

Written evidence submitted by The Widows Empowerment Trust

Call for Evidence Government Support for Charities.

Oyowwe Kigho BA, POL, BCAh, Founder of The Widows Empowerment Trust, awarded winner for Combating Loneliness across United Kingdom by ITV-Good Morning Britain (2020). Social Activist on bereavement, strong community leader, social voice for Widowed community, Ambassador for championing volunteers and student's placement opportunities. Her understanding of Grief, loss and bereavement against negative impacts on health and wellbeing, is a stronger passion, inspiration & motivation for her striving to mitigating Loneliness & Isolation across the United Kingdom.

Oyowwe Innovation ideas for mitigating Loneliness and Isolation faced by Widowed and other vulnerable communities, has been recognised and honoured by UK Prime Minister Mrs Theresa May (Points of Light UK'S 1225TH - 2019). Also recognised and awarded British Citizen Award for health (BCAH) Medal (2020).

Oyowwe has received other numerous awards and recognition for her work including The National Lottery – Good cause, shinning a light on her by dedicating an Engraved Bench Monument to her and The Widows Empowerment Trust (2021), waiting to be launch after the lockdown in Manchester for her outstanding and exceptional services in reducing loneliness and social isolation caused by the unprecedented, unrivalled scientific and global challenges that affected all communities especially the community she is serving, now facing multiple challenges – such as **grief, lockdown**, the risk of contracting the virus itself and its impact on overstretched health services, to the knock-on effect on the health and livelihood system. She adapted her service to respond to these new challenges, both now and in the longer- term. She has been recognised and honour as one of the eight finalised on National Diversity Award (2019) with over 28,000.00 nomination votes. She has been recognised and awarded the most compassionate (2019) for Manchester BME. She is an ambassador for championing volunteers and providing placement opportunities for students across Universities in Greater Manchester. By supporting them to gain valuable skills.

BEFORE Covid19 (our services)

The Widows Empowerment Trust is charity based in Manchester to support bereaved spouses and others in need due to bereavement, loss, and grief. Founded in 2017 and is volunteer led. We currently have 76 volunteers who run the organisation, we have supported more than 350 beneficiaries and over 3000 volunteers have gained valuable skills with the aim of our charitable objectives and

regular fundraising. Our mission is to reduce loneliness and isolation of bereaved spouses and others in need due to bereavement. Before the COVID-19, we run four different wellbeing workshop centres across Manchester including Dementia group and peer to peer support. We run varied range of activities such as sewing, knitting, crochet, cooking, craft, bingo, and karaoke. Along with befriending services either phone, face to face and celebrating key dates. (such as Valentine's day, Mother's day and Christmas party). For many people experiencing isolation and mental ill health, our group is a real benefit. It offers people to build social support network and many of our activities encourage growth of confidence and interpersonal skills. Also, provide widowed community opportunity to meet others having the same experience to interact. Every week we have consistently receiving high number of people attending our weekly activities in our different centre (Average of 25 people per session). Also, reaching out to average of 35 people weekly over the telephone. Widows can become the most marginalised group in the society but underrepresented and often those in the greatest need. Whether in terms of financial, emotional, physical, social etc. Our vast majority of our clients are older people, however, we provide services regardless age, colour, sexuality, faith, religion, disability, nationality etc.

Covid 19 support service

The effective ways we adapted to limit the impact of the loneliness & isolation faced by our bereaved spouses and other vulnerable communities. Our new innovative ideas has helped to bringing our community together. Our activities include Bingo, Crafts & Quiz. Also, befriending services using a telephone to chat up with our beneficiaries regularly, encouraging them on activities, sending letters, cards and helping with shopping. These activities have helped our group to feel socially connected and feeling sense of belonging. Nearly one in five older people (17%) say they can go a week without speaking to a friend, family member or neighbour. For one in ten (11%) this is over a month. More than 75% says feelings of loneliness are out of control, for 3.6 million older people television is their main form of company

ONLINE Our services

- The Widows Empowerment Trust hosts Bingo & Quiz night via zoom every Saturday at 3:30pm to support and be socially inclusive to those who are suffering from bereavement and loss. This night is to ensure that social connectedness is still happening during the pandemic and that no one is left feeling alone and to provide some light fun and prizes. This to encourage our client group to participant
- The Widows Empowerment Trust does help with food grocery delivery to those who have suffered from bereavement and loss and are vulnerable to the coronavirus. Please get in touch to see how we can help on
- The Widows Empowerment Trust provides one-to-one community visits and befriending telephone calls to those who have suffered from bereavement and grief and need support to help them through their grieving process. Please get in touch to find out more .

