



South West London insight and engagement analysis

Review of reports to further support
'snap-shot' of local insight

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Objective

A review, collation, analysis, synthesis and interpretation of existing insight and engagement reports from health and care partners across South West London over the last 12 month period

The insights gained will help to inform the priorities for the South West London Integrated Care System

Identification of reports to be included in the review

A call was sent to ICS partners for engagement reports detailing findings and recommendations from Place or SWL based insight from the last 12 months. These partners include: Healthwatch, VCS, NHS Trusts, Public Health, Place councils, Place-based PPE teams. Only reports received through this process have been included in this review.

This is a review of the themes of insight from local people across 106 engagement reports. Corresponding strategies and service changes have not been analysed for the purpose of this report.



Methodological approach

01 Call for insight and engagement documents

The organisations that form the SWL integrated Care System were asked to identify and submit engagement reports for work conducted over the last twelve months.

02 Review of documents

The documents were reviewed and a pro forma template completed to understand key findings and recommendations. The sample, methodological approach and gaps in respondents were noted.

Documents which did not provide accessible findings about community insight were excluded from the review at this stage.

03 Themes

The key findings and recommendations were themed to understand priorities where these were available.

Most reports covered individual services or community groups. For these reports cross cutting issues were themed, such as 'digital exclusion'.

04 By engagement type and insight level

Analysis by 'insight level' was completed to derive key priorities and themes by engagement type.

The 'insight levels' were grouped and analysed as:

- SWL or borough level priorities
- Health and Care Plan priority areas and engagement themes
- Priority services areas and cross-cutting themes

05 Key points

Bringing together all the analysis, a range of key points highlighted by the rapid review have been suggested.

Key areas lacking insight reports have been identified. These include children and young people's services.

Limitations of the review

- Breadth and variation of reports included in the review – from small engagements on specific topics to borough-wide engagements on priorities for the area to South West London wide insight
- Timescale to ensure the review influenced decision making process – limiting time for analysis of each report
- Variety of methodologies and robustness of insights
- Self-selecting nature of report submission leading to a focus on a limited number of priority services and issues
- Variation of reports on issues and services undertaken across each Place limiting ability to compare across boroughs
- Timeframe for report inclusion creating a specificity of issues with the context of the pandemic

Reports filtered out of this review

- Qualitative and quantitative raw data reports without analysis
- Engagement event reports without insight findings or recommendations
- National survey findings without further analysis to explore implications for local priorities
- Strategic plans and annual reports without engagement findings
- Reports based on data and statistics not derived from engagement insight
- Update reports on actions following previous engagements conducted outside the inclusion period
- Engagements with single participants

Reports categorised as

1. SWL, borough or locality level priorities arising from broad engagements on residents' concerns and priorities
2. Health and care plan priority areas across 6 Places
3. Themes arising from related H&CP engagements
4. Priority service areas identified through multiple reports
5. Cross cutting themes arising across a large number of different reports

Reports by subject – part 1

Issue	Croydon	Kingston	Merton	Richmond	Sutton	Wandsworth	SWL
SWL, borough or local priorities			***		**		*
Health and Care Plan	*	*	*	*	*	*	
Dentistry	*			*	*		
Covid (impacts on groups)	**	*	****		*	*	
Long covid	*	*	*	*		*	
Carers		*	*	*		*	**
VCS	*		*			*	
Cost of living					**		
Primary care	**		*			*	*
Community development	*	*		*			
Maternity	*	*				*	*
Immunisation							****
Mental Health	***	***		*		***	*

Reports by subject – part 2



Issue	Croydon	Kingston	Merton	Richmond	Sutton	Wandsworth	SWL
Digital exclusion/inclusion	*	*				*	
Healthy living/inequalities				*	*****	*	*
Residential care and day opportunities		**			*		
Long term conditions		Diabetes MS					
Obesity							*
Disabilities				*		Sight loss	
Learning disabilities, ASD, neurodiversity		**	**			**	
Dementia			*	**		*	
Bereavement		*					
Hospital discharge/home rehab			*			**	
Other - specify	PICs UEC CQC			Direct Payments		Direct Payments	CDC Co-production

Summary of insight themes at each level

Top level SWL and Place priorities	Health and Care Plan refresh priorities	Health and Care Plan engagement themes	General reports – priority services	General reports – cross cutting themes
Access to clean, green spaces; traffic management and improved air quality	Tackling inequalities in health	Frailty and older people	Access to dentistry	Communication and information
Access to health medical support, including GP appointments	Focusing on prevention through promoting healthy living, including obesity	Support for people with a learning disability or neurodiversity	Long covid	Inequalities, diversity and inclusion
Mental health support	Promoting mental health and wellness for all ages	Reducing the stigma of mental health	Mental health support	Referrals and access to other services
Support for local economies, including local businesses and job growth	Social isolation and loneliness	Social isolation and loneliness	Dementia	Social isolation and loneliness
Support for older people	Voluntary and community services	Voluntary and community services	Access to GPs	Voluntary and community services
Financial support through the cost of living crisis	Identifying and supporting carers	Active travel	Services for carers	Cost of living crisis
	SEN, disabilities and looked after children	Digital exclusion	Immunisation	Digital exclusion
	Early years – CYP transition physical health			

People and communities: common themes from Place

COST OF LIVING CRISIS



- Affecting people's mental health and ability to live a healthy lifestyle – from early years to older age
- Concerns about feeding families and heating homes
- Concerns about housing – lack of availability and affordability
- Homelessness on the increase
- Higher risk of certain health conditions – putting extra pressure on NHS services – particularly mental health services and increasing health inequalities

VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR



- Important to hear from small & large organisations
- Broader representation is needed

PATIENT INFORMATION AND SERVICES COMMUNICATION



- Missing letters
- Lack of translated materials
- Transition between services - need for joined up approach across health and care – 'tell us once' approach
- Not keeping patients informed about delays and changes to appointments

Snap-shot of current concerns and views from communities including input from:

- local outreach work
- insight reports – including from HW
- local surveys
- intelligence from VCS networks
- community and health champions
- discussed and reviewed by Place Comms and Engagement groups

GPs AND DENTISTRY



- Availability of appointments, waiting times including face-to-face
- Variation in access across and within boroughs



REFERRALS, WAITING TIME AND SERVICE NAVIGATION

- Challenges getting timely referrals and long waiting times for mental health, children and young people's mental health and outpatient services
- Patients left chasing updates and not being clear who to contact about their referral. How can we support and provide more information and updates for patients about status of their referral



SERVICE AVAILABILITY AND DEMAND

- Perceptions that additional services are wanted and are not always delivered
- Concern around service availability of services/sites in some areas
- Multiple engagement requests with tight timescales and low resources affect communities ability to be involved
- Priority for local people that we feedback how their feedback has influenced the provision of services



TRUST IN PUBLIC SERVICES

- In public sector organisations and professionals amongst some communities



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Service waiting times, access, hard to navigate, more support needed in some communities and services need to be culturally competent
- Children and young people's mental health - access, waiting times, substance misuse
- Social isolation for older people and adults with learning disabilities



SUPPORT FOR CARERS

- Carers' voices need to be elevated and need for carers to be considered as essential part of support and decision making



People and communities: views and concerns

COST OF LIVING CRISIS



- Affecting people's mental health and ability to live a healthy lifestyle – from early years to older age
- 1 Accessibility of services – transport and affordability
- 1 Financial support through the crisis – help to know about and access the funds that are available to support them – lack of trust contributes to this, not just about signposting
- Concerns about feeding families and heating homes
- Concerns about housing – lack of availability and affordability
- Homelessness on the increase
- Higher risk of certain health conditions – putting extra pressure on NHS services – particularly mental health services and increasing health inequalities

NEW!

EMPLOYMENT



- Pathways to employment after covid, for carers, people with learning disabilities
- Support for local economies, including local businesses and job growth

NEW!

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY



- Unconscious bias training
- Encourage conversation about transparency on cultural differences
- Be prepared to make changes
- Ensure systemic issues are investigated and tackled



COMMUNICATION, NAVIGATION AND SIGNPOSTING

- Signposting, navigation and a single point of access where possible
- 1 Sufficient information to know where to get help, all in one place
- 1 People's ability to look after their own health and wellbeing (self-care), with ability to ask professionals questions or and contact to help navigate where necessary
- 1 Lack of materials in accessible formats, including for people with a learning disability, translations, sight impaired
- Transition between services - need for joined up approach across health and care – 'tell us once' approach
- Missing letters and not keeping patients informed about delays and changes to appointments

NEW!

GREEN AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS



- Access to clean, green spaces
- Traffic and poor air quality barriers to healthy living
- Active travel

NEW!

DEMENTIA



- Variability of support services across SWL
- Information needs to be in one place, support from one point of contact

VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR CAPACITY



- 1 Capacity and resource across the sector
- 1 Important to hear from small & large organisations
- Broader representation is needed

REFERRALS AND WAITING TIMES



- Challenges getting timely referrals and long waiting times for mental health, children and young people's mental health and outpatient services
- Patients left chasing updates and not being clear who to contact about their referral. How can we support and provide more information and updates for patients about status of their referral

GPs AND DENTISTRY



- Availability of appointments, waiting times including face-to-face
- Variation in access across and within boroughs

SUPPORT FOR CARERS



- Carers' voices need to be elevated and need for carers to be considered as essential part of support and decision making

NEW!

SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Social isolation for older people and adults with learning disabilities
- Also for carers and younger adults and children



SERVICE AVAILABILITY AND DEMAND

- Perceptions that additional services are wanted and are not always delivered
- Concern around service availability of services/sites in some areas
- Multiple engagement requests with tight timescales and low resources affect communities ability to be involved
- Priority for local people that we feedback how their feedback has influenced the provision of services



NEW!

DIGITAL EXCLUSION

- Shift to digital services has left some population groups facing digital exclusion
- Need multiple points of access and to retain options for face to face contact



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

- Long service waiting times, need interim support
- Access, hard to navigate, more support needed in some communities and services need to be culturally competent
- Children and young people's mental health - access, waiting times, substance misuse

