

Thurrock Cancer Conversations

healthwatch
Thurrock



Follow Up
Report
2021

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About Healthwatch Thurrock

Healthwatch Thurrock is the independent Health and Social care services champion for the people of Thurrock. We gather and represent views of local residents in order to build up a picture of services that are doing well and where they can be improved.

Along with consultation work and gathering the voices of residents, Healthwatch Thurrock also provide an information guidance and signposting service.

Residents are invited to “speak out” via an online forum as well as through targeted surveys, conversations and face to face engagement within the community.

Healthwatch Thurrock presents the voices of Thurrock to aid in identifying the need for change, considerations before commissioning and to support best practice across services.

Through conversation and engagement with people actually using the services Healthwatch Thurrock highlight and promote improvements.

We know that services are better when people are treated as individuals and are actively involved with shaping support.

To do this, services need to learn from examples of real experiences, how they can be adapted and fit around local needs.

It is also important to understand where services are working well and that should be considered to be a blueprint of change when designing services and support.

Background

In spring 2020 Healthwatch Thurrock were commissioned to conduct conversations with individuals to identify the quantity, source and consistency of information received by patients following diagnosis of cancer. The findings have since been published in our report Thurrock Cancer Conversations.

Cancer Research UK reports that an estimated 2.3 million fewer tests that help diagnose cancer have taken place since lockdown compared to the same time last year.

The dip is attributed for many reasons, including people putting off seeking help at the start of the Pandemic and measures needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 such as social distancing, deep- cleaning of equipment and use of PPE - reducing capacity and slowing down normal service.

Staff shortages were already a concern before the pandemic with 1 in 10 diagnostic posts unfilled, and the demand now is even higher. Cancer Research UK's Chief executive said "we're over the peak of the Pandemic now, so it's worrying there is an increasing number of patients whose lives are on pause while they wait for tests that could impact their chances of survival.

This report follows on from the Healthwatch Thurrock Cancer Conversations Report 2019.

The Thurrock Picture

Thurrock consists of 20 wards. There is a great variance in the proportion of each wards population in terms of deprivation.

Only 6 of the 20 wards represented are green in the English indices of deprivation.

At least 20% of Thurrock children live in poverty.

This in turn puts families and young people at greater risk of poor Health outcomes.

