



Black Thrive Lambeth

Impact Report 2023-2024

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Introduction to Black Thrive Lambeth

Black Thrive Lambeth was established in 2016, primarily in response to the recommendations of the Lambeth Black Health and Wellbeing Commission following the death in police custody of Sean Rigg, a Black musician who was experiencing mental health challenges at the time and died because of excessive force.

Lambeth has been home to the UK's largest Black community since the 1950s. People of African and Caribbean origin, both past and present, have made significant and lasting contributions to the borough's cultural and economic life. Despite these successes, Lambeth still faces growing socio-economic inequality that disproportionately affects its Black African and Caribbean residents. Evidence suggests that exposure to the stressors linked to these inequalities negatively impacts both physical and mental well-being.

Our mission is to address the inequalities that negatively affect the mental health and well-being of Black people in Lambeth. We are a partnership between communities, statutory organisations, voluntary groups, and the private sector, working together to reduce the inequalities that lead to poorer socioeconomic outcomes for Black communities in the borough and initiate the systemic change required to see Black residents thrive.

The various systems and the people who work within them consistently create environments that prevent Black people from thriving. We work with individuals and organisations to challenge the mindsets and power imbalances that underpin policy development, resource allocation, and practices. Many Black people thrive despite the odds that are stacked against them. We change the odds by embedding race equity at every level of the system and building upon these experiences so that thriving is not the exception but becomes the rule.

Due to structural inequalities, the experiences and outcomes for Black people in Lambeth are, on average, significantly worse than those of their white counterparts in every area of life – education, employment, income, social care, housing, policing, criminal justice, well-being, and health. We believe that the only way forward is to centre the voices, experiences, and expertise of the full spectrum of Black communities in creating the change that is needed – of the people, by the people, with the people, for the people!

Children, Young People, and Families

The CYPF (Children, Young People, and Families) workstream is committed to driving systems change that positively impacts children, young people, and families. Our primary objectives are to gain a deeper understanding of the mental health needs of young people in Lambeth and coproduce practical solutions to challenges while ensuring that community voice is central to creating and developing services. To achieve this, we work with various statutory and community partners to develop and deliver projects championing youth voice and participation and addressing racial inequalities.

Our community work includes engaging with parents and young people, advocating for their needs, and empowering them to navigate systems such as schools and mental health services. We view each programme and project as an opportunity to engage the community to address the challenges Black children and parents face. This approach fosters a sense of ownership for participants, builds trust between Black Thrive and communities and creates opportunities for community upskilling.

Alongside our main programmes of work, Black Thrive are proudly supporting the Fund the Hubs campaign, in partnership with [Centre for Mental Health](#), [Mind](#), [The Children's Society](#), and [BACP](#), [Young Minds](#), [Youth Access](#) and [Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition](#). The campaign is calling for a national network of early support hubs in every local area so that all young people can access timely support and advice for issues affecting their mental health. We believe that safe spaces are crucial ground for impactful youth work, so that we can meet young people where they are.

We are incredibly excited about the year ahead and look forward to developing our existing programmes and partnerships and creating new ones. Our short-term goals include:

- Launching the Roots to Wings Toolkit, a whole-school community resource supporting mental health and wellbeing.
- Sharing the final Children in Need study results and methodological reflections on the programme.
- Supporting the Young Researchers in curating a range of activities, spotlighting Children's Mental Health Week 2025.
- Supporting the Fund the Hubs Campaign and expanding our work in policy and campaigns
- Building research capacity in our young people, providing opportunities for their growth and development.

The CYPF team has diligently worked to deliver impactful community engagement and upskilling around emotional wellbeing throughout the year. Specifically, our South East London Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB) and Children in Need programmes have facilitated the co-production of insightful workshops, creative interventions and resources in schools, youth services, community spaces, and with various system partners.



Hayward Gallery Visit

The Children in Need Young Researchers Project

In the last year, the primary focus of this project was a peer research study investigating the factors impacting the wellbeing of Black/mixed heritage children living, studying, or playing in Lambeth. By collaborating with the Research Institute, we designed training workshops that upskilled the group in the key research areas: study design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of our study findings.

Whilst running a peer research programme with such a young cohort of children can be challenging, we are proud of what they have achieved. We have seen incredibly positive changes in our young people, from their social interactions with one another to their skills as researchers.

Throughout the research process, we thought carefully about how we upskill young researchers to take part meaningfully. They have acted as critical friends, providing insight at each stage of the research process. They refined our documents and processes by telling us what works and what does not, what makes sense to them, and what does not. Once we collected the data, we taught them how to code the transcribed data, and they successfully identified the key themes and insights. We have seen their critical thinking skills improve, and their ability to bring concepts together and come to their conclusions. They do not always agree, but we have seen an improvement in their ability to defend their positions. The activities have improved their teamwork and critical thinking skills, teaching them the value of supporting each other with their work, and this has had a positive effect on their confidence and participation.

Moreover, we have seen an increased awareness of the different factors that can affect mental health and wellbeing. Throughout the process of the research study, we have been aware that our young researchers are not representative of all young people in Lambeth. There are protected characteristics that we know affect mental health and wellbeing, e.g. care experienced, refugee/asylum seekers and LGBTQ+. These voices are not represented in our group. However, we have been intentional about expanding our young researchers' worldviews and teaching them how to consider other young people's lived experiences. We have done this by crafting activities that encourage them to think outside of their experiences and expose them to literature that shares other people's experiences.