- We provide a support group on Facebook called Widows Connect. Supporting widows across the globe. This is managed by our dedicated widows who are now volunteers and provide a safe place for widows to talk about their grief and to connect with each other to provide the support needed. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/374032190510>
- We also launched Economic and sustainability project in Africa, helping widows in hardship by providing trade for them. Presently we have 103 widows in Nigeria and 68 in Kenya. Also, building a house for one of our widow in Nigeria, Lagos whose house is collapsing, flooded and sinking. The project has started and we are soliciting for funding .

When it is safe to do so, and in line with national government guidelines & rules, we continue to work directly with communities. Our volunteers form deep Relationships and build on trust, with people with whom we provide support for. Our befriending service over the phone & face to face on social distancing with PPE is helping to tackle the social isolation. Also, our online activities ensuring that our response plans are meeting the needs of the people we serve- and using our existing networks to share important information across our volunteers. Most of our community and national volunteer have been able to continue their work since the pandemic started.

We were able to provide placement opportunities to the student from the university, providing them opportunity to develop extensive virtual support network project and how the charity will continue to improve its online services. Also, we are working to adapt our approach & develop innovative ways of working remotely.

The wellbeing & safety of all our volunteers along with that of our staffs and our primary beneficiaries is important. We are making sure we provide everyone with extra guidance, which is regularly reviewed by our duty of care team and providing ongoing befriending training.

Collaborating with Our Partners

We were working with other organisation to promote best practice for volunteers, beneficiaries and create the biggest possible impact together. We explore opportunities to collaborate with other professionals and agencies. Also, universities, to help with research to improve our innovative online activities, establish feedback mechanisms, and encourage our beneficiaries to volunteer. We recognise during this unprecedented time , there are times when our partners may be better placed to reach the most vulnerable or isolated groups and we work in collaboration to build their capacity to deliver our **ONLINE ACTIVITIES**

Building Resilience

Alongside supporting our community to connect and building a safe space to help reduce the loneliness & isolation posed by the pandemics. Our ongoing services

continue to strengthen the essential systems that underpin society including loneliness, social isolation, mental health, and social inclusion network.

We are working to safeguard access to services for our older people and marginalized group. This enabled them to connect with others in the communities and empowering them to speak up, this helps to identify triggers at earliest stage. Also, we are making sure our services continue to build strong communities' resilience, focusing on developing people we support through our empowerment program rather than creating dependency

THE REASON AM SUBMITTING EVIDENCE

The government funding that we received through The National Lottery fund has been positively impactful in our community. It has helped us to reach 100s of widowed, other vulnerable communities. The running and core cost such as staffing, has helped us to provide reliable, coordinated, monitor our activities, volunteers, and continuous support for our beneficiaries. The funding has helped in bringing our community. Teaching our older people how to use their devices to connect, was one of the toughest challenges ever faced as an organisation. However, we were able to provide volunteering opportunities for over 400 volunteers across United Kingdom. Which has helped to develop their employability skill, empathic and interpersonal skills. Also, given volunteers insight about grief, bereavement and loss

The funding has helped to support 24 student placements from The Manchester Metropolitan University. due to covid-19 our fundraising ability has been vastly reduced and has made us more reliant on applying for funds. The funding from the government has provided the vital support that we needed as an organisation to be able to make a real difference to the lives of those going through grief, loneliness, and isolation. We continually receive referrals from other agencies.

View link to some of our testimonies and our work on our work.

