



ISLINGTON FOOD PARTNERSHIP

Progress Report 2020 and 2021





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Introduction

The Camden and Islington Food Poverty needs assessment estimated that in 2018, over 19,000 people in Islington experienced moderate or high levels of food insecurity.¹

Food poverty, also known as food insecurity, refers to the experience of not being able to access enough, nutritious food or feeling uncertain about being able to do so.² The causes of food poverty are complex and interrelated. These causes can include: low income, high rent, high costs of living, issues accessing benefits, domestic abuse, debt, and immigration conditions such as No Recourse to Public Funds.³ Food poverty highlights inequality within our society and disproportionately affects certain population groups, including households with a disabled person, people experiencing ill-health, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups, people who are homeless, and families with young children.⁴

Insufficient access to food can lead to the adoption of risk-averse food purchasing habits, where, in the face of having little to spend, households prioritise purchasing foods that will not go to waste and that are most filling. Often this means a reliance on cheap foods that are nutrient-poor but calorie-rich.⁵

Food poverty can lead to hunger, fatigue, malnutrition and health issues, as well as dental caries in children. Needing to adhere to strict

budgeting or experiencing uncertainty around accessing food can be highly stressful, require a great deal of mental energy and be detrimental to a person's sense of social inclusion, comfort and everyday joy.⁶ Poor nutritional quality in diets is also a known risk factor for cancer, heart disease and diabetes.⁷

Recognising that effective collaboration was needed to tackle such an important and wide-reaching issue, local organisations, community groups and public sector professionals came together to form the Islington Food Poverty Alliance in January 2019.

Although already working to Islington's 2010 Borough Food Strategy, the IFPA was formed to bring specific focus to addressing food poverty. As well as the wider team of members, our partnership is managed by a coordinating group, and chaired by Manor Gardens Welfare Trust.

The Food Poverty Action Plan

Shortly after forming, we published our **Food Poverty Action Plan 2019-2022**. This action plan outlines a strategy for ensuring that every Islington resident eats at least one nutritious meal each day by 2022.

The plan calls for a well-rounded approach in order to address the root causes of food poverty. We know that common barriers to seeking help

¹ <https://opendata.camden.gov.uk/Health/Food-Poverty-Needs-Assessment-2018/a6rj-bnun>

² [What is food poverty? | Sustain \(sustainweb.org\)](https://www.sustainweb.org/what-is-food-poverty/)

³ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1491/149105.htm>

⁴ [https://www.sustainweb.org/foodpoverty/whatisfoodpoverty/;](https://www.sustainweb.org/foodpoverty/whatisfoodpoverty/)

⁵ <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1491/149105.htm#footnote-174-backlink>

⁶ <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-food-insecurity-2020-report-v5.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/84467/err-235.pdf>

with food include feelings of stigma or shame, a lack of knowledge about services and restrictive service criteria.⁸ Removing these barriers was centred as a key aspect of the Food Poverty Action Plan, as well as a strong awareness of the key demographic groups who are disproportionately affected by food poverty.

The Covid-19 pandemic

During the past two years, the Covid-19 pandemic presented many new and difficult challenges for members of the IFP and for Islington residents.

There was a dramatic change in the food landscape across the UK. The Food Foundation found that food insecurity levels in the UK were 250% higher in May 2020 than before the pandemic.⁹ Across the UK, millions of people were already struggling to afford food before the Covid-19 lockdown, and the huge losses in income and lack of access to usual support networks, led to many newly food insecure residents who had previously been just about 'getting by'. Children were not attending school and, although provision was made for Free School Meal Eligible pupils, this offer would not have been taken up by everyone. With increased costs of utilities and children being at home, households faced more and more demand on their budgets for food and essential items.¹⁰

⁸ <https://opendata.camden.gov.uk/download/a6rj-bnun/application%2Fpdf>

⁹ <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/press-release/food-insecurity-and-debt-are-new-reality-under-lockdown>

¹⁰ <https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/fsa-food-insecurity-2020-report-v5.pdf>

Those who were self-isolating following contact with Covid-19 or shielding due to underlying health conditions were unable to leave their homes. This created barriers in people accessing nutritious food, such as delivery costs, financial difficulties or a lack of access to their usual support networks.¹¹ This made it harder for many to source the food that best supports their health needs.

Members of the IFPA therefore had to radically alter their work in order to respond to these rapid changes. This included bringing together partnerships of organisations and funding to provide crisis food support to thousands individuals and families across Islington. At the height of the pandemic, we met weekly as an Alliance in order to ensure needs across the Borough were met, and VCS organisations were supported in their work.

“Thank you for your support around tackling food insecurity”
- Hornsey Lane Estate Community Association (IFP member)

The current picture

Existing support schemes have made a difference, but gaps have meant many people still struggle to eat adequately. The Food Foundation found that, despite the emergency measures in place, levels of food insecurity were higher in January 2021 than before the pandemic. Households with children have been hit hard, with many children still falling through the cracks in support. Existing inequalities were

¹¹ THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON HOUSEHOLD FOOD SECURITY
https://foodfoundation.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/FF_Impact-of-Covid_FINAL.pdf

deepened during the pandemic, with even more disproportional levels of food insecurity being experienced by Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) people, as well as disabled people.¹²

The IFP has made great progress on the Action Plan, with many ambitions having progressed more quickly than expected as a result of the pandemic. As we emerge out of the pandemic and enter the final year of the Food Poverty Action Plan, we are looking to broaden our horizon on food. The first step in doing this included changing our name and broadening our aims. In the summer of 2021, the Islington Food Poverty Alliance became the Islington Food Partnership (IFP), re-expanding out our remit into broader food and sustainability work in the Borough, alongside food poverty.

This report analyses the progress that has been made against our Action Plan key aims, and through this celebrates the incredible work of our members and communities in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. We hope to use these insights in the creation of a new strategy for:

Developing an ambitious and sustainable food network for Islington

¹² Ibid.

From The Islington Food Partnership Coordinating Group:

Alex Britten, Operations Manager, Manor Gardens Welfare Trust and Chair of the IFP

Candice George, Islington Food Partnership Coordinator, Manor Gardens Welfare Trust

Meinir Jones, Public Health Strategist – Healthy Weight, Camden and Islington Public Health

