

HOPE IS ALIVE

This project currently operates in Peckham covering the boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark. It will improve their quality of life, health, confidence, and self-esteem, develop life skills and capacities, and enable them to participate in support and friendship networks. The project will build the confidence of our service users and help them to cope with life, during and after COVID-19. The difference the project will make is it aims to tackle the dilemma (Lost of Hope for Life) posed by the persistently high level of HIV infection and mental illness and now COVID-19 among London residents of Black African origin, and the barriers they face in accessing testing, counselling, medical care, socialising and training. The project will build their confidence and reduce the barriers they face in life.

Although it is close to our existing work, this will be an additional service during this time of crisis. We plan to deliver personal necessities and quality food as good nutrition is essential for those affected by HIV and mental issues. This funding will enable us to provide a 24-hour help line to respond immediately to individual cries for help. In addition, we will also be offering phone and on-line counselling to support and encourage our service users. Taking the necessary precautions and protection, we will be visiting some of our most vulnerable service users to offer support and care.

The Ernest Foundation will maintain a learning culture, drawing on knowledge from HIV community-based programmes worldwide, and especially in Africa, where they have proved very successful. We will run this project for 12 months.

The Ernest Foundation work with people from the disadvantaged and deprived Black African community living with HIV and related health conditions and most likely to be affected with COVID-19, because of their immune system. Our work evolved from the experience we had of people feeling so desperate they considered suicide. These people, due to the stigma they faced from family members, friends, and the public, tend to live in isolation. The project provides safe space, support, facilitation, and time for people living with HIV and related conditions to come together, build connections and friendships, support one another by sharing experiences and learning from one another and developing their self-esteem so they can come out of isolation and live a normal life. On the basis of these, we think our project meets the priorities above.

This is a project with the people for the people. The participants are fully involved from the start to finish. The people living with HIV and living in isolation will be ambassadors of the idea; visiting clinics and public places distributing leaflets and newsletters, so others can be reached. They will help develop the group as a family and work with community leaders and carry out home visits. We have realised that it is important for people living with HIV to stay with their families at home because this is the best place for the clients to gain affection from their beloved ones. In this regard, it is necessary to promote home visits, give counselling services and physical support to clients to help them live happily in their families and community. In the face of this need, we will organise training for members of the group to develop their capacity and skills on home visits. Home-based care training will be organized once a year for leaders and members of the support group. We will recruit volunteers from within community groups, train and equip them to sell our project among their members.

We will be using ZOOM to meet up and socialise as well as identifying the needs of members.