

Ageing Better in Camden



Ageing Better in Camden

Interim evaluation report

July 2018



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Executive summary

Ageing Better in Camden (ABC) is a six-year programme that aims to address social isolation and loneliness in older people (over the age of 60) living in Camden. The programme is intended to produce the following outcomes:

- Older people at risk from or experiencing social isolation will be more involved in their communities and provide stronger support to each other.
- Older people will experience less social isolation as a result of participation in programme activities.
- Services which address the social isolation of older people (SIOP) in Camden are more relevant and better co-ordinated, with increased numbers of older people engaged in their design and delivery.

With £4.5m of Big Lottery funding, ABC has commissioned a range of projects in order to build a body of evidence that can support increased awareness and knowledge relating to SIOP, both locally and more widely.

Traverse is conducting an independent evaluation of the programme. This is the first of two interim evaluation reports exploring the outcomes that ABC-funded projects are having and the extent to which these align with ABC's aims. This report draws on rich qualitative data from conversations (interviews and focus groups) with project participants and project leads, as well as quantitative data from participant demographic surveys.

This report can be used to provide emerging indications and individual participant stories about how projects are achieving progress, the impacts they are having on some participants, and whether these fall in line with ABC's aims. In the drafting process, each project chapter was checked with the project leads for accuracy. However, it should not be read as a comprehensive description and progress check of each of the projects, as it relies on data from a small selection of individuals from each project and therefore cannot be fully representative of all project participants' views and experiences.

Key findings by project

In this phase of the evaluation, we report on the progress of the 8 projects funded by ABC that were more established at this time. An additional 4 projects will be included in the next phase of the evaluation. These 8 projects are described in the table below. Each entry covers

- The delivery partners involved and no. of registered participants since the ABC contract commenced;
- The number of participants who took part in an interview or focus group;
- The project's key aims and activities;
- How the project is structured; and
- The key findings from the qualitative evaluation research, covering the impacts achieved and how the project might be improved.



| Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants | Activities | Structure and delivery | Key findings |
|--|--|--|---|
| Digital Inclusion, Mary Ward Centre 417 registered participants 15 evaluation participants | Digital inclusion provided dedicated classes where project staff provide training and support to use technology. Activities include iPad photography classes, singing classes with iPads, and local history project with iPads. | The project lead at Mary Ward oversees and plans sessions, which are delivered by a team of teachers who deliver session in a range of settings. | <p>The fact that the project is geographically flexible, and not rooted to a specific place has helped with widening its reach.</p> <p>The positive impacts associated with taking part in the sessions included learning new things, improved mental wellbeing, meeting new people and becoming more confident in social settings.</p> <p>Suggested improvements include better accommodating those without Apple devices and integrating the use of mobile phones into the sessions.</p> |
| Men's Action, North London Cares 268 registered participants 18 evaluation participants Intergenerational activities, North London Cares 640 registered participants 10 evaluation participants | <p>Men's Action aims to create activities which appeal to men who are generally less engaged in social activities than women. Activities include men's cookery, podcast recordings, gig and quiz nights and photography.</p> <p>The intergenerational project focuses on activities that bring older and younger people together. Activities include work place visits, a weekly social club and movie nights.</p> | North London Cares runs a large programme of activities through both projects. From the perspective of a participant there is no distinction between the two projects, and many attend activities from both. | <p>Participants appreciate the range of activities on offer and intergenerational connections that are being supported. NLC activities are felt to provide alleviation from life struggles, including ill-health, caring responsibilities and loneliness.</p> <p>The role played by staff in facilitating activities has been important to their success, ensuring that everyone feels welcome.</p> <p>It was suggested that more could be done to help people shift from acquaintances to friendships.</p> |



| Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants | Activities | Structure and delivery | Key findings |
|--|---|---|---|
| Kilburn Community Action, Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (KOVE) 443 registered participants 12 evaluation participants | KOVE aims to improve the quality of life for older residents through supporting older people's engagement and involvement in their local communities. Activities include an older person's steering group, community forums (which are member-run and host discussions on local issues), bench-to-bench walks and a cinema club. | KOVE is led by a job-share between two coordinators and a member-led steering group. The project also places a strong focus on regular members taking an active role in the design and delivery of project activities. | The project has been supporting older people to take community leadership roles and has enabled them to better influence and challenge decisions that affect them in the local area. The bench-to-bench walks were felt to have a range of impacts, including increased social contact, physical fitness and engagement with the local area. The bench-to-bench walks could be made more inclusive through catering for individuals with different abilities. |
| LGBT+ Connect, Opening Doors London/ Age UK Camden 268 registered participants 8 evaluation participants | LGBT+ Connect provides opportunities for older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people in Camden to meet and socialise with one another. Activities include singing sessions, creative writing, computer drop-ins, speaker and movie nights, and a coffee and cake club. | The project lead based at Opening Doors London oversees and coordinates activities. A team of volunteers deliver the activities in a range of settings across Camden. | Participants felt that the activities were having a positive effect on their wellbeing. Male participants felt that activities were immediately welcoming. Female participants felt that activities should be made more inclusive for women through better facilitation and that the channels of communication between hub leads and participants could be improved. |



| Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants | Activities | Structure and delivery | Key findings |
|--|--|---|---|
| We are Ageing Better St Pancras and Somers Town (WAAB), Origin Housing 392 registered participants 15 evaluation participants | WAAB aims to reduce isolation encourage active citizenship and support greater interaction between four distinct communities in the area. Activities include art sessions, fish and chips socials and Somers Town Voice Meetings. | WAAB is led by a part-time Project Coordinator based at The St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre. They are supported by a steering group and 11 volunteers. | Holding activities across community venues, and moving activities between them is enabling participants to meet more new people. Participants are starting to take ownership of running activities and are welcoming newcomers, supported by an approachable Coordinator Where certain activities such as the trips have become oversubscribed, participants felt that a seat rotation system would be fairer than a "first-come-first-served" approach. |
| Regent's Park CAP, Third Age Project 367 registered participants 11 evaluation participants | The Third Age Project works in a diverse area and aims to target older people who experience cultural and language barriers when trying to access mainstream services. Activities include an English club, exercise clubs and a luncheon club. | The project is led by a manager and project support worker. As part of its work with ABC, the project has increased its volunteer base to 37 and it is supporting volunteers to lead activities, attend monthly forum meetings and operate as Trustees. | The use of mostly one venue has meant that activities are accessible and convenient and that residents, including those from different backgrounds, are becoming more connected. Participants are consistently positive about the quality of activities on offer and the impact of participating, which includes making new friends and connections and improved physical and mental well-being. Some participants are apprehensive about contributing to the delivery of the project. This highlights the importance of including light touch and one-off opportunities to contribute. |



| Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants | Activities | Structure and delivery | Key findings |
|--|--|---|--|
| Bangladeshi CAP, Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre (lead partner), the Bengali Workers Association and Kings Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association. 125 registered participants 16 evaluation participants | Whilst a key focus is on working with the Bangladeshi community, the project also aims to build and strengthen connections between residents from different ethnic backgrounds. Activities include chair based exercise classes, walking groups, massage classes, tea and coffee morning and community lunches. The project is also focused on working with strategic partners in the area to raise awareness and support recruitment. | The project has a core team of coordinators and managers, based across the three organisations who are involved in managing and overseeing the project as well as delivering activities, alongside volunteers and specialist practitioners to run sessions. | The regular activities hosted by the project are leading to many positive impacts, including improved physical and mental well-being and greater independence. There is evidence that the project is encouraging participants to take an active role, contributing to the delivery in a range of ways. A popular request is for more days out in the mix of activities, because in their day-to-day lives participants go to a limited number of places. |



| Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants | Activities | Structure and delivery | Key findings |
|---|--|--|--|
| Gospel Oak and Haverstock CAP (Our Three Points), Kentish Town City Farm (lead partner), Castlehaven Community Association and Queen's Crescent Community Association. 119 registered participants 9 evaluation participants | The project aims to build connections between local people, places and nature and between the three participating centres. Activities include Knit, Make & Sew sessions, coffee morning events, yoga and exercise classes, social lunches and one-off activities e.g. intergenerational pottery. | The project is led by a Partnerships Manager and Coordinator based at Kentish Town City Farm who works across all three centres. They are supported by a growing team of 10 volunteers, and a steering group that shapes project delivery and supports communications. | <p>In line with the project's aim, project participants are also moving between the three participating community centres to attend activities.</p> <p>Activities cater to differing levels of physical mobility. Being in a class suited to their ability appears to have sustained individual's involvement in the project, and also led to other benefits such as increased confidence.</p> <p>People called for further engagement activities to increase the numbers of participants, e.g. working alongside GP surgeries, placing adverts in local publications and introducing less formal activities such as walking groups.</p> |

Conclusions

Project impacts

Across the groups and interviews, participants tended to have high levels of satisfaction with the projects, and identified the following positive impacts which support ABC's aims:

- Reduced social isolation and increased wellbeing.
- Increased confidence and independence.
- Stronger relationships across communities and generations.

When it comes to achieving impacts, stakeholders and project leads cited the challenges of supporting people with complex needs who cannot easily be supported in community settings as well as a lack of appropriate services and support e.g. befriending services, and community transport.

Role played by staff

Frontline staff are playing a pivotal role in enabling participants to achieve positive impacts. The positive qualities and ways of working include:

- Being friendly, developing rapport and joining activities with participants.
- Enabling participants to feel that they're part of how the project is run and able to make suggestions about changes
- Going 'above and beyond' to facilitate participation, e.g. collecting a wheelchair user from home, but also regular communication/reminders to service users about events and activities – making people feel 'looked after'.

Where projects have built on pre-existing groups and activities, they have tended to take longstanding participants with them. There is some evidence that these participants are well placed to welcome and support new joiners.

The relationship between long standing participants and new joiners is a theme that can be further explored in the next phase of the evaluation.

Pathways into the programme

Projects are using a wide variety of engagement approaches to recruit participants. However, across the board there is evidence that projects are struggling to engage the most socially isolated older people.

It was suggested that there needed to be more recruitment at the contact points where people could be identified as being on the cusp of social isolation, before they become isolated and harder to reach e.g. through GPs/other service partners.

The programme has acknowledged the need for more contact with those who are socially isolated and not known to services and has therefore developed the Outreach Project.

How participants are experiencing the project

New joiners tend to identify with a single activity. However, as time progresses, they may build more of an attachment to the lead organisation or to the community centre where it takes place.

There is evidence of increased social resilience as participants go to more than one activity and build networks. Furthermore, across most projects 'super participants' have emerged, who attend multiple sessions per week and/ or are support others to be involved.

Participants tend not to be aware that they are part of a larger programme called Ageing Better in Camden.

If the programme has ambitions to be 'greater than the sum of its parts', there could be value in exploring how to raise levels of awareness.

Project structure and delivery models

ABC funded projects have various models and structures:

- Most projects have one lead organisation which works to different degrees with community centres and other local assets to deliver a rolling schedule of activities and events.
- Other projects are made up of organisations working in partnerships – they tend to have a central management group, but each partner will host and deliver activities.
- One project organises time limited courses working with a range of settings/organisations to recruit participants. It works across the borough with a range of groups and settings, 'threading' through the other ABC projects.

When it comes to delivering activities, successful ways of working have included:

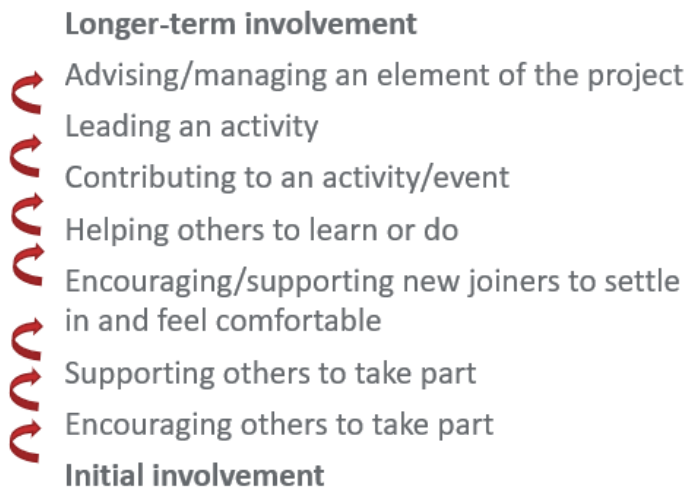
- Hosting activities across multiple venues in communities, which encourages people to explore new areas and meet new people.
- At the same time, holding most events within a single centre can build familiarity and encourage those with less confidence to stay engaged, and may also reduce accessibility issues for those with more limited mobility.
- Providing different tiers/ intensities of activities that are appropriate to older people with different levels of health and mobility.
- Offering a range of activities/ sessions that meet older people's varying preferences and interests.

In the next phase of the evaluation, there would be value in exploring the pros and cons associated with the different staffing models and structures used across the programme, as well as the development of partnerships and different types of asset-based working.

Co-production with participants

Many examples have emerged of how participants are informing and developing what is offered (co-design) as well as contributing to the delivery of the projects (co-production).

When it comes to co-production the evaluation has found that key enablers include a diverse range of options for people's involvement and an approach that supports participants to move up or down a ladder of participation. The various co-production actions or steps that emerged across the projects are set out below.



There would be value in looking further at how projects that fall into these categories are successfully shifting participants away from being more passive 'consumers' of services/activities to being active contributors.

The evaluation found that all projects are attempting to build co-production into their practice. However, across the programme, there are different starting points. The evaluation found that there were:

- 1) Newly formed projects who have attempted to build in co-production approaches from the outset.
- 2) Well-established projects with a track record/ commitment to co-production.
- 3) Established organisations which are now seeking to develop their practice around co-production.

Systems working

Systems working will help ABC to achieve its aim of creating more relevant and better co-ordinated services in the borough. To date there has been limited evidence collected about the extent to which ABC has been achieving or working towards systems level impacts. To date the evaluation team has identified the following examples:

- Bangladeshi CAP has a strand of work to develop partnerships with local mosques and to help them raise awareness of and drive recruitment to the project. There are few similar examples across other projects.
- The Third Age Project has developed some referral pathways with various local services e.g. a falls clinic, a mental health service to gain new participants.

The Community Connectors project has the potential to make a significant contribution at the systems level by helping to develop new referral pathways, identifying gaps between provision and needs, connecting more vulnerable older people to relevant projects and helping older people to join a variety of Ageing Better in Camden Projects.

The role played by Community Connectors will be explored in the next phase of qualitative research.

We will also explore the extent to which projects have set strategic goals around creating systems change and are working towards them. It will also look at the role of the Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG) and the Strategic board in informing service commissioning and planning in the borough.

1. Introduction

The Ageing Better in Camden (ABC) programme is a six-year programme that aims to address social isolation and loneliness in older people living in Camden. The programme is investing £4.5m of Big Lottery funding, intended to produce the following outcomes:

- Older citizens at risk from or experiencing social isolation will be more involved in their communities, and provide stronger support to each other.
- Older people will experience less social isolation as a result of participation in programme activities.
- Services which address the social isolation of older people (SIOP) in Camden are more relevant and better co-ordinated, with increased numbers of older people engaged in their design and delivery.

ABC is funding and supporting a range of projects for older people in Camden in order to form a body of evidence for increased awareness and knowledge in relation to SIOP, both locally and more widely. The following projects supported by ABC have had various start dates from July 2015 and are developing at unique rates:

Table 1 Projects highlighted within this report

| Project | Delivery agency | Date started |
|---|---|---------------|
| Digital Inclusion | Mary Ward Centre | July 2015 |
| Men's Action | North London Cares (NLC) | July 2015 |
| Intergenerational activities | North London Cares (NLC) | July 2015 |
| Kilburn Community Action | Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (KOVE) | July 2015 |
| LGBT+ Connect | Opening Doors London/Age UK Camden | December 2015 |
| St. Pancras and Somers Town Community Action Project (We are Ageing Better St Pancras and Somers Town) | Origin Housing | October 2016 |
| Regent's Park Community Action Project | Third Age Project | October 2017 |
| Bangladeshi Community Action Project | Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre led partnership with Bengali Works Association and Kings Cross Brunswick Community Association | October 2017 |

| | | |
|--|---|--------------|
| Gospel Oak and Haverstock Community action project (Our Three Points) | Kentish Town City Farm led partnership with Queens Crescent Community Association and Castlehaven Community Association | October 2017 |
|--|---|--------------|

Since then, additional projects have received support from ABC, including: Abbey Community Centre, Community Connectors, Akash Resident Association, Dragon Hall Community Centre, Highgate Newton Community Centre and Community Outreach.

1.1 Aims and objectives

This will be the first of two interim reports that aim to explore and analyse the outcomes that ABC funded projects are having and whether these are in line with ABC's aims. This report will focus on the more established projects (those found in figure 1), and will draw on rich qualitative data from conversations with project participants and project leads, as well as quantitative data from demographic surveys, to understand participant experiences and to extract examples of how projects are contributing to positive changes.

Findings will be presented by project, with one chapter for each project to allow for a deeper analysis.



At the end of each chapter a list of ticks will represent the positive impacts of the project,



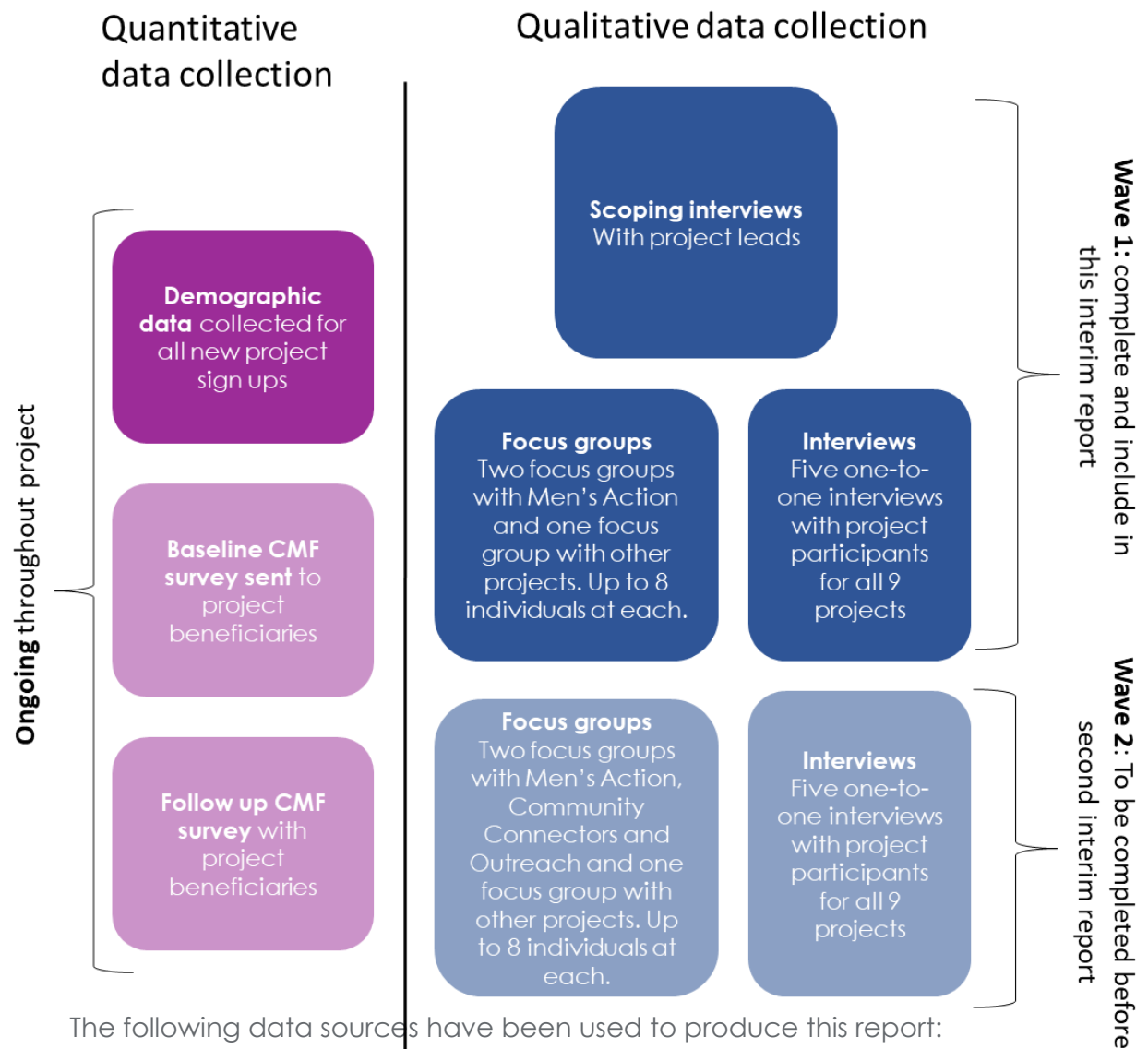
and lightbulbs will indicate suggestions for improvement made by participants.¹

1.2 Methodology

This report summarises the findings from the **first wave** of qualitative and quantitative research undertaken by Traverse. (The second interim report will take into account data from the second wave of research.) The data collected and

Figure 1 Qualitative and quantitative data collection

included within this report is highlighted in figure 1, below:



The following data sources have been used to produce this report:

- Depth interviews with ABC project leads
- One focus groups with project participants at all projects and two with Men's Action
- Up to 5 depth interviews with participants at each project
- Demographic information from when participants register with projects

The demographic data was collected upon registration through a form, and it is

important to note that in some cases participants did not provide all information. This means that there is some missing data, so figures reported in the chapters should be treated with caution.

Alongside the tools listed above, project participants were asked to complete a national evaluation survey called the Common Measurement Framework (CMF). The CMF data is not analysed within this report, but will be contained within a separate report due out in Autumn 2018.

Scoping interviews

Traverse conducted face-to-face scoping interviews with all project leads and members of the ABC strategic board to provide an overview of perspectives of the programme as a whole and to understand the contexts in which projects are working in.

Focus groups

Focus group participants were purposively selected. This was based on demographic data from each project to ensure that the focus group participants were representative of overall project participants (considering gender, age, ethnicity and sexual identity). We also asked that focus group participants were selected to have a mix of those who were newer to the project, as well as some who had been attending for a long time. In order to help recruitment, Traverse provided a recruitment flyer for each project.

Focus groups were facilitated by a researcher at Traverse, and were arranged to be most convenient for participants, in terms of venue and timings. For example, in some cases, such as with 'Our Three Points' and 'Men's Action', it was most convenience for the focus group to take place directly after, or during the usual time of a project activity. In other cases where this would not work, as it would interfere too much with activities or would be too much of a strain for participants, focus groups were organised as stand-alone events, often at a venue familiar to them.

One-to-one interviews

Interview participants were also purposively selected by project leads with input from Traverse. Recruitment was guided to include some participants who project leads felt were more socially isolated or lonely, as well as one to two participants where CMF data indicated that they may be socially isolated or lonely.

Interviews were arranged at the times and locations that were most convenient for participants; either at project venues, public spaces, in their homes or, where a face-to-face interview was not possible, conducted over the phone.

Summary of wave 1 research

Below is a summary of the interviews and focus groups completed for each project. Information about research participants for each project can be found in the sections that follow.

| | Digital Inclusion | Men's Action | Intergenerational | KOVE | LGBT+ Connect | Origin | Third Age Project | Bangladeshi CAP | Our Three Points |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|------|---------------|--------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Focus Group no. of participants | 10 | 13 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 11 | 4 |
| No. of interviews completed | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |

1.3 How to read this report

This report can be used to provide emerging indications and individual participant stories about how projects are achieving progress, the impacts they are having on some participants, and whether these fall in line with ABC's aims. In the drafting process, each project focused chapter was shared with project leads to check for accuracy.

It should not however be read as a comprehensive description and progress check of each of the projects, as it relies on data from a small selection of individuals from each project and therefore cannot be fully representative of all project participants' views and experiences.

This report does not include an analysis of newer projects such as Abbey community centre, Community Connectors, Akash Outlook, Dragon hall, Highgate Newton and Community Outreach.

2. Digital Inclusion Project

2.1 Introduction

The Digital Inclusion project (launched in July 2015) is run by the Mary Ward Centre (MWC), an adult education centre and community space that runs activities and offers learning opportunities aimed at all ages. This project aims to reduce isolation, facilitate friendships, build confidence and help older people become more involved in their local community.

Initially the project aimed to promote digital inclusion by integrating digital learning into existing activities. However, the project found that older people preferred to take part in dedicated classes in which project staff provided training and support to use technology they own (such as tablets, mobile phones and laptops), but lack the skills and confidence to use. The project leads are trying to appeal to a range of interest groups, including the possibility of integrating digital learning in mainstream activities.

The teaching team vary in their expertise, not all being IT teachers, some being art teachers for example. The project leads also try to match teachers to group needs.

Looking to the future, the project is focusing on reaching out to new people in an aim to break the pattern of 'repeat attenders'. To do this, they are trying to be more open-minded and creative about using technology.

Digital Inclusion's activities include:

- **iPad photography classes:** A class for those interested in both the artistic and technical sides of photography
- **Singing classes with iPads:** Choir singing with a singing tutor at a care home on Wellesey Road which integrates iPads into the sessions
- **Local history project with iPads:** Run at Thanet Youth Community Centre

2.2

About the participants

Digital Inclusion has registered 417 participants since it commenced its Ageing Better Camden contract in July 2015. As shown below (Figure 1), of these participants:

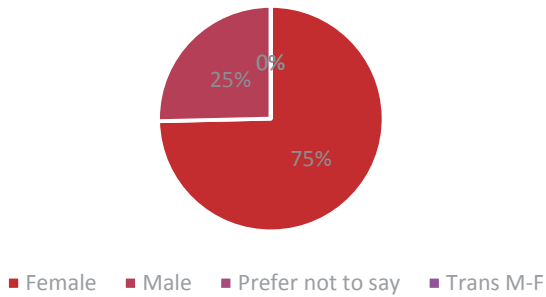
- 414 participants (99%) reported their gender. In total, 75% of these were female and 25% were male;
- 404 participants (97%) reported their age. In total, 54% of these participants were aged 75 or above. 11% of these participants were aged under 65.
- 403 participants (97%) reported their ethnicity. 60% were from a White English,

Scottish, Welsh, N.Irish, British or White Other background.

