



North East London



Social Prescribing Community Chest

Final Report

January 2024



Beyond Sight Loss - Tactile Windsor Castle Display

East End
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Executive Summary

The Social Prescribing Community Chest was established to pilot services and activities delivered by the voluntary and community sector (VCS) that would address gaps in health inequalities. 12 grants totalling £60,000 were awarded to community groups supporting residents across Tower Hamlets. All projects were delivered between 19 June and 3 September 2023, reaching 328 residents and delivering over 1,000 hours of support.

- There was evidence of services having an impact on three key areas of improving household finances, community engagement and emotional well-being. There was less evidence of impact on improving physical well-being.
- Building knowledge of services, trust and establishing referral links between social prescribers and community groups takes time. CVS groups with pre-existing strong relationships with the social prescribing service received the majority of referrals from this route. Greater time and opportunities for groups and social prescribers to connect should be built into future programmes.
- Social Prescribers reported challenges in the time required to build rapport with residents and for them to agree to a referral to a CVS service. The fear and lack of confidence of residents in attending new and unfamiliar groups, should not be underestimated, as well as the fact that CVS groups were often not within close proximity.
- CVS groups reported the timeframe for delivering projects was short with limited time for interventions to deliver impact and engage professionals e.g. Public Health. For future funding greater time needs to be provided to allow groups to engage with external agencies and deliver a comprehensive package of support.
- Good communication was essential for this project considering the various stakeholders and short delivery time-frame. While the majority of projects were excellent and this allowed changes to funding and services provision to be made quickly, there was poor communication from others in responding to emails and submitting final reports. The time/resource implications to keep chasing project leads should not be underestimated.

Social Prescribing Community Chest – Tower Hamlets

The Tower Hamlets Place Based Partnership (a collaboration of health, care and community and voluntary sector organisations) working closely with the Tower Hamlets Council is committed to supporting the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise Sector (VCFSE) to deliver services and activities that engage residents and support their health and wellbeing.

Through the Social Prescribing Community Chest, funding was made available to VCFSEs to pilot services and activities linked to health inequalities and gaps in community provision, particularly gaps (or unmet needs) in services and activities that the Tower Hamlets Social Prescribing Service and other key community connector services refer to. The fund sought to identify groups who had never engaged in social prescribing previously and create new networks to increase networking across the borough.

“I cant believe I’m able to do this. Why did I leave it so long, Once I knew the basics it was easier to ask others to help you learn more and go further”,
Skillspool Training Service User

Funding Priorities

1) Social isolation/loneliness: Befriending in people's homes with a particular focus on those who may be housebound or who face additional challenges e.g. dementia, disability, limited English.

2) Social isolation/connecting to the community: Befriending services to physically escort and support residents to engage in the community, attend activities and appointments, with a focus on those who may face barriers such as disability, people with anxiety, limited English.

3) Mental health/social isolation: Befriending/support groups for men, with a focus on those who may feel lonely/isolated/need mental health support and/or middle-aged/older men and Bangladeshi men.

4) Culturally targeted health and wellbeing activities for Black Caribbean and African community: Provision of physical activity sessions, food/healthy eating advice, culturally appropriate cooking classes, peer and group support particularly for those with long-term health conditions.

5) Cost of living advice/support: Outreach into the community, linking in with Food Banks to provide residents with advice/information on support available to them in the borough around increased cost of living with a particular focus on people with long term health conditions & disabilities; people with negative budgets/in debt; people on pre-payment meters and families with children.

Funding

19 applications were received, all were assessed by East End Community Foundation (EECF) identifying alignment between proposals and key criteria of the fund, project plan, track record, budget and geographical location. Recommendations were presented to, and discussed with, the NHS NEL panel on Wednesday 7 June. The panel consisted of representatives from NHS North East London, GP Care Group Social Prescribing Service, Tower Hamlets Council for Voluntary Service and Tower Hamlets Council. 12 proposals were awarded funding as follows:

