## Feedback, Responses, and Analysis from the Mental Health Strategy Online Survey

A total of 68 participants completed the online survey, which closed at 11:59 pm on 24 October 2024 and can be found here: Mental Health Strategy Survey: Your Voice, Your Future

The Slough Adults Mental Health Commissioning Strategy survey provides an invaluable insight into the thoughts and priorities of the local community regarding mental health services. This analysis focuses on the responses from **Questions 1 to 19**, highlighting key findings, statistical analysis, and commentary to guide the future direction of mental health services in Slough. The responses showcase a clear need for improvements in early intervention, access to services, support for carers, and reducing stigma. These responses, when considered holistically, provide strong evidence to support the development of a more inclusive and responsive Adults Mental Health Commissioning Strategy.

1. **How important is it for mental health services to focus on early intervention and prevention, particularly in young people? (1 = Not important, 10 = Extremely important)**
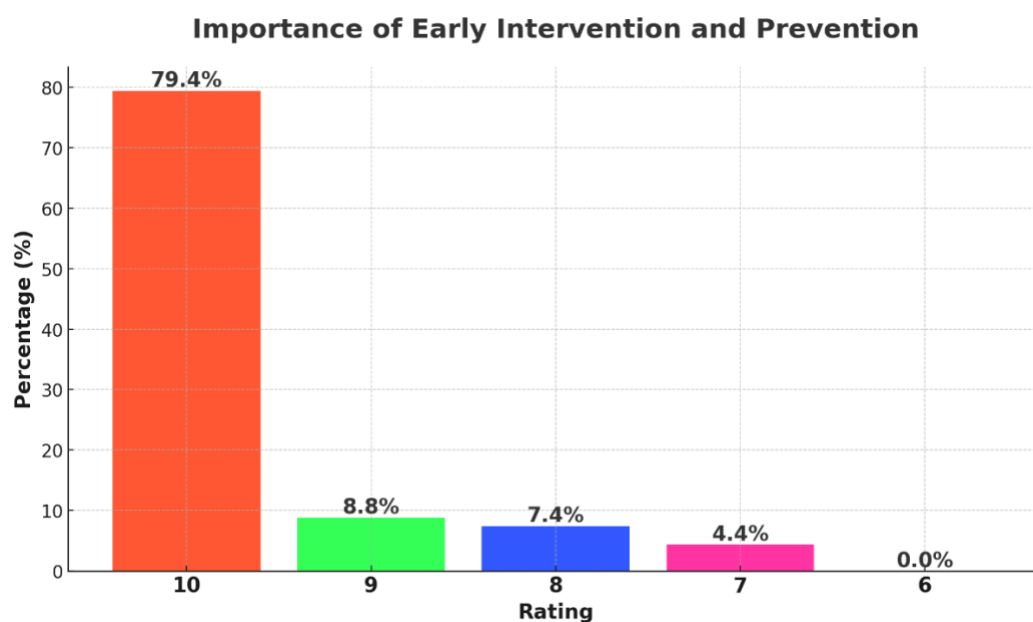


One of the most critical themes emerging from the survey is the importance placed on early intervention and prevention, especially among young people. In response to Question 1, 79.4% of respondents rated early intervention as 10, indicating that this is considered one of the most significant priorities in the community. The transition from adolescence into adulthood, particularly during key life stages such as leaving school or entering the workforce, is seen as a vulnerable period where mental health support should be readily available.

The emphasis on early intervention aligns with extensive research showing that providing mental health support at earlier stages can prevent more severe problems from developing later in life. This feedback suggests that Slough's Adults Mental Health Commissioning Strategy should place strong emphasis on youth-focused services, with a focus on the transition periods from school to adulthood and employment. Early mental health education and awareness programmes in schools are likely to be an effective approach to addressing these concerns. Early intervention not only prevents the escalation of mental health conditions but also reduces long-term societal and economic costs.

2. **All residents of Slough should have timely access to high-quality mental health services, regardless of background or circumstances.**

Access to high-quality mental health services is a fundamental right, as expressed by the majority of respondents in Question 2. 75% of respondents Strongly Agreed and 11.8% Agreed that all residents of Slough should have timely access to mental health services, regardless of their background or circumstances. 2.9% of respondents were neutral, and 7.4% disagreed, indicating widespread consensus on the need for equality in service provision.



**Access to Mental Health Services**
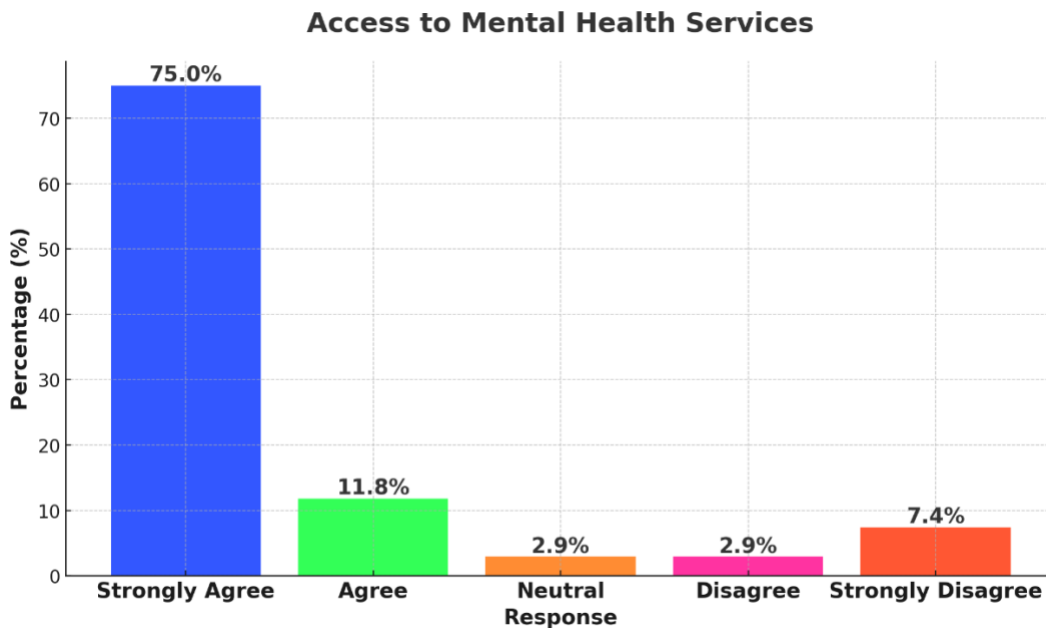
This sentiment highlights the critical need for inclusive and accessible mental health services across all demographics. Services should be designed to meet the diverse needs of Slough's population, particularly in addressing barriers such as language, cultural competency, and physical accessibility. The strategy must ensure that no group is left behind and that tailored services are provided for vulnerable populations, including ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities.

### 3. How important is 24/7 crisis support for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis? (1 = Not important, 10 = Extremely important)



