

Rethink
Mental
Illness

Executive Summary

Service Experience Survey Report

24/25



Contents

- Executive Summary..... 3
 - Introduction..... 3
- Keys findings at a glance 4
- Our Impact 5
 - Quality of life..... 5
 - Safety, housing and stability..... 5
 - Access to the right support..... 5
 - Mental health and wellbeing 6
 - Confidence, independence and hope..... 6
 - Connection and not feeling alone..... 7
- Other services..... 7
 - Advocacy, rights and having a voice 7
 - Support for carers 8
 - Helplines 8
 - Bereavement by suicide..... 8
 - Employment support 9
 - Prison mental health services 9
- Where we need to improve 10
- What happens next..... 11
- In summary..... 12



Executive Summary

Introduction

I am delighted to introduce Rethink Mental Illness’s latest national service user satisfaction report. This publication represents a significant step forward in how we listen to and learn from the people who rely on our services. At its heart, the report is built on the voices of those who shared their experiences through the Service Experience Survey. I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone who took part – your feedback is invaluable and directly shapes the way we improve and deliver support.

Over the past year, we have transformed the way we engage with those accessing our services. Accessibility has been central to this change, with both standard and easy-read formats ensuring that more people can participate. Importantly, the survey was co-produced with people with lived experience and our staff, so the questions reflect what truly matters. By embedding these measures across all services, we now have a clearer picture of satisfaction, outcomes, and the impact on quality of life.

This report draws on the largest sample of feedback from those accessing services that we have ever gathered, complemented by Rethink’s Demographic Dashboard Data, a fantastic resource that provides a comprehensive view of who is accessing our services nationally. Together, these datasets enable us to assess how representative survey responses are, while also deepening our understanding of the diversity of our service user population.

For the first time, our mission to improve quality of life for people severely affected by mental illness has been assessed on a national scale. The inclusion of ‘I statements’ from our Impact Framework further strengthens this analysis, allowing us to track progress over time and identify the areas of support that make the greatest difference to people’s lives.

This year’s findings are particularly encouraging. Not only do a strong majority report positive experiences, but we also see statistically significant improvements in key national measures. People are now even more likely to recommend the service they accessed, and overall service ratings have strengthened, with significant reductions in negative scores. These results highlight the value of accessible, personalised support and the commitment of our teams across the country.

We remain dedicated to listening, learning, and acting on this feedback to ensure our services continue to meet diverse needs and improve lives.

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Overview

Each year, Rethink Mental Illness asks people who use our services to tell us about their experiences. Their voices shape everything we do – from how we design support to how we measure what matters most.

The Service Experience Survey (SES) is one of the key ways we listen. It gives people the opportunity to share, in their own words, how our services have supported them and where we can do better. The feedback helps us to understand the real impact of our work, track progress against our mission, and identify where change is needed.

This report presents the findings from the 2024/25 survey, which received over 2,000 responses from people across England accessing a wide range of Rethink Mental Illness services. These include community and crisis support, supported and residential accommodation, carers and advocacy services, employment and prison mental health support, helplines, and bereavement by suicide services. Together, these responses provide one of the most comprehensive pictures yet of the experiences of people affected by severe mental illness.

Most respondents were either currently using a Rethink service (71%) or had done so within the past six months (23%). This means that what we heard reflects current experiences and provides a clear, real-time view of how our services are performing.

By asking questions linked to these domains, we can better understand where our support is making a measurable difference – and where we need to go further.

This year's results continue to show that Rethink Mental Illness makes a profound and lasting difference to the people we support. Across every type of service, people told us that being listened to, understood, and treated with compassion is what matters most – and what Rethink delivers best.

At the same time, the data also highlights areas where we can grow. People asked for more consistent staffing, longer-term support, and clearer communication. These insights will shape our priorities for the year ahead as we continue to improve accessibility, consistency, and impact across all services.

The following report sets out what we learned: the strengths, the challenges, and the real stories of change behind the numbers.

