

MEETING: 24/05/2016

Ref: 13288

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health

British Refugee Council

Adv: Tania Bronstein

Amount requested: £112,037

Base: Newham

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £112,000

The Charity

The British Refugee Council (BRC) is a leading provider of services for asylum seekers and refugees (AS&R), and a prominent advocate for refugee protection in the UK. Its services address pressing resettlement needs of AS&R, including destitution, housing, mental health, and employment. The charity also offers dedicated help to unaccompanied minors and supports refugee community organisations in building their institutional capacity. BRC runs services in various locations in England, and directly supports an annual average of between 1,300 to 1,500 people in London.

The Application

BRC seeks a three-year grant towards staffing and running costs of its therapeutic support service to help AS&R in London in addressing the psychological impact of their traumatic experiences. The grant would meet the costs of delivering at least 12 one-to-one counselling/psychotherapy sessions to 180 individuals, and of running facilitated psycho-educational therapy groups for 90 people.

The Recommendation

BRC is long experienced in providing quality assured counselling and psychotherapy to comprehensively support AS&R with mental health problems in their journey to recovery. This is well-managed service delivered by competent professionals.

£112,000 over three years (£36,200; £37,300 and £38,500) towards staffing, running costs and overheads of a counselling service for refugees in London.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
21/01/2010	£64,500 over 2 years (£31,500; £33,000) for a fundraising and support service for small refugee community organisations

Background and detail of proposal

People seeking safety from war and violence are often deeply traumatised. Their displacement and the complexity of the asylum-seeking process frequently exacerbate their distress. The BRC addresses their mental health needs through a bespoke model that begins by helping AS&R over immediate survival issues, is followed by one-to-one counselling /psychotherapy, and complemented by facilitated psycho-educational groups. The charity has learnt over years of practice that AS&R can only engage meaningfully in a therapeutic process when practical survival needs are addressed, and that additional help is needed to sustain people in recovery. The psycho-educational groups provide for the above by creating peer support networks and by enhancing people's skills to cope and to adapt to a new life in this country.

This service is accredited by the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy, is offered in several languages and is customised to individuals' needs. The team of trained/qualified staff and volunteers in the counselling team is skilled in different therapeutic approaches and disciplines, and the service is well linked to other specialist support, for example for torture survivors who often require intensive, longer-term help.

Financial Observations

For the current year (2016-17) forecast income totals £6,439m of which £4,606m (71%) was confirmed as at 31st March 2016.

The large deficit in 2014/15 is largely attributed to the loss of a significant Home Office Contract with effect from 31st March 2014, including redundancy costs (staff reduced from 116 in 2013/14 to 68 in 2014/15). However, in 2015/16, the charity raised a record level of unrestricted donations (£2.5m). The charity advises that this resulted from a surge in donations from the public in reaction to the refugee crisis in Europe/neighbouring countries, and that higher levels of income and expenditure forecasted for 2016/17 are to support new arrivals following the Government's pledge to resettle 20,000 Syrian refugees by 2020.

The one-off unrestricted surplus achieved in 2015/16 has increased the free reserves holding, which is forecasted to be slightly below the 3 months' worth of expenditure policy target by 31 March 2017.

Year end at 31 March	2014/15 Audited Accounts	2015/16 Draft Outturn	2016/17 Current Year Forecast
Income and Expenditure	£'000	£'000	£'000
Income	4,608	5,786	6,439
Expenditure	5,520	5,242	6,488
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(550)	582	(98)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(362)	(38)	49
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(912)	544	(49)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	19.8%	9.4%	0.8%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	685 (14.8%)	814 (14%)	789 (12 %)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	1,111	1,693	1,595
How many months' worth of expenditure	2.4	3.8	2.9
Reserves Policy target	1,380	1,310	1,622
How many months' worth of expenditure	3	3	3
Free reserves over/(under) target	(269)	383	27