



WALTHAM FOREST

# MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION STRATEGY

2023-2026



Waltham Forest  
Health and  
Wellbeing Board



Waltham Forest



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# Introduction

## What is mental health promotion and why it is important?

Mental health promotion aims to promote positive mental health and wellbeing across the population in order to prevent the development of mental health conditions. It is particularly targeted at those groups with the poorest mental health and those experiencing risk factors that make mental health conditions more likely. It operates at four levels:



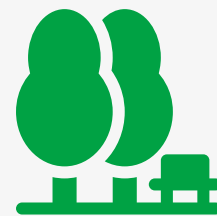
Strengthening individuals to improve and protect their mental health (e.g. promoting emotional and social skills, better networks, resilience, physical activity, social relationships etc.)



Reducing barriers to good mental health and wellbeing (e.g. addressing poverty, inequality, employment and housing and other social determinants of health)



Strengthening communities (e.g. increasing social inclusion and participation, peer support networks, arts and culture, improving mental health in schools and workplaces)



Improving the quality of the physical environment (e.g. facilitating access to green spaces and quality transport networks)

Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing is important because it supports good quality of life and benefits many areas of personal and social life. It also helps reduce the incidence and prevalence of common and serious mental health conditions further down the line. Common mental illnesses are low-level conditions common within the population, such as anxiety, low mood, depression and stress; while serious mental illness refers to more severe conditions that limit a person's ability to engage in functional and occupational activities.









**On an individual level, good mental health also improves residents' ability to:**



realise their abilities,  
live a life with purpose  
and meaning



make a positive  
contribution to the  
community



form positive  
relationships with others  
and feel connected  
and supported



be resilient in  
coping with life's ups  
and downs



maintain good  
physical health

Promoting good health and wellbeing is a priority for the Council and our partners. The recently published report 'A Fairer and Healthier Waltham Forest'<sup>1</sup>, by the Institute of Health Equity, highlights the unequal access to a healthy life that supports good mental wellbeing. The Council's Corporate framework, 15-Minute Neighbourhoods, seeks to improve residents' access to resources that support health and wellbeing, closer to where people live.<sup>2</sup>

Waltham Forest is also one of 75 local authorities that have been awarded Family Hubs and Start for Life funding to transform services into a Family Hub model between 2022-2025. Perinatal mental health and parent-infant relationships are a core pillar within this programme and strengthening the Waltham Forest offer for parents and family's mental health and wellbeing is a key priority.

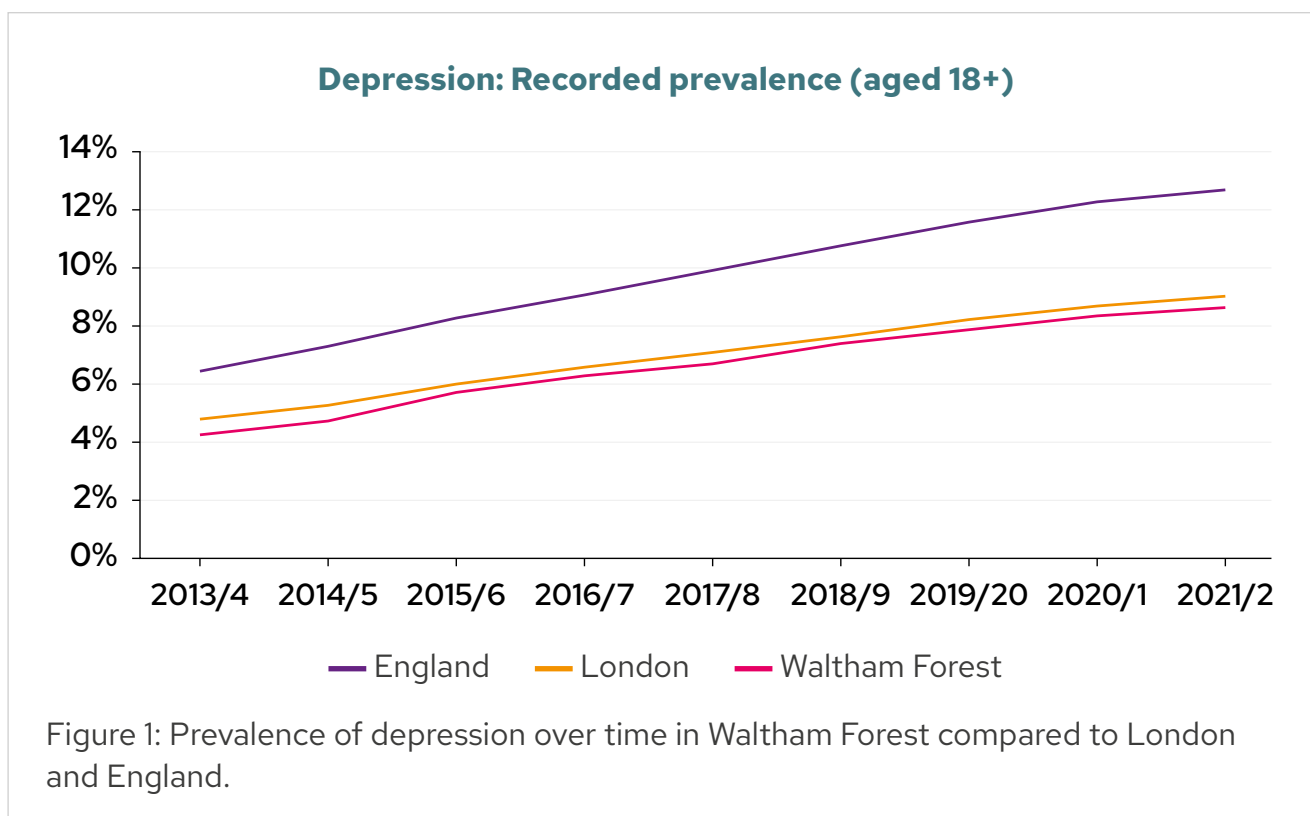
<sup>1</sup> Michael Marmot et al (2022): A Fairer and Healthier Waltham Forest- Equity and the Social Determinants in Waltham Forest

<sup>2</sup> Waltham Forest Council, New Corporate Framework- 15 Minutes Neighbourhood 2023

# Mental wellbeing in Waltham Forest

Around **20% of Waltham Forest residents aged 16 and over have a diagnosis of a common mental health disorder<sup>3</sup>** and around 1% have a serious mental illness diagnosis. Recent trend data shows an increase in the prevalence of depression over time, as recorded on GP practice registers, in line with England and London trends.

In 2020/2021 approximately **9% of residents aged 18 plus had a diagnosis of depression in Waltham Forest**, similar to London (9%) and lower than England (13%) [Figure 1].



Various sources of information on local mental health and wellbeing have been brought together to assess the mental wellbeing needs of our population and these are summarised on the below.

