

DELIVERED BY



# JOLLOF NIGHTS

# 2025

**END OF PILOT REPORT**



**REPORTING PERIOD: FEB  
- JUNE 2025**

**FUNDED BY: GROUNDWORK LONDON -  
GREENWICH HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES FUND**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>PROJECT OVERVIEW</b>	<b>( 1 )</b>
<b>ABOUT THE MODEL</b>	<b>( 2 )</b>
<b>KEY OUTCOMES AND IMPACT</b>	<b>( 3-4 )</b>
<b>COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>( 5 )</b>
<b>WHAT WORKED WELL</b>	<b>( 6 )</b>
<b>CHALLENGES AND LEARNING</b>	<b>( 7-8 )</b>
<b>SUSTAINABILITY AND NEXT STEPS</b>	<b>( 9 )</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>( 10 )</b>

# PROJECT OVERVIEW



**JESSE ASHIEGBU**

Project lead and primary facilitator

## HOW THE PROJECT WAS DELIVERED

Between February and June 2025, a total of 9 Jollof Nights sessions were delivered across 4 barbershops in the Royal Borough of Greenwich. The final session was hosted at Headlinerz Barbershop, the birthplace of the Jollof Nights model. This special edition focused on “Fatherhood: A Father’s Role in Love, Change and Care” and was co-facilitated with the Parenting Lead from Oxleas NHS, reflecting the growing cross-sector commitment to men’s wellbeing.

Each session was co-designed with participants, with themes including stress, fatherhood, emotional resilience, and identity. Participants shaped every stage of delivery through feedback, shared lived experience, and suggestions for future topics.

## AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The Jollof Nights 2025 pilot, funded by Groundwork London, aimed to improve the emotional, mental, and physical wellbeing of African and Caribbean men through culturally relevant peer support, early health awareness, and trusted community engagement.

By delivering sessions within barbershops - familiar and culturally affirming spaces for many African and Caribbean men -the project tackled stigma, loneliness, and health inequalities through conversation, connection, and community care.

**9**

Sessions delivered

**187**

Total participants

**4**

Barbershops across London  
Borough of Greenwich

**102**

Feedback forms collected

As an added contribution beyond the scope of this grant, Ndukauba CIC independently funded free blood pressure testing during routine barbershop visits and around Jollof Nights sessions. This allowed men to engage in preventative health in a setting they trust - supporting NHS goals to improve early detection of hypertension in high-risk communities.

All facilitators were trained in emotional de-escalation, active listening, and NHS signposting to ensure a safe, responsive space for all attendees.

# ABOUT THE MODEL

Jollof Nights combines peer-led group conversations, culturally tailored health education, and informal screening in trusted community spaces. Sessions are co-designed, food-centred, and delivered by Jollof Nights model-trained facilitators and barbers. These gatherings create safe, affirming environments where men can openly explore topics such as mental health, suicide prevention, fatherhood, perinatal mental health, sexual health and HIV prevention, emotional and physical wellbeing, stress, loneliness, finances, masculinity, grief, and general wellbeing.

The model includes:

- Routine and daily high blood pressure checks in trusted spaces
- Signposting and dual referral pathways with NHS and community systems
- Follow-up through the Jollof Nights Connects app and a gamified health education app that supports behavioural tracking and insight collection (currently under development)

During sessions, men gather like a family meeting, sharing meals, especially our signature Jollof rice, which serves as a culturally resonant anchor. The familiarity of this dish fosters a deep sense of belonging and brotherhood, creating the psychological safety needed for honest, vulnerable conversations to unfold.

The session is formally opened by the facilitator who is always a trusted, non-clinical community leader, who sets the tone by reminding participants of the ground rules:

“Nothing you say here today is considered right or wrong. Everyone has the right to speak, be heard, and have their opinion respected without judgement. Pushbacks must be done respectfully, and only when it’s your turn to speak. What we say here stays here - video recording or sharing another man’s story is strictly prohibited.”