The questions asked in the survey are closely aligned to our Impact Framework, which is built around seven domains that define quality of life for people living with severe mental illness:

- 1. Access to the right support when it's needed**
- 2. Having a safe and stable home**
- 3. Maintaining physical health and wellbeing**
- 4. Building meaningful relationships and social connections**
- 5. Achieving financial stability**
- 6. Developing confidence, skills, and opportunities for personal growth**
- 7. Gaining a sense of value, purpose, and hope for the future**

Keys findings at a glance

This is based on 2,000+ responses across our services, including community and crisis support, housing and accommodation, prison mental health services, advocacy, helplines, carers support, bereavement by suicide services and employment support.

Most people responding were either currently using a Rethink service (71%) or had used one in the last six months (23%), which means what we heard reflects what's happening right now.

Statistically significant findings

According to the statistical significance testing carried out for this report (explained in detail in the full methodology section), the following results are considered statistically significant. This means we can be highly confident that these improvements reflect real change, rather than differences arising by chance due to sample variation.



would recommend their service to a friend or family member in a similar situation. We continue to perform above the national Friends and Family Test benchmark for mental health services.



rated the support they received as 'good' or 'excellent' – and no one rated their support as poor.



Our Impact

Our mission is that people severely affected by mental illness have the best possible quality of life. This year's results show that we are making a meaningful difference across core areas of life: safety, housing, mental health, confidence, connection, and hope.

84%

Quality of life

84% of people told us that support from **Rethink Mental Illness improved their quality of life.** That's in line with last year (83%) and shows a sustained, positive impact across different service types.

Only **4% disagreed** that their quality of life had improved, **down from 6% last year.**

Most people feel our support is helping, and fewer people feel it is not.



Safety, housing and stability

Feeling safe and having somewhere to live are some of the most basic, and most powerful, foundations for recovery.

- **83%** of people agreed they **have "a place I can call home."**
- **69%** said they **feel safe** where they are.
- In our supported accommodation services, **86%** said they **feel secure**, and **85%** said their **room meets their needs.**
- In our CQC registered residential services, **91%** told us their **room meets their needs** and **88%** said **staff had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.**
- In our crisis accommodation, **83%** said the service had a **positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing**, and **83%** felt **safer there than before they arrived.**

For many people, our services are not just accommodation – they're the first place in a long time where they've felt safe, respected and able to rest.



72%

feel they have access to the **right support when they need it.**

Access to the right support

We ask everyone whether they feel they have access to the right support when they need it. This year, 72% said yes.

We see this reflected across services:

- People in our community services told us the **support is accessible (90%).**
- **82%** of helpline users **agreed the helpline was accessible** to them, often at times when other services are closed.
- **In prisons, 92%** said they **were given information** about treatment options that were appropriate for their needs, and **78%** said they were **offered their preferred option.**
- **In advocacy, 85%** said they **understood their rights**, and **89%** said they **felt able to disagree with decisions** about their own care.

Choice and voice are coming through strongly. People feel listened to and included in decisions affecting their lives.

Mental health and wellbeing

We continue to have a clear impact on people's mental health:

- **87%** of people using our community services said the **support had improved their mental health and wellbeing.**
- **83%** of people using crisis accommodation said the **service had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.**
- **88%** of people in CQC registered services said the **service had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.**
- **93%** of people bereaved by suicide said the **service had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing.**
- **80%** of people using **employment support** said the service had a **positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.**



In people's own words, that impact often sounds like:

“ I feel calmer. ”

“ I feel less suicidal. ”

“ I've started to look after myself again. ”

“ I can keep going. ”



73%

feel more hopeful about **eventually living more independently.**

Confidence, independence and hope

We see a strong link between feeling believed, being encouraged, and feeling able to move forward.

- **82%** of people using our community services said **their confidence and self-esteem had improved.**
- **73%** of people in supported accommodation said **their confidence and self-esteem had improved.**
- **83%** of people in CQC registered services said **they felt more confident and had improved self-esteem.**
- In employment services, **82%** said support improved **their confidence and self-esteem, and 80% said it supported their wellbeing at work or while looking for work.**

In supported accommodation, people described very practical gains: cooking, cleaning, budgeting, going to appointments, using public transport, talking to health and social care professionals, and planning for “what’s next.” **73% said the service helped them feel more hopeful about eventually living more independently.**

In crisis accommodation, people told us the space, the time away from pressure, and someone being there 24/7 helped rebuild a sense of control. 70% told us they felt less suicidal since accessing the service.



