

MEETING: 26/03/2020

Ref: 15695

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital**St Margaret's House Settlement****Adv: Gilly Green****Base: Tower Hamlets****Amount requested: £104,952.00****Benefit: Tower Hamlets****Amount recommended: £104,960****The Applicant**

St Margaret's House (SMH) is a long-established charity which aims to promote positive social change by creating opportunities for people to come together and play a more active part in their east London community – especially in Tower Hamlets. It welcomes over 3000 people every week to take part in activities – often led by local people – including crafts, music, yoga and enjoying a healthy meal through its café.

The Application

Disabled adults from the Bangladeshi community often have few opportunities outside the home for socialising, skills development and confidence building. In March 2019 SMH worked with one of its tenant organisations Bangladeshi Parents and Carers Association to pilot to Ghyama Arts' (Awesome Arts) a programme run in conjunction with the Central School of Speech and Drama providing regular arts and dance activity to disabled adults at BPCA's Day Centre. The programme delivered to adults with multiple disabilities, including those with Down's Syndrome, Congenital Cerebral Palsy and moderate learning disabilities. Some participants were single word communicators. The activities delivered real benefits including increased confidence, increased verbal communication and a stronger sense of independence. Working together BCPA and SMH now wish to extend the programme to deliver a wider arts and drama programme by working with three community-based arts organisations, all of whom have experience of working with disabled people. The application over three years builds on the pilot and extends the range of activities to include film making, circus skills and public celebrations within the Centre and the wider community. Funding is requested to provide a Project Coordinator to oversee the project, programme costs and those of the external organisations, as well as a contribution to management support, core costs and training. BCPA and SMH are both contributing staff time in kind to a value of just over £50,000 over three years.

The Recommendation

This project meets your objectives by increasing access to the arts for disabled people and thereby promoting greater autonomy and independence. Whilst working with relatively small numbers of people, it aims to bring professional artists to work with those who are often highly marginalised. As such it has at its core a commitment to inclusion. A grant is recommended as follows:

A grant of £104,960 over three years (£36,340; £34,380; £34,240) towards the salary, running and project management costs of the arts programme for disabled adults.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
26/09/2019	Declined as it was too soon after an earlier access audit grant was awarded

Background and detail of proposal

Each year of the project will be divided into three terms and have two three-hour sessions per week for up to 25 adults. Term one will focus on theatre skills led by Spare Tyre Theatre Co, term two on film making with Chocolate Films and term three will teach circus skills led by the National Centre for Circus Arts. There will be three public celebrations a year shared with the wider day centre membership and parents/carers and the local Tower Hamlets community. Many participants require one to one support for these types of activities and so numbers of service users are low. The partnership between SHA and BCPA adds value with SHA responsible for day to day planning, management and evaluation of the project and BCPA bringing experience of the service user group and cultural and language support to the visiting organisations. The experience of service users will be captured through video diary, feedback from those who are able and observation of changes in non-verbal service users from key day centre staff.

Financial Information

St Margaret's House generates most of income through rents from around 30 tenant community groups on its site. It raises some funding from charitable trusts, usually for specific projects either that it runs itself or such as in this case, in partnership with a tenant organisation. The level of confirmed income for 2021 is low as SMH has only included income for the first three months of the year in line with tenancy notice periods. Last year the organisation took a decision to begin a fundraising appeal to build a fully accessible new arts and wellbeing centre on its site. It designated some of its unrestricted reserves for this purpose. SMH is currently operating below its reserves policy, although in 2019 Trustees revised downwards the level of reserve required although going forwards the policy remains at 3 months. SMH has ended the last two years with planned deficits but will end 20/21 with a small operating surplus. Going forwards SMH expects to generate annual surpluses and build its free reserves. It will do this through a 3% rent rise for tenants, along with price rises for its charges to its hall, chapel and other spaces. Despite not meeting its reserves policy and a low level of free reserves, the organisation has confirmed that the designated funds could be made available in the case of any unexpected shortfall.

Year end as at MARCH 31st	2019	2020	2021
	Signed Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1,079,006	1,059,505	1,937,301
- % of Income confirmed as at 23 January 2021	N/A	77%	20%
Expenditure	(1,125,766)	(1,101,025)	(1,460,079)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(46,760)	(41,520)	477,222
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	5,389	3,448	500
Designated funds	0	(26,701)	475,000
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(52,149)	(18,267)	1,722
	(46,760)	(41,520)	477,222
Operating Expenditure (unrestricted)	1,123,392	1,051,967	1,113,079
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	225,177	206,910	208,632
No of months of operating expenditure	2.4	2.4	2.2
Reserves policy target	231,000	262,994	278,269
No of months of operating expenditure	2.5	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(5,823)	(56,084)	(69,637)