

A Spotlight Report

How people feel about living in Medway

A spotlight report focusing on **Chatham**.



September 2024

Our health and wellbeing can be affected by things that we experience in everyday life.

There is increasing interest in these wider determinants of health and Healthwatch Medway wanted to understand what positively and negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of people in Medway.

Medway has a range of diverse settlements, from isolated rural villages and hamlets on the peninsula to densely populated urban towns.

This report is part of a series of reports that will be posted monthly in 2024 with each covering a different area of Medway. As of September 2024, these reports together contain 367 responses. You can read our other reports [here](#).

In September 2024, we engaged with **54** residents living in **Chatham**.

Healthwatch Medway will share this report with health and social care services to help build an understanding of how the areas where people live impact on them, and how we can work together with services to improve Medway residents' quality of life.

This report summarises what we have heard.

Methodology

Using a semi-structured interview, we approached people face-to-face in local community areas.

Participants were selected by a randomised sample of who was out and about in their local area on the days we were engaging.

Factors that contribute to feeling positive about where you live

54 people told us why they like where they live:

72%

of Chatham locals told us that they **like** where they live.

39%

mentioned that the **local community** has a positive impact on them liking where they live.

" nice neighbours who are supportive, we look out for each other, there's a proper community which makes a difference."

17%

mentioned the benefit of the **safety** of the area.

"I do feel safe, although apparently someone was attacked in Luton Road, that does have a bad reputation, but I can avoid that by taking the bus."

There's also less crime in Gillingham than in London which makes me feel safer.

17%

of locals mentioned the **familiarity of the local area** contributes to them liking where they live.

"I have lived here all of my life. Moved around within the district but always stayed in Medway. It is nice knowing the area."

"My family are here, nothing else."

15%

mentioned the benefit of the **quietness** of the area.

"I live on a nice quiet street that is a bit away from the high street and it has helped me rebuild from a period of self-destruction."

15%

of residents said they like the **local amenities** in the area.

"It's got a spoons and a good gym."

"There's a good amount of shops around."

15%

of residents mentioned the good **public transport** is a positive factor of the area.

"It is very convenient there are a lot of bus routes."

15%

mentioned the benefit of the **housing** in the area.

"My housing is really nice."

11%

of locals mentioned that **convenience** is a positive attribute of the area.

"Everything is really close to me."

"It's close to transport to London."

11%

of residents mentioned **local events** have a positive effect on them liking the area.

"lots of fantastic events that cost £5 or below so perfect for families, especially those on a budget."

11%

mentioned the availability of local **green spaces** to be a positive feature of the area.

"It's got nice open spaces with the nature reserve. You can go for long walks in the countryside. It's nice and quiet if they don't build any more houses."

6%

spoke about **cultural diversity** in the area.

"Lots of creative and cultural events showcasing the many talented people in our community. They promote inclusivity, a sense of belonging and place."

4%

mentioned the **local history**.

"There is a lot of history and I love the local history. I adore Rochester."

2%

of residents mentioned that they like

- **nothing**
- **cleanliness**
- **cost of living**
- **the opportunities**

"My sons had more opportunities here than in London like grammar schools, football teams and rugby."

Factors that contribute to feeling negative about where you live

54 people told us what they do not like about where they live:

28%

of locals told us that they **do not like** where they live.

46%

of locals mentioned the negative impact of **crime** and **anti-social behaviour** in the local area.

Below are the the themes that they mentioned.

22%

said they do not always feel **safe**.

"They say it is a safe place to live but it's not. I'm worried about my sister so it does affect me. The anti-social crime is worrying, it puts pressure on me and stresses me out. It takes my health down, that's the only way I can describe it."

"I really don't feel safe on the high street if I am on my own, and not safe at all once it is dark."

13%

mentioned the impact of the use of **drugs and alcohol** in the area.

"There is also a big drug problem with lots of addicts out on the street. I also don't feel safe at night, and feel quite nervous since the far right riots."

13%

spoke about **aggressive behaviour**.

"The drunks and the druggies. There was a punch up here at 8am, it makes me feel very uncomfortable."

7%

mentioned issues with **homelessness and beggars** in the area.

"Poor people lying down in the streets, something needs to be done, but the council just turns a blind eye. It does affect me to see them."

4%

mentioned **racial issues**.

"There is a little bit of racism, but I have come down from London, so I am used to that."

2%

of people specifically mentioned **robberies, gangs and knife crime** as a source of negatively impacting on how they feel about living in the area.

"Medway is like a 'wish' version of London, 13 year olds with knives and that. I got stalked around here too."

20%

of residents said they dislike **nothing** about the area they live in.

"I like it all."

17%

spoke about **urban decay**.

"There's nothing new and lots of things have closed down.."

"The high street, there are lots of derelict shops. I wouldn't usually come down here. "

14%

mentioned the negative impact of the **community**.

"I think Chatham is really dirty and a lot of the people there are questionable."

"There is also less of a community feel compared to London where we moved down from."

13%

spoke about the **cleanliness** in the area being a negative.

"It's filthy. The council don't do anything. There's rats everywhere. It makes you depressed. The dirt around, ashtrays just don't get used, it's all on the ground."

11%

spoke about the **lack of amenities** in the area.

"Lack of efficient services and infrastructure affecting positive outcomes for health, wellbeing, education and socialising."

11%

mentioned the **lack of activities** locally.

"There is nowhere for the kids to go so they just get into trouble.."

"There could be more to the high street apart from Primark; there could be more upmarket shops, I end up going to M&S at Hempstead Valley. Chatham is just all food and nail bars - there is a café culture, but it's not vibrant. I went to the library and saw a poster about the vibrant social scene - well, I've yet to find that!"

6%

mentioned issues with **public transport** negatively impacting how they feel about the area.

"Poor public transport provision in the evenings limiting opportunities to travel to socialise or attend entertainment venues including gyms."

6%

spoke about the **development of new housing** in the area being a negative.

"There is a lot of building work going on, a lot of regeneration, it's a bit top-heavy at the moment but no infrastructure to support it - no GPs, no extra schools."

6%

mentioned the **noise**.

"There's a bit of an issue with construction work and the noise from the trains."

4%

mentioned **issues with the roads** in the area was a negative.

"I feel a bit neglected by the council in my area. For instance there has been a pot hole on my road for 6 months and hasn't been fixed, it just keeps getting bigger."

4%

of people also spoke about the **issues with access to health services**.

"I think Chatham town centre itself is very rough. I had to come here for my contact lens fitting. It feels unsafe walking around."

4%

spoke about the **cost of living**.

"Prices are rising and it's getting financially difficult for people to live in Medway."

4%

mentioned **immigration**.

"I don't like Chatham High Street, the last couple of years there are all the foreigners, they are not very clean, horrible. It's a shithole. The crackheads and foreigners. It's too overpopulated."

4%

mentioned a **lack of police** in the area.

"I don't feel safe where I live at all, also think that there is a real lack of policing."

2%

talked about **green spaces**.

"Parks could do with revamping."

2%

spoke about their **housing**.

"I've been on the waiting list for accommodation for over 250 days. I'm a care-leaver and they told me that the waiting list was 65 days. I'm currently in temporary accommodation."

Involvement in community groups and activities

We engaged with **54** Chatham residents out in the community.

Those involved

32

people that we spoke to **were involved** in at least one community group.

Of those:

91%

believe liking where you live and being involved in community groups **has an impact** on your health and wellbeing.

78%

like the area that they live in.

25%

do not want to get involved in anything else apart from the groups they are already involved in.

An insight into those attending community groups in Chatham:

Out of the **32** residents that **were involved** in community groups:

81%

identified as **White British**.

63%

identified as **female**.

63%

identified as having a **disability** or long term **health condition**.

50%

were aged between 25-64.

19%

identified as **carers**.

Those not involved

21

were not involved in community groups.
one person did not respond.

Of those:

76%

believe liking where you live and being involved in community groups **has an impact** on your health and wellbeing.

62%

like where they live.

38%

do not want to get involved in community groups.

An insight into those not attending community groups in Chatham:

Out of the **21** that **were not** involved in community groups.

71%

identified as **White British**.

67%

identified as **female**.

19%

identified as having a **disability** or long term **health condition**.

57%

were aged between 25–64.

24%

identified as **carers**.

Community Groups Mentioned:

Of the **54** responses from Chatham residents, these are the local groups that were mentioned.

- Home Start
- The Princess Project
- Gillingham Street Angels
- St Augustines
- Brompton Bowels
- The Walderslade Hub
- Medway Inter Faith Action
- Medway United Nations Association
- Nucleus Arts
- Ladies Exercise Class
- MAPS (Marks Activity Programme Service)
- Arches Local
- All Saints Church walking group
- Fit and Feed Scheme at New Road Primary School
- One Big Family
- Kent Wildlife Trust
- Pip n Jims
- The hub in Weeds Wood
- The Sikh Temple in Rochester
- "I am in a sobriety group"
- Scouts
- Explorers
- Medway Youth Council
- Salvation Army
- army association
- British legion
- St Johns
- FND [Functional Neurological Disorder] Group
- Britton house
- Open Road
- parental classes
- Sue Ryder



Benefits of being involved in community groups

Out of the **32** people who said they are involved in community groups:

91%

said that being involved in a community group has an **impact on their health and wellbeing**.

69%

mentioned that involvement in community groups has a **positive social impact**.

"I go to explorers and that has been really good for me as I have made strong friends with people that don't go to my school."

19%

mentioned that getting involved has a **positive impact on their mental health**.

"A local church – they have been priceless as they are my only social connection as I have no family. They have helped me not fall into depression."

13%

mentioned the **positive impact on the community**.

"I can be making tea and coffee for up to 200 people, it can be busy and tiring, but it gives me chance to give back, to give to others what I've been given."

13%

mentioned that involvement in community groups **benefits their physical health**.

"It gets me out of the house. I've made friends and it's my one day a week that I get out."

6%

mentioned the **positives of learning new skills**.

"It's quite a significant thing for me, to feel part of the community, and due to connecting with others, we learn from each other, be inspired. A lady went to university in her 70s and did a degree due to support from Arches Local and she was an advocate of age not being a barrier and "If I can do it, you can do it too!""

Barriers to joining community groups

We asked people whether they faced any barriers to joining community groups or getting involved with anything locally. Out of **53** respondents:

34%

of respondents mentioned a **lack of spare time** to get involved in local groups.

"Maybe some craft groups, it is difficult because I work full time in Maidstone so it can be difficult to find the time or the energy to commit to a group."

23%

said that there was **nothing** they wished to be involved in.

"Not really. I have a lot of hobbies, I crochet and knit and I like to do jigsaws. I'm quite happy."

11%

mentioned a **lack of opportunities**.

"When there's less stuff to do like youth centres, more bad stuff happens. When there's less activities they turn to bad things. There should be more money going into young people's services. Build a youth centre, people will go there. You don't want to just be sat around."

9%

of people mentioned that their **caring responsibilities** are a barrier to them accessing community groups.

"[There is] loads [I would like to get involved in,] but my wife has Dementia. You change expectations and get used to it."

"I would like to be able to go out more and get involved, but I'm a carer for my mum who has Alzheimer's, which means I am not able to give any time to any community groups."

9%

of locals mentioned **money** being a barrier to them getting involved in local groups.

"I would like to get back into dancing again but the classes are so expensive my Mum couldn't afford the fees for it."

8%

spoke about **public transport** being a barrier to getting involved.

"Transport is a problem. I can't go to other places I want to."

"I can't get to anywhere unless I have a lift."

6%

of respondents spoke about the **accessibility** of the groups.

"I can't drive due to my health conditions, but at the moment, I'm happy."

"I don't like travelling out at night, but I would like to get involved in Tai Chai."

4%

of locals spoken to mentioned that their **physical health** impacts on their ability to get involved.

"Because of my anxiety and fibro, the pain is restricting."

4%

of locals spoken to mentioned that their **mental health** impacts on their ability to get involved.

"I used to go to Aqua Fit, but I lost confidence after Covid and didn't go back."

4%

of respondents mentioned a **lack of information** about local groups.

"I would like to get into football, but I don't know where to go."

2%

mentioned the **lack of amenities** as a barrier.

"There could be more around where I live – a lot of things have closed down or knocked down. There used to be the bingo but that's closed down now, which is a shame."

2%

spoke about the **community**.

"No, the people of today are not very friendly, I just see family and friends. When he was alive, I used to go to the pub with my husband, but it's now disgusting – you go in for a pint and some drugs."

2%

talked about **mobility** being a barrier.

"There are things I would like to do but I have mobility issues these days."

One person did not respond to this question.

Summary

- 91%** of the 54 people who said they were involved in community groups believe that **being involved** has an **impact on their health and wellbeing**.
- 72%** of Chatham locals said they **like living in Chatham**.
- 69%** of respondents who **are involved in community groups** find that it has a **positive social impact**.
- 46%** of locals mentioned the negative impact of **crime and anti-social behaviour** in the local area.
- 39%** of locals mentioned that the **community** in the area contributes to people liking where they live.
- 38%** of respondents that are not involved in local groups **do not want to get involved**.
- 34%** of respondents mentioned a **lack of spare time** to get involved in local groups.

35 Participants – Profile Breakdown

		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	35	65%
	Male	19	35%
Transgender		0	
Age	0-15	1	2%
	16-24	12	22%
	25-34	2	4%
	35-44	9	17%
	45-54	8	15%
	55-64	9	17%
	65-74	6	11%
	75-84	5	9%
	85-94	1	2%
	95-99	1	2%
Sexuality	Heterosexual	48	89%
	Bisexual	2	4%
	Prefer not to say	4	7%

		Number	Percentage
Ethnicity	English/Welsh/ Scottish/Northern Irish/British	41	76%
	Indian	3	6%
	Black British	2	4%
	Caribbean	2	4%
	White and Asian	2	4%
	African	1	2%
	Chinese	1	2%
	Irish	1	2%
	Nepalese	1	2%
	Prefer not to say	0	
First Language	English	49	91%
	Punjabi	1	2%
	Mandarin	1	2%
	Nepali	1	2%
	Prefer not to say	2	4%

		Number	Percentage
Carer		11	20%
	Young Carer	0	
Do you have a disability or health condition?	Yes	25	46%
	Mental health condition	12	22%
	Long term health condition	11	20%
	Physical disability	9	17%
	Learning disability	6	11%
	Prefer not to say	1	2%
Neurodiversity	ADHD	5	9%
	Autism	3	6%
	OCD	2	4%
	Dyslexia	1	2%

If you would like to chat with us about the report you can reach us through the following routes:



Online:
www.healthwatchmedway.com



By Telephone:
Healthwatch Medway Freephone
0800 136 656



By Email:
enquiries@healthwatchmedway.com



By Text:
Text us on 07525 861 639. By
texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's
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