffering from Pneumonia. They had Pulmonary Fibrosis and it took about 4 weeks for them to recover. The doctors managed to wean them off 24/7 oxygen and they were clinically well by the end of their stay. However, the occupational therapist did nothing to help mobilise my parent, and at the time of their discharge from hospital, they were unable to get to the toilet at home. Being unable to access the toilet is degrading and something that caused my parent a great deal of distress. Before they left hospital the Occupational Therapist phoned me 3 times to discuss arrangements at home and I found the OT aggressively insistent attitude rather bullying. They 'persuaded' my parent (who had Dementia) that their bed should be moved to the living room. When my parent agreed to this, I knew they had been bullied into agreeing to it, because they hated anything being moved around due to their Dementia and, when they came home, they insisted the furniture remain where it was. The occupational therapist's poor recommendations also resulted in our local Social Services (in Wandsworth) providing an insufficient care package for my parent at home. I suffer with anxiety and find the hassle from this therapist difficult to cope with, especially as I was also physically unwell, and when I asked them why my parent wasn't mobilised, she said that they 'Didn't have time'. The result was a horribly messy situation of several failed discharges from hospital that left my parent stressed and exhausted, it contributed to two mental breakdowns suffered by me and made me feel less able to cope with looking after my parent, who really needed 24/7 nursing. My niece was so worried she got my parent admitted to a care home for respite where she was so unhappy that she said she wanted to die. It was also at the care home that she contracted Covid-19 and, after readmission to Kingston Hospital, she passed away 4 days later. I am struggling to make sense of the mess of my parent's treatment by this occupational therapist, her poor handling of my parent's discharge from hospital, guilt at how much suffering they were caused (by wondering if I had not been suffering with increased Anxiety, I may have been able to do more to help them), and now grief. The Covid-19 outbreak has highlighted the extent to which many healthcare professionals go in order to save lives, but the appalling attitude of certain individuals, such as this occupational therapist, results in vast levels of distress to patients and additional work placed on other healthcare workers who are left to pick up the pieces. It felt as though the occupational therapist had given up on

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part of the job she should have been doing (to mobilise) and spent all her time running around like a headless chicken trying to bully patients and families into making arrangements for patients who are not fit enough to go home to somehow cope.”

“I would like to say how amazing staff have been treating my son at Kingston Hospital...My son was not easy to treat, extremely traumatised and very phobic and they provided such excellent care. I would also like to thank all other staff involved in his care that we did not get the names of. There have been no delays in his treatment due to Covid, the service has been excellent and the staff very caring.”

Healthwatch Kingston also learned about a patient living with a disability whose full-time carer was unable to be with them in the ward during ‘lockdown’. The disabled patient felt that ward staff did not grasp that the full-time carer was essential to them.

Healthwatch Kingston sources:

- *‘Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1’*
- *Additional (non-survey) NHS and social experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston website, in emails and during virtual community engagement events between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.*

c. SOCIAL CARE (e.g. care homes, and home care)

In summary: There were only a small number, but contradictory experiences shared by respondents to the ‘Share your experiences during COVID-19’ survey (1 April to 30 November 2020) about access to social care services. Some people reported being able to easily contact Your Healthcare and Adult Social Care to get an assessment, and there were two positive accounts of accessing direct payments. Others shared experiences of poor access and poor quality of social care. One respondent mentioned that Adult Social Care did not return calls and that information about care for older people was not easily available on the Kingston Council website. Some respondents shared that Adult Social Care personal assistants provided an excellent level of care and had taken into account protective and safeguarding measures during the pandemic. Another was concerned about a lack of available carers and there was one negative experience reported about end-of-life care.

Only five people responded to this service area as part of the ‘Share your experiences during Covid-19’ survey. Healthwatch Kingston ran a separate engagement survey to gather experiences of residents, and family members and friends of residents of Care Homes, Supported Living Homes and Extra Care Housing during the pandemic. Find out more about our Residents, family and friends' experiences of residential care during the coronavirus pandemic report [here](#).

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Access to social care services

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

Answered: 5 Skipped: 9

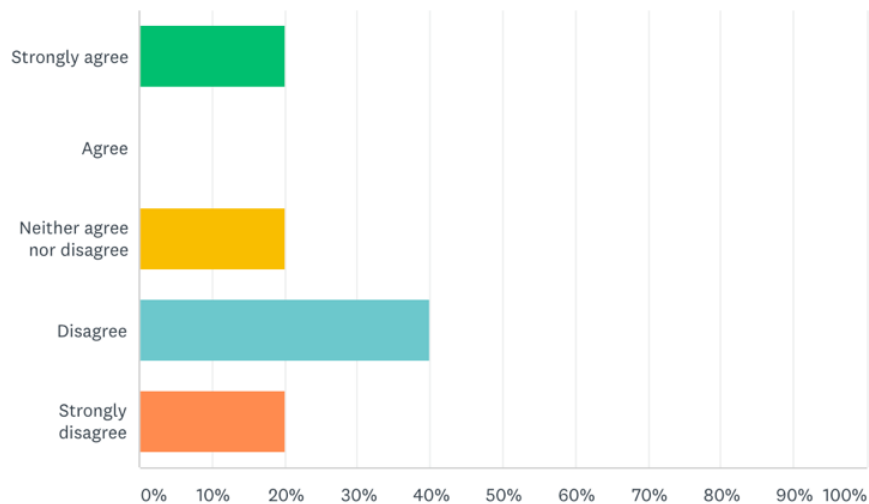


Figure 13: Experiences of access to social care services in Kingston.

Figure 13 shows 2 out the 5 respondents disagreed that they were able to access social care services during the pandemic, 1 strongly disagreed, 1 neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1 strongly agreed that they were able to access services.

Some experiences of good access to social care services

About Your Healthcare:

“It was easy to make contact through a telephone call provided through a 'one-stop' person approach. This is so useful in terms of getting a professional service quickly, and especially in an emergency.”

About Kingston Council Adult Social Care:

“I recently accessed a Direct Payment from Kingston Council just prior to the start of COVID-19. The assessment was well-documented, and the financial assessment was quickly executed. As well as the agreed budget, each month Kingston Council has

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provided an additional 33% funding to allow for additional expenditure. For example: Personal Assistants (PAs) being unable to fly back to the UK; PAs having to quarantine on arrival in the UK; PAs off sick, PAs having to leave for various reasons; service user needs increased over the period, all costing additional funding.”

About Kingston Council Social Workers:

 *Social workers were exceptionally efficient.”*

 *The social worker was very helpful and contacted us once my husband was home to see if we needed anything.”*

Some experiences of poor access to social care services

About Kingston Council and care for older people:

 *I tried to find services on RBK website, but there was nothing available.”*

About Kingston Council Adult social care:

 *They don't return calls; you have to chase them.”*

About Learning Disability Services:

 *Felt that no effort was made to ensure good outcomes for people with learning disabilities in care/supported living.”*

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Quality of social care services

How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 9

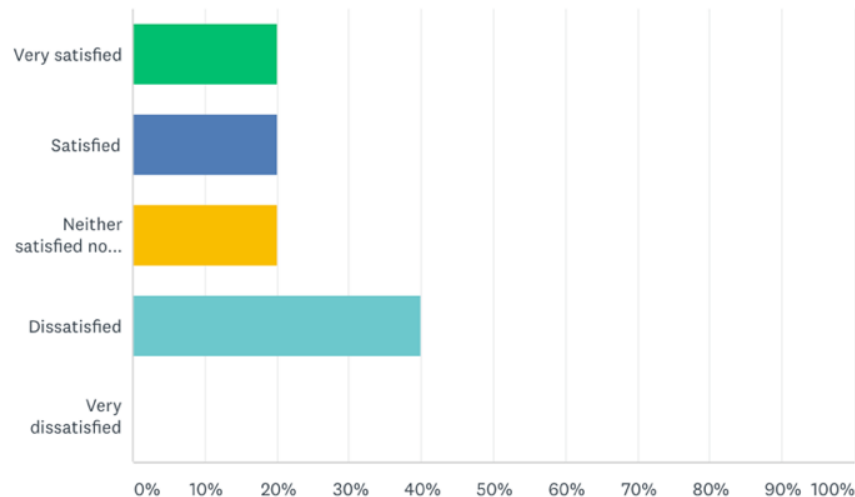


Figure 14: Experiences of quality of social care services in Kingston.

Figure 14 shows 2 respondents were dissatisfied with the quality of their social care, 1 neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 1 satisfied and 1 very satisfied.

An experience of good quality social care services

About Kingston Council Adult social care:

- “Personal Assistants have provided the very best support especially when extra hours have been required. Additional hygiene levels have been agreed and carried out in terms of use of anti-bacterial and alco-gel and other protective and safeguarding measures.”

Some experiences of poor quality social care services

About Kingston Council Adult social care:

- “Haven't received any help.”
- “Lack of available carers is a serious concern. We have been trying to recruit a part-time carer since October - nightmare.”

