

# South London Listens Action Plan

November 2021 - November 2023



**Working together to prevent a mental ill-health crisis as a direct result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.**

**South London Listens is a unique two-year partnership programme that is built on the contributions of over 6000 people across south London to help prevent a mental ill-health crisis as a direct result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.**

**The actions contained within this document have been co-produced with support from statutory, voluntary and community organisations.**

**Over the next two years between November 2021 - November 2023 we will deliver these actions as a partnership, helping to create a new blueprint for working together to build community resilience and improve mental health across south London.**

**To everyone involved in South London Listens so far, thank you.**

**What you have told us has shaped our four priorities:**

- 1. Loneliness, social isolation and digital exclusion**
- 2. Work and wages**
- 3. Children, young people and parental mental health**
- 4. Access to mental health services for migrants, refugees and diaspora communities.**

## Contents

Title	Page
<b>South London Listens - at a glance</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>South London Listens partners</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Foreword</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Response from community leaders</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The South London Listens story</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Priority 1: Loneliness, social isolation and digital exclusion</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Priority 2: Work and wages</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Priority 3: Children, young people and parental mental health</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Priority 4: Access to mental health services for migrants, refugees and diaspora communities</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Recovering together - next steps</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Overseeing the programme and measuring success</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Impact and evaluation</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>35</b>

# South London Listens - At a Glance

## Our journey so far and key milestones over the next two years

### June 2020

Three virtual South London Listens summits involving 3000 people leading to establishment of major taskforce, with over 25 organisations including NHS, Local Authorities, Citizens UK and voluntary and community organisations.

### November 2020 - March 2021

South London Listens Community Campaign launched – training 300 leaders and listening to over 6000 people.

### April - May 2021

'Problem to issue' workshops co-chaired by community leaders, NHS and local authorities help define the four South London Listens priorities and co-produce 22 solution-focused pledges.

### June 2021

South London Listens community summit held with over 800 attendees, including local authority leaders, councillors, mental health trust chief executives and chairs from across the wider NHS system leading to commitments to action across south London.

### October 2021

South London Listens two-year Action Plan launched with robust governance in place to oversee delivery.

### Summer 2022

Community accountability assembly to take stock and review progress being made at the halfway point of the two-year programme.

### Summer 2023

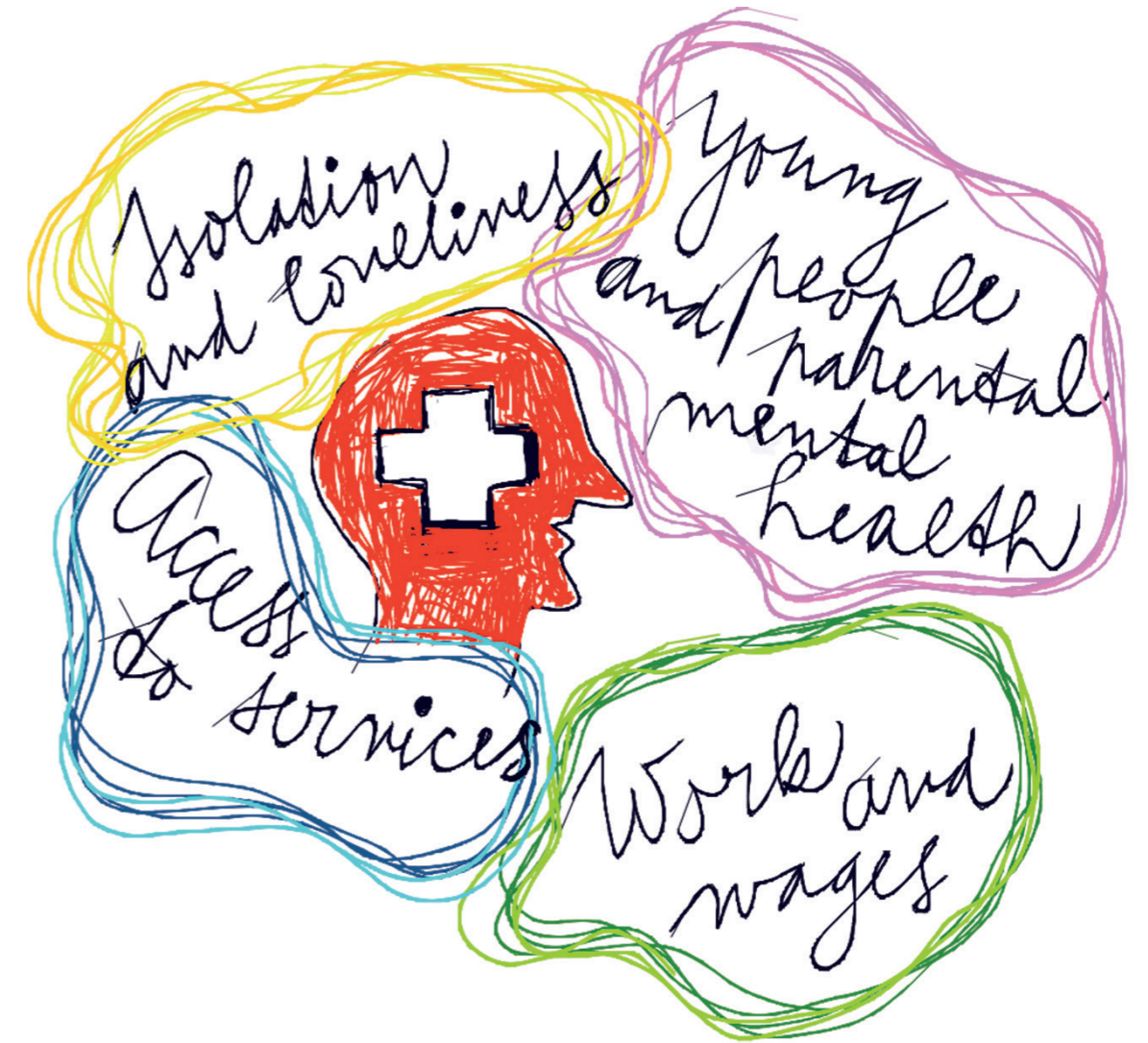
Final community accountability assembly to review and celebrate progress that has been made against all 22 pledges and agree next steps to ensure sustainability.