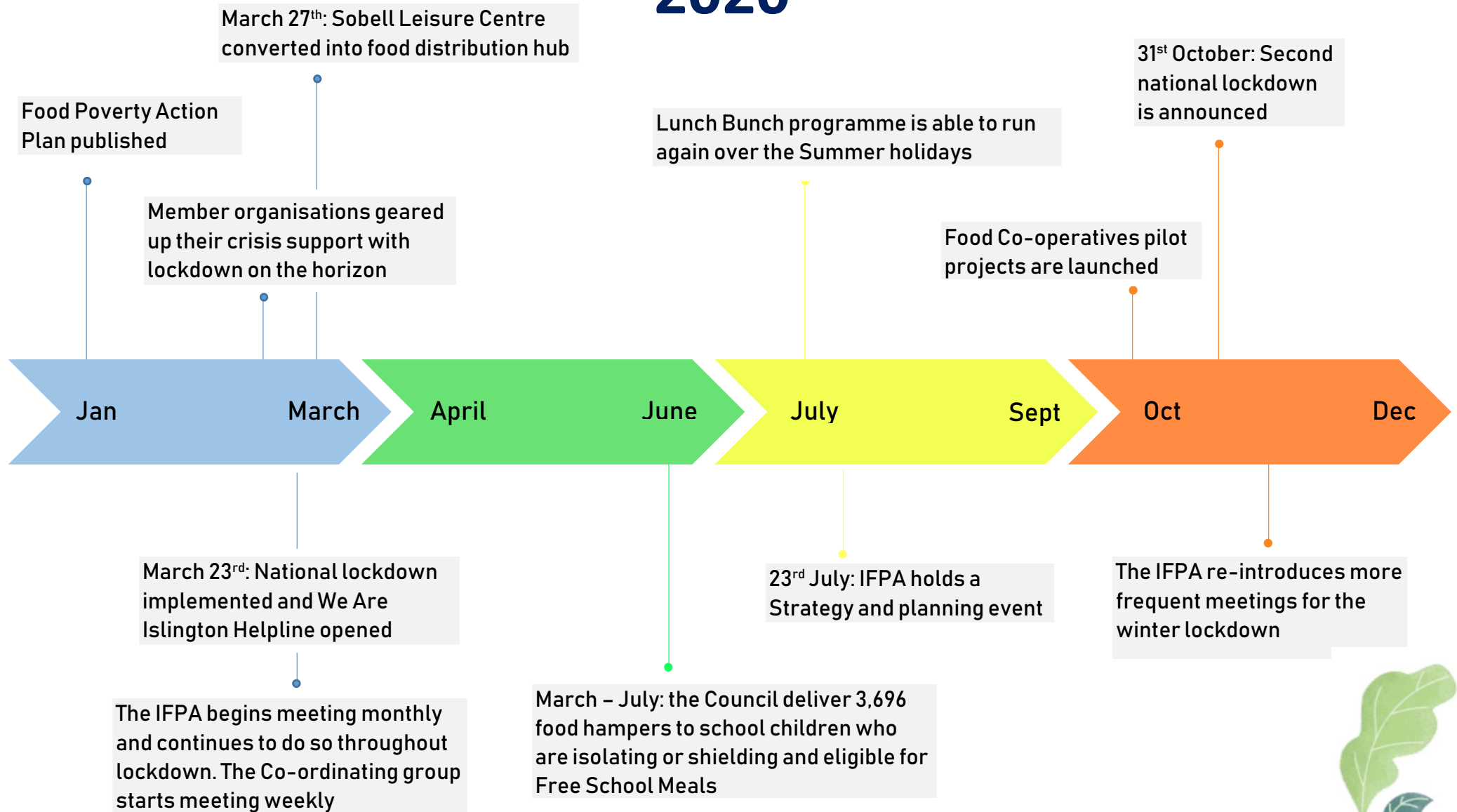
Amanuel Woldesus, Head of Margins Project, Union Chapel

Marjon Willers, Specialist Dietitian for Schools and Early Years, Islington Council

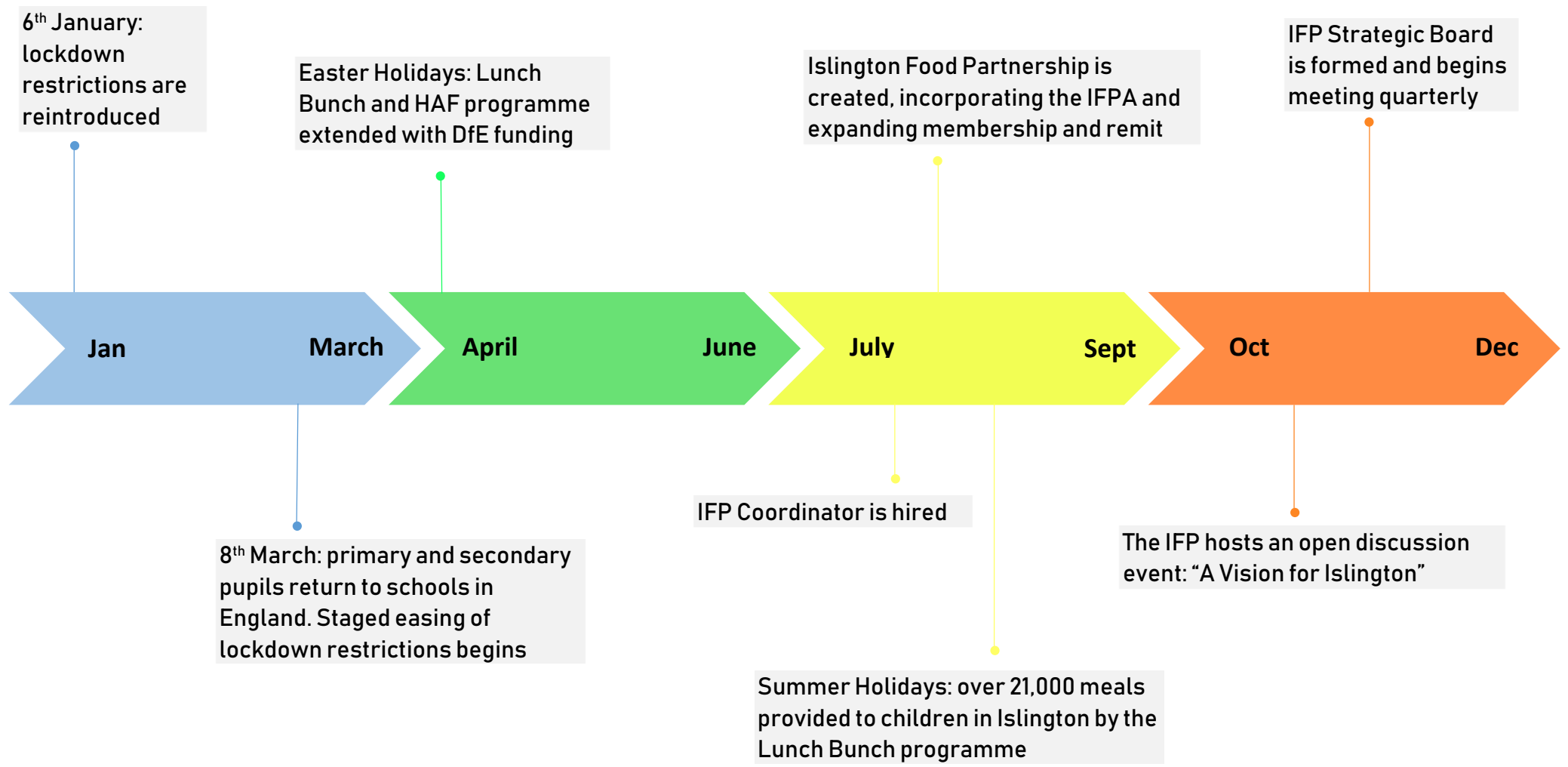
Michelle Webb, Environmental Health Manager, Islington Council



2020



2021



Highlights and Challenges of 2020-2021

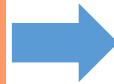
Islington residents have been deeply affected by the pandemic – financially, emotionally and physically - and systemic inequalities are even wider now than they were in 2019. IFP members had to hugely change the way they work and organise quickly to address the crisis needs that presented across all our communities in Islington.