End of life care:

- “I find it difficult to imagine that anyone having to deal with end-of-life care for a loved one would feel very comforted about the standard of service on offer.”

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Social care aftercare

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

Answered: 5 Skipped: 9

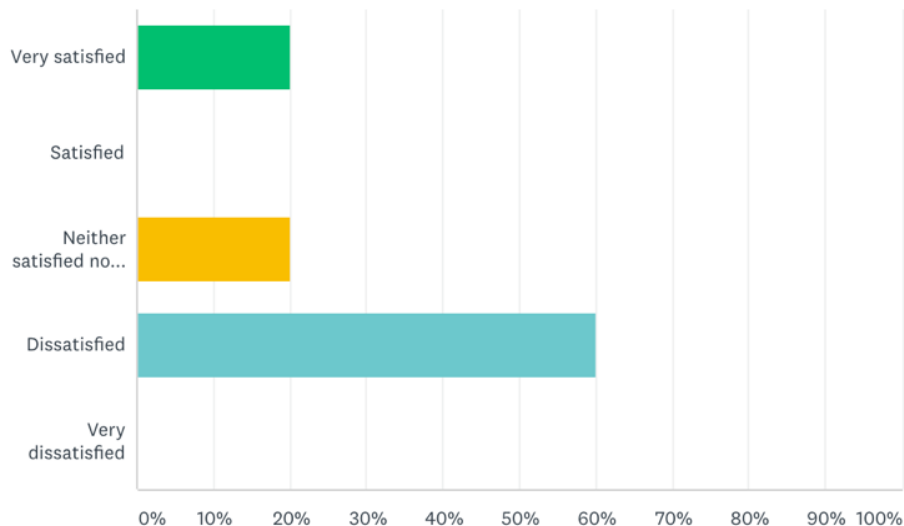


Figure 15: Experiences of social care aftercare in Kingston.

Figure 15 shows 3 respondents were dissatisfied with aftercare provided, 1 was neither satisfied not dissatisfied, and 1 person was very satisfied.

An experience of good aftercare from social care services

About Kingston Council Adult social care:

- “A quick response, and so reassuring.”

Some experiences of poor aftercare from social care services

End of life care:

- “Everything that needed to happen was always hit and miss and always took so long get put into place.”

About Kingston Council Adult social care:

- “No information available.”

 *No support given - they don't return phone calls.”*

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d. COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES (e.g. advocacy and safeguarding)

In summary: There was limited feedback from respondents to this service area but included dissatisfaction with the lack of community based mental health support services while praising Hestia for their advocacy support regarding this.

Of those that responded to our ‘Share your experiences during COVID-19’ survey (1 April to 30 November 2020), seven people provided feedback on this service area but only four answered the following questions.

Access to community support services

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

Answered: 4 Skipped: 3

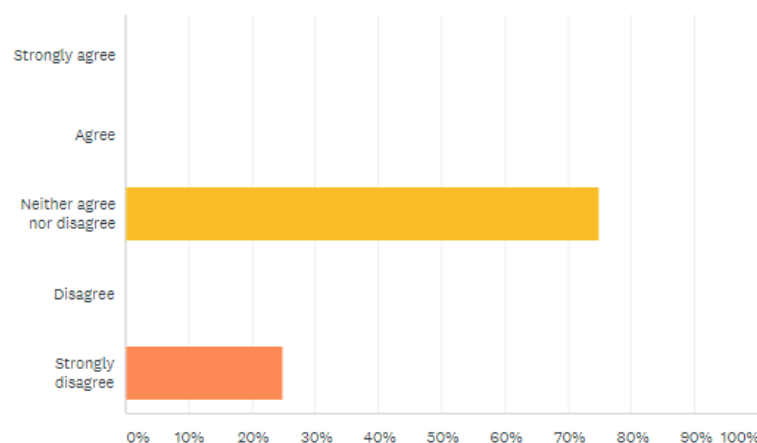


Figure 16: Experiences of access to community support services in Kingston.

Figure 16 shows that out of the small sample of 4 respondents who rated community support services, 3 neither agreed nor disagreed and one strongly disagreed it was easy to access the help and support they needed from community support services.

Some experiences of poor access to community support services

- “I didn’t need support and I was surprised to be told in the first place that I was in the shielding group.”
- “Could contact Community Mental Health Trust and psychiatrist and care coordinator but not enough time allocated for support.”
- “Had to chase up to have telephone appointments. I had to have support from Hestia to speak to the correct professional on numerous occasions.”

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Quality of community support services

How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 3

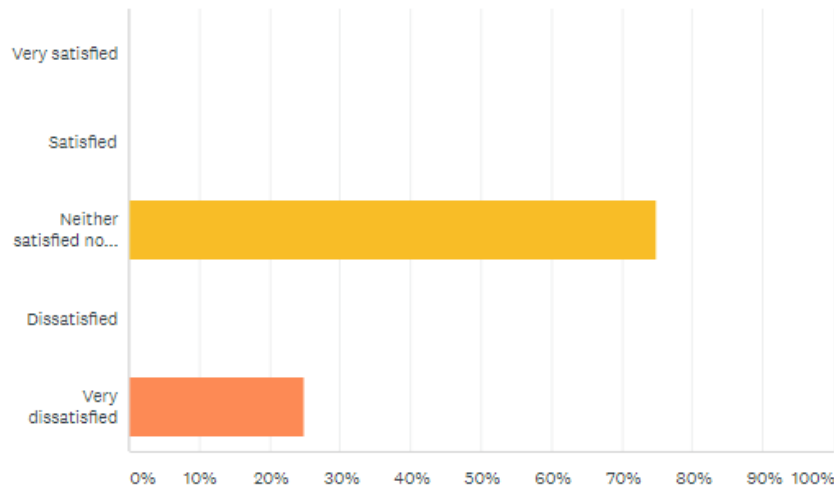


Figure 17: Experiences of the quality of community support services in Kingston.

Figure 17 shows that 3 respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 1 was strongly dissatisfied with the quality of care provided from community support services.

Some experiences of the quality of community support services

- I needed more support than was available.”
- “Satisfied with the direct care that my daughter received. Very unsatisfied with safeguarding, learning disability team discussing - 'What if?' Regarding my daughter going to Hospital, getting Covid19 etc.”
- “Support for my husband from Mind in Kingston, found through my buddy.”
- “Thank you, Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness.”
- “There was an agreed medication increase about 6 weeks ago, but this hasn't happened, I keep chasing with support from Hestia and still hasn't happened. I feel like I have been completely let down by the mental health services. I am vulnerable and shielding and no one contacted me for the first two and half months of lockdown, my GP contacted me asking if I have symptoms and asked if I had been contacted by mental health services which I had not, this prompted the Tolworth CMHRT to contact me a week later. Hestia had to support with contacting my psychiatrist. Letter from meeting with psychiatrist and psychotherapist pre-lockdown was received 3 months after meeting and following Hestia highlighting that it was outstanding.” (This quote is placed here as it illustrates the good quality community work Hestia had done considering the person said they had been let down by their mental health services).

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Community support services aftercare

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

Answered: 4 Skipped: 3

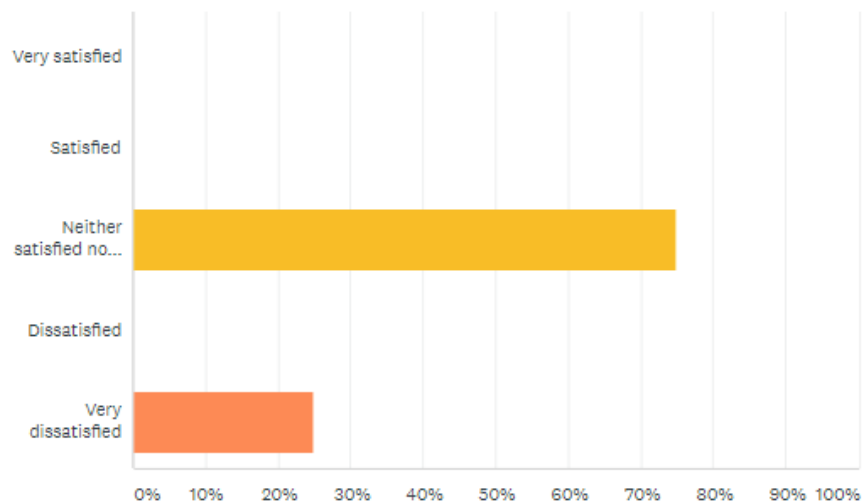


Figure 18: Experiences of community support services aftercare in Kingston.

Figure 18 shows that 3 respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 1 was strongly dissatisfied with the aftercare provided from community support services.

An experience of community support services aftercare

“Medication still hasn't been increased - 3 months outstanding.”

