

MEETING: 16/07/2014

Ref: 12283

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health**

YouthNet

Adv: Ciaran Rafferty

Base: Islington

Benefit: London-wide

Amount requested: £44,695

**The Charity:**

YouthNet was established in 1995 by the broadcaster Martyn Lewis and is the UK's first exclusively online charity, providing guidance and support to young people aged 16-25 so that they can make better and more informed choices. It offers, also, significant opportunities for young people to volunteer, particularly as trained mentors. Offering services via the internet is particularly attractive to young people as not only are they familiar with the technology, they can access the services anonymously and at any time.

**The Application:**

This application is for a third and final year's continuation of an existing, Trust-funded, project which provides online advice and support to young Londoners experiencing poor mental health. The current grant has just ended and has been very successful in delivering positive outcomes. Fine-tuning in the proposed third year would see greater targeting of young men (who represent 33% of existing service users).

**The Recommendation:**

YouthNet, unique in its approach, is very effective at working with and for young people. It harnesses their enthusiasm for new technology and social networking to provide free, accessible, high-quality and confidential support. This project also provides excellent volunteering opportunities for young people as peer supporters and mentors. A grant as requested is recommended:

***£44,700, for a third and final year, towards the costs of the Live Chat service providing advice and support to young Londoners with mental health needs.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
15/03/2012	£70,000 over two years (£30,000; £40,000) towards the costs of providing advice and support services to young Londoners experiencing poor mental health.
01/12/2005	£47,250 as a final 18 months' contribution towards a project training young people to become on-line peer mentors.
25/06/2004	£45,000 over 18 months (£30,000, £15,000) towards a project training young people to become on-line peer mentors.

**Background and detail of proposal**

Young people are very comfortable with using web-based and social media sites and so it follows that support services can use these platforms very effectively for engaging with that audience. YouthNet has much history and experience in so doing.

In March 2012 you funded the charity for two years to provide web-based support and advice for those experiencing mental ill health. Monitoring of that work has shown a high degree of satisfaction amongst service users and good outcomes achieved. The range of beneficiaries has been wide although the organisation does intend, in a third year, to target those groups which it feels could benefit even more – eg young men. The project, called Live Chat, offers a safe, anonymous place for young people to seek, and receive, advice or emotional support. Approximately 100 people use the service each month.

Much of this support is provided by other young people, volunteering as mentors. They are carefully recruited and vetted, fully trained and supported. The organisation has appropriate safeguarding policies and processes in place, whilst the experience and skills gained by the young volunteers helps them gain employment.

The component costs of the project are stated on the application form in broad headings, although the daily rates and the numbers of days' worth of expenditure have been provided separately and are considered by your officer to be satisfactory.

### Financial Information

YouthNet's reserves policy (which it states as a sum rather than in monthly terms) is to hold between £500,000 - £800,000 in unrestricted reserves. Although it looks to have dropped below this target range in 2013/14 the forecast for the current year anticipates free reserves held at the year end to exceed, slightly, the lower threshold. 46% of the forecast income for 2014/15 had been confirmed as at 30<sup>th</sup> May 2014, prior to the start of the financial year on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014.

Year-end at 30 <sup>th</sup> June	2012/13 Audited/Examined	2013/14 DRAFT	2014/15 Current Year Forecast
	£	£	£
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>			
Income	2,675,789	2,150,227	2,230,000
Expenditure	3,056,321	2,289,229	2,149,029
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(355,990)	(139,002)	80,971
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(24,542)	0	0
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(380,532)	(139,002)	80,971
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	14.2%	6.5%	3.6%
Generating funds as % of income	14%	n/a	n/a
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	574,351	435,349	516,230
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	2.3	2.3	2.9
Reserves Policy target (£)	500k – 800k	500k – 800k	500k-800k
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	2 – 3.1 equiv.	2.6-4.2 equiv.	2.8-4.5 equiv.
Free reserves over target / (under target)	within target range	(64,651 – 364,651)	within target range