As we wrap up the study and programme in 2025, the young researchers will be curating a range of activities and workshops designed to engage and educate other young people on mental health and wellbeing. This wellbeing programme will not only provide a meaningful way to give back to the community but also offer valuable opportunities for the young researchers to develop skills in event and project management. We are excited to share the final outputs of the programme in the coming months.



Case Study: Young Researchers Project

As we begin to wrap up the Children in Need Programme, we wanted to highlight some key outcomes that have emerged from this work.

Working with Child Friendly Lambeth

Our Young Researchers successfully engaged with Child Friendly Lambeth on a TFL consultation and wrote a letter, sharing their views. They successfully engaged with UNICEF UK, providing their thoughts on the theory of change for the Child Friendly Lambeth strategy. We are considering how to support a few young researchers to become Child Friendly Champions (young people who work with Lambeth Council on actioning the CFL strategy)

Working with communities

Young researchers engaged with their local community – they attended the McDonalds x Spiral Campaign Launch at Brixton McDonalds, facilitated a workshop with other young people at the Baytree, and attended an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery (Southbank Centre). All these experiences have provided opportunities to expand their worldview and interact with other young people in the sector. During the data collection phase of the project, one young researcher showed great initiative by promoting the study to her

Headteacher. She gave him our contact details and we were able to join their school assembly, explaining the project and how to take part.

We maintained and strengthened relationships with community stakeholders, such as Partnership for Young London and The Link Up Crew. These organisations provided valuable insights and alternative approaches to youth engagement, which challenged our assumptions and broadened our perspective.

Supported wellbeing in our young researchers

In early 2024, CYPF observed that many young researchers on the course frequently expressed negative views on friendships, self, and identity during discussions with staff. Concerned about the potential impact of these views on the co-production process and the young researchers' wellbeing, CYPF organised 6 sessions with child psychologist Jacque Cranston. These wellbeing sessions gave the children the opportunity to explore more of who they are, what motivates them and how they can use their new transferrable skills to shape their experiences.

Building research capacity in young people

We successfully upskilled the children in thematic analysis – we spent four sessions teaching them how to code information from a text. When they began coding the data with the support of our research team, the process was smooth. They were showing signs of more critical thinking and reflective practice.

Reflections from a Young Researcher

One of our young researchers is a 13-year-old girl, of Black Nigerian heritage, who lives, plays and goes to school in Lambeth. We are extremely

proud of how she has grown since joining the project. In May, Partnership for Young London approached us looking for researchers to join their project called Authoring Our Own Stories. We spoke to the YRs, and she volunteered to take part. The project lead for PFYL updated us on her progress, saying that she is the youngest researcher but is confident and contributes to the discussions, drawing a lot on her experiences with Black Thrive to support the project.

When we asked our young researcher if she would be willing to share her thoughts on the programme with us, she responded with the following:

“

“During the A Million & Me Project, I have been learning about how mental health impacts black children between the ages of 8 - 13 who live and study in Lambeth. I have gained more knowledge about racism and bullying and how they affect children's mental health and wellness through this study project. I have also learnt possible ways of dealing with these issues.

The project has allowed me to explore how mental health can be good or bad and how it's alright to not be ok. You can always talk about it as there are many services and people that can help you.

Being a part of the research project has given me the opportunity to take my mental health seriously and to discuss with my friends the value of having excellent mental health and strategies for overcoming poor mental health especially when it might have been caused by external factors such as bullying for example.

The project has allowed me to focus more on the issues and stigma in the black community that [surround] mental health and how facilities such as green spaces and youth centres affect the mental health of young people who live and study in Lambeth.”

This programme is further proof that with the right care and investment, children have the capacity and are interested in shaping the world around them. We look forward to using our skills and resources to equip children and young people to shape the services designed for them.

South East London Integrated Care Board

The South East London Integrated Care Board (SEL ICB) commissioned Black Thrive to conduct listening exercises with children, parents, and staff in primary schools across five South East London Boroughs (Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Bromley & Greenwich) to identify the emotional wellbeing and mental health needs of Black and Mixed Black heritage children. The intention was that this information would then be fed back to SEL ICB and place-based commissioners to support local commissioning decisions, ensuring that provision meets the identified needs and supports improved outcomes for Black and Mixed Black heritage children. This project is part of the [NHS Core20Plus5 Programme](#), designed to tackle health inequalities through the Community Connector Model.

In year one, we engaged 260+ children, over 70 parents, and 112 staff members in focus groups. This was in 8 schools across 5 boroughs (Bromley, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark). During the sessions, parents and teachers were asked to consider any mental health and emotional wellbeing challenges they were witnessing, what the solutions might be, and barriers to these solutions being actualised. The children's sessions were run differently, focusing on using creativity and teamwork to explore and express different themes on mental health. These storyboards formed the basis of a discussion about what safe and good mental health looks like and how to get support.

Each school raised a range of challenges, but key themes included undiagnosed and unmet neurodiverse needs, low parental engagement, transition to secondary school, racialised bullying, challenges with emotional expression, impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and wider systemic issues such as housing and the cost-of-living crisis. A summary of the emerging themes in each school was presented to SEL ICB, commissioners, and the school, alongside recommended interventions to address some of the needs.

