

LINKABLE – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Executive Summary

LinkAble supports children and adults with learning disabilities in the Boroughs of Woking and Surrey Heath. It is the only Charity in the local area that provides support to people of all ages with learning disabilities, offering a range of activities and supporting access with trained staff. The Group has a fully accessible Centre in Woking and works in the local community to offer familiarity and routine to the children, young people and adults. The services also offer respite for exhausted parents and carers.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, activities for under 18s consisted of days out, after school clubs, weekend activities and holiday schemes. Adults were offered activities designed to develop their independent living skills and encourage healthy living such as zumba, yoga, cookery courses and volunteering opportunities which enabled them to become valued members within their communities. Its evening services featured more user-led social and recreational activities such as swimming, restaurant visits and karaoke as well as a singing group and a drama group. Until March 2020, LinkAble had been running a nightclub evening, known as ‘Mayhem’ six times a year for over ten years which frequently attracts over 200 adults with learning disabilities from Surrey and beyond. This is unique to LinkAble and Woking.

Financially Covid-19 has negatively impacted on all income streams, with many services and fundraising events having to be cancelled. The Charity has forecast the pandemic has cost LinkAble in the region of £160,000. During lockdown LinkAble became even more important for many service users and their families as they dealt with the challenges of self-isolation and accessing the support they needed.

As lockdown restrictions started to be lifted between July and October, the Charity was able to resume some face to face services for its youngest service users at weekends and during the school summer holidays. Whilst some face to face services for under 18s had also resumed, support for adults with learning disabilities re-started temporarily in September 2020.

LinkAble has applied for a grant of £34,000 for each of the next three years to cover the salary of the Head of Services role, which will enable the Group to focus on enhancing its service provision in the Borough. After the three year period expires, the Charity would aim to raise the funds required by proactively applying for grants from charitable trusts and foundations, whilst encouraging individuals, businesses, and community groups to undertake fundraising.

Given the excellent work undertaken by the Charity and the consultee comments which are supportive, it is recommended that the application be approved with a grant of £34,200 for each of the years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, with no commitment to any funding beyond this time. The funding would be allocated from the Council’s Community Fund.

Recommendations

<p>The Executive is requested to:</p>	<p>RESOLVE That, subject to the outcome of the Council’s budgetary process, a grant of £34,200 be awarded from the Community Fund towards the cost of the Head of Services role for each of the years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24.</p>
<p>Reason for Decision</p>	<p>To provide the Charity with funding for to enable it to continue to</p>

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	enhance its services for residents in the Borough.
Legal Authority	S19 (Misc. Provisions) Local Government Act 1976
Confirmation of funding	<p>This award is provisionally made on the expectation that the Council's budgets for revenue and capital projects remain at the same level allocated for the current financial year. The Council's overall budget, including the sums allocated for community grants, will be determined by Council at its meeting on 11 February 2021. In the event the grant budgets are set at the anticipated levels, confirmation of the Council's support will be sent to successful applicants. Groups should not plan for the 2021/22 funding until this confirmation has been received.</p> <p>Should the budgets be reduced as part of the Council's efforts to achieve savings to offset the impact of Covid on the Council's financial position, a special meeting of the Executive will be held to review the provisional awards and allocate the funds available on a priority basis.</p>
Conditions	<p>Accounts. The Organisation must submit accounts for the year in which the grant is awarded, including an income and expenditure account and balance sheet. Please note that accounts for other years may also be required.</p> <p>Monitoring Information. The Organisation must submit quarterly monitoring information as a measure of its achievements. Failure to provide details will jeopardise the award. E-mail requests will be sent to the applicant on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Publicity. Where possible, the Organisation is required to publicise the support received from Woking Borough Council, including on websites and literature / leaflets produced.</p> <p>Payments. Unless exceptional circumstances exist all invoices must be received quarterly with monitoring information for the previous quarter.</p> <p>Payment Period. Final quarter claims must be made by the second week in April. Unclaimed awards will not be available at a later date unless exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated to the Council before the end of the award year.</p> <p>Joint Working. WBC expects the Organisation to engage positively on health and wellbeing multi-agency joint work affecting Woking. Groups which refuse may place their Council support at risk, e.g. grant, concessionary rent and other assistance.</p> <p>Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Following the introduction of new legislation from April 2018, the Council expects the support of partner agencies in identifying people at risk of homelessness as early as possible to maximise the opportunities to prevent such. Partner agencies / organisations are expected to be engaged in joint working arrangements to assist in finding suitable housing and support solutions, and where appropriate to undertake and respond to the new 'duty to refer'. Groups which do not support this new legislation and way of working positively may put their Council support at risk.</p>
Performance Indicators	<p>Users. The Organisation to provide a breakdown of the users.</p> <p>Activities. The Organisation to provide details of activities and</p>

