CITY & HACKNEY
PUBLIC HEALTH

CAN
COMMUNITY AFRICAN NETWORK

A partnership between the Community African Network and Public Health

Community-led needs assessment

Recommendations

September 2026



Hackney

CITY OF LONDON

We're on a journey together

These recommendations arose from a community-led needs assessment with the Black African Community in Hackney. This took place over 2025 to 2026, is illustrated in the diagram on the next page.

We recognise that several initiatives are already underway which link to the recommendations and actions outlined in this report.

Because this is an ongoing journey, please also keep in mind that there may be some small changes to the recommendations and actions as we finalise them.

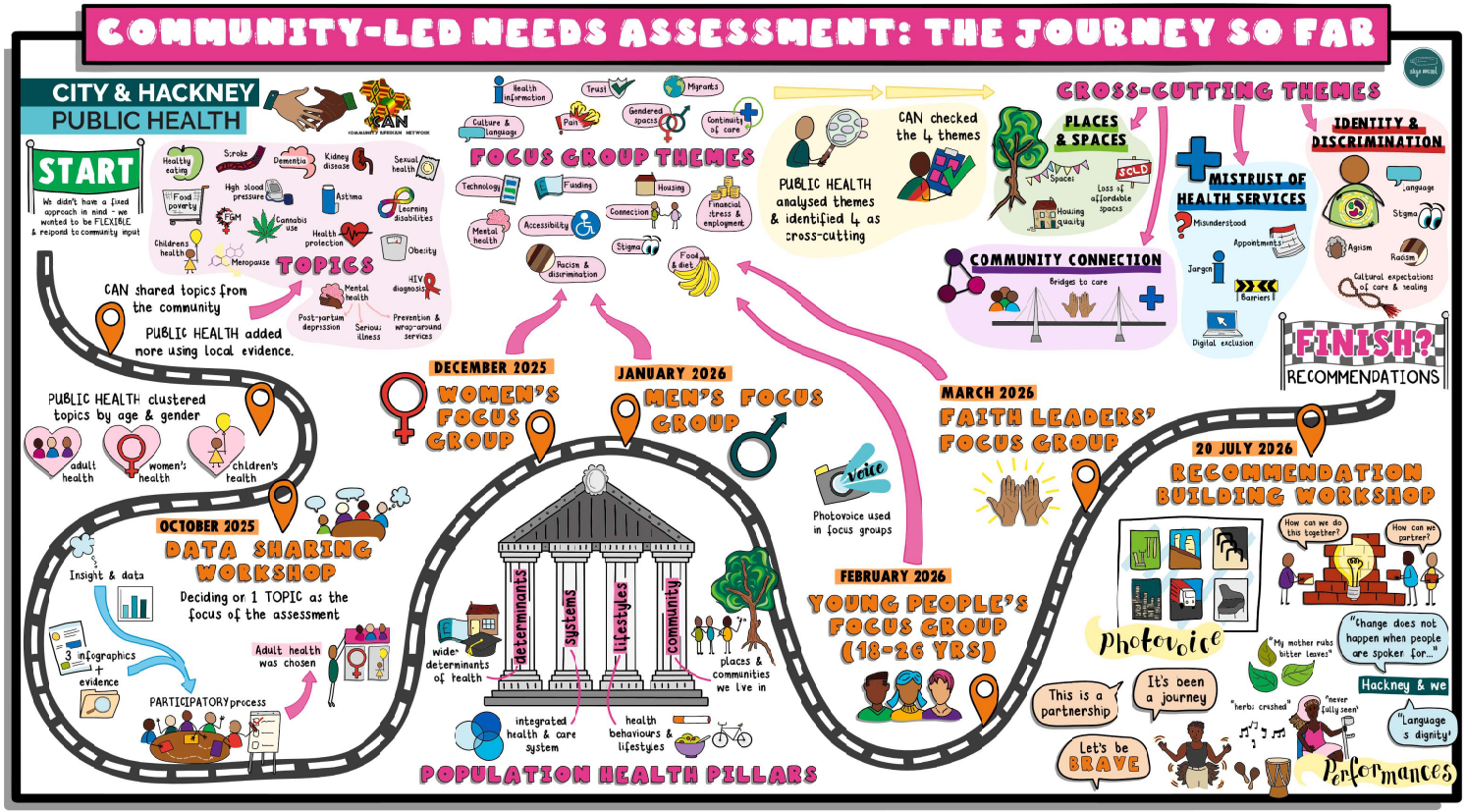


Illustration credit: Skye McCool

Aspirations for working together

Throughout our journey we have heard from the community about how we should all work together. From these discussions, we have developed the following aspirations to help shape future connections and collaboration with the community.

Doing with us, not to us

Meet us where we are, in everyday spaces

Value and protect our community leaders

Create safe, culturally sensitive spaces to heal

Recommendations

	Pg
Share health information in ways that work for everyone	6
Support and train trusted community and faith leaders	7
Support NHS and Council staff to truly see, hear, and understand residents' lives	8
Make it easier to book appointments and receive care from a familiar team	9
Improve Structured Medication Reviews so they feel safe and clear	10
Support Black grassroots groups with fair and accessible funding	11
Create more social, creative, and informal ways for the community to connect	12
Improve housing quality and proactive repairs	13
Create safe, accessible, and affordable community spaces	14
Increase awareness and ownership of public assets	15
Bridge the gap between leadership and the community through real co-design	16
Establish safe health care and support access for residents with insecure immigration status	17

Share health information in ways that work for everyone

