



Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund

Assessment Pack – January 2025

CoL Crime Prevention Association (26076)

Family Action (26801)

Mental Fight Club (26538)

CoL Housing New Developments and Special Projects Team (26797)

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND

City of London Crime Prevention Association (26076)

Amount requested: £291,000

Amount recommended: £101,600

Purpose of grant request: To provide deliver a programme of initiatives to prevent Violence against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse for workers, residents and visitors in the City of London.

Type of cost: Revenue

Ward(s) benefitting: All

Neighbourhood Area(s) benefitting: n/a

The Applicant

The City of London Crime Prevention Association (CoLCPA) is a registered charity (1068671) established in 2006 to promote crime prevention and reduction measures in the City of London, in conjunction with the police and voluntary agencies, by protecting people and property from criminal acts, encouraging greater public participation in the prevention of crime and through providing education, information and practical assistance to the community. The Association has a national membership (250+) of those involved in safety, security, and emergency response who are invited to eleven meetings per year and two membership networking events plus guests, where they can hear about the latest crime trends, counter terrorism updates, security issues facing the City and discuss appropriate mitigation methods. CoLCPA also produces 'City Security', a quarterly magazine with a 10,000 hard-copy and digital circulation. CoLCPA promotes crime prevention and reduction initiatives within the City of London, serving as both a communication network for major stakeholders (Bank of England, National Security Inspectorate) and a charitable donor providing small grants to other security related charities (averaging £20,000 per annum). The organisation works in partnership with the City of London Police with the Chairman of the City of London Police Authority Board appointed Patron of CoLCPA during their term in office. In partnership with law enforcement and other relevant associations, CoLCPA has helped develop a number of local and national preventative initiatives including Project Kestrel, a fire safety training package for security and facilities personnel; Project Griffin, a national counter-terrorism awareness initiative now called ACT Awareness; and the Cross Sector and Safety Security Communications (CSSC) providing security alert messaging. CoLCPA has one full-time member of staff providing administrative support to its active Board of eight trustees – two of whom, appointed in December 2024, are female with lived-experience of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

Background and detail of proposal

As identified in the City of London's 'Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2022-25', seven out of ten women have experienced some form of sexual

harassment in public and one in four women experience domestic abuse during their lifetime. Cultural and systemic drivers, such as harmful attitudes and gender-based power dynamics, contribute to harassment, domestic abuse, and sexual violence which is why addressing VAWG requires a focus on both prevention and cultural change. Sexual offences account for 2% of all crime in the City but are rising, with a 25% increase since 2022/23. Whilst VAWG remains a small proportion of recorded crime in the City, sexual offences have seen the second-highest year-on-year percentage increase with sexual offences predominantly linked to the night-time economy (NTE), occurring mostly in NTE hotspots during NTE hours, in particular around Bishopsgate. VAWG affects people regardless of their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, age, religion, culture, ethnicity, background or disability and is directly linked to consequences such as homelessness, mental health issues and substance misuse. In the City of London VAWG victims are primarily women over 16 years of age, though about 10% of victims of other sexual offences are adult males. 2023/24 Data.Police.uk crime statistics identify 9,404 reported crimes in the City of London of which there were 1,621 'violence and sexual offences' – the second most prevalent types of crime reported during the period.

To stem the increase in this type of crime and ensure that the City remains a safe place to live, work and visit in November 2023, to coincide with the Lord Mayor's year of office, CoLCPA set up the 'Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse Consortium' for the City of London (Consortium). The Consortium currently has 52 active voluntary participants representing over 30 City of London organisations, associations and business entities including The City of London Police, British Transport Police, Metropolitan Police, The Security Industry Authority, Safer Business Network, Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse and City Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). The Consortium is governed by an Executive Committee of 14 which is made up of 10 members plus the Chair (who is also the Chair of CoLCPA), a Patron (former Lady Mayoress, Elisabeth Mainelli) and two Ambassadors (including the former CoL Police Commissioner). 40% of the Consortium's Executive Board identify as female of which half have lived experience of VAWG. Management and administration of the Consortium is provided by CoLPA which is acting as lead applicant for this CILNF application. Collectively the Consortium aims to deliver twelve core crime prevention initiatives which benefit City residents, workers and those seeking hospitality in the City of London including: a Taxi Marshalling service operating from Liverpool Street station Thursday to Saturday (10pm-1am) where licensed taxi marshals help individuals to find a safe, legitimate taxi or guide people to nearby public transport options; the establishment of 'Safe Havens' across the City providing a place of temporary refuge for a person to escape an unsafe situation and facilitate their onward journey; the development of a 'Safe Haven App' which shows users live Safe Haven locations and sends a message to that location that the vulnerable person is seeking assistance; intelligence analysis and sharing; 'Ask for Angela' scheme providing assistance to those in distress at hospitality venues to get the support they need for a safe onward journey; prevent drink spiking; bystander awareness training; high visibility private sector security presence in partnership with the City Security Council; comms; user surveys; education and training. Whilst these crime prevention schemes are aimed at preventing VAWG they are universal in their application with the potential to reduce violence and sexual offences in the City.

The Square Mile is home to almost 1,000 licensed premises, with 16 of them benefitting from 24-hour licenses, and over 300 serving alcohol after midnight. Creating a thriving hospitality sector and night time economy (NTE) is central to delivering the CoL's 'Destination City' vision. Since the end of 2023, the Taxi Marshalling service, which has facilitated over 12,000 journeys for 22,000+ passengers of which 51% were females (of which a third were lone females) and 49% males, has been funded through three successive Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) grants. Other strands of the Consortium's programme including funding for the Business Engagement Manager and WAVE/Ask Angela training has also been funded through individual POCA grants to a Consortium member (Safer Business Network). Moving forward the Consortium seeks to move away from this piecemeal funding to a more centralised approach enabling it to consolidate its management and expand its programme of work. CoLCPA, on behalf of the Consortium, is seeking initial 12-month CILNF funding to provide management infrastructure through continuation funding for the full-time Project Manager, Business Engagement Officer and Marketing/Analyst role; analysis of crime statistics to identify crime hotspots in the City; delivery of improved comms and marketing of crime prevention programmes; delivery of 6-monthly Prevent VAWG surveys; establishment of an additional 40 new Safe Havens in the City; and provision of free in-person training sessions to City businesses and employees including Bystander Awareness, WAVE/Ask for Angela and Safe Haven. Although the Consortium's primary focus is the reduction of VAWG and DA, all the crime prevention programmes delivered by the Consortium are inclusive providing services for all genders and protected characteristics.

