

Is Social Prescribing Working?

Feedback from users of the
Community Connector Service in
RB Kingston

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healthwatch
Kingston upon Thames

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Introduction and thanks

Between November 2019 and March 2020, Healthwatch Kingston (HWK) conducted a series of telephone interviews with consenting users of the Community Connector Service at Staywell asking about the medium-term impact of the service on their health and wellbeing. This report details the feedback that we received, our observations on the qualitative and quantitative data that we received, the recommendations that we made and Staywell's response to these recommendations. Our grateful thanks to Staywell and the two members of HWK staff and three volunteer telephone interviewers for making this piece of research possible.

About Healthwatch Kingston

Healthwatch Kingston (HWK) is the independent champion for people using local health and social care services. We listen to what people like about services and what could be improved. We share their views with those with the power to make change happen. People can also speak to us to find information about health and social care services available locally. We help make health and social care services work better for the people who use them. The way we work varies but everything we say and do is informed by local people.



HWK Community Care Task Group

HWK's task groups hold regular meetings at the Kingston Quaker Centre where they discuss potential enter & view visits, undertake research into people's experience of health and social care, contribute to the publication of reports and help HWK identify priority areas to focus on.

The Community Care Task Group priority for 2019/20 was "To examine the impact of Kingston Co-ordinated Care on service users, patients and where possible, their carers. During the year, individual services that are established or have been revised by the KCC programme will be considered for review, with the initial focus being on Connected Kingston".

About the Community Connector Service

The Community Connector Service is run by Staywell, formerly Age Concern Kingston. Staywell's core work is with older people and their carers, with an aim of supporting users to live with independence, dignity, to decide their own direction, and enjoy life as part of the community. The organisation works to create a greater understanding of older people's needs and their potential to contribute to community life. Staywell also fosters greater understanding between the generations by involving younger people in its work through volunteering.

The Community Connector Service was established by Staywell in the autumn of 2018 to trial a social prescribing approach with adults living in Kingston. It was initially funded through the Kingston Coordinated Care Programme as a one-year pilot from September 2018. But, since September 2019, the service has been funded by Kingston's five Primary Care Networks (PCNs), which came into existence in July 2019, and decided to jointly contract the service from Staywell, thereby building on the work and learning of the initial pilot. NHS England has made social prescribing one of its priorities over the next five years and has provided funding through Primary Care Networks across the country for the employment of Social Prescribing Link Workers as part of the workforce supporting primary care. NHS England has also encouraged PCNs to work in partnership with the voluntary and community sector in its delivery of social prescribing. In Kingston, these roles go by the title Community Connectors.

A Community Connector will typically work with an individual over a period of 8-10 weeks, with a number of short-term interventions, focusing on their needs and what they want to achieve,

or change, in their lives. Through also utilising an individual's interests, skills and assets, the aim is to connect the person to community-based services which can improve their general wellbeing, in turn improving their health and care situation and independence from the use of statutory services.

The Community Connector Service, as originally commissioned by KCC, focussed on frail and frail elderly individuals as this cohort was identified as high users of an expensive acute system. Referrals came through a range of routes, including multi-disciplinary meetings, from voluntary and community sector agencies and self-referrals. Six months into service delivery, the service was opened to other adults over the age of 18 registered with a GP practice.

Reasons for the survey

HWK has been supportive of the concept of social prescribing ever since the idea of developing a local social prescribing service first emerged around 2017-18. For example, a number of HWK volunteers helped test the Connected Kingston "digital tool", part of Kingston's social prescribing offer, when it was being developed in 2018. There are two reasons for HWK's support for the principle. The first is that we have seen some evidence from elsewhere in the country of social prescribing providing health and wellbeing benefits for patients, users and carers. The second is that it fits in with national and local plans to give a greater emphasis to early intervention and prevention. One of the drivers for the latter development has been a greater recognition of the higher costs incurred by health and social care providers when providing crisis intervention services at a later date.

But, whilst being supportive of the principle of social prescribing as a model, HWK has also been seeking evidence that the overall Connected Kingston programme (of which Staywell's Community Connector Service forms just one part and is funded separately to the rest of the programme), is actually making a difference, ie that the wider programme is improving the health and wellbeing of users and that the level of investment put into the other components of the programme is justified by the outcomes being secured.

It was in this context that, in 2018, Staywell offered to work with HWK to seek feedback from users of the **Community Connector Service** on the impact of this service on their health and wellbeing, several weeks (and in some cases, several months) after the provision of the service to the individual had ended. This provided an opportunity to examine the medium-term impact

of the service adding to the qualitative data collected by the service from each individual at the point when provision of the face-to-face provision of the service had ended for the individual.

It should be noted that the Community Care Task Group has also maintained an interest in how the impact of the two other aspects of the Connected Kingston programme - the “digital tool” (<https://www.connectedkingston.uk/>) and the work of the Community Champions - are being assessed and evaluated.

Methodology

The methodology for seeking feedback from users of the Community Connector Service was discussed and agreed, over a period of several months, by HWK’s Community Care Task Group. The key elements of the methodology were for:

- a) Staywell to seek written consent from service users for their contact details to be passed on to HWK
- b) HWK to offer to interview service users over the phone, unless they expressed a preference for receiving the interview questions by email or post
- c) HWK to prepare a standard set of mainly closed questions to ask of users whilst also welcoming and recording any additional comments that they made
- d) HWK to recruit and train (DBS-checked) volunteers to undertake the telephone interviews from amongst HWK’s active affiliates and from other interested people not already involved in HWK
- e) HWK to check the suitability of the questions with the Psychology Department at Kingston University and also the volunteers who offered to undertake the interviews
- f) and for HWK to train volunteers and members of staff (all DBS checked) to undertake the telephone interviews

A copy of the final version of the Consent Form is provided in Appendix 1, and the interview questions are provided in Appendix 2.

Application of the methodology

When the chosen methodology was applied in practice, the results were:

Training

- Four HWK volunteers agreed to participate and train in telephone interviewing using an early draft of the set questions.

Consent Forms

- The first batch of 12 completed consent forms was passed on to HWK by Staywell's Community Connector Service in September 2019 - advance calls were made to this initial cohort by the service to remind them to expect a phone call from HWK as, several months had elapsed since some individuals had their last contact with the service.
- A total of 37 completed consent forms were received from Staywell between September 2019 and March 2020.