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	events held. Publicity. The Organisation to advise how the Council's support has been publicised. Statement of Use. The Organisation to provide a statement stating the use to which the grant money has been put.
Future Support	The funding is being awarded for the following financial years: 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 with no commitment to any funding beyond this time.

The Executive has authority to determine the above recommendations.

Background Papers:

2021/22 Application Form.

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1.0 Summary of Application	
1.1 Status and Aims	<p>Since 1989 LinkAble has been supporting children and adults with learning disabilities in the Boroughs of Woking and Surrey Heath. It is the only charity in the local area that provides support to people of all ages with learning disabilities. It offers a range of activities and supports access to these with trained staff. LinkAble has three service strands: children (5-11 years old), youth (11-18 years old) and adults (over 18 years old with no upper age limit). By accessing its services, activities and experiences it supports service users to learn new skills, form lasting friendships and lead fulfilling, independent lives.</p> <p>Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, activities for under 18s consisted of days out, after school clubs, weekend activities and holiday schemes. Adults were offered activities designed to develop their independent living skills and encourage healthy living such as zumba, yoga, cookery courses and volunteering opportunities which enabled them to become valued members within their communities. Its evening services featured more user-led social and recreational activities such as swimming, restaurant visits and karaoke as well as a singing group and a drama group. LinkAble has been running a nightclub evening, known as 'Mayhem' six times a year for over ten years which frequently attracts over 200 adults with learning disabilities from Surrey and beyond. This is unique to LinkAble and Woking.</p>
1.2 Employees	<p>104, comprising:</p> <p>8 office staff (4 full-time and 4 part-time)</p> <p>43 part-time staff involved with the delivery of activities during term-time, 30 staff working with service users under 18 and 13 working with adult service users.</p> <p>53 sessional staff available to work the holiday schemes outside of school term-time.</p>
1.3 Volunteers	<p>55.</p> <p>Each year there are in the region of 50 to 55 volunteers that undertake various roles within the Charity. These are mainly helping with the children and adult groups. A couple of volunteers help in the LinkAble office, at fundraising events and with maintaining the garden and outdoor areas. Approximately 20% of volunteers are students doing the Duke of Edinburgh awards as well as school and college work placements. In total a total of 330 volunteering hours were delivered during 2019/20.</p> <p>LinkAble offers students and others wanting to work or volunteer from the local area a stepping stone to develop careers in teaching, childcare services, social work, speech and language therapy as well as medicine. For many it is their first paid role and provides them with the opportunity to gain experience and upskill. Whilst studying and on completion many staff will stay within the area and take up important roles within the local community. For those who leave LinkAble and pursue an alternative career path they still benefit and develop transferable skills.</p>

