

ABOUT US

Healthwatch Cornwall is an independent, publicly-funded organisation. We have statutory duties and a remit to ensure health and social care services in Cornwall are the best they can be for people, now and in the future.

By listening to your experiences of publicly funded health and social care services we are able to inform decisions made by the commissioners and providers of them. This means your voice is heard by those planning and delivering services and can influence positive outcomes.

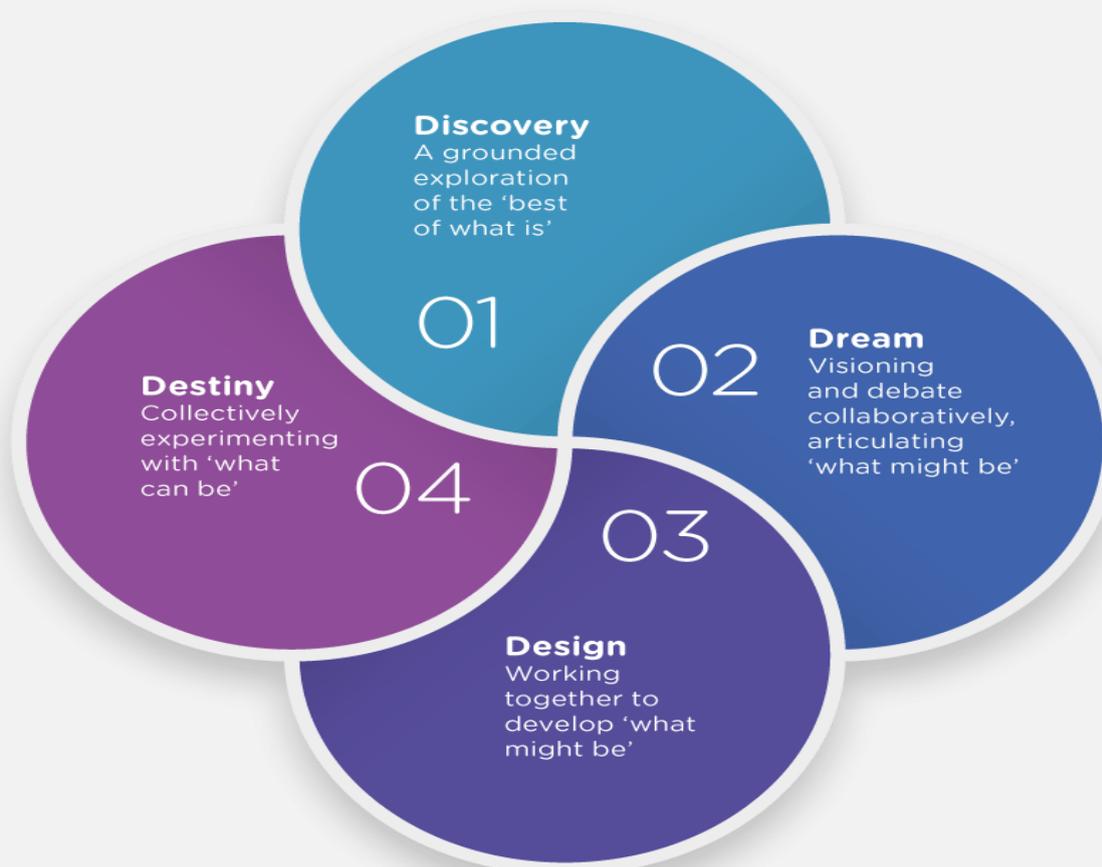


BACKGROUND

In 2018, NHS Kernow commissioned Health Watch Cornwall (HC) to carry out an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) style engagement report into commissioned mental health services in Cornwall.

The theory and methodology of this activity is to engage staff in a strengths-based approach to research to generate new ideas and opportunities for organisational and service development. The key feature of this approach is the ‘appreciative’ perspective which, rather than identifying problems that need to be ‘fixed’, helps teams to identify existing strengths, achievements and successes and enables a positive core to be built upon.

