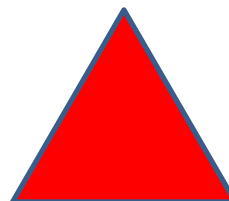


2019-05-C009 Carers Support Merton

Grant Details:

Total Grant: £41,717
Amount awarded to date: £23,109
Amount remaining: £18,608
Start date: 27 February 2020
End date:
Date of Report: N/A



Grant Summary:

Carers Support Merton is a charity supporting unpaid carers who are caring for a family member, friend, relative who is frail, has a disability, is suffering mental ill health or has an addiction. They predominantly support carers who live in the London Borough of Merton but do in some circumstances support cares outside of the Borough. Their mission is to support unpaid carers over the age of five to lead a fulfilling life. They do this by providing information, advice, guidance, advocacy, emotional support and respite activities. They support around 300 young carers each year and 1000 adult carers over the age of 18.

The grant will support Carers Support Merton to undertake a digital transformation to underpin the improvement of almost every aspect of their operations, including increasing efficiency of service delivery and income generation.

www.csmerton.org

Current issues:

Carers Support Merton (CSM) was awarded a Development Grant of £41,717 in October 2019. The purpose of the grant was to help Carers Support Merton undertake a digital transformation. This included moving to a new database that would help to track activities better and both help to build a stronger evidence base to support better fundraising and free up staff time in terms of paperwork and tracking carers. The other element of the project was to employ a new member of staff to redesign their website and all comms and marketing to enable better use of digital platforms and increase unrestricted fundraising.

Covid-19 had a big impact on Carers Support Merton as they shifted their focus to providing emergency support to carers and developing new ways to operate with home working. This all coincided with the start of their grant.

In September 2020, we sent them a reminder that their 6-month report was overdue (all projects are sent reminders in advance of reports needing to be submitted and when they are due) and the report was received at the end of September. The report outlined the work that they had done to identify and purchase a new database and the initial work

(including recruitment of a new temporary staff member) undertaken to clean up their existing data prior to migration to the new system. They also outlined the work that a new Fundraising and Communications Officer had done, although she was furloughed soon after starting in role. At this point despite the project being behind original timescales there was no indication that the grant would not be able to be fully utilised.

Carers Support Merton sent a further report stating that they had recently undertaken an IT upgrade and the work schedule that had been meant to take 4 weeks had ended up taking 5 months, which had impacted the project significantly and considerable daily challenges were being faced with the new database linked to this.

In April 2021 after significant chasing for the end of year report by email and phone the CEO emailed and a call was arranged. On the call it was agreed that the length of the grant term would be extended from 18 to 24 months to allow more time for the communications and fundraising element of the funding to be undertaken. The payment schedule for the grant was updated and the CEO agreed to send an updated work plan. A deadline was given for this workplan to be received by.

Unfortunately, despite further chasing the workplan was not submitted and after additional deadlines were given for information the CEO got in touch in October 2021 to advise that due to delays and pressures in other parts of the organisation, they had decided not to proceed with the communications element of the work. The two final instalments of the grant were cancelled and the organisation asked to submit a final report and a finance report highlighting spend to date (this has still not been received).

This is a really disappointing outcome to this grant but the advent of the pandemic has led to a 25% increase in demand for support from carers. That on top of the IT issues they have faced has caused a situation where they don't have the capacity to progress the project in the foreseeable future. This grass roots charity has though been well supported by Triangle Trust funding as in addition to the Development Grant they were also awarded £6,324 in the first phase of our Covid-19 emergency funding and £7,700 in phase two.