Some of the interventions commissioned in Year One included:

- [Happy in Schools](#) – provided workshops for parents and teachers on neurodiversity to address the mental health/SEND stigma that prevents Black children from receiving support.
- [Poetic Unity](#) – providing a creative intervention for Black boys who struggle with emotional expression. The programme is called 'Mandem, let's talk' and uses poetry to promote self-expression. They also ran a 'Get started in poetry' 10-week programme, which aimed to develop confidence and self-expression in boys and girls.
- [The Black Curriculum](#) – provided a curriculum audit for a school who recognised they could improve representation in this area.

One of the interventions recommended was an embedded Community Connector within the school setting. The aim was to bridge the gap between the school and the local community, ensuring families had access to broader support systems. This role had varying degrees of success, one example being a collaboration with Southwark Council Temporary Housing.

In May 2024, our Community Connector designed a housing workshop for families in a Southwark school affected by challenges with temporary accommodation. Around 30 parents attended the workshop and received information on what was happening with the local estates, the following steps, and what they could do to prepare or access more support. Five housing officers were present, and they were able to run a Q&A at the end of the session. Whilst this was not a commissioned intervention, it was an example of how joined-up working can play a vital role in connecting schools and families to the appropriate support. A challenge we experienced in developing the role was that there was limited time in the school year to embed the Community Connector—building relationships within a school setting takes time and resources that go beyond the scope of the programme.

Despite the challenges, Black Thrive and SEL ICB are committed to tackling mental health inequalities for Black/Mixed Black Heritage children and young people. In light of this, we have decided to pursue an expansion of this programme in 2025. The next few months will be used to finalise the redesign of the programme, utilising the insights gathered from year one.

Roots to Wings Toolkit

In February 2024, Black Thrive commissioned Comuzi, a London-based innovation lab, to co-develop a mental health toolkit. The [Roots to Wings toolkit](#) was developed in response to the key themes arising in the Core20Plus5 Programme with SEL ICB. It takes a trauma-informed, anti-racist, and whole-school approach to mental health and emotional well-being. It provides a range of activities designed for Black/Mixed Black heritage parents, school staff, and young people, to advance and advocate for better mental health in their school communities. The co-creation process engaged 61 community members: 10 young people, 8 parents and/or carers, 10 teachers/support workers, and 33 mental health advocates via online groups. Discussions centred around the mental health and wellbeing of young people in South London and what effective, appropriate support looks like.

The toolkit's goals include improving pre-teen mental health through community and holistic wellbeing support, encouraging effective communication across all stakeholders, and championing trauma-informed interventions that recognise and address intergenerational trauma.

Black Queer & Thriving

Black Queer & Thriving (BQT) is an exploratory pilot that seeks to explore the health and well-being experiences of Black LGBTQ+ residents across the BTG Locality areas, working with them to develop and advocate for interventions that improve access, experiences and outcomes in mental health services and/or divert them to other more appropriate interventions/services.

The Black Queer & Thriving Project has been designed to:

- Improve access, outcomes and experiences of Black LGBTQ+ people in Lambeth's mental health services;
- Ensure that Black Thrive's work is inclusive of sexual orientation and gender;
- Explore the causes behind social isolation and loneliness within the community and trial
- events that address them; and
- Deliver Black-owned and Black-led community research that details the health and wellbeing experiences of Black LGBTQ+ People.

As a seldom-heard community, this workstream is guided by community-driven systems change; the belief that the communities are not 'at the bottom' of any system. The foundation of this work centres on their local knowledge/intelligence, emphasis of leadership from within the community and Black Thrive's backbone support to use their voices to shape health and wellbeing experiences.

In the past year, the workstream has shifted focus from community engagement to knowledge sharing, partnership development, and supporting strategic programme areas. This shift aims to empower Black Queer voices to influence systemic change. While Lambeth and Southwark have large Black LGBTQ+ communities, perceived homophobia and religious hostility often silence them. Recognising this, the project prioritises collaboration with and support for these communities to drive systemic change.

Recent efforts have centred on building relationships with system stakeholders, gathering information, and developing capacity. This involves outlining health and wellbeing priorities for Black LGBTQ+ in Lambeth and Southwark and improving the BQT Working Group's effectiveness.

Community engagement remains strong, with over 500 members reached through six community events and direct engagement with system organisations, including the first external LGBTQ+ Staff Network event.

Working Group

The Lambeth Working Group has grown to 15 members last year. Through collaborative community research, we have engaged the wider community, identified local project partners, and provided them with capacity building support. Learnings from the past year are being shared with the newly formed Black Thrive Haringey LGBTQ+ Working Group and used for the development of Birmingham and Southwark based Working Groups. Analysis of data from the community research project is currently underway and will inform future program priorities.

Community Research

The Working Group collaborated with the BQT Programme & Partnership Manager to develop a community survey exploring the health and wellbeing experiences of Black LGBTQ+ people in Lambeth and Southwark. The survey addresses mental health experiences, safety, social prescribing and relationship to their local communities. Following recommendations in previous community research reports, this will be one of the few community research reports exploring Black LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing experiences within local authority areas. We have completed the consultation phase; the report is scheduled for release in January 2025.

Capacity Building

The Working Group has identified the need for greater resource flows to upcoming Black LGBTQ+ community leaders and health and wellbeing practitioners to improve access to culturally sensitive support mechanisms. Over the past year, we've worked with Lambeth-based Black LGBTQ+ activists to co-host events, highlighted by A Queeribbean Dominos Night and Black Queer Actors' Playground, that promote the BQT Community Survey, provide brave spaces that alleviate social isolation and loneliness and a space for the activist to improve their craft. We have supported their progress through support with feedback, fundraising and signposting to specialist capacity building organisations such as Community Southwark. The Working Group are excited to identify further activists and creatives to support in 2025 with activities that support the programme priorities.