Telephone interviews

- 28 people gave consent to be interviewed by telephone.
- It proved possible to speak to and obtain information from 20 of these 28 people.
- Of the other 8, 2 people were in hospital (we were informed by family members), 2 people had not started the service, or had only had one session; 2 people could not remember using the service; 2 people never answered or were always found to be on voicemail.
- Gathering the above information took, including repeat calls, a total of 58 telephone calls. A further 35 calls were made to people that we could not initially get to speak to as there was no reply, or the number was on voicemail. The total number of telephone calls made was therefore 93.
- 3 volunteers and 2 members of HWK carried out all the telephone interviews.
- On average, the interviewers were able to talk to about 3 people in each hour of making calls.

Emails and Post

- Three additional people expressed a preference for receiving the questionnaire by email - 2 replied and 1 did not.
- 6 people expressed a preference for receiving the questionnaire by post, but none replied.

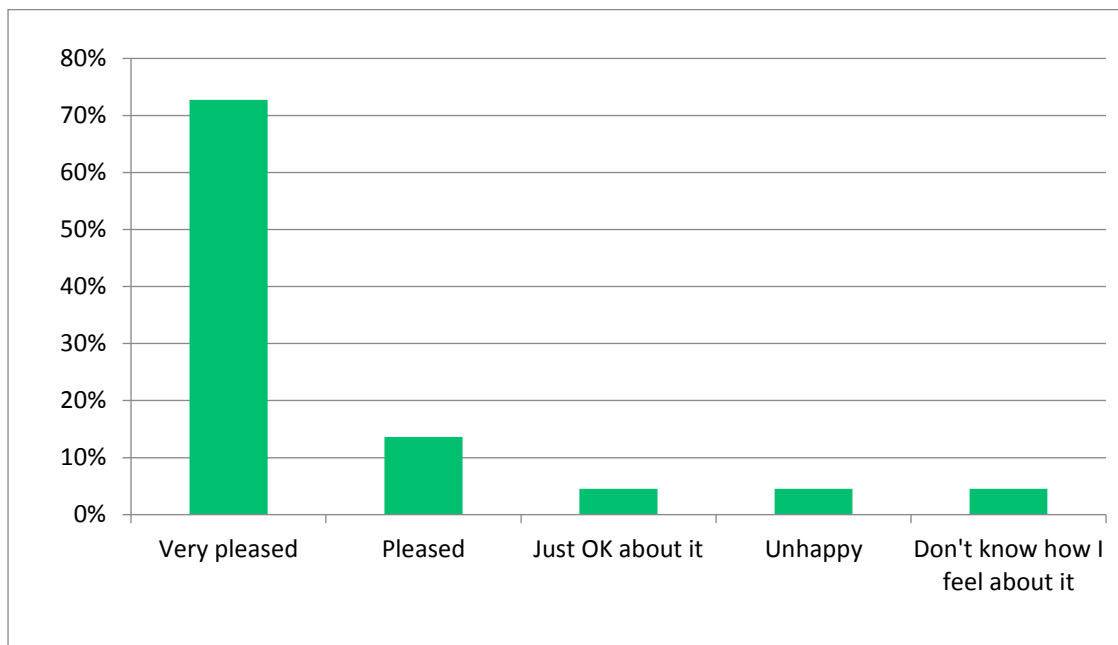
Overall

- In total, 22 people provided a response.
- The total number of volunteer and staff hours spent on the phone or sending out letter and emails is estimated at 35 hours.
- An interview log was designed, and reference numbers issued to each service user to keep all survey information confidential.
- All data received was input into SurveyMonkey for analysis and reporting.

Results

Q1 - How do you feel now about the fact that you were referred to the Community Connector Service provided by Staywell?

Results Graph Q1:



Results Table Q1.

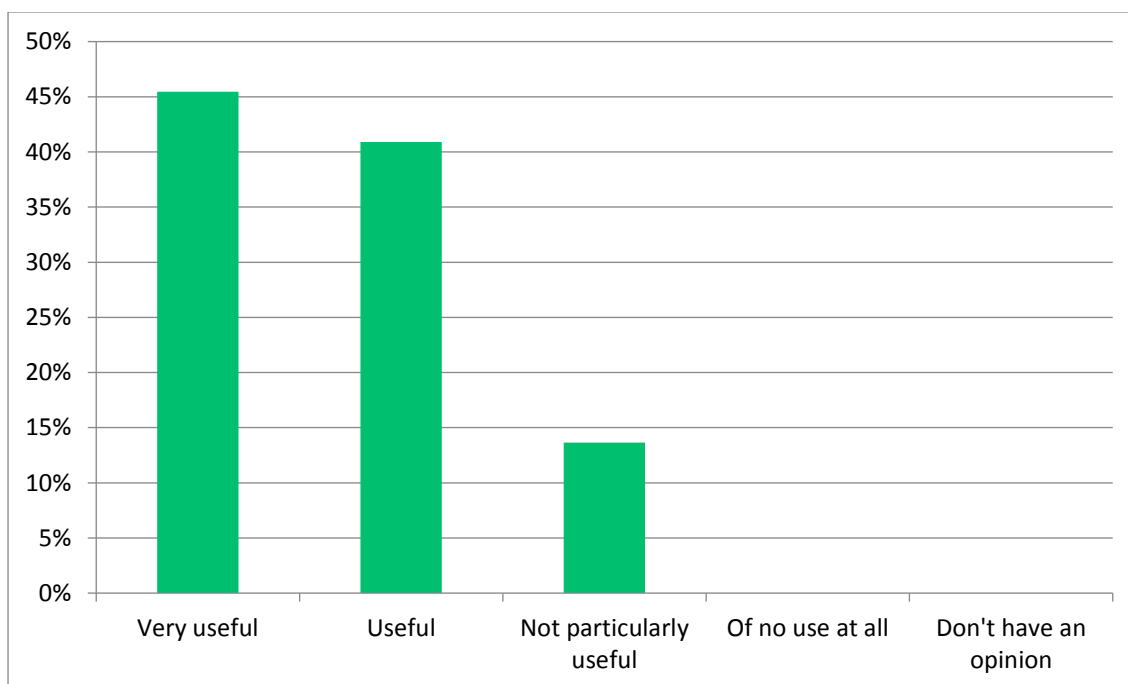
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|----|
| Very pleased | 72.73% | 16 |
| Pleased | 13.64% | 3 |
| Just OK about it | 4.55% | 1 |
| Unhappy | 4.55% | 1 |
| Or I don't know how I feel about it? | 4.55% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 22 |

