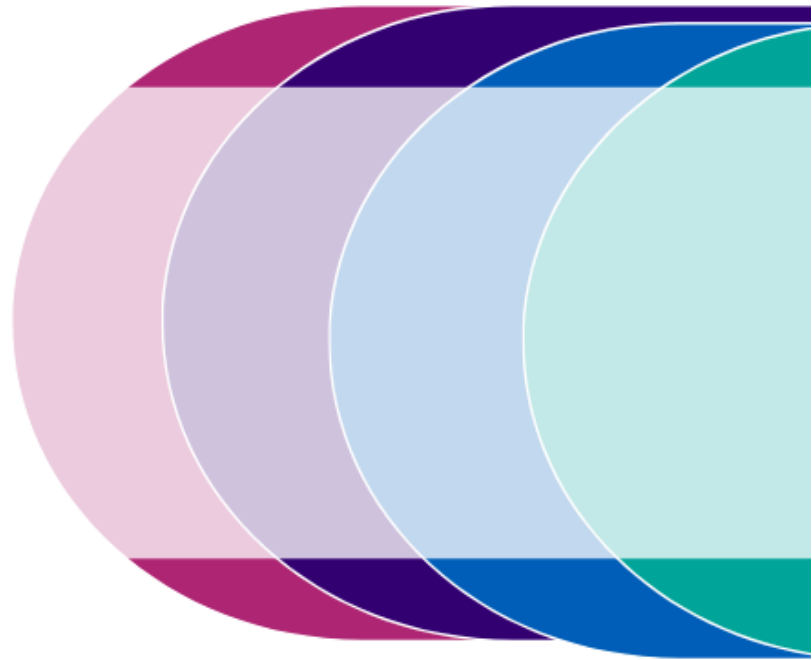




Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership Insight Gathering Network February 2024



Supported by Healthwatch Medway



Context

21 Medway and Swale community organisations and 9 Medway and Swale PPGs were invited to take part in the first Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership Insight Gathering Network survey.

Each participating community organisation was asked to encourage 6 people who use their services, to answer two questions. PPG colleagues were asked to spend an hour or so in their practice waiting room, to ask patients the questions face to face.

The survey had two questions:

- What elements of living in Medway or Swale do you feel make a positive difference to your health and wellbeing?
- What elements of living in Medway or Swale have a negative impact on your health and wellbeing?

These questions were designed to directly inform Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership's social regeneration approach.

The data from the survey landed within a secure platform hosted by Healthwatch Medway who undertook the analysis and wrote this report.

