



## **BRINGING HEALTH CLOSER TO YOU**

### **Community Health and Wellbeing Engagement Report by OMOTOLA WONUOLA**

A survey and community engagement project exploring how Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) spaces can support community health and wellbeing across Southwark.

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## Executive Summary

This report presents the findings from the **Bringing Health Closer to You** initiative, a community-led engagement project exploring how Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) spaces can better support health, wellbeing, and participation across Southwark.

The work was carried out by **Omotola Wonuola** in the role of Community Health Ambassador. The aim was to understand how residents currently engage with TRA spaces, identify existing barriers, and explore how these local spaces can be more effectively used to reduce health inequalities.

A total of **97 residents** participated in the survey and engagement activities. Findings show that awareness of TRA services remains low, and participation in existing activities is limited. However, this does not reflect a lack of interest. On the contrary, residents expressed strong enthusiasm for using local spaces for health and wellbeing activities.



Residents highlighted interest in wellbeing sessions, health checks, and access to reliable health information. There was also strong support for embedding a Community Health Ambassador within communities to bridge the gap between residents and services.



This work aligns closely with the direction of the NHS England 10-Year Health Plan, particularly its focus on prevention, early intervention, and delivering care closer to home through neighbourhood-based models of care. It also aligns with the work of Community Southwark, including the Premises Project, which aims to strengthen access to community spaces for the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).

At its core, this project demonstrates that trusted, local spaces already exist within communities. With the right coordination between VCS organisations, Community Health Ambassadors, and local health systems, these spaces can play a significant role in improving health outcomes and reducing inequalities.

## Key Insights from the Community Survey

The **Bringing Health Closer to You** survey gathered responses from **97 residents across Southwark** to better understand awareness of Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) services and identify opportunities to strengthen community health and wellbeing.

The survey responses provided a clear picture of both the challenges and opportunities within the community.

The results highlight several important insights regarding community engagement, awareness of services and interest in local health initiatives

### Key Statistics

- 97 residents surveyed
- 59 percent of residents are not aware of TRA services or activities
- Around 90 percent of residents are interested in monthly community health events
- 71 residents support the introduction of a Community Health Ambassador
- SE22 was identified as a priority engagement gap, which led to targeted engagement through the Paxton Pantry case study.

### Awareness of TRA Services

More than half of respondents were unaware of TRA services or activities in their area. This lack of awareness naturally affects participation, with many residents reporting that they have never attended a TRA meeting or event.

This points to a communication issue rather than a lack of community interest.

### Participation in TRA Activities

Despite low awareness of TRA structures, residents showed overwhelming interest in health and wellbeing initiatives. There is clear demand for:

- Health checks
- Wellbeing workshops
- Informal health information sessions

This presents a strong opportunity to reposition TRA spaces as accessible community health hubs.

### Interest in Community Health Activities

Residents were particularly interested in:

- Exercise and physical activity
- Nutrition and healthy eating
- Mental wellbeing and stress management
- Managing long-term conditions

This reflects a clear appetite for preventative health support within the community.

### Engagement Gaps Identified

Analysis of postcode data revealed that engagement was stronger in some areas than others.

Lower participation was recorded from several postcode districts including:

SE22

SE24

SE17

This indicates opportunities for targeted outreach within these communities.

The engagement activity at **Paxton Pantry in SE22** helped address part of this gap by gathering additional feedback from residents within that area

## Overall Insight

The survey findings indicate that residents are interested in community health activities but many are not aware of existing community structures such as TRA spaces.

Improving communication, increasing outreach and delivering health initiatives within trusted local environments could significantly strengthen community engagement and support wellbeing across Southwark.

## 1. Introduction

Tenants and Residents Associations play an important role in local communities. They provide spaces where residents can meet, share concerns, and contribute to decisions that affect their neighbourhoods.

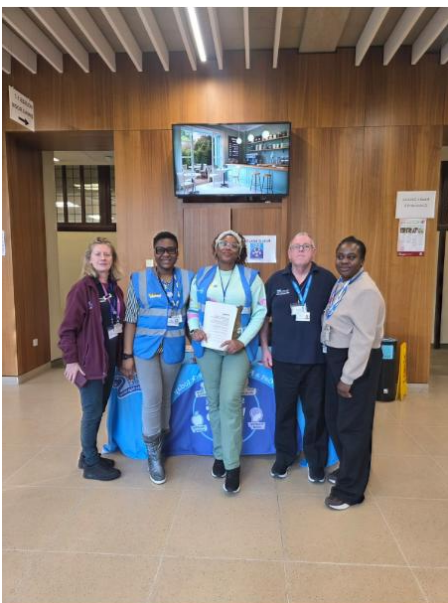
However, for these spaces to be effective, they must be visible, accessible, and relevant to residents' everyday lives.

