

LEARNING VISIT REPORT
The Renewal Programme 12951

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| 1.1 Date of visit: September 22 nd 2017 | 1.2 Name of visiting Grants Officer: Joan Millbank | 1.3 People met with: Louise Vera, Director of Training |
| 1.4 Programme Area & Outcomes: English for Speakers of Other Languages: More people with improved English language skills and more people participating in the wider community. | | |
| 1.5 Purpose of the award: £59,300 over three years to meet the sessional staffing and running costs of providing introductory ESOL classes for women aged 60 years and over. | | |
| MONITORING INFORMATION | | |
| 2.1 Project Outcome 1: 108 older women will learn basic English that will allow them to participate more fully in their communities (45 recruited yearly with a retention rate of 36 learners a year) Progress made: In year one 39 older women learners have participated in one of the three levels of classes (each of 12-week duration delivered 3 times per annum). Each learner received an initial assessment to ascertain their level of English and was then placed in a class according to their individual need. Classes were provided for: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Older learners who were non-literate or semi-literate in their first language who focused on learning the alphabet and basic words. 2. Absolute beginners who focused on learning phonics and simple everyday words. 3. Beginners who focused on learning phonics, everyday words and phrases, basic grammar and punctuation. <p>The older learners also benefited from participating in a weekly conversation class run by volunteers. The Friday conversation group has also provided an opportunity to bring the older learners into contact with external visitors and organisations to inform them about local services and activities; the intention of this is to help integrate the women into the wider community. Trips out were anticipated but not delivered in the year for operational reasons. Trips out are planned for year 2 and 3.</p> | | |
| 2.2 Project Outcome 2: At least 24 women over 3 years will feel confident enough to participate in volunteering in one of the Renewal Programme's projects, supporting other women to integrate in their communities, especially those new to the UK. Progress made: In year one 7 women were successfully recruited as project volunteers; they came forward from other activities run by Renewal. The main role of the volunteers has been to lead the Friday conversation classes, which has happened. Basic training was provided although Renewal recognises that more | | |

support is required to help them offer effective learning support. This is underway. A further 2 volunteers have been recruited from within the 2017 cohort of older learners

GRANT OFFICER COMMENTS

The Renewal Programme has been delivering formal accredited ESOL classes for more than 10 years and is a member of Newham Learning Partnership, within which it attracts statutory funding. Your funding allows the charity to provide specific targeted support to older women learners from refugee and migrant communities who are illiterate/ semi-literate in their first language, often isolated at home, unfamiliar with formal classroom settings and in need of a less formal learning environment. While each class is run by a trained ESOL tutor, the teaching is delivered in a less formal way, learning materials are designed to reflect the interests of the older learners and each learner is supported to learn at their own pace. To help the women feel comfortable they can bring friends and family to the Friday conversation group, although as the year has progressed this has stopped in practice as internal friendships have developed. Your officer was able to observe a Friday session; 30 older women learners were in attendance working in small groups of 5-6 led by a volunteer. The women were all engrossed in the conversations and there was a very energetic and engaged 'feel' in the room. During the visit your officer reviewed programme records which showed positive feedback from the older women learners and that 2 had progressed onto main ESOL entry 1 classes, 1 had signed up for computer training, 5 had joined the Centre's keep fit class and two had become peer volunteers on Fridays. Records also showed that 90% of the learners in year 1 were of Bengali descent (which reflects the local demographics of East Ham); other learners include older women from Afghan, Egyptian, Pakistani and Indian backgrounds, most of whom had lived in Newham for many years.

The Director of Training highlighted a number of issues and project responses:

1. Measuring impact – while there is project evaluation it is rather basic. The charity is now part of a 12-month sector collaboration with UCL (University of Central London) which will place PhD students within the organisation to devise client-based evaluation methods.
2. Volunteer support – recognising the limits of the current approach Renewal is working with Aston-Mansfield and other voluntary organisations to devise a Newham-based volunteer training programme to address the particular needs of the borough and requirements of their projects. At the meeting involving the local Mosque was discussed, both as a source of volunteers and funding.

The organisation's recent monitoring report and the learning visit revealed the importance of this type of ESOL support. The numbers of older women participating, observation of their engagement and seeing their feedback demonstrates the value of the work.