

MEETING: 06/07/2018

Ref: 14546

ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Improving Londoners' Mental Health

Spear Housing Association Ltd

Adv: Julla Mirkin

Amount requested: £60,760

Base: Richmond

(Revised request: £92,500)

Benefit: Richmond

Amount recommended: £92,500

The Applicant

Founded in 1987, initially as a night shelter in Richmond, SPEAR is now a homelessness charity that operates in five boroughs in south west London. It offers a range of integrated accommodation and support services, including: emergency accommodation; supported tenancies; rough sleeper outreach; skills training, work placements; pre-employment activities; and signposting to social/health services.

The Application

This application is for a Peer Support and User Involvement programme which will offer homeless people in Kingston and Richmond befriending and support from Peer Volunteers, who are themselves transitioning away from homelessness.

The Recommendation

During assessment it became clear that the applicant has ambitions that had not been reflected in the original application, partly due to the urgent need for funds precipitated by a funder reneging on the second year's funding of a two-year agreement due to its own lack of funds. A revised request for incremental expansion of the Peer Support and User Involvement programme with increased targets and costs has been provided and is reflected in the recommendation:

£92,500 over three years (£13,350; £34,150; £45,000) for the salary and on-costs of the p/t (30hpw) Peer Support Worker, training, activities, line management and additional costs associated with an incremental expansion of the Peer Support and User Involvement programme.

Funding History

None

Background and detail of proposal

In 2016/17, 140 new rough sleepers were recorded in Richmond and Kingston, a 50% rise since 2011/12 (Dept. of Communities and Local Government). Data collated by Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness, an existing CBT Grantee, indicates that the total number of people sleeping rough or at risk of losing their homes in Kingston and Richmond in 2016-17 was just under 650. There is no other dedicated homeless health provision, apart from that offered by SPEAR, in the two boroughs.

SPEAR's Peer Support and User Involvement programme sits within its Homeless Health Link Service, which supports homeless people to register with GPs; advocates in care settings; and ensures that treatment for multiple conditions is joined up. An evaluation of the Homeless Health Link Service in 2017, funded by the Big Lottery and delivered by the Young Foundation, recommended peer support to help users stay engaged with treatments and activities to improve mental well-being.

Evidence from Homeless Link and from SPEAR's own research suggests that mental ill health and dual-diagnosis is common amongst homeless people: Homeless Link suggest that 86% of the homeless population have mental ill health compared with 30% of the wider population; and of 220 SPEAR Clients accessing services since 2015, 89% had two or more health needs, ranging from mental or physical needs or addiction, indicating the vulnerability of SPEAR's user group. Furthermore, there are a range of interconnected barriers to accessing treatment for homeless people, including the requirement to be registered with a GP – which is especially difficult for people with no fixed abode; the requirement to keep appointments and the common exclusion of addicts from mental health treatments. The complexity of beneficiaries' treatment plans that often address multiple needs, requires considerable coordination; it is believed that clients will benefit significantly from the support of sympathetic and skilled Peers Mentors.

Homeless Health Link Managers will recommend suitable clients to train as Peer Mentors each year. The team also creates individualised peer support plans for each client, which will involve Peer Mentors in tasks, such as, accompanying clients to medical appointments; providing moral support; visiting clients in hospital and supporting them to engage with services and activities to improve their mental health. The Peer Support and Service User Involvement Programme, which is coordinated by a former client, also supports the progress of the Peer Mentors to gain the confidence and skills to support their own recoveries. Peer mentors are helped to complete an accredited peer mentoring qualification with Open College Network, which involves attending lectures, tutorials and completing coursework; they are also supported to search and apply for work or learning opportunities at the end of their placement. Programme outcomes include 18 peer mentors improving their literacy; 23 gaining mentoring qualifications and 14 securing employment during the lifetime of the grant.

Service users are encouraged to meet weekly for group meetings and to attend a programme of 15 social, education or health-related activities per year, designed to improve clients' wellbeing and mental health. 150 homeless people from Richmond and Kingston will be supported to access services and engage with SPEAR's activities during the funding period. SPEAR also proposes to deliver five workshops for health and social care professionals, co-delivered with Peer Volunteers, to offer an insight into the specific experiences and perspectives of homeless people.

Financial Information

SPEAR incurred a deficit in 2017, which was caused by two issues: firstly, the charity struggled to recover housing benefit from its housing residents. It has since introduced a new role, Income Officer, specifically to do this and that hasn't been an issue since. Secondly, there was a gap in funding for the Homeless Health Link Service, which the charity covered from its reserves. Income has increased in 2018 and 2019 due to SPEAR securing several large government contracts for delivering homeless services.

Year end as at 31 March	2017	2018	2019
	Audited Accounts	Forecast	Budget
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	1 930 335	2 693 731	2 502 949
- % of Income confirmed as at 09/05/18	n/a	N/a	90%
Expenditure	(2 122 911)	(2 651 784)	(2 502 949)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(192 576)	41 947	0
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(35,853)	0	0
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(156,723)	41,947	0
	(192,576)	41,947	0
Cost of Raising Funds	149 741	159 976	121,717
- % of Income	7.8%	5.9%	4.9%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	1 906 508	2 204 176	2 041 742
Free unrestricted reserves:			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	433 812	475 759	475 759
No of months of operating expenditure	2.7	2.6	2.8
Reserves policy target	476 627	551 044	510 436
No of months of operating expenditure	3.0	3.0	3.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(42 815)	(75 285)	(34 677)

