

# IMPROVING EQUITY



## *in Tower Hamlets*

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# INTRODUCTION



Tower Hamlets is celebrated for its rich history and diversity, however, in the shadow of this diversity are stark inequalities that significantly impact the health and well-being of residents.

The Improving Equity Programme is a collaborative initiative that aims to tackle the health and social inequalities in Tower Hamlets. It provides funding, training and support to local projects using Quality Improvement (QI) methods to address complex and systemic issues affecting the wellbeing of the community.

QI methods help tackle complex problems like equity by using tools and activities that consider different views, drivers of change, and psychological and systemic factors. QI helps to break down problems into smaller and manageable parts and test solutions. The programme hopes to create positive and lasting change in Tower Hamlets by working with partners from different sectors and sharing QI knowledge and resources.



# IMPROVEMENT SUPPORT

## Leverage Community Assets

A core principle of quality improvement is those closest to the issues are best placed to identify improvements. This project leveraged community assets and strengths by building capacity. This involved providing QI training, and funding to help community members develop new skills or expand existing ones.

## Quality Improvement Training

A lead from each project was nominated to attend the East London Foundation Trust 'Improvement Leaders Programme' a 5-month programme designed to develop team members skills in designing, developing and leading improvement projects.

## Learning Network

A learning network was established to bring team leaders together in a monthly space to share improvement stories, learn from each other and connect leaders working on similar projects.

## Improvement Support

Project teams received guidance and coaching from an Improvement Advisor, who is an expert in QI methods. The Improvement Advisor helps the teams to apply QI tools and techniques to their projects, such as defining the problem, measuring the current state, testing changes and evaluating the results. The aim of this process is to implement changes that are effective and sustainable.

# INEQUALITY THEMES



## Clinical effectiveness

- Improve health, well-being and experience of people who are homeless and rough sleepers in hostel provision.
- Improve the recovery rates of Bangladeshi service users accessing Tower Hamlets Talking Therapies.

**The projects are varied but address three core themes of inequality.**



## Access and experience

- Improving experience and support pre- and post-diagnosis for children with SEND and their families.
- Provide culturally meaningful services for substance abuses and mental health in the Somali community.
- Improve physical health and confidence of Somali women through cycling.
- To support isolated, marginalised women access opportunities, improve skills and confidence to feel integrated.



## Workforce inequalities

- Increase employment opportunities for Black African people over 50.
- Improvement employment opportunities for Somali women in NHS and healthcare roles.
- Empowering staff to participate and act against workplace inequalities and racism.

# LEARNING SUMMARY



This project demonstrates a way of working that is in the spirit of true partnership; recognising the strengths and assets of different organisations, community groups and faith leaders and bringing them together to address inequality.

## What we have learnt...



**Clear communication** and transparency of the project expectations should be communicated during the bidding process to help teams, especially charity organisations prepare.



**Funding** is essential for charity, community and voluntary sector organisations to carry out change ideas.



**QI Support** needs to be flexible and adapted to meet the requirements of each project. Bespoke training sessions increased QI capacity in the community.

# IMPROVING EQUITY



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Appendix: Project Summaries



**TOWER HAMLETS  
TOGETHER**

Delivering better health  
through partnership

# WOMEN IN MOTION

Led by: Zainab Jama and Layla Abdi

**Women in Motion employability project aimed to improve employment opportunities for 15 Somali women in NHS and healthcare roles.**

## What they did...

- Developed tailored employability programs, including training and mentorship, to enhance the skills and knowledge.
- Women's Inclusive Team facilitated connections and supported networking and job applications.
- Partnered with local health organisations to find suitable vacancies for Somali women.



"The program has been a life-changing experience for me. The training boosted my confidence...I am proud to be a positive example for other Somali women in my community."

**53%** employed as GP receptionists

**47%** referred to bank staff positions

Women taking part in the training scheme reported increases in motivation, confidence and skills following participating in the training programme. Friendship and social engagement were highlighted by participants as valuable components to enhance employability.

Poor representation of the Somali community has been identified as a barrier to accessing healthcare services. A long-term ambition of this project is to enhance the accessibility of primary care for the Somali community and improve health outcomes.

# WOMEN IN MOTION

Led by: Zainab Jama and Layla Abdi



**Women in Motion Cycle Sisters aims to improve mental and physical well-being for Somali women through access to bicycles and cycling lessons.**

The Women In Motion project partnered with Sister Cycle to support Somali women's health and well-being through cycling. The project provided bicycles and cycling sessions to help the women be physically active, mentally healthy, and socially connected. The project was inclusive and tailored to the Somali women's needs and preferences in Tower Hamlets.

