



**Promoting equality and
empowerment**

ASRA
Report
2019-20

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Background

The organisation was set up in 1998. It started with a drop-in service managed by the project manager and local communities on a voluntary basis. The communities dedicated efforts led to its recognition by the local authority and attracted support from the local elected members.

The organisation "ASRA" (Urdu/Hindi/Punjabi meaning – Help, Support and Protection) was registered as a Scottish charity on 22 February 2001. It has to be noted that ASRA's service is the most cost-effective provision in Glasgow. IGF currently manages core funding, and it covers annual rent of the premises, P/T salary of the project manager and limited admin cost. In addition to the core funding, the organisation has been successfully securing some additional funding in the form of small grants every year to consolidate its support provision for older and disabled people, their carers and families from minority ethnic communities, including asylum seeker and refugee communities in Glasgow.

ASRA has over 200 members from diverse communities up to 93 years of age and has an average daily attendance of around 30 people.

Our Aims

We aim to deliver and develop sustainable, comprehensive daycare service to older and disabled people and their carers and families from minority ethnic communities. The provision is aimed to focus on older and vulnerable people and their carers who suffer physical and/or mental impairment, live in isolation and fulfil the early intervention and prevention criteria. The service aims to bring the communities mentioned above closer and support them to live an independent and proactive life in the community to enhance their quality of life.

Membership and service users

The project's membership is gradually increasing, with current membership at over 200, increasing demand for the service. Furthermore, it is organisational practice when a service user does not attend the centre for two weeks or more; attempts are made to ascertain their wellbeing. That includes a home visit if required. This service also extends to those who are not regular attendees yet are housebound and living in isolation.

On average, 30-35 people attend the day centre daily. The majority of the service users are registered with the centre. Nevertheless, the service is available to those not noted but who meet the criteria set in the constitution, i.e. older (50+) and disabled (moderate physical and/or mental impairment) or their carers from diverse communities. To register as a service user, the applicant or the person referred to is assessed by the project manager and, if recommended, is subsequently approved by the management committee.

The organisation's members come from diverse cultures and religions such as Christians, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, with origins such as Afghanistan, African, Algeria, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Middle East and Pakistan.

The time and days when the users access the service at ASRA vary from daily to weekly attendance. The timetable is mutually agreed upon and aimed to be flexible and needed as much as possible. It is also linked with the mutually agreed programme of activities offered.

FINANCIAL REVIEW and OTHER PROJECTS

The year 2019-20 has been the year of steady progress with some challenges. The project has been providing service to older and disabled people, their carers from diverse communities, including refugee communities in North West Glasgow in a culturally sensitive environment. Prevention and early intervention have been at the forefront of our service. It aimed to make day-to-day living more comfortable and giving older and disabled people full and meaningful lives.

The service focused on supporting people living in isolation, either suffering or were at potential risk of developing physical and/or mental deterioration and by offering them needed support, reduce their isolation and help them make informed choices for a healthy and proactive lifestyle.

SCVO-Community Jobs Scotland (CJS)

The organisation was awarded funding for the post of Assistant Day Care Worker by CJS-SCVO. The position was funded for 52 weeks for 25 hours per week at the current living wage rate.

The employment aims to allow the worker to gain a more extensive experience working with members from diverse cultures and beliefs and embrace training opportunities to enhance future career prospects. At the same time, it assisted the organisation in strengthening the more comprehensive network and opportunity to access resources to channel more energy to consolidate project service provision to vulnerable older adults and carers from diverse communities.

Access to Work Support

With the assistance of 'Supported Employment Service' Glasgow City HSCP, the organisation successfully secured £9240.00 through 'Access to Work Support' and assisted one of the ASRA-CJS part-time employees to provide coaching and support on her job for a limited period through the year 2019-20.

