# Point of Care Testing: Reducing Preventable Harm

## Addressing Hypertension Awareness, Access and Inequality in North East and North Central London

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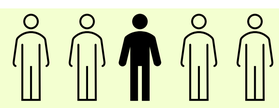
Acknowledgement: Evaluation and Insights Team, UCLPartners

UCLPartners Health Innovation

### Background



- Hypertension **increases** risk of **heart attack** and **stroke**
- **1 in 5 preventable CVD deaths** (>75 y/o) occur in the most deprived groups
- North East London: 2.2M people, 50%+ ethnic minorities, 24% most deprived
- High CVD burden: **130,000** living with heart disease, **220 deaths per month**
- National priority: Case-finding and lipid management through **Core20Plus5** to reduce inequalities.

### Purpose of Project

- Aim: Early detection, reduce health inequalities
- Evaluates programme effectiveness and equity of access
- Identifies high CVD risk and optimises medication
- Assesses staff and patient acceptability
- Supports NHS Long Term Plan: digital prevention, community screening, chronic disease management

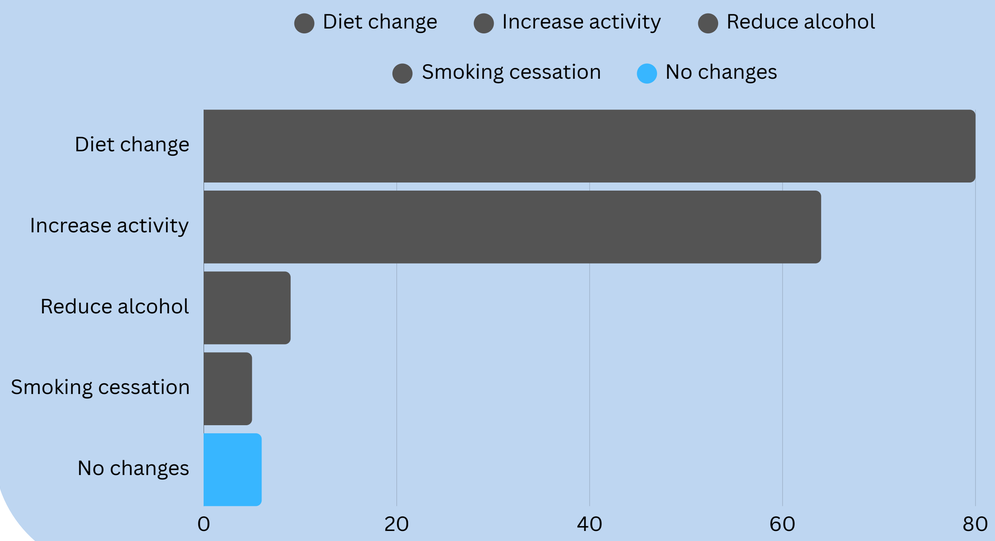
### POCT Pathway

- Becoming aware: Patients hear about the free service in community pharmacies (posters, staff, or word of mouth).
- Agreement & consent: Pharmacist explains the pilot, patients read info and consent to take part.
- Testing (POCT): Quick blood pressure and cholesterol checks done on site.
- Getting informed: Results explained immediately, with tailored lifestyle advice or GP referral if needed.

The UCLPartners Evaluation and Insights team used mixed-methods approaches, combining quantitative surveys of patients who used the service with qualitative interviews of pharmacists delivering it. Survey data were analysed and visualised in graphs and charts to identify patterns across age, gender, ethnicity, and comorbidities, helping to understand service impact and inform improvements in early detection and care.

## Patient Experience

Satisfaction with service experience




## Patient profile

- 350 patients tested (Jan–July 2025)
- Gender: 65% female, 35% male
- Shockingly, 70% of patients from the top 30% most deprived areas
- Of those tested, 7%  of those tested had diabetes, whilst 16% had family history of CVD
- Other risks: high BP and smoking were flagged as notable risk factors

99% of patients found it easy to access results

97% of patients would recommend the service to friends or family

## Pharmacist Feedback

Pharmacists of the involved pharmacies interviewed

- Positive impact on community cardiovascular health
- Complemented existing BP checks → raised CV risk awareness
- Barriers: language, low awareness beyond walk-ins, hard-to-reach groups (older adults, some religious communities)
- Patients: greater awareness of CV risk/prevention
- Some reluctance to start statins → preference for lifestyle change first

## Key Insights

- The service reached **deprived populations** and patients already at higher cardiovascular risk.
- Patients valued the **convenience** and **pre-existing rapport** with trusted pharmacists, with **very high satisfaction** and recommendation rates.
- Many planned positive lifestyle changes after testing, showing potential for **lasting health benefits**.
- **Awareness** of the service and **time pressures** in pharmacies remains a key challenge for wider-scale up.

For more information on the POCT Pathway, scan the QR code

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