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TRAINING | VOLUNTEERING | WELLBEING



**London Borough
of Hounslow**

2024

Heston West and Cranford CORE20 Report



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Heston West and Cranford Engagement – CORE20 Report

This report delves into the healthcare challenges and opportunities faced by the diverse community in Heston West and Cranford in Hounslow, with a particular focus on minority groups and individuals from low-income backgrounds. By employing a combination of one-to-one interviews, focus groups, and surveys, we have gathered comprehensive data that highlights the personal experiences and broader trends within the population. Our engagement efforts in May 2024, which included 80 residents (including the CORE20 wellbeing activities participants) and an additional 24 survey respondents, provided a detailed understanding of the barriers to accessing NHS services and the significant impact these challenges have on the health and wellbeing of residents.

Key themes emerged from our data, revealing critical issues such as social isolation, chronic physical health conditions, lack of access to healthcare, and stigma and discrimination. These insights are pivotal in shaping effective strategies to improve healthcare access and inclusivity. This report also underscores the vital role of community-led engagement activities in fostering trust and gathering honest feedback from community members. By addressing the identified barriers and implementing the recommendations provided, we aim to bridge the gap between healthcare providers and the public, ensuring that all voices in Heston West and Cranford are heard and valued.

The subsequent sections will present the detailed methodology, findings, and proposed solutions to enhance healthcare access and support the overall wellbeing of the Heston West and Cranford community.

Methodology and Key Themes

We utilised a combination of one-to-one interviews, focus groups, and surveys to gather comprehensive data from our community. The chosen methods allowed us to capture both in-depth personal experiences and broader trends within the population. One-to-one interviews provided detailed individual insights, while focus groups facilitated interactive discussions, and surveys allowed for the collection of quantitative data from a larger sample. The success of our one-to-one interviews was mainly due to the fact that the interviewees were long-time participants in our clubs, hence they were more open about their opinions, allowing us to get the real picture. Our engagement activities included 80 participants, and a further 24 completing the online survey. The demographic data collected covered age, disability, gender, ethnicity, and location.

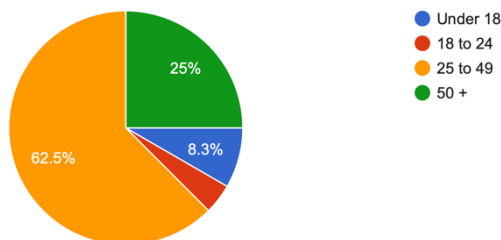


Figure 1: Age Demographics of Survey Respondents.

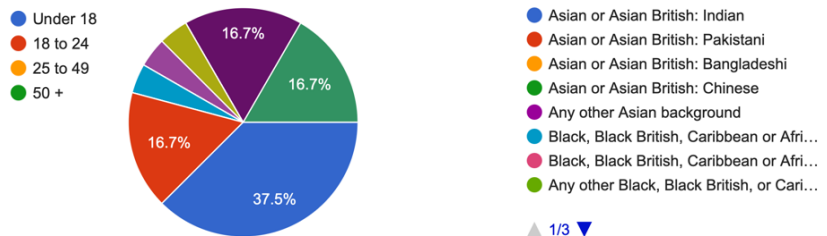


Figure 2 shows the spread of ethnic demographics from our survey responses.

The majority of the survey respondents were from minority ethnic backgrounds and within the age range of 25-49 years, as seen in Figure 1. This demographic is crucial, as their responses provide valuable insights that will enable us to shape a better future for these communities. Engaging with this group helps us understand and address the barriers they face in accessing NHS services. The data collected from these demographics highlighted significant issues that require our immediate attention and action. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Anonymity was maintained through unique identifiers, and data was stored securely.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the key challenges impacting the health and wellbeing of our community, we conducted a survey asking residents to identify the biggest difficulties they face on a regular basis. The responses highlighted four major themes: social isolation, physical health conditions, lack of access to healthcare, and stigma and discrimination. This response is crucial as it sheds light on the significant obstacle's residents encounter, emphasising the profound impact these challenges have on their overall health and wellbeing.

