

Committee(s)	Dated:
The City Bridge Trust Committee	24 th November 2016
Subject: Support into employment for disabled people	Public
Report of: Chief Grants Officer	For Decision

Summary

This report sets out proposals for implementing a programme of support targeted at helping disabled people into employment.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- a) Discuss and agree the proposed focus and principles of this funding
- b) Instruct your officers to present specific recommendations for funding to your Committee in early 2017

Main Report

Background

1. In July 2015, in the City Bridge Trust's 20th Anniversary year, the Court of Common Council agreed an uplift to the CBT core grants budget, equating to an extra £3m in 2105/16; an extra £4m in 2016/17; and an extra £5m in 2017/18. These additional funds were to be used to provide a 20% lift of your Investing in Londoners grants programme and to support specific areas of interest, including strategic funding to support the most disadvantaged into work.
2. Your Committee agreed that 40% of the additional annual sums be set aside for "*grants, on a pro-active, strategic basis, to support the most disadvantaged Londoners towards/into employment*". This equates to £1.2m in 15/16; £1.6m in 16/17 and £2m in 17/18. As no funds were committed last financial year, the amount currently available for this particular stream is £2.8m, with an additional £2m being added in 2017/18. It has been agreed that these funds be targeted at disabled people and those with mental health problems.

Current Position

3. Statistics from the Department for Work & Pensions in 2014 show that there are over 11m people in Great Britain living with a limiting long term illness, impairment or disability. According to the Labour Force Survey, disabled people are now more likely to be employed than they were in 2002, but disabled people remain significantly less likely to be in employment than non-disabled people.

The Government's recent publication *Work, health and disability green paper: improving lives* (October 2016) states that there are 48% of working age disabled people in work compared to 80% of non-disabled people and that only 8% of employers report that they have recruited a disabled person or someone with a long-term (1 year or more) health condition.

4. Through your long-standing support for disabled people's independence – indeed, since the Trust commenced grant-making in 1995 - you have established a deep and informative portfolio of organisations which, in one way or another, have helped disabled people access and sustain employment. You have funded very many horticultural training schemes, for example; and numerous social enterprises which provide catering services by skilling and supporting disabled people. You have funded a range of infrastructure bodies to support disabled people's organisations across the capital; whilst your 20+ year commitment to improving access to buildings and services has helped London become more inclusive for more people. It is fitting, therefore, that you seek to improve access to meaningful and sustainable employment for disabled people as it will reduce poverty and its associated ills such as poor mental and physical health, low self-esteem and will encourage a sense of belonging and purpose.
5. You are currently funding a number of organisations which are doing very good work in helping disabled people into, and in, employment. *Action for Kids* has achieved some excellent outcomes in its work with young people with learning disabilities; whilst *Muscular Dystrophy UK* (MDUK) has made great strides through offering supported work experience to a cohort of physically disabled adults. There are many others, of course, including many schemes which provide horticultural training or catering skills for example. Equally, there are some employers which are at the forefront of being disabled-friendly (eg Barclays, Fujitsu, Sainsbury's) but no-one would deny that more could be done.
6. Over the past several months your officers have been talking to disabled people's organisations and to relevant infrastructure bodies to understand more fully where the gaps are in supporting disabled people into employment; where the opportunities may lie; and, more importantly, where the Trust could make a difference. Contacts made through the Lord Mayor's *Power of Diversity* programme have been very valuable as well. Your officers have also worked with colleagues in the Corporation's Economic Development Team in the development of their employability strategy to ensure appropriate links are made.
7. In broad terms, we have identified three key areas on which to focus:
 - helping disabled people access work opportunities through reducing the barriers they may face
 - encouraging and supporting more employers to offer more – and more meaningful - opportunities
 - improving the pathways which connect potential employers with potential employees.
8. To make progress on these issues, in the first instance, it is sensible to build upon what already exists.

