



Diabetes information and research event

Centrecom Community Centre
7th September 2024

Scope

In collaboration with [Health Innovation East \(HIE\)](#) and the [National Institute for Health and Care Research \(NIHR\)](#), [Healthwatch Milton Keynes \(HWMK\)](#) organised a Diabetes Information and Research event. Funded by BLMK Integrated Care Board (ICB) Research Engagement Network (REN)

Four events were held in BLMK The objectives of the events in were to increase knowledge and participation by communities in research, with a focus on Type 2 diabetes in minority ethnicity groups.

The high level aim of the REN programme is to increase diversity in research participation. This is to ultimately ensure that research can reduce health inequalities. The objectives are:

- Q Growth of local research engagement networks with underserved communities
- Q Embed consideration of diversity in research within Integrated Care Systems (ICS) operations/governance structures
- Q Increase opportunities and inclusivity for people from underserved communities to take part in research

The event covered:

- Q Provision of diabetes education
- Q Provision of information of what research is
- Q Provision of information about how participants can get involved
- Q Overview of current diabetes research
- Q Capture interest from attendees in becoming Diabetes Research Champions in the future
- Q Demonstrate active Diabetes Research Champions and showcase their experiences.

Planning

Event planning commenced in June 2024 where Healthwatch Milton Keynes staff gathered to exchange ideas on where and who the event should be targeted at and to strategise on publicity and promotion. In the lead-up to the event, regular meetings took place with Healthwatch colleagues from Bedfordshire, Luton, and Milton Keynes who were all organising similar events in their respective areas. Collaboration also included representatives from Health Innovation East, [Diabetes UK](#) and the National Institute for Health & Care Research to provide progress updates.

The event was aimed at Milton Keynes' Asian and Black African & Caribbean communities and was held in a central location for ease of access.

Centrecom Community Centre in Central Milton Keynes was chosen to host, the venue offers ample space and excellent facilities for disabled access and parking. Centrecom provided us with tables and chairs, internet access, PA system and use of the kitchen on site.

Promotion

We promoted the event widely across Milton Keynes through various social media platforms, including Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, this included a paid 'boost' which gained good traction on the week of the event. Flyers were distributed to key stakeholders for sharing through their communication channels via email.

Additionally, communications of the event were circulated in the Primary Care Briefing and were shared with local Patient Participation Groups.

Those who wished to attend the event were encouraged to book via the QR code which was visible on the event flyer. This would take you to the booking page on HWMK's website.

Event poster



Research ready focus group



Event flyer

As part of our core engagement activities here at Healthwatch Milton Keynes, we put on monthly focus groups, each with a particular theme.

On 30th August 2024, our focus was on research in the community. This was an online session which included a presentation from HWMK on what we mean by research, opportunities and any barriers people may encounter when joining programmes.

Dr. Oliver Mytton, who heads up the ACTIVATE study at MKUH joined us to give a presentation on the study and how those who attended could access it. The ACTIVATE study will test the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the Milton Keynes Activity Reward Programme, which combines wearable technology and financial incentives, to help people with type 2 diabetes be more physically active as a way of improving their health.

This focus group acted a great opportunity for us to help promote and encourage those at the session to attend the Diabetes information and research event a week later.

When discussing research, attendees told us:



I am aware of many research programmes but not sure how to access them.



If I knew how to better manage, that would lower the burden I put on the NHS. More research could really help this.



I have enquired about research opportunities but GPs do not know where or when they are happening.



Research ready focus group

As the session moved on, we discussed some of the barriers people could potentially face when getting into research:



People simply don't know what's about. There doesn't seem to be much in the way of comms campaigns.



Time and costs could be a potential factor for people.



Associated risks is a massive reason why many people don't wish participate in research. You only ever hear when I trial has gone wrong and the negative outcomes.



People's preconceptions of what data is going to be used for.



We finally spoke out what research opportunities you would like to see and what you are most likely to get involved with. Participants spoke of being involved in a study for the individual and not an average and there being too many variables with an average. They also spoke on the inclusion of ACTIVATE study in the session was a big selling point as they wished to know more and get into the programme.

All attendees of the focus group came to and participated in the Diabetes information and research event.

Speakers

The event itself, was similar to a seminar with guest speakers and an additional marketplace for service providers to interact with attendees throughout the session. Each gave a 15-20 minute presentation and then opened for questions.

Three speakers who presented at the event:

- 🕒 Donna Coe - Community Engagement Manager, Patient & Public Involvement, NIHR.
- 🕒 Abdul Rais - Community Champion, Diabetes UK.
- 🕒 Dr. Suri Dhanoa - Clinical Lead, [MKUH Diabetic Eye Screening Programme](#).

