

**COVID-19 Report**  
**Digital/Alternative Services**  
**March 2020 - July 2020**



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## About this Report

This report details the theme of alternative methods of treatment and care during the COVID-19 pandemic, the comments included in this report have been shared by our community from March 2020 – July 2020. During this period, overall there has been 381 comments received about 81 different services, Healthwatch Knowsley received 38 comments relating to the theme of alternative access to treatment, which relate to a number of different services. Some comments have also been collected via a survey looking specifically at Health and Wellbeing during Covid-19.

All comments are the actual words of the people who shared them and have not been changed in any way.

Healthwatch will work with services to look at supporting any further developments following this report. We would welcome any feedback relating to the information contained within this report and encourage the services within this report to utilise the feedback centre to provide responses to the reviews to enable communication between the service and patients.

## What is Healthwatch?

Healthwatch is the independent community champion created to gather and represent the views of the public on Health and Adult Social Care. We play a part at both a local and national level to make sure that peoples experiences of Health and Adult Social Care are taken into account by both service providers and commissioners.

## How do we make a difference?

- We are part of, and answerable to the community
- We improve local health and adult social care services through community feedback
- We provide information about the care choices the community have
- We talk and listen to people from every part of the community
- We hold services to account for the care they provide

## Why do we do it?

Healthwatch Knowsley has been developed to give the people of Knowsley a stronger voice in influencing and challenging how health and adult social care services are provided within our region.

## What we are responsible for

- Enabling people to share their views and concerns about health and adult social care services in Knowsley
- Helping build a picture of where services are doing well and where they can be improved
- Providing authoritative, evidence based feedback to organisations responsible for commissioning or delivering local health and adult social care services
- Working with Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) and social care providers amongst others to help make sure that services are designed to meet local people's needs.

## Our Values

- **Inclusive** – working with all communities across Knowsley
- **Influential** – we are responsive, setting the agenda and making change happen
- **Independent** – we act on behalf of consumers, listening carefully then speaking loudly on their behalf
- **Credible** – we value knowledge, seeking information and challenging assumptions with facts
- **Collaborative** – we work in partnership with health and social care organisations to keep the debate positive and we get things done

**Healthwatch Knowsley will be an effective and clear voice for the community of Knowsley in relation to health and social care service provision and commissioning.**

## Our vision is simple



People are at the heart of everything we do.

We play an important role bringing communities and services together. Everything we do is shaped by what people tell us. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they work
- Undertaking surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with partner organisations
- Receiving patients views through our online Feedback Centre.

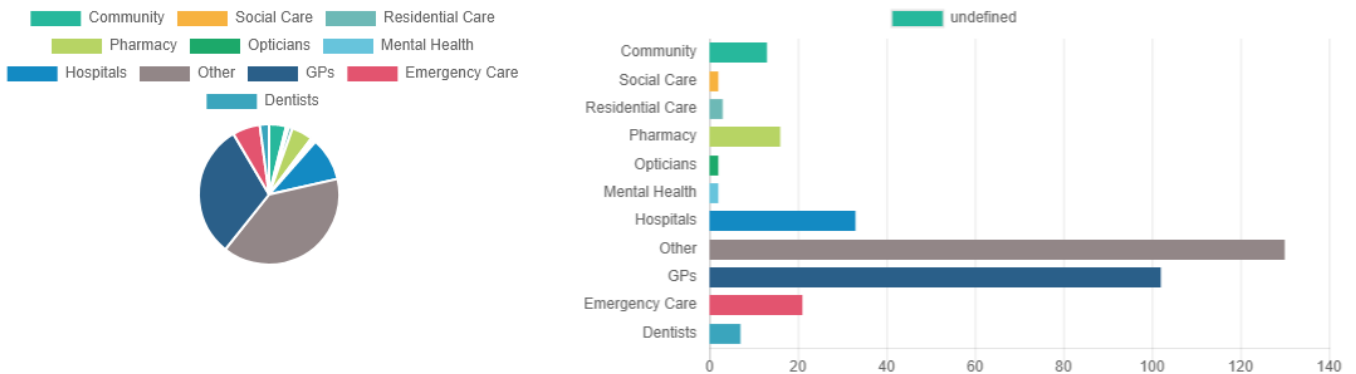
## Snapshot of the period

Between March 2020 – July 2020, we received 381 comments about 81 different health and social care services via the Healthwatch Knowsley feedback centre. From the comments received through the feedback centre the average rating for services during this period is just over 4 stars (good), in relation to individual ratings these are rated between 4 – 4.5 stars.