Using the mapped crime data, the Business Engagement Officer will connect directly with City businesses in crime hotspot areas to promote awareness amongst employers of local safety initiatives. In partnership with the City of London Police Licencing Team, the officer will lead on the Consortium's training programme providing free face-to-face training sessions to business employees including 'WAVE' to increase the skills, knowledge and confidence of those working in licensed premises focusing on identifying vulnerability; the 'Ask for Angela' scheme that helps anyone who is feeling vulnerable on a night out to get the support they need; and 'Bystander Awareness' which teaches appropriate responses to situations we interpret as being potentially harmful to another person. This in-person training will run in tandem with free e-learning offered to City businesses via Safer Business Network and the City BIDs. Over the last three years there has been continuous demand for in-person training with monthly sessions attracting 25+ attendees - businesses using the additional e-learning often for new staff once managers have been trained.

The Consortium aims to reduce the number of VAWG and DA crimes in the City of London by an estimated 25% over the next 3 years and to increase City residents, workers and visitors feelings of safety in the late evenings which it will measure through twice-yearly public surveys. By the end of Year One through CILNF funding the Consortium will establish an additional 40 Safe Havens in the City; sign up an additional 50 hospitality venues to the Ask for Angela scheme; deliver WAVE/Ask Angela and Safe Haven training sessions to 90 hospitality venues; provide NTE 'footfall' data provided by Oxford Partners and associated crime hotspot analytics which will be shared quarterly with City of London Police to inform their policing

activities; and deliver 12 Bystander Intervention training sessions and Worker Protection Act 2023 training to City businesses and employees (estimated 480 individuals trained). The Worker Protection Act 2023, which came into force in October 2024, introduces a new duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees. CILNF funded Consortium staff will also support the administration of the Taxi Marshalling scheme, the promotion of the Safe Haven app (to be launched in the City, Westminster and Charing Cross), development of an education programme with London universities, partner the City Security Council to deliver high visibility night time patrols in the City, support the wider uptake in the City of the 'Stamp out Spiking' scheme and be an active partner in fostering the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse.

The Consortium regularly updates the City of London Police Violent Crime Sub-Committee and attends Safer City Partnership meetings. It maintains a high level relationship with the Chief Officers of the City of London Police, Metropolitan Police and British Transport Police in addition to active relationships with the Safer Business Network, Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse, the Suzy Lamplugh Trust and White Ribbon. Additional income for delivery of the Consortium's crime prevention programmes for the City of London has been confirmed from the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals (£10,000/year towards Bystander Awareness), CoLCPA which plans to donate £10,000 each year, the City BIDs (£240,000 across three years, including Eastern City Partnership and Aldgate Connects, for taxi marshalling) and the private business sector (including £120,000 from Vigilant Security towards the Safe Haven app and £30,000 from QCIC towards administration).

Following consultation with the CoL Community Safety Team, CoL Police Licencing Team and CoL Licencing Team, CoLCPA's request for three-year funding is being recommended as an initial 12-month grant to evidence demand for its training and assessment of the additionality of the proposed crime hotspot analysis over and above that provided by BID and CoL Police analysts with the potential for continuation funding through CILNF. A provision towards annual safeguarding training for CoLCPA Board and staff has been added to the Year One grant request.

Value for Money

There is reputational benefit for the City of London in terms of achieving its vision for 'Destination City' in maintaining the Square Mile's reputation as a low crime area. Moreover, as identified in the CoL's 'VAWG Strategy 2022-25' the prevention of VAWG is of significant social value as it 'will improve the Square Mile population's resilience, well-being, warding off of adverse childhood experiences, mental illness and homelessness in the years to come'. In economic terms the prevention of VAWG and other violent crime will reduce the need for additional policing costs, the potential loss of business productivity through employee mental health, sickness and associated issues. CILNF funding for the Consortium is anticipated to lever in a further £210,000 over the duration of the grant from the private security sector, City BIDs and private donations. In turn, increasing the safety and security of the City's night time economy will boost revenue growth and create a socially attractive hospitality environment.

Financial Information

Historically, the majority of CoLCPA's income has derived from its 250+ membership fees (£400 per organisation, £350 for sole traders), donations and legacies with expenditure primarily on raising funds, publishing its monthly magazine 'City Security,' charitable donations to other organisations delivering in the security sector and the wage of its full-time Administrator. However, in 2023/24 CoLCPA began raising income for Consortium related crime prevention initiatives through POCA grants, security businesses and City of London BIDs with its income growing to circa £209k in 2024/25. Consolidating the Consortium's fundraising through CoLCPA will see CoLCPA's turnover further increase in 2025/26. To reflect CoLCPA's increasing turnover, the Board has increased its reserves policy for 2023/24 to £40,000. As at end March 2024 CoLCPA held £48,224 free unrestricted reserves, £8,224 above its adopted reserves policy of £40,000. There are no concerns about the financial viability of the applicant over the duration of the grant.

Year end as at 31 March	2023	2024	2025
	Signed Accounts	Draft Accounts	Forecast
	£	£	£
Income & expenditure:			
Income	76,044	147,100	208,938
Expenditure	(92,511)	(121,859)	(191,102)
Surplus/(deficit)	(16,467)	25,241	17,836
Reserves:			
Total restricted	0	19,710	32,890
Total unrestricted	42,693	48,224	52,880
Total reserves	42,693	67,934	85,770
Of which: free unrestricted	42,693	48,224	52,880
Reserves policy target	10,000	40,000	40,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	32,693	8,224	12,880

Recommendation

The Consortium is a sector-led initiative for the City of London with a substantial membership dedicated to delivering the City of London's 'VAWG Strategy 2022-25' vision that 'the Square Mile is free from Violence Against Women and Girls and is a place that is safe for everyone to live, work and learn' and contributes to the City of London's Corporate Plan's priority to provide 'a vibrant thriving destination by ensuring the Square Mile is a safe and welcoming place for everyone...that works for residents, visitors, business and leisure'. The application also meets the CILNF priority to support proposals that demonstrate community support as evidenced by the Consortium's strong organisational membership, with the establishment of a steering group ensuring that the Consortium's comms and marketing includes an element of co-design from those with lived experience. A grant is recommended as follows:

£101,600 over 12 months to provide funding for a Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse Consortium Project Manager, Business Engagement Officer and Marketing/Analyst to promote and deliver a programme of free in-person crime prevention training (WAVE/Ask for Angela, Safe Haven and Bystander Awareness) to City businesses and employees, to establish and promote a further 40 Safe Havens in the City, analyse and share

VAWG crime data with key stakeholders and undertake 6-monthly Prevent VAWG public surveys.

