

Committee:	Date:	Ref No.
The City Bridge Trust	9 th January 2014	
Subject: Partnership with Prisoners Abroad	Public	
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For Decision	
<u>Summary</u>		
<p>Following your Quinquennial Review 2012/13, this paper sets out proposals to develop a hardship fund, in partnership with Prisoners Abroad, for British citizens returning to London after imprisonment overseas whose sentences are spent and who are at high risk of street homelessness as a result of destitution.</p> <p>Recommendation</p> <p>That Prisoners Abroad is awarded a grant of £330,000 from your grants budget for 2013/14 in order to establish and administer a hardship fund for destitute British citizens returning to London after imprisonment overseas.</p>		

Main Report

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At your June 2013 meeting, you received a paper outlining the proposed programmes for the Trust for the next five years, following your latest Quinquennial Review. These were approved by the Court of Common Council in July 2013.
- 1.2 As well as your open programmes, *Investing in Londoners*, which were 'soft-launched' at the end of September 2013, you approved a number of partnership programmes to be developed over the coming months, including the establishment of two hardships funds to support individuals in need. One of these was a partnership with the Buttle UK to establish a hardship fund for survivors of domestic violence in London and you approved proposals for this at your last meeting. The other was to establish a hardship fund in partnership with Prisoners Abroad (PA) in order to help British citizens returning to London after imprisonment overseas. This paper sets out proposals for the development and resourcing of this partnership.

2.0 About Prisoners Abroad

- 2.1 PA is the only UK charity caring for the welfare of British prisoners held in foreign prisons, often in conditions that seriously threaten their physical and mental health. During 2012/13, it provided assistance to 1,745 Britons detained overseas in a total of 95 countries.
- 2.2 It has three main areas of activity:
- **Working with clients during prison sentences.** PA provides a vital link between prisoners detained overseas and various agencies both in the UK and in the country in which they are held. PA provides specialist advice to prisoners and their families, including information on foreign criminal justice systems, prisoners' rights, prison conditions, parole, remission and transfer to the UK. It also provides grants to assist those in financial hardship. Last year, this amounted to £250,000 of which £114,000 provided 446 prisoners with survival grants to provide additional food where the quantity and quality of food is inadequate. Last Year, PA provided assistance to 1,745 Britons detained overseas in a total of 95 countries.
 - **Working with families and friends of those detained.** Last year, over 2,000 families were registered to receive PA's services, an increase of just under 600 from the previous year. PA provides advice, support and information to friends and family about foreign prison conditions and criminal justice systems. It aims to aid communication between families and the imprisoned family member and to prevent family relationships from breaking down, for example, by developing an interactive scrapbook to enable families, especially those with children, to stay in touch with their relative in prison. It also helps families to book and arrange visits, and last year helped 29 families with grants of £9,400 to visit their relative overseas.
 - **Resettlement work following release from prison:** PA's resettlement service provides a range of services designed to prevent homelessness and destitution for Britons returning to the UK. Last year, 156 returning ex-prisoners used the resettlement service and PA provided £82,400 in emergency grants for accommodation, food, travel, clothes, toiletries and other survival items.
- 2.3 It provides free and confidential services on the basis of need. It does not campaign to get prisoners released and it cannot give legal advice, pay fines or visit prisoners overseas.

3.0 About Prisoners Abroad Resettlement Service

- 3.1 Many of the people helped by its resettlement service have lived abroad for many years and don't have family or friends in the UK to help them. They are not entitled to statutory support because they have not come through the UK prison system and they are therefore vulnerable to becoming homeless and/or reverting to criminal activity in order to support themselves. PA plays a pivotal role in preventing such a decline through its partnership with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

whose consular staff take PA's registration forms into prison which means it has some information about an individual's needs prior to their release. It also works in partnership with the Travel-Care charities based at airports which will issue returning prisoners with a ticket they can use to travel to the offices of PA. Here they can access crisis support such as a shower, toiletries, clothes and emergency housing, followed by 2-4 months of support from a resettlement officer. Once the client's most urgent needs have been met, that is, they have temporary accommodation, they are claiming benefits and they have received any urgent medical attention they may need, then PA will refer them on to other relevant agencies that can provide further specialist support.

4.0 Why the need?

- 4.1 Many of the ex-prisoners supported by PA either left the UK as children, or have lived a long time overseas. It means that when they return, sometimes as a result of a deportation order, they have nowhere to live and no family to turn to. Some may be traumatised after surviving a harsh prison regime and some may have lost contact with family during a long period of incarceration.
- 4.2 PA's clients often arrive back to the UK with complex emotional and psychological problems which prevent them from getting their lives back on track. The needs of its clients can be varied and complex, ranging from separation from family and friends as a result of deportation; trauma following harsh prison conditions; addictions or mental health problems that may have led to their incarceration in the first place; loss of contact with family and friends.
- 4.3 PA's clients typically arrive back in the UK with no money and nowhere to stay and have no NI or NHS number that would enable them to open a bank account, claim benefits, access health services, and find employment. As well as the psychological problems described earlier, they may also have little knowledge of systems and culture in the UK, such as the benefits or employment system.
- 4.4 Since April 2013, PA's clients have not been able to access the previously centralised Social Fund, since its devolution to local authorities. In order to access a Crisis Loan, to cover the cost of a rent deposit, for example, applicants have to prove a local connection, including a minimum residency of 6 months, or proof that they have been homeless in the borough. As a consequence, PA is increasingly helping its clients with these costs.
- 4.5 Historically, it has funded its resettlement services (and the other areas in which it supports individuals) through a mix of grants, individual and major-donor giving programmes and trusts and foundations. Core support from trusts and foundations play a crucial part in providing stability and the capacity for forward-planning. PA is now moving into a

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more challenging period as its clients need more support and for a longer period as a result of changes to the benefits system. The partnership with the Trust will enable it to maintain the quality of its resettlement service and provide a solid foundation for the development of future services.

5.0 How the Trust's funding would be used

- 5.1 The resettlement officer's initial interview with a client is key to assessing their need for funds. The majority of PA's clients are men and they may well have arrived in shoes and clothes in appropriate for the climate, in need of a shave and/or a wash. The resettlement officer will build a picture of the client and what is needed to see them through the challenging first few days and weeks following their return to the UK.
- 5.2 PA's clients use its re-settlement service as a last resort because there is no alternative help available. The hardship fund would be used for the following, depending on the most pressing needs of the client:
- **Emergency Accommodation:** PA will book its clients into hostels or Bed and Breakfast to ensure they have a roof over their heads during the first few days and weeks of their return and will meet the cost (between £100 and £150 per week) until their benefits come through or they have secured employment, whichever is sooner.
 - **Subsistence:** Clients with no money may be provided with up to £5 per day for food until benefit claims (or employment) come through.
 - **Travel:** Travel grants (usually Oyster cards) give clients the necessary mobility to sort out vital administrative matters in the crucial days and weeks after their return. It enables them to register at their local Job Centre, attend medical appointments or get to a hostel for an overnight stay, for example.
 - **Basic necessities:** Some clients arrive only with the clothes they stand up in. PA is able to assist with clothes, toiletries, a map of London and other items critical to day to day survival.
 - **Passports:** Many clients arrive back in the UK with only an Emergency Travel Document, not a passport. A passport, especially for those who have lived overseas for a long time, is key to proving their identity and therefore complete registrations and access services. Some of PA's grants therefore help clients to obtain a passport.
 - **Pre-paid mobile phones:** A mobile phone can help clients to complete vital administrative tasks where they do not have access to a landline as well as to make contact with family and friends.
 - **Agency fees, rents in advance, deposits:** Whilst its clients are in temporary accommodation, PA helps its clients to find more permanent accommodation. Clients need an address in order to claim benefits, look for work, and to be able to complete many registrations – from applying for a library card, to opening a bank account, to obtaining a NHS number. With soaring rents in London, and a lack of available social housing, it is very difficult for PA's clients to access reasonable, affordable housing. To help its London clients, PA has developed

relationships with private lettings agencies and social enterprises that specialise in housing ex-offenders. These organisations typically charge an agency fee, a month's rent in advance and, on occasion, a deposit. PA awards grant to meet these costs.

- **Starter packs:** Once its clients are ready to move into longer-term accommodation, PA assists with basic starter packs that include items such as a kettle, cutlery, crockery, basic kitchen equipment and bedding.

5.3 The vast majority of grants awarded are paid directly to the supplier, giving reassurance that funds are used for their intended purpose.