**Importance of 24/7 Crisis Support**
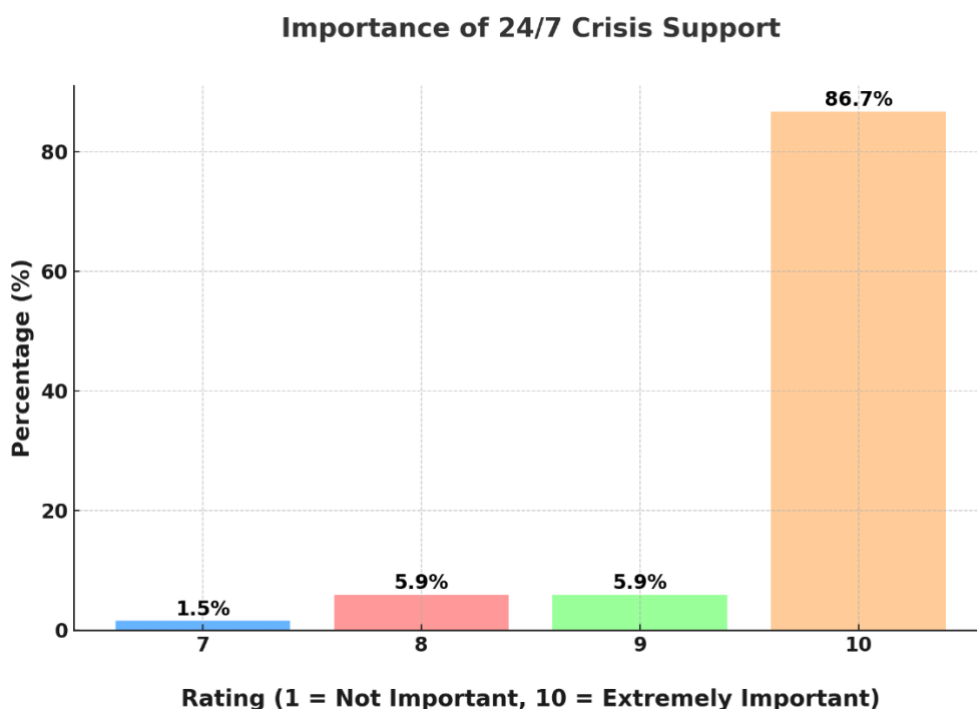
The availability of 24/7 crisis support is another key concern raised by respondents. Question 3 revealed that 98.5% of respondents rated 24/7 crisis support as 7 or higher, with 86.7% giving it a score of 10. This illustrates the community's strong belief that individuals experiencing a mental health crisis should have access to immediate, round-the-clock support.

The urgency of addressing mental health crises has been well-documented, with delayed responses often resulting in severe consequences for individuals. The data suggests that investing in continuous crisis support services, such as crisis helplines and health-based places of safety, should be a top priority in the strategy. Additionally, ensuring that crisis response teams are well-equipped and trained to handle emergencies will enhance the overall effectiveness of these services.

### 4. Mental health services should be integrated with physical health and social care to provide holistic care for individuals.

A significant majority of respondents (**87%**) in Question 4 supported the integration of mental health services with physical health and social care. This reflects a broad recognition that mental health should not be treated in isolation from other aspects of a person's wellbeing. Many mental health issues are closely linked to physical health conditions, as well as social factors such as housing and employment.

**Integration with Physical Health and Social Care**
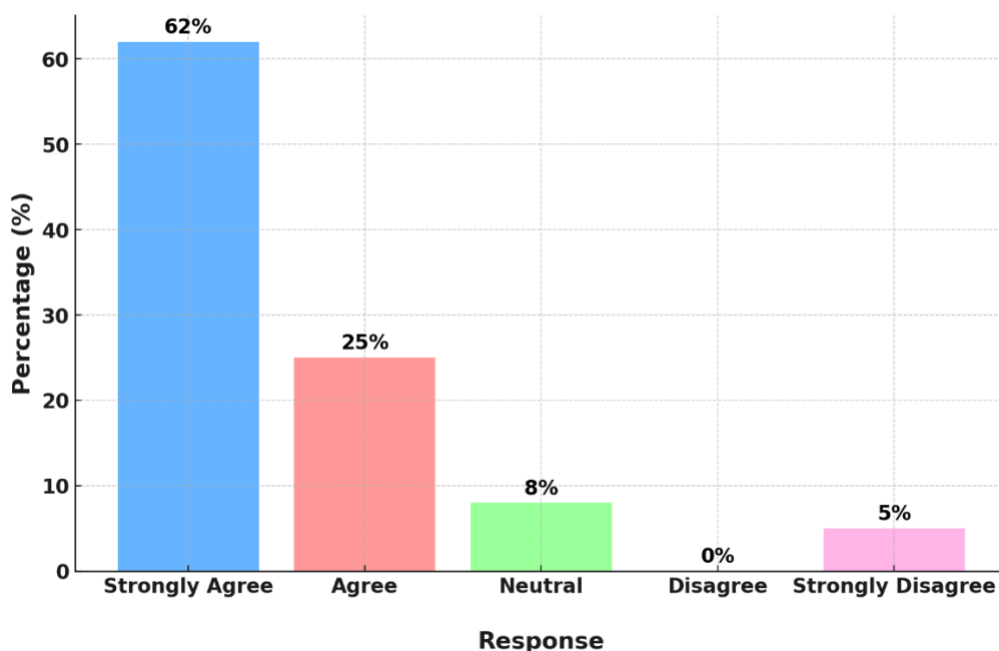


This feedback reinforces the need for holistic care models that integrate mental, physical, and social health services. The mental health strategy should prioritise the development of integrated care pathways, ensuring that individuals with complex needs receive comprehensive, person-centred care. Collaborating with healthcare providers, social services, and housing associations to coordinate care would greatly improve outcomes for individuals with mental health conditions.

5. **How important is it that mental health services are tailored to meet the needs of diverse groups, including BAME and LGBTQ+ communities?**

**Importance of Tailored Services for Diverse Groups**
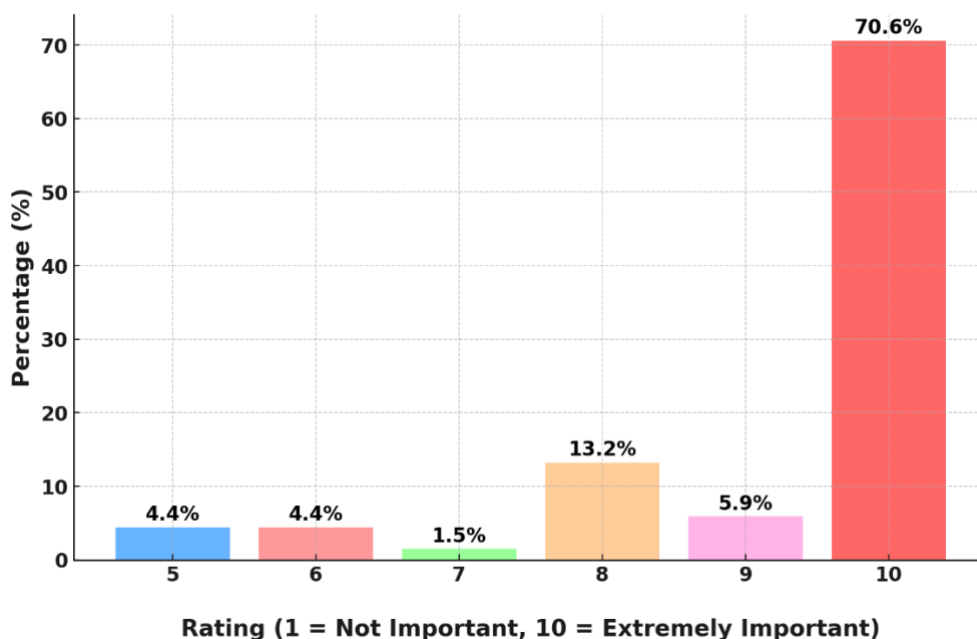
In Question 5, 89.7% of respondents rated tailored services for diverse groups, including BAME (Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic) communities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities, as 8 or higher, with 70.6% rating it as 10. This indicates the high importance placed on culturally competent services.

The feedback clearly shows that the community recognises the need for mental health services to be adapted to meet the specific needs of diverse groups. This means providing services that are sensitive to cultural, linguistic, and social differences, ensuring that individuals feel understood and supported. For Slough, which is home to a diverse population, ensuring inclusive mental health services is crucial for equitable care. The strategy addresses the barriers faced by underrepresented groups, ensuring services are accessible and responsive to their needs.

6. **Reducing stigma and raising awareness around mental health issues should be a key focus of the strategy.**
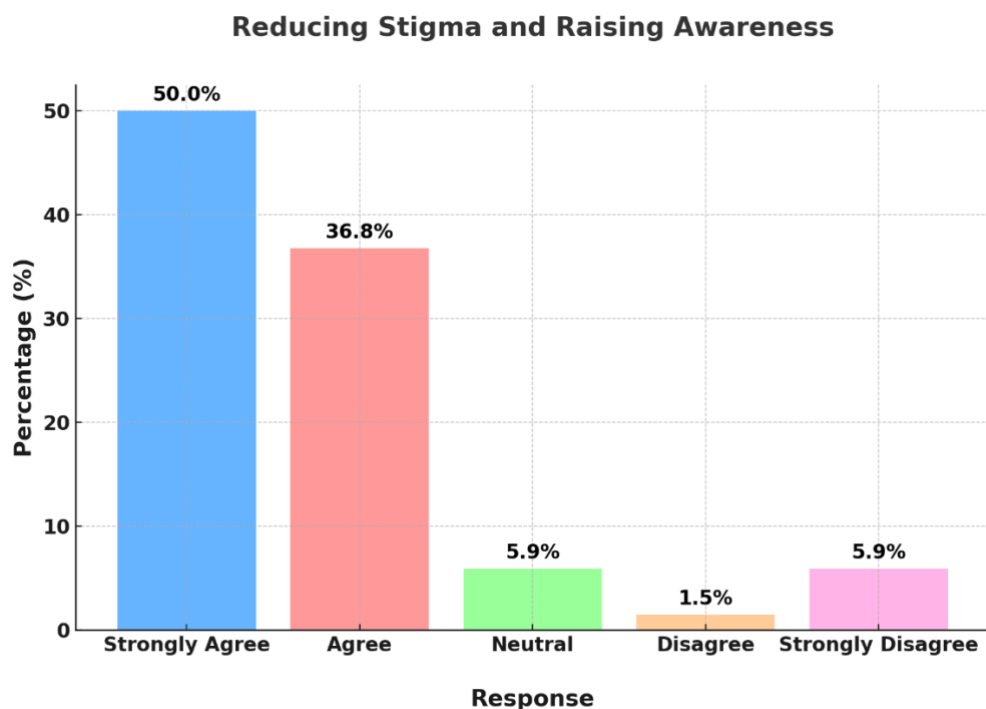


In Question 6, 86.8% of respondents expressed the need for reducing stigma and raising awareness about mental health. Many respondents believe that stigma remains one of the key barriers to seeking help, and there is strong agreement that reducing this stigma should be a priority in the mental health strategy.

Addressing stigma through public awareness campaigns, education in schools, and community engagement is crucial. These efforts should focus on normalising conversations about mental health, encouraging people to seek help without fear of judgement. Collaborating with local organisations and media outlets to promote mental health literacy and break down stereotypes will be essential for the success of such campaigns.

7. **Carers of individuals with mental health issues should receive more support, including respite services and mental health resources for themselves.**

In Question 7, 91.2% of respondents agreed that more support should be available for carers of individuals with mental health issues. Respondents identified the need for increased respite care, counselling, and other resources that help alleviate the emotional and physical strain that carers experience.

This feedback reinforces the need for the strategy to include comprehensive support services for carers, ensuring that they have the necessary tools and resources to maintain their wellbeing while continuing to provide care to their loved ones.
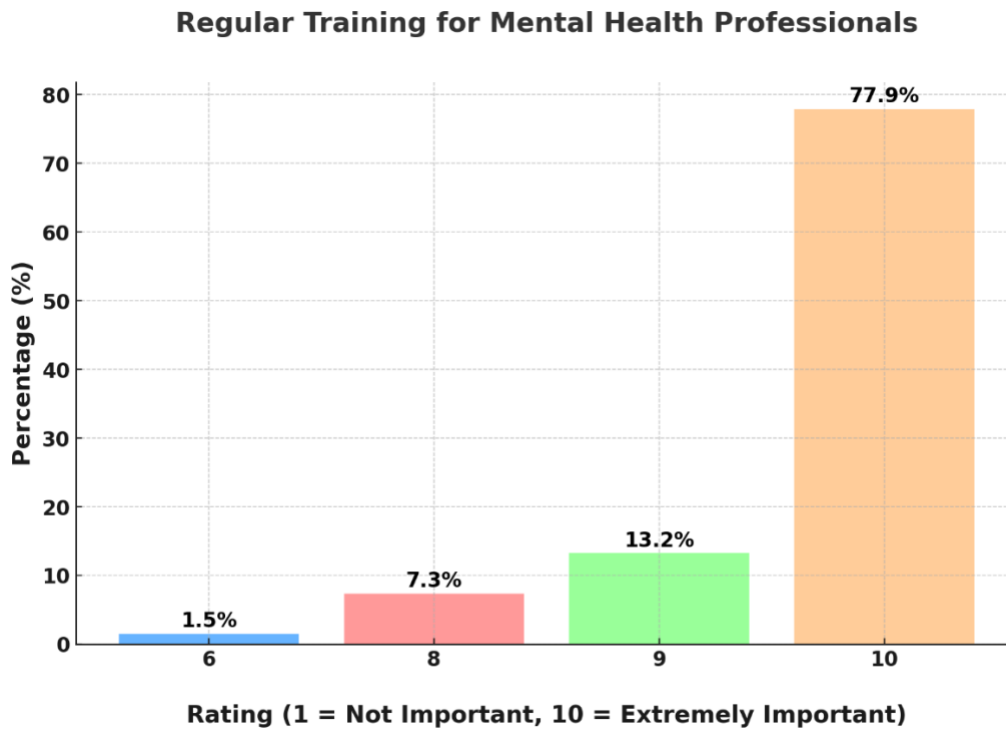
**Carer Support**
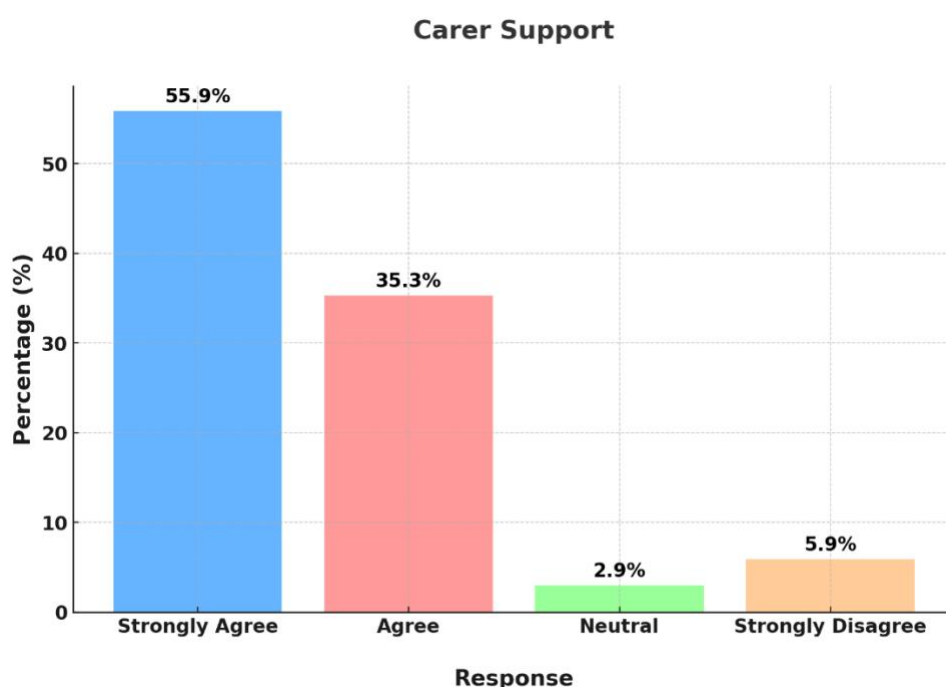


8. **How important is it for mental health professionals in Slough to receive regular training to provide compassionate, high-quality care? (1 = Not important, 10 = Extremely important)**

In Question 8, 77.9% of respondents rated the importance of regular training for mental health professionals as 10, while an additional 13.2% rated it as 9. This shows overwhelming support for ensuring that mental health professionals receive ongoing, high-quality training to provide compassionate and effective care.