Locality Expansion

BQT has partnered with Black Thrive Haringey and Black Thrive Birmingham to explore how their work can incorporate the experiences of Black LGBTQ+ people. Two introductory Working Group meetings have been held with BTH and planning with BTB and a partner organisation, Fruit Punch, has started, with the aim of starting a Working Group there in early 2025. BQT is exploring potential partners to start a Southwark Working Group in Jan 2025.

Queer Networks Connect

Queer Networks Connect, a pilot initiative developed and led by Black Thrive Lambeth and Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation, aims to strengthen relationships and collaboration between LGBTQ+ Networks and staff working primarily across Lambeth and Southwark. By fostering networking and minimising power dynamics that can hinder information and resource sharing, the initiative strives to create a supportive environment that addresses the unique challenges faced by Lambeth and Southwark's LGBTQ+ communities, which represent the highest LGBTQ+ populations in the UK.

The inaugural Queer Networks Connect event brought together over 60 staff members across 10 networks to share community intelligence and explore ways of better supporting local LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing for both staff and residents. The event highlighted the expertise of locally based Black well-being practitioners and emphasised the critical role of social prescribing and networking in community health. Planning for a follow-up event, focused on the intersection of Blackness, Queerness and Disability, is currently underway.

Plans for 2025

Leading into 2025, we're mindful of the work that has been done with systems and communities and will focus more on developing Black Queer voices in Patient and Public Involvement spaces. This includes:

- Outlining mental health care pathway frameworks for LGBTQ+ people currently are currently in existence and exploring whether they are culturally appropriate for Black LGBTQ+ people.
- Further development of the research base on Black LGBTQ+ health and wellbeing experiences.
- Identify the appropriate community engagement mechanisms that can influence PCREF.



Case Study: Kelsea Sellars from Bare Radicals

What were the lessons learned from the experience, the successes and the voices of community members/partner organisations involved. We want to include engaging images & graphics, vibrant images and less text (500 words max per case study) the tone will be conversational

Black Thrive's role as a backbone to the community was explored in a collaborative Black History Month event with Kelsea Sellars from Bare Radicals, a Black-led LGBTQ+ organisation based in Lambeth.

Working Group Members suggested opportunities to connect with local stakeholders to increase accessibility to the community survey and build trust with Lambeth's Black Queer communities. This culminated in an event aiming to create a brave space for local Black LGBTQ+ people to connect with Caribbean culture, learn about local community assets and improve intergenerational connections within Lambeth's Black LGBTQ+ community.

This event was driven by Working Group feedback that social isolation and loneliness were key factors for poor mental health in Black Queer communities. They also noted that there are few spaces for Black LGBTQ+ people that were sober, and community based.

It was attended by over 80 people and resulted in:

- **A 100% increase in newsletter sign-ups for BQT and BR.**
- **A starting mailing list for Bare Radicals**
- **Two new members joining the Working Group**
- **Increased trust in Black Thrive as an organisation that supports Black LGBTQ+ people**

We are happy to share feedback from some attendees:

"I learned how to play dominoes! I felt safe in an environment where dominoes was being played!!"

"Spend time with older generations of queer people is a luxury.

Thank you"

Due to the success of this event, BQT has developed an informal partnership with Bare Radicals, which has resulted in an equally successful follow-up event in April 2024 and opportunities to collaborate on the QNC II event and Lambeth-based Pride Festivals.

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Really enjoyed the diversity of the crowd and the community feel of the event, so I'm taking away with me great memories and experience.

Event attendee

Employment Project Strategy

The Black Thrive employment project, funded by Guys and St Thomas' Charity (GSTC), aims to pilot innovative approaches to improve employment prospects for Black residents in Lambeth with long-term health conditions. This strategy outlines the goals and activities to achieve this. Societies have interconnected systems that can create adverse outcomes for certain groups due to structural discrimination, marginalisation, or lack of institutional power. Focusing on systems change can improve outcomes for these groups, offering long-term solutions that promote equity and justice. After six months of work, necessary system changes have been identified to enhance employment prospects for Black residents in Lambeth with long-term health conditions.

The project aims to direct public sector resources to address employment inequalities, make data from statutory partners and key system actors available to incorporate Black community insights, ensure high-quality and accessible employment support tailored to Black individuals with long-term health conditions, and utilise employer resources to ensure positive workplace experiences and prevent unemployment for staff with long-term health conditions.

Project Overview

The Employment Project aims to enhance employment outcomes for Black Lambeth residents with long-term health conditions. Key actions include empowering grantees with lived experience to develop skills and sustainability, establishing a collaborative group for employment and social inclusion focused on Black individuals with long-term conditions (LTCs), creating engaging, publicly available information about project outcomes and learnings, increasing qualitative data from communities and front-line workers about Black individuals with LTCs.

This project contributes to the BTG vision and objectives by decolonising the evidence landscape through conducting and collaborating on research, embedding lived experience in research methodologies, supporting partner organisations with data collection and analysis, and publishing papers, blogs, and sharing learnings through various media. It also focuses on embedding race equity in systems change by improving policies and practices related to employment and health, influencing decisions by commissioners and senior stakeholders, supporting a lived experience working group for grant funding distribution, and piloting new ways of working with a focus on Black/Disabled leadership.

