

When trust is the foundation and love is the method

Chai & Chat Community Health Event · 2 May 2026 · Durning Hall, Forest Gate, London

There are evenings that stay with you long after the lights go down. Saturday in Forest Gate was one of them — over 200 people, families, elders and strangers who became friends, filling Durning Hall for an evening that showed what public health can look like when it is built on culture, creativity and shared humanity.

200+

residents attended
from across communities

6

languages spoken on
the same stage

3

partner organisations,
one shared vision

1

blueprint for the
future of community health

WHY THIS MATTERS

Trust cannot be leafleted. It must be lived.

Vaccine hesitancy is not new — it has existed since the first smallpox vaccine in the 19th century. Today it remains a growing challenge for immunisation programmes worldwide, accelerated by unregulated social media and the spread of misinformation. In London and across the UK, we are seeing worrying levels of low vaccination uptake, leaving children, parents and elders more vulnerable to measles, flu, Covid-19 and other preventable diseases.

The answer is not more leaflets. It is more trust. And trust is built person to person, in the languages people speak at home, in the places they already gather, through the voices they already believe in. That is exactly what Chai & Chat set out to do — and did.

THE EVENING

Co-created by community, for community

Every poem, scene and song was co-created by community members themselves — in their own languages, from their own lived experiences. Punjabi folk songs. Bengali ballads. Drama and plays. Mehndi on offered hands. Masala chai, karakdaar and fragrant. Food that spoke of home. And a

rendition of Kabhi Kabhi that carried the whole room somewhere words can barely reach.

Children sat beside grandparents. Neighbours finally spoke — properly spoke. A grandmother from Bangladesh beside a grandmother from Ghana. This is what community cohesion looks like. Not a strategy. A feeling. A choice made together.

Hindi	Urdu	Punjabi	Bengali	Sylheti	English
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Alongside the creativity, health services were present in full — stalls with clinicians and volunteers offering health checks, vaccination advice and wellbeing guidance. Families who walked in for the culture left knowing more about the care available to them.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“ *I am not South Asian — but I felt completely at home. The welcome, the music, the food. This is what our neighbourhood can be.* ”

Local resident, attendee

“ *The poetry was in my language. Someone on that stage was saying what I feel. I did not expect that. I will come back.* ”

First-time community event visitor

“ *I came for the music — and left having had a health check and a real conversation about my wellbeing. That is remarkable.* ”

Attendee, East London

THE APPROACH

The 3T Model — a framework for real trust

This event was guided by Riyadhul Karim's 3T model, a framework for embedding health conversations within the communities they are meant to serve.

T1	T2	T3
Trusted Leaders	Trusted Places	Trusted Voices
Community elders and faith leaders who already hold trust — carrying health messages through existing relationships.	Venues like Durning Hall where communities already gather, making health part of everyday life.	Poets, musicians and storytellers from within the community, speaking in the languages people live in.

INSPIRATION

Building on proven creative health models

This work draws on a rich tradition of arts-based public health. Brazil's beloved vaccine mascot Ze Gotinha — part of the national SUS health system — has promoted immunisation to millions through character and culture. UNICEF's educational cartoon Meena, created in the 1990s, used storytelling to build health awareness across Bangladesh and South Asia. Both show that clear communication, delivered through culturally resonant creativity, changes behaviour in ways that official messaging alone cannot.

Chai & Chat is the East London iteration of that tradition: rooted in lived experience, responsive to local culture, and built by the people it is designed to serve.

WHO MADE THIS HAPPEN

Three organisations. One community. Together.

<p>CREATIVE HEALTH LEAD</p> <p>Blossom Group</p> <p>Leading the creative facilitation, arts-based methods and co-production of community health content — showcasing the cultural dimension within healthcare systems.</p>	<p>COMMUNITY ANCHOR</p> <p>Subco Trust</p> <p>Rooted in community and faith, Subco Trust brought deep local relationships and the lived experience essential to genuine grassroots reach.</p>	<p>COMMUNITY PARTNER</p> <p>Hawaa Network</p> <p>Bringing networks, voices and cultural intelligence that ensured the evening spoke authentically to South Asian women and families across East London.</p>	
<p>HEALTH SERVICES ON THE NIGHT</p>	<p>Live Well Newham</p>	<p>Woodgrange Medical Practice</p>	<p>Vaccination UK Ltd</p>

A REPLICABLE MODEL

Blueprint for creative community health

- 1 Embed in community, don't parachute in**

Work with organisations already trusted in the community. Health conversations land when they come from familiar faces in familiar places.
- 2 Use arts and culture as the access point**

Music, poetry and drama lower barriers, create shared experience and open people to conversations they might otherwise avoid.

3

Co-create, don't broadcast

Health content made by community members carries authority no leaflet or poster can achieve. People hear themselves in it.

4

Bring health services into the cultural space

Clinicians and community sit together. People came for the music and stayed for a health check. That is the opportunity.

5

Build for replication from the start

This was a pilot designed as a blueprint. Every element is transferable — to other neighbourhoods, other communities, other health priorities.

*We came as many. We left as one. This is a seed, a blueprint, a beginning —
a love letter to what our communities can be when we choose to truly see
each other.*

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