

MEETING 19/06/14

Ref: 12177

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health

Women's Therapy Centre

Adv: Jemma Grieve Combes

Base: Islington

Amount requested: £120,000

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £120,000

Purpose of grant request: The Affirm project will work with women from poor communities including asylum seekers, offenders and those in debt, and who are at risk of self-harm and suicide.

Background

Established in 1976, the Women's Therapy Centre (WTC) has a good track record of providing appropriate therapeutic services to disadvantaged women and of reaching clients who would not usually have access to psychotherapy or be able to afford it. The organisation's work currently focuses on young mothers; gender violence; domestic violence and childhood sexual abuse; and BME women, including refugees and asylum seekers. It also accepts some private referrals. WTC also provides non-managerial support to other organisations which work with women with psychotherapeutic needs. In 2012 WTC joined with three other key psychotherapy agencies in North London (Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Centre, Maya Centre, and Immigrant Counselling and Psychotherapy) to create the Accept consortium. Through the consortium members aim to collaboratively develop psychotherapy services that the most vulnerable and excluded groups can access; improve quality of delivery and share best practice; and benefit from efficiency savings.

Funding History

You awarded WTC a grant of £59,000 over 3 years in 2009 towards the costs of developing a therapeutic service for female refugees. The grant was satisfactorily reported on and allowed the organisation to establish and maintain good links with refugee and asylum seeker communities.

Current Application

WTC now seeks funding for a new project, Affirm, to support women at risk of self-harm and suicide. This will include refugees and asylum seekers with no recourse to public funds; offenders; women from a range of diverse communities; and those in debt. There would be four main elements to the project:

1. **One-to-one sessions:** 15 women per year will attend an average of twenty one-to-one therapy sessions with a psychoanalyst. The needs of new clients would be assessed by a senior staff member and an exit strategy carefully planned.
2. **Group work:** 55 women would attend group therapy sessions including two new groups that will be created on harmful behaviour. Each group runs for 1.5 hours for up to 40 weeks, with an average of 8 or 9 women per group.
3. **Reflective practice for staff and volunteers:** WTC will deliver ten 2-hour sessions to referral agencies to help them understand better the needs of people at risk of self-harm and suicide, the key issues and strategies, and how to refer.
4. **Link worker:** a link worker would support clients with practical issues such as money, childcare, food banks, housing and legal issues.

The organisation has thorough risk assessment processes and GPs are always notified of concerns. Staff attend keyworker conferences and alerts and all practitioners receive regular clinical supervision. Volunteer clinical trainees from local universities will be a key part of the project and they will be fully supervised and supported throughout their work.

Financial Observations

Audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2013 show a surplus of £69,533 (17.3% of turnover of £402,220), comprising a surplus of £88,040 on unrestricted funds and a deficit of £18,507 on restricted funds. The surplus was largely due to the receipt of a legacy of £54k.

The reserves policy states that the organisation aims to hold free unrestricted reserves equivalent to 2 months' worth of expenditure which based on 2014/15 expenditure equates to £45,526. At 31st March 2013 free unrestricted reserves stood at £109,128 which is equivalent to 4.8 months' worth of 2014/15 expenditure. The organisation has advised that the funds held in excess of the reserves policy have been helpful to hold during the transition period, in which a new CEO joined the organisation.

The draft outturn for the year ended 31st March 2014 indicates income of £330,539 and expenditure of £319,166 leading to a surplus of £11,373 (3.4% of turnover), all on unrestricted funds. The budget for the current year to 31st March 2015 has income projected to be £280,950 and expenditure £273,151, leading to a surplus of £7,799 (2.8% of turnover) all on unrestricted funds. Of total income, £174,272 (62%) had been confirmed at 7th February 2014. The remaining £106,678 (38%) comprises £82,000 of restricted grant income and £24,678 of unrestricted income expected through service provision, fees and donations.

At 31st March 2015 free unrestricted reserves are expected to be £128,300 which is equivalent to 5.6 months' worth of current expenditure and ahead of the policy to hold 2 months' worth at £45,526. The new CEO has advised that the organisation will be reviewing the reserves policy and considering ways to use the excess free unrestricted reserves to develop the organisation, through premises or project development and ways to keep services affordable for all.

Officer's Appraisal

This is a well-respected organisation that delivers targeted and quality services to women who may otherwise be unsupported. WTC takes learning and evaluation of its activities very seriously and plans to commission an external evaluation of this work. Findings would be shared widely to influence policy and share best practice with key agencies such as A&E departments and GPs as well as the network of therapy centres across the country. As such, this work has the potential to have a wider impact on this important field of work.

Recommendation

£120,000 over three years (£44,000; £40,000; £36,000) towards the salaries of a Community Development Therapist (15hrs/wk); Link Worker (17.5hrs/wk) and Therapists (371.5hrs/yr) and running costs of the Affirm project to provide psychotherapeutic support for women at risk of self-harm and suicide.