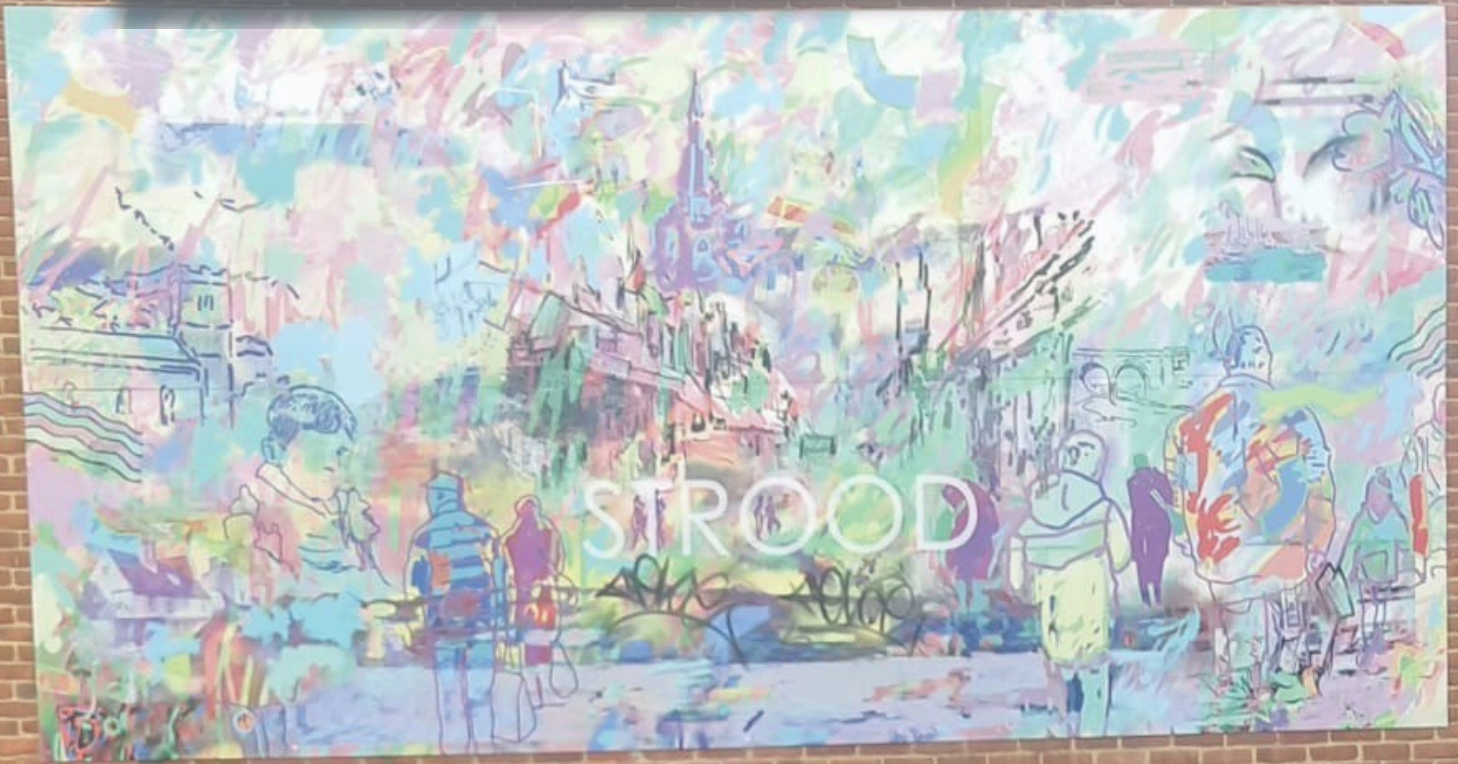**A Spotlight Report**

How people feel about living in Medway

A spotlight report focusing on the Medway town of Strood.

June 2025

A spotlight report on the Building Blocks of Life, focusing on the area of Strood.

Contents

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 June 2025, we engaged with **55** residents living in Stood.

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 Strood has on Residents

What's good about living in your area?

We asked 55 residents living in Strood what they like about their area. *Figure 1* shows the number of mentions by positive theme. 4 people said 'nothing'. 1 person did not answer.
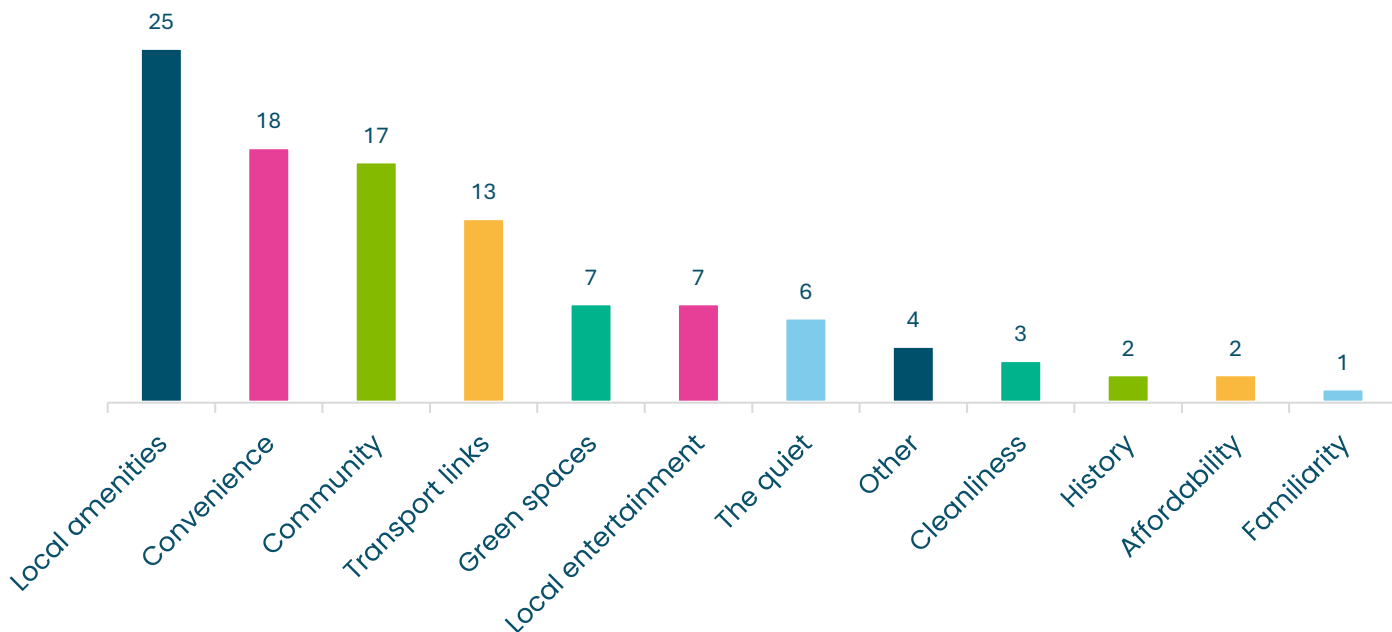
Figure 1 – Number of mentions by positive theme

Local Amenities (25 mentions)

45% mentioned local amenities.

