

A Spotlight Report

How people feel about
living in Medway

A spotlight report focusing
on the Medway villages
Lordswood and
Walderslade.

July
2025

A spotlight report on the Building Blocks of Life, focusing on Lordswood and Walderslade.

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About Us

Healthwatch Medway are independent champions for health and social care in Medway. Our aim is to improve services by ensuring local voices are heard – we want to hear about health and social care experiences so as to influence positive change for communities across the Medway area. We have the power to influence NHS leaders and other decision makers to listen to your feedback and improve standards of care.

Healthwatch Medway is hosted by EK360.

Background

Our health and wellbeing can be affected by things that we experience in everyday life. There is increasing interest in these wider determinants of health, and Healthwatch Medway wanted to understand what positively and negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of people in Medway. Medway has a range of diverse settlements, from isolated rural villages and hamlets on the peninsula to densely populated urban towns. In July 2025, we engaged with **38** residents living in Lordswood (17) and Walderslade (21).

Healthwatch Medway will share this report with health and social care services to help build an understanding of how the areas where people live impact on them, and how we can work together with services to improve Medway residents' quality of life. This report summarises what we have heard.

There will be 9 reports in this series coming out across 2025, as a follow on from the 9 reports in our 'Medway Areas' series in 2024.

Methodology

Using a semi-structured interview, we approached people face-to-face in local community areas. Participants were selected by a randomised sample of who was out and about in their local area on the days we were engaging.

Some percentages presented in this report may not total 100% exactly. This is either due to participants being able to select multiple responses for certain questions, or due to rounding of percentages to the nearest whole number.

Findings

The Impact Living in Lordswood and Walderslade has on Residents

What’s good about living in your area?

We asked 38 residents living in Lordswood and Walderslade what they like about their area. *Figure 1* shows the number of mentions by positive theme. 4 people said ‘nothing’.

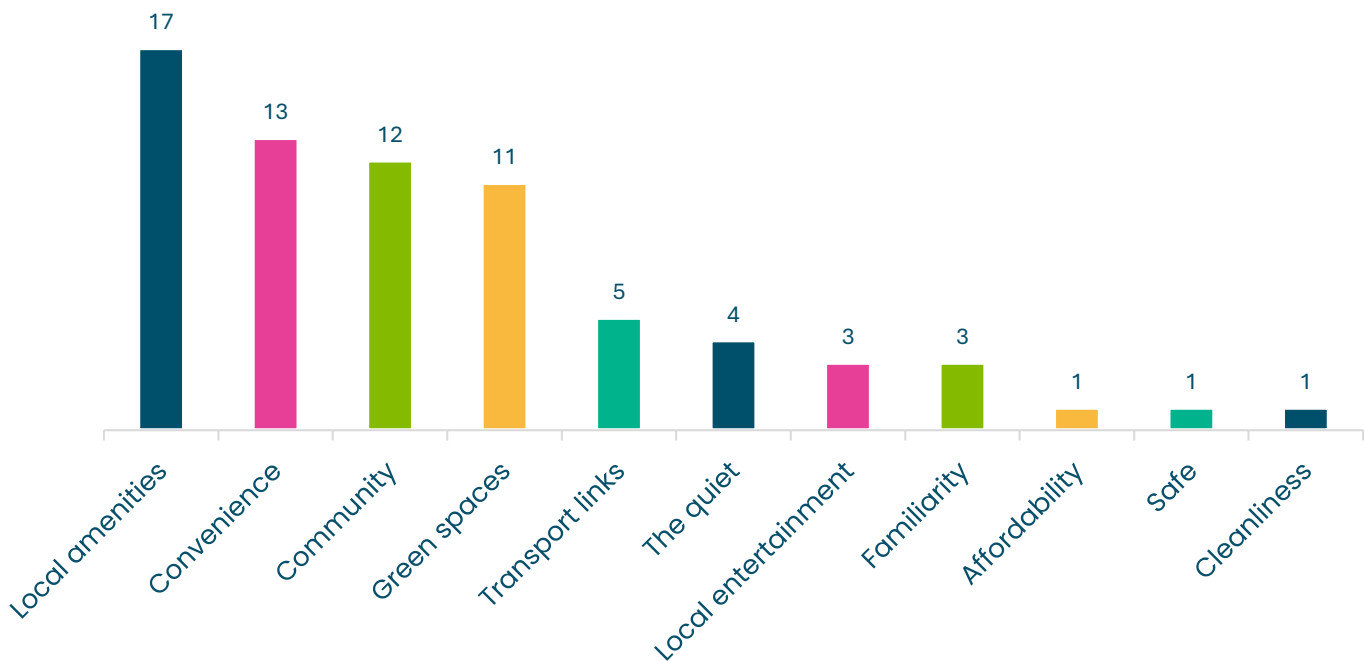


Figure 1 – Number of mentions by positive theme

Local amenities (17 mentions)

45% mentioned local amenities.

- “We have everything we need here – the Co-op, the chemist, doctor, library, cafes.”
- “The facilities are good and easy to get to.”
- “There are lots of shops in the village and all the local schools are very good.”

Convenience (13 mentions)

34% mentioned convenience.

- "Got everything we want here have the facilities and can easily walk to all of these things."
- "Everything is very convenient in the village, we have lots of shops and cafes and don't have to drive anywhere."

The Community (12 mentions)

32% mentioned the community.

- "The community here is brilliant, people look out for each other."
- "Well, I'd say it's a friendly place and people are quite nice."
- "Community where you know everyone. That's it."

Green spaces (11 mentions)

29% of respondents told us they enjoy the green spaces.

- "Lots of green spaces."
- "The park here is nice, nice to have bit of greenery."
- "I love that I can walk the dog around the fields by our house, go for bike rides with my daughters."

Transport links (5 mentions)

13% told us about transport links, particularly buses.

- "The buses 176 and 177 are good."
- "The 132 bus service is also very good."

The Quiet (4 mentions)

11% mentioned the quiet.

- "The area is quiet."
- "[It is] peaceful."

Local entertainment (3 mentions)

8% mentioned local entertainment and groups.

- "Lots to do. Leisure centre do a lot. Fantastic youth clubs."

Familiarity (3 mentions)

8% mentioned familiarity.

- “Lived here a long time. Can't compare it to anywhere else. Not been anywhere else in a long time.”