### October 2023

Publication of South London Listens review and evaluation report. Office for Health Improvement and Disparities to consider recommendations for future programmes.

# South London Listens partners

We are grateful to all of our partners for committing to work together over the next two years to deliver on the priorities and pledges made to the communities of south London.



**Sir Norman Lamb, Co-Chair of the South London Listens Taskforce and Chair of South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust:**

The community summit in June powerfully set an agenda for action to prevent mental ill-health and promote recovery. It is now our job to make sure the pledges we made become a reality. It is inspiring to be working in such close partnership between the NHS, local authorities, and members of our communities. Together we are going to make lasting improvements to people's lives.

**Ann Beasley CBE, Co-Chair of the South London Listens Taskforce and Chair of South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust:**

Our communities have been very clear about the toll the pandemic has taken and continues to take on their mental health. We know there is a long road ahead of us, but by working in partnership and listening to our communities we can take practical action that will have a real impact on people's lives.

**As we continue to build new partnerships throughout the programme we will update this page.**

# Foreword

From the South London Listens partners

## Preventing a mental ill-health crisis. We've listened - now it's time to act.

**Covid-19 has had a deep impact on the mental health of every one of us. Whether it is dealing with the virus itself, losing your job, juggling the demands of work and home schooling, feeling lonely, missing friends or the tragedy of losing a loved one, we have all had a very personal experience of living through this pandemic.**

For many of us its effects will be short lived, but for others Covid-19 will continue to cast a long shadow for years to come as people begin to rebuild their lives. Most worryingly, it will be those people who are already experiencing significant health inequalities, including those from economically and socially disadvantaged households, black and minority ethnic communities, and those who were already socially isolated.

Since March 2020, our ambition has been clear. We recognised that only by working together across south London can we tackle these challenges head on. From the very beginning, we knew that this response had to start at grassroots by listening to the people directly impacted. More than 6000 people took part in the South London Listens community listening campaign and shared their stories of how the pandemic has impacted their lives and their mental health.

**Thank you to everyone who has been involved on this journey so far. It has been our privilege to work with you to listen, to share ideas, and to create solutions together - culminating in the inspirational Community Summit in June 2021.**

**This plan of action details our programme of work across the four South London Listens priorities:**

- 1. Social isolation, loneliness and digital exclusion**
- 2. Work and wages**
- 3. Children, young people and parental mental health**
- 4. Access to mental health services for migrants, refugees and diaspora communities**

This document sets out our formal response to the 'asks' made at the Community Summit on 16 June 2021 and makes clear our commitment to working together to deliver on the pledges we have made to our communities across south London.

We know that as a result of Covid-19, people need mental health support right now, and many more will need help in the future. We will continue to work hard to make sure that help is there at the earliest possible point. We also know that the path to recovery lies not just in institutions, but in communities themselves.

Through South London Listens we want to help build community capacity and resilience around mental health. This means supporting individuals to connect,

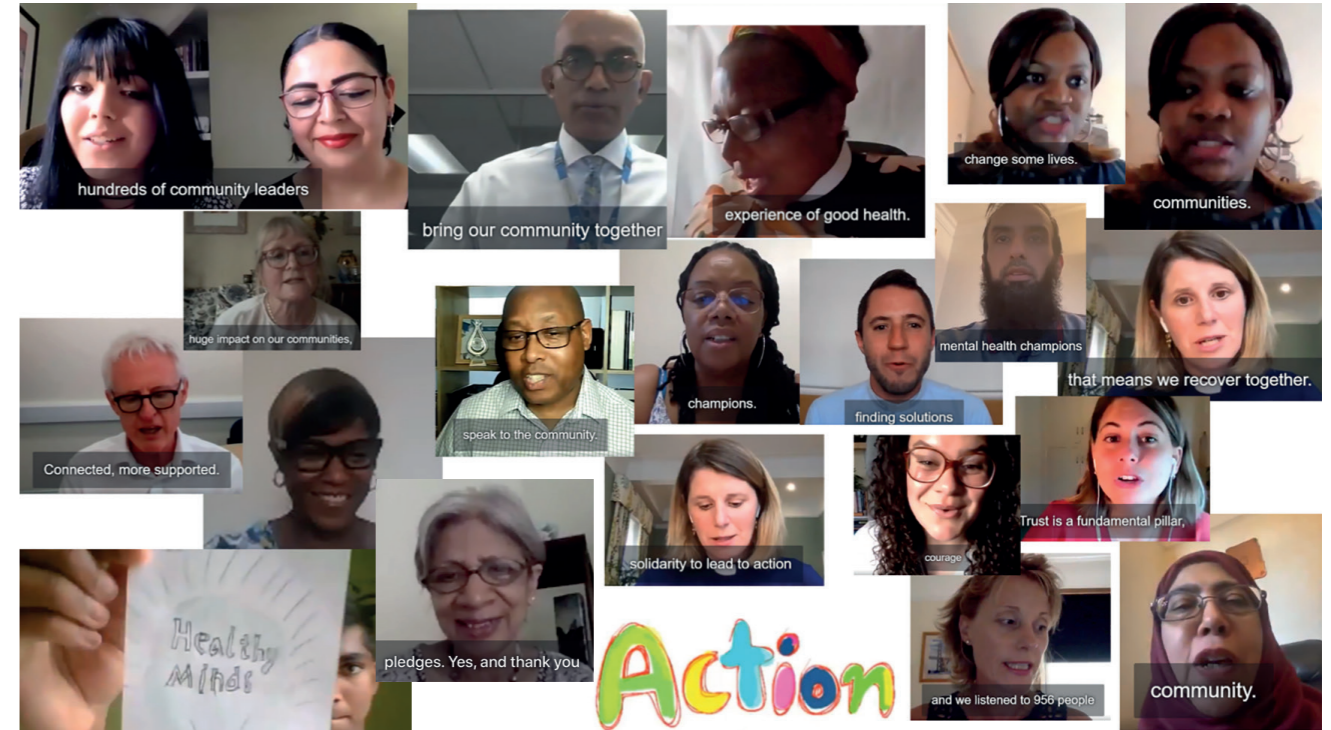
understand their own mental wellbeing and be better equipped to know how to access support, as well as being confident in helping others in their community.