Reviews		Services	
<h1>331</h1> <p>reviews for March 2020-July 2020</p>	<p>Total Reviews</p> <h1>6255</h1> <p>(Since January 2016)</p>	<h1>81</h1> <p>services reviewed this period</p>	<p>Total Services reviewed</p> <h1>229</h1> <p>(Since January 2016)</p>
Average Rating		Average Individual Ratings	
<p>Average rating for March 2020 -July 2020 (4.0664652567976)</p>  <p>Overall average (4.0137490007994)</p> 		<p>Quality of care <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p> <hr/> <p>Quality of treatment <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p> <hr/> <p>Staff <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p> <hr/> <p>Cleanliness <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p> <hr/> <p>Food &amp; Drink (if applicable) <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p> <hr/> <p>Communication <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p> <hr/> <p>Discharge <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p> <hr/> <p>Accessibility <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p> <hr/> <p>Safety <span style="float: right;">★★★★☆</span></p>	

## Categories

From the 331 comments received during this period, the majority of reviews relate to other services, of which the majority are for Knowsley Carers Centre. Primary care services, hospitals and emergency care have also received a number of comments between March – July 20, as highlighted in the image below.




>	Category	Count	Rating	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Subcategories
+	Community	13	★★★★☆	46%	31%	23%	
+	Social Care	2	★★★★☆	50%	50%	0%	
+	Residential Care	3	★★★☆☆	0%	33%	67%	
+	Pharmacy	16	★★★☆☆	44%	31%	25%	
+	Opticians	2	★★★☆☆	50%	0%	50%	
+	Mental Health	2	★☆☆☆☆	0%	100%	0%	
+	Hospitals	33	★★★☆☆	30%	42%	27%	
+	Other	130	★★★★★	85%	2%	13%	
+	GPs	102	★★★☆☆	49%	29%	22%	
+	Emergency Care	21	★★★☆☆	10%	57%	33%	
+	Dentists	7	★★★☆☆	29%	14%	57%	

## Themes

In relation to the comments received, the following themes are apparent:

- Telephone consultations
- Online Access to services
- E-consultations
- Alternative methods of communication, e.g. text messaging



A majority of the comments received during lockdown related to alternative methods of communicating with services, particularly the use of telephone consultations and the use of e-consult. Others also mentioned that it had been useful receiving regular updates from services through text messaging, allowing patients to stay informed about what care is available.




The comments, which are included below, provide both positive and negative experiences during this period, key issues have included:

- Lack of access/knowledge of online services/apps
- Lack of communication/miscommunication
- Lack of access to services , e.g. physiotherapy, smear tests
- Information/guidance about e-consult, e.g. easy read





It is also important to note that a number of people provide positive comments about the care, communication and treatment they have received during lockdown and some reviews welcome the use of the alternative methods of consultation and treatment.

## Comments






Provider	Created	Rating	Title	Review
 Pharmacy	2020-03-27 14:16:45	2	Prescription Deliveries	(Name omitted) told patient that they could not receive a home delivery and just download the app to order prescriptions. Couple in the 70s and don't have access to online tech.
 GPs	2020-04-08 01:24:48	1	Never any response to e consultation requests	Receptionist at (name omitted) could find no record of me having a spacer device for my inhaler, despite me. Being a severe asthmatic for more than 30 years. Told to ask for online e consultation to request a replacement. Filled out a long largely irrelevant form a week ago. Still not heard anything. Before the triage system this would have been a simple prescription request. As I was advised by the





				Government to shield myself, I am unable to go into the surgery to follow it up. What is the point in telling a known severe asthmatic to stay in to protect myself if I am unable to get a spacer I need to take my inhalers! Before the system changed, the reception staff were lovely and helpful and the doctors were caring and interested, despite there being a frequent change of doctor.
 GPs	2020-06-01 15:59:59	5	Over and above	I have IBS and it flared up quite badly. I did an e-consult on Thursday at 9am and a nurse practitioner – (name omitted) - and she was absolutely brilliant. She spent a lot of time going over what the problem was. And she called me back a few times to see how I was. She sent a prescription to the pharmacy for me. And I had a really bad stabbing pain in my ear and she said I had strained it. She gave me great ear drops which stopped the pain. She said if there was no improvement in my ear in 12 hours, she would come out and check it. She has phoned a couple of times since then. Excellent.
 Hospitals	2020-06-10 10:41:59	5	Hospital	I have previously had skin cancer and I had a telephone consultation with my GP on Friday 1st May who sent a referral to (name omitted) hospital. I had a call on Monday 4th May giving me an appointment for Wednesday 6th where I saw the consultant and had biopsy immediately afterwards. Excellent experience.
 Hospitals	2020-06-10 11:08:30	2	Trauma & Orthopaedics	I had 2 appointments cancelled, was told they'd be done over phone only got 1 phone call - I am







				awaiting surgery on my foot & in a lot of pain & discomfort
 <b>GPs</b>	2020-06-10 11:47:49	5	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	Dr (name omitted) provided excellent telephone appointment, appropriate advice, prescription and sick note. He is a credit to his profession.
 <b>Community</b>	2020-06-10 12:34:13	3	Physiotherapy	I need physiotherapy in my hand. As I am unable to access this service my condition has gotten worse. I did have a telephone consultation however by its nature, physiotherapy is 'hands on'. I was supposed to receive exercises to help via email. These did not arrive despite ringing back to ask for them again.
 <b>GPs</b>	2020-06-10 13:04:42	3	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	Had regular text messages to update us. Bit upsetting the smear tests have been cancelled & could not get an appointment
 <b>Hospitals</b>	2020-07-01 13:14:26	2	Respiratory Service	Three weeks ago (11th June) my right leg swelled, the next day I had a telephone consultation with the GP, who gave me a prescription and sent me for a blood test and referred me to the cardiologist for an ultrasound. I attended the walk in centre to get my leg dressed and while there, the nurse queried my medication as she felt that I was on a high dose of water tablets and aspirin and told me to speak to my GP. I had a telephone consultation on 18th June and the GP said that I sounded out of breath and sent me for a chest x-ray. On 25th June, I phoned the GP for my x-ray results and asked about my cardiology appointment. The receptionist advised that I had been referred on 11th June and called the service to check. The

				receptionist called me back and explained that the service had called me on my landline number and as there was no answer they were going to refer me back to my GP- the service advised the receptionist that they would contact me soon. I got a call and an appointment and attended yesterday for my ultrasound at (name omitted) Medical Centre. If I hadn't have pushed I don't know when I would have got my appointment. The service should make a greater effort to ring someone more than once before referring back to the GP – they should also ring the mobile number, which would show as a missed call.
 <b>GPs</b>	2020-07-01 14:42:29	2	(Name Omitted) Medical Centre	<p>I rang today and was told to do an e-consultation. There is no easy read information. I did the form and at the end of it, it tells me to contact the surgery and I cannot submit the form. When I ring back, the reception said I need to complete the form.</p> <p>When I spoke to Dr (name omitted) 3 weeks ago, the doctor said they would call me in two weeks to see how I was going with my medication and I am still waiting.</p>
 <b>GPs</b>	2020-07-07 10:08:15	3	(Name Omitted) Medical Centre	I had issues with the online access and had to hand deliver a prescription. There were just 2 baskets that were not lockable and the reception shutter was down, I am just concerned that this could be a breach of confidentiality.
 <b>Hospitals</b>	2020-07-09 10:52:04	5	Gastroenterology	Consultant (name omitted) - Due for routine appointment - received a letter from consultants secretary

				about a telephone consultation - consultant rang and discussed and possible follow up. Can go back at any time and be fast tracked. Fantastic!
 Hospitals	2020-07-09 10:55:09	5	Rheumatology Clinic	Letter received to say I will have a telephone consultation next week and if the consultant thinks I need to come in, they will arrange. Fantastic way to work!
 GPs	2020-07-09 10:57:12	5	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	I received a text to say that routine appointments are now available by telephone.
 GPs	2020-07-09 11:28:33	4	E-Consult	I filled in the questionnaire for e-consult and was told that someone would call me back the same day but I didn't get the call. The next day I was not feeling very well and the nurse practitioner called me following the completion of the questionnaire the previous day and advised me to go to hospital. The service was good except it took them a day to get back to me but they were very friendly and helpful.
 GPs	2020-07-09 12:44:02	4	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	I tried to get online prescriptions and found it really difficult. So I just put my prescription in the box and pick it up from the chemist once a month.
 GPs	2020-07-09 12:52:46	5	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	The promptness - we can't go at the moment, it has to be over the phone. I had an issue, and I rang my doctor. I needed to send a photo, and within 5 minutes of sending it the doctor rang and said I needed an ambulance. It came flying into the close with the blue lights on! It was low oxygen. I spoke to the GP about another issue and medication was sent to the pharmacy straight away. Reception are brilliant.

