

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Women's Forum

Tuesday, 22 September 2020

Present

Pauline Woodhouse (Co-Chair), Sally wood, Alex Rex, Dawn Thomas, ngie Kennedy, Debbie Burns, Mavis Mundirwa, Neelam Aggarwal, Morcea Walker, Rachel Duncan, Cllr Danielle Stone, Rachel Packman, Rutendo Nyatsine, Debbie MacColl

Officers at the meeting

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Anna King and Felicity Watson.

2. WELCOME

Pauline welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Debbie apologised for not having the minutes of the last meeting ready due to lockdown and being separated from her notes. To be rectified asap. Notes from Vicki Martin's input had been circulated.

Neelam stated that a lot of agencies put in a funding bid that they would meet the need for the BAME community but when women actually approached them, they were not given any support. This raised the question as to whether something separate was needed. Northampton should be self-sufficient when it came to looking after their residents and women should not have to go to Southall Black Sisters who were not funded to assist in this area but did so purely out of a desire to help people.

A proposal was made to set up a working group to look at where the gaps were for BAME women and potentially to hold a fund to help those in crisis. After much discussion it was agreed that Rachel would send out invites and the working group would sit under the Forum, with a standing agenda item. The working group could be facilitated however people wanted it. Rachel also reported that Vicki Martin had been about to set NADSA meeting dates and the action plan would be on the agenda. Rachel would ensure that ethnic minority voices were heard and their needs taken into account.

Both Dawn and Cllr Stone stated that another meeting was currently going on around the same subject and it was a shame that they could not attend both. Debbie to try and ensure meeting clashes did not happen again.

Concerns were raised that the working group should be made up exclusively of BAME women in order to properly represent them and hear their voices. However, after discussion it was agreed that may exclude some valuable skills and expertise of non BAME members.

Rachel Duncan stated that NDAS now had a BAME worker who was currently working part time and getting to know the local communities and would sit on the working group. Rachel was trying to get funding to support full time work. The most

difficult thing working with women with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) was the lack of funding to do any work. NDAS was in a better financial situation now than last year and had secured 1 funded space in refuge for women with NRPF for the next 12 months which was currently filled. Eve also had 1 space. The funding however, was not sufficient to cover the requirement and they were looking to fulfil the gap with donations.

Neelam stated that women who were going through a divorce and not in a very good state of mind, found it very difficult to even sign divorce papers and needed a lot of support. They were currently often signposted to solicitors which they could not afford. Cllr Stone stated that solicitors were only really needed in a divorce when there was conflict and could be supported through the process.

Dawn informed the group of 2 organisations to support women through legal issues. Both are well worth investigating.

Rights of Women - <https://rightsofwomen.org.uk/>

The Centre for Women's Justice - <https://www.centreforwomensjustice.org.uk/>

4. NCF FUNDING - ALEX REX

Alex introduced herself as the Programme Manager for NCF. She ran through some of the requirements for groups to access funding:-

- Constitution
- Bank Account in the name of the group
- Policies as appropriate (Safeguarding vulnerable adults/children)

She also ran through some of the funds currently available:-

Covid Crisis funding – deadline of 8 October for applications but another round was expected.

Compton Fund from £500 to £5,000, deadline of 2 October.

The Northampton Queen's Institute Relief Fund (Northampton only) £10,000 - £20,000 for improving health and wellbeing. Alex suggested the working group looked at this fund.

#iwillfund – for youth social action.

Winter Wellbeing Fund – for supporting older and vulnerable people during the cold winter months.

More details of these funding opportunities, guidance etc were available on the website - <http://www.ncf.uk.com/>

Alex said she and her colleague Anthony, the Grants Co-ordinator, would be more than happy to discuss any applications people were planning to make.

Contact Details - Alex@ncf.uk.com

Anthony@ncf.uk.com

Alex also informed the group of the Henry Martin Bursary which offered grants of up to £500 to help people get back into work. It would also be possible for NCF to hold funds in a similar bursary for victims of DA which individuals could apply for. The group would have to do some fund raising for the money but could potentially ask someone like the High Sheriff.

Neelam stated it was a very good offer and she had known of a woman who wanted a bursary to learn to drive but was told there was no funding available. She explained how difficult it was for women to be able to pay for lessons as the men

often did not want them to have any independence, yet it opened up a whole new world to that woman around work and childcare. Alex responded that they had funded driving lessons for people before but she had not dealt with this individual case so could not comment. Although NCF gave advice, it was the actual funders who made the final decisions on which applications were successful. Morcea stated that it was very good to have the opportunity to discuss applications before submitting them and often projects needed to be moulded to fit a specific funding pot. She also offered to link in with the working group if any assistance was needed to find and apply for funding.

5. UPDATES

Neelam – Diwali would be going ahead virtually this year on Saturday 7 November, 5.30pm – 7pm with a huge line up. The Nine Days festival would also go ahead virtually. Neelam stated they were grateful to be able to still do things to bring people together even though they could not meet in person.

Rachel – during lockdown there had been a massive reduction in calls, down by 40% over the first 3 weeks with an increase in website traffic. Since lockdown had been eased, there had been an increase in calls of 43% over pre-Covid levels, with July seeing an increase of 63% over pre-Covid levels. The cases were more complex than normal as well. There was now a support worker in each area with children's worker in refuge and outreach. New staff members were receiving training so group would could be increased.

The DA Bill looked like it was on track for implementation by April but Rachel warned that the party movement was to vote no for DA support for immigrant women.

Dawn – work had been online since March. Normally there would be 26 weeks of support but there had been an increase in session numbers following issues with Covid and the need for low level mental health support.

Angie – C2C were still working remotely with the Northampton Centre only being open by appointment. They were trying to be creative and do outside activities and had just taken over an allotment to work with women with mental health issues.

Sally – Breast Friends were doing everything online making sure people did not feel isolated. There had been great support for sessions like Zoom fitness and bedtime stories for adults etc.

Mavis reported they had been very busy doing African inspired food parcels, a hot meal project thanks to NCF and a befriending project where they called lonely people for conversations and signposted them.

Rutendo thanked NCF for funding Zimwomen. They had been working with Mavis's group with the food parcels and Covid mental health support. The Young Black Achievers Awards presentation would be done online this year and the logistics were currently being worked out.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Democracy Week Conference

Cllr Stone told the group that she always organised something for a local group of BAME women during democracy week. This year they had chosen to host a conference 'BAME Women in Times of Crisis'. They had chosen the speakers and

it would be on October 15 from 1 until 2.30pm and would be available afterwards on You Tube. She had approached Vicki Rockall about the Forum promoting the event. Vicki had suggested bringing it to the meeting today to see if everyone was in support. The group agreed it would be a very good idea to have a unified front.
Keep the date in your diary – more details to follow!

NEXT MEETING - 11AM TUESDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2020

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified