

MEETING: 10/01/2017

Ref: 13387

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London Safer

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help (SSAFA)

Adv: Jemma Grieve Combes

Amount requested: £102,000

Base: City

Benefit: London-wide

Amount recommended: £102,000

The Charity

SSAFA is the UK's oldest national tri-military charity, providing support to service personnel, veterans and their families. At the core of the charity's work is its casework service delivering welfare advice and support. This is provided by 7,000 trained volunteers in the community through 92 regional branches and directly on military bases through 68 voluntary service committees. SSAFA is contracted to deliver health and social contracts to Armed forces in the UK and overseas. It also provides a range of specialist services include mentoring for those leaving military life; an adoption and fostering service; short respite breaks for service children with a disability or additional need; and family support groups for those who are bereaved. The charity runs a number of residential services including a care home, two homes for injured personnel and their families and two Stepping Stone homes for women and children facing homelessness following relationship breakdown.

The Application

Women survivors of domestic violence with a military connection face particular challenges such as frequent home moves and, if they are the non-serving partner, the insecurity of military accommodation if they leave their partner. **Stepping Stones House** provides a specialist service for these women and their children by providing safe accommodation and support for as long as they need. The request for funding is for a contribution to the salary of the Home Manager. The Home Manager not only provides a family support role to women but liaises with external bodies such as social services and health professionals, manages **Stepping Stones House's** staff and ensures that policies and procedures are in place to create a safe and secure environment.

The Recommendation

Stepping Stones House is a well-established service meeting the needs of women and children with specialist needs. The house is open to women from all over the UK. However the majority will be from London and resettle in London: in 2015 64% were from London boroughs and 50% resettled in London areas. As the funding request is for 11% of the total project costs this is in line with your policies. If you award a grant as advised the organisation will need to raise a further £72k to make year one viable, otherwise it will call on its unrestricted reserves. It is recommended that your funding in years 2 and 3 is conditional on sufficient funds being raised.

£102,000 over 3 years (£33,300; £34,000; £34,700) for the salary of the f/t Stepping Stones House Home Manager. The grant in years 2 and 3 is conditional on sufficient funds being raised to make the initiative viable.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
22/09/16	Withdrawn (SSAFA London City East Division)
28/04/11	£10,000 for the SSAFA London City East Division for a third and final year towards running costs to continue to support older Service and National Service veterans and their dependants in central London.

Background and detail of proposal

Stepping Stones House is a registered refuge in North West London that provides safe and supportive accommodation for up to 20 women with a military connection and their children following relationship breakdown. In 2015 51 % of its families were fleeing domestic violence. The House is staffed by a team of three support workers, one of which is the House Manager and all are trained caseworkers. The House Manager lives on site and ensures a 24 hour service is provided.

Women are usually referred to Stepping Stones house through SSAFA's volunteers and unit welfare officers, though a growing number are self-referring through its website. The House Manager aims to assess all applications with 24 hours, working with outside professional support agencies. Once an application is accepted a member of staff will carry out safety planning, arrange transportation and if necessary accompany the woman and any children to safely arrive at the House. On arrival women receive a welcome pack and all furnishings are provided: this is critical to women who often arrive with no more than a few bags of clothes and toys.

Once a woman is settled staff will carry out a risk management plan and needs assessment to develop an outcome based support plan. This might include support with organising childcare or schooling, accessing grant funding and benefit entitlements, adult education or training and housing needs. If required, staff will accompany women to appointments such as the doctors, counselling and solicitors. Primarily, however, staff provide emotional support to women who are often distressed and vulnerable. Families can stay at Stepping Stones House as long as they need to which is typically up to 14 months. As well as the core programme of support, trips and outings are arranged to make sure children have treats on special occasions.

Financial Information

£41,542,000 (90%) of current year income is confirmed as at 2nd November 2016. Forecast/budget income has reduced post 2015 as a result of contractual income from the MOD declining as the number of service personnel based overseas reduces, alongside contracts with the NHS diminishing in value.

The cost of generating funds is relatively high, including the organisation's costs of delivering contracted services for the NHS (£5.3m in 2015). This figure is reducing in subsequent years as the level of this service provision reduces.

SSAFA's balance sheet shows a defined pension scheme liability of £37.8m. It is the view of the charity that the liability lies with the Ministry of Defence. It reports that conversations with the Ministry are ongoing and it hopes to positively resolve the issue in early 2017. Excluding this liability, the charity's free unrestricted reserves

stand at just over £25m which equates to 5.5 months expenditure. In addition the charity holds designated funds of just over £2m for specific projects. The organisation has a reserves policy to hold 2 year's operating costs from which it excludes restricted expenditure and direct costs on NHS, health and social care contract work. In 2016 this was equivalent to £34,900,000. It explains that this policy is to allow it to meet its commitment to lifelong support for its beneficiaries.

Year-end at December	2015 Audited Accounts	2016 Current Year Forecast	2017 Budget
	£	£	£
Income and Expenditure			
Income	53,819,000	47,900,000	39,935,000
Expenditure	55,434,000	48,060,000	40,053,000
Unrestricted Funds Surplus/ (Deficit)	(1,429,000)	63,000	(900,000)
Restricted Funds Surplus / (Deficit)	(186,000)	(223,000)	782,000
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	(1,615,000)	(160,000)	(118,000)
Surplus / (Deficit) as a % of turnover	(3%)	(0.3%)	(0.3%)
Cost of Generating funds (% of income)	14.8%	9.3%	14.2%
Net gains/losses	5,024,000	Calculated at year end	Calculated at year-end
Total Surplus / (Deficit)	3,409,000	(160,000)	(118,000)
Free unrestricted reserves			
Unrestricted free reserves held at Year End	25,303,000	28,354,000	27,454,000
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	5.5	7.1	8.2
Reserves Policy target	33,342,000	34,900,000	35,300,000
~ how many months' worth of expenditure	7.2 months (24 months operating costs)	8.7 months (24 months operating costs)	10.6 months (24 months operating costs)
Free reserves over target / (under target)	(8,039,000)	(6,546,000)	(7,846,000)