Individual Comments Q1:

| Q1 - How do you feel now about the fact that you were referred to the Community Connector Service at Staywell? | |
|--|---|
| Response | Any additional comments: |
| Very pleased | Really helps me out |
| Just OK about it | It took a long time to get the card for taxi |
| Very pleased | Can't think of a service that has achieved so much in a short time |
| Very pleased | Helped me a lot |
| Very pleased | Ambulance service was called to my home. I felt unsupported and they immediately called the GP on my behalf. The GP then referred me to Staywell and the Community Connector Service. Very pleased! |
| Very pleased | Taken aback but very pleased |
| Very pleased | Very helpful |
| Very pleased | The Connector took me to a Centre. Very helpful |
| Pleased | Lived all life in Africa. Very difficult to mix with people. I struggle with having a 'terrible memory' |
| Very pleased | Love it to bits. They're very helpful in so many ways |

Q2 - What is your general impression of the Community Connector Service overall?

Results Graph Q2:



Results Table Q2:

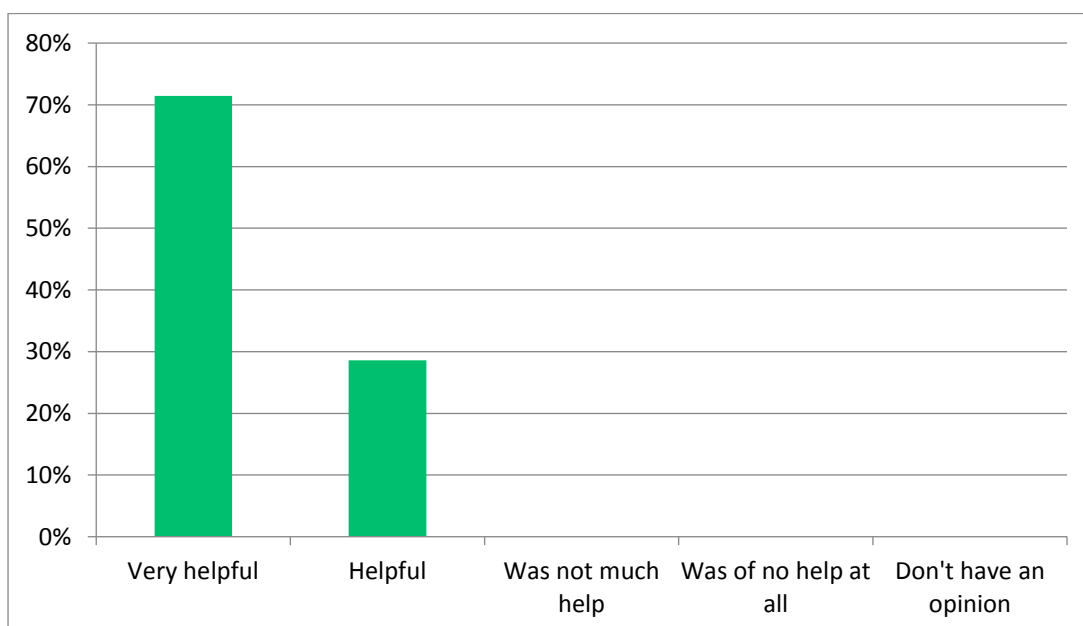
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Very useful | 45.45% | 10 |
| Useful | 40.91% | 9 |
| Not particularly useful | 13.64% | 3 |
| Of no use at all | 0.00% | 0 |
| Or I don't have an opinion | 0.00% | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 22 |

Individual Comments Q2:

| Q2 - What is your general impression of the Community Connector Service overall? | |
|--|---|
| Response | Any additional comments: |
| Very useful | Staff very nice. Remembered my name |
| Useful | Can now use the taxi card |
| Very useful | They do amazing work. But the time allowed is too short. Could have accomplished more with 4 more visits. Social Worker not helping - only getting 2 hours care (Elderly and Vulnerable People) |
| Useful | Definitely useful |
| Not particularly useful | Didn't like the food |
| Useful | Enlightening |
| Useful | Got me into YMCA activities and just out having a cup of tea. Gave me an opportunity to listen to everyone. Find it difficult to mix with people |

Q3 - How helpful was the Community Connector that you met with?

Results Graph Q3:



Results Table Q3:

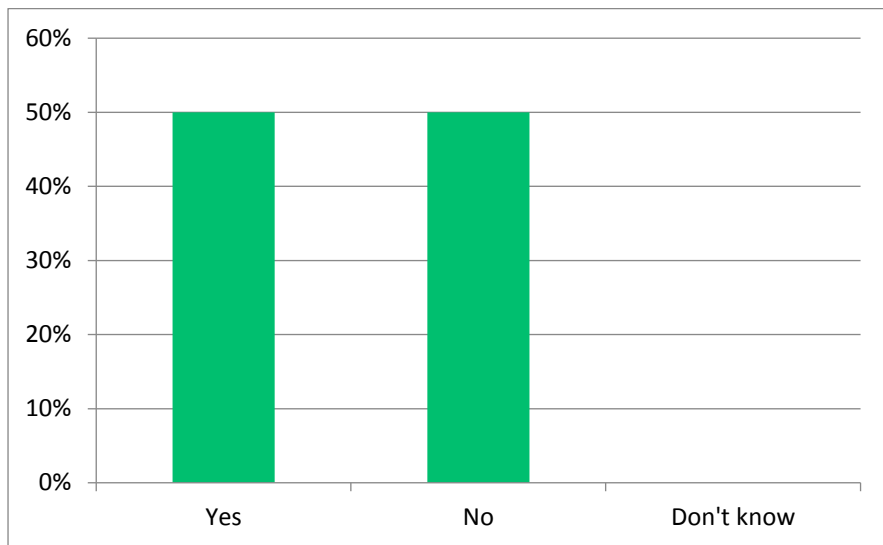
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|----|
| Very helpful | 71.43% | 15 |
| Helpful | 28.57% | 6 |
| Was not much help | 0.00% | 0 |
| Was of no help at all | 0.00% | 0 |
| Or I don't have an opinion | 0.00% | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 21 |

