

## Healthwatch Hear My Voice Project

Performance art project based on survey findings of Redbridge residents views and experiences of local mental health services

Compiled 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018



## Project Overview

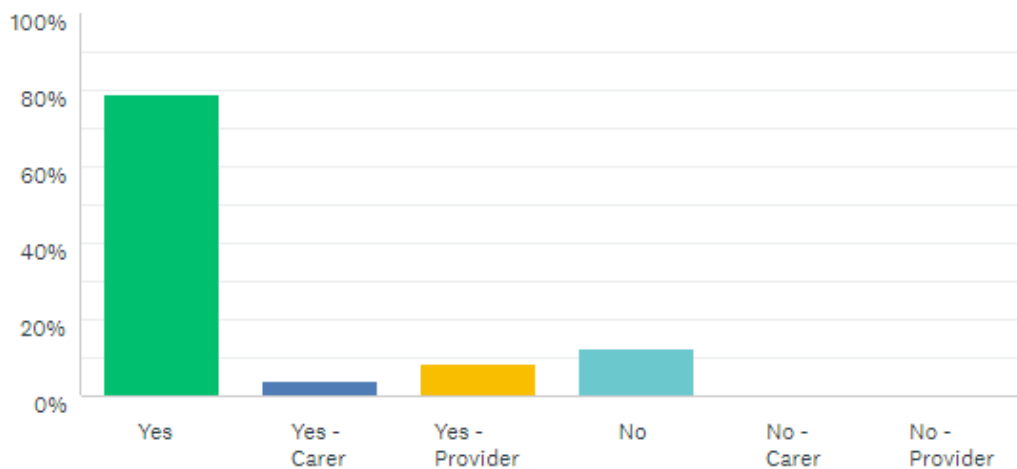
Healthwatch Hear My Voice was a 6 week performance art based project for local residents with lived experience of mental ill health, either as service users, service providers or carers/support workers.

The results of a survey of local residents views and experiences of Redbridge mental health services was used as a basis for some end of project sketches which were performed entirely by the project participants.

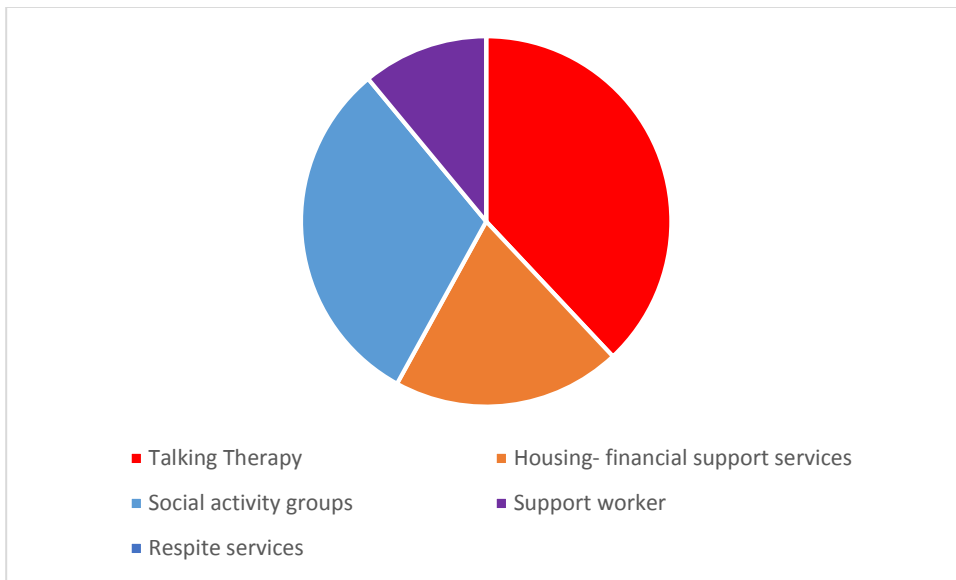
## Survey Findings

The survey was conducted both online and at local health and wellbeing events and solicited the views of both service users and providers, with the results as follows:

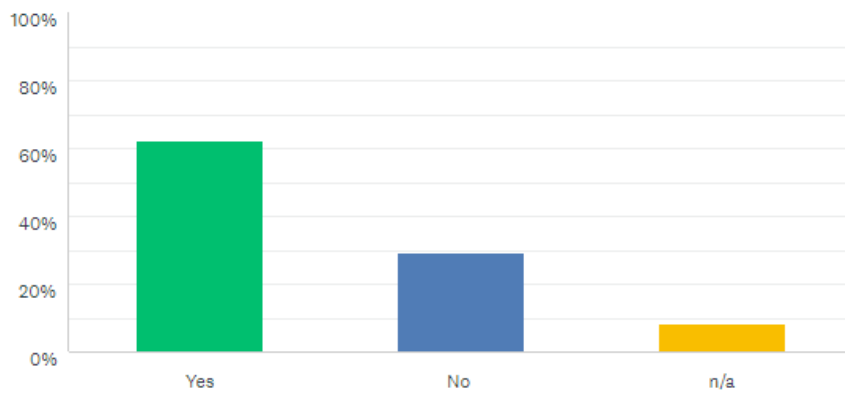
Question 1: Do you currently use, care for a user or provide local mental health services?



