

# Our Health in our Hands

Case studies of  
voluntary groups  
working towards a  
healthier Redbridge



# Contents

## **Foreword**

## **Introduction**

## **Case studies**

Anxiety Care

Arthritis Self-Help Network (Patient Education Forum at King George Hospital)

Daffodil Advocacy Project

Disabled Asian Women's Network (DAWN)

ELOP (East London Out Project)

Fit for Fun

Forest Farm Peace Garden

King of Hearts

Panjabi Centre

Redbridge and Waltham Forest African Communities Forum

Redbridge Asian Mandal

Redbridge User Network User Pressure Group (RUN-UP)

Shpresa

Sickle Plus

Sikh Community Care Project

Voices of Experience

Welcome Centre

## **Volunteering**

## **RedbridgeCVS**

About Us

Contact Us

## Foreword

The Government's White Paper "Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England" states that

"it is simply not possible to promote healthier lifestyles through Whitehall diktat and nannying about the way people should live. Recent years have proved that one-size-fits-all solutions are not good when public health challenges vary from one neighbourhood to the next."

It goes on to say that a new approach is needed

"that empowers individuals to make healthy choices and gives communities the tools to address their own, particular needs."

*Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England (November 2010)*

There is a huge range of voluntary and community organisations in Redbridge. These groups share a number of characteristics, including being "not-for-profit," and they have often been established as a result of local people seeing local needs and deciding to form organisations and/or undertake activities that help meet these needs. RedbridgeCVS is the umbrella body for the voluntary sector in Redbridge and we estimate that there are around 800 voluntary and community groups in the borough. A large percentage of these groups have a specific focus on health and social care – but all can have a role to play in helping people to keep healthy and understand the potential role of the NHS in improving their lives.

Voluntary and community organisations – including faith-based groups – engage with their members and service users in a qualitatively different way to statutory bodies and often have long-standing relationships with local people who can be deemed "hard to reach" by public sector professionals such as those working for the NHS. We believe that local primary and secondary health care providers, such as GPs, can make significantly better use of the resources offered by voluntary and community groups and through making appropriate referrals to local groups, can save themselves time (and money!) as a result of their patients joining and accessing appropriate support groups, lunch clubs, activity sessions, self-help groups, and expert-patient groups etc. We also believe that using these groups to disseminate relevant messages about health promotion and healthy living is a highly effective way of ensuring that local people can get timely access to accurate and useful information about keeping healthy, as well as knowing how best to make use of NHS resources such as GPs etc.

RedbridgeCVS has a Health Partnerships Officer post which is funded by NHS Redbridge. This post exists to help improve partnership working between the NHS and voluntary and community groups in the borough. This document is an attempt to show local GPs and others just some of the many voluntary organisations to which they could refer patients and others, thereby making best use of the wide range of resources the voluntary and community sector can offer.

We are keen to hear from GPs and NHS staff who would like to learn more about the local voluntary sector and/or who might like to suggest ways that we can provide information to them so that they can make referrals to appropriate local groups for the benefit of their patients (and themselves).

The move towards GP commissioning makes this doubly important, as GPs are going to be in greater control of NHS budgets than ever before, and we believe that the voluntary sector can play an essential role in improving local health and shaping local health services.



Ross Diamond  
Chief Officer  
RedbridgeCVS  
March 2011

## Introduction

This document aims to increase the awareness of the NHS and GPs in Redbridge about the range of ways that local voluntary and community organisations contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of residents, and to act as a catalyst for us to explore opportunities for further joined-up working in the future (including timely and relevant two-way referrals). Although these case studies are not exhaustive and do not include all the local voluntary groups that work directly on health related matters, they provide a snapshot of the voluntary sectors' involvement in improving the health of local people.

The document includes 17 case studies of voluntary groups that currently work in Redbridge to address public health priorities such as arthritis, anxiety, sexual health, heart disease, obesity, sickle cell anaemia, and mental health. It reflects the different communities that voluntary groups work with, including older people, young people, people with learning difficulties, people with disabilities, refugees and asylum seekers, homeless people, ethnic minority communities and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

We hope that this document will lead to greater mutual understanding between the NHS and local community organisations which will ultimately inform future health policies and programmes. We hope to see continuing ongoing engagement between statutory health services and the voluntary sector so that we can add value to all our efforts to make Redbridge a healthier place.

### **More information**

If you need any more information about the groups mentioned in this document or any other groups working on health in Redbridge, please email Swati Vyas, Health Partnerships Officer, at [swati@redbridgecvs.net](mailto:swati@redbridgecvs.net) or call her on 020 8514 9626.

# Anxiety Care

## Introduction and Brief History

Anxiety Care was registered as a charity in 1996. It was formed from the experiences of some carers and sufferers of anxiety disorders, who found it difficult to access appropriate statutory services. From a beginning where meetings were held in the founder's living room, Anxiety Care grew to where they now employ 2 staff and have a 'bank' of approximately thirty volunteers who facilitate the services.

## Description of the Project

- A comprehensive website with free information on all aspects of anxiety disorders, phobias and obsessive compulsive disorders for those affected and family/friends
- Support and recovery groups which are run four times per week, from three sites across the borough. These are drop-in groups, which means there are no assessments or waiting lists
- A helpline which provides information and support
- A one-to-one counselling service
- Structured Recovery home visits
- An online group every Monday evening which provides support and information
- An email Structured Recovery and Counselling Service
- Support and information/signposting for parents whose children have anxieties
- An enquiries service which is available online
- A training programme specialising in the area of anxiety disorders



## Need for the Project(s)

Research suggests that 10% of the UK population will at one stage suffer a debilitating anxiety disorder, including 13% of all children between the ages of 9 and 17 years. Of these people, only 1 in 7 is currently seeking treatment, and the majority not in treatment are from disadvantaged backgrounds. Anxiety Care's own evidence from 14,000 unique individual visits per month to their website, 35 email enquiries per month, 9 helpline contacts per day, and a 15% increase in clients across services over the last 8 months – due in part to the uncertain economic times and the organisation's increased awareness raising locally – indicates that their 3,000 plus clients annually are just a small proportion of those in need.

## Aims and Objectives of the Organisation

To provide high quality services to those who experience anxiety disorders including panic attacks, general anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder and phobias. Anxiety Care also seeks to increase awareness of the issue and promote the awareness that you can recover and not just learn to live with it.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- greatly reduced number of visits to GPs and A&E departments
- reduced waiting lists
- less reliance on prescription medicine

- service users more likely to be less reliant on welfare benefits as many return to work or begin to access training opportunities.

## Benefits for Users

Service users:

- gain a better understanding of their condition and are more able to plan, initiate and follow a recovery plan, supported by Anxiety Care, designed for their individual needs
- gain access to self-support networks by attending group sessions and building relationships with other service users
- are equipped with coping skills to resume their normal lives, improve family and personal relationships
- have improved confidence and self-esteem
- have no feeling of shame about their condition.

## Lessons Learnt

It is important for Anxiety Care to ensure that they continue to work with other professionals to grow public awareness of the issue. It is also essential that they monitor their clients' progress as it is important to provide evidence that what Anxiety Care does works. It is the experience of Anxiety Care that service users can recover from even chronic anxiety disorders.

### **How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?**

Through client questionnaires and the use of IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) minimum dataset.

## The Way Ahead

To build a strong base of skilled, committed volunteers. Anxiety Care also wishes to expand their training and would like to offer it to others who are interested in what they do. They are currently in the process of inviting volunteers from a local BME group to take part in their next training; this follows feedback that their client group are likely to take support only from members of their own community due to language and cultural barriers.

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# Arthritis Self-Help Network

## Patient Education Forum at King George Hospital

A case study of partnership between the voluntary and statutory sectors

### Introduction and Brief History

Arthritis Self-Help Network is a voluntary group providing support to people affected by arthritis. It was formerly known as King George Hospital Rheumatology Support Group and was founded in 2002. It was set up by the initiative of Dr Guy Dabrera, Mrs Diane Wynne-Fitzgerald and Miss Joan Woolston with the support of staff members of the Rheumatology Department at KGH, as there wasn't any similar support group for arthritis patients in Redbridge at the time. The support group initially started meeting informally twice a month at KGH as a self-help group where members would share their experiences of coping with arthritis.



In 2006, the hospital administrators at KGH wanted to move the Rheumatology Department to Outpatients. Members of the Self-Help Group opposed this, and after asking patients to sign a petition to prevent the move they were successful in their efforts to prevent this change. The petition's success and the enthusiasm of the members and other patients illustrated how much power patients can have and, therefore, it was decided to formalise the group by forming a management committee and adopting a formal constitution.

In 2009, the name of King George Hospital Rheumatology Support Group was changed to avoid the misunderstanding they were funded by the NHS. The new name – Arthritis Self-Help Network (NE London) or ASNet – has allowed the group to reach a wider range of users.

ASNet currently offers the following services to its members:

- a. Patient Education Forum (PEF) at King George Hospital once a month
- b. Self-help groups
- c. Raised bed allotment
- d. Alexander Technique sessions
- f. Tai chi and yoga classes

The Arthritis Self-Help Network's Patient Education Forum is a good example of partnership working between the voluntary and statutory sectors.

### Description of the Partnership

The Patient Education Forum (PEF) for patients affected by arthritis was started in 2009 on the joint initiative of Dr Guy Dabrera, Consultant Rheumatologist in the Rheumatology Department of King George Hospital and Mrs Diane Wynne-Fitzgerald, founder of the Arthritis Self-Help Network (ASNet).

Patient education sessions are conducted once every month at the James Fawcett Centre at King George Hospital. The sessions are focused on the needs of patients and every patient has a chance to put their questions to Dr Dabrera. Members of the forum also share their experiences of living with arthritis with other forum participants. In addition, the monthly forum meetings also cover topics such as different types of arthritis, treatments, drugs available, diagnostic tests required, NHS practice and patient experience.

The hospital provides a meeting room free of cost for the forum meetings. Mrs Wynne-Fitzgerald facilitates the meeting and ensures that everyone in the group has an equal opportunity to speak and ask questions. ASNNet promotes the forum by sending out promotional leaflets including the forum meeting dates to a wide range of public places. The forum is also open to all family members of the patients.

## Need for the Patient Education Forum

Dr Dabrera identified an unmet need for patient education as he was the only consultant rheumatologist in Redbridge and was restricted to spending only fifteen minutes per patient per consultation. Patients felt a similar need to be able to discuss their symptoms and treatment. However, there was no way to pass on the basic information about arthritis, which was essential both for patients and their family members. Counselling was available from a nurse specialist before a patient started receiving medication regarding such issues as possible side effects of the drugs and how often blood tests needed to be done, but there was a need for a forum where patients could get together on a continuing basis. To fulfil this unmet need for regular patient education, the PEF was started.