Individual Comments Q3:

| Q3 - How helpful was the Community Connector that you met with? | |
|---|--|
| Response | Any additional comments: |
| Helpful | Very pleasant |
| Very helpful | Community Connector was lovely |
| Very helpful | 'Community Connector was a breath of fresh air she was lovely'. I was previously ill and had experienced domestic violence. The Community Connector was kind, honest and caring, compared with my social worker |
| Very helpful | 'Community Connector sorted everything out for me. Rail put in hallway. Handle by shower. Toilets - rail put in by toilet to help me get up and down'. They are now looking into an electric remote control on the toilet. Expecting in the next 10 days a Blue Badge/Taxi Pass and Freedom Pass - the Community Connector is assisting me with all of these |
| Very helpful | Patient and kind |
| Very helpful | Extremely helpful |
| Very helpful | Wish service was working for them as it helped us so much |
| Very helpful | Wonderful. Caring |
| Very helpful | Very nice lady |
| Very helpful | Very sweet. The Community Connector understood what I was saying about not mixing well. Love her to bits. Wonderful experience with her |

Q4 - As a result of your meeting with the Community Connector, did you take part in any new activities?

Results Graph Q4:



Results Table Q4:

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Yes | 50.00% | 11 |
| No | 50.00% | 11 |
| Or I don't know | 0.00% | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 22 |

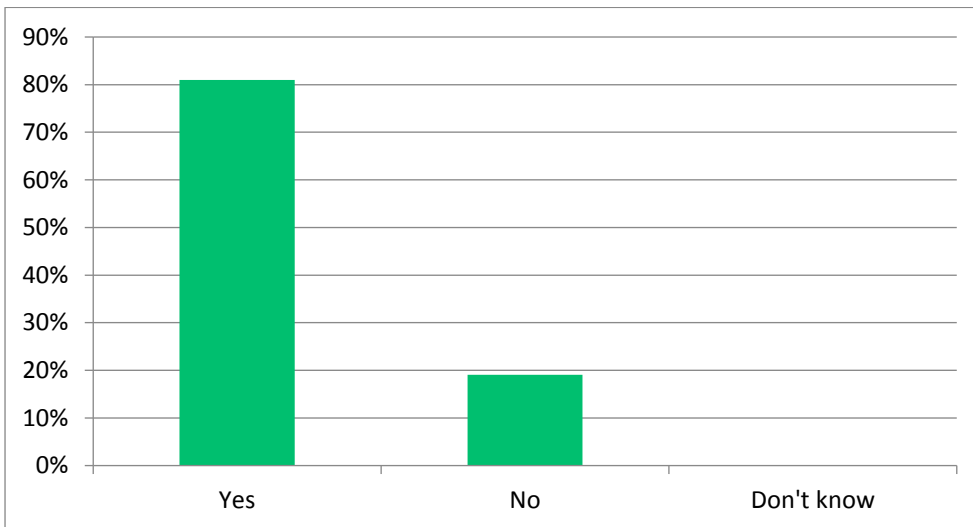
Individual Comments Q4:

| Q4 - As a result of your meeting with the Community Connector, did you take part in any new activities? | |
|---|--|
| Response | Any additional comments: |
| No | The problem was I was offered a lunch group in Surbiton but this was almost impossible for me to get to. |
| Yes | 1 - Course at the King Charles Centre on Wellbeing and Happiness, only started 2 weeks ago and its a 6-week course. 2 - Meditation Relaxation Classes on a Friday |
| No | Had some time in hospital and my husband has got Alzheimer's, so was difficult |
| Yes | I found a job with xxx, it's a new job driving. They helped me to move house. Will be visiting the Kingston Community Furniture Shop next week set up by Staywell |
| Yes | The Community Connector put me in touch with a Gospel Choir. Husband died 4 years ago and I've been housebound since then. It's the perfect thing for me. She's organizing a Taxi Card for me. Went to the office together - I just need a photo now then I can get black cabs. Have not yet participated in |

| | |
|-----|---|
| | the Gospel choir but the Community Connector also contacted my social worker. The Community Connector did everything she could |
| No | Given two suggestions, but I was nervous about meeting new people. I have some friends come around so I'm ok at present |
| Yes | Kingsgate Choir, good energy club and Hestia) |
| Yes | I got a haircut |
| Yes | Not still taking part |
| Yes | Day out in centre Kingston. We meet and do exercises. Meet a lot of people now. It's near the University opposite the Alfriston. The Community Connector took me and I still go on Wednesdays. Also go to New Malden for pains, physio and to talk about pain. The course is for six weeks and I will be contacted if another course comes up |
| Yes | Reading session. On the waiting list for an IT course |
| No | Visited a centre but it was too far. Was a lovely centre and would go back if it was closer |
| Yes | YMCA. Senior Citizens get together for tea and bun |
| Yes | Still taking part in speech therapy |
| Yes | Xmas concert. Singing |

Q5 - As a result of your meetings with the Community Connector, have you made any significant changes to the way you live your life?

Results Graph Q5:



Results Table Q5:

