

# Essay analyzing charitable housing organization Cyrenians

## Equality and Diversity in Housing

### Introduction

This report presents an analysis of Cyrenians, a charitable housing organization whose activities are based in West London. It documents the activities of the company in the community of Hounslow detailing the needs of the residents of Hounslow in West London with regard to the services provided by Cyrenians. Centrally, the aim of the report is to establish the role that Cyrenians play in ensuring equality and diversity in housing, in its areas of operation taking the example of Hounslow as a study case.

### The Community of Hounslow

The London Borough of Hounslow is an outer London borough situated in West London. It extends somewhere in between Hammersmith in East Heathrow, in the east and Heathrow Airport in the west. The population of Hounslow is estimated to be around 218, 600 residents. The community is comprised of a rich diversity.

A unique characteristic of Hounslow is that one third of its entire residential population is composed of individuals from minority communities (London Borough of Hounslow 3).

The residents of Hounslow have various problems that challenge them. A section of the residents' most common problem is mental health problems. However, projections by the government estimate that Hounslow's greatest challenge lies in substance abuse and misuse by its youths. Another section of the population of Hounslow is also challenged in terms of capacity to maintain a normal family setting. This because a considerable percentage of families are single parent families, as a result of divorce and teenage pregnancy.

Hounslow is also host to homeless people, asylum seekers and ex-offenders looking to start over (Hounslow Homes News 2).

### Services provided by Cyrenians to the Community of Hounslow

Cyrenians' establishment in 1972 followed the sprout of needs of the local communities of west London brought about by the decline of housing in the region. This led to several individuals being rendered homeless that is when Cyrenians is formed to provide shelter and support on a humanitarian scale. Since then the non-profit oriented organization has been dedicated to delivery of extraordinary services in ordinary households and ordinary streets to vulnerable individuals who are in desperate need of aid (Cyrenians 2).

The services that Cyrenians offer to the community of Hounslow are as differentiated as the needs of the residents of Hounslow are. This is perhaps attributable to the fact that its main aim is not so abstract. The charitable organization is driven by humanitarian concern. As such, it strives to provide the best housing care and support in London to the most vulnerable in the local communities (Cyrenians 3). Cyrenians' values encompass respect for diversity, challenging inequality, working in partnerships, promoting recovery and inclusion and making a difference in the community. This is envisaged in its objectives that are among other concerns centered on meeting immediate and emerging needs of the

community. As part of its diversity protection and advocacy agenda, Cyrenians prioritizes the needs of black and minority ethnic groups in Hounslow. In doing so, it ensures that its works are reflective of the communities in which it operates its best practices (Cyrenians 4-5).

The charitable organization is expanding to other regions out of West London with an agenda of uplifting living standards of vulnerable residents of London. Its mission is summed up in five major areas that include; offering accommodation, outreach, addiction and recovery, employability and women's and families services. Due to its philanthropy, the firm has been awarded the 'Charity Times National Charity of the year award' in 2008 and 2009 it was also feted with the 'Queen's

Award for Voluntary Service' (Gibson).

As a matter of fact recently, Cyrenians' success in the delivery of services and paid off when it expanded to acquire another charitable organization dubbed Platform. This recent development would ensure that the company expands its services to reach out to a wider scale of the vulnerable in the community not just in Hounslow but beyond and throughout the UK (Rimmer).

### **The Impact of Cyrenians' Services on the Community of Hounslow**

The Cyrenians charity is open to all those who are in need of the aid of the organization. It has a variety of services that are tailored in meeting particular needs of individuals in the community. As part of its charter, it is focused on delivering accommodation needs where the organization makes referrals through the local authority housing team. In addition, it assists the homeless to access shelter through the national housing charity shelter (Changing Lives).

The organization also offers services that cater for residents who are addicted to drug use in the Hounslow region. This service is aimed at guiding and assisting them towards recovery. It makes referrals of residents of Hounslow to reputable institutions where their addiction can be treated. In addition, the organization offers financial support in situations where the patient is incapacitated in footing the bills for treatment (Changing Lives).

Thirdly, the company is dedicated to ensuring the functionality of family units in the region. In doing this, it works closely with residents of Hounslow particularly needy families headed by single parents. Cognizant of the fact that each family faces unique challenges; Cyrenians is concerned with developing personal contact and relationships with families to work out solutions for the problems that they face. The organization does this through counseling and mediation (Changing Lives).

With regard to vulnerable women and girls in the community Cyrenians ensures that it works with other organizations to offer opportunities for women to achieve. They develop a relationship with organizations that are feminine oriented in providing opportunities to women and girls. This liaison ensures that women in Hounslow have adequate opportunities to develop themselves (Changing Lives).

The organizations also runs an outreach program where staff of the firm go out to residents in need of help and offer them exactly that. Some of the needs of these special groups and individuals include ex-convicts. Evidently, most of them find it hard to reconnect with society after being incarcerated. The Cyrenians organization reaches out to them and helps them in recuperating back to society. Similarly, Cyrenians gives employment solutions to these ex-convicts as well as any other resident of Hounslow, who may find difficulty in securing and maintaining a job (Changing Lives).

Finally, the Cyrenians organization is also committed to the development of enterprise in the community of Hounslow by running charity shops, food distribution centers and the likes all in the aim of providing additional funds to support its clientele who keep growing in numbers each year (Changing Lives).