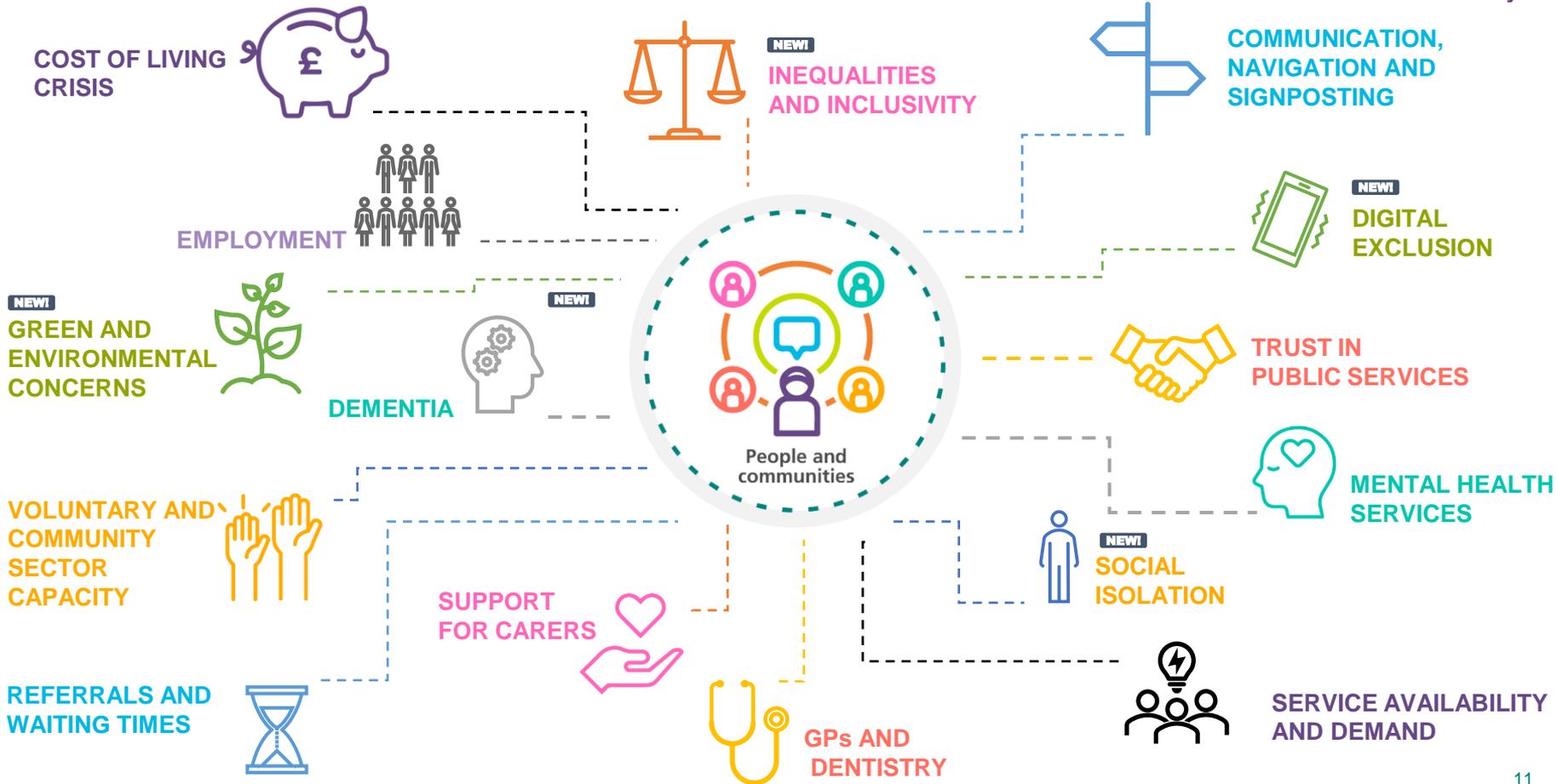
People and communities

NEW!

New topic

1 Added view

People and communities: views and concerns





Green and environmental concerns

- **Access to clean, green spaces**

Several top level engagements showed the importance of local green spaces to residents^{1, 2, 3}, including for mental and physical wellbeing. Litter and antisocial behaviour reduced the enjoyment of these spaces^{1, 2, 4}

- **Traffic management and Improved air quality**

At the same time traffic and air pollution were seen as barriers to healthier living^{1, 2, 3}

- **Active travel**

The role of active travel – walking and cycling – was highlighted both to address climate change and to address obesity and healthier living^{4, 5, 6}

References

- 1 Traverse (October 2021) *Engaging Merton*
- 2 Community Action Sutton (2021) *Building stronger communities: What do residents think of St Heliers*
- 3 SWL CCG (2022) *Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London*
- 4 Merton Young Inspectors and Partnership for Young London (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on young people in Merton*
- 5 SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*
- 6 SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Refresh of Richmond's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*



Employment

- **Support for local economies, including local high streets, businesses and job growth**
Sutton's '*Stronger Sutton Conversation*' found support for the local economy and businesses to be a top issue, with creating local jobs a priority⁷. Merton's engagement suggested residents wanted thriving high streets to be a focus of future priorities¹.
- **Employment support after long covid, for carers, people with learning disabilities**
A range of reports highlighted the need for employment support for different groups including, people with long covid ⁸, unpaid carers who find it hard to get jobs to fit around their caring duties⁹, and people with a learning disability who would like to work, but possibly not full time^{10, 11, 5}

References

- 7 LB Sutton (2022) *Stronger Sutton Conversation*
- 1 Traverse (October 2021) *Engaging Merton*
- 8 Healthwatch Croydon (2022) *Croydon Residents' experiences of Living with Long Covid*
- 9 Carers Trust (2022) *Working for Carers evaluation*
- 10 Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*
- 11 John and Catley (2021) *The big conversation*
- 5 SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

- **Access to dentists**

Several Healthwatches from across the SWL region conducted engagements around the accessibility of dentists during the pandemic and concluded this is a priority area^{12, 13, 14}. Issues include: poor and variable access to NHS dentists, including for emergency appointments; implications for physical and mental health due to suffering in pain or being unable to eat; lack of understanding around NHS dentistry pricing.

- **Availability of appointments for GPs**

All levels of reports found access to GPs to be a priority area including top level priorities^{3, 7, 5}. A range of individual service reports highlighted GP access as an issue such as Wandsworth's dementia service review¹⁵ and Kingston Health report on neurodiversity services¹⁶.

References

- 12 Healthwatch Croydon (2022) *Croydon residents' experiences of accessing and using NHS dental services in 2021*
- 13 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) *Dentistry service during coronavirus*
- 14 Healthwatch Sutton (May 2022) *Accessing dental services since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic*
- 3 S WL CCG (2022) *Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London*
- 7 LB Sutton (2022) *Stronger Sutton Conversation*
- 5 SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*
- 15 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*
- 16 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Pulse Check report: Neurodiversity and health and care services*



Referrals and waiting times

- **Challenges getting timely referrals and long waiting times for a range of mental health and outpatient services**
The engagement reports highlight long waits for appointments following referrals to a range of services in different borough, e.g. diabetes services, sight tests for people with sight loss, neurodiversity assessments and bereavement services ^{17, 18, 16, 19}
- **More information and updates for patients about status of their referral and other sources of support**
Wandsworth Healthwatch noted increased waiting times for services due to covid. They recommend transparency about appointment accessibility and waiting times for services, whilst signposting to alternative support where necessary ²⁰



References

- 17 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Pulse Check Report – Services for people with diabetes*
- 18 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss*
- 16 Healthwatch Kingston Pulse Check report (2021) *Neurodiversity and health and care services report*
- 19 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Bereavement Services and Support in Kingston: community engagement report*
- 20 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of managing health and care during the coronavirus pandemic 2021*



Mental health services

- **Service waiting times and access**

The covid pandemic has seen increased demand and waiting for mental health services^{20, 21, 22}. The SWL Mental Health survey revealed waiting times for appointments to be the main issue for people seeking support²³. There should be interim support for people with ongoing challenges if information provision is insufficient prior to appointments¹.

- **Services need to be culturally competent**

Mental health services need to be culturally competent. Reports suggest support in community locations where people feel comfortable and being facilitated through trusted community groups may increase access for some population groups^{24, 20}.

- **Children and young people's mental health**

Particular need in Richmond, which has the highest number of young people engaging in three or more risky behaviours in London²⁵.

References

20 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of managing health and care during the coronavirus pandemic 2021*

21 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of Croydon residents*

22 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Mental Health and Wellbeing Subgroup (Kingston Communities Task Force): End of Year Report 2021-22*

23 SWL CCG (2022) *Mental Health Strategy: interim findings*

24 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Mental Health Wellbeing in our community*

20 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of managing health and care during the coronavirus pandemic 2021*

25 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) Email on risky behaviours



Dementia services



- **Consistency of services**

Different levels of types of support available in different Places²⁶. This includes numbers of support workers and access to respite care. There needs to be better knowledge of dementia services across adult social care in Richmond, for example carers' assessments²⁷. Dementia diagnosis rates need to be improved²⁸, with access to GP appointments identified as an issue²⁷

- **Information and navigation**

Information should be in one place, with one point of contact and support to help people living with dementia and their carers navigate the system ^{26, 28}

- **Face to face and peer support**

There needs to be the options for face to face support across the dementia journey ²⁸; importance of local peer support groups^{28, 29}

- **Additional support**

Low level psychosocial support ²⁷, support around cognitive skills ³⁰, better support on leaving hospital ³¹, culturally appropriate services ²⁸

References

- 26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*
- 27 LBR and SWLICs (2022) *Richmond Health and Care Dementia Strategy Consultation*
- 28 London Borough of Merton (2021) *Community Dementia Services Public Engagement Report*
- 29 SWLCCG (2022) *Cheam Fair: community engagement*
- 30 Wandsworth ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*
- 31 NHS SWL (2022) *Improving support for people following hospital discharge and bedded rehab: NHS South West London engagement summary*



Support for unpaid carers



- **Carers' voices need to be elevated and need for carers to be considered as essential part of support**
Carers provide an essential part of the health and social care support system, often at a cost to their own social and economic life ^{32, 33}. This was magnified throughout the pandemic when VSC and peer support services were not available.
- **Caring is a social determinant of health**
The reports reveal that caring is a social determinant of health, with a large majority of carers saying caring has impacted their physical or mental health ^{33, 34}.
- **Carers need to be identified and supported**
Need better identification to help them to navigate and access support services ³⁵. New carers may need additional information about the condition/care needs of the person for whom they are caring ³⁵. Carers need mental health support, respite ^{26, 28}, a life away from caring ³⁴, community support and information ³⁴ – including financial support. Young carers needs a social life ³⁶.

References

- 32 Carers Trust (2022) *Working for Carers evaluation*
- 33 Carers Trust (2022) *Commitment to Carers Programme London Region*
- 34 Merton Council (2021) *Carers Strategy*
- 35 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Carer experience of hospital discharge*
- 26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*
- 28 London Borough of Merton (2021) *Community Dementia Services Public Engagement Report*
- 36 Royal Borough of Kingston (2022) *All Ages Carer Strategy*



Social isolation

- **Social isolation for older people and adults with a learning disability**

Social isolation, particularly for older people, was identified as a key issue throughout the Health and Care Plan refresh engagements ^{5, 30, 37}. Other groups at risk of social isolation include adults with a learning disability, people with sight loss and carers ^{18, 10, 34}

- **Linked to mental and physical health**

Social isolation is known to be a social determinant of mental health and can contribute to declining physical health in older peoples ^{5, 22, 38}

- **Support for people at risk of social isolation and loneliness**

Addressing isolation include community groups working to restore trust for older people³⁸; and Croydon Healthwatch review of the Personal Independence Coordinator programme found older people had reduced social isolation at the end of the programme³⁹. The voluntary and community sector can help, for example supporting older people to be more confident to engage following the pandemic ⁴⁰.

