



Listening Together Report

April 2025

"To better understand the barriers and obstacles faced by people with mental health challenges in these locations - have your say in shaping the future of community and mental health services."



A localised Listening Campaign for better mental health in Castle Point and Rochford

.....Have your say 

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Background

At Trust Links, co-production is at the heart of our approach. We are committed to working alongside our members, rather than for them to receive our services or even to simply shape and improve our services. In 2022/23, we took a significant step towards embedding this principle by developing a structured Peer Support and Co-Production Model. This model was designed to create a clear pathway for progression, allowing members not only to receive support but also to actively contribute to the development and delivery of our services.

We recognise the value of lived experience in inspiring hope and fostering recovery.

Members who expressed an interest in supporting others were mentored and encouraged to nurture their skills, alongside using their personal experiences of mental health challenges, to lead and co-deliver our services. This process not only increased Trust Links's organisational capacity, but has proved to be empowering and therapeutic, as many found purpose and connection in helping others to navigate similar struggles.

"I started to help others in the group, and I was enjoying attending. I wouldn't want anyone to go through what I did on their own. I wanted to give back the support and kindness I had been given so I decided to become a Peer. I am proud of how far I have come and becoming a Peer. I am proud to be a Peer for Trust Links." (LP, 2024)



To equip our Peers for these roles, we provided structured training, including the IMROC Peer Support Course, Mental Health First Aid, regular supervision, and opportunities to be aware of and involved in key decision-making within our organisation.

As our Peer Network grew, it became clear that there was a strong desire to extend support beyond structured wellbeing groups and activities within our organisation. In 2023, an opportunity arose to collaborate with Citizens UK through their Weaving Trust events, designed to build connections across diverse communities. Trust Links Peers took an active role in facilitating and supporting these events, which encouraged open dialogue and relationship-building in settings such as churches, mosques, and community organisations. These interactions highlighted shared values and experiences, reinforcing Citizens UK's concept of Relational Power: the strength and empowerment that emerges when people connect and organise collectively.

Recognising the strong alignment between Citizens UK's Listening and Organising methodologies and Trust Links's commitment to co-production, we decided to become a Citizens UK member. This membership provided a platform for our Peer Members and Volunteers to develop skills in community organising, advocacy, and negotiation, equipping them to take meaningful action in response to the challenges faced by those accessing mental health services.

In November 2024, with funding from Essex County Council, Trust Links Peers were enabled to lead Listening Workshops across Rochford and Castle Point. The goal was to gain deeper insights into the barriers preventing individuals from engaging with mental health support. Using a combination of lived experience, Peer Support training, and Citizens UK methodologies, our Peers conducted one-to-ones, Weaving Trust exercises, and house meetings to gather valuable firsthand perspectives. This approach ensured that Co-Production remained central to the process, allowing those with lived experience to shape the conversations and drive meaningful change.

Citizens UK Methodology Glossary:



1-2-1s: A structured conversation between two people aimed at building relationships, understanding personal motivations, and identifying shared concerns. These meetings focus on listening deeply and uncovering common interests to drive collective action.



Weaving Trust Exercises: Originally designed to foster connections across difference. Participants are given an opportunity to have timed 1-2-1s with more than just one person in the room. These conversations offer an opportunity for every participant to connect with someone else in the room, discovering shared values and experiences. The goal is to strengthen trust and relational power, encouraging collaboration between individuals from diverse backgrounds.



House Meetings: Around the table discussions where community members come together to share personal experiences, discuss common challenges, and identify key issues affecting their lives. These meetings help shape collective priorities and lay the foundation for broader organising efforts.

Introduction

The making of a Listening Together Workshop:

Once requested by Trust Links and Essex County Council to conduct Listening Workshops across Rochford and Castle Point, all of the Trust Links Peers met a few times to discuss ideas on how the workshops could be run, advertised, how many Peers would attend per workshop, what questions would best reflect Essex County Council's request, how to ensure that participants safety was kept, follow ups were given (if needed, or appropriate), how to evidence participants answers and what materials would be utilised as well as evaluation.

The following layout was agreed:

- Workshops to have the duration of 2 hours with a 15 minute break midway.
- At least 2 to 3 Peers per workshop: A chair, a timekeeper and a scribe alongside ad hoc support from Trust Links Peer Supervisor and Co-Production Lead.
- Refreshments offered at all sessions.
- Fidget toys, sensory boxes and mindful colouring available to participants.
- Opportunity for 1-2-1s or signposting for participants at the end of every workshop. Telephone follow ups to be offered if need/risk is identified.
- Questions to be co-produced between Trust Links Peers, Trust Links Members, and staff involved in supporting the project.
- Peers who are residents in or use services under Rochford and Castle Point to identify venues and groups to offer Listening Workshops to.
- Considerations around accessibility. Ensure that facilities are disability friendly.
- Capturing at least 100 voices under Rochford and Castle Point.

Methods

The Questions & their Methodology:

- **Ice breaker & Weaving Trust Exercise Practice:**

Introduce yourself and why do you think Mental Health is important?

Answers to this question have not been evidenced in this report as Peers agreed to use this question as a practice run/introduction to relax participants attending the workshops. Participants were given 3 minutes to engage in a 1-2-1 with another participant in the room (Weaving Trust Method) and then to share their answers with the group. To achieve the Weaving Trust Method, 2 rows of chairs were placed in the room to allow participants to seat down with someone else in front of them whilst engaging in conversation. A bell was used to mark when the 3 minutes came to an end. Once the time was up, participants on the left row were asked to move 1 chair to the left. This ensured that their next 1-2-1 conversation was now with a different participant.

- **1 – Weaving Trust Exercise:**

What stops people from accessing Mental Health support?

Participants were given 5 minutes to consider this question in a 1-2-1 conversation with another participant. This time a different person from the one they spoke with in their Ice Breaker question. A bell was used to mark when the 5 minutes came to an end. Participants had plant pots with paper cards and pens inside placed under their chair and were encouraged to write down their thoughts after their 1-2-1.

- **2 – Weaving Trust Exercise:**

How could the available Mental Health services in your area be improved?

Participants were given 5 minutes to consider this question in a 1-2-1 conversation with another participant. This time a different person from the one they spoke with in their Ice Breaker question. A bell was used to mark when the 5 minutes came to an end. Participants had plant pots with paper cards and pens inside placed under their chair and were encouraged to write down their thoughts after their 1-2-1.

15minutes Break for refreshments and connection building



- **3 – House Meeting:**

What is needed in your community to ensure you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health Services as much?

Participants gathered around the table alongside peers. In the table, participants were given flip chart paper, post its and pens to scribble down their answers. Peers raised the above question to be discussed and asked everyone to take a few minutes in silence to consider this last question. After a few minutes of reflection, peers opened the room for discussion around the table. To ensure that everyone could participate, peers gave every participant 2 minutes to share with the group their thoughts. Peers noted answers down on paper. Those who wished to not voice their thoughts in a group were encouraged to write down their thoughts on paper. Once everyone shared their thoughts and answers were noted. A free discussion was held using active listening.