Condition One: The 'Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse Consortium' for the City of London (Consortium) to establish a steering group of individuals with lived-experience of VAWG or Domestic Abuse to ensure the Consortium's marketing, comms and training is shaped and informed by a user-voice.

Condition Two: The 'Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse Consortium' for the City of London (Consortium) to share its enhanced crime 'hotspot' analytics quarterly with key stakeholders including the Community Safety Manager – City of London Corporation, Licencing Inspector – City of London Police and Safer City Partnership meetings.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND

Family Action (26801)

Amount requested: £240,516

Amount recommended: £162,184

Purpose of grant request: To expand and enhance Family Action's Aldgate FOOD Club through the staffing and provision of both a lunchtime and twilight FOOD Club session for 50 weeks each year at Artizan Street Library plus three annual social events for members.

Type of cost: Revenue

Ward(s) benefitting: All

Neighbourhood Area(s) benefitting: n/a

The Applicant

Family Action (FA) is charitable company (264713) founded in 1869 to preserve and protect the good health, in particular mental health, of families, individuals and groups within the community and the relief of poverty. An award winning charity (Third Sector Charity of the Year 2021), FA work from the heart of local communities supporting people through change, challenge and crisis supporting over 60,000 families each year through 200 community-based services which provide practical, emotional and financial support to individuals, children and families experiencing poverty, disadvantage and social isolation in England and Wales. FA services fall under nine overarching themes: Early Years and Perinatal; Children and Families; Young People; Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing; Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND); Domestic and Sexual Abuse; Care Experienced and Adoption; Food; Financial support. Their Food Services include delivery of the National School Breakfast Programme on behalf of the Department for Education, providing a healthy breakfast for 350,000 children every school day. FA also runs 32 Food on Our Doorstep (FOOD) Clubs across the country, supporting people experiencing food insecurity, and deliver Life Skills sessions building confidence, financial and employability skills alongside access to healthy food. Since 2023, FA has worked closely with the City of London Community and Children's Services, Adult Skills and Education Service, and Libraries Service to deliver the Aldgate FOOD Club at Artizan Street Library supporting residents impacted by the cost of living crisis to access affordable food funded for two years through the Combined Relief of Poverty Charity (£82,790).

Background and detail of proposal

The Greater London Authority's (GLA) Survey of Londoners evidenced that that 17% of children in the capital experience food insecurity, along with 20% of adults (1.5 million Londoners), 36% of single parents and 32% of black Londoners. Within the City of London there is huge disparity in income and pockets of high deprivation including Mansell Street Estate, Middlesex Street Estate and Golden Lane Estate. The Portsoken ward, for example, is in the second quintile of the Index of Multiple

Deprivation with 21% of children under-16 and 31% of adults 60+ living in low income households. The situation is exacerbated by the lack of low cost food shops and supermarkets in the area. The Living Wage's Report (London's Low Pay Landscape) identifies that half of low paid Londoners have used a food bank in the past year, with about a quarter visiting one at least once a week and that low income households often face additional, complex challenges such as unemployment/low-paid work, mental health problems, housing insecurity, disabilities/health conditions and social isolation.

To respond to ongoing cost of living pressures and address resultant food poverty experienced by low-income families in the City of London and support City workers experiencing in-work poverty, FA is seeking CILNF funding to extend the Aldgate FOOD Club (AFC) on Thursdays 2-4pm to March 2028 and expand provision through the launch of a second twilight session for the City's hidden workforce on Friday evenings 5-7pm starting in August 2025. The proposal has been encouraged by City Corporation Community and Children's Services Officers as part of a coordinated approach that complements statutory services and aligns with the aims of the City's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. The FOOD club will be held on the upper floor of Artizan Street Library (lift accessible for disabled members and those with pushchairs, children or limited mobility) for 50 weeks each year bringing a wider, more diverse community into the library and promoting the support and services it offers. This increase in capacity and longevity of funding cannot be met through the level of resources available through the CRPC and so FA is applying to CILNF for AFC's three-year continuation and expansion funding.

Previously run on a referral only basis, to widen participation to include City workers suffering from in-work poverty and in keeping with all of FA's other 30+ FOOD Clubs nationwide, the AFC will also welcome self-referrals specifically targeting vulnerable people in low income households who are struggling with food insecurity. Referrals via CoL Housing (estate management, tenancy sustainment), CoL Adult Social Care, CoL Children and Families Services, CoL Early Years and Education, CoL Libraries, Guinness Housing Trust, City Advice (Toynbee Hall), City Connections, Society Links (youth services) and Age UK City of London will continue. In addition a new comms plan will promote the AFC via Aldgate School and Children Centre, nurseries, Golden Lane Community Centre, Portsoken Community Centre, St Luke's, local churches, City Squared VCS network, Neaman GP Practice, Social Prescriber's team, Shoreditch Trust, City Advice, CoL Member's newsletters/surgeries and to the City's hidden workers in hospitality, security and cleaning. Currently 39% of AFC members are Asian/Asian British, with Bengali spoken by many members. Budget has been set aside to provide marketing in a number of local languages with specific targeted comms to people living in social housing in Mansell Street Estate, Middlesex Street Estate, Golden Lane Estate and families of children attending Aldgate School.