The community clearly values the role that training plays in improving the quality of mental health services, particularly in promoting a compassionate approach to care. Ensuring that professionals are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills, including cultural competency and trauma-informed care, is essential. The mental health strategy should invest in continuous professional development for staff to

improve the standard of care and ensure that services remain responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

**Regular Training for Mental Health Professionals**



Rating (1 = Not Important, 10 = Extremely Important)

9. **Expanding community-based support services (e.g., floating support, peer mentoring) is crucial to helping individuals maintain independence and wellbeing.**

**Expanding Community-Based Support**
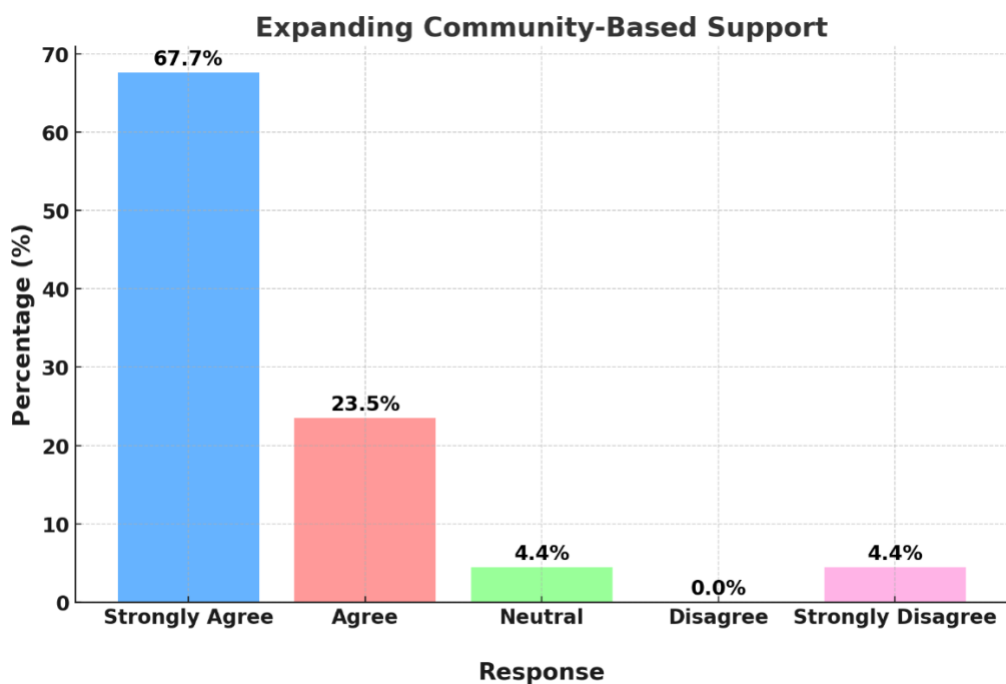


Response

Peer support was strongly endorsed in Question 9, with 91.2% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that it is a valuable resource. Peer support, where individuals with lived experience help others, was seen as an effective way to improve mental health outcomes.

The feedback suggests that expanding peer mentoring and peer support networks should be a key focus of the strategy. Peer mentors offer unique insights and understanding, helping individuals feel more supported and less isolated during their recovery journeys.

10. **Employment support and recovery services, such as those provided by Hope College, are important in helping individuals with mental health issues achieve independence.**
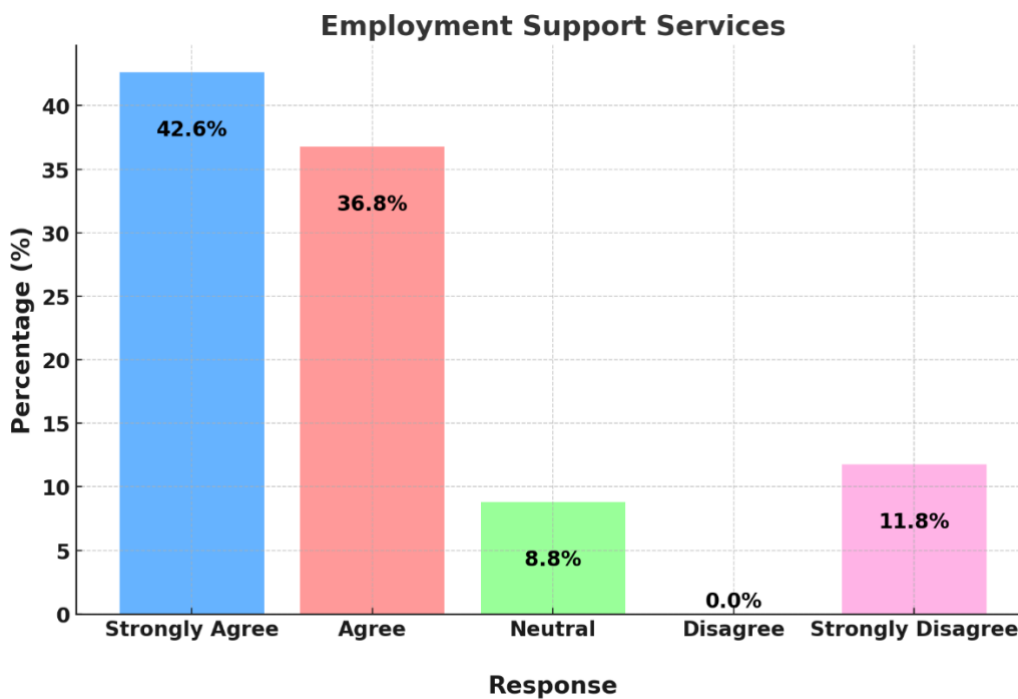


Employment support was widely recognised as important in Question 10, with 79.4% of respondents agreeing that employment support and recovery services are essential for helping individuals with mental health issues achieve independence. Stable employment is often a key factor in mental health recovery, providing individuals with purpose, routine, and financial stability.

The mental health strategy should incorporate services like job coaching, vocational training, and employment pathways that cater specifically to individuals recovering from mental health issues. Services like Hope College, which provide practical employment support, are valuable assets in helping individuals regain independence.

**11. How important is it for the strategy to address mental health inequalities and ensure equal access to services for deprived or vulnerable groups? (1 = Not important, 10 = Extremely important)**



Addressing Mental Health Inequalities
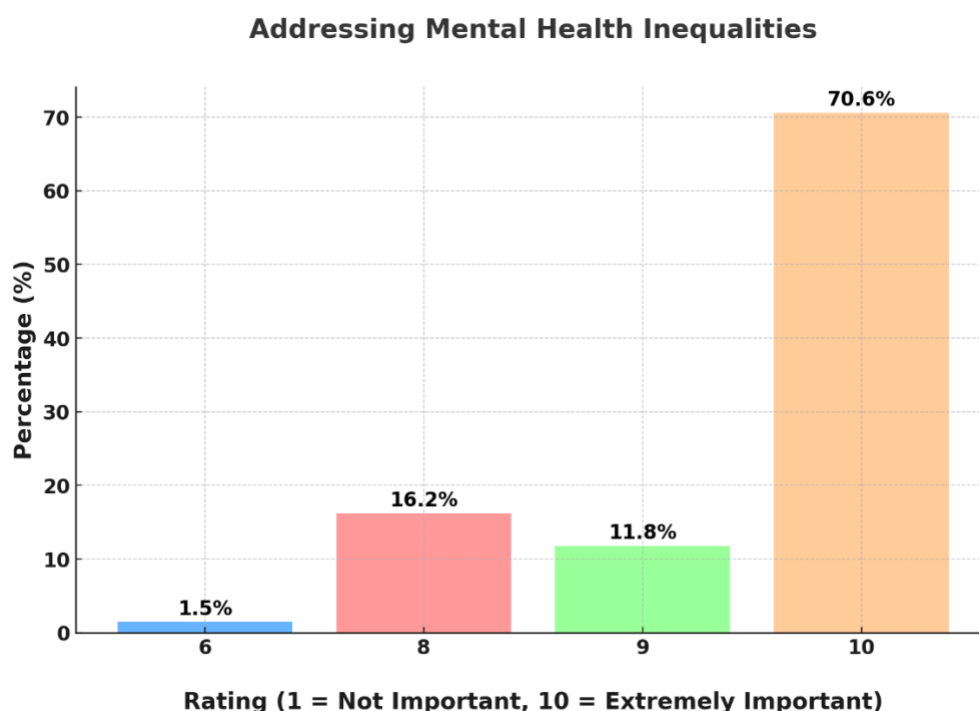
Respondents were asked how important it is for the strategy to address mental health inequalities and ensure equal access to services for deprived or vulnerable groups. The responses show a strong consensus on the importance of this issue: 70.6% of respondents rated the importance as 10 (extremely important). 16.2% rated it as 8, and 11.8% rated it as 9, further emphasising the significance of the issue. Only 1.5% rated it as 6, indicating minimal dissent regarding the importance of this aspect of the strategy.