References

- 5 SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*
- 30 Wandsworth ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*
- 37 Merton ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*
- 18 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss (2021-2)*
- 10 Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*
- 34 Merton Council (2021) *Carers Strategy*
- 22 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Mental Health and Wellbeing Subgroup (Kingston Communities Task Force): End of Year Report 2021-22*
- 38 Age UK (2021) *Impact of covid on older people*
- 39 Healthwatch/One Croydon (2022) *Client experience of Croydon's Personal Independence Coordinator Programme*
- 40 ACO Projects (August 2022) *Appreciative Inquiry in COVID-19 Vulnerable Communities in Croydon*



Voluntary and community sector

- **Scale and importance of the VCS sector activity**

Essential support is provided by the voluntary and community sector (VCS) for a wide range of communities and groups with health conditions or social support needs e.g. maternity services ⁴¹, people with ADHD ¹⁶, carers ³⁴, people living with dementia²⁶ and preparing homes for hospital discharge ³⁵. Activities were highly missed throughout the pandemic, although most organisations managed to adapt rapidly to provide some levels of support ⁴²

- **Important to hear from small and large organisations**

Smaller organisations, which may be closer to their communities and more trusted, need to have better engagement with and support from infrastructure organisations ^{43, 44}

- **Capacity and resource across the sector**

Reports on community resilience post-covid suggest the need to activate the VCS to engage vulnerable communities ³⁸ and work more closely with statutory services ⁴⁰. Need to future proof and fund the sector to provide activities and support suggested by a range of strategies and social prescribing bodies ^{45, 42}

References

- 41 [Maternity Voices Partnership \(2022\) *Maternity stories: A deep dive into the maternity journeys of 10 women of Black and Asian ethnicities*](#)
- 16 [Healthwatch Kingston Pulse Check report \(2021\) *Neurodiversity and health and care services report*](#)
- 34 [Merton Council \(2021\) *Carers Strategy*](#)
- 26 [Healthwatch Wandsworth \(2022\) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*](#)
- 35 [Healthwatch Wandsworth \(2022\) *Carer experience of hospital discharge*](#)
- 42 [Wandsworth Care Alliance \(2022\) *State of the Sector*](#)
- 43 [Healthwatch Croydon \(2021\) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Primary Care Event*](#)
- 44 [BAME Voice \(2021\) *An Assessment of the Impact of the Corona Virus Pandemic on BAME Communities in the London Borough of Merton*](#)
- 38 [Age UK \(2021\) *Impact of covid on older people*](#)
- 40 [ACO Projects \(August 2022\) *Appreciative Inquiry in COVID-19 Vulnerable Communities in Croydon*](#)
- 45 [Merton Connected \(2021\) *State of the voluntary and community sector in Merton*](#)



Diversity and inclusion

- **Not being listened to or believed**
Maternity service users having to be assertive and persistent to be believed⁴¹. Lack of trust affecting referrals and support⁴⁶
- **Lack of trust in service providers**
Due to previous experiences of racism and unconscious bias¹ and lack of understanding about how personal information is used⁴⁷.
- **Under-representation in service uptake and engagement**
Need to understand lack of service uptake by ethnic minority users⁴⁸. Services, such as mental health, need to be taken to trusted community groups and locations²⁴ to reduce stigma and increase uptake
- **Need to recognise and reflect cultural differences**
For example, for bereavement services¹⁹ and around Covid⁴⁴. Reflect differences in messaging and communication⁴⁴, including in community languages⁴⁹

References

- 41 Maternity Voices Partnership (2022) *Maternity stories: A deep dive into the maternity journeys of 10 women of Black and Asian ethnicities*
- 46 Healthwatch Croydon and CQC (2022) *Black, Asian, and ethnic minority groups experiences of health and social services and the role of the CQC*
- 47 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Feedback on Wandsworth Healthwatch Assembly: health inequalities*
- 48 RBK (2022) *Day opportunities and meaningful occupations transformation*
- 24 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Mental Health Wellbeing in our community*
- 19 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Bereavement Services and Support in Kingston: community engagement report*
- 44 BAME Voice (2021) *An Assessment of the Impact of the Corona Virus Pandemic on BAME Communities in the London Borough of Merton*
- 49 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Public views on the themes of the GP Access Guide*



Cost of living crisis

- **Affecting people's mental health and ability to live a healthy lifestyle**
Engagement reports reveal the cost of living crisis is being to have an impact on mental and physical wellbeing ^{50, 3, 51}
- **Concerns about feeding families and heating homes**
Healthwatch Sutton report shows 41% of respondents are cutting back on heating and 30% on food spending ⁵⁰. A range of engagement reports shows people are anxious about being able to afford to heat their home ^{50, 3, 52} or eat well enough ^{51, 29}
- **Highlighting sources of support through the crisis**
Information about financial support but also access to housing support, such as insulation ⁵². Important to note that some groups were already financially vulnerable, for example throughout the pandemic ^{4, 38}
- **Accessibility of services – transport and affordability**
Individual engagements suggest the most vulnerable may struggle to access services for which they need to travel. For example, in Croydon a resident reported having to go with eating for a day after having to taxi to hospital ⁵³

References

- 50 Healthwatch Sutton (2022) *The cost of living crisis*
3 SWL CCG (2022) *Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London*
51 SWL ICS (2022) *Wallington Primary Care Network: Health inequalities engagement*
52 Sutton PCNs/ICS (2022) *Shanklin Village Health and wellbeing events*
29 SWLCCG (2022) *Cheam Fair*
4 Merton Young Inspectors and Partnership for Young London (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on young people in Merton*
38 Age UK (2021) *Impact of covid on older people*
53 Croydon CCG Social and Outreach feedback



Communication, navigation and signposting



- **Signposting, navigation and having sufficient information**
Services should be well signposted or have one key point of contact to help navigation ^{54, 55, 56, 57}. Information provision needs to be sufficient to self care/provide care for others but not overwhelming, with one point of access ^{35, 41}. There should be a way to ask follow up questions about support and treatment if necessary.
- **Materials in accessible formats, including for people with a learning disability, translations, sight impaired**
Multiple reports highlight the need for information provision to be in a range of appropriate formats: e.g. easy read and information in one place for people with a learning disability ⁵⁸; for people with sight loss, information provision and logistics need to be provided in accessible formats or with support provided ¹⁸; young people need to be communicated with in a way that is accessible and relevant to them ⁴; and culturally appropriate information community languages and using images with which communities could identify ⁴⁴.

References

- 54 Healthwatch/One Croydon (2022) *Client experience of Croydon's Personal Independence Coordinator Programme*
- 55 Healthwatch Croydon (2022) *Croydon residents' Urgent and Emergency Care journey and experience*
- 56 Healthwatch Croydon (2020) *Young People's experiences of mental health in Croydon*
- 57 Healthwatch Croydon (2019) *Service Users experience of perinatal mental health services in Croydon*
- 35 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Carer experience of hospital discharge*
- 41 Maternity Voices Partnership (2022) *Maternity stories: A deep dive into the maternity journeys of 10 women of Black and Asian ethnicities*
- 58 The Working Together Group and the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames (2021) *The Big Plan*
- 18 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss*
- 4 Merton Young Inspectors and Partnership for Young London (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on young people in Merton*
- 44 BAME Voice (2021) *An Assessment of the Impact of the Corona Virus Pandemic on BAME Communities in the London Borough of Merton*



Digital exclusion

- **Digital exclusion**

Across the engagement reports, it is clear that digital apps, websites, online community meetings and appointments have helped deliver health and care services. Some groups, including older people, people with a learning disability, sight loss or people with English as a second language, can be digitally excluded^{18, 26, 10}. Digital exclusion increasingly means social exclusion⁵⁹

- **Training and access to IT**

There are specially designed apps for different groups, for example people with a learning disability, and training courses. Overcoming digital exclusion is not just a case of having spaces and the support to gain skills, many people also needs financial support for IT^{59, 24}.

- **Need to have other access routes and face to face appointments**

Even with support, not everyone has the cognitive ability to learn or will want to engage digitally^{26, 10}. A range of access methods will need to be offered⁶⁰.

References

- 18 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss*
- 26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people living with dementia and their carers*
- 10 Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carer*
- 59 Speedway (2020) *VCS Digital Exclusion Survey*
- 24 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Mental Health Wellbeing in our community*
- 60 Clearview Research (2022) *Enhanced Primary Care Hub Evaluation*

Appendices

Methodology



Objective

A review, collation, analysis, synthesis and interpretation of existing insight and engagement reports from health and care partners across South West London over the last 12 month period

The insights gained will help to inform the priorities for the South West London Integrated Care System

Identification of reports to be included in the review

A call was sent to ICS partners for engagement reports detailing findings and recommendations from Place or SWL based insight from the last 12 months. These partners include: Healthwatch, VCS, NHS Trusts, Public Health, Place councils, Place-based PPE teams. Only reports received through this process have been included in this review.

This is a review of the themes of insight from local people across 106 engagement reports. Corresponding strategies and service changes have not been analysed for the purpose of this report.



Methodological approach

01 Call for insight and engagement documents

The organisations that form the SWL integrated Care System were asked to identify and submit engagement reports for work conducted over the last twelve months.

02 Review of documents

The documents were reviewed and a pro forma template completed to understand key findings and recommendations. The sample, methodological approach and gaps in respondents were noted.

Documents which did not provide accessible findings about community insight were excluded from the review at this stage.

03 Themes

The key findings and recommendations were themed to understand priorities where these were available.

Most reports covered individual services or community groups. For these reports cross cutting issues were themed, such as 'digital exclusion'.

04 By engagement type and insight level

Analysis by 'insight level' was completed to derive key priorities and themes by engagement type.

The 'insight levels' were grouped and analysed as:

- SWL or borough level priorities
- Health and Care Plan priority areas and engagement themes
- Priority services areas and cross-cutting themes

05 Key points

Bringing together all the analysis, a range of key points highlighted by the rapid review have been suggested.

Key areas lacking insight reports have been identified. These include children and young people's services.

Report submission and filtering



A call was sent to ICS partners for engagement reports detailing findings and recommendations from Place or SWL based insight from the last 12 months. These partners include Healthwatch, VCS, Trusts, Place councils, Place-based PPE teams.

Given the timelines, the focus for the review was based on key findings and recommendations. While all reports and datasets submitted were reviewed, it has not been possible to utilise the information from all submissions. Reports were filtered out if they:

- Contained raw data without analysis or links to standard, national survey findings without further analysis to explain their implications
- Detailed strategies or engagement events but did not include any insight findings or recommendations
- Provided updates on actions following previous engagements that were not conducted in the timeframes
- Highlighted findings engagements with single participants

Reports on engagements that were conducted outside the timeframes were reviewed and included in the analysis if they contained findings which had broader implications.

Whilst 130 reports were admitted for review, 104 were analysed following this first stage filtering.



Limitations of the analysis

This is a rapid review, with the majority of the reports received and analysed within a week:

- Focus has been on the information provided within executive summaries and recommendations
- This has skewed the insight away from 'what works well' and limited detailed analysis of recommendations for specific services or relating to demographic groups and protected characteristics

There is a wide variety of different reports, ranging from insight into experience of specific condition pathways for specific groups or local community group meetings to Borough-wide engagements to understand local priorities. These insights have been utilised without recognition and explanation of the robustness of different types of engagement and research methodologies.

The issues and broad service areas covered by reports are not the same for different Places which makes comparison limited.

The context for service provision and residents' needs has changed rapidly across the year, from the impacts of covid to the more nascent issues arising from the cost of living crisis.



Categorisation of reports

The reports submitted contained very different types of data. A few were large borough-wide engagements to understand residents' priorities for an area. Others contained very thorough findings and recommendations about a specific service pathway in a single Place e.g. multiple sclerosis services in Kingston. Many of these detailed service reports had no corresponding report for other Places. Additionally, within the last year all six Places in SWL have developed Health and Care Plans with partners and stakeholders, conducting engagements around the priorities. As key strategies for each Place, it appears essential to understand the common priorities for action and themes around additional findings from engagements.

To create a logical picture of priorities and themes, analysis has been conducted at three separate levels, creating five levels of priorities:

1. A small number of SWL, borough or location level priorities arising from broad engagements on residents' concerns and priorities
2. Health and Care Plan priority areas
3. Themes arising from related engagements for each Place
4. Priority services areas from a large number of individual engagement exercise reports
5. Cross-cutting themes arising from a large number of individual engagement exercise reports.



Appendices

South West London, borough and location level priorities



Top level priority areas from reports

- Access to clean, green spaces; traffic management and improved air quality
- Access to health medical support, including GP appointments
- Mental health support
- Support for local economies, including local high streets, businesses and job growth
- Support for older people
- Support through the cost of living crisis



Main priorities – findings from borough level engagements



SWL ICS engagement teams are currently conducting a survey to understand the priorities for the ICS to address, with the findings to form part of the overall needs analysis. A small number of other engagements reviewed for this insight study are relevant for informing high level priorities. Merton and Sutton councils have conducted large scale dialogues with their populations about what residents appreciate about the area and their priorities for actions following the pandemic. SWL CCG has a survey on health and daily life, which shows area-wide priorities for measuring health inequalities. The engagements all used different methodologies and questions, but the findings have been grouped together here as indicative of residents' wider priorities.

