

MEETING: 14/03/2018

Ref: 14332

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty

Community Links Trust Ltd

Adv: Kate Moralee

Base: Newham

Amount requested: £132,964

Benefit: Newham

(Revised request: £158,494)

Amount recommended: £158,500

The Applicant

Community Links' (CL) aim is to find new solutions to existing problems and to work with the local community to deliver those solutions. CL adopts an asset based approach, acts early to prevent problems from occurring or becoming entrenched and aims to provide access to all forms of opportunity to generate change with the local community. Core activities include work with young people, advice, community development, education, employment and training and health.

The Trust provided funding for a merger/partnership with Catch22 in 2017. Catch22 is now the parent organisation though Community Links remains independently constituted, independently registered with the Charity Commission and operates its own budget within the Catch22 Group structure. CL launched a new three-year strategy vision in 2017 "Ready for Everything Communities" a community of ambition, resilience and influence, where people support each other to thrive and achieve.

The Application

The Trust is asked to support a p/t Advice Worker (specialising in Housing Advice) and associated costs to strengthen the current advice offer and the mapping, testing and implementation of a new model of relational holistic advice.

The Recommendation

CL has worked in the borough of Newham for 40 years and is well established within the local community. CL has a track record of and reputation for delivering excellent quality advice services. It works in partnership with other local advice agencies including a multi sign-posting service across East London. The organisation has recently moved to a new building providing a visible presence in the local community, though this project aims to extend advice services to two outreach locations.

The model responds to the increasing complexity of cases encountered by current advice workers and aims to provide those who access these services with the tools and ability to find their own solutions in the future. The request is for the first three years of a five-year project for which funds must be secured for the final two years. Your officer requested a revised budget be submitted to accurately reflect the salary and hours required to attract the right expertise and experience to meet demand and to include an external evaluation to demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of this relational approach, providing evidence to secure funding for the final two years of the project and to influence policy and practice in this arena.

The application fits well with your Reducing Poverty priority and funding is recommended as follows:

£158,500 over 3 years (£51,900; £51,100; £55,500) for 0.8fte equivalent Specialist Adviser post; community engagement and evaluation costs as well as a contribution to organisational overheads.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
20/03/2017	£50,000 towards fees related to the merger/ partnership with a second party
24/11/2016	Stepping Stones: £50,000 over 12 months to cover the costs of a Capital Development Manager to prepare the business case for a capital appeal as well as the structure of any social investment fundraising.
03/10/2013	£76,000 over two years (2 x £38,000) for the costs of a part-time (3dpw) Community Development Worker, associated ESOL programme costs and a contribution to core costs at 15%.

Background and detail of proposal

The level of demand for benefit and housing advice in Newham far outstrips the provision. The local CAB has experienced excessive demand for services with having to turn people away from the service. CL offers one off 25-minute advice sessions, with the opportunity to refer limited numbers to case workers. Its form filling service has six volunteers is currently open from 8am to 5:30pm and is busy throughout that time. CL has petitioned for a separate entrance to the building to extend hours as demand is so great. The service is seeing more and more complicated cases and has at times had to represent people at appeals. A legal advice service is offered one evening per week and people start to queue at 3pm though the service does not start until 6:30pm.

Newham has the worst private rented sector in London in terms of quality and eviction rates. Newham has seen a rise in evictions and resulting homelessness with an 85% increase in rough sleeping from 2016 to 2017 (rising from 16 in 2014 to 76 in 2017). With the roll out of Universal Credit in 2018 it is feared that this situation will get worse. CL is already seeing a rise in the level of poverty and hunger and is in the process of opening a Foodbank. In addition to this Newham is undergoing significant regeneration which is changing the demographic and creating community churn, fragmentation and isolation.

CL has developed a model of advice giving which is embedded in the local community, recognising strengths and giving people the tools to develop their own solutions. It aims to provide a relational service rather than a one-off crisis transactional model. The priority is to ensure that current demand can be met, and all aspects of advice needs are met, increasing provision at its hub and providing two outreach services for parts of the borough where there are no advice services currently. At the same time CL will train and connect different parts of the community to explore how they can support each other, share learning from practice using this to influence policy and pioneer a digital approach, exploring the use of technology to improve delivery.

Financial Information

As Catch22 are the responsible legal entity for any grant awarded by CBT your officer has analysed and presented the financial information for Catch22. CL operates an independent budget within the Catch22 Group. Whilst Catch22 predicts growth in 2018 your officer is confident that this growth can be adequately managed within the current financial systems and procedures. It has a strong and robust Reserves Policy developed in April 2017 which provides for unforeseen emergencies or unexpected needs.

Year end as at 31st August	FY 16 Audited Accounts £	FY 17 Draft £	FY 18 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	46,818,000	48,388,341	57,118,972
- % of Income confirmed @5.1.18	n/a	n/a	92%
Expenditure	(48,715,000)	(49,127,362)	(56,549,537)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(1,897,000)	(739,021)	569,435
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(2,107,000)	(24,921)	649,019
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	210,000	(714,100)	(79,585)
	(1,897,000)	(739,021)	569,434
Cost of Raising Funds	0	80,000	80,000
- % of Income	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	36,006,000	40,665,350	43,960,351
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	7,842,000	7,127,900	7,048,315
No of months of operating expenditure	2.6	2.1	1.9
Reserves policy target	4,600,000	4,600,000	4,600,000
No of months of operating expenditure	1.5	1.4	1.3
Free reserves over/(under) target	3,242,000	2,527,900	2,448,315