The **Bringing Health Closer to You** initiative was developed to explore how these spaces can be better used, not just for meetings, but as active hubs for health, wellbeing, and community connection.

## 2. Background to the Engagement

As a Community Health Ambassador, one of my core responsibilities is to help bridge the gap around health inequalities across Southwark. Through my engagement with residents, it became clear that many people are still facing challenges such as limited awareness of available services, uncertainty about how to access support, and discomfort when engaging with formal healthcare environments.

This is especially important at a time when many residents are experiencing long waiting times for GP appointments, even for relatively simple referrals. These delays can discourage people from seeking help early and can lead to conditions worsening unnecessarily.



During various community engagement activities, I also observed that many TRA halls, although located at the heart of local neighbourhoods, remain underused and are often not seen as accessible or relevant spaces for support.

This project was therefore developed as a practical response to these challenges, using trusted, familiar community spaces to bring health conversations closer to residents and make support more accessible, timely, and community-led.

### 3. Purpose of the Survey

The survey aimed to:

- Assess awareness of TRA services
- Understand participation levels
- Identify barriers to engagement
- Explore interest in health activities
- Identify priority health topics
- Assess support for community health initiatives
- Evaluate interest in a Community Health Ambassador role

### 4. Methodology

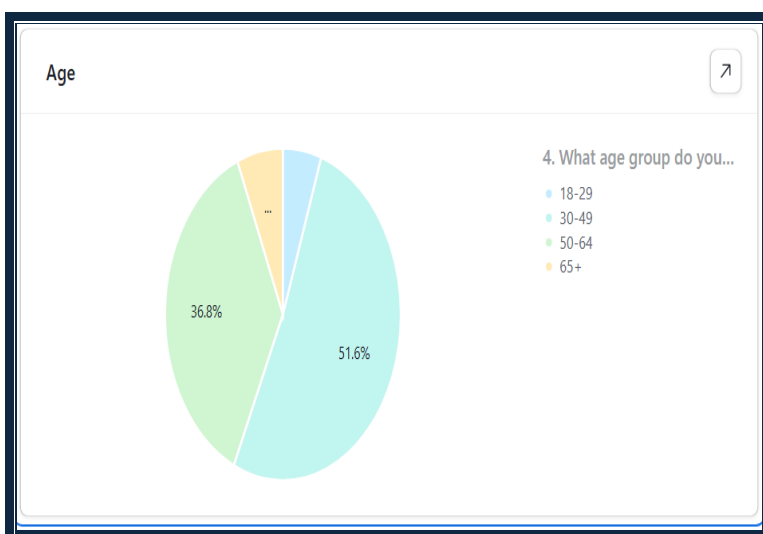
A structured questionnaire was used to gather feedback from residents across Southwark. The survey was distributed:

- Online
- Through in-person engagement activities

A total of **97 responses** were collected and analysed to identify key trends and insights.

### 5. Participant Demographics

The survey collected demographic information to understand the diversity of respondents within the community. Understanding demographic patterns also helps identify which groups are more engaged and where additional outreach may be needed.



**The majority of respondents were aged 30–64, with significantly lower participation from younger residents (18–29). This highlights a need for targeted youth engagement.**

## 6. Postcode Distribution of Respondents

Responses were received from across Southwark, with the highest participation from **SE5** and **SE15**. Additional responses were recorded from **SE1**, **SE16**, and **SE21**.

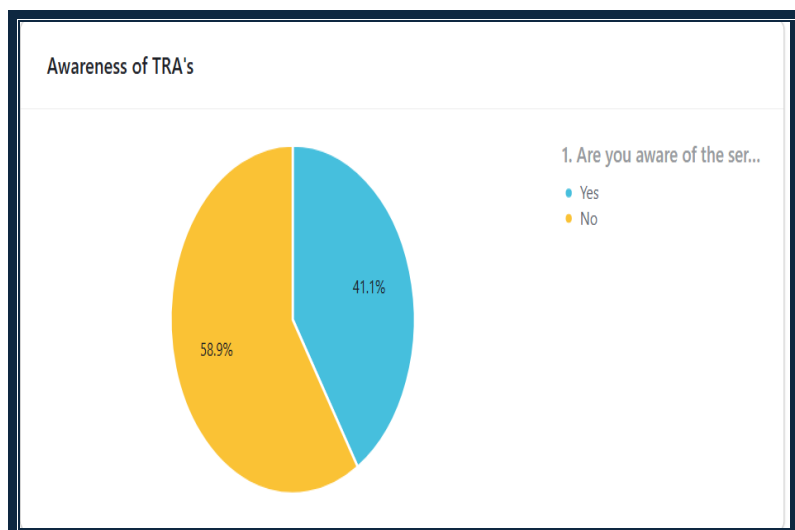
Lower engagement was observed in **SE22**, **SE24**, and **SE17**, highlighting areas for targeted outreach. A small number of responses were also received from neighbouring boroughs, including **SE18** and **SE3**, indicating some wider community reach beyond Southwark.

Overall, the data shows a broad geographic spread, while identifying key areas where engagement can be strengthened.

## 7. Key Findings

### 7.1. Awareness of TRA Services

The survey results indicate that awareness of TRA services among residents remains relatively low.



More than half of respondents indicated that they were not aware of TRA services or activities in their area.

This suggests that additional communication and outreach efforts may be needed to improve awareness within the community.

### 7.2 Participation in TRA Activities

Residents were asked whether they had ever attended a TRA meeting or event.

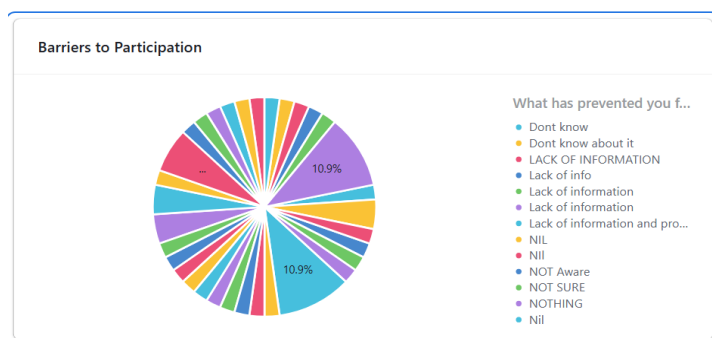
Response	Number
Yes	35
No	51
Unsure	9

The majority of respondents reported that they had not participated in TRA meetings or activities, highlighting the need to increase community engagement.

## Barriers to Participation

Residents who had not attended TRA events were asked to identify possible barriers.

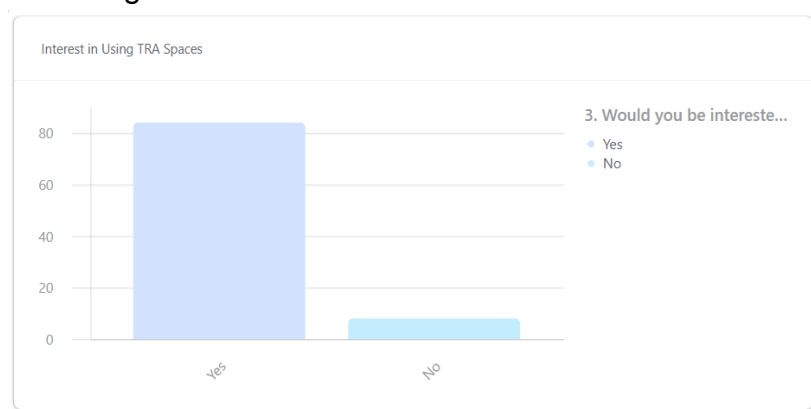
Total responses to the barrier question: 46 residents



These findings suggest that, despite the presence of TRA halls within close proximity to residents, awareness of their existence and services remains low. This highlights the need to improve communication, visibility, and accessibility in order to increase awareness and encourage greater community participation.

### 7.3 Interest in Using TRA Spaces

Residents were asked whether they would be interested in using TRA spaces for health and wellbeing activities.