Organisation	Award	Priority Area
Ashaadibi Education & Cultural Centre (partnership with Women's Inclusive Team)	£9,000	3. Mental health/social isolation -befriending and support for men
Bethnal Green Mission Church	£1,500	2. Social isolation - Community Engagement and Services
Beyond Sight Loss	£5,000	2. Social isolation - Community Engagement and Services
Coaching for Unpaid Carers	£4,640	6. Other
EastHands	£3,300	5. Cost of living advice/support
Happy in Your Body	£5,181	2. Social isolation - Community Engagement and Services
Neighbours in Poplar	£4,800	2. Social isolation - Community Engagement and Services
The Oitij-jo collective	£4,997	2. Social isolation - Community Engagement and Services
SimpleGifts: Unitarian Centre for Social Action	£3,245	3. Mental health/social isolation -befriending and support for men
Skillspool Training	£3,409	4. Culturally targeted health and wellbeing activities
Sunny Jar Eco Hub (partnership with R-Urban Poplar)	£9,938	3. Mental health/social isolation -befriending and support for men
True You Today	£4,990	2. Social isolation - Community Engagement and Services

Key Stats

Cumulative figures from all projects



people took part in community activities



referred from social prescribers



people engaged in community activities for the first time



of support accessed through workshops, classes, coaching and one-to-one advice



average number of sessions attended by residents*

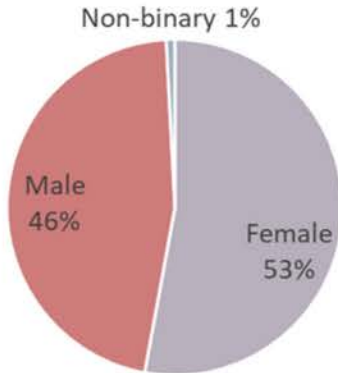


groups who have a better understanding of how to work with social prescribers

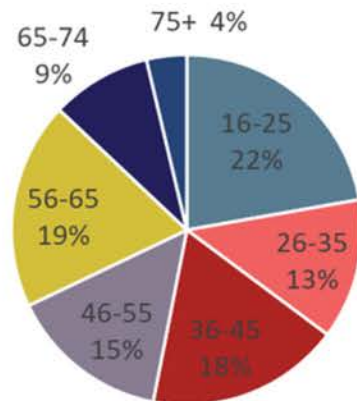
- Number of sessions varied from one attendance at a Bethnal Green Mission Church to 14 sessions of well-being complementary therapies and workshops through Happy in Your Body

Demographics of Beneficiaries

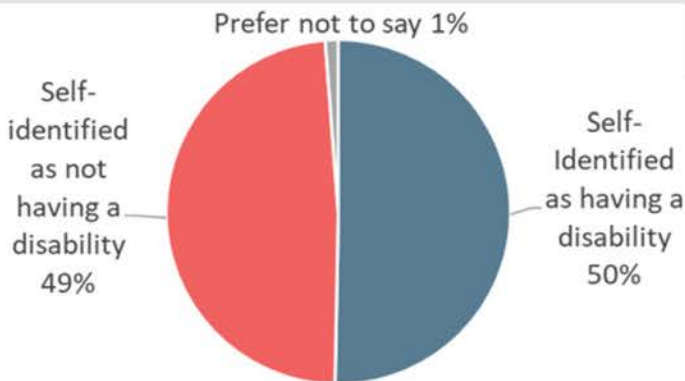
Gender



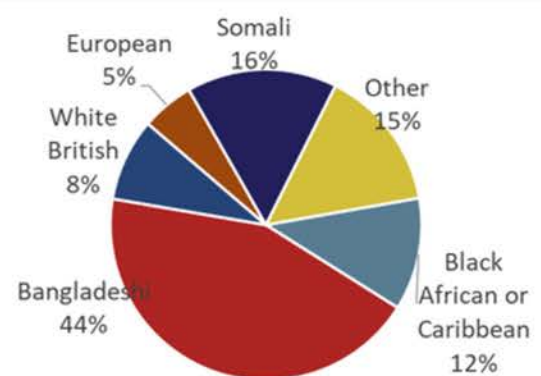
Age



Disability



Ethnicity



"If I didn't play football, I wouldn't have anything else to do in the week. The others, they stay in their rooms all day and this is why they can get depressed", Bethnal Green Mission Church Service User

Impact of the Fund

Groups were asked to select three of four monitoring outcomes and undertake a baseline assessment on residents joining the project and again at the end of the funding to assess the difference the projects had made. Outcome data was only provided for 220 / 67% of project participants



residents said they were better able to support themselves and their family financially

In the past few weeks, our Neighbours in Poplar friends have been a lifeline for us, offering support in navigating welfare benefits and providing practical assistance.



