

Harrow Healthy Living Centre

CONTEXT

The purpose of this paper (and the presentation that will accompany it on 26 May) is to increase awareness of the Harrow Healthy Living Centre (HHLC) and to invite stakeholders to support its long term financial sustainability.

The Harrow Healthy Living Centre was opened in February 2004. It is located in a prominent position on Wealdstone High Street together with the local library, a Centre run by Harrow Youth Services and a Health Advice and Support Centre managed by NHS Harrow.

The HHLC was one of over 250 Healthy Living Centres sponsored by the Big Lottery Fund to celebrate the Millennium. As the opening date suggests, the HHLC was one of the last of these to open and, as with the others, received a five year grant. In our case the grant was some £780,000 of which £150,000 was spent on capital.

The initial vision of the HLC was

- ✓ To promote healthy life styles by developing services and encouraging use of existing facilities
- ✓ Manage a café staffed by disabled people providing healthy food that will attract users to the centre and provide income
- ✓ Run a training and employment project for disabled people who will run the Café
- ✓ Provide training programmes for people who provide service to disabled people.

THE PAST

The grant submission was originally made in the name of a number of local charities led by Harrow Association of Voluntary Services (HAVS). By the time the grant was approved the lead had changed to Choices4All. Ultimately (in 2007) Harrow Healthy Living Centre Ltd. was created in its own right as a Company Limited by Guarantee and, later, a Registered Charity.

The HHLC Board agreed to locate the centre in Wealdstone High Street at the request of Harrow Council as a part of re-generation of Wealdstone. In return the Council allow the HHLC to occupy the premises rent free although there are significant service charges levied (c£27,000 pa).

The HHLC consists of a large (70 seat) Community Café together with 3 Meeting Rooms (each accommodating 20 people max.). The Café offers work experience for some 20 Learning Disabled clients, on a rota, and a healthy menu for the general public. The Meeting Rooms are open to any organisation to use at a semi-commercial rate. Sometimes they are used for health and well being topics.

With perfect hindsight it was always going to be difficult for the HHLC to be economically sustainable without the Big Lottery Grant:

- ✓ Until last year none of the Learning Disabled clients were funded for the HHLC to provide a service to them. To date we now have 2 that are funded, 1 from Hillingdon and 1 from Harrow – this is discussed further below.
- ✓ As a Community Café the HHLC's Red Brick Café is too large to be financially solvent. It can only attract limited passing trade and many national chains would struggle to break-even with a similar size establishment- even if located in the centre of Harrow.
- ✓ The Meeting Rooms are only capable of providing limited health and well-being activities.
- ✓ The HLC was not set up with financial or other practical support from the local NHS.
- ✓ Inevitably it took time to build up custom in the Café and this meant that in early years a disproportionate amount of the grant was spent, meaning that reserves were at a low level at the end of the 5 year period.

PRESENT

By 2008/9 the Café income with the two Learning Disability placements had built up to £90,000, but not including the Lottery grant was losing some £75,000. Meeting Room hire and other incidentals brought in some £25,000 pa but, discounting the grant, had losses of around £65,000. Without the Lottery grant, therefore, around £130,000 pa is needed. Reserves are down to around £30,000 with exit costs between £10 -15,000.

The original Director of the HHLC left in July 2008, and the Trustees have appointed me on an Interim basis to prepare and implement a sustainable business plan. I have had experience of working with some 20 HLCs as part of the Big Lottery's Development and Support Programme.

A number of actions have been taken over the last few months and, as a result, the HLC is getting close to short term balance. The longer term challenge remains. To secure short term viability one of the meeting rooms has been 'rented' to North West London Community Foundation full time. Partitions have been bought so that part of the Café can be hired for other activities during the day. In order to provide space for 'funded' clients, the parents/carers of the current students have been warned that the students will have to leave if they can't obtain funding.

Specific funding guarantees (in addition to café income and room hire):

Student Placements:	£18,000
Council Vol Sector Grant	£ 9000
Council 6 months Service Charge Suspension	£ 13000
Further Council Assistance	£ 7000
PCT Vol. Sector Grant	£11,500
PCT 'Choosing Health' Projects	£ 3000
North West London Community Foundation	£ 12000
Miscellaneous	£ 7000
<i>Total</i>	<i>£80,500</i>

Although this is still £60k short of the sum needed to break even by the end of the financial year, there are significant possibilities for more funding shortly:

- ✓ Discussions are ongoing via the Harrow Learning Disability Team (who have been extremely helpful) about getting a number of the current students reviewed to assess their eligibility for funding. There about 6 of these who could well gain direct payments and there has already been hopeful progress for 2 of these. This source could bring in £30,000 pa.
- ✓ Two bids have been made to outside agencies: Awards for All and City Bridge Trust. If successful these could bring in £45,000 pa (c £25,000 in 2009/10).
- ✓ There are a number of other external bodies where it may be possible to put in bids.

As stated above Reserves are around £30,000 and it is felt that above sources of guaranteed income will be enough to guarantee continuing to operate until November and that by that time enough money should have been secured to be viable into the next financial year.

THE FUTURE

Clearly it is desirable that in the future the HHLC has a secure enough financial base to avoid the desperate scramble for funds that has proved necessary this year.

It is for consideration as to whether current (funded) activities are sufficiently consistent with the original vision, or whether, indeed, the original vision is still appropriate and financially sustainable. The location and character of the HLC makes it highly suitable for a Community hub and it has been set up to provide training and work experience for the increasing Learning and other Disability population in Harrow. Ironically the aspect of the vision embodied in its title – health and well-being- is not sufficiently well represented in the activities and without further support from NHS Harrow this will continue.

How can the stakeholders represented at the HSP help? The purpose of the paper is to increase understanding of the current position of your HLC. It is not solely a question of handing over money, what will be required is commitment and ‘ownership’. Anyone walking into the Red Brick Café in Wealdstone can recognise its potential as a Community resource, but this will require action in partnership.

RECOMMENDATION

It is suggested, therefore, that a Workshop be held in September around this topic and the planning for this workshop is carried out by the HLC in conjunction with senior representatives of the HSP.

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