

Healthy Heart

2024 Report: Year Two



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“

‘[The course] had great information to take and act on. How to take care of yourself, manage your blood pressure. See your GP if medication isn’t working.’

Healthy Heart participant

”

Executive summary

Our Healthy Heart team work to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease in Barnet's African, Caribbean and South Asian communities.

From 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024, we provided 1,191 brief and extended brief interventions to people at drop-in events. In addition, we delivered over 170 more in-depth interventions during courses and workshops.

Improving people's heart health is a crucial priority because cardiovascular disease is a leading cause of death, including in working age adults ([BHF 2024](#)). People with South Asian, African and Caribbean heritage have a higher incidence of and mortality from hypertension, compared to the national average ([Raleigh 2023](#)). In 2022, Barnet Council developed a Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Programme; the Healthy Heart project is one part of this strategy ([Barnet Council 2023](#)).

Outreach

Our Healthy Heart interventions took place at venues including food banks, community centres and places of worship. The invaluable support we received from our partner organisations has been crucial to the project's success, and these groups are listed on p15. The majority of our events took place in areas with relatively high levels of deprivation: Burnt Oak, Colindale, Edgware, Golders Green and West Hendon ([Office for National Statistics 2021](#)).

During our interventions, the Healthy Heart team took participants' blood pressure, provided them with information and signposting on heart health and had effective conversations about setting personal goals. Key topics included healthy eating, exercise and how to monitor your blood pressure. Where participants received a high (or low) blood pressure reading, the team explained the importance of seeking timely support from their GP and pharmacy. In cases where a reading was very high or low, people were signposted to Accident and Emergency (A&E). In addition, from June 2023 to May 2024 we distributed over 1,120 Healthy Heart resource packs.

From p23, we set out data on our intensive Healthy Heart courses, and the changes which participants told us they had made since attending. Some people told us that, before they attended a Healthy Heart session, they had not been aware that they had high blood pressure. The majority of course participants reported having made positive changes since engaging with Healthy Heart, including eating more healthily, exercising more, and arranging GP appointments where these were needed. When asked what action they would take if their blood pressure went above 140/90, three quarters of attendees gave the correct answer, saying that they would contact their GP.

Executive summary

System change

While participants made positive changes as a result of attending Healthy Heart sessions, many people also told us about difficulties they had experienced when seeking to engage with health services and improve their well-being.

Attendees described challenges with accessing primary care appointments and difficulties with arranging foreign language interpreters for medical appointments. Although GP practices in Barnet have a designated telephone interpreter service, many Healthy Heart participants told us that they did not know how to access this. In relation to healthy eating, attendees told us about the challenges posed by the cost of living crisis, and that dietary advice did not always feel geared towards the culturally specific food that they ate.

We took on board participants' feedback in two ways. First, we used this input to develop the service offered by the Healthy Heart project. For example:

- In response to attendees' language needs we produced and distributed Gujarati and Somali translations of our Healthy Heart resource pack.
- We organised Healthy Heart sessions in GP surgeries. These events provide an opportunity to reach out to residents who are not engaging with their GP around heart health, to offer them culturally tailored support, and to encourage those with high blood pressure to meet with health professionals in their GP surgery to discuss this.
- We are currently developing culturally tailored healthy eating workshops.

Secondly, as is set out from p30 of this report, we shared anonymous feedback with our statutory partners, and worked together to help address the inequalities faced by participants. This has, for example, resulted in:

- Our input into the NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board's re-tender process for the primary care interpreter contract.
- Work with the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust to improve access to interpreters.
- A new primary care access project which we developed in partnership with the NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board and Barnet Council during the course of 2024. This work has been closely informed by the feedback we have received from Healthy Heart participants. The key focuses are: improving access to GP appointments, ensuring that the information on GP websites is clear and accessible, and creating plain English resources for Barnet residents on how to access their GP.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Barnet Council, the NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board and the Royal Free London Trust for their support and collaboration.

Key info

Outreach



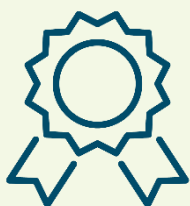
- Delivered **1,191** brief and extended brief interventions to event attendees
- Provided over **170** in-depth interventions during courses and workshops

A big thankyou to our partners

We worked with **over 30 organisations**, including food banks, places of worship, community centres, schools and libraries



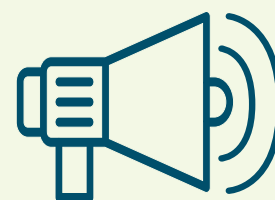
Recognition



In March 2024, the **African Caribbean Culture Society of Barnet** presented our team with a certificate of appreciation for service to the community

Spreading the word

- **873** Healthy Heart resource packs distributed – English language
- **248** Somali and Gujarati resource packs given out
- **4,556** Healthy Heart X/Twitter impressions



Foreword

The Healthy Heart project is a wonderful example of collaborative working between voluntary services, Barnet Council, primary care and the NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board, primarily for the benefit of our local South Asian, Black and minority ethnic populations.

We have based the project on the evidence that these populations have poorer outcomes when it comes to health, wealth, housing, employment and the justice system.

The Healthy Heart project focuses on supporting these target populations to better manage their cardiovascular health, in line with NHS England's [Core 20+5](#) initiative. This has been achieved through the various strategies of brief interventions, extended brief interventions, workshops and multi-session courses. Adopting the 'Care Closer to Home' model, the team go to community sites to engage with people in the environments that are safe and familiar for them.

Our Peer Engagement Officers have worked tirelessly to provide over 1,360 interventions and establish positive links with the community. They have taken a holistic approach, recognising how people's social needs affect their health. There have been added benefits as participants share their learning with friends and family.

There is still more that we can do. The team are keen to be upskilled to understand the connections with other chronic diseases, that also have a significant impact on cardiovascular health. Valuable learning from community feedback will enable us to provide a more tailored approach in the coming year and build on the resounding success of this project.

Dr Narishta Joanne Sebastian Pillai
MBBS. DCH, MRCP, PG Dip Cardiology
GP Principal and Co-Clinical Director of PCNID Barnet



Acknowledgments

A big thankyou to:

- Our fantastic Healthy Heart team: Judi Dumont Barter, Riffat Ahmed and Salna Abdallah.
- Our Healthy Heart volunteers: Emine Aziz, Cecilia Boumbou and Melysa Martinez Mendoza.
- All the members of the public who took part in our events and shared their views with us.
- The Healthy Heart funders: Barnet Council and the NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board - who made the project possible.
- The Healthy Heart Working Group: Candice Bryan (Co-Chair), Judi Dumont Barter (Co-Chair), Sarah Campbell, Dr. Deborah Jenkins, Tara Mooney and Daniel Morgan.
- Our Clinical Reference Group: Marsha Alter, Dr. Ameet Bakhai, Caitlin Bays, Amalin Dutt, Bianca Ilii, Dr. Niro Kuganenderan, Dr. William Meyer, Sarah Milne, Indira Nathan, Dr. Narishta Sebastian Pillai, Sangeeta Seedher and Vasundra Tailor.

This report was written by Sarah Campbell and Judi Dumont Barter.

Introduction

Our Healthy Heart team work to raise awareness of cardiovascular disease in Barnet's African, Caribbean and South Asian communities.

From 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024, the team regularly delivered events, workshops and courses:

- We provided 1,191 brief and extended brief interventions at drop-in events.
- We delivered 96 more in-depth interventions during six stand-alone workshops.
- We organised four Healthy Heart courses, each of which took place over several weeks. In total, 77 attendees completed pre-course questionnaires and 48 completed post-course questionnaires.

Cardiovascular disease is a key priority in health prevention work because it is a leading cause of death, including in working age adults ([BHF 2024](#)). Barnet Council's Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Programme data shows that there are nearly 50,000 patients diagnosed with hypertension on the GP QOF Registers in the borough (2020-21), and the estimated number of people living with hypertension is over 89,000. This suggests that around 39,000 people in Barnet may have undiagnosed hypertension ([Barnet Council 2022](#)).

In Barnet, residents living in the most deprived areas are significantly more likely to die from cardiovascular disease than those in the least deprived areas ([Barnet Council 2023](#)). Furthermore, nationally, studies consistently



Introduction

show a higher incidence, prevalence and mortality from cardiovascular disease amongst people with South Asian heritage, compared to the national average. Despite having a lower risk of heart disease, people with African and Caribbean heritage have a higher than average incidence of and mortality from hypertension and stroke ([Raleigh 2023](#)).

In order to address the risks posed by cardiovascular disease, in 2022 Barnet Council produced a four year Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Programme. The Healthy Heart project is one part of this strategy ([Barnet Council 2023](#)). In 2022, in partnership with Barnet Council and the NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board, Inclusion Barnet launched the Healthy Heart project. The first year of delivery took place from June 2022 to May 2023, and in 2023 a report was published outlining key learning from year one ([Inclusion Barnet 2023](#)). Since October 2023, management and oversight of the Healthy Heart project has sat within Healthwatch Barnet, which is hosted by Inclusion Barnet.

