

Accessing Safe Havens

Survey results

By Wendy Smith



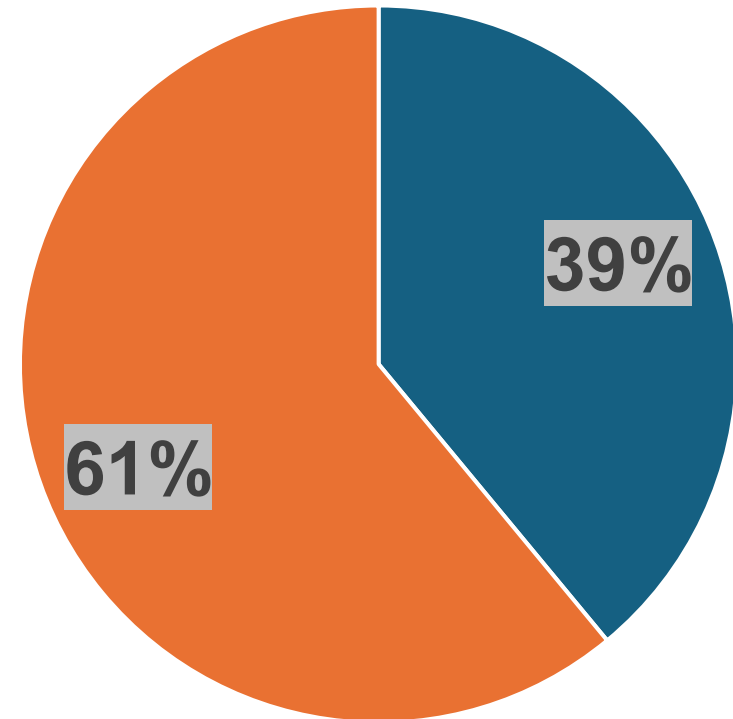


The Survey

- We wanted to understand:
 - What challenges people face to attending the Safe Havens in Surrey and Northeast Hampshire in person
 - What could make it easier for them
 - How helpful they found the Safe Haven
 - 19 people completed the survey, which ran from 18th November to 19th December 2025.
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The Results

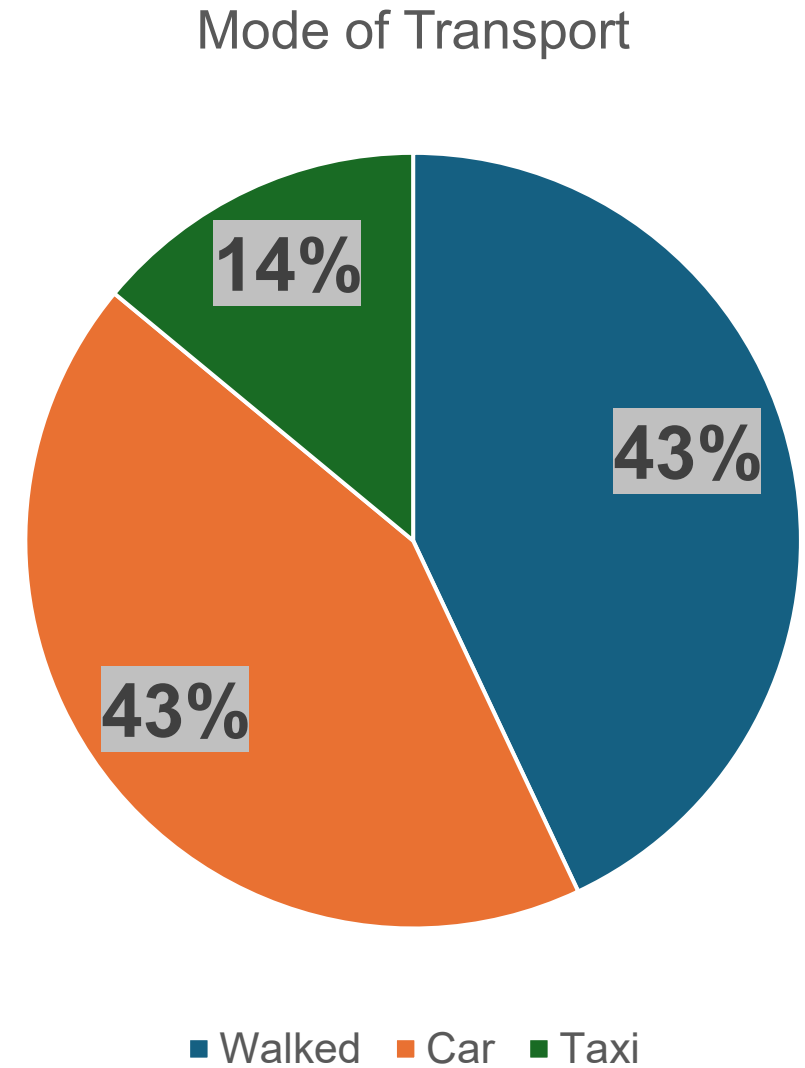
- Of those 19 people, 14 (74%) had been advised to attend the Safe Haven in person, and a further 4 (21%) had decided for themselves to attend while struggling with their mental health, without a professional recommending it.
- Of the 18 people who wanted to attend or were advised to, 7 (39%) were able to attend and 11 (61%) were not.



