



Time to Smile

Knowledge and Practice

Time to Smile



Contents

Introduction	2
The Project	3
Background	3
Activities delivered	4
What the beneficiaries said	5
Adults	5
Young people	8
Delivering the project	10
The Project Coordinator	10
Activity Providers	11
Volunteers	11
The Steering group	12
What we did	13
Introduction	13
Counselling	14
Arts and crafts	16
Nutritional cooking	17
Benefiting from the outdoors	17
What Worked Well	20
Marketing the project	20
Updating and making changes to the project	24
What we could do differently	25
Recommendations	28
Appendices	29

Introduction

Knowledge and Practice (KAP) is a Community Interest company established in 2017 and offering a range of services that reach marginalised communities. In providing support to those communities KAP works in such a way as to offer long term learning and social networks that last well beyond the life on any project.

Based in South London its projects are local in nature and the focus in recent years has been on running projects which reach several generations such as summer programmes for under 18-year-olds, which engage them with formal learning and the national curriculum through fun activities. KAP also supports people vulnerable to or already living with long term conditions such as diabetes many of whom are older (i.e., over the age of 50 years).



ENJOYING A SOCIAL EVENT WITH FRIENDS

The Project

Background

Much of the work that KAP was delivering came under threat with the arrival of COVID when a great deal of the country also experienced lockdown. We were then successful at achieving a small fund from the National Lottery for a period of 6 months during 2020 that allowed us to deliver a service during the most intense period of COVID infection. As a result of that project, we learned that COVID increased stress, poverty and isolation in Croydon's BAME families, and additional pressure on the physical and mental health of those groups already experiencing marginalisation and discrimination.

We used the information and learning we gathered from that project in the development of the current project which was funded for 3 years beginning in September 2021.

This project was designed to support 20 families and 50 older people in the first year and will

- Improve mental health and wellbeing
- Reduce obesity levels and improved physical health
- Reduce social isolation and loneliness
- Alleviate of stress and boredom

- Increase self confidence
- Create positive relationships

Activities Delivered

These activities were offered free of charge in recognition of the levels of poverty to be found in the area. A list of them has been shown below

- Yoga
- Arts and craft
- Cultural food Nutrition/cooking
- Counselling
- Health awareness events
- Sign posting
- Gardening

What the Beneficiaries Said

Adults

Individuals who made use of the project were invited to give feedback to the project in ways which would allow us to continually learn and make changes to the project during its lifetime. For instance, they were informed about the Steering Group – its role and how to both get on it as well as how it can assist them in making changes to the project itself.

We wished to keep the questions brief and focused in order to increase the number of responses we would get as a result. Beneficiaries were invited to provide feedback to the project more formally in response to two questions that were sent out to them.

What difference has this project made to your health?

What difference has this project made to your confidence?

The following responses typify those provided by respondents and as can be seen below some of the answers address both issues at the same time.

Qn. What difference has this project made to your health?

The two main responses provided focused on yoga and the food sessions.

Wow the activities especially the yoga has helped with my flexibility, and I have managed to stop using the walking stick. (Older woman with diabetes)

However, another theme has been the interaction with the activity providers themselves and the project staff

I must say I have really enjoyed the yoga sessions, they are good exercises to keep us flexible and it's so nice to meet other people. Nutan is just amazing, always giving some good tips on how to stay positive and mindful of everything we do. I must add that I also enjoyed all the events etc that BME staff organise frequently for us. Thank you so much to you and all the staff for caring about us. (Older man)

Some individuals also spoke about the allotment sessions, as people were able to learn about how to cultivate plants from seed and take them all the way through to harvesting them.

I am enjoying the benefits of Yoga with Nutan. It refreshes our tired mind, body and lifts our spirits too. Nutan is a very good teacher and she teaches us how to keep our body and mind active. She really inspires us, all credit to her. The allotment session is helpful, I enjoyed the cooking section too. Thanks for keeping these and more. I pray it continues well in future. (Older woman)

I'm happy to give my feedback as the team give us such a good variety of classes & activities that we are always stimulated & invigorated. I started with yoga where Nutan manages to relax us whilst still making it fun. The visits to the allotment are much more physical but just the right amount to keep us active & strong, then

sprinkled every so often with cookery clases (sic) which are great team bonding activities. More recently we have had health education visits from outside professionals like the bowel cancer talk which was really interesting. Thank you so much & well done to the whole team (Older woman with long term health condition)

Qn. - What difference has this project made to your confidence?