The government is committed to reducing food bank use and FA are part of a working party led by Feeding Britain that will be looking to see how this can be achieved. Unlike foodbanks, which provide individuals in crisis with short-term emergency help, FOOD Clubs offer regular support to members, who are able to access food at low prices enabling them to stretch their budget further and prevent financial crises. Typically food banks provide a limited variety of long-life, tinned and dried foodstuffs which are limited in their nutritional value compared to the range of

foods and fresh items available at FOOD Clubs. FOOD Clubs also differ in that members pay a small membership fee – establishing that all members of the club are equal and breaking down the perceived stigma of accessing food by providing a more dignified way to access help when struggling. The AFC will improve access to healthy, low cost food for people struggling with food insecurity; save members' money and increase disposable income, so that people can afford other essentials such as heating, hygiene products and clothing; improve mental health and wellbeing by reducing members' financial stress; signpost and support members to access local services; and reduce food waste and landfill through using otherwise surplus food. All AFC staff/volunteers complete mandatory training including health and safety, safeguarding, equality and diversity, and Level 2 Food Hygiene and Allergy Awareness. FA has achieved 5-star Food Hygiene ratings for all FOOD Clubs assessed, and hold the 'Investing in Volunteers' quality standard.

The AFC is run by a dedicated FOOD Club Assistant who schedules staggered appointments for members to prevent the need for queuing with at least two volunteers each session providing information on the range of food available and at hand to help pack. Volunteers are provided by City corporates (A&O Shearman and Structure Tone) with two additional corporate supporters in development. Members can purchase food worth £17.50 - £20 for just £4 each week with sufficient cereals, grains, meat, fresh vegetables, spices, sauces, dairy items and frozen meals to feed a family up to four meals. Food bag sales will raise an anticipated £49,960 over the next three years which together with the CILNF grant will fund a p/t Food Club Coordinator and p/t Food Club Assistant, provide families with fresh and culturally appropriate food including fresh Halal meat, hire of the library (£10,800/year), central support costs, marketing and three FOOD Club social events each year co-designed, planned and delivered with members, helping members to build community connections. Food is supplied to AFC by surplus food charities (Felix Trust, His Church) and purchased direct from vegetable wholesalers. FA aims to build attendance to 45 members at each session providing food for 90 low-income families each week. It is estimated that members will use the FOOD Club for an average 12 months with approximately 50% turnover of members each year as personal circumstances change. Current membership demographics are: 95% of members have household income below £30,000; over a quarter (28%) of members have a household income below £5,000; 60% of members are in households where no adults are currently in employment; almost 1 in 4 members (24%) have a disability; 46% of members are eligible for benefits and tax credits; 63% are non-White with 39% Asian/Asian British (including Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Chinese; any other Asian background).

During assessment the funding request has been revised to include an inflationary increase on food and room hire costs and reduction in relation to wrap around service provision with FA now providing two programmes to City members through additional external funding.

Value for Money

The proposal represents good value for money in terms of the financial value of additional services that it will lever in for the benefit of low income City residents and workers. Through external funding FA will offer AFC members two programmes of wraparound provision: 'Fuel Your Finances' which aims to support members to

maximise income, reduce energy costs and improve energy safety funded until initially end March 2026; and 'Life Skills' a programme which supports members to develop confidence and social networks funded initially to end December 2025. AFC will provide 4,500 bags of food each year with an estimated value of approximately £90,000 thereby doubling the value of the CILNF grant investment. In social value terms it should be noted that there are no food banks operating within the City of London with AFC the only FOOD Club. From an environmental standpoint AFC will save 10,000+kg per year of surplus food from going to waste in landfill.

Financial Information

FA's income has been slowly growing. Total income for 2023/24 was £40.4m of which 95% was restricted to funding specific services received from Local Authorities, central government and NHS Trusts with a net surplus for the year of £136,000. The Charity has a significant pension deficit but has a clear plan to manage this and continues to make significant annual payments towards the deficit under an agreed payment scheme with the Pension Regulator (£822k in 2023/24). FA Trustees do not consider this deficit to represent an immediate demand on the Charity's funds. Income and expenditure are projected to reduce in 2025/26 in line with a number of contracts coming to end on 31 March 2025. This is not unusual for FA and discussions are in progress to renew or replace these contracts and related work streams. Total free unrestricted reserves at 2023/24 year end were £2.23m which was below FA's reserves policy of 6 months running costs of the head office, potential closure costs and continuing lease obligations (£4.26m). FA's Board budgets from a worst case scenario to include only known income and maximum predicted expenditure. Their current budget for 2025/26 indicates a potential deficit of £3.22m but excludes contracts that will be awarded as the year progresses and potential in-year efficiency savings. As an example the 2024/25 budget began with a predicted deficit of £2.43m and now predicts a surplus. There are no financial concerns in relation to the applicant for the duration of the grant.

Year end as at 31 March	2024 Signed Accounts £	2025 Management Accounts £	2026 Budget £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	40,361,000	42,384,381	35,904,999
Expenditure	(39,323,000)	(41,996,443)	(39,128,704)
Gains/(losses)	(902,000)	0	0
Surplus/(deficit)	136,000	387,938	(3,223,705)
Reserves:			
Total endowed	9,865,000	9,865,000	9,865,000
Total restricted	4,215,000	4,514,908	2,897,408
Total unrestricted	6,729,000	6,817,030	5,210,825
Total reserves	20,809,000	21,196,938	17,973,233
Of which: free unrestricted	2,232,000	2,320,030	713,825
Reserves policy target	4,260,000	4,260,000	4,260,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	(2,028,000)	(1,939,970)	(3,546,175)

Recommendation

The Aldgate FOOD Club is the City's key distributor of food to those experiencing food poverty and the impact of the continuing cost of living crisis. The proposal, which will extend the AFC to support City workers in low paid roles experiencing in-

work poverty, meets the CILNF Community Priority to 'address the needs of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, minoritised communities, older people, disabled people, LGBTQIA+ people and those living in poverty' by offering an additional out-of-hours FOOD Club session each week with culturally appropriate food items, increasing the number of local people who benefit and reaching those who struggle to attend during weekdays. With financial insecurity and poverty known to be a major determinant of health inequalities and negatively impact wellbeing, AFC is a key asset in the delivery of the CoL's Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2028 supporting its members to build their financial resilience and prevent them from falling into crisis. A grant is recommended as follows:

£162,184 over 3 years (Year 1 £46,762; Year 2 £56,803; Year 3 £58,619) towards the expansion and enhancement of Family Action's Aldgate FOOD Club through the staffing and provision of both a lunchtime and twilight FOOD Club session for 50 weeks each year at Artizan Street Library plus three annual social events for members.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND

Mental Fight Club (26538)

Amount requested: £195,971

Amount recommended: £195,971

Purpose of grant request: To provide creative wellbeing events in the City of London to support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of City residents and City workers.