By identifying these core issues, we can better understand the great challenges our community members are facing and work towards addressing them effectively.

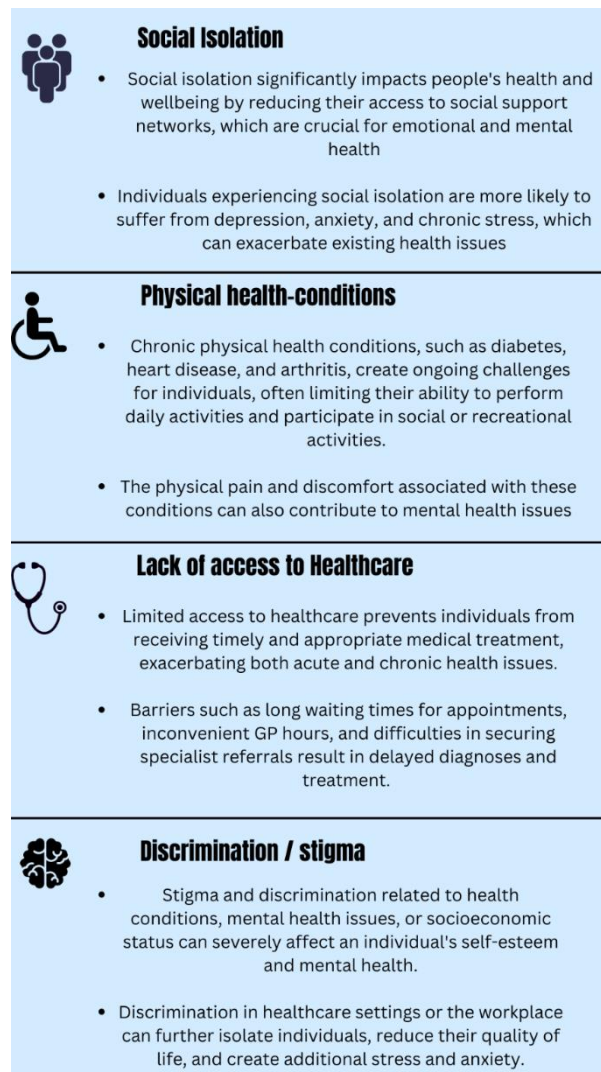


Figure 3. Four themes impacting mental and physical health of individuals living in Hounslow.

To collect valuable data, we organised focus groups designed to gather essential information and create a safe environment for participants to share their thoughts.

The first focus group was held at one of our Heston West Big Local Creative Club sessions. This session took place on Sunday 12th May, at Cranford Community College. The activities included one-to-one interviews, followed by a focus group. There were 10 participants in total, predominantly female, aged between 30 and 65, representing a mixed ethnicity demographic. The second focus group, with 20 participants, was held at Cranford Community College. This session took place on Sunday 19th May, at our free community communal hot lunches programme, allowing us to conduct one-to-one interviews with community members from very low-income backgrounds. One significant challenge we faced was the limited interaction with men, as many were busy providing for their families. However, this focus group was crucial as we were able to engage with a few men, predominantly single and over 45, , gaining valuable insights into their specific challenges.

The questions for the focus groups and in-person interviews primarily tackled knowledge and accessibility, including:

- **Do people know when to talk to their GP?**
- **What does health and wellbeing mean to them?**
- **What is stopping them from getting in touch with their GP?**
- **Do they have any previous health conditions?**

The results from these focus groups are highlighted below, along with key steps to address the identified challenges.



Identified Barriers to Healthcare Access

Identified barriers to healthcare access in Heston West and Cranford include long appointment times, with many residents reporting extended waiting periods to secure a GP appointment, leading to delays in receiving necessary care. Single mothers' express difficult in getting GPs to understand and act upon the urgency for specialist appointments for their –

children, and the inflexibility in rescheduling appointments adds to their frustration. GP operating hours often clash with work schedules, particularly for individuals in low-income jobs who cannot afford to take time off work, a significant issue for both single parents and low-income families who must choose between healthcare and earning a livelihood. Patients frequently see different GPs at each visit, mainly referring to the GP centres in Cranford, preventing them from building a rapport and leading to a lack of personalised care. Many residents are confused about what "wellbeing" entails due to the perceived disorganisation within GP surgeries, which hampers their ability to seek appropriate care.

