WIRRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD MODEL PILOT: QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS

Full Report

Qualitative Insight Team, Public Health
Wirral Council

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List of figures, tables, case studies, and images

List of acronyms/Abbreviations

QIT	Qualitative Insight Team
WNM	Wirral Neighbourhood Model

Document information

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Wirral Neighbourhood Model (WNM) is a community led initiative to reduce health inequalities across Wirral, moving from focusing on ill health to promoting wellbeing. It is a collaboration between Wirral community leaders, residents, the NHS, and Local Authority to promote a bottom-up approach, driving change within individual neighbourhoods that focuses on the needs of each area.

The Wirral Neighbourhood Model Steering Group are using a phased approach to implement the WNM initially in two trailblazing neighbourhood areas:

- Birkenhead A, including areas of:
  - Bidston Hill, Birkenhead Centre, Claughton North, Claughton South and Oxton North and Noctorum North and Upton East.
- Wallasey C, including areas of:
  - Egremont, Liscard, Poulton and Seacombe.

This approach seeks to tackle health inequalities in these areas and learnings from this initial pilot will be applied across the remaining seven neighbourhoods.

The Qualitative Insight Team were asked to support the WNM Pilot through gathering the voices of residents from the Birkenhead A and Wallasey C neighbourhood areas. Data collection for this project took place over an eight-week period between October and December 2023. Researchers sought to capture residents' thoughts and experiences relating to:

- Their current health and wellbeing.
- What is important to them where they live.
- What they would like to see improved.
- How residents in these areas might start to see and experience change.

Insight was gathered through engagements with 156 people across Birkenhead A and Wallasey C neighbourhood areas. Researchers used a range of creative methods to engage with residents and encourage them to share their views and expectations.

Summary of findings

This section provides a summary of the findings from respondents across the two neighbourhood areas. Further analysis and case studies can be found in the main body of the report.

1. What did residents share about their Health and Wellbeing?

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods residents talked about their health and wellbeing in the context of both physical and mental health. Insights gathered from engagement with residents found that people have varied ways of taking control of and managing their health and wellbeing, including:

- Going on walks.
- Walking the dog.
- Visiting leisure centres to access swimming pools and gyms.
- Engaging in activities that allow them to socialise with others such as cycling groups and ramblers walks in Birkenhead Park.
- Dieting, eating in moderation.
- Gardening.
- Being a part of and maintaining good support networks with family and friends.
- Keeping busy.
- Working and having job roles that enable work/life balance and to socialise with others.

Residents shared their expectations for services to enhance, support and promote different activities that are already a part of people's lives, rather than offer new elements that will not be taken up by the residents.

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods residents also identified various challenges they experience in relation to their health and wellbeing. Residents told us that despite their best efforts to manage their health and wellbeing, people still have challenges in their everyday lives, including:

- The pressures of managing work/life balance, with multiple conflicting responsibilities including work, childcare, volunteering, and leisure activities.
- Looking after and caring for ill family members.
- Physical and mental health conditions.
- The rising cost-of-living (including inflation).
- Poor housing conditions such as experiences with damp, fungi, and mould.
- Dealing with landlords who residents perceived to not listen to or value the health of their tenants.
- Reduced ability to adequately heat their homes and having to find alternative ways to keep warm to save money.
- Not feeling safe in their local area due to gang activity, crime and drug use.

- Limited mobility, which can lead to social isolation.
- Challenging experiences when accessing health services and frustration with regards to long waiting times in securing a GP appointment.

Residents of Wallasey C generally had more positive feelings towards their health and wellbeing than the residents of Birkenhead A.

2. What is important to residents where they live?

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods residents identified a variety of things as important to them. One of the most common themes that emerged was the power of positive social networks and relationships, including:

- The importance of family relationships.
- Having good neighbours and friends to talk to.
- Having a sense of community, through community activities and attending community venues.

Residents shared their expectations for services to promote activities that foster positive social relationships and bring people together.

Other priorities identified across both neighbourhoods included:

- Living in adequate housing and having landlords who respect residents and pay attention to their concerns.
- Feeling safe in the local area. This is sometimes undermined by anti-social behaviour, unmonitored abandoned properties, drugs, gangs, and crime.
- Living in a clean environment. Seeing litter everywhere affects people's health and wellbeing.
- For their community to continue to feel like the home they have always known. There is a shared concern that with many long-standing shops and facilities closing down across the two neighbourhoods, people will no longer have adequate places to shop and congregate and the community will continue to decline.
- Having activities for different groups of people in the community. Residents perceived that in-person interactions have declined over the years and there is a need for more activities and events to be set up. There was a shared sentiment that the group most in need right now is young people.
- Being able to travel efficiently and affordably.

3. What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where residents live?

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods residents shared their concerns and suggestions for the improvement of the areas they live in. Themes emerged across both neighbourhoods that ranged from individual needs to the needs of the community, including:

- Improved health services, GPs, dentists, physiotherapists, and mental health support. Residents shared frustration with waiting times and difficulty booking medical appointments online.
- The need for clubs and activities for young people, as the most effective way to keep them out of danger and out of trouble.
- The need for safety improvement to communities, including the use of CCTV cameras, police presence, monitoring alley ways, street lighting, and the establishment of a neighbourhood watch.
- Bigger and clearer signs showing speed limits and the creation of more parking spaces.
- Improving the accessibility of existing spaces to reduce barriers for people with disabilities.
- Activities suited for specific groups of people such as older people, parents with toddlers, men, veterans, people living with disability, etc.
- A cleaner environment and improved housing conditions. Residents talked about damp in their houses, mice infestations and litter in the streets and alley ways.
- The presence of abandoned buildings and unmaintained houses. Residents suggested that out of service buildings should be used for community activities rather than being left to dilapidate further.
- Improved communication around the availability and opening hours of one-stop shop provision. Individuals told us they struggled to sometimes find support with Council tax and other issues.
- More consultation around regeneration plans, so that residents feel consulted with in advance, rather than informed of changes coming to their communities.
- Improved communication of the opportunities and services available in their local area.
- Improved communication between community leaders and the Council.
- Building the sense of community by supporting small community organisations that are just starting up and creating volunteering opportunities.

4. How would residents know if positive changes were happening in their area?

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods the responses given to this question had two strands. Firstly, residents told us the ways they receive updates about their local area. In both neighbourhoods, social media and word of mouth were most popular, and some working residents said they either don't follow updates, don't know where to look, or aren't interested. Secondly, people told us about the changes they would see, hear, or feel in their local area. These discussions centred around physical changes to the environment, changes to people's behaviour, and changes to people's mood and sense of community.

For Birkenhead A residents, an improved sense of community, connection, and safety are where most change would be noticed. Whereas for Wallasey C residents, physical changes to the environment would be most notable.

Key themes emerging from the insights include:

- Residents told us they would find out about changes in their area through a range of communication channels, including social media, word of mouth, community groups, online newspapers/ websites, email, local counsellor newsletter, consultations, leaflets and posters and print newspapers.
- Residents said that more feeling of community, connection, and neighbourliness would be most notable. Residents would like to see 'people coming together' and showing acts of kindness.
- Residents told us they would notice positive changes to their neighbourhood if they saw changes to their environment including more cleanliness, less litter, and abandoned houses being addressed.
- Residents would notice positive change if they saw a difference in people's behaviour, including less crime, drug use, anti-social behaviour, worklessness, and social isolation.
- Residents said they would notice change if there was more feeling of positivity in their community, including highlighting and celebrating success, and being proactive rather than reactive.

Project Background

The Wirral Neighbourhood Model is a community led initiative to reduce health inequalities across Wirral, moving from focusing on ill health to promoting wellbeing. It is a collaboration between Wirral community leaders, residents, the NHS, and Local Authority to promote a bottom-up approach, driving change within individual neighbourhoods that focuses on the needs of each area.

As the map in appendix 4 illustrates, there are 9 geographic neighbourhoods in the Wirral Neighbourhood Model (WNM). Wirral is piloting 2 trailblazing pilot neighbourhoods:

- Birkenhead A
    - Bidston Hill, Birkenhead Centre, Claughton North, Claughton South and Oxton North and Noctorum North and Upton East.
- Wallasey C
    - Egremont, Liscard, Poulton and Seacombe.

The overall aim for the Qualitative Insight Team's (QIT) work is to support the WNM Steering Group by gathering voices of residents in a variety of different locations and settings across both areas. This report captures residents' opinions and thoughts around what is important to them in their neighbourhood and community, what they would like to see improved, and how the residents of these areas will start to see and experience these changes. Throughout this process the QIT also gathered some context insight around participants' health and explored with residents how they think potential improvements to their neighbourhoods could impact upon their health and wellbeing.

The Wirral Neighbourhood Model Steering Group are using a phased approach to implement the neighbourhood model initially to two trailblazing neighbourhood areas, Birkenhead A and Wallasey C. This approach will seek to tackle health inequalities in these areas. Using learning from the initial pilot areas the proposal would be to disseminate the approach across the remaining seven neighbourhoods. The Qualitative Insight Team were asked to support the Wirral Neighbourhood Model Pilot by gathering voices of residents in a variety of different locations and settings across two Wirral Neighbourhood Model Pilot areas, Birkenhead A and Wallasey C (see map in Appendix 4). The data collection and engagement phases of this project took place over an 8-week period between October and December 2023. Researchers sought to capture residents' thoughts and experiences around:

- Their current health and wellbeing.
- What is important to them where they live.
- What they would like to see improved.
- How residents of these areas might start to see and experience change.

Methodology

Project scoping meetings

Project scoping meetings allowed research methods to be agreed and developed in partnership with representatives of the Neighbourhood Model Steering Group. The QIT then adapted a range of methods throughout the project to meet the needs of the brief and identified engagement locations chosen within the pilot areas.

Research questions

The following four core research questions were developed, with additional prompt questions to encourage additional engagement:

1) How is your Health & Wellbeing at the moment?
2) Thinking about where you live, what is important to you?
3) What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where you live?
4) How would you see, hear, or feel positive changes in your area?

Examples of the additional prompt questions are included in Appendix 3.

Recruitment

The project was aimed at gathering the voice of residents across all age groups, ethnicities, and employment status. The QIT used ethnographic techniques to engage with residents within their own communities, local services, groups and activities. Insight was gathered from a range of different settings where people live and go about their daily lives. Using a range of engagement methods ensured that a diverse and wide-ranging pool of people were recruited and engaged with for this project. In addition, an information leaflet was created to encourage residents to provide their feedback (See Appendix 5). Recruitment was supported by a range of organisations and community groups who support people living or accessing services in the Birkenhead A and Wallasey C neighbourhood areas. This included leisure services, youth groups, community centres, local activity groups and support groups. Working with organisations and community groups enhanced the recruitment for this project and meant that the QIT was able to engage with a wider range of residents. The trusted role of community organisations within neighbourhoods was key to supporting introductory research conversations with residents who may have felt apprehensive to engage with a research team.

Engagement Methods

A total of 156 residents were engaged with during this project. Researchers used a range of creative methods to engage with residents and encourage them to share and record their views. These included research grids, activity sheets, post-it note boards, focus groups, friendship interviews, informal conversations and 'walk and talk' sessions (See examples of engagement methods in Appendix 6).

The main method of data collection, door-knocking, involved engaging with residents in Birkenhead A and Wallasey C neighbourhoods on their doorstep, enabling face-to-face discussions where they live, about the area they live in. This method was supported by the Community Connectors at Involve Northwest, a non-profit

organisation based in Wirral, who offer a wide range of services to help improve quality of life for local individuals and families. This method was supplemented by discussions at community engagements, involving researchers setting up stands in public venues within the two neighbourhoods, attending community events, organisations, support and activity groups.

