



2007-2008
*Increasing Voluntary
and Community Sector
Service Delivery*



Case Study No. 4 – Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association

INTRODUCTION

Croydon Neighbourhood Care Association (CNCA) exists to promote, support and develop local neighbourhood care schemes within the London Borough of Croydon for the relief of isolated and vulnerable individuals within the community.

Currently, 29 groups benefit from umbrella support from the Association. The groups offer a variety of services to their local communities, but all endeavour to link local people together to reduce loneliness and isolation and offer practical help to each other, through the use of volunteers.

CNCA is invaluable to these groups who might not be able to continue without the support and capacity that the Association provides.

CNCA is a charity, constituted as a company limited by guarantee. Its work is mainly carried out by its part time staff, supervised by its trustees. The trustees meet as a Board and its Executive Committee meets 10 times a year. Various sub-groups also meet as required and report back to the full Committee.

Croydon Council provides the majority of CNCA's funding and the organisation is close to securing external funding for one part-time post which will assist in developing its services. Croydon's funding (£100k per year) includes money for renting their council premises, staff salaries and services provided by CNCA for its member groups. The funding is provided on a three year basis through a Funding Agreement, which helps place CNCA on a more sustainable footing. The charity also receives £5k from the local Primary Care Trust for health-related driving for its members.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The 29 member groups vary in size and activity, ranging from Shiloh in South Norwood, a very small lunch club for African Caribbean elders, to the Parchmore Centre that runs a broad range of services including a lunch club, day centre and other services such as volunteers assisting in people's homes

and shopping trips for people who would not go outside the front door on their own.

Umbrella Support

CNCA provides a range of umbrella support services for its member groups, including:

- Advice and information updates
- The provision of opportunities for networking with other member groups at Members Forums
- Support in representing the Association's views to other bodies about transport provision
- The provision of information on current legislation issues
- Arranging Criminal Records Bureau checks for potential new volunteers and new staff (CNCA registered as an umbrella body from May 2005)
- Administering funds from the Primary Care Trust for repaying expenses incurred in health-related driving
- The provision of CNCA parking permits by Croydon Council.

Focused one-to-one work with seventeen member groups in the last year has included help with: funding applications; premises issues and negotiation; service development; issues concerning accessible transport; monitoring; publicity; volunteer recruitment and good practice; employment and recruitment issues for paid staff; committee issues; governing documents and trustee procedures, and support when particular difficulties arise.

Group statistics for the last financial year (2006-07) show a total of 8,564 individuals were helped. There were 89,219 club attendees and 50,669 recorded instances of general help. The number of active volunteers was 1,340.

Linda Algat, CNCA Manager summarises the organisation's work, "Mostly we respond to various groups' needs as they arise, but we have a programme of training and meetings throughout the year. However, the most important part of our work is at the other end of the phone; if groups are in trouble and need help we go out of our way to support them."

Training

The CNCA Training Programme is structured around member groups' needs. For example, if groups are running a day centre or a pop-in or lunch club, their volunteers go on the basic food hygiene course, the first aid course and the moving and handling course. If there is enough demand for new courses, CNCA will run these as well.

For example, CNCA recently ran a course together with Croydon Voluntary Association for the Blind to train people to work with blind clients and the best way of helping them with their correspondence and bills.

In the last year, twelve successful training events were held for 117 staff and volunteers on topics including: intermediate fundraising; adult abuse awareness; monitoring & evaluation and emergency first aid.

Networking

The Association provides a forum in which member groups can help and support each other and address issues relating to neighbourhood care. Staff and trustees participate in various planning and consultative meetings. In 2001, CNCA started a new forum, VoSSPOP (Voluntary Sector Service Providers for Older People), for organisations to network with other voluntary sector groups serving Croydon's older residents and to elect representatives to serve on forums such as the Older People's Partnership and to hear relevant speakers and debate issues of mutual concern.

Example of premises and negotiation work leading to successful outcome for a member group

"Upper Norwood Association for Community Care (UNACC) was working from a church hall in Upper Norwood on an incredibly steep gradient of a hill and elderly people were being required at all times of the year to walk up and down the hill and some people were falling. But older people were so desperate to go in and have warmth, comfort and a good meal that they were braving this" explains Ms Algat.

"So it became a passion to get them out of that place. We looked around Upper Norwood and couldn't find anything. And then the group using the Waterside Centre, just off a park in South Norwood, vacated the premises and we realised it was going to become available. It is a beautiful building by a lake and big enough to take a lunch club.

"I arranged with the council for UNACC to go and see it and I have never seen anything run so smoothly before. Because the council officer was excited by it, knew the right people to approach and understood UNACC had a good track record, everything seemed to happen so quickly. We negotiated how much money UNACC would need and when they could move. They opened up in November 2006 and are currently enjoying their first summer in lovely premises overlooking the lake with its abundant wildlife.

"One of the most important things we have is local knowledge, I couldn't do this job without it and that is one of the things the council tap into as well, because they do not have the level that we have."

As well as providing support for groups, CNCA receives around 15 calls a week from Croydon Council for local knowledge and relevant services, particularly from the Adult Social Services Department.

GOOD PRACTICE POINTS

Croydon's Partnership for Older People Project (POPP)

At the beginning of 2007, Croydon's POPP bid was successful in securing funding to offer services closer to the homes of Croydon's older population.

CNCA is represented on the Steering Group and was asked to undertake the recruitment of two members of staff. This took a huge amount of work, but CNCA managed to recruit two officers, the POPP Project Manager and Pop Stop Co-ordinator. Some services are now being offered and a Pop Stop 'super bus' is expected to be fully operational by October.

Ms Algat says: "This was an opportunity to use our expertise and get things done in a different way. We could sort things out quite quickly. We had two officers in post within two months.

"The whole bid meant the voluntary and independent sectors would work together and it has been the most amazing learning curve. We have learned that the bus is the least important part of it. What has come across now is that if you can get people from all sectors speaking to each other, they don't really need a vehicle. All they need is to be talking to each other so they can go out to a sheltered housing block or a day centre with a pharmacy group, nail cutting service or benefit checks and go and offer the service there.

"The experience has also taught us some of the constraints that the council works under, and the demands from the Department of Health have been an eye opener."

Building relationships and trust

Trust has been the most important ingredient in making the three-way relationship between the council, CNCA and the member groups, work.

Ms Algat says: "The groups trust us to do the right thing by them, and over the years we have grown to know the people in the council and they understand us a lot more than they used to and vice versa; out of that comes a trust and a regard for each other.

"I have quite a large database of people in the council that I can go to for a specific reason. Before the council were quite distant, now we have everyone's contact details and we know who to contact, such as a commissioning manager etc to ask questions, or contacts in housing and environmental health. It's a very healthy relationship we feel we've got with the council."

She adds: "The multi-agency, multi-sector steering group has helped us learn about each others roles and the different ways of doing things. For example, the Single Assessment Process form has been made more simple and compact."

FURTHER INFORMATION AND REFERENCES

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