**Event Minutes**

***Celebrating Faith and Health in Tower Hamlets***

***2/3/2023***

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| **Time** | **Name of speaker/ Team member** | **Description** |
| 12.30 | Jeremy Simmons, *FaithAction Policy and Programme Officer* | Jeremy welcomed everyone and gave background to the project.  Main theme: partnership working.  A faith leader recently remarked to Jeremy that we’ve achieved more in the last 3 years for the development of partnership working than we did in the previous 10.  Project background: FaithAction surveyed needs, identified 10 partner organisations, co-designed projects to meet the specific needs of the borough. |
| 12.35 | Georgia Ramirez, Public Health Programme Manager, Tower Hamlets Council | Georgia emphasised the importance of partnership working with the faith sector and how faith and other partners can work together effectively.  This way of collaborating around health in Tower Hamlets began with Covid-specific work and developed into the Faith Health Action Partnership (FHAP) project.  As stated in the recent health inequalities report from the Bishop of London: ‘Health inequalities are everyone’s business’.  Why is partnership important?   * Crucial response to Covid needs – bereavement, loneliness and isolation, vaccine roll out, responding to needs due to lockdowns, and supporting recovery   Benefits of funding faith settings:   * Reach to the most marginalised * Safe and confidential space for holistic conversations * Experience supporting people’s wellbeing (spiritual and otherwise)   Looking ahead:   * Have recommended making a budget available for the next financial year (and every year thereafter) * ICS alliance – One integration care system developing an alliance of voluntary sector orgs – GR wants faith settings to be involved * Primary care networks going to get funding going forward to address health inequalities. GR wants faith settings to be involved and access this funding. * THCVS funding is available to apply for already |
| 12.40 | Sufia Alam, East London Mosque: Maryam Centre Manager and THIFF Interim Chair | SA shared that Easton London Mosque was looked to as trusted partners by the council from the earliest days of Covid. Effective partnership working has continued since then. Appreciated provision and trust that was demonstrated.  Why fund faith groups?   * Well connected into communities and have trusted networks * Faith groups bring spiritual resilience and an active approach to health and wellbeing * Avoids duplication of efforts by bringing skills and opportunities together.   Project overview:   * The Maryam Centre project focused on exercise for women. * A small pot of money went a long way because relationships already existed. * Took a day trip to Cambridge ECO Mosque. This was important because not everyone can afford a holiday. Day trip did wonders for social relationships and created intergenerational opportunities for connection. * Faith groups support ‘spiritual resilience’ * ‘I’ve never seen these women so relaxed’ – the trip gave the women permission to take time out |
| 12.45 | Martin King, Take Back Your Life Project | MK participated in a previous Tack Back Your Life programme. It helped him understand where he needed to go after severe injuries.  Signed up to be trained as a mindfulness champion. Supported his own wellbeing and began reaching out to others. First over zoom, now running an in-person men’s wellbeing group.  “Take opportunities when they present themselves”. |
| 12:50 | Video | Introduced each project that was run.  Key messages/quotes:   * ‘Prevention is better than a cure’ (benefits of places of worship over GP/health setting) * ‘Community is a sense of “I am not alone”’ * People who previously joined as service recipients have been trained to run other small projects themselves. * Bilingual instructor really understands the community and helps to create community through humour. * ‘If the funding wasn’t there, we wouldn’t be able to run this kind of project’ * ‘We would not have had funding for the necessary coaching’ * ‘There are a certain number of voluntary hours I can put in, but it’s not easy and not enough’ * Invite people, encourage them, but let them decide what they want to do. * Don’t do what you think is needed, find out what is really needed. Talk to your users. |
| 12.55 | James Olanipekun (Christ Apostolic Church)  Sabeha Miah (Cycle Sisters)  Tareshvari Robinson (Take Back Your Life)  Nozmul Hussain (Newark Youth)  Mohammed Muhith (East London Mosque)  Nazrul Islam (Dorset Community Association)  Atikur Rahman (Wapping Noorani Masjid & Cultural Centre) | Project leaders gave a short introduction of who they are and what their project is.  Wapping Masjid – 30 people engaged. If they didn’t have money they wouldn’t be able to run it. Attendees asking when it is going happen again.  Take Back Your Life - Mindfulness and pain management to those who usually don’t have access. (Women with lower English literacy skills). Entirely free. Have helped 100s people during past 5 years. Give people time that the GP cannot.  Cycle Sisters – Making cycling accessible to Muslim women. Creating role models. Creates health benefits, a supportive sisterhood/network and leads to conversations around any and everything. Challenges stereotypes.  Christ Apostolic Church – Researched what people wanted first. Established their own space where they can be themselves. Member of congregation didn’t know his blood pressure was through the roof until routine appointment. FHAP enabled them to make sure more people were checking their blood pressure and thinking about their health more generally.  Newark Youth – over 50s coffee and yoga. Exercise and opportunity to connect (post covid). For some, this was the only time in the week that they came and met people face to face. Worked with around 60 adults in total, mainly women but some men. Worked with several partners including GP who was the main referral partner.  Shaphoran Mosque – young people’s project, running positive activities. Gone from 2 workers to 9 thanks to support made available. Hoping the same can happen next year.  East London Mosque – 55+ project. For many, this group was the only place that attendees engaged with any health services. |
| 13.10 | Q&A | What has been the most difficult challenge?   * Not having own venue. Using another hall. Restricted access towards end of project. * However, partnership opportunity as well: led to shared participation across different projects. * Cycle Sisters had never considered how wide their reach was until asked (focused on running the activities). Realised she had never counted about 100 people that she had a connection with. * Lack of capacity to measure impact because of funding constraints.   Big Conversations (NHS North East London) launching soon. If they came to faith communities what would they expect the conversation to be about around health?   * Mental wellbeing. * No longer ‘hard to reach’, just need to put in a bit of effort and speak to the right people. * Often people talk about what they want to do; on this panel are people who will act. * Dissemination of information doesn’t reach very far without a conduit. Need to link right information to right people. Those who experience the greatest inequalities need access. * Example of covid messaging – people accused of not following rules who never received the message. * Health and wellbeing/mindfulness needs funding. * Projects acted as a bridge into community and all kinds of wellbeing. * People tired of being consulted unless there is a result of the consultation. * FHAP report will be shared soon. * Ended up doing a lot of voluntary hours in addition to what the funding was able to provide for. |
|  | Georgia Ramirez | Certificate presentation: Project leads were presented with certificates for their projects. |
|  | Jeremy Simmons | Closing comments – thank you to all involved. Not the end of the project – hoping this will continue. |