

Committee	Dated:
City Bridge Trust	30 th January 2020
Subject: Strengthening Voices, Realising Rights, Phase 2 – a joint initiative with Trust for London (Reference: 15917)	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer & Director of City Bridge Trust (CGO)	For Decision
Report author: Ciaran Rafferty, Funding Director	

Summary

This report requests funds to support phase 2 of an initiative – *Strengthening Voices, Realising Rights* - to be led by Trust for London and which, building on the work to date in phase 1, aims to ensure the collective rights of Deaf and Disabled people are protected, promoted and fulfilled.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Agree a grant of £400,000 over three years to Trust for London to establish a joint fund for Phase 2 of the *Strengthening Voices – Realising Rights* initiative to support work that tackles some of the root causes of poverty and disadvantage amongst Deaf and Disabled Londoners.

Main Report

Background

1. “Nothing about us without us” is a slogan used to communicate the idea that no policy should be decided nor service delivered by any representative without the direct participation of those affected by that policy or service. The term became particularly prominent in disability activism in the 1990s and is a concept still valid today.
2. In the disability movement the principle is reflected in the form of Deaf and Disabled People’s Organisations (DDPOs) – organisations where the majority of the leadership comprises deaf or disabled people¹. Such organisations, it is argued, know what’s best for the people they serve.

1. An organisation is a DDPO if a) their Management Committee or Board has at least 75% representation from Deaf and Disabled people and; b) at least 50% of their staff team are Deaf and Disabled people with representation at all levels of the organisation; and c) they provide services for or work on behalf of Deaf and Disabled people. (Source: Inclusion London)

Current Position

3. In July 2018 the Trust made a contribution of £300,000 towards a joint initiative with Trust for London (TFL) to create a fund to support DDPOs (after an open application process) to provide advice services to enable Deaf and Disabled people to access social protection benefits and exercise their individual rights.
4. The fund available, given TFL's contribution, totalled c.£1.3m and was launched in December 2018, on the International Day of Disabled Persons. Applications were sought from DDPOs to bolster their capacity to offer advice, casework and representation. Seven borough-wide organisations were funded for three-year periods, from 19 applications, with most commencing their projects in April 2019. (*A summary of the scheme's progress to date is provided at Appendix A*)
5. In addition to the seven grants awarded the joint fund also supported a capacity-building programme for the organisations (provided by Inclusion London); and formative evaluation by a team of disabled researchers.
6. Phase 1 of *Strengthening Voices – Realising Rights* was also different from your usual practice in that a panel of external disabled people joined officers from TFL and your Trust to consider the grant applications and to make recommendations to the TFL Board. The panel was chaired by Tara Flood, a trustee of TFL and a long-standing disabled rights activist.

Proposal for Phase 2

7. Whilst the organisations supported in Phase 1 will continue their work to ensure that the collective rights of Deaf and Disabled people are protected, promoted and fulfilled, Phase 2 aims to fund work that tackles some of the root causes of poverty and inequality and aims to promote long lasting change and thus ensure that progress in realising Disabled people's rights is back on track. This includes policy advocacy, campaigning and other work that:
 - Seeks to influence decisions, policies and practices, and;
 - Holds policy and decision-makers to account for protecting, promoting and fulfilling Deaf and Disabled people's rights
8. Phase 2 aims to create long term change and is based on the principle that DDPOs are themselves best placed to identify their priorities and to decide the issues he wish to promote or change. An open application process for funding will be instigated (as for Phase 1) with proposals expected to work towards the following outcomes:
 - Increased levels of collaboration, with more DDPOs engaging in coalitions, partnerships and alliances for rights
 - Increased visibility and effectiveness of DDPOs' efforts to influence change
 - A more diverse and inclusive movement for social change in London
 - Enhanced involvement of DDPOs in policy processes; and in Effectively holding institutions to account.

9. At the time of writing TFL is likely to commit £500,000 towards the total fund available for grants for this second phase. Grants will be available for a maximum of £60,000 per year for up to three years. Should you agree the recommendation to contribute £400,000 to the fund then this would enable up to 5 organisations to be funded at the maximum level. A grants advisory panel, similar to that convened for Phase 1 (see para 6 above), will consider applications and make recommendations to the TFL Board who will make the final decisions.
10. Trust for London would host the initiative and administer the funds, therefore if you agree the recommendation to contribute then the grant would be payable to them. You have, of course, a track record with this type of arrangement and a long collaborative history with Trust for London – going back to the *Fear & Fashion* initiative begun in 2006, to the current partnership on the *Moving on Up* and the recent *Citizenship and Integration* projects. TFL would also coordinate all the processes and stakeholders, including the recruitment and induction of advisors. The fund would be launched in March 2020 and grants announced in late June/early July.