End of Workshop:

Peers thanked participants for their time and took email addresses of those who wish to receive a copy of the final report in the future. Opportunities were given at the end for signposting and or arranging follow-up phone calls.



Rayleigh

15 November '24



11

Participants



3

TL peers

Results:

Eleven people participated in the Workshop. It was advertised at Rayleigh Church grounds, online and to Trust Links members who were residents of Rayleigh area.

Three Trust Links Peers ran the workshop – Due to odd numbers for 1-2-1s, one of the Peers actively participated in the workshop but their answers were not considered in this report.

Weaving Trust Methods were used for the first 2 questions (participants had 1-2-1s with others and wrote their answers in cards).

House Meeting Listening was applied to the last question.
(Around the table discussion whilst one of the Peers made note of the group answers).

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"The embarrassment of asking for help"</i>	<i>"During my initial diagnosis I felt overwhelmed and needed a person to talk to but was given websites and links. Too impersonal"</i>	<i>"Moderate Social Media"</i>
<i>"One's socioeconomic status such as access to phone, transport, etc"</i>	<i>"Lack of therapy/human contact. All too busy to deal with patients straight away"</i>	<i>"Someone to talk to for the isolated"</i>
<i>"How they are feeling"</i>	<i>"No immediate crisis support."</i>	<i>"Make Mental Health easier to talk about"</i>
<i>"Being around people that don't know about their Mental Health"</i>	<i>"Staff working in these environments have limited training or aware of what support is available"</i>	<i>"Wellbeing Hubs and drop ins"</i>
<i>"Being out of their comfort zone, feeling anxious, nervous to say something"</i>	<i>"More information about what's on offer"</i>	<i>"Local Mental Health Advocacy"</i>
<i>"Anxiety, lack of motivation as inherent part of Mental Health struggles"</i>	<i>"There is a lack of following up from services if they think you are not at "risk".</i>	<i>"Promote/Bring a better sense of community"</i>
<i>"Trying to get an appointment with my doctors is extremely difficult and demoralising and makes me not want to try. I end up feeling isolated from my community and angry/anxious with everyone"</i>	<i>"Support should be available in all locations, instead of making people travel miles to access support"</i>	<i>"More drop in centers"</i>
<i>"Lack of reassurance to seek help. Also being unaware of what help/support is out there"</i>	<i>"More information on service's websites about expectations and waiting times"</i>	<i>"Increase wellbeing and mental health education for all"</i>
<i>"Lack of funding to attend support"</i>	<i>"More funding for befrienders"</i>	<i>"More services and better waiting lists"</i>
<i>"Doctors do not understand Mental Health – bad experiences from previously prevents getting help now"</i>	<i>"More home visits"</i>	<i>"In Rayleigh there is no help available. "</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"I need to be able to talk to someone that understands where I am coming from. Someone who can help me, not judge like before"</i>	<i>"More local groups for support (socials)"</i>	<i>"Give residents wellbeing magazines and self-help guides"</i>
<i>"Not knowing where to go. Information is vague."</i>	<i>"Local government/council needs to put more funding into and organisations such as Trust Links."</i>	<i>"Make access to information easy to access and clear"</i>
<i>"People's background/ situation/history And experiences"</i>	<i>"GPs should have more time with patients to assess Mental Health"</i>	<i>"Create safe zones and safe places where people who are struggling can meet others in the same situation"</i>
<i>"I think I am stupid for worrying. People tell me "I just get on with it" and I tell myself "You can do it".</i>	<i>"More advertising of support available in shops/charities"</i>	<i>"More social groups"</i>
<i>"Waiting Lists – GP's, Therapy, etc. "</i>	<i>"More staff with experiences who have had Mental Health experiences in the NHS"</i>	<i>"Less referrals, less waiting lists and more action"</i>
<i>"Not Knowing how to access the right support."</i>	<i>"Waiting lists improved or whilst on waiting lists more support offered"</i>	<i>"More groups"</i>
<i>"Poor signposting"</i>	<i>"Better information in from GPS"</i>	<i>"More help with cost of living and access to holistic wellbeing activities"</i>
<i>"Not asking the right questions"</i>	<i>"More Mental Health Hubs and drop ins"</i>	<i>"Open a Trust Links in Rayleigh area"</i>
	<i>"Shorter Waiting Lists"</i>	<i>"More group activities in Rayleigh"</i>
	<i>"Better access to support how you want: face to face, at home, on the phone, etc"</i>	<i>"Teach children about Mental Health from an early age to prevent need as adults"</i>
	<i>"Make it feel that you matter"</i>	
	<i>"More community support groups"</i>	
	<i>"Get it right the first time"</i>	

How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?
<i>"Only immediate service publicised is GP or 111 – this is not enough"</i>
<i>"Streamline service – flow chart process than referral to people/services that either not appreciate or took forever to get access to (therapy for you)"</i>
<i>"Processes not explained overwhelmed with information"</i>
<i>"Government funding to local councils to train and provide better proper mental health support and help – if the government does nothing then the increase in Mental Health will flourish and more will fall through the cracks and possibly end their life out of frustration because of no help"</i>
<i>"I was referred to the Mental Health Team: when I eventually got an appointment – one session taking all my details and never heard anything since!!! Perhaps I need to try and harm myself or??"</i>
<i>"You don't get to see a Mental Health Nurse or MH specialist unless GP does you a referral. Patients should have the option to see a MH specialist instead of GP. Someone trained that can offer extended time to speak about your worries"</i>
<i>"GPs should advertise in their surgeries that you can have a longer appointment to give you extra time to talk"</i>

<i>"A dedicated Doctor or Nurse for mental health issues. Somewhere for patients to talk if they need immediate support"</i>
<i>"Signposting is often limited to GP and 111."</i>
<i>"NHS staff need more training in Mental Health and be understanding and respectful of people's struggles"</i>
<i>"More care in the community"</i>
<i>"Rayleigh needs more drop-in centres and wellbeing hubs"</i>
<i>"Need more awareness of services in shops/churches and public spaces"</i>
<i>"When treatment care comes to an end, somebody should be available to follow up. Make sure nobody feels like the end is the end"</i>
“ ”

Thundersley

29 November '24



13

Participants



2

TL peers

Results:

Thirteen people participated in the Workshop. It was advertised in the local area and to Trust Links members who were residents of Thundersley area.

Two Trust Links Peers ran the workshop – Due to odd numbers for 1-2-1s, one of the Peers actively participated in the workshop but their answers were not considered in this report.

Due to the space available and number of participants, all questions were conducted using House Meeting methodology. (Around the table discussion whilst one of the Peers made note of the group answers, Participants were also encouraged to write their answers in post its if they didn't feel confident raising their concerns by speaking).

