



**Engaging with elderly  
Asian communities  
in Dudley  
February 2024**



# Making connections

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Healthwatch Dudley strives to engage with seldom-heard communities in the Dudley borough. People whose first language is not English, often struggle to access the health and social care they need.

Whilst out in the town centre in May 2022, a Healthwatch Dudley staff member, was approached by an elderly Asian gentleman known to her who enquired about her role in Healthwatch Dudley. When he learned about what we do, he invited her to go to Wellington Road Community Centre to speak to others about Healthwatch Dudley.

This led to the formation of groups for people who could not speak English. We also helped the community centre obtain funding to help people meet and work together to socialise, take part in activities and keep safe and healthy.

# What happened next

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Two weeks later, Healthwatch Dudley went to chat with the Centre Manager and a volunteer at the Wellington Road Community Centre. They extended a warm welcome and explained they were planning a Jubilee party in June and invited us along.

They also asked for our help as Healthwatch Dudley to bring people out again after the pandemic to make use of the Centre's facilities. They said that over the last two to three years, no community activities or gatherings had been going ahead because of COVID-19 restrictions. Since people had stopped coming out, they had lost touch and did not have information about Covid-19, or how to look after themselves and had generally lost confidence.



# Listening circle

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Several contacts were re-established at the Jubilee party which led to us setting up a regular listening circle which started with two women and six men.

People said they used the centre to play cards and told us about their health and social care concerns. They said were bored, felt disconnected from friends and family members and were scared to go out.

Each week, more and more women attended the listening circle and relationships were formed.

During conversations, people told us they wanted to become more active and be able to look after their health. After staying at home during the pandemic, they said they felt less fit and wanted to do something about it. We therefore involved a Dudley CVS colleague working for Active Black Country who arranged a couple of exercise sessions and used her contacts to get a tutor to provide classes for the next few months. She also provided opportunities to apply for funding to help the group keep active in the future.

The men became more curious and visited Jasmine Road Community Gardens in Dudley to see if they would like to do something similar at Wellington Road. They said they had skills they could pass on to younger people who had the energy and ability to create an outdoor growing space as they didn't feel able to do it themselves.



# Community information celebration

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As relationships grew, people told us they wanted to know more about the support and information which was available to them for their health and care.

We responded by arranging a Community Information Celebration event on 4 November 2022.

We provided informal interpreting via Healthwatch Dudley staff and friends of Wellington Road Community Centre. The event included 15 information stalls from local organisations and departments who provide services which are designed to look after people in their own home and keep them safe and healthy.

The event was well received by stallholders, professionals and members of the public. The stallholders said they welcomed the opportunity to re-connect and find out what was available and going on since the pandemic.



# Making changes

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As a result of networking and information sharing at the event, here are just some of the outcomes:

- **16 health checks** were conducted for elderly Indian men and women a few weeks later by Solutions 4 Health.

*"I am a diabetic. Over the last two years, I have not had any health checks or seen a doctor, they have just given me repeat prescriptions. Because I do not speak English, I cannot explain this, but the doctor's surgery does not invite me for check-ups anyway."*

- **Two IT courses** were held (one for men and one for women) at Wellington Road Community Centre by Dudley Council Adult & Community Learning.
- Citizens Advice Dudley & Wolverhampton planned Self-Management Courses for We Love Carers and other attendees of the event.

*"Nice to come to this community, I talked to different people, I like everyone. I got information about courses."*

- Several **referrals to Dudley Council Telecare service** were made for the Indian community.
- One person who attended expressed their wish to **volunteer** to help with future engagement involving the Indian community.

*"I want to know about how to volunteer."*



# Learning from the community

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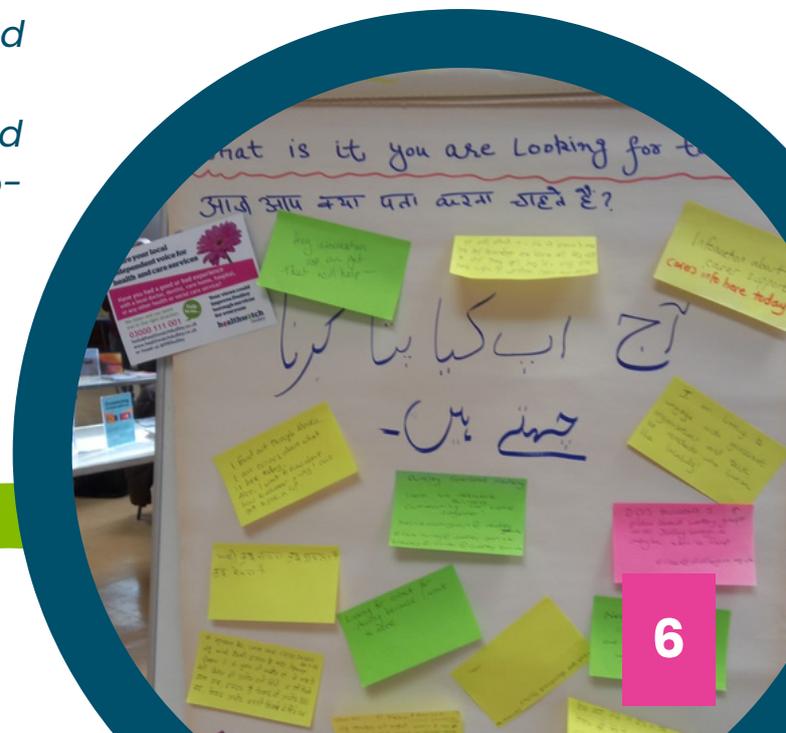
The stallholders who attended the event listened to the concerns of the elderly Asian community and made plans to change their services accordingly.

