

Black Health Workshops

2024–5

A resident-led model of health information provision
supporting early intervention and prevention

January 2026

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Introduction

The Community Research and Support programme gathers vital insight into our most vulnerable residents' lives, and their experiences of accessing health, care and wellbeing services. The programme also supports communities through information provision and signposting.

Within the larger programme of research, our Black Health Workshops were aimed at members of the Black African, Caribbean and Somali communities. We worked with our partners [Choices CIC](#) and [Islington Somali Community](#) to deliver workshops to men, women and families focusing on factors influencing preventable early death. There was a particular focus on immunisations. The programme also covered aspects of physical and mental health identified by partners as priorities within their communities.

We delivered 11 Black Health workshops in trusted community settings with interpreting support available where appropriate. We had three objectives: firstly, to give residents the information they needed to take charge of their health; secondly, enabling them to understand their rights and become more assertive to influence the system to improve; and finally, building capacity in our partners to champion findings with commissioners.

This report is intended to be read alongside the report [Community Research and Support 2024-5](#), published in June 2025. The delivery model, the objectives, and the timeframes are the same (some Black Health Workshops took place later in 2025 than originally intended). Rather than repeat the findings shared in June 2025, this report will largely limit its scope to the immunisations and special educational needs workshops that were delivered as Black Health Workshops. These were themes that were unique to this part of our community research programme.

We supported 205 residents from communities experiencing health inequalities through our Black Health Workshops. We supported 431 residents through our Community Research and Support 2024-5 programme. Both programmes have benefitted from the active participation of partners from the statutory sector. We've worked in collaboration with Public Health, local clinical leads, the NCL Cancer Alliance, local NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts, and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) team.

Workshops

11 Black Health Workshops were delivered¹. Each partner committed to delivering one workshop on immunisations. Beyond this prerequisite, topic selection was informed by discussions with the residents the partners support, and knowledge of the health issues that residents tended to approach them with for advice and signposting support. Some partners selected specific topics (prostate cancer awareness, for example) in order to engage with more men than they usually reached. Choices CIC delivered four workshops and Islington Somali Community delivered seven. Clinicians and other expert partners were invited to present.

Workshop themes

- 3 workshops on Cancer Awareness (one on cancer for women and two on prostate cancer)
- 1 workshop on Winter Wellness
- 1 workshop on Mental Health
- 1 workshop on the Menopause and Women's Health
- 1 workshop for families supporting children with Special Educational Needs
- 2 workshops on Diabetes/Hypertension
- 2 workshops on Immunisations

Reach and methodology

- 205 residents attended the workshops (see page 13 for equality monitoring information)
- Partners strove to include different participants in each workshop.

The workshops were conversational in style. They were hosted in settings where participants would feel comfortable and relaxed, and more likely to take in information and to ask questions. Choices invited speakers with appropriate cultural competency who were able to inspire the trust of the Black African and Caribbean audience. In the case of Islington Somali Community, we sought to invite speakers with both clinical expertise and relevant language skills. For example, a Somali doctor delivered their immunisations workshop. Where a native speaker was not available, interpreting was provided by the hosting organisation.

Each participant was invited to complete an evaluation form at the end of the workshop. Signposting was provided to participants who needed additional support. The hosting partner completed a separate workshop evaluation and identified case study participants to contact after some time had passed to show the ongoing impact of the workshops. Healthwatch also conducted an end of project interview with each partner.

"The speakers that we had were really good and made everyone feel at ease. The relaxed atmosphere helped... Even people that may have been normally uptight, they relaxed and enjoyed it. Dr Itanu was great. She is a member of the British Caribbean Doctors and Dentists Association. She was very funny. She didn't just read from the presentation, she brought her life experience as well."
- Project Lead, Choices CIC

¹A 12th workshop, on Breast Awareness and Screening, had been booked for June 2025 but was cancelled at short notice due to staff shortages at the North London Breast Screening Service and it wasn't possible to reschedule within this project's timescales.