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Fear and stigma"</i>	<i>"We need more services in general and better phone support"</i>	<i>"Increase feelings of belonging and to know that people have someone to turn to"</i>
<i>"Being ignored and lost in the system"</i>	<i>"Being put in the right service, instead of being signposted from service to service"</i>	<i>"More wellbeing support at work and schools"</i>
<i>"Having to wait a very long time for an appointment and finding the right support/services"</i>	<i>"More funding so services can actually work"</i>	<i>"More support groups"</i>
<i>"Lack of awareness of services"</i>	<i>"Hiring and training more staff to work in Mental Health"</i>	<i>"A drop in Hub where I could go and talk about how I feel."</i>
<i>"Stigma of Mental Health"</i>	<i>"Treat everyone with compassion and sympathy"</i>	<i>"More peer support groups"</i>
<i>"Waiting lists"</i>	<i>"Improvements in Youth Mental Health Care. A hurt child is easier to heal than a broken adult."</i>	<i>"We need staff that is understanding"</i>
<i>"Overwhelm and anxiety"</i>	<i>"A continued number to where you can go if you or your love ones can go to help help"</i>	<i>"More general knowledge of mental health"</i>
<i>"Not confident I get the help needed – I needed help before, phoned 111 Mental Health and got told to watch something good on TV when I was suicidal"</i>	<i>"I would like a phone number I could call if I'm feeling really down. This has happened to me and I don't know what I could do about it"</i>	<i>"Mental Health First Aid as mandatory training for all"</i>
<i>"Waiting times and not enough staff"</i>	<i>"Make services more accessible to all"</i>	<i>"Kindness to all"</i>
<i>"Not knowing what to say, worried they will be judged for asking for help"</i>	<i>"Quicker interventions"</i>	<i>"More support for families and to those struggling with cost of living"</i>
<i>"Social stigma for the older generations"</i>	<i>"Offer more face-to-face workshops and wellbeing courses"</i>	<i>"Investment in support groups and youth clubs"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Waiting times are way too long and makes you not want to bother"</i>	<i>"Out of hours support for those who work"</i>	<i>"Life coach on prescription"</i>
<i>"How people speak with people with mental health problems"</i>	<i>"More staff needs to be trained in Mental Health and show more empathy and compassion"</i>	<i>"More empathy and friendly support"</i>
<i>"I don't know who I should contact for my mental health"</i>	<i>"More befrienders and people to talk to about your problems would help"</i>	<i>"Counsellors available in schools and workplaces"</i>
<i>"GPs not knowing what's out there, personally I think not knowing where to go when you are low as at that time you don't have the ability to find what you need"</i>	<i>"Home Mental Health Visits"</i>	<i>"More early intervention and early prevention initiatives"</i>
<i>"Religious beliefs"</i>	<i>"GPs don't know what's out there – meds and therapy for you are the first point of answer"</i>	<i>"Wellbeing courses in person not online"</i>
<i>"Stigma"</i>	<i>"Services are inconsistent"</i>	<i>"More support from things such as bullying"</i>
<i>"Financial difficulties"</i>	<i>"A service similar do Samaritans but that does signpost"</i>	<i>"Parental support to ensure children grow well"</i>
<i>"Waiting lists"</i>	<i>"Waiting times – it's frustrating to not know when our appointment is going to be. This creates anxiety and if we are constantly calling services then we are also clogging their system but there is no other way of getting updates"</i>	<i>"Make learning about mental health and how to stay well mandatory schools"</i>
<i>"Lack of qualified staff"</i>	<i>"Constantly having to tell your story to different services and different people is tiring"</i>	<i>"Restrict social media"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Lack of time due to responsibilities such as family, work, etc"</i>	<i>"More places like Trust Links"</i>	<i>"Support slow living lifestyles"</i>
<i>"Feeling foolish asking for help, fear of opening up for nothing"</i>	<i>"Treat people fairly and give them the dignity they deserve. Don't make them feel bad just because they are trying to ask for help."</i>	<i>"Offer every community the chance of accessing meaningful activities and positive experiences"</i>
<i>"Feeling too ill to actually being able to ask for help"</i>	<i>"Better waiting times for diagnosis of learning difficulties, autism and ADHD"</i>	
<i>"Fear of being sectioned"</i>	<i>"Support individual's families, carers and support workers instead of seeing the individual alone"</i>	
<i>"Fear that reaching out means losing my children to social services"</i>	<i>"Standardised Mental Health support offer across all GPs"</i>	
	<i>"Offer more group therapy and peer support groups"</i>	
	<i>"Make signposting accessible not clinical"</i>	
		



Enlightening • Innovative • Interesting • Excellent
Hopeful • Educational • Hopeful • Beginnings
Correction • Thankful • Enjoyable • Connected
Empowering

Word
 evaluation
 from the
 group:

Canvey Island

29 November '24



18
Participants



3
TL peers

Results:

Eighteen people participated in the Workshop. It was advertised at Wintergardens Baptist Church in Canvey, online and to Trust Links members who were residents of Canvey area.

Three Trust Links Peers ran the workshop.

Weaving Trust Methods were used for the first two questions (participants had 1-2-1's with others and wrote their answers in cards).

House Meeting Listening was applied to the last question. (Around the table discussion whilst one of the Peers made note of the group answers).

Comments:

"Attending the workshop, I was inspired by Warren being a peer and doing so well and going on to paid work. It was like a light switch going off in my head. I thought I would love to be given the opportunity to do work towards that goal too, and helping other people would make me happy. Not forgetting Ana that also inspired me to work towards a goal, as I strongly feel by helping myself, I could also help others just similar to me. Whereas before I felt I couldn't do anything and felt so hopeless. I'm hoping to work towards that goal. Thank you to all Trust Links also for all their hard work"
(D.S, 2024)

