

APPENDIX 1

CENTRAL GRANTS UNIT

City of London Corporation Combined Relief of Poverty Charity (1073660)

Family Action (ref. 20114)

Amount requested: £82,790

Amount recommended: £82,790

Purpose of grant request: Setting up a FOOD Club (Pantry) in Aldgate to serve up to 50 local families a week.

The Applicant

Family Action (FA) is a national charity that has provided support to children and families in need for nearly 150 years. It currently supports over 45,000 children, families, and individuals each year across England and Wales, including 12 London Boroughs. Its work involves tackling some of the most complex and difficult issues facing families today – including poverty, domestic abuse, mental ill health, learning disabilities and substance and alcohol misuse.

Its services cover four key areas: early years; children and families; adult mental health; and the delivery of a national grants programme for vulnerable individuals and families with multiple and complex needs.

The children and family services are based in a variety of community settings including Children's Centres, schools and Primary Care settings such as GP surgeries. Many of the services offer home-based support to work intensively with vulnerable families to help them overcome the challenges they face and turn their lives around.

Background and detail of proposal

The Cost-of-Living crisis is having a profound effect on individuals and families. The use of Food Banks has risen significantly, and many families are struggling to be able to buy basic supplies in the face of rising fuel and energy prices. This pressure becomes more significant in areas in Central London where communities must travel on public transport to access affordable food. The City of London has often been considered a food desert, due to its lack of affordable shops making it more difficult for vulnerable families to access nutritious food for their families.

FA are applying for funding to set up and run a food pantry service to support low-income and vulnerable families in Aldgate. The club will run weekly sessions out of the community space of Artizan Street Library, starting one day per week, from the 1st April 2023. The food pantry will be membership based, with members paying £1 to join initially, and thereafter £3.50 weekly for food and essentials to the value of £15, thereby saving money and supporting with the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

Members of the pantry will be referred by local advice and support agencies such as food banks, health visitors, and family support services. The food provided will be varied but will typically include household staples such as rice and pasta, tinned produce as well as fresh and frozen items. Families will also receive recipes and ideas for cooking healthily on a budget using typical pantry items. FA have worked in conjunction with Officers and feel that the library is an ideal community space and will encourage residents to come into the venue and find out more about the services on offer. Alongside the food pantry Family Action will deliver several wrap around services, supporting its members who are most in need. While this project will take place in the City of London it will also be available to residents in neighbouring Tower Hamlets as it is easily accessible from the Aldgate area.

Financial Information

FA are a significant National Charity with a turnover of £38 Million. FA like many Charities has forecast deficits over the next two years considering the growing costs of all of its charitable activities. It is increasing its fundraising operations and working with funders to re-look at budgets to ensure this deficit can be reduced and that further reserves can be built to bring the Charity in line with its reserves policy. The Charity retains a staff contingency fund to support it through this difficult period.

The Charity has a significant Pension Deficit which impacts its restricted funds, The Trustees of FA do not consider this deficit to represent an immediate demand on the Charities fund and do not; therefore, consider that there are any resultant limitations on resources available for general application.

Recommendation

Family Action have been delivering food pantry services in neighbouring Tower Hamlets for several years and they have become valued hubs for the community. The idea of food pantries started in Bristol during the Coronavirus Pandemic which saw increasing numbers of people accessing food banks. The food pantry offers fresh and frozen food items at highly subsidised prices, allowing members to feel that they are in control of the food they buy, with less of the social stigma of accessing a food bank. This service will be invaluable to the Aldgate Area where access to affordable food is a constant challenge for residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Funding is recommended in full over two years as follows:

£82,790 over two years (£43,120; £39,670) to support with the setup of a Food Pantry in Aldgate supporting families and residents impacted by the Cost of Living Crisis to access affordable food.