

## Self Care Coronavirus Innovations Award – Highly Commended

### Safe and Independent Living- COVID19 Response

*Below are details of the highly commended entry for the 2020 Self Care Coronavirus Innovation Awards. The Self Care Forum is keen to spread ideas of best practice and we hope this will be helpful in providing tips to implement self care strategies that will benefit people in your community.*

#### Title and contact details

<b>Title of Initiative</b>
Age UK Lewisham and Southwark Covid response
<b>Name of team</b>
Safe and Independent Living (SAIL) Team Southwark
<b>Contact name</b>
Syeda Hussain
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<b>Date submitted</b> 30.07.2020

#### Problem(s) and how you tackled them

##### What was the problem you were trying to tackle?

Age UK Lewisham and Southwark is a local charity working in the community to support thousands of older people from a variety of ethnicities and backgrounds each year. Safe and Independent Living (SAIL) is a service for older people aged 50+ and their carers to help them participate in their local community and access the full range of services available, including leisure and social activities to address social isolation and promote physical and mental wellbeing including through seeking to address underlying causes of people's social care needs. We also provide Information and Advice, handyperson, and work closely with agencies to provide support such as befriending, mental health, and adult social care.

Due to Covid our face-to-face contact has been suspended. Lockdown was swift, unexpected and majority of our clients had to shield/self-isolate with no preparation in how to get through this period. Many of our clients do not have families or friends to support them, have underlying health conditions, are unable to use the internet and/or have care packages but frequently lost out on support as care agencies had many staff off sick. There were also safeguarding issues such as neglect, domestic abuse, and financial abuse (mainly scams/fraud) etc.

**Please give a brief description of your self care innovation**

In response to this sudden closure of our service, in order to continue to provide support the Southwark SAIL team made welfare calls to all older people aged 68+ who have used our services in the past 2 years to ensure they were safe and had access to food/shopping services. To date we have contacted over 3000 clients, and made over 5000 phone calls in addition to sending out letters for those we could not reach by phone. During these calls we identified clients who needed support with prescription collection, food shopping and to reduce social isolation by referring to telephone befriending, sent out activity packs by post which included chair-based exercises, cupboard recipes, puzzles and colouring in for mental stimulation/Mindfulness. Those who declined befriending but wanted to receive regular calls and be checked in with due to anxiety, we made regular check-in calls with. We have had 200 clients on the list for this in addition to carrying out our usual casework. They have appreciated receiving a call from a friendly, caring voice. As well as working with the community to support clients with their shopping, we created our own shop and drop service to support clients who did not have cash, and cannot use online shopping. Our handyperson service continued to do home visits for free jobs involving health and safety such as installing grab rails, key-safes, change lightbulbs to ensure they remained safe at home.

**What challenges or barriers were you faced with?**

Staff were unexpectedly asked to work from home and were on lockdown themselves but had to learn to adapt quickly to continue to support older people. Older people were scared, anxious and felt abandoned, and had their own individual issues. Fast changing guidance and information, leading to confusion and uncertainty. Misunderstanding of what clients could and could not do. As an organisation we kept up to date, information sharing, reassured clients on the phone.

**How did you solve the problems or overcome the barriers? (max 250 words)**

We adapted the handyperson service to ensure we were still supporting people while keeping everyone safe. Flexibility in the workforce was key and we only took tasks related to health and safety. For information and advice, support was provided over the phone to prevent older people from being financially worse off. The rest of the team made welfare calls – we created a template to ensure consistency in asking the right questions so we could identify how to support clients and what follow up support was needed. It was challenging for us to organise our response as this was a new way of working, having a large client list, but being here to answer the phone helped keep people calm and provided reassurance. We were also able to put measures in place to ensure the client was safe. For example, we identified clients who were hard of hearing and did not have smartphones. We received a donation of smartphones and ensured clients accessed these. We made sure to change the settings so they could read it more clearly, and with support from volunteers we helped clients set up WhatsApp video calls so they can use sign language and receive texts on medical appointments. Due to the increase in clients with low self-esteem and suicidal thoughts we made sure staff were up-to-date on their training to support clients. We also provided a free pair of slippers to older people who have had a trip or fall in the last 12 months.

**Did you work with other partners or organisations? If so, who were they**

For safeguarding cases we worked closely with social workers and medical professionals to ensure the safety of our clients. For example, we identified an older person who was severely malnourished as they had no money and was in debt. We arranged food parcels, and referred client to the malnutrition team while GP did a health check, social services looked at housing issue such as installing heating, our in-house Information and Advice team applied for benefits and referred client to a Law services to prevent client from being made homeless due to debt. Generally we worked with mutual aid groups and GoodGym for volunteers to help older people with shopping. We worked with befriending agencies such as Time and Talent, Link Age, and Blackfriars Settlement. We took on referrals from link workers and worked with them to support older people. We worked with community mental health, Telecare, OT, law centres, and the

volunteer sector in general. We also worked with Hubbub and O2 to distribute smartphones which include a data sim.

## Impact and outcomes

### Who benefited from this initiative?

Older people aged 50+ but majority of our clients were aged 70+ and their carers (e.g. users, customers, patients etc.)

### Was the initiative directed at a group?

As above

### What were the benefits to the targeted group or individuals?

Hard to reach older people who may otherwise have been overlooked. In particular those were isolated and did not have a support network, and older people with underlying health conditions. Additional support for hospital discharge patients, which means they can be discharged quicker and back at home. Sloppy slipper delivery helping prevent slips, trips and falls. Our referrals come from a wide variety of sources including GP surgeries, hospitals, adult social care, OT, voluntary sector, next of kin/neighbours and self-referrals.

### Were there benefits to you, your colleagues, your organisation or to a wider area such as the NHS? If so, what were they?

The hospital discharge point and supporting GP surgeries benefitted by reducing the impact on hospital services and other referrals benefitted adult social care and Southwark Council in general. Our services reduced pressure on statutory organisations, which meant in the long term there were services were able to make better use of scarce resources and staff time. Older people and their families felt better supported, especially if family members were unable to visit their loved ones and felt they had more control over their choices, and were better prepared in making informed choices. The biggest benefit was job satisfactions as majority of our clients thanked us for just remembering them during these chaotic times, and in some instances we were the only ones who reached out to them

## Evidence

### Do you have formal or anecdotal evidence of success? – (separate pdf is available with more info re statistics)

March to date HP jobs  
19 home fire safety visits  
31 falls prevention jobs  
33 home security jobs  
All helped clients feel safe in their home.

9 garden jobs so people could enjoy their outside space

March to date

26 key safes fitted  
7 microenvironment jobs  
Have enabled quicker discharge from hospital

**What was the cost of this initiative in terms of time, money, or other resources?**

Our existing services was re-directed to covid response with an addition of £5000 to set up the shop and drop service.

**Do you have any images, materials or weblinks to supplement your application?**

- Case studies - <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/lewishamandsouthwark/about-us/shops/>
- <https://twitter.com/AgeUKLS/status/1287772838263508992?s=20>
- <https://twitter.com/AgeUKLS/status/1286225142264340480?s=20>
- <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/bp-assets/globalassets/lewisham-and-southwark/documents/services/healthy-living/covid-creative-support-pack-3.pdf>
- <https://twitter.com/AgeUKLS/status/1269947799866617857?s=20>



**And, finally...**

**Are there any lessons you learned or top tips that you would like to share?**

We've learnt that our contact information isn't up to date for all clients and we relied on letters to reach more older people. We learned how important digital inclusion is especially during covid and what a difference made by providing a smartphone. Since people were not allowed to go out providing slippers helped reduced the risk of falls. The biggest lesson for us was the importance of a simple phone call made to an older person. Majority of our feedback was older people feeling happy to be remembered and not abandoned. It was and still is an emotional journey for all of us. The key thing is be patient and always ask open questions. Once you build rapport clients will feel more comfortable to share their concerns, and open to receiving help. On many occasions we had to think outside the box to support unmet needs especially when clients feels they been turned away by other services. Partnership working is key to accessing the support needed for older people. It's thanks to the support of our community we've been successful thus far.

**Did you use any of the Self Care Forum or other organisation's resources? If so, please specify**

Samaritans, BBBC (Tower Hamlets social prescribing service), meeting with partnership organisations and Community Southwark.

**Why do you think this initiative deserves to win the award?**

Through unprecedented circumstances the team were determined to support older people in the community. They have rarely turned away clients and would always look for creative solutions e.g. reaching out to others in the community to help remove and install a washing machine for an older person, where professionals did not!

Covid has enhanced their person-centred approach. Older people's needs are at the heart of everything they do. Their flexibility and initiative deserves to win because of their drive to overcome challenges so those most vulnerable in our community remained supported, evidenced by all the positive messages we have received.