*“It made me realise that not one of our leaflets is in another language and all of the pictures in our communications are of white people. We will go back and own this and sort it out.”*

***“The interaction has been fab.  
Catering to language barriers has been ace.”***

*“Important feedback on health check availability and that we need to hold more, as people aren’t always able to access them from their GP.”*

*“We need face-to-face opportunities to talk – people talked to us today about the help they need with being a carer. People find it hard to communicate so face-to-face is really needed.”*



# Outcomes

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## People are socialising more and becoming more active

In six months, we made some good relationships and encouraged the community to start coming out again, to exercise and socialise.

To raise awareness of the rights of carers and support available, we hosted a lantern making session as part of Light Up for Carers led by Dudley Council.

We also worked with Dudley Council's Healthy Communities to plan an organised walk; which Healthwatch Dudley staff led around Grange Park in December 2022.

## People have more information and awareness about interpreters

We identified that there are barriers to being able to speak to a GP or a doctor at hospital. Some people told us that they were unaware they were entitled to an interpreter. Another person said they were asked if they needed an interpreter prior to having an operation, but on the day, there was no interpreter.

There is some confusion about whose responsibility it is to book an interpreter at GP surgeries and in hospital settings. There is also a lack of information available about how to request an interpreter.

We will continue to make people aware that they have a right to an interpreter for their health appointments.

*"I have to wait to book GP appointments or open the post because I can't read them. I can recognise the NHS logo but not read the letter so it makes me stressed because I don't know what the letter is talking about"*

# Technology and independence

In the listening circle, people told us how they felt helpless and hopeless because of language barriers and were dependent on other family members because they couldn't use mobile phones or other devices.

We responded by arranging basic computer skills courses through Dudley Council Adult & Community Learning – one for women and one for men – so that they could use technology and become more independent.

People told us they wanted to know how to: find out information in their local area, book their own blood tests, make health appointments and to socialise electronically.

*“My toe hurt. The GP said to take a photo and send it to them. I don't know how to use a mobile phone or how to take the picture and send it to the surgery. I tried to explain this to the doctor but because of the language barrier the doctor said sorry no other option.”*

# Information to manage health and wellbeing

People told us they would like to know how to control their diabetes and eat more healthily. Following further discussion, Solutions 4 Health, offered to deliver a 12-week Shape Up for Life course in Punjabi, especially for the people who had started to attend Wellington Road on a regular basis.



## Following up – January 2024

We re-visited the Centre in January 2024 to have a chat with the Centre Manager and find out what has happened since our last involvement.

- **Regular exercise classes** are still ongoing, one for women and one for men.
- The **IT course** was well attended. The people attending learned how to use their iPads or iPhones.
- The Centre is still a '**Warm Place**' where anyone can drop in and people regularly meet there to socialise.
- AB Leisure (who now deliver services formerly provided by Solutions 4 Health) is in discussion with the Centre Manager about providing further **health awareness and healthy lifestyle sessions**.
- The Centre Manager also offered to sit with people who use the Centre to help them complete our **GP Surgery Access Survey** so that the elderly Asian community could **contribute their views** about getting appointments.





# The future

We believe that by building relationships and signposting to relevant information and services, we have helped to address the health inequalities faced by the elderly Asian people living in Dudley.

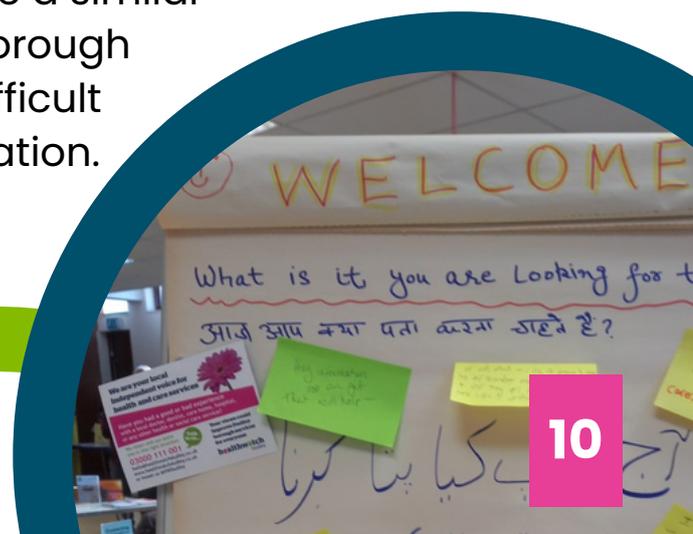
Healthwatch Dudley will always listen to people's experiences and provide information.

We want to thank the community's people who shared their views and helped make a difference to health and care services in Dudley.

Thank you also to the stallholders who attended the information event and listened to a seldom-heard community.

A special mention to Monika, who used to work for Healthwatch Dudley, who worked hard to reconnect the elderly Asian community with the services available to them.

Following our involvement with Wellington Road Community Centre, we aim to provide a similar input around other parts of Dudley borough for communities who are finding it difficult to communicate and find out information.



# healthwatch

Dudley



**If you would like this report  
in another language or  
format please contact us.**

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