Finally - we don't want this initiative to be a one-off. We want to make sure that the community based mental ill-health prevention and recovery agenda is embedded across south London - so that our approach and ideas can grow and be sustained. We want to see more programmes and more funding - so that we can not only prevent the challenges that Covid-19 presents to mental health, but build a mentally healthy south London for the future.

We are clear - this is the beginning of our journey together. We can see the devastating impact the pandemic continues to have across the world and in our communities - but together we have hope. Hope that the journey we have started will see us come through the other side of the pandemic more connected, supported, cared for, healthier and stronger.



Use QR code to view community summit'



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**Hope that the journey we have started will see us come through the other side of the pandemic more connected, supported, cared for, healthier and stronger.**

## Response from community leaders

**As community leaders from across south London, who invested our hopes, time and energy in listening to thousands of others and developing asks of decision makers, we are pleased to see this Action Plan published. It signals your commitment to following through on the pledges you made to us at the Community Summit on 16 June 2021**

We endorse this document as a good start in the roadmap to recovery of south London's wellbeing and mental health.

We are excited to see the mental health champions programme launched, with funded training and community mental health hubs fully resourced across south London. It is our ambition that through this work no one is more than 10 minutes away from speaking to someone about their mental health should they need to.

We welcome and fully endorse the ambition for every partner in south London to become a living wage employer. Low wages have long been a strain on mental health, which was only exacerbated by the pandemic. Continued progress in this direction will be vital in both the prevention of mental ill-health and improving the wellbeing for every south Londoner. In a time where we have seen an exponential rise in the use of foodbanks across our communities, for those in and out of work, leadership in this area from the mental health trusts, the wider NHS, and local authorities will make a significant difference.

We are delighted to see commitments to improving the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) waiting experience and upping parental support. For many of us, this is an area of special urgency. Whilst we recognise significant work has been done to address and improve the CAMHS experience, we are especially enthused to see a commitment to delivering our innovative idea of a CAMHS virtual waiting room.

We are particularly thrilled to note work has already begun in identifying community embedded workers to improve access for refugees, migrants and diaspora communities.

Members of these communities have played a pivotal role in the South London Listens process. This will be an important first step towards acknowledging their rich contribution to the south London community and the validity of their needs.

We look forward to continuing this fruitful work and partnership. The exciting but hard work has only just begun!

**Rev'd Cathy Wiles,  
Assistant Priest at All Saints West Dulwich,  
on behalf of South London Citizens**



# The South London Listens story

## The challenge

The Covid-19 pandemic has had an impact on every aspect of our lives and on our physical and mental health. Nationally, it is predicted that 10 million people in the UK will need either new or additional mental health support as a direct consequence of the pandemic.<sup>[1]</sup>

Research shows that mental ill-health has already increased among adults and young people in the UK during the pandemic, with increased rates of stress, depression, and anxiety.<sup>[2][3][4]</sup>

Covid-19 has brought many new challenges; but it has also had an amplifying effect on pre-existing inequalities in both society and health services, threatening the most vulnerable in our communities. Affected communities and groups are those already experiencing significant health inequalities, including those from black and minority ethnic groups, and people who are economically and socially disadvantaged.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Our response

The South London Listens programme has been developed to meet these challenges head on – as an urgent mental ill-health prevention response to ensure south London communities can recover from the significant mental health impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a partnership involving many of the local authorities in south London, the South London Mental Health and Community Partnership (SLP) which is formed of Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (South London and Maudsley) and South West London and St George’s Mental Health NHS Trust (SWLStG), Citizens UK, local Healthwatch organisations, South East and South West London Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and over 100 community organisations including schools, colleges, universities, faith organisations and small charities.

Since June 2020, we have been engaging the community and healthcare experts through three major digital summits, which gathered the views of over 3,000 people on the biggest mental health challenges communities face around Covid-19.

In November 2020, we launched a four-month listening campaign - South London Listens - with our strategic partner Citizens UK, a national community organising charity made up of an alliance of diverse local communities working together for the common good. Communities were asked to share their views on what they felt was having the biggest impact on their mental health due to Covid-19. The result was a deep and extensive piece of community-led mental health listening and engagement. Over 300 community leaders were trained by community organisers in Citizens UK to listen to others in their community. These leaders could reach people who public institutions typically don’t always reach. Through their leadership, over 5,700 people actively engaged in the campaign through one-to-one conversations, and in small group meetings on Zoom, sharing issues, experiences, ideas and solutions. A further 600 people took part in an online survey.

