



**TEES VALLEY BUDDIES**  
Neurodiversity Social Support Network

“CREATING A COMMUNITY, WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS”

CHARITY NUMBER: 1192585



# Tees Valley Buddies

## Mental Health Survey Report from the perspective of Neurodiverse People

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## Introduction

Tees Valley Buddies is a neuro diverse self-advocacy and peer support charity ran by Neurodiverse people *for* Neurodiverse people!

Our mission is to create a network to drive forward a more inclusive society that values and celebrates difference, where neurodiverse people can live safe, happy and fulfilled lives.

## Mental Health Survey

During June 2021, we hosted a live survey focused on mental health. We wanted to find out if people with neurodivergent conditions:

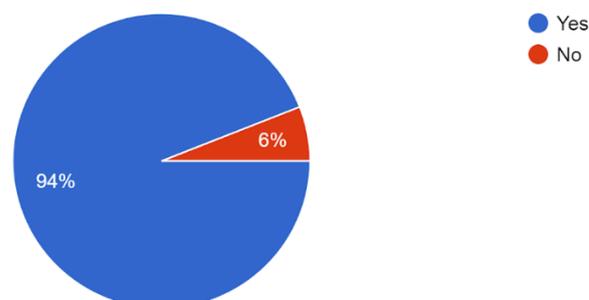
- Are more likely to have a mental health condition such as depression and anxiety
- If having a neurodivergent condition can impact on mental health and wellbeing
- If neurodivergent people with mental health conditions felt supported by primary care and the voluntary and community sector
- What support services and interventions would be more beneficial to meet the needs of neurodivergent people with mental health issues.

## Mental Health Survey Findings

The following information is a collation of responses to each question area within our survey. Significant findings have been highlighted alongside the overall findings:

**94% of neurodiverse respondents said “yes” to having a mental health issue**

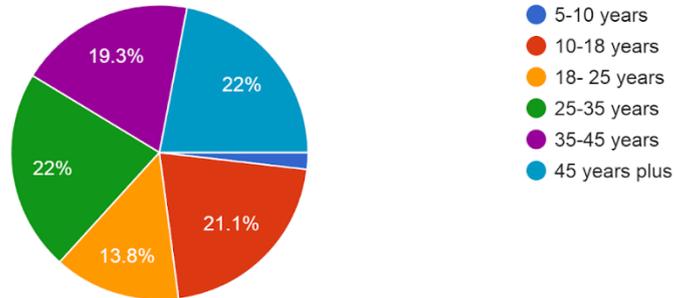
Do you have a Mental Health issue? (or the person you are answering for)  
117 responses



## Respondent's profile

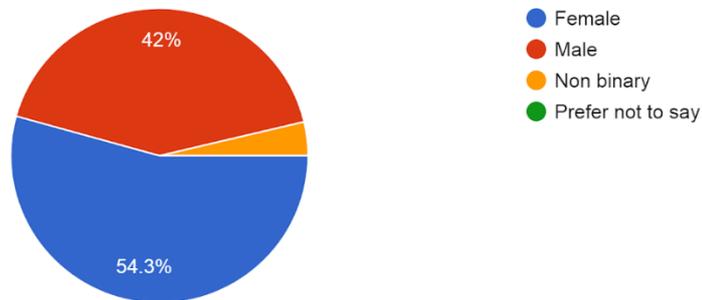
How old are you? (or the age of the person you are answering for)

109 responses



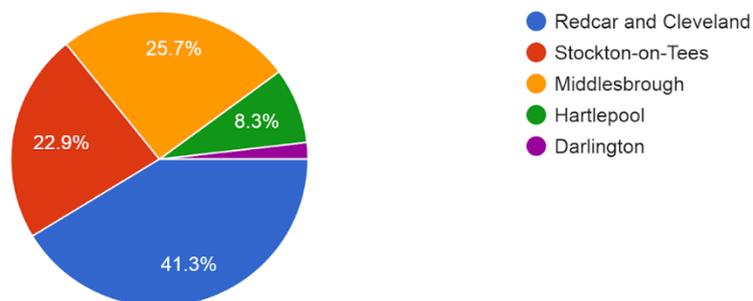
Are you;

81 responses



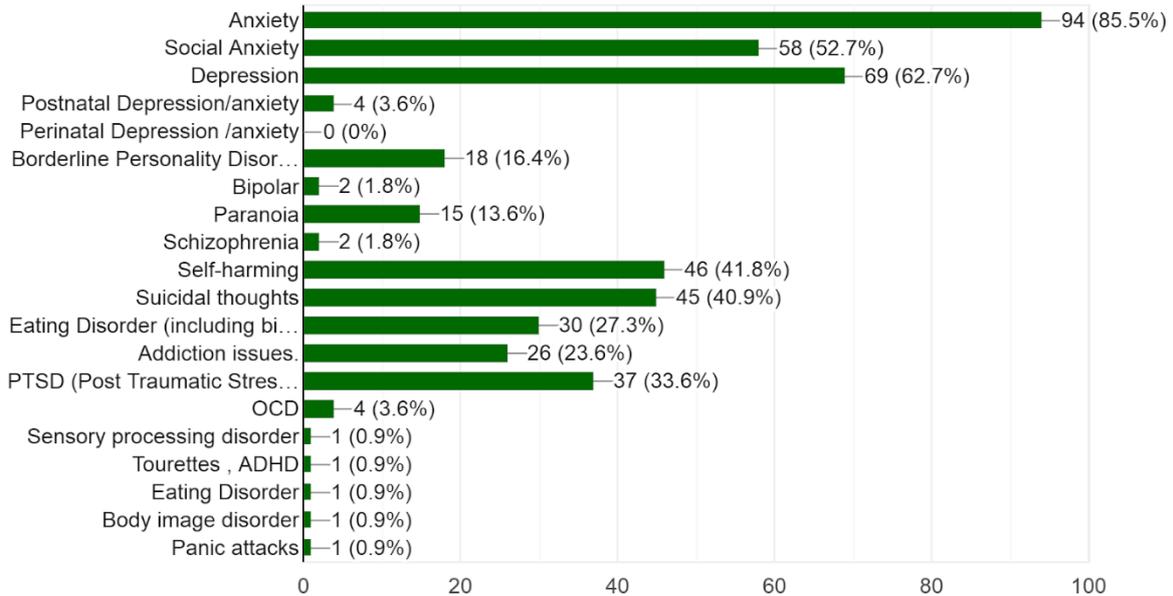
Which area in Tees Valley do you live in?

109 responses



Do you have any of the following

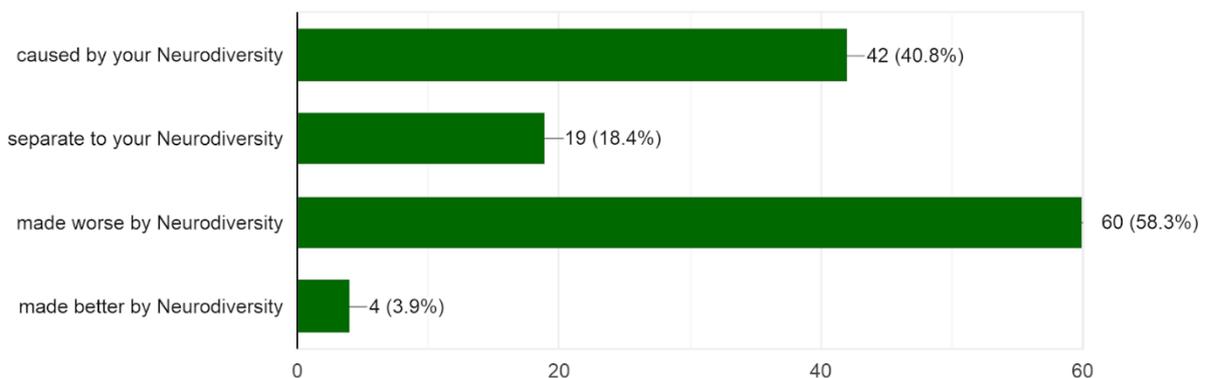
110 responses



**Anxiety and Depression were most common but also high rates of self-harming, suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, addiction issues and PTSD were also reported.**