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1.4 Clients/Users	<p>313, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 177 male 136 female 287 disabled 59 ethnic minority 129 resident in Woking 77 aged 6-10 91 aged 11-18 144 aged 19-65 1 aged 65+ <p>For under 18's services, the Group has a contract with Surrey County Council to deliver a Short Breaks Scheme, enabling the Group to subsidise the cost for parents, carers or families to a lower per-session charge. Before Covid-19, a rate of £24 was charged for a session of 6 hours (6.5 hours during school holiday schemes).</p> <p>For adults, subscription amounts are set to cover staffing and overhead costs depending on the group size and length, ranging from £45 per 'We Can Do Anything Wednesday' session (running at 6 hours) down to £6 per Chill Out Wednesday session (also designed as a low-cost point of access group for service users).</p> <p>Some of the evening groups then add on an additional charge to cover the activity cost (entry to an attraction, meal costs, supply costs) which are all advertised via group programmes released the month before. Mayhem costs a set £5 per person each time the event is run.</p> <p>LinkAble aims to keep the cost of attending its services as low as possible, especially for adult groups and activities for which no public funding is received. The Group undertakes fundraising by applying for grants from charitable trusts and foundations; and encouraging individuals, corporates and community groups to make donations, organise fundraising events or take on challenges in support.</p>
1.5 Members	N/A.
1.6 Sum Requested	£34,200 (Revenue) on a three year basis
1.7 Project	<p>LinkAble would like to ask for funding towards the Charity's Head of Services position.</p> <p>The current Head of Services is responsible for all LinkAble's adult services and oversees under-18 services. Regarding adult provision the Head of Services is responsible for the strategic direction, implementation and management of LinkAble's services in Woking and Surrey Heath.</p> <p>The amount of funding required to cover the cost of this post for one year would be £34,200. LinkAble would like the Council to consider funding the post for three years at a total cost of £102,600.</p>
1.8 Cost breakdown:	<p>Annual salary - £30,000</p> <p>Pension - £900</p>

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	<p>National Insurance - £3,300</p> <p>Total - £34,200</p>
<p>1.9 Community Benefit</p>	<p>In 2019/20 LinkAble was able to support 287 people through a total of 923 different activities or group sessions. Overall, users attended 26,808 hours of supported activities. Whilst these figures highlight the direct benefit to the community and LinkAble's important role in supporting people with learning disabilities, it does not show the indirect benefits to a service users' family and friends in the form of opportunities to have some free time.</p> <p>LinkAble addresses the need to provide quality care and support to adults with learning disabilities, allowing them to develop skills and confidence to be able to live independently. Service users contribute financially and through direct action, such as volunteering, and being active members within their communities.</p> <p>LinkAble offers employment and volunteering opportunities to all, especially young people, many of whom are in further or higher education and studying to be a teacher or health professional. They gain invaluable experience and receive first class training.</p> <p>As a result of the Charity's work there would be fewer health and wellbeing issues associated with isolation and poor health choices, potentially reducing the need or support from other public service providers.</p>
<p>1.10 Covid-19 Impact</p>	<p>The Charity reports that it is expecting a challenging second half to the year both from a service and organisational perspective.</p> <p>Financially Covid-19 has negatively impacted on all income streams, with many services and fundraising events having to be cancelled. The Charity has forecast the pandemic has cost LinkAble in the region of £160,000. LinkAble operated on a skeleton staff as the charity navigated the period of lockdown. Its focus once the current restrictions are lifted is to resume as many of its services as possible and get back to 'business as usual' as quickly and as safely as possible.</p> <p>The pandemic has had a significant impact on the way that LinkAble delivers its services. For many service users attending LinkAble provides routine, familiarity and much needed respite. During lockdown LinkAble became even more important for many service users and their families as they dealt with the challenges of self-isolation and accessing the support they needed.</p> <p>Face to face services were suspended in March 2020 and the Group continued to engage regularly with our service users and their families virtually, identifying ways in which they wanted to be supported and doing everything possible to meet their needs. It re-invented the way in which it operated from a services perspective to ensure that wherever possible activities and support could be delivered and accessed remotely.</p> <p>In April 2020, just a couple of weeks after suspending face to face services, it was in the position to offer the following support:</p> <p><i>Children (5 to 11-year olds) & Youth (12 to 18-year olds)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light touch support - bi-weekly phone calls to families to check in

