

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions**Auditory Verbal Centre****Adv: Tim Wilson****Amount requested: £135,000****Base: Southwark****Benefit: London-wide****Amount recommended: £135,000****The Applicant**

Auditory Verbal Centre (AVC) is a registered charity working to ensure that deaf babies and children can listen and speak as equals alongside their hearing peers. The charity supports families through an early intervention programme, conducts research, and trains auditory professionals. Its work is concerned with increasing awareness and expectations of what deaf children can achieve. The organisation is based in Bicester but has a centre in Bermondsey, which is the focus of this application.

The Application

The charity seeks funding to increase the provision of audio-verbal therapy (AVT) services to deaf children in London. The work is intended to help children develop listening and spoken language skills to support their transition to independent adulthood and therefore falls under the Trust's scheme to support specialist provision for deaf and disabled people to increase choice and control in their lives.

The Recommendation

AVT involves teaching deaf children to listen and speak using residual hearing and assistive technology such as hearing aids and cochlear implants. The charity highlights that, without effective support, deaf children acquire language skills at a slower rate than hearing peers. This can mean starting primary school with language skills of a much younger peer, and resulting in lower educational attainment, reduced employment prospects, isolation and poor mental health. Whilst AVT is part of mainstream provision in several countries it is not yet in the patient pathway in the UK, which AVC states is due to the lack of randomised control trial evidence. The charity's website highlights examples of the progress deaf children can make in their speech and listening, and the organisation's work has been subject to positive evaluation. It will be featured in a forthcoming guide to effective tools from the Early Intervention Foundation. AVC is an award-winning charity working to support around 160 families (50 in London) to learn the AV skills needed to assist their children. The request is for core costs (proportionate to London benefit) so funding is advised as follows:

£135,000 over three years (£50,000; £45,000; £40,000) to provide auditory verbal therapy to deaf children and their families in London.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
04/07/2013	£60,000 over two years towards the staffing costs of AVUK's London centre.
16/02/2012	£30,000 towards salary and running costs of a specialist service for deaf children in London.

Background and detail of proposal

AVC seeks funding to support deaf children build their listening and spoken language skills in order to increase their social confidence and independence. By working with pre-school children, the charity aims to ensure they are ready to thrive once they are in mainstream provision. The organisation will also work with NHS audiologists, training them to use AVT techniques. There are currently only around 20 qualified AV practitioners in the UK, and the charity would like to increase this number more than tenfold. It takes around 3 years to upskill a professional in AV. Through its wider awareness-raising work, AVC also aims to demonstrate deaf children's potential and build support for the statutory provision of AVT.

The work will take place in a purpose-designed building which is easily accessible from London Underground and based just outside the Congestion Charge Zone. There are four therapy rooms, which families attend on a fortnightly basis. Emphasis is placed on teaching parents and carers the skills needed to continue practicing AVT at home with their children. Participants typically spend 2 – 3 years on the programme and there is currently more demand than AVC can meet. The charity charges for provision but offers a means-tested bursary programme so that family income is not a barrier to access. None of the City Bridge grant-funding would be used towards the bursary programme, this would otherwise fall outside scope of funding individuals.

Financial Information

AVC has moved its financial year end from March to July and the figures shown for 2019 in the table below cover a 16-month period. Whilst 2019 is a longer financial year than 2018 and 2020, it shows only a modest increase in turnover which the charity attributes to the planned absence of several clinical staff and the consequent reduction in income-generating services. This is seen in lower than expected income for sessional work and training activities. Nonetheless the organisation had reached 80% of its income target for 2019 by late March, with four months remaining in the financial year. Its pipeline of grant applications (excluding a potential award from City Bridge Trust) means that it is confident of achieving its fundraising goal.

AVC's free reserves fall short of the trustees' four-month target, and the organisation is looking to improve its position, but this work is likely to take some time and the table below shows only a gradual improvement year on year.

Year end as at 31st March In 2018, changing to 31st July In 2019	2018 Audited Accounts 12 months £	2019 Forecast 16 months £	2020 Budget 12 months £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,119,230	1,335,285	1,137,355
- % of Income confirmed as at 27th March	n/a	67%	28%
Expenditure	(1,026,261)	(1,411,499)	(1,136,040)
Total surplus/(deficit)	92,969	(76,214)	1,315
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	128,998	(147,496)	527
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(36,029)	71,282	788
	92,969	(76,214)	1,315
Cost of Raising Funds	151,917	180,201	124,291
- % of Income	13.6%	13.5%	10.9%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	545,862	817,252	787,476
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	48,583	119,865	120,653
No of months of operating expenditure	1.1	1.8	1.8
Reserves policy target	181,954	272,417	262,492
No of months of operating expenditure	4.0	4.0	4.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(133,371)	(152,552)	(141,839)