We also invite system professionals to co-design and co-facilitate special Q&A segments. In line with our men’s-only policy, these professionals must be male.

Toward the end of each session, we collect attendance and anonymous feedback to help inform and refine future sessions. Meetings are intentionally capped at 30 men to ensure deeper, more meaningful engagement and to provide equitable space for rotational participation.

Because of the organic and emotionally honest nature of Jollof Nights, discussions often go beyond pre-set themes. As emotions rise and buried wounds surface, we begin to witness what we call “the cracks”, these are those moments when masks come off, guards drop, and healing begins. These sessions become powerful mirrors where men feel seen, heard, and supported by others who genuinely care and are vulnerable too.

It is the revival of the African and Caribbean community spirit, rooted in culture and tradition, that helps restore the trust and healing our people have long needed. Community is the best therapy we have, especially when it feels like we’ve been displaced from our cultural habitat and placed into marginalised environments where trust in systems has broken down. That disconnection takes a toll mentally, emotionally, and physically, and is compounded by long-standing economic disadvantage.

At the end of the day, a successful Jollof Nights session is not defined by numbers, but by transformation. If just one man leaves feeling lighter, having heard someone articulate a struggle he thought he faced alone, or finds comfort in a new perspective and chooses to come back next time and bring a friend, then that night has fulfilled its purpose.

This is Jollof Nights, my friends

# JOLLOF NIGHT 11/02/25

## CONSULIGRATE BARBERSHOP, WOOLWICH



**TUESDAY  
NIGHT JOLLOF**

TOPIC  
**COPING WITH STRESS/DEPRESSION  
ANXIETY & LONELINESS**

Date: 11th Feb 2025  
Time: 6:30-8:30pm  
Venue: Consuligrade Barbershop 20-22 Willmount Street Woolwich, SE18 6ED

FREE JOLLOF RICE & DRINKS

SCAN HERE TO ATTEND

POWERED BY

FOR ENQUIRY: 07888183774 / 07944324204

**Dammy d Barber**  
HOST

**Jesse d Barber**  
GUEST



“My views [of mental health] was totally different before I came”  
- PARTICIPANT

# JOLLOF NIGHT 25/02/25

## CONSULIGRATE BARBERSHOP, WOOLWICH



**TUESDAY NIGHT JOLLOF**  
With **DAMMY d BARBER**

Host: **Dammy d Barber**

Topic: **Building Resilience  
Thriving in the face of challenges**

DATE: 25 Feb 2025  
TIME: 6.30-8.30pm

Venue: Consuligrade Barbershop 20-22  
Wilmount Street Woolwich, SE18 6ED

Powered By: **NDUKAUBA**

Facilitator: **Jesse d Barber**



“Tonight being my first time, the Jollof night is really an impactful one where brothers get to share their ideas in love and learning” - PARTICIPANT

# KEY OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

## ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

Total Responses Collected: 102; 76 Handwritten Feedback Forms and 26 Google Form Submissions

Feedback from participants consistently described the sessions as informative, empowering, emotionally safe, and culturally relatable. The use of barbershops as familiar, informal community spaces made participants feel at ease and more willing to open up.

“This session is a gamechanger for men’s health.”  
“It gave me more reason to think about myself and my actions as a father.”

