Community Food Projects Small Grants Emergency Fund

Lewisham Local launched the Emergency Food for Community Food Projects Fund in April 2022 to support projects impacted by the reduction of food provided at the Surplus Food Hubs, food price increases, and the rise in demand for food aid due to the rising cost of living. There was £13,700 currently available for distribution.



Lewisham Local worked in partnership with Lewisham Foodbank who generously donated £10,000 to support Lewisham's wider network of projects who provide free and low-cost food for Lewisham's residents who have been impacted by the Hub's closure on March 31st 2022. Lewisham Local provided the additional match funding thanks to funding from Lewisham Council's Hardship Fund.

The grant could be spent on:

- Purchasing fresh or ambient food supplies, including cultural foods reflecting the diverse ethnic make-up of the borough to support community food banks, social pantries and projects providing free meals
- Purchasing fridges & freezers or increasing storage capacity
- Transportation costs

The criteria to apply was:

- Funds must be to support Lewisham residents
- This fund is targeted at projects who collected food from the Surplus Food Hubs at the Green Man and Ewart Community Hall at the time of its closure
- For existing projects currently in operation
- Organisations must have public liability insurance and an organisational bank account
- Organisations and groups must have a safeguarding policy
- Funds must be spent within six months of receipt

Who could apply?

- Open to registered charities and constituted groups based in Lewisham
- Projects who collected food from the Surplus Food Hubs coordinated by GCDA at the Green Man and Ewart Community Hall at the time of its closure

Programme Impact

Lewisham Local funded 19 community food projects in total through this programme.

- 8 food banks
- 2 community meals
- 5 social supermarkets
- 4 food giving groups (providing food, food delivery or parcels)

Community Food Projects funded

AFRIL – based in Lee but cover all of Lewisham

Catford Fridge – based in Catford

Catford Soup Kitchen – based in Catford

Downham Gleaning Pantry – based in Downham

Evelyn Community Store- based in Evelyn

Feed the Hill- Based in New Cross Gate

Glory Days Community Group– based in Catford

Grove Park Emergency Food Project– based in Grove Park

Legendary Community Club – based in Downham and Forest Hill

LewCAS- based in Lewisham Centre , supports refugee and asylum seekers

Lewington Food Project – Silwood Estate, Evelyn

LWCC Food Service – based in Honor Oak

Rehoboth Community Outreach Club – basked in Sydneham

RMUK Wellbeing Project – based in Lee covering whole of Lewisham

Sydenham Community Supermarket – based in Sydenham

We Care Food Bank– based in Deptford/Brockley

World of Hope – Based in Greenwich, covers Lewisham migrant communities

Young Lewisham Project -based in Catford

The funding supported over 5000 individuals with food from the 19 projects.

How the money was spent by Food Projects

Below are some examples of how the funds were spent by different projects:



Catford Fridge - used the funds to buy weekly additional bulk fresh produce from a local supplier, helping them to achieve their ongoing goal of assisting people in our community who are struggling with food insecurity.

Catford Soup Kitchen – spent the money on ambient foods and toiletries. It has given the project the ability to provide the users of the project with ambient food and toiletries which have been essential for the project.



Rehoboth Community Outreach - prepare, cook and serve an estimated 150 - 200 free hot meals Mondays 11am - 2pm in the local community of Hazel Grove/ Allwood Close SE26 4JP from the Ray Champion Meeting Room where we are located. They were able to improve their services to ensure they are catering to everyone needs that access their services. The food they prepare and serve are now diverse, which now includes halal, Caribbean, African and Asian food and ingredients.

Sydenham Community Supermarket – they were able to purchase various foods via supermarkets (due to delivery) on a weekly basis until the funding finished. This took roughly 5-6 weeks, sometimes topping up payment out of their budget. The purchase of this food was very popular with the supermarket members and has meant that they have been able to continue to make sure that they can make at least 4-5 meals per week for their families from the foods available.

Sydenham Community Supermarket changed what they purchased because of the funding to provide more cultural food options. *"We now have roughly 50-70 people attending our supermarket on a weekly basis due in part to the variety of foods that we are able to offer and the fact that we can offer various cultural and religious foods. Because of the funding and the popularity of the foods purchased we have decided to keep some of the items as regular items and are rotating some items, which comes our of our budget/membership fees"*

Young Lewisham Project -used the funds to supplement the food costs for their weekly Grub Club.

