

Mental Health Day Opportunities Report: Part One Service Users' Feedback

March 2025



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Background

Healthwatch Liverpool was approached by Liverpool City Council (LCC) in November 2024 and asked if we could help them to engage with users of Mental Health Day Services, to collect their feedback about the services. This followed a previous, similar, review of the services which we conducted in 2018/19 www.healthwatchliverpool.co.uk/report/2019-09-05/mental-health-day-opportunities-report-august-2019

The Council wanted us to do this because they were working with the services, and service users, to look at how to make best use of existing resources, for the benefit of current and future service users. They also wanted to consider whether existing referral routes and facilities could be streamlined whilst preserving a suitable range of support and activities for diverse service users across the city. The Council were not only interested to hear from existing service users, but also from managers and staff within the services, in order to inform what services could look like in the future.

Liverpool's Mental Health Day Services are currently provided by five organisations:

- Imagine Independence (Imagine)
- Liverpool Roots Trust (Roots)
- Mary Seacole House (MSH)
- Person Shaped Support (PSS)
- Waythrough (formerly Richmond Fellowship)

These services are aimed at people in Liverpool who experience mental health difficulties. The aim is to provide some mental-health specific input alongside social and leisure opportunities.

The services provided by four of the providers are broadly similar. PSS, Imagine Independence, Mary Seacole House and Liverpool Roots Trust provide programmes of courses, group sessions and activities. These include mental health specific content, such as courses on coping with anxiety, alongside more general activities such as art or music classes, walking groups or IT skills. Peer support also plays an important role.

The Waythrough service is different as it is a Time Bank. This involves people taking part in activities to 'bank' time which they can then withdraw. People give time to help others by doing activities for free and can then ask for other people's time when they need help. Members offer a range of skills and are matched with other members who are in need of those skills.

The Council was already in regular contact with all five services about possible future service provision, however Healthwatch Liverpool was asked to provide an independent feedback route so that service users and staff could have their say confidentially. This report is published alongside Part Two (managers and staff) on [our website](#).

Method

We were advised that the Council would be carrying out their own meetings with service users as part of their engagement process. It was therefore decided that the Healthwatch Liverpool engagement would take the form of surveys. This method would allow people to complete the surveys in their own time if they wished – either using paper copies or an online version which they could access with a weblink or QR code.

Alternatively, we offered people the option of asking us to call them on the telephone and go through the survey with them – inputting their answers on their behalf. We also offered anybody the option of having other forms of support to complete the survey – for instance if English was not their first language.

We drafted a survey for service users. Questions were mostly the same for all services, but the Waythrough questions were slightly different, to reflect the different service it provides. We also drafted a survey for managers and staff at the five organisations. We shared all the draft surveys with the Council and the five service providers for comment. We wanted to make sure that our questions were appropriate and easy to understand.

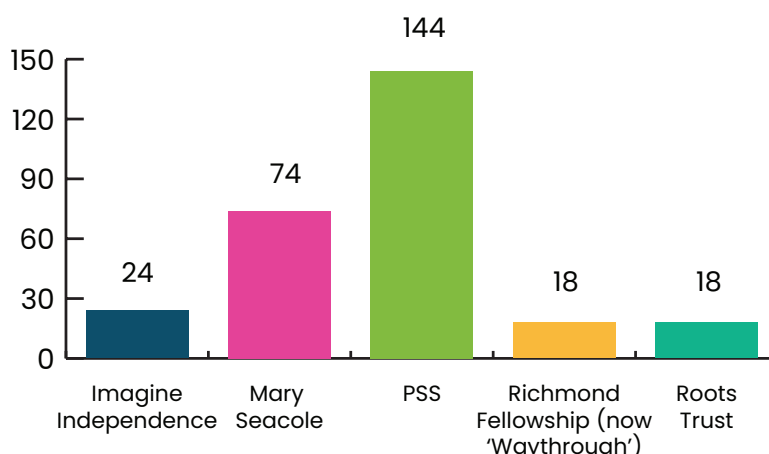
Where possible, we asked service users similar questions to those we asked in 2019, so that we could compare answers and see whether service users' experiences and opinions had changed over the past 5 years.

Once the surveys were finalised each of the 5 services shared them with service users and staff. We included a freepost address for people to return their completed paper surveys directly to us if they wished. As noted above, we also produced online versions of the surveys.

Survey Responses – Service Users

Q1 Which service do you access?

We received 278 responses from service users. Just over three quarters of these (218, 78.4%) were from MSH and PSS service users. This reflects the larger number of people who use these services (see table on page 5). Where we feel it provides useful insight we have broken down responses to the questions that follow by individual service.



At the time of the survey (Jan 2025) the number of service users at four of the services was approximately as set out on the following page – although not all were active. Unfortunately, we did not receive service user numbers from one service:

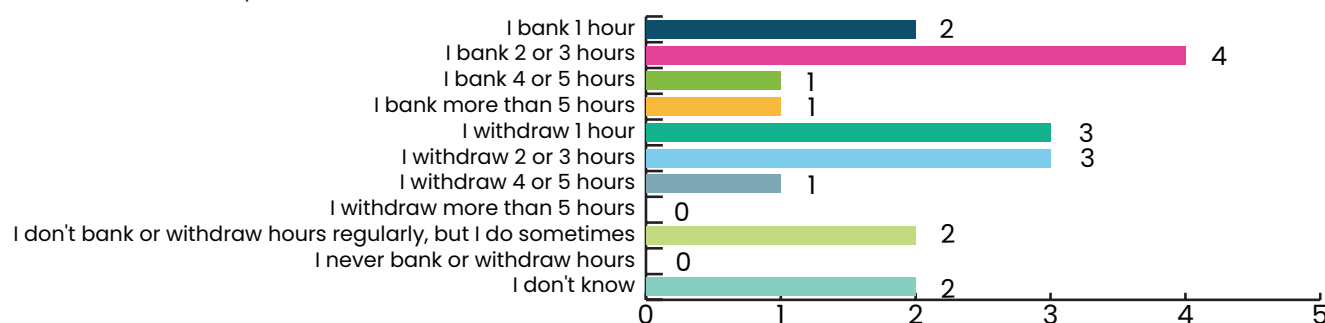
Service	Service Users	% Response Rate
Imagine	75	32%
MSH	323	23%
PSS	262	55%
Roots	26	69%
Waythrough	No data received	Not known

Imagine also provided a summary of evaluation feedback from 21 participants who had completed 6-week Wellbeing courses just prior to the survey. Although this data could not be included in the survey data charts contained in this report we include it here for information.

- 100% felt the venue was Good/Very good
- 100% felt the Training Delivered was Good/Very Good
- 67% felt the Training Aids used were of Good/Very Good
- 100% felt the Written Materials/Handouts were Good/Very Good
- 100% felt they achieved their goal for the sessions.

Q2 How many hours do you usually bank or withdraw from the Time Bank/Our Time each week?

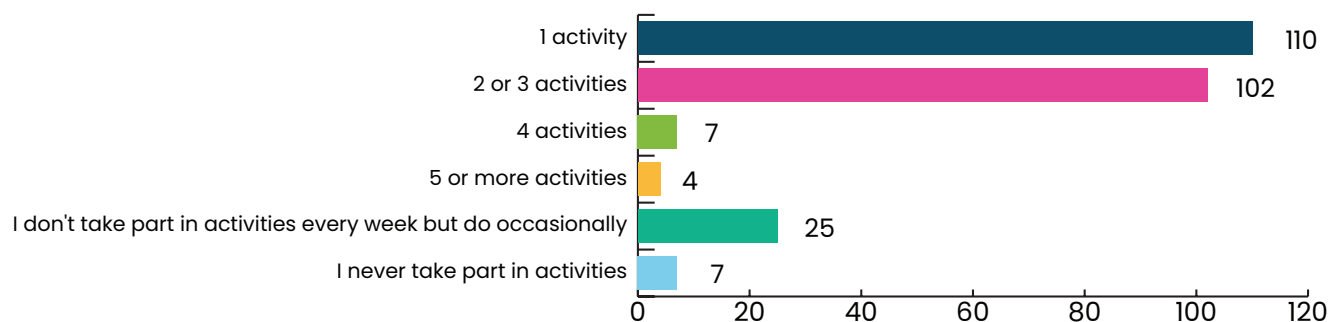
Question 2 was aimed only at Time Bank users at Waythrough (formerly Richmond Fellowship). We received 18 responses to it.



The most popular number of hours banked weekly by service users was '2 or 3 hours' (4, 22.22%) with the majority of people withdrawing 1 (3, 16.67%), 2 or 3 (3, 16.67%) hours a week.

Q3 On average how many activities provided by the service do you usually take part in each week?

This question was aimed at Imagine, MSH, PSS and Roots service users. 255 people answered the question, of whom 110 (43.1%) took part in 1 activity a week (or, in some cases fortnightly, if this was how often an activity was offered). A further 102 (40%) took part in 2 or 3 weekly activities. Almost 10% of people (25, 9.8%) said that although they weren't regular participants, they made use of the ability to access services as they needed them. A further 7 people (2.7%) said they never took part in activities – but were clearly in touch with services enough to have completed the survey.



Q4 What do you take part in?

248 people answered this question. They listed a wide range of groups and activities that they were involved with. These included creative/arts/crafts-based groups, relaxation and mindfulness groups, sports and exercise groups, men's or women's groups, peer support groups, anxiety, depression and stress management groups, conversational English groups, coffee meet-ups, and more. Everything from bee-keeping to cookery, swimming to photography, chair-based yoga to walking football.

The most frequently mentioned word was 'Relaxation' (mentioned 59 times), followed by 'Anxiety' (40 mentions), 'Music' (32), 'Mindfulness' (27), 'Art' (22), 'Coffee' (19), 'Walking' (18), 'Depression' (18) and 'Exercise' (18).

Q5 Of all the things you take part in, which do you value the most? This might be the one you enjoy the most or one you find the most beneficial for your health and wellbeing.

We had 255 answers to this question. These tended to reflect the answers given to the previous question, with a range of groups, activities and courses listed. 'Relaxation' was again the most frequently mentioned beneficial activity (34 mentions), followed by 'music' (23) and 'anxiety' (21).

