

**MEETING: 06/07/2018**

**Ref: 14562**

**ASSESSMENT CATEGORY - Reducing Poverty**

**Brixton Advice Centre**

**Adv: Shegufta Rahman**

**Base: Lambeth**

**Amount requested: £190,511**

**Benefit: Lambeth**

**Amount recommended: £146,000**

**The Applicant**

Registered as a charity in 1985, Brixton Advice Centre (BAC) promotes access to justice by providing good quality legal advice and assistance to the local community. This includes legal advice and representation to individuals who would otherwise be unable to access legal services due to costs and may suffer disadvantage in terms of personal and economic wellbeing as a consequence. In addition, the charity supports individuals to maximise their income and better manage their lives.

**The Application**

Funding is requested for a service to provide legal assistance at the point of food crisis which addresses the underlying problems causing that crisis. BAC intend on making the service sustainable through the engagement and training of volunteers. The charity will be delivering this service in partnership with two three foodbank venues in Lambeth, as well as Centre 70 which is another advice centre.

**The Recommendation**

BAC has co-designed a joined-up approach towards tackling the underlying issues for those experiencing food poverty. Building on the strengths of each of the partners, the project has potential to become sustainable post-funding. The amount recommended is at a reduced rate as the request included some expenditure that falls outside the scope of your funding, as well funding for posts that would equate to more than one full-time equivalent (which is your usual limit for funding).

***£146,000 over three years (£48,000, £50,000, £48,000) for the p/t salary of an Advisor (0.8 FTE) and associated project costs.***

**Funding History**

None.

**Background and detail of proposal**

The project will have two approaches towards supporting people facing financial crisis. Firstly, it will assist those who are in crisis at the point of initial contact and work on resolving the causes of that crisis. Secondly, it will develop the skills of foodbank volunteers in basic advice skills and the identification and use of local information resources in order to underpin the ongoing effective provision of services within the foodbank setting, both during and after the project ends. The project partnership includes Norwood and Brixton Foodbank, which is made up of three separate foodbank venues in the borough with over 200 volunteers between them, and two advice centres also based in Lambeth; BAC and Centre 70. BAC and Centre 70 are both members of Advice UK and hold various accreditations including both holding Specialist Quality Mark. Centre 70 has a unique benefit of also offering a well-established counselling service that provides free and affordable counselling on issues such as depression, family and relationship issues, effects of loss, trauma

or change, drug or alcohol misuse, unemployment and debt, bereavement, and the effects of domestic or sexual abuse. BAC has a strong food poverty focus and recently hosted the University College London for a research paper on foodbank use. BAC is also the home of the Lambeth Larder, a community food resource for local people and the first of its kind in London. Visitors to the foodbank will receive immediate support from the foodbank and an on-site advisor from one of the advice centres. As well as addressing the immediate food crisis, providing wraparound support services in this way will give those visiting the foodbank immediate access to advice and support on the types of issues that are most likely to have caused the crisis they are experiencing; debt, benefits, housing and general legal advice.

As well as the partnership having a strong frontline delivery component, BAC and Centre 70 will facilitate training for foodbank volunteers in basic advice skills and local information resources. The primary method will be through a number of volunteers attending a two-month voluntary secondment within the advice centres as part of their induction to being foodbank volunteers. This will be a rolling programme with two volunteers in advice training at any one time, one at each of the advice centres. BAC expect two secondments per quarter; eight per year in total when at capacity. Priority will be given to the volunteers who have themselves been users of the foodbank, providing the opportunity to develop transferable skills for those who might benefit most e.g. those finding it difficult to gain employment and/or those experiencing some form of social or economic exclusion.

#### Financial Information

The charity did not report any expenditure for the cost of raising funds in 2017 but will be allocating expenditure in the category of spend going forward. In the current context of cuts to legal aid funding, BAC has taken a strategic decision to broaden the scope of its work for projects like this one that reflect its charitable objectives, rather than relying on a narrow income stream. This is resulting in more restricted income being secured from trusts and foundations.

Year end as at 31 March	2017 Audited Accounts £	2018 Forecast £	2019 Budget £
<b>Income &amp; expenditure:</b>			
Income	466,417	352,606	267,925
- % of Income confirmed as at 24/05/2018	n/a	100%	47%
Expenditure	(509,275)	(374,885)	(294,867)
Total surplus/(deficit)	(42,858)	(22,279)	(26,942)
Split between:			
- Restricted surplus/(deficit)	(6,919)	(32,325)	(85,733)
- Unrestricted surplus/(deficit)	(35,939)	10,046	58,791
	(42,858)	(22,279)	(26,942)
Cost of Raising Funds	0	26,053	28,053
- % of Income	0.0%	7.4%	10.5%
Operating expenditure (unrestricted funds)	502,356	187,895	82,349
<b>Free unrestricted reserves:</b>			
Free unrestricted reserves held at year end	106,227	83,948	57,006
No of months of operating expenditure	2.5	5.4	8.3
Reserves policy target	251,178	93,948	41,175
No of months of operating expenditure	6.0	6.0	6.0
Free reserves over/(under) target	(144,951)	(10,000)	15,832