- "The range of shops is good."
- "We have most of the services compared to the rest of Medway, apart from the banks."
- "There is a variety of shops. You have the smaller stores like M&S, Asda. I use the gym, it's 24/7. I go 4 times a week. It's decent, it's The Gym Group."
- "The schools are good. My son has special educational needs and the school (Hilltop) is very good. It is a mainstream school not a special school. All the staff including the midday meal supervisors are really good with him."

Convenience (18 mentions)

33% mentioned convenience.

- "I like that I have everything on my doorstep. Everything is on hand (doctors, dentist, shops, pharmacy, post office and cafes)."
- "I can walk everywhere I need to go."
- "The convenience for travelling into London and to Rochester."
- "I guess easy access to shops, easy to get to Rochester, it's just over the bridge."

The Community (17 mentions)

31% told us the community is a positive aspect of where they live.

- "The neighbours are really good."
- "The neighbourhood. We all look out for each other. Everyone has each other's backs."
- "Good community groups."
- "I like it because you get to meet a lot of people. They are friendly and say hi. That makes you want to go back, they greet you when you go back."

Transport links (13 mentions)

24% mentioned transport links.

- "Public transport means I can get everywhere."
- "It's close to London and there are good transport links."
- "Public transport means I can get everywhere I need to go and can get to see my family."

Green Spaces (7 mentions)

13% of participants mentioned that they enjoy the green spaces in their area.

- "Broom Hill Park is a fabulous facility."
- "We've got lovely open spaces where you can sit and chat."

Local Entertainment (7 mentions)

13% mentioned local entertainment.

- "I like the atmosphere here and I like the buskers."
- "There are quite a lot of social activities to do at the microbar."

- "In the summer the council organises games and activities and in the winter they do amazing lights at Christmas."

The Quiet (6 mentions)

11% mentioned the quiet.

- "The quietness of it, in the daytime there are no cars, nothing really happens."
- "There is more space in the area where we live, it is not so heavily populated and especially not compared to London."
- "Quiet where I live."

Other (4 mentions)

7% mentioned other positive aspects of their area.

- "A much slower pace of life."
- "One of my children and grandchildren live close by and I get to see them all the time."

Cleanliness (3 mentions)

5% told us about the cleanliness of the area.

- "Clean. Sweeper comes through regularly."
- "The bin men are excellent. They go above and beyond clearing rubbish in the streets."

History (2 mentions)

5% mentioned the history as a positive aspect of the area.

- "There's a lot going on there's a lot of history."

Affordability (2 mentions)

5% mentioned affordability.

- "The house prices are cheaper [than] in London, which meant we could afford to buy a house with a garden."

Familiarity (2 mentions)

5% mentioned familiarity.

- "I was born here. It's home. I have lived in lots of places, but this is home."

Positive Impacts of the Area

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

45 of the 55 respondents (**82%**) said that where they live has a positive impact on them, 1 respondent said that it does not (**2%**) and 9 respondents (**16%**) did not answer or said 'don't know'. Some respondents specified multiple positive impacts. *Figure **2*** represents the specified positive impacts of the area.
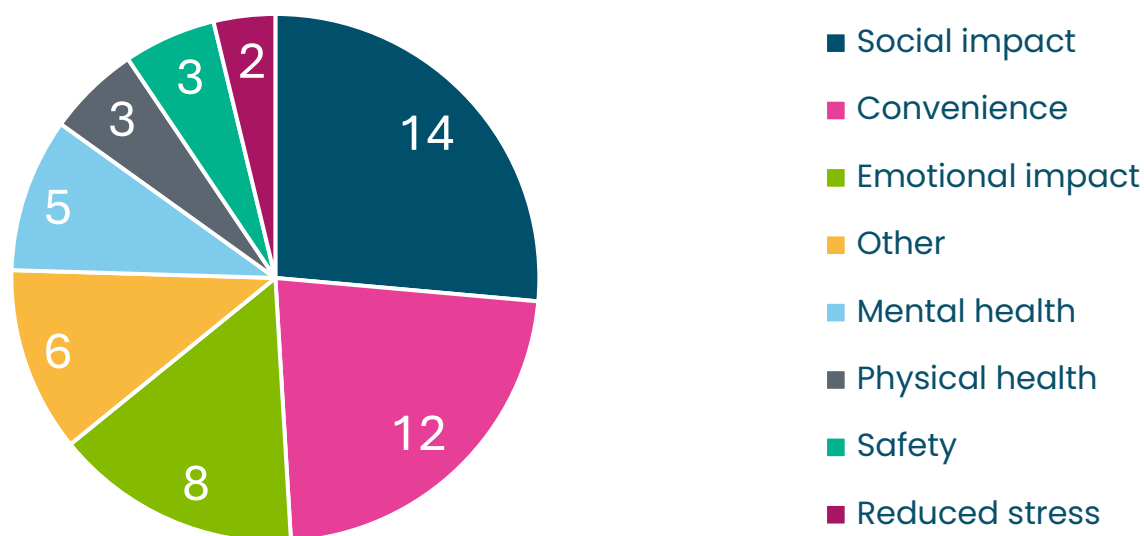

Figure 2 – **Number of mentions by positive impact**

Legend:
- Social impact
- Convenience
- Emotional impact
- Other
- Mental health
- Physical health
- Safety
- Reduced stress

Social impact (14 mentions)

25% of people mentioned that where they live had a positive impact on their social life.
- "We've got lots of open spaces which means we get to have lots of festivals."
- "It is a really nice place to go and do something and just wanting to be in the town."
- "It nice to have neighbours that are there for you."
- "There's always somewhere to go and it can be somewhere different each time. It means the children can go out."

Convenience (12 mentions)

22% mentioned that where they live had a positive impact as it's convenient.
- "I am coeliac, so having a variety of supermarkets means I can get the things I need."

- "I can get into the local area and get what I need. The buses are important because I can't drive and my walking is limited."
- "It's convenient, you don't have to plan, you can just pop down."

Emotional impact (8 mentions)

15% mentioned that where they live had a positive emotional impact.

- "It makes me happy to live."
- "It makes me feel happy and good inside."

Other (6 mentions)

11% mentioned other positive impacts.

- "It makes it an acceptable place to live, you don't need to have much going on, just enough to tick over."

Mental health (5 mentions)

9% of respondents said that where they live had a positive impact on their mental health.

- "Depending on the weather I can get out and about which helps my mental health."

Physical health (3 mentions)

5% of respondents said that where they live had a positive impact on their physical health.

- "It's good to keep fit, it's good physically and mentally, especially at my age."

Safety (3 mentions)

5% of respondents mentioned a positive impact of living in the area was that they felt safe.

- "I feel safe and its safe for the kids growing up."

Reduced stress (2 mentions)

4% of respondents mentioned a positive impact of living in the area was that they have reduced levels of stress.

- "It's less stressful being able to work locally and not have to worry about commuting."

