

MEETING: 25/09/2014

Ref: 12265

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health

Choices Islington

Adv: Tania Bronstein

Base: Islington

Benefit: Islington

Amount requested: £43,287

{Revised request: £48,600}

Amount recommended: £48,600

The Charity

Set up in 1999, Choices Islington (CI) is a small local charity offering one-to-one non-directive counselling in unplanned pregnancy; pregnancy and other child losses; a befriending project for vulnerable new mothers; relationships and sexual health education projects in schools; and a counselling service at HMP Holloway (HMPH).

The Application

ICC seeks funds towards salaries of two part-time counsellors to increase capacity to support inmates at HMPH who are pregnant on admission; and those grieving over lost children, including through compulsory adoption and the care system.

The Recommendation

This service adheres to good practice and delivers very satisfactory user outcomes. Through increasing the number of paid counsellors, waiting times would reduce and more inmates would be helped – all leading to improved mental health. The organisation has revised its request to include, now, the full balance needed for year one (£19,400) which would give it sufficient time to raise the necessary balances in subsequent years including, it is hoped, from the Healthcare Department in HMPH. The recommendation supports this revised request:

£48,600 over three years (£19,400; £14,400; £14,800) towards two part-time counsellors' salaries and related support costs for work in HMP Holloway.

Funding History:

None

Background and detail of proposal

CI's core services are to provide non-directive, non-judgemental, counselling to facilitate informed decision-making for women and partners facing unplanned pregnancies; and a therapy for women struggling with post-abortion, adoption and other pregnancy/child loss issues. It abides by the British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy codes of ethics and practice, and although it is a Christian charity, its service philosophy emphasises and respects individual women's choices. It is pertinent to note that a piece of investigative journalism in 2011 singled it out as the only pregnancy counselling centre of six visited "undercover" in London that provided balanced advice (Abortion Undercover, Daily Mail 30.08.2011).

CI has been delivering a counselling service at HMP Holloway (HMPH) since 2008. The harmful impacts of imprisonment for mothers and their children are well recognised, and CI routinely supports large numbers of female inmates who have lost children through adoption or to the care system. Grief over children they have lost is an abiding theme for imprisoned women, and one which profoundly affects their emotional and mental health. The counsellors also support women who are

pregnant on admission who often find it exceedingly difficult to make decisions. This service is in high demand. Last year CI had 155 referrals but was only able to help 106 women. HMPH is also a remand prison with very quick turnover and often women are released or moved to other prisons before getting help or completing their therapeutic programme. If you support this request, the CI team will grow to three paid and four volunteer counsellors, which would enable more women to be helped more quickly and to receive as much support as possible whilst incarcerated. (The outputs and outcomes for this work have been revised slightly and are shown at Appendix 1 to the application form.)

CI's prison work is part of the Healthcare Department at HMPH and delivered under a service level agreement with Central and North West London NHS Trust (itself commissioned to provide all health care at the prison). However, CI does not receive remuneration for its work, despite service evaluations evidencing impressive reductions in levels of anxiety and depression post-counselling, with almost all service users gaining greater insights, sense of responsibility, and agency. The organisation will continue to seek some financial support from HMPH.

Financial Information

Forecast income for the current year is £160,535 of which £71,450 (45%) had been secured by 31st July 2014. The table below shows that CI maintains a holding of free reserves considerably higher than its policy target to hold 3 months' worth of expenditure. CI explains that it does not have any stable or secure income source and is heavily dependent on charitable donations, many of which are for small sums. Given that these are unpredictable income sources, the trustees consider it prudent to maintain reserves above their policy target to guard against substantial short-falls in income, in particular the failure to raise sufficient funds in-year to keep their services running.

Year end at 31 st December	2013 Independently Examined Accounts £	2014 Current Year Forecast £
Income and Expenditure		
Income	152,192	160,535
Expenditure	119,870	156,075
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	29,213	4,460
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	3,109	0
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	32,323	4,460
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	21.2%	2.8%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	14,527 (9.5%)	15,500 (12.4%)
Free unrestricted reserves		
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	91,241	95,701
How many months' worth of expenditure	9.1	7.4
Reserves Policy target	29,967	39,019
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	61,274	56,682