We published our Islington Food Poverty Action Plan in January 2020, and the then Islington Food Poverty Alliance (now Islington Food Partnership) was able to respond quickly to provide a coordinated and collaborative cross Borough approach that may not have existed without this partnership.

Challenges

1. Crisis and community support

Services saw a huge increase in demand for emergency food support in 2020. Because of the rapid changes, members found their time and resources to be highly stretched, making it challenging to focus energy on piloting innovative ideas and creating a higher risk of burnout for staff and volunteers.



Highlights

Organisations and community groups mobilised together to respond to the crisis of the pandemic and the rapid changes in the community's needs. In 2020, thousands of food parcels and meals were distributed, and the community effort meant that tonnes of food surplus was saved from landfill.

More in-person events were able to happen in 2021 than in 2020. Community centres observed social connections forming and people arriving early to food hubs, so that they could chat with their neighbours. New connections were also created during the Food Co-operatives pilot.

Several members of the IFP received the Mayor's civic award in 2021 for their work in the community: Rosalyn Tyrell at Hanley Crouch Community Association, the team at Copenhagen Street Foodbank, the Andover Estate Community Centre, St Luke's Community Centre and Elaine Maffrett at Hilldrop Community Centre. The CEO of Manor Gardens Welfare Trust, Katy Porter, was awarded a BEM in June 2021 for her work in the community during the pandemic.

2. Schools and Early Years

Primary schools faced difficulties with the uptake of universal free school meals. Free School meals are universal in Islington Primary Schools as a way to reduce stigma. However, during the pandemic meals were eaten in the classroom, so many pupils started bringing packed lunches.

Early Years support services were affected by the pandemic, with some peer-support groups operating online for most of 2020 and 2021. New parents may have missed out on important, informal conversations with each other about food.

3. Partnership development and collaboration

The IFP hasn't been able to meet in-person for some time, creating challenges for some members in their sense of connecting with the partnership.

During the lockdowns, Islington provided hampers to families to replace free school meals that children would have had in schools. Vouchers were also provided during school holidays, and holiday activity schemes were put in place to support families across the Borough.

The Infant feeding pathway was created in 2020, strengthening cross-service communication between foodbanks and community centres with Breastfeeding support services

The collaboration strengthened between community organisations and the Council, for example the Council re-purposed the Sobell Leisure Centre into a Food Distribution hub where surplus and bulk purchased food was then delivered to community food projects.

Through the IFP, the Environmental Health team were able to provide support for community food projects running in the Borough, and work collaboratively to ensure services were meeting both environmental health regulations and the needs of communities.

In October 2020, the Islington Food Cooperative Network was set up in 7 community organisations across Islington, to provide a new and sustainable option for affordable food, whilst introducing residents to the cooperative model of organising.

With funding from Camden and Islington Public Health, the IFP hired a part-time co-ordinator in 2021. The IFP also launched a [new website](#) in October 2021¹³.

¹³ with thanks to developer Onkardeep Singh via Charity Connect

Key Highlights: our progress against the Action Plan Aims

The Food Poverty Action Plan outlined 4 Key Aims in the IFP’s strategy:

- Aim 1: Accurate identification and measurement of food poverty and actions to mitigate
- Aim 2: Tackling the root causes of food poverty
- Aim 3: Ensure there is adequate crisis support so that no one goes hungry
- Aim 4: Improving cross-service communication across Islington



In addition to this, the Steering Group identified 5 Key Priority goals, within these aims:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| Increase free or low-cost meals available for children, young people and their families during the school holidays | Aim 2 |
| Support for Home care service and care homes providing safe and healthy food and learning to recognise signs of food poverty | Aim 2 |
| Run community led cook taste projects including shopping on a budget and how to prepare healthy options | Aim 2 |
| Development of Islington directory to assist signposting by and to all partners | Aim 3 |
| Strengthen Islington’s Food Poverty Alliance and the Council, Voluntary and Community Sector coalition, by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting annual food poverty event to bring partners together and share best practice • Ensuring regular e-communication to share key messages across key stakeholders • Maintaining an up to date web page with key information and ongoing updates | Aim 4 |

Aim 1 – Accurate identification and measurement of food poverty and actions to mitigate

The purpose of this aim is to measure and monitor key indicators relating to food poverty in Islington, to inform our approach and highlight needs. Included below are a variety of data that can potentially be used to indicate levels of food poverty.

Free School Meals

In Islington, there is a local policy of providing Universal Free School Meals to all nursery and primary school pupils in state funded schools. Secondary school pupils in Islington are eligible for free school meals (FSM) according to the national criteria.¹⁴ Data on levels of FSM eligibility is still captured in Islington, for all school ages, as a way of monitoring changes in household income or financial precarity within the borough.

It's estimated that 1 million children in the UK are experiencing food poverty, despite not being eligible for the FSM scheme, because the income threshold is very low and does not account for how many

children are living in one household.¹⁵ FSM eligibility rates are therefore most useful as a way of monitoring changes over time, rather than exact levels of food poverty. However, it's also important to note that the criteria have been altered slightly during the past decade.¹⁶

In 2020/21, the percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals (FSME) in London was 22.6%.¹⁷ In England overall, 1.74 million pupils were eligible in January 2021, which is 20.8% of all pupils. FSME was substantially higher in Islington, with 38.3% of pupils known to be eligible for Free School Meals.

¹⁴ Pupils in state-funded schools in England are eligible for free school meals if the parent or caregiver they live with is receiving benefits, including income support, or receiving Universal Credit with a household income below £7,400 a year.

¹⁵ https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/Fixing_Lunch.pdf

¹⁶ https://www.repository.cam.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1810/261209/llie_et_al-2016-British_Educational_Research_Journal-AM.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

¹⁷ From school census data from the Department of Education.

Percentages of pupils known to be eligible for FSM in Islington, surrounding boroughs and compared with wider London and England figures:¹⁸

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Camden	26.8	26.4	24.9	28.1	31.1	36.2
City of London	19.6	12.0	11.3	11.2	10.1	13.7
England	14.3	14.0	13.6	15.4	17.3	20.8
Hackney	31.6	30.0	27.7	30.3	32.2	36.6
Haringey	20.4	19.0	17.2	18.2	19.6	22.6
Islington	31.3	29.5	28.1	30.1	32.3	38.3
Westminster	27.1	24.3	22.0	24.1	26.7	30.8
London	17.6	16.6	15.7	17.2	18.8	22.6
England	14.3	14.0	13.6	15.4	17.3	20.8

FSME has been rising in Islington since 2016, however, the increase from January 2020 to January 2021 is higher than each of these previous year-on-year increases. This trend can also be seen in the overall figures for England, with FSM eligibility already rising before the Covid-19 pandemic, but a sharper increase being seen between 2019/20 and 2020/21.



