

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Muscular Dystrophy Group of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Adv: Ciaran Rafferty

Amount requested: £110,047

{Revised request: £112,861}

Amount recommended: £113,000

Base: Southwark

Benefit: London-wide

The Charity

Muscular Dystrophy UK (MDUK) was established in 1959 to improve the lives of people affected by muscle disease. Muscular dystrophy is an umbrella term for over sixty relatively rare and progressive muscle-wasting conditions for which there is currently no cure. Although the effects and related symptoms caused by muscle disease vary, the common trait is that those affected will be physically disabled and often reliant on others for their personal care. The charity's work is aimed at both improving the lives of people currently affected by muscle wasting conditions and at investing in research to establish cures and treatments for the future.

The Application

This application is for continuation of the Trailblazers project which has been funded for the past two years and which provides work experience and holistic support to disabled people to help them develop the soft and hard skills needed to increase their chances of accessing employment or further education.

The Recommendation

This project meets your criteria for funding of up to 5 years as it is pan-London, strategically important and unique. (In most cases an organisation will have had three-years' initial funding and then apply for another two but it makes more sense to consider the full three year balance at this stage.) The annual sums applied for are greater than those previously awarded. This is because the work ahead will build significantly on the success of the project so far; delivering better outcomes to more people. The project, should you agree funding, will form a cornerstone of one of your themes for your 20th Anniversary – ie supporting young disabled people into employment or education – and, as such, warrants the additional support requested. A slight adjustment (to include a component omitted in the original request) has been incorporated in the recommendation:

£113,000 over three years (£41,500; £34,500; £37,000) towards the salary costs of a Project Lead Officer and running costs for delivering the Trailblazers work-experience project for Londoners.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
18/04/2013	£42,500 over two years (£21,000; £21,500) towards the salary and project costs of a work-experience programme for young disabled Londoners.
09/09/2010	£40,000 for a third and final year's support for the salary and associated running costs of an Information & Support Co-ordinator.
01/05/2008	£90,000 over two years (2 x £45,000) for the salary of a Volunteer Co-ordinator and running costs to develop an Expert Patient Network.

Background and detail of proposal

The Trailblazers programme within MDUK targets young disabled people nationally (currently 600+ in number) to work together both on national and local issues which are important to them. To date, their principal focus has been on gaining access to education and employment. At your meeting in May 2015 you heard from James Lee, Trailblazers Campaigns Officer, who spoke of the barriers to employment and of the good work done so far with the current CBT grant to support access to employment - particularly through providing supported work experience opportunities.

In 2012, 46% of young disabled people of working age were in full-time employment, compared to 76% of non-disabled people (Labour Force Survey 20120 – whilst getting into work is becoming harder for young people in general, as a university degree or other high level of study does not guarantee employment. Work experience, internships and apprenticeships are becoming increasingly important for young people to get on the work ladder but these are very difficult to achieve when living with a disability. The Access to Work scheme (which allows employers to apply for grants to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate a disabled employee) is available only when that person is fully employed and does not cover the costs of offering short-term placements such as work experience or internships.

Furthermore, misconceptions around the skills and capabilities of disabled people still exist among employers – or at least that is the perception amongst MDUK's Trailblazers, amongst whom 85% of those surveyed had looked for work experience but over half of these had experienced barriers when doing so. A vicious circle is being created – young disabled people are unable to demonstrate their potential to employers; misconceptions and anxieties about disabled employees become more entrenched; so opportunities to prove their ability become even more elusive.

In the project funded to date, MDUK offered supportive work experience placements within its own organisation and was able to achieve some excellent outcomes, with all those having completed their course moving on to further education, employment, or further work-based training. Nonetheless the charity has professionally reviewed and analysed that work in order to shape the proposal for the next three years, with the following elements being integral:

- Continuation of work experience placements at MDUK headquarters
- Increase the number of direct beneficiaries
- Focus on the project being led by disabled young people
- Continuation of mentoring, employability workshops and bespoke support
- Stronger focus on engaging corporate and other external organisations to host placements
- Establish stronger networks to increase opportunities for young disabled people
- Work more closely with London's universities and their student bodies as potential hosts for placements
- Aim to offer either apprenticeship or internship opportunities after the initial work experience placement
- Offer to cover key equipment and/or travel costs for hosting a placement
- Develop a sustainable legacy – including a toolkit for employers

This proposal, therefore, builds significantly on all that has been achieved in the two years to date and has enormous potential to assist and the Trust in its 20th Anniversary theme to support disabled young people into work. The costs identified include some provision to support the offer of apprenticeships and/or internships – as a way of further increasing the likelihood of young Londoners gaining sustained employment.

Financial Information

MDUK advised that the large surplus shown in the accounts to 31st March 2014 was partly due to the receipt of £2.176m in legacies, much of it in the last quarter. This occurred, again, at the end of the 2014/15 financial year, albeit to a lesser degree. The legacies have been earmarked as designated funds to be spent on research and strategic development work. As a result of this, MDUK plans to recruit a Head of Clinical Development in the current year who will oversee these new programmes. The charity forecasts that at 31st March 2016 designated funds will stand at £1.9m. Excluding designated funds the organisation also forecasts it will hold £1.6m at 31st March 2016 in general reserves, which is sufficient to meet the charity's reserve policy.

MDUK advised that it typically spends c.30% of its income on generating funds. Such costs include: events and promotions; direct marketing; apportionment to core; recruitment and support of volunteer fundraisers; and work in managing legacy income. Less than 10% of income comes from statutory sources.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Audited Accounts	2014/15 Draft Outturn	2015/16 Current Year Forecast
	£	£	£
Income and Expenditure			
Income	6,660,000	6,398,000	5,510,000
Expenditure	4,937,000	5,358,000	6,154,000
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	1,645,000	1,137,000	(321,000)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	240,000	(97,000)	(323,000)
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	1,885,000	1,040,000	(644,000)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	28.3%	16.3%	(11.7%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	1,988,000 (29.8%)	1,880,000 (29.4%)	1,884,000 (34.2%)
Unrestricted general reserves			
Unrestricted general reserves held at Year End	1,480,000	1,664,000	1,593,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.6	3.7	3.1
Reserves Policy target	1,500,000	1,500,000	1,500,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.6	3.4	2.9
Free reserves over/(under) target	(20,000)	164,000	93,000