BRIDGING HEALTH AND COMMUNITY

REPORT ON THE BANGLADESHI HEALTH MELAS NOVEMBER 2025

LONDON BANGLADESHI HEALTH PARTNERSHIP

NHS England London

NHS North East London Cancer Alliance

DIABETES UK
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

Healthy Redbridge
A Borough Partnership

DORSET COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION (DCA)

TOWER HAMLETS

Woodgrange Medical Practice

healthwatch Tower Hamlets

Bangla Housing Association

VOICE 4CHANGE ENGLAND

LONDON BANGLADESHI HEALTH PARTNERSHIP











TOWER HAMLETS BANGLADESHI HEALTH MELA (12 NOVEMBER 2025)











REDBRIDGE BANGLADESHI HEALTH MELA (4 NOVEMBER 2025)

CONTENTS

1 Executive Summary 01

2 Introduction 02

3 The Tower Hamlets Bangladeshi Health Mela 02

4 The Redbridge Bangladeshi Health Mela 13

5 Cross-Mela Analysis 32

6 Lessons Learned 33

7 Conclusion 33

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bangladeshi Health Melas (November 2025), held in Redbridge and Tower Hamlets, brought together over 100 residents, health professionals, and community leaders to promote accessible, culturally sensitive healthcare engagement.

Through free health checks, flu vaccinations, and bilingual health education, the Melas helped tackle misinformation, build trust, and empower better health decisions among local Bangladeshi residents, addressing persistent inequalities in preventive healthcare access. Feedback revealed that 50% of participants only sometimes feel they receive the healthcare they need, highlighting the continued need for community-based engagement models that bridge institutional systems and grassroots community networks.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Bangladeshi community represents one of the largest ethnic minority groups in East London, with deep-rooted ties to areas like Tower Hamlets and Redbridge. However, longstanding challenges such as language barriers, digital exclusion, and limited trust in healthcare services continue to shape disparities in health outcomes, particularly around conditions like diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

To address these challenges, the Bangladeshi Health Melas were designed as vibrant, community-led initiatives combining health promotion with cultural celebration. Each event created accessible opportunities for residents to seek advice, health checks, and vaccinations from trusted sources.

3. THE TOWER HAMLETS BANGLADESHI HEALTH MELA

3.1. Overview

Held on 12 November 2025 at the Sundial Centre, the Tower Hamlets Health Mela attracted 65 attendees, including residents, health professionals, and local partners.

3.2. Key Partners and Activities:

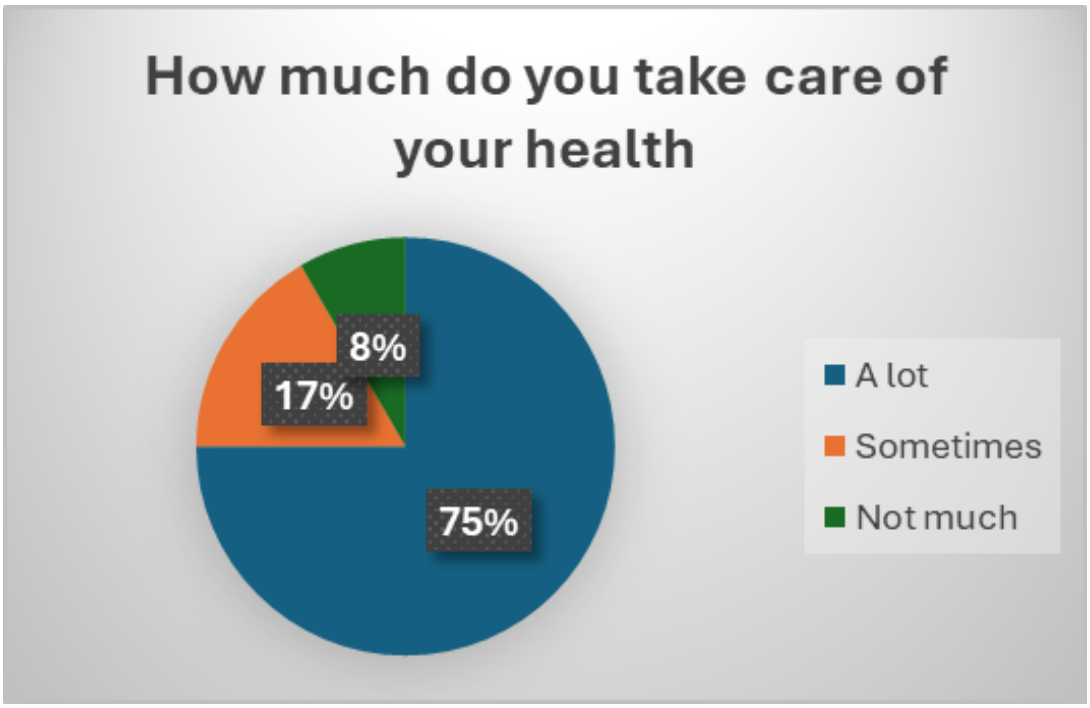
Organised by the Bangla Housing Association, Voice4Change England, and the London Bangladeshi Health Partnership, the Mela offered:

- Free health checks and flu vaccinations
- Informational stalls run by Diabetes UK, Healthwatch Tower Hamlets, Shewise Women's Resource Hub, and Vaccination UK, among others
- Resources on winter health, vaccination safety, and myth-busting dialogue

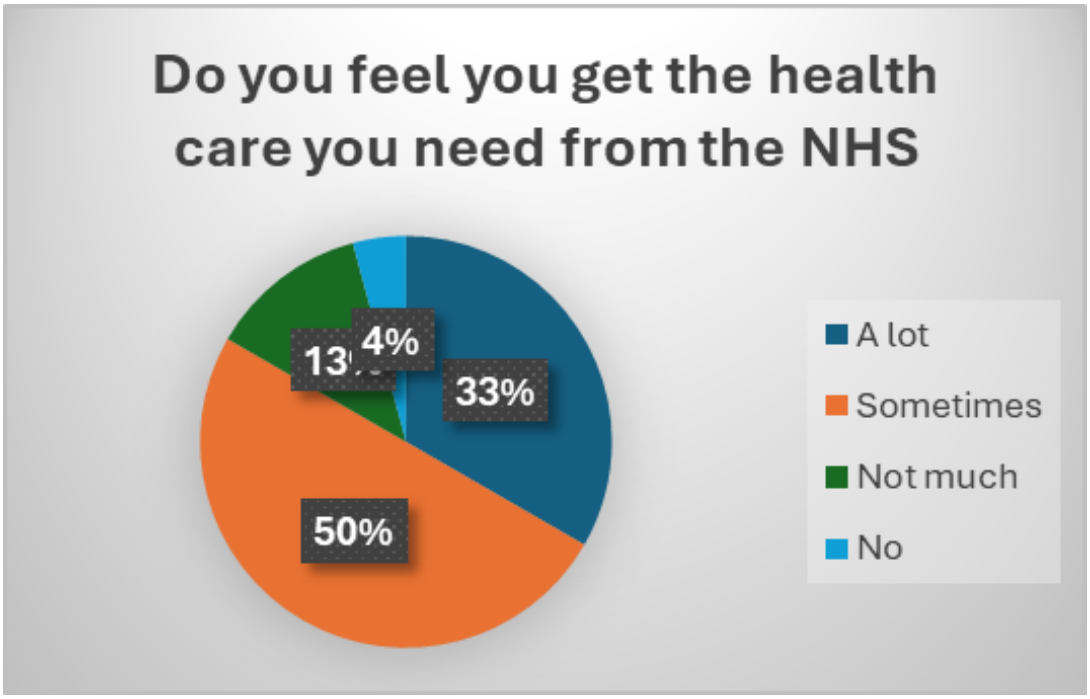
3.3. Findings:

From 24 completed feedback forms.

1. How much do you take care of your health?		
A lot	18	(75%)
Sometimes	4	(17%)
Not much	2	(8%)
None	0	(0%)

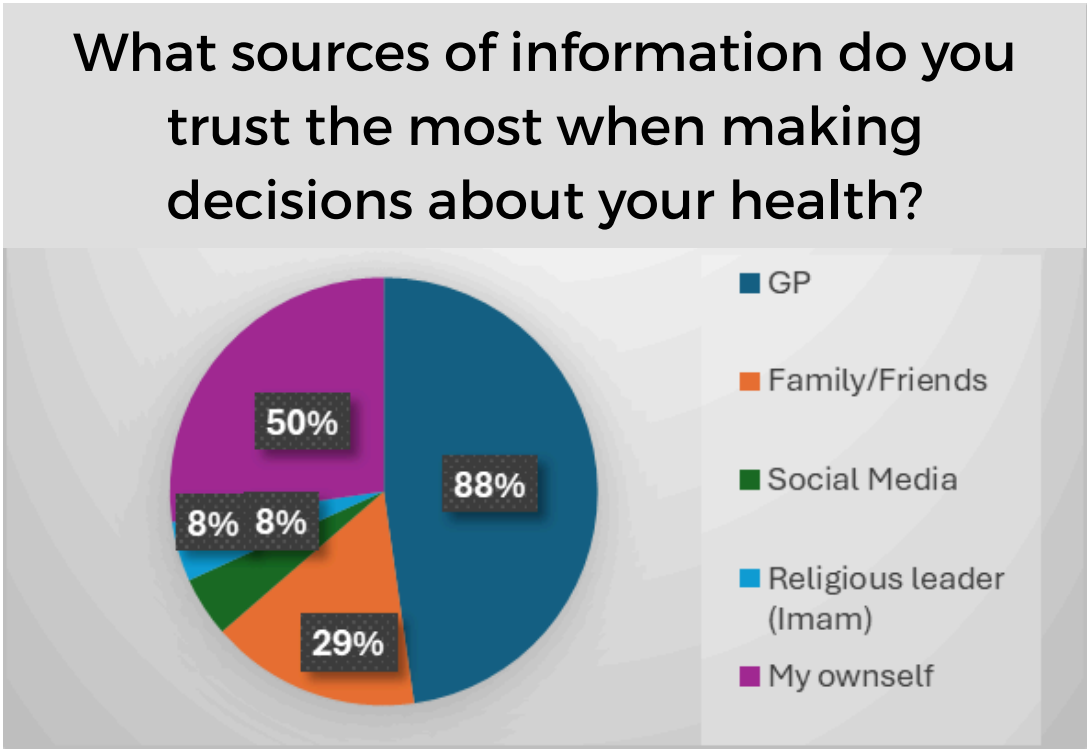


2. Do you feel you get the health care you need from the NHS?		
A lot	8	(33%)
Sometimes	12	(50%)
Not much	3	(13%)
None	1	(4%)