Health inequalities

As outlined above, from June 2023 to May 2024, the Healthy Heart team provided over 1,360 interventions to event, workshop and course attendees.

Our focus was on engaging with African, Caribbean and South Asian communities. We also prioritised running our outreach sessions in parts of Barnet where residents typically have fewer resources, and there are relatively high levels of poverty according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation ([Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2019](#)). As set out from p16 of this report, the project had a considerable impact in terms of raising awareness of hypertension and empowering residents to manage this condition.

The team also received valuable feedback from residents about the challenges they faced when seeking to access medical care and look after their health. Many participants told us about practical barriers to accessing GP appointments, but also that they struggled to trust health professionals. For example, a Somali resident said:



I have not visited the GP for three years. After covid, I don't really trust using them. I know I have high blood pressure and other [health conditions] ..'





We often worked with event attendees who were not fluent in English. One of our Peer Engagement Officers speaks Urdu fluently, and we have delivered events using Gujarati, Somali and Portuguese interpreters (the latter for an Angolan community group). In these settings, participants regularly fed back to us that they had difficulty communicating with their GP because of the language barrier.

Although GP practices have a designated telephone interpreter service, many of our event attendees told us that they did not know how to access this. In relation to healthy eating, participants told us about the challenges they faced eating well given the cost of living crisis, and the time pressures imposed by work and caring responsibilities. Some people told us that they tended to cook culturally specific, traditional recipes, and that healthy eating advice did not always feel geared towards this type of food.

As is set out from p30 below, we took on board participants' feedback in two ways. First, we used this input to develop and refine the service offered by the Healthy Heart project. Secondly, we shared anonymous feedback with our statutory partners, and worked together to help address the inequalities faced by participants. In some cases, we had the opportunity to collaborate in the development of more accessible services.

About the project

The Healthy Heart project has been developed in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's 'Public health guideline on behaviour change: individual approaches'.

In this guideline, recommendation nine states that staff should, 'Deliver very brief, brief, extended brief and high intensity behaviour change interventions and programmes' ([NICE 2014](#)). Healthy Heart delivers three types of interventions:

1 Brief and extended brief interventions

During a brief intervention, a Healthy Heart team member engages with a participant for a few minutes. An extended brief intervention lasts for between 10 and 15 minutes. Both interventions take place at drop-in events. They involve information sharing and dialogue in relation to heart health. Extended brief interventions include goal setting – supporting participants to identify capability, opportunities and motivation for behaviour change.

2 Workshops

These are one-off intensive sessions, lasting between one and two hours, which allow the themes listed above to be explored in greater depth. Like our briefer interventions, these workshops have been developed in line with the relevant section of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) [guideline](#), in this case on high intensity interventions.

3 Courses

Healthy Heart courses take place over several weeks, with each session lasting around two hours. These courses have also been developed in line with the NICE guideline on high intensity interventions. They cover high blood pressure awareness, monitoring and management, healthy eating and exercise. The team support participants to set goals and review their progress.

Blood pressure checks

All three types of interventions involve checking participants' blood pressure. However, if attendees do not consent to having their blood pressure checked, the team will still offer them information about heart health.

Where blood pressure readings are taken, the team:

- Give participants a card with their blood pressure reading.
- Present the blood pressure chart and point out their reading on it.

About the project

- Give out a physical copy of the British Heart Foundation leaflet [Understanding Blood Pressure](#).
- If somebody receives a high (or low) blood pressure reading, the team signposts them to their GP and pharmacy; in cases where the reading is very high or low, people are signposted to Accident and Emergency (A&E).

Our Healthy Heart Peer Engagement Officers, Salna Abdullah and Riffat Ahmed, undertook the following training:

- Healthwatch Islington training on blood pressure checks – developed in collaboration with Camden and Islington NHS Trust Core Team Population Health nurses and a GP
- Barnet Council bespoke training – Making Every Contact Count
- Citizens Advice – First Aid Advice
- Healthy Dialogues Consultancy – Motivational Interviewing
- British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation – Behaviour Change and Psycho-social Support

In April 2024, the Healthy Heart team began working with volunteers. Our volunteers assist our Peer Engagement Officers with setting up events and work with participants to complete monitoring forms.



About the project

None of the work set out in this report would have been possible without our Peer Engagement Officers. See below their reflections on the factors that have made the project a success, including our partnerships, and the next steps for Healthy Heart, such as work with GPs and libraries.

Riffat

This project has opened up prospects for personal training that in turn compliment and enrich our professional approach to the programme and help our personal growth. To be able to deliver the Healthy Heart intensive sessions to larger groups has been really rewarding as there is a greater opportunity for behaviour and lifestyle change as an outcome of peer support. Our work with Barnet Asian Women's Association is an excellent example of this.

Our project aims to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals from marginalised, ethnic minority communities within our target areas. Change can happen only if different organisations work in collaboration with each other.

- We have had the opportunity to work with multiple organisations and even Councillors supporting us in our cause. Working with schools has been something that I cherish as I sincerely feel that the change needs to happen from the early years of one's life.
- Having Central London Community Healthcare provide us with the opportunity to engage with people in local hospitals and GP surgeries is absolutely awesome. We can potentially do more.

Salna

The project has received invaluable support from so many people. I want to take a moment to thank both Councillor Ernest Ambe and Barnet Council's Public Health Strategist, Candice Bryan. Through Councillor Ernest Ambe we have been able to access numerous community groups and events within the borough since the beginning of the project.

Candice Bryan has worked closely with us throughout the project, linking our work with that of Barnet Council's Public Health team, and coming to see us on the ground, for example at the Centre of Excellence Health Fair. Her continued support has been a privilege; the support from my team and the Inclusion Barnet organisation as a whole is a crucial part of my achievement in year two of the project and I should be grateful for that.

About the project

I've also enjoyed working with libraries. Burnt Oak Library has opened the door for us to access BOOST – the employment programme based within the library. Working alongside the Pre-Diabetic Programme at Colindale Library has also been a good opportunity to engage patients with comorbidities under one roof, to enable them to benefit from both diabetic and high blood pressure services.

We had a good collaboration with the equality, diversity, and inclusion team for patients and carers at the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, where we examined the problem of language barriers in access to health services among the groups we are supporting in the Healthy Heart project. Our collaboration had a good outcome as we were offered help with interpreting services. Also, Inclusion Barnet have used these discussions as a starting point for a project with the Royal Free London Trust on removing barriers to pre-operative care.

Lastly, I also enjoyed hearing from the two organisations – Barnet Asian Women's Association and the Somali Centre of Excellence – at our event in March 2024. It was an opportunity to witness the first-hand testimony of two organisations and see what a difference the Healthy Heart project has made to the lives of our target communities.

Going forward, I think one of the things that would really help would be funding for community organisations to deliver initiatives of their choice in collaboration with the Healthy Heart project. We also have an important opportunity in the work we're doing with GP surgeries, to work together to reach people who could benefit from the Healthy Heart project.



Partnerships

Effective partnerships with both the voluntary and statutory sectors have been crucial to the success of the Healthy Heart project.

Once again, we would like to thank both the Somali Centre of Excellence and Colindale Communities Trust for supporting us from the very beginning of the Healthy Heart project, since May 2022. We are grateful for their continued engagement - linking us in with local events and recommending us to anyone carrying out work to better the health and wellbeing of local residents.

Listed below are those we wish to thank:

- African Caribbean Culture Society of Barnet
- Age UK Barnet
- Barnet African Caribbean Association
- Barnet Asian Older People's Association
- Barnet Asian Women's Association
- Burnt Oak, Colindale and West Hendon Foodbanks
- Burnt Oak Nepalese Community
- Centre of Excellence – Somali Community Group
- Central London Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - drop-in services at Grahame Park Health Centre, Watling Medical Centre and Edgware Community Hospital
- Colindale Communities Trust
- Everglade Medical Practice
- Grahame Park Community Centre
- Islamic Centre Edgware
- Jain Community
- Libraries: Burnt Oak, Colindale, Edgware, Hendon and Golders Green
- Living Ways Ministries
- New Citizens Gateway
- Nova Vida – Angolan Project
- One Stonegrove
- Schools: Hyde, Barnfield and Sunnyfields
- Uitas
- West Hendon Hub – Metropolitan Thames Valley Housing
- West Hendon Islamic Centre
- Yaran Project

For more detail on the events that Healthy Heart has supported, in partnership with these organisations, see Appendix three on p38.

Brief and extended brief interventions

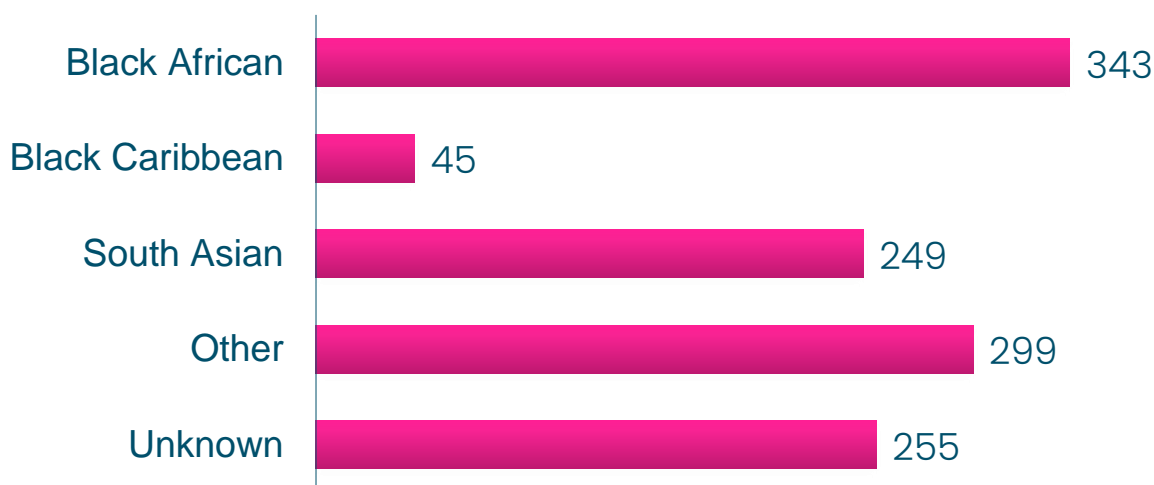
From 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024, we provided a total of 1,191 interventions to event attendees.

Each one-to-one intervention lasted between a few minutes and 15 minutes, and involved information provision and dialogue with the participant in relation to their heart health.

These interventions took place at locations including food banks, community centres, places of worship, schools and libraries. Some events were with specific communities, including Somali, Angolan and Gujarati residents. In other cases, events were held at venues such as Barnet Multicultural Community Centre or New Citizens' Gateway's service for refugees and asylum seekers. See Appendix three on p38 for a full list of the outreach events that Healthy Heart supported during this period.

The charts below set out demographic data for the 1,191 interventions. They show that the majority of participants were people with African, Caribbean or South Asian heritage. The charts also outline the areas in Barnet where attendees were living, and indicate that the majority were in locations with relatively high levels of deprivation: Burnt Oak, Colindale, Edgware, Golders Green and West Hendon ([Office for National Statistics 2021](#)).

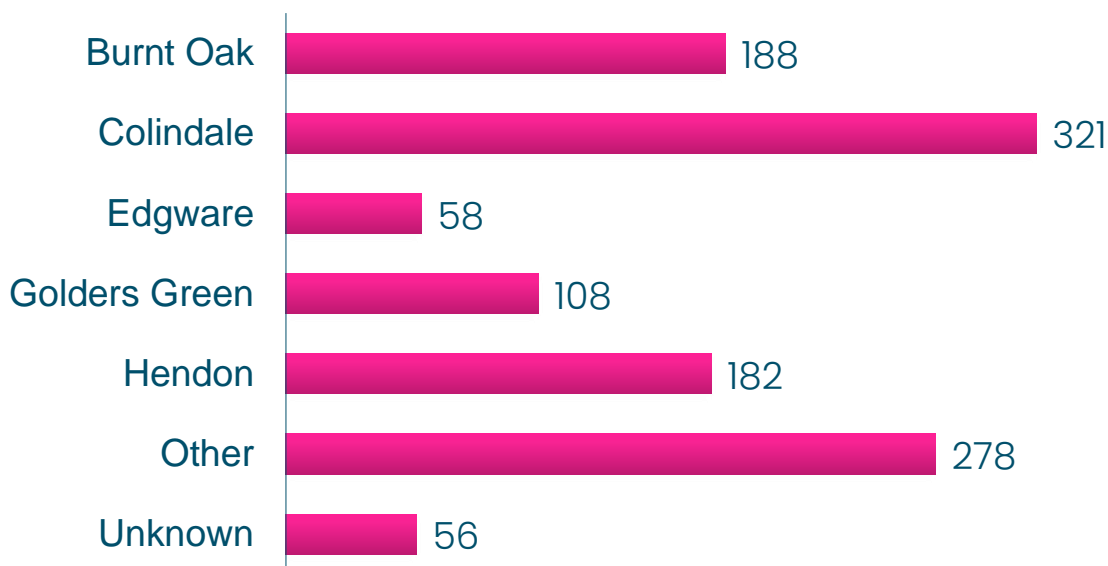
Ethnicity



Brief and extended brief interventions

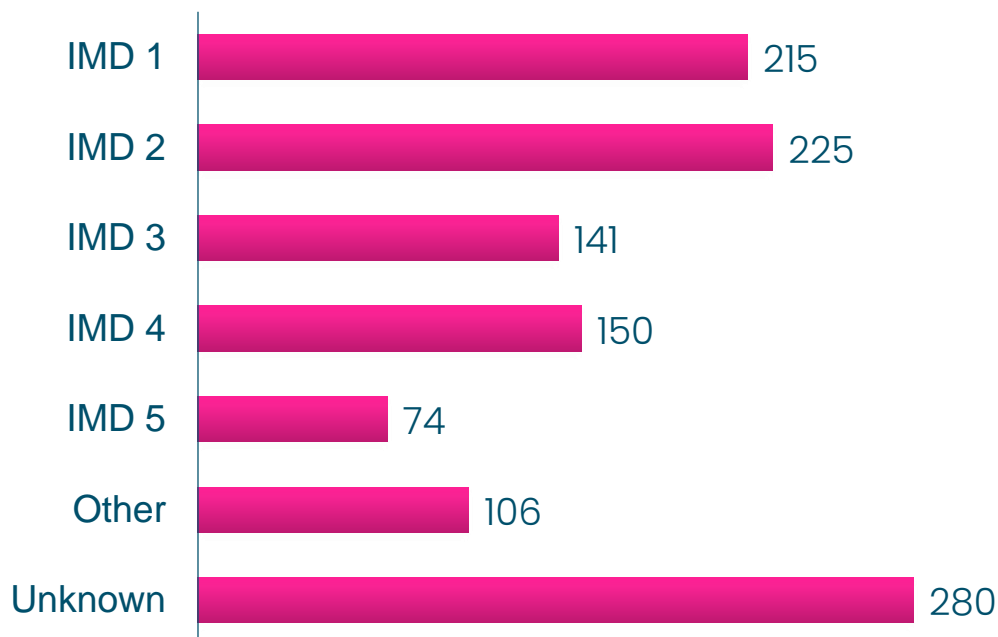
Area

The chart below shows the areas where our participants were living.



Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

The Index of Multiple Deprivation sets out the relative poverty or deprivation of small areas across the country, including within Barnet ([Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2019](#)). Areas classified as IMD1 are those found to be the most deprived, and IMD5 signifies the least deprived areas. The chart below shows the IMD scores for our participants' locations.



Brief and extended brief interventions

The IMD information listed above was calculated using postcode data. From June to December 2023, home postcode data were not consistently collected from all participants, so there were a larger number of 'unknowns'. Furthermore, during this period in some cases the event venue's postcode was used as proxy data. As can be seen from Appendix three on p38, venues commonly included libraries, food banks, local community centres and GP surgeries. However, from January 2024, IMD data was either recorded as 'unknown - prefer not to say', or based on attendees' actual home postcodes. The third year of the Healthy Heart project began in June 2024, and we have continued to consistently collect home postcode data.

Qualitative feedback

Often, our participants were facing multiple challenges, such as the cost of living crisis, poor housing, neighbourhood safety, depression or anxiety. Some people told us that, before attending one of our events, they had not been aware that they had high blood pressure. Others said that, while they had known that they had high blood pressure, addressing this had not been something they had been able to focus on or prioritise.



Brief and extended brief interventions

Attendees also told us about challenges with accessing primary care. Many GP practices ask patients to call at 8am to secure appointments. Often, Healthy Heart participants told us that, when calling at 8am, they had either not been able to get through on the phone at all or had waited on hold for long periods only to be advised that all the appointments had been taken by the time they got through. Some attendees told us that, when they were able to arrange a GP appointment, the time limit of ten minutes per appointment created pressure, causing them to become hesitant and unable to recall what they wanted to say.

Where participants received high blood pressure readings, our Peer Engagement Officers explained the next steps they should take, including making contact with their GP. Where possible, as well as providing signposting on the day, our staff gave attendees the option of having follow up phone calls with the Healthy Heart team. In some cases, we were able to effectively support participants to access help from their GP or local pharmacy – please see case study below.

Case Study

Morgan* attended a drop-in event and had their blood pressure taken by our Healthy Heart team. They said it had been over a year since their last GP appointment. Morgan also told us that they were in a lot of pain from arthritis, which had been diagnosed when they were abroad. They said they had given up trying to get a GP appointment in the UK after several attempts. At this Healthy Heart event, Morgan was surprised to discover that they had high blood pressure. They told us they had no idea that they had this condition. Our Peer Engagement Officer emphasised the importance of Morgan seeing a GP as soon as possible.

