

GRANT APPLICATION 2017/18 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	To support people who need help to maintain their independence, lead active lives and change behaviour To reduce health inequalities and build more resilient communities To promote self-care through access to information, resources and community networks To focus on using parks to achieve wider public health priorities	
Organisation	COMMUNITY FOCUS	ref 93/C/LAD
Address	Friary House, Friary Park, N20	

Corporate policy, aims and objectives

The council is committed to helping people to be independent and live active lives, recognizing that some people need more support than others to achieve this. The transformation of adult health and social care set out in the Care Act 2014 and Department of Health publications 'Our Health, Our Care, Our Say' and 'A Vision for Social Care, Capable Communities and Active Citizens' places growing emphasis on preventative services; delivering targeted information and advice; and ensuring people have the right support at the right time.

The Commissioning Plan for Adults & Communities, 2015-20, focuses on the development of preventative services; the removal of inequalities; and the well-being agenda. The Barnet Ageing Well Programme has a key role in building resilience in individuals and links to the neighbourhood model of day activities for older people offered by the Barnet Provider Group, a consortium of voluntary organisations led by Age UK Barnet, which focuses on improving access to information and advice; increasing inclusion; and developing mutual support and self-help between citizens and community-based support networks for older people.

Activities / proposal

Community Focus, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee formed in 1978, seeks to encourage disabled and older people to participate in the arts in pursuit of personal development; social interaction; equality; and lifelong learning. It offers a range of creative activities for mainly older people with physical or sensory impairments, learning difficulties or mental health problems and people recovering from long-term illness. Clients typically lack stimulation and are at risk of social exclusion. One-to-one support from staff, carers and volunteers facilitates accessibility by the most severely disabled clients.

In-house, ten or twelve-week long courses, restricted in size to maintain a personalised service, include creative writing; drama; dance; drumming; singing; watercolour painting; ceramics; jewellery making; textile art; photography; visual arts; and computing. An expanded outreach programme in care homes and community centres, embracing some of those activities and supporting less mobile people, is focused especially on more deprived wards in the west of the borough. CF also runs short-break programmes for young people with severe disabilities and early stage intervention courses for 16 to 25 year-olds with mental health issues. It states that it had 2,456 clients in 2016/17, of whom 1,750 (71%) were older and/or disabled people.

Feedback from clients demonstrates a high level of satisfaction with service delivery. The main outcomes measured are that clients feel more able to deal with challenging life circumstances and access support mechanisms. Managers of care homes and other outreach settings highlight how CF's work with some of the most severely disabled clients, in particular those with learning difficulties or suffering from dementia, is positively affecting their quality of life.

In January, CF initiated a new project, 'Combat Loneliness', at the Royal British Legion (RBL) Club in Friern Barnet in response to identification by Age UK Barnet and RBL of a large number of elderly residents in the area who are at risk of isolation or experiencing loneliness. The project offers lunch, music, entertainment and games twice a week for up to 50 largely able-bodied elderly people who are predominantly seeking companionship, whereas CF's core service is mainly for older people with disabilities or learning difficulties.

CF is proposing to build on the success of the pilot and elaborate on the provision at Friary House, where a range of physical activities to be delivered in the adjoining Friary Park, to include bowls, pitch and putt golf and walking, will augment social entertainment and activities indoors. The aim is to introduce in the itinerary some of the creative arts and crafts activities that feature in CF's main programme, together with talks on healthy eating and other topics of interest to older people. To commence on a weekly basis, lunch is to be provided in partnership with another voluntary group at Friary House, Barnet Asian Women's Association, which will facilitate integration between each organisation's clients.

Age UK Barnet, which will act as the main referral agency to the project, states that many isolated or older people reside in the immediate vicinity, invariably living alone or in sheltered accommodation and with no family or close friends nearby. To run on a termly basis over a total of 36 weeks, the project will have capacity for 20 people at each session. It is expected that there will be up to 90 beneficiaries over the course of the next twelve months.

The commissioning strategy espouses the development of more day activities for older and disabled people. Evidence exists of how community-based initiatives, such as by CF, can provide effective outcomes that serve to maintain independence and improve mental and physical well-being in a cost-effective way. Adults & Communities acknowledge that CF has a strong pedigree of working with older people. The proposal has the potential to engage with older people who are harder to reach and not accessing other support services, besides making use of a green space with existing facilities such as a bowls green.

Cost and financial need

CF relies on a web of interconnecting funding to support a year's programme. 86% of revenue expenditure of £302,546 in 2015/16 was met from grants from 17 different sources, mostly charitable trusts. Many are small grants of less than £10,000 supporting specific elements of its work. The balance of income is mainly self-generated through fees and charges. Staffing costs, which include freelance tutors to run the majority of courses, account for up to 80% of the annual budget. At 31/3/2016, CF had net current liabilities of £30,999. Its overall financial position improved slightly in 2016/17, the accounts for which have yet to be published pending completion of an audit. CF states that it has restored a small working contingency this year.

A funding agreement through the corporate grants programme, which replaced an annual core grant, expired on 31 March 2017. The agreement extended over six years and subsidised the fees payable for attendance on CF's courses by people with disabilities, mental health problems and learning difficulties. It was geared particularly towards the development and delivery of courses on an outreach basis in the community to improve access to residents living in all parts of the borough. Funding tapered over the period from £83,300 pa to £47,300 pa.

A rolling contract with the Children's Service continues to support the delivery of the short-break programmes for young people with severe disabilities, valued at £29,736 in 2017/18.

The pilot Combat Loneliness project in Friern Barnet has been commissioned by RBL, which is funding the service with a two-year grant of £23,160.

The discontinuance of the corporate funding agreement and other financial challenges faced by CF since it moved from the Arts Depot to Friary House in 2014 has resulted in an increase in course fees this year, income from which is estimated to defray 36% of expenditure. Although the council bore much of the cost of adaptations to the new premises, the move resulted in CF drawing on reserves to meet other costs and adversely affected fundraising through grants. As a result, arrears have accrued on its rental and service charge liabilities. Agreement has been reached over how it will repay the debt. With effect from 2017/18, it qualifies for a subsidised rate of premises costs under the community asset strategy, supporting its sustainability.

An original grant request of £10,000 to create and run the new Combat Loneliness provision at Friary House over one year, which will have significant voluntary input with the help of Age UK Barnet, has been modified to £8,580. The budget comprises £4,320 for a tutor and an assistant to deliver creative arts and crafts activities; £1,800 to buy second-hand bowls and new pitch and putt golf equipment and to hire the bowls green in the park; £1,800 as an apportionment of premises overheads; £360 for refreshments; and £300 for marketing. The provision of lunch will be self-financing and is excluded from the estimates.

The proposal is to deliver the project free of charge for the first term, except for lunch, which is optional and will cost £6. Thereafter, clients will be charged £4 per session, in addition to lunch, unless additional funding can be found to subsidise take-up. The award recommended takes account of estimated revenue from the charge in terms two and three, assuming a full take-up of places, and reduces (to £100) the allowance for marketing given the options that exist to publicise the project without cost.

Sustainability is based on maximising income from charges over a full year and mainstreaming the provision with the core programme, whereby it will form part of CF's annual fundraising strategy that has supported its courses for many years.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

£6,500 (from Edward Harvist Charity)

Start-up grant

One-off grant

Special conditions:

Payment of the award should be made subject to (a) agreement of an implementation plan, to include targets and milestones in year one for monitoring purposes, and (b) the receipt of quarterly progress reports and an undertaking to provide an evaluation of the project at the end of twelve months.

Target grant outcomes

To maintain the independence, and improve the quality of life, health and well-being, of vulnerable elderly people.

Date: August 2017