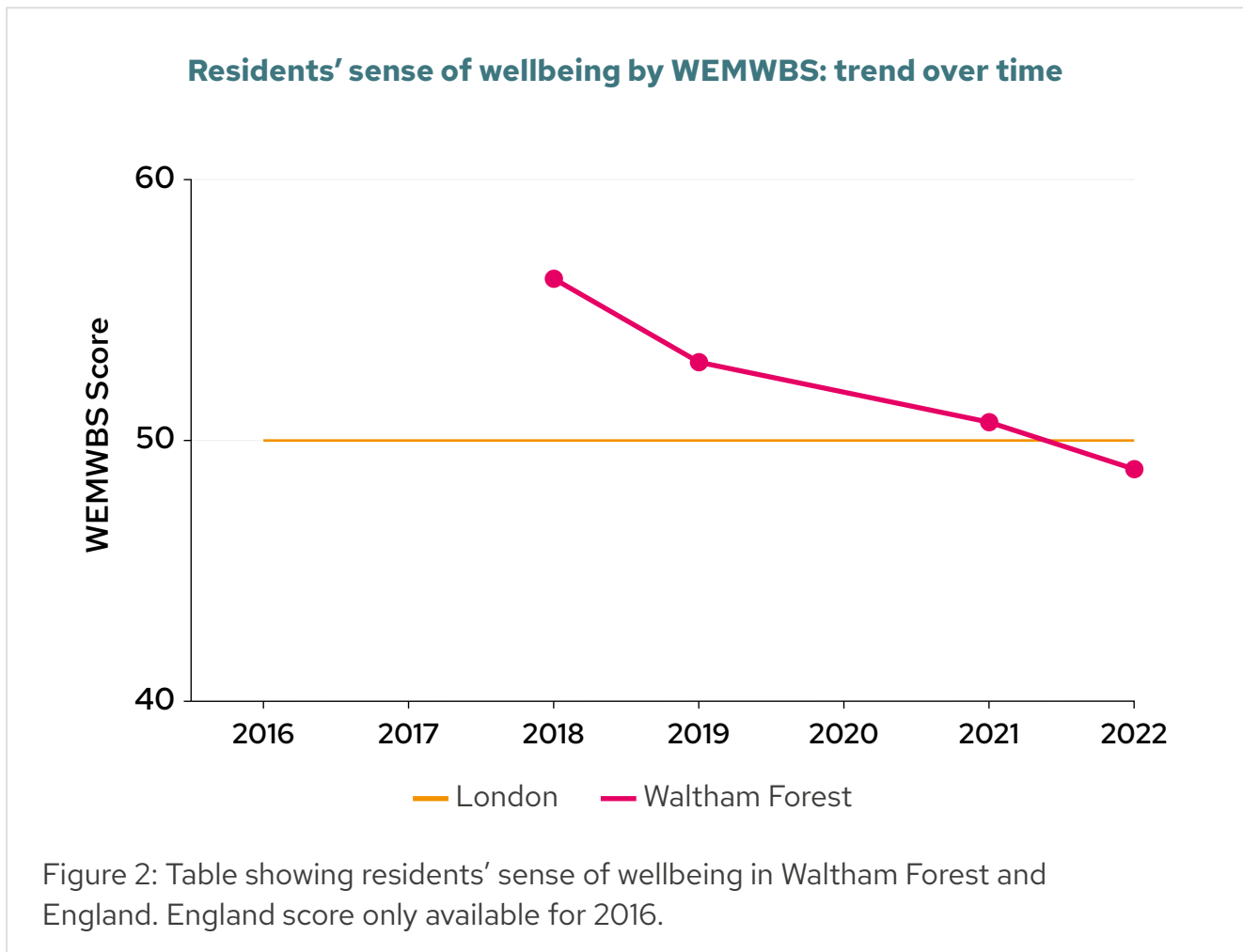
## Summary of local mental wellbeing

### Overall wellbeing of residents in Waltham Forest

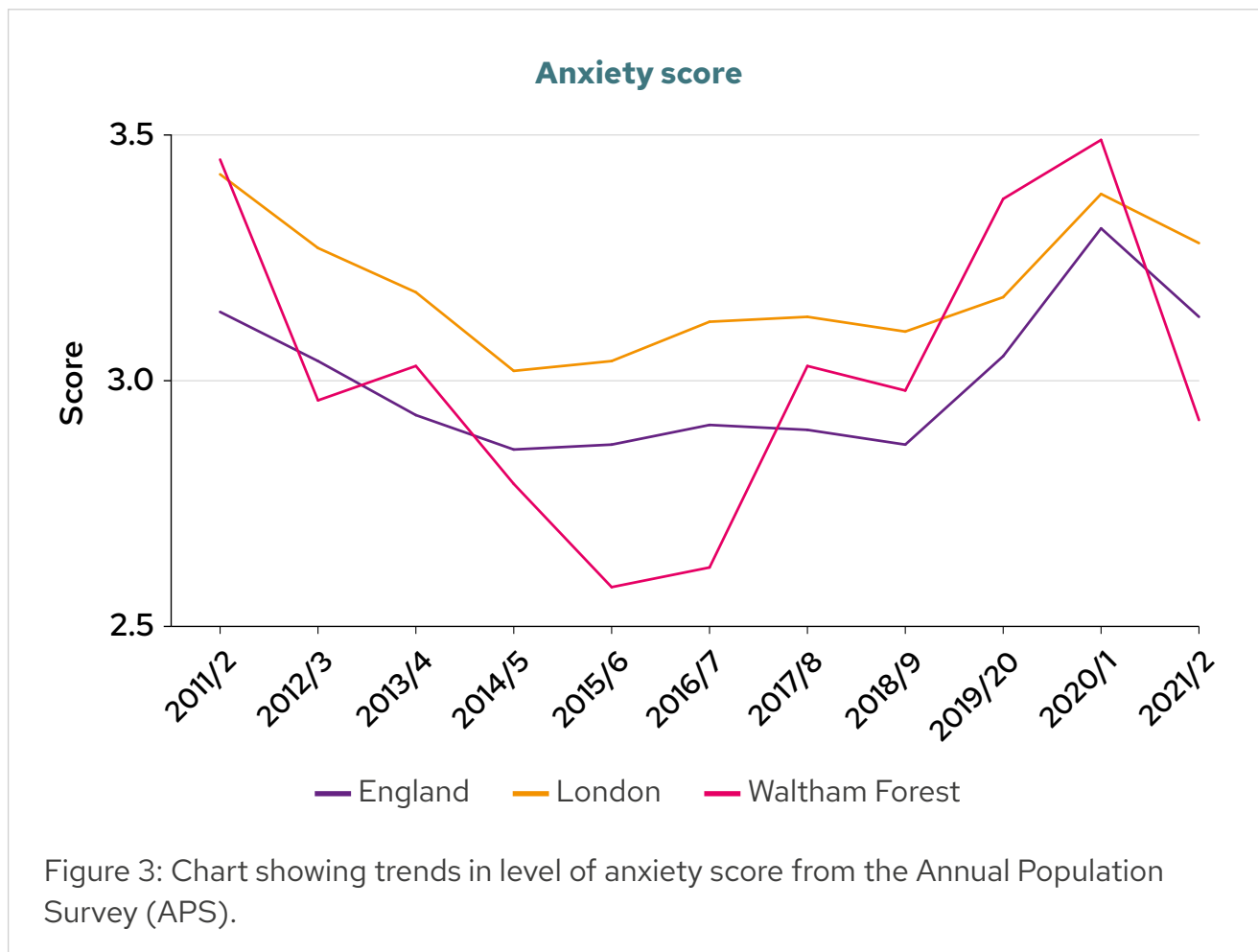
A complete review of local mental wellbeing data has been published in a Mental Wellbeing Needs Assessment, available at [walthamforest.gov.uk/mentalhealth/waltham-forests-mental-health-and-wellbeing](https://walthamforest.gov.uk/mentalhealth/waltham-forests-mental-health-and-wellbeing).