After this event, our Peer Engagement Officer followed up with Morgan over the phone, and encouraged them to see a GP. Some time later, our Officer again spoke to Morgan on the phone, and they confirmed that they had met with their GP and were on the journey to treatment, for both for high blood pressure and arthritis. They said that they had been 'suffering in silence' but that the Healthy Heart intervention had spurred them to take the next step.

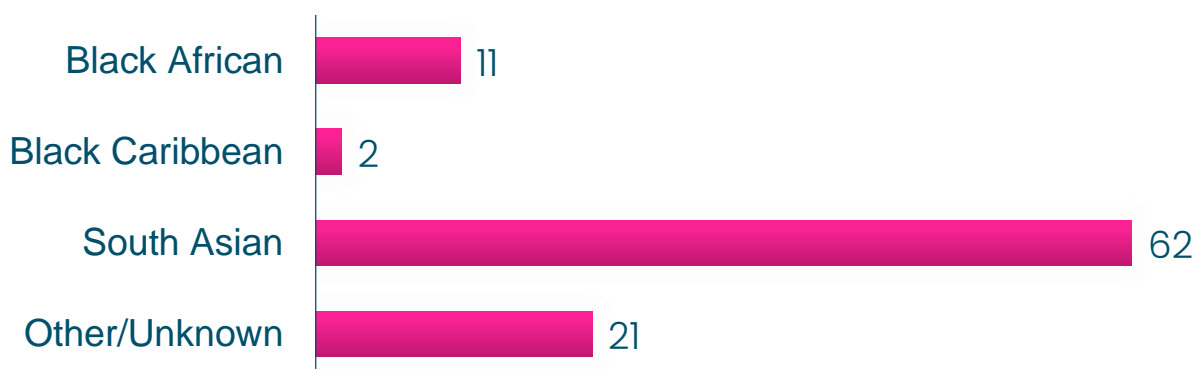
* Name changed

Intensive workshops

From 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024, we provided 96 interventions to attendees over the course of six intensive workshops.

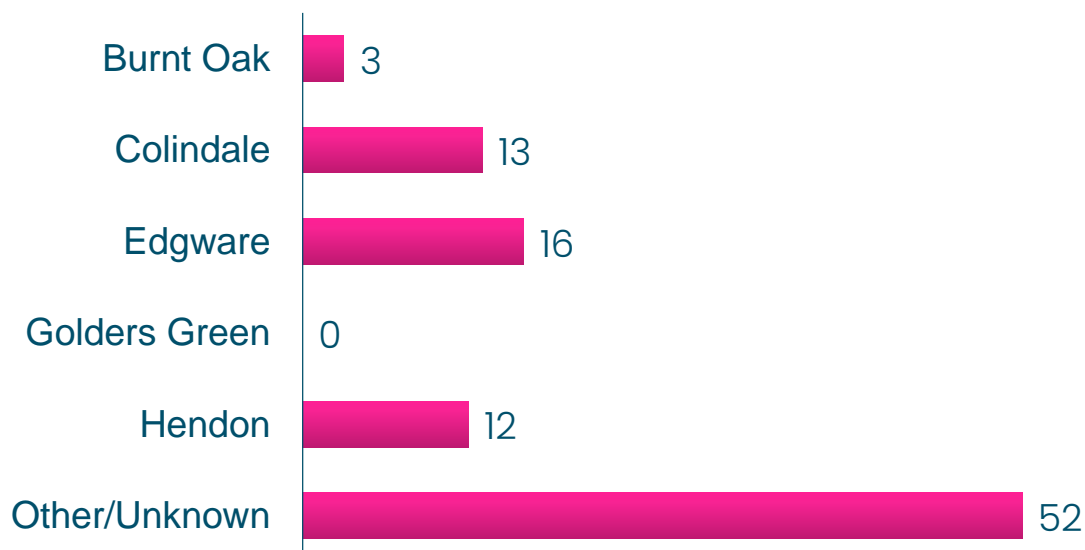
One of these workshops was hosted by Age UK Barnet, another was at Colindale Library, two were at the West Hendon Hub Community Centre and a further two were with Barnet Asian Women's Association. These group workshops were one-off sessions, lasting between one and two hours. They focused on information sharing, dialogue and supporting participants to plan personal goals in relation to heart health. The charts below set out demographic data for the attendees.

Ethnicity



Area

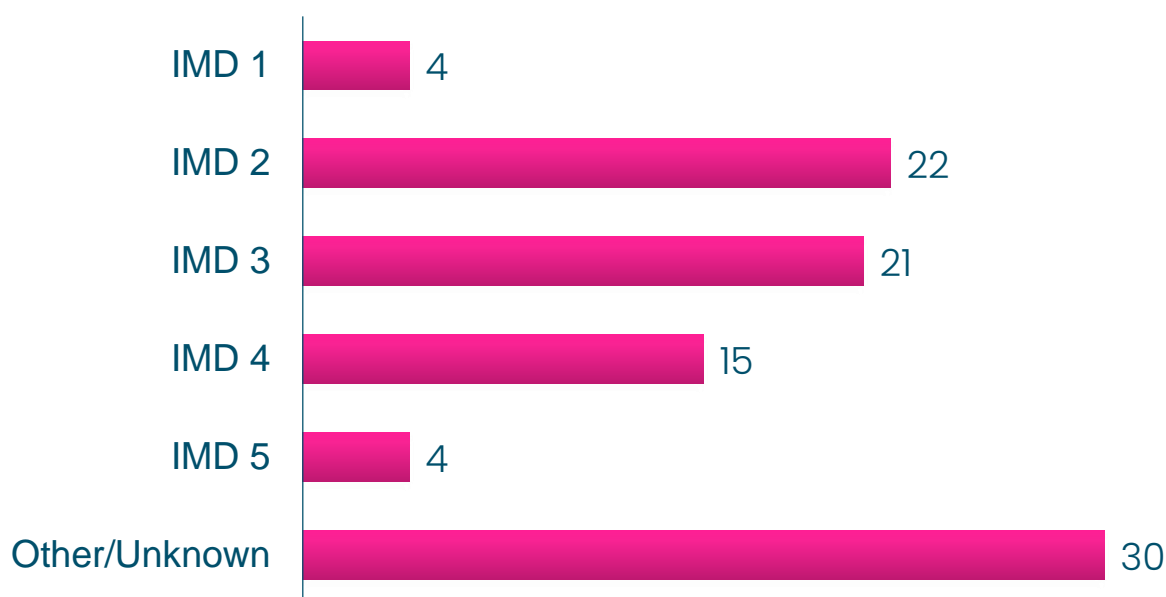
The chart below indicates the areas where our workshop participants were living.



Intensive workshops

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

This chart shows the **IMD** scores for the locations of our workshop participants. Areas classified as IMD1 are those found to be the most deprived; IMD5 signifies the least deprived areas. For further details of how these data were collected, see p18.



Qualitative feedback

These intensive workshops provided the opportunity for us to discuss high blood pressure, healthy eating and exercise with attendees in greater detail. Often, our focus was on supporting participants to identify incremental, achievable changes that they could make to improve their heart health. One attendee said that the main message they took from the workshop was to:



“Start with the small steps – more activity, less salt.”



Some people shared specific challenges that they had faced when seeking to change their diet, and we were able to talk through possible solutions. For example, see the case study below, from Barnet Asian Women’s Association.

Intensive workshops

Case Study: Barnet Asian Women's Association

We ran two workshops with Barnet Asian Women's Association, in July and October 2023. The sessions had 30 and 25 attendees respectively. The participants were very engaged, and the association's Chair, Neena Patel, said, 'Ladies [who attended] expressed that they feel cut off because of their ethnicity and excluded from education or self-help programmes, preventing them from managing their blood pressure... your session helped us to learn about blood pressure in a relaxed way.'

During the workshops, the issue of cooking for social gatherings came up repeatedly, and our Peer Engagement Officer facilitated an extended dialogue on this subject. After the session, Neena commented, 'Food is a problem in social gatherings, some ladies expressed concern at the difficulty in cooking separate meals for high blood pressure in the family. You educated them on how it is to talk to the family members about healthy eating and making some small healthy choices to implement into day-to-day eating. The ladies are now more relaxed due to the understanding from you on how to manage and cope with food and stress during social gatherings.'

After the workshops, we were able to pay occasional visits to Barnet Asian Women's Association, and found that they had made a number of changes as a result of the Healthy Heart interventions. For example, the group were offering more healthy snack options at their meetings. They had also developed a recipe swap scheme, for members to share healthy alternative recipes for use at family meals and social gatherings.



Courses

Between 1 June 2023 and 31 May 2024, we delivered four Healthy Heart courses. Attendees were linked to the following organisations, either as group members or users of services:

- [West Hendon Community Hub](#): four week course beginning June 2023
- [Living Ways Ministries](#): four week course beginning October 2023
- [Barnet African Caribbean Association](#): four week course beginning January 2024
- [Age UK Barnet](#): three week course beginning January 2024

We greatly appreciate the support of these partner organisations, which allowed these courses to take place.

