The Nsibidi Project

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

November 2025 to October 2026

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Championing African art, culture and worldview as a tool to bring Derby's communities together.

We do not just understand the community.

WE ARE THE COMMUNITY.

The Nsibidi Project CIC · Derby, United Kingdom

WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

A YEAR OF OPENING DOORS

This year, The Nsibidi Project did what it was set up to do: open doors between Derby's African communities and the services that are meant to serve them. We sat in barbershops with men who had never spoken about their mental health in a group. We listened to mothers describe pregnancy, birth and loss. We hosted honest, difficult conversations about vaccines. And we opened a warm, welcoming space where families could gather and belong.

None of this works because we studied the community. It works because **we are the community**. Our languages, music, stories and ways of gathering are not decoration. They are the reason people walk through the door, and the reason they come back.

Ndukwe Onuoha, Director, The Nsibidi Project CIC

The year at a glance

200+ people reached across our programmes

20+ facilitated sessions across the year

5 programme strands delivered in Derby

15 delivery, funding and community partners

Our work this year

Fade Therapy
Men's mental health conversations in the barbershop chair.

Maternity and Neonatal Voices
African women shaping how Derby's maternity care listens.

Vaccine Conversations
Safe spaces to voice doubts and ask hard questions.

Warm Welcome Hub
A monthly home from home for African families.

Women's Wellbeing Swim
A private, women-only session. All 30 places booked.

PROGRAMME 01 · MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

FADE THERAPY

Funded by the Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner through the Safer and Stronger Communities Fund.

For many Black and African heritage men, the barbershop is the one place where talk flows freely. Fade Therapy turns that trust into early mental health support. Each session is co-facilitated by a trained wellbeing practitioner and a local barber, opening conversations about stigma, masculinity, identity, family pressure, money and policing.

15+
barbershop sessions in Arboretum, Normanton and Abbey wards

70+
men took part

50
men came back for more than one session, plus an active WhatsApp group





In the barbershop and beyond: sessions in Derby barbershops and community spaces.

IN THEIR WORDS

"We should do this more often."

"Men should learn to share."

"I'm happy I came to this."

For many, the first time they had discussed mental health openly in a group.

WHAT CHANGED

- Greater willingness to seek help
- Better understanding of mental and emotional wellbeing
- Less isolation, more confidence talking about personal challenges
- A rise in enquiries to Derbyshire MIND after sessions
- Zero safeguarding incidents

IN THE DERBY TELEGRAPH

"Most men will not speak up normally, so this is a chance for man-to-man therapy."

Nnamdi Ifeagwu, Fade Therapy lead

ON BBC NEWS

"We are having deep conversations. People are talking about what is happening to them in their community and sharing."

Salah Abdul Adulabi (Fifty), barber

Delivered with wellbeing practitioners from Derbyshire MIND, Derby City Council and Real Talk, with support from Arboretum and Normanton Ward Neighbourhood Boards, Community Action Derby and Derby City Council's Prevent Team. **Next:** more wards, and a version for women.

PROGRAMME 02 · MATERNAL HEALTH

MATERNITY AND NEONATAL VOICES

Our part in the DHIP Maternity and Neonatal Engagement Project, delivered by Community Action Derby with funding from Family Hubs and NHS Derby and Derbyshire ICB.



3
facilitated group sessions

30
women took part, mostly aged 23 to 47

16%
of all 184 voices heard across the city project

100%
identified as Black African

SESSION 1
Services, barriers and how women want to hear from us

SESSION 2
Pregnancy, birth and neonatal care

SESSION 3
Loss of a baby and bereavement support

WHAT WOMEN VALUED

+ Regular antenatal appointments and space to ask questions
+ Planned, well-monitored births and overall safe delivery
+ Timely, helpful community midwife and health visitor visits
+ Neonatal staff who explained equipment and processes

WHAT MUST CHANGE

! Concerns not taken seriously; assumptions made about pain tolerance
! Not always informed before procedures; consent needs strengthening
! Rushed discharge and little emotional support after birth
! Some women discharged without emotional support after miscarriage

VACCINATION IN PREGNANCY

Share of participants vaccinated

Whooping cough	100%
RSV	100%
Flu	c.90%

Women asked for clear information on benefits and risks so they can make informed choices.

The Nsibidi difference

Few women knew of Family Hubs before our sessions; awareness grew through them. They want information through community and faith networks: where we already are.

What happens next

University Hospitals of Derby and Burton is launching a Maternity and Neonatal Forum, and Best Start Family Hubs committed to building links with trusted community leaders.

Source: DHIP Maternity and Neonatal Engagement Report, The Nsibidi Project section and partner responses.

PROGRAMME 03 · COMMUNITY HEALTH

VACCINE CONVERSATIONS

Community Connector sessions for the Derby Health Inequalities Partnership (DHIP), February 2026.



