

What did we learn at the Big Leeds Chat 2021?

A collection of conversations about what matters to people in Leeds in terms of staying healthy and happy two years on from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic

DRAFT

Contents

Foreword

What is the Big Leeds Chat?

How the Big Leeds Chat developed in 2021

How we wrote this report

Glossary

What we learnt at previous Big Leeds Chats

What people told us in 2021: the 10 Big Leeds Chat statements

Next steps for the Big Leeds Chat

Part I: Taking Action: Decision Makers' Ideas for Change

Part II: The Conversations

Acknowledgements

DRAFT

Foreword

“The Big Leeds Chat is a key event in the diary for all the people involved in planning health and care services. This is an opportunity to go out into all the local communities in Leeds, listen to people and understand how we become the best city for health and wellbeing. Starting in 2018, there have been three Big Leeds Chats, each one changing and adapting to grow, strengthen and make sure we are hearing everyone’s voice in Leeds, both in the different places that people live and with the city’s many different communities.

The idea of the Big Leeds Chat is very simple: we want to put the people of Leeds at the heart of health and care decision making. As well as all the work happening to listen to people’s experiences, we believe it’s vital that services listen directly to people, in their communities. So for each Big Leeds Chat, we have gone out together, not as different organisations, but as one team who all work to make health and care services better in Leeds. This is Team Leeds, and we are there to do the listening. We have gone directly into the centre of communities rather than expecting people to come to meetings, from markets to coffee mornings and parks to community groups all across Leeds. And we have gone to listen - to really listen - about what makes a good, happy and healthy life, and understand what needs to be done differently.

This autumn, as we emerged out of lockdown, we thought it was really important to listen to people about their experiences. Ambitiously, in times of COVID we strove to develop the Big Leeds Chat even further and go far and wide, having over 40 Chats in communities across Leeds. This is by far the most we have ever had. We met so many brilliant and inspiring people who live and work in their communities, acting together to make them the best places to live. We heard a lot about the strength and resilience of each of those places, but also the challenges they are facing in health and care.

We hope you enjoy reading this report. It tells the story of where we went, the people we met and what is important to them in terms of health and wellbeing in Leeds. Importantly, it tells the story of what our decision makers took away and how they will use this information as we move forward to become the best city for health and wellbeing.

Finally, a big “thank you” to all the people who donned their yellow Big Leeds Chat t-shirts and who spoke with us, and to the decision makers and chat

makers who joined us on the tour. We will now go on to use this insight to shape health and care services in the future.”

Cllr. Fiona Venner

DRAFT

What is the Big Leeds Chat?

In Leeds we have an ambition, led by our People's Voice Team¹, to make sure the voice of people is at the heart of all levels of health and care planning. Most especially, we want to ensure that residents experiencing the greatest health inequalities are at the heart of everything we do. This is essential if we are to achieve the ambition in our Health and Wellbeing Strategy² to improve the health of the poorest the fastest.

The Big Leeds Chat is an innovative, citywide approach to support this ambition. It brings senior leaders from across the health and care system together with the public as one #TeamLeeds, so that they can listen to people's experiences around health and wellbeing, in the broadest sense of the term, and find out what matters most to them.

How the Big Leeds Chat developed in 2021

The first Big Leeds Chat included more than 500 conversations in Kirkgate market in October 2018. A year later, we again called in at Kirkgate market (which was even busier than the year before), and we also worked with Local Care Partnerships³ and settings such as food banks to get out into Leeds' many communities.

By 2021, the world had changed a lot, and we knew it was more important than ever that we get out to listen to people, given the way the pandemic had deepened health inequalities across the country. We connected up with Local Care Partnerships to organise a local Big Leeds Chat in each area, as well as Community of Interest groups and young people's organisations. In keeping with our ambition, we wanted to hear from as broad a range of people as we could, not least those who had faced some of the toughest circumstances over the past 18 months.

All in all, 43 chats were had from September through to November, involving dozens of decision makers and chat makers⁴ who came along from every health and care organisation to support the conversations.

¹ See Glossary.

² <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/plans-and-strategies/health-and-wellbeing-strategy>

³ See Glossary.

⁴ See Glossary.

Date	LCP or community group	Location
4 th September	Woodsley & Holt Park LCP	OPAL, LS16
11 th September	Armley LCP	Armley Moor, LS12
15 th September	Association of Blind Asians	Roundhay Park, LS8
18 th September	Beeston & Middleton LCP	Beeston Festival at Crossflatts Park, LS11
20 th September	Bramley, Wortley & Middleton	Fairfield Community Centre, LS13
22 nd September	Morley LCP	Groundwork/Morley Festival, LS27
23 rd September	Morley LCP	Groundwork/Morley Festival, LS27
24 th September	Morley LCP	Groundwork/Morley Festival, LS27
25 th September	HATCH LCP	Reginald Centre, LS7
25 th September	Otley & Aireborough LCP	Festival of Kindness, LS21
25 th September	York Road LCP	The Old Fire Station, Gipton, LS9
28 th September	West Leeds LCP - Bramley	Bramley Shopping Centre, LS13
28 th September	West Leeds LCP - Pudsey	Pudsey, LS28
30 th September	BME Dementia Touchstone Service	Online
30 th September	Crossgates LCP	Crossgates Shopping Centre, LS15
4 th October	LS25 LS26 LCP	Net Building, Garforth, LS25
4 th October	LS25 LS26 LCP	Halliday Court Sheltered Housing Complex, Garforth, LS25
5 th October	LS25 LS26 LCP	St Mary the Less, Allerton Bywater, WF10

5 th October	LS25 LS26 LCP	Cross Hills Court Sheltered Housing Complex, Kippax, LS25
5 th October	LGBT+ group	Mill Hill Chapel, LS1
6 th October	Youth Matters Group	Swarcliffe Community Centre, LS14
7 th October	BLC Online Chat	Online
7 th October	HATCH LCP	Leeds Polish Centre, LS7
8 th October	Otley & Aireborough LCP	Aireborough Leisure Centre, LS20
11 th October	Leeds Student Medical Practice & The Light	One Mill Street, Leeds City Centre, LS9
13 th October	Woodsley & Holt Park LCP	Burley Lodge Centre, LS6
14 th October	Your Space	Jamyang Buddhist Centre, LS11
14 th October	LGBTQ+ Leeds Youth Service	West Leeds Activity Centre, LS12
15 th October	Woodsley & Holt Park LCP	All Hallows Church, LS6
18 th October	MindMate Ambassadors Meeting	Community Hub, John Lewis, LS2
19 th October	Digital Workshop: Young People (10-18 years old)	Online
21 st October	Youth Club	Swarcliffe Community Centre, LS14
21 st October	Wetherby LCP	Wetherby Town Hall, LS22
25 th October	Vocal Girls	Jones Haughton Accountants, LS2
26 th October	West Leeds Men's Network	Bramley Community Centre, LS13
26 th October	Central LCP	Meanwood Valley Urban Farm, LS7
26 th October	Barca Youth Group	Fairfield Community Centre, LS13
27 th October	Growing Rooms	Armley, LS12
28 th October	Seacroft LCP	Old Seacroft Chapel, LS14
10 th November	HATCH LCP	Little London, LS7
13 th November	Social Group	Feel Good Factor Leeds, LS7

16 th November	Men's Group	Feel Good Factor Leeds, LS7
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How we wrote this report

This report was written by the Big Leeds Chat working group. It is based on the notes made by the professionals who went out to each of our local areas and community settings.

At each Big Leeds Chat event, chat makers and decision makers teamed up into pairs to have conversations with people. As they did so, they each made notes, with the chat makers recording what people told us, and the decision makers recording their own reflections about the conversation and how we could make Leeds the best city for health and care.

Decision makers and chat makers asked people the following three questions:

1. How has it been for you over the past 18 months?
2. What things would help you improve your health and wellbeing?
3. What could make your area a happier and healthier place to live?

The working group identified key themes from all the notes gathered each day. The chat makers' notes are summarised in Part 2 of this report, and the decision maker feedback in Part 1.

If you would like to see the full set of notes for any Local Care Partnership or Community of Interest, please contact the People's Voices Team.⁵

Glossary

Chat maker: Chat makers are professionals working in health and care in Leeds. They volunteered to facilitate the conversations we had in each Local Care Partnership and Community of Interest. As well as recording what people told us (see Part 2 of this report for details), they helped the day run smoothly.