Our course content was developed in consultation with the Healthy Heart Clinical Reference Group, in particular the medical doctors and nutritionist who sit on this group. The syllabus is normally delivered over four sessions, but in the case of the course we delivered with Age UK Barnet's members, the same content was delivered over three sessions. The sessions consist of:

- One: introduction to Healthy Heart and high blood pressure
- Two: detail on high blood pressure and risk factors; video of Dr Amit Shah
- Three: healthy eating; including video by NHS Nutritionist Nourhan Barakat
- Four: exercise session delivered by the [Fit & Active Barnet](#) team

In total, 77 attendees completed pre-course questionnaires during the courses' opening sessions. At their final classes, 48 participants filled in post-course questionnaires. As is set out below, during the final week of the course participants were asked whether they had made any changes as a result of attending the Healthy Heart sessions. They could answer 'yes' to as many options as they wished. Of the 48 people who completed post-course questionnaires, 24 reported having reduced their salt intake, 22 said they were doing more physical activity, and 25 said they had spoken to family members about what they had learned.

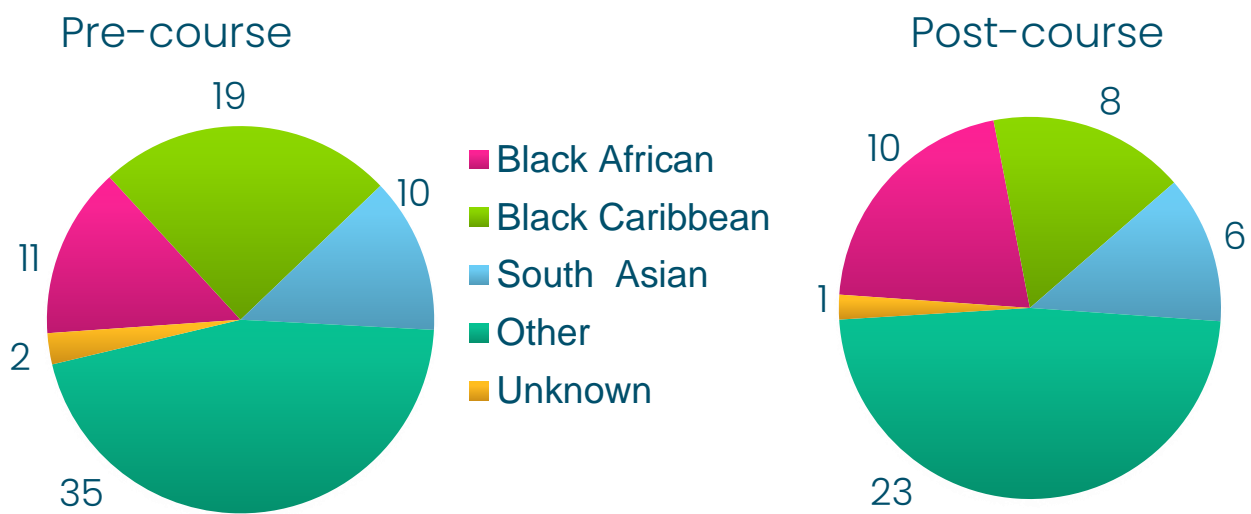
The questionnaire data set out below offer useful insights into participants' experiences. However, it is important to note that, while some people attended the entire course, others only came to some sessions. There was, therefore, variation between the individuals who completed the pre-course and post-course questionnaires, which means the data do not offer a direct comparison. Some additional participants did not complete either questionnaire due to factors including limited literacy and reluctance to share data about themselves. We always offer people a choice about answering monitoring questions, in line with data protection principles.

Courses

The charts below display combined data from the four Healthy Heart courses which took place between 1 June 2023 and 31 May 2024. They set out data which was collected in the 77 pre-course and 48 post-course questionnaires.

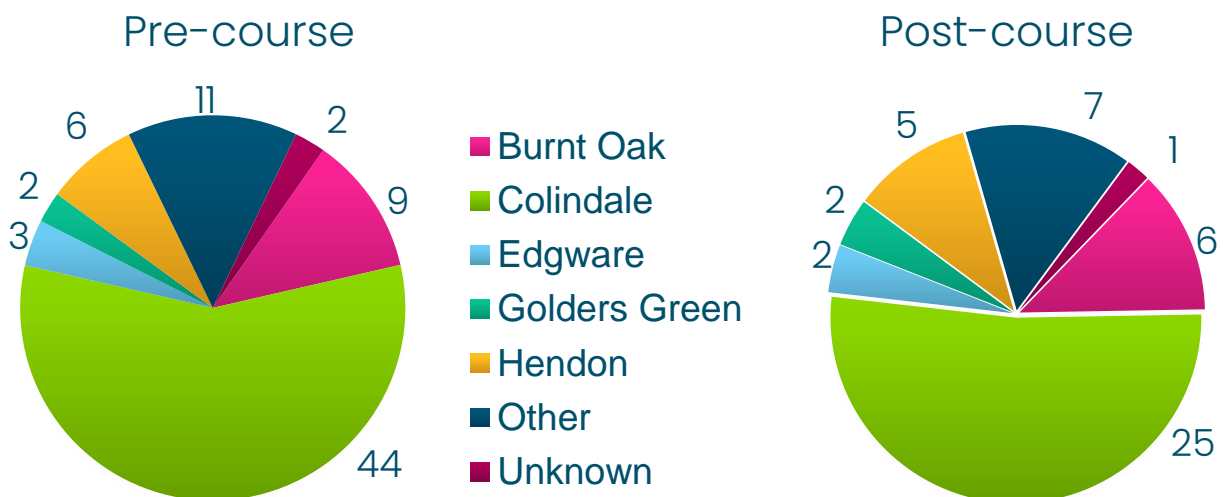
As can be seen from the area data, the majority of participants were in areas with relatively high levels of deprivation, including Burnt Oak, Colindale, Edgware, Golders Green and West Hendon ([Office for National Statistics 2021](#)).

Ethnicity



Area

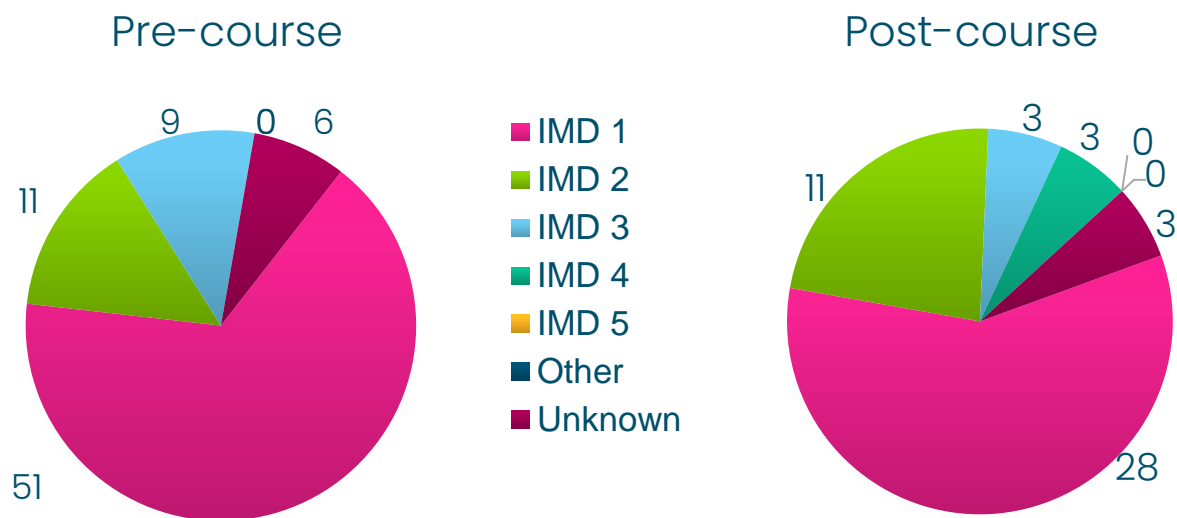
These two charts show the areas where course participants were living – a large proportion were in Colindale.