Data analysis

Resident responses were organised into two groups:

- Residents who live in the Birkenhead A neighbourhood
- Residents who live in the Wallasey C neighbourhood

Resident responses were then analysed using thematic analysis, in which researchers identify common themes, topics, ideas and patterns in the insight shared by residents.

Participant Demographics

The following section provides a breakdown of participant demographics:

Residents engaged with	Number of respondents
Birkenhead A Resident	51
Wallasey C Resident	30
Non – Resident	75
Total	**156**

Table 1: Resident and non-resident engagement figures.

Age category	Number of respondents
Young person (6 – 19)	25
20 - 29	8
30 - 39	28
40 - 49	13
50 - 59	16
60 - 69	30
70 - 79	20
80+	12
Age not disclosed	4
Total	**156**

Table 2: Resident age category

Residents engaged with	Number of respondents
Female	89
Male	48
Transgender or Non-Binary	1
Gender not disclosed	3
Gender not captured*	15
Total	**156**

Table 3: Resident gender

*Resident gender was not captured on young people between the ages of 6 and 12 years.

Pilot Findings

Question 1: How is your Health & Wellbeing at the moment?

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods', residents discussed varied elements about their physical and mental health, including perceived causes of ill health such as poor housing conditions, limited mobility, social isolation, and the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis. They also talked about how they manage their health and keep well in their daily working and social lives, including experiences accessing health and community services.

Insights from Birkenhead A

Health and work

Residents in Birkenhead A discussed how they felt about their health in relation to work and their occupations. Several people told us they felt positive about the jobs they have and how this contributes to positive mental wellbeing. A teacher we spoke to told us her job at a local school where she works with young people helps her to *'remain optimistic about life and the community' (Female, aged 40).* A young woman explained how she gets job satisfaction through talking to colleagues and regular customers. These social interactions positively support her wellbeing. Similarly, a woman, aged 22, who works as a wedding planner told us she keeps well by socialising with her customers and witnessing their happiness at events. Another woman, aged 58, explained that they have a *'stressful job'* but says this is good for her mental health and maintaining a work/life balance.

In contrast, residents also discussed the challenges they face in managing work/life balance and their multiple responsibilities including work, childcare, volunteering, and leisure activities. One parent who lives in Bidston and St. James ward discussed the challenges and pressures in negotiating work and childcare responsibilities. He explained that he has a very busy life while looking after his new-born baby during the day, and working as a delivery driver at night, which he says can be *'very tiring' (Male, aged 35)*. He also explained that his wife is experiencing pressures with being a mum to their new-born baby as she can get ill through tiredness while he is at work. Similar thoughts were expressed by residents in Birkenhead and Tranmere ward. One man, aged 46, who is a carer, explained that he feels stressed in his personal life, particularly with work and money. However, he is passionate about his hobby offering free car diagnostic services for those in his community that cannot afford them.

Job security was also raised as a concern by a woman, aged 39, which is causing her stress and anxiety. She works two jobs in banking and in a supermarket and is concerned about the future of her banking job as she is seeing physical banks close in the high street. As a result, she is upskilling herself in her banking job to minimise the chances of her job being at risk. She says she finds it difficult to balance two jobs, her volunteering, and leisure activities, including the ramblers walk she attends. These examples demonstrate that the perceived pressures of maintaining a work/life balance can negatively impact on people's mental health and wellbeing.

Several male residents highlighted the importance of resilience and how they use this to navigate their daily lives. They told us they don't always feel confident talking about their feelings and this may go unnoticed. For example, one man, aged 34, explained that he is *'always keeping busy'* as he works a lot during the week. This means that he does not *'have time to worry about a lot of things'* which suggests that he is focused on his own work and could be neglecting his own health and wellbeing.

Mental health and wellbeing

One important theme discussed by residents of Birkenhead and Tranmere and Bidston and St. James wards was feelings of negative mental health and wellbeing, including stress, anxiety, and depression. Together two women who are both unemployed shared how they felt about their negative mental wellbeing. One woman, aged 32, summarised this by explaining that *'I'm depressed'*, another woman, aged 52, explained that she also has depression and anxiety. For this woman, she is receiving medical support which is helping at the moment. However, she explained that, for her, any additional support should be one-to-one as she does not like groups. Another male, aged 33, explained that he is in receipt of benefits for his mental health conditions, including Universal Credit and PIP. Many residents told us that mental health support should be tailored to meet their needs.

Residents also discussed the causes of negative mental wellbeing. This intersected with other mental and physical health conditions they have including ADHD, diabetes, and mobility issues which can cause them to stay indoors for prolonged periods of time. Family situations could also be quite stressful for respondents. Examples of this included residents having care responsibilities for children and family members who are ill and have debilitating health conditions. Some residents find it challenging to live their own lives whilst juggling work and care responsibilities.

 Other causes of negative mental wellbeing from residents in the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward included the rising cost-of-living, inflation, crime and being a victim of crime, as well as not feeling safe as a result of drug use in the area. One person who is a delivery driver explained that they had been a victim of a robbery, causing him paranoia and making him feel *'worried all the time' (Male, aged 36)*. Consequently, he has become more aware of *'a lot of bad things happening on the streets'*. Similarly, an older respondent, aged 60 and unemployed, explained that he has depression which is exacerbated by seeing adults engaging in drug use in his local area. These examples show that addressing crime and substance use in the Birkenhead A area could help these residents feel safer, improve their mental wellbeing, and make them feel more positively about their local area.

Staying healthy and keeping well

Some residents provided short answers that did not look deeply into their health and wellbeing further but generated a positive response. This included answers such as *'I'm doing OK' (Female, aged 29)*, *'health and wellbeing is fine' (Male, aged 27)*, *'we are quiet, happy people' (Female, aged 36)* and *'I'm feeling alright, I don't have issues with my health'.(Female, aged 71).* While these indicate positive feelings about their health and wellbeing, people may have been hesitant in answering this question and may have felt it too pertinent and thus replied with a short, positive response.

In some conversations, additional prompt questions proved useful in expanding on these points, such as asking people how they manage to keep well. Responses included dieting, eating in moderation (while also exercising), walking, walking the dog, quitting smoking, and managing conditions through medication. In one engagement session at a community play centre in Bidston and St. James ward, young people aged 13 to 15 told us they keep healthy by eating less takeaways, drinking water and milk (including at school), eating fruit and vegetables, and by exercising.

Some residents explained that they need to take part in active pursuits to manage their health conditions. A husband-and-wife couple who are both retired and living in Bidston and St. James ward discussed how they manage their health conditions. The husband is aged 71, he is diabetic and suffers with stress, anxiety, and panic attacks. He is supported by GPs and hospitals and is managing his conditions with medication, food, exercise, and being able to spot triggers for his panic attacks. The female had a car accident when she was younger which damaged her back and femur. She was concerned that she would spend her life in a wheelchair, however, she has built up her strength through walking and swimming, telling us, *‘[I’ve] walked 1 mile a day my whole life’ (Female, aged 81).* Her doctor has also supported her to deal with the pain through exercising and dieting. Similarly, another retired woman, aged 81, who joined a ramblers walk says she has a *‘good outlook on life’* and does not *‘let things get [her] down’*. Keeping mobile and playing bowls throughout the year also helps a retired woman, aged 92, who lives in Oxton ward. For these residents, they feel empowered to take control of their own health, whether that is through exercising, going to the gym, taking medication, or attending activity groups.

Housing

Residents we spoke to in the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward shared their experiences of living in poor housing conditions. This included mould developing in their houses, leading the houses to feel cold and damp. Residents also discussed issues they have with landlords. One resident explained that their house is damp and *‘too cold’* (Female, aged 49) because they turn their heating off to save money. Similarly, another resident told us that the heating in their house is *‘OK’ (Female, aged 60)*, but she has to find ways of staying warm in the house, such as wearing gloves indoors. One resident raised concern about *‘fungus developing in [the] house’* however, she explained that she was *‘getting by’* with it and was maintaining their current circumstances. Alternatively, another man, aged 33, expressed concerns about his *‘house covered in mould’* while their landlord is increasing their rent by £300 per month. He was worried about the rising cost of his rent which is negatively impacting his mental health. These examples demonstrate that, alongside other causes, inadequate heating appears to be posing health risks to some residents, as well as generating fears about worsening already poor housing conditions.

Mobility and isolation

Residents in the Birkenhead and Tranmere and Bidston and St. James wards also discussed how they have limiting mobility issues, which in some cases, leads to isolation. This is the case for one retired man, aged 84, who lives at home with his partner. He is in a wheelchair and has accompanying health issues, despite this he explained that they both care for each other. His health is not good at the moment as

he had a stroke a couple of years ago, experiences memory loss, and consequently does not *'get out much'*. He told us that the Covid-19 lockdowns significantly reduced his and his partner's social contact, and he still does not see or speak to many people including *'family at the end of the road'*. The couple shared that they were concerned about contracting Covid and hesitant about Covid vaccines.

Residents also told us that physical health conditions can limit their mobility, leading to social isolation. One woman, aged 48, shared her experience with having a stoma. She has been in situations where her stoma has burst and is now worried that it could burst in public or at work, which she says would be *'embarrassing'* for her. Subsequently, she now chooses not to work and stays at home, which is making her feel socially isolated. This is exacerbated by the perception that she is not receiving adequate support from the stoma clinic, explaining that its *'been a nightmare with them'*.

Some residents told us that they do get opportunities to go out and leave the house, but there are debilitating factors that limit how far they travel. One man, aged 60 discussed his mobility issues, sharing that he is *'slow moving around'*. He said he *'potters around the house'* and will go out to walk to his GP surgery and the local Lidl supermarket. He also experiences anxiety, stress, nervousness, and lack of sleep, for which he is receiving medication. He told us it's important that any support offered helps to alleviate social isolation and is provided in a suitable location given his limited mobility.

Insights from Wallasey C

Staying healthy and keeping well

On occasion, residents in Wallasey C provided short answers that did not expand on their health and wellbeing but produced positive responses. This included *'[the] best I have ever been' (Trans Female, aged 40)*, *'everything is good' (Male, aged 40)*, *'health and wellbeing is fine' (Female, aged 33)*, and *'everything is normal and alright' (Female, aged 32)*. Some residents also explained that taking prescribed medication keeps them well.

Residents told us about a variety of activities (paid and unpaid) that keep them healthy and well. This included going to the gym, walking, walking the dog, getting outside, taking part in spiritual practices to look after their *'mind, body, and spirit'*, gardening, socialising, listening to *'happy'* music first thing in the morning, and doing arts and crafts. *'Keeping busy'* for one retired woman, aged 68, is an important way to not *'get down about things'*. The primary reason people told us they take part in such activities was to look after their mental health.

Residents also highlighted that having good support networks was also important in staying well. This included having family, friends, children, and grandchildren. For two unemployed mums in Seacombe ward, aged 36 and 37 respectively, they explained how *'running after the kids'* and looking after them helps them to keep fit. Taking part in volunteering was also discussed by a retired woman aged 70 who runs a ramblers walk. She explained that her husband has dementia and she wanted to give something back to the local community by encouraging other people to join her group. This

enables her to socialise and network with others, while getting respite from her care responsibilities.

