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COMMUNITY ACTION SUTTON & SUTTON GIVING

*Crisis Fund – Report on Behalf of ASKI (Advice Support Knowledge Information) Sharon
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COMMUNITY ACTION

SUTTON & SUTTON GIVING

COVID-19 Crisis Fund – Report on Behalf of
ASKI (Advice Support Knowledge Information)

SUMMARY

ASKI is a small charity based in Thornton Heath, the London Borough of Croydon. As a result of the COVID-19 lockdown the charity has had to revise the way in which it carries out its charitable work. Which has lead to them widening their reach and working in partnership with other charities, Third sector organisations and statutory services further a field.

This report highlights the work undertaken by the charity in Sutton with the older BME population, as a result of funding which they managed to secure within the borough. It also emphasises the services that will need to be put into place to ensure that the older BME population, needs are been met in the day to day delivery of servces within the borough now and in the future.



Joseph Jeffers CEO B.A. M.A. FIDTA

Community Action Sutton & Sutton Giving COVID-19 Crisis Fund

Introduction

Advice Support Knowledge Information is a charity based in the London Borough of Croydon. The charity was established in 2012 and has had its own premises which operates in part as a community café on the high street for the last 3 years. ASKI is currently funded via grants, donations and membership fees in order to deliver their programmes and activities.

As a charity, prior to the COVID-19 Lockdown, ASKI ran weekly, bi-weekly and monthly activities and events that catered to over 231 people throughout the month. Within those activities the charity ran regular dance and exercise classes, sewing and knitting classes, bi-weekly and monthly social clubs, which involved guest speakers from various organisations including the NHS and local government, discussions on relevant topics followed by a healthy lunch. The charity is unique in that it is User Led by the people attending which gives the charity a high degree of sustainability and investment by those taking part.

To further help reduce the growing isolation identified amongst its members, ASKI provided a Saturday pop up café from their premises on the high street, which allowed members and non-members alike to have somewhere safe to go, where they could meet and engage outside the usual Monday to Friday 9-5 office hours. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), “healthy Ageing is about creating the environments and opportunities that enable people to be and do what they value throughout their lives”. Furthermore, the WHO (2020) also go on to state that healthy Ageing is a process of where older adults develop and maintain the functional ability that supports wellbeing throughout ageing.

Under the leadership of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the charity run by an active Board of Trustees and Volunteers has strived to produce a Healthy Ageing (HA) programme that has encouraged older adults to take advantage of

opportunities to engage in meaningful activities, social interaction and physical activities that promote both mental and physical health and well-being (Age UK, 2011). The charity undertakes its work largely due to its bank of 23 DBS checked volunteers as well as paid sessional staff and pro-bono consultants.

During the initial COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, the charity was able to acquire funding that enabled them to successfully deliver a hot meal service within the London Borough of Croydon to their members for a period of 2 months. During this time ASKI delivered 571 meals, that were made using fresh ingredients to ensure that they were as nutritious as possible as well as culturally appropriate to meet the needs of the members.

As a result this Croydon initiative lead to ASKI reaching out to the BME community within Sutton to see if there was a need for a similar service there.

Community Action Sutton & Sutton Giving COVID-19 Crisis Fund

Within the Borough of Sutton there is a significant issue of health and social inequalities particularly amongst those from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds. Further, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, those from BME groups have been impacted disproportionately by the virus which is believed to be a result of social inequalities and health statuses (The Health Foundation, 2020). ASKI with support from ACHA (African and Caribbean Heritage Association) were able to identify service users that fell within these remits. Hence, this was part of the reason why the decision was made to offer this service to these clients. As a charity ASKI wanted to ensure that those most vulnerable to COVID-19 were catered to; this service enabled the charity to cater to those deemed most at risk by the pandemic and the consequent lockdown.

ASKI specialist knowledge, expertise and rootedness in Sutton enabled them to reach and respond to some of the highest risk individuals which also enabled them to fill the gap between those provided by other agencies who were not able to cater to the needs of this particular population. As a result of the funding that was acquired to deliver this service, the charity was able to provide and deliver hot meals to clients

for a period of 4 months. ASKI partnered with a range of chefs that were able to produce a variety of healthy meals, including organic and plant-based to provide a bi-weekly meal delivery service to older BME men and women in the Borough of Sutton. Additionally, the cultural appropriateness of the meals was just a big of a factor as the nutritional content to ensure that all of the clients needs were met. Throughout the service a total of 771 meals where delivered to clients.

In addition to the meal delivery, ASKI also provided a Wrap-A-Round service. This was created to help further reduce isolation through providing weekly catch ups with clients via the telephone, as well as competitions and Zoom classes that included Chair Based exercises delivered by DBS checked staff for those receiving the meals to get in volved in.

Overall, the Sutton meal delivery service was a huge success. Furthermore, as a Charity, ASKI was able to go beyond the scope of just dropping off meals to those in need, by providing a 'lifeline' to some of the more vulnerable groups within the community. This knowledge highlighted a need for a different way to work as a charity in the future. The impact of COVID-19 emphasised many uncertainties on how the charity would be able to continue during the forth coming months. Thus, providing this along with the Croydon meal delivery service has enabled the charity to realise that the way forward for them during these uncertain times are to ensure that their clients not only have access to a hot meal but that their physical, mental and social needs are also met during times of isolation and shielding.

Feedback from Clients

In order for the charity to have a better understanding of the usefulness of the meal delivery service and impact that the COVID-19 Lockdown had on the clients, a simple questionnaire was designed to gather this information (Appendix 1). The main themes derived are included in the diagram below.



Conclusion

Although the initial reason for the Lockdown was to help save lives and reduce the pressure on key services such as the NHS, isolation for older adults with little to no social support can be quite detrimental to their health and well-being (Age UK, 2011). Services that charities such as ASKI provides can be lifelines for many of those that access their services. However, within these uncertain times the way in which a charity operates and provides their services are in danger, as it takes resources both of monetary value and time for this to be undertaken (Kay, 2020).

ASKI has been hit rather hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, as they are having to adapt the way they work within these rapid changing times. However, there is still a need for charities like ASKI to continue running, as the services they have been able to provide throughout this current lockdown have proven to be of value to the BME population they have catered to throughout.

Recommendations

The COVID-19 lockdown has come with many challenges, in-particular how this charity has been able to continue working within the current climate. ASKI has been able to adapt well, through successfully been supported by a range of funders to meet the growing needs of older people from BME communities that are in need of their services in Sutton.

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, ASKI has had to adapt their strategic plan and fund-raising strategy. With Support from the London Community Response Fund ASKI was able to move services to a digital platform to provide online blended learning and support. This new way of reaching members and clients will be monitored during the COVID-19 crisis

What has also been highlighted during this COVID-19 pandemic, is a concern that ASKI identified from its very origin of establishment, that older people from BME communities cultural needs were often not met in the day to day delivery of services. As a result, ASKI intends to widen its reach in working in partnership with other

Charities, Third Sector Organisations and Statutory Services in Croydon and surrounding Boroughs to ensure that these communities continue to be catered to. Moreover, the Board of Trustees are also looking at setting up a meal delivery service, as a result of the work they have undertaken during the COVID-19 crisis.

Areas of focus moving forward:

- Establish a Sutton based charity to work with the wider BME communities in Sutton - Place At My Table this was established in August 2020 with this as part of its remit.
- Work closely with agencies in Sutton to support them in meeting the needs of their BME service users, through providing training, advice and support.
- Identify a range of Heritage and Arts based projects which can highlight the contribution made by BME communities living and working in the Borough of Sutton

References

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Appendix 1
ASKI Food Survey Delivery Service Questionnaire
COVID-19 Response

1. How important is it that the meal delivery service caters to your cultural needs?
Please explain:

2. In addition to your meal delivery, what other sources of support have you received to date? Please explain:

3. How has this isolation impacted on your quality of life? Please explain:

4. If something like this were to happen again, what systems would you like to see in place? Please explain:

5. Please circle your age range below:

55-60 61-65 66-70 71-75 76-80 81+



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