

**MEETING: 20/03/2017**

**Ref: 13695**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Older Londoners**

**The Reader**

**Adv: Sandra Davidson**

**Amount requested: £98,267**

**Base: Croydon**

**Benefit: Croydon**

**Amount recommended: £87,900**

**The Charity**

The Reader is a national charity and social enterprise that promotes the benefits of reading and engaging in literature for everyone, regardless of their circumstances. The Reader's shared reading groups take place in a variety of settings including prisons, mental health centres, care homes and local communities. Its simple model of reading aloud in facilitated groups is proven to support positive mental health and wellbeing, combating isolation, calming aggression and helping people with dementia.

**The Application**

The Reader is seeking a three year grant towards the cost of establishing 15 reading groups in Croydon working with four partner organisations: Age UK Croydon, Contact the Elderly, RSVP, and The Croydon Churches Sheltered Housing Association to support those over 75+ at risk of isolation and depression. The grant will enable the organisation to develop its shared reading groups in Croydon and build on its work currently taking place across London.

**The Recommendation**

The Reader has developed a strong track record of delivering high quality, impactful, large scale projects, using reading to empower, engage and connect older people, including people with dementia and their carers. The costs of the overheads and training appear to be fairly high and therefore it is recommended that this are reduced. This has been discussed with the applicant who stated that the reduction will have relatively little impact on the delivery of the project.

**£87,900 over three years (£35,900; £27,800; £24,200) towards the cost of establishing Shared Reading groups in Croydon targeting isolated older people 75 plus.**

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
20/10/2011	The organisation has not made a sufficient case as to why a new full-time post is needed to train 40 volunteers per year when its current training programme, for which it charges, runs 3-day classes with 8-10 people per class.
08/07/2010	Application from a Liverpool-based organisation for work which does not specifically address your priorities.

**Background and detail of proposal**

Since 2008, the organisation has engaged over 5,000 people, from a range of backgrounds, to deliver Shared Reading groups themselves. There are now over 370 weekly groups across the UK with 82 groups running in London. Flagship projects include Big Lottery Merseyside with a reach of 800 socially isolated people through 1:1 reading in care homes; a London based project in partnership with Guy's and St Thomas' Trust training 200 individuals to become Reader Leaders. Research

by the University of Liverpool and professional testimony shows that Shared Reading is an effective non-medical intervention. This is supported by the organisations in-house evaluation which finds: 86% of readers with dementia report improved mood; 88% of older members report improved social interaction and 89% of volunteers report improved health and wellbeing. There is evidence that for older people and those living with dementia, reading has a positive impact on wellbeing and can help build new cognitive pathways in the brain. Research also shows that 8-10 % of people aged over 65 feel lonely and nearly two thirds (62%) of people with dementia live on their own are lonely.

In the Shared Reading model, all reading material is read aloud in the session itself, and open-ended discussion is encouraged by the project worker. Group members participate voluntarily as they wish and interact in relation to what is happening in the text itself (in terms of themes, description, language) and what may be happening within themselves as individuals. Small groups are run normally once per week lasting up to two hours with short stories or whole novels being read over a course of weeks or sometimes months, read aloud to ensure everyone, whatever their literacy level can engage with the text. The three year project aims to establish 15 reading groups reaching 243 members; run 965 sessions; train 24 volunteers and 2 local organisers. It is anticipated that over 4,800 group members will benefit. 1:1 sessions will be available to individuals where health and mobility issues present a barrier. It is expected that 70% of those involved will be over 75. The project will provide a supportive network that tackles social isolation and work closely with partners to provide those who are vulnerable opportunities to engage in shared reading.

### Financial Information

The Reader has a development strategy in place to achieve a more balanced and diversified income profile including charitable trusts, commissioned income, and corporate support. The organisation has also developed a more sustainable, cost efficient and cost effective community led delivery model in order to reduce reliance on larger funds.

Year end as at 31st March	2016 Audited Accounts £	2017 Latest Forecast £	2018 Forecast £
<b>Income &amp; expenditure</b>			
Income	3,678,504	2,962,845	2,929,122
- % of Income confirmed at 14 February 2017	n/a	n/a	39%
Expenditure	(3,410,994)	(3,067,107)	(2,926,768)
Total surplus/(deficit)	<b>267,510</b>	<b>(104,262)</b>	<b>2,354</b>
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	306,803	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(39,293)	(104,262)	2,354
	<b>267,510</b>	<b>(104,262)</b>	<b>2,354</b>
Cost of Raising Funds	256,239	547,336	511,431
- % of income	7.0%	18.5%	17.5%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	979,917	1,178,685	857,362
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	399,097	294,835	297,189
No of months of operating expenditure	4.9	3.0	4.2
Reserves policy target	225,000	225,000	225,000
No of months of operating expenditure	2.8	2.3	3.1
Free reserves over/(under) target	174,097	69,835	72,189