

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Making London More Inclusive

Sense

Adv: Geraldine Page

Amount requested: £153,939

Base: Islington

Benefit: Newham, Tower Hamlets and Hackney

Amount recommended: 154,000

The Applicant

Sense is a national disability charity that supports people with complex communication needs to be understood, connected and valued. Founded in 1955 as a self-help group by parents of children who were born deafblind as a result of Rubella it has been the main service provider for deafblind people and their carers. It now has a broader focus including; children and adults with dual sensory impairments, autism, and single sensory impairments with additional needs such as epilepsy, cognitive conditions and/or physical disabilities. Services include supporting children, young people and adults in their home, in the community and at its centres. Sense also provide family support services including information, advice, short breaks and family events.

Today, the Sense group comprises of a number of organisations. Sense, the trading name for "Sense, The National Deafblind and Rubella Association", which works in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It is also the corporate trustee of the Royal Society for Deaf Children (Birmingham) and Coventry Society for the Blind, both separately registered charities. It is the sole member of Sense Scotland, Sense International (also both separately registered charities) and Sense4Enterprise Limited, and it holds 100% of the issued share capital of Helping Sense Ltd, Sense's trading company which runs the Sense charity shops.

The Application

Sense is seeking funding towards its East London 'Amaze' programme supporting 105 young people (over 3 years) aged 16-25 with complex sensory and communication needs to transition towards adulthood. The pilot programme is designed to give young people the chance to develop skills, friendships and local connections through a year long programme of arts and sports activities, working with mainstream and specialist providers. Activities will be chosen to support essential skills development for adulthood including, autonomy, independence, confidence, self-exploration, choice and citizenship.

The young people will benefit from personalised support to achieve individual outcomes through a team of skilled volunteer 'buddies'. This enables young people to practice skills, pursue interests, and maintain local friends. Volunteer buddies will support travel and engagement in group activity days (reducing travel as a barrier) and will meet for a further session each month. Each young person will also create a 'personal statement' through film, image, sound, music and words to enable them to share their preferences, abilities and needs with professionals and future service providers. Following completion of the programme after one year the participants will have the option to continue 1:1 buddying by making payments from their Personal Budgets, continuing the availability of activities and social engagement. (A Personal

Budget is the amount of money a council allocates to an individual to meet their care and support needs.) This model is designed to give independence, flexibility and choice to the young person but also manage sustainability of the programme going forward. If successful, the programme has great potential to be scaled up and delivered across more locations.

The Recommendation

This application will support a group of highly vulnerable young people through a period of significant transition and will help to raise their future aspirations. The project is well planned and is the result of a comprehensive consultation (Shape Your Future, 2015) that Sense ran with young people with complex communication needs and their parents/carers. Sense is requesting a contribution from you towards staffing and project costs with the balance being raised from 2 other sources. Fundraising and personal payments from the young people participating to purchase continuation of support if they wish. The grant is tapered in years 2 and 3 as income from fundraising and personal payments is included. Sense has also applied to the Lockwood Charitable Foundation for £149,921, from which initial feedback has been positive. Funding from the Trust would also enable Sense to attract other funders.

£154,000 over 3 years (£78,500, £55,500, £20,000) for 50% of the f/t Programme Development Manager in years 1 and 2 and towards the running costs of the 'Amaze' programme supporting 105 young people aged 16-25 with complex sensory and communication needs to transition towards adulthood. The grant in years 2 and 3 is conditional on sufficient funds being raised to make the initiative viable.

Funding History

Meeting Date	Decision
10/01/2013	£71,400 over three years (£23,200; £23,800; £24,400) towards employment of service delivery and campaign staff to develop and monitor transition services to deafblind young Londoners.

Background and detail of proposal

Moving in to adult life can be a challenging and daunting time for young people and their families, especially when the young person has complex communication needs. The professionals that have provided support for the most of their lives 'disappear', funding options change, the structure of education settings finishes and with that so does opportunities to socialise and participate in a variety of activities. Young people can become socially isolated, with little opportunity to meet new people, make friends, participate in meaningful activities, or develop skills much needed for adult life. Young people who have complex communication needs (which often act as a barrier to their participation in their own transition to adulthood) often feel they are left out of decisions made about their futures. Many decisions and choices need to be made during transition, yet insufficient knowledge of this process by practitioners and commissioners mean young people risk losing co-ordinated support on reaching adulthood across social care, health and employment. Sense has designed this programme to ensure young people remain at the heart of their transition process, build skills and friends and community links which will benefit them throughout their adult life, and equipped them with the resources to express choices, aspirations and support needs to future service providers.

Financial Information

The financial information presented to you relates to Sense, The National Deafblind and Rubella Association, which works in England, Wales and Northern Ireland who will be delivering this project. Your Officer has also reviewed the Sense Group consolidated accounts and high-level income and expenditure information for 2017/18 and 2018/19, which raise no concerns. Sense is a financially well managed charity. It does however have a pension deficit of £14.5m linked to historical membership of the London Pension Fund Authority. Sense has been working to reduce the actuarial risk that all defined benefit schemes bring. All members have been withdrawn from the scheme and the liability is being actively managed. It is in negotiations to agree a repayment plan and has put in place interim arrangements.

Two thirds of Sense's income come from fees charged to local authorities for its services and it has a significant trading arm in its high street shops. Trustees have a reserves policy target of £12.5m which appear high, but it includes managing the relocation of people who use their residential care in the unlikely event the organisation closes. Free unrestricted reserves are lower as fixed assets have been excluded.

Year end as at 31 March	2017 Audited Accounts £	2018 Forecast £	2019 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	60 697 375	59 493,000	61 237 000
- % of Income confirmed as at 01/02/18	n/a	94.72%	72%
Expenditure	(59 346 346)	(58 720,000)	(59,644,000)
Actuarial loss on pension scheme	(1 128,000)	N/A	N/A
Total surplus/(deficit)	223,029	773,000	1,593,000
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	228,771	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	2,881	773,000	1,593,000
- Endowment Funds	(8,623)	N/A	N/A
	223,029	773,000	1,593,000
Cost of Raising Funds	10,531 984	10,372 000	11,135,000
- % of Income	17.4%	17.4%	18.2%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	57 859,761	55,444 000	57,081 000
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	3,811,207	4,584 207	6,177,207
No of months of operating expenditure	0.8	1.0	1.3
Reserves policy target	12 500 000	12,500,000	12,500,000
No of months of operating expenditure	2.6	2.7	2.6
Free reserves over/(under) target	(8 688 793)	(7 915 793)	(6 322,793)

