

MEETING: 15/06/2017

Ref: 13930

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty

Centre 70

Adv: Rebecca Green

Amount requested: £99,960

Base: Lambeth

Benefit: Lambeth

Amount recommended: £100,000

The Charity

Centre 70 is a registered charity which aims to support the community in Lambeth and the surrounding boroughs by helping people to cope with a wide range of social, domestic and financial problems via the provision of professional advice and counselling. The advice centre was established in 1970, providing free advice on housing, welfare benefits, debt relief and legal matters to those in the local community. The Counselling Service followed in 1987, delivering low cost psychotherapeutic counselling. Centre 70 champions an integrated and holistic approach to some of the most disadvantaged people in the local community, and works in cooperation with different services and community groups in order to deliver advice outreach to day centres, prisons, food banks and housing offices.

The Application

The INSPIRE project aims to provide a free holistic counselling and advice service targeting those with multiple disadvantages. For those who have been helped by this first stage advice and counselling process, there will then be the possibility to be involved in longer term training as either a 'specialist community adviser' or to be involved in peer support groups. The extensive training involved in these volunteer roles will offer real skills, supporting participants to be able to offer advice on a range of issues, including debt, financial capability and welfare benefits to others in their communities. Similarly, the peer support groups will encourage self-help between members and sharing of emotional support for those with common experiences.

The Recommendation

Centre 70 is a well-established community organisation, with experience of providing integrated advice and counselling services, and the knowledge and capacity to deliver the training and volunteer support function. Funding is sought to support the salary of a part time (18 hpw) Project Leader to manage the project and the development of the volunteer training packages, in addition to the costs of delivering the free counselling and advice sessions and the associated project costs. Funding is recommended as follows:

£100,000 over 3 years (£33,340; £33,330; £33,330) towards the INSPIRE programme, including the salary of a part time (18hpw) Project Leader, contributions towards other staff involved in the delivery of the work, and associated project costs.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
08/10/2009	£70,000 for the capital and associated fees to improve access to the Centre 70 premises
25/11/2008	Application withdrawn
01/11/2007	Application has been withdrawn
04/10/2007	£4,500 for the cost of commissioning an independent access audit.

Background and detail of proposal

Currently, the Centre 70 advice and counselling services are experiencing higher demand than capacity, and are not funded to provide all counselling services for free. Therefore, the INSPIRE project intends to address these issues, targeting those who are less well served by current provision of counselling and psychological support and are experiencing multiple disadvantage (e.g. people who have mental health needs who have also experienced homelessness, are refugees and asylum seekers, have recently left prison, or have experienced domestic violence), people with mental health needs from BME communities and people who identify as LGBT.

The Lambeth State of the Borough 2016 report placed Lambeth as the 8th most deprived borough in London, and noted that a third of working age people and a quarter of people of retirement age in Lambeth are living in poverty. Centre 70 is well established, and has strong relationships with other voluntary organisations in Lambeth. In addition to relationships with London-wide Prisons and Probation, the group receives referrals from local women's refuges and domestic violence outreach services, South London Refugee Association and has good links with LGBT services in the borough. Centre 70 recently won a Lambeth business award for commitment to the community and is a winner of West Norwood favourite business award.

Financial Information

In its internal management reports, Centre 70 shows project expenditure as being restricted even though it will be paid out of unrestricted income. This is presented correctly in their year-end accounts, however it has the impact in the financial table of making the restricted position in 2016/17 and 2017/18 stronger and hence free reserves cover look higher than it should be. In addition, the charity explained that reserves are presently above policy as a large percentage of cases remain in Work in Progress, i.e. the value of work that is due were they to close all their cases at year-end. There is also an intention to buy the long lease of the building, with reserves being used for the deposit.

Despite these presentational points, the reserves position is satisfactory.

Year end as at 31 March	2016 Audited/Examined Accounts £	2017 Forecast £	2018 Forecast £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	548,861	554,320	554,969
- % of Income confirmed as at 28/02/2017	n/a	n/a	65%
Expenditure	(514,710)	(574,640)	(554,558)
Total surplus/(deficit)	34,151	(20,320)	411
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	0	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	34,151	(20,320)	411
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Cost of Raising Funds	0	1,135	741
- % of income	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	483,306	206,173	154,589
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	208,892	188,572	188,983
No of months of operating expenditure	5.2	11.0	14.7
Reserves policy target	161,102	149,390	149,390
No of months of operating expenditure	4.0	8.7	11.6
Free reserves over/(under) target	47,790	39,182	39,593