

**MEETING: 14/11/2018**

**Ref: 14954**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions**

**Roma Support Group**

**Adv: Sandra Jones**

**Base: Newham**

**Amount requested: £84,716**

**Benefit: London-wide**

**Amount recommended: £84,800**

**The Applicant**

Roma Support Group (RSG), a charity, was set up in 1998 to improve the quality of life for Roma refugees and migrants living in London, chiefly through supporting them to adapt and successfully integrate into UK society. A further aim is to raise awareness about the Roma culture and history amongst the general public, in particular people working in the public sector who provide services to this community. The Roma community is one of the most socially excluded groups in London and as a community, they have had a history of persecution across Europe. During 2017 the organisation supported over 3,000 Roma refugees and migrants across London.

**The Application**

RSG is seeking funding for a two-year continuation of the Roma Mental Health Advocacy Project to provide support to Roma migrants and refugees in gaining access to mental health services and understanding mental health issues. This will include one-to-one advocacy support, peer support sessions, as well as increasing the understanding amongst mental health professionals about Roma patients' experiences, needs, barriers and culture. This will be achieved by a part time (3 days per week) Project Co-ordinator and 2 mental health advocates, each working 1 day per week.

**The Recommendation**

The proposal is for continuation funding of a three-year project funded by your Committee. Over the three years of operation the project has evidenced high impact for those people accessing the service, exceeding all targets set for the project. A further two years will enable the project to continue this important service and work on its sustainability. This project is a good fit with your Positive Transitions element of Bridging Divides.

***£84,800 over two years (£41,000; £43,800) towards the costs of a Project Co-ordinator (21hpw); 2 p/t bi-lingual mental health advocates (7hpw each); and related running costs for a mental health advocacy service.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
13/05/2015	£122,900 over three years (£41,000; £39,300; £42,600) for the costs of a Project Co-ordinator (21 hpw); 2 p/t mental health advocates (7hpw each); and related running costs for a mental health advocacy service.

**Background and detail of proposal**

In setting up the project, the barriers to accessing mental health services for Roma people identified were lack of trust in mental health professionals; lack of knowledge

of the existing services and where to seek help; communication, language and literacy barriers; inability to use systems to organise appointments and the stigma of mental health issues within the Roma community.

From the mental health professional side, lack of awareness of the Roma culture and needs was identified as a key barrier. In all these areas progress has been made. It has been identified that when Roma community members are provided with culturally appropriate information about mental health issues and avenues for accessing professional support, their willingness to discuss mental health and engage with professional, increases substantially 75% of beneficiaries of the current project reported improved understanding of mental health issues and services, with 50% of beneficiaries reporting an increased independence in accessing mental health services and confidence in engaging with mental health professionals .

### Financial Information

RSG shows a deficit on unrestricted reserves over the last three years. this was a planned deficit of the charity as they made a policy decision in financial year ending 2016 to reduce their unrestricted funds to a level identified in their reserves policy of 3 months of turnover.

Year end as at 31 January	2017 Audited Accounts £	2018 Draft Accounts £	2019 Budget £
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	315,888	397,618	327,600
- % of income confirmed as at September 2018	n/a	n/a	96%
Expenditure	(352,083)	(352,095)	(347,499)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(36,195)	45,523	(19,899)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(20,220)	63,252	(5,355)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(15,975)	(17,729)	(14,544)
	(36,195)	45,523	(19,899)
Cost of Raising Funds	33,036	33,939	33,775
- % of income	10.5%	8.5%	10.3%
Total expenditure (total funds)	352,083	352,095	347,499
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	107,425	89,696	75,152
No of months of operating expenditure	3.7	3.1	2.6
Reserves policy target	88,021	88,024	86,875
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	19,404	1,672	(11,723)