



The Health Tree – Thriving Communities

Thriving Communities

“Nothing but praise for this much needed 'tree of connection”

Health Tree network participant

“The Health Tree is a life line for my mother”

Health Tree acupuncture



the
health
tree

Executive Summary

This is our report that sets out our experience of “The Health Tree” which was one of 36 Thriving Communities funded by a combination of Arts Council England, Historic England and Natural England, NHS England and NHS Improvement, Sport England, the Money & Pensions Service, NHS Charities Together and the National Academy for Social Prescribing.

This report is written by St Margaret’s House who was the lead partner in the project but also includes contributions for all partners. Our main partners in the project were Social Action for Health, Outside Edge Theatre, Fevered Sleep, London Arts and Health, Spare Tyre Theatre and our Tower Hamlets social prescribing service Tower Hamlets GP Care Group.

Along the way we also worked with many other partners and collaborators as the project progressed including Bodywise, Woodwork for Wellbeing, Brady Arts Centre, Greater London Authority Culture Team, UCL and Tower Hamlets Carers Centre.

This report showcases:

- What we intended to happen
- What we delivered
- How successful we were in what we intended
- Reflections on the project
- What is the legacy

To compile this report we have used data from surveys, data from surveys conducted on our behalf, notes from meetings, qualitative data from participants gained in a variety of ways from across the project and film and visual evidence. We used the Arts Council's "Insights" tool to conduct the surveys. At the application phase of the project there was an intention to use a wellbeing scale. We soon realised in our sub group meeting that this not possible with partners various capacity levels, totally different methods of delivery. Instead we focused on measuring referrals from social prescribers to measure increase of relationship between social prescribers and our sector and looking at what positive difference the project was making to people's lives.

Overall this report finds

- There was a level of success in building a stronger relationship with our social prescribing service in Tower Hamlets, an increase in referrals and a discovery of other referral pathways.
- The project did have a positive impact on people's lives and reached a significant number of people with long-term health conditions of disabilities
- We could have reached more participants from Global Majority Communities and that this is something that we will be taking forward with partnership with Social Action for Health when considering the future of The Health Tree.
- We need to look at how we engage more men in social prescribing but when men are engaged it can be successful.
- There is a potential model with The Health Tree that links with the GLA's vision around Creative Health Zones and that the approach taken with this piece of work aligns strongly with this idea.



The Health Tree event Oct 21

What we intended

There were two main “branches” to our tree”

Branch One

The first branch delivered a programme of activities that Tower Hamlets residents can get involved with to improve their wellbeing, mental health and Covid Recovery. We wanted to work with social prescribers, link workers and community members so that people who would get the most benefit could access the activities.

This looked like:

- **St Margaret’s House** - Acupuncture Clinic, Chair Yoga, Pilates, HIIT and Mindful Movements, Diet and Nutrition Courses, Creative Woodwork, Legal Advice sessions led by local solicitors Malcom and Co based with St Margaret’s House “Create Place”
- **Fevered Sleep Theatre** -a series of Creative Walks that bring together arts with physically activity as well as three seasonal outdoor celebrations opportunities for a wide range of cultures and communities to meet and connect.
- **Spare Tyre Theatre** - a series of Covid secure Cafés that will provide a creative space for local residents who have been affected by Covid-19 to come together, find support and information, increasing to access to services which meet identified needs, and enable them to benefit from a formal referral pathway or sign posting to activities which form part of “The Health Tree” programme.
- **Social Action for Health- My Moves** -run online to digitally-excluded communities to foster a sense of belonging through food, music, cultural dance, and exercise, as well as ESOL provision; their befriending initiatives will offer walking groups, culturally appropriate physical activities, peer-support and accredited training; and a Covid catch-up cancer-awareness program will run to encourage people to visit their doctor.
- **Outside Edge Theatre**- A series of 5 Ways to Wellbeing Workshops with the local community

The Second Branch

The Second Branch of The Health Tree focused on building up the Tower Hamlets community’s understanding of, and opportunities in, Social Prescribing. The Health Tree would work very closely with The Tower Hamlets GP Care Group and **London Arts and Health** to build networks with local link workers and groups and create more referral pathways. We would also provide public events so that everyone has the opportunity to find out how they can benefit from social prescribing.

This looked like:

- **Six social prescribing networking meetings** led by London Arts and Health providing learning and support opportunities to forge partnerships and increase understanding of how groups can build partnerships with their local link worker, and to raise awareness of the planned online tool for social prescribing.
- **Six meetings of The Health Tree sub group** led by Social Action for Health and London Arts and Health that looks at sustainability of social prescribing for Tower Hamlets and creating opportunities for more voluntary sector groups and local communities to benefit.
- **Two public showcase events** celebrating social prescribing that will enable health professionals and link workers to see what is on offer and increase their knowledge and understanding of activities taking place in their areas

What We Delivered

Branch One

All activities have been completed mostly as intended. Standing Body who were going to run Health and Diet Clinics were not able to participate so we extended Acupuncture and worked with an Arts Therapist to deliver workshops. Covid Café's started later than expected and were online so that Long Covid sufferers could access them easier.

Activities Delivery:

St Margaret's House:

- Yoga, Tai Chi, Pilates and Fitness delivered on track with 44 sessions delivered each. These activities have reached 98 participants across the year. 10 participants are from a social prescribing route.
- Acupuncture have delivered 48 weeks of Multi Bed Clinic and in that delivered 179 sessions to people. Of these 17 have been from socially prescribed route.
- There were 9 Legal Advice session since July there have been 22 participants and 5 of them were socially prescribed or have been referred from a trusted community source

- Due to extra funding sourced 31 weeks of Woodwork delivered since (93 sessions). It has reached 25 participants and at last count 12 have socially prescribed.

Art Therapy has delivered 18 sessions reaching 12 people with 9 of them being socially prescribed. We also offered other activities as part of The Health Tree such as Pregnancy Yoga, Dance and a very popular massage. 375 people signed up on our More Human system and took part in an activity.

Social Action for Health- have delivered 50 sessions of the My Moves project including 4 cross collaborations with IT and ESOL Skills. These have reached 35 participants from outreach work. Most have come to SAfH from a prescribed route

Outside Edge delivered 5 Ways to Wellbeing Workshop reaching 12 people within Tower Hamlets Carers Centre where their manager referred people to the sessions

Fevered Sleep have delivered 3 walk in July, Oct 21 and March 22. The first walk had 30 booked but was rained off but 2nd and 3rd attracted 16 people.

Spare Tyre- have delivered 19 Covid Café's online and have reached 26 people.

Branch Two

We delivered our 6 Network Meetings- to navigate various Covid waves these were on Zoom. 53 people attended a network meeting across the year and we were represented by 22 organisations. We had attendance from social prescribers and engaged in conversations on the theme of prescribing as well as presentations from community groups and projects.

We delivered 5 sub-groups meetings attended by all Project Partners and local CVS where we discussed successes and challenges of the project and also developing links with the Culture Team at the GLA and the planning of a research project. We also discussed what methods work with social prescribers and what doesn't.

We delivered 2 public events at the Brady Arts Centre, taking place on Oct 21 (88 attendees) and Social Prescribing Day March 22 (93 attendees). Both were well received and were opportunities for partners to come together and share activities but also for our community to have face to face access to the Tower Hamlet's GP Cares, our social prescribing service

How successful we were in what we intended

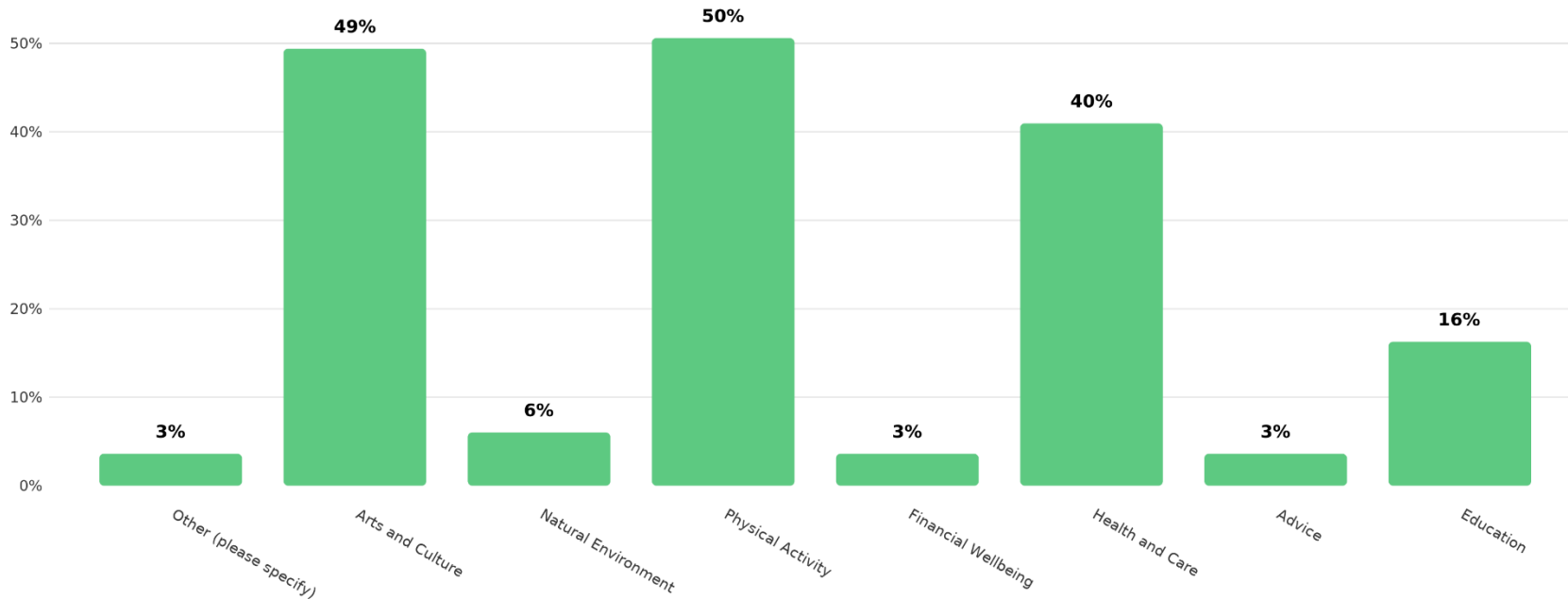
Part One: The Activities

In this section we will look in more detail in our aims of strengthening social prescribing pathways in Tower Hamlets and improving our community's wellbeing.

Each section will be a response to a piece of data gained from our "Insights" survey. 169 Health Tree participants filled out our questionnaire which will show something about the participants and their experience of The Health Tree. This will be followed by reflections on what the data shows and why we think this is followed by more qualitative evidence gathered that demonstrates some evidence of impact the project has made.

The tables are taken from Insights and the numbers above the bars are shown as % but actually represent the number of people who have completed the survey.

