

SPEAR

homelessness to independence



South West London Integrated Care System Richmond Health Inequalities Fund Report

MAY 2023

This is the evaluation report of SPEAR's Homeless Health Link Health and Wellbeing Days, delivered in Richmond between March and May 2023. This evaluation was undertaken by Claire Carter and Sarah Fishbourne of Impact Consultancy and Research.

“Wouldn't have bothered with my covid jab if I'd had to make an appointment for it...it made it a lot simpler...with the doctor being there it is much easier to say can I see you for 5...rather than making an appointment and then remembering what you have made the appointment about.”

SPEAR client



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We held **2**
Health and Wellbeing Days.



134
attendees
attended our
Health and Wellbeing Days.



21
health & wellbeing
agencies took part
in the events.

84%
of those surveyed
said that the
health days
were good or excellent.

77%
of those surveyed
said they **know**
more about health services as a result
of attending a
health day.

91%
of those surveyed
said that they
felt more confident about
how to access
a **GP, dentist**
or therapeutic
support.

81%
of those surveyed
said that they felt
they would be
better able to
manage their
own health as a
result of attending
the Health and
Wellbeing Day.

87%
of agencies felt
the health and
wellbeing days
were very effective
or effective at
informing people
about what health
services are available.

“I think what you are doing is fantastic and you have the right mix of agencies. I would say we need more of this, on a more regular basis, as there is a great need.”

Health agency at a Health and Wellbeing day

1. Introduction

In February 2023 SPEAR was awarded £19,640 from the South West London Integrated Care System (SWL ICS) to deliver two Health and Wellbeing Days to those experiencing homelessness in the London borough of Richmond. The aim of the project was to improve rough sleeper's access and engagement with primary healthcare services over the winter months.

2. Background & Context

This project was developed in response to the health inequalities facing those who are experiencing homelessness in South West London. It is well established that rough sleepers are more likely to have poorer physical and mental health than the general population. Their health needs are more likely to be chronic, multiple and complex, which can reduce their life expectancy by 30 years. Despite these inequalities, people who are experiencing homelessness also face a number of barriers to accessing healthcare services, such as:

Address - many people assume you need a fixed address for services, when in fact you don't. For those who do get an appointment, there are the practicalities of where to send letters for appointments and reminders.

Money - no phone credit to make appointment, no travel money to get there, or no access to internet.



Information - lack of accessible information to find out how to get support, especially during the pandemic, as well as lack of digital and literacy skills to access information.



Confidence - many people feel they don't deserve support or care, and these negative feelings can stop them seeking the services available to them. Low self-worth and isolation also mean people may have a fear of bad news, so they simply avoid healthcare. They don't have the mental strength to face difficult health issues, or the love and support that friends and family can offer.



Trust - previous negative experiences with institutions and professionals (some since childhood) are a common barrier to seeking help.



This project built upon SPEAR's established Homeless Health Link service, which seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of those experiencing homelessness in South West London. This service connects rough sleepers to local healthcare services, provides patient advocacy and raises awareness of the barriers that rough sleepers face with health professionals. This project also builds upon SPEAR's partnership with the NHS Primary Care Team, who together piloted drop-in Health and Wellbeing Days in 2020/21. These days aimed to increase Covid-19 vaccine uptake, reduce vaccine hesitancy and address other health inequalities in rough

sleepers and those seeking asylum in South West London. These days were well attended with over 60 visitors and were also received by key health partners.

The primary focus of this project was to provide access to local healthcare services for rough sleepers in the London boroughs of Wandsworth and Merton during the winter months of 2022/2023. Winter can be an exceptionally challenging time for rough sleepers, with the cold temperatures causing and exacerbating health conditions. In addition, the NHS faces greater pressures in the winter, with an increase in seasonal illnesses and conditions impacted by the cold weather.

Therefore, this project sought to reduce the burden on the NHS over the winter, by empowering rough sleepers to access and engage with healthcare services, so they can begin to address long-standing health conditions, conditions in their early stages or even those yet to be identified.

3. Project outcomes

The four outcomes that the project intended to achieve were:

1. People experiencing homelessness will report **feeling better informed about available health services**.
2. People experiencing homelessness will have a **greater understanding of how to access primary healthcare services**.
3. People experiencing homelessness report **improved confidence in accessing primary healthcare services**.
4. People experiencing homelessness experience a **positive experience from engaging with healthcare services** at our Health and Wellbeing Days.



