

GRANT APPLICATION 2016/17 – ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

Priority Corporate Outcomes	To support families and individuals that need help, such as to maintain their independence and lead active lives To increase resilience amongst people with disabilities and complex needs and help them to achieve their potential To reduce unemployment and support vulnerable and hard to reach people into work	
Organisation	THE LARCHES COMMUNITY	<div>ref</div> <div>244/S/LSD</div>
Address	Larches House, 1 Rectory Lane, Edgware	

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 wider well-being agenda. It reflects the national learning disabilities priority of moving away from specialist service provision to facilitating access to mainstream services with a focus on addressing inequalities. The aim is to support adults with learning disabilities to have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else to live a full life and realise their ambitions, using a wide range of resources; different approaches; and increasing the use of social networks.

Activities / proposal

The Larches Community (LC), the trading name of The Larches Trust, a registered charity and company limited by guarantee formed in 1995, provides life/employment skills training and other forms of support and empowerment to people with learning disabilities, autism or Asperger's syndrome aimed at realising their potential, complemented by social and recreational activities. It currently has nearly 100 clients, of which 60 are from Barnet. 50% are young adults aged between 19 and 25. 65% of clients attend as part of care packages managed by other agencies. The trust has been granted planning permission to replace its existing building with a larger one, to include a training café and a theatre, during the construction of which LC will temporarily relocate to Edgware District Reform Synagogue.

Much of LC's work focuses on a 'Learning for Life' programme', through which it delivers a range of mainly ten-week courses aimed at developing independent living and socialisation skills and building self-confidence, self-awareness and decision-making. Many of the courses are based around the creative arts such as drama and musical theatre, an effective facilitation tool for people who have communication difficulties, are non-verbal or cannot read or write. Courses also include cookery, horticulture and money skills to enable learners to safeguard themselves and each other. A new pilot project of relaxation, mindfulness and meditation seeks to encourage and facilitate health and wellbeing.

LC also runs a weekly social club and additional projects and activities in holiday periods.

This application seeks help to set up and establish a social enterprise, to be known as 'Roots &

Wings', encompassing the existing production of handmade greetings cards at one of the craft classes, sold once a month at a local shopping centre, and the production of mosaics, building on the success of a project earlier this year whereby 70 clients worked on a mosaic 'peace tree', now displayed at LC's premises. Other merchandise ultimately to be made and sold through the social enterprise includes jewellery, candles, wellbeing hampers and home accessories.

The proposal seeks to underpin LC's sustainability as part of a strategy for developing multiple and diverse income streams whilst showcasing the positive contribution that people with learning disabilities and autism can make to society. The delivery of vocationally-based courses to impart skills to make and develop products for sale is seen as an effective way of developing clients' learning skills and resilience.

The production of mosaics, an artisan craft with relatively few practitioners that will form the core element of the social enterprise, will be added to the Learning for Life programme on three days a week, with an emphasis on the use of recycled materials. The mosaic peace tree project, which brought together people from all faiths and cultures, identified the suitability of mosaic art for working with, and capturing the imagination of, people with all levels of learning disability and across the generation divide. A draft three-year business plan identifies the potential market places for mosaic products, especially within the urban landscape.

75% of LC's existing clientele have expressed a wish to join the new mosaic classes. Although not everyone will attain the level of competence necessary to produce mosaic art of the standard required, supporting tasks will be found complementary to the persons' skills. Participants will be paid once they reach a benchmark of competence. Alternative progression pathways will be open for those not wishing to be part of the social enterprise, either as a leisure pursuit or supporting tutors to train new learners and participants.

Adults & Communities and the Barnet Clinical Commissioning Group endorse the work of organisations like LC in addressing the needs of people with learning disabilities, complementing, as they do, the developing strategy of increasing local training and employment opportunities for people with learning disabilities and autism. The application is supported, subject to approval of the legal structure to be adopted for the social enterprise and to collaboration with 'Bright Futures', a service commissioned from another not-for-profit organisation, Barnet Mencap, to support the client group, including into employment.

Cost and financial need

In the twelve months up to September 2015, LC incurred expenditure of £106,957, divided in roughly equal proportion between service delivery and overheads. It employs two-full-time staff and has three self-employed tutors who are engaged on a sessional basis, supported by fifteen volunteers. About 50% of revenue is earned income from charges and from lettings of the organisation's main activity area when it is not in use. Small fixed-term grants are mainly linked to the Learning for Life programme. The annual budget is balanced through fundraising. A 2014/15 deficit of £4,084 reduced net current assets to £35,885, of which £7,500 was restricted, leaving an uncommitted balance of £28,885 (30.5% of estimated 2016/17 expenditure).

The redevelopment of LC's premises will be funded by the sale of part of the site for residential purposes. A capital fundraising appeal is to be launched to furnish and equip the new building.

LC was awarded a one-year corporate grant of £5,130 in 2012/13 to expand and develop its courses, linked to supporting younger clients into independent living.

A grant of £10,000 is sought towards the cost of recruiting and employing a co-ordinator for one

year to set up and run the social enterprise, shown as £28,200, towards which sum £16,794 has been raised through fundraising and donations. The incumbent, who will double up as a craft tutor, will lead on the creation of training courses in each of the social enterprise disciplines, embracing skills that go beyond the existing complement of courses; the marketing of merchandise; and the identification of options for increased partnership with public, private and of third sector organisations. The objective is to create a financially sustainable micro business whilst promoting and maintaining a learner outcome approach in line with the charity's ethos.

The launch of the new mosaic classes will cost £22,940 over six months, embracing tutor, material and project management costs. Overheads, such as premises costs, will initially be absorbed by LC, but will ultimately be factored into the budget for the social enterprise. There will be a nominal charge for trainees, as there is for existing courses, up to the point where those who reach the benchmark of competence and graduate to join the business will be paid. A proportion of £21,000 raised to date by way of grants, including £10,000 from the Big Lottery 'Awards for All' scheme, is earmarked for the mosaic element of the social enterprise.

The draft business plan anticipates that the production and sale of mosaics alone will generate a profit to be ploughed back into the social enterprise by year two, the level of which will be influenced by the success of developing work through commissions.

A similar model of developing other strands of the social enterprise will generally involve a small initial investment, especially for items like greetings cards.

The cost of retaining the new co-ordinator post beyond year one will form part of the overheads of the social enterprise to be defrayed through sales.

Grant recommendation, type and conditions

£10,000 (from Edward Harvist Charity)

Start-up grant
One-off grant



Special conditions:

Payment of the award should be made subject to (a) approval of the legal structure to be adopted for the social enterprise; (b) agreement of an implementation plan and a work plan for the co-ordinator, to include targets and milestones in year one for monitoring purposes; (c) agreement of a strategy for collaboration with the 'Bright Futures' service in discussion with Barnet Mencap and Adults & Communities; and (d) 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 develop the personal and workplace skills of adults with learning disabilities, autism or Asperger's syndrome, increasing their independence and capacity to participate in the community, and to support them into employment.

Date: November 2016