

Community Engagement

LCBB4002

Assessment 1

Student: Marinela Andreica

ID:2010777

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Introduction

This report will look at the community from the London Borough of Merton. The selected community to develop a social project is the faith community from the borough. It is intended to develop a series of projects for the faith communities and the first project to start with is the orthodox faith community which in the area is also represented by the Romanian community.

Therefore this social project aims to help the faith community to address integration within the faith community, to tackle isolation and loneliness. The type of community engagement project is a combination of community building and education.

Historical background

The London Borough of Merton is situated in the south-west part of the English capital and it occupies more than 14 square miles. It was formed in 1965 when several districts merged together. Within the borough there are five town centres Morden, Raynes Park, Colliers Wood, Wimbledon, Mitcham. The borough has a population over 200000 of residents who live in approximately 80000 households (London Gov, 2022).

This borough is very popular because of the tennis competitions that take place every year, the Wimbledon Championships which began in 1877. This benefits the area because of the increased number of visitors during the tennis tournaments (Merton Gov, 2022).

The outer London Borough of Merton is impregnated with history from roman roads, buildings to pioneering industries. The name of “Merton” originates from the name of the historic parish from the area and it means “farmstead by the pool”. Historical evidence suggests that in the 13th century were signed the Statutes of Merton which are considered to be the basis of common law. Between the 16th century and the 19th century the area started to build and developed many industries such as fabric bleaching, printing, waterwheels, rail lines (Britannica, 2022).

Community mapping

The London Borough of Merton has always welcomed minorities and many worshipping centres were built in the past years. In the borough there are different churches, mosques and other grand edifices where people have prayed for centuries or new or transformed buildings where people can have peaceful reflections (Merton Gov, 2022).

The faith community in the borough is strong and it promotes religious education by inviting visitors to have first-hand experience of the existing worshipping faith community. One of the many worshipping centres from the borough is The Romanian Orthodox Church “Buna vestire and Saint Apostol Iacob” Parish. It is situated in Morden and it welcomes worshippers every Sunday and other religious days during the year. It is mainly the Romanian community that attends the religious

services, but is an inclusive community and everyone is welcomed. The Romanians who live in the Borough go to church to pray and reflect, but also to meet the other members of the community (Buna Vestire, 2022).

The secondary research has highlighted that the London Borough of London has a variety of communities with different preoccupations and interests. That is why it is imperative to focus on a single segment from the community in order to develop an effective project towards the community. The selected segment is the Romanian community and it is intended to develop a direct service type of community engagement to address the needs of the community.

Planning

Purpose: To help the faith community to address integration within the faith community, to tackle isolation and loneliness. The Orthodox Easter is celebrated one week after the Catholic Easter which is celebrated in the United Kingdom. That is why Romanian community can feel divided and exclusive as they can not celebrate and take time off as this dates are considered normal working days. That is why the project aims to help the community in need of information, to promote the existence of a Romanian church in the borough through social media on Romanian groups and to organise an event for Easter celebration where orthodox and everyone who want to celebrate orthodox Easter are welcomed to come to the mass and after for lunch and meet the other members of the community.

Timeline: This event will be organised on the Orthodox Easter Sunday to help the Romanian community to be able to participate at the Easter mass and to enable the act of worships, but also to develop the community awareness, to build relationships which can be the base for future community projects. It will help Romanians to celebrate together especially when they don't have any family here in the UK.

Budget and method: It is intended to raise money from donations from local Romanian business and other local business. The event will be advertised in advance on social media and at the church so the people can bring traditional food if they want to. It is also intended to organise bags with food to be given to families in need. Also voluntaries within the community will help with serving food for the Easter lunch and cleaning after the event.

Benefits: This project will contribute on the long term to the mental health of the community as religion is an important part for the Romanians, but also will make the community stronger and more connected.

SMART objectives

Specific: to address integration within the faith community, to tackle isolation and loneliness

Measurable: to organise an Easter lunch for the Romanian community, to make preparations for 100 participants

Achievable: to ensure the community involvement

Relevant: to develop and connect the community

Time bound: to organise a lunch for the Orthodox Easter for the current year

Stakeholders

The Romanian orthodox church will be an important stakeholder for this project because will be the liaison factor for the community. Other stakeholders are the members of the Romanian community and any other people who are interested to take part. Other stakeholders are the local business that will provide help and donations.

