

MEETING 30/01/2020

Ref: 15422

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions**SignHealth****Adv: Jenny Field****Base: Wandsworth****Amount requested: £259,198****Benefit: London-wide****Amount recommended: £260,000****The Applicant**

SignHealth provides specialist BSL health and care services and campaigns to remove the barriers to services that Deaf people face. It is a Deaf-led organisation whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL). It delivers advocacy, outreach and residential care from key delivery bases in London, Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham.

The Application

Its DeafHope domestic violence service is delivered entirely by Deaf female staff, mainly across London with some delivery in Kent. You are asked to support the costs of a Deaf sign-language user as a Children and Families Worker to advocate for and support children of Deaf victims of domestic abuse. This includes helping deaf parents understand the impact of domestic abuse on their developing child; improve their parenting skills; help negotiate complex Custody and Child Protection processes; try and keep families together - where this is in the best interests of the child; support Deaf mothers who have had their children removed; and help health professionals understand Deaf parenting. The focus of this role would be solely on London.

The Recommendation

SignHealth is an impressive, award-winning organisation and is probably the only deaf-led organisation working in this highly specialist and complex area with the necessary skills and expertise. Most of the clients it works with are extremely marginalised and suffer severe and entrenched levels of abuse. Funding is requested over 5 years, at the end of which time, SignHealth would hope to have a national programme in place (and plan to start talks with trusts and foundations which have a national focus during the coming year).

£260,000 over 5 years (£50,000; £51,000; £52,000; £53,000; £54,000) towards the full-time salary of a Children and Families Support Worker, plus associated running costs, for a specialist service supporting Deaf women and their children who are escaping domestic abuse to re-build their lives with increased resilience, independence and well-being.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
January 2012	90,000 over three years to support 2 part-time outreach workers supporting Deaf women affected by domestic abuse and their children.

Background and detail of proposal

The needs of children affected by domestic abuse are all too often overlooked as research you commissioned from Refuge and NSPCC, published as far back as November 2011, so powerfully demonstrated. This is exacerbated and more complex in Deaf families where Deaf mothers are much more likely to have their children removed. Even where interpreters are provided, the provision is likely to be substandard making it hard for the mother to cope with the written and verbal interactions of with courts, social services, police and other professionals. Mainstream services routinely overlook the communication needs of Deaf people and mistakenly believe they can access services by reading/writing or by bringing a friend, relative or child to interpret.

The project will also engage with children of Deaf adults who have been affected by the abuse of their mother (and may themselves have experience violence or abuse from the perpetrator).

Located within SignHealth's Children and Young People Advocacy Team, the postholder also works closely with the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor Team. In turn, both teams work closely with women's refuges, Women's Aid, Social Services, the police, CAFCASS, family courts and other mainstream organisations.

Financial Information

SignHealth's reserves policy is to hold a minimum of 6-month's total expenditure in free reserves. From the table below, you can see that its reserves are significantly above this level. This is largely due to the sale of a property towards the end of 2018-19. The trustees plan to designate some of these reserves during 2019-20 in order to invest in the organisation as well as to initiate new activities. A modest deficit of £1,752 is forecast on unrestricted funds. This will be met from free reserves.

Year end as at 31st March	2019	2020	2021
	Signed Accounts £	Forecast £	Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	4,584,580	4,479,355	4,685,944
- % of Income confirmed as at 09/12/2019	N/A	N/A	83%
Expenditure	(4,370,792)	(4,456,378)	(4,685,872)
Net (losses) gains on sale/revaluation of assets	(598,000)	N/A	N/A
Total surplus/(deficit)	(384,212)	22,977	72
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(10,792)	28,286	1824
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(373,420)	(5,309)	(1,752)
	(384,212)	22,977	72
Total expenditure	4,370,792	4,456,378	4,685,872
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	3,163,552	3,158,243	3,158,315
No of months of operating expenditure	8.7	8.5	8.1
Reserves policy target	2,185,396	2,228,189	2,342,936
No of months of total expenditure	6.00	6.12	6.43
Free reserves over/(under) target	978,156	930,054	815,379