residents better able to play an active role in society

"I attended a class for the first time in 20 years, and I enjoy volunteering in the community centre",
Ashaadibi Cultural Centre Service User



residents felt happier

"The session really helped with my mental wellbeing and my self-acceptance, it boosted my confidence and made me feel so much more grounded", True You Today Service User



residents reported better levels of physical fitness

"As someone who has colitis and 2 slipped discs, I found the sessions helped me to de-stress and find exercises that help me with day to day mobility", Simple Gifts Service User

Project Reports

Bethnal Green Mission Church

Bethnal Green Mission Church had initially planned to run a project for male refugees focusing on activities to support social inclusion and wellbeing, including a football club, gardening sessions and access to English conversational classes held in the church. Upon award, the group realised they would be unable to implement all activities within the required timeframe, they therefore reduced the scope of their project to provision of the weekly football group, running for 6 weeks, for male asylum seekers staying in Whitechapel House. 56 men accessed the football club, all referred by social prescribers. There were a mix of ethnicity and ages, and the average age was 26, the youngest being 19. The majority, 30 men only accessed one session, and the remainder accessed 2-5 sessions. Funding enabled the group to hire a large pitch for up to 20 players, and football equipment that would enable them to play. This included boots, shorts, socks, and bibs, which were collected and washed after each sessions enabling them to be used by attendees, including new players, the following week. Upon learning that there were minimal resources available at Whitechapel House and many residents were without basic toiletries, a portion of the funding was used to buy toiletry packages to hand out to the players. Bethnal Green Mission Church found gathering monitoring data a challenge, but 8 participants identified improved mental health and 7 improved physical health as a result of the football.

M is aged 20 and attended 5 of the 6 football sessions. M has lived in Tower Hamlets for 2 months, and was previously staying in temporary accommodation in Swiss Cottage where he made friends. He has not established any connections with Whitechapel House and likened it to a prison, due to there being no privacy, very small quantities of food of poor quality, and often unfriendly security on the door. M identified a connection for all the residents in Whitechapel House between staying inside the building all day and having poor mental health. M has always loved football has found it really helpful having the football project to go to each week. M says he benefits from the sense of improvement he gets from playing football, and it helps him maintain his fitness. He says it's the only time in the week that he can clear his head and reduce his stress, as he only focuses on the game. He said that the timing of the group works really well, as it is in between prayer times at the Mosque, which he and many others of the residents attend. Overall, M said he's really excited for the football group to continue.

Beyond Sight Loss

Beyond Sight Loss is a user-led charity addressing the loneliness, social isolation and wellbeing of blind and partially sighted people. Through funding the group ran a 'Summer of Connection' project bringing together existing group and new group members through a programme of excursions and social gatherings. 41 blind and visually impaired people were supported, 33 existing and 8 new members, supported by 12 volunteers. New members were recruited through outreach and no referrals were received from Social Prescribers. Activities included visits to Lavender Farm, Windsor Castle, Buckingham Palace and The British Library, with social events including karaoke. A Technology Day was held in August to support group members develop digital skills. Events were regularly attended with 24 blind and visually impaired people at each event. The group had planned to run meditation courses however these were postponed to the Autumn due to lack of availability of the workshop guide. Overall project participants reported a significant impact of the project on addressing loneliness and that they felt more active within their community and felt happier as a result.

What I really like is getting information about all the activities and organisations out there for me from the help of BSL...There is always a lot going on. I get a lot of help and guidance from BSL that isn't available anywhere else.

Love making a new group of friends after being isolated by my bad sight.

"...it has helped my confidence a lot and I enjoy socialising with other members of the group. I like the volunteers, I think they have been trained well and they are really understanding of my needs. I get on well with the different groups of people at BSL, who also have different eye conditions, through the members' meetings and outings/events I am able to do more of now."

Happy in Your Body

Happy in Your Body worked collaboratively with Pathways Trust and Cranbrook Tenants and Residents Association to deliver holistic complementary therapies and activities for people suffering from chronic illness, including long covid, exhaustion, pain and fatigue. 11 women were engaged on the programme, 6 referred by social prescribers and the others through organisational outreach. Three participants were recruited at reserves, should others drop out, two of these received assessment, one to two sessions of complementary therapy and signposting to other services and the third was recruited onto the full programme. 8 women received the full range of activities of 1:1 visioning session to set goals, assessment and triage to in-house and external services, five complementary therapy sessions and five group health coaching sessions. The average age of participants was 50 years, ethnicity was mixed with just under half from the Bangladeshi community and a high number of participants, 8, identified as carers. The 8 participants who accessed the full range of activities all identified increased in mental well-being and half identified improvements in physical well-being.