"The Grub club is a very important part of our day. This time is used to have some one to one time with young people. Teach young people how to cook and let them experiment with spices and food. They are also involved in the planning of the menu for the week. Young people also gain an OCN accreditation. This is an ongoing project and is very successful."



Feed The Hill - spent the funding on purchasing fresh and ambient food supplies, including cultural foods, to supplement the surplus food they receive from The Felix Project. It has allowed them to provide the most vulnerable local residents with reliable weekly supplies of balanced, nutritious food including fresh fruit, vegetables, dairy, bread, meat/fish, eggs, hygiene products etc. Therefore, it has met the needs of the people who access their service, and improved the service they offer.

LWCC Food Service - The provision of cultural foods was greatly received by the individuals that access their food service. They provided foods that their clients from ethnic minority groups would have foods that are a usual part of their diet. Clients were able to have nutritional meals that included foods that would usually form part of their diet but cannot afford to purchase.

Downham Gleaning Pantry - used this grant to purchase food in bulk for the families that use the gleaning pantry, products included meat, tins, pasta and rice and cleaning products and sanitary products.

"This grant has ensured we had enough food and essential items to cater for all families who use our service, before this grant was awarded we was struggling to obtain enough food to cater for all families, this ensured we were able to make sure everyone was fed."

Glory Days - Handed out food parcels to over 50 people including vulnerable, unemployed and pensioners. The project was successful with the back-up of surplus from the supermarkets we were able to offer families a decent amount of food. People wanted more culture food, but due to the expense was only able to supply a limited amount.

"This was an enormous help for struggling and low-income families within the borough. Families with children were seen as a priority in order to feed and educate the next generation of Learners."



RMUK Food and Wellbeing - The fund contributed directly towards cultural food distribution; provision of culturally relevant nutritional guidance, and indirectly towards coffee mornings, walking groups; creative activities, helping address social isolation and promote physical /mental well-being. Maintaining this vital cultural heritage link is essential as it allowed RMUK to successfully maintain a trusted link between communities and mainstream services/support.

"Service users commented that they could leave their worries at home when they know that a delivery is on the way."

There was a reduction in cultural disconnect, and service users were clearly enjoying connections made through receiving cultural foods.

Service user commented that : *"It's always great to talk and have others who can support and understand how you are feeling, especially in these times when we have been isolating and want to re-engage with our food".*

Eveyln Community Store - The money awarded enabled the store to get cultural vegetables and fresh fruit delivered by The Bear Church for six weeks. The grant enabled them to obtain the more expensive vegetables such as yam, plantain, okra, park choy, fresh crispy lettuce, tomatoes and , hot peppers. They had deliveries of fresh fruit so members could have every fruit instead of choosing between one or another. The deliveries we received from the bear church enabled our members to have some of everything we had to offer.

"Members appreciate the fact that on a Friday it's fresh produce and they tell other members how to cook it and what you can do with it, this has made conversations happen within the members group

and a WhatsApp recipe group has emerged whereupon people take pictures of what they have made with the produce. Friendships have blossomed and enabled the community to integrate."

Legendary Community Club - were able to continue to purchase fresh and ambient stock for their users.

"Our users prefer fresh stock and we can deliver some nutritious elements for them, so we try and include a variety of fresh each week."

Grove Park Emergency Project

"The funding has enabled us to sustain and make progress with new stakeholders such as Olio contribute Food on a regular basis."

"Without the support and input from Lewisham Local we would not have been able to have sustained the project."

We Care Food Bank

We Care Food Bank is a community hub & food bank for emergency food access. They used the grant to buy gluten-free & dairy free options, halal and food that reflects the health needs and faith issues of their wide membership. They found that Vegan and other food that reflects dietary and health concerns of their members is the fastest growing demand and yet it's the highest in cost. They have around 200 on their membership with dietary requirements.

"We ensured that more of the users of the We Care Community Hub could access more food and drink that were appropriate for their special dietary needs. We also ensured that four elderly and disabled women could have the incontinence pads they needed to make their lives a little easier."

LewCAS

LewCAS food bank specifically supports refugees and asylum seekers. They used the grant to purchase fresh cultural foods to support their African and Caribbean members. They were able to use a local supplier from Lewisham Market. The grant helped the group consider the cultural preferences of different members and how this changed over time.

"It made it look at our client base analytically."

