

BRENT HEALTH MATTERS NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2025



ONE

Family wellbeing in Kingsbury

Our visit to Church Lane Family Wellbeing Centre in Kingsbury saw the Brent Health Matters (BHM) team provide advice and support to both parents and children.

Rebeka Khanom, Health Educator (at the time!), explained, "We visited this Family Wellbeing Centre for the first time, and given how close it is to Fryent Primary School, it was a great opportunity to reach parents from both the school and centre.



"We provided health checks, information about the support services in Brent and advice around mental health, immunisation and leading a healthy lifestyle.

"Having all the services and information under one roof really helps, as parents can neglect their own health as they prioritise their children, so it's important that we champion their health and wellbeing."

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TWO

Who's who

Claire Mitchell joined BHM's clinical team as a GP in December 2024. Following 29 years at Willow Tree Family Doctors in Kingsbury, Claire told us, "I increasingly wanted to make a change from standard general practice to working with groups who struggle to access healthcare, like people with learning difficulties and mental health challenges, so when I saw the advert for BHM I thought I'd give it a go."



As part of BHM, Claire supports residents at events and in their own homes, and explains, "It's the flexibility and opportunity that is brilliant for the patient. I am proud at how adaptable BHM is and the time I am able to spend with residents – many of whom haven't had contact with a GP since before Covid.

"Simple interventions such as asking questions like what the best locations and times are to engage your community can be really impactful. We are removing barriers by going into the community rather than expecting people to visit a surgery. Until you get out there, you won't know what the unmet needs are."

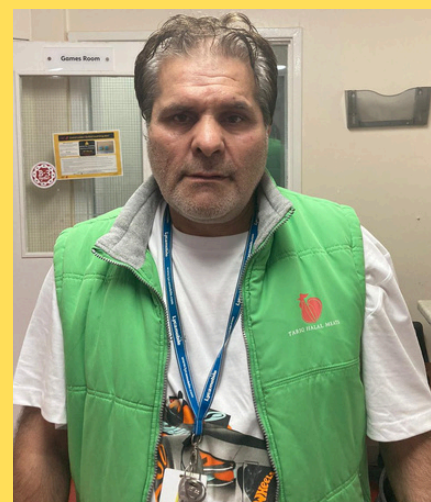
"I think our engagements at the Village School in Kingsbury and our efforts to support diabetics with learning difficulties have been really meaningful in improving the quality of care this cohort receives."

THREE

"Today was different"

Our most recent visit to Livingstone House in Harlesden saw us carry out health checks on people in temporary accommodation there with a history of rough sleeping.

They included Mehdi Avarideh, 61, who told us, "Today's event was really good. The BHM team listened to me and was understanding. I wish every service worked like this. In my experience, I always found obstacles in accessing any health service, and little explanation as to why. It usually feels like I'm bothering them, or that they pity me, which is also not nice. I have felt a lot of inequality. I believe services should make life easier for people, but the system doesn't work and it makes me angry and frustrated. Today was different. I had a great experience."



FOUR

Delightful Carnivale

The rain held off for this year’s Kilburn Carnivale (more or less!) and the BHM team managed to carry out 64 health checks on local residents drawn to the area for the festivities.

Sumbal Asif, 54, from Kilburn, attended with her daughter Nayab Asif, 24. “It was good,” she told us. “I had my blood pressure taken and everything. I live locally so I would definitely come again if there was another event in the neighbourhood.”



We were blessed with some excellent clinical support on the day from nurses Irene Gwatata and Jessie Gawan. Irene said, “It’s interesting to catch people who



are unaware of issues, such as someone with high blood pressure.”

Jessie said, “I usually see people further down the line. This is more about prevention, so I have enjoyed speaking to people.

“Some people for example presented with weight issues but they were otherwise healthy. It helped them think about what to do.”

Cllr Ryan Hack, Mayor of Brent, was also at the event and said, “Brent Health Matters is saving lives and supporting our residents in the community, providing life-saving services at a grassroots level. Extraordinary.”



FIVE

Clean Air Day

For Clean Air Day BHM visited The Carlton Vale Infant and Kilburn Park School Federation to talk about air pollution.

Kate Heracleous, Senior Nurse with the CYP team, said, "Children are especially sensitive to air pollution because their bodies are still growing. Air pollution can negatively impact children's lungs, immune systems and brains and can cause asthma or make it worse.

"Today we encouraged parents to think about the methods they use to travel with their children so that they can do their best to protect children from environmental dangers."



Linett Kamala, Kilburn Community Champion, said, "Clean Air Day is a great opportunity to raise awareness within the community. The partnership working between the council, the NHS, and the community has been amazing. I hope there is much more to come."



Mentor Isufi, 44, from Kilburn, attended the event and said, "I have seen on the news how ill some children can become from air pollution, so it is really important that children and us parents learn how to protect our families from the dangers of pollution.

"But also how we can all contribute towards creating a more eco-friendly environment."

Health bus hits the High Road

The Health Bus was out and about again, this time parking up outside Kingsbury Library to deliver health and wellbeing support and advice to local people.

Hansa Gabher, 75, and her husband Pratap Gabher, 77, live locally in Kingsbury and both are diabetic.

Pratap said, “Our son told us about the health bus visiting our local high street today. We thought we would get our health checked rather than sitting at home. This location is ideal. People are already here to use the library, to go shopping, so why not get your health looked at too?”

Hansa said, “I learned my blood sugar was quite high, so now I need to go and see my GP on Monday. Even though I am diabetic, I am only invited for a check once a year, and it’s tough to get an appointment with a GP anyway, so this opportunity has given me a more regular update on how I am managing my diabetes – or not – as it has proved essential.”



Sunita Patel, Health and Wellbeing Community Connector with CNWL, said, “We are supporting the community with health checks, mental health support and healthy lifestyle advice.

“Partnering with the library has helped to create a welcoming and family-friendly environment where we can encourage conversations and share important health and wellbeing advice for all ages.

“Several participants shared that they found the session extremely valuable and appreciated the opportunity to attend.”

SEVEN

Somali community engagement

Our work to engage with the Somali community about immunisations continued at the Unity Centre in Harlesden in June.

The work began at the end of last year and continued during World Immunisation Week in April when we listened to views and experiences of members of the Somali community relating to childhood immunisations.

The latest event allowed us to feedback the findings from those sessions, identifying barriers and issues that require further attention and discussion. By developing a shared understanding of the issues prevalent within the community we can look to address them and build trust and engagement.

Salma Mohamed, 29, from Harlesden, said, “I have attended a few of the sessions because my cousin recommended it to me. I have two children, and I wanted to learn about how I can help them to be healthy and I wanted to find out the effects that vaccination might have on their development.

“Before the sessions I had heard in my community that MMR vaccines can cause autism, and I was a bit worried about giving it to my children. Now I’m confident that vaccines can prevent our children from getting really sick and I would encourage other mothers to make sure their children have it.”



Rhoda Ibrahim, CEO of SAAFI, spoke at the event. “This project is about increasing awareness of the benefits of immunisations in the Somali community. We started this last year and began engaging with the community to find out the reasons why the vaccination uptake is low.

“Some of the challenges include language barriers, digital exclusion, mistrust and misconceptions. It is important to involve the community as much as possible and to listen to them so we can properly address concerns and provide information to help them.”

EIGHT

Filipino Independence Day

Our work to engage with our Filipino community continued at the start of June as we marked Filipino Independence Day with a special event at Brent Civic Centre in Wembley.

A festival atmosphere prevailed as Filipino culture was celebrated at the same time as the BHM Team promoted health and wellbeing messages, encouraging attendees to check on their health daily.

In addition, 78 health checks were carried out that led to 20 escalations – over 25% of those seen.



Ken Kiwas, a Senior BHM Nurse, said, “This is the first Filipino event in Brent with NHS health checks, emotional wellbeing support, and a full programme of performances. This event is helping to unite people with traditional music, food, arts and crafts and children’s activities.”

Rebecca Sarinas, aged 73, from Wembley, told us, “Today I am wearing our cultural traditional dress because I’m proud and want to share my indigenous culture and origins with our community and the wider community in Brent. I had a health check and I think today was fabulous for our community.”



NINE

In the post

Over two days the BHM team carried out 76 health checks on staff at the Royal Mail depot in Stonebridge, identifying 74% requiring escalation to their GP based on concerns.

Escalations were mostly for high diabetic risk scores, but as Senior Nurse, Romeo Esteban, explained, “We also had patients with elevated blood pressure and one that required an ECG due to low heart rate.”



TEN

In the heart of the community

An event focusing on heart failure was delivered in Harlesden, including health checks for attendees.

Dietitian, Tai Ibitoye, was part of the BHM team on the day and said, “The event was all about supporting patients who have heart failure and providing them with evidenced based information and practical tips on how to manage the condition.



“We saw a diverse population group, so it was vital that we are provided culturally appropriate information.

“One of the advantages of today's event is that most patients don't have the luxury of seeing a dietitian and we know that if they are referred, they might have to wait a long time to be seen and will have limited time at their appointment.

“We were able to spend more time with patients to answer various questions, have conversations and relate to patients in a community setting.”

ELEVEN

A recipe for success

BHM has been working with VIA, a charity supporting people with drug or alcohol problems to transform their lives for the better, delivering a new series of cooking sessions. The sessions consist of six classes aimed at teaching affordable, healthy recipes to a group of six women facing substance abuse challenges.

Our Community Champion, Claudine Thornhill, both co-developed the recipes alongside the participants and led the sessions delivered between July and September. “I like that the group is engaged and enthusiastic about cooking. They were all helping and I feel we have all learnt from each other,” she said.

Sophia Boukadir, 31, from Willesden Green, was part of the group. She told us, “I really liked the sessions. I was inspired to try these dishes at home.”



TWELVE

Welsh Harp wellbeing

We took the health bus to Welsh Harp and parked up outside a popular café to engage with the local Somali community and provide health checks and emotional wellbeing support.



In all we carried out 44 health checks, with nine (20%) leading to an escalation to the patient's GP. One patient we saw was sent to A&E because of raised glucose levels.

Zubeyda Hussein, Health and Wellbeing Community Connector, said "This is the Kingsbury and Kenton locality's first event in Welsh Harp and today we focused on engaging with Somali men.

"Lots of the men here don't regularly engage with health services and have not seen a GP for a long time. They regularly meet at this café, so this is a great place for us to come and share important health and wellbeing messages.

"BHM is working hard to make health care more accessible for the cohort. We have myself, Hassan and Ahmed here today from Somali backgrounds, and we have been able to translate the information, and I think the men feel more comfortable when they are able to speak in their own language."

Abdullahi Ahmad, 34, from Neasden told us, "I came to the café last week and my friends here told me that this event was happening. I thought it sounded like a good idea. Sometimes people don't go to the GP because we don't have time, or because they are not sure how to get an appointment. Today I felt really looked after."



THIRTEEN

Know Your Numbers

Our blood pressure awareness event held outside Lidl in Wembley during 'Know Your Numbers Week' proved popular with shoppers who took to the health bus for blood pressure checks and dietary advice. A total of 33 people were seen from African, Caribbean, South Asian and Middle Eastern backgrounds.

Specialist Dietitian, Tai Ibitoye, said, "We had four escalations with individuals having high blood pressure and we were able to contact their GP to be monitored for a seven-day blood pressure reading and for their medications to be reviewed."



The event focused on raising awareness about hypertension and how everyday dietary habits can impact heart health. A mini survey also helped the BHM Team ascertain people's knowledge and understanding on nutrition and blood pressure.

Most individuals were surprised to learn how much salt they should be consuming and didn't know how to read traffic light food labels. Many were also unfamiliar with how caffeine and alcohol can influence blood pressure.

Advice was offered on how to spot hidden salt in common foods like bread and sauces. By meeting people where they shop, the event helped make the people make informed choices about what they bought that day and into the future.

FOURTEEN

Learning Disability award

The BHM Pharmacy Team won the 'Learning Disabilities Initiative of the Year' award at the HSJ Patient Safety Awards in September.

The award recognised the role of pharmacists in supporting the Triple Aim Framework for individuals with learning disabilities.

