

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Advice and Support**

**Paddington Law Centre**

**Adv: Sandra Davidson**

**Amount requested: £107,249**

**Base: Westminster**

**Benefit: Westminster and  
Surrounding areas**

**Amount recommended: £107,250**

**The Applicant**

Paddington Law Centre provides free legal advice, practical casework and tribunal representation to poor and vulnerable people. Specialising in housing, welfare benefits and employment law, the Centre helps marginalised people increase their income, obtain and/or retain stable, suitable housing, (including finding homes for the homeless), and remain in employment, free from discriminatory treatment. Operating from office space on the Harrow Road, in one of the most deprived wards in Westminster, the Centre is open to new clients via drop-in sessions four days a week and for pre-arranged appointments on the fifth day. Clients can also contact the Centre by telephone or email. Its team of solicitors support around 200 beneficiaries a year. 70% of beneficiaries are suffering from an illness or disability, 65% are from BAME communities and 70% are women, including many single parents.

**The Application**

This application is for two years' continuation funding, following a three-year grant, awarded in September 2016, supporting a full wrap around service delivering specialist legal advice for vulnerable people in Westminster and surrounding areas. Promoting the service in GP surgeries, places of worship and community hubs in order to engage "hard to reach" beneficiaries. During the last year, the organisation delivered advice and support to 1200 people, of whom 200 poor and vulnerable people received in-depth assistance, with a success rate of 90% in increasing income/addressing homelessness/improving working conditions and pay/tackling discrimination and improving clients' self-determination.

**The Recommendation**

Paddington Law Centre is a trusted community resource with an excellent reputation for the services it provides. With a wealth of experience, their work offers access to free specialist legal/advice for vulnerable people and those on low incomes. During its existing grant, reports and evaluation demonstrate positive impact in securing favourable tribunal decisions for claimants, increasing household income and improving economic circumstances. This application fully meets the criteria for your Advice and Support programme. Funding is recommended as follows:

**£107,250 over two further and final years (£53,500; £53,750) towards the salary and on-costs of a part-time Housing Caseworker (2.5dpw), a Welfare Rights Worker (2dpw), and a Project Co-ordinator (1dpw); plus associated running costs.**

## Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
24/05/2016	£165,300 over three years (£54,200; £55,100; £56,000) for the salary and on-cost of a part-time Housing Caseworker (2.5d d/p/w) a Welfare Rights Worker (2 d/p/w), and a Project co-ordinator (1d/p/w); plus associated running costs.

### Background and detail of proposal

Westminster is a very wealthy borough and one of the most prosperous in the country. Despite this, there are pockets of extreme deprivation and poverty. Westminster has the 6<sup>th</sup> highest level of child poverty in the UK with 41.29% of children living in poverty in 2017 (after housing costs).<sup>1</sup> 30% of housing in Westminster is overcrowded as defined by the government, which is the third highest level of overcrowding in the country<sup>2</sup> The charity works with a small staff team providing legal/advice in social welfare, housing and welfare benefits. Using in-depth casework and representation, support is given at every stage, concluding with professional representation where necessary. Ongoing changes in the benefits system has seen an increased number of people seeking advice, in particular in the areas of social welfare law: housing, welfare benefits, employment and debt. With the introduction of Universal Credit and the fire at Grenfell Tower, the organisation is seeing more people with increasingly complex problems and time spent with each client has significantly increased.

The centre regularly uses volunteers, for both casework and admin tasks to maximise service delivery. It works closely with various charitable organisations including Pro Bono Community, Migrant Resource Centre and Westminster Mind to name but few. 750 people are expected to access the service over two years. Key outcomes for the project include: increased awareness of legal rights - through more people accessing legal support; improved economic circumstance – as a result of more claimants winning benefit appeals and a reduction of homelessness due to support; and representation from Paddington Law Centre.

### Financial Information

Income has fluctuated over the last couple of years due to time limited grants. An improved position is shown for 2020 due to Trust for London recently awarding a grant of £120,000 over three years towards the salary and running costs of the Centre's Employment Caseworker/Solicitor. Fundraising is carried out in-house by a legal caseworker, which equates to 15% of the pro-rated salary at approximately £7,500 per annum. The charity also benefits from pro bono consultants employed by the Law Centres Network. Cost of raising funds will be included in its future accounts on advice from your funding manager.

<sup>1</sup> End Child Poverty Coalition January 2018

<sup>2</sup> Understanding Social Needs in Westminster – NPC Think Tank October 2012

<b>Year end as at 31st March</b>	<b>2018 Signed Accounts £</b>	<b>2019 Forecast £</b>	<b>2020 Budget £</b>
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	187,946	149,083	211,457
- % of Income confirmed as at	N/A	N/A	63%
Expenditure	(216,637)	(192,017)	(176,725)
<b>Total surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>(28,691)</b>	<b>(42,934)</b>	<b>34,732</b>
<b>Split between:</b>			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(7,940)	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(20,751)	(42,934)	34,732
	<b>(28,691)</b>	<b>(42,934)</b>	<b>34,732</b>
<b>Cost of Raising Funds</b>	4,503	0	0
- % of Income	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	216,637	138,242	122,599
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	73,218	30,284	65,016
No of months of operating expenditure	4.1	2.6	6.4
Reserves policy target	54,159	34,561	30,650
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	19,059	(4,277)	34,366