Action For Refugees Lewisham (AFRIL)

AFRIL used the grant to purchase a mixture of ambient food for food parcels, supermarket vouchers and seeds to increase food grown for the project. Introducing supermarket vouchers was a new approach for the organisation due to respond to external circumstances. There were shortages in food supplies, with several supermarkets failing to deliver 'loss leader' item orders to foodbanks. This was replicated across the country. Donations decreased while the price of food bags increased significantly. They worked creatively with partners at St Peter's Church, and started to combine fresh food and food vouchers for supermarkets that stocked culturally appropriate food. They also significantly increased food growing, with member volunteers, so that AFRIL's Allotment of Refuge was a source of food for the food bank.

"This grant has allowed us to continue to provide good quality and healthy (fresh) foods to our foodbank members, reintroducing culturally appropriate food and stock up on core ambient staples to supplement donations. We consider the project successful as despite a decrease in donations we continued our level of support and provided 476 food parcels to up to 40 families per week."

One of the foodbank users said *'This has been helpful to me and my child, we get lots of food variety and whenever we need support. They are friendly in manner and make me feel safe."*

Key learning and outcomes from the programme

All the projects reported that the grant made a difference in the following areas:



- Generating volunteering roles
- Generating asset-sharing of resources and skills across the VCS community
- Generating new connections between stakeholders in the VCS community
- Increased sense of place
- The grant helped the organisation become resourceful and resilient
- **100% of projects** said that the grant benefitted the health and wellbeing of the people who access their service
- **100% of projects** said that the grant improved access to and availability of health/community services and facilities
- **100% of projects** said that the grant helped to alleviate poverty

Several groups reported adapting to providing more cultural foods as a result of the funding such as Sydenham Community Supermarket. Groups like AFRIL were able to test a new approach to food support through providing supermarket vouchers as opposed to parcels when issues in the supply chain impacted their current model. *"We expected the planned temporary move to food vouchers would not be well received by members. However, following consultation and conversation they have told us that they prefer them and would like them to continue (alongside the fresh food) because it gives them agency and control to choose the foods that are most culturally appropriate and relevant to them, and enables them to budget somewhat." AFRIL Foodbank*

Some groups commented that the grant provided some stability during a turbulent time when they did not know from one week to the next what food would be available, causing anxiety amongst staff and volunteers.

Others commented on the difference it made being able to offer a choice of foods. *'Being able to purchase a variety of products means we was able to give our customers choice which in turn helps them to feel more at ease and less like a charity case when visiting our pantry. It helps to keep families dignity.' (Downham Gleaning Pantry).* We Care said, *"Most overwhelmingly we learned how much the demand for more specialist (and therefore more expensive) food, drink, and hygiene essentials is increasing, and that we must think carefully about how we can continue to fund their provision."*

The funding encouraged projects to source from local suppliers in addition to the food they received from surplus food providers like The Felix Project.

'We were happy that we could buy from a small local supplier and will always aim to support local businesses in our community.' Catford Fridge ltd.

The funding has also indirectly facilitated new connections and increased confidence in cooking new foods.

'The conversations that have come out of different ways to present and cook the produce has led to members getting to know each other. The WhatsApp recipe group has brought together people who probably would not normally speak to each other. It has also given people confidence to show how and what they cook.'– Eveyln Community Store

Grove Park Emergency Food Project reflected that they now need to work with partners and clarify their vision to sustain and develop their work.

Ongoing Needs and Next Steps

While the funding was welcomed by all projects, the support it provided was time limited. The cost-of-living crisis, which has pushed up food prices for individuals and projects themselves is having a considerable impact on groups.

'We have seen that the need for food projects has increased as more people are experiencing food poverty despite being in full-time employment.' Catford Soup Kitchen

Several groups commented that they would like to find out about more funding opportunities and resources and many commented that more funding was needed to sustain the purchasing of ambient stock and fresh, particularly cultural foods.

Lewisham Local continues to identify and share funding opportunities with community food projects through Good Food Lewisham and the Lewisham Local newsletters. There is also fundraising support available through the Fundraising Development Manager including Friday Fundraising Club. Lewisham Local is working hard to identify future funding opportunities to continue to support and sustain Lewisham's network of Community Food Projects and is currently working with Lewisham Public Health to launch a Food Justice Community Grants Fund in February 2023.

Lewisham Local will look at how to address other needs mentioned such as training for volunteers and identifying reliable suppliers of ambient stock through the network.

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Lewisham Local would like to thank all the projects who participated and worked hard to deliver this programme and to those who shared feedback with us who are continuing to work tirelessly to provide vital food and support to Lewisham's communities.

Lewisham Local would like to thank Lewisham Foodbank and Lewisham Council for providing the funding to run this programme.