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Not knowing that they need support until it's too late"</i>	<i>"Better access to the right services"</i>	<i>"More groups to join"</i>
<i>"Struggling to have access to the internet"</i>	<i>"Improve waiting times"</i>	<i>"More things to do"</i>
<i>"Fear of being judged"</i>	<i>"Offer people a chance to talk about their problems with their GPs instead of cutting people short in appointments or requesting that only 1 issue is raised"</i>	<i>"Peer support"</i>
<i>"Feeling isolated and not believing that there is help available"</i>	<i>"Better signposting to services that actually exist"</i>	<i>"Courses and wellbeing activities offered to the community"</i>
<i>"Don't have money to pay for therapy"</i>	<i>"More funding for support groups and community initiatives"</i>	<i>"Stop automatising of all services, people enjoy connecting with others"</i>
<i>"Long waiting lists puts me off"</i>	<i>"Staff that is compassionate"</i>	<i>"A better understanding from the British population including every form of media, that people with mental problems are not a danger to them"</i>
<i>"Shame and feeling like I am a burden"</i>	<i>"Reduction of waiting times"</i>	<i>"Offer alternative therapies and free gym"</i>
<i>"Not knowing who to turn to"</i>	<i>"More mental health and medication reviews offered"</i>	<i>"Access to physical exercise and good nutrition at a low cost"</i>
<i>"Feeling too anxious to ask for help"</i>	<i>"More staff"</i>	<i>"More charities and fun activities for people"</i>
<i>"Being asked to attend services far from home"</i>	<i>"Group therapy"</i>	<i>"Council could create support groups in every neighbourhood"</i>
<i>"Stigma around Mental Health"</i>	<i>"Staff that understands Mental Health"</i>	<i>"More volunteers and befrienders to check on people's wellbeing"</i>
<i>"My health"</i>	<i>"Offer alternative therapies"</i>	<i>"Community magazines and services advertised by post instead of online"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Not knowing what's available"</i>	<i>"Funding to ensure services can run effectively"</i>	<i>"A time machine, more compassion and money so we don't have to worry about the basic living"</i>
<i>"Lack of trust that services will understand you – I am from a generation who's always been told to pull myself together"</i>	<i>"Support for those with learning disabilities who also struggle with their mental health"</i>	<i>"More community groups and no bill clubs"</i>
<i>"Fear of being vulnerable"</i>	<i>"Access to help needs to be made easier"</i>	<i>"Educate people on Mental Health, for example having ads on TV explaining how to deal with panic attacks, etc"</i>
<i>"Having to tell life story to a stranger"</i>	<i>"Treat people with respect and dignity"</i>	<i>"Offer Mental Health MOTS like we offer Physical Health MOTS"</i>
<i>"Waiting lists"</i>	<i>"Teach people about their mental health instead of just diagnosing them and putting them on medication"</i>	<i>"Wellbeing tips in the post"</i>
<i>"Having to wait over a 1 year to be seen my someone"</i>	<i>"Need 24h drop ins"</i>	<i>"Health Clubs, clubs aimed at supporting people with confidence, self-esteem, support clubs, anxiety and mental health focus"</i>
<i>"There are not enough services"</i>	<i>"More support in the community"</i>	<i>"Better access and more economic power – changing the view of society on people with Mental Health difficulties so they are not seen as second-class citizens"</i>
<i>"Lack of awareness that you need support"</i>	<i>"Offer home visits"</i>	<i>"Invest in people's skills, offer right adjustments and support and training for all"</i>
<i>"Not feeling understood or listened to"</i>	<i>"Seeing the same GP to build trust instead of a different one every time"</i>	<i>"Benefits system makes it very hard for people to feel supported"</i>
<i>"Fear that it will affect my job"</i>	<i>"What services?"</i>	<i>"More support networks"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Not knowing that support is available"</i>	<i>"Out of hours appointments for people"</i>	<i>"Media regulations"</i>
<i>"Stigma"</i>	<i>"Increase sense of community by bringing people together"</i>	<i>"More places like Trust Links"</i>
<i>"I have been let down previously before and I just think it will happen again"</i>	<i>"Be able to get a doctors appointment when needed instead of waiting for weeks when your anxiety and depression gets worse"</i>	<i>"More funding for services/ community services"</i>
<i>"Not believing that anyone can help"</i>	<i>"More training in Mental Health presentations"</i>	<i>"More education for Health as a whole"</i>
<i>"Lack of trust in services"</i>	<i>"Audit 111 calls for poor practice"</i>	<i>"More community support for different groups, gender, age, families"</i>
<i>"No time if working full-time or caring for others"</i>	<i>"More advocacy for people struggling"</i>	<i>"Less working hours specially for families"</i>
<i>"Not knowing what to do, where to go when they are struggling"</i>	<i>"People feel like criminals in certain services where security is exaggerated, places are cold and clinical which affects how safe people feel in services that are aimed at helping"</i>	<i>"Evening education in the community to reach those who work during the day"</i>
<i>"Mental Health users often are made to feel they have to prove themselves that they are unwell"</i>	<i>"More mentors, hubs, more time with professionals that can help"</i>	<i>"More Youth Projects"</i>
	<i>"Combat isolation"</i>	<i>"Leisure activities at accessible rates"</i>
	<i>"Give more information around disabilities, autism, adhd and others"</i>	<i>"Fix cost of living, people need to be able to make ends meet before they can spend money on their health unfortunately"</i>
		

Rochford

13 December '24



13

Participants



3

TL peers

Results:

Fourteen people participated in the Workshop. It was advertised in the local area and to Trust Links members who were residents of Rochford area.

Three Trust Links Peers ran the workshop.

Due to the space available and number of participants all questions were conducted using House Meeting methodology. (Around the table discussion whilst one of the Peers made note of the group answers, Participants were also encouraged to write their answers in post its if they didn't feel confident raising their concerns by speaking.)

Comments:

"I think more peers with lived experience are needed. I like the Peer system at Trust Links because they are very welcoming. Claire, my peer at Arts & Crafts encouraged me to talk to people and helped me gain friendships that I wouldn't have had the courage to do so alone. She gave me encouragement to learn new skills. Without Claire and the peers at Trust Links, I wouldn't have been able to utilise the groups to the extent I have now."
(Charlie, 2024)

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Sick role"</i>	<i>"Offer person centred approach"</i>	<i>"Offer buddy systems or coaching"</i>
<i>"Lack of awareness of existing useful resources"</i>	<i>"More dignity, empathy and empowerment"</i>	<i>"More creative events"</i>
<i>"Stigma"</i>	<i>"A lot to improve, being more proactive"</i>	<i>"Less bureaucracy to put support in place"</i>
<i>"Culture and beliefs"</i>	<i>"Offer support for those that may be dyslexic or struggle with literacy or technology use"</i>	<i>"Mental Health TV series for education"</i>
<i>"Long time waiting for support"</i>	<i>"Better communication"</i>	<i>"Mental Health Jingles on the radio and TV"</i>
<i>"Not knowing how to access Mental Health support"</i>	<i>"Proper signposting services"</i>	<i>"Updated community boards everywhere, shops, supermarkets, GPS, bus stops"</i>
<i>"Tired of being passed on from organisation to organisation without ever getting help"</i>	<i>"Initial contact point is important, saves getting stressed/added pressure being passed around from one person to another"</i>	<i>"More human contact and less machines"</i>
<i>"Lack of empathy from those who are meant to support you"</i>	<i>"Proper understanding of who does what, boundaries, job descriptions, what they can provide is very unclear. Very frustrating"</i>	<i>"Easy access to food banks and financial support if you are struggling"</i>
<i>"Being embarrassed"</i>	<i>"Too many services overlapping, but also great big holes in what is needed?"</i>	<i>"Free cinema tickets"</i>
<i>"Feeling ashamed"</i>	<i>"Helplines, listening services, practical services"</i>	<i>"More social clubs"</i>
<i>"It would be good if there was an available mental health nurse all the time at the doctor's surgeries"</i>	<i>"Not enough face to face help/support/services/ everything is done by telephone or online! (not helpful)"</i>	<i>"Make towns fully disabled friendly"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Doctors don't have time for mental health issues as you only get 10 minutes for your appointment"</i>	<i>"Less waiting times, the time to wait for an appointment is unacceptable. It's frustrating, it makes people anxious and causes unnecessary stress"</i>	<i>"More public spaces for people to gather"</i>
<i>"From starting point being passed to different departments, sometimes leading to taking up to a day just trying to get through the right department"</i>	<i>"Say what you mean and mean what you say"</i>	<i>"Improve disable access overall"</i>
<i>"Constant referrals but all appointments are very repetitive as in see you in 6 months, its very daunting waiting in pain to be told the same thing 6 months later"</i>	<i>"More access to medical records without it being online"</i>	<i>"Deal with people's socioeconomic factors"</i>
<i>"Ridicule, shame, man-up mentality and low self-esteem"</i>	<i>"Patients being treated with dignity instead of being told our experiences are not valid"</i>	<i>"Create services that are aimed at teaching people coping strategies"</i>
<i>"Being dismissed and told I was overreacting"</i>	<i>"Less hoops to jump through"</i>	<i>"More focus on men's health"</i>
<i>"Told to put your big girl pants on"</i>	<i>"Improve wait times"</i>	<i>"Support people earlier and they will not need to use mental health services as much"</i>
<i>"Stigma"</i>	<i>"Help people before its critical not dismiss until it's too late"</i>	<i>"More community groups and support"</i>
<i>"Lack of advertisement of services available"</i>	<i>"Have a wider range of people/ethnicities/young/old/traditional/ alternative allowing less discrimination and making people more approachable"</i>	<i>"Educate people on how to advocate for themselves and their rights"</i>
<i>"Long waiting times"</i>	<i>"Seeing a case worker occasionally would be advantageous"</i>	<i>"Invest in training services and workers to deliver support instead of just signposting"</i>
<i>"Fear of judgement from others"</i>	<i>"Make access to support easier. "Internet access is very hit and miss, telephone access needs improvement"</i>	<i>"Focus on early prevention"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Finding out who to go to?"</i>	<i>"Adequate funding and staffing"</i>	<i>"Funding for services needs to be better distributed"</i>
<i>"Minefield of services but it's not clear what is out there"</i>	<i>"Seamless collaboration with appropriate member organisations"</i>	<i>"Free access to fitness and leisure"</i>
<i>"Stigma attached – feel embarrassed to ask"</i>	<i>"Evidence based informed services"</i>	<i>"More counselling"</i>
<i>"NHS provide endless barriers to support"</i>	<i>"To have a mental health nurse at the doctors that deals with just that because you only get a 10minutes appointment with a doctor"</i>	<i>"Invest in alternative therapies"</i>
<i>"Feel like a failure asking (not met with support, clinical response)"</i>	<i>"To have people that reach out and "befriend" people with mental health issues. To have a phone call once a week or once a fortnight specially people with suicide thoughts or that have tried to commit suicide"</i>	<i>"Subsidised leisure services"</i>
<i>"GP/Staff not trained in emotional support or aware of what support can be given, passed on to other sectors"</i>	<i>"Im not good at computers so would like someone to help with filling up forms"</i>	<i>"More groups and opportunities to connect with others with similar experiences"</i>
<i>"GPs are not the appropriate start point"</i>	<i>"More specialists help available"</i>	”
<i>"Don't know who to speak with"</i>	<i>"More updates when waiting"</i>	
”	<i>"Criteria to access help are too strict"</i>	
	<i>"More support other than CBT and meds"</i>	
	<i>"Stop losing people in the system, book their next appointments when you see them"</i>	
	”	