Some people provided more detailed responses; examples include:

"Reading group. It provides a safe space to learn how to contribute and communicate your opinions without being rejected or ridiculed. It helps to rebuild self-esteem." **PSS service user**

"WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan). I really feel like I have used the tools needed and have the plan on my wall." **PSS service user**

"The strategies for how to manage anxiety, being part of the group, sleep strategies, time management and mindfulness." **Roots service user**

"Volunteering with the Ukelele group, it's an opportunity to be part of a group that has been together for a while but also introduce new people to the activity." **PSS service user**

"I like having something to do every week at least where I can do something social, otherwise I'm usually very isolated and don't do a lot socially which can affect my mental health." **Imagine service user**

"Learning basic English in a friendly environment. I feel safe here and my confidence has improved. I have made friends as well, which helps me a lot to feel good about myself." **MSH service user**

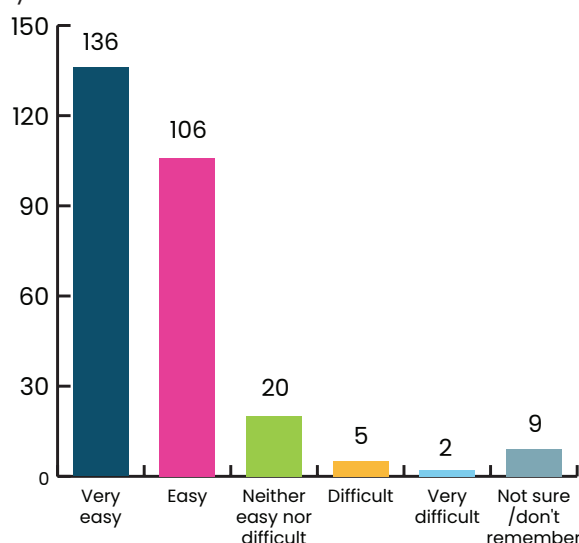
"I find the short courses helpful (with booklet to refer to afterwards)." **PSS service user**

"If I'm being honest all, the walk with Sylvie is both exercise but also able to talk any issues out, and she always has the time to listen and care and give advice. Cath gives me support in many areas, the relaxation classes are extremely helpful and always I leave more relaxed than I did going in. I also partake in Cath's Yoga, to which I would never have thought I would. At either venue, Cath will always listen to what I'm concerned with and helps and will give as much support as is possible." **PSS service user**

"The extra support to get out and overcome my anxiety. Look honestly, I have issues just being around people due to various issues, attending helps me overcome that, normalise being around people and in a public space. This is the tip of the iceberg, but the reason I choose the tabletop gaming group is it's a good distraction that I enjoy and aids me as part of a group activity, you know the things I struggle with. Secondly its Steven he helps as one human to another. I am not sure I could attend without him." **Imagine service user**

Q6 When you first heard about the service and started to use it, how easy was it to be referred to it?

Almost half of the 278 people who answered this question (48.9%) said they had found referral to the service to be 'Very Easy', a further 106 (38.1%) had found it 'Easy'. Only 7 people (2.5%) found referral 'Difficult' or 'Very Difficult'.



Positive feedback included:

"I self-referred online. Very easy and quick reply (1 week)." **PSS service user**

"The referral was very easy and quick. This service is very helpful. They listen to everything and sort out all your issues within no time." **MSH service user**

"An easy-going atmosphere which was caring and inclusive. The GP and social prescriber referred me and encouraged me to go. The course lead then contacted me and described the course, and he decided that it might be helpful for me, which it was." **Roots service user**

Even where referral was difficult, the overall experience was generally still positive.

"Not easy at all but the people that run the group helped a lot with the things that was going on." **PSS service user**

Q7 Why did you first start using the service? Do you still use it for the same reason?

265 people responded to this question. The main reasons given for using the service in the first place were, unsurprisingly, to provide mental health support and help to manage mental health (71 mentions), including: anxiety (67), depression (54), isolation (12), stress (10) and mood (10).

"I was suffering badly with my mental health. I was hospitalised for attempted suicide. Also, during my recovery, psychotic episodes which terrified me and my family. I often get suicidal ideations, so PSS are a lifeline." **PSS service user**

"To help me get out into the community when waiting for other services. The wait for the other services was so long I felt forgotten. I'm still waiting for the other services, but this has bridged the gap and kept my mental health from deteriorating." **Imagine service user**

Some people had begun attending one course or activity but had taken further courses or become involved in a range of different activities, and accessed other service providers, over time.

"To help with my mental health. Yes, I am still using this service for different reasons like getting support with my benefits, housing and many more." **MSH service user**

"I had tried everything to cope or relieve my anxiety, but nothing seemed to work. I didn't want to just accept that taking anti-depressants was the only way to recover from my poor mental health, as this approach didn't seem to be working. Being in a group with others with similar experiences living with anxiety and depression was a new thing for me. After the initial strangeness of it all the anxiety management sessions became part of my weekly routine, which I very much looked forward to. Following a couple of weeks attending the course I had built up a little courage to contact another service which I could draw on for further support. This was the Armistead Centre; I became a regular at their social sessions which filled me with real hope and lessened the long years of despair I had lived through struggling with my sexuality. Had I not attended the PSS Wellbeing Centres, I don't think I would have summoned the courage to go along to the Armistead Centre. Knowing that the Umbrella Centre and its staff are always there for me to support and welcome me plays a big part in my being able to live with anxiety and keeps me safe from the worse aspects of mental illness." **PSS service user**

Many people said they still used the services for the original reason.

"I started using this service because of domestic abuse, mentally, physically, sexually. Was also diagnosed with anxiety, depression, mental health and bipolar. And I am still using this service for all the same reasons, if not more severe. Depend on this service." **PSS service user**

"I accessed the service due to my anxiety and depression. Although I manage my conditions much better nowadays, I still access the service as a way of keeping myself mentally grounded." **PSS service user**

"To ease my loneliness. I am still using this service as it helps towards my mental health." **MSH service user**

"For mental health reasons. To stop me from feeling isolated. Yes, I still use the Roots service." **Roots service user**

Q8 What do you think of the accessibility of the following?

Of those who responded to these questions, the majority found access to the services – including buildings/venues, transport links and online information – either 'Very Easy' or 'Easy'.

Answer Choices	Very easy	Easy	Neither easy nor difficult	Difficult	Very difficult	Not sure
The building	122	96	36	12	7	4
Transport	91	79	47	24	11	8
Online access	85	63	50	10	4	29

There were 99 additional comments, indicating that transport can be a barrier to access, depending on the location of the service in relation to the service user's home; some buildings present problems for people with limited mobility, and some people remain digitally excluded.

"I find I can access most of the places we go and can locate different bus stops and can use my bus pass." **Imagine service user**

"I live within walking distance but I'm so grateful to be able to attend. I have no online access, so this does not apply." **PSS service user**

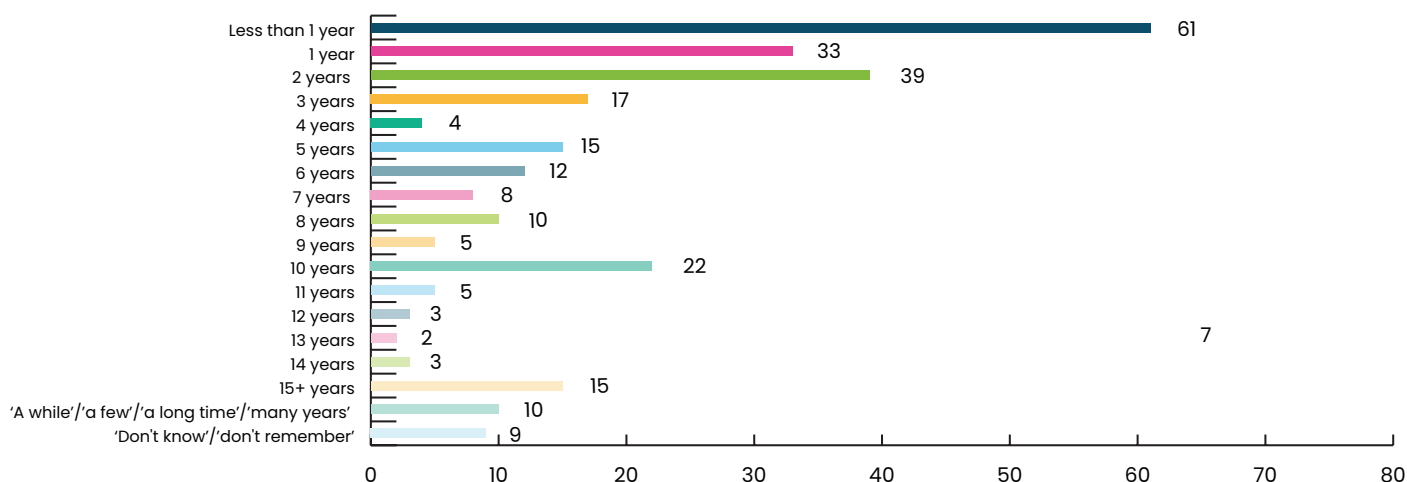
"As an older person I find it more difficult to access the building. I also have mobility problems." **PSS service user**

"The earlier venue was easier to access due to better connectivity. I usually walk to the venue, but if the weather is not nice, I have to get the bus – 2 buses, which makes it a bit less easy for me to reach." **MSH service user**

"There's no wheelchair accessibility in the building the group is based in, which could be a serious problem for anyone with mobility issues. Also, I don't think anyone's travel expenses are covered which makes it difficult to get to if you don't have much money." **Imagine service user**

Q9 How long have you been accessing this service?

273 people answered this question. They had been accessing services from as little as a week to as long as 28 years. Some had only had short-term engagement for specific courses, whilst others valued the ability to access a service over a long time. Almost a quarter (22.3%) had been using services for less than a year, with 39.5% using services for between 1 and 5 years. 12.8% of people had used services between 10 and 14 years, with 5.4% engaging with services for 15+ years.



The longest engagement was from a PSS service user (28 years), a MSH service user (24 years) and an Imagine service user (22 years).

Q10 What are the best things about this service?

We had 270 answers to this question.

By far the most mentioned word was 'staff'. 102 people specifically told us that the staff were crucial to their experience of the services.

"Friendly staff, made to feel like you matter." PSS service user

"The staff are amazing. The people I've met have made a positive impact on my life. The centre has provided the support I need." PSS service user

"The support and help I received from the staff. The encouragement to move on and try new things. The service made me feel more confident about myself." Roots service user

"The staff are friendly and welcoming and genuinely care for the service users." Roots service user

"The staff. My advocate supported me according to my needs. Because of my mobility she tends to book appointments over the phone. She followed up all the enquiries related with my issues. She made sure that I understood every step before she made any move. She is thoughtful, kind and knowledgeable." MSH service user

"I would say that the staff is the best thing about MSH – they make all the difference. I have never felt so welcome anywhere else and the fact that they are all from different cultural backgrounds and bilingual, it is easier for the service users to communicate with them. They are compassionate, kind, friendly and welcoming. They are very supportive and eager to help at all times." MSH service user

"The staff – they are so caring, thoughtful and supportive. Dead down to earth." Imagine service user

The second most mentioned thing was 'people' (63). This included fellow service-users, the opportunity to meet other people in similar circumstances, and socialising with others:

"Just meeting people and making friends basically." Imagine service user

"Safe spaces to share activities with people with similar problems who understand." PSS service user

"I like the community it brings together over shared interests, I think it can be very good for improving mental and physical health, providing someone with something to look forward to in their routine and mixing with other people who they can relate to." **Imagine service user**

"It is good to get out, I don't have much family so I get to see people." **Waythrough service user**

The third most mentioned thing was 'support' (52)

"They are there for you when you need help. Friendly and relaxed, better than more formal support. Better than any anti-depressant!" **PSS service user**

"Reassurance from staff. The community feeling. Feel supported learning how to deal with stress." **Roots service user**

"They support people in their difficult times." **MSH service user**

"Peer support which I missed so much." **MSH service user**

"The buzz you get from supporting others." **Waythrough service user**

"The ability to access support when needed easily, where it would take longer to get appointments with medical professionals. I can also have phone contact when needed." **Roots service user**

Other things which were mentioned frequently included: friendliness, activities, courses, safety, learning, advocacy.

