



IMPACT REPORT

COMMUNITY WELLBEING PROJECT



FEBRUARY 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2024
BRIDGE PARK LEISURE CENTRE, BRENT

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INTRODUCTION

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This report for the period of February 2023 to September 2024 provides a comprehensive analysis of the Community Wellbeing Project's impact on participating households. Based at Bridge Park Leisure Centre, the project had a significant impact across outcome areas and made a lasting impression on the community it serves.

The £4 a week membership provided access to a comprehensive package of support that included food, advice, and holistic wellbeing support. The project also delivered community events, cooking classes, visits from the circus, money management courses and Iftar celebrations, among other activities. It was a one-stop shop for local families to be supported.

In total, **547** households completed their 3-month membership, with **4,674** shops carried out, **6,638** lunches served, and **1,523** drop-in attendees. Partnerships were built with 23 organisations to enable us to provide the breadth of services, all under one roof.

This report focuses on our four key outcome areas. By examining data collected from 142 households, we have assessed the effectiveness of our interventions and identified areas for improvement in future iterations of the project.

Financial Resilience By the end of the membership, 26% of members reported they had disposable income of between £21-£40, which was a significant increase from just 6% at the beginning.

Health and Wellbeing Members exercised significantly more regularly, with 5% exercising 1-2 a week before the membership, rising to 27% by the end. Members also improved on all aspects of the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

Access to Other Services Members' confidence in accessing financial support rose from 4.9/10 at the beginning of the membership to 6.1/10 at the end, and knowledge of the welfare benefits system rose from 5.2/10 to 6.5/10.

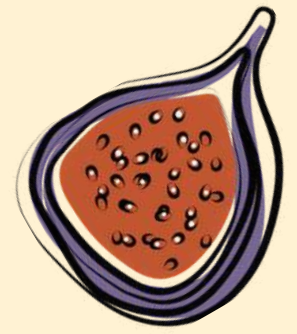
Access to Affordable Food An average household of 4 people saved £1,056 during the membership. In addition, 21% more members felt they could buy enough food for their household needs by the end of the project.

With over **37,000** total interactions across the different elements and an abundance of positive feedback from members, partners and volunteers, we know that the project had an overwhelmingly positive impact on people's finances, health and wellbeing.

Our sincere thanks to all our volunteers, staff, partners, and funders who have worked together to make sure the project delivers quality support for members.

We look forward to continuing to support the residents of Brent.

WHY DID WE SET UP THE CWP?



Food Bank

Reactive, providing emergency food to those already experiencing crisis

Stigmatised service, offering **limited choice** for religious, dietary and cultural needs

Food Parcels are a **short-term solution** and do not address the long term causes of food insecurity

Residents travel to **multiple locations** to receive different support, including food and advice

Food Banks often work in a **silo** and don't address the link between poverty and poor wellbeing.

Community Wellbeing Project

Preventative, supporting those at risk of crisis to strengthen their financial resilience

Increased **dignity** and **choice**. Members' experience mimics that of a supermarket, including payment of a small fee

Integrated welfare support enables **longer term** financial resilience

Comprehensive support **under one roof** increases engagement and removes barriers

Multiple elements that encourage members to spend time together and **build community**.



Chartwells PLC healthy eating workshop



Volunteers serving lunch in the café



Evening volunteers serving dessert



Royal Coronation themed lunch in the café



Chef Jas instructing our corporate volunteers



CWP Member doing their weekly shop



THE PROJECT

For just £4 a week, members of the Community Wellbeing Project gain access to a Community Shop, hot meals, advice services, and health and wellbeing support for 12 weeks. Unlike the Food Bank, this initiative focuses on preventative support, offering local families a comprehensive range of assistance under one roof.

Health and Wellbeing

Gym memberships for member households, alongside a range of other support, including **mental health** services, **arts and crafts**, **children's holiday programmes** and **wellbeing activities** in the space.

Grocery support

In the **Community Shop**, members can access over £25 worth of groceries, including non-perishables, fruit and vegetables, hygiene products and cleaning materials. Intended to be a top-up shop providing **financial relief** and always something different on offer.

