

# Adaptive Leadership in Micro Social Enterprise Teams: Exploring Innovative Healthcare Partnerships

**Maurice Ekwugha**  
University of Greenwich, UK

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*COVID-19 is a relatively new disease, and most victims are in low income, people-facing jobs. The most economically disadvantaged in society are less able to comply with certain non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) partly due to their financial situation. Hope for the Helpless (H4H), set up as part of a micro social enterprise to cater for rough sleepers in London, UK, is at the heart of the COVID-19 response to the homeless there. A lack of financial resources or capital can constrain social entrepreneurs and restrict their ability to create social capital. However, some social entrepreneurs have been able to innovatively leverage on previous relationships to augment their resource base because engagement with stakeholders is critical. The study explores one such relationship between H4H and a local health centre. It is hoped that this study will uncover survival strategies for social entrepreneurs to succeed and thrive in a post-COVID-19 world.*

COVID 19 has hit the global economy hard; and its spread from the early 2020s has meant nations had to shut down their economies to deal with it. The devastating impact of this situation took its toll on health services in the UK and the government had to put measures in place to protect the NHS. Unfortunately, such measures

discouraged close contact with the most vulnerable groups and people were often reluctant to engage with them due to fear of infection, social distancing, lockdowns, and so on. The impact also spilled on to social enterprises which are often known to augment the efforts of health and social care.

The NHS is diverse but it has a common standard to work towards, namely: putting the enhancement of the patient experience first and delivering the highest standards of clinical care and services possible. According to Chakravorty et al. (2020) COVID-19 is a new disease with a disproportionately high death rate among the Black and Ethnic Minority (BAME) community compared to the rest of the UK, and most victims are in low income, people-facing jobs, and are therefore at a higher risk for infection and thus more desperate for a remedy. Atchison et al (2020) found that the most economically disadvantaged in society are less able to comply with certain non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) like social distancing, 7-day isolation and 14-day quarantine measures, partly due to their financial situation. The high proportion of ethnic minorities in East London situates the Hope for the Helpless (H4H) based in Stratford East London, which is part of a micro social enterprise, at the heart of the COVID-19 response, particularly to the homeless there.

H4H was set up in 2018 as part of a micro social enterprise to cater for the rough sleepers around the Stratford city centre in East London, UK. What started out as a small and infrequent food stall soon ballooned into a full-blown organisation providing food, clothing and other basic amenities, as well as sundry assistance to about 100 rough sleepers on a weekly basis.

The H4H team is comprised of a team leader, four regular members and upwards of five other volunteers. The H4H team leader's role includes supervision and monitoring of the team members; investigating incidents and complaints; reporting any issues, writing reports; attending to enquiries from clients and other team members, and giving regular updates and feedback to the parent organisation. The team is proactive. The homeless arrive to be served warm food and provided with clothing in a well-lit welcoming environment; and the floors clean and conducive to their health and well-being. However, the service is also reactive. The team is alert to promptly deal with any routine occurrences. For example, dealing with rowdy individuals or when a sick person inadvertently vomits on the floor while waiting to be served. Sometimes, individuals may occasionally come in with more information s. For example, if a homeless person needs somewhere to spend the night, the team leader will personally contact a homeless shelter or call upon another team member to do so.

At the busiest of times on Saturday evenings, the H4H venue is a beehive of activity as various team members play their roles serving clients and performing their various duties. The tables are set at 8 p.m. and the homeless form an orderly

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