Participant feedback

All 205 residents who participated in a Black Health Workshop completed an evaluation form. Evaluations forms and comments were generally very positive.

- All participants found the workshop information helpful (200) or partially helpful (5)
- Almost all participants felt they could act on the information (196) or partially could (8)

"I used to put off getting screened but all the things I learnt made me reconsider."
- Women's Cancer Awareness Workshop, March 2025

Workshop-specific impacts

- 46 of the 71 participants of immunisation workshops said they had changed their mind about having vaccinations (flu, covid, MMR) as a result of attending the workshop.
- 41 of the 42 participants of cancer awareness workshops said they were more confident about checking for signs of cancer or more aware of the signs and symptoms of cancer.

"I learned so many things about the prostate which I didn't know before."
- Prostate Cancer Awareness Workshop, December 2024

- All 38 winter wellness participants felt more confident to access services.
- All 37 diabetes workshop participants felt more confident about checking for signs of diabetes and all 37 said they were making lifestyle changes.
- All 21 hypertension workshop participants said they were more aware of hypertension, and they all said they were making lifestyle changes.
- Everyone attending menopause (15 participants) and mental health workshops (19 participants) felt more confident about accessing the support that is available.
- All 20 participants of the special educational needs workshop said they felt more confident about accessing the support services available for children with special needs and for their parents and carers.

"The session reminded me how big a difference simple stuff like moving more and eating better can make."
- Diabetes Workshop, April 2025

Immunisations

19 residents attended the immunisations workshop hosted by Choices CIC and 14 participated in the workshop on the same theme hosted by Islington Somali Community. Additionally, the winter wellness workshop hosted by Islington Somali Community included a section on immunisations and was attended by 38 residents. Content covered seasonal vaccination messages including flu vaccinations, COVID booster information, and access routes via GP surgeries, pharmacies, and walk-in clinics. Signposting and support was offered to those who needed help booking appointments. All 71 participants were Islington residents.

Workshop at Choices CIC, December 2024

"Some people were so adamant about their views – they are adamant that those views are the right ones! We had to remind people to be respectful of each other's opinions. Immunisations was the most charged and volatile of the conversations. Despite being in 2025, five years from Covid, people have really entrenched views."
- Project Lead, Choices CIC

The workshop hosted by Choices served as a useful reminder that the topic of immunisation remains a contentious issue. This session focused more on Covid and flu vaccinations. 14 of the 19 attendees rated the event as Good or Very Good, with the remaining five feeling it was only OK. Many of the attendees who rated the workshop positively still had no intention of changing their mind about vaccinations. Vaccine hesitancy applied to cohort as a whole, not just those who were less positive about the event.

Feedback from participants indicated a degree of scepticism about information provided by official channels. A number of participants had already done their own research.

"I have researched the information but I have listened to others opinions and made my own decision", "I don't see the need to have a vaccine. I don't trust it and I feel we are being used as guinea pigs", "I am quite knowledgeable about vaccines."

Themes emerging from the discussions:

1. **Lack of trust in the NHS and, by extension, NHS immunisation programmes:** Much of the distrust is rooted in the COVID-19 pandemic and the fact that Black and minority ethnic communities suffered a disproportionately higher burden, including higher rates of infection, hospitalisation, and death. These disparities were largely driven by long-standing socio-economic inequalities and structural racism².

"It was a good discussion, I believe this was an agenda and the community is too trusting."

"We used to trust the NHS before. Today will help us to try and trust them."

"I want more open and honest stats about BAME and all vaccines."

"I learnt many BME people have reservations about accepting immunisation."

² Structural racism is defined as a system where public policies, institutional practices, cultural norms, and societal structures interact to create and perpetuate racial inequality, resulting in unfair advantages for some racial groups and disadvantages for others, often without individual intent

2. **A belief that the Covid vaccine (in particular) has not been well tested:**

"Covid 19 is still a new vaccine not tested well enough, hasn't prevented all of the vaccinated people from catching it multiple times over."

