

MEETING: 16/07/2014

Ref: 12220

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health

Friend Counselling (London) Limited

Adv: Julia Mirkin

Base: Islington

Amount requested: £135,285

Benefit: London-wide

The Charity:

Established in 1972, Friend Counselling (London) Limited (FCL) is the UK's oldest lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender (LGBT) charity. FCL aims to relieve mental and emotional crises and support those who may be in doubt about their sexual identity. FCL worked with 757 beneficiaries in 13/14 offering counselling: support groups; specialised LGBT drug and alcohol services; and sexual health services. A key feature of its work is its use of volunteers, all of whom belong to the LGBT community and therefore understand the issues faced by FCL's beneficiaries. FCL also delivers training for healthcare professionals on issues specific to the LGBT community. FCL's work with the transsexual community, which is not served by Stonewall for example, distinguishes it from other organisations serving this particular target group.

The Application:

FCL requests funding towards the salaries of the Volunteer Coordinator and the Counselling Service Coordinator. It also requests support towards the one-to-one and group counselling services and its social groups, which are delivered by trained volunteers. Twelve weeks of psychosocial counselling – as opposed to medicalised treatment - is offered to FCL beneficiaries, after which on-going support is available through the support groups. FCL proposes to recruit and train volunteers from BME and transsexual backgrounds to ensure a representative cross-section of its service users are reflected in its pool of volunteers.

The Recommendation:

The organisation's work focuses on a section of the population that presents with higher rates of mental ill health and drug and alcohol abuse. Despite these needs, however, there are barriers to LGBT people accessing mainstream mental health, drug and alcohol, and sexual health services. Peer to peer support is advocated strongly by the Mental Health Foundation, Mind and Positively UK, as being very effective. FCL's peer support approach has been referenced by DrugScope as an effective methodology, particularly in addressing emerging issues in relation to drug use in the LGBT community:

£135,300 (£43,500; £45,100; £46,700) towards the salary costs of the Volunteer Coordinator and Counselling Service Coordinator (up to a maximum of £30,000 per annum) plus clinical supervision, programme and management costs.

Funding History

None.

Background and detail of proposal

A survey of FCL's service-users indicated that only 12% would feel comfortable accessing mainstream mental health services. However, the *Gay and Bisexual*

Men's Health Survey (Stonewall and Sigma Research, 2011), reports that: 'In the last year, 27 per cent of gay men thought about taking their own life ... This increases to 38 per cent for bisexual men and 35 per cent for black and minority ethnic gay and bisexual men. Just four per cent of men in general thought about taking their own life in the last year'. Stonewall's *Prescription for Change: Lesbian and bisexual women's health check 2008*, states that 'In the last year, one in five lesbian and bisexual women say they have deliberately harmed themselves in some way compared to 0.4 per cent of the general population'. FCL's proposed outputs include 170 LGBT people per year reporting improved mental health from engagement with open-access group and drop-in services; and 120 LGBT people per year reporting improved mental health from engaging with structured counselling with FCL. A further project outcome will be 50 new volunteers trained and supported each year of the project. A range of established tools will be used to monitor the mental health of beneficiaries, for example, Core 10, GAD 7 and PHQ 9, all of which assess levels of anxiety and depression at the start and end of therapy. All volunteers receive an induction, which is followed by specialist training according to the work they will deliver.

Financial Information

In 11/12 FCL purchased its building on Caledonian Road. It secured a mortgage of £118,000, for which it has fixed repayments for the remaining 22 years. FCL was required to contribute towards the purchase as a condition of one of its capital grants. This resulted in a deficit on unrestricted free reserves. FCL also carried out building refurbishments, costs for which appear in the 12/13 accounts. 88.5% of budgeted 14/15 income has been secured at the time of writing. FCL has applications pending with Lloyds Foundation and Monument Trust and is also tendering for local authority contracts for drug and alcohol, mental, and sexual health services and will generate income from training, direct fundraising and room hires.

| Year-end at 31 st March | 2012/13 Audited/Examined £ | 2013/14 DRAFT £ | 2014/15 Forecast £ |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| Income and Expenditure | | | |
| Income | 299,630 | 256,190 | 216,912 |
| Expenditure | 311,414 | 229,248 | 248,444 |
| Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit) | (22,782) | 2,095 | (11,524) |
| Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit) | 10,998 | 24,847 | (20,008) |
| Total Surplus / (Deficit) | (11,784) | 26,942 | (31,532) |
| Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover | 3.9% | 10.5% | 14.5% |
| Generating funds as % of income | 6.8% | | |
| Free unrestricted reserves | | | |
| Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End | 44,681 | 46,766 | 35,252 |
| ~ how many months' worth of expenditure | 1.7 | 2.4 | 1.7 |
| Reserves Policy target (£) | 77,853 | 57,312 | 62,110 |
| ~ how many months' worth of expenditure | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Free reserves over target / (under target) | (33,172) | (10,536) | (26,860) |