## Aims and Objectives of the Forum

The long-term aim was to educate patients and empower them to take control of their disease. The objectives of the forum are:

1. To educate patients about arthritis and the treatments available, possible complications, effects of arthritis on other parts of the body, and other life style issues
2. To address patients' queries concerning their ongoing treatment
3. To reassure patients that the treatment available at King George Hospital is on a par with any other hospital in the country
4. To remove communication barriers between doctors and patients

### Contributions of King George Hospital and Arthritis Self-Help Network

1. Both KGH and ASNet had taken the initiative to start the forum
2. The meeting room is provided free of cost by KGH
3. Dr Guy Dabrera and his team conduct the sessions free of charge
4. ASNet's contribution is to promote the forum by distributing publications, making phone calls and sending emails to members.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

1. The hospital gets an opportunity to interact with patients in an informal environment and obtain their feedback on services provided to them
2. It is useful in promoting health and well being and preventing many health problems resulting in less pressure on the hospital resources
3. It helps in developing 'Expert Patients', who become a resource to educate other patients and thus save time and resources for the Rheumatology Department.

## Benefits for Users

PEF has benefited the patients as well as doctors and the organizations they represent i.e. Arthritis Self-Help Network and King George Hospital (part of Barking, Havering and Redbridge Hospitals Trust)

1. Patients are able to obtain information on their disease and how to manage it. In addition, they receive information on the latest drugs and treatments available to them
2. The group also benefits patients' family members and carers as they gain a better understanding of the impact of arthritis on the physical and mental health of the patient
3. ASNet has increased their credibility and their work has expanded from a single self-help group to a voluntary group and finally a registered charity (No 1138058) with a slight change of name to Arthritis Self-help Network (London). It is known as an organization that works for betterment of patients living with

arthritis.

4. It helps in developing 'Expert Patients' who become a resource to educate other patients.

## Lessons Learnt

1. Health promotion in a setting comfortable for people can have a positive impact on patients' health and well being
2. Patient education helps in prevention of illness and also saves General Practitioners' and Consultants' time as patients have basic information about the disease
3. Patients need information and advice on healthy diet for better response to treatment
4. Imparting education is a skill and needs a lot of perseverance, especially when it is done in a voluntary capacity.
5. Flexibility is important when arranging the sessions, as they may have to be postponed owing to unforeseen circumstances.
6. It is important to have someone who is good at building rapport with both with the patients and the doctors
7. A good facilitator is needed to allow each person to speak and treat them all with equal respect
8. Logistics need care such as arranging a suitable venue and time for the meetings

### How does the Forum know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?

One of the biggest indicators that the Forum is achieving its aims and objectives are the increasing number of people who join. It has become very popular and patients give positive feedback after attending the sessions.

It has removed the communication barrier faced by patients as the Forum gives them an opportunity to discuss their condition with the doctor in an informal and friendly environment.

In addition, there is a demand to start an online group for patients who are not able to attend the forum meetings.

The members nominated Dr Dabrera for an award in appreciation of his work with the group and in 2006 he received the 'Healthcare Champion' award from the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Association at a special ceremony at the Houses of Parliament.



## The Way Ahead

The above case study shows that the Patient Education Forum is a model that could be replicated in other hospitals for patients with different diseases/conditions.

Such forums need to be promoted at the primary care level by General Practitioners, as primary prevention is more effective in the long run.

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# Daffodil Advocacy Project

## Best practices when working with people who have learning disabilities

### Introduction and Brief History

Adults with learning disabilities are often some of the most disempowered members of our society. Communication barriers and the prejudice of others can mean that someone else is always in charge of their lives. The Daffodil Advocacy Project was established in Redbridge in 1995, to provide people with learning disabilities with independent advocacy to assist them in obtaining access to their full rights and choices as citizens.

### Description of the Project

The Daffodil Advocacy Project provides advocacy support to adults with a learning disability in Redbridge and surrounding areas. 'Advocacy' means taking actions to help people to speak up and get their voices heard about what they need, want or choose in a range of different situations. The Daffodil Advocacy Project is an independent organisation which means that their advocates can be totally on the side of their service users. The Project is also user-led, so all their policies, procedures and activities are based on the views of their service users. Service users are always at the forefront of all activities and the project staff play a supportive role to them. In addition, the project also encourages people with a learning disability to join their Board of Trustees and its Advisory Group. Service users are also actively involved in other aspects of the project, working as paid staff and volunteers.



#### The main services provided by the Daffodil Advocacy Project are:

- Providing a one-to-one advocacy service, using paid and volunteer advocates;
- Supporting (as appropriate) self-advocacy groups such as Redbridge People First and Speak Up Link Up. These groups talk about issues that affect the daily lives of people with learning disabilities and participate in the development of local services.

Advocates use their time, equipment, communication skills, knowledge of learning disability, commitment to equal rights and creativity to provide these services.

### Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- The project is a very important resource for NHS and Social Care services to gain information on the health and social care needs of people with learning disabilities.
- The Daffodil Advocacy Project helps NHS and Social Care services to conduct consultations with their service users on different health and social care policies. It is able to provide first hand feedback from service users which can be used for shaping future health and social care programmes.

### Benefits for Users

Service users are supported:

- to understand their rights to access local services
- to be able to speak up for their rights

- to be able to live more independently

## Lessons Learnt

- The most important lesson learnt by The Daffodil Advocacy Project is to listen to its service users and involve them at all levels of the project. This makes the project user-led in a real sense and shapes its activities based on the felt needs of the service users.
- Although involving users at all levels is process-orientated and time-consuming, it is very important as it results in positive changes in the lives of the service users.

### **How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?**

- The Daffodil Advocacy Project started working when there were no advocacy services for people with learning disabilities in Redbridge. The project has grown over the years and supported 241 service users in the year 2009-10.
- The project has a sound monitoring and evaluation system which constantly informs their current and future plans and helps them understand whether they are reaching their aim and objectives. Both internal and external evaluations are conducted periodically by consulting the service users to know whether services have had a positive impact on them. If service users are unable to share their views on the services provided by the project, their carers, social workers and key workers are contacted for the evaluation. As well as having two service users on the Board of Trustees, there is an Advisory Group to the board composed of service users. There is close communication between the two groups.
- The Annual General Meeting of the project is conducted in an interactive manner and gives service users an opportunity to share their experiences of working with the project and provide feedback on the services provided.

## The Way Ahead

The Daffodil Advocacy Project would like to reach out to its service users and support them as long as possible because they value its services.

One of the suggestions from service users is to train them to teach different service providers on how to work with people with learning disabilities. This is one of the directions the organisation would like to pursue in the future.

The project also plans to continue providing one-to-one advocacy and support to self-advocacy groups. However, the challenge for the project as a whole is to secure their future funding in the current economic environment.

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# Disabled Asian Women's Network (DAWN)

## Introduction and Brief History

Disabled Asian Women's Network (DAWN) was set up in December 1993 to cater for the physical, emotional and mental well-being of disabled Asian women. The group was started to improve the quality of life of the elderly and help them manage their lives with more comfort and ease, which gives them a sense of being part of the community. DAWN also provides a forum for free exchange of information, beliefs and ideas about gender, race and equality.

## Description of the Project

DAWN provides a day care drop-in service for over a hundred members, who are Asian women aged over sixty. Members enrol with DAWN by paying a fee of £10 per annum. The drop-in sessions are provided every Tuesday and Wednesday from 12 noon to 3 pm and the following activities are conducted for members:

1. Yoga classes
2. Exercise classes
3. Alternative therapies like body massage, reflexology etc.
4. Talks and workshops on health issues and social care services
5. Cultural and recreational activities and celebration of festivals
6. A hot meal is served at the end of the day free of cost
7. Day trips to places of interest
8. Library services
9. Capacity building: computer and English classes



## Need for the Project

When DAWN was formed in 1993, there was a lack of day care/drop-in services for elderly disabled Asian women in Redbridge. There was a need to provide a drop-in service for this population which was culturally appropriate and a place where Asian women could meet other women of similar backgrounds. DAWN was formed to cater to these needs and added its activities based on requests from members.

## Aims and Objectives

DAWN provides a regular meeting point to facilitate social education and recreational activities with the emphasis on empowerment and advocacy. It works in conjunction with other organizations and services in order to facilitate and contribute towards programmes and seminars.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

1. Health promotional talks prevent many health issues amongst DAWN members, thereby saving NHS and hospital resources
2. Information and advice on social services like pension, housing, benefits system and so forth helps social

care services to engage with service users as a group

3. DAWN saves administration expenses for social care services as they support members in filling forms, writing letters, translating information received by members etc.

## Benefits for Users

1. Members of DAWN receive information and advice on health issues and social care services. This helps them access the services and also prevents health conditions by raising awareness. This also gives members an opportunity to interact with officials of statutory bodies and resolve queries face-to-face.
2. Members are able to benefit from the subsidised services provided by DAWN.

## Lessons Learnt

1. To increase the uptake of any service for elderly disabled Asian women, services should be designed and delivered based on cultural and language requirements of service users.
2. Health awareness can be increased by conducting one-to-one community sessions.
3. Regular health checks in the community setting will prevent many health problems amongst elderly disabled women.
4. Being amongst their own culture and in the same age group improves the mental and emotional health of elderly disabled Asian women.

## The Way Ahead

DAWN would like to continue its current activities and extend its drop-in sessions to all days of the week. It also plans to start a 60+ club once a week for men and women who work. As DAWN's objective is to improve the mental and emotional well-being of its members, they plan to start a Laughter Club for their members, who will benefit from its therapeutic effects.

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# ELOP (East London Out Project)

## Introduction and Brief History

East London Out Project (ELOP) is an exciting and innovative lesbian and gay mental health charity based in East London. ELOP was established around 1995 as a grassroots-developed and community-led organisation with the aim of promoting the mental health, wellbeing, empowerment and equality of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) communities. Since its inception, ELOP has been providing information, advice, advocacy, counselling and support services, plus other social and community activities and events in North East London's LGB&T communities.

ELOP operates a holistic approach and believes that one area of health and well-being, whether this be mental, psychological, emotional, physical, social or even community, cannot really be fully achieved or maintained without recognition or the opportunity for all the concerns of our 'whole self' to be addressed. By having a range of services ELOP is able to refer those using one service to another for additional support, information or advice as appropriate.

