

## Shared Activities Evaluation Report 2017/ 2018



Photo by Concia Albert ([havenhive@gmail.com](mailto:havenhive@gmail.com))



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## **Introduction**

The BME Health Forum is committed to supporting BME community organisations in Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea and Hammersmith and Fulham to deliver health and wellbeing services that benefit local communities. In January 2017, the BME Health Forum funded 8 small projects to deliver activities that would enhance their users' emotional wellbeing. The last project was completed in December 2017.

What follows is the evaluation of 5 of these projects. The three smaller projects involved single day events that were not measurable with the same methodology and have therefore not been included.

The purpose of this funding, besides improving the emotional wellbeing of people from BME communities, was to demonstrate the value of funding small community projects. We hope to show that funding projects of less than £1500 can have a measurable impact on the wellbeing of communities and in some instances can help reduce inappropriate use of health services.

It is worth highlighting of course that these community projects are not delivered in a vacuum. The organisations that are delivering them are well established and frequently, besides attending the projects described here, clients will have received other types of support, and their improved wellbeing may have resulted from the holistic support they received rather than attendance at a single project. However, there is a lot of supporting evidence on the benefits of physical and social activities on emotional wellbeing. The results from these projects suggest that attending a regular class for physical exercise or a purposeful social or educational activity makes a real difference to many people's emotional wellbeing.

## **Evaluation Methodology**

The projects are evaluated through questionnaires that the organisations were asked to give their users to complete when they were first involved in the project and at the end of the project. Additionally, we attended some of the projects and interviewed participants and photographed some of the projects.

The questionnaires include:

- 10 items from the 14 scale Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) which are scored on a 1-5 point scale (ranging from 'None of the time', 'Rarely', 'Some of the Time', 'Often', 'All of the time').
- A question that asked participants to rate their health on a scale from 0-100 from the EQ-5D-5L scale
- Additional questions where clients are asked how often they attended their GP, they are asked to rate their ability to manage their general health, and also their view on whether taking part in the project was likely to reduce their use of GP services

# **African Dance sessions and a visit to the Lion King by Healthier Divas**

## **Description of the project**

Twelve weeks of African dance sessions on Thursdays for 25 people and a visit to the Lion King for 12 people. Some participants made a contribution towards the Lion King tickets (total £160.00).

## **Cost: £1396**

We had feedback from 21 women and 3 men. They were from the UK, Europe, Africa, the Middle East and the Caribbean. Their ages ranged from 29 to 68 with the average being 49 years old. The average number of sessions attended was 10. The clients did African dance classes and a day trip to the Lion King.

## **Evaluation**

Verbal feedback:

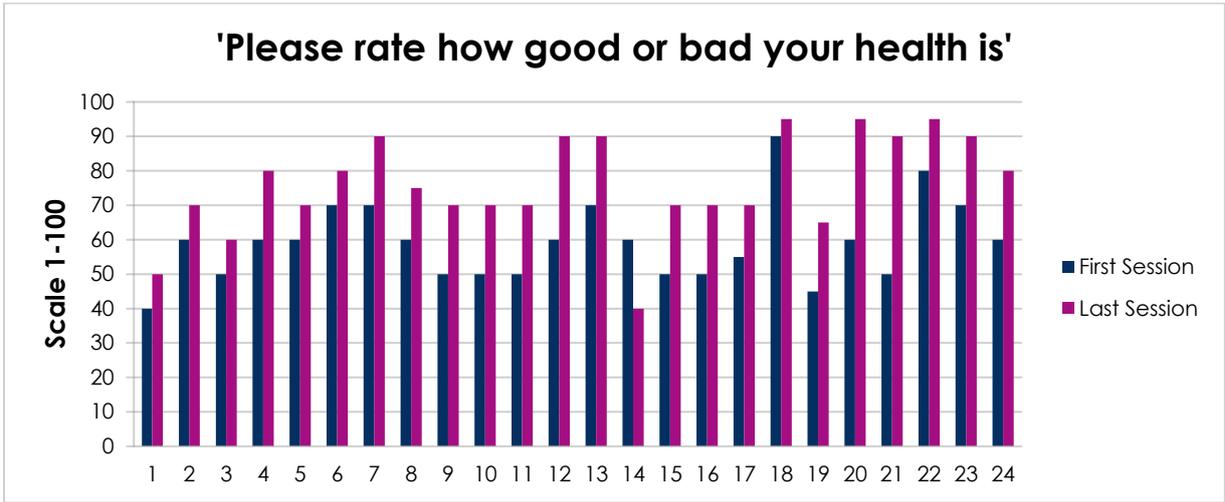
The verbal feedback from clients were very positive. They said they really enjoyed the music and the dancing.

"I have met people from different countries who I wouldn't have met outside of here and we are all friends."