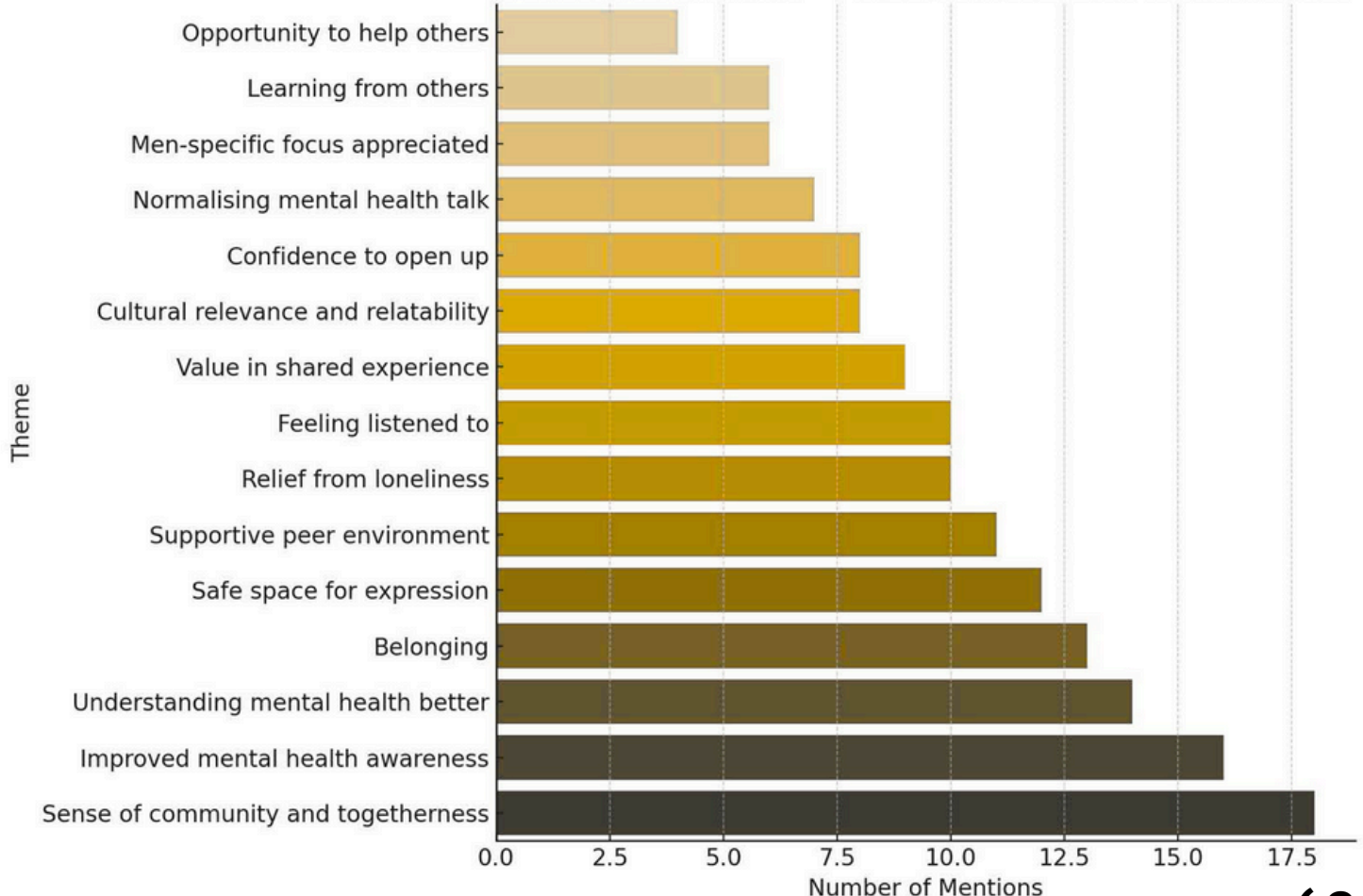
## COMMON BENEFITS REPORTED

Participants across all locations reported:

- Emotional release and relief
- Increased self-awareness and clarity
- A sense of brotherhood, safety, and connection
- Improved confidence discussing identity, fatherhood, and wellbeing
- Encouragement to seek help when needed

“Common issues we keep inside were finally expressed.”  
“It helped me realise I’m not alone.”  
“I’ve learned how to better manage my feelings.”