Type of cost: Revenue

Ward(s) benefitting: All

Neighbourhood Area(s) benefitting: n/a

The Applicant

Mental Fight Club (MFC) is a CIO (1158926) founded, led, and delivered by people with mental health experience. Established in 2003, MFC provides community-based support to people who are disabled through mental ill health. MFC's approach responds to the marginalisation and stigma commonly experienced by this cohort, increasing individuals' agency and ability to address their own needs over the long term, supporting independence and integration. MFC's two keystone projects are the Dragon Café, a weekly drop-in creative space that has been delivered for over 10 years in Southwark and, since 2018, Dragon Café in the City which is held fortnightly in partnership with the CoL Library Services at Shoe Lane Library. In addition MFC delivers special events across London that showcase the work of participants or support specific groups. In the last ten years MFC has welcomed over 20,000 individual attendees to its events, worked with over 900 neurodivergent artists and artists with experience of mental health, and partnered with a number of leading cultural institutions (Bloomsbury Festival, V&A, Museum of the Home, South Bank Centre, Museum of London). MFC is run by a four part-time staff, 15 volunteers and a Board trustees most of whom have lived experience of mental illness either directly or through the experience of friends and family.

Background and detail of proposal

Mental ill health, especially that caused by isolation, has increased due to the pandemic with depression rates in the UK doubled since the COVID-19 pandemic began (Office for National Statistics, May 2021). Groups disproportionately affected are those burdened by existing inequalities such as young people, women, clinically vulnerable adults, people living with a disability and those living in the most deprived areas. In part due to the long waiting times to access mental health services, there has been an increased focus on community-based, preventative and holistic mental health care. The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Arts, Health & Wellbeing's 'Creative Health Report' recognises the value of arts in health, the ability for the arts to support wellbeing, loneliness and mental health and the potential for the arts to reduce health service and social care costs.

The Dragon Café in the City (DCC) is a free, all-day, drop-in creative space, delivered every other Wednesday to support the mental health and wellbeing of City residents and workers, hosted by CoL Library Service in the public open access area of Shoe Lane Library. MFC provides an integrated service to overcome the shame and stigma commonly experienced by people with a mental health diagnosis, and the fact that many individuals may not identify with or want to disclose their status. All age ranges, backgrounds, genders and ethnicities are included and welcome. This non-judgemental approach has proven to be successful in engaging with a cohort of disabled people that is particularly vulnerable due to their complex needs. . MFC works with patrons (as MFC refers to attendees) at all stages of their recovery and management of their illness following a crisis, incident or inpatient stay. Most are unable to work, some find it difficult to leave their homes, and all are unable to connect easily with others. Patrons' mental health struggles include depression, anxiety, psychosis, hearing voices, obsessions and compulsive behaviours with many often experiencing multiple challenges including physical conditions such as Parkinson's, homelessness, insecure migration status and poverty.

MFC is not a therapeutic intervention, but is based around artist-led creative activities which are highly effective in building communication, reflection, community and self-nurturing. This addresses the compounding impacts of marginalisation to build patrons' agency, resilience, confidence, a social network and sense of belonging - vital tools in enabling patrons to better recognise and support their own needs, with evidenced positive impact on quality of life, independence and participation in society, including via volunteering and paid roles within MFC. The regularity and format of the Dragon in the City Café (DCC) is based on a detailed understanding of the holistic needs of patrons. An informal, public, free flow space offers opportunities to engage in activities, observe, chat or a safe place just to 'be'. A wide variety of creative activities are offered including film, photography, dance, singing, visual arts, storytelling and writing alongside well-being sessions including self-massage, yoga, laughter-therapy, pilates and work-life balance classes. A patron's journey often starts with simply sitting alone for repeated sessions before an individual chooses to talk or join in. Over time, individuals build the confidence to create, direct and present their own art, supported by MFC staff, experienced team of freelance facilitators and volunteers, many of whom have lived experience of mental ill health. Patrons also regularly move into roles leading or co-leading activities within the Dragon Café team. Activities are structured into day-long programmes (midday to 7pm). Each day features an average of four activities, each one lasting an hour with social breaks in between. Lunch time activities and evening activities ensure DCC is accessible to those with care and work responsibilities. Blending in-person and online provision ensures DCC is accessible to those with chronic health and mobility-limiting conditions.

MFC is applying to CILNF specifically to support the delivery of DCC over the next five years as it expands its capacity from 25 to potentially 40 attendees/activity and diversifies its funding base as it relocates to a new larger space at One New Change (anticipated move date December 2025). Funding will support the provision of 22 sessions each year providing 88 creative and wellbeing activities to build a strong patrons' community, reduce social isolation and improve patrons' ability to support their own wellbeing. MFC plan to seize the opportunity of the relocation to One New Change, the City's main shopping centre next to St Pauls Cathedral, to expand its

impact with an anticipated increase in more regular attendees of at least 25% alongside associated increase in both volunteers and support staff. Funding will support more targeted communications (in a range of languages) to reach those marginalised in the City including refugees, homeless, those unemployed due to mental ill health and small City-based businesses which find it hard to support the mental wellbeing of their staff internally. Expected programme outcomes anticipate that; 85% of participants report that their mental wellbeing has improved; 80% of participants feel more able to engage with supporting their own mental wellbeing; 85% of participants note an increased sense of community.