Local Resident Insight survey data, which uses the standardised Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) to measure residents' sense of wellbeing, demonstrate a deterioration in adult mental wellbeing in Waltham Forest since 2018 [Figure 2].

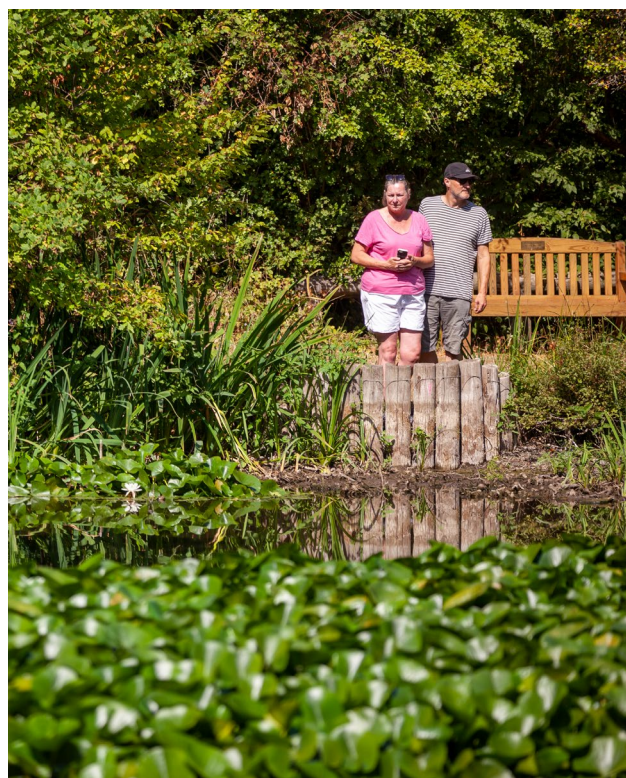
Annual Population Survey data also showed an increase (worsening) in anxiety levels from 2018 until 2020/2021, although this was followed by a decrease (improvement) in 2021/2022 and this decrease was greater in Waltham Forest compared to London and England.







Worsening of wellbeing and anxiety levels in Waltham Forest and across London and England in 2020 are likely to be related to the covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns that happened as a result. Anxiety levels decreased in 2021/22, which is thought to be in line with decreasing risk of infection and people returning to normal life after the pandemic. However, there is still some way to go to reach pre-pandemic levels.



### Risk Factors affecting residents' mental health

Mental health risk factors are circumstances that make poor mental health outcomes more likely. There are many circumstances that make people's mental health worse, including financial concerns and social isolation. Our recent local health survey asked what factors Waltham Forest residents felt had the biggest negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.

#### These included:



**35%**

FINANCIAL ISSUES



**34%**

STRESS AT WORK



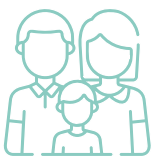
**30%**

WORLD EVENTS



**23%**

ISOLATION / LONELINESS



**20%**

FAMILY / RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS



**20%**

THEIR OWN POOR PHYSICAL HEALTH

These issues also depended on membership of different population groups and communities. For example, for young people, the number one factor was unemployment. Housing issues were the main factor for Black residents and LGBTQ+ residents. Housing-related problems and poor health of a loved one were also important factors for unpaid carers providing 20+ hours of care per week.

Financial issues being the overall top concern for Waltham Forest residents is in line with the current cost of living crisis happening across the country post covid-19 pandemic.

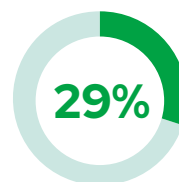
### Risk factors and ways of coping during stressful times

A person's behaviours in response to challenging situations in life can also impact on their mental health. For example, if a person used a negative coping mechanism when feeling stressed, such as drinking alcohol or eating unhealthy food, this behaviour may lead to worse mental and physical health over time, perpetuating the negative cycle. On the other hand, if a person went for a walk or met with friends as a coping mechanism, this could lead to them feeling better and could have a positive effect on their mental health in the longer term.

#### In Waltham Forest:



One in five residents use exclusively negative coping mechanisms to feel better.



While almost one in three residents use exclusively positive coping mechanisms to feel better (Figure 9).



## Summary

After a number of years of improving population mental wellbeing in England, London and Waltham Forest, the past few years have seen declines in almost all mental wellbeing data sources. This is likely to have been influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis and although there have been some signs of recovery, there is still a lot of work needed to recover to pre-pandemic wellbeing levels.

Local and national evidence also demonstrates that mental wellbeing varies between population groups, with inequalities seen between ethnic, socioeconomic, sex and age groups. Targeted approaches that are tailored to specific groups are needed to help reduce these inequalities.



# Our vision

**Our vision is to promote good mental wellbeing for the whole population in Waltham Forest and reduce the number of residents with mental health problems.**

This will be achieved by working with our partners to support residents to improve and protect their own wellbeing, reducing circumstances that make people's mental health worse (risk factors) and promoting access to local and national services and resources that intervene early to maintain good mental wellbeing.

## Objectives

The objectives of the strategy align with the four themes of work:

1. Reduce stigma and discrimination around mental health in the population.
2. Tackle the social, economic and environmental circumstances which harm mental wellbeing (also known as social determinants of mental health).
3. Promote evidence-based self-help approaches to promoting mental wellbeing in the population, including the '5 Ways to Wellbeing'.
4. Provide support at an early stage (both during early years and for people who are experiencing low-level mental health problems) to prevent the development of more serious conditions further down the line.

## Our Approach, Values and Principles

This strategy uses the following approach and key principles.

### Life-course approach

A life-course approach supports wellbeing at all stages in life rather than focusing on a single condition at a single life stage. Adopting a life-course approach involves taking action early in the life course and appropriately during life's transitions. It considers the critical stages where large differences can be made by promoting or restoring health and wellbeing, and where risk factors can be minimised and protective factors enhanced, from pre-conception to early years, adolescence, working age and into older age.

Figure 4 highlights some of the services delivered in Waltham Forest throughout the life course among babies, children and young people, adults and older adults.



Services for Children, Young People and Families	Services for Adults	Wellbeing Services for Older Adults
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellbeing Peer support /Youth Ambassadors programme: peer-to-peer mental health support for secondary school-aged pupils.</li> <li>• Youth Mental Health First Aid: training to school and Family Hubs staff.</li> <li>• Support for mental wellbeing in Family Hubs: A range of services to support expecting and new parents and families with parent infant relationships and mild to moderate mental health difficulties.</li> <li>• Kooth: Commissioned online counselling and wellbeing advice for young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking Therapies: psychotherapy support to adults facing common mental health disorders.</li> <li>• Your Crisis Our Action: initiative focuses on key areas to tackle Cost of Living crisis.</li> <li>• Social Prescribing: service connects residents to non-clinical community services such as debt advice, housing services, and more.</li> <li>• Arts and Crafts and other wellbeing-related short courses: delivered by the WF Adult Learning Service.</li> <li>• Health Champions: service commissioned from Leyton Orient Trust promotes local health and wellbeing services to residents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age UK offer a range of wellbeing services for adults aged 50+, including fitness and digital sessions, as well as social groups for those aged 60+.</li> <li>• Support to stay active and independent through social activities, lunch clubs etc.</li> <li>• Support for carers (all ages).</li> <li>• Adult social care services.</li> </ul>

Figure 4: Examples of Mental wellbeing services across the life course.

