

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty**Migrants Resource Centre****Adv: Kate Moralee****Amount requested: £96,567****Base: Haringey****Benefit: Tower Hamlets****Amount recommended: £94,500****The Applicant**

Established in 1985 the Migrants Resource Centre (MRC), a charity, is a key resource for refugees and migrants of all cultures and nationalities seeking to improve the quality of their life in London. It has a vision of a British society that is inclusive and celebrates the diversity of its population. Its activities include information and advice services, ESOL tuition, community education courses, employability support, a health inclusion project, a Digital Generation Gap project as well as projects influencing policy and empowering voice. It merged in 2017 with Asylum Aid, whom you have also supported, which resulted in a large increase in income.

The Application

The Trust is asked to support 50% of a FTE Senior Caseworker plus associated delivery costs to provide immigration legal advice to homeless migrants at University College London and Royal London hospitals. Pathway, the project delivery partner, is already established in these hospitals through their Clinical Homelessness Teams (CHTs) including people with lived experience. This service is funded through contracts with Clinical Commissioning Groups. Pathway has found that over 50% of the referrals are recent migrants, many with insecure immigration status and no recourse to public funds. It is hoped that the partnership between MRC and Pathway will enable homeless migrant patients to receive the best medical care and discharge plan possible through the addition of relevant and up-to-date legal advice.

The Recommendation

MRC has a strong track record of providing immigration legal advice to some of London's most marginalised groups of people, a fact that reflects their capacity to carry out this project. Although there were some initial queries regarding the post's salary and operational costs, this has now been clarified, with MRC submitting a more detailed budget breakdown and your officer removing some ineligible elements. MRC's funding bid sits firmly within the Trust's Reducing Poverty programme outcomes and comes at a time of a steep rise in rough sleeping on the capital's streets. Funding is advised as follows:

£94,500 over 3 years (£30,500, £31,500, £32,500) contributing to 0.5 FTE post of Senior Caseworker, contribution to Legal Administrator and Supervising Solicitor salaries, and associated running costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
15/06/2017	An unsuccessful Stepping Stones application
22/09/2016	As above
14/07/2016	Proposal withdrawn

04/09/2013	£31,100 for a third and final year towards a part time (21 hrs) Empowerment Worker and related costs of a cross-community media project.
17/02/2011	£61,000 over two years (£30,400; £30,600) towards a cross-community media project.

Background and detail of proposal

The detrimental effects of living on the streets are manifested in the A&E admittance rates for homeless people, which can be six times higher than for housed people. It is often the case that the admitted patients arrive with long neglected illnesses and mental health issues putting them in need of specialist care and advice.

There is no automatic right to housing upon discharge from hospitals and provision is provided only after several criteria are met, some of which can be very difficult for a homeless person to fulfil. Without the CHTs, the issue of lack of accommodation to be discharged to is only picked up at the point of discharge. This inevitably leads to bed-blocking, leaving the patients stranded in hospitals and putting a strain on NHS resources. The CHTs' work with patients from admittance and can identify and resolve accommodation issues prior to discharge, however, they lack the specific knowledge and expertise to be able to advise on Immigration rights. Establishing patients' rights to public services can facilitate the discharge into social housing and address the issue of bed-blocking.

The caseworker will link MRC's existing in-house immigration advice legal team with Pathway CHTs based in the hospitals. Immigration advice will be given on a case-by-case basis via telephone and a dedicated email account. In some cases, a hospital visit may be required, and the caseworker will meet the patient directly. Provision of advice may include conducting research, contacting other agencies and organisations, or other work as required to provide appropriate support to the client, patient, or hospital team. MRC and Pathway hope that their collaboration will result in an increased capacity of the CHTs to provide tailored immigration legal advice independently of the Caseworker and eventually enable the project to grow beyond the boundaries of the two hospitals.

Financial Information

The organisation holds its free reserves in a realisable investment fund to generate maximum income. It is projecting unrestricted deficits for 2018 and 2019 whilst it consolidates the merger as well as ensuring core services continue when several funding streams come to an end over the next two years. It has developed a five-year strategy to ensure continuity post-merger and to streamline service delivery and fundraising. Its reserves target is based on 6 months total operating costs.

Year end as at 31 March	2017	2018	2019
	Audited Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,558,141	1,380,401	1,385,871
- % of Income confirmed as at 16/2/18	n/a	%	47%
Expenditure	(1,353,636)	(1,502,600)	(1,502,600)
Total surplus/(deficit)	204,505	(142,199)	(116,929)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	120,525	45,806	6,751
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	83,980	(188,005)	(123,680)
	204,505	(142,199)	(116,929)
Cost of Raising Funds	67,371	90,000	90,000
- % of Income	4.3%	6.6%	6.5%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	963,601	1,217,705	1,078,380
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	1,232,726	1,044,721	921,041
No of months of operating expenditure	15.4	10.3	10.2
Reserves policy target	676,818	751,300	751,300
No of months of operating expenditure	8.4	7.4	8.4
Free reserves over/(under) target	555,908	293,421	169,741