However, some residents did share negative experiences about their health and wellbeing. A retired man, aged 82, says he is feeling *'fine'*, except for the challenges that come with age. Similar feelings were expressed by other residents, including a retired man, aged 72, who has osteoarthritis. He says he uses a walking stick to move around and described himself as *'knackered'* with *'plastic knees'*. One retired woman, also aged 72, had experienced some side effects with her Covid vaccine.

Accessible health services

Residents gave mixed responses about accessing health services and receiving treatment. One retired disabled man, aged 60, who lives in Seacombe ward held positive feelings about his physiotherapy treatment received following a hybrid hip replacement. He says he appreciates the honesty of the physiotherapist when it comes to identifying pain. However, he has had issues with previous physiotherapists as they gave him additional worries by not disclosing the knock-on effects of treatment. Another man, aged 55, who was employed full-time, explained that he sees a district nurse regularly and receives *'all the care I need for my condition'*. He had his leg amputated below the knee last year and is currently waiting for a prosthetic.

However, residents that shared challenges when accessing health services and treatment often discussed long waiting times for a GP appointment. One retired man, aged 69, explained that accessing the GP can be a *'sore point'*. His wife was on the phone to the GP surgery for an hour trying to get through to them to speak to a doctor to then be told to go to the walk-in centre. Similarly, a 38-year-old man explained that his wife has been waiting two to three weeks for a scan that was requested through their GP. They were frustrated at the long waiting time to secure and attend an appointment.

Health and work

Residents in Seacombe ward, like those in the Birkenhead A neighbourhood, explained that working benefits their mental health because it enables them to socialise and meet different people. One young man, aged 25, is employed full-time and works 60 hours a week, including day and night shifts. He told us he's struggled with his mental health in the past, but that work has been helpful, particularly having conversations with colleagues and customers. However, his long working hours do make it difficult for him to socialise with friends outside of work. When he does have free time, he likes to meet his friends and go to the pub. Similar thoughts were expressed by another man, aged 55, who is employed as a tattoo artist. He explained that working also gives him opportunities to socialise with others and meet new and regular customers.

However, work can be stressful for some residents, negatively impacting their mental health and wellbeing. One retired woman, aged 73 who lives in Liscard ward, is a volunteer and runs a community centre. She explained that she does not get much time off work and has been feeling stressed recently when applying for charity status

for her community centre. For some young families, they feel the pressures and challenges in negotiating multiple responsibilities, including work and childcare. A stay-at-home mum aged 34, who lives in Seacombe ward, explained that it can be challenging being on her own, looking after her 2 children while her husband works to support them.

Cost-of-living

Some residents in Seacombe ward told us that they were recently unemployed and were worried about the rising cost-of-living. One woman, aged 50, shared her concerns about being recently unemployed and the pressures of finding another job, and taking on multiple jobs to pay for rising bills. She explained that she saves money by reducing the number of hours the heating is on for in the house. One way she keeps warm is by *'curling up with hot water bottles'*. She also says she is finding it difficult to save for holidays because rising bills eat into her holiday savings. Being unable to pay for the rent was also a concern raised by respondents. One man, aged 34 who is unemployed and has a young child, explained that he also has caring responsibilities for his ill and disabled parents, who are currently behind on the rent due to his father being in intensive care. Such examples demonstrates that the rising cost-of-living can cause many pressures on families in the area, such as the need to find alternative employment quickly and negotiating childcare and caring responsibilities.

Question 2: What is important to you where you live?

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods' residents talked about varied aspects of their experiences living in their local area. These included physical factors such as the condition of housing, transport, infrastructure and the environment. They also talked about how where they live connects with and effects their emotional wellbeing, including elements such as feelings around safety and leisure activities. People told us what matters to them, their families, friends and community networks, and their experiences where they live.

Insights from Birkenhead A

Safety

Residents in Birkenhead A gave prominence to the safety of their Neighborhood and their homes. Having a safe neighborhood was shared as an essential foundation for their mental health, their daily activities and promoting a sense of community well-being. We heard a number of key concerns, including drug activity and anti-social behavior:

> *'There's a lot of drug dealing around here in the alleys, and in the Central Park, it goes dark and then you see them just appear 'like a shop', it's horrible for me to see as someone who's lived here 24 years' (Female, aged 29).*

> *'Drugs in the back alley sometimes, they either climb over the wall or are let in. Feels horrible to see' (Female, aged 34).*

> *'Bad behavior, mischief night was horrible here' (Female, aged 22).*

Several residents were also concerned about the effects of drugs and anti-social behaviour on young people, *'children witness [drug activity] all the time as well'*. Added to this was the perception that a lack of activities for young people may be a cause of anti-social behaviour or negative cultures, *'[Kids] have nothing to do, just on their bikes etc. and in their hoodies and balaclavas, unsettling' (Female, aged 29).*

Several improvements were suggested by residents to improve feelings of safety in their communities. Police presence appeared to be a priority in this respect; *'I'd feel safer […] with more police presence.' 'We need more visible police presence' (Male, aged 29)'.* The provision of diversionary activities for young people was also highlighted, *'[Activities] keeps kids off the street. The BB community centre is good and should be maintained and invested in continuously' (Female, aged 22)* Further, preventative safety measures were also mentioned, including, *'Better CCTV would make me feel safer with the behaviour' (Female, aged 22).*

Housing

Residents shared varied opinions about housing and living conditions in their neighbourhood, particularly regarding affordability, the impact of private landlords and their experiences over time. Several residents we spoke to emphasise the importance of the affordability of housing where they live, particularly in the current economic climate, *'the cost of renting on this street is affordable' (Female, aged 40).* However,

this was often caveated by perceived challenges, and changing communities, *'affordable housing is great but also attract all sorts of people' (Female, aged 40).* Ownership of several properties by private landlords appeared to be of some influence on living conditions, bringing subsequent change; *'private landlords took over the place, it became less habitable, drugs everywhere' (Female, aged 84).* In their opinion, this has also brought other concerning effects; *'There is a high number of houses of multiple occupancy on this street, you have houses with more than 10 people', 'the street is overcrowded […] which promotes anti-social behaviour' (Female, aged 40).* Overall, residents expressed concerns about the habitability of some spaces, their management of these spaces and the broader impact of these changes on the community.

Residents also told us that having access to housing which is practically tailored to the needs of everyone can be difficult, as one individual explained, *'[I need] comfortable housing. At my age I won't always be able to climb 48 stairs to get to my flat on the third floor' (Female, aged 69).* Another asserted the value of local authority assisted living over renting in the private sector or prohibitively expensive adaptations in privately-owned homes, *'Here, [we have] alarm systems, buzzers, and alarm necklaces which can be of use in health emergencies' (Female, aged 79).*

Environment

Residents told us about the importance of green spaces and the need for a *'clean environment'* with focused improvement within their neighbourhoods. Amongst some people we spoke to there was a real desire for bringing nature into a predominantly urban environment in order to improve mental health, *'We'd like more communal areas. Parks.', (Female, aged 64).*

Residents shared particular observations and concerns about litter and household waste where they live. One man shared his thoughts on moving to the area, *'[We] moved into our house over a year ago. There was a heap of rubbish behind the house when we first moved in. The council cleaned it and I appreciated that' (Female, aged 35).* One resident told us that he would like to see bins being emptied more regularly, pointing to an overflowing wheelie bin outside their property. Other residents told us they would like to see more community efforts to maintain their neighbourhood, *'Street cleaning needs to be improved, resident groups are inactive, except for Christmas and some other celebrations' (Male, aged 46).* Overall, residents told us they value regular maintenance, increased street cleaning services, and community efforts to maintain a clean environment where they live.

Community and Social Networks

Residents in Birkenhead A told us that community and social connections are an important part of where they live. Overall, experiences we heard ranged from positive interactions and collaborative efforts in the community, to challenges in building relationships and concerns about neighbour behaviour.

People highlighted the importance of *'having good neighbours'*, building relationships with people on their street and being involved in community activities. They also told us that consistency in this respect was important, as one resident highlighted, *'you get used to some people, but then they move on or pass away' (Female, aged 70).* Others told us that relationships take time to form into *'community spirit'* and this is often

helped along by receiving help and helping others. As two residents highlighted, *'next door helped us move a sofa in the other day'* and *'we helped put their Christmas lights up' (Female, aged 34).*

People told us that having new neighbours move in often brought new dynamics which created challenges in maintaining or establishing connections: *'We found it challenging making relationships with the new neighbours as they tend to keep to themselves' (Male, aged 34).* Similarly, moving to the area from elsewhere meant enduring time to adjust and create new relationships, *'We used to have strong relationships with our neighbours in Wallasey, so when we moved it was challenging (Male, age unknown).* Where consistency in community relationships was not found, this had the potential to create concerns or make people feel uneasy, as one resident shared, *'there are so many dodgy and suspicious people here now' (Male, aged 44)* and another resident shared, *'My neighbours are always arguing in the street and being manipulative' (Female, aged 62).*

Transport

People in Birkenhead A shared mixed opinions on public transport and infrastructure. These varied from general opinions on the availability and effectiveness of services, to the importance of maintaining infrastructure to bolster community well-being.

> *'Public transport is bad round here' (Female, aged, 39).*
>
> *'[We do have an] efficient transport system. The bus routes are great' (Male, aged 36).*

We heard that frequent, reliable, and well-positioned bus links are crucial for people to access a variety of locations, as one couple highlighted *'we don't keep to the one church, [we] attend events and volunteer across Wirral' (Male, aged 71).* One lady shared that she was dissatisfied with the bus connection to Hoylake, which puts her off going to the leisure activities she enjoys as, *'after a long day at work I don't want to get two buses'.* Another man added that efficient transport links were important for accessing community facilities because, *'bus links are important for [me] to get around. With a bus stop at the end of the road, everything is nearby' (Male, aged 60).* One older person who lives in Oxton told us that they were considering moving back to Wallasey as the *'buses around here are lacking'* and she would like to *'be closer to friends, buses, trains and shops.' (Female, aged 92).* Comments from these residents highlight that they not only value efficient public transport services within their neighbourhood, but also that their connections with other neighbourhoods are equally important to them.

Insights from Wallasey C

Community and networks

Most residents that we spoke to in Wallasey C told us that they like being part of the community. One person said*, 'Egremont is friendly, everyone knows everyone on [this] Street' (Female, aged 73).* Some people we spoke to felt well connected and know and socialise with their neighbours often, as one lady summarised, *'I regularly speak to the elderly people in my road'.* Another person mentioned, *'I've lived here for 40 years, there's good community spirit' (Female, aged 69).* Some people told us they

enjoy community volunteering, with one lady sharing *'[I] like to link up with other community organisations. This year they gave me hundreds of easter eggs to give out' (Female, aged 68).* For some, having family nearby is an important part of their community network, as one lady discussed, *'My family is important to me [living here]. I'm glad I live close to my children and grandchildren' (Female, aged 82).* Other residents agreed, telling us that having family nearby improves their social life as well; *'The whole family, we go down to the front to watch [the boats]' (Female, aged 32) […] 'We're close to the school so I can walk my daughter' (Female, aged 37).* One relatively new resident also emphasised the family-friendly nature of the area, sharing their story of moving there, *'We recently moved from London, myself, wife and three kids, and we're liking the new house/area so far. Its nice and friendly' (Male, aged 38).* This suggests that the community is seen as welcoming for families. Not everyone we spoke to feels the same way, however, as one person told us*, 'Not much community spirit in the area. People keep themselves to themselves' (Female, aged 50).* Another adding, *'[we have] a few grumpy neighbours who don't cooperate, this can make parking outside the house difficult' (Female, aged 36).* This shows that opinions about community spirit and networking in this area can vary dependent on how long an individual has lived in the area. Despite this, there's a shared interest in volunteering and giving back. One person told us they enjoy*, 'Volunteering and giving back to the community. Helping anyone who needs it' (Female, aged 73).* This shows that some residents feel it's important to contribute and support each other within the community.

