



# Working with minoritised communities in Camden: the Ageing Better in Camden approach

Ageing Better in Camden, February 2022



## Contents

About Ageing Better in Camden.....	1
What we did .....	2
Development and Funding.....	2
What was provided in Camden .....	6
Summary of Bangladeshi CAP delivery.....	6
Community Activity Programme .....	8
Summary of BAME CAP delivery.....	10

## About Ageing Better in Camden

We are a partnership of older people and Camden organisations, working together to tackle social isolation and loneliness among older people. We draw on existing skills and resources in the local community to tackle social isolation and loneliness.

Ageing Better in Camden (ABC) is part of Age UK Camden and Ageing Better, a programme set up by The National Lottery Community Fund, the largest funder of community activity in the UK. Ageing Better aims to develop creative ways for people aged over 50 to be actively involved in their local communities, helping to combat social isolation and loneliness. It is one of five major programmes set up by The National Lottery Community Fund to test and learn from new approaches to designing services which aim to make people's lives healthier and happier.



@abc\_camden



[ageingbetterincamden.org.uk](http://ageingbetterincamden.org.uk)

# What we did

## Development and Funding

Camden is a diverse and vibrant borough but also has significant health inequalities, which are particularly experienced by Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities who are often described as 'hard to reach'. The ABC solution to this was to commission specialist provision for these communities as they are 'under-served' as opposed to 'hard to reach'. By funding activities which both meet their needs and are delivered by culturally appropriate organisations, isolated older people will attend activities, create connections, make friends, and so see an improvement in their wellbeing.

In addition to members of BAME communities being isolated and under-served, often the community groups and voluntary sector organisations who represent them are underfunded and their impact unrecognised. As ABC wanted to make sure that the funding was directed to support BAME communities its resources needed to be accessible to the groups who could best support them.



Camden's largest BAME community is Bangladeshi and support for this group was one of the key funding priorities identified during the Ageing Better



consultation and bidding process. In order to make sure that the activities we were commissioning were what the community needed, and to support partnership building across Bangladeshi community organisations, ABC funded a development contract which created scope for consultation and partnership building by a team also from the Bangladeshi community. This led to the development of a project funded at £50,000 per year, which included strands of work with mosques and with older Bangladeshi women, delivered by a partnership of three Camden BAME organisations. They were able to reach isolated members from within, creating a successful project which could meet the needs of the Bangladeshi community.



Whilst the Bangladeshi community is the largest BAME community in Camden there were a number of others who ABC were also keen to reach out to and fund. In order to try and engage with organisations who work within these communities we designed our next funding round, The Community Activity Programme, for the delivery of community-based activities and explicitly prioritised bids from BAME community groups and mainstream organisations working in partnership with them. This funding was less at £10,000 per year, so we hoped it would be appropriate for smaller groups. As well as advertising this funding opportunity widely, we also proactively contacted a number of BAME community groups to let them know the funding was available and answer any questions that they might have. We hoped this would reduce the barriers created by the formal process we were required to use to distribute

the funds. This led to 4 of the 12 groups who were awarded funding being organisations or partnerships specifically focusing on BAME communities.

However, we realised that we had still not been able to reach the BAME micro groups and communities in Camden. Our funding structures were too complex. The need to complete tender documents and sign Service Level Agreements meant our funding was inaccessible.

To ensure funding reached these micro groups Ageing Better in Camden commissioned the BAME Community Action Project in 2018.

We worked with Voluntary Action Camden to enable local groups to come together to look at how this might be most effective, and that work led to seven groups forming a partnership to work together to support isolated older people in their communities.



In order to manage the complex contracting arrangements, a larger BAME organisation from the borough held the contract and provided support to the smaller organisations involved. The partners have been successful in introducing a range of social and wellbeing activities, building links and shared learning amongst the partners and their members. It has increased capacity within the groups and funded activities specifically for people from each community. Again, this demonstrates that people are not hard to reach if you fund specialist and appropriate provision or activities, so the reach is from within the community rather than outside. ABC commissioned independent research into the

development, implementation, and impact of the BAME-CAP project to document learning from the project which can be found here

<http://www.ageingbetterincamden.org.uk/bameled-partnership>

## Case study: Older people in the lead

We have a member advisory group that comes up with activities. The women wanted to go swimming. We anticipated potential barriers around access and understanding how to use the facilities e.g. lockers, showers for those who hadn't been to the swimming pool before, and we anticipated some people may feel intimidated by the premises.



It's essential for people to be supported throughout the activity including during the preparation stage. In this case that meant talking about and buying an appropriate swimming costume and booking women-only swimming sessions.

After an initial induction session, the women built their confidence quickly and decided to go directly to the leisure centre instead of meeting at our centre to make their way there.

We set up an informal feedback system with the leisure centre to ensure relevant support can be provided to the women.

(Bangladeshi Community Action Project)

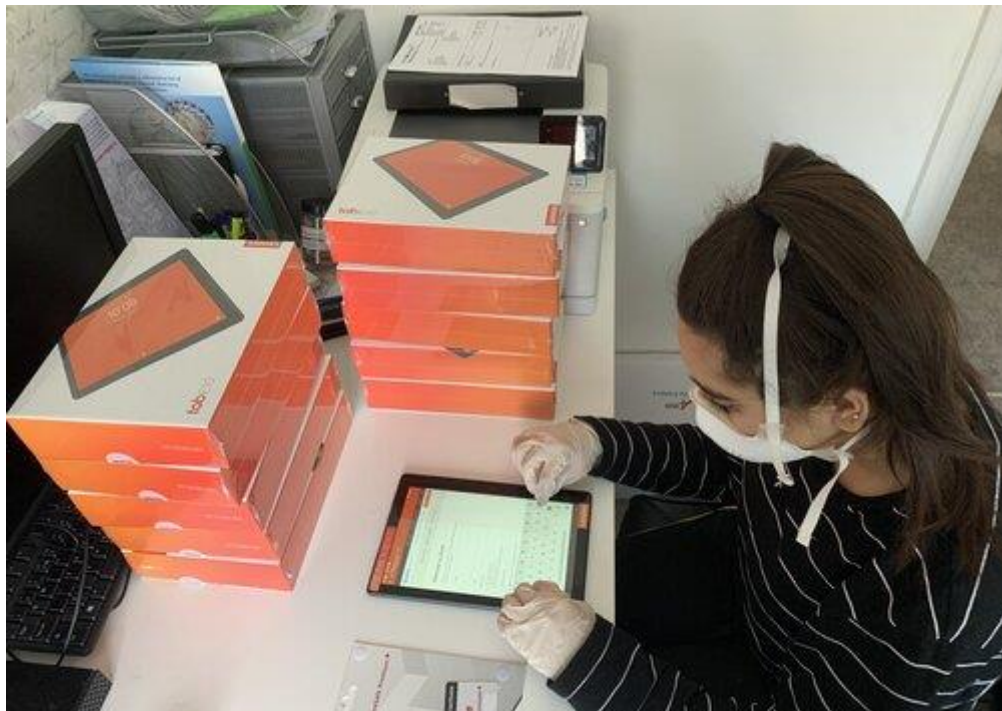
## **What was provided in Camden:**

**The Bangladeshi Community Action Project** was run by a partnership of three local organisations: Hopscotch, Bengali Workers Association and Kings Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association. The partners came together to offer a wide range of activities for older people from the Bangladeshi community in Camden. They worked to ensure everyone felt welcomed and included, and had choices about what to get involved in. The activities covered liaising with local mosques, exercise including walks and swimming with separate groups for men and women as appropriate, ESOL classes, lunch clubs etc. The project worked to keep in touch with participants and to adapt its offer after the start of the pandemic, with some activities using zoom and WhatsApp, and others taking place outside.



## Case study: Using the hybrid approach during the Covid-19 lockdown

Henna Asian Women's Group continued their 'Art, Freedom and Creativity' group for older South Asian women both online via Zoom and by posting out activity packs for those not online. Henna secured tablets and set them up so that users could now have access to the internet.







### **Community Activity Programme**

**Akash Residents Association:** The Akash Residents' Association is a group of around 40 people aged over 55 years who live in Bloomsbury in accommodation provided by a housing association. Around 95 per cent are from BAME backgrounds, mostly South Asia and North Africa.

ABC funding has led to the delivery of a range of activities and trips including craft class, weekly tea, festive meals, and trips to Kew Gardens and the British Museum.

**Henna Asian Women's Group:** Henna Asian Women's Group was set up over 35 years ago by Asian women migrating from India, Pakistan and East Africa. They are based at the Abbey Community Centre where they offer a range of multi-lingual services and activities.

ABC funding has led to the delivery of a range of activities including singing, painting, creative writing & storytelling, gardening, exercise, cooking and technology support (smartphone and tablets).

## Case study: Creating a Warm Welcome

West Hampstead Women's Centre started Legs, Bums and Tums, which is pretty heavy exercise. For someone who hasn't exercised in a while it was very, very tough. To make the class inclusive, the tutor introduced different exercises, some of which are chair based.

We buy each member an exercise mat which they can keep safely at the centre, so they don't have to carry it around with them. This makes them feel included and wanting to return.



We created a friendly atmosphere after that whereby we make a little fruit salad and a chia seed pudding, a refreshment at the end of the session, which was very popular and encouraged women to come back week after week. They would tell us, "It's well worth all the hard effort!".

The women would sit together and have a chat while they had their refreshments. The women support each other, cheering when they do a hard session! This has created real friendships among the women. A little refreshment always does the trick!

**Kosmos Centre:** The Kosmos Centre is committed to improving the quality of life for ethnic minority women, their families and community by encouraging active participation in society. Originally called Camden Cypriot Women's Organisation they have changed focus and now work with all BAME women.

ABC funding has led to the delivery of a weekly welcome café alongside some other activities such as gardening.

**West Hampstead Women's Centre:** WHWC has been active in the London Borough of Camden for 34 years. We encourage women accessing our services to fulfil their potential and improve their lives. We are open to women from all communities and backgrounds with a focus on Asian, Somali and Irish communities, which reflect the make-up of the local area.

ABC funding has led to the delivery of 'Asian Women's Health Calendar' information sessions, 'Writing Myself' weekly evening therapeutic creative writing classes for older Irish women, "Legs, Bums and Tums" keep-fit classes designed for older women and "Seed to Plate" a weekly gardening/horticultural project for older women.

## **BAME Community Action Project**

In 2018 ABC recognised that its funding had not reached micro organisations in the BAME community in Camden. We commissioned the BAME Community Action Project which would both offer support and activities for older people in their communities and would also work with and provide some capacity building for a number of micro organisations.

Our first stage was to ask Voluntary Action Camden to undertake development work to bring together and support a partnership of local groups to bid for the work. In 2018 we commissioned a partnership of seven organisations led by Hopscotch, and with the African Health Forum as the lead delivery partner. The other partners were:

APTO – African Physical Training Organisation

Cornerstone Parish

Light of Nations Mission (LNM)

South Sudan Women's Skills Development (SSWSD)

Kurdish Community Association (KCA) who left the partnership in 2019

Ethiopian Welfare Association – joined 2019

Women's Voices – joined 2020

The project ran from October 2018 – January 2022, and at the end of the ABC programme the partnership was seeking alternative funding to sustain their work.

The project activities were:

- To reach out to people who are isolated or at risk of isolation
- To build intergenerational connections
- To support or deliver activities that older BAME people engage with
- To ensure that older BAME people have a strong voice in the shaping, planning and delivery of the project
- To engage with older BAME individuals, groups and organisations to provide information and support access to local support and services

The first 18 months of the project saw a growing participation in a range of activities reaching older people who had previously been isolated. The Covid pandemic was a major challenge to these small organisations and the individual participants, most of whom were not able to switch to online communication and participation. The partner organisations and their volunteers responded by providing telephone support, food shopping and delivery, some activities via WhatsApp and Zoom, followed by a gradual reintroduction of some outdoor activities when possible.

Working as a partnership has enabled the small groups and their participants to share information and learning, to come together when possible and to want to continue working together beyond the end of the ABC programme funding.