## Tackling inequalities, racism and groups most at risk of mental health problems

Mental wellbeing affects everyone in the population and anyone can develop a mental health problem. However, some people are more likely to be exposed to factors that make mental health worse and less likely to experience factors that protect their mental health. In this document we refer to these groups as 'priority' or 'high-risk' groups.

National and local research has shown systematic differences in groups who are more likely to report having bad or very bad mental health compared to the general population [Figure 5-6].<sup>4</sup> There are also groups who are less likely to use positive behaviours that promote good mental health to cope during challenging times and were more likely to adopt negative coping behaviours during challenging times compared to the general population. Carers and those on lower income are less likely to use some of the positive coping behaviours during stressful times, while young adults aged 16-34 and residents who identify as LGBTQ+ are more likely to use some of the negative behaviours to cope with stress.

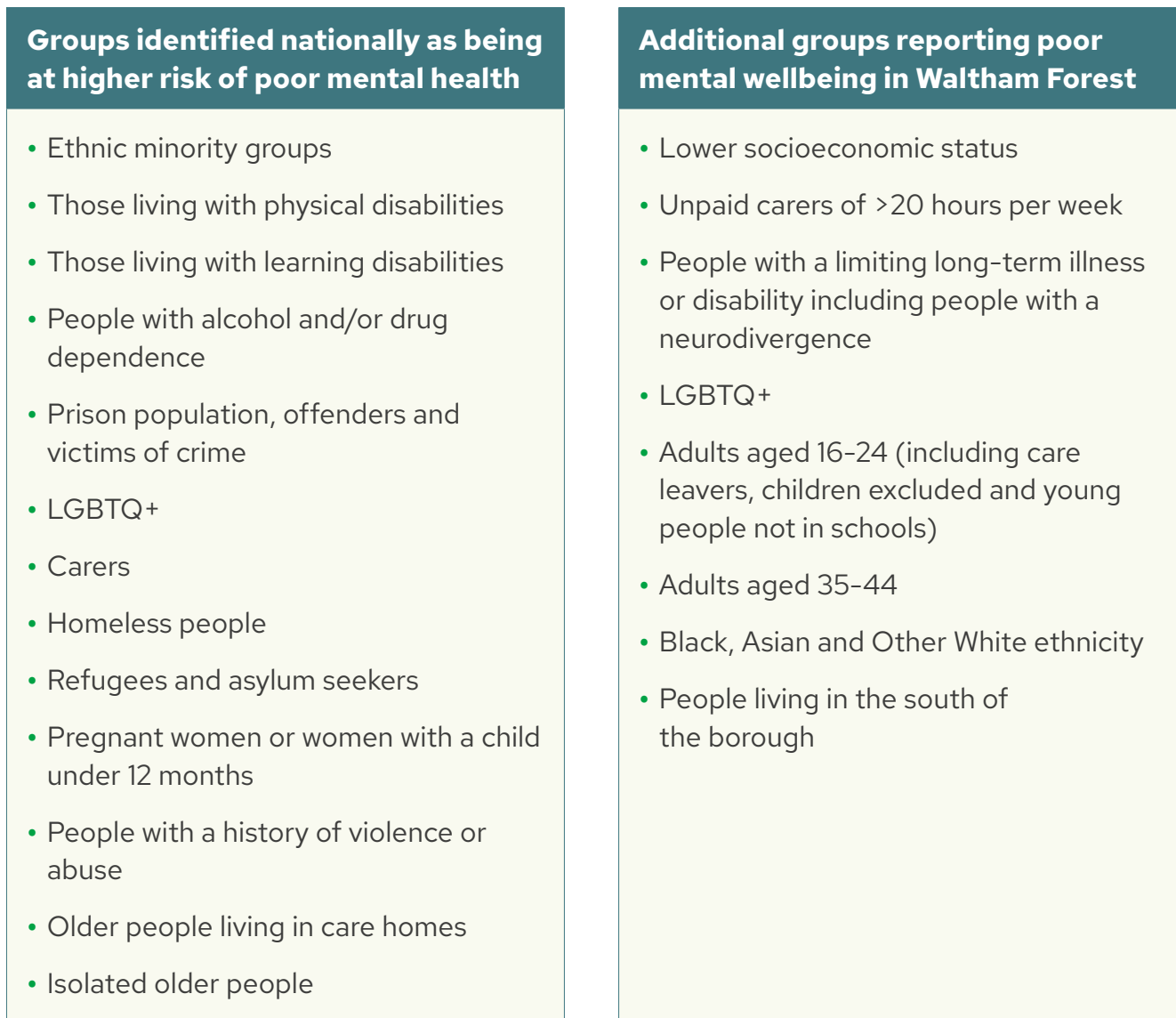


Figure 5: Data showing groups at higher risk of mental health problems nationally and locally.

<sup>4</sup> Public Health England (2019). [Mental health: population factors](#)





