

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive****Pursuing Independent Paths****Amount requested: £97,364****Amount recommended: £97,300****Adv: Sandra Davidson  
Base: Westminster  
Benefit: Westminster &  
Surrounding areas****The Charity**

Pursuing Independent Paths (PIP) was established in 1983 to promote choice and opportunities for adults with learning disabilities (LDs), particularly in the development of life and vocational skills and support networks. Its core aim is to help students to achieve their potential – in independent living skills, social and emotional development and integration into the community. PIP works with each student and their circle of support to develop personalised services based on individual goals and skills. It offers a flexible and dynamic range of services, including accredited training and education, travel training, independent living, employment skills and work placements, and support into mainstream education. More than 50 volunteers help to deliver and administer the service.

**The Application**

The charity seeks funding to develop its Performing Arts Project to deliver weekly drama and dance sessions providing a non-judgemental environment in which services users can explore their thoughts, feelings and experiences. The weekly sessions will also provide the opportunity for students to devise two public performances each year.

**The Recommendation**

PIP is highly regarded as a small, friendly and accessible local provider of quality social care, offering exciting and innovative services to adults with learning disabilities and mental health issues. It encourages and empowers its students to reach their full potential, and provides a safe and fun learning environment. Students play a central role in developing the charity's direction. This project will build the confidence of students, many of whom are fearful of performing in front of an audience. Funding is recommended as follows:

***£97,300 over three years (£32,900; £32,000; £32,400) towards salaries and related costs of delivering the Performing Arts Project for young adults with learning disabilities.***

**Funding History**

Meeting Date	Decision
07/06/2007	£86,500 over three years (£28,000; £29,000; £29,500) towards the full-time salary and running costs of a travel training project for adults with learning disabilities.

**Background and detail of proposal**

PIP's Performing Arts project is a development of its drama and theatre project, which has been running in some form since 2006. Westminster City Council covered the cost of the drama session as part of a wider arts project from 2012-2014. PIP has now reshaped the project to incorporate drama and theatre, dance and digital

media in order to complement the Health and Wellbeing Project funded by the Big Lottery. In 2014 PIP held three service-user focus groups, which demonstrated that students felt happy participating in drama and dance sessions as many struggle to express themselves verbally. Digital media sessions have been built into this project following recent work creating original music and video with the BBC, and student-led drama productions at the V&A Museum.

The project will provide a more structured dance programme of 35 two-hour sessions over the course of the year with up to 15 students attending each session. The sessions will focus on learning-specific moves and routines used in street dance, and on incorporating dance into PIP's theatre productions. Drama workshops will be run by a drama practitioner specialising in dramatherapy with an assigned PIP member of staff, anticipated to benefit 15 students, encouraging their personal growth and social integration. The therapeutic element of PIP's drama workshops incorporates a diverse range of vocal, physical and mental exercises and activities aimed at improving self-awareness, thoughts and feelings, and confidence. During 2013 the charity took the decision to expand its W9 facility into the adjacent building. The two spaces were joined together, creating a single integrated delivery area with larger kitchen, improved IT facilities and new teaching areas. The expansion has enabled PIP to meet the latent demand for its services. Its student base has grown to 50, with 142 students sessions delivered every week.

### Financial Information

Forecast income for the current year 2015/16 is £610,242 of which £331,861 (54%) had been confirmed by the 30th of September 2015.

The charity advises that the cost of generating funds is low due to approximately 50% of its income coming from a service agreement with a local authority, 10% coming from ongoing contracts and due to its director and staff spending considerable time raising funds on a voluntary basis.

Year end at 31 March	2014/15 Audited Accounts £	2015/16 Current Year Budget £
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>		
Income	556,226	610,242
Expenditure	558,585	610,242
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(2,359)	(45,000)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	0	45,000
<b>Total Surplus / (Deficit)</b>	<b>(2,359)</b>	<b>0</b>
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(0.4%)	0%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	7,073 (1.3%)	10,000 (1.6%)
<b>Free unrestricted reserves</b>		
Free unrestricted reserves held at year-end	191,447	146,447
How many months' worth of expenditure	4.1	2.9
Reserves Policy target	139,647 – 279,294	152,561 – 305,121
How many months' worth of expenditure	3.0 – 6.0	3.0 – 6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	51,800 – (87,847)	(6,114) – (158,674)