Guiding Principles

- **Solve the Problem Permanently:** Systems changes should provide long-term solutions, avoiding short-term, one-off activities that depend on the ongoing existence of Black Thrive. The goal is to establish standard practices within partner organisations and key system actors that create equitable outcomes for Black individuals with long-term conditions.
- **Focus on Sustainable Impact:** Only engage in activities with a realistic potential to improve outcomes for Black individuals with long-term conditions. In the context of heightened awareness around racism and anti-racism, it is crucial to avoid activities that do not offer long-term benefits. The Black Thrive Employment project will prioritise sustainable outcomes, saying 'no' to work that distracts from this focus. Activities will be regularly evaluated to ensure they contribute to the overall ambition, with the flexibility to change, stop, or increase efforts as needed.

The system change strategy for the Employment Project aims to create a real-time understanding of the employment landscape for Black individuals with long-term conditions (LTCs) in Lambeth. This involves systematically collecting and making equalities data openly available by all organisations involved in employment and health. By co-producing data with partners and using modern data analysis techniques, the project will develop insights and strategic learning, focusing on shared measurement systems and employment support provider activities.

To embed equitable employment outcomes in key organisations' policies and practices, the project will integrate employment into care planning as a recovery pathway, increase employer awareness and use of Access to Work funding, and promote a vocational rehabilitation approach. Additionally, it will influence public sector procurement to enhance employment opportunities for Black individuals with LTCs, develop effective recruitment systems, and ensure high-quality, coherent employment support that meets residents' needs. These changes will be achieved by influencing care planning delivery, raising awareness of Access to Work, promoting vocational rehabilitation, and working with partners to use data and evidence for funding decisions.

Creating a coherent, connected, and collaborative system of employment support providers is another key outcome. The project aims to ensure that a referral to any employment service leads to a service that meets the individual's needs, embodying a "no wrong door" approach. This will be achieved by influencing new commissioning practices and system coordination.

Over the last year, our employment workstream has taken some time to scale back and reflect on how we interact and provide the most effective way to have greater impact on the community. We still value the community members and partners who have come with us along the journey.

No Wrong Door

The employment team is dedicated to improving employment outcomes for Black Lambeth residents with long-term health conditions. Our focus this year has been to build relationships with the No Wrong Door (NWD) partnership.

NWD operates on the principle that employment support should be individualised, considering both strengths and weaknesses. This has led us to adopt a person-centred, trauma-informed approach.

The NWD partnership is made up of employment support providers and healthcare practitioners, working together to pilot new ways of supporting Black Lambeth residents with long-term health conditions. The initial members of the partnership were Mosaic Clubhouse, First Steps Trust, High Trees, Disability Advice Service, Renaisi, Vocation Matters and SLaM Occupational Therapists. The partnership's current members are Renaisi, DASL, Vocation Matters and SLaM. A key area of systems change work carried out through NWD is on how to strategically build relationships from various sectors to challenge the fragmentation and create a more holistic support system that benefits Black Disabled Lambeth residents. One of the successes achieved from this pursuit is the great trust that is now within the partnership shared between stakeholders. Additionally, we will be working towards ensuring greater awareness of our work in 2025, keeping all informed with the important developments taking place in our team.

Going forward, the employment team will prioritise dedicating resources to explore and examine the ways in which self-employment for Black disabled Lambeth residents can take place in a more seamless way. Some of the exciting work we are doing involves the development of educational resources about the reality of Black disabled experiences in seeking employment, and providing recommendations on increasing accessibility within service provision, amongst other things.

Partnership and engagement

The No Wrong Door (NWD) partnership is a collaborative effort based on shared values, trust, and mutual respect, aiming to enhance employment support for Black disabled people by pooling resources and expertise. Each partner's unique contributions are valued, with inclusive participation guiding decision-making. Success is measured by the collective impact on race and disability justice. Partners commit to creating accessible learning frameworks informed by race and disability justice, incorporating the lived experiences of Black and Disabled community members. These systems drive organisational change, with documented practices, goals, and insights shared within the partnership.

A positive learning culture involves co-producing knowledge with Lived Experience Leads (LEs), ensuring their input leads to tangible changes in policies and culture, fostering a safe and empowering environment. Collective practice within the partnership includes collaborative decision-making, solidarity, continuous learning,

and accountability. Partners work to dismantle systemic oppression and promote race and disability justice through inclusivity, intersectional analysis, and effective collaboration. This approach acknowledges each partner's contributions, fosters accountability, and appreciates diversity, ensuring the partnership remains adaptable and responsive through continuous reflection and improvement.

Collective care fosters an empathetic, supportive community that prioritises individual well-being, challenges oppressive systems, and promotes compassion and empowerment. This ensures partners feel valued and heard, resolving conflicts through restorative dialogue and equitable distribution of resources. Compassionate conflict resolution focuses on restorative justice and intersectional understanding, rejecting punitive measures and promoting deeper connections and collective liberation.

Creating safe environments is essential, involving ongoing efforts to practice care in words, actions, and attitudes, respecting and recognising each participant, and being mindful of power imbalances. A safe environment allows for addressing, rectifying, and healing from harm, particularly attuned to ableism, racism, and elitism, empowering those with direct experiences to share their insights. Marginalisation refers to the denial of equitable access to resources, opportunities, and power due to intersecting oppressions. The partnership continuously examines interactions to recognise and address marginalisation, encouraging partners to reflect on their understanding and experiences of marginalisation and their own privileges. Intersectionality, introduced by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights how intersecting identities create unique experiences of oppression. It emphasises addressing both the challenges and joys of intersecting identities, prompting partners to consider their community memberships and support for intersectional concerns, particularly for Black and Disabled residents.