Donna Coe discussing how you can be part of health and care research with an explanation of how research can help to better treat conditions. Donna spoke on how to get involved in diabetes studies.



Abdul Rais gave an overview from his perspective with lived experience of type 2 diabetes. He spoke about how he found out and the through the journey it has lead him on to now be a Community Champion with Diabetes UK.

Dr. Suri Dhanoa's presentation gained the most interaction from attendees as she spoke about the eye screening process and shared detailed slides. She also spoke about the [ACTIVATE study](#) which Oliver Mytton had discussed at the focus group session a week earlier.



Providers

Six service providers were present in the marketplace area to offer information, advice and to discuss research opportunities in-between speakers:

- Q [National Institute for Health & Care Research](#)
- Q [Milton Keynes University Hospital Research & Development Team](#)
- Q [Public Health Outreach Team](#)
- Q [Diabetes UK](#)
- Q [Milton Keynes University Hospital Eye Screening](#)
- Q [Diabetes UK - Milton Keynes](#)



Photos:

Left - members of Diabetes UK and Diabetes UK MK.

Bottom left - market place space during one of the speakers.

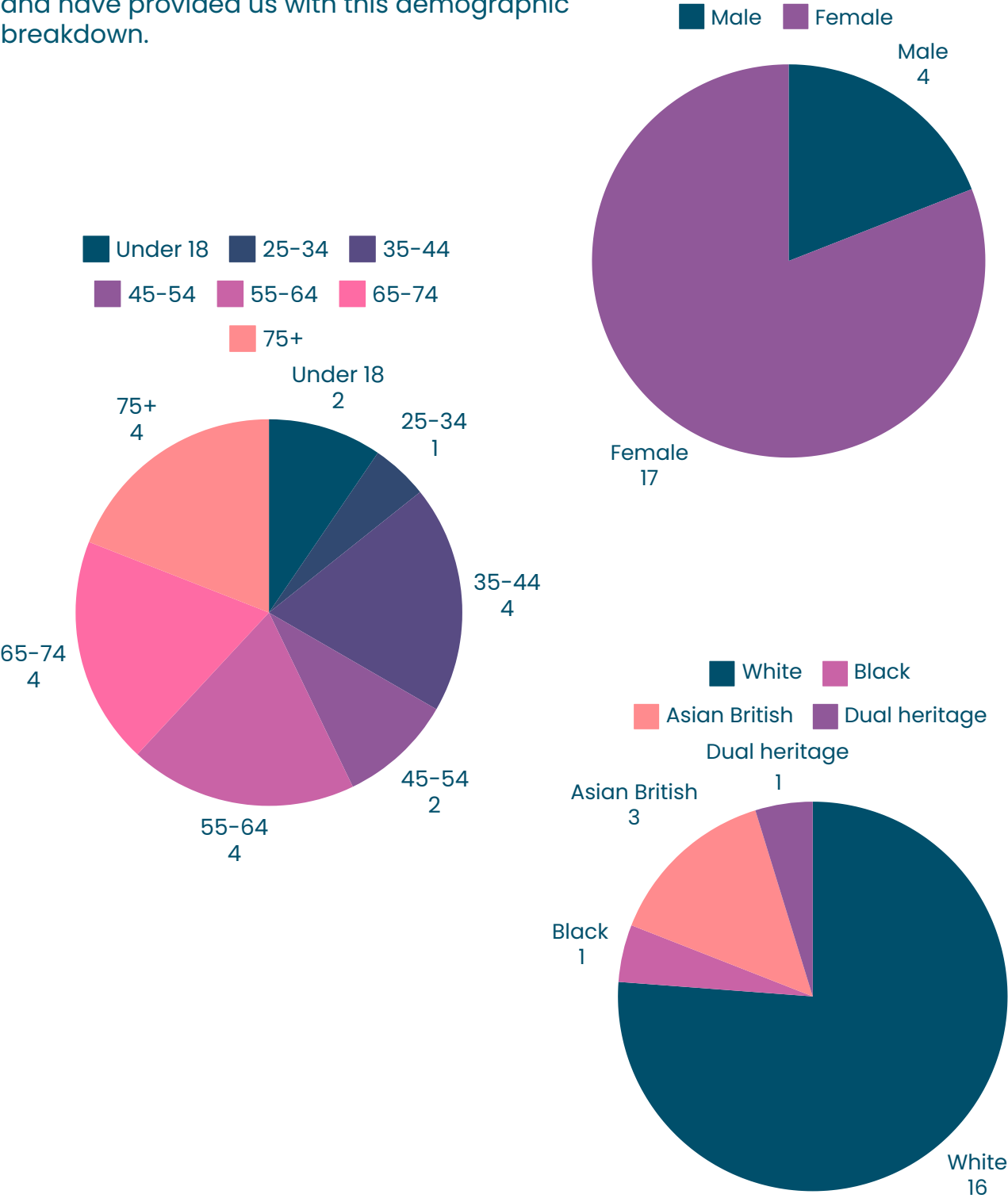
Below - Attendees engaging with providers during lunch.