Decision maker: Decision makers are professionals working in health and care in Leeds who led the conversations with people at each Big Leeds Chat. Their jobs give them the opportunity to shape health and care services in the city. Their reflections are set out in Part 1 of this report.

⁵ <https://healthwatchleeds.co.uk/>

Local Care Partnership: Local Care Partnerships are designed to offer “joined-up working to deliver local care for local people, working in and with local communities”.⁶ There are 19 across Leeds, and they are organised geographically.

Community of Interest: Communities of Interest are groups of people who share an identity. In Leeds, the Communities of Interest network enables “two-way communication between the public sector and third sector organisations that represent communities facing health inequalities”.⁷

People’s Voices Team: The People’s Voices Team brings together involvement leads from across health and care organisations to work together as one team. It was set up by the Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board to help improve involvement across the city and avoid duplication. Our shared aim is to put people’s voices at the centre of health and care decision making in Leeds, and in particular the voice of people living with the greatest health inequalities.

Leeds Health and Wellbeing Board: The Health and Wellbeing Board is a group of senior representatives from organisations across Leeds, including Leeds City Council, the NHS, the community sector and Healthwatch Leeds, which represents views of the public. It helps to achieve our ambition of Leeds being a healthy and caring city for all ages, where people who are the poorest, improve their health the fastest.

Third sector: The third sector is a term used to describe non-profit organisations that aren’t part of either the public or private sectors. An alternative name for it is the “voluntary and community sector”.

What we learnt at previous Big Leeds Chats

At the Big Leeds Chats in 2018 and 2019, there were a lot of shared themes about what matters most to people, although there were some differences too. Below is a very quick summary of what people told us at those two Big Leeds Chats.

The Big Leeds Chat 2018

What do people love about Leeds?

⁶ <http://inspiringchangeleeds.org/local-care-partnerships/>

⁷ <https://forumcentral.org.uk/communities-of-interest/>

1. Living in a big city
2. People in Leeds are friendly
3. Being able to go shopping into the city centre and use places like the market
4. Living in a diverse city with different cuisines and cultures
5. Having access to the green spaces in Leeds and the countryside nearby

What do people do to keep themselves healthy?

1. Diet
2. Exercise and fitness
3. Spending time with family and friends
4. Accessing GP practices
5. Lack of time and motivation makes it difficult to take part in healthy activities.

What do people think we need to do to make Leeds the best city for health and wellbeing?

1. Cost
2. Public transport
3. Information
4. Environment
5. Healthcare
6. Employment
7. Communities
8. Housing
9. Education

The Big Leeds Chat 2019

What do you love about where you live?

1. Community
2. Green space and close to countryside
3. Shopping and places to eat
4. Culture & entertainment
5. Easy to get around
6. Public services & facilities

What do you do to keep healthy?

1. Self-directed exercise
2. Exercise class/centre
3. Healthy diet
4. Family & community
5. Self-care
6. Hobbies and interests
7. Avoiding alcohol & smoking
8. Work
9. Engaging with health services

How can we make Leeds the best city for health and wellbeing?

1. Better transport
2. Be more inclusive and have communities that talk to each other
3. Improve health and care services
4. More health education and promotion
5. Look after the environment
6. Improve community facilities & public spaces
7. Tackle poverty and homelessness, and improve housing
8. Make gyms, exercise classes and other services more affordable
9. Deal with crime
10. Less unhealthy fast food

What people told us in 2021: the 10 Big Leeds Chat statements

Based on the conversations our decision makers and chat makers had across the city, we have put together ten statements representing the top ten things people told us would make Leeds a happier and healthier place to live.

1. Make Leeds a city where children and young people's lives are filled with positive things to do.

If there was one topic that came up more than any other in our Big Leeds Chats, it was that children, young people and families would love to see more things they could get involved in with their fellow residents. People credited families as playing such an important role in keeping each other going during the hardest days of the pandemic, but keeping everyone entertained and stimulated hasn't always been easy. People said they would like to see Leeds nurture families through everything from playgrounds to playgroups, youth clubs and skate parks – but these need to feel like safe and welcoming places, as the fear of antisocial behaviour can make provision seem inaccessible. Children's and young people's services are more than a niche concern to the people who joined the Big Leeds Chat – they are the hallmark of a city that cares for every family.

2. Make Leeds a city where there are plentiful activities in every local area to support everyone's wellbeing.

People of all ages told us how important it was they got the chance to connect with their friends, neighbours and fellow Leeds residents. Knowing they aren't alone is an important way that people keep well – but they need activities to be affordable, easy to get to and, at least some of the time, in person rather than online. The third sector plays a hugely valued role in organising ways for people to get together and be each other's support, and residents said they would love to see it do more and receive the investment it deserves. Some of the time, people weren't looking for organised activities but somewhere they could just be with others. Inviting local buildings and green spaces were another important factor identified in a good community scene. A lot of people who spoke to us told us they were volunteers, and it was clear from the amazing response to calls for volunteers during the early days of the pandemic that Leeds residents are more than willing to give their time – they just need the structures to be able to do so.

3. Make Leeds a city where people can connect with services face-to-face when they need to.

Residents of all ages have been getting online more during the pandemic – but, across Leeds, many people told us this has left them with a real hunger to connect with others in person. While we did hear from people who were digitally excluded, we also heard from those who can get online and on the phone regularly but don't necessarily think remote services would always work for them. Although, for some, phone and digital contact can be handy, people told us they had also found it doesn't always provide for the personal connection they value when they are looking for support with their health. Because the move to remote delivery has coincided with a time where people say they've found it harder to access services, there is a real danger that people see remote health and care services as "second-class" and a way of offering less, not more, care.

4. Make Leeds a city where people feel confident they will get help from their GP without barriers getting in the way.

Over the pandemic, people across Leeds told us they felt it had got harder and harder to book GP appointments. The issue seemed to be particularly prevalent in certain areas. It's clear from people's comments just how much they value their GP, so when it feels like a trial to get through the front door, they can be left feeling disconnected from a valued source of help and, at worst, left to cope alone by public services. Conversely, when people did feel supported by services, this could make a real difference to their wellbeing.

5. Make Leeds a city where each individual community has the local facilities, services and amenities they need.

During our Big Leeds Chats, people told us about much-loved local venues, organisations, parks and so on, and they were keen to talk about their area or community. However, we also heard about what can go wrong if services are a long way away from people, including for those living in outlying areas which were only incorporated into Leeds a few decades ago. People also told us how local areas could quickly lose their appeal when the shops, pubs and so on which give locals a reason to be there shut down. It's worth bearing in mind that, although these 10 statements are relevant to all our Chats, each of the latter had its own unique topics. In Bramley, for instance, people regularly flagged up problems with unsuitable housing, while people in Wetherby talked

about concerns services couldn't cope with a fast-growing population. When we're developing services and initiatives, it seems that a locally focussed approach really does matter to people.

6. Make Leeds a city where fears about crime and antisocial behaviour are no barrier to enjoying everything the community has to offer.

People in many areas and communities in Leeds talked about how they worried they might become a victim of crime or antisocial behaviour when they go out into their local area, and this makes it all the more daunting for them to use the public spaces and facilities that support their health and wellbeing. People of all ages - but perhaps most notably children and young people - said they were less likely to get out into our parks and leisure facilities if they were worried about what might happen. On the other hand, some also suggested that issues are caused in part by young people not having enough things to keep them busy and feeling positive. One solution people often suggest is more, and more visible, police.

7. Make Leeds a city where services acknowledge the impact of the pandemic on people's mental health and where a varied range of service- and community-based mental health support is available.

Our chats often touched upon how lockdowns and the loneliness they wrought had affected people's mental wellbeing and confidence, and some people said it's not going to be easy for everyone to "go back to normal". All kinds of groups – whether men, women, children or young people - have felt the effects, and sometimes people suggested that targeted work should be in place to support residents to reach out for help. We heard how some people had struggled to get the treatment they wanted for their mental health from services, but we also heard a lot of interest in "non-traditional" ways of keeping well, such as friendly, welcoming community activities organised by the third sector and peers. Sometimes, people suggested these activities be mental health-focussed but, often, people said just having a way to be social was key.

8. Make Leeds a city where there are affordable activities that enable everyone to stay healthy.

While many people in Leeds said they would love to exercise more at leisure centres and facilities, sometimes this is out of reach because it's too expensive, especially when we factor in other costs like getting a bus. Free activities such

as walking have been a big part of how people have kept well during the pandemic. It's also worth noting that people were much more likely to tell us they would like to exercise than change their diet, and smoking and drinking rarely came up in our conversations.

