

MEETING: 13/05/2015

Ref: 12677

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health

Roma Support Group

Adv: Sandra Jones

Base: Newham

Amount requested: £126,872

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £122,900

The Charity

Roma Support Group (RSG) was set up in 1998 to improve the quality of life for Roma refugees and migrants living in London, chiefly through supporting them to adapt and successfully integrate into UK society. A further aim is to raise awareness about the Roma culture and history amongst the general public including, in particular, people working in the public sector who provide services to this community. The Roma community is one of the most socially excluded groups in London and, as a people, they have had a history of persecution across Europe. During 2013/14 the charity supported 2,218 Roma refugees and migrants most of whom are based in East London, although there are other groupings in West London and Croydon.

The Application

Your funding is sought to provide a culturally sensitive mental health advocacy service for Roma refugees and migrants in London over a three year period. This will include one-to-one advocacy, peer support sessions as well as increasing the understanding about Roma patients' experiences, needs, barriers and culture amongst mental health professionals.

The Recommendation

This proposal builds on a mental health advocacy project, funded by the Kings Fund, which identified the need to improve communication strategies between mental health professionals and the Roma service users by empowering the users through advocacy and peer support; as well as educating the mental health professionals on the needs of the Roma community. This will be achieved by employing a part time (21 hours) project co-ordinator; 2 bi-lingual mental health advocates (7 hpw each); and associated running costs. The recommendation is less than the amount requested as the proposal included costs for evaluating the project on an annual basis. Whilst an annual evaluation is not justifiable, having an overall evaluation at the end of the project is reasonable and has been included in the recommendation.

£122,900 over three years (£41,000; £39,300; £42,600) for the costs of a Project Co-ordinator (21 hpw); 2 p/t mental health advocates (7hpw each); and related running costs for a mental health advocacy service.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
10/07/2007	£78,000 over three years (£26,000; £27,000;£25,000) for the salary of a part-time (18hrs) Advice Worker and running costs for a project providing advice and information to excluded Roma people aged 60+.

Background and detail of proposal

RSG's mental health advocacy project, funded by the King's Fund and working with 100 beneficiaries, demonstrated the need for this service amongst the Roma community. The barriers to accessing mental health services identified by the project were: lack of trust in mental health professionals; lack of knowledge of the existing services and where to seek help; communication, language and literacy barriers; inability to use systems to arrange and rearrange medical appointments; social exclusion and isolation; and the stigma of mental health issues within the Roma community. The project also provided evidence that there is a lack of awareness of the Roma culture and needs amongst mental health professionals and that improving two-way communication led to greater effectiveness of treatment and progress to recovery.

Building on this, the project will provide one-to-one advocacy sessions for 180 individual beneficiaries over three years, to improve their access to mental health services. Group peer-support sessions will be delivered on a monthly basis for 75 beneficiaries, enabling them to share information and experiences which will enhance their self-esteem, confidence, and problem-solving skills. Easy-read information leaflets will be produced, explaining mental health issues and the mental health system; as well as leaflets on the Roma Community for mental health professionals. Six training workshops will be run for 90 mental health professionals during the life of the project.

Financial Information

RSG accounting year runs from 1st February – 31 January, and for the year end 31 January 2014 the outturn will show a deficit of £10,300, on top of a £65,547 deficit for 2013/14. This was a planned deficit of the charity as they made a policy decision to reduce their unrestricted funds to a level identified in their reserves policy of 3- 6 months turnover by the end of their current financial year. The reserves were used to continue to fund various positions where the funding agreements had come to an end. Obviously this is not sustainable and so the RSG are seeking alternative funding for these posts. The cost of generating funds is calculated by the charity when preparing its year-end accounts.

Year end at 31 January	2013/14 Audited Accounts	2014/15 Outturn	2015/16 Current Year Budget
	£	£	£
Income and Expenditure			
Income	182,789	268,800	280,317
Expenditure	248,336	279,100	313,923
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(13,554)	16,000	(33,917)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(51,993)	(23,600)	311
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(65,547)	(10,300)	(33,606)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(35.9%)	(3.8%)	(12.0%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	17,452 (9.5%)	-	-
Free unrestricted reserves			
Free unrestricted reserves held at Year End	152,112	168,112	134,195
How many months' worth of expenditure	7.4	7.2	5.1
Reserves Policy target	62,084 – 124,170	69,775 – 139,550	78,481 – 156,962
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.0 – 6.0	3.0 – 6.0	3.0 – 6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	90,028 – 27,942	98,337 – 28,562	55,714 – (22,767)