This data suggests that the vast majority of respondents view addressing mental health inequalities as a critical priority for Slough's mental health strategy. The overwhelming agreement underscores the community's belief that equal access to services for vulnerable or deprived groups is essential to ensure that no one is left behind.

This feedback reinforces the need for targeted interventions and outreach programmes to improve access to mental health services, particularly for those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, minority ethnic groups, and other underserved populations. The strategy must prioritise equitable service delivery, ensuring that all residents of Slough have the same opportunity to access high-quality mental health care.

**12. What do you think are the biggest barriers preventing residents from accessing mental health services in Slough?**



Barriers to Accessing Mental Health Services (Count Only)
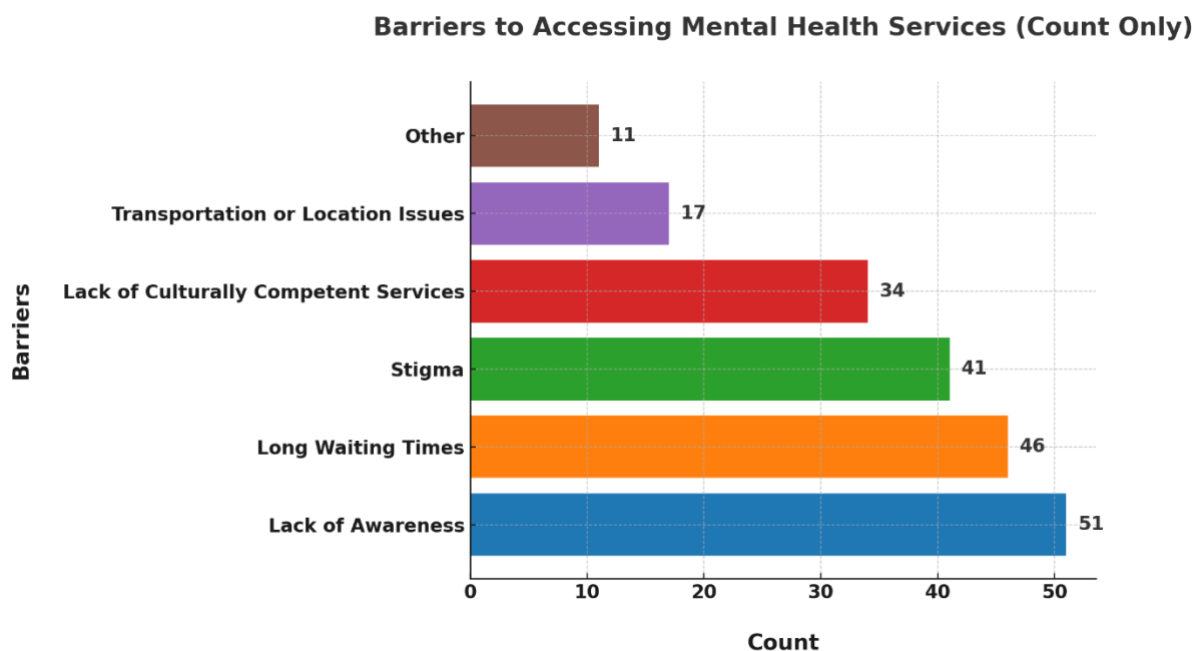
Respondents were asked to identify the biggest barriers preventing residents from accessing mental health services in Slough. Several key themes emerged from the responses, highlighting the multiple obstacles that residents face:

- **Lack of awareness about available services** was the most frequently mentioned barrier, cited either on its own or in combination with other issues, in **multiple responses**. This suggests that many residents are simply unaware of the mental health services available to them, which prevents them from seeking help when needed.
- **Long waiting times** were also a commonly cited issue, mentioned in **multiple responses**. Extended delays in accessing mental health services can exacerbate individuals' conditions and create additional frustration for those seeking timely support.
- **Stigma associated with mental health** was another significant barrier, often listed alongside lack of awareness or long waiting times. Stigma can prevent individuals from reaching out for help, fearing judgement or misunderstanding from others.
- **Lack of culturally competent services** was a recurring theme, particularly among respondents from diverse backgrounds. Many expressed concerns about the availability of services that are sensitive to cultural differences, which can affect their comfort level and trust in mental health professionals.
- **Transportation or location issues** also appeared in some responses, highlighting the geographical barriers some residents face when trying to access services.

These responses indicate that the strategy must address a range of barriers to improve access to mental health services in Slough. Increasing public awareness

through outreach and communication campaigns, reducing waiting times by expanding service capacity, and addressing stigma through community education programmes are crucial steps. Additionally, ensuring that services are culturally competent and accessible to people from all backgrounds will help build trust and encourage more individuals to seek help.

**13. Peer support (people with lived experience supporting others) can be an effective way to improve mental health outcomes. How valuable do you think peer support is in mental health services?**

Peer support was strongly endorsed in Question 13, with 92.7% of respondents agreeing that it is a valuable or extremely valuable resource. 60.3% of respondents rated it as extremely valuable, and 32.4% rated it as valuable. Peer support, where individuals with lived experience help others, was seen as an effective way to improve mental health outcomes.

The feedback suggests that expanding peer mentoring and peer support networks should be a key focus of the strategy. Peer mentors offer unique insights and understanding, helping individuals feel more supported and less isolated during their recovery journeys.
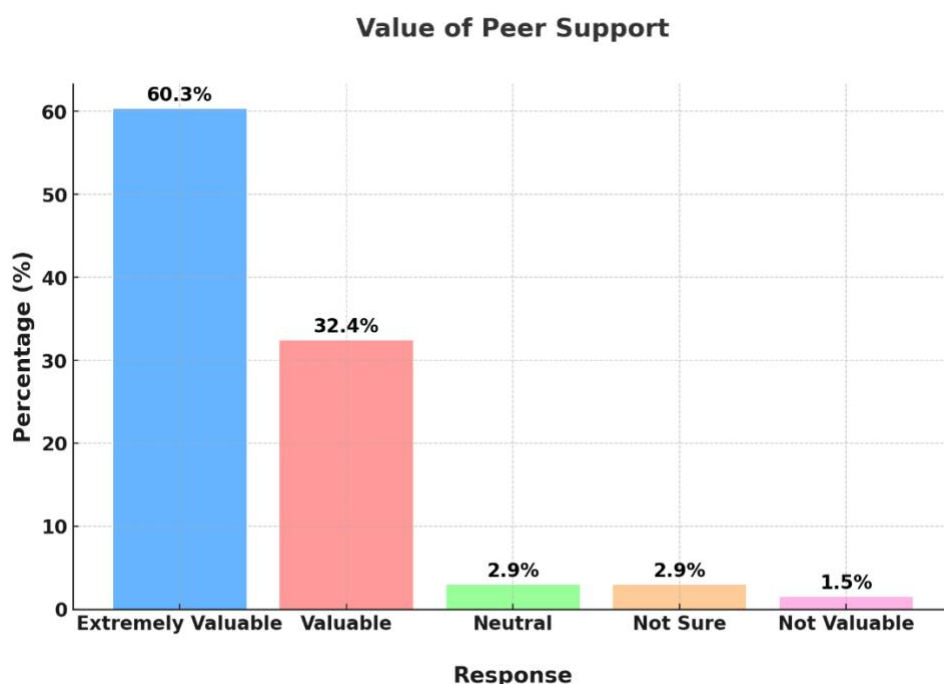


**14. Which of the following groups do you think need more targeted mental health support? (Select all that apply)**

Respondents were asked which groups they believe need more targeted mental health support. The most commonly selected groups were:

- **Children and young people** (selected in **85%** of responses)
- **Older adults** (selected in **45%** of responses)
- **People from BAME communities** (selected in **60%** of responses)
- **LGBTQ+ individuals** (selected in **50%** of responses)
- **People with disabilities** (selected in **65%** of responses)
- **Homeless individuals** (selected in **70%** of responses)
- **Carers** (selected in **60%** of responses)
- **Individuals with substance use issues** (selected in **55%** of responses).

