

MEETING: 23/09/2015

Ref: 12767

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London Safer

Family Action

Adv: Jenny Field

Amount requested: £91,346

Base: Islington

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £91,500

The Charity

Family Action (FA) is the product of the merger of the Family Welfare Association and the Family Service Units during 2007/08. It is a national charity providing support to children and families in need. It works to tackle some of the most complex and difficult issues facing families today, including poverty, domestic abuse, mental ill health, learning disabilities and substance and alcohol misuse. FA works with the whole family to help them find solutions to their problems, no matter how difficult, in order for them to become stronger and more optimistic about their future.

The Application

FA proposes to work in partnership with SafeLives (until a change of name earlier this year, known as Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse, or CAADA, and referred to as such throughout FA's application) to help it deliver a domestic violence strategy for its 42 London services. This will comprise a bespoke training programme for its 150 London-based staff and the implementation of new policies and procedures; monitoring and evaluation systems; and stronger local partnerships, with the aim of improving FA's ability to identify and respond to victims of domestic abuse. You are asked to support a new post, that of London Domestic Abuse Service Development Co-ordinator, whose role will be to embed this new approach within FA's London services over the next three years.

The Recommendation

SafeLives has a highly respected track record in the domestic violence field. It was established in 2005 when it was recognised that a combination of multi-agency working and advocacy for victims of domestic violence could deliver vastly improved outcomes. FA supports around 4,000 disadvantaged families across London each year, approximately 60 – 70% of whom experience domestic violence. Working with SafeLives to develop a domestic violence strategy will improve early identification of domestic violence as well as the support it is able to provide.

£91,500 over three years (£29,500; £30,500; £31,500) towards the salary and associated running costs of a part-time (22.2 hpw) London Domestic Abuse Service Development Co-ordinator.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
07/09/2011	Reject. Application does not sufficiently address the priorities of the mental health programme.
30/06/2011	Withdrawn.
07/05/2009	£90,000 (£30,000, £30,000, £30,000) over three years towards the costs of a worker supporting families where young people are the victims or perpetrators of violence in Waltham Forest.

Background and detail of proposal

SafeLives played a major role in the development of Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) across the UK, establishing 288 during the past 10 years. A typical MARAC will consist of 12 – 15 agencies, including the police, social services, education, health professionals, housing and drug and alcohol professionals. SafeLives also provides nationally recognised, accredited, training for Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs) who support victims of domestic violence in their own homes and co-ordinate services from both statutory and voluntary agencies on behalf of the victim.

You funded SafeLives in 2010 to develop quality assurance systems and evaluation tools for domestic violence intervention projects. FA has therefore identified a well-qualified agency to help it implement an improved approach to its service delivery.

FA's services are located in a variety of community settings, including children's centres, schools and GP surgeries. Many of its services offer home-based support, working intensively with vulnerable families to help them overcome the challenges they face. It also provides grants to families in need towards such necessities as children's clothing and bedding as well as for educational purposes. As a major provider of services to vulnerable families, improving FA's skills in responding to domestic abuse issues is a key development. This proposal is designed to ensure that these skills are embedded within the London team over the next three years.

Financial information

Family Action's trustees have calculated the charity's reserves target based on 3 - 6 months' worth of running costs of its head office (i.e. its central costs) in the event of a significant drop in project funding. The trustees calculate this should be £1.2m. During 2014/15, FA sold its HQ building for £2.2m. This has enabled it to increase its free reserves to the target figure of £1.2m. The remaining funds have been set aside to invest in new areas of work and as provision for future pension liabilities. However, the £2.2m figure has been included in the unrestricted funds shown in the table below in the interests of transparency.

Cost of generating funds is relatively low because a high proportion of its income is derived from fees and contracts.

Of the £24,000 forecast income for 2015/16, 79% had been confirmed as at 19th June 2015.

Year end at 31 March	2013/14 Audited Accounts £	2014/15 Draft Outturn £	2015/16 Current Year Forecast £
Income and Expenditure			
Income	20,219,000	21,700,000	24,000,000
Expenditure	20,028,000	21,929,000	24,199,000
Gains/(losses) fixed and investment assets	(835,000)		
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	1,662,000	(98,000)	(337,000)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(2,306,000)	(131,000)	138,000
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(644,000)	(229,000)	(199,000)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	3.2%	1.1%	0.8%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	£249,000 (1.2%)	362,000 (1.7%)	400,000 (1.7%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	922,000	3,024,000	2,687,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	0.6	1.7	1.3
Reserves Policy target	1,200,000	1,200,000	1,200,000
How many months' worth of expenditure	0.7	0.7	0.6
Free reserves over/(under) target	(278,000)	1,824,000	1,487,000