GPs often limit consultations to the presenting issue, discouraging patients from discussing multiple health concerns in one visit, exemplified by a mother of four who was asked to book a separate appointment to discuss a lump in her chest while already present for a prescription check. Patients with regular prescriptions struggle to request medications on time, leading to missed doses and potential health risks. There is a perception that GPs do not proactively search for symptoms to prevent diseases but rather react to issues presented at the time of the appointment. Some patients with ongoing health conditions report being referred to specialists only once, with no follow-up or ongoing management plan.

Recommendations to Address Barriers

To address these barriers and improve healthcare access in Heston West and Cranford, the following steps are recommended by the community:

- Implement systems to ensure patients can collect their repeat prescriptions on time, reducing the risk of missed medications.
- Maintain non-digital options for those with special needs or heavy responsibilities, ensuring inclusivity.
- Empower pharmacists to manage repeat prescriptions, providing an alternative to GP visits and reducing the burden on GP services.
- Introduce more flexible appointment times, including evenings and weekends, to accommodate those with restrictive work schedules.
- Strive to provide patients with consistent GP appointments to build rapport and ensure personalised care.
- Encourage GPs to allow patients to discuss multiple health concerns in one visit, promoting comprehensive care.
- Implement protocols for GPs to actively monitor patients for potential health issues, focusing on preventive care rather than solely reactive treatment.
- Ensure that patients with chronic conditions have clear, ongoing management plans and easy access to specialist referrals as needed.
- Due to a lack of GP surgeries in Heston West and Cranford, additional GP surgeries required, with community outreach access at various times and locations.

Key Question 1: Thinking about your immediate community/neighbourhood, what contributes to health and wellbeing and what difficulties exist that affect health and wellbeing?

Many residents reported that social isolation severely impacts their mental and emotional health, with this theme emerging strongly from individuals living alone, especially the elderly and those with limited mobility. Chronic physical health conditions frequently affected –

individuals' ability to perform daily activities and participate in community life, primarily impacting middle-aged and older adults. The difficulty in accessing timely and appropriate healthcare services was a common concern, highlighted by residents experiencing long waiting times for GP appointments and logistical challenges such as inconvenient appointment times conflicting with work schedules. Notably, individuals from low-income backgrounds and those with inflexible jobs were most affected. Stigma and discrimination related to health conditions or socioeconomic status emerged as significant barriers to seeking help and support, particularly among minority groups and individuals with mental health issues, who reported feeling marginalised and hesitant to access services due to fear of judgment. For more information, refer to Figure 3 for a visual representation.

Key Question 2: Thinking about your immediate community/neighbourhood, what activities, services, and support could improve health and wellbeing?

To improve health and wellbeing in our immediate community and neighbourhood, several activities, services, and support systems could be beneficial. Increasing awareness among residents is essential, ensuring inclusivity by providing information through various channels, not just online or in person, but also through easily accessible means like posters and local notices. Offering free or reduced-cost local activities can encourage social interaction, helping people to come out and socialise more. More posters and visible awareness campaigns about ongoing activities and services can keep the community informed.



Residents have expressed a desire for more events where medical staff are present, as they value opportunities to have their health monitored, such as blood pressure checks, and to learn more about their health. From our online survey, 83% of respondents were unaware of Hounslow's Community Solutions Team, and 80% were either unaware of or had not accessed Hounslow's Outreach Health Bus. However, those who had used the Outreach Health Bus reported a positive experience, praising the guidance provided and describing the staff and overall service as excellent.

Ensuring that healthcare staff, including GPs, actively reach out and make their presence known in the community can help residents feel more supported. Addressing the main issue of isolation is crucial, as tackling this will address numerous health problems by providing more social support. This approach makes people feel involved and encourages physical activity, which is important for preventing diseases like obesity and cardiac issues. Additionally, more support is needed around mental health, and efforts to bring people together can play a significant role in this. Organising activities that offer both physical and mental support and holding events that encourage community members to get to know each other, can significantly enhance the overall health and wellbeing of the community.