Affordability (1 mention)

3% mentioned affordability.

- “The petrol station is quite a good price.”

Safety (1 mention)

3% mentioned safety.

- “The lack of violence and nasty people that live here. There are a few idiots but, on the whole, people are very respectful.”

Cleanliness (1 mention)

3% mentioned the cleanliness.

- “Generally the area is friendly and clean.”

Positive Impacts of the Area

Following up on our first question, we asked respondents, 'How does that have a positive impact on you?'

28 of the 38 respondents (**74%**) said that where they live has a positive impact on them, 2 respondents said that it does not (**5%**) and 8 respondents (**21%**) did not answer or said 'don't know'. Some respondents specified multiple positive impacts. *Figure 2* represents the specified positive impacts of the area

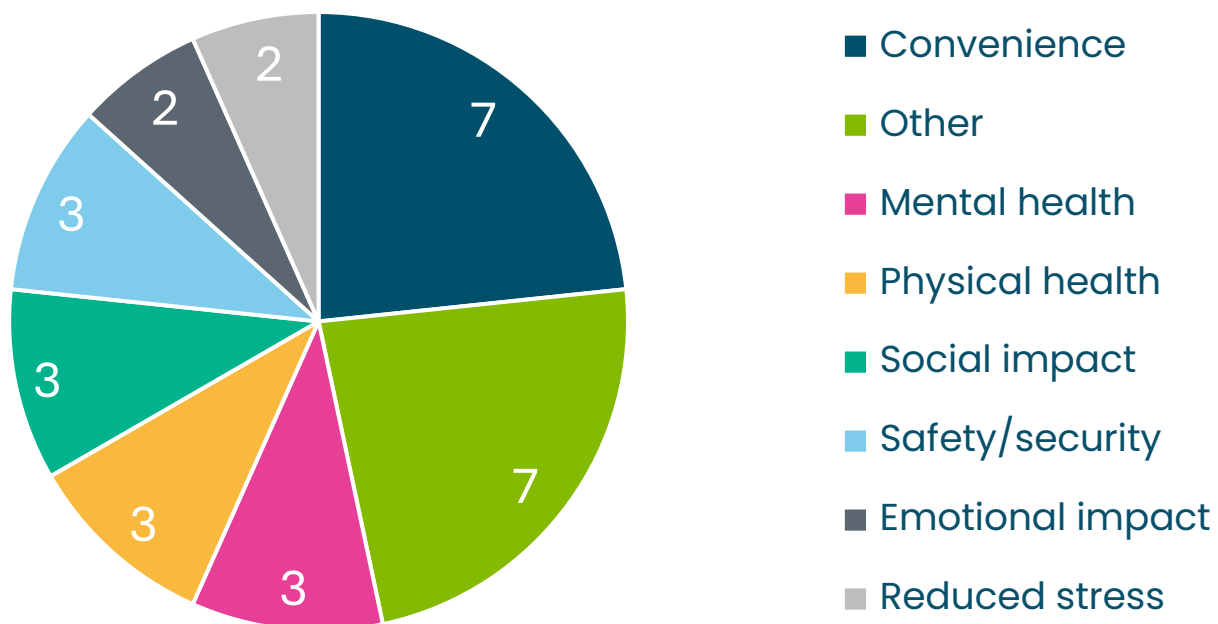


Figure 2 – Number of mentions by positive impact

Convenience (7 mentions)

18% mentioned convenience.

- "It makes life easy as you get older as it's on your doorstep, it's convenient and you don't have to worry about having to go too far to get the stuff you need and being able to get about."
- "It means I don't have to drive for miles to get anything anywhere."

Other (7 mentions)

18% mentioned other positive impacts

- "The kids spend most of the day at school and come home happy. Kids love nature. Get what you need by walking (helps environment)."
- "It makes life easy and relaxed."

Mental Health (3 mentions)

8% of respondents said that where they live had a positive impact on their mental health.

- "I like to walk my dog a lot. Good for my mental health. Five minutes and in the woods, lovely."
- "It helps my mental health having access to nature also playing an instrument violin and sewing."

Physical Health (3 mentions)

8% of people mentioned a positive impact on their physical health.

- "The greenery is magic. My wife enjoys getting out walking a lot. I am a bit more restricted as I have a mobility scooter, but it's great to be able to see it around me."
- "I can get out and go cycling all year round."

Social Impact (3 mentions)

8% of people mentioned that where they live had a positive impact on their social life.

- "Something to do, so I don't sit indoors all day."

Safety/Security (3 mentions)

8% of respondents mentioned a positive impact of living in the area was that they felt safe.

- "If you are in trouble, you know someone will have your back. They will watch your house. They will help you out."

Emotional impact (2 mentions)

5% of respondents mentioned a positive emotional impact.

- "Makes me feel happy."

Reduced stress (2 mentions)

5% of respondents told us that they feel less stressed.

- "Means I don't have to worry."
- "Helps me feel there is less pressure."

What are the negatives about living in your area?

We asked 38 respondents what they dislike about the area they live in. *Figure 3* shows the number of mentions by negative theme.

