

Towards Inclusive Healthcare: Rethinking mental health services for Black African and Caribbean communities in Southwark

This report looks at how Black African and Caribbean communities in Southwark view mental health services.

The research involved **79 participants**, and had two main parts:

- **General Opinions:** Surveys and focus groups gathered broad views on mental health services.
- **Focus on Black Men:** Specific focus groups and interviews explored Black men's views on non-clinical mental health support.

What did we learn?

1. Barriers to support

Stigma, distrust of services, and a lack of awareness about available support, especially for preventive care, were major obstacles. Black men faced the greatest challenges in accessing support due to these barriers.



2. Isolation is a major factor

Isolation was a key contributor to poor mental health among Black men. Many use **informal coping methods**, such as spending time with friends or listening to music, rather than seeking help through mental health services.



3. Interest in non-clinical support

Participants showed a strong interest in **non-clinical support options** like peer groups, exercise, and creative activities. However, a lack of information about how to access these services continues to be an issue.



What can be done?

Community-based services were seen as essential for reducing stigma and providing care that feels safe and inclusive. For example, **shared experience between service providers and users** can make people feel more comfortable.

“Offer more talking therapy and small community groups, not just medication to Black people. Work with organisations who specialise with Black people to find the right approach.”

-Participant

Recommendations

1. Provide **long-term funding** for community-based mental health services.
2. Create **projects aimed at preventing** mental health issues for Black men, e.g. through arts, exercise and wellbeing activities.
3. Offer **training and support** to community groups and local leaders, so they can help people in community spaces to access mental health support.
4. Encourage different organisations, like the NHS, Social Care and community groups, to **work together** to make sure people get the help they need.
5. Make sure all mental health services **follow the Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework** (PCREF) and let communities know how this has improved patient experience.
6. Organise a **'Taster Day' event** to showcase community services, so people can learn more about what support is available.
7. Work with community-based services to understand what support they might need, and **share knowledge** about how best to support Black communities with their mental health.
8. Launch a **mental health awareness campaign** focused on Black men, using accessible language and highlighting examples of Black men who have had good experiences using mental health services.