Conclusion

There is a strong desire for increased activities and funding aimed at tackling isolation, which is seen as a root cause of many problems, both mental and physical. The community feels disconnected from the healthcare system, often feeling they must adjust to be seen and cared for rather than feeling valued. People desire to take pride in the healthcare system, but this requires healthcare workers to show respect and provide the necessary time and attention. It's crucial for healthcare providers to understand the boundaries of those from low-income families, who should not have to choose between their wellbeing and other responsibilities. The community seeks more events and awareness campaigns focused on health and wellbeing, aiming to feel safe and heard.

Reflection and Recommendations on Behalf of C-Change West London

Our organisation focused on two key areas: healthcare and social initiatives. In terms of healthcare, we advocate for maintaining non-digital options to ensure inclusivity for individuals with special needs or heavy responsibilities. Empowering pharmacists to manage repeat prescriptions can provide an alternative to GP visits, thereby reducing the burden on GP services. Additionally, introducing more flexible appointment times, including evenings and weekends, would accommodate individuals with restrictive work schedules and enhance accessibility to healthcare services.



On the social front, we strongly recommend increasing funding to address social isolation. This could involve organising events and community clubs tailored for various groups, such as disabled individuals and seniors, to encourage social interaction and develop support networks.

We also propose allowing community organisations to host informative sessions with healthcare workers present, which would help build trust and strengthen the relationship between the community and the NHS. These initiatives aim to improve social connectivity and overall wellbeing within our community.

We encountered challenges in reaching the traveller community during our engagement efforts due to access issues at the Hartland Centre. However, we plan to engage with the residents in the coming weeks once the centre has been repaired, and we will share our findings as soon as possible.

It's not all doom and gloom regarding the NHS; in fact, there is a sense of positivity and trust within the community. Community-led engagement activities play a crucial role in fostering this trust, allowing us to gather honest opinions from community members. These activities are pivotal in bridging the gap between healthcare providers and the public.

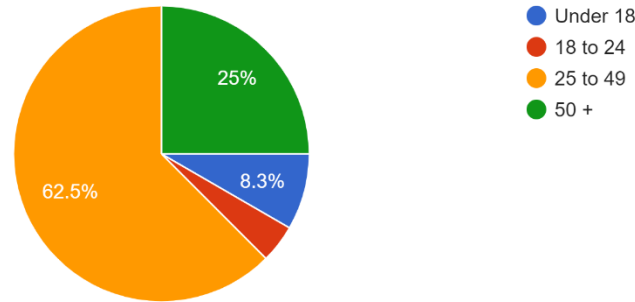


One of our dedicated volunteers, Richard (above), expressed his profound gratitude, stating he is “indebted to the NHS.” He shared his life-changing experience, emphasising how the NHS’s care and support enabled his wife to have a happier end to her life. Such testimonials highlight the deep appreciation many hold for the NHS, reflecting the critical role it plays in the wellbeing of the community. Through these community interactions, it is evident that despite existing barriers to healthcare, there is a shared belief in the value and positive impact of the NHS.

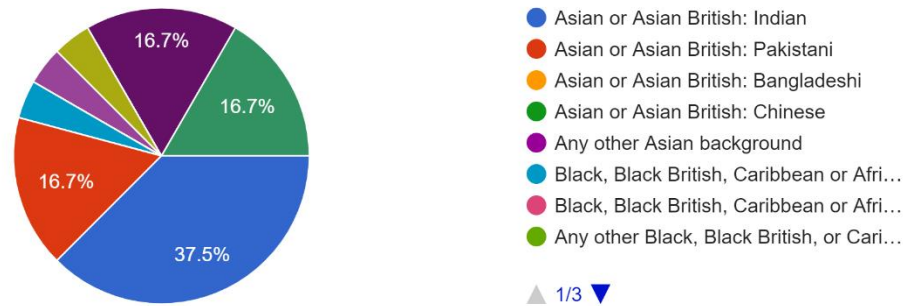
CORE20 Online Survey responses on pages 8 to 12.

