



Coffee Afrik

Rooted Advocacy Support

#Advocacyliberation

“I feel more optimistic about my future. The support I received from Coffee Afrik reducing my rent arrears and finally sorting out disrepair at home, just makes me feel human again, a good mum again”

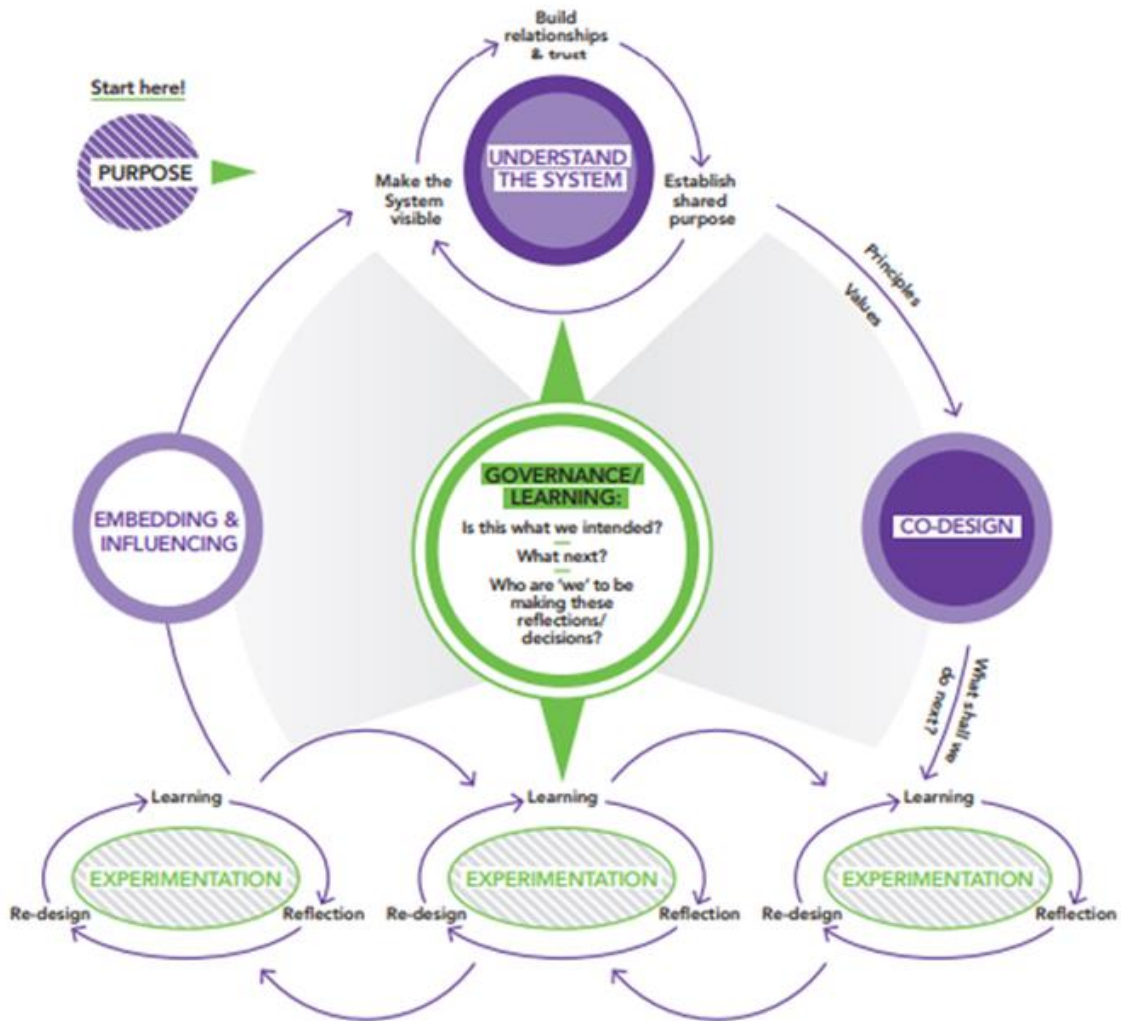
Client Testimony

Summary of impact

- Created an advocacy support program to tackle the intersectional issues arising from Covid-19
- Organised 1 to 1 meeting, with our clients led by our culturally competent Advocacy Support Officer, who assisted in signposting clients to CAB et al and campaigning for SEND access, attending EHCP tribunals.
- Incorporated our liberating referral pathway model into the program which connected our clients to over 45 third sector organisations across the borough.
- Improved digital inclusion by supporting clients to use the internet for self-help and find out what local organisation exist in their area.
- Clients on the program have recorded an 89% improvement in mood, morale, and resilience.
- We have dealt with a 300% increase in referrals with over 80% of referrals from new clients, including housing, welfare, debt, and mental health support.
- Many of our referrals were for financial assistance, housing welfare & food bank support. Medical issues covering both physical and mental at 55%, with 25% debt related.

Our aim:

The aim behind our project was to coordinate an advocacy support program for the largely BAME community in Hackney who are currently facing many intersectional issues, a model rooted in divesting from whiteness, using trauma informed language and rooted advocacy applying the human systems learning model below. As the only Somali focused organisation in Hackney, we found ourselves in a unique position to offer such a service.



Our ongoing support program has allowed our clients time to reset, pause and focus on their healing. In addition to facilitating the breakdown of language, culturally and digital barriers of access for our clients.

A large contributor to the success of our work was the employment of a culturally competent Advocacy Support Officer, who brought unique insight and experience, leaving our participants with a renewed sense of self-confidence and purpose. Moreover, the incorporation of our referral pathway model has eased the process in which clients are referred to services.