4. Project Activity

Health Inequalities funding was received to support the following activity:

MONTHLY COMMUNITY-BASED, DROP-IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING DAYS.

Two Health and Wellbeing Days were held in April and May 2023. A breakdown of the numbers and location of the events is provided below. SPEAR's Health and Wellbeing Days bring together health and wellbeing organisations and services within one community venue for increased accessibility by people experiencing homelessness, former rough sleepers or otherwise vulnerable individuals. The health days offer health checks and advice on other preventative programmes, seasonal vaccinations and access to other health services, such as GP, mental health support and dentistry advice. In addition, they offer holistic services, such as haircuts, hot meals and warm clothing.

Health checks can include screening for the main blood borne viruses, TB, sexually transmitted infections, diabetes, heart disease, breast cancer and liver disease. Attendees also have access to a GP and information and advice on dental health, addiction, mental health and bowel screening, amongst others.

The Health and Wellbeing Days are delivered in collaboration with SPEAR's existing partners within the South West London Integrated Care System and include primary and secondary health and social care providers. In addition, the days are attended by SPEAR's rough sleeper outreach teams. A full list of the



partners in attendance at the events is attached as Appendix A.

The Health and Wellbeing Days are supported by a team of local volunteers, including those who run the clothing pop-up, barbers and a volunteer GP, who specialises in mental health.

In addition to the health-services on offer, clients are offered:

- A hot breakfast for those who visited early and a hot lunch.
- Gift bags for visitors, which include toiletries (toothpaste, toothbrush, shower gel etc), food vouchers and food items, which are portable, ready to eat and nutritious, such as self-heating meals.
- Access to translators; Ukrainian and Polish.

The events were held at community-based venues, one of which runs daily drop-in support sessions for rough sleepers. Flyers advertising the events were distributed via the venues and a wide range of other local outlets such as supermarkets, charity shops, GP surgeries and chemists and were translated into Ukrainian and Polish in order to attract rough sleepers from the local migrant population.

5. Evaluation methodology

Client data

People attending the Health and Wellbeing Days were asked to provide feedback on the event and to answer some survey questions relating to the project outcomes. Responses to the questions were recorded by SPEAR staff on tablets and subsequently inputted onto SPEAR's client management database. The original plan was for the staff member on the registration desk to ask people to complete the survey when they collected their goody-bag on leaving the event. However, due to the volume of people in attendance a decision was made to ask multiple SPEAR staff to support the collection of feedback from people during the event itself. Stickers were given to people once they had given feedback to help prevent the collection of duplicate data.

Whilst data was not collected from every attendee, half of those attending completed a survey. A copy of the survey is attached as Appendix B. SPEAR also recorded the number of people

in attendance and whether they were existing SPEAR clients or unknown to SPEAR.

Agency data

All agencies in attendance at the health days were asked to record the number of clients they saw and the nature of the interaction e.g. advice on giving up smoking, flu vaccination. Agencies were also asked to complete a feedback form (Appendix C) to gather agencies perception on the extent to which the health days were effective in achieving the project outcomes and any suggestions about how the events could be improved.

Handling & interpreting the data

In order to ensure that the data collected via the surveys was uniform and ready for analysis, a process of data cleansing was undertaken. This ensured that all duplicate entries collected at the same event and erroneous comments or data were removed from the dataset.

All the statistics contained within this report are based on either the 67 completed surveys collected at the Health and Wellbeing Days or the 24 agency feedback forms. Statistics where appropriate are shown first as a percentage and then as the number of individuals that selected that response. It is not possible to determine how many repeat attendees completed surveys and as such this caveat should be taken into account when reviewing the statistics. Where numbers relating to responses do not equate to the total number of completed surveys this is due to a number of nil responses.



EVALUATION CONCLUDES:

- 1 Health and wellbeing days provide rough sleepers with a valuable opportunity to access health and wellbeing services in an accessible and non-judgemental setting.
- 2 The partnership approach combined with the informal drop-in nature actively encourages people to address health concerns that would otherwise go unaddressed.
- 3 Health and wellbeing days remove barriers that can prohibit and discourage rough sleepers from accessing primary healthcare services and have helped to increase their confidence and 'know how' in accessing local services.
- 4 These events provide an essential alternative to traditional healthcare services that demand a certain degree of permanency, planning and provision.