Lived Experience Leads

The NWD initiative is driven by the goal of creating a better world for Black Disabled people. It emphasises the importance of a culture where Black Disabled individuals can collaborate with able-bodied people to address and minimise barriers. The initiative aims to create spaces where the voices of Black Disabled people are not only heard but truly listened to, weaving their stories into narratives of resilience and hope. This involves promoting awareness, challenging biases, fostering inclusivity, advocating for equal opportunities, and dismantling systemic barriers.

The stories shared by Black Disabled people are essential in shaping policies and practices. Their active involvement in decision-making spaces is crucial for their liberation. Empowering individuals to advocate for their rights ensures their voices are heard and acted upon. The Lived Experience Leads (LEs) play a significant role in this process, sharing their personal experiences and challenging ableist assumptions. They highlight the importance of acknowledging and respecting diverse perceptions and abilities.

One LEL shared that they feel whole and do not see their voice as disabled, emphasising that their abilities strengthen their character and compassion. Another LEL discussed the personal challenges of disability, noting that it affects their self-perception and relationship with the world. Despite these challenges, they have developed resilience and perseverance, which boosts their self-confidence.

Self-care is also a priority, with a personalised approach being necessary due to the unique experiences of everyone. The LELs emphasise the importance of managing stress and anxiety, given the lack of accessible support in society. Their perseverance is driven by the need to move through the world purposefully, facing fears and stepping outside comfort zones to achieve change.

The essence of the NWD project lies in the voices and experiences it centres. Society must listen, learn, and act to create meaningful change. While Black Disabled people may feel powerless against structural barriers, the initiative underscores the importance of starting somewhere. The LELs aspire to help future generations contribute to society, manage their health effectively, and live full, valued lives without financial struggles. This constant care for others is expected to lead to significant changes, and the NWD team looks forward to sharing their achievements and continuing their collaborative work.

Partnership and Collaboration

The NWD Collective includes five specialist employment support providers in Lambeth. These partners work together by sharing data, resources, referrals, and best practices to enhance their collective impact. The goal is to create a seamless support network where Black and Disabled individuals can access necessary support without facing barriers.

Partners and Their Roles

Renaissi works with individuals facing economic exclusion and supports social organisations and place-based systems. Mosaic Clubhouse helps individuals displaced by mental illness regain confidence and skills through the Clubhouse model, which involves co-production between service users and staff. Status Employment offers the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model to help individuals with serious mental health issues find employment, along with education, training, and volunteering opportunities. Disability Advice Service Lambeth (DASL) provides information, advice, and advocacy to support individuals with various impairments into employment. Vocation Matters, a user-led project within South London and Maudsley (SLaM) NHS Foundation Trust, offers vocational support for people using mental health services.

Impact and Testimonials

The impact of these organisations is evident through the success stories of individuals they have supported. For example, Mosaic Clubhouse and Status Employment have

helped individuals secure employment and education opportunities, while DASL has assisted service users in regaining confidence and navigating the job application process. Vocation Matters provides ongoing vocational support and training through projects like Clean and Care, which helps participants gain the skills and confidence needed for employment.

Challenges of Isolation

Working in isolation can lead to duplicated efforts, poor communication, and missed opportunities, creating obstacles for those in need. The NWD partnership aims to overcome these challenges by fostering collaboration. By working together, the partners can provide more comprehensive and effective support to Black and Disabled residents.

The partnership seeks to expand by encouraging other organisations and community-led services in Lambeth to join. Interested parties are invited to complete a survey to express their interest. This expansion aims to build a larger, more inclusive network that can better serve the community.

Vision for Systems Change

The NWD aims to shift from a competitive to a collaborative network of providers, building new relationships and connections. The goal is to create a human-centred system where any referral leads to appropriate support, ensuring no wrong door for Black and Disabled individuals seeking help. This vision includes changing policies, practices, and resource flows to better serve the community and promote equity.

Conclusion

The project demonstrates systems change by enabling continuous learning, bringing fresh perspectives, and changing assumptions and narratives through published research and events. It builds confidence and agency among individuals with lived experience, facilitates decision-making power within communities, changes policies and practices, and establishes new connections and improves relationships between system actors and residents. This comprehensive approach aims to create long-term benefits for Black communities by fostering systemic change and promoting equity in employment and health outcomes.

By empowering Black Disabled voices, forming inclusive groups, and providing accessible information, these initiatives promote systemic change and equity. They focus on decolonising the evidence landscape, embedding race equity, and ensuring continuous learning and policy improvements. Striving to create a seamless, human-centred support system where everyone can access the help they need, ultimately fostering a more equitable future for Black communities in Lambeth.

Culturally Appropriate Peer Support and Advocacy

Culturally Appropriate Peer Support and Advocacy (CAPSA) is funded by the Living Well Network Alliance (including SLaM), the Department for Health and Social Care, and supported by Lambeth Together. Building on the outstanding work accomplished by the team last year, we are now progressing to phase two of the project. This phase will focus on strengthening our statutory connections and ensuring more substantial outcomes, incorporating a more solid model based on the recommendations from the evaluation completed this year.

Bridging the Gap

Over the past year, the CAPSA team has made substantial strides in improving mental health outcomes by addressing the cultural needs of service users and the practices of professionals at various levels within Lambeth.

