Background and aims There is increasing evidence that childhood vitamin D deficiency is associated with poorer overall health and associated with numerous diseases. We wanted to assess knowledge and use of vitamin D in mothers of the Somali Community in West London and with the aim of improving knowledge, access to vitamin D and reducing the burden of vitamin D associated healthcare problems in mothers and their children.

Methods A representative sample of Somali individuals were contacted by HASVO (Harrow Association of Somali Voluntary Organisations) and three meetings conducted with these community members. Participants were asked to complete a detailed vitamin D questionnaire assessing baseline knowledge of vitamin D deficiency, awareness of its importance and current uptake. This was followed by an educational presentation and discussion. Questionnaires and presentations were in English and translators provided for those who required assistance.

Results 45 participants completed the questionnaire. Most participants had heard of vitamin D deficiency (33), but the participants and their children were at high risk of it through lifestyle factors, particularly low sun exposure. The discussion exposed variability in both lay health beliefs and experiences with healthcare professionals.

Conclusion Phase I of this study has shown that (i) there is a current vitamin D crisis in this community and knowledge is variable, (ii) clarity in community is needed about vitamin D dosage, (iii) access to cheap vitamin D needs to be better publicised. Thus, we propose that a vitamin D campaign is needed and will be rolled out in Phase II.