In addition to operating direct community frontline services, ELOP also delivers second-tier work which includes providing information, training, consultancy and support to statutory and voluntary sector policy makers, managers, service providers and their staff teams.

## Description of the Project

ELOP provides a range of services including counselling, advice and information, support to victims of homophobic crime, sexual health support, and a range of social activities in their Club Mellow Community Lounge for families, young people, adults, and people with support needs (contact the centre for up-to-date information on what's on offer).

In addition, ELOP also provides a range of services to schools, including teacher training and class room lessons to look at homophobic bullying in schools and LGBT people throughout the curriculum.

### Advice and Information

- telephone, drop-in sessions, day and evening information-line, individual appointments, casework, sign-posting and referrals

### Community Safety and Victim Care Services

- operating an LGBT non-police reporting centre, running community campaigns, providing victim care and witness support services, running community safety awareness programmes, working with the police and community safety teams across North East London, involvement in anti-homophobic multi-agency forums, liaison with police LGBT officers, raising awareness to the nature and existence of homophobic harassment, incidents and crimes, providing training to mainstream providers

### Counselling

- individual (14-, 28- and 42-session contracts), couples/partners/relationship counselling (up to 28-session contracts), 14 plus youth counselling, plus occasional theme based support groups

### LGBT Community Activities, Events & Workshops

- variety of weekly youth, women's, men's, mixed gender and theme-specific social groups
- varied monthly, quarterly and annual programmes of community events, upcoming activities and workshops
- a range of factual, fiction, biographies, videos and DVDs in the group's community library

### Sexual Health Promotion

- advice and information, support and counselling, distribution of condoms, lube and sexual health materials, assisted and fast-track referral to a range of sexual health services, including Genito-Urinary Medicine/ Department of Sexual Health and HIV clinics, drop-in sessions, HIV prevention initiatives, workshops, plus training programmes for mainstream service providers

## Support and Advocacy

- individual appointments, telephone and on-going casework

## Training, Consultancy, Research and Representation

- for statutory and voluntary sector providers and staff teams, membership and involvement on numerous multi-agency forums, committees, and strategy groups.

## Young People's Services 'Youth Out East'

- individual support, weekly groups, drop-in sessions, workshops, young people's network, youth forum, school based programme, training and awareness raising for education, youth and mainstream providers

## Volunteering Opportunities and Student Placements

- there are numerous opportunities for community members to contribute to the services, activities and events of ELOP, plus get on-site learning support, career and personal development opportunities.

## Need for the Project

ELOP was established 15 years ago as an LGB&T counselling service through the need identified by a local gay man asking to see a gay counsellor following some negative experiences in mainstream provision. The rest of ELOP's services have evolved through need identified in issues presented in the counselling service, for example around community safety and social isolation. However, whilst mainstream services and legislation have improved since then, there is still a need and demand for targeted mental health support for LGB&T communities as their needs are often not recognised and therefore not met in mainstream provision. ELOP services also recognise the need for patient choice in the services people can access and the importance of feeling represented in those services.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- ELOP's services complement statutory services and help to relieve the pressure from user over-use
- Its services are more cost-effective than statutory services
- ELOP has good links/networks with statutory professionals and services, and can effectively signpost as needed

## Benefits for Users

- LGB&T individuals can access support services delivered by LGB&T professionals
- As a targeted service provider, ELOP has more detailed knowledge and understanding of the complexity of issues faced by its communities
- Users feel empowered accessing services in a dedicated LGB&T centre where they can readily access a comprehensive range of information on other LGB&T support services

## Impact of the Project

To evaluate its counselling service, ELOP administers an anonymous self-rating questionnaire before and after counselling which is then reviewed to gain an overall picture of the impact of the service – this has shown an average rating increase of 56%. Evaluation of its other services varies with a range of qualitative measures to capture the wealth of verbal feedback from the users' experience.

## Lessons Learnt

The comparative spend between HIV prevention and treatment services is vast. Much more could and should be spent on prevention services, including counselling to explore risk behaviours, which are particularly complex in LGB&T communities. ELOP also knows that it provides a high quality service with a range of contract lengths to ensure that users maximise their benefit from its services. ELOP can also refer users to its other services as appropriate or signpost to other specialist organisations as necessary, which promotes overall better mental health and well being.

## The Way Ahead

ELOP's services will be affected by government funding cuts, however its counselling service and social activities will remain. It intends to build on these and continue to seek funding for its other services. ELOP also intends to develop its work with LGBT families and have recently started an LGBT parent/carer and toddler group.

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# Fit for Fun

## Introduction and Brief History

Redbridge Council for Voluntary Service (RedbridgeCVS) is the umbrella organisation for voluntary and community sector groups in the borough. It is a registered charity, in operation since 1991.

Fit for Fun came about following a pilot project run by RedbridgeCVS in 2006/2007. It was funded by NHS Redbridge and provided 20 weeks of exercise classes for voluntary and community sector groups in the borough. As a result of the success of the pilot project, NHS Redbridge commissioned RedbridgeCVS to continue the programme for 3 years, beginning in April 2008.



Since April 2008, 107 groups have taken part, and over 1,700 individuals have been involved. RedbridgeCVS work with groups from week 10 onwards to help them find ways to ensure they can continue with their activity once the 20 weeks are over. 80% of groups in Year 1 and 68% so far in year 2 have continued to exercise up to 6 months after the 20 funded weeks have ended.

The project has been enormously successful and popular with the participants. All the groups have expressed their thanks for the help they have been given to improve both their physical and mental wellbeing.

## Description of the Project

The aim of the project is to increase levels of physical activity in Redbridge residents in a sustainable way and contribute to the prevention and treatment of a range of conditions including obesity, cardio-vascular disease, coronary heart disease, diabetes, depression, hypertension and osteoporosis. It is structured so that small groups of like-minded people take part in physical activities on a regular basis in familiar settings, rather than have to be motivated to attend a gym or organised classes on their own.

Groups choose the activity they want to undertake and RedbridgeCVS match them with a fully qualified and vetted trainer to carry out the sessions at a time of their choice.

## Need for the Project

NHS Redbridge identified the low levels of involvement in physical activity in the borough generally, and in some wards specifically. This was based on the Sport England Physical Activity Participation estimates.

## Aims and Objectives of the Organisation

- To encourage residents to undertake regular physical activity with people they already knew, in a setting they felt comfortable in.
- To work with groups to assist them in finding ways to ensure that the classes could continue once the funding ceased.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- Improvements in health and wellbeing of patients
- Less reliance on prescribed drugs

- Fewer GP/nurse consultations
- More responsibility being taken by individuals for their wellbeing

## Benefits for Users

- Increased physical and mental health wellbeing
- More social interaction with others
- Less dependency on drugs
- Increased confidence levels
- Improvements in physical conditions
- Being able to exercise in familiar surroundings with people they know, rather than having to go individually to a gym or classes.

## Lessons Learnt

The project has been enormously successful and popular. There is scope for GP practice patient groups to be involved (one surgery has already participated.) The greatest strengths of the programme is that:

- It is fun for the participants
- Exercise is tailored to suit the needs of all participants
- It is an environment they feel comfortable in
- The participants choose their activities and RedbridgeCVS provides the qualified and vetted instructors



### How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?

From the feedback it receives from individual participants and groups, and from the extraordinarily high levels of those continuing with the regular exercise classes once the 20 free weeks are completed.

## The Way Ahead

RedbridgeCVS would like to be able to undertake further monitoring of participants so as to be able to quantify the benefits to participants and the benefits to NHS and Social Care services. At present the results are self-defined by the participants. We would welcome the opportunity to work with GPs to explore this area.

## Contact Details

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# Forest Farm Peace Garden

## Introduction and Brief History

Forest Farm Peace Garden (FFPG) is a community garden and a registered charity in Hainault, Redbridge that works with a broad cross-section of the local community to promote mental and physical health, inclusion and intercultural awareness and environmental sustainability. Since 2004, FFPG has involved over 700 volunteers in organic food growing, conservation, and regeneration of a derelict allotment site to further the permaculture principles of People Care, Earth Care & Fair Share.

FFPG has provided, and will continue to provide, dedicated and integrated programming for mental health service users in their garden. FFPG aims to extend their strategic knowledge and experience of therapeutic horticulture through building strong links with the statutory sector, whilst establishing a transitional programme whereby service users may move from an institutional setting to their supported community setting at the FFPG site.

## Description of the Project(s)

FFPG has been supporting refugees and asylum seekers with mental health issues since 2004, and other service users since 2006. Funding from Comic Relief and Capital Volunteering ended in 2009, so we were unable to welcome new volunteers to the Garden in 2010. However with funding currently from Ecominds and City Bridge Trust, we have been accepting new referrals (either directly from prospective volunteers or from health professionals or voluntary groups) since January 2011. To date, we have not charged for services.

FFPG offers one-to-one support for people with greater needs, integrated group work on communal areas, and a buddy programme for newcomers. A small group of people with learning difficulties attends each week. The organisation's approach is based on valuing every volunteer as an individual and harnessing their potential to contribute to the life of the garden.

These activities have been generated in response to volunteer interest, and intend specific outcomes for individual participants, e.g. learning practical skills, sharing experiences and knowledge, and demonstrating talents through access to the range of creative activities.



## Need for the Project(s)

FFPG was set up as a community garden to work therapeutically with refugees and asylum seekers. The first volunteers were clients of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. Since 2006 the Garden has also welcomed other volunteers whose emotional, physical and psychological health improves as a result of exercise in a safe and welcoming green space with organic food to take home.

There is a huge demand for therapeutic horticultural activities in Redbridge and east London, as shown by our weekly referrals from statutory and community mental health services. Unfortunately without adequate funding FFPG is unable to provide the staffing to meet this demand. The PCT's Healthy Redbridge programme also specifically identified a need for projects addressing healthy eating, physical activity, and mental well-being in Hainault. Furthermore, the sustained participation of volunteers, as well as their positive feedback and improvement, confirms that FFPG's holistic and integrative approach is greatly valued by service users.

## Aims and Objectives of the Organisation

The objectives of FFPG are:

1. To preserve and protect the mental and physical health of the wider community and in particular refugees and asylum seekers and their families through the provision of organic gardening opportunities, conservation based activities, education and one to one support.
2. To preserve, protect, and improve the physical environment; in particular through organic gardening, permaculture, conservation, and other ecologically sound practices.
3. To foster a genuinely diverse and integrated community through:
  - a. Eliminating discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion;
  - b. Promoting activities to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- Straightforward referral mechanism.
- Cost-effective community-based support that allows for integration and progression beyond the term of the initial referral period.
- Opportunity for GPs to refer people at early stage of mental distress – can avoid costly and time-consuming appointments.
- Provides alternative strategy to pharmaceutical intervention that avoids high non-compliance rates following prescription for mental illness.
- Provides an inclusive pathway to recovery for those less at ease with institutional care – including refugees and asylum seekers and young people.
- Security of referring to a well-respected charity with 7 years' experience working with mental health service users.
- Direct links with Goodmayes hospital will allow supported transition from acute care setting to supported community project setting.
- Informal and formal peers support to promote user-led recovery.