Q11 What difference has this service made to your life? How has that changed over time? Are there times when you need it more than others?

264 people gave us examples of how the services had made a difference to them. They explained how services had helped and supported them and their mental health, even through life's most difficult times. Examples include:

"It has been my safe place, during my dark times. The people who work there listen, and actively listen, but never put pressure on me to disclose past issues that I have, and are still moving on from, to my future, a positive one!" **PSS service user**

"The service gave me a purpose of being me. Not afraid to talk or be scolded by what I say. My needs are ongoing and yes, I will contact the centre when life gets tough. I always feel a relief to have someone listen, direct you to what might help me. My life is full of health problems, and I also have a bulimic daughter/ADHD. I would be lost without PSS support." **PSS service user**

"It has stopped me taking my own life more than once." **PSS service user**

"I am able to get to work and cope with situations that I once struggled with as a result of calmness and clear thinking. Thanks to the therapies with the group. It has made a huge change to my life." **PSS service user**

"Has helped me with my confidence. To socialise with other people. Especially in the winter months when it is harder to get out and meet people." **Imagine service user**

"Yes, this group helps me greatly in resetting each week. I find, as the week progresses, I run out of steam and crash. With the help of Tuesday walks with nature and Wednesday meditation that I balance the better aspects of my week for a longer duration. I have my bad weeks, as does everyone, and the times when I want to go to groups the least due to anxiety etc are the times I reap the most rewards for them!" **Imagine service user**

"I would not be here without Imagine. I need Imagine in my life or no point me going on. They have empathy." **Imagine service user**

"Stopped me wanting to try suicide again." **Imagine service user**

"The service has made a huge difference to my life. I went on to do some voluntary work followed by a couple of online courses. With the help and support of the staff I was able to take on some seasonal work. I now have a permanent job all down to the staff giving me the encouragement and support I needed." **Roots service user**

"Opened up to new opportunities and ideas for the future. Currently feeling well and positive about myself and want to come off all my medication after 40+ years." **Roots service user**

"I have learned to swim which was something I really wanted to do and now I really enjoy." **MSH service user**

"It helped me to be connected with others and not be alone." **MSH service user**

"MSH made me feel I also belong here. I was feeling alone and isolated before I joined the women's group. It gave me a safe space to talk with like-minded people and understand each other. I liked the fact that MSH provided an exclusive women's only space for me because I was not comfortable being around unknown men." **MSH service user**

"It has helped by making me leave the house regularly, I was very isolated." **Waythrough service user**

"Wow, I leave the house, I talk to people, I value myself. At first I was very alone, I was so paranoid, full of meds, the usual story around mental health. I started attending the groups with Henry and the other staff, it helped that there was no pressure to change. Over time I started taking part in the trades and this helped hugely." **Waythrough service user**

"I am much better, that shocks me at times as I was so unwell." **Waythrough service user**

"I am out and about now, the old me was stuck in worrying about nothing. No friends, little contact with family. I feel better today, I value myself and look after myself better, never dreamt that I would say that 5 years ago." **Waythrough service user**

"I was a mess, constantly in out of hospital, using drugs/alcohol to make myself feel better. Now I help myself by attending group work, gyms, choirs, I have an active social life, and I am well. I access when I can, the staff call me to check in and offer events, I like that." **Waythrough service user**

Some people said that their need for services/relationship with services changed over time.

"It has improved my life, mental health. I have needed the service more at times." **PSS service user**

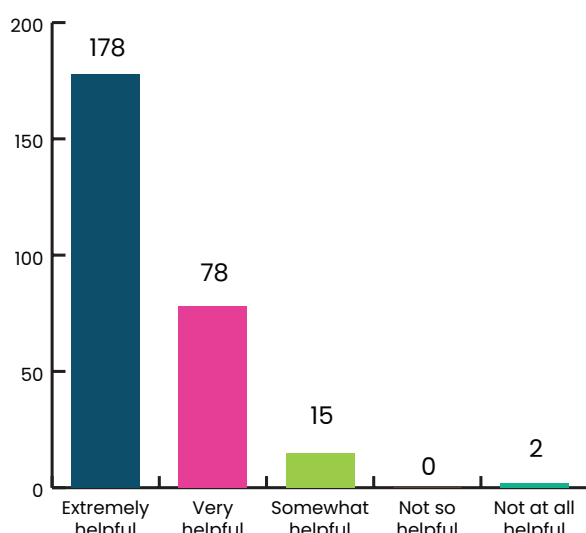
"I now volunteer with the group providing support rather than accessing it." **Imagine service user**

"It's has been a life-saving service and support for me when I have been very poorly and in ill health it has got my well-being and mental health back to a normal place, so I can get my life back on track. I have used more when I have had really big emotional and personal losses, and it has helped get me through the most difficult and challenging times of my life. I have used more within the last few years due to life events." **PSS service user**

"It has made me feel less isolated and helped with my self-confidence and self-worth. I find it helpful all the time but particularly helpful during times of greater than usual stress such as bereavement and physical health problems." **PSS service user**

Q12 To what extent do you feel this service has helped you maintain or improve your sense of mental health and wellbeing?

Expanding on the previous question, 178 people, a clear majority (65.2%), said that the service had been 'Extremely Helpful' in maintaining their sense of mental health and wellbeing. A further 78 (28.6%) felt it had been 'Helpful'.



112 people made further comments, including:

"Would have no sort of life without Imagine." **Imagine service user**

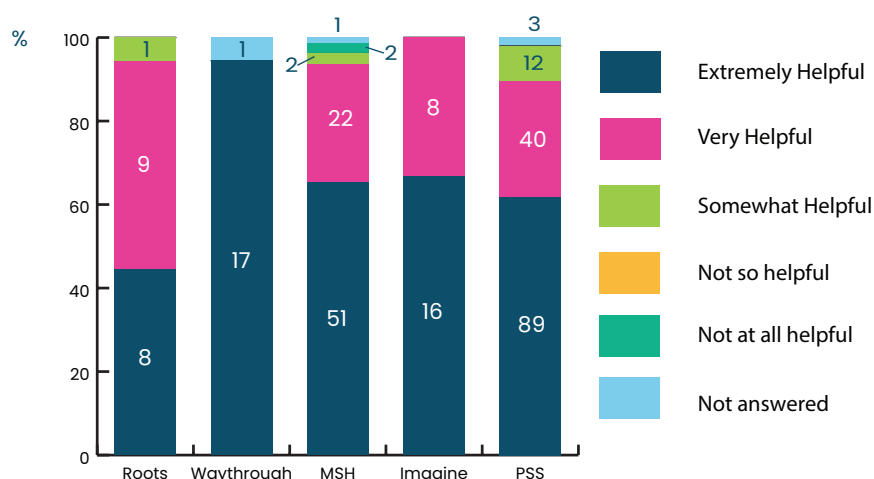
"Is the only support I have, without it there are no people in my life, family or friends." **PSS service user**

"Since I know MSH will help me with almost everything, I don't worry about things at all now. I know I will get help whenever I reach out to them, and it has made my life a lot easier." **MSH service user**

"I am reducing medication, no sleeping tablets. I feel that I have a life again, it has been so long that I was ill." **Waythrough service user**

"It has enabled me to have confidence in joining the activities at Joseph Lappin Centre i.e. 'Sway with Ray' (exercise)." **Roots service user**

Where people expressed dissatisfaction with services it was because of venue/location/ accessibility rather than staff, services on offer, or other service users.



Looking at the above data disaggregated by service provider, it's clear that the pattern of finding the support provided by services either 'Extremely Helpful' or 'Very Helpful' is consistent across the organisations, although Waythrough had the highest relative rating.

Q13 Do you feel that using this service makes you less likely to use other mental health support services (e.g. GP, Crisis Care, A&E, other services)?'

Almost three-quarters of the 147 people who responded to this question (204, 73.9%) said that it made them less likely to need support from NHS services or other mental health support services.

"Because of the staff and the constant support, I don't feel the need to go anywhere else." **MSH service user**

"Strongly (...) since I become a member of MSH I stopped seeing other medical professionals." **MSH service user**

"This service takes a huge burden off the GP and hospitals." **PSS service user**

"Yes, I haven't had to go to the hospital ever since MSH took me as a service user. It has made a positive change in my mental health that I am now more confident and relaxed. As a result, I don't need to access any other mental health support services." **MSH service user**

"I went to A&E over night last year because I wanted to die. Without PSS my life would have been impossible to bear. The groups help to alleviate the symptoms as does the human contact. Without PSS more people would end up in A&E or hospital." **PSS service user**

Only 35 people (12.7%) felt it would not reduce their need for other services, but this was often for specific reasons, such as providing a complementary service to clinical care:

"No, it's a perfect difference from my medical care, more relaxed and informal. If I ever needed to, I'd contact the crisis service, but my GP had also been amazing in supporting my related medical needs." **PSS service user**

"It helps to bridge the 2-year waiting list to be seen by an NHS psychotherapist to

treat C-PTSD. Stalling further mental deterioration through meaningful interactions with others.” **PSS service user**

In other cases, people relied mainly or partially on clinical services but supplemented them with community-based support:

“No, I use A & E, hospital and GP more.” **MSH service user**

“It doesn’t make me less likely to use anything, but it’s not the fault of the service or people running it, it’s just there’s only so much you can address so if you need a medical professional then you will still require NHS services.” **Imagine service user**

37 people said they weren’t sure. Again, this tended to be because they felt a need both for clinical and non-clinical services:

“Both, as both are needed. GP is vital and I share with them. My PSS support (is) my ‘go to’.” **PSS service user**

Again, looking at disaggregated data shows that the clear majority of service users across the five services felt that they were less likely to require other types of support because of their engagement with mental health day service provision.

Q14 How could the service be improved?

