

One year with Covid-19: Experiences of **NHS dental 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 NHS dental 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 NHS dental services** with you.

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.

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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

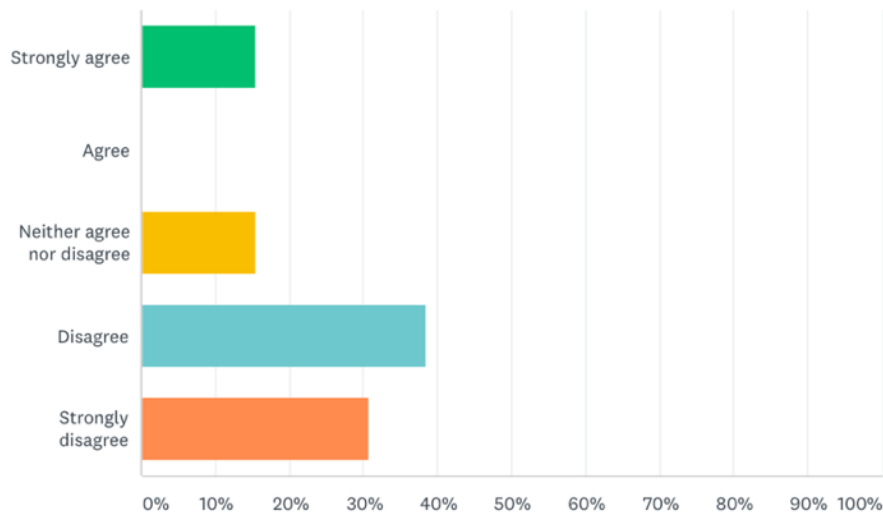


Figure 19: Experiences of access to NHS dental care in Kingston.

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.”

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- “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

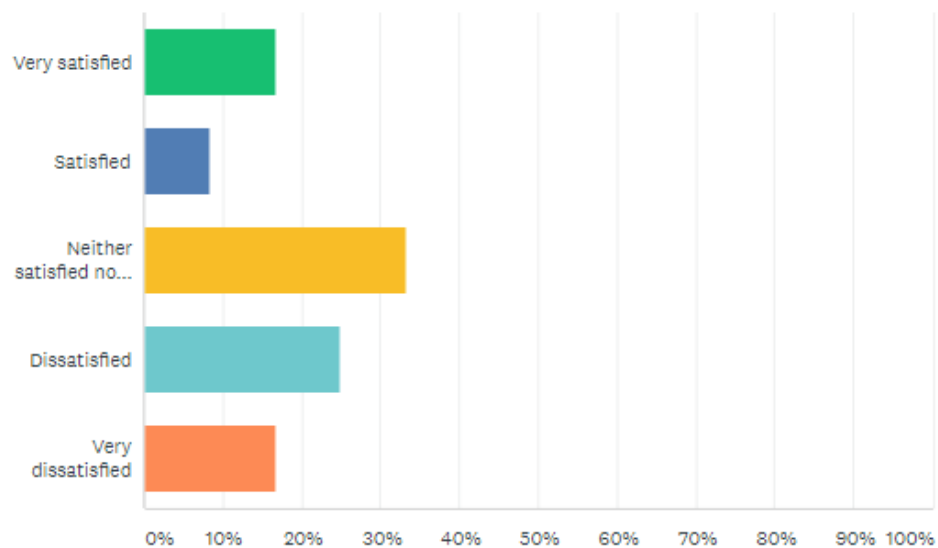


Figure 20: Experiences of the quality of NHS dental care in Kingston.

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.

“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.”

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NHS dental services aftercare

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

Answered: 12 Skipped: 9

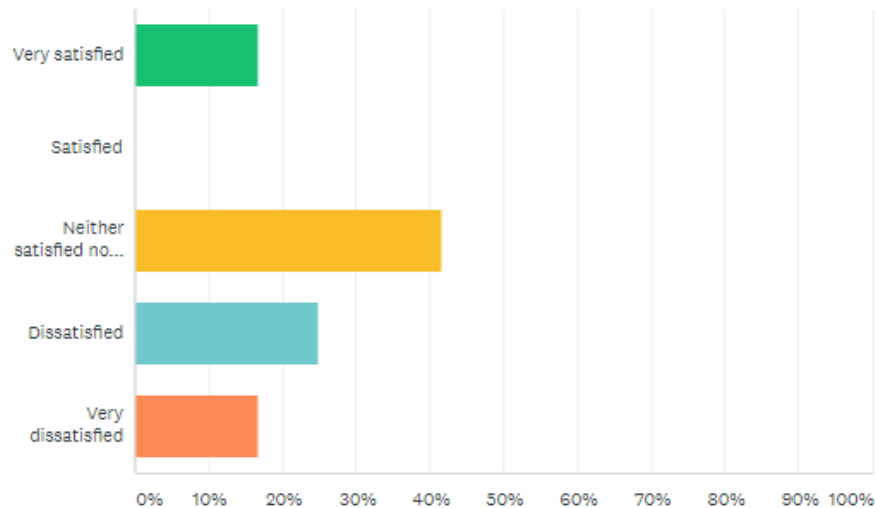


Figure 21: Experiences of NHS dental aftercare in Kingston.

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?"

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."

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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.”


“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

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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

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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.”



“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).*

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

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