Thank you..... for all the activities, I have managed to make friends, increased my confidence and reduce isolation, I look forward to every week to meet my friends.

The allotment has given me the confidence to be able to grow things in my garden , I have been using all the tips that I learnt. (Older woman)

The clases (sic) and visit to allotment has helped me immensely I get to meet lively people and also helps me to stay fit and emotionally strong The Yoga teacher gives us a lot of positive tips on how to live happy and peaceful life I wish there were more classes You all are doing a sterling job Thanks a million (Older man)

It was wonderful returning two weeks ago after 3 years. Wonderful renewing old friendships and meeting new people. Yoga as always was great, tried online but not the same as in person. Sadly had to miss the last 2 weeks, but will be back next week. (Woman with long term health condition)

Young people

Young people on the project had an age range of 8-17 years and provided their feedback through their Steering Group. There were four areas of the project that they enjoyed the most and felt they got the most benefit from. These sessions increased confidence for those young people who would never have had the opportunity to engage in some of these activities because of time and cost. As a result, they were able to build relationships with new friends and reinforce those with their siblings and parents.

- The family cooking sessions were the most popular. Parents and children were provided with the guidance and ingredients to cook wholesome culturally appropriate and nutritional meals. At the end of the cooking session, they would sit as a family and share that meal. These sessions, like all the cooking sessions occurred monthly at Good Food Matters and online and gave young people the opportunity to spend time with busy parents, some of whom are doing three jobs to keep a roof over their heads.
- They thoroughly enjoyed the family get together events – a trip to Westminster, a visit and BBQ at Hove Beach and a Family-Ride Day at Play Fest at New Addington. All of the food throughout the day was provided by the project. Instead of spending the entire summer at home, they were able to explore new places and new ideas, expanding their confidence and curiosity.

- The arts and crafts sessions were very well received. It was well attended by the young people (more so than adults) and was one of the things that they encouraged the project to continue to provide.

Whilst the following is not directly part of the project, it did emanate from it. Online extra educational support was provided on a voluntary basis by GDPR checked and qualified teachers, who supported the children to keep up with lessons in the context of a curriculum disrupted by COVID. The provision of this element added to the confidence of the young people who said that they would have fallen behind without it being provided.

Delivering the Project

The Project Coordinator

The Project Coordinator was recruited in September 2021, having been a volunteer with KAP for several years and following a redundancy.

She is currently employed with the project for 15 hours per week. Local to Croydon, our Project Coordinator has found that being employed in the role has increased her overall motivation and employability.

Her responsibilities include

- Marketing the project
- Providing administration including booking and paying for venue space
- Coordinating the work of the Activity Coordinators
- Reporting on the work of the project
- Supporting and meeting with the steering group
- Keeping the Director of KAP informed about the project's work

Activity Providers

All the individuals paid to deliver the project's activities are local to the area i.e., within Croydon or within South London. KAP made a conscious decision to recruit local people because Croydon is one of the areas in London that experiences significant levels of unemployment and poverty. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, September 2019) marks out Croydon as having 18.1% (69,576) of its population amongst the 20% most deprived in the nation. In addition, this approach is in keeping with KAP's environmental approach – reducing carbon miles.

The Volunteers

We have 6 volunteers who are operate as coordinators supporting the delivery of the various activities. Two of the volunteers oversee the work on the allotments and the other four volunteers assist with the outdoors activities such as walking, the yoga, nutrition/cooking sessions etc.

The volunteers have all been active as volunteers with KAP for many years and continue to do so because they feel that it helped with their own social skills and increasing their confidence in a range of situations.