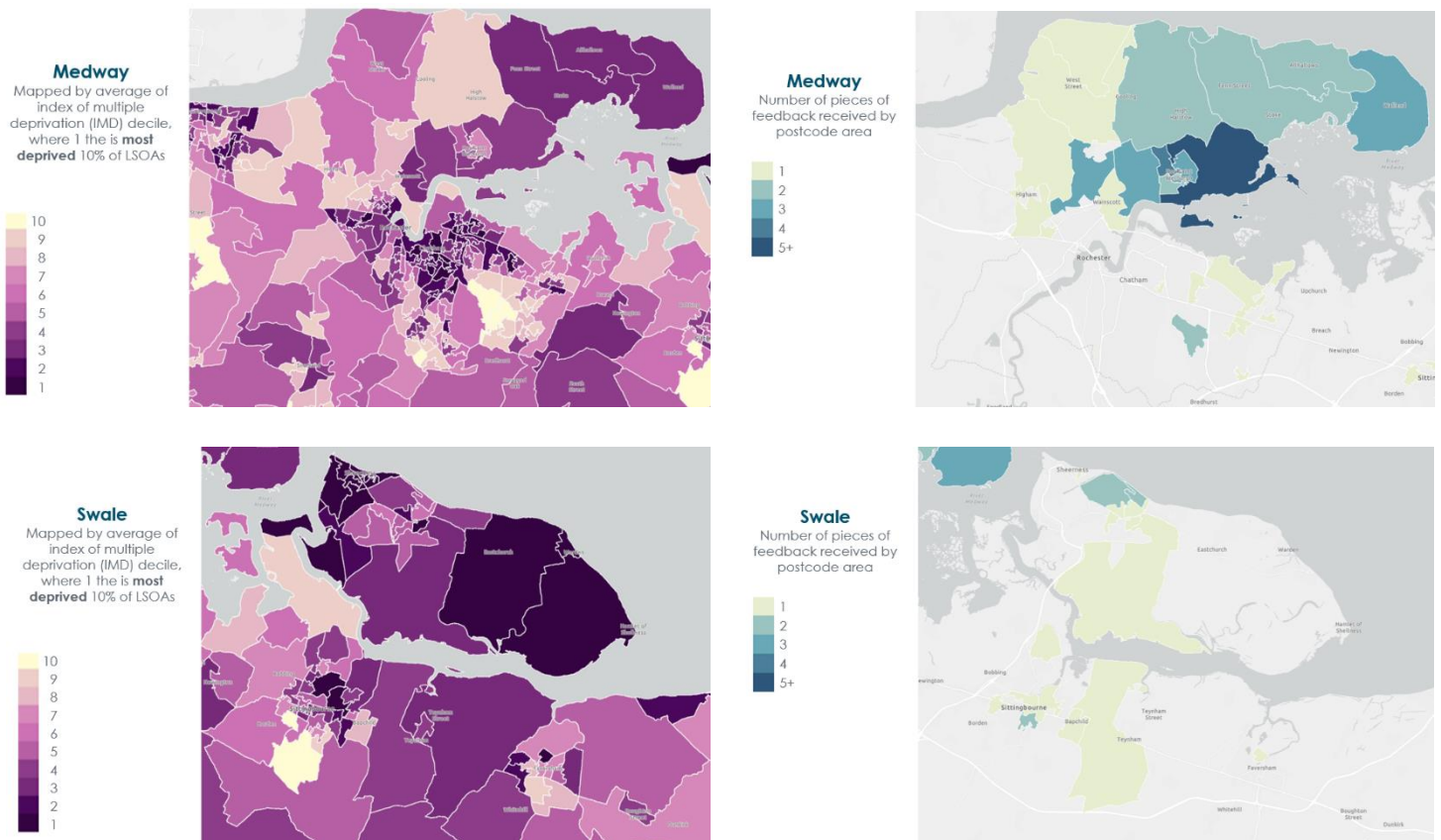
Participants

72 people submitted a response.

- **71% (51)** of participants were female and 26% (19) were male. 1 person identified as non binary, trans. 1 person did not state their gender.
- **82% (59)** of participants identified as heterosexual, 3% (2) as gay/queer or lesbian. 15% (11) people did not state their sexuality.
- **83% (60)** of participants identified as being from an English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British ethnic group. 17% (12) did not state their ethnicity.
- **4% (3)** said that English was not their first language.
- **22% (16)** of participants identified as being a carer. No one identified as a young carer.

| Age | No. of participants |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 25-34 years | 2 |
| 35-44 years | 1 |
| 45-54 years | 11 |
| 55-64 years | 21 |
| 65-74 years | 15 |
| 75-84 years | 17 |
| 85-94 years | 4 |
| Not stated | 1 |
| Total | 72 |

Participants came from all over Medway and Swale.



