

PRESSURE DROP 2026

African Caribbean health event



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hypertension remains one of the most significant and preventable drivers of cardiovascular disease, yet its burden is not shared equally. Across the Black Country Primary Care Networks, Black communities consistently experience poorer blood pressure control than their White counterparts, an inequality that reflects decades of national evidence. Despite facing a higher risk of stroke, heart failure, and early mortality, Black patients are often diagnosed later and treated less aggressively, compounding already elevated risks. The consequences are stark: nearly half of stroke-related deaths in this population could be prevented through timely diagnosis and effective management.

These disparities are not simply clinical, they are structural. Attendee insights from the Pressure Drop initiative exposed the “elephant in the room”: systemic racism, cultural disconnect, and a lack of trust in healthcare services. Participants described feeling unheard, undervalued, and treated as second-class citizens, leading to disengagement from preventative care. Chronic stress driven by lived experiences of discrimination further exacerbates hypertension risk, while one-size-fits-all healthcare approaches fail to meet the specific needs of Black communities.

The Pressure Drop event directly confronted these inequities by bringing healthcare into a trusted, culturally relevant community setting. Its impact was immediate and compelling. Of the 55 participants, predominantly of African and Caribbean heritage, 40% had elevated blood pressure, revealing a substantial burden of undiagnosed or uncontrolled hypertension. Additionally, 18% were living with obesity, compounding cardiovascular risk. Crucially, 100% of participants consented to sharing their results with their GP, demonstrating that when services are delivered in a way that builds trust and respects cultural context, engagement barriers can be overcome.

Beyond detection, the event created a platform for dialogue, empowerment, and visibility of lived experiences that are too often overlooked. It highlighted that improving health outcomes is not solely about clinical intervention, but about rebuilding trust, addressing bias, and designing services with, not for, communities.

The implications are clear. Without targeted action, these inequalities will persist, driving avoidable illness, premature death, and widening gaps in

health outcomes. However, initiatives like Pressure Drop demonstrate a powerful, scalable solution. By embedding culturally competent, community-led interventions into healthcare delivery, systems can improve early diagnosis, prevent life-threatening complications, and reduce long-term costs, while taking meaningful steps toward equity.

This initiative highlights the need to address hypertension in Black communities through both clinical care and broader health equity efforts and the clinical report at the end provides clinical data and information.



BACKGROUND

Hypertension remains a significant contributor to cardiovascular morbidity and mortality, with notable disparities in outcomes between ethnic groups. Within the Black Country Primary Care Networks (PCNs), blood pressure control in Black populations is consistently poorer compared to White populations.

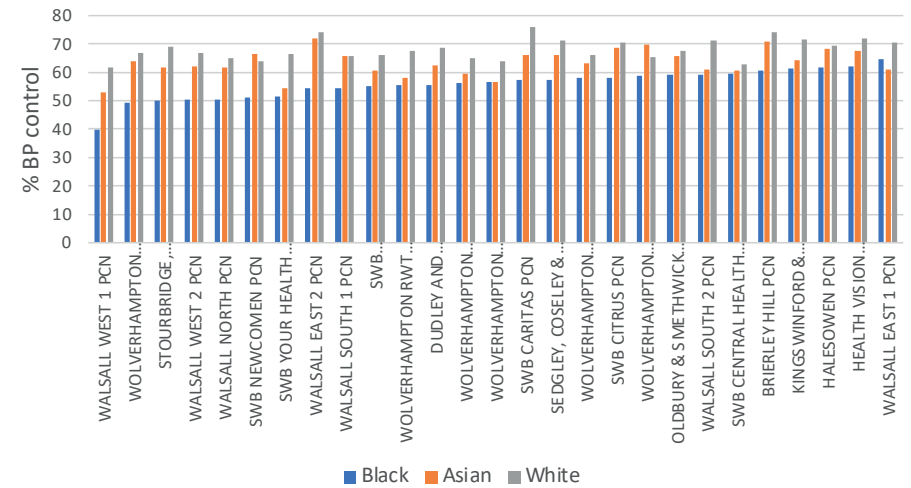
This reflects a wider national trend, supported by research over the past three decades, demonstrating inequities in hypertension management among Black patients. Evidence indicates that antihypertensive treatment is often initiated at higher blood pressure thresholds in Black populations, despite their increased risk of complications such as stroke. Improved detection and management of hypertension in Black patients has the potential to significantly reduce adverse outcomes. It is estimated that up to 45% of stroke mortality could be prevented through appropriate diagnosis and effective treatment of hypertension in this group. Additionally, Black patients are at a higher risk of developing heart failure at a younger age compared to other populations.

