



Group development and sustainability

Uganda Community in Greater Manchester (UCOMM)



Throughout its 15 years existence, UCOMM has played a vital role in helping the BAME community, especially of Ugandan descent to settle in, live in, work and make connections with other new migrants, and to better access statutory services such as the NHS.

UCOMM was set up in 2005, by a group of people who all originated from Uganda, and were newly settling in Manchester. By coming together, they were able to support each other by sharing accommodation and information on accessing services, education, transportation, health as well as support one another with family, emotional, financial, legal, and language challenges. In 2008, UCOMM registered as a charitable company (former no. 1123706) and in 2017 converted to a CIO (no. 1173468).

In 2020, UCOMM's services were severely challenged by the Coronavirus pandemic, and the board had to quickly respond to the crisis at hand.

UCOMM received a Covid support grant from the National Lottery Community Fund which provided space for UCOMM's manager to focus on developing a sustainable organisation. They reached out to Macc for support with strategic planning, alongside refreshing their policies & procedures and securing further funding.

A Macc development worker met with UCOMM initially to discuss their needs and prioritise the outcomes the group wanted to achieve. Due to Covid-19 guidance at the time and the needs of the group, all support needed to be delivered remotely. Together the Macc worker and UCOMM manager created an Organisational Development Plan, RAG rated according to the urgency of the need. Meetings took place every couple of months



over the course of late 2020 to 2021 where actions would be agreed and progress followed up on. Support was wide-reaching, including updating the groups Volunteer Expenses processes, revising several key Policies and Procedures including Health and Safety, and providing lists of relevant open funding programmes as well as advice and pointers on draft funding bids. Macc tailored a Data Protection policy to create a new version for smaller groups and led a bespoke session for another volunteer at UCOMM.

The development worker also developed a new strategic planning process for online delivery, including pre-session work, two 2-hour online zoom meetings to cover SWOT and strategic risk assessment, including analysis of various programmes to make choices about what to resource, prioritise and pursue.

A Macc development worker linked UCOMM up with the department of social responsibility at Manchester University, and engaged 3 postgraduate students to carry out some mapping of other black-specialist third sector organisations in Manchester in order to inform their strategic planning.

Following this, Macc contracted a consultant to work with the group on scoping a community consultation to inform their future strategy, developing a database, as well as recruiting volunteers. Where UCOMM had limited capacity, the consultant was able further support, for example, with guidance for interviewing and recruiting volunteers, defining roles and tasks, including data cleansing to understand current cohort and short telephone surveys as a pragmatic and proportionate consultation exercise. 6 months later and these volunteers are still benefitting the organisation who now have plans to further development their structures and systems for data collection and impact management.

“I also want to acknowledge the amount of work that you are putting in and we are very very grateful. I have no idea how you do it, the professionalism is astounding. I think we needed you many many years ago”.

“I think it is going well with the volunteers - there is no way we could have done this without you holding my hand. you have done a great job. i just don't know what we are going to do without you”.



Throughout the support period, a Macc development worker was always on hand to answer questions, signpost UCOMM to external contacts and share resources, including the Charity Commission guidance on record keeping, and professional HR support for payroll advice and requirements.

UCOMM is interested in seeking larger pots of funding and strategic planning in the future, to which a Macc development worker has offered an invitation of support once UCOMM are ready.

“You have been so patient with me and my team. Elisa and Sarah (the new volunteers) are wonderful... . I am so grateful to you, thank you so much.”

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