

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

## One year with Covid-19: What you told us about your experiences of hospital services in Kingston

**PLEASE NOTE:** The complete 15-month report collates experiences of health and social care services 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 our website, received in voice messages, emails and during virtual engagement events between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. You can read the full report [here](#) but we have also published a series of subject specific mini reports.

Healthwatch Kingston is pleased to be able to share this mini report about your **experiences of hospital services** with you.

### **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.

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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.

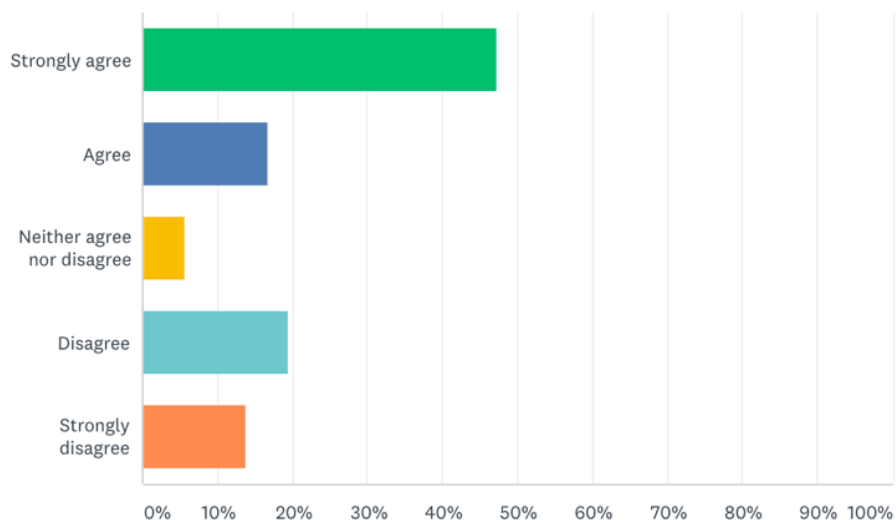
Some other access, quality of care and aftercare experiences shared with Healthwatch Kingston about Kingston Hospital services during this reporting period, however, indicated service quality can differ between health disciplines and between episodes of care. Some respondents noted frustration about 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.

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## 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 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.”


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## 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.”

### 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.”*

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**About Kingston Hospital Outpatients:**

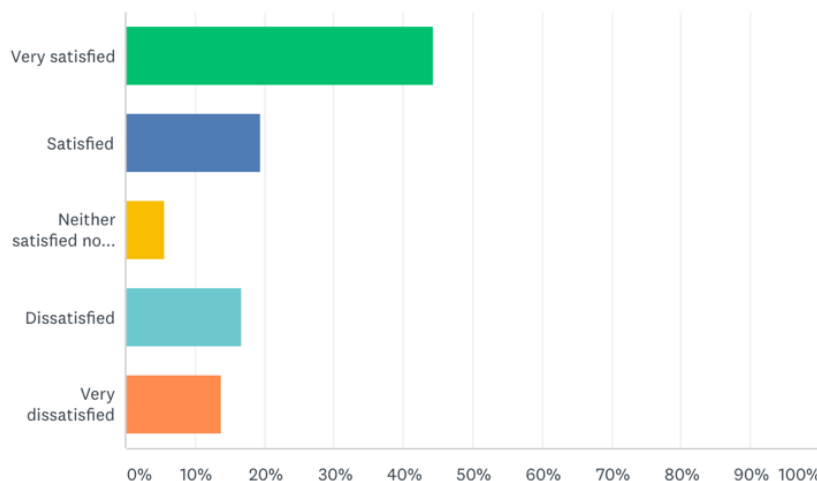


*“Still waiting for diagnostic examinations. Long delays waiting for appointments and lack of communication about when they might be. Very stressful as my condition is getting worse by the day causing great pain and restricting movement.”*

**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.”

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**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.”*

- “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.”*


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## 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.”

### 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

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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.

## Hospital aftercare

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

Answered: 36 Skipped: 27

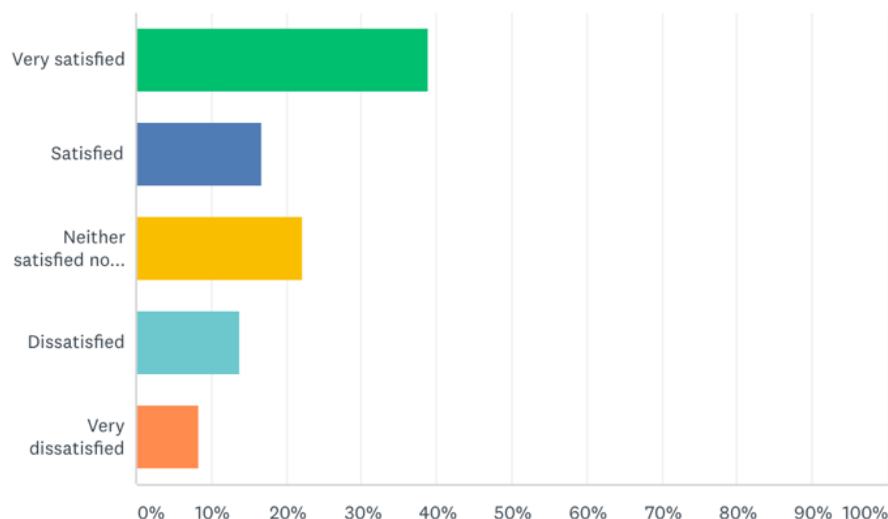


Figure 12: How respondents rated Kingston Hospital aftercare.

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.”




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- “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.”*

**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.”

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 *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.”*

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.”

“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?”

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“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 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

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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 part of the job she should have been doing 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 and staff has been excellent.”

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.*

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## 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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**healthwatch**  
Kingston upon Thames

*“Tell us what you think about NHS and social care.”*

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