9. Make Leeds a city where green spaces are kept tidy and welcoming, because services understand the vital role they play in keeping people well.

People in Leeds love our many parks and see them as a crucial resource for keeping us all well (although residents in our more deprived areas sometimes said they were less likely to have them on their doorstep). Not only are parks a beautiful community venue, people noted how they offer the chance to connect with nature, walk, run and play. Residents told us how it saddens them when green spaces aren't cared for or feel unsafe, with littering, graffiti and anti-social behaviour sometimes driving away people who would otherwise access them.

10. Make Leeds a city where everyone can get around easily on public transport, no matter their location or mobility needs.

When bus services are unreliable or infrequent, or they require people to change multiple times, it's more than an annoyance – it shrinks Leeds residents' worlds, especially if they are older, less mobile or poor. It also makes accessing health and care services all the more difficult.

What next for the Big Leeds Chat?

Leeds' residents have told senior leaders and decision makers what would make our city a happier, healthier place to live. Now it's time to plan how we act on what we have learnt and figure out what we still don't know about different parts of and communities in the city. Really positively, as soon as the Chats were finished, decision makers were using the information that they had heard and taking it into their work. Each Local Care Partnership is working through what it can do to make changes in its local area based on what people told us. The information has also already been used by Leeds City Council as it develops its Better Lives Strategy around what a good life looks like for people with care and support needs, and in the ongoing work and planning to improve mental health services and make Leeds a great city to live in for our mental health.

In addition, however, and new for this year's Big Leeds Chat, we wanted to develop stronger processes for turning what we heard into action. As part of this, we call on our health and care boards and organisations to work with our 10 Big Leeds Chat statements so that, in a year's time, they can tell residents how they have acted on people's experiences to make Leeds the city we all want it to be. In Part I of this report, we also include some of the ideas for making Leeds a happier and healthier place that decision makers had following on from their Big Leeds Chats. We hope these serve as a useful starting point for boards and organisations as they look to make change.

The 10 Big Leeds Chat statements are:

1. Make Leeds a city where children and young people's lives are filled with positive things to do.
2. Make Leeds a city where there are plentiful activities in every local area to support everyone's wellbeing.
3. Make Leeds a city where people can connect with services face-to-face when they need to.
4. Make Leeds a city where people feel confident they will get help from their GP without barriers getting in the way.
5. Make Leeds a city where each individual community has the local facilities, services and amenities they need.
6. Make Leeds a city where fears about crime and antisocial behaviour are no barrier to enjoying everything the community has to offer.

7. Make Leeds a city where services acknowledge the impact of the pandemic on people's mental health and where a varied range of service- and community-based mental health support is available.
8. Make Leeds a city where there are affordable activities that enable everyone to stay healthy.
9. Make Leeds a city where green spaces are kept tidy and welcoming, because services understand the vital role they play in keeping people well.
10. Make Leeds a city where everyone can get around easily on public transport, no matter their location or mobility needs.

In March 2023, we will be producing a "what happened next report" to give a summary of all the work taking place in Leeds around the 10 key statements and, importantly, what it means for people in Leeds.

Part I: Decision Makers' Ideas for Change

As we have said, the Big Leeds Chat isn't just about listening – most importantly, it's about taking action based on what people in Leeds have told us.

With this in mind, following on from their Big Leeds Chat we asked decision makers what their initial ideas were to make Leeds a happier and healthier city.

15 key themes came out of their responses, which serve as a useful starting point for discussions about how we can take action based on what people told us.

1	Adapt services to improve people's experiences	26%
2	Renew our focus on children & young people	23%
3	Communicate about services and community groups	17%
4	Make sure the community sector can offer a comprehensive, well-supported range of services	15%
5	Protect and maintain public space	15%
6	Refresh our ethos or focus to suit new priorities	13%
7	Develop tailored provision for specific groups of people	12%
8	Review how people access mental health support & what people need to be able to access to keep well	9%
9	Help people to feel safer in the community	9%
10	Invest in local areas and their community sectors	6%
11	Make sure everyone can access a safe, suitable home	6%
12	Foster a culture of listening in services	6%
13	Design public transport better for the people who use it	6%
14	Work together as a system to improve people's experiences	4%
15	Make good employment a driver for health and wellbeing	2%

1. Adapt services to improve people's experiences

We got more comments about ways to change services for the better than any other topic. All kinds of suggestions were made, but many fell into four categories. In no particular order, they were:

Make accessing primary care easier, expanding capacity where necessary.

"GP is key to people's satisfaction with NHS and it seems we have a mismatch between demand and capacity. Also people don't like new booking systems which suggests debate or change needed."

"What can be done to improve access to GPs and dental services reduce waiting times for appointments"

"Look at ways to improve access to GP services or provide / promote alternative ways to access care. e.g. this couple spoke very highly of drop-in blood clinic at Chapel Allerton as an alternative to GP appointment."

Find a way to accommodate people who want to be seen in person by services.

"Feedback was that online support not that helpful. But easy access and quick response very important."

"Digital inclusion for school aged children. Ensure no children are left behind"

"Certainly need to get the balance between efficiency of phone work versus face to face."

Identify gaps in staff training and make sure services feel well-staffed.

"Mental health training for reception staff and training on delivering a triage - particularly for individuals who have prior mental health struggles"

"Would like to see more nurses / less managers."

Make fitness activities more affordable.

"Look at fitness facilities and how we enable access to those who are less confident in their abilities, or unable to afford fitness access"

"Improve access to exercise & community activities for working people on low wages."

Here are a few of the other, very diverse ideas the decision-makers had during their Big Leeds Chats about how services could be changed for the better:

“Social work stability - young person with social worker who regularly changes so has to repeatedly start again in building relationships and trust”

“Serious look at NHS equipment reuse”

“Leeds Care record usage. Person held records and not repeating tests/assessments”

2. Renew our focus on children & young people

Develop more things for children, young people and families to do, and take action to make existing provision feel more accessible.

“Promote local groups in Bramley - definite need and demand for groups aimed at teenagers.”

“Invest/look at better ways to solve the problem of families not being able to access healthy living activities.”

“As a city, make 'Think Family' a reality rather than talking about it but not going beyond statutory services”

“Lots of issues with young children unable to socialise, i.e. under 5s. Wants more evening family activities.”

Identify more opportunities for the city to listen to young people’s needs.

“Need to engage with young people - what do they want?”

“More patient experience activity with young people to ensure needs are met”

Tackle young people’s digital exclusion and offer young people the option to interact with professionals in person, rather than remotely.

“Digital exclusion very important for elders and young people / schools.”

“Access to mental health support services, especially for young children/child. Need face to face support for young people/post natal mums. Listening to first-time mums and taking on board their concerns and anxieties.”

Provide more preventative and awareness-raising work around mental health.

“Embedding MH awareness earlier, i.e. in schools.”

“Opportunities for young people to explore and hear about mental health and services, its impact and services available.”

3. Communicate about services and community groups

Communicate more about health and care services and their availability.

“I think we really need to make clear to the population what all the services are/what they are called, what they can/can't treat. Back to basics. Also people still have no idea what primary care networks are. Concepts like the BLC are a godsend.”

“Clearer messages on what is now open”

“Consider communications around healthcare options to improve understanding of users and make pathways clearer: social media/ videos/ leaflet drops etc.”

Communicate more with people about what's available to keep them healthy and well in their local area and community.

“Be much more proactive about what services are available. Maintain the contact by different media on a regular basis.”

“Better promotion of social prescribing and benefits.”

“Promote availability of exercises & importance of this to maintain wellbeing - active lifestyle & meeting friends”

“Advertise different services to people in the community - GroundWork. Poster information leaflets within the practice”

Provide broader communications about what the city is trying to do and other positives, as well as more targeted communications for young people.

“Children need to be informed as much as adults. Tap into their ideas.”

“Education and communication with young people”

“Promote good/positive news stories”

“Continue supporting health equality. Sharing this to the public so they know what the city is trying to achieve.”

4. Make sure the community sector can offer a comprehensive, well-supported range of services

Make sure there are peer support groups and groups for specific populations.

“Support groups for people in same situations.”

“Bespoke groups that improve and maintain general health and wellbeing in line with local needs and demand. Promote local groups in Bramley - definite need and demand for groups aimed at teenagers.”

“The value of peer support for different health conditions is critical so they should be protected.”