243 people answered this question. The most frequent suggestion was:

More/more varied activities (40), groups (16) or sessions (10):

“More courses for the long-term mental health customers/users.” **PSS service user**

“The service could benefit from more trainers practiced in the arts to add variety to the timetable e.g. musicians and writers. They could supplement the existing activities run by staff and volunteers.” **PSS service user**

“Maybe encouragement to sign up for other courses to try out. Maybe a programme set up so that the information isn’t lost. E.g. follow-on course from Anxiety. Six/eight weeks sometimes isn’t long enough. Maybe a follow-on course a bit differently structured from first one as an example.” **Roots service user**

“I need more specific courses such as learning social etiquette, communicating and listening effectively and setting boundaries, etc. Which PSS don’t offer. I would attend more often if these sessions were offered. I need these types of sessions the most to help me feel more confident and safe for returning to the employment environment one day. Please, please, please do these courses to help provide us with tools for entering the workplace so that we can contribute to society effectively, instead of being a drain on the taxpayer!!” **PSS service user**

More funding (27):

“MORE FUNDING. Ongoing, never ending. This would allow more groups, variety depending on what you like. PSS have such a strong connection with those that use their service. Any improvements usually revolved around budgets. They have struggled, made cuts, and made the best of the service possible.” **PSS service user**

"More funding – bringing these services into GP practices where they actually know the needs of their patients and can support the deliverer to produce a programme that is in line with what the GP believes would benefit their patients." **Roots service user**

"More funding so that users can go to more courses and go to all courses weekly instead of fortnightly. The crucial matter is that the service is available to sufferers. I can't explain how bad life is with mental illness. Without PSS we would not make it in life. We would end up in A&E or hospital and generally living an unbearable existence without some important ways of improving life through PSS." **PSS service user**

"Because of funding constraints, the service has not been able to provide all the groups and courses it once did, and the service has suffered as a result, but it still performs miracles on what funding it has. I have witnessed how not just myself, but other service users have thrived and recovered from having the worse mental health to gaining improved mental health and wellbeing. With more funding the service could cast its net wider and deliver the service to more service users across the city." **PSS service user**

More staff (11):

"MSH is part of my life, and I would like to see it improved, to have more activities in place and more staff." **MSH service user**

There was a recognition that these three wishes were related, and that more activities and staff were reliant on more funding:

"More money to maintain the premises, more certainty about future funding so they can keep the wonderful staff; team are always rushing across the service. So, more staff and sessions please." **PSS service user**

"More groups, but they'd need more funding for this. More stability. Staff don't know if they will keep their jobs from one year to the next. Also, I don't know if the service will end from one year to the next – not good for my mental health." **PSS service user**

"More staff, more resources for more courses" **PSS service user**

"The targeted service users are a very diverse bunch, just to adapt to that it is the staff that make it work. The system seems to be always under pressure, funding, changing rules, and rules that have blocked them in aiding support." **Imagine Service User**

"This service was good and the tutor was excellent. If the funding was increased more innovative programmes with a more creative dimension could be developed." **Roots service user**

Other suggestions included:

More 121/personal/long-term support

"offering more personal support" **MSH service user**

"More support on a 1-1 basis" **PSS service user**

"Longer support as I've been waiting a long time for NHS support." **Imagine service user**

"The time limit of service users is beyond stupid though. If a person has an issue that can be fixed in that time, then they can shrug and carry on with their life. But anyone that would really need the help, well you cannot put a timeline on that, each person's trauma is different and so is their healing process, months, years, decades you can't judge that, they can't, neither can the therapists but forcing them to do it like a trick on demand is so unrealistic I cannot even give words to it." **Imagine Service User**

"The programmes are too short and unrealistic in what can be expected to be achieved. It's ridiculous to think that after 6-8 weeks = 12 or 16 hours, a person life would be changed to any great extent, no matter how good the programme or the tutor." **Roots service user**

Wider access to support:

"Everyone who wants support to recover should be helped to access the service." **Waythrough service user**

"More centres maybe, i.e. in the NORTH END of Liverpool. More GREEN related space i.e. like the (Dutch) Barn." **PSS service user**

More accessible facilities:

"A central hub that is easy to access via public transport with parking. I like the fact that the book club was held in the Central Library for instance because it's an accessible building, has good transport links and parking. Plus, it's a public building so normalises the activity." **Imagine service user**

"Move to a different building, or much safer area like before so people can access easily and come without fear." **MSH service user**

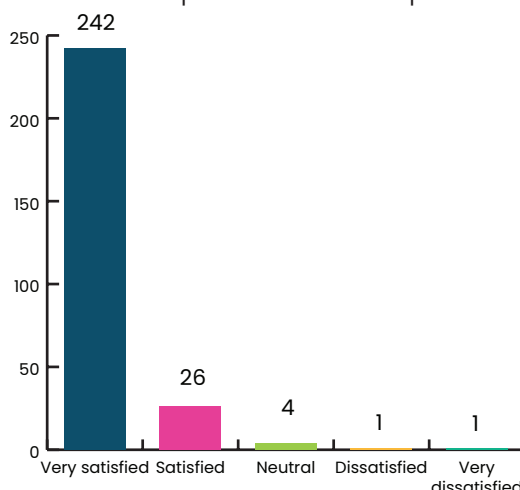
Improved language support, and specific support for BME communities:

"MSH is the only service that provides support to BME, and I would like to see this service thrive." **MSH service user**

"It would be great if we could get more language support." **MSH service user**

Q15 How happy are you with the staff at the service?

Of the 274 people who responded to this question, an overwhelming 242 (88.3%) said they were 'very satisfied' with staff. A further 26 (9.5%) were 'satisfied'. This, and the answers to the previous question, indicates that the staff at all the providers are a particularly valuable asset.



153 people added further comments. The 6 most frequently used descriptions of staff were:

- Helpful (30)
- Friendly (15)
- Supportive (15)
- Welcoming (14)
- Kind (13)
- Care(ing) (12)

Other adjectives used to describe staff were: knowledgeable, professional, great, brilliant, trustworthy, listening, patient, dedicated, excellent, thoughtful, approachable, genuine, understanding, nice, amazing, respectful, wonderful, fantastic.

"I trust the staff. I am respected AND I RESPECT THEM!" **PSS service user**

"They are excellent at what they do. Better than any GP or psychiatrist." **PSS service user**

"Each and every one of them is totally dedicated in what they do, and I trust them with my life." **PSS service user**

"Cool, calm and collected staff! Much respect to them as mental health is a difficult area made harder by funding cuts." **PSS service user**

"Without the dedicated staff the service would (have) collapsed. The staff is incredible and due to their hard work the service is flowing and progressing." **MSH service user**

"Although I struggle with my language but the staff is very supportive. They speak slow and make sure that I understand the information." **MSH service user**

"I feel it's the staff that makes all the difference to the organisation. They are very passionate, genuinely caring and understanding. I've often been surprised by the way they patiently listen and find solutions to the problems. If not for these lovely staff, the service would not have felt so welcoming." **MSH service user**

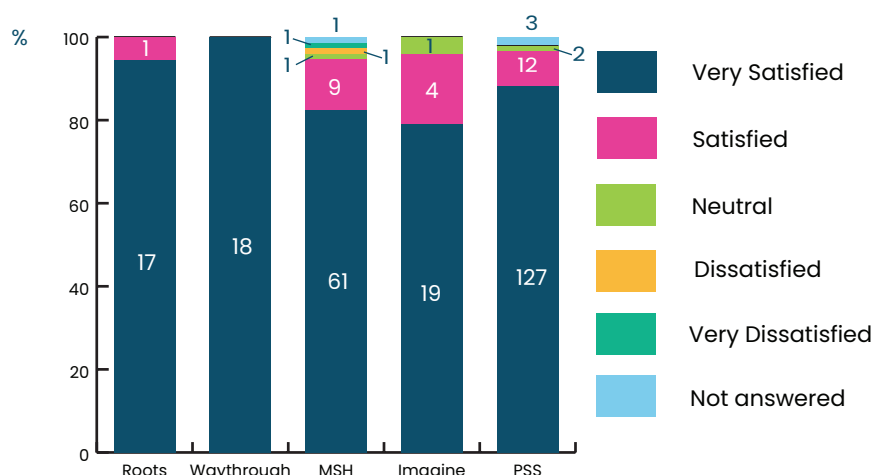
"Big help these are, I am not very good with words, but they make it easy for me and that is good." **Waythrough service user**

"What can I say? These people helped me change, they gave me belief in myself, and they did by supporting me, that is the difference for me." **Waythrough service user**

"They are all down to earth individuals who have lived experience as well as professional qualifications. They are warm and friendly and really care about their clients as people." **Imagine service user**

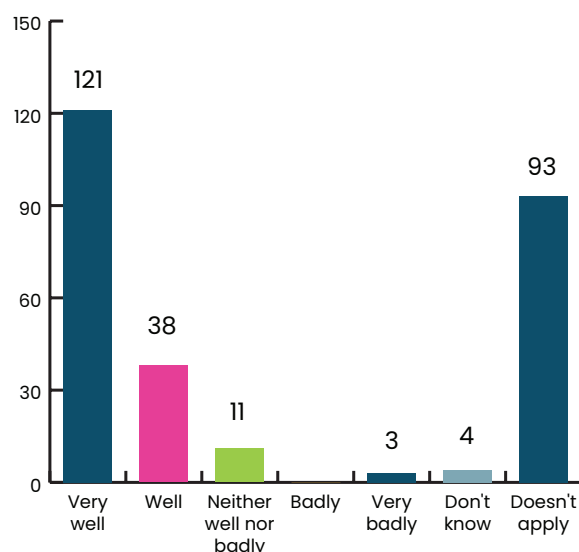
"Helpful and always available to talk with as they are qualified professionals." **Roots service user**

Looking at the data by service provider again shows that the vast majority of responses across all five services were in the 'Very satisfied' category.



Q16 If you have any additional support needs (for example with communication, mobility, or because of neurodiversity or a learning disability etc.) how well do you feel that this service supports you with this?

Just over a third of the 270 people who answered this question (93, 34.4%) said it did not apply to them. Of the remaining 177 people (44.8%), said their additional needs were supported 'very well', and a further 38 (14.1%) said they were supported 'well'.



We received 83 further comments, mainly focused on support received around neurodivergence, disability, and communication:

"They provide support with my dyslexia, ADHD and help with form filling." PSS service user

"Helped me find drink and drug use support." PSS service user

"Always get language support and basic training for my personal growth." MSH service user

"I have communication difficulties as English is not my first language. Mary Seacole House has help me to improve and make every effort to communicate with me."

MSH service user

"I require language support and most of the staff at MSH are bilingual, which is very beneficial."

MSH service user

"Mobility/disabilities. Always make me feel a normal person even though some days I'm worn out, tired and struggling most days."

PSS service user

"I am autistic, and they make sure that my communication difficulties are minimised and well supported. I am also of restricted mobility, and they have ensured that their two suburban sites (Dutch Barn and The Avenue) are fully accessible."

PSS service user

"My social skills are not best but just being diagnosed with Autism it helps."

