

A Spotlight Report

How people feel about living in Medway

A spotlight report focusing on **Rochester**.



May 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 May 2024, these reports together contain 206 responses. You can read our other reports [here](#).

In May 2024, we engaged with **62** residents living in **Rochester**.

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

62 people told us why they like where they live:

45%

of Rochester locals mentioned that the **local community** contributes to people liking where they live.

"When I broke my arm I would get my eggs beaten and washing put out on the line, people would open my tins for me. It moved me that people cared and looked out for me."

44%

of residents mentioned the **convenience** of Rochester is a factor in their levels of happiness about living in the area.

"I have everything I need within a one-mile radius. It's a relief to know I don't have to traipse for miles to get what I want or need, and as I am getting older, accessibility is important."

40%

mentioned that the **history of the area** had a positive impact on residents liking where they live.

"I love old movies and the buildings here are like out of those movies - so beautiful."

"The historic aspect of Rochester brings such a lovely quality."

34%

of residents mentioned that the **green** and **open spaces** increase their level of satisfaction of where they live.

"I enjoy the countryside. You can walk around the river, pick blackberries, go paddling in the river. Such a beautiful place - good for the soul. Makes you want to get up in the morning. You cope with life better living somewhere like this."

32%

mentioned the range of **local amenities** are a factor in their levels of happiness about the area they live.

"There are lots of bars, cafes, restaurants - it has life!"

"All the facilities here, which is important as you get older, you don't get stranded or cut off."

29%

of locals mentioned the amount of **local activities and events** impacts on liking where they live.

"I look forward to going out. Everyday there is somewhere to go and somewhere to do something."

23%

of Rochester locals mentioned the **safety** of the area add to how much they live living there.

"It makes me feel safe, it's my home. It's a place I want to bring my son up in."

"It's safer if you judge it against other areas around here."

"It's a very wholesome place, especially compared to London."

21%

mentioned the positives of **public transport links**.

"The transport links are fabulous, although sometimes I have waited over an hour for a bus."

"I like the easy commute from here into London."

"The public transport links are good, especially to London."

19%

of people mentioned the **quietness** of the area having a positive impact on how they feel about where they live.

"[Rochester is a] very pleasant place. [It's] quieter. I work in London which is hectic."

13%

mentioned the importance of **familiarity** and **family ties** being one of the reasons why they like where they live.

"I have always lived here and I love it!"

6%

mentioned other things that have positive impacts on them in their area:

cultural diversity (3%)

"It's vibrant [and has] lots of cultural diversity."

and **cheaper housing (3%)**

"Housing is more affordable and spacious [than in London]."

Factors that contribute to feeling negative about where you live

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

39%

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

19%

of people specifically mentioned the **night-time economy** as a source of negatively impacting on how they feel about living in the area.

"I wouldn't come down to the high street in the evening past 7pm. There are always police around and someone always has a knife and I am disabled so that scares me."

"The yobby side... the drunks, shouting all weekend, all the noise. I avoid the high street of an evening, I wouldn't feel safe."

18%

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

"I stay in a lot as I do not feel safe leaving my own home."

10%

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

"There is a lot of drug dealing in Rochester. It's blatant and I hate it."

"My housemates... smoke so much weed, it's everywhere."

5%

of residents mentioned seeing an **increase** in the amount of crime in the area.

"There does seem to have been more crime in the area."

"Crime is really going up. My road in particular has seen an increase."

5%

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

"I witnessed a couple of homeless guys getting into a drunken fight in the middle of the day. It gives a bit of an aggy vibe to the place."

2%

mentioned **racial** incidents.

"I have experienced racial incidents. That's nothing new, I am used to it by now. You just crack on."

Other factors that contribute to feeling negative about where you live

19%

of Rochester residents mentioned the negative impact of the amount of **traffic** in the local area. **"I remember when I first moved here, the traffic would stretch right across Rochester Bridge and nothing has changed."**

18%

mentioned the negative impact of **noise** in the area. **"We are creating modern-day slums, people living on top of each other, no sound isolation, hearing everyone else's business, music, whether you want to or not."**

18%

spoke about the **lack of amenities** and how that negatively impacts how they feel about living in the area. **"A lot of what we need is gone - no banks, the Post Office shut, the shops are closing."**

13%

of residents spoke about the amount of **rubbish** left around the area having a negative impact on them liking the area.

11%

mentioned issues with **public transport** negatively impacting how they feel about living in Rochester.

10%

mentioned the negative impact of issues with the amount of potholes in the **roads**.

8%

mentioned the negatives of the lack of **parking** available where they live.

"It can limit me going out as it's anxiety-inducing not knowing whether you will be able to park when you get home."

8%

spoke about the negative impact of new **housing being built**.

"the amount of housing we are getting now... it feels very claustrophobic."

5%

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

3%

3% of people we spoke to said the **community** was something they did not like about Rochester. A further **3%** mentioned the **cost of living** in Rochester was a negative.

Involvement in community groups and activities

We engaged with Rochester residents out in the community.

62 people told us if they were involved in local community groups.

32 **were** involved in community groups.

94% believe liking where you live and being involved in groups **has an impact** on your health and wellbeing.

88% **like** where they live.

41% **do not** want to get involved in anything else apart from the groups they are already involved in.

30 **were not** involved in community groups.

77% believe liking where you live and being involved in groups **has an impact** on your health and wellbeing.

94% **like** where they live.

30% **do not** want to get involved in community groups.

Demographics of those involved and not involved in community groups

32 out of the **32** that **were** involved in community groups.

69% identified as **White British**.