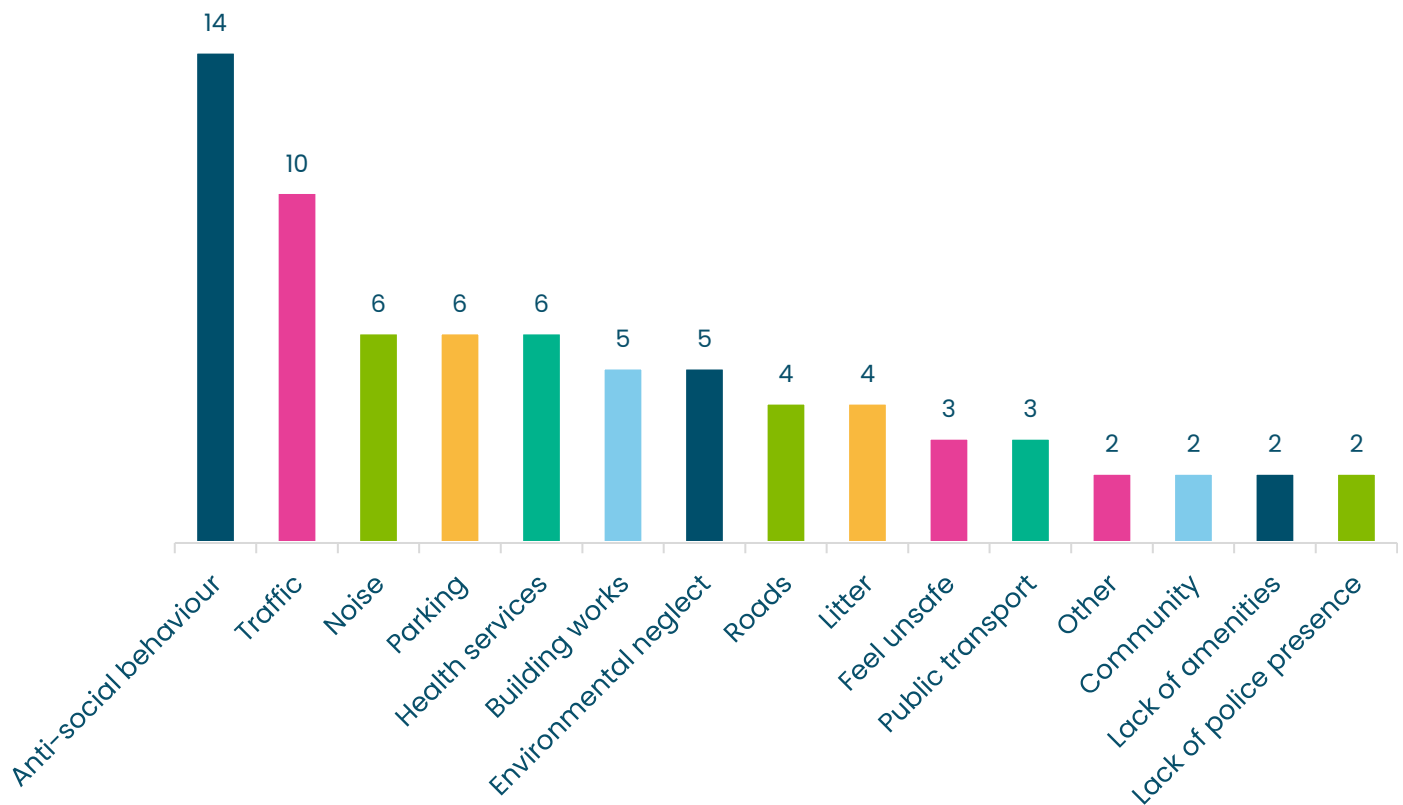


Figure 3 – Number of mentions by negative theme

Anti-social Behaviour (14 mentions)

37% mentioned anti-social behaviour in the area, with lots of comments about bikes and e-scooters.

- "Little children misbehave."
- "Electric bikes are scary around here. The police are horrible to everyone. Lots of gangs around here."
- "The youths with their quad bikes, e-bikes and normal bikes. Youths hanging around and disrespectful. They swear and are rude and act as a pack."
- "Anti-social behaviour (kids hanging around in the evening)."
- "Evenings – teenagers group up around here. Riding their bikes around."
- "I got assaulted here. Don't know if its racism or something else."

Traffic (10 mentions)

26% of respondents mentioned traffic, particularly unsafe driving and speeding.

- “They should respect the speed limit. There’s a tricky corner that people speed around, it’s not safe.”
- “The quality of driving round here is awful. people just pull out of junctions without looking and expect you to stop, even if it is your right of way.”
- “People can be ignorant, they drive like they are entitled to be the only ones on the road.”

Noise (6 mentions)

16% told us that noise is an issue, particularly from cars and motorbikes.

- “Mainly in the summer months the teenagers congregate and ride their bikes and e-scooters they are very noisy and are a nuisance.”
- “There are lots of motorbikes and they are very loud and annoying.”
- “Collection of loud car and bike noises from exhausts which has been reported to the Police.”

Parking (6 mentions)

16% mentioned issues with parking.

- “There are some issues with parking. There’s also a lot of narrow parking for cars and some of them end up parking on pavements – or block a corner – which is no good for me, it is difficult when I’m on my scooter, it’s not safe as you have to go in the road.”
- “The physical parking spaces are small and cars have got bigger which makes parking difficult.”

Health services (6 mentions)

16% mentioned issues with health services.

- “Lack of access to GP, health services.”
- “Don’t like this ‘Anima operating system’ for booking appointments and other items at the Lordswood Community Health Centre.”
- “The health centre is way over-stretched. I cannot ring and get an appointment, I have to use the internet, which is not inclusive, and hard to use. Only one hospital when we used to have three.”
- “GP service poor, no GP consistency either. Anima only appointments gone by 8.01 am and the prescribing team is phone only or formal letter no email.”

Building works (5 mentions)

13% told us that the amount of building is a negative aspect of their area.

- "Everywhere, flats are being built. I hate it."
- "There is a lot of new building work going on and the crime and thefts have increased. There is and will be a lot more traffic in the area and more pressure on the health services."
- "It is too built up there used to be all just bungalows here, but new people have been allowed to make them into two storey homes with four or five bedrooms."

Environmental neglect (5 mentions)

13% mentioned environmental neglect.

- "The lack of gardening in public areas, it's a shame to see it looking neglected."
- "Not a lot of love for the area. Area needs care and attention, looking after."
- "It has changed a lot where the Council are not doing anything i.e. not cutting back hedges and paving stones are up. Weeds up to four foot high."

Roads (4 mentions)

11% mentioned issues with roads.

- "Their general condition is appalling, long strips of unevenness, potholes all over the place - and the longer you leave them, the worse they get."
- "Potholes are a big issue we have had to replace four tyres because of them."

Litter (4 mentions)

11% mentioned litter.

- "The lack of upkeep - lots of rubbish everywhere."

Feel unsafe (3 mentions)

8% told us they feel unsafe in the area.

- "I don't feel safe walking in certain places."

Public Transport (3 mentions)

8% of respondents spoke about the lack of public transport.

- "The buses are always late and then on Sunday no early buses before (9am) so late for work and then miss the 6pm bus from Chatham and no other buses."

