

Joint submission from the **Age UK East London and Black Women's Health and Family Support** to The Commissioners' Decision Makers meeting 17.01.2017 regarding the lease on 82 Russia Lane and the classification of the building.

Dear Commissioners,

When considering suspending grants to our organisations and the classification of this building we would like you to consider the following points:

1. AUKEL and BWHAFS have not had a formal letter, email or call regarding the issue of a lease causing the withholding of grants. Both our organisations were informally told via our grants officer that grants were being withheld and, in the case of AUKEL, this was as late as Friday 13th January 2017. No lease has been sent by the council for discussion. It is difficult to understand why our grants would be withheld for not having a lease without any opportunity to negotiate or discuss this.
2. Both our organisations had previously attempted to obtain a lease in 1997 but this was not followed through by the council and questions from our solicitors were not answered.
3. We would welcome the opportunity to negotiate a lease.
4. We need to sensibly plan for the introduction of rent - a sudden increase in overheads will threaten the survival of both our organisations as will the withholding of grants. We have been given no opportunity to plan for an increase in expenditure and our budgets did not make a provision for rent.
5. 82 Russia Lane has been used for community provision since it was built. Age UK East London was involved in the vision and design for the building which was always intended for community use and has occupied it since its completion. Over decades it has become well established as a community resource. For example, there is a drop in service for older people which was accessed by 715 older people in 2016. Both our organisations support exceptionally vulnerable people many of whom are living alone, who feel isolated and are struggling with complex health conditions. The services provided from both organisations are free for our clients. If both organisations are forced to stop our services, the consequences for over 5,000 frail and mainly elderly residents in Tower Hamlets will be severe. We have very restricted funds and whilst Age UK East London has a brand partnership with Age UK it is an independent local charity and needs to raise all of its funding locally.
6. There is a council run dementia day centre on the ground floor and all the organisations occupying this building need to be mindful and respectful of the needs of the visitors to this centre with whom we have daily contact. We have no control over the classification of this building but it clearly has always operated as a community centre and is well known as the place to go to for help.
7. Suspending our grants will also result in our organisations being unable to pay staff, many of whom are local single mothers with young children. BWHAFS have already had to suspend salaries since December - just before Christmas.
8. The effect on cash flow from the grant suspension will result in late payment of our invoices and potential penalty payments.
9. Finally, both organisations have been working in this borough for many decades supporting clients in the community, in hospital and at home. We have significant knowledge both of the local need and of the other provisions and organisations and believe the added value we bring will be lost if we are unable to secure a fair rent and a timed negotiation. Ultimately it will be our clients in Tower Hamlets who will be left with the consequences of the loss of our

services. This can be easily avoided if we are allowed to negotiate a lease with the council without the unfair threat of continued grant suspension.

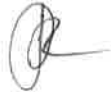
We would therefore ask the Commissioners to reconsider suspending our grants and agree to a sensible timeline within which to negotiate our lease. We would also ask that 82 Russia Lane be classified as a community building.

Yours sincerely



Jane Caldwell

Chief Executive - Age UK East London



Joycelyn Hayford

Operations Director - Black Women's Health and Family Support