

City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

Organisation: Action for Stammering Children	Grant ref: 10856 (CR)	Programme area: Positive Transitions to Independent Living\ Young disabled people in transition into adulthood
Amount, date and purpose of grant: 17/11/2011: £90,000 over three years (3 x £30,000) towards the costs of providing specialist consultation to young Londoners.		
Visiting Grants Officer: Ciaran Rafferty, accompanied by Mrs Littlechild	Date of meeting: 23 rd January 2014	
Met with: Patrick Tonks (Chief Exec) and Elaine Kelman (Clinical Manager)		
1. Introduction to the organisation: Action for Stammering Children (ASC) is a charity which supports expert therapy to transform the lives of children and young people who stammer. The organisation is often referred to, incorrectly, as the Michael Palin Centre, which is located in Islington and has developed a world-wide reputation for its work in this field. ASC, in fact, was founded in 1989 and is the charity <i>behind</i> the Michael Palin Centre (founded in 1993) and the more recently established Stammering Support Centre in Leeds. Although these two centres employ many therapists the charity itself (ASC) is exceptionally lean – with a f/t Chief Executive and one p/t Administrator.		
2. The project funded: Prior to delivering the therapies to children and young people the organisation aims to provide a programme of consultation and assessment of/for both the child and their parents/family. This is essential to ensuring that the therapy itself is correctly tailored to individual needs and circumstances. Each one of these pre-therapy programmes costs, on average, £836 per child so the £30,000 annual grant covers in the region of 37 such consultations per year. The grant commenced in December 2011.		
3. Work delivered to date: Stammering is not something that can be fixed permanently but it can be managed. It can be triggered by an event or other factors (e.g. the change from primary to secondary school) so the key is to address the relevant factors in order to alleviate the chance of it happening and/or the ability of the child to manage it so that it doesn't get in the way of their development and health. The earlier a child can be helped the greater the chance that the problems will not become entrenched. Because the cause and resolution of stammering is so personal it follows that the more bespoke the therapy, the more successful it is likely to be. Pre-therapy assessment, funded by the Trust, allows for two therapists to provide, on average, 2 hours of work with the child and their families. (The NHS will fund only up to ½ hour of this end of the treatment hence the need for independent funding.) In the first two years of the grant (from Dec 2011 – Nov 2013) Trust funding provided for approximately 70 pre-therapy consultations.		

4. Difference made:

The pre-therapy consultations clearly have a direct effect on the quality and impact of the therapeutic treatment of the child but they also have a significant impact on the child's family as they are included in the process to a greater or lesser extent. Their inclusion helps them better understand the specific issues that may be affecting the child's speech – and thereby help to alleviate some possible factors and/or making the treatment become more focused and more likely to succeed. Seeing a child fail to manage their stammer and all the consequent implications (e.g. becoming more withdrawn, being bullied, etc.) can be heart-breaking for a parent and the fact of involving them in the early stages of diagnosis and treatment is essential to their wellbeing as well. It is not unusual, for example, for a parent to have had stammer themselves and if they have "grown out of it" as can happen then they feel that their child will be okay and will, too, grow out of it. The consultations with the therapists are essential to ensuring that, in these instances, the child continues to get the treatment s/he needs.

In monitoring information provided by the organisation, over 80% of parents attending the consultation believe that it has helped them better understand their child's needs and that it has provided a positive way forward for them and their child. A similar percentage of the *therapists* said that the consultations helped them better understand the child's difficulties and were better able to devise a more suitable programme of treatment.

5. Grants Administration:

The grant has been administered and monitored effectively and with no compliance issues arising at any time. The organisation has been happy with their dealings with the Trust.

6. Concluding comments:

Stammering affects many children, with 6 males affected for every one female. By way of introduction to this meeting the organisation played a short but powerful video of some young children telling of the various difficulties arising from their stammering. The impact is different from person to person and so it stands to reason that treatment should follow suit. The Trust's support of pre-therapy consultation makes the eventual treatment more effective and more sustainable. It also has a distinct benefit to the parents/carers and siblings – making them more aware of the triggers and of the methods of managing the condition and ensuring that the young person has an effective support system based on what is right for them. Sadly, there are far too few services such as those provided by ASC – making what they do even more valuable. This is a well-run, experienced, efficient and effective organisation at the leading edge of work in this field.