Several underlying factors contribute to these disparities. These include genetic differences that may influence response to antihypertensive medications, challenges with medication adherence, and dietary factors such as higher salt intake.

Given these inequalities, there is a clear need for targeted interventions. The Pressure Drop event was developed to address these gaps by improving awareness, early detection, and effective management of hypertension within Black communities across the Black Country PCNs.

Blood Pressure control in Black population is worse than in White in every Black Country Primary Care Network.

BP control by ethnicity - Black Country PCNs (CVDPrevent Dec 2024)



Dr Lloyd Baron, local GP, Clinical Advisor for Health Inequalities Research Lead for Primary Care, DGFT This was an excellent event co-produced with the local African-Caribbean community and well attended by people of all ages. Working to co-produce events with communities who experience health related inequalities is key to understanding why they exist and working to reduce them. There was high engagement from local people as well as health and social care services across Dudley. I hope we can build this relationship further so local health services can evolve and adapt to meet the needs of all members of our community. Thank you to all the hard work from those involved!



A COMMUNITY-LED RESPONSE TO HEALTH INEQUALITIES

To address the high prevalence of hypertension and cardiovascular health inequalities affecting African Caribbean communities, local community groups and trusted organisations worked collaboratively to co-design Pressure Drop, a culturally inclusive health engagement event. The event was developed to create a welcoming and familiar environment where attendees could access health information, screening, and support in a way that felt accessible, trusted, and community-led.

Held on 28 March at the African Caribbean Centre in Dudley, the event was opened by local GP Dr Lucy Martin in her role as Deputy Lieutenant for the West Midlands. The day was intentionally designed as an interactive and engaging community event, combining health promotion with entertainment and social connection to encourage participation and relationship-building.

The event provided free blood pressure and cardiovascular risk assessments, on-site clinical advice, signposting to primary care services, and health education focused on hypertension prevention and management. Attendees were also invited to reflect on an important question:

Community champions and trusted local organisations played a central role in delivering the event, helping to address barriers including mistrust, limited awareness, and difficulties accessing healthcare services. Alongside its role as a health intervention, Pressure Drop aimed to strengthen long-term relationships between healthcare providers and the African Caribbean community.

Macka B

“My name is Macka B. I am a Reggae artist with a career spanning over 40 years, and also in the last decade I have become a very popular social media influencer focusing on health and wellness with millions of followers.

The Pressure Drop event was a very important event helping to increase awareness of High blood pressure and the damage it can cause. It was in a nice relaxed community setting which helped to reach the target audience. It was great to be involved as I am very passionate about trying to make the world a healthier place. It would be good if these types of events were replicated all over the country.”



Why do Black people experience greater health inequalities, and what can we do to make improvements?



PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION

The event was delivered through a strong partnership between community and healthcare organisations, including The Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, High Oak Youth and Community Group, Dudley Caribbean and Friends Association, and The William Wilson Turner Foundation CIO.

Together, partners shared a common aim of improving health outcomes, reducing inequalities, and empowering local communities through culturally appropriate engagement and education.

Event Objectives

Pressure Drop was designed to:

- Raise awareness of high blood pressure and cardiovascular health within the African Caribbean community
- Encourage healthier lifestyle choices
- Improve access to health advice and preventative care
- Strengthen relationships between residents, healthcare professionals, and community organisations
- Promote wellbeing through culturally relevant engagement, entertainment, and interactive activities



Angela Edwards, High Oak Youth and Community Centre: It was a fantastic example of partnership working and demonstrated what can be achieved when organisations come together, pool their resources, and work alongside the community to support one another. It was inspiring to see the NHS, High Oak Youth and Community Centre, and our partner organisations working collaboratively to create positive outcomes, strengthen community connections, and improve the health and wellbeing of ethnic minority communities. By working together, we were able to create a welcoming and inclusive space where people felt valued, supported, and empowered to access information, services, and opportunities that can help them live healthier and more connected lives."



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACTIVITIES

A range of promotional materials, including event posters and bespoke campaign artwork, were developed to support visibility and engagement across the community.

On the day, the event brought together 18 organisations from across the NHS, public health, voluntary, education, and community sectors. Stallholders included services focused on respiratory health, stroke prevention, smoking cessation, bereavement support, wellbeing, adult learning, and social prescribing, enabling attendees to access a broad range of health and community support in one setting.

