

2022-2025 HEALTH HAVEN PROGRAMME EVALUATION

*Supporting Camden residents living
with long-term health conditions*

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CASTLEHAVEN

heart of your community

Charity No: 295829 | Company No: 2069107

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About Health Haven



Health Haven is a free health and wellbeing programme run by the Castlehaven Community Association. Since April 2022, we've supported Camden residents living with long-term health conditions or disabilities. From yoga and Pilates to social clubs and cultural trips, we've created a space where people can improve their health, try new things, and connect with others who understand what it's like to manage ongoing health challenges.

What We Offer

- Exercise classes** (Pilates, Yoga & Mindfulness, Circuit Training, Tai Chi)
- Social groups** (Women's Club, Bengali Women's Club, Men's Club, Book Club)
- Creative activities** (Drama & Poetry Workshops, Community Cinema)
- Health support** (Health Talks, Cooking Classes, Weight Management group)
- Cultural trips** (Museum Visits, Gallery Tours, Local History Walks)

How Health Haven Started

Health Haven was developed through a partnership with the Prince of Wales GP Surgery, our nearest medical practice. Together, we identified gaps in local health services and created a programme focused on preventative and community-based support.

A Social Prescriber from the surgery worked at Castlehaven one day a week during the programme's first year, building strong connections between clinical and community-based care. Today, GPs and social prescribers across Camden regularly refer patients to Health Haven, while people can also join through self-referral or recommendations from friends.

The first year focused on establishing a consistent schedule of weekly and monthly activities, with participant feedback helping shape what we offer. We've built strong partnerships with organisations including the Working Men's College, British Library, British Museum, Islington Talking Therapies, Healthwatch, and UCLH.

These collaborations have enabled us to deliver specialist programmes like Mental Health First-Aid Training for Bengali Women, diabetic cooking courses, and creative health activities including local history walks and gallery visits.

With funding from Camden Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Friends of Gospel Oak, River of Hope, and the John McAlpine Fund, we've also pursued targeted funding for supplementary projects like social outings for older men and music therapy for people experiencing mental health challenges.



About This Report

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This report draws on three years of Health Haven data and member feedback collected between June and September 2025:

Membership data from 281 people who joined Health Haven between April 2022 and June 2025

Surveys from 40 active members, completed before joining and at least 6 months later

In-depth conversations with 10 people – including 4 members 2 member volunteers, 2 social prescribers, and 2 tutors

Creative feedback session where 8 members created art collages about their Health Haven experience

Our Members



281

Members have joined Health Haven since we launched in 2022. Our members come from across Camden and represent the diversity of our borough.

Members range from **18 to 85 years old**, with 2/3 being between

45-74

We support people of all backgrounds –

White British, Black, Asian and Mixed Ethnicities

We're reaching people who need us most...

1/3

Of members are **unemployed** due to **long-term sickness or disability**

30%

Were referred by either their **GP or a social prescriber**

1/3

Another 1/3 of members are **retired**, and therefore at risk of **social isolation**

78%

Of members report experiencing **2 or more long-term health conditions**

What Members Say



"Health Haven has helped me to make local connections... So now I've met people, I can go for coffee and things, which is really convenient".

"I think it gives me the routine of getting out of the house, meeting new people, doing things in a group. It's given me a lot of confidence."

"There are things that I didn't do that I now do comfortably."

"Sometimes you get up and think I can't be bothered, and you're aching and stiff, but you find that energy from somewhere, usually from one another."

"It's not only about physical health - it's really stimulating on every level. It looks to improve all aspects of your mind, body and soul."

"Everyone that runs the [Women's] group and all the staff are so approachable and welcoming. It's just nice to have that friendly face."

When we asked members to create art about their Health Haven experience, they filled their collages with **images of connection, growth, and transformation**. One member's collage included the words **"In Our Hands"** – capturing how members see themselves as central to what makes Health Haven special and unique.



Member collages from participatory art-based feedback session

The Difference Health Haven Makes



Better Physical Health

Members report noticeable improvements in their fitness, strength, and balance. Those managing chronic conditions such as arthritis or other mobility issues discover they can do more than they thought possible.

Improved Mental Wellbeing

When we surveyed members before and after joining Health Haven, they reported feeling significantly more optimistic about the future, more useful, and better able to think clearly. Many describe feeling less stressed and anxious after sessions.

