

Southampton Mental Health Network Stage 2 Making Southampton a Mental Health Friendly City Survey – Executive Summary

Southampton Mental Health Network (SMHN) is a collection of individuals and organisations working together under the joint vision: ‘To make Southampton a mental health friendly city, for all, ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion’. SMHN became publicly active in 2019 and, with more than 100 member organisations involved in its development, became a registered charity in September 2022. Southampton City Council supports the network.

Background: In 2021, SMHN conducted a survey to ask respondents what would help to make Southampton a mental health friendly city. 87% of people surveyed said that the most important thing in making Southampton a mental health friendly city is access to support when needed. Support can take many forms, including services or help/support from groups, friends, family or colleagues. This report presents the findings of a second survey (Stage 2), which asked respondents for their views on the support that would be most valuable to them and others they know.

Methods: The stage 2 survey opened for responses in 2022 and was originally comprised of mostly open-ended questions. The question set was revised to primarily multiple-choice questions shortly after circulation to facilitate quicker and more straightforward responses, given the low response rate. Consequently, there was one dataset for the first version of the survey (32 responses) and a second dataset for the revised version (188 responses). The second version received responses up to September 2023. During analysis, for questions which were the same across both question sets, responses were combined and analysed together. For questions that differed between the two survey versions, results were compared for similar questions or reported separately. Qualitative data was grouped into themes, and quantitative data was counted and converted into tables and graphs. While multiple choice questions may have skewed responses, inclusion of an ‘other’ option allowed respondents to write their own answers.

Key findings: Most respondents had either lived experience of poor/low mental health (124 responses) or a friend/ family member with lived experience (120 responses). The majority were female (70%) and lived in Southampton. Respondents requested counselling and talking therapies, advice on lifestyle, and group support, including peer groups, activity groups, social groups, and others. They also asked for further assistance to access information and services. Waiting lists were identified as a significant barrier to accessing support, and respondents requested additional support while on waiting lists. Respondents stated that support should be free or low-cost, local, accessible, and available during evenings and weekends. They requested additional services, more professionals, and increased funding to train staff and volunteers. Lastly, support should be provided by services or professionals who work well together and are understanding, listen actively, tailor support to different cultures, communities, languages, individual needs, and neurodiversity, and offer help in an environment that the individual feels comfortable in.



Next steps: Respondents stated that there is insufficient support in Southampton. Good collaboration between services is needed to offer partial solutions while they wait for a more comprehensive solution. Better joint working could also address the need for support while on waiting lists. SMHN is well-positioned to facilitate collaboration between service providers. The results of this survey will also be shared with local partners and stakeholders.

Further questions: Further work is needed to capture perspectives from a broader range of genders, including men, non-binary, trans, and other gender identities. It's also essential to explore the "local" concept, which may hold different meanings for different individuals. These questions highlight the need for continued research and deeper inquiry.

Contact: If you have any questions, comments or feedback to share with us, please contact us at smhn@communicareinsouthampton.org.uk