“Kingston Centre for Independent Living (KCIL) has provided support in terms of telephone calls and a service offering creative suggestions while shielding.”

“Your Health Care service support. A GP phoned a courtesy call to ask general health and social care questions.”

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e. NHS DENTAL SERVICES

In summary: Most respondents to the ‘Share your experiences during COVID-19’ survey (1 April to 30 November 2020), were unable to access NHS dental services during the pandemic. People expressed frustration at not being able to get an appointment. Some people did share that when needed, they were able to get necessary pain medication from their GP instead. Communication at the beginning of the pandemic by the Chief Dental Officer for England, does not appear to have been shared with patients. Healthwatch Kingston engaged with the Kingston and Richmond Local Dental Committee to communicate this more clearly and published a website service update on 14 October 2020 explaining that dental surgeries were not permitted to see patients for face-to-face care. This led to a backlog of unmet need, delayed and suspended treatments and as dental practices reopened, access issues for people looking for NHS dental care continued as dentists had to prioritise patients with the most urgent need first.

Healthwatch England published [Dentistry and the impact of COVID-19](#) in December 2020. The report shared what over 1,300 people said about their experience of NHS dentistry during July and September 2020. The themes echo experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston.

Access to NHS dental services

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

Answered: 13 Skipped: 8

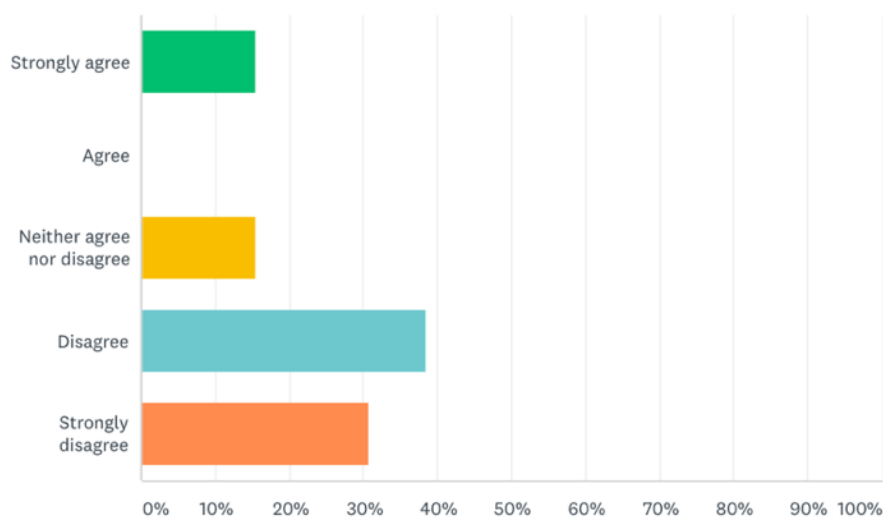


Figure 19: Experiences of access to NHS dental care in Kingston.

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Figure 19 shows that out of the 13 that answered this question, 4 respondents strongly disagreed, 5 disagreed, 2 neither agreed nor disagreed and 2 strongly agreed that they were able to access NHS dental care.

No good qualitative experiences about NHS dental care were provided through the ‘Share your experiences during COVID-19’ survey. Respondents needed to either access substitute care from other NHS providers or resort to over-the-counter self-care.

Some experiences of poor access to NHS dental services

About NHS dental services:

- “No NHS dental services available.”
- “My appointment was cancelled.”
- “Unable to access NHS dental treatment.”
- “Not able to get an NHS dental appointment.”

Quality of NHS dental services

How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Answered: 12 Skipped: 9

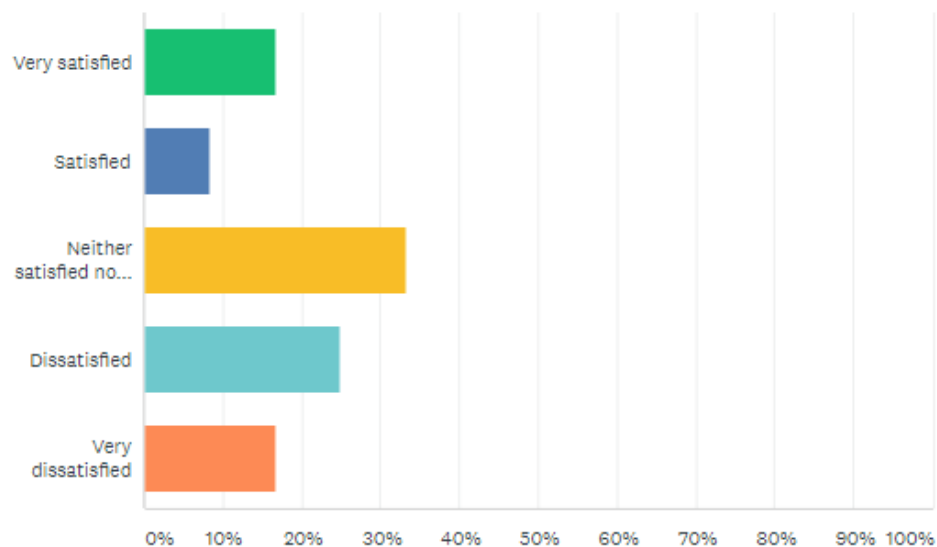


Figure 20: Experiences of the quality of NHS dental care in Kingston.

Figure 20 shows that out of the 12 respondents to this question about how they would rate the quality of the NHS dental services care they received, 2 respondents were very dissatisfied, 3 were dissatisfied, 4 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Not unsurprisingly, considering reports of limited access during the pandemic, only 1 was satisfied and 2 very satisfied with the quality of NHS dental care.

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“I managed to get antibiotics from my GP surgery for my gum infection, then continued to self-medicate with Corsodyl and dental hygiene aids as Dental Surgeries were closed.”

NHS dental services aftercare

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

Answered: 12 Skipped: 9

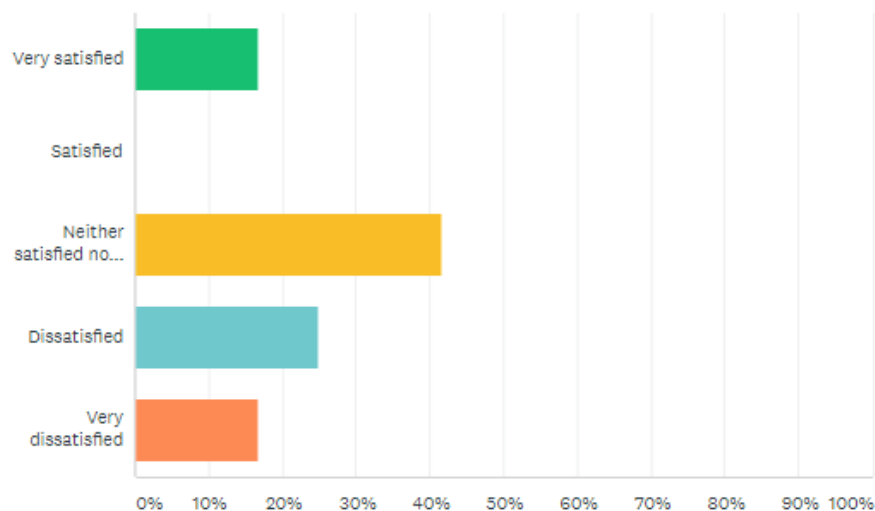


Figure 21: Experiences of NHS dental aftercare in Kingston.

Figure 21 shows that out of the 12 respondents to this question about how they rated NHS dental services aftercare, again, 2 respondents were very dissatisfied, 3 were dissatisfied, 4 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied but this time, the 2 that were able to access NHS dental care were very satisfied with the aftercare they received.

“My local dentist is shut so I had to use 111 to get my prescription. They directed me to Kingston Hospital to get a prescription, but the relevant unit was locked down, so it took a lot of searching to find a means to get the paperwork. Why can't dentist open as they normally wear PPE?”

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ADDITIONAL NHS DENTAL SERVICES EXPERIENCES SHARED from other HWK sources:

One person with a learning disability said, “My NHS dentist was very quiet. I was given a temperature check and the environment felt clean and safe.”


Another person with a learning disability shared, “I have not been able to see my [NHS] dentist for a year. My appointment in August 2020 was cancelled, and moved to October, which was also cancelled. A new date was booked for March 2021.” They added, “This is a concern as dental issues can lead to other health issues.”

“I am struggling to find an NHS dentist taking on new patients.”

“I am struggling to find a dentist in Kingston accepting new NHS patients, please can you advise?”

“I’ve recently moved to Kingston and am trying (so far without success) to find a dentist practice that is taking on NHS patients. My son is 16 months old (and has yet to see a dentist). I have an NHS maternity exemption certificate, so am also looking to register as an NHS patient myself. Can you please help advise on which dentists are taking on new NHS patients (especially adults as I would like to go to the same practice as my son)? I’ve been working my way through the list on the NHS website but so far just getting told they’re only taking on new private patients.”