¹⁸ From school census data from the Department of Education. This figure includes state-funded nursery, primary, secondary and special schools, non-maintained special schools and pupil referral units. Does not include independent schools

Fuel Poverty figures

Fuel Poverty is defined using the Low-Income Low Energy Efficiency indicator. A household is defined as experiencing food poverty if:

- They are living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D or below *and*
- When they spend the required amount to heat their home, they are left with an income below the official poverty line

As household income and living costs are closely linked with food poverty, fuel poverty rates can be used as an indicator for food insecurity. The department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy collects statistics on fuel poverty and publishes the figures with a two-year lag. The fuel poverty figures for 2019 were published in 2021.

In 2019, there were 530,740 people in fuel poverty in London, 15.2% of the population. This was an increase from the 2018 figure of 11.4%. Islington fuel poverty rates for 2019 were slightly below the London average at 14.8%, but this is also an increase from 2018 figure of 11%. The impact of household income-loss during the pandemic and rising energy prices are yet to be measured.

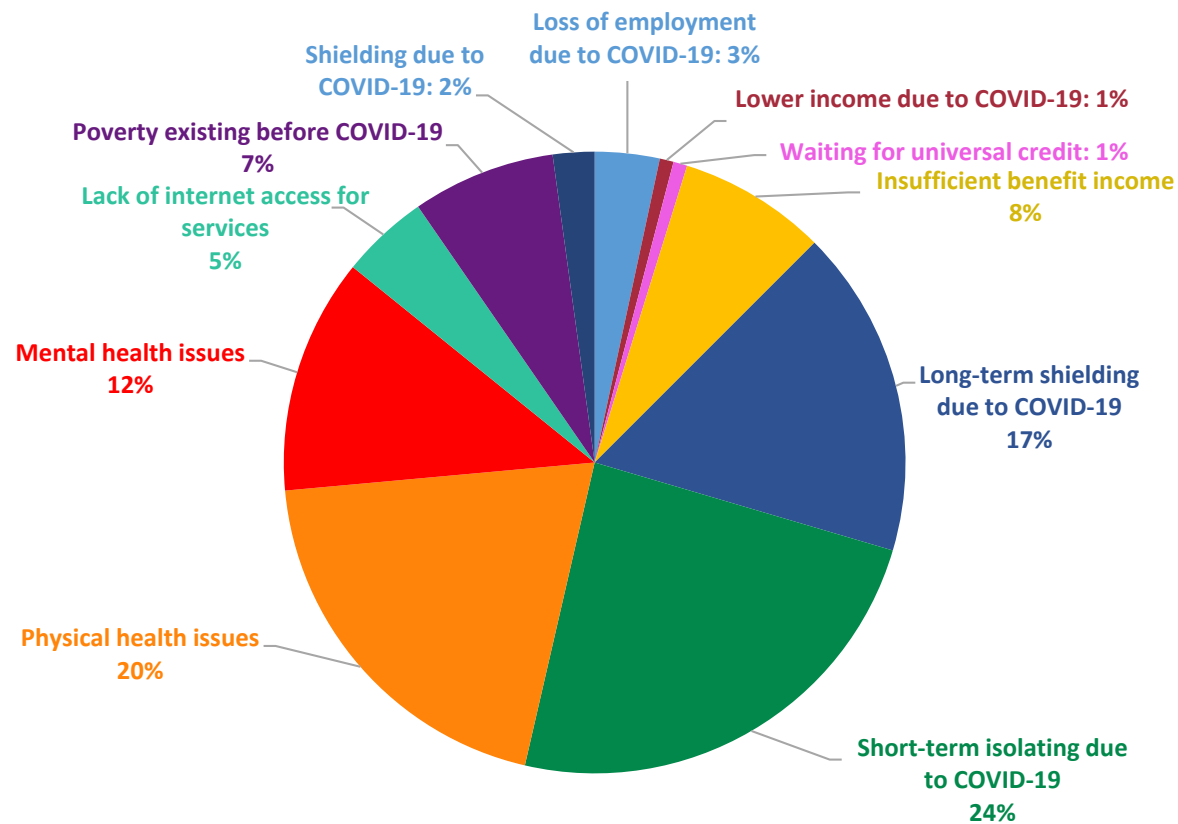
London Fuel Poverty Stats 2019 (published 2021)¹⁹

Borough	Number of households ¹	Number of households in fuel poverty ¹	Proportion of households fuel poor (%)
Haringey	108,473	19,798	18.3
Hackney	108,209	17,821	16.5
Islington	99,623	14,703	14.8
Tower Hamlets	107,761	15,290	14.2
Camden	104,052	14,279	13.7
Westminster	112,567	15,260	13.6
City of London	4,655	296	6.4

¹⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-fuel-poverty-statistics-report-2021>

Emergency food support data

Reasons for accessing the food support service at Manor Gardens Welfare Trust



Total: 416 respondents, from a client base of 553 households

Various members of the IFPA provided emergency food support during the Covid-19 pandemic. Two case studies of crisis support are Manor Gardens Welfare Trust and Octopus Communities (a network of Islington community hubs). While emergency support tends to represent only the 'tip of the iceberg', the impact data from these projects can offer insight into the levels of food poverty in Islington in 2020-21, and some of the reasons people gave for seeking support.

During their emergency food provision, Manor Gardens worked with partners Age UK, Bright Start, Eagle Recovery Project, Help on Your Doorstep, Islington Mind, Islington People's Rights and Single Homeless Project. Together, they supported an average of **1,295 individuals per month** (including children) and a **total of 553 different households** between April and September 2020.

In the first 6 months since the UK lockdown began, the Octopus Communities (a network of Islington community hubs) distributed an average of **1,500 food and essential hygiene parcels per week**.

Breast-feeding rates

Rates of breast-feeding (or chest-feeding) are monitored due to the health benefits of breastmilk. Amongst other nutritional benefits, breastmilk contains live cells and antibodies that help to develop the infant’s immune system.²⁰ While it can be a special bonding experience between parent and child, it can also be very stressful, with some mothers and parents struggling to breastfeed and feeling a great deal of shame around this.

In recognition of the importance of breastfeeding and the collective responsibility to support parents, Islington is committed to maintaining UNICEF’s Baby Friendly standards in infant healthcare. Islington achieved Baby Friendly Level 3 in 2018.