Meals together

The **Community Café** serves breakfast, lunch and a variety of snacks throughout the day for members and their family. In the evening, the **Community Kitchen** serves a **delicious** and **nutritious** dinner, with restaurant-style service.

Advice and Support

Members attend an in-depth initial appointment with an advisor to develop a **personal development plan**. From this, members are signposted to **partner organisations** and attend follow up appointments. Support includes a varied timetable of specialised support around **welfare, finances, employment, housing, debt** and more.

£4





Volunteer Liza serving in the Community Shop



Volunteer Chris serving lunch from the Community Café



Members choosing their items in the Community Shop



Homemade burgers, chips and slaw



Volunteer Amro putting the finishing touches on dinner



Volunteer Jane ready to take orders for evening service



MONITORING & EVALUATION



Outcomes

1. Greater Financial Resilience for Members

2. Improved Mental and Physical Wellbeing

3. Improved Knowledge of and Ability to Access Local Specialist Support Services

4. Improved Access to Affordable Food and Other Essentials



CWP IN NUMBERS

547 households registered

1,995 beneficiaries of the membership including the whole household

Average household size of **4 people**

Many larger households of up to **12 people** accessing the project

3 Surplus Food and Logistics Partners

19 Advice, Welfare and Wellbeing partners

450 adult members enrolled in the gym at Bridge Park Leisure Centre

50 junior members enrolled at Bridge Park Leisure Centre

£1,056 average direct savings per household

112 tonnes of surplus food redistributed

106 community volunteers supporting different project elements

24 CWP members became volunteers

29 corporate teams supported the project for one-off volunteering days

1,789 volunteer shifts completed

6,109 hours given to the project by regular and corporate volunteers



4,674 Community shops carried out

6,638 nutritious lunches served through the Community Café

23,126 covers served at the Community Café and Kitchen

1,523 drop-in attendees with advisors and partners

469 uses of Bridge Park Leisure Centre facilities

168 children attended school holiday activity days

655 engagements with Public Health interventions

37,253 touchpoints across the different elements of the project



GREATER FINANCIAL RESILIENCE FOR MEMBERS

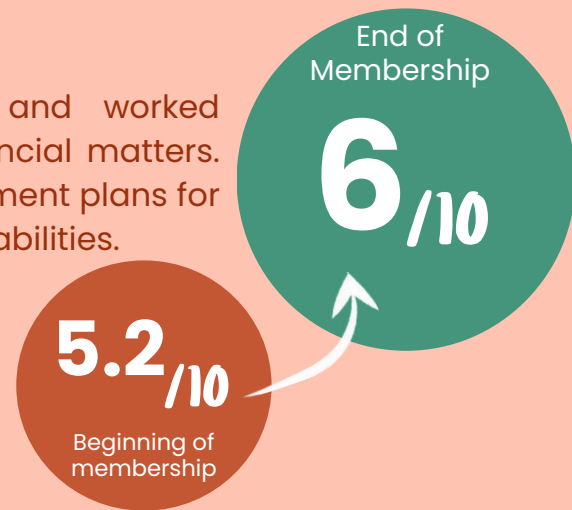
Summary

A key objective of the project was to enhance members' long term financial resilience. According to the data, the 3-month programme had a generally positive effect, with members reporting increased confidence in money management skills and higher disposable income. Nevertheless, there was no notable change in how financial pressures affected participants' overall wellbeing and relationships. This is likely because complex financial issues, like debt, are long-term problems that require more than three months to resolve.

Budgeting

Members attended financial management courses and worked collaboratively with CWP advisors on their personal financial matters. They formulated budgeting strategies and created repayment plans for council tax arrears, energy debts, and other outstanding liabilities.

Out of 10, how confident do you feel about budgeting?