Financial information

11. Audited accounts for the year ended 31st December 2018 show a strong balance sheet with total group funds of £325,181,129. After expenditure, the charity incurred a net operating loss of £6,920,857 which, after net gains and losses on investments and revaluation of the Trust's fixed assets, generated a surplus of £8,204,363 as shown below.
12. It is Trust for London's policy not to maintain any unrestricted reserves as ongoing working capital is available from the endowment under the total return policy adopted. A small proportion of the grant budget is permitted to be carried over the year end, if unspent. The 2019 forecast and 2020 budget does not show gains on investments as these are not predicted in advance. However, Trustees are confident enough in the investment income to allow for the level of expenditure on grants as forecast.

Year end as at 31 December 2020	2018	2019	2020
	Audited Accounts	Forecast - Trust only	Budget - Trust only
	£	£	£
Income	12,521,085	9,076,000	9,826,000
- % of Income confirmed as at 20/12/2019	n/a	n/a	n/a
Expenditure	(19,441,942)	(17,764,000)	(21,120,000)
Net surplus/(deficit)	(6,920,857)	(8,688,000)	(11,294,000)
Net gain/losses on investments	(1,433,506)	-	-
Other gains/losses	150,000	-	-
Total surplus/(deficit)	(8,204,363)	(8,688,000)	(11,294,000)
Total Funds	325,181,129	316,493,129	327,787,129

Conclusion

13. This proposal builds on a successful model of engagement and support for Deaf and Disabled Londoners and in its aim to tackle some of the root causes of poverty and disadvantage amongst the disabled community will clearly meet the aims of Bridging Divides. The operational model of the programme, employing co-production and participatory grant-making, ensures that the voice of Deaf and Disabled people themselves will be heard; whilst the partnership approach between City Bridge Trust and Trust for London will further uphold your commitment to collaboration and joint working where the sum is greater than the parts. A grant if agreed will enable an important strand of work to be supported in 2020 - the 25th anniversary of the introduction of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the 25th anniversary of the Trust itself.

Appendices

Progress report on Phase 1.

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APPENDIX A**City Bridge Trust – Strategic Initiative progress report****TRUST FOR LONDON****Ref: 14833****Grant Amount: £300,000**

Purpose of grant: Contribution towards Strengthening Voices Realising Rights (SVRR), a funders' collaborative to support Deaf and Disabled people's organisations (DDPOs) in their work protecting, promoting and advancing equal rights and inclusion for Deaf and Disabled Londoners (DDL). Phase 1 of SVRR was launched on 03.12.2018, the International Day of Disabled Persons with a pooled fund of £1,314,610. City Bridge Trust contributed £300,000. Trust for London (TFL) has funded the remainder.

Project Start Date: 01.04.2019**Projected End Date: 31.03.2022**

Please summarise your progress to date, specifically focusing on the key outcomes and impact of the project:

SVRR is a special initiative attempting to live up to the “nothing about us, without us” principle: Deaf and Disabled people are informing strategy, programmatic approach and funding decisions. Grantees, providers of capacity building, learning partners and advisers, all identify as Deaf and/or Disabled. We are accruing significant learning from this first attempt to embed co-production throughout the grant-making cycle.

The initiative comprises several strands. Progress in each strand is summarised below:

Grants to DDPOs to bolster their capacity to offer advice, casework and representation to support DDL in obtaining social protection benefits and access to services. Further to an open call, 7 borough-wide DDPOs out of 19 applicants were awarded £1,077,110 over three years (listed in Appendix 1). Most DDPOs started work in April 2019. Grantees report that welfare benefits, housing and care have been the main areas of advice. They note increasing numbers of service users, cases dealt with and significant increases in benefit appeals at both reconsideration stage and tribunal stage. Detailed service delivery statistics in the first year of Phase 1 will be available after April 2020.

A capacity building programme delivered by Inclusion London started with in- depth assessments of each DDPO's competences from which individual and collective learning plans are being delivered. The programme aims to: skill up DDPOs with tools to offer good quality advice, achieve AQS accreditation; build on evidence to influence change; and strengthen grantees' organisational competences. A community of shared learning is emerging through peer collaborations and peer learning events.

A formative evaluation: The learning partners (a team of disabled researchers appointed in March 2019) have been visiting and gathering data from the funded DDPOs. They will be generating insights into the work as it progresses, enabling all stakeholders to gain timely information to improve practice. TFL plans to bring additional expertise to support funded DDPOs to more rigorously monitor their work in 2020.