Courses

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)

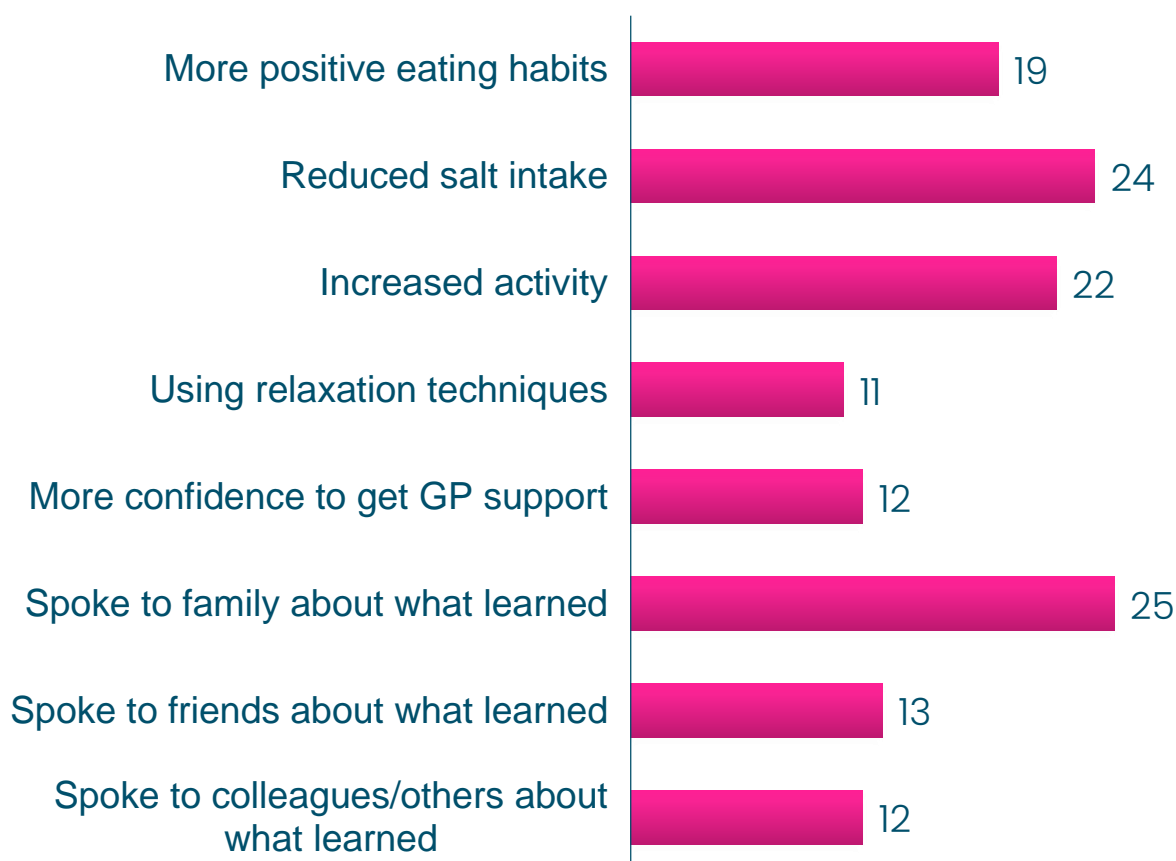
These charts show the **IMD** scores for the locations of our course participants. Areas classified as IMD1 are those found to be the most deprived; IMD5 signifies the least deprived areas. For further details of how these data were collected, see p18.



Post-course data

In post-course questionnaires, we asked attendees about their engagement with health services and their decision-making in relation to healthy eating and exercise.

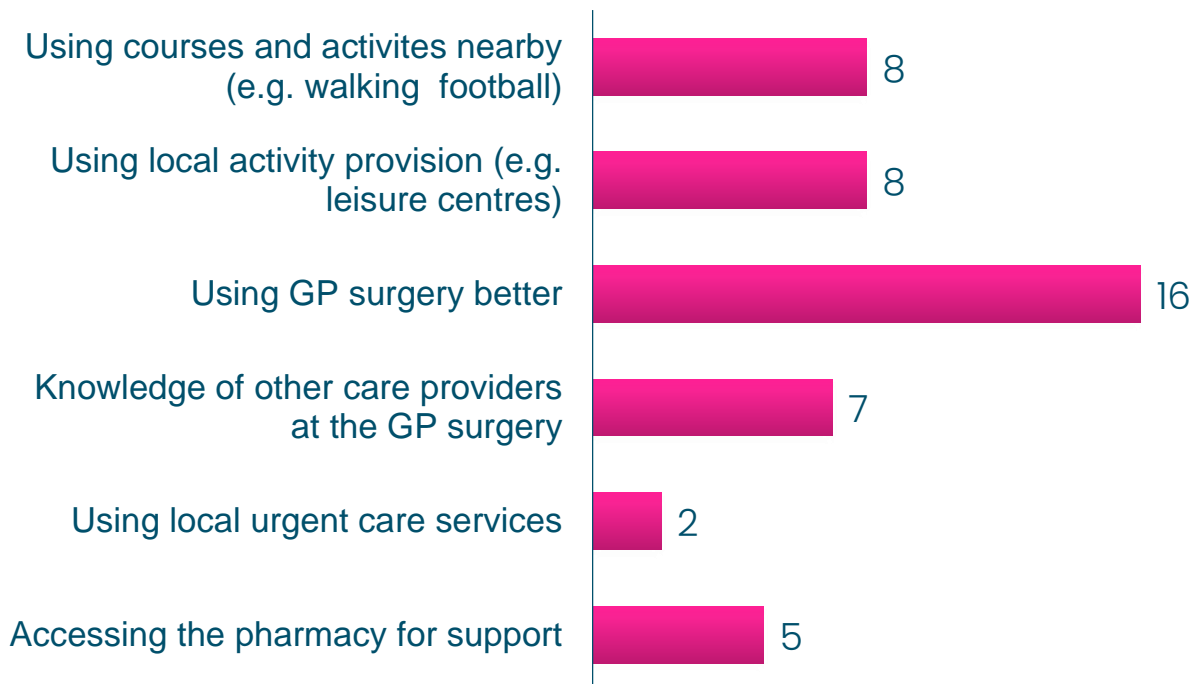
People were asked whether they had made any changes since attending a Healthy Heart session. As can be seen from the chart below, many of the 48 participants reported having made improvements since they began the Healthy Heart course, including eating more healthily, exercising more, and speaking to family members about what they had learned. Attendees were asked to tick all the options that applied to them.



Post-course data

Confidence: accessing services

In post-course questionnaires, participants were asked whether they did, or did not, feel more confident to get the support they needed through local services. Attendees could select as many options as they chose.



Case Study: Age UK Barnet

Age UK Barnet's Age-friendly Coordinator, Pippa Mannerings, provided the following feedback about the course we delivered to her customers:

'The Healthy Heart team were experts in leading conversations - utilising people's experiences, making them feel safe and welcomed and keeping on track with an interesting syllabus. The group agree they are now much more aware of how a healthy lifestyle impacts their blood pressure. Some members told me they have been to have their blood pressure checked after learning this should be checked more regularly.'

'Since the course, we've changed the refreshments we use for our group to include fresh fruit and more savoury options, rather than just biscuits. The course also encouraged me to change the way I lead the group to incorporate more active movement. I highly recommend the Healthy Heart interventions to other organisations and community groups.'

Post-course data

Primary care access

While most attendees reported making positive changes as a result of attending Healthy Heart sessions, many people also told us about challenges with accessing healthcare. They described difficulties getting through to their GP on the phone, not understanding how to use online booking tools, and unavailability of appointments.

A number of our participants did not speak English fluently. Although GP practices in Barnet have a designated telephone interpreter service, many of our attendees told us that they did not know how to access this. Some people said that they had never accessed an interpreter, while others told us that a telephone interpreter had been provided for some of their GP appointments but not others. Participants said that on some occasions their children had interpreted during appointments, but that they did not feel comfortable with this. Some attendees told us that the language barrier had prevented them from fully explaining their symptoms to their GP, or from understanding their diagnosis or medications.

On a positive note, a number of course participants said that their engagement with primary care providers had improved since they had attended a Healthy Heart session. As can be seen from the charts above on p26 and p27, 12 people said that, having attended our sessions, they were more confident to get support from their GP. Furthermore, 16 people said that they were using their GP surgery better. Seven people said they had more knowledge of other care providers at their GP surgery, other than doctors.

In addition to the questions listed above, participants were asked what action they had taken, if they had experienced high blood pressure since attending a previous Healthy Heart session. In response, 16 people said they had received support through a pharmacy and 12 said they had accessed their GP. Attendees were also asked about what action they would take if their blood pressure went above 140/90. In their replies, 37 people gave the correct answer, saying that they would contact their GP. One attendee said:



"[The course] had great information to take and act on. How to take care of yourself, manage your blood pressure. See your GP if medication isn't working."





Case Study: Barnet African Caribbean Association

Barnet African Caribbean Association's Angela Greave fed back that, after attending a series of Healthy Heart sessions, their members were engaging more in health-seeking behaviours. She told us that:

'Some members have told me that they have become more vigilant about their dietary habits and more careful about what they eat and drink. I've also observed people checking in more regularly with the Outreach Nurse when she attends the community centre - to get their blood pressure monitored, but also to discuss any other health concerns they might have.'

'Members have also told me that they are now in more regular contact with their GP or healthcare provider for check ups specifically related to their own personal ailments - although they all comment on how difficult it is to access these services.'

System change

In recent years, there has been increasingly widespread recognition of the health inequalities experienced by global majority communities, and the need to take action to address these.

For example, the Health Foundation notes that:

“Racial discrimination affects people’s life chances negatively in many ways. For example, by restricting access to education and employment opportunities. People from black and minority ethnic groups tend to have poorer socioeconomic circumstances, leading to poorer health outcomes.”
([Health Foundation, 2020](#))

As is set out above, many Healthy Heart participants have told us about challenges that they have faced when seeking to access services and improve their health. As well as providing support to individual residents, we have shared their experiences with statutory partners in order to advocate for systemic changes. In some instances, we have been able to collaborate on the development of more accessible services. While we have worked with statutory partners on a wide range of issues, there have been three key focuses: foreign language interpreters, primary care access and healthy eating.