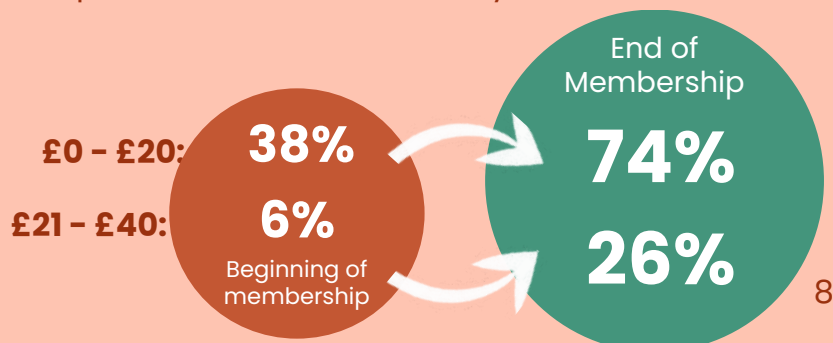


Responses show a small but consistent increase in budgeting confidence, suggesting a need to enhance access to budgeting advice. Some of our members reported budgeting workshops as a lesser priority, since they are already skilled at budgeting on a low income.

Disposable Income

Members received advice and guidance on welfare benefits and additional entitlements from advisors in the space. Additionally, obtaining food and meals for them and their families from the shop, café and kitchen helped members save money.

How much disposable income do you have left at the end of the month?





The responses revealed a notable rise in the percentage of members who had additional disposable income at the end of the month, growing from 6% to 26% with £21-40 left. Many benefit issues, debt plans, and utility support services often need more than 12 weeks to have a significant impact. These are frequently long-term problems. The overall cost of living crisis also reduces the impact of the gains made through the programme.

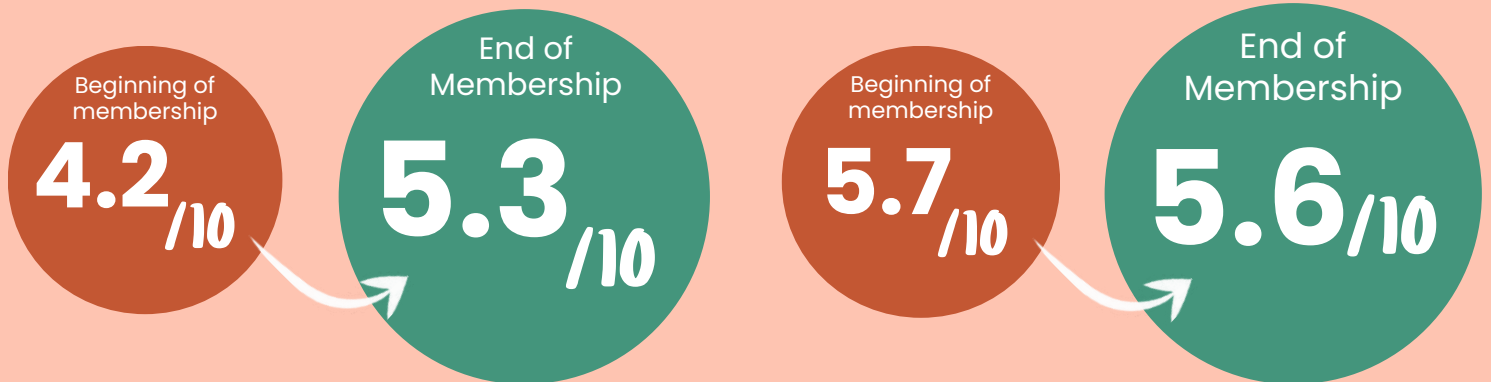
Effects of financial stress

It is clear from responses that members' *perception* of how their financial situation impacts their stress levels is still high, despite the improvements shown above. Members clearly report that their ongoing experience of financial stress negatively impacts their relationships as well as their mental and physical wellbeing. Members also reported new financial challenges arising within the 3-month membership period, even if some issues were resolved, which may help to explain why the impact of financial stress remained high.

Out of 10, how would you rate the impact of financial stress on...

- your relationships with friends and family?

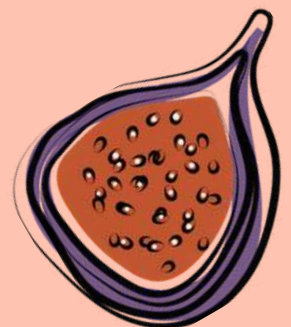
- your physical and mental health?