What are the negatives about living in your area?

We asked 55 respondents what they dislike about the area they live in. *Figure 3* shows the number of mentions by negative theme.
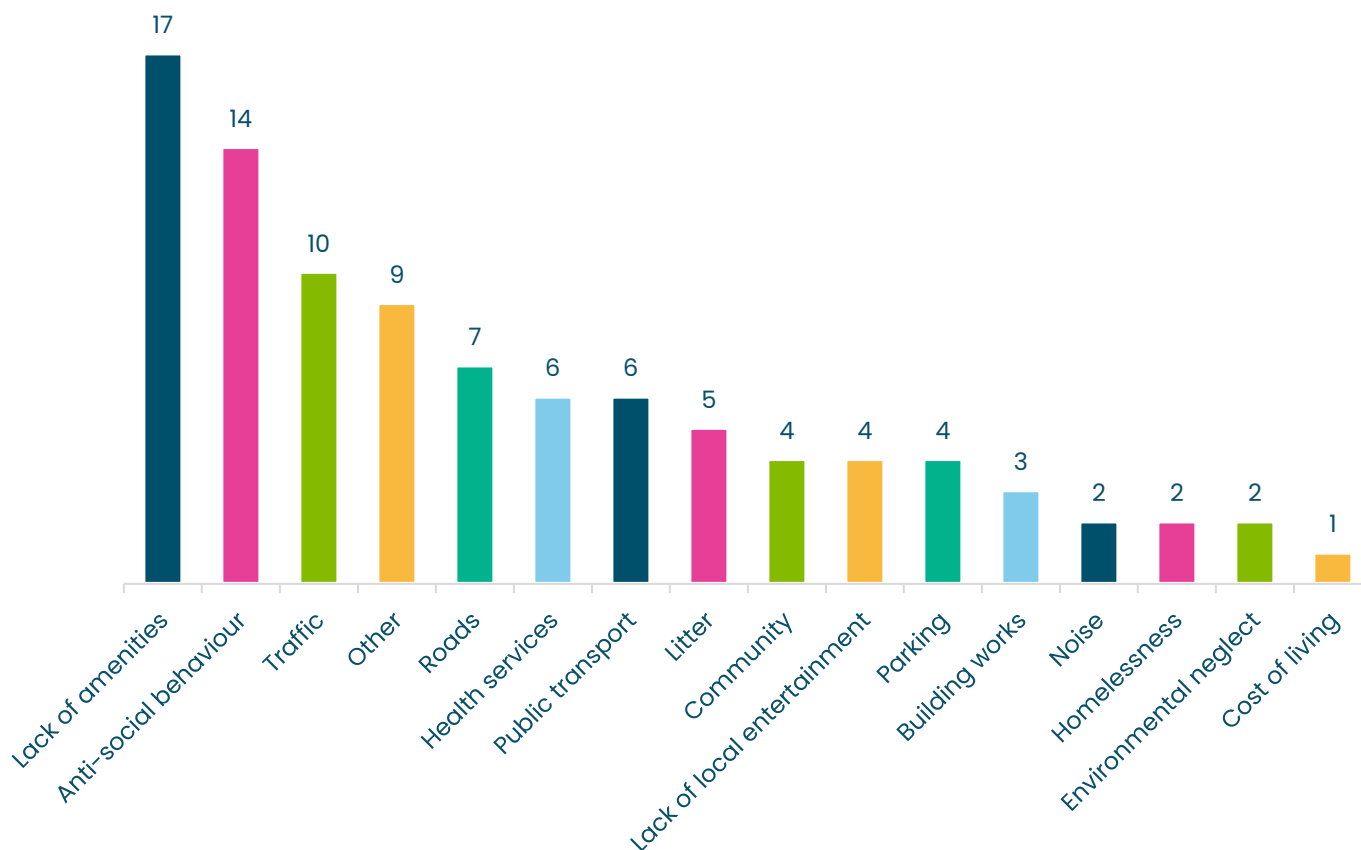

Figure 3 – Number of mentions by negative theme

Lack of Amenities (17 mentions)

31% of people mentioned the lack of amenities where they live.

- "All these barber shops around here - we have 9 barber shops. Who needs that many? All the banks have shut for some bizarre reason. It's disappointing that so many shops are shutting."
- "There are no banks and only 2 building societies. The Post Office doesn't have a banking hub so it's useless."
- "It would be nice to have more variety of shops, particularly smaller shops in the High Street, so there is more choice. Currently its a lot of nail bars and barbers. Its a shame we had 2 charity shops close, particularly as one of them was a local community charity (and the other one was Demelza)."

Anti-social Behaviour (14 mentions)

25% mentioned anti-social behaviour in the area.

- "The drinkers; in the evening there are a lot of people congregating on the seats over near the post office and the police are always having to deal with them and stop them from fighting shouting abuse."
- "Only the drinkers [points to the square by the Post Office]. Sometimes they are sleeping across the benches."
- "The High Street especially on a Saturday night gets very rowdy so the High Street itself loses its charm."
- "There are E-scooters around and people doing wheelies on bikes."

Traffic (10 mentions)

18% of respondents mentioned the traffic in their area.

- "Traffic! They drive so fast through the centre."

Other (9 mentions)

16% of respondents mentioned other negative aspects of Strood.

- "Chatham high street is now seedy. They have taken away the countryside. We are too close to Dover."
- "Medway Council make the decisions about SEND funding, which they try to cut."
- "The drainage in the area is bad."
- "The cycle paths are a problem. They aren't being repaired or cleared of rubbish and the barriers are a hinderance."

Roads (7 mentions)

13% told us about issues with roads.

- "There are always some sort of roadworks going on in Strood."
- "Potholes are everywhere. Park Road still has potholes to be finished."
- "The potholes. They are never sorted. They come out and circle it but never fix it."

Health services (6 mentions)

11% of participants mentioned issues with health services.

- "Lack of GP, Dentist, services in the area due to all the new houses being built. The infra structure not set up to cope."
- "You can't get a doctors appointment (even for people with multiple health conditions like me). And when you do they are time limited so you can't get everything sorted. They will only discuss one issue at a time when I might have

lots going on. And the doctors don't know enough or know what they are doing. The lack knowledge about your existing health conditions."

Public Transport (6 mentions)

11% of respondents spoke about the lack of public transport.

- "Buses are hit and miss, but you've got to go, so you suck it up."
- "The bus does not come on time and that can mess you up, especially if you have a train to catch."
- "The bus service, where I am there is only one bus every hour."

Litter (5 mentions)

9% mentioned litter.

- "Litter is one of the big issues and the houses of multiple occupancy (HMOs), don't have any provision for them to put their rubbish that is why it is usually just thrown out on the street the council needs to provide or make provision for where they can get rid of their refuse."
- "The state of the place too - rubbish everywhere! Where I live, it's dumped in alleys, it's not nice to see. I walk to Cliffe Road and there's always food waste."
- "There is 'fly tipping'. Everyone leaves rubbish out 'hoping' the bin men will take it but they won't."