Interpreters

As detailed above, a number of Healthy Heart participants, who were not fluent in English, told us about difficulties communicating with their GP due to language barriers. Although GP practices in Barnet have a designated telephone interpreter service, many of our event attendees told us that they did not know how to access this.

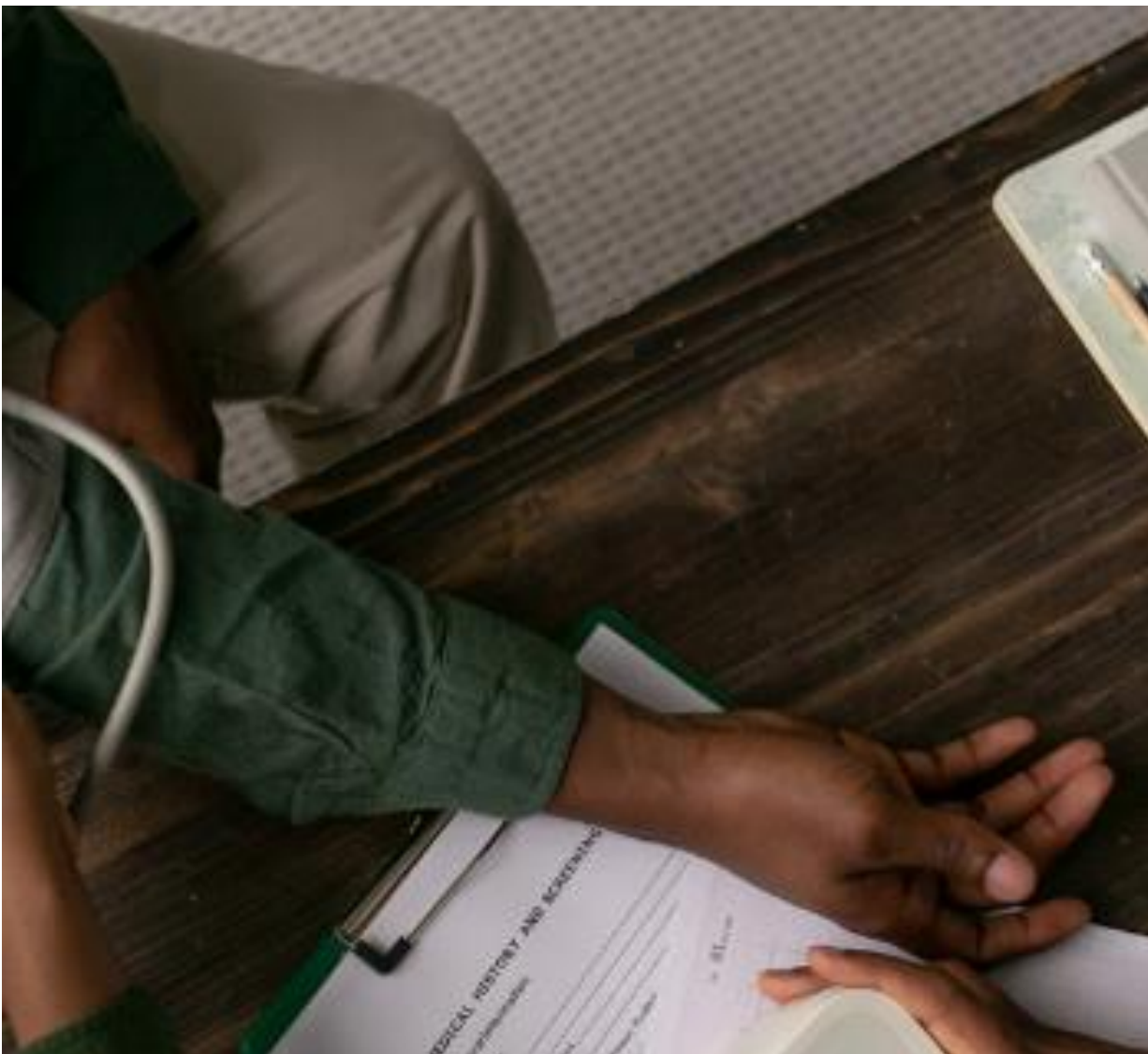
We have been able to raise this issue through two main routes. In May 2024, the NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board (NCL ICB) were designing their re-tender process for the primary care interpreter contract. We were able to provide NCL ICB with feedback from Healthy Heart participants about what they needed from an interpreter service.

Secondly, we raised concerns about access to interpreters through the Barnet Equalities Network. The Healthy Heart team gave a presentation to the network on some of the barriers and health inequalities that Healthy Heart participants had experienced. In particular, we shared evidence from Somali residents in Grahame Park, about challenges with accessing

System change

translations of NHS letters, and interpreters for face-to-face appointments in both primary and secondary care. Subsequently, Healthy Heart's presentation to the Barnet Equalities Network was repeated in a meeting with the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust.

This work with the Barnet Equalities Network has led to two outcomes. First, the Royal Free London Trust have provided professional interpreters for some Healthy Heart events since June 2024. Secondly, our host organisation, Inclusion Barnet, used evidence from Healthy Heart's participants to develop a project with the Royal Free London Trust on removing barriers to pre-operative care. The project team have devised a series of standards which the Royal Free London Trust is now applying to pre-operative care. These are designed to ensure that staff and systems in pre-operative care are working effectively to reduce the barriers to accessing the service.



System change

Primary care

During 2023/24, the issue that residents most commonly shared with Healthwatch Barnet was challenges with accessing GP appointments. We received this feedback from Healthy Heart participants, at general Healthwatch outreach events, via our enquiry phone line, and during the course of research, including our work in Barnet's primary care walk-in centres ([Healthwatch Barnet 2024](#)). We note that GP access is a problem across the country - see, for example, [House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee 2022](#). However, while there are aspects of this issue that can only be resolved at a national level, some improvements can be made through borough-based initiatives.

In order to take action locally, we applied for funding from NCL ICB, to deliver a project on access to primary care. The funding was granted, and as part of the project design, we looked at the specific issues around health inequalities which had been raised by Healthy Heart participants. We also consulted with partners including Barnet Council, the Somali Centre of Excellence, Barnet Asian Women's Association and Colindale Communities Trust. Our primary care access project is being delivered from autumn 2024, and has three key elements:

- **GP websites:** reviewing the websites of Barnet's 48 GP practices and feeding back where improvements could be made. Our analysis includes matters raised by Healthy Heart participants, including the provision of information about interpreters, clarity of instructions on how to book appointments, and explanations of options for when the practice is closed, such as out of hours GP appointments.
- **Mystery shopping:** telephone based research into Barnet's 48 GP practices. Again, this includes key issues which Healthy Heart participants have shared with us, such as access to double appointments, interpreters and face to face appointments.
- **Communications:** creating a simple, accessible guide for Barnet residents on how to access their GP.

In addition to our primary care access project, we have sought to bridge the gap between Healthy Heart participants and primary care providers through collaborative events. This work began in June and September 2023, when we delivered two well-attended drop-in sessions at Everglade Medical Practice. Building on this success, from May to September 2024 we worked with Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust to run six events in primary care settings including Grahame Park Health Centre, Watling Medical Centre and Edgware NHS Walk-In Centre. At the time of writing, further intensive workshops have been scheduled for the coming months



With Everglade Medical Practice and Oak Lodge Medical Centre. To date, these events have provided an important opportunity to reach out to residents who are not engaging with their GP in relation to heart health, provide culturally tailored support, and encourage those with high blood pressure to meet with health professionals in their GP surgery to discuss this.

Finally, we have had the opportunity to share learning from the Healthy Heart project in a number of forums, including:

- Barnet Council's Adults and Health Overview and Scrutiny Sub-Committee, Task and Finish Group on Primary Care Access
- Barnet Borough Partnership Board
- Barnet Health & Well-being Board
- Pan Barnet GP Forum
- Barnet Council's October 2023 Black History Month event at Hendon Town Hall

Ethnicity, health inequalities and structural racism are issues that were raised and in order to maintain and encourage positive partnership working whilst continuing to build trust, must not be ignored or filtered down.

Healthy eating

As set out above, in the course of delivering Healthy Heart sessions we had some in-depth discussions with participants about healthy eating and the barriers they faced to making changes to their diets.

System change

It is important to note that the Healthy Heart project is being delivered in the context of the cost of living crisis. Inflationary cost increases have meant that eating healthily has become more difficult for people on a low income. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), across the country the overall price of food and non-alcoholic beverages rose by around 26% between December 2022 and December 2023 ([ONS 2024](#)). In an ONS survey of more than 11,000 adults which ran from October to December 2023, 1 in 25 adults said that, in the previous two weeks, their household had run out of food and they had not been able to afford to buy more ([ONS 2024](#)). According to a 2022 report by the Food Foundation, healthy nutritious food is nearly three times more expensive than obesogenic unhealthy products. This research found that healthy foods cost an average of £8.51 for 1,000 calories compared to just £3.25 for 1,000 calories of less healthy foods ([Food Foundation 2022](#)).

