

MONITORING VISIT REPORT: Ascension Community Trust 11355

1.1 Date of visit: March 17 th 2015	1.2 Name of visiting Grants Officer: Joan Millbank	1.3 People met with: Malathy Muthu, Manager Beryl Callison, Elders Activity Co-ordinator 8 service users
1.4 Programme Area & Outcomes: Older Londoners (Fewer older people with depression & more people reporting improved well-being)		
1.5 Purpose of the award: £24,400 over two years (£12,000; £12,400) towards the continuing cost of the Elders Project Co-ordinator's salary.		
MONITORING INFORMATION		
2.1 Project Outcome 1: Reduced social isolation. <p>Progress made: ACT's programme of activities continues to be provided two days each week (Tuesday and Thursdays). The post holder spends a further two days each week on outreach, home visits, project organisation and administration. Weekly activities include informal conversation, cooked lunch followed by activities for example, armchair exercise, tea dances and bingo. The charity also undertakes informal reminiscence work.</p> <p>Informal session feedback and results from ACT's annual user survey highlights that users feel less isolated as a result of the charity's support. Discussion with users on the monitoring visit confirmed this assertion; older people said that the sessions provided an opportunity (and for some the sole opportunity) to leave their homes, to find companionship and to make friends. Asked what they would do if the session were unable to run, all eight said that they would spend more time alone in their homes.</p>		
2.2 Project Outcome 2: Improved health and wellbeing. <p>Progress made: The service users, project manager and co-ordinator all expressed the view that their health (i.e. older people) had improved and the risk of more serious physical and mental health conditions had been reduced. The staff view was informed by comments from family members, and views expressed by the service users, informally and via the annual users survey. Most significantly, tracking via the Newham StayWell initiative, of which the project is a member, has found that older peoples' request for GP appointments had reduced. Discussion with users on the monitoring visit confirmed this view point; all said that they felt healthier as result of undertaking physical exercise, more alert because they were engaged and stimulated, and all felt more positive and had an increased sense of wellbeing.</p>		

GRANT OFFICER COMMENTS

The project is on course to meeting its anticipated targets. In the last year 165 people over the aged of 55 years attended the club on one or both activity days of whom 55% were aged 75 years plus. Participants reflect the local population i.e. mainly white women, most of whom have lived in the neighbourhood for many years, are widows who now live alone and with families that have moved away. The organisation is aware of changing needs relating to people living longer and in consequence the wider field of need. It has also recognised the growing numbers of older men who live alone and is considering how it can engage with them.

For a small project it is doing well in meeting its outcomes. It recognises the value of being part of a wider health initiative (Newham Staywell programme) both in terms of addressing the health needs of its older users but also, as a small community-based group, gaining organisational support and information including being part of a client tracking and monitoring system.

The grantee identified two challenges: getting isolated older people to leave their homes and helping them manage their personal budgets. The level of the Trust grant gives capacity to the project to undertake outreach as well as running the direct activities by allowing the worker time to conduct home visits to inform, reassure and encourage the individual to attend. It has found that many older people do not understand the purpose of personal budgets, and see it as an additional benefit rather than money to 'buy in' services. It has also identified examples where the person's family manage the budget and does not always use it for their direct benefit. It would appreciate more support particularly from and within Newham.

The grantee commended the Trust on maintaining a funding programme to benefit older Londoners and suggested that five year funding would be helpful.

Overall a good community-based project which is addressing a Trust priority in an effective way.