The community (4 mentions)

7% mentioned the community are a negative aspect of the area.

- "It is too over-populated."
- "Too many people now living in the area, it has changed so much since I moved here."

Lack of Local Entertainment (4 mentions)

7% mentioned a lack of local entertainment.

- "There's nowhere for teenagers to go in the area. All the local community groups seem to have closed, like the Scouts."
- "There's not enough to do here, no adventure."

Parking (4 mentions)

7% spoke about issues with parking.

- "There is no zoning. People park to use the train (for free) and are there all day. We can't then park. Have to park 3 streets away."

- "Why do we have so many yellow lines if no-one enforces it? No-one tells anyone to move. It's really frustrating. The road I live on is like a rat run, they park on corners and it's just a matter of time before there's an accident."

Building works (2 mentions)

4% of participants mentioned issues with building works in the area.

- "They are continually housebuilding. this is not sending the right message, there are houses everywhere and it is doing nothing to solve the housing crisis. They are not being built how they said they would be built. And then they wonder why people get annoyed? I have written to the council and not even received a reply. The fact for some, they are now being overlooked and it's an invasion of privacy."

Noise (2 mentions)

4% mentioned noise.

- "People that shout out accusations with no reasons."
- "Music being played to loud."
- "The High Street especially on a Saturday night gets very rowdy so the High Street itself loses its charm."

Homelessness (2 mentions)

4% mentioned homelessness.

- "Lots of homeless."
- "I don't want to come to Strood in the evening because of all of the people who are homeless."

Environmental neglect (2 mentions)

4% mentioned environmental neglect.

- "The hedges are not cut back or tidied."

Cost of Living (1 mention)

2% spoke about the cost of living.

- "People complain about people who have moved in (my son calls them migrants) but I find them quite nice. But it does mean more pressure so my son can't afford to rent or buy in the area, so he has to live with me, and he struggles to get a job."

How does that have a negative impact on you?

We followed up the previous question by asking respondents how the negatives they had identified had had an impact on them. 40 out of the 55 respondents (**73%**) said that where they live does have a negative impact on them and 10 respondents (**18%**) said that it does not. 5 respondents (**9%**) did not answer. Some respondents specified multiple negative impacts. *Figure 4* shows the specified negative impacts of the area.
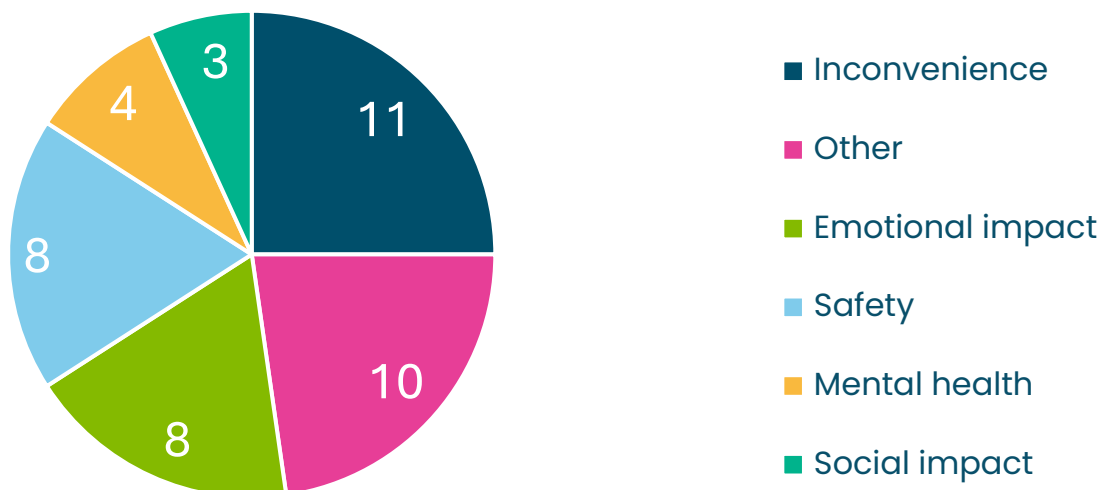

Figure 4 – Number of mentions by negative impact

Inconvenience (11 mentions)

20% spoke about the negative impact of inconvenience.

- "It means that you have to plan coming in to town to do anything to ensure that you can get the bus home again. Also, if you have any appointments, you need to make sure they are in the morning, again so that you can be sure to get the bus back."
- "Whenever I do anything or go anywhere I have to work around the bus schedule, for instance when I come into town to go shopping, I have to rush about so that I can ensure I am back in time to get the bus home."

Other (10 mentions)

18% of people mentioned other issues.

- "It feels claustrophobic. You feel hemmed in."
- "The potholes are causing damage to my car."
- "It makes me want to leave the area more and more."

Emotional impact (8 mentions)

15% of people mentioned negative emotional impact, making residents feel stressed and frustrated.

- "This is a huge impact on us. It is stressful."
- "It's really frustrating."
- "I don't like seeing [litter], so it makes me feel bad when I do."

Safety (8 mentions)

15% of people mentioned feeling unsafe.

- "I don't walk out at night. I do not feel safe at night. This restricts my life."
- "Worried to go out."
- "It makes me feel less safe. You can't leave things unattended, and even have to watch what you leave outside your house."

Mental health (4 mentions)

7% of people mentioned the impact on their mental health.

- "It's not good, it's depressing when you come into town."
- "It's depressing and means you don't feel like going out."
- "All this worry impacts my mental health."

Social Impact (3 mentions)

5% of people mentioned where they live has an impact on their social life.

- "I really don't like seeing all the drinkers and it makes me not want to go out. I try to get everything done in the daytime."
- "You end up staying indoors unless you really have to really have to go out. It's isolating and makes you miserable, especially if you are already feeling crap – and then you do come out and see a shithole. I used to live in Lambeth and you'd have all sorts of different cultures there. Here, it's the same, but there are more racist arseholes about. There are pubs you just don't go into."

Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Medway Residents

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

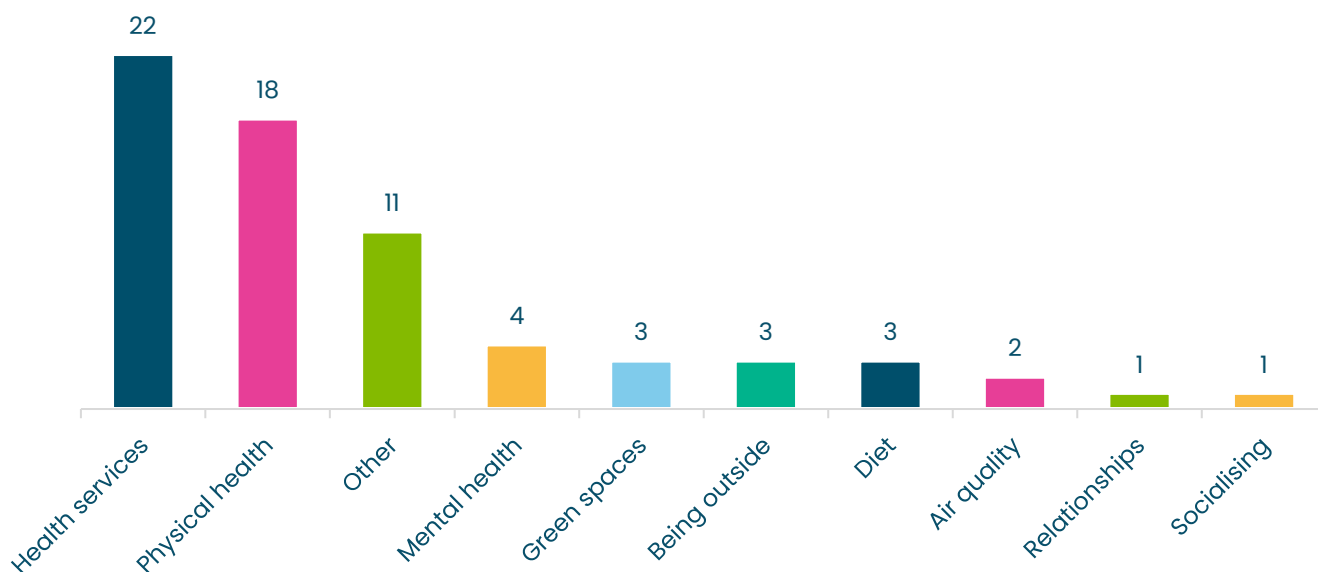We asked respondents what comes to mind when they think of health and wellbeing.

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

Health Services (22 mentions)

40% of people spoken to mentioned health services as something they think of when prompted by the question.

- "Trying to get to the GP is horrendous. They've started to do booking online now. I'm worried about the older people and how they do it. They shouldn't have to rely on someone else to access the GP."
- "That we need more surgeries and more patient care within doctors themselves."
- "The Doctors. They run pop up buses for people who can't get to the doctors to run health checks. The run smoking ones to help people stop smoking"

Physical health (18 mentions)

33% of respondents mentioned they associate physical health with health and wellbeing.

- "Keeping fit, I do a lot of walking, I walk my dog all around."

- "I think about my own health and the conditions I have, plus my partner, who is in a wheelchair."
- "I go for walks, I like to go swimming."
- "There is a walk for every day of the week if you want to somewhere in Medway."

Other (11 mentions)

20% of people mentioned other things that come to mind when they think of health and wellbeing.

- "I think about stress and constantly being in a heightened state of fight or flight and which battle regarding my son's health or education am I going to have to deal with next."
- "Children and keeping them healthy."

Mental health (4 mentions)

7% mentioned mental health.

- "I think about mental health improving."

Green spaces (3 mentions)

5% mentioned green spaces.

- "Open spaces. Broomhill Park, the Friends of Broomhill. They are great and the spaces are great for your physical and mental health."

Being outside (3 mentions)

5% mentioned being outside.

- "I go for walks, I like to go swimming. The countryside, gardening."

Diet (3 mentions)

5% of people mentioned diet.

- "Have a good diet, not too much fast food."

Air quality (2 mentions)

4% of people mentioned air quality.

- "Pollution - I think it is very bad, I have asthma and COPD."
- "All the cars and the exhaust fumes. I am asthmatic so I can't go places that are dirty with fumes. I walk where there are less cars."

Relationships (1 mention)

2% of people mentioned relationships.

- "I have a nice home and neighbours. Everyone looks after me. I am grateful."

Socialising (1 mention)

2% of people mentioned socialising.

- "The Medway Health Walkers who meet weekly at the Strood Community Hub."

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. 15 people said, 'don't know/nothing'. 3 people did not answer.
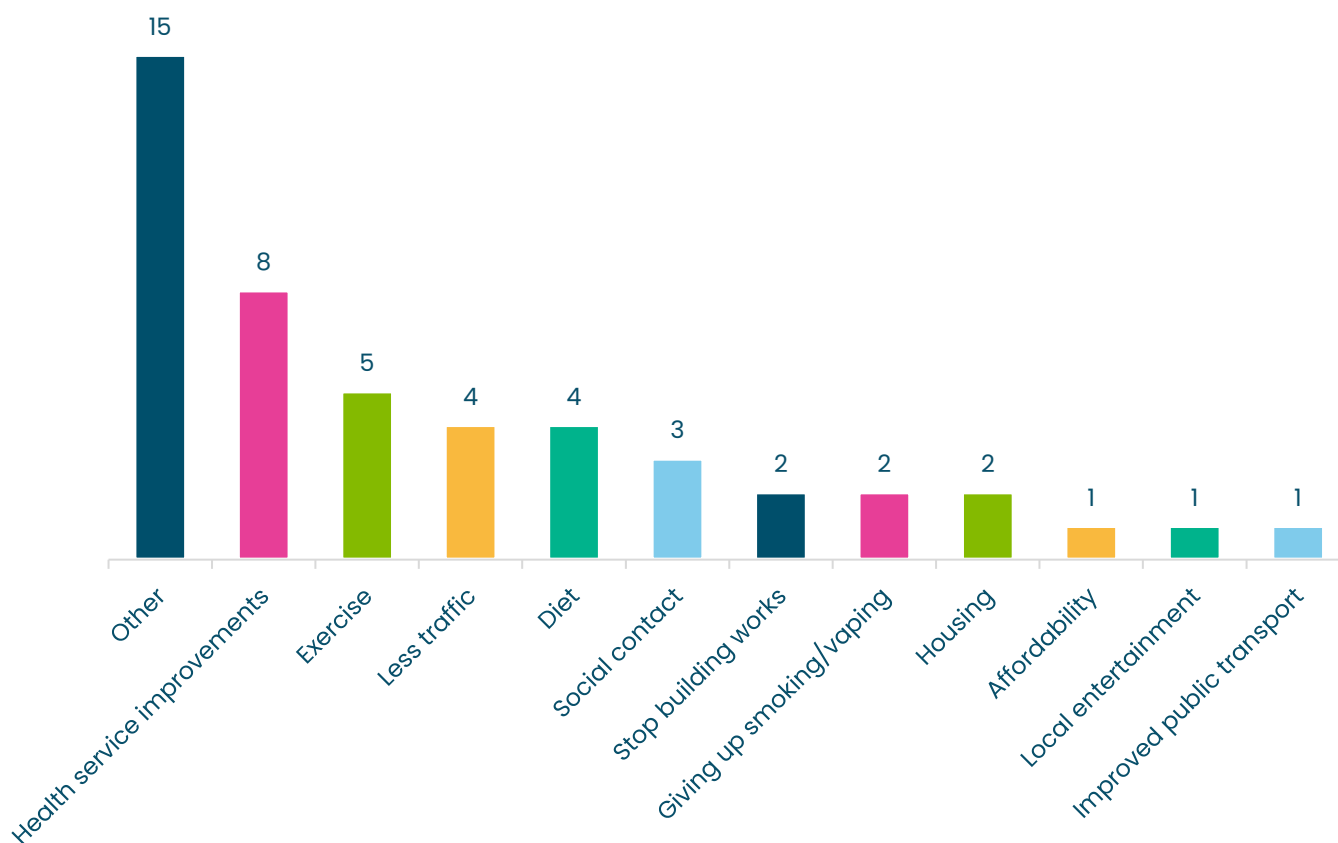

Figure 6 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "What would help you to improve your health and wellbeing?"