## The solutions

**Moving from problems to solutions isn’t easy. Problems are multifaceted, general, and overwhelming; often ideas proposed to tackle problems can feel unrealistic or involve government intervention.**

We ran problem to issues workshops, working with community leaders to break down problems into bite-size chunks that we could do something about together. Issues are specific, immediate, and tangible things that someone in the system has the power to change. From issues, we started to develop solutions. A good issue always includes a solution to the challenge you have identified. Usually communities come up with problems and then experts say what should be done to solve them; this creates an unhealthy power imbalance and so instead we designed solution workshops bringing together as equals those with lived and learned experience. Members of the community and teams from mental health trusts and local authorities were tasked with coming up with solutions that were both worthwhile and realistic.

# South London Listens four priority areas

The result was four key priorities and a series of asks from the community to the NHS and local authorities made at a Community Summit in June 2021.



## Priority 1

### Loneliness, social isolation and digital exclusion

- 1.1 Support the Mental Health Champions programme
- 1.2 Develop a social isolation, loneliness and digital inclusion strategy



## Priority 3

### Children, young people and parental mental health

- 3.1 Create a CAMHS virtual waiting room
- 3.2 Resource parent groups to offer peer-to-peer support



## Priority 2

### Work and wages

- 2.1 Work towards accrediting all Mental Health Trusts in South London as Living Wage employers
- 2.2 Champion the Living Wage in the health sector
- 2.3 Local authorities to become Living Wage accredited
- 2.4 Local authorities to develop a Living Wage places scheme



## Priority 4

### Access to mental health services for migrants, refugees and diaspora communities

- 4.1 NHS to invest in mental health practitioners embedded in community organisations
- 4.2 NHS to develop a culturally competent workforce
- 4.3 Local authorities to support 4.1 and 4.2
- 4.4 Support the ‘Safer Surgeries’ initiative

**In the next part of this document we set out our pledges in response to the community asks – as well as our wider commitments and actions across these key priority areas over the next two years.**

**We are committed to delivering against our ambitions and to share lessons and best practice more widely across London and the UK as our programme develops.**

**We will put in place robust monitoring and evaluation to help shape future mental ill-health prevention programmes using the lessons we have and continue to learn from the South London Listens programme.**

# Priority 1



## Loneliness, social isolation and digital exclusion

**Social restrictions, including local and national lockdowns have been a vital pillar of the public health strategies to target the spread of Covid-19. But they put a significant strain on the public's mental health.**

Social isolation was the highest ranked theme in our listening campaign, with a third of responses citing the negative impact it has had on their mental health. Many respondents to our survey experienced feelings of powerlessness (81 percent), isolation (78 percent) and loneliness (76 percent) since the start of the pandemic. These feelings were particularly prominent among respondents aged 18-34, with more than 90 percent experiencing some degree of loneliness, isolation and powerlessness.

This echoes national trends showing that the mental health toll of missed contact with family, friends and colleagues. The pandemic has exacerbated existing feelings of loneliness and isolation especially for parents, carers, older people and those who have been bereaved.<sup>[6] [7]</sup>

This is important because social isolation and loneliness are often linked to mental health problems including depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem.<sup>[8]</sup> They can also be barriers to accessing care.

The impact on Wellbeing for people at risk of loneliness is likely to be compounded by other economic and social impacts experienced by the same people, such as those experiencing job losses and health anxieties.

## What our communities asked for

### NHS and local authorities to:

- 1.1 Support and resource a Mental Health Champions programme
- 1.2 Develop a social isolation, loneliness and digital inclusion strategy in your borough

## What we are doing

### Launching the Mental Health Champions programme

**Since the Community Summit in June 2021, we have developed the programme's flagship Champions programme, which underpins the work of South London Listens in building mental health understanding, awareness and engagement.**

The Champions programme will develop the capability and capacity of community and voluntary organisations to support the wellbeing of local people to strengthen collaborations between health services and voluntary organisations. It has three core elements:

#### 1. Mental Health Champions

Through the next two years, our ambition is to train at least 400 leaders across south London. Mental Health Champions will receive special training from the Mental Health Promotion team at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. It could be as simple as taking the time to listen to someone who is stressed or anxious and passing on techniques to help them manage their feelings, to directing those with more serious problems to where they can get professional help.

Champions will report back on the trends and themes affecting their communities. By continually listening to this feedback and identifying issues early, we will be able to proactively design and deliver services that meet their needs.

#### 2. Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs

Working with our Mental Health Champions, we are supporting the development of over 60 mental health and wellbeing hubs across south London. These hubs will be spaces both in physical and virtual format – which will be places for local people to turn to when they feel their mental health is low or simply to feel more connected with their local community.

Hubs will be hosted by existing networks of relationships and will be able to translate material so that it is culturally relevant for users. Importantly, these hubs will provide a way for communities to look after their own wellbeing and have an ongoing relationship with their local mental health trust – with regular listening events to share learnings and to feed back into mental health service planning and development.

#### 3. Mental Health Activists

To build on the incredible engagement we've seen with South London Listens, we will create thousands of mental health activists. They will help to ensure that mental health remains a priority locally, raising awareness and promoting mental wellbeing at community events and meetings. Our Activists will be empowered with knowledge, local resources and links with NHS services to give initial first step support, acting as sign posters. As part of this work, we will also build on South London Listens' engagement with local MPs and Councillors to provide mental health awareness sessions for elected officials across south London to enable them to better serve their communities' mental health needs.