Imagine service user

"I have problems with sharp lights and my advocate made sure that the meeting room has dim lights which suited my needs."

MSH service user

"I have hearing problem due to deafness in my ear. But the staff at MSH take special care to ensure I hear and understand what is said. They are always there to help me with interpretation and support when I have to contact other services or organisations."

MSH service user

"I suffer from severe OCD and the staff are helpful and understanding as it's a debilitating condition."

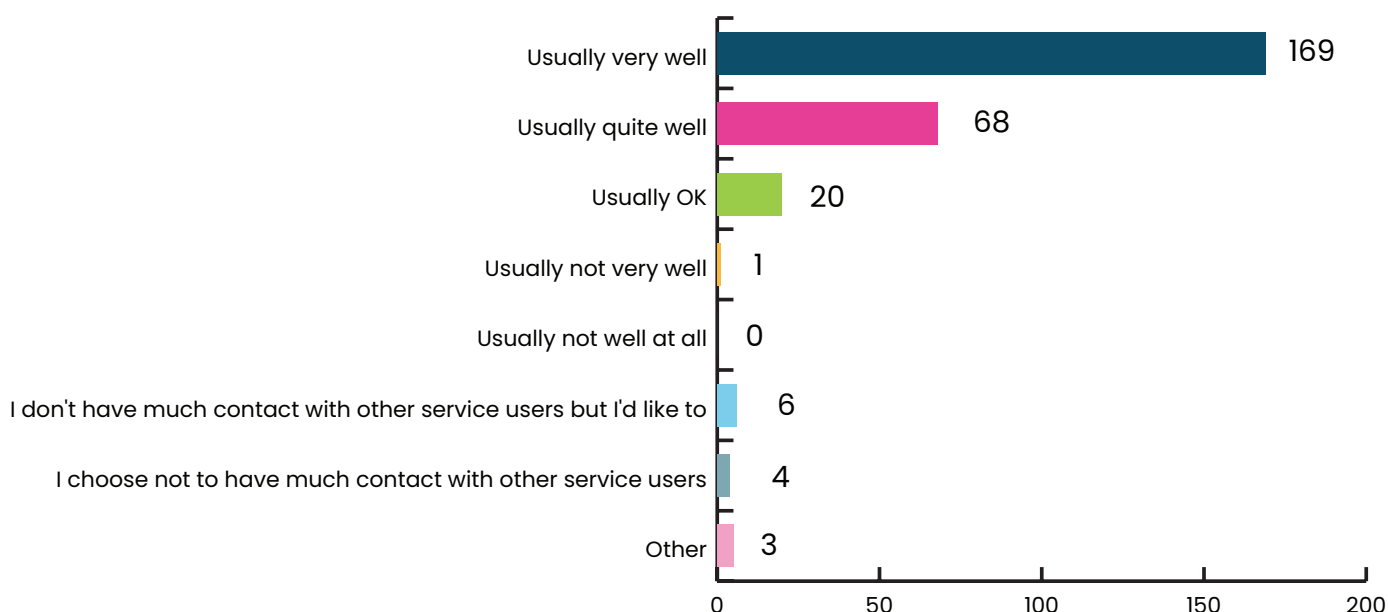
Roots service user

"I feel a bit more mentally well. And feel my communications skills are getting better. I still need to work on a few skills I learn from services."

Imagine service user

Q17 How well do you get on with the other people who use this service?

Again, of the 273 people who answered this question, a clear majority got on 'usually very well' (169, 61.9%) or 'usually quite well' (68, 24.9%) with their fellow service users. Another indicator of safety within the services.



91 people made further comments. Examples include:

"I find that I am not the only person with these problems. Other people that attend have other problems and share their thoughts and anxieties." **PSS service user**

"I find my same language people makes me to talk." **MSH service user**

"As a service user and volunteer I get on with everyone. I think it's important to strive for keeping the Wellbeing Centres as the welcoming environments that they are, without this it puts people on edge and is not good for those with anxiety wishing to access the service." **PSS service user**

"The women's group are very friendly and kind. All multicultural and from different backgrounds and nationalities." **MSH service user**

"The service users I have met have been amazing and supportive and I feel we all have different qualities and experiences to share and support each other and it's a safe place to divulge any issues both social and personal and a great way to meet genuine and supportive friends." **PSS service user**

"I have made some friends at the groups and continue to enjoy meeting and learning about new people when before I was hesitant to think about leaving the house." **PSS service user**

"Good mutual support from service users." **Roots service user**

"I try to mix with the other people in the service and get on quite well." **Imagine service user**

Although survey respondents were overwhelmingly comfortable with their fellow service users, there were some words of caution even from a service user who usually got on quite well with their service user peer-group.

"Sometimes you can tend to 'overshare' or hear things which can upset and trigger people. Group sizes and confidentiality are very important." **PSS service user**

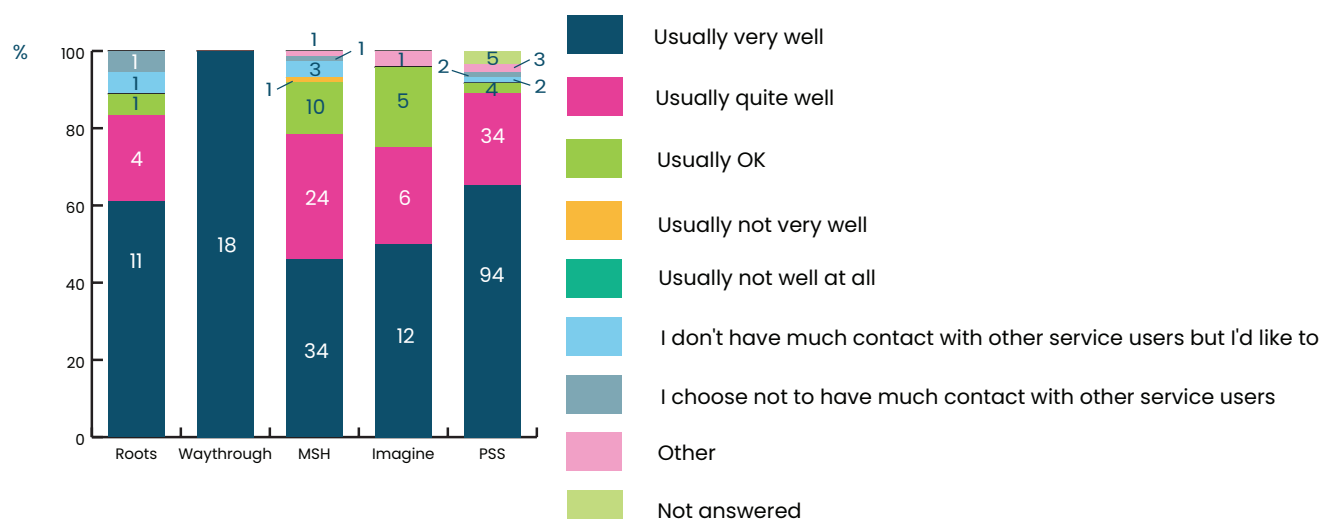
One person who answered 'Other', described how difficult mixing with others can be for some people.

"I do not mix well, trust issues, have to get to know people." **Imagine service user**

As did someone who answered, 'I choose not to have much contact with other service users.'

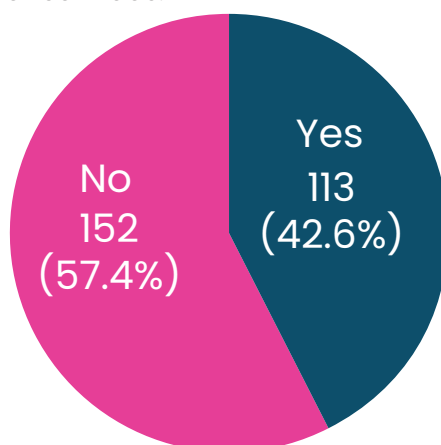
"I'm still getting used to feeling safe around people." **PSS service user**

Data broken down by each organisation again shows that service users in each service told us they get on 'Usually very well' with others who use the service.

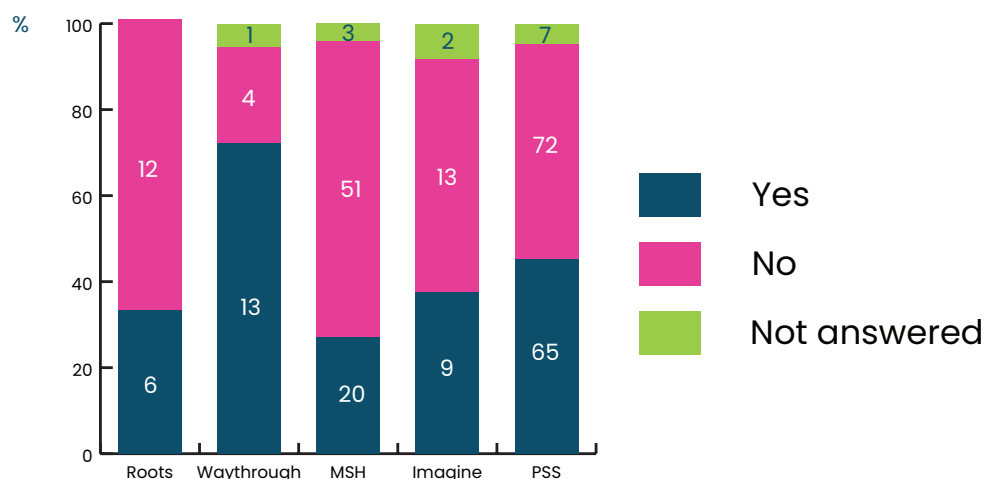


Q18 Do you access any other groups, activities or support outside of this mental health service?

Whilst the majority of the 265 survey respondents who answered this question (152, 57.4%) said they did not access any other support for their mental wellbeing, a significant number (113, 42.6%) were also in touch with other services.



The spread of answers across the five organisations was similar but the service provider whose users were least likely to use other services was MSH, perhaps reflecting the particular cultural support needs of many of their service users.



Q19 If “yes” you attend another services or group too, please give details such as what you access, how often etc.

127 people told us more about why they also attend other services. Reasons included:

- To access services or activities not available at the service they were providing feedback about
- To access similar services or activities – on other days of the week or at other locations

Some service users attended more than one of the 5 services covered in this report, e.g.

“PSS – mindfulness group once a week.” Imagine service user

“Imagine independence. Once a week – reading group.” PSS service user

12 people, all of them PSS service users, said that they also attended Kindred Minds activities. This may be because both have premises at Lee Valley Millennium Centre, and are closely linked.