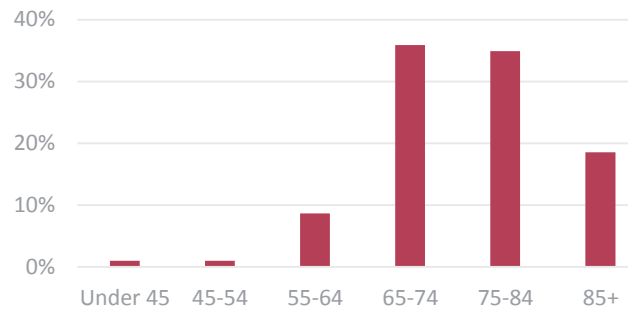
- 391 (94%) participants reported their religion. 29% were Christian and 29% reported as having no religion.
- 396 participants reported their Sexual identity. 45% of these were heterosexual and 52% preferred not to say.

Figure 1: Summary of Digital Inclusion participant demographics

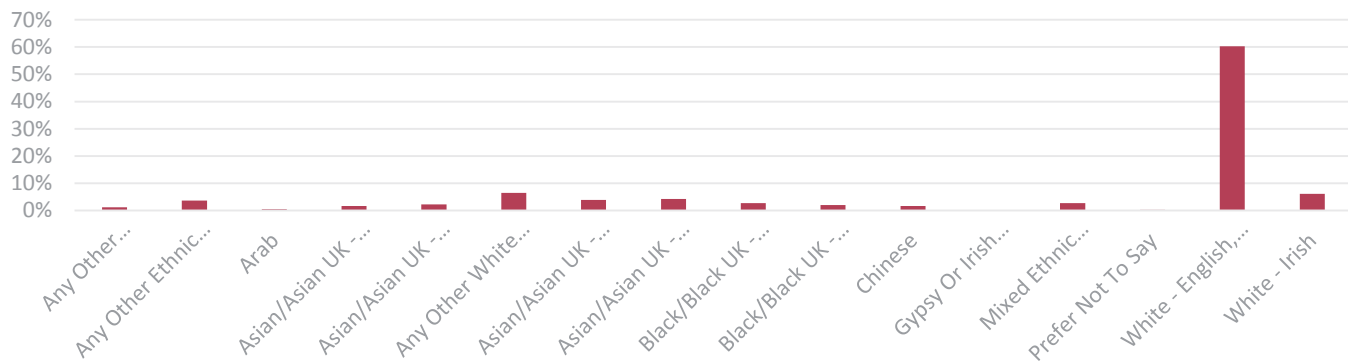
Gender (n=414)



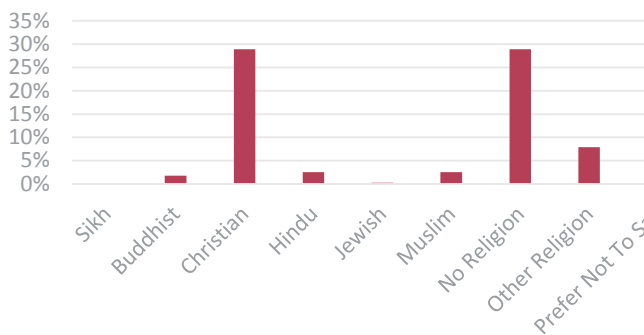
Age (n=404)



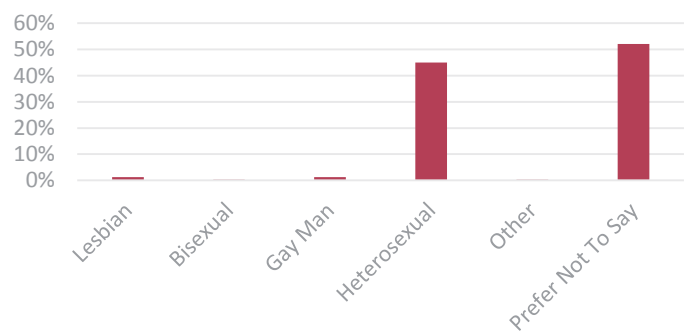
Ethnic group (n=403)



Religious group (n=391)



Sexual identity (n=396)



2.3 Findings

Primary qualitative research was undertaken with 15 members of the Digital Inclusion project.

Where stated, the demographics of the 15 individuals that we spoke to from the digital inclusion project is as follows:

- Gender: 8 females; 4 male; 3 unknown gender
- Age: 67-81
- Ethnicity: 7 White British; 2 Black/Black UK – Caribbean; 1 Chinese;

Motivations and pathways into the project

Many of those involved found out about the project through North London Cares (where one group was organised in partnership with NLC). Participants felt that information is passed between NLC members very easily, and there is much cross-promotion. Indeed during the focus group itself, NLC members were promoting activities to Digital Inclusion participants. Other participants read about the Digital Inclusion project in a local paper, saw a leaflet in a library, or heard about it at other activities and groups they were attending, such as walking with Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (another ABC project) or taking part in yoga at the Mary Ward Centre.

For most participants, the main motivation for taking part in the project was to learn more about using technology in general (rather than just iPads). There was a general view amongst the group that they all own technology that they are not confident in using, or underused. The six-week nature of the course was also attractive in being so comprehensive.

“The iPad is so intricate and so much in it which no-one knows about. People my age don't take to it very well. My granddaughter who is 4 knows it so well and I didn't have a clue – I used it like a phone. I wanted to do it because I wanted to learn what to do.” (Female, 81)

“I thought the six-week course would be comprehensive and better than ad hoc drop-in sessions.” (Female, 67)

Getting out of the house and meeting people was another overriding motivation. Several talked about a fear of not doing anything in the day and just staying at home. Some people who came to the sessions were more withdrawn and reserved, but nevertheless desired variety in their lives.

Other motivations for taking part included:

- A desire to learn new skills. One participant wanted to learn some new skills, with the aim of potentially getting some part time work.
- An interest in photography. A couple of participants did not have iPads, but had digital cameras and thought they could still benefit from coming to the iPad photography sessions.
- To see what's around you differently and to become more inquisitive
- One participant took part in many other activities with the Mary Ward Centre, and enjoyed being busy and joining in with everything.

“It’s always been at the back of my mind that I’d like to go back and do some part time work if I get better, so anything I can learn about this sort of thing is helpful.” (Female, 78)

Experiences and impacts

Most participants we spoke to mentioned iPad photography as being the activity which they had participated in the most. Therefore, most of the feedback was regarding these classes.

Learning new things

All participants really enjoyed learning new things based around photography they can do with their iPads, such as taking photos, printing photos and sending photos to people. Participants also appreciated learning about how to take a good photo artistically, and thinking about how much a photo can convey. Some also mentioned wider, unintended benefits from the sessions, such as learning how to shop online.

“I’ve learnt about one or two things I would never had known about if I hadn’t been. Although I don’t personally want to blog, I was very pleased to learn about blogging and how it can be and is done. And I was surprised how simple it was.” (Female, 78)

Improved mental wellbeing

Many participants referred to how the sessions make them feel happier. This was particularly linked to social aspects, but also to the way they experienced the world, being more informed, and how they felt more observant and engaged as they took part in the photography based activities.

“It makes you really open your eyes, you become more vigilant and observant” (Female, 81)

Meeting new people

Most of those interviewed mentioned how they had enjoyed connecting with other older people and had even made new friends.

“When the lesson is over we sit and chat amongst ourselves about what we’ve learnt and have a laugh. It makes you feel comfortable with each other and because we’ve got on so well it is good to find friends that way.” (Female, 67)

“It’s quite social. It’s very nice to meet up with people on this occasion. I’ve met people at these events that I didn’t know lived in the next street to me or something like that. It gives a nice feeling. I think it de-isolates us in a way. Because we all live in these big anonymous places now.” (Female, 81)

Other people were more focused on learning than making new friends.

“It was very much that I wanted to go for information. I chatted to other people but that’s not what I went for” (Female, 67)

Increased confidence

Several participants mentioned how they felt nervous and apprehensive at the beginning when they started attending the iPad sessions, as they were worried that they would not know anyone else. However, they also described how this soon changed and they became more confident, partly because they realised

that everyone else was as bad at using technology as they were. One participant commented on how learning new things increased her confidence.

“It makes me more cheerful when I learn something new and it helps with confidence” (Female, 78)

Reflections on the project

Reflections about staff

The skills and quality of staff were important to project success. Participants praised the staff who ran the sessions, describing them as friendly, welcoming and experienced. They appreciated the way staff were aware of different individuals' paces and did not make them feel rushed. Some commented that they liked the scenario based learning when looking at how to manage different situations as a photographer.

“They said ‘we understand you won’t know a lot, but we’ll go through it and if you don’t understand please ask and we’ll go through it slowly until you pick it up’ which is so good. They make you feel they aren’t stupid by asking – they were helpful. If you didn’t know anything and asked they would sit with you and go through it until you picked it up.” (Female, 81)

“You didn’t feel embarrassed if you needed help with something. They were very easy going and helpful. I can’t praise them more really.” (Female, 78)

Participants felt that staff communicated information to them well in advance. They were happy with how much they could direct the sessions, but overall liked the staff leading. A few mentioned how they learn from each other in the sessions, and so were not totally reliant on the leads.

Reflections on the activities

Participants felt that the sessions were easy and accessible to get to, and valued the lift in particular, which enabled those less mobile to access the sessions. They reported that the sessions were laid back and geared around the participants' individual needs. They also valued the night timing of the session, describing how they do not usually go out at night so it was a welcome opportunity to explore the city at night.

Participants appreciated that sessions were free and that refreshments were offered. They felt that the group sizes (of 10-12) were good, and also that those who did not have iPads were able to bring their digital cameras instead.

“I thought it was very well done. It was a small group and one of the nice things about it was that instead of sitting in a class or round a screen we sat round a table and it struck me that sitting around this large table was a very nice way to do things. And of course, you can do that with a tablet. It was so nice.” (Female, 78)

“There was a good introduction. You could leave the room if you wanted, there was no compulsion to do anything.” (Female, 67)

Suggested improvements

Some felt that the project could advertise more, particularly when trying to reach

more isolated people. Several were aware that they were moving across different Camden groups, but nevertheless felt that somehow cross referrals between projects could be happening more often, or more systematically. Suggested locations for advertising included GP surgeries and local noticeboards.

“Any activity like the iPad session needs to have in bold letters BEGINNERS WELCOME so it’s not intimidating. If you can get people in the door there is a high chance that they will return. You need to be tactful and encouraging to isolated older people.” (Male, 74)

There was also a suggestion that the sessions be more inclusive to those without Apple devices, and also to those wanting to use their mobile phones more.

“We were given Apple ipads to use. If I had an Apple at home, perhaps I would have learnt and retained more. Apple are perhaps at the higher end, if you were to use Android or a less expensive version, perhaps you would have been able to practice a bit more. It might be worth giving some attention to this.” (Female, 78)

“And also people are using mobiles for more. I’d like to know more about using my mobile, perhaps rather than using ipads.” (Female, 78)

Another suggestion was that there be a follow-up session about a month after the course, to test what participants had learnt.

Test and Learn: MWC returned to a care home on Wellsley Road (where they had previously run a digital inclusion programme) to run an arts-based history project. The aim was that there would be a tangible product of a place mat of photos for each person based on the year they were born, which would facilitate social bonding.

People were excited to find shared birthdays and the project stimulated much discussion. However, it also took more resources than expected. For example, several people joined later, and so the co-ordinator had to ‘finish off’ a lot of place mats.

MWC is considering, if the project was to be done again, doing shared placemats between 2-3 people, to ease resources. They are also trying to recruit more volunteers for the project.



The evidence suggests that the project has enabled people to feel more connected to their local area through photography. The fact that the project is geographically flexible, and not rooted to a specific place has helped with widening its reach.



Participants reported that being able to use technology better makes them feel happier and more confident, and therefore less socially isolated.



It was felt that those without Apple devices could have been accommodated better, and that using mobile phones could be integrated into the sessions.

2.4 Case studies

Case Study 1: Brian, Digital Inclusion Participant

Brian is in his mid 80s and has taken part in three Digital Inclusion sessions. He first became aware of DI through his participation in another local group, KOVE.

He wanted to learn more about computers and how to use them, for his own general use. Brian immediately felt at ease in the group and learning new skills provided him with enjoyment and a sense of achievement.

"I've learnt about one or two things I would never had known about if I hadn't been. Although I don't personally want to blog, I was very pleased to learn about blogging and how it can be and is done. And I was surprised how simple it was...It's always been at the back of my mind that I'd like to go back and do some part time work if I get better, so anything I can learn about this sort of thing is helpful."

Brian enjoys sitting around a table as it is a nicer than sitting in front of a screen, and the use of tablets allowed this. He finds the afternoon timings of the sessions convenient, as he often feels unwell in the mornings. Staff were helpful and responsive to input and suggestions from participants.

"The young man who explained everything was very clear and very patient because we don't always get the hang of things. It was very easy to ask. And also, the helper was good. And all of that created a very pleasant atmosphere...You didn't feel embarrassed if you needed help with something. They were very easy going and helpful. I can't praise them more really."

Attending the project has benefitted Brian's mental wellbeing, as learning a new skill had made him more cheerful and more confident. Brian also praised the social aspect of the activity, despite 3 visits being too short a time to build lasting friendships. However, he felt that DI could better meet the needs of their users by tailoring the sessions to match the technology they use at home.

"We were given Apple iPads to use. If I had an Apple at home, perhaps I would have learnt and retained more. Apple are perhaps at the higher end, if you were to use Android or a less expensive version, perhaps you would have been able to practise a bit more... People are using mobiles for more. I'd like to know more about using my mobile, perhaps rather than using iPads."

Brian's experience with Digital Inclusion had made him more likely to participate in similar projects in future, and it had increased his curiosity about other things. Brian is now looking to find out how to use a mobile phone. He would recommend the project to others.

3. North London Cares (Intergenerational and Men's Action projects)

3.1 Introduction

The Ageing Better in Camden funding is being used to support two projects that North London Cares runs. These include: an **Intergenerational project**, which focuses on activities that bring older and younger people together within Camden and Islington, fostering an intergenerational sense of community; and a **Men's Action project**, which aims to create activities which appeal to men who are generally less engaged in social activities than women.

North London Cares was founded in 2011 to create a network of young professionals and older people in Camden and Islington, bridging gaps across social, generational and cultural divides. It aims to improve loneliness and isolation among older (and younger) people and improve the wellbeing, skills and confidence of all participants.

North London Cares runs a large programme of activities through both projects. From the perspective of older neighbours, there is no distinction between the two projects and many participants attend activities from both. What they experience is a monthly calendar of events and activities from which they can select which they wish to attend to. The only activities which is for men only is the men's cookery group.

North London Cares work hard to recruit new participants through community and door-to-door outreach programmes. Additionally, they post 700 programme leaflets listing their activities every month to their network. Activities are run by a member of staff, along with a small number of volunteers. Each activity is run differently, where some operate on a weekly or monthly basis and others are stand-alone events.

Their future focus will be to support older people to engage more with technology. After testing various approaches, they have concluded that the best way to achieve this is to encourage older participants to ask any technology-related questions at all events (not just technology specific ones), by working to incorporate more of a tech-focus at all activities.

North London Cares' main activities

Men's action activities include:

- **Men's cookery:** This is a weekly cooking class led by one member of NLC staff at the Abbey Road community centre.
- **Podcast recording:** Podcast recording sessions where older people share their life stories with younger volunteers in a recording studio. These are then shared online.
- **Gig and quiz nights:** Monthly clubs in a sheltered housing block, where older neighbours and volunteers either watch a live performance or compete in a music themed quiz.
- **Photography:** Older neighbours and volunteers learn photography tips before putting them to use using digital devices.

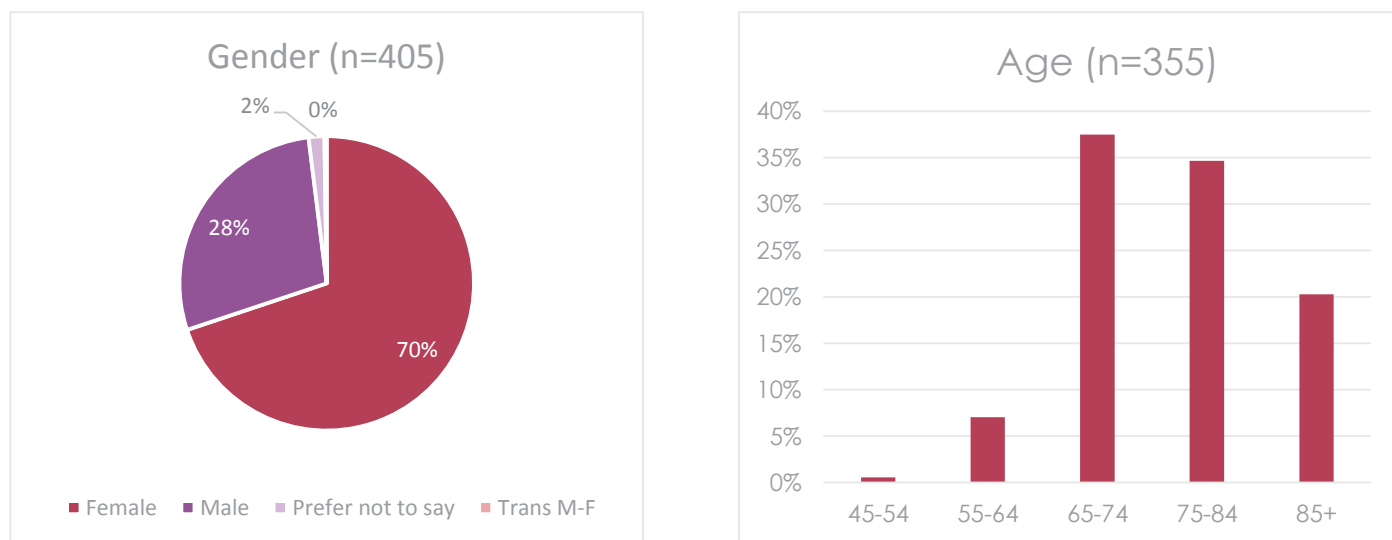
The intergenerational project activities include:

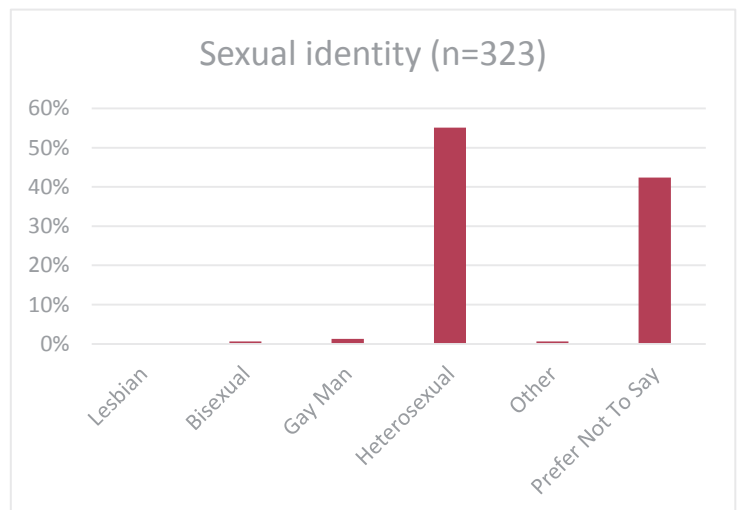
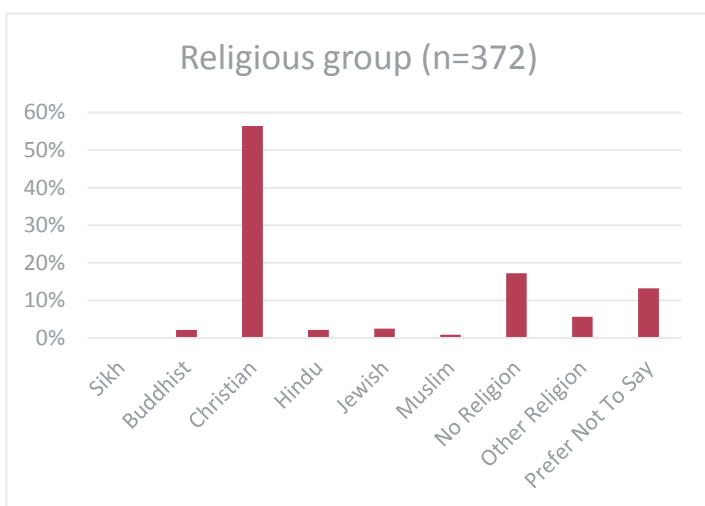
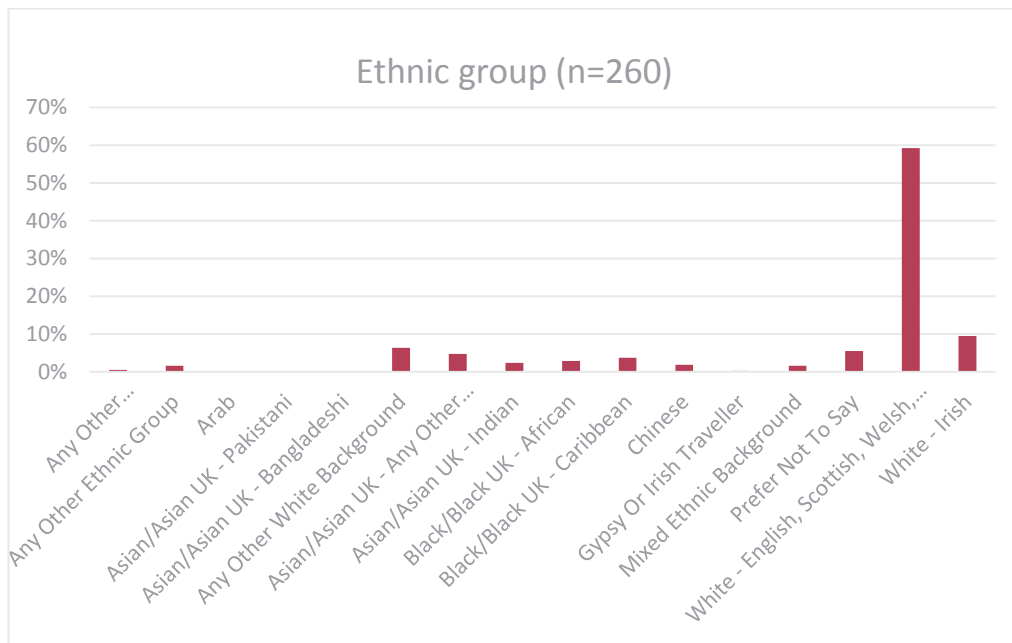
- **Work place visits:** Organised visits to partner organisations and volunteer places of work. These have included Google, RIBA, the Foreign Office and the British Library
- **A weekly social club:** Each week with a different theme, activities are very varied and have included a technology clinic, a flamenco afternoon, storytelling session and puppet making.
- **Movie night:** An evening club where neighbours socialise over tea and snacks before the group settle for a film.

About the participants

Since the Ageing Better Camden contract commenced in July 2015, North London Cares has registered a total of **640** participants to the **Intergenerational project** and **268** to the **Men's Action project**. Out of these, **168 have been registered on both projects** and attend activities from both.

Figure 1: Summary of NLC Intergenerational participant demographics



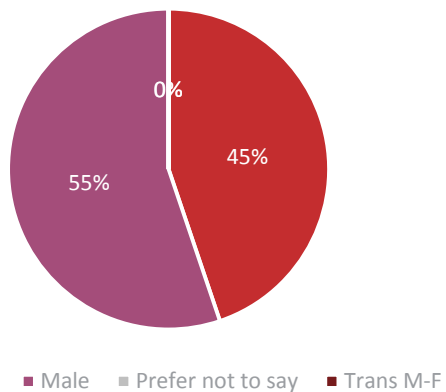


As shown in (Figure 1), and using demographic information from their sign-up questionnaire, of the participants who attend **Intergenerational Project** activities:

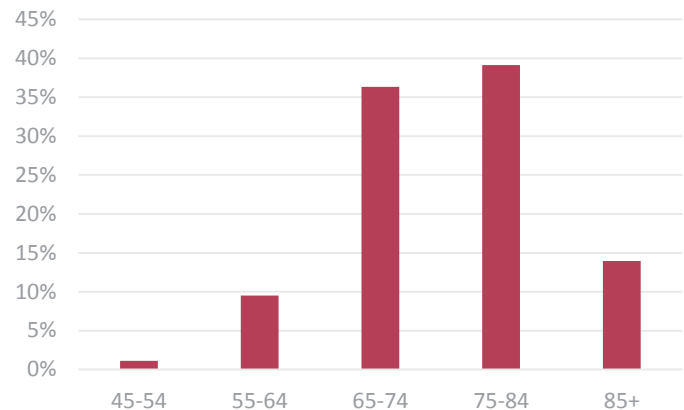
- 405 respondents (63%) answered the question about gender. Of these, 283 (70%) participants reported they were female and 114 (28%) reported they were male. One reported that they were transsexual and 7 said that they preferred not to disclose their gender.
- 355 respondents (55%) answered the question about age. In total, over half of respondents were aged 75 or above.
- 380 respondents (59%) answered the question about ethnicity. In total, 69% of these respondents were from a White British background.
- 372 respondents (58%) disclosed their religion. Over half were Christian, although 17% were not religion and 13% preferred not to say.
- 323 respondents (50%) answered the question about Sexual identity. Of these, 55% were heterosexual and 42% preferred not to say.