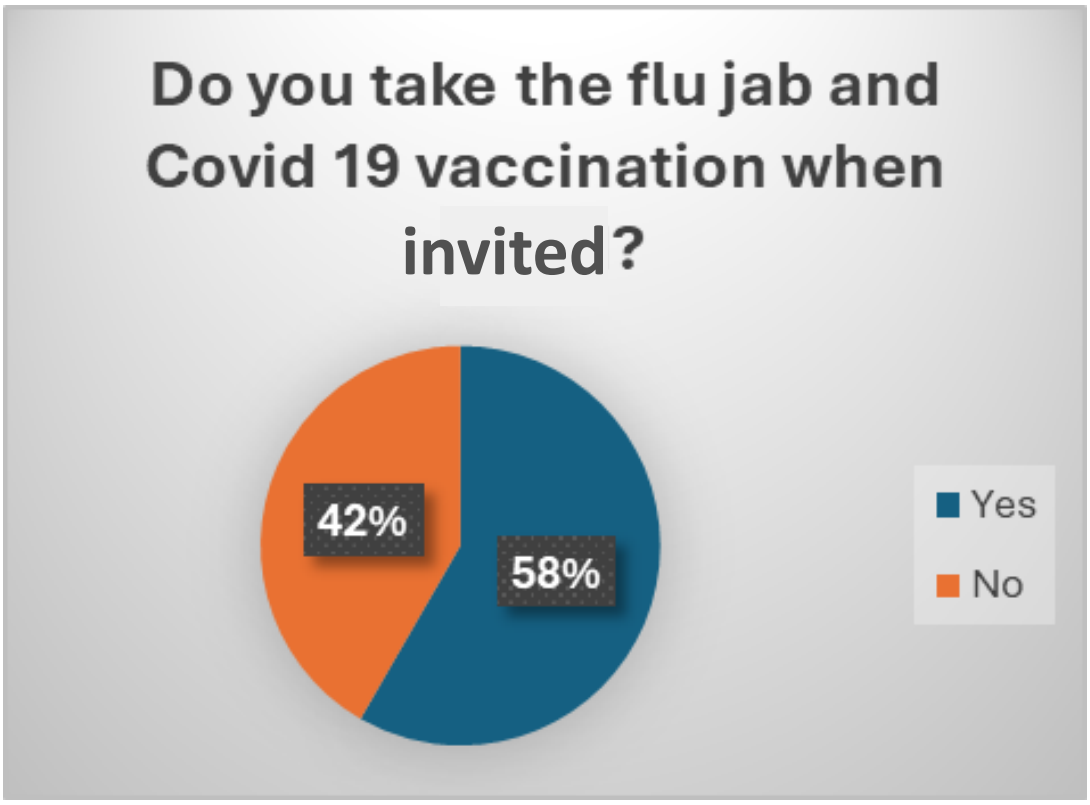


3. What sources of information do you trust most when making decisions about your health, including when taking vaccinations?

GP	21	(88%)
Family/Friends	7	(29%)
Social media	2	(8%)
Religious Leader (Imam)	2	(8%)
My own self	12	(50%)

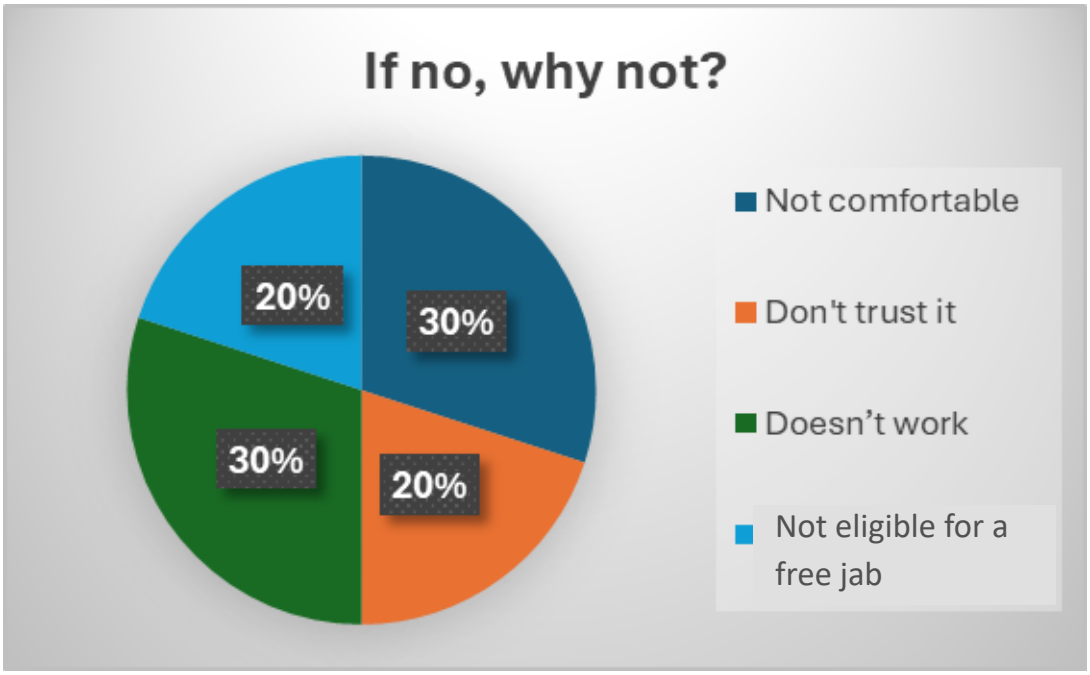


4. Do you take your flu jab and Covid-19 vaccination when invited?		
Yes	14	(58%)
No	10	(42%)

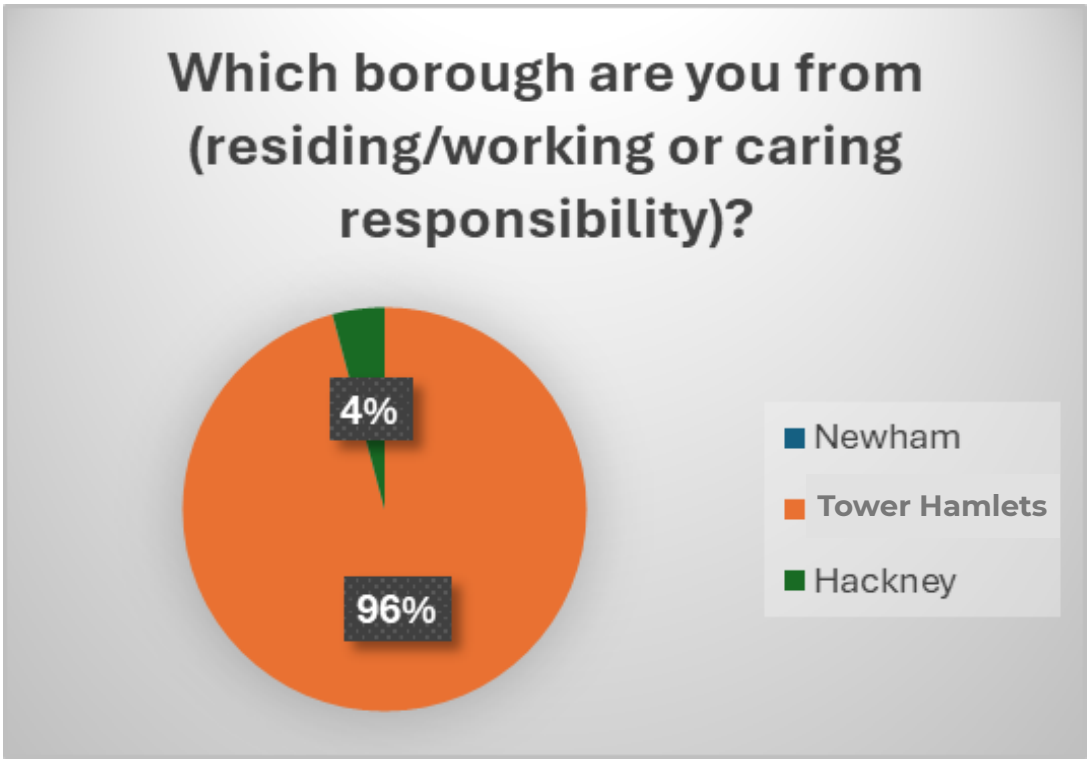


5. If no, why not?

Not comfortable	3	(30%)
Don't trust it	2	(20%)
Doesn’t work	3	(30%)
Not eligible for a free jab	2	(20%)