Conclusion

Despite improvements in budgeting skills and a rise in disposable income, the complexity of financial issues suggests that members need more than three months of support for optimal results. To enhance long-term financial stability, the data suggests that extending the membership period to six months would lead to better outcomes for residents.

“By getting food that is nutritious to feed my child without the huge cost of a supermarket shop has meant I’ve been able to make my money stretch, and I’m almost out of debt. Plus the food is fresh fruit and veg which has encouraged my son and me to try out new recipes.” - CWP Member September 2024



OUTCOME 2 IMPROVED MENTAL AND PHYSICAL WELLBEING

Summary

By providing access to a gym and support from Public Health and Brent Health Matters, we were able to offer health advice, mini health checks, and other medical interventions that would otherwise require members to visit their GP. With 655 Public Health engagements and 500 members using the gym facilities, there was notable participation among members. Comparative data shows an improvement in regularity of exercise and positive changes on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

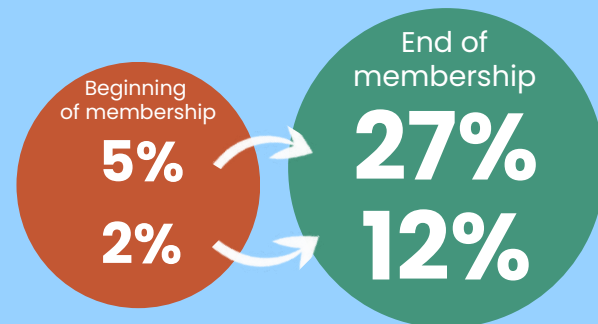
Physical Activity

The association between physical activity and improved mental health outcomes is well-established. Through a gym membership, with access to classes and a sauna and steam facilities, we can see a significant increase in regular exercise among members. Many commented that the gym being based in the same space as the rest of the programme facilitated regular use and helped members find time to attend.

How often do you undertake physical activity?

1/2 times a week:

2/3 times a week:



Health Interventions

The collaboration with Brent Public Health and Brent Health Matters facilitated a diverse array of workshops, drop-in sessions and awareness programs, covering a wide range of topics around health and wellbeing.

Brent Health Matters

58 Health Checks

BMI, Blood Pressure and Sugar Checks, Dietician, Pharmacist, Escalation to GP

NWL NHS with Public Health

2 Vaccines, 142 Health Checks

MECC, MMR/Polio Vaccine Awareness, Blood Pressure and Sugar Checks, BMI, Covid/Flu Vaccinations

Health Promotion Events

453 Attendees

Healthy Eating, Physical Activity, Signposting to Brent Services, Emotional Support



Promoting Community and Inclusion

The project provided opportunities for members to build relationships and created a community focused on sharing food. The effectiveness of the health and wellbeing interventions, as well as the community benefits such as reducing isolation and supporting new friendships, were measured using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. Survey findings indicated improvements in all statements on the scale.

Statement (rated /5)	Beginning of membership	End of membership
• I've been feeling positive	3	4
• I've been able to relax	3	4
• I've been dealing well with problems	3	4
• I've been feeling optimistic about the future	4	4
• I've had spare energy to spare	3	4
• I've been feeling confident	3	4
• I've been interested in new things	4	4

The improvements, though modest, were significant and indicate promising progress. Numerous members reported that the relationships they formed within the space have endured beyond the programme, and that the space provided them with opportunities to socialise that they had not expected but greatly valued.

Conclusion

The project was very effective at promoting physical and mental wellbeing, with 655 interactions in Public Health interventions and 500 gym memberships. The café and kitchen fostered lasting friendships and a sense of community. Longer memberships could further enhance wellbeing, and improve long-term health outcomes.