“Please could you inform me where there is an NHS dentist I could join in the local area. I’m currently at a private practice in New Malden and have had a temporary band fitted rather than a crown in December as I didn’t have the funds and today, I have a front back tooth that’s broken down to the gum. I’m not working at present or unable to claim any benefits so I can’t afford to pay £800 minimum to get the tooth fixed urgently if that’s even possible.”

 *I have been trying to register with a number of dental practices in the area, but they are all saying I must wait; could be months...I'm alone with two young girls and would really welcome being able to register with an NHS dentist.”*

“I love my dentists and know they are trying hard. However I’ve had an abscess for over a year now and been prescribed 3 courses of antibiotics with no follow up. The tooth is very bad and is now affecting the teeth around it as well as causing me ridiculous amounts of pain.”

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“I wanted to make an appointment for a routine check-up last summer but was told to call back (with no guidance as to when). When I checked again none of the local dentists were offering NHS appointments. I have now made an appointment with my dentist where I lived before. My check-up will be nearly a year later and involve a 100-mile drive. I don't have an emergency, have never needed dental treatment and want to keep it that way. I feel investment in prevention (even "during Covid" is wise).”

“I have had three [NHS dental] appointments for myself and daughter cancelled and told they don't know when we will be offered another appointment, but I can't send my daughter in on her own. She's 5 years old. I have chronic bleeding gums and still can't get an appointment as I'm not in pain with it.”

“Currently trying to change dentists so that it's closer to home. Been told due to Covid it's a 3 year wait to register elsewhere!”



I wondered if you could help, I'm struggling to find an NHS dentist taking on new patients in the area. I've just had a baby and would really like to book a check-up as I'm experiencing a lot of sensitivity and pain.”

“We booked an appointment last year for four of us, Dentist spent 4 to 5 minutes for all of us and advise private treatment which cost was £35.00 each.”

“On 10/11/2020 I went again, and the dentist spent 1 minute and was given advise for private treatment which will cost £85.00 for hygienist.”



I'm trying to register with an NHS dentist in Kingston (just moved to the area) but have called several and none are taking new patients. Can you please let me know if you know of any who are taking new patients?”


“I've tried calling but there's been no reply.”

“I am contacting you as a last resort. I am trying to find an NHS dentist near my area but having a tough time finding one. I was in immense pain due to a tooth abscess, for which I finally contacted NHS 111 and was offered a dentist that provided me antibiotics. I need to check if these work and if further treatment will be needed, in my case I think I will need to go for a root canal. I have a lot of other dental work to do, fillings, extractions and root canals.”

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 *“Whichever dental practice I call says that they don’t accept NHS patients.”*

“I have been on the NHS site searching for an NHS dentist as I have been made redundant and am on Universal Credit. I clicked through the list and the majority state they are not taking new adult NHS patients the ones that state no information has been provided I have called to be told no. I finally was told to call My Dentist in Surbiton where I was given an appointment in 5 weeks’ time which was 01/04/21 then 4 days before my appointment it was cancelled.” Healthwatch Kingston since learned that the appointment was moved to 08/04 but when the patient arrived, they were told the dentist was not there and they could offer them an appointment for 16/04. The patient said, they now have no confidence the appointment would be kept.

 *“I’ve been looking for a few weeks but I’m struggling to find a dentist near me accepting new NHS patients. I have an issue that needs to be seen to ASAP and I can’t afford private treatment. Do you know any practices that are accepting new patients near me? I’m based in Kingston but I’m happy to drive further afield if needed.”*

Healthwatch Kingston sources:

- *Additional (non-survey) NHS and social experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston website, in emails and during virtual community engagement events between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.*
- *‘Let’s Talk’ engagement session with people with a learning disability at Kingston Mencap on 3 November 2020 (9 people with a learning disability and carers attended).*

f. PHARMACY SERVICES

In summary: There was mixed and, in some cases, directly contrasting feedback from survey respondents about pharmacy services between 1 April to 30 November 2020. One respondent commented that, “pharmacy staff were outstanding” and another said, “the staff went above and beyond to help”. People reported being able to call to request medication to be delivered during to their home during the pandemic. Some pharmacies, however, did not offer delivery services, particularly towards the beginning of the pandemic, and this caused some people inconvenience and distress, not being able to access their medication. There was also an experience reported about one pharmacy that cancelled a “flu jab” appointment at the last minute and did not follow up to rearrange.

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Access to pharmacy services

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

Answered: 10 Skipped: 10

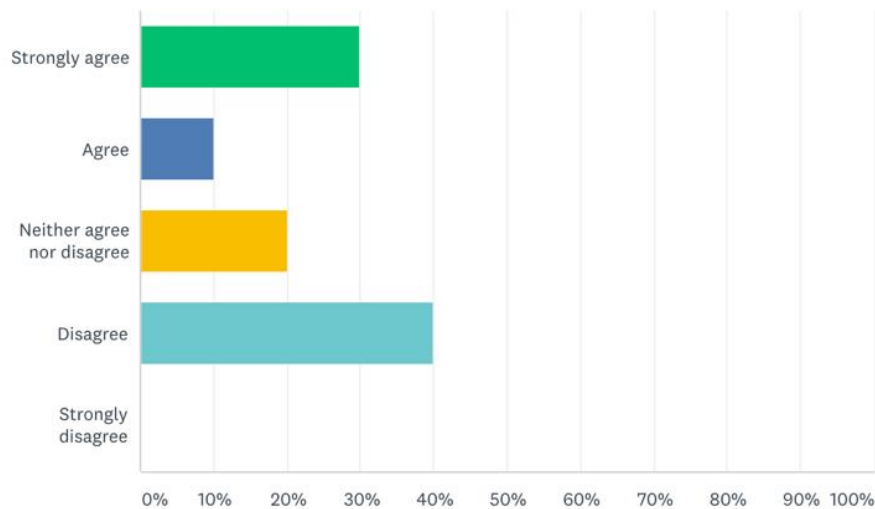


Figure 22: Experiences of access to pharmacy services in Kingston.

Figure 22 shows that out of the 10 that rated access to pharmacy services in the survey, 3 strongly agreed, 1 agreed, 2 neither agreed nor disagreed, and 4 disagreed they were able to access pharmacy services.

Some experiences of good access to pharmacy services

About Kingston pharmacies:

“Always quick to prepare the requested medications and good personal service.”

“They have been extremely helpful lending me medication until my prescription came through.”

- “Throughout this pandemic and always, I have been able to call and receive help, as well as easily access the pharmacy. The pharmacy was facing depleted stock due to over demand, but they kept calm and smiling, offering customers an alternative if something was not on the shelf. Nothing is ever too much trouble - even during a pandemic.”

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Some experiences of poor access to pharmacy services

About Kingston pharmacies:

- “I was able to book a flu jab [at a local pharmacy] as someone with a type of sclerosis and asthma. I was called 4 hours before the appointment to be told by a lady on the other end of the phone that they were overbooking them online and they only get an allocation of 100 per week, which by Thursday, they've used up.”



Self-isolation should mean that pharmacies recognise the need for home delivery. However, my local pharmacy was reluctant to do this.”

- Just prior to the lockdown announcement in March, I requested from the GP a prescription for inhalers via [a pharmacy]. I was told to phone [them] (and this was necessary as a new 'customer' to find out when it was ready). Try as I might, there was no reply phoning [the pharmacy] direct. After 3 or 4 weeks, I phoned the GP surgery again and another prescription was ordered and they gave me the phone number of the emergency Kingston courier service. [We] got through after 7 or 8 goes and all was well. For my prescriptions, I found no phone requests available.”

Quality of pharmacy services

How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 10

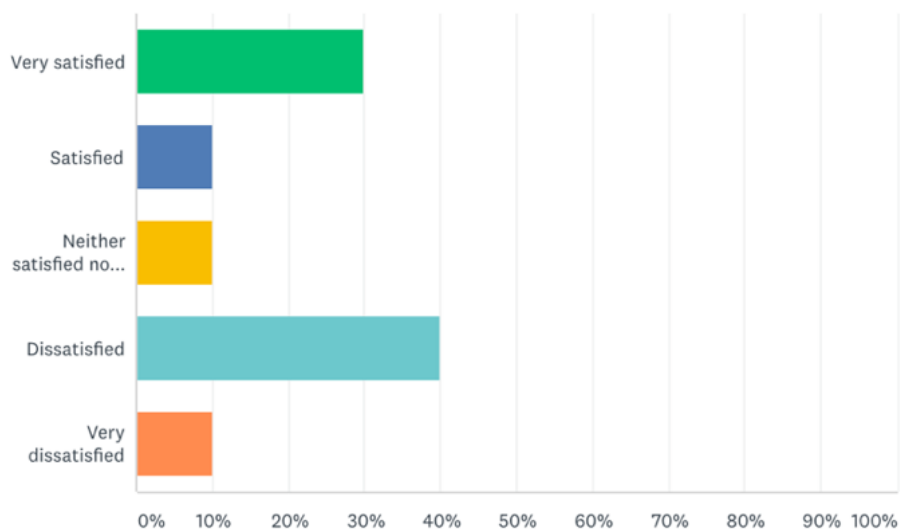


Figure 23: Experiences of the quality of pharmacy services in Kingston.

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Figure 23 shows that again there is a mix in the experiences shared with 3 out of the 10 respondents being very satisfied with the quality of the service they received, 1 satisfied, 1 neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 dissatisfied and 1 very dissatisfied.

Some experiences of good quality pharmacy services

About Kingston pharmacies:

- “They go above and beyond to provide an excellent service.”



I called to find out status of a previous medication order and it was made available within 24 hours. The staff make you feel nothing is too much trouble, they always, before and during this pandemic, ensure the best outcome for their customers.”

- “Throughout this pandemic, and always, I have been able to call and receive help, as well as easily access their Pharmacy, last occasion on 19th March. This was no exception, their pharmacy was that day facing depleted stock, due to over demand, some shelves empty, they kept calm and smiling, offering customers an alternative if something was not on the shelf. Nothing is ever too much trouble - even during a pandemic - I witnessed their calmness and reassurance, even though they must have been very affected inside, at seeing their regular shelf stock shockingly depleted overnight, like never before.”



Excellent communication with telephone consultations and medications delivered to my door.”

- “This pharmacy is exemplary, they deserve a call out, they have worked over and above 100% throughout this pandemic, they must be exhausted. They are always proactive, always friendly, smiling and welcoming. I trust their advice 100% when I can't see a GP and have done during this pandemic.”

Some experiences of poor-quality pharmacy services

About a Kingston pharmacy:



It was a hassle and a whole week's notice had to be given in order for delivery to happen.”

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Pharmacy services aftercare

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

Answered: 9 Skipped: 11

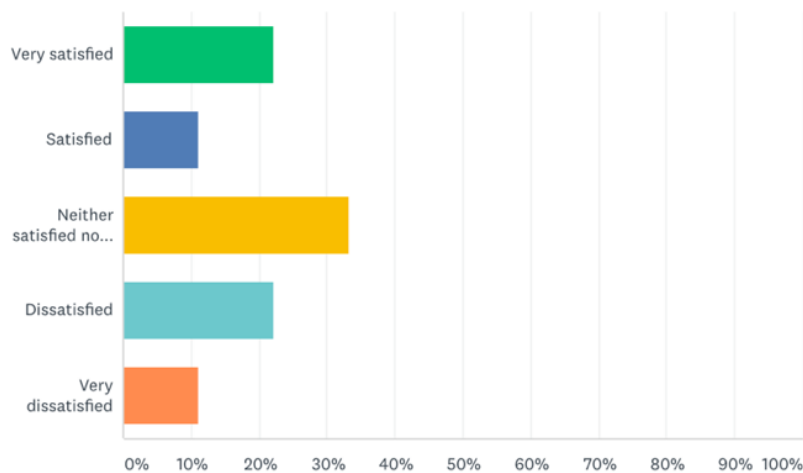


Figure 24: Experiences of aftercare provided by pharmacy services in Kingston.

In Figure 24, 2 out of 9 respondents were very satisfied with the pharmacy aftercare they received, 1 was satisfied, 3 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 2 were dissatisfied and 1 was very dissatisfied.


Some experiences of pharmacy services good aftercare

About a Kingston pharmacy:

“Having had a widespread shortage of brown inhalers, they fully explained the use of the substitute inhaler I was given in April instead. My daughter had reason to call in April, over a separate issue, they more than reassured explained the problem over the phone.”

- “It was reassuring to know the courier service was still available, but it can take a week if they are busy. This can cause problems.”
- “Yes, once it [aftercare] had really been established delivery started to happen more as a matter of routine.”


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 *I called at the end of April to find out status of a previous medication order and it was made available within 24 hours. The staff make you feel nothing is too much trouble, they always, before and during this pandemic, ensure the best outcome for their customers.”*

Some experiences of pharmacy services poor aftercare

About a Kingston pharmacy:

 *I was told I'd be called [by the pharmacy] in due course.”*

 *I was told I would be called about a follow-up flu jab in due course but am still waiting to hear back.”*

g. GP SERVICES

In summary: Most respondents that shared experiences about GP services ‘strongly agreed’ that they were able to access their GP service, despite noting pressures on services brought about by the pandemic and were ‘very satisfied’ with the quality of care received by GP practices across Kingston. Comments shared with Healthwatch Kingston did however indicate some variation in experiences, dependant on which GP practice and what treatment was required.

Many respondents said they were able get appointments and the switch to telephone and online appointments was handled smoothly and efficiently. Although, there were exceptions to this. People said, ongoing support was received throughout the pandemic. Generally, respondents reported good quality of care, citing, use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), reassuring diagnoses, good contact with GPs, and efficient pathways of care and referrals being made but again, there were exceptions to this.

Some respondents reported difficulty accessing services and getting appointments and when they tried elsewhere. Some shared poor service experiences with some reception teams, poor diagnosis, a “lack of concern or care” and frustration at only being able to talk about “one thing”. One person reported a worrying experience of not getting a shingles diagnosis, having to go to A&E and get treated by the hospital doctor instead and another said that a surgery had closed with some patients being sent to another for care.

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PLEASE NOTE: Healthwatch Kingston has agreed to meet with Kingston GP leads from the South West London Clinical Commissioning Group to discuss specific issues about named GP services raised by local people during this period.

Access to GP services

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

Answered: 39 Skipped: 31

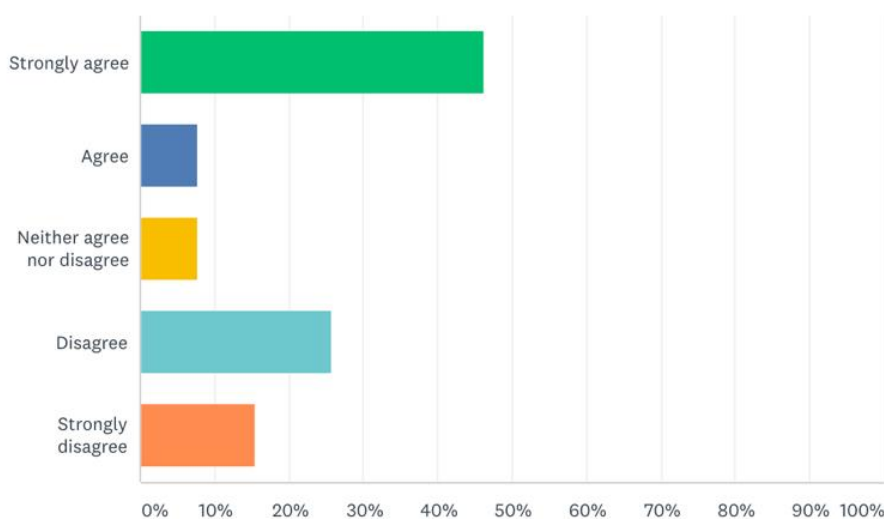


Figure 25: Experiences of access to GP services in Kingston.

Figure 25 shows that 18 (over half of the 39 respondents to this question) either strongly agreed or agreed that they were able to access care from their GP, 3 neither agreed nor disagreed, 10 disagreed and 6 strongly disagreed. 31 people skipped this question.

Some experiences of good access to GP services

About Kingston GPs:

- “The practice is changing to an online service. This seem to work reasonably well, and emails are answered quickly.”
- “Although closed to the general public, the service I required (zoladex injection) was provided as usual.”
- “My wife needed a blood test which was organised efficiently, and the blood test took place safely.”
- “Staff answering telephone very helpful and reassuring. Phone answered quickly.”
- “Easy to get an appointment.”

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 *GP was very helpful over phones and doctors always phoned back.”*

- “All GPs I dealt with were very supportive and clear what they were concerned about and listened very carefully to what I was saying. Ordered tests and after following up 3rd telephone consultation they decided that they wanted me to be seen by Kingston A&E. I was seen promptly, and again A&E staff were professional, courteous and efficient.”

 *Very accommodating, offering video calls. PPE when appointments are needed. I had a baby in March and have really appreciated ongoing support at the practice.”*


Some experiences of poor access to GP services

About Kingston GPs:

- “They closed the health centre and were only seeing people at [a different GP] in Kingston, which I could not get to, and I couldn't get an appointment with my GP.”
- “I couldn't get an appointment for my 1 yr. old who had a temperature without going through 111, despite being confident in this age group that it wasn't Covid.”