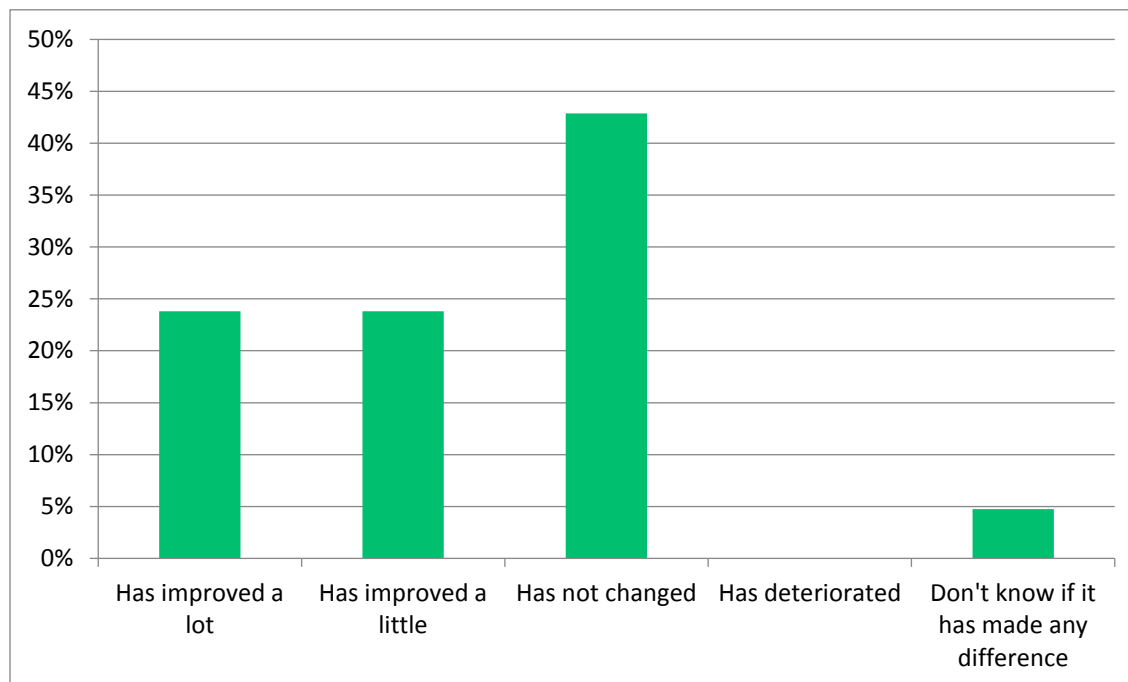
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Yes | 80.95% | 17 |
| No | 19.05% | 4 |
| Or I don't know | 0.00% | 0 |
| TOTAL | | 21 |

Individual Comments Q5:

| Q5 - As a result of your meetings with the Community Connector, have you made any significant changes to the way you live your life? | |
|--|---|
| Response | If yes: what has changed: |
| No | Had the community connector for 6 weeks but became even more lonely after she stopped. Spent a lot of time going to hospital since. |
| Yes | Meeting People |
| Yes | I have a new job and they really got me motivated and then moved house as a result |
| Yes | Can now use the taxi to get around. It has given her a little more independence |
| Yes | I know I've got to do something. Be pro-active. Got to get rid of the pain, and not just stay here. It motivated me to do things. The Community Connector left her number – it has been comforting to have been accepted for who I am |
| Yes | Help with using toilet. It made life easier |
| Yes | Grab rails have helped a lot. Hoping to get more support, but part of the follow-up is still pending. Waiting to find out if we qualify for attendance allowance, in which case we would be able to afford more caring support |
| Yes | Has helped me. They helped me to get a Freedom Pass and that's taken a lot off my mind |
| Yes | Attend the Kingsgate Choir once a week |
| Yes | Look forward to trying but I didn't realise I needed to |
| Yes | More confident |
| Yes | They took me to Kingston to get Blue Badge, which made it easier for parking. And going to a gym that the Community Connector told me about after coming out of hospital. A GP referral is more expensive. I pay monthly £19. I'm going every day, have lost a stone and gone from a size 22 to size 14 |
| Yes | I am now getting more support and help for me and my husband in Sutton, as we live in Worcester Park |
| Yes | I don't do it weekly and only go sometimes. I was taken to Alfriston but it's not my care, so not taken it up |
| Yes | Getting better, less depressed |
| Yes | Made things more accessible. Now have a carer once a week |

Q6 - To what extent do you think your state of health and wellbeing has improved as a result of any activities that you were referred to?

Results Graph Q6:



Results Table Q6:

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Has improved a lot | 23.81% | 5 |
| Has improved a little | 23.81% | 5 |
| Has not changed | 42.86% | 9 |
| Has deteriorated | 0.00% | 0 |
| Or I don't know if it has made any difference | 4.76% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 21 |

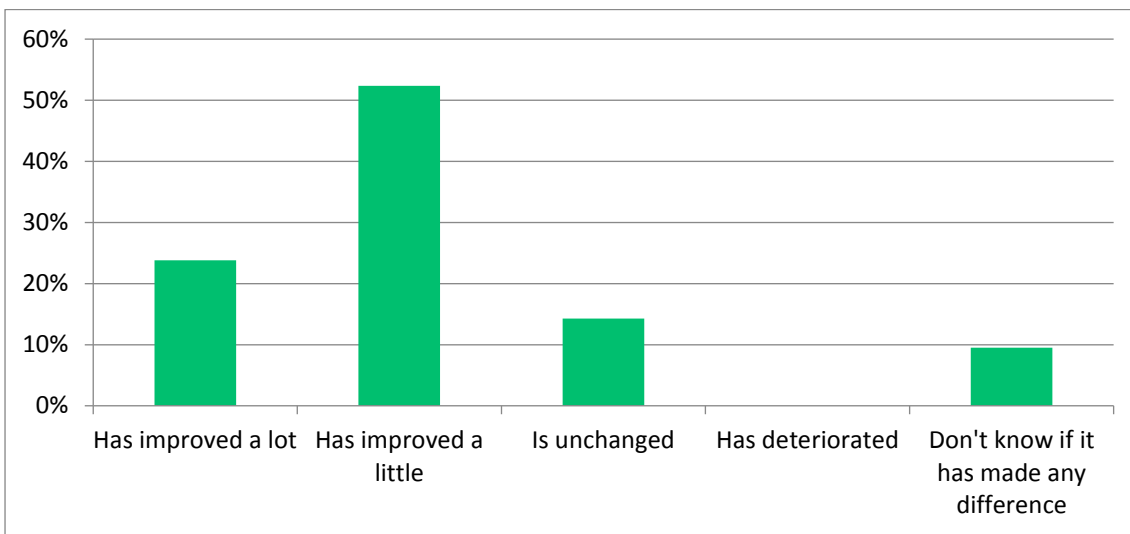
Individual Comments Q6:

| Q6 - To what extent do you think your state of health and wellbeing has improved as a result of any activities that you were referred to? Do you think your state of health and wellbeing... | |
|--|--|
| Response | Any additional comments: |
| Has improved a little | But I have chronic pain |
| Has improved a lot | Massively |
| Or I don't know if it has made any difference | Not been yet. But I'm hopeful, from past experience, that it will be helpful |

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Has improved a little | Wellbeing has changed. Has not changed my health |
| Has improved a little | Joined a Balance Group |
| Has improved a lot | Very very good – I was stuck in the house |
| Has not changed | Not at the moment, but I think that will change |
| Has not changed | Get a bit low sometimes. My husband died. I came back from Africa and now have children nearby |

Q7 - To what extent do you feel your quality of life has improved as a result of any new activities that you have taken on?

