

Hackney Thinking Spaces

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Population Health Hub



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Phase One Overview

A summary of what we delivered in Phase One – the community groups, their impact, and the development of the Community Advisory Board.



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Hackney Thinking Spaces

Hackney Thinking Spaces was commissioned by London Borough of Hackney to provide:

1. Community Support: therapeutic community spaces
2. Peer support and empowerment
3. Development of community-based solutions.

It was delivered by *I Found Me Therapeutic Counselling*, provided culturally safe therapeutic spaces for Black and Global Majority residents to reflect, heal and connect. The programmes supported communities to explore racial trauma, share experiences, and build peer support.

What I Found Me delivered

- **20 group programmes** delivered across Hackney (to different target groups), including: *Uplift, HerStory, EmpowHERment, Healing Generations, Reason 2 Heal, Colour Me Kind, Eat-Live-Grow, New Beginnings, Empower ME, SendStars, Women Rising and the Community Builders Therapeutic Group*,
- The groups utilised **mixed methods**: reflective discussions, art-based work, storytelling, mindfulness, movement; this was supplemented with **1:1 support** where needed (counselling, mentoring, signposting)
- **Safe, culturally ground spaces** supported by trained counsellors and community specialists (I Found Me enabled **strong engagement** from communities, groups and residents who don't usually access services)

Hackney Thinking Spaces

The Population Health Hub conducted a mixed-methods [evaluation](#) of Hackney Thinking Spaces - gathering insight from participants, group facilitators and stakeholders.

Impact

Outcomes that were important to participants:

1. Safety, security, community, belonging
2. Feeling heard
3. Opportunity to share issues as well as understanding others perspectives
4. Space to challenge (safely)
5. Forming supportive relationships; connecting, meeting new people, socialising, fun
6. Learning, personal growth, knowledge – of rights, tools and strategies
7. Healing

Feedback from group participants was overwhelmingly positive, with nearly 100% saying they were supportive and safe sessions which were useful and relevant, and that they would recommend to others. Participants felt more empowered, better understood and more hopeful for the future.

Participants reported better relationships, with their community, as well as friends and family; that they felt more motivated at school/employment; they were more engaged in community activities (e.g. police forums, volunteering and becoming peer mentors) and being part of e.g. mental health first aid training to better support their community.

The Community Advisory Board (CAB)

Phase One also established a Community Advisory Board representing Hackney's diverse communities. The CAB met regularly to reflect on insights from the groups, to interrogate system leaders, and to co-develop system-wide recommendations.

What the CAB did

- Reviewed themes and community solutions from I Found Me group sessions
- Ran two panels sessions with voluntary and statutory sector partners (one on Social Action and one on Mental Health services): discussed barriers and inequalities in mental health, education, healthcare access, community support
- Co-produced a set of recommendations to address racial trauma and inequalities

Why This Matters

The [evaluation](#) showed that culturally safe, community-led spaces are high-impact, and that the CAB model provides a clear blueprint for system change — one rooted in lived experience and co-production, ready to be scaled in Phase Two.

Phase One Recommendations

The Community Advisory Board developed a set of recommendations. These recommendations were prioritised based on members' votes on urgency. They set out the actions needed to address racial trauma and tackle systemic racism as identified by the community.



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Four Key Areas of the recommendations

**COMMISSIONING
& STRUCTURAL
CHANGE**

**ACCESS TO
COMMUNITY
SPACES IN
HACKNEY**

**EMOTIONAL
HEALTH AND
WELLBEING**

**BLACK HISTORY
AND EDUCATION**

Full details of recommendations [here](#)

COMMISSIONING & STRUCTURAL CHANGE

ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED TO CHANGE ORGANISATIONAL COMMISSIONING STRUCTURES WHICH ARE WORKING WITHIN A SYSTEMICALLY RACIST SYSTEM

- A commitment from key stakeholders to actively assess their commissioning process through an anti-racist lens
- Increased transparency in relation to commissioning processes and where racist structures impact on access to funding

REVIEW EXISTING PROVIDER NETWORKS IN HACKNEY TO LOOK AT THE PURPOSE OF THESE FORUMS AND IF THEY ARE HAVING NECESSARY IMPACT. I.E. ARE THESE GROUPS

- Demonstrating meaningful examples of co-production between provider and commissioners
- addressing power dynamics of commissioner and small provider
- addressing inequity of access to funding
- empowering and enabling the voluntary sector/ small groups/individuals to access funding
- Providing infrastructure support with evidencing impact

INCREASING THE STATUTORY SECTOR UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNIQUE ROLE WHICH THE BGM VOLUNTARY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS HAVE IN SUPPORTING the community

- Sharing evidence and impact
- Address communication and engagement barriers that limit statutory bodies' effectiveness in working with BGM voluntary sector organisations.

**INCREASING ACCESS
TO COMMUNITY
SPACES IN HACKNEY
FOR BLACK AND
GLOBAL MAJORITY
RESIDENTS**

INCREASE RESOURCES AND SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY HUBS/SPACES

SUPPORTING BLACK AND GLOBAL MAJORITY Communities

- Establishing Black community spaces
- Increasing affordable access to commercial spaces

INCREASE ACCESS TO COMMUNITY HALLS AND COMMERCIAL SPACES FOR THE BLACK AND GLOBAL MAJORITY Community

- Fair and responsive pricing policy for community spaces and commercial spaces
- Remove barriers to access, clearer policies and processes for accessing
- Making community halls community-led and free (removing from housing revenue account)

DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION of accessible directory of community spaces (including policies and procedures)

EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

FOCUSING ON COMMUNITY-WIDE RESILIENCE WHICH PROMOTES PREVENTATIVE APPROACHES AND CONSIDERS PARTNERSHIPS FOR A MODEL RELEVANT TO DIVERSE COMMUNITIES INCLUDING LOW-COST/ FREE EMOTIONAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING INITIATIVES.

- Increase understanding of self-care ‘do it for you’ and how to maintain good mental health

SUSTAINED FUNDING FOR HACKNEY THINKING SPACES TO CONTINUE TO ADDRESS COMMUNITY TRAUMA AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

- Sustainably embed peer support community groups for BGM in Hackney
- Increase community access to Mental Health First Aiders training
- Expand model to include therapeutically facilitated peer support spaces for Black and Global majority led VCS organisations.

IMPROVING HOW STATUTORY WORKFORCES INTERACT WITH BGM COMMUNITIES SUCH THAT THEY BECOME A POSITIVE RATHER THAN NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THEIR EHWP.

- Establishing robust mechanism for monitoring change/improvement in outcomes from services
- Embed holistic treatment of services users so that social determinants and e.g. racism are considered by services (in particular mental health services)
- Establishing a community accountability board so that statutory services can be held to account by the communities they serve.

BLACK HISTORY AND EDUCATION

UTILISE THE EXISTING BLACK HISTORY 365 AS A PLATFORM TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF BLACK/AFRICAN HISTORY, UNDERPINNED BY SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF BLACK HISTORY (LED BY EXPERTS): EDUCATION, Empowerment, Fulfilment, Purpose

- Review the existing Black History 365 programme to deliver meaningful engagement with Black History - acknowledging the importance of understanding the significance of Black historical figures and landmarks, using the CLR James library as an example.
- Develop a complete and meaningful integration of Black history into the curriculum, not as separate from "normal/mainstream" history.
- Establish a Black History Network - to promote Black History Education across multidisciplinary professionals.
- Link Black history and education to the unique role of Black and global majority voluntary sector organisations in Hackney, including developing and teaching Black history in collaboration with the voluntary sector.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE ACTIONS

To implement the Phase One recommendations, Phase Two will:

- Translate CAB priorities into actionable work streams
- Work with partners across the system to identify responsibilities and resourcing for these
- Develop a delivery plan focused on achievable, high-impact actions
- Embed co-production through continued involvement of CAB members

Next steps

Phase 2 of Hackney Thinking Spaces has been commissioned and funded for the next two years (September 2025 - August 2027). This will involve:

- New Thinking Spaces groups, now including one to support empowerment of Black leaders in VCS organisations (including recognising the impact of discrimination and structural racism in commissioning processes)
- a Phase Two Community Advisory Board: to continue with the key aim of pursuing the action plan to effect system change (previous slide) and overseeing Phase Two Thinking Spaces Groups

Questions



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