

MEETING: 23/09/2015

Ref: 12755

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Resettlement and Rehabilitation of Offenders**

women@thewell

Amount requested: £124,038

Amount recommended: £105,000

Adv: Tania Bronstein

Base: Camden

Benefit: Camden, Islington and Hackney

**The Charity**

Women@thewell (W@W) supports women trapped in, or vulnerable to street prostitution, to exit chaotic lifestyles and to divert them away from prostitution and the criminal justice (CJS) system. It offers a safe drop-in providing hot meals, showers, laundry and storage facilities, and advocacy, service brokerage, and counselling to help users to address their complex, multiple needs. W@W was set up by Catholic nuns with support from the Institute of Our Lady of Mercy which acquired a property for the charity near Kings Cross, and has core funded it since inception. W@W helps c.250 women annually.

**The Application**

Three year funding is sought for a life skills programme to support street workers in acquiring life skills needed to stabilise their lives, exit prostitution and reduce re-offending. This consists of weekly cooking and healthy eating, literacy, sewing, arts and crafts sessions; monthly health and relationships workshops; and support to enable women to progress with their learning.

**The Recommendation**

This charity seamlessly and holistically tackles the array of vulnerabilities of women in street prostitution. The request includes a full-time salary, but the recommendation is to meet four days/week of this salary, as some of the post's duties are not directly related to the project's outcomes. This has been clarified with the organisation.

***£105,000 over 3 years (£34,600; £34,800; £35,600) towards four days/week salary costs of a Senior Support Worker and running costs of a life skills programme for women who have offended or are at risk of offending or re-offending.***

**Funding History**

None

**Background and detail of proposal**

W@W works with vulnerable women with complex needs, typically including homelessness, addictions, child abuse experiences, lack of qualifications and skills, and poor health. Street sex workers are often exposed to serious and violent crimes, and are prone to re-offending cycles and to serving short prison sentences for non-violent offences such as soliciting in public spaces, shoplifting, possession of drugs and for breach of ASBOS and public space protection orders. Locally, these orders have been increasingly issued since the regeneration of the Kings Cross/St Pancras area began.

W@W evolved from work by its current director in London's East End where agencies were working in silos and failing to address interlinked problems that push women into prostitution and are barriers to exiting street work. W@W was therefore set up to offer a holistic approach to putting the "jigsaw pieces of support" together by helping women to meet immediate needs attendant to rough sleeping, addictions, crises, and CJS involvement; and to offer service brokerage, advocacy, therapeutic and other support to help women stabilise their lives. This process is described as neither linear nor quick, because the problems street working women have are so entrenched that they tend to move in and out of chaos many times before achieving a changed lifestyle.

This project is a critical piece of this support jigsaw. The work aims to attract and sustain women's engagement with W@W's services; to help them to gain skills and resources towards safer, healthier lives; as a stepping-stone towards formal learning/training; and ultimately to open up chances away from street life and offending. W@W's work with vulnerable women in street prostitution is viewed by CJS funders as exemplary and trailblazing. In 2014, this charity was the overall winner of the Centre for Social Justice Awards.

### Financial Information

Income is forecast to increase by 17% between 2015 and 2016, which the charity advised is due to its fundraising strategy to secure a diverse range of funding streams over a two or three year period. As at 14th July 2015 the charity had secured £364,727 (74.8% of forecast income) for the current year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015, and £272,624 (47.7% of forecast income) for the following year ending 31st December 2016.

The charity has advised that its Trustees are working to build up free unrestricted reserves above its current target level of three months and has plans to increase its policy level to six months to provide greater self-sufficiency and a buffer for leaner years.

Year end at 31 December	2014 Audited Accounts £	2015 Current Year Forecast £	2016 Following Year Forecast £
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>			
Income	348,955	487,036	570,606
Expenditure	412,216	413,031	414,752
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(57,308)	29,393	35,729
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(5,953)	44,612	120,125
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(63,261)	74,005	155,854
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(18.1%)	15%	27%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	23,169 (6.6%)	21,191 - 4.3%	22,957 - 4%
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>			
Unrestricted free reserves at Year End	83,486	112,879	148,608
How many months' worth of expenditure	2.4	3.3	4.3
Reserves Policy target	103,054	103,258	103,686
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(19,568)	9,621	(44,920)