Figure 2: Summary of NLC Men's Action participant demographics

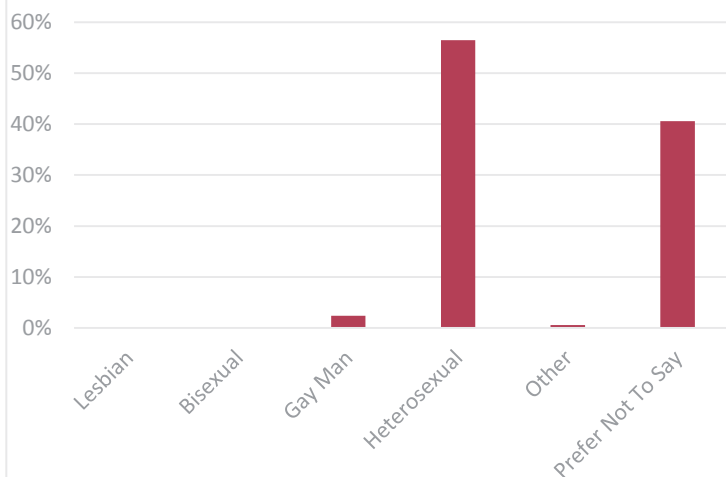
Gender (n=212)



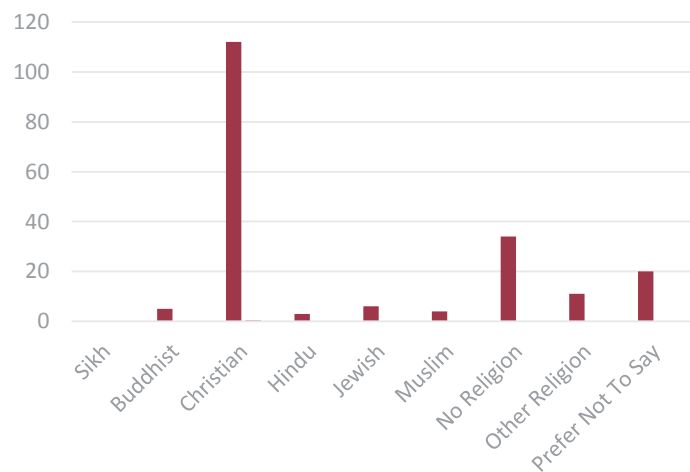
Age (n=179)



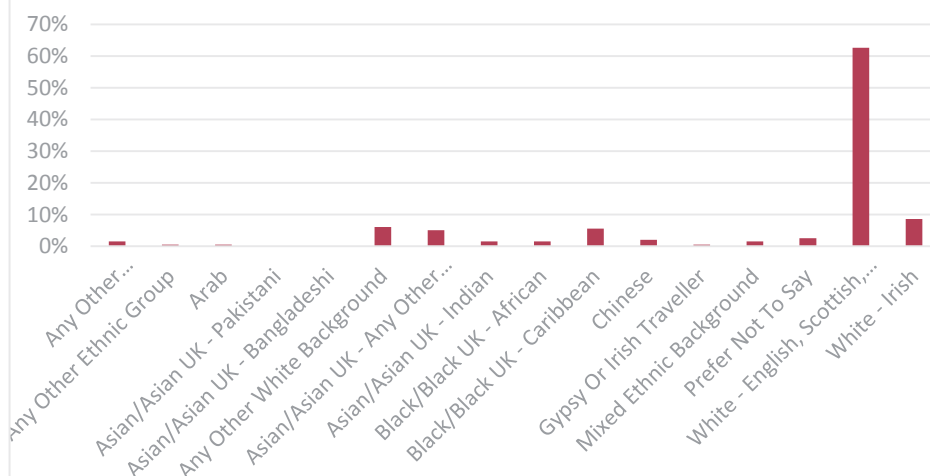
Sexual identity (n=170)



Religious group (n=195)



Ethnic group (n=198)



As shown in (Figure 2), and using demographic information from their sign-up questionnaire, of the participants who attend **Men's Action Project** activities:

- 212 respondents (79%) answered the question about gender. Of these, 95 participants (45%) reported they were female and 117 (55%) reported they were male.
- 179 respondents (67%) answered the question about age. In total, over half of respondents were aged 75 or above.
- 198 respondents (74%) answered the question about ethnicity. In total, 71% of these respondents were from a White British background.
- 195 respondents (73%) disclosed their religion. Over half were Christian, although 17% were not religion and 10% preferred not to say.
- 170 respondents (63%) answered the question about Sexual identity. Of these, 56% were heterosexual and 41% preferred not to say.

3.2 Findings

Primary qualitative research was undertaken with 10 members of the Intergenerational project and 18 members of the Men's Action project in May 2018.

Where stated, the demographics of the 10 individuals that we spoke to from the Intergenerational project is as follows:

- Gender: 8 females, 2 males;
- Age: 67-97 years old;
- Ethnicity: 6 White British, 1 Asian UK – Indian, 1 Black UK – African, 1 Mixed Ethnic background;
- Religion: 5 Christian, 1 Muslim, 3 no religion;
- Sexual identity: 4 heterosexuals.

Where stated, the demographics of the 18 individuals that we spoke to from the Men's Action project is as follows:

- Gender: 18 males;
- Age: 62-90 years old;
- Ethnicity: 13 White British, 1 Asian background, 1 Black/Black UK Caribbean;
- Religion: 7 Christian, 1 Buddhist,
- Sexual identity: 9 heterosexuals, 1 gay man.

Motivations and pathways into the project

North London Cares recruit participants through door-knocking and community outreach programmes, such as their 'winter wellbeing project'. This is run in places such as community centres, GP surgeries, chemists, supermarkets and libraries and works in partnership with Camden and Islington public health who give them a list of people in the area over 65 that access adult social care. They are planning an outreach programme to reengage those that they have lost to the programme, possibly due to a life transition or change of circumstances, such as a change in

health or mobility issues. Additionally, NLC distribute flyers and programme leaflets to a wide network of individuals, including their existing network,

Out of the participants that we spoke to, most heard about North London cares through word of mouth, although a few came across flyers in community centres and GPs and a couple were recruited through their outreach programme, for example one respondent said that she received a flyer through her door, although she only attended an event once she had received a recommendation from a friend.

The motivations for participating varied from person to person, many were either attracted by the extensive list of activities and opportunities to learn and so found something that appealed to them directly, for example one participant specifically attended the Men's cooking class as he wanted to develop cooking skills, as his wife had developed a long-term illness and he wanted to prepare for a time when she could no longer cook.

"I thought: you've got to start somewhere, I might be on my own one day, you never know. I've got to know how to do things. I'm quite handy at preparing vegetables and stuff, and baking, I can do a crumble and stuff like that." - Men's action participant, Male, 71

Others across both groups were motivated to join in activities by a wish to get out of the house and to mix with others. For a few, activities provided by NLC were their only regular activities, and without them they would leave the house significantly less.

"It's somewhere to go, that's the main thing. I'm not one for being indoors all the time, that would drive me mad. I like to get up." - Men's action participant, male, 74

A few participants were motivated to join NLC by the unique possibility to mix with professionals of all ages and sought this out, having missed the intergenerational interactions that came with working life.

Some participants have joined NLC activities that take place at their local community centres such as Castlehaven, Busby place and Abbey Community Centre and they seem more motivated to do so through their affiliation to the community centre, than the pull of the NLC activities. In most cases where this occurs, these are the only NLC activities that they attend, and some also attend activities in their local centre hosted by other organisations. This can be compared with other NLC participants who are attracted to specific activities and where the venue is a secondary consideration. These participants tend to be more mobile and more interested in trying new activities.

Experiences and impacts

Alleviation of loneliness and distraction from life's woes

Participants commented that NLC activities helped to alleviate their feelings of loneliness and provide a welcome distraction from life's problems, for example ill-health or caring responsibilities. This was mostly achieved through their diverse range of regular activities which provide opportunities to socialise with likeminded people on a weekly basis, facilitated by friendly and welcoming staff and

volunteers and providing activities that foster collaboration and learning (such as with the men's cooking group). As such, participants felt that NLC activities benefited their wellbeing, by providing an uplifting, fun and social experience and many felt that without it, their wellbeing would decline.

"It takes me out of myself, out of where I am, which I think is really important in maintaining my own mental health." - Men's action participant, male, 75

"It brings life into my body. I don't think of all my pains and problems and have a nice time. It is somewhere to meet people and make friends. You learn something every time you go there."- Intergenerational project participant, female, 70

"Not being lonely. If I never found someone like NLC I don't know what I'd do. Without them, what would I have?" Men's action participant, male, 74

Socialising with younger age groups

Participants especially liked that NLC offered opportunities to socialise not only with peers, but also professionals from younger age groups. Participants were excited by the workplace visits, where they enjoyed socialising with young professionals and exploring professional environments. Although these activities were less frequent, had different attendees each time and were therefore less focussed on making lasting connections, participants found the activities themselves inspiring, and liked this meaningful, cross-age interaction. Several suggested that meaningful interactions with young people is rare and that the opportunity for this forms a real point of difference for participants, when they compare NLC with other activities for older people in Camden.

"I thought it was interesting that you can meet other people who are younger than yourself – the volunteers, it's great, that interaction between senior people and younger people, professionals. An interesting combination." Intergenerational project participant, male, age unknown

"What I really like about some of the interactions and NLCs is that they are young professional people...and we are not treated like old fogeys." Intergenerational project participant, female, age unknown

"I'm a member of [a nearby community centre] which is just down the road, they've been there for a long time but there's not the buzz I get when I'm with NLC. It's the young people coming in, it makes a big difference. It's electric." Men's action participant, male, 72

Keeping active

Participants felt that a major benefit of NLC projects was that it kept them active. As mentioned, for a few, their one weekly NLC activity was their only social activity in their week, and without it, they felt that they would not leave the house. For example, one participant with mobility issues relies on a volunteer to take her to her local NLC activity weekly, and without this support would not attend any activities.

"One of the young volunteers calls for me and walks with me each week. Otherwise I wouldn't get out very much because I've lost my confidence. I'm afraid of falling." Intergenerational project participant, female, 97

More physically-able and energetic participants liked that activities took place in various venues across north London and felt that this kept them active.

“The venues are so varied, and it makes everybody use transport more, so all the things that get diminished as you get lonelier and more isolated; we’re not, we’re able to climb on a bus. It encourages us to keep our bodies like that, so that is, that’s really good.” Intergenerational project participant, male, age unknown

Reciprocity

Participants liked that some activities relied on their contributions, and was therefore creative and fostered collaboration with others. This can be seen in the podcasting sessions, where participants share their stories and work together to produce a podcast that is shared online, as well as the men’s cooking group, where participants all collaborate to produce a meal, which they then eat together.

“We’re are all links in the chain. Everyone has their job to do but it all comes together.” Men’s action participant, Male, 85

Reflections on the project

Reflections about staff

People spoke very warmly about the NLC staff and volunteers who they said made the experience of starting a new activity welcoming and unthreatening. They make a concerted effort to ensure that new group members are integrated into the group and facilitate initial conversations. A few participants commented that NLC staff make a special effort to learn and remember participants names, which makes them feel particularly welcome. These strong relationships with the staff and volunteers are a key component for what makes activities successful.

“They’re just absolutely brilliant. To do that you’ve got to be dedicated, you’ve got to actually do it. And they do it for us. Without them I wouldn’t go there.” Men’s action participant, male, age unknown

On the other hand, this bond with staff and volunteers also meant that when there has been staff turn around, or a change of volunteers, this has had a large impact on participants. This occurs regularly at some NLC activities, where some volunteers are full-time professionals and therefore can only attend sessions infrequently.

“I hate to say this, but when Mike was off ... the person who came along was not the same. He just didn’t know us. He was friendly and he did what Mike had told him to do, but it wasn’t the same... Might be a good idea if substitutes are going to take over, it would be better for them to meet the group in advance and get to know everyone. Not a big problem, but change is not always easy, and people get attached to the people they usually see.” Men’s action participant, male, 75

Sharing information both ways

Overall, participants felt that the communication with project leads was good, and that they could contact them if need be. Participants felt that they could easily approach any NLC staff to give feedback. Although most were very happy with what was on offer, participants did feel that they could make suggestions. As mentioned earlier, this was aided by the fact that participants felt that they had gotten to know staff through activities.

Participants also felt that the current process of posting programme leaflets (with the listed activities) was a good way of sharing information and they felt that picking names out of a hat for oversubscribed events was a fair way of deciding who can attend.

“Most people, me included, think that if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it. There’s a huge range of activities to go on, and different kinds of things.”
Men’s action participant

Room for improvement

The main suggestions for improvement offered by participants were: avoiding clashes between activities, as it has meant that they have had to choose one activity over another, where they may like to attend both and providing transport, especially for those who struggle with mobility.

“We used to get taxis and now they can’t get taxis. Because of that, most of the time I don’t go out. We need a minibus so they can take us out.”
Intergenerational project participant, male, 75

One participant also felt that more could be done to facilitate interactions to allow them to develop from casual acquaintances to meaningful friendships, as this, they believe is what will be the most effective at combating loneliness.

“Not as simple as just having a space where people can make friends. People come along because they’re feeling the benefit to their wellbeing and social lives. The volunteer training is important; they ‘need to be able to reconstruct a casual meeting’ so that it flows easily into something more. If you’re going to

Test and Learn: As part of their activities, NLC were asked to incorporate technology into their programme of events. The team were already at capacity and they found that older neighbours had been resistant in the past.

After consulting with The Mary Ward Centre they tried two approaches 1) Hosting a tech clinic at their weekly social in Kentish Town. 2) Sensitively incorporating technology into existing sessions - i.e. Investigative work in 1 round of a quiz, Spotify at Desert Island Disc events and iPads, or at the end of workplace visits.

The first option had mixed results and they found that option 2 worked much better to allow for technology to be introduced into activities in a natural way. They have now started telling participants not to wait for to ask tech questions, but to ask them at all events, playing on their strength of intergenerational skill sharing.

break down loneliness, this is what you've got to do." Men's action participant, male, 75



Participants liked that NLC allowed them to integrate with people in different age groups.



They felt that NLC activities provided alleviation from life struggles, including ill-health, caring responsibilities and loneliness.



They praised the wide range of activities on offer, which meant that there was something for everyone.



The role played by staff to facilitate activities has been important to the project's success, insuring that everyone feels welcome.



It was suggested that more could be done to help people transition from have acquaintances to friends.

3.3 Case Studies

Case Study 1: Dave, Men's Action participant

Dave cares for his wife and children. He joined the men's action cookery class to learn a new skill which will prepare him for the future. The class gives him a means of escape once a week where he can relinquish his caring responsibilities.

Dave has been attending the men's cookery class for four years. Much of his time is taken up by caring for his wife and children, who have faced various health issues over the past few years. Before coming to the cooking class, he used to attend a carer's group for men, but this shut down because of a lack of funding. He can't remember exactly where he heard about the class, but thinks it may have been through the Camden Journal, or from a leaflet at his doctor's surgery.

Dave was keen to begin attending the cooking class as his wife became ill and was less able to do things around the house. He had basic cookery skills, but was nervous about using the hob. This is the only group he attends as he has significant caring duties, and has to do the majority of housework and shopping alone, as well as picking up his granddaughter from school once a week. The fact that the cooking class is a men's only activity was part of its appeal. He no longer feels safe going to the pub alone, so this gives him an alternative way to get to know people.

Through taking part in the classes, Dave has built a supportive community of friends. This sense of community is enhanced by bumping into people he knows from the class in the street, although he is too busy to make plans with them socially. He likes the consistency of attendees, which means that he sees the same faces every week.

Because Dave feels comfortable in the group, he has been able to share his problems and receive support from other members, particularly when his daughter was suffering from cancer. The club has also given him a space where he can go and forget about his problems for a while and have fun with the other men, and he often feels happier as a result of attending.

He has also developed cookery skills, and now feels confident that he would be able to take care of him and his wife if she was too sick to cook.

Dave has built strong relationships with several of the volunteer staff, and his only concern is that sometimes he becomes attached to them and they leave. Sometimes the group gets a little too busy, and Dave feels that it would be nice to have some more space to accommodate extra people, or if fewer people were allowed to attend. Despite this, he feels that more should be done to get other isolated people to take part in activities, and suggests that volunteers could attend with them to provide support, or people could be encouraged to bring a friend.

Case Study 2: Alex, Men's Action participant

Alex got involved in NLC two years ago, after struggling to adapt to retirement. He had wanted to continue working, but this had not been possible. He found the first month of his retirement very isolating and lonely but now benefits from attending a large range of NLC activities.

"I had a day job, and all of a sudden I had to retire, and I'm a physical person. I approached the management, but they weren't interested, and the first month was sheer agony. So, I know what loneliness is."

Because of this, his daughter suggested he attend an event at the Castlehaven Community Association, and through this became involved with NLC, who host podcast recordings at the venue.

Since his initial involvement, Alex has taken part in many different activities and groups organised by NLC, including a photography class, a puppet making course, competitions and French bowls. He has been on many outings with NLC, including to the Foreign Office, and to the ballet. He also attended a digital class that he heard about through NLC. He likes that everyone is catered for, and there are activities to suit all interests.

Becoming involved with NLC has enabled Alex to be more active, and to spend time with new people. Through this, he feels that he fits in well in other new situations. He has developed strong relationships with NLC staff and attendees, and this has led to him becoming less lonely.

"The club itself, the events, the people, everybody's happy, that's what I like. Everyone gets on so well and it just shows that people can work and live together."

Alex has also developed a number of new and interesting skills, such as puppet making and photography, which have allowed him to use his creative skills.

Alex now attends most NLC activities, only missing out on yoga and cooking classes. The only things he would change about the activities is the length. He would prefer some activities to be longer, and would like time to chat afterwards.

Case Study 3: Susan, Intergenerational project participant

Susan loves the opportunity to socialise that NLC offers her. With her mobility issues she is not confident to leave the house on her own.

Susan has been attending NLC events for almost seven years, since they first began almost seven years ago. She initially heard about them as she was part of an organisation called the Good Neighbours Association, and somebody came to this from NLC and put a film on every month. They then took over the community hall and have been running events and activities there ever since.

Through joining NLC Susan hoped for somewhere new to go as a way to meet people and get out of the house. The first time she attended she got on well with other attendees and volunteers, and felt welcome and at ease.

Susan now attends a social every Wednesday afternoon where attendees take part in different activities each week. Through this she has learned how to do new things, like making seed bombs and Chinese dumplings. Since joining Susan has lost a lot of her mobility, and as a result is no longer confident to leave the house by herself as she fears she may fall. She is able to come to NLC as a volunteer picks her up each week to take her to the social.

Susan most enjoys socialising with others and getting out of the house. Through talking to other people and seeing them regularly she has seen improvements in her wellbeing. She enjoys mixing with volunteers of a different generation to herself.

"You can socialise and meet with other people. Otherwise you would sit indoors and do nothing if your family aren't near."

She says that while NLC has made her more likely to participate in other activities like it, she's not really interested in expanding her range of activities, and is happy attending Wednesday afternoon sessions and church on Sundays. She feels confident to speak up and have her say at NLC events, although she doesn't feel that anything about the activities needs changing. She finds it easy to contact those in charge.

"If there was any other organisation like it I'd go but I don't think you could beat NLC. I like the people who organise it, the people you meet, they're all very friendly. If you just went for a social afternoon it would be good to get out. NLC really lives up to its name."

Case Study 4: Tom, Men's Action participant

Tom is his wife's carer and so cannot attend activities that are too far from home. He became involved in the NLC podcasting activities and enjoys seeing the same faces every week. He feels that the activities he attends have had a positive influence on his wellbeing and social life.

Tom has been involved with NLC for the past two years. Due to his caring responsibility Tom could not travel far from his daughter, and had limited time for activities, so he became involved in the podcasting project at Castlehaven to take his mind off his day to day responsibilities and get out of the house. He had been used to mixing with people of all ages at work, so wanted the chance to interact with and learn from the younger volunteers.

Tom had few expectations of the project, but felt pleased that he would benefit from activities at a centre he had helped to set up. When he joined he was immediately made to feel welcome by the volunteers, who he praised for being kind and responsive to the needs of the older participants.

"I can't speak too highly of the volunteers. They're very patient. They try to engage with the older people on their terms, by which I mean our terms. They'll respond to something we're saying, rather than launching off into something of their own."

Since he first attended the podcasting sessions, Tom has been involved in many other activities run by NLC, including their men-focused projects, inter-generational sessions. He has also attended workplace visits led by volunteers, which he found interesting as they showed him how quickly the workplace was changing. He praises NLC for offering a huge range of activities that cater for everyone. He is somewhat limited in what he attends as he has to arrange care for his daughter in order to attend events.

NLC has provided Tom with an outlet from the stresses of his caring responsibilities. He enjoys the challenge that is presented by the podcasting sessions in particular, where participants are not told what the topic will be until the day. In these sessions he enjoys hearing others speak about their memories of Camden, and how they differ from his own.

"It's a sociable activity, but I think it's more than that, it's more subtle. It's about restructuring your own experience so that you're re-contextualising your own experience in the light of other people's."

Tom feels that in order to decrease loneliness and isolation more people should be encouraged to bring a friend to activities. He suggests that there should be more of a focus on getting the opinions of the people using NLC services in order to help them understand what is working well and what isn't.

Case Study 5: Anna, Intergenerational project participant

NLC gives Anna a reason to leave the house each week and helps to keep her active despite mobility issues.

Anna is in her 70s and has been attending NLC intergenerational events for three months. She lives alone and doesn't see many people, so at times felt isolated. Before joining NLC she had received a flyer, and she had been invited to attend by a friend around five years ago. However, she didn't go until she was invited to a film night by a friend, and since then she has been attending regularly. Because of the welcoming environment, Anna feels comfortable attending even if her friend doesn't come. She sometimes feels that other old people are not friendly, but this is not the case at NLC.

Anna most enjoys attending films and social events such as parties and line dancing. She has also gone to activities at a food recycling centre. So far she hasn't joined any clubs, but has been enjoying attending drop in sessions.

"I just love the films because I never get a chance to see a film and it's nice to see it with other people. It's like going out to a film really. You feel you've had an evening out which you wouldn't do on your own. It pulls people out of themselves."

Anna sometimes finds it hard to get to venues as they require taking public transport, and she lacks confidence in finding her way around. The fact that events end by 9pm is a positive for Anna, who no longer feels safe being out late at night after having been attacked a few years ago.

Anna prefers to attend events where she feels there is a personal touch, such as her British Museum events with Age UK Camden which are run by a friend. She finds many organised events clinical and lacking in warmth, but thinks that NLC feels different due to its relaxed and informal atmosphere. Compared to other events, she says that NLC feel like family, providing food, refreshments, and even blankets when the weather is cold. She usually mixes with young people, and does not know many people over 40, and so appreciates the mix of young volunteers and older people. She has developed strong relationships with others at NLC, and one volunteer now visits her.

"Old people have got time to talk and no-one has time for young people. You don't tell your own age group things that aren't cool. She makes me consider going to things I wouldn't normally consider because I'm insular – she says, 'I'll be there'. It's empathy. I would miss it a lot if it closed up."

After attending events with NLC intergenerational Anna has felt less isolated. The project gives her something to look forward to each week, and has encouraged her to go out more, despite her medical issues. She would like to volunteer with the project in future, once these issues have been resolved.

"Without it I would miss it, I would feel a lack of socialising. Before the activities I was a bit isolated socially. I didn't see people much. Everyone works, and I don't."

4. Kilburn Community Action Project

4.1 Introduction

Kilburn Community Action Project is run by Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (KOVE), a registered charity and community group for older people in the Kilburn, Swiss Cottage and the West Hampstead area.

Established in 2001-2002, KOVE aims to improve the quality of life for older residents in these areas through supporting older people's engagement and involvement in their local communities. While the organisation is led by two job-share Coordinators and a member-led steering group, the project also places a strong focus on regular members to take an active role in the design and delivery of project activities. For example, the organisation holds regular member meetings and also supports the work of approximately eight member-led community forums in the local area.

A central focus of the organisation's work is coordinating local campaigns in response to the suitability of street environments for older people. Recent campaigns have focused on community seating, access to public toilets, pedestrian crossing times and public transport.

For example, as part of the Kilburn Action Community Project, KOVE held a community meeting to discuss older people's experience of bus services in Kilburn and West Hampstead. Attendees raised several issues including buses proximity to pavements when parked, which were then highlighted through a short film featuring KOVE members. KOVE then facilitated a meeting between Transport for London, Camden Council, and the Older People's Advisory Group, following which a leaflet was produced that summaries issues and new developments in response.

KOVE also organises bench-to-bench walks that help older people become more familiar with their local area and the different community spaces and assets within their surroundings. Underpinning all of these activities is a community partnership approach to support joint-working between organisations and to avoid duplication of activities in the local area.

Looking ahead, KOVE plans to continue to develop its campaigns and network of community forums in response to local needs, as well as place a stronger focus on engaging BAME individuals in the local community.