CORE20 Online Survey Responses

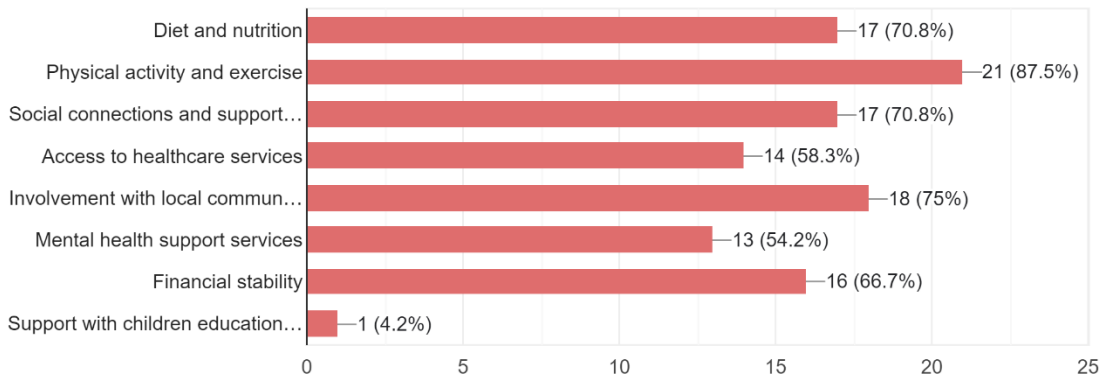
Age



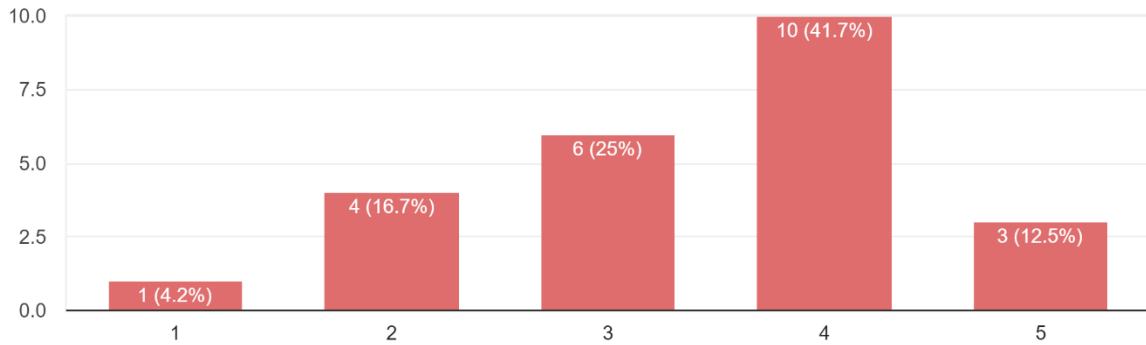
Ethnicity



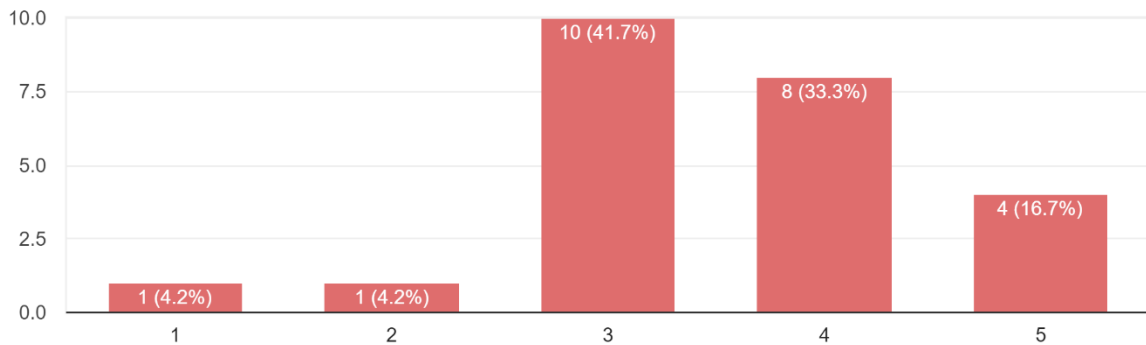
What factors do you believe contribute most to your health and wellbeing? Select all that apply.