The event also featured contributions from reggae artist and health advocate Macka B, who highlighted the importance of community-based health promotion and culturally relevant approaches to improving wellbeing. Entertainment and health-focused performances from Miss Ida further contributed to an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere that encouraged engagement.

KEY PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGES

Throughout the event, attendees were encouraged to:

- Know and regularly monitor their blood pressure
- Consider the impact of diet, smoking, alcohol, exercise, and stress on cardiovascular health
- Seek support where blood pressure remained uncontrolled

Healthcare professionals were also encouraged to:

- Address health inequalities proactively
- Consider ethnicity in prescribing practices
- Improve referrals into personalised care and lifestyle support services

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

The event attracted 115 attendees throughout the day and included on-site blood pressure and cholesterol checks.

Feedback demonstrated a highly positive response:

- Nearly 90% of attendees rated the event as excellent
- All respondents stated they would attend a similar event again
- The event achieved an average satisfaction score of 4.84 out of 5
- Information provided achieved an average helpfulness score of 4.79 out of 5

Attendees consistently described the event as informative, welcoming, well organised, and engaging.



Shirnette Collins, Dudley Caribbean & Friends Association: For me, The Pressure Drop event demonstrated the importance of meeting people where they are and listening to lived experience. It has strengthened relationships within the community and between services and residents, laying a foundation for continued collaboration.

The next step is to build on this energy ensuring that the voices heard here in Dudley continue to shape future action, support, and opportunity.



Social media reach for Macka B was in excess of 63K



UNDERSTANDING HEALTH INEQUALITIES: ATTENDEE REFLECTIONS

Attendees identified systemic racism, discrimination, and a lack of cultural understanding within healthcare and wider society as key drivers of health inequalities affecting Black communities.

Many participants described feeling undervalued, unheard, and treated unfairly, which contributed to mistrust and disengagement from healthcare services. Chronic stress linked to racism, workplace pressures, and societal expectations was also highlighted as a significant factor affecting physical health, particularly high blood pressure.

Participants also raised concerns around poor communication and the perception that Black communities are not prioritised within healthcare systems.

To address these inequalities, attendees called for:

- Greater cultural competence within healthcare services
- Fair and equitable treatment
- Healthcare approaches tailored to the needs of Black communities
- Increased Black representation in leadership and decision-making roles
- Improved communication around diagnoses and treatment
- Respect, honesty, and active listening in patient care

Overall, participants emphasised that meaningful progress requires systemic change, reduced bias and racism, and a stronger commitment to hearing and valuing Black voices within healthcare.

IMPACT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

Evaluation feedback indicated that the event successfully increased awareness and understanding of:

- Blood pressure management
- Healthy eating and hydration
- Preventative healthcare
- The importance of regular health checks

Many attendees reported feeling more motivated to monitor their health and make positive lifestyle changes. Key learning themes included reducing salt intake, maintaining a healthy diet, and recognising the importance of seeking support even when feeling well.

Attendees also highlighted the value of community connection and culturally relevant engagement in building trust and encouraging participation.

STRENGTHS OF THE EVENT

Several strengths emerged from attendee feedback. Participants particularly valued the combination of health information, entertainment, and community atmosphere, describing the event as enjoyable, inclusive, and impactful. Music, performances, refreshments, and interactive activities helped create a positive environment that supported meaningful engagement with health services and professionals. Many attendees expressed support for similar events being delivered more regularly across Dudley and beyond.

STALLHOLDER FEEDBACK

Feedback from stallholders was equally positive. Engagement levels were high, with stallholders reporting between 12 and 37 interactions each, averaging approximately 22 attendees per stall.

All participating organisations stated that the event successfully raised awareness of their services and enabled valuable networking and partnership opportunities. Communication, coordination, and overall organisation of the event were universally rated as excellent, and all stallholders indicated they would participate in similar events again.

The only notable challenge identified was limited space within the venue, reported by a small minority of participants.



CONCLUSION

Pressure Drop was a highly successful community health engagement event that demonstrated the value of culturally informed, partnership-led approaches to reducing health inequalities.

By combining health education, preventative screening, community engagement, and cultural activities, the event created a trusted and accessible environment for the African Caribbean community. Feedback from attendees and partner organisations highlighted strong satisfaction, meaningful learning outcomes, and clear demand for future events of a similar nature.

