

## COMMUNITY

### Royal Borough of Greenwich

## Working together to make a difference – Food for thought

Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency (GCDA), is a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee. It was established in 1982 as a social enterprise support organisation serving the diverse communities of Royal Greenwich. Its work is focussed on a community needs approach using participatory appraisal techniques to encourage local action to meet the needs of local communities.



As a result of a community needs assessment it was identified that there was a need for local food initiatives which addressed the requirement for improved access to fresh fruit and vegetables and healthier diets. Consequently, working in collaboration with and commissioned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich (RBG), GCDA has delivered numerous community support projects within Royal Greenwich.

The work carried out by GCDA is broad and far-reaching, and includes the following activities:

1. **Community cookery clubs;** 5-week clubs open to the whole community, providing people with the opportunity to learn new skills and build confidence to make small changes that can have a big impact on health. Participants can also progress to train as cookery club tutors themselves. The clubs run in various community settings throughout the year.
2. **Made in Greenwich** – A shop that was opened in the heart of Greenwich town centre in September 2019. It stocks locally made gifts and products from 85 artists, makers and food entrepreneurs within Royal Greenwich.
3. **Royal Arsenal Farmers Market and Kidbrooke markets** – since GCDA took over the running of the Arsenal Farmer's market, it has built a real community hub for local residents and traders, with excellent feedback from both. Through these activities, it provides trading opportunities to the participants from their business start-up courses.
4. **Business & Enterprise Training & Support** - GCDA has supported the start-up of over 200 businesses including cafes, catering businesses, designer makers, events and administrative businesses, yoga and beauty businesses. To help residents who want to run their own food or any other business but need help in getting started, support is on-hand through the Food Business Start-Up Training. Clients can learn about the practical aspects that are crucial for starting a business. GCDA also offers a suite of training to support new businesses including website building, social media, financial management, market research, food safety systems and more.

5. **Food growing and horticultural training;** GCDA has helped establish 40+ sites and has delivered courses in schools, care homes, prisons, housing estates, parks and community groups. They currently provide ongoing support to 5 sites across the borough which has helped build community cohesion and confidence amongst local residents.
6. **Greenwich Kitchen;** located in Greenwich, the centre offers sessional kitchen use to caterers that may not have access to suitable workspace or equipment
7. **Training;** GCDA offers a wide range of training through the Adult and Community Learning contract with RBG. Courses include businesses courses mentioned above, but also a range of cooking skills, horticultural and sewing skills courses.
8. **Good Food Networks;** GCDA runs 3 food partnerships - Good Food in Greenwich, Lewisham and Bexley, bringing together innovative and inspiring food projects, businesses, schools, children's centres, third sector organisations, and council departments to work together to make food systems healthier, fairer and more sustainable. GCDA has been successful in achieving the Sustainable Food Places bronze awards for Greenwich.
9. **Food Business Network;** GCDA also runs a network specifically for food businesses - some already established and others just starting out. The network helps them connect, share experiences, and hear about the latest challenges faced by businesses operating within the borough.
10. **Community Centres –** Woolwich Common Community Centre has been managed by GCDA for the last six years. In this time user numbers have increased and through this constant community engagement it gives GCDA a real understanding of local community needs



As part of the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic, GCDA (working in partnership with RBG, Charlton Athletic Community Trust and a host of other local organisations), quickly mobilised to develop a structure of food support for vulnerable residents, regardless of their ability to pay, and recognising the broad spectrum of vulnerabilities that may impact one's ability to access nutritious food.

The support programme was delivered in record time, due to the excellent relationships already existing in Greenwich between the local authority, community and voluntary sector organisations, and food businesses and enterprises committed to providing healthy, equitable and sustainably produced food. While financial resource is a crucial factor in a successful emergency response, Greenwich proved that mutually supportive relationships and a culture of collaboration are key ingredients in the resilience of a local food system.

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