**60** Somali women trained in cycling

**64** hours of individual teaching

**55%** reported increase in confidence and skills

**2** Somali women employed

The sessions boosted the participants' wellbeing and cycling skills. They felt more confident and healthier by the end of the programme. Some of them continued to cycle with Sister Cycle, showing their passion and commitment.

Key learning for this project was around providing culturally adaptive services to better reach the Somali community. Advertising and recruitment into cycling sessions worked best when tapping into social networks. WhatsApp group chats and voice notes worked well for an oral society. Training days were shifted to accommodate Muslim religious practices of fasting. These adjustments increased attendance and participation.

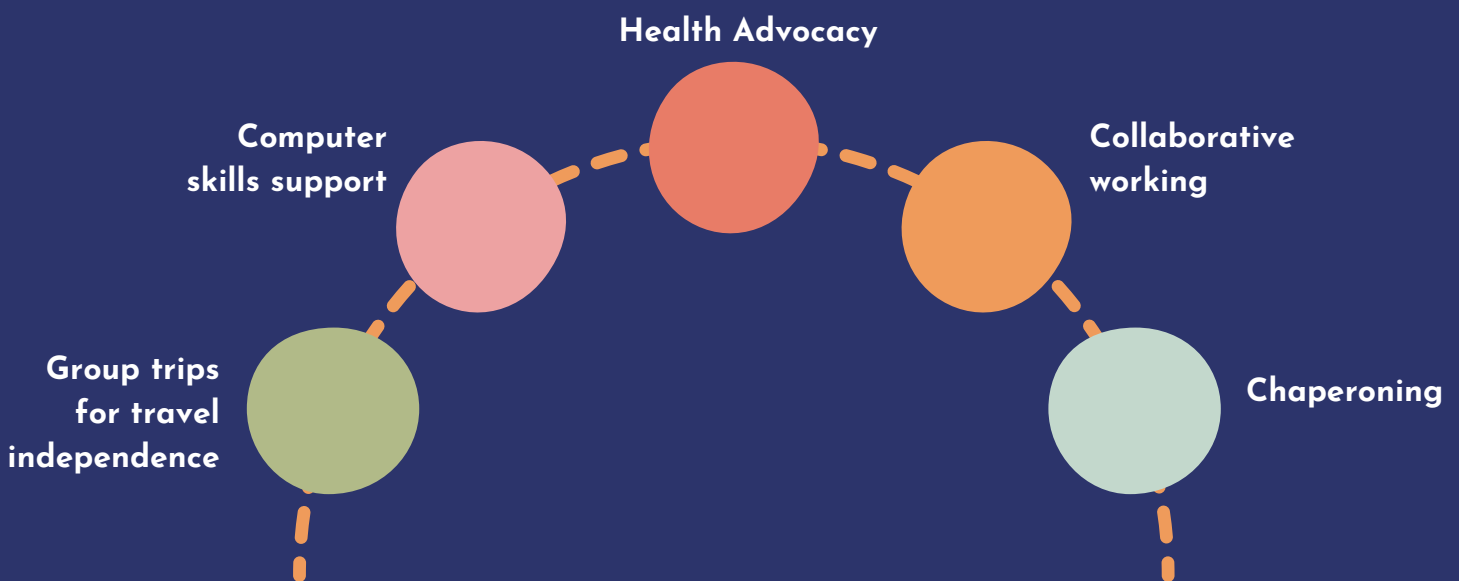


# STITCHES IN TIME

Led by: Paul Garayo and Esther Melvern

Stitches in Time aims to support isolated, marginalised women to access opportunities, improve skills and confidence to feel integrated.

## What they did...



Stitches in Time works with women of Bangladeshi origin, supporting a wide variety of needs that people have. Two project participants are working alongside staff to steer the QI work. Activities include process maps and fishbone diagrams to map out the wide variety of issues the team support participants with and identify barriers to progress.

Bromley-by-Bow

# CHANGE MAKERS

Led by: Rujie Nessa, Ishrat Sadik, Johuria Ukthi, Jessica Walker

**Change Makers aims to improve the experience and support pre- and post-diagnosis for children with special education needs and disability and their families.**

## What they did...

Peer support coffee morning.

Sensory area in GP reception.

