

Case study

Cooperative Community Action Ltd (CCA) – In conversation with Marva Daley-Lewis, Director of CCA

Based in Nottingham, Cooperative Community Action Ltd is a social enterprise specialising in community focus development, outreach support and mental health services serving the black and minority ethnic community and the wider community.

Why set up a support service?

I became disillusioned as a front line worker. I was seeing people in tears, working with people who were suffering and there was nothing I could do about it. I thought that we could change things. We asked community leaders and the general community: "If we were to start an organisation, what would you be looking for?" It took about two years and then in 2000 we registered, applied for funding from the European Regional Development Fund and Cooperative Community Action (CCA) was born.

What kind of services does CCA offer?

CCA is a social enterprise specialising in community focus development, outreach support and mental health services. We currently deliver various programmes that are tapping in the needs of the community: we work in BME health as we find, statistically, in this area that there are people that don't access doctors, don't have a dentist, or go to the opticians.

We also have a counseling programme that is oversubscribed. We tap into various different issues like poverty and domestic violence; all different issues that are in the community.

We help newcomers as they move from the status of asylum seeker to refugee to find accommodation, schools, jobs and training.

Our training room is where we provide various embedded learning programmes including ESOL and training for trainers.

People who come from developing countries are natural entrepreneurs because they have no welfare system. We have a social enterprise programme where we offer accreditation and support them to work through a business plan.

We must impress upon people the importance of finding work, both socially and economically. If a working person can provide for their families, pay their rent without tapping into social security, then they can have pride and a place in their

community. We support people into work and meet with employers to make sure it happens.

Which communities and community groups do you work with?

CCA are not affiliated to one person, we are affiliated to everyone. We look at the community as a whole and the people within the community – we address the issues that affect them and what their needs are.

Do you enjoy your work?

For me it's about seeing somebody who comes into the organisation that you have picked up from hospital and has been suffering from domestic violence and probably six weeks after working with them, you see them smile or they come into class and have a debate. It's about welcoming people as they come through the door; you give them a cup of tea and make a couple of calls to social security and their cheque is in the post and they can pay their bills and buy their food. We are empowering people and supporting people through their worst days.

Can you tell me about your achievements and goals?

We have really humane, positive, warm and caring staff. Behind every organisation the driving force is the staff and you have to have the right people on board. They need to have empathy, they have to care and it's most important that they need to be professional.

There are so many different issues in the community so we have to be focused. We are constantly going for contracts and funding so that we can address the different social issues that we have. We are striving to build a platform so our organisation can live on when we have retired and gone, somebody else can take forward the same ethos as we do and continue to do the same work. In any society there is always a deprived section and within that you need to be able to support those that are less able to support themselves.

My grandmother said that first you have to have a dream, then you have to believe the dream, then you own that dream, then you need to activate the dream and see what you are made of. I believe that we are fighters. We are looking at how we can develop ourselves to be self-sustaining.

For further information visit www.cca-ltd.org.uk

Social Enterprises are businesses that trade goods and services and use their profits for social and environmental goals. The idea behind social enterprise is simple. Whereas for some businesses, owner profits and shareholder value are the top priorities, for social enterprises, long term benefits to employees, consumers and communities are the major consideration.