Understanding the importance of culturally competence in providing care to clients from diverse backgrounds cannot be overlooked, with the success of this project testament to this. As such we shall continually promote the need for culturally sensitive services embedded within advocacy support program.

Impact of Covid-19 on Advocacy Support Services

Our service users face discrimination and are at the sharp end of inequality and poverty. While the NHS Long Term Plan sets out to improve the health and wellbeing of those who are most negatively affected by inequality, the coronavirus pandemic has brought these inequalities into stark relief and made many of them worse.

It is increasingly evident that there has been avoidable loss of life. Many people have experienced dreadful conditions, in part due to a falling away of measures designed to protect people's rights and wellbeing, despite tremendous efforts of people working in advocacy services. Overwhelmingly, people who already found it harder to have their voices heard have suffered greatest in the pandemic.

Our Advocacy support has played a vital role in improving people's circumstances. A core tenet of advocacy is to redress inequality so that people's rights are upheld, and they are respected as individuals who are listened to and understood irrespective of their religion, culture, or background.

Our Advocates have a unique and crucial perspective on community needs, they are experts by experience, and use this expertise through their work helping to support some of the most excluded and marginalised people in societies, to assert their rights.

Advocacy Support Program

Our Advocacy Support Officer played a huge role in assisting many clients in the borough with a wide range of issues. Facilitated at our safe space, residents and clients would be welcomed to come and meet with our officers to be supported.

Clients from many diverse backgrounds would often reach out to us, due to their culturally competent support, which is our ability to cater and consider their cultural needs.

Our Support Officer has played a key role in signposting many of our clients to numerous organisations. The cases in which they take on require an in-depth understanding of local services providers both statutory and non-statutory.