Roles

It will be formed a team from the Romanian community that will be volunteering to help organising the event. One part of the team will be in charge with promoting the event on social media and creating adverts to be distributed in the church after the Sunday mass for several weeks in April before the Easter. One part of the team will be responsible for obtaining donations, money and food donations for the lunch and the food bags and for the cost of the rent for the location. One part of the team will be responsible to collaborate with the Morden Parish Hall to rent the community centre for the day.

Communicate the plan

The project will be communicated to the priest to ensure support. Also it is very important for the project to ensure that the costs of the project are covered. The team members will start by presenting the project to the local business who want to give donations towards the event. Also it will be communicated to the Morden Parish Hall in order to book the place for that date.

Management and control mechanism

This project will be led by me as the Community Engagement Practitioner, but I will be consulting and collaborating with the members of the Romanian community. In order to avoid any confusion and miss communication the priest will make the community aware of the event and will announce his own support. Will communicate with the volunteers through telephone or social media. All the members of the team will report to me as the project manager. People who will want to contribute to the event with food or other helpful resources will be able to inform the team after church or through telephone as it will be made available on the advert displayed at the church.

Tracking progress

It is aimed that all the details of the event to be finalised within the established timeline. In order to track the progress, at the end of each week will be informed the members of the team and the priest. The project will be first announce in the first Sunday of April and it will be followed every Sunday with updates. The venue for the lunch will be communicated from the beginning in order to ensure as many people are informed and can make plans for that day. Word of mouth is important also for acquiring donations as people could know organisations and people who can contribute with donations.

Data collection

It is aimed to collect qualitative primary data in order to evaluate the need of this type of project. Data collection will be realised using focus group method on social media on 10 to 20 members of the community who will be asked at the church to participate. The selected sample will be relevant for the community. The data will be collected prior the project and it will have 3 main questions “How many members does your family have?”, “Would you like to participate at an Easter lunch within the Romanian community”, “Would you consider donating food or other resources for this type of event?”. Based on the feedback will be estimated the number of the participants and the potential contributions.

Recommendation

The approach to this project is to connect the Romanian community, to help the people in need. Another aspect of this project is to promote local Romanian business and other business that want to contribute towards the costs of the event. All the organisations who make donations will be thanked within the event and community will be made aware of the help provided. This will help with business promotion within the Romanian community.

Confirm decision points

The decisions considered for this project are being confirmed for the event to take place as follows surveying the community regarding the need of such project, sourcing financial help from donators, renting the community hall for the event, organising the food parcels and organising the food for the lunch.

Lesson learnt

Secondary data has helped the segmentation and targeting the community. Although primary data has been the source of research for this project, the word of mouth has played an important role. The generosity of the members within the community contributed to the success of this project. The faith community is important for the well being of any community and the Romanian community within the borough has strong beliefs which help them thrive as a community.

Project evaluation

The evaluation of this project is realised by me as the Community Engagement Practitioner, but also by the church representative who will observe the participation at the mass and at the event. This is a small project that does not require complex resources, but the coordination of the informational process regarding the project is very important because Easter is an important celebration for the community and all details should be put in place and avoid any disruptions.

Once the project has been accomplished it will be realised an informal evaluation of the project by the event organisers over the next period of time when people come to church.

Project outcome and findings

This community benefits of such events because the Romanian community could feel estranged from their own country and could have no close family to celebrate. Many leave their family back home to come to work in the UK and that could be overwhelming for their mental health. Religion has great importance for the community and this event combines multiple purposes, informational about the worship centre activity and engagement increase through recreation places.

Conclusion

This report has focused on developing a project for a community segment within the London Borough of Merton. It has made use of secondary data research and primary data research. This has helped with the main theme of the project, to help the faith community to address integration within the faith community, to tackle isolation and loneliness. It has been concluded that the best approach to help the community is to organise an event for the Orthodox Easter Sunday where communities can feel welcomed. This has taken into account that this year the Catholic Easter celebrated in the UK is one week before and which could make the Romanian community feel estranged.

The recommendations to improve community engagement for the faith community from the London Borough of Merton is to continue to organise events in cooperation with the faith communities. Due to the high number of families with children it can be taken in consideration to organise educational events for the children whilst maintaining a close collaboration with the church.

Another recommendation for future projects is to ensure families in need within the community are looked after and regular donation and programs can be put in place to provide help with clothes and food. This would require more research and identifying stable financial resources which could involve the help from charities and other organisations.

References

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