



POVERTY



London Borough of Brent Council

Community Wellbeing Project

A collaboration between Brent Council, delivery partners Sufra NW London and local organisations, aiming to tackle food poverty, build resilience within local communities and reduce long term dependency on support services.

Brent is one of the most diverse areas in the country: it was the first local authority in the UK to have a majority black, Asian and minority ethnic population and is home to speakers of 149 different languages. Levels of poverty in the borough are high, lending to our residents being one of the worst impacted during the Covid-19 pandemic and harshly affected by effects of the cost of living crisis.

To address this issue, easing effects of the cost of living crisis became a strategic priority for Brent Council with an aim to provide more holistic support to residents, tailored to complex needs and co-designed with local stakeholders and co-produced with key partners. Brent Council recently became a Right to Food borough, paving a unique opportunity for alternative models of support for residents with complex needs.

The Community Wellbeing Project emerged through a cross-council and system wide Outcomes Based Review (OBR) conducted by Brent Council. The process spanned across four phases: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver, and used comprehensive community engagement and research methodologies to gather new perspectives from a range of stakeholders, ensuring the Brent response is tailored around local needs. A successful 'Visioning' event was hosted at Brent Council in September 2022, bringing together over 80 partners, community organisations and residents to collaborate in generating ideas.

The review identified three priority ideas for testing, one being a Community Shop and Kitchen model, later named The Community Wellbeing Project. At the heart of the model is the importance of building resilient communities, tackling social isolation and an aim to prevent residents with complex needs from falling into crisis. The model is based on a range of interventions in a warm, community space and includes access to nutritious food in a way that enhances dignity, reduces stigma and provides more autonomy to those in need.



Visioning Day

The Community Wellbeing Project pilot began in February 2023 and will be trialled over a 6-month period, with capacity to support up to 200 residents throughout the trial. The pilot is a collaboration with delivery partners Sufra NW London, a local charity playing a crucial role in addressing the causes and consequences of poverty in the borough through its services, coordination of the Brent Food Aid Network and by working with Brent Council as part of a VCS engagement group.

The Community Wellbeing Project is open two days a week, on Mondays and Tuesdays, in Stonebridge and operates on a membership basis. A £3.50 per week membership fee gives members, and their families, access to a host of support, including:

- A weekly food shop worth approximately £25
- Free lunch from the Community Café and a sit-down evening meal at the Community Kitchen, also open for free use and benefit by the wider community.
- Access to 1-2-1 sessions with an advisor and specialist welfare advice, workshops and health and wellbeing support, including gym access.

Over 20 partners will participate in delivering specialist support to members of the programme, ranging from borough-level groups to national advice and support organisations. The pilot will continue into Summer 2023. Understanding demand and evaluating success of the pilot will make the case for expanding operations across the borough, tailored to specific ward-level needs. Success will be measured against indicators focused on improved resilience, mental and physical wellbeing, access to affordable food and improved knowledge of, and access to local services.

Other pilots emerging from the Outcomes Based Review include:

- A Crisis Response Fund: a partnership with 3 voluntary sector partners to provide rapid financial aid of up to £200 for residents facing emergencies.
- An Upskilling Frontline Staff pilot: delivering a series of training sessions to council and partner frontline staff on topics such as benefits and grants, homelessness and spotting the signs for early prevention. The second phase of the programme will develop increased debt advisory capacity within Brent Council and partner organisations.

The Community Wellbeing Project model along with other financial support and advice mechanisms for residents, like our Resident Support Fund and Brent Hubs, are crucial in effectively responding to the different needs of local communities, and support priorities for our draft Moving Brent Forward Together [Borough Plan for 2023-2027](#).

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