Attendance

21 attendees were present on the event with the majority having booked through HWMK’s website.

Health Innovation East worked with HWMK to register attendees as they entered the event and have provided us with this demographic breakdown.



Translation & interpreters

As the event was aimed at ethnic diverse communities, we had secured the services of British Sign Language (BSL) interpreters. Both Abdul Rais and a member of the Diabetes UK team were both fluent in many South Asian languages and dialects.

Two deaf people booked onto the event via our website. The BSL interpreters signed throughout the presentations and also made themselves available while the attendees were in conversation with providers in the marketplace.



Diabetes friendly lunch

Lunch was provided to attendees in between the second and third speaker. We had secured the services of local nutritionist Andrea Stelluto who provided a wide range of meat, vegetarian and vegan dishes, all of which were gluten free.



A sugar free dessert was also served by Andrea at the end of the session to take away.

Attendees were extremely happy with the meals and almost everyone who we have been in touch with after the event gave wonderful feedback.

Health Innovation East survey

Health Innovation East (HIE) conducted a survey towards the conclusion of the event. The aim of this survey was to gather immediate feedback, as the event is part of a broader initiative to encourage greater participation in research, especially among groups that are often underrepresented.

Participation in the survey was voluntary, and every opinion was valued, contributing to improvements for future events.

All responses were completely anonymous. HIE provided the data for all four Healthwatch events as part of an evaluation report that will be made publicly available. They assured attendees that those who completed the survey would remain unidentifiable in any published free text within the report. 71% of attendees at the Milton Keynes event completed the survey.

The following data is aggregated across attendees at those events (125).

How did attendees find out about the events?

Responses to the survey suggest that 57 (39%) people found out about the event through an existing community event/ongoing activity, this is likely due to the Champion's delivering their events at their existing community wellbeing sessions. There were 36 other responses, of which 18 said they had found out about the event via their GP Practice/PCN, 7 via their local Healthwatch, 3 via the Temple, 1 via a Coproduction Coordinator, 1 via the Next-door Neighbour App, 1 via Luton & Dunstable Hospital staff media and for the remaining 5 no response was given.

Community interest in health and care research and intention to participate.

What level of understanding and interest do attendees have in research following the events?

Out of a total of 79 responses, eighty-four percent of people who attended an event said that they understood what health and care research is, with 81% knowing how to get involved and 87% understanding what it means to take part. However, only 77% well understood the opportunities to take part in diabetes research in their local area – although this is in line with the limited opportunities for participation at present.

The following provides an indication of the attendee's interest in taking part in diabetes health and care research and intent to join the Be Part of Research Registry.

There were 84 responses to this question: 51% intended to express an interest and 42% intended to join the Be Part of Research Registry, suggesting the event was successful in raising awareness and encouraging involvement in diabetes research.

Barriers to participation in diabetes research for underserved communities We asked event attendees:

What might prevent them from participating in diabetes health and care research?

There were 98 responses to this question and respondents were asked to select all reasons that applied. The following graph provides an overview of the barriers to participation in diabetes research faced by underserved communities. The most common barriers identified were financial burden, work commitments and ability/willingness to travel. There were sixteen 'other' responses. When asked to provide more detail six said a lack of time, two said they had signed up to the register for other health conditions, one said they were anxious about what was involved, and one would like to see a more detailed explanations into the control group data collection.

The full report can be found at <https://healthinnovationeast.co.uk/>

Summary

In summary, the event successfully achieved all of its objectives. It facilitated the mapping of diabetes research and revealed gaps in research activity in the area, which is now being rectified. Additionally, it showed that creating Diabetes Research Champions is achievable. By connecting the project to a clinical area with a significant prevalence, it resonated well with local communities. The event also pinpointed obstacles to research participation within targeted communities and promoted health and care research opportunities to underserved groups in Milton Keynes.



healthwatch

Milton Keynes

Healthwatch Milton Keynes
Suite 113, Milton Keynes Business Centre
Foxhunter Drive
Linford Wood
Milton Keynes
MK14 6GD

www.healthwatchmiltonkeynes.co.uk
t: 01908 698800
e: info@healthwatchmiltonkeynes.co.uk
 [@Healthwatch_MK](https://www.instagram.com/Healthwatch_MK)
 [Facebook.com/HealthwatchMK](https://www.facebook.com/HealthwatchMK)