KOVE's activities include:

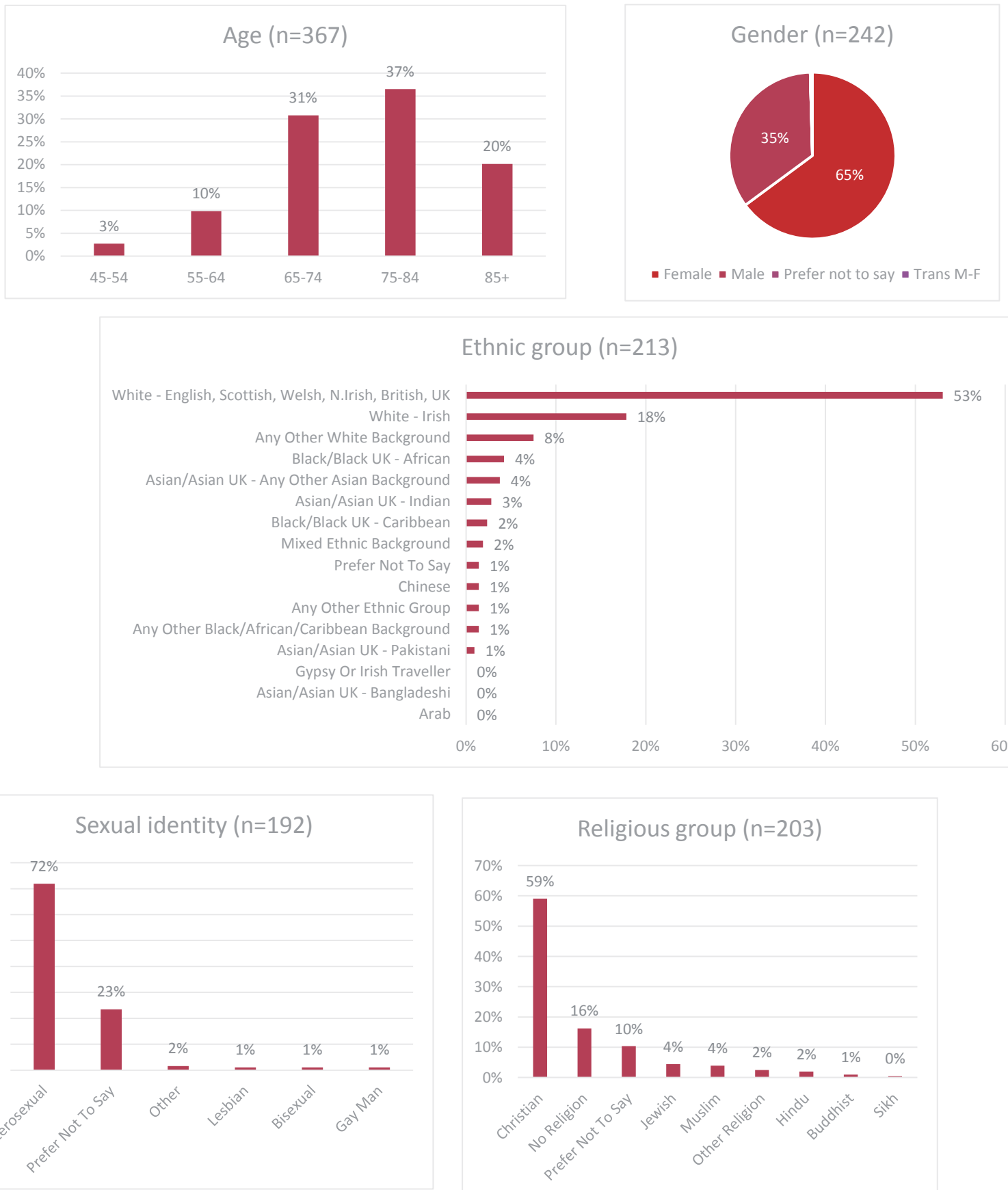
- **Steering group meetings:** An open-meeting where the KOVE's Trustees meet with a steering group composed of older people, in addition to KOVE members.
- **Community forums:** A network of member-run, forums that host discussions on local issues and other topics to help improve the quality of life for older people in the local area.
- **Bench-to-bench walks:** Bi-monthly, guided walks that enable older people to socialise, take part in gentle exercise and learn about their local area and its history.
- **Cinema club:** A monthly gathering at Sycamore Community Hall, followed by tea and coffee.

4.2 About the participants

KOVE has registered 443 participants since it commenced its Ageing Better in Camden contract in July 2015. As shown overleaf (Figure 1), of these participants:

- 241 participants (56%) reported their gender. In total, 65% of these participants were female and 35% were male;
- 366 participants (83%) reported their age. In total, 57% of these participants were aged 75 or above. Only a minority of participants (10%) were aged 55-64.
- 212 participants (48%) reported their ethnicity. In total, 78% of these participants were from a White British, White Irish or White Other background.
- 203 participants (46%) reported their religion. In total, 59% of these participants defined themselves as 'Christian' and 16% of participants defined themselves as 'no religion'.
- 192 participants (43%) reported their Sexual identity. In total, 72% of these participants defined themselves as 'heterosexual'. 5% of participants defined themselves as 'lesbian', 'bisexual', 'gay man' or 'other'.

Figure 1: Summary of participant demographics



4.3 Findings

Primary qualitative research was undertaken with 12 members of the KOVE project.

Where stated, the demographics of these 12 individuals is as follows:

- Gender: 7 females, 5 males;
- Age: 68-88 years old;
- Ethnicity: 7 White British, 1 Any other white background, 1 Asian UK – Indian, 1 Chinese and 1 Black UK Caribbean.

Motivations and pathways into the project

Most people found out about KOVE through word-of-mouth or by seeing a local advertisement. For example, one participant first attended a discussion on local transport issues after seeing an advertisement in the local paper.

Motivations to join the project included:

- Getting out and going on walks, particularly to unfamiliar parts of London or to green spaces that were easily accessible from London. Participants found the label of 'bench-to-bench walks' particularly appealing as they are less strenuous and more interesting than uninterrupted walking.
- Getting involved with issues that were affecting the local community, especially those relating to local transport; and
- Meeting people of a similar age in the local area.

“The bench-to-bench label was the enticer. The fact that it wasn’t a ten-mile hike is good. It’s not just walking, you can learn more about your local area.” – Female, 68

Experiences and impacts

Most participants had taken part in the bench-to-bench walks, while several had also attended the monthly film screenings and community forums.

Increased knowledge of activities, landmarks and facilities local area

The walks were very popular among participants as they were felt to offer an interesting alternative to traditional ways of staying active. Participants said that they had enjoyed going to places that they hadn't been to before, as well as learning new things about places with which they were already familiar. For example, a KOVE Joint Coordinator reported that one walk featured a visit to the Jewish Cultural Centre on Finchley Road; many KOVE members lived close by and knew of the centre, but had never been in. Participants also reported that they enjoyed being able to walk at their own pace, as well as added extras such as a free booklet mapping out accessible toilets in the local area.

“Sometimes it can be just the fear of going out or not knowing where one is going. By going out repeatedly on these walks, that can help one overcome isolation and anxiety type feelings.” - Female, age unknown

Meeting new people

Participants also enjoyed the opportunity to meet new people and make new friendships across all activities. Several participants talked about how they valued the opportunity to connect with people who have similar priorities to them, though several mentioned that these friendships did not extend beyond the group.

“For me, it’s getting out of the house and meeting people. I certainly wouldn’t have gone on these walks – we used to go on walks when my husband was fitter, but not so much now – so I’m really grateful for the exercise as I certainly wouldn’t go around on my own” - Female, 74

“It’s a friendly environment. You tend to share each other’s problems – in many communities, problems are similar in terms of elderly people and they are neglected by the government.”- Male, 88

Increased involvement with the local area, issues and campaigns

While many participants considered themselves to have been active individuals before they joined KOVE, several participants described how activities such as the bench-to-bench walks had increased their connection to the local area.

Some individuals also felt that KOVE meetings increased their awareness of issues within the local community and provided them with an opportunity to contribute their views. One participant mentioned that being part of this group-setting had increased their confidence to

participate in local campaigns, while others felt that their voice was stronger now that it was part of a collective.

Amongst longer-term members, there were also several examples of where members had either led or taken an active role in local campaigns and groups. For example, one participant had attended the meeting on older people's experiences of bus services in Kilburn and West Hampstead with Transport for London and other local stakeholders. Another participant had established their own local community group with the support of KOVE.

“I’ve been involved with monthly meetings at KOVE since around 3 years ago... KOVE supported me in starting a community forum for older people. [One of the benefits of being involved with KOVE has been] meeting with other people with similar priorities in their community. It extended the way that I could get involved in my local community.” – Male, 88

Test and Learn: Alongside the bench-to-bench walks, KOVE is also working to improve community seating in the local area and create an age friendly street environment. KOVE recently successfully applied for funding from Camden Council to replace a bench on Kilburn High Road and also installed a family dedication bench. Lessons learned included the importance of working with local residents to identify need, the value of partnership working and joint applications, and the need to ensuring continued publicity.

Participant reflections on the project

The Joint Coordinators were described as playing a central role within the project. Most participants recognised the time that they devoted to listening to the ideas

and needs of individual participants, as well as preparing additional materials that improved their experience. For example, the bench-to-bench guides in advance of the walks.

Similarly, most participants also found the groups welcoming and inclusive, though only a minority of participants felt that they had helped shape the design and delivery of project activities. Examples of member contributions included attending KOVE member meetings and sharing views on local issues and suggesting future bench-to-bench walks or film screenings. Of those participants, who had not contributed to how the project was organised and delivered, most were new members that were happy with their involvement in the project and wanted to settle in before getting more involved.

Participant recommendations on how to improve the project included:

- Having varied groups on the bench-to-bench walks;
- Having a mix of old and more contemporary films, as well as making the cinema club more accessible for older people with visual impairments.
- While most people were content with the timing of activities, some felt that activities at 1:30pm could start slightly earlier or later to avoid lunch.

Looking to the future, a couple of participants felt that KOVE needs to continue to raise awareness of its existence. Suggestions on this front included distributing more leaflets that advertised KOVE's activities, as well as having more able-bodied volunteers to help with those who are house-bound.

“I think it's a great thing. I think that it's lovely that it's there for old people. These things need to be out there – I know some people don't like mixing with crowds of people, but I like people and I'm happy to join in with something like this.” – Female, 74



Participants felt well-supported by project staff across activities, including the KOVE community forums which enable older people to better influence and challenge decisions that affect them in the local area.



KOVE's bench-to-bench walks were felt to have a range of impacts, including increased social contact, physical fitness and engagement with the local area.



The project supports people to take community leadership roles.



It was suggested that project activities could be made more inclusive through catering for individuals with different abilities. For example, bench-to-bench walks at different paces, or routes of different lengths.

4.4 Case studies

Case study 1 – Joe, KOVE participant

Joe is in his late 80s, of Black UK – Caribbean background, and has lived in the Borough of Camden since 1978. He has been involved with KOVE for three years, during which he has seen the number of members treble. He frequently attends the monthly bench walks and meetings.

Joe contacted KOVE and expressed an interest in helping older people in the community after a leaflet was dropped through his front door. He was told the project ran meetings and needed some assistance. He wanted to get to know others who also wanted to help the community.

“Meeting with other people with similar priorities in their community. It also extended the way that I could get involved in my local community. I was involved in a national problem in terms of attending the National Pensioners Convention.”

Joe finds the meetings friendly, welcoming and easy to get involved in:

“It's a friendly environment. You tend to share each other's problems – in many communities, problems are similar in terms of elderly people and they are neglected by the government.”

Joe has built relationships at KOVE, and he and other members greet each other on the street. Unfortunately, Joe has been unable to attend many meetings in the previous six months, as his wife passed away and he felt that he needed to leave the country for a while. However, he feels that attending KOVE events since has helped to decrease his sense of loneliness.

Through his involvement with KOVE Joe has been able to make positive changes to his local community by improving local facilities for the elderly. This includes changing the timing of traffic lights so that older people have longer to cross the road and ensuring bus drivers allow elderly people time to sit down before pulling away from stops.

Joe also believes that loneliness can have a detrimental effect on people, and that KOVE is beneficial to the health of older people as the activities help them to get out and about and meet new people. He's also written an article on this topic, which he intends to circulate via the KOVE network.

Case Study 2 – Margaret, KOVE participant

Margaret is in her mid-70s, of White British background and considers herself to have a long-standing physical or mental disability. She first became involved with KOVE a couple of years ago after it recommended to her by someone she knew at a local exercise class. One of the main reasons that she decided to join the project was to meet and socialise with new people.

"Before I retired I panicked, retirement is a big change in your life, I thought "what am I going to do after working?", I didn't realise these clubs existed... I would have joined sooner if I'd known."

When she first joined, Margaret found everyone to be very welcoming. She also found that it helped that she already knew a couple of ladies from her exercise class. She's since taken part in the bench walks, where she's made new friends and enjoyed visiting new places. Margaret cares for her husband, who has health difficulties, so attending these have given her a chance to get out of the house

She has enjoyed the wide range of speakers and activities at KOVE meetings, as well as getting the chance to have her own say:

"We have speakers sometimes – they're always interesting. Once we had the police to help us with fake phone calls, we had a young girl and boy to talk to us about the recycling, sometimes we just play bocchia, which is nice. We've also had talks about exercising at our age."

Her involvement in KOVE has also given her a chance to be more engaged with her local community and develop services for elderly people in her area.

"We've been able to get more benches and things like that – also the toilets. We have a booklet to say where all the toilets were – that was really useful."

Margaret feels that KOVE has helped elderly people become more active and sociable, listing an arthritis group and armchair yoga as positive examples of this. To help even more, she suggested that KOVE organises a care share or hires a minibus to collect people who are unable to get out the house easily.

Overall, Margaret has had a very positive experience and KOVE, and urges others to give it a try:

"I'd just say come along and see. Come along and see what happens. Might like it, might not, but sometimes you have to go to places 2-3 times before you get a sense of what's happening. I think it's a great thing. I think that it's lovely that it's there for old people. These things need to be out there – I know some people don't like mixing with crowds of people, but I like people and I'm happy to join in with something like this."

5. LGBT+ Connect

5.1 Introduction

The LGBT+ Connect project began in August 2015. It provides opportunities for older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people in Camden to meet and socialise with one another, with the aim of improving participants' wellbeing and strengthening local communities. The project is delivered by Age UK Camden and Opening Doors London, a charity who provide activities and information and support services for older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans* people across the UK.

A key challenge for the project has been offering activities that attract female, transsexual and black and minority ethnic (BME) participants, where activities tend to be most popular with cisgender (where their gender identity matches the sex that they were assigned at birth), white males. LGBT+ Connect are trying to increase their reach with the BME community and have recently tested a dedicated BME activity in Brixton, in which some Camden residents participated.

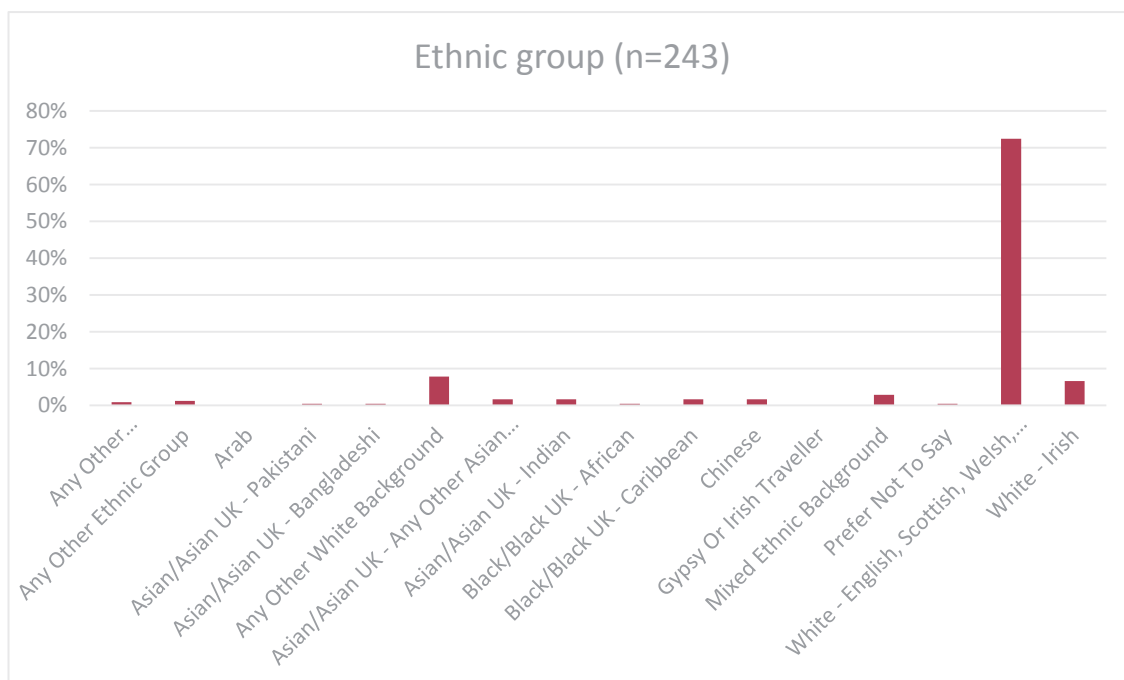
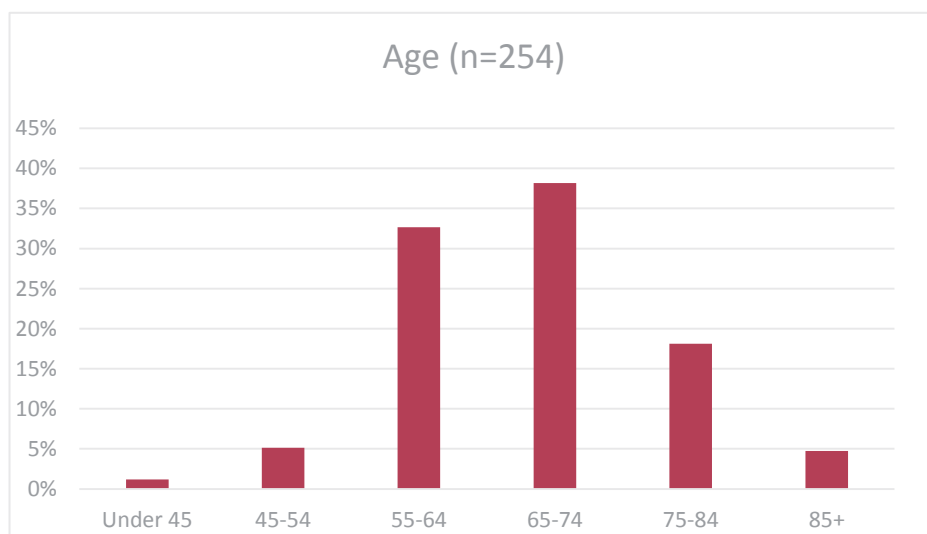
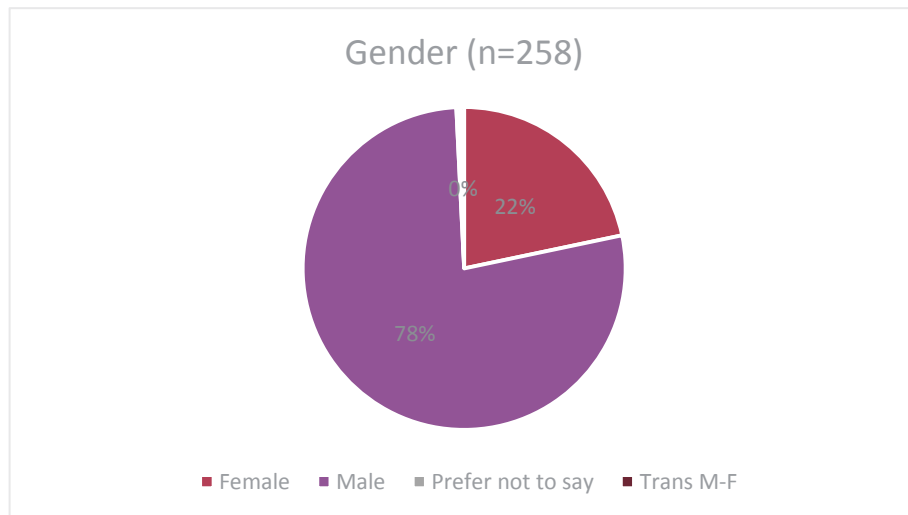
LGBT+ Connect activities include:

- **Bridge and Scrabble Club at the Lumen Café:** A weekly coffee and scrabble club, offering games and discounted tea and coffee.
- **Singing for fun!** At the Mary Ward centre: A weekly singing session.
- **Creative writing group at Tavis house:** This runs twice monthly and offers an opportunity to improve and develop creative writing skills with a professional.
- **Rainbow surfers at Tavis House:** a weekly LGBT+ friendly computer drop-in.
- **Separate men and women speaker nights** to ensure that the topics resonate with their audience.
- **Separate men and women movie nights** to make sure that the films chosen are suitable for their audience.
- **Friday Coffee and Cake Club:** This takes place every Friday at Tavis house and is open to all, but is mostly attended by men.
- **Rainbow Memory Café:** For those suffering memory loss issues to get together and discuss their concerns.

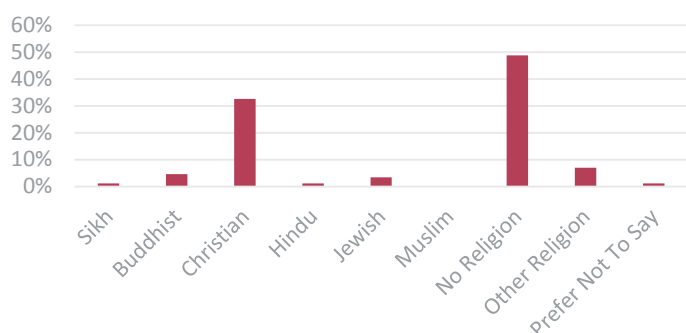
5.2 About the participants

Since the Ageing Better Camden contract with LGBT+ Connect commenced in December 2015, they have registered a total of **268** participants.

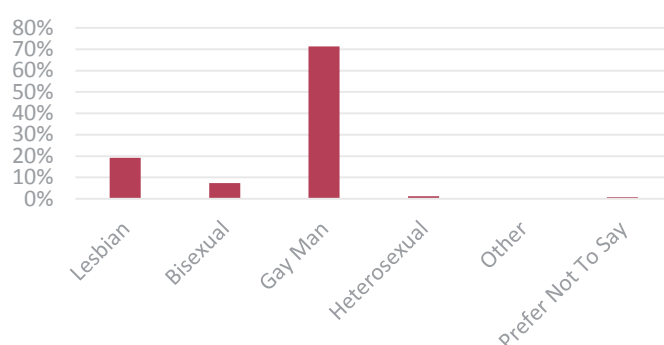
Figure 1: Summary of LGBT+ Connect participant demographics



Religious group (n=172)



Sexual identity (n=244)



As shown in (Figure 1), and using demographic information from their sign-up questionnaire, of the participants who attend **LGBT Connect+** activities:

- 258 respondents (96%) answered the question about gender. Of these, 200 (78%) participants reported they were male and 56 (22%) reported they were female. One reported that they were transsexual and 1 said that they preferred not to disclose their gender.
- 254 respondents (95%) answered the question about age. In total. The majority of participants were between 55 and 74.
- 243 respondents (91%) answered the question about ethnicity. In total, 79% of these respondents were from a White British background.
- 172 respondents (64%) disclosed their religion. Half said that they were not religious, but 33% said that they were Christian.
- 244 respondents (91%) answered the question about Sexual identity. Of these, 71% were gay men, 19% were lesbians and 7% were bisexual.

5.3 Findings

Primary qualitative research was undertaken with 8 members of the LGBT+ Connect project.

Where stated, the demographics of these 8 individuals that we spoke to from LGBT+ Connect is as follows:

- Gender: 5 males, 3 females;
- Age: 50-73 years old;
- Ethnicity: All had a white British background;
- Religion: 5 No religion, 3 Christian;
- Sexual identity: 5 gay men and 3 lesbians

Motivations and pathways into the project

The LGBT+ Connect project activities comprise of the Opening Doors London activities that take place in Camden. As such, they are communicated to participants along with all other ODL activities, so LGBT+ Connect participants are not themselves aware of the distinction. Therefore, participants attend various ODL activities, where some are part of LGBT+ Connect if they take place in Camden, and others are not.

Most LGBT+ Connect participants that we spoke to had heard about Opening Doors through word-of-mouth, whereas some had heard about it through Age UK Camden services or had picked up a flyer at another LGBT event for older people.

Project attendees were motivated to join activities in order to meet like-minded individuals with the same sexual identity and therefore a mutual basis of understanding, where for example one mentioned he had less in common with heterosexual people who talked about their children all the time. Participants felt that this interaction with other LGBT people was important for their wellbeing, and fostered a sense of community, for example one participant, who suffers from depression wanted to join in ODL activities in lieu of counselling and felt that talking to other likeminded individuals would help.

'I come to have people to talk to, because I suffer from depression and so many people that come here have the same issues. It is good to have people to talk to.' Male, 50

'That wasn't my reason, I've got lots of activities. Mine was to do social activities with gay people, hoping to feel more relaxed, as opposed to with straight people, they talk about their children and stuff like that.' Male, 76

Some specified that they wanted to join a platonic group of activities for LGBT participants to make friends, and that they were drawn to LGBT+ Connect activities as they were not sex-oriented, but more focussed on socialising and making friends.