In addition to facing financial challenges, some event attendees told us that they tended to use traditional recipes that were specific to their culture, and that healthy eating advice did not always feel geared towards the type of food that they usually cooked.

Through this work, we identified a need for further provision around healthy eating. In summer 2024, we worked with the Healthy Heart Clinical Reference Group to develop an Eating Well Workshop. We will begin delivering sessions in winter 2024. We are also working with Barnet Council to explore strategic links between the Healthy Heart project and the [Barnet Food Plan](#).



Resources and awareness raising

A key part of the Healthy Heart project is dialogue with residents and voluntary sector partners about how we can further develop our work.

In 2023/24, this led us to undertake several initiatives, including translating the Healthy Heart resource pack into Gujarati and Somali, and providing professional subtitles for our Healthy Heart course videos.

The main written resources we've provided are:

- Paper-based English language Healthy Heart resource packs – 873 distributed from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024.
- Paper-based Somali and Gujarati resource packs – 248 distributed from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024.
- Accessible social media content on heart health – our Healthy Heart posts generated 4,556 X/Twitter impressions from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2024.
- Healthy Heart [webpages](#) and regular articles in our Healthwatch Barnet [e-newsletter](#).

We've also had the opportunity to foster dialogue on heart health through various other routes, for example:

- In March 2024, the African Caribbean Culture Society of Barnet presented our team with a certificate of appreciation for services to the community.
- In March 2024, Healthwatch Barnet hosted a meeting on community-based hypertension outreach. This event brought together statutory partners and grassroots community groups, to share ideas on ways to maximise the effectiveness of work to tackle physical health inequalities. The meeting was attended by Councillor Alison Moore, representatives from Barnet Council, the NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board, the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust and a number of voluntary sector groups. This was an important opportunity to plan collaborative work on access to interpreters, primary care and healthy eating.
- Healthy Heart was featured in the [Spring 2024](#) Barnet First Magazine, which Barnet Council aims to deliver to every household in the borough. In March 2024, our work was covered in the [Barnet Post](#), and in a blog post on Barnet Council's [Your Health Barnet](#) site.

Appendix one: key performance indicators

In partnership with Barnet Council, we agreed key performance indicators for year one of the Healthy Heart project. The same set of indicators were employed in year two. As can be seen from the data on p16 to p28, we far exceeded the numerical targets set out below:

1. To engage at least 400 residents from the target communities in year two.
2. To provide 350 brief or very brief interventions.
3. To provide 50 extended brief interventions.
4. Participants self-report:
 - a) an increase in knowledge of behaviors that promote good cardiovascular health
 - b) changes in behavior to promote good cardiovascular health
 - c) increased confidence in access to health, care and other services to improve cardiovascular health
 - d) increased appropriateness in use of healthcare.
5. Those living in the most deprived neighbourhoods are accessing the services - reporting count of users by indices of multiple deprivation quintiles.
6. Healthy Heart Peer Engagement Officers continue to benefit from extensive management support and have attended relevant training.
7. Develop a plan for next steps following year two project delivery, with voluntary and community sector partners.

Appendix two: courses and workshops

Courses

Course started	Organisation	Number of weeks	Pre-course questionnaires	Post-course questionnaires
June 2023	West Hendon Hub	4	5	5
October 2023	Living Ways Ministries	4	40	18
January 2024	Barnet African Caribbean Association	4	16	7
January 2024	Age UK Barnet	3	16	18
		Total	77	48

Workshops

Date	Organisation	Number of attendees
14 June 2023	West Hendon Hub	4
5 July 2023	West Hendon Hub	4
28 July 2023	Barnet Asian Women's Association	30
13 October 2023	Barnet Asian Women's Association	25
15 February 2024	Age UK Barnet – Edgware Church Group	17
29 February 2024	Colindale Library	16
	Total	96

Appendix three: brief and extended brief interventions

Please note: 'number of participants' refers to the number of people that the Healthy Heart team provided with interventions.

Date	Organisation	Event	Number of participants
1 June 2023	Somali Centre of Excellence	Community drop-in session	15
8 June 2023	Everglade GP Surgery & Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust	Health and social care educational event	53
16 June 2023	New Citizens Gateway	Refugee community drop-in session	19
21 June 2023	West Hendon Hub	Community drop-in session	10
23 June 2023	Barnet Council	Diabetes awareness event at Brent Cross Shopping Centre	53
1 July 2023	Somali Centre of Excellence	Community drop-in session	21
14 July 2023	Hyde School	Community event and job fair	8
21 July - 9 August 2023	West Hendon Hub	Community drop-in sessions	5
24 July 2023	Barnet Asian Women's Association	Arts Depot event	6
1 August - 16 August 2023	Somali Centre of Excellence	Community drop-in sessions	28
16 August 2023	West Hendon Hub - Food bank	Food bank	10
17 August 2023	Burnt Oak - Food bank	Food bank	15
13 September 2023	Everglade GP Surgery	Educational event for patients	40
20 September - 11 October 2023	West Hendon Hub	Community drop-in sessions	15

Appendix three: brief and extended brief interventions

Date	Organisation	Event	Number of participants
27 September 2023	Burnt Oak Fun Day - various organisations	Community event	5
13 October 2023	Burnt Oak Library	Community drop-in session	11
18 October 2023	West Hendon Hub - Food bank	Food bank	9
21 October 2023	Somali Centre of Excellence	Black History Month event	70
24 October 2023	Age UK Barnet	Colindale well-being group for people aged 55+	16
26 October 2023	Burnt Oak - Food bank	Food bank	28
27 October 2023	Jain Community Group	Religious community event	70
28 October 2023	Barnet African Cultural Association	Black History Month event	11
29 October 2023	Barnet Council	Black History Month event at Hendon Town Hall	60
4 November 2023	One Stonegrove	Community event for Disabled people	32
10 November 2023	Meridian Well-Being Centre	Community event	13
10 November 2023	Somali Centre of Excellence	Interfaith community event	11
13 November - 15 November 2023	Burnt Oak Library	Community drop-in sessions	20
15 November - 30 November 2023	West Hendon Hub	Community drop-in sessions	10
28 November 2023	Barnet Council	Unite to end violence against women & girls - Hendon Town Hall event	10

Appendix three: brief and extended brief interventions

Date	Organisation	Event	Number of participants
4 December 2023	Age UK Barnet	Living well event for people aged 55+	9
5 December 2023	Barnet African Cultural Association	Community group at Hendon Church	3
6 December - 13 December 2023	West Hendon Hub	Community drop-in sessions	21
10 December 2023	Fit & Active Barnet - Barnet Council and GLL Better	Community activity session	8
18 December 2023	Burnt Oak Library	Community drop-in session	13
21 December 2023	Barnet African Cultural Association	Community group at Canons Health Centre	16
22 January 2024	Burnt Oak Library	Community drop-in session	8
26 January 2024	Golders Green Library	Community drop-in session	13
31 January 2024	West Hendon Hub - Food bank	Food bank	12
5 February 2024	Edgware Library	Community drop-in session	19
9 February 2024	Barnfield Primary School	Meeting of parent and teacher group	19
17 February 2024	Nova Vida - Edgware Angolan Group	Community health session	44
23 February 2024	Golders Green Library	Community drop-in session	15
26 February 2024	Burnt Oak Library	Community drop-in session	14
27 February 2024	Hendon Library	Community drop-in session	16

Appendix three: brief and extended brief interventions

Date	Organisation	Event	Number of participants
28 February 2024	West Hendon Hub - Food bank	Food bank	13
29 February 2024	Colindale Library	Community drop-in session	4
1 March 2024	Meridian Well-Being Centre	Community health session	13
8 March 2024	Burnt Oak Leisure Centre	International Women's Day event	36
14 March 2024	Hyde Farm School	Meeting of parent and teacher group	23
16 March 2024	Barnet Multicultural Community Centre	Wellness Festival	12
18 March 2024	Edgware Library	Community drop-in session	19
25 March 2024	Burnt Oak Library	Community drop-in session	13
26 March 2024	Hendon Library	Community drop-in session	18
28 March 2024	Colindale Library	Community drop-in session	13
19 April 2024	BOOST employment and cost of living support in Barnet	Session for local people who are currently unemployed	12
22 April 2024	Burnt Oak Library	Community drop-in session	8
23 April 2024	Hendon Library	Community drop-in session	9
25 April 2025	Somali Centre of Excellence	Health Fair	33
3 May 2024	Somali Centre of Excellence	Legends group for older people	14

Appendix three: brief and extended brief interventions

Date	Organisation	Event	Number of participants
10 May 2024	Golders Green Library	Community drop-in session	12
14 May 2024	Hendon Library	Community drop-in session	18
21 May 2024	Grahame Park GP Surgery and Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust	Drop-in session	17



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