## Benefits for Users

- During 2010 more than 200 volunteers contributed to the Garden, with more than 30 of those contributing at least twice a month.
- FFPG's supportive and therapeutic natural environment provides an oasis and refuge for people experiencing the emotional, economic and physical effects of social exclusion.
- Promotes physical activity and healthy eating
- Spending time in a natural outdoor environment, being welcomed, being listened to, and feeling engaged and purposeful within a supportive community contributes to mental wellbeing of service users.
- FFPG's Capital Volunteering program demonstrated that participating service users benefited from decreased isolation, increased social networks, improved diet, learned new skills and widely reported significant improvements to their mental and physical health.
- Life skills development through workshops including herbs and nutrition, composting, beekeeping,

growing and cooking organic food, wind turbine operation and preserving skills.

- FFPG tackles stigma and exclusion by avoiding differentiation in the garden between 'service users', 'beneficiaries' and 'volunteers'.
- Mental health service users and other 'beneficiaries' within the project have progressed to a variety of roles, including: staff members, website designer, arts events organiser, skills workshop leader, 'volunteer buddy' – befriending newcomers, trustees and sitting on recruitment panels.

**Quotes from participants suffering from mental ill health:**

"The main thing volunteering here has done for me is it's good for my health. It combats depression. I definitely feel better from coming here. I feel more calm, it lasts into the evenings and I definitely sleep better. Last night I didn't sleep well – I bet you I'll sleep better tonight." (JF)

"This project has really built my confidence. I am much happier and more confident because it has made me feel strong and healthy. Also I have improved my English." (TY)

"The things I like best about the garden are meeting people, working together. I am relaxed here" (ZD)



## Lessons Learnt

- Those comfortable in the outdoor environment report great improvements to their well-being and remain active within the project for long periods.
- Accurate and descriptive promotional material helps potential participants have a realistic sense of what is being offered – this helps to maximise retention rates amongst those referred to the project.
- This support work needs to be adequately funded and staffed. To deliver high quality support, even with the involvement of volunteer buddies, requires well trained staff members working within capacity.
- Inductions and visits need to be focused and not held too often, so that staff are able to concentrate on their main duty of supporting existing participants.

## The Way Ahead

- FFPG needs to know how to package its services in a way that GPs, hospitals etc. can buy into them – including establishing credibility.
- Work needs to be done to educate GPs and hospital departments about the benefits of FFPG's services.
- FFPG plans to build up evidence around impact on health outcomes of their service users
- Learn ways of approaching commissioners and building relationships.
- FFPG plans to explore partnership working with other groups providing a similar service.

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**Website**

[www.forestfarmpeacegarden.org](http://www.forestfarmpeacegarden.org)

# King of Hearts

## Introduction and Brief History

King of Hearts is a self-help group formed in 2001 by a group of like-minded cardiac patients and staff. It continues to promote the welfare and care of cardiac patients and carers in Redbridge, Barking and Dagenham and Havering.

The first meeting of the King of Hearts was called by the staff in the Cardiology department of King George Hospital in January 2001. At that meeting, invited cardiac patients were told about the benefits of starting a support group. From those present at the meeting, a committee was formed consisting of patients, carers and hospital staff.



King of Hearts has always had strong and positive support from their Presidents, doctors of Cardiology department at King George Hospital, Andrew Deaner and Charles Knight. Heart Failure Sister Karen Hughes, a member of staff from King George Hospital, sit on their committee and attend the monthly meetings and offers support to members when required.

## Description of the Project(s)

King of Hearts has over a hundred members who stay in touch with the group's activities and events through newsletters and emails. The members' meeting is held on second Wednesday of every month in the evenings when they can share problems and experiences. The meetings also include talks on different topics requested by members. King of Hearts is partly financed through a raffle towards which members contribute, donations and fund raising events like health walks. Members are recruited to the group at their rehabilitation appointment and leaflets of the project are available at King George and Queens Hospital. Membership in the group is free so that anyone who needs help can take advantage of its services.

## Need for the Project

Someone who has experienced heart problems is undoubtedly in the best position to offer comfort and hope to those recovering from the effects of heart disease. Both people with heart disease and their carers experience many fears and worries and sharing these with others helps lessen the load. King of Hearts was started to provide this peer support to anyone with a heart problem to come to terms with the condition.

## Aims and Objectives

- To promote the welfare and care of cardiac patients both in and out of hospital.
- To promote and provide support for patients and their carers when resuming home and social life.
- To establish and facilitate local contact, support and counselling centres, accessible to anyone with cardiac complaints, including carers, friends and relatives.
- To increase public awareness of heart and heart-related disease, their causes, treatment, implications and the help available.
- To provide social and personal contact with people who share and understand their needs and problems.
- To liaise with existing groups in this or similar fields.
- To act as an information centre for those people requiring literature on heart disease.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

Savings made by NHS and Social Care due to services of this group can be used for other services for patients.

## Benefits for Users

- Confidence building
- Rehabilitation
- Peer support
- Advocacy on behalf of cardiac patients and carers

## Lessons Learnt

- Just because a person looks well doesn't mean they are.
- Sometimes it is the carer that needs help, not the patient.
- To help a person you need to learn to listen to what they are telling you.

### Major Achievements

- The chairperson of King of Hearts, Tony Roth, sits on the Cardiac Network Board and other sub-committees.
- One of the group members was a patient advisor and assisted in getting the Specialist Heart Failure Service started at King George Hospital.
- A group member also advised on the initiative which started a direct ambulance service at the London Chest Hospital for patients who need emergency cardiac services.



## The Way Ahead

King of Hearts plans to continue its efforts towards supporting cardiac patients and their carers. In addition, it would like to advocate for the psychological support patients require after being diagnosed with a cardiac condition, along with the rehabilitation services, as these are currently missing.

## Contact Details

King of Hearts meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm. The venue is:

The Aldborough Room,  
Fullwell Cross Library  
High Street  
Barkingside  
IG6 2EA

### Email

a.roth@ntlworld.com

### Website

www.kingofheartsuk.org

# Punjabi Centre

## Introduction and Brief History

The origins of the Punjabi Centre go as far back as 1982, a time where there were no community facilities specifically for South Asians in Redbridge or the surrounding areas. A number of determined and farsighted community leaders saw the need for a community centre that served the residents of South Asian origin, particularly those from Panjab, India. To meet this need, they formed a community group named Redbridge Punjabi Sabhiacharak (Cultural) Sabha in 1983 and it was registered as a charity in 1984.

## Description of the Project

The Punjabi Centre organises activities including:

- health promotional talks
- talks on housing and tax benefits
- outings and trips to local and international destinations
- celebration of main festivals
- arts and crafts
- light exercise

The Centre also works in partnership with another charity, Arthritis Self-Help Network, and has organised a self-help group for men and women affected by arthritis.



The centre also provides healthy hot meals to all its users.

### Older People's Services

Five community groups – Apna Elderly Men's Group, Milan Elderly Women's Group, Sanmaan Asian Group, Sehyogi Yoga Group and Satkar Health and Social Group for elderly people – organise their meetings once a week at the Punjabi Centre. The main purpose of these groups is to facilitate meetings of elderly people with common interests, to prevent isolation and improve their health and well-being.

### Information and Advice

Since its inception, the Centre has offered signposting, advocacy, advice and information to the local community on a range of topics, including immigration, housing, education, benefits and employment, and has acted as arbitrators in family and marriage disputes.

### Mental health services

The Centre has been implementing the New Commonwealth Women's Mental Health Project since 1993 and provides services like counselling, assertiveness and confidence-building training, yoga and reflexology, music therapy and practical support through advice and group discussions. The project reaches out to over thirty clients who are referred by GPs, hospitals and health clinics.

### Sports and physical exercise

- The Centre organises special yoga sessions offered to all its users twice a week. The yoga sessions are conducted by a trained yoga teacher.
- In addition, indoor games like table tennis, chess and cards are available to both young and elderly service users.
- The Centre has been organizing a kick boxing group since 1997 run by professional instructors. Over fifty participants aged between 6 and 50 take part in these sessions twice a week.

### Education and Training

Every year, Punjabi Centre organizes an education fair for Asian women in partnership with University of East

London and the London Borough of Redbridge. In addition, the Centre organises supplementary science teaching for GCSE and 'A' level courses for 30-40 young people on weekends.

### **Cultural and Social Activities**

The Centre organizes bhangra (folk dance) and music classes for children and young people to promote Indian culture. The centre celebrates the festivals of Vaisakhi and Diwali every year.

### **Women's Empowerment**

The Centre has organised conferences for Asian women including speakers who raised awareness of domestic violence, racial abuse, victim support, educational and employment facilities, National Health Services, Council services, etc.

## **Aims and Objectives of the Organisation**

- Empowerment of women
- Provision of day care and leisure facilities for the elderly
- Promotion of supplementary education for children
- Promotion of community cohesion and liaison with voluntary, community and statutory organisations
- Promotion and co-ordination of cultural activities including literature, arts, music, folklore and folk dances
- Promotion of activities for the youth
- Provision of counselling service in matrimonial and domestic matters

## **Benefits for Health and Social Care Services**

NHS and Social Care benefit from the activities of the Panjabi Centre in terms of fewer GP appointments, hospital admissions, and referrals to mental health services. The Centre's users become more informed citizens, who are aware of local health and social care services.

## **Benefits for Users**

The fact that Panjabi Centre is run and managed by people from the community it serves brings an understanding of community needs and makes it truly needs-led. It helps to break the social isolation of elderly people and improves community cohesion.

## **Lessons Learnt**

- Engaging local communities is possible only if community services are designed and provided by people from within the communities
- Health and social care services can be effective only if they are provided in a culturally appropriate manner
- To effectively provide community services, there is a need for dedicated and qualified volunteers

### **How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?**

- Panjabi Centre has over 582 families registered as life members
- Every week about 250 people attend the centre and socialise
- Under the New Commonwealth Women's Health Project activities, 10 to 15 women attend the centre every week



- The Executive Committee members are from the local community, they are made aware of community issues through their meetings with relatives and friends, and attendance at social and cultural events.