- Was able to attend
- Was not able to attend

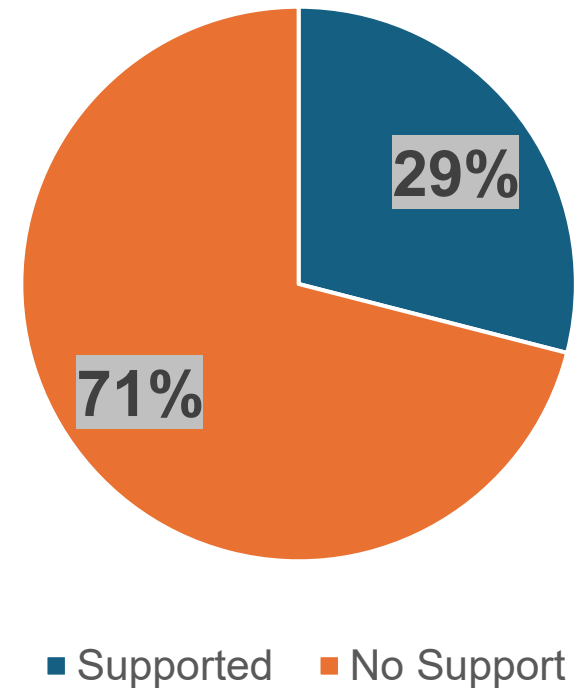
Reaching the Safe Haven

- For those who attended the Safe Haven in person, 3 (43%) walked, 3 (43%) arrived by car, and one (14%) person travelled by taxi.



Support to attend

- Two people (29%) were supported to attend, and 5 people (71%) had no support.
- One person was driven by their husband, and another walked with family members.
- Four people could not think of any help or support that would have made it easier for them to attend in person.
- One person said they reached the Safe Haven but were denied access as they have “*a problem with alcohol*”.