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	<p>on their wellbeing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to speak with staff via a zoom call or to receive a bespoke video message from them • Weekly ideas and themes for activities to do at home • Staff created bespoke audio and visual content for brand new activities that could be accessed via the website and social media <p>Adults (18 years plus, no upper age limit)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A weekly programme of online activities that could be accessed via Zoom including Zumba, arts and crafts and cooking classes • Guidance on how to use Zoom video calling • Instruction on how to access a specially created closed Facebook group for service users to access information and feel connected with one another and LinkAble staff <p>For all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance with tasks such as shopping, or the collection of medicines • Reassuring service users via external communications that LinkAble was here to support them and was available if needed.
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2.0 Financial Background	
2.1 Budget	<p>At the time of the application, the Group held £272,715 in the bank.</p> <p>The sum of £53,375 is reserved as the Quarter Two payment from Surrey County Council Under 18s contract and £40,000 is reserved for current liabilities.</p> <p>The Group has submitted a budget for 2021/22 which shows an anticipated income of £489,902 against an anticipated expenditure of £532,001, resulting in an anticipated deficit of £42,099.</p> <p>Anticipated income includes SCC Children’s Services Grant (£213,500), charitable trusts and grants (£123,000), donations (£32,000) and fundraising (£5,000).</p> <p>Items of expenditure include salaries (£145,340), direct wages (£257,966), other direct costs (£37,648) and administration (£30,727).</p>
2.2 Accounts	<p>The Group has submitted accounts for 2019/20 which show an income of £595,979 (£508,736 in 2018/19) against expenditure of £549,672 (£508,692 in 2018/19), resulting in a surplus of £46,307 (virtually breaking even in 2018/19). The sum of £196,150 was carried forward at the end of the 2019/20 year.</p>
2.3 Support over the past five years	<p>New application.</p>

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3.0 Assessment of Application		
3.1 Key Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution ○ Registered Charity ○ VAT Registered ○ Equal Opportunities Policy ○ Safeguarding Policy ○ Reserves Policy ○ Quality Mark ○ Other funding sources pursued ○ Other support by the Council ○ Fundraising ○ Two quotes ○ Regular monitoring provided previously <p>* Mandatory rate relief, discretionary rate relief, concessionary rent, service budget funding of £8,000 towards costs associated with activities for adults and children.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes *</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>
3.2 Consultee Comments	<p><u>Diana Chan, Health and Wellbeing Manager</u></p> <p>I am supportive of the £102,600 being requested to fund the Head of Services position for a three year period. This will provide support to the strategic direction and implementation of LinkAble’s services in the local community. In 2019/20, the charity has supported 137 sessions to adults with learning disabilities, a total of 612 sessions and a total of 13,846 attendance hours, giving an indication of how well utilised and needed their services are for the Woking area.</p>	
3.3 Assessment	<p>For an adult with learning disabilities there are many challenges that can negatively affect their quality of life. They tend to have fewer opportunities for social engagement and spending time with their peers. Venues and places of interest that they would like to visit may not be accessible due to an individual’s ability and mobility. It may be that there is no support available or groups set up to cater for their needs. There remain many adults with a learning disability who live in isolation with no opportunity to enjoy new experiences and gain skills. In turn all of these factors can have a negative impact on an individual’s mental health and physical well-being.</p> <p>For a young adult with a learning disability it can be a particularly challenging time in their lives as they not only have the usual physical and emotional changes that every teenager experiences. They have to cope with transitioning from one of the groups for children to an adult one, whilst at the same time dealing with leaving school or college. They also experience a drastic reduction in the local support available to them which can lead to many feeling vulnerable, lonely and isolated where their days become long and lack any sort of structure or variety. Ultimately this will have a negative impact on an individual’s physical health and wellbeing.</p>	

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In 2018/19 LinkAble:

- Supported over 140 adults with learning disabilities mainly from Woking and some from Surrey Heath
- Delivered 610 sessions
- Totalling 13,044 attendance hours

In 2019/20 LinkAble:

- Supported over 137 adults with learning disabilities mainly from Woking and some from Surrey Heath
- Delivered 612 sessions
- Totalling 13,846 attendance hours

For many service users, attending LinkAble provides routine and familiarity and much needed respite for parents and carers. Since the start of the pandemic and during lockdown LinkAble became an even more important source of support for many users and their families as they dealt with the challenges of self-isolation and accessing the support they needed. The restrictions put in place had a negative impact on the health and wellbeing of many at what was a stressful, uncertain and worrying time. Throughout lockdown regular contact was maintained with users, their families and carers. Some had coped well with the situation whilst others had struggled.