Safety

Residents expressed some concerns about safety in their neighbourhood. We had discussions with several people in Wallasey C about these concerns. One resident emphasised the importance of police presence for a sense of security, saying*, 'Feeling safe, it's about police presence' (Male, aged 32).* Another resident told us that perceptions about safety can affect the way she goes about her daily life, *'Safety could be improved. If I go out, I'll go in the morning when it's light' (Female, aged 66).* Some people shared issues relating to anti-social behaviour, and where the focus for improvement should be, as one lady states, *'Tackle gangs and teenagers on bikes, start there' (Female, aged 68).* As well as talking about experiences where they live, people also told us about shared spaces, *'Get Central Park safe so people can go out and feel safe… There used to be park rangers' (Female, aged 68).* The same resident told us she's seen a noticeable rise in the presence of homelessness in Liscard, and was concerned about the effects, *'[I've] seen an increase in homeless people begging in Liscard, and they can be quite aggressive'.* She also expressed worries about drugs in Wallasey C, for example, *'Derelict areas, like the 'Hebron' (an old school car park at Edgerton Grove), they're attracting drugs'.* A number of residents highlighted concerns about drug dealing, one lady saying, *'There's a lot of drug dealing around here in the alleys, and in Central Park' (Female, age unknown).* Some residents shared positive remarks around safety initiatives such as the Knife Angel in Birkenhead, for its impact on young people and adults who participated in the initiative by surrendering weapons, *'I liked the knife angel initiative, thought it was touching to see young people and parents bringing weapons forward' (Female, aged 75).* Overall,

residents highlighted their perceptions and apprehensions about safety, suggesting tangible ways to improve safety where they live.

Environment

Residents shared a variety of thoughts about the condition of the environment where they live. Some gave positive feedback, as one resident shared, *'I enjoy the views on the prom. It is quiet here' (Female, aged 56).* However, others are concerned about issues such as litter and its effects, as one man told us, *'There is a lot of mice coming from the alleys' (Male, aged 59).* People also want things to look better, as one person shared, *'Rubbish needs to be addressed, buildings cared for, flats around here do not look good' (Female, aged 56).* Several individuals have lived in the area for a number of years and shared views on the condition of the neighbourhood and how it has changed over time, *'I've been here a long time, 10 years, it has gone downhill a bit though' (Female, aged 56).* One lady who was part of a local cleaning group 'The Wombles' spoke about the way that residents treat and care for the area, *'I've lived here for 30 years […] but I don't like some people's attitudes' (Male, aged 59).* This suggests these residents have seen some negative changes over time. Some people told us about positive efforts to clean up litter in the area, supported by local councillors, *'The green party were good at getting the Council to clean up the alleys recently… A special van came round to empty the waste from gardens, but I would like to see them do that more often' (Female, aged 58).* Residents appreciate when concerted efforts are made to make the area cleaner but told us they would like to see more proactive regular efforts to maintain cleanliness. Overall, people in Wallasey C have mixed feelings about the condition of the environment, with some liking the natural views and green spaces and others wanting it to be cleaner and look better. There's both concern and appreciation for efforts to improve the environment.

Accessible Services

Several residents told us it was important to them that local services are maintained and receive investment. One resident mentioned the closure of the library, saying that it was a significant loss for the local area, *'[I] used to go to the library to print things, but it's closed down now' (Female, aged 67).* Another resident shared, *'the loss of the library was a big hit for the local area, there's nothing for us, it's only for under 5's now' (Female, aged 67).* These residents appeared concerned and disappointed about the closure of the library, particularly its impact on people's access to resources and services. Another resident that lived close to Wallasey Town Hall told us that they've been disappointed with its condition and how it was being used, *'You've got the beautiful Wallasey town hall, but it's not being used' (Male, aged 72).*

Question 3: What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where you live?

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods it was clear that people had concerns and also suggestions for improvements for where they live and how this connects with their health and wellbeing. People talked about how they value the NHS and community health services, how they would like to see more accessible services and activities, and how we can make the already available more accessible. Communication was also important to residents, particularly disseminating knowledge and awareness of available services. Physical aspects were talked about often, including access to quality housing and good transport links, the effects of littering on the environment and how local small businesses, such as struggling shops and markets could be supported.

Insights from Birkenhead A

Accessible Health Services

Residents often told us that improved health services would enhance their health and wellbeing. Services discussed regularly included GPs, dentists, physiotherapists, and mental health support. Engagements demonstrated that there are several factors affecting how people access health services which in turn effect residents' health and wellbeing. A few issues where highlighted, with examples:

- Accessibility, *'Walking to the GP is OK as the walk is downhill. But it is difficult to walk uphill' (Unknown).*
- Availability, people told us they find it difficult to get appointments for mental health services. Some people spoke about waiting up to three months for an appointment, *'It's hard getting an appointment and then you then don't get the help you need' (Female, 79).*
- Technological limitations – booking appointments online presents barriers for others - *'How can I book anything via e-consult? I'm 84. It's not suitable' (Male, 84).*

Activities for young people

Many residents agree that there is a need for more clubs and activities for young people as the most effective way to keep them out of danger and out of trouble. Two parents talked about the need for more mixed age activities, *'We need more spaces where kids of different ages can come together, rather than being horrible to each other' (Female, 39 and Female, 34).* One young person felt that some centres have amazing facilities, but they don't encourage young people of different ages to mix.

Young people also talked about *'social development.'* People want to see more opportunities for young teens as they perceive the number of options to be limited. This perceived lack of opportunities is a gap that some residents think leads teenagers to crime and gang behaviour. However, some residents we spoke to believe that this gap offers an opportunity for intervention.

Some residents told us they feel there are not enough government funded apprenticeships for young people, *'Apprenticeships are hard to get on, even for those with high grades. So, there's no incentive to get a job' (Female, 34).* The young people we spoke to told us that they believe the number of apprenticeship opportunities should be substantially increased and promotion of these opportunities should be improved.

One lady, aged 34 told us her family had lived in the Birkenhead A neighbourhood their whole lives and shared some insights around safety for young people. She felt that young people aren't scared of the police. Instead, the police are scared of young people. She told a story of a family asking the police for help after being harassed by gangs at the park, but the police would not help due to lack of resources. She would like more police presence and tougher enforcement on gang culture as, *'You see gangs everywhere now, not just in the deprived areas'* and *'More needs to be done to tackle safety so that communities can lead more active lives'.*

Young people and families told us they are unhappy about the closure of *Sure Start* services, where parents would access advice, family nurses, and talk to other parents.

Communication

Several residents told us they feel that more work can be put into improving communications between the council, residents, and various stakeholder organisations. People we spoke to asked for information on upcoming events, available services, open community centres, as well as talking about the desire for more advertising around when Birkenhead Market Hall is open as one market trader highlighted, *'people assume we're closed.' (Male, aged 42).*

Accessibility

People with mobility challenges also communicated that they would want more services better suited for them, as one man explained:

> *'My partner and I can't get out. She is poorly. She used to be a social person, but she struggles with isolation now. I have an electric scooter that I can use but we don't go out really, just to the shops. Having places to go to would be good but we can't get out much, we would need help. Now that Covid has waned a little we're more prepared to get out and about, but there's nothing really out there for us. Knowing about support that is available is good. Now that you've told me about these places, I might be able to get their support' (Male, aged 84).*

Clean environment

Many residents shared their growing concerns with littering in Birkenhead. People communicated that they want green spaces kept clean and tidy, *'As soon as you get off the train there is rubbish everywhere. Dog poo fines are not enforced. 'Right [outside] my gate there is poo everywhere. I have to clean it up myself' (Female, aged*

69). Some residents also talked about having to put up homemade signs telling people to put their litter in the bin.

Safety

Residents often told us about the need for a safe environment to live in. Residents shared stories about how they are scared to walk in certain parts of Birkenhead at night because the lighting is poor, and it feels unsafe. These concerns seem to be growing with the start of winter where it gets dark early.

Safety was also a common theme among young people from the ages of 6-15 years. One young person told us she likes going for walks, but her mum doesn't let her go to Birkenhead Park by herself, because of concerns with safety, she remarked *'there's interesting people around there if you know what I mean' (Female, aged 13).*

When asked how they'd improve the local area, one young person felt that *'you can't have nothing nice; it just gets nicked' (Male, aged 15).* They'd had their bike stolen when they were 13 by people wearing balaclavas. They said, *'if there was more to do, people wouldn't be out doing that'.* Young people appear annoyed by fireworks going off all year round at the field by their houses, they felt it was teenagers setting them off. One young person told a story of a young girl being chased by someone trying to set a firework off at her.

Many residents told us they want to see increased police presence and responsiveness. People also suggested the installation of cameras, improved street lighting and the monitoring of alley ways. Some residents felt that the unmonitored alleys were used for drug dealing. Several residents also told us that they do not feel safe because they live close to an organisation that offers support to service users who they perceive often exhibit anti-social behaviour, including youth centres and assisted housing. While they appreciate the support being offered to those who need it, they also feel that their presence might promote anti-social behaviour in their community. Some people spoke of observing fights, verbal altercations, and other anti-social behaviour.

Road safety was also mentioned by residents. People we spoke to would like to see speed limits displayed in bold across the street, as on many occasions during the day they hear people driving extremely fast, regardless of children playing in the street.

In addition, people also remarked that they would like to see more support and education around drugs, especially for children and people in the early stages of addiction.

Communities and networks

Residents told us that being with other people is important. They felt that a lot of people in retirement housing keep to themselves and do not join in the community, despite there being activities like bingo and coffee mornings to join.

People also told us they would also like to see more opportunities to volunteer in their communities. One man who volunteers delivering food parcels commented, *'I need to*

be doing things, I don't want to sit watching TV being an old age pensioner. You need things to occupy your days and weeks.' (Male, aged 71).

We were also told that people appreciate initiatives such as Christmas hampers for the less fortunate, free fruits for children, and bringing different ethnic groups living in the same area together.

Socialisation across different ethnic and religious communities was important to some residents. Several residents highlighted that there is a sizeable Indian and Muslim community in their neighbourhood, and they felt it would be nice to integrate different cultures to promote and build relationships with one another.

Spaces for parents with toddlers

One resident talked about the impact of COVID on the toddlers play group at which they volunteer. They told us that during Covid restrictions, toddlers were used to being told they could not play with other children or toys, and mums and children would play in their own isolated spaces. Slowly they had seen children get braver but had recognised a lasting impact of the pandemic on children in the group. They told us that spaces for parents to get together is important and that open groups like the Walking Group may need more acknowledgement.

Regeneration

Residents had a shared sentiment that regeneration would not be effective and does not include enough elements to benefit the ordinary resident. *'Flatten the area and start again. All the talks of regeneration won't solve anything. It is just offices coming there is nothing for the ordinary resident' (Male, aged 36).* Young people shared that they would want regeneration to fix some of the services they use on a regular basis or used to use. One girl, aged 13, commented:

> *'Regenerate the area, like the lake opposite here…They put poison it, because something was eating the fish, so people can't go in it now. Its dirty and people pour bleach in it. We'd use it if it was clean, like some of the older kids could go jump in after [going to the youth club] in the summer'.*

Residents identified disused building in the communities such as Mosques and libraries. They felt that instead of these buildings going out of use they could be repurposed for activities designed to bring the community together. Suggestions included play centres for children and activities for young people.