**Groups more likely to report bad or very bad mental wellbeing, compared to 20% overall, Waltham Forest**

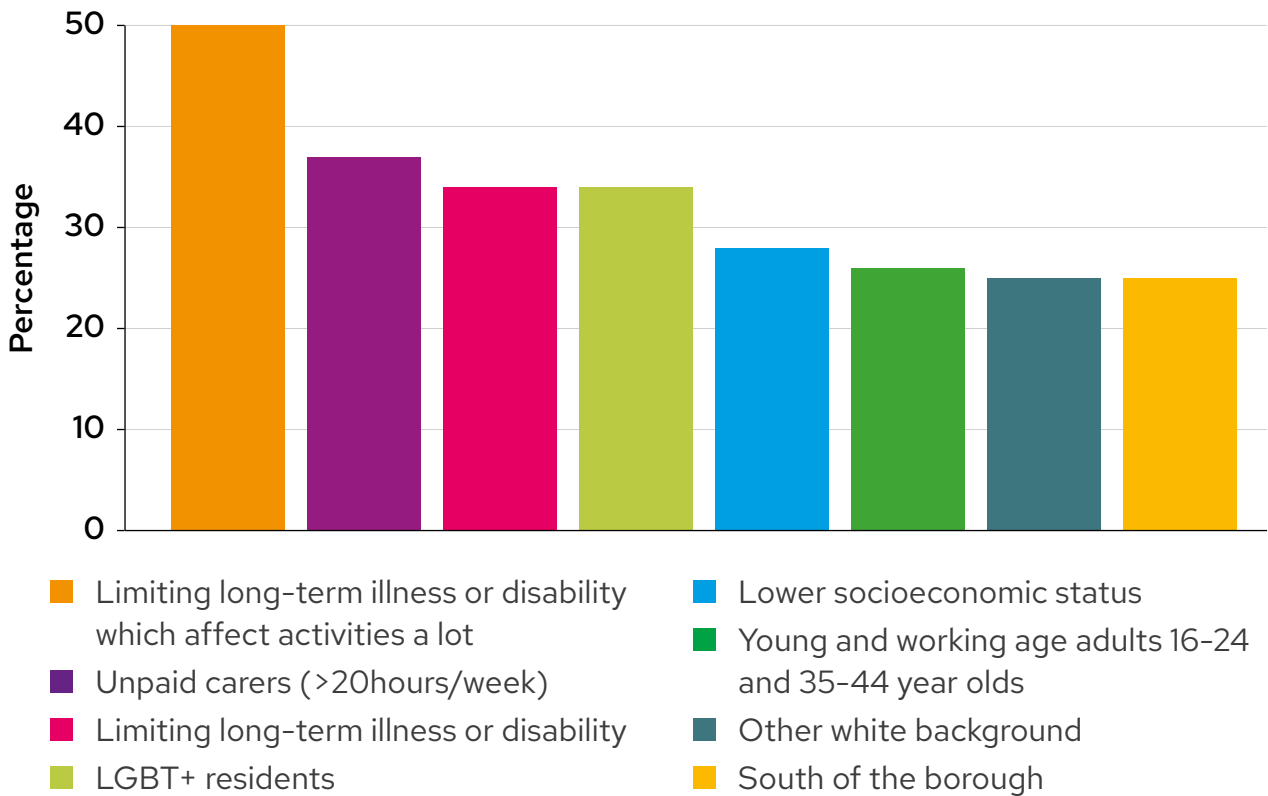
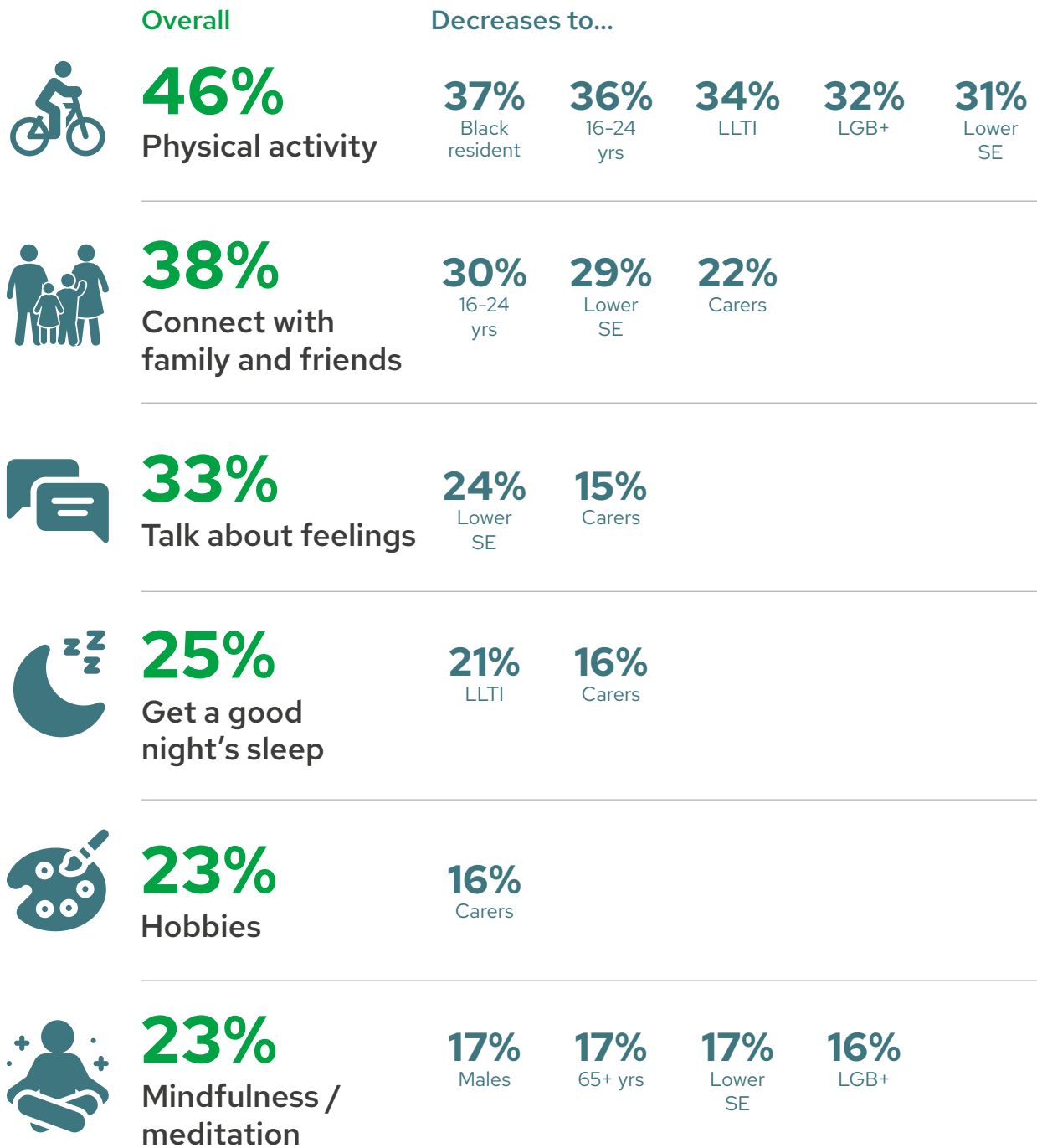


Figure 6: Chart showing percentage of people more likely to report bad or very bad mental wellbeing compared to the general Waltham Forest population.



**Key**

- Carers** Unpaid carers giving 20+ hours per week
- Lower SE** Lower socio-economic grade
- LLTI** Residents with a limiting long term illness
- LGB+** Residents with queer identities (i.e. who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, other non-heterosexual orientation)

Figure 7: Population groups less likely to use positive coping behaviours in Waltham Forest, 2022.

## Current activity to address inequalities

Local research into health inequalities in Waltham Forest was commissioned from the Marmot Institute of Health Equity.<sup>5</sup> The report sets out actions for partners across the health and social care system to tackle inequalities, racism and other social determinants of health, all of which have significant impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Recommendations were made across eight Marmot areas, all of which have potential to improve mental health and wellbeing, such as: improving housing standards, developing the community and voluntary sector who are well placed to reach some of the most in need groups and improving access to employment for those with mental health and other long term conditions.



## Next steps

- For the first year of our strategy, we will prioritise four groups for mental health promotion activity. We will review and agree priority groups in future years. Priority groups for year one are:
  - Expectant and new parents/families
  - Unpaid carers
  - People living with long term physical health conditions.
  - Black men
- Delivery of Marmot recommendations to improve mental health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities in mental health outcomes.
- All mental health campaigns and promotion of mental health services to clearly focus on groups who need support the most.
- Support the use of standardised measures and tools for measuring mental wellbeing and evaluating the impact and equity of mental wellbeing services and projects across the borough.
- Ensure improving mental wellbeing is an outcome considered in the commissioning of all health improvement and wider services. Any new funding opportunities should ensure the mental wellbeing of high-risk groups is considered as a priority area.



### Partnership working across the system and the Prevention Concordat

NHS England guidance and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) Prevention Concordat for Mental Health highlights the importance of partnership working with people, communities and partners across the whole mental health system. Waltham Forest is now a signatory of the OHID Prevention Concordat, which is focused on developing and delivering actions to improve wellbeing in partnership.

We have also established an integrated perinatal and parental mental health working group which will have a key role in developing and implementing a new strategy for perinatal and parental mental health and parent-infant relationships.

### Next steps

- Partners across the system continue to work together to improve the mental wellbeing of residents and prevent mental health conditions. A joint action plan will be developed and implemented to achieve the objectives of this strategy.
- Representatives from the priority groups identified should continue to be engaged after the strategy has been published to ensure all work is as effective as possible in reducing mental health inequalities.
- Review partnership programmes that have worked well, such as the Community Health Champions project, applying learnings across the system.