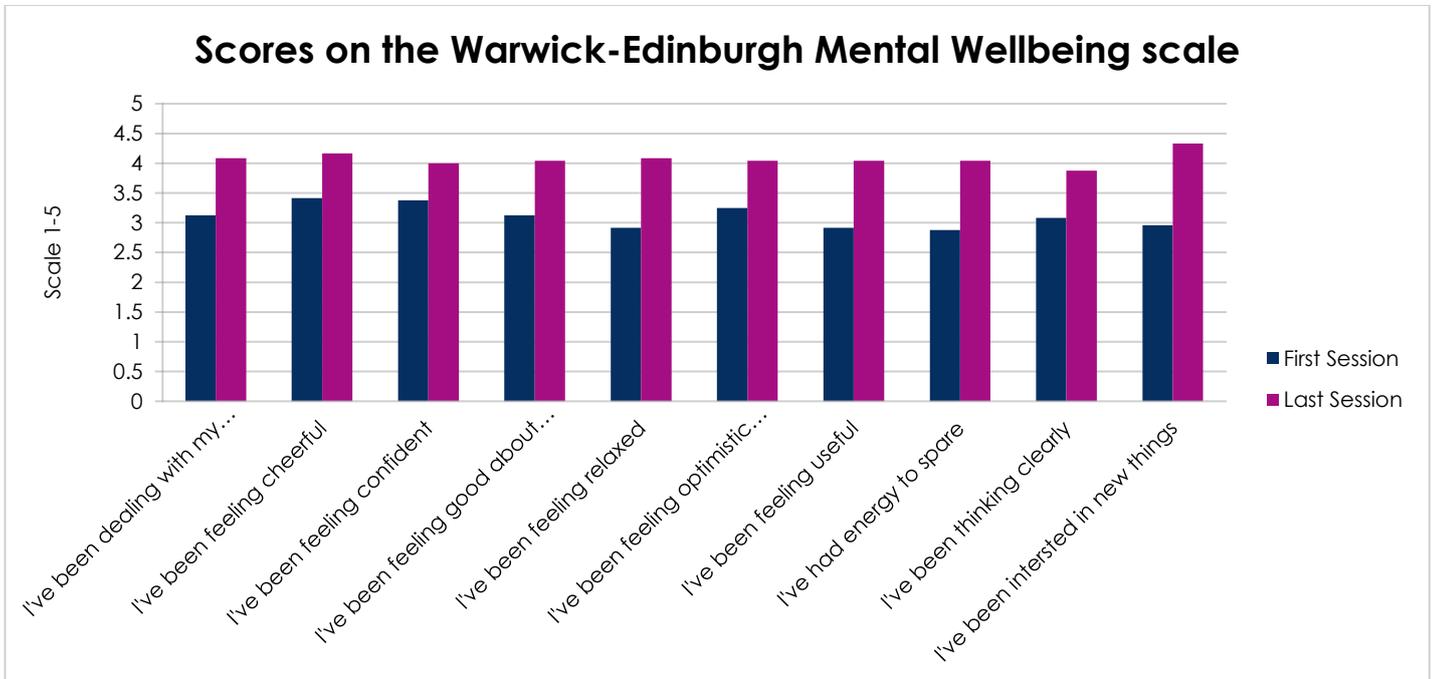
"This exercise class has helped me not to feel lonely and it gives me something to look forward to."

"I saw an advert on the community board on my estate for African dance and I thought I would go and see what it is all about. I tried it out and now I don't miss a week. My health has transformed, Before, I had pains in my joints, and pain in my back which I get because of an accident. Now it is very rare that I get any pain at all. ... I tried Zumba too but I found that too intensive but the pace in this class is just right for me. I have my independence and the ladies who come to this class are nice to be around. Faith who is our usual teacher is brilliant! ... So much energy and nice moves on my hips."

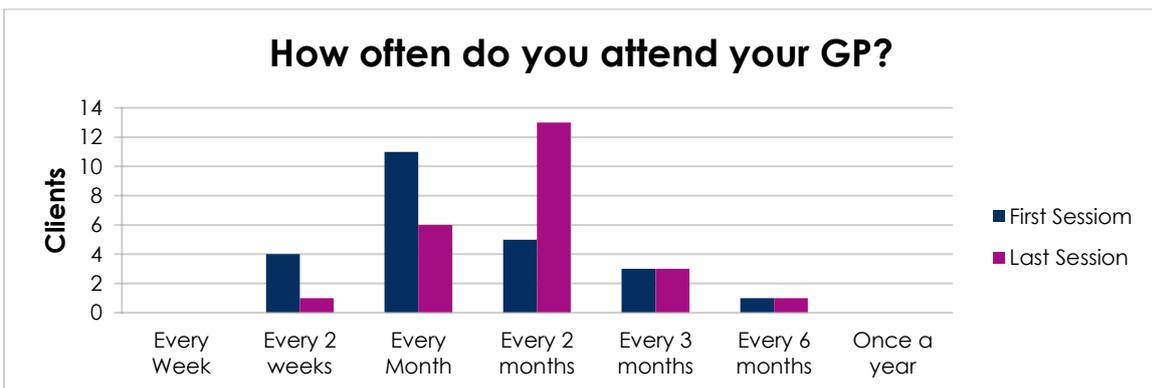
The clients rated their health much better at the end of the project compared to the beginning. The average changed from 59/100 to 73/100.



Clients' score on the WEMWBS improved considerably in the 10 items that were used from an average of 3.1 to an average of 4.1.



Clients at the end of the project reported visiting their GP less frequently than at the beginning. At the end of the project, this group of 24 clients would have attended the GP a total of 29 times in an 8 week period, compared to the 43 times they would have attended prior to the project.



## **Conclusion**

This project made a significant difference to participants' lives and improved considerably how healthy they felt and their emotional wellbeing. It also reduced how often they attended their GP, so in two months' time it saved a total of 14 GP appointments.

## **Exercise classes by the Iranian Association**

### **Description of the project**

Weekly aerobics class for 16 weeks for 20 people

### **Cost: £1370**

The project involved 20 participants doing an aerobics session once a week for 16 weeks. The participants were 3 men and 17 women, from Iran who were Farsi speakers. The average age was 50 years old, and participants ages ranged from 35-65.