HEALTH CHECK RESULTS

A Community-Based Blood Pressure Screening Initiative in an African Caribbean Population

ABSTRACT

Hypertension is a major contributor to cardiovascular disease and disproportionately affects individuals of African and Caribbean heritage. The Pressure Drop initiative aimed to improve awareness and early detection through community-based screening. Fifty-five participants were engaged, with 40% demonstrating elevated blood pressure (>140 mmHg). Obesity was identified in 18% of participants, and all individuals consented to sharing results with their general practitioner. These findings highlight a significant burden of cardiovascular risk and demonstrate the effectiveness of culturally tailored, community-led interventions in reducing health inequalities. University undergraduate pharmacy students and foundation trainees were instrumental in delivery of the initiative and undertook the necessary training to support the event.

INTRODUCTION

Hypertension is one of the leading modifiable risk factors for cardiovascular morbidity and mortality worldwide (World Health Organization, 2021). In the

United Kingdom, individuals of African and Caribbean descent experience disproportionately higher rates of hypertension, earlier onset, and more severe complications, including stroke and chronic kidney disease (NICE, 2019; BHF, 2022).

Despite this elevated risk, engagement with preventative healthcare services remains suboptimal within some ethnic minority populations. Structural barriers, cultural factors, and reduced trust in healthcare systems contribute to lower uptake of screening and delayed diagnosis (Public Health England, 2018). Emerging evidence suggests that community-based interventions, particularly those that are culturally tailored, can significantly improve access and engagement. Research into medicines-related inequalities emphasises the importance of trust, culturally competent care, and collaboration with community stakeholders in improving healthcare access for ethnic minority populations.

The Pressure Drop initiative was developed in response to these challenges, aiming to provide accessible cardiovascular screening within a trusted community setting.

METHODS

This project was conducted as a service evaluation of a community-based health intervention. Participants attending the Pressure Drop event were offered opportunistic blood pressure screening, alongside additional cardiovascular risk assessments including BMI and cholesterol where feasible. Participants provided informed consent for their data to be recorded and shared with their GP to support follow-up care. Data were anonymised prior to analysis. As the project was classified as a service evaluation, formal research ethics approval was not required. Descriptive statistical analysis was performed to summarise demographic characteristics and key clinical outcomes.



RESULTS

Participant Characteristics

A total of 55 individuals participated in the event health checks aspect of the event. The majority (82%, n=45) were of African or Caribbean heritage, indicating effective targeting of the intended population. Male participants accounted for 18% (n=10).

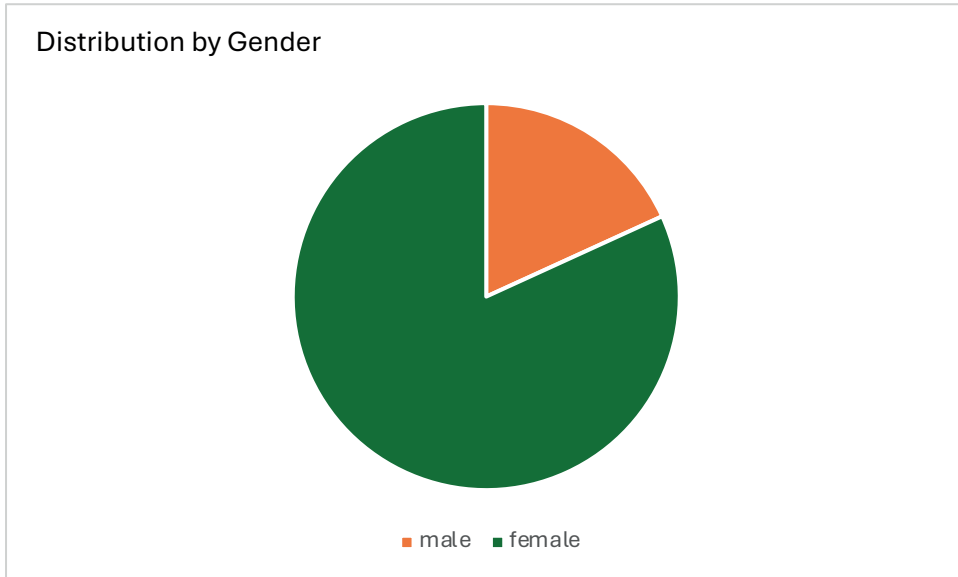


Figure 1 illustrates the ethnic distribution of participants.

Blood Pressure Findings

Elevated blood pressure (>140 mmHg) was identified in 22 participants, representing 40% of the cohort. This high prevalence suggests a substantial burden of undiagnosed or uncontrolled hypertension within the community.