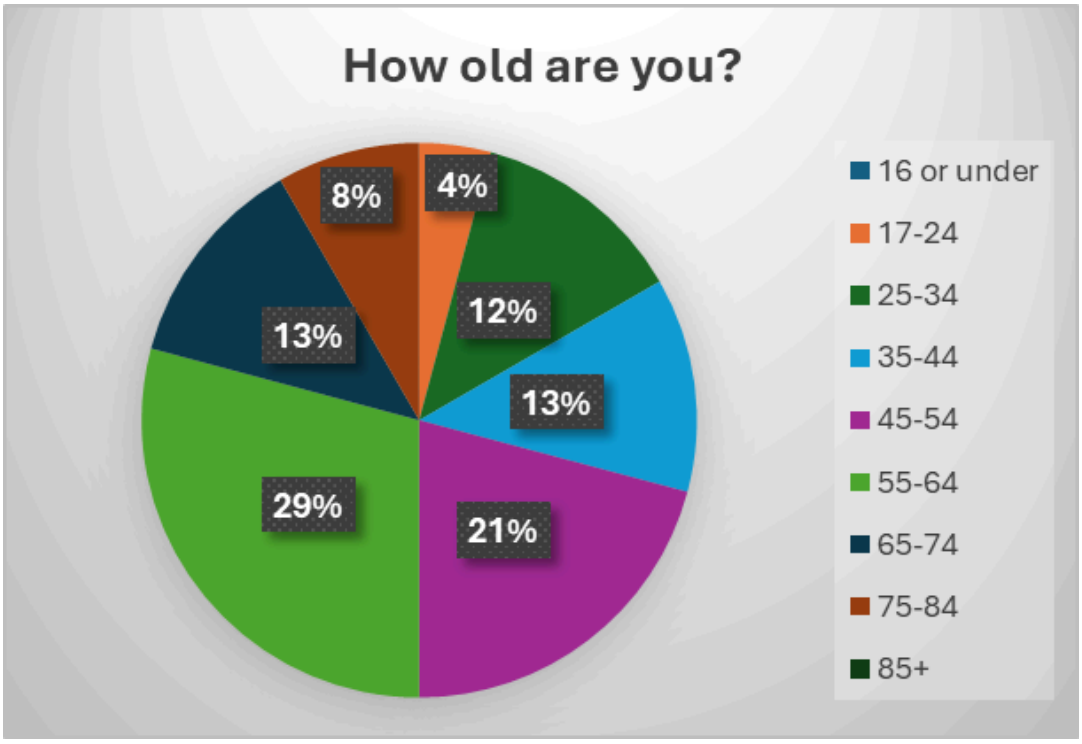


6. Which Borough are you from (residing/working or caring responsibility)?		
Newham	0	(0%)
Tower Hamlets	23	(96%)
Hackney	1	(4%)



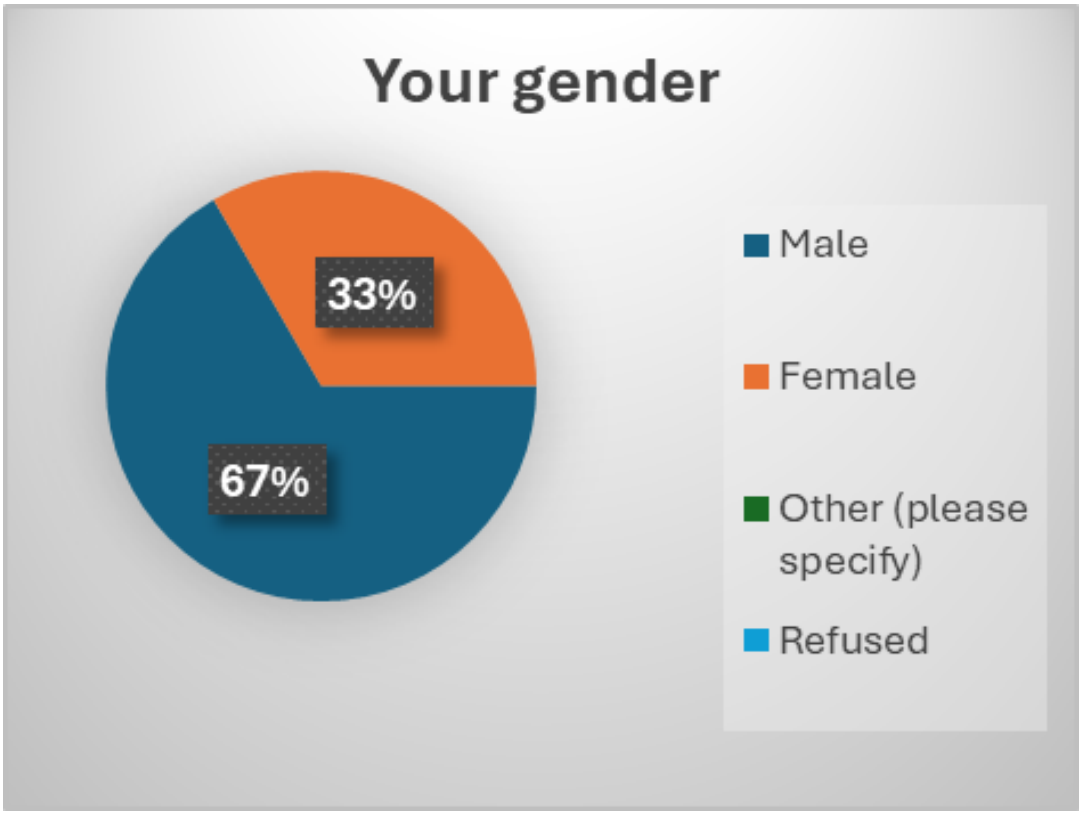
7. How old are you?

16 or under	0	(0%)
17-24	1	(4%)
25-34	3	(13%)
35-44	3	(13%)
45-54	5	(21%)
55-64	7	(29%)
65-74	3	(13%)
75-84	2	(8%)
85+	0	(0%)



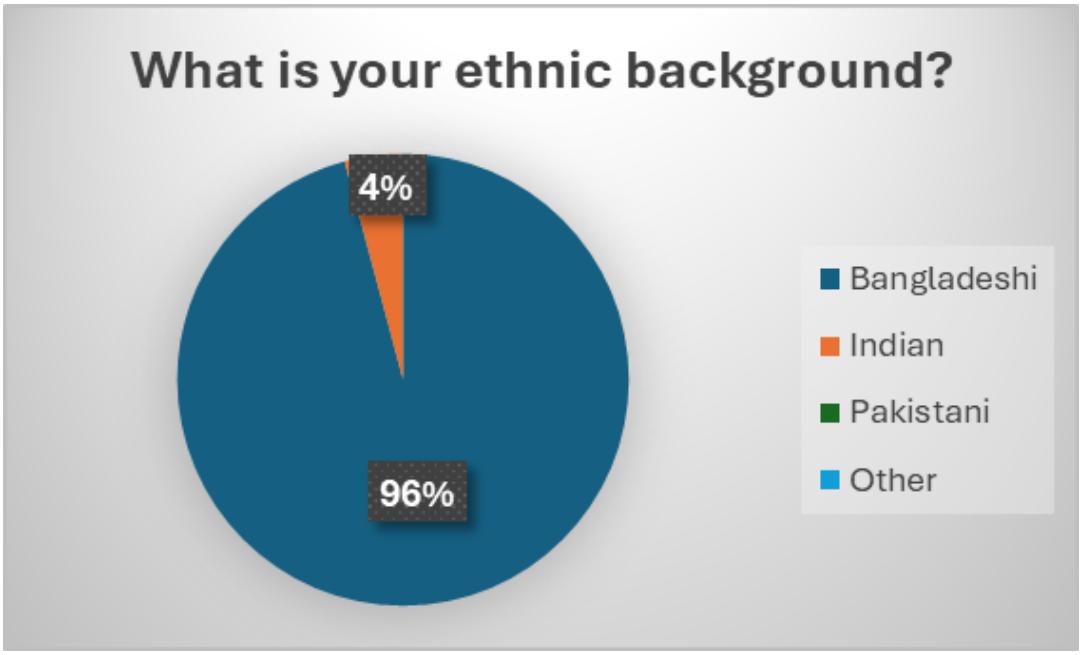
8. Your gender

Male	16	(67%)
Female	8	(33%)
Other (please specify)	0	(0%)
Refused	0	(0%)



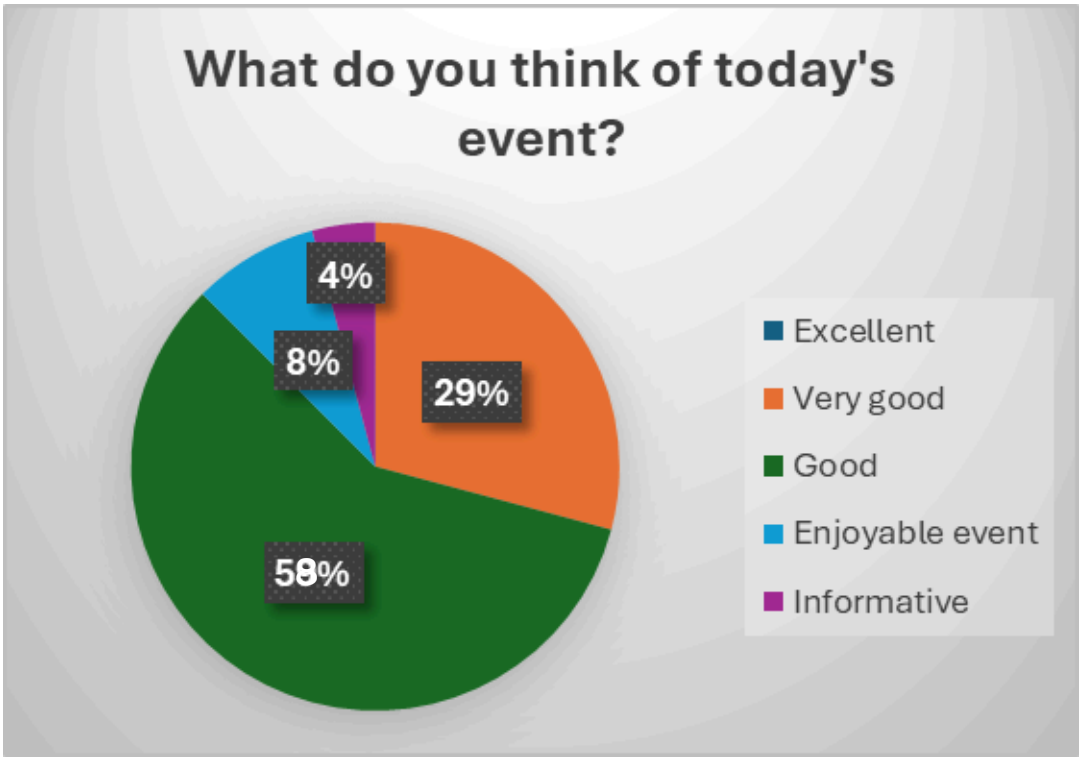
9. What is your ethnic background?

Bangladeshi	23	(96%)
Indian	1	(4%)
Pakistani	0	(0%)
Other	0	(0%)



10. What do you think about today's event?

Excellent	0	(0%)
Very good	7	(29%)
Good	14	(58%)
Enjoyable event	2	(8%)
Informative	1	(4%)



3.4. Participant Feedback:

- GP appointments hard to get
- Variety of health information was available
- There should be more health events like this
- Information on mental health available for future events
- Provide Tea/coffee refreshments
- Publicise widely to attract more people
- Get a GP to attend future events
- Like the health check
- Events during school holidays is better
- Invite the rehousing team from the council for housing advice
- Online triage if very difficult
- Exercise activity was very good

3. THE REDBRIDGE BANGLADESHI HEALTH MELA

4.1. Overview:

The Redbridge Health Mela, held on 4 November 2025 at the Redbridge Central Library, marked the first such event in the borough.

4.2. Stakeholders and Delivery:

The event was organised with support from Bangla Housing Association, Voice4Change England, the London Bangladeshi Health Partnership, and Redbridge Council. Attendees included councillors, NHS public health staff, and local doctors such as Dr Sarwat Bari, Dr Nawsheen Alam, and Dr Manpreet Kaur.

Highlights included:

- Health talks on diabetes and winter wellbeing
- Exercise sessions, henna activities, and traditional Bangladeshi food
- Over 40 health and social care stalls, offering screenings and welfare advice in English and Sylheti

Visible support from Councillors Helen Coombe and Syeda Choudhury, Cabinet Member for Health Mark Santos, Public Health Director Gladys Xavier, and Head of Public Health James Bachmann reflected the borough's commitment to tackling health inequalities. Their presence reinforced cross-sector leadership and shared accountability.

The breadth of services was praised by Councillor Helen Coombe: "With the event being so well attended from different services it's been great for people to be able to chat, find out what is available and to take an active part in their health."

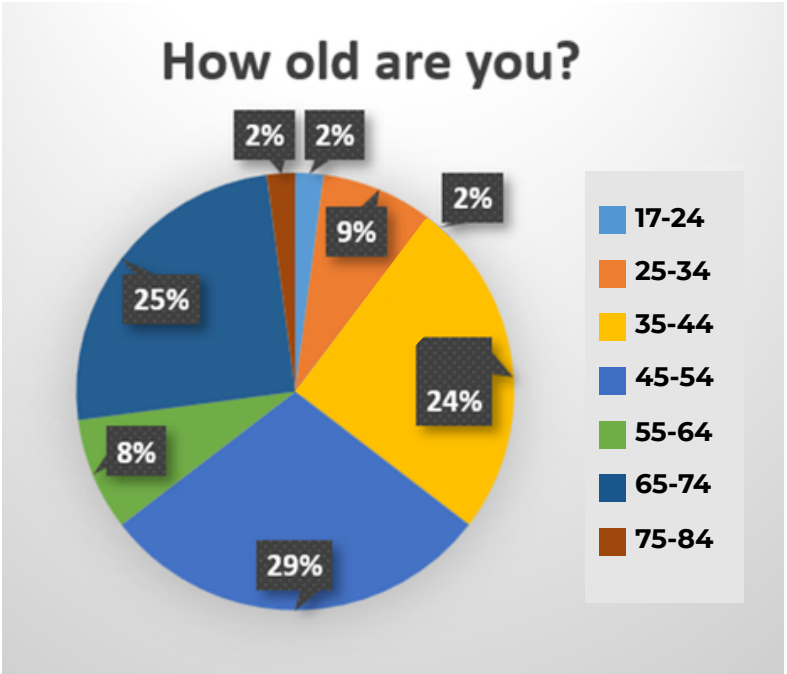
Councillor Syeda Choudhury not only celebrated Redbridge's collective progress but urged gratitude toward allies and the importance of preparing for future health challenges: "We must pay gratitude to the non-Bengalis who have helped the Bangladeshi community get to where they are today. Future health melas will help us all be prepared and promote vaccinations and bust myths."

Riyad Karim, Assistant Director, Community Engagement and Health Equity, NHSE London, spoke about the vital need to connect with communities in ways that are culturally relevant and trusted. Members of the London Bangladeshi Health Partnership Senior Management Team echoed the value of nurturing voices from within the community to drive engagement, advocacy and outreach.
Sonia Lard of the Public Health Team, who helped lead the initiative, noted, "It's a promising step towards more inclusive health outreach in Redbridge. We're already thinking about the next one!"

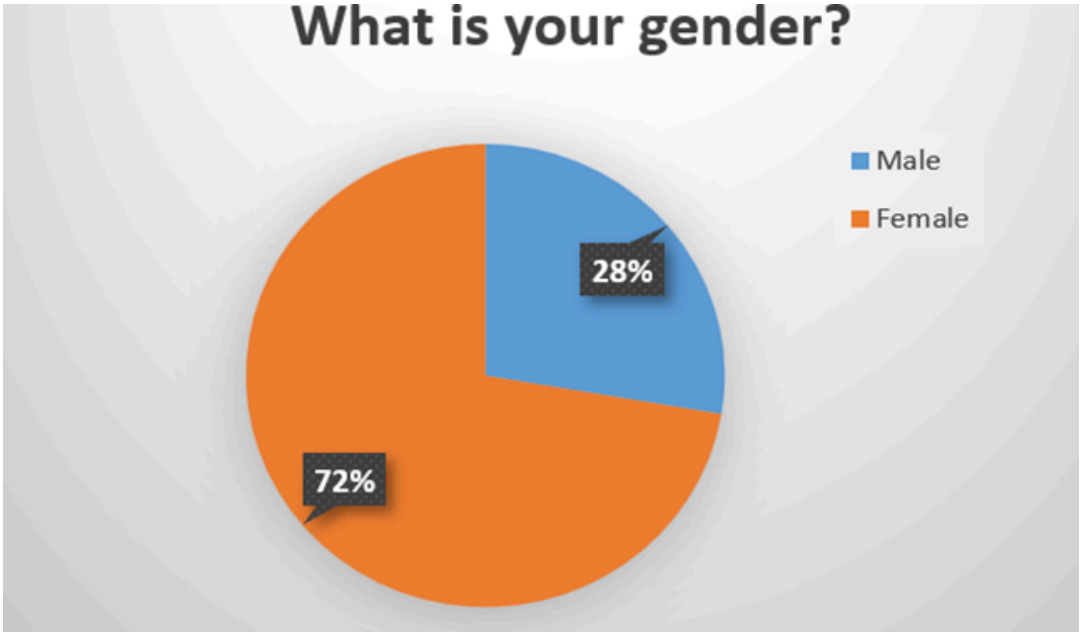
As summed up by Councillor Mark Santos, “This event addresses the specific needs of the community, while celebrating the resilience and strength of the Bangladeshi community.”

