

MEETING 26/03/2020**Ref: 15670****ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Connecting the Capital****Children Ahead Ltd****Adv: Gilly Green****Base: Hackney****Amount requested: £440,000.00****Benefit: Hackney****Amount recommended: £250,000****The Applicant**

Children Ahead (CA), a charity, works with the Charedi (Orthodox Jewish) community to support children with learning difficulties to achieve their personal best by providing integrated interventions for their development. It also empowers parents and families of children with learning disabilities to take an active role in their child's education and health. CA also gives schools and teachers the skills and resources they need to identify, refer and support children with learning disabilities.

The Application

The Charedi community in Hackney is the largest outside of Israel. It has limited interaction with the mainstream community and children are educated in Charedi schools. The community has high levels of poverty and for those with children experiencing difficulties at home, at school and socially, access to relevant support services is more difficult due to cultural and language barriers. Whilst many of the children it works with are in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan through the school system, many do not meet the threshold and risk slipping through the net. Many children experience underlying mental health problems either masked as learning difficulties or trauma due to family illness, dysfunction or abuse, but there is a widespread mistrust of psychological services provided by the mainstream community, believing it is incompatible with Orthodox Judaism. CA has worked hard within the Charedi community to build trust and transcend these barriers and has provided mental health support alongside its learning disabled focus. Its trained psychotherapists and group facilitators from within the community provide sessions in its fun, educational and neutral space designed to overcome stigma associated with mental health issues. The application is to expand its provision of psychotherapy for children and young people to meet increasing need and includes sessional therapists' fees, clinical supervision, one to one mentoring and a social skills coordinator; along with a contribution to administration and core costs. Having previously only supported work with boys, it is now expanding its services to also include work with girls.

The Recommendation

Children Ahead has a good track record of providing services to this specific community and has been providing therapeutic activities for over ten years. It has built a trusted reputation within the Charedi community and is well networked both within mainstream mental health services and with local Charedi schools and parents. The service is filling an important gap in mental health support for a community that does not easily access mainstream services. Some funds have already been raised towards the project and a contribution towards the full costs is advised in line with your typical level of funding for projects of this nature. A grant is recommended as follows:

£250,000 over five years (5 x £50,000) towards the costs of psychotherapeutic and other mental health support to young people, both boys and girls. Release of year 2 of the grant is conditional on the charity having recruited at least one woman to the Board of Trustees.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

The grant will provide a variety of activities including one-to-one psychotherapy with each child receiving 12-24 sessions depending on need; social skills groups targeting those whose behaviour difficulties impact their ability to socialise (including those with ADHD); and a pilot project of one-to-one post intervention mentoring that will help strengthen the child's ability to continue to use the tools they have gained to maintain levels of improvement. All therapists and the clinical supervisor work on a freelance basis. However, there is now a recognition that this arrangement may not provide appropriate levels of internal oversight or accountability, and so CA plans to recruit an in-house clinical supervisor. With only four trustees the organisation is also committed to increasing this number and to include women on its Board. One woman with clinical expertise (a current gap on the Board) has already been identified.

Financial Information

CA receives most of its funding from Charitable Trusts and Foundations including recent grants from BBC Children in Need, Comic Relief, and a 5-year commitment from the National Lottery Community Fund. It also has a small unrestricted contribution from the London Borough of Hackney and generates approximately 20% of its income from user contributions. Until recently it has struggled to build reserves but as its unrestricted income grows the position has improved and next year it anticipates a surplus which will enable the organisation to meet its reserves policy. Its multi-year grants mean that CA has over 80% of its income confirmed for the current year ending in July 20 and 78% for the following year putting the organisation onto a much more secure financial footing.

Year end as at JULY 31st	2018	2019	2020
	Signed Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	603,628	729,473	882,130
- % of Income confirmed as at 18th Feb 2020	N/A	100%	88%
Expenditure	(595,883)	(723,833)	(821,462)
Total surplus/(deficit)	7,745	5,640	60,668
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	0	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	7,745	5,640	60,668
	7,745	5,640	60,668
Operating Expenditure (unrestricted)	363,063	513,374	512,962
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	69,757	75,397	136,065
No of months of operating expenditure	2.3	1.8	3.2
Reserves policy target	90,765	128,343	128,240
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(21,008)	(52,946)	7,825