I used the gym for two months and it was really good, I enjoyed it a lot. It was a time for myself. - CWP Member, Phase 3





OUTCOME 3

IMPROVED KNOWLEDGE OF AND ABILITY TO ACCESS LOCAL SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICES

Summary

A key goal of the programme was to offer members access to a range of services in one location and to overcome the disconnect between services operating independently across the borough. Our data reveals a significant increase amongst member in both awareness of, and engagement with, services and support available throughout Brent.

Accessing other services

Members reported a noticeable increase in confidence in knowing where to access a variety of support services, including those related to finances, debt, caregiving, energy and housing. Additionally, enhanced knowledge of welfare benefits and individual entitlements was a key outcome, attributed to the close collaboration with advisors in the space.

Survey Question (rated /10)	Beginning of Membership	End of Membership
• How confident are you in knowing what financial support is available to you?	4.9	6.1
• How confident are you in accessing debt related services?	4.3	5.5
• How confident are you in accessing other services in the borough? (carers, financial, energy, housing support etc)	4.9	6.3
• Rate your knowledge of welfare benefits	5.2	6.5
• Rate your entitlement to access benefits	5.5	6.5

Collaboration Drives Success

The project's success and future expansion relies heavily on the development of its partnership network. Working with a variety of partners allows the project to access additional resources, expertise, and community outreach, enhancing its effectiveness and scalability.



Conclusion

The drop-in support from advisors allowed members to revisit issues, build relationships with advisors, and approach organisations at their own pace. While engagement and knowledge of services have significantly improved, we should aim to further increase confidence and understanding through longer memberships and more opportunities to engage with a more varied timetable of support available.



Department
for Work &
Pensions



shaw trust

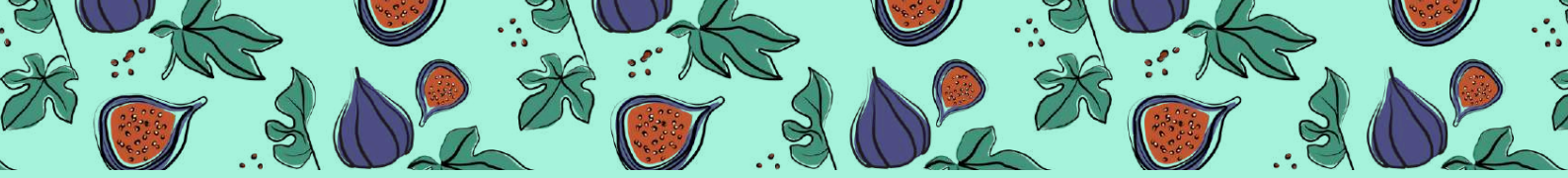


LAWSTOP



"The hub advisors helped me; I have learnt a lot of things that I didn't know about support that I didn't know existed. It is hard to know where to start on your own."

CWP Member



OUTCOME 4 IMPROVED ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE FOOD AND OTHER ESSENTIALS

Summary

In addition to long-term outcomes, the programme delivered immediate essential support, including access to groceries, hygiene products and cleaning supplies through the shop, as well as freshly prepared meals via the daytime café and evening kitchen. Together, the services available provided critical short-term financial relief, empowering members to meet household needs while ensuring dignity and choice. They also fostered a sense of community, reduced stress over shopping and cooking, and offered a chance for members to enjoy meals with family and friends in a restaurant-like setting.

Project Savings

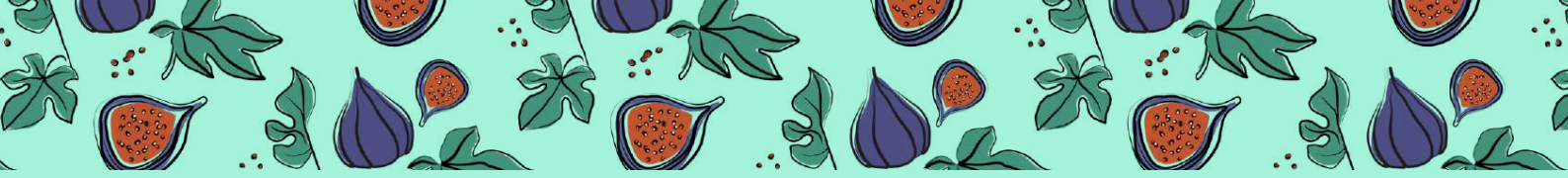
Members reported a decrease in their weekly spend on food, from an average of £131.40 to £113.50 - a saving of almost £20 a week. This saving enabled them to purchase top-up items from supermarkets, including food specific to their culture and dietary needs, as well as small, unaffordable 'luxuries' that helped diversify their food choices.