### Tackling loneliness, social isolation and digital exclusion

Since the pandemic hit, South London Listens partners have been working to respond to the significant challenges of loneliness, social isolation and digital exclusion at a local level.

Across the boroughs, led by local authorities, important work is underway to develop local strategic responses. South London Listens is committed to supporting this work – we will be working with our partners to monitor and share best practice of work underway.

### Councillor Lucy Caldicott, Lambeth Council's member for health and social care:

A key focus for Lambeth now and into the future is tackling systemic health inequalities and this will continue, more so than ever, as we emerge from or live with the pandemic. We are proud to sign up to the full range of pledges and play our role, alongside our partners, in supporting our communities' mental health and wellbeing.



### Councillor Chris Best, Lewisham Council's member for health and adult social care:

The voice of our communities couldn't have been clearer and access to services will be one of our top priorities. I'm also very proud that Lewisham will be supporting the Mental Health Champions programme and developing a digital and local isolation strategy to help Lewisham residents recover from the pandemic.

# Priority 2



## Work and wages

**Work and mental health are inextricably linked. Work is good for our mental health, but being unemployed, or in a challenging work environment, can have a significant negative impact on our wellbeing. Likewise, being on low or insecure wages causes stress and anxiety that can undermine our mental health.**

The pandemic had a devastating effect on the economy and businesses and services across the United Kingdom. In 2020, the UK experienced the most significant decline in GDP since the 1920s<sup>[9]</sup>. Since the Covid-19 pandemic began, the proportion of adults in Great Britain who found it difficult or very difficult to pay usual household bills doubled from 5 percent to 11 percent.<sup>[10]</sup>

These developments exacerbate significant challenges in London, where poverty is already higher than in any other region or country in the UK.

Through the community listening campaign, we heard about the huge impact on work and wages because of the pandemic. We heard from people in minimum wage jobs of how their hours had been cut leaving them unable to provide for their families.

Our survey found that one in three people have been affected by job insecurity (38 percent) and a similar proportion are struggling to pay the bills (34 percent).

As well as financial insecurity, income loss, and unemployment we also heard about the stress and anxiety caused by increased workloads and trying to manage a work/life balance in new working environments.

**David Bradley, Chief Executive of South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust:**

This cruel pandemic has affected so many of the people we serve in different ways. We must ensure that our response is just as comprehensive and that it addresses both the mental health problems many have experienced and the underlying issues contributing to those problems. We all hope this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience so if anyone was ever going to get involved in helping to plan local services, now is that time.

## Kely's Story

**Money worries and challenges with bosses are bad enough at the best of times. Add in a global pandemic, as Kely discovered, and the stress can make your hair fall out.**

Despite having a teenage son with asthma, Kely felt her only choice was to continue to brave public transport each day to get to her cleaning job – where she was earning the London Living Wage. Her employers bluntly rejected her worries about travelling on public transport, knowing that her son has asthma and refused to furlough her. Later they cut her hours without warning.

**“They said I should leave if I didn't like it, but I couldn't do that when people are losing their jobs so I was caught between a rock and a hard place.”**  
Kely, from Southwark, recalls.

**“I was getting so worried that I wasn't sleeping and I was losing weight. Even my hair started to fall out. My union was helping me and eventually I decided that I would stop fighting them trying to sack me as long as I received redundancy money.”**



The company even played hardball on that but eventually paid up. This still left Kely facing the challenges of unemployment when the UK was in the biggest recession since the 1920s.

After a few weeks Kely found new work, but she is working fewer hours and it only pays the minimum wage. Things are very tight and she has had to turn to her local foodbank to get by.

Ironically, that hit on her income is being felt even more now that society is opening up.

**“It is great that the pandemic might be coming to an end and we can do things to take our mind off it all, but now I don't have the money to do anything. Splurging for us is a new school shirt or trousers for my son. When I go food shopping I check the price tag on every single item.”**

Throughout the pandemic Kely has found strength and comfort from being active in a Latin American community group, whose name translates as Empowering Families. Lambeth Citizens, part of Citizens UK also provided her son with a laptop and phone. This meant he could take part in remote learning. Having been trained by Citizens UK to lead small online consultation groups for South London Listens, Kely has participated in and led several – encouraging others to open up about their experiences.

# What our communities asked for

## NHS to:

- 2.1 Work towards accrediting all mental health trusts in south London as Living Wage employers
- 2.2 Champion the Living Wage within the health sector more widely, including encouraging GP surgeries, Clinical Commissioning Groups and hospitals to accredit as Living Wage employers

## Local authorities to:

- 2.3 Accredite as a Living Wage employer, and if you've already done this as a Living Hours employer
- 2.4 Develop a Living Wage Places scheme in your borough

# What we are doing

## Promoting the Living Wage across south London

**NHS and local authority partners across south London have committed to working towards becoming Living Wage employers. Some of our partners are more advanced in this work – for example South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust became a Living Wage employer in February 2020.**

Over the next two years, we will work to celebrate advances already made and understand the feasibility and timescale to make more progress. Our ambition is that every trust and local authority in south London will be a Living Wage employer. Where trusts and local authorities are not Living Wage accredited, we will go through the following steps:

- Ensure senior leaders in each institution are on board with achieving accreditation and paying the Living Wage. Nominate a member of staff in each institution to lead on accreditation
- Enquire with the Living Wage Foundation to receive guidance on setting up and scheduling milestones
- Ensure all directly employed staff are paid the Living Wage
- Identify all relevant third-party contracts that are not paid at the Living Wage, setting target delivery dates for implementation
- Build the Living Wage into all terms and conditions and future supplier communications
- Submit approved milestones and Living Wage agreement to the Living Wage Foundation
- Once accredited we will celebrate and communicate our Living Wage employer accreditation with our internal and external networks, including displaying the Living Wage employer logo and Living Wage plaque, and appearing on the Living Wage Foundation's interactive map of Living Wage Employers