Trying new activities builds confidence. Members talk about surprising themselves – going to museums they'd never have visited alone, traveling independently with more confidence, or simply realising "actually, I can do it."

Routine and Purpose

Regular sessions provide structure and something to look forward to – especially important after big life changes like the pandemic, retirement, or stopping being a carer.

Connection and Friendship

Perhaps most powerfully, Health Haven creates lasting connections and friendships. Members meet for coffee between sessions, stay connected via WhatsApp groups, and gather for picnics and celebrations.



What Makes Health Haven Work



It's Free

This matters enormously. Gym memberships, exercise classes, and cultural activities are often unaffordable for people who can't work due to health conditions. Health Haven removes that barrier completely.



It's Flexible

Drop-in sessions mean no pressure. Online options alongside face-to-face. Weekly and monthly choices. Members appreciate knowing they don't have to commit to every session or feel guilty if they need to leave early.



Tutors Really Care

Our tutors adapt sessions to different abilities, use trauma-informed approaches, and create psychologically safe spaces where people feel comfortable being themselves.



Staff Make You Feel Welcome

From the moment people walk through the door, they're greeted warmly. Staff remember names, check in on people, and create a warm and welcoming atmosphere that facilitates continued engagement.



There's Something for Everyone

With 15+ different activities on offer, members can find what works for them – whether that's gentle movement, social connection, creative expression, or learning something new.



Members Shape What We Do

Health Haven isn't something we do to people - it's something we create with them. Members' ideas have led to new activities, and volunteers help run sessions like our Community Cinema.

"It's just so easy for people to access and be part of and be welcomed and understood."

– Social prescriber

Looking Forward: Where We're Headed

Health Haven is working well, but we're always learning and growing. This evaluation has identified opportunities to reach even more people and deepen our impact:

More Options for Working-Age Adults

Limited evening and weekend provision means we're missing people who are trying to balance health challenges with employment. Expanding sessions at these times could extend our reach to this demographic.

More Creative and Cultural Programming

There's clear appetite among members for expanded creative activities, including choir and singing groups, as well as continued access to museum exhibitions. Strengthening this "creative health" dimension of our offer would complement our existing exercise and social programming.





Targeted Support for Neurodivergent Individuals

Social prescribers have identified a need for specialist programming and partnership development to better support neurodivergent people in our community.

Continued Engagement of Under-Represented Groups

While we've had success with targeted initiatives like our Men's Group and Bengali Women's Group, we want to continue finding ways to engage males and Asian populations who remain slightly under-represented in our membership.

Why Health Haven Matters

Camden is the loneliest place in the UK. Life expectancy varies by 13 years between our richest and poorest neighbourhoods. Mental health diagnoses are rising. People with long-term conditions struggle to access support that works for them.

Health Haven addresses the **social determinants of health** – the connections, purpose, and belonging that shape wellbeing beyond medical care. We're building community resilience, reducing pressure on the NHS, and proving that **person-centred, community-based support** works.

Social prescribers call us their "number one option" for patients with complex needs. Members describe us as unique in Camden's landscape. And the evidence backs this up: measurable improvements in wellbeing, sustained engagement across multiple activities, and connections that extend far beyond our walls.

Health Haven is a vital community asset that **tackles health inequalities, reduces social isolation**, helps people **manage long-term conditions**, and builds the **connections fundamental to wellbeing**.

Thank You

This work wouldn't be possible without our funders: Community Infrastructure Levy (Camden Council), D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Friends of Gospel Oak, River of Hope, and the John McAlpine Fund.

Thank you to our partners: Prince of Wales GP Surgery, Working Men's College, British Library, British Museum, Islington Talking Therapies, Healthwatch, and UCLH, as well as the many other organisations, tutors, volunteers, and individuals who have contributed to making Health Haven what it is today.

A special thank you to the members, volunteers, tutors, and social prescribers who generously shared their time and experiences for this evaluation through interviews, surveys, and our participatory arts session. Your voices are at the heart of this report. Thank you also to Carlos Tavares for volunteering so much time conducting interviews and analysing data, and to Maryam Hashemi for facilitating our participatory feedback session.

Most importantly, thank you to our members. You are Health Haven. Your openness, energy, and commitment to supporting each other makes this community what it is.



Castlehaven is an award-winning community association in Camden Town, offering safe, inclusive spaces and free and low-cost activities for all ages, cultures, and abilities.

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