

CITY BRIDGE TRUST – Delegated Authority (Requests up to £250k)

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides - Positive Transitions\Older people (choice and control)

BeFriend (formerly Volunteer Link Scheme)

Ref: 15751

Adv: Jack Joslin

Amount requested: £130,100

Base: Ealing

Benefit: Ealing

Amount recommended: £130,000

Purpose of grant request: To support our essential work to combat isolation and loneliness for older people and those with mental health problems, helping them to flourish and grow in the local community.

The Applicant

Befriend was originally set up in 1994 by Ealing council and became an independent charity in 1998. The charity aims to relieve isolation amongst adults in the London Borough of Ealing, especially those who are housebound, by providing a weekly visit from a volunteer. Although the charity initially focused on older people, its case load has become more diverse over recent years. It is their view that this is a response to cuts in local authority funding which has meant that only those in severest need are able to access statutory services. As a result, they have been receiving referrals of people with more complex needs including dementia, learning disabilities and mental health problems. Many of their clients additionally face other issues in their lives such as housing problems, problems with carers and immigration issues. Some do not speak English. The charity currently supports around 130 matched pairs of volunteers and clients, drawing on the contribution of around 100 volunteers.

Background and detail of proposal

This application is for additional funds to support the implementation of the charity's five-year strategy. The key elements of this strategy involve a broadening of the concept of befriending and the role of the befriender. The Charity sees befrienders becoming facilitators as well as visitors, supporting their clients to access a wider range of local social connections whether through helping them to access other local activities or by bringing small groups of clients together. In recognition of the extent to which many clients struggle with resolving other practical issues in their lives (such as housing, benefits etc), they want to introduce a support and advice service delivered from the office. They also recognise that some of the most isolated people in the borough operate "under the radar" and they want to extend their reach to bring their service to this group by a range of means including using pharmacists as referral points and recruiting volunteer interpreters to assist the assessment process with potential clients who do not speak English. In addition (but separately funded) they want to increase the capacity of the mental health project and introduce a specialist bereavement service.

All this will require additional support and training for volunteers. Staff currently support a larger number of matches than the National umbrella body for befriending projects recommends. They are proposing an innovative pilot to address this, developing a group of lead volunteers who would be trained to provide front line

support to a team of 10 befriending volunteers. Lead volunteers would then be supervised by paid staff. They want to introduce regular dementia training for all volunteers and ensure that all volunteers and clients have a formal six-monthly review.

Since the lockdown was implemented the Charity's face-to-face befriending has been suspended. Befriending Coordinators are working hard coordinating an emergency shopping and prescription delivery service for older people in the Borough. They currently provide shopping and prescription help for 45-50 people each week, and since the start have supported over 200 people through this emergency service. The charity is also coordinating telephone befriending for all its existing clients (123) plus an additional 41 who have been referred for Telephone Befriending since the start of the lockdown. Funding to support the crucial befriending roles is crucial as the service continues to support individuals as the lockdown begins to be lifted.

Financial Information

The charity expects unrestricted free reserves to be impacted by the Coronavirus Pandemic, the table below outlines this decline. The charity holds £60,000 of designated reserves as a 'Closedown Reserve' as security. Although total unrestricted reserves are expected to be impacted the organisation still holds a 4-month buffer in line with their policy. They will concentrate on securing funding for future years to ensure they can maintain this position and increase free reserves.

Year end as at 31st March	2019 Signed Accounts £	2020 Forecast £	2021 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	65,779	152,518	170,566
- % of Income confirmed as at 05/05/2020	N/A	100%	94%
Expenditure	(114,435)	(167,647)	(194,235)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(41,180)	(15,129)	(23,669)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(801)	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(41,009)	(15,129)	(23,669)
	(41,810)	(15,129)	(23,669)
Operating Expenditure (unrestricted)	88,894	146,173	187,035
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	41,398	26,269	2,600
No of months of operating expenditure	5.6	2.2	0.2
Reserves policy target	60,000	60,000	60,000
No of months of operating expenditure	4.0	4.0	4.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(18,602)	(33,731)	(57,400)

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
08/07/2020	(LCRF) £9,550 to fund the essential and urgent costs outlined in the application, so that the organisation can carry on providing support to Londoners.
31/01/2019	Application declined due to level of free reserves held.
23/11/2017	Application declined due to level of free reserves held.

Recommendation

The organisation provides a distinct service which is both needed and valued. They have an ethos which is friendly, efficient and professional and a set of services which are responsive to the needs of clients and volunteers. The Charity's five-year strategy is client focused and ambitious but also creative in its approach to addressing the management issues associated with expansion.

At the time of applying this funding would support the delivery of the befriending service as the Charity looks to expand its services. Since the impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic this funding will be utilised to ensure that all the Befriending Coordinators salaries are secure as they continue to offer support to the community they work with in unprecedented times. This application clearly aligns to the Positive Transitions programme as it will provide specialist services for older people. Funding is recommended as follows:

£130,000 over 5 years (£25,000; £25,500; £26,000; £26,500; £27,000) to contribute to the salary costs of the Befriending Coordinators and associated project costs to deliver a Befriending Service for older people in Ealing.

Approved.....
Chief Grants Officer /
Deputy CGO

Approved.....
Chair

Approved.....
Deputy Chair

Date.....

Date.....

Date.....