Priorities

Merton has conducted a borough-wide engagement about priorities for recovery in the local area '*Engaging Merton*'¹. Green space and sense of community were the most valued, key assets for residents who wanted good high streets and green spaces as a priority for the area. Litter and traffic were the negative aspects identified. Accessing support from the local community was the main positive aspect that residents wanted to build upon in recovery, with a focus on rejuvenated high streets. Social isolation, access to health services, education, finance and work had been concerns for people across the pandemic¹. Merton Young Inspectors' report on the impact of covid highlighted the importance of green space for young Merton residents. In response, the Youth Parliament want to tackle environmental concerns such as recycling and littering, including a proposal for zones around schools where pupils are encouraged to use low carbon travel⁴.

¹ Traverse (October 2021) *Engaging Merton*

⁴ Merton Young Inspectors and Partnership for Young London (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on young people in Merton*

Main priorities – findings from borough level engagements



Sutton's '*Stronger Sutton Conversation*' found local concerns were 'access to medical support', 'support for older and vulnerable people' and 'Support for the local economy/business'⁷. The top three priorities to address were 'supporting local businesses', 'creating jobs' and 'providing more mental health support'. In particular, people from the less well off ACORN groups were revealed to be more likely to prioritise help for mental health and wellbeing, including bereavement services and help with employment.

Two engagements conducted across smaller areas reveal similar priorities for St Heliers in Sutton and Pollards Hill in Merton. A Community Action Sutton report on St Heliers found that people liked it for being close to shops and services, good transport links and green and open space⁶¹. Concerns were crime, antisocial behaviour and littering. There were the same things residents in Pollard Hill would like to focus on improving⁶². Access to parks and open spaces were found to be the most important thing overall, with residents interested in activities for children and older people. Financial difficulties following the pandemic and current cost-of-living crisis were the key concern. Younger people highlighted mental health as an isolation; isolation and loneliness were a concern for older residents⁶².

References

7 LB Sutton (2022) *Stronger Sutton Conversation*

61 Community Action Sutton (2021) *Building stronger communities: What do residents think of St Heliers*

62 Hegg, R (2022) *Pollards Hill Priorities Research* Moat Foundation

Main priorities



A SWL survey on health and daily life reflected the findings from other reports³. Respondents were mostly positive about their environment and amenities. The top barriers to maintaining their health were air pollution, finances and being able to afford gas and electricity. This survey, which was conducted more recently, shows signs of local concerns for those on low incomes shifting from issues related to the pandemic towards the cost of living crisis. Priorities for respondents were their own and their family's health.

Respondents would like to participate in NHS run programmes to maintain health, with 'being easier to get a GP appointment', 'easier to get talking therapies' and 'walk-in centres' as the top things health and care providers could do to help³.

Overall priorities

From these top level reports, suggested priorities include:

- Access to clean, green spaces; traffic management and improved air quality
- Access to health medical support, including GP appointments
- Mental health support
- Support for local economies, including local high streets, businesses and job growth
- Support for older people
- Support through the cost of living crisis

References

[3 SWL CCG \(2022\) Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London](#)

Appendices

Health and Care Plan refresh and
corresponding engagement priorities

Key priorities from Health and Care Plans and themes from related engagements

Start Well

- Mental health
- Obesity
- SEN, disabilities and children looked after
- Early Years – CYP transition physical health



Live Well

- LTC (including diabetes, CVD, respiratory)
- Mental health
- Prevention (including healthy lifestyle)



Age Well

- Healthy ageing
- Loneliness and social isolation

Cross cutting themes: Health inequalities, prevention and early intervention, healthy places, integrated services, support carers

Key themes from engagements

- Reducing stigma around mental health
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Digital exclusion
- Frailty and Older people
- Support for people with a learning disability or neurodiversity
- The role of the voluntary and community sector
- Active travel and green infrastructure

Findings from Health and Care Plan engagements



All six Places in South West London ICS undertook a programme of work and engagement in 2021 to refresh their Health and Care Plans^{43, 30, 37, 5, 63, 6, 64}. This is the largest body of work determining Place-based priorities for health and care, having been conducted with partner and stakeholder input. As such, the Health and Care Plan priorities, and their related engagement findings, will be highlighted here.

The six different Places devised and engaged on priorities. These were specific to their area although it is clear from the plans that there are several, key shared priorities across the SWL catchment. These have been mapped as part of the SWL needs analysis mapping exercise⁶⁵.

There are differences in the plans, for example Croydon's engagement exercise supported a focus on 'Support, develop and maintain the Croydon health and care workforce'⁶⁴; Sutton prioritised 'joined up support to address frailty in older people'⁶³.

43 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Primary Care Event*

30 Wandsworth ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

37 Merton ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

5 SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

63 SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Sutton Health and Care Plan 22-24*

6 SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Refresh of Richmond's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

64 One Croydon (2021) *Health and Care Plan 2022-2024*

65 SWLICS (2022) *SWL Needs analysis Mapping of SWL place JSNAs, Health and Wellbeing Strategies, Health and Care Plans and Core20PLUS5*

Findings from Health and Care Plan engagements

Feedback from the engagement exercises suggest several other areas that local communities think should receive greater priority.

Reducing stigma around mental health

Mental health services were deemed to be important for both adults and children. One aspect mentioned in both the Wandsworth³⁰ and Merton³⁷ engagements was the need to do more to address the stigma around accessing mental health services. Creating culturally sensitive services was part of the way to help destigmatise mental health.

In Richmond⁶, it was felt that there needed to be more focus on risky behaviours and drug taking by young people.

Social isolation and loneliness

Tackling social isolation and loneliness was highlighted as an issue in Kingston⁵, Merton³⁷, Sutton⁶³ and Wandsworth³⁰ engagements. Following Covid, the implications of social isolation on mental health were amplified. In particular, social isolation and loneliness as a social determinant for health in older people was mentioned.

³⁰ Wandsworth ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

³⁷ Merton ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

⁵ SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

⁶³ SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Sutton Health and Care Plan 22-24*

⁶ SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Refresh of Richmond's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

Findings from Health and Care Plan engagements



Digital exclusion

Digital exclusion was raised as an issue in Richmond⁶ and Merton³⁷ engagements. There were concerns that essential care was not being made available to everyone because individuals were expected to communicate with services more online and use technology.

Frailty and older people

A need to focus on frailty in older people was raised as an issue in Sutton⁶³, Wandsworth³⁰ and Merton³⁷. Integrated services should address frailty as part of preventative measures for ill health and vulnerabilities.

The role of the voluntary and community sector

Croydon⁴³, Kingston⁵ and Richmond⁶ engagements highlighted the role of the voluntary and community. More partnership working with the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and greater involvement of the VCS in the delivery of services were suggested. At the same time, Croydon Healthwatch report⁴³ argues there needs to be an acknowledgement of the limitations of the sector to deliver everything, with Richmond feedback highlighting the need for funding to help the VCS with service delivery.

⁴³ Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Primary Care Event*

³⁰ Wandsworth ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

³⁷ Merton ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

⁵ SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

⁶³ SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Sutton Health and Care Plan 22-24*

⁶ SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Refresh of Richmond's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

Findings from Health and Care Plan engagements



Support for people with a learning disability or neurodiversity

The need for a greater focus on the services for children and adults with a learning disability was mentioned in the Wandsworth³⁰ and Richmond⁹¹ engagements. Better support for children with social, emotional and communication difficulties, learning disabilities and autism was mentioned in Wandsworth³⁰.

Respondents in Richmond argued for more focus on care services for those with learning disabilities in adult life including support for housing, obtaining employment, and ensuring independence⁶. The needs of people with a neuro disability though identified as a sizeable proportion of all hospital patients were highlighted as missing.

Active travel and green infrastructure

In the Kingston⁵ engagement, more people made comments on this than any other theme. Many felt there was not enough emphasis on the role of walking and cycling as health determinants, given the positive impact on health. Active travel has the potential to tackle obesity, increase exercise levels, reduce local air pollution, and has mental health benefits. Similarly, Richmond a respondent highlighted that improved infrastructure for active travel and transport independence for children could improve community connections and improve wellbeing⁶.

30 Wandsworth ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

6 SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Refresh of Richmond's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

5 SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

Appendices

Other specific issue priorities and cross-cutting themes from reports

Priority areas and cross-cutting themes from other engagement reports

Priority areas from other engagement reports

- Dentists
- Long covid
- Mental Health
- GP access
- Dementia
- Immunisation
- Carers

Cross-cutting themes from other engagement reports

- Social isolation and loneliness
- Digital exclusion
- Cost of living
- The role of the voluntary and community sector
- Service access and referral times
- Communication and information
- Inequalities, diversity and inclusion



Other themes and priorities – specific reports



ICS partners submitted a range of insight reports on specific topics, service areas or groups of service users. These reports raise two ways to derive priorities for action:

1. Importance of issue overall
2. Common themes from across the reports

Importance of issue overall

The range of engagement projects undertaken and reported across the time period selected for this piece of work are largely reflective of the context of 2021. In particular, the largest number of reports submitted *per topic* for this review are on the impact of covid on: older people; carers; people with a learning disability; people living with dementia, young people's mental health; diverse communities. Among other issues, these reports detail the effects of the pandemic on social isolation, the ability to access services, digital exclusion and the impact on mental health. Rather than focusing on the pandemic as a priority, the themes from these reports will be integrated with the themes arising from across the reports overall.

Other topics had multiple report submissions from Healthwatch and other ICS partners, highlighting their importance overall: long covid, mental health, dentistry, dementia, immunisation and carers. In particular, Healthwatches have argued that dentistry needs to be a priority for the ICS.



Common themes

Many of the reports are about specific services: e.g. bereavement, diabetes, MS, maternity, rehabilitation or specific groups of services user: e.g. people with a learning disability, people with sight loss. As it is impossible to prioritise any of the hundreds of specialised findings and recommendations, common themes have been identified as priorities. These include:

- Social isolation
- Communication and information
- Digital exclusion
- GP access
- Service access and referral times
- The role of community, voluntary and peer support groups
- Inequalities, diversity and inclusion



Access to NHS dentists



Healthwatch Croydon¹², Richmond^{66, 13} and Sutton¹⁴ conducted work on access to NHS dentists across the pandemic. The reports reveal variable access and residents unable to locate or register with an NHS dentist¹². The Kingston engagement for their Health and Care Plan also raised the need for greater access to dentists⁵. Healthwatch Croydon found 49% people had difficulty getting an appointment when they had a problem¹². Healthwatch Sutton found that 13% of patients could not access emergency appointments. Healthwatch Richmond points out that dental access is one of the things they are contacted about most and that there are substantial social costs to not being able to receive treatment, including pain and poor nutrition. 'Responsibility for dentistry transfers from NHSE to ICS in April 2023. There is good reason to think that this needs to be a priority.⁶⁶'

Healthwatch Croydon highlighted that people highly value NHS dentists¹². However, Healthwatch Richmond found people were more likely to rate their experience negatively if they used an NHS dentist rather than a private one¹³. As well as increasing access, Healthwatch Croydon recommends communicating issues better to patients, with websites needing to be improved. In particular they suggest communicating the reasons for higher private costs better¹².

