

MEETING 26/03/2020

Ref: 15641

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions**Chinese Mental Health Association****Adv: Natalie Jordan****Base: Barnet****Amount requested: £260,864****Benefit: London-wide****Amount recommended: £260,900****The Applicant**

The Chinese Mental Health Association (CMHA) was founded in 1993 and registered as a charity in 1996. Its aims varied over its early years covering local services in East London and national campaigning; it now has a local wellbeing support focus. CHMA settled in Barnet in 2016, home to the UK's largest Chinese population and accessible to the north "sub-region" of London that includes a third of London's 150,000-strong Chinese population. It now reaches 4,000 Londoners a year and is the only mental health service in London catering to Chinese communities, aiming to destigmatise mental health problems and provide culturally sensitive mental health services. It receives statutory funding to operate part of Barnet IAPT Service and the Barnet Wellbeing Hub and is at Level B on Barnet's Quality Assurance Framework.

The Application

CMHA seeks funding over five years for the three strands of its established Chinese Wellbeing Service:

- Volunteer Befriending by trained volunteers either at home or over the phone, supporting vulnerable, elderly, isolated and house-bound people with mental health issues;
- the Recovery Club, a weekly meet-up where attendees can access peer support and social activities for those with mental health illnesses, and;
- the Prevention Club, a weekly group focussing on wellbeing activities to prevent mental health worsening and includes those without a diagnosis.

The Recommendation

CMHA has made significant in-roads in destigmatising mental health issues in the local Chinese community, working through reluctance from individuals to associate with the charity to establish itself as a trusted organisation. However, there remain traditional and ongoing cultural barriers, particularly amongst older people, which necessitate a specific service. This can include stigma towards mental health issues and an emphasis on dealing with personal problems privately. CMHA balances Western and Traditional Chinese Medicine approaches to bridge connections between the two, involving experts from both fields.

The well-attended Prevention Club is a key strand in addressing these barriers, with an emphasis on wellbeing and social activities bringing in those who would otherwise not seek mental health support before problems worsen. This embodies your principle of Early Action, making support accessible early on, from which individuals can be supported navigating available services. There is natural flow between this and the Recovery Club as attendees come to terms with or improve their mental health issues and mental health is further destigmatised.

Through CHMA's culturally specific, holistic and accessible approach, older people and those from migrant backgrounds with mental health issues can connect in with community activity and are supported in connections onwards to other mainstream services through established connections with relevant organisations. The application was submitted under your migrant and refugees priority, but it notably cross-cuts a number of priorities under Positive Transitions: just under half of beneficiaries of the Wellbeing Service are over 65; and all fall under your definition of disability due to diagnoses of complex mental health illnesses. As such, funding is recommended:

£260,900 over 5 years (£50,700; £51,600; £52,600; £52,500; £53,500) for a Co-ordinator (0.8FTE), Support Worker (0.2FTE), volunteer expenses and running costs for the Chinese Wellbeing Service.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
31/05/2012	£120,000 over three years (3 x £40,000) towards the salary and related costs of the Chief Executive post.

Background and detail of proposal

An independent evaluation (2019) found that the Wellbeing Service offers a warm and safe environment, with 100% of beneficiaries reporting improvements in psychological wellbeing and healthier lifestyles, and 95% improved physical health. The most common issues faced by those supported through the befriending service are depression, social isolation and psychosis or schizophrenia; in the social clubs, common issues are depression and social isolation. Many service users have related physical health problems; 38% reported loneliness; many commented on nervousness accessing support as a result of anticipated stigma.

This application represents a scaling down of previous work, equivalent to approximately half of the now concluded annual funding from the National Lottery Community Fund. Costs are reduced as a result of the project's development during this time, such as: reduced costs in venue hire since the charity took over the Meritage Centre; many of activities gradually converting to self-funded or changed to more sustainable activities; and establishment of a core base of dedicated volunteers able to run projects with minimal support requirements. In addition, some targets are scaled back, and CMHA will continue to fundraise and explore opportunities to deliver other wellbeing activities at the Meritage Centre.

Financial Information

Approximately 75% of CMHA's income is from statutory sources relating to contracts with Barnet Council. CMHA is seeking to diversify income and generate more from charitable funding. The longer term vision is to generate more income through the Meritage Centre with an onsite café and fee-based services.

The table shows that reserves held at year end are below policy target level. However, this level is above three months' equivalent expenditure which the board have agreed is a suitable minimum. The longer-term aspiration is to achieve an equivalent of six months' expenditure in reserves, within the next five years.

Year end as at 31st March	2019	2020	2021
	Signed Accounts	Budget	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	400,665	338,654	558,114
- % of Income confirmed as at 28/11/2019	N/A	100%	67%
Expenditure	(392,410)	(332,654)	(518,615)
Total surplus/(deficit)	8,255	6,000	39,499
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(10,264)	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	18,519	6,000	39,500
	8,255	6,000	39,500
Total expenditure	392,410	332,654	518,615
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	120,574	126,574	166,074
No of months of operating expenditure	3.7	4.6	3.8
Reserves policy target	196,205	166,327	259,308
No of months of operating expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(75,631)	(39,753)	(93,234)