

COPING WITH AND OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF C®VID -19 PROJECT



END OF PROJECT REPORT 2021



PROJECT ID: 20147413

Prepared and submitted by **Odehye Nana Kwasi Asiedu-Ofei Vice President** For and on behalf of GUM

10th June 2021

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

On behalf of the Trustees of Ghana Union Midlands {GUM}, I present the End of Project Report, titled 'Coping with and overcoming the fear of the COVID-19' to the National Lottery Community Fund.

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked substantial damage to human lives. There is clear evidence that COVID-19 does not affect all population groups equally. Black people in the UK generally reside in urban city areas and large cities like London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds. Cardiff, Newport, Swansea, Glasgow, and Edinburgh. In the Midlands region, cities and large towns like Birmingham, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Northampton, Nottingham, Dudley, and Walsall all have a large population of Africans and Caribbean people residing in these urban areas.

Research and analyses of data have shown that old age, ethnicity and people residing in certain geographical areas are prone and more likely to be victims of the coronavirus. It is for this reason that Ghana Union Midlands put together a project and sought funding from the National Lottery Community Fund to provide advice and practical support to African and Caribbean communities in the Midlands region to overcome the fear of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how to cope with it.

The report is intended to provide an account of how the funding received was used to deliver our project activities. This is a 6-month project, which started in October 2020 and finished in March 2021.

2.0 PROJECT AIMS

The principal aim of our project is to provide advice and practical support to African and Caribbean communities in the Midlands region to overcome the fear of COVID-19 pandemic, and how to cope with it. To help deliver this aim, we put together five key objectives to manage the delivery of the project, which are as follows:

1) Develop a basic understanding of COVID-19 and how to manage the spread and prevention of the disease in our community.

- 2) Identify and address key issues, worries, and anxieties of individuals and the community as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 3) Provide social and welfare survival tips and practical support to help individual and families in our community cope during and after the COVID 19 pandemic period.
- 4) Develop a better understanding of how to deal with and manage financial, loss of income, and unemployment difficulties during coronavirus.
- 5) Develop an understanding of the link between COVID-19 and mental health. Furthermore, provide strategies, tips, and practical support to manage the mental health expectations of our community.

3.0 ACCOUNTABLE BODY

On 29th September 2020, Ghana Union Midlands [GUM], the regional umbrella body for Ghanaian groups in the Midlands region was awarded a grant of £10,000. The grant was to advise our community on how to cope with the worries and to overcome the fears of COVID-19 during the pandemic. This, therefore, makes GUM the contract holder and the accountable body for the grant with the National Lottery Community Fund.

4.0 DELIVERY PARTNERS

GUM assigned the delivery of the project to four local community groups who are all group members affiliated to the regional umbrella body. However, GUM remained the contract holder and the accountable body to the National Lottery Community Fund.

The project was delivered on behalf of GUM by the following delivery partners who are all affiliated group members of the regional umbrella body for Ghanaian groups in the Midlands region. The delivery partners are:

- 1. Ghana Union Greater Birmingham [GUGB]
- 2. Ghanaian Social Workers Association [GHASWA]

- 3. Ghanaian Residents Association in Northamptonshire [GRAIN]
- 4. Ghanaian Nurses Association Midlands [GNAM]

A memorandum of understanding between GUM and the delivery partners was agreed, and the tasks assigned to them clearly explained. This sets out the relationship between GUM and the delivery partners and their responsibilities. We also agreed with the delivery partners on the topics to be delivered by each partner and the expected dates for the talks. The fees for the delivery of the project were agreed in advance with the delivery partners. The terms of delivery, fees, and payment schedules were incorporated in the memorandum of understanding that was agreed between GUM and the delivery partners.

5.0 PROMOTION OF THE PROJECT

The project was promoted to our target groups using social media via text messages, WhatsApp, and Facebook. This was circulated by GUM and also the delivery partners, to their respective members and target groups about the project. We developed an initial online visual poster, which was circulated by WhatsApp to our service users. This informed them that GUM had received funding from the National Lottery Community Fund for our project. Please see appendix 1 for the attached poster.

We further developed separate visual posters for each of the talks that were delivered and this was circulated widely to our service users. We also involved all the delivery partners and other groups affiliated with the umbrella body in this exercise to circulate the visual posters on their social media platforms to inform their members about the project talks. Please see appendix1 for the posters of the 12 talks delivered.

6.0 DELIVERY PLAN

A delivery plan was put together to guide the delivery partners and the facilitators in order to ensure effective delivery of the project. The components of the plan essentially were a work schedules from subtasks that were set up to be accomplished during the delivery of the project. The plan also served the purpose of guiding management for the control and monitoring of the project activities.

