



# **A life worthwhile** - Scoping future service offers revisited

A review in 2022

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# Introduction

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This research was conducted as a continuation of the 2019 paper *A life worthwhile- scoping future services offers*. The paper highlights three main areas which the people we support consider to be key contributors to living a life worthwhile: **relationships, health and wellbeing, and meaningful activities**. We have focussed on these areas to scope service offers that respond to the needs of the people we support.

The aim of this qualitative research was to reassess if these aspects are still relevant, see how the services we provide and different elements within them have contributed to support in any of these categories, and if there is room for improvement or innovation.

A set of workshops were carried out across four different services, with 25 participants drawn from colleagues and people who use those services. The workshops were mainly group conversations, guided with a simple activity around the three areas with prompt questions and an optional drawing/writing exercise.



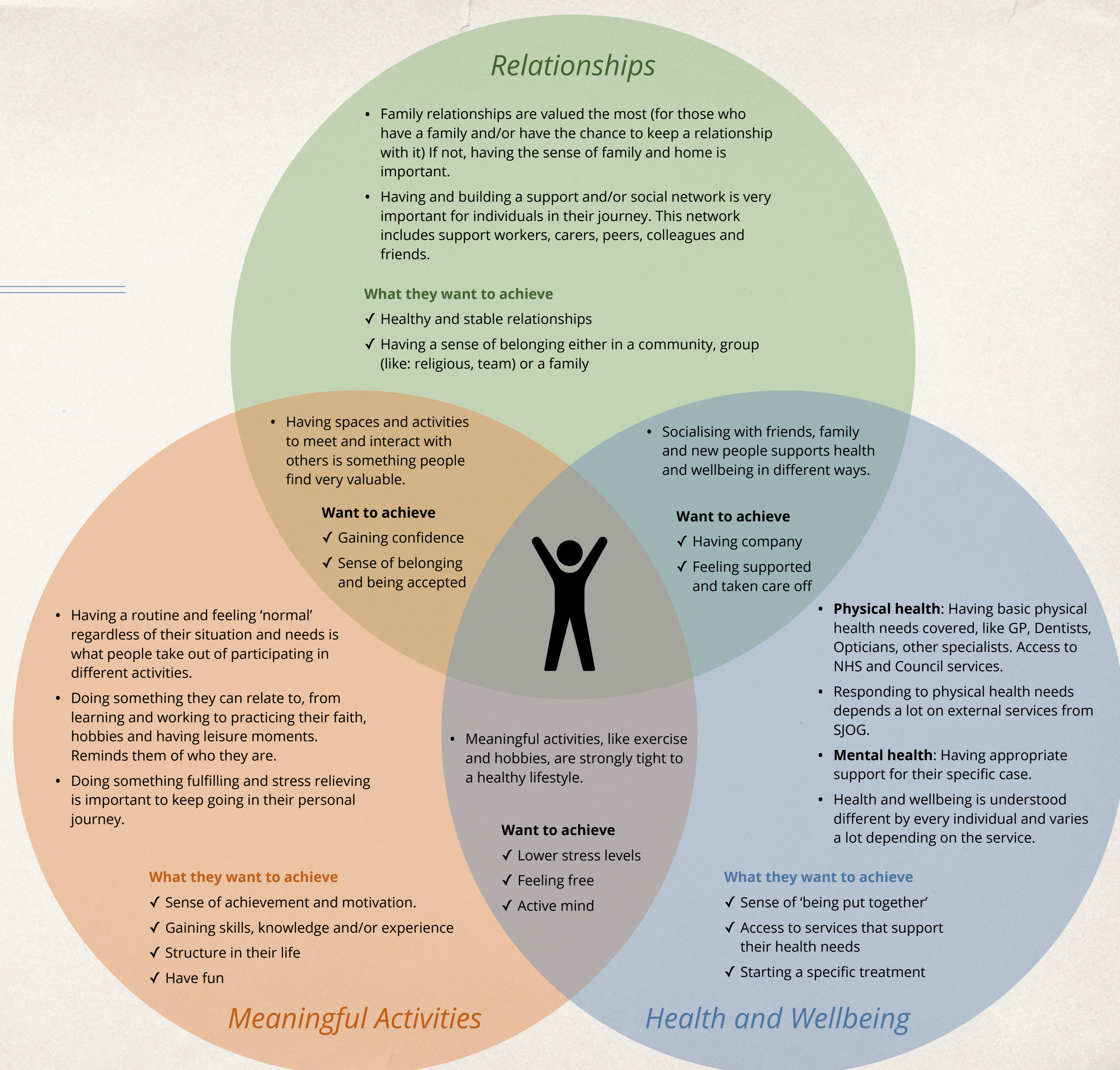
# The 3 main areas

## What they represent

This diagram shows the general view of what each area represents for the people we support and colleagues who participated in the workshops. The information is based on their own experience, but some people said they could speak for other peers (not in the workshop) for some of the areas and relatable experiences.

It also shows how the areas are interconnected. Although this was common to all four services involved in the research, the findings reinforced the conclusion that there is no one-size-fits-all solution, support must be person-centred, and all the needs varied from case to case and across the four fields of support SJOG covers.

Apart from what each area represents, the diagram includes what people want to achieve and what being well looks like in each area.



# What's working in each area?

SJOG is already helping its service users and colleagues to live a life worthwhile. Although the four types of services are different in terms of the people they support, they have common ground in the three areas identified, since they all focus on helping the individual. Highlighting the things that are working is important so that they can be enhanced and used as examples of how to implement new ideas. Some of these are listed below:

## *Relationships*

- Colleagues in SJOG make people feel supported by showing them they are here for them and not just for the work or as a company.
- SJOG colleagues are helping the people they support engage in safe relationships and access different social activities where possible.
- People using the services are surrounded by people. Whether they are project workers, friends, family or peers, there is always someone available in the services. (This is mostly for residential services)
- People supported in the services benefit from meeting with people (peers) they can relate to through a shared interest, story, culture or background.
- There is trust between all individuals in the SJOG community. This includes colleagues and the people we support.

## *Meaningful Activities*

- When people we support have the chance to participate in different activities they feel happy and see the benefit in their stress, mood and entertainment needs. They like to be taken into account and appreciate having the opportunity to attend workshops, too.
- Colleagues are aware that not all activities will work for all the people. Services tailor their activities to the needs of specific individuals as much as they can.
- Both colleagues and people we support wish to contribute to their communities and help others when they have the chance. Some services have volunteer activities, peer support activities or mentorship that support this.
- The services provide spaces to interact as community, like different events and celebrations, which people like to participate and engage in. Peers, friends and family are welcome at these events, too and it brings joy to service users.
- All services organise activities focused on health and wellbeing which people we support enjoy, like going for a stroll in the park and music sessions.

## *Health and Wellbeing*

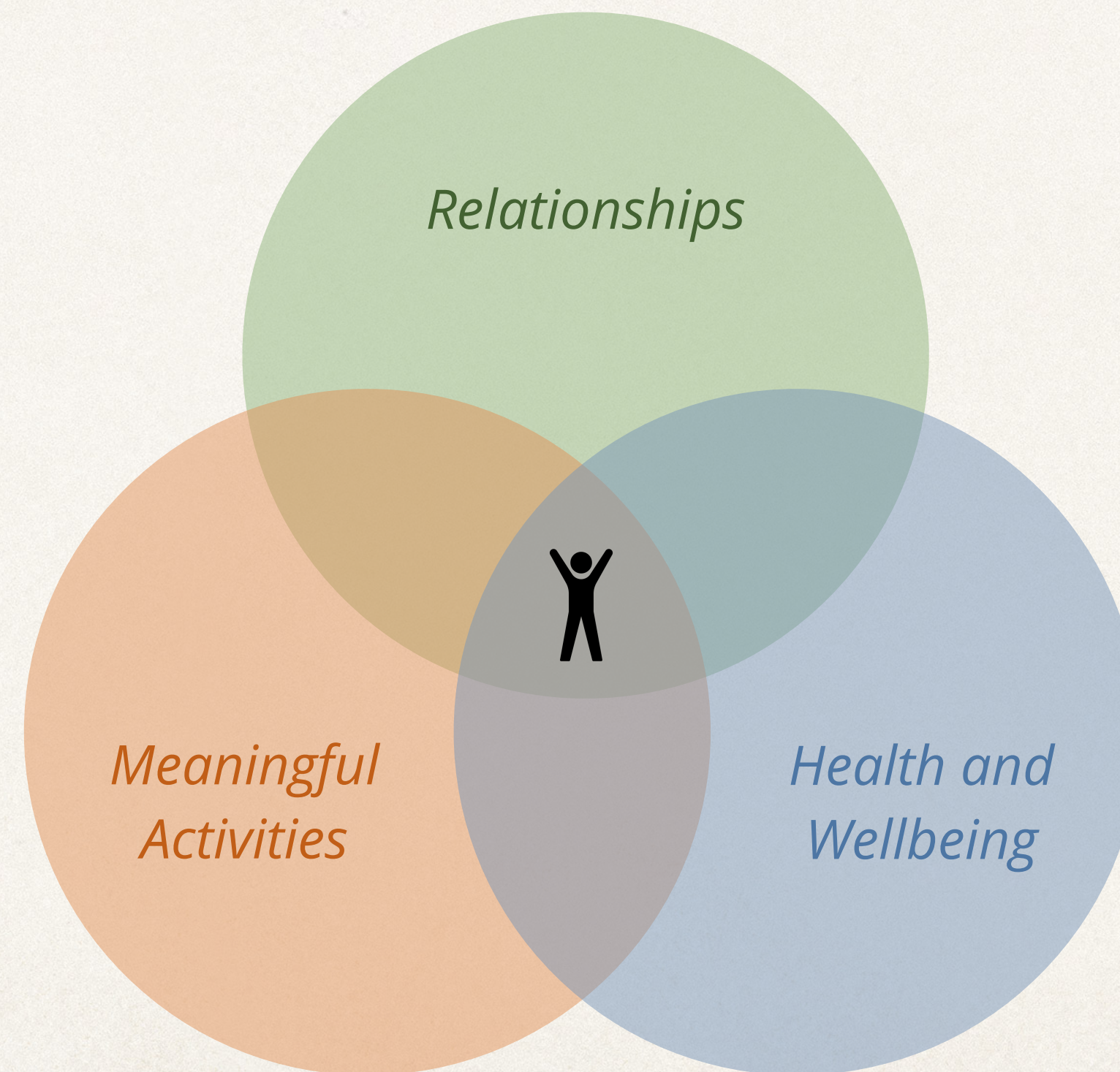
- SJOG takes a person-centred approach which is carefully followed in all services as closely as possible.
- No two colleagues follow exactly the same path in developing the expertise, motivation and drive to do their jobs supporting others in their health and wellbeing. For some colleagues, the motivation comes from personal experience or being close to people who have been through situations similar to those experienced by the people our colleagues support (disabilities, dementia, mental health conditions). This makes their job very meaningful and rewarding for them.
- Safety regarding physical and mental health of the service users is a priority in all of SJOG's services.
- All services carry out regular health check-ups and support people in getting to their medical appointments.
- SJOG services provide access to group activities that help individuals' progress in different aspects of their journey e.g., group therapy for substance misuse, emotional therapy.

# Where is more support needed?

## Disabilities Services

The workshop for disabilities service showed there is a balance between the three areas and people are fulfilled in all of them. The three areas complement each other and are tied to the specific disability-related needs of each individual.

They didn't express the need for support in any particular area but there is always space for improvements and some challenges to overcome like behavioural problems and costs to provide support which are prohibitive. The biggest challenge for this user group is that for the most part they rely on other people to do activities, moving around, and care needs.



### **Relationships**

Their dependence on people make relationships an area to focus on. For the most part, they only maintain social relationships with people they already know. Meeting new people is challenging because there is misunderstanding of the disability. It's a process that needs guidance to create the interaction in an accessible way.

### **Activities**

Doing activities is mostly for leisure, entertaining and health and wellbeing, involving movement and encouraging self expression. Activities don't necessarily need to be paid or have any monetary reward but to make people feel capable.

### **Health and wellbeing**

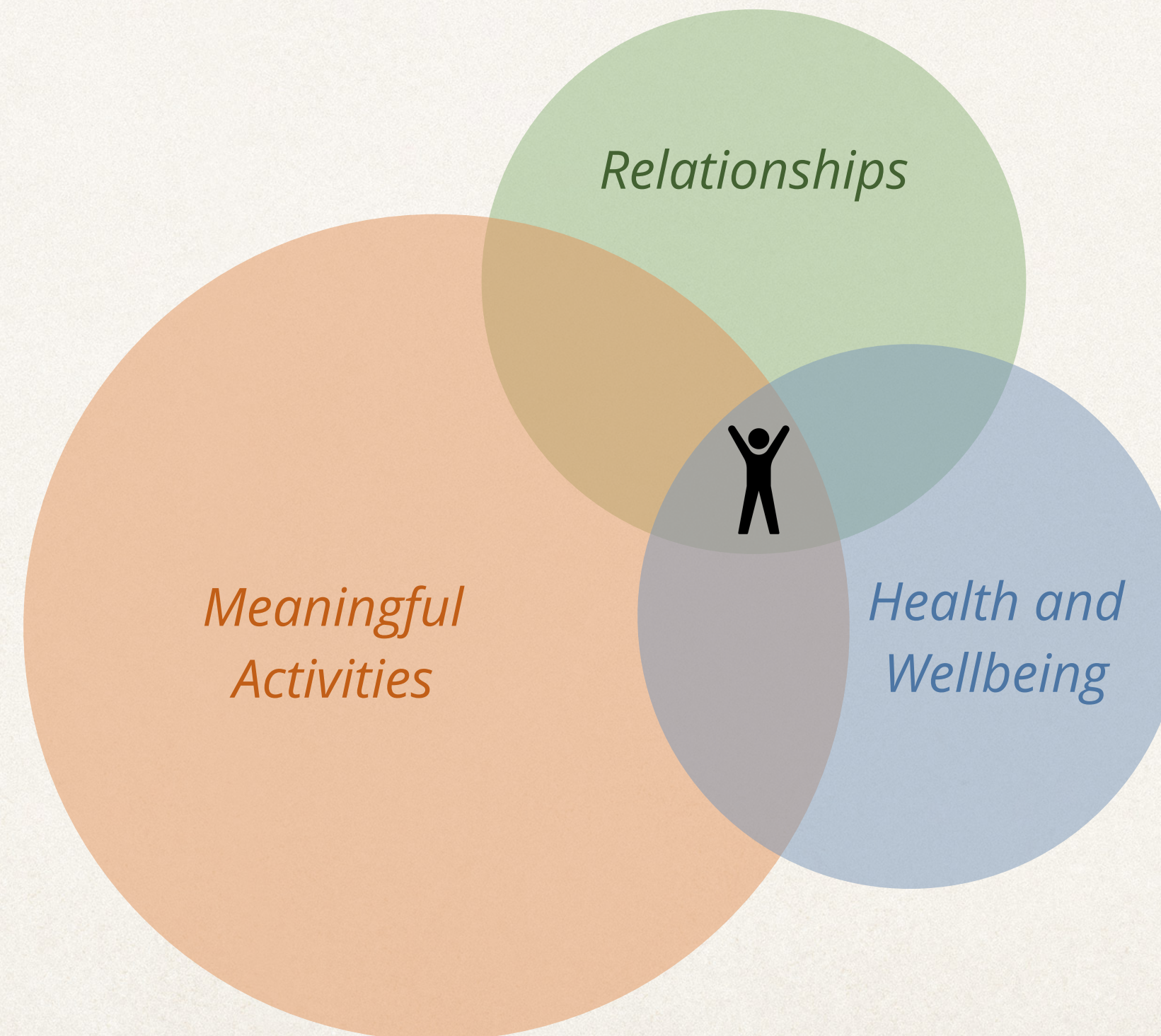
This area is mainly focused on the specific needs of the disability, including mental health and physical aspects. Activities have play a big part here although there is limited grand funding to enhance them.

# Where is more support needed?

## Older Religious Communities Services

The service for older religious communities showed that the three areas are balanced for the Sisters, although colleagues expressed there could be more done around meaningful activities. Keeping a balance takes compromise from both parts, colleagues and Sisters, but sometimes due to age and their strong religion vocation there is resistance from the Sisters for change and introducing new things in their life.

Building trust between them is important and it can sometimes be challenging. It is something to focus on because it leads the Sisters to accept and become more open to receiving extra assistance in any or all of the three areas.



### Relationships

Trust is a big component of the relationship between Sisters, colleagues and their friends and family, who often visit the service. They are a close but strong community united by their faith and religion, so although they are very welcoming to people, it takes time for Sisters to open up to visitors and new people. They have the local community and there is potential to enhance more interaction and engagement with it, and expand the service to benefit others around them.

### Activities

Activities in the service are mainly vocational, like doing prayers, helping others and religious coaching. SJOG colleagues working at the service consider that the Sisters could benefit from being more active, and having a bit of leisure and social activities would improve their health and well being. For example engaging with other groups in the community or charity work. The main challenges are: some sisters don't want to engage, they feel they don't need to move or do different activities and the fact that they need supported living.

### Health and wellbeing

Care and assistance is the focus in this area because the Sisters are not longer fully independent. Colleagues said there is always room for improvement in keeping a nice environment, promoting healthy habits like nutrition and physical activity, and breaking monotony. The biggest challenge is to achieve a balance of support without taking away their independence.

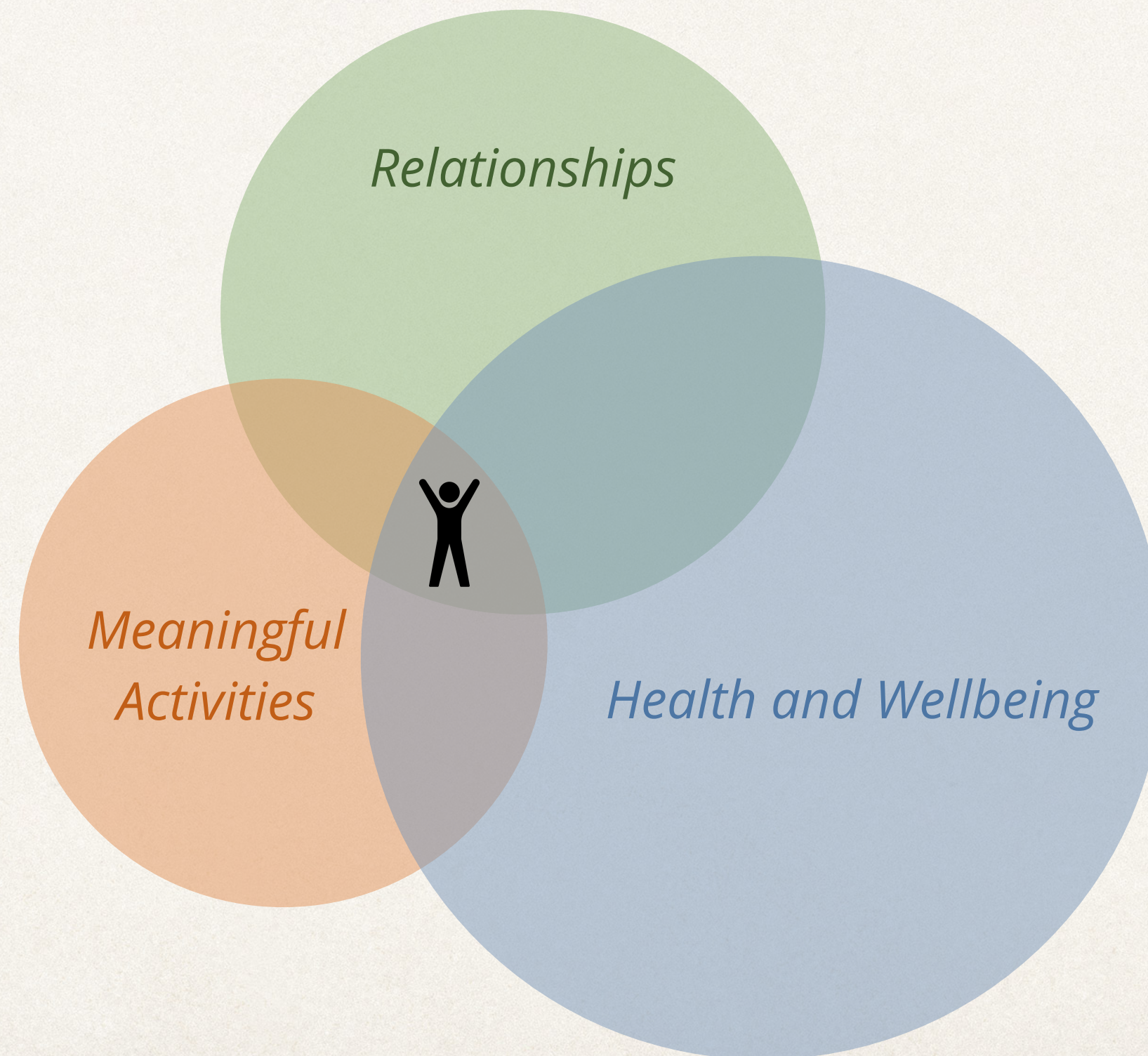
# Where is more support needed?

