

MEETING: 12/03/2015

Ref: 12378

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Older Londoners

South Thames Crossroads – Caring for Carers

Adv: Tania Bronstein

Base: Merton

Amount requested: £124,690

{Revised request: £146,352}

Amount recommended: £140,000

**Benefit: Lambeth, Croydon,
Merton, Sutton, Wandsworth**

The Charity

South Thames Crossroads (STC) works across Wandsworth, Croydon, Lambeth, Merton and Sutton, offering home-based respite care services to relieve carers from the stresses of caring for someone who is elderly, disabled or chronically ill. STC also runs several projects to improve quality of life for carers. These include advice, information, counselling, employment support and dedicated projects for young carers and carers of people with mental health problems.

The Application

An application was received from STC in June 2014, completed by the then outgoing Director. Your officer subsequently contacted the new Director who asked if he could review and amend the proposal. Whilst the project and the rationale behind it remain the same, the targets and budget have now been revised and it is this, amended, application (for £146,352) which appears in your papers today. (A copy of the original application is on file.)

STC plans to recruit volunteer "community connectors" to create neighbourhood-based, small, friendship and social support groups of older carers. These volunteers would organise three introductory meet-ups for older carers. Subsequent meetings would be arranged by group members on their own, eventually to form a number of local, self-sustaining, groups. These would be organised by local postcodes and deliberately remain small, targeting older people new to caring who lack close family or other support networks. Carers in the project would be linked and sign-posted to STC and other services they require. The project would run initially in Lambeth and then extend into the other four boroughs in which STC works.

The Recommendation

The project's concept is simple but promising. Small groups of people living in close proximity are more likely to form enduring friendships and support networks, and the local emphasis would enable STC to reach "hidden" carers not in touch with sources of support. STC's considerable expertise working with carers - and its presence and networks in the five target boroughs - augurs well for the project. A grant is advised as follows and which reflects reduction in some individual cost components to reflect a more realistic approach:

£140,000 over 3 years (£47,000; £46,000; £47,000) for the salary of a f/t Older Carers Peer Support Coordinator and the running costs of a project setting up and supporting small neighbourhood-based groups of older carers.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
03/04/2008	£96,000 towards the Children's Services Coordinator's salary costs

Background and detail of proposal

STC works in five boroughs, annually offering in excess of 80,000 hours of home-based short breaks for carers. It also runs projects to relieve carers from the physical, mental and financial strains and stresses of round-the-clock caring for their loved ones. This project is inspired by the National Childbirth Trust's successful Tea Groups. In these, a local mum introduces new mothers to one another in their neighbourhood by hosting introductory meetings. The mum's groups tend to develop organically into lasting friendships and mutual support groups. This model is well suited to help in relieving carers' isolation. Most schemes addressing this need tend to offer large group activities (often some distance away from users' homes) and social contact may suddenly end if/when funding expires. This model addresses these shortcomings, offering scope for older carers to form sustainable social bonds in their localities, and does not rely on external funding to operate and survive.

STC proposes to recruit a Project Coordinator to identify, recruit, train and support the "community connectors" on on-going basis. Funds are sought for the full cost of the project over three years, comprising of salary, running costs and overheads. The project has been well planned and realistically budgeted on a full-cost-recovery basis, save for a few items, hence the adjusted level of recommended grant.

Financial information

Forecast income in the current year 2014/15 is £1,783,786, of which £1,770,976 (99%) had been confirmed as at 15th December 2014. The charity notes that the fall in income of £541,394 (23%) and the reduction in expenditure of £288,279 (13%) is due to it ceasing to run loss-incurring projects and projects less well aligned to its mission. The charity advises that the deficit in the current year is planned and is due to staff re-structuring and efforts to improve the charity's brand, which it hopes will attract additional income.

The costs of generating funds disclosed in the charity's 2013/14 accounts only included the costs of fundraising from charitable trusts but did not represent the cost of generating funds from all sources. The charity advises that it will disclose the full cost of generating funds in future and has provided an initial estimate for the current year as shown in the table.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Audited Accounts	2014/15 Current Year Forecast
	£	£
Income and Expenditure		
Income	2,325,180	1,783,786
Expenditure	2,238,520	1,950,241
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	108,836	(124,179)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(22,176)	(42,276)
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	86,660	(166,455)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	3.7%	(9.3%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	£10,463 (0.45%)	£41,259 (2.3%)
Free unrestricted reserves		
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	553,990	429,811
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.0	2.6
Reserves Policy target	1,119,258	975,120
How many months' worth of expenditure	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(565,268)	(545,309)