

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
The City Bridge Trust	27 <sup>th</sup> September 2012
<b>Subject:</b> Strategic Literacy Initiative in Islington	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Chief Grants Officer	<b>For Decision</b>
<b><u>Summary</u></b>	
<p>This paper proposes a strategic literacy initiative, aimed at measurably improving literacy results in a 'flagship' primary school in Islington.</p> <p>It proposes a partnership between City Bridge Trust, Volunteer Reading Help, Islington Education Department, an Islington primary school and the Evening Standard. It would be part of the Evening Standard's 'Get London Reading' campaign, and would be widely publicised.</p> <p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>That you approve a grant of £72,300 over three years (£23,400; £24,100; £24,800) to Volunteer Reading Help towards the costs of a strategic literacy initiative in Islington, to be charged against your Strategic Initiatives budget for 2012/13.</p>	

## **Main Report**

### **1.0 Purpose**

- 1.1 This paper proposes a strategic partnership aimed at improving literacy in an Islington primary school, which has London-wide implications. The partnership would comprise Islington Education Department, Volunteer Reading Help (VRH), a primary school yet to be confirmed and the Evening Standard. The latter has led the highly successful 'Get London Reading' campaign which has achieved notable results, and its flagship success has been a collaboration with VRH in St Mary's Primary School in Battersea. The Evening Standard published regular stories on progress achieved by the children, which leveraged additional funding and donations in kind, such as additional computers and software for St Mary's.

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 For several months, the Chief Grants Officer has been discussing the need for and value of a strategic initiative which would address a major London issue and at the same time demonstrate the City of London's commitment to supporting charitable activity, particularly in a neighbouring borough.
- 2.2 Following meetings with the Town Clerk, Director of Community & Children's Services and Director of Press & Public Relations, it was agreed that the Chief Grants Officer would explore the feasibility of working with the Evening Standard on its 'Get London Reading' campaign. The Evening Standard's delivery partner is VRH.

## **3.0 The 'Get London Reading' Campaign**

- 3.1 As a response to the shocking statistic that one in four children leave London's primary schools unable to read properly, the Evening Standard launched its campaign in 2011, joining forces with VRH, which provides specialist reading volunteers to work intensively in under-performing schools or those finding children's reading development particularly challenging. The campaign raised £10m, which in particular helped VRH recruit and train hundreds of volunteers who were deployed in schools across London.
- 3.2 The Standard adopted one particular school, St Mary's in Battersea, and 25 reading volunteers worked with the weakest students for one year. A record 91% of St Mary's pupils aged 11 years passed English and Maths key stage 2, achieving at least the level 4 national standard, compared to a mere 52% the previous year.

## **4.0 How the Model Works**

- 4.1 VRH pairs each reading helper with at least three children in a school, who they visit twice a week, spending 30 minutes with each child on a one-to-one basis.
- 4.2 The reading helpers provide reliable and consistent support by staying with the same three children for typically three to four terms. Over this time they build up a rapport with the children and work at the child's pace. This in turn allows the child to build their reading confidence and then make progress.
- 4.3 To aid their sessions, VRH provides a box of books and games for each reading helper; and they provide a friendly and safe learning environment for the children. Each session is outside the classroom, away from peer pressure, where each child can become a successful reader, over time.

4.4 For many children, their reading helper provides a consistent role model in their life.

## **5.0 Replicating the Model**

5.1 Building on the success of St Mary's, it is proposed to replicate the model which now has a sound evidence base. Whilst the Standard would not be able to guarantee the same exposure as with St Mary's, it will be able to announce the replication of the model and publicise the City of London Corporation's support for the Islington initiative.

## **6.0 Project Aims**

- To annually improve 75 children's reading ability at a primary school in Islington, using 25 volunteers from across the borough, thus driving up overall achievement at the selected school. The school would be selected by Islington Council, in collaboration with City Bridge Trust, the CoL Director of Community & Children's Services and VRH. It would be a school that is: currently under-performing in this area (for example, only 50-60% of pupils obtaining the required literacy standard); has a school leadership team that is positive about such a large scale injection of volunteers and the impact that will have; and is willing to take part in media activities.

### **Objectives**

- To increase the number of children in the selected primary school achieving the required standard in reading within 2 years of starting the project.
- To use this project as a pilot to expand the VRH scheme into more primary schools in Islington.
- To demonstrate the impact and value of the VRH's approach to schools and the Local Authority so they contribute in the long-term.

## **7.0 Monitoring and Evaluation**

7.1 The following information is gathered on each child receiving the service:

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Year Group
- Reason selected for programme
- Whether the child has English as their first language

- Whether the child is subject to a care order
- Whether the child is eligible for free school meals
- Reading level at start of programme
- Reading sub-levels progress in the previous school year (to benchmark)
- Reading levels at termly intervals (to check progress)
- Date started programme
- Date finished programme (when finished)

7.2 Schools enter details of the children at the start of the programme and then update reading level data on a termly basis. Information on prior progress allows VRH to provide a benchmark from which to measure a child's progress during the year in which they work with their reading helper. It also enables VRH to put their progress in context.

7.3 Since the launch of this new evaluation system, schools have input data for 2,495 children. From the information collected to date, the average progress of a child in the year before referral to a VRH reading helper was just 0.1 reading sub levels. The national target for each child is to progress by 2 reading sub levels.