Other (15 mentions)

27% mentioned other things that would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "Jobs that understand mental health and that it's 24/7. They are closing places where people could meet and gather, such as the Visitors Centre in Rochester. People don't know where they can go or people they can talk to. Safe Havens are only open in the evenings and don't take into consideration that people are depressed all the time, 24/7."
- "More police visibility in the area."
- "Clearing the rubbish. Litter pickers are really good in town, but they don't come to houses."
- "Get in some carer's support as things are going to get a lot harder. Go get a hobby like singing."

Health service improvements (8 mentions)

15% mentioned that improvements to health services would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "Speeding up the diagnosis that I am waiting for."
- "Bring in more doctors and nurses. I don't believe just bringing them in from abroad is the solution or sustainable."
- "Having better access or more GPs in the area."

Exercise (5 mentions)

9% spoke about exercise as something that would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "It would be nice if there were some more 'ladies only' classes at the gym."
- "I could probably walk a lot more than I do."

Less traffic (4 mentions)

7% mentioned that if there was less traffic, that would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "Less traffic – I can taste the fumes some days."
- "I don't think you can improve the health with all the traffic. The amount of cars is terrible."

Diet (4 mentions)

7% of respondents told us that improving their diet would help improve their health and wellbeing.

- "Bring back better school dinners."

Social contact (3 mentions)

5% mentioned that more social contact would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "Get out the house more."

Stop building works (2 mentions)

4% mentioned stopping building works.

- "Less house building. Not feeling so hemmed in. I want to preserve the open spaces."

Give up smoking/vaping (2 mentions)

4% of people we spoke to said that giving up smoking or vaping would improve their health and wellbeing.

Housing (2 mentions)

4% mentioned improvements to housing would improve their health and wellbeing.
- "Being in a bungalow rather than a house."
- "Having a garden, I live in a flat now, but I used to do a lot of gardening when I lived in a house, but I separated from my husband and so had to move."

Affordability (1 mention)

2% mentioned more affordable amenities as something that would improve their health and wellbeing.
- "Making things like the gym more affordable and more pleasant to go to. The private gym which is the cheap one is still too expensive for me because I am on benefits and the council run leisure centre is really busy and noisy, which I struggle to cope with."

Local entertainment (1 mention)

2% mentioned local entertainment.
- "There needs to be more for young people to do to stop them getting tempted into drugs, when I was growing up there was nothing and there still isn't."

Improved public transport (1 mention)

2% mentioned public transport.
- "A reliable bus service. The 191 is awful - one I ended up walking home and not a single bus passed me in all that time. I had waited at the bus stop for a bit and people were saying they had already been waiting there for an hour, so I should have seen one at least."

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. 3 people did not answer.
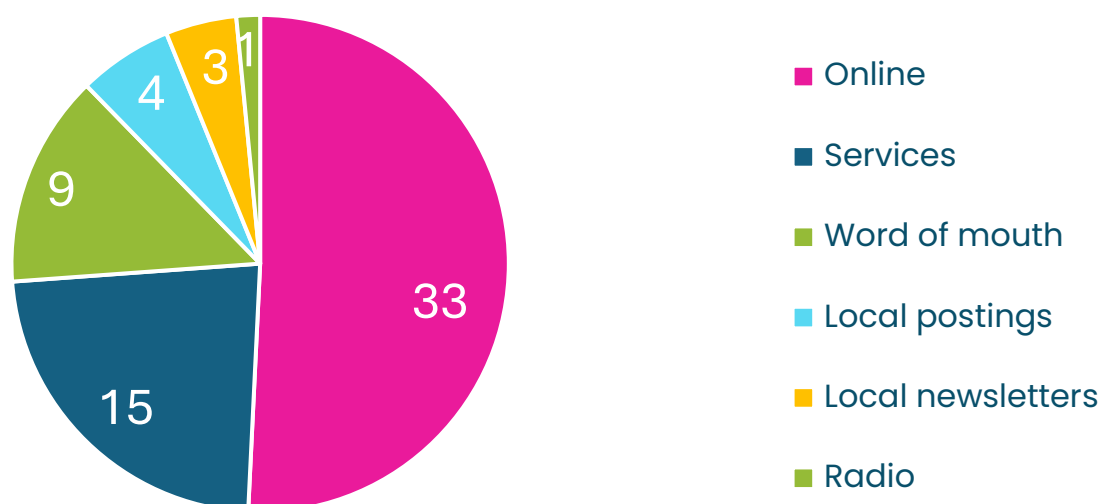

Legend:
- Online
- Services
- Word of mouth
- Local postings
- Local newsletters
- Radio

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

Online (33 mentions)

60% of people mentioned they would go online for information about what is happening locally, with **11%** specifically mentioning Facebook sites.

- "As much as I don't like social media, it is one of the areas, along with Google, where I find out what is going on."

Services (15 mentions)

27% said they would look to services to find out local information, with **22%** specifically mentioning the library.

- "I don't have a computer, so I would go to the library."
- "I go to the library, it's really good as I can renew my bus pass there too - like a 'one-stop shop'."

Word of Mouth (9 mentions)

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

- "It's a small place, you find out from people."

- "I have a friend who works at the council, so that is where I find out most things."

Local Postings (4 mentions)

7% find out local information through local postings.

- "Sometimes leaflets come through the door."

Local Newsletters (1 mention)

2% get their local information through local newsletters.

- "The little booklet, The Net, that's very good. Medway Matters also tells you what's going on."

Radio (1 mention)

2% get their local information through local radio.

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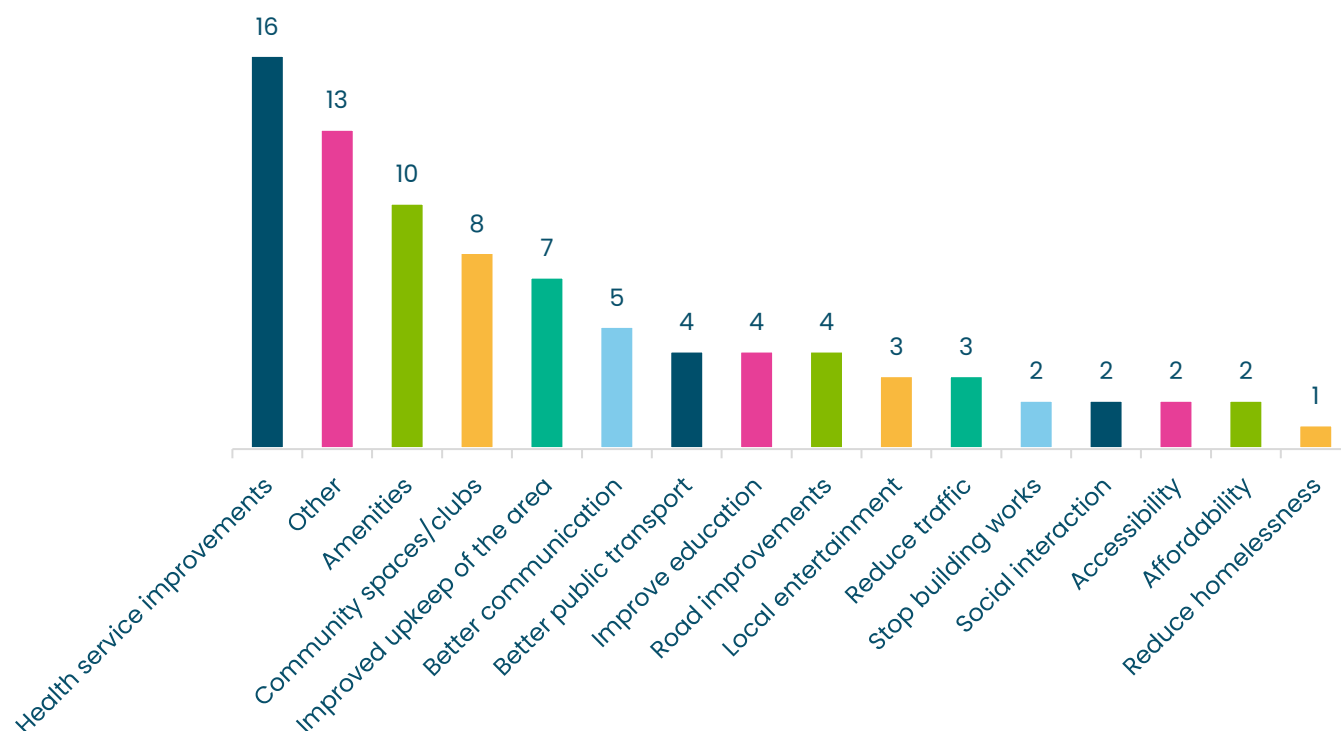
Figure 8 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "What could be done to promote health and wellbeing within your community?"

Health Service Improvements (16 mentions)

29% of respondents said that improvements to health services will improve community health and wellbeing.

- "More GPs available. Lower waiting lists for pain clinics. Lower waiting lists for scans. More things in person, less online (eConsults). More funding for dementia in Medway. There is currently only one person doing dementia support (paid). Something more permanent or long term. ADSS Support buddies in hospitals (Medway) to be brought back."
- "Better mental health services, more modern hospital that can see more people (and easier to park when go there), easier to see health professionals face-to-face and not just on phones."

- "More visible clinics, pop-in centres where you don't need an appointment but can walk in for advice or go in and get a check-up (no ringing or holding on the phone). Maybe have more health fairs as people do not like going to the doctors."

Other (13 mentions)

24% of people spoke about other ways to improve community health and wellbeing.

- "Greater police presence walking around. I have never seen a Community Officer in Strood."
- "Get rid of BBC and civil servants and use the money to provide space and get people out of bed blocking. Firms that don't pay council tax - pay by how much comes in, not by the building."
- "It would be really good to get rid of all the drinkers and stop the fighting and shouting that goes on."
- "Don't be ashamed of being British. We should celebrate the good things about Britain and our history."
- "Everywhere you go you seem to smell cannabis, it would be nice if you didn't have to smell that wherever you went."

Amenities (10 mentions)

18% mentioned more amenities would improve community health and wellbeing.

- "Having a local indoor swimming pool for older people."
- "Building more schools with SEND (special educational needs or disabilities) provision so more children can go to their local school and not have to get a bus or transport to a school further away."
- "I have to travel to get to the job centre so it would be good if there was may be a 'pop-up' job centre so it isn't as difficult to get to."

Community Spaces/Clubs (8 mentions)

15% of people mentioned community spaces/clubs.

- "Turn the empty shops into a Community Hub (where you can rent rooms, cafe, meetings for groups, clubs)."
- "More community groups for people to keep connected."

Improved upkeep of the area (7 mentions)

13% of people mentioned improved upkeep of the area would improve health and wellbeing.

- "The centre needs to be given a lick of paint and brightened up, the buildings are dull and depressing. The litter needs to cleared and we could do with be more bins, there aren't any dog waste bins."
- "Clear up the rubbish! You never see road sweepers anymore - we need to bring them back!"

Better communication (5 mentions)

9% of people mentioned better communication around what is available for local people would improve health and wellbeing.

- "People don't know what is available locally. They should use the precinct (or a hall in the centre of town) to promote services so that people can find out what is available. When people are diagnosed with Parkinsons, they are left to get on with it. There are groups that can help, but no one knows about the services. Its not just about Parkinsons. There is a lot of help out there but you need to know where to go. Even the GP doesn't have the information."
- "Better communication, especially for people with a learning disability, those who are neuro diverse and those with poor mental health."
- "I am not sure people know what is going on. We need to get people out and meeting each other, it's good for you mentally as well as physically."

Better public transport (4 mentions)

7% of respondents mentioned better public transport would improve community health and wellbeing.

- "More buses - I sometimes have to rush so I can get the bus back as it's only one an hour and I don't want to miss it."

Improve education (4 mentions)

7% of people mentioned improving education.

- "Start young and get into schools. Its about education and breaking down barriers so we talk about things. Like mental health and cancer."
- "Children need to learn to eat better not just rubbish all the time."
- "People need to learn to be disciplined in their own health and wellbeing."

Road improvements (4 mentions)

7% mentioned improving roads.

- "Try to reduce the amount of roadworks that are going on all the time."

Local entertainment (3 mentions)

5% of people mentioned more local entertainment would be beneficial.

- "There used to be a 'Dickens world' over in Chatham, which was really good and we used to have signs for it here in Strood and people would often stop for directions; it would be good to have something like that again."

Reduce traffic (3 mentions)

5% of people mentioned improvements to traffic.

- "There's a lot of through traffic, which needs to be reduced and there are always roadworks and queues of traffic on the bridge.

Stop building works (2 mentions)

4% told us that stopping building works would improve community health and wellbeing.

- "Keep the open spaces around Strood as they are plans to build a lot on them."

Social interaction (2 mentions)

4% mentioned that more social interaction would improve health and wellbeing.

- "A few more meeting places for the elderly to go and socialise eg cafe clubs or hub meetings etc...(I see them sitting around on their own on the benches)."

Accessibility (2 mentions)

4% of people mentioned improving the accessibility of Strood.

- "Make the high street more pedestrian friendly. Make it a one way system."
- "Make it more accessible for everyone, particularly the older generation."

Affordability (2 mentions)

4% of people mentioned affordability.

- "Bring parking charges down."
- "We've had to use our savings to cover basic necessities - out pension has not gone up enough to cover costs and that does not seem fair."

Reduce homelessness (1 mention)

2% mentioned the homeless community.

