

Community Voices Analysis

Norfolk Office of Data Analytics was commissioned to report the evidence from Community Voices data for three 'pillars' (living and working conditions, lifestyle, and health and care services) to inform the ICB Inequality Strategy. This supplementary paper brings together key findings collected in two rounds from the four questions in each pillar with a final summary from the collective findings.

Round 1 Evidence

Health and Care Services

Twenty-four people shared their views about health and care services in Norfolk and Waveney. Commentary in the green boxes is copied direct from Community Voices without amendment.

What would make Norfolk and Waveney a better place to live and work in?

Six people answered this question.

The health and care services mentioned by people in response to this question were **dental services** (twice), **maternity services** including help with breastfeeding, and **support for people with caring responsibilities** (once each).

Other improvements focused on a national, systemic issue (a reduction in NHS waiting times was referred to three times) and a local, highly-achievable request (supplying information in preferred languages).

She mentioned her daughter having probable ADHD for which has given the test but the results are taking longer than a year and she hasn't heard anything substantial from them to start her treatment. The school, counsellors, and the gp has referred her many times that the kid should immediately get tested and start her treatment. She is feeling frustrated with the system because it is causing difficulties for her daughter and she doesn't like that. She has heard stories from other mothers in the school [school name removed] that there are other families suffering from similar situations about getting their treatment started.

What do people do to keep healthy and well, physically and mentally?

Four people answered this question. Responses to this question tended to describe incidences of poor mental health rather than what people do to maintain good health although one respondent described an holistic view of wellbeing linking nutrition and physical exercise with positive mental health.

He tries to eat healthy food and to do sport activities regularly. But the main problem is to stay in good mood and don't feel sadly and to have depression.

What stops people keeping healthy and well?

Two people answered this question. Both respondents talked about not being able to get the right - or any - support (for caring at home and with mental health issues) when they need it. One respondent described the impact of not being able to get help as an escalation of need and involvement of Norfolk Police. [1]

Her mental health, because she has a tendency to lose her temper she has a court appointed Dr whom she does not have regular contact because they are not local. This makes speaking to and getting treatment much harder. She has relied on the Crisis team and the police to help her with her MH as she cannot see the GP.

What matters most to people when it comes to support for their health?

Twenty people answered this question. People said what matters to them most is **accessibility of GPs** (seven comments, five of them positive), being able to access **mental health services** (four comments), and **support in the individual's preferred language** (three comments) were mentioned.

Other aspects of support were also described: support for caring (2), signposting to services (1), understanding health professionals (1), availability of dental care (1), hospital waiting time (1), and travelling abroad for health care (1).

Being able to see a GP (7)

I like seeing my own GP and I'm usually lucky and do see him, I feel things are improving with the health service.

Being able to access mental Health services (4)

I have found that I have got more support for my mental health from mind rather than NSFT.

Being able to access support in preferred language (3)

To be able to speak in her own language.

[1] Norfolk Police are rolling out [Right Care Right Person](#) (February 2024) to ensure people with mental health problems receive support from the appropriate agency.

Living and Working Conditions

Thirty-two people shared their views about living and working conditions in Norfolk and Waveney. The number in parentheses in the text is the number of comments made about the theme. Commentary in the green boxes is copied direct from Community Voices without amendment.

What would make Norfolk and Waveney a better place to live and work in?

Twenty-two people answered this question and some expressed satisfaction with their communities describing them as 'safe', 'beautiful' and 'diverse and nice to live in'. However, people's conversations about living and working in Norfolk and Waveney also highlighted issues of concern.

- **Social isolation** and a lack of community groups or support (5), concerns about **anti-social behaviour or neighbourhood safety** (3), and **lack of public transport** (1) were mentioned.
- **Restricted employment opportunities and job insecurity** (5), particularly for areas reliant on seasonal or low-paid jobs, were discussed. Associated issues with the current **high cost of living** were also noted (2).
- The relationship between a **weak economy** and deterioration in the physical appearance of town centres ('sad', 'poor', 'derelict') when businesses fail was described (5).
- **Additional challenges** faced by people whose first language is not English (2), people from abroad who need extra support, (2) and people trying to arrange care in their own home in a rural location where carers are not paid for travelling time (1) were described.

In addition to the points previous points, 13 people suggested specific **improvements**:

Create better employment opportunities

"To make Norfolk and Waveney a better place to live would be higher wages, there are jobs but the salary just isn't viable to live on, there are no real incentives for people to come and work here, we cant even recruit GPs."