“Support for groups and activities for learning disabled people - crucial and affirming”

Organise events and spaces that bring people together, celebrate the positives happening in local areas and give residents a chance to hear about the community groups available to them.

“consider how we work better to get people to be able to access opportunities to be social and outside. Work closer with social prescribing and more community events to showcase groups etc.”

“more events like Morley arts festival. More community spirit.”

Support the third sector, including smaller and grassroots organisations.

“Mens Sheds are a godsend, company and support for one another. It's got to stay at GroundWork.”

“Prevention of mental health through 3rd sector activities are critical.”

“community centres crucial and need to be affordable.”

“Encourage smaller organisations/grassroots to thrive & support these locally as they offer community connectivity & local support.”

“Really consider how we are systematically funding & supporting community activities - play schemes, older people as these are key to wellbeing & health of community.”

Protect the assets that are already out there in the community, including the assets we don't traditionally see as community venues but serve as a much-valued place for people to get together.

"Making it comfortable to people to get out and about. Protecting the social infrastructure of communities such as groups of churches, pubs etc."

5. Protect and maintain public space

Protect parks and outdoor spaces, which are so important to people's health and wellbeing.

"Park crucial - value of the parks during the pandemic - Continue improvements and sustain the facilities"

"Maintain the fantastic work the parks department does Highlight the importance of parks and green spaces"

Keep parks tidy and well-maintained so they're used to the full.

"People want/appreciate nice, tidy areas on their doorstep. Focus has to be on upkeeping our areas to a quality standard"

Make public space accessible and welcoming to residents with different needs, with things like benches, attractive shops and so on.

"More benches in Bramley shopping centre so individuals can sit and chat - community vibe which would be most welcomed."

6. Refresh our ethos or focus to suit new priorities

Focus on new priorities that need to be tackled, such as digital exclusion.

"Digital exclusion very important for elders and young people / schools."

"Supporting equal access to IT."

"Consider neighbourhood assets & geography as barriers to healthy lifestyles and isolation"

"Consider how we can reduce health inequalities and increase exercise opportunities for people on lower incomes."

"Prevention needs to be higher up list"

“Invest/look at better ways to solve the problem of families not being able to access healthy living activities.”

Adopt a new approach or ethos, centred on people’s real experiences.

“Be compassionate.”

“Physical and MH are as important as each other.”

“Tackle isolation in a person centred way”

Recognise how COVID has had a lasting impact on people.

“Look at how COVID has affected peoples mental health- people are still frightened about close interactions.”

“Recognising breadth and complexity of experiences for someone with COVID.”

7. Develop tailored provision for specific groups of people

Gear services more effectively to older people’s needs.

“Invest in 3rd sector. Activities to keep older healthy people healthy and stimulated.”

“To have a discrete focus on older people and older peoples issues in health and social care planning. To continue to work with health professionals and support them to improve access and develop their workforce to meet the needs of older people.”

“More activities for older people to help get them out of the house. Transport to help those unable to come out unaided. Unkempt local areas and mend seating near Black Elders , as there is nowhere to sit. Mental & physical health are both important for community health.”

Adapt spaces for people with disabilities and wheelchair users.

“More accessible city for those who are wheelchair users - particularly city centre and better access/experience of visiting the shops.”

“Housing not suitable for disabled scooters.”

“Very few disabled parking. More accessible shops for disabled locals. Shop inspection by council to make sure enough space for disabled.”

“Door to door local transportation for disabled people.”

Look again at provision in services and beyond for children and adults with learning disabilities and autism.

“Support for groups and activities for learning disabled people - crucial and affirming”

“Trust especially with special needs children is difficult to build. Services not set up to build these relationships. Mental health of the young person and the family suffers immensely.”

“Review support services for people with autism and their families.”

Support women and new mothers more effectively.

“Need face to face support for young people/post natal mums. Listening to first-time mums and taking on board their concerns and anxieties.”

“Focus on young mums is so important.”

8. Review how people access mental health support & what wider provision people need to keep well

“Review mental health services and their waiting lists”

“Mental health training for reception staff and training on delivering a triage - particularly for individuals who have prior mental health struggles”

“Need more opportunities for people to discuss mental health.”

9. Help people to feel safer in the community

“How do we make people/families feel safe in the area they live? Concerns about not wanting children to play outdoors because of safety - 'the local areas limits freedom'.”

“Ensure we keep investing in activities & support for families to reduce crime & anti-social behaviour.”

10. Invest in local areas and their community sectors

“Identify investments: we need more fantastic community venues like New Wortley. The Old Fire Station that brings diverse people together.”

“Jobs and skills, investments in Armley. Jobs are the key to everything.”

“Invest in 3rd sector.”

11. Make sure everyone can access a safe, suitable home

“Access to housing needs to improve.”

“Tackle housing crisis”

12. Foster a culture of listening in services

“Engage at grassroots and be seen to engage”

“Make listening a part of all professional practice - enable community organisations to act as constant listening posts - so things can be fed in and out more readily.”

“More patient experience activity with young people to ensure needs are met”

13. Design public transport for the people who use it

“More flexible bus services at peak time.”

“Help connect Otley & be aware of Leeds centric services as transport issues raised.”

14. Work together as a system to improve people’s experiences

“Makes me more determined to work with the whole system to improve the current situation”

“Focus on those schools that are failing - question what more can the health and care system do with this and don't just leave to the domain of the education services.”

15. Make good employment a driver for health and wellbeing

“Think about workforce opportunities of people wanting to make career changes.”

“Employment is crucial”

DRAFT

Part II: The Conversations

DRAFT

Association of Blind Asians

We met with the Association of Blind Asians at Roundhay Park, in north Leeds. The association has been improving the lives of people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities with visual impairments since 1989.

We met **6 people** during our Big Leeds Chat.

What did people at the Association of Blind Asians say?

The people we met from the ABA had had quite mixed experiences of the pandemic, although on the whole they had felt pretty isolated and, in some cases, were still finding it tough to get out of the house. Sometimes, people were worried about catching the virus.

A couple of people had struggled to get the help they needed from the GP and hospital.

What they would love to see is more affordable activities to get involved in, as well as more venues for people to get together. They had all kinds of ideas for activities they would like to do, including crafts, trips out and exercise classes.

What next steps did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“We can have more impact on population health by supporting community based groups - this group have had diabetes awareness, dietitian, etc. courses. They practice yoga, have learned to use Zoom and are very keen to learn more.”

“Constantly evaluating whether key messages are likely to reach women like these - what can be done to make people FEEL included - and feel like their inclusion is WANTED.”

Armley

The Big Leeds Chat roadshow took us to Armley Moor for the Armley Festival. We were thrilled to be at this free community event, among stalls, live music, arts, crafts, theatre and food from around the world.

We met **24 people** during our Big Leeds Chat in Armley.

What did people say in Armley?

The mental health impact of the pandemic was felt keenly in Armley, and lots of the people we met at the fair told us how lonely they had been. Armley residents would like to be supported with this in different ways. Some suggested that organised activities and more informal, social ways of learning how to take care of themselves would be a really positive way of making a change to people's mental health, while others interested in or had good experiences of more traditional routes.

A lot of people said that street drinking and antisocial behaviour were problems that needed to be addressed in Armley. Many acknowledged that there needed to be more help for people struggling with alcoholism.

Not everyone in Armley had found it easy to get help from their GP, and a couple of locals told us how they had been on a waiting list for heart treatment (for 3 years in one person's case). When people felt services weren't there for them, this could amplify their distress – but, equally, when people did feel supported, it made a big difference.

People suggested that more (and better used) community spaces and events would make Armley happier and healthier, with some pointing out that there was very little for young people in the area.

What next steps for Armley did this chat inspire in our decision-makers?

“Think about support networks for 40-60's.”

“Jobs and skills investments in Armley. Jobs are the key to everything.”

“Embedding MH awareness earlier, i.e. in schools. Outdoor events and using resources already in place to promote health and wellbeing. Ensure equitable access to schemes.”

“Think about how we could redevelop volunteer exchange.”

DRAFT

Bramley, Wortley & Middleton

We visited a vaccine clinic at Fairfield Community Centre for our Big Leeds Chat in Bramley, Wortley & Middleton.

We met **51 people** during our Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say in Bramley?

People in Bramley have had real trouble getting in touch with the GP over the pandemic, and they've been particularly concerned that face-to-face appointments haven't been available. Phone contact just hasn't measured up to seeing the doctor in person for many of the people who chatted with us. This has contributed, for a few people, to a feeling of being left to cope alone – although it's worth pointing out that when help has been given to people during lockdowns, it has been very warmly received.

