

Migrant Health and Wellbeing System Workshop Report 2026

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Introduction, Background and Purpose

This workshop brought together partners from across Wirral to consider the health and wellbeing needs of ethnic minority communities, reflect on emerging evidence and insights, and explore how services can work more effectively together to strengthen support across the system. Public Health Wirral, in conjunction with the Wirral Migrant Health and Wellbeing Partnership, has recently developed new evidence and insights through a joint strategic needs assessment. The workshop provided an opportunity for partners to review and reflect on this emerging evidence, and to contribute their expertise and experience in identifying key themes, challenges and opportunities for improvement.

Purpose

This workshop brought together partners across health, local authority, and community sectors to identify barriers, gaps, and opportunities to improve migrant health and wellbeing. Discussions were structured across three areas:

1. Reaching communities and understanding need
2. Service gaps, partnerships, and models
3. Opportunities and desired outcomes

Participants

The workshop was attended by a broad range of partners from across the local system, reflecting the importance of multi-agency collaboration in addressing migrant health and wellbeing.

Attendees included representatives from:

- Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations supporting ethnic minority communities
- NHS services, including Primary Care, Mental Health, Acute and Community services
- Public Health and wider Local Authority teams
- Housing providers
- Social Care and Children's Services
- Other strategic and system partners

This diverse participation enabled a rich discussion incorporating frontline experience, strategic insight, and community perspectives, supporting a whole-system view of the challenges and opportunities.

Session 1: Reaching Communities & Understanding Need

Which ethnic minority communities are currently well served in Wirral, and which are not?

Session 1 highlighted that while some established communities in Wirral, particularly African and Caribbean groups, are relatively well connected to services, many others—including newer migrant communities, refugees and asylum seekers, Arabic-speaking populations, and Traveller communities—remain less visible and under-served.

What are the main barriers preventing engagement (e.g. trust, language, cost, awareness)?

The main barriers to engagement are widespread and interconnected, including language and communication difficulties, limited or inconsistent translation support, low awareness of services, cost and transport challenges, and low trust linked to fear, cultural differences, and previous experiences.

What outreach approaches work best in practice?

Effective outreach approaches were identified as community-based and relationship-led, including delivering services in trusted local settings, informal engagement sessions, targeted outreach, and strong multi-agency collaboration.

How can services build on existing trusted relationships?

To build on existing trusted relationships, services should focus on consistent and transparent engagement, work through community and voluntary networks, improve cultural awareness, and invest in long-term, community-centred approaches that ensure individuals feel heard, respected, and supported.

Summary

Session 1 highlighted that while some established communities are well connected to services, many migrant groups remain underrepresented or miss out entirely due to barriers such as language, cost, transport, limited awareness, and low trust. Participants identified significant unmet needs, including support with housing, immigration advice, employment, and basic needs, particularly for those in temporary accommodation or with no resource to public funds.

The system is often complex and difficult to navigate, with gaps in data and inconsistent outreach. However, effective approaches were identified, including community-based outreach, strong multi-agency working, and delivering services in trusted local settings. Overall, improving engagement requires culturally competent, accessible services built on trust, clear communication, and sustained collaboration with communities.

Session 2: Service Gaps, Partnerships & Models

What services or support are currently missing or under provided?

Session 2 identified significant gaps in provision, particularly around mental health, trauma-informed care, migrant counselling services for children and adults, translation and interpretation services, and access to immigration, housing, and legal advice, alongside limited capacity and services not always being locally accessible. Specific examples included, phone access issues and long waits for services, requirement of safe spaces for families and individuals, services being geographically concentrated in areas such as Birkenhead and the need for cultural awareness training and education across all ages, backgrounds and professions.

Where do services overlap, and where could collaboration work better?

There was a strong sense that services often overlap or operate in silos, leading to duplication in some areas and gaps in others, with coordination and communication needing improvement. One example suggested joined-up support systems and an emphasis the neighbourhood hub models, incorporating support such as community mental health teams, dedicated homelessness support system, cross-sector collaboration for Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and a space for feedback from community groups informing strategy.

What role could partnerships play in improving reach and outcomes?

Partnerships were seen as critical to addressing this, with a need for shared vision, better information sharing, stronger collaboration with the VCFS sector, and greater involvement of communities and frontline staff to improve reach and outcomes, in addition to greater collaboration with schools for education and training across all ages.

How could services align with neighbourhood or place-based health models?

Participants also emphasised aligning services more closely with neighbourhood or place-based models, such as local hubs and integrated approaches, to deliver more accessible, culturally responsive, and joined-up support at a community level.

Summary

Session 2 highlighted significant gaps in service provision, particularly in mental health support, trauma-informed care, translation and interpretation services, and access to immigration, legal, housing, and employment advice. Services were often described as fragmented, difficult to navigate, and unevenly distributed, with limited capacity and poor coordination across organisations.

Participants emphasised the importance of stronger partnership working, including better communication, shared planning, and treating the VCFS sector as an equal partner to improve reach and outcomes. There was also a clear need to move towards more joined-up, place-based models—such as neighbourhood hubs—supported by better use of data, greater involvement of frontline staff and communities, and more consistent, accessible delivery of services.

Session 3: Opportunities & Outcomes

How can we work together differently that will help?

Session 3 highlighted that working differently requires stronger collaboration across organisations, improved data sharing, and a shift toward community-centred and co-produced approaches, where lived experience informs decision-making and services work together rather than in isolation.

Participants emphasised the importance of equitable funding, cultural competence, and inclusive system design. Some examples included anti-racist policy and strategy development, including community voices in service planning, mapping services to better identify referral pathways and increase data sharing across organisations and having this agenda at leadership meetings.

What outcomes really matter to communities?

The outcomes that matter most to communities include equal access to services, feeling welcomed and included, reduced isolation, improved safety and wellbeing, and having clear, accessible support, referral pathways and opportunities to participate, with systems that are culturally aware, listen, respond, and reflect their needs.

Summary

Session 3 focused on how the system can work differently to improve outcomes, with a strong emphasis on collaboration, co-production, and community-centred approaches. Participants highlighted the need to better embed lived experience in decision-making, improve data sharing, and strengthen partnership working across organisations while addressing competition and ensuring equitable funding. There was also a clear call to build culturally competent, inclusive services supported by anti-racist approaches and stronger workforce awareness.

The outcomes that matter most to communities include equal access to services, reduced isolation, feeling welcomed and included, and having clear, accessible support and opportunities for participation, with systems that listen, respond, and reflect community needs.

System Improvement Priorities Areas and Next Steps

To support health and wellbeing needs of ethnic minority communities:

- Improve access and communication, including translation and system navigation
- Address key service gaps, especially mental health and advice services
- Strengthen partnership working and coordination
- Embed community voice and co-production
- Develop place-based and integrated delivery models
- Build cultural competence and inclusive practice

Conclusion

Across all workshop sessions, there was strong agreement that improving migrant health and wellbeing requires a fundamental shift towards a more community-centred and culturally competent system. Participants consistently highlighted the need to improve access and navigation, particularly in relation to language and communication, alongside strengthening provision for mental health, advice, and wider support services.

There was also a clear emphasis on the importance of better coordination across organisations, with stronger partnership working and a more joined-up approach to service delivery. Central to this is the need to increase the meaningful involvement of communities themselves in shaping services and ensuring that lived experience informs both design and delivery.

The current system is widely experienced as fragmented and difficult to navigate, which can prevent people from accessing the support they need in a timely or effective way. There is a clear need to move towards a more integrated, accessible, and inclusive approach, where services are easier to understand and better aligned around the needs of individuals and communities.

The workshop reinforced the importance of building trust, improving access to coordinated services, and reducing fragmentation across the system. It also highlighted key gaps that require attention, particularly in relation to mental health support, interpretation services, and access to immigration and advice services.

Overall, there was a strong and consistent message that progress will depend on genuine collaboration across partners, a shared commitment to co-production, and a focus on creating inclusive systems where communities feel welcomed, connected, and supported.

Contact details

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