

MEETING 14/07/2016

Ref: 13144

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty

Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network

Adv: Sandra Davidson

Amount requested: £148,646

Base: Lewisham

Benefit: Lewisham

Amount recommended: £120,000

The Charity

Established in 1991 Lewisham Refugee and Migrant Network (LRMN) is a longstanding provider of information, advice and support to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in South East London. Services provided include guidance on immigration, welfare benefits, housing, homelessness, debt, health, education and counselling and therapeutic support to survivors of domestic violence and gender bases violence.

The Application

LRMN is seeking three year funding to provide specialist housing advice through the recruitment of a Housing Law Advisor. Working as part of Advice Lewisham, (previously funded by Big Lottery), and in partnership with seven other providers, LRMN will offer housing law advice from their office and from a series of hubs across the borough. A part-time co-ordinator, funded by the local authority, manages the Advice Lewisham network

The Recommendation

LRMN has many years' experience of offering specialists services in the borough. With cuts to Legal Aid, welfare changes and sanctions, the demand for LRMN services has soared, with a particular increase in the number of destitute clients turning to LRMN for housing advice. Your support for this application would enable the charity to continue to run much needed advice services. The request was adjusted following the assessment meeting, as you usually fund a maximum of one full time equivalent post in a project of this nature.

£120,000 over three years (£39,100; £39,900; £41,000) for the salary of a full-time Housing Law Advisor and associated running costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
28/06/2012	£92,000 over two years (£47,000 and £45,000) for a full-time Development Worker plus on-costs to deliver digital and social media support to BMER organisations in Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark.
16/02/2012	Following feedback from one of your grants officers on the need to provide more evidence that there is sufficient demand for the proposed service, the organisation has decided to withdraw its application and survey its members.
20/10/2011	Following an assessment meeting, the organisation has decided to withdraw its application in order to revise its cost and undertake market research into the need for the proposed project.

Background and detail of proposal

Lewisham is inner London's fourth largest borough in terms of population and third in its geographical area. It is home to 275,900 people, an increase since the last census in 2011. There are over 170 languages spoken in the borough. By 2011, private rented accommodation accounted for 24% of all housing, a rise of 10% from 2001. The number of clients living in poor housing conditions and facing problems with their tenancies has increased. Repossessions in the borough have risen and possession orders (including suspended orders) have doubled in the past ten years. In the third quarter of 2014, 496 homes were repossessed and 623 possession claims were issued (Shelter, 2015). In 2014/15, 768 households were identified as homeless and in priority need and 2,800 children were living in temporary accommodation (Shelter, 2015). The Council's Service Review highlighted the high quality of advice and guidance across the borough and the need to continue to deliver these services via the voluntary sector. This project will take specialist housing across the borough through the provision of outreach appointments, increasing the geographical area in which help is available and increasing the overall availability of much needed specialist advice.

Financial Information

Forecast income for the current year 2016/17 is £458,954 of which £296,046 (65%) had been confirmed April 2016. The charity aims to hold unrestricted free reserves equivalent to between 3 and 6 months' worth of expenditure and has consistently achieved that. The costs of generating funds are low as the director's time is not included in the audited accounts but accounted for in the forecast years in 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Year end at 31 March	2014/15 Audited Accounts	2015/16 Forecast Outturn	2016/17 Budgeted
Income and Expenditure			
Income	369,336	369,283	458,954
Expenditure	322,825	350,274	430,034
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	41,508	26,455	13,938
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	5,003	(7,446)	14,982
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	46,511	19,009	28,920
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of Income	12.6%	5.1%	6.3%
Cost of Generating Funds (% of Income)	1,123 (0.3%)	14,634 (4.0%)	20,161 (4.4%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Free unrestricted reserves held at Year End	139,746	166,201	180,139
How many months' worth of expenditure	5.2	5.7	5.0
Reserves Policy target	80,706 - 161,413	87,569 - 175,137	107,509 - 215,017
How many months' worth of expenditure	3 - 6 months	3 - 6 months	3 - 6 months
Free reserves over/(under) target	59,040 -(21,667)	78,633 - (8,936)	72,631 - (34,878)