Connection and not feeling alone

Isolation came through as a major pressure point again this year – but so did connection.

- **73% of people** using our services agreed **“I have social connections that are meaningful to me.”**
- **72%** agreed **“I have access to the right support when I need it.”**
- **73%** of people in our crisis accommodation said they **felt less socially isolated.**
- **79%** of people in community services said the service **helped reduce social isolation.**
- **79%** of carers said they **felt less alone** because of the support they received.
- **71%** of people bereaved by suicide said they had **met people who could genuinely empathise with their experience.**

For many people, meeting others “in the same boat” is not just helpful – it’s described as life-saving. Group support, peer support, carers groups and bereavement groups all continue to play a critical role in helping people feel understood, without judgement.

Other services

Advocacy, rights and having a voice

Advocacy users told us, in their own words, that **being heard matters.**

- **85%** said they **understood their rights.**
- **77%** said they **understood their choices.**
- **76%** said they **felt safe accessing advocacy.**
- **75%** said they **felt confident speaking for themselves.**
- **82–84%** said their **advocate explained their role clearly,** understood their issues, and made sure they were listened to.

For some, advocacy changed the actual outcome of a decision – including access to leave, discharge, entitlement to services, or being able to say no when they were under pressure.



People told us their advocate:

“spoke when I couldn’t”

“stood up for me”

“helped me challenge decisions”

“was my voice when I was voiceless.”



Support for carers

Carers continue to tell us that they are under huge strain – emotionally, practically and financially – and that support is often hard to access elsewhere.

- **94%** said they **were supported** to access appropriate information.
- **89%** said **support helped** them improve their physical health and fitness.
- **88%** said they were **now managing** their own health and wellbeing better.
- **80%** said they **felt more confident.**
- **79%** said they **felt less alone / less isolated.**
- **79%** said they **felt valued.**

We also saw a steep rise this year in carers asking specifically for 1-to-1 support (70%, up from 36% last year), and for help navigating formal systems like Carers Assessments and local authority support. Carers told us, clearly, that being listened to without judgment – and being treated as someone with needs of their own – is essential.



“
The helpline
got me
through the
night”



Helplines

Our helplines are often used at the hardest moments.

- **82%** said the **helpline was accessible** to them.
- **82%** said they could **guide the conversation and talk about what they needed**.
- **74%** said the **helpline helped** with their problem **straight away**.
- **100%** said **suicide was approached sensitively and compassionately**.
- **100%** felt **comfortable talking** to a support worker about the impact of what they were going through.

People used words like “lifeline,” “kept me safe,” “got me through the night,” and “the only place I could turn.” Many people made a direct link between contacting the helpline and not acting on thoughts of self-harm or suicide.



Bereavement by suicide

This service supports people after one of the most painful and traumatic experiences a person can face.

- **93%** said the **service had a positive impact** on their mental wellbeing.
- **86%** said it **helped them grieve and process their loss**.
- **82%** felt **more able to look after themselves**.
- **71%** said they had **met people who could empathise with what they’ve been through**.
- **67%** said they felt **more able to talk** to family or friends about suicide.
- **100%** said the **service approaches suicide in a compassionate and sensitive way**, and that they felt at ease speaking to their worker.

People told us that this support helped them to keep going, helped them feel less alone in their grief, and helped them to start rebuilding in a way that felt possible.

Employment support

Employment is not just about work. It’s about identity, purpose and hope.

- **100%** of people using our employment services **said they were helped to look for competitive employment when they felt ready**.
- **100%** said **staff listened to their preferences** about the kind of work they wanted.
- **100%** said they **did not feel excluded or discriminated against** because of their mental health or benefits situation.
- **80%** said the **job opportunities** being explored **matched their interests**.
- **80%** said the **service supported their health and wellbeing** while in work or looking for work.
- **82%** said **their confidence and self-esteem had improved**.

There were also practical gains. 66% said they now feel more confident writing applications and cover letters. 41% said they are now in work or volunteering.



66%

now feel **more confident** writing applications and cover letters.



Many also told us **they simply wanted more sessions, more continuity, and some form of follow-up after release**.

Prison mental health services

In our primary mental health services in prisons, we again saw very high levels of satisfaction and trust.

