

Self Care Coronavirus Innovations Award Winning Entry

Case Study – Sutton Women’s Centre

Below are details of the winning 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

Title of Initiative
Ongoing support for domestic violence
Name of Self Care Programme
Sutton Women’s Centre Counselling and Freedom ProgrammeTeam
Contact name
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Date submitted
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Problem(s) and how you tackled them

What is the context of this study? What was the problem you were trying to tackle? Domestic violence Support Food support to vulnerable families
Please give a brief description of your self care innovation We altered our Face to face support to victims of domestic violence by providing: On-Line Freedom Programme a: 12 week Domestic Abuse course. The Programme examines the roles, attitudes and beliefs of the abuser and helps the victim make sense of what has happened to them. We run 9 programmes per year with a minimum of 20 women on each course. The course includes:

- “Early Warning Signs” of coercive control used by perpetrators to isolate their victim
- the effects of domestic abuse on children and their developmental stages
- what prevents victims leaving an abusive relationship
- how the dominator uses coercive control “to test the waters”, and the escalation which leads to the victim being unable to trust their own judgement

Counselling provided on-line by volunteer counsellors. The women using our service have been victims of domestic violence, childhood sexual abuse or rape. We currently have 35 counsellors providing counselling to 80 women per week. The service is in high demand and we have 70 women on the waiting list. The service is free and we offer each woman an initial 16 weeks counselling, which can be extended, if necessary, up to a year.

Food Support was given to vulnerable families as a result of donations from the local churches, Rotary clubs and a grant from Sutton council. We are currently supporting 35 families and women from the local refuge with food parcels.

Therapeutic and healing courses were also changed from taking place in the center to on-line providing those self-isolating at home with additional support giving them a sense of self-worth.

What challenges or barriers were you faced with?

How did you solve the problems or overcome the barriers?

Did you work with other partners or organisations?

Sutton Women’s Centre has only 3 part-time workers who manage the center. To ensure the center remained open the staff alternated between working from home and in the office to maintain social distancing.

Barriers we faced with on-line support:

Clients who were stuck at home with the perpetrator:

Support was provided when they were came to the center under the disguise of collecting food.

Clients who did not have access to computers:

They were invited to use a small room at the center where they were able to practice social distancing.

Mums with children at home, no free time to talk:

Evening support was provided when the children were in bed.

Mums who were disabled or self-isolating:

Staff and volunteers delivered food to their home address.

We worked in partnership with Carshalton & Sutton and Cheam Park Rotary clubs, Sutton Vineyard Church, Sutton College for Adult Learners, the local women’s refuge, Sutton Nightwatch, Morrisons supermarket, Ecolocal and Community Action Sutton.

What were the benefits to the targeted group or individuals?

Sutton Women's Centre has been providing services to women in the London Borough of Sutton and the surrounding area for over 30 years. Our vision is for all women in our community to achieve their full potential and we work towards this by providing women with a safe space where they can access support, advice, information and education to help them develop their skills and achieve this potential. We currently support 200 women per week.

The initiative taken during lockdown was aimed at victims of domestic violence and those who were isolated, their anxiety and depression severely increased with social isolation and many of them are single parents struggling with the added responsibility of home-schooling and trying to feed their children. We are currently providing weekly food parcels to 46 women and 72 children. Knowing that she is receiving support with food and can feed her family will increase a woman's mental and emotional wellbeing. It also ensures that her family have a reasonable diet, essential in promoting positive mental health. It also alleviates her financial burden and reduces the power her abuser has as it is very common for an abuser to use finances as a way of still exerting power and control. Providing support during this time enables the survivor to take back her power and control over her own life

Feedback from service user: "Hi Pauline just want to pass on a huge thank you to you and Heather and her daughter and anyone else involved in helping me with the food being delivered. I am so appreciative. Always in tears as I'm emptying the bags as it's overwhelming."

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

The organization has grown in reputation and standing in the borough. Referrals for support from social services have increased during the lockdown. A personal thankyou was received from the borough domestic violence commissioner for providing additional services. Our Facebook page updated our clients on news of the virus and the activities in the borough. Knowing that we can and are making a difference to some-ones lives has definitely produced greater job satisfaction.

Evidence

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

46 women and 72 children are on the list to receive food parcels, minimum value £30.00 per bag £1380 per week
50 women receiving counselling , minimum value £2000 per week
50 women on Freedom programme minimum value £2000 per week. 02/06/2020
Volunteer time. 10 volunteers, @ £15.00 per hour = £150 per week.
Total monthly cost £22,000

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

<https://www.facebook.com/SuttonWomen>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MAbhXv_Lk0s

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

Human contact is very important to people's general well-being and mental health. Our on-line programmes have been a lifeline to many as it is the only time that they have made contact or had discussions with other people during lockdown. Being stuck at home reduces one's self confidence and we have found that keeping in touch with our clients has helped improve their mental health and self-worth.

Our on-line Art Therapy classes have replaced the weekly sessions we held at the centre. Comments from one participant: "Provides a safe judgement free environment in which to share my art, without feeling self-conscious and helps to support personal growth and confidence x x x"

Did you use any of the Self Care Forum or other organisation's resources?

We employ qualified facilitators to run our courses who have informed me that they use NHS and .gov websites for the latest guidance on health topics though.

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

Sutton Women's Centre is a local charity, run by local women for the benefit of local women. All staff and volunteers of Sutton Women's Centre have worked and are working non-stop throughout the lockdown ensuring that support and advice is available to those in need. The Centre has remained open despite the lockdown and despite two of the three members of staff having contracted the virus. We have continued to provide support, increased our stock of food, with help from local supermarkets and allotments, kept clients updated on the virus by postings on our Facebook page.