MB is a 55 year old single mother living in Bow, and an unpaid carer for her eldest son who suffers from psychosis, with episodes of schizophrenia. When she first presented to the programme she was experiencing severe pain in her leg, bottom and hip and prescribed codeine by her GP which she took sparingly to help complete tasks such as shopping, laundry and taking her son to the doctor. Following assessment MB accessed cranial osteopathy, and although skeptical at first noticed that it helped relieve the pain, stating "It was like my life turned around. Because I was pain free I started to look forward to loads of things. Even things like cleaning the house and cooking. I could function again. I couldn't believe it. The group sessions are really good. It's really good to know that you are not the only one going through stuff. Your mindset reigns it in to realise that pain is not great or comfortable but we can try and help ourselves with different things, like exercise, eating healthily. I want to deal with my pain and at the same time look after myself and my son. I couldn't do that when my pain was so bad. This program is getting me to focus on myself."

Neighbours in Poplar

With funding Neighbours in Poplar were able to employ a Sylheti speaking support worker who carried out a range of activities and services that directly benefited the Bengali women in Poplar and Isle of Dogs. 27 women were supported, two-thirds referred by social prescribers and a third through outreach in the community. Women were predominantly older, with an average age of 66, and the oldest aged 85. Women were supported through workshops on Breast Cancer awareness and Personal Protection from the Metropolitan Police. One-to-one support provided essential assistance with welfare benefits, housing issues, and referrals to support services including Adult Social Care services. Older Bengali men were also referred by the Social Prescribing Team, offered initial support by Neighbours in Poplar, and referred on to SimpleGifts, also funded through the Social Prescribing Community Chest. Evaluation was undertaken against all four impact statements with all those accessing the service recording a one-point improvement against at least two of the outcome indicators.

Ms. X is currently living with her husband and father in a one bedroom apartment in Poplar. Her father faced various challenges, including navigating the complex welfare system and accessing the necessary support. Ms. X and her father cannot speak English, and have struggled to access and understand services. Ms. X was referred through a Social Prescriber and supported in applying for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) on behalf of her father. This was successful and as a result Ms X became eligible for the Carer's Allowance due to her commitment to caring for her father. Finally to improve their living conditions, Ms. X and her father were supported in apply to the housing register and are awaiting new accommodation better suited to their needs.

The Oitij-jo Collective

The Oitij-Jo Collective ran a "Summer of Creativity" through funding from the Community Chest. The programme of creative workshops engaged women from BAME backgrounds through nettle weaving, henna making, clay sculpture, jewelry making, block printing, and crafting and upcycling. 10 workshops were run between 7 July and 18 August. 52 women were engaged through the workshops, 26 attending only one event and 24 attending 2 or more. All were recruited through outreach with no referrals from social prescribers. A creche was also provided enabling mothers to fully engage in the workshops, in the knowledge their children were being cared for, and providing opportunities for child development through provision of age-specific arts and crafts activities. Anecdotal feedback from the group identified that the impact of the creative workshops extended beyond the act of crafting with participants finding inspiration, mutual support, and newfound self-assurance.

I think it brought the local community together - I met and chatted with people that I would not normally speak with, even through we might go to the same markets, schools, etc. Not being Bengali or South Asian.. I also got to learn more about Bengali culture and its rich history. A lady told me that I was the first Taiwanese person they had ever met, and we exchanged similarities of how we grew up in neighbourhoods where we were the only non-white people.

It reduces the feeling of boredom associated with isolation and loneliness. It has a positive impact on mental health and well-being through socialising and accomplishing creative goals. .

True You Today

True You Today supported 11 (target 10) women and genderqueer survivors of domestic abuse through art, movement and creativity. Two referrals were made by social prescribers and the others accessed through self-referral or the group's outreach work. Residents were aged from mid-twenties to mid-fifties and two identified as non-binary. Participants accessed 6-10 workshops of their choice with the aim of building self-esteem, body confidence, emotional well-being and resilience. Popular workshops were aerial sessions such as trapeze and group coaching, followed by yoga. 10 of 11 participants identified as better able to play an active part in their community, 7 as happier and 9 as having improved well-being as a result of the project.