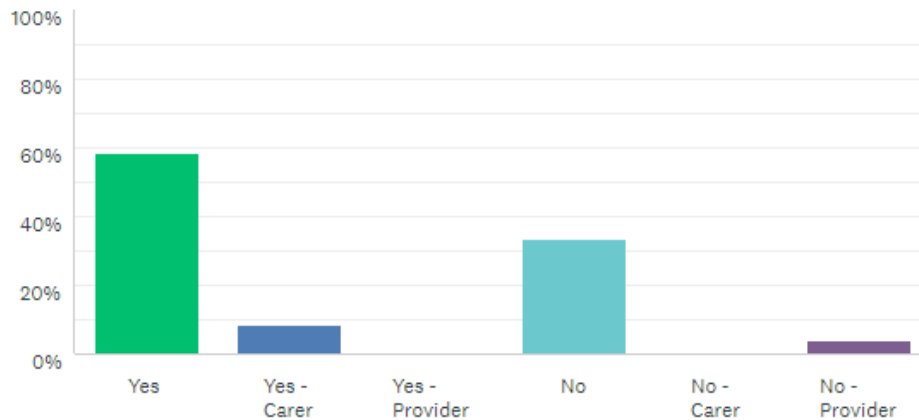
Question 2: Which services do you currently use or provide?



Question 3: Did you find it easy to gain access to local mental health services?



Question 4: Are you happy with the services you currently use or provide?



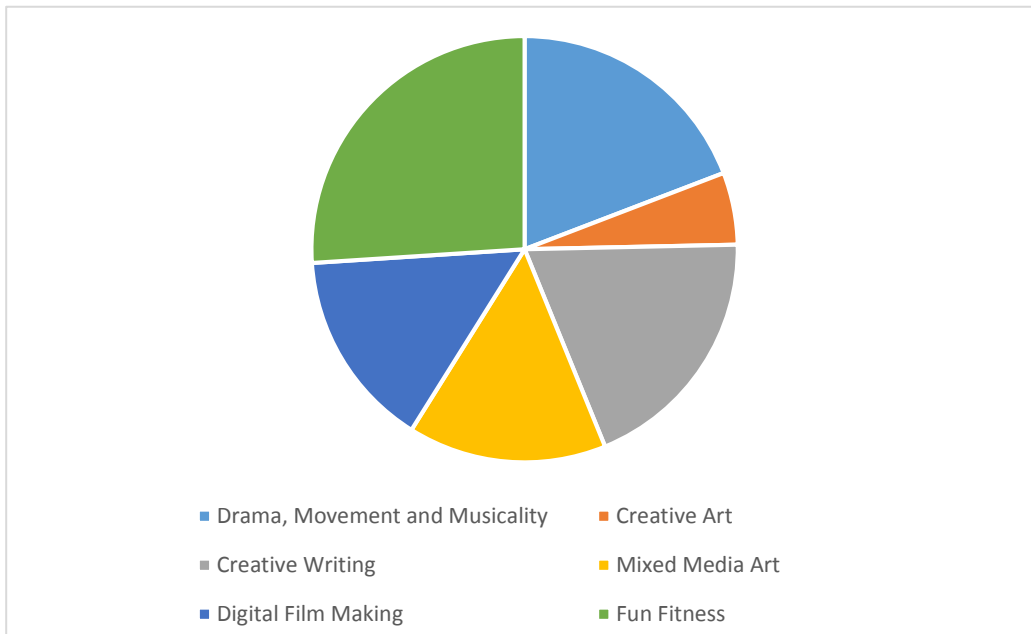
Question 5: What improvements would you like to see in gaining access to local mental health services?

General themes include better cooperation between MH organisations, more money invested into services, easier access, more open centers for people to go to, increased availability of self-help activities, more resources, more support, and reduced waiting times.

Question 6: What improvements would you like to see in the range of services and activities provided?

General themes include wider choice of services/ activities, use of social activities such as drama and increased awareness of support groups.

Question 7: Would you be interested in attending any of the following activities provided specifically for adults with lived experience of mental ill health?



Question 8: Would you like to provide details of any particularly positive or negative experience you have had accessing mental health services or activities?

**Case study:**

'I am 48 years of age. I have suffered depression/mental problems since the age of 17.'

My parents could not understand me so my father went to visit my GP. I was very emotionally disturbed and scared to walk out of even my front door. I became withdrawn and shy of people. I refused to attend the appointment with my GP, so the surgery sent a team of white psychiatrists to my house. I was interviewed by them and I was asked to describe my feelings to them. I was then diagnosed with experiencing a "nervous breakdown".

