

MEETING: 30/01/2020

Ref: 15590

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Advice and Support**Grandparents Plus****Adv: Sandra Jones****Base: Southwark****Benefit: London-wide****Amount requested: £211,336****{Revised request: £211,900}****Amount recommended: £211,900****The Applicant**

Operating since 2002, Grandparents Plus (GP) is a national charity dedicated to supporting kinship carers, i.e. family and friends raising children who are not able to live with their parents. The organisation seeks to support their target group through a holistic approach.

The Application

The application sought is for a Senior Advisor (London) and associated costs in order to provide a specialist advice and support service for kinship carers across London.

The organisation has demonstrated a strong track record of providing quality advice services and has recently been awarded Advice Quality Standard (AQS). This post is currently funded in part through unrestricted donations and covered the South of England, however given the level of demand from London the organisation is applying for the post to work specifically in London. Funding is therefore to cover a full time Senior Advisor and associated running costs including costs of recruiting and supporting volunteers.

The Recommendation

GP has been operating an advice service as part of their core service since setting up. Although they had been operating under a system similar to the Citizens Advice Service, it is only recently that they have obtained AQS. This is an extremely important area of work and to date this service is the only one working specifically with kinship carers.

This project will enable them to focus on those kinship carers in London, where demand has risen dramatically and which has led to the organisation operating a waiting list, albeit currently only 2 weeks. The post will facilitate this situation to be resolved and, through using volunteers and working with partners in London, it is anticipated that the organisation will be able to reach those kinship carers who would not normally access this service. In discussion with your officer the organisation recognised that they had miscalculated on the costs of the volunteers which has now been rectified, hence the revised request. A grant is recommended:

£211,900 over 5 years (£40,000; £41,000; £42,300; £43,600; £45,000) towards a FTE Senior Advice Worker (London) and associated costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
31/01/2019	Application withdrawn.

Background and detail of proposal

This organisation is unique in so far that it works with a specific group of carers who are vulnerable as they do not normally have access to the same level of services as other carers. GP provides a holistic service, connecting them with other kinship carers, building networks of support including peer-to-peer support, an online community and training and learning events. One of the core services is providing an information and advice service, both online and one-to-one advice. From their knowledge of issues faced by kinship carers, GP works with service providers and decision makers, providing evidence and policy solutions and training.

Providing an advice service is crucial to the support given. This is provided online, via e mail and the telephone as well as face to face. Monthly surgeries are also run on Facebook. Many cases are one-off support, although they are increasingly getting more complex casework. GP currently work with 14 London local authorities which it aims to increase across the whole of London by year 5.

Financial Information

The organisation has increased its income for 2019 mainly through contracts from local authorities, and it is anticipated that this will continue to increase, particularly in London; they are currently in discussions with a collaboration of local authorities in South London. This funding does not include the provision of welfare advice to kinship carers.

The reserves are slightly over the stated policy of 6 months. These have been deliberately built up as they are looking to open a new centre in the north of England.

Year end as at 31 March	2018 Audited Accounts £	2019 Audited Accounts £	2020 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	864,471	965,139	1,299,878
- % of Income confirmed as at 22/02/2019	n/a	n/a	87%
Expenditure	(778,481)	(762,361)	(1,063,524)
Total surplus/(deficit)	85,990	202,778	236,354
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	7,537	(24,407)	91,570
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	78,453	227,185	144,784
	85,990	202,778	236,354
Total expenditure	778,481	762,361	1,063,524
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	269,381	491,328	636,112
No of months of total expenditure	4.2	7.7	7.2
Reserves policy target	389,241	381,181	531,762
No of months of total expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(119,860)	110,148	104,350