1. Calm Café – M's Experience.

Following the first lifting of lockdown restrictions in 2020 we reopened the Calm Café with limited numbers attending because of government guide lines on social distancing.

During these initial sessions a man in his thirty's, who was unknown to services began attending the Calm Café. To begin with, he would just sit at the table staring down at the surface. He didn't express any wish to take part in the activities the calm café had to offer. He was allowed him to stay at it provided him with a safe place.

He attended twice a week. This situation continued for a number of weeks, we felt he may need to observe for himself what the calm café had to offer and the support he could get. He gradually built confidence, trust and respect during the sessions.

After a few weeks of attending I approached him for a one to one to try and build up rapport and ascertain if he required any peer support or had any social care needs. He explained that during and after lockdown he started misusing alcohol and drugs also had several affairs and decided to tell his wife which led to the breakup of his long term marriage. He was very low in mood and felt he could not cope with life without alcohol or illicit drugs. We agreed a supportive care plan.

We provided a return to work plan to help him achieve some goals and a purpose in life. We also discussed some strategies to help him cope with his relationship problems and any related issues. We opened up a dialogue with his wife and his wife responded in a positive way. As result of our intervention he stopped using drugs and alcohol. He sought medical intervention via primary care services, received a diagnosis of depression and was prescribed anti-depressants. In addition to this he also accessed talking services via Telford Mind.

Outcome of all of these planned interventions meant he returned to the family home and his wife also started talking therapy. He went back to full- time working and continues to take anti-depressants, but this will be reviewed. He still attends the Calm Café twice a week and he is an active and supportive member to others.

He avoided hospital admission and statutory mental health services.

2. ACCI Activity to date

One of the principal aims for ACCI was to create awareness which empowers and informs members of the black community in Telford who need mental health or wider community support. To do this they have met a number of groups and attended a number of local events including:

- The Autism Telford Hub
- One Voice represents elders of the African Caribbean community from the Windrush generation.
- Telford African & Afro-Caribbean Resource Centre (*TAARC*) where invitations were given for their members to attend our open day.
- Sunday service at the *Pentecostal Church in Telford*
- *Hadley Services Connections Day*.
- Calm Café's organised by Telford Mind & Telford & Wrekin Council. Individuals have been supported to attend sessions for support.

[Type here]

- Connections have been made with the Citizens Advice Bureau which has already resulted in referrals. CA are interested in the possibility of ACCI being based in their Tan Bank offices with a view to setting up a Citizen's Advice portal, to enable ACCI to make referrals which would be fast tracked to advisors.
- Office space is being provided at TACT (Telford After Care Team) for ACCI to hold sessions. The first workshop attracted five members.
- ACCI will be attending Telford College's 'Fresher's Fayre' and will be hosting a weekly drop-in service for students of African/African-Caribbean heritage.
- Further visits to develop community connections are planned at: Woodside Community Centre, Brookside Community Centre & Home-start Telford.

In addition to this ACCI have supported individuals in the following ways:

- Music therapy, Poetry workshops *Total participants 60*.
- Country walks 4 sessions.
- Liverpool trip *participants 2*
- Weekly farm petting sessions
- Board games including monopoly, chess and bingo over 6 weeks
- Home visit 2 people
- Crisis intervention 1 family
- Outreach 2 people