6.0 Monitoring & Evaluation

6.1 Last year, PA introduced a new evaluation framework to help it evaluate its success. As well as quantifiable information, such as the number and type of grants awarded, PA will measure the extent to which grants have helped clients re-settle, gain independence and improve their emotional well-being. PA uses a comprehensive exit questionnaire for clients who have received its services which covers a range of questions about which of PA's services they have used and how helpful they have found them, together with a number of questions about their health and well-being.

6.2 It also holds an annual focus group. Last year, this involved 30 clients, whose feedback included:

- 83% had benefitted from its emergency accommodation grants
- 97% had received assistance in applying for state benefits
- 47% said that PA had referred to employment advice services
- 20% said that PA had referred them to education and training services
- 95% said that the travel grants had made it is easier for them to attend appointments

7.0 Cost

7.1 PA has submitted an indicative annual budget which includes a 15% contribution to its overheads as well as a contribution towards evaluation. This is set out in the Table 1 below which shows the number, type and value of grants that are proposed. This will enable a minimum of 150 people to be supported. Some clients will need more than one category of grant, depending on their circumstances

7.2 As this is a new way of working for the Trust, it is recommended that you take the same approach with this grant as you did with Buttle UK by committing funds for 18 months initially. This would give time for the partnership to run for a year and to then be evaluated. A re-assessment of the likely funding requirement going forward would then be presented to your Committee during 2014/15.

Table 1

Costs	Year 1		Year 2		Total
	No	£	No	£	
Emergency Accommodation	100	52,000	50	26,000	78,000
Subsistence Grants	140	16,700	70	8,350	25,050
Travel Grants	150	20,000	75	10,000	30,000
Basic Necessity Grants	100	4,000	50	2,000	6,000
Passports @ £70	45	3,150	22	1,540	4,690
Mobile Phones @ £30	60	1,800	30	900	2,700
Agency fees, rents in advance & deposits	60	82,500	30	41,250	123,750
Starter Packs @ £100 average	60	6,000	30	3,000	9,000
Total Grants		186,150		93,040	279,190
Contribution to Monitoring & Evaluation		5,850		2,960	8,810
Contribution to overheads		28,000		14,000	42,000
Grand Total		220,000		110,000	330,000

8.0 Financial Observations

- 8.1 The proposed grant contribution from the City Bridge Trust is £330,000 over an initial 18 month period. It is anticipated that £42,000 of the grant will be used to meet the overhead costs of the Charity in administering this hardship fund, £8,810 will be used towards evaluations costs, with the remaining £279,190 directed towards "Crisis", "Move On" and "Bridging" support costs. It is proposed that the grant will be released on a phased basis as required by the charity. The intention is to maintain a level of at least £10,000 in the hardship fund. The initial tranche of hardship funding will be £50,000, in addition to the overhead costs which will be paid quarterly.
- 8.2 Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013 indicate a surplus for the year of £10,086 (0.75% of turnover), comprising a deficit for the year of £53,414 Restricted Funds and a surplus of £63,500 on Unrestricted Funds. The net total funds as at 31 March 2013 were £498,558 (including £43,760 Fixed Assets) comprising £20,000 in Restricted Funds and £478,558 in Unrestricted Funds.
- 8.3 The reserves policy states that the organisation aims to hold a level of free reserves ranging from £386,000 to £567,000 for risk mitigation. Free reserves held at 31 March 2013 were £434,798 comprising total funds less restricted funds and net fixed assets. This is equivalent to 6.5 months' unrestricted expenditure.
- 8.4 The budget for 2013/14 shows a total projected actual income of £1.52 million and projected actual expenditure of some £1.55 million. Confirmed/received income totals £1.32 million and unconfirmed income

totals some £202,000. A deficit of some £26,000 is currently projected for the year.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 The proposed partnership with PA is intended to complement two of your new Investing in Londoners programmes, 'Reducing Poverty' and 'Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Offenders'.
- 9.2 PA has the expertise and track record to support a highly vulnerable client group at a critical time during their return to London. Arriving in London without basics such as a travel card, and often no family or friends, is traumatic and it would be all too easy for these individuals to become suicidal, drift into substance abuse or re-offend and/or become street homeless. PA is able to provide the practical and emotional support to aid their successful resettlement.
- 7.3 As this is a pilot, it is recommended that you commit funds for 18 months initially, with a decision regarding the level of future funding based on an evaluation of the first 12-18 months.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1 That Prisoners Abroad is awarded a grant of £330,000 from your grants budget for 2013/14 in order to establish and administer a hardship fund for destitute British citizens returning to London after imprisonment overseas.

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