



<b>Committee:</b> Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board City Bridge Foundation Board	<b>Date:</b> 16 September 2024 19 September 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Strategic Initiative: London Legal Support Trust (Ref. 23852)	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Sacha Rose-Smith, Chief Funding Director	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Sandra Jones, Funding Manager	

## Summary

London Legal Support Trust (LLST) is a registered charity (number 1101906) which was initially incorporated (Company number 4930926) as the London Law Trust, changing its name to LLST, which registered as a charity in 2004. LLST works to assist voluntary sector legal advice agencies and law centres in London and the Home Counties by providing them with a range of support including grant funding. LLST is part of a network of seven Legal Support Trusts across England and Wales working with the Access to Justice Foundation to support pro bono and advice agencies. The charity has four core strands of work in support of free legal advice services in London which are raising funds to distribute as grants; working collaboratively with others to raise funds for the free legal advice sector; supporting the improved management and infrastructure of the sector through the Centres of Excellence programme; and helping reduce costs and save money through pro bono or discounted schemes.

This report requests funding of £1,440,363 over five years towards two previously funded programmes, the Centres of Excellence (CoEx) (funded under Bridging Divides) and a Strategic Initiative to develop and maintain a London-wide specialist advice forum (LSAF). City Bridge Foundation (CBF) has funded advice work for much of its history, with specific funding strands/priorities devoted to it during the current (Bridging Divides) and previous (Investing in Londoners) funding strategies as well as Strategic Initiatives. The programmes currently funded, CoEx and LSAF, are both due to finish their funding imminently and it is proposed that their funding be combined into one strategic grant.

## Recommendations

It is recommended that the Funding Committee of the City Bridge Foundation Board, in the discharge of functions for the City Corporation as Trustee of CBF and solely in the charity's best interests:

- i) Endorse the award of £1,440,400 over five years (£271,300; £279,400; £287,800; £296,500; £305,400) to LLST towards continuation funding to provide second tier infrastructure support through the previously funded Centres of Excellence programme and the London Specialist Advice Forum;
- ii) The above being subject to the financial assessment of LLST being undertaken by the funding team with sign-off received from the CBF Finance Director (in line with authority levels, this being a grant request above £1m);



- iii) Delegate the decision to approve the Grant Offer Letter (thereby formally committing to the funds) relating to the £1,440,400 set out in this report, to the Acting CBF Managing Director, Chair, CBF Board and Deputy Chair, CBF Board, in consultation with the CBF Finance Director.
- iv) Should there be substantive alterations to the arrangements set out in this paper, the decision outlined in the recommendation will return to the Funding Committee and CBF Board.

It is recommended that the City Bridge Foundation Board, in the discharge of functions for the City Corporation as Trustee of CBF and solely in the charity's best interests:

- i) Agree the award of £1,440,400 over five years (£271,300; £279,400; £287,800; £296,500; £305,400) to LLST towards continuation funding to provide second tier infrastructure support through the previously funded Centres of Excellence programme and the London Specialist Advice Forum, with the terms as endorsed by the Funding Committee.

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. Within legal support, three levels of advice are offered: information, generalist (with or without casework) and specialist. Information advice provides information only, such as leaflets or signposting. In broad terms, generalist advice services can identify legal issues and give clients the knowledge and guidance to resolve these and may take responsibility for moving the issue forward (case work); specialist advice organisations can undertake ongoing case work, as well as advocacy and representation. Specialist advice services may also indicate services delivering advice to a specified client group with a particular combination and/or complexity of legal needs (for example, women, disabled people, students, migrant communities etc).
2. CBF has a long history of funding the advice sector to address inequalities in London by enabling more Londoners to access debt and legal advice services for support before they hit crisis point. This has been a specific theme within BD. Funding advice work complements most of CBF's other funding streams such as those addressing homelessness or working with disabled people, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. This funding covers both generalist and specialist advice levels, and CBF is one of the few funders in London that include generalist level advice.
3. There have also been strategic grants such as projects partnering with the Legal Education Foundation (LEF) e.g., £500,000 towards an Immigration Advice grants programme (also supported by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and Trust for London) and, since 2016, supporting the provision of Justice First Fellowships (also supported by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy) which



encourages and enables newly qualified lawyers to practice in the social justice arena. CBF has also partnered with LLST by jointly funding its CoEx project (since 2014) working with smaller organisations to capacity build their specialist advice. CBF also funds a London-wide advice sector forum and a one-off grant for a billing co-ordinator (a joint project with the LEF and LLST) to support agencies who get legal aid to bill the Legal Aid Agency properly and so make them more sustainable.

4. LLST have been one of our main partners over the years in supporting legal advice centred in being cost-effective and sustainable. They offer Grants Plus support through money-saving schemes and running or funding places on training courses depending on agencies' needs and offers advice, support and guidance where possible. In July 2022, CBF awarded £6,000,000 as our biggest Alliance Partnership for running costs and onward grant making as part of the Advice Skills Development Fund, which was part of Propels 'robust safety net' theme.