How much money do you spend on a weekly food shop?



Estimated potential CWP savings for a family of 4

Elements of the project	Savings per month
• Monthly gym membership each	£72
• Grocery shopping from the Community Shop for the family	£72
• Attending Community Café for lunch once a week	£88
• Attending Community Kitchen for dinner once a week	£120
Total saving per month	£352
Total saving during membership	£1,056



Access to Food

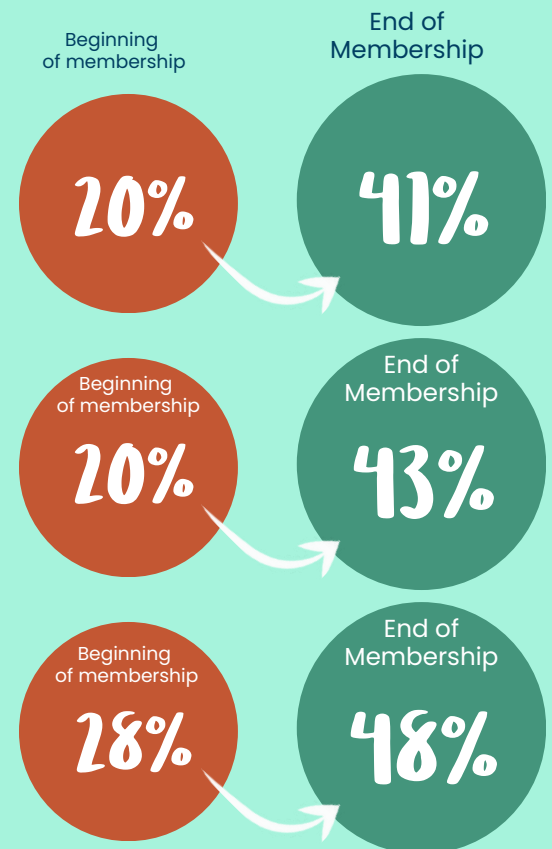
Members reported that by the end of the programme they were better able to purchase the food their family needed and wanted, and they felt more confident about budgeting for their food shopping.

“To receive so many products for only £4 a week meant that instead of using the money for those items, I could use it for other expenses that would not have been possible otherwise. For example, my son really likes the food from my home-country and thanks to the shop I was able to buy fufu and beans” – CWP Member VO



% that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”

- I can afford to buy enough food for my households’ needs
- I can afford to buy the items that I want to eat
- I feel like I can budget well for my weekly food shop



Conclusion

One of the program’s primary achievements was providing affordable food, resulting in an average monthly saving of £72 for members. Members reported a significant improvement in their ability to buy and consume the food they wanted. This financial relief and greater sense of dignity and choice illustrates how the model goes beyond traditional food bank services. When other food-related savings (access to the café and kitchen) are included, as well as free access to a gym, the potential saving for a family of 4 is estimated at over £1,000 per membership.

COMMUNITY KITCHEN

The Community Kitchen, while available to members and their families, also welcomed the wider community. As part of the Sufra network of Community Kitchens, the service offered a free, restaurant-style two or three course meal to everyone who attended - regardless of whether they were CWP members.

The evening sessions at the Community Wellbeing Project also hosted a diverse range of events, including Black History Month themed meals, sponsored commemorative dinners, celebratory Iftar gatherings, Diwali celebrations, and much more. These events not only provided nourishment but also bring people together, foster community cohesion and celebrate differences.



