

# South Asian Patient Engagement

Streatham PCN Community Engagement Project



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# Introduction

Lambeth is home to diverse population groups, and as such, GP practices include patients from diverse backgrounds and languages. This can often translate into discordance between patients and healthcare professionals, resulting in communication difficulties. The barriers to accessing and understanding key information in health care can also lead to poorer outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

Healthwatch Lambeth collaborated with Streatham Primary Care Network to address some of the challenges they experienced when engaging with patients from diverse linguistic backgrounds. Some of the practices within Streatham have over 50% of their population group from South Asian backgrounds.

Primary Care Network (PCN) is a collective name for local GP practices that have come together to focus on local patient care. The Streatham PCN is comprised of the following practices:

- Streatham Common Group Practice
- Palace Road Surgery
- Valley Road Surgery
- The Exchange Surgery
- The Streatham Hill Group Practice
- The Vale Surgery

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<sup>1</sup> Addressing language as a barrier to healthcare access and quality

[Katriina L Whitaker](#) et al r J Gen Pract. 2021 Dec 31;72(714):4–5

# Background

Drawing on feedback from initial conversations with staff in these practices, we found that many patients are unsure how best to navigate the Primary Care setting and require many interventions to encourage them to attend their regular screening appointments. In particular, uptake for cancer screenings is very low. Staff also told us that:

- Practices within the PCN attract many Tamil speakers within and from neighbouring boroughs because several clinicians and staff speak Tamil.
- Patients want to see the same GP at each visit because of their need to speak with clinicians who speak Tamil. This can increase waiting times.
- Many patients are unable to use the self check-in computer in the waiting room because information is only available in English.
- As a result, reception staff always have to be available to check people in for their appointments.

In addition to speaking with staff within the PCN and practice, we also spoke with community members about their health needs. We attended a local Diwali event as well as a seniors lunch club at a local temple and spoke with attendees about their health priorities. The main health concerns mentioned were as follows:

- Diabetes
- GP access
- Dementia
- Carers advice/information
- Weight loss
- Hypertension
- Healthy eating

# Aims of the Engagement

Collaborating with PCN staff, we arranged a Health & Wellbeing Event in a local Health Centre focusing on patients from South Asian backgrounds. The PCN wanted to:

- a. Understand their health needs better and any barriers they face accessing care or utilising their health screening/checks.
- b. Understand how the PCN could best support them.
- c. Encourage patients from South Asian backgrounds to attend regular health screenings and cancer checks.

The PCN acknowledged that they often host programs and events for patients from Black African and Black Caribbean backgrounds but have never done so for any other population groups. This event was viewed as an opportunity to 'start the conversation' with patients to understand their needs so that changes could be made within practices and across the PCN.



*Healthwatch Lambeth staff during the Health and Wellbeing Event.*

# Engagement Event

The Health and Wellbeing event for South Asian patients was hosted at Gracefield Gardens Health Centre. GP practices within the PCN sent a text message to patients who identified as South Asian, informing them about the event and the opportunity to partake in a healthy lunch. Several activities took place as outlined below.

## Information and Advice Stalls

Stallholders representing organisations whose health priorities aligned with those identified through community conversations with residents of South Asian origin. These included, and are not limited to, the following:

- Diabetes UK
- Age UK Lambeth (offering information about Dementia)
- Carers Hub (providing people with information on their services)
- Clear Community Web
- Cancer Don't Let It Win
- Lambeth Health & Wellbeing Bus

A full list of stallholders can be found in the Appendix.

Where possible, organisations brought along materials in community languages, and staff members who could speak those languages were in attendance.

## Talks and Q&As

GPs and staff from local practices attended and delivered a short presentation about diabetes and gave patients the opportunity to ask questions. A Health Coach also spoke about healthy eating and the role of diet when managing health conditions such as hypertension and diabetes. Several public health professionals were present to speak about different types of cancer screenings.

## Health Checks and Practice-Led Support

Nursing staff were on hand throughout the event to provide blood pressure and glucose tests. Social Prescribers from within the PCN were present to speak with patients and start the conversation about what type of support would be helpful to them and how their practice can best support them.