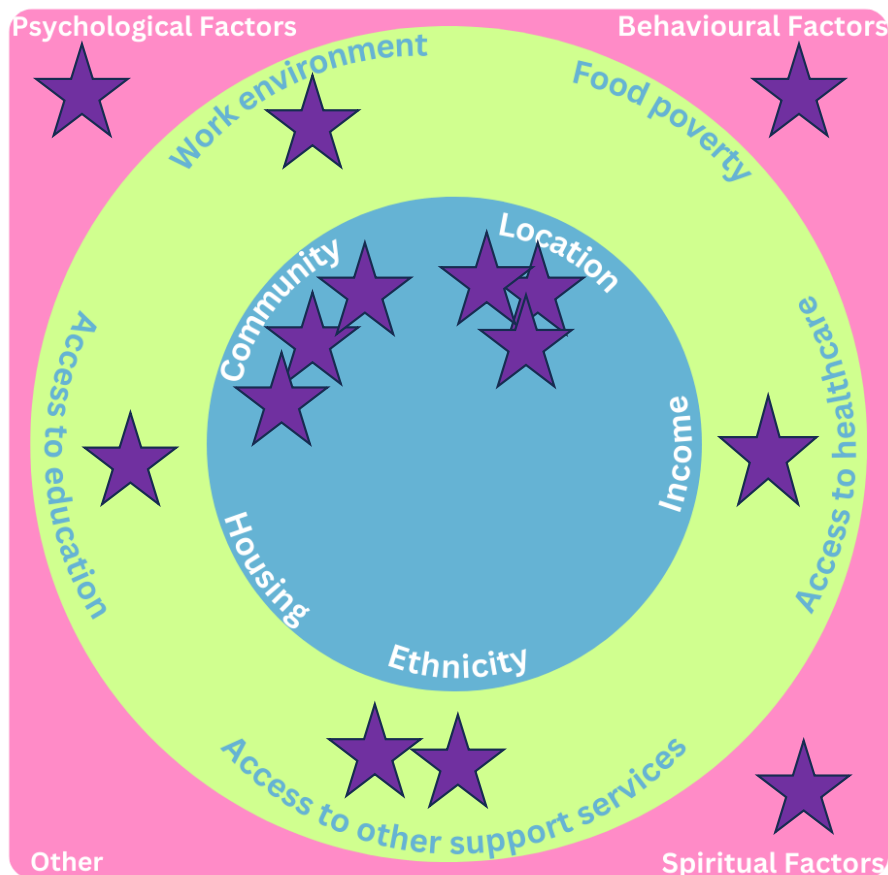
56% (40) people identified that they had a disability, some people identified that they had more than one disability. A breakdown of this can be seen in the tables.

Long term health conditions included:

ADHD, AF, Arthritis, Asthma, Bowel cancer, Chronic Kidney Disease, CKD, COPD, Diabetes, Fibromyalgia, Heart disease, High Blood pressure, M.E, Multiple Sclerosis, Osteo-arthritis, Parkinsons, Skeletal degeneration, Stroke, Thyroid condition and Tourette's.

| Self identified disability | No of participants |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Physical Disability | 22 |
| Learning Disability | 1 |
| Mental Health | 9 |
| Long Term Health Condition | 22 |

What elements of living in Medway or Swale do you feel make a positive difference to your health and wellbeing?



There were a range of themes within the insights gathered. The diagram above places these themes in relation to the wider determinants of health.

The largest cluster of themes focused on how people felt the location that they lived in benefited their health and wellbeing (55 mentions)

- Access to Green/Open spaces and Local Parks (46 mentions)
- Clean, fresh air (7 mentions)
- Police & Safety (2 mentions)

The second cluster of themes focused on how people feel their local community benefits their health and wellbeing (41 mentions).