Grow the economy

"We need more stores in town again to encourage people to come back in."

Be inclusive

"More spaces to improve English and to contact with people with similar problems."

Improve neighbourhoods

"... 'It's evident that the coastal towns are a bit deprived anyway but the people of the city needs to feel cared for take care of their surroundings more, the council has to put more effort and show the people that it cares too. ..."

Promote caring communities

"...there are a lot of people in the society who are still alone and do not find much to do and everyone should help them to find something they like."

What do people do to keep healthy and well, physically and mentally?

Seven people answered this question. **Socialising** (3) and **volunteering** (2) are the main activities people do to keep themselves healthy and well ('connect, be active and give' are recognised as important ways to wellbeing).

"I love going out with my dog for walks and I stop for coffee and often meet friends, which is good for my wellbeing."

"I volunteer with a local charity which keeps me mentally well and fit, I have met lots of people who I wouldn't have met."

What stops people keeping healthy and well?

Twelve people answered this question. The main barrier to staying healthy is financial: people referred to high utility bills and other pressures on their income which affect their ability to keep healthy and well.

- **Limited finances** inhibit people's ability to do the activities they want to do to keep themselves healthy and well (7).
- The **cost or availability of transport** (3), particularly in rural areas stops some people accessing wellbeing activities.
- The pressure of **working long hours** (2) which leaves little time for prioritising physical and mental health was also mentioned, as were **linguistic barriers** (2).

"I am limited on what I can do if there are costs involved also transport issues."

What matters most to people when it comes to support for their health?

Nine people answered this question. Although a few people explained how the cost of living, poor housing and unemployment (3) affects their ability to get the support they need, more people talked about **lack of services**. People described being unable to get the support they need for their health, including:

- 'Social support'/support with socialising (2)
- Support for people with SEN (2)
- Pet sitting service to allow them to go into hospital (1)
- Opticians (1)

People also pointed out that even when support is available, it is not necessarily **accessible**, or may be prohibitively expensive.

“Stated that after their partner was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, they found there was no after support. Was told about groups but does not find it easy to get them to the groups as they themselves have limited mobility. Stated that they were given give some weeks of care for partner in a free trial period but now finds it too expensive so no longer has this”.

Lifestyle Factors

Eleven people shared their views about lifestyle factors which affect their health and wellbeing. Commentary in the green boxes is copied direct from Community Voices without amendment.

What do people do to keep healthy and well, physically and mentally?

Eleven people answered this question. People described maintaining their physical health through a mix of exercise and diet. Activities to support mental health include those which connect people or reduce stress and promote relaxation. Alcohol was mentioned by some people as helping them to stay well.

Physical exercise	Behaviours	Mental health	External support
Running Walking Cycling Swimming Singing Dancing Gardening Going to the gym Doing yoga Playing bowls	Eating healthily Vegetables and fruit Taking vitamins Drinking water or tea Drinking alcohol. Stopping smoking Sleeping well Hot and cold showers Washing in cold water	Relaxing (reading, music, playing) Socialising Meditating Spending time in nature Being with family, friends and pets Breathing fresh air	Physiotherapist Psychologist Slimming World NHS health checks Online information Medication NHS guidance

“I cycle a lot it gets me out and about, I go with a mate and we travel around 20 odd miles stop for a pint then head back, at least weekly.”

“I keep pretty healthy and well, I walk my dog two to three times a day, I love to sing and dance to music and socialise.”

“Iwalk and breathe fresh air, exercise, I drink a lot of water and do exercise, I drink vodka, I walk and eat fruit and strawberries, I take vitamin tablets. I use.....drink tea, honey and milk, eating fruits, hot tea and chamomile, honey and hot tea, water and tomato, paracetamol. Eucalyptus, vodka with salt and pepper. Whiskey, honey and lemon....mulled wine... .”

"The new online system makes it hard, to explain the problems then the doctors don't see you because they don't think it is important."

What do people do to keep healthy and well, physically and mentally?

Four people answered this question. Keeping active, getting enough rest and seeking support from mental health groups were noted as being helpful (3).

What stops people keeping healthy and well?

Ten people answered this question. The majority of respondents explained that their **poor mental health** prevents them from seeking the help they need (7). **Not being able to get an appointment with a GP** was also an issue (2).

"Depression stops her doing everything."

What matters most to people when it comes to support for their health?