7.4 After starting work with a reading helper schools are asked to input information about a child's progress on a termly basis. From the data collected to date over two terms, VRH has seen an average improvement of 1.6 reading levels. It must, of course, be remembered that VRH is at an early stage of assessing its impact. However, the results it is seeing so far are very encouraging and indicative of the success of VRH's support. A full academic analysis of VRH's impact will be available towards the end of 2012.

7.5 A further evaluation is being conducted with Oxford Brookes University, where attitudinal outline data is being collected which will capture the view and progress of a representative sample of children at the beginning and end of the academic year.

## **8.0 Why Islington?**

8.1 VRH targets its support to work in the top 25% of the most disadvantaged regions in the country, in areas which see the highest levels of deprivation and lowest literacy levels, thereby ensuring that support is delivered to those children who need it most.

8.2 According to the End Child Poverty campaign, 43% of children in Islington live in families who are out of work and on benefits. Both North and South Islington fall into the top twenty of constituencies with the highest levels of child poverty (2011) across the UK, with Islington South and Finsbury experiencing 46% and Islington North 40%. In terms of reading attainment, Islington currently has a

higher percentage of children below level 4 in reading at key stage 2 (18%) than the average for England (16%).

- 8.3 Several Islington primary schools serve as feeder schools for the City of London Academy in Islington. If more of the Academy's Year 7 students started from a higher literacy and numeracy baseline, then GCSE and A levels are likely to show improvement.

## 9.0 Proposed Timelines

- 9.1 If you approve this proposal, the timetable would be as follows:  
(VRH would identify a school within Islington Council by end of September 2012 and launch the project within that school in November 2012)

<b>Milestones</b>	<b>Proposed dates</b>
Start publicity to recruit reading helpers	Sept-Oct 2012
Finalise flagship school and sign Service Level Agreements	Sept-Oct 2012
Interview potential reading helpers	Sept-Nov 2012; May-Jul 2013 (for attrition after year 1)
Train reading helpers	Oct-Nov 2012; May-Jul 2013 (for attrition after year 1)
Place reading helpers in flagship school	Nov 2012
Gather data on attainment outcomes termly basis	Nov 2012/Jan 2013/May 2013/Jul 2013/Sept 2013
Conduct questionnaires for attitudinal outcomes	Nov 2012 and June 2013
Review output progress for year 1	Aug 2013
Overall report on data to review outcome progress for year 1	Nov-Dec 2013
Years 2 and 3 would follow a similar pattern	

## 10.0 Budget

- 10.1 VRH estimates it will cost £72,327 to initiate a new 'flagship' school for three years. This will cover the full costs for 25 volunteer readers, supporting 75 pupils per year for three years. This support will be targeted at the pupils most in need. A detailed budget based on VRH's current cost per child of £312 is set out below.

<b>Breakdown of expenditure</b>	<b>Year one</b>	<b>Year two</b>	<b>Year three</b>	<b>Total</b>
Salary and Staff Costs	£16,950	£17,459	£17,982	£52,391
Travel and Subsistence	£1,650	£1,700	£1,750	£5,100
Training (non-salary costs)	£300	£309	£318	£927
Recruitment (non-salary costs)	£150	£155	£159	£464
Consultancy and Contract	£150	£155	£159	£464
Other Services (evaluation and resources)	£225	£232	£239	£695
Office Expenses	£1,200	£1,236	£1,273	£3,709
IT and Support Costs	£450	£464	£477	£1,391
Premises Costs	£1,725	£1,777	£1,830	£5,332
Legal/Professional*	£450	£464	£477	£1,391
Fundraising and marketing	£150	£155	£159	£464
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£23,400</b>	<b>£24,102</b>	<b>£24,825</b>	<b>£72,327</b>

10.2 If you approve this initiative, the total costs of £72,300 would be charged against your budget of £747,500 for Strategic Initiatives 2012-2013. You have already approved the following strategic initiatives (see table below). If you agree this initiative, it would leave a balance of £204,590 remaining for 2012-2013.

	<b>Committee date</b>	<b>£</b>
Quinquennial Review Horizon Scanning	16/02/2012	50,000
Social Investment Specialist Role	15/03/2012	50,000
Learning & Sharing Strategy	26/04/2012	124,000
Reading Agency	26/04/2012	50,000
Beacon Award	26/04/2012	32,500
Greening Third Sector	26/04/2012	75,000
Lord Mayor's Show	31/05/2012	24,110
<i>The Lord Mayor's Appeal (TBC)</i>	18/07/2012	65,000
<b>For this meeting:</b>		
<i>Strategic Literacy Initiative (to be approved)</i>	27/09/2012	72,300
	<b>Total</b>	<b>542,910</b>
<i>Sum available as 5% annual WwL grants budget</i>		<i>747,500</i>
<i>Balance remaining</i>		<i>204,590</i>

## **11.0 Consultation**

11.1 The Director of Public Relations and the Director of Community and Children's Services have been consulted over the preparation of this paper and they support the proposal.

## **12.0 Conclusion**

12.1 VRH's approach is effective, simple and is supported by a clear evidence-base. Fundamental to VRH's service delivery are its specialist reading volunteers. The Evening Standard as its media partner has done much to raise awareness of the importance of improving literacy; and this initiative is an opportunity to meet real need and to ensure that the City of London Corporation gets due recognition for its role in tackling disadvantage in a neighbouring borough.

### **Recommendation**

That you approve a grant of £72,300 over three years (£23,400; £24,100; £24,800) to Volunteer Reading Help towards the costs of a strategic literacy initiative in Islington, to be charged against your Strategic Initiatives budget for 2012/13.

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