



# Brent

**Cabinet**  
19 June 2017

**Report from:**  
**Director of Performance, Policy**  
**and Partnerships**

For Action

Wards Affected: All

## **Local Advice and Guidance Services** **Brent Advice Partnership – Advice Small Grants**

### **1.0 Summary**

- 1.1 The procurement and award of Brent's Local Advice and Guidance Service contracts were considered by Cabinet on 16 November 2015 and 8 February 2016. One of the contracts awarded to Brent Citizen's Advice Bureau was the Brent Advice Partnership contract. This contract included the administration of a small advice grants programme of £242,000 per year to include recommending to Officers the award of small advice grants of up to £10,000 using delegated powers. A recommendation from Brent Advice Partnership's Advice Fund Grant's Panel has now been received to award a grant to Mencap Brent in the sum of £19,657.77 and as a result Cabinet approval is sought to permit such an award.

### **2.0 Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- 2.1 Note the making of Round 3 Brent Advice Partnership's Advice Fund grants using delegated powers as set out in Figure 1 at paragraph 3.7.
- 2.2 Approve the making of a Brent Advice Partnership's Advice Fund grant of £19,657.77 to Brent Mencap for the period of 1 year for the reasons detailed in paragraphs 3.09 – 3.14. The grant will provide an advice service to assist Brent residents aged 18-65 who have been assessed as having a learning disability but whom are not currently eligible for support from Brent Adult Social Care. This includes people living with family carers, in their own tenancies or in supported housing. Some may present with multiple, complex issues such as debt, hate crime and depression which often only emerge once a simpler issue such as getting a Freedom pass has been resolved or another form filled in.

### **3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 On 16 November 2015, Cabinet approved inviting tenders for local advice and guidance services. One of the contracts to be procured was for the operation of the Brent Advice Partnership (BAP), a borough

wide advice partnership, including the provision of a digital information and advice gateway. In addition, however, the BAP contract included provision for administration of an advice small grants programme

- 3.2 On 8 February 2016, Cabinet approved the award of the BAP contract to Brent Citizen's Advice Bureau.
- 3.3 In order to ensure the efficient administration of the Brent Advice Fund grants programme, previous reports detailed that grant applications would be assessed by a BAP panel and any grants up to £10k would be awarded pursuant to officer delegated powers (see generally section 9 of the table at paragraph 2.5 of Part 4 of Brent's Constitution).

#### Brent Advice Fund Grants

- 3.5 The online application form for Brent Advice Fund grants and guidance notes are available at:

<http://brentadvicefund.grantsupporter.com/>.

Two programmes are available to applicants, namely:

- Capacity Grants of up to £3k, for bidders seeking to improve their organisation's suitability in delivering advice services by funding items such as advice quality marks and capital IT equipment
- Advice Grants of up to £10k, for bidders seeking to deliver advice services and who already have the "set-up" to begin/resume advice delivery. Organisations can apply for over £10K in exceptional circumstances. Priority areas for the advice grants are updated for each round of grants based on the data around advice needs from the main advice contract from the previous quarter.

- 3.6 There are 4 rounds of advice grants per year. This report refers to Round 3. The closing date for Round 3 of the Brent Advice Fund was 12 January 2017. All applicants must be signed up to the BAPs membership agreement. The applications were considered by The Brent Advice Fund Panel which is made up of a Citizens Advice Brent Trustee, the CEO of CVS Brent and the Partnerships & Engagement Manager, Brent Council. A total of £26,000 was recommended for award to 5 applicants (£6,000 seeking Capacity Grants and £20,000 seeking Advice Grants). In addition, the Panel recommended for award an application from Brent Mencap for £19,657.77 which is subject to Cabinet approval via this report.
- 3.7 Details of the Brent Advice Fund grants approved by the Brent Advice Fund Grants Panel in Round 3 and awarded pursuant to delegated powers and are outlined in Figure 1 below:
- 3.8 In January 2017, Cabinet approved funding for Advice4renters of £18,500 for an advice project to set up two volunteer teams assisting the Housing Advice Centre. Frontline volunteers will assist clients online and with general enquiries; additionally volunteer casework assistants work with in-house solicitors and advisers to progress cases. The training and experience provided ensures that within a few months, volunteers are ready to move on to formal training or employment, a Client Support Coordinator was required to provide consistent casework assistance when needed and to undertake training and supervision of both volunteer teams, thereby saving specialist solicitors/advisers valuable time which could be spent on assisting a higher number of clients.