# Our Strategy - How we will achieve our vision

We will achieve our vision by implementing a programme of work across the following four strategy themes.

## THEME ONE: Tackling stigma and discrimination around mental health

### Why this theme is important

The stigma and discrimination that exists around mental health creates a negative mental health cycle where people with mental health problems often report feelings of failure and worthlessness. This prevents many people from talking about their issues with friends, family and colleagues or seeking help from a professional.

### Where we are now: local insight

Since the Waltham Forest Mental Wellbeing Strategy was first published in 2018, we have conducted bi-annual assessments of mental health stigma in the population to track progress. This suggests that stigma levels have been decreasing during this time. However, there has been no regional or national data published during this time for comparison.





### What has been achieved

Waltham Forest Council has supported the national Time to Change campaign for several years, which aimed to enable people with lived experience of mental health problems to tell their stories and help challenge stigma around mental health. Over the past four years, Waltham Forest's Public Health team and CREST Waltham Forest have worked together to deliver a local campaign, including training and support for Time to Change champions to run events and initiatives to tackle stigma.

We also delivered a number of training opportunities for frontline staff and residents to have better understanding and empathy towards people with mental health conditions:

- Over 140 school and family hub staff have now been trained in Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training which provides skills and knowledge to spot early signs of mental distress and provide support in an empathetic, non-stigmatising way.
- Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training has been delivered to over 500 frontline staff in Waltham Forest from across all sectors. MECC focuses on holding non-judgemental, supportive conversations around mental health and signposting to relevant support.
- A group of 18 to 25 year-old peer mentors, some with lived experience of mental health problems, have been trained to support school pupils who may need help through the School Mental Health Ambassadors programme.

### Next steps:

- Continue to tackle mental health stigma through mental health awareness campaigns and supporting VCS based activities including the Community Health Champions commissioned from Leyton Orient Trust, with a focus on communities most affected by stigma.
- Support wider uptake of mental health training across the health and care system for all ages and develop an e-learning MECC programme for frontline staff across Waltham Forest.
- Ensure that people affected by poor mental health are supported to be visible and share their stories through council and partners communication channels.
- Continue to track progress through inclusion of bi-annual assessments of stigma in our Resident Insight Survey and publish results in our JSNA.
- Continue partnerships with schools and young people to deliver mental health awareness and anti-stigma campaigns in schools, including increasing number of schools involved in the Mental Health Ambassadors programme.
- Increase focus on tackling stigma of perinatal mental health through parents sharing their experiences of mental health and ways of managing their own mental wellbeing.
- Implement a training plan on perinatal mental health and parent infant relationships as part of the Family Hubs programme. This will aim to ensure that all staff working with families during pregnancy and in the first years after pregnancy are trained in perinatal mental health and parent infant relationships. To ensure the longevity of the training programmes, a 'train the trainer' approach will be implemented.

## Tackling Inequalities

- Include assessment by priority group characteristics in annual measures of stigma to assess inequalities trends and identify groups in Waltham Forest most affected by stigma.
- Take a targeted approach to stigma campaigns to reduce inequalities, aiming to reach groups most affected by mental health stigma through effective channels.

## THEME TWO: Social determinants of mental health and wellbeing

### Why this theme is important

Mental health problems can affect anyone, but it is now widely accepted that people's social and economic conditions influence their risk of both mental and physical ill-health. The factors that influence health are distributed unevenly throughout the population, leading to inequalities.

The recent health inequalities report commissioned from the Marmot Institute of Health Equity has highlighted some of the key determinants of health that are unequally distributed throughout the population. Most of the factors covered in that report impact on mental health and wellbeing, meaning the response as a whole will contribute to reducing mental health inequalities. This strategy identifies the following as priorities for action to improve mental health:

- economic wellbeing and poverty, particularly in relation to the cost-of-living crisis,
- improving access to employment and workplace conditions,
- improving housing conditions,
- social isolation and loneliness,
- tackling inequalities and racism.

## Local Insight

A recent health survey of Waltham Forest residents showed that the top issues negatively affecting mental health are as follows:



**Financial issues**  
(35%)



**Stress at work**  
(34%)



**What's happening in the world / what's in the news**  
(30%)



**Isolation / loneliness**  
(23%)

## What has been achieved

The Waltham Forest social prescribing offer has developed significantly over the past five years alongside the development of a new Adult Early Help offer for those experiencing situations likely to affect their mental health and wellbeing. Link workers in these services work to support residents who have non-medical needs to access various sources of support across the statutory and voluntary sector, such as social groups and befriending to alleviate isolation and loneliness, housing services, debt advice and others. Social prescribing community chest grants are in place to support local communities deliver health and wellbeing activities to support their communities.



Social prescribers are now embedded within every Primary Care Network in the borough and all of these roles are supported by a 'core' social prescribing team in the Council. This team handle referrals from Talking Therapies and social care and provide training and development for other social prescribers in the system. An early years social prescribing service is now in place and a Family Support Service provided by Lloyd Park CFC supports families with housing, debt management, poverty, adult education needs etc.

A recent innovation has been the introduction of wellbeing cafes, to support residents who are experiencing social isolation and low-level mental health problems. A 12-week set of sessions with other residents experiencing similar issues have been found to improve mental wellbeing scores and connect people into other services.

For school aged children, a Schools Mental Health Charter was launched pre-pandemic and supports and encourages schools to put in place an effective whole school approach to creating a mentally healthy environment for everyone in the school community.

A strategy to tackle the cost-of-living crisis in Waltham Forest, is in place. It has delivered a number of outcomes for our residents, such as:

- 18 groups now operating 'Community Living Rooms', providing a year-round offer of social activity and practical support around the cost of living across the borough.
- Support in place for residents in need to lower bills and have warmer and greener homes.
- Payments directly to households in crisis.
- Supporting residents to increase income capacity through providing new skills, support and advice, as well as supporting local businesses.
- The Employment, Business and Skills (EBS) offer supports economic growth and prosperity for residents.

#### Next steps:

- Review the social prescribing / link worker offer in Waltham Forest to ensure it is tackling health inequalities by providing effective support to residents who need it most.
- Evaluate the early years social prescribing offer to ensure it is delivering maximum benefit to families.
- Continue to establish the wellbeing cafes offer and evaluate it appropriately to inform future commissioning decisions and ensure the best model is in place to support residents at all ages.
- Continue rolling out the Schools Mental Health Charter and audit schools already in the scheme.
- Support inclusion of population wellbeing outcome measures in council wide strategies.
- Increase awareness and uptake of existing services and support for parents and families.

Actions in the following priority areas will also be implemented:

### Workplace Health

- Establish an approach to supporting businesses to provide mentally healthy workplaces across Waltham Forest.
- Continue to develop and promote the wellbeing offer for Council staff, maximising our position as one of the biggest employers in the borough.
- Develop offers of support for groups excluded from employment and at higher risk of mental health problems to access and maintain good employment.
- Work with partners to encourage relevant employers to ensure that perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship training is part of job descriptions and inductions for new starters.

### Economic wellbeing and poverty

The following initiatives will be explored:

- Wellbeing activities to be delivered at Community Living Room spaces, for example explore opportunities for co-locating relevant services to the community spaces including Health Champions, Talking Therapies etc.
- Promote uptake of employment and volunteering opportunities at the Community Living Room spaces.
- Information and advice on mental health and wellbeing to be shared through community and business networks, spaces, partners and communication channels.
- Incorporate wellbeing into Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) offer such as offering Mental Health First Aid training to staff at CAB.