What kind of activity have you or will you engage in?



The table above shows how participants identified the type of activity that they were taking part in. It is worth noting that all of the 169 people who completed this survey filled it out after they had taken part in the activity.

It does reflect the variety of activities that The Health Tree offered and it is pleasing to see all the activities reflected here:

- Art and Culture aligns strongly with the My Moves dance, Outside Edge Theatre workshops, Art Therapy.
- Health and Care aligns with all the yoga activities, acupuncture and massage
- Physical Activity aligns with the Fitness sessions and Walks
- It's nice to see Natural Environment represented through the Walks and Financial Wellbeing and Advice links very likely with the Legal Advice.

It shows “Arts and Culture”, “Physical Activity” and “Health and Care” are represented strongly, almost equally and gives a sense that arts, physical activity and Health can align and be delivered in a project together.

Here are some reflections on the diversity of the offer within The Health Tree

“The Health Tree was an excellent initiative in the community focusing on the Arts, offering a diverse range of services that we could refer people to”

Chayad Miah – Tower Hamlets Social Prescriber

“Really great, I found I was really engaged with the world, and felt much calmer”

Fevered Sleep Walk Participant

“I am very active now because of the dance and I look forward to the classes. Even if it is raining, I make sure I am there.”

My Moves Participant

“Deliciously pain relieving and skilful. The group practitioner format really helps with affordability.”

Massage Shala Participant

"I've felt able to pick up a colouring pencil with equanimity for the first time in forever."

Art Therapy Participant

"Such a pleasure to receive a massage in such a welcoming warming and vibrant environment. The music was perfect! Please have it all the time!!"

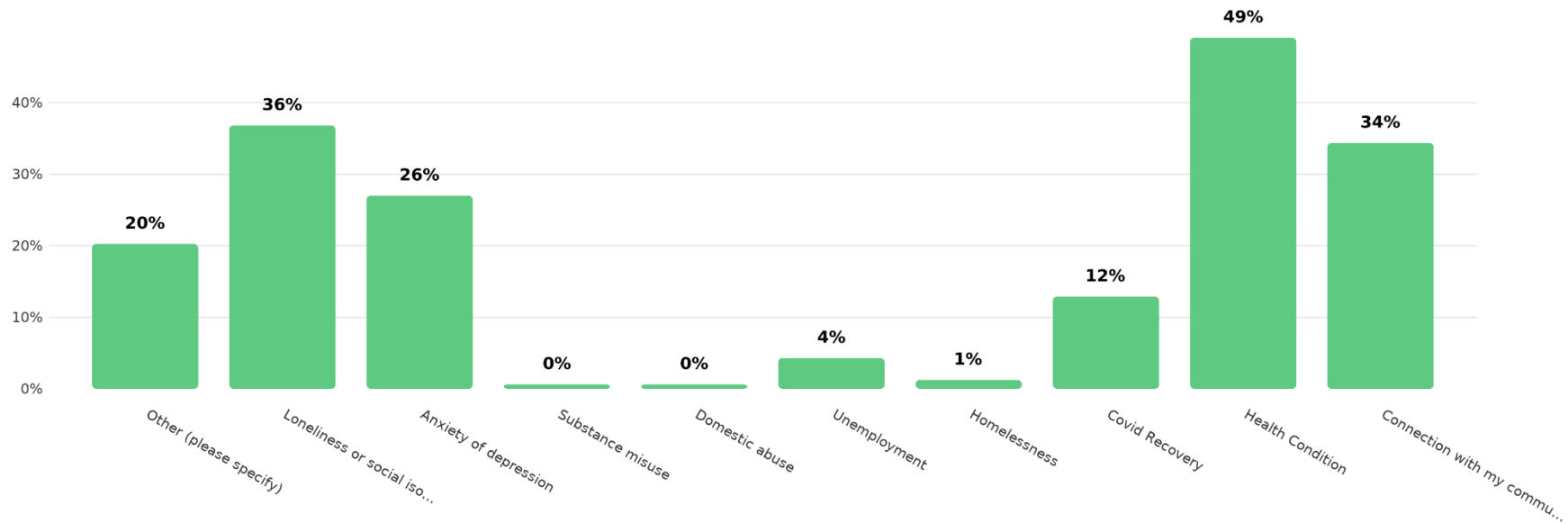
Massage Shala Participant





Images of “Ways to Wellbeing Workshops” through Outside Edge Theatre

What is the reason for joining or being referred to The Health Tree activity you have or will take part in?



The table above shows the reasons why our participants joined or were referred to The Health Tree. It shows a variety of reasons why people engaged. It shows highest numbers engaging because of Health Conditions but also a high number engaging because of mental health reasons such as loneliness or social isolation and Anxiety or Depression. We added “Connection with my Community” to the survey and a high number choose this option too.

When people chose “Other” they specified the words: massage, pregnancy, self, improve, affordable, physical fitness, general.

Covid Recovery is included too and this is very likely because the Covid Café as it was part of the project specifically aimed at people suffering with Long Covid.

Through talking to participants we did get a strong sense that the project was having a positive impact on their health and wellbeing especially around “isolation” as these testimonials from My Moves participants highlight:

Participant 1

“I like the My Moves classes, talking and exercising, and using the computer online. Learning how to use Google Maps was a bonus. I am confident using it for the train and bus by myself. I like My Moves because the staff call me up, treat me really well and are checking up on me. Even if the computer didn't work, I called up and got assistance straight away. I felt important. I had something to look forward to each week. At the beginning I felt isolated. There was lots of communication with phone calls and online classes. I attended twice a week which help with my isolation.”

Participant 2

I like My Moves because there are lots of opportunities. I learned how to use laptops and how to feed my body and be healthy and how to speak English. I learned lots of things from My Moves. It has helped me speak English confidently and friendly. We talk about our culture, how to help each other, how to exercise and health eating. I felt lonely and had anxiety. I was afraid to go out. Having laptops to use helped overcome my loneliness. I really love meeting with the group.

Participant 3

I really liked the English classes and all the opportunities. I like the exercise and using the laptops. I like how there are many things to do, so I am not bored. The teachers are so good. I am very active now because of the dance and I look forward to the classes. Even if it is raining, I make sure I am there. The communication is very very good. Before starting, I felt the loneliness. Now I don't feel lonely. I feel more strong, more happy and more active.



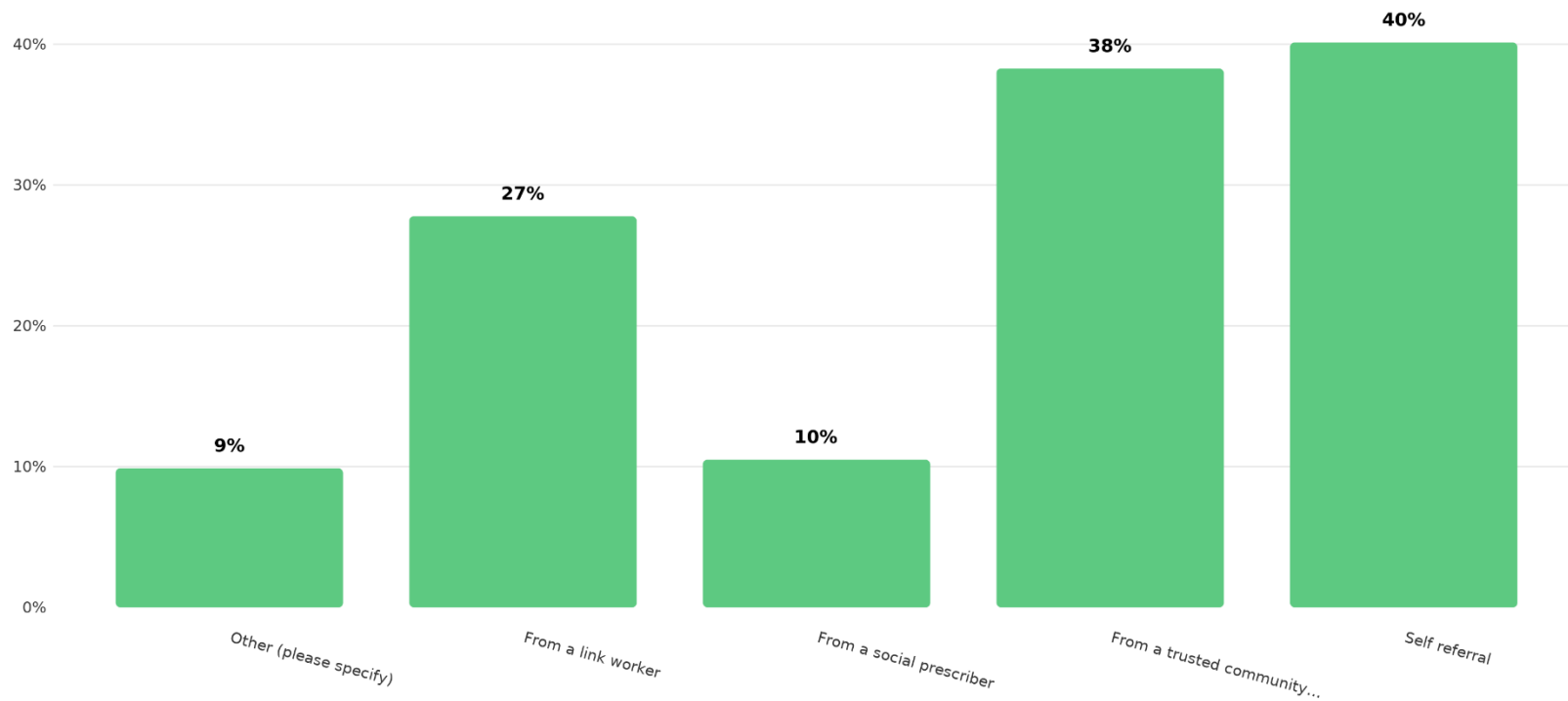




My Moves lead by Social Action for Health with IT Skills workshops and dancing at our first event on October 21

The Health Tree - Participants Survey - Survey Custom Questions

How did you engage with the activity



An outcome we wanted to achieve was to increase referrals from social prescribing routes to our activities within the Health Tree. At St Margaret's House we were very keen to do this as we were aware informally that 2 or 3 people were attending or had attended our activities

through a social prescribing route. As a community hub hosting our own programme plus having 25 arts and wellbeing tenants based in our building we wanted to explore how we developed social prescribing as a project. Social Action for Health already had links with social prescribers but were keen to expand as did Outside Edge Theatre. Fevered Sleep and Spare Tyre were keen to explore

