

MEETING 10/04/2014

Ref: 12047

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty

North Kensington Law Centre

Adv: Jenny Field

Base: Kensington & Chelsea

Benefit: Kensington & Chelsea

Amount requested: £106,100

{Revised request: £150,000}

Amount recommended: £150,000

Purpose of grant request: To improve triage for all users of our services to be able to support more vulnerable people whether they qualify for legal aid or not.

Background

North Kensington Law Centre (NKLC) was established in 1970 as the first Law Centre in the country with the aim of providing free/affordable independent legal advice, principally for residents of North Kensington, although it is able to see people from all parts of London. It is located in Goldbourne Ward, ranked the second most deprived in London on the 2010 Indices of Deprivation.

NKLC currently has two legal aid contracts, one covering housing, the other immigration and asylum. It also provides legal advice on welfare benefits and employment. All individuals attending NKLC will receive basic advice and information but where this is in areas of law that fall outside its specific expertise, the individual will be referred to other agencies. It also works with other advice agencies in the borough in order to share good practice and resources and avoid unnecessary duplication.

Funding History

None.

Current Application

The communities NKLC serves have been severely impacted by the combination of reductions in state benefits on the one hand, resulting in more complex client needs, and cuts in funding for advice services on the other, making it more difficult to access legal advice at a time when it is needed more than ever. Since April 2013, legal aid has no longer been available for employment and welfare benefits advice and the number of immigration cases covered by legal aid has reduced.

Currently, NKLC is only able to help those people that fall into the areas where it already has funding or legal aid contracts – housing, immigration and asylum, and welfare benefits. Of the 150+ enquiries that it receives each month, it turns away around 40, either because it lacks capacity to help them or because the person's need falls outside the categories for which it has funding. In order to rise to the challenge of how to meet a growing demand for services at a time of reduced resources, NKLC has just introduced a triage service which enables it to assess, signpost and engage with larger numbers of people. The application before you requests funding over three years to build and embed this model through the employment of a full-time Triage Co-ordinator and related costs.

As well as an overall increased number of people seeking advice, NKLC is seeing more people facing multiple problems and its caseloads are becoming increasingly complex. All too often with welfare benefits, housing and employment cases, there is a link with depression and mental health. Many of those it sees do not speak English as a first language, are isolated and vulnerable, and are often caught in a loop of navigating complex benefits, employment issues and housing issues, often falling at every hurdle. Without assistance and representation these problems are not resolved and so much of the emphasis of NKLC's work has become advocacy based.

The triage service enables each person's individual needs to be assessed and to then be presented with a package of options – these may include referral to other agencies; identifying pro bono support; providing access to self-help materials; as well as offering legal support and in-house representation. Critical to the success of this model will be the recruitment of volunteers who are then trained in the triage approach. NKLC has a good track record in recruiting volunteers with a legal background. It is hoped to build on this by offering more formal, paid internships in order to retain volunteers trained in triage matters. The volunteers will be able to provide vital 'hand-holding', meaning that when someone is referred to another agency, for example, the volunteer will broker that to ensure the client does not become 'lost'.

Financial Observations

Audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013 show a surplus of £2,191 (0.5% of turnover) all on unrestricted funds.

The charity's reserves policy is to hold three months' worth of running costs as free unrestricted reserves which the trustees have calculated to be £83,500 in the 2012/13 accounts. As at 31st March 2013, free unrestricted reserves were below target at £8,509 which represents 1.2 weeks' worth of 2013/14 total expenditure.

Latest management accounts for 2013/14 show total income of £386,100 all of which is confirmed, and a projected surplus of £35,700 (9.2% of turnover), comprising £7,700 on unrestricted funds and £28,000 on restricted funds.

NKLC's budget for 2014/15 shows income of £443,449, of which £308,449 (70%) had been confirmed as at 18th March 2014. Of the unconfirmed income, £80,000 is expected from fee earnings during the year (2013/14: £65,000), £5,000 from sponsorship for the London Legal Walk, with the remaining balance of £50,000 subject to this application presented today. After total expenditure of £424,831, a surplus of £18,618 is anticipated, wholly on unrestricted funds. This should increase the free unrestricted reserves position to £34,827, equating to 1 months' worth of total 2014/15 expenditure.