Impact of Jollof Nights™ - Summary from 102 Feedback Forms



# KEY OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

## INTEGRATION WITH NHS SERVICES

Another outcome of our Pilot is that Jollof Nights now operates within a mutual referral pathway with Oxleas NHS Talking Therapies via Greenwich Time to Talk:

- Participants can self-refer to clinical services directly from sessions,
- NHS professionals actively signpost service users to Jollof Nights as a culturally grounded, non-clinical support space
- This hybrid community-clinical model bridges early engagement with formal care pathways

## FUTURE PLANNING

97% of participants expressed a desire to attend future sessions, with strong support for more frequent events.

Feedback indicated:

46% preferred fortnightly delivery

38% preferred monthly

Others expressed interest in weekly sessions

*“Yes, most definitely. This needs to continue.”*

*“I’d love to be part of it again—regularly.”*

Every respondent supported expanding Jollof Nights to more locations and communities:

*“Barbershops should be doing this everywhere.”*

*“It should go across the UK. Nothing else is doing this for our men.”*

*“Yes—it reduces stress and creates awareness.”*

## MENTAL HEALTH UNDERSTANDING (BEFORE VS AFTER)

Participants entered the sessions with varying levels of awareness and comfort around mental health. Many admitted to limited prior understanding or stigma-influenced views. By the end, most expressed increased understanding, emotional openness, and a willingness to seek help:

*“My views were badly judgmental before I came.”*

*“Now I feel I can talk about my problems without shame.”*

*“TNJ helped me open up more, which I usually wouldn’t do.”*

## KEY FINDINGS

✓ 95% reported the session positively impacted their wellbeing

✓ 100% feel the model should be replicated in other barbershops across Greenwich

✓ 97% would attend again

✓ 62% expressed wanting sessions to be more frequent than monthly

# JOLLOF NIGHT 27/03/25

## NICK'S HQ BARBERSHOP, PLUMBSTEAD

**THURSDAY NIGHT JOLLOF**

**TOPIC**  
**COPING WITH STRESS/DEPRESSION ANXIETY & LONELINESS**

**Date**  
27th March, 2025

**Time**  
7:00-9:30pm


**Venue**  
Nick's HQ Barber Shop  
229 Plumstead high street SE18 1HF

**FREE JOLLOF RICE & DRINKS**

SCAN HERE TO ATTEND

**NO BLACK MAN'S TIME**

FOR ENQUIRY: 07888183774



**Nick**  
HOST



**Jesse d Barber**



“The session was great. Very engaging and informative. I learned quite a few things and the conversation was open and honest” - PARTICIPANT

# COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

The initiative has partnered with local barbershops to host events, thereby embedding the program within the community fabric. The Jollof Nights pilot worked because the community made it work.

This was about barbers who care. Men who opened their shops, shared their stories, and made space for others to feel safe and heard. Dammy showed up again and again to support his friends. Basil spoke honestly about what men go through. Nick saw how the sessions could help not just him, but his customers too.

That's what made the difference, real people having real conversations in places they trust.

This pilot proves that when support comes from familiar voices in familiar spaces, people show up and open up. That's how we start to close the gap in health and wellbeing for our communities.



"I'm a supporter of [Jollof Nights]. The reason why I am supporting this activity is because I lost my cousin through something like this.. depression.. in 2001. So I decided to come into this to make other people aware of this. I've done mine twice, Tuesday night jollof. I'm here to support my friends." - Dammy d barber

"By virtue of what i do, I get to see a lot of people and hear from a lot of people about what they are passing through You know? like they say, the barber chair is a therapeutic chair, when the customer sits down they feel comfortable and want to talk about stuff. So i know, especially in our african community, men, we pass through a lot. You know? but because of our nature we dont like to talk about it. so i believe this an avenue for us to share our experiences and find a way to [share] suggestions or solutions." - BASIL (Barber)



"I get connected with Jesse, the founder of Thursday night jollof, when I listened to his conversation I realized it can help me, and can also help my customers. So that's one of the reasons why I'm hosting ." - Nick (barber)