# Case study



**South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust has received Living Wage accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation. The Trust now pays all its staff the real Living Wage, which is higher than the minimum wage set by the government. It also means the Trust pays all London-based employees the London Living Wage. This is an independently calculated rate that ensures workers can meet the cost of living in the capital and earn enough to support themselves and their families.**

## Providing employment support for people with mental health problems

We will launch a pilot of the Work Well advice line – an employment support line for people with mental health problems, initially developed as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Anyone with a work-related issue causing them stress (for example unemployment, redundancy, furlough, bullying, stress at work) can call the advice line and will be given advice and signposting to a suitable employment service and/or mental health service if they're not already receiving support. There are hundreds of different projects/agencies offering advice but people generally don't know how to access them – this will not only help people get the help they need more quickly, it will provide support to mental health services, with clinicians able to refer clients to the advice line. This pilot will initially take place in Lambeth and Southwark and if successful, we will look to secure a wider roll out across south London.

## Hosting careers days for south Londoners interested in careers in mental health

Mental health trusts already host careers days, but we know we could do them better and in closer partnership with community institutions and other partners. We will work with community leaders to develop a new approach to careers days that opens them up to groups that are currently underrepresented in the mental health and wider workforce.

# Priority 3



## Children, young people and parental mental health

**The pandemic put immense pressure on the mental health of children, young people, parents and caregivers. Rates of mental ill-health, which were already increasing in young people, have been exacerbated as children and young people have struggled with missed education, fear and anxiety.**

A Young Minds study found that 67 percent of young people believe that the pandemic will have a long-term adverse effect on their mental health.<sup>[11]</sup> We also know that Covid-19 is further increasing child maltreatment, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation because of lack of access to school friends, teachers, social workers and the safe space and services that schools provide.<sup>[12]</sup> Young people in Child and Adolescent Mental Health

Services (CAMHS) in particular are feeling in limbo and lacking support. The negative impacts on children have been mirrored in research on parents during the pandemic, who have seen increases in stress, anxiety and depression.<sup>[13]</sup>

From our listening, we heard caregivers expressing feelings of guilt and grappling with the stigma of 'not coping'.

Many parents wanted mental health support but did not know where to get it. Around a third of parents in our survey were not confident that they were able to cope and were experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

## What our communities asked for

### NHS and local authorities to:

- 3.1 Improve the interaction for young people on the waiting list for CAMHS by developing something like a 'virtual waiting room' which would include:**
  - a more interactive process
  - ensuring young people know where they are on the waiting list
  - curating young people's path so that whilst they wait, they can access bespoke digital tools
- 3.2 Support and resource parent groups to offer peer-to-peer and co-produced mental health support**

## What we are doing

### Improving the CAMHS waiting experience

**As outlined at the Community Summit in June 2021, there is widespread agreement on the need to improve the CAMHS waiting experience - and broad commitment to do better in communicating, providing more contact and supporting young people and families at this critical time.**

#### Our plan is twofold:

1. Across the mental health trusts, work has already begun to explore the changes that can be made now to improve systems and the ways young people are communicated with in their referral journey. This includes how we can offer supportive tools to navigate the wait or 'void' as some of our community members call it. This work will be, supported by the South London Listens programme team, and include auditing the range of tools that already exist
2. We will be facilitating co-production groups to explore in detail the proposal of a 'virtual waiting room' to improve the interaction for young people whilst they are on the CAMHS waiting list. We will bring together mental health trusts with local partners, including schools and teachers, to scope the proposal from January 2022. We will then work with NHS, local authority partners and charities to fund the development and trialling of a new initiative

### Scaling up parental mental health support

Over the next two years, we are ambitious about improving the scale and reach of parent peer support services in south London, to meet the vital need outlined in South London Listens. We have begun auditing the current picture across south London to identify gaps and opportunities – including promoting existing initiatives underway at a borough level. Working with - and expanding - our networks, we will provide upskilling and training to parent groups across south London and launch two new pilot initiatives Parent University and Dad Champions.

Through Parent University, we will bring together parents of young children, community leaders and organisations and mental health professionals to work to develop and co-create a mental health and wellbeing programme. This programme, which we are initially piloting in Southwark and Lambeth, will aim to specifically meet the needs of vulnerable parents with young children struggling because of isolation and poor mental health. We will identify key topics, an outline, delivery method and materials for the course.

Through our Dad Champions project, we will carry out a proof-of-concept trial of a new programme for fathers across Lewisham, Lambeth, Southwark and Croydon. It is adapted from the successful Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) model. This addresses the findings of South London Listens, in particular challenges around engagement with fathers. This will be co-created with south London communities and will focus on fathers of children aged 2-11.

We will invest in leadership development for parent leaders in south London, equipping them to provide peer-to-peer mental health support and work with partners to directly address the findings from South London Listens. Through an initial pilot in Southwark, this will include a training course to upskill people who run parent groups in the relationship-building techniques of community organising, mental health awareness, and how to access the mental health system. We will then develop a programme that will provide a peer-to-peer support network for parents that are alumni of Parent University to connect with each other and break down the barriers to positive parental mental health.

We know that there is widespread support across the NHS and local authorities in south London for parent peer support programmes, so we will be looking to build on our pilots to develop and roll out more widely throughout our programme.

