

Every Drop Matters

Reflections Report 2026



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Introductions and Purpose

Healthwatch Southwark partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT) to deliver Every Drop Matters on 26th February 2025 at the Urban Village Hall. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of sickle cell, improve understanding of the importance of ethnically diverse blood donors, and support people to speak directly with NHS professionals. We had 18 sign-ups and 9 attendees, each spending quality time engaging with partners. The event also reflected our commitment to connecting people to power by ensuring underrepresented communities can access trusted health information and influence the services that impact them.

Planning

Planning began after two separate engagement opportunities arose. NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT) reached out to explore collaboration, and separately our team met the GSTT Sickle Cell Programme Leads at another event. Recognising the synchronisation between the two – one supporting people living with sickle cell and one increasing awareness of blood donation – we intentionally brought both teams together for a combined community event. Community Health Ambassadors played a key role. Some supported the Vital 5 outreach team, while others assisted with broader event delivery. We promoted the event through ambassador group chats, a vital engagement tool as ambassadors are local residents and often part of communities most affected by sickle cell.

Promotion

Promotion took place across multiple channels, including our website, social media, Community Southwark channels, Southwark Council's 'What's Happening' page, the South East London ICB, the REACH Network, GSTT mailing lists, and community networks. We also shared the event through Community Health Ambassador group chats and community mailing lists.

Event flyer below:

26 FEB 2026
• 11.30-1.30PM •
URBAN VILLAGE HALL

NHS
Guy's and St Thomas'
NHS Foundation Trust

Save lives
Give blood

healthwatch
Southwark

EVERY DROP COUNTS

JOIN HEALTHWATCH SOUTHWARK & GUYS AND ST THOMAS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF SICKLE CELL AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BLOOD DONATION. FIND OUT YOUR BLOOD TYPE AND SIGN UP AS A BLOOD DONOR.

RSVP HERE
[INFO@HEALTHWATCHSOUTHWARK.ORG](mailto:info@healthwatchsouthwark.org)

The Event

The event featured several interactive stations: GSTT's specialist sickle cell pilot programme team, the NHSBT 'What's Your Blood Type?' (WYBT) activity, the Vital 5 outreach team, and NIHR Research. The WYBT activity was particularly impactful. It could only be carried out with individuals already registered as blood donors, which prompted conversations about donor eligibility and encouraged sign-ups. Several people working in the building also came down to participate after hearing about the activity. This helped increase engagement and extended the reach of the WYBT activity beyond pre-registered attendees.

Community Health Ambassadors supported participation throughout the session, helping residents navigate the stations and assisting with Vital 5 outreach. Throughout the day, we sat with attendees, explained each station, answered questions and made sure people felt welcomed. All informal feedback was positive and highlighted the value of speaking directly to NHS staff in a relaxed environment.



Feedback

GSTT shared:

“I really enjoyed working with you and had some very helpful conversations about community collaboration; particularly interested in how you can disseminate funding to experts by experience more easily... although we had few people attend, it was good to connect with what else is happening and create possibilities for future collaborations.”

NHS Blood and Transplant shared:

“Although the attendance was smaller than expected, I truly value the opportunity to connect with another team... Please keep us in mind for future community events.”

Learnings

- Interactive activities work well. WYBT sparked conversations, increased donor awareness, and encouraged people to consider registering.
- Accessibility matters. A resident emailed on the morning of the event saying it looked amazing but highlighted that some people living with sickle cell cannot always attend in person. While this event needed to be in-person for WYBT, hybrid or online options should be considered in future.
- Ambassadors remain essential. Their outreach and on-the-day support strengthened trust and communication.
- Cross-service collaboration added strong value. GSTT, NHSBT, Vital 5 and NIHR deepened their relationships and explored future joint work.
- Informal feedback still provides meaningful insight. Conversations with attendees showed clear appreciation for the warm, conversational format.
- Leafleting ahead of time is important. When attendance appeared low on the day, we carried out live outreach in nearby pharmacies, local lunch delis and footfall areas. This showed that the surrounding area is largely tourist-heavy and busy with work-lunchtime visitors. For future sessions, leaflet-drops and in-person outreach in the days beforehand will help increase awareness among local residents.

Next Steps

- Explore hybrid or online components for future events.
- Build ongoing partnership work with GSTT and NHSBT.
- Strengthen ambassador-led outreach and hyperlocal promotion.
- Plan further community-based sickle cell awareness activities.

- Improve onsite feedback gathering, using both written and verbal methods.
- Continue creating relaxed, conversational spaces for residents to speak directly with NHS teams.

Conclusion

Every Drop Matters created a warm and collaborative space for residents, ambassadors, and NHS partners to come together and discuss sickle cell and blood donation in an accessible way. The event strengthened relationships between services, encouraged meaningful conversations, and highlighted further opportunities to reach and support communities most affected by sickle cell. We look forward to building on this work and continuing to centre local voices in future engagement activities.