Distribution by Systolic Blood Pressure

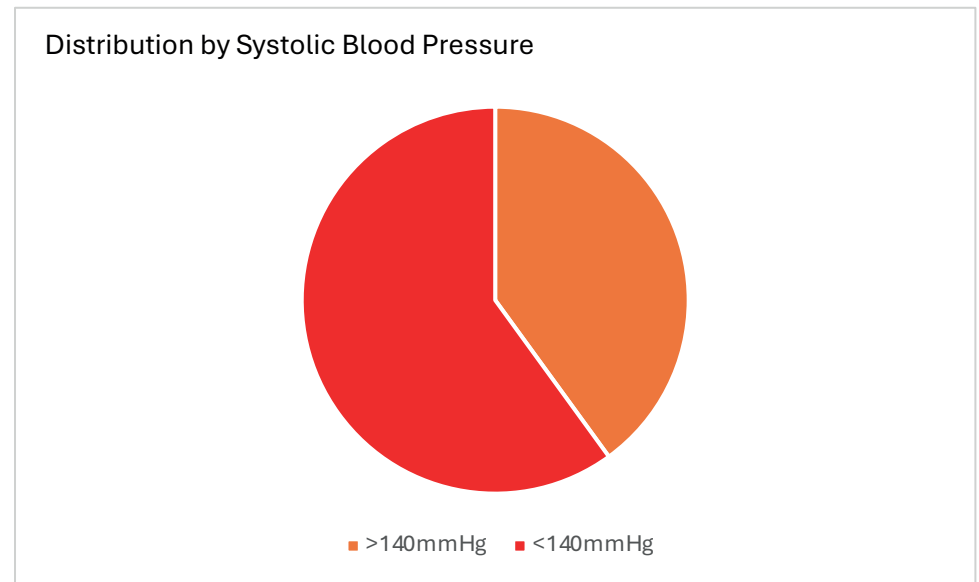


Figure 2 shows the distribution of blood pressure categories.

Body Mass Index (BMI)

Ten participants (18%) had a BMI greater than 30, categorising them as obese. Obesity is a significant risk factor for hypertension and cardiovascular disease, indicating compounded risk in a subset of participants.

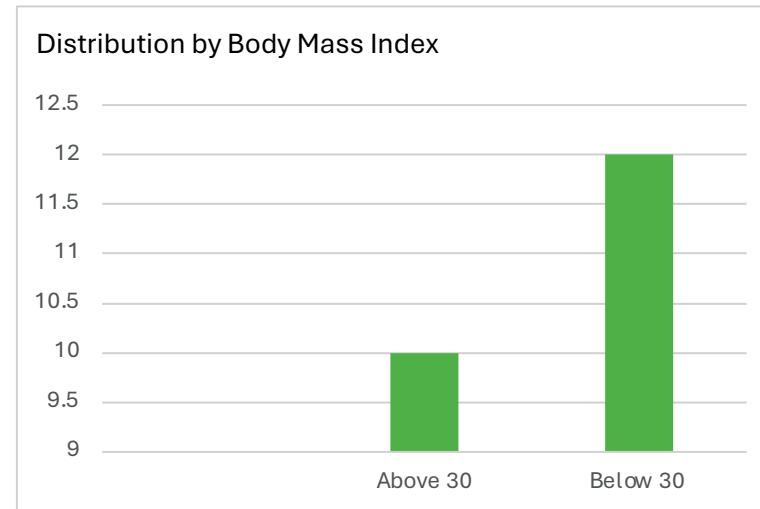
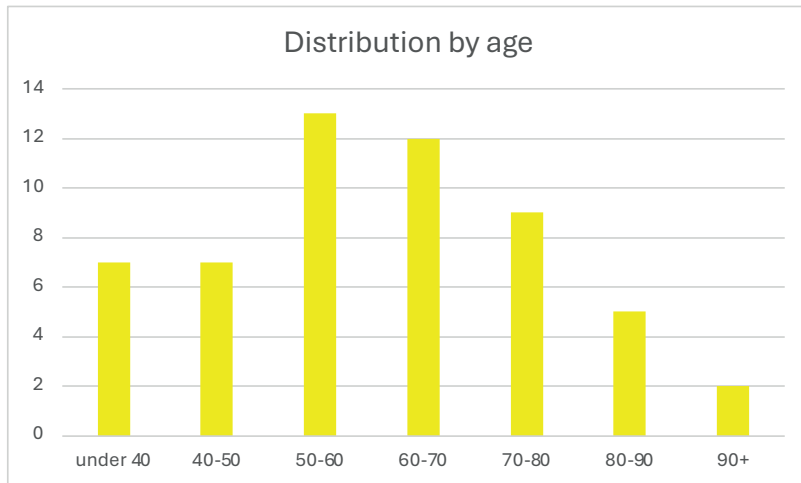


Figure 3 presents BMI distribution.