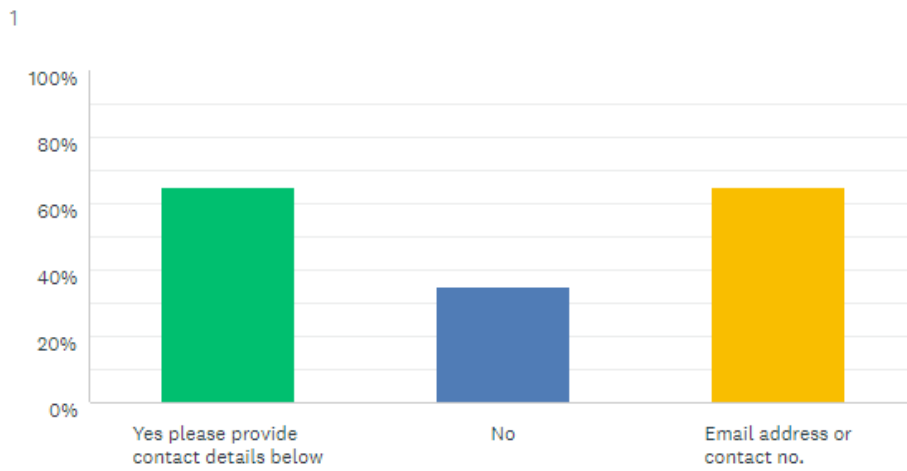
I actually was very young and I did not understand this nor did my family. They instantly prescribed me with anti-depressants called "stelazine" 20mg oral tablets. I was not informed of the side effects these drugs would make me experience.

I was not in the stable frame of mind to discuss or argue with the doctors. I started taking the tablets and started feeling drowsy and lazy. The tablets made me feel sleepy and increased my appetite. So I ate a lot of food, especially junk food. I stayed in my bed during the day and all night. I became withdrawn from my family and relatives and from the outside world'.

'I think the drugs are unnecessary and only ruin our health and make the condition worse. The doctors have really got the negative and wrong approach towards emotional stress and disappointments of which they describe as "depression". 'I really would like to see some serious attitude changes towards this mental problem. Drugs are not the answer'.

'Drugs only ruined my life and I feel angry and very resentful towards my family and the doctors'. 'Positive advice like a health and fitness exercise routines and nutrition and diet advice. Exercise such as yoga and meditation. Relaxation techniques and more and more creativity and social activities within the community in the UK.'

Question 9: Would you be interested in participating in a fun, performance art project with likeminded people highlighting Redbridge resident's views and experiences of local mental health services and activities?







## Performance Art Workshop Results

The workshops were attended by between 8 and 14 participants each week for a total of 5 weeks out of the intended 6 (due to extreme weather conditions).

Most of the participants had no prior experience of drama, and didn't feel able, after such a short time, to perform to an audience, but everyone who attended the final session felt able to participate in at least one of the sketches and to be filmed doing so. This, after only 5 weeks of attending such workshops and meeting each other shows how beneficial performance based workshops, provided in a 'safe' and empathetic environment are to people's confidence and wellbeing.

The narrated sketches that were performed are based on experiences provided by survey respondents and workshop participants.

All participants gave regular feedback in the form of Rainbows and Raindrops of what they enjoyed or didn't enjoy about the sessions {See Appendix 2 -4}, and participants 'interviewed' each other as part of the final session to get their personal feedback about the project.

The feedback included:

- Improvement in confidence and overall wellbeing
- The group gave them something to look forward to and something to talk about with their family and friends
- Some had gained a newfound interest in creative activities
- All participants enjoyed the relaxed and social aspect of the group
- The peer led nature of the group with shared experiences enabled them to feel comfortable expressing themselves and to be playful
- A desire to find more creative activities to take part in
- Participants were disappointed that the workshops had to end
- Participants can't afford to access paid sessions

Another participant who suffers from severe social anxiety gained confidence from seeing a clip of himself performing a short sketch, because he was shocked that he looked 'normal' to onlookers. His perception of himself was that everyone could see the inner turmoil and panic he was experiencing, and that he looked like a 'gibbering wreck'. The fact that he didn't, gave his self-esteem a boost and the confidence to attend a job interview.

## Summary

The majority of survey respondents and project participants appear to be mostly satisfied with the local mental health services provided, although long waiting times for access to talking therapy services is a prevalent concern. There is also concern expressed about the quality/skills training of therapists and first point of contact personnel.

Other areas for improvement noted are the need for increased availability of, and better signposting to, a greater variety of therapeutic, social activities, not only for long term service users to improve quality of life and help prevent relapse, but as a preventative measure that could be tried before the prescribing of medication in some mild to moderate cases.

## List of Appendices

- Question 5 survey responses
- Question 6 survey responses
- Question 8 survey responses
- Appendix 1 – excerpts from service user email received in response to survey
- Appendices 2,3 & 4 – Rainbow & Raindrops participant feedback
- Flashdrive containing compilation video and participant feedback