Results Graph Q7:



Results Table Q7:

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Has improved a lot | 23.81% | 5 |
| Has improved a little | 52.38% | 11 |
| Is unchanged | 14.29% | 3 |
| Has deteriorated | 0.00% | 0 |
| Or I don't know if it has made any difference | 9.52% | 2 |
| TOTAL | | 21 |

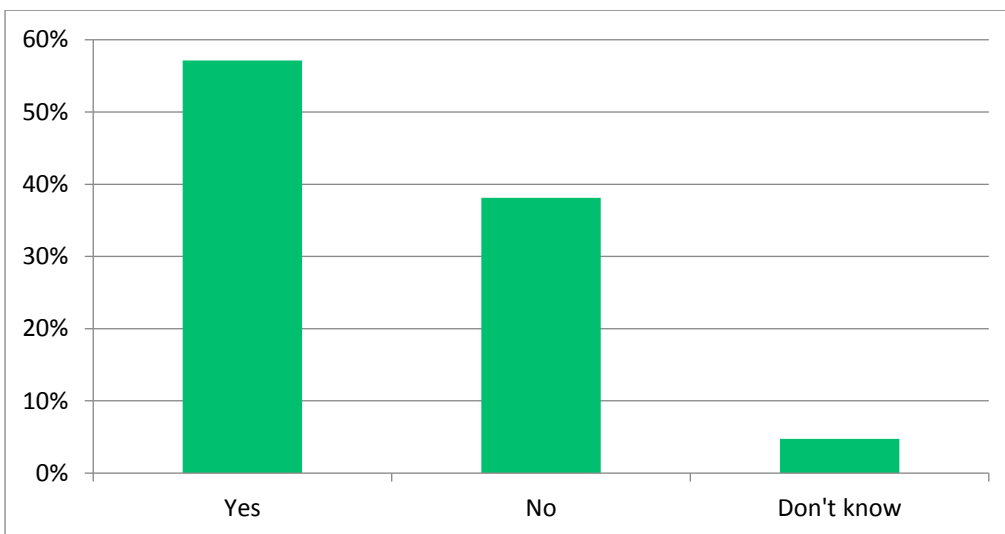
Individual Comments Q7:

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Q7 - To what extent do you feel your quality of life has improved as a result of any new activities that have taken on? | |
| Response | Any other comments: |
| Has improved a lot | Have a new home |
| Has improved a little | Only used the taxi twice |

| | |
|---|--|
| Has improved a little | The Community Connector put me in a different mind-set, with hope and help |
| Or I don't know if it has made any difference | N/a - no need for additional activities |
| Has improved a lot | Food is very good |
| Has improved a little | Walk about more |
| Has improved a lot | Walking. Being told look good. Happy |
| Has improved a little | Realised there is support out there and organisations to help |
| Has improved a little | Knowing she is there and that I can contact the Community Connector |
| Has improved a lot | Helped with social isolation |

Q8 - As a result of your meetings with the Community Connector, has your use of local health or social care services changed in any way?

Results Graph Q8:



Results Table Q8:

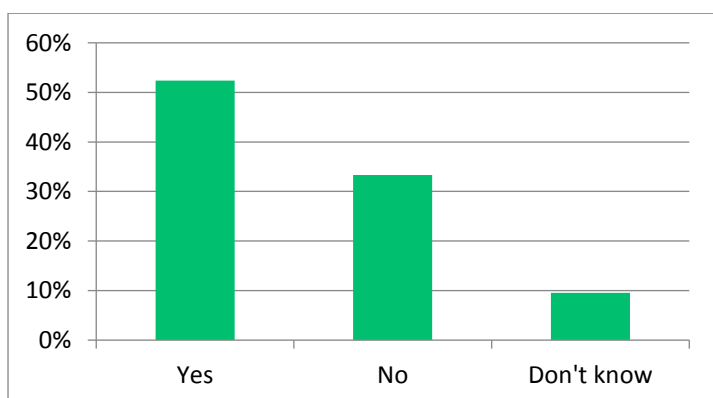
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Yes | 57.14% | 12 |
| No | 38.10% | 8 |
| Or I don't know | 4.76% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 21 |

Individual Comments Q8:

| Q8 - As a result of your meetings with the Community Connector, has your use of local health or social care services changed in any way? | |
|--|--|
| Response | If yes: what has changed: |
| Yes | Had a doctor who was useless. The Community Connector got the council to put handrails on the stairs and bath, which has helped me a lot. Through talking to the Community Connector, I was encouraged to change doctors. |
| Yes | I won't be using them as I don't feel I need the support anymore (in a positive way) |
| Yes | Now have a permanent social worker |
| Yes | Made me think I don't want to have a social worker. Want to be how I was. Felt I had to rely on people Was happy going to work. Hate being on benefits. Will be getting more joints replaced. Once done, and heal, I hope I won't be in such pain – it's wearing me down |
| Yes | I hope it will. I hope to be able to afford help with managing food and meal preparation especially, and maybe some occasional personal care (e.g. pedicure) but that depends on whether we qualify for attendance allowance and we are still waiting to find out |
| No | But I am considering looking at the Good Gym from a leaflet I got from the Community Connector |
| Yes | Now seeing a physio |
| Yes | Hope to get a more regular occupation |
| No | If you want things from District Nurses, they aren't providing things such as cream |
| Yes | Not going to the GP as often as I was before. Not been in 4 months, apart from vaccination. Doctor is very happy |
| Yes | I have looked for support closer to home |
| No | Doctor knows my story. I am quite healthy but suffer with arthritis |
| Yes | Community Connector really helped me |
| Yes | Helps with walking/going out |

Q9 - Do you think anyone who cares for you or supports you - like family members or friends - has benefited as a result of your involvement in the Community Connector service?