4.3. Findings:

1. How old are you?		
17-24	1	(2%)
25-34	4	(8%)
35-44	12	(24%)
45-54	14	(29%)
55-64	4	(8%)
65-74	12	(25%)
75-84	1	(2%)

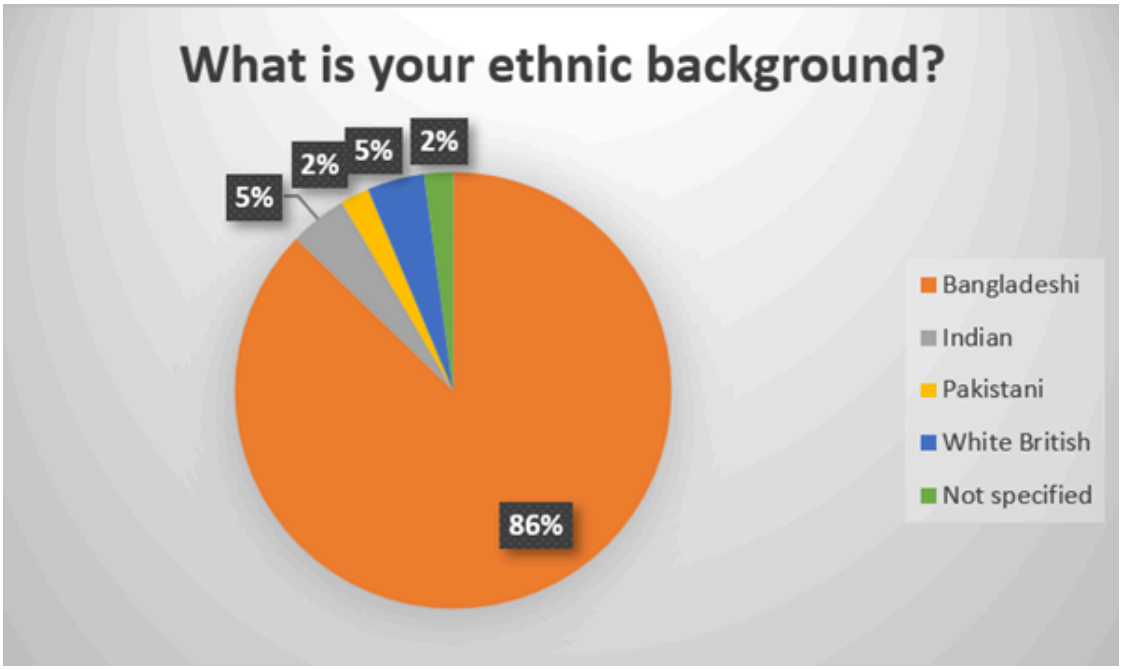


2. What is your gender?		
Male	13	(28%)
Female	34	(72%)

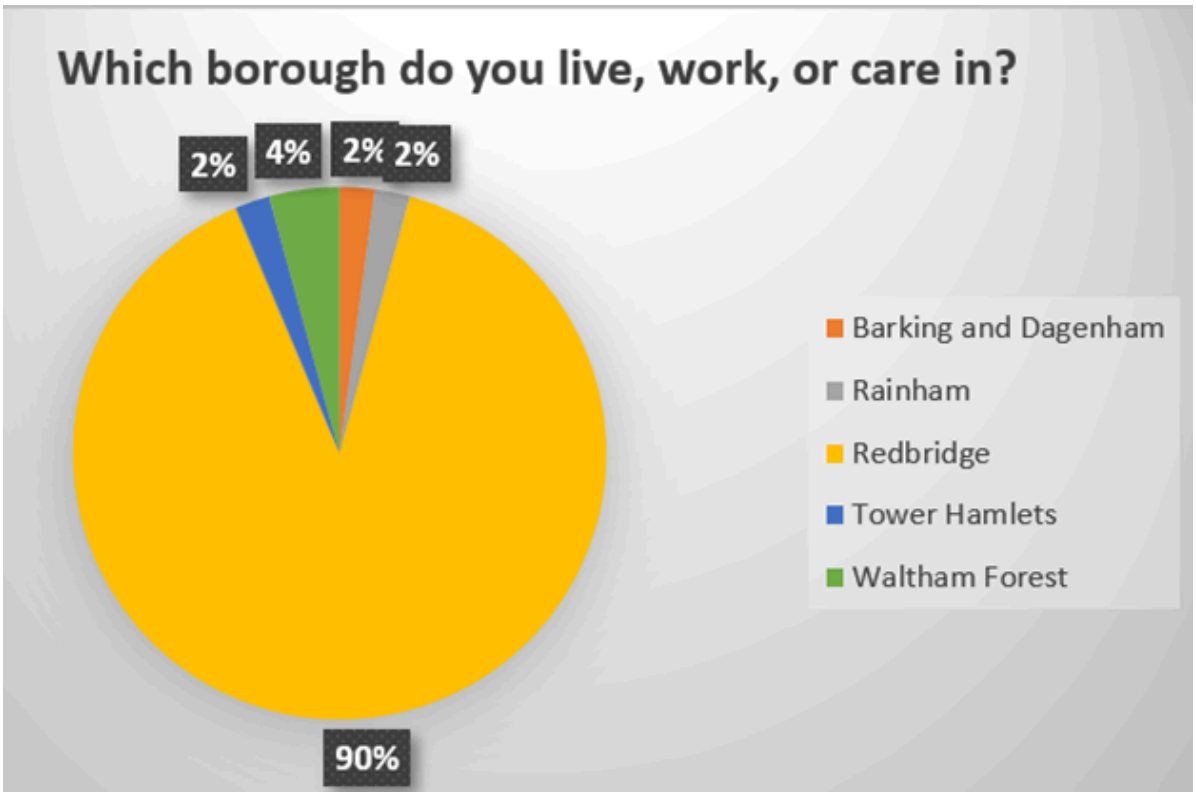


3. What is your ethnic background?

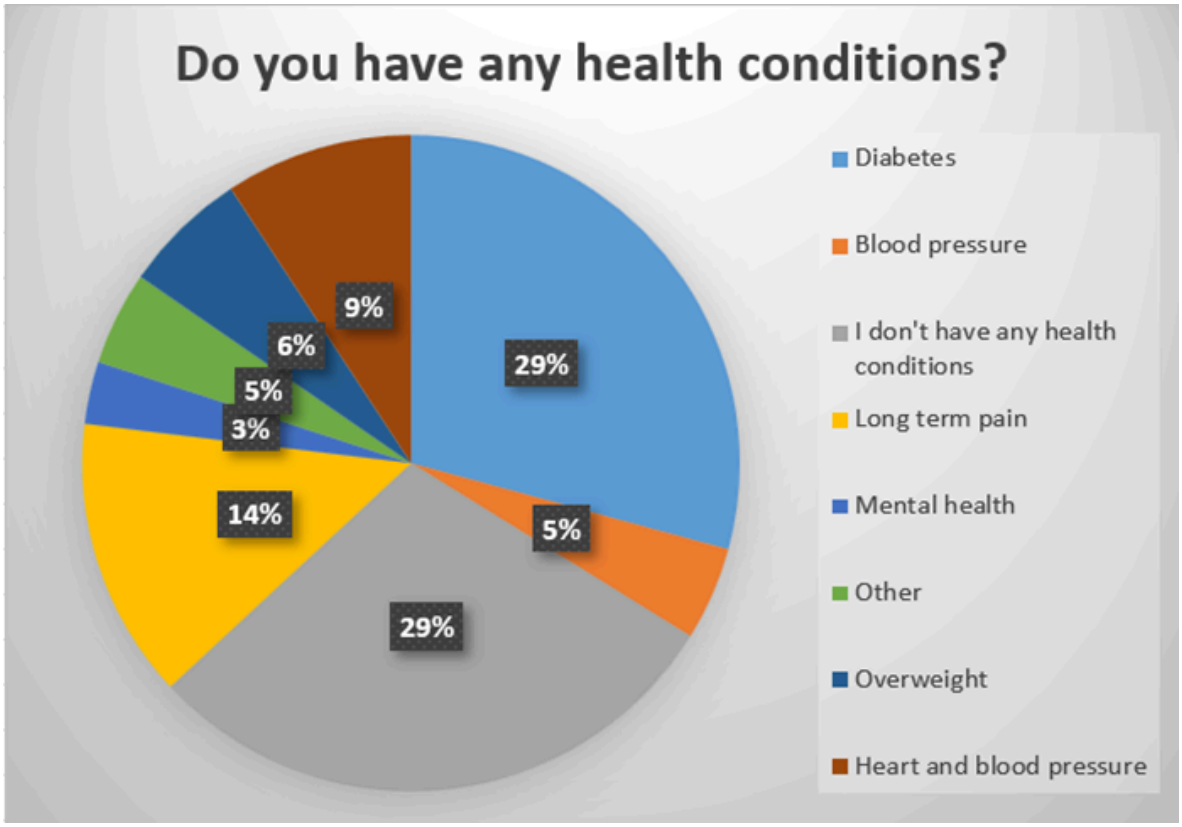
Bangladeshi	41	(86%)
Indian	2	(5%)
Pakistani	1	(2%)
White British	2	(5%)
Not Specified	1	(2%)



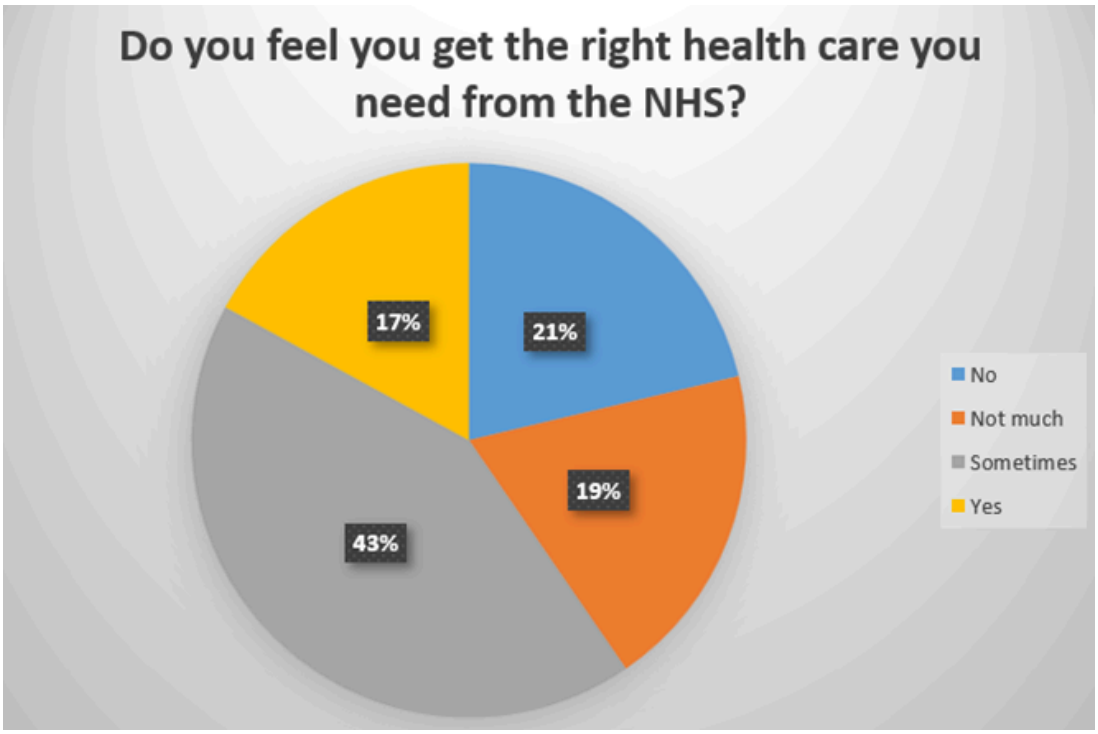
4. Which borough do you live, work, or care in?		
Barking and Dagenham	1	(2%)
Rainham	1	(2%)
Redbridge	42	(90%)
Tower Hamlets	1	(2%)
Waltham Forest	2	(4%)