# JOLLOF NIGHT 12/04/25

## NICK'S HQ BARBERSHOP, PLUMBSTEAD



**SATURDAY NIGHT JOLLOF**

TOPIC  
**REBUILDING TRUST AND RECONCILIATION AMONGST THE SO-CALLED 'BLACK COMMUNITY'**

Date: 12th April, 2025 | Time: 8:00-11:00 pm | Venue: Nick's HQ Barber Shop, 229 Plumstead high street SE18 3JF

FREE JOLLOF RICE & DRINKS

SCAN HERE TO ATTEND

NO BLACK MAN'S TIME

FOR ENQUIRY: 07888183774



“Very enlightening to see men coming together discussing topics to empower each other”.

PARTICIPANT

# WHAT WORKED WELL

## FOOD & FAMILIARITY

Serving jollof rice with beef, fish or turkey and plantain at each session fostered connection and ease. Food became a leveler, a cultural bridge that made men feel welcome, stayed longer, and opened up more freely.

## REAL-TIME FEEDBACK & CO-DESIGN

Each session was shaped in real time based on community input. Participants suggested future topics such as; Fatherhood, anger, relationships and mental health after loss. This iterative, co-designed approach ensured the content remained relevant and responsive to real needs.

## BREAKING ISOLATION, BRIDGING HEALTH GAPS

By combining grassroots visibility, culturally resonant content, and trusted environments, Jollof Nights succeeded in:

- Breaking cycles of social isolation
- Tackling health inequalities (e.g., via free blood pressure testing and other non clinical strategies)
- Normalising emotional conversations among African and Caribbean men

## ATTENDANCE & DEMAND

Between February and June 2025, we delivered 9 sessions across 4 barbershops, reaching between 11 to 35 participants per session. Notably, even our lowest turnout on just three days' notice, still drew 11 men, signaling the growing trust and demand for the Jollof Nights model.

How did we achieve this?

- One of the most effective engagement tools was word-of-mouth. Attendees were invited by friends, barbers, and community leaders, creating organic and trusted networks of participation. This approach amplified community trust and built momentum for future sessions.
- We promoted Jollof Nights through; WhatsApp broadcast lists, Instagram and TikTok, including barber-generated content, Eventbrite flyers with QR codes, Direct community outreach by barbers and returning attendees.

## ENGAGEMENT & FACILITATION STYLE

Our facilitation was peer-led, emotionally intelligent, and culturally grounded. Sessions were co-hosted by Jesse D Barber and local barbers, combining lived experience, humour, and music to foster natural, judgment-free conversations.

## TRUSTED SPACES & COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP

By hosting sessions within everyday barbershops, not clinics or hired halls, we created familiar, low-barrier environments. We co-designed sessions with barbers, briefing them beforehand and allowing leadership to emerge from within.

# JOLLOF NIGHT 21/05/25

## GADO LOUNGE, WOOLWICH



**WEDNESDAY**  
**NIGHT JOLLOF**

TOPIC  
**COPING WITH STRESS/DEPRESSION  
ANXIETY & LONELINESS**

Date: 21st May 2025 | Time: 7:00pm-9:30pm | Venue: Gado lounge, 122 Woolwich High St, London SE18 6DS

FREE JOLLOF RICE & DRINKS

QR CODE: SCAN HERE TO ATTEND

**GADO**  
NIGERIAN RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

FOOD HYGIENE RATING: 5

**BASIL d Barber**  
HOST

**Jesse d Barber**  
FACILITATOR

FOR ENQUIRY: 07888183774



“It fosters togetherness and opportunity to share and listen to each others views” -PARTICIPANT



# CHALLENGES AND LEARNING

## SHORT NOTICE

Sessions announced with less than a week's notice had lower turnout. Working men and fathers need time to plan.