### **Accessibility of Cyrenians' Services**

To ensure that the organization reaches out to the population of Hounslow the firm has established several communication mechanisms. First, the Cyrenians organization runs an outreach program whose general aim is to connect with the community.

In essence, the aim of the organization is to infiltrate the community of Hounslow and with effect be in a position to identify vulnerable persons in the community. After identifying these vulnerable members the personnel of the Cyrenians' initiative then commence to extend a hand of help to them (Changing Lives).

Secondly, the Cyrenians organization has a call center with dedicated phone numbers that are made available for the public to call in whenever in need of help. The call center is run all day long seven days a week ensuring that residents of Hounslow are in reach of the services offered by the organization at any time of night or day (Changing Lives; Cyrenians 2).

Thirdly, the Cyrenians organization also operates a website that is dedicated to its activities. Residents of Hounslow with internet access can get information about the organization and the services that it offers from the website. More importantly, they can obtain the contacts of the organization and commence to approach them for aid (Cyrenians 1).

From the above mentioned communication channels it is apparent that the Cyrenians organization has developed appropriate mechanisms to ensure that it is in contact with the community of Hounslow. However, it is also worth of note that the firm can do more through its outreach program. This is because people in problems in the locality may be reluctant to seek help due to embarrassment or simply shying away. Notably, persons such as ex-convicts and drug addicts require some level of convincing that they need help as they would more often than not decide not to seek help for themselves.

### **UK Legislation on Equality and Diversity**

The law in the United Kingdom is very particular about equality in diversity. According to the Library and Information Services website; new equality laws in the UK protect individuals' rights from discrimination of any form. Further, these biases encompass discrimination on the basis of race, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation (Library & Information Services).

Equality laws in the UK are respected for the most part with few concerns being raised especially concerning laws that ensure the rights of gays, lesbians and bisexuals. Consequently, analysts note that there is need to ensure that diversity and equality laws are followed to the letter. Moreover, the fundamental rights of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals should be considered to be indifferent from any other human rights (Creegan, McKearney and Wright 590).

With regard to the services offered by Cyrenians it is notable that the services are open to all that are in need of aid. The policy and mission of Cyrenians is explicitly clear with regard to the category of individuals that it extends its services to. Though it categorizes needy residents of Hounslow under various needs, they are generally vulnerable and in need of aid. First, the organization expressly offers aid to the homeless and assists addicts on their journey to recovery.

Secondly, through the outreach program they help people reconnect through social and support. Thirdly, the Cyrenians provides employment and enterprise solutions to empower needy residents of Hounslow. Finally, it provides counseling and mediation services to families in need, coupled with women support initiatives to empower women (Changing Lives).

Conspicuously, the services offered by Cyrenians do not appear discriminatory of any persons in the community of Hounslow. However, a close analysis reveals that it does not either expressly ensure the rights of diverse groups of people. Whereas it is dedicated to better the lives of the black and minority communities in Hounslow, it does not include the particular attention of these minority groups (Cyrenians 5).

Moreover, in delivering services in a community that is diverse with regard to equality laws pertaining to diversity; it is notable that the Cyrenians is unclear about its policy in extending a hand to minority groups such as gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Primarily, the concern of the law with regard to equality in diversity has been partially met by the

Cyrenians organization. Therefore, it is worth to note that the organization though commendable in its efforts to reach out to the vulnerable in the Hounslow community, it is as well breaking the law with regard to equality and diversity legislation.

Further, this can be seen through the fact that the organization has not come out clearly with regard to its policies governing equality and diversity in minority groups such as the aforementioned. It is not surprising that the firm has not reported that it offers assistance to groups such as gays, lesbians and the likes. An explanation could be drawn from intellectual inference such that individuals of these minority groups feel not included among the categories presented by the Cyrenians.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Principally, this report has detailed the activities of Cyrenians organization in providing humanitarian services to the community of Hounslow. First, the paper finds that the Cyrenians plays a central role in not only providing housing solutions to vulnerable citizens of Hounslow. But, the organization is also instrumental in providing support services to needy community members who make use of the organization's philanthropy to better their lives.

Secondly, the report established that communication channels employed by the Cyrenians are adequate in ensuring that the community of Hounslow is aware of the services on offer and how to access them. More importantly, the services that are offered by the organization have served to ensure that the company expands to reach out to more vulnerable persons within and without the Hounslow residential area.

Thirdly, the report finds that the Cyrenians has followed the UK law in its service delivery by ensuring that it does not discriminate against any persons. In addition, the Cyrenians has dedicated itself to uplifting the standards of the minority and the black community in Hounslow. However, it is also

noteworthy that it has not expressly mentioned the minorities it offers services to. This abstract nature with which the Cyrenians provides services to all in a sense discriminates against minorities such as gays and lesbians.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of this study that the Cyrenians make inclusions in its service charter to include services and aid that is offered to minority groups such as Lesbians and Gays. Furthermore, the organization should make inclusion of testimonials from individuals from the minority groups who have received assistance from its services. Ultimately, this would help in addressing the stigma that such minority groups face. Hence, members of such minority groups can boldly face and approach the Cyrenians for help. Centrally, the Cyrenians would have comprehensively ensured that it complies fully with the UK equality and diversity laws.

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