CAPSA has collaborated with Lambeth's secondary mental health service users to foster a sense of empowerment through co-production in care planning and advocacy. Our work has focused on building trust through representation and creating a sense of cultural safety to improve overall wellbeing and inspire hope in service users about the possibility of recovery.

A key aspect of our advocacy approach has been the representation of service users' perspectives in clinical settings. We have consistently raised awareness of cultural barriers by attending interagency formulation meetings within community mental health teams to advocate for service user needs. We have used our intersectional lens to highlight the importance of cultural competence and lived experience, while ensuring that individual rights are upheld in accordance with the Mental Health Act (1983).

Across the borough, we have delivered training to both inpatient and community-based statutory partners to ensure the continuity of culturally competent care in line with the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework (PCREF). Through this workstream, we have been able to amplify the voices of service users with lived experience and increase awareness of the cultural barriers that hinder the development of secure, trusting relationships between individuals and their clinical teams.

Working to support individuals to have their needs met within mental health services has focused our advocacy on reduction in crisis and empowering individuals. An example of this was, receiving a referral and meeting with the individual to build rapport and co-produce a care plan. We were able to provide a safe space for her to discuss navigating Mental Health care as a Black woman, something often deemed taboo and stigmatised in her family leading to feelings of isolation. Working

with her to meet people with similar experiences, we also helped equip her with the right language, so she was able to express her desire to come off medication with her community mental health team whilst having an advocate be present with her in medical reviews. By building a bridge of clear communication with her, the care coordinator, consultant psychiatrist, there became an agreed timeline in which she can safely come off medication that paid close attention to her needs outlined in her care plan.

Theory of Change Workshop with King's College London

CAPSA's ongoing efforts to implement the PCREF with our community partners have led to our contribution to Maudsley Charity's report on developing best practices for statutory organisations in the locality.

Social Inclusion Workshop

We have placed a strong emphasis on allowing the collective community voice to guide our work. In partnership with King's College London, we conducted a Social Inclusion workshop that highlighted the community's views on social inclusion. By identifying unmet social care needs within the community, the study aimed to pinpoint areas requiring further support. This workshop resulted in a paper authored by CAPSA team members, advocating for the voices of Black individuals with Serious Mental Illness (SMI), a group often overlooked in mental health research.

Service Evaluation

To build on the invaluable work the team has accomplished since its inception, CAPSA has completed a comprehensive evaluation with the support of Sheffield Hallam University. By gathering insights from team members, service users, and statutory partners, we have assessed how well the service has met the community's needs, in line with the original business case. This evaluation process has been crucial in ensuring that the service's core goals remain central to daily operations.

Culture of Care

The team's involvement in NHS England's Culture of Care programme has been vital in raising standards of practice in mental health wards across the nation. Working with the wider Black Thrive team, we have applied our experiential knowledge to understand the areas that need improvement.

Two members of the CAPSA team have participated in the Culture of Care working group, supporting Black Thrive's focus on racial equity in inpatient care. The insights gained from CAPSA's work on inpatient wards in Lambeth have been instrumental in supporting Lived Experience advisors and the research team.

Staffing

While staffing changes were a challenge in the previous year, this year has seen more consistency, allowing for adjustments in the team's deployment. Rather than expanding the team, we have focused on ensuring that all members receive specialised training. Independent Mental Health Advocacy Training has been a key area of development, ensuring that team members are equipped to address the needs presented by service users. All team members are now qualified with at least a Level 2 award, ensuring the team can provide appropriate support. Additionally, the team has benefited from Seni Lewis Training, further enhancing professional development.

Recommendations

Looking ahead to 2025, CAPSA aims to evolve in line with the findings of our evaluation, ensuring that our service objectives are aligned with the community's needs, as outlined in future engagement opportunities. We plan to expand our community portfolio to provide more preventative support and broaden our reach through further collaboration.



Communities

The purpose of the Communities Workstream at Black Thrive Lambeth is to empower Black communities in Lambeth by addressing systemic inequalities that affect their health, wellbeing, and opportunities. This workstream focuses on ensuring that the lived experiences, needs, and voices of Black residents are at the centre of decision-making processes related to health, employment, education, and other social determinants of wellbeing.

Key goals include:

- Community-led decision making: Encouraging Black communities to actively participate in shaping services and policies that impact their lives.
- Advocacy and systemic change: Working to dismantle structural barriers, particularly within health and social care, that disproportionately disadvantage Black people.
- Co-production and collaboration: Building partnerships with community organisations, residents, and stakeholders to create co-produced solutions that are culturally relevant and effective.
- Building resilience and leadership: Supporting community capacity-building, fostering leadership within Black communities, and creating opportunities for people to influence change.

Partnerships

In 2024, the Communities Workstream prioritised partnerships as a core strategy. Black Thrive Lambeth recognised the need to reconnect with the Lambeth community. The most effective approach was to collaborate with existing projects that are already serving our community.

The Communities Workstream also focused on the Angell Town area within Lambeth. It was acknowledged that the number of Black residents within Lambeth who can participate in our services and workshops is finite. Therefore, Black Thrive Lambeth chose not to compete for this audience but to enhance and support other organisations in their ongoing work.

Supporting our partner organisations

Black Thrive Lambeth remained adaptable in the support it offered to organisations. In some cases, we provided venues for community events addressing critical issues. On other occasions, we supplied meals, ensuring attendees could benefit from a free meal during their gatherings.

