

MEETING: 14/11/18

Ref: 14871

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Advice and Support

Southwark Law Centre

Adv: Kate Moralee

Amount requested: £100,890

Base: Southwark

Benefit: Southwark

Amount recommended: £101,000

The Applicant

Southwark Law Centre (SLC), a charitable company, was established in 1976 to relieve poverty through the provision of legal advice, representation, education and research. It prioritises cases which involve the prevention of homelessness, destitution, discrimination, breaches of Human Rights and poverty. It also supports other community agencies by providing consultancy and training.

The Application

In April 2015 you awarded SLC £158,000 over 3 years towards the full-time salary of an Immigration Solicitor. The service aimed to provide access to specialist immigration and asylum advice accepting self-referrals as well as referrals from local community and public sector organisations. This application requests continuation funding for SLC to continue delivering this service providing advice and casework to Judicial Review and tribunal representation, a telephone consultancy and referral line for frontline workers from other organisations workshops and briefing papers to inform policy and practice.

The Recommendation

SLC delivers quality advice and legal case work and is recognised for its expertise and flexibility to be able to take on more challenging cases. The Senior Caseworker funded by CBT provides supervision for other solicitors at SLC, ensuring quality representation for individuals and succession planning for SLC. SLC also provides briefings and advice for other agencies in this arena, as well as influencing strategy, good practice and policy. This project fits well with your Advice and Guidance programme outcomes and priorities with funding recommended as follows:

£101,000 over a further 2 years (£50,000; £51,000) towards the salary and associated running costs of SLC's Senior Immigration Solicitor to provide legal advice to individuals and advice and support to other advice agencies.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
24/11/2016	£1,300 to commission an independent access audit at Southwark Law Centre
09/07/2015	£158,000 over three years (£51,000, £53,000, £54,000) towards the full-time salary and associated running costs of Southwark Law Centre's Immigration Solicitor.

Background and detail of proposal

In an increasingly hostile environment for many of those needing its services and with shrinking Legal Aid provision, the funding from CBT has allowed and will continue to allow SLC to take on more of the pioneering and complex cases not

covered by Legal Aid, which in turn enables SLC to push boundaries setting case law and precedents. This work has then allowed other agencies to follow where case law is established.

SLC uses its success to influence policy, strategy and practice through networks, and forums, as well as offering consultancy and advice to other frontline advice services. For example, SLC is currently trying to influence Southwark and Lewisham BC's to stop hosting Home Office representatives within the No Recourse to Public Funds teams. Having HO representatives sitting within NRPF teams discourages people from accessing the services for fear of being served removal notices by HO. Two people have been issued with removal notices and HO officers have given incorrect advice even though it is not their role to advise. This creates an environment of fear and hostility, resulting in non or low-take up of NRPF support, leaving individuals increasingly vulnerable.

CBT funding will allow SLC to be responsive to the needs of local communities, which change over time. Recently SLC has represented many Windrush individuals where "leave to remain" evidence has been lost. SLC has been able to research, collect evidence, participate in discussions, write articles and circulate findings to other agencies and statutory bodies. It also works in partnership with Pathways providing support and advice to Pathways for homeless migrants who are hospitalised and indeed taking on more complex case management. This partnership has been a great learning experience for SLC as it would not have encountered these clients except for the partnership with Pathways. Many clients accessing SLC have been in the country a significant period of time, often 15 years or more, seeing many different solicitors without any resolution to their immigration status.

Without CBT funding SLC would have to operate more like a private practice, be more risk averse and be unable to take on the more complex cases which are most pioneering with outcomes which can be used to influence policy, practice and strategy.

Financial Information

SLC has seen its income shrinking over the last three years due to a reduction in Legal Aid income with SLC increasing staffing to cope with demand and expenditure on essential refurbishment and repairs to the office accommodation. The projected deficit budget for 2018/19 has been agreed by Trustees but will be reviewed through the six-month management accounts in November.

Year end as at 31 March	2017 Audited Accounts £	2018 Draft £	2019 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	908,360	879,541	875,697
- % of Income confirmed as at 3/9/18	n/a	0%	47%
Expenditure	(794,483)	(880,461)	(906,265)
Total surplus/(deficit)	113,877	(920)	(30,568)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	33,278	47,419	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	80,599	(48,339)	(30,568)
	113,877	(920)	(30,568)
Cost of Raising Funds	0	0	7,890
- % of Income	0.0%	0.0%	0.9%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	651,644	690,930	652,393
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	438,127	387,685	357,117
No of months of operating expenditure	8.1	6.7	6.6
Reserves policy target	325,822	345,465	326,197
No of months of operating expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	112,305	42,220	30,921