References

12 Healthwatch Croydon (2022) *Croydon residents' experiences of accessing and using NHS dental services in 2021*

66 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) *Concerns from callers in Richmond over last six months: email*

13 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) *Dentistry service during coronavirus*

14 Healthwatch Sutton (May 2022) *Accessing dental services since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic*

5 SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

Long Covid



Long Covid is another issue which several local Healthwatches have addressed^{8, 67, 68, 69, 70}. The issue of Long Covid was still in its infancy when the reports were written, with the need for recognition and identification of the condition to be embedded in health services. Healthwatch Merton suggests having SWL wide recommendations to apply across localities⁶⁷. They argued support should include peer support and a range of treatment options, including an holistic approach to address emotional and mental health problems due to illness. Kingston Healthwatch argue the need for integrated and coordinated care and support in the community, particularly post discharge from hospital⁷⁰.

Richmond Healthwatch found people with long covid were sometimes suffering from isolation and needed better information. They recommended the creation of a peer-led, clinician aided support group to help alleviate this⁶⁸. Merton suggested a pilot or seed fund to empower community sector organisations who could set up opportunities, such as peer support groups, that help people living with Long Covid⁶⁷. Additionally, Croydon Healthwatch recommends tailored support for those dealing with employment and financial concerns and better support for friends and family⁸.

References

8 Healthwatch Croydon (2022) *Croydon Residents' experiences of Living with Long Covid*

67 Healthwatch Merton (2022) *Long Covid Snapshot report*

68 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) *Living with Long Covid*

69 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Long Covid*

70 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Living with Long Covid*

Unpaid carers



The role of unpaid carers, and the need to provide them with better support, formed the single largest issue across the engagement insight reports reviewed. As well as Carer Strategies from Merton, Kingston and Richmond, there were two dedicated London-wide reports from The Carers Trust. However, carers came through as a theme from multiple Covid related reports and from specific conditions, illnesses and protected characteristic engagements.

The reports reveal that caring is a social determinant of health, with a large majority of carers saying caring has impacted their physical or mental health^{33, 34}.

- Merton carers strategy insight shows 68% carers say the caring role has affected their wellbeing
- only 25% have enough social contact
- 70% say their physical health has been impacted by caring³⁴.
- London-wide research found 40% of carers are being treated for clinical depression and 38% of young carers reporting caring has impacted their mental health³², with the pandemic increasing the need for emotional support³².

Social isolation is already a factor impacting carers³⁴, and this has been heightened by Covid. For example, in Richmond survey responses from minority ethnic communities showed increased fear and anxiety to continue with social activities due to the pandemic despite the lifting of restrictions, with 80% not fully returned to their social activities⁷¹.

References

³³ Carers Trust (2022) *Commitment to Carers Programme London Region*

³⁴ Merton Council (2021) *Carers Strategy*

³² Carers Trust (2022) *Working for Carers evaluation*

⁷¹ Richmond Community Action Project

Unpaid carers



As well as physical and mental health issues, caring impacts employment opportunities (88% say it has impacted career progression³⁴) and can create financial hardship⁷². Unpaid carers struggle to find work that fits in with their caring role³². Young carers face additional pressures in education⁷². Not all carers are identified, leaving it harder for them to navigate care systems^{34, 35}. Moreover, carers often found themselves under pressure when loved ones are discharged from hospital^{35, 73} and needed more information about support services following discharge³⁵. Additionally, older carers may be digitally excluded. Information provision was an issue, with half of the respondents to Richmond's survey saying they found it difficult to get information on support and services³⁶.

Carers need mental health support, respite^{26, 28}, a life away from caring³⁴, community support and information³⁴ They need support to look after their own health. More young carers need to be identified and supported to have a social life and prevent isolation³⁶. More needs to be done to address the financial impact of caring, including ensuring carers have information about financial support and one off crisis payments³⁶.

Services need to be culturally sensitive, respite and services need to take account of culture and faith. Information needs to be in a variety of languages and culturally tailored³⁶. LBGQTQ+ feel that services are often not for them and have a subsequent lack of engagement with services³⁶.

References

- 72 LBR/JSNA Collaborators (Nov 2021) JNSA – community voice³⁴ Merton Council (2021) *Carers Strategy*
- 32 Carers Trust (2022) *Working for Carers evaluation*
- 35 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Carer experience of hospital discharge*
- 73 NHS SWL (2022) *Improving support for people following hospital discharge and bedded rehab: NHS South West London engagement summary*
- 36 Royal Borough of Kingston (2022) *All Ages Carer Strategy*
- 26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*
- 28 London Borough of Merton (2021) *Community Dementia Services Public Engagement Report*

Mental health



Numerous reports detailed links between the pandemic and mental health^{21, 20} with many people struggling to access mental health services due to waiting times^{20, 21, 22}. Although a recent SWL survey suggests many people have better mental health this year³, waiting times are still long in some Places⁵³ and community engagements around healthy living shows the anxieties of the cost of living crisis are beginning to affect the mental health of some residents in Sutton⁷⁴. An SWL survey on health and daily life found 27% of respondents felt '*health and care could improve their wellbeing by making it easier to access talking therapies*'. Moreover, Healthwatch Richmond suggests young people in the borough require particular support as research shows Richmond has the highest number of young people engaging in three or more risky behaviours of any borough in London²⁵. Wandsworth Youth Council argues young people are likely to disconnect from services and not ask for help as they feel they are not being listened to⁷⁵.

The interim findings of the SWLCCG Mental Health Strategy survey²³ revealed waiting times for appointments to be the main issue for people seeking support (51%). Additionally, 38% said feelings of shame/stigma prevented them seeking help and 29% said they were too unwell to seek help. These interim findings showed one of the key issues for Croydon respondents was not trusting health services, although survey numbers were small. The role of family and friends in helping people through mental health problems was highlighted (72%), with mental health apps ranked the least likely to be helpful (11%)²³

21 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of Croydon residents*

20 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of managing health and care during the coronavirus pandemic 2021*

22 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Mental Health and Wellbeing Subgroup (Kingston Communities Task Force): End of Year Report 2021-22*

3 SWL CCG (2022) *Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London*

53 Croydon Social and Outreach feedback

74 SWLICS (2022) *Bishop Andrews Church BBQ: community engagement*

25 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) *Risky behaviours in young people: Email*

75 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Wandsworth Youth Council Mental Health Report*

23 SWL CCG (2022) *Mental Health Strategy: interim findings*

Mental health



Healthwatch recommendations from both Kingston⁷⁶ and Richmond²⁰ suggest there should be interim support for people waiting for treatment if information provision is insufficient prior to appointments. Two reports from Wandsworth suggested mental health services needed to go into community spaces to help reduce stigma around mental health support²⁴ and be provided by local groups and in community settings where people feel more comfortable⁷⁷. Croydon²¹ recommended tailored support for help with employment. Mencap Merton suggested mental health information needed to highlight support services which have specialist expertise and easy access routes for people with a learning disability or autism spectrum diagnosis¹⁰.

Both Healthwatch Croydon⁵⁷ and Wandsworth⁷⁸ have conducted engagements on perinatal mental health services. Croydon found an issue with not enough continuity of cares; Wandsworth raised issues with getting a referral and waiting times. Whilst responses to the service are largely positive, service users reported losing faith in the system due to problems accessing it and unsupportive attitudes from healthcare staff.

76 Healthwatch Kingston (2021) *iCope Kingston Service Users experience update*

20 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of managing health and care during the coronavirus pandemic 2021*

24 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Mental Health Wellbeing in our community*

77 WCA (2022) *Mental Health Wellbeing in our Community*

21 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of Croydon residents*

10 Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*

56 Healthwatch Croydon (2020) *Young People's experiences of mental health in Croydon*

57 Healthwatch Croydon (2019) *Service Users experience of perinatal mental health services in Croydon*

78 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of perinatal mental health*

Immunisation

Immunisation continues to be a key area for SWL, with the CCG engagement team conducting several studies into the willingness of adults to get vaccinated or vaccinate their children. These 2022 reports cover flu, covid, MMR and polio.

A survey found 80% of adults eligible for a flu jab will get one; the main reason is to protect self; the main reason against is feeling they do not need it. Just under two thirds of parents of children eligible for a flu jab intend to get their child vaccinated. By contrast, most respondents in focus groups with children aged between 12-15 were hesitant about getting them vaccinated for covid. This is due to fears of potential health implications related to fertility and heart inflammation⁷⁹. These results showed a correlation with other immunisations: 65% of parents who state their children had not received childhood vaccinations were also not planning to give their children Covid-19 vaccinations; 63% of parents whose children had received childhood vaccinations would vaccinate their children against Covid-19⁸¹.

A large majority of respondents (85%) recognised the need to immunise their children even against rare diseases. Most parents recognised the severity of MMR, although 10% thought they were mild illnesses. Parents who vaccinated their children thought the vaccines were safe and efficient. One third of parents who had vaccinated their children with only some or none of the vaccines reported this was due to difficulty booking appointments⁸⁰.

Some respondents to the polio engagement similarly mentioned problems booking appointments and concerns about side effects. However, most parents understood the severity of polio and wanted to vaccinate their children⁸².

References

79 SWLCCG (2022) *Flu and Covid Booster survey and focus group headline findings*

80 NHS SWL (2022) *Childhood Vaccinations Survey*

81 SWLCCG (2022) *Parent Covid-19 Vaccine Survey and Focus Groups Findings*

82 SWLICS (2022) *Polio insight summary*

Dementia services



Healthwatch Wandsworth identified support for people living with dementia and their carers as a key issue throughout the pandemic and began to engage around the subject, particularly provision of information²⁶. In the Wandsworth Health and Care Plan refresh engagement, more support for people living with dementia was highlighted as a need in relation to lifestyle services and cognitive skills³⁰. Merton Health and Care Plan refresh engagement suggested the need to improve dementia diagnosis rates³⁷. A Merton engagement on community dementia services found many respondents experienced barriers to accessing dementia services. These included: transport, support needed to attend services, IT, the need for respite care and knowledge of what services existed²⁸. London Borough of Richmond is currently consulting on a dementia strategy, having conducted engagement across 2020²⁷.

The engagements conducted by Wandsworth Healthwatch over the last two years have highlighted a difference in the support available between SWL boroughs. There was a perception Richmond and Merton appear to offer more support and resources for people living with dementia and their carers, including more support workers²⁶. However, the same set of engagements found there was a sense that Merton borough support services provided little respite support in comparison to Wandsworth Carer's Centre, which offers 50 hours per year²⁶. In Richmond, engagements suggested a need to consider increasing availability and flexibility of respite care, including day care centres and home care. This would aid unpaid carers' wellbeing and reduce isolation²⁷.

26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) Our work with people with dementia and their carers

30 Wandsworth ICS (2021) Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement

37 Merton ICS (2021) Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement

28 London Borough of Merton (2021) Community Dementia Services Public Engagement Report

27 LBR and SWLICS (2022) Richmond Health and Care Dementia Strategy Consultation

Dementia services



Richmond engagements to develop its dementia strategy found a need to raise awareness in adult social care about dementia and available services, including around carers' assessments²⁷. It suggested a need for dementia champions across the Adult Social Care Directorate²⁷.

A Merton engagement looked at options for changes to community dementia services in Merton²⁸. It found that while keeping the Hub as a service base at which a range of activities will continue to be offered, community dementia services should be more accessible in local areas of Merton. People living with dementia and their carers should be able to access face-to-face support throughout their dementia journey, with home visits being arranged when needed, especially if individuals are no longer able to access community services²⁸.

Information was important for Merton community services, with people wanting one point of contact and help navigating services²⁸. Similarly, Richmond engagement found a need for support to navigate the support system for all unpaid carers, regardless of funding status²⁷. In Wandsworth, one of the key concerns about the services for people living with dementia was a lack of information in one place. In response, a Healthwatch website is being used to signpost residents²⁶.