Promoting disability inclusive funding practice: through creating learning and networking opportunities for funders. This has included a presentation on how the Ford Foundation has radically transformed its practices, a blog and articles for organisations such as London

Funders and Association of European Foundations and a workshop on co-production in grant-making at the ACF conference.

Participatory decision-making: The initiative has recruited Deaf and Disabled advisors to a Grants Advisory Panel (GAP) chaired by a Trustee of TFL who is Disabled, and which also includes grants staff. The GAP ensures that all the strands of SVRR are informed by Deaf and Disabled people. It has advised strategy, programme approach, and decision-making. Funding recommendations of GAP for Phase 1 were presented to the Trustees of TFL - the custodians of the Trust's funds -for final approval. A recent recruitment in the summer has added new experience and diversity to the Panel.

Do you have any particular learning points to share?

SVRR has been a continuous learning experience. We are learning that:

- a) DDPOs which have just started giving information/advice because of this funding have had to grapple with issues such as inducting staff new to benefits work and setting up new processes and procedures. In contrast, DDPOs which have been running services for some time managed to transition into this project much more smoothly. Outputs have varied significantly between the former and the latter group.
- b) Three out of 9 people recruited by the seven DDPOs (33%) left their jobs for health/ personal reasons in the first 6 months. A consistent theme emerging is how much harder it is to recruit and retain Deaf and Disabled staff, frequently due to lack of on the job supports. For example, a Blind employee of one grantee has been unable to do his job as well as expected due to the system lacking in reasonable adjustments - for example welfare benefit forms not being available in accessible formats - while his employer DDPO has had to struggle to get funds for travel from "Access to Work".
- c) Our open, wide advertisement to recruit for GAP and for the Learning Partner did not attract the expected high number of applications from Deaf and Disabled people. We received only one evaluation tender from disabled individuals. This mirrors difficulties DDPOs have experienced recruiting staff.
- d) The evaluation brief is being re-configured. From the Learning Partners' first baseline report and conversations with them it has emerged that their expertise from experience would be best applied to evaluating the benefits or otherwise of this model of inclusive grant-making practice. To complement this work we are approaching CES for additional input to support data collection and analysis by the grantees.
- e) Emerging evidence suggests that the DDPOs' services, being user led and delivered by peers, are qualitatively different and result in a raft of added benefits, including important soft outcomes for service users.
- f) Co-production is resource intensive and meeting access and support needs add to the costs. But the process has generated new ideas based on better information of what goes on the ground. Engagement of people with first-hand experience of the issues has significantly enhanced the quality of our decision-making and processes.

What are your plans for the remainder of the period funded:

All along the intention has been for SVRR to fund the complementary themes of advice and of voice/campaigning work, hence the plan to launch Phase 2 to support the latter. If all goes as planned the launch of Phase 2 of SVRR will be in early March 2020 with the deadline for applications around 1st May and final decisions on applications by late June 2020.

What will happen at the end of the grant?

Phase 1 will run until 31.03.22. The theory of Change of SVRR posits that sustained capacity building support would result in DDPOs being more capable to evidence their work's value and secure resources from other sources to sustain their activities. It is hoped that the final evaluation will document this. TFL intends to place particular attention to strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks early in 2020.

APPENDIX 1

List of funded organisations (December 2019)

Name of Organisation	SUM AWARDED AND PURPOSE
Action Disability Kensington & Chelsea (ADKC)	£111,750 over three years for a Disability Specialist Legal Advice Worker specialising in Welfare Benefits and general Advice with Casework in discrimination, accessible transport reviews and community care.
Disability Advice Service Lambeth (DASL)	£169,000 over three years to secure the future of DASL's Advice Service, covering salary/running costs of a Senior Advice Worker with hours increased to full-time, recruitment of 4 additional volunteer benefit advisers, and management costs to ensure service quality through maintenance of the AQS and contribution to policy work.
Enfield Disability Action	£180,000 over three years for an accessible advice and advocacy service for deaf and disabled people in Enfield. Delivering advice and advocacy on welfare rights, housing, health, social care and human rights issues. Learning from the work will be shared with DDPO's funders and service providers
Inclusion Barnet (IB)	£174,660 over three years to place a full-time Peer Welfare Advisor within IB's Touchpoint team, which is a new information navigation service, to provide a full-time accessible welfare and money advice, including case work and financial capability work
Merton Centre For Independent Living	£180,000 over three years towards two trainee posts to increase capacity in Welfare Benefits and Community Care casework. In particular, support with the transfer from DLA to PIP, and new PIP applications; and support with Community Care needs assessments, reassessments and especially charging issues.
Richmond Users Independent Living (RUILS),	£142,000 over three years for an information, advice and advocacy service for disabled people in Richmond. This person-centred service will provide active casework and advice for individuals navigating the complex health and social care systems and will provide specialist support and advocacy with housing issues and welfare benefit appeals.
Stay Safe East (SSE)	£119,700 over three years to employ a Benefits and Entitlements Adviser to: (a) support Deaf and disabled survivors of abuse to access welfare benefits and other entitlements; (b) provide budgeting support where needed; (c) produce guidance on income needs of disabled survivors; (d) identify issues for disabled survivors in relation to benefits and poverty; (e) work for change.

