



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

POVERTY



London Borough of Hackney

Working collaboratively to support residents in financial crisis

Developing our collaborative approach

Tackling poverty has been a priority since 2018, alongside shaping a more inclusive economy. Before the pandemic, we were already concerned about the ways that the benefits system, housing costs and low wages had driven up levels of poverty and specifically in-work poverty. Despite visible affluence, we estimate that a third of Hackney households and half of children are in poverty, after housing costs, and that groups that experience structural inequality are more likely to be in poverty, By 2020 we were developing a more co-ordinated approach to tackling poverty. During the pandemic we built on this approach, recognising, unfortunately, that we expected people to be in a worse financial position coming out of the pandemic and we would need to ensure support was still in place. Collaboration continues to be at the heart of this approach.



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Framing the issues the right way

Hackney adopted a Poverty Reduction Framework in March 2022. The causes and effects of poverty are varied and complex. No single service or organisation can tackle the scale of the challenge or reach the diversity of people struggling.

The framework helps balance these different considerations. It identifies the importance of early years and advocates for an early help approach for all ages. It sets out how the Council will work with partners to improve the crisis support and makes the connection between crisis support and early help, outlining the importance of learning for frontline workers. The external drivers of poverty are highlighted and we set out what the Council is doing to intervene, whilst being honest about the limitations.

The rest of this case study focuses on collaborative approaches to delivering crisis support, that still seeks to develop more preventative ways of working.



Woodberry Aid - community shop

Community leadership

The framework is steered by a task group of four Cabinet Members who between them cover equality, health and social care, financial support and early years. They provide leadership and insight into the practical difference this work is making.

Social value

The Money Hub team within the Council creates a single point of access for emergency funding. Residents in financial distress now only have to fill out one form, instead of four and Money Hub also uses data proactively to contact people we know are in financial difficulty. When offering financial support, we also look for opportunities to maximise income and



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encourage benefit take up. The Money Hub's outreach workers collaborate with community partners and share their resources, so that they have a wider value and impact.

Social partnerships

Community partners are better able to reach the diversity of residents than the Council. By investing in them, we are also building community wealth. We have mapped organisations large and small and created open ways to bring people together to co-ordinate and work together. We route some of the funding we receive from central government (for example the Household Support Fund) to community partners to make sure this resource reaches those that need it.

Enterprise and social economy

We have worked with community partners to develop more sustainable ways to support residents through community shops. Together we have invested in the infrastructure needed to manage food surplus so it can be centrally stored and distributed to a wide range of partners. We are exploring how we can better tackle food poverty in schools, looking at ways we might offer healthier food that costs less, through different business models and collaboration with community organisations.

Radical innovation

We bring health partners together with community partners and council services to join up support in a way that has never been done before. Since February 2023, health and care partners have been able to make fast referrals for financial support, so we ensure that funding like the Household Support Fund gets to residents who need it, without going through more hoops. This builds reach that can help us offer more preventative support to those in need.

Engagement and co-production

We are developing hyper local partnerships, supported by two "system convenors." This has aided the mobilisation and animation of warm spaces and the set up of a new network of 20 organisations that have been funded because they have good reach into communities. We are then able to plug more support into these areas - for example, social prescribers and members of the Money Hub team and employment support. This also creates connections between Council led services, like children and family hubs and grassroots support.

Learning and walking the talk

We are equipping frontline staff to better support residents. Key work to date includes regular partnership-wide communications describing what help is available and a fortnightly 'tools for front line practitioners' session that is open to all people working in City and Hackney to support residents.

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