The explicit objective was that the information and insight gathered would be used to inform the development of a co-produced joint strategy for mental health for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly and, importantly, to inform ongoing development work. HC carried out sessions early in 2019 reflecting the first two stages (‘Discovery’ and ‘Dream’) with approximately 230 people from 30 mental health teams across the county, so that key themes from this engagement approach could be identified and presented to the commissioning team as ideas that could be taken forward to the ‘Design’ and ‘Destiny’ phases.



Summary of Key Findings and Future Considerations:

What is, and What Could Be?

A Strong Community of People Dedicated to Supporting People with Mental Health Needs

It must firstly be recognised that frontline staff and managers, whether in mental health services or in policing our communities, demonstrate the utmost commitment to ensuring people requiring support for their mental health were treated with compassion and held continually in high regard: staff were driven to ensuring the best possible outcomes for people. This strength in our services - and therefore our community must be recognised as a valuable asset that will undoubtedly prove fundamental to driving positive change and to implementing the future Mental Health Strategy for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Our dedicated workforce of primary, secondary and the voluntary sector, often go 'above and beyond' their roles and remit to provide a person-centred, evidence-based and holistic approach to assessment and treatment, that recognises both mental and physical health needs.

Teamwork was also a strength across many teams. However, there was clear recognition that services working more collaboratively could result in better outcomes for clients.

There was a desire for pathways and referral routes to be reviewed, and for there to be better clarity about the remit of teams across the system. The aim of this was to ensure a more timely and appropriate journey for clients, within and between services. A drive for a greater emphasis on early intervention and preventative community services being more widely available was also evident.

While staff were generally positive about the learning and development opportunities available to them, there was an ambition to strengthen the workforce by offering more opportunities to build skills, share good practice, review existing roles/team structures and maintain an emphasis on recruitment and retention.



Recommendations and Considerations for Next Steps:

Build on the existing mental health workforce and local communities, and review the provision of existing services

- There is an opportunity to build upon the strengths of the existing workforce. Staff are clearly driven to deliver high quality, personalised client care, through a range of therapies and innovative approaches which they are keen to develop and expand, especially for those with complex needs.
- Gap analysis: There is an aspiration by frontline teams to review the configuration of teams to address gaps in service provision based on findings with this report, in consideration of the NHS Long Term Plan and of the Mental Health Five Year Forward View, and to further develop services based on local clients' needs.
- There is an opportunity to review and to co-design how teams could be better configured (roles, skills) to address gaps that have led to staff going 'over and above' to meet the needs of service users. This could ensure staff's roles, people's skills, time and energy are maximised to ensure the best outcomes for service users.
- Opportunities for increasing workforce retention and recruitment could be explored. This could include enabling more of the types of learning opportunities and continuing professional development staff told us they valued. Consideration could be given to flexible/alternative ways of working along with a strategic focus on staff wellbeing.

Collaboration between services and teamwork

- Recognise the strength of the existing workforce and the will to work more collaboratively with services (primary, secondary, voluntary). Build upon this by exploring opportunities for greater collaboration that leads to improved mental health outcomes and a better experience through the mental health pathway for service users, through facilitating a multi-disciplinary team, multi-service approach to care delivery.
- Identify and enable barriers between the services to be reduced, whether between primary, secondary care or the voluntary sector, whether they are linked to IT, systems and processes, information governance or the interpretation of commissioning arrangements and referral criteria.
- In addressing the aspects raised in this report that relate to the 'wider system' a more community based, collaborative approach could be considered. This will recognise and address factors that influence the prevention and re-ablement of peoples' mental health in our communities, such as housing, employment, finances and social isolation. New approaches would seek to wrap a wider range of services around the person (community groups, charities, social prescribing etc) to achieve this.

- Facilitate opportunities within teams and across services for effective care planning and coordination that build teams and services around the client, and ensure a 'flat hierarchy' culture is created, where all opinions are valued when planning and coordinating care.

