

Supporting people in food poverty

Funding impact report

eMbedding heAlth equiTy in City & Hackney (MATCH) Fund 2024/25

City & Hackney
Population Health Hub

Contents

Executive summary 3
About the Population Health Hub 5
eMbedding heAlth equiTy in City & Hackney (MATCH) 7
Programme overview: Supporting people in food poverty 12
Fund wide achievements 16
- Awareness 17
- Action 20
- Advocacy 22

Learning 23
Case studies 27
Further reading 36
- Overall MATCH Year 1 impact report 37
- Improving equity in cardiovascular disease outcomes 38
- Improving equity in maternity services 39
- Women's Health 40
- Anti-Racist Commissioning 42

Appendix 43

Executive summary

The Population Health Hub (PHH) is a shared, system resource supporting the City and Hackney Place-based Partnership (PbP). The PHH helps system partners reduce health inequalities and improve our population's health.

We set up the eMbedding heAlth equiTy in City and Hackney (MATCH) programme to identify and reduce inequalities by working together with partners across the system. The MATCH Fund supported this programme by providing responsive, outcomes-focused funding to bring change ideas to life. We recognised that addressing local health inequalities requires collaborative, flexible funding models that enable partners across the system to take action where it is needed most.

The MATCH programme has since taken on an 'Academy' style model with the aim of making the programme more sustainable and scalable, with less reliance on funding and short project timeframes. Through this adapted version of the MATCH approach, we work with teams and provide support to embed a health equity approach into everyday ways of working.

In year 1 of the programme, the Fund granted just under **£250,000** to **17** community organisations and one NHS partner. The organisations delivered projects in five programme areas where pervasive health inequalities affect our communities.

This report is a spotlight on one of these programme areas: '**Supporting people in food poverty'**.

The programme addressed the sharp rise in emergency food demand by awarding nearly **£50,000** to 3 equity-led community organisations: **H.O.P.E at Morningside, Bloom Market, and Chatsworth Youth Club**.

The projects piloted models that transitioned away from traditional, unsustainable foodbanks toward income-generating food provision underpinned by an environment of choice, dignity, and respect successfully.

Other highlights include:

Access and Sustainability

154 households accessed high-quality food at costs at least **45%** cheaper than supermarkets. H.O.P.E's pantry model generated nearly **£5,000** in income and reduced foodbank dependency by **55%**.

Waste Reduction

Collaborative efforts saved **126,891kg** of food waste in 2024/25. Bloom Market alone redistributed approximately **63,500kg** of produce through its network

Health and Wellbeing

While **10%** of participants noted physical health improvements, **100%** of pantry users reported better mental health due to the stress relief of consistent food access.

Social Connection

The projects acted as vital community hubs; **90%** of parents at Chatsworth's cooking club felt less isolated, and **100%** of H.O.P.E pantry users felt more connected to their community.

The programme demonstrated that offering choice and dignity in the food provision experience - such as using shopping trolleys and tiered pricing - reaches residents who previously avoided foodbanks due to stigma. However, barriers such as digital access for online ordering remain.

Future funding considerations include:

Capital Infrastructure

Prioritising refrigeration, storage, and vehicles to help organisations scale and share surplus food.

Operational Balance

Ensuring participatory design processes do not overwhelm the limited capacity of frontline providers.



About the Population Health Hub

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The Population Health Hub was established in 2021 to reduce health inequalities and improve the health of our population in City and Hackney. We are a shared, system-wide resource and work to increase awareness of what's needed, support others to take action, and advocate for change. Our vision is for everyone across the system to play a role.

> **"Working together with our residents to improve health and care, address health inequalities and make City and Hackney thrive."**

We support the City and Hackney Place-based Partnership (PbP) vision:

We have developed four strategic objectives to support this vision:



eMbedding heAlth equiTy in City & Hackney (MATCH)

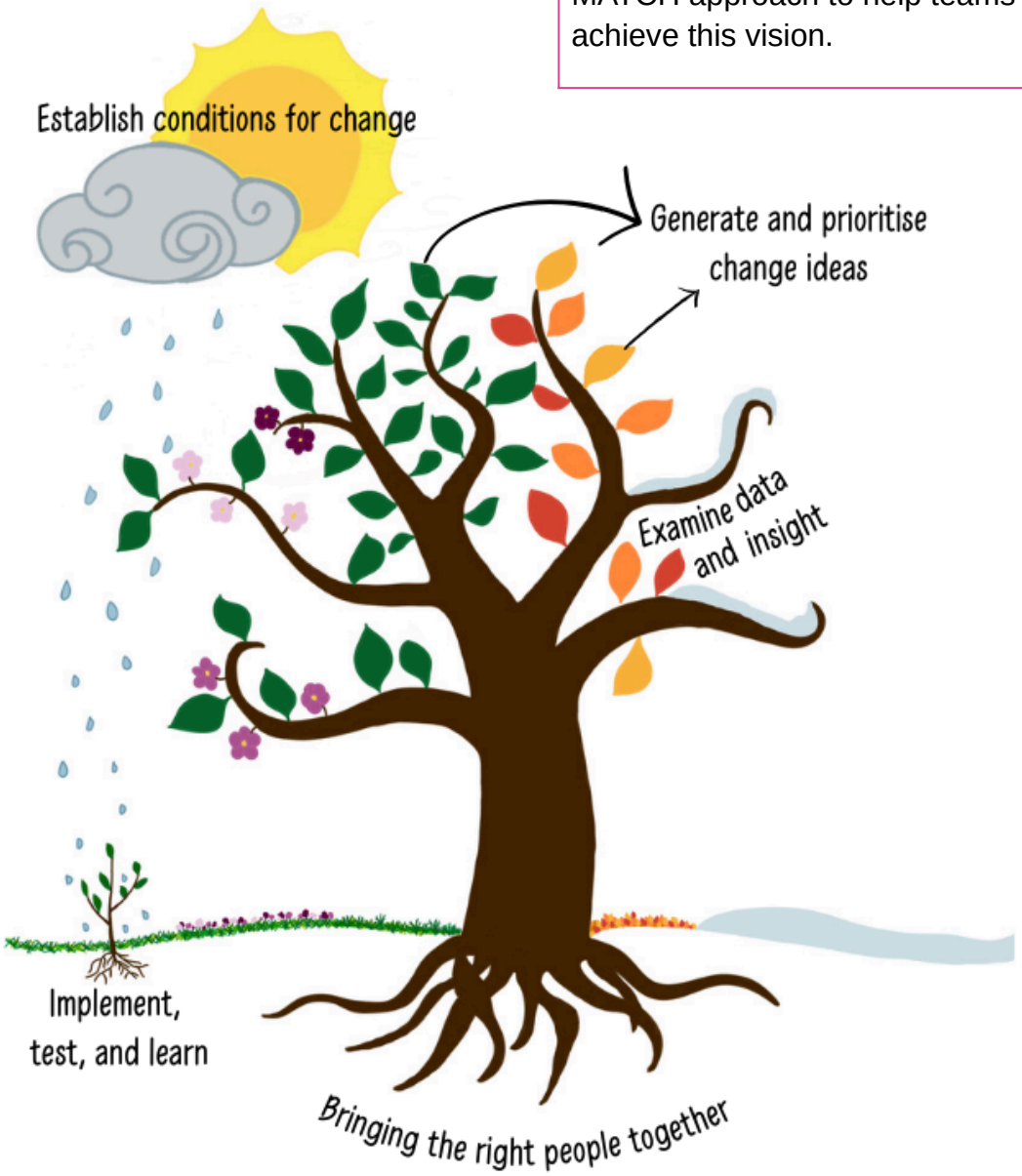
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eMbedding heAlth equiTy in City & Hackney (MATCH)

We established the eMbedding heAlth equiTy in City and Hackney (MATCH) programme to support partners across the system to embed health equity in their day-to-day work.

The vision behind the PHH and MATCH is very bold:

To transition from addressing health inequalities solely through targeted services to embedding health equity as a core function within all partner organisations across the City and Hackney system. We developed the MATCH approach to help teams achieve this vision.



The MATCH participatory approach includes:



Bringing the right people together

Including statutory partners, the voluntary sector, community organisations, and residents



Examining data and insight

To understand health inequalities, combining quantitative data with rich, qualitative insights



Establishing conditions for change

To understand what the barriers are to improving inequalities



Generating and prioritising areas or ideas for change

With communities and residents



Implementing, testing, and learning

From change projects

Each year the programme looks at key areas where deep health inequalities exist within City and Hackney and invites partners across the statutory and voluntary, community, and social enterprise sectors to work together in a participatory process collaborating on areas for change.[1]

[1] Please see Appendix for statement on interpretation of differences shown by characteristics such as ethnicity or deprivation.

In year 1 the programme explored

Improving equity in cardiovascular disease (CVD) outcomes:

How do we improve fairness in heart health outcomes for Black populations in the City of London and Hackney?

