

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive**Ability Bow****Adv: Olivia Dix****Base: Tower Hamlets****Benefit: Tower Hamlets****Amount requested: £96,983****(Revised request: £98,900)****Amount recommended: £98,900****The Charity**

Ability Bow was set up in 2006 to enable people with disabilities and long-term health conditions to get stronger, increase confidence and become more independent, through exercise. It started out supporting 20 people – since then it has steadily expanded over the 10 years and now supports over 500 disabled people in their community gym. There is only one other gym in London that is specifically for people with physical disabilities and mental health problems.

People in London experience some of the poorest health, with high sickness and disability rates and particularly high premature death rates for stroke and heart disease. There are also higher than average rates of anxiety, depression and severe mental illness.

The Application

Ability Bow is requesting funding to run the Positive Steps exercise class programme and a community outreach programme focused on mental health.

The Recommendation

This is a well-led organisation, occupying an important niche locally. Its specialised programmes, equipment and tailored support is not available in regular gyms. It is clearly valued by users and local organisations. The amount originally requested was increased following the assessment visit to allow for an uplift in salaries.

£98,900 over 3 years (£32,300, £32,800; £33,800) for a Positive Steps Development Instructor (14 h/p/w), sessional workers and the associated costs of the Positive Steps project.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
17/02/2011	£86,700 over three years (£27,500; £27,600; £31,600) for a Development Instructor (21 hours per week) and other costs of a project, providing regular, supervised and affordable exercise sessions for people with disabilities and chronic health conditions in Tower Hamlets and Hackney

Background and detail of proposal

Mental Health is the single biggest category of referrals the organisation receives. People come to Ability Bow with mental ill health issues that are either a direct problem, the effect of medication or adjustment to a new disability. The CEO is confident in the organisation's ability to work with people with a range of mental ill-health issues. It has good links locally with the Clinical Commissioning Group, having been commissioned to to run a pilot project for people with long-term physical

conditions, mental illness and learning disability, who were 'chronically disengaged' from NHS services and work with the local MIND as well as the Bow Haven, a user-led mental health organisation.

From its experience Ability Bow has recognised the need to address the particular issues faced by people with mental health problems. There is considerable evidence on the positive effects of exercise on mood and feeling of wellbeing. In addition Ability Bow will assist participants in taking more control of their lives and becoming more independent through peer and social support, increased self management knowledge and skills and increased levels of community engagement by running social activities, volunteering at Ability Bow and becoming mental health champions. They use a robust evaluation tool, the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale and Patient Activation Measure. In addition to discussions with staff, your Grant Officer had one to one conversations with three users who had experienced mental ill health as well as physical disability and all of whom saw Ability Bow as an organisation which had significantly assisted them beyond the exercise classes.

Financial Information

An issue in building reserves for Ability Bow, as a small charity, has been the amount of funding via contracts where all funding is for service delivery. Trustees are aware of the need to build the level of free reserves and there is a plan to diversify funding in coming years to achieve this. In the 2015/16 accounts unrestricted free reserves were given as £29,478, but this included fixed assets of £14,543. It has been suggested to Ability Bow that it designates an equivalent amount for a Fixed Asset Fund. Fundraising costs are low 16/17 and 17/18 as a fundraiser is now employed as necessary on just an ad-hoc basis. The 2017/18 forecast is at draft stage, with the split between restricted and unrestricted expenditure yet to be finalised, hence the disparity in the figures below. However your Grant Officer is confident of the reserves position.

Year end as at 31st March	2016 Examined Accounts £	2017 Forecast £	2018 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	310,602	272,100	303,868
- % of Income confirmed	n/a	n/a	77%
Expenditure	(306,731)	(248,235)	(238,280)
Total surplus/(deficit)	3,871	23,865	65,588
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(5,651)	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	9,522	23,865	65,588
	3,871	23,865	65,588
Cost of Raising Funds	18,366	2,875	3,000
- % of income	5.9%	1.1%	1.0%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	178,693	120,135	65,780
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	29,478	53,343	118,931
No of months of operating expenditure	2.0	5.3	21.7
Reserves policy target	44,673	30,033	59,570
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	10.9
Free reserves over/(under) target	(15,195)	23,310	59,361