²⁷ LBR and SWLICS (2022) *Richmond Health and Care Dementia Strategy Consultation*

²⁸ London Borough of Merton (2021) *Community Dementia Services Public Engagement Report*

²⁶ Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*

Dementia services



There was a tension between the usefulness of digital offers and face to face support. Richmond engagements highlighted the need to understand how digital information and service solutions could be improved²⁷. However, while a majority of respondents in Merton felt they had the confidence, equipment and provisions to access dementia services online, a lower proportion of respondents felt they wanted to get support digitally²⁸. A community engagement in Cheam revealed a request for a regular, local dementia support group which couples could attend²⁹.

Additional support needs were identified across the reports including: low level psychosocial support for unpaid carers²⁷; better support for people living with dementia following hospital discharge³¹; and culturally inclusive community services²⁸. More focus needed to be put on whether people living with dementia who did not have a carer had needs that were not being met.

27 LBR and SWLICS (2022) *Richmond Health and Care Dementia Strategy Consultation*

83 Public Health (2022) *Richmond Dementia Prevention and Care Showcase Report*

28 London Borough of Merton (2021) *Community Dementia Services Public Engagement Report*

29 SWLCCG (2022) *Cheam Fair: community engagement*

31 NHS SWL (2022) *Improving support for people following hospital discharge and bedded rehab: NHS South West London engagement summary*

Other themes

Social isolation and loneliness

The covid pandemic has put a spot light on social isolation and loneliness, with participants in engagement exercises raising it as an issue¹. Multiple engagements conducted across 2021 revealed the scale of social isolation and its negative impacts on different groups, including:

- People with a learning disability, due to activity closures¹⁰
- Older people³⁸ and people in residential care⁸⁴
- Young people⁷⁵
- Carers³⁴ and young carers^{72, 36}
- People with Long Covid⁶⁸

Healthwatch Kingston partners found that loneliness and isolation was a key factor in people facing difficulties with their mental health²².

1 Traverse (October 2021) *Engaging Merton*

10 Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*

38 Age UK (2021) *Impact of covid on older people*

84 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Residential Care during the coronavirus pandemic report: Feedback from residents and their families and friends*

75 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Wandsworth Youth Council Mental Health Report 2022*

34 Merton Council (2021) *Carers Strategy*

72 LBR/JSNA Collaborators (Nov 2021) *JNSA – community voice*

36 Royal Borough of Kingston (2022) *All Ages Carer Strategy*

68 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) *Living with Long Covid*

22 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Mental Health and Wellbeing Subgroup (Kingston Communities Task Force): End of Year Report 2021-22*

Other themes

Social isolation and loneliness

For many, as services and activities reopen, social isolation will have been reduced. However, engagement findings suggested older people could need support to have the confidence to return to in person activities and socialising⁴⁰ and adults and young people with a learning disability/ASD may need additional training and support to recover their previous independence skills following social isolation of Covid¹⁰.

The reports reviewed highlighted groups likely to suffer from social isolation, regardless of covid. Isolation and loneliness may be caused by disabilities which limit access to services and socialising²⁴. Kingston and Wandsworth Healthwatch reports found people with sight loss are more likely to suffer from social isolation, including encountering barriers to using technology for accessing services and needing support for independence¹⁵. Older people are particularly vulnerable to social isolation^{30, 37}, as well as people experiencing bereavement⁹⁷. Local engagements on healthy living with groups likely to experience health inequalities in Sutton found social isolation was a prevalent theme⁵¹.

40 ACO Projects (August 2022) *Appreciative Inquiry in COVID-19 Vulnerable Communities in Croydon*

10 Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*

24 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Mental Health Wellbeing in our community*

18 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss (2021-2)*

30 Wandsworth ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

37 Merton ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

19 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Bereavement Services and Support in Kingston: community engagement report*

51 SWL ICS (2022) *Wallington Primary Care Network: Health inequalities engagement*

Other themes

Social isolation and loneliness

Findings and recommendations about how to address isolation include working with voluntary and community groups to restore trust for older people concerned about socialising post-Covid⁴⁰, including thinking about offering transport and lunch to increase uptake⁸⁵. A Croydon Healthwatch review of the Personal Independence Coordinator programme found older people had reduced social isolation at the end of the programme³⁹. Increasing the level of bereavement services should provide additional support for older people⁵.

⁴⁰ ACO Projects (August 2022) *Appreciative Inquiry in COVID-19 Vulnerable Communities in Croydon*

⁸⁵ Croydon Central Local Community Partnership (March 2022) *Meeting notes*

³⁹ Healthwatch/One Croydon (2022) *Client experience of Croydon's Personal Independence Coordinator Programme*

⁵ SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

Other themes

Digital exclusion

Across the engagement reports, it is clear that digital apps, websites, online community meetings and appointments have helped to deliver health and care services. At the same time, concern about digital exclusion is a common theme. As Kingston's VCS digital exclusion survey shows, digital exclusion increasingly means social exclusion as well as difficulty accessing services⁵⁹. Overcoming it is not just a case of having spaces and the support to gain skills, many people also need financial support for IT^{24, 59}.

Several reports highlight the challenge. Wandsworth dementia services engagement shows help to use digital technology and useful apps was needed²⁶. Richmond council's 'Big Issue' conversation shows only 23% of the people with a learning disability surveyed were able to use technology independently, relying on family or paid staff predominantly for help to access it. Merton's report on the impacts of covid on people with a learning disability shows their carers are above the national average for digital poverty and likely to be the most digitally excluded group of residents¹⁰. People with sight loss also have digital inclusion issues¹⁸.

Merton's borough-wide engagement reported worries about digital exclusion as a frequently raised issues. Respondents felt that many local services and information sharing were happening online, with face-to-face services suffering as a result¹. Responses to the Richmond Health and Care Plan engagement highlighted concerns that essential care was not being made available to everyone because individuals were expected to communicate with services more online and use technology⁶.

59 *Speedway (2020) VCS Digital Exclusion Survey*

24 *Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) Mental Health Wellbeing in our community*

26 *Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) Our work with people living with dementia and their carers*

10 *Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*

18 *Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss (2021-2)*

1 *Traverse (October 2021) Engaging Merton*

6 *SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) Refresh of Richmond's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

Other themes



Digital exclusion

Similarly, Merton Health and Care Plan engagement suggested many older people suffer from digital exclusion³⁷, as did a Kingston Healthwatch engagement on mental health⁸⁶. Sutton outreach work on healthy living with groups more likely to experience health inequalities found residents worried about digital inclusion⁸⁷.

Multiple routes to access services⁶⁹ and information will need to be continued to prevent exclusion. There needs to be more support to train people and provide access to devices⁵⁹. Better and more targeted digital offers may be required for groups, for example Healthwatch Wandsworth's innovative work on digital support for people with a learning disability⁸⁸ and ClearCommunityWeb technical support programme at Croydon Age UK⁸⁹. Even with support, not everyone has the cognitive ability to learn or will want to engage digitally^{26, 10}.

37 Merton ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*

86 Healthwatch Kingston (2021) *South London Mental Ill-Health Prevention and Recovery Programme community and voluntary sector mental health activity audit: Kingston stakeholder interviews report October 2021*

87 Central Sutton Primary Care Network (2022) *Working with communities to reduce health and inequalities*

60 Clearview Research (2022) *Enhanced Primary Care Hub Evaluation*

39 Speedway (2020) *VCS Digital Exclusion Survey*

88 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Digital Support for People with Learning Disabilities*

89 ClearCommunityWeb (2021) *Community Tech Support Drop-in Outreach programme for in-person support*

26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people living with dementia and their carers*

10 Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*

Other themes

Communication and information

Across the reports received there was substantial discussion about the role of communication and information in allowing all community groups to access the services they require. Digital exclusion has been looked at separately, but a wider focus on communication and navigation is revealed from the findings of the reports. It is important to note that it has not been possible to quantify the scale of communication problems and it may be limited to particular areas, services and groups, with good practice overall.

The issues raised are threefold:

1. Having sufficient information to self-care and know where to get help
2. Signposting and navigation
3. Ensuring information is in a range of formats appropriate to users

A review of Wandsworth hospital discharge services for carers suggested they needed more information about how to care at home and what happens next in terms of treatment and support³⁵. Croydon Healthwatch report on GP access suggests respondents were concerned about inadequate resources are provided for patients to enable them to self-care and feeling that self-care will leave vulnerable patients adrift⁴⁹. Richmond Healthwatch review of Direct Payments suggested respondents wanted more information about payments and what they could be used for⁹⁰. Case studies by Maternity Voice Partnership found that parents had often been presented with large amounts of information on paper but with limited possibilities to ask questions⁴¹. The CQC maternity benchmarking survey found inconsistencies in the provision of information and advice, with a variation across south west London hospitals^{91, 92, 93}.

35 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Carer experience of hospital discharge*

49 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Public views on the themes of the GP Access Guide*

90 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) *Direct payments in the Borough of Richmond*

41 Maternity Voices Partnership (2022) *Maternity stories: A deep dive into the maternity journeys of 10 women of Black and Asian ethnicities*

91 NHS, CQC, Ipsos (2021) *Maternity Benchmark Survey: Croydon Health Services NHS Trust*

92 NHS, CQC, Ipsos (2021) *Maternity Benchmark Survey: Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust*

93 NHS, CQC, Ipsos (2021) *Maternity Benchmark Survey: St Georges University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust*

Other themes

Communication and information

Croydon Healthwatch review of the Personal Coordinator Programme showed that one of the top needs for clients before the programme was help with signposting to other services, advice and information³⁹. The need for clear signposting and easy access was also highlighted by Croydon Healthwatch for young people's and perinatal mental health services and throughout the urgent and emergency care pathway^{56, 52, 55}. A survey of carers in Kingston found that half of respondents found it fairly difficult or very difficult to find information and advice on support and services³⁶. People living with dementia wanted a single point of access, with information about services and support in one place^{28, 20}. However, information on its own is not always enough, carers wanted face-to-face support which assisted rather than just signposted³⁶. Clearview Research recommended a team of patient advocates that can advocate for a patient and advise them on the pathway offering support or signposting them to someone who would know more about their diagnosis⁹⁴. The report also highlighted poor communication and coordination across community diagnostic pathways.

39 Healthwatch/One Croydon (2022) *Client experience of Croydon's Personal Independence Coordinator Programme*

56 Healthwatch Croydon (2020) *Young People's experiences of mental health in Croydon*

52 Healthwatch Croydon (2019) *Service Users experience of perinatal mental health services in Croydon*

55 Healthwatch Croydon (2022) *Croydon residents' Urgent and Emergency Care journey and experience*

36 Royal Borough of Kingston (2022) *All Ages Carer Strategy*

28 London Borough of Merton (2022) *Community Dementia Services Public Engagement Report*

20 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*

94 Clearview Research (2022) *Community Diagnostic Centres: Community Engagement*

Other themes



Communication and information

Multiple reports highlight the need for information provision to be in a range of appropriate formats. Young adults with a learning disability wanted easy to find, read and information in one place⁵⁸. For people with sight loss, information provision and logistics need to be provided in accessible formats or with support provided¹⁸. Young people need to be communicated with in a way that is accessible and relevant to them⁴. Information about bereavement and burial services should be multicultural¹⁷ and more needed to be done to communicate covid issues with BAME communities in community languages and using images with which they could identify⁴⁴. Additionally, work on community diagnostics recommended patients were asked their preferred mode of communication across their diagnosis and treatment⁹⁴.