## Modern Day Slavery and Trafficking Services

The service that participated in the workshop was a residential one, but some of the things brought up are also applicable to outreach services. The outcomes revealed that all of the areas could have extra support and it's hard to get consistency, or keep everyone happy, due to the diversity of people, backgrounds and stories.

In all of the areas there are feelings and emotions involved, which sets a challenge to fulfil them for every person. Having no pocket money is another limitation stopping people from doing what they want.

Finally, culture was a theme that came across all areas. There is a great cultural mix between colleagues and service users, which sometimes creates issues when relating to and understanding each other.



### Relationships

There are mixed feelings between being well and needing more support. One of the biggest considerations to have is that most of the users in this group have trust issues due to a past traumatic experience and being involved in abusive relationships. It sets a barrier in building stable relationships and gives different interpretations on what healthy relationships should look like. They need help to have a sense of family and belonging. Most of them are far from their family, lost touch or don't have a relationship with it and have to deal with the loss. The relationship they build with their project worker is key, but for colleagues there is a fine line between professionalism and being a friend to the person where they need to keep find the right balance.

### Activities

People understand the importance of a meaningful activity and wish to do one, but need support to: access it, find one that works for them and fits their recovery journey and interests, stay engaged and motivated to do it. There is space to bring in new things that challenge curiosity, improve skills and recognises their talents.

### Health and wellbeing

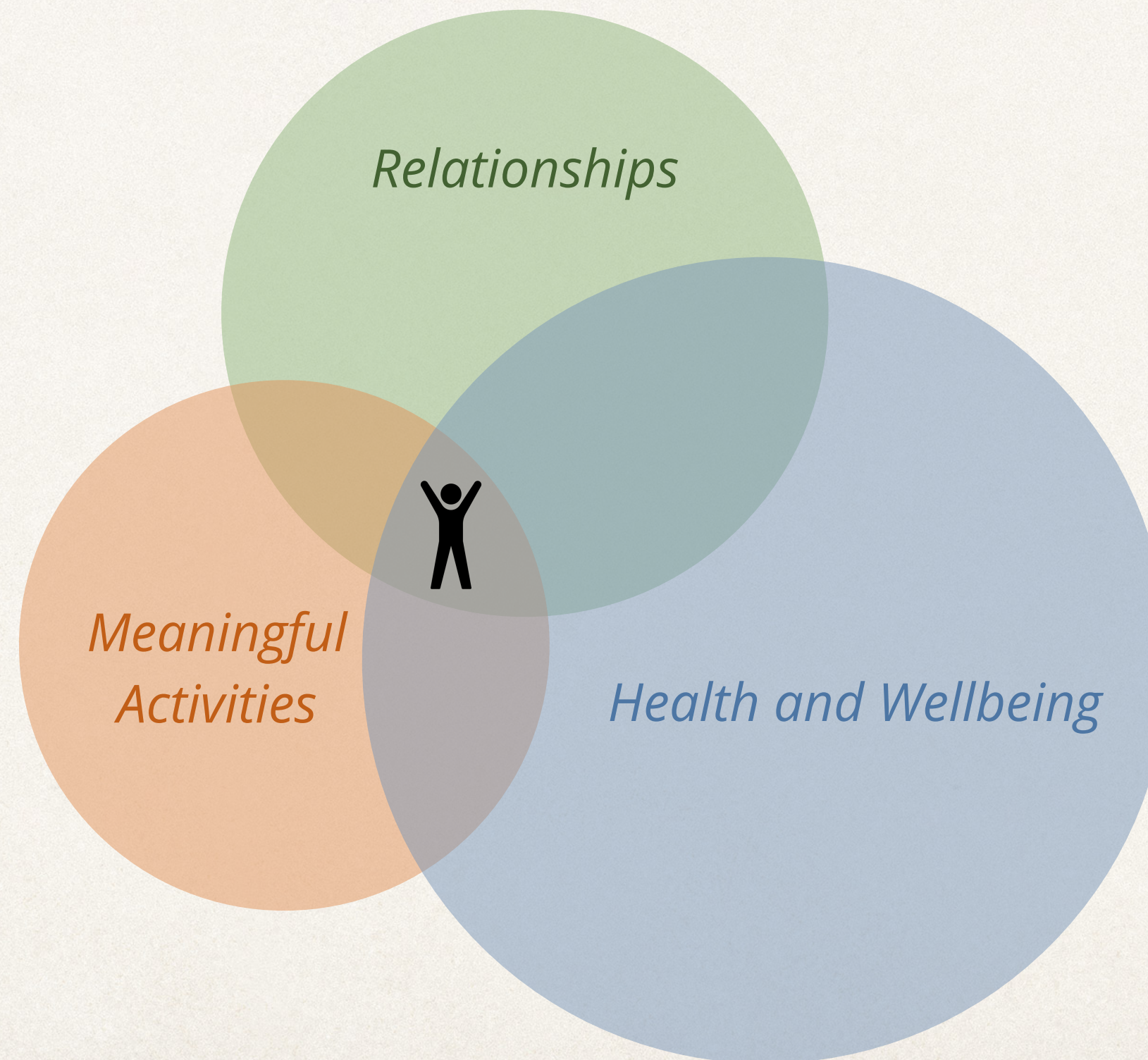
This area needs the most attention because most of the service users have very unstable mental health and improving it is something they look forward to. One of the things that resonated with the group is achieving a feeling of safety and stability. Another important aspect on the area was giving more attention to issues that affect each person like sexuality, homophobia, religion, and the mix of different cultures. Creating a space of tolerance and respect where they can thrive individually and as a community is key.

