

Living Well Salford



Contents

Who we are	3
Summary	4
Methodology	5
Demographics	7
Analysis	8
Positive work of Living Well	12
Potential for change	16
Next steps	21
Responses from providers and commissioners	22
Acknowledgements	24

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Who we are

Healthwatch Salford is your health and social care champion. Whether you've had a good or bad experience, we can use your feedback to improve services for everyone and we have the right to make NHS leaders and other care providers listen to what you have to say. We are completely independent and impartial and anything you say is confidential. We also offer information and advice to help you to get the support you need. Our service is free, simple to use and can make a real difference to people in Salford and beyond.

Living Well Salford

Living Well Salford is a community mental health service, delivered in partnership between Greater Manchester Mental Health (GMMH), Mind in Salford, Six Degrees, Wellbeing Matters and START. Living Well aims to support people with their mental health who need more support than their GP can offer but less than a community mental health team, aiming to bridge the gap between primary and secondary mental health services. Living Well supports people with a focus on their skills, aspirations, and experiences. They aim to put people's strengths and lived experience at the centre to help individuals stay well as part of their community.



Summary

The partnership between Healthwatch Salford and Living Well Salford demonstrates how listening to people's experiences can help bring about positive change and shape the delivery of mental health support in Salford. The work Healthwatch Salford has conducted has led to improvements being made within the Living Well service and beyond.

Throughout this work we have taken time to understand individuals' experiences of the Living Well service and have also learned about their experiences with other mental health services in Salford. This work has given people the opportunity to share their personal experiences throughout their life journeys, which was important as it supported with better understanding of the people who use the service. People emphasised their lack of trust and confidence in mental health services due to their previous experiences and felt it was difficult to rebuild that trust. For some, Living Well had restored their faith in services.

With regards to areas for improvement identified through this work, some people highlighted miscommunications within the Living Well service around referrals. Some people shared that their letters for appointments from the Living Well service were not received, which led to missed appointments. We also heard that whilst people felt the support was helpful, the ending felt abrupt when people had completed their time with Living Well.

The data gathering has led to the following changes being made:

- Personal details being updated more regularly across Community teams and administrative staff having a key role in updating information to improve appointment letter receipt rates.
- More ways of notifying people of appointments, introducing text messages, confirming e-mail addresses and letters being sent in the post.
- Additional staff training implemented to support with goal setting for service users and signposting to services which best suit their needs.
- Improved communication around referrals
- Onward journey tool developed to support people when they leave the Living Well service.
- Improvements made within other mental health services in Salford.

Methodology

Living Well started in 2017/18 as part of the national Innovation Unit's lottery funded programme to learn from the transformation of mental health services in Lambeth, working with four pilot sites nationally, of which Salford was one. Originally developed as a pilot approach, the Living Well model was designed collaboratively, working with people who have lived experience of mental health services, providers, system leaders and commissioners to developing a new service offer to support people falling between the gaps of primary care mental health offers and secondary care mental health services. Scaling-up of the model took place from 2020, with the offer being expanded across all of Salford in April 2023, in line with the NHS Long Term Plan and Community Mental Health Transformation Framework.

As the work relating to transformation has evolved, the work undertaken by Healthwatch has expanded from the core Living Well team, to include wider community mental health transformation (e.g., Living Well network, CMHT etc). Central to the design and co-production for Living Well was the importance on understanding people's experiences of receiving support from the service and learning from this to make improvements. Early ethnographic research was conducted by the Living Well Collaborative, Living Well Design Team and Engagement Workers to inform the model.

In July 2021 we started to undertake ethnographic data gathering to collate feedback from people who have been supported by the service. Ethnographic data gathering is an in-depth, qualitative method of data gathering where data is collected through interviews

and observations, aiming to understand a person's experiences, interests and views. The data gathering allows people to share the journey of their life, not solely focused on the Living Well service; it provides the opportunity for a conversation to flow and for people to discuss whatever they want to share. Throughout this report we will use the word 'stories', which refers to people's personal experiences throughout their life. including but not limited to mental health services.

Our aim was to reach a range of different people who had used the Living Well service, including those who are from marginalised groups. We used language interpreters and had documents translated to individuals' first language to ensure there were no barriers to sharing their experiences.