3. **Concerns about a link between the Covid vaccine and Long Covid:**

Residents raised this as a concern during the workshop discussions.

4. **Vaccine fatigue:** The model of taking a vaccine forever is not appealing, particularly when there are concerns in the community about side effects.

"Whilst I took the COVID-19 vaccine and the booster x 2, I was not prepared to continue taking more and more vaccines. I find the constant pressure to take vaccines without informing the public of any side effects is extremely dangerous."

5. **Fatalism/lack of concern:**

"I don't really care too much at my age." (80 plus)

During the end of project interview, the project lead at Choices noted that some residents were angry that immunisations was even a topic that had been brought to the table for discussion, "Residents were saying to us 'I am not prepared to listen and not prepared to hear what you have to say.'"

Impact

"I felt it was great to have a forum where people could openly discuss their concerns. Vaccines isn't an either/or matter and the workshop was very helpful in that people were able to share various perspectives."

- Immunisations Workshop, December 2024

Despite the charged nature of some of the conversations, the main outcome of the workshop was that residents were more open to the discussion around vaccinations. In the words of the project lead, "It did open their minds, even for people that had lost family during Covid. We often had to pose the question to them: 'Isn't it better to take it and have some immunity than not taking it at all?'"

- 13 participants said that attending hadn't changed their mind about vaccinations, five said it had, and one was undecided. Of the five that did change their mind, two said they felt a bit more open to vaccinations but were still several stages away from taking them, one felt less open as a result of hearing the stories shared by other participants, 'I have had three but no more after hearing complications people had', and two gave no further detail.
- 16 of 19 felt more confident about accessing reliable information about vaccinations because of the session.

Choices CIC

Immunisations Workshop December 2024

J experienced deep personal loss during the pandemic. Close friends and family passed away from COVID-19, and these painful experiences left her unconvinced about vaccination. Despite widespread messaging encouraging people to get the jab, J remained firm in her decision not to change her mind. For her, the topic of immunisation brought up grief and mistrust.

When she attended the immunisation workshop, she was expecting to feel judged for her opinions, but we, as the hosting organisation, created a safe and respectful space and all views were welcomed. We reassured her that it was okay to have her own opinion about the vaccine, and that asking questions and expressing concerns was just as valuable to us, which we hoped helped J feel listened to rather than pressured.

As a result, she started to engage with the discussion more fully. Other people agreed with her view as well. By the end of the workshop, she said she felt more confident that she could have an ongoing conversation about immunisation without being judged.

Even though she did not immediately decide to have the vaccine, she left with a clearer understanding of how vaccines work, the role they play in protecting communities, and the importance of making an informed choice rather than one rooted only in fear or past experiences.

She also showed a willingness to take home more accurate information to share with others, even if her personal decision remained unchanged. She left the workshop happy with our presentation, and willing to engage with our future workshops.

Islington Somali Community Workshop, June 2025

The immunisations workshop hosted by Islington Somali Community was branded as a Child Health and Wellbeing workshop. There was concern in the community about the link between autism and the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine. Our Childhood Immunisation Outreach Worker helped deliver the workshop, alongside a Somali-speaking GP.

Themes emerging from the discussions:

- There were concerns around the link between autism and vaccinations.
- There is a perception that there is a higher prevalence of autism in Somali children compared to other groups. Participants wanted to better understand the reasons for this.
- Participants wanted to feel heard and to be given the opportunity to understand each vaccination. To this end, people wanted health professionals to provide information about vaccinations, leaflets for example.
- Participants wanted reassurance and information about what safety structures are in place when vaccines are being developed, and if side effects are experienced.
- Participants wanted health professionals to ensure they informed them of choices for non-porcine vaccinations (alternative MMR vaccination that doesn't contain pork)
- It is important to be able to ask for further information.