### Housing

- Ensure the upcoming Housing Strategy meets mental health objectives outlined in the Marmot report. This includes improving conditions for those living in the private rented sector and including Health Impact Assessments at the planning stage for new housing developments.
- Increase the number of housing officers in the Local Authority and Housing Associations engaging in MECC and other mental health training.
- Continue to develop fuel poverty support offers for those living in cold homes, particularly for residents whose physical and mental health is at highest risk.

### Tackling Inequalities

- Deliver targeted outreach and engagement to ensure groups with the highest needs are accessing services in line with their needs.

## THEME THREE: Self-help approaches to improving mental wellbeing

### Why this theme is important

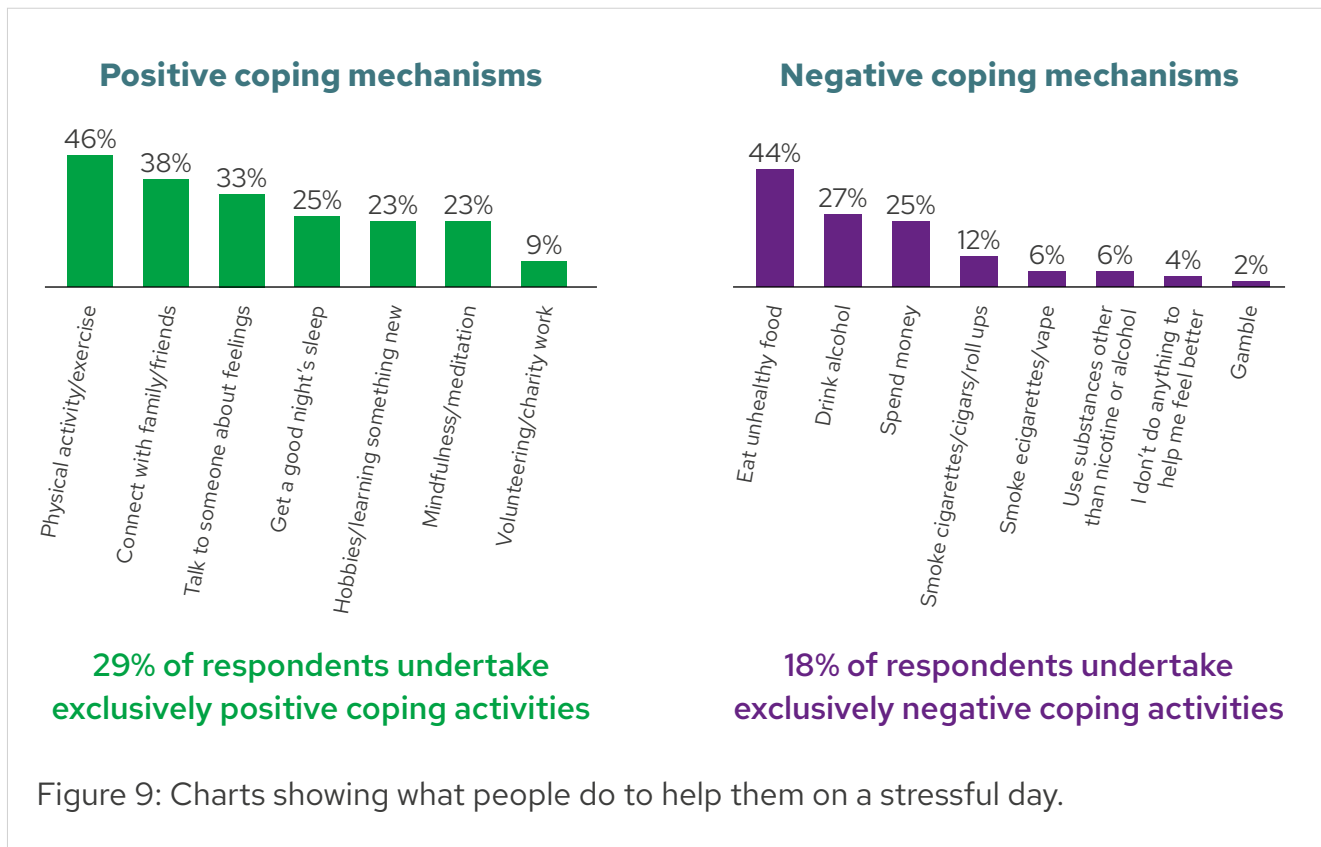
With one in four members of the population expected to experience a mental health problem, there is a need for self-help approaches to mental health prevention. There is a long history of promoting self-help approaches for physical health issues, but mental health has lagged behind in this respect. The Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing project recommends promotion of the '5 Ways to Wellbeing', which is an evidence-based set of ways to improve mental wellbeing. They are:

1. Connecting with others
2. Being physically active
3. Taking notice of our feelings and surrounding environment
4. Learning new skills
5. Giving to others, such as volunteering or an act of kindness

### Local insight

Our recent resident health survey explored self-help approaches to mental health and wellbeing.

When asked how people cope with stressful times, there was a mixture of positive and potentially harmful coping mechanisms, with physical activity and eating unhealthy food coming out as the most common behaviours. The results suggest there is still work to be done in terms of developing a population shift towards healthy behaviours in response to stress. The results also showed that there are inequalities with some groups more likely to be engaging in positive and negative self-help approaches to mental wellbeing than others.





Our resident engagement also showed that only around 10% of the population were aware of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing campaign, compared to 49% and 41% who were aware of Samaritans and Talking Therapies respectively. This suggests there is a need to raise awareness of self-help, prevention approaches to mental health in Waltham Forest.

Service / campaign	% aware	
Samaritans of Waltham Forest	49%	
Waltham Forest Talking Therapies	41%	→ 55% for those rating their mental health as <b>bad</b>
Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest	21%	
Every Mind Matters	17%	→ 21% for those rating their mental health as <b>bad</b>
Waltham Forest Prescribing Service	11%	
Five Ways to Wellbeing	8%	
Thrive LDN	8%	
Waltham Forest Time to Change Hub	6%	
Kooth online	6%	
Young Person’s Mental Health charter	5%	
Good Thinking Digital mental wellbeing support	4%	
<b>None of these</b>	<b>4%</b>	→ 24% for those rating their mental health as <b>bad</b>

Q. Before today, had you heard of any of the following mental health and wellbeing services and campaigns?

Number of respondents: 949

Figure 10: Table showing % of residents aware of mental health services and resources in the borough.



### What has been achieved

A vast range of local cultural, sporting and learning opportunities are available for residents to access, with benefits to their mental health and wellbeing. The Enjoy Waltham Forest programme has created mentally healthy public spaces that encourage walking, cycling and social interaction. These opportunities are often promoted and targeted at groups less likely to engage in such activities and more likely to experience poor mental health.

We have implemented campaigns such as 5 Ways to Wellbeing, particularly around World Mental Health Day, London Great Mental Health Day and others to promote lifestyles that support positive wellbeing.

A wide range of activities in Family Hubs support families and parents to interact, socialise and meet other parents. Health visitors also discuss mental wellbeing at all new birth, 6-to 8-week, and health review appointments and provide information and signposting.

Our wellbeing cafes provide isolated residents with a 12-week programme of support based around engagement in evidence-based wellbeing activities.