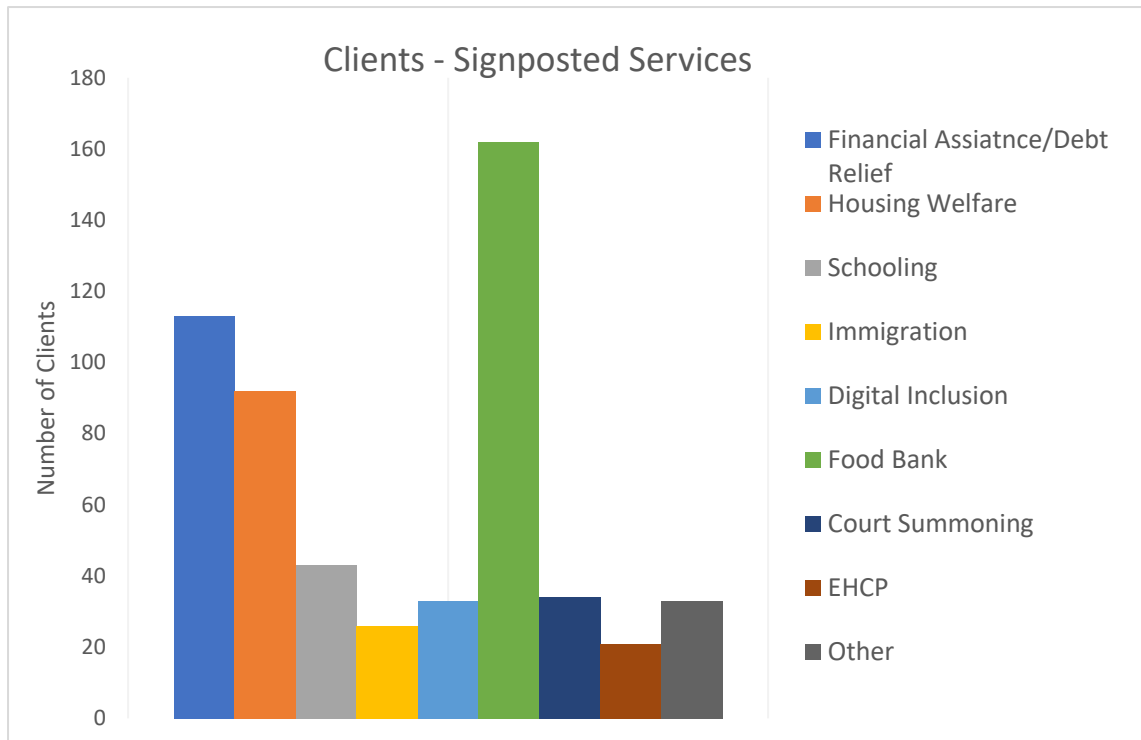
It requires an in-depth understanding of due processes, and the ability to patiently break this process down to people who have often lack extraordinarily little understanding of processes.

We have had experience working with those who are considered NRPF, it has been both challenging and welcoming experience. Our work is powered by passion for equality in the community, which is why we have ever turned a resident away.



Case Study #1

‘I have been struggling with a huge financial debt, my husband passed away during the pandemic and we have been struggling to make ends meet. I heard about the work of Coffee Afrik from a neighbour, who told me about a program they were running which supports people from the community. I visited their space and spoke with one of the support officers, who was exceedingly kind. Once they realised my issue, they suggested we reach out to Nawaal charity, an organisation which helps people who are in financial debt. The support officer helped me complete the application, and within a few weeks, I received a notification, that my debt had been paid off in full, I cannot thank the team for their work.’



Data: Our Salesforce Platform

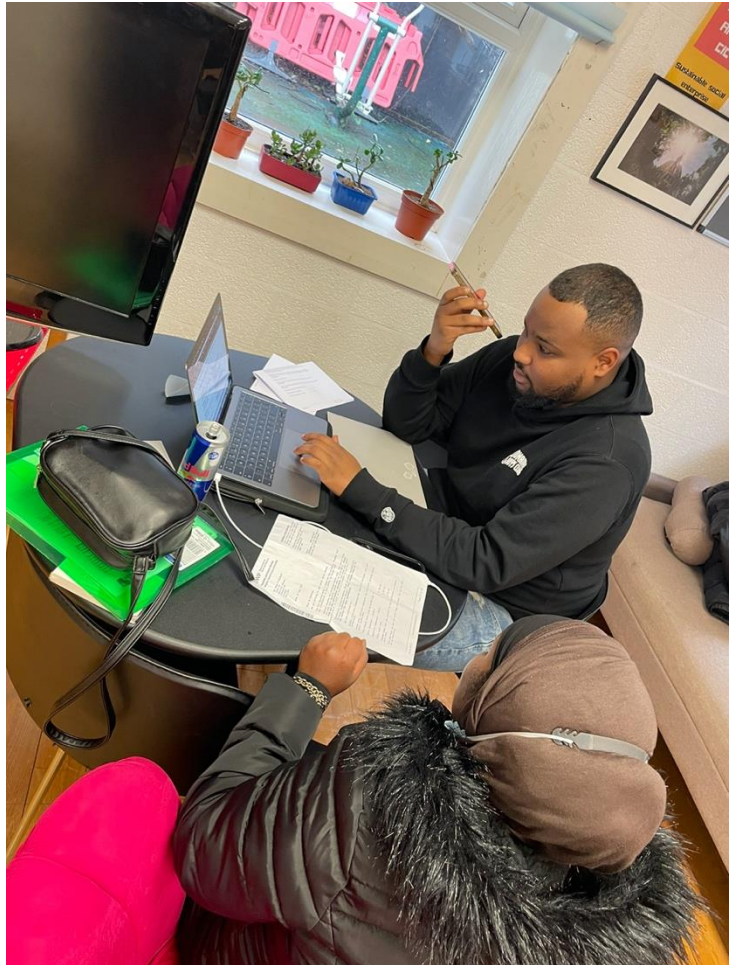
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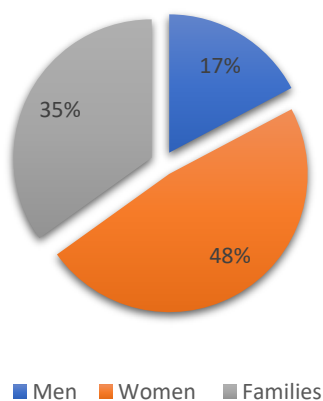
As documented above we have signposted a vast number of residents to services over the past year. The specific themes of support ranged from housing welfare, in which many residents were inadequate housed, to cases where residents were being threatened with deportation. At present local organisations like CAB have a waiting list, which is up to 6 months, waiting for 6 months is literally life and death for our clients.