The findings demonstrate strong community interest in using TRA spaces for health and wellbeing activities. This provides clear evidence that the **Bringing Health Closer to You** initiative has the potential to deliver significant benefits for residents, particularly in supporting the shift within the NHS 10 Year Plan towards

community-based care and a greater focus on prevention rather than treatment.

### 7.4 Health and Wellbeing Interests

Residents were allowed to **select more than one option**, so the percentages represent the share of total selections.

Health Topic	Responses	Percentage
Exercise and physical activity	70	27.9%
Nutrition and healthy eating	69	27.5%
Mental wellness and stress management	67	26.7%
Managing long term conditions	37	14.7%
Other topics	8	3.2%
Total topic selections: 251		



### 7.5 Interest in Monthly Community Health Events

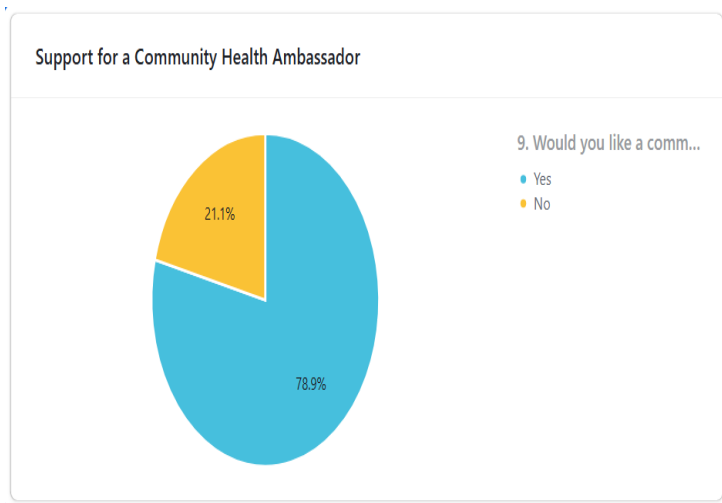
Residents were asked whether they would be interested in monthly health focused community events.

Response	Number
Yes	86
No	9



### 7.6 Support for a Community Health Ambassador

Residents were asked whether they would support the presence of a Community Health Ambassador



The majority of respondents supported this idea. Residents suggested that a Health Ambassador could:

- share reliable health information
- organise community health activities
- connect residents with health services
- listen to community health concerns

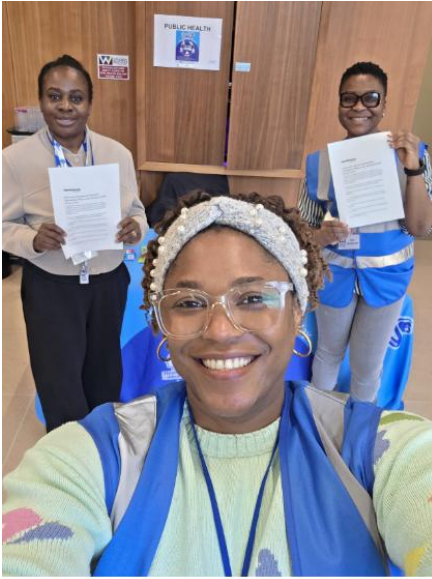
## 8. Case Study Evidence

### Case Study 1 - Bringing Health Closer to You Community Engagement

Alongside the survey, community engagement activities were carried out across several locations including libraries, TRA networks and other neighbourhood spaces. Early engagement revealed two important gaps. Young adults aged 18 to 25 were significantly underrepresented in the responses.

This suggests that additional outreach is required through schools, colleges and youth networks.

Another gap was identified in the Dulwich area where participation from residents was limited. Targeted engagement activities were therefore introduced within local community spaces in the area.



Despite these gaps, residents expressed strong interest in participating in community health activities and welcomed the opportunity to share their views about how local spaces could better support wellbeing.



## Case Study 2 - Paxton Pantry Filling the SE22 Engagement Gap

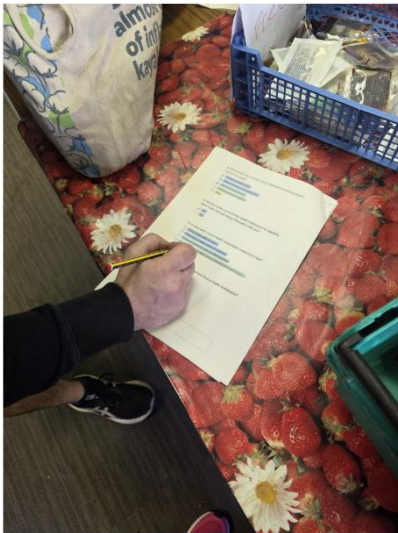
Survey results highlighted limited engagement from residents within the SE22 postcode area. To address this, targeted engagement was carried out at **Paxton Pantry**, a local community food hub. During the engagement session more than **25 residents visited the pantry**, with meaningful conversations and insights gathered from **15 residents**.