Benfleet

29 February '25



19
Participants



3
TL peers

Results:

Nineteen people participated in the Workshop. It was advertised at Benfleet's Methodist Church where T.I.M.E – A local Men's Support Group for Mental Health Concerns takes place every Tuesday evening. The workshop was offered to the group who this service in the Benfleet area.

Three Trust Links Peers ran the workshop.

Due to the space available and number of participants all questions were conducted using House Meeting methodology. (Around the table discussion whilst one of the Peers made note of the group answers, Participants were also encouraged to write their answers in post its if they didn't feel confident raising their concerns by speaking.)

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"I can't read and write, don't have a phone or family to support me. Getting support for myself is a nightmare"</i>	<i>"Offer right adjustments to people's needs. Not what you think it's needed but what people are saying that they need to engage with support"</i>	<i>"More community-based projects"</i>
<i>"Not knowing where to go"</i>	<i>"Offer more advocacy"</i>	<i>"More stuff in the community to prevent isolation."</i>
<i>"Feeling isolated"</i>	<i>"Signposting from service to service is not helpful, work collaboratively so people don't have to constantly share their story with everyone they speak with"</i>	<i>"Investment in green spaces, parks and cycling roads"</i>
<i>"Long waiting times (GPS, Counselling)"</i>	<i>"Improve waiting times"</i>	<i>"More peer support groups"</i>
<i>"Stigma of Mental Health, people won't open up"</i>	<i>"Offer more than just 6 weeks therapy – that is not enough"</i>	<i>"Free gym access"</i>
<i>"Not enough information or support"</i>	<i>"Advertise services more as well as clear information of what people need to do to access it"</i>	<i>"Somewhere to go at all times when you are feeling lonely"</i>
<i>"Too much medication handed out, put people off from going to GP"</i>	<i>"Create more local support groups such as T.I.M.E for people to access whilst they are waiting for Drs or NHS support"</i>	<i>"More activities outdoors"</i>
<i>"No support for those who are illiterate"</i>	<i>"More funding is needed to reduce waiting times"</i>	<i>"Free gyms"</i>
<i>"Not getting reviews for medication"</i>	<i>"Make information on how to access support easily available and updated"</i>	<i>"More access to holistic support"</i>
<i>"Lack of knowledge"</i>	<i>"Hire more staff"</i>	<i>"Access to good nutrition, fresh vegetables and fruit instead of processed food"</i>
<i>"The stigma around Mental Health"</i>	<i>"Engage in educating the community and giving them tools to learn how to manage their mental health"</i>	<i>"Community and peer support groups in all areas"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"The waiting times for treatment and the constant push of pills to mash and numb the real problem"</i>	<i>"More support for charities and local groups, less NHS"</i>	<i>"More allotments"</i>
<i>"Not enough advertised support that would show the community of all ages that there is help if needed"</i>	<i>"Stop changing the psychiatrist every 6 months/ year within the Essex Mental Health help service"</i>	<i>"Reward people for eating healthy"</i>
<i>"Not having support to deal with or discuss the problem"</i>	<i>"I found a wellbeing group by luck! We need more referrals from GPs to these services"</i>	<i>"More spaces for exercise"</i>
<i>"The stigma of feeling like what they are dealing with is not important enough"</i>	<i>"Improve waiting times"</i>	<i>"Free gyms and more hubs for people to walk in and access information for support"</i>
<i>"Accessibility to GPs with the knowledge to deal with Mental Health and not just handing out anti-depressants/pills"</i>	<i>"Phone lines for support by area"</i>	<i>"Free classes, trips out, swimming and bike riding groups"</i>
<i>"Not knowing who to reach out to"</i>	<i>"Improve training for GPs in Mental Health to identify the need for mental support"</i>	<i>"Better signposting and local awareness of what's available"</i>
<i>"Waiting lists time"</i>	<i>"Make services accessible to all"</i>	<i>"More support groups"</i>
<i>"Mental Health not taken seriously"</i>	<i>"Shorten waiting lists"</i>	<i>"A wellbeing hub such as T.I.M.E and Trustlinks etc"</i>
<i>"Stigma about Mental Health"</i>	<i>"Offer alternatives to medication"</i>	<i>"Places that you can access help without having to wait or pay"</i>
<i>"I will not access Mental Health services as I have a phobia of doctors/NHS. I access charities only."</i>	<i>"More support groups"</i>	<i>"Support with cost of living"</i>
<i>"Embarrassment. Sometimes people do not want to admit they need help because they are worried others will think less of them"</i>	<i>"More funding to services"</i>	<i>"Public available resources to lessen financial burdens. A lot of stress is caused by worrying about earning enough to live"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Shame. We judge ourselves for wanting or needing help."</i>	<i>"More one on one services"</i>	<i>"Invest in supporting communities coming together to prevent alienation"</i>
<i>"Time, energy. People who work full-time or have other obligations might not have enough time left to tend to their mental health concerns."</i>	<i>"Mental Health Awareness projects in the community and in schools"</i>	<i>"Social spaces that don't cost money to access"</i>
<i>"Money, seeking professional help promptly cost a lot of money and otherwise waiting lists are long."</i>	<i>"More availability of information about how to access Mental Health services properly"</i>	<i>"More support groups and open spaces"</i>
<i>"Long wait for appointments"</i>	<i>"Focus on addressing the root issues of people's problems instead of just giving them medication"</i>	<i>"Free gyms"</i>
<i>"Not enough gender groups and embarrassment as a men to admit we are struggling with our mental health"</i>	<i>"Offer follow ups after putting people on medication. As personal experience goes, I was put on antidepressants and because they were not working I just got my dosage upped and it caused me an immense amount of rage and anger problems so I had to stop them completely and that's the way I have stayed since"</i>	<i>"More places like Trust Links and other charities"</i>
<i>"Waiting times"</i>	<i>"Invest in more groups like T.I.M.E, they found me at my time of need and I didn't know that groups like this existed."</i>	<i>"Free food hubs and free childcare services"</i>