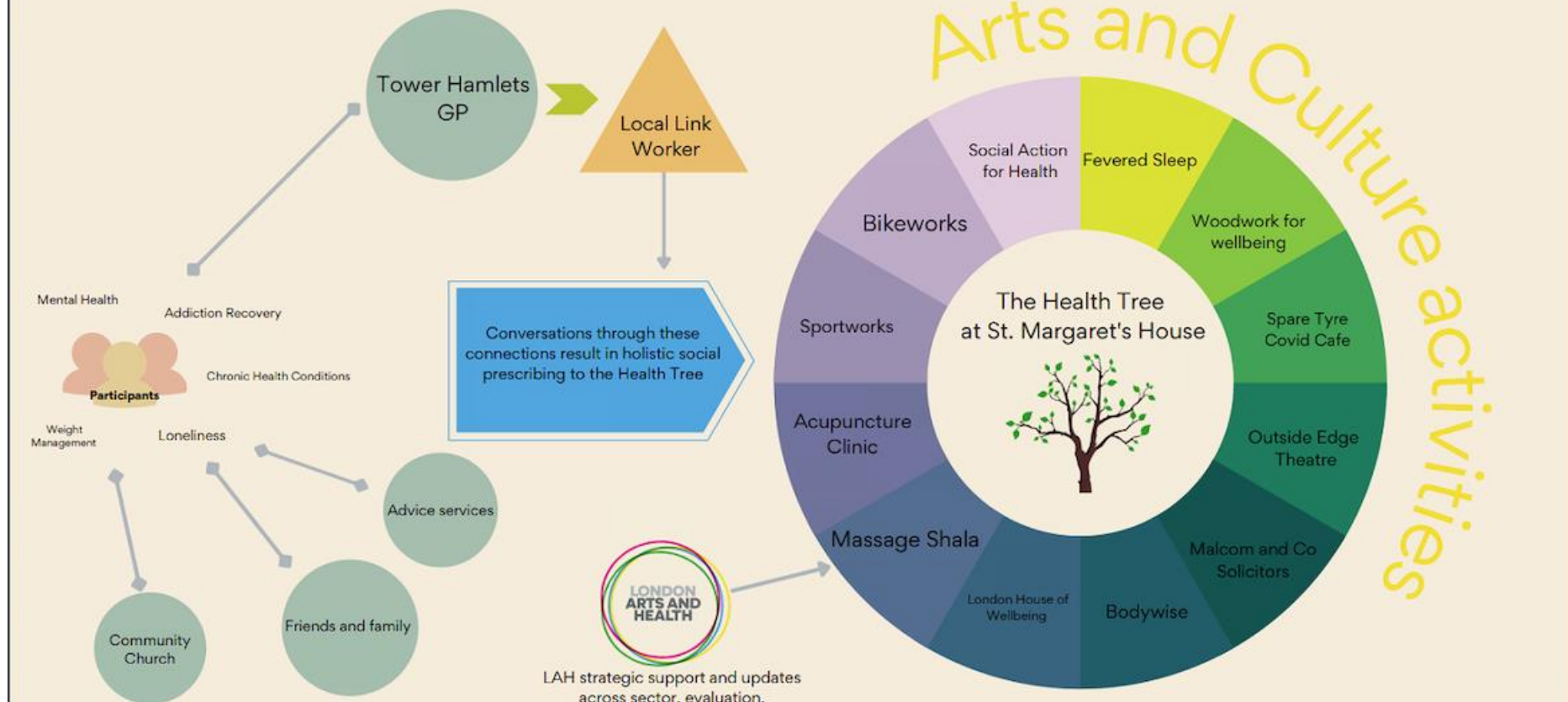
- From a St Margaret's House perspective there was a larger increase in socially prescribed referrals- starting with the 2 or 3 we knew off rising to an average of 30 per month by the end of the project. *(See reflection below)*
- For Outside Edge Theatre we discovered that because of the link with Tower Hamlets Carers and the delivery of within their building a trusted staff member from within the organisation started his own referral process to the activities. And from our first public event we met a local church project who said that they had been referring to the project too. We realised and begun to learn that the language around the words "social prescribing" and "referrals" can be broad and used differently depending on who you spoke to. This played out in our sub group meetings and network meetings. There was often confusion amongst partners, practitioners, professionals and participants about differences between link workers and social prescribers and we met with Tower Hamlets Public Health to talk about the project who said that they were starting a team of Community Connectors.
- Social Action for Health had strong relationships with the social prescribing service and most of their participants originally came from an official social prescribing source but then had been referred to other projects within the charity by other trusted community sources e.g other organisations an, staff members and practitioners.

We do feel the project built a stronger relationship with our social prescribing service but it also raised awareness of other referral pathways and opened up a conversation about the language we use around what a referral is.

Through working in partnership and with the networking elements included The Health Tree did seem to create a hub approach that a variety of referral methods started to emerge and this was captured through an outside evaluation conducted by **London Arts and Health** about the Health Tree to contribute to their Mythbuster Guide project.

The table below shows all the elements of The Health Tree and how they interconnect

The Health Tree Mapping



St Margaret's House a reflection on building a relationship with social prescribers

“When we started the project the relationship with TH GP Care Group (our social prescribing service) was quite formal. We were invited to attend some of their team meetings as guest speakers and worked with them to ensure all The Health Tree activities were uploaded to the CLARITY system which is their intranet for activities to prescribe. The partnerships were there referrals were small. A few months TH GP Care Group needed a space to have their first meeting and we invited them to have it at St Margaret's House, providing refreshments and a tour of all our spaces. The Health Tree came more alive to them, they had met the St Margaret's team, saw where activities would be and could relate to it. From that day we had the direct emails of the team of 16 prescribers: we emailed them directly, invited them to ask questions about activities beyond the information in listings and phone us and worked to respond quickly. The relationship became more personable and therefore referrals started to happen. The development is striking, the last time we attended their team meetings was to watch a “rehearsal” of the play they were preparing for our March event to showcase how a prescribing conversation works with a patient.

We learnt for this to work we really had to “invite” the social prescribers in to the project and think of it almost as networking. We learnt that you have to move beyond the systems and structures in place and think more about building a relationship rather than relying on formal routes. It's a realisation that came out in sub group meetings and network meetings too.”

You can see Stuart Cox (Arts and Wellbeing Director/Deputy CEO) from St Margaret's House talking about the experience of developing the partnership with social prescribers at the National Academy for Social Prescribing's “Social Prescribing Show” at the Southbank Centre at Social Prescribing Week

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUjZsZr1-Y0&t=2061s>

There are great speakers from Historic England and Arts Council too and St Margaret's House's slot is about 31 mins in.

Below are testimonials, quotes and a case study that showcase our community's experience of referring to The Health Tree

“I have referred (name) to you, so glad he enjoys it! There is a real need for it, just we are so busy that we sometimes aren't able to tell people about it”

Wilma Bol (Social Prescriber) regarding Art Therapy.

“I found it through Esther –she works at the GP- she told me about carpentry here. When I am here I am happy.”

Woodwork participant social prescribed

“I came to the first class very nervous. My social prescriber explained it would help me with my anxiety and mental illness. I am here to help with my journey to recover”

Movement Participant

“I visited twice for acupuncture and loved this space called The Canvas. Its almost next door to York Hall and the rest of the street are very welcoming also. If you get a chance and have time there's a local charity shop almost next door. All said and done it's been a great time at the canvas for me. Thankyou social prescriber for the time you spent arranging this for me.”

Google review Feedback



NETWORK CASE STUDY 1 – TOWER HAMLETS SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

Patient age at time of referral: 45

Patient gender: Female

Ethnicity: Bangladeshi

Headline (summary of patient needs)

Patient feeling socially isolated and would like to engage in physical activities to improve her health and wellbeing.

Reason for referral and presenting problem – Maximum 50 words

This patient has suffered with a number of mental health issues for a number of years which has affected her everyday life. At the time of referral, she was receiving support to manage her mental health by professionals from the practice and in the community. Patient was looking to find out about the physical exercise groups and activities to contribute to her maintaining her health and wellbeing.

Details of social prescribing intervention (including number of sessions) – Maximum 100 words

Patient self-referred to Social Prescribing after it was encouraged by the mental health nurse who was supporting the patient to access information and signposting around physical exercise groups. The patient was interested in losing weight as she had become very inactive over the lockdown period. We explored engaging with a weight management programme, but she felt that she couldn't commit to the weekly requirements to engage with the facilitators. We then explored a more flexible option to engage with physical wellbeing activities through St Margaret's House who offered free sessions for patients referred through Social Prescribing. I was able to input the patients details and book her onto the 'Fitness Fusion' sessions. The patient attended for 3 weeks and gave feedback that it was very enjoyable. I signposted the patient to the walking groups for Bengali women in Tower Hamlets as well as the Walk Tower Hamlets groups to improve her social connections and meet new people in her community.

Number of face-to-face sessions

6 telephone sessions

Community services signposted and referred into
St Margaret's House – The Health Tree
St Peters Community Centre
Walk Tower Hamlets
Women's Health and Family services – Bengali Women's walking group

Identified needs addressed by intervention *highlight relevant area*

Carers Support	Managing Long Term Conditions
Domestic Abuse	Mental Wellbeing

Education	Parenting Support
Employment Support	Physical Wellbeing
Financial Problem	Social Connection
Housing Problem	Substance Misuse
Immigration Issues	Transport/Mobility Support
Leisure Activities	Other:

Outcomes as a result of intervention (including engagement with services)

Patient was able to attend the 'fitness fusion' sessions that I referred her onto based at the St Margaret's House, run by The Health Tree. These sessions were highly enjoyable for her as she was able to find out about the opportunities in her local community. This was especially important for her as she had become quite socially isolated over the past year whilst she was self-isolating. She also found that she had put on weight due to her lack of physical exercise whilst staying at home. So she found that by joining the sessions she was able to focus on losing a few pounds of weight and to increase her fitness levels. By taking part in these activities, she could also maintain a positive mental health which she had been suffering with for a number of years.

Patient quotation (if available)

Thank you, you have really helped me and I enjoyed the activities I took part in.

In the end whatever the language used and whatever the official method The Health Tree embraced the "action and spirit of referrals" and created a programme that celebrated different referral pathways with our formal social prescribing at the heart of it. It felt like a "hub" or "zone" of referral by the end.