The Steering Group

We have a Steering group which meets on a month basis and is made up of members of the project, volunteers, the Coordinator and the Project Director. Its role is to review the work of the project focusing on what is working and what is not, and to make suggestions. They are supported by receiving feedback and suggestions from anyone benefiting from and or delivering the project. Ideas are suggested by anyone in the older people's project and then this is discussed in the steering group. Examples of suggestions include new places to walk – such as in the woods and not just in the park; offering families new places to visit such as the beach; making links with new organisations such as Nuffield Health and the Rotary Club to find ways to increase benefits to those using the project as well as improving visibility of the project in the local area.

What we Did

Introduction

The Time to Smile Project has been extremely successful in its first year of delivery. KAP aimed to work with 20 families in its first year but supported more than 30 families in the same time frame. Similarly, we reached and assisted over 65 older people, compared with our original target of 50 people in this age group.

Yoga and Meditation

KAP has been delivering yoga classes for several years because of its link to stress



YOGA CLASSES - ALWAYS BUSY

reduction and muscle strengthening. We are well known for doing this and have built up a significant presence in the community for increasing access to this form of health activity which is out of reach for many people living in deprived communities.

We have negotiated a good rate for the hall, which is in the heart of the community with good transport links. The hall's capacity is 25-30 depending on whether people use mats or need chairs to participate but we also now offer online sessions to increase the number of people who can join in. As a result

of these and other activities we have seen a steady increase in the number of men who attend on a regular basis. Currently 8 men regularly attend compared with 3 when we started to deliver the sessions.

We have embedded opportunities to build social capital at the end of each class, where attendees can have a chat over tea and snacks discussing life, and the space has become a safe for peer space for them as it has helped reducing isolation, loneliness and building friendships.

Counselling

The Counselling offer to beneficiaries was for 6 sessions for every individual who needed it. The original number of sessions as laid out in the application form was to reach 25 beneficiaries – however this number was reached in less than 6 months. The Lottery provided an extra £5000 for a target of 50 beneficiaries.

Despite this change, even this number was exceeded and in September 57 people had already made use of the counselling service.

Total Case Load:	Clients Discharged:	Clients: on hold
57	49	8

All of the clients were from the BAME community with 99% of them being Black. Trauma was an overarching theme, being consistent in all cases. Causal factors were varied ranging from domestic abuse, relational trauma racism and discrimination and traumatic experiences from psychiatric treatment to name a few.

As predicted, a number of individuals discussed their experience of depression some of which is linked to the lockdown.

Factors which are negatively affecting people's mental health include lockdown and poor family relationships, though some clients experienced loneliness, which has been exacerbated by the lockdown.

Several focused on their underlying health conditions, which have left them marginalised in society and prevented them from fulfilling their goals such as gaining employment or having a family. The range of underlying conditions is varied, for example HIV, sight impairment, schizophrenia, and Sickle Cell. Stigma about their health conditions had a significant impact on their physical health, wellbeing, self-perception, and self-confidence which in-turn had an impact on their relationships and at times employment.

Others talked about their mental health, in relation to the loss of loved ones. Additionally, factors in relation to intersectionality were also present, namely the impact of Covid on cultural practices following bereavement.

At this point it is important to highlighted that a number of service users mentioned that the background of the Counsellor as being from a BAME community affected their decision to make use of the service. The importance of representation will continue to be a consideration in future projects, as being able to reach into and provide relevant services to marginalised communities is at the heart of KAP's work.

There are currently 6 clients in active therapy, all of whom have underlying physical health conditions, and 5 out of the 6 of them are presenting symptoms of depression and anxiety. This snapshot is indicative of the individuals who make use of the counselling service and

demonstrates the state of wellbeing that individuals are presenting with who are the beneficiaries of the Time to Smile project.

The demand remains high, with individuals on a waiting list for therapy.

At the end of August, 10 clients had gone on to access support due to bereavement, after their 6 sessions with the project.