**Figure 1** Brent Advice Fund Grants 2016 – 2017: Rounds 1-3

Organisation	Grant Summary ROUND 1 (Summer)	Total Grant Approved	Capacity / Advice
Advice4Renters	To set up two volunteer teams assisting our Housing Advice Centre, our frontline volunteers assist clients online and with general enquiries; our volunteer casework assistants work with our solicitors and advisers to progress cases. The training and experience we provide means that after a few months, volunteers are ready to move on to formal training or employment, so we need a Client Support Coordinator to provide consistent casework assistance when needed and to undertake training and supervision of both volunteer teams, thereby saving specialist solicitors/advisers valuable time which can be spent on assisting more clients.	£18,500.00	A
1VoiceCommunity	To achieve Quality Standards to provide SEND impartial, information advice and support to families with SEND CYP in Brent and to prepare the organisation to manage a future Advice project.	£3,000.00	C
BHCAC	This project is about building beneficiaries' resilience through welfare reforms. The Project will help beneficiaries make informed choices, secure their welfare entitlements to enable them to remain in control of their own lives and prevent problems arising in the first place or recurring.	£10,000.00	A
Energy Solutions	Our project aims to strengthen the organisation's capacity to provide advice on utility debts to Brent residents by obtaining the Advice Quality Standard (AQS). Achieving this standard will ensure residents are receiving good quality advice that is in line with current legislation and best practice and strengthen the organisation's ability to attract future funding to ensure we can continue to offer our services to local people.	£3,000.00	C
Help Somalia Fdn	"Advice4Life" will provide remedial advice and 1-1 support to resolve people's debts and enable increased income to pay for essentials [shelter, food and clothing] plus proactive support enabling beneficiaries to better manage their finances and households avoiding future financial issues – more than 500 people will benefit over the next year.	£10,000.00	A
Hornstars SC	The project is to have an advice surgery two days a week in which those from marginalised communities particularly from the Horn of Africa will visit the centre to receive advice and guidance with regards to welfare benefits. The aim would be to advice 10 people per week and target of 100 people for the year, building in the clients would be coming back for more support and in which case they can be sign posted to other advice agencies in Brent who can support them with their other needs.	£9,920.00	A
Royal Assn for Deaf	Our project will support Deaf residents with IAG, regarding Welfare Benefits (and other topics). All staff are fluent in BSL. We will also provide Deaf Awareness training to local voluntary organisations.	£8442.33	A
SAAFI	To ensure for the continuation of our advice, information and information services by employing an advice	£7,800.00	A

	worker and applying to become accredited AQS.		
Salisbury World	We aim to achieve AQS to improve the quality, monitoring and evaluation of our services, with a view to increasing our capacity. Our project is about empowering refugees and new migrants to access accurate information and make informed decisions, becoming active, fulfilled members of their local communities.	£3,000.00	C
Sufra	To improve the quality of life of 360 vulnerable residents who are in need welfare advice and assistance. This will be achieved through one-to-one advocacy and assistance tailored to each individual.	£3,000.00	C
<b>Total</b>		<b>£76,662.33</b>	

Organisation	Grant Summary ROUND 2 (Autumn)	Total Grant Approved	Capacity / Advice
1VoiceCommunity	To achieve AQS Accreditation to provide SEND impartial, information advice and support to families with SEND CYP in Brent	£3,000.00	C
Horn of Africa Refugee Welfare Group	AQS and general modernisation HARWG, with updated processes, insurance, equipment and access updated case management. We will use a sessional worker to assist us with implementing the changes to improve our working practices.	£3,000.00	C
<b>Total</b>		<b>£6,000.00</b>	

Organisation	Grant Summary ROUND 3 (Winter)	Total Grant Approved	Capacity / Advice
Asian People's Disability Alliance	To put our current advice provision on a better resourced, more formal and systemic basis and to enhance our ability to make a difference to the lives of and be a source of support to elderly and disabled Asian residents.	£3,000.00	C
Ashford Place	Reduce numbers of people in crisis and suffering from poverty and homelessness in Brent, through high quality welfare and benefits advice in community and faith venues throughout the borough	£10,000.00	A
Global Skills Centre	This project is to build the capacity of GSC to gain AQS Accreditation and to equip our volunteers to help vulnerable people (particularly older people and/or those with disability) and anyone else who needs welfare benefits and employment advice.	£3,000.00	C
Safe Start Foundation	SafeStart Foundation (SSF) wishes to access funds to secure AQS accreditation to demonstrate quality advice provision and part fund an older people's advice project, with a focus on cancer related support.	£10,000.00	A

Brent Mencap	To assist Brent residents aged 18-65 who have been assessed as having a learning disability but whom are not currently eligible for support from Brent Adult Social Care. This includes people living with family carers, in their own tenancies or in supported housing. Some may present with multiple, complex issues such as debt, hate crime and depression which often only emerge once a simpler issue such as getting a Freedom pass has been resolved or another form filled in.	£19,657.77	A
Total		<p><i>£45,657.77 with cabinet approval</i></p> <p><i>£26,000.00 without cabinet approval</i></p>	

3.09 A bid requesting £19,657.77 was submitted by Brent Mencap and was approved by the Brent Advice Fund Grants Panel. Brent Mencap is providing £11,193 match funding to deliver the project.

3.10 This grant is to fund the delivery of personalised, specialist accessible advice, information and non-digital support across a range of areas:

- welfare benefits,
- employment, volunteering or education services
- housing,
- universal services such as transport, health and well-being services, leisure options, aids and adaptations
- money, budgeting and low level debt advice
- personal safety and hate crime reporting
- Non digital support

3.11 It will assist Brent residents aged 18-65 who have been assessed as having a learning disability but whom are not currently eligible for support from Brent Adult Social Care. This includes people living with family carers, in their own tenancies or in supported housing. Some may present with multiple, complex issues such as debt, hate crime and depression which often only emerge once a simpler issue such as getting a Freedom pass has been resolved or another form filled in.

3.12 The service will include; a telephone triage, drop-in, assisted digital support, form-filling and advice to service users. The grant will also fund the accreditation of the service to seek future charitable funding and sustainability of the project. The grant will enable Mencap to build on the work carried out by the BAS4IL project and the current initiative is based on feedback from BAS4IL service users.

3.13 The outputs of the funding are detailed below:

Activity description	Output Measure 1	Output Measure 2
Telephone advice	1 session per week x 44 weeks	4 client queries responded to
Drop-in & assisted digital support	1 session per week x 44 weeks	6 clients triage assisted
Complex advice & casework	5 appointments per week x 44 weeks	5 clients advised weekly

3.14 The outcomes of the funding are detailed below:

- People with a learning disability and other Disabled people are more aware about housing, employment, health and leisure options available to them
- People with a learning disability and other Disabled people feel more confident as their benefits, debt, housing or related issues are resolved
- People with a learning disability and other Disabled people are more aware of web based information and resources and feel more confident using web based information and digital forms

- 3.15 In view of the above, Officers would recommend making a grant of £19,657.77 to Brent Mencap to set up and deliver this advisory service.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The Voluntary Sector Initiative Fund – Advice Small Grants budget allocation for 2016/17 is £242,000.
- 4.2 The recommendations made in this report can be implemented within the available budget. £108,622.33 has been approved previously. If this grant of £19,657.77 is approved that would leave £113,679.90 for round 4 in April 2017.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Under S1 of the Localism Act 2011 the Council has a general power of competence to do anything which an individual may do unless it is expressly prohibited.
- 5.2 The giving of grants to voluntary organisations is a discretionary power which must be exercised reasonably taking into account all relevant considerations and ignoring irrelevant considerations.
- 5.5 “Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have ‘due regard’ to the need to eliminate discrimination and other conduct prohibited under the Act and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not. This is the public sector equality duty. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. The purpose of the duty is to enquire into whether a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision. Due regard is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances.”
- 5.6 The duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Council, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations. Members are referred to Section 6 below.

#### **6.0 Diversity Implications**

- 6.1 An Equality Analysis, also known as an Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the process of the approval of Brent’s Local Advice and Guidance Service contracts. This report refers to the purely procedural matter of approving grants recommended by the Brent Advice Fund Grants Panel which exceed £10,000 and therefore there are no diversity implications arising from it, other than the relevant legal implications mentioned above.

#### **7.0 Background Documents**

None

#### **8.0 Appendices**

None

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