 <b>GPs</b>	2020-07-09 12:58:46	5	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	Surgey is sending regular updates by text message to let patients know that they are still there and to call if needed, which is quite reassuring, they are very good, I can't fault them.
 <b>GPs</b>	2020-07-09 13:04:03	4	Telephone consultation	I rang at 8am for a telephone consultation and they did not call back until 3pm.
 <b>GPs</b>	2020-07-09 13:57:26	2	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	I rang yesterday and they asked me to do an e-consultation and I said I can't as it isn't straight forward. The care navigator did the form with me over the phone. There needs better reasonable adjustments for people with different needs such as autism/learning disability etc. E-consult should be a choice. They said they would call me back in 24 hours and it's been over 24 hours now and had no call. The practice manager had told me I could ring anytime because I have autism. They care is really good when I go in for an appointment.
 <b>GPs</b>	2020-07-09 15:11:47	5	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	Last week I did an e-consult form because I had a pain in my tongue, but like pins and needles - it was really bad. Dr (name omitted) called me and had looked at previous forms - it is a classic sign of thyroid being out of sync. I'm on medication for underactive thyroid. I needed blood tests for my medication to be changed. I had to go in for my blood form, and it was great it was already ready. I didn't like e-consult at first, but now I am used to it, I think it is really good. They send it to you so you see what you've said, so I can check and they also keep it on record. Always get back on time.

 <b>GPs</b>	2020-07-28 07:12:07	5	Excellent service	Telephone triage and surgery appointment offered the next day. On arrival at surgery simple and clear instructions for covid safety. I did not feel anxious at all about additional covid risks associated with surgery visit.
 <b>GPs</b>	11/08/2020 11:14:06	1	(Name omitted) Medical Centre	I supported a lady who has a sight impairment to fill in an e-consult form. I was directed to the website to fill in the form and it was not on there. I rang again and was told to google '(name omitted) Medical Centre e-consult form'. I started to fill it in and asked me if I was registered at (name omitted) - said no and it kicked me out. Rang again and they told me I had to say yes. The lady is over 80 and not feeling very well - it was a long conversation. She had a number of symptoms, some relating to the issue and some not. On some occasions it was telling me to ring 999. It was frustrating for her. There was no indication that there was another way for someone from the practice to call her - I explained she could not do it and the reception asked if I could do it. People shouldn't be put in the situation where they have to fill it in for them - you don't know what questions are popping up and they are put in a situation where they have to answer quite personal questions. It is not a flexible way to access services - where is the alternative route. Even if I was a family member, people have the right to privacy around their medical conditions from family and friends. It took about an hour to fill it in. All for some feedback from a GP appointment she had

				already had. A GP could have looked at her notes and a 5 minute phone call. The receptionist was very polite, but it didn't seem there were any other options.
 <b>GPs</b>	11/08/2020 21:26:23	1	Poor customer service	I am unable to complete the e form due to the firewall on my phone, I was advised there's nothing they could do. Advised could not call to make the appointment due to COVID lockdown. There needs to be other options for customers to seek medical advice
 <b>GPs</b>	21/08/2020 11:44	1	Inequitable access	Understand the embracing of technology, however, patients who do not have mobile/internet/laptop/tablets etc. are being discriminated in terms of accessing care. Repeat prescriptions only being available electronically? This is poor in terms of support to the patient population served by this practice. Equally eConsult does the same, try being elderly, hard of hearing and having to get support from very unhelpful reception staff (very short, not patient, forget that patients are ringing for help) to complete this over the phone. No respect or support for patients. Try getting an appointment when the doctor has requested to see you again - same rigmarole, fill in eConsult...no the GP has requested an appointment, this should be booked by the admin team not put more admin burden on the patient. The doctors however are lovely in their manner, although joined up care and reviewing of elderly patients with multiple co-morbidities does leave something to be desired. Please do better.

