

Essex Service User Scoping exercise 2022/2023

As part of Changing Futures, Essex County Council and Phoenix Futures explored the views and experiences of the current 'system' from individuals who access services in Essex. These individuals were able to speak about any part of the system which they had accessed and their experiences. To achieve this, we compiled questionnaires that asked the following questions:

In your experience, what are the common barriers to accessing services?

1. What are your experiences of accessing services in Essex, good, bad, or average?
2. What barriers, if any, have you encountered and what impact have these had on you?
3. What solutions do you suggest?

How does the current system negatively impact people facing multiple disadvantages when moving between services?

1. Have you had experiences of moving/transferring between services?
2. How did this move go? What worked well and were there any gaps/barriers? How did these gaps/barriers affect you?
3. What solutions do you suggest?

What are the common ways that the current system makes people feel, particularly those facing multiple disadvantage?

1. How do you think the current system as a whole affects people with multiple disadvantage?
2. What solutions are there to empower individuals and create more effective interactions?
3. If you could change one thing about your experience, what would it be?

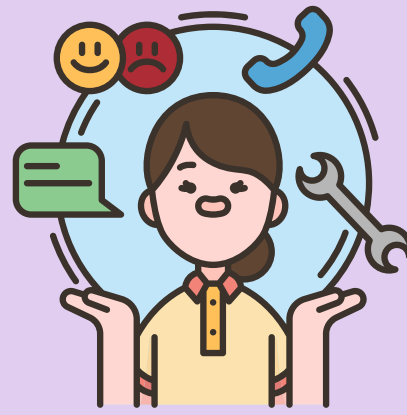
We spoke with 100 individuals across the county who are or have accessed services within Essex. Those who took part, their ages ranged from 18 - 74 and were of all backgrounds.

Our aim is to be able to develop an honest and transparent approach, without a culture of blame or accusations, which will enable true system change and make services more accessible for those with multiple disadvantages.

To enable us all to facilitate change, we first need to understand gaps in services as well as barriers to accessing and retaining service users.

Everything you will see on the next slides are the true responses from those who took part in this scoping exercise.

Identifying the barriers individuals face when accessing support



Barriers to services

Poor Communication



- Poor internal communication
- Poor communication with GP's
- Unclear signposting to services
- Not listening to service users

Services under-resourced



- Key workers changing often
- Delays accessing services
- Lack of face to face appointments

Unable to access services:



- Struggle accessing housing support
- Lack of support available
- Poor experience with MH services
- Struggle accessing a dentist

Suggested solutions

“More meetings between services, monthly so as **all there to support**”

“Better systems. You should have a **response time for referrals**”

“**More professionals needed.** Specialists to interact at places like this (Sanctus)”

“**Better support** for younger generation”

“For the services to be **more compassionate and listen** to what you have to say”

- More frequent and improved communication with service users
- Increase collaboration and listening to service users
- Increase funding, staffing levels and support
- Improve training for staff
- More face to face appointments
- Services to adopt a person-centred approach
- Increase signposting of services
- Face to Face communication and appointments
- Clearer access to information on the services available
- Compassionate and open communication from services

“For them to learn a **person centred approach**”

“**More services to be available,** more support for therapies. Trained mental health specialist doctors”

“**Improve signposting,** make people and other services know what is available”

Impact

Suicide Ideation

Negative impact on Mental Health

Increased Stress & Anxiety

“Let down, make me feel like **I didn't deserve help**”

“**Not people centred**”

Physical health declined

“Can't work, affects my anxiety, made me feel **life isn't worth living**”

Increased Substance Misuse

Disengaged with services

Negative view of services

Feelings of confusion & frustration

“Anxiety, disappointment, **loss of faith in the system.** Makes you want to not bother getting help”

“I've been **using drugs and drinking more**”

Understanding the impact on individuals navigating the current system

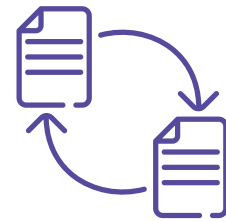


Barriers to services

Poor Communication

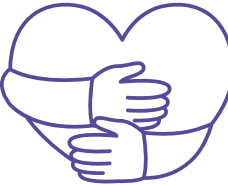


- Lack of Communication between services
- Repetition of information
- Lack of communication with service user



Mismanaged referrals & transfers

- Poor transition from YP to Adult services & GP to MH
- Referrals not picked up
- Medication not being transferred



Empathy & understanding

- Service users not feeling listened to
- Lacking empathy and attentiveness
- Poor understanding from both services and service user



Loss or lack of support

- Service users felt unsupported
- Losing access to services when moving areas
- Long waiting times for support

Suggested solutions

"A phone call so I knew I hadn't been forgotten and to see how I was coping"

"Support worker to help transition"

"There is trust, honesty and confidentiality and no-one is judged"

- More frequent and improved communication with service users
- Increase collaboration between services and listening to service users
- More support to be made available
- Increase levels of staffing
- More face to face appointments
- Improve awareness and understanding of service user needs
- Increase signposting of services
- Reduce complexity in accessing services - single point of access
- Improve transitions between services

"Improve the way services communicate with each other"

"One point of contact to access all services"

"People to be more understanding and work at the pace and ability for me"

"More funding. Better continuity of Care"

"Explain more about what's happening and what will happen next"

"I felt lost with no support"

"Not able to have support as no one knows who to refer to"

Impact

Suicide Ideation

Negative impact on Mental Health

Increased Stress & Anxiety

Increased Substance Misuse

Physical health declined

Lost access to services

Negative view of services

Feelings of frustration

"Makes me feel unimportant, just a statistic"

"Put anxiety through the roof"

Understanding how the current system makes individuals feel



Impacts

Impacts on Mental Health



- Worsens already poor mental health
- Repetition of their stories retraumatizes
- Felt alone & not worth helping



Feeling unsupported

- Negative judgements impact level and quality of support
- Not always taken seriously, not a person-centred approach

Hard to access services



- Lack of accessibility & support
- Lack of service knowledge
- Long waiting times for services
- Confusion with services set up

Impacts - In their words

"System is not working, causing people mental and physical problems, causes people more anxiety"

"Drug abuse, prison, self-harm, suicide"

"Makes people feel lonely and no one cares about your feelings, isolation"

"It's not easy to navigate the system unless you have someone to help you with it and know what to do and where to go"

"Very confusing, disheartening and it takes a long time to get any support and it does not always feel like the right support"

"Not treated equally, looked down on"

"Too long a wait for services to interact"

"Too much paperwork - Support lacking for learning difficulties, find it particularly difficult and confusing"

"Makes it worse, calls from different people. Having to retell your story to everyone a million times"

If you could change your experience...

"More staff/regular contact"

"Support workers available to more people"

"Getting into services quicker"

"To have been listened to"

"More communication both ways and being helped when needed"

"Waiting times reduced"

"Better inter-service support"

"Help sooner as my mental health badly deteriorated to time waiting"

"Be given 1:1 support"

"More access and understanding of needs"

"Be honest about my situation sooner than later"

"Smoother/easier pathway into services. No wrong door policy"

"More face to face appointments"

"Clear pathways on the treatment plan"