Who: Local council | NHS | Community & faith groups

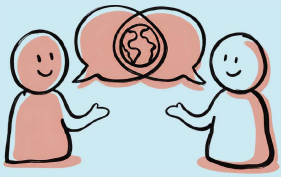


"Finding **clear and reliable health information** can be dificult. Leaflets and the NHS app **do not reach everyone**, which can lead to residents relying on other support networks where **health advice can be mixed**."

Tailor the format of communication

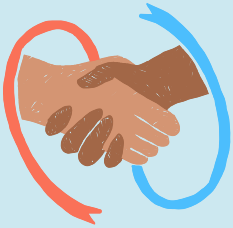


Support different languages



Make events fun and social





Partner with trusted groups



Prioritise imagery over text



Share info where people actually are



For detailed actions see page 18

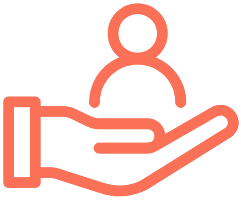
Support and train trusted community and faith leaders

Who: Local council | NHS | Community & faith groups



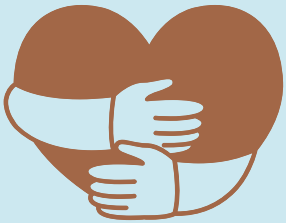
"When **services are difficult to use or not trusted**, residents turn to trusted community leaders. This places a weight on these leaders, who often **support residents with complex needs**."

Provide tailored support sessions



Expand community champions





Comfortable spaces to talk



Help with language barriers



Respect faith and medicine



For detailed actions see page 18

Support NHS and Council staff to truly see, hear, and understand residents' lives

Who: Local council | NHS | GP surgeries | Community & faith groups



"Quick assumptions about a **resident's background, age, or accent** can make it harder for healthcare providers to **hear their concerns fully**. Residents feel that **decisions are made without a good understanding** of what daily life is like for them"

Listen to the whole story



Learn through creative storytelling





Offer home visits for residents with long-term conditions



Bring leaders into the community

For detailed actions see page 19

Make it easier to book appointments and receive care from a familiar team

Who: Local council | NHS | GP surgeries

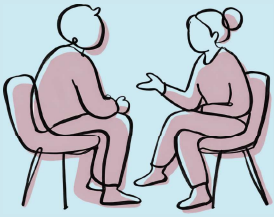


"**Stressful appointment booking** systems, NHS **letters missing important details**, and having to **retell health histories** makes it hard for residents to build a comfortable, trusting relationship with healthcare providers."