- People and relationships (19 mentions)
- Community resources, local shops etc (11 mentions)
- Transport / easy travel (11 mentions)

The third theme is around the benefits of walking and exercise (22 mentions)

A cluster of themes highlighted benefits of community groups and activities on health and wellbeing (19 mentions)

- Community Group / Activities (17 mentions)
- Support for Carers (2 mentions)

Other themes were:

- Positive benefits of access to Healthcare services, such as GP, Dentist, District nursing (11 mentions)
- Psychological factors of being valued and volunteering (5 mentions)
- Benefits of faith groups (2 mentions)
- Having access to jobs (1 mention)
- Support from local school (1 mention)
- Weekly rubbish collection (1 mention)

Exploring the themes in more detail

Access to Green/Open spaces and Local Parks (46 mentions)

- *Green spaces for enjoying fresh air and walks.*
- *Some beautiful green park and spaces that enable you to get out and enjoy the countryside.*
- *I enjoy gardening I was unable to do that when I lived in London.*
- *Living on the Hoo Peninsula makes me feel good and happy because of the open spaces and countryside all around me. Also living in a village is far better for me than living in a town; I have had experience of both.*

Walking and exercise (22 mentions)

- *Being able to walk by the sea not only is good exercise but mentally it helps with mood and general well being.*
- *I also enjoy being so near to nature and the access provided by Medway Council (despite much of Medway being a conurbation) -- near me, places like the Riverside Park, the Community Wood off Lower Bloors Lane -- walking there is great for well being and mindfulness.*
- *There's lots of outdoor spaces for walks - we are 10 mins away from the coast at Grain or 15 mins from All Hallows or down at the sea wall at Hoo.*
- *Living in a village outside of the main town, I enjoy the open spaces of the countryside, the green spaces that you can walk dogs and ramble to your hearts content, also being close too the river/sea the invigilating sea breezes*

People and relationships (19 mentions)

- *Being in a rural area where the community is friendly, and care about/look out for each other.*
- *Having friends and family nearby and good neighbours to keep an eye on me.*
- *I feel a pride in living in such a community that has so many historical links, (the former Chatham Dockyard, the Charles Dickens connection of Rochester*

and that city's impressive cathedral and Norman castle, I need not continue as I am sure we are aware of those and many more). Living in such an area brings an underlying communal spirit, where so many people and their families are familiar or known to each other, creating a very supportive network.

- *I live in a vibrant village community where there is a lot going on for people who choose to get involved. I have lots of choice of groups and activities that I can get involved with and it is easy to meet new people and make new friends.*
- *I like the village life and feel that on the whole we have a great community spirit.*

Community Group / Activities (17 mentions)

- *In general people are very friendly and willing to help. Other organisations such as Age UK and our local U3A provide interest groups, occasional outings and monthly meetings.*
- *It's a close community in Tunstall, lots of social activities.*
- *Having a charity with volunteers like Whoo Cares who we can depend on for help, companionship and guidance on legal matters ...not feeling lonely makes a big difference*

Healthcare (11 mentions)

- *We are also lucky to have a Minor Injuries Unit and a walk in GP surgery if we cannot get to our own GP.*
- *The Sittingbourne Memorial Hospital is a god send.*
- *In our particular case I am well served by a very good surgery who are giving us great service despite the challenges stacked up against them. I feel truly blessed and consequently have a confident and positive feeling about living in the area*

Transport / easy travel (11 mentions)

- *Being able to access multiple roads to get to other neighbouring areas...*
- *Faversham is small nice and quiet and easy to access*
- *Having free bus travel to attend social clubs.*

Community resources, local shops etc (11 mentions)

- *Obviously concerned about the ongoing ability to finance e.g. parks libraries, leisure activities, Riverside which are vital to health and wellbeing.*
- *I like the historical parts such as the Dockyard. Pleasant shopping areas although the dockside outlet is not as nice as it used to be.*
- *I live close to the river - we have a view of the river from our house, and it was the reason we bought it. It's walking distance from my youngest's primary school, and the new school being built in Frindsbury is where my eldest will go.*

Clean, fresh air (7 mentions)

- *Living close to the coast means that the air is clean. Having lived & worked in London some years ago the air was polluted from industrial waste & car fumes. The overall climate must be advantageous to prolonged good health.*

Being valued / volunteering (5 mentions)