At Marcus Lipton, we arranged for a professional basketball coach to engage with young people, providing training and enhancing their basketball skills.

Project Heal

While supporting others, the Communities Workstream also promoted its own initiative, Project Heal. This project aims to address a significant issue impacting our community: trauma. Recognising the lack of understanding around trauma within both the community and the services that work with it, Black Thrive Lambeth directed focused efforts toward addressing this concern.

Project Heal was established to raise awareness about the various traumas affecting individuals in the community. Our goal was to demonstrate that we see and acknowledge their experiences, encouraging services and practitioners to do the same.

The concept of “soil and seeds” underpins Project Heal. Just as various factors must be considered for seeds to grow—such as age, temperature, and soil type—similar considerations apply to trauma in Lambeth:

- Age: How long the trauma has remained unaddressed.
- Temperature: The relevance of the trauma to current well-being.
- Soil Type: The availability of services and understanding accessible to the people.

Project Heal aims to enhance the quality of “seeds” being planted in the soil, ultimately fostering growth and healing.

Collaboration and Implementation

Project Heal is a co-produced initiative developed through extensive discussions. It involved collaboration across Lambeth, Birmingham, and Haringey to deliver the programme to the Lambeth community. We engaged with our audience to gather narratives that highlight the objectives of Project Heal. Lambeth contributed three narratives, Birmingham one, and Haringey none.

Due to their expertise in filming Haringey asked that they be commissioned to carry out the “story telling” of the narratives.



Case Study: The Karibu Centre and Black Thrive Lambeth

The Karibu Centre, situated in Brixton, stands as one of the few remaining Black-owned spaces in Lambeth. Originally established to serve the African and Caribbean communities, the Centre has a rich history as a cultural, educational, and social hub. While it is now primarily used for wakes and other significant public events, it was once a place of broader community engagement, offering educational classes and housing a school. Despite these changes, the Karibu Centre remains an essential space for bringing the community together, preserving its cultural heritage, and fostering a sense of belonging.

Accessibility and Inclusivity at the Karibu Centre

One of the Centre’s key strengths is its accessibility. Located on the ground floor, it is wheelchair accessible, ensuring that events held at the Karibu Centre are open and inclusive for all members of the community. This accessibility makes it an ideal location for community gatherings and events, reflecting its commitment to inclusivity and supporting diverse needs within Lambeth.

Black Thrive Lambeth’s Engagement with the Karibu Centre

Black Thrive Lambeth has actively supported and utilised the Karibu Centre as part of its mission to strengthen community ties. One significant example is the Mother’s Day celebration hosted at the Centre. This event was designed to honour the women in our community, creating an environment where attendees could connect, share their stories, and foster a sense of solidarity. The Centre’s accessible, welcoming atmosphere made it the perfect venue for such a celebration.

Another successful event hosted by Black Thrive Lambeth was the Reggae and Motown quiz night. This event brought together community members for a lively evening of music, entertainment, and cultural exchange, showcasing the Karibu Centre as a versatile space for community enjoyment. Events like these highlight the Centre’s ability to host a variety of activities that attract diverse audiences, helping to revitalise the space and reinforce its role as a social hub.

Supporting Community Organisations

In addition to hosting its own events, Black Thrive Lambeth has also facilitated access to the Karibu Centre for other community organisations. For example, Black Thrive supported the Angell Town organisation CHIPS by covering the costs for the use of the space, enabling CHIPS to host their own event. This partnership not only strengthens community ties but also ensures that vital programs and services have the necessary resources and venues to reach those they serve. By providing this support, Black Thrive Lambeth demonstrates a commitment to uplifting other local initiatives and organisations.

Conclusion

The Karibu Centre’s historical and cultural importance in Lambeth cannot be overstated. As a Black-owned space, it remains a critical resource for the community, providing a safe and accessible venue for significant public events, celebrations, and gatherings. Black Thrive Lambeth’s collaboration with the Karibu Centre can be seen as an act of planting seeds in fertile soil. By paying for the use of the space—whether for our own events like the Mother’s Day celebration and the Reggae and Motown quiz night, or by supporting organisations such as CHIPS—Black Thrive is planting the seeds of opportunity.

These seeds, nurtured in the supportive and inclusive environment that the Karibu Centre represents, help communities flourish. The Centre itself is the soil, rich with history and accessibility, that allows these initiatives to grow and develop. In this way, Black Thrive Lambeth contributes to ensuring that the Karibu Centre continues to be a vital space where the community can gather, connect, and thrive, thus preserving its legacy for future generations.

Glossary of Terms

Acroynm	Expansion
BACP	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
BQT	Black Queer & Thriving
BTL	Black Thrive Lambeth
BTG	Black Thrive Global
CFL	Child Friendly Lambeth
CHIPS	Community Hub for Intergenerational Play and Support
CYPF	Children, Young People, and Families
DASL	Disability Advice Service Lambeth
GSTC	Guys and St Thomas’ Charity
ICB	Integrated Care Board
IPS	Individual Placement and Support
KCL	King’s College London
LEL	Lived Experience Leads
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (plus other gender identities and sexual orientations)
LTC	Long-Term Conditions
NHS	National Health Service
NWD	No Wrong Door
PCREF	Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework
PFYL	Partnership for Young London
Q&A	Question and Answer
QNC	Queer Networks Connect
SEL	South East London
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SLaM	South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust
SMI	Serious Mental Illness
TFL	Transport for London



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