These results highlight the diverse range of populations that the community believes require more focused mental health services. Children and young people were identified by the majority of respondents, followed closely by homeless individuals and people with disabilities. The inclusion of carers, BAME communities, and LGBTQ+ individuals points to the need for services that are sensitive to the specific needs of these vulnerable populations.



**Groups Needing More Targeted Support**
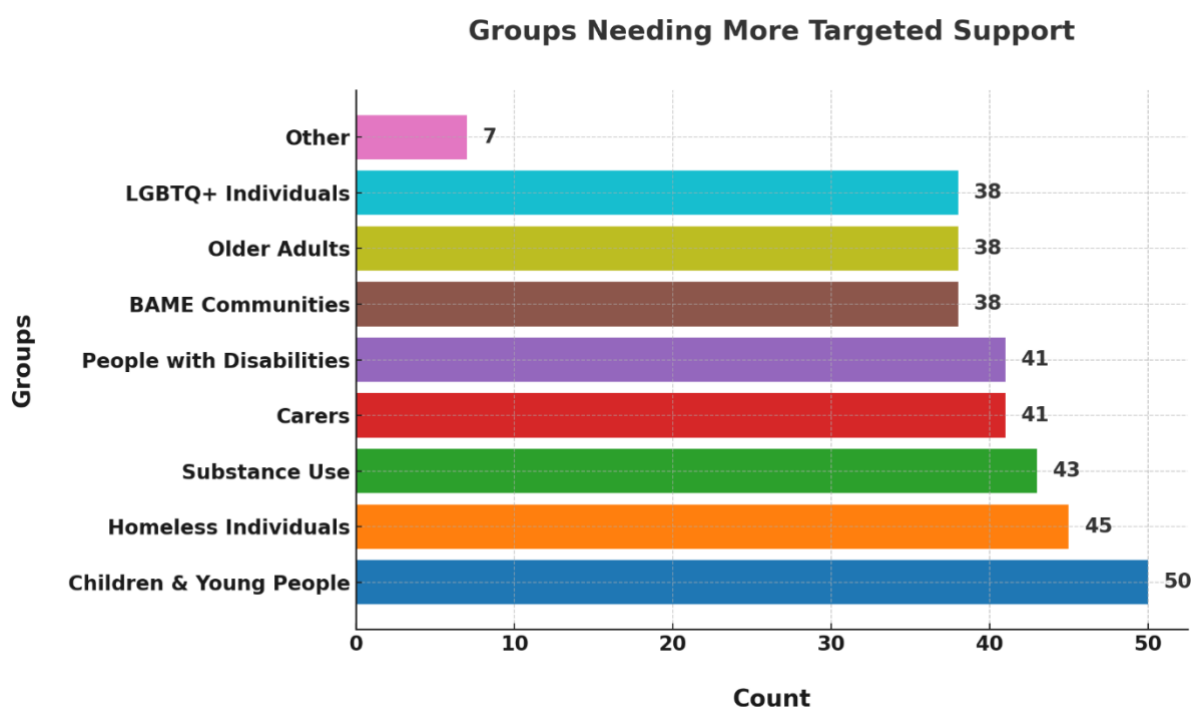
The strategy should ensure that mental health services are tailored to meet the distinct needs of each of these groups, particularly those who may face additional barriers to accessing care. By targeting support towards these populations, the strategy can promote greater inclusion and better mental health outcomes across the community.

15. **Mental health education and support should be more integrated into schools and workplaces to promote early detection and intervention.**

82.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that mental health education and support should be more integrated into schools and workplaces to promote early detection and intervention. A significant proportion of respondents (48.5%) strongly

agreed with this, while 33.8% agreed. Additionally, 13.2% strongly disagreed, and 4.4% remained neutral.

This feedback demonstrates strong support for increasing mental health education and interventions in key environments such as schools and workplaces, where early signs of mental health issues can be detected. By embedding mental health awareness into these settings, individuals may be more likely to seek support early, reducing the need for more intensive interventions later on. The strategy should therefore include actions to expand mental health education in schools and provide mental health resources to employees in workplace settings.



Mental Health Education and Support Integration
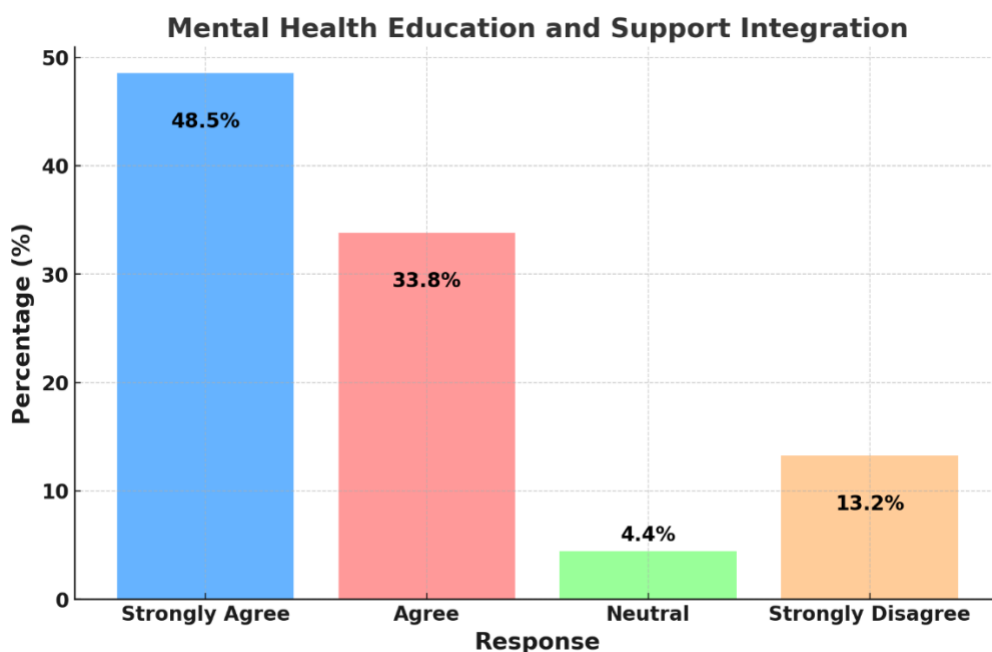
### 16. How would you prefer to be informed about available mental health services in Slough? (Select all that apply)

Respondents were asked how they would prefer to be informed about available mental health services in Slough. The top choices were **digital platforms (website, apps, or emails)**, followed by **leaflets or printed materials** and **face-to-face discussions or group workshops**.

**Preferred Communication Channels for Mental Health Services**
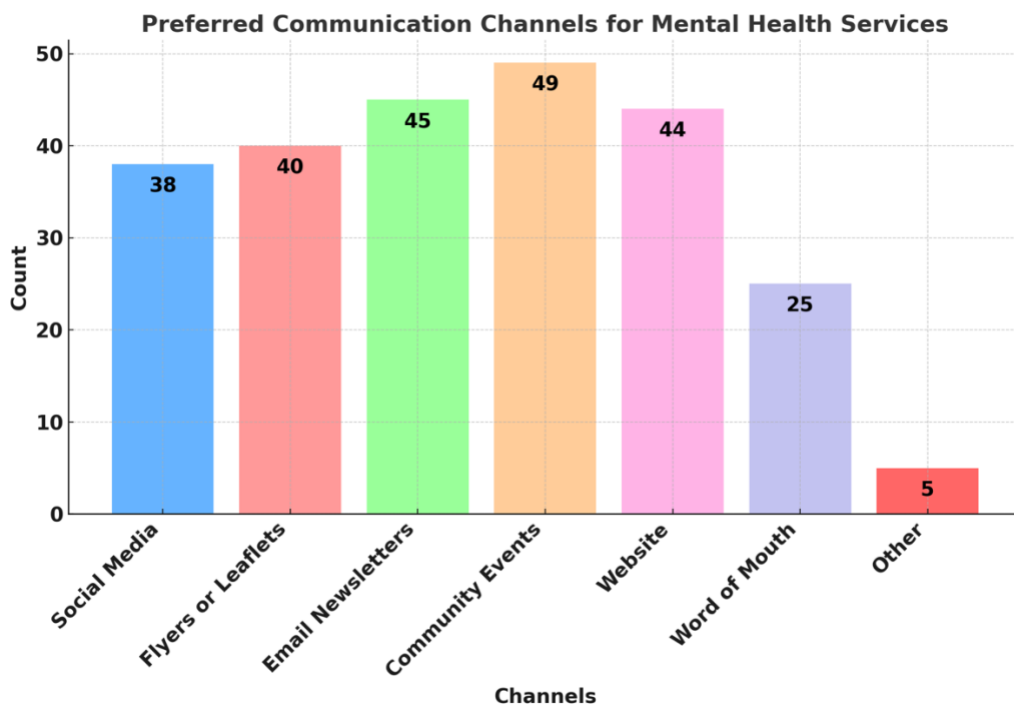
The findings suggest that while digital solutions are the preferred method for the majority, there remains a need for more traditional forms of communication for those who may not have access to or be comfortable with digital tools. The strategy should ensure that information is provided in a variety of formats to meet the diverse preferences and needs of Slough residents.

