

Men in Mind: Loneliness, mental health and men's access to support in Dorking and across Surrey

Healthwatch Surrey were invited to be a part of the Dorking Neighbourhood and Area Committee pilot. Against the backdrop of Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy Index statistics showing Mole Valley has the highest incidence of suicide of all Surrey boroughs, the committee identified loneliness and isolation as one of the most prevalent issues in the area. This project aimed to identify what impact this has on men's mental health specifically, and to explore the importance, availability and awareness of community ties and local groups to support them.

What did we do?



We focused our engagement activities in Dorking and its neighbouring villages, visiting **7** locations to speak to a variety of men from different backgrounds.

We had an accompanying survey which was open to men across Surrey.

The survey was co-designed with men accessing the most local Andy's Man Club (in Leatherhead) to build a picture of what men already accessing mental health services felt the barriers were to access what community means to them – this provided invaluable context to guide our survey and engagement activity.



125 people completed our survey, either online or with us face to face at our engagement events.

Key findings

The importance of community

- **86%** (**87%** in Dorking) of men surveyed feel part of their community. However, almost two thirds (**61%**) of those in Dorking said they would like to feel **more** part of their community than they do.
- What community means to each individual is different. **71%** said that doing good work in their area and **68%** said that **belonging to more local clubs** would help their

sense of community. In addition, **61%** thought having **local clubs, sports and social activities** were necessary to feel part of their community.

- Over half (**56%**) of the men that said they did not feel part of their community rated their **mental health as poor to average**.



“Getting out and meeting people or just helping out with something can make a big difference. We all helped with gritting pathways when it was cold and it was great to meet people and feel like you’ve done a good thing.”



Emotional wellbeing and mental health

- Almost half (**41%**) of the men surveyed would like to do **more to support their wellbeing and mental health**. Reasons for not doing so were complex and varied but being **‘time poor’** was a recurring theme, with half of those surveyed (**50%**) **feeling guilty** about using any sort of support services.
- Just **15 out of 125** men accessed a **local group** to support their mental health and wellbeing. Reasons included lack of knowledge about what is available (most of the men we surveyed either didn’t know what groups were available, or didn’t think there were enough of them), a lack of men’s specific groups and not feeling comfortable accessing what is available.



“I wish there were services specifically for men like me – not just general mental health support, but somewhere to talk about my relationship and mental health. I need a place where it’s safe to say I’m struggling without feeling guilty or weak. Peer groups, drop-in sessions, or even one to one support would make a huge difference.”



Men who do not feel part of a community are more likely to experience poorer mental health and reduced overall wellbeing. Greater support is needed for those who struggle to feel included, in order to prevent more serious mental health challenges developing over time. Support should be easy to reach and designed without barriers or expectations that may discourage men from engaging.

Read more in our full report: [Men in Mind: Loneliness, mental health and men’s access to support in Dorking and across Surrey – March 2026](#)