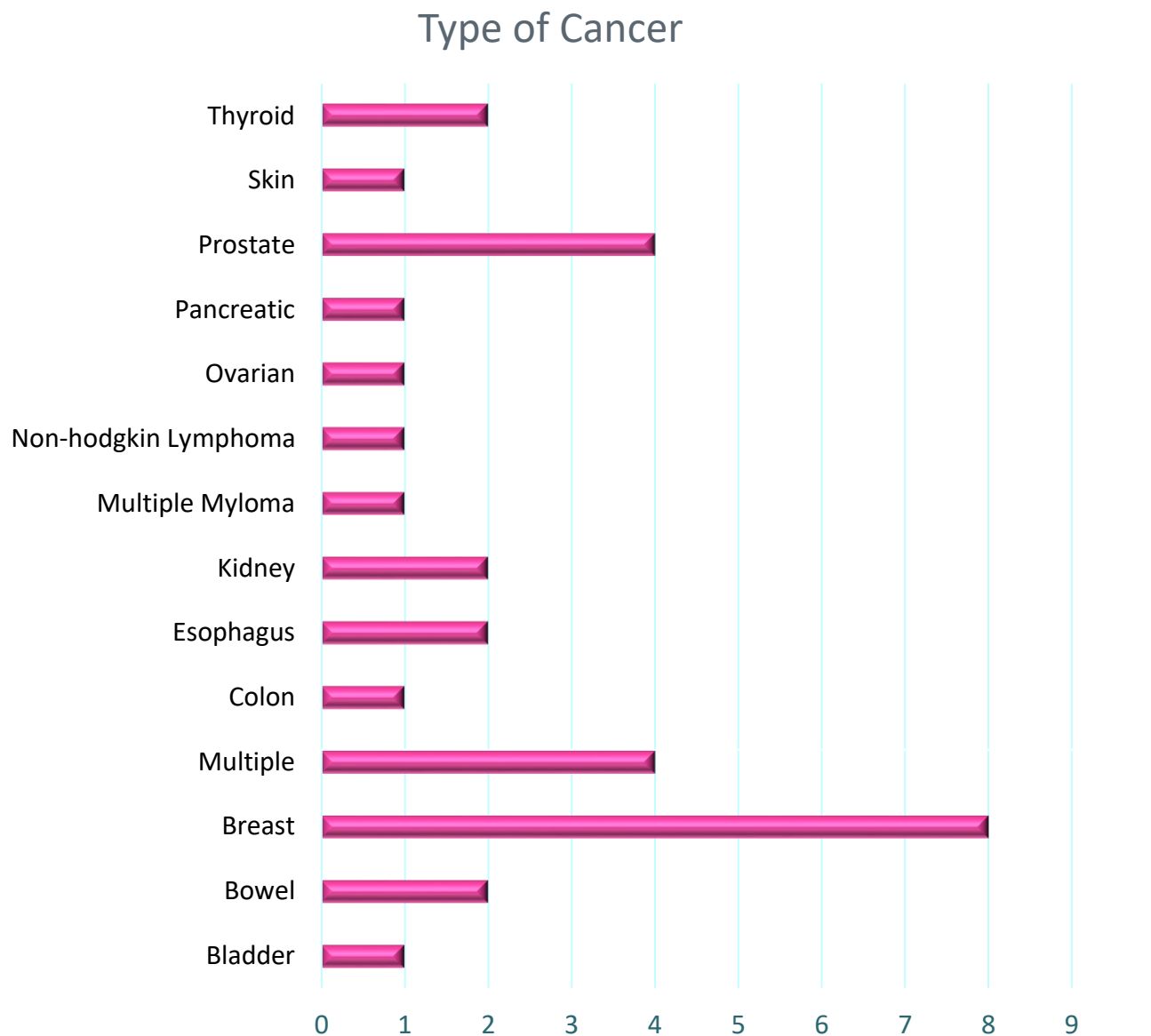
It is therefore extremely important for Thurrock residents to be able to access timely, good quality cancer services to support better health outcomes.

Local performance of cancer services is below that of comparable areas and neighbouring CCG areas. Cancer Deep Dive Thurrock JSNA (2016)