- “I don’t like the public transport. The buses are terrible. There is only one bus in Walderslade and Lordswood that directly goes to the train station. You often have to get off at Chatham Bus Station and then walk up which isn’t always possible for everyone. And then the buses don’t sync with the train arrival times – you often find you have to wait ages for the bus after getting off the train at Chatham. They need to talk to each other. The 101 and 166, there are plenty of them, but the when the 176 breaks down, you have an hour to wait and it’s too much of a trek to walk.”

Other (2 mentions)

5% mentioned other negative aspects of the area.

- “The trees in road are all the same variety it would be nice to have some variety if the council are planting them maybe some with berries.”

Community (2 mentions)

5% spoke about the community as a negative aspect of their area.

- “I am not a racist – but it’s all foreign food and foreign shops and they are all out, chatting and shouting in the street. It doesn’t feel like it is your town anymore.”
- “There is trouble with the immigrants that have been put in temporary accommodation – they are all male.”
- “There are too many DFL [Down From London-ers] making it too congested. I do not like this area anymore. It’s changed and it’s far too congested, too many people.”

Lack of amenities (2 mentions)

5% of people mentioned a lack of local amenities.

- “Too much building work going on but not enough schools, GP or hospitals. It is worse at Kestrel/Lordswood.”
- “We used to have a keep fit class specifically for the elderly but sadly the instructor who was in their 90s died and no-one replaced them or took over. There are a lot of charity shops in the area and the Iceland, Wilkinson’s and Shoe shop have all shut.”

Lack of police presence (2 mentions)

5% of people mentioned a lack of police presence.

- “Lack of police and no respect used to know who your local bobby was.”

How does that have a negative impact on you?

We followed up the previous question by asking respondents how the negatives they identified had an impact on them. 32 out of the 38 respondents (**84%**) said that where they live does have a negative impact on them and 5 respondents (**13%**) said that it does not. 1 respondent (**3%**) did not answer. Some respondents specified multiple negative impacts. *Figure 4* shows the specified negative impacts of the area.

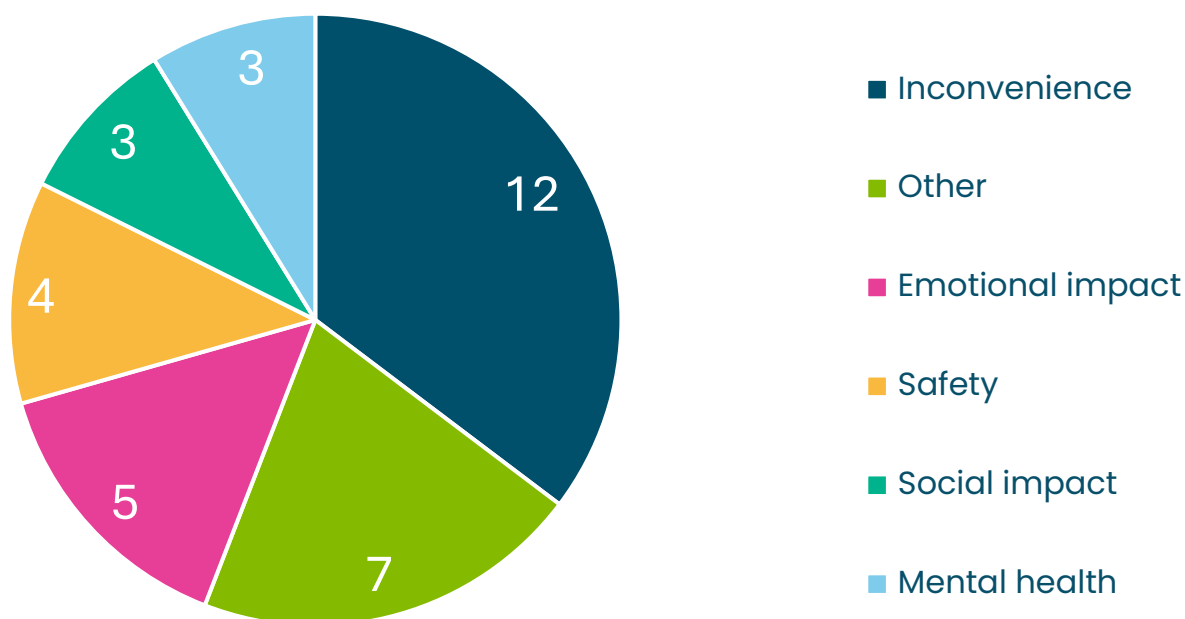


Figure 4 – Number of mentions by negative impact

Inconvenience (12 mentions)

32% spoke about the negative impact of inconvenience.

- "Have to wait for other people to take me shopping at Morrisons. Would like to be more independent and use the bus."
- "Journeys take longer. Waiting for doctor's appointments takes longer."
- "Balance of having to travel earlier. I take longer to travel because the buses are late."
- "Because of my work I can get back quite late, like 1:00 AM or 2:00 AM, and I'll have to drive around to find somewhere to park and walk back to my house."

Others (7 mentions)

18% mentioned other negative impacts, such as environmental impact and wanting to leave the area.

- "Bad for the environment, it was a green area."
- "It makes you want to move somewhere completely different, when funds allow. I wouldn't say it gets me down, but it's an irritant and a constant one at that."

Emotional impact (5 mentions)

13% mentioned negative emotional impact, making residents feel unhappy and worried.

- "It makes me feel unhappy."
- "It's annoying and it's worrying as something might happen. There's an overhanging tree on my property and I am worried it will damage my house."

Safety (4 mentions)

11% of people mentioned the impact on their perceived safety.

- "It's shocking. It's a worry as it's dangerous, there could be an accident. Where the petrol station is, you need a pedestrian crossing. It's simple as it's a 3-way roundabout and you just hope people will be sensible. I have seen people just go for it and hope for the best."
- "I don't feel safe."

Social Impact (3 mentions)

8% of people mentioned where they live has an impact on their social life, particularly during the evening.

- "Stay away in the evening/limits when I go out. Stick to daytime only."
- "I am not coming out in the evening."

Mental health (3 mentions)

8% mentioned the impact on their mental health.

- "I feel depressed all the time, all the time. I just want to get out of here. I feel like this all the time. I don't want to live here, but we're too old to move."
- "Very frustrating – and a bit depressing as you can't see how it's ever going to get any better."

Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Medway Residents

When you think of health and wellbeing what comes to mind?