'The LGBT world as I had experienced it, is kind of pubs and clubs and all these things that doesn't appeal to me. It's all sex orientated and I wasn't interested in that, I wanted a social group. I went in with the expectation of broadening my social horizons, and it's done that.' Male, 61

One participant, who is very politically active himself, liked that ODL had more of a political angle than other projects for older people.

'I think Opening Doors has possibly got a more political angle, the others aren't. They have ambitions to make changes to society that would help gay people.' Male, 73

Experiences and impacts

Making friends and socialising

LGBT+ Connect has been important for participants to enable social interactions. This was the most important impact of the activities identified by individuals. Participants mentioned that attending regular activities with likeminded individuals had enabled them to make new friends which has benefitted their wellbeing and for some it was the first time that they had developed friendships with other LGBT people.

"That was important because I've never had a group of gay friends before. Most of my friends all through my life have been heterosexual, and whether they knew about me or not was immaterial, most of my friendships were straight." Male, 61

"I have formed very strong friendships with the people involved and it has really lifted me." Male, 71

Combating isolation

Participants have also mentioned that attending LGBT+ Connect activities has had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing. Some suggested that it has helped to combat feelings of social isolation and loneliness by giving them a place to go where they can socialise and make friends, and some mentioned that it gave them a weekly or monthly structure where they can look forward to socialising.

***'It's made me less likely to be lonely. I know it's going to happen once or twice a month, an event that I wouldn't have gone to if it wasn't there.'* Male, 73**

A few participants mentioned that since they no longer work, they have become more isolated and see less people. ODL activities work to replace this gap for them.

***'When I was working there was more interaction, but I was made redundant twice – ODL sort of replaced a part of my life that had gone by.'* Male, 61**

Reflections on the project

Lack of activities for women

The three women we spoke to had the perception that there were fewer opportunities for women through ODL to meet like-minded individuals than there were for men. This was because, although there were just as many women's only activities as there were men's, most of the activities that were open to all, mostly attracted men, and women once attending often found that they were the only women at these activities. This could lead to them feeling less included and for some newer participants, less likely to want to come back. Some had been attending ODL activities for a long time (prior to the ABC funding) and said that the number of activities targeted at women has reduced over time.

***'I've had a 50/50 experience. On the first night when I went to the games there wasn't one woman, it was very gay men oriented'* Female, 67**

A few participants (mostly women) felt that the facilitators could be doing more to make sure that women feel welcomed and integrated at events, especially at those dominated by men, but also the women's only events, where some established groups of participants were not always felt to be as friendly as they could be.

***'For women, lots of women come once and never again, I think often there isn't the encouragement, the supportive warm greeting, sometimes there aren't enough skills in volunteers to make sure people aren't left out.'* Female, 67**

One woman felt that the project had once helped her to overcome feelings of isolation, but now that there were fewer activities aimed at women she felt more isolated in some ways as a result.

***'They have scrabble club, I've been twice and I was the only woman. I know it's very negative but that's how I feel at present, when you're talking about Age UK combatting loneliness or isolation.'* Female, 65**

Inconsistency of the activities

Some of the participants said that the quality of the activities could be variable, and that they would recommend some more than others. For example, one participant who only attended the Friday Coffee and Cake club always felt very welcome, whereas one struggled to feel included at a games night.

Out of borough activities

One participant felt that there were fewer activities in Camden than there used to be, and that many of the activities that she wished to attend were outside of Camden (and therefore not part of LGBT+ Connect). The longer journeys involved in accessing these activities were seen as a barrier.

Communication

A few participants mentioned that they would like to have more opportunities to shape the types of activities that ODL offers and how they are delivered. Some also wanted a bit guidance on how they could provide feedback and wanted more opportunities to see those leading and coordinating the project.

There were mixed views on the way the ODL shared information with participants. Some were satisfied with the use of online tools to promote activities, whereas others suggested that they did not receive all emails and that not everyone who takes part in ODL activities is proficient at using online tools and therefore could be left out from receiving activity information.

Participants who do not use digital tools tended to rely on each other to communicate new activities or changes to existing ones. One participant felt that the website could be made easier to navigate, especially when considering participants' digital skills.

Test and Learn: LGBT+ Connect wanted to use alternative events to increase their attendance and so tested a Caribbean food tasting night

They found that members were very engaged with one another interacting over food and it became a focal point for discussion, where participants were sharing recipes.

They found that this was a bonding experience and helped to break down any previous barriers between individuals and helped them to relax in the social setting.

It was a great event to offer something different from the norm and allow people to share about their cultures and backgrounds through their love of food.

'There seems to be a preponderance of using the internet, email and so on, and quite a few members have never been online and aren't likely to, that isolates them a little bit, but the members themselves will need to thrash this out with the organisers.'
Male, 61

Advertising

Several participants had suggestions about how to further promote Opening Doors London activities (including those that are delivered as part of LGBT+ Connect). One suggested that adverts should be posted in the Camden New Journal, and another said that

there should be more visible posters upon entry to Tavis House, where ODL is based and some activities take place.



Participants liked that LGBT+ Connect allowed them to integrate with people with the same sexual identity and male participants found the activities immediately welcoming.



Participants liked the list of activities and felt that it has positive effects on their wellbeing.



Participants felt that activities should be made more inclusive for women through better facilitation



Participants felt that the channels of communication between hub leads and participants could be improved and there were suggestions about how to further promote the project.

5.4 Case studies

Case Study 1: Dean, LGBT Connect participant

Dean enjoys the structure that ODL gives him and has made some really good friends who have enhanced his life

Dean has been attending Opening Doors events for the past three to four years. He lives alone, and prior to joining Opening Doors was not doing a lot of social activities, meaning that at times he felt isolated. He joined as a way of making new friends and broadening his horizons.

Dean learned about Opening Doors through some friends at a lunch club in Soho, who went to Opening Doors events and suggested he give it a try. Because of this, he already knew a few people when he first went along. He found it very welcoming, with everyone greeting one another, and found the name badges useful as it meant you could refer to others by name.

He now attends several events a week, including the quiz night at Henderson Court. He often meets with members of Opening Doors socially, and usually speaks to at least two or three people from Opening Doors daily.

Attending Opening Doors has given his days structure that was lacking after being made redundant twice. He enjoys being with like-minded people, and thinks it is important to associate with others from the LGBT community, particularly as he feels that people are more open to voicing their prejudices after the Brexit vote.

As a result of taking part in Opening Doors activities, Dean feels more at ease with himself. Being part of this community has helped him to feel useful to others, something he highly values.

"Feeling part of something and having solid friendships and being able to look out for others. If people have problems, you are able to listen and involve them and give them a chance to talk so that they aren't overwhelmed by the situation."

Although Dean feels unable to formally volunteer due to personal commitments, he helps others on a voluntary basis, visiting and calling them. He has befriended one man from the project and together they go on weekends to Wales, and Dean sometimes stays with him. He has helped to promote Opening Doors by distributing fliers in his local community.

Dean finds staff at the project to be very encouraging, caring, and open to new ideas. He notes that when he was unable to attend Opening Doors for a few weeks one of the staff members posted a message on his Facebook page to check that he was ok. Staff have encouraged him to take part in other activities, and he has enjoyed singing in a local choir.

Dean would recommend Opening Doors to others, as it has had a strong positive influence on his own life.

"Come along and enhance your life. If you have met someone on a personal level you could arrange to meet them somewhere and go in with them. Sometimes people look a bit lost but someone will always go up to them and say 'is it your first time?'"

Case Study 2: Steve, LGBT Connect participant

Steve has made friends through ODL and takes part in most of the activities, which has helped combat feelings of loneliness and depression. Despite this, he thinks that ODL's modes of communication could be improved

Steve joined Opening Doors in 2012, when he was in his mid-50s. He had never belonged to a gay social organisation before, and had few gays friends. Prior to joining he had struggled with depression and had at times felt isolated. He felt that the LGBT world was very centred around pubs and clubs, something that he was not interested in.

While attending an LGBT wine and cheese night, Steve noticed some literature on Opening Doors. He hoped to broaden his horizons and meet new friends, so decided to attend a film club the group had organised in Hampstead, and was signed up by a member of staff. He immediately felt welcomed, and soon after attended another group.

"I was a new face and everyone was saying hello, and I took a notebook to jot down names because there were so many, it was friendly and welcoming, and I made friends that night who are good friends now."

Now Steve goes to as many activities as possible, and makes a concerted effort to support new groups as they begin. He has attended a wide range of events including film nights, tours, exhibitions and coffee mornings. He tries to attend monthly groups regularly.

Through attending Opening Doors events, Steve has built a wide group of friends and no longer feels isolated. Now his diary is often full, either with Opening Doors events, or with social occasions with people he has met through Opening Doors. He enjoys the sense of community, and of doing things with like-minded people that Opening Doors affords him, and the range of activities available.

He would like to take a more active role in the project in order to help other LGBT people, and has considered becoming an ambassador, although he is somewhat put off by the fundraising involved in the role. He would like to volunteer first, perhaps as a befriender.

"There are a lot of isolated LGBT people, and the older you get the more infirm and mobility challenged you become, and the more help you need, and the more you need help from outside."

Despite the positive impact that Opening Doors has had on his life, Steve sees several issues that he feels the project needs to address. Firstly, communication with members could be improved, as listings often contain inaccuracies. There are often timetabling clashes, with new groups scheduled at the same time, so although he would like to support both he is unable to. Also, he feels there is too much focus on using the internet to communicate.

"They're not doing it deliberately, but most of them are younger, below 50, and I sometimes feel that they don't realise how much of a foreign language the internet is for some people."

Steve feels that there is no one within Opening Doors that he can go to with his concerns and suggestions, despite staff being generally approachable. There is no easy way to contact staff, and although there is an email address on the listings, emails are often not responded to.

Steve would like to see more involvement and consultation of members.

Case Study 3: Hannah, LGBT Connect participant

Hannah originally felt that ODL helped with her feelings of loneliness, but recently, with less activities targeted towards women, she feels isolated again

Hannah is 65 and lives in Camden. She suffers from hearing loss and has felt isolated for a long time. She started attending Opening Doors events around four years ago, and used to attend up to three times a week. Currently she goes to about one event a month, usually women's social activities.

After attending a meeting of Age UK Camden which included discussions on LGBT issues and mentioned Opening Doors and reading literature available about Opening Doors activities, Hannah decided to join. Despite having few expectations of what attending Opening Doors would be like, Hannah enjoyed the social outings and summer trips, and initially felt less isolated as a result of her participation.

"Once I joined the group and we went on outings and social events it was thrilling for me. It was something for isolated people who don't know other people like themselves, or are in the right age group, or the same outlook."

Despite an initially positive experience of Opening Doors events, Hannah has continued to struggle with isolation. A major factor in this is that there are not enough events specifically for women, and in the past, she has felt uncomfortable attending activities and being the only female.

"I like the social events but since they've had cuts in funding or changed things, there have not been so many social events for women. I know they're under the banner of mixed groups, but even then, I found I was one of the only females that have joined."

Hearing loss is another factor that contributes to a sense of isolation for Hannah, as she feels excluded from some activities, such as the film club. She has struggled to make friends, and feels that other members are too busy to meet outside of Opening Doors activities.

"I can't join in a theatre event, or stand-up comedy, then I can't go. I use another group that does plays with text, but when I have asked a couple of people from open Doors they're busy, or they've got partners, so I still end up going on my own."

Although in general she has found staff to be very helpful, and they help her by posting listing to her each month as she has struggled to use her computer to print them, she has also made suggestions about activities and what is needed in Opening Doors that she feels have not been listened to. She would like to see more consideration of those who suffer from hearing loss, and more focus on events specifically for women.

6. St Pancras and Somers Town Community Action Project

6.1 Introduction

St Pancras and Somers Town Community Action Project, otherwise known as 'We are Ageing Better in St Pancras and Somers Town' (WAAB), is a partnership led by Origin Housing Association with Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre and Somers Town Community Association.

Established in 2016, the project aims to reduce loneliness among older people and support them to become more active citizens in an area that has seen major urban redevelopment and social change over the past 25 years. The project also aims to encourage greater interaction between four distinct communities in the area (Agar Grove, Camden Road, Kings Cross and St Pancras, and Somers Town).

WAAB delivers a large programme of activities across several centres in the area, such as Coopers Lane Tenants Hall and Basil Jellicoe Hall. Activities include community development projects, sports and physical activity classes, art projects and food-based events.

Most of these are delivered in partnership with St Pancras Community Centre, which has worked with older people for many years. WAAB has also formed close working relationships with other services based at The Living Centre, such as the Sports Activators programme, which enables informal discussion between organisations on how best to support individuals.

WAAB is led by a part-time Project Coordinator based at The St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre. This staff member is also supported by a steering group and 11 volunteers, who have started to plan and lead new activities, as well as takeover management of existing activities.

To date, WAAB has utilised a community asset-based approach in the development and delivery of its activities. New activities in the local area were designed through a series of community lunches that brought older people from across the area together to discuss what activities they wanted to see in their local area.

Looking ahead, a key focus of the project is to increase engagement in the Elm Grove and Amptill areas, as well as developing the sustainability of project activities through supporting service user involvement.

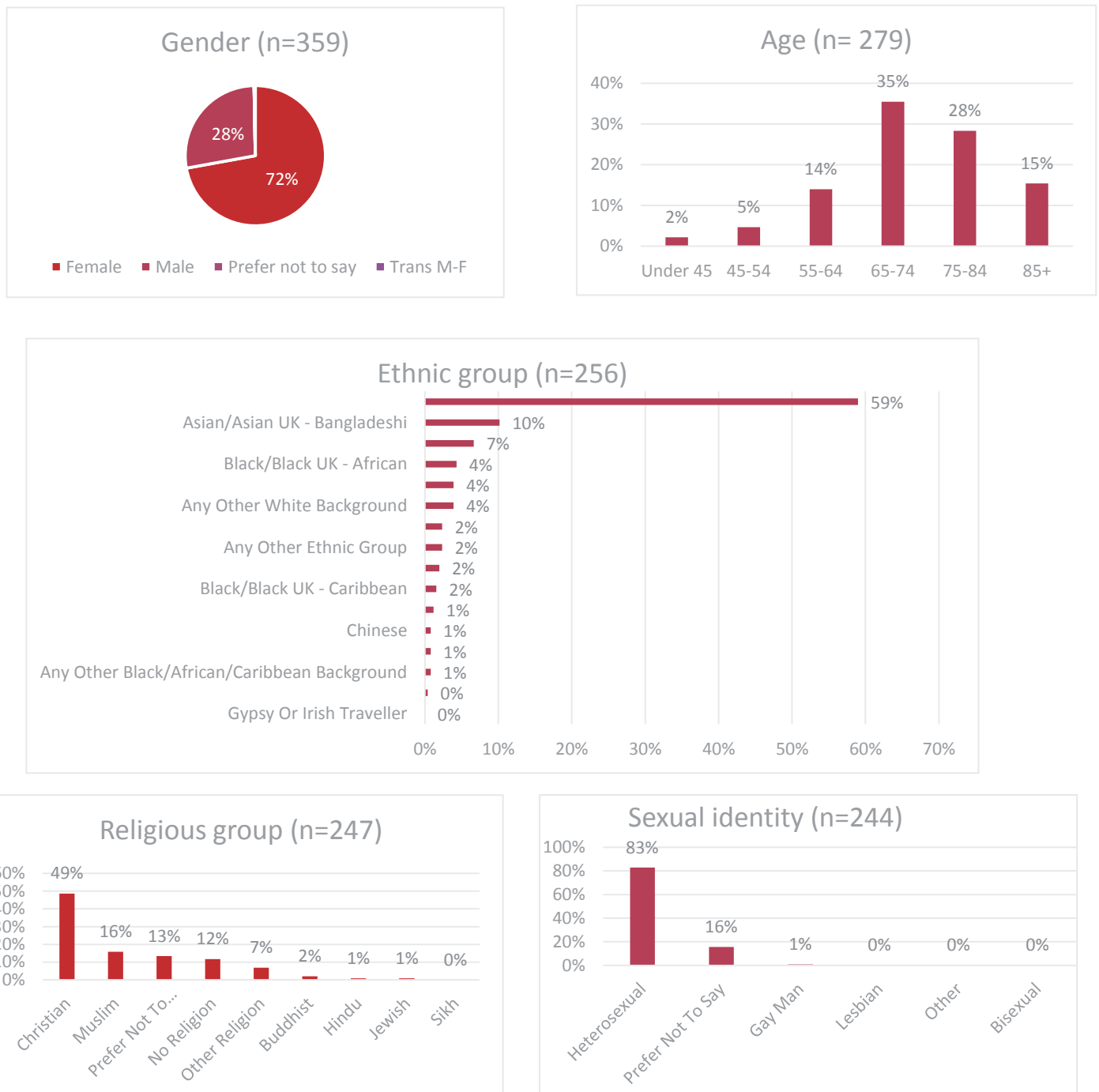
WAAB activities include:

- **Art sessions:** Often involving local artists, the art sessions are run as a safe space where participants can share personal issues and significant aspects of their lives with others.
- **Fish and chips social:** An affordable fish and chips lunch at St Pancras Community Centre, or dinner and quiz night at Coopers Lane Tenants Hall.
- **Somers Town Voice Meetings:** A meeting that allows older people in the local area to share their views and challenge new plans and developments in the local area.

6.2 About the participants

- WAAB has registered 392 participants since it commenced its Ageing Better in Camden contract in October 2016. As shown overleaf (Figure 1), of these participants:
- 359 participants (92%) reported their gender. In total, 72% of these participants were female and 28% were male;
- 279 participants (71%) reported their age. In total, 43% of these participants were aged 75 or above. 21% of these participants were aged under 65.
- 256 participants (65%) respondents reported their ethnicity. In total, 70% of these respondents were from a White British, White Irish or White Other background.

Figure 1: Summary of WAAB



Findings

Primary qualitative research was undertaken with 15 members of the St Pancras and Somers Town Community Action project.

Were specified, the demographics of these 15 individuals are:

- Gender: 14 females and 1 male;
- Age: 52-91 years old;
- Ethnicity: 8 White British, White Irish and Any other White background; 1 Asian UK – Indian; 1 Asian UK – Any other background; 1 Chinese; and 1 Mixed ethnic background.

Motivations and pathways into the project

WAAB have taken a wide range of approaches to promoting the project, and this was reflected in participants stories of how they first heard about the project. Routes into the project included:

- Advertisements and leaflets posted in the local library and St Pancras and Somers Town Community Centre;
- Word-of-mouth through meeting people who attended the project at other activities in the local community, or upon visiting the Living Centre (at which other services are offered);
- Attending a taster workshop or one-off event offered by WAAB;
- A visit to the Francis Crick Institute (in which WAAB is based) by other community groups; and
- A referral from a local GP as part of Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) services.

In addition, one participant also explained how participants had started to get other people in the local community involved with the project.

“We escorted two new people – [The Coordinator] was surprised that we managed to take them there. She was surprised we’d done this, she’d tried before. I am good at influencing people – they are lonely, they say they can’t do this and can’t do that – we encourage them.” – Female, 91

Participant motivations mainly come from desires to be healthier and more social. Where participants were looking to meet people, several had a specific interest in broadening their horizons and meeting people that they wouldn’t normally socialise with. This included older people of different nationalities and young people.

Experiences and impacts

Making new friends and connections

Many participants reported that they’d connected with others and made friends through WAAB activities. In particular, participants felt that the coffee mornings following Tai Chi classes and the fish and chip nights at different venues in the community were particularly good opportunities for this.

“Activities in different locations are a good idea – you meet more people. Each

group has set people that goes to it, so by going to other groups you meet different people.” – Female, 65

One participant explained that the project had also enabled her to connect with old friends in the local area that she'd lost touch with while acting as a long-term family carer.

“I got to know friends again that I'd lost contact with. I have since gone from better to better... we meet outside the classes. I was doing that with an old friend I reconnected with, but now we've involved another lady who's a carer.” – Female, 65

Participants also reported how the friendships they had made had extended beyond project activities – some greeted others on the street, several had exchanged phone numbers and regularly called each other, while a few had started to meet on their own accord for coffee or to go shopping in charity shops together.

“You connect with other people. I met people in the session and then you see them on the street and have a coffee with them.” – Male, 70

One participant explained that she felt that she had more of a support network to draw on as a result of this, while another described how she now received support at home from a young volunteer that she had befriended.

Improved wellbeing

Several participants felt they had improved their physical and mental wellbeing through their involvement with WAAB. Beyond the physical benefits of exercise classes, which had helped one participant recover from a shoulder injury, several participants reported that participating in project activities had helped improved their confidence. For one participant, this had helped them move into a local voluntary role:

“I went to the confidence building workshops when I joined. We had to do interviewing skills. That was very good... that helped me get a job as a volunteer.” Female, 68

In particular, several participants felt that the art sessions provided them with a space where they could relax and de-stress. Participants ascribed this to not only the activity itself, but also the freedom that they were provided within sessions in terms of undertaking activities at their own pace.

“It's something to look forward to – as soon as you come in you are relaxed. It brings you into a zone where there's nobody on your back.” – Male, 70

Sharing and learning skills

Participants were enthusiastic about how the activities had enabled them to try new activities, learn new skills or, in some cases, simply reignite old passions. The sense of fulfilment that came from these experiences was also felt to connect to improved wellbeing.

“And I loved going to the skip garden – I loved the energy. It's expanding my brain... I was so motivated that I bought a book about herbs after the visit. Feeds into my healthy living approach.” – Female, 67

For one participant, the project had also enabled her to share with others her knowledge of the importance of healthy eating and how to prepare simple, affordable healthy meals.

“I have been bringing sandwiches and demonstrated healthy cooking, this went down really well. People found it quite interesting. Learning more and sharing my passion has improved my wellbeing” – Female, 68

Becoming more active outside your home

While many of the participants interviewed were already active in the local community, several participants commented that participating in WAAB activities had made them more active.

“We went to Worthing... it was fun. I could go on the train myself, but it wouldn't be the same. It's about the camaraderie.” – Female, 67

Where this was the case, participants often commented that the proximity of activities to their homes and the attraction of undertaking activities in the company of others were significant incentives in helping them to be more active.

Building connections within and between local communities

Several participants also talked about how the project had enabled them to connect with others within the community. There was some suggestion from participants that project activities had brought people together from different parts of the community, and that activities represented a neutral space within the community where they could freely interact.

“There's nothing vindictive said to each other, you're laughing and joking. People accept each other for who they are in that room – regardless of race, creed, whatever.” – Male, 70

In addition, another participant who had become isolated due to her role as a family carer felt that WAAB was also a vehicle through which she could help others facing similar challenges.

“There are people that I can help. There are people here who are carers themselves – and having been through what I've been through, I can see in some of them that they were in the same trap I was in.” – Female, 65

Reflections on the project

Reflections about staff

Participants felt that the approach of the Project Coordinator to the role was one of the defining aspects of the project. Participants felt that the Coordinator was 'one of the family', referencing her regular involvement with activities and the amount of time that she dedicated to supporting individual participants. In particular, several participants spoke about how the Coordinator enabled their participation in the project through regular communication.

“We're older, we forget things. The idea of someone giving you a prompt is great. Not everyone has a computer – we won't get that email, but we will get that text or call. It also makes us feel like someone is taking care of us.” – Female, 52

For some, this attention also facilitated their involvement in how the project was

run. Several participants mentioned how they felt the Coordinator was always open to suggestions and gave examples of where they had proposed new activities or changes to existing activities that were acted upon. For example, one participant explained how the Coordinator had helped one group organise their own art class after the teacher left.

“The teacher left a couple of months ago, we’ve been organising it ourselves ever since. [The Coordinator] has been supporting us and organising for guest teachers to come in, but we’re leading the group now.” – Female, 65

Reflections on activities

Almost all participants felt that WAAB activities were accessible, inclusive and easy to take part in. In particular, most participants commented on the warm welcome that they received the first time they attended an activity.

“The coordinator was so glad that I turned up, that made me feel welcome. She didn’t know me, I didn’t know her, but she was so happy that I came along.” – Female, 64

Several participants reported that either the Coordinator or other attendees had made a conscious effort to talk with them, involve them and show them around the Living Centre or another venue.

“New people, you have to speak to them to bring them out of themselves, you don’t just let them sit there, you help them, make them feel involved, that they are one of us.” – Female, 91

While most activities were within walking distance of people’s homes, several participants also commented on the support that the project provided less mobile people in terms of travel. For example, a select number of attendees having access to paid-for taxi cards.

Suggested improvements

Many participants agreed that more people in the local community could benefit from the project, and that free taster days were a good vehicle to increase participation.

“Maybe have another taster day, invite all of the local community centres and the sheltered housing blocks in the area. Encourage these people.” – Female, 68

There were also recommendations to keep expanding the range of activities. A few participants suggested that there could be more men attending the group, but acknowledged that they are often less willing to try things out. There were

Test and Learn: WAAB aimed to increase the sustainability of the weekly art class through transforming it into a self-run group with monthly supervision sessions from local artists. Despite concerns that participants would not attend without a tutor, members of the class have continued to attend as they value each other’s company and the sense of peace that comes from the activities. WAAB learned that the presence of a tutor was not as essential as first thought, and that members are happy to attend as long as there are structured activities and materials for them to use.

suggestions that perhaps activities like drawing and making things might appeal to them more.

There was also a suggestion that a rotation system is put in place for the trips, to stop the same people going all the time and filling up the spaces. This suggestion was also expanded to the groups in general, with people suggesting that participants might benefit from rotating between activities.

Other suggestions included:

- Classes related to teaching English as a second language
- Mindfulness sessions and finance classes
- More interaction with young people
- Sessions involving pets and animals
- More indoor activities in winter and earlier classes that don't take up the whole morning



Holding activities across community venues, and moving activities between them, enables participants to meet more new people.



Participants have started to take ownership of running project activities and welcoming newcomers, supported by an approachable Coordinator



Where certain activities such as the trips have become oversubscribed, it was suggested that a seat rotation system would be fairer than a “first-come-first-served” approach.

6.3 Case studies

Case Study 1: Harry, WAAB participant

Harry is 69 years old, of White British background and lives alone. For the past eight weeks he has been attending art classes at the St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre on Wednesday mornings.

Harry found out about the Living Centre through his work at a local community centre. It was also recommended to him by people he knew through Age UK. At first, he was not keen to go, as he had a bad experience of art therapy in the past, but he enjoyed his first session and has been going ever since.

He immediately felt welcomed at the sessions, and already knew many people there. He enjoys the relaxed atmosphere, and has learned new techniques but to him this is not the most important thing, rather he appreciates the flexibility and freedom to take part in activities that you choose.

"If you don't want to do anything, you can just sit and talk. You're not isolated. You can just sit there and talk to people."

He has taken part in a variety of activities, including painting murals, and painting on walls in the St Pancras Community Centre. He enjoys that the art group introduces new things all the time.

Through taking part, he has been able to learn from different people, and has become less isolated. At the classes, he feels accepted for who he is. He has made relationships with people that go beyond the art sessions, and now know people to speak to in the street or have coffee with.

"People accept each other for who they are in that room – regardless of race, creed, whatever."

As a result of taking part in the art classes, Harry has been introduced to other activities at the Living Centre, and is looking forward to a trip to the Isle of White later on this year. He has also got involved in other activities such as the film club, and various talks and day trips. He is involved in decision making about activities, and feels as though the management are very responsive to suggestions.

"Jess is very good... I don't see her as a leader, I see her as part of the team. She asks us, and if it can be done, it's done... and if we can't do something she always comes back with alternatives."

The sessions have made him more comfortable in himself, and have made him feel more relaxed and able to cope with work stresses. He enjoys the structure that taking part in activities at the Community Centre allows him, and this has given him more routine in his day to day life.

Case Study 2: Leena, WAAB participant

Leena is 67 years old, of Asian UK – Indian background and lives with her partner. She has been attending activities at the St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre since October.

After seeing an advert in the library for a project focused on mental health, Leena decided to attend along with her son to help him overcome difficulties related to workplace stress. Through this, she became interested in the other activities they offer, and began to attend yoga and tai chi classes. She also attends coffee mornings and technology classes, and has been on several trips out.

She was later asked to become a volunteer to support other activities, and through this she helps to champion healthy eating, bringing sandwiches to coffee mornings and running healthy cooking demonstrations. Since her mother died, Leena has had more spare time, and taking part in activities at the Living Centre has made her more active.

"When I brought my mustard and pickles they really liked it. Instead of butter, I used oil, and Greek Yoghurt will do the job for moisture. They found it quite interesting. I was so surprised that people didn't know how to make food for themselves."

She enjoys the friendly atmosphere, and appreciates that there is always something going on, and someone available to help. She has attended activities with friends, and has enjoyed making new friends, particularly on the mental health course, which had a mix of young and old participants.

The mental health project gave Leena the skills needed to help her son, and a friend who also had mental health issues.

Leena is passionate about healthy eating, and through volunteering has been able to share this with others. She has also made new friends with similar interests to herself, with whom she shares dietary advice. Through this, her self-esteem has improved, and sharing her passion has improved her sense of wellbeing. She has felt valued, as the people who she has helped and advised have reported feeling better and being more active.

Leena is concerned that some of the activities may be too expensive. She feels that the health classes in particular should be free, as some people also have to pay to get to the centre.

"The boxing was great, they all loved it, but if they had to pay, it puts people off. The mental health course would have cost £150, so it was amazing to do it for free."

Case Study 3: Alice, WAAB participant

Alice is 90 years old, of White British background, and lives alone. She has been attending St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre since it first opened.

Alice first heard about the project through attending the clubs they put on, and decided to join in order to meet new people, and enjoyed talking to people from different nationalities, and people of different ages. She had attended the St Pancras club since 1995, but she noted that the number of activities here had reduced in previous years.

Alice goes to as many activities as she can, including bocchia, crocheting, toy making, meals, singing, painting, drawing, mat making, Easter bonnet making, and befriending people in care homes in Camden and King's Cross. She has been on a trip to Margate, and was looking forward to upcoming outings to Worthing, Herne Bay and the Isle of White. St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre threw her a party for her 90th birthday last year. Staff have been supportive of her needs, offering to get her a wheelchair for outings if necessary. Although she can't volunteer she has encouraged others who may be lonely to take part in activities, even escorting them to classes:

"New people, you have to speak to them to bring them out of themselves, you don't just let them sit there, you help them, and they help us. Make them feel involved, they are one of us. I took two new people last week,"

She valued the chance to get out of the house, and appreciated that others at the centre would ask her for advice as she has been going there for so long.

Throughout her time attending activities at the Living Centre, Alice has most enjoyed meeting new people. Throughout her visits she has felt welcomed by staff and volunteers at the Living Centre, and this helped her feel a sense of being wanted that she noted was important for older people. Attending the project had enabled her to build more relationships outside of the Living Centre with the people she met there.

One of the things she most enjoyed was mixing with people from a diverse range of backgrounds and nationalities. One young German volunteer studied her experiences during the war for a college project, and subsequently helped with her gardening. She took another volunteer to Elephant and Castle on an outing to show her where she bought her clothes. She now knows more people in her area to say hello to on the street and discuss the activities they attend together. Although she had no suggestions for improvements, she felt that there was a lack of men at activities, and that they may benefit from taking part too:

"We don't have many men, only about two or four. They can be less willing to try things out, they think they are lacking in something, [they're] less confident about this kind of thing, but there are things that they'd like doing like drawings and making things."

7. Regent's Park Community Action Project

7.1 Introduction

Regent's Park Community Action Project is run by the Third Age Project, a registered charity in West Euston for older people on low income, who live on their own, or who suffer from a long-term health condition or disability in Camden.

The charity was first established in 1997, and the Community Action Project was commissioned in October 2017 and, therefore, had only been operating for 8 months at the time of data collection. Based in a neighbourhood where 11 major languages are spoken, the organisation also places an explicit focus on targeting older people who experience cultural and language barriers when trying to access mainstream services. In particular, there is an increasing proportion of older people of Bengali and South Asian origin in the immediate neighbourhood who suffer from poor health.

The project offers a wide range of activities, many of which are fitness-based and focus on improving the health of participants. For example, each week the project takes over the Samuel Lithgow Youth Centre and hosts a 60+ health club. The project also runs a range of social and cultural events to increase happiness, including a film club, craft sessions and theatre visits.

Underpinning these activities is strong ethos of self-help. The Third Age Project operates a membership model, where participants pay £10 per year and gain unlimited access to activities such as the coach trips, but are also expected to volunteer in some capacity. The project also has an outreach programme for participants unable to afford the fee, including volunteering in exchange for membership.

The Third Age project is led by a full-time Manager, supported by a part-time Project Support Worker (3 days per week). The project also works closely with the Regents Park Time Bank, which is based in the same office and whose part-time worker runs the project's weekly lunch and English clubs. As part of its work with Ageing Better in Camden, the project has made a concerted effort to increase its volunteer base, which now stands at 37. The project supports volunteers to work towards leading activities, attend a monthly forum, and operate as Trustees to improve sustainability.

The project also has a network of 18 partner associations, including four educational colleges and several universities, and Regents Park Time Bank supports a Bangladeshi women's cooperative on its premises. Ad hoc volunteers from local educational organisations assist the delivery of activities and undertake external evaluations.

The Third Age Project's activities include:

- **English club:** ESOL classes, which also include practical exercises such as getting around London.
- **Exercise clubs:** A wide range of exercises including Boccia, chair-based exercise, yoga and Zumba.
- **Luncheon club:** A weekly hot, home-cooked meal, provided at a discounted price to members.

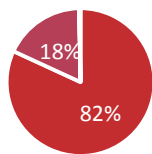
7.2 About the participants

The Third Age Project has registered 367 participants since it commenced its Ageing Better in Camden contract in October 2017. As shown overleaf (Figure 1), of these participants:

- 331 participants (90%) reported their gender. In total, 82% of these participants were female and 18% were male;
- 327 participants (89%) reported their age. In total, 35% of these participants were aged 75 or above. Only a minority of participants (18%) were aged 64 or younger.
- 316 participants (86%) reported their ethnicity. In total, 45% of these respondents were from a White British, White Irish or White Other background. 30% of these participants were from an Asian background.
- 133 participants (36%) reported their religious group. 38% of these participants defined themselves as 'Christian', 16% defined themselves as 'Muslim'.
- 109 participants (30%) reported their Sexual identity. Of these 63% defined themselves as 'heterosexual'.

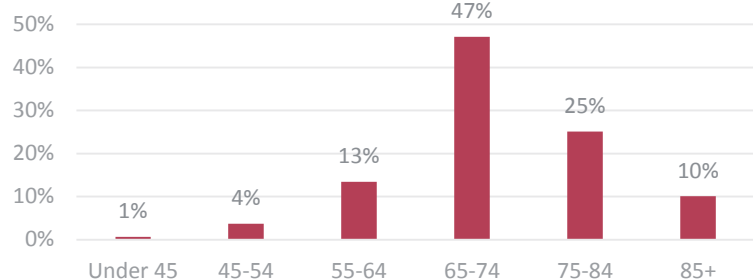
Figure 1: Summary of Third Age Project participant demographics

Gender (n=331)

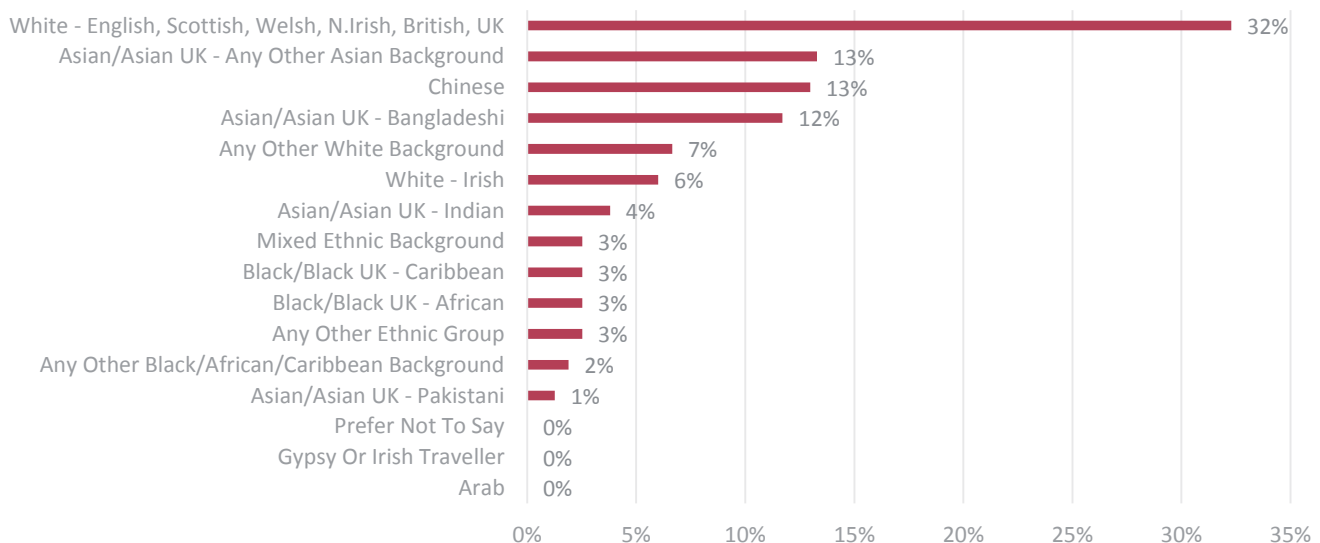


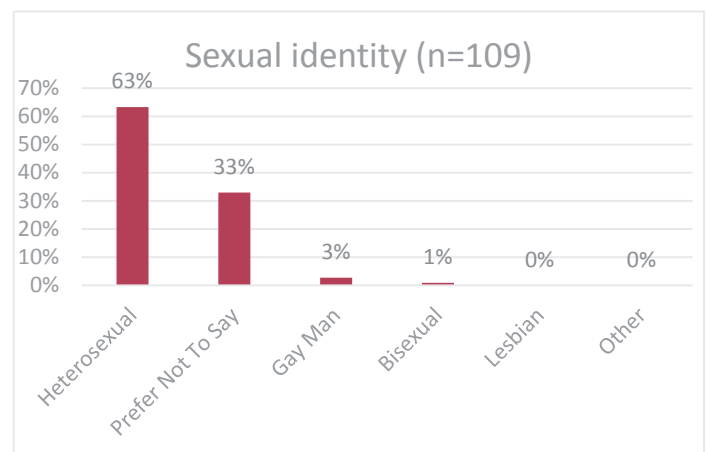
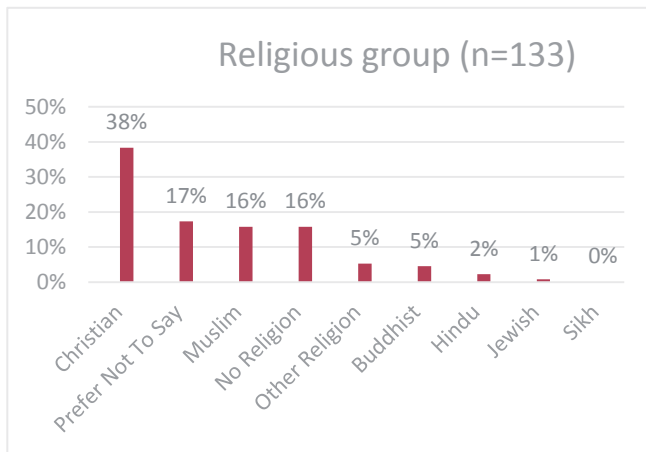
■ Female ■ Male
■ Prefer not to say ■ Trans M-F

Age (n=327)



Ethnic group (n=316)





Primary qualitative research was undertaken with 11 members of the Regent's Park Community Action project.

Where stated, the demographics of the 11 individuals that we spoke to from the project is as follows:

- Gender: 8 women; 3 male;
- Age: 62-96 years old;
- Ethnicity: 5 White British; 2 Asian UK – Indian; 1 Asian UK – Any other Asian background; 1 Any other white background; and 1 Chinese.

Motivations and pathways into the project

Across the groups and interviews, it was common to have heard about the project through word-of-mouth, often through friends – who highlighted their positive experiences of taking part and encouraged them to start attending.

In two cases, participants talked about being signposted by professionals to the specific activities. One participant was recommended to the project by her psychologist following a period of poor mental health. Another was encouraged to attend the chair based exercises by a professional at a falls clinic.

In terms of motivations, several participants explained that they had entered periods of their lives when they rarely left their homes and so had become bored and isolated. This was linked to declining health or changes in their lives, such as entering retirement, or losing a spouse. In this context the project was seen as a chance to become more active, and to create new connections and friendships.

Reflecting on what had drawn them to the project, several mentioned that they were attracted by the wide variety of activities that were on offer while others said that they were especially interested in the physical and sporting activities, such as walking, football and yoga.

A few participants said that they liked the fact that the project was located near to where they lived, this meant that taking part was convenient and did not involve costly or difficult travel arrangements.

Experiences and impacts

Participants were on the whole very positive about the quality of activities delivered by the Third Age Project, with a few noting that they were markedly better than similar offers in the borough in terms of the quality of staff, the variety of activities on offer and the quality of social interaction that the project fostered.

While some reported attending activities once a week, there were a few “serial attenders”, who took part in multiple sessions each week. For example, one participant said that they typically attended at least four activities a week, including chair-based exercise, yoga, aerobics, tai chi, boccia and mindfulness, as well as attending summer coach trips. Some of these participants made the point that the more you do, the more energy you have, and so a kind of virtuous circle of participation can develop.

“It does get you moving, compared to sitting down with a book and not moving for hours. Energy begets energy – it gets you up for doing more. I could be sitting at home doing nothing, and I find it's too easy to drift into that.”

Making new friends and connections

Many participants across the groups and interviews, reported that through the project they had formed connections and friendships with a wide range of people. In a few cases, these participants reported that they spoke to these new friends on the telephone or met up with them outside of project activities. This included a widow who previously felt isolated but now felt as though she had developed a support network of people who could call on when things got difficult.

Some talked about the value of seeing project participants when they were out and about, and stopping for a chat. Several also noted that through attending Third Age Project, they had made connections with people from a range of backgrounds and nationalities. This was felt to be important in a diverse area where people often lived parallel lives and had few opportunities to connect.

“We're all different nationalities and from walks of life – it's nice meeting new people. It's lovely. You get different views – that doesn't happen as much out here.”

Test and Learn: The Third Age Project has launched a Bangladeshi Older Women's Walking for Health club, which runs weekly alongside its English club. The club aims to enable older Bangladeshi women to get out their homes, take on leadership roles and socialise with non-Bangladeshi woman. The event is currently attended by around 9 women per week, two of whom have completed accredited training to lead the group. Participants also came up with the idea to meet other groups whilst walking in the park. The club now aims to recruit more volunteer leaders to ensure momentum and sustainability. The main lessons learned when launching a new activity included allowing participants plenty of time to ask questions in advance and persevere when initial take-up is slow.

These impacts suggest that the projects area based focus is supporting stronger communities and community cohesion in the West Euston area.

Physical and mental well being

The physical and mental well-being benefits associated with attending the project were widely discussed by participants. Many emphasised that participating in the project had made a marked improvement on their mental well-being. For example, several talked about the fun and laughter that the project had brought, another described the lift in their mood once they had visited the centre, and were making their way home. For one participant who had suffered a period of poor mental health, the regular football classes that she had embraced, had had a transformative effect on her well-being and sense of self.

“The mental and physical benefits of playing football have been massive. Like I said, I feel like I’m reborn now. With everything I do, I’m feeling fresh. I’m back to normal. I feel happy.”

When it came to the social benefits of taking part in the activities, a few mentioned that the points before or after activities offered important opportunities for people to catch-up and develop connections. This was because during the activity themselves there were sometimes few chances to talk.

As one participant became more active and challenged herself through the project, she recounted that her memory had improved. Others talked about improved mobility and physical fitness as a result of taking part in the sports-based activities.

Improved confidence

Participants who previously spent most of their time indoors reported becoming more confident about leaving their house and travelling since engaging with the project. This meant that they were more able to seek out new experiences in their wider life. Some also talked about the pride associated with developing new skills, such as learning how to play a sport, and developing skills such as sewing.

Volunteering and contributing to the project:

Many participants reported that they were doing their best to encourage friends and people they met in passing to visit the Third Age Project, because their own experiences had been so positive. There was some evidence to suggest that the project was committed to being steered by its members, in terms of the mix of activities offered.

When it came to volunteering and leading activities participants in the groups and interviews showed some apprehension. One participant said that they would be willing to volunteer but not to lead a project, as this sounded too demanding. Some in the group explained that they had been heavily involved in local campaigning around HS2 and other local issues, which had been a time consuming and challenging. For this reason, they did not want to take on new and ongoing commitments. For another participant who had recently retired, they wanted to avoid forms of volunteering that risked feeling “too much like work”.

Reflections on the project

Staff were consistently described as friendly and approachable and skilled in making people feel at ease when they began attending activities.

Participants valued the way in which staff helped to create a relaxed atmosphere, where there was no pressure to be “sporty” and high achieving when taking part in activities.

A few also highlighted how dedicated staff were to helping people take part. For example, the group noted that the project lead would pick people up from their homes who were wheel chair users and take them to activities, if they could not arrange help themselves. The project had also paid for taxis so that people could attend the Christmas parties.

Some reported that they had developed close relationships with staff over time, and had come to see them as like family members.

Suggested improvements

While participants were generally very satisfied with the Third Age Project, a few suggestions were made:

- Two participants wondered whether it might be possible to offer activities at different levels of intensity, so that people with different levels of mobility and health could choose the most appropriate options.
- In the group participants said that there might be value in increasing the leafleting and poster campaigns to further raise awareness of the project. However, some noted that a challenge when trying to promote the project was that the area is very diverse, and having a wide range of translated materials might not be realistic.
- One participant wondered whether the project could potentially do more to find people who used wheel chairs. As this was a group of residents who desperately need more social and leisure opportunities.



The area based focus of the project, and the use of mostly one community venue has meant that activities are accessible and convenient for participants. This particularly important for those with limited mobility.



The area based focus is helping to strengthen connections between residents, including between those from different backgrounds and cultures.



Participants are consistently positive about the quality of activities on offer, the impact of participating, and the efforts made by staff to welcome and support participants. Because participants are satisfied with the project, they are committed to recommending the project to residents who stand to benefit.



When it comes to contributing and volunteering on the project residents may be apprehensive about making any ongoing commitments. This highlights the importance including light touch and one-off opportunities to contribute.

7.6 Case studies

Case Study 1: Annie, Third Age Project participant

Annie is almost 90 years old, of White British background lives alone. She joined the Third Age Project (TAP) nearly five years ago, after the death of her husband. A friend of recommended the project and she decided to join to meet new people and learn new things. She now attends TAP three to five times a week and takes part in many activities:

"I've been doing things I never thought I'd get around to doing: craft – working with felt, going on outings,; going on walks,; exercise on Tuesday and yoga on Monday/Friday – I love it we've got a good tutor, bingo, films, dinner."

When she first arrived at TAP, Lilian found the atmosphere very welcoming. Her knowledge of the project has been limited, but she was pleasantly surprised at how good it turned out to be. She has particularly enjoyed taking part in craft activities, including making things from steel wires for the British Museum, and knitting.

Annie likes that TAP offers a wide range of activities to both men and women, and feels confident to make suggestions about what she would like to do. Sessions are held at a convenient time and location, and information provided about them is clear.

Through her engagement with TAP, Annie has made new friendships with people of different nationalities and backgrounds, something she had not anticipated. This provided an invaluable support network following the death of her son.

"I'd only been here three years and I lost my son. I don't know what I'd have done without this place. I came, and they were all outside waiting – they were there all the way through. [The staff], everybody."

By attending TAP, Annie has become more confident leaving the house in other social situations, such as meeting friends. She is keen to be involved in other similar projects, and has found new projects in Dalston and on The Strand. She has developed particularly close relationships with the staff who run TAP activities.

"[The staff] are so good they're like my son and granddaughter – they're so good! We tell each other things that you can't talk to anyone else about and you know it wouldn't go outside this door. We're looked after – we're spoilt really."

For people that may be interested in joining TAP, Annie believed that there was no need to stay at home and be lonely and that they simply needed to come down and give it a go.

Case Study 2: Jhumpa, Third Age Project participant

Jhumpa is 69 years old, Asian background, and lives alone. She became part of TAP around eight years ago. After retiring she wanted to find more ways to stay active, try new things and meet new people. After a friend mentioned the project and she asked for the address. She felt the exercise would be particularly beneficial.

On arriving at TAP, Jhumpa found the atmosphere welcoming, and immediately felt at ease. She now attends at least four activities a week, including chair-based exercise, yoga, aerobics, tai chi, boccia and mindfulness. She has also attended summer coach trips.

"Instantly welcome – if the people in a place welcome you in nice way, then you know. These sorts of people are suitable for the public, there's a difference between the staff here and elsewhere. The staff are very important – they're always people, no matter who they are. They don't look at your colour or whatever. They bend over backwards."

She finds the activities well timed, not too early but also allowing enough time for people to get home afterwards. The locations are conveniently situated, and she enjoys the walk to and from activities. Jhumpa finds the project leaders helpful and open to suggestions, and while information about activities was easy to find, staff were on hand to explain anything unclear.

Through taking part in TAP activities Jhumpa has most enjoyed socialising, and has built friendships with people from all over the world. She has seen significant improvements in her mental and physical wellbeing, and is now more confident when meeting new people. Her doctor has allowed her to use physical exercise as a replacement for depression tablets. The exercise sessions have enabled her to become more active, overcoming arthritis and sight problems. However, she did feel that Zumba sessions were at times too intense.

"You meet so many people from all over the world – I have friends from everywhere since coming here... We all hug and meet people like a big family – no she's black, I'm white. We just eat, enjoy and make jokes together."

Because of her own overwhelmingly positive experience with TAP she regularly encouraged friends and even people she met on the bus to become involved in the project.

Case study 3: Grace, Third Age Project participant

Grace is 96 years old, White British background and lives on her own. She has been part of TAP for six weeks. She had been suffering from health problems, and had spent eight weeks in the falls clinic, where TAP was recommended to her because of its chair based exercises. Initially Grace was concerned about attending outings, because she was worried her health problems would hold others back.

"I don't do a lot because my breathing's not good, [so I] can't walk too far – don't go on outings as I don't want to hold people back. I chicken out a little bit at the moment. I do what I can."

Grace already knew one woman who attended TAP activities, so was confident that she would have somebody to talk to. Once she arrived she found everyone else to be very welcoming. Initially she walked to events, but later was able to use a wheelchair and be picked up.

Grace most enjoys the social aspect of TAP, which has given her the opportunity to make new friends. She also enjoys learning to play boccia, and she had recently been to a tournament.

"[I] enjoy the company – I don't see many people during the week. Good place to meet people and have a chat...Mainly see people at the crypt – have a cup of tea around exercises. Sometimes meet people out and about – though not going out at the moment."

Attending TAP exercise classes has improved Grace's wellbeing, but having been unable to attend for three to four weeks she is once again affected by shortness of breath and other medical problems.

Despite enjoying the variety of activities on offer, Grace feels that the scheduling of activities could be improved, and that TAP could do more to find members who are in wheelchairs, or have other mobility issues.

"There's a lot to choose from. They give you a leaflet every month with all the activities. Trouble is, it clashes with an activity that you're already doing anyway...I'd love to do creative writing, but it clashes with the other things...creative writing, chair exercises and boccia are all at the same time."

Nonetheless, Grace finds the staff at TAP friendly, helpful and easily contactable, and feels that information about activities is easy to access. She believes that TAP is a good way of getting older people out of their house to enjoy activities, and would recommend it to others.

8. Bangladeshi Community Action Project (CAP)

8.1 Introduction

Bangladeshi CAP was launched in October 2017 and is being delivered by a partnership made up of three organisations, all based in the Kings Cross and Euston area: Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre, the lead organisation, the Bengali Workers Association and Kings Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association (KCBNA). All three partners are well-established organisations in the borough, who have an expertise and track record of working with the Bangladeshi residents.

The project has a core team of coordinators and managers, based across the three organisations who are involved in managing and overseeing the project as well as organising and delivering activities, working alongside volunteers and specialist practitioners.

In line with Bangladeshi cultural preferences, activities tend to be run separately for male and female participants. Whilst a key focus is on working with the Bangladeshi community, the project aims to build and strengthen connections between residents from different ethnic backgrounds. It does this by organising events and activities that are open to the public, as well as specific groups, e.g. community lunches and exercise sessions attended by both Bangladeshi and Somali women.

Project leads are committed to growing service user's confidence and capabilities so that they can steer and contribute to activities in different ways. This includes recruiting and growing a pool of volunteers who can contribute to the programme, including the provision of peer-to-peer and outreach to help reach new participants, helping to setup and lead activities, and supporting evaluation and fundraising. An Advisory Group has recently been established to support co-production and ensure that participants can shape and influence the project.

As well as providing advocacy and meeting participants face-to-face to introduce the project and encourage involvement, project leads have invested resource into distributing promotional materials across relevant networks and settings. However, because levels of literacy are low this approach does not always achieve a huge impact.

Bangladeshi CAPs activities include:

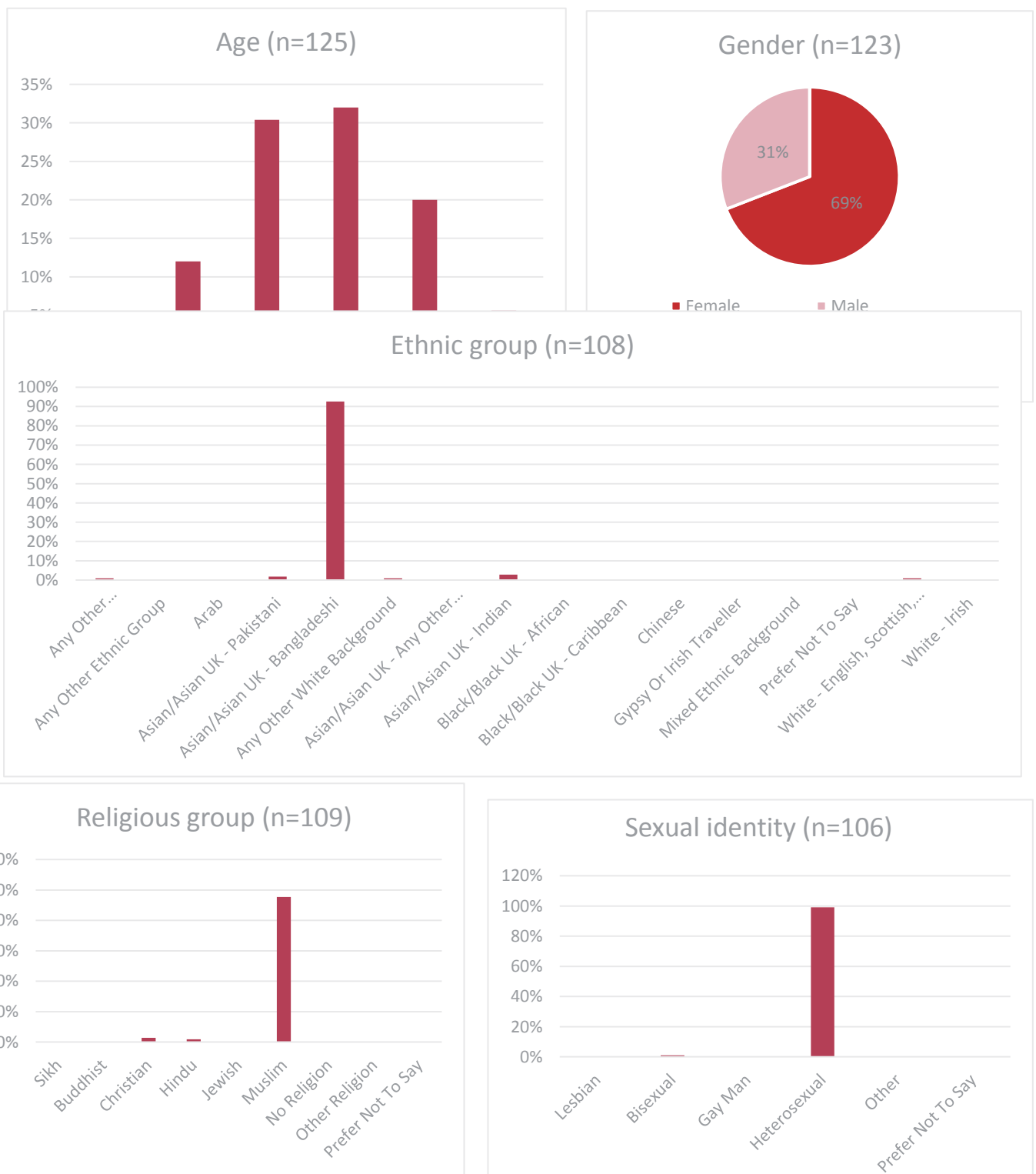
- **Sessions and activities that support health and well-being and social contact:** This includes chair based exercise classes, walking groups, women's massage classes, swimming sessions, health and well-being workshops, community lunches and social groups and a gardening group who meet every Monday.
- **Organising and contributing to events:** This includes organising daytrips for older people e.g. to the seaside, fruit picking, and attending relevant events in the community to raise awareness about the project.
- **Working with strategic partners:** the project has begun a programme of work to build strategic partnerships with local mosques to raise awareness of the project and ABC, and recruit new members. This is based on the realisation that mosques and their imams are highly trusted and influential figures in their community.

8.2 About the participants

Bangladeshi CAP has registered 125 participants since it commenced its Ageing Better in Camden contract in July 2015. As shown overleaf (Figure 1), of these participants:

- 123 (98%) respondents reported their gender. In total, 69% of participants were female and 31% were male;
- 125 (100%) respondents reported their age. In total, over half of respondents were aged 75 or above.
- 108 (86%) respondents reported their ethnicity. Just over nine out of ten are Bangladeshi, while the remaining participants are from Indian, White British, Pakistani and Black African backgrounds.

Figure 1: Summary of Bangladeshi CAP participant demographics



Primary qualitative research was undertaken with 16 members of the Bangladeshi Community Action project. Most participants did not speak much English, and were supported to give their views by interpreters. Therefore, we have not used verbatim quotes in this chapter and participants views are often paraphrased.

Where stated, the demographics of the 16 individuals that we spoke to is as follows:

- Gender: 5 males and 11 females
- Age: 56 - 73
- Ethnicity: 15 Bangladeshi, 1 Indian

Motivations and pathways into the project

The focus groups were attended by both older people who were longstanding members or visitors to one of the three different organisations delivering the project, as well as people who had joined the programme in the last few weeks and months.

One of the routes to joining CAP was for help and advice with a personal issue. A few older people across the focus groups reported that they had initially come to one of the three centres, seeking specific advice relating to a housing or benefits issues. Having received support with their specific issues, the project leads encouraged them to consider attending a social event or activity. Project leads noted that when they first come into contact with older people in this way, they often have to invest a lot of time and energy to encourage them to take part in activities.

Several of the participants from the focus group with men reported hearing about the project by attending a one-to-one introductory meeting with the project lead. During this meeting the lead is able to find out about their health and living situation and what their interests and preferences were when it came to community activities. The project lead commented that these one-to-one initial conversations are an effective way to build interest in the project.

Some found out about the project when they began attending English lessons which are not funded by ABC, and learnt about the wider offer. A few were encouraged to begin attending by their friends and neighbours.

When participants in the interviews and groups were asked to reflect on why they had chosen to take part in the project activities most said that they offered a chance for them to build friendships and to begin leading more active lifestyles. Here several mentioned that before attending the activities they had previously been suffering from boredom and had felt isolated.

Project leads added some further reflections on the backgrounds and motivations of their target participants:

- It is quite common for the older people they work with to live in small cramped social housing, so it can be liberating to come to the centres and “stretch their legs”, and take part in activities.

- The project includes a large number of older women, including widows who may live alone and have very few opportunities to interact with anyone.
- Participants often have adult children who have moved out and now are encouraging their parents to become more active and connected. However, these parents often lack the confidence and English language skills to do so.
- Many members have poor health, including long-term conditions such as arthritis, diabetes and chronic pain, which impacts on their mobility and quality of life.

Experiences and impacts

Confidence and independence

Through taking part in the activities, some of the participants who took part in the interview reported that they have improved their confidence and limited English, which is helping them to lead more independent and active lives in the wider community. For example, there were several examples of members who could now use public transport independently, go on shopping trips on their own, or say 'hi' to their neighbours, where previously they would have found this difficult. Women who were taking part in the swimming sessions also now met at the swimming pool making their own way there, rather than all starting the journey from the centre and travelling together.

Participants across the groups reported that taking part in the various activities was adding variety and pleasure to their lives, as they tried things out and got a taste for things, which they might have previously ruled out. For example, many of the female participants highlighted that their favourite activity so far had been swimming, which they would not have tried without the initial support and encouragement of the group and the work of the project lead to facilitate the visits.

Another activity mentioned by the group was boccia which had involved women from both Bangladeshi and non-Bangladeshi backgrounds taking part and mixing.

Project leads noted that the positive changes – especially those seen in the female participants – was part of a wider positive shift taking place in their community. This involved family members becoming gradually less anxious and protective of their mothers or spouses, and women becoming more willing and able to question things and take control of their lives.

Taking control

During the groups, examples emerged of where older people had taken an active role in contributing to the project. Members talked about the satisfaction they felt when they had contributed to activities in different ways and where activities they had suggested had become a great success, such as the women's swimming sessions.

In the men's group one participant talked with pride about his experience of leading the walking groups, and several explained that they were training up to be mental health peer educators, and that in a few months they would be qualified. In the women's group, individuals talked about the satisfaction they

gained from doing things such as preparing food for the socials, teaching others new things such as sewing, or volunteering to help organise the activities.

Community building

The rolling schedule of activities has helped to foster a strong sense of community and new friendships amongst the older people taking. Most said that they regarded other members of the group as friends, and it was quite common for them to report that they would speak to participants outside of the groups by telephone, or say hello to them at the mosque. Participants also felt that it was their duty to invite friends and neighbours, especially those in need, to attend the groups. They also talked about the importance of creating a welcoming and supportive atmosphere for any new members so that they had a positive experience and were more likely to return.

Improved physical and mental well being

Through taking part in activities such as the chair-based exercises and the walking and swimming sessions, a few of the participants reported that there had been improvements in their physical health, this included increased energy, strength and mobility. For example, a male participant from the focus group noted that his shoulder pains have reduced since he started taking part in the exercise classes.

It was also widely reported that having taken part in activities, participants would feel happier and in a better mood, with several noting that the activities were the

highlight of their week. A few participants explained during the groups, that they had been suffering from anxiety and depression, but that this had been eased since they started attending project activities. Many of the participants across both men's and women's focus groups reported that what they liked most about the project was the chance to talk and laugh together.

Test and Learn: The Bengali Workers Association secured a European power lifting champion and sport scientist to run chair-based exercise sessions with male participants. As well as leading participants through exercises, the volunteer has worked with individual users to identify their long-term health problems and advise them on specific exercises to help them manage them. These are summarised in individualised weekly activity plans.

While participants have reported enjoying the sessions and some are exercising in their own time, not everyone has embraced the activity outside of the classroom. To encourage participants to work towards their plans, the project lead intends to adjust the intensity and type of activities set out in them and the targets. The project lead is also encouraging participants to find buddies and do the exercises together. Another next step is to roll out the sessions for female participants.

“we need food to settle our hunger, but laughter to settle the soul, speaking to each other releases tensions and takes away sadness”

Reflecting on this point, project leads felt that their work with the older people has helped to de-stigmatise mental health; where speaking about feeling depressed

or mentally unwell was frowned upon, they have helped to shift the mind-set and make it more acceptable to talk about it and seek help.

Reflections on the project

Participants across the groups were consistently positive about how the project was organised and about the importance of the staff leading the project. They praised:

- The efforts made by project leads to being flexible and responsive to their needs – helping them resolve challenges, e.g. making sense of a letter, resolving a financial issue. Here staff noted that they were able to move beyond the role of interpreter and acted more as advocate and sign poster.
- The commitment of the project to offering a wide range of activities and to giving members the opportunities to contribute in different ways.
- The project lead's ability to create strong bonds with members, and make new joiners feel relaxed and welcome. It was common for participants to say that the project had come to feel like their second homes, and that being amongst staff and other members felt like being amongst family.

When it came to how the project might be improved, participants tended to emphasise again how satisfied they were with the staff and with what was offered. Several stated that they would really value having a few more daytrips in the project calendar, since many of them led very repetitive lives and rarely left their immediate neighbourhoods. The day trips that they had made, for e.g. to Southall and to the beach, had made a lasting impression on them.



The fieldwork highlights that the regular activities hosted by the project are leading to many positive impacts, including improved physical and mental well-being and greater independence.



There is evidence that the project is encouraging participants to take an active role, contributing to the delivery in a range of ways.



Several older people would like to have more days out included in the mix of activities, because in their day-to-day lives they go to a limited number of places.

8.4 Case studies

Case study 1 – Sathik, Bangladeshi CAP participant

Sadhika is in her late 60s, and lives in Kentish Town. She first came to the UK in 2000. Before attending Hopscotch activities, Sadhika felt quite isolated. Her son and daughter are both married, and her husband died a few years ago. Besides Hopscotch activities she has little to do with her time, as she feels constrained by her limited English and different cultural background. She first started coming to Hopscotch for English lessons, and through this she learned about the social and exercise activities they put on. She now attends Hopscotch activities once a week, using her freedom pass to get the bus to sessions.

When she first attended Hopscotch, she was very nervous and scared, but was warmly welcomed by everyone there. Staff helped to make Sadhika feel welcomed, and encouraged her to take part in activities.

Since she started attending Hopscotch, Sadhika has taken part in swimming, other exercise classes, and various outings. She continues to attend English classes twice a week. Her favourite activities are the swimming and the walking sessions. Aside from the activities, Sadhika enjoys meeting new people, and having a chance to chat to them. She had previously attended events at the working men's college, but prefers Hopscotch as she feels the activities they offer are more relevant to her.

Attending Hopscotch has made Sadhika feel happier, as she has made new friends and feels more connected to others. As a result, she feels happier about her life. She has nice memories of going on a seaside trip with the organisation. Her wellbeing has improved as she is now spending less time on her own. Sadhika is keen to continue attending Hopscotch events and would like to be involved in the project on a long-term basis. She is particularly interested in outings and outdoors activities.

Although she usually speaks Bengali at Hopscotch unless she is in her English class, her level of English has improved. She is more confident when speaking, and is now able to have a quick chat with her English neighbour. As a result, she feels happier, and more connected to her neighbourhood.

Case Study 2 – Laina, Bangladeshi CAP participant

Laina is in her early 70s, and comes from Queen's Crescent. She moved to Covent Garden around 3 – 4 months ago. She has four sons and one daughter, and lives with her husband. She doesn't attend many social activities aside from the ones put on by Hopscotch. She found out about the sessions by attending another group, where the members encouraged her to try it out.

So far, Laina has taken part in weekly sessions, and has done swimming sessions and other exercise classes. She also enjoyed a trip to the seaside, and to Southall to go shopping. Laina does not attend many social occasions, and Hopscotch can be her only activity in a week. The sessions give her something to look forward to, and she can't wait to attend. Throughout her time at Hopscotch Laina has found both staff and other attendees to be very welcoming and friendly.

Laina most enjoys the swimming lessons and exercise classes, as they offer her a chance to take part in something that is just for her, rather than something for her and her husband. She also likes socialising, and through the activities has made new friends who she speaks to on the phone in the evenings, which is a positive change for her. She likes that she can ask these people questions, or for support and advice. As a result of her increased social interaction she is more confident when speaking to new people. Before attending the activities, she didn't like travelling alone, but now is happy to take the bus to and from sessions alone. As well as giving her something to look forward to, the sessions leave her feeling positive, and good about herself.

She hopes to continue attending sessions, and would like to go on more summer outings, either to the seaside or to go fruit picking.

Case Study 3 – Khaled, Bangladeshi CAP participant

Khaled is in his mid-70s and lives in the Euston area on his own. Before joining Bangladeshi CAP he had been spending most of days indoors, watching television and had few people to speak to each week. He was feeling quite bored and lonely and he often felt a lack of energy. He has also been suffering from depression, which was linked to his wife passing away and his children having grown up and left home.

He was encouraged to attend the Surma centre following receiving some advice linked to his finances by one of the centre's staff. As he has taken part in the regular activities and the social mornings, things have improved for him.

He describes feeling less tension stress and feels as though he has escaped away from his own negative thoughts.

Now when he exercises he feels lighter. With more exercise he is also sleeping better.

Having enjoyed the chair based exercises and walks through Regent's Park and seen improvements in his health, he now feels clearer about the importance of being active and he even does some of the chair based exercises at home.

Since visiting the centre, he also feels more confident about doing chores and going out alone. Where previously he might ask someone from the centre to accompany him to the doctors or to East London to buy meat and vegetables, he now feels more comfortable making these trips alone.

9. Gospel Oak and Haverstock Community Action Project

9.1 Introduction

Gospel Oak and Haverstock Community Action Project, otherwise known as 'Our Three Points', is a partnership between Kentish Town City Farm (KTCF), Castlehaven Community Association (CCA) and Queen's Crescent Community Association (QCCA).

Established in 2017, the project aims to build connections between local people, places and nature. A central focus of the project is to build stronger relationships between the three participating centres, drawing on the history of engagement with different groups of individuals in the local community to create movement between them.

The project promotes and offers a range of interlinked activities across the three centres for people aged 60 years and over in the Gospel Oak and Haverstock areas. For example, a series of intergenerational pottery workshops that brought together CCA's history with residents in sheltered housing and KTCF's experience of working with schoolchildren.

The project is led by a Partnerships Manager and Coordinator based at KTCF, but who works across all three centres in a part-time capacity (22.5 hours per week). This staff member is also supported by a growing team of 10 volunteers, and a steering group that shape the delivery of the project and support the communications.

To date, the project lead explained that they have placed a strong focus on supporting the involvement of participants in co-design and co-production. Local residents were engaged from the initial stages of project design, identifying needs in terms of transport and informing the timing of activities, as well as the design of specific activities such as the menu for the social lunches.

Our Three Point's activities include:

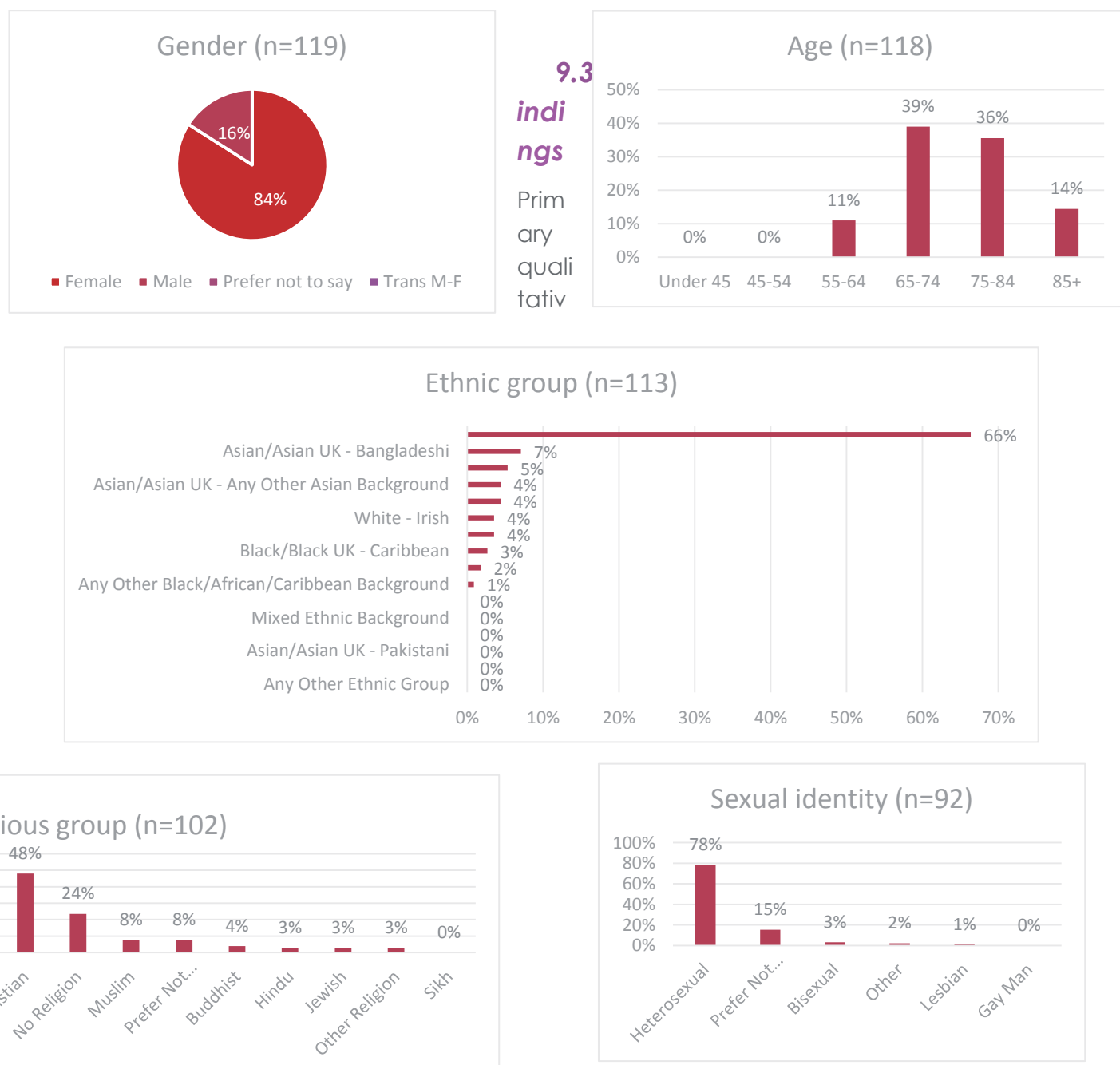
- **Knit, Make & Sew:** A class for those interested in crafts and textiles.
- **Coffee morning events:** A regular event that plays host to different activities, including a Healthwatch Camden focus group and a member-led Murder mystery and raffle.
- **Yoga and exercise classes:** A non-age specific gentle yoga class at KTCF, in addition to a chair-based exercise class at Queen's Crescent Community Association.
- **Social lunches:** a regular three-course lunch at QCCA cooked by a professional chef and accompanied by card games.
- **One-off activities:** a range of one-off and short-term classes, including intergenerational pottery workshops, South Asia dance workshops, tea dances, walks and Songhaven concerts.

9.2 About the participants

Our Three Points has registered 119 participants since it commenced its Ageing Better in Camden contract in October 2017. As shown overleaf (Figure 1), of these participants:

- 119 participants (100%) reported their gender. In total, 84% of these participants were female and 16% were male;
- 118 participants (99%) reported their age. In total, 50% of these participants were aged 75 or above. Only a minority of participants (11%) were aged 64 or younger.
- 113 participants (95%) reported their ethnicity. In total, 7% of these respondents were from a White British, White Irish or White Other background.

Figure 1: Summary of participant demographics



Primary qualitative research was undertaken with 9 members of the Our Three Points project.

Where stated, the demographics of the 9 individuals that we spoke to is as follows:

- Gender: 9 females; 0 males;
- Age: 55-80 years old;
- Ethnicity: 7 White British; 1 Asian UK – Indian; and 1 Asian UK – Any other Asian background.

Motivations and pathways into the project

Participants from across the three centres and different activities had heard about the project in a variety of ways. These included:

- Online activity, including the Kentish Town City Farm Twitter feed and the Nextdoor neighbourhood forum;
- Attending a taster workshop or one-off event offered by Our Three Points at one of the three centres. For example, the tea dance or Indian dance workshop taster; or
- Our Three Points leaflets available at the three centres; and
- Word-of-mouth

Beyond personal interest in the activities, motivations for participating in Our Three Point activities also varied between individuals, but included:

- Proximity of the classes at the local community centres, compared to existing activities that are further from home and less convenient;
- Improving physical fitness to help alleviate long-term health conditions such as arthritis and mobility problems;
- An opportunity to return to once loved activities after a period of ill-health, particularly in terms of the gentle yoga classes that offer a gentler programme than local gyms and other providers; and
- Meeting new people and getting involved in volunteering.

