

Ref Code	Organisation Name
2022-05-YC02	Brent Carers Centre
Visit Date	Visited By
15 th August 2022	Victoria Southwell
Overall aim of the funding	
<p>To support young adult carers struggling in school or not in employment or education with advice, advocacy, and representation. This will help them to address personal barriers and issues they face which impact on their academic achievements, career opportunities and future aspirations.</p>	
Background to Organisation and governance	
<p>Brent Carers Centre (BCC) is a registered charity that was established in 1994 and gained charitable status in 1997. BCC employs 1 full time and 6 part time staff and has 40 current volunteers. They additionally employ 15 sessional Health Educators and 2 Digital Inclusion Workers as part of a separate project. A board of 7 Trustees meet every two months and have a range of skills that includes education, marketing, finance and business development. 5 of the current Trustees have direct experience of caring. There are two vacancies on the board and a recent skills audit identified gaps in legal knowledge, the wider third sector and administration.</p> <p>A Strategic Plan is in place for 2019-23 setting out strategic aims for the organisation across a number of key areas – these include marketing, key stakeholders, financial strategy, human resources, service development and environmental responsibility. This detailed strategy directly addresses the loss of local authority funding and rebuilding the organisation and clearly sets out next steps and implications.</p>	
Leadership and expertise	
<p>At the assessment I met with Anne-Marie Morris (CEO) and Irene Lewis (Chair of Trustees).</p> <p>Anne-Marie joined BCC in 2013 and has a background in working with children and families having previously been CEO of a children’s charity. She describes herself as an approachable and positive leader who is unafraid of making difficult decisions but believes in bringing the team with her. She presented as a tenacious, realistic and dedicated leader who has helped BCC navigate some extremely challenging times.</p> <p>Irene has been a Trustee for over 20 years and has been Chair for the past 15. She is a former teacher and understands the needs of young carers due to this. She also has previously been a carer herself and so brings personal understanding to the role of Chair. She is clearly a committed Trustee with a long and strong commitment to BCC. She recognises that she has been a Trustee for a significant period of time and is keen to step away from the role once suitable successors have been identified. She clearly provides challenge and support to the CEO which was evident during the assessment.</p>	
Aims and Activities	
<p>Brent Carers Centre aims to ensure that unpaid carers are recognised, valued, and supported to live rather than just exist. They work to make a positive difference to the lives of unpaid carers by encouraging wider recognition of their caring role and the challenges and inequalities they face. They also aim to promote carers views and</p>	

opinions about change which is informed by their experience and to provide carer relevant support.

BCC provides a wide range of services that includes; information and advocacy, maximising income services, well-being activities, caring support and training, befriending and a counselling service. They also work with young adult carers and provide a range of activities including; creative writing, photography and drama workshops, small grants to support learning and respite activities.

In 2021 BCC had 6,198 carers registered with them and 1,357 were supported during the year. 600 young carers are included in the registered number and around 200 of these are young adult carers.

Safeguarding

BCC has a comprehensive approach to safeguarding which is in line with the 'London Safeguarding Children Protection' procedures. The CEO is their designated Safeguarding Children Officer and is named in the policy which is reviewed every two years.

All staff receive Safeguarding training at induction and then have an annual refresher. Clear processes are in place to raise concerns and escalate these to relevant partner agencies. When work was actively taking place with young carers there would be approximately 2-3 concerns escalated annually. There was a good awareness of wider safeguarding issues and the CEO has significant expertise in this area. She leads in Safeguarding training linked to carers across Brent. Safeguarding is an agenda item at all Trustee meetings.

Finances

Profit and Loss accounts for the year ending 31st March 2021 show income of £221,509 against expenditure of £248,249 resulting in a deficit of £26,740 for the year.

The balance sheet shows net current assets of £119,932 all of which is unrestricted. The reserves policy states that BCC should aim to hold between 3-6 months budgeted expenditure in general funds and this is currently being achieved. However, unrestricted funds reduced by £26,740 from 2020 figures. Trustees regularly review this situation.

In 2019 BCC unexpectedly lost the statutory contract to provide services to unpaid carers in Brent. The contract was awarded to a Gateway partnership covering 3 London Boroughs. This had a significant impact, leading to considerable shrinkage of staff and income. BCC is currently in a rebuilding phase and is slowly regrowing income and providing a wider range of services with a more mixed portfolio of funding. Budgets and funding predictions for 2022/23 and 2023/24 are due to remain largely stable, although there is an aspiration to grow their work with young carers by recruiting a Young Carers Manager at some point in the future. Main funding is currently received from Brent Clinical Commissioning Group and a small number of Trusts and Foundations.

Clear financial systems are in place and there is strong oversight from the Board via the Treasurer (a Chartered Accountant) who presents quarterly management accounts at Trustee Meetings. Trustees are involved in working with the CEO to develop the annual budget. Day to day financial matters are dealt with by the Finance Manager.

Current Situation and need
<p>The 2011 census revealed Brent to be the borough with the second highest number of young carers in London with 3,243 young carers. Brent is also one of the most ethnically diverse boroughs in London with almost two thirds of the population (64%) being from BAME groups, the third highest in London.</p> <p>The concept of a young carer is completely unfamiliar to many BAME communities as helping your family and extended family is something that is normal and expected. This can mean that the impact of caring on the child is often not realised or understood. This often takes place within the additional context of BAME families being more likely than other families to be impacted by other inequalities and adversities such as mental health issues, poverty and domestic abuse, which all provide an additional strain on young carers within these households.</p> <p>The impact of being a young adult carer on their education can be seen in many different ways including lateness and absences, stress, reduced concentration, low self-esteem and even depression. Lack of sufficient space and time to revise and do homework is also a common problem with all of these factors severely impacting on a young carers ability to achieve in school and limits their future prospects. The restrictions linked to the pandemic have also caused young carers to experience isolation, not be able to have breaks or respite, increased their stress levels and feelings of being overwhelmed and left them falling even further behind with their studies.</p> <p>To address these important issues BCC plans to employ a Young Adult Carer Support Officer who will offer tailored support to young adult carers aged 14-25 to address their educational needs and barriers to attainment. These needs are not currently supported by BCC's services nor by any other provider in the borough. The worker will engage with schools and colleges to raise awareness on young carer issues, helping them to understand how to be more friendly and adopt flexible practises to support young carer's educational attainment. The worker will provide casework support to young carers struggling in school or college as a result of their caring role. This project will enable BCC to work more effectively in both identifying and supporting the educational needs and issues of young adult carers in Brent.</p>
Expected Key Achievements in Year 1
EKA 1
An increase in the amount of support available to young carers in school settings.
EKA 2
An increase in young carers and young adult carers' desired outcomes, leading to improved attendance, achievement, and enjoyment of education.
EKA 3
Increase in number of young carers being identified and supported in schools.
Request and Budget
<p>BCC is requesting £58,899 over 2 years to employ a part time (FTE 0.6) Young Adult Carer Worker and associated project costs.</p> <p>£29,849 in year 1 - £17,549 (salary and associated costs), £7,000 (overheads), £3,000 (training), £1,500 (recruitment), £800 (mobile phone, printing, and travel).</p> <p>£29,849 in year 2 - £18,299 (salary and associated costs), £7,000 (overheads), £3,750 (training), £800 (mobile phone, printing, and travel).</p>

Conclusion

BCC is a small yet impressive charity. In my paper review of the application prior to the assessment meeting I had some concerns about the viability and expertise of the organisation, however I came away thoroughly impressed with what appears to be a well-run and resilient organisation.

One of the things that most impressed me about BCC was their openness and transparency about the loss of statutory funding and their current situation. We spent some time talking about the need for BCC to still exist if services are being delivered by another provider and it was clear that the contract being delivered by the Gateway is extremely restrictive and falls short of meeting many of the needs of unpaid carers. Young adult carers are completely ignored in this contract. So, the need for BCC remains strong and the challenge will be how the organisation moves forward with new funding arrangements and focuses. The support of the Cranfield Trust through the Spark Programme will be of huge value to BCC and the areas they identified prior to the assessment about where Cranfield Trust support could help were realistic and well thought through. The CEO is dynamic yet realistic and she is well supported by a strong and engaged board and a small, yet knowledgeable, stable staff team.

The work with young adult carers will build on previous projects that have been delivered by BCC historically. Whilst no formal discrete support currently is provided there are approximately 600 young carers on BCC's books who receive support through their general services, around 200 of which are young adult carers. This project will make a huge difference to both their support needs but also help BCC to identify and support additional young carers who are currently hidden. The high number of BAME residents in Brent means that a large number of these young carers will come from BAME communities and BCC has a strong track record of engaging with and supporting carers from diverse communities.

This won't duplicate existing provision as the current Gateway that provides services to carers in Brent doesn't have any focus on the needs of young adult carers as a specific group. So this really is a group of young people who are totally underserved and whose needs are going completely unmet.

There is an ambition to develop the young carers support further within BCC and to recruit a Young Carers Manager who will ultimately oversee this project and development of the wider service. The links that BCC have previously built with schools and other relevant forums are still in place and so this proposal already has a foundation to build on.

A grant to BCC will add huge value to the work they currently do with young carers and has the potential of significantly help them continue to grow and regain a sense of stability. This is a local organisation that has a strong link with the communities it serves. The loss of the local authority contract was a huge blow but their resilience and determination to keep providing their services, which remain relevant and much needed, is commendable. The high number of BAME young carers who will be worked with makes this application stand out and the expertise of working with a large number of different communities will be a good addition to the portfolio and benefit the wider cohort of grantees. Therefore, I would strongly recommend support with a grant as requested.

Recommended Priority Rating

Risk = Medium

Difference to organisation = High

Priority = High