

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY: Bridging Divides – Cornerstone Fund**London Youth****Adv: Caspar Cech-Lucas****Amount requested: £300,000****Base: Hackney****Benefit: Croydon****Amount recommended: £300,000****The Lead Organisation**

London Youth (also known as The Federation of London Youth Clubs / LY) is a registered charity and leads the largest, longest-running youth sector network in the capital. Across its network of 637 youth organisations, 5,724 youth workers support 87,646 young people every week. London Youth is committed to strengthening London's youth organisations through strategic leadership, personalised support, training, delivering a quality mark scheme for youth work, and securing grants and programme funding for members.

The Partnership

The Partnership involves three core organisations: London Youth, Power the Fight, and the Brandon Centre, all of whom bring complementary skills, insight and experience on youth work, mental health, cultural sensitivity, and therapeutic interventions. London Youth and Power the Fight have worked together for around 18 months on a project funded by the Violence Reduction Unit. Power the Fight supported London Youth to scrutinise and build its cultural competencies. The Brandon Centre brings therapeutic expertise along with a willingness and appetite to address systemic racism within the mental health sector. If successful in securing a grant the aim is to engage at least 8 Croydon based youth organisations, three of whom have already been involved in the development stage (PlayPlace, Legacy Youth Zone, Gloves not Gunz). Croydon Council is keen to contribute and has offered in kind support with training and mapping of existing services. Alongside this, a range of therapeutic/mental health focused organisations and individual professionals will be drawn in to develop the model and deliver training. London Youth has experience in convening and facilitating projects of this size and scope. The partnership is mindful of the need to strike a balance between driving delivery and allowing for flexibility and meeting the needs of the youth sector and youth workers.

The Proposal

This is a coherent and well thought through proposal to develop a place-based model to build the capacity of the youth sector to support the mental health needs of young people in Croydon. This pilot scheme will create cross sector partnerships and build a community of practice to upskill youth workers on mental health support

through training and clinical supervision. Alongside this, therapeutic professionals will also receive training and support to build cultural competency to improve their own practice and work towards breaking down structural discrimination within the sector. London Youth has worked closely with Power the Fight in the development phase to identify key partners, run consultations with youth workers, training providers, NHS representatives, young people, and black led community groups.

The partnership has been careful to identify local needs, secure local support and to ensure the project is complementary to other work already underway. Many youth workers are having to triage and help young people navigate mental health challenges. There is widespread acknowledgement that community based mental health interventions and preventative work is crucial. Rather than turning youth workers and grassroots organisations into mental health practitioners, this is about equipping staff with the necessary skills and clinical support. Careful consideration has been given to safeguarding. With the systemic issues around lack of access and diversity within the mental health sector, youth workers are in prime position to be part of the solution, especially for young people of colour, given the demographics of London. At the end of the two years, it is hoped that the project will have piloted a model to:

- Enable youth workers to support young people with their mental health
- Establish local collaboration between the youth and therapeutic sectors
- Identify ways to ensure counselling and clinical mental health support can be more accessible for marginalised and minoritized communities.

Cornerstone Fund Outcomes

This proposal addresses 3 of the main Cornerstone Fund outcomes, under the headings of 'capacity and capability' (through ensuring youth workers, the youth sector and therapeutic professionals are better placed to support young people and make appropriate referrals); 'co-production' (by working with young people, youth workers and therapeutic professionals to design and deliver solutions); and 'collaboration' (by ensuring better working relationships and respect between the youth and therapeutic sectors).

Equity Considerations

The project was developed with the voices of the communities it is hoping to impact at its core, including young people with lived experience of mental health challenges, black youth sector CEOs with lived experience, and youth workers who live in and represent excluded and discriminated communities. Equity considerations are essential for the systems change that this partnership is hoping to enact.

Financial Information

LY's 2021 accounts show a deficit, with the forecast for the two years following expected to show further deficits. The 2021 deficit is against restricted funds, but deficits are expected against both restricted and unrestricted lines in 2022 and 2023

(with 2023 showing a reduced overall deficit). LY's Free unrestricted reserves stood at £3.3m in 2021, which is above the organisation's reserves target of 3-6 months of total expenditure, although the organisation aims to hold 6 months by 2025 (estimated to be £4m). This 6-month reserves target is ambitious, and although the organisation's reserves are declining within the table below, they remain above 3 months of expenditure (3.9 months in 2023). This steady decline of free reserves is discussed in the organisation's 2021 accounts, but as noted the reserves remain above target levels. In addition, of total designated funds of just over £11m, £4.3m is designated towards a 'development fund' which is being held for the long term in investments. These funds are designated for the longer-term sustainability of the charity, giving assurances that the organisation has a longer-term financial strategy in place. There has been investment in fundraising, specifically corporate and high net worth individual, to further diversify income streams to complement LY's strong trust and foundations track record, all of which will support the organisation in its longer-term financial sustainability and mitigate the identified decline in free reserves. The organisation is confident it can remain a going concern.

Year end as at 31st August	2021	2022	2023
	Signed Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	5,341,742	6,448,387	7,268,837
Expenditure	(6,625,326)	(7,403,453)	(7,719,787)
Gains/(losses)	1,053,573	0	0
Surplus/(deficit)	(230,011)	(955,066)	(450,950)
Reserves:			
Total endowed	1,634,806	1,634,806	1,634,806
Total restricted	652,741	227,035	15,417
Total unrestricted	14,545,442	14,016,082	13,776,750
Total reserves	16,832,989	15,877,923	15,426,973
Of which: free unrestricted	3,300,787	2,771,427	2,532,095
Reserves policy target	1,656,332	1,850,863	1,929,947
Free reserves over/(under) target	1,644,456	920,564	602,148

Recommendation

This is a strong and well-developed partnership to pilot a potentially game-changing place-based model to build the capacity of the youth sector and therapeutic professionals to support young people's mental health needs in Croydon. Funding at the level requested is recommended:

£300,000 over two years (£138,000; £162,000) to pilot a place-based model to build the capacity of the youth sector to support young people's mental health needs in Croydon.