"Together We Care" (TWC) Project funded by People's Health Trust - Active Communities

The Project TWC was launched on 18 March and had been delivering its service effectively as planned. The project focused on providing structured and needed outreach and centre-based support to improve wellbeing and reduce the social isolation of older people and their carers. The project has been working towards achieving its outcomes that included;
"Increased involvement of participants in project design and delivery". Participants were enabled and supported to lead, shape and develop the project.
"Building Stronger connections, enabling friendships between the participants and improved social networks".

The project 'Together We Care' completed on 23 March 2020. Staff and volunteers working collaboratively with the service users could offer support and reduce isolation by upholding their active participation in a series of weekly, monthly and quarterly activities.

The project was initially scheduled to complete by 20 March 2020. We were fortunate to manage to deliver the programme of activities with minor adjustments before the coronavirus

lockdown hit us all. The last session of group activities, initially scheduled in the previous week of the project, was split into three sub-sessions of smaller groups over four days, 18, 19, 20 and 23 March, to comply with safety guidelines coronavirus epidemic. That enabled us to facilitate a social distance of 2 meters among the users while participating in it.

"Happy Breaks" Project funded by Shared Care Scotland

The project 'Happy Breaks' was launched in September 2018 for twelve months. The service focused on providing carers with a break and aimed to achieve the following outcomes:
Carers have more opportunities to enjoy a life outside of their caring role
Carers feel better supported to sustain their caring role
Carers and the people they care for have improved wellbeing.

Happy Breaks project completed one year successfully. 90% of the carers were 50+, and the cared-for were 65+ who ranged up to 92 years of age. A range of activities, including day outings, were delivered through the 12 months of the project's tenure. Sessional staff and volunteers were recruited and provided training in various areas to enhance their existing skills and learn new skills in working effectively with vulnerable adults and communities from diverse cultures and origins.

Area Partnership Funding

The project was awarded an Area Partnership grant of £4605 spent on equipment/s, ASRA website, facilitating a group visit to Stirling Castle, and Bannockburn's battle for 28 older people from minority ethnic communities. That provided respite to their carers as well as allowing them to embrace Scottish heritage.

The Stirling castle and Robert the Bruce statue are the symbols of Scottish independence and a source of national pride, and visiting them brought valuable experience to the members.

Innovative Services Delivered

In addition to the daily daycare service, we deliver/aim to provide the following innovative services.

Outreach and Befriending service

In addition to a daycare programme, the project offered limited outreach and befriending service that focused on older and frail people and their carers in North West Glasgow. The service included visiting older and frail members who were housebound/isolated in their homes, offering them one-to-one befriending support, making phone calls on their behalf to arrange their appointments, assisting them with shopping, and ensuring they were safe in their homes. Furthermore, they were assisted with organising welfare rights advice if required and encouraging and escorting them to participate in a range of activities at the day centre.

Support for Carers and people cared for

The project provided structured and needed outreach and centre-based one to one and group befriending support to carers of older people and those cared-for to bring long term positive impact on their wellbeing and make them feel that their caring role is valued.

The carers age 50 to 85 years old are members from minority ethnic communities who are socially disadvantaged and come from multiple deprivations. They find caring for an older person a challenging yet precious experience for helping their loved ones in their time of need. They live an isolated life. Most of them rely on state benefits for their day-to-day living and experience difficulties accessing mainstream support due to language and cultural barriers. They have become vulnerable and require urgent support to be able to sustain good quality and dignified care.

They were encouraged and supported to access a variety of weekly, monthly and quarterly activities.

The activities included yoga and meditation sessions, keeping fit classes, healthy cooking, IT and social media training, and quarterly group meetings.

The successful progression is the result of the combined effort of the participants, staff and volunteers.

Indoor Sports and Keep Fit Classes

The project offers daily and weekly access to Indoor sports such as playing cards, keram board, darts, exercise bike, rowing machine, treadmill, carpet bowling, table tennis and badminton. Besides, we offer weekly Keep fit classes suitable for older and frail members. The classes are culturally sensitive and are provided to the women-only group and a mixed-gender group.