J is recovering from addiction and is at risk of homelessness and the case study is in her own words: "I feel I have greatly benefitted from these various activities, i.e. ariel acrobatics, core stability and mindful photoshoots. Participating in these activities has given me overall a sense of purpose. I struggle with self-confidence at a lot of the time, and not only have I noticed a substantial amount of physical strength in my body but in turn, a lot of mental clarity has come from doing these programs. Without these programs, I very much feel I would continue an unhealthy cycle that would cause more damage than good. Overall I have found it has been such a life changing experience. The group classes are a great platform to hear others work through their issues, reminding us we are never alone. The community support has been something I look forward to on a weekly basis and I continue to learn so much as we actively put into practise the teachings we are receiving. These sessions have shifted my perspective from victim into the leader of my own life, and for this I am eternally grateful, as my wellbeing has improved greatly thanks to implementing the tools I have acquired."

Ashaadidibi Education and Cultural Centre in partnership with Women's Inclusive Team

The project, Aim Higher Wellness, provided culturally specific support for the Somali Community. 52 people accessed the project against a target of 40, the majority through organisational outreach with only two referred through social prescribing. There was a mix of ethnicities, with the majority of participants from the Somali community alongside residents from the Bangladeshi community, and a fairly even split between men and women, with an average age of 43 across a diverse age range, the youngest being aged 22 years and the oldest 65. Participants accessed a range of weekly sessions including advice and guidance, one-to-one befriending, and keep fit classes. Following discussion with participants cooking classes and an Arabic language club were also included towards the end of the programme.

Referred in June 2023 through a social prescriber. P had previously remained indoors for 8 months, engaging in no social activities, reporting poor sleeping patterns, and trust issues due to family trauma. She had a fear of engaging with services and accessed no other community support. Over 8 sessions she attended weekly befriending sessions, and progressed to attending cooking activities, the latter being a passion of hers this led to P engaging with the internet in finding new cuisines and restaurants. P has started socialising and taking walks in the park with members of the group.

Simple Gifts

This project provided 10 weeks of mindfulness sessions for older men aged 45+. In the first few weeks participation was low with only one referral through social prescribing, however outreach resulted in 13 men participating with an average attendance of 8 per session. Men were predominantly from the Bangladeshi community. Sessions combined gentle exercise such as stretching and yoga led by an experienced instructor and conversation opportunities on topics that are important to them in a safe and non-judgmental environment. Participants received information on health matters such as diabetes, weight management and the importance of carrying out regular checks, alongside information on other support such as welfare and housing. The majority of participants reported improvements across a combination of measures playing an active part in the community, mental and physical well-being.

J was referred to project by a social prescriber, he had recently experienced bereavement in the family and suffers from a number of health complications including diabetes and uses a wheelchair as a result of a physical disability. J has no family and this project provided his only interaction with others and an opportunity to socialise with other men, discuss what they have done during the week and share their life experiences. The Mindful Men project staff make regular contact with J to remind them of the sessions and if he requires any additional support. Initially reserved, as the sessions progressed J became more open, his confidence has improved alongside his independence, they he feels more engaged and less lonely and isolated.

Sunny Jar Eco Hub in partnership with R-Urban

The aim of the project was to run a series of 10 weekly workshops, based on the men's shed model, providing a space for men to connect and improve their mental health. The partnership struggled to recruit to this project in the time allocated. While the project initially aimed to recruit 15 men it only reached a much smaller number, with 5 referrals from social prescribers. Due to the small numbers engaged and limited feedback, conclusions can be drawn as to the impact of this project..

E's health had deteriorated since an episode of Covid four years ago and he was unable to return to his previous activities. After coming to the Make and Mend workshops, he is now volunteering with the community gardeners and is sharing his new gardening knowledge with family and friends. He says the workshops have inspired him to think of his next steps and other things to get involved in.