Movement workshop at St Margaret's House







Massage Shala at St Margaret's House

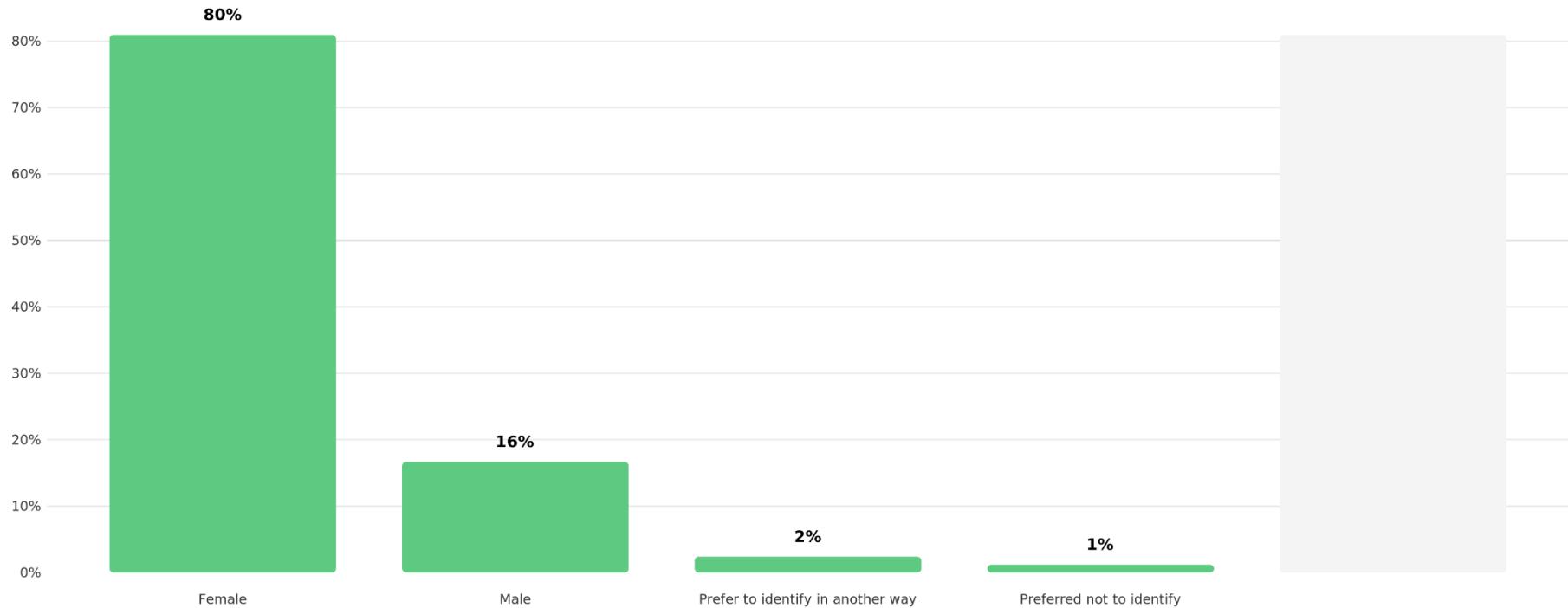


Osondu from Malcom & Co Solicitors who provide Legal Advise workshops at St Margaret's House



Woodwork session at St Margaret's House

What is your gender



The data above shows very high engagement from participants who identify as female which is fantastic but not so much those who identify as male which is an issue we feel could be worked on in the future. It actually reflects data from research we learned from a Thriving Communities webinar on health inequalities that highlighted twice as many women than men benefit from social prescribing.

We did have one element of the project that had the most engagement with men and this was the Woodwork for Wellbeing sessions which ran on Tuesdays. It was not exclusive to men (there was a mixed group too) but it did have a strong connection with social prescriber's male patients.

“The woodwork space and instructors has proved invaluable for not only several of our local menfolk with mental health issues, but this last 12months it has provided a vital, safe space for several asylum seeker males, who otherwise had nowhere to be outside of their one-room accommodation. (To me, it was also great to see something specifically for men). It proved to be a brilliant outlet for creativity and all the therapeutic benefits therein. What is really unique is that language has not been a barrier and everyone is welcome, no matter your experience.”

Esther – Social Prescriber

The health and wellbeing outcomes were very powerful for our male participants too and this film of a session highlights the impact both of the activity and the action of social prescribing itself

https://youtu.be/hTF3YZ_nP4M

But the conversation of how to engage more men was part of our network meetings and one that should be considered in the future.

Here are the notes from our last Health Tree network meeting on 31st March 2022

“It was interesting we reached a small number of men in the project. It also reflected research from the National Academy from Social Prescribing that twice as many women than men are benefiting from social prescribing. There was general agreement that this is something to look at and Cynthia from Social Action for Health spoke about up and coming work they are doing on this. Melissa from Engage Here spoke about the importance of creating the right atmosphere for men- chilled and non-competitive. If you have any thoughts, projects or interest in following up on increasing men's engagement with this work then do let me know and I'll pass on to Social Action for Health. There was reflection that the woodwork had been a positive project for men.”





Change

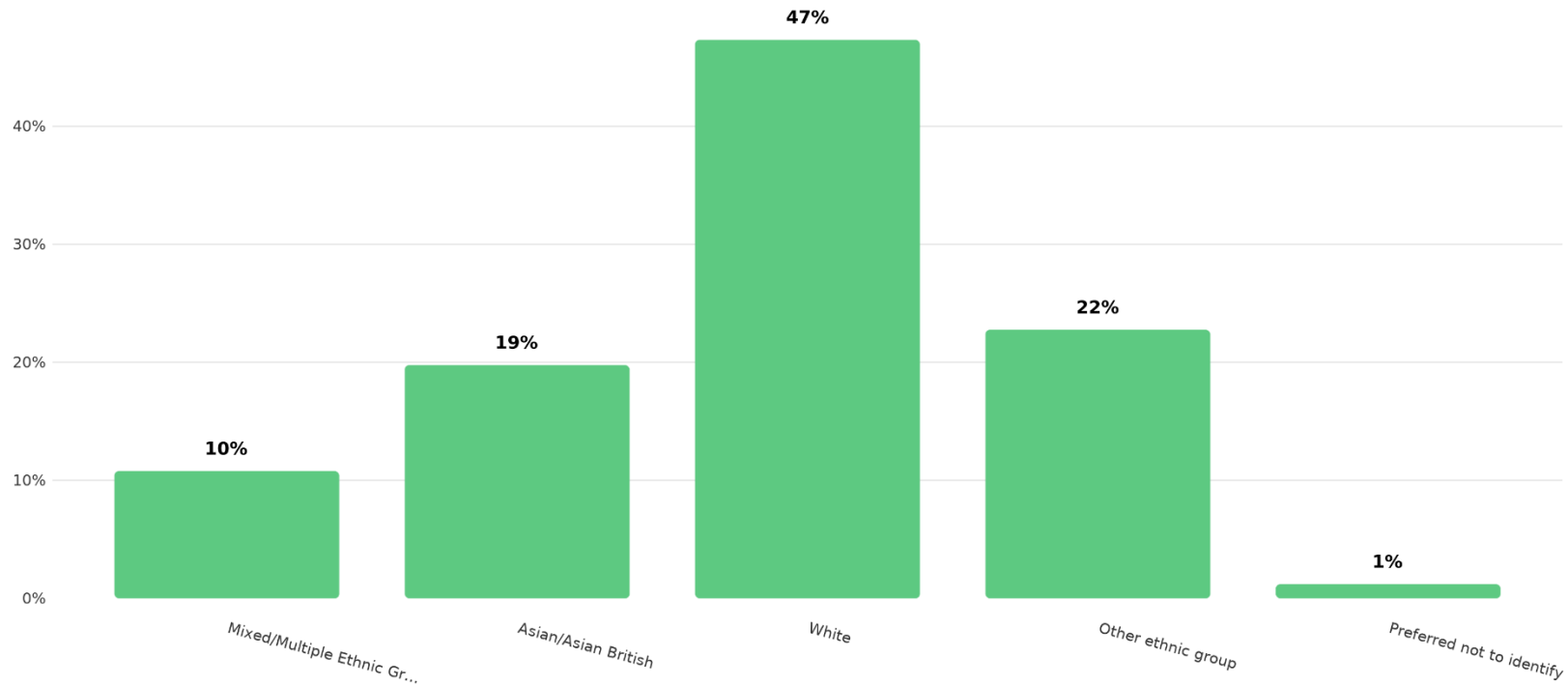
Change is a new state of matter.
Change is a new state of mind.
Change is a new state of being.
Change is a new state of life.
Change is a new state of love.
Change is a new state of hope.
Change is a new state of faith.
Change is a new state of peace.
Change is a new state of joy.
Change is a new state of happiness.
Change is a new state of success.
Change is a new state of fulfillment.
Change is a new state of meaning.
Change is a new state of purpose.
Change is a new state of direction.
Change is a new state of destiny.





Woodwork at St Margaret's House

What is your Ethnicity



This table shows the breakdown of ethnicity of the participants who completed the survey. It highlights that we could have done more to reach Global Majority communities in Tower Hamlets.

There was some fantastic work from Social Action for Health from the My Moves project in reaching Somali and Bangaldeshi communities and all staff from Social Action for Health were helpful in sharing expertise and knowledge. Mahurun Chowdhury who is the Operations Manager at Social Action for Health was instrumental in engaging Somali and Bangladeshi older women groups to parts of the Health Tree such as the public events. These are events that these groups would not have normally attended and it was through Mahurun's hard work that they came.

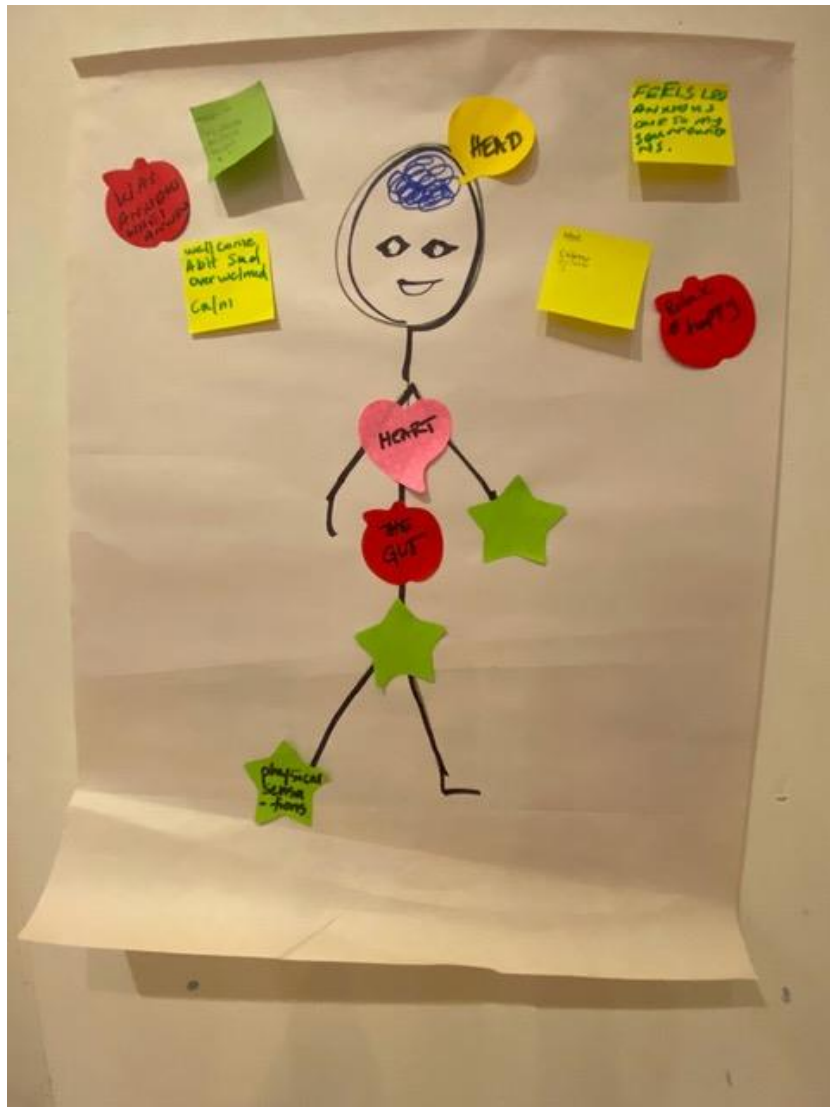
There were reflections during the project of how we can address this in the future