Confidential and Expert Advice Service

We offer regular advice on a range of welfare rights, multiple debts, and housing. We refer to other agencies (such as Shelter, CAB, GCC and housing associations etc.) to address poverty, financial difficulties and the risk of homelessness that older and vulnerable adults from disadvantaged groups may be facing. The service is facilitated by a Welfare rights officer (a volunteer) and a staff member from Older People Services, Trust Housing Association and ASRA's Project Manager. Furthermore, a referral system is in place in conjunction with "Shelter" to deal with matters such as rent arrears, homelessness, problems with landlord, dampness and disrepair, eviction and mortgage arrears.

The project dealt with and provided advice and support in response to approximately 525 inquiries during the year. These included pension credit (48), retirement state pension (56), council tax (60), housing benefit (67), employment support allowance (41), disability living allowance / Personal Independence Payment (32), attendance allowance (3), Job Seeker's Allowance (9), housing (26), and other miscellaneous matters such as social fund, Carers allowance, passports and ID cards applications, visa applications and naturalisation and the blue badge scheme (183).

Single / Widow Women's Group

We support the EKTA group of older single women at ASRA who meet every Friday. A specially tailored programme of activities is organised that includes a Yoga class for women and vegetarian lunch. It provides them with an opportunity to socialise and combat isolation. The group comprises over 40 members.

Older Single Men Group

The project is carrying out research to gather members' views and comments to identify the need to establish an older single men's group.

Stay Well Programme

The stay well programme includes input from health and social care professional to deliver interactive dialogue to raise awareness of different health & social care issues and enhance access to available services. Other projects that assist older and vulnerable people from diverse minority ethnic communities are invited to bring their groups and participate in activities and awareness-raising seminars. This allows members to broaden their network circle, combat loneliness, and positively impact their wellbeing. 50 to 60 individuals attend most events. This is a joint initiative of ASRA and Central & West Integration Network hosted by ASRA.

The ESOL classes

The ESOL classes are an on-going provision and are gender-sensitive. Women only classes are facilitated by a volunteer teacher. It offers members an opportunity to learn linguistic skills in a culturally sensitive environment. The classes are offered twice a week and are attended by 15 – 20 members.

The project fundraised over £900 during the year that included collections, donations and service charges.

Activities for people with sensory impairment

We worked in partnership with 'Deafblind Scotland' Glasgow and offered breathing classes, yoga classes and exercise classes specifically designed for people with sensory impairment. We fundraised to purchase and install a loop system on our premises in the main hall and one other room. This provided significant support to people with visual and/or hearing impairment and made everyone feel valued and included. This activity currently has been discontinued due to a lack of resource. We aim to reinstate once further resources become available.

Supporting Cultural Diversity & Awareness

As part of the project's objectives to bring diverse communities closer, raise awareness, celebrate diversity and enhance harmony and integration amongst them, the project organises diverse social and cultural programmes such as Eid, Diwali, Christmas & New Year, Refugees Week, two monthly multi-lingual / cultural poetry sessions during the year. The events play a pivotal part in developing respect and understanding of different cultures, their values and enhance mutual respect. The events were popular and well attended by an average of 80 people.

The project participated in various events and activities organised jointly with Central & West Integration Network, WSREC, WCAVSN, Algerian Society Scotland and other member organisations in the area. Some of the events were "Celebration of Life", "Stay Well", "16 Days of Action", Drugs and Alcohol Awareness, "Refugee Week", Gardening project, Sewing and Arts & Crafts. It provided ASRA with the opportunity to network with other service providers that shared similar aims and assisted the communities in developing social links and bonds, integrating within the wider society, and participating in intercultural activities.