A lot of the people we chatted with in Bramley told us their mental and physical health wasn't good, and in some cases made worse by isolation and anxieties around catching COVID.

One of the things people most commonly told us they would like to see in Bramley is more services for children and young people. Some people believe this dearth of things to do is a contributing factor to the antisocial behaviour that came up in a lot of people's comments. Antisocial behaviour also has the knock-on effect of making some families reluctant to let their kids go out. Crime – including knife crime and drug-dealing – is something the people of Bramley are keenly aware of.

More people in Bramley than elsewhere explained how their house wasn't right for them, and some described how it was hard to get the Council to solve this issue.

A lot of people said they would benefit from a better bus service in Bramley, and there was a real outcry that benches where locals could once rest and relax had been taken away.

What next steps for Bramley did this chat inspire in our decision-makers?

“I think we really need to make clear to the population what all the services are/what they are called, what they can/can't treat. Back to basics. Also people still have no idea what primary care networks are. Concepts like the BLC are a godsend.”

“Improving public transport. Would like more shops filled in the Bramley retail park and better integration of communities.”

“Not enough facilities in Bramley for young people e.g. bowling, sports centre & snooker”

DRAFT

Carers Leeds' Dementia Carer Support Group

For this Big Leeds Chat, we headed to Carers Leeds' support group for people looking after someone living with dementia.

What did people say at the Dementia Carer Support Group?

The members of the support group said that the last several months had been "horrible". They had missed face-to-face contact, and they said they had been left feeling "helpless" or "worthless" because there had not been enough support for carers. The group's members would like to feel more valued for the work they do keeping their loved ones safe, and they would love to be able to place more trust in services (both NHS and Council-based) to help them with daily tasks.

The group said it would be helpful if services were more sensitive to carers' circumstances. One example they gave was Leeds City Council sending invoices addressed to relatives who had died months previously with the word "deceased" next to their name, which can be very upsetting for family members to read.

They praised Carers Leeds for the "amazing support" they provide, saying they wouldn't be able to carry on without the organisation.

They pointed out that caring for loved ones when out and about in public could be made easier, not least due to vehicles being parked on pavements. Sometimes the attendees had even had to push wheelchairs onto roads!

The group members said they would feel safer outside if there were an increased police presence, and there was agreement there needs to be better street lighting. They also thought that having fewer takeaway shops would make Leeds a happier and healthier city.

What next steps did this chat inspire in our decision-makers?

"The importance of dignity and respect. Considering the caring workforce into 21/22 - how do we get the right caring workforce?"

Central Leeds

We headed to Meanwood Valley Urban Farm to speak to people in Central Leeds.

18 people joined this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say in Central Leeds?

On the whole, the pandemic and everything that it entailed, from looking after kids at home to work, isolation and dealing with life events alone, had been a real drain on people in Central Leeds. Some of the people who chatted to us told us how tough it had been for children and parents when schools, nurseries and services shut their doors. Working from home had been a painful transition for some, although others credited work as the thing that kept them relatively well during the pandemic.

People would love to see more activities that get local residents (and families in particular) out of the house, meeting each other and being physically active. To do this, what people in Central Leeds need is more green space, as well as some more affordable venues that aren't too far away.

A handful of people also mentioned that it had been hard to get help from the GP, and that what they really wanted was face-to-face appointments.

What next steps for Central Leeds did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“Support groups for people in same situations, like single parents, and help for people who are finding it hard to get back out of covid”

“More things like Light Night and child friendly provision that is outdoors”

Children & Young People's Digital Workshop

We caught up with some of the children and young people who make up Leeds' Youth Council to hear what was on their minds.

About **15 young people** joined us to chat over Zoom.

What did people say at the Children & Young People's Digital Workshop?

At the workshop, we heard how a lot of the young people had found the pandemic quite frightening and difficult at first. Some stayed at home, but others whose parents were key workers kept going to school, which had been tough because most of their friends weren't there. On the whole, however, they had adapted over time.

The group had a whole range of ways they keep healthy and well, including meditation, keeping hydrated and playing music. Getting enough sleep was very important to a lot of the young people.

The people at this Big Leeds Chat also shared lots of ideas about what Leeds could do to help everyone stay happy and healthy. Some people said that making green spaces feel tidier and more welcoming would mean that people would want to get out more, especially if there were more attractions such as swings. They said it was important young people had a choice of activities to go to, including things that didn't mean you needed a lift to get there and back. One idea the group suggested was a Harry Potter treasure hunt. However, they said it was just as important that people got to hear about activities, because not all the information is getting out there at the moment. Making sure children and young people had downtime after school was another suggestion, as was starting the school day a little later.

What next steps did our decision makers take away from their chats?

"Respect views of children. People adapted really well but there has been an impact. Physical and MH are as important as each other. Thinking positive and having fun is critical. Children need to be informed as much as adults. Tap into their ideas."

Crossgates

We joined forces with a health and care fair at the Cross Gates Shopping Centre to catch up with people in LS15.

We met **15 people** at the Crossgates Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say in Crossgates?

One of the most common topics of conversation to come up in Crossgates was how difficult it was to get a GP appointment. People often felt phone or remote appointments were no substitute when they were offered. While we did hear praise for services such as the hospital, from time to time we also heard about long waiting lists for specialist treatment, as well as how hard it can be to get loved ones' mental health needs taken seriously.

Family was another big part of our chats in Crossgates. Oftentimes, family had been a huge source of practical and emotional support during the dark days of lockdown (as had neighbours and schemes such as Crossgates Good Neighbours), and people were grateful for the help sons and daughters provided when they had kids of their own to look after. But loved ones and their troubles could be a source of worry too.

There was a sense that the shops in Crossgates had become less interesting in recent times, which made making the trip in less worthwhile. The locals who chatted to us suggested that changing this would make the area happier and healthier, and there were also a few requests for more things for children and young people to do. People had very mixed views about public transport in Crossgates, with some saying it didn't work for them.

What next steps for Crossgates did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“Keep investing in neighbourhood networks”

“Look at ways to improve access to GP services or provide / promote alternative ways to access care. e.g. a couple spoke very highly of drop-in blood clinic at Chapel Allerton as an alternative to GP appointment.”

“Look at fitness facilities and how we enable access to those who are less confident in their abilities, or unable to afford fitness access. Reduced rates; local free support targeted to engage and offered with budget advice to sustain.”

“Realising that it is not just older people who struggle with access issues – it’s across all age groups”

“Need to promote support available to carers more widely so that people access it if needed.”

DRAFT

Feel Good Factor Men's Group

The Big Leeds Chat headed to the Feel Good Factor men's group, which took place in the organisation's base in Chapeltown.

What did people at Feel Good Factor's Men's Group?

At the Feel Good Factor men's group, people told us that they didn't feel some areas got the same care and attention as other, more affluent parts of the city. The men felt that roads could be better planned in Harehills so there was less congestion, and they would also like to feel safer when they were out and about.

DRAFT

Feel Good Factor Social Group

Feel Good Factor's social group meets regularly on a weekend, giving members the chance to catch up with friends.

About **15 people** joined us for this chat

What did people say at Feel Good Factor's Social Group?

At this Big Leeds Chat, people told us how much of a lifeline Feel Good Factor had been during the pandemic, including for people living alone. They would love to see the lunch clubs that stopped during lockdowns brought back, as well as shorter waiting lists for really useful community services like gardening and decorating.

People's mobility had been affected by not getting out, as well as their mental wellbeing. The group hadn't found it easy to get through to their GP surgeries to book appointments, and they had struggled to get face-to-face care in particular. They said they hadn't been able to get more routine treatment, and there was also a perception that things like screening were happening in some areas but not others.

People told us that they'd had trouble getting appointments and paying for dental work, to the extent that they'd put off getting the treatment they needed. They pointed out that they couldn't do anything about this situation because they knew they wouldn't find another dentist to take them on.

In all our conversations about accessing health and care, there was a feeling that people had to fight to get the help they needed, as well as acknowledgement that not everyone is able to do that. People talked about services using COVID as an excuse for reducing what they offered.

People at Feel Good Factor said that more reliable public transport which gave them access to different parts of the city (and the free bus which used to circulate around the city centre) would help them improve their health and wellbeing, as would being able to use bus passes before 9.30am. They said they loved getting outdoors, but they worried about slipping on leaves.