### **Evaluation**

Verbal feedback:

The verbal feedback from participants was very positive. People appreciated how the exercise lifted their mood and they enjoyed the social aspects as well.

"My mood is lifted when I do exercise. I look forward to the classes."

"I had an operation a few years ago where I lost both of my legs from the knees down, I now use prosthetic legs to get around. 4 years ago, I was also morbidly obese, I have now lost 50Kg since I started exercising a few years ago. This extra exercise class is just what I need because my weight has stagnated and I still need to lose some more weight. It was difficult at first to exercise with these legs but keeping going has helped me to become more comfortable with them"

Q: What keeps you motivated to come to the class?: "I have met some really nice people here at the class, they have all being so encouraging to me and want to give me their support when they see I wanted to give up. Losing the weight and being able to do more things has kept me coming too. I am 64 but this is the best I felt in many years. We need these classes because some of us here are not able to pay for exercise classes. And free things like walking, you don't get to meet people. This is such a good thing. We also have a very good teacher".



Photo by Concia Albert (havenhive@gmail.com)

"I am 72 years old and I love to exercise here. Look how many friends I now have. We also sometimes have food together. This class means we can meet more because now I am retired, I don't get the chance to spend time with people like I used to. I feel so healthy; my diabetes is well controlled and exercising twice a week helps me to maintain my fitness and happiness."

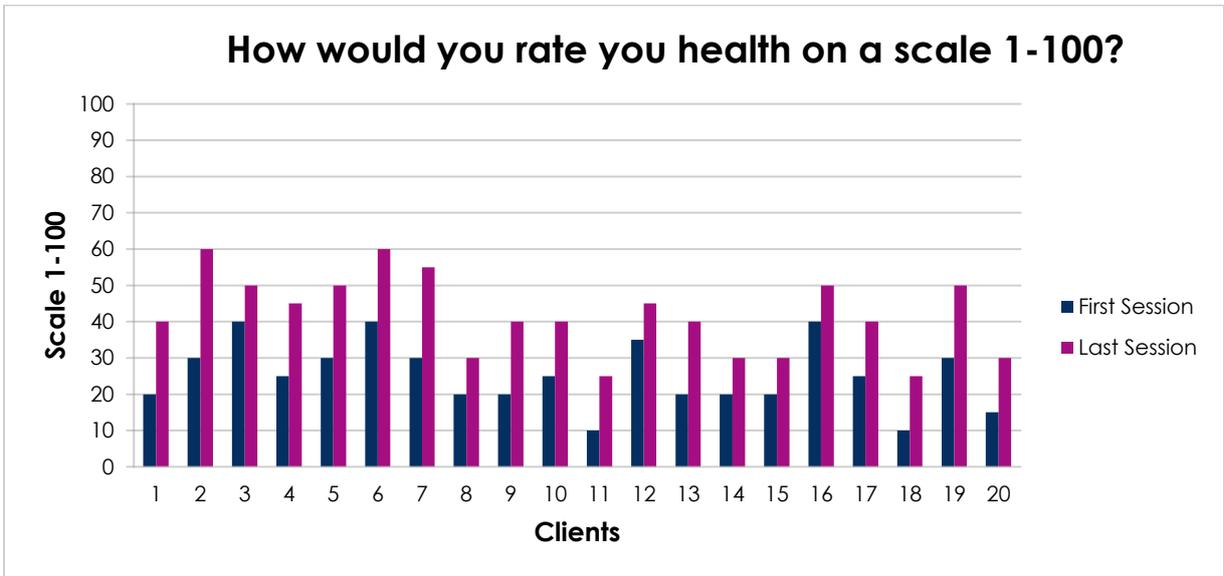
"It makes me feel good. It is difficult some days, but I know I feel good after, so I keep doing it."

"I love the music we exercise to. Most of the music here is in my first language and I feel at home."

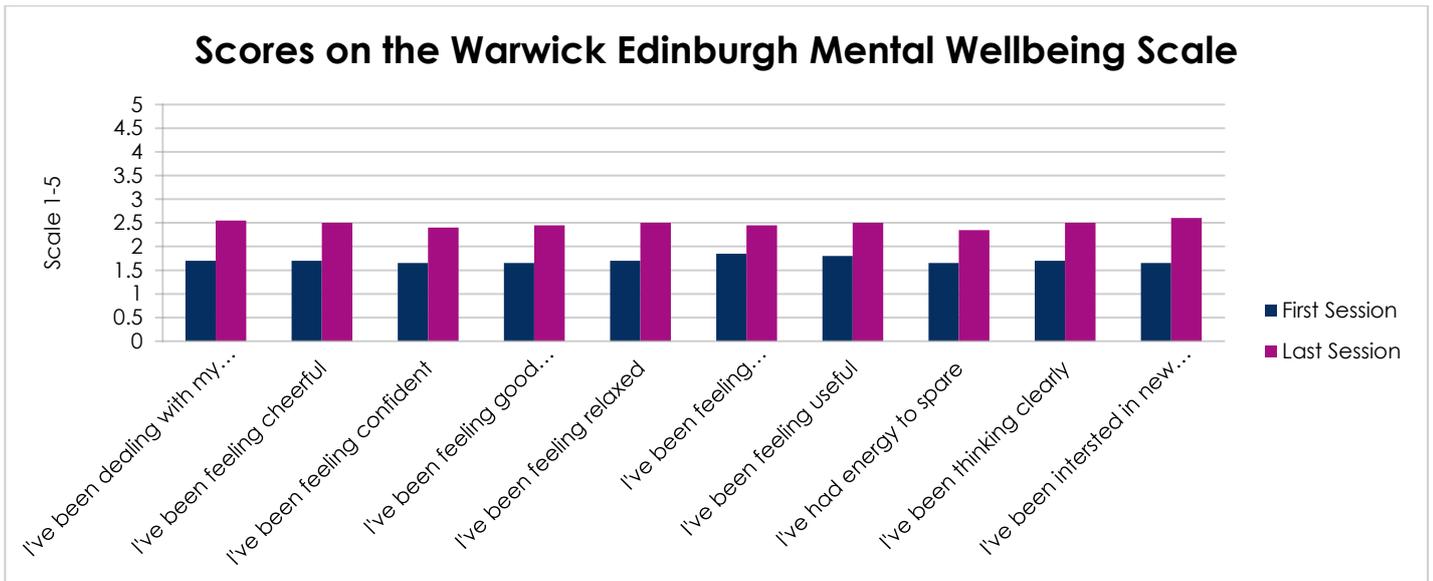
"I like feeling like I am doing something to help myself. I suffer from depression and since I have been exercising, I have felt happier. It has helped with my mood a lot. Having this second class is so good because of my family commitments I am not always able to get to the other class. I wish we could keep this class for longer than the 12 weeks."

"Yes, I always talk about the class here where ever I go, so many people in our community who do not have good English, or much money need an exercise class like this to help them to stay healthy and to meet friends."

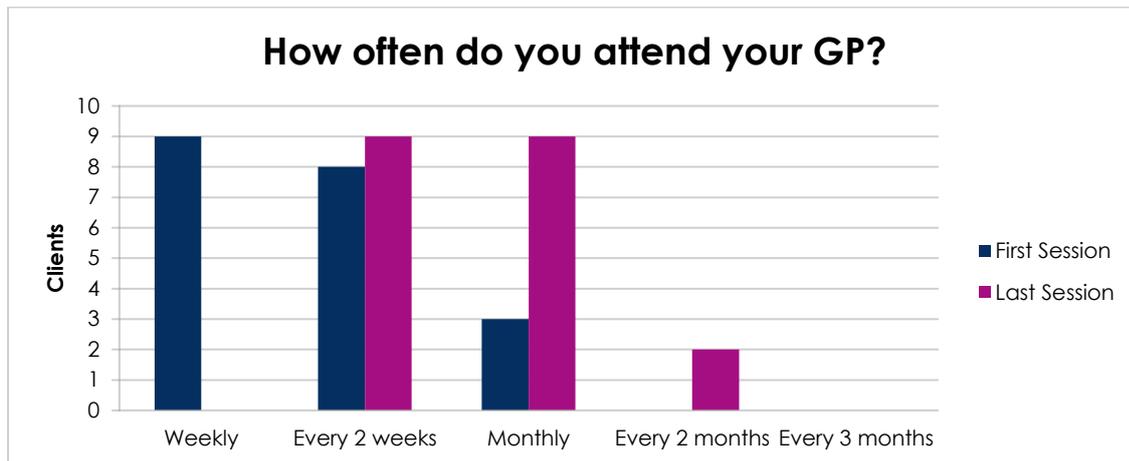
The clients rated their health much better at the end of the project compared to the beginning. The average changed from 25/100 to 42/100.



The clients' scores on the WEMWBS improved a lot from an average of 1.7 to an average of 2.5.



Clients reported attending their GP a lot less often compared to the start of the project. In 8 weeks this group of 20 clients would have attended the GP 56 times instead of the 110 times they were attending prior to the project.



## Conclusion

This group of Iranian people rated their health very poorly at the start of the project and also rated their mental wellbeing very low. They attended the GP very frequently. At the end of the project they rated their health and mental wellbeing a lot higher and attended the GP much less frequently.

## Walking and Zumba by Hear Women

### Description of the project

Zumba classes and a walking group for 12 weeks attended by 20 women

**Cost: £1400**

### Evaluation

Verbal feedback:

"Before I couldn't move much. When I woke up in the mornings my back was especially painful. Now, I put on my makeup and I come to the dance classes and I feel good. I feel full of energy after the class. When I go home, I take care of my husband who is unwell. I help him to take part in chair based exercises because I now know how good exercise is for health and wellbeing."

"I like the dance because it makes me happy. Before I used to have depression. Now I feel so good. I come every week."

"I always tell my friends about this class. Especially when I see them very tired. I tell them to go and do exercise at this mosque."

"I am feeling more active. Before, we were not active but now we are active. It is helping us. I feel so fresh these days."

"I was tired, I was worried about life. I have friends and now I am dancing."

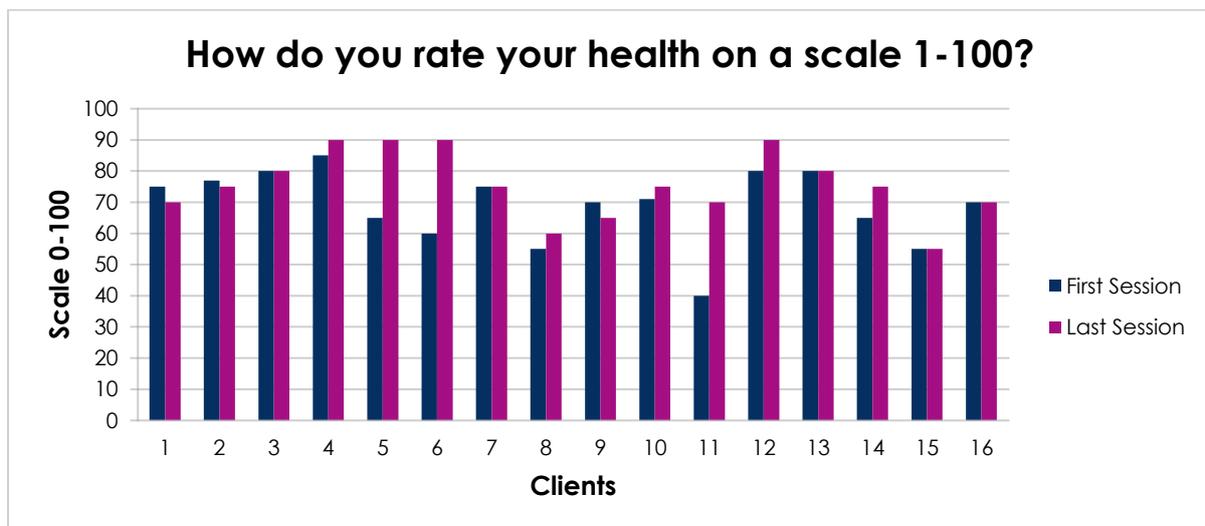
"I am happy. Everything is very good. Before coming to the exercise class here I spent my time staying in the house and doing house wife things. My life is very different now"

"I have several health conditions. Since starting the class I feel so much happier. Before I was totally stiff."

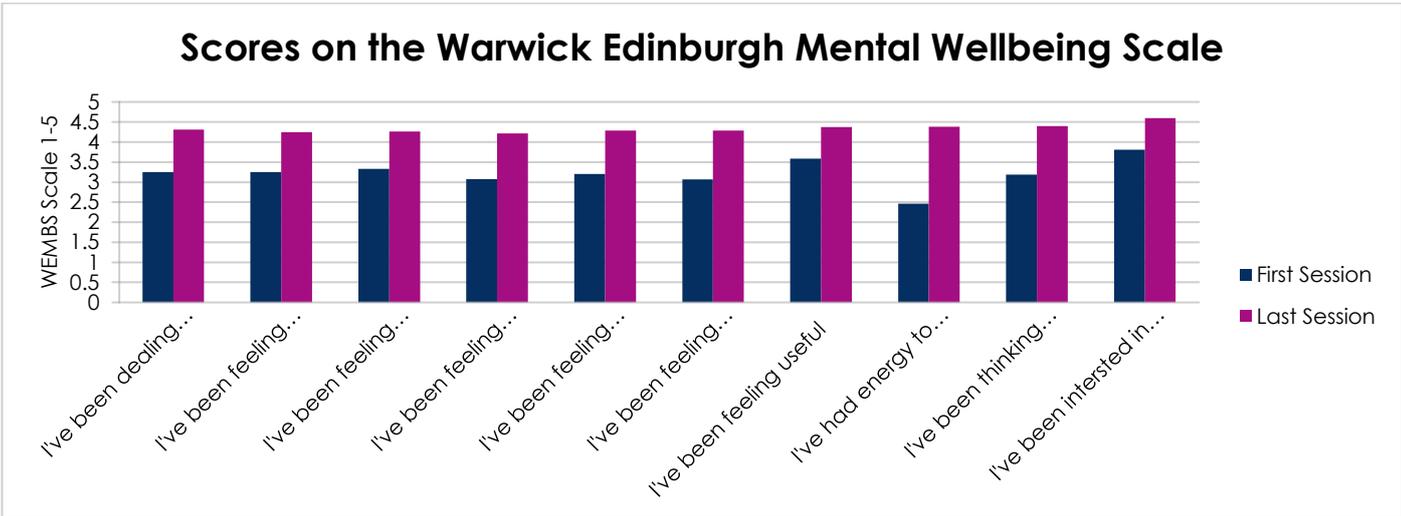
"I am now feeling better than I used to. I used to go to the hospital more because of my knee pain and foot pain. But I don't need to do that anymore."

We received completed questionnaires from 16 women. Their average age was 52 and ranged from 30-78. The countries of origin of the women included Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Ghana, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia.

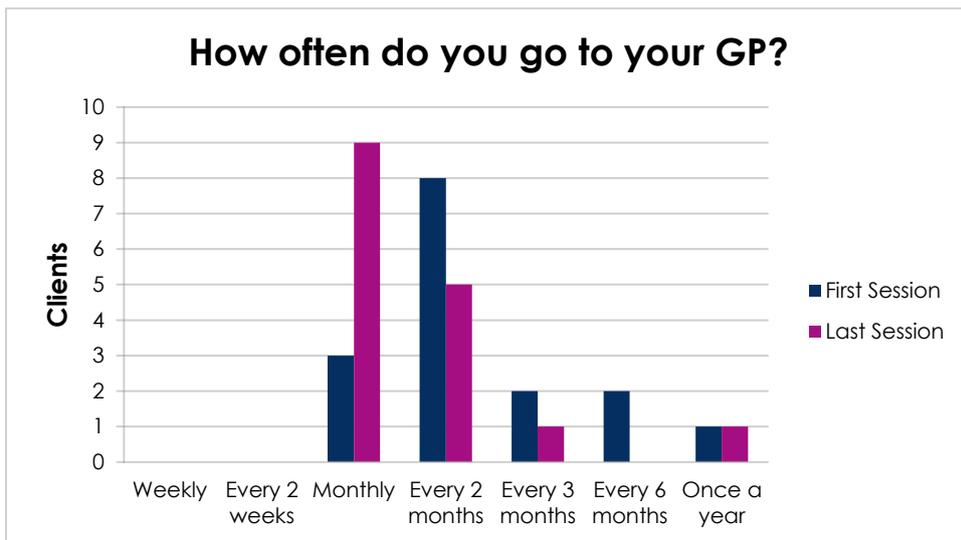
On average they rated their health as having improved from 69/100 to 76/100 although not everyone improved. Many of the women taking part in the Zumba class had already been involved in physical activities delivered by Hear Women so they already rated their health highly which is why perhaps they didn't show as much improvement.



