

## Report for the Health Overview Scrutiny Committee, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2025

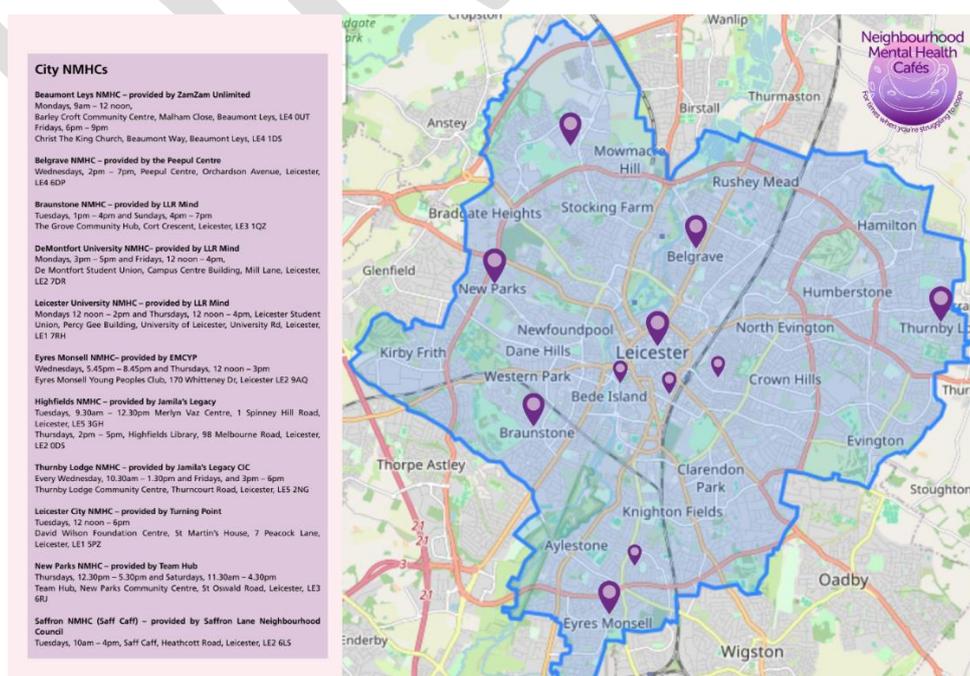
### Neighbourhood Mental Health Cafes – Leicester

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#### Background information

1. The Neighbourhood Mental Health Café (NMHC) scheme launched in 2021/22 as part of a national drive to increase mental health crisis alternatives. The local ambition at that time was to have twenty-five cafes in place by 2023/24 across Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland, which originally equalled the same number of Primary Care Networks.
2. This NMHC scheme is focused on increasing local access for adults to get help in neighbourhoods when they are experiencing mental health distress, without the need to book, as an alternative to attending A&E or booking GP appointments.
3. The locations of the cafes have been identified in partnership with local stakeholders, such as Public Health, and are situated in areas which have higher rates of deprivation and/or higher referral rates to urgent mental health services (see figure 1). The cafes are generally based in local authority or VCS owned/rented community centres, as opposed to NHS buildings.

**Figure 1 – NMHC Café Locations**



4. A grant approach has been used to provide funding for local Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) organisations to deliver the cafes. This approach was chosen as local VCS tend who have a high degree of insight, understanding and skills to meet the diverse needs of communities in Leicester. There are currently 9 organisations (see figure 2) who provide café 20 sessions per week, equating to 70 hours across Monday to Sunday (predominantly Monday to Friday) in Leicester.

**Figure 2 – NMHC VCS Providers**

Eyres Monsell Children & Young People’s Centre	Team Hub	Jamilla’s Legacy
Peepul Health	Saff Caff in association with Saffron Acres	Leicester City in the Community
Turning Point	Zam Zam Unlimited Possibilities CIC with Amitai Counselling	LLR MIND

5. Neighbourhood Mental Health Cafes offer face-to-face support in a safe a calming environment, types of support include, working on coping strategies and skills, actions planning & problem solving and developing safety plans. A comprehensive service specification provides organisations with expectations and guidance as to how the cafes should operate, to ensure a higher degree of continuity across the cafes.
6. A pathway is in place where café Providers can contact the Mental Health Urgent Care Hub or into the Central Access Point via the professionals’ route where an individual’s needs are beyond the capability of the café to support.
7. From a quality perspective, a provider network meeting is held regularly with VCS Providers to ensure key areas are discussed in relation to the performance, training, and information sharing. This forum provides the opportunity for organisations to contribute towards developments and required changes. A coproduction group for people with lived experience is also in place which has developed products such as the café welcome pack.
8. The LLR Neighbourhood Mental Health Café scheme was included in a review carried out by Black Country Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust in 2025, which benchmarked café/crisis alternative schemes commissioned in the Midlands region including Black Country, Birmingham & Solihull, Coventry & Warwickshire). From a cost perspective, the average expenditure per contact for LLR equates to £101.27, which when calculated for activity in Leicester, reduces to £77 per contact. The review identified this sits in the lower range comparatively with other ICB areas, which range from £74 - £315 per contact, offering confidence from a value for money perspective. The review also highlighted that Leicester cafes are effective in the way the engage and provide support for non-white people comparatively with other schemes in the region.