- **92%** said they were given information about treatment options that were appropriate to their needs.
- **78%** said they were offered their preferred treatment.
- **89%** said they were **completely satisfied with their assessment**, and a further 9% were mostly satisfied.
- **95%** said they **were listened to and taken seriously “at all times.”**
- **88%** said they **were involved in making choices about their care**.
- **86%** said they **received help that really mattered to them**.

Where we need to improve

Alongside the positive feedback, people were honest with us about what isn't working well enough yet. *We take that seriously.*

We heard five clear messages:

- 1. People repeatedly asked for more stability.** 19% of all improvement-related comments were about staffing consistency, cancelled appointments, or support ending sooner than they felt ready for. Trust takes time to build, and when it breaks, people feel set back. Though these are sector-wide issues with social care continuity, it is important we also highlight this internally.

“I need consistency. Please don't keep changing my worker.”

- 2. “Please don't drop me when I start to get better.”**

14% of comments asked for longer or ongoing support. People told us they worry about what happens when structured contact stops. **They want smoother transitions** – not a cliff edge.

- 3. Access and travel were major barriers (12%).** People talked about distance, cost, transport, mobility, and timings. Some told us they were being asked to access a different location that didn't feel right or safe for them.

“It's hard to get to you.”

- 4. “I need more to do, not just to talk.”**

People asked for more groups (especially in supported and CQC-registered accommodation), more structured activities, and more variety. This covered **social groups, creative sessions, confidence-building, weekend activities, and women-only or interest-based spaces.**

- 5.** People told us they wanted **better communication and proactive follow-up.** 10% of feedback was about wanting **clearer information** on what's available, what's happening next, **who is contacting them, and when.**

“Please keep in touch clearly.”

There were also specific points about:



Navigating money, benefits and housing: people consistently asked for more practical help here.



Feeling prepared to live independently: people in accommodation services want clearer plans, more rehearsal of real-life skills, and more confidence that they'll be supported when they move on.



Immediate response at crisis point: while most people using helplines felt supported, a minority described experiences where they did not feel responded to quickly enough, or where communication cut off too early. That experience can make someone feel worse, not better.



Variety in activities: In accommodation services, some people felt there wasn't enough to occupy their time, especially if they'd been there a long time.



Continuity in bereavement and carers services: for some, having to tell their story again to new workers felt exhausting and painful.

These are all areas we can act on.

**We asked,
we listened, and
now we act.**



What happens next

Over the next year we will:

1. Strengthen continuity and consistency

We will keep working to reduce unnecessary changes in key workers and to minimise cancelled or missed appointments. Where change is unavoidable, we will focus on warm handovers so people don't feel like they're "starting again."

2. Plan support around transition, not just crisis

We will build in clearer "what happens next" conversations, especially in crisis accommodation, supported housing, carers services and bereavement support. People have told us they need a way to stay connected – even briefly – as they move on. We will make that expectation part of how we work.

3. Expand meaningful activity and peer connection

We will continue to grow peer-led, group-based and creative activities, especially in accommodation services. We'll focus on activities that reduce isolation, build social confidence, and feel relevant to people's lives – including evenings and weekends where possible.

4. Improve practical support around money, housing and stability

We will keep strengthening support around benefits, housing, and everyday pressures. People told us: "help with forms changed everything," "I'm not in debt now," and "I finally feel settled." We will do more of that.

5. Keep making our services easier to access

We will keep offering flexible formats – text, phone, in-person, online – and work to reduce travel barriers. We'll also continue promoting inclusive, culturally competent and trauma-informed support, so people feel safe engaging with us.

6. Protect what people said matters most

Across every type of service, people told us the same thing in different words:

"You listened."

"You understood."

"You treated me like a person."

**That is our core standard.
We will protect it.**

In summary

The message from people using our services this year is clear.

We are having a real impact. We are keeping people safe. We are helping people rebuild confidence, trust, skills and relationships. We are helping people feel less alone. We are helping people imagine a future.

But people also told us what they need us to do better: stay with them, be consistent, make it easier to get to us, and help them keep going when the really intense support ends.



**We're listening,
and we're acting.**

Rethink Mental Illness

We are the charity for
people severely affected by
mental illness, no matter
what they're going through.

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