	New birth visit (10-14 days)		6-8 weeks	
	Exclusive bf	Any bf	Exclusive bf	Any bf
Jan-Mar 2020	55.6%	88.7%	50.6%	84.1%
Apr-Jun 2020	58.1%	88.3%	56.0%	85.8%
Jul-Sept 2020	60.1%	89.5%	57.9%	81.0%
Oct-Dec 2020	60.7%	88.5%	58.6%	85.4%
2018-2019	60.6%	88.5%	53.5%	81.0%
2019-2020	58.5%	89.2%	53.1%	83.3%
2020-2021	59.0%	89.4%	55.5%	82.1%

Bright Start Early Childhood Services and the Whittington Health Trust provide support with infant-feeding through health visits and a parent-led Breastfeeding Support Scheme. Together, they have been monitoring rates of breast(chest)-feeding. This table shows the rates for known data (i.e. where the breastfeeding (bf) status has been recorded).

Chest-feeding rates for 2020 continued to remain fairly level with rates from the past 5 years, despite the new challenges presented by the pandemic. This may have been because, while some new parents found it detrimental to be cut-off from their support networks and in-person groups, others may have found lockdown beneficial to breast-feeding, as there were fewer interruptions from visitors.²¹ Initially, in the first lockdown, Breastfeeding Support services were operated remotely where possible, with health visitors contacting new parents over the phone at 10-14 days and 6–8-weeks after birth. In-person home visits were able to resume in the summer of 2020.

²⁰ Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect

Prof Cesar G Victora, MD, et al., Published: January 30, 2016 DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)01024-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01024-7)

²¹ Latorre, G., Martinelli, D., Guida, P. *et al.* Impact of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown on exclusive breastfeeding in non-infected mothers. *Int Breastfeed J* **16**, 36 (2021).

<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13006-021-00382-4>

Aim 2 – Tackle the root causes of food poverty

Through the Food Poverty Action Plan, the partnership aims to address some of the underlying and interrelated causes of food poverty.

As there is considerable overlap between the causes of food poverty and financial insecurity, one key focus of Aim 2 is to support income maximisation for residents.

The distribution of food and resources also contributes to levels of food poverty, particularly in regard to affordable, nutritious food. The UK

Food Industry generates an estimated 3.6 million tonnes of edible food waste each year.²² Reducing food waste is highlighted as a way to work towards Aim 2, involving stakeholders at different levels including businesses and the local community.

As well as this, the Action Plan recognises that there are key priority groups who are disproportionately affected by food poverty, as well as key stakeholders who would be involved in bringing about change and therefore included several tailored interventions to reflect this.

Key outcomes for Aim 2:

- Increase free or low-cost meals available for children, young people and their families during the school holidays
- Support for Home care service and care homes providing safe and healthy food and learning to recognise signs of food poverty
- Run community led cook taste projects, including shopping on a budget and how to prepare healthy options

²² <https://wrap.org.uk/resources/report/food-waste-primary-production-uk>

Income Maximisation

SHINE - The Seasonal Health Intervention Network

Islington's Seasonal Health Intervention Network (SHINE) works with residents to save them money on their energy bills. They do this through Home Energy visits, sourcing discounts and supporting residents with debt relief. Between January 2020 and August 2021, SHINE supported Islington residents to make the following total savings:



Jan 2020 – Aug 2021

Home Energy Visits	£231,848 saved
Discounts	£643,752 saved
Debt relief	£15,708 saved
Total	£891,308 saved

Families and children

Holiday Activities and Food Programme (HAF)

The Holiday Activities and Food Programme gives FSM eligible children in Islington the chance to enjoy free fun activities in the school holidays. Alongside these activities, the children are given a free and nutritious lunch. A similar programme called Lunch bunch had been running in Islington’s adventure playgrounds since 2018, but the types of activities and number of days it is provided was significantly increased in 2021 with the national introduction of the HAF programme. This also meant that it could be run over the Christmas break for the first time in 2021.

**HAF Summer 2021:
Over 25,000 meals provided to children in Islington**



Islington Council Food Hampers

At the start of the first UK lockdown, working with their School Meals partner Caterlink, Islington Council implemented a new service for shielding or self-isolating pupils who were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) under the national criteria. From March to July 2020, schools could either order food hampers provided by Caterlink or provide supermarket food vouchers. The food vouchers were sourced either directly from local supermarkets or via the Department for Education’s (DfE) FSM voucher scheme.

**Between March and
December 2020:
5,228 food hampers were
distributed, the equivalent
of at least 52,280 lunches**



Hampers were issued fortnightly to schools and provided food to cover 10 lunches. Each contained ingredients that could make a number of nutritious meals or be combined with other food in the home to make a wider range of meals and snacks. The hampers were adapted as time progressed, including for example, salad items from May onwards and dates during Ramadan. A vegetarian hamper was also available. The Council contributed additional funding, above the school meal food funds, towards this scheme.

Food vouchers have been available for all FSM eligible pupils each half-term and holiday since May 2020 and were also available during the lockdown of January and February 2021. These food vouchers have been funded by LBI directly, the Covid Winter Grant or via the Local Authority Household Support Grant. An information leaflet 'Lunch at home – Ideas on a budget' was prepared for families during 2021. The booklet had a suggested shopping list for using the food vouchers to make five lunches and some ideas for nutritious tasty recipes for children to enjoy at home.

Food waste reduction

The Felix Project, through partnership with 39 local organisations, including 16 members of the IFP, redistributed tonnes of surplus food for use within community food projects. Their headline figures for 2020 food waste prevention are:

310 tonnes (310,000kg) of food saved - the equivalent of 738,000 meals
930 tonnes (930,000kg) of carbon saved by rescuing this food from going to landfill
Food shopping bills reduced by £930,000 for Islington residents



Community cooking

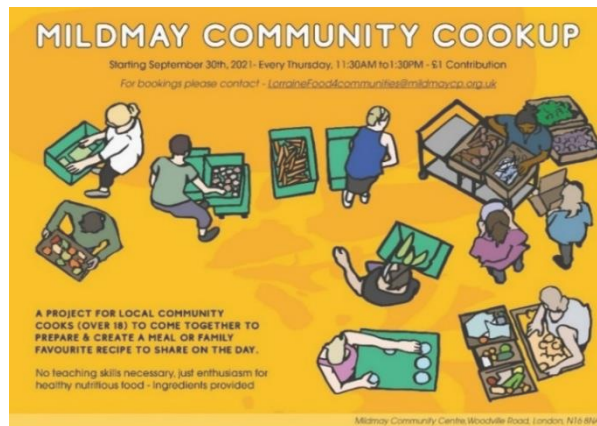
Several member organisations either started or adapted their cooking and tasting projects in 2020-2021, including the following examples:

Bags of Taste

During the UK lockdowns, Bags of Taste delivered ingredients to local people wanting to learn nutritious recipes that can be made on a budget. Each course participant had contact from mentor online and joined a WhatsApp group with other participants.

