

MEETING: 08/07/2020

Ref: 15679

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Positive Transitions - Choice and Control**Advocacy Now****Adv: Rachel Billett****Base: Greenwich****Amount requested: £384,255.00****Benefit: Greenwich****Amount recommended: £250,000****The Applicant**

Advocacy Now (formerly Advocacy for Older People in Greenwich) is a registered charity that provides advocacy support for vulnerable, mainly older and disabled people in Greenwich. In the last year, its advocates worked with 450 clients (and their families/carers) of whom 178 secured their rights to disability and other benefits, 72 avoided homelessness and 162 frail elderly people spoke up about decisions regarding their care. It has two full-time and three part-time staff, with 20 volunteers.

The Application

Advocacy Now is requesting funding towards a post of Volunteer Co-ordinator to expand its volunteer pool to 30, train and manage its volunteers. It will also support other local organisations in their advocacy. It previously funded this role until 2019 but now lacks capacity to recruit and support volunteers whilst meeting demand.

The Recommendation

Advocacy Now has considerable expertise and experience in advocacy for very vulnerable and isolated people, often with complex needs. It has good outcomes and a high satisfaction rate of 98% and has a strong community ethos (two previous clients are now on its Board). Its volunteer advocates are vital to its success (during its last grant to fund a Volunteer Manager, 48 volunteers provided over 1000 days support for 384 clients. Advocacy Now has excellent processes in place to recruit, vet and manage the "right people" for these challenging roles. It has worked with the City Lit to develop and run a training programme for advocates and has a strong commitment to the wellbeing and support of its volunteers. It lacks capacity to do this without a dedicated post. The original request was for a full-time post and relatively high other management, volunteer and IT costs. In discussion with the applicant, it agreed that it would recruit a part-time post (hours to be decided) or secure other funding. Both options are realistic (the group has good reserves and unrestricted income). A long term (5 year) commitment to the post would give stability as the organisation is expanding its reach and experiencing increased demand. Funding is advised as follows;

£250,000 over five years (5 x £50,000) towards the salary of a Volunteer Co-ordinator and associated costs including volunteer expenses.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
09/07/2015	Organisation withdrew the application.
16/02/2012	£29,000 for a third year's support for a dementia advocacy project subject.

Background and detail of proposal

Demand for Advocacy Now's services has increased by an average of 30% a year for the last four years, and it expects further yet gradual growth, partly as a result of expanding its remit, cuts and changes to local services and moving its base from Eltham to Woolwich in 2019 (where it is becoming better known). Its outreach approach works well and has a track record in reaching individuals and communities who are isolated, such as the Nepalese community, and living with complex problems. Many have mental and physical health needs, some are housebound or non-verbal and are very vulnerable; 54 of its clients in the last year involved adult safeguarding. This exacerbates the need for strong support and management for its volunteers. It has a strong systematic approach that ensures safeguarding of volunteers and clients is a high priority (its safeguarding training and practice is particularly embedded), but it also works hard to ensure the volunteers have the right approach. Recruitment and support currently falls to the Chief Executive and deputy but this is not sustainable or effective; volunteer numbers have dropped from 40 (at the time of a Volunteer Co-ordinator) to under 20.

Financial Information

The organisation has secured full funding for the current year. Its reserves target of £20,000 is considered by officers to be on the low side. Given that the majority of its income is restricted funding, its reserves held and forecast, being just over 4 months of total expenditure, are deemed to be appropriate. Its main funding (Big Lottery Fund for £62,000 a year) is in place until 2023, and it also has committed funding from two local trusts (total £30,000) each year. Although unconfirmed, it expects to secure ongoing funding from LB Greenwich and new funding from Greenwich Community Trust. It has trusts and statutory fundraising plan that will help to meet its modest expansion plans.

Since the Covid-19 crisis, two of its long-term funders have agreed to unrestrict the grants it currently holds and in addition, it has received funding of £25,000 from the National Lottery Community Fund to enable it to meet emergency needs of its clients. These factors mean that in the short to medium term, the organisation feels itself to be in a relatively stable financial position. On the other hand, work it might have undertaken to advocate on behalf of older residents in care homes can no longer take place. However, this service would be purchased by local authorities by way of spot purchasing (as opposed to a lock contract) and so will not have a detrimental effect on income.

Year end as at March 31st	2019	2020	2021
	Signed Accounts £	Forecast £	Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	159,085	170,000	228,500
- % of Income confirmed as at 28/02/20	N/A	100%	42%
Expenditure	(166,214)	(161,907)	(219,700)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(7,129)	8,093	8,800
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	N/A	0	(9,000)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(7,129)	8,093	17,800
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Total Expenditure	166,214	161,907	219,700
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	52,363	60,456	78,256
No of months of operating expenditure	3.8	4.5	4.3
Reserves policy target	20,000	20,000	20,000
No of months of operating expenditure	1.4	1.5	1.1
Free reserves over/(under) target	32,363	40,456	58,256