The women's improvement on the Warwick Edinburgh Mental wellbeing Scale was more significant from an average of 3.2 to an average of 4.3. Scores on the item 'I have energy to spare' in particular, improved from 2.5 to 4.4.



Based on the feedback from these women this project increased the frequency with which they visited the GP. However, this group of women did not visit the GP very often so it maybe that an increase was appropriate as they became more health conscious.



### Conclusion

This project obviously benefitted the participants' mental wellbeing and in most cases it improved their perception of how healthy they are. It may also have increased the frequency with which these women attended the GP from an average of once every 2 months to an average of once a month. The benefits of this project were possibly not as great as in the other projects because the women were already benefitting from similar projects and already enjoyed fairly good physical and mental health.

## Film workshop “Changing Narratives” by People Arise Now

### Description of the project

A DVD night on Friday evenings for 14 weeks followed by chatting about key themes e.g. self esteem, conquering adversity with a facilitator. Examples of films are: Collateral beauty, Frankie and Alice, Silver linings, Ordinary people, Beautiful mind. Attended by ex-prisoners, and families of prisoners. They attended an average of 9 sessions (ranging from 1-14)

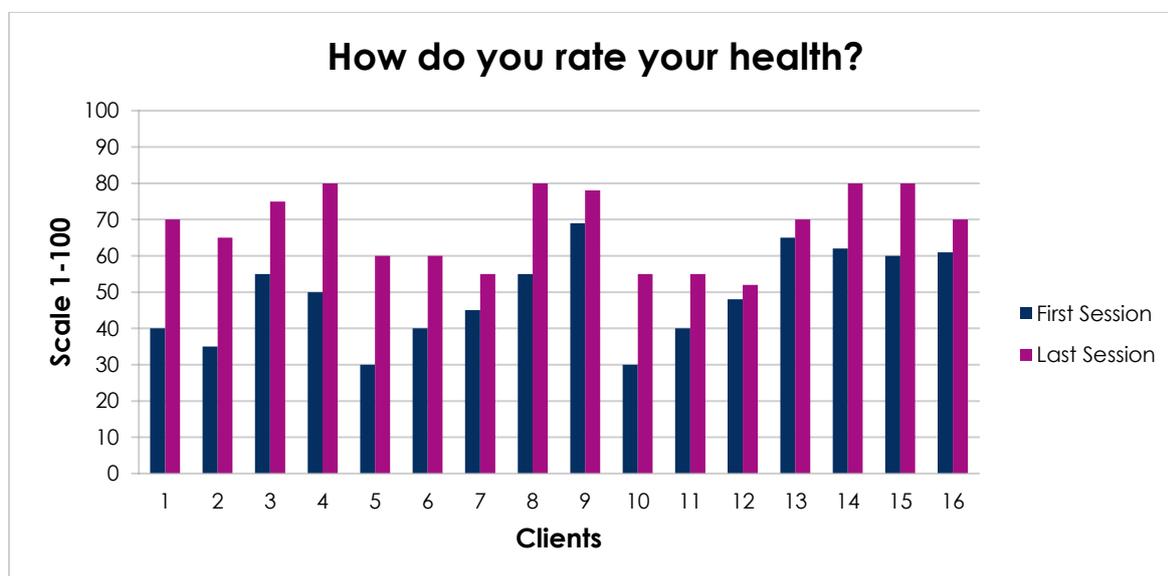
**Cost: £1500**

### Evaluation

We received feedback forms from 16 people, 8 men and 8 women. Their average age was 34 and ranged from 17-67. Their country of origin was: Ghana, Greece, Jamaica, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Uganda, UK, Zambia.

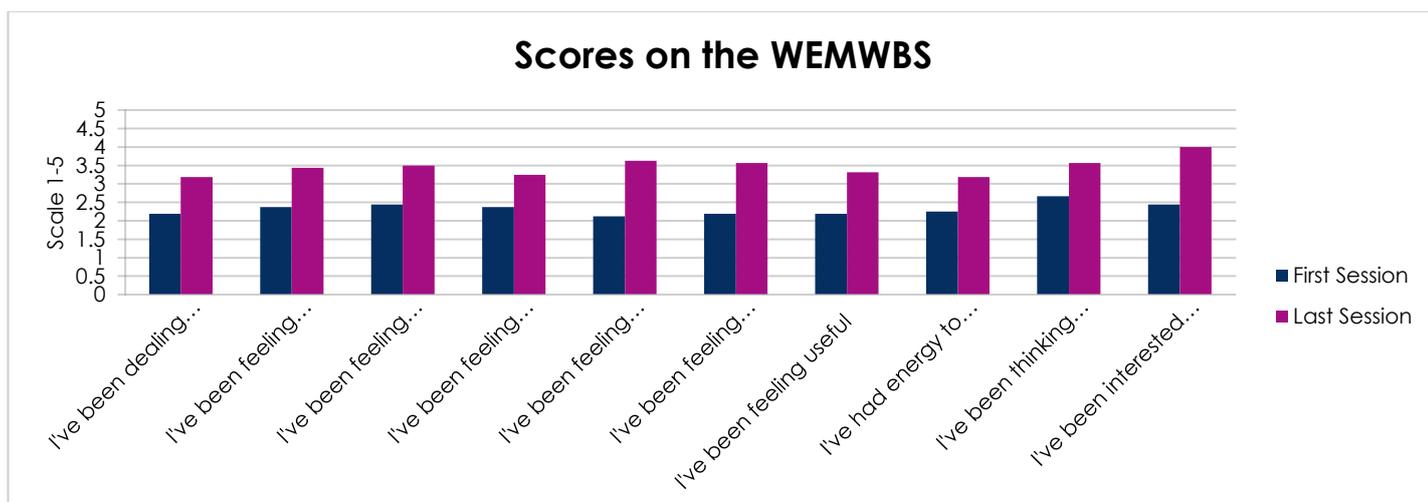
We didn't have the opportunity to visit the project, but the organisation sent us feedback from participants who said they enjoyed it and wanted the project to continue. They also wanted more time to discuss the films and to get to the bottom of the relevant mental health issues.

There was a real improvement in how people rated their health from an average of 49/100 to an average of 68/100.

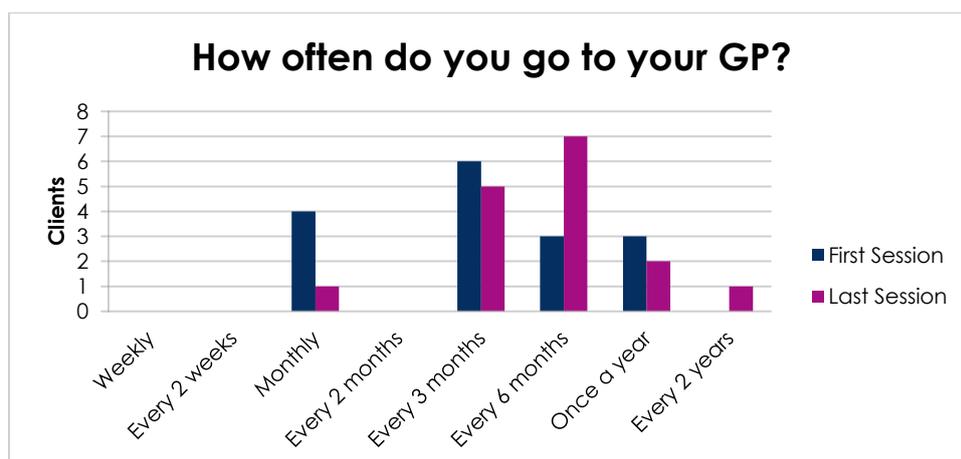


There was also a real improvement in their mental wellbeing scores from an average of 2.3/5 to an average of 3.5/5. In particular, on the item “I have been interested in new things” there was a change from an average of 2.4/5 to an average of 4/5, in “I've been feeling optimistic about the future” there was a change from an average

of 2.2/5 to an average of 3.6/5, and "I've been feeling relaxed" from an average of 2.1/5 to an average of 3.6/5.



This group slightly reduced their attendance at the GP. However, as this group were not attending their GP very frequently, so this is not as significant as in the other projects. In 6 months, this cohort would have visited the GP 23 times compared to 39 times prior to the project thus saving 16 appointments.



## Conclusion

The project made a real improvement to the participants' health and wellbeing. They enjoyed the project and made real improvements in their emotional wellbeing and in how healthy they felt. This is reflected partly in their reduced use of GP services, although this group of people were never very high users of GP services.