Testimony from a Bags of Taste course participant:

"I would definitely encourage someone to participate. It is so nice to have the connection around a shared activity, even if it is remote. It was amazing to have all the ingredients being provided and all the thought and detail given to it to make everything as accessible as possible. It was great to see everyone's unique version of the meals we were cooking and to receive gentle and supportive encouragement and guidance from Pipi and Caroline. I have really appreciated it all."



Mildmay Community Centre relaunched their Community Cookup events in Nov '21



In April 2021, Elizabeth House hosted a Community Cooks training programme with NFS London, where local cooks could learn about preparing batch meals, train in Level 2 Food Hygiene and explore concepts of food sovereignty.



Aim 3 – Ensure there is adequate crisis support so that no one goes hungry

In early lockdown, the Alliance brought together key community organisations and aligned with the Council to facilitate a joined-up community response to the crisis. Not only was there an increase in demand for food support, but food services needed to quickly adapt their ways of working. By increasing their meetings to once a month, with a coordinating group meeting weekly, the partnership could share learnings, strengthen partnerships and collaborate during rapidly evolving circumstances.

In March 2020, the Council converted the Sobell Leisure Centre into a food distribution hub. The Felix Project partnered with the Council at this time, allowing them to hugely increase their capacity in redistributing food surplus to local VCS organisations. The Octopus Communities Network were also able to use this space to organise emergency food support.



The Environmental Health team at Islington Council worked with VCS groups to provide advice on food hygiene and Covid-19 safety measures, allowing projects to operate as safely as possible and supporting organisations that were running emergency food provision for the first time.

Across Islington, staff and volunteers at community hubs mobilised to provide emergency food packages and cooked meals to their community. Organisations adapted to find ways of delivering food packages to residents and to provide wellbeing support remotely.

Several volunteer-run mutual aid groups were created in the borough in March 2020, with residents picking up groceries or medication for shielding and isolating neighbours. Mutual aid groups also provided support to community hubs by assisting with deliveries and helping to connect people to services. The community effort, along with co-operation from the Council, resulted in thousands of food parcels and cooked meals being distributed over the first lockdown alone.



In July 2020, the IFP held a Strategy and Planning event to collaborate in building resilience to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, creating clear, strategic responses of support, which accounted for the challenges of low capacity and burnout. For this event, member organisations who were moving away from emergency food provision worked together to align their exit strategies and ensure effective referrals between services. In October 2020, the Islington Food Cooperative Network pilot was launched, exploring a membership model of food support, and several organisations continued to operate co-ops throughout 2021.

We are Islington

We are Islington is a Council-run helpline launched in March 2020, providing support to residents with accessing grants, food and fuel vouchers, or signposting them to local organisations and mutual aid groups.

As well as operating this helpline and running their own emergency food response, Islington Council supported 23 community food projects throughout the pandemic, providing £210,000 in funding through grants and offering practical support, for example with printing or parking permits. As well as this, the Council supported Volunteer Action Islington in creating a database to match volunteers with local projects.

In the winter of 2020, We Are Islington used their Covid Winter Grant allocation of £1,388 million to support residents who had been affected by food and fuel poverty. This funding provided support with food costs for families with low household incomes, care leavers and people with No Recourse to Public Funds status. Through this scheme, additional funding was also provided to partners within the voluntary sector.



Case Studies – VCS sector

Manor Gardens Welfare Trust (MGWT):

With lockdown on the horizon in March 2020, MGWT and partners adapted rapidly to respond to residents' needs.



April – September 2020

A total of 2,688 food packages delivered

An average of 126 packages per week

Reached an average of 1,294 people a month

“We worked closely with Islington Council, local GPs and key VCS partners to help develop a borough-wide response. Within days we had set up a food distribution hub in our Centre with a wide range of staple foods. In the last four weeks we have distributed 409 large parcels of food using a fantastic team of volunteers, many of whom are local residents who contacted us to help. Individuals and families have been referred from many organisations working across Islington to ensure that no one goes without.” - *Manor Gardens Newsletter, April 2020*

Octopus Communities

Octopus Communities is a network of 15 community centres who have been working together for over 20 years. As part of their Health and Wellbeing programme, the network and its members have run a variety of community food hub activities, including over 55’s lunch clubs; healthy eating cook-ups; community food growing and foodbanks. Some of these were already operating at the start of 2020, but when lockdown happened, the network went into a full-scale operation of crisis response.

After expressing to the Council that they needed a central hub for packing and distribution, the Council gave them access to the Sobell Leisure Centre in March 2020. The network faced some initial challenges in sourcing enough food to meet requests, but overcame this by collaborating with other partners, mutual aid groups and the Council.

A member of Octopus reflected that, while the work was very full-on, 20 years of collaborating as a network meant they were able to mobilise very quickly when crisis hit: “Each person played to their strengths and came together; there was a huge sense of camaraderie.”

As well as distributing food parcels, members of Octopus, such as Caxton House and Elizabeth House, produced videos and online sessions around cooking healthy food on a budget. Caxton



House also distributed food kits, which contained measured ingredients for nutritious meals that can be made with limited facilities. Between March and April 2020, they distributed 144 food kits.

By December 2021, several of the community hubs had transitioned back to their pre-Covid community food activities, such as lunch clubs and cooking sessions. However, as there is still a large number of local people in need of food support, some of the hubs continue to operate their food parcel schemes, including foodbanks and food co-ops.

Octopus Communities

Caxton House Community Centre
Elizabeth House Community Centre
Finsbury Park Community Hub
Brickworks Hanley Crouch Community Association
Highbury Roundhouse
Hilldrop Area Community Association
Hornsey Lane Estate Community Centre
Holloway Neighbourhood Group
Light Project Pro International
Mildmay Community Partnership
Muslim Welfare House
The Peel, St Luke’s Community Centre
Whittington Park Community Centre

March 19th – December 2020
Across 9 food hubs in the Network,
37,915 food parcels and 62,056 meals
were distributed



Other member organisations who ran food support programmes we want to highlight and celebrate in 2020 and 2021 include:

Andover Community Centre
Choices London CIC
FEAST with us
The Museum of Homelessness
St Mary Hornsey Rise & The Hive foodbank

The Arc Centre
Copenhagen Street Foodbank
FoodCycle Islington
The Margins Project (at Union Chapel)
The Ringcross Community Foodbank



Arc Centre



FoodCycle Islington



Margins Project

Diversity of crisis support

Because the causes are varied and complex, the nature of food insecurity and the barriers involved vary greatly across individuals. It's therefore important that available crisis support is diverse enough to suit a variety of needs and preferences.

From an overview of the available food support within the IFPA, almost all of the services offering crisis support in 2020/21 were not means-tested, reducing bureaucratic barriers to support. In spring 2020, 75% of services were offering deliveries and 50% were offering cooked meals. Services offering deliveries had decreased to 25% by spring 2021, reflecting the easing of lockdown restrictions.