Impact

"It was good to know the implications of not getting vaccinated. Also, having a Somali doctor was good, I was able to ask direct questions."
– Immunisations Workshop, June 2025

The participants found the presentation informative and clear. Interpreting was provided in Somali. Participants also really welcomed having the Somali-speaking doctor do the question and answer section. It was very open conversation around vaccination hesitation and why we need to vaccinate. The project leader reported that there was cultural understanding, and a sensitive approach to the participants concerns/ hesitation around vaccination.

All 14 attendees rated the event as Good or Very Good. All 14 felt more confident about accessing reliable information about vaccinations as a result of attending. 12 of the group said they had changed their mind about vaccinations and now had fewer reservations.

Islington Somali Community Immunisations Workshop June 2025

S was initially against the idea of vaccination but is now becoming more open to reconsidering. She feels more confident in her understanding that autism is not linked to the MMR vaccine and acknowledges the ongoing research regarding its causes. She plans to discuss the side effects and implications of not vaccinating with her husband before making a decision, with his support. There was a clear shift in thinking for S. This was helped by the interactive nature of the workshop, with questions and answers.

H is a new mum who also attended the workshop. She had misgivings about the MMR vaccination. H found the workshop helpful. Hearing good quality information from a medical professional about the MMR vaccination and on the risks of not having it made her change her mind. She will now accept the MMR when her child is old enough. H felt empowered by learning about each vaccination, the potential side effects, and the symptoms it protects you from.

SEN Workshop

All 20 participants who attended the Special Educational Needs (SEN) workshop had a neurodiverse child who had been diagnosed or was waiting to be diagnosed. Participants were very engaged and ready to ask loads of questions.

The workshop was delivered by the Service Manager at Islington SENDiass (they provide information and support on matters relating to SEN or disabilities), the Chair of the Family Carers Action Group, and the Families Engagement, Activities, and Short Breaks Manager at Centre 404.

Themes emerging from the discussions:

- Mothers are struggling to advocate for their children needs.
- Mothers are feeling dismissed when trying to get support for their neurodiverse children in school.
- Participants felt they were not being heard.
- Participants lacked confidence to advocate both for their children and for their own needs as carers.

Impact

All 20 attendees rated the event as Good or Very Good. All 20 had a greater understanding of the support available for children with special needs and their parents/carers as a result of attending. All 20 felt more confident about accessing that support. At least one participant will now be attending support groups at Centre 404 as a result of coming to the workshop.

"I am going to attend support groups for SEN"
"I will contact SENDIASS"
"I did not know about EHCP plan"
"I can talk to my school"
"I know what organisations are here to help"
"I feel more confident challenging the school"

In the workshop evaluations many of the participants said that although the session had been very helpful, they still felt they needed more sessions in Somali on this topic to help them get the support for their children that they needed.

Case studies

This report is intended to be read alongside the report [Community Research and Support 2024-5](#). For more information about the strengths of this model of research, as well as recommendations for improvements to information provision to better meet the needs of these communities, please refer to that report. To conclude here, we include two more case studies to show the impact of some of the other topics covered in the Black Health Workshops programme. We also commissioned a short film about our prostate cancer work which you can watch [here](#).

Choices CIC

Prostate Cancer Awareness Workshop February 2025

W considered himself to be healthy, and, like many men in our community, didn't go to the doctors often, even when he was not well. He did not know much about prostate cancer and what he had heard was confusing. In addition, W did not trust the NHS because of personal experiences.

It wasn't just mistrust that stopped him getting help. Trying to get an appointment with his GP felt like a battle, and when health checks happened, prostate health was never mentioned. Fear, embarrassment, and the cultural silence around men's health reinforced his decision to "just get on with it".

Attending the prostate cancer workshop changed that. For the first time, W sat in a space where the conversation felt open, honest, and safe. Hearing from Errol McKellar, a Black prostate cancer survivor, was a turning point for him. Seeing someone who looked like him speak about his own experience made the issue feel real and urgent for him, but also "survivable". Errol's story broke through barriers of silence and mistrust, and W felt able to ask questions he had never voiced before. The workshop didn't just share facts, but also it gave W. the tools and encouragement to act. He learned about the risks, especially for Black men, and understood why early detection is so critical. The information about PSA tests was clear and practical, and the speakers encouraged the men to speak to their GPs and get tested.

