

Feedback from the North Ayrshire Good Life Session

19th September 2023

Background

26 people attended our community engagement session to discuss 'What does a good life look like to support mental health and wellbeing in North Ayrshire?' Attendees were from a range of backgrounds across North Ayrshire; some worked in the third sector, others did not, but all lived in the area and used services. Everyone was keen to contribute their experiences, opinions and ideas.

What is it like to live in North Ayrshire?

Working in small groups, we began by discussing places, services and things to do in North Ayrshire in relation to mental health and wellbeing, and considered 'what was good' and 'what could be improved'. A number of themes emerged and we grouped feedback under each one. A key theme was lack of available information about the services that exist and the need to communicate better.

Health services

- Poor communication and contact with surgeries
- Difficult to get GP appointment - stretched to limit
- Access to dentists is an issue
- Wider problem of NHS waiting lists
- Waiting over a year for a hospital appointment by phone
- Over a year to get an appointment at Crosshouse.

Support services

- Good third sector provision
- More communication needed between community services
- Shortage of carers and distinct lack of provision or access to support leading to isolation and loneliness
- Lack of support for older people and lack of advocacy
- Access to services, inc. access to ASN support, could be better
- Services for over 50s no longer 'age appropriate' in 2023
- Reduced social care services not available, suitable or accessible
- Lack of flexibility around services (criteria)
- CAB not always equipped to support.

Housing & Transport

- Housing shortage and lack of adequate housing
- Positive that youngsters have bus pass
- Lack of transport and provision is disjointed
- Buses and trains few and far between
- Garnock Valley has poor public transport and it's a big issue
- Poor transport (bus) in Beith prevents opportunities
- Lack of transport leads to isolation
- There was a consultation before the buses were stopped it felt like we were ignored and not listened to.

Leisure

- Lack of community youth groups
- Capture what young people want
- Need activities for children at an affordable price
- More sporting activities for children and young people
- No social spaces
- Need more social activities for adults to address social isolation
- Cost of leisure is a barrier
- Leisure in North Ayrshire is top class and partnership working is key
- Support services to community clubs is excellent
- Successful table tennis club open to all and Drum 4 Ur Life
- Good facilities but struggle to get revenue funding for coaches/staff.

Environment

- Good green spaces - tricky access
- Great beaches and plenty of green spaces
- Cycle paths, walking routes, outdoor gyms, community gardens, allotments all good
- No facilities to use when visiting scenic areas
- Lack of public toilets
- Fly tipping and dumping are major problems
- Parts of Saltcoats require maintenance
- Garnock Valley has a large number of derelict buildings which impacts negatively on Beith and Kilbirnie
- State of the shops in Adrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston (negative)
- Absence of banks and newsagents that people need
- Diversity of people is good
- Communities pulling together.



Volunteering and Employment

- Lack of employment
- Support and access to peer development opportunities
- Tricky to get employment with mental health issues - stigma
- Lots of people are willing to volunteer but training needed
- Lack of “experienced” or “trained” volunteers for mental health charities
- How do you recruit “professional volunteers” in North Ayrshire?
- Not being allowed to work or do charity work is an issue for some.



Cost of Living issues

- Underlying issues of poverty and debt
- Huge issue of people with fuel crisis and debt
- Cost of food too high
- Too many fast food shops
- There are good food larders and food banks, but it's not good that they are needed.



Information and Communications

- Lack of awareness about what's out there - services, support and groups
- Lack of information and communication on services - even about this session
- People don't know about all the good things that are going on
- We need more information sharing about what's happening
- Not just digital - printed resources and info for those who don't use tech
- Advertising - social media, shops, library, paper.





Social isolation and loneliness

- High levels of loneliness and a lack of hope
- Hopelessness and loneliness due to language barriers
- Access to amenities for people with ASN and disabilities is very important
- Mobile cinema is a positive
- More evening and weekend entertainment for those who feel lonely.



The council and how it behaves

- The council make decisions and arrangements without consulting with people
- No consultation on NAC public spending - roads and pavements
- Lack of communication about impact and feedback - “you said we did”
- Council tax going up - now paying for the debt.

What does a good life look like in North Ayrshire?

We then asked the groups to consider what a good life in North Ayrshire would look like to support good mental health and wellbeing. Using a fictional character, the groups considered what that person’s life might look like in a typical week if things were going really well for them. Each group chose the same character; a single parent with two teenage children keen to return to college and socialise with friends. The groups answered the same questions and the answers from all three groups are as follows.

1. Where do they live and what does it look like?

- In urban social housing
- Council house in 3 towns, 3-bed new build with garden, easy access to education establishments, close to bus routes
- NAC house in 3 towns. 3-bedroom, garden, nice area.

2. How do they eat well?

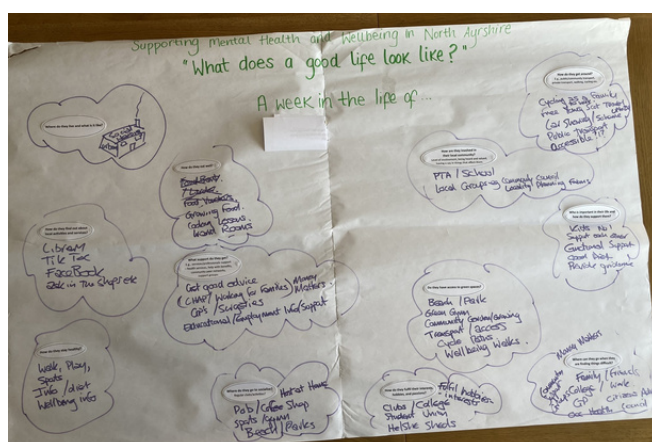
- Growing food, cooking lessons, warm rooms
- Grow your own, food larders, cheap recipes/cooking on a budget
- Food bank and food larder only to top-up food shop.

3. What support do they get?

- Get good advice from CHAP/Working for Families/GPs surgeries/Money Matters, educational/employment info and support
- Easy access to CHAP/Advocacy services, support for teenager with ease of access, referral to peer support in-person and online, college/school
- Expand groups in third sector to school/college system
- Money Matters, CHAP, Employment services, church, libraries.

4. How do they find out about local activities and services?

- Library, TikTok, Facebook, ask in the shops etc.
- Community hub, posters, leaflets, libraries, activity app, social media, schools/colleges, tenancy info.
- Library, Link-Up Saltcoats, social media, school.



5. How do they stay healthy?

- Walk, play, sports, diet and wellbeing info.
- Access to local gyms (cheap or free), community cycle hire, parks and outdoor gyms (organised activities), eating home-grown food, access to GP in-person, affordability of household bills etc. advice easily accessible (Money Matters, CHAP)
- Dentists, doctors, opticians - appointments available, free gym membership.

6. Where do they go to socialise?

- Host at home, pub, coffee shop, sports/gym, beach and parks
- Community groups, affordable activities
- Community groups, Duke of Edinburgh, youth organisations.

7. How do they get around?

- Cycling to work and as a family, free Young Scot travel, car-sharing scheme, public transport is accessible.
- Good bus access, free bus pass, bike.
- Cycle, private transport, youth bus pass.

8. How are they involved in their local community? (Level of involvement, being heard and valued, having a say in things that affect them).

- PTA/school, local groups e.g. community council, locality planning forums.
- Duke of Edinburgh, community groups, youth organisations.

9. Who is important in their life and how do they support them?

- Kids no.1. support each other, emotional support, good diet, provide guidance
- Family, each other, friends, pets
- Grandparents, friends, spouse/partner - listen, childcare/finance.

10. Do they have access to green spaces?

- Beach, park, green gym, community gardening/growing access, community transport, cycle paths, wellbeing walks
- Parks, beaches, community gardens
- Good opportunities for green spaces, parks and beaches.

11. How do they fulfill their interests, hobbies, and passions?

- Clubs/college, student union, He/She Sheds
- Community groups, affordable activities, evening classes mixed men and women/ LGBT fully inclusive
- Snooker, pool, swimming, gym, golf, KA leisure, skate park, community centre, safe social media, friends.



For further information on this work, contact ingrid@otbds.org