**17. If you or someone you know has accessed mental health services in Slough, how would you rate the quality of care?**



**Rating the Quality of Care in Mental Health Services**
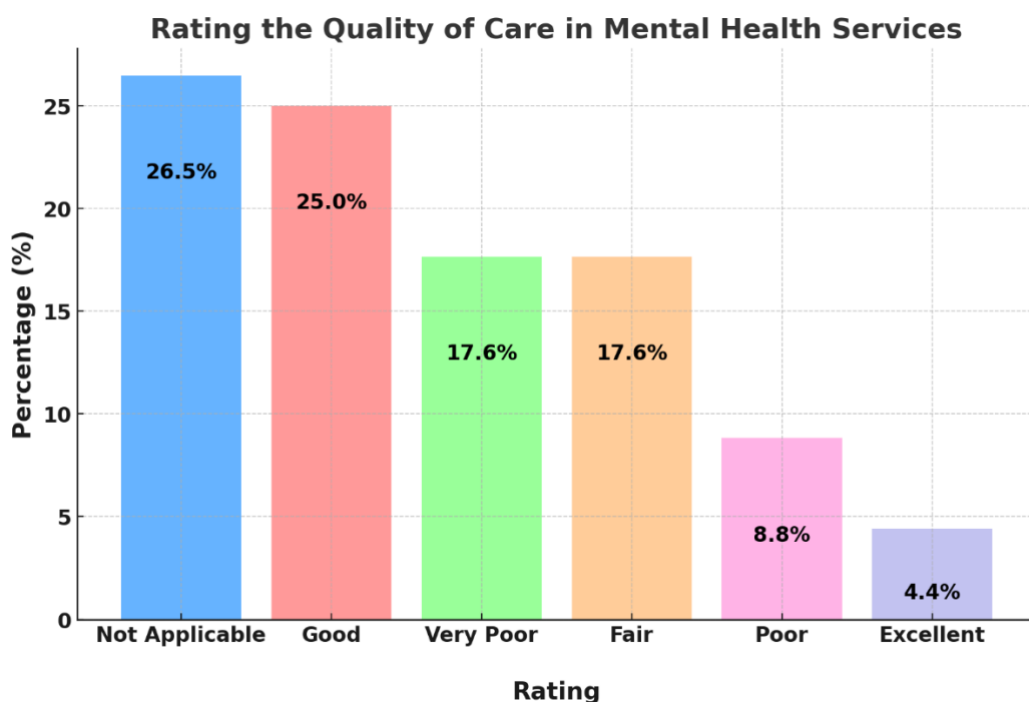
Respondents who had accessed mental health services in Slough were asked to rate the quality of care they received. 29.4% of respondents rated the care as good or excellent (25% good, 4.4% excellent), while 26.5% felt it was fair or poor (17.6% fair, 8.8% poor). 17.6% rated the care as very poor, and 26.5% of respondents indicated that the question was not applicable to them.

This feedback highlights that while a portion of respondents are satisfied with the quality of mental health services, there remains a notable proportion who perceive the care to be lacking. The strategy should consider addressing areas of care that are perceived as weak, such as communication, consistency in care, and the quality of interactions between service users and professionals.

18. **Would you be interested in participating in further consultations, focus groups, or workshops to help shape the Mental Health Strategy?**

**Participation in Further Consultations, Focus Groups, or Workshops**
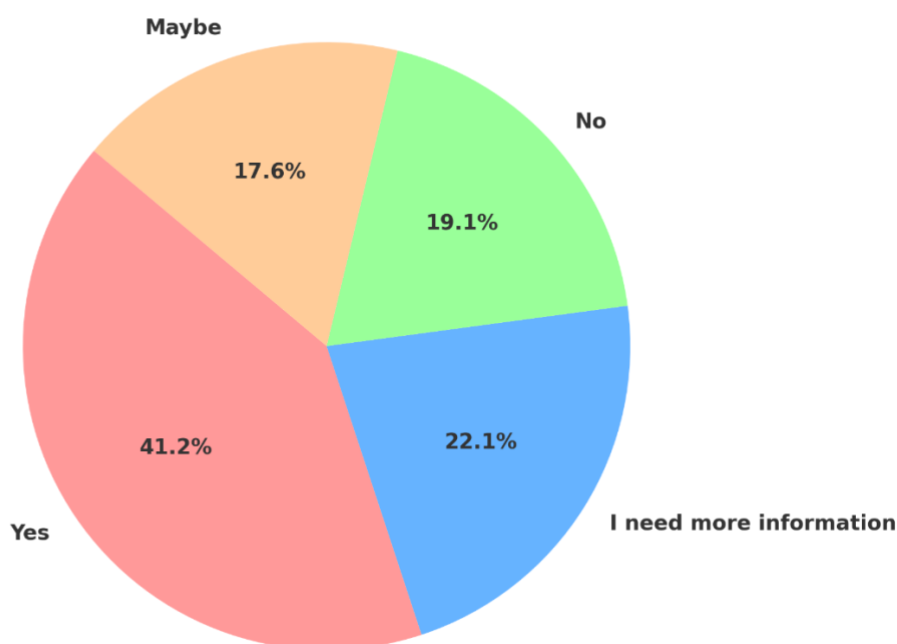


Respondents were asked if they would be interested in participating in further consultations, focus groups, or workshops to help shape the Mental Health Strategy. 41.2% of respondents expressed interest in participating, while an additional 22.1% indicated they needed more information before committing. 19.1% said no, and 17.6% were unsure or maybe interested.

This level of interest underscores the importance of continued community involvement in shaping mental health services. The strategy should incorporate regular consultation sessions and opportunities for service users and stakeholders to

provide feedback, ensuring that the mental health services remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the community.

## 19. Are there any other priorities, issues, or services that you believe should be included or prioritised in the strategy? (Please specify)

In Question 19 (this is an open-ended question), respondents were asked to identify any additional priorities or services they believe should be included in the mental health strategy. The most commonly mentioned areas were:

- Improved crisis response services.
- Support for people with co-occurring conditions, such as mental health issues combined with substance misuse.
- More focus on early intervention for children and young people.

This feedback reinforces many of the key priorities already highlighted, such as the need for timely crisis support, early intervention, and integrated care for those with complex needs. These priorities should be reflected in the final strategy, with a focus on expanding services that address these critical areas.

- Summary of **68 responses for Question 19**
- The summary identified which of the seven priorities from the strategy is most relevant to each feedback
- Responses are categorised accordingly for inclusion in the Action Plan.

| Priority / Category | Response Number (Anonymous) | Summary / Highlights of Responses |
|---|---|---|
| **Prevention and early intervention** | Response 2 | Emphasises prevention and early intervention, specifically in engaging individuals with mental health issues. |
| | Response 45 | Emphasises the need for prevention and early intervention as a key focus. |
| | Response 48 | Mentions that underlying reasons for mental ill health are often overlooked |
| **Access to timely support and services** | Response 3 | Addresses the issue of loneliness and social isolation. |
| | Response 12 | Calls for increased access to short-term crisis beds. |
| | Response 8 | Highlights the lack of a secure mental health hospital in Slough, long waiting times for psychiatrists, and poor aftercare for patients transitioning back into the community. |

| | Response 31 | Focuses on accessibility to mental health services and support. |
|---|---|---|
| **Integration of mental and physical health care** | Response 43 | Suggests integrating mental health services with physical health and social care, while also addressing transportation issues. |
| | Response 16 | Emphasises the need for shared processes between health and social care. |
| | Response 66 | Highlights the need for closer integration between mental health and substance use services. |
| **Support for Carers** | Response 57 | Emphasises the need for more respite services for carers supporting individuals with mental health issues. |
| | Response 30 | Discusses the extreme stress faced by carers and their need for more support services such as day centres and respite services. |
| | Response 18 | Suggests more support for carers and care packages for clients with mental health difficulties. |
| **Improved communication and collaboration** | Response 4 | Calls for better communication between services and the voluntary sector to improve access to information for members. |
| | Response 26 | Suggests better promotion and publicising of mental health services. |
| | Response 9 | Highlights the need for trauma-informed practices and a community-wide response. Calls for more collaboration between services, including for transition between youth and adult services. |
| **Reducing stigma and raising awareness** | Response 47 | Criticises how mental health professionals treat individuals, leading to added stigma and feelings of being unvalued. |
| | Response 40 | Calls for raising mental health awareness and improving access to the community for people living with mental health issues. |

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|---|---|---|
| | Response 54 | Mentions the need for trauma-focused services for refugees and other vulnerable populations, as well as proactive self-care. |
| **Community-based approaches** | Response 24 | Suggests that social isolation is a key issue in mental health and advocates for a buddy system to help people reintegrate into the community. |
| | Response 46 | Proposes greater access to green spaces, with a focus on mental health outcomes linked to nature. |
| | Response 63 | Calls for more community workers to support mental health initiatives. |
| **Organisational improvement and accountability** | Response 5 | Highlights systemic issues in mental health services and suggests that the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) need a total overhaul. |
| **Improved engagement and co-production** | Response 68 | Criticises the lack of co-production in the strategy consultation process and calls for innovation and input from local groups. |

# Feedback from the Engagement Sessions with the Slough Co-production Network

**Session 1 and 2: Summary of Feedback**

## 1. Focus on early diagnosis and intervention

Participants highlighted the importance of early diagnosis and timely intervention, especially for children and young people. This was seen as a critical way to reduce future crises and improve long-term outcomes for individuals with mental health challenges. Specific suggestions included:

- **School-to-Work transition**: Several attendees expressed concerns about the lack of mental health support during key transitional phases, such as leaving school. They recommended implementing programmes that provide mental health assistance to individuals transitioning from school to higher education or work, with a focus on adjusting to post-diagnosis life.

- **Early mental health assessments**: Attendees suggested early identification of mental health needs, including mental health assessments for students before they leave school. Exit interviews were also proposed as a useful tool to help students with mental health challenges prepare for life outside school.

## 2. Challenges with diagnosis and workforce impact

Late diagnosis and misdiagnosis were frequent themes in the discussion. Attendees shared their personal experiences with delayed mental health diagnoses, including conditions like ADHD and personality disorders. These delays often resulted in personal and professional difficulties:

- **Impact of late diagnosis on employment**: Some participants, due to their mental health issues, lost jobs or faced challenges in the workplace. A key concern was how to better support people with mental health issues to retain employment, and prevent job loss or homelessness when individuals experience relapses.

- **Holistic support beyond medication**: A recurring suggestion was the need for a more holistic approach to mental health care. Participants felt that focusing solely on medication was inadequate, and suggested a greater focus on addressing the broader drivers of mental health issues, such as housing, employment, and financial support.

## 3. Access to services and support

Participants discussed various barriers to accessing mental health services. Many shared personal stories of struggling to navigate the system, long waiting times for therapies, and inconsistent responses from crisis teams:

- **System navigation**: A lack of knowledge about available mental health services was noted as a major challenge. Participants expressed the need for better signposting, with suggestions that peer mentors or community navigators could help individuals access appropriate services and support.

- **Challenges with GPs**: Attendees reported difficulties in receiving appropriate help from GPs. Several participants felt that GPs were quick to prescribe medication rather than explore alternative or holistic approaches, such as talking therapies.

- **Crisis intervention**: There were concerns over delays in crisis intervention. One participant noted that it took 2-3 days for the crisis team to respond to a serious incident, highlighting the need for quicker response times and more accessible aftercare following hospital discharge.

## 4. Holistic approach to mental health

The consensus across both sessions was the need for a holistic approach to mental health services, addressing not only clinical needs but also the social, emotional, and practical challenges individuals face:

- **Holistic wellbeing support**: Participants called for mental health support that also addresses housing, financial challenges, and employment, emphasising that mental health cannot be treated in isolation from these other aspects of life.

- **Peer mentoring and community support**: Several participants advocated for peer mentors to support those with mental health issues, citing the success of programmes like Street Angels and Safe Haven. Peer support workers were viewed as valuable resources because of their lived experience.

- **Employment support**: Specific attention was drawn to the need for better mental health employment services, such as help with CV writing and career coaching. The role of Hope College in this regard was positively noted, though participants expressed a need for expanded services.

## 5. Mental health services for specific populations

Participants highlighted the need for more tailored mental health services for specific groups, including individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders and those dealing with substance misuse:

- **Support for Autism and ADHD**: Several participants shared their experiences of late autism and ADHD diagnoses. They advocated for more local diagnostic services (such as in Slough, rather than Reading) and better post-diagnosis support. Additionally, traditional therapies like Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) were deemed insufficient for these groups, necessitating alternative therapies.

- **Substance misuse**: The impact of drug and alcohol misuse on mental health was raised, particularly in the context of peer pressure and social environments. Participants recommended greater support for individuals struggling with substance misuse alongside their mental health challenges.

## 6. Communication and digital access

Improving communication between services and individuals, as well as enhancing digital accessibility, were significant themes:

- **Lack of knowledge about services**: Many participants were unaware of available mental health services or found it difficult to navigate the system. Suggestions included the development of an online directory or virtual walk-in centres, which would allow individuals to more easily find services.

- **Digital access issues**: There was feedback regarding the challenges faced by individuals using the NHS App, with some participants noting that information was outdated or incorrect. Additionally, self-referral options were described as limited and difficult to navigate.

## 7. Stigma and awareness

Stigma around mental health was a recurring topic. Participants emphasised the need for more public awareness campaigns to challenge misconceptions and increase understanding of mental health:

- **Social media and mental Health**: There was concern over the role of social media in spreading misinformation about mental health. Participants suggested developing a public campaign that counteracts this and promotes accurate information about mental health services.

- **Mental Health First Aid (MHFA)**: Participants supported the idea of having more Mental Health First Aiders in the community, particularly in partnership with the police.

## 8. Safer spaces and Peer Support

Safe spaces like Safe Haven on the High Street and peer mentoring programmes were positively received by participants:

- **Positive feedback on peer mentoring**: Peer mentoring programmes, such as those offered by Hope House and Street Angels, were highlighted as beneficial for individuals struggling with mental health issues. Expanding these programmes was strongly encouraged by attendees.

- **Safe Haven**: The Safe Haven service was praised as a model of support for those in crisis. Attendees suggested expanding this service to other parts of the community, ensuring people have accessible, safe spaces to seek help.

## 9. Recommendations

Based on the feedback from the engagement sessions, the following recommendations have been made for inclusion in the Slough Mental Health Strategy:

1. Implement early diagnosis programmes in schools and improve mental health support during key transitional phases, such as school-to-work transitions.
2. Develop more holistic services that address the wider determinants of mental health, including housing, employment, and financial support.
3. Enhance signposting and create a more user-friendly system for navigating mental health services, potentially through peer mentors or community navigators.
4. Establish local diagnostic services and offer alternative therapies beyond traditional approaches for individuals with autism and ADHD.
5. Improve crisis response times and develop a comprehensive aftercare plan for individuals transitioning from hospital to community services.
6. Launch public campaigns focused on mental health education, reducing stigma, and countering misinformation on social media.
7. Expand peer mentoring programmes and safe spaces, such as Safe Haven, to provide more community-based support for individuals in crisis.

*******End*******