"I look forward to coming on Thursdays. What I learn here, I am sharing with others- like home gardening projects or bird houses. It's already started on a small scale, I talk about it to my family and friends. It's nice to be in a garden. Organic food is my passion. I feel healed when I come here- even though I'm just being supervised, I feel the support and feel the benefit. "

Skillspool Training

The Embrace IT project provided peer support digital literacy sessions to 10 residents with long term health conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure. The participants were from BAME communities, and predominantly female (8 of the 10). The sessions offered practical help with information technology to participants in self-managing their condition. It gave them the chance to gain and practice new digital skills whereby they were able to access information about their conditions, nutritional information and how to improve their diet and physical activity levels. They were able to sign up to text message reminders on their phones and research dietary information. The project increased the digital skills and activities among the beneficiaries, improved their health and wellbeing and increased their levels of social contacts and support. Social Prescribers did not refer any residents to the project and participants were identified through engagement with East End Homes and various support networks that meet at BCC Community Centre in Whitechapel, where Skillspool Training also operate. All but one participant recorded an improvement in mental well-being and that they were happier as a result of accessing the project, and a third reported improved physical well-being.

A (74) was bought a tablet by her children many years ago but was intimidated by the new technology. A's progress was slow but she kept coming back and appreciated that the sessions were more like a social club than a class. A is now using her tablet and phone, calling and texting her family and new found friends she's made in the project. She is now confident and regularly takes time to look up information on the NHS website about her condition and commented that she enjoyed learning to look up things on the internet and the fact that one can look up almost anything. She would like to participate in any digital literacy project and is keen to peer support other participants.

East Hands

EastHands supported 45 residents through a range of activities to address the challenges related to the increasing cost of living. Support covered financial advice on budget management, managing energy cost, guidance on benefits entitlement, and assistance with related paperwork. East Hands acted as mediators with housing and utility companies helping residents to resolve issues or negotiate better terms. The initial project plan was to support 100 people, however this was identified as over-ambitious and the 45 reached is more realistic for the funding available. Impact monitoring was recorded for 16 participants who accessed more than one support session, with the majority recording an increased ability to support themselves and their family and improved happiness. As part of the project initiative, 40 "Grow your own veg" kits were distributed to residents but the impact of this element of the project was not evaluated.

Mr X received a bailiff letter from the court, concerning an outstanding payment with Tower Hamlets and initially ignored it, hoping it would just go away on its own. However when bailiff's again contacted Mr X he sought assistance from EastHands, who helped him understand why he had been contacted, the gravity of the situation and signposted him to Citizen Advice Bureau to resolve the issue. The case is still pending, Mr X feels assured his financial issues will be resolved and is hopeful for a positive outcome.

Coaching for Unpaid Carers

Coaching for Unpaid Carers had planned to run a series of groups workshops and one-to-one coaching sessions reaching 30-45 male carers across Tower Hamlets. The group found recruitment challenging, supporting 7 carers all female, predominantly identified through the Tower Hamlets Carers Centre, with only one referral from a social prescriber. 30 sessions of one-to-one coaching were delivered. It was agreed underspend could be utilised to continue the project for a further 6 months.

R has been caring for two elderly parents with a range of health conditions since childhood, but more intensely for the past 16 years. She admits she is struggling and notices the impact of not having any respite from caring and not getting much help from anyone else. She would like to be able to work but finds it hard to plan and commit. R accessed five coaching sessions for help with developing an idea for a self-employed business that she could do alongside caring hoping to set concrete goals without feeling overwhelmed and anxious. She was able to attain practical tools to use now and later, and unlocked skills that she had forgotten she had. She reflected that she had achieved clarity, acceptance and understanding, that she had built her confidence and felt more able to take responsibility for finding her purpose. At the end of her coaching, she felt that she could benefit from more coaching, perhaps less frequently, perhaps working in a group, with a chance to check in and see how things have progressed. After her coaching she said "I challenged my beliefs and fears and found confidence to work on my goals. I understood my current situation better. It felt less futile, and I can now see a way forward ... I am forging a new path for myself and that in itself...the whole process....is challenging but brings immediate growth".