# Where is more support needed?

## Homelessness Services

Service users in the homeless service feel satisfied regarding the meaningful activities area and they value that the service provides different opportunities for them.

Relationships and health and wellbeing are the two areas that need more focus. The service already does a lot for them in both areas but this is where they have more barriers and personal issues.



### Relationships

People feel they need support in this area. They mentioned they've had very unstable and or abusive relationships before, making it difficult to relate to new people, and be afraid of violence. Relationships for them are based on understanding and their recovery journey, in which most of them expressed they feel lonely, that's why project workers and their peers' support are key to breaking the homelessness cycle they have been though. Their main barrier in the way they relate to others is poor self-image.

### Activities

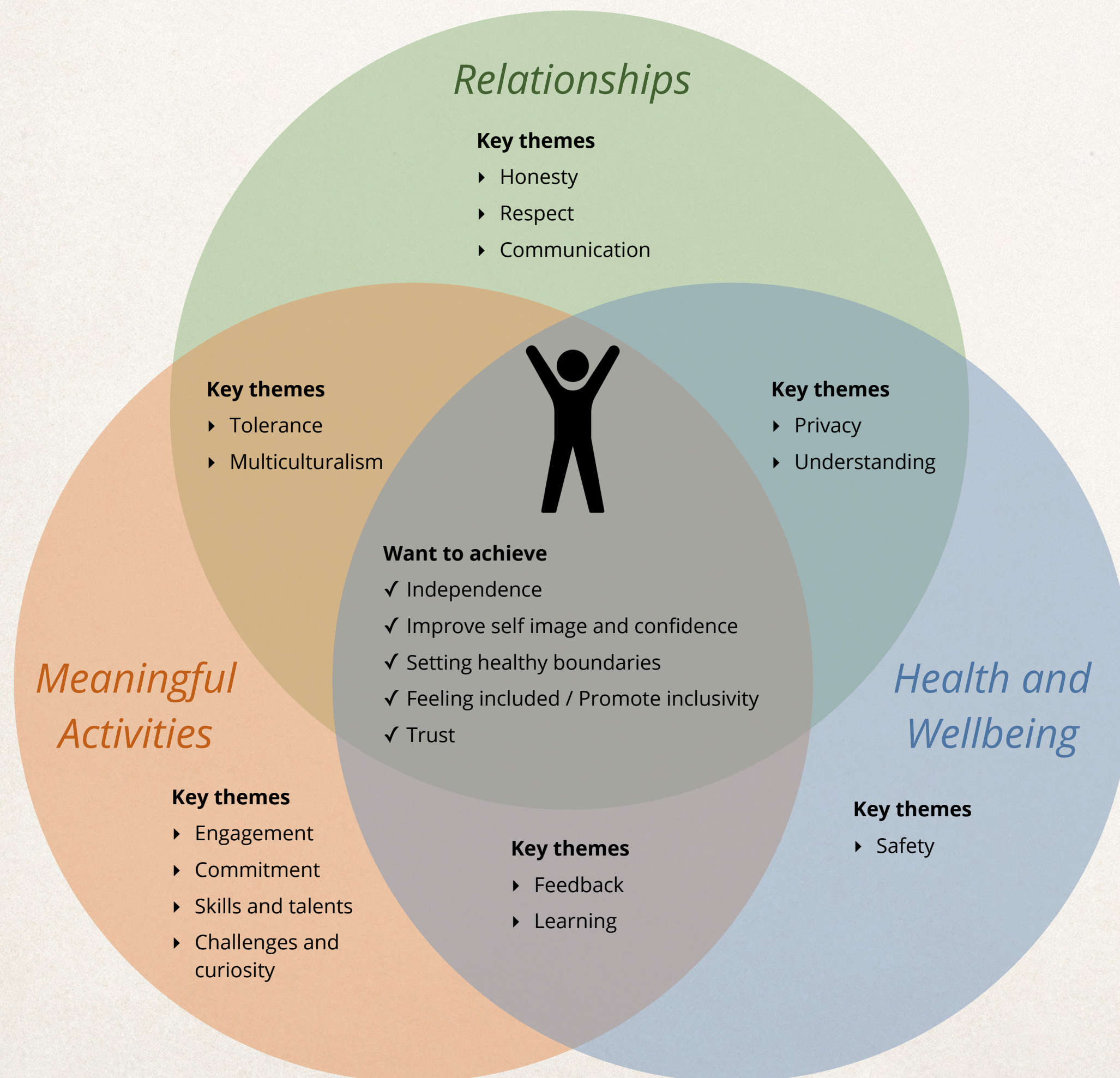
People in the service are satisfied with this area. They have access to different cultural, sport and leisure activities they enjoy. Activities help them keep their minds active and relax. Some of them mentioned they wan to have access to education or prepare themselves to find jobs. Volunteering has been a first step for some of them to gain the skills and the experience they need to get into a job. Having more opportunities like this can be beneficial and is something they are willing to try. Another area that has potential to be explored further and enhanced is peer support and mentorship where the service users help others based on their experience.