Results Graph Q9:



Results Table Q9:

| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Yes | 52.38% | 11 |
| No | 33.33% | 7 |
| I don't know | 9.52% | 2 |
| TOTAL | | 21 |

Individual Comments Q9:

| Q9 - Do you think anyone who cares for you or supports you – like family members or friends - has benefited as a result of your involvement in the Community Connector service? | |
|---|---|
| Response | If yes: what benefits have you seen: |
| Yes | Started seeing family again that they haven't seen in years |
| Yes | Now have a taxi card and feel more independent |
| No | Family members have their own problems. Don't want to worry them |
| I don't know | Feel it will be easier to see friends once I get the Blue Badge |
| Yes | My husband and daughters were very worried about my declining ability to cope with everyday life and felt confused as to where to go for help. This service gave us all an interlocutor who knew her way around the different support providers and could guide us. |
| Yes | Mum and daughter. If I need to meet daughter from work I can get there by train. If it's mum, and need to pick up stuff from her, like shopping, I'm able to go by bus |
| | Feeling better and brighter |
| Yes | Family, friends, kids. Can pick up a phone! Couldn't do that before. So so happy with the Community Connector. Would recommend it to anyone! Changes their lives. |
| No | Still visit a staff member regularly even though I am no longer using the service. I feel other service users are more in need of support than I am currently |
| Yes | Don't feel like I have to carry everything on my own or rely so much on others |
| Yes | My daughter is happy I now have something to go to. |
| Yes | My son and girlfriend have benefited |

Q10 - Age if given

During the process of conducting the surveys there was a broadening in the age group of the people contacted by the interviewers. Originally the Community Connector service was only available for the frail and elderly. But later in 2019, the service was opened up to people in

need of support from all adults ages. Once this change had occurred, we started asking if the service users were happy to share their age. These were the results.

| Age (if given) Open-Ended Response |
|---------------------------------------|
| 84 |
| 60 |
| 63 years old |
| 57 years old |
| 52 years old |
| 94 |
| 72 |
| 95 1/2 years old |
| 89 |
| Client - 81 & Wife - 71 |
| 87 |
| 84 |
| 85 |
| 49 |
| 64 |
| 91 |

Assessment of the Data and Conclusions

Firstly, it is necessary to say something about the limitations of this piece of research. Most importantly, we recognise that the data presented in this report is not necessarily representative of the views of the full complement of people who have used the Community Connector Service since its inception: data was not obtained from every user of the service, nor from a random sample. Information has only been collected from 22 users as compared with the hundreds of people who had used the service at the time the survey was carried out. The service users who provided information were people who:

- (a) had used the service during a particular timeframe of the service’s existence; and
- (b) were invited by a Community Connector to participate in the research - the Community Connectors judged that it would be unreasonable to ask some service users to do so, for reasons of capacity or immediate circumstances etc; and
- (c) agreed to fill in a consent form for HWK to contact them; and
- (d) the telephone interviewers actually managed to speak to on the phone (or a reply was received by email or post).

That said, what can readily be concluded from the data is that the people who did provide HWK with their views and information had a strongly favourable view of the service and of the consequences for them of using the service. Particularly striking in the data are the following results (the percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number):

- 83% of respondents who answered said they were very pleased or pleased, in retrospect, to have been referred to the service;
- 87% of respondents who answered were of the opinion that the service was very useful or useful;
- **Every** respondent who answered said that the Community Connector with whom they met was either very helpful (71%) or helpful (29%).

The additional comments about the Community Connectors were also very positive and there was a strong sense that what the respondents valued above all else was that someone, sometimes for the first time in a long time, was actually taking a personal as well as a professional interest in their welfare. Indeed, a few respondents expressed regret that the support being given to them had ended and would have liked it to have continued.

When asked whether users had taken part in any new activities - as a result of their contact with a Community Connector - there was a greater divide in the feedback, with 50% saying yes and 50% saying no. The additional comments offered by respondents to this question offered insight into the reasons for this variation in response: some people were intending to take up new activities but were awaiting a particular date; some had not (yet) been able to take up new activities because the dates available did not suit them or other life events had intervened (such as hospitalisation); and some felt a need for more support before being able to proceed.

Additional benefits: It also became apparent that during some of the interviews that users were benefiting from changes other than participation in new activities. For example, some respondents spoke about new equipment being installed in their home, or travel being made easier for them (eg with a blue badge or Oyster card/Freedom Pass being organised for them). Whilst these might not be viewed as social prescriptions, they will have made it easier for users to get access to activities, groups, opportunities etc as part of social prescriptions.

There were some interesting differences in response to the questions about whether or not working with the Community Connectors had improved their sense of health & wellbeing and their quality of life. This confirmed the usefulness of asking two questions which, on first

reading, might look like very similar. Respondents views on whether their state of well-being had improved as a result of new activities were variable: 24% said it had improved a lot, 24% said it had improved a little and 43% said it had not changed. In contrast, the respondents were much more positive about the consequences for their quality of life, with 76% saying it had improved a lot or had improved a little.

57% of respondents said that their use of local health or social care services had changed as a result of their meetings with the Community Connectors. When these 12 people were invited to provide details, 4 reported that they were using services less, 1 had changed doctors, 1 now had a permanent social worker and 1 had started physiotherapy.

It was also interesting to see that just over half (52%) of respondents said that people who supported them, like family members or friends, had also benefited as a result of their engagement with the Community Connector Service, sometimes with the consequence that relationships had been strengthened.

So, finally, to turn to the question on the front page of this report “Is Social Prescribing Working?” The evidence in this report, although limited in scale, suggests that the answer is “Yes”. It is certainly working for some - maybe many people using the Staywell Community Connector Service.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1:

That funding of the Community Connector Service, or a similar such intensive social prescribing service in Kingston, be maintained and that the potential for the service to reach, and benefit, a wider range of people be explored.

Response from Staywell:

Currently the service is funded for five Community Connectors across Kingston’s five PCNs and Staywell has only just had confirmation that funding is now available for the work that the service has delivered since September 2019 and contracted by the PCNs in July of that year. Unlike other London boroughs, for example Merton, where additional resources from the CCG and from PCNs’ own investment has supported link worker social prescribing, in Kingston no funding has been provided for any additional costs, apart from the funding for Connector staff

costs, which is provided to the PCNs through their NHS contract. There is no funding for management of the team, further service development, or evaluation.