From July 2021 to April 2023, 101 people who have been supported by the Living Well Salford network, have shared their stories with Healthwatch Salford. Healthwatch Salford analysed these stories and identified trends in each journey shared. The process of this included Healthwatch gathering the stories from individuals who have used the service, breaking the feedback down into trends and themes and sharing with the service. A story and themes were shared within each meeting Healthwatch attended with the Living Well staff team, which allowed for discussions to be held to reflect on the learning to be taken from findings. This allowed for the team to suggest possible solutions to overcome the difficulties people had shared. It also allowed for reflection on why a person may have had a particular experience and findings to improve the service for the future. Each journey and summary of themes are shared with the Operational Manager of Living Well Salford and the Adult Mental Health commissioner in Salford.

Demographics

Some of the people who took part in the research (101 people) went on to give us more details about their backgrounds.



21 - Heterosexual
1 - Bisexual
1 - Lesbian
5 - Gay
1 - Queer



11 - Male
10 - Female
2 - Non-binary



Christian - 7
Jewish - 2
Sikh - 1
Other - 1
Atheist - 12



Pakistani - 2
Mixed Caribbean White - 1
Mixed Other - 5
White British - 19
White Other - 3



2 individuals had undergone gender reassignment.



5 people said they had a disability.

Analysis

“

There were three main trends which arose from people sharing their stories. In this report we will share our findings relating to the individuals' circumstances; the positive work of Living Well and the potential for change in the service.

Individuals' circumstances

Whilst gathering the stories, we identified a recurring trend when people told us about their lives and circumstances. Many individuals who receive support by the Living Well service face multiple difficulties within their day-to-day lives, which have been broken down into themes:

Negative experience of other mental health services

Some individuals shared that they have had negative past experiences with other mental health services; they shared that they did not feel listened to and that the service they had used did not seem to care for their needs. Many people disclosed the feeling of being bounced around different parts of the mental health system and they felt that no progress had been made with them.

“My mental health has been bad for years and I've been passed from mental health team to mental health team as I don't feel I fit the criteria, or it doesn't work for me.”



Physical Health

Some people supported by Living Well faced difficulties with their physical health which in turn affected their mental health. Some individuals were living with long term conditions including Parkinson's Disease and Fibromyalgia.

“My physical health and mental health are not perfect, but I'm not perfect. I had a breakdown in Mat this year at work and that was a serious crisis. I have been off work since, I've had to make a lifetime worth of changes which have affected me and my working and family life. It has thrown a massive curve ball in my life.”

Neurodiversity

Some individuals presenting to Living Well are neurodiverse, with many sharing that they have received a diagnosis of ADHD and Autism. The stories people have shared evidenced that Living Well have managed individual neurodiverse needs well and catered to preferences.

The stories have also evidenced that many people who accessed the Living Well service were undiagnosed but presented symptoms of neurodiversity; the Living Well team helped them to understand their symptoms and supported with referrals for late diagnosis.

“Living Well have everything there and as I’m autistic, it helped me. The sensory things really helped”.



“I have symptoms of ADHD, and this sometimes leads to physical problems, this was diagnosed partly thanks to the Living Well team as they had me referred. I was diagnosed with anxiety and depression which is what Living Well were helping with, I wanted to look into it more because it did feel like more and Living Well were really good with helping me in what direction to go in, which is how I got the ADHD referral.”



“Living Well referred me for an ADHD diagnosis as well. I did the test they do at Living Well and they said they will put me through for the diagnosis. I’m hoping it will give me more answers and things will become clearer, I’m trying to be the best I can be.”

Housing

Housing difficulties has been a common theme with people sharing their stories; mainly due to the living conditions they were in, the location or who they lived with. This was a recurring theme which was presented to the Living Well team. Living Well acknowledged the issue and recruited a Housing Worker who engages with people on behalf of Living Well. The Housing Worker will engage with people with mental health needs as part of the Living Well offer, supporting people with advice and connection to wider housing support.

“Living Well helped me get a letter to the housing as I’m trying to get out of the house that I’m in, I have loads of problems. There are leaks, damp, mould, the ceilings have caved in twice, the boiler is vibrating all day very loudly”.



Struggling to set goals and struggling to enjoy things.

Through the data gathering, people expressed that they struggled to set goals, which is something that the Living Well practitioners ask when people start receiving support from the service. This is asked as it can be something they can work towards with the practitioner to try to achieve. Some people stated that this felt like added pressure to their everyday difficulties and they struggled to set the goals. Several people shared that they would take each day as it comes and did not like to think too far ahead.

