

One year with Covid-19: Experiences of **mental health 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 mental health services in Kingston

PLEASE NOTE: The complete 15-month report brings 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 mental health services** with you.

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.

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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.

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

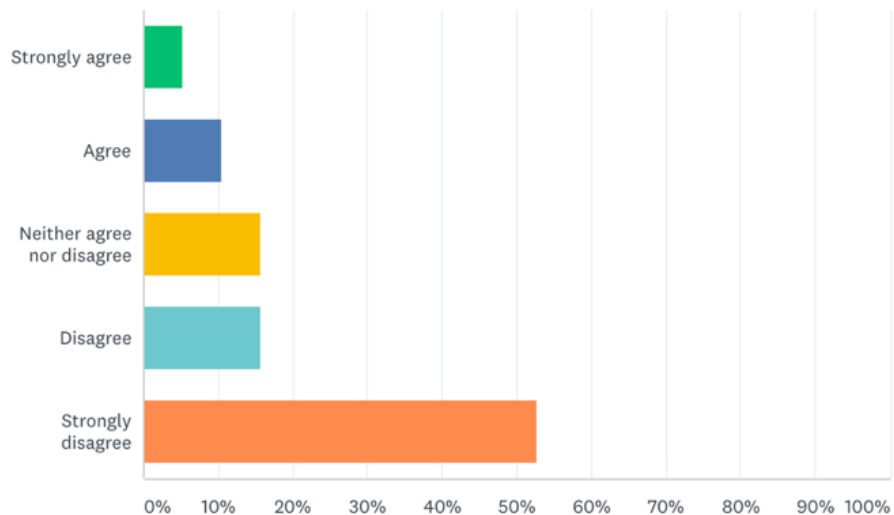


Figure 7: How respondents rated access to mental health care in Kingston.

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.

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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.”*



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.”

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Quality of mental health care services in Kingston

How satisfied were you with the care you received?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 16

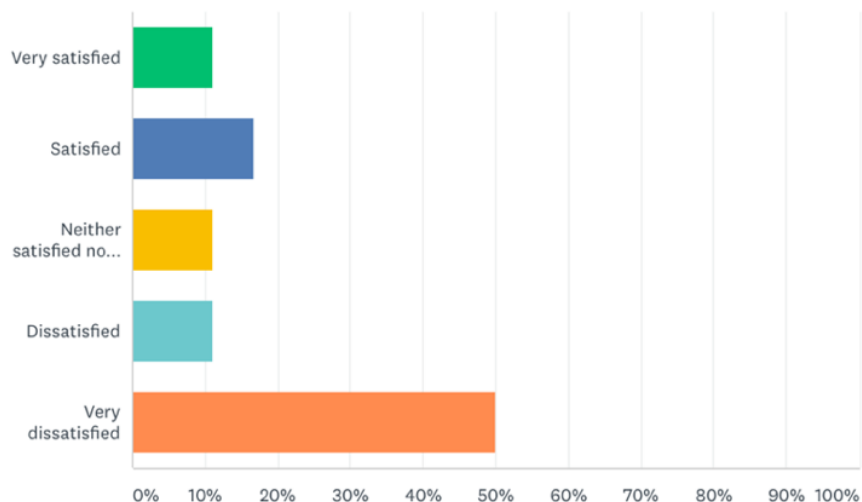


Figure 8: How respondents rated the quality of mental health care in Kingston.

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.

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*

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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

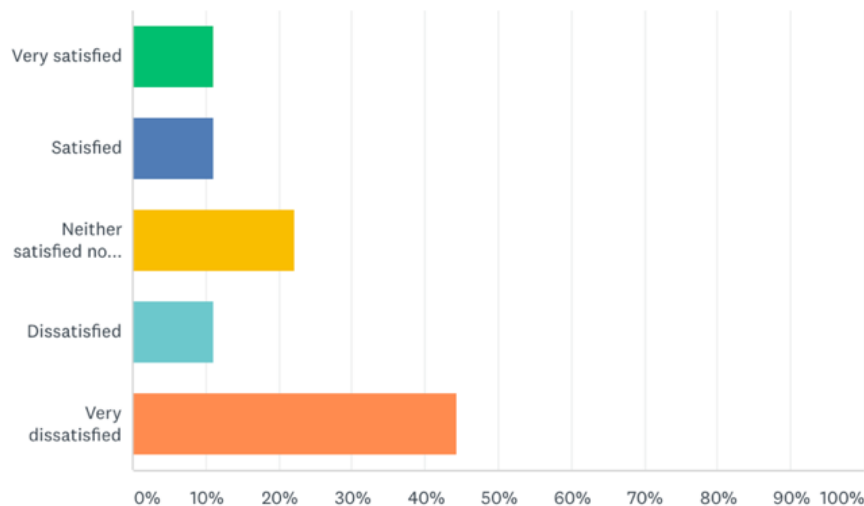



Figure 9: How respondents rated mental health service aftercare in Kingston.

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*

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services as my neurodiversity impacts my mental health. Disappointing there was no help after an ADHD diagnosis, just 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

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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?”

“I have twice self-referred to [Kingston] iCope. Neither time has resulted in therapy. I recently contacted them; 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.*

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

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