

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health**Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation****Adv: Jenny Field****Base: Islington****Amount requested: £28,806****Benefit: Haringey****Amount recommended: £28,800****The Charity**

Middle Eastern Women and Society Organisation (MEWSO) was established in 2010 as an entirely voluntary endeavour and registered as a charity in 2012. It started life as a befriending organisation, supporting isolated women from Middle Eastern communities. It began to run classes and workshops covering a range of topics, including pilates, stress management and money management. Increasingly, it began to see women who were victims of domestic violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as those affected by honour killings in the family. In addition to self-referrals, MEWSO receives increasing numbers of referrals from GPs, social services, the police, schools and community organisations, as word about its existence spreads.

The Application

MEWSO remains very small, with just one part-time member of staff (10 hours per week) funded by Comic Relief. It nevertheless attracts some highly skilled volunteers, such as qualified ESOL teachers. Currently, it is able to offer some support to women who have been subject to or affected by violence, whether this be helping them register with a GP or access a women's refuge. It also provides some counselling in a voluntary capacity. This application requests funding to enable MEWSO to employ qualified sessional counsellors, together with a part-time outreach worker to help put the service on a more structured footing. MEWSO has a volunteer who is a psychologist with 30 years' experience who will provide the necessary clinical supervision. The outreach worker will visit women in their homes, hostels or refuges as necessary to assist with advice, information and advocacy on matters related to the trauma the women have experienced.

The Recommendation

Whilst MEWSO is a comparatively small organisation relative to the organisations you typically fund, it impressed with its energy and drive, its ability to reach vulnerable women that other organisations cannot; and its absolute commitment to help clients transform their lives. Other funders consulted during the assessment of this application were similarly impressed. Members might question why the amount required, and therefore the amount requested, tapers down. This is because as the service becomes established, it is proposed to introduce a small charge for the counselling sessions in order to make the programme sustainable.

£28,800 over three years (£10,100; £9,500; £9,200) towards a part-time Outreach Worker (6 hours pw) and a part-time Counsellor (8 hours pw), together with associated running costs.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

MEWSO is a grants roots organisation set up by a group of women who themselves had been through a number of the issues that this application sets out to address who wished to advocate on behalf of other women in similar situations. It works with women from a wide range of Middle Eastern communities including Kurdish, Iranian, Turkish, Afghan and Iraqi. It is in the early stages of its growth and development but is seeking to develop at a steady pace and in a sustainable way.

Financial Information

In 2013/14, MEWSO's income was under £25,000 and therefore below the Charity Commission requirement for an independent examination or audit. The charity understands that as its income in 2014/15 will exceed this limit, an independent examination will be a required.

As a relatively small, young charity registered in 2012, MEWSO has advised that it has not yet established a reserves policy, however the charity will review this when preparing its 2014/15 year-end accounts. At 31st March 2015 free unrestricted funds are estimated to be equivalent to 1.1 months' worth of expenditure, MEWSO advised that they hope to gradually build unrestricted reserves by increasing donations mainly from the community.

During 2013/14, MEWSO was a completely voluntary organisation and almost all fundraising was in the form of grant applications, which were undertaken by the voluntary management committee. In 2014/15 MEWSO appointed a part-time Co-ordinator, which in addition to other higher running costs explains the increased expenditure in the current year. It is estimated that the Co-ordinator spends approximately 10% of her time on fundraising, again, mainly on writing grant applications, which represents the cost of generating funds. Total income is forecast to be £32,925 in the current year 2014/15 all of which has been confirmed, the forecast does not include this application to City Bridge Trust or associated expenditure.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Accounts	2014/15 Current Year Forecast
Income and Expenditure	£	£
Income	24,028	32,925
Expenditure	5,383	25,090
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	1,833	35
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	16,812	7,800
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	18,645	7,835
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	77.7%	23.8%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	-	1,000 (3.9%)
Free unrestricted reserves		
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	1,833	1,868
How many months' worth of expenditure	4.0	1.1
Reserves Policy target	-	-
How many months' worth of expenditure	-	-
Free reserves over/(under) target	-	-