

GRANT APPLICATION 2015/16 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	To ensure that Barnet is a place of opportunity where people can further their quality of life		
Organisation	THE GESHEREU SUPPORT NETWORK	ref	365/C/CTY
Address	21 Maple Street, W1		
Corporate policy, aims and objectives			
<p>The council is committed to working with partners to make Barnet a place of opportunity where people can further their quality of life in line with the core principles of treating citizens equally and with understanding and respect, and ensuring equal access to quality services which provide value to the taxpayer.</p>			
Activities / proposal			
<p>The GesherEU Support Network (GSN) is a registered charity founded in 2012 aimed at preventing social exclusion amongst people who have left strict closed religious communities, in particular ultra-orthodox Jewish communities, in which they have been raised or have spent a significant part of their lives, and assisting them to integrate into mainstream society.</p> <p>The charity focuses on people who have chosen to leave the ultra-orthodox Jewish Charedi community, or are considering doing so. It states that it neither promotes nor encourages people to leave, however. It claims that members of that community, having led a structured, religiously rule-bound life, isolated from the general population, face cultural disorientation and isolation and have little practical knowledge or skills to function independently. Many cannot read, write and or even speak English and have no recognized educational qualifications, severely compromising their ability to earn a living.</p> <p>GSN offers peer-led support from amongst mainstream Jews to become socially integrated into mainstream British society by way of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * fortnightly social support meetings, usually in volunteers' homes, where service-users, whose mother tongue is Yiddish, can meet, share experiences and socialize in a non-judgmental environment; * one-to-one support for those who are too nervous to meet others and/or seeking legal access through the courts to their children; * quarterly cultural awareness events; * signposting to agencies offering emotional and practical support to abused women or help for adult learners. <p>At the time of applying GSN had 25 service-users, male and female, aged between 22 and 40, ten of whom lived in Barnet. Of 26 children who belonged to the Barnet clients, nineteen lived with their mothers permanently and attended local schools. Five of the Barnet families had relocated from Stamford Hill, from where many of the charity's clients are drawn.</p> <p>This application seeks help to raise awareness of GSN's work amongst the ultra-orthodox Jewish community in Barnet; to expand the programme of social support for local service-users and take them on guided visits to places of interest to which they may previously have been forbidden; and to develop the governance, strategic planning and fundraising skills of the board of trustees.</p>			

The issues raised are recognised within both the Charedi and the wider Jewish communities, including amongst a number of influential and pragmatic rabbis in Barnet and Stamford Hill, and some progress has been made to broaden the integration of Charedi men and women into the workplace and other areas of society. Further work is required to help with assimilation into the wider community, but there is a risk of misunderstanding and damage to communities unless it is handled discretely and sensitively.

There are other charities and voluntary groups in existence within the Jewish community whose work addresses or supports the needs of those facing social exclusion. The Bridging Trust, for example, funds projects designed to build links; remove barriers; and encourage understanding both between Jews of different persuasions and between Jews and people of other ethnic or religious backgrounds. Other groups such as Jewish Women's Aid, Kol Bonayich and The Boys' Clubhouse regularly deal with the type of clients in question.

Help to develop GSN's presence in Barnet is not supported having regard to the risk of duplication with the work of these and other organisations. The charity should collaborate with other agencies to identify any specific unmet needs involving the Charedi community, in which case another bid will be considered, especially if it is in partnership with other providers.

Cost and financial need

In the year ended 31/12/2014, GSN incurred expenditure of £10,727. Income, entirely in the form of voluntary donations, amounted to £10,952, resulting in a surplus of £225 after seven months' operation as a registered charity.

The request is for a grant of £9,800 towards estimated expenditure of £17,100 in 2015, specifically in support of publicity and marketing in Barnet (£2,200); an expanded programme of fortnightly social activities (£3,090); outings to museums and galleries (£1,060); and board training and development (£2,900).

Several elements of the bid, including refreshments, entertainments, subsidised outings and board training/development, are not eligible for funding in the context of the corporate grants programme irrespective of the recommendation to dismiss the application as a whole.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

NIL

Date: August 2015