- *Being a volunteer for Whoo Cares CIC is fulfilling. Also, a volunteer for my local Church.*
- *I work 3 days for the charity Whoo Cares and this gives me an immense feeling of satisfaction knowing that we are helping lonely and isolated people on the Hoo Peninsula.*

Police & Safety (2 mentions)

- *I'm always very glad we have Kent Police too. They are so under-manned ... They work hard handling a difficult element of the community and the Kent officers are always helpful and approachable.*
- *There is very little crime where I live, I have good neighbours around me, it is safe for me to walk out after dark and I feel confident about the local Police - so all these things have a positive effect on my wellbeing.*

Support for Carers (2 mentions)

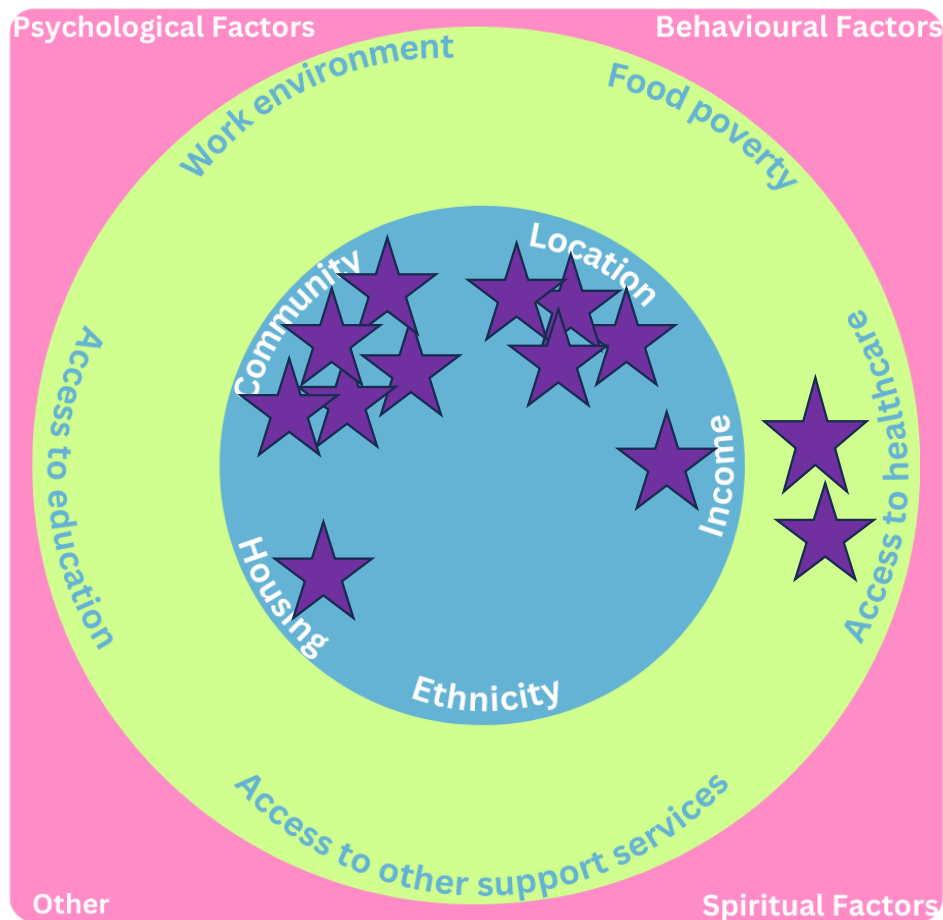
- *My partner has vascular dementia. The support I have received since he has been diagnosed is very good*

Other factors that contribute to mental health and wellbeing

- Having access to jobs (1 mention)
- Support from local school (1 mention)
- Faith groups (2 mentions)
- Weekly rubbish collection (1 mention)
- Good weather (1 mention)



What elements of living in Medway or Swale have a negative impact on your health and wellbeing?



There were a range of themes within the insights gathered. The diagram above places these themes in relation to the wider determinants of health.

