

MEETING: 14/03/2018

Ref: 14234

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty

Help Somalia Foundation

Adv: Sandra Jones

Amount requested: £71,758

Base: Brent

Benefit: Brent

Amount recommended: £70,000

The Applicant

Established in 1996, Help Somalia Foundation (HSF) is a registered charity delivering a range of activities for the Somali community and is a key organisation in the London Borough of Brent. These activities include social welfare advice and advocacy, employment and skill training, ESOL classes, supplementary education and support to parents to understand the education system. In recent years the organisation has widened this support to include other BAMER communities, and is in the process of revising its name and constitution.

The Application

HSF seeks funding to deliver *Advice4Life*: a three-year project providing advice and 1-1 support to resolve people's financial debts enabling beneficiaries to manage their finances better, avoiding future financial issues, and includes advice and casework across all areas of social welfare law. This will be achieved through the employment of a 0.5FTE Advice and Development Worker and associated running costs.

The Recommendation

HSF is a long-established charity that delivers a range of quality services in the local community and is recognised as integral to support offered to the BAMER communities in Brent. The organisation has provided advice and information for a number of years (AQS accredited) and is part of Brent Advice Matters (BAM), the borough's advice network. *Advice4Life* will provide additional resource to meet an increasing demand particularly as Universal Credit for all claimants is to be introduced in the borough in August 2018. Funding includes £1,000 each year for evaluation which is excessive, therefore the recommendation is to retain the evaluation costs for year three, but not for years 1 and 2.

£70,000 over three years (£22,500; £23,000; £24,500) towards the salary costs of a 0.5FTE Advice and Development Worker and associated running costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
30/10/2013	Application for a mental health focussed project declined as organisation had no track record in this area.

Background and detail of proposal

Through BAM, the local authority funded the costs of the AQS accreditation and for a formal referral process between agencies to be put in place. Current advice is provided through volunteers (trained by BAM) and supervised by the CEO.

If funding is approved, the project will be in a position to offer advice and information through face-to-face drop-in appointments within the HSF centre for three days per week as well as undertake some outreach work in one of the advice hubs based in Willesden and Harlesden. The project will also establish a telephone advice line for those not able to attend the drop-ins. This service will be delivered by the Advice and Development Worker and ten volunteers to be recruited and supervised by the Advice Worker and CEO. It is anticipated that at least an additional 100 people and their families will access advice from the organisation.

With the many changes to the welfare benefit system and the full roll out of the Universal Credit in August 2018 (currently just single people in the area are subject to Universal Credit), demand for advice will continue to increase.

Financial Information

HSF is considered by the borough to be a key organisation for the Somali and other BAMER communities, and funding for at least the next two years has been assured.

Over recent years the income level fluctuates dependent on the various funding streams. Reserve levels are extremely low albeit this is slowly improving. The organisation is trying to increase free reserves, but they consider this will be a slow process as the majority of funding is through restricted funding

Year end as at 31 March	2016 Audited Accounts £	2017 Audited Accounts £	2018 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	57,664	90,553	106,147
- % of income confirmed as at 31/01/2018	n/a	%	78%
Expenditure	(63,565)	(80,833)	(101,508)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(5,901)	9,720	4,639
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(2,779)	489	4,599
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(3,122)	9,231	40
	(5,901)	9,720	4,639
Cost of Raising Funds	0	0	1,440
- % of income	0.0%	0.0%	1.4%
Operating expenditure (total funds)	63,565	80,833	101,508
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	3,853	13,084	13,124
No of months of operating expenditure	0.7	1.9	1.6
Reserves policy target	15,891	20,208	25,377
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(12,038)	(7,124)	(12,253)