81% identified as **female**.

50% were aged **55 and over**.

16% identified as having a **primary language other than English**.

16% identified as having a **disability** or long term **health condition**.

6% identified as **carers**.

30 out of the **30** that **were not** involved in community groups.

73% identified as **White British**.

60% identified as **female**.

50% were aged **55 and over**.

7% identified as having a **primary language other than English**.

17% identified as having a **disability** or long term **health condition**.

7% identified as **carers**.

Community Groups Mentioned:

From the **62** responses from Rochester locals, these were the local groups that were mentioned.

- Scouts
- Beavers
- Bingo
- Singing Group
- Gardening Group
- Local Theatre
- Rochester and Cobham Golf Club
- Bridge Club
- Conversation Café
- Creative Knitting and Sewing Group
- The u3a
- Rochester WI
- “Various ARAs” (Active Retirement Associations)
- Borstal Open Spaces
- Spanish Classes at Adult Education
- Shannon Trust
- Rochester Walking Group
- Weekly Health Class
- Rochester Community Friends (online group)
- Toddler Group at Rochester Library
- Little Stars Toddler Group
- Friends of Eastgate House
- Friends of the Vines
- Force along the Esplanade
- City Centre Forum
- Let’s Get Chatty
- The Death Café
- Film club
- Book Club
- A Stroke Club
- Theatre Group
- Pilates
- Exercise Groups
- Baby Massage in Rainham
- Riverside Play School
- Medway Council Sensory Baby Group
- Strood Library Baby Group
- Medway Pride
- Intra Community Trust
- Chatty Café at Jaspers
- Connect
- “a walking group”
- “the church”
- Adult Education Classes
- Physical Activity Classes
- Local Music Scene at the Flipping Frog pub
- St Margret’s Church Groups

Benefits of being involved in community groups

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

94%

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

56%

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

"Groups give you the opportunity to get to know people, make friends and connections. It gives me a sense of belonging, new friendships. They reduce isolation and [give me] the opportunity to form new connections."

34%

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

*"I would be lost without them. I get down if I don't get out of the house a lot. Life would be boring, depressing."
"I think groups are good for people's mental health. There's a lot of loneliness out there, and that's hard."*

6%

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

"It's great to have something positive to get out of the house for. You don't want to end up being one of those people who sits in a chair all day and moans."

3%

of people believe being part of a community group has a **positive impact on the community**.

"I deliver activity classes to ethnic minority women. I feel I am giving back something and the women participating are incredibly grateful. If I didn't run this session, these women would not attend a gym or any other class."

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 **62** respondents:

37%

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

"I'm a young mum so I just don't have the time or energy to get involved in anything at all."

24%

said that there was **nothing** they wished to be involved in. Of these responses:

13%

said that there was nothing they wished to be involved in as they already have all they need.

"I don't want to get involved in much these days, I just want the peace and quiet and I have enough friends."

13%

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

"Groups for my child. I have tried to find stuff, but there is not much around."

8%

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

"I would like to try tai chi but because of my mobility I cannot stand in the middle of a class."

5%

of locals spoken to mentioned that their **mental health** creates a barrier, which impacts on them being able to get involved.

"Busy places are difficult for me but I am awaiting therapy... anxiety stops me."

3%

of respondents spoke about a **lack of knowledge** of what is available in the area.

"I don't really know what is out there to be honest. Maybe groups could advertise more."

10%

of residents spoken to say that not being involved in community groups does not affect them.

94%

of the 32 people who said they were involved in community groups believe that **being involved** has an **impact on their health and wellbeing**.

90%

of overall respondents said they **like** living in Rochester.

56%

of the 32 people who said they are involved in community groups believe that **being involved** has a **positive social impact**.

52%

of overall respondents said they were **involved in community groups**.

39%

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

37%

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

24%

said that there were no local groups or opportunities they wished to be involved in.

18%

of respondents said they **do not always feel safe** living in Rochester.

10%

of residents spoken to say that not being involved in community groups **does not** affect them.

Participant Profile Breakdown

We spoke to **62** people, of these:

Ethnicity

- 71%** of people identified as **White British**.
- 5%** preferred not to disclose their ethnicity.
- 3%** identified as **White and Black Caribbean**.
- 3%** identified as **White and Black African**.
- 3%** identified as **Bangladeshi**.
- 2%** identified as **Chinese**.
- 2%** identified as **Pakistani**.
- 2%** identified as **White and Asian**.
- 2%** identified as **Indonesian**.
- 2%** identified as **Jewish**.
- 2%** identified as **Italian**.
- 2%** identified as **Albanian**.
- 2%** identified as **Greek**.
- 2%** identified as **mixed English White**.

Age

- 2% were **0-15**.
- 10% were **16-24**.
- 13% were **25-34**.
- 8% were **35-44**.
- 11% were **45-54**.
- 16% were **55-64**.
- 18% of respondents were **between the ages of 65-74**.
- 16% were **75-84**.
- 6% preferred not to disclose their age.

Gender and Sexuality

- 71% of people identified as **female**.
- 29% of people identified as **male**.
- 85% of people identified as **heterosexual**.
- 11% preferred not to disclose their sexuality.
- 3% of people identified as **homosexual**.

Disability and Long Term Health Conditions

16% of people identified as having a disability or long term health condition.

6% identified as having a **long term health condition**.

5% identified as having a **physical disability**.

5% spoke about having a **mental health condition**.

Carers

6% of people identified as **carers**.



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
British Sign Language interpreter
will make contact

 @HWMedway

 @healthwatchmedway

 @healthwmedway