### Next steps:

- Continue to use existing local and pan-London mental health promotion campaigns and offers to promote positive self-help approaches to wellbeing, ensuring campaigns are targeted at high-risk groups.
- Increase local use of NHS Every Mind Matters resources including the 'mind planning' function.
- Help residents develop positive coping mechanisms during stressful situations such as adopting 5 ways to wellbeing in their everyday lives while also tackling barriers to positive coping mechanisms.
- Increase focus on supporting uptake of volunteering as previous and recent research shows that out of the 5 ways to wellbeing, the beneficial impact of volunteering is the least well known.
- Deliver bespoke campaigns and interventions to raise awareness and support parents and families with their mental health and emotional wellbeing and ensure that there is a focus on supporting those parents and families who are most vulnerable.

## THEME FOUR: Early intervention for the prevention of mental health problems

### Why this theme is important

Intervening early in the development of many mental health conditions can prevent more serious problems further down the line. Activity to support early intervention is important, particularly for individuals with low level mental health problems and those at an early stage of life.

### Local Insight

Our local engagement work provides insight into awareness of early intervention services. The result showed that:

- Awareness of Samaritans and Talking Therapies is good, but for other sources of mental health support such as Kooth or social prescribing awareness is low (Figure 10).
- For mental health services residents are aware of, appointment availability, access (waiting lists), and the expectation that services would not meet their needs, were seen as barriers to accessing services (Figure 11- 12).

### Factors affecting reluctance to seek help for mental health issues

When asked what might contribute to people not seeking help for poor mental health, the main factor was around fear of **not being taken seriously**.

This was the top factor for **all demographic sub-groups**.



**83%**

People **not** believing the problem will **not** be taken seriously enough.



**76%**

Mental health services are hard to access.



**75%**

Believe or hoping the problem will get better by itself.



**72%**

Worry about what people think.



**71%**

People don't know about mental health services.



**55%**

Unable / unwilling to access online services.

Figure 11: Survey asking why Waltham Forest residents are not accessing services earlier.



### What has been achieved

Digital support offers for adults and children struggling with their mental health have been established. Kooth is an online mental health support offer for children and young people, available at any time. Similarly, Good Thinking is a London-wide digital mental wellbeing service for adults. While we know that not everyone will want to use digital services, we know that they are useful for providing early interventions for some, freeing up face-to-face appointments in other services.

Promotion of the Waltham Forest Talking Therapies service in the community has supported uptake among groups who do not traditionally access mental health services.

Flourish is a postnatal group support service, delivered by Lloyd Park Children's Charity (LPCC), encouraging mothers to talk about their concerns and offering further support as required. LPCC also delivers the Mellow Bumps antenatal programme for expectant parents to feel more relaxed during pregnancy, improve their wellbeing and start to build a relationship with their baby. There is a specialist perinatal mental health visitor post in the 0-19 service.

A range of interventions have been commissioned in schools to prevent the development of mental health problems that could end up requiring support from CAMHS professionals. These include Schools Mental Health Ambassadors, who work to support children with low level mental health problems.

Training for frontline staff aims to improve the identification and intervention in early mental health problems. Youth Mental Health First Aid has been commissioned

for staff in schools, Family Hubs and other youth facilities in the borough. MECC training has been delivered to frontline staff across the Council, NHS and voluntary sector.

### Next steps:

- Continue to promote awareness of, and early access to, services that provide support for common mental health problems, such as Talking Therapies, Good Thinking and Kooth.
- Identify and address barriers to seeking help early including providing information and case studies about services, appointment availability, effectiveness of services to meet needs, and stigma.
- Conduct audits to understand and ensure equity of access to these offers.
- Make mental health a core part of the new Family Hubs programme, ensuring that it delivers an improved and equitable mental health offer for parents, including:
  - Parental and perinatal mental health offer and resources- for parents / carers with mild-moderate mental health needs
  - Develop an integrated adult mental health service offer within Family Hubs to include wellbeing and support for parents and families experiencing mild to moderate perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship difficulties.
  - Improve our local mental health and wellbeing support for fathers. This includes a new service led by Lloyd Park Children's Charity called 'Fathers Wellbeing' which will offer fathers support through one-to-one counselling or group support sessions.

- Develop a new multidisciplinary perinatal mental health and parent–infant relationship strategy for Waltham Forest with clear referral pathways for families.
- Further increase joint working with schools, particularly by engaging them in the Schools Mental Health Charter.
- Improve reach and performance of Kooth online mental health support particularly for priority groups.
- Complete an evaluation of the School Mental Health Ambassadors programme.
- Review and refresh plans for delivering MHFA training for young people and adults.
- Develop and promote a MECC e-learning package that incorporates signposting to mental health services as a priority.
- Increase awareness of Good Thinking and improve our intelligence on number of users and performance.

## Tackling Inequalities

- Deliver equity audits and priority group-specific evaluation of services to understand needs and gaps in services for priority and 'seldom reached' groups.
- Deliver campaigns and interventions to promote uptake of early intervention services among priority groups.
- Recruit and train health champions and mental health ambassadors to promote uptake of early intervention services to specific priority groups.
- Roll out perinatal mental health and parent infant relationship training for staff working with families during pregnancy and with children under the age of 2 over the next year and develop champions who will deliver ongoing training to the workforce in the longer term.





# Evaluating our objectives

**Evaluation is a core component of quality and improvement.**

We will work to propose and support standardised measures and tools for measuring mental wellbeing and evaluating the impact and equity of services and projects across the borough and as part of the Council's Residents Insights Survey. We will also promote or provide training around evaluation to mental health and wellbeing for stakeholders in the borough.

Appendix 1 sets out the indicators that will be used to evaluate progress on each of our objectives and approaches, including equity audits and evaluating inequalities.





# Appendix 1

Outcomes	Indicator and Tools
<p><b>General wellbeing measures</b></p>	<p>Population personal wellbeing, using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ONS 4 (Life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness, anxiety) (RIS)</li> <li>• WEMWBS (RIS)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tackle stigma and discrimination faced by people with a mental health diagnosis</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of population who will be willing to live with, work with or continue a relationship with someone with a mental health problem (RIS)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promote use of positive self-help approaches to improve mental wellbeing and resilience</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proportion of residents who use positive approaches and negative behaviours to cope during adverse or everyday life situations (RIS)</li> <li>• Proportion who are aware of and will use one or more of the self-help approaches or campaigns, e.g. 5 Ways to Wellbeing (RIS)</li> <li>• Webpage clicks to Council’s wellbeing webpage, campaign pages and Good Thinking pages</li> <li>• Number of contact/conversations around self-help approaches to wellbeing</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promote early access to early intervention services, including low-level mental health services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referrals to Talking Therapy, Good Thinking, Kooth and other early intervention services</li> <li>• Uptake to services from priority groups (equity audits)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Tackle inequalities and discrimination that impacts mental health and wellbeing among groups most affected by mental health problems and wellbeing, including carers, people with a disability, young people, Black and Asian communities, and LGBTQ+</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the proportion of people from priority groups that use wellbeing/ mental health services.</li> <li>• No. of targeted campaigns or engagement for priority groups</li> <li>• Case studies shared from residents from priority groups</li> <li>• Equity audits</li> <li>• Number of co-located interventions that targets groups where they are, e.g. number of services delivered in a mosque or with carers</li> <li>• No. of joint working wellbeing projects delivered in partnership with priority groups</li> </ul>

If you have any feedback, comments or suggestions about mental health promotion in Waltham Forest, contact us at  
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