“Kindred Minds, chair yoga – fabulous for mind and body. Once weekly, more would be great.” PSS service user

Activities or organisations that people attended elsewhere were wide-ranging and included:

Reading groups, creative writing, art groups, choir, drama group, dance group, knit and natter, history group, sewing, yoga, craft, orchestra, tai-chi, chi gong, holistic therapies, walking group, football, Homeless Football, badminton, rugby, exercise groups, gardening, strength and condition classes at Lifestyles gyms, aqua aerobics, Stroll for the Soul.

However, they also attended groups such as Asylum Link, Al-Anon, domestic violence support, WHISC, Whitechapel New Beginnings, food banks, Sean’s Place, Paul’s Place, Andy’s Man Club, Everton in the Community Dad’s Group, Everton in the Community Women’s Group, Mind Connect, Student Support Services, YPAS, RASA, Peer Talk, Age Concern, Bridge Chapel, Collective Encounters, Soul Survivor, church, pensioners’ groups, Citizens Advice, AIDS UK. Some were also attending, or on the waiting list for Mersey Care NHS Talking Therapies (previously Talk Liverpool) or Life Rooms, Moss House. Others specifically mentioned their GP.

Some were also involved in voluntary work, either at the services covered in this report or elsewhere.

Not everyone had had uniformly positive experiences, however. This service user with global majority heritage said:

“Tried ‘Life Rooms’. It has good offerings but they didn’t accommodate for my acquired neurodivergence which made it hard for me to contribute and learn. I did the improving self-esteem course. I have my eye on the confidence and assertiveness one next. I’ve had an induction with Mary Seacole House also but the staff member responsible for me didn’t show up for my original induction and hasn’t bothered sharing the timetable of offerings which is really poor form. I want to see what they can do for me, but they’re not fussed in having me as a service user because I can speak English well.” PSS service user

Q20 If “no” you don’t attend any other service/activities, what has stopped you from getting involved with groups, activity or support outside of this service? (e.g. don’t know about any, cost, other commitments, anxious about meeting new people etc)

175 people responded to this question. 30 people mentioned anxiety/being anxious:

“My anxiety stops me from wanting to go to groups with lots of people. I also have a lot of problems with motivation.” **Roots service user**

“Suffer with social anxiety, ADHD. Struggling with groups. Will hopefully get there at some point. To go on some group outings, events.” **PSS service user**

“Anxious about meeting new people. Takes me a while to go to new places with new people. I struggle with some environments.” **PSS service user**

“I am anxious if other people will listen to me or understand my needs.” **MSH service user**

“For years I have been isolated and my anxious getting in the way.” **Roots service user**

However, some service users had been able to overcome their anxiety, e.g.

“I am able to manage my anxiety, and I am now in full time employment.” **Roots service user**

7 people said that they did not have time to access any other services:

“By the time I take my grandson to school, then do some cleaning, then seeing my sister, then back to pick my grandson from school and looking after him till he goes home.” **PSS service user**

“Time constraints and other commitments.” **MSH service user**

“Time. I am a full time carer for my wife.” **PSS service user**

Other people mentioned lack of awareness of other services, and barriers to attending, such as travel costs and distance:

“I do not know about any other services” **Imagine service user**

“Travel is off-putting to services/activities. Costs – taxi, long bus journeys, then a walk in unfamiliar areas. Also, the building of new places can be daunting and ‘clinical’, can I get out for fresh air, a ‘breather’ if I need to?” **PSS service user**

But for some people, the services they were already accessing were enough, or provided a safe space:

“I don’t need any other services/activities.” **MSH service user**

“After coming to MSH I don’t feel the need to go anywhere else.” **MSH service user**

“I don’t like change I feel safe in this environment.” **PSS service user**

Key Findings and Recommendations (Service Users)

Key Findings

When comparing the feedback from service users in 2025 to that from service users who answered our previous survey in 2019, the key findings are strikingly similar.

The 2019 findings are listed below, with further comments based on the 2025 survey.

	2019 Findings	2025 Findings
1	People really value the ability to socialise with other people and the support of caring staff.	This remains the case. The importance of socialising with a peer group who share similar experiences and challenges is clear. As is the positive impact of engagement with caring, skilled and knowledgeable staff.
2	People appear to enjoy general activities such as art and cookery classes. It is possible that these are more popular than mental-health specific activities, but this needs further investigation.	It also remains the case that people rate arts and crafts based, practical skills and exercise-based activities highly. However, these tend to be valued in combination with courses focussing on managing and maintaining mental health.
3	People also value having a safe and nonjudgemental space and the services give them an opportunity to get out of the house.	Again, this remains true and relates to the importance of socialising with others and opportunities to (re)engage in everyday activities such as getting on a bus and going for a coffee and a chat.
4	People feel that the services have enabled them to improve or maintain their mental health.	There is clear evidence that not only does this remain the case but in many cases the services have been life-changing or life-saving.
5	The services also help to build people's confidence and allow them to develop friendships.	This remains true. There is also evidence that increased confidence has enabled some service users to become volunteers and provide support to others. Others have reduced or stopped taking medication due to increased wellbeing and/or need to use NHS services less frequently. Improved confidence and new friendships were particularly noted as being important to people who feel marginalised due to e.g. not speaking English as a first language.

6	People would like to see the services extended to include a greater range of activities, longer opening hours and increased funding.	There is still a clear wish for more of the existing groups/activities, an expanded 'menu' of groups/activities, more funding and more staff to deliver this.
7	A majority of people do not access any other activities outside of the services. This is due to anxiety, particularly about meeting new people, and also cost.	This also remains the case. In fact, 57.3% of respondents in 2019 didn't access other services. In 2025 this figure was 57.4%. The main reasons given now are anxiety, meeting new people, accessibility and lack of awareness of other services.

Conclusion and Action Points

The feedback we received from service users of all 5 services was overwhelmingly favourable, with people expressing their support for the services, staff and opportunities provided. Access to services was mostly relatively easy and people told us that they want the ability to access support as often as they require it, for as long as they need it.

People generally felt safe, respected and heard by services, and had frequently formed friendships and community with fellow service users, all of which had increased their confidence and, in some cases, in their own words, saved their lives.

Based on the feedback received, we therefore suggest that there is a need to:

1. Seek to maintain funding to this area of work and increase it where possible. The need has been clearly demonstrated, and is likely to increase, based on current demand.
2. Improve communications between the 5 service providers involved in delivering these services, and between them and statutory service providers – including Mersey Care's Life Rooms – to focus on information-sharing, reducing duplication of services, improved referrals and the best possible outcomes for service users. Service user representation and stories should also be central to this process, whether through a regular cross-sector forum or other means.
3. Improve the accuracy of referrals by services and commissioners working together to consider options for a 'One Stop'/'No Wrong Door' referral route to services, through which self-referrals, and referrals from statutory agencies – including the NHS – or external service providers, can be assessed and forwarded to a suitable Mental Health Day Service provider, or providers, as appropriate. This could also help to re-refer existing service users if their needs or interests change.
4. Provide access to a central pool of Support Staff who can assist service users in accessing external services/support and navigating services across the existing mental health day services offer.
5. Continue to support the use of shared, accessible, facilities across the city.
6. Whilst requiring all services to retain a commitment to supporting a diverse client base, recognise the unique cultural competencies of MSH.

7. Support Waythrough to grow its service user base through closer collaboration with the wider time banking sector and encouraging closer collaboration with other local service providers such that service users across all Liverpool mental health day provision have more opportunities to use, swap and share their skills including through the timebank.
8. Review any blanket requirements for service users to leave services after set time periods, and deal with service user need on an individual basis – except where people access services to take part in specific time-limited courses. In this case, ensure that they receive tailored signposting and support to access other services if required on completion of the course.
9. Consider ways in which training opportunities could be shared across all relevant service providers; whether delivered by the NHS, Liverpool City Council, voluntary sector providers or others. This should include training delivered by the 5 organisations covered by this report, including service users as well as staff.
10. Continue to recognise that the voluntary sector services provided by Imagine Independence, Liverpool Roots Trust, Mary Seacole House, Person Shaped Support and Waythrough are more than an 'add-on' to statutory services, or a 'holding' place for people waiting to access NHS support. They offer a unique opportunity to find support, safety, friendship and tools for dealing with life's challenges, as well as chances to share skills more widely and to support others.
11. Healthwatch Liverpool notes that PSS and MSH are members of and attend our monthly Community Engagement Board (CEB) and would like to extend an invitation to Imagine, Roots, and Waythrough to become CEB members and/or to explore ways in which we can capture the experiences of their service users in relation to the wider health and social care sectors.

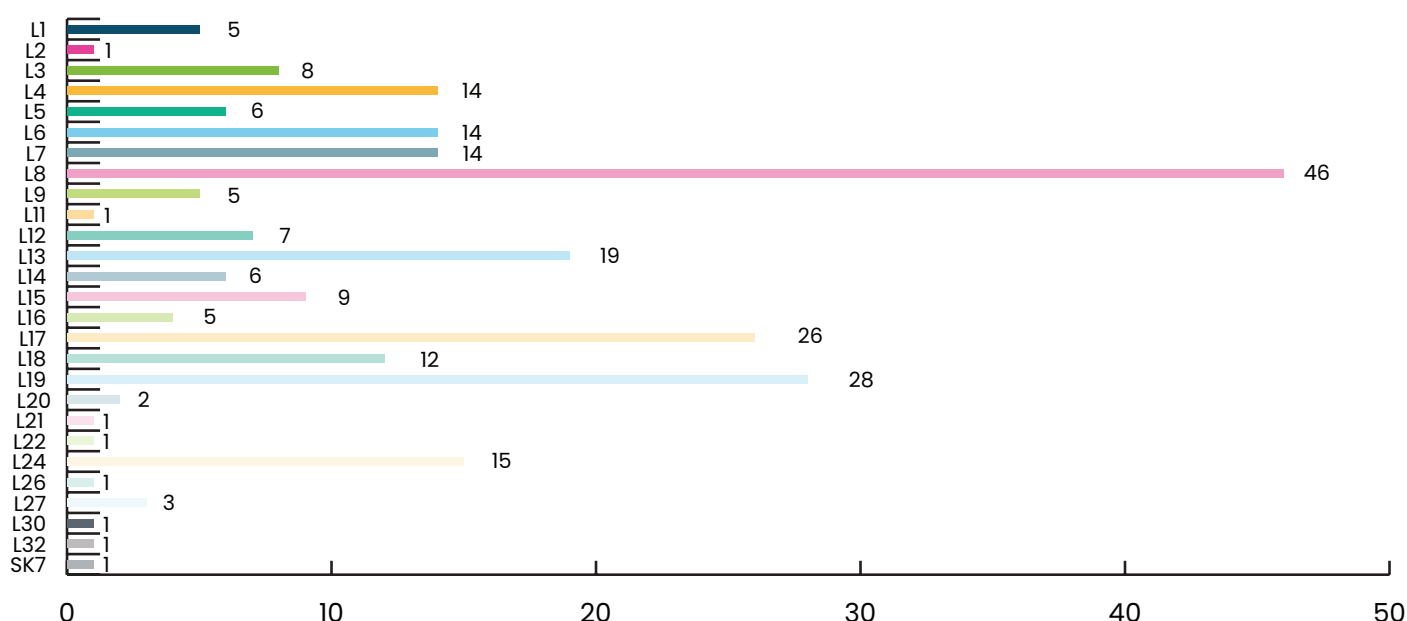
Note: These Action Points apply across both reports. Staff and service users expressed very similar aspirations in their responses. We believe that service user and staff needs, as expressed in this engagement, are therefore closely linked and should not be separated.