7.0 MODES OF DELIVERY & PROJECT ACTIVITIES

7.1 Modes of Delivery

Due to coronavirus and the lockdown restrictions, it became necessary to deliver the project virtually using online learning, workshops, and discussions. We adopted ZOOM and Facebook as the platform to be used to deliver the online sessions. This allowed us to reach a wider audience. Participants were able to participate fully in the talks, workshops, and discussions from the comfort of their homes, to improve their knowledge and understanding of the coronavirus.

The project was structured to be delivered in two phases. The first phase started in October and finished in December 2020. The second and last phase of the project started in January and finished in March 2021. All the delivery partners were assigned 3 different topics each to deliver. Where the delivery partners did not have the required expertise within their organisation to deliver a specific topic, they were allowed to buy in external expertise to deliver the talks for their organisation. It was agreed that where a delivery partner engages a person or supplier to deliver a task on its behalf, the delivery partner shall be responsible to pay for the services and not GUM.

7.2 Project Activities

During the period October 2020 – March 2021, we delivered 12 virtual talks on different subjects, all COVID -19 related topics. This benefited **1,464** people who participated in the talks via Facebook and ZOOM from the comfort of their homes.

The project talks were delivered from the homes of the speakers and they were linked up with the facilitator [host] of the events in his home, which in itself brought its own challenges. Also, other challenges faced were the dates and time of our talks, which were competing with other virtual programmes/ events. Despite this, attendance and participation in our virtual talks were good.

The table below shows the months, dates, topics, the number of people who participated in the virtual online talks, workshops, and discussions.

Phase 1: October - December 2020

Date	Topic COVID-19	Delivery Partner Ghana Union	No of audience via Facebook	No of audience via Zoom	Total No of audience
October 2020	Overview, Infection, and Prevention	Greater Birmingham [GUGB]	32	63	95
7 th November 2020	The role of social workers and how they help families to cope with COVID – 19	Ghanaian Social Workers Association [GHASWA]	34	57	81
21 st November 2020	Finance, Housing, and Unemployment worries on people affected by coronavirus	Ghanaian Residents Association in Northamptonshire [GRAIN]	39	95	134
5 th December 2020	Coping with stress during COVID-19 and its effects on mental health	Ghanaian Nurses Association Midlands [GNAM]	32	65	97
		TOTAL [a]	137	280	417

Phase 2: January- March 2021

Date	Topic	Delivery Partner	No of audience via Facebook	No of audience via Zoom	Total No of audience
16 th January 2021	How effective and safe is the coronavirus vaccines in the fight against the pandemic?	Ghana Union Greater Birmingham [GUGB]	114	137	251
30 th January 2021	How to stay in touch with family & friends, and nurturing relationships	Ghanaian Residents Association in Northamptonshire [GRAIN]	85	71	156
13 th February 2021	The effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health amongst BAME community in the Midlands	Ghanaian Nurses Association Midlands [GNAM]	36	62	98
20 th February 2021	How to Manage the Risk of abuse in the Pandemic	Ghanaian Social Workers Association [GHASWA]	38	55	93

27 th	Oral Health &	Ghana Union	47	82	129
February	the COVID-19	Greater	ter		
2021	Pandemic	Birmingham	n		
		[GUGB]			
13 th March	Maintaining a	Ghanaian	49	81	130
2021	healthy lifestyle	Residents			
	in this period of	Association in			
	COVID-19	Northamptonshire			
	pandemic				
		[GRAIN]			
46					
20 th March	Sickle cell	Ghanaian Nurses	40	52	92
2021	awareness	Association			
	and its effects	Midlands			
	on families in				
	this period of	[GNAM]			
	COVID-19				
	Pandemic				
27 th March	Drug trofficking	Ghanaian Social	35	63	98
	Drug trafficking		33	63	90
2021	and modern	Workers			
	slavery	Association			
	amongst black teens in	[CHV6/VV]			
	COVID-19	[GHASWA]			
	pandemic				
	period				
	1, 2, 1, 2	TOTAL[b]	444	603	1,047
					·
		GRAND TOTAL			
		[A+B]	581	883	1,464

Source: GUM COVID-19 Project, 2021. The numbers shown in the table above were compiled from the data collected from ZOOM and Facebook storage.

8.0 TECHNICAL CHALLENGES FACED IN THE DELIVERY

The use of virtual platforms to deliver projects is nothing new. However, its use to deliver community projects in a covid-19 pandemic era, proved to be a challenge, particularly at the beginning of the project. We realised that some of our members were not familiar with the new technology. So, we had to factor in a programme, specifically geared towards enhancing peoples understanding and ability towards the use of virtual platforms. For example, it was a common occurrence for programmes to be disrupted by background noises, arising from the failure of a participant to mute his or her microphone.

In the case of the delivery partners, we encountered problems such as; unfamiliarity with specific functions on the ZOOM platform; disruption to programme caused by increased demands on the Wi-Fi network being used; and the coordination of multiple speakers from different locations. As a result of these technical issues, we factored in rehearsal times with speakers before delivering each programme. The rehearsal times proved invaluable in addressing the technical issues on the use of the zoom virtual platform. The Chair and facilitator of the events also had some challenges switching between Facebook and Zoom during the live sessions to identify and address arising questions.

9.0 FINANCE

Since GUM is in receipt of public funds, it is the view of the trustees that it is their collective responsibility to ensure that adequate internal financial control systems are in place to successfully account for the grant received. Critical to the implementation of these financial control is an appropriate level of segregation of the organisation's [GUM] own funds from the project funds [grant] received. We ensured that the grant expended on the project all had an audit trail with the necessary invoices and receipts to support the payments.

9.1. How the Grant was spent

A grant of £10,000 was paid to GUM to deliver the project. The table below provides an account of how the funding received was used to deliver the project activities.

Cost Analysis	Budgeted	Actual Spend	Variance
	Project		{Over/under
	Expenditure	{Expenditure}	spend}
Project Management & Coordination	1,200	1,200	0.00
Delivery Partner's Fees [4 Partners]	6,000	6,000	0.00
Digital & online support	900	900	0.00
Project Overheads [Running cost]	1,100	996	104.00
Equipment	800	904	-104.00
Total	10,000	10,000	0.00

The expenditure shown in our project application was based on known costs agreed with the delivery partners when our application was put together. Therefore, these costs are expenses that became fixed cost and did not increase or decrease for the services provided by our delivery partners. However, the cost of certain expenditure, for example, equipment was not accurately determined at the application stage. Throughout the project duration, we constantly monitored our actual spend against the project budget. This ensured that we were operating within the grant that was approved for the project.

10.0 PROJECT EVALUATION

The evaluation of the project was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the evaluation was conducted in January 2021 after the completion of the first phase of the project, which ended in December 2020. The evaluation covered the period October – December 2020, which focussed on the effectiveness in the planning and delivery of the project. The delivery partners were involved in this exercise to get their feedback on the planning and delivery of the project. The evaluation helped us to:

- monitor the progress of the project
- check whether what we were doing was still what local people want or need
- identify strengths and weaknesses of the project
- find out whether we have used our resources [i.e., time and money] effectively
- create the basis for the planning and delivery of phase 2 of the project

The second phase of the evaluation was conducted in April after the project officially ended in March 2021. It covered the period January – March 2021. The evaluation focussed this time on the members of the delivery partners, other groups affiliated to GUM, and the local communities in the Midlands region, who participated in the talks, seminars, and workshops.

A sample population of the people who participated in the virtual talks were randomly selected to be interviewed. The delivery partners were assigned with the responsibility to interview their members who have been randomly selected and took part in the virtual talks. We agreed with the delivery partners to use questionnaire-based information about the participants who took part in the talks. Telephone interviews were conducted to assess the impact on the project participants and what the grant had achieved, and the benefits to the community. Participants were asked to express their personal circumstances over the course of the project.

The key evaluation questions were:

- ✓ The usefulness of the topics and the effectiveness of the delivery to members
 and the community.
- ✓ The impact of the project on members and the community.
- ✓ Whether GUM has been successful in putting out messages across to the community on COVID prevention and alleviating their fears and worries on the pandemic.
- ✓ What difference the project has made to the local communities in general.

11.0 WHAT THE GRANT HAS HELPED US TO ACHIEVE

Using the information gathered from the evaluation of the project, we were able to determine how the grant has helped us to achieve our desired results. Outlined below are what the grant has enabled us to achieve to make an impact on people and the community in general.

11.1 Benefits to our members and participants

> Telephone and online support were given to people who were either isolating or shielding, as well as people who are housebound with various

illnesses. The stories from our members and participants show that the project has helped people in many different ways to overcome psychological effects such as social isolation, loneliness, anxiety, boredom, and stress through the project activities. Participants also reported that they felt a sense of solidarity and found solace in the support given to them.

- > The lack of understanding and support in financial management can have significant ramifications on broader mental health as a result of the stress that comes from financial worries. With increased exposure to the benefits system and other financial packages, participants reported that they were able to use the practical advice and information provided at the finance talk to navigate their way through the various financial packages available to help cope with financial and housing worries in the lockdown.
- Participants acknowledged the mental and psychological benefits of engaging in physical activities, for example, going for walks, which has helped in better decision- making, feeling mentally clearer, and making them more alert. Participants also reported improvements and reductions in mood and lower stress levels.