Experiences and impacts

All those interviewed had taken part in a physical activity of some description, including yoga, chair exercise and dance classes, as well as the tea dance. Several participants were also involved with other activities such as the coffee morning.

Improved physical wellbeing

Classes involving easy-to-medium exercise were felt to be accessible to all and have a range of physical benefits, including increased flexibility and weight loss:

“There is a chair-based exercise class. I am overweight and diabetic – I’m a bit scared about going all out into over-enthusiastic exercising. I would like to get more maneuverability into my life and I think chair-based exercise classes are an excellent way for me to start gently.” – Female, 65

Certain classes such as the Indian dance workshops were also felt to have specific benefits as they activated seldom used muscle groups.

In addition, the lack of required equipment within classes meant that several participants were practicing the exercises in their own time at home.

“I had a knee replacement and doing the exercises prior to that helped to build up the muscles. My recovery was very good.” – Female, 80

Improved mental wellbeing

Some participants also felt that the classes had had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing. Beyond the meditative nature of the exercises involved, several participants felt that the activities had empowered them:

“It brought back all the memories of all the things that I can do. I started playing my music again and listening to things that lift my spirit a bit. It had that positive impact on me.” – Female, 63

“I’ve had some pretty scary health stuff... you can go on the forums and read all day about the health things and think, “is that going to be me tomorrow?”. This class has helped me define myself as someone who goes to yoga and does yoga, rather than someone who’s ill and can’t do anything.” – Female 2, 63

In addition, one participant at gentle yoga pointed out the mental benefits of exercising around other age groups:

“Gentle yoga on Tuesdays isn’t age-specific – that can actually boost your confidence. You think, ‘I’m not so bad’ when you’re doing yoga alongside people in their early 40s... Although I think the single age group classes are good for people who are a bit more shy or hesitant.” – Female, 74

Meeting new people

Several participants reported that they’d met new people through Our Three Point’s project activities. Participants tended to socialise before, during or after project activities:

“I met new people, which was one of the reasons I wanted to go to these activities, so it was a very positive experience for me. I felt I had found another gang I would be comfortable with.” – Female, 65

One participant also reported that she was now looking to meet up with several people outside of organised project activities.

“I’ve met new people at the dance... we’ve exchanged numbers and things...” – Female 1, 63

One participant also reported that, though she didn’t feel that the class was the right place to make friends, she had met people that she otherwise wouldn’t have done due to the cross-cultural nature of the activity and the attendees it attracted.

Increased confidence to engage with other activities

Several participants felt that attending classes had increased their confidence to undertake other activities in the local community. For one participant, participation in chair exercise classes had given her the confidence to join a local

gym, while another participant has now offered to run her own class as part of the project.

"I've talked to [the Coordinator] about another Indian dance class - looking at it from a health and fitness perspective rather than a performance perspective. That made me realise that I've built my confidence enough to speak to her about it - her eyes lit up!" - Female 1, 63

Being in a class of similar abilities was also felt to be a factor in helping people increase their confidence. For example, one participant explained that it felt good to be part of a class where everyone was of a similar ability, rather than feeling the pressure of trying to keep up with the rest of the group.

Increased activity

Some participants felt that they had become active outside of their home, particularly those participants who lived further away and had to walk as part of their journey. Regardless of how close they lived, participants also felt that the perceived physical, mental and social benefits of the classes also acted as an incentive to get out of the house during the winter.

"I have arthritis so sometimes I try to get up in the morning and I think, 'I don't want to get out of bed', but then I think about coming here and seeing all my friends." - Female, 55

Participant reflections on the project

Reflections about staff

Participants were extremely positive about the Our Three Points Coordinator, mentioning her approachableness, communication through regular updates and well-designed materials, and willingness to listen and get involved in activities.

"[The Coordinator] holds conversations at different levels depending on who she is talking to. Some people dealing with older people can be slightly patronising, but there was none of that about her. She believes in older people having choices - they are capable of getting out and doing things and she wants to see them get the opportunity." - Female, 65

Class instructors were also praised for their expertise, the inclusive atmosphere they created within classes, and their tailored delivery of exercises. This interest in what project participants wanted from classes was felt to be an important factor for any physical improvements to occur.

"[The instructor] always asks us for how we're feeling at the beginning - that helps her tailor it. Today we said we're tired, so there were more balances. There was not so much movement between poses, it was not as testing." - Female 2, 63

Reflections on activities

While some participants felt that several of the exercise classes were either too hard or too easy for them due to differing levels of physical mobility, all of these individuals had found another activity within the project that suited them and sustained their involvement.

Overall, participants also praised the affordability of classes and the novelty of classes such as the Indian dance workshop compared to other activities within the

local area. However, most voiced concerns about whether these activities would be able to continue following the funding period.

Suggested improvements

Participant recommendations on how to improve the project included:

- Most participants suggested working alongside GP surgeries in the West Haverstock and Gospel Oak areas to signpost towards the project, as well as placing advertisements in local publications such as the Kentish Towner or Camden New Journal.
- Several participants suggested that the project should run more dance activities, including ones that had a more communal element such as line dancing.
- Some participants highlighted the low involvement of older men within the project. Participants felt that activities such as chair exercise and yoga would be of benefit to older men, but that perhaps an alternative exercise group such as a walking group would be a good for people who weren't sure about joining a class.

Test and Learn: The relaunched Queen's Crescent Social Lunch is a three-course lunch cooked by a professional chef and accompanied by card games. Past lunches were very popular with residents, but were stopped due to funding issues. After restarting the lunches, the Project Coordinator was surprised that only a small number of residents attended. She later found out this was due to a perception amongst some that the previous club as cliquey, movement to other clubs, and loyalty to the former chef. Our Three Points learned that 'new' activities often have legacies that need to be addressed, and has since taken steps to increase turnout. For example, visiting the bingo club next door to address any concerns and encouraging volunteer input.



There was some suggestion that, in line with the project's aim, project participants are also moving between the three participating community centres to attend activities.



Our Three Points offers a range of physical exercise classes that cater to differing levels of physical mobility. Being in a class suited to their ability appears to have sustained individual's involvement in the project, and also led to other benefits such as increased confidence.



Some participants felt that classes would benefit from more attendees. Suggested engagement strategies for attracting more people included working alongside GP surgeries, placing adverts in local publications and introducing less formal activities such as walking groups.

9.4 Case studies

Case Study 1: Janet, Our Three Points Participant

Janet is 65 years old, of White British background, and lives on her own in Camden. Over the past five years he has become more isolated as members of his family have died. She joined Our Three Points to get out and meet new people, both by volunteering and participating. She first heard about Our Three Points when she attended the Castlehaven 50+ activities last year, and saw a leaflet and application form. She was attracted by the wide range of activities available, and felt that this meant there was something for everyone.

Janet first volunteered at a tea dance at Our Three Points, and found the atmosphere welcoming and laid back.

"There was tea, coffee, soft drinks and a variety of food, including clearly marked food for vegetarians. That helped with the relaxed, informal nature. It was very well organised, without the strings being seen. This can make a huge difference because people are comfortable."

Since then, she has been to social lunches, but hopes to attend the Songhaven music concert and get involved in more music activities. She is looking forward to taking part in the chair-based exercise class, the steering group meetings, the spring walks and the knit make and sew class.

Janet has found the activities to be well timed and in accessible buildings. She appreciates that thought has gone in to the target audience when producing information about events, as they are printed in a large font.

Janet's enjoyment of Our Three Points activities owes much to their staff, who have been helpful and approachable, without being patronising.

"[The Coordinator] believes in older people having choices – they are capable of getting out and doing things and she wants to see them get the opportunity. I think that is a wonderful attitude."

Through attending Our Three Points activities Janet has achieved her goal of meeting new people, and has built strong relationships. She is enthusiastic about the project, and hopes to continue volunteering and participating.

"Old people don't lose our brains, or our senses and we don't disappear. I think it's important that people see people are there and want them to be involved in these activities. People should be encouraged to keep themselves physically and mentally healthy."

She would like to see more people attending events, and hopes to consider new ways to spread the word about them. She feels that there should be stronger communication between organisations, and that this could encourage new people to take part.

Case Study 2: Anaya, Our Three Points participant

Anaya is 63 years old, of Asian UK – Indian background and lives alone. She has recently started attending yoga and Indian dance sessions with Our Three Points. In March she attended an Indian dance workshop that took place at the Castlehaven Community Centre, where she met the Project Coordinator, who mentioned that they were planning on running more workshops in future.

When she began attending the classes at Queen's Crescent, Anaya immediately felt welcomed by staff and other attendees. Since then, she has been a regular attendee at both Indian dance and yoga classes. She has found the classes are generally pitched at the right level, and that the teachers are very good.

"It was wonderful. They were really nice... the people running QC brought us all drinks, made us feel comfortable. There were also lots of people there."

Anaya has danced her whole life, but has struggled to find a class that suits her in recent years. Although she enjoyed the Indian dance classes, they focused mainly on performance, rather than health and fitness, and she found this frustrating at times.

"When you're older it's really hard to find a class for older people. Classes are for younger people... it's all energetic and fast. Your joints just aren't up to it. When you've danced all your life and you can't find somewhere that does a class that's right for you... it's really frustrating."

Through taking part in the classes Anaya has built confidence, and this enabled her to approach the teacher to suggest that classes take a health and fitness approach to dance, which was well-received by the instructor. She is now looking forward to taking part in these classes in future.

Attending classes has helped Anaya to get out of the house and meet new people, which in turn has improved her mental health, leaving her feeling more positive and energised. She has made a number of new friends who she intends to meet up with outside of the classes. She feels that attending the classes helped her to get through a difficult winter, and since they began she has started playing music again, and doing things to lift her spirits.

"Part of the idea was to get out. I would've stayed at home and been busy... but not in that kind of way. House stuff and coping with life admin that needs doing. Not dancing or yoga – things that are good for keeping me strong and healthy. I'm more active, needed that boost"

Anaya has had a largely positive experience of attending Our Three Points activities, but is concerned that the yoga and Indian dance classes will not be replaced by other activities when they end.

Case Study 3: Michelle, Our Three Points participant

Michelle is 63 years old, of a White British background, and lives with her partner. She already volunteers for North London Cares. She started coming to yoga classes at Kentish Town City Farm when they first began, and now attends once a week. She initially saw the classes advertised on the Farm's Twitter page and decided to come along. Michelle wanted to be more active, but was frustrated by the lack of activities available for those over 55.

As part of her volunteer role at NLC, Michelle had taken part in sitting yoga, which she had enjoyed. She had previously been to yoga classes at a local gym which she found were too high level, and could be competitive.

"I used to do yoga classes, but I found that the classes at the gym... the vibe is wrong, and they're a bit high level as well."

On her first visit, she found the class at Kentish Town City Farm difficult to find, but once she found the venue she enjoyed the class. One of the main things Michelle enjoys about the yoga class is that it is more relaxed, with a better atmosphere as it is a relatively small group.

This enables the teacher to tailor classes more to individual needs, and this one-to-one attention is a major positive for Michelle.

"[The instructor] always asks us for how we're feeling at the beginning – helps her tailor it. Today we said we're tired, so there were more balances. Not so much movement between poses, not as testing."

The classes fit well into Michelle's day, and provide her with a structure to focus her day around.

"Because I come on the train to it, I walk to the station, I walk here, and basically it's enough to fill in a day. Sometimes I'll go shopping afterwards... it gets me out to do things."

Her only criticism is that sometimes the mats are too thin, especially for those with arthritic knees, so she now brings her own.

As a result of taking part in yoga classes Michelle has experienced significant physical health benefits. She feels more flexible, has lost weight, and feels more energised to do things and take part in activities. She has gained confidence, and now takes part in a Pilates class, and goes to a local gym. Michelle has recently been through a period of significant ill-health, and the classes have helped her to redefine herself as someone who does yoga, rather than an ill person who can't take part. She feels that walking groups would be a good way to get people more active, and build their confidence to take part in other activities.

10. Conclusions

What individual impacts is the programme achieving?

Drawing on the qualitative fieldwork, there is evidence to suggest that the projects are achieving the anticipated positive impacts for older people. However, the extent to which these early findings are substantiated will be tested further in an analysis of the CMF data. Positive outcomes include:

Improved mental and physical well-being: As older people become more active and connected this is resulting in self-reported improvements in physical and mental well-being. Many felt that the positive shifts in mental well-being were the most profound and life changing impacts associated with getting involved. Participants frequently talked about the lift in their mood when they participated in activities and many projects have a specific focus on supporting improved well-being, whether that be through exercise, supporting fun and friendship, or improving people's diet.

New friendships and connections: the projects were widely seen as providing spaces for participants where they could build friendships and connections, and experience fun and laughter. For people who were previously isolated and lonely, following a bereavement or retirement for example, this was hugely valued. As participants developed friendships, some understood them as providing a support network they could rely upon in times of need. Across the projects, there were many examples of participants whose relationships that were formed during ABC funded activities developed into meeting outside of activities. This included friendships and wider and more 'shallow' community connections and acquaintances, who they could say 'hi' to or stop and chat with.

Improved confidence and independence: The projects have provided older people with opportunities to try new things and develop new skills and confidence. Encouraged by the staff leading the projects, and their peers, older people are relishing the range of activities on offer. Improved confidence has also been achieved as participants have contributed to projects in different ways e.g. leading activities or contributing in some way. For some of the most recent participants in particular, the act of travelling to projects and trying new things, has built their confidence and independence, which is having a broader positive impact on their lives.

Building relationships across communities and generations: There is some evidence that the area-based projects in particular are strengthening connections between people from different nationalities and class backgrounds, as they come together to attend activities at various community venues. There is evidence that the NLC projects have helped to build bonds between younger and older residents, with participants describing the greater sense of community in their neighbourhoods, that was previously lacking.

As participants grow in confidence and have positive experiences, some of them are experiencing a virtuous circle of participation, where they are increasing what they do as they achieve more and more benefits.

What are the enablers and challenges to achieving positive impacts?

Participants have high levels of satisfaction with the quality of the projects, praising both the staff, the range of activities on offer, and professionalism with which activities are designed and delivered.

Frontline staff are playing a pivotal role in enabling participants to achieve positive impacts. Across the project, the positive qualities and way of working of frontline staff include:

- Being friendly, developing rapport and joining activities with participants,
- Enabling participants to feel that they're part of how the project is run and able to make suggestions etc.
- Going over and above to facilitate participation (e.g. providing transport for people in a wheelchair, but also regular communication/reminders to participants re events – making people feel 'looked after')

Where projects have built on pre-existing groups and activities, projects have tended to take longstanding participants with them. There is some evidence that these participants are well placed to welcome and support new joiners.

In terms of programme design, enablers to achieving positive impacts have included:

- Spreading activities across multiple venues in communities, which encourages people to explore new areas and meet new people (a common criticism of old projects is that they've stagnated through the same older participants, or are perceived as cliquey)
- At the same time, holding most events within a single centre is more easily accessible to people with limited mobility problems and the familiarity may also help people with less confidence.
- Providing different tier/ intensities of activities that are appropriate to older people with different levels of health and mobility and different preferences.
- Providing activities that are local to participants. This was particularly valued by participants with limited mobility and confidence.

The relationship between long standing participants and new joiners is a theme that can be further explored in the next phase of the evaluation.

When it comes to achieving impacts, stakeholders and project leads cited the challenges of supporting people with complex needs who cannot easily be supported in community settings as well as a lack of appropriate services and support e.g. befriending services and affordable transport options.

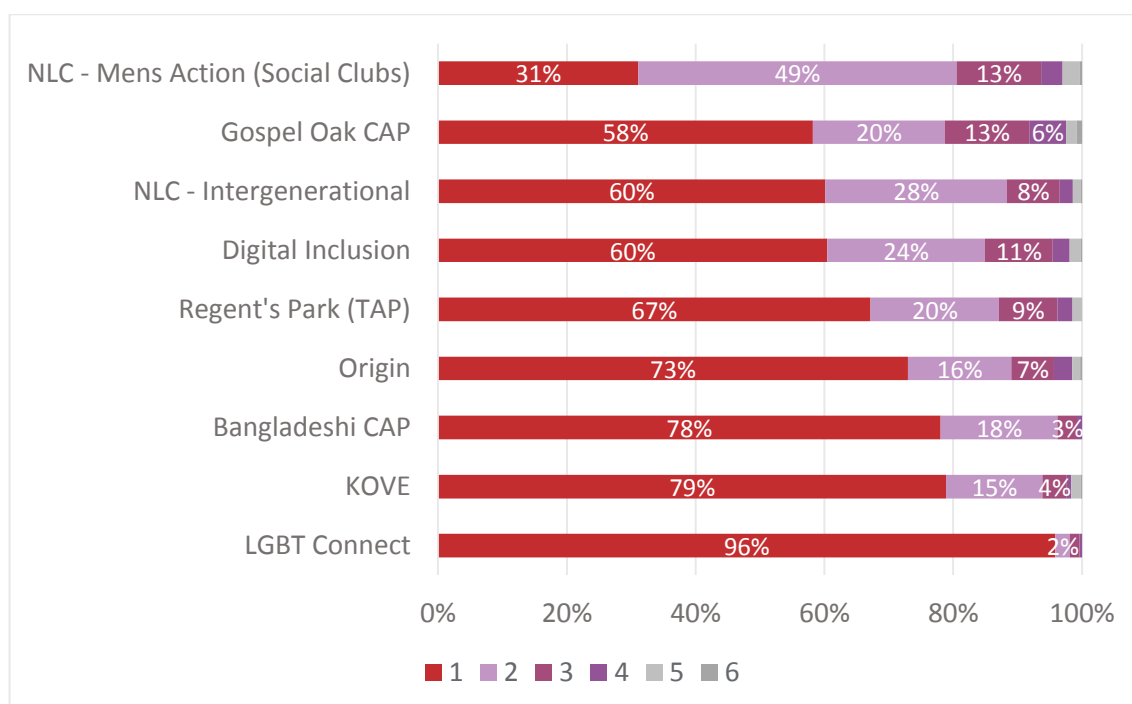
How is ABC being experienced by participants?

There is some evidence that more recent joiners to the programme primarily identify with the particular activity that initially brought them there. However, over time participants tend to build more of a relationship and attachment to the community centre or lead organisation and may increase their involvement in its activities.

While several projects appear to be seen as a vehicle for accessing a rolling schedule of activities, NLC, Third Age Project and KOVE have members who are committed to their project/organisation's strategic goals, e.g. promoting intergenerational contact and co-production, recruiting participants, taking part in grass roots community activism. In some cases these lead organisation's focus/mission statements was still felt to be influencing who was attracted to joining the projects.

Most projects have their 'super participants' who stand out, either because they attend multiple activities each week hosted/ delivered by the same project; they are especially committed to supporting their projects (e.g. helping others to attend, or doing outreach); or because are willing to take part in activities across the borough and programme.

Below we set out the extent to which ABC participants registered with a project are attending one or more projects, drawing on demographic Charity Log data. Across the projects, there are significant variations. LGBT+ Connect, for example has the highest proportion of participants who do not engage with any other ABC projects. This may be because project participants are looking specifically for LGBT activities. On the other hand, Gospel Oak CAP and the NLC projects have a high percentage of individuals who also take part in other ABC projects, although it should be noted that for NLC projects (including Men's Action) there was a lot of crossover between projects.



Participants tend not to be aware that they are part of a larger programme operating across Camden. If the programme has ambitions to be 'greater than the sum of its parts', then there would be value in exploring how to raise levels of awareness. If the programme or individual project are primarily focused on delivering a rolling schedule of high quality activities, then this may be less of a priority.

Have there been any negative or unanticipated impacts?

Across the groups and interviews almost all of the participants who took part in interviews and group discussions reported only positive impacts as they engaged with ABC projects. However, there were a small number of cases where participants had less positive experiences. These included:

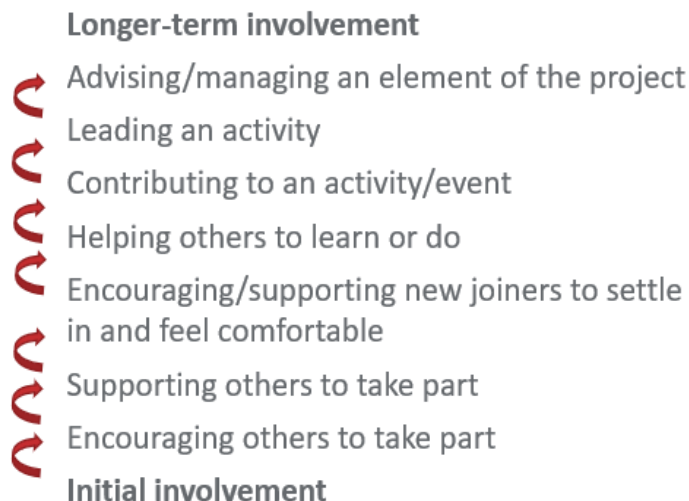
- A small number from on project who reported that they did not feel welcomed and comfortable when attending activities, because the other participants had formed established groups and were not making efforts to include them.
- One participant who reported feeling more isolated and having less to do as the ABC project she had previously regularly attended changed its offer and became less appealing and relevant to her.
- Several of the project leads reported that a lack of affordable community transport sometimes meant that older people with limited mobility were missing out on much needed opportunities to take part in ABC activities.

How is ABC supporting co-production?

In the qualitative groups and interviews, many examples emerged of how participants are informing and developing what is offered (co-design) as well as contributing to the delivery of the projects in different ways (co-production).

In terms of co-design, projects are offering both structured mechanisms (e.g. attending advisory groups, or feedback forum meetings) as well as softer more ad hoc approaches that involve identifying needs through ongoing conversations.

When it comes to co-production, a spectrum or ladder of activities is emerging. Examples include:



There is evidence that co-production is enabled where projects have a diverse range of volunteering and co-production options, including ad hoc options that are not considered demanding; and where they have an approach that supports participants to move up or down an escalator of actions.

Across the projects there were different starting points in terms of how co-production was being understood and pursued:

- There are newly formed projects that have built in commitments to co-

production and co-design from the start (Our Three Points).

- There are well established organisations/projects which have always placed co-production at the centre of what they do.
- There are established organisations/projects who are developing their practice in this area where previously it may have not a core element of their approach.
- There are some projects where participants felt that their contribution will increase over time as they begin to feel more comfortable shaping the delivery of the project.

Going forward, there would be value in looking further at how projects that fall into the above categories are successfully shifting participants away from transactional consumers of services/activities into active contributors.

Related to the theme of co-production, participants valued activities that fostered a sense of collaboration and reciprocity. For example, NLC is delivering podcasting sessions, where participants share their stories and work together to produce a podcast that is shared online. There were also several examples across the projects of participants regularly preparing food and bringing it to settings and activities to be shared by others.

Variation in delivery structures

The ABC funded projects have varying models and structures, which can affect the types of impacts and experiences that they are able to achieve for users, the roles and responsibilities of project leads and wider staff; and the extent to which they need to work with local partners and community assets.

Most of the projects have one lead organisation who works to different degrees with other local community centres and other assets (e.g. volunteers) to deliver a rolling schedule of activities and one-off events.

In the next phase of the evaluation, there would be value in exploring the relationship between different project models and the outcomes they are achieving. This could usefully include a focus on different forms of asset based working.

Bangladeshi CAP and Our Three Points are made up of organisations working in partnerships: they have a central management group, but each partner will host and deliver activities. Our Three Points is focused on building on rather than duplicating on the partners offers, and on encouraging participants to move across the different centres and activities. Whereas with Bangladeshi CAP participants have strong links with their local centres and value the familiarity and convenience of visiting one setting.

Going forward, it will be important for the evaluation to track the development of these partnerships and to understand what the 'value added' is of working in this way.

Both NLC and the Mary Ward Centre who deliver Digital Inclusion are able to thread through other provision by providing sessions in host organisations. The Mary

Ward Centre has done this mostly with ABC partners.

Across the programme, the extent to which project leads work directly with participants varies. While some project leads are well known to participants and work directly with them, other project leads act more as coordinators and facilitators behind the scenes, and activities are delivered by volunteers or by sessional workers (e.g. LGBT Connect and Digital Inclusion).

There would be value in explore the pros and cons associated with the different staffing models and structures being used across the programme.

Knowledge sharing and innovation across the projects

There is evidence that as an organisation with experience and expertise in co-production, KOVE has been working with other ABC funded projects to influence and support their practice.

Projects are making good progress with the test and learn approach, which involves trialling activities and new ways of working and then writing-up what was learnt.

It is not yet clear how much projects across the programme drawing on this evidence to inform what they do or are forming 'communities of practice'. This is something to explore in the next wave of research.

Systems level impacts

To date there has been limited evidence collected about the extent to which ABC has been achieving or working towards systems level impacts. To date the evaluation team has identified the following examples:

- Bangladeshi CAP have a strand of work with local mosques, to develop partnerships with them and use them to help raise awareness and drive recruitment to the project. Across the other projects, similar examples are thin on the ground.
- The Third Age Project has developed some referral pathways with various local services e.g. a falls clinic, a mental health service to gain new participants.

Moving forward, the Community Connectors project has the potential to make a significant contribution at the systems level: it can do this by helping to develop new referral pathways, identifying gaps between provision and needs, connecting the more vulnerable older people to relevant projects, and helping older people to join a variety of Ageing Better in Camden Projects.

Going forward the evaluation team will be exploring the extent to which projects have set strategic goals around creating systems change and are working towards them.

It will also look at the role of the older peoples advisory group and the Strategic board in shaping commissioning and planning in the borough



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