Garforth

To meet people living in Garforth and the surrounding area, we heard from people at NET (Garforth), the Halliday Court Sheltered Housing Complex (Garforth), the Community Room at St Mary the Less (Allerton Bywater) and the Cross Hills Court Sheltered Housing Complex (Kippax).

53 people joined us for the Big Leeds Chats in Garforth.

What did people say in Garforth?

Loneliness was one of the most common lockdown experiences people told us about in Garforth. The company of family, but also friends from organisations such as Garforth NET, meant a lot to people and was sorely missed. This was all the more difficult for those residents dealing with bereavement or caring for unwell loved ones.

There was a sense in a number of our conversations with people in Garforth that they saw it as their responsibility to “cope” and look after themselves as best they could. A lot of locals said walking had helped them stay well, although some also commented that there weren’t enough affordable, accessible exercise classes. There certainly were issues around not being able to get through to the GP surgery on the phone, although they weren’t brought up quite as often here as in other areas.

Garforth NET was roundly praised for the essential moral and practical support it gave people at a time when little other help felt available to some residents.

Although by no means everyone who chatted with us in Garforth was of retirement age, the downsides of getting older were a big part of our conversations. More public benches and loos came up in several chats as something that could help make Garforth healthier and happier. Getting out and about is even more important when you consider that some people told us their mobility had got worse over lockdown, and a bus service that’s genuinely accessible to less mobile would get local residents one step closer to being able to do just that.

Growing Rooms

We went to Growing Rooms, a hostel run by St George's Crypt, to meet the residents for this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say at Growing Rooms?

The switch to remote ways of staying in touch with each other and services was a big topic of conversation at Growing Rooms. Although there was acknowledgement that the internet offered some advantages, there was also a strong sense that person-to-person contact was a really important way of keeping people healthy and happy. This was why isolation had been so tough for some of Growing Rooms' members, and there was worry that we might end up back in lockdown again.

Growing Rooms' members wanted to see more people with lived experience of addiction and other issues working for health and care services. At the moment, barriers that get in people's way when they want to find health and care work include expensive tuition fees and past convictions. There was a strong sense that people who plan health and care services weren't connected enough to those of us who use the NHS.

People also talked about mental health services and how they didn't always have a sophisticated understanding of addiction, which made them less effective. Waiting lists were felt to be long, and there wasn't enough of the aftercare recovering addicts need to keep clean. It was suggested that better data sharing between services would be helpful to fill in the gaps between that exist at the moment (although people also acknowledged that this could be tricky given the stigma around addiction).

The person-centred care that Growing Rooms offers was felt to be really important.

People thought free access to leisure services and public bike schemes, as well as better public transport, would make Leeds healthier and happier, as well as more green spaces in the city centre in particular.

What next steps did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“Sometimes a GP might prescribe a drug rather than linking a person to services such as Growing Rooms, potentially due to (i) lack of awareness of the option, (ii) lack of understanding of the background of the service user, (iii) insufficient emphasis on the value of mental wellbeing. Routes into the service and signposting were also difficult. Support beyond these 12 step programmes is crucial – it’s more than treatment, it’s what happens after. People need homes, jobs and support to access these.”

“Linking voices from service users to decision makers is tricky but important”

DRAFT

Chapelton, Burmantofts, Harehills & Richmond Hill

We went to the vaccine clinic in the Reginald Centre and a coffee morning at the Polish Centre for our Big Leeds Chats in the Chapelton, Burmantofts, Harehills & Richmond Hill (or “HATCH”) area of the city.

42 people joined us for these Big Leeds Chats.

What did people say in Chapelton, Burmantofts, Harehills and Richmond Hill?

Access to primary care services (including dentists) was what people in Chapelton, Burmantofts, Harehills and Richmond Hill told us about more than anything else. Some people commented that they needed to get back to seeing their health professionals face-to-face. Similarly, lots of people really valued the chance to get together with friends, neighbours and the wider community. They would love to get back to face-to-face activities which are rooted in the community but made possible by the third sector and other services.

Some said getting out with other people helped keep them mentally well, so it perhaps wasn't surprising that the isolation of lockdown had taken a toll on people's mental health in Chapelton, Burmantofts, Harehills and Richmond Hill.

People often spoke about the role family had played over the pandemic. In many cases, people said how much they had missed relatives, while others explained they had moved in with others for support over lockdown. They often credited family for keeping them going, but at times they noted that a certain amount of strain had been put on them and their relationships.

Given how key family has been to people in Chapelton, Burmantofts, Harehills and Richmond Hill, it's no surprise children were another important theme. There were concerns that children hadn't had enough to do over lockdown, and an often-repeated suggestion that more provision to keep kids occupied would improve local people's lives.

What next steps for HATCH did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“We need to really consider how we are systematically funding & supporting community activities”

“Family getting on despite lots of challenges. Impact on 2 year old not socialising & having nursery opportunities. Love of local community but identifying that children need things to do so not on our roads & older people so not isolated”

“People are still scared and suffering from anxiety. Elderly struggle to access services. Digitally isolated elderly need support.”

“More activities to support elderly. Access to transportation for disabled people.”

“The importance of having community wellbeing activities that people can link into will influence my work”

DRAFT

Leeds Student Medical Practice

We went to One Mill Street to meet the people who live and work in this student accommodation.

We met **12 people** at this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say at Leeds Student Medical Practice & The Light?

One of the things people most commonly told us at Leeds Student Medical Practice & The Light was that connecting with people in person, rather than virtually, was vital to their wellbeing. A number of people said studying online had been harder than studying on site, and there was a real hope that events like the Big Leeds Chat which give people a reason to meet would get back into full swing.

Healthy eating and exercise were two of the main ways people wanted to stay healthy and happy.

What next steps did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“Feedback was that online support not that helpful. But easy access and quick response very important.”

“Continue to share access information about primary care services”

LGBT+ Adults

We headed to the LGBT+ Coffee and Cake Café session at Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel during the Big Leeds Chat roadshow.

15 people joined us for a chat.

What did people at the LGBT+ Coffee & Cake group say?

One of the things people at the Coffee & Cake group said was that they would love to have more opportunities to meet people, especially after all the isolation of lockdown. It would be great to see more LGBT+ friendly venues and groups out there for people to join – and, importantly, attend in person. Not everyone at the Coffee & Cake group had a computer or smartphone, and those who did often said how important face-to-face contact was regardless.

Difficulties with getting a GP appointment were another common thread in our chats. There was a lot of acknowledgment that the pandemic had been an emotionally tough time for many and, although the group felt they'd largely coped, one person had really struggled to get the mental health support they needed.

A lot of people told us how their working lives had changed during the pandemic, from redundancies to new jobs and changing workloads, ways of working and shifts.

Morley

Groundworks hosted our Big Leeds Chats in Morley over three days. As well as popping into the courses going on at Men in Sheds and Women in Sheds, we ventured out onto the streets of Morley and called into the Arts Festival.

65 people joined us for our Big Leeds Chats in Morley.

What did people say in Morley?

People in Morley told us about the trouble they had had accessing health and care more than anything else. Although it wasn't universal, people often felt it was very difficult to get through to GP surgeries (let alone secure a face-to-face appointment), especially when they weren't internet users. Occasionally, people felt GP receptionists were obstructive, and noted that they had heard about others going to A&E because primary care hadn't attended to them. Long waiting lists for specialist treatment have also taken their toll on some.

Isolation was another key pandemic experience for people in Morley. The locals with mental health needs who chatted with us often felt remote provision hadn't given them as much support as they needed. Having the chance to connect with others around shared activities is an important way of staying happy and well for Morley residents.

There was also a strong sense that there needs to be more for young people and families to do. The wider context to this, as people described it to us, was that Morley didn't have enough to bring locals of all ages together as a community. People were tired of antisocial behaviour (which they sometimes linked to children not having enough to keep them busy) and petty crime, but also of a high-street that was losing its shops and appeal. Other ways in which people felt shared space could be improved were more regular and reliable bin collections, less congestion and fewer cars parked on pavements.

When people do have the chance to get together and feel part of local life, it can clearly make a difference to their lives.

What next steps for Morley did this chat inspire in our decision-makers?

“Need more opportunities for people to discuss mental health. Consider how we work better to get people to be able to access opportunities to be social

and outside. Work closer with social prescribing and more community events to showcase groups etc.”

“Supporting GP practices to increase availability and increase access to those that need.”