We asked respondents what comes to mind when they think of health and wellbeing.

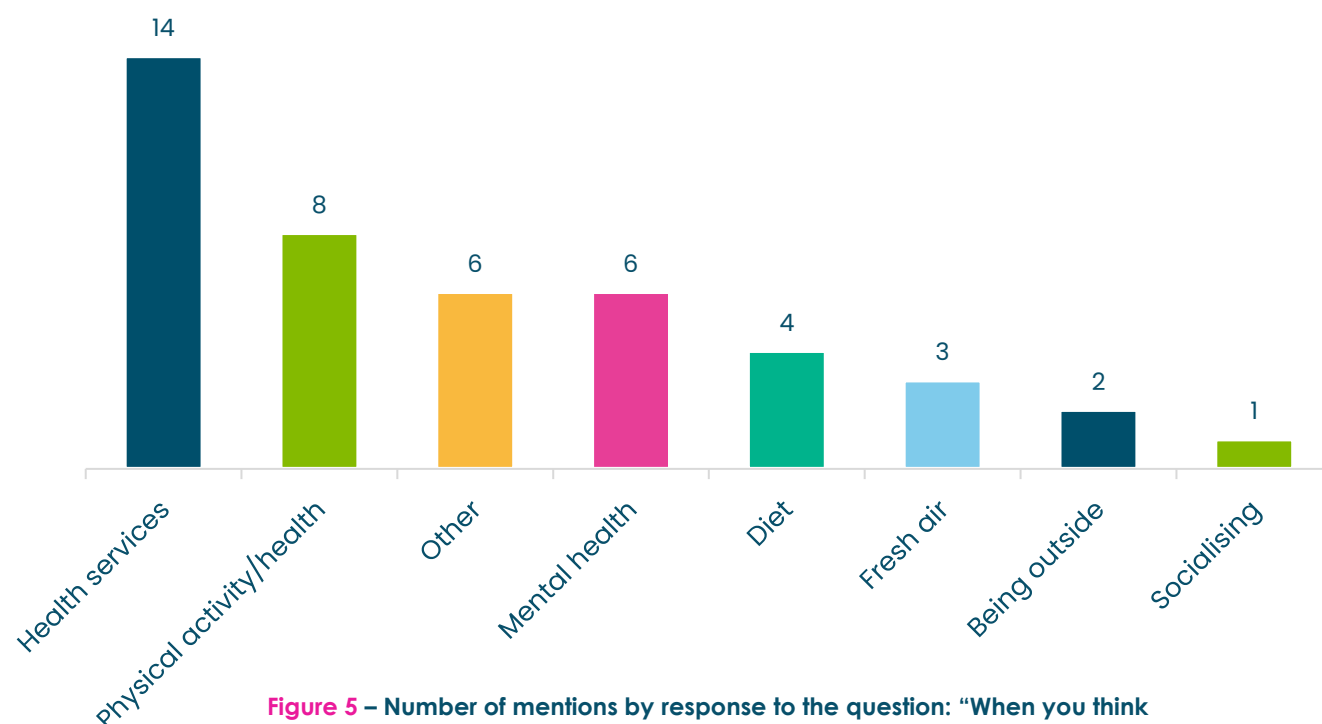


Figure 5 – Number of mentions by response to the question: “When you think of health and wellbeing, what comes to mind?”

Health services (14 mentions)

37% of people spoken to mentioned health services as something they think of when prompted by the question.

- “Lack of health services. Lack of available GP appointments.”
- “Hospital, doctors, pharmacies, being able to get an appointment.”
- “I think of my doctor’s surgery (Reach). I can never get an appointment. They tell me to use this ANIMA all the time, but it can’t verify me. I try on the phone and get told there are no more appointments for the day.”

Physical activity/health (8 mentions)

21% of respondents mentioned they associate physical health with health and wellbeing.

- “Keeping health under control as much as possible, stay in good nick.”

Other (6 mentions)

16% of people mentioned other things that come to mind when they think of health and wellbeing.

- “The five ways of wellbeing. Self-care. Having a bath to relax. Reading a book in the garden. Having a break to buy a drink.”
- “I think about getting older.”
- “Work-life balance.”

Mental health (6 mentions)

16% mentioned mental health.

- “When it is quiet you can go for a good walk and mental health is better (trees, open areas etc) not too crowded, not too much going on.”
- “Medication for mental health counselling.”
- “Happiness, feeling well. Having lived here for 43 years, I have happy memories.”

Diet (4 mentions)

11% of people mentioned having a healthy diet.

Fresh air (3 mentions)

8% of people mentioned fresh air.

- “Fresh air, scenery. Concrete jungles aren't good for anyone.”
- “Maybe dog walking, getting some fresh air.”

Being outside (2 mentions)

8% of people told us they associate being outside with health and wellbeing.

Socialising (1 mention)

3% mentioned socialising.

- “If you're happy, it makes a difference. I like chats, having connections with people, like we are now.”

What would help you to improve your health and wellbeing?

We asked people what they think would help them to improve their health and wellbeing. *Figure 6* shows the number of mentions by response. 7 people said, 'don't know/nothing'. 1 person did not answer.