## The Way Ahead

- Provide advice on drug abuse, particularly alcoholic drinks
- Encourage Asians, particularly men, to take active part in physical exercises
- Distribute literature on ailments commonly found in the Asian population
- Raise awareness of healthy food and better cooking methods
- Provide housing for the elderly
- Local community has expanded and there is a need for a bigger building
- Panjabi Centre also plans to create and maintain a database of its service users
- Panjabi Centre needs to secure funding to sustain its activities

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# Redbridge and Waltham Forest African Communities Forum

## Introduction and Brief History

The African Forum is a community development initiative that provides a range of services to more than 10,000 African people in North East London and elsewhere. As an umbrella organization, the Forum networks with over 37 African led community based groups. The groups are representative of all regions of Africa.

## Description of the Project

- Capacity building for community groups and community leaders
- Delivering seminar workshops on a range of issues including around sexual health, women, men and youth
- Offering shared office accommodation to start up groups
- Influencing policy by being a member of the African HIV Policy Network (AHPN), London Mayor's Forum and BME networks

## Aims and Objectives of the Organisation

To focus mainly on local community issues such as HIV/AIDS, mental health, unemployment, capacity building initiatives and to work in collaboration and partnership with the voluntary and community organizations as well as with other statutory and non-statutory agencies tackling economic, social, cultural and general health issues.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- Involvement of strategic planning and delivery insures that service contributes to local health improvement strategy.
- Service ensures value for money.
- Involvement in local compact and Community Empowerment Forums.

## Benefits for Users

- Culturally appropriateness as project coordinators are often from the service user group and projects are often needs lead.
- Service users are encouraged to take part in service planning, delivery and evaluation.
- A local service.

## Lessons Learnt

- Networking and joint venture activities
- Skill share and good practice
- Working with a diverse community with diverse needs

### **How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?**

We gather service user feedback –Written and word of mouth. We deliver monthly meetings at which members and the public are involved. We use management performance reports and adhere strictly to grant or funding criteria.



## The Way Ahead

- Need to expand service
- Need to gain quality marks
- Need to expand management committee and grow resource base (staff and grants)

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# Redbridge Asian Mandal

## Introduction and Brief History

RAM (Redbridge Asian Mandal) was set up as a community centre in 2005 to benefit the residents of Redbridge and surrounding areas, particularly the elderly members of the Asian community, and to reduce social isolation with the objective of improving the condition of life of the community members.

RAM acquired charitable status in 2008. From a humble beginning of 40 members at its inception, it has grown from strength to strength and now has a membership of over 580 people and has a waiting list. RAM is governed by a written constitution and has an elected executive committee of 13 members.

The majority of RAM members are Asians and are from Africa or from the Indian sub-continent and are aged between 60 and 100. RAM is a blessing for local senior citizens, many of whom are frail and lonely and have nowhere to go during the day. They get the opportunity to mingle and make friends and feel a sense of belonging.

## Description of the Project

RAM's members meet every Tuesday afternoon from 12.30 to 4.00 pm at St Alban's Church, Albert Road, Ilford. The programme begins with 'satsang' – a get-together of members who sing bhajans (prayers, hymns) and songs. Some prefer to play cards in the adjoining room. This is followed by talks by speakers from the Council, NHS or medical practitioners on social services and health issues including diabetes, arthritis, healthy diet and exercise. These activities are followed by announcements of forthcoming events and an 'aarti' – an offering to the Lord. The day culminates with a full free lunch which is either provided by RAM or other well wishers.



In addition, there are dance classes, yoga and other physical exercise classes on other days during the week. RAM also organises trips to places of interest, temples, cinema, theatre and the sea-side which is a boon to some members who normally do not venture out on their own. RAM also celebrates special events such as Diwali, India's Independence Day and more. RAM also organises overseas trips for the members.

## Need for the Project

Increasing numbers of elderly Asian people in Redbridge face social isolation, and there was a gap in the day care services that were aimed at the Asian population. Some elderly people living alone have no desire nor the capability to cook on their own. In addition, most Asian people are at high risk of high blood pressure, diabetes, depression and high cholesterol. They needed a place to go to where they can engage in social activities and also receive information and advice on health and social care services. RAM filled in this gap by starting its services to cater to the needs of this population.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- RAM's services reduce unnecessary hospital admissions and GP appointments thus helping the NHS make savings on their resources.
- RAM provides information on health services and improving the uptake of health programmes where the Asian population is under-represented. RAM also raises awareness about social care services in the borough.

## Benefits for Users

- The activities and gatherings organised by RAM have helped people to make long-term friends, who in turn have helped RAM volunteers to get the lonely to leave their homes and make new friends of their own. There have been instances where RAM volunteers have accompanied members to hospitals, doctors and other official institutions. They have assisted elderly people with travel, language problems or accompanied them to provide moral support. This has also built a stronger and more confident community, a community which will work together to tackle their problems. The members will hopefully become more active and healthier and in turn benefit the community as a whole. Members receive advice on social, financial and health issues from visiting Council staff, health visitors and others.
- Many people who live on their own get an opportunity to meet with their peers and exchange ideas and talk about matters that affect them all from time to time
- RAM encourages people who do not usually take part in physical exercises to become more active.
- RAM encourages people to change to a healthy diet and improve their health overall
- Some people who are unable to cook for themselves get full hot dinners at RAM's meeting

## Major Achievements

- The outcomes of RAM's activities are measured by recording members' feedback through forms and questionnaires. For example, members gave the following feedback after the end of yoga and dance classes earlier in 2010:
  - 100% enjoyed taking part in the classes
  - 100% enjoyed the dance classes
  - 75% enjoyed the yoga sessions
  - 95% requested that the classes be repeated
- Increase in membership from 40 at time of inception to 580 members
- Most members happy and less isolated by attending RAM activities
- If not physically fitter, members feel mentally more active



## The Way Ahead

- RAM is seeking to expand its activities over the next three years in order to provide even better services to its members. The main need identified by its members is to hire a bigger venue for its Day Centre (weekly meetings) as the current one in cannot accommodate all its members. RAM would also like to extend the meeting days from once a week to possibly two days a week.
- RAM is also planning to introduce more exercise classes and indoor games in order to provide recreation in addition to promoting good health.
- To be able to do all of the above, RAM plans to look for more funding opportunities.

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# Redbridge User Network User Pressure Group (RUN-UP)

## Introduction and Brief History

RUN-UP was formed in 1998 by a group of mental health service users and carers who wanted to bring their perspective to negotiate for change to service provision both in the present and for the future.

RUN-UP has grown from a 'front room' pressure group to become a formidable advocate for the collective rights of service users in the London Borough of Redbridge.

And the journey continues...

## Description of the Project(s)

RUN-UP (Redbridge User Network User Pressure group), is a user-led service for people experiencing mental health issues and their carers. RUN-UP currently reaches out to 420 service users, covering many different services in Redbridge. Monthly meetings are organised to discuss different topics relevant to them with invited speakers. These meetings also give service users an opportunity to socialise and share their experiences. RUN-UP also works with some voluntary and non-voluntary User Consultants whose role is to represent various forums including North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) and actively campaign for the improvement of mental health services.

RUN-UP disseminates information amongst all its service-users through a bi-monthly newsletter, which covers mental health related issues, policy changes and the organisation's activities, including training courses. The newsletter goes out to more than 500 individuals and groups in Redbridge as well as other East London boroughs. It is also available now on NELFT website and the Redbridge Concern for Mental Health website.

### How does the project help service users?

- By offering a safe place for service users to express their experiences of service provision
- By offering information to users about available services
- By providing training so that service users can participate in and make meaningful contributions in different committees, meetings and forums

## Need for the Project(s)

Our society finds it hard to deal with mental distress and sometimes responds by marginalising those who experience it. Those experiencing mental distress do so as a result of many factors. As an independent service RUN-UP wants to see changes in local and national policies; in user-led mental health services; in the right to choose a better way of life; in the right to access community services; in the right to know about medical treatments and side effects; in the right to choose alternative treatments, such as homeopathy and acupuncture; and in the right to live in the community without harassment or prejudice.

## Aims and Objectives of the Organisation

RUN-UP aims to ensure that users have group representation to assert their views, needs and rights, and that their knowledge and expert viewpoints are used to improve mental health services. RUN-UP achieves its aim by:

1. Making its services available and user-friendly, providing knowledge and information to change local policies and practices.
2. Applying a responsible but strong pressure on the local agenda affecting the provision of mental health services in Redbridge.
3. Including all members of the community without discrimination of age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

RUN-UP helps NHS and Social Care to understand the real needs of service users challenge things that are not right for service users.

### Quotes of Service Providers:

- "RUN-UP is still unique and over the last 2-3 years, their advocacy has become stronger, which influenced the introduction of Independent Mental Capacity Advocates." North East London Foundation Trust
- "Commissioners of Mental Health services in Redbridge regard RUN-UP as influential in the delivery of the quality of mental health services in Redbridge."

## Benefits for Users

As RUN-UP is an independent user-led group, all its policies, procedures and activities are based on the views of its service users. It is able to challenge decisions of service providers if mental health services are not designed to cater to needs of service users.

Involvement and representation of User Consultants on various policy forums gives them confidence and skills to become assertive. It has built their capacity to represent other users.

### Voices of Service Users

"RUN-UP is our own voice and not one manipulated by Trust managers. Often source of valuable, frank questioning of service discussions" – Service user

"RUN-UP has an influence in the quality of mental health services in Redbridge. Especially in the commissioning of new services as they were involved in local implementation meetings where decisions on new services are taken."

## Lessons Learnt

- It is important to work in partnership with different organizations like NELFT, that work towards improving the mental health and wellbeing of local residents
- Clear and regular communication between partners and service users is key to the success of any project
- Transparency is fundamental to good partnership
- Be tactful in working with different partners
- It takes lot of perseverance to advocate for rights of service users
- It is very important that a user-led group is open and accessible to everyone irrespective of ethnicity, socio-economic or religious background
- Better investment in user-led groups like RUN-UP will enhance its services and reach out to a wider group of mental health service users
- Not to be afraid to challenge decisions or policies that are not beneficial to service users

### How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?

- RUN-UP is able to represent users on various working groups across NELFT and Redbridge and gives voice to Redbridge service users
- RUN-UP started with 10-15 members in 1998 and has grown to a current membership of 151. Its newsletters are sent out to over 400 organisations including all different services and community groups.
- RUN-UP advocated against closure of Progress team at NELFT through campaigns with local MPs and representation at Parliament
- RUN-UP is currently advocating for involvement of service users on changes proposed for access to the Freedom Pass
- RUN-UP is involved in developing a Service User Involvement Strategy for NELFT

## The Way Ahead

RUN-UP has been able to give a voice to its service users and advocate for their right to quality mental health services in Redbridge. RUN-UP plans to strengthen its efforts by:

1. Increasing staff resources and support to equip staff to carry out daily functions.
2. Raising its profile and promote its services more widely.
3. Becoming politically astute in local and wider context, to enable service users to navigate the system.
4. Putting more effort into increasing funding to deliver appropriate services to its client group.
5. Reviewing their role in light of the introduction of personalised budgets
6. Joining forces with other campaigning user groups and extending its services across other boroughs.