Insights from Wallasey C

Communication

The subject of improved communication came up in different ways amongst discussions with residents. Firstly, people spoke about needing improved communication with politicians, councillors, and the council. Secondly, people spoke about needing more information on volunteering opportunities. And lastly, people spoke about needing more information on ongoing activities in the community in order

to be more involved. Residents would like to see more people out of their houses and socialising with others.

Tailored support

Residents identified several groups of people who would benefit from tailored support, including:

- **Men –** Residents communicated that they would want to see more activities and support tailored to men. They observed that women have community organisations and mentioned a few names, whilst men do not really appear to have much support specific to them. A shared belief that men do not speak up enough about their feelings was shared by a number of residents.
- **Veterans –** Residents highlighted the perception that veterans are supposed to have priority in the NHS because of their service to the country, however, they remarked, *'In reality it's not that way' (Male, aged 72).*
- **People living with disability –** Residents highlighted that support for disabled people needed to be targeted appropriately to meet their needs.
- **Toddlers –** Residents would like to see more clubs for children, one example given was the establishment of a 'babysitting club'.
  Teenagers – There was a strong perception amongst residents that there are not enough services and activities for young people. Suggestions offered included, *'a civic centre with games for kids, instead of families having to go outside the area' (Female, aged 67).*

Regeneration

Similar to residents engaged with in Birkenhead A, residents of Wallasey C who engaged with researchers feel that more consultation is needed with regards to regeneration plans. The most common theme shared was ensuring that new build areas have doctors, pubs, and police stations, as some residents felt that are *'No services to go with the new builds' (Male, aged 72).*

Funding and support for small charity organisations

Three residents who spoke to researchers through a focus group shared their expectations and needs with regards to funding for small organisations. They spoke of the gaps they had identified in their community that they would be able to support with. They identified issues such as people needing inviting places with food provision, and affordable spaces for community group sessions. Focus group members also told us that they need to gain their charity status so they can apply for more funding, which in turn will help them support more people with social supermarkets and related activities. They highlighted that they have been going through the charity application process for three years, they need training opportunities on applying for grants, and they struggle to find the time and resources to find and apply for funding. They shared that they need a bigger vehicle for buying their social supermarket food. They also shared that they shop around for bargains and buy in about 50% of their food, which can mean that they don't make much profit, but they do reinvest what profit they make into the supermarket. As one resident shared, *'We can't be picky about what food*

donations we accept, but some people are sceptical about foreign brands. They're used to fresh food' (Female, aged 73).

Improved services

Resident in Wallasey C also expressed concerns with regards to different areas of their lives they would want improved. Several themes emerged from different groups of people including:

- Community groups and spaces.
- Need easier access to doctors, nurses, and police.
- More trained staff in mental health, like suicide awareness
- More activities and groups to get people involved in the community.
- Can be a mental battle when applying for disability benefits. Gym memberships need to be more affordable for those unemployed.
- Some people have found it a challenge to get support with council tax and other issues.
- Shared belief that face-to-face contact is important in the community.
- Uneven pavements. Water splashes up when delivery drivers park half on the road, and half on the pavement.
- Cleaner environment.
- Free parking spaces at the city centre. Current fees discourage going there.
- Would like a big supermarket nearby so he wouldn't have to drive the family to the supermarket.
- More pharmacies in the local area - there is only one.
- Access to the alleyways from residents from the front gates, give us keys for them. Then things can be better managed, and we can make better use of the space i.e., for storage of bicycles etc.
- There should be a neighbourhood watch.

Question 4: How would you see, hear, or feel positive changes in your area?

Across the two trailblazer neighbourhoods, people talked about two key elements. Firstly, how they receive updates about their local area. In both neighbourhoods, social media and word of mouth were most popular, with some working residents sharing that they either do not follow updates, do not know where to look, or are not interested. Secondly, people talked about how they would feel or see changes happening in their local area. These discussions centred around physical changes to the environment, changes to people's behaviour, people's mood and their sense of community. For most residents, an improved sense of community, connection, safety and environmental changes are where most change would be noticed.

Insights from Birkenhead A

Receiving updates

Birkenhead A residents told us they were most likely to find out about changes in their area through several mediums, including, social media, word of mouth, community groups, online newspapers, websites, and local newsletters. The most popular response was social media, with many references to community Facebook groups. In Gautby Road, residents would like to see more neighbours engage with the street's Facebook group, as there was a feeling that one side of the street is more insular and *'seem less connected' (Female, aged 29)*. Word of mouth was the second most common, which included family, friends, and neighbours.

Some working residents told us they either do not follow updates or are not interested in hearing about changes. As one man, aged 33, explained, *'I don't really keep up with anything, doubt I will start now'.* Retired residents aged 71-92 said they prefer in-person or print updates, such as society or church meetings, and councillor newsletters. One man, aged 84, said he does not go out much or see people because of his health and memory, adding, *'people would have to come to us'.*

Community and networks

When asked how they would see, hear, or feel positive change, Birkenhead A residents told us that more feeling of community, connection, and neighbourliness would be most notable. Residents would like to see *'people coming together'* and showing acts of kindness. Some residents talked about getting the community feeling back, but there was some pessimism and uncertainty about achieving it, *'If we all got together, we could see a future in the community. But that won't happen in the world we're living in now' (Female, aged 62).* Some Birkenhead A residents shared that they would notice change if there was more positivity. For example, a 13-year-old told us they would like *'more fun'* and one female, aged 39, said she would like to see *'less depression in people'.*

Experiencing change

Birkenhead A residents told us they would notice positive changes to their neighbourhood if they saw improvements to their environment, including more cleanliness, less litter, and abandoned houses being addressed. Talking about the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward, one male resident, aged 46 said, *'All development*

starts at Hamilton Square and stops there. I don't see any investment here in this area. This part needs wise regeneration too.'

Young residents aged 13-17 shared that they would also notice change if litter and fly tipping were addressed. For example, one young person aged 13 said: *'Regenerate the area, like the lake opposite here…It's dirty and people pour bleach in it…. We'd use it if it was clean'.* In addition, they would notice if there were more youth clubs and mixed-aged spaces/activities, as well as increased funding for resources and re-decoration of their youth centre.

Birkenhead A residents also told us they would notice positive change if they saw a difference in people's behaviour, including less crime, drug use, anti-social behaviour, worklessness, and social isolation. Residents would feel safer if they saw less *'gangs'* and *'kids messing about'* and they would not have to avoid socialising or walking alone in places they expect to find intimidating behaviour, examples included, Birkenhead Central Park, the beach during summer, and restaurants.

Some Birkenhead A residents felt that giving young people more to do in their free time would help encourage behavioural changes. Others felt there should be better communication with young people and a change in attitude towards them, *'People think the kids around here are all feral but they're not' (Female, aged 32).* Young people themselves felt that having more mixed-aged youth centres would address boredom, isolation and bullying, *'We need more spaces where kids of different ages can come together, rather than being horrible to each other' (Female, aged 13).* Young people said they would notice positive change if fewer young people were inactive. Some residents felt the same way about older people, saying it's important to *'encourage them not to hibernate in their flats'* (Female, 92)

Some residents were pessimistic about seeing positive changes to people's behaviour, *'you can't have nothing nice; it just gets nicked' (Male, aged 15).* Likewise, a 36-year-old male said, *'You can fix the place and the houses, but the people remain the same, how do we fix people?'.*

Insights from Wallasey C

Receiving updates

Wallasey C residents told us they would find out about changes in their local area through several mediums including, word of mouth, social media, newspapers, schools, community groups and leaflets. The most popular medium was word of mouth, including *'chit chat'* with neighbours, family, and colleagues. Social media was the second most common response, with Wallasey C residents engaging with the 'Voice of Egremont', 'Wallasey Gossip' and veteran Facebook groups. One resident said: *'The [Facebook] group is alright but it's mostly just people moaning about their problems. It would be great if there was some sort of controlled communication system' (Female, aged 32).*

Wallasey C residents who worked shared that they experience barriers to hearing updates, including not knowing where to look, being too busy, keeping to themselves, and being new to the area and not yet having connections.

Some people felt that digitalisation is hindering communication and community spirit, such as the closure of MP surgeries, town hall meetings, and the 'One-Stop shop' at Wallasey Town Hall. One resident explained, *'People have no idea who their local MP is. MPs used to have surgeries where you could go talk to them in person. Town hall meetings have gone now' (Male, aged 72).*

Experiencing change

When asked how they would see, hear, or feel positive change, Wallasey C residents told us that changes to their physical environment would be most noticeable. Residents gave examples of changes they would see, including: a cleaner environment, fewer empty buildings and shops, more pharmacies, more trees, more police presence, more mental health services, and improvements made to Birkenhead Park to ensure it receives World Heritage status. Residents told us they would notice more investment in the area. However, some mentioned the importance of investing in the right elements, such as activities for young people and ensuring that new build areas have the infrastructure and services that people need:

> *'In the past, the council used to spend money on libraries, cleaning the street and activities for young people. Now they spend money on things that no one needs like the cycle paths. No one needs those!' (Female, aged 83).*

> *'It's what you see. I've lived here for a long time, and it's definitely got worse and in decline. I would like to see it go in a positive direction, more investment in the place' (Female, aged 56).*

> *'Seeing more people drawn into the area if improvements were made. People would visit here more' (Female, aged 34).*

Some Wallasey C residents said they would notice positive change by seeing a difference in people's behaviour: *'I'd see it happening - see people putting in the effort' (Female, aged 18)*. Around the topic of littering, residents would notice neighbours having more respect and *'pride in where they live'*, with one resident suggested *'educating school children about recycling throughout the area" (Female, aged 76)*.

Positivity and community

Wallasey C residents said they would notice change if there was more feeling of positivity in their neighbourhood, including, *'Being proactive not reactive. More focus on positivity, highlighting and celebrating success' (Trans female, aged 40)*. Although some residents felt there is a close-knit community, a few residents explained that community spirit can be difficult to encourage, *'It is difficult to drum up community spirit, given that people keep themselves to themselves a lot' (Female, aged 50).* Similar to Birkenhead A, some Wallasey C residents told us they would notice a shift in their neighbour's moods and outlook, *'People aren't as neighbourly, and they can be moody. So, seeing people's moods improving' (Female, aged 72).*

Some residents felt that changes to the environment and the way information is communicated would help revitalise community spirit and encourage social interaction, such as more open shops and townhall meetings.

Case Studies

The following section provides four case studies of residents who live in either Birkenhead A or Wallasey C neighbourhoods. The case study gives a more in-depth understanding of each individuals' current health and wellbeing, what is important to them where they live, what could be improved, and how they would notice change in their neighbourhood. Each individual has been assigned a pseudonym to protect their privacy and identity.

Case Study 1: Peter
Peter is 36 years old, employed, and lives in the Birkenhead A neighbourhood (Birkenhead and Tranmere ward). He works as a delivery man and he says he feels *'drained, overwhelmed, and disappointed'*. He owned a business in Birkenhead prior to the Covid pandemic in 2020, which he had to close because he found it was unsustainable to run.

How is your health and wellbeing at the moment?

Peter explains that as he travels around quite a lot as a delivery man. He *'sees a lot of bad things happening in the streets'* which he says has affected his mental health. These feelings are also as a result of him being a victim of crime which has made him paranoid and worried on a regular basis.

Thinking about you and where you live, what is important to you?

Peter says that the only positive thing to mention is an efficient public transport system. He says the bus routes are great.

What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where you live?

Peter sees shops closing every day in Birkenhead and that his *'neighbourhood offers very little to celebrate'*. He explained that it *'sucks'* having to travel to Liverpool, Bromborough, or Chester for shopping as *'there is nothing around here!'*. Peter is also in a WhatsApp group chat with his work colleagues, and they have said that Birkenhead *'is always seen as a cliché, it's a joke!'*.
Peter expressed his frustration and felt despondent about regeneration in Birkenhead. He says that it *'won't solve anything'* and that they should just *'flatten the area and start again'*. He's concerned that the regeneration efforts will not benefit him as an *'ordinary resident'*. He also holds the view that the regeneration plans will just consist of new offices.

How would you hear about, see, or feel that there were positive changes in your area?

Peter was concerned that the regeneration efforts in Birkenhead would not help to change people's behaviours. He explained that *'you can fix the place and the houses, but the people remain the same, [but] how do we fix people?'*

Case Study 2: Gordon

Gordon is 72 and lives in the Wallasey C neighbourhood (Seacombe ward). He is a retired veteran, having left the military in the nineties. Gordon has a military disability pension. He attends a breakfast morning for veterans where he meets with like-minded people and has a laugh.

How is your health and wellbeing at the moment?

Gordon has osteoarthritis and uses a walking stick. He referred to himself as *'knackered'* and as having *'plastic knees'.* To keep well Gordon walks along the prom every morning.

Thinking about you and where you live, what is important to you?

For Gordon, *'looking after veterans is the most important'.* Second, it's important that his local area is used to its best potential. Areas in Wallasey like King Street are *'derelict, it's terrible'* and *'you've got the beautiful Wallasey town hall, but it's not being used'.*

Gordon likes that there is *'self-policing'* of littering on the prom... *'People call each other out for dog fouling'.*

Knowing what's going on in his area is important to him, as well as having forums to raise his thoughts and concerns.

What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where you live?

To improve health outcomes for veterans, Gordon says it's important that veterans receive the priority access to NHS healthcare they are entitled to. He says, *'in reality, it's not that way'.*

Gordon thinks that new build areas need to have better infrastructure, including doctors, pubs, and police stations, *'There's no services to go with the new builds'.* He thinks this will improve the quality of wellbeing and community in the area.

How would you hear about, see, or feel that there were positive changes in your area?

Gordon would like more in-person communication of changes happening in the local area. He feels that over the years, there has become fewer opportunities to have two-way conversations, particularly with services such as townhall meetings, MP surgeries and one-stop shops. He finds it difficult to make contact with public services and council representatives. In-person forums would help him feel a better sense of community, while also offering the opportunity to revive local assets like the Wallasey Town Hall.

Gordon would notice positive change if there was more support for veterans and a shift in attitude towards them on a local level, *'it boils down to a local level, local government'.*

Case Study 3: Sally

Sally is 62 and lives in the Birkenhead A neighbourhood (Bidston and St James ward). She is unable to work due to having the lung condition Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).

How is your health and wellbeing at the moment?

Sally's lung condition is improving. She says she is *'getting there now'* but it is still up and down. She's had anxiety in the past due to trauma, but it's getting better, and she looks after herself.

Sally has two sisters who are ill at the moment. She feels *'in the middle'* and said, *'that's a lot of pressure on me'.*

Thinking about you and where you live, what is important to you?

Having respectful neighbours is most important to Sally. Her neighbours are *'always arguing in the street'* and she feels that young people in the community do not respect each other. Sally has contacted the local housing association about her neighbour's behaviour. They said to keep a note of everything that happens, but Sally said, *'I'd be filling notebooks all the time'.*

What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where you live?

Sally would like to see more CCTV in the street for safety. She said, *'I've bought a Ring doorbell and I'm waiting for that to arrive so that I feel safe. Better CCTV would make me feel safer with the neighbours' behaviour'.*

Sally also thinks that young people, especially teenagers, need more to do. She says they have lost out on local community spaces, *'The community house near us used to have more space for activities, but it's now just a room for donations…There's nowhere for the kids to go unless there's a party on the street'.*

How would you hear about, see, or feel that there were positive changes in your area?

Sally wants to see the community come together, but she is sceptical, *'If we all got together, we could see a future in the community. But that won't happen in the world we're living in now. Kids taking weapons to primary school and into shops, you wouldn't think that stuff would happen now, but it does'.*

Case Study 4: Tony

Tony is 55 and lives in the Wallasey C neighbourhood (Seacombe ward). He works full time in a creative industry, and he is a father to two young children.

How is your health and wellbeing at the moment?

Tony said he is *"less able than most"* because he had an amputation surgery recently and is waiting for a prosthetic. He said, *'I don't consider myself disabled. I'm pretty decent in my general health otherwise'.* Tony sees a district nurse often and receives all the care he needs for his condition.

Tony's job keeps him well, especially the social nature of his work, and he looks forward to spending time with his children.

Thinking about you and where you live, what is important to you?

Tony has lived in the area for about three years and does not have any major problems. However, cleanliness is important to Tony. He says there are a lot of mice coming from the alleyways, which just reflects the condition of them. He sees rubbish and waste, like sofas, that do not get cleared and spill over into front yards.

What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where you live?

Personally, Tony would like support with his bins due to his mobility. Tony made an application for someone to help him with his bins three months ago, but he has not had a response.

Tony would like residents to have access to the alleyways so they can be better managed. Residents could make better use of the alleys, for example storage for bicycles when Tony's friends visit.

How would you hear about, see, or feel that there were positive changes in your area?

Tony shared, *"I have a large social network and a job which keeps me well informed".*

Pilot Opportunities and Recommendations

Throughout this pilot project residents have highlighted a number of areas of importance in relation to their health and wellbeing, what is important to them where they live, what can be done to improve health and wellbeing, and how they would recognise positive change. This bottom-up approach to the provision of insights within two trailblazer neighbourhoods, Birkenhead A and Wallasey C, is part of a wider project which can drive change within individual neighbourhoods by focusing on the needs of each area. Subsequently, learnings from this initial pilot can be considered across the remaining seven neighbourhoods within the Wirral Neighbourhood Model.

- **Engage with residents and neighbourhoods using varied engagement methods.** Residents told us that the best way to engage with them is the method that is most appropriate for the individual. In this WNM pilot project, using a variety of engagement methods enabled the Qualitative Insight Team to engage with residents in accessible ways that best suited the individual, enabling engagement with a wide and diverse sample of residents.

- **Engage with residents and neighbourhoods using varied engagement settings.** Working with trusted community organisations, the combination of door-knocking, engaging in community settings, activity groups and services greatly enhanced the range of insight captured within the two trailblazer neighbourhoods. We found that people talked most openly and topically within the places they live and visit in their daily lives. Engaging with people on their doorstep led to rich, detailed insights through face-to-face discussions where they live, about the area they live in. Engaging with residents in community settings led to a diverse range of views about the organisations and services people use in their daily lives.

- **Tailor services to meet the needs of each individual.** Residents told us that receiving and accessing tailored services is an important part of managing and improving their health and wellbeing. We heard that people are more likely to access, make use and maintain use of services and facilities that are designed, communicated, and delivered in this way. People told us that access to opportunity can be stifled by availability, efficiency, proximity, affordability, poor communications, and lack of trust. Whether accessing exercise opportunities, mental health support, health services, housing, or information, advice and guidance, many individuals shared that services work best for them when they are mainly focused on meeting *their* individual needs.

- **Focus on homes and families.** Many residents from different neighbourhoods, settings and backgrounds told us that homes and families, community, and networks where an important foundation of their health and wellbeing. We heard that without achieving the basics of quality, safe, affordable, and comfortable housing, or building and maintaining meaningful social relationships, they were simply surviving and not thriving. People told us that any focus on supporting the individual and managing and improving their health and wellbeing needs to start where they live, physically and emotionally.

- **Focus on Early intervention and Prevention.** Residents told us that keeping active and being supported to maintain a physical foundation of mobility is key to living their daily lives and managing and improving their health and wellbeing. This was particularly prominent for older people and people with long term conditions. We heard that stability in people's environment is crucial to preventing social isolation and focus should be put on important places that are at the heart of the community, such as markets, shops, activities and services near where people live. Many residents told us that there is a need for adequate services for young people. This would help to prevent missed opportunities for education, socialisation, and steering young people away from the perceived dangers of gangs, drugs, and anti-social behaviour.

- **The importance of supporting work/life balance.** Many residents told us they spend the majority of their lives in or seeking employment, education, or volunteering. People told us that having meaningful pursuits and maintaining a flexible work/life balance was important to managing and improving their health and wellbeing. We heard that having work environments that acknowledge and support people's lives outside of employment, education, and volunteering, such as care responsibilities, social activities, and physical exercise benefits residents physical and mental health.

- **Use of the Qualitative Insight Toolkit for future Wirral Neighbourhood Model engagements.** The toolkit was developed to encourage and support insight gathering and sharing across Wirral. The toolkit is designed for a range of audiences, including those who are new to gathering qualitative insight and those who gather resident insight regularly as part of their day-to-day work. The Qualitative Insight Team can support future WNM partners with access to the toolkit to share best practice when gathering community voice, and improve community and organisation learning, skills and development.

- **Increase opportunities for partnership working.** Residents highlighted their experiences of gaps between services. These included gaps in communication, signposting and customer and patient experience. Working more closely together will help to build on the strengths of WNM partners and stakeholders and expand community reach to gather future insight and build trust in communities. People told us that filling the gaps between services and organisations will not only improve provision but will strengthen connections with residents. These are the people who have diverse experiences and perspectives of their communities, who can improve knowledge and understanding of communities and inform future WNM engagement projects.

- **Continue to listen to and work with residents.** Residents told us they have the strongest grass-roots understanding of their neighbourhood area and live and breathe it within their daily lives. Residents are connected to their communities and networks and can provide valuable insight to inform the development of the Wirral Neighbourhood Model, now and in the future.

Contact details.

Contact

For further details, or to give us feedback please contact:
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About us

Qualitative Insight is a type of research that speaks to people to gather their thoughts, experiences, and ideas on particular subjects. The Qualitative Insight Team at Wirral Council work with residents to ensure that their voices are heard when informing council policy and decision making. The team supports the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing strategy, in which residents' voices are a key strand.

Appendix 1: Non – Resident Insight

The insights below were captured from respondents at community locations within the two trailblazer Neighbourhoods. Respondents in this section either lived in geographical wards within Wirral that were outside of the boundaries of the two trailblazer Neighbourhoods, or they did not provide their postcode demographic information.

Question 1: How is your Health & Wellbeing at the moment?

Birkenhead A (non-residents)

Accessing Health Services

Respondents gave mixed responses when talking about accessing GP and hospital appointments, and other NHS services. While some respondents felt supported by their GP and hospitals, others found it difficult to get a GP appointment. One semi-retired woman who lives in Bromborough described issues with her surgeries E-Consult service. She told us it *'throws me out'* and does not allow her to make an appointment. For her, it is an endless cycle where she rings the surgery and is then referred back to E-Consult to make an appointment. This shows that E-Consult services pose accessibility challenges for this resident who requires human contact (in-person and over the telephone) when communicating with GP surgeries.

