

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions

Waterloo Community Counselling

Adv: Lily Brandhorst

Base: Lambeth

Benefit: London-wide

Amount requested: £70,000

(Revised request amount: £80,000)

Amount recommended: £80,000

The Applicant

Established 20 years ago, Waterloo Community Counselling (WCC) is a registered charity. It provides counselling to the public on a sliding price scale, improving access for clients on low incomes. In 2004, noting that people with limited English language skills and/or no recourse to public funds struggle to access mental health support, it established a 'multi-ethnic counselling service' (MECS). MECS provides mother tongue counselling to refugees and asylum seekers and today accounts for a large proportion of WCC's work. 70% of referrals to WCC come from GPs and statutory mental health services, with the remainder from voluntary sector organisations. Self-referrals also occur. A standard support package involves up to 18 weeks of one-to-one or group therapy. Most service delivery takes place at WCC's Lambeth base, with some in Brent.

The Application

WCC seeks two further years of funding towards MECS. Funding would cover part of the costs of WCC's Project Manager (a qualified counsellor) and Project Administrator and the time of several freelance therapists. Funding will enable WCC to support at least 190 clients via one-to-one counselling and group work. In addition, a contribution towards core costs will help with WCC's ancillary services such as travel costs for clients. The charity expects 70% of the clients it supports to experience significant improvements in their mental health.

The Recommendation

Waterloo Community Counselling has performed very well throughout the three-year grant which has just ended, exceeding its original targets. The project is a good match for the Positive Transitions theme, supporting refugees and asylum seekers to overcome some of the barriers to support and participation that confront them and is well-regarded by statutory and voluntary sector providers working with similar groups. MECS continues to be the only service in London to provide mother tongue counselling to refugees and asylum seekers in virtually any language. Following discussion with your officer a revised request was submitted to include a contribution to core costs to support greater sustainability by ensuring the charity does not have to subsidise the project from its reserves. A grant is recommended:

£80,000 for two further and final years (2 x £40,000) comprising £20,000 p/a towards the Project Manager and Administrators' salaries, £12,000 p/a towards sessional Counsellors' fees and a contribution of £8,000 p/a for client travel and other core costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
26/11/2015	£102,000 over three years (£33,000; £34,000; £35,000) for the costs of Waterloo Community Counselling's Project Manager and freelance fees for counsellors working with refugees and asylum seekers experiencing trauma, grief or loss.
19/02/2009	£102,000 over three years (£33,000; £34,000; £35,000) towards the project management salary & freelance fees of the Multi-Ethnic Counselling Service focused on trauma for refugees/asylum seekers.

Background and detail of proposal

The majority of MECs clients seen by WCC display significant trauma, anxiety and depression. Fleeing conflict and persecution, they have abandoned their homes, made dangerous journeys and, once arrived in the UK, face lengthy uncertainty regarding their immigration status. Unpicking complex psychological issues requires a relationship of trust between the client and therapist, in which the client is confident articulating their thoughts and feelings. That is why providing counselling in the mother tongue is so crucial and covers more than 27 different languages. If an experienced counsellor who speaks the language required cannot be found, an interpreter is provided. Clients are isolated and the service offers space to talk which helps people stabilise, moving from what is frequently an acute suicidal mindset to a more optimistic outlook. The provision of travel costs and childcare for clients is essential for many to be able to attend.

In addition WCC provides groups offering therapeutic activities, including yoga for Tamil speakers and a crafts club run by a woman who is herself a refugee. This decreases clients' isolation. WCC also makes referrals to established partners offering advice including refugee and asylum support, volunteering and training.

Whilst the local Clinical Commissioning Group supports WCC's work with clients who are eligible for statutory services, City Bridge Trust is asked to assist with those refugees and asylum seekers who have no recourse to public funds.

Financial Information

In the past two years WCC has faced extremely high demand for the MECS service; difficulty recruiting an appropriately skilled Fundraiser; and a 100% rent increase. This led to deficits in 2018 and 2019. Robust free reserves allowed the organisation to weather these difficulties in 2018 and 2019 and to cover the deficits on restricted funds. With a Fundraiser in place and 75% of 2020 projected income secured by quarter 1, WCC expects to end the year in surplus. It will moderate the overall number of counselling sessions offered according to income secured.

Year end as at 31st March	2018	2019	2020
	Signed Accounts	Draft Accounts	Forecast
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	431,863	414,915	400,834
- % of Income confirmed as at 14/6/19	N/A	N/A	79%
Expenditure	(452,717)	(485,403)	(363,559)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(20,854)	(70,488)	37,275
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(8,895)	(43,274)	485
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(11,959)	(27,214)	36,790
	(20,854)	(70,488)	37,275
Cost of Raising Funds	16,174	26,100	8,800
- % of income	3.7%	6.3%	2.2%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	131,700	180,111	135,719
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	104,992	34,504	71,294
No of months of operating expenditure	9.6	2.3	6.3
Reserves policy target	65,850	90,056	67,860
No of months of operating expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	39,142	(55,552)	3,435