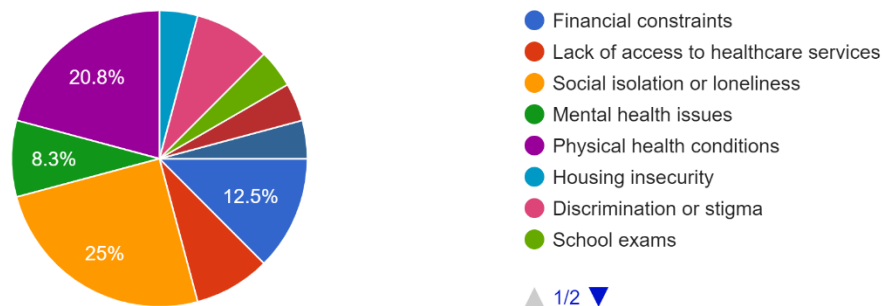
How would you rate your personal overall physical health (in the last 6 months) on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being excellent?



How would you rate your personal overall mental wellbeing (in the last 6 months) on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being very poor and 5 being excellent?

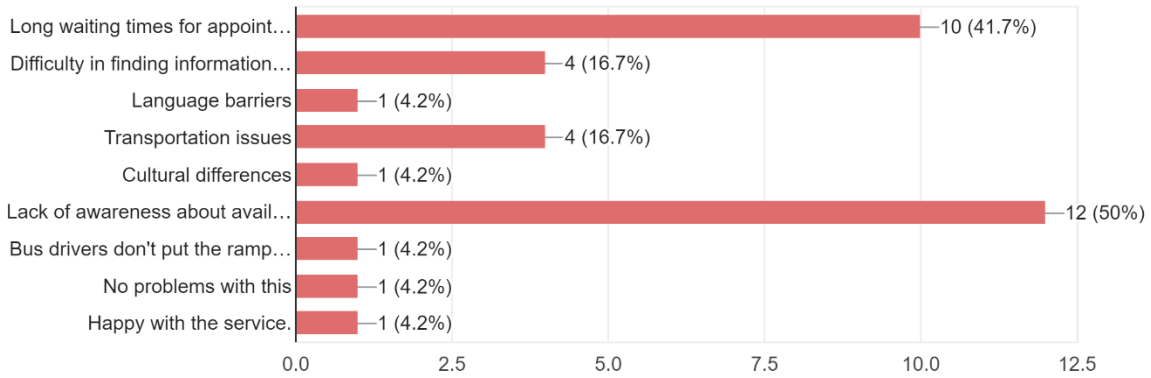


What are the biggest difficulties or challenges that impact your health and wellbeing on a regular basis? Choose up to three.