Recommendation 2:

That funders (especially the Primary Care Networks) and service providers (in particular Staywell) find a way to further assess and evaluate the medium-term benefits to service users of the Community Connector Service and any similar such service that is devised in the future. Also, that an attempt be made to assess the longer-term savings secured by this early intervention services as compared with costs of more intensive, or crisis, intervention at a later date.

Response from Staywell:

Staywell would welcome and support an independent evaluation of the service and its outcomes once it is re-established post the current Coronavirus situation. Currently however, there is no specific funding for either the evaluation framework, or the costs that would be incurred to Staywell in supporting the process.

Recommendation 3:

That funders and providers note the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges presented by the methodology used in this piece of research and consider how this methodology might be further utilised, adapted and improved.

Response from Staywell:

From the experience of delivering the service to date, it is clear that there are a number of key factors underpinning successful case working with referred clients - some of which have been identified in this survey work:

- *Giving time to really listen to the person*
- *Time spent taking a personal, as well as a professional interest in the person's welfare*
- *Providing a structure in order to prioritise what the key issues are for the person*
- *Recognising that these may not always be the stated reasons for the initial referral, but as, if not more important to the person themselves*
- *There are often other unintentional, but valuable benefits for the person, and also for their carers and families*

We hope that in the future development of the service working closely with PCN Clinical Directors, that these key attributes and strengths are not lost in the adoption of a new model of delivery.

Prior to the current Coronavirus situation, Staywell had been asked by the PCN Clinical Directors to change its operating model to date so that Community Connectors spent the majority of their time based in allocated GP practices - seeing clients by prior booked appointments. This was in part to raise the profile of the service amongst primary care staff, albeit that we had some reservations and were keen not to lose the valuable connection with the community and its wealth of diverse resources, which we felt was key to the success of the service.

Recommendation 4:

That consideration be given to the provision of a service that can be further tailored to the needs of each individual in terms of the number of sessions and period of support provided, taking into account the aspiration to promote the independence of users in the longer-term.

Response from Staywell:

In discussions with PCN CDs, we had eventually agreed that the initial “assessment” meeting was key in building a trusted rapport and relationship with the person, which would in turn inform the success of subsequent work, and required up to an hour (dependent on the presenting issue(s)), rather than the initially suggested 20 minutes.

From this meeting an individual and realistic goal plan would be developed with the person and then implemented over the following 6-10 weeks through a number of interventions (typically around 6), which could involve further meetings - perhaps away from the GP practice, telephone support, research into community resources and support with accessing these resources.



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YOUR CONSENT TO HELP US

You have been referred for support by a Staywell Community Connector which is part of Connected Kingston.

Healthwatch Kingston is an **independent** organisation. We would like to find out about your experience of being supported by Staywell’s Community Connector service, and whether it has made a difference to your health and wellbeing.

Your consent, and how you would like to be contacted

To do this, we need your written consent below for your name and contact details to be given to Healthwatch Kingston by Staywell so that we can contact you about your experience.

Your telephone number for a short call: Yes No

Your address (if you would prefer to receive a questionnaire by post): Yes No

Your e-mail address (if you would prefer to complete a questionnaire online): Yes No

Signed: Contact No:

Please print your name: Date:

Your Community Connector:

A report will be produced on our findings. This will **not** include your name, and will be kept confidential. Your information will be processed and stored for the purpose of this project only, and in accordance with the Healthwatch Kingston upon Thames’ Privacy Policy available at www.healthwatchkingston.org.uk, which can also be provided in paper form on request.



Appendix 2 - Questions used

Community Connector service at Staywell

1. How do you feel **now** about the fact that you were referred to the Community Connector service at Staywell?

Do you feel...

| | | Any additional comments made |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Very pleased | | |
| Pleased | | |
| Just OK about it | | |
| Unhappy | | |
| I don't know how I feel about it | | |

2. What is your general impression of the **Community Connector service overall?**

Do you think it is...

| | | Any additional comments made |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Very useful | | |
| Useful | | |
| Not particularly useful | | |
| Of no use | | |
| I don't have an opinion | | |

3. How helpful was the **Community Connector** that you met with?

| | | Any additional comments made |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Very helpful | | |
| Helpful | | |
| Was not much help | | |
| Was of no help at all | | |
| I don't have an opinion | | |

4. As a result of your meetings with the Community Connector, did you take part in **any new activities?**

| | Y/N | Any additional comments made |
|--------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Yes | | |
| No | | |
| I don't know | | |

If yes: what new activities did you start and are you still taking part in them?

| Activity - list: | Still taking part | Any additional comments made |
|------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| | Yes / No | |
| | Yes / No | |
| | Yes / No | |

5. As a result of your meetings with the Community Connector, have you made **any significant changes to the way you live your life?**

| | Y/N | Any additional comments made |
|--------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Yes | | |
| No | | |
| I don't know | | |

If yes: what has changed?

6. To what extent do you think your **state of health and wellbeing** has improved as a result of any activities that you were referred to?

*Do you think your **state of health and wellbeing...**?*

| | | Any additional comments made |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| Has improved a lot | | |
| Has improved a little | | |
| Has not changed | | |
| Has deteriorated | | |
| I don't know if it has made any difference | | |

7. To what extent do you feel your **quality of life** has improved as a result of any new activities that have taken on?

*Do you think your **quality of life...**?*

| | | Any additional comments made |
|--|--|------------------------------|
| Has improved a lot | | |
| Has improved a little | | |
| Is unchanged | | |
| Has deteriorated | | |
| I don't know if it has made any difference | | |

8. As a result of your meetings with the Community Connector, has **your use of local health or social care services changed** in any way?

| | Y/N | Any additional comments made |
|--------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Yes | | |
| No | | |
| I don't know | | |

If yes: what has changed?

9. Do you think anyone who cares for you or supports you - like family members or friends - has benefitted as a result of your involvement in the Community Connector service?

| | Y/N | Any additional comments made |
|--------------|-----|------------------------------|
| Yes | | |
| No | | |
| I don't know | | |

If yes: what benefits you have seen?

The Community Connector Service was originally only available to people of certain age but in recent months availability has been expanded to a larger group. It would be helpful with our results if you could supply your age:

Healthwatch Kingston and the Community Connector Service at Staywell would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.