Croydon Healthwatch work on the GP Access Guide found a lack of interpreters was consistently reported⁴⁹. LB Merton community dementia services report suggested that to be inclusive, services should be available in other languages, such as Tamil and for services to better include those with additional health needs, such as people with a learning disability, autism and hearing impairment²⁸.

28 The Working Together Group and the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames (2021) *The Big Plan*

18 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss*

4 Merton Young Inspectors and Partnership for Young London (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on young people in Merton*

19 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Bereavement Services and Support in Kingston: community engagement report*

44 BAME Voice (2021) *An Assessment of the Impact of the Corona Virus Pandemic on BAME Communities in the London Borough of Merton*

94 Clearview Research (2022) *Community Diagnostic Centres: Community Engagement*

49 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Public views on the themes of the GP Access Guide*

28 London Borough of Merton (2022) *Community Dementia Services Public Engagement Report*

Other themes



Cost of living and implications for health

The cost of living crisis was an emerging theme from the engagement reports reviewed. SWL engagement team conducted a survey which asked about **concerns that get in the way of maintaining health**. The biggest concerns were; air quality/pollution (31%) debts/finances (29%) and being able to afford gas/electric (26%)³. Sutton Healthwatch engagement on the cost of living showed 41% of respondents are cutting back on heating and 30% on food spending.

The implications for health are clear. *'More people expect to cut back on heating, food and socialising than are cutting back now. People's mental health is affected as well as their physical health 33% of respondents already experience stress about bills. 24% of respondents say they go out with friends less than they used to – we know that support from friends and family is important to mental health'*⁵⁰.

Multiple reports from Sutton healthy living events reveal structural problems, both financial and time, to eating well⁵¹. The events have elicited requests for advice on finances, warm events and more support on insulation⁵². Exercise classes were believed to have less variety on offer than before covid and need to be more affordable to encourage uptake by those on low incomes⁹⁵. There was some feedback about mental health issues being driven by the cost of living crisis, including breathing difficulties worsened by cold weather and not being able to afford to use the heating⁹⁷. Attendants at a Cheam event talked about the affordability of healthy food and the impact of the cost of living crisis²⁹. At a Wallington Primary School fair engagement, people mentioned the need for more free activities for children⁹⁶.

3 SWL CCG (2022) *Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London*

50 Healthwatch Sutton (2022) *The cost of living crisis*

51 SWL ICS (2022) *Wallington Primary Care Network: Health inequalities engagement*

52 Sutton PCNs/ICS (2022) *Shanklin Village Health and wellbeing events*

95 SWL NHS (2022) *Healthy eating engagement event*

29 SWLCCG (2022) *Cheam Fair: community engagement*

96 SWLCCG (2022) *Wallington Primary School Summer Fair: community engagement*

97 SWLICS (2022) *Bishop Andrews Church BBQ: community engagement*

Other themes

Cost of living and implications for health

Many groups were already financially vulnerable. Some older people exhibited increased food poverty throughout the pandemic³⁸. A Merton report into the impact of covid on young people revealed that food poverty was disproportionately experienced by different groups: their study suggested one in ten young people had had to skip meals, while one in twenty went a whole day without eating⁴. The rising cost of living is likely to have an impact on carers and people with a long term condition. Engagements show this could impact access to healthcare. The issue of hospital parking was raised by the Kingston report on MS services where is no Blue Badge parking⁹⁸; in Croydon, a resident mentioned that taxi travel to hospital meant they were unable to afford to eat that day⁵³.

Reports highlight a range of areas where people facing health inequalities may need information and support to access direct payments, financial packages or emergency funds. This includes awareness of one off poverty hardship payments for carers³⁶.

³⁸ Age UK (2021) *Impact of covid on older people*

⁴ Merton Young Inspectors and Partnership for Young London (2021) *Impact of Covid-19 on young people in Merton*

⁹⁸ Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Pulse Check Report: Multiple Sclerosis*

⁵³ Croydon CCG Social and Outreach feedback

³⁶ RBK (2021) All ages carer strategy

Other themes



Voluntary and community sector

The importance of the voluntary and community sector in South West London was revealed across a range of reports. The provision of community services, activities, carer and peer support groups was recognised as highly valuable for health and wellbeing. The importance of peer support groups, both commissioned and self-sustaining, were mentioned in reports on maternity services⁴¹, people with ADHD¹⁶, carers³⁴, people living with dementia²⁶ and hospital discharge³⁵.

The loss of in person activities due to Covid was felt by a range of groups, including people with a learning disability¹⁰, people living with dementia²⁶, carers^{71, 38} and older people³⁸. The rapid response by the sector meant they continued to offer community support, often through digital services⁴². A Community Action report on Surbiton found that community organisations radically adapted their ways of working to provide new levels of support, with volunteers bringing together the community and local spaces for supportive action. The relationships and networks the VCS had in local areas enabled this shift to happen effectively⁹⁹. However, Merton VCS 'State of the Sector' report highlights the problems the advice and befriending services had in responding to increased demand³⁸.

41 Maternity Voices Partnership (2022) *Maternity stories: A deep dive into the maternity journeys of 10 women of Black and Asian ethnicities*

16 Healthwatch Kingston Pulse Check report (2021) *Neurodiversity and health and care services report*

34 Merton Council (2021) *Carers Strategy*

26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*

35 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Carer experience of hospital discharge*

10 Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*

71 Richmond Community Action Research Project 2022

38 Age UK (2021) *Impact of covid on older people*

42 Wandsworth Care Alliance (2022) *State of the Sector*

99 Hawkins/Brown (2020) *Everyday life in Surbiton: How local spaces, facilities and groups build relationships, encourage participation and help tackle inequalities*

Other themes

Voluntary and community sector



The role of the VCS in providing support services for people with a long term condition, offering activities through social prescribing and developing trusted relationship with vulnerable communities is celebrated across the engagement reports. A continued and expanding role, working alongside infrastructure organisations, is mentioned across Health and Care Plans. Reports on community resilience post-covid suggest the need to activate the community sector to engage vulnerable communities and work more closely with statutory services⁴⁰. There is a need to provide financial support for the VCS to aid recovery and increase social contact for older people³⁸. It is important to note that the VCS provides other services, such as running food banks and providing employment support for people with mental health problems¹⁰⁰.

However, the VCS has limits to its ability to provide support and act as a bridge to diverse communities. Merton 'State of the Sector' report highlights concerns that social prescribing places an expectation on frontline groups to pick up referrals and demand without receiving any funding support to help this work. NHS and council Public Health teams need to match the focus on community-based prevention activity with an understanding that this requires long-term investment¹⁰¹ Croydon Healthwatch highlights that '*Community and voluntary organisations and volunteers are being asked to help deliver services. However, small organisations with inconsistent funding and a static volunteer base are feeling stretched to capacity*'⁴³. These organisations need support to continue their work, often in challenging financial environments. BAME Voice argues that Merton Council needs to fund smaller organisations able to bridge the gap between the east and west of the borough⁴⁴. Wandsworth Care Alliance recommends starting a dialogue between the local statutory sector, local infrastructure organisations and the sector more generally about future proofing the sector⁴².

40 ACO Projects (August 2022) *Appreciative Inquiry in COVID-19 Vulnerable Communities in Croydon*

38 Age UK (2021) *Impact of covid on older people*

100 CVA (2022) *The Croydon VCS Manifesto: Mayoral term 2022-2026*

101 Merton Connected (2021) *State of the voluntary and community sector in Merton*

43 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Primary Care Event*

44 BAME Voice (2021) *An Assessment of the Impact of the Corona Virus Pandemic on BAME Communities in the London Borough of Merton*

42 Wandsworth Care Alliance (2022) *State of the Sector*

Other themes

GP Access

GP access was an issue mentioned at all levels of reports. Kingston's Health and Care Plan Refresh engagement revealed getting a GP appointment to be an issue⁵. A SWL-wide survey³ asked respondents what health and care could do to improve wellbeing, with the top answer being 'easier to get a GP appointment' (38%). Similarly, Sutton's borough-wide conversation⁷ found the top concern was 'access to medical support i.e. hospital/GP appointments', with 89% respondents 'concerned' and 57% 'very concerned'. Local engagements about Croydon UEC pathways⁵⁵ and a potential surgery closure in Merton¹⁰² raised the issues of accessing GP appointments. Similarly, individual service reports revealed GP access as an issues, including Wandsworth's dementia service review²⁶ and Kingston Healthwatch report on neurodiversity services¹⁶. A range of healthy living outreach meetings in Sutton heard concerns about getting GP^{51, 103, 96}.

5 SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

3 SWL CCG (2022) *Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London*

7 LB Sutton (2022) *Stronger Sutton Conversation*

55 Healthwatch Croydon (2022) *Croydon residents' Urgent and Emergency Care journey and experience*

102 Rowans Surgery (2022) *Summary of feedback from public engagement events*

26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people living with dementia and their carers*

16 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Pulse Check report: Neurodiversity and health and care services*

51 SWL ICS (2022) *Wallington Primary Care Network: Health inequalities engagement*

103 Carshalton PCN (2022) *Working with communities to reduce health and inequalities*

96 SWLCCG (2022) *Wallington Primary School Summer Fair*

Other themes

GP Access

As well as increasing access to GP appointments, there were concerns about the sorts of appointments available being appropriate for specific groups. For example, older people preferred face to face appointments⁶⁰ and there is a need to ensure those who should have longer appointments to explain complex issues should be aware of the option, for example for people living with dementia²⁶. Croydon Healthwatch work on the GP Access Guide⁴⁹ suggests Asylum seekers, refugees, carers, homeless, vulnerable, mentally and physically disabled and other marginalised groups such as patients who are autistic may need different appointment types. They report a lack of access to interpreters is also a barrier to GP access.

60 Clearview Research (2022) *Enhanced Primary Care Hub Evaluation*

26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people living with dementia and their carers*

49 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Public views on the themes of the GP Access Guide*

Other themes

Service referrals and waiting times

As well as long waiting times for mental health services following referrals, the reports reviewed highlighted a range of services with long waiting times:

- People with sight loss have long waits for appointments and experienced missed appointments in Wandsworth¹⁸.
- Kingston reports mentioned good services for people with diabetes after referral to hospital, but many not being referred early enough and access to eye test has reduced¹⁷.
- Some neurodiverse people reported waiting years for an appointment in Kingston, with many experiencing long waits for assessment and services¹⁶.
- Bereavement support for older people in Kingston had long waiting lists and what support is available needs to be more accessible^{19, 5}.

¹⁸ Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss*

¹⁷ Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Pulse Check Report – Services for people with diabetes*

¹⁶ Healthwatch Kingston Pulse Check report (2021) *Neurodiversity and health and care services report*

¹⁹ Healthwatch Kingston (2022) *Bereavement Services and Support in Kingston: community engagement report*

⁵ SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

Other themes

Service referrals and waiting times

This corresponded with insight on community diagnostic pathways, which found inconsistencies and long waiting times can have a devastating impact on patients' physical health and wellbeing⁹⁴. Poor communication about the status of referrals left people uncertain about progress and chasing updates.

Wandsworth Healthwatch noted increased waiting times for services due to covid. They recommend transparency about appointment accessibility and waiting times for services, whilst signposting to alternative support where needed²⁰.

The SWL maternity research suggested appointments for maternity services needed to be flexible to enable women to continue work and access health and care services when they need them⁴¹.

⁹⁴ Clearview Research (2022) *Community Diagnostic Centres: Community Engagement*

²⁰ Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of managing health and care during the coronavirus pandemic 2021*

⁴¹ Maternity Voices Partnership (2022) *Maternity stories: A deep dive into the maternity journeys of 10 women of Black and Asian ethnicities*

Other themes

Inequalities, diversity and inclusion

Black, Asian and minority ethnic minorities

Several reports highlighted a range of issues relating to inequalities and inclusion, with two reports providing extensive and detailed recommendations about Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities for Merton⁴⁴ and Wandsworth⁴⁷. The recommendations covered health, education and general services and are too numerous to include here, but key issues have been identified across the reports.