Issues and Options

9. Improving the pathways between disabled people and potential employers can take many forms but there is no doubt that work which improves the understanding between both sides and of their respective needs can help create more and more meaningful opportunities. Organisations such as Business Disability Forum (BDF) (see para 11 below) can do this to a certain degree but there is also a role for disabled people's organisations themselves, such as *Inclusion London*. Their knowledge of, and access to, the disabled community is a somewhat untapped resource at present and they are well placed to be a broader voice for their members and to influence policy as well as practice on employment issues.
10. In the many discussions held and gatherings attended over the past several months the value of work experience has been clearly stated, particularly by disabled people themselves. Individuals see it as a way of getting a foot in the door and of showcasing their abilities whilst, for employers, it can reassure them that wholesale changes are not needed to become more disabled friendly. MDUK, which you currently fund, has run a successful work experience programme for several years but it advocates for a model which deviates from the standard 1-2 week placement as, more often than not, this just leads to the individual being allocated uninspiring and basic administrative tasks (eg endless filing and photocopying). MDUK (and others) advocate for longer periods of engagement, even if for just 2 days per week, as that means the individual is more likely to work on a project over time. This model also enables the host organisation (and its people) to integrate the disabled person more fully.
11. The needs of employers are equally important in this issue. Many are doing very good work whilst many would like to do more but do not really know how, or are worried about what might be involved. Therefore, sharing good practice amongst employers and celebrating success is very important in helping to create new opportunities for disabled people as more employers will feel confident about taking that first step. One of the key organisations working in this arena is BDF, a not-for-profit member organisation that makes it easier and more rewarding to do business with and employ disabled people. BDF provides pragmatic support by sharing expertise, giving advice, providing training and facilitating networking opportunities.
12. Disability takes many forms and so the barriers disabled people can face are multitudinous and may include those which would fall outside the immediate scope of the Trust (eg inaccessible public transport). The best way of determining such barriers, and therefore the potential solutions, is to enable disabled people themselves (and those who may advocate for them) to have a voice. There are also practical steps which can be supported. For example, *Action for Kids'* work in supporting young adults with learning difficulties has demonstrated the clear need for, and advantage of, travel training – whereby an individual is given the skills and confidence to get to and from a place of work on their own and, more importantly, to be able to take an alternative route if their normal journey is disrupted in any way. Grants for travel training used to be quite common amongst independent funders several years ago but has fallen by the wayside somewhat.

Specific support for it could now be a valuable component of the Trust's initiatives.

13. For those organisations which provide for young disabled people it is often taken that the upper age limit is 25 – an age cap that is also reflected in (and perhaps driven by) the limits set by funders. Several charities have said that some young people for one reason or another do not access any type of support until their early twenties and so it would be sensible to support (ie fund) work for those aged up to 30. This would be particularly valuable in schemes which are employment related.

Proposals

14. This report does not set out specific plans to allocate the £2.8m currently available but, instead, recommends the broad focus and key principles for investing some of those funds in a series of initiatives to support disabled people into, and in, employment.
15. Your support should focus on helping younger people/young adults aged between 16 – 30. Whilst unemployment for disabled people of all ages is higher than it should be, the Trust cannot make reasonable inroads into this issue unless it narrows its focus in some way. Concentrating on the younger element will be more in keeping with much of your previous work in helping disabled people in transition and will draw on your existing expertise and relationships established over many years.
16. You should invest further in those charities which – from recent or current funding – you know to be making good progress in this area. Organisations such as Action for Kids, Muscular Dystrophy UK, Scope, etc should be considered for funding to scale up their tried-and-tested programmes.
17. You are advised to support the Business Disability Forum (subject to receiving a satisfactory proposal) to scale up its excellent and unique work in providing employers with the skills, resources and opportunities to share best practice and to increase the quantity and quality of opportunities for younger disabled people.
18. You are advised to consider supporting organisations/work (such as Inclusion London) which increases and improves the links between employers and disabled Londoners.
19. You are advised to support initiatives which increase the quantity and quality of work experience opportunities for younger disabled people.
20. Sustainable progress on this issue is more likely to be achieved through investment over time rather than a “quick fix”. You are advised, therefore, to consider 5 year funding of projects where assessment supports such investment, but that individual and collective progress is determined and aided by independent, formative, evaluation. Where possible such evaluation should be used to inform policy makers, particularly government, independent funders, business and organisations working in this area.

Next Steps

21. Pending your consideration of the recommendations above, your officers will arrange a round-table meeting in December with some of the organisations mentioned in this report and key personnel from within the City Corporation (eg EDO) linking through to employers, to take your recommendations forward.
22. Following that meeting and other consultations as required, a report will come to your Committee in early 2017 outlining specific proposals for allocating the funds available. This may include the framework for a time- and funds-limited “open” programme for applications under specific priorities.

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