## ESOL classes by Queens Park Bangladesh Association

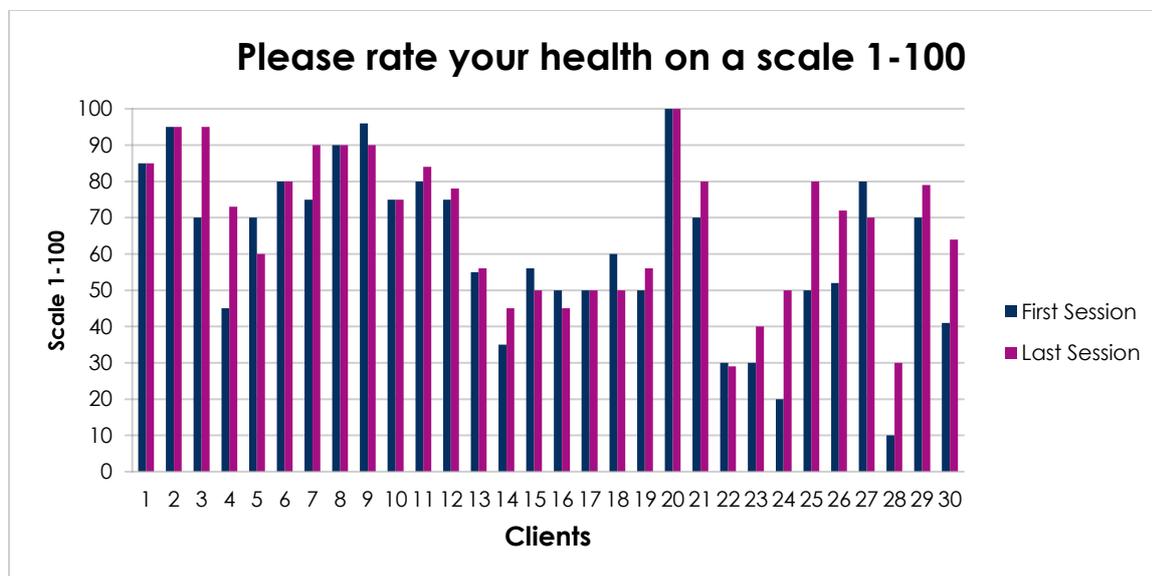
### Description of the project

An English Language class for 30 women from the Bangladeshi community. The class was offered for 14 weeks but the women attended an average of 8 sessions (ranging from 7-13). The average age of the women was 40 and ranged from 21-68.

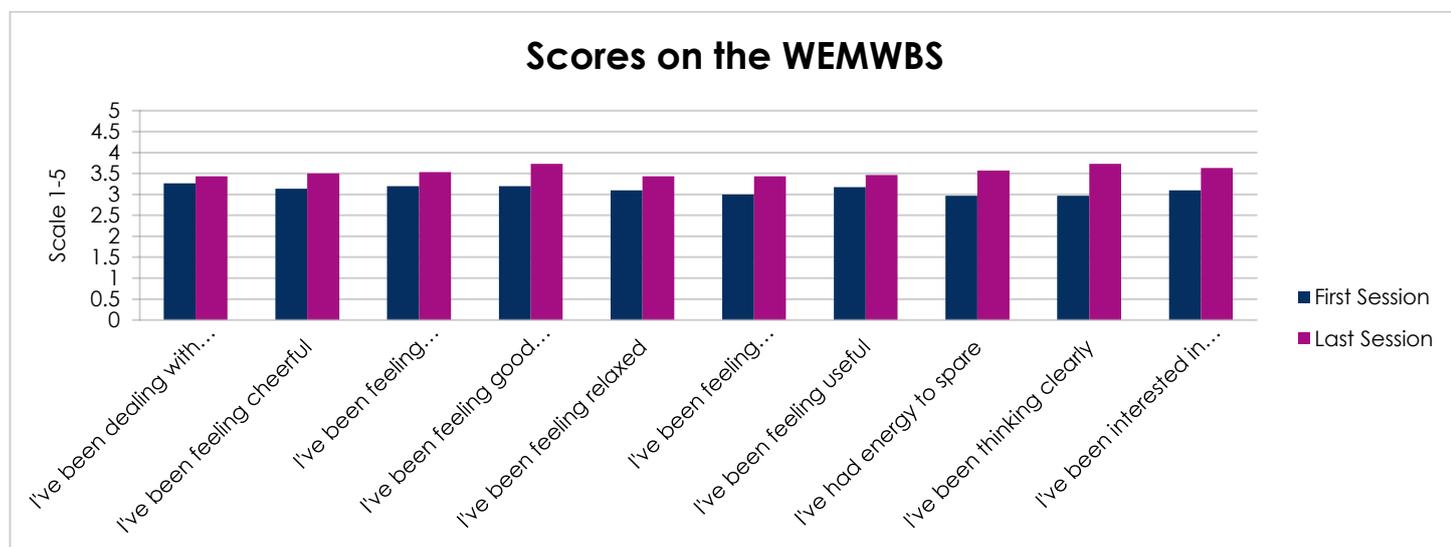
**Cost: £1452**

### Evaluation

The women rated a small improvement in their health from an average of 62/100 to an average of 68/100.



The women's emotional wellbeing also showed a moderate improvement from an average of 3.1/5 to an average of 3.5/5.



In terms of attending their GP, the project didn't really influence attendance. Out of 30 respondents 23 reported no change, 3 said that attended less often and 4 said that they attended more often.

### Conclusion

This project showed an improvement in women's mental wellbeing and their overall sense of health. The effects were small which may be because women didn't attend all the session but also because at the start of the project, they already had fairly high mental wellbeing and perceived themselves to be quite healthy.

## **Single day events**

Three organisations requested funding that covered daytrips or a social event. The trips were to Southend on sea, fruit picking on Hewitt's farm in Kent, and a shopping mall excursion in Essex and the social event was in Pimlico. While these trips were well attended, and feedback was positive, it was difficult to assess the impact on well-being as the organisations found it too difficult to do the monitoring forms and they may have been meaningless.

## **Conclusion**

The 5 projects evaluated here all improved their clients' mental wellbeing and perception of how healthy they were. Some projects also reduced the frequency by which their clients said they visited their GP. Improvements were greater in clients who initially rated their emotional wellbeing and their health the lowest.

We know that being physically active and having social contact are key to people staying healthy. These projects demonstrate that it's possible for small amounts of money to provide access to physical, social and educational activities to communities who would struggle to access or pay for these activities independently. They also show that the positive effects from accessing these activities are measurable and that therefore funding such activities can produce easily measurable outcomes.

## **Recommendation**

We know that it's important that the general public have access to affordable opportunities for physical, social and educational activities and that this is essential for preventing ill health. For people from BME communities, who are often 1<sup>st</sup> generation migrants on low incomes the easiest way for this to be achieved is through activities organised by local community charities. It is easy to establish such programmes through local organisations who can provide classes in settings that are easy for clients to access for small sums of money and who can record outcomes measuring improvement.



