

# East African Association

## SEL ICS - Working with people and communities engagement strategy report

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to facilitate marginalised Somali women to have a voice in their future healthcare provisions. We hope the data we have collected is helpful.

This process has given us an opportunity to further understand the healthcare, fitness and mental wellbeing challenges facing the community. We are going to incorporate what we have learnt from this evaluation to continue to develop our services beyond the SEL ICS - Working with people and communities engagement strategy. For example we have implemented a weekly Somali women only focus group into our activities (flyer attached) which if useful we will continue to send you.

[Women only fitness flyer](#)

### The number of individuals engaged:

We engaged with 26 Somali women from various backgrounds in The London Boroughs of Southwark, Greenwich and Lambeth (specifically our main service users that are immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers)

This includes disadvantaged women such as:

- Single parents: a high percentage of Somali refugee women are divorced or separated due to cultural adjustments from moving to the UK
- Women with existing health issues: many Somali women do not access GPs or healthcare provision
- Women suffering from mental health and wellbeing issues: isolation due to COVID restrictions has compounded anxiety and/or depression
- Vulnerably housed women or those experiencing unsuitable living conditions
- Women with no access to statutory benefits: suffering economic and food poverty, putting their personal and family's health at risk

All participants were females from the Somali community (Black African ethnicity). They were in the following groups:

Age:

13 - 20-30 yrs old

8 - 30-40 yrs old

3- 40-50 yrs old

2 - 50-60 yrs old

Boroughs:

11 Lambeth

12 Southwark

3 Greenwich

## **How you recruited people to speak to you (are they people you already work with or did you use other methods to find them?)**

85% of the Somali women we surveyed are already engaged with the East African Association (either through accessing our advice and guidance services or their children attending our sports sessions).

We have recruited women from the local mosques and used our engagement with women and families during Ramadan and EID to access a broad spectrum of the community.

By working with young people and other voluntary sector organisations we are able to have opportunities to speak openly with the female Somali community. Our profile has recently been raised allowing us to reach more marginalised Somali women through social media and word of mouth.

For example:

EAA's CEO was recently recognised by the Guardian (newspaper) Angels awards. [Guardian Angels article](#)

Last week he also did a radio interview with TalkSport to highlight the issues faced by young people and their families from the East African refugee community.



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EAA also won the Mayor of London's Community Champions Award that recognises organisations that worked in partnership with other organisations across the community, boroughs or sectors throughout the pandemic and we have used our networks to access Somali women for the engagement strategy. [Mayor of London Community Champions Awards](#)

## **What engagement methods you used and the dates the engagement took place (focus groups, a survey)**

Our engagement methods included 1:2:1 feedback surveys with 12 Somali women with a caseworker or volunteer to explain the questions to overcome any language barriers. These took place on 12/04/2022 and 15/04/2022 after our football matches.

### **Questions asked:**

1. What's important to you in looking after you and / or your families health and wellbeing?
2. Is there anything that makes your life difficult at the moment?
3. What would make your life easier at the moment?
4. Are there any changes you would like to see in your local area regarding health and wellbeing?
5. What could improve your communication and relationships with local health services?

6. What do we need to do differently to support you to share your experiences and views of healthcare with us? This helps us plan and improve health services
7. Would you like to leave any comments/further feedback on your experience with your local health services and how they can become better for your community?

We held 2 focus groups on 05/05/2022 with 7 women each.

In our focus groups we have quotes from some women.

"This is a brilliant idea to understand each other and also tell our problems and get help"

Another said, I did not know that such groups and activity was available to the women. We need more awareness she said"

Others all echoed sentiments for own space and support financially, physically and emotionally. Through this we assured everyone that the focus groups will keep going but once a month for 6 months and hoping it will open them up more and we can progress our questions and improve our services so they see they are being listened to.

#### **What people told you – presenting the key themes in the feedback you heard and ordering them by importance or frequency**

1. Having women only culturally appropriate spaces for fitness (preferable led by Muslim women coaches) was the most consistent priority across the feedback
2. Improving English language skills to better access healthcare services and/or healthcare information provided in Somali
3. Financial issues causing poverty and impacting on mental wellbeing and ability to buy food
4. Providing opportunities to interact with other Somali women to build confidence
5. Healthy eating and nutritional advice for families
6. More accessible children/family activities

#### **Were there any differences in opinion from the community you were working with?**

No, we feel the answers to all the questions raised one or more of the above issues.

#### **Other quotes from participants**

"It is important for my family to have easier appointment booking and better information about the GP and Health [care]. I don't know much and only when we get sick [that] I make contact"

"I think I need to keep fit and healthy. I don't exercise and this impacts on me. I have gained weight and feel a lot more lazy"