“Stop building on football / playing fields. More people = increase in services? Lack of NHS dentists”

“Men in Sheds are a godsend, company and support for one another. It's got to stay at GroundWorks.”

“There is a lack of funding for small projects offering wellbeing, i.e. women & men in sheds – Groundworks.”

“Be much more proactive about what services are available. Maintain the contact by different media on a regular basis.”

“We could look at how we communicate the triage process. Make pathways and health options clearer i.e. walk in pharmacy.”

“Look at how COVID has affected people’s mental health - people are still frightened about close interactions. Improve services for mental health/ social interactions.”

Otley & Aireborough

We went to the Festival of Kindness and Aireborough Leisure Centre to chat with people living in the Otley area.

We caught up with **6 people** at these Big Leeds Chats.

What did people in Otley & Aireborough say?

People in Otley and Aireborough told us about the trouble they'd had accessing health services during the pandemic. GP surgeries were an important one, with people finding remote appointments really quite alienating. Dentists and baby clinics were also mentioned. Locals in Otley and Aireborough would appreciate more communication about what's reopening and when.

People also talked about the great things fitness and leisure schemes offer at the moment, as well as the ways they can be improved.

Finally, we heard that bus services needed to be improved, with better links around the local area.

What next steps for Otley & Aireborough did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“Should there be a consistent approach to primary care access as different surgeries do different things?”

“We certainly need to get the balance between efficiency of phone work versus face to face.”

“GP is key to people's satisfaction with NHS and it seems we have a mismatch between demand and capacity. Also people don't like new booking systems which suggests debate or change needed.”

“Clearly people are really keen to exercise and public services like Aireborough Leisure Centre are clearly valued. However, how do we increase different ways people can exercise at a time of funding constraints?”

Pudsey

We went to Pudsey market and park as part of our tour of West Leeds.

13 people joined us for this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say in Pudsey?

Three topics came out of our conversations very strongly when the Big Leeds Chat called in at Pudsey.

The first and most prominent was how hard it's been to get support from the GP, and face-to-face support in particular. In some cases, things had got so difficult that people had the impression that the health service wasn't functioning as it should anymore, and people wanted more doctors to be hired. We also heard that mental health services hadn't been prompt enough in every case.

Second, people told us that it didn't always feel safe to be out and about in Pudsey, and they wanted more, and more reactive, policing.

Third, Pudsey residents would like the area to be a little friendlier to young children and families, with more things for them to do.

What next steps for Pudsey did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

"GP face to face appointments being increased. People feel they are being fobbed off with phone appointments."

"Inter-generated work. Work with nature & music. Renovate/improve the skate park."

Seacroft

The Big Leeds Chat went to the LS14 Trust's activity groups to connect with people living in Seacroft.

21 people took part in this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say in Seacroft?

People in Seacroft often told us about how the pandemic and its lockdowns had changed their lives. For some, it had provided a welcome break from life's usual stresses but, for others, the isolation had only worsened their mental health. A few local people said they would like mental health support but were struggling to get it.

Families and children came up a lot in our conversations in all kinds of ways, and there was a real appetite for more things for parents and children to do together. Sometimes what people wanted was a shared place to "just be".

Something else that would make Seacroft a happier, healthier place to live, according to the residents we spoke to, was safer streets. Neighbours knowing each other and getting involved in the activities that are already making a difference to people's lives was another popular idea.

Touchstone's BME Dementia Service

Touchstone's BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Dementia Service provides specialist support to people from ethnic minorities living with memory problems or a dementia diagnosis, as well as their carers.

What did people say at the BME Dementia Service?

Some of the people at the BME Dementia Service told us how the loneliness and isolation of the pandemic had really impacted on their mental health. Because they didn't all know how to use the phone or computer, they had struggled to stay in touch with family, although most had now learnt the computer skills they wanted. A few also said they had been having problems with their physical health because they hadn't been able to go on gentle walks or attend their regular groups.

Most people said they feared COVID and preferred to stay indoors, with two saying they haven't been out since March 2020. The Zoom exercise classes and social group meetings organised by Touchstone have been a "blessing".

A couple of people spoke about dentists only offering partial work (such as a check-up and clean but not fillings). Most of the group members said they would like GP surgeries to resume face to face consultations, or at least offer the option to older people and those with English as a second language, as not everyone is able to get online. Three people spoke about the difficulties they had in booking an appointment; they talked about experience where, when they finally got through to reception after much waiting, they were asked to call the next day as there were no appointments left. Many have family members who have to take time off work to help them make calls or go to appointments with them.

Most people would like to return to some form of normality and have local groups run as they did previously, but they were afraid that, with winter was approaching, they would be homebound. One person said they would like home help as they suffer with a lot of joint pain and were finding it more and more difficult to do daily tasks at home. Some said a culturally appropriate befriending service would be good, as well as somewhere local for older people to meet for a chat and cup of tea.

Young people at Swarcliffe Youth Club, Mindmate and Barca

The Big Leeds Chat roadshow took us to Swarcliffe Youth Club, Mindmate and Barca, where we got the chance to hear what would make young people happier and healthier.

More than **20 young people** came to these Big Leeds Chats.

What did young people at Swarcliffe and Barca say?

On the whole, a lot of the young people who talked to us at Swarcliffe Youth Club and Barca had found life during the pandemic boring. It had been tough to learn over the internet, partly because it was harder to focus away from school. Some people felt they had really fallen behind as a result. Other things that made school (and life more generally) harder were a lack of private space at home and difficulties getting hold of a computer. Some young people were loving getting back into school, although others had found the transition hard, and a number of those we spoke to had been part of 130 students excluded en masse over a uniform violation.

A few of the young people had lost loved ones during the pandemic.

Crime and anti-social behaviour were a big part of lots of our chats around the city, but never more so than with the young people in Swarcliffe and Barca. There were a lot of worries about knife crime, but another thing that discouraged people from going out was intimidating groups of older teenagers.

The young people who chatted with us really valued the chance youth club gave them to get together somewhere safe and welcoming. They'd like to see more kinds of organisations like these, as well as a skate park and some well-lit areas where they can meet friends.

What next steps did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“Digital inclusion for school aged children. Ensure no children are left behind.”

“Focus on those schools that are failing - question what more can the health and care system do with this and don't just leave to the domain of the education services.”

“Young people all living in overcrowded homes and reportedly no schooling throughout lockdown. Think about study support areas within community facilities.”

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Vocal Girls

Vocal Girls is a group of young women who get together to make sure girls' and young women's voices are a key part of the Women Friendly Leeds campaign.

6 people joined us for this Big Leeds Chat.

What did the young people at Vocal Girls say?

The young women at Vocal Girls agreed that getting access to the GP, dentist, mental health services and sexual health had been hard. They felt that GP receptionists could sometimes be abrupt and generally unhelpful, and when they did manage to get an appointment, it was often too short. Just registering with a dentist was difficult, not least because of the steep joining fees, and some people had been dumped by surgeries for supposed non-attendance. Some people hadn't been able to see a dentist in years and were stuck on waiting lists, and those needing hospital treatment for long-term conditions or support from sexual health clinics had had to wait for many months.

The young women we met felt there was an over-reliance on prescribing medication for mental health concerns. More social prescribing was suggested as a good complement to more traditional mental health treatment models, although they added that it could be made more accessible than it is right now.

We also heard how the young women would like health education in schools to be improved. They would like to see a lot more discussion about healthy relationships and consent, and they think the way information about STIs is presented is counterproductive. There was also a lot of discussion about how schools were insensitive to girls' needs when they had their period.

The girls also suggested that education about things like applying for jobs, finances, tax and writing CVs needed to be available for people well into adulthood.

People also wanted to see more for young people to do, including cheaper leisure centres, as well as better, more reliable public transport and safer cycle lanes.

LGBT+ Youth

The Big Leeds Chat went to the LGBTQ+ Youth Service at West Leeds Activity to join in the conversation.

What did young LGBT+ people say at the West Leeds Activity Centre?

The young people at West Leeds described the past 18 months as an “emotional rollercoaster”. This wasn’t the case for everybody, but lockdowns had been very difficult when families weren’t supportive of the young people’s sexuality.

People often said they didn’t like school because of bullying, but that online learning had been very hard or impossible to engage with too.

The LGBT+ young people at West Leeds talked about social media and the negative effects it could have on mental health, although it was also an important way for them to keep in touch with friends.

