

People's experiences of using services in North Tyneside when experiencing a mental health crisis

What did we want to find out?

- To identify trends in service experience for people who are in need of mental health services during crisis.
- To gather views of service users, carers and staff to understand gaps in service provision.
- To use the feedback gathered to input into the North Tyneside CCG Crisis Pathway Review.

What did we do?

We brought together a steering group of service users, carers, staff and commissioners to design the project and support the analysis of findings.

We designed a number of methods of data collection to gather a range of people's experiences.

This included an online and offline survey, focus groups, interviews with people currently using crisis services and general engagement.

Figure 1. Respondents by research method

Method of gathering feedback:	Number of participants:			
	Service users	Carers	Staff	Unknown
Online and Offline survey	56	36	37	0
Focus groups	33	0	6	0
E & V Telephone interviews	4	0	0	0
General engagement (including social media interactions and our Feedback Centre)	30	7	0	6
Total:	123	43	43	6

Preliminary findings

As we aimed to understand people's journey through services, we analysed our findings in relation to the following themes:

1. Defining crisis
2. Accessing support
3. Receiving support
4. Leaving support

1. Defining crisis

We knew there was often a disparity between people's definitions and understandings of what a 'mental health crisis' meant to them. Therefore, we developed a working definition through our focus groups and the themes identified by our respondents:

"An overwhelming experience of extreme mental ill health, which impacts a person's ability to cope and stay safe"

The key aspects people identified when defining a mental health crisis included:

- Risk to self (63)
- Rapid deterioration or change (13)
- The need for immediate intervention (27)
- A 'can't cope' situation (25)
- Individual to the person experiencing the crisis (9)

2. Accessing support

The majority (68%) of respondents stated that they knew where to go for help in a crisis. However, they described a number of barriers to accessing support. This was often in relation to the **clarity of service provision, waiting times, reluctance due to negative past experiences** and issues around **eligibility for older people** or those who have issues with **substance misuse**.

"Because I don't know how the crisis team class as a crisis, so I never know if its ok for me to call or not. It's not clear what service is for what"

"She said someone would ring me back. After 4 hours! no-one had"

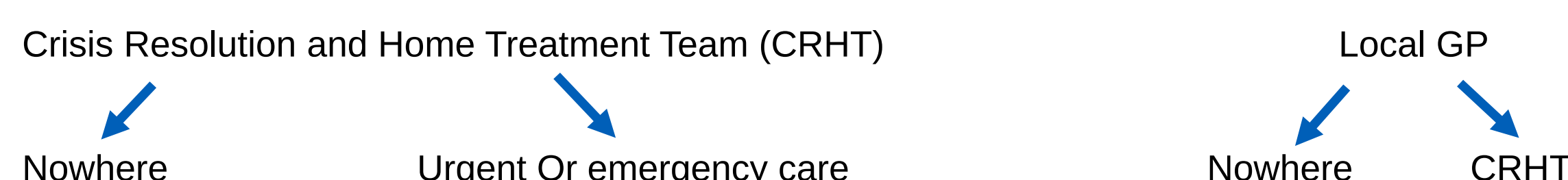
3. Receiving support

Respondents discussed positive and negative experiences of receiving support from services. People emphasised the importance of 'knowing there was someone there' and the importance of a range of service and voluntary organisations.

"Was given advice by A&E Dr who assured me I was ok all vitals ok and I wasn't going to die. Crisis team helped me understand my current thoughts"

However, respondents raised concerns about the **lack of crisis beds** in the area, the clarity of **information sharing** and poor experiences of **staff support**.

We mapped the most common journeys individuals told us about when trying to access support in a crisis. The two most common routes were:



4. Leaving support

Only 7 people told us about positive experiences of being discharged or transitioned, whereas 29 people told us about negative experiences. Positive experiences were largely characterised by service users and carers being involved in the process and being clearly informed from the offset.

We will continue to analyse feedback we have received about local people's experiences. Further findings and recommendations will be presented in our full report later this year. To keep informed about our work on mental health go to: www.healthwatchnorthtyneside.co.uk/your-issues/mental-health/