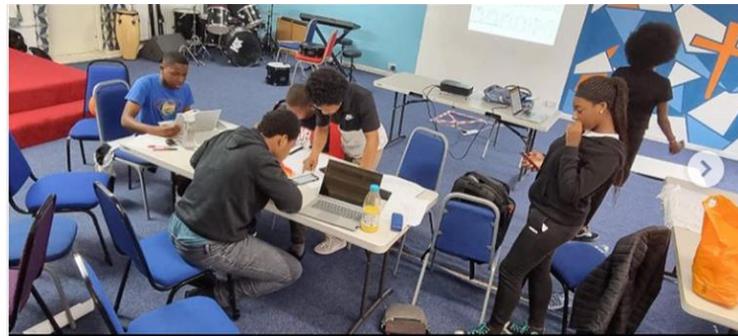
Arts and Crafts

The Arts and Craft sessions offered opportunity to be creative and additionally allowed people to alleviate stress, boredom and support their mental health.

Young people enjoyed these sessions and found it a great way to make interesting items whilst reinforcing family ties and building friendships with new people.



ARTS AND CRAFTS ENJOYED BY ALL AGES



ARTS AND CRAFTS ENJOYED BY ALL AGES



JEWELRY MAKING

Nutritional Cooking

The project worked closely with its partner agency Good Food Matters – that provide

- outdoors exercise on the allotment
- some of the ingredients that are cooked based on cultural



appropriateness and nutritional advice

- contributions to our culturally appropriate food parcels
- the kitchen where the food is prepared.

The most popular activity in the project continues to be the cultural cooking sessions. They remain very competitive and overly subscribed. The classes are provided fortnightly and provide families opportunities build great relationships whilst cooking balanced diets on a budget

Benefiting from the Outdoors

There were several elements to the outdoor programme including gardening, walking in parks, walking in the countryside and family events such as going to the beach. Some of these have been detailed below.

Gardening



AT THE ALLOTMENTS - GOOD FOOD MATTERS

The allotment has been a great source of social networking, the alleviation of stress and learning new cultural foods. Some of the food planted, tended and harvested have been included in the food parcels that families received helping to reduce the cost of living.



EXAMPLE OF A FRESH FOOD PARCEL INCORPORATING FOOD FROM THE ALLOTMENT

The bonus has been that the food parcels were culturally appropriate compared with traditional food parcels from food banks.

Walk in the woods

The project offers regular walks around the park – led by two of its volunteers at a time. In response to several requests this outdoor activity was expanded to a walk in the woods, which encouraged people to find and make use of local places of beauty which are often on their doorsteps but which they know nothing about.

Summer Trips Out

The project was guided by issues of interest and need within the beneficiary group. The message which came to them was how important it was for families to be able to bond through special occasions and as a result several activities took place including family beach trips and trips to Westminster.



**WESTMINSTER - EXPLORING
THE CITY WE LIVE IN**

What Worked Well

Marketing the project

The Project operated several ways of marketing what it had to offer.

- Reaching out to other organisations in the locality to ensure that they were aware of what we offered and could signpost to us. This included organisations such as Croydon BME Forum, which put our project on their website. In return we would post information about other projects and events in the area.