Staff and Volunteers Training

The staff and volunteers were supported to access a variety of training programmes during the year. The training courses included;

- Level 2 Certificate in Digital Marketing Course. The course was funded by the Scottish Government and provided by Digital Skills Scotland. It helped the learners improve their skills in understanding SEO (Search Engine Optimisation), social & digital media, and other emerging digital techniques.
- Cybersecurity advice for employers: The training programme was organised by SCVO and facilitated by Police Scotland. The training addressed all the issues related to cybersecurity risks and remedies and precautions in detail.
- Good governance: building strong foundations, good management
- Fundraising: creating successful applications to trusts - insight on needs and solutions, quality of the project and resources you need to deliver the project. This was organised by People's Health Trust in partnership with the Scottish Community Development Centre.
- Microsoft Office Excel Level Two. Breast screening awareness workshops
- Challenging perceptions around employing people with convictions. SCVO provided the training at their office in Glasgow. The workshops included talks, presentation, case studies and information on different forms of disclosure checks.
- 'Working with care experienced young people'. SCVO provided the training at their office in Glasgow. The workshops included talks, presentation, case studies. The training helped the staff enhance their knowledge of working with care experienced young people effectively and sensitively.
- Engaging Effectively: Clarity, Focus and Power: Training course was organised with Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE), facilitated by 'Kissing with Confidence' who are an organisation delivering transformational skills development that will assist grow our organisation.
- Active Listening: the power and charm of listening effectively Empathy and Rapport
- Confidence and Assertiveness

Networking

The project supported diverse community groups through sharing its resources and working in collaboration. The groups included EKTA (Single Women group from BME Communities), Hemat Gryfe for Women, West Scotland Regional Equality Council (WSREC), Ghana Association and Deafblind Scotland, Trust Housing Association Edinburgh and Scottish Old People's Assembly Edinburgh (SOPA).

Community events and workshops were organised during the year. Carers and people cared for taking part in the events. Members from other third sector agencies were invited, along with input from the HSCP. The workshops included 'Calorie dropping fat controlling' and 'Happiness is your best friend', 'Causes and effects of isolation' 'What do we mean from a healthy lifestyle', 'Carers Legislation', Food, Diet and Obesity, Will and power of attorney and 'Methods of communication'. Over 70 people attended each event.

Corona Virus

The UK is facing a difficult and worrying time with the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19). We know many of us may be experiencing the impact of this already and will be worried about what it could mean for all of us over the coming weeks.

The organisation announced to close the day centre for the members from 24 March 20 until further notice to comply with the government and NHS lockdown instructions. In particular, people who were vulnerable and had any other underline health conditions should stay at their homes.

ASRA staff have been working from home, with most of its activities are offered virtually, online, through social media, telephone, and applications such as Zoom. We aim to reach out to older people and their carers who were living in incredibly challenging situations. They are deemed to be at a higher risk of being forgotten by society. They have minimal access to the support services due to their inability to traverse barriers they face, such as language, frailty, deprivation, physical and mental health impairment.

As an organisation, we continue to assess the present situation on a daily basis and the effects this may have on each of us.

Our thanks

In the end, we would like to offer our sincere thanks to the Integrated Grant Fund (IGF), Health and Social Care Glasgow, Age Scotland, Peoples Health Trust, Shared Care Scotland and Area Partnerships for their invaluable support.

We would like to offer our special thanks to our local Councillors Hanzala Malik, Ken Andrew and Martha Wardrop for their tremendous support throughout the year.

Councillor Hanzala Malik has been holding his Surgery at Asra premises at 39 Napierhall Street on 1st and 3rd Tuesdays each month between 9 am - 11 am since Tuesday the 5 September 2017. Due to the pandemic lockdown, face to face surgeries is suspended and substituted with video and telephone calls.

Our special thanks should be extended to all our members and service users for their cooperation and contribution in fundraising and planning and participating in a range of activities.

All our staff, volunteers and the project manager deserve enormous thanks for their tremendous contribution and dedicated efforts in developing the service and assisting the project to achieve its objects.

The project aims to promote volunteering within diverse communities and organise educational and training events for staff, volunteers and service users to develop skills and confidence to enhance employment opportunities.