Respondents also told us they are frustrated about long waiting lists for hospital appointments. One lady, aged 69 who lives in Prenton, shared her story of falling at Liverpool Cathedral two years ago and consequently she has experienced issues with her legs ever since. She explained that she was continuously being kept on the waiting list and has received text messages asking *'if she'd been seen yet'* and *'if she'd still like her neurology appointment'*, which she says has knocked her confidence. Similarly, another retired man expressed his frustration at waiting for a physiotherapy appointment on the NHS. He recently injured his back and is suffering with sciatica which means he is unable to walk far, or exercise how he would like. Due to the long wait, he ended up going private and spending £50-£75 per session, which he says has helped but it is too expensive to repeat. This demonstrates the importance of the NHS for these residents but also raises concerns about the impact of long waiting lists and the long-term cost of private healthcare.

Some respondents expressed frustration about treatment with NHS services. One retired lady, aged 68 who lives in Oxton, shared her frustration waiting for an operation since 2019. She told us her health is *'bad'* due to this and it is compounding other health issues. Doctors said her fractured hip is *'just arthritis'* and she does not feel listened to. She has been told that due to a recent blood clot she must wait another six months to be seen by a consultant about her hip. This has *'knocked [her] confidence in the NHS'*. She also shared that her husband was given the 'all clear' from doctors for cancer but it returned, and sadly he passed away.

Another respondent expressed similar feelings about mental health services. This woman, aged 36, who is currently unemployed and lives in Upton ward told us there

were no beds available in Wirral for her mental health episode. Instead, she was admitted to a hospital in Macclesfield but had to discharge herself early as she was concerned about losing her flat.

Managing health and keeping well

Respondents told us that socialising and developing support networks helps them to manage their health and keep well. One man, aged 47, living in Leasowe and Moreton East ward told us his *'health and wellbeing are good, mainly because I have a good support network of family and friends'*.

Respondents told us they could be more sociable by attending groups and activities, encouraging socialising with others through exercise. One unemployed man, aged 40, who lives in the Hoylake and Meols ward told us he has felt more sociable since joining a cycling group in Birkenhead Central Park. Through this he also makes connections with health services such as dentists and GPs.

Work and health

Respondents told us that work can negatively impacted on their health and wellbeing. One retired man, age unknown, who attends Bidston Sport and Activity Centre felt that his previous job induced stress and caused high blood pressure, which has persisted into retirement. He is monitoring his blood pressure and says he will be taking tablets for the rest of his life. Another resident told us their job involves *'generally moving around'* which makes them *'feel good'* and that they were not getting *'stressed over things'*. However, they also explained that they were feeling tired and needing some time off from work. This shows that for these residents it is important to keep active while balancing their work commitments. However, poor working conditions can cause stress and anxiety.

Some residents are unable to work full-time due to their disabilities and health conditions. One disabled woman, aged 57, who lives in Moreton West and Saughall Massie ward told us she is unable to work because of spinal issues. She also has diagnosed PTSD and her children all have different symptoms of ADHD, which she says is *'a lot to juggle'*. However, she does volunteer part-time which for her is more flexible as she says she can call in sick if she is feeling unwell. She also told us that one of her children, aged 20, has a job that involves working from home which has improved their health. Their child experiences anxiety and panic attacks and is being assessed for rheumatoid arthritis. Yet, because of their work shifts, they are unable to go trampolining. This raises a wider point about supporting employers to put in place and make reasonable adjustments for their employees to support their health and wellbeing needs.

Wallasey C (non-residents)

Managing health and keeping well

Several respondents gave positive feelings about their health and wellbeing including *'pretty good', 'amazing', 'reasonably OK',* and *'as fit as a butcher's dog',* but did not expand further on their feedback. Some respondents provided good feedback on cancer care, *'I am getting good treatment… [I have] a positive outlook… [I am] doing really well'.*

Several older respondents told us about their health conditions, including:

- High blood pressure and a blood defect that caused arthritis.
- Issues with joints such as hips, knees, and ankles.
- In recovery from heart attack.
- Diabetes.
- Anxiety.

A male veteran, aged 66, told us he has a range of physical and mental health issues including back and knee pain and diagnosed PTSD. He says he has come to terms with his PTSD explaining, *'you make light of it, you're living with it'.* Though he still has concerns, he has taken more control of his health by attending counselling to develop coping mechanisms.

Respondents visiting Guinea Gap Leisure Centre told us that attending the gym, swimming, and exercise classes helps them to keep healthy and manage their health conditions. One man aged 73 from Wallasey told us swimming helps with his arthritis and joint pain. Similarly, a retired woman aged 73, visiting Europa Pools attends aqua-aerobics classes as they are *'beneficial'* for her health and wellbeing. A respondent aged 63 from Pensby told us that visiting the leisure centre helps them *'get better'* from a broken wrist and shin splints and provides some respite from worrying about issues with her son. For respondents with long-term health conditions, having a local leisure centre that is accessible is important to empower them to improve their health and wellbeing.

Question 2: What is important to you?

Birkenhead A (non-residents)

Physical Activities

Respondents shared that tailored accessible exercise is an important foundation of health and wellbeing. One person shared the need for *'Pavements in a good condition for wheelchair use'* underlining the importance of inclusivity. Another individual told us they value *'access to assisted bikes'* praising their ease of use and accessibility. A range of activities including football events, cycling, walking, and running were popular amongst the people we spoke to.

Community and networks

Having a strong sense of community and family/friend networks was important to the non-residents we spoke to in community settings. People stressed the significance of having varied engagement, volunteering, and political involvement in their lives. One person telling us, *'Having a wide network of friends is important'* emphasising that their family has friends from groups and events all across Wirral, not just in their neighbourhood. Another person discussed the role of work and volunteering in maintaining good mental health stating, *'Volunteering - giving something back, keeps [me] busy'*. Non- residents also told us they want to see local community assets and spaces preserved. They stressed the need for varied facilities in these areas to maintain a sense of community for people and their families,

> *'Creativity around music facilities and creating a community around it.'* […] *'Community and community spaces are so important'.(Trans Female, aged 40)*

> *'Safe places for children to play [such as] Beechwood Play and Community Centre'. (Male, age unknown)*

> *'I often stay with my six-year-old granddaughter. We are always going to different places - playing centres and activities nearby for children are important to us, like museums' (Male, aged 68).*

Others expressed concerns about empty shops, emphasizing the role of these spaces in maintaining community connections. One individual had strong feelings on this issue, *'Birkenhead shopping area needs improving. [It] is getting worse and worse and worse'*.

Feeling Safe

Respondents expressed the importance of safety but also shared some concerns. Several people at numerous locations expressed unease about walking along unlit streets in the area and perceived threats related to anti-social behaviour. One individual told us they were concerned by *'seeing hoodies and "ninjas" on bikes, it's worrying, almost running people over'*. The desire for visible police presence was a

recurring theme, which we were told could improve peoples' feelings of safety and allow them to go about their daily lives more confidently.

Wallasey C (non-residents)

Physical Activities

Non-residents told us that physical exercise and quality leisure facilities were important to them. A number of individuals told us they value the local swimming pool and that it should be maintained alongside other leisure facilities as an asset to the community, as one lady summarised, *'Swimming, sauna, the gym all very important to my health and well-being.'* A number of people we spoke to would like to see improvements, sharing the need for a larger more well-equipped gym and addressing concerns about comfort when exercising:

> *'We need a wider range of facilities and equipment in the gym or more local availability elsewhere. The gym [at Guinea Gap Leisure Centre] could be larger'.*

> *'[There is a] lack of air conditioning in the gym. When lots of people are in there and it's hot and people are waiting for the machines, wiping the machines down, there is a lack of air, it can be uncomfortable'.*

Feeling Safe

Safety was a central theme in Wallasey C for non-residents, who emphasised the importance of community support, good neighbours, and connection in feeling safe. Specific concerns about anti-social behaviour and safety in Liscard were clear, and individuals shared how this can affect the way they go about their daily lives:

> *'Liscard can be very scary and can draw in the wrong kind of people'.*

> *'She'll only go [to Liscard] in the morning when it's light'.*

> *'I used to jog around Central Park [Liscard] but wouldn't even walk there now due to safety concerns'.*

One non–resident also reflected on their changing perception of the area as, *'Liscard used to be beautiful'*. Concerns about the changing nature of the area was also shared by several older people we spoke to in the community.

Green spaces

Non-residents expressed a deep appreciation for their proximity to rivers, beaches, and promenades in Wallasey and across the Wirral. They value these spaces for walking and other outdoor activities and seemed to have a strong connection to them and a desire to protect and maintain them. Some residents also expressed a real opposition to any construction happening on the local green belt.

Question 3: What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where you live?

Birkenhead A (non-residents)

Accessibility

Pavements where an area of concern from conversation in community settings in Birkenhead A. Several people told us that pavements can be uneven and need upgrading in places. This can be a challenge for walking, particularly for people who have been told to exercise more by the GP. One person shared how they must travel to New Brighton in the car where the pavement is more level, adding, *'but I shouldn't have to travel a distance to walk on an even pavement'*. Wheelchair access on pathways was also an issue raised with residents sharing that drop down curbs are not low enough, making pushing wheelchairs a problem.

Activities

Older people we spoke to shared their need for a wider range of activities. Several suggestions were made including football clubs. There was a shared concern that the biggest number of people struggling with isolation and loneliness was older people, so services should be tailored more towards them.

Communication

Several people told us they hear about particular events through word of mouth and from their friends but they were concerned for other people, '*How about those isolated with few friends? How do they know about the various health initiatives happening in the area?'.* Non-residents shared a need to advertise more information on health and well-being in the area.

Support for Local Businesses

Several residents with an interest in local business mentioned that there is a need to increase promotion for small businesses to utilise empty units, and to provide teaching to understand tax breaks.

Mental Health Services

Insights gathered revealed that people want increased mental health services and hubs, particularly for people living with learning disabilities. Closely related to this is the need for more access to developing reading and writing skills appropriate for people living with learning disabilities.

Wallasey C (non-residents)

Transport

Several non-residents felt there is need for transport links to be improved. One person told us they were struggling with bus links to access other areas in Wirral such as links to New Brighton. They told us that for them it is half a mile walk to the nearest bus stop.

Activities

People remarked that leisure facilities need improving, particularly swimming pools. Europa pools came up in conversation across our engagement locations. Key concerns raised included improved locks on doors for increased privacy and more thorough pool cleaning. Going from the cold pool to cold changing room presents a huge challenge for some people we spoke to. Warmer changing rooms were suggested by one resident so that body temperature does not drop too much when leaving the pool. It was remarked that this could particularly help people with long-term health conditions and families with young children. One parent shared their thoughts:

> *'This leisure facility is ok, but Europa Pools is really cold [in the changing room]. At half term there were loads of kids using the pool, some with colds and illnesses, the cold changing room would have affected them. I'm not sure if it would be viable but it would be good to heat the changing rooms, even at certain times of the day, to make it better for some people' (age, gender unknown).*

Support for local business

Non-residents we spoke to told us that shops closing down such as Wilko's greatly reduced their shopping experience. People we spoke to told us there is a need for more diversity of shops and more homeware stores.

Support for Pensioners

Pensioners were identified as a group that is often underserved and needing support in various ways. The key concern has to do with pension money not being enough for rent and bills. One man in his 80s spoke on how he is, *'only existing on £500 per week and it can be challenging… its existing, not living'.*

Question 4: How would you see, hear or feel positive changes in your area?

Birkenhead A (non-residents)

Non-residents we spoke to followed the same trend of mostly accessing updates through social media and word of mouth. However, there was more concern about how to find out information, such as public consultations and their results, added to a perception that, *'communication needs to be more accessible to those who don't have social media' (Female, aged 73)*. There was a suggestion by some non-residents that existing assets should be used to disseminate information, like a promotional stall in Birkenhead market.