Environments and Resources

- Ensure the buildings, space and environments are reflective of clients' and staffs' needs and contribute to the physical and mental wellbeing of service users and of the workforce.

Police

- There is an opportunity for greater collaboration between the police and mental health services; to enable a clearer understanding of each other's roles and remit; in the co-development of services; and to create opportunities for joint training and knowledge sharing.



Key points in response to the four questions, from staff, manager and the police:

Staff - Question 1

In summary, key aspects of 'What makes you proud?' included:

- Treating clients with compassion and continually holding them in high regard
- Being able to offer a range of evidence-based approaches, therapies and treatment
- Continually striving for high standards of care
- Empowering clients with knowledge, skills and independence to self-manage
- Providing a holistic approach to assessment and treatment that considers the clients mental and physical health needs
- Involving families and those close to clients
- Being person-centred and often going 'above and beyond' to support the clients' needs
- Ability to build positive therapeutic relationships with clients
- Focussed on prevention and recovery
- Strong, supportive and dynamic teamwork centred around doing the best for clients and maintaining client and staff safety
- A culture within teams which ensures all roles and skills are recognised as offering equal value in contributing to client care across some teams
- Having a supportive management with opportunities for continual professional development and knowledge sharing

Staff - Question 2

In summary, key aspects of 'What could work better?' included:

- More people accessing services earlier and when they need it
- Expand current or introduce new treatments
- Improved clarity regarding the remit of individual teams
- Better integration between services and teams could improve the referral pathway, care coordination and service user experience
- Consideration could be given to how teams could be configured or staffed differently to better meet clients' needs
- Staff's suggestions to improve working environments, resources and equipment that could benefit both staff and clients
- Service sustainability and funding was a priority for some services
- Explore opportunities for learning and development to improve staff recruitment and retention

Key points in response to the four questions, from staff, manager and the police:

Staff - Question 3

In summary, key aspects of ‘What do you do extra?’ included:

- Staff going ‘above and beyond’ - extending their remit to meet people’s needs and avoiding further referrals
- Supporting clients with general ‘life admin’ (finances, housing etc)
- Working beyond shifts to ensure administrative tasks are completed
- Liaison with other agencies

Staff - Question 4

In summary, key aspects of ‘What more could you/would you like to do?’ included:

- Review the structure of current teams/organisations in order to seek opportunities for expansion of available therapy/treatment options for clients
- Review pathway options and capacity across services (correct Jody?) to evaluate gaps in provision and/or the expansion of existing services
- Expand the availability of group based support
- Consider the gap in the ‘assertive outreach’ approach
- To have access to a range of professional development opportunities and ways of working to enhance career progression and job satisfaction and in light of staff wellbeing
- Review the availability of additional community support services e.g. financial/benefit advice

Managers

The priority of this report remains on frontline staffs’ views, however it is very noteworthy that many of the points raised by Managers were strongly echoed in the wider staff sessions. There was particular emphasis on staff’s professional and compassionate approach to clients, their focus on providing high standards of care, and the will to incorporate new treatments and innovative approaches to ensure the best outcomes for their clients.

Police

- Police officers felt they engaged well with people with mental health problems, were proud of their empathetic approach and worked hard to ensure the best outcome for people. They liaised well with other services and remained focussed on people’s safety.

Key points in response to the four questions, from staff, manager and the police:

Police (continued)

- It was clear that greater availability of mental health service staff and a more responsive mental health service could help ensure individuals accessed the support they needed sooner and relieve some of the time pressures police felt this placed on frontline police resources.
- Respondents felt a more collaborative approach to interagency working across services could enable a more rapid response to those requiring mental health support, making it easier to access the most appropriate service when needed and to prevent the need for further police input. Sharing knowledge could help to build officers' skills in managing people with mental health problems.
- Suggestions for new mental health services related to responsive services for people in crisis and over the phone, or in-person support for frontline officers.
- Greater funding and resources for mental health services were called for, in order to better serve the needs of people requiring support due to their mental health.



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