The largest cluster of themes focused on how people feel their local community impacts their health and wellbeing (73 mentions).

- Lack of local community resources, local shops (9 mentions)
- Personal Safety (13 mentions)
- Public Transport (21 mentions)
- Traffic (16 mentions)
- Potholes/Roads (14 mentions)

The second cluster of themes focused on how people felt that access to healthcare services had a negative impact on their health and wellbeing (56 mentions)

- Difficulties in access to Healthcare (50 mentions)
- Lack of Mental Health support (6 mentions)

The third cluster of themes focused on how the location that they lived in impacted on their health and wellbeing (49 mentions)

- House building (19 mentions)

- Pollution/ rubbish (18 mentions)
- Sense of decline in the area (8 mentions)
- Lack of Green/Open spaces (4 mentions)

Other themes were:

- Cost of living and access to supermarkets for cheaper food (4 mentions)
- Lack of Social Housing (3 mentions)

Exploring the themes in more detail

Difficulties in access to Healthcare (50 mentions)

- *When you choose and book and find no appointments are available you may be told there is a waiting list of 20 weeks and then left in hole with no where to move onto*
- *Difficulty communicating with my GP surgery. Fortunately, I do not need medical help or advice very often, but when I do, it is not quick or easy or straightforward to get my questions answered.*
- *Difficulty getting doctors appointment, so often feel like giving up*
- *Often being discouraged from accessing assessment or assistance for most health matters, unless unavoidable or an emergency. This contributes to concerns about overall health outcomes if continuing to live in this area, from ongoing needs into later life.*
- *The chemist's too busy to have walk in chats.*
- *Difficultly getting dentist appointments and unfair to have to pay.*

Public Transport (21 mentions)

- *Being isolated in terms of bus services*
- *Difficulties with the bus service as I do not drive.*
- *If I did not drive I would find transport much more difficult to access. I do think about how my life would change if I ever had to give up driving. This will not only affect me in basic things like being able to do my own shopping and go out for lunch, but it would also affect me with bigger things like being able to have holidays and go and visit family and friends around the UK.*
- *The bus service to and from the Peninsula is appalling, not reliable, infrequent, and certainly not compatible for people having to start work early or finish later than 6pm*
- *Poor public transport links to rural community*
- *The lack of a reliable and inexpensive bus service which affects many elderly people. If I am no longer able to drive, I will not be able to get to any of my clubs and I know this is the case for many on the Island*
- *If you do not have access to a car and have to rely on very poor public transport again another thing that can isolate people both elderly and mums with young families*

- *The on going transport issues that are never addressed, which prevent local people access services that are offered in the community unless they are within their village, leaving them unsupported and then lost because of this on going problem.*

House building (19 mentions)

- *The Council's plans to build so many more houses on the Hoo Peninsula is negatively affecting my wellbeing.*
- *Insufficient infrastructure to support population and ever-increasing pressure on local services.*
- *Multiple housing developments that are being built, spoiling green spaces.*
- *The fact that Medway Council have no plan to protect the area where I live, but rather build more houses. When the whole of Medway becomes a concrete jungle with traffic jams 24 hours a day and no fresh air to breathe with they realise that we need to save our countryside before there is none left to enjoy.*
- *The continual development of new housing estates around the Island and the infrastructure not being address to facilities these new dwellings. This causes not just poor access to local amities but continual traffic issues at peak times and rising pollution problems for those with health conditions.*

Pollution/ rubbish (18 mentions)

- *The air pollution, including dirty buses, and dog poo on pavements, with Litter and fly tipping.*
- *Also the building of the houses will negatively affect my health due to traffic congestion and air quality.*
- *Littering and the dumping of waste at curb side.*

Traffic (16 mentions)