Croydon Health work for the CQC, found that people from Black, Asian, and ethnic minority groups had referrals and support affected because they were not being listened to or believed⁴¹. Similarly, Maternity Voice Partnership insight work with women of Black and Asian ethnicities found maternity service users having to be assertive and persistent to be believed⁴¹. Women expressed frustration about concerns, symptoms or expressions of choice being dismissed.

Some women of Black and Asian ethnicities reported mistrusting and being fearful of maternity services, due to previous experiences of racism and unconscious bias⁴¹. A lack of understanding about how personal information is used adds to distrust in some communities⁴⁷. Croydon Healthwatch reported that when registering with GPs some people, including refugees and asylum seekers, were asked for identification they did not need or informed they did have the correct documents³⁹.

⁴⁴ BAME Voice (2021) *An Assessment of the Impact of the Corona Virus Pandemic on BAME Communities in the London Borough of Merton*

⁴⁷ Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Feedback on Wandsworth Healthwatch Assembly: health inequalities*

⁴⁶ Healthwatch Croydon and CQC (2022) *Black, Asian, and ethnic minority groups experiences of health and social services and the role of the CQC*

⁴¹ Maternity Voices Partnership (2022) *Maternity stories: A deep dive into the maternity journeys of 10 women of Black and Asian ethnicities*

³⁹ Healthwatch/One Croydon (2022) *Client experience of Croydon's Personal Independence Coordinator Programme*

Other themes

Inequalities, diversity and inclusion

Black, Asian and minority ethnic minorities

There is an underrepresentation of ethnic minority users for some services, for example day services⁴⁸. A report on community dementia services in Merton suggested the need for greater inclusivity, with provisions made for different communities in Merton. This would apply to ethnic minority groups, and individuals with additional health needs, including people with learning disabilities²⁶. Other services, such as mental health, need to be taken to trusted community groups and locations²⁴ to reduce stigma and increase uptake. Community health and social services should be situated in relatively close proximity to areas with Black, Asian and minority ethnic populations to help to increase take up of services by these groups^{47, 44, 24}.

There is a need to recognise and reflect cultural differences and culturally specific needs, for example, for bereavement services¹⁹ and around Covid⁴⁴. These should be reflected in messaging and communication⁷¹, including in community languages⁴⁹. BAME Voice argue that Cultural Competence courses should be made mandatory for all medical and social care staff⁴⁴; Croydon Healthwatch suggests ongoing equality and diversity training is a priority for GP and practice staff as patients are reporting continued discrimination⁴⁹. Systemic issues should be continuously investigated and tackled, rather than running ad-hoc projects to tackle inequalities⁴⁴.

48 RBK (2022) *Day opportunities and meaningful occupations transformation*

26 Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people with dementia and their carers*

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71 Richmond Community Action Research Project 2022

49 Healthwatch Croydon (2021) *Public views on the themes of the GP Access Guide*

Other themes

Inequalities, diversity and inclusion

People with a learning disability

Two large discussions have been held around services for people with a learning disability in Richmond⁵⁸ and Merton¹¹. These conversations and strategies cover all aspects of the lives of PWLD and are too comprehensive to review fully here. Issues include employment, housing, independence, physical and mental health. People with learning disabilities and autism like work⁹, lots of people aspired to have jobs and careers, with some wanting to start their own business¹¹. There is a preference to work for 20 hours or less per week, with the need for employers to give support and feedback about how well they are doing. Exercise, diet and knowledge about healthy lifestyles all need further support from a range of stakeholders, so people with learning disabilities or autism can learn about and access these. Social interaction and activities are key to mental wellbeing⁵⁸. Kingston Health and Care Plan engagement⁵ suggest the need to focus on care services for those with learning disabilities in adult life including support for housing, obtaining employment, and ensuring independence.

⁵⁸ The Working Together Group and the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames (2021) *The Big Plan*

¹⁰ Public Health LBM and Mencap Merton (2021) *Impacts of Covid 19 on people with a learning disability or autism and their carers*

¹¹ John and Catley (2021) *The big conversation*

⁹ Carers Trust (2022) *Working for Carers evaluation*

⁵ SWLHCP (2021) *Refresh of Kingston's Health and Care Plan 2022 -2024 Patient and public engagement report*

Key findings: what's missing



Key findings: what's missing

This has been a rapid review of engagement reports covering the last 12 months. Due to the specificity of the time period and the rapid request for reports, many areas are missing insight. These include:

1. Borough level engagements for Croydon, Kingston, Richmond and Wandsworth conducted within the timeframes
2. A range of insight around children's and older people's services, although we know from baseline reports that there is extensive engagement with children and young people. Areas of co-production involved CYP using SEND, Mental health services, Looked After Children and children managed by safeguarding teams¹⁰⁴
3. Insight into a range of protected characteristics and health equalities groups, e.g. LGBTQ+
4. An ability to compare services by Place

Additionally, thorough reports about specific services have been submitted but not analysed in depth. Instead, cross-cutting themes have been derived from across the range of reports. This is because their detailed recommendations are particular to the service and Place. However, it is important to acknowledge the types of findings deriving from these reports so thumbnails have been included in the following section.

References

104 SWL ICS (2022) *SWL Baseline Report: Patient Experience & Co-production Quality and Nursing*



Selected insights from other reports



A series of individual services in specific Places were covered by thorough engagement reports. Although it has not been possible to 'group' these together to create priorities or themes, these reports contain important insights. Some examples have been included here.

Bereavement services in Kingston:

The SWLICS should ensure actions taken in response to the Kingston community engagement pilot recommendations align with the SWL End of Care action plans. There should be collaborative working between the borough bereavement officer and organisations within Place. Bereavement service, crematoria and burial sites need to be inclusive for a range of faiths and cultures¹⁹.

19 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) Bereavement Services and Support in Kingston: community engagement report

Direct Payments in Richmond

There is a need for more clarity about how funds can be spent and what support was available. There was a perceived lack of flexibility about what funds could be spent on, partly due to a lack of awareness of the support available and partly because people wanted more options⁹⁰.

90 Healthwatch Richmond (2022) Direct payments in the Borough of Richmond



Selected insights from other reports

Multiple sclerosis in Kingston

The report found variability across boroughs relating to pathways for hospital treatment and care. There is no specialist multiple sclerosis specialist nurse working as part of the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) in Kingston, unlike in other South West London boroughs⁹⁸.

98 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) Pulse Check Report: Multiple Sclerosis

Diabetes in Kingston

Although there was a positive response to survey questions about access to care, services and support after referral to Kingston hospital services, too few people in early diagnosis are being referred to NHS services. There are concerns about lack of consistencies between GPs¹⁷.

17 Healthwatch Kingston (2022) Pulse Check Report – Services for people with diabetes



Selected insights from other reports



Improving support following hospital discharge in Merton and Wandsworth

The engagement found most people can see the benefit in supporting people to go home as soon as possible, although they feel additional support is needed. Rehab would be preferred in the home but lack of space for the equipment is an issue. Experiences of discharge from hospital to home were generally a positive experience, although improvements could be made. There was a concern about the lack of support for dementia patients was a concern³¹.

31 NHS SWL (2022) [Improving support for people following hospital discharge and bedded rehab: NHS South West London engagement summary](#)



Overall priorities and themes



Summary of insight themes at each level

Top level SWL and Place priorities	Health and Care Plan refresh priorities	Health and Care Plan engagement themes	General reports – priority services	General reports – cross cutting themes
Access to clean, green spaces; traffic management and improved air quality	Tackling inequalities in health	Frailty and older people	Access to dentistry	Communication and information
Access to health medical support, including GP appointments	Focusing on prevention through promoting healthy living, including obesity	Support for people with a learning disability or neurodiversity	Long covid	Inequalities, diversity and inclusion
Mental health support	Promoting mental health and wellness for all ages	Reducing the stigma of mental health	Mental health support	Referrals and access to other services
Support for local economies, including local businesses and job growth	Social isolation and loneliness	Social isolation and loneliness	Dementia	Social isolation and loneliness
Support for older people	Voluntary and community services	Voluntary and community services	Access to GPs	Voluntary and community services
Financial support through the cost of living crisis	Identifying and supporting carers	Active travel	Services for carers	Cost of living crisis
	SEN, disabilities and looked after children	Digital exclusion	Immunisation	Digital exclusion
	Early years – CYP transition physical health			

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- 3 SWL CCG (2022) *Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London*
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<https://www.southwestlondonics.org.uk/content/uploads/2022/06/Kingston-Health-and-Care-Plan-2022-to-2024-patient-and-public-engagement-report.pdf>
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Sutton PCNs/ICS (2022) *Shanklin Village Health and wellbeing events*

SWL NHS (2022) *Health eating engagement event*

SWLICS (2022) *Bishop Andrews Church BBQ: community engagement*

SWL Health and Care Partnership (2021) *Sutton Health and Care Plan 22-24*

SWL ICS (2022) *Wallington Primary Care Network: Health inequalities engagement*

SWLCCG (2022) *Cheam Fair: community engagement*

SWLCCG (2022) *Wallington Primary School Summer Fair: community engagement*



Documents reviewed - Wandsworth



BAME (2021) *Young People's experiences of Covid 19 Webpage*
Clearview Research (2022) *Enhanced Primary Care Hub Evaluation*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Mental Health in Our Community*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Report on Feedback at the Healthwatch Wandsworth Assembly September 2021 – Health Inequalities*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of managing health and care during the coronavirus pandemic 2021*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Wandsworth Youth Council Mental Health Report 2022*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2021) *Experiences of perinatal mental health*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Our work with people living with dementia and their carers*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Digital Support for People with Learning Disabilities*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of long covid*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Experiences of Health and Social Care Services for People with Sight Loss (2021-2)*
Healthwatch Wandsworth (2022) *Carer experience of hospital discharge*
NHS, CQC, Ipsos (2021) *Maternity Benchmark Survey: St Georges University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust*
NHS SWL (2022) *Improving support for people following hospital discharge and bedded rehab: NHS South West London engagement summary*
Wandsworth ICS (2021) *Health and Care Plan Refresh Engagement*
Wandsworth Care Alliance (2022) *State of the Sector*



Documents reviewed – South West London and London



Carers Trust (2022) *Working for Carers evaluation*

Carers Trust (2022) *Commitment to Carers Programme London Region*

Clearview Research (2022) *Community Diagnostic Centres: Community Engagement*

Maternity Voices Partnership (2022) *Maternity stories: A deep dive into the maternity journeys of 10 women of Black and Asian ethnicities*

SWL CCG (2022) *Health and daily life: Understanding priorities to develop metrics to measure health inequality in Core-20 areas of South West London*

SWL CCG (August 2022) *Biggest Issue Survey Headlines*

SWLCCG (2021) *Physical health checks to support mental health & wellbeing*

SWL CCG (2022) *Mental Health Strategy: interim findings*

SWLCCG (2022) *Phase One: pharmacy insight*

SWLCCG (2022) *Flu and Covid Booster survey and focus group headline findings*

SWLCCG (2022) *Childhood Vaccinations Survey*

SWLCCG (2022) *Parent Covid-19 Vaccine Survey and Focus Groups Findings*

SWLICS (2022) *Polio insight summary*

SWL ICS (2022) *SWL Baseline Report: Patient Experience & Co-production Quality and Nursing*



Thank you

For any other information or enquiries please
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