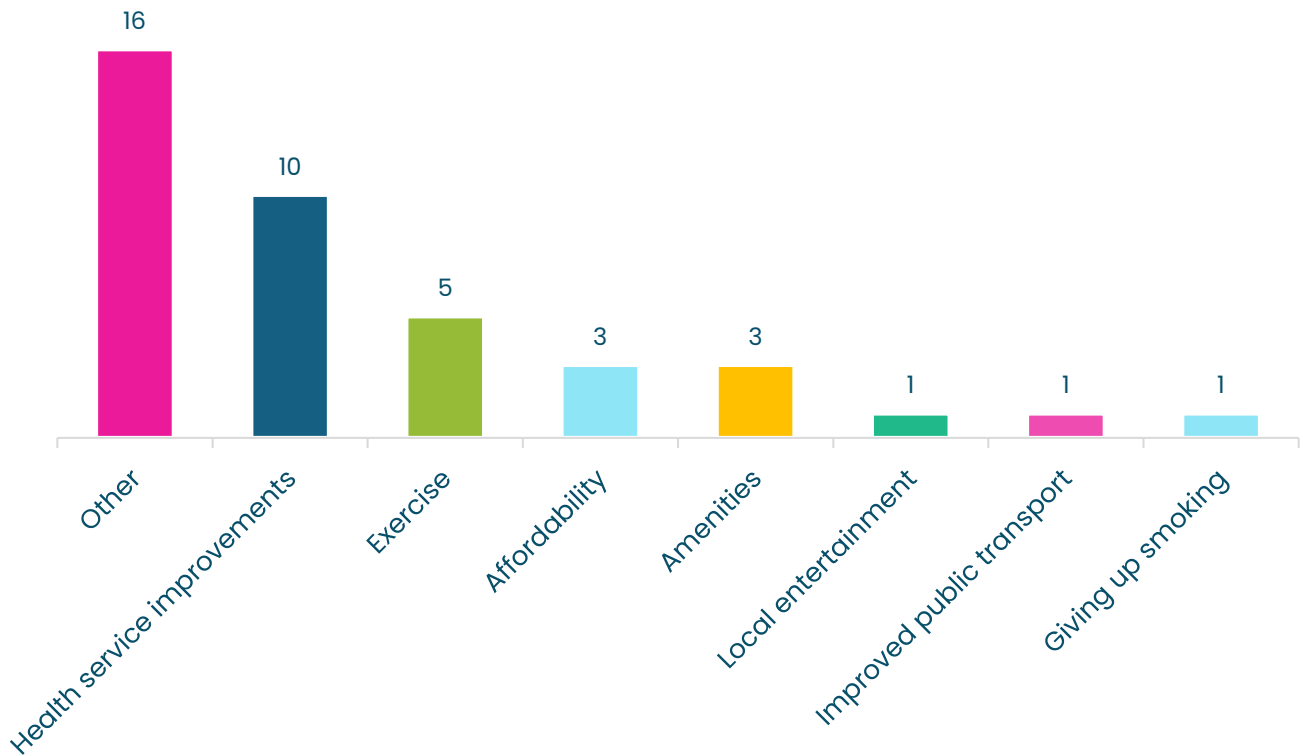


Figure 6 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "What would help you to improve your health and wellbeing?"

Other (16 mentions)

42% mentioned other things that would improve their health and wellbeing, such as more police presence, feeling safer, and improved physical health.

- "More police presence on streets."
- "Personal thing, beautiful spaces (shame now have to pay to park) and feeling safe would reduce my anxiety."
- "I'm currently off work due to illness caused through a colleague bullying me. It's difficult to define but the world needs to be calmer and there needs to be more compromise."
- "I can do a lot for myself, but I would like another leg [interviewee had one leg] as I used to like gardening, but you just crack on, do what you can."

Health service improvements (10 mentions)

26% mentioned that improvements to health services would improve their health and wellbeing.

- “Getting GP appointments (more available) at Lordswood community health centre. Being listened to when I want an appointment in Lordswood. (not in Walderslade). Getting what I need for my healthcare.”
- “Longer times of GP opening hours. i.e. earlier or later. Being offered a blood test elsewhere without an appointment i.e. a drop in/walk in service.”
- “It is nice to know where to go to speak to someone where you can ask about mental health support. However, I don't feel I meet the criteria and go round in circles.”

Exercise (5 mentions)

13% spoke about exercise as something that would improve their health and wellbeing.

- “Going for more walks (but time issue because of full time working).”
- “I could probably be more active.”

Affordability (3 mentions)

8% mentioned more affordable amenities as something that would improve their health and wellbeing.

- “Cheaper gym membership for a family.”
- “Could do with financial security i.e. Mortgage paid off. Interest rate being higher has really affected me.”

Amenities (2 mentions)

5% of people mentioned that improved amenities would help to improve their health and wellbeing.

- “Have somewhere to park my car.”
- “Better shops.”

Local entertainment (1 mention)

3% mentioned local entertainment.

- “More things for age range 20s to early 30s to be available.”

Improved public transport (1 mention)

3% mentioned improving public transport.

Give up smoking (1 mention)

3% told us that giving up smoking would improve their health and wellbeing.

Where do you go to find out information for what is available locally?

We also asked people where they would most likely go to find out information for what is available locally. *Figure 7* shows the number of mentions by response. 2 people did not answer.

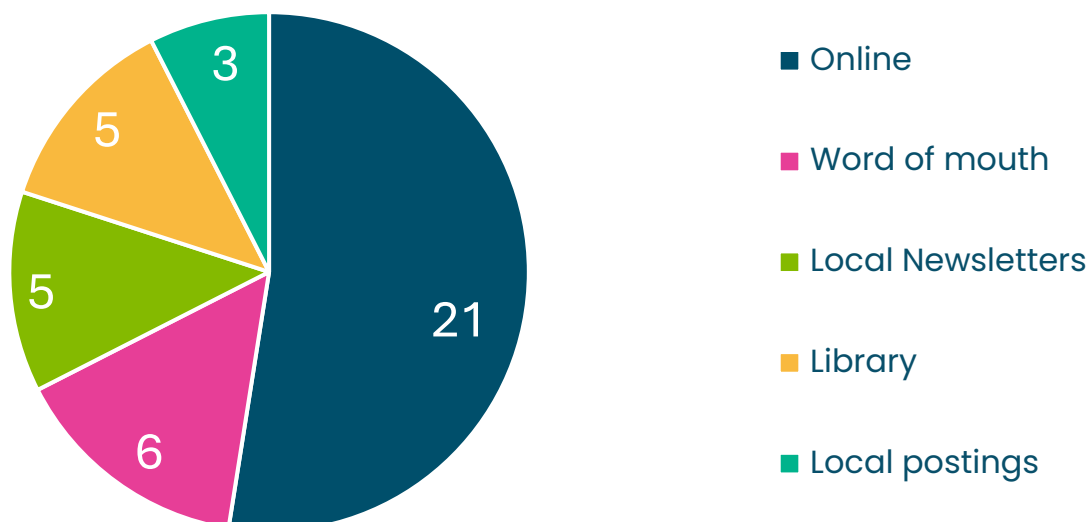


Figure 7 – Number of mentions by response to the question: “Where do you go to find out information for what is available locally?”

Online (21 mentions)

55% of people mentioned they would go online for information about what is happening locally, with **16%** specifically mentioning Facebook sites.

Word of Mouth (6 mentions)

16% said that they would find out what is happening locally through word of mouth.

- “I don’t use social media, so I rely on friends and family.”

Local Newsletters (5 mentions)

13% get their local information through local newsletters.

- “Use the Medway Matters Magazine.”

Library (5 mentions)

13% said they would go to the library for local information.

Local Postings (3 mentions)

8% find out local information through local postings.

- “We have posters around.”
- “Notice boards which have information about local activities.”

What could be done to promote health and wellbeing within your community?

We asked people what could be done within their local areas and communities to improve their health and wellbeing. *Figure 8* shows the number of mentions by response theme. 2 people did not answer and 2 people said 'nothing'.

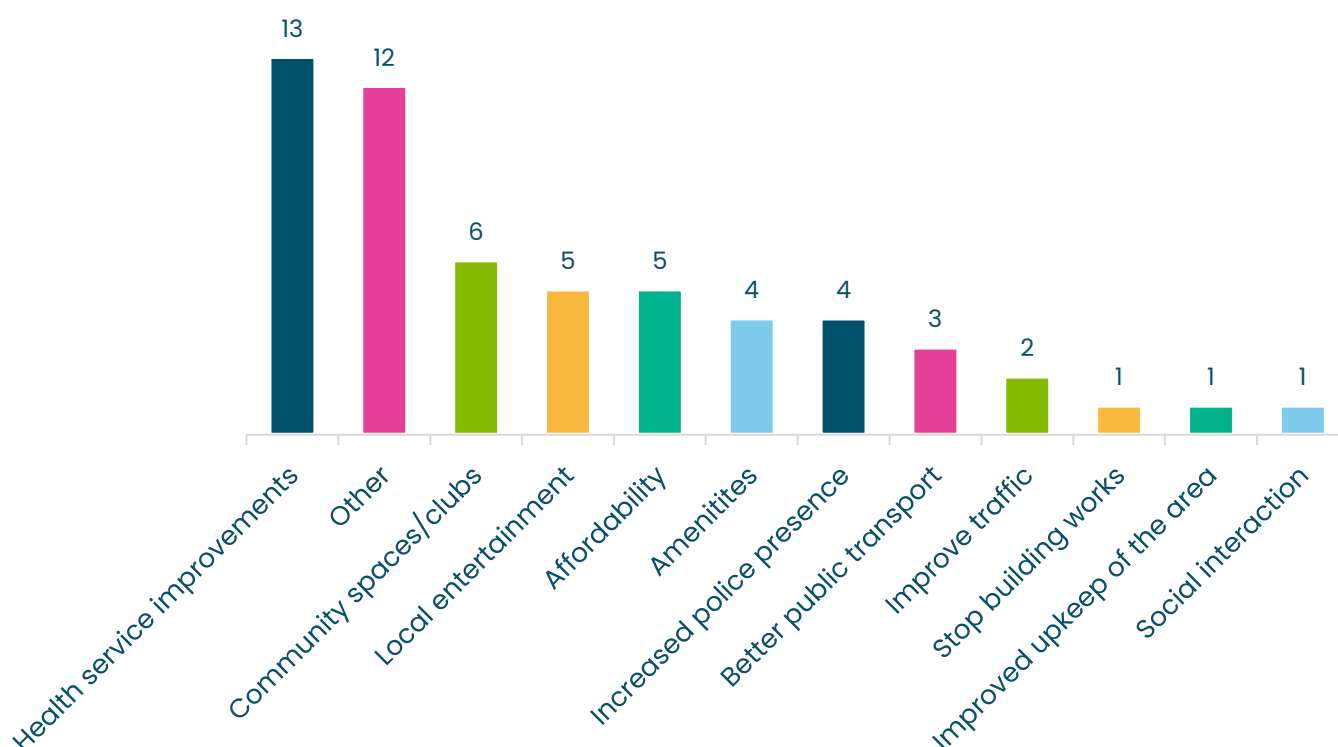


Figure 8 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "What could be done to promote health and wellbeing within your community?"

Health Service Improvements (13 mentions)

34% of respondents said that improvements to health services would improve community health and wellbeing.

- "Improve GP surgeries appointments. Get an appointment when I ask/request one. Meeting my healthcare requests."
- "Getting a doctor's appointment is a current barrier so to be able to access GP appointment when needed. Reduce the waiting list for the NHS services."

Other (12 mentions)

32% of people spoke about other ways to improve community health and wellbeing.

- "More availability for healthier foods and less processed food, locally. Not much available other than Tesco."

- “More money in my pocket. Counsellors in schools so pupils have access to appropriate adult that can listen to them.”
- “Get a pedestrian crossing for the roundabout by the petrol station. No parking on the pavements, especially when people have such big drives – they need to use them.”

Community Spaces/Clubs (6 mentions)

16% of people mentioned community spaces/clubs.

- “More funding for the local youth clubs.”
- “To see a community hub with longer hours open for children and wider community.”
- “A decent sports club that everyone can enjoy and have something for all ages and all abilities. Make sure the cost isn't prohibitive, make it accessible for all.”

Local entertainment (5 mentions)

13% of people mentioned more local entertainment would be beneficial, particularly for young people.

- “More activities to take youths away from loitering.”
- “More events around here (Lords wood) like the things they put on in Rochester.”
- “Maybe get more for youngsters, I don't know what there is, but I am sure there could be more and activities that mean they are not stuck on a phone or gadget.”

Affordability (5 mentions)

13% of people mentioned making the gym and sports activities more affordable would improve community health and wellbeing.

- “Cheaper gym to make it accessible for families.”
- “Cheaper sports facilities. Free sports facilities.”

Amenities (4 mentions)

11% mentioned more amenities would improve community health and wellbeing.

- “Bring back the community shops like bakery, meats (butcher), green grocers, general shop, laundry at Lords wood Lane.”
- “Build a local swimming pool, just down the road would be nice.”

Increased police presence (4 mentions)

11% mentioned increased police presence would improve community health and wellbeing.

- “More police on streets.”

- “More PCSO’s and police officers available and visible.”
- “Be nice if we had bobbies (police) that come around (used to have them around in the precinct but not any more).”

Better public transport (3 mentions)

8% of people mentioned better public transport would improve community health and wellbeing.

