

MEETING 21/03/2019

Ref: 15075

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Advice and Support

Asylum Support Appeals Project

Adv: Sandra Jones

Amount requested: £90,000

Base: Tower Hamlets

Benefit: Tower Hamlets

Amount recommended: £90,000

The Applicant

The Asylum Support Appeals Project (ASAP) charity was established in 2003 to reduce the destitution of asylum seekers by defending their legal rights to food and shelter. This is done by providing free legal advice and representation at tribunal to asylum seekers who have been refused support or had their support discontinued by the UK Border Agency. It also runs a second tier Advice Line and training on asylum support law and appeals and undertakes some social policy work.

The Application

This application is for two years' continuation funding for the organisation's advice and support service that you initially funded for three years in 2016. This service provides free legal advice and representation to London based destitute asylum seekers who are appealing against a refusal or discontinuation of support. A second-tier advice line also runs 3 times per week for agencies that work with asylum seekers. The advice line is for queries on access to support for asylum seekers and is run by the charity's expert legal team. Also on offer is face to face, webinar and e-learning training and advice for people from organisations in London advising asylum seekers, to improve their understanding and legal knowledge of asylum support. Quarterly network meetings will also be held to share updates and information. The funding requested is to cover 50% of the Solicitor, 40% of the Duty Scheme Co-ordinator and 10% of the Director Post with associated running costs.

The Recommendation

Your previous funding has delivered excellent outcomes for the beneficiaries of this project and the monitoring highlighted the impact of the work that they undertake with an extremely vulnerable client group. In 2017/18 ASAP's Duty Scheme assisted 585 asylum seekers (871 including family members) at the Asylum Support Tribunal (AST), with 69% of the refusals to support being overturned or remitted. A grant is advised:

£90,000 over a further two years (2x £45,000) towards 50% of the salary costs of a Solicitor; 40% of a Duty Scheme Co-ordinator; and 10% of the Director's salary; plus associated running costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
18/03/2016	£135,000 (3 x £45,000) over three years towards the salaries of a Solicitor (50%), Duty Scheme Co-ordinator (40%) and Director (10%) and associated running costs.

Background and detail of proposal

Asylum seekers arriving in the UK are not able to work or access mainstream benefits and therefore must apply to the Home Office for support. This support is available to those who can prove their destitution; however, this is often refused or terminated. ASAP offers free tribunal representation through its one paid solicitor and a number of solicitors and barristers who offer their time to the charity for free. The demand for ASAP's services has increased over the last year as Home Office contracts to the Refugee Council and Refugee Action to provide advice has ceased, and the contract with the new provider excludes advocacy and representation. This has led to an increase in the number of referrals to the charity as well as an increase in the calls from small inexperienced advice organisations.

Managed by the charity's Director, the project will be delivered partly by ASAP's four legal advisors plus 40 duty scheme volunteer advocates. The solicitor is responsible for overseeing the representations, and the duty advocates the Legal Team to ensure the quality. The Co-ordinator is responsible for recruiting, managing and supporting the volunteer advocates who provide daily representation at the Tribunal along with those involved with the advice line, network meetings and newsletters.

Financial Information

The charity holds free reserves just below its reserves target which is based on an amount rather than number of months of operating costs. This figure is above three months turnover and is within the charity commission's guidelines.

Cost of generating funds were not disclosed in the 2018 accounts. The organisation has advised that the estimated amount for 2019 and 2020 is based on the time spent by the Director on this activity, which is two days per month.

Year end as at 31 March	2018 Audited Accounts £	2019 Budget £	2020 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	496,923	553,953	553,220
- % of income confirmed as at 18/12/2018	n/a	n/a	70%
Expenditure	(484,374)	(555,625)	(553,764)
Total surplus/(deficit)	12,549	(1,672)	(544)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	9,915	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	2,634	(1,672)	(544)
	12,549	(1,672)	(544)
Cost of Raising Funds	0	4,107	4,230
- % of income	0.0%	0.7%	0.8%
Total expenditure	484,374	555,625	553,764
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	195,755	194,083	193,539
No of months of total expenditure	4.8	4.2	4.2
Reserves policy target	201,396	201,396	201,396
No of months of total expenditure	5.0	4.3	4.4
Free reserves over/(under) target	(5,641)	(7,313)	(7,857)