APPENDIX 1A SVRR Capacity building support from Inclusion London: April to December 2019.

What we have done

- We carried out in-depth advice service audits with the 7 SVRR DDPOs that enabled us to get a detailed picture of the training and support needs of each advice service.
- We reviewed audit findings and decided to offer a quarterly programme of training and support to SVRR DDPOs to meet the needs identified through the audits.
- We launched our first quarterly training and support programme in July 2019 and followed that with a second programme of training and support in October. Over the combined 6-month period July to December we set up, commissioned from CPAG and AdviceUK, and ran 4 training courses on: “Effective Supervision for Managers and Supervisors” (2-day course); “Effective Case Recording”; “Universal Credit for Disabled People” and “Challenging PIP decisions”. These courses were attended by 36 reps from DDPOs. We received 100% positive feedback from participants who completed the evaluation forms: 78 % participants who filled out the training evaluation forms said they strongly agreed (and 22 % agreed) that the courses helped them to “Gain knowledge they can use in their work; were able to share and discuss ideas that are useful for their work and felt more confident about addressing this subject at work”
- We ran 2 advice peer network meetings in August and October attended by 11 DDPO advice workers. Our peer network meetings aim to be a place where DDPO advice workers can meet together to find out and share information and get support.
- We wrote and delivered 2 bespoke ‘briefings’ at the peer network meetings on rights and duties in relation to ‘Housing Disrepair’ and “How to complain”.
- We are finalising an advice resources guide which will give up to date links and signposting information to the advice sectors best advice resources and guides.
- We have been running an advice line for DDPO advice workers from 6 August
- We have developed a bespoke Monitoring and evaluation framework and have liaised with the SVRR evaluation consultants.
- We have developed a social policy reporting protocol which helps DDPOs identify evidence through their casework that they can then use in campaigns.

Key learning so far

- Feedback from DDPO workers on the training and the peer network meetings has been very positive with 100% of attendees finding our support useful.
- We have had lower attendance at the training than desired. We believe this is primarily due to the difficulties that part-time, and sometimes solo, advice staff, working under heavy workloads, have in allocating time out from service delivery to attend the training and peer network meetings. This has been compounded by wider issues of under-resourcing of the DDPO sector which means there is often not a strong culture of attending training or prioritising staff development/support because these resources are rarely open or available to DDPO staff. We are working closely with DDPO staff to ensure we put on the training courses that best meet their needs and build strong working relationships with each organisation; attendance numbers have been increasing as a result.
- Getting the right staff on the right training is crucial in ensuring the training is effective. This involves a lot of co-ordination including: understanding the different training needs of advice staff, clarifying from training providers who the training is best pitched at, communicating this to the DDPOs and working with them to ensure the appropriate staff attend. Again, this will get easier as we develop our understanding about the training needs of individual advice workers within the DDPOs

- We have had low take up of the advice line support despite lots of positive comments on the need for this service. We will be producing targeted publicity for DDPOs about the helpline and we will be offering in-situ support from our Director of Campaigns and Justice who will be visiting each DDPO to go through our offer and resources available, discuss casework issues and the best ways we can provide casework support going forward.

Plans

- We will continue with a quarterly programme of support for rest of year one and review in April 2020
- We are consulting closely with SVRR DDPOs on emerging training needs and the training and support programme for Jan to March 2020 reflects a broader range of training topics including: What does getting an Advice Quality Standard (AQS) involve; Improving Communication with People with Mental Health Issues; Representing at the First Tier Tribunal; The Care Act and Homelessness. We will also be producing briefings on 'How to use data protection laws to collect evidence' and 'How to make complaints related to social care'.
- From January 2020, all targeted DDPOs will be members of AdviceUK and have access to AdviceUK's resources.

In summary we believe we are building a strong programme of needs-led capacity building support that is bespoke, valued, flexible and dynamic and that is creating space and opportunities for DDPOs and their staff to come together to share information, knowledge and support.

Inclusion London Dec 2019