**Learning:** We'll adopt a regular monthly promo schedule across all sites.

## BARBER UNDERSTANDING

Some barbers saw Jollof Nights as just an event, not a wellbeing model.

**Learning:** We've launched a certified, incentivised facilitator training to build clarity and ownership.

## TIMEKEEPING

Punctuality was inconsistent among both hosts and attendees.

**Learning:** Sessions will now start on time, every time, to build rhythm and mutual respect.

## FAIR COMPENSATION

Barbers lost income to host sessions, and stipends didn't always reflect this.

**Learning:** We'll increase compensation to match the time and trust invested.

## FOOD INCLUSIVITY

Not all attendees could eat the food due to dietary or allergy needs.

**Learning:** Future sessions will offer more inclusive meal options.

## VENUE BARRIERS

We were turned away by barbershops in Thamesmead and Charlton, and couldn't find a culturally safe space in Eltham.

**Learning:** We're engaging local football teams in these areas until trusted barbershop sites are secured.

## DIGITAL GAPS

Manual sign-ups and feedback made coordination harder.

**Next Step:** We're building the Jollof Nights Connect app to streamline registrations, reminders, and feedback across all locations.



# CHALLENGES AND LEARNING

## INTIMATE GROUP SIZE

Capping each session at a maximum of 30 participants significantly improved the quality of conversations. Smaller, intentional group sizes fostered trust, allowed for more rotational participation, and ensured that every voice had space to be heard - an essential factor in encouraging emotional expression among men.

## IN-PERSON DELIVERY

Jollof Nights is deliberately designed to tackle isolation. Transitioning to digital platforms would compromise its effectiveness, dismantle the safe-space culture, and reduce peer-led authenticity.

## DEMOGRAPHIC AWARENESS

Participants' education, economic standing, and cultural exposure shape how they engage in conversations. Facilitators must use social intelligence, cultural humility, and class awareness to keep sessions inclusive and relatable. Equally vital is linguistic flexibility—shifting between Standard English, slang, and culturally familiar expressions—to foster comfort, reduce intimidation, and encourage open participation.

## BOUNDARIES AROUND CONVERSATIONS

Religion and politics were intentionally excluded as debate topics to maintain psychological safety. Instead, we explored how socio-political and religious events influence our mental health - providing a shared lens to understand stressors without triggering conflict or division.

## LACK OF SUSTAINED FUNDING

At the time of this report, the next available funding round from Groundwork London is not due to open until October 2025. This presents a significant challenge, as it creates a gap in funding that will disrupt the continuity of a proven health equity model that is helping to build trust and improve access in marginalised communities.

Without sustained support, programmes like Jollof Nights, which communities have come to rely on, may not be able to continue in the interim. This kind of interruption risks undermining the progress made. It highlights the difficulties grassroots initiatives face in maintaining momentum when funding is not flexible or ongoing.

# JOLLOF NIGHT 17/06/25

## CONSOLIGRATE BARBERSHOP, WOOLWICH

**TUESDAY NIGHT JOLLOF**

TOPIC  
**FATHERHOOD . WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FATHER TODAY?**

Date 17th, June 2025	Time 7.30-9.30pm	Venue Consoligrade Babershop 20-22 Wilmount Street Woolwich, SE18 6ED
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FREE JOLLOF RICE & DRINKS

SCAN HERE TO ATTEND

POWERED BY

**NO BLACK MAN'S TIME**

FOR ENQUIRY: 07888183774



“It is a unique experience, quite different from any other experience I have had about promoting men’s health”

Attendee

# JOLLOF NIGHT 18/06/25

## NICK'S HQ BARBER SHOP, WOOLWICH



**WEDNESDAY  
NIGHT JOLLOF**

TOPIC  
**FATHERHOOD . WHAT DOES IT  
MEAN TO BE A FATHER TODAY?**

Date <b>18th, June 2025</b>	Time <b>7.30- 9.30pm</b>	Venue <b>Nick's HQ Barber Shop 229 Plumstead high street SE18 1HF</b>
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FREE JOLLOF RICE & DRINKS