### Working in collaboration with football clubs across south London

We are exploring work on a new initiative Advantage, which is a community based support offering mentoring for young people with mild to moderate mental health and wellbeing needs. It is an innovative partnership between football community club organisations and NHS CAMHS units. Advantage uses youth work to connect with young people, with a mentor supported by a designated NHS clinician.

## Jo and Emma's view

As a psychotherapist in a secondary school and parent to three boys, I know the crucial importance of mental health support for children, young people, and the adults around them. Parents and teachers often describe to me their experience of waiting for mental health services as leaving them feeling powerless, as if they are left in limbo. This is echoed in my family's story. We waited two years for mental health support for one of my sons and we are currently in this process with another son.

### Jo

In South London Listens, we listened to over 100 students in our school and have led the way in developing solutions with other schools and community leaders on what we heard. In regard to young people and schools, we feel the focus needs to be on supporting people whilst they are waiting to access services. Our solution is to develop the digital equivalent of a waiting room. This is to support and monitor young people whilst they are on the waiting list to ensure their mental health does not worsen in this period. It would also support families who can often feel helpless whilst their child is waiting for acute support or early intervention.

### Emma

#### **Martin Wilkinson, Director of Integrated Care and Commissioning, South East London Integrated Care System:**

It's been inspiring to work with our communities in such a different way. I feel proud of the joint work we are doing on such important issues, tackling the mental health impact of the pandemic, especially for young people. It's rewarding to be involved and co-create change together with our communities, to make a real and felt difference.



# Priority 4



## Access to mental health services for migrants, refugees and diaspora communities

**For many people in south London, Covid-19 has brought on new mental health challenges - or made existing challenges worse. The need to improve access to support and appropriate services has never been greater.**

This increased need is particularly felt by those who already experience disadvantage in our society, particularly Black, African, Caribbean and mixed heritage communities, and migrants, refugees, and diaspora groups.

Our survey found that 48 percent of people do not know where to go for support. This rises to 54 percent for Black, African, and Caribbean community members, two in five of whom face a lack of mental health services (39 percent).

Community leaders from migrant, refugee and diaspora communities highlight specific issues blocking access including language and cultural barriers, lack of trust in the NHS, complicated forms, not understanding the system and fear of personal data being shared beyond the service.

## What our communities asked for

### NHS to:

- 4.1 Invest in mental health practitioners embedded in community organisations, to build trust and provide services for refugee, migrant and diaspora communities – including work to:
  - Bridge gaps between the NHS and communities
  - Assess and triage complex needs
  - Make referrals and follow up with patients to help them navigate the system
  - Make registering for and accessing services easier
- 4.2 Work towards developing a culturally competent workforce by:
  - Reviewing existing practices for cultural competence (translators, cultural awareness, data sharing)
  - Updating protocols to reduce structural barriers
  - Establishing mechanisms to involve communities in developing solutions to entrenched healthcare inequalities
  - Training and equipping staff to understand barriers to healthcare and take active steps to overcome these barriers

### Local authorities to:

- 4.3 Give your support to these initiatives
- 4.4 Encourage your local GP surgeries to register as 'Safer Surgeries'

## *Elsie and Hera's view*

The pandemic was really hard for people with insecure immigration status as they had nowhere to go and did not trust mental health services for fear of being reported to the home office. South London Listens brought the community together, and we got to learn about the issues we all shared such as the barrier of speaking English as a second language and trust when accessing services. For me, the community embedded worker will mean rebuilding this trust and that people like me will be able to get the help we need without fear.

### **Elsie**

Trust is a fundamental pillar of any healthcare system. So how can we build it? Go to where trust already exists. Most migrants rely on their communities for information and support. They go to their neighbours, their faith community, their local charity, where they can speak to someone who has either been in their shoes or someone who intimately knows what they are going through.

### **Hera**



## What we are doing

### Community embedded worker programme

The community asked us to invest in mental health practitioners to support the needs of refugee, migrant and diaspora communities. To meet this goal, we have begun scoping a new Community Embedded Worker role. Through this, we will fund a mental health clinical advisor to work with marginalised migrant and diaspora groups to provide clinical mental health and wellbeing support for vulnerable individuals at risk of mental ill-health.

The advisor will work with key community organisations to understand needs, develop culturally relevant material, and train community leaders to give low level support so that the benefits of the work can be maintained at a local level. In 2022, we are piloting the scheme in Southwark and Lambeth, with a view to rolling it out across south London if it is successful.

### Ethnicity and Mental Health Improvement Project (EMHIP)

South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust is working with Ethnicity and Mental Health Improvement Project (EMHIP) to reduce ethnic inequalities in access, experience and outcome of mental health care.

### Building cultural capability

We are committed to continuing to involve communities in developing solutions to entrenched healthcare inequalities and reducing structural barriers. Across the three mental health trusts in south London, supported by South London and Maudsley's Mental Health Promotion Team and Citizens UK, we will be supporting a programme of staff training to boost cultural capabilities.

### Promoting Safer Surgeries

The Safe Surgeries Network, run by Doctors of the World, recognises GP practices that commit to taking steps to tackle the barriers faced by many migrants in accessing healthcare. Our ambition is for all south London surgeries to be 'Safe Surgeries'. We will be working with Doctors of the World to audit take up within south London and promote and encourage local GP surgeries to register as 'Safe Surgeries'.





## Recovering together – next steps

**Covid-19 has brought us challenges. But through South London Listens it has also led to unique new relationships – and partnerships – between communities, organisations, and institutions. This work so far is just the start. Through this programme, we’re committed to continuing to listen and take action together to build a path to mental health recovery.**

### **This is how:**

#### **We will attend accountability assemblies.**

We will attend two accountability assemblies hosted by community leaders through the duration of the programme. The first will be in the summer of 2022 to review progress against our pledges, share good practice and celebrate our progress together.