<i>"Mental health is a complicated issue"</i>	<i>"Advertise your services better and widely"</i>	<i>"Subsidised or free gym membership"</i>
<i>"Some people find it hard to make their way to a place. Physical access"</i>	<i>"More help is needed"</i>	<i>"More therapy and counselling"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Stigma and lack of education"</i>	<i>"Improve waiting times for therapy"</i>	<i>"Long term support after treatment"</i>
<i>"Nothing happens after asking for help"</i>	<i>"There aren't enough counsellors"</i>	<i>"Access to holistic support, natural therapies"</i>
<i>"Services are not geared up to support with common issues such as isolation, grief – people feel unsupported but left unmanaged these issues can develop into serious mental health concerns. There is a lack of trust that services can do anything"</i>	<i>"We need a Trust Links group at Canvey and another long covid support grouper closer"</i>	<i>"More groups that are free to access"</i>
<i>"The wait for therapy for you is too long, I have been waiting now for 9 months"</i>	<i>"More signposting to long term support like social and support groups"</i>	<i>"Community spaces for people to use to meet up and have socialisation"</i>
<i>"Waiting times. Feeling rejected when you are struggling and can't even get a GP appointment or are asked to call again, try some other time"</i>	<i>"Waiting lists need improving"</i>	<i>"Investment in people's physical health with free gyms will also help people's mental health"</i>
<i>"There is not enough advertisement of the support available"</i>	<i>"More funding and mental health education from a young age"</i>	<i>"More activities that are free to access"</i>
<i>"Stigma and fear"</i>		<i>"Get in schools and teach them about trauma before they face it"</i>
<i>"Not knowing where to go"</i>		<i>"Wellbeing drop ins and centres"</i>
<i>"Not knowing where to go"</i>		<i>"Wellbeing drop ins and centres"</i>
<i>"Fear that there will be repercussions if you ask for support"</i>		<i>"Community centres offering support"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Themselves, Mental Block"</i>		<i>"Cheaper activities"</i>
<i>"Feeling like I can't be honest. Not having the trust or the time to open up with services."</i>		<i>"Wellbeing groups and places to go with a smile and like minded people to talk to"</i>
<i>"It all takes too long, and we are suffering"</i>		“
<i>"Not wanting to just go on medication"</i>		
<i>"Waiting times. Feeling rejected when you are struggling and can't even get a GP appointment or are asked to call again, try some other time"</i>		
”		



Hockley

28 February '25



7

Participants



3

TL peers

Results:

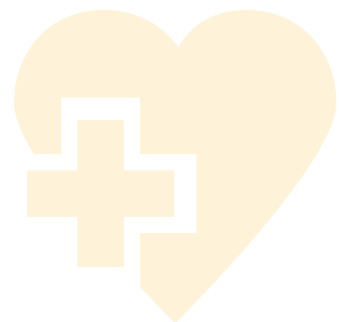
Seven people participated in the Workshop. It was advertised at the Dome Surgery in Hockley. A hard to reach and isolated area where an estimated 120 over 65s live.

Three Trust Links Peers ran the workshop.

Due to the space available and number of participants all questions were conducted using House Meeting methodology. (Around the table discussion whilst one of the Peers made note of the group answers, Participants were also encouraged to write their answers in post its if they didn't feel confident raising their concerns by speaking.)

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Stigma, not being believed."</i>	<i>"Adress waiting times"</i>	<i>"We need a community center with community groups for isolated communities"</i>
<i>"Don't know who to ask"</i>	<i>"Less hoops to jump through"</i>	<i>"This area needs a community centre which would allow people to talk and connect with each other"</i>
<i>"Concerned that it will worry parents"</i>	<i>"Less automation and more actual humans"</i>	<i>"Better transport links, I feel very isolated"</i>
<i>"Feeling ashamed, anxiety, shyness"</i>	<i>"More direct help"</i>	<i>"More help in the community"</i>
<i>"No transport, don't drive and only 2 buses ran where we live"</i>	<i>"Work on waiting lists"</i>	<i>"Better transport"</i>
<i>"Public transport is very bad to go and speak with anyone"</i>	<i>"More help is needed for those who can't access or understand the internet"</i>	<i>"Exercise machines"</i>
<i>"No idea what is available"</i>	<i>"Create more groups to go to – coffee mornings, walking groups, reading books etc"</i>	<i>"Invest in coffee mornings and classes for wellbeing"</i>
<i>"No awareness of services"</i>	<i>"Make processes to access help more straightforward"</i>	<i>"Exercise machines"</i>
<i>"There's no longer a community centre where we live"</i>	<i>"Offer support groups, peer groups"</i>	<i>"Access to shops, roadways with paths so we can walk safely to garden centre in Lower Road"</i>
<i>"Lack of public transport"</i>	<i>"More support in person"</i>	<i>"Coffee mornings to meet local residents"</i>
<i>"Not having information on what is available for support"</i>	<i>"Better access to face-to-face appointments in my local area instead of asking me to travel far away"</i>	<i>"a good bus service in lower road"</i>
<i>"Stigma and public attitude"</i>	<i>"Easier way of contacting services"</i>	<i>"Better access to local amenities"</i>
<i>"Stigma"</i>	<i>"Contact with a human being"</i>	<i>"Better buses to shop"</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Media, overdramatising mental health issues"</i>	<i>"Transport to appointments"</i>	<i>"Roadsides to be safe to walk on"</i>
<i>"Not knowing where to go or who to ask for support"</i>	<i>"I rather talk to people than machines"</i>	”
<i>"No transport to get anywhere, physical health makes it hard to go on long journeys and having to wait all day to come back"</i>	<i>"Prevent isolation"</i>	
<i>"Lack of funds to get out and about accessing different things"</i>	<i>"Shorter waiting times"</i>	
<i>"Feeling anxious"</i>	<i>"More help for those who can't access or understand the internet"</i>	
<i>"Embarrassment, shame"</i>	”	
<i>"No support to find and engage with services"</i>		
<i>"Not wanting to be perceived differently or looked down because of Mental Health struggles"</i>		
<i>"There is no help whatsoever in here, we are very isolated and public transport is really bad"</i>		
”		



Benfleet and Castle Point

1 March '25



18
Participants



2
TL peers

Results:

Eighteen people engaged with our peers to support the Listening Together Campaign. It was not advertised as in this occasion, but Peers decided to attend an existing community event and engage with Benfleet and Castle Point residents that were in attendance and interested in participating on the day.