Officer's Appraisal

In common with many voluntary independent advice centres NKLC has been through a challenging period due to loss of income from legal aid and other funding cuts. An Interim Director has been in post since September 2013 to oversee the changes the organisation needs to make in order to make itself sustainable. The 2014/15 budget seems realistic and, if achieved, will put NKLC in a healthier position than in the

previous two years. The proposed triage system is part of NKLC's overall strategy to make itself more efficient and effective. Your support will play a key role in enabling it to develop and embed this new approach and help to make it more accessible to vulnerable clients.

The original request did not include a full year's costs in Year 1 because the applicant wrongly assumed that because a decision was unlikely to be made until April, it could only request 9 months' worth of funding for that year. It also contained an error in the amount requested in Year 3 and £25,000 towards the Triage Co-ordinator salary had not been included. The funding level required is £50,000 per annum and this is recommended.

Recommendation

£150,000 over three years towards the salary of a Triage Co-ordinator and associated running costs of establishing a triage system within the law centre.

The City Bridge Trust

Investing In Londoners: Application for a grant



About your organisation

Name of your organisation: North Kensington Law Centre	
If your organisation is part of a larger organisation, what is its name? n/a	
In which London Borough is your organisation based? Kensington & Chelsea	
Contact person: Ms Raji Hunjan	Position: Interim Director
Website: http://www.nklc.co.uk	
Legal status of organisation: Registered Charity	Charity, Charitable Incorporated Company or company number: 279699
When was your organisation established? 08/06/1970	
Aims of your organisation: <p>To provide free and/or affordable legal advice to all of Kensington's communities (and also neighbouring boroughs) and particularly those from the North of the borough who otherwise cannot access legal help and support.</p>	
Main activities of your organisation: <p>We currently run two legal aid contracts - housing and asylum. Under each of these contracts we employ specialist solicitors to offer legal advice and representation to some of the borough's most vulnerable people. In addition we also employ a case worker to offer legal advice and support in the areas of welfare benefits and employment. All individuals who visit the law centre are offered very basic support and advice, but in the areas of law that we do not cover, we refer them on to other charities and agencies. We also work more broadly with other advice agencies in the Borough to develop a wider understanding and strategy for support people in the community.</p>	

Number of staff

Full-time:	Part-time:	Management committee members:	Active volunteers:
4	2	7	30

Property occupied by your organisation

Is the main property owned, leased or rented by your organisation?	If leased/rented, how long is the outstanding agreement?
Leased	6 years, renewable

Environmental Impact

City Bridge Trust wants to help voluntary sector organisations to have a positive environmental impact. Please tell us how much your organisation is already doing to have a positive environmental impact using the definitions below to help you decide.

Getting started: We try not to be wasteful and have introduced some simple 'green actions'.

Grant Request

Details of grant request

Under which of City Bridge Trust's programmes are you applying? Reducing Poverty
Which of the programme outcome(s) does your application aim to achieve? More people accessing debt and legal services More Londoners with improved economic circumstances
Please describe the purpose of your funding request in one sentence. To improve triage for all users of our services to be able to support more vulnerable people whether they qualify for legal aid or not.
When will the funding be required? 31/01/2014
How much funding are you requesting? Year 1: £31,050 Year 2: £50,600 Year 3: £24,450 Total: £106,100
Do you plan to continue the activity beyond the period for which you are requesting funding? If so, how do you intend to fund it? Yes. As our triage becomes more established, we will be able to raise further income through our legal aid contracts to make this more self sufficient.
If you need any planning or other statutory consents for the project to proceed, what stage have the applications reached? No

Summary of grant request

We want to increase our efficacy and ability to both reach more people in the community, but also in particular those who are severely disadvantaged with increasingly complex issues, whether they qualify or fall out of legal aid scope. We want to deliver this by providing an excellent service of triage, where we identify and assess the needs of each individual person and provide them with a package of suitable options; these may include referrals to other agencies, identifying pro bono legal support, providing access to educational and self help material, or offering legal support and representation in house. In cases where we refer clients to other agencies or legal advice services we will broker introductions to ensure a smooth transition. This service will be provided from our Golbourne Road office.

The need has been established mainly by understanding the types and number of people requiring specific legal assistance and debt advice that we currently are unable to help and therefore refer to other services. On a month on month basis, we turn away approx 40 people (450 a year) that require support in areas of law that are not covered by our existing services. These areas include family law, some aspects of immigration, criminal, education and some aspects of employment. All of these people are disadvantaged in that their income is too low to be able to afford the fees of private law firms. In addition, in the areas that we currently do cover - housing, asylum, welfare benefits and employment - we turn people away up to 300 people a year who would qualify for legal help simply because we have run out of capacity to take on their case.

The triage work that we propose is an open access service that will reach all communities of Kensington and Chelsea primarily, but also communities from neighbouring boroughs who require access to free and/or affordable legal advice. Whilst open access, all our services target groups facing multiple social issues (such as immigration, disabilities, mental health problems and homelessness) and therefore by its very nature reach the most disadvantaged.

The North Kensington Law Centre was the first Law Centre in the country, pioneering a community-based legal service which promotes rights and equality of opportunity. We have been serving the community of North Kensington for over 40 years and have established a history and tradition of fighting for justice on behalf of people from disadvantaged and vulnerable communities. In addition to our history, we have the energy and value base to keep on achieving social change with communities for the next 40 years and beyond. We are not afraid to hold power structures to account and in our recent past have taken on a range of sensitive issues such as trafficking and employment issues concerning migrant domestic workers.

In terms of meeting the good practice principles:

- we are currently negotiating with the Borough either a refit of our existing office or support to move into a fully serviced building, either options give us a chance to address our carbon footprint.
- we welcome all sections of the community, and many of our users are from BME background or have complex social issues and the triage work will enable us to support more diversity.
- our volunteers play a very important role in delivering our services and we want to strengthen this through the triage work.

Outputs and outcomes

What are the main activities or outputs you want to deliver? Please include no more than 5. By activities or outputs we mean the services, products or facilities you plan to deliver. If you plan to deliver work over more than one year you should include activities over the full grant period requested. Try to be specific.

To provide first stage triage for all visitors to the Law Centre. We want to offer 15/20 minutes of free legal support and advice to up 2,500 people in year one, increasing to 3,500 in year two and 4,000 in year three.

For those visitors who qualify for legal aid, we use activity one to assess the complexity of the case, and then start the process of supporting clients through volunteers before referring to the solicitor or case worker. this will enable us to support up more people each year.

For those who do not qualify for legal aid, we will use activity one to then support those people in other ways - referrals, access to pro bono, low cost charges, educational and self advocacy advice. This will be amount to 400 people year one, increasing to 500.

For the most complex cases for very vulnerable people that fall out of legal aid scope, we will endeavour to secure pro bono specialist support for 30 people in year one, 60 in year two and 90 in year three

To keep a detailed log of the people we help and the help they require to begin to develop other services and approaches to supporting the communities before the point of crisis.

What main differences or outcomes do you hope the activities you have described above will achieve? Please include no more than 5. By differences or outcomes we mean the changes, benefits, learning or other effects that result from the work your project would deliver. These might be for individuals, families, communities or the environment.

more people in kensington and beyond have access to specialist legal and debt advice

More people empowered to ask for help and to address their social/economic issues

More people with complex social and economic issues reached

more evidence and broader understanding of the people who access our services in order to provide additional preventative services

In terms of our organisation, more effective processes, policies and procedures by which to support our clients more effectively

Who will benefit?

About your beneficiaries

How many people will benefit directly from the grant per year?

2,600

In which Greater London borough(s) or areas of London will your beneficiaries live?

Kensington & Chelsea (70%)

Several SW London (10%)

Several NW London (10%)

London-wide (10%)

What age group(s) will benefit?

16-24

25-44

45-64

65-74

What gender will beneficiaries be?

All

What will the ethnic grouping(s) of the beneficiaries be?

A range of ethnic groups

If Other ethnic group, please give details:

What proportion of the beneficiaries will be disabled people?

11-20%

Funding required for the project

What is the total cost of the proposed activity/project?

Expenditure heading	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Triage Co-ordinator salary and on costs	30,000	31,500	33,000	94,500
Practice Co-ordinator salary and on costs	30,000	31,500	33,000	94,500
Volunteer expenses and subsistence	6,000	7,000	8,000	21,000
Core costs	15,000	17,000	20,000	52,000
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0

TOTAL:	81,000	87,000	94,000	262,000
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What income has already been raised?

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Big Lottery Transition Fund	14,000	15,000	0	29,000
Income earned through Legal Aid contracts (forecasted)	15,000	20,000	20,000	30,000
London Legal Support Trust	5,000	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0

TOTAL:	34,000	30,000	20,000	0
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What other funders are currently considering the proposal?

Source	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Law Society Charity	15,000	0	0	15,000
Lloyds TSB	14,000	14,000	0	28,000
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0

TOTAL:	29,000	14,000	0	0
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How much is requested from the Trust?

Expenditure heading	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Contribution to Triage Co-ordinator salary	21,000	22,000	25,000	68,000
Volunteer expenses and subsistence	6,000	7,000	8,000	21,000
Contribution to Practice Co-ordinator salary	0	15,000	10,000	30,000
Contribution to core costs @ 15%	4,050	6,600	6,450	18,000
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0

TOTAL:	31,050	50,600	24,450	106,100
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Finance details

Please complete using your most recent audited or independently examined accounts.

Financial year ended:	Month: March	Year: 2013
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Income received from:	£
Voluntary income	0
Activities for generating funds	0
Investment income	99
Income from charitable activities	359,134
Other sources	54,100
Total Income:	413,333

Expenditure:	£
Charitable activities	404,853
Governance costs	6,289
Cost of generating funds	0
Other	0
Total Expenditure:	411,142
Net (deficit)/surplus:	2,191
Other Recognised Gains/(Losses):	0
Net Movement in Funds:	0

Asset position at year end	£
Fixed assets	1,102
Investments	0
Net current assets	8,509
Long-term liabilities	0
*Total Assets (A):	9,611

Reserves at year end	£
Endowment funds	0
Restricted funds	0
Unrestricted funds	9,611
*Total Reserves (B):	9,611

*** Please note that total Assets (A) and Total Reserves (B) should be the same.**

Statutory funding

For your most recent financial year, what % of your income was from statutory sources?
81-90%

Organisational changes

Describe any significant changes to your structure, financial position or core activities since the date of your most recent accounts:

We have seen a dramatic cut in legal aid funding since changes in legal aid post April 2013, in response we have made 4 solicitors/caseworkers redundant. Improving triage is a way of still providing a quality service. An interim director is overseeing a change process for a permanent director to lead post March 2014.

Previous funding received

Please list the funding received by your organisation from the following statutory sources during the last THREE years.

	2010 £	2011 £	2012 £
City of London (except City Bridge Trust)	0	0	0
London Local Authorities	44,120	44,120	44,120
London Councils	123,681	77,709	6,918
Health Authorities	0	0	0
Central Government departments	311,400	256,233	250,099
Other statutory bodies	42,500	50,000	0

Previous grants received

Please list the grants received by your organisation from charitable trusts and foundations (other than City Bridge Trust) during the last THREE years. List source, years and annual amounts. Please include the 5 largest only.

Name of Funder	2010 £	2011 £	2012 £
tudor trust	16,875	16,875	0
Esmee Fairbairn	0	33,007	55,011
Trust for London	0	44,000	9,000
London Legal Support Trust	0	25,000	0
	0	0	0

Declaration

I confirm that, to the best of my knowledge, all the information I have provided in this application form is correct. I fully understand that City Bridge Trust has zero tolerance towards fraud and will seek to prosecute and recover funds in every instance.

Please confirm: Yes Full Name: **Raji Hunjan**

Role within **Director**
Organisation: