

MEETING: 25/09/2014

Ref: 12234

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Resources for Autism

Amount requested: £106,263
{Revised request: £120,514}
Amount recommended: £120,600

Adv: Joan Millbank
Base: Barnet
Benefit: Several North London boroughs

The Charity

Resources for Autism (RfA) was set up in 1997 to improve the lives of children and adults with autism, a life-long condition that affects the ability to communicate and understand. Autism is a spectrum condition which can lead to social isolation and mental ill health.

The Application

RfA is seeking £120,514 over three years to expand its transition project, which supports young adults with autism aged 19 to 25 years to build life and work skills to enable independence. The project provides a complementary trio of support: peer and workplace volunteering; weekly confidence groups using discussion and role play to build life skills; and advice and guidance on any aspect of concern to the young adult and their family, including managing finances and personal budgets. 65 young adults are expected to benefit over a three year period.

The Recommendation

The charity has a sound reputation in providing support to people with autism and their families. The project builds on work with young adults with autism, helping them to learn skills and gain confidence to overcome the issues that create isolation and prevent independence. The project costs have been adjusted since the original request to include management and administration costs, based on a full-cost-recovery approach.

£120,600 over three years (£39,600; £40,200; £40,800) towards the cost of the transition service, including a part-time (18hpw) Support Manager, volunteering expenses, and project running costs to benefit sixty-five young Londoners with autism.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
10/04/2014	Withdrawn as it was too similar to work previously funded.
05/11/2009	£88,130 (£28,800; £29,370; £29,960) towards the salaries and running costs of YNOT? group for 15-19 year olds with autism.
17/05/2005	£90,000 over three years (3 x £30,000) towards the salaries and running costs of respite playschemes for children and young people.

Background and detail of proposal:

A survey by the National Autism Council in 2012 found that one in three 16 to 24 year olds were not in education, employment or training (NEET), which is more than double the incidence in the general population. RfA's own surveys indicate that lack of income and opportunities to develop work-related skills compound problems experienced by young adults with autism moving towards independent living.

Young adults will be offered supported peer-volunteering opportunities where they learn skills through providing support to other families; and community-based volunteering which match their area of interest and need (eg in an animal rescue centre). A weekly group will be set up to offer information and discussion to this cohort of young adults. All participants will be offered one-to-one advice and information to help them learn and deal with the complexities of managing their finances and making informed choices in other aspects of their lives.

Past experience has demonstrated a high success rate, with 100% of users and their carers stating that they had benefited from the support provided. Of the 27 young adults helped to date, six have moved into paid employment and two into further education, while the rest remain in their volunteering placements. A further 65 young adults will be supported over three years. Outcomes include increased confidence, enhanced social skills, and work-related skills. Project costs are high to reflect the level of support needed, including accompanying volunteers on placements and expenses for peer-volunteers and those on community placements.

Financial Information:

Total forecast income for the current year is £1,329,684, of which £1,206,684 (91%) had been confirmed by August 2014. Compared to the prior year, the charity's income has reduced by £237k (15%) due to some grants coming to an end and to an expected reduction in available contracts. However, the charity's expenditure has fallen by a slightly larger proportion at £326k (20%). This reduction in expenditure is predicted as a consequence of having to end some adult services where funding is unsecured and has allowed the charity to reverse its deficits of the prior two years and balance its budget in the current year 2014/15.

The reserve's policy states that the charity should aim to retain free unrestricted funds of not less than six and not more than eighteen month's expenditure. The charity's free reserves holding at 31st March 2014 was below this target at £397k, which is equivalent to almost 3 months' worth of expenditure.

Year-end at March	2012/12 Audited Accounts	2013/14 Draft Audited Accounts	2014/15 Current Year Forecast
	£	£	£
Income and Expenditure			
Income	1,358,822	1,566,518	1,329,684
Expenditure	1,512,988	1,650,088	1,323,653
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(10,921)	(34,067)	6,031
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(143,245)	(49,503)	0
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(154,166)	(83,570)	6,031
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	11.3%	5.3%	0.5%
Generating funds (% of income)	28,988 (2.1%)	24391(1.6%)	-
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	438,403	396,815	402,846
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	3.5	2.9	3.7
Reserves Policy target	756,494	825,044	661,826
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	6	6	6
Free reserves over target / (under target)	(318,091)	(428,229)	(258,980)