

MEETING: 25/07/2019

Ref: 15302

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Advice and Support

Ealing Law Centre

Adv: Geraldine Page

Base: Ealing

Amount requested: £127,139

Benefit: Ealing

Amount recommended: £108,000

The Applicant

Set up in 2012, Ealing Law Centre (ELC) is a registered charity and offers free specialist legal advice and representation to people on low incomes in Ealing and nearby boroughs. Currently ELC provides people in need with expert legal advice and representation, free of charge, in housing, immigration and welfare rights law. Its advice, representation and appeals services help vulnerable victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, asylum seekers and refugees. ELC provides a casework and appeals service for people at risk of losing their homes and with welfare benefit problems. Through outreach services at Ealing Food Bank and Brentford County Court it advises and assists persons facing crisis at their point of need.

The Application

In May 2016 you awarded ELC £155,400 over 3 years towards the wages of two 0.6FTE caseworkers, running costs and overheads of providing legal advice on housing and welfare rights. This funding enabled ELC to fill a gap in services that had been left by the closure of Law for All in 2011, and withdrawal of legal aid through the introduction of Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offender Act 2012 (LASPO). This application is for a further 2 years' continuation funding, which is permitted under your Bridging Divides programme.

The Recommendation

ELC's current 3-year grant, due to end in September 2019, has been very successful and exceeded targets. The charity plays an integral role in the advice community locally and nationally. ELC has developed close links with a network of local advice agencies. In 2018 its team won the Legal Aid Lawyer of the Year Award- Not for Profit Agency. Ordinarily you fund only one FTE post per organisation, in May 2016 you agreed to fund 2x0.6 FTE posts because Ealing had not received as much funding from the Trust compared to other boroughs and given that the salary costs are modest and the work important. This is still the case and as this is a continuation funding request it is appropriate to continue to fund at on the same basis. The recommended amount is £19k lower than the request due to removal of some costs which were not included in the original grant, thereby keeping funding at a similar level to before. This project fits well with your Advice and Support programme outcomes and priorities hence funding is recommended:

£108,000 over two further and final years (£54,000, £54,000) towards the wages of two 0.6FTE caseworkers, running costs and overheads of providing legal advice on housing and welfare rights.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
24/05/2016	£155,400 (3 x £51,800) towards the wages of two 0.6FTE caseworkers, running costs and overheads of providing legal advice on housing and welfare rights.

Background and detail of proposal

ELC holds a legal aid contract for its immigration, housing and welfare benefits work. Work that falls outside the scope of Legal Aid is currently funded by several Trusts and Foundations including CBT. ELC provides outreach services at Ealing Food Bank, HADEA and Brentford County Court. It also provides training and Public Legal Education for community groups, academic institutions and other service providers and other establishments by direct request or through requests from Law Centres Network and other partners. Demand for services for welfare and housing legal advice and representation continues to exceed the capacity and there are no other providers in Ealing who can offer specialist legal advice and representation for free for people with limited financial means.

The Trust for London 2017 poverty profile gives Ealing an overall rank of 18.8. and it is ranked amongst the worst 8 boroughs for inequality, housing, low pay and benefits. ELC services are used by many marginalised people who face linked difficulties with housing and welfare benefits, are at risk of eviction, destitution or both, and who have been unable to access early legal advice. It works closely with front line advice agencies to identify such cases, providing outreach clinics, taking referrals of complex cases, and providing training for their staff. The two part-time posts provide much of the capacity which makes this work possible. They are also responsible for running ELC's housing advice line and sanctions hotline. Digital exclusion is becoming a major issue, especially with Universal Credit. To help address this ELC will introduce a form-filling clinic where volunteers, supervised by the Welfare Benefits Caseworker, will help client's complete online forms.

Financial Information

The charity's finances are stable, and its income is a combination of approx. 30% income earned through contracts and 70% grants and donations. ELC reserves policy is to hold free unrestricted funds for six months operating costs. Reserves are in slightly in excess of this but is prudent in the current climate.

Year end as at 31st March	2018 Examined Accounts £	2019 Draft Accounts £	2020 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	264,974	315,218	420,005
- % of Income confirmed as at 4/8/19	N/A	100%	93%
Expenditure	(241,039)	(303,418)	(410,974)
Total surplus/(deficit)	23,935	11,800	9,031
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	0	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	23,935	11,800	9,031
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Cost of Raising Funds	0	60	1,500
- % of Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	79,812	97,095	133,715
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	106,745	118,545	127,576
No of months of operating expenditure	16.0	14.7	11.4
Reserves policy target	39,906	48,548	66,858
No of months of operating expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	66,839	69,998	60,719