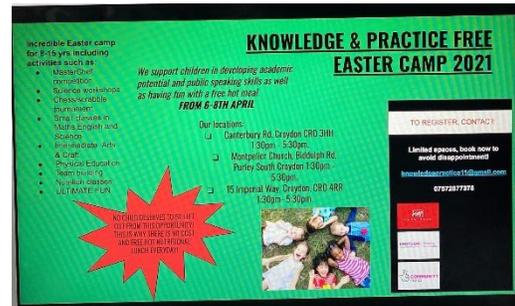
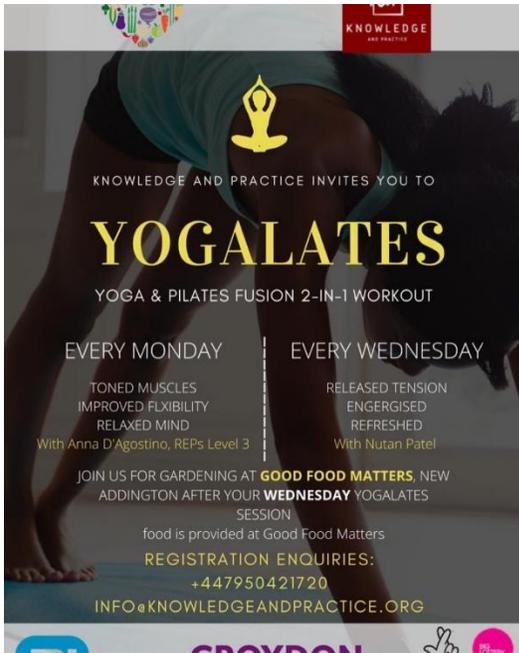
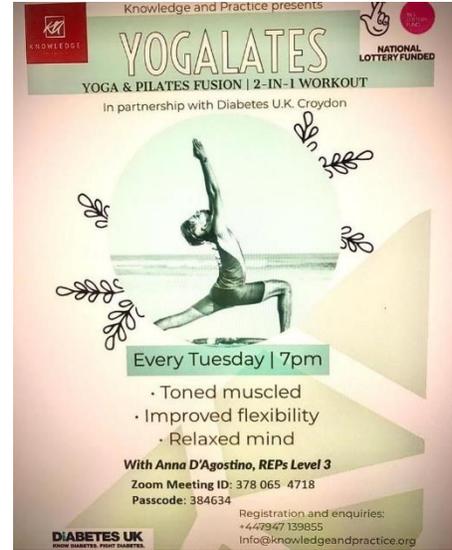
- Social Media

We used social media (mostly Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/knowledgepract/>) and Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/knowledgeandpractice/?hl=en> as one stop shops for matters to do with health and wellbeing in the Croydon area, focusing on BAME health. The aim being to attract a range of people who might not have been purposefully looking for our project – but having found out about it might take up the offers available.

We also employed WhatsApp, but mostly as a social network that individuals can sign up to under GDPR conditions. Individuals could choose to sign up for all or any of the platforms and receive messages about what was on in their local area and the benefit of WhatsApp was its ability to provide peer support beyond the hours when the project was open.



EXAMPLES OF THE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES MARKETED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA



- Word of Mouth

We encouraged our beneficiaries to invite their friends and share their own experiences of the project and what difference it is making in their lives. This has been the main way

of attracting new people to the project. They often mention that they look at our profile online to get a better sense of us before they make contact with us as a project.

Networking and Partnership working

We continue to work closely with Good Food Matters who are our partners in this project. Their mission is to *provide the space, knowledge and support to help our community grow, cook and enjoy nutritious food.*

<https://www.goodfoodmatters.org.uk/mission>



KAP DIRECTOR GIFTY NMAJU AT THE ROTARY CLUB FOLLOWING SPEECH ABOUT THE PROJECT

Clearly the project's work in providing culturally appropriate and nutritious food aligns with this work.

Partnership working and building networks has been one of our project's strengths. As indicated before we have been working in partnership with Good Food Matters to increase exercise through gardening on their local allotments and through making use of their high-quality kitchen facilities, where we provide our culturally and nutritionally appropriate meals. We also

have engaged with other agencies such as St. Christopher and The Alzheimer Society, where we delivered events/talks on Dementia Awareness as it affects BAME

communities. We did the same with St Christopher, an agency that works which works with people towards the end of life, and their families. We talked about the situation for BAME people in terms of losing a loved one. This allowed us to increase our profile in mainstream organisations, making



YOUNG BENEFICIARIES OF THE NUFFIELD HEALTH'S INVITATION TO SWIM AT THE POOL

it easier for them to be able to signpost individuals and families appropriately in the direction of the project.

We met also with the local Rotary club as well in order to share what we did and the ways in which we might be able to work together in the future.

We have also made inroads into other parts of the 3rd sector where we have taken up the offer of a swimming session with Nuffield health in their heated pool.



SWIMMING AT NUFFIELD HEALTH

Updating and making changes to the project

Having members from the project on the Steering group has proved extremely valuable because they have provided a great link to the remainder of the beneficiaries and the project has been well steered as a result of their guidance. Some of the most significant changes include – increasing access to counselling by using the budget differently once it became clear how much benefit people were getting from this service. Changing the programme in terms of walks, as people became more confident about where they wanted to go on their journeys. Reaching out across the 3rd sector including to Nuffield which itself has a social mission to increase the offer that we could make to our beneficiaries.