Limitations and Improvements

Engagement with Social Prescribers

One of the aims of the fund was to create new links between VCSFE groups and Social Prescribers. Prior to the projects commencing, a 'meet-and-greet' session was held, an opportunity for the VCSFE project leads to virtually meet the social prescribers, showcase their projects and build relationships in order to facilitate referrals to the projects. Despite this (and further communication and leaflets being shared with the social prescribers) referrals (particularly for men) proved challenging (please see comments below capturing social prescribers' feedback). Further attempts were also made to increase referrals mid-way through the delivery timeline, and details of the VCSFE projects were shared with Health and Wellbeing Coaches, Care Coordinators and the wider community connector services in the borough in order to try and increase referral numbers, however, this still remained a challenge. Groups with pre-existing strong relationships, such as Bethnal Green Mission Church and Neighbours in Poplar received the majority of referrals from this route. However other groups found it difficult to engage and one organisation stated that they "found the system quite frustrating to navigate". This was echoed by other groups, and following the induction meeting with social prescribers, funded projects groups were waiting for social prescribers to initiate referrals. Groups didn't know how to connect directly with GP practices or link workers, or who was engaged in the project and would have wanted more engagement, opportunities to present their projects and build relationships. In future funding greater capacity and time needs to be factored in to a programme to allow groups and social prescribers to engage and build relationships.

Duration of Pilots

Many groups highlighted the short time frame of the projects. While timeframes had been clear from the outset and organisations had set out a delivery plan in their applications, in practice they found it difficult to deliver all aspects of the project within the funding period. Neighbours in Poplar had difficulty in hosting workshops with Public Health regarding Mammogram Screening, as they had a 12 weeks turnaround time when delivering talks. One beneficiary of Coaching for Carers found "The coaching was too short, so it's too early to say what impact it has had. But I did learn new ways of thinking and it enabled me to explore self-care better and with clarity. I'd like to continue with coaching". For future funding, including pilots, greater time needs to be provided e.g. 6 months to allow groups to engage with external agencies and deliver a comprehensive package of support.

Limitations and Improvements

Recruiting Participants

Several groups found it difficult to recruit participants, partly due to lack of referrals from social prescribers and short timeframe of project delivery. Groups were advised from the outset that they should recruit to the project from existing users, networks and outreach. Several groups were able to do this successfully demonstrating their existing networks and engagement in Tower Hamlets.

Social prescribers also expressed challenges with referrals, particularly the time needed for them to build rapport and relationships both with the new VCSFE projects, as well as the time to build rapport with service users before they could get service users to agree to an onward referral to VCSFE organisations. Other challenges were also identified, including:

- Service users declining referrals if the service was not in close proximity to their home and would require travelling.
- Service users who lack confidence feeling insecure and anxious about attending a new group, which can make people feel lonelier/out of place/lacking confidence. This can make it difficult to refer people, even if it is a great initiative.
- It's hard to get men to come to groups, many lack confidence to meet new people, particularly if they are going through a mentally tough time.
- Projects aimed at specific groups: not all carers want to socialise with other carers; similarly, not all survivors of domestic violence want to be labelled as such and would much prefer to do activities in another setting – just with other women.

Communication Between Service Providers and EECF

Good communication was essential for this project considering the various stakeholders and short delivery time-frame. For the majority of projects communication between service providers was very good and regular check-ins were undertaken between EECF and providers. This led early on to one group reducing their delivery and grant allocation accordingly, meaning the funds could be re-allocated to another project. In other instances it identified challenges in recruiting participants resulting in agreed changes to delivery models, and identifying underspend.

However for some projects communication was very poor, with them being unresponsive to check-in calls, delays in responding to emails, providing limited information and delays to some projects submitting their final monitoring reports. This resulted in late identification of underspend for one project, and concerns around delivery of one project only being identified following delivery of their final report. The time/resource implications to keep chasing project leads should not be underestimated.

Delivery and reporting

Challenges with recruiting service users impacted some projects ability to use their full funding allocation. In these instances, projects were extended past the project end date so as to allow projects additional time to deliver their service and utilise their underspend. This had implications on getting outcome data and evidencing impact for the final evaluation report.

"I was too scared to admit that I was struggling with my mental health but the Imam was very calm and told me it was normal part of life, and it was interesting to know that the Prophet also experienced stress or depressions and there is always solutions. I feel more at ease as I felt like a bad Muslim a few weeks ago (translated from Bangla to English)", Ashaadibi Cultural Centre Service User

"I've been struggling I really have. Things are just extremely lonely. Reaching out to people and the reactions is a lot. The amount of birthdays I'm having on my own. It is very isolating. You offer such great stuff just what's needed.", True You Today Service User



Bethnal Green Mission Church

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Email: info@eastendcf.org

Company No: 8104415
Charity No: 1147789



www.eastendcf.org



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https://www.instagram.com/eastend_cf/

East End
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION