

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Strengthening London's Voluntary Sector****London Legal Support Trust****Adv: Sandra Jones****Base: City****Amount requested: £300,000****Benefit: London-wide****Amount recommended: £300,000****The Charity**

The London Legal Support Trust (LLST), established in 2003, works to assist voluntary sector legal advice agencies and law centres in London and the Home Counties by providing them with a range of support including grant funding. LLST is part of a network of seven Legal Support Trusts across Wales and England working with the Access to Justice Foundation to support pro bono and advice agencies. The charity has four core strands of work in support of free legal advice services in London which are raising funds to distribute as grants; working collaboratively with others to raise funds for the free legal advice sector; supporting the improved management and infrastructure of the sector through the Centres of Excellence programme; and helping reduce costs and save money through pro bono or discounted schemes.

**The Application**

Your Committee supported this proposal in March 2014 as a Strategic Initiative, awarding £150,000 per annum over three years towards core salary and other costs to support the provision of Centre of Excellence in Greater London. This request is to extend the programme for a further two years from September 2017 and, now that the work is embedded, can be more readily considered as part of your standard programmes, albeit at a higher level than usual due to the scale of the work.

**The Recommendation**

LLST is a specialist and unique organisation that provides expertise to build the capacity of voluntary sector legal advice agencies and is ideally placed to support organisations to become Centre of Excellence. Monitoring provided for the preceding years funded by this Committee indicate that this project has exceeded targets, with 21 agencies having achieved Centre of Excellence status and a further 52 in the process. Continued investment in the LLST's work will help strengthen and improve the legal advice sector, funded through Investing In Londoners and will help it better meet the increasing needs of Londoners.

***£300,000 over two years (2 x £150,000) towards core salary and other costs to support the provision of Centres of Excellence in Greater London.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
13/03/2014	£450,000 over three years (3 x £150,000) towards core salary and other costs to support the provision of Centres of Excellence in London.

**Background and detail of proposal**

Since 2013 LLST developed a strategy known as Centres of Excellence offering advice agencies support to attain Centre of Excellence status. The majority of the

grant funding distributed by LLST is directed towards those agencies having achieved Centre of Excellence status.

The LLST Centre of Excellence project provides funding and free management consultancy/ training to not for profit agencies delivering legal advice services. Those agencies applying will undergo a stringent 'MOT' undertaken by LLST and where an organisation might need to improve in order to attain Centre of Excellence status free consultancy/training support is provided.

LLST estimates that to turn an applicant organisation into a robust Centre of Excellence with improved for strength and sustainability costs an average of £20,000 - £25,000. Some of this comprises the cost of providing bespoke professional support needed and some is in the form of grant-aid to the organisation to free up their capacity to fully engage in the process and/or offset staff temporarily being taken away from front-line duties. The development process allows the organisation to plan and concentrate their efforts on improving both their services and their financial security for the future, which is often hindered by the current cycle of uncertainty and crisis management. The process also provides the opportunity for sharing best practice and developing a strategic focus across the sector in London.

### Financial Information

LLST accounts show all income is unrestricted, none of which is from statutory sources. The majority comes from fundraising events, with donations from a number of lawyer practices, and a grant from City Bridge Trust. The cost of raising funds in 2016 was high for the charity; this was due to the costs incurred to put on a music gala; this was a one-off. The charity has included the CBT grant as unrestricted in their accounts. Officers have discussed this with the charity and in future the CBT grant will be considered as restricted.

Year end as at 31 December	2016 Audited Accounts £	2017 Forecast £	2018 Forecast £
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	1,155,636	989,500	1,014,500
- % of Income confirmed as at 09/08/2017	n/a	85%	0
Expenditure	(1,162,647)	(977,177)	(989,399)
Total surplus/(deficit)	<b>(7,011)</b>	<b>12,323</b>	<b>25,101</b>
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	0	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(7,011)	12,323	25,101
	<b>(7,011)</b>	<b>12,323</b>	<b>25,101</b>
Cost of Raising Funds	266,174	197,900	202,900
- % of income	23.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Operating expenditure (non-grant expenditure)	322,319	332,177	351,599
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	252,412	264,735	289,836
No of months of operating expenditure	9.4	9.6	9.9
Reserves policy target	161,160	166,089	175,800
No of months of operating expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	91,253	98,647	114,037