 *Difficult to get access to the surgery.”*

- “The practice is using a new online system. Emails don't reach doctors, reception staff are critical of patients who don't feel confident to use the internet form, doctors don't always wear a mask when walking round the practice.”
- “GP online or phone consultations were an effort to get - long explanations before consent and tests cancelled. Impression was that GPs were avoiding helping patients, yet they appeared to have had less work than usual.”
- “It is almost impossible to get an appointment. You have to call at 8am and repeatedly redial in the hope you can get through. If you try and call after 8.15 there is no point as the appointments are already gone.”

 *When I call the surgery, they have no appointments, and we have to call on the day at 8am and they will try to find us an appointment. Getting an appointment is very difficult.”*

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Quality of GP services

How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Answered: 39 Skipped: 31

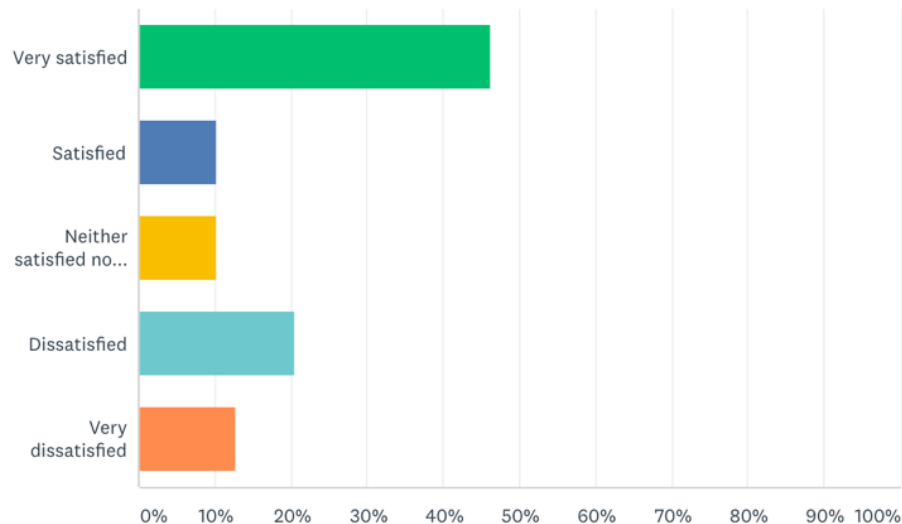


Figure 26: Experiences of the quality of GP services in Kingston.

Figure 26 shows that from the survey respondents who answered this question, the majority (56%) were either very satisfied (18 people) or satisfied (4 people) with the quality of care they received from their GP services during the pandemic. Out of the others, 4 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 8 were dissatisfied and 5 were very dissatisfied.

Some experiences of good quality GP services

About Kingston GPs:

- “I felt reassured by GP about the plan suggested to determine diagnosis. Felt I could contact GP again before diagnosis made. GP very professional, knowledgeable and kind.”
- “Treatment was maintained even though full PPE was required.”
- “Blood test carried out efficiently by a very supportive specialist nurse.”
- “I received a text reminding me that my child was due their one-year vaccinations. As it was during the start of lockdown, I wasn't sure if such appointments were temporarily postponed. I called and got an appointment for the following day. On arrival the second entry doors were shut with a sign instructing us to wash our hands in the toilet next to the door, and ring the buzzer to be let in. The waiting room only had one other patient in. Staff on reception were wearing masks. The nurse was brilliant, as they always are with vaccinations. Very gentle a reassuring.”

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- “Whole pathway of care was efficient despite the Lockdown and definitely felt that all of the staff had my best interests to the forefront.”



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

Some experiences of poor-quality GP services

About Kingston GPs:

- “Basic diagnostics were not provided for my daughter (aged 9) by GP. After £1000 worth of private diagnostics my daughter was diagnosed with a UTI and vitamin D deficiency. Both of these should have been easy to diagnose by primary health care with access to her records and history. There should have been no need for private referral.”
- “Receptionists gave me wrong information, GPs gave me wrong diagnosis and treatment and when I made a complaint, the Practice Manager was rude and aggressive and threatened to remove me from the practice if I kept making complaints - and they eventually did remove me from their practice when I made another complaint.”
- “Delays with communication and doctors who rushed my appointments.”
- “I was seen in a room with no computer so there was no immediate access to my history. I had to tell the GP I was allergic to the first prescription and then tell her I was diabetic which was a surprise to her. Two days later I went through the call system again to tell the doctor my face was a lot worse and asked if I should go to A&E. The doctor said to wait and see so I emailed her a photo. At 6pm she rang to say she had seen the photo and I was really worse and needed to go to A&E immediately. A&E said I had shingles not cellulitis and changed tablets. By then it was too late to have anti virials to help prevent nerve pain, so I now have continuing nerve pain.”
- “When I do go to the doctors, they tell me I can only talk about one thing and as I don't often go to the doctors, I always have more than one thing to talk about. I always leave the surgery feeling unsatisfied because they never have time to answer my question.”
- “There is a lack of concern and care.”



I requested an MRI and the GP advised I would not be seen so I had to make my own arrangements and pay. The report from the MRI meant I needed an ultrasound which again I had to

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arrange and pay for. I was left feeling very alone, having to do things for myself.



The doctor did [their] best to diagnose and prescribe over the telephone, but it was not comparable to a face-to-face consultation.”

GP services aftercare

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

Answered: 37 Skipped: 33

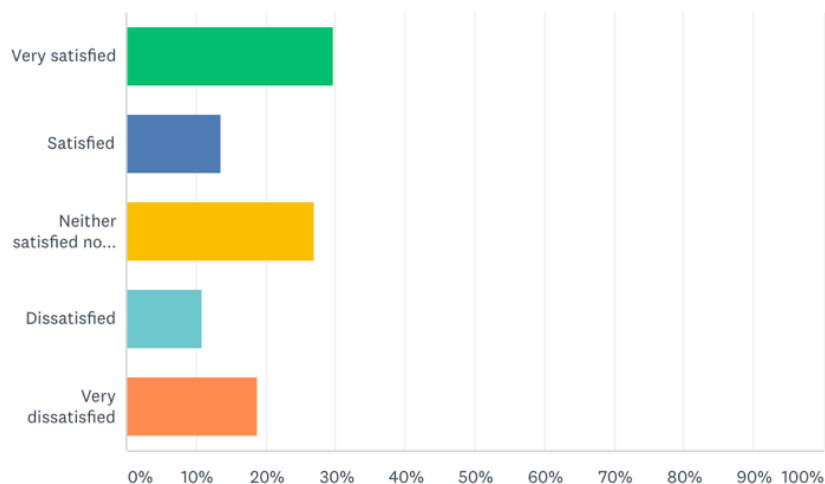


Figure 27: Experiences of GP services aftercare in Kingston.

Figure 27 shows 11 respondents to this question reported they were very satisfied with the aftercare provided by their GP, 5 were satisfied, 10 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 4 were dissatisfied and 7 were very dissatisfied.

Some experiences of GP services good aftercare

About Kingston GPs:

- “I was informed that staff were available if required by phone.”
- “I was given leaflets about the vaccination and explained about the possible aftereffects.”
- “Consultant rang me, and I had a telephone consultation, he ordered CT scan which was done the next day. He then telephoned me with the results.”
- “Follow up and checks were made for my husband after discharge from hospital.”

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 *We received continuous support with daily phone calls to check on our conditions and offered us, if we needed, further medical assistance and re-assessment of our conditions.”*

Some experiences of GP services poor aftercare

About Kingston GPs:

- “NHS referral has still not materialised, and we were forced to go privately because of intense pain. Consultant identified source of intense pain and we are relieved that we made that decision.”
- “Form to complete for a test was very badly explained.”
- “After three telephone consultations with GP, was finally referred to a specialist, but was told this would take at least two weeks, and would be a telephone consultation only.”
- “After A&E diagnosed shingles, there was no advice on nerve pain. My son who is a doctor told me to ask for pregabalin, so I then had to phone GP back who then prescribed it.”

ADDITIONAL GP SERVICES EXPERIENCES SHARED from other HWK sources:

“It can still be difficult to get an appointment at [my] 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.”

One person with a learning disability said they had received their annual health and blood pressure check, flu jab and pneumonia vaccine. The practice made contact with them to remind them to book. “I was very impressed with service”.

“I have my flu jab booked for the start of November, but the GP didn’t call me to offer, as others have been doing for people with a learning disability.”

 *Another person with a learning disability said, “It’s October and I’ve not been called up by my GP for a flu jab.”*

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“It’s very difficult to get GP appointments for my two toddlers when I need it the most. I’m either told I have to wait for 2 weeks for the next appointment or advised to go to A&E. I don’t feel it would be appropriate to go to A&E as it’s not a medical emergency and wouldn’t want to burden their service. Is there a way to have more appointments?”