## Contact Details

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runupuk@hotmail.com

### Website

[www.rcmh.org.uk/runup.htm](http://www.rcmh.org.uk/runup.htm)

## Introduction and Brief History

The Shpresa Programme is a registered charity founded in 2002 by an Albanian-speaking asylum seeker to work with Albanian-speaking refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. It aims to:

- Support and enable Albanian-speaking people in the UK to improve their quality of life and to play a full role in society
- Improve the quality of our organisation and increase our capacity to develop services further
- Work in partnership with users and a wide range of other agencies to meet the needs of Albanian-speaking asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and their dependents
- Enable individuals and groups to develop services and activities that meet the needs of their communities
- Develop community cohesion and promote an Albanian-speaking community identity

We provide a range of services including a women's project, a children's project, a youth project and a volunteering project.

## Description of the Project

Time to Talk is a partnership project which seeks to provide a holistic service to refugee women from the Albanian-speaking community, including survivors of rape and sexual violence, experiencing mental and emotional distress.

This project provides accessible culturally sensitive services for refugee women by:

- Providing practical support and a signposting service to women seeking to access psychotherapy to enable them to take up and continue to attend therapy.
- Providing mental health information sessions, therapy taster sessions, six week psycho-educational groups for women on topics such as domestic violence and parenting and assessments.
- Providing culturally sensitive mother tongue therapy, or therapy with a skilled and experienced interpreter, for women refugee survivors of rape and sexual violence.
- Evaluating this work



## Need for the Project

Shpresa was founded in 2002 but by 2007 it became apparent that many women approaching Shpresa for assistance were coping with a range of mental health problems as well as practical problems. Shpresa staff and volunteers were regularly seeing women experiencing high levels of acute depression and anxiety.

Refugees, including the women using Shpresa's services, flee their countries of origin for a number of reasons, including war, abuse of their human rights or persecution on grounds of their political belief and actions, their religion, ethnicity or gender. This means that they have experienced significant multiple losses in their lives and because of the experience of conflict, violence, loss and possibly sexual violence prior to their flight they have a high risk of developing mental health problems.

When they arrive in the UK their experiences can include detention, lack of access to services such as housing and education, not being allowed to work, isolation, boredom and discrimination. The separation of families in conflict – with some members still in the country of origin – is also a particular source of anxiety for some refugees. Again, this combination of stressors can increase the chance of refugees experiencing mental health problems.



However, in spite of their vulnerability to mental and emotional distress, refugee women face multiple barriers when seeking to access mental health provision in general and therapy provision in particular. These include language and communication barriers and cultural differences in the approach to mental health, including stigma around asking for help. Many recently arrived women are socially excluded and so face practical and economic problems in finding the time and resources to attend therapy. There can be a lack of understanding of the needs of these women among some providers of mental health services.

For these reason Shpresa Programme and the Women's Therapy Centre, a therapy provider with experience of engaging with, and understanding the needs of, women refugees and asylum seekers (it is cited as an example of good practice by the Department Of Health\*) decided to work together to try and break down some of the barriers and develop holistic services to meet the needs of this very vulnerable group of women.

\* Department of Health (2002) *Women's Mental Health: Into the Mainstream* (London, Department of Health)

## Aims and Objectives of the Project

The aims and objectives of this project are best encapsulated in the outcomes the project is seeking to deliver, which are that:

- Albanian-speaking women, including women who have survived rape and sexual violence will have clear, mother tongue information about where they can access help.
- Albanian-speaking women will get the practical support/signposting they require to enable them to access therapy sessions.
- Albanian-speaking women will learn more about positive mental health and mental health services and be able to access the services that they require.
- Albanian-speaking women will receive culturally and gender-sensitive therapy which will help them to identify/express painful emotions and learn less damaging ways of managing fear/distress

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

The external evaluator identified the following benefits of this project for the NHS and social care providers:

- Women refugees and asylum seekers are at greater risk of mental health problems than the general population but they face numerous practical and psychological barriers to accessing mental health services. The NHS and social care providers are frequently unable to access the women who most need their support
- This project has shown that by working with refugee community groups trusted by women from refugee communities, mental health providers, including providers of therapy services, can facilitate access to mental health services for women who traditionally do not use these services.

## Benefits for Users

An external evaluation of this project identified the following key benefits for service users:

- Women from refugee communities who struggle to cope with relationship problems and domestic

violence, cultural conflicts between themselves and their older children and feelings of displacement and isolation value having a safe space where they can meet with other women and discuss these issues.

- Women from refugee communities need and value a flexible service which can respond to their many and varied needs and signpost them to other support services and advice.
- Women from refugee communities when they are able to access therapy services, find this provision helpful in addressing some of their very deep rooted feelings of dislocation, isolation and distress.

## Lessons Learnt

- Women refugees and asylum seekers are at greater risk of mental health problems than the general population but they face numerous practical and psychological barriers to accessing mental health services.
- By working with refugee community groups trusted by women from refugee communities, mental health providers, including providers of therapy services, can facilitate access to mental health services for women who traditionally do not use these services.
- Women from refugee communities struggle to cope with relationship problems and domestic violence, cultural conflicts between themselves and their older children and feelings of displacement and isolation. They value having a safe space where they can meet with other women and discuss these issues.
- Women from refugee communities need and value a flexible service which can respond to their many and varied needs and signpost them to other support services and advice.
- Women from refugee communities when they are able to access therapy services, find this provision helpful in addressing some of their very deep rooted feelings of dislocation, isolation and distress.

### **How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?**

Shpresa Programme has a well developed monitoring and evaluation system which includes keeping records of the number of women who attend each element of the service. In addition, Shpresa has also conducted project evaluation through an independent evaluator who uses different means of collecting data like focus group discussions and interviews with service users, staff members of Shpresa and Women's Therapy Centre.

## The Way Ahead

Shpresa Programme is working to achieve the following outcomes:

- Mental health services for women refugees and asylum seekers are delivered in conjunction with refugee community groups and other agencies which women refugee and asylum seekers access and trust.
- Services where possible are delivered locally and that agencies assist in transport and childcare to enable women on low incomes to access services.
- Women can access therapy services alongside practical support services which are wide ranging and flexible.
- Women receive accurate information on mental health which challenges the stigma and barriers which exist to prevent women accessing services.
- Information is provided in such a way as to enable women to make informed choices about the help they require.
- Services are developed by staff and volunteers who are aware that women who have fled situations of conflict and war frequently struggle to adjust to the host culture and can experience a loss of identity, feelings of depression and anxiety, and a fear they will be judged as they struggle to reconcile their past with their future. Staff and volunteers also need to be aware that these women value a space where they can talk about these experiences without feeling judged or attacked.
- Agencies should develop culturally sensitive domestic violence services for women refugees and asylum seekers as their lack of knowledge about services and sources of support places these women at great risk.

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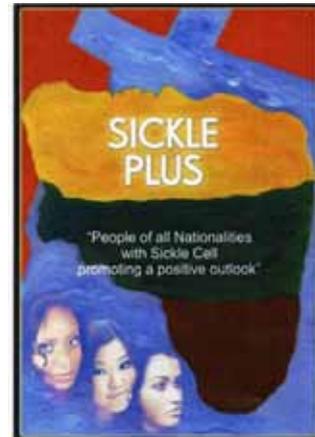
[www.shpresaprogramme.com](http://www.shpresaprogramme.com)

# Sickle Plus

## Description of the Project(s)

Sickle Plus is a charitable organisation that raises awareness on sickle cell blood disorder in the many diverse communities of London by using media related projects. The Sickle Plus team uses different mediums like poetry, short films, concerts, songs, adverts, leaflets and workshops to reach out to schools, colleges, universities, and nurseries to raise awareness about sickle cell blood disorder. Its media related projects benefit users as they educate them on the nature of sickle cell disorder, its causes, how to keep a healthier life style, stress management and how to cope with crisis. It also aims at reducing stigma towards those affected by sickle cell anaemia.

The organisation works with people from different ethnic backgrounds who are at risk of sickle cell anaemia. Sickle Plus works in partnership with the Sickle Cell Society UK.



## Need for the Project

There is a great need for sickle cell anaemia awareness as it is the largest blood disorder in the UK and research has found that the public at large are ignorant about it. Most people are not aware of the fact that sickle cell anaemia is not limited to a particular ethnic community. Sickle Plus' message is simple – "break the stigma through education".

## Aims and Objectives of the Organisation

- To raise awareness of sickle cell anaemia amongst different communities
- To provide a service for those affected by this disorder and fill a gap in health care and social care service provision.
- To conduct workshops covering health advice and provide tips and stress management for those affected.
- To raise funds for a multi-cultural recreational centre for sickle cell sufferers in the UK and for global awareness about sickle cell disorder.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

Sickle Plus activities – including counselling, stress management, information on a healthier life style, nutritional programmes and media related recreational projects – benefit NHS and social care services on a long term basis because they give answers to users' questions, along with those of their families, thus taking a huge amount of pressure off the NHS. Hospitalisation of users – which can happen because the user is not given enough information regarding their self-management – are thus reduced.

Regarding Social Care Services and how the benefit system works for sickle cell sufferers, we as a team are very instrumental in relaying and handing out information and leaflets via the Sickle Cell Society UK office, with whom we work in partnership. Our dedicated work takes a hands-on approach, and we feel that social care services will and indeed have benefited from. We also have offered our services in our registered office which furthermore has a lounge and large garden so that the user has a place to chill out and relax with friends – basic counselling is also an option.

## Benefits for Users

The benefits of having sickle cell awareness projects are to create greater understanding of sickle cell blood disorder, and to encourage provision for sickle cell sufferers in schools and work places, so eliminating false stigmas in relation to laziness in schools and misunderstanding in a hospital environment.

The benefits for the users include allowing to express their opinions and to enjoy entertainment which also

gives them a chance to socialise. Long-term effects for the user include a holistic approach to their approach to sickle cell disorder, including a healthy life style leading to greater longevity. Sickle Plus also provides advisory services for screening for sickle cell trait and family planning.