5. Do you have any health conditions?		
Diabetes	19	(29%)
Blood pressure	3	(5%)
I do not have any health conditions	19	(29%)
Long term pain	9	(14%)
Mental Health	2	(3%)
Other	3	(5%)
Overweight	4	(6%)
Heart and Blood pressure	6	(9%)



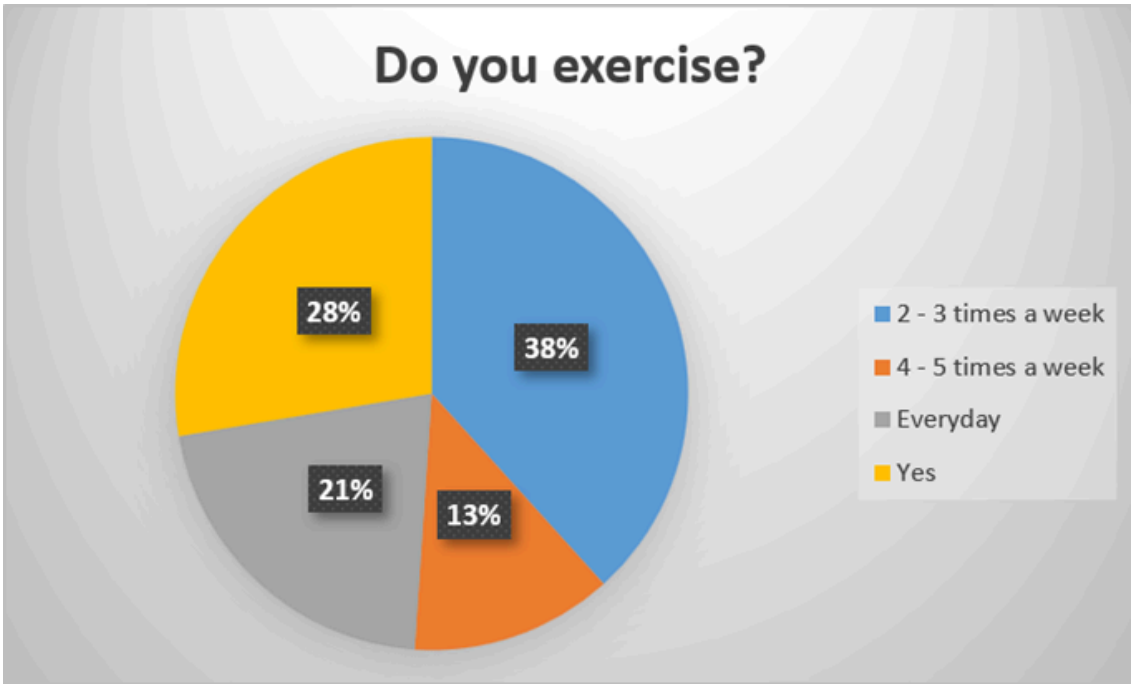
6. Do you feel you get the right health care you need from the NHS?		
No	10	(21%)
Not much	9	(19%)
Sometimes	20	(43%)
Yes	8	(17%)



If no, why not?

- No available appointments / hard to get appointments
- Long wait time for appointments
- Language barriers
- Booking is slow
- Difficulty doing it online / via an app
- Doctors don't help / don't take you seriously / no action
- Doctors take long time to diagnose
- I don't visit doctors
- Health service not well resourced
- Hard to speak to doc or get referred to services
- No health issues

7. Do you exercise?		
2-3 times a week	18	(38%)
4-5 times a week	6	(12%)
Everyday	10	(21%)
Yes	13	(28%)



If no, what is stopping you?

- Depression
- Don't feel like it, don't feel well
- Can't be bothered
- Don't have the time
- Too busy
- Physio for knee
- No time, look after grandchildren
- Because of pain can't move much
- Forget, busy with other things
- Too busy with kids
- Will start
- No time

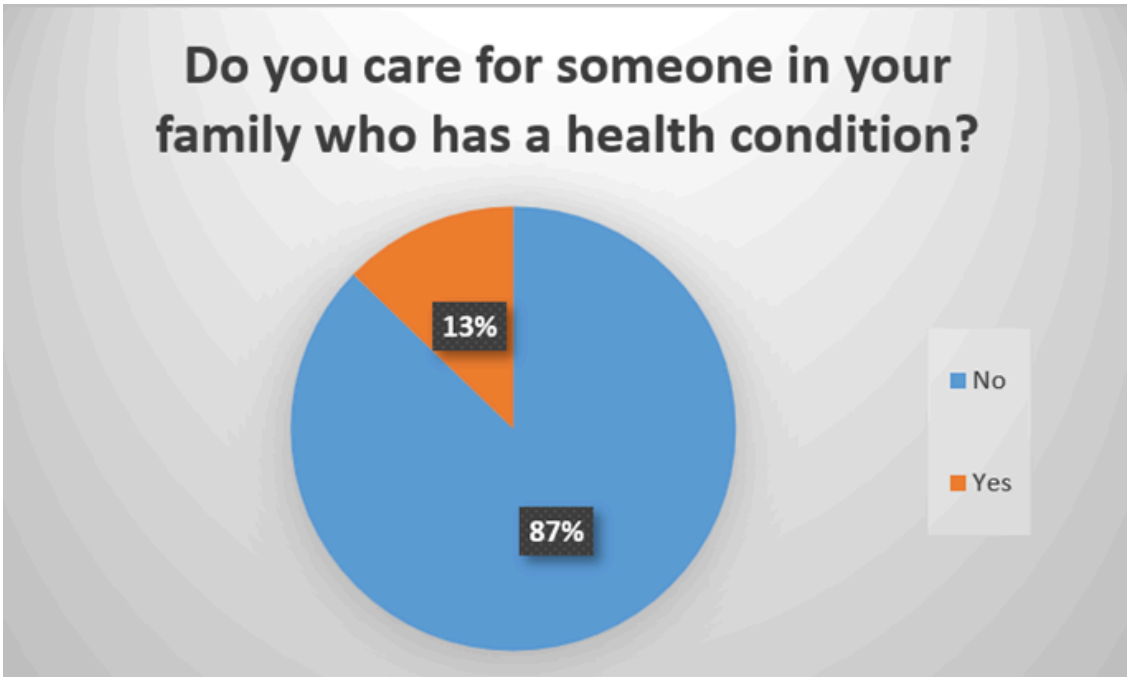
8. Do you try to eat healthy food?		
2-3 times a week	17	(36%)
4-5 times a week	7	(15%)
Everyday	17	(36%)
Yes	6	(15%)



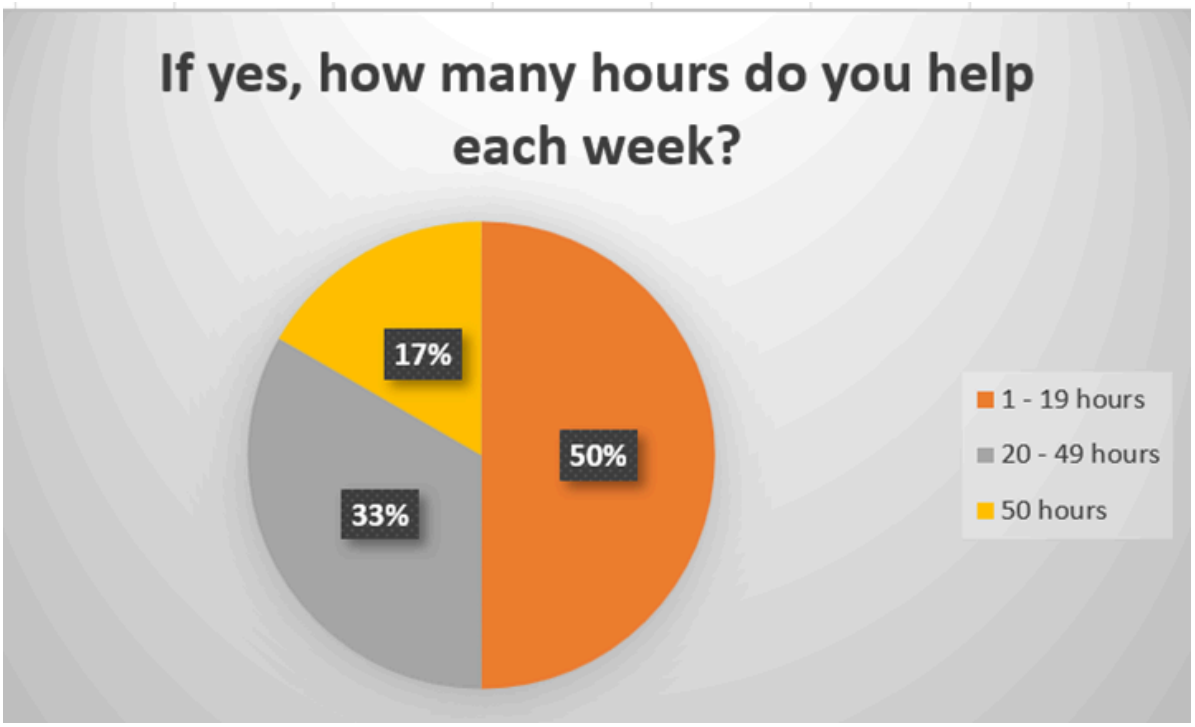
If no, what is stopping you?