Case Study #2

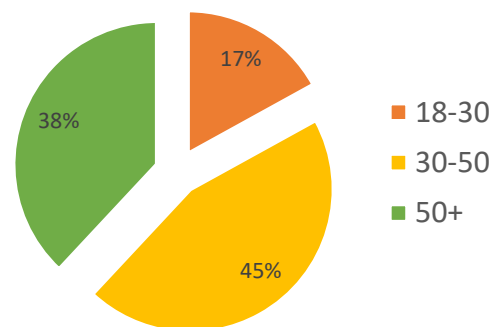
"I have been living in a hostel for the past 4 years, with my five old daughters, we have constantly reached out to the council, to relocate us because the current conditions were extremely unsafe for myself and my child's wellbeing. My language barrier meant that I struggled with speaking about my case, so my family friend suggested I reach out to Coffee Afrik, so I arranged a meeting with a support officer. Once the support officer understood the severity of my case, they escalated my case to the council and directly to the head of Hackney Housing. My case was heard, and on the back of this meeting, I have thankfully been given a permanent home. I am extremely grateful for the support of Coffee Afrik, I believe that if I did not reach out to them, I would still be in the hostel, fearing for my child's safety. I owe them so much."



Client groups supported



Client Ages Breakdown



Client Signposting-Referral Pathway Model

Great emphasis was placed on creating an environment focused on supporting clients using the lived experience of our advocacy support officer. This level of support came in many forms such as social, emotional, and practical support but most importantly this support was mutually offered and reciprocal, allowing our clients to be supported.

The importance behind integrating our referral pathway model into this project was largely due to the absence of culturally sensitive support provided by both local and statutory services, particularly for POC. To combat this, we have connected our clients to other complementary BAMER organisation in addition to linking them to a network with over forty-five other organisations. Consequently, we were able to deal with and resolve many of our client's woes and concerns.

Nevertheless, we also witnessed a surge in demand for our advocacy support program which saw an increase of 156%, with this number continually rising on a weekly basis.

Although, food is not the only sole concern of our clients with many requiring housing and financial assistance too. During this project we have observed a 400% increase in referrals to the likes of Nawal Charity who specialise in offering financial assistance. As a result, many clients were able to pay off large debts, which has greatly improved their mental health since they no longer must endure the impeding anxious wait for bailiffs or eviction notices.

Conclusion:

A key component for our success on this project and achieving significant impact and changing the lives of our clients is the role played by culturally competent Advocacy Support Officer who built up a real bond with our clients. Due to their connection, they were able to get to the root cause of our client's troubles and thus the term rooted advocacy, healing in practice. In addition to providing our environment with a focus on recovery support, and the fundamental aim being for our clients to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

The project was made complete by our referral pathway model which sought to address our clients' needs. The ease in which they were referred greatly assisted our work in changing their lives for the better.