Support from community organisations had been a big positive during the pandemic and had helped the young people to stay mentally well. On the whole, traditional mental health services hadn’t been felt to be as helpful. People would love to see more offers around mental health targeted more specifically at groups of people to help them make the first step towards care and treatment, as well as shorter waiting lists at CAMHS.

More LGBT+ friendly community youth groups were another way we could make Leeds happier and healthier for the young people in West Leeds. They would also like to see youth group leaders get support with their digital skills so these are as up to date as their own, as well as opportunities to do non-competitive sports and learn fun and practical skills.

West Leeds Men's Network

The Big Leeds Chat roadshow headed to Bramley Community Centre to meet the West Leeds Men's Network run by Barca. The group meets regularly so members can share conversation over a cup of tea and a biscuit.

About **10 people** joined us for this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people at West Leeds Men's Network say?

Mental health was an important topic for the men at the Men's Network – both their own and their loved-ones. Lockdowns and the pandemic had been tough for some (although others noted upsides like the peace and quiet that let them hear birds singing).

Some of the group had found online services and platforms a really useful way to look after their health, but there was a lot of acknowledgement that many people aren't able to use digital options at the moment.

A number of people in the group said they had had a tough time getting support from primary care options like GP surgeries and 111, in part because appointments seemed scarce. A couple of the men also told us that they had either lost the one-to-one support they had once had, or the path they had to follow to get one-to-one support had felt quite complicated.

What next steps did our decision-makers take away from their chats?

“Why do charities have to justify their funding? and continually bid for funds? What about their services users?”

“Access to GP and triage - frustrating to repeat same situation/story every time. Digital appointments and booking system doesn't always work for some individuals”

“Mental health - opportunities to talk (not specific services).”

Wetherby

We went to Wetherby Town Hall.

42 people joined us for this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say in Wetherby?

By far and away the biggest health and care issue people in Wetherby told us about was a lack of access. Often this meant getting through to the GP surgery to book an appointment (although a few people also told us they'd been waiting for secondary care for some time). For many in Wetherby, being able to see the GP face-to-face was an important part of connecting with primary care. There seemed to be a sense that remote care was part of a general scaling-back of GP availability.

That said, a few people also took pains to say how good their surgery had been over the pandemic. Whichever angle people approached primary care access from, one thing was consistent: people clearly placed a huge amount of value on their GP.

Some people mentioned that they were worried new housing would put a strain on overstretched infrastructure, including healthcare and already unpleasantly congested roads. It was very much felt that public transport needed improvement, not least because of the air pollution afflicting the area and its residents.

A few people also mentioned how expensive housing was in Wetherby, expressing the hope that cheaper options would be made available.

Finally, six of the people we spoke to in Wetherby told us about a bereavement they had suffered since the start of the pandemic. For this and other reasons (not least isolation), some people's mental health had declined in recent months. For Wetherby residents, getting mental health support often means travelling to Leeds or York – which can entail relying on a bus service few seem to have confidence in.

What next steps for Wetherby did this chat inspire in our decision-makers?

“Mental health support group required for Wetherby”

“[Wetherby needs] more flexible bus services at peak time”

“Need to consider how we link cross-border”

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Woodsley & Holt Park

The Big Leeds Chat roadshow took us to OPAL, Rainbow Junk-tion and Little London. OPAL supports older people to live happy, healthy, informed lives in their own homes while Rainbow Junk-tion is an independent pay-as-you-feel community café that aims to reduce food waste, feed hungry people and build community.

A total of **23 people** took part in these Big Leeds Chats.

What did people say in Woodsley and Holt Park?

During our chats at OPAL, Rainbow Junk-tion and Little London, we heard a lot about how the pandemic had put a strain on people's mental health. The isolation and uncertainty really took its toll on many, although a few others said that working had helped them keep a much-needed sense of stability.

Parents told us about how hard the pandemic had been on children and young people's mental health, and it had been tough keeping them entertained during the long days of home-schooling. People would like to see much more for locals of all ages (but especially children and families) to do in the area, and thought organised spaces and activities might be a really useful and sensitive way to support everyone to look after their physical and mental health.

Housing is an issue for local people in Woodsley and Holt Park. Sometimes, lockdowns had shown up the inherent difficulties of house shares and closely packed housing units, with residents with less space seeing their relationships with neighbours and housemates come under strain. Other people shared that their house wasn't suitable to their needs, but they'd found other options unaffordable or they hadn't been given high enough priority by Housing Options to have a chance of moving any time soon.

It was clear that lots of Woodsley & Holt Park residents loved to see local people coming together to support one another, and some of the people we spoke to told us they were volunteers for community organisations.

What next steps for Woodsley & Holt Park did this chat inspire in our decision-makers?

“I heard about the isolating impact of pandemic and the challenges of non face-to-face mental health support. We need to consider how we support those who feel isolated, especially in terms of access to telephone/remote services.”

“Consider neighbourhood assets & geography as barriers to healthy lifestyles and isolation”

“Power of volunteering. Woman was so active because she lives alone.”

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York Road

We went to the Heritage Day celebrations at Gipton Old Fire Station to meet up with local residents.

23 people joined us at this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say in the York Road area?

On the whole, people in the York Road area felt they'd more or less "managed" during the last 18 months (although that wasn't universal, of course). Home-schooling was widely agreed to have been hard, and many of the people who chatted with us had kept working throughout the pandemic. Sometimes, job changes and home-working had made life a little easier, although long hours meant some people didn't have as much time as they'd like to look after themselves through things like exercise and social clubs.

One key downside people had noticed in recent times, however, was trouble getting primary care. While again there were exceptions, a number of residents told us getting to speak with a GP had been very difficult, and a couple of residents said NHS 111 hadn't worked for them at all.

People were particularly keen to see more spaces and activities to keep young people happy and well, with some saying it would be great to have more mental health support for everyone, children in particular. Two people also said men would benefit from more support.

There was a widespread feeling that community centres and groups were hugely valuable to everyone's wellbeing. In fact, a couple of people told us they had been coming to Gipton Old Fire Station for 40 or 50 years, and some called in on a near-daily basis.

What next steps for the York Road area did this chat inspire in our decision-makers?

"Improve access to exercise & community activities for working people on low wages."

"Check how health visitor access has been in Leeds - do we know?"

“Identify investments: we need more fantastic community venues like the Old Fire Station that brings diverse people together.”

“Ensure we keep investing in activities & support for families to reduce crime & anti-social behaviour.”

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Your Space Leeds

Your Space Leeds is a project run by Mindwell in Holbeck to offer social groups, walking groups, workshops and healthy living activities.

15 people joined us for this Big Leeds Chat.

What did people say at Your Space?

One of the key things people at Your Space felt would help their health and wellbeing was community groups. Some people told us they felt there needed to be more for young children and their parents in particular, while others explained how important opportunities to socialise and get out of the house were to their mental health. Some people had managed to stay in touch with friends and loved ones online during the pandemic, but others pointed out that they preferred face-to-face conversations or couldn't use the internet at all.

There was also interest in activities that would help people improve their English and other skills.

We heard about worries about crime in the area discouraged people – especially women – from going out at night, with some pointing out it was important activities felt safe to go to. Sex work and drug crime were the two worries people cited the most.

The challenges of looking after children at home during lockdowns while also balancing work and other commitments came up in a number of our conversations at Your Space. Work – both the positives it offered during lockdowns but also worries about finding it – came up particularly often during our chats at Your Space. People sometimes talked about ongoing money worries, as well as how much they had valued the help they had had from their community during lockdowns.

What next steps did this chat inspire in our decision-makers?

“Access to MH support services, especially for young children/child. Need face to face support for young people/post natal mums. Listening to first-time mums and taking on board their concerns and anxieties.”

“Significant concerns about:

- Access to MH services and support
- Safety in the local area - feel vulnerable as a lone women (with a young child) when outdoors, even in daylight.”

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Acknowledgements

We would like to say a huge “thank you” first and foremost to the hundreds of people who joined in the Big Leeds Chat 2021 all around the city. Yet again, the people of Leeds were extremely generous with their time, thoughts and ideas, and we hope to do you all justice with the work we do as a city following on from your conversations with us.

Huge thanks also to all the decision makers and chat makers who gave their energy and time to make the Big Leeds Chat happen in 2021. It was no mean feat to go out and do over 40 chats at a time when we were all still dealing with the effects of the pandemic, so we are immensely grateful to all the professionals who took part at what was a very busy time.

And finally, thank you to you for reading this report! We hope it fuels your own ideas for making Leeds a happier and healthier place to live.

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