Quotes from the IFPA member survey 2021:

“Thank you for your support around tackling food insecurity”

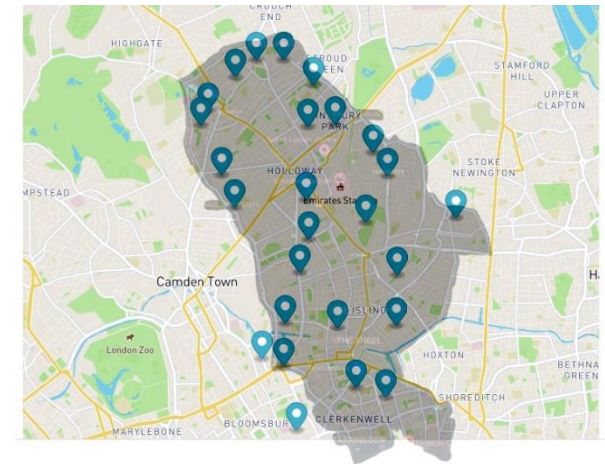
Hornsey Lane Estate Community Association

“Access to food and its benefits to our community have become high priority to our organisation”

Hilldrop Area Community Association

“The IFPA was instrumental in us setting up our food bank, we're keen to see how it develops”

Arc Community Space CIC



Map of IFP food support organisations

Beyond Crisis Support – Looking to the long-term

Food Cooperatives pilot project

In October 2020, with funding from Food Power for Generation Covid, The Islington Food Cooperative Network was formed, launching 7 pilot community food cooperatives across the Borough. The goal of the pilot project was to provide new and sustainable option for affordable food across the Borough, whilst also introducing residents to the cooperative model.

The Islington Food Cooperative Network was led by **Manor Gardens Welfare Trust** in partnership with **Choices, Elizabeth House, Mildmay Community Centre, Hilldrop Community Centre, Hornsey Lane Community Association, Newington Green Action Trust and Co-operation Town.**



Through the pilot, the Islington Food Cooperative Network had 347 families as members, who accessed over 6,700 meals' worth of food. 57% of these households were from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) households, 26%

found it difficult or impossible to get to shops where they can buy healthy food, and 28% did not have an internet connection at home.

Following the success of this pilot, and the learnings and challenges that came along with it, the Islington Cooperative Network [published a Learnings and Insights Guide](#) which will be of use to other organisations wanting to lead or support similar projects. The majority of the pilot projects have continued to operate beyond the end of the funding period in May 2021. In the future, the IFP hopes to support the setting up of more resident-led, self-organised food cooperatives.



The collaborative element of food cooperatives sets them apart from emergency food support and allows for more long-term food security, self-organised by the communities they benefit. The membership model, which creates a sense of operating in solidarity with each other, also reduces the stigma around accessing affordable food. This is reflected in quotes from members of the pilot projects:

“A key focus of our project was building local community agency and tackling food waste. Communication of these fundamental focuses were key to fostering a positive environment that ensured any households facing food insecurity did not feel a sense of stigma. It was regularly reiterated that the £3 membership fee helped the individual member as well as every other member. The communal tenets of the project were a key draw for many members who, especially in light of the pandemic, were seeking community.”

Hornsey Lane Estate Community Association



“The boxes have reminded me to cook things I’d forgotten about. I’m making piccalilli and carrot cake today. It’s great to know I have a big soup ready to go at any time.”

Hilldrop Cooperative member

“With more people coming to prepare their parcels, we used the Food Hub as a vehicle to drive community relations, especially since this was the first time we were meeting some of the residents (due to Covid). We started offering tea and coffee [..]. Every week, the number of residents enjoying refreshments grew, so we expanded the area. It was a great way for us to connect with the community.”

- Elizabeth House Community Centre

“Having food and extra bits provided through time of Covid, allowing us not to be out as much, has helped relieve a lot of stress and anxiety.”

- Mildmay cooperative member



**BUILDING
COMMUNITY
THROUGH
FOOD**

Aim 4 - Improving cross-service communication across Islington

Case Study: Infant feeding pathway:

The Infant Feeding pathway was set up in early 2020 by public health professionals at the Whittington Health Trust, Bright Start Islington, We Are Islington and Public Health. The pathway was created to ensure that Islington adhered to its UNICEF Baby Friendly Level 3 status and prevented baby formula products from being inadvertently promoted through foodbanks, whilst also ensuring that parents could access baby formula where needed.

If someone requests baby formula at a foodbank, they are referred through the pathway to the Health Team. A Health Visitor will then assess them and provide infant formula or connect them with Breastfeeding Support services if needed.



Cross-partnership communication:

There are a number of ways that the IFP have been working to develop cross-service communication since January 2020, including:

- **Islington Food Partnership membership and governance**
 - We built our membership, with now over 170 individuals across 70 different organisations part of the partnership
 - We have a strategic board, which includes representation from across our key stakeholder groups and two elected Council members, and a cross-sector coordinating group, who together provide oversight to and coordination of the partnership
- **Opportunities for engagement and information sharing**
 - We have an active mailing list that allows all members to share information and opportunities across the partnership, and the IFP coordinating group share regular newsletters and updates
 - We host a broad partnership meeting every quarter, which provides information, trainings, and opportunities for discussion and collaboration
- **Communications**
 - We have a website that shares information for both residents and organisations on what is going on in the Borough around food, and where people can access support
 - We are working with an independent communications consultant to develop a communications strategy and engagement plan for the partnership, to increase the engagement with our work across the Borough, including with residents
- **Services directory**
 - A directory of local services was created and is updated and shared across members every month. This directory contains information on IFP services offering emergency food support, advice and advocacy, community food projects, digital inclusion programmes and practical support. It also allowed organisations to communicate if they were currently accepting donated items, and share any opportunities for partnerships.

- **Events**

- A Strategy and Planning Event was held in July 2020
- As part of Islington's Greener Together Festival, the IFP held an open discussion event in October 2021 about developing an ambitious and sustainable food network in Islington. The event was attended by members and residents
- A calendar of events is planned for 2022, including strategy development sessions, a lecture series, and public forums