- Right from the start we'll have stronger Global Majority representation on the decision or discussion parts of the project
- With the network group have stronger goals one engaging groups, practitioners and speakers from Global Majority communities
- Have stronger planning around the needs of the group and plan for translators at events, prayer rooms, materials in the relevant language

There is agreement that thinking about the reach and ethnicity of our participants will be much more at the core of planning from the start in the next phase of the development of The Heath Tree



Fitness activity at St Margaret's House





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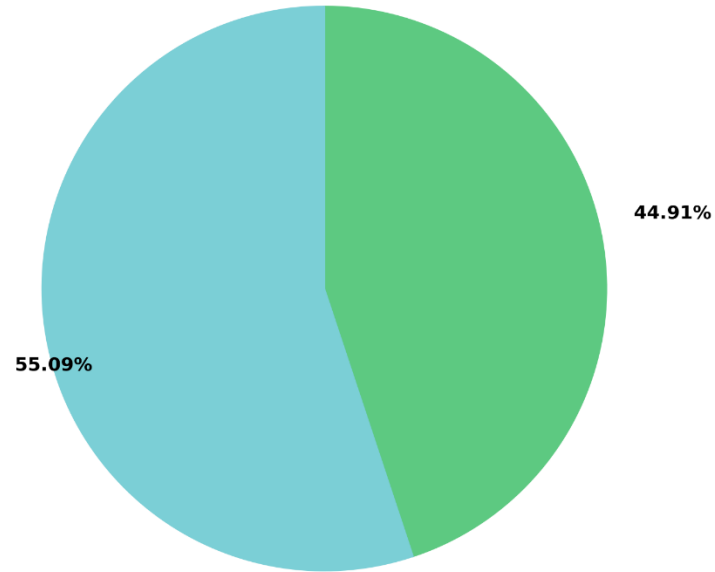
I feel
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Participants evaluate their activities

Do you have a long-term health condition or disability

- No
- Yes



There was much evidence that The Health Tree did have an impact on health outcomes. For St Margaret's House we have never had such high engagement from people with long term health conditions or disability in such a project before. Normally the statistic for this would be

below 10% so it's exciting 55% of the participants interviewed had a long term health condition or disability. It demonstrates to us that the approach of a cultural or non-traditional health organisation can and does have potential to work with health outcomes and creative non-traditional ways of delivery can engage communities.

This very much played out in the acupuncture multi bed part of The Health Tree. At first this part of the project took a while to connect but after time and especially after the visit by the group of social prescribers to St Margaret's House things began to change and the sessions became popular and often fully booked. It is then we started to receive very powerful testimonials about the impact of this work below. A few things emerged:

- The space the multi bed delivered in was a multi-purpose studio space that used to be a shop. Its front is directly on a street and the studio is also used for the dance and rehearsals. Also Multi bed means the treatments were delivered with other participants as a group. Yet there is something about this approach that worked for people where other services that are more traditional and delivered in more traditional health settings had failed for them.
- The Health Tree made services and treatments "affordable" to people who would otherwise not think or believe that they could access these services
- We have never had such a piece of work at St Margaret's House before where participants have come into the office or emailed so concerned and anxious because the funding is coming to an end. It demonstrated to us what an impact the work is having but also for the future that there must be long term consideration to the sustainable funding of the activities within projects like The Health Tree- especially when the activities are led by grass roots of smaller organisations who do not have the capacity or governance to provide their own funding.

The case studies and testimonials highlight some of the points raised above:

"I am writing to say how much I have valued the accessible service provided by the acupuncture clinic. My own experience is that I am recovering slowly from several fractures sustained in a cycling accident, as well as dealing with a traumatic bereavement. The combined effect of this has been delayed bone healing and reduced ability to engage in physical activities to support wellbeing. I struggled with the level of pain caused by physio exercises, I felt either anxious or exhausted and wasn't sure how I was going to be able to do the things I needed to do to get better. Being able to access weekly acupuncture has made an enormous difference in terms of pain management and in improving mobility which has had a positive impact on my mental health and meant that I am now able to exercise more and feel I am recovering rather than

stuck. Despite having been working full time, my previous experiences of acupuncture were of it being too expensive to afford on more than an occasional basis and, were it not for this clinic, I would not have been able to consider the regular treatment which is making such a difference to my health.”

(Acupuncture Participant)

“I suffer from chronic pain and I can’t recommend this team and service enough. They are gentle and understanding and after attending for a few weeks I feel much better, pains have subsided and my general well-being and mobility have improved.” (Acupuncture Participant)

“I have had 3 sessions of acupuncture and am amazed with the results I had problems with my feet and legs plus hormonal issues. My pains have literally disappeared & I feel balanced & emotionally well. The team here are so lovely and accommodating. I can’t recommend this place enough. Thank you.” (Acupuncture Participant)

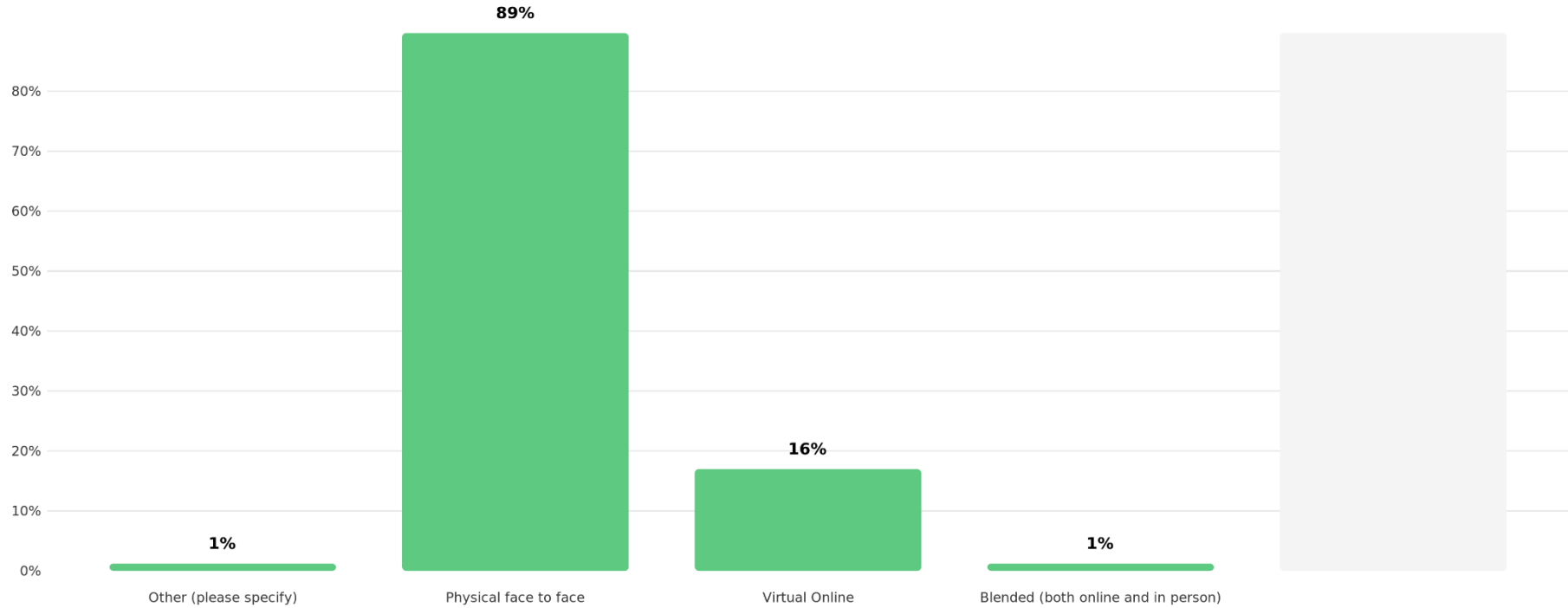
“My mother is having acupuncture at The Health Tree. The acupuncture has changed her life style and health. My mother had severe stiffness in her legs and body. She was in incredible pain and she has other complications. Since visiting The Health Tree it has motivated her and given her hope. She is very hopeful about her health improving and the treatment has given her will power. My mother's mood has improved incredibly. The Health Tree is a life line for my mother and somewhere she can attend to manage her symptoms. Prior to this I was asking and searching for other medical treatments. Nothing was available and other types of treatment have failed.” (Acupuncture Participant)

“This has been an invaluable service for me over the last couple of months. I am Autistic, have FND, EDS and other co-morbidities and working closely with () and () has helped me immensely. Although this multidisciplinary clinic is limited in its options of treatment modalities, it has provided beneficial intervention that I otherwise would not have had access to for multifaceted reasons. Providing quality and affordable complementary therapies facilitates the community you serve to achieve an optimum state of health and well-being and I have been very grateful to be a part of that.” (Acupuncture Participant)



Numbi Arts deliver Somali dance as part of My Moves from Social Action for Health

What was the method of delivery



It's great that the data shows a high level of face to face activity especially as the project has had to negotiate delivery coming out of Covid lockdowns and Omicron strand of Covid.

Ceri Durham from Social Action for Health did highlight that there might have been more delivery online than shown here as some of the My Moves participants got so excited to be seeing people physically again that they may have forgot that their workshops started online.

Having a variety of ways of delivering was very useful. There was an intention that everything would be delivered face to face but in the end due to some of the Covid restrictions and after thinking about access for participants with Long Covid it was agreed that some of the delivery would be on line. This played very well for the Covid Café. After careful consideration and thinking about the levels of tiredness Long Covid sufferers can experience the whole of this part of the project was delivered through Zoom.

The images and quotes from participants below highlight the outputs and outcomes from the Covid Café part of the project

“Thank you for holding this space so well, I’ve been looking for something like this for more than a year” – on the session

“What a fabulous bunch of women you’ve brought together” (it’s not a gendered project – but it’s true!) – on the facilitators

“It’s already having an effect. I’m finding I’m able to express my needs to my housemates, after all this time downplaying things” – facilitator

“helping to see the balance between acceptance of where I’m at and still being committed to recovery and that being ok”

“finding the little joys, celebrating the little achievements, and still being aware that I don’t want to be here in this group

“It was lovely just having the space to share and being able to talk to such kind people”

“I have not had an opportunity to meet anyone with Long Covid to date, until today at the Covid Café, and I have also just lost my job as a result of having London Covid so it was fantastic to meet some people who not only have it or who have ELC, but also who are tapping into the Creative flow and thinking about using meditation style guided visualisations to improve wellbeing.”