#### **We will put community leaders at the heart of the programme governance**

Community leaders will be at the centre of our work to deliver this action plan, including being part of the governance and decision-making structures of the programme.

#### **Supporting anchor institutions**

We will be supporting the three mental health trusts to work together to further expand their work as anchor institutions. As outlined by the Health Foundation, this means working together to:

- Purchase more locally and for social benefit: in England alone, the NHS spends £27bn each year on goods and services
- Using our buildings and spaces to support communities: The NHS occupies 8,353 sites across England on 6,700 hectares of land
- Widening access to quality work: The NHS is the UK’s biggest employer with 1.6m employees
- Working more closely with our local partners: The NHS can learn from others, spread good ideas and model civic responsibility
- Reducing the NHS’ environmental impact: The NHS is responsible for 40% of the public sector’s carbon footprint. <sup>[14]</sup>

We will work with local authority partners to promote and support their work on anchor programmes.



## Overseeing the programme and measuring success

**With the launch of this action plan, the programme moves to its delivery phase from November 2021 to November 2023. This will be steered by a new South London Listens Taskforce, which will oversee and drive the programme’s workplans and projects across the four South London Listens priority workstreams. Membership represents each of the boroughs involved as well as community leaders from South London Listens and NHS leadership across the South London Partnership.**

The Taskforce will formally report into the South West and South East London Integrated Care Systems. A new high-level advisory board has also been set up to provide strategic advice and expert input through roundtable events held at key moments through the two-year programme to drive forward the prevention agenda. This will be chaired by Sir Norman Lamb and Ann Beasley, CBE and the membership includes trust chief executives, clinical and strategy leads in south London, council leaders and councillors, and community leaders.

On a day-to-day basis, the project will be managed and coordinated by a small programme team. They will oversee work with all programme partners including local authorities, statutory and community organisations, supporting the concrete implementation of the action plan. The project is supported by our strategic partner Citizens UK who have been commissioned to support delivering the programme over the next two years.

Ranjeet Kaile, Director of Communications, Stakeholder Engagement and Public Affairs at South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust is the Senior Responsible Officer for South London Listens.





## Impact and evaluation

**The programme's impact will be measured against its three key strategic aims:**

1. Supporting services' response to prevent mental ill-health
2. Building healthier and resilient communities better able to respond to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond
3. Embedding mental ill-health prevention within anchor institutions in south London

We will be working with evaluation partners to monitor our success against these aims.

Using a 'theory of change' approach, we will set out success measures relating to our individual projects and the programme as a whole. Progress will be monitored by the community through two Accountability Assemblies throughout the programme. Reflection, learning and evaluation are being built in throughout this programme to ensure the work continuously improves and can support developments across NHS Trusts and wider national and international prevention initiatives.

**On behalf of South London Listens we extend thanks to NHS Charities Together for their generous funding for this programme**

**Councillor Evelyn Akoto, Southwark Council's member for health and well-being:**

We are fully committed to what our community is asking us to do. We have started work on Safer Surgeries and I am now determined to have all our surgeries sign up. We have a transient population so it's important we combat the postcode lottery by working together to provide excellent mental health services wherever our residents may find themselves.

**Iona Lidington, Director of Public Health, Kingston Council:**

This work builds on the work we have been doing on our mental health strategy, Thrive Kingston. We want to take forward our mental health champions. In terms of social isolation and digital inclusion, building on Connected Kingston which is a community platform which is a real conduit to join people up to a whole host of activities that are happening in our local patch.

**Councillor Janet Campbell, Croydon Council's member for families, health and social care:**

The passion of our communities to overcome the terrible impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been inspiring. Now is the time for us to match their passion and pledge our support to all their asks. I'm looking forward to continuing to work alongside our community to improve mental health for all.

**Tonia Michaelides, Locality Executive Director, South West London Integrated Care System:**

I believe we must be ambitious for the wellbeing of our communities, and I am proud of the work of South London Listens – and I am proud to be involved and represent the NHS. This has demonstrated that even out of a terrible situation like the Covid-19 pandemic, such positive things can be achieved together.

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### **Vanessa Ford, Chief Executive of South West London and St George's Mental Health NHS Trust:**

It is incredible how many voices have been heard throughout this process – and I am here to say that the Trust is ready to act on the issues that will have the biggest impact on our communities and to help rebuild lives. Thank you for sharing your stories and we are here to work with you on these areas together.

### **Councillor Piers Allen, Richmond Council's Cabinet Member for Adults Social Services and Health:**

Richmond Council is very supportive of the asks and pledges in South London Listens programme and is already doing work in a number of these areas, with particular focus on social isolation and digital inclusion. In Richmond, we are striving to make our commitment to mental health on a par with our commitment to good physical health. South London Listens has provided the chance to make our community and residents voices loud and clear such positive things can be achieved together.

### **Matthew Trainer, Former Chief Executive of Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust:**

South London Listens has pulled together and coordinated our thinking about how we respond to the challenge of Covid-19. It's now up to us to implement it in a way that is respectful of our communities and Boroughs. This will run at different paces but will run in the same direction.

## **Find out more**

[www.southlondonlistens.org](http://www.southlondonlistens.org)

## **Action Plan**

This document was produced by the South London Listens programme team and colleagues from the communications teams at South London and Maudsley, SWLStG, and Oxleas.

The illustrations used in this document were produced by Lucie Vyhnálková.

Please contact us if you would like a copy in large print, audio, braille or translated into another language.

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