Final Farewell Dinner Celebration Event, September 2024



Mayor Tariq Dar supporting the evening service



Chef and volunteers after an afternoon shift in the kitchen



Diwali themed dinner service, October 2023



Sufra volunteers attending Eid dinner celebrations



Corporate volunteer group after a morning cooking with Chef



Celebratory Iftar event at Community Kitchen



Volunteers prepping with surplus produce

"We love this place because some of us can't afford gas or electricity. Coming here helps us pay"

"The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, with friendly people. It's nice to meet friends and chat."

"I'm so happy I discovered this Community Kitchen. It has a friendly atmosphere, and the generous servings of food and refreshments are much appreciated. Thank you to Sufra and all the staff for your hospitality."

"It's a nice, warm, dry, and comfortable place to relax on cold, wet days."

"We are very grateful. Thank you to the cook and all the staff who provide and cater these wonderful dishes with politeness and in such a positive atmosphere."

"This place is very important for mental health. The coordinator is always smiling and welcoming, and the chef is excellent."

"Thank you for all the amazing food and the warm welcome every time we visit"

"The food is very lovely, and we wish it was available every day, as life can be lonely and expensive".

"The service here is excellent. The staff are friendly, caring, and dedicated. The food is very good, including the tea, snacks, and meals. I've made many good friends here, and I look forward to making more. I hope these services continue."

"We meet others, which is good for our mental health and helps combat loneliness."

"Thank you for bringing us together and letting us share a sense of community, spirit, and friendship."

"We are very grateful to the volunteers for everything they do."

Guest feedback collected from Community Kitchen attendees on our final celebration evening, September 2024

AMARA'S STORY

Amara first heard about the project from a neighbour on St. Raphael's Estate. Struggling with the **rising cost of living**, she felt overwhelmed by her outgoings, especially her high electricity bill. Limited by her financial situation, Amara **couldn't afford to socialise**, which left her feeling increasingly isolated.

When Amara joined the project, her life began to shift. She started attending on both Mondays and Tuesdays, even on days when she didn't need to shop. Instead, she used her visits to **meet with advisors for follow-up appointments** or to spend time in the café, where she formed meaningful friendships with others who understood her challenges.

"We met through the café and exchanged numbers. Now we keep in touch, we tell each other's to come and meet in the café for lunch."

Through the project, Amara participated in **money management workshops** and worked closely with advisors to navigate her financial challenges and prepare critical documents for the Home Office. These efforts have brought both financial relief and supported her immigration case. Amara's worries about her energy bills have eased, and she feels more capable of managing her finances.

"I'm still struggling a bit now with the cost of living, but things overall are better. It releases the stress when you chat with your friends."

Beyond the financial benefits, Amara has experienced **significant personal growth**. Her confidence has increased, and she feels more connected to her community. Amara's newfound confidence has also opened doors to new opportunities. She recently joined St. Raphael's Community Garden, combining her passion for gardening with the chance to expand her social network.



PROJECT LEARNINGS

✓ Length of Membership

Data suggests that a longer membership would lead to more sustained improvements in members' lives. Longer term access to advisors and partners would help make changes to members' situations that will outlive the short-term financial relief of the shop and café, creating long-term financial resilience.

✓ The Value of a Dignified Community Space

Member feedback highlights the significant impact of the social aspect of the project. Many formed unexpected friendships, enjoyed eating tasty meals in a community setting, and maintained these relationships beyond the membership period.

✓ Employment Support

Many members face challenges in securing suitable employment due to childcare, caregiving, and other responsibilities. While some progress has been made with employment partners, there is potential to offer additional support in this area.

✓ Health and Wellbeing

Despite notable improvements in both members' finances and various health and wellbeing outcomes, members still reported high levels of stress - largely due to financial pressures. Aside from longer term financial support, incorporating additional mental health support could significantly enhance members' wellbeing.

✓ Advisor Capacity

There was a lot of pressure on advisors, as many members presented complex cases. Integrating volunteer support in the advice service to triage and signpost members would relieve some of these pressure and create additional capacity for advisors to focus on more complex cases.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

We have developed a toolkit called '**Beyond the Foodbank**' that outlines the steps we took with partners to set up the Community Wellbeing Project. The toolkit acts as a 'how-to guide' and is complete with a list of resources and project templates to share learnings. We hope this toolkit provides useful insight to other food aid organisations looking to transition beyond the traditional food bank model too!

bit.ly/BeyondTheFoodbank



CONCLUSION

In a borough where 1 in every 3 people are experiencing poverty, it is evident that there is a real need for this project. While traditional food banks across Brent and the country focus on emergency food aid, this often comes too late and fails to address the root causes of hardship. The Community Wellbeing Project takes a preventative, holistic approach to support Brent residents in achieving lasting change.

Our data shows clear improvements for members in financial resilience, mental and physical wellbeing, access to local services, and availability of affordable food. With over 37,000 interactions across the different services, and an abundance of positive feedback from members, partners, and volunteers, we know that the project is having a positive impact in Stonebridge.

The project's impact to date has only been possible thanks to the large numbers of volunteers who have dedicated 6109 hours of their time to keeping it running. The integrated way in which the project works with the Local Authority and 22 other partner organisations from across the borough is unique, and hopefully paves a way for future integrated working and more collaboration.

We hope to use our learnings to date to support with expansion of the model to support our community in Brent, taking into account the need for a longer membership in order to make a sustained impact on families, and further building our network of partners who can support us in this work.

This project helps us move the national conversation away from traditional food parcel distribution, and towards a more integrated and holistic approach. Our goal is to ensure that local communities have the resilience, support, and capacity they need to improve their finances, build relationships in a dignified setting, and change their lives for the better.



ABOUT SUFRA

Sufra is a charity in North West London that prevents hunger, fights poverty and builds community.

With the help of our volunteers and partners, we coordinate a network of food banks, kitchens, a community shop and café. These act as a gateway for guests to access more holistic support – including welfare advice, asylum support and our award-winning community garden.

We aim to work with our guests to find solutions to their challenges together, whilst campaigning against the causes of hunger and poverty.



Community Garden

St. Raphael's Edible Garden offers educational courses, children's activities and a pay-as-you-feel garden market.



OpenARMs / Asylum Seeker, Refugee & Migrant Support

We provide immigration support, ESOL classes and social inclusion activities.



Food Aid



We provide emergency parcels of food and toiletries through our food bank.

Advice Service

We run Advice Sessions twice a week to support guests with debt, benefits, housing and bills.



Community Wellbeing Project

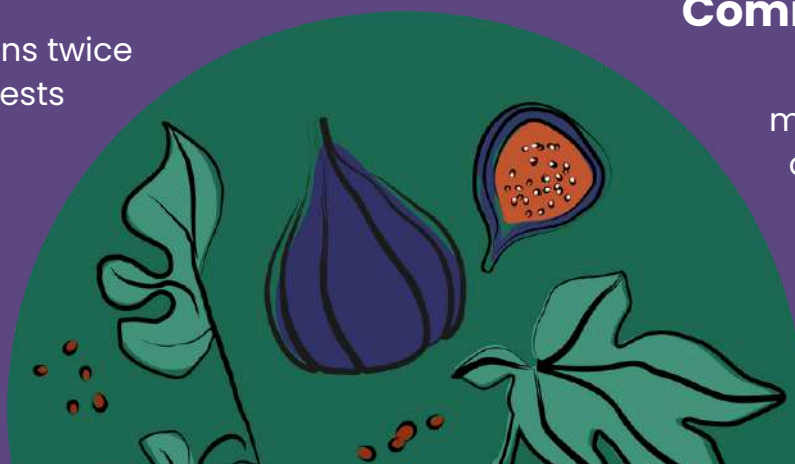
We operate a Community Shop, Café, Kitchen and Advice Services from Bridge Park Leisure Centre twice a week.



What We Do

Community Kitchen

We serve free, warm meals to anyone in the community, 5 times a week.





www.sufra-nwlondon.org.uk
admin@sufra-nwlondon.org.uk
Registered Charity No. 1151911

COMMUNITY WELLBEING PROJECT

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FEBRUARY 2023 - SEPTEMBER 2024