Other Risk Factors

Cholesterol levels below 5 mmol/L were recorded in 12 participants; with 6 of these individuals being primary prevention with a QRisk reported >10%, therefore requiring an offering of lipid lowering therapies.

Age distribution indicated that only 13% of participants were under 40 years, suggesting that the majority were within higher-risk age groups normally eligible for NHS health checks.



ENGAGEMENT OUTCOME

All participants (100%) consented to sharing their results with their GP, representing a key success of the initiative and demonstrating strong trust and engagement.

DISCUSSION

The Pressure Drop initiative identified a high prevalence of elevated blood pressure (40%) within an African Caribbean community cohort. This finding aligns with existing literature demonstrating increased hypertension risk and

severity within this population (NICE, 2019; BHF, 2022).

The proportion of participants with obesity (18%) further contributes to cardiovascular risk, highlighting the need for integrated prevention strategies addressing multiple risk factors simultaneously.

Importantly, the success of the initiative lies not only in the identification of clinical risk but also in its ability to engage participants effectively. The 100% consent rate for GP data sharing reflects a high level of trust, which is often cited as a barrier to healthcare engagement in ethnic minority communities.

Research highlights that individuals from these communities may be unaware of available services or face challenges in accessing them. Building trust, fostering relationships, and working collaboratively with community leaders are critical to overcoming these barriers.

By delivering care within a familiar and culturally appropriate setting, the Pressure Drop initiative successfully addressed these challenges and facilitated linkage to formal healthcare pathways.



Dr Duncan Jenkins, Associate Director for Primary Care Pharmacy and Population Health Management, DGFT The trigger for the event was the fact that people in the Black community with high blood pressure are less likely than White people to have their blood pressure controlled to the recommended level. This is important because high blood pressure is a major risk for having a heart attack or stroke. The health checks and BP measurements were popular and there was a queue all afternoon. Miss Ida and Macka B provided fantastic entertainment with a serious message, delivered with style! Follow up has been arranged and we plan to provide regular visits to the centre going forward to provide health advice and blood pressure check.



IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND POLICY

The findings demonstrate a clear need for targeted cardiovascular screening within African Caribbean populations. Community-based interventions provide an effective mechanism for reaching underserved groups and identifying individuals at risk earlier in the disease pathway.

Scaling such initiatives could contribute to:

- Reduced incidence of stroke and cardiovascular events
- Improved early diagnosis and management of hypertension
- Reduction in long-term healthcare costs

These outcomes align closely with NHS priorities around prevention and reducing health inequalities.

LIMITATIONS

The study is limited by its relatively small sample size and opportunistic recruitment strategy, which may limit generalisability. Additionally, incomplete data for some cardiovascular risk factors restricted comprehensive risk profiling.

CONCLUSION

The Pressure Drop initiative successfully engaged a predominantly African Caribbean population in community-based blood pressure screening, identifying a high prevalence of hypertension and associated risk factors.

The findings reinforce the importance of culturally tailored, community-led interventions in addressing health inequalities and improving cardiovascular outcomes. Expansion of similar programmes represents a critical opportunity for healthcare systems to improve early detection and reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease.

REFERENCES

- British Heart Foundation (2022). UK Factsheet: Ethnicity and Cardiovascular Disease.
- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) (2019). Hypertension in Adults: Diagnosis and Management (NG136).
- Public Health England (2018). Health Profile for England.
- World Health Organization (2021). Hypertension Fact Sheet.
- Robinson-Barella A. Medicines-related inequalities: working and researching with ethnic minority communities



Joan Blaney, CBE. Hon. DEd. CEO of the William Wilson Turner Foundation; It was wonderful to see the outcome of weeks and months of preparation come together so successfully. The strong turnout, the energy on the day, and the clear commitment from stallholders to promote better health, share information, and encourage access to services that support well-being – was heart-warming.

This was reflected in the number of people who took up health checks, and from conversations afterwards, many indicated they would take steps to improve their health.

Miss Ida's performance was very well received, with her message on the importance of maintaining healthy blood pressure landing strongly with the audience. This was further reinforced by an excellent performance from Macka B, who helped bring the message to life engagingly and memorably.

It was a real privilege to have played a part in such a successful event from start to finish, and congratulations to everyone involved.