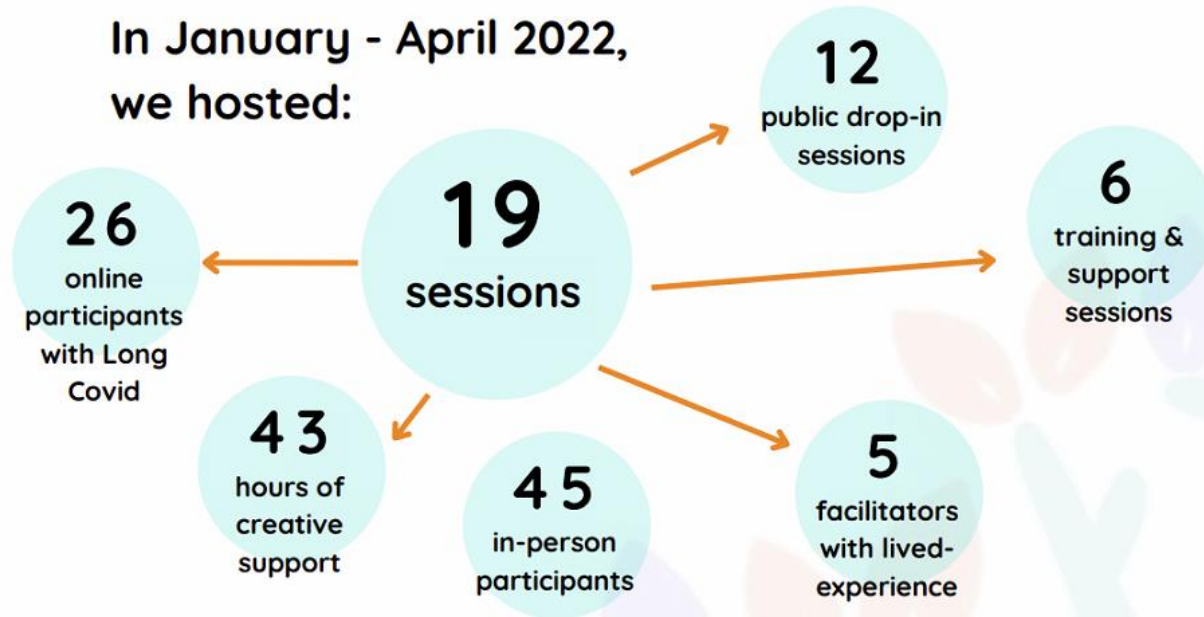
“I am feeling very clam now, with more space. Usually I feel very stressed at these sorts of things”



COVID CAFÉ

Covid Café is a creative, inclusive space for anyone learning to live with Long Covid. Hosted by artists with lived experience of Long Covid, and/or another long-term condition, the Covid Café is a place for conversation, creativity - a place to breathe - and try out making changes one step at a time.

In January - April 2022,
we hosted:



“ So good to have a place to be taken seriously and heard. I felt connected to the other participants ”

“ It was great to connect with other people going through a similar experience - a beacon of hope ”

“ I realise through being here today that I don't want to go back [to how everything/ I] was before Covid ”

More information can be found on our website:

<https://www.sparetyre.org/whats-on/events/covid-cafes>

Sign up to the Covid Café mailing list for future dates:

<https://mailinglist.sparetyre.org/h/r/C610A3CE174BE5EB2540EF23F30FEDED>

Or contact us directly:

Covidcafe@sparetyre.org
07598 142 058



With thanks to:



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Branch Two Network Meetings

The second “Branch” of The Health Tree was our strategic element consisting of:

- 6 network meetings to open up more discussion and learning of social prescribing to raise awareness amongst local groups, artists, practitioners and health workers.
- 6 sub group meetings between project partners to discuss project progress and future opportunities.
- 2 Public events for anyone in our community to find out about social prescribing and celebrate activities

We have delivered 6 meetings across the year engaging over 20 organisations including;

* Tower Hamlets GP Cares Group

- Woodwork for Wellbeing
- East London Cares
- Shaw Trust
- Globe Community Project
- GoodGym Tower Hamlets
- Trapped in Zone One
- Spear Project
- Bromley By Bow Centre
- Tower Hamlets CVS
- Bangladeshi Parents and Carers Association
- Engage Here
- Children’s Society
- Chisenhale Gallery

Meetings were held on:

Thursday 6th May 2021

Thursday 1st July 2021

Thursday 4th Nov 2021

Thursday 16th Dec 2021

Thursday 10th Feb 2022

Thursday 31st March 2022

Here is a case study which demonstrates a shift in thinking and development of relationships between groups and the social prescribing service. It is from the massage project that ran from St Margaret's House and joined in the Health Tree as the project began. It became a popular addition to our programme but they never had any interaction with social prescribing before the project:

Rachel "Massage Shala" practitioner

'I am now understanding that it is really a thing and people are actually doing it, before I thought it was a thing that people were being encouraged to do but it wasn't happening much, now I can email my local Link Worker and send her information about the Massage Shala. Being part of the Health Tree has granted the group access to many more clients, and a network that is supporting people with both their physical and mental health. This network has not only been beneficial for participants in terms of ease of access to a wide range of groups , but has also created the opportunity for individual practitioners to link up, collaborate and share knowledge 'it's nice not feeling like we are not just doing this on our own'



Zoom with Revuzor



ASUS VivoBook

First ever Health Tree network meeting



Students from UCL Creative Health Course getting involved with the network

Branch Two - The Health Tree Events

We held two events at the Brady Arts Centre in Whitechapel. The first was on Weds 13th October and the second was on Thurs March 10th 2022- Social Prescribing Day.

These events were focused on bringing our community together and give an opportunity for anyone interested to find out what social prescribing is and talk to Tower Hamlets Cares. The idea is that we wanted to have something that was interactive and social

Weds Oct 13th event- “What is Social Prescribing?”

The focus of this event was to find ways to explain and talk about how social prescribing works in Tower Hamlets.

We benefitted from a mix of talks and workshops which included:

- Bengali dance workshop from the My Moves dance project led by Social Action for Health
- Talks from London Arts and Health, Tower Hamlets GP Care Group and Arts Council
- Drama theatre workshop led by Outside Edge Theatre
- Screening of Woodwork for Wellbeing film
- Introduction to Covid Café's from Spare Tyre

London Arts and Health also conducted an evaluation of The Health Tree at the event and we were very lucky to have James Sanderson from National Academy for Social Prescribing give a talk and close the event.

Here are some key findings from the evaluation conducted by London Arts and Health showing levels of understanding of social prescribing from people attending the event.

- 63% of respondents knew what social prescribing is, saying it involved 'linking people with the right support'
- Participants found out about projects via their GP or via St. Margaret's House directly.
- Stakeholders identified as: social prescribers, project leaders delivering social prescribing and also local residents who were aware of the Health Tree and prescribed residents to the activities
- 100% of stakeholders said 'working collaboratively' was the single most important thing about the Health Tree consortium, and 50% agreed that the Health Tree had increased the number of participants.

And this is case study as part of the London Arts and Health research from Outside Edge's Molly Cox and shows the impact of the event on the development of their projects and work.

"When I spoke to Molly Cox, about this workshop, she explained that herself and the group leader had met the Bollywood dance practitioner at the Health Tree's event in October of this year. They had both loved working with her in the demonstration she had done there, and so asked if she would come to Outside Edge to do a workshop with participants. This struck me as an example of the huge advantages of being part of a social prescribing hub such as the Health Tree. Molly noted how the Health Tree has developed a network of like-minded creatives in the field of arts and health who are all striving towards the same goal."

Event Two- March 10th 2022 – Celebrating Social Prescribers

As it was Social Prescribing Day this felt like a great opportunity to celebrate our project, social prescribers and Tower Hamlets GP Care Group.

The event included:

- A live and interactive demonstration of a Covid Café led by Spare Tyre's Rebecca Manson Jones
- A Somali Dance workshop led by My Moves projects and Numbi Arts
- Warm up and networking skills from Outside Edge Theatre
- A singing workshop led by guests Breathe AHR
- A reflection of The Health Tree including all our partners

From a social prescribing perspective a powerful moment came when the staff from the Tower Hamlets GP Care Group our social prescribing service got up a performed a play on how a conversation works between a social prescriber and a patient. This demonstrated a real sense of a relationship in the project and sense of working together.



Singing led by Breathe AHR at Health Tree event March 2022





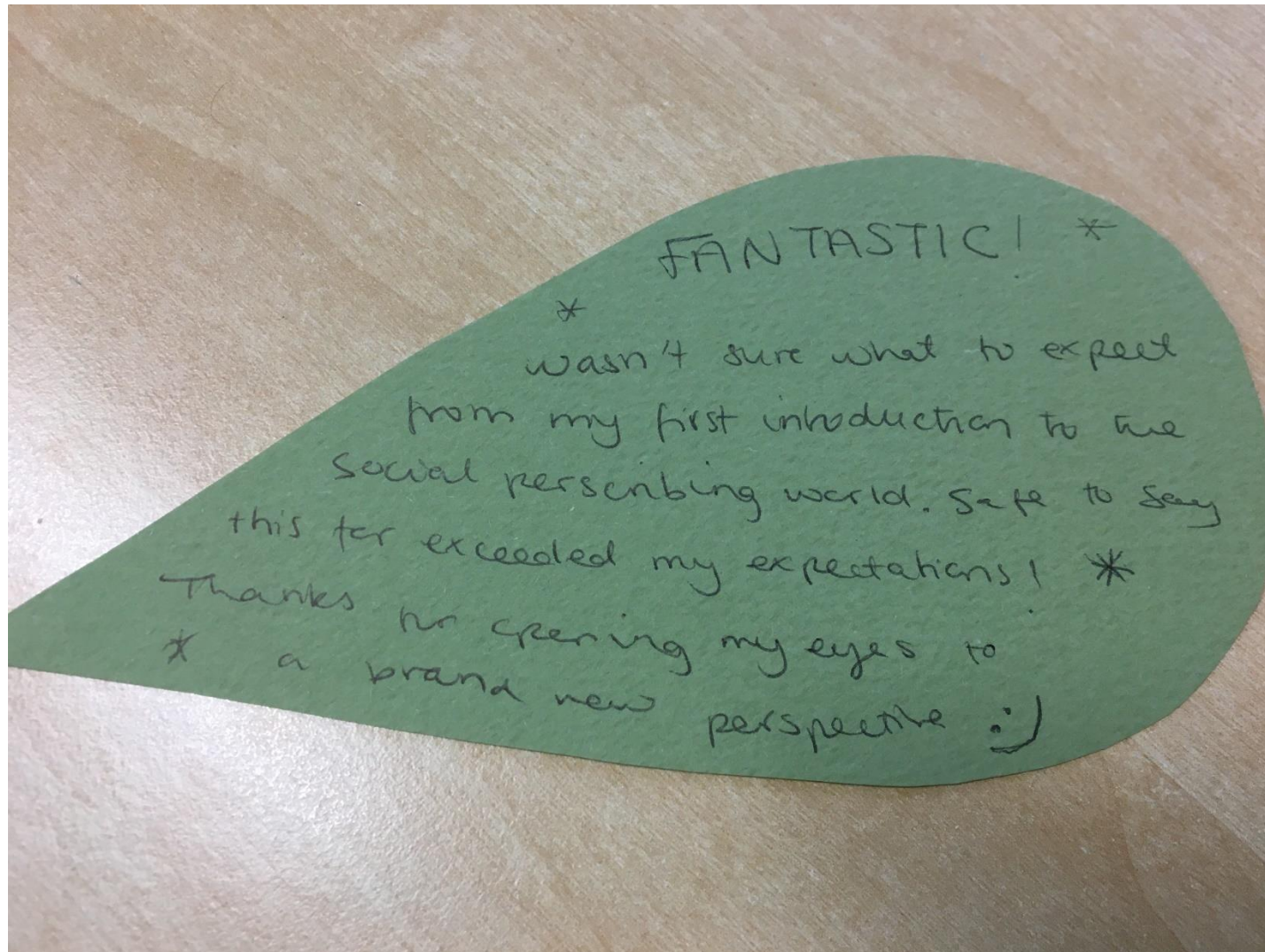
Fevered Sleep engaging social prescribers at Health Tree event in Oct 21 and March 22