## Health and Wellbeing during the Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Based on a template provided through Healthwatch England and with support from Healthwatch Sefton regarding access to surveying software, Healthwatch Knowsley has undertaken a survey to ask local people how the Covid-19 pandemic is affecting them.

This has been shared across social media; the Local Authorities 'Knowsley News' and through the GP practices social media routes. The survey has received 368 responses and this activity has provided key messages about how people are managing during this time, which will be fed into the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board and the recovery planning activities across Knowsley. Some of the responses received from the survey have mentioned the use of both online services and alternative methods of consultation, as well as addressing some concerns about the lack of service available during the pandemic. Comments provided from the survey are included within this report.

## Survey Responses

Below are a number of comments received via the Health & Wellbeing during Coronavirus Survey:

"I am due blood tests necessary because of regular medication but the surgery is closed and only telephone advice available. Also, my Consultant hospital appointment usually has a spirometry breathing test afterwards but as I had a telephone consultation this couldn't happen."

"Telephone consultations with medical professionals whilst essential are not as effective as face to face ones."

"Community Matron closed my mum's case without consultation with family. 2 if my sisters have LPA District Nurses advised they "are at the end of the phone" but do not provide input or monitoring. GP input had been non-existent. Assessment by Nurse took place over the phone, antibiotics prescribed for mum bleeding (a new symptom) without blood or urine tests or examination. My mum's health needs have not improved in this time."

"Physio was cancelled for CRPS for right hand and telephone consultation was given for my eye pressure issues with a face to face appt given for June 8th - no issues with these changes"

"A number of clinic appointments have been postponed. GP appointment changed to telephone consultation. Hospital appointment due in two weeks. Intend to query if this can take place on phone. Blood tests due in five weeks time, will need to check the position closer to time. Need a podiatry appointment but not sure the present situation."

"GP reviews for illness and medication, My GP has spoken to me over a phone consultation I can at any time ring my Doctor with any concerns and I get my medication direct now from the chemist. Normally I would attend surgery and collect own medication."

"ENT dep at Broadgreen. Telephone consultant led consultation instead and new appointment offered for Oct 2020"

"I'd just like to say, telephone appointments with my Doctor are much more convenient for both me and him. It saves a lot of time traveling to surgery I understand this isn't always possible, and sometimes Doctor needs to see a patient face to face."

"Rheumatology St Helens hospital continuation of care and telephone advice. GP surgery used online service."

"I have been updating regularly by my gp surgery – (name omitted) at Tarbock Medical Centre. I had been hoping to get an appointment with Listening Ear as I had my telephone appointment on 16th March but with everything going on, I haven't been able to and haven't had any communication from them."

"Was not tested. Waited 2 hours 30 minutes on 111 then cut off. Gp Dr (name omitted) Tarbock Surgery, provided excellent telephone appointment, appropriate advice, prescription and sick notice. He is a credit to his profession. Following this needed ENT referral at St Helens Hospital which was prompt, all investigations carried out rapidly with luckily good outcome. All provided in a safe environment."

"Gp practice has been very helpful and very accessible for telephone advice and prescriptions, the telephone appointments were efficient and saved waiting weeks for appointments. Online questionnaire prior to gaining telephone appointments were easily accessed. Maternity care- it was worrying going into labour and having to attend triage alone, however hospital was much quieter and more efficient in providing services without all e tea people being present in hospitals. Have received limited follow up support from midwifery and health visiting services (only telephone follow ups for me and baby), breastfeeding telephone support service were in more contact and more reassuring."

"It was very early on, before lockdown. Telephone appointment. Very dismissive. No advice. Now I know we met all symptoms including the new lesser known ones (even thought they were being talked about at the time). Whole family and some colleagues who had contact with me, got it too. I have been crying out for help, I am not in good health, I have tried several times to get reviewed however via telephone is very difficult, GP was extremely dismissive I need urgent review."

"Psychology level 4. Was due to start therapy (after waiting for 11 months after a referral from the crisis team). Totally understand that appointments have to be via telephone at the moment and eventually having discussed it with my therapist, we've decided to delay for 4 weeks and then reassess. That's understandable, but the lack of communication before I was able to speak to my therapist was appalling."



# Feedback Centre

This report has been compiled using the new Healthwatch Knowsley Feedback Centre. This web based tool enables members of the public to rate the services that they use and provides real time analysis of the feedback, enabling early identification of trends and issues.



## Contact us

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