

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

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

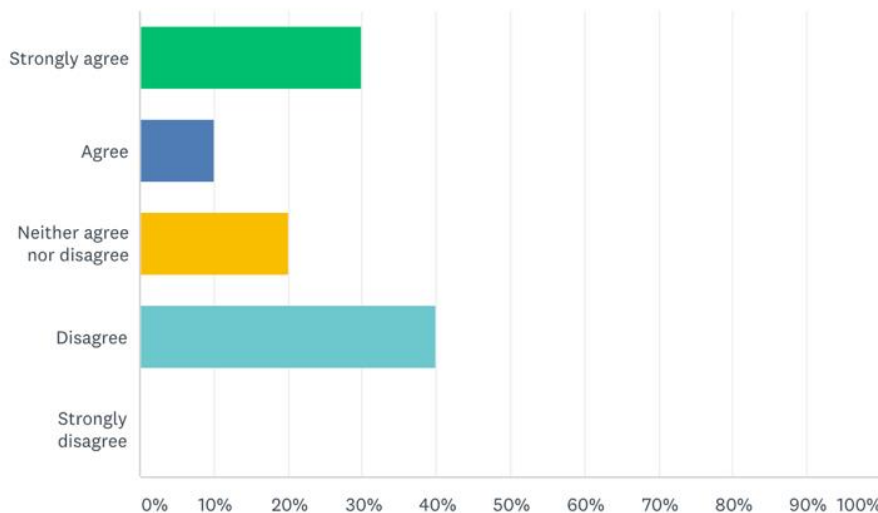


Figure 22: Experiences of access to pharmacy services in Kingston.

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

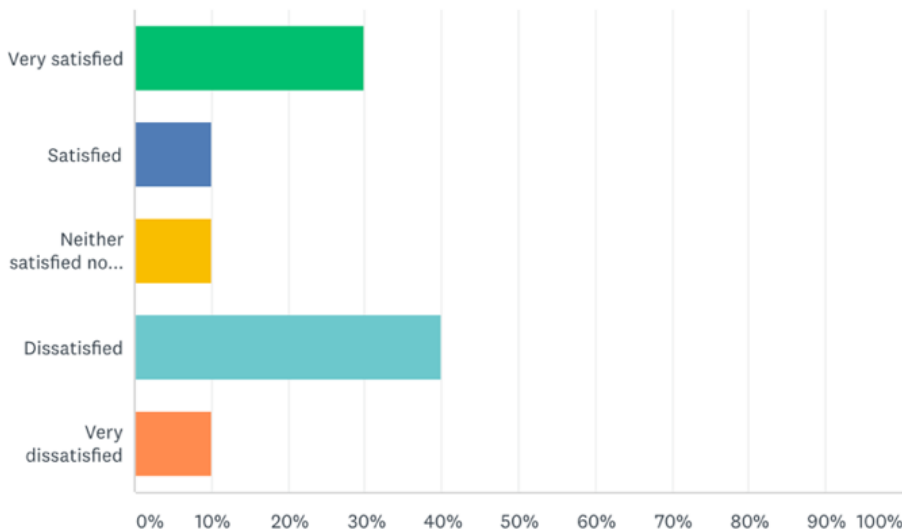


Figure 23: Experiences of the quality of pharmacy services in Kingston.


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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

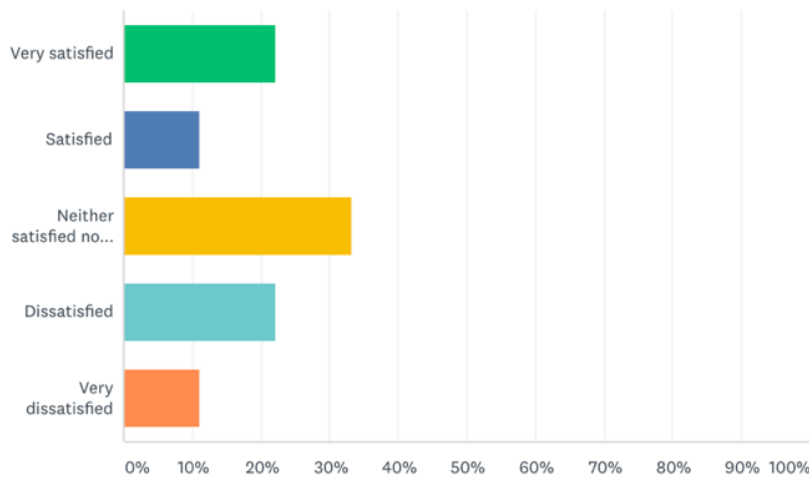


Figure 24: Experiences of aftercare provided by pharmacy services in Kingston.

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.”*

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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Appendix: Since publication of this report

On 23 August 2021, Healthwatch England published ‘What improvements do people want to see?’ gathered from local Healthwatch research ([COVID-19: What can pharmacists learn from people’s experiences of services?](#))

Despite acknowledging the importance of pharmacies, not everyone has got the care they need from them.

- **Availability of medication** - Many people have told us their medication has been delayed or is out of stock, sometimes because of missing or incorrect prescriptions. As a result, people are making multiple trips to their pharmacy.
- **Waiting times** - People struggled with long waiting times and queues, particularly those more vulnerable or during winter.
- **Safety** - Social distancing and infection control measures were not always in place or followed, leaving people feeling anxious and stressed about going to the pharmacy. For example, people told Healthwatch in Bromley, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Hounslow, Lewisham and Waltham Forest about inadequate mask and glove-wearing by staff and unclean surfaces.
- **Coordination** - People experienced poor communication and coordination between pharmacies and GPs, with people finding a lack of coordination. It has then been difficult to resolve any issues caused by this.
- **Delivery** - Medication delivery has got worse or stopped completely in some areas, causing difficulties for those self-isolating or shielding.
- **Better understanding about what pharmacists can do** - The main reason people use pharmacies is to get their medication. But not everyone understands the full range of services and support you offer, such as preventative advice and treatment for minor ailments. Some of the reasons people gave for not seeking support from their pharmacist first was:
 - Often being told to see their GP anyway, creating the sense that there was little point going to your pharmacist first.
 - They seemed too busy to talk, or there is no private space.
 - Not always clear on the roles, qualifications and expertise of pharmacy staff.

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

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