Care from a familiar team



Explain why you need to know





Explore more booking options



Ensure clear and confidential communication



For detailed actions see page 19

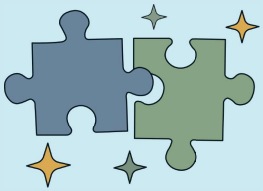
Improve Structured Medication Reviews so they feel safe and clear

Who: Local pharmacies | NHS | GP surgeries



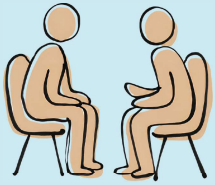
"Residents may **feel anxious about taking medicines**. This anxiety can increase if they are on **multiple or long-term medications**. Reviews over the phone can **feel too rushed**, preventing residents building trust comfortably."

Work as a partnership



Explain things simply





Talk in person

For detailed actions see page 20

Support Black grassroots groups with fair and accessible funding

Who: Local council | NHS



"Black grassroots organisations find it **hard to secure funding** when application processes favour larger, established organisations. **Funding for creative activities** (art, music, dance) is difficult to receive long term."

Make the grant process easier



Help groups apply for funding





Fund creative health

For detailed actions see page 20

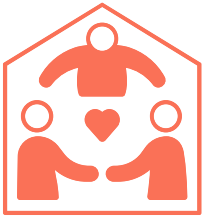
Create more social, creative, and informal ways for the community to connect

Who: Local council | NHS | Community & faith groups



"There is a **shortage of relaxed, welcoming spaces** for the community to safely connect, especially trusted spaces where different **generations and communities can learn from and share with each other.**"

Explore offering free spaces



Offer a mix of fun, informal activities





Provide creative health activities



Learn from each other



Community directories

For detailed actions see page 21

Improve housing quality and proactive repairs

Who: Local council | Community & faith groups

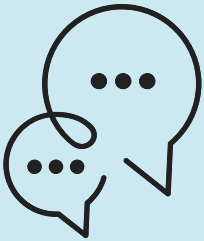


"Housing disrepair (including broken lifts, sewage leaks, etc,) and living in cold, damp, and mouldy homes can be a **source of stress** that affects residents' **physical and mental health**. This worry is made harder when **waiting for urgent repairs** feels slow, or is difficult to track."

Proactive housing repairs



Provide clear communication



For detailed actions see page 21

Create safe, accessible, and affordable community spaces

Who: Local council | NHS | Community & faith groups



"Some local parks and green spaces can **feel neglected or unsafe**, while rising costs can make **residents feel excluded** from spaces in their own neighbourhoods. Young people have very **few indoor spaces** and can **feel judged** when socialising outside."

Create welcoming, affordable community spaces for all



Invest in youth-led spaces



For detailed actions see page 21

Increase awareness and ownership of public assets

Who: Local council | NHS | Community & faith groups



"**Green spaces and other public assets are important** for health and wellbeing, but there is a need for **greater awareness, change of perception, and greater ownership.**"

Activate green spaces for health and pride



Reclaim spaces (e.g., parks and museums) together





Promote community-led events

For detailed actions see page 22

Bridge the gap between leadership and the community through real co-design

Who: Local council | NHS | Community & faith groups



"Neighbourhood changes can **disrupt daily life** and leave some residents **feeling isolated and anxious**. The disconnect between leadership and community can be exacerbated by **feedback systems that feel like tick-box exercises**."

Co-design traffic schemes before implementation



Create real, in-depth community dialogue



For detailed actions see page 22

Establish safe health care and support access for people with insecure immigration status

Who: Local council | NHS | Community & faith groups



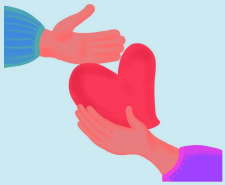
"Residents with insecure immigration status face **barriers when trying to access health care**, some avoiding help due to fear. There is a **lack of safe spaces** where they can comfortably receive advice and care in confidence."

Anonymous community-based clinics



Ensure spatial and health care safety





Empower trusted advocates

For detailed actions see page 22

Detailed Actions

Share health information in ways that work for everyone

- **Tailor the format of communication:** Share health information in ways that fit the people you want to reach. Use creative arts with bright colors, plenty of pictures, and short, easy-to-read text instead of long paragraphs. For young audiences, use social media.
- **Share info where people actually are:** Put simple flyers in nurseries, schools, community spaces, etc. and tap into existing campaigns.
- **Partner with trusted groups:** Work with community groups and faith leaders to share reliable health facts and positive stories through local networks.
- **Make events fun and social:** Share health tips at community events, where residents can chat with health staff in a relaxed way.
- **Support different languages:** Explore simple translation tools and support Community Health Champions to help everyone understand complicated medical terms and communicate messages orally.
- **Prioritise imagery over text:** Design materials with vibrant colors, graphics, and bold, concise text. Avoid lengthy paragraphs, small fonts, and dense print to keep messages clear and engaging. Consider using or creating videos to deliver messages where relevant.

Support and train trusted community and faith leaders

- **Provide tailored support sessions:** Run the Council's "tools for frontline workers" session for community and faith leaders.
- **Expand community champions:** Support and grow the Community Health Champions programme, particularly including more young people.
- **Help with language barriers:** Provide trusted translators to help residents understand health details while making sure their personal stories stay private.
- **Comfortable spaces to talk:** Safe, relaxed spaces (both informal and formal) for NHS staff and community members to talk together
- **Respect faith and medicine:** Help faith leaders and community members comfortably navigate the boundary between spiritual healing (prayer) and seeking necessary medical help. Support health MOTs as a way of integrating faith and health.

Detailed Actions

Support NHS and Council staff to truly see, hear, and understand residents' lives

- **Listen to the whole story:** Support GPs and NHS staff to check their assumptions and listen carefully to each patient's full story. Recruit or engage existing Community Health Champions to attend GP appointments with residents.
- **Learn through creative storytelling:** Use creative activities like theatre, art, and real-life local stories to train staff.
- **Home visits for residents with severe chronic conditions:** GPs should visit patients living with severe long-term illnesses to conduct a 'Fit for Living' survey. During these visits, GPs can offer personalised health advice while assessing the resident's home environment, reporting any poor housing conditions directly to the local council for action.
- **Bring leaders into the community:** Invite senior Council and NHS executives into the local community spaces to observe, listen, and chat with residents where they feel most comfortable.

Make it easier to book appointments and receive care from a familiar team

- **Care from a familiar team:** Try to match residents with the same doctor or nurse to help build a comfortable, trusting relationship.
- **Explain why you need to know:** When asking for a resident's medical history, explain why you need to know. This will help residents understand better why they may be asked to share their medical history again.
- **Explore more booking options:** Look into how booking systems can be made more flexible, offering to let people book online, by phone, or in person so everyone has an equal and fair choice. Consider offering double-length slots for residents who need extra time with their GPs.
- **Ensure clear and confidential communication:** Ensure appointment letters include full details and gently check in on residents who miss appointments. Make information more accessible and simplify wording. Ensure privacy when answering questions.

Detailed Actions

Improve Structured Medication Reviews so they feel safe and clear

- **Talk in person:** Try to hold Structured Medication Reviews face-to-face rather than over the phone, so residents can bring in their medicine boxes and talk them through. If SMRs are over the phone, make sure the appointment is long enough for residents to share their concerns.
- **Explain things simply:** Ensure GPs and pharmacists take the time during medication reviews to explain exactly what each medicine does, why the resident needs it, and what side effects to look out for. Make information more accessible and simplify wording
- **Work as a partnership:** Make SMRs a partnership between the resident, their GP, hospitals (specifically Homerton), and their pharmacist. Staff should listen to residents' concerns and make sure they feel completely safe and comfortable with their long-term prescriptions.