6. Evaluation findings

Meeting project outcomes

The following evaluation data collected at the Health and Wellbeing Days suggests that the outcomes were met by the project.

- 1 People experiencing homelessness will report feeling better informed about available health services.
 - 77% of people completing a feedback form said that they know more about health services as a result of attending a health day.
 - 2 People experiencing homelessness will have a greater understanding of how to access primary healthcare services.¹
 - 3 People experiencing homelessness report improved confidence in accessing primary healthcare services.
- 91% of people completing a feedback form said that they felt more confident about how to access a GP, dentist or therapeutic support.
 - 4 People experiencing homelessness experience a positive experience from engaging with healthcare services at our Health and Wellbeing Days.
 - 84% of people completing a feedback form said that the health days were 'good' or 'excellent'.

These findings demonstrate that the events are for many an effective way of increasing confidence and understanding in how to access primary healthcare services. Feedback also suggests that access to follow-up support plays a key role in helping people to take action to address health issues post the event.

1 To simplify the Health and Wellbeing Day survey the questions relating to outcomes 2 & 3 were combined and the intention was for outcome two to be explored through surveys with those that received one-to-one follow-up support. The practicalities of the support resulted in the follow-up support survey not being implemented. In future in order for this outcome to be evidenced across the project SPEAR should add in a separate question to measure understanding about how to access primary healthcare services.

7. Health and Wellbeing Days

Both of the Health and Wellbeing Days were well attended with 134 people attending in total. Feedback was collected from 67 of the attendees. Of these, 50 had attended a previous Health and Wellbeing Day and 17 were attending a Health and Wellbeing Day for the first time. These attendance figures highlight the value of these types of events in reaching people who may not have an existing relationship with local support services either through choice or circumstance. It also reinforces the need to hold these types of events on a regular basis in order to provide ongoing opportunities for people to address their health needs and access related services.

Due to how the data was collected it is not possible to determine how many unique pieces of feedback were collected across both the events.

The days were positively received with 84% (56) of those surveyed rating the day as excellent or good (19 stated it as

“**EVERYTHING IS FOCUSED ON THE USER WHICH IS GREAT, GREAT ACCESS TO SERVICES THAT DIDN'T INITIALLY COME HERE, GREAT FOR MENTAL HEALTH.**”
Event attendee

excellent and 37 stated it as good). 10 said it was OK and 1 said it was poor. This demonstrates that overall most people surveyed had a positive experience from engaging with healthcare services at the Health and Wellbeing Days.

In order to ascertain what had been the driver for people to attend the event and what their specific health support needs were, people were asked, as part of the survey, to identify what they were hoping to get support with at the event.

Significantly people were more likely to reference a non-health specific e.g.,





access to clothes or food when asked what they required help with. This may be due to people feeling uncomfortable or embarrassed about talking about their health needs. The most commonly referenced 'other' services, or reason for attending, were access to the clothes project, food, the barber, advice and information relating to accommodation and for social interaction.

Where people did specify a health concern the most common issues that attendees reported as needing help with were mental health (4), teeth (4).

77% of survey respondents said they knew more about health services available as a result of attending; 23 said 'a lot', 30 said 'a bit', 2 said 'not sure' and 11 said 'no' and there was 1 nil response.

91% (61) of attendees stated they felt more confident about how they could get to see a GP, dentist or access therapeutic support as a result of attending the Health and Wellbeing Day. 4 said they did not feel more confident and 1 said they 'didn't know' and there was 1 nil response.

81% (54) said they felt they would be better able to manage their own health as a result of attending the Health and Wellbeing Day. 8 said they would not and 5 said they 'didn't know'. The most common reasons why people felt that they wouldn't be able to manage their own health better were; 'poor mental health' (14), and 'addiction' (5). 18 people said that nothing would prevent them from managing their own health.

Attendees were asked what would help them to manage their health. The majority of respondents stated that they either were already being helped or did not need further help. Where people did specify a need for support 7 people said help with accommodation and 5 said more health days. Whilst other responses were given these were the most commonly cited.

When asked how the Health and Wellbeing Days could be improved 48% (32) responded 'nothing'. Those that did have suggestions were most likely to reference the need for more agencies (8).

8. Agency feedback

21 different agencies took part in the Health and Wellbeing Days. 12 agencies attended the first day and 15 attended the second day. 24 feedback forms were completed across the two events. A copy of the feedback form is attached as Appendix C. 21 of those surveyed felt the event was very effective or effective at informing people about what health services are available to rough sleepers (13 very effective and 8 effective). Of the remaining agencies 3 felt it was quite effective.

When asked about their perception of how effective agencies felt the events were at giving people the confidence to access healthcare services independently, 21 of those surveyed felt the event was very effective or effective (7 very effective and 14 effective). 2 agencies felt they were quite effective, and 1 felt they were unsure.

Agencies were also asked how effective they felt the events were at helping people to manage their own health. 20 of those surveyed felt the event was either very effective or effective at informing people about what health services are available to rough sleepers (6 agencies very effective and 14 felt it was effective). Of the remaining agencies 2 felt it was quite effective and 2 were unsure.

Agencies observed that attendees most commonly sought help in relation to mental health support (including help to address isolation) and signposting to other sources of support.

The response from agencies was very positive with people seeing the value of organisations coming together in one place to support people. There were also a number of comments about how the event might benefit from being branded as a 'Health, wellbeing and social care event' given that the offer, whilst predominantly focused on health services, was wider than that.

In terms of what could be done to improve the event the most common response was to provide access to quiet private space where people could talk to agencies confidentially. Other suggestions for improving the event included:

- Providing attendees with some information about what agencies were in attendance and what support they could offer people.
- Adopting a 'speed dating' format to encourage people to engage with more agencies.
- Providing advice on healthy eating and diabetes support.
- Providing a podiatrist.



"GREAT NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY FOR REFERRAL ROUTES."

Health agency at a Health & Wellbeing day

9. Areas for development

The following section identifies aspects of the project that would benefit from some development or further consideration in order to; increase the impact for beneficiaries or provide more insight that will strengthen the evidence base that underpins the project. The suggested areas are grouped into 'improving project delivery' and 'improving data collection.'

1. Explore options for providing access to podiatry services and advice on healthy eating and diabetes support as part of the standard Health and Wellbeing Day offer.
2. Explore ways to increase levels of awareness and engagement with the range of services on offer at the events e.g. a 'speed dating' format.
3. Introduce systems that ensure equality of access to the Clothing Project provided at the events.
4. Review how feedback is collected at the events and introduce systems to increase the numbers of attendees providing feedback.
5. Introduce the following additional questions in the attendee survey to provide further valuable insight:
 - Why did you rate the event as you did?
 - What would help / encourage you to take advantage of the services on offer?
 - After today do you have a better understanding about how to access primary healthcare services.
6. Undertake some qualitative evaluation with agencies in order to gain deeper insight into their perspectives on the project's impact.
7. Find alternative venues that can provide access to private spaces to facilitate confidential conversations.
8. Provide attendees with some information about what agencies were in attendance and what support they could offer people.



Conclusion

It is evident from the feedback and data collected that SPEAR's Health and Wellbeing Days provide rough sleepers and other vulnerable individuals with a **valuable opportunity to access health and wellbeing services in an accessible and non-judgemental setting.**

In addition, the multi-agency approach combined with the informal drop-in nature of these events **actively encourages people to address health concerns that would otherwise go unaddressed.**

Whilst the removal of barriers that prohibit and discourage rough sleepers from accessing primary healthcare services has helped to increase people's confidence and 'know how' in accessing these services it is clear that the chaotic and unstable nature of many rough sleepers' lifestyles combined with multiple complex needs presents a significant barrier to them accessing traditional healthcare services located in clinical settings.

As such these types of events provide an essential alternative to traditional healthcare services that demand a certain degree of permanency, planning and provision.

Beyond access to healthcare the events also play an important role in improving people's sense of wellbeing and self-worth through the provision of barber services and the clothing project.



Based on the findings of this report, SPEAR should now consider how it can strengthen and enhance the offer provided through these days and continue to develop its understanding about how it can maximise the impact of the events and collect stories that illustrate the difference that this service makes to the people it supports.