Two Peers supported the engagement.

Due to the space available and the nature of the event, the peers had a stall, and questions were put up on white boards. During the event, the Trust Links Peers conducted 1-2-1s with those willing to engage and support the listening project. Participants were also encouraged to write their answers down on post its and stick them on to the white boards provided.

Signposting and follow up calls were still made available to participants in this setting.

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Courage to find help"</i>	<i>"More community groups"</i>	<i>"Lots of community support & meetings"</i>
<i>"Confidence or knowledge in knowing where to go"</i>	<i>"By listening to what the community needs"</i>	<i>"Shine light to strong role models"</i>
<i>"Not aware that they are struggling"</i>	<i>"Perhaps greater awareness raising so people know what's out there"</i>	<i>"More Love, less focus on ego and being the best"</i>
<i>"Doctors not providing enough support"</i>	<i>"More funding"</i>	<i>"More support like Trust Links"</i>
<i>"Ashamed to find out"</i>	<i>"More therapy offers, more support groups"</i>	<i>"Invest in innovation and equal access for all"</i>
<i>"Not enough awareness of services that are out there"</i>	<i>"Better waiting times"</i>	<i>"Community support networks and more ways to make people aware of what is available"</i>
<i>"Fear & Stigma"</i>	<i>"More welcoming groups"</i>	<i>"Places like HOME Hub to support all locals"</i>
<i>"Not being aware that something is wrong and then where to find help"</i>	<i>"Create more community groups"</i>	<i>"Better GP access, increased mental health support and services across communities"</i>
<i>"Not knowing where and how to access mental health services and perhaps denial too"</i>	<i>"Better communication from GPs, schools, colleges etc as where to go and raise awareness"</i>	<i>"Love, compassion and understanding"</i>
<i>"Stigma"</i>	<i>"More access to therapy"</i>	<i>"More available support. Appropriate support. The right information available"</i>
<i>"Possible perceptions and pride, old school attitudes"</i>	<i>"More community groups, advertisement and support"</i>	<i>"A place people can go to be listened and supported"</i>
<i>"Not enough education, ignorance"</i>	<i>"More funding towards environments"</i>	<i>"This is a macro level"</i>
<i>"Lack of funds to access support"</i>	<i>"More groups supporting people with various issues"</i>	<i>"More charities like Trust Links, more evening and community groups like T.I.M.E."</i>

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
<i>"Shame & Self-loathing"</i>	<i>"Better waiting times"</i>	<i>"More Welcoming support groups"</i>
<i>"Not knowing how to access support"</i>	<i>"More awareness of different health issues mental and physical"</i>	<i>"More understanding and better help"</i>
<i>"Not being able to recognise that you are unwell"</i>	<i>"Services need more funding and advertised everywhere in the community"</i>	<i>"Access to green spaces, food and wellbeing activities"</i>
<i>"Struggling to ask"</i>	<i>"Some people don't like the internet"</i>	<i>"Support with cost-of-living"</i>
<i>"Afraid to ask for help"</i>	<i>"Services close by and better accessibility"</i>	<i>"Better work conditions and better access to healthcare"</i>
<i>"People not knowing what's available to them"</i>	<i>"Faster access, people feel let down by waiting so long for care"</i>	<i>"Investment in community groups"</i>
“	<i>"More advertisement, and more empathy"</i>	”
	<i>"More activities that prevent people from feeling lonely"</i>	
	”	



Youth Session

Rayleigh Youth Club

28 February '25

 **5**
Participants

 **2**
TL peers

Results:

Five young people participated in the Workshop. It was advertised at Trust Links Rayleigh Youth Club.

Two Peers run the workshop.

For this workshop only and because Peers were engaging with young people (aged 11-16), Peers made the decision to adapt the wording of the questions and replaced the word Mental Health with Wellbeing. It was important for Peers that young people's experiences in these workshops was kept light and safe throughout.

Due to the space available and number of participants, all questions were conducted using House Meeting methodology. (Around the table discussion whilst one of the Peers made note of the group answers, Participants were also encouraged to write their answers in post its if they didn't feel confident raising their concerns by speaking).

What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?	How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?	What is needed in your community to ensure that you stay well and don't need to use Mental Health services as much?
"More advertisement in schools"	"Every town should have youth services and youth clubs available for all"	"Socialising is the reason I come to youth group, if there were more groups I would attend more because I am homeschooled this is the only time I get to make friends"
"Not knowing about it"	"Offer more opportunities to go on trips"	"Offer more activities for young people to do"
"Feeling nervous, shy about it"	"Offer Pet therapy"	"More support for those who are homeschooled"
"Being homeschooled and not knowing about what's out there"	"Animals allowed everywhere"	"Advertise youth activities everywhere"
"Not having enough information, my school didn't know about this youth club"	"Transport to take me on trips"	"Free things to do, not everyone can afford things"
"Not knowing you need help or what to expect"	"More information shared with schools and parents"	"
"	"Better Mental Health services, better waiting lists"	"

Comments:

"I was happy to have you coming to my group because I think there aren't enough youth groups or support for young people. When I needed help, I was only offered group therapy and online courses, so my parents took me to see a counsellor privately. Youth services are good because it's nice to know that there are other people who feel the same way as I do "I was happy to have you coming to my group because I think there aren't enough youth groups or support for young people. When I needed help, I was only offered group therapy and online courses, so my parents took me to see a counsellor privately. Youth services are good because it's nice to know that there are other people who feel the same way as I do" (Y.P, 2025)

Findings & Data Interpretation

To understand the different results obtained across the three questions asked, answers were categorised into key themes. Below is a breakdown of the key themes identified for each question.

1 What stops people from accessing Mental Health Support?

Stigma:

- Embarrassment, shame and fear were the most common used words by our participants.
- Fear of repercussions e.g. losing access to children, being sectioned.
- Lack of education & awareness from friends and family.

Lack of accessibility & Socioeconomic factors:

- Illiteracy, IT illiteracy, learning and/or physical disabilities.
- Poor access to transport links.
- Services not disabled friendly.
- Lack of funds to engage with support.

Individual Factors:

- Nature of one's mental health.
- Personal beliefs.
- Isolation.
- Work and care giving responsibilities.

Lack of Trust in Services:

- Negative experiences with primary care and clinical mental health services and support services.
- Long waiting times, lack of enough appointments, lack of follow up care.
- Feeling misunderstood/ unsupported.
- Medication overreliance.