We evaluated the event and The Health Tree by working with local artist Sylvia Morgado who had joined The Health Tree network. She created a tree for people at the event to leave their reflections of The Health Tree.

Here is what people said:

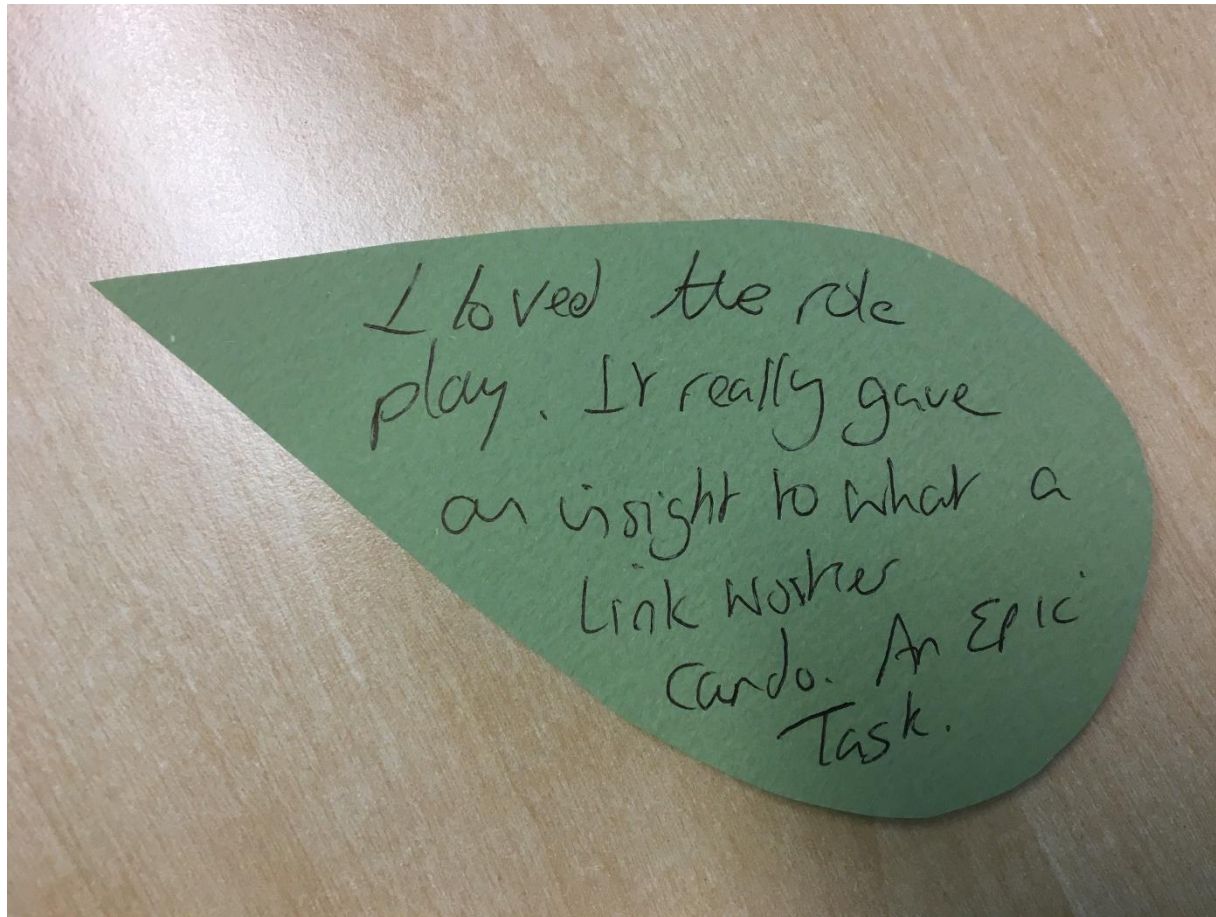
Evaluation activity – The Health Tree event 10.03.2022

- Wonderful to have the opportunity to do acupuncture and massage through the network. Helped a lot in a moment of a lot of stress. Thank you so much!
- Fantastic! Wasn't sure what to expect from my first introduction to the social prescribing world. Safe to say this far exceeded my expectations! Thanks for opening my eyes to a brand new perspective.



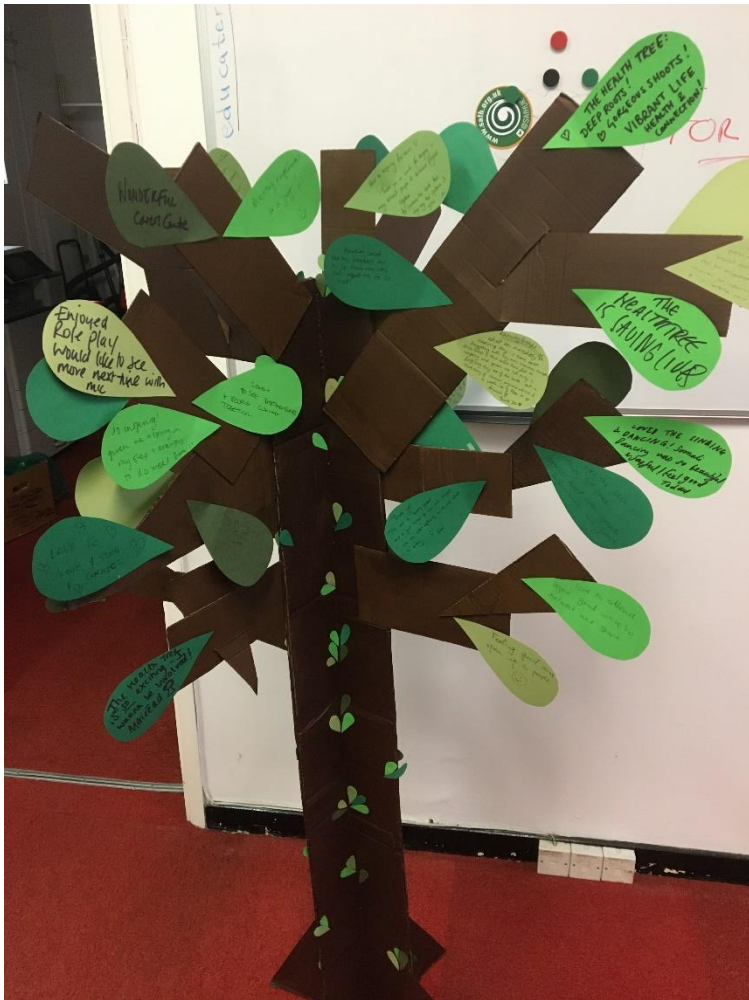
- Thanks! Big thanks! Looking forward to next year's one!
- Growing popularity at the fantastic Woodwork for Wellbeing!

- Bringing together people after such a long time apart. So lovely to see so many people prioritising their health.
- Eternally grateful. What an incredibly inspiring day – I have been struggling with my own mental health since Covid and this event has felt so uplifting and given me not only a fulfilling day out of the house, but a tool bag of names, organisations and a whole lot of hope to go forward. Thank you.
- Amazing event! Really enjoyed all the activities and learning about the wonderful work everyone is doing! Very organised!
- What an inspiring few hours. Thank you so much for bringing so many brilliant people and brilliant projects together. All communities need this. Long may this continue and grow!
- So great to hear from people actually doing the social prescribing thing. Thank you.
- I loved the role play. It really gave an insight into what a link worker can do. An epic task.



- The Health Tree: deep roots! Gorgeous shoots! Vibrant life, health, and connection!
- The Health Tree is saving lives.
- So inspiring! Given me a spring in my step and energy to do more!
- Wonderful.
- Feeling good and open up to people.
- Love to attend again. Great way to network and share.

- Love the idea of this 3rd tree, overall event was great, performances was great.
- Very exciting and FUN.
- Enjoyed role play, would like to see more next time with mic.
- Positive connection.
- It was amazing to network with all the different organisations and partners. Loved watching all the activities!
- The Health Tree is so exciting – I want to be involved!
- Lovely to see partnerships and people coming together
- Loved the singing and dancing! Somali dancing was so beautiful and joyful. Feel good today.
- Meeting neighbours is a joy!
- Loved to move and sing and connect.
- Thank you! This was a lovely event and a good taster for me and insight into the arts and wellbeing world into which I am entering!
- To be an organisation new to the area, to have met so many others, has been fantastic!
- Amazing concept that has introduced me to so many new ideas and inspired me to do more!



Here are some reflections from the Tower Hamlets GP Care Group team on their involvement with The Health Tree.

“Our Social Prescribing team have really enjoyed being part of the Health Tree initiative. It has increased access to a diverse range of arts activities for our patients and it has been a positive partnership to be involved in.”

Sadhia Warraich- Social Prescribing Manager

“Over the past year the Tower Hamlets Social Prescribing Service has been working closely with St Margaret’s House and The Health Tree. For patients referred to us seeking social activities, wellbeing services and creative outlets, the organisation has been a hub of positivity and community care.

My referrals to The Health Tree have included acupuncture, yoga, woodwork for wellbeing, art therapy and the free legal advice.

Feedback from patients regarding their experiences have been very positive and engaging. Many did not know of the Health Tree and how accessible it is.

