

MEETING 26/03/2020

Ref: 15599

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions****Aurora Foundation for People Abused in Childhood****Adv: Gilly Green****Base: Kingston****Amount requested: £159,200****Benefit: London-wide****Amount recommended: £28,400****The Applicant**

The Aurora Foundation for People Abused in Childhood (Aurora) is a small registered charity based in Kingston, South West London is a counselling centre and part therapeutic community which aims to improve the mental wellbeing of adult women and men who have experienced abuse in childhood. Its main activities include long term counselling and group activities to address the emotional and psychological problems experienced by victims of childhood abuse.

**The Application**

The problems faced by victims of child abuse can be profound and long lasting, affecting mental and physical health and can result in post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, self-harm and substance misuse. Given the nature of the abuse and the trauma that surrounds it, and the fact that many survivors do not come forward due to stigma and shame, accurate prevalence figures are difficult to obtain. However, a recent crime survey (2018) for England and Wales indicates that 1 in 4 adults were abused in some way as a child. Services for adult survivors can be hard to access and most clients find Aurora through an online search though a small proportion are signposted by other health providers such as GPs or NHS psychological services. Statutory services can rarely provide long term counselling. Most clients contribute financially towards their counselling, but this excludes those on low incomes. Aurora is the only service in South West London which offers long term counselling to this user group and evaluation of the service through evidence-based tools shows consistently good outcomes. Aurora is requesting funding over five years to subsidise the cost of long term, person-centred counselling for those unable to pay for the service. This will allow weekly counselling, delivered by specialist counsellors and group work where appropriate to be offered to a broader range of clients. The request includes counsellor and group facilitator costs, clinical supervision and management and premises charges.

**The Recommendation**

With limited resources Aurora has focused on ensuring a high-quality counselling service is available but unfortunately it has not been able to give priority to organisational stability. Despite generating around 30% of its income through fees and a further 20% through donations, its financial position remains fragile due to the level of grant funding currently confirmed for 2021. It is also insufficiently linked into local statutory services. Meeting Aurora's request to subsidise its counselling service over 5 years may not be the best way to achieve greater stability but a grant to fund the counselling short term together with support for organisational development would be very useful. Your officer therefore recommends covering the costs of psychotherapy for low income clients for one year, together with funding to support the development of a funding strategy and help to position the organisation more effectively within the health system. Depending on progress, the organisation could

subsequently be encouraged to return for follow on funding after the first year subject to the conditions below. A grant is recommended as follows:

***£28,400 made up of £18,400 over one year towards therapists' fees, clinical supervision, premises and management costs and £10,000 to develop a robust fundraising plan and develop better links with local statutory providers.***

## Funding History

None

## Background and detail of proposal

Despite the current challenges around access, the charity works with a diverse range of people and last year 42% of clients were from black and minority ethnic communities. Approximately 80% of clients are women. Monitoring reports against its three-year grant from MOPAC show positive changes for individuals in wellbeing and improved functioning. As well as one to one support Aurora also enables people to meet and connect to other survivors before and after therapy. It also organises social gatherings and outings, recognising that many survivors can experience isolation and loneliness, given their reluctance to disclose their experience even to close family and friends.

## Financial Information

Aurora generates approximately half its income from client fees and donations, and these have been at a consistent level for the last few years. Its last set of signed accounts (2019) showed low levels of unrestricted reserves but the position has improved considerably. The percentage of income confirmed for 2021 does not include client fees as these are not contractual but given the organisation has a waiting list, these are reasonably secure. The deficit on the restricted funds for 2021 will be covered by the unrestricted surplus. The calculation for the level of free unrestricted reserves for 2021 is based on total expenditure as Trustees are currently reviewing the reserves policy to clarify what level of funds should be held for what purpose. This is felt to present a more prudent approach and guards against a worst-case scenario. Applications to several charitable trusts are in the pipeline to fill the current funding gaps and with external support a more strategic approach to fundraising and partnership working will increase chance of the organisation becoming more sustainable in the future.

Year end as at 31 MARCH	2019	2020	2021
	Signed Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	85,407	105,386	100,576
- % of Income confirmed as at 12/02/20	N/A	90%	26%
Expenditure	(89,384)	(86,210)	(90,450)
Total surplus/(deficit)	<b>(3,977)</b>	<b>19,176</b>	<b>10,126</b>
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	320	0	(9,874)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(4,297)	19,176	20,000
	<b>(3,977)</b>	<b>19,176</b>	<b>10,126</b>
Operating Expenditure (unrestricted)	54,804	38,310	90,450
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	4,421	23,597	43,597
No of months of operating expenditure	1.0	7.4	5.8
Reserves policy target	13,701	9,577	22,612
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(9,280)	14,020	20,985