Additionally, many struggled to find enjoyment in activities or hobbies which was due to their mental health. Some individuals expressed enjoying hobbies in the past but this changing when their mental health declined.

“Before my accident, I used to like doing a lot of DIY. I liked driving a lot too and I was a really good driver overall, I had 17 years no claims. Now, I have nothing that I like to do”.



Complex relationships

Some individuals who shared their stories expressed having difficult relationships with their family and friends, thus having a limited social network and limited informal support. Some disclosed having people around them but did not feel they could discuss their feelings or mental health.

"I don't have anyone in my life, I struggle as I'm really lonely. I had someone around, but it felt like a toxic relationship, so I've stopped speaking to her now."



"I don't speak to anyone, I don't have people I would speak to about my problems"

Positive work of Living Well

The data gathering has demonstrated that the Living Well service has made a hugely positive impact overall on people struggling with their mental health in Salford. Themes were created to emphasise the positive work:

Groups interventions

The group sessions that the Living Well service conduct with people have shown to have had a positive impact on their mental health. The 'managing emotions' group was a session that people referred to when sharing their journey, and many found it was beneficial to them.

"The managing emotions group was really insightful and eye-opening".



Flexibility

The flexibility of the Living Well service was a consistent theme which cropped up. Individuals shared that the Living Well team gave them a choice of where to receive support, for example either at their home or in the community. Additionally, Living Well were found to work around individuals' schedules if they had other commitments.

"It was a really good flexible, two-way thing".



Less clinical

The service was described to be less clinical by the people accessing it. People shared that they had support in the community such as libraries or a local park, which felt more comfortable for them than a clinical setting typical of mental health services.

"We just talked in the sessions, I spoke to her and it's not clinical, you don't need to be a psychologist sometimes you just need somebody to listen".



Waiting time

Generally, most people who shared their journey were pleased with the waiting times. For the majority of people, they had been contacted within four weeks of being referred.

"I was referred quickly, I was surprised how quick it was to be honest".



"[The waiting time] didn't feel long, there was a waiting list; but the contact was very good. They phoned me a few times and mentioned referrals, told me the process of how it works and what was going to happen. The staff member then phoned me quite soon after and arranged our first session."



Staff members

The staff members were mentioned throughout all stories, mostly as being relatable, empathetic, understanding, and genuine. People shared that they did not feel pressured by the staff members. Some disclosed that they had received more support from a couple of sessions with Living Well than they had from any other mental health support service.

"I felt like I got a lot off him, like he genuinely wanted to help me".



"They're not just professional people it's people who have been there and you can relate to."



"It's the little things that make such a big difference, he gave us all a hug and reassured us and told us if we need anything to call him anytime. A couple of days later he text and asked how things are and I explained the current situation."



Handover process

Another example of what people have acknowledged about the Living Well service is the handover to different services such as START, Writing to Heal, Society Inc, and more. This was very useful for most individuals as it made people aware of the offers of different services and supported with their onward journey after using the Living Well service. Signposting for many also allowed for the end of their time with Living Well to not feel as abrupt as they moved on to another organisation that offered support.

“[START has] a good size group too and it’s nice to meet new people. I feel like I can relate to people there and when they speak about their mental health and problems occasionally it makes me feel less alone”.



“After Living Well, I was doing the Writing to Heal, I got seen by them quite quick. Writing to heal was a lot of writing and writing positive things, we spoke about me being positive and doing self-affirmations, this was helpful for me as I was struggling about not fixing everything and felt guilty for saying no.”

Potential for change

Gathering people's experiences has allowed for learning on what could improve a person's experience of Living Well. The in-depth discussion gave those who had accessed the service an opportunity to discuss what may have worked better for them and if they would have changed anything. This allowed understanding on where there was potential for change within the service and facilitated a learning culture – giving permission for staff to be reflective and responsive to service improvements based on individual experiences. This has facilitated an ongoing co-design process, with the service offer flexing and responding to feedback, whilst still remaining faithful to the original design principles.

Communication

There were some communication difficulties present as some individuals raised that letters were not being received at the beginning of their Living Well journey for their first appointment. Some had been provided letters with appointments, but the letter featured incorrect information, such as the location of the appointment.

Another communication issue raised was that some were incorrectly told to return to their GP after missing an appointment with Living Well. For those supported within the multidisciplinary team in Living Well, they can rerefer themselves back into the service if they feel they need it thus they do not have to go back to their GP.