What we could do Differently

Most of the sessions and activities that we offer occur during the day-time, which impacts on the opportunity for many men to get involved. As a project we still have to overcome the way that we are viewed by men in the community – namely as something which is not for them.

An example of that is that some of the classes were considered to be more focused on the needs of women than men and could have impacted the recruitment to some of our classes for example we offered jewellery making as part of our suite of creative activities. We will speak with the men who attended our existing activities and ask for their advice on how to increase the number of men who make use of our project.

Despite reaching out through our existing and new networks, the number of men who attend our project on a regular basis is now 10. Whilst this is a significant improvement it is still lower than we would like. In the next year we intend to work more actively with Men's Sheds to try to improve our gender balance. The project has already made a contact in that agency.

Another area of learning has been about the importance of communicating with funders, for example we were struggling in the first six months with the counselling budget as we had used up all the budget due to the demand but when we contacted the grant offer, she was able to help us and advise us.

It has been very difficult to gather information from beneficiaries about their weight loss/obesity, despite asking for information about this for the evaluation. At the start of the project, it had been our intention to take measurements that we could use to demonstrate impact, however beneficiaries were not willing to engage on that basis. On reflection it would have been helpful to manage expectations about gathering some information (even if self-reported) by raising it during the activities – namely the nutrition and possibly the walking sessions. This is an important aspect of the project and in the future, the Steering Group will explore ways of gathering this information well ahead of the evaluation – for instance by offering an award or some other incentive which they may find appealing as a reward for their achievements.

Having a member of paid staff to oversee the project was very important. KAP has been delivering projects for many years with little funding available for overseeing and coordinating the work and with significant reliance on volunteers. Delivering this project has therefore reduced the stress on everyone involved because of the capacity available to make sure that everything is running smoothly. Beneficiaries were able to make regular contact with the Project Coordinator in a way that was not possible previously.

We work actively with a number of volunteers, who help to support the activities being delivered within the project. We did not realise how time consuming it would be to process all of the petty cash transactions associated with this, and as a result we have been asked to consider ways in which this can be better managed including having a paid finance officer to do the role.

The greatest learning has been in having a 3-year funded, rather than a yearly funded project. The project and the organisation is more stable and able to reflect and develop

in ways that provides stability and continuity to our beneficiaries, some of whom and are amongst the most marginalised in the UK.

Recommendations

1. Steering group to explore ways of gathering information about impact around obesity reduction.
2. Steering groups to explore ways of increasing the number of men who get involved in the project.
3. Explore ways to better manage the petty cash process.
4. Continue to communicate with the National Lottery as appropriate.

Appendices

ACTIVITY PROVIDERS

COMPENSATED OFFER

Hello Everyone,

Do you have a fun, interesting, or practical skill that can be shared with others?

Do you have an interest, or previous experience, in hosting or running groups?

Do you have free time during the summer?

Knowledge and Practice are currently looking for Activity Coordinators who can provide in-person, group activity sessions for children 8-16years in the London Borough of Croydon. After recently receiving funding for this new initiative, we can confirm the selected Activity Coordinators will be offered an ongoing, compensated placement with the potential to extend, dependent on their popularity.

Although we are looking for Activity Coordinators who possess a range of skills, we are particularly keen on those who can offer, or host, the following:

- Sewing, Knitting or Crotchet class
- Singing, or choir, group
- Jewellery-making sessions (easy level)
- Arts and Craft

- Physical activity
- Maths, sciences and English tutors/mentors (idea for those that just took GCSE/A level)
- Food and nutrition

Things to consider: Activity Coordinators will be required to possess, or register, for a Disclosure Barring Service (criminal record) check). All sessions will be offered to children, so your proposed activity must cater toward this age group.

If you, or someone you know, is interested in this opportunity, please email knowledgepractice11@gmail.com for more information. Please include your:

- Full Name
- Proposed activity you wish to host
- Any previous experience in developing skills for this activity and/or hosting group sessions



KNOWLEDGE & PRACTICE