- **Regional and national partnership work**

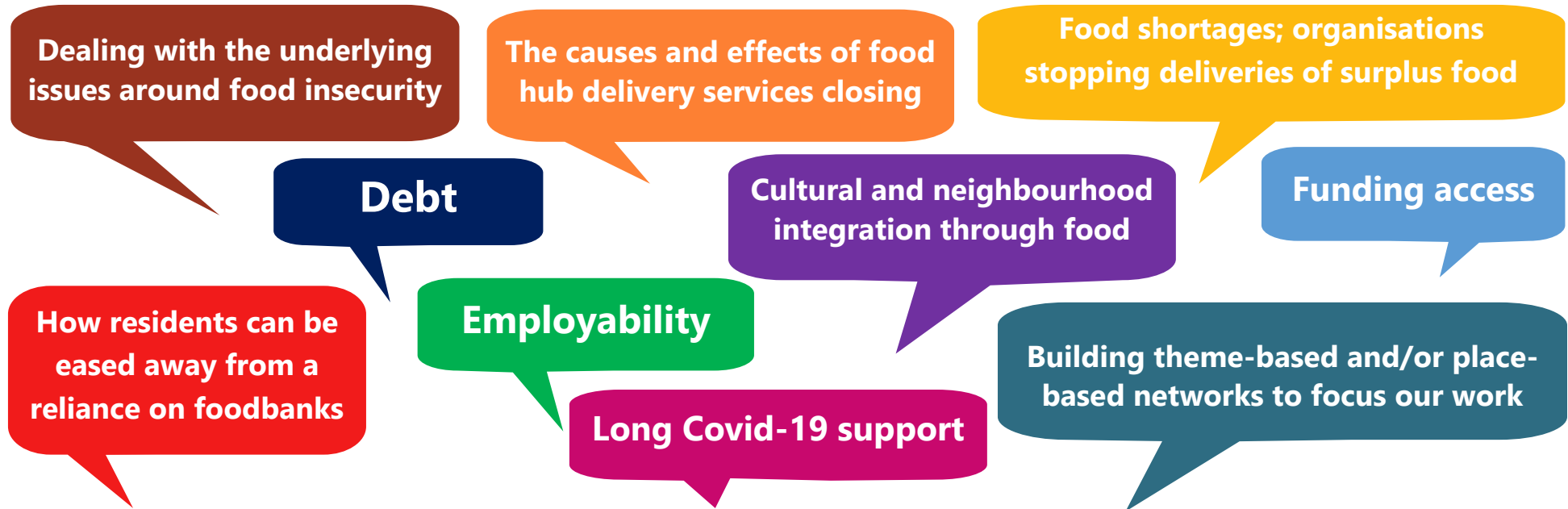
- We have maintained our membership in the Food Power Network, including receiving funding from them for the Islington Food Cooperative Network pilot
- We have refreshed our Sustainable Food Places membership, and are bidding to become a Bronze Sustainable Food Place in 2022
- We continue to engage with regional and national groups working on food, including the London Boroughs Food Group, North East London food group, and national Food Partnership network through Sustainable Food Places

Through all this work, we have been able to achieve all our goals set out in Aim 4 of the Islington Food Poverty Action Plan.



Member survey

A feedback survey was conducted in April 2021 and members identified the following priorities for the IFP's work in the near future:²³



²³ n.b. 92% of survey respondents were from Third sector and community organisations

Next Steps

The Food Poverty Action Plan

- The Action Plan runs until December 2022. As a next step within this strategy, we are working to identify any gaps in existing services or barriers that are preventing people from accessing enough, nutritious food. For example, by looking in greater detail at services available for different key groups, who are disproportionately affected by food insecurity.

Strategy development

A Strategic Board was formed for the IFP in late 2021 and is collaborating with members and the coordinating group to create a new Food Strategy for Islington from 2023-2028.

Creating a good food movement

- Due to limits on time and capacity, we haven't been able to put energy into targeted approaches to widely engage businesses, school and residents in our work. Looking ahead, we hope to further build on the connections that were strengthened during the crisis response of 2020-2021 and to create new relationships between stakeholders and neighbours in a borough-wide food movement.
- With funding from Sustainable Food Places and Public Health Islington, the Chair and Coordinator's capacity will be increased for 2022. This grant will also provide funding for a Communications Consultant to work with us in creating a communications strategy.
- As a next step in building a food movement, the IFP will work on clearly defining our mission, purpose and values, as well as creating a brand that communicates these to the public.
- We will also start trying to find creative, engaging ways of showcasing our work to the public
- Another key step will be to research and identify 'community anchors' – key individuals and organisations with strong or far-reaching connections within community groups. This work will help us to build a picture of the existing Islington food movement and some effective access points for increasing our outreach and engagement.

Innovation – piloting and supporting food projects

Community organisations have seen a lot of energy and engagement around food over the past two years – through mutual aid groups, volunteers, and food co-op members.

- Now that in-person events are able to occur and there is more capacity within the IFP, one of our next steps will be to continue to support innovative food projects, using our multi-sector connections to offer resources, guidance, training and health advice.
- In the coming months, we hope to support local projects, such as: community pantries, resident or organisation-led food cooperatives, social-eating spaces or community cafés, and seeking out new pockets of community-led innovation within Islington’s food system.





With thanks to the members of the Islington Food Partnership:

Whittington Health NHS Trust

ISLINGTON PLAY ASSOCIATION

Felix THE FELIX PROJECT

CHOICES

MILDMAY COMMUNITY CENTRE

islington giving

HILLDROP community centre

FOOD CYCLE

Bags of Taste

caterlink feeding the imagination

ST LUKE'S COMMUNITY CENTRE

ISLINGTON

Newington Green Action Group

healthwatch Islington

LONDON ASSEMBLY

manorgardens Providing services to the community since 1913 for health and wellbeing

HIGHBURY ROUNDHOUSE

Bright Start Islington Every child | Every family

octopus communities

FareShare fighting hunger, tackling food waste

ALEXANDRA WYLE C OF E LOWER FOUNDATION

ELIZABETH HOUSE Your local community centre

Nag's Head Town Centre

ST LUKE'S

sustain

ipr islington people's rights

the trussell trust Stop UK Hunger

Help on Your Doorstep Empowered people and communities

HLECA

Hornsey Lane Estate Community Association



Islington Food Partnership Progress Report 2020-2021

50 Shades Greener
Age UK Islington
Alexandra Wylie Tower Foundation
Arsenal in the Community
Andover Community Centre
Awesome CIC
Bags of Taste
Bright Start Islington
Camden and Islington NHS
Foundation Trust
Caterlink
Caxton House
Choices London CIC
City University
Claremont Project
Cripplegate
Elizabeth House
Fareshare
Feast With Us

First Love Foundation
Food For All UK
FoodCycle
Full Circle Bar Group
Go Dharmic
Groundwork
Hanley Crouch Community
Association
Hargrave Hall
Healthwatch Islington
Help On Your Doorstep
Highbury Roundhouse
Hilldrop Community Centre
Hive Foodbank
Hornsey Lane Estate Community
Association
Impact Hub Kings Cross
Islington Giving
Islington Mutual Aid Groups

Islington People's Rights
Islington Play Association
Islington Trussel Trust Foodbank
Kings Cross Church
KLH Sustainability
London Borough of Islington
Light Project Pro International
London Assembly
London MET University
London School of Hygiene & Tropical
Medicine
Maha Devi Centre
Manor Gardens Welfare Trust
Mildmay Community Centre
Museum of Homelessness
Muslim Welfare House
Nags Head Town Centre Group
National Food Service London
Newington Green Action Group

Octopus Communities
Pilion Trust
Shelter From The Storm
St Giles Trust
St Luke's Community Centre
St Mary's Hornsey Rise
St Stephens Church
Streets Kitchen
Stuart Low Trust
Sustain
The Arc Centre
The Felix Project
Tonkotsu Restaurant
Union Chapel
UCKG
Wesley's Chapel & Leysian Mission
Whittington Health NHS Trust