“Then someone referred me to Living Well and I didn't know what that was, I was meant to get a letter about it and I never got it. I then got an email setting up an appointment and I didn't feel like I understood what was going on.”



“Apparently, I had meetings scheduled which they said they sent on a letter which I had never received so I didn't know that we had sessions arranged and I missed the meeting, my apartment complex is really bad with post. After this, they said they had closed the case.”

“I did get lost before the session, the letter they sent had the wrong address printed on so I ended up getting lost.”

How we made a change: As a result of this information being shared, the Living Well team took time to ensure all personal information of service users was updated and accurate. Additionally, Living Well made a change in how they sent appointment information to service users. Originally, letters were sent with appointment information enclosed.

People sharing their stories allowed for recognition of the issue of lost letters and Living Well began to send appointment information by text message as well as to home addresses. As a new service, Living Well employed new Administrators who were trained and supported to improve management of personal information and appointments sent by letter or text message.

Additionally, staff were reinforced of the Living Well process, that anyone supported by the multidisciplinary team in Living Well can self-refer back into the service if they feel it is necessary.

Referrals

Referrals was a common theme where some people had experienced difficulties. Some individuals shared that they had finished their sessions with Living Well but had been referred on to other services with a waiting time to be seen. Evidently, there were problems in referral communications, where people using the service were unsure when they would get seen by follow-on services and had not received any information about it, which caused confusion and anxiety for individuals.

“I just feel like I’ve been passed from pillar to post, I’ve not had much support.”



How we made a change: This recurring challenge has been shared within wider collaborative discussions where many Salford organisations attend and discuss possible solutions to bigger system pressures for example: NHS talking therapies who are facing increased numbers of referrals which is having an impact on access and waiting times.

Location

Despite some individuals praising the alternative locations and non-clinical settings, some did not benefit from the location change for their appointment. For some individuals, they shared that their support was at a different location each time which subsequently caused some anxiety and confusion. People shared that they would have preferred the appointment being at the same space each time.

“Living Well was confusing as it was in different locations, I get anxiety travelling to new places and it’s better once you get familiar, a consistent location would be easier.”



How we made a change: Living Well staff offer choice in terms of where to meet people who are using the service in aim to reduce anxiety.

Notice of appointment

A small number of individuals discussed difficulty with the lack of notice for appointments from Living Well. People supported by the service told us it was difficult to secure time off work to have appointments with Living Well due to work demands.

“One time I couldn’t make a session and they only told me a week before that it was happening”



Abrupt ending

For some people, they felt as though the ending of support with Living Well felt abrupt or as though they were not ready for it to come to an end. Individuals shared that they were not ready to leave, and they would have liked more sessions to improve their mental health. Some expressed that they were not aware the support was ending and being shocked to learn this.

“I remember the ending feeling abrupt, I knew it was coming but I think at the time my mental health was getting worse”.



How we made change: Living Well developed an onward journey tool to support with people coming to the end of their time using the service. The onward journey tool includes the work the individual has done whilst being supported by Living Well, an individual action plan for going forward and helpful connections for if they feel they need it. Living Well discuss the importance of support for individuals using the service around endings and their onward journey after Living Well within caseload management. They also regularly made staff aware that support can be extended for those who need it.

Handover process

Various people shared that the multiple referrals from Living Well to services felt overwhelming. People needed clarity on which provider was providing which service. People suggested that there could be an explanation on the services which contact them to be provided in written form due to people having difficulty remembering. Although some people told us that signposting was beneficial, it did seem to cause confusion for people trying to differentiate between services.

“The only thing I would say is that all of the signposting as well as mental health support is a bit overwhelming. Taking that in as well as the mental health support can feel a bit much”.



How we made a change: The Living Well service responded by making changes to reduce the feeling of overwhelm for people. Living Well now ensure that staff let individuals outline how much support they need themselves in terms of signposting, to avoid staff overloading the person with options. Staff had additional training to support with goal-setting, which ensures that people using the service do not feel pressured during this process. This then supports individuals to understand which service they will be handed over to, as it is in line with their goal setting.

Staff personal experiences

One individual who accessed the Living Well service shared an occasion when staff disclosed their own experience of mental health difficulties. People using this service felt as though it invalidated their own mental health difficulties.

“We’re all sad in the moment but a bipolar episode is completely different and bigger”.