### Health and wellbeing

The focus for this area was mental health; stress, substance miss-use, addictive behaviours, and repetitive toxic cycles, are some of the struggles people face and have a desire to overcome. The way they understand physical health is very different for every case as some of them also have illnesses to overcome. Health and wellbeing is the area where most support is needed as it put a lot of barriers that affect progress and engagement in the other two areas.



# A Life Worthwhile



## Common aim

The three areas that contribute to living a life worthwhile have specific aims and actions that can be taken to strengthen each one, but the workshops showed common themes that focus on the individuals themselves, what the journey in SJOG services represents for them, and what the three areas combined should help them achieve.

## General Barriers

Regardless of the area and the service type, common barriers or challenges to fulfilling the aims of each one were mentioned and are the following:

- Budgets, costs and available funding.
- Finding the right balance between providing person specific support, tailored to individual needs with what's available, and what the service and colleagues are able to provide.
- Behavioural problems and emotional responses from the service users that affect others. People overcoming mental health issues can have sudden change in moods or breakdowns that slows down their progress and engagement by not being in the right mindset.
- People not knowing what support is available.
- Lack of awareness about health and wellbeing. Seems like is a bit hard for people to talk about this.
- Stigma around the topics SJOG works on and ignorance on how to deal with them from external parties or community that might stop people from getting involved.
- There is high rotation of staff in some services even if colleagues find their job meaningful and fulfilling.
- Colleagues can get very stressed when helping others and dealing with difficult situations. They sometimes forget to take care of themselves and cope with the stress that comes from the job.

# Challenges

The research shows there is an opportunity for innovation in the different services SJOG provides and responding to the needs of the three areas contributing to living a life worthwhile. Based on the findings we defined a challenge for each area, the aim is to find creative solutions to overcome barriers differently or improve the services in a way that hasn't been done yet.



## *Challenge 1 - Building trust*

How might we create an environment of better communication and tolerance across the services and groups of people we support?

## *Challenge 2 - Enhancing people's talents*

How might we use the skills, knowledge and diverse cultural backgrounds of the people we support to benefit of their recovery journey and others?

## *Challenge 3 - Care for the carers*

If you had the chance to build a wellbeing plan that balances work and time for carers to cope with the stress of their job better how would you do it?