# Feedback and Learnings from the Engagement Activity

Over 60 patients attended the event. As the Health and Wellbeing Event had multiple elements, feedback about the event was captured in several ways:

- Feedback from stallholders included information about the number of patients they each spoke with, the topics raised by patients, any challenges they experienced with language, and suggestions for how to enhance similar events in the future.
- Social Prescribers and Healthwatch Lambeth volunteers spoke with patients to hear if they found the event beneficial and ask what is important to them regarding their own health and that of their family.
- Large sheets of poster paper were placed in the event seeking patient feedback. These questions were suggested by the PCN staff:
  - *How can health services better support you?*
  - *If you could change one thing about your GP, what would it be?*

## Usefulness of the Event

Overall, many patients found the event beneficial, particularly the information shared by the stallholders as well as the clinical talk about diabetes from the GP staff. Several stated that the most helpful part of the day was:

- The opportunity to obtain information and speak with people individually.
- Being provided with leaflets and information.
- The talks that were arranged, specifically the GP talk about diabetes.
- Stallholders also confirmed that many patients had commented on the usefulness of the talks.
- The opportunity to speak to someone in person.

Several attendees said they would attend a similar event in the future.

## Key Issues Raised on the Day

### Attendance, Health Checks, and Screenings

Through conversations with social prescribers, many of the attendees reported that they do attend regular health checks and cancer screenings. One of the objectives of the day was to understand the reasons patients do not present for these screenings and how they could be encouraged to do so. As many visitors

during the event reported they do attend such screenings, practices are considering trialling different strategies to reach those members of the community who do not attend.

Patients also told us that they would like more support for the following:

- Taking care of their eyes.
- Caring for parents.
- Keeping healthy as they age.
- Housing issues leading to detrimental health outcomes including someone with stress and high blood pressure.

## Language

Language was raised as a challenge by a couple of stallholders but was not a barrier for most people who attended the event. However, it should be noted that the communications about the event were in English and therefore those who attended were most likely confident speaking English.

## Access

In addition to language barriers, other issues raised by the attendees included their desire for in-person appointments with GPs, as well as the difficulties they have in utilising practice websites or apps. The majority of people who spoke with social prescribers at the event did say they struggle to access Healthcare; this takes the form of mostly Digital access (5) closely followed by language (3) and then mobility struggles (2). Digital inclusion was raised by PCN staff as a next step they may wish to explore with this community group.



*Presentation during the Health and Wellbeing event.*



# Next Steps and Recommendations

The Health and Wellbeing event successfully engaged with members of the South Asian community and allowed opportunities for PCN staff to directly hear the challenges experienced by this patient group. However, many of those who attended are already engaged in their healthcare and reported that they do attend their regular health checks. Opportunities for future engagement and consultation with the South Asian community include:

- Encourage health checks and cancer screenings by reaching out to community members in non-health venues such as local temples or community day centres.
- Build on the success of this event by using the feedback received to host similar events in the future.
- Smaller scale events that focus on one topic area such as digital inclusion, diabetes or cancer screenings would better facilitate the use of a translator or interpreting services. Examples include a focus on digital skills or an information session explaining the different roles within GP practices.
- Provide practices with a budget for translation services such that they can provide information to patients in a range of languages.
- Include members of the South Asian community in planning future events to ensure the priorities of the practice align with the needs of the patients.

# Appendices

Feedback gathered on the day of the event.

## Feedback from Stallholders

### Tally of Interactions with the Public

Organisation	Tally
NIHR	17
St Christophers Hospice	20
Royal Trinity Hospice	14
Age Exchange	12
Alzheimer's Society Lambeth	7
Targeted Lunch check, & Other screenings	8
Carers Hub	20
ORDRS (sign ups 20, leaflets 60)	20
Cancer don't let it win	20
Diabetes UK	25
Lambeth Health and Wellbeing Bus	40
ClearCommunityWeb	15
<b>Average</b>	<b>18</b>