DCC attracts a diverse cohort of patrons from the homeless to the City worker with on average 41% BAME and 21% white attendees. 64% of patrons state they are disabled and 34% are over 60 years of age. To attract new attendees and a younger patrons groups, DCC aims to use CILNF funding to enhance its programme to provide a platform for innovative and emerging artists to provide wire sculpture, Qi gong, ballad walks and up-cycling sewing and programme at least one physical activity per event. MFC is supported in its work through a strong network of connections to other City organisations active in the sector including Healthwatch, City of London Police, The Advocacy Project, Bridge Watchers, Samaritans, Hackney CVS, City Carers Community, St Mungos and the recently formed 'City Squared' CoL VCS network who will support the promotion of DCC.

A key outcome of this CILNF proposal is the diversification of MFC's funding base to move the future funding of DCC from reliance on CoL grants to corporate sponsorship given the DCC's new high-footfall City location at One New Change Shopping Centre, payroll giving and patron donations. MFC will prioritise building relationships with businesses with a turnover of between £800k and £8m, CoL based offices and a business interest that has some creative link.

Value for Money

The proposal, which provides early intervention and self-guided condition maintenance, represents good value for money when considering the potential cost both to the National Health Service in terms of therapy, treatment and potential in-patient costs and to City employers in terms of sickness absence. There is also significant social value through the reduction of social isolation and loneliness as evidenced in the Campaign to End Loneliness's research which identified that social isolation can also contribute to cognitive decline, poor sleep quality, lower educational attainment and long-term unemployment. In purely economic terms, CILNF funded activity is anticipated to lever in an estimated £89,500 contribution from City businesses and donations over the five-year funding period with the aim that DCC will cease to be CoL grant reliant. As demand for DCC grows MFC will secure additional volunteers to keep salary costs level.

Financial Information

Whilst, MFC has successfully diversified its income to secure funding from a wider range of trusts and foundations, grants continue to be predominantly single-year preventing the organisation from longer-term financial planning and expansion of activity. MFC's income has been growing steadily, raising 28% of its funds through local health commissioners, 68% from trusts and foundations (National Lottery, Southwark Charities, Sports England, Southwark Neighbourhood Fund, City Bridge

Foundation, Culture Mile BID) and 4% from donations and project fees. In 2023/24 MFC had an income of £203,290 with £72,716 in unrestricted reserves, slightly in excess of its 3-months running costs reserves policy (£60,000) and a further £12,500 designated reserves ring fenced for MFC's annual profile raising event. There are no financial concerns in relation to the applicant over the duration of the grant.

Year end as at 30 April	2023 Signed Accounts £	2024 Draft Accounts £	2025 Management Accounts £
Income & expenditure:			
Income	188,260	203,290	203,340
Expenditure	(184,510)	(205,077)	(204,818)
Surplus/(deficit)	3,750	(1,787)	(1,478)
Reserves:			
Total restricted	50,063	52,416	50,873
Total unrestricted	89,356	85,216	85,281
Total reserves	139,419	137,632	136,154
Of which: free unrestricted	72,856	72,716	72,781
Reserves policy target	60,000	60,000	60,000
Free reserves over/(under) target	12,856	12,716	12,781

Recommendation

MFC is an award winning organisation that promotes social inclusion by enabling CoL residents and workers experiencing mental health issues to create and connect with the wider community thereby reducing social isolation and providing the critical tools necessary for patrons to articulate effective personal strategies to pre-empt the onset of serious mental illness, support early recovery and maintain recovery in the long term. Funding will enable DCC to both expand its capacity and become financially resilient. The proposal meets the CILNF community priority to 'address the needs of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, minoritised communities, older people, disabled people, LGBTQIA+ people and those living in poverty' by supporting a well-tested, specialist intervention based on lived experience that is empowering disabled people who have complex needs to live more active and independent lives. The proposal also strongly meets two of the City of London's Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2024-28 key priorities by 'improving mental health' and 'increasing social connections and reducing social isolation'. A grant is recommended as follows:

£195,971 over 5 years (Year 1 £51,192; Year 2 £46,643; Year 3 £45,039; Year 4 £34,873; Year 5 £18,224) to provide 22 creative wellbeing events in the City of London each year to support and improve the mental health and wellbeing of City residents and City workers.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND

City of London Corporation – Housing Special Projects Team (26797)

Amount requested: £423,191

Amount recommended: £390,419

Purpose of grant request: Provision of new community facilities (Garden Community Room, Community Gym, refurbished MUGA), enhanced green spaces and Community Gardening facilities to improve the health and wellbeing of Middlesex Street Estate residents.

Type of cost: Capital (99%) & revenue (1%)

Ward(s) benefitting: Portsoken

Neighbourhood Area(s) benefitting: n/a

The Applicant

The City of London's Department of Community & Children's Services Housing Department (CoL HD) five key aims are that: people of all ages live in safe communities; people of all ages can achieve their ambitions through education, training and lifelong-learning; people of all ages can live independently, play a role in their communities and exercise choice over their services; people of all ages enjoy good health and wellbeing; people of all ages feel part of, engaged with and able to shape their community. This application, to enhance and improve podium facilities on the Middlesex Street Estate (MSE), has been developed with the Middlesex Street Estate Residents Association (MSERA) and the Middlesex Street Gardening Club (MSGC) in collaboration with CoL Surveyors and CoL Police, with CoL Housing New Developments and Special Projects Team acting as lead applicant given its specialism in managing the delivery of complex infrastructure projects relating to housing stock and services.

Background and detail of proposal

MSE, in the Portsoken ward of the City of London, comprises of Petticoat Tower (23 floors) and Petticoat Square with properties encircling a landscaped podium area – an open public plaza at first floor level. The estate is home to approximately 400 residents. 159 of the flats are social housing with the remaining 67 held on long leases. The estate was built between 1965 and 1970 and shares its site with Artizan Street Library and Community Centre. As outlined in the CoL's Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2024-28, Portsoken ward has the highest level of pensioner and child poverty in the City and is amongst the top 20% of wards in the country for levels of deprivation. The CoL's most diverse ward, Portsoken is also where the youngest population is fastest growing. In addition, 40% of residents living in MSE are elderly, 30% of MSE residents report a disability and 31% of residents living in MSE are from BAME communities.

This funding proposal is connected with the Eastern Base proposal at Middlesex Street which will redevelop of parts of MSE's car parks, ground floor service yard,

and seven retail units on Gravel Lane, to provide an operational base for the CoL Police (CoLP) in the East of the City (planning reference: 23/00882/FULL). The first-floor car park at MSE has been vacant for some years following the removal of the access ramps and the basement car park has been part-used as a secure vehicle compound by the CoLPol since 2020. The introduction of the new CoLP accommodation directly below the podium requires the renewal of the waterproof membrane that sits above the existing concrete roof slab, introduction of additional insulation to improve thermal performance and reduce podium footfall noise to a structure which is over 60 years old. CoL HD New Developments and Special Projects Team is leading the application to ensure that the needs of the residents are protected and to seize an opportunity to improve the wellbeing of residents.

The podium has become a shared communal garden, with an active Community Gardening Club (MSGC), which provides a traffic free and sheltered space with well-developed planting, seating, raised planters, greenhouse, play-space for toddlers and an enclosed steel mesh ball court (the MUGA). The lifting, waterproofing and repair of the podium will provide an opportunity to not only replace the existing garden and recreation facilities but enhance and extend them. All removal, repair and replacement works will be fully funded by the CoL Surveyor's and CoL HD with the CILNF funding only specific new and additional facilities for residents to improve their health and wellbeing through reducing social isolation and increasing community cohesion.

The scheme of works has been informed by a robust programme of consultation with residents and commercial tenants of the MSE including surveys, door-knocking, community meeting and workshops to inform the detailed Statement of Community Involvement (CommComm UK, Sep 2023), 'Residents' use of MUGA' survey (Nov 2024) and monthly Community Steering Group meetings with representation from MSERA, Petticoat Square Leaseholders' Association, Chair of the CoL Community & Children's Services Committee, CoL Lead Councillor for Residents' Engagement, Senior Officers from the Department of Community & Children's Services, CoL Resident Services, City Surveyors and CoLP, Portsoken Ward Members, Construction Team, Project Managers and Community Consultants. As a result of detailed consultation the scheme was updated to include a refurbished and redesigned podium garden with community garden room, new covered space, improved seating, enhanced planting plus gardening, play and exercise equipment.

Specifically the CILNF grant will fund the expansion and enhancement of the sunken garden through the replacement of failed planters and increased diversity of planting in a transformed area of the podium which will be redeveloped to provide full access for people with a disability. At the centre of the podium, embedded in the new planting and at the heart of the community space, CILNF will provide a timber clad 'Community Garden Room' with a biodiverse planted roof and sliding bi-fold doors opening directly onto the garden as a multi-purpose meeting space suitable for 20-24 people. The room will function as a free space with heating, lighting, tea making facilities and furniture available for use by residents from 09:00 to 20:00 from Monday to Saturday and from 12:00 to 20:00 on Sunday. Management, cleaning and inspection arrangements for the space will be included in the management plan for the estate. Adjacent to the Community Garden Room will be a new canopied area with picnic-style seating providing shade and shelter from rain extending the period

the garden can be used by residents. These new facilities will become a vital meeting point and social hub for residents reducing loneliness and social isolation.

Age UK research into the risk of loneliness, which can be linked to social isolation, found that residents aged 65 years and above in Portsoken Ward are at very high risk of loneliness (Social Isolation in the City of London Report). MSE has a high number of single occupancy accommodation with 50 studio and 90 one bedroom flats on the estate. Social isolation and lack of social connection has a profound impact on individuals leading to increased loneliness, depression, anxiety, and other physical health issues, such as heart disease and the risk of early mortality. Research has also evidenced that social isolation can also contribute to cognitive decline, poor sleep quality, lower educational attainment and long-term unemployment (Campaign to End Loneliness). 69 MSE residents are in receipt of benefits including 16 pensioners unable to regularly afford to access the high-end City coffee bars nearby. The provision of community facilities at the heart of the estate will support their individual wellbeing and 'social capital' - the value gained by connections between people and the impact that has on improving lives and health on both an individual and community level. It is anticipated that 95% of residents will use or attend events in the new Community Garden Room each year.

The estate has an active gardening club (MEGC) whose members participate in planting and tending to the podium garden. MEGC currently has a small wooden greenhouse on the podium, a basic composting system and two watering points. MEGC has worked closely with the landscape designer on the overall concept of the new podium design and planting scheme which will incorporate specimen plants grown by the club on site over the last decade. In line with the CILNF Community Priority to support Gardening Clubs, the proposal seeks funding to provide MEGC with a new larger, lockable aluminium greenhouse, additional garden tools, a four-section composting system and an additional two taps and hoses to enable watering of all areas of the new layout. The MEGC will take shared responsibility for the longer-term upkeep of the planting supporting estate staff with regular garden maintenance.

The CILNF grant will fund the upgrading of the play space to provide equipment for older toddlers and pre-school children – climbing tower and ball chute - plus two carer's benches for supervising adults which will be installed alongside re-instated items of existing play equipment. CoL HD will fund the upgrading of the MUGA pitch surface and provide acoustic installation to improve resident amenity. There are 76 children aged under 16 on MSE and CILNF funds are sought specifically to expand the range of sports provision for these children and residents, based on the results of a recent residents' survey, to include fixed football goal posts, basketball nets and poles with adjustable nets that can be adapted for badminton and tennis. At the specific request of the MSERA the Eastern Base project will include provision for the fit out of the upper floor of 20 Gravel Lane (above the Estate Office) to be run as a Community Gym. Access to the gym will be between the hours of 09:00 to 20:00 from Monday to Saturday and from 12:00 to 20:00 on Sunday. Resident volunteers, through MSERA, will manage locking and unlocking the space with CoL HD responsible for regular cleaning of the gym and washroom facilities. Users of the gym will be asked to familiarise themselves with notices displayed within the premises relating to action in the event of a fire, the proper use of equipment, and

other health and safety matters such as fault reporting. CILNF funding is requested towards the purchase of gym equipment and its maintenance for three years, after which CoL HD will take responsibility. The indoor gym will be a convenient and much needed on-site facility for all residents providing opportunity for regular exercise to promote health and wellbeing with an anticipated 80% of residents visiting the gym at least once in the first year.

The new planting scheme will increase biodiversity by an estimated 30% through the careful selection of wildlife friendly planting which will include a diversity of food sources, with emphasis on nectar and pollen rich flowers, with wide seasonal availability. Biodiversity enhancements include the creation of micro habitats and refuge features including open areas of sandy substrate for ground invertebrates, vertical log piles to provide a range of dry to wet timber, bird boxes, bat boxes, bee post, invertebrate hotel, water trays and biodiverse roofs to the Community Shelter and Community Garden Room. The landscape redesign has also provided an opportunity to increase the climate change resilience of the planting scheme through the introduction of drought tolerant planting including hardy aromatic herbs and other Mediterranean basin species. To reduce water use the MSGC has committed to targeted watering via hoses rather than automated irrigation drip line, and rain water will be harvested. The redesign will result in increased foliage cover and expansion of the overall planting area by 25%.

The CILNF funded podium enhancement works are scheduled to begin at the end of March 2024 with an anticipated completion date of November 2025. The scheme of works has been fully reviewed for accessibility with recommendations having informed improvements to the final concept design including slopes provided around the edge of the raised podium area with shallow gradients and one short 1:17 ramped section with handrails to the previously difficult to access sunken garden. Other specific accessibility provisions include step-free access to the Community Garden Room and raised planting beds.

Value for Money

The contract for the main works was awarded following an FTS Open Tender process with eight bidders and two full responses. The tender evaluation criteria was weighted at 20% technical, 25% Technical Interview, 40% commercial and 15% responsible procurement with the highest ranked contractor offered the contract. The funding request has been reduced during assessment to align with the RIBA Stage 4 schedule of work and revised costings. The project also evidences high environment value through its focus on increasing biodiversity by an estimated 30% and development of a planting scheme that is climate resilient. Two biodiverse planted roofs and the invertebrate refuges will support the diversification of mini-beasts on site in turn supporting the diversification of birds. Harvesting of rainwater will reduce water usage and new planting will offer an increased level of shading and natural flood management. On-site greening will increase by around 25% of area. The project is of very high social value both through its provision of a central community space to reduce social isolation and improve community cohesion in an estate with a high percentage population of individuals living alone and through its increased provision for physical activity through play and exercise as an avenue for residents of all ages to make social connections and to improve health and wellbeing.

Financial Information

The CoL Corporation manages two funds, City Fund and City's Estate. In common with other local authorities, City Fund receives funding via grants from central government, a share of business rates income and the proceeds of the local council tax. City Fund also generates rental and interest income to help finance its activities. Financial projections for City Fund indicate a potential deficit of (£15.7m) in 2026/27 which is being addressed through reassessing commitments to major projects and reprioritisation of reserves. City Fund maintains adequate levels of both general and earmarked reserves to support its functions across the short to medium term. The CoL HD itself posted a surplus in 2023/24 and is projecting a surplus for 2024/25 of which the majority is set aside as a dedicated repairs reserve. The MSE Podium redevelopment has confirmed funding from CoL Police/CoL Surveyors and CoL Housing who will also fund the ongoing maintenance and repair of the podium and its assets. Therefore there are no concerns about the financial viability of the applicant in relation to the delivery of the grant funded project.

Year end as at 31 March	2024 Housing Actual £	2025 Housing Budget £
Income & expenditure:		
Income	16,616,000	17,734,000
Expenditure	(14,461,000)	(15,359,000)
Surplus/(deficit)	2,155,000	2,375,000
Reserves:		
Major Repairs Reserve	2,073,000	4,304,000
Total unrestricted	309,000	453,000
Total reserves	2,382,000	4,757,000
Of which: free unrestricted	309,000	453,000

Recommendation

The CILNF funded enhancement of the MSE podium garden, community gardening equipment and new play and exercise facilities seizes an opportunity to improve the wellbeing of residents by providing a community adversely affected by the impacts of external development with much needed new community infrastructure which will create lasting social impact. MSE, an estate in the City's most deprived ward, has a high percentage of individuals living alone including pensioners and care leavers at risk of social isolation with the consequent impacts on their health and wellbeing. The proposal strongly delivers on the CoL HD's aim to '*ensure that people enjoy good health & wellbeing*' through the expansion of on-site play and exercise facilities for older toddlers to adults. The CILNF funded new Community Garden Room and Shelter are essential new infrastructure around which to focus community engagement and strongly meet the CoL's Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2024-28 Priority Two by '*increasing social connection and reducing social isolation*'. The application has been driven by MSERA and based on extensive formal consultation with residents and external stakeholders meeting a further two of the CoL HD's key aims to ensure '*people of all ages feel part of, engaged with and able to shape their community*' and '*independence, involvement and choice*'. The project's thoughtful landscape design, planting scheme and ecology infrastructure will also deliver the CoL's Biodiversity Action Plan's aim to '*protect and enhance habitats and species in*

the City’ enhancing biodiversity on the podium by an estimated 30%. Significantly the proposal meets seven of the CILNF’s community priorities by ‘*preserving existing and creating more green space in the City including estate gardens and support for gardening clubs*’ with a range of new equipment and facilities to be provided for MSGC; providing ‘*sporting, exercise and health activities*’; ‘*addressing the needs of people from disadvantaged backgrounds, minoritised communities, older people, disabled people and those living in poverty*’; ‘*mitigating climate change & enhancing biodiversity & wildlife*’; providing ‘*activities and services for children, young people and families*’; ‘*making public spaces and services fully accessible for disabled people and the elderly*’; and through the partnership with MSERA delivering ‘*proposals and activities that have been co-designed and demonstrate community support*’. The proposal benefits from a strong local voice, with MSERA and MSGC spearheading this application and ensuring enduring community ownership of the project. Funding is recommended as follows:

£390,419 to provide new community facilities (Garden Community Room, Community Gym, refurbished MUGA and play space), enhanced green spaces and Community Gardening facilities to improve the health and wellbeing of Middlesex Street Estate residents.

Condition: Release of £42,973 towards gym equipment and maintenance inclusive of OH&P and prelims to be conditional upon the receipt of a finalised list of gym equipment agreed with MSERA.

Condition: Release of £35,448 towards steel grillage to support the Community Garden Room inclusive of OH&P and prelims to be conditional upon confirmation of requirement.