Do you think your Mental Health is

103 responses

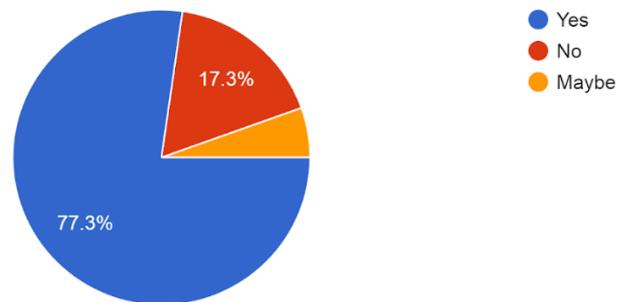


**58.3% of respondents felt their neurodiversity made their mental health worse**

**40.8% of respondents believed their mental health issues were caused by having a neurodivergent condition or difference.**

Were/are you bullied at school because you were/are different?

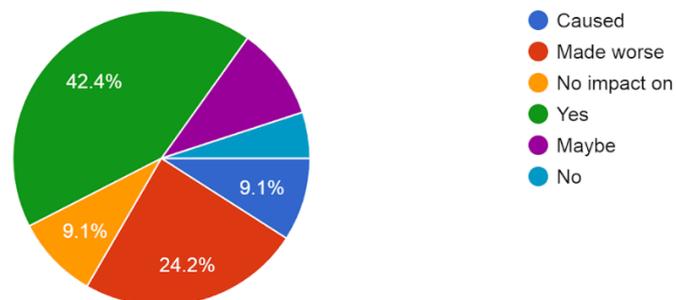
110 responses



**77.5 % of neurodiverse respondents have experienced bullying at school because they are different**

If you answered yes to the above question, do you feel that the bullying caused or added to your MH issue?

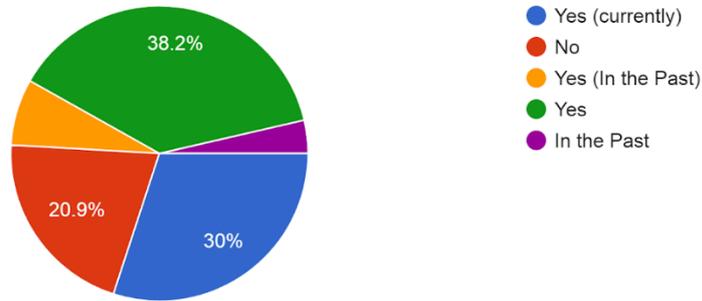
99 responses



**42.4 % of neurodiverse respondents felt the bullying they experienced at school caused or added to their mental health issues.**

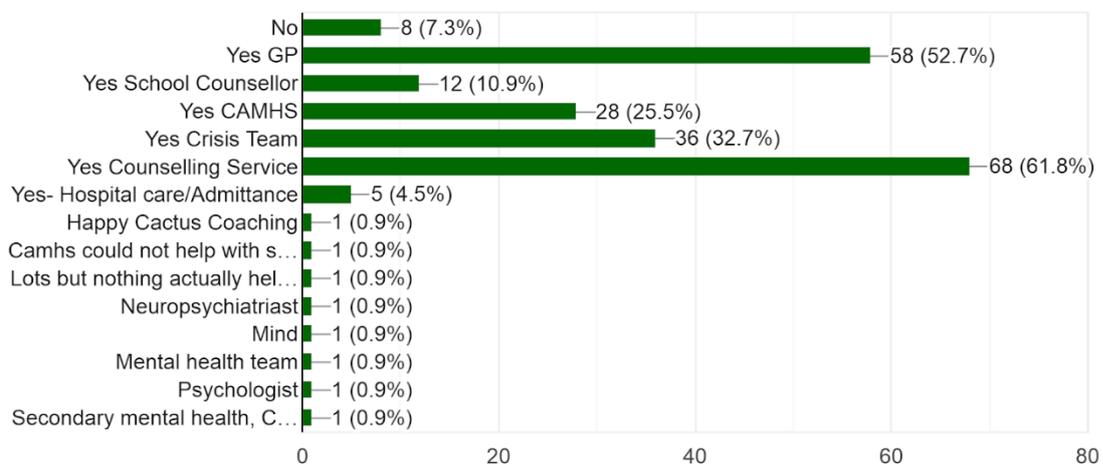
**24.2 % of neurodiverse respondents strongly believe the bullying made their mental health worse.**

Do you currently or have you in the past, taken prescribed medicines for your Mental Health issue?  
110 responses



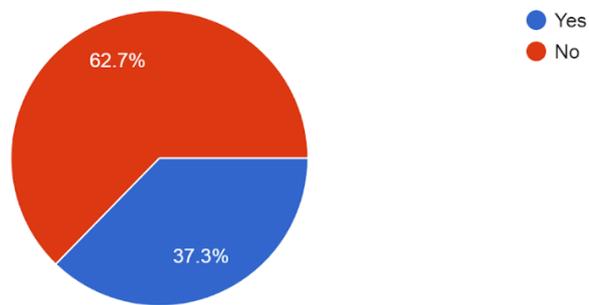
**68.2% of neurodiverse respondents are currently prescribed medicines for mental health issues.**

Have you ever had support from a professional about Mental Health?  
110 responses



Have you seen a Mental Health professional in the last 12 months? (this includes by phone or by zoom or other online platform, or face to face)

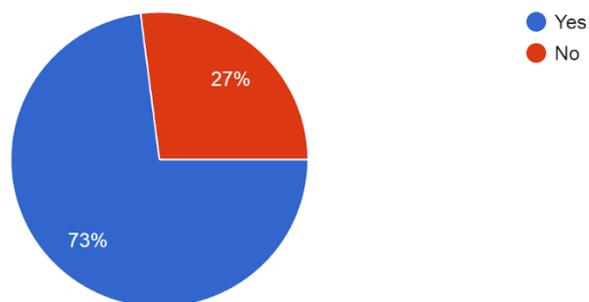
110 responses



**62.7% of neurodiverse respondents with mental health issues have not had any contact from a mental health professional in the last 12 months**

If you answered No to the question above, would you have liked to see a MH professional in the last 12 months?

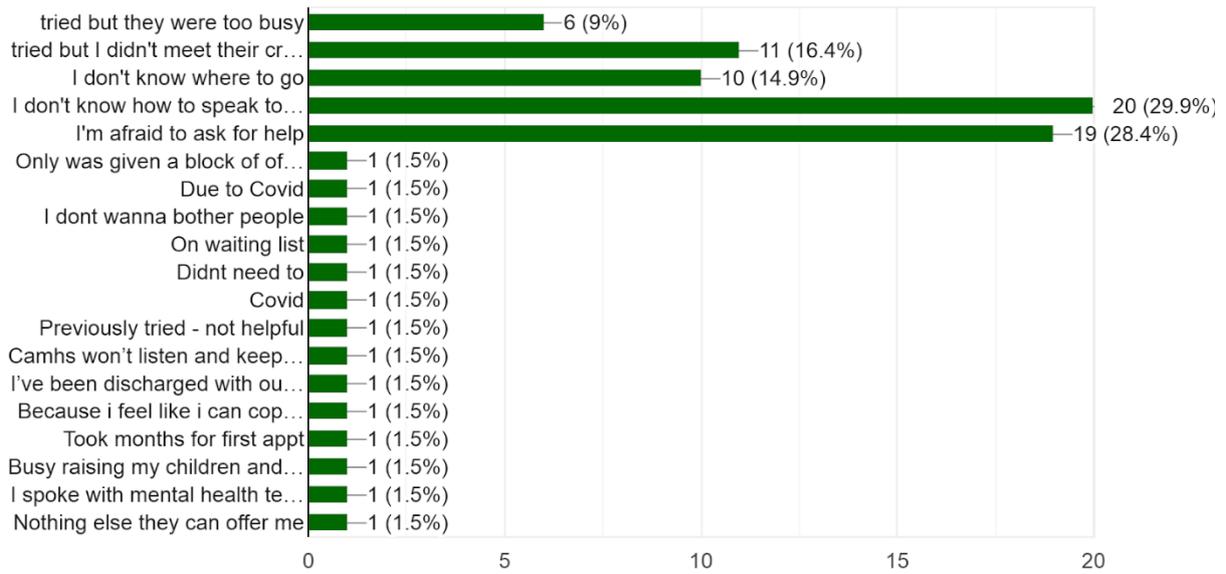
74 responses



**73% of neurodiverse respondents said they would have liked to have seen a MH professional in the last 12 months**

If you haven't/didn't, what stopped you?

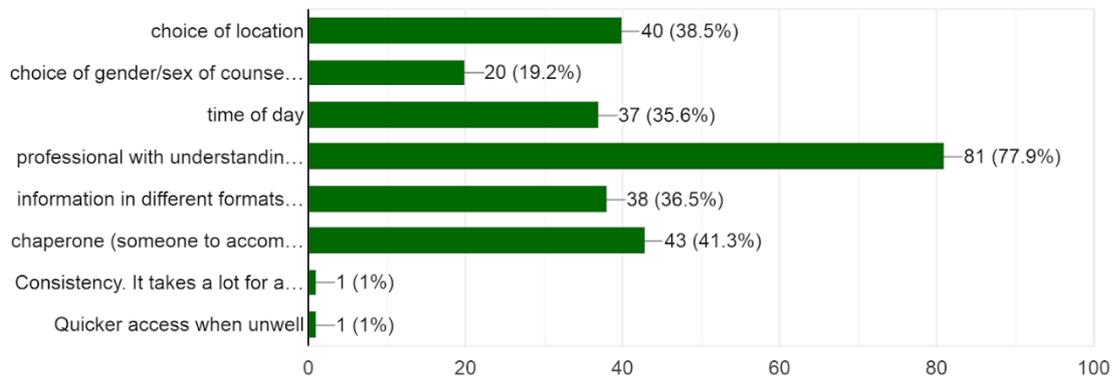
67 responses



**The main reasons that stopped many neurodiverse respondents asking for help for their mental health was not knowing where to go, feeling they did not meet the criteria, not knowing how to speak to professionals and services or being too afraid to ask for help.**

If you were to receive MH support, what things would you need to make it work for you?

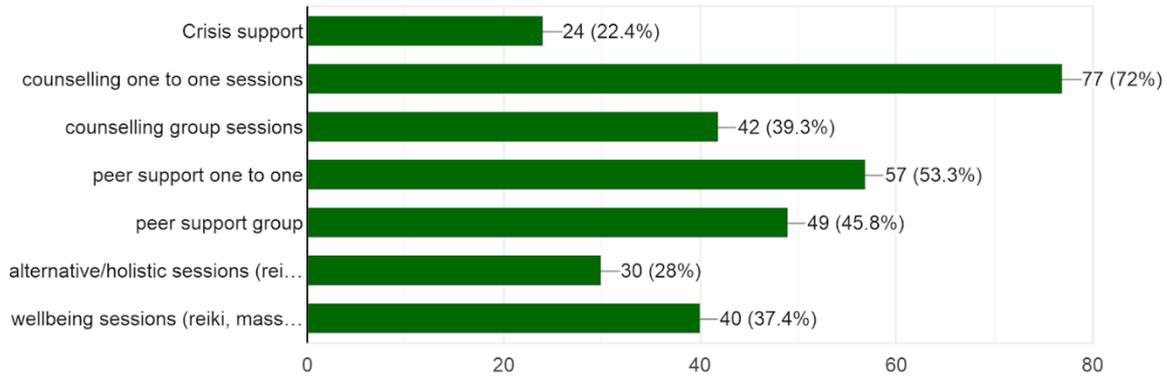
104 responses



**77.9% of neurodiverse respondents said they would prefer to receive mental health support from professionals who understand neurodiversity.**