## Key Themes from Conversations

Organisation	Themes
NIHR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing about BP, diabetes, cancer, dementia</li> <li>• Research – is it voluntary or paid?</li> <li>• Research in care homes/hospices</li> <li>• Dementia and healthcare research</li> <li>• Research needs to get out to the community.</li> <li>• People need to know what happens with samples etc.</li> </ul>
St Christophers Hospice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community</li> <li>• Compassionate Neighbours</li> <li>• Carers Support</li> <li>• Bereavement</li> </ul>
Royal Trinity Hospice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social prescribing and link to compassionate neighbours</li> <li>• Advance care planning</li> <li>• Volunteering in our shops</li> <li>• Promoting out free literature</li> </ul>
Age Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressiveness in late stages of dementia – what to do.</li> <li>• Interested in learning more about dementia/possibly volunteer</li> <li>• Social prescriber -referral forms/leaflets</li> <li>• How to reduce risk of dementia</li> <li>• Would like more information</li> </ul>
Alzheimer's Society Lambeth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dementia Research</li> <li>• General information about dementia</li> <li>• Support – carer and housing</li> <li>• Volunteering</li> <li>• Dementia progression</li> </ul>

Targeted Lunch check and other screenings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of awareness of importance of regular self breast checking (in young and old)</li> <li>• Belief that if they feel well, then they are well. Didn't realise that to stay well we need to check ourselves. Cultural stigma on that.</li> <li>• Anger that mammography procedure is painful and belief there should be a better check!</li> </ul>
Carers Hub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paid care work</li> <li>• Housing difficulties</li> <li>• Legal Signpost</li> <li>• Outside of Lambeth</li> <li>• Comping to speak at PPC – Palace Road GP</li> <li>• Bereavement/ past care work</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Benefits – PIP/Attend/Carers</li> </ul>
ORDRS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• Diabetes</li> </ul>
Cancer don't let it win	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prostate cancer</li> </ul>
Diabetes UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to look after my Diabetes 2</li> <li>• No Type 1 Diabetes</li> </ul>
Lambeth Health and Wellbeing Bus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interested in CVD Project</li> <li>• Impressed with information on offer</li> <li>• Spoke to people around HIV</li> <li>• Cancer awareness</li> <li>• Courses and activities available in borough</li> <li>• Financial support</li> </ul>
ClearCommunityWeb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most participants wanted to talk about the most appropriate activity to join so asked to be called back by staff at CCW.</li> <li>• One person wanted advice on which mobile phone they could buy that met their needs.</li> </ul>

## Was language a barrier at the event, would a translator have helped in any way?

- Only for a few people. Would be an idea to know if any of the stallholders speak any languages and may be able to help with translation. (NIHR)
- Potentially! Although I did hear another attendee offer to translate for someone else (St Christophers Hospice)
- Some 'clients' did shy away, and language could have been a barrier? (Royal Trinity Hospice)
- One lady spoke Tamil and unfortunately I didn't have leaflet in Tamil. (Targeted Lung Check and other screenings)
- Managed to play a bowel screening video in Tamil but not breast (Targeted Lung Check and other screenings)
- It was fine (ORDRS)
- No problem with language barrier (Cancer don't let it win)
- Once – interpreter arrived to help (Diabetes UK)
- Yes – one person spoke little English (Lambeth H&W Bus)
- No, all those we talked to have good English. (ClearCommunityWeb)

## Suggestions for next time

- More timed talks over the day for example diabetes etc (NIHR)
- Good timings (St Christophers Hospice)
- Excellent table position and well attended (Royal Trinity Hospice)
- A welcome flyer in other languages explaining what is on offer for arrivals (Royal Trinity Hospice)
- More leaflets on cervical screening and bowel screening (Targeted lung check and other screenings)
- I must say it was a very good day (Cancer don't let it win)
- Well done, nice mix (Diabetes UK)
- Good clinical talk on Diabetes (Diabetes UK)
- Great food (Diabetes UK)
- Excellent other health suppliers (Diabetes UK)
- Should be free blood test without GP Appointment (Diabetes UK)
- Refreshments (H&W Bus)

- Better signage (H&W Bus)
- More volunteers/people to greet on way in (H&W Bus)
- Program with timings (H&W Bus)
- More chairs for participants (ClearCommunityWeb)

## Written Patient Feedback

Sourced via large posters on display

### How can health services better support you?

- More events like this

### If you could change one thing about your GP, what would it be?

- Should be able to pre-book your prenatal appointment earlier than on the same week
- When you book an appointment, the GP should update themselves with your information before you enter so you are not repeating.

## Verbal Patient Feedback

Social prescribers from Streatham PCN and Healthwatch Staff/volunteers spoke with patients about their health priorities and documented their feedback in a short survey template.

13 respondents from The Vale (8), Streatham High Practice (2), Streatham Hill (1), Clarence Avenue (1), The Exchange (1).

### Q: With regards to you and your family's health, the most important thing is:

11 responses:

- Taking care of my eyes
- My mum being looked after and me
- Maintaining quality of life through good healthcare
- To check blood pressure and sugar level
- To get an appointment
- To have a face-to-face appointment with my family GP
- Good health and wellbeing. Management
- Make sure everything is alright
- Getting help and support
- Keeping healthy as you get older. Doing what you can to prevent illness.

- Health is all ok, just current housing issue causing lots of stress and I have high BP for the first time

**Q: My main concerns are:**

12 responses:

- I have no concerns
- Back pain (displaced spinal block)
- Diabetes – self managed, maintaining fitness
- Mental health, anxiety
- Follow up appointments
- GP online appointments are limited and not available
- Access to medical services on time
- My knee has started to hurt a lot, swelling and pain, causing falls. I'm getting tests done for this.
- Troubling symptoms, GP can't diagnose. Have had lots of failed diagnoses. Therefore, GP sent for blood tests.
- Unable to communicate due to language barrier
- Privately getting domestic care/home care such as cleaning and shopping – always ask GP
- Increased BP. No electricity = stress

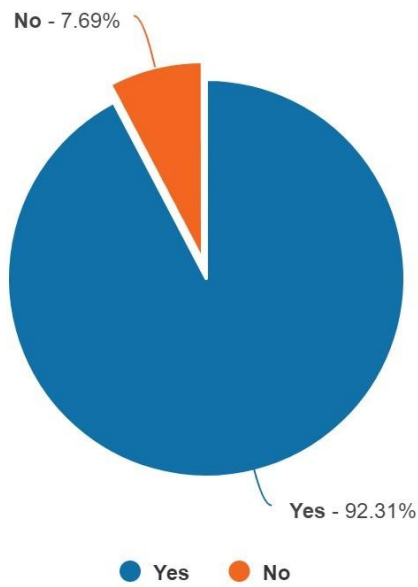
**Q: My GP can support my family and I by:**

9 responses:

- My GP is doing a good job. I am happy with the service.
- To get rid of a lump in my head – told it's cosmetic
- I want support to treat my anxiety
- To be able to talk to them
- Making it possible or easier to see her or send a message
- Consultation, advice, reviewing my health and medication
- Doing their best
- Advise around mental health issues and support
- Having more health events to keep in touch. Appointments delayed.

## Figure 1

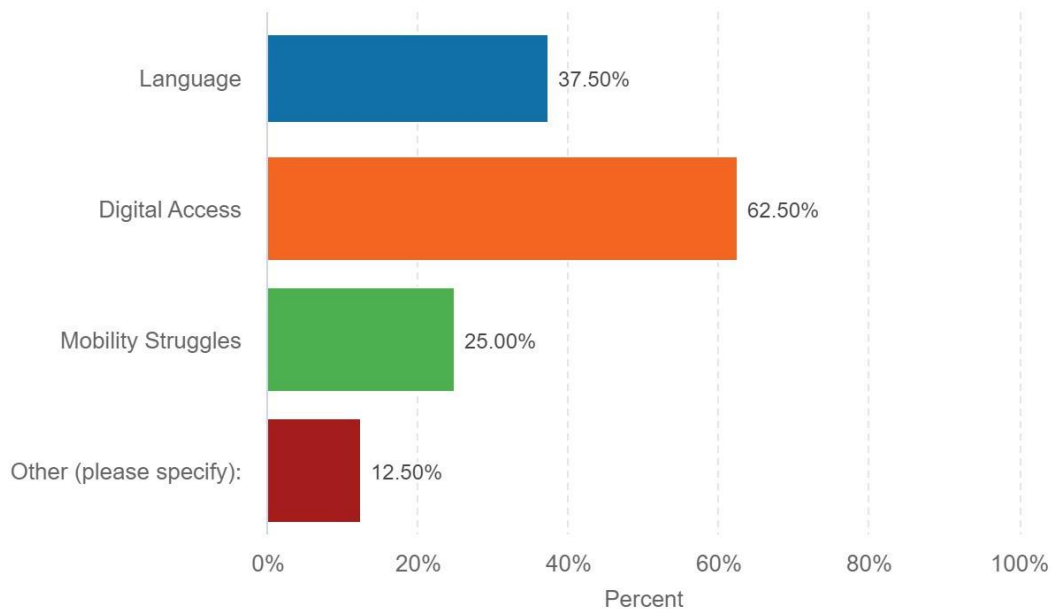
Do you struggle to access the healthcare you need?



13 responses captured.

## Figure 2

If yes, please select the reasons below...

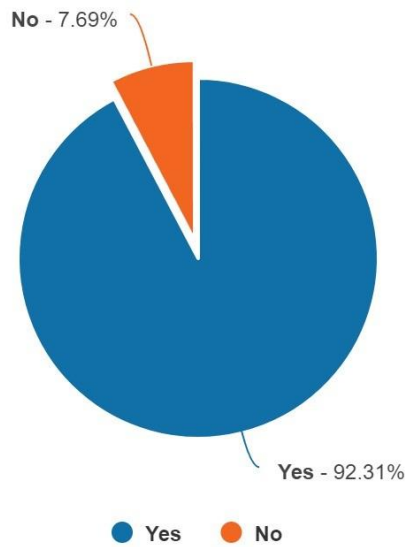


8 responses captured: Language (3); Digital Access (5); Mobility Struggles (2); Other (1).



**Figure 3**

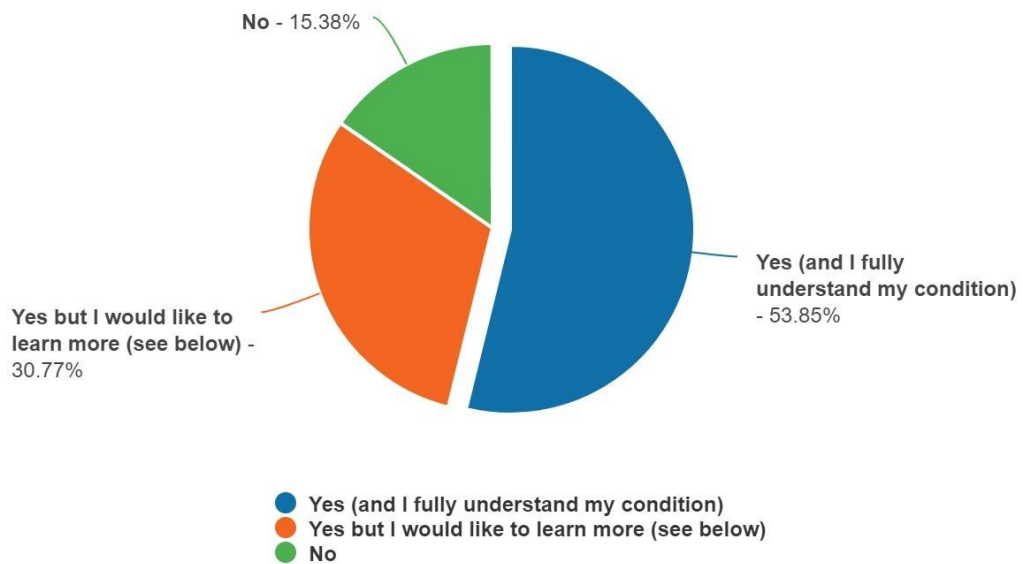
Do you attend your regular check ups and screenings when invited by your GP?



13 responses captured.

**Figure 4**

Do you live with a long term condition?



13 responses. Yes and fully understand (7); Yes but would like more information (4); No (2)

Of the 4 people who said they would like more information:

- All 4 would like that information In Person
- 1 person would like to receive information from Physical materials
- 1 person would like to receive information Online

**Q: If you live with a long-term condition, would you consider online self-management tools?**

4 responses.

- Yes = 2, No=2

**Q: What has been the most helpful part of today for you?**

5 responses:

- The leaflets
- The talks that have been arranged on Blood Pressure and Diabetes
- GP talk about Diabetes
- Speaking to Someone
- Finding Information

**Q: Would you come to a similar event if we held another one?**

7 responses:

- Yes=6
- No=1



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