

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty**Bell Farm Christian Centre****Adv: Tim Wilson****Base: Hillingdon****Benefit: Hillingdon****Amount requested: £97,100****Amount recommended: £97,100****The Charity**

Based in an area of high deprivation, Bell Farm Christian Centre (BFCC) runs several community welfare services in addition to its activity as a place of worship. The charity offers: carers and toddlers groups; a toy library; a luncheon club; outreach work for older people; parenting classes; support to enable Traveller families to access education for their children; employment training courses; and advice services. Local levels of deprivation, illiteracy and innumeracy result in considerable pressure on local services, a situation which is perhaps only likely to get worse with an ambitious programme of house building in the area.

The Application

BFCC began offering advice services in 1998 to fill a gap left by other agencies withdrawing from the Bell Farm estate because of concerns over crime. The charity's Advice, Information and Care Service offers free support on a range of issues including housing, benefits, debt, and domestic violence. BFCC has seen a sharp increase in demand for this service in recent years, with the number of client visits rising by almost 250% from 2009 to 2014. The charity believes this is the result of increased local deprivation and recent changes to benefit rules. BFCC notes that clients are presenting with increasingly complex problems that take longer to resolve. To cope with greater demand, the charity seeks funding for a new Advice Worker and a contribution to running costs.

The Recommendation

Currently, approximately 1,500 clients benefit from BFCC's advice service each year. The proposed Advice Worker would enable the charity to support a further 500 clients. The post-holder will offer support at the BFCC as well as through home visits. This is a well-managed service with the appropriate quality assurance in place. Although BFCC is a faith-based organisation, its services are open to all and it is clear that the charity has worked hard to build strong relationships with the Bell Farm community. With little alternative provision in the local area, there is high demand for BFCC's work. Funding is advised as follows:

£97,100 over three years (£31,840; £32,140; £33,120) for a f/t Advice Worker and associated project overheads.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
07/10/2004	£50,500 over three years (£21,000; £14,500; £15,000) towards the salary of an older people's worker, on costs and transport provision.

Background and detail of proposal

Delivered by a team of two staff members, BFCC's advice service already serves a large client base. In addition to the advice it offers directly, the charity has built a network of partner agencies to which it can make referrals. The network includes a

West London legal firm, the Metropolitan Police's Safer Neighbourhood Team, refugee and disablement associations, and the borough food bank. Open drop-in sessions take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays in five-hour blocks, whilst the rest of the working week is dedicated to appointments and home visits. Over 60% of service users are from minority ethnic communities and almost 7% are disabled, user-data which reflects the area's demographic profile.

The charity conducts ongoing project monitoring data from which demonstrates good outcomes for service users. The advice service was subject to a positive independent evaluation in 2012 by the Hillingdon Community Trust. The proposal to your Trust is for an additional advice worker who will concentrate on debt and benefit advice and will enable the charity to serve growing demand.

Financial Information

As of 8th September 2014 the charity had confirmed £311,348 (83%) of its forecast income of £374,070 for 2014-15.

Over recent years Bell Farm Christian Centre has made changes to its operation and, whilst not eliminating its operating deficit, the size of the deficit has reduced. The charity is now actively seeking additional unrestricted income in order to balance its budget and to generate a reasonable level of free reserves, which are currently below target as shown in the table.

Year end at 5 April	2012/13 Audited	2013/14 Draft Accounts	2014/15 Current Year Budget
	£	£	£
Income and Expenditure			
Income	283,273	313,683	374,070
Expenditure	321,871	339,994	389,393
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(35,897)	(8,303)	219
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(2,701)	(18,008)	(15,542)
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(38,598)	(26,311)	(15,323)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(13.6%)	(8.4%)	(4.1%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	5,460 (1.9%)	6,182 (2.0%)	6,175 (1.7%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	25,768	16,762	16,981
How many months' worth of expenditure	1	0.6	0.5
Reserves Policy target	53,645	56,666	64,899
How many months' worth of expenditure	2	2	2
Free reserves over target /(under target)	(27,877)	(39,904)	(47,918)