## Lessons Learnt

The lessons learnt are that not enough information is given out about sickle cell disorder – this can cost lives, money and time along with ignorance about who sickle cell affects.

### **How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?**

The project knows that it is achieving its aims and objectives because we have been working with the different communities most affected with sickle cell disorder for the past seven years. We have also worked with the communities affected, mainstream networks and media outlets such as radio stations and community television. Our holistic approach has created a demand for more information and more media-related projects by the different communities. Academics, schools, colleges, hospitals and businesses have also shown an interest in working in partnership with our organisation.

## The Way Ahead

- The way ahead would be better implementation of community cohesion policies, and embracing the fact that different races have sickle cell disorder. Our experience shows that there is strength in numbers. We at Sickle Plus are certain that this approach will reduce the cases of sickle cell and increase the chance of a cure for the disorder. That is why we have named our organisation Sickle Plus, the Plus representing our positive approach and the different ethnic groups affected.
- Sickle Cell Multi-Cultural Recreational Centre: Sickle Plus are happy to announce that they are looking to open up a recreational centre for sickle cell sufferers in 2011 with the help of their partners the Sickle Cell Society UK and media partners MBK Entertainment.
- Sickle Plus is currently working on a celebrity event for summer 2011 and seeks more voluntary workers and sponsors. They would also consider partnering on the summer concert. Sickle Plus are in partnership with a mainstream events company in New York for the summer concert.

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# Sikh Community Care Project

## Introduction and Brief History

The Sikh Community Care Project (SCCP) began as a voluntary project in 1992. A constitution was formally adopted in 1996 and the organisation started to operate as a local service provider with the assistance of some members of the Sikh community who had a vision of the needs of the community, especially the South Asian women, elderly and disabled people. The project has now grown into a structured body led by a voluntary management committee, part-funded to employ salaried staff and part volunteer-led, which forms an important part of social care and health provision in the Borough.

## Description of the Project

SCCP implements various projects for people of different age groups.

### 1. The Elderly Project

The project runs a drop-in service for elderly women on every Monday in Ilford which aims at improving health and wellbeing by providing services like free health checks, talks on healthy living, reflexology, massage sessions, weekly walks in local parks etc. SCCP also runs a befriending and home visiting service which consists of carers and professionals visiting extremely old, socially impaired or depressed elderly people.



### 2. Youth Project

This project aims to empower and educate youth through physical, educational and recreational activities. These activities encourage the youth to gain new skills and help them develop through trainings, youth workshops, cultural events and sports activities. The project also conducts health awareness sessions including those on importance of physical activity and sexual health.

### 3. Women's Project

The project's main initiatives involves initial training for women to access job opportunities in the mainstream job market by enrolling them on basic courses like health and safety, first-aid, food and hygiene etc. This is being done in partnership with Havering College. In addition, the project also includes support and counselling to women in partnership with Kiran Asian Women's Aid.

## Need for the Project

In most East London boroughs, including Redbridge, there is a large South Asian population. It was found that local services were not culturally appropriate and to fill in this gap, SCCP started its activities in Waltham Forest and Redbridge. Although the name includes the word 'Sikh', SCCP services are not limited to the Sikh community only, it caters for all communities.

## Aims and Objectives of the Project

SCCP's vision is to be highly regarded for excellence in the public sector for voluntary services, elderly projects, educational and recreational development and support, whilst remaining sensitive and responsive to the needs of the South Asian community.

The project's main operational aims since its inception have been to ensure that its members are able to:

- Access opportunities and services
- Acquire new skills, gain qualifications and experience relevant for gaining employment
- Develop social skills and build their own social networks to play a part in community life
- Develop healthy lifestyles and enjoy healthy lives
- Access information and support readily in personal and professional matters

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- Raise awareness about direct payments, personal budgets and social care services amongst service users
- Raise awareness about NHS services, access to GP services, rights, choices
- Helps the statutory sector to conduct consultations with service users from South Asian community
- Helps with referring service users to appropriate services
- Helping elderly people maintain an independent living at home and prevent hospital admissions. This saves lot of resources of the statutory sector
- Providing free health checks to service users including cholesterol, diabetes, Body Mass Index etc. This again brings savings to NHS resources as the project helps in early identification of symptoms that need further care or treatment

## Benefits for Users

- Service users receive instant access to services
- SCCP services are available 24 x 7
- Removes language barriers
- Local service thus reducing opportunity cost to users

### Quotes from Service Users

- "I feel very lively when I come to this centre as I meet other women, we dance and sing. Our health checks are done regularly." (service user)
- "We wait for Monday to come. The centre staff treats us very well and we are able to socialise with others and make many friends." (service user)

## Lessons Learnt

- The best way of reaching out to underrepresented communities is to have a holistic approach
- One-window service helps reducing opportunity costs of service users
- It is important that the mainstream service providers acknowledge the contribution of the voluntary sector towards improving health and well-being of communities
- It will be cost-effective for the NHS to work in partnership with the voluntary sector

### How does the Project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?

The project has expanded its reach from Waltham Forest to Redbride and has reached out to over 14,000 service users so far. The number of service users has been increasing for all the



activities provided by SCCP. Following are some outcomes of SCCP activities for the year 2009-10:

1. Through regular advice, information and advocacy services on average over 50-60 people receive service on various welfare benefits or pension services.
2. Over 2000 elderly people, mainly of Indian origin have received services from SCCP in the past year.
3. Health checks have been arranged regularly with a nurse to prevent the onset of diabetes and hypertension through early detection.
4. In the last year, through a specific project to raise awareness about Bowel Cancer Screening, SCCP reached out to over 3000 people of which 89 people reported that they went for screening after attending the awareness sessions by SCCP.
5. Many younger women have gained employment after doing relevant accredited training we arranged in partnerships with other providers. 230 women benefited from SCCP's ESOL classes.
6. Over 67 elderly members have accessed social care services this year with the information SCCP shares with them about Direct Payments and through the referrals we made.
7. Regular youth forums and other activities have given opportunities to over 200 young people aged 13-19 to participate in and engage with various services.

## The Way Ahead

- Continue providing preventative health services
- Plan to start a joint consortium with voluntary groups having similar aim and objectives
- Plan to tender for services around health and social care

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# Voices of Experience

## Introduction and Brief History

Voices of Experience is a service run by Age Concern Redbridge and was established at the end of 2003 following extensive research by Chief Officer Andy Petty. Research was carried out with Age Concern Exeter's User Involvement Service, Senior Voice, as well as with similar projects in Harrow, Sutton and Camden.

## Description of the Project

The service enables older people who regularly use health and social care services to influence a range of service providers through genuine consultation.

There are two groups known as the Questionnaire Group and the User Panel. Each work in different ways to ensure their opinions are represented and their voices heard.

### Questionnaire Group

This group is made up of over 200 older people and to be eligible to join the Questionnaire Group the member must be an older person living in the London Borough of Redbridge and preferably with experience of using local health and/or social care services.

There will be up to 4 questionnaires a year on a wide range of issues which are important to older people in the borough. Questionnaires dealing with three or four issues are sent out with a stamped addressed envelope and the answers given by the group are collated and presented in a report. Group members may also be involved in discussions and meetings. Questionnaire group members frequently take part in focus groups often addressing health issues. Recent focus groups included Dementia and Electronic Patient Records.



In addition, many members from local BME groups complete questionnaires for the project and also take part in focus groups. To enable this, the Co-ordinator has established effective regular links with these community groups.

### Users' Panel

This is a group of 15 older people drawn from the Questionnaire Group. These individuals will represent the Voices of Experience at meetings with representatives from Social Services, NHS Services and other interested parties. The User Panel is chosen from the broadest spectrum of older people throughout the borough to ensure that it truly represents the views of the majority of older people. They also meet regularly to discuss issues which arise and Age Concern provides training, support and transport to assist the panel members.

## Need for the Project

With statutory organisations often required to consult with service users about the services they provide, it was important from Age Concern's point of view to ensure that older people were included in consultations.

## Aims and Objectives

To ensure the voices of older people are heard and that their views and concerns are reflected in local strategies

and service developments.

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- Helps the statutory sector to gain insight into views of older people around issues like health, social care, transport, community safety etc.
- The statutory sector has acknowledged that Voices of Experience is a powerful influence and this is of benefit to them because of their many and varied engagements in other community groups such as LINK (Local Involvement Network), 50+ Forum, The Pensioners' Forum and U3A (University of the Third Age), and they are able to reach many older people who might otherwise not have the opportunity to voice their opinions – for example a crime and disorder survey in 2009 had better representation from older people than any other group through sending the survey via Voices of Experience.
- Panel members take part in consultations, both local and pan-London, read and comment on strategy documents, and attend various working groups.

## Benefits for Users

A recent research study by a student at the London School of Economics showed that the service has had a positive effect on members, focusing on improving the lives of older people by ensuring that they have a say in the services they want and need, and influence how they develop. The project allows members to learn from each others' experiences as well as from older people in other London boroughs. It also gives them much needed information on services available, their rights and how to access services and information.

Some of the comments made by the Panel members are:

- "We are like a dripping tap, if you tell people often enough, someone will listen."
- "Our voice is heard more than an individual person's would be, so you lobby as an entity and not just one person."
- "I am pleased to be a member of Voices of Experience and its Chair. I have been a member since it started and have enjoyed the work we do. We have a fantastic group of people that are dedicated to Voices and the work we do. I have been involved in many subjects-too many to list."

## Lessons Learnt

- The questionnaire needs to be user-friendly
- Communication with panel members has to be based on their needs
- Online questionnaire will be useful for those having access to the internet

## The Way Ahead

- Age Concern Redbridge wants to continue its support to the Voices of Experience and in addition, broaden it to include even more from the Black Asian Minority Ethnic communities, people with learning disabilities and those with mental health problems.

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# Welcome Centre

## Introduction and Brief History

The Welcome Project was established in 2001 to meet the need of refugees, asylum seekers and the socially isolated within the community of Redbridge.

## Description of the Project

The project is a Day Centre that provides an extensive range of services for the homeless and vulnerable adults. Our Support Team provides one-to-one support, advice and guidance on a range of issues including:

- drug and alcohol misuse
- mental health
- physical health
- housing
- benefits
- a nurse led clinic (4 hours per week)
- a life skills training and employment programme
- hot meals, clothing, showers and a laundry service on a daily basis

## Need for the Project

The project was initially started in 2001 to meet the emerging needs of refugees and asylum seekers, but soon after the project began it was clear that other needs existed in the community, such as support for the homeless and vulnerable adults.

The Welcome Project initially focused on meeting practical needs (food, clothing, showers and laundry) but in 2005 it was felt that providing only practical support was not enough to meet the growing needs of this hard to reach client group.

The service was developed to provide a support worker, whose role is to provide one-to-one support to clients that help them deal with the issues that caused their homelessness. By July 2010 the project employed a Life Skills, Training and Employment Co-ordinator to provide opportunities for clients to move forward into independent living and focus on training and employment. The Welcome Project is the only day centre in Redbridge of its kind that takes a holistic view of its clients' needs.



## Aims and Objectives of the Project

- Reduce acute housing needs
- Increase independent living skills
- Provide advice, guidance and support in key themes (substance misuse, benefits and immigration)
- Provide training and pre-employment support
- Improve health and general well-being (included improving mental health)
- Make referral to appropriate agencies
- Advocacy and representation

## Benefits for Health and Social Care Services

- Project has access to hard-to-reach group and can encourage and support service users to engage with other key public and statutory services.
- Health and well-being needs of hard to reach group can be met by an approach based on joint working
- Reduced cases of isolation and sustained life within homeless community
- Healthier community within the homeless sector

## Benefits for Users

- Housing needs met
- Drug and alcohol abstinence
- Improved health
- Increased independent living skills
- Service users can navigate statutory and public services more easily
- Increased self esteem and self worth
- Support to enter the job market
- Settled and engaged within the community
- Reduced social isolation
- Service user makes changes that make a positive difference in their lives

## Lessons Learnt

Working with this client group often means building relationships. So case work can take several months before a difference can be seen, which can sometimes mean that funding outcomes can be difficult to obtain especially if it is only for one year.

### How does the project know that it is achieving its aim and objectives?

- Positive feedback from service users
- Feedback from other agencies
- Service users housed and living independently
- Service users abstaining from drug and alcohol
- Service users into full and part-time employment
- Service users at the stage of entering the job market
- Evidence of healthier life styles



### Impact of Welcome Centre's activities during October 2009 – September 2010

Of the 360 clients that have attended the service at least once during the last year:

#### Health

- 121 clients have been seen at least once by the nurse and have received a health check
- 35 clients have been referred to the polyclinic/doctors
- 36 clients have been and assessed by Westminster Drug Project
- 12 clients have been referred and received counselling

- 7 clients have been referred to community rehabilitation

#### Housing

- 36 clients have been found more appropriate accommodation

#### Practical support

- 8,750 3-course healthy meals have been served
- 647 service washes have been carried out
- 1,287 showers have been provided

## The Way Ahead

- To increase the support staff so that we can effectively engage with a greater number of clients
- To get health, drug and alcohol agencies to recognise the work that is done to encourage and support this client group
- To engage more clients into the life skills programme
- To encourage more clients to play an active role in their own health & wellbeing
- Provide more opportunities for employment by working with local businesses to create work placements, which can lead to employment
- Increase self-sufficiency of the project by promoting a donor scheme
- Increase joint working approach with other health and social care services

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# Volunteering

## Volunteer Centre Redbridge

RedbridgeCVS supports voluntary and community organisations in a number of ways, including hosting specialist projects such as Volunteer Centre Redbridge.

### **Volunteer Centre Redbridge:**

- Raises awareness of the value of volunteering and encourages more people to volunteer, through advertising volunteering opportunities and providing information, advice and guidance to potential volunteers.
- Supports both voluntary and statutory sector organisations in the borough to develop more roles for volunteers, providing guidance and training for volunteer managers to ensure that roles are safe and appropriate.
- Has developed NHS Redbridge's Volunteering Policy and Procedures and supports NHS Redbridge to recruit and manage its volunteers.

The project employs a manager, who oversees service planning & delivery, works with volunteer-involving organisations to develop roles and promote good practice and publicises volunteering opportunities. The project's brokerage worker provides information and guidance to individuals about suitable volunteering opportunities. The project also has its own team of volunteers involved in administrative and promotional roles. It has a high success rate in supporting its volunteers into paid employment through building skills and confidence through their volunteering.

## The Volunteer Centre Meets a Real Need

All voluntary sector organisations in the borough rely on volunteers to help deliver their services, since they are all governed by voluntary trustees. Most also involve volunteers in practical roles and service delivery. This means that without volunteers, services, on which many vulnerable people rely, would not be delivered.

For example two of our major local charities, Age Concern Redbridge and Haven House Children's Hospice, involve high numbers of volunteers in roles ranging from fundraising to befriending. Through using the services of the Volunteer Centre to develop roles, advertise for and recruit volunteers, front-line organisations such as these can concentrate on service delivery and access the help needed to develop their volunteering programmes.

## The work of Volunteer Centre Redbridge

Volunteer Centres deliver six Core Functions, which are:

- Brokerage
- Marketing
- Developing opportunities
- Good practice work with volunteer-involving organisations
- Strategic development of volunteering – helping to plan how volunteering can support key local objectives, including those of the local authority and NHS.
- Campaigning on issues affecting volunteers & volunteering

## Impact of volunteers on health sector service delivery

The Commission on the Future of Volunteering (2008, cited in Neuberger, 2008) has highlighted the following unique benefits that volunteers can offer to the health service sector, which can serve as a basis for investigating potential benefits to service users:

1. Peer support – 'a user voice and expertise as former patients'
2. Ownership by user communities

3. A personal, human touch
4. Actual health benefits to individuals (as discussed for volunteers in the section above)
5. Innovation and fresh perspectives
6. Source of local and other knowledge
7. Community cohesion and strengthening – social capital (Blakeley et al., 2006)

In addition, volunteers may act as intermediaries between health professionals and service users or other agencies. They may be seen as less constrained by professional roles, and therefore able to engender a greater sense of trust and intimacy than paid professionals; in certain settings, such relationships could be advantageous for health and well-being of both volunteers and service users.

## Volunteer Centre Redbridge

Volunteer Centre Redbridge has been actively involved in supporting and promoting volunteering within NHS Redbridge. This has included:

- Writing a volunteering policy, developing procedures, documentation and planning training for managers of volunteers.
- Looking at ways to encourage volunteering in consultation opportunities offered by the NHS in Redbridge, including participation in the Readers' Panel.
- Working with the Community Engagement Team to enhance roles for Loxford Polyclinic panel members and recruit to newer panels.
- Developing the involvement of volunteers in the NHS response to possible emergencies and working with NHS Redbridge's Emergency Preparedness Officer to recruit & train volunteers to respond quickly in the event of a major incident, supporting staff members.

## Benefits of Volunteering

The benefits of volunteering include:

- Overcoming isolation
- Having a sense of purpose
- Making a contribution
- Learning new skills
- Building confidence
- Making the transition from illness or unemployment to employability
- Not allowing talents to go to waste

In a bid to find out more precisely what impact volunteering can have on health, in 2008 Volunteering England commissioned the University of Wales, Lampeter to undertake a systematic review of published research.

Volunteering was shown to decrease mortality and to improve self-rated health, mental health, life satisfaction, the ability to carry out activities of daily living without functional impairment, social support and interaction, healthy behaviours and the ability to cope with one's own illness.

There was also evidence of volunteers making a difference to the health and well-being of service users, including increased self esteem, improved disease management and acceptance, better parenting skills, mental health, survival time for hospice patients, adoption of healthy behaviours, concordance with medical treatments, and improved relationships with health care professionals.

A further study published by the Corporation for National and Community Service, Office of Research and Policy Development, 'The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research', Washington, DC 2007, identified that whilst it is undoubtedly the case that better health leads to continued volunteering, volunteering also leads to improved physical and mental health. Thus they are part of a self-reinforcing cycle.

Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose, as found in a study of older adults, where formal volunteering moderated the loss of a sense of purpose among older adults who had experienced the loss of major role identities, such as wage-earner and parent. (Greenfield and Marks, 2004)

In general, volunteers report greater life satisfaction and better physical health than do non-volunteers, and

their life satisfaction and physical health improves at a greater rate as a result of volunteering. At the same time, older volunteers experience greater increases in life satisfaction and greater positive changes in their perceived health as a result of their volunteer activities than do younger volunteers. (Van Willigen, 2000)

## Benefits of Volunteering: A Local Example

One local example of the benefits of volunteering comes from Haroon Sattar, who volunteers for Redbridge Disability Association, and is pictured on the right with ReDA's advocacy manager Ian Evans. Haroon told us:

*I was never really aware of the issues that disabled people faced on a daily basis. I am now very much aware of these issues and understand them much better. Now, instead of feeling sympathy for people that are disabled, I feel a great empathy towards them.*

*I have helped with internet research and having gone through the in-house training, have been able to interview people and advised them accordingly. I have done external 'Power Point' presentations when other members of staff have been unable to make meetings. I have also helped publicise the services we offer to new arrivals into the borough of Redbridge. Volunteers very much support the paid staff and other members of the organisation.*

*Many of the skills gained through volunteering are transferable into paid employment, such as interpersonal skills, advice giving, answering the telephone, taking accurate messages. If a person has been in long term unemployment it can be a route back into employment.*

*I have found I have improved on my communication skills but I have also been able to bring many skills, learnt during my working life, into the voluntary role, to help other people*

*It has been a good and effective use of my free time, keeping my brain ticking over so it can remain healthy and I can live longer.*



## Benefits from Volunteers and Volunteer Centre Redbridge

In times of recession-related redundancy, volunteering helps people to:

- Keep skills fresh
- Gain experience
- Make CVs stand out
- Fill time productively
- Meet people, network and avoid social isolation

It is unsurprising then that increasing volunteering in Redbridge has been a target of our Local Area Agreement, supported by all signatories, including NHS Redbridge.

### **How does the project know that it is achieving its aims and objectives?**

The project provides regular monitoring reports to the Chief Officer, Board of Trustees and funders, indicating progress against pre-agreed objectives. We are also working towards a nationally recognised accreditation scheme for Volunteer Centres.

We are seeing numbers of enquiries from potential volunteers rising every week, continually register new organisations seeking our help to recruit and manage their volunteers and have successfully placed nearly 80 local people in vital volunteering roles since the Volunteer Centre reopened in November 2010. We hope and aim to build on this success in the coming months.

## About Us

RedbridgeCVS is an umbrella body that works with over 800 voluntary and community organisations in the London Borough of Redbridge.

### Mission

Our mission is to promote a strong, effective and independent voluntary and community sector in Redbridge.

### Funders



Funded by



## Contact Us

For more information about voluntary and community groups providing health and care services in Redbridge, contact:

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