Demographic information

We were interested to know some anonymous information about the people who answered the survey, to see what we could learn from it about who uses local mental health day services. The information below provides a summary of the information that survey respondents shared with us. It may not be representative of all service users.

Q21 What is the first part of your postcode? (e.g. L8, L24)

We received 251 responses. Of these, service users were most likely to live in the L8, L19 and L17 areas (Toxteth, Garston and Aigburth) but there was representation from across the city, and one person came from Stockport.



It is not clear from this information whether people are more likely to attend services/opportunities, or to be referred to them by e.g. their GP, if they are in their local area, and perhaps have fewer barriers to attending, such as public transport routes.

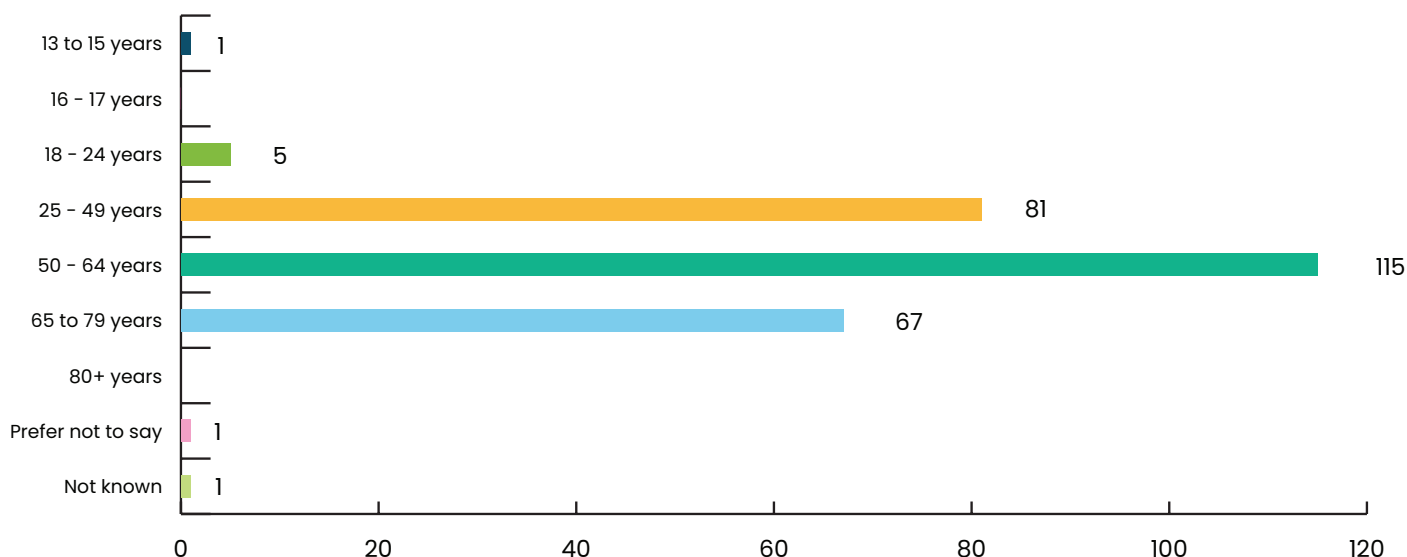
We asked services for the postcodes from which they typically deliver activities, and these included:

Service	Postcodes of Service Bases
Imagine	L1, L2, L3, L6, L7, L9, L11, L15, L17, L24
MSH	L8
PSS Wellbeing Centres	L3, L19, L25
Roots	L13, L3
Waythrough	Various – depending on the traded activities

There would seem to be at least some correlation between referrals and service users addresses with, for instance, Roots service users mainly coming from L12, L13 and L14 (close to the Joseph Lappin Centre, Old Swan), and L5 and L6 (close to the Roots Trust base in Everton), whilst 50% of MSH service users who responded to the survey had an L8 postcode, close to the MSH base on Upper Parliament Street and their other main location at The Florrie.

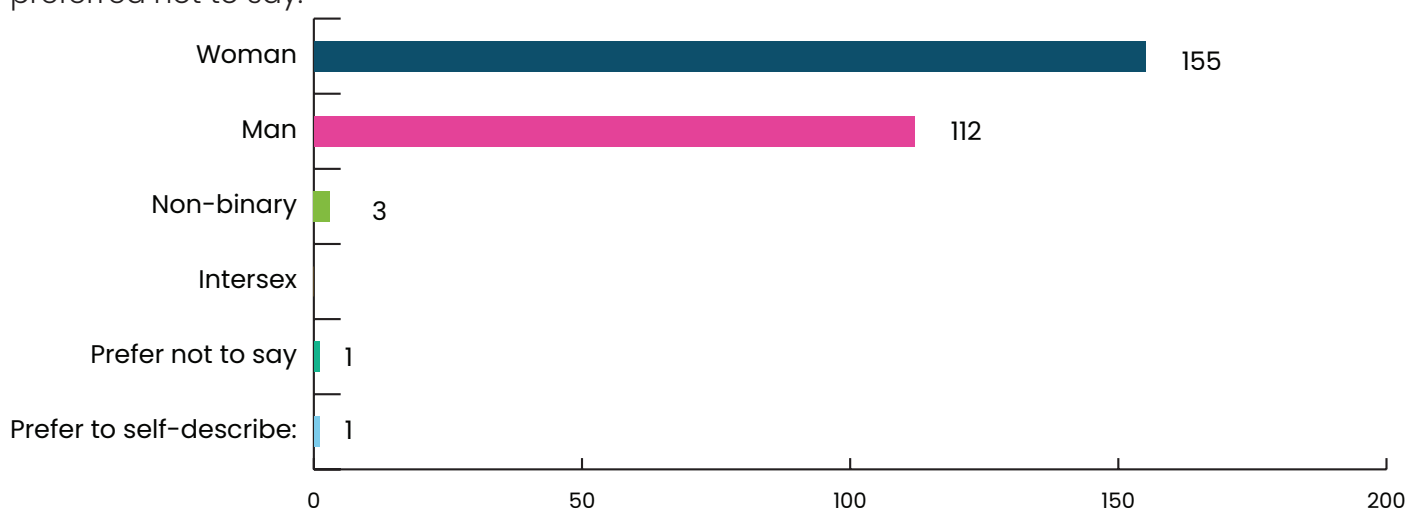
Q22 Please tell us your age

271 people answered this question and 115 of them (42.4%) were aged 50–64, with a quarter being 65–79. However, close to a third were aged 25–49. We would expect there to be relatively few under 25s using these services as this group may be more likely to be supported through CAMHS or student services; even accounting for the PSS text support service for 18–25-year-olds. One person said they were aged 13–15 but this seems unlikely given that the services this report is focused on are aimed at adults.



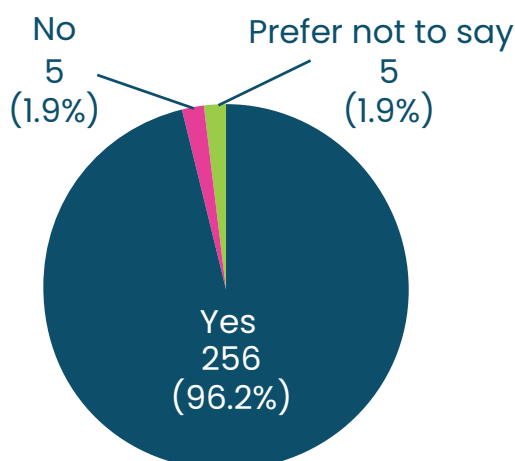
Q23 Please tell us your gender

Of the 272 people who answered this question, there were more women (155, 57%) than men (112, 41.2%) with 3 non-binary people (1.1%), one who preferred to self-describe, and one who preferred not to say.



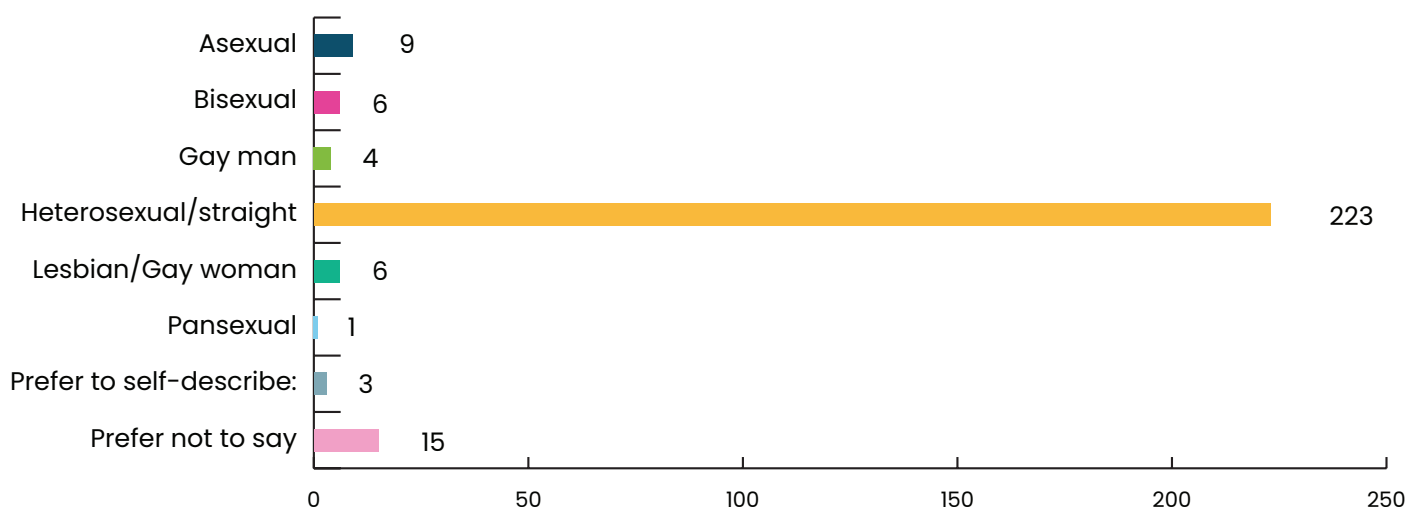
Q24 Is your gender identity the same as your sex recorded at birth?

Whilst the vast majority of the 266 who answered this question (256, 96.2%) identified with their sex recorded at birth, 5 people (1.9%) did not, and 5 (1.9%) preferred not to say.