Forty-two people answered this question. People said what matters to them most is:

- **Good mental health services and support** (11) accessible within a helpful timeframe.
- **Access to GPs** (9) with appointments which can be booked in a variety of ways (in person, by phone and online).
- **Access to dental care** (7) – some people explained they had paid privately for dental care as they could not find an NHS dentist and this had caused financial hardship.
- **Shorter waiting times** (5) for hospital care, NHS appointments and emergency care (ambulance).

People's **experience of services** was described at various points in the process from needing clearer **signposting** to services (3), enduring **long waiting times** (4), feeling **listened to** (or not) by health professionals (4), the **inpatient** experience (3), **hospital discharge** (2), and lack of **follow up** support (3).

Access to mental health services and support in a timely manner (11)

"XX years ago found herself being admitted to [hospital] after having a nervous brake down when her husband died, They were amazing and once discharged she also got outside support with going to groups and help with travel due to Panic attacks without this support she believe she wouldn't of been here today however know so many people now struggling with server mental health problems and there just isn't the support they had available now, getting into a mental hospital which a lot of people need it virtually impossible and people they know who have managed to come out with zero support or people who are struggling and need help are put on 18 month waiting list and just expected to cope in that time, she feels this is what leading people to suicide and self harm increase."

Access to a GP (9)

"The way that is no required to access the dr is excluding her. She needs a dr but the phone calls and popping into the surgery is frowned on and she cannot do internet."

Access to a dentist (7)

"No NHS dentist around anymore and cant afford private so i'm currently left with broken teeth and tooth pain, feels like if your on low income your just left to suffer."

Long waiting times for services (5)

"Feel like wait time from the NHS for mental health diagnosis is a "joke both my children were showing signs for ADHD and was receiving zero support from their school ... i was told the wait time was 5 year via NHS and i just physically could not wait that long for my oldest child to get support, so i decided to go private i could only do this by getting a credit card it cost me £1600. We were seen and had the diagnosis within 5 weeks which is a huge differences compared to NHS wait, i'm now having to make monthly installments to pay off my credit card so then i can do the same all over again for my daughter. The school is now putting some extra support in place but still its not great and looking into how i can get further help for them. I just feel like parent shouldn't have to find themselves in debt to get the right help for their children, the system needs to change."

Living and Working Conditions

Sixty-eight people shared their views about living and working conditions in Norfolk and Waveney.

The number in parentheses in the text is the number of comments made about the theme. Commentary in green boxes is copied direct from Community Voices without amendment.

What would make Norfolk and Waveney a better place to live and work in?

Forty-three people answered this question. As in the previous round of conversations, people described both positive and negative aspects of life in their community (13).

Neighbourhood safety (8) was described as problematic because of poor lighting, speeding, inconsiderate car parking, drug use in the area or lack of children's play areas; however some people described their area as feeling safe, especially long-term residents.

Issues with **housing**, such as affordability or getting repairs done (6) and **local employment opportunities** (6) were mentioned.

In contrast to the previous round of conversations, **lack of local facilities**, especially those for young people, were described (6), as was poor accessibility of **community engagement and community centres** (4).

Additional challenges faced by people with SEN (4) and people whose first language is not English (2) were recorded.

Positive effects of being integrated into one's community include a reduction in social isolation, prevention of harm, minimisation of need for statutory services and improved wellbeing, as described below in relation to a person with dementia.

"The other residents of the Fellow's Close are very good friends of hers and they always seem to be worried about her being alone and walk off in the middle of the day. There have been instances where someone from the housing area has spotted her outside on her walking aimlessly and then walked her back home. So now they are always trying to take her with them whenever they go somewhere close so that she doesn't feel lonely and wants to leave without anyone with her. These days she is doing better."

What do people do to keep healthy and well, physically and mentally?

Ten people answered this question. **Volunteering** (4) and **attending local community groups** (2) are the main activities people do to keep themselves healthy and well ('connect, be active and give' are recognised as important ways to wellbeing).

"I keep busy volunteering and facilitate an activity group, I do enjoy fishing and I eat healthy."

"Hobbies are very important as come to groups and meet people."

What stops people keeping healthy and well?

Thirteen people answered this question. The main barriers to staying healthy are **financial constraints** (4) and feeling **socially isolated or lonely** (4).

"The cost of living stops me doing more things I would like to do, my budgets are very tight."

"Addiction to my phone and internet, social anxiety, no one to do activities with."