“I am sick of listening to my GP surgery’s 10-minute recorded message whenever I ring, which ironically states that patient care is “our priority”, when it obviously isn’t, since they have closed the surgery and aren’t seeing any patients. They are only seeing patients at [a GP], which I can’t get to as I live in Surbiton and don’t have a car. In their 10-minute recorded message it says you can book appointments online, but I just logged in and it said I cannot book appointments online. Their website proves that the NHS has now been privatised as they are only offering paid for services - £35 for a video call with a physiotherapist or counsellor, £5 to speak to a pharmacist on the phone - without mentioning that all of these things are available free on the NHS. It is impossible to even speak to a GP on the phone, let alone see one in person. It is no wonder so many people are dying now as they can’t even get to see a GP. When I rang today, I was told the doctor was doing phone appointments, but they were all gone, but they were doing phone appointments for Wed, but I couldn’t pre-book an appointment. I have now found out that the receptionist was wrong to tell me that. When I last spoke to the doctor, they told me I would need to make an appointment to see them, but I cannot even get an appointment to speak to them on the phone let alone see them. [A different doctor] told me months ago I should make an appointment to see them, but I cannot get an appointment with them either.”



I made a complaint about the Practice Manager of [the] surgery last year but nothing was done about it.”

“On 14th October 2020, my GP stated on the phone that she would refer me for a left hip operation (as there was not cartilage in the hip joint socket after x-ray results). I did not hear anything for 3 weeks so when I phoned the reception of my GP, I was told to wait until 15th November before calling back. I called today, 16th November. The reception said it is nothing to do with them as they have already written for referral and I need to chase them up. I stated where have you written? Is it to Mr X at Epsom Hospital (this is because the doctor talked about writing to Mr X who performed my hip operation), as I have received nothing from you to state that you have written to them? The receptionist said it has only been 4 weeks and to wait and they wrote to Kingston Hospital. I said it is nearly 5 weeks and I cannot chase the hospital as they will ask me to go through my GP as the letter of referral was sent by them. The receptionist said it was nothing to do with them and a doctor will call back. A different GP called back and asking what I was calling about and I explained. He said in this Covid times it takes longer. I appreciate this. But I was told to phone on the 15th November as a month was reasonable time to receive some response in these times. They did not indicate how long I will need to wait again. This GP stated that he will get his secretary to chase this

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up. I understand in these covid times this may take longer than normal, but someone should indicate what normal time for response is. When I had asked the original GP, how long before an operation date, would it be like 3 to 6 months. She said she does not think it will take that long as NHS is now using private services but cannot tell how long it will take. I had stated that Mr X performed the right hip replacement but twice I have seen him within the last 4 years, and he has refused to replace left hip on the basis of back problem and not a hip problem and prescribed some tablets to deaden the nerves. I very quickly stopped having this medication, as I looked up on the internet and were definitely not for me. I did state to Mr X that my back was very strong, and I do not have any back issues, but he insisted and had written to me and the GP accordingly. I had stated to my GP that I did not feel back was the problem and I could not continue to have the medication as I wished to recover rather than deaden the nerves in my thighs, hips, knees and calves. Also I did not feel the pain was going away. GP prescribed Amitriptyline. This worked but having it continuously makes the pain come back. I stop using it and have it occasionally when in pain. Even then my legs get painful, thus waiting for a month made me call the GP. I appreciate there are a lot of people waiting for such responses and waiting to see Mr X's team or awaiting operation dates, but some indication of the time lag would be useful. Is it another month wait? This is just my feedback on the services.”



I would like to bring to attention that there is a severe lack of services for the victims of sexual abuse/violence. No statutory service is currently meeting the need or waiting lists for those lucky enough to be offered services is very long. Survivors are signposted to private therapy, with low-cost options also not appropriate for dealing with the complex trauma. The cheapest option available to me was £55 per hour, I have been told I will need therapy for 2 years. This will cost me around £6000. I've been told by GPs to "invest" in my health and pay. However, this seems unjust, I didn't choose to be sexually abused, I was failed by services throughout my childhood to safeguard myself. Now I am footing the bill to be able to recover.”

“Our GP service have been truly amazing providing support and aftercare...excellent doctors who care for their patients' welfare.”

“Long before Covid, it has been extremely difficult to contact my [GP] surgery about better care for my numerous pre-existing health conditions. These have been very trying and have worsened considerably during lock down. I have very severe arthritis all over, particularly in my neck, knees, back and feet. I also have a fractured spine. Due to

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severe and unpredictable IBS, going out is a nightmare. This is because with cafes and restaurants and pubs out of bounds, there is no access to toilets. I believe it is the same in supermarkets. Another with the same thing and form of arthritis recently was brave enough to raise this issue on one of these 'phone in' programmes.”

Healthwatch Kingston sources:

- *‘Experiences of NHS and social care services in Kingston before and during the Coronavirus pandemic: Snapshot report #1’.*
- *‘Let’s Talk’ engagement session with people with a learning disability at Kingston Mencap on 3 November 2020 (9 people with a learning disability and carers attended).*
- *Additional (non-survey) NHS and social experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston website, in emails and during virtual community engagement events between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.*

h. KINGSTON STRONGER TOGETHER

In summary: The Kingston Stronger Together Support Hub is run in partnership between Kingston Council, Kingston Voluntary Action, Volunteering Kingston and other community groups. Together they offered help to Kingston residents who could not leave their home due to COVID-19 and needed extra help on top of what friends, family, trusted neighbours and other local services were providing. Most experiences shared about Kingston Stronger Together, although limited in number, were positive. Respondents really appreciated being contacted if they were vulnerable and not able to access food and other services during the pandemic. One respondent said, “They called me to offer help in a difficult time.”

9 people responded to the access/quality and aftercare questions about this service in the ‘Share your experiences during COVID-19’ survey (1 April to 30 November 2020), of which 5 people provided 18 experiences. 7 of these experiences were negative and 11 were positive.

Some experiences of Kingston Stronger Together

About Kingston Stronger Together:





Regular phone calls from a volunteer supported, and continue to support, me.”


- “The help was regular and can be relied upon.”
- “I appreciated having regular calls to check that the buddy service was continuing to work for me.”

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 *They called me to offer help in a difficult time.”*

 *They rang me to check I was OK and had everything I needed.”*


 *They helped me when I had difficulties with my son.”*

 *We appreciated the kindness they showed us at this time of uncertainty.”*

ADDITIONAL KINGSTON STRONGER TOGETHER EXPERIENCES SHARED from other HWK sources:

“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 was a single mum).”*

Healthwatch Kingston sources:

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

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i. OTHER SERVICES


In summary: Five people shared experiences of other services (one on maternity services, one on care for older people, one on direct payments/personal budgets, and another on '111' service and sexual health services). There were other examples of '111' in action provided within responses to other parts of the survey. A challenge appeared to be that access to information about 'other services' was either difficult to find or only online. This raised concerns about access to information for the digitally excluded.

ADDITIONAL EXPERIENCES shared about **OTHER SERVICES** from the 'Share your experiences during COVID-19' survey (1 April to 30 November 2020).

Poor Access to social care information (Care for Older People):

 *I'm trying to find services on RBK website, nothing available."*

Poor Quality of social care information (Care for Older People):

 *I cannot find any information about applying for an emergency device for people living alone to alert emergency services while not being able to make contact with anyone i.e. an accident at home and unable to move toward a phone."*

Good Access to social care - Your Health Care (Direct Payments):

 *Easy to make contact through a telephone call provided through a 'one-stop' person approach. This is so useful in terms of getting a professional service quickly, and especially in an emergency."*

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5. Health inequalities

Healthwatch Kingston is mindful of the disproportionate effect on health of not always being able to access appropriate NHS and social care. Health inequalities have been further highlighted during the coronavirus pandemic. It is important therefore, that local health and care plans address the additional inequalities brought about because of the impact of Covid-19 while continuing to tackle the wider determinants of health. Healthwatch Kingston support the move by public health to make Kingston upon Thames a Marmot Borough, using Sir Michael Marmot’s principles to reduce inequalities and create a fairer society, outlined in the [‘Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On’](#) report produced by the Institute of Health Equity and commissioned by the Health Foundation to mark 10 years on from the landmark study [‘Fair Society, Healthy Lives’](#).

Inequalities in access to care are mirrored in health and social care engagement with some local communities. The demographic data from our ‘Share your experiences during COVID-19’ survey, illustrates this. 78 people answered this question. 58 people (74%) described themselves as ‘White British’. 2 people described themselves as ‘White/Any other background’ and 11 people preferred not to say. The [RBK Ethnicity Report](#) states almost one-third (31%) of the population of Kingston are from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Only 7 people who responded to the survey (9%) described themselves as black, Asian or minority ethnic.

Challenges with access to care also exist for carers and those living with a disability or a long-term medical conditions. Over half of survey respondents considered themselves to be in these groups.

Healthwatch Kingston has committed to ‘moving towards’ better representation in our engagement work and is promoting a collaborative approach with voluntary sector organisations and with support from local community champions.