Residents discussed their awareness of community spaces, barriers to accessing services and ideas for improving local wellbeing support.

The engagement highlighted three key issues.

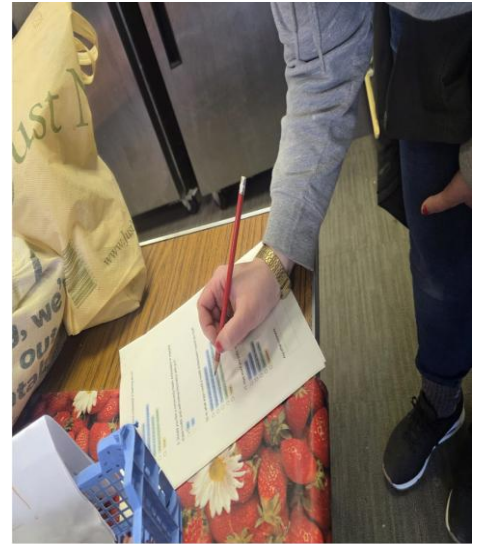
1. Limited transparency around the management of some community spaces.
2. Perception that there are very few accessible community halls.
3. Strong potential for preventative health outreach within trusted neighbourhood spaces.

Residents appeared more comfortable discussing wellbeing within the familiar environment of the pantry than in formal healthcare settings.



Kemi, Broker at Paxton Green Time Bank, confirmed the relevance of the project and the potential for future health outreach:

*"Thank you again for attending, it was a really good afternoon, and I'm glad you were able to complete so many surveys. I've spoken with the rest of the team about the Vital 5 Outreach Team visiting us to run monthly health checks. Everyone is very pleased, as the project aligns beautifully with the work we're doing at Paxton Pantry."*



The engagement also generated interest from stakeholders in introducing **monthly health checks through the Vital 5 outreach team**, demonstrating the potential for trusted community hubs to support preventative health services.

## 9. Community Needs Identified

The survey findings highlight several key community needs.

These include:

- improved awareness of TRA services
- greater opportunities for community participation
- access to reliable health and wellbeing information
- regular health related community activities
- stronger communication between residents and community organisations

## 10. Preferred Communication Channels

Residents indicated several preferred methods for receiving information about community initiatives. These included:

- community events
- newsletters
- social media updates
- phone messages
- in person engagement

Using multiple communication channels may help improve engagement across different groups.

## 11. Policy Alignment

The findings from this report strongly align with both national and local strategic priorities for health and community development.

At a national level, the NHS England 10-Year Health Plan sets out a clear direction for transforming healthcare delivery through three key shifts: **from hospital to community**, **from analogue to digital**, and **from sickness to prevention**. A central component of this strategy is the development of **neighbourhood health services**, which aim to deliver more integrated, place-based care within local communities.

Within this context, the role of **Community Health Ambassadors** becomes increasingly important. The plan emphasises the need to work closely with communities, build trust, and improve access to health services through locally embedded approaches. This directly supports the findings of this report, where residents expressed strong support for having a visible, trusted individual within their community to provide health information, facilitate engagement, and connect people to services.



Furthermore, this work aligns with the initiatives led by Community Southwark, particularly the **Premises Project** led by Alex, which focuses on improving access to community spaces and strengthening infrastructure for the **Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS)**. By making better use of existing community venues both initiatives support a shared goal of activating local spaces as hubs for wellbeing, connection, and service delivery.

At a local level, this also supports the ambitions of the Southwark Council **Southwark 2030 Strategy**, which prioritises reducing inequalities, empowering communities, and improving overall wellbeing.

By integrating **Community Health Ambassadors** into neighbourhood-level delivery and aligning with VCS infrastructure development, the **Bringing Health Closer to You** initiative demonstrates a practical, scalable model for delivering preventative, community-based healthcare in line with national policy.

