

MEETING: 24/11/2016

Ref: 13238

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health

Red Balloon Learner Centre NW London

Adv: Tim Wilson

Base: Harrow

Amount requested: £232,570

Benefit: Ealing

Amount recommended: £95,000

The Charity

Red Balloon Learner Centre NW London (RB-NWL) is one of a number of independent charities established to support children who have experienced such severe bullying they exclude themselves from school. The first Red Balloon was founded in Cambridge in 1996, and since then operations have extended across England as well as through an online service for children unable to access a local Red Balloon. RB-NWL was registered in 2005. Centres offer therapeutic support alongside formal tuition, working to re-build children's shattered self-esteem and prepare them to re-enter mainstream education.

The Application

RB-NWL seeks funding for a Talking Therapist to work alongside colleagues providing art and music therapies to young people attending the centre. The post is newly created following a programme of service expansion intended to improve the effectiveness of young people's outcomes. The therapist will work with children aged 11-16 through one-to-one as well as group settings in order to prepare them for a successful transition to mainstream schooling.

The Recommendation

The charity helps children develop the self-confidence and resilience that allows them to face school without the fear that bullying can create. Whilst beneficiaries generally do not have a formal mental health diagnosis (children often self-exclude before this process is complete), the assessments RB-NWL conducts ensure that the children it supports have an acute need for intensive counselling. The application included costs which would not be suitable for your mental health support programme (such as residential outings) and the level of award has been discussed with the charity which is content it can cover the balance through pupil fees, donations and local fundraising. Funding is recommended as follows:

£95,000 over three years (£30,000; £32,000; £33,000) for the salary, on costs and supervision costs of a full-time Talking Therapist providing one-to-one and group support to children attending Red Balloon Learner Centre NW London.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
09/07/2015	An application under the Trust's mental health programme which was rejected for falling outside the published programme priorities.
06/09/2007	£60,000 over three years for the costs of providing therapy to children and families.
02/03/2006	A request for capital which was subsequently withdrawn as the organisation raised funds elsewhere.

Background and detail of proposal

Young people are referred to RB-NWL by schools, pupil referral units, and through word of mouth. Capacity is limited to around 20 young people at any one time, so RB-NWL delivers individualised and intensive assistance to address the underlying reasons why a participant has excluded themselves from school. The goal is to support young people back into mainstream education as quickly as possible, and to ensure that academic performance does not suffer during this period of absence. The therapeutic support offered alongside the tuition is a key part of the offer and seeks to strengthen the young people's mental health.

Financial Information

At 7th October RB-NWL advised it had confirmed £84,200 of its 2016-17 income (20%), with much of the balance expected in fee income for pupils which is received throughout the year. The charity reports a reduction in free reserves at the end of 2015-16 which will be repaired and strengthened by an improved surplus in 2016-17. Nevertheless, RB-NWL is expected to fall short of its free reserve target and seeks to remedy this through carefully managed service expansion. Expenditure is forecast to grow by 36% between 2014-15 and 2016-17 as RB-NWL works with more young people, and with increasingly complex cases. This requires additional staffing. RB-NWL states that it does not incur any costs for generating funds. It benefits from fundraising support provided by an affiliated charity (Red Balloon Learner Centre Group) based in Cambridge which was established specifically to raise money for Red Balloon activities in different parts of the country. Any local fundraising is delivered by unpaid trustees.

Year end at 31 August	2014-15 Independently Examined	2015-16 Draft	2016-17 Forecast
Income and Expenditure	£	£	£
Income	305,115	282,470	415,765
Expenditure	276,281	296,526	372,712
Unrestricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	35,493	(16,813)	50,353
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(6,659)	2,757	(7,300)
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	28,834	(14,056)	43,053
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	9.5%	(5%)	10.3%
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	30,912	14,099	64,452
How many months' worth of expenditure	1.3	0.57	2.1
Reserves Policy target	3	3	3
How many months' worth of expenditure	69,070	74,132	93,178
Free reserves over/(under) target	(38,158)	(60,033)	(28,726)