People unable to attend the Safe Haven

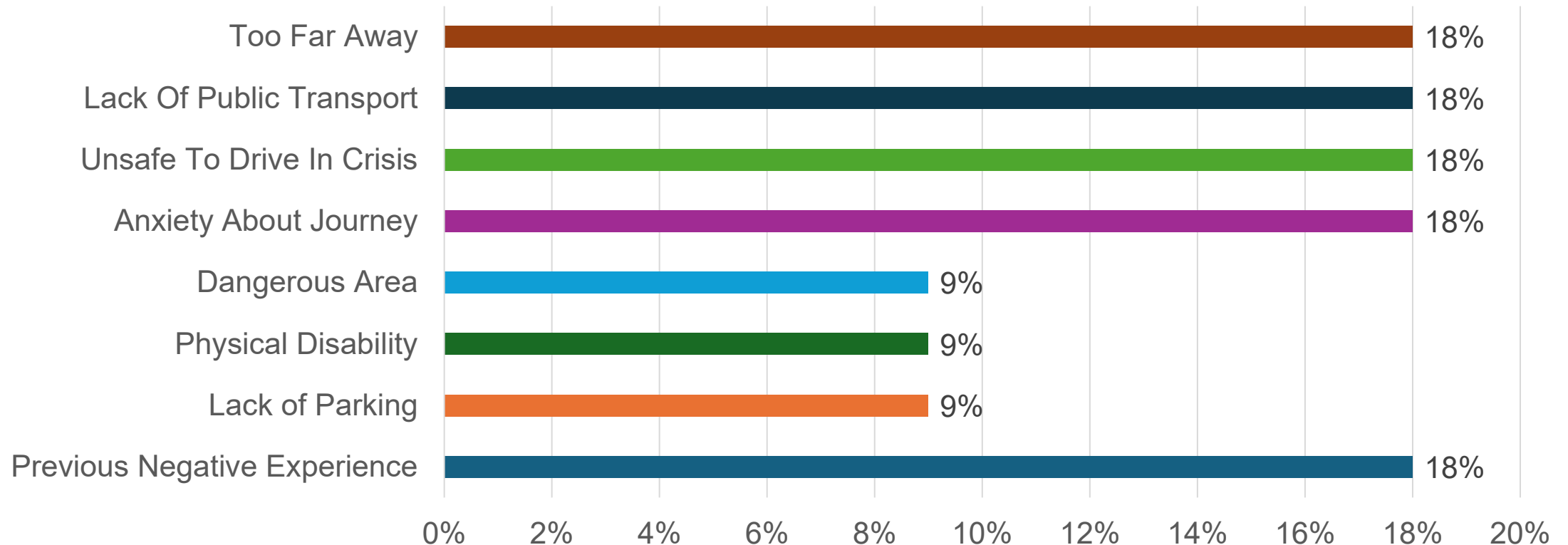
- For those who did not attend the Safe Haven in person, the biggest barrier was transport, including the inaccessibility of locations and difficulty making the journey.
- Previous negative experiences with time limits on visits were also a factor.

“My bus stops going to Farnborough at around 5.30 to 6pm. Last bus from Farnborough is 17.55, so can’t get to Aldershot at all.”

“I don't actually think it's a good idea to tell someone in a crisis to get in a car and go somewhere!”

“When I did go in person, I was only there 15mins and they told me not to bother coming back and to just do the online one. It was appalling.”

Reasons people were unable to attend the Safe Haven in person



Percentages are based on how many times these issues were mentioned by respondents. Some people gave more than one reason in their answer, so percentages add up to more than 100.



People felt it could be easier to access Safe Havens if:

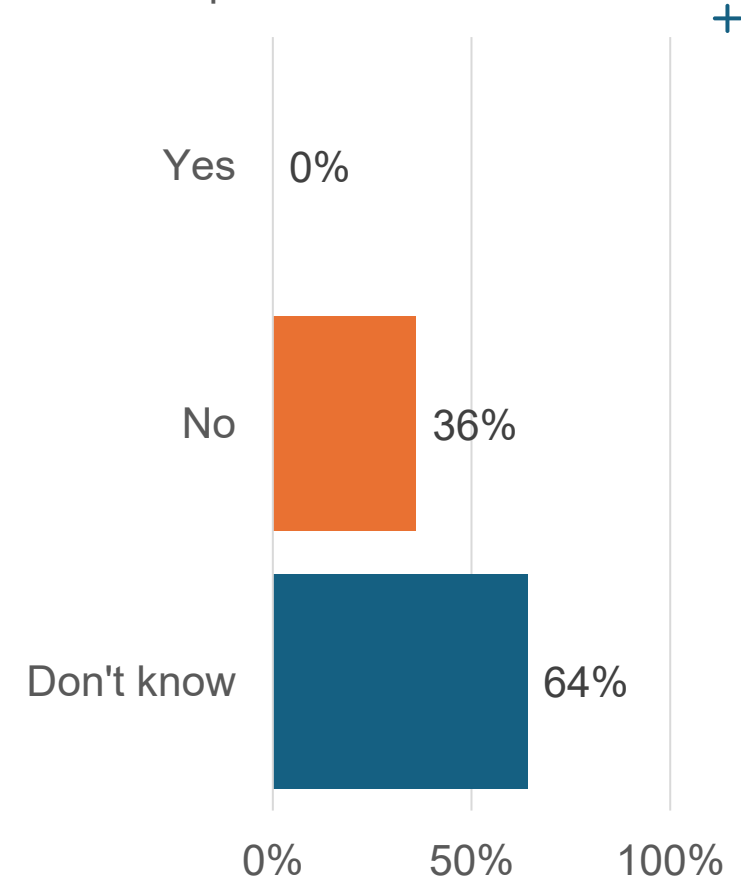
- Someone could take them there
- There was a bus service operating during the evening
- The Safe Haven had a more central location
- Car parking was easier
- It was within their borough
- The Safe Haven was in an area that felt safer at night
- It was open earlier in the day, as 6-11pm is too late for some people
- There was a video to show exactly what to expect to reduce anxiety, particularly for autistic people
- They did not send people away (this person was told to access online instead)

One person could not think of anything that would make it easier.

Trying again

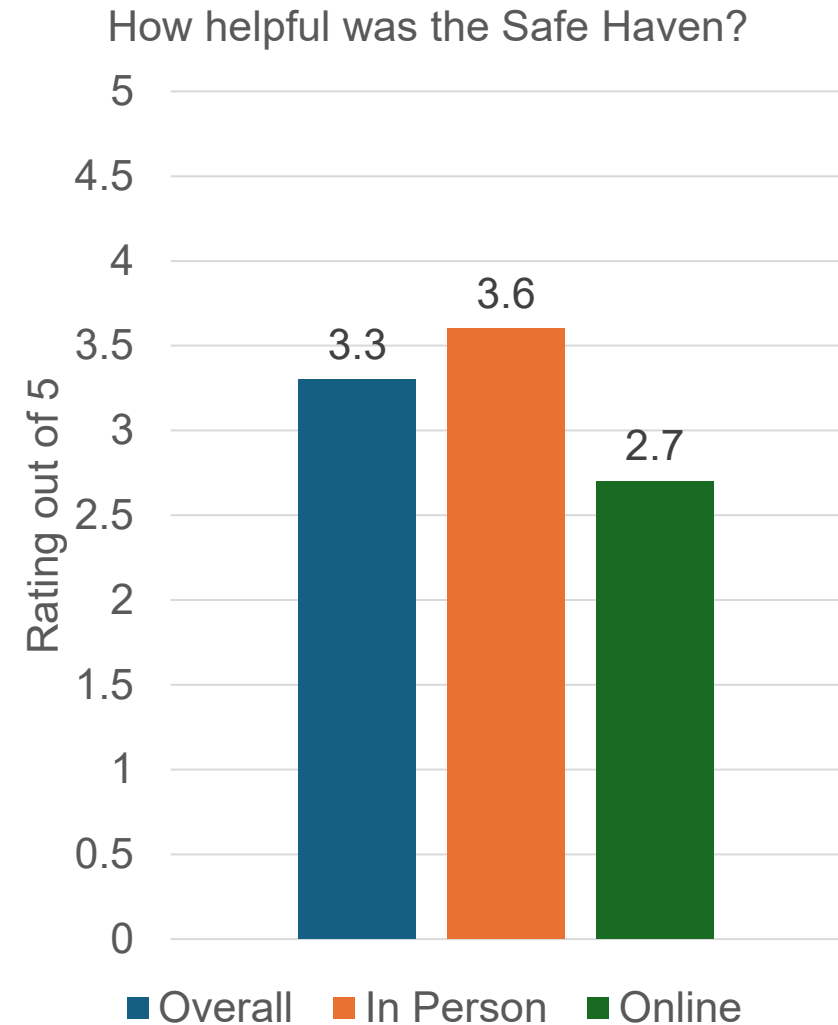
- Of the 11 people who had been unable to attend in person, 4 (36%) said they would not feel able to attend in person in the future, and 7 (64%) said they did not know. No-one said yes.
- 3 of those people accessed the Safe Haven online instead of attending in person, and 8 did not.
- One person said they were unaware there was an online offering.