## **Activity, performance and outcomes**

9. In 2024/25 the scheme has achieved the following across the cafes within Leicester.
- Total visitors – 3,689
  - New visitors – 1,004
  - Repeat visitors – 2,685
10. People attending the cafes are asked for up to three reasons they have attended the café for support. The most common presenting issues currently are as follows.
- Anxiety (24.2%)
  - Depression (14.2%)
  - Isolation & Loneliness (9.8%)
  - Stress (9.2%)
  - Needing practical support & advice (7.9%)
  - Family issues (5.7%)

Other common reasons for presenting at a café include bereavement, carer strain, debt & financial issues, domestic abuse, employment issues, family issues, gambling harms, homelessness, housing, memory issues, mood disturbance, physical health issues, psychosis experiences, relationship status, self-harm, substance misuse and suicidal ideation.

11. From a demographic perspective, in 2024/25, those attending the cafes reflect similar rates in comparison with the general population which is important considering the factors that affect people's health in Leicester.

Ethnicity	Café (% of attendees)	*Ethnic groups in Leicester (%)
White	43.23%	41%
Asian/ British Asian	43.07%	43%
Black/ African /Caribbean/ Black British	7.35%	7.7%
Mixed multiple ethnic groups	1.4%	3.8%
Other ethnic groups	0.8%	4.1

\*Source, Adult Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Leicester City, Nov 2023

\*\*151 individuals 'preferred not to say'

The data above highlights people from a black heritage background have slightly lower contacts at the cafes compared to the population rate in Leicester. To address this, and other challenges faced by the black heritage community in relation mental health, Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust have formed a partnership with the African Heritage Alliance to improve engagement, awareness and support with the community. The intended outcome is to increase preventative activity and increase earlier identification of mental health issues.

12. From an age perspective the highest numbers of café attendees are aged between 41-64yrs old (46%). People between 18-25 are the least likely to present to Neighbourhood Mental Health Cafes in Leicester currently amounting to only 9% of all contacts currently. This suggests that whilst the University's have cafes, there is more to do to ensure the scheme engages and works for people within this younger adult age group.
13. Regarding disability, 34% of all attendees suggested they had a physical or mental disability. Whilst this is higher than the findings of the 2021 Census (16%), the question at cafes does not ask the extent the disabilities limited day-to-day activity which makes it difficult to make accurate assumptions. However, the data does suggest that the cafes are accessible and being used by people with a self-defined disability.
14. An additional question was introduced in 2024 regarding neurodivergence, of which 20% of café attendees suggested they lived with a neurodiverse need or condition. National estimates suggest 1 in 7 individuals or 15-20% of the population would divert neurologically from said neurotypical "norm" (NHS England) which is consistent with footfall at the cafes.
15. In terms of outcomes, individuals attending the cafes having either receiving 1:1 or group support will have benefitted from the following.
  - Discussing coping techniques
  - Developing a risk or safety plan
  - Referred to provider in-house services (wider needs inc. food banks)
  - Referral made to health services
  - Mental Health Hub contacted
  - Discussed/taught a Decider Skill
16. The data suggests that the cafes, using the techniques above, can support most individuals without the need to escalate to urgent and emergency care with only 0.6% of individuals being referred to the Mental Health Hub. This demonstrates the cafes are working effectively as a 'crisis alternative' intervention and contributing supporting to manage flow within the system. Similarly, individuals are suggesting they attended the café instead of seeing their GP, contacting the crisis team or contacting the Central Access Point (CAP).
17. People attending cafes are encouraged to give feedback on their experience of using the cafes. The following was recently received by the LPT PALS team *"In a time of crisis, I attended the mental health cafe and over a number of weeks and months was supported by friendly faces welcoming with a cup of tea and even more importantly had the chance to speak one to one through some of my issues.... Without the support of the cafe, I am not sure I would be in such a positive place in my life and so again please thank those involved"*