Confidence in vaccines is slipping in parts of our community, and too few people have anywhere safe to say why. As DHIP Community Connectors, we made that space, in person and on WhatsApp, so that real concerns could be heard rather than left to grow in silence.

2
connection sessions, 5 and 27 February

15
community members took part

0
issues hosting; people spoke openly and wanted to learn more





WHAT WE HEARD

- Confidence has fallen since COVID-19, especially for children's vaccines
- Worries about side effects, including fears for children's development
- Information feels scarce, and some sources are not trusted
- Questions on whether vaccines are tested across different ethnic and genetic backgrounds
- For many, the first chance they had ever had to talk it through

WHAT WOULD BUILD CONFIDENCE

+ Clear explanation of how vaccines are developed and what they contain
+ Reassurance from medical professionals within our own community
+ Honest, transparent information on benefits and risks
+ Clear signposting to where to find out more

With clear information showing benefits outweigh risks, participants said they would be more likely to take up vaccination.

Some concerns rest on claims that clinical evidence does not support. That is precisely why trusted, two-way conversation matters: it is where worries are heard first, and then answered. We are seeking resources for more guided conversations and better signposting.

PROGRAMME 04 · BELONGING

WARM WELCOME HUB

Part of Derby's Warm Welcome Winter 2026 programme, hosted monthly at Rebecca House, Derby.



Winter can be the hardest season for families building a life far from home. Our Warm Welcome hub offers warmth, company and a sense of belonging in a space that feels familiar, where parents can connect and children can play alongside them. This is the African village, rebuilt in Derby.

33

people at the first hub session on 17 October 2026

Adults 22 — **Children 11**

A third of our guests were children: a space for whole families.

Women and girls 23 — **Men and boys 10**

Seven in ten were women and girls.

Where our guests travelled from

Attendees by postcode district

DE1	10
DE22	9
DE23	7
DE24	3
DE73	2
DE3	1
DE21	1

Seven postcode districts, with most guests from the city centre and the west and south of Derby. People travel to be with their community.

Reaching who others miss

Every guest at this session identified as Black or Black British, a community often under-represented in mainstream warm spaces.

Run by the community

Families arrive among people who share their heritage and understand their world. No translation of culture needed.

Source: Warm Welcome Winter 2026 monitoring form, Rebecca House, session of 17 October 2026.

PROGRAMME 05 · WOMEN'S WELLBEING

WOMEN'S WELLBEING SWIM

A free, private, women-only swimming session in partnership with Everyone Active.

We created a swimming session built around privacy and comfort, so that African women in Derby could enjoy the water together, on their own terms. Every place was taken.



30/30

places booked. Every lane full before the day.

When	Saturday 2 May 2026, 5pm to 6pm
Where	Moorways Sports Village and Water Park, Moor Lane, Allenton, Derby DE24 9HY
With	Everyone Active
Cost	Free to every participant

DESIGNED FOR COMFORT

Private

An enclosed space with the blinds down throughout.

Women only

Women participants, with a female lifeguard on hand at all times.

Confidence first

A pool that is not deep, so every woman can stay within her comfort zone.

FROM OUR ANNOUNCEMENT

"Yayy! All lanes in our private, women-only swimming session are full!"

WOMEN AT THE HEART OF OUR YEAR

30
women shaped Derby's maternity engagement

30
swim places filled by women

7 IN 10
Warm Welcome hub guests were women and girls

WITH THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS

Derbyshire Police and Crime Commissioner — Safer and Stronger Together
Community Action
dhip — Derby Health Inequalities Partnership
NHS Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board
everyone ACTIVE
Living Seed Church Derby
Afro Best of the Best
EL & H Hair & Beauty Saloon & Barbershop
Roots
Practically Leading

Derby City Council Prevent Team
Derbyshire MIND
Real Talk
Arboretum Ward Neighbourhood Board
Normanton Ward Neighbourhood Board

WHAT THIS YEAR TAUGHT US

Culture is the way in

Barbershops, churches and community hubs reached people that clinics and leaflets do not.

Trust travels through us

Men and women alike asked to hear from services through community and faith networks.

Gaps we will close

Tracking referrals and follow-up more closely.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2026/27

- **Fade Therapy grows** into more Derby wards, with a new version for women, and The Listening Booth for private voice recording.
- **Naija Dance and Wellbeing**, a year-long programme open to everyone in Derby's Sadler Gate creative quarter.
- **A podcast of African folk tales**, carrying life lessons from our elders to a new generation.
- **The Nsibidi Cultural Hub**, our long-term ambition for a permanent home for African culture in Derby.

AS FEATURED IN BBC News · Derby Telegraph

The Nsibidi Project

Igwebuike: there is strength in numbers.

Partner with us, fund us, or simply come along.
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