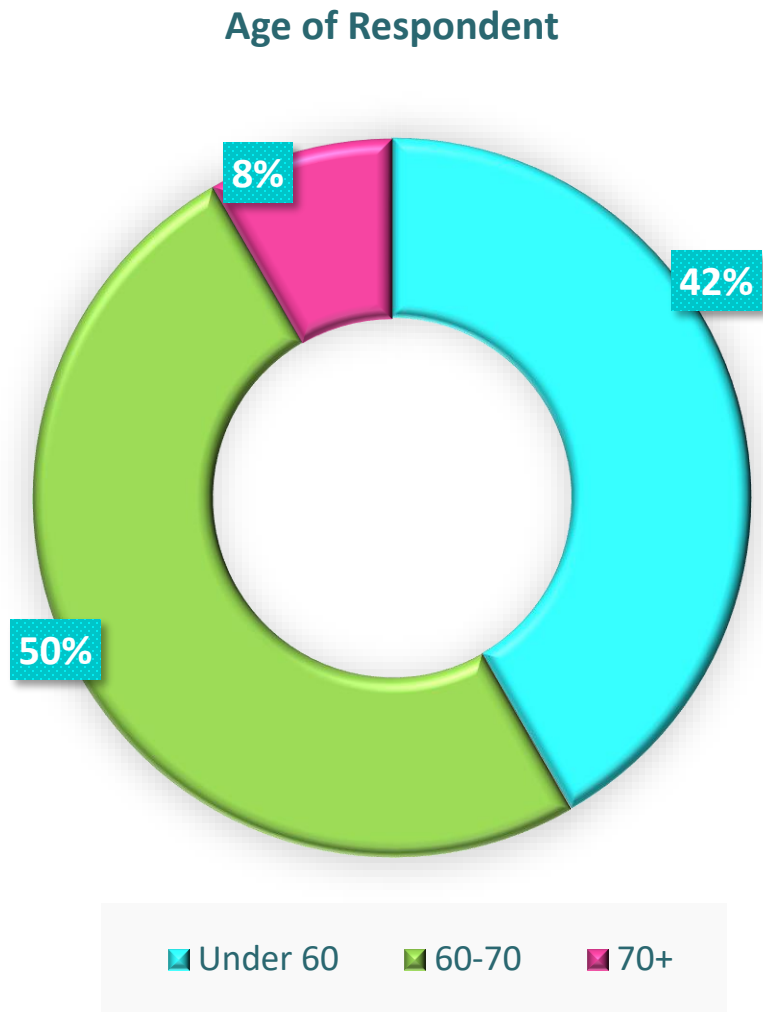
The population of Thurrock have reported challenges in uncovering local support following diagnosis of cancer, during treatment, the recovery phase and living with and beyond cancer. Cancer Alliance & Macmillan (2018).

Follow Up Work

Following up from the initial work in 2019, 34 previous responders to the original Cancer Conversations were contacted.



Age of respondents



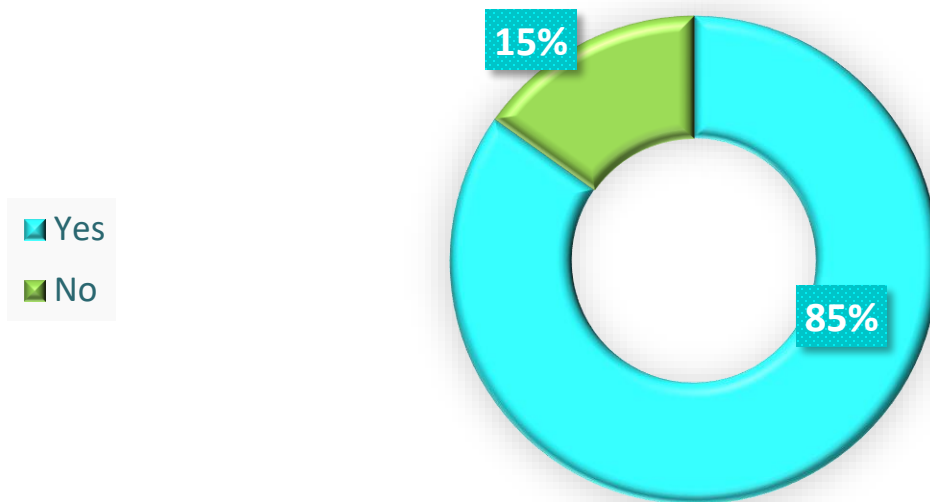
The ages of the respondents were between 36 and 93 years of age.

Residents were contacted by phone after agreeing to a follow up call in the first survey.

Accessing services during lockdown

The majority (85%) of cancer sufferers that were contacted had been able to access services during lockdown.

Have you been able to adequately access services during lockdown?