11.2 Benefits to the community

- ❖ The project virtual talks promoted a sense of well-being, particularly among those with few social connections by extending their networks through their participation in the project talks and workshops. People felt part of the community and this increased their resources and contacts they can turn to for assistance. These social ties generated trust and prompted people to feel more secure.
- ❖ The talks on the various topics were delivered by professionals from the Ghanaian community who had a cultural understanding of the project target group. Participants felt relaxed and were able to relate to the professionals who facilitated the talks and workshops. Participants took in good faith and accepted the assurances given to them on the various issues of concern to the community, especially whether the vaccines were safe. This assurance encouraged people to take up the vaccine offers and afterward nearly 82% reported to us that they have had their first shot of the vaccines.

- ❖ Community groups have a role to play in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in helping individuals and communities. There is growing recognition by participants of the role the project has played in tackling isolation and loneliness to help improve health problems, and also strengthen resilience to health problems in the community.
- ❖ Participants reported that they had checked on their neighbours who might need help at least once a week. This kind of gesture reassured the local people that support was available when needed during the peak of the pandemic and neighbours are connecting and looking out for each other.

13. CONCLUSION

The COVID- 19 pandemic have turned upside down the lives of many people and is more likely to have a lasting impact particularly on the lives of the BAME communities. These groups already marginalised and disadvantaged are likely to become more so. Additionally, many have undergone traumatic experiences during the lockdown, and struggled to cope with homelife, bereavement, employment, and job losses. As a result, they have had to adjust themselves drastically to changes in their lives. Even those who have adjusted well to the restrictions may still face profound challenges. The GUM COVID project has helped people in many different ways to cope with and overcome the fear of the coronavirus pandemic.

Research has shown that the BAME communities generally are suspicious and less likely to take a coronavirus jab. In the past, Black Africans had been experimented on in atrocities that have given rise to a degree of medical scepticism. Also, false conspiracy theories surrounding the vaccine and spreading in our community have contributed to the low take-up rate by certain BAME community. Despite this, our project succeeded in convincing people of the importance of the vaccine and stressed that it is safe to be vaccinated. Hence nearly 82% who participated in the project talks, seminars, and workshops reported to us during the evaluation that they have had their first jab of the vaccine.

The evaluation conducted at the end of the project also revealed the dilemma facing undocumented migrants who are struggling for access to the vaccines. They have been denied registration at their local doctors. The GPs often check their immigration status requiring identification or proof of address, although neither is required to get primary care. Many are scared to go to the NHS in case they pass their information over to the police and immigration officers. This has forced them to shun the coronavirus vaccine over data-sharing worries. Therefore, they won't bother to get tested for COVID or expect to be vaccinated, thus putting themselves and public health at risk.

The low take-up rate of the vaccine amongst certain BAME groups remains a major concern if one particular community is unvaccinated because this group is among the most at risk of dying with COVID-19. This means that the virus will go through that community like wildfire if people refused to be vaccinated. The low uptake of the vaccines is further compounded by the dilemma facing undocumented migrants who shun the vaccination mainly for immigration reasons. Therefore, there is a compelling case for GUM to do something about this particular problem in our community, and try to dispel the myths and improve understanding of the vaccines.

Appendix 1: Announcement of the Project & Funding Flyer



PHASE 1:

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2020 PROMOTIONAL FLYERS





grants obtained from the National Lottery Fund

GUM is proud to support its affiliated group

members across the Midlands region using the

We thank you all for your continued support.

grants obtained from the National Lottery Fund.



Don't miss out. Please make a note in your diary and join us on ZOOM & FACEBOOK

RSVP:

GUM Secretariat

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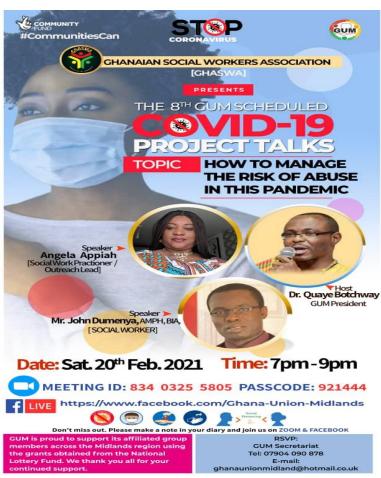
grants obtained from the National Lottery Fund.

PHASE 2:

JANUARY - MARCH 2021 PROMOTIONAL FLYERS









MEETING ID: 819 4020 3531 PASSCODE: 978422

LIVE https://www.facebook.com/Ghana-Union-Midlands

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Distancing C

GUM is proud to support its affiliated group members across the Midlands region using the grants obtained from the National Lottery Fund. We thank you all for your continued support. RSVP:
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Meeting ID: 815 1728 4663 Passcode: 519841

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