

**MEETING: 23/11/2017**

**Ref: 14160**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive**

**The Royal Society for Blind Children**

**Amount requested: £113,955**

**Amount recommended: £113,960**

**Adv: Geraldine Page**

**Base: Hackney**

**Benefit: Newham, Lewisham,  
Tower Hamlets, Lambeth,  
Bromley**

**The Applicant**

The Royal Society for Blind Children (RSBC) is a charity working with blind and partially sighted children and young people up to the age of 25. RSBC deliver a combination of educational, sport, creative and developmental services to support blind and partially sighted young people to develop to their full potential. On the 1st January 2017 the Royal London Society for Blind Children (1838 – 2016) and Royal Society for Blind People (1884 – 2016) joined together to become RSBC. Jointly, the charities now have the geographic reach to deliver a national service. The merger also allowed for some economies of scale.

**The Application**

RSBC is requesting funding to significantly increase opportunities for blind and partially sighted young people (16-25) to secure sustained employment. This will be achieved by: Engaging and training identified employers through a series of workshops to prepare them to offer apprenticeships to blind or partially sighted young people; Liaising with education providers to establish RSBC as a gateway organisation for the young people to access apprenticeship opportunities and providing on-going support to both employers and young people during the apprenticeship period, 12 months. The proposed project will supplement and improve upon RSBC's current employability programme, funded by the Lottery (Jun 15–May 18). The existing provision builds confidence and skills of participants and offers them short work placements (2 weeks) at partner employers. It has achieved significant outcomes in improving participants' emotional and practical skills to find work, but evidence shows that obtaining sustained employment following the programme remains an issue for the young people. This funding would enable RSBC to build on its connections with a number of employers including TfL, Goldman Sachs, the London Transport Museum, NHS, KPMG, GSK, with the aim of increasing their involvement and offering full apprenticeships. RSBC will also identify and cultivate relationships with 20+ public and 20+ private sector employers supporting them to provide apprenticeships.

**The Recommendation**

RSBC has demonstrated a strong track record in supporting blind and partially sighted children and young people. The project will tailor support to meet the specific needs of each young person and employer. Funding from the Trust would enable RSBC to attract other funders and expand the work further to support more employers and young people.

***£113,960 over three years (£32,192, £39,124 £42,644) towards the costs of delivering an apprenticeship programme with partner employers for 40 blind and partially sighted young people (16-25).***

## Funding History

| Meeting Date | Decision   |
|--------------|--|
| 31/05/2012   | £55,000 over three years (£17,800; £18,300; £18,900) towards a programme supporting young visual impaired people make the transition to adulthood. |

## Background and detail of proposal

Blind and partially sighted young people are among the most disadvantaged groups in our society. 90% of those who lose their sight in youth won't work for more than six months in their lives and nearly 70% of blind and partially sighted young people are living on the poverty line. Sight accounts for 80% of all learning and being blind affects the skills development of young people. Sight loss impairs people's ability to learn from experience and reduces their exposure to age typical experiences. This means they often come to the job market with less maturity and experience than their sighted peers. This is compounded by the fact that employers are generally unreceptive to offering blind young people long term opportunities, based on perceptions that they won't be able to deliver the work effectively, or that they would need continuous intensive support. This project would establish a strong enabling environment by working with employers to increase their ability and confidence in employing blind and partially sighted young people.

## Financial Information

The Trustees have developed an ambitious strategy for the new organisation to meet its key objective that no child will grow up poor and lonely just because they are blind. To match the opportunities afforded by its national reach, it plans to double its income in the next five years by looking at new sustainable ways of generating income. In order to achieve this, trustees have agreed an exceptional investment of £1m in fundraising from its reserves over the next 4 years. On 03/11/17 RSBC confirmed it had received an unrestricted donation of £1m which is not in the forecast below. Trustees have a clear plan for this additional income by investing in their Family Support Service, increasing the number of Family Engagement Workers and launching an online platform. The large restricted deficit in 2017 relates to income received from Google for RSBC subsidiary Wayfindr (a service that aids vision impaired people to navigate independently using their mobile device) which was accounted for in 2016 but spent in the calendar year 2017.

| Year end as at 31 December                  | 2016             | 2017             | 2018         |
|---|------------------|------------------|--------------|
|   | Audited Accounts | Forecast         | Budget       |
|   | £                | £                | £            |
| <b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>            |                  |                  |              |
| Income                                      | 5,325,000        | 5,103,218        | 5,538,000    |
| - % of Income confirmed as at 26/10/2017    | n/a              | %                | 29%          |
| Expenditure                                 | (5,451,000)      | (6,002,273)      | (5,534,000)  |
| Total surplus/(deficit)                     | <b>(126,000)</b> | <b>(899,055)</b> | <b>4,000</b> |
| Split between:                              |                  |                  |              |
| - Restricted surplus/(deficit)              | (67,000)         | (663,418)        | 511,000      |
| - Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)            | (59,000)         | (235,637)        | (507,000)    |
|   | <b>(126,000)</b> | <b>(899,055)</b> | <b>4,000</b> |
| Cost of Raising Funds                       | 1,475,000        | 1,105,682        | 1,286,000    |
| - % of income                               | 27.7%            | 21.7%            | 23.2%        |
| Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)  | 4,454,000        | 3,961,967        | 3,257,000    |
| <b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>          |                  |                  |              |
| Free unrestricted reserves held at year end | 2,038,000        | 1,802,363        | 1,295,363    |
| No of months of operating expenditure       | 5.5              | 5.5              | 4.8          |
| Reserves policy target                      | 1,500,000        | 1,500,000        | 1,500,000    |
| No of months of operating expenditure       | 4.0              | 4.5              | 5.5          |
| Free reserves over/(under) target           | 538,000          | 302,363          | (204,637)    |