These findings should then be shared with key policy makers and commissioners to ensure that that the health needs and challenges of some of the most vulnerable members of society are taken into account when planning and resourcing local health services.



Appendix A

HEALTHCARE & SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED AT THE SPEAR HEALTH AND WELLBEING DAYS

- Covid-19 and flu vaccinations
- St George's University Hospital NHS provided liver scanning & blood borne virus testing
- GP volunteer
- Healthwatch Richmond
- Kings College Dental Institute
- Refuge
- Spectra London
- DWP
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Fulham FC Foundation
- Volunteer barber
- SPEAR rough sleeper outreach teams
- Kingston Interpreting Service
- Dose of Nature
- NHS South West London ICB
- The Vineyard Community Centre
- The Mulberry Centre
- Green Gym
- Richmond Mind
- Ruils Social Prescribing
- Table of Hope

Appendix B

NUMBER OF AGENCY INTERACTIONS

The following table shows a breakdown by intervention of the number of attendees that received support.

	26.04.23 Richmond	18.05.23 Richmond	Total
Numbers who received a vaccination (flu, Covid)	-	4	4
Numbers who received a health check/test (liver scan, BBV test, breast screening)	-	9	9
Numbers who had a haircut	15	24	39
Numbers who accessed GP	16	4	20
Numbers who accessed mental health support	19	38	57
Numbers who accessed the optician	-	-	0
Numbers who sought dentistry advice	-	12	12
Numbers who accessed the clothing project	65	15	80
Numbers who were offered and engaged with support from Health Link workers	65	69	134

Please note: The Covid-19 team were unable to attend the first Richmond event. The second event saw low vaccination numbers due to Covid-19 vaccinations now only available for those over 75 years (plus those under 18, those pregnant).

The NHS had issues with their mobile van, so did not attend the first Richmond event.

We were able to offer more haircuts than on previous health days, as we had two barbers in attendance at both events.

The optician was not able to attend the Richmond events.

The volunteer GP was unable to attend the second Richmond event and the replacement GP was only able to attend for a short period of time.

Appendix C

HEALTH AND WELLBEING DAY CLIENT SURVEY

Core Questions

- Client Name
- In person or follow up call (tick box options)
- If possible identify the intervention (Health and Wellbeing Days, one to one health support, one to one digital drop-in and digital workshop) the user is then routed to the relevant questions for that intervention.
- Date
- Part of DI cohort (yes / no / tick box)

SPEAR Health & Wellbeing Day	Drop down options
<p>1. How did it go?</p>	<p>Poor / OK / good / excellent / not sure</p>
<p>2. What was it you were hoping to get help with today?</p>	<p>Teeth Feet Mental Health Heart Circulation Respiratory Other (please specify)</p>
<p>3. Do you feel like you know more about what health services are available?</p>	<p>No / A bit / A lot / Not sure</p>
<p>4. Do you feel confident that you know how you can get to see a GP / Dentist / therapeutic support?</p>	<p>Yes / No / Don't know</p>
<p>5. After today, do you feel like you will be able to manage your own health better?</p>	<p>Yes / No / Don't know</p>
<p>6. What might stop you from managing your own health? How can we help / support you?</p>	
<p>7. How could we improve these days?</p>	
<p>8. Any observations / comments / quotes</p>	

Appendix D



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SPEAR HEALTH & WELLBEING DAYS – AGENCY FEEDBACK

<p>Date</p>	<p>Agency name:</p>
<p>Please can you take a moment to answers these questions and give us your feedback so we can help to improve these events. Many thanks</p>	
<p>1 Overall, how effective do you think these events are at informing people about what health services are available to them? <i>(please circle)</i>.</p> <p>Very effective Effective Quite effective Not effective Unsure</p>	
<p>2 Overall, how effective do you think these events are at giving people the confidence to access health services independently? <i>(please circle)</i>.</p> <p>Very effective Effective Quite effective Not effective Unsure</p>	
<p>3 Overall, how effective do you think these events are at helping people to manage their own health better? <i>(please circle)</i>.</p> <p>Very effective Effective Quite effective Not effective Unsure</p>	
<p>Are there any changes we could make that would improve these days for clients or agencies?</p>	
<p>How many people did you engage with today?</p>	<p>What were the most common concerns raised today?</p>
<p>Any other comments?</p>	



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