After the event, W decided he was going to book appointment with his GP to discuss prostate cancer screening and his family risk, and he was going to open up to his friends about what he had learned. W also expressed interest in joining prostate cancer research, hoping his participation could contribute to meaningful change for Black men in the future.

The change for W was both personal and collective. He felt more informed and confident to take steps to take care of his own health, but he also wanted to be a quiet advocate, encouraging other men not to ignore the signs or let fear and mistrust hold them back.

Islington Somali Community Menopause Workshop January 2025

A is a mother in her 50s and a resident of Islington. She attended our Menopause Workshop. A explained that she has been experiencing health issues such as UTIs (urinary tract infections), low mood, dry skin, and brain fog. She visited her GP, who found nothing abnormal but suggested that it might be the menopause. A was unsure what this meant, as it was not something discussed in her culture. While feeling low, A accepted that her quality of life might change and believed there was nothing she could do. She thought attending the menopause workshop would be helpful just for talking about her experience, but she gained much more. A found the facilitators relatable and now has a better understanding of the symptoms of menopause. She shared that it was reassuring to hear how many women experience similar symptoms, but even more important was learning about the treatments available to ease menopause symptoms. A was not aware of how HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) works and that Vaginal Oestrogen could help with dryness.

She feels much better now. She had previously felt she was going to pieces, but now feels more hopeful. She is more aware of her lifestyle choices and how to challenge medical professionals on understanding menopause and its symptoms.

Age and Gender	Total number of participants	18 to 24 years	25 to 49 years	50 to 64 years	65 to 79 years	80 + years	Not known	Male	Female	Non-binary	Self-describe	Not Known
Immunisations: 23/12/2024, Choices	19	1	3	9	4	1	1	2	16			1
Immunisations: 19/06/2025, ISC	14		11	3				4	10			
Cancer (women): 10/03/2025, Choices	18		1	10	7				17			1
Diabetes: 10/04/2025, Choices	16	1	3	9	3			2	14			
Hypertension/Diabetes: 13/02/2025, ISC	21		7	6	6	2		14	7			
Menopause: 29/01/2025, ISC	15		9	6					15			
Mental Health: 27/11/2024, ISC	19		10	8	1			10	9			
Prostate cancer: 24/04/2025, Choices	4		1	2	1			3	1			
Prostate cancer: 18/12/2024, ISC	21		2	10	7	2		21				
Special educ. needs: 25/2/2025, ISC	20		17	3					20			
Winter wellness: 06/11/2024, ISC	38	1	21	12	4			10	28			
Total	205	3	85	78	33	5	1	66	137	0	0	2

Ethnicity	Total number of participants	Black African	Black Caribbean	Black Eritrean	Black Ghanaian	Black Nigerian	Black Somali	Black Other	Mixed	White British	Other	Not known
Immunisations: 23/12/2024, Choices	19	1	12			1		1	2	1		1
Immunisations: 19/06/2025, ISC	14						13				1	
Cancer (women): 10/03/2025, Choices	18	5	7		1				4			1
Diabetes: 10/04/2025, Choices	16	2	5		1	2		1	1		2	2
Hypertension/Diabetes: 13/02/2025, ISC	21						21					
Menopause: 29/01/2025, ISC	15						15					
Mental Health: 27/11/2024, ISC	19						19					
Prostate cancer: 24/04/2025, Choices	4		1						3			
Prostate cancer: 18/12/2024, ISC	21							20	1			
Special educ. needs: 25/2/2025, ISC	20					1	18	1				
Winter wellness: 06/11/2024, ISC	38	28					9	1				
Total	205	36	25	0	2	4	115	5	10	1	3	4



healthwatch Islington

Healthwatch Islington
Claremont Building
24 – 27 White Lion Street
London N1 9PD

www.healthwatchislington.co.uk
info@healthwatchislington.co.uk