What matters most to people when it comes to support for their health?

Thirty-one people answered this question. Being **socially isolated or lonely** was highlighted as having a negative impact on people's health (11): conversely, people also described the preventative and positive effects of feeling supported. **Community groups** which deal with specific topics (such as grief counselling or mental health) (5) were noted as being helpful.

The **high cost of living** (6) was described as making it difficult to maintain health (being able to afford good food or attending groups). The cost of paying for private treatment when the NHS is unable to provide care in a timely manner is a further drain on people's resources.

"She also had a double knee replacement a couple of years ago while she was waiting for this she couldn't walk it took 12 month to finally get the operation but the build up meant she couldn't leave the house without depending on family to take her out or taxis but couldn't afford to get taxi often, wasn't given any support at home other then a support work who done their food shopping this lead her to feeling very isolated and depressed and wish she had been given more support with that. Since having the operation her life has completely turned around and is able to get out and volunteer and attend community groups."

Summary

Please note this summary includes data from Rounds 1 and 2 of the Community Voices data

- Grey boxes indicate there were no responses to the question or question was not asked.
- The number of times a comment was made is not cited below but numerical information is included in each pillar report.

	Living and Working	Lifestyle	H&C Services
What would make Norfolk and Waveney a better place to live and work in?	Secure, local jobs with fair wages. Clean, safe and connected neighbourhoods. Caring and inclusive communities with good facilities. Strong economy and lower cost of living. Affordable and well-maintained housing.		Access to dental services. Mental health support and services Access to a GP. Better maternity services. Support for people with caring responsibilities.
What do people do to keep healthy and well, physically and mentally?	Socialise with friends and family. Volunteer their time and skills. Attend local community groups.	Do physical exercise. Eat healthily. Get enough sleep. Stop smoking. Be aware of their mental health and reduce stress. Seek health support (NHS/other). Stay connected to people. Get sufficient rest	Be aware of their mental health and seek support. Get sufficient rest to carry on with caring role.
What stops people keeping healthy and well?	Limited money. Cost or availability of transport, especially in rural areas. Long working hours. Language barriers. Feeling lonely or isolated.	Smoking. Stress. Long working hours.	Lack of appropriate, affordable, accessible services. Poor mental health limiting ability to seek support. Lack of GP care.
What matters most to people when it comes to support for their health?	Lack of appropriate, affordable, accessible (preventative and remedial) services. Wider determinants of health (income, employment and housing). Having support to deal with social isolation.	Being able to exercise.	Accessibility of GP. Accessibility of mental health services. Accessibility of dental care. Support in the individual's preferred language. NHS waiting times. Reducing long waiting times for services.

Case study: Lack of mental health services and support

“Suffered from depression for a few years now and takes medication which his doctor gave to him, however expressed that the doctor did not offer additional support and felt he was just given the medication and not really contacted again, nothing to see how he was coping or how the medication was working and not given an option for any form of counseling, wishes he had been because he still struggles and has had to seek support from other organisations in norwich which he self referred to such as community groups and MAP but will soon be to old for MAP as it for people under 25, worries he will have no support when hes 25 and wishes there was more mental health support across norwich as feels like there isn't.

- No medication check up.
- Lack of alternative/additional support from GP for mental health problems.
- Lack of mental health services.
- Age restrictions on (limited) services.

Case study: The financial, physical and emotional cost of lack of dental care.

“Hasn't been to the dentist in over 15 years due to being kicked off their books for not going but couldn't go as at the time i wouldn't leave the house at all due to anxiety, recently had to go to A&E due to face swelling due to tooth infection and they were amazing and removed 10 of my teeth however i am now left with just 4 teeth and cant get into a NHS dentist anywhere in Norwich the hospital suggested one in Diss but i can't get there due to my anxiety and fear of using a bus, i feel like I've just been left unable to eat and when contacting a private dentist it will cost me £3000 to have remaining teeth removed and dentures made, no one of benefits can afford that but i'm going to have to try and save as my confidence has completely gone since having all my teeth removed, it really impacted my confidence and mental health further. More NHS dentists need to be available It feels like people like myself on low income due to illness are just being left to suffer because of it.”

- Perception of inequitable access to dental care because of income.
- Access to dental care restricted by poor mental health (anxiety and transport).
- Lack of preventative dental care resulting in cost shift to A&E services.
- Medical problem resolved by emergency surgery but patient left unable to eat, with poorer mental health and potential personal financial burden.