"First diagnosed by Dentist. During lockdown, appointments cancelled with no information, difficult to see GP"

"Carer for partner. Difficult to get through to GP and lack of appointments"

"Had trouble reaching the GP. Difficulty with supplies. "

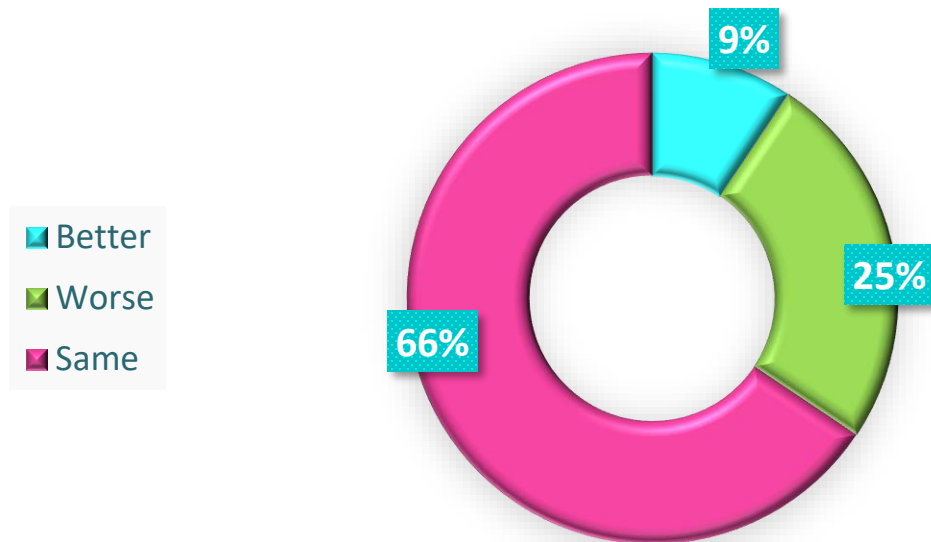
"Poor care in hospital"

"Discharged without pain relief and without anti-biotics"

Accessing services during lockdown

When questioned whether the treatment has been better, worse or the same, most said it had stayed the same (66%)

Has treatment been Better, Worse or the Same?



"No complaints re GP but hospital clinics have been cancelled. Feel let down by cancer service"

All clear now, but very difficult to contact GP surgery"

"Carer for partner. Difficult to get through to GP and lack of appointments"

"Good service from the GP. Very happy with treatment"

"Having lots of health issues at the moment"

"In remission – very good treatment"

Further Comments

""My care has been fine, lockdown has caused depression"

"All services have been OK"

"I've spoken to cancer nurse by phone. All fine getting my medication."

"I've still been working throughout, no problems, good access to GP"

"No complaints"

"Contact with GP has been a challenge"

"I've had good treatment throughout"

"Some appointments were cancelled but rearranged OK. Hasn't needed the GP during Lockdown"

Further Comments

"Good service from both hospital and GP during lockdown"

"Patient has since died"

"I'm happy with the treatment received"

"I've been in hospital with additional complications"

"All services been OK"

"I've had good treatment throughout"

"No problems – All treatments have been good"

"I have had good treatment throughout"

Further Comments

"I would have like to have seen GP face to face but restrictions for C-19 are in place"

"I have had no issues"

"I have had courtesy calls from GP - no complaints"

"I've been low in Mood. Referred on to various services"

"I have spoken to the cancer nurse by phone. All fine getting medication."

"GP has been OK"

Summary

The results from this follow up survey, reveal 15% of those contacted reported not being able to adequately access services during lockdown and 25% claim their access to treatment has been worse.

This picture mirrors what is happening nationally.

Covid-19 is an unprecedented crisis which has had a profound impact on health services and will continue to do so for months possibly years to come.

According to Cancer UK around two million people are currently waiting for cancer screening (Cancer UK 2020) they warn that at a time when the NHS will be recovering from one major health crisis, we are in danger of creating another, a Cancer crisis.

Cancer charities have come together with a 12 point plan for restoration, recovery and transformation of cancer services.

Locally we need to ensure there are clear data available about the scale of disruption to cancer tests and treatment over the past year. Setting out a baseline of how many interventions were postponed or cancelled and the plan for how services plan to 'Catch up'.

Healthwatch Thurrock will be keeping a watching brief on these developments, and following up with conversations with Thurrock residents to ascertain and address any potential gaps in service.



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