

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - English for Speakers of Other Languages

Community Action For Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Adv: Geraldine Page

Amount requested: £84,520

Base: Wandsworth

Benefit: Croydon

Amount recommended: £84,520

The Applicant

Community Action for Refugees and Asylum Seekers (CARAS) is a community outreach (registered) charity based in Tooting that offers support and advice to people of refugee/asylum seeking background to enable them to overcome barriers that prevent access to rights, entitlements, opportunities and a good quality of life. The types of services they provide include: ESOL classes for women and young people; one to one individual support with people experiencing difficulty or transition; advocacy support and a range of bespoke teaching and training sessions on issues affecting people of refugee background.

The Application

CARAS is requesting funding to provide ESOL classes for 210 women and men of refugee background over three years. These classes will be attended by adults who are unable to access college courses due to social isolation, a lack of appropriate locations within reach, childcare needs, and factors relating to their forced displacement. CARAS classes support refugee adults into mainstream ESOL provision where possible. The charity will provide one 2-hour ESOL class per week for mixed group of adult refugees, with creche; and one 2-hour ESOL class per week for women refugees, with creche. The majority of classes will be pre-entry with some Level 1 and Level 2.

The Recommendation

CARAS is highly regarded within the community it serves for delivering high quality services for people of refugee and asylum-seeking background and mobilising its team of 100 volunteers. It has a range of group activities that support people of all ages to develop their English skills, access services and opportunities, build supportive social networks and to feel welcomed. CARAS works with individuals to make sure that people get the specific support that matches their situation no matter how complex. The project is well planned and a good fit with your outcomes for the English for speakers of other languages programme. Full funding is recommended:

£84,520 over 3 years (£27,520; £27,780; £29,220) towards the salary costs of the Project Coordinator (2.5 days per week) and associated running costs of the ESOL programme.

Background and detail of proposal

CARAS is based in Tooting, close to London's asylum processing hub in Croydon. There are very few entry level classes with creche facilities available for adult

refugees and asylum seekers, which is vital to enabling many women to participate in classes. Many people arrive with little or no English and have to wait many weeks or months to access school or college places. Many refugee women locally are very isolated with limited opportunities to develop their English skills and few classes which are accessible to them. There is also a high level of illiteracy amongst CARAS beneficiaries which makes acquiring English in formal settings particularly difficult. A recent mapping exercise of local provision showed cuts to ESOL courses at the local colleges and there are very few entry level classes available locally for adult asylum seekers. The project coordinator is CELTA qualified and leads a team of qualified ESOL volunteer teachers who design and teach the lessons. Each qualified teacher will be supported by additional volunteers, ensuring that learners can have one-to-one support when necessary. This method works well for people who need additional encouragement to participate, and especially for those who have never had any education before. However, every session is led a qualified ESOL teacher, ensuring a high quality of teaching throughout.

Financial Information

CARAS are now in the second year of a three-year major capacity building initiative which is intended to significantly increase the organisation's resilience and flexibility. The first year was dedicated to increasing unrestricted revenue. This has allowed it to meet its new reserves policy for the first time and it plans to revise it to include a slightly larger reserve in the future. CARAS's aim is a small annual growth to allow it to continue to meet its commitments, develop its governance, and refine its practice to ensure it is meeting the needs of its beneficiaries. By the end of the three years, CARAS hope that its increased unrestricted revenue will be adequate to fund its core salaries without the need for further restricted grant funding. In the longer term it plans to cover all its essential costs through unrestricted funds, thereby ensuring stability.

Year end as at 31 August	2016 Examined Accounts £	2017 Draft £	2018 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	240,745	243,900	249,000
- % of Income confirmed as at 28/02/2017	n/a	100%	67%
Expenditure	(183,019)	(215,415)	(221,424)
Total surplus/(deficit)	57,726	28,485	27,576
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	46,245	(1,662)	1,051
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	11,481	30,147	26,525
	57,726	28,485	27,576
Cost of Raising Funds	398	24,800	25,800
- % of Income	0.2%	10.2%	10.4%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	42,546	21,763	33,475
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	15,741	45,888	72,413
No of months of operating expenditure	4.4	25.3	26.0
Reserves policy target	53,142	53,142	53,142
No of months of operating expenditure	15.0	29.3	19.1
Free reserves over/(under) target	(37,401)	(7,254)	19,271