### What would help you with your mental health?

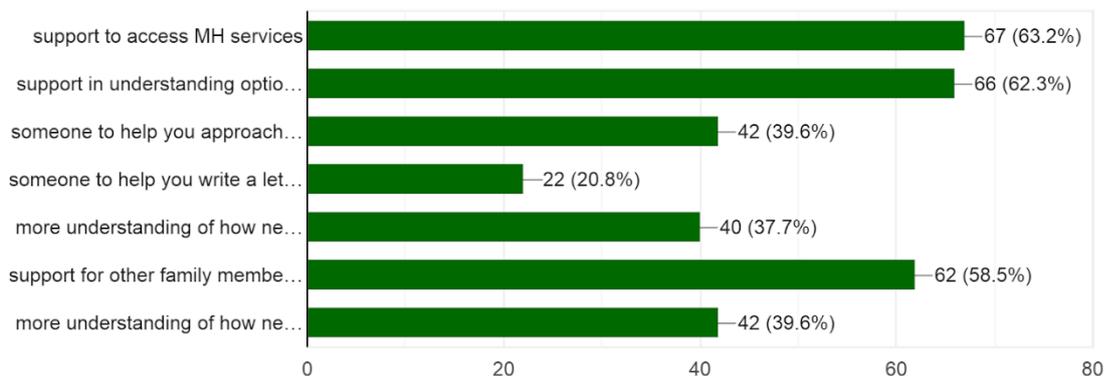
107 responses



**Many neurodiverse respondents felt talking therapies, peer support and wellbeing classes would help them with their mental health.**

### What other things would help?

106 responses



**More than half of the neurodiverse respondents wanted support in accessing mental health services and support in understanding what mental health options are available. Many respondents also wanted support in understanding how their neurodiversity can affect their mental health.**

## **Conclusion**

The results of the survey clearly show that the majority of neurodivergent people who took part in our survey have mental health issues.

Anxiety and depression were most common, but high rates of self-harming, suicidal thoughts, eating disorders, addiction issues and PTSD were also reported.

Many neurodivergent people felt strongly that their neurodiversity made their mental health worse, and others believed their mental health issues were caused by having a neurodivergent condition or difference. It was also reported that 94% of neurodiverse respondents have experienced bullying at school because they were different.

This unfortunately has massively impacted their lives as many feel being bullied at school has caused or added to their mental health issues growing up and in adulthood.

A high percentage of neurodivergent people who filled out the survey 68.2% are currently prescribed medicines for mental health issues. The Survey found 62.7% respondents with mental health issues have not had any contact from a mental health professional in the last 12 months. Even though 73% respondents said they would have liked to have seen a mental health professional.

The survey reported the main reasons that stopped many respondents asking for help for their mental health was not knowing where to go, feeling they did not meet the criteria, not knowing how to speak to professionals and services or being too afraid to ask for help. The survey also found that neurodivergent people with mental health issues would prefer to receive mental health support from professionals who understand neurodiversity.

Many respondents felt talking therapies, peer support and wellbeing classes would help them most with their mental health. More than half of the respondents wanted support in accessing mental health services and support in understanding what mental health options are available.

Many respondents also wanted support in understanding how neurodiversity can affect their mental health and emotional well being.

## **Tees Valley Buddies response to the survey**

TVB is keen to work with all stakeholders including third sector organisations and community groups to build more positive and supportive relationships between these organisations and the Neurodiverse community.

We recognise that for many - these relationships will take time to develop as, far too often, trust on both sides has been eroded. TVB aims to show that effective partnership between groups is possible and preferable but understands that this will be a process.

We will support Neurodivergent individuals through activities like our peer support systems for as long as necessary and - where possible and appropriate - act as a voice for all in our community who need it, until such time they feel confident enough to speak for themselves.

Through our mentoring, self-advocacy and community groups we will be fostering community involvement, pride, and confidence, as well as supporting individuals to develop more effective self-advocacy skills and self-belief.

## **Our future plans**

We hope to offer bespoke training and acceptance programmes in the hope to work with statutory

services, education providers, and other organisations to promote inclusion and understanding of Neurodiversity and the benefits that Neurodivergent people can bring to an environment -

whether in schools, as individuals or in the workplace.

## **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank everyone that has been involved in capturing this information. We understand that talking about mental health can be difficult and our appreciation goes out to all those that have taken part.

## **Contact Us:**

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Or message 'Tees Valley Buddies' on Facebook