## 12. Opportunities for Community Health and Wellbeing

The findings suggest that TRA spaces can be effectively used to deliver accessible community health and wellbeing initiatives.

Possible initiatives include:

- monthly wellness days
- blood pressure and health screening events
- mental health awareness workshops
- nutrition and healthy eating sessions
- community fitness programmes

These initiatives could help address health inequalities and improve overall community wellbeing.

## 13. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the survey, the following actions are recommended:

1. Increase awareness of TRA services through improved communication strategies.
2. Introduce regular community health and wellbeing events within TRA spaces.
3. Establish a Community Health Ambassador programme to support health promotion.
4. Improve outreach efforts in underrepresented postcode districts.
5. Encourage greater resident participation in TRA meetings and decision making.
6. Use multiple communication channels to ensure information reaches all residents.

## 14. Conclusion

The **Bringing Health Closer to You** survey has provided valuable insight into residents' awareness, participation and interest in community health initiatives.

Although awareness of TRA services remains limited, residents demonstrated strong interest in health and wellbeing activities within local community spaces.

By strengthening communication, increasing engagement and supporting community led initiatives, TRA organisations are well positioned to support community wellbeing and help address health inequalities across Southwark through locally delivered initiative.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by expressing my sincere gratitude to Almighty God for granting me the wisdom and insight to understand the needs of residents and to carry out this work with purpose and clarity. I would also like to thank all individuals and organisations who contributed to the success of the ***Bringing Health Closer to You*** initiative.

Special appreciation goes to the Community Health Ambassadors for their dedication to improving health outcomes within local communities. I am equally grateful to Public Health Southwark, Community Southwark, and the Healthwatch Southwark team for their continued support, collaboration, and commitment to community wellbeing.

My sincere thanks go to **Ese Anabui** and **Enduement Adiohwofor** for their committed time and invaluable support throughout the engagement process.

I am also grateful to **Rhyana Ebanks-Babb** for her thoughtful reviews and valuable suggestions, which helped strengthen the quality and clarity of this report.

Finally, I would like to extend heartfelt thanks to every resident who participated in this project. Your time, openness, and commitment are deeply appreciated, and your contributions have made this work possible.



## Community Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) survey- Bringing Health Closer to You

I would like to engage with the TRA's in collaboration with Southwark Group Of Tenants Organisation (STGO) as a platform to connect more closely with the local community, gather their feedback, and explore how best to support and promote their general wellbeing.

My goal is to help bridge health inequalities by understanding community needs and encouraging active participation.

To achieve this, I propose developing a short questionnaire for residents to:

- Educate the TRAs that they are groups of local residents who come together to share the views and concerns of people in their area
- Assess their awareness of TRA services and community resources.
- Understand how they would like to be more engaged with TRA members.
- Identify opportunities to use TRA spaces for community health and wellness activities.
- Explore interest in regular health-focused events (e.g., monthly wellness days offering vital checks and other services).

Name \*

Email address \*

Phone number

Postcode

This will help us identify a TRA near you

1. Are you aware of the services and activities that TRA offers in your community? \*

- Yes
- No

2. Have you ever attended a TRA meeting or event? \*

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

3. Would you be interested in using TRA spaces for health and wellbeing activities?

- Yes
- No

4. What age group do you belong to?

- Under 18
- 18-29
- 30-49

- 50-64
- 65+

5. Which age groups do you think currently use TRA services most?

6. How would you prefer TRA to engage with you? (e.g., in-person meetings, newsletters, social media, home visits)

7. Would you be interested in monthly health-focused events in your community (e.g., free vital checks, health information, and resources)?

- Yes
- No

8. What health topics are you most interested in learning about? (Tick all that apply)

- Nutrition and healthy eating
- Mental wellness and stress management
- Exercise and physical activity
- Managing long term conditions
- Other

9. Would you like a community Health Ambassador to regularly share health and well-being information with you?

- Yes
- No

10. In what ways could a Health Ambassador support you best?

- Sharing reliable health information
- Organising local health activities and workshops
- Connecting residents to health and wellbeing services
- Listening to community health concerns and feeding them back to servic...
- Other

11. How would you prefer to hear from a Health Ambassador?

- In person visit
- Community event
- Phone call/text messages
- Social media updates
- Newsletter

Any other comments