### **Current Application**

5. In addition to the Alliance Partnership funding, LLST have been funded over several years for two main programmes, the CoEx since 2014 and the LSAF since 2019. By merging the funding for these two programmes, LLST will be delivering on three outcomes.
6. Outcome 1 will increase access to specialist free legal advice provision in each local authority in London. This will be achieved by: engaging with 60 advice agencies through the CoEx; building more robust local partnerships/referral networks; act as a catalyst to engage specialist legal advice and small non-specialist agencies to increase advice offer to those in need; topic specific areas of advice training; provide infrastructure consultancy to ensure the agencies remain open to support their communities; support existing specialist agencies to work with local agencies to provide outreach services into advice deserts; tailored consultancy support for legal aid tendering and quality marks so advice agencies can secure contracts and deliver services to an accredited standard; provide employee assistance programmes to staff of the CoEX agencies.
7. Outcome 2 is to increase awareness of the need for specialist legal advice amongst key stakeholders, funders and policymakers. This will generate increased funding for this sector, including through partnerships, improving the ability of advice agencies to provide vital support to more Londoners and maintain longer-term sustainability. This will be achieved through the Advice Forum creating a platform to enable agencies to talk about the importance of their work; giving them access to funders to share their work; learning and feedback loop on current and emerging issues within the advice sector; awareness raising and a weekly newsletter.
8. Outcome 3 is to increase sustainability of existing organisations and developing specialist advice organisations, this will lead to more free legal advice providers having diversified funding bases, strengthening their resilience and maintaining lower overheads with shared learning and opportunities to develop collaborative



work and access peer support to enable robust communities of practice. This will be achieved by providing tailored consultancy and training; peer mentoring; money saving scheme, building partnerships within the sector, particularly between specialist and generalist agencies; building partnerships for procuring advice contracts and developing pilots based on self-identified needs.

9. By merging the two programmes, LLST have been able to ensure a comprehensive and effective offer based on consultation within the LSAF and an extensive review of the CoEx scheme (attached at Appendix B).
10. The funding requested is a merger of the two programmes and covers the costs of a FTE senior programmes manager, a FTE development officer and associated running costs. This merger yields some savings from the two separate schemes.

### Financial Information

11. The table below covers the financial year 2022 signed accounts (LLST financial year is January – December), with draft accounts for 2023 and management accounts for 2024. The 2024 budget shows a deficit of £557,760. This deficit is due to the timing of grants in and out of the account as well as the organisation attempting in 2024 to spend down the reserve surplus built up in 2023 (623,768). Their reserves policy of maintaining 6 months of general expenditure requires approximately £450,000 and their 2024 figures will be in excess of this. Going forward LLST will be looking for small surpluses, as it is not their intention to hold excessive reserves, especially considering their beneficiaries' ever-increasing demands, but they endeavour to hold unrestricted free reserves in line with their policy, which is reviewed appropriately in line with changing economic/financial condition. Draft forecast figures for 2025 anticipate an income of £4,233,150 and expenditure of £4,209,117 leaving a surplus of £24,033. Their financial track record bears this out.

Year end as at 31 December	2022	2023	2024
	Signed Accounts	Draft accounts	Management Accounts
	£	£	£
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	2,031,610	3,659,160	4,253,470
Expenditure	(1,675,881)	(3,076,153)	(4,811,230)
<b>Surplus/(deficit)</b>	<b>355,729</b>	<b>583,007</b>	<b>(557,760)</b>
<b>Reserves:</b>			
Total restricted	244,474	725,804	194,944
Total unrestricted	121,256	254,191	227,291
<b>Total reserves</b>	<b>365,730</b>	<b>979,995</b>	<b>422,235</b>
Of which: free unrestricted	490,833	623,768	596,868
Reserves policy target	332,000	309,201	450,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	158,833	314,567	146,868



## Conclusion

12. LLST play a pivotal role in supporting the efficiency and effectiveness of the advice sector in London and is a key partner for CBF in driving forward improvement in the sector. The programmes, which have been funded separately until now, have demonstrated how they have improved the sector, with the report in Appendix B identifying how effective the CoEx is along with recommendations going forward, which have been incorporated in their application along with feedback from the LSAF members.
13. The funds will enable this important infrastructure work to continue, important at this time with increased demand for legal advice given the cost-of-living crisis and the level of funding being competitive. Each outcome is designed for closer collaboration between funders and the sector as well as larger and smaller groups, improving on the quality of advice given to a range of communities, addressing inequalities. This funding will allow for the continuation of the sector working with funders to co-produce solutions.

## Appendices

- Appendix A: LLST Funding History
- Appendix B: Draft Review of the Centres of Excellence scheme; future development of the scheme

## Sandra Jones

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## Appendix A: London Legal Support Trust Funding History

ID	Type	Meeting Date	Decision
20180	Inflationary Pressures Payment	12/06/2023	£11,900
19106	Bridging Divides	26/09/2022	£362,200 over two years (£176,100; £186,100) towards core salary and other costs to support the provision of Centres of Excellence in Greater London.
19437	Strategic Initiatives	20/06/2022	£6,000,000 over five years to the London Legal Support Trust for running costs and onward grant-making as part of the Advice Skills Development Fund.
19096	Strategic Initiatives	09/03/2022	£50,000 for the year towards the costs of a FTE Billing Co-ordinator and associated running costs as a partnership with LLST and LEF.
15445	Bridging Divides	25/07/2019	£464,000 over three years (£152,000; £154,000; £158,000) towards core salary and other costs to support the provision of Centres of Excellence in Greater London.
15328	Strategic Initiatives	25/07/2019	£345,000 over five years (£69,000 per annum) to the London Legal Support Trust to cover the cost of a f/t Development Officer plus senior officer support from the CEO and Head of Funding and associated project costs of establishing, developing and maintain
14136	Investing in Londoners	20/09/2017	£300,000 over two years (2 x £150,000) towards core salary and other costs to support the provision of Centres of Excellence in Greater London.
12218	Strategic Initiatives	13/03/2014	£450,000 over three years (3 x £150,000) towards core salary and other costs to support the provision of Centres of Excellence in Greater London.
IPP567	Inflationary Pressures Payment		£1,140



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## **Appendix B: Draft Review of the Centres of Excellence scheme; future development of the scheme**



FINAL DRAFT -  
Report on the future