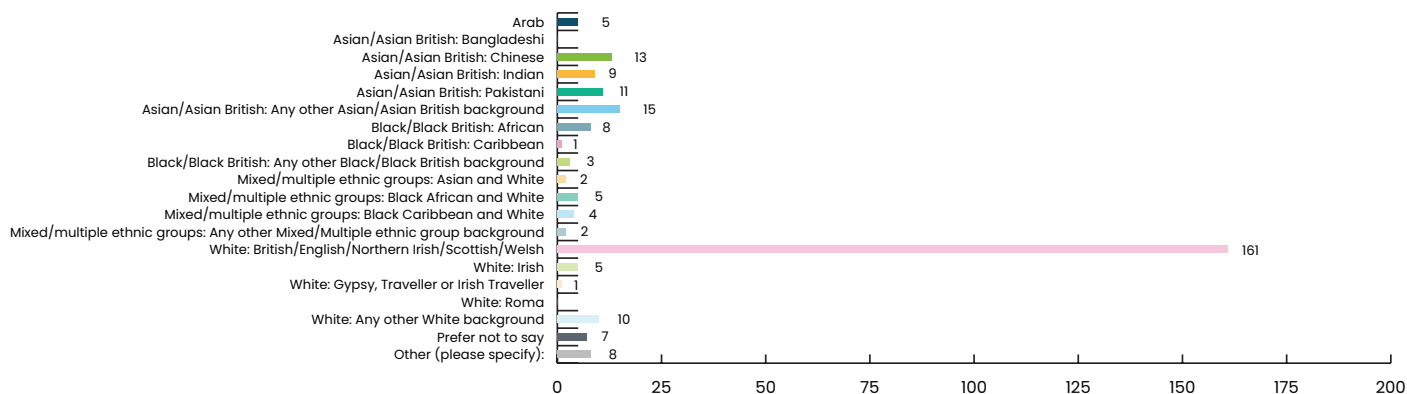
Q25 Please tell us which sexual orientation you identify with

267 people answered this question, of whom a significant majority (223, 83.5%) were heterosexual/straight. However, at least 26 people (9.7%) identified as being part of the LGBTQIA+ spectrum, with an additional 3 people (1.1%) preferring to self-describe and 15 (5.6%) preferring not to say.



Q26 Please select your ethnicity

We received 270 responses to this question. Whilst approximately three-fifths (161, 59.63%) of respondents were 'White: British/English/Northern Irish/Scottish/Welsh', there was a wide range of ethnicities included, with the next most common ethnicities being 'Asian/Asian British: Any other Asian/Asian British background' (15, 5.56%), 'Asian/Asian British: Chinese' (13, 4.81%) and 'Asian/Asian British: Pakistani' (11, 4.07%).

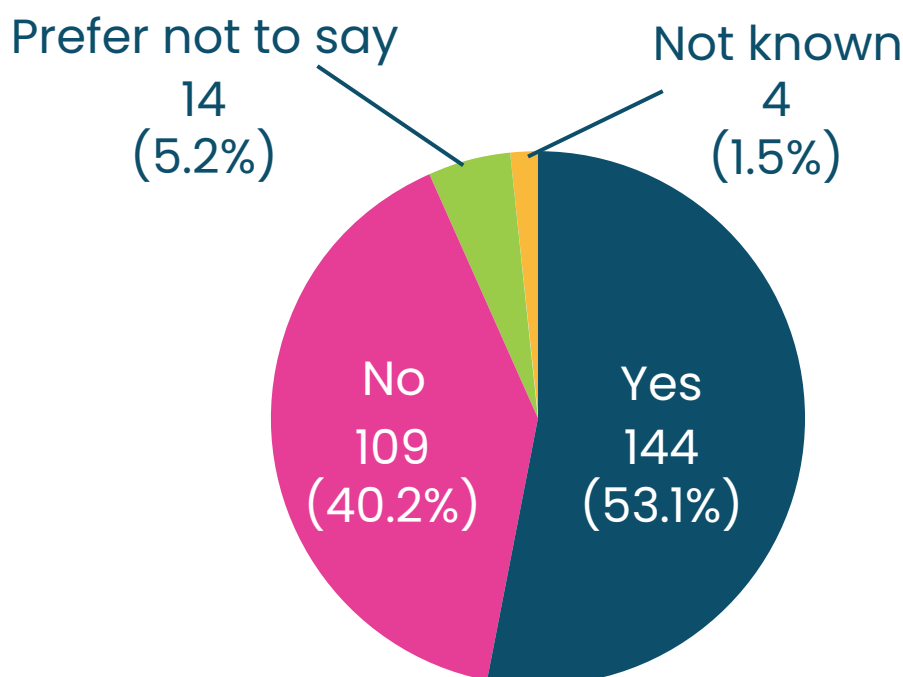


Of these groups, all 26 of those identifying as 'Asian/Asian British: Any other Asian/Asian British background', or 'Asian/Asian British: Pakistani' were MSH service users; as were 11 of the 12 people who selected one of the three 'Black' categories ('Black/Black British: African', 'Black/Black British: Caribbean' and 'Black/Black British: Any other Black/Black British background'); similarly, 9 of the 13 people identifying as 'Asian/Asian British: Chinese' were also MSH service users. This clearly indicates how important this particular service is to people from these groups.

8 people chose to self-identify as: Scouse, Latina, Kurdistan, Left Blank, Latin, English, 'White freckled!' and Irish descent.

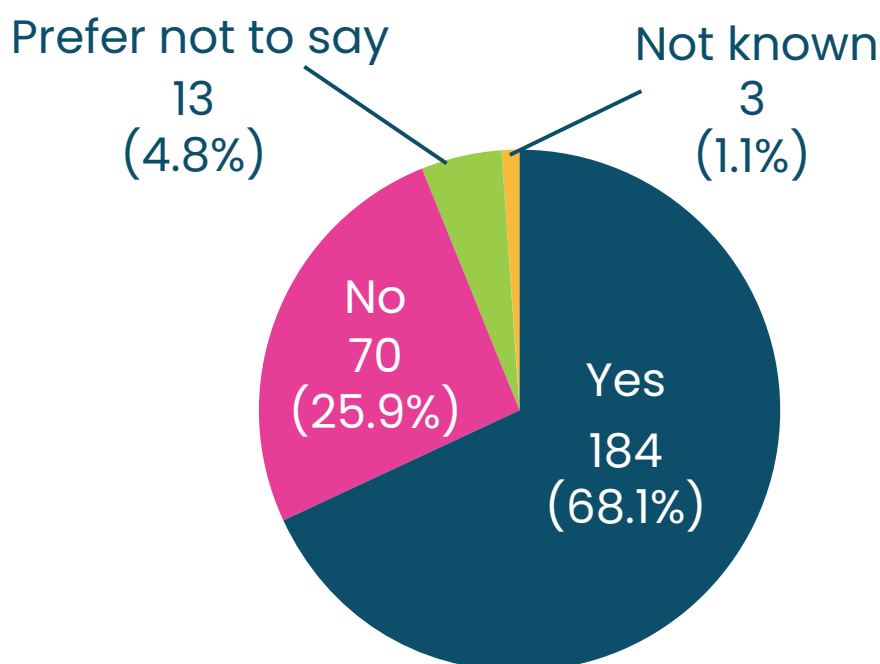
Q27 Do you have a disability?

Just over half of the 271 respondents to this question (144, 53.1%) said they had a disability. It is not known whether this was in addition to their mental health condition. This may vary from service user to service user, depending on their definition of 'disability'.



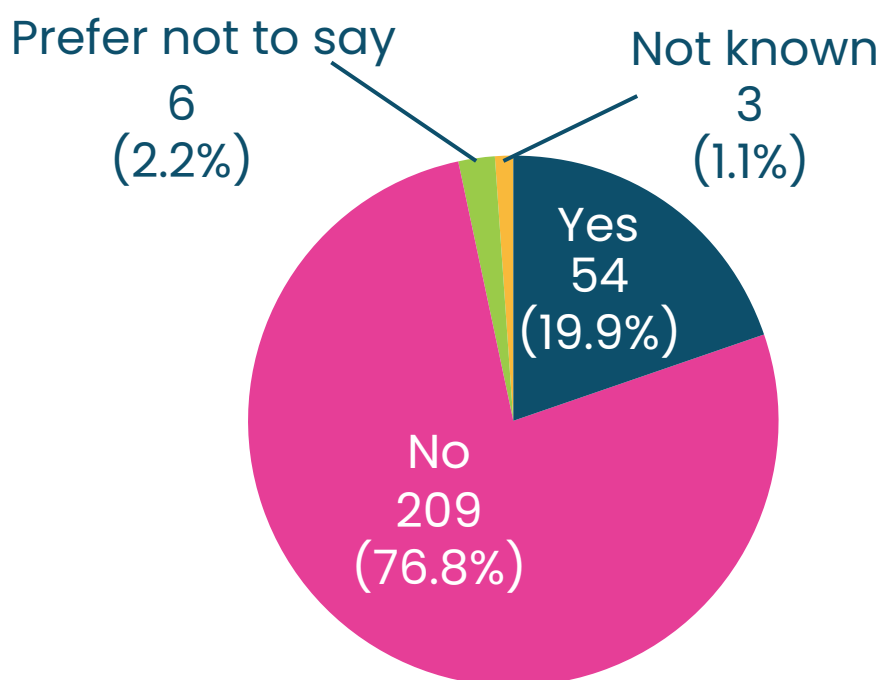
Q28 Do you have a long-term health condition?

Almost three-fifths of the 270 people who responded to this question had a long-term health condition. Again, it is not clear whether this is in addition to their mental health condition. This may vary from service user to service user.



Q29 Do you consider yourself to be a carer?

Whilst just over three-quarters of the 272 respondents to this question (209, 76.8%) did not have caring responsibilities, a fifth (54, 19.9%) were carers. Based on some of their responses to survey questions, above, this had an impact not only on their overall mental wellbeing (stress, anxiety) but also on their ability to access support services as frequently as they might wish to.



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the survey with such detailed and thoughtful answers, and such personal examples of why these services matter so much to them. We have not had the space to quote from everyone's answers, but they have all been read carefully and have helped us to write this report. We hope it reflects their experiences and feelings.

About Healthwatch Liverpool

Healthwatch Liverpool is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to make sure that those running services put people at the heart of care. One of our main purposes is to understand the needs, experiences and concerns of people who use health and social care services and to speak out on their behalf.

As part of a national network made up of local Healthwatch organisations in every local authority area of England and Healthwatch England, the national body, our work contributes to a nationwide perspective of health and social care services.

At Healthwatch Liverpool we also provide a dedicated information and signposting service which helps to put people in touch with services and activities that can help maintain and improve their health and wellbeing.

March 2025

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