BBC NORTH INTERVIEW ABOUT OUR SERVICE AND IMPACTS

2 OF OUR BENEFICIARIES AND FOUNDER MRS OYOVWE KIGHO

Testimonies

<https://fb.watch/3S8bv9CEay/>

<https://fb.watch/3S7VlnPsPe/> (our online activity)

https://fb.watch/3S7_XlxFmv/

<https://fb.watch/3S84o8CIQe/>

for more videos and photos please check our website and facebook page

www.widowsempowerment.com

www.facebook.com/widowsempowerment

twitter: @Widowsemptrust

SUMMARY

Oyovwe Kigho BA, POL, BCAh, Founder, of The Widows Empowerment Trust, awarded winner for Combating Loneliness across United Kingdom by ITV-Good Morning Britain (2020). Social Activist on bereavement, strong community leader, social voice for Widowed community, Ambassador for championing volunteers and student's placement opportunities.

Oyovwe Innovation ideas for mitigating Loneliness and Isolation faced by Widowed community and others vulnerable communities, has been recognised and honoured by UK Prime Minister Mrs Theresa May (Points of Light UK'S 1225TH - 2019). Also recognised and awarded British Citizen Award for health (BCAH) Medal (2020).

Oyovwe has received other numerous awards and recognition for her work including The National Lottery – Good cause, shinning a light on her by dedicating an Engraved Bench Monument to her and The Widows Empowerment Trust (2021), waiting to be launch after the lockdown in Manchester for her outstanding and exceptional services in reducing loneliness and social isolation caused by the unprecedented, unrivalled scientific and global challenges that affected all communities especially the community she is serving, now facing multiple challenges – such as **grief, lockdown**, the risk of contracting the virus itself and its impact on overstretched health services, to the knock-on effect on the health and livelihood system. She adapted her service to respond to these new challenges, both now and in the longer- term.

BEFORE Covid19 (our services)

The Widows Empowerment Trust is charity based in Manchester to support bereaved spouses and other vulnerable communities, founded in 2017 and is volunteer led. We currently have 76 volunteers who run the organisation, we have supported more than 350 beneficiaries and over 3000 volunteers have gained value skills with our charitable objectives and regular fundraising. Our mission is to reduce loneliness and isolation of bereaved spouses. We run four different wellbeing workshop centres across Manchester including Dementia support and peer to peer support. We run varied range of activities such as sewing, knitting, crochet, cooking, craft, and karaoke. Along with befriending services either by phone or face to face. For many people experiencing Isolation and mental ill health, our group is a real benefit. it offers people to build social support network, encourage growth of confidence and interpersonal skills. Every week we have consistently high number of people attending our weekly activities in our different centre (Average of 25 people per session). Also, reaching out to Average of 35 people weekly over the telephone. Widows can become the most marginalised group in the society but underrepresented and often those in the greatest need. whether in terms of emotional, physical, social psychological. Our vast majority of our clients are older people, however, we provide services regardless age, colour, sexuality, faith, religion, disability, nationality etc.

Covid19 support service

The effective ways we adapted to limit the impact of the loneliness & isolation faced by our community include Bingo, Crafts & Quiz. Also, befriending services using a telephone to chat up with our beneficiaries encouraging activities, sending letters, cards and helping with shopping. These activities have helped our group to feel socially connected and feeling sense of belonging. Nearly one in five older people (17%) say they can go a week without speaking to a friend, family member or neighbour. For one in ten (11%) this is over a month. More than 75% says feelings of loneliness are out of control, for 3.6 million older people television is their main form of company

The government funding that we received through The National Lottery fund has really helped us to reached 100s of widowed & other vulnerable communities. The Running & core cost such as staffing,

has helped us to provide reliable, coordinated, monitor our activities, volunteers, and continuous support for our beneficiaries. The funding has helped in bringing our community together. Teaching our older people how to use their devices on zoom to connect, was one of the toughest challenges ever faced as an organisation. However, we provided volunteering opportunities for over 300 volunteers across United Kingdom. Which has helped to develop their employability skill, empathic and interpersonal skills. Also, given volunteers insight about grief, bereavement and loss

The funding has helped to support 24 student placements from The Manchester Metropolitan University. Due to covid-19 our fundraising ability has been vastly reduced and has made us more reliant on applying for funds. The funding from the government has provided the vital support that we needed as an organisation to be able to make a real difference to the lives of those going through grief, loneliness, and isolation. We continually receive referrals from other agencies.

For more information, please visit our website and social media platform

www.widowsempowerment.com

www.facebook.com/widowsempowerment

www.twitter.com/widowsemptrust

February 2021