The benefits to Woking and the surrounding area of supporting LinkAble's adult services are as follows:

Service Users

- Adults with a learning disability will have opportunities to develop vital life skills and develop friendships and relationships
- Provide meaningful activities for adults with a learning disability from Woking helping to improve confidence, independence and self-esteem
- A positive impact on an individual's health and well being

The Local Community

- Addresses the need to provide quality care and support to adults with learning disabilities, allowing them to develop skills and confidence to be able to live independently
- Service users will contribute financially and through direct action, such as volunteering, to be active members within their communities in and around Woking
- LinkAble offers employment and volunteering opportunities to all, especially young people, many of whom are in further or higher education and studying to be a teacher or health professional. They gain invaluable experience and receive first class training
- There will be fewer health and wellbeing issues associated with isolation and poor health choices, potentially reducing the need or support from other public service providers

Like many charities, the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on LinkAble's service delivery. The subsequent lockdown and the restrictions introduced meant LinkAble has had to evolve and

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adapt the way in which it delivers its services and groups. In just a few weeks its service delivery shifted from its traditional face to face to a virtual format. Examples are:

- Light touch support - bi-weekly phone calls to families to check in on their wellbeing.
- Opportunities for service users and their families to speak with staff via a zoom call or to receive a bespoke video message.
- Weekly ideas for children activities to do at home.
- Creation of bespoke audio and visual content for brand new children activities that could be accessed via our website and social media.
- A weekly programme of online activities that could be accessed via Zoom including Zumba, arts and crafts and cooking classes.
- Guidance on how to use Zoom video calling.

As lockdown restrictions started to be lifted between July and October, the Charity had been able to resume some face to face services for its youngest service users at weekends and during the school summer holidays much earlier. Whilst face to face services for under 18s also resumed, support for adults with learning disabilities restarted temporarily in September 2020. Having run online throughout, it is intended to resume some face to face classes when possible, such as Zumba and ActAbles, limited to ten people per group and with social distancing measures in place.

With face to face services resuming LinkAble remains committed to restarting its full range of groups and activities for all age groups as soon as it is safe to do so.

The Charity undertakes fundraising work each year through grant applications from grant-giving bodies such as the Community Foundation for Surrey, Post Code Lottery alongside Trusts and Foundations. Confirmed income is being received from the Surrey County Council Play and Leisure Contract (£160,125) and the Peter Harrison Charitable Foundation for under 18's one to one support (£10,000).

LinkAble is apply for a grant of £34,000 for each of the next three years to cover the salary of the Head of Services role, which will enable the Group to focus on service provision in the Borough. After the three years, the Charity would aim to raise the funds required by proactively applying for grants from charitable trusts and foundations, whilst encouraging individuals, businesses, and community groups to undertake fundraising.

Before Covid-19 LinkAble was starting the process of developing a new fundraising and communications strategy which had to be put on hold. As things slowly return to some normality and the full impact of recent events is assessed it will be revisited.

Fundraising activities over the 12 months to August 2020 included:

- Applying to charitable trusts and foundations on a monthly basis
- Held a Gala Ball as part of the 30th Anniversary celebrations
- Organised own fundraising events including a Brush Party,

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Summer Birthday BBQ and gourmet evening

- Received a substantial legacy from an ex trustee
- LinkAble received its first ever place in the 2020 London Marathon and other runners undertook the Woking Lions Martian Run and Surrey Half Marathon on behalf of LinkAble
- LinkAble has also developed corporate partnerships with Galiford Try and continues to explore opportunities to work with local businesses
- LinkAble collection pots are located within shops and other venues in and around Woking

Where it is safe to do so LinkAble is still encouraging supporters to engage in fundraising activities and continues to invite donations from supporters.

Given the excellent work undertaken by the Charity it is recommended that the application be approved with a grant of £34,200 for each of the years 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24, with no commitment to any funding beyond this time. The funding will be allocated from the Council's Community Fund.

REPORT ENDS