Learning through play workshop and paediatric first aid course.

Coaching for parents to build confidence and enhance skills to deliver training.

Developing parent-led training offer for GP and community centre staff.

The project team have worked tirelessly to ensure voices and perspectives from all are heard and centred in their work – launching the improvement work with a survey out to SEN/D families to understand what matters most to them. Implementation of “quick win” change ideas to increase trust and buy-in.

**“I always feel supported with and by you all. You are all so amazing and made me feel self-worth.”**

Parents are enthusiastic about the changes being made, and feel seen, heard, and respected by the project team.

# CHANGE OPPORTUNITIES

Led by: Reverend James Olanipekun

**Change Opportunities aims to increase employment opportunities for Black African people over 50.**

## What they did...

Surveyed people on employment goals and identified needs gaps in the community:

**Employment Goals** - many people were keen to be self-employed, able to work flexibly and contribute to the community.

**Needs:** digital skills training, access to digital equipment and retraining.

**Obstacles:** being offered unsuitable employment, financial concerns, redundancy, health concerns and caring responsibilities.



### CHANGE IDEAS

**CREATED A PEER-TO-PEER NETWORK TO SHARE SKILLS WITH LIVE JOB POSTINGS, COACHING AND SUPPORT.**

**USING PEER NETWORKS TO DISMANTLE NEGATIVE SELF TALK. EXTEND SUPPORT TO WOMEN TO MEET NEED.**

**"I was blind and now with QI I can see."**

QI methods have allowed the project leader to think in stages, to understand the drivers of the problem and work to address them rather than doing the same thing and getting the same result. Measurement encourages project group to consider, "am I doing well? And how will I know?". The project has helped bring people together.

# CRISIS CAFE

Led by: Abdirahim Hassan

The Crisis Cafe project aims increase engagement among current liberatory café service users by 60-80% and attract new service users to engage with the café.

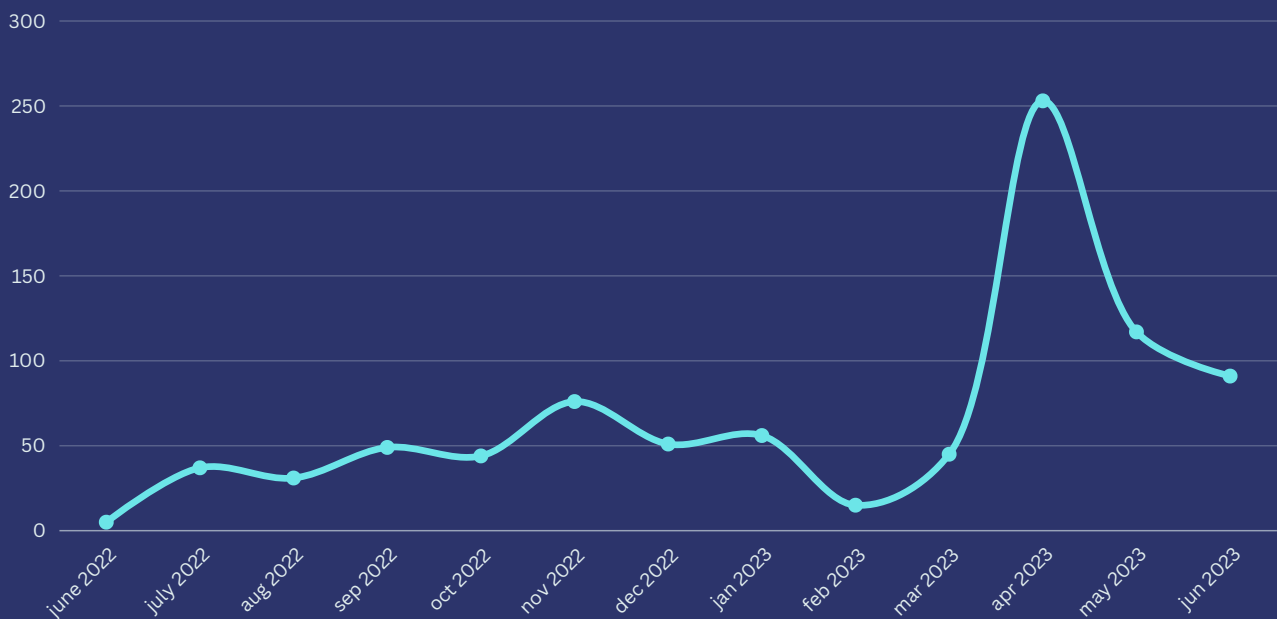
## What they did...

Tested change ideas to increase engagement in the service:

- 1) Culturally competent training and Islamic lead for drug treatment
- 2) Record attendance of everyone who attends Crisis care and feedback from 1-2-1s.
- 3) Developing father's space for service users in crisis.

“We understand how to heal our communities whilst empowering them to use their voice and agency”.

Run chart of 'Number of service users engaged' per month



The problematic drug use outreach supported 157 service users last month, most with complex health issues including housing inequity, serious mental health, physical health decline and unemployment.

# CARE CO-ORDINATION

The aim of work is to test the efficacy of care coordination MDT in identifying residents who are at risk of crisis.

## What they did...

Identified challenges and co-produced change ideas with residents. Ensuring their voices are heard and encouraging participation in improvements.



## Change Ideas....

Facilitate  
monthly  
MDT

Standard  
tools and  
approach

Dedicated  
workforce

QI principles have enhanced co-production of this project, ensuring those in hostel care are integral members of the team making changes. A wellbeing form has been co-designed to capture feedback from residents on a regular basis.

"The pilot's strength lies in the integrated and collaborative work of the hostels and across health, social care and voluntary sectors. This is what we want to see beyond the pilot - a consistent integrated (commissioned) approach to helping homeless and rough sleepers living in Tower Hamlets."

# ANTI-RACIST ALLYSHIP

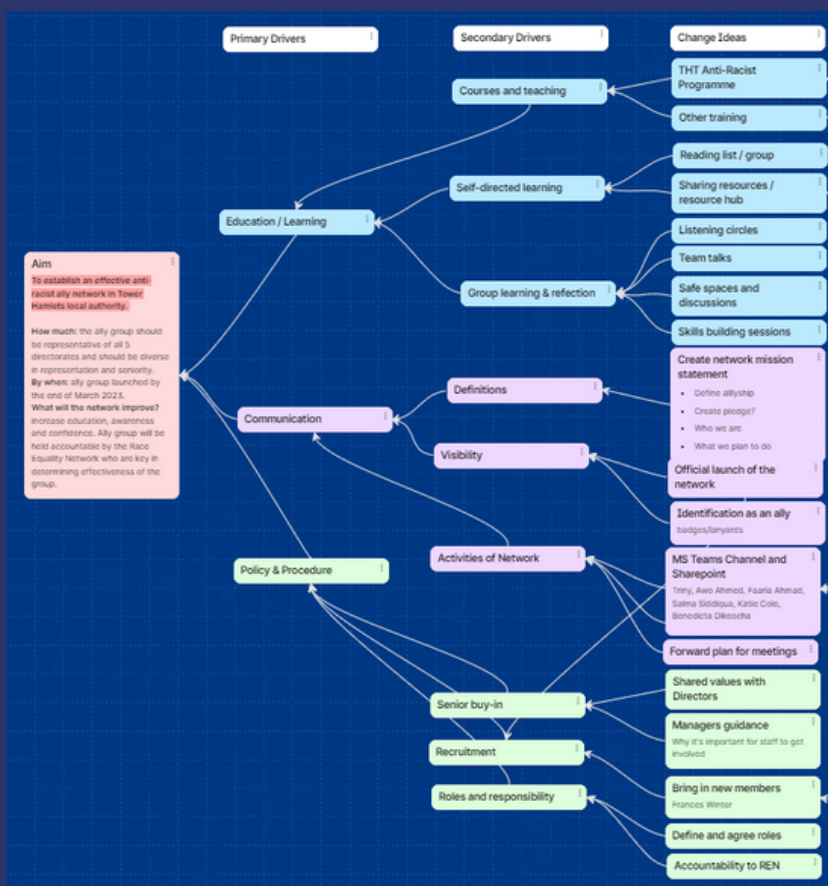
**Aim to increase the number of staff who actively work to tackle workplace inequities between different ethnic groups by developing them as authentic allies.**



## What they did...

- Force-field analysis to understand barriers and enablers of change.
- Driver diagram.
- Suite of change ideas and testing.

“Our project will be a success when we know we can bring our authentic selves to work.”



The project has created a safe space to connect and work together to address racism and inequality in Tower Hamlets local authority.

QI methods have encouraged the team to ensure the project has support from senior leaders, appropriate governance and accountability structures in place and diverse membership.

# CONTACT

For more details about the programme or quality improvement please contact the project leads.

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