- "There needs to be more done to help the homeless."

Demographic Breakdown

- **Age**: The largest response was from people aged 75-84 (**27%**). The least common response was from people aged 35-44 and 85-94 (each at **4%**). The full range of ages is shown in *Figure **9**.*
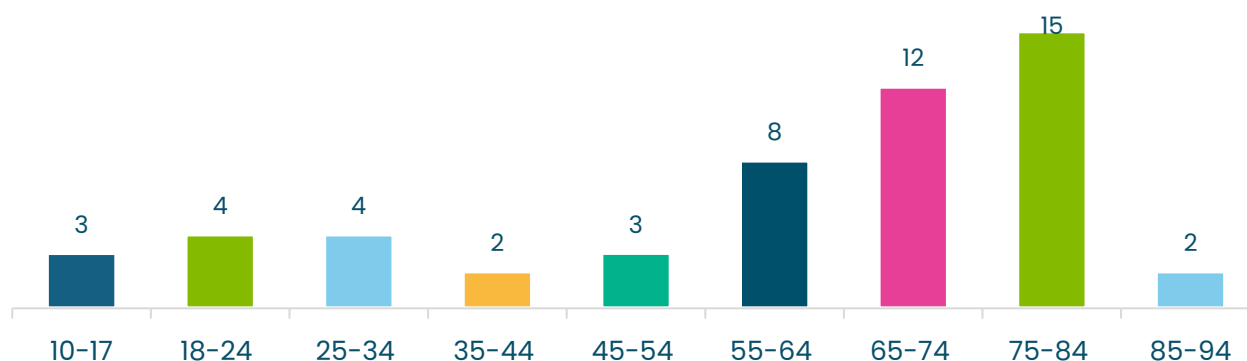

Figure 9 – Number of participants by age

- **Gender**: **69%** of participants identified as female and **27%** identified as male. **4%** chose 'prefer not to say'. **93%** of participants' gender identity was the same as their sex recorded at birth.

- **Sexual orientation**: **80%** of participants identified as heterosexual/straight, **4%** identified as gay or lesbian, **2%** self-described as pansexual/asexual. **12%** preferred not to say. **12%** did not answer.

- **Ethnicity**: **80%** were White/White British, **5%** were from other white backgrounds (Irish and not specified), **5%** were Black British, **2%** were Black Caribbean, **4%** were Indian, **2%** preferred not to say. **2%** did not answer.

- **English as a first language: 92%** of participants told us that English was their first language, **4%** told us that their first language was not English (Hindi and Punjabi). **2%** preferred not to say and **2%** did not answer.

- **Religion: 24%** of participants told us they were Christian, **43%** told us they have no religion, **15%** told us they were Catholic, **9%** told us that they had other religions (Seikh, Jehovah's Witness, Protestant, Hindu and Pagan) and **9%** did not answer.

- **Disability**: **11%** reported having a disability.

- **Long-term health conditions**: **29%** of participants reported having a long-term health condition.

- **Mental Health: 11%** reported experiencing a mental health issue.

- **Neurodiversity**: **7%** identified as neurodiverse and **93%** identified as neurotypical.

- **Employment status**: The largest response was from people who were retired (**56%**). The full range of employment status is shown in *Figure 10*. 5 people did not answer.

30

10

8

2

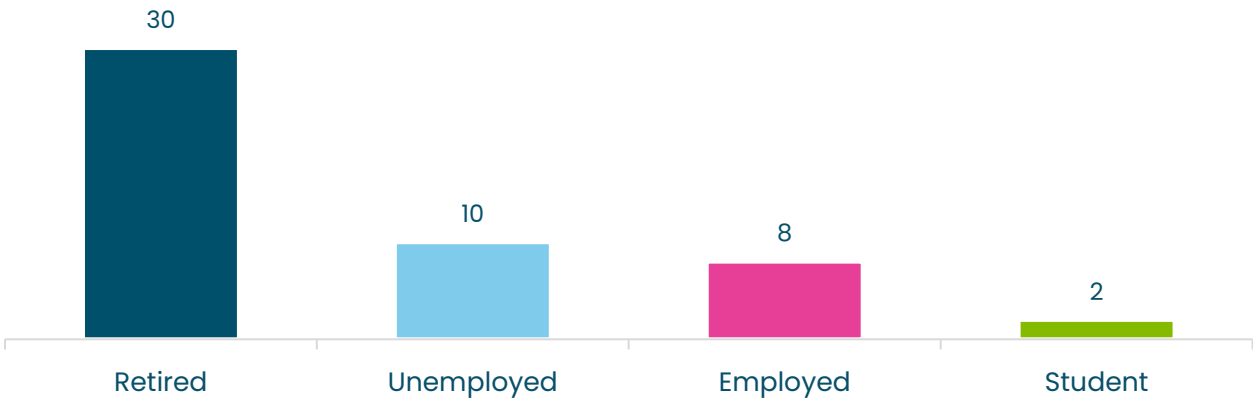Retired   Unemployed   Employed   Student

Figure 10 – Number of participants by employment status

- **Financial status:** The largest response was from people who told us that they never struggle to pay for basic necessities (**67%**). The full range of financial status responses is provided in *Figure 11*. 1 person did not answer.
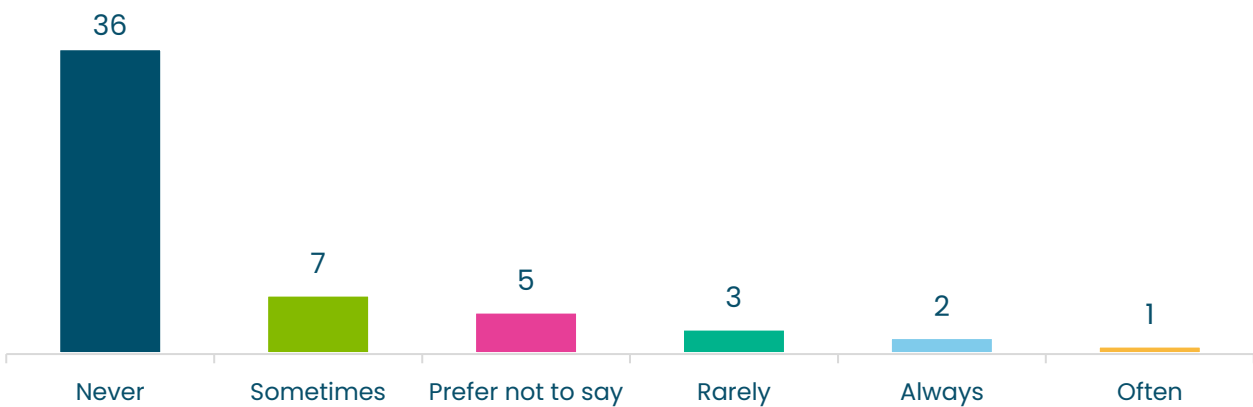
36

7

5

3

2

1

Never   Sometimes   Prefer not to say   Rarely   Always   Often

Figure 11 – 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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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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