Might you feel able to attend in person in the future?



How helpful was the Safe Haven?

- Those that attended the Safe Haven either in person or online were asked how helpful they found it.
- The overall average rating was 3.3 out of 5.
- The average rating for those attending in person was 3.6 out of 5.
- The average rating for those attending online was 2.7 out of 5.



Positive experiences of the Safe Haven

“The fact that it was there and available made me feel safer and reassured that it was there - just knowing it was there helped me to get through periods of distress”

“Staff at Redhill safe haven are lovely and they do drop in preventive between 6-8 so I go once a week every week to get me out of the house”

“Having the opportunity to be in a safe place when I was struggling with risky behaviour kept me safe. Also it was helpful to have people to talk to including a nurse who could access my notes.”

“Just very kind people who helped.”

“Calm me down having someone professional to talk to.”

“Was able to make a plan that got me support.”

Negative experiences of the Safe Haven

- Perceived lack of empathy from staff
- No support for people with alcohol addiction
- Disappointment when Safe Haven did not refer someone to the home treatment team, after their GP had sent them to the Safe Haven to get that referral
- *“I don't understand why you moved a central location to somewhere difficult to get to in crisis” (Woking)*

Not understanding individual needs and differing presentations

Staff insisted the person follow their standard advice, even after the person explained why it was unsuitable for them. *“When I explained this, he basically told me I wouldn't get better if I couldn't be bothered to try, which left me feeling more hopeless and suicidal than when I first contacted safe haven. He made no attempt to empathise or understand my situation”*

“On arrival I was questioned at the door as to whether I was in crisis and if I wasn't I could not come in. Problem here is who decides and defines a crisis? Mentally Health professional or MFT support staff. The mentally unwell person definitely knows they are in crisis but safe haven staff at Epsom feel it is their decision.”

“There were times when I wasn't welcomed. I felt like the staff needed to understand that a crisis can be different for each person.”

“They just told me to use my coping mechanisms which I had already done, which is why I called in first place. I needed someone to talk to not to be told to do distractions I’d already tried.”

“I also find that the suggestions offered are ones that I have already tried before coming to safe haven so they are not really helpful. I usually come in crisis so need crisis help”

Only getting a reminder of coping mechanisms

Suggested improvements

- Reinstating early evening wellbeing groups which stopped during Covid pandemic. *“It used to help me feel less alone and it used to help me with socialising etc.”*
- Opening earlier in the day, as current hours are a barrier to people who need to find childcare and someone to drive them to the Safe Haven
- Allowing visits of more than 30 minutes. *“It takes me a while to get there which doesn’t seem worth the hassle for 30 minutes”*
- Encouraging grounding or distraction activities. *“I find there isn’t much on offer at safe haven other than to chat. I would prefer to spend the time trying to de escalate by doing something that is distracting such as colouring to make it less formal as well as chat.”*
- If the Safe Haven is closed, display a sign on the door signposting alternative sources of support and update the website to show it is closed