Support Black grassroots groups with fair and accessible funding

- **Make the grant process easier:** Simplify the grant process so smaller community groups have a fair and equal chance to receive funding.
- **Help groups apply for funding:** Create a local list of Global Majority grassroots groups and invite them to workshops that offer practical help on how to successfully apply for grants. Conduct consultations with the community to see what the problems actually are to support workshops.
- **Fund creative health:** Set aside dedicated funding for community art, music, and dance to ensure these programmes can continue to help residents connect and manage stress.

Detailed Actions

Create more social, creative, and informal ways for the community to connect

- **Explore offering free spaces:** Explore providing Council venues free of charge and connect community and faith leaders with creative health programmes so they can easily host local events.
- **Offer a mix of fun, informal activities:** Run a variety of relaxed activities tailored to different groups.
- **Provide creative health activities for residents:** Set up dedicated creative programmes (like music and art therapy) for Black African residents, using art as a safe, therapeutic space to process difficult and sensitive health issues.
- **Learn from each other:** Create friendly ways for different generations and different communities to share their knowledge and experiences, such as young people helping older residents with technology, while older generations share their cultural traditions and history.
- **Community directories:** Consider establishing a community-led directory of local opportunities and assets.

Improve housing quality and proactive repairs

- **Proactive housing repairs:** Shift housing services to be timely and proactive when residents and people experiencing homelessness report maintenance issues, stepping in early before problems get worse. Conduct proactive reviews of housing standards and conditions.
- **Provide clearer communication:** Ensure housing teams communicate clearly with residents, providing friendly and regular updates throughout the repair process. Conduct housing surgeries where people with issues can drop in.

Create safe, accessible, and affordable community spaces

- **Create welcoming, affordable community spaces for all:** Invest in inclusive local spaces—including culturally modest indoor and outdoor active spaces—by promoting affordable cafes in community spaces, and co-designing warm, judgment-free environments so no one feels excluded. Consider safety and maintenance needs.
- **Invest in youth-led spaces:** Invest in establishing dedicated, youth-led physical spaces (like modern youth clubs and creative hubs) where young people can socialise, play, and express themselves without facing public judgment.

Detailed Actions

Increase awareness and ownership of public assets

- **Activate green spaces for health and pride:** Run community-led outdoor activities to build ownership, and use local lidos, parks, and libraries for health and cultural events.
- **Reclaim spaces (e.g. parks and museums) together:** Build trust and confidence by organising intergenerational park walks, and host cultural activities to re-brand spaces that have historical associations with being dangerous.
- **Community-led promotion:** Empower local champions and community influencers to promote local events, opportunities and places in their own words, rather than relying on council-led messaging.

Bridge the gap between leadership and the community through real co-design

- **Co-design traffic schemes before implementation:** Establish a collaborative co-design protocol between the Council and local communities before traffic changes or Low Traffic Neighbourhoods are put in place, ensuring early and transparent communication.
- **Create real, in-depth dialogue:** Move away from superficial surveys and create dedicated, comfortable spaces for in-depth community feedback. Build in feedback loops and always communicate how you acted on the community's feedback.

Establish safe health care and support access for residents with insecure immigration status

- **Anonymous community-based clinics:** Set up trusted, anonymous welfare and health advocacy clinics located in familiar community spaces where residents with insecure immigration status can access basic health advice, testing, and support.
- **Ensure spatial and healthcare safety:** Proactively protect the spaces where these clinics operate so residents can access care safely, without fear of immigration enforcement or financial penalties.
- **Empower trusted advocates:** Support community-led advocates who can help residents navigate local services securely, ensuring absolute confidentiality. Provide resources and funding to charities who support residents with insecure immigration status, signpost to Safe Surgeries and work in partnership with NGOs who lead in this space e.g. DOTW.

Space for your own thoughts and reflections

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PUBLIC HEALTH

Thank you for joining us on this journey to improve health in City & Hackney

A special thank you to our partners at the Community African Network for helping to guide this process from start to finish.

We also want to extend our thank you to the residents who shared their lived experiences with us, directly shaping these recommendations.

Hackney

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