The staff at St Margaret’s House have been instrumental in creating simple pathways for patients to be referred, and their communication regarding the services and new offerings is fantastic. As a social prescriber I feel very included.

It has been a pleasure to watch The Health Tree grow and be nurtured by such an invested team.”

Farrah Idris – Tower Hamlets Social Prescriber

“It’s fair to say that over the past few years Social Prescribing has really taken off, with many finding the benefits of improving their physical and mental wellbeing by engaging in community wellbeing groups, especially during and after the pandemic. But Social Prescribing wouldn’t be as active as it could be, if it weren’t for projects such as Health Tree that serves to support those in need of an extra booster in life.

It was wonderful to see so many people join the National Social Prescribing Day run by the Health Tree on 10th March. I was personally inspired by the commitment many community organisations have given to running activities at such a hard time for many people.

Over the past year, I have been actively referring vulnerable and isolated people of all ages to access the brilliant activities offered by Health Tree, from the ‘Fitness Fusion’ exercise classes to the ‘Woodwork for Wellbeing’ workshops. I have seen first-hand the positive impact these activities have had on the physical and mental wellbeing of those I have referred. I have also had amazing feedback from the participants, who have expressed how great they felt after joining and couldn’t wait for the next sessions!

I am very much looking forward to hearing what is next for Health Tree and getting more local residents involved!”

Jessica Connolly Black- Tower Hamlets Social Prescriber

“The gains which the Tower Hamlets GP Care Group have received from The Health Tree are many – having a buzzing network of service providers who all share the same vision, ie reaching the hard-to-reach in our community; being able to refer patients in a direct way through Social Prescribing channels to events and programmes which we can vouch for, having seen and met with many of the artists, trainers and professionals who either work at/with the brilliant hub which is St Margaret’s House. It has been wonderful to refer into such a local and community-led project. The collaboration has really blossomed, with projects growing in size and reach.

Instances of socially-prescribed activities, to name a few: the Massage Shala; Mindful Movement sessions; Woodwork for Wellbeing; and Fast Fashion.

In particular, individual patients have given feedback that the Mindful Movement for example, enabled a chronically anxious patient to get back ‘out there’ and re-enter a group activity and she is now keen to try other group sessions.

As a Wellbeing Link worker my experience with The Health Tree has been brilliant throughout –the team are great collaborators and I think they have set a high standard for the rest of the borough!

Esther Bissessar- Tower Hamlets Social Prescriber



Tower Hamlets GP Care Group performing a play at event in March 22

What has happened as a result of this work

The funding of Thriving Communities was for a year ending in March 2022. However, there are some developments and activities that show a legacy and a future for this work:

- St Margaret's House has been working with some of the delivery partners and has supported Woodwork for Wellbeing to set up as their own CIC and find their own funding. We also have supported the Acupuncture Multi Bed in making their first ever funding application.
- Fevered Sleep have been linking more with organisations within St Margaret's House especially the Bangladeshi Parents and Carers Association and have worked with this group and in collaboration with St Margaret's House on an application for funding for joint partnership working sharing a producer role across the three organisations.
- Outside Edge Theatre inspired by the relationship they have developed with the Tower Hamlets Carers Centre are talking together about the possibility of creating their own project
- Social Action for Health are in discussions with Woodwork for Wellbeing about commissioning them to deliver Woodwork sessions for their Somali and Bangladeshi men groups.
- We have developed a relationship UCL's new Creative Health course and are currently benefiting a 3 month work placement who is accessing this work and how we can better demonstrate our impact in the future
- Spare Tyre have met with a Senior Manager from the NHS Personalised Care Group to discuss the Covid Café project with a view to gaining further support in the development of this work.
- St Margaret's House is working on future funding applications to support the development of this work and involving all the Health Tree partners

- GLA have awarded us £2500 and St Margaret's House, Social Action for Health and London Arts and Health have agreed to use this to support the network meetings over the next year to develop Creative Health Zone model idea (see below).
- We have started to connect with the Social Prescribing Service in Newham to tell them about The Health Tree and Creative Health Zone idea (see below).

A Research Opportunity

In the autumn of 2021 London Arts and Health introduced us to Clare Lovett who worked at the Culture Team for the Greater London Authority. Clare was interested in the developing work of our project and when we talked she felt there could be an alignment with The Health Tree and the GLA's vision for Creative Health Zones. The Creative Health Zone idea is in early form but had elements of community led, placed based creative ways to bring arts, culture and wellbeing together. The idea links with the Mayor's London Plan.

We sent in a proposal to Clare and were commissioned to embark on a piece of research and create a report from this looking at what a possible Creative Health Zone be. The Health Tree would be a case study and we'd talk to wider community involved in health, arts and social prescribing.

This led us on an exciting adventure where not only were we delivering The Health Tree but conducting the research too- both to finish in March 2022! Luckily, we were helped in our research by working with two amazing organisations BOP Consulting and Clod Ensemble's Performing Medicine. Also, our current partners London Arts and Health and Social Action for Health supported too.

This has been an exciting development for The Health Tree and the research does demonstrate the potential of a model to be shared with other areas. From April 2022 onwards we plan to work with the GLA to see how we can use the research report and take the work further.

Could The Health Tree grow and become a forest?– Read the research from the link below and decide for yourself.

<https://www.stmargarethouse.org.uk/arts-projects/creative-health-zone-research>

Final conclusions from the project and what we'll do in the future

Working with Social Prescribers

A key finding is that you have to nurture the relationship with your social prescribing service and go above and beyond the official system taking place. The key learning in progressing with this will be to keep that personal relationship we have developed by providing space for them where we can, seeing how help their objectives, involving them in new ideas and projects right from the start and encouraging personal interaction and questions through email, phone calls and The Health Tree newsletter we developed.

We'll aim to find out more data from Tower Hamlets GP Care group on who is being referred to what and gain more case studies but also share our evaluations with their service too.

Reach of underserved communities and groups

Progressing to the next stage of this work we'll right from the start plan how to engage more Global Majority communities to the project especially Somali and Bangladeshi. We'll ensure that these groups are represented in the planning stages and be more proactive in bringing this topic to forum and network meetings especially as we work towards the Creative Health Zone idea. St Margaret's House and Social Action for Health have agreed to work more closely on this. Also we'll embed thinking about how more men can benefit from social prescribing and learn from has worked so successfully with woodwork in reaching men and apply it to the planning of other activities

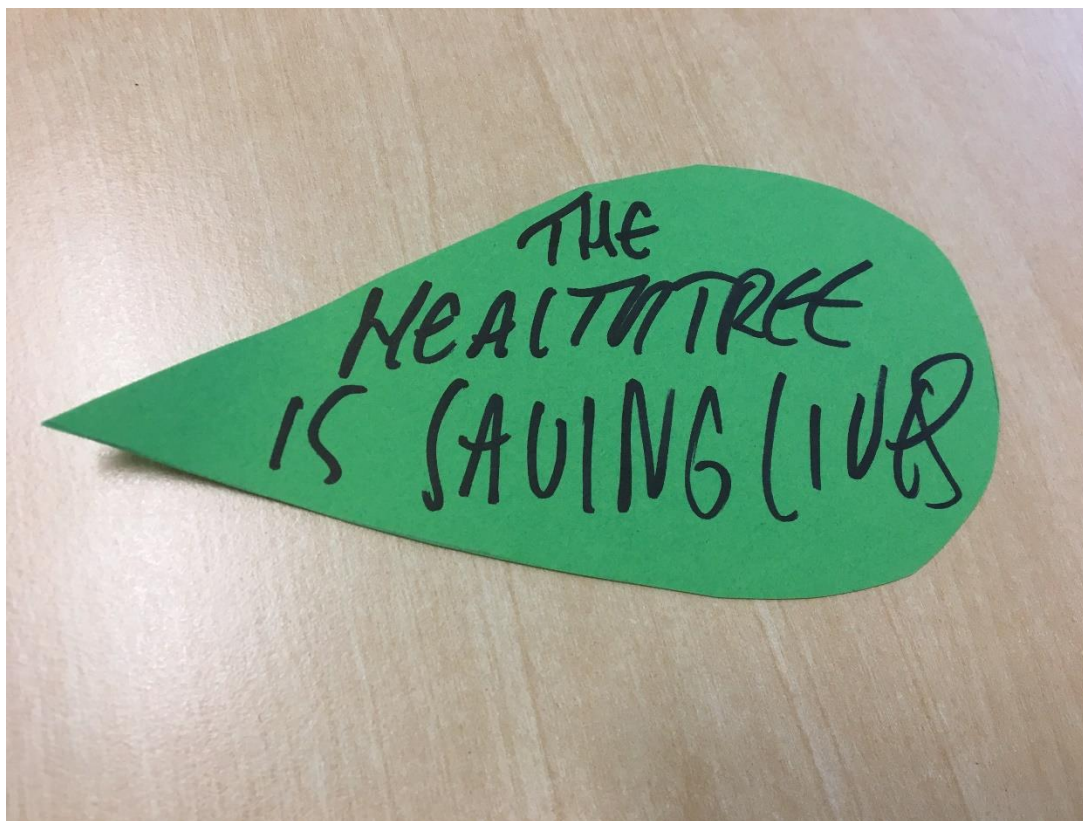
Language and communication of social prescribing

Language and communication of what social prescribing even is and how the benefits of it are evidenced so that that different audiences understand and get what they need came up so much during the course of the project. There was no sure fire conclusion for us and we felt this from everyone in the sector we spoke to as well. For example the report you are reading right now to one audience might be a powerful tool but to another might not hold enough data to be meaningful for them. We acknowledge that moving forward our partnership within The Health Tree could be good way to work together more closely on finding a "language" that could work. Social Action for Health work is much more used to reporting back on health outcomes and St Margaret's House used to reporting on arts. With a partnership developed

through The Health Tree and history of working with each other, a project where a huge focus was around the communication and language of social prescribing could be really interesting.

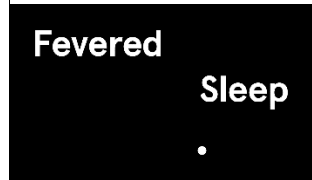
A Potential Model

Working on the Thriving Communities and aligning this with work from the GLA we do feel that the project has potential to be a model that can be embraced by other communities. We feel this is evidence by the research report conducted with the GLA, the building of a relationship with our social prescribing services and other referral pathways. The evidence from participants, social prescribers and community members although high on qualitative data, we feel does demonstrate a level of success with the project. We are excited to explore this for the future and are working together to further develop and grow out Health Tree



We'd really like to thank Thriving Communities and Arts Council England, Historic England and Natural England, NHS England and NHS Improvement, Sport England, the Money & Pensions Service, NHS Charities Together and the National Academy for Social Prescribing for the opportunity of bringing The Health Tree to life!

Thank you to our partners





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Bhavini Joshi

Dominic Saulter

For Health Tree logo

Shaka Lish

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To discuss the report contact Stuart Cox at stuart@stmargarethouse.org.uk