- *The amount of construction traffic on the small residential roads in Hoo and associated road closures, mud, blocked roads by workers cars being parked in the roads.
The condition of the roads and the road systems (particularly around the Medway Tunnel) and the amount of traffic which causes me stress and anxiety.*
- *The constant building of houses, meaning more people on the Peninsular with one road in and out. Any traffic issues and everything grinds to a halt. In September, when my eldest was starting her new school, we had a few stressful weeks getting her to the school bus on time as roadworks caused traffic to be at a standstill with no alternative ways off the Peninsular. For the sake of a cycle path that hardly anyone uses - not well planned.*

Potholes/Roadworks (14 mentions)

- *Feeling trapped on the peninsula with roadworks and no alternative viable route*
- *Local road and level of repairs/ modernising impact on living and travelling around the area.*

Personal Safety (13 mentions)

- *Anti social behaviour, high rates of shoplifting*
- *High Streets are unwelcome places and intimidation in the tense atmosphere that is created by groups of loud men, mainly, congregating and obstructing progress.*
- *A general feeling of being unsafe when in public spaces at night and sometimes during the day.*
- *Other issues include the lack of policing - theft and kids behaving badly (we had a bottle thrown at our house last Halloween and there's always issues with antisocial behaviour in the village and at the local shops. There's no deterrent at all.*
- *Police presence virtually non existent on Sheppey which leads to a great deal of anxiety especially for the elderly living alone. It also restricts the hours they feel safe venturing out.*
- *Lack of police presence that facilitates the rising problems with theft, antisocial behaviour and fear for those that are vulnerable.*

Lack of local community resources, local shops (9 mentions)

- *closed shops on the high street.*
- *Infrastructure for GP/Dentist/Schools is becoming very fragile. People who live in the small villages cannot get their children into their local school, meaning they have to travel.*
- *Lack of shops except nail bars/ charity shops. We need to travel to other areas to benefit from larger stores.*
- *Lack of youth support structures clubs and safe places to congregate and share experiences and discover new interests.*

Sense of decline in the area (8 mentions)

- *Medway is not an inspirational area in which to live. People are losing hope that things will get better and so not bothering. An increasing number of people who do not see any sense of community are using social media as a means of abusive behaviour, some of which would not be said in face to face. Chatham as the nearest town, is run down and where many shops have disappeared. Re-generation is years off.*
- *Streets are unkept full of litter and dog mess. Place feels unkept and uncared for. There appears to be no pride in where you live, unless you are in the most affluent parts of the towns.*
- *The condition of the environment around me. For example, the level of rubbish on the sides of the roads makes me feel bad about the place I live as the people around me are not respecting the area.*
- *The amount of rubbish that is being dropped due lack of pride in their living and dwelling places, which encourages vandalism and unsocial behaviour.*
- *The feeling of hopelessness that is felt in the community for those that have complex health issues and isolated. This impacts greatly on the local health & wellbeing services and the staff that work for them. These services and staff are over run and working on limited budgets to try to help these people improve their sense of wellbeing and health.*

Lack of Mental Health support (6 mentions)

- *Not enough support for mental health*
- *My daughter suffers with mental illness and self harms and it's usually after the local hospital is closed and I have to use Medway. I dread it. Several years ago, Medway had a mental health wing until KMPT in their wisdom decided to close it and transferred the wards to Dartford leaving Medway without any facilities for patients. My daughter spent six months there on a section. I did 6000 miles visiting her. When are Medway going to get their own facilities?*

Lack of Green/Open spaces (4 mentions)

- *Moving from a leafier area to this one, very grey immediate surroundings also often impact heavily on my wellbeing (lots of urban, built-up areas with no trees or planting factored in) as does losing remaining green spaces and a lack of means to travel further afield to access others.*
- *Lack of open spaces within easy reach by public transport.*

Cost of living and access to supermarkets for cheaper food (4 mentions)

- *Having to travel off of the Hoo Peninsula to ...visit big supermarkets where you can get better deals for food.*

Lack of Social Housing (3 mentions)

- *lack of social or affordable housing for local families or elderly.*