SCAN HERE TO ATTEND

POWERED BY

NO BLACK MAN'S TIME



FOR ENQUIRY: 07888183774



“It [the session] helped me gain positive perspectives” - PARTICIPANT

# SUSTAINABILITY AND NEXT STEPS

“...Not just barbershops. There should be more spaces like this for men to meet and commune together”. - Attendee



The Jollof Nights pilot has demonstrated how trusted, culturally grounded spaces can tackle isolation, support prevention, and improve health engagement among African and Caribbean men. We are now focused on deepening impact, expanding reach, and embedding long-term sustainability.

## Theory of Change

If we create safe, familiar environments for peer-led conversation and early health education, then we reduce isolation, improve access to support, and prevent the escalation of long-term conditions.

This aligns with:

- Core20PLUS5 – focused outreach to underserved communities
- HiQiP – integrating non-clinical models to reduce inequalities
- London Neighbourhood Health Services – hyper-local, co-designed delivery
- NHS Long Term Plan – prevention, earlier diagnosis, and stronger community care

## What Makes Us Sustainable

Jollof Nights is a data-rich, grassroots-driven model. Through real-time feedback, health engagement data, and co-facilitator insights, we generate evidence that informs service design and systems change.

## We are currently

- Building the JN Connect app to manage sign-ups, feedback, and follow-up
- Launching a “Request Jollof Nights Near You” feature to crowdsource demand across the UK
- Developing a gamified men’s health app to foster chronic illness conversations and track behavioural shifts
- Certifying barbers and leaders via our facilitator training programme
- Partnering with NHS and research institutions to evaluate outcomes
- Licensing the model and co-delivering through NHS, VCSE collaboration, local council and other institutional commissioning.

## Our Long-Term Vision

We will scale through a mixed-income model, combining NHS partnerships, grants, commissioned delivery, and licensable training. Jollof Nights is positioned to become a national community health infrastructure, rooted in culture, insight, and prevention.

# JOLLOF NIGHT 19/06/25

HEADLINERZ BARBERSHOP,  
EAST GREENWICH



**THURSDAY NIGHT JOLLOF**  
SPECIAL SESSION

POWERED BY  
NDUKAUBA

TOPIC  
**STRONG BACK, SOFT HEART**  
A FATHER'S ROLE IN LOVE, CHANGE AND CARE  
FOR NEW FATHERS AND FATHERS-TO-BE

FACILITATOR **Jesse d Barber**

Q&A SESSION **Emmanuel Awuah**  
CAMHS Parenting Lead  
Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

Date 19th, June 2025	Time 7.30-9.30pm	Venue Headlinerz Barbershop 143 Trafalgar Road, SE10 9 TX
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QR CODE

FREE JOLLOF RICE & DRINKS

FOR ENQUIRY: 07888183774



“It was a welcoming space” - PARTICIPANT

# CONCLUSION AND THANK YOU



This pilot confirms that barbershops are more than just grooming spaces - they are gateways to health equity, trust and social healing. Jollof Nights has not only met but exceeded expectations in delivering grassroots, life-affirming care. With continued support, this model can revolutionize community wellbeing from the ground up.

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Thank you to Groundwork London for supporting this pilot and the resulting end-of-project report. Your commitment to community-led health and wellbeing has enabled this initiative to make a meaningful impact across the Royal Borough of Greenwich. We would not have been able to provide this level of intervention without your crucial support.

To our friends at Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust, thank you for your valuable input during the pilot phase and for your ongoing support of the project. Your collaboration has been instrumental in shaping our approach, and we deeply appreciate your continued commitment.

We would also like to thank the participating barbershops, facilitators, and residents whose contributions have helped in showing prove that this model actually works. Your voices, insights, and presence remain at the heart of everything we do. We look forward to what is to come, and hope to continue to work with all again in the near future.

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