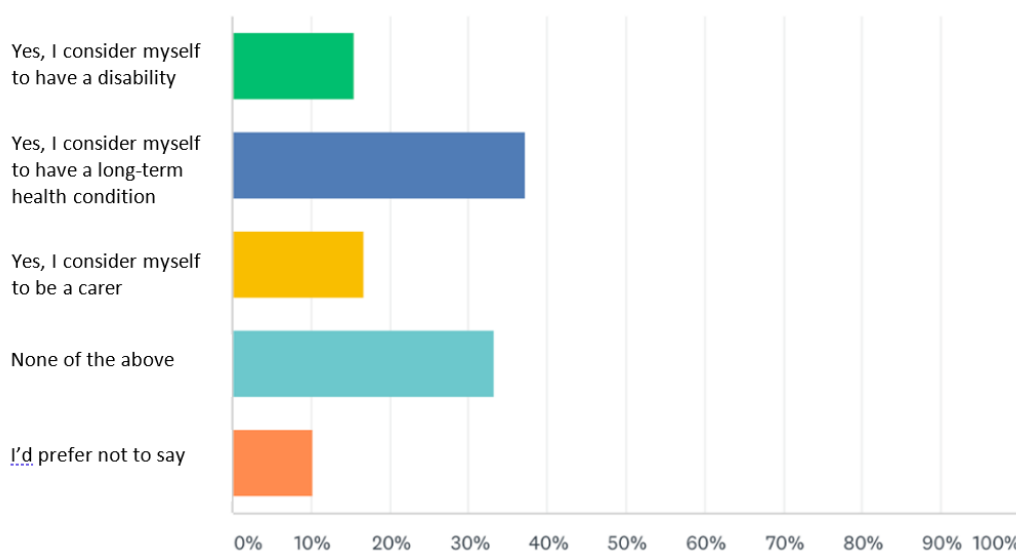


Figure 28: Respondents identifying as a carer, having a disability or a long-term health condition.

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6. In conclusion

This 15-month report has brought together 501 experiences, views and concerns shared with Healthwatch Kingston by 238 people between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021.

Analysing what we have received has reminded us that qualitative data can raise issues, such as the variability in care in the same setting, that quantitative data probably would not. We have heard about variable quality of care, even between nurses on the same ward and in some scenarios, the care described is clinically verging on the dangerous, e.g. lack of hydration and a nasogastric tube withheld.

Some of the feedback from residents received by Healthwatch Kingston over the period indicates a lack of co-ordination of care and mentions of patients having to do their own progress-chasing, e.g. the patient who had to chase their orthopaedic referral and had not been sent the referral letter, since they did not know which hospital they had been referred to.

Kingston Hospital

Kingston Hospital received mostly positive feedback for their response during the coronavirus pandemic. Respondents to the 'Share your experiences during COVID-19' survey (1 April to 30 November 2020) mentioned, "excellent care and service provided by staff", "efficient safety procedures and precautions in place to safeguard against the virus", along with an acknowledgement of "a smooth-running A&E department". There was also praise from respondents for maternity and cancer services, the Royal Eye Unit, elderly care, and the diabetic clinic.

Poor experiences of hospital services shared by respondents included delays in access to diagnostic appointments, "they also said that they were not supposed to be booking anyone in for the urgent scan pathways as this was meant for cancer patients only and follow-up care", getting results from tests, relatives struggling to communicate with patients who were in hospital (one specifically in the case of a patient who had dementia). Another patient provided feedback about their mixed experience while in hospital maternity care, saying, "a few maternity staff were amazing" but then, "many midwives were disengaged, often seeming to lack basic knowledge and empathy". There was also a negative experience reported about the aftercare one patient had received from an occupational therapist at the hospital, which may be an issue with the Discharge to Assess policy. If so, it had not been explained to the relative or implemented very well.

Some other access, quality of care and aftercare experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston about Kingston Hospital services during this reporting period, however, indicated service quality can differ between health disciplines and between episodes of care. Some respondents noted frustration about the lack of communication about hospital appointments, some hospital staff not listening to and understanding patient needs, and the lack of refreshments and food for visitors having to wait for relatives.

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Some respondents also shared they would have felt safer accessing the care they needed at their GP surgery rather than having to visit hospital for their care. Others were concerned about the negative impact on health that the focus on patients with COVID-19 was having on the delayed provision of previously planned elective care.

Mental Health

In mental health, attempts to replace the face-to-face service did not seem to have been very effective. This not only raises a question about the level of general planning for a pandemic before all this started, but also, could some of this been anticipated? Respondents to Healthwatch Kingston said they struggled to access mental health services, and when they managed to access their mental health care, the quality of their care was not deemed satisfactory. Many respondents reported poor communication, lack of support, problems with their medication and diagnosis. A number of respondents shared that there had been no aftercare and they were frustrated with the lack of follow-up. The Community Mental Health Team was the most mentioned service and also had the most negative comments from respondents.

Dentistry

In dentistry, where it is clear that NHS dentistry is inadequately funded, most residents were unable to access NHS dental services during the pandemic. People expressed frustration at not being able to get an appointment. Some people did share that when needed, they were able to get necessary pain medication from their GP instead, but this would not have addressed the underlying dental problem.

GPs

The pandemic also exacerbated existing access problems in primary care, having to ring at 8am for a same day appointment or waiting two weeks if it is booked later in the day really does not appear to be suitable for those residents who shared their experiences.

Most respondents shared positive experiences about GP services, despite noting pressures on services brought about by the pandemic and were 'very satisfied' with the quality of care received by GP practices across Kingston. Comments shared with Healthwatch Kingston did however indicate some variation in experiences, dependant on which GP practice and what treatment was required.

Many respondents said they were able get appointments and the switch to telephone and online appointments was handled smoothly and efficiently. Although, there were exceptions to this. People said, ongoing support was received throughout the pandemic. Generally, respondents reported good quality of care, citing, use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), reassuring diagnoses, good contact with GPs, and efficient pathways of care and referrals being made but again, there were exceptions to this.

Some respondents reported difficulty accessing services and getting appointments. Some shared poor service experiences with some reception teams, poor diagnosis, a "lack of concern or care" and frustration at only being able to talk about "one thing". One person

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reported a worrying experience of not getting a shingles diagnosis, having to go to A&E and get treated by the hospital doctor instead and another said that a surgery had closed with some patients being sent to another for care.

Co-ordination of Care

The report illustrates the obvious need for clear consistent pathways; 111 was reported to have referred someone to a service - dentistry at Kingston Hospital - which was not available. A new patient was told to phone the pharmacy - but they never answered, so medication provision was delayed. "I have now found out that the receptionist was wrong to tell me that".

It is also widely recognised that people living with long-term conditions need to become their own care co-ordinators or have someone who can help them with this. During the pandemic, when carers were unable to accompany patients who lacked capacity or were unable to answer questions accurately, there were instances of misdiagnosis with serious effects. The need for therapeutic support (i.e. the presence of a carer) to prevent this happening has now been recognised by Kingston Hospital.

Social care

There were a small number of responses, but contradictory experiences shared about poor quality of social care including lack of information on Kingston Council website.

Healthwatch Kingston ran a separate engagement survey to gather experiences of residents, and family members and friends of residents of Care Homes, Supported Living Homes and Extra Care Housing. Find out more [here](#).

Pharmacy

There was mixed response and, in some cases, directly contrasting feedback about pharmacy services. One respondent commented that, "pharmacy staff were outstanding" and another said, "the staff went above and beyond to help". People reported being able to call to request medication to be delivered during to their home during the pandemic. Some pharmacies, however, did not offer delivery services, particularly towards the beginning of the pandemic, and this caused some people inconvenience and worry that their medical condition would deteriorate, due to not being able to access their medication. There was also an experience reported about one pharmacy that cancelled a "flu jab" appointment at the last minute and did not follow up to rearrange.

Kingston Stronger Together

Respondents really appreciated being contacted by the Kingston Stronger Together Hub if they were vulnerable and not able to access food and other services during the pandemic.

To finish this report section on an appreciative note, one respondent said, "They called me to offer help in a difficult time." We feel this sums it up nicely.

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7. 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.

So sensitive issues that have been shared can also contribute to identified areas requiring improvement, Healthwatch Kingston will meet with Kingston GP leads from the South West London Clinical Commissioning Group, hospital, social care and other leads to discuss specific issues about services raised by local people.

During this period, whilst maintaining our independence, Healthwatch Kingston has also worked collaboratively with a range of organisations including Kingston Council, NHS south west London, schools and Kingston voluntary and community sector organisations on other Covid-19 related engagement work with residents. These included:

- [Young People's Wellbeing During the Covid-19 Crisis](#)
- [Tell us what you thought about Test and Trace and the NHS Covid-19 App](#)
- [Tell us what you think about the Covid-19 vaccination](#)
- [Residents, family, and friends' experiences of Care Homes during Covid-19.](#)

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