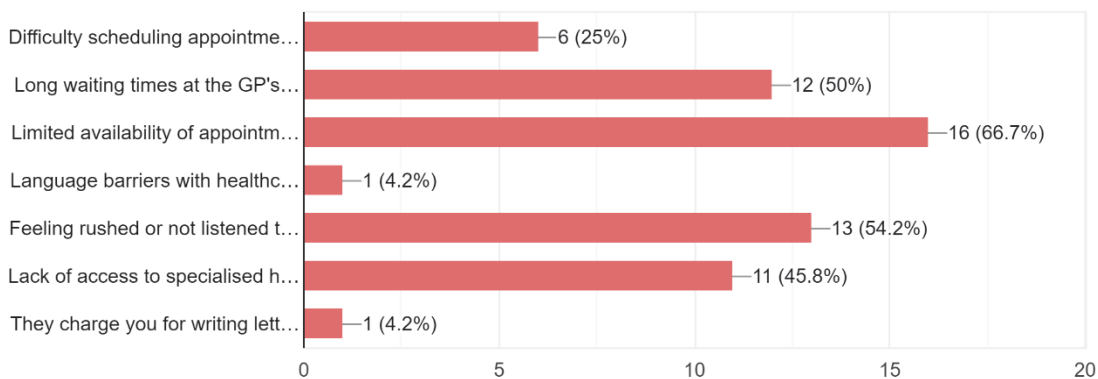


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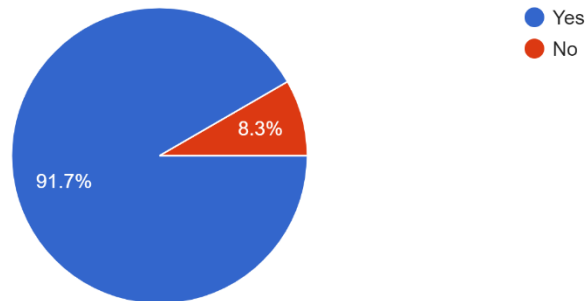
Have you encountered any barriers when seeking or accessing health and wellbeing services in Hounslow? If yes, please select all that apply.



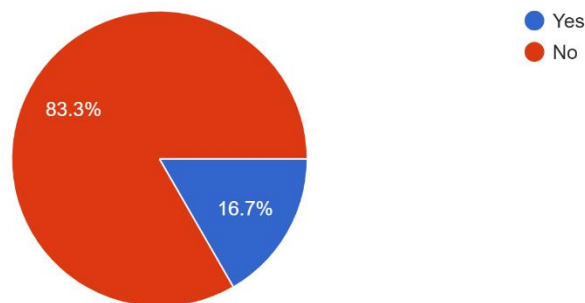
Reflecting on your last experience at the GP, what challenges or barriers did you face in accessing healthcare services? Choose all that apply.



In the past 6 months, have you taken part in any community activities or attended local community events?



Are you familiar with Hounslow's Community Solutions team?



(Optional) In your opinion, what are the main factors contributing to inequalities of experience among residents in your area?

Survey respondents identified several main factors contributing to inequalities of experience among residents in their area:

- **Strong communities:** Some residents feel there is a lack of interaction among different communities, with people often socialising only within their own groups.
- **Assertiveness and Connection:** Residents need to be more outgoing and willing to connect with others to find local opportunities in health and wellbeing.
- **Financial Barriers:** Financial difficulties are a significant factor.
- **Language Barriers:** These prevent some residents from accessing facilities and services.
- **Cost of Living:** The high cost of living is a concern.
- **Awareness:** There is a lack of awareness of available facilities and community activities.
- **Communication:** More effective communication methods, such as posters and non-social media channels, are needed to inform residents.
- **Free or Low-Cost Activities:** There is a lack of provision for free or low-cost community activities.

Some responses indicated confusion or uncertainty about the question.

(Optional) Do you have any additional suggestions or comments regarding how we can address health inequalities and promote better health outcomes for everyone in our community?

Survey respondents provided the following suggestions for addressing health inequalities and promoting better health outcomes in the community:

- **Increased Communication:** Use noticeboards and promote health and wellbeing activities through Hounslow's Health Outreach Team. Emphasise word of mouth and direct interaction.
- **Free or Reduced-Cost Activities:** Offer more free or low-cost local activities to improve mental and physical health.
- **Shorter Waiting Times:** Reduce waiting times for hospital appointments.
- **Longer Appointment Times:** Allow more time for appointments at GP surgeries and hospitals so patients can fully explain their issues.
- **Community Events:** Promote and schedule events for children and residents to increase awareness of available resources.
- **School Communication:** Send messages from schools to parents about community activities and health resources.
- **Inclusive Activities:** Provide more inclusive activities to promote better health and ensure they are broadly advertised to reach all community members.

Some responses indicated that no additional suggestions or comments were offered.



Report written by Sharanjit Kaur, edited by Taz Virdee, and supported by Layba Nisar. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in our focus groups, one-to-one interviews, and online survey. Your contributions and support have been invaluable.

For more information about C-Change West London, please visit: www.cowl.org.uk