

MEETING: 25/07/2019

Ref: 15083

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions

Sycamore Trust U.K.

Adv: Gilly Green

Amount requested: £102,993

Base: Barking & Dagenham

Benefit: Barking & Dagenham,

Havering, Redbridge

Amount recommended: £90,000

The Applicant

The charity was founded in 1995 as Parents of Autistic Children Together (PACT). In 2011 it merged with Barking & Dagenham Mencap to become Sycamore Trust UK. The charity provides services for people with Autistic Spectrum disorders, learning difficulties and their families through the provision of advice, support, information and educational activities, aiding them towards active lifestyles, reaching potential and social integration.

The Application

The Sycamore Trust seeks continuation funding towards a 'Family Services Coordinator' to support families in Barking & Dagenham, Havering and Redbridge who have had a child recently diagnosed with Autism. Over the last three years with your funding, the Coordinator has supported a total of 180 families - many through the initial stages of diagnosis, providing information, advice and support. The service also works with existing families providing ongoing support and advice; runs peer support groups and provides a crisis intervention service when necessary. The programme builds the resilience and capabilities of parents and carers to ensure the best outcomes for their children. Work to advance the understanding of autism locally with professionals and in the community is carried out by people with autism who have been trained as autism ambassadors.

The Recommendation

The Sycamore Trust is an established and respected organisation with over 25 years' experience providing services and support for people with Autism and their families. Through an empowerment model, the programme meets the outcomes of your programme by helping parents and carers to become more resilient, more independent and have more choice and control over the critical decisions that affect children's lives. The grant advised is less than that requested to be more in line with the level of funding of the previous award (which is your usual approach). The organisation confirms any balance required will be met from reserves, which are healthy. A grant is recommended:

£90,000 over two years (£45,000; £45,000) for a full time Family Services Coordinator and related overheads.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
24/05/2016	£112,100 over three years (£36,600; £37,400; £38,100) for a full time Family Services Coordinator and related overheads.

Ref: 22103548

Background and detail of proposal

In 2018, 67% of families worked with used the service for the first time, indicating continuing commitment by the organisation to seek out families with newly diagnosed children. This programme offers a complete service for parents, carers and their children providing initial support, training, advice and focus groups, volunteering opportunities, and training sessions to allow families to build support networks. Common issues addressed include behavioural support; school development; and puberty. The service also carries out financial health checks and ensures families are in receipt of any benefits they are entitled to. ST is well established in the area and reaches families reflective of the local populations in each borough, including BME and other minority groups. A significant majority of children they work with are boys (86%), reflecting current trends in diagnosis, though ST has started a young women's group which has been well received.

Financial Information

Income and expenditure have risen consistently over the last three years as Sycamore Trust has won further contracts and a £100,000 donation for an employment project over two years (which has now finished). The organisation has a healthy level of free reserves and most contracts and grants run for at least the next two years. In theory, ST could pay for this work itself. However, the long-term picture is less certain as fears grow around the de-commissioning of services for this user group locally, combined with increasing demand. In response Trustees have instigated a comprehensive review of the model of support. The new business plan focuses on increasing earned income, charging for some services (where it would not deter users) and receiving a greater proportion of funds from trusts and foundations. Funding this post as advised would allow the charity's fundraising efforts to be focused on longer term organisational stability rather than short term delivery posts.

Year end as at 31 MARCH	2018 Examined Accounts	2019 Forecast	2020 Budget
Income & expenditure:			
Income	480,846	528,913	581,230
- % of income confirmed as at 22 May 2019	n/a	100%	66%
Expenditure	(462,277)	(501,971)	(572,857)
Total surplus/(deficit)	18,569	26,942	8,373
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(18,739)	(23,138)	(6,892)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	37,308	50,080	15,265
	18,569	26,942	8,373
Cost of Raising Funds	0	5,313	7,500
- % of Income	0.0%	1.0%	1.3%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	314,544	229,024	241,338
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	219,870	269,950	285,215
No of months of operating expenditure	8.4	14.1	14.2
Reserves policy target	157,064	114,532	120,669
No of months of operating expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	62,806	155,418	164,546