Non-residents felt that physical changes to the environment would provide quick, positive outcomes. Similar to residents of Birkenhead A, they would notice cleanliness and less empty shops, but would also notice improved road surfaces, more public toilets, and more services for families (including mental health, legal, and housing support). In terms of noticing changes to people's behaviour, non-residents placed more emphasis on seeing less 'bicycle gang' activity and experiencing less threatening behaviour. A resident of Wallasey said that to change young people's mindsets, *'you need to change what's seen as "cool"' (Male, aged 54).* Non-residents felt that

behaviour change takes time, *'people need a lifestyle change, and a lifestyle change takes time to be noticed' (Female, aged 69, Birkenhead B).*

Wallasey C (non-residents)

Non-residents said they access information through community groups and print newspapers, with less people mentioning social media. This could be explained by the older ages of this cohort (mostly 63-88 years). At a veteran's group in the Wallasey C neighbourhood, veterans told us their events and Facebook groups play an important role in making positive changes happen and sharing when they happen. However, they felt that *'we shouldn't have to be doing that'.* Instead, updates about support available to veterans (like pensions and healthcare advice) should be more readily available and not only publicised by the veteran's community. Other non-residents agreed that local updates could be communicated in better ways, emphasising the need for more in-person and print communication. For example, one Wallasey resident told us that the plans for Birkenhead's regeneration are important to them, but the plans are mostly online and hard to find.

When asked how they would see, hear, and feel positive change, non-residents focused on seeing fewer empty shops around Wallasey and Liscard, particularly a new occupant for the Wilko's shopping unit in the Cherry Tree Shopping Centre. Similar to residents, they would notice improved infrastructure near the new regeneration developments, as well as more police presence and responsiveness to incidents of crime and vandalism. In terms of behaviour change, non-residents said that less anti-social behaviour in the streets would positively impact people's wellbeing, *'If outdoors felt safer, then it would get people out and about and walking' (Female, age not disclosed).* Non-residents would notice young people having more hope, a positive outlook, and willingness to engage in community activities. A Wallasey resident felt strongly that people need to see change, no matter how small, to give them hope for the future, *'When something happens that you thought couldn't happen. That gives people hope and positivity' (Female, age not disclosed).*

Appendix 2: Engagement data

The following section provides a breakdown of the engagement approach.

Engagement Method	Number of respondents
Birkenhead (Total)	**107**
Door Knocks (Research Grids)	32
Activity Sheets	24
Focus Group	4
Friendship Interview	9
Informal Research Conversations	28
Walk and Talk	10
Wallasey (Total)	**49**
Door Knocks (Research Grids)	21
Focus Group	14
Informal Research Conversations	14
Total	**156**

Table 4: Number of people engaged with by method

Engagement Location	Number of respondents
Birkenhead	**83**
Door Knocks (Research Grids)	32
Bidston Tennis Centre	4
Birkenhead Central Library	6
Birkenhead Market	8
Birkenhead Park Ramblers	10
Christ the King	5
St James Centre	3
Wheels for All - Group - Birkenhead Park	5
Tomorrow's Women Wirral	4
Europa Pools Birkenhead	6
Wallasey	**73**
Door Knocks (Research Grids)	21
Egremont Community Centre	3
Joint Veterans Service Breakfast	8
Wallasey Central Library	7
Guinea Gap Leisure Centre	7
St Mary's Church	3
Gautby Road Youth Club	24
Total	**156**

Table 5: Number of people engaged with by location.

Appendix 3: Research grids and question prompts

Research questions with prompts

Throughout the research respondents were asked the following four main questions, with additional prompts to encourage further engagement:

- **Question 1: How is your Health & Wellbeing at the moment?**
  - What keeps you well?

- **Question 2: Thinking about where you live, what is important to you?**
  - What do you like?
  - What could be improved?

- **Question 3: What can be done to help improve health and wellbeing where you live?**
  - For you?
  - For people in your community?
  - Is there anything you could be empowered to do?

- **Question 4: How would you see, hear, or feel positive changes in your area?**
  - Where do you think the biggest change would be noticed?
  - What methods of communication work best for you?

Appendix 4: Wirral Neighbourhood Model Pilot map
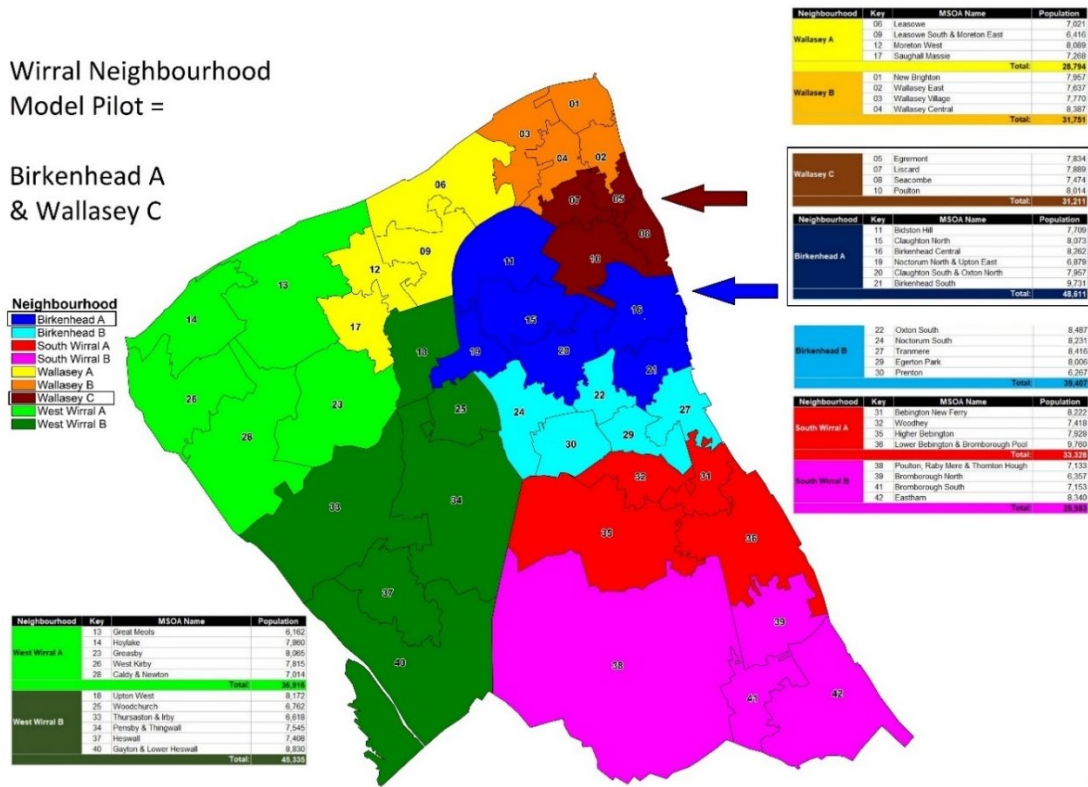
Source: Wirral Intelligence Service (amended to highlight pilot areas)

Figure 1: Wirral Neighbourhood Model Pilot Map

Appendix 5: Qualitative Insight Team information leaflet

The Qualitative Insight Team (QIT) designed an information leaflet explaining the team's purpose, the aims of the research, how respondents can be involved and how they can ask and submit queries about the wider project (see below).

Figure 2: Qualitative Insight Team Wirral Neighbourhoods Leaflet

Appendix 6: Engagement methods examples

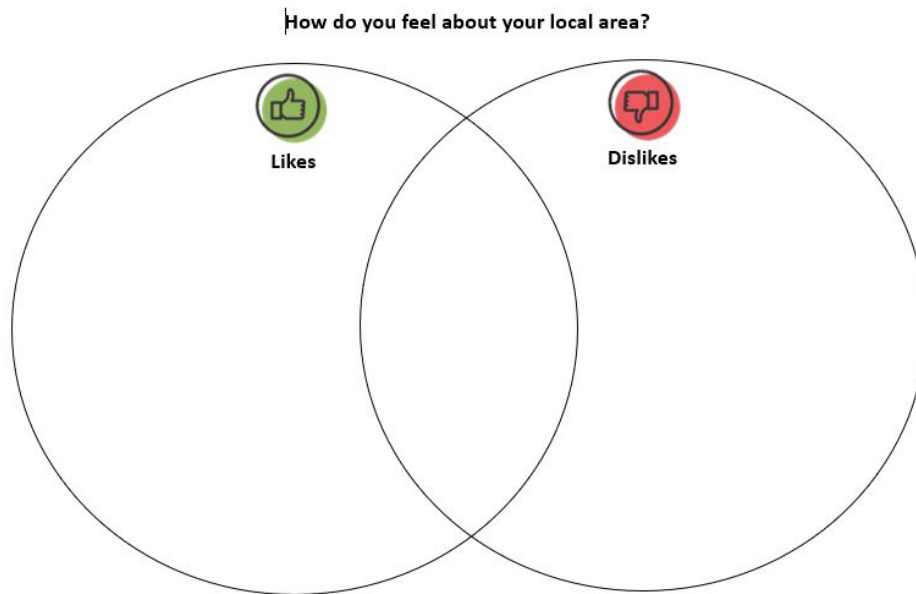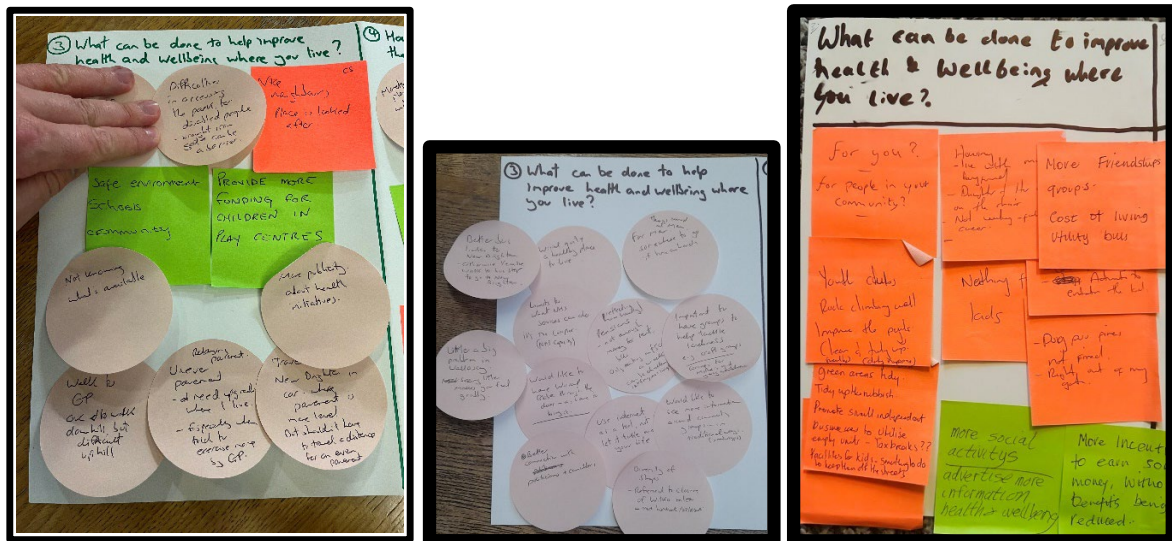Examples of engagement methods used in this project are provided below:

Figure 3: Activity sheet template

Image 1: Post-it-note boards