- Bengali food unhealthy
- Buy ready-made food
- Eat out a lot
- I try, what is healthy?
- Love chocolate
- Make what kids want/would eat
- Makes no difference, tried before
- Will start

9. Do you care for someone in your family who has a health condition?		
No	41	(87%)
Yes	6	(13%)

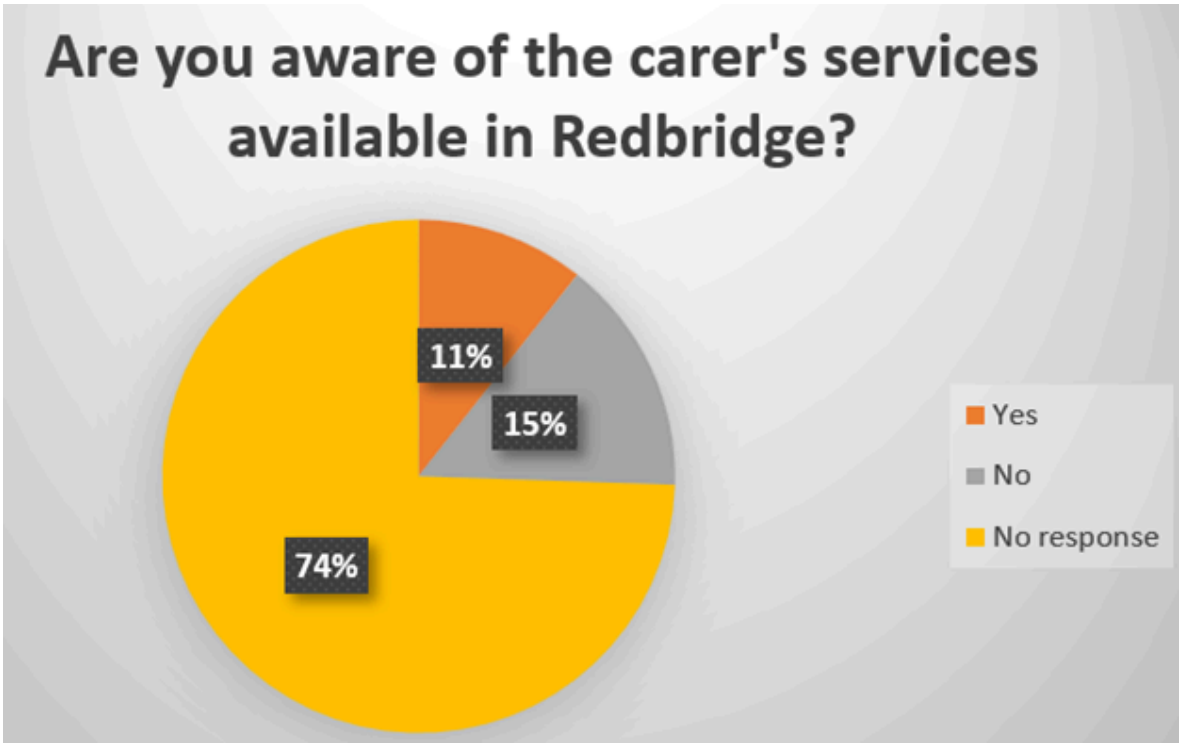


10. If yes, how many hours do you help each week?		
1-19 hours	3	(50%)
20-49 hours	2	(33%)
50 hours	1	(17%)



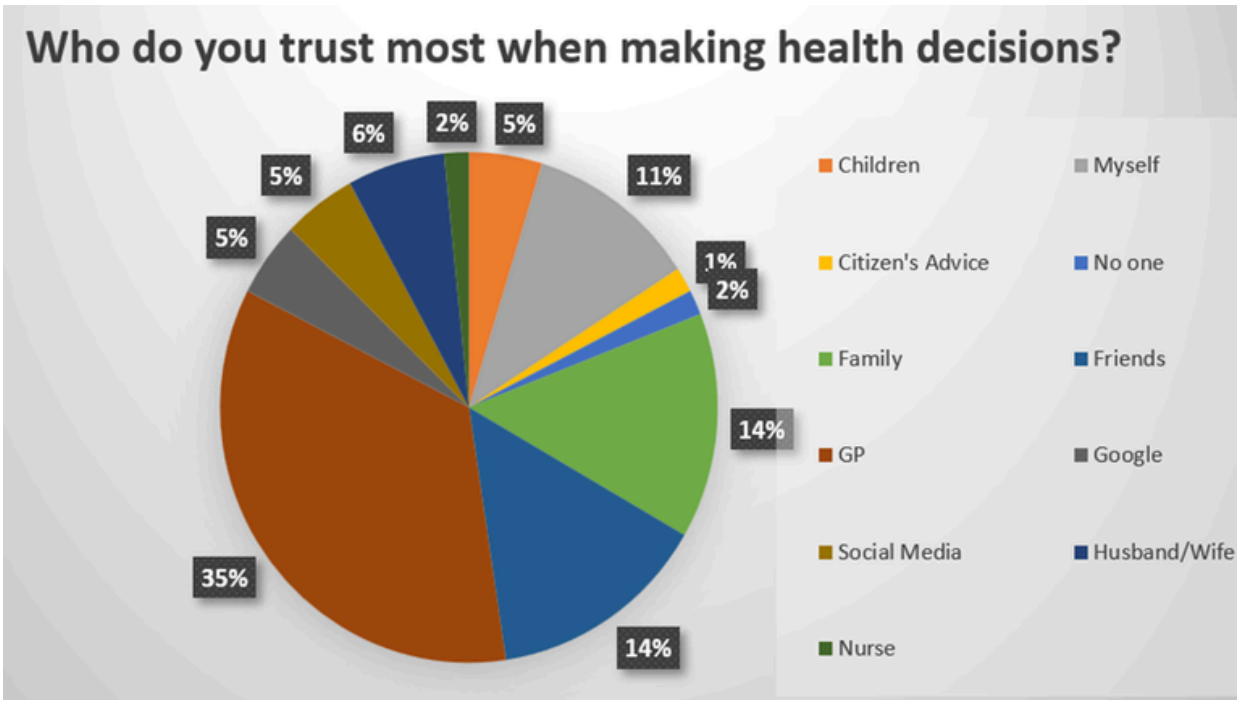
11. Are you aware of the carer's services available in Redbridge?

Yes	5	(11%)
No	7	(15%)
No response	35	(74%)

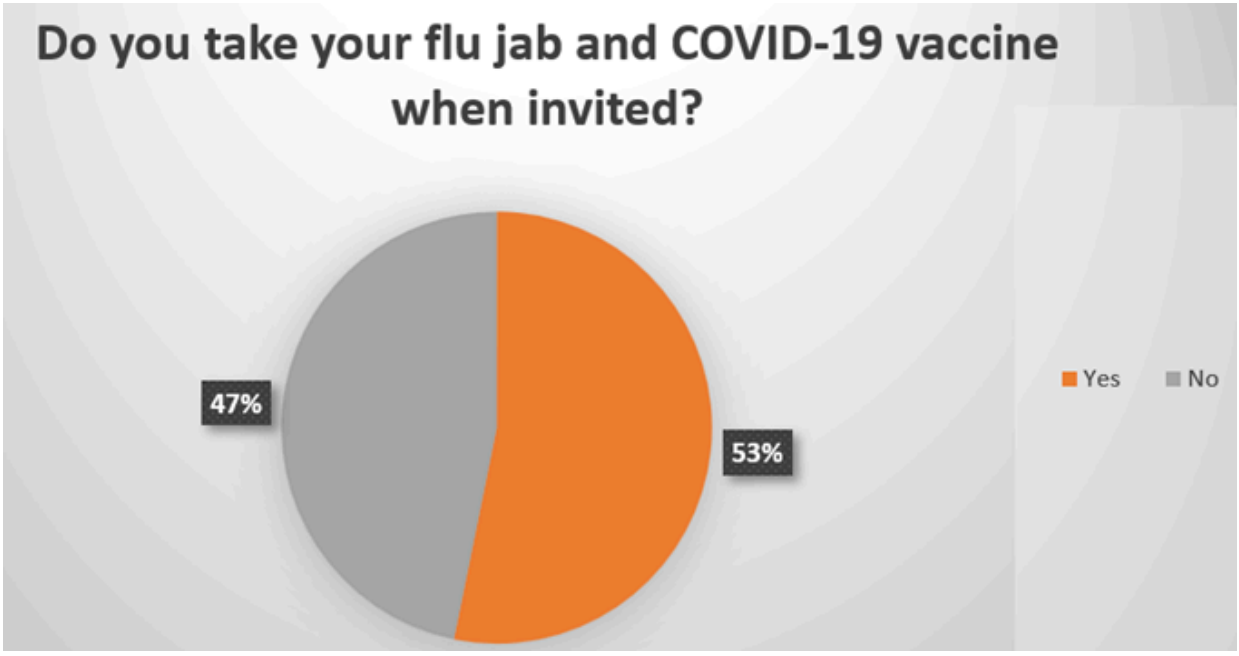


12. Who do you trust the most when making health decisions?

Children	3	(5%)
Myself	7	(11%)
Citizen's Advice	1	(1%)
No one	1	(1%)
Family	9	(14%)
Friends	9	(14%)
GP	22	(35%)
Google	3	(5%)
Social Media	3	(5%)
Husband/Wife	4	(6%)
Nurse	1	(1%)



13. Do you take your flu jab and COVID-19 vaccine when invited?		
Yes	25	(53%)
No	22	(47%)

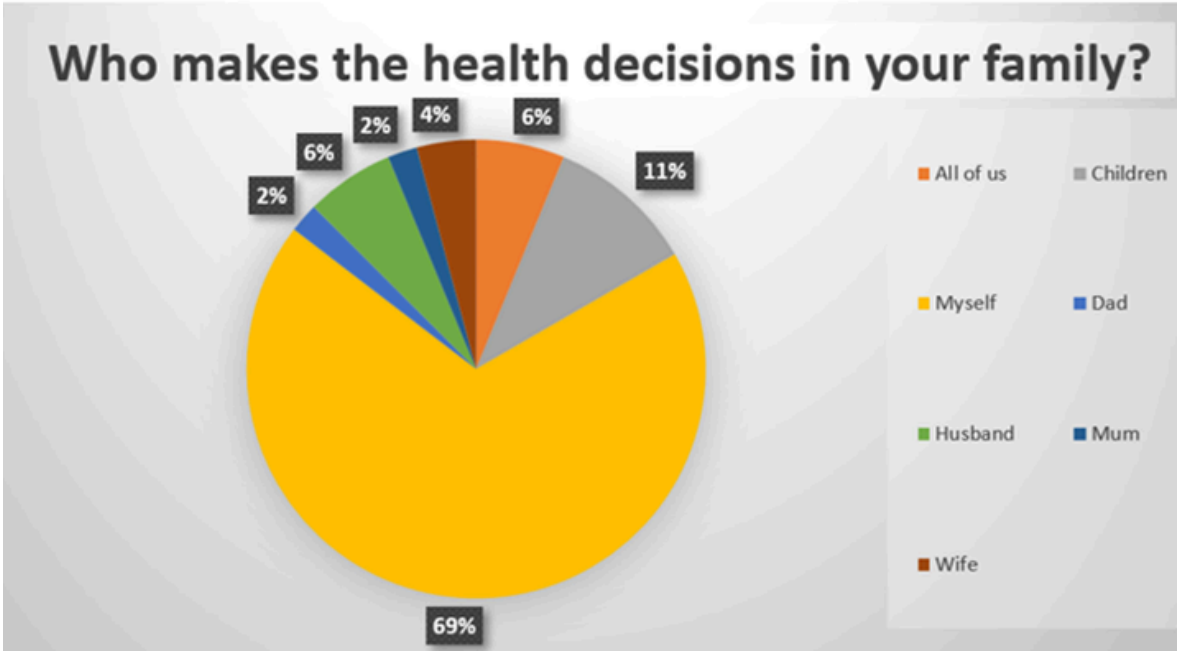


If no, why not?

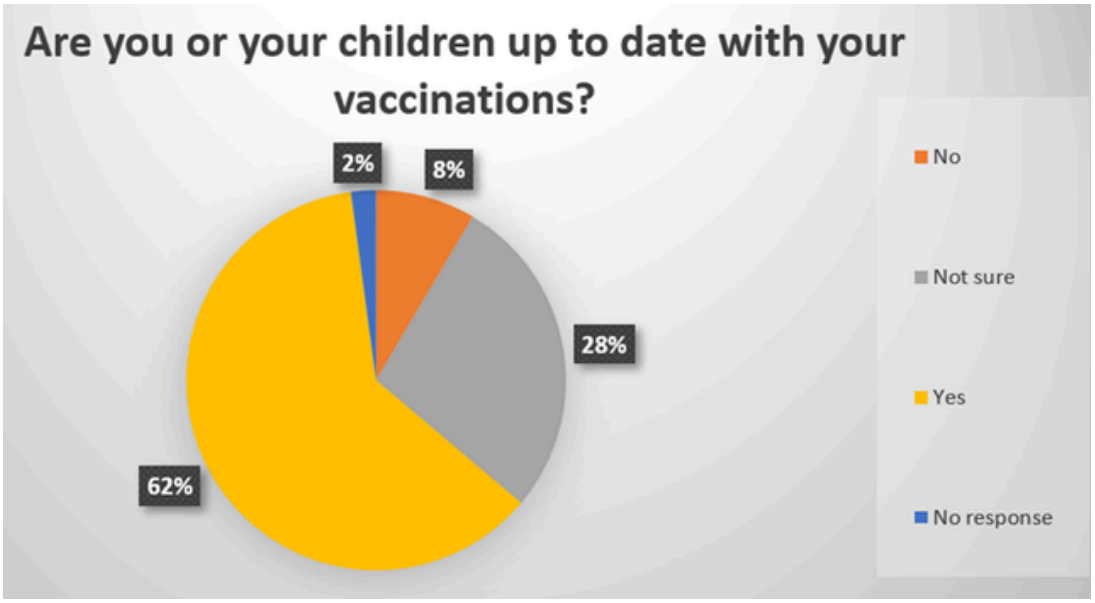
- Not interested

14. Who makes the health decisions in your family?

All of us	3	(6%)
Children	5	(11%)
Myself	33	(69%)
Father	1	(2%)
Husband	3	(6%)
Mother	1	(2%)
Wife	2	(4%)



15. Are you or your children up to date with your vaccinations		
No	4	(8%)
Not sure	13	(28%)
Yes	29	(62%)
No response	1	(2%)



If no, why not?

- Covid vaccine has side effects
- Don't feel comfortable
- Don't know about it
- Don't know what's inside it
- Don't need it
- Don't qualify
- Don't trust it
- Don't want to pay
- Don't work
- Makes me more ill
- No one tells me to get it
- Not eligible
- Not interested
- Not offered to me

16. Would you like to join our Community Health Champions WhatsApp group?		
No	25	(53%)
Yes	13	(28%)
Not sure	1	(2%)
No response	8	(17%)



How did you hear about today's event?

- Job centre
- Leaflet
- Stall holder
- Word of mouth
- Work

What did you think about today's event?

- Alhamdulillah very good
- Enjoyed chair exercise
- Enjoyed myself at event
- Enjoyed the food, took advice on diabetes
- Excellent
- Good
- Good discussions and info
- Good event
- Good information and knowledge about health
- Great event lot of information
- It was ok enjoyed it
- Liked it everyone was welcoming
- More events like this, great way to meet people
- My first time was very good
- Nice, lots of activity
- Really busy and some great engagement with potential service users
- Really good
- Really nice enjoyed very much
- Thank you for the event, very good.
- Very cool
- Very good first time in event
- Very good need more events like this did my health check
- Very good, everything available in Bangla
- Very good, find my childhood friend and made new friends too
- Very helpful
- Very important and needed

5. CROSS-MELA ANALYSIS

5.1 Public Health Engagement

Both events demonstrated how social trust and cultural relevance can significantly enhance participation in preventive health. Bilingual delivery, free screenings, and accessible venues directly counter barriers often found in clinical environments.

5.2 Data Summary

Indicator	Tower Hamlets	Redbridge (Indicative)
Attendance	65	80+ (approx.)
Primary Trusted Source	GP (88%)	GP (majority)
Reported Barriers	GP access, mistrust	Digital access, mistrust
Ethnicity (Bangladeshi)	96%	80%+

6. LESSONS LEARNED

- Health events gain traction when held in familiar, culturally resonant venues.
- Language accessibility and face-to-face delivery improve understanding and engagement.
- Combining clinical services with social activities fosters openness and comfort.
- Partnerships between community organisations and statutory bodies enhance legitimacy and reach.

Engaging with the Bangladeshi community through the mela approach offers an effective and culturally resonant way to raise awareness and increase participation in local services. Given the positive associations of melas, funders should consider supporting this model of community engagement for the Bangladeshi community.

7. CONCLUSION

The Bangladeshi Health Melas in Redbridge and Tower Hamlets in 2025 clearly demonstrate that culturally rooted, community-led health engagement can deliver measurable gains in awareness, trust, and participation among groups historically underrepresented in preventive healthcare initiatives.

These events transformed community spaces into inclusive health access points, not only providing flu vaccinations and blood pressure checks but also creating safe environments for dialogue about health myths, digital exclusion, and trust in services. The strong turnout, positive feedback, and high levels of engagement from both residents and partners illustrate that when healthcare is delivered through trusted, familiar networks, participation and confidence grow substantially.

These melas demonstrate the power of bringing together Trusted Leaders, Trusted Medical and Community Professionals, and Trusted Places that are familiar and accessible to the community. By engaging and amplifying Trusted Voices within the Bangladeshi community, the approach strengthens credibility, reduces misinformation, and builds sustained trust and confidence in health services. This 3Ts model (Trusted Leaders, Trusted Places, Trusted Voices), developed by Riyad Karim, NHSE London, is particularly impactful for underserved populations, where culturally grounded engagement is essential to addressing inequities and improving long-term health outcomes.

The Bangladeshi Health Melas show that investing in culturally competent, partnership-driven programmes achieves both immediate health outcomes and long-term trust building. Continued support for this approach will help local systems engage minority communities more effectively, build resilient networks, and lay the groundwork for healthier, more equitable boroughs.

8. APPENDIX

Consent for Photographs:

Attendees at both health melas were informed in advance that photographers were present and were invited to identify themselves if they did not wish to appear in any images. Care was taken to ensure that anyone who opted out was not included in photographs taken or published, and where possible, images were captured from the back of the audience to show attendance without identifying individuals. All photographs in which faces are visible were taken with explicit verbal consent.

Blog:

Bridging Health and Community: Tower Hamlets Bangladeshi Health Mela 2025 - V4CE

Health, Heritage and Hope: Redbridge Bangladeshi Health Mela Unites Community - V4CE

Cancer awareness at the Bangladeshi Health Mela - NELCA

Tower Hamlets Blog

Redbridge Blog

Social Media Posts:

Tower Hamlets Bangladeshi Health Mela:
Instagram
X
LinkedIn
Facebook

Redbridge Bangladeshi Health Mela
Instagram
X
LinkedIn
Facebook

Redbridge Council
Instagram
Facebook
TikTok