Lack of information:

- Not knowing what support is available.
- Not understanding how to access support.
- Societal attitudes due to lack of education/awareness.

2 How can the available Mental Health support services in your area be improved?

Access to Services & Waiting Times:

- Significant concerns about long waiting times for therapy, diagnosis, and specialist support.
- Requests for quicker interventions, more immediate crisis support, and follow-ups after treatment.
- The need for more staff and better funding to reduce delays.

Community-Based Support & Peer Networks:

- Strong demand for more local support groups, including coffee mornings, walking groups, and peer support.
- People want face-to-face interactions rather than digital-only options.
- Requests for youth services, befriending programs, and more social activities to prevent loneliness.

Awareness & Communication:

- People are unaware of available services; better advertising and outreach is needed.
- Improved GP training to recognize mental health needs and refer people correctly.
- More signposting but in a human-centred, non-clinical way.

Personalised & Holistic Care:

- A need for less rigid criteria and a more person-centred approach.
- Alternative therapies beyond medication and CBT.
- Requests for longer-term therapy, not just six-week courses.

Empathy & Human Interaction:

- People feel dismissed, rushed, or invalidated by services.
- Requests for more compassionate, well-trained staff who understand mental health.
- Less automation and more human interaction, especially in crisis situations.

Accessibility & Inclusivity:

- Many people struggle with online systems and digital forms.
- Services need to be easier to access, more local, and available out-of-hours.
- Specific support for neurodivergent individuals, those with disabilities, and non-English speakers.



Collaboration & Continuity of Care:

- People are frustrated by having to repeat their stories to multiple services.
- A need for better collaboration between NHS services, charities, and community groups.
- Continuity of care is poor, with frequent changes in psychiatrists and lack of follow-ups.



Funding & Staffing Issues:

- Services are underfunded and understaffed, making it hard to meet demand.
- People call for more investment in mental health services, especially community-based initiatives.
- There is a need for mental health specialists in GP practices.

3 What is needed in your community to stay well and reduce the need for mental health services?



Social Connection & Community Support:

- More support groups, peer support, and drop-in hubs.
- More volunteers and befrienders to check on people's wellbeing.
- Community support networks and opportunities to connect.
- Coffee mornings and community groups for isolated individuals.
- More spaces for people to meet, social clubs, and youth projects.
- A stronger sense of community and belonging.



More Accessibility & Awareness of Services:

- Better signposting and awareness of available resources.
- Community magazines and services advertised by post, not just online.
- Updated community boards in public places (shops, GP offices, bus stops).
- More evening education and accessible community courses.
- A place where people can go to be listened to and supported.
- More drop-in centres and crisis support hubs.



Offer Mental Health Education & Early Intervention:

- Mental Health First Aid as mandatory training for all.
- Mental health education in schools and workplaces.
- TV series, jingles, and public campaigns to educate on mental health.
- Self-advocacy training and awareness of rights.
- Teaching children about mental health from an early age.

Improve workplace & School Wellbeing:

- More wellbeing support in workplaces and schools.
- Counsellors available in schools and workplaces.
- Life coaching on prescription.
- Investment in training and adjustments for workplace mental health.

Reducing Social Isolation & Inclusion:

- Making towns fully accessible for disabled people.
- Better transport links to reduce isolation.
- Social spaces that don't cost money to access.
- Support for homeschooling families and young people.
- Safe zones for people to connect and share experiences.

Cost of Living & Financial Stress:

- Support with cost of living, food banks, and financial aid.
- Publicly available resources to lessen financial burdens.
- More funding for community services and charities.
- Free or subsidised access to wellbeing activities, fitness, and leisure.
- Investment in affordable community housing and essential services.

Alternative & Holistic Support:

- Free gyms, outdoor activities, and fitness programs.
- Access to fresh, healthy food instead of processed food.
- More spaces for exercise, allotments, and green spaces.
- Alternative therapies and holistic support.
- More funding for community-based wellbeing activities.

Addressing Digital & Media Influence:

- Moderation and restrictions on social media.
- Media regulations to improve mental health awareness.
- Less automation of services and more human interaction.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Over the course of our Listening Together project, it became clear that while mental health continues to be talked about more openly in some circles, **deep-rooted barriers still prevent many people from accessing the support they need.** Through eight workshops, we engaged with 105 individuals across the Rochford and Castle Point areas. What we heard was honest, moving, and often difficult, but it also highlighted how much potential there is for positive change when **services work in partnership with communities** and when **lived experience is at the heart of shaping solutions.**

The three main themes that emerged were **accessibility barriers, trust in services,** and the **need for community-based, preventative support.** These were mentioned again and again, across age groups and backgrounds. People aren't just asking for more services; **they're asking for services that work better, feel safer, and reflect the realities of their lives.**

Access and barriers remain a major issue. From long waiting times to digital exclusion, lack of transport, and financial pressure, people told us again and again that getting help felt like jumping through hoops, often when they're already at breaking point. **Mental health support should be a lifeline, not a maze.**

Trust in services is another deep concern. Many of those we spoke to shared stories of being dismissed, misdiagnosed, or made to feel like a problem to be managed rather than a person to be heard. This is not just disheartening; it's damaging. Without trust, people don't reach out. **Services must rebuild that trust by showing consistency, compassion, and commitment to longer-term care.**

And finally, the strongest thread through all our listening was the power of community-based support. **People want to feel connected, not just treated.** They spoke of coffee mornings, walking groups, safe spaces, peer support networks not as 'nice extras' but as vital parts of their wellbeing. **Early intervention, education, and connection were seen as just as important as crisis care, if not more so.**

Our recommendations:

1. **Invest in local, face-to-face support options** that are flexible, inclusive, and non-clinical in feel especially for those who are digitally excluded or isolated.
2. **Embed lived experience into service design** at every level, ensuring Co-Production isn't a one-off event, but an ongoing relationship with communities.
3. **Fund preventative and community-based initiatives**, such as peer support groups, youth projects, and drop-in wellbeing hubs that create meaningful connections before a crisis point.
4. **Improve service continuity and follow-up care** by tackling staff shortages and enabling smoother collaboration between services so people aren't repeatedly telling their story from scratch.
5. **Strengthen mental health education** in schools, workplaces, and communities, and provide self-advocacy training to empower individuals to seek help earlier.

This project has shown us that people know what they need and when they're given the space to speak, they offer not just insight, but hope. Our ask is simple: let's listen, and act together.



Acknowledgements:

This report has been written by Ana Isidoro, the Trust Links Co-Production Lead, in partnership with our Trust Links Co-Production Team and Trust Links Peer Volunteers. We would like to express our thanks to Essex County Council for the opportunity to take part in this Listening as well as to all the Trust Links Peers that have worked very hard to contribute to this project:

Lee Farrow

Janetta Smith

Warren Wright

Darren Allport

Hayley Zincraft

James Hancock

Claire Sidnell

Lynn Price

Phil Masters

Darren Fern

Ian Batley

Andriea Evans

Craig Midgley

Scott Nolan

Lana Samin-Stannett