How we made a change: This issue raised where staff were sharing personal experiences at inappropriate times and led to training for the staff team to understand when is appropriate to relate to individuals' mental health experiences.

- Every time feedback is provided to Healthwatch Salford, Living Well will review this once they receive the feedback and, if appropriate, reach out again to anyone who has had a less positive experience. This is so the Living Well service can revisit communication with the individual to see if there is any more that they can do to support the person.
- By sharing their stories, people were provided with an opportunity to flag up individual issues. For example, one individual was not referred to Wellbeing Matters (partner) as they expected to be, meaning they were not assigned a community connector. This person sharing their experience allowed for this to be recognised and the mistake to be rectified.
- Some people sharing their journey resulted in changes being made within other mental health services in Salford where they raised concerns. Specific experiences were escalated to the Commissioner who fed back to the Quality Leads for future discussions on improvement for services.

Next steps

Healthwatch Salford will be continuing our ethnographic data gathering with Living Well, as the service has now expanded across the whole city of Salford, adopting the same culture of learning from people's lived experience. The data gathering has also been ongoing within the Community Mental Health teams in Salford (Prescott House, Ramsgate House and Cromwell House) to inform the transformation of community mental health offers. People are sharing their stories of these services, which we continue to analyse and take back to the services involved. Gathering people's experiences has also been ongoing with the Listening Lounge in Salford. The aim of this work is to continue making improvements to mental health services across Salford.

"I would rate Living Well 15 out of 10, 100 out of 10. I felt like it wasn't just a 'here's another one', I felt like they identified all of my needs really well. One of the staff members did it over the telephone and she's an amazing lady. Both the staff members just put the work together really well and it felt like it was meant for me."



Responses from Commissioners and providers

We shared our report with Greater Manchester Mental Health, Salford Integrated Commissioning, Start Inspiring Minds, Six Degrees Social Enterprise and Mind in Salford.

Clare Mayo (Integrated Commissioning Manager for Adult Mental Health, Greater Manchester Integrated Care / Salford City Council):

“The work undertaken by Healthwatch Salford to understand the strengths, needs and experiences of people accessing the Living Well offer has been particularly valuable, as the service is working with people who previously would not have received support due to the historic gap between primary and secondary care mental health services. Better understanding of people’s experiences has resulted in an improved offer for local people. In addition, regular insight into people’s experiences has supported an ongoing connection to a learning ethos within the team and has emphasised the importance of co-producing approaches as part of wider community mental health transformation”.

Michelle Dennett (Start Inspiring Minds):

“Healthwatch Salford have been and continue to be, an invaluable part of the development of Living Well in Salford. Their role in capturing ethnographic feedback from people who have used the service has embedded a culture of learning and reflection at the heart of the model, ensuring good practice is celebrated, and improvements to the service are implemented based on lived experience. Healthwatch Salford have given a voice to those people who previously had been let down by services, falling through the gap that existed between primary and secondary care. By providing people with the opportunity to tell their story they have helped to validate their experiences, influence change, and provide a new and more collaborative way for Living Well to interact with the community that it supports.”

Tammy Young (Operational Lead Living Well)

“Healthwatch Salford have played a vital role in collating service user feedback via Ethnographic research. Capturing peoples experience of the mental health system has allowed Living Well to listen and learn from people narrative, this has played a significant role in the development of a Living Well system, a system that listens, learns, and wants to be better for those who use it. Healthwatch have provided regular service user feedback both individually and by highlighting key themes. Living Well have celebrated good news but have also used this narrative as a quality improvement tool, guiding us to parts of the system, service or care that could be better! Not only have they amplified the voice of lived experience, but they have ignited a sense of compassion and collaboration. Healthwatch has strengthened lived experience voices and as a result strengthened the learning culture , innovation and idea of wanting Living Well to be better”.

Markus Greenwood (Chief Executive, Mind in Salford):

“The ethnographic research done by Healthwatch has been an integral part of Living Well. The feedback from clients using the service has enabled us to hone our offer and ensure that we’re meeting their needs; which is especially important for people who have often been let down previously by the mental health system.”

Acknowledgements

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NHS providers and commissioners

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People with Lived Experience

Without the time and involvement of people with lived experience of mental health services and support, ethnographic research would not be possible. Sharing experiences, personal situations and ideas and thoughts for improvement has made this work possible. Healthwatch Salford would like to recognise and thank everyone who has allowed us to better understand their lived experience throughout this work.





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