- “Improve public transport in this area because lots of people don't drive. It's not great, it impacts on people who can't get out as easily as me.”
- “Transport, definitely – sort out the buses.”

Improve traffic (2 mentions)

5% of people mentioned improving traffic, specifically regarding driving at the speed limit.

- “Get people parking better and remembering how to drive at the speed limit!”
- “Make sure people stick to the speed limits”

Stop building works (1 mention)

3% told us that stopping building works would improve community health and wellbeing.

Improved upkeep of the area (1 mention)

3% said that improved upkeep of the area would be beneficial.

- “Modernise the area, change it from the 1970s and update it to the modern day. Improve the upkeep of public areas in the village, they need improving as we now only have broken benches and planters because the kids have no respect, jump on them and break them. It would be good to have nice things to look at when out.”

Social interaction (1 mention)

3% mentioned social interaction.

- “More social activities for retired people on different days and walking groups.”

Demographic Breakdown

- **Age:** The largest response was from people aged 65–74 (**29%**). The least common response was from people aged 85–94 (**3%**). The full range of ages is shown in *Figure 9*.

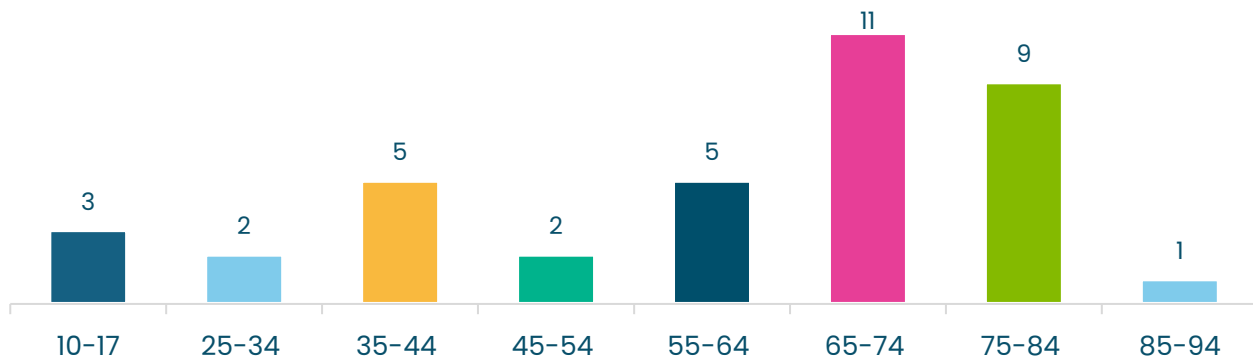


Figure 9 – Number of participants by age

- **Gender:** **53%** of participants identified as female and **47%** identified as male. **95%** of participants' gender identity was the same as their sex recorded at birth. **5%** preferred not to say.
- **Sexual orientation:** **87%** of participants identified as heterosexual/straight and **3%** identified as bisexual. **10%** preferred not to say.
- **Ethnicity:** **87%** were White/White British, **3%** were from other white backgrounds (White Asian), **3%** were Black British, **4%** were Asian British and **3%** did not answer.
- **English as a first language:** **97%** of participants told us that English was their first language, **3%** told us that their first language was not English (Filipino).
- **Religion:** **44%** of participants told us they were Christian, **32%** told us they have no religion, **8%** told us they were Catholic, **3%** told us that they were Muslim, **3%** told us that they were an Atheist and **10%** did not answer.
- **Disability:** **29%** reported having a disability.
- **Long-term health conditions:** **26%** of participants reported having a long-term health condition.
- **Mental Health:** **13%** reported experiencing a mental health issue.
- **Neurodiversity:** **3%** identified as neurodiverse and **97%** identified as neurotypical.
- **Carer status:** **29%** identified as a carer.
- **Employment status:** : **47%** of respondents were employed, **45%** were retired and 3 people did not answer.

- **Financial status:** The largest response was from people who told us that they never struggle to pay for basic necessities (**79%**). The full range of financial status responses is provided in *Figure 10*. 3 people did not answer.

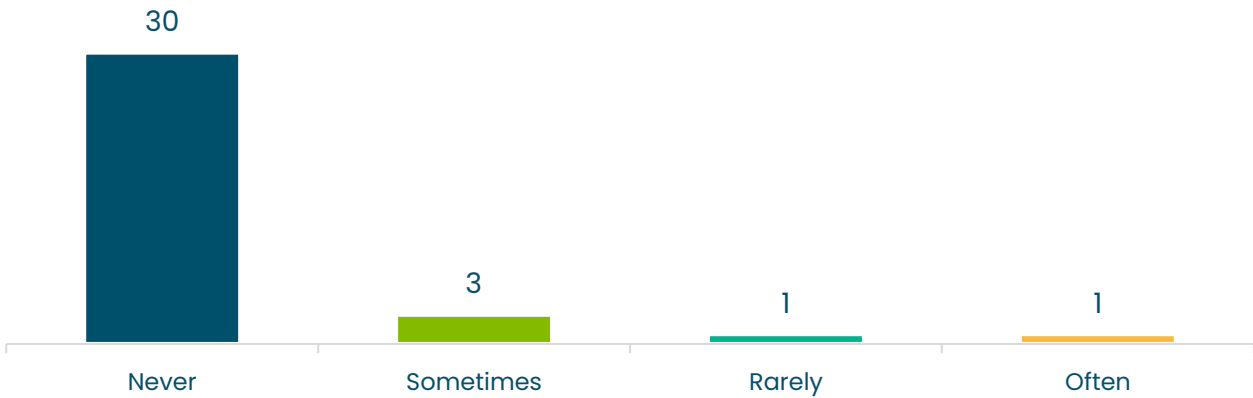


Figure 10 – Number of participants by responses to the question: “In the past six months, have you struggled to pay for basic necessities?”

Insights to Inform

These insights to inform are meant for this series of reports as a whole. There will be 9 reports in this series coming out across 2025, as a follow on from the 9 reports in our 'Medway Areas' series in 2024.

- For Medway Council and the NHS in Kent and Medway to use these insights to inform their work.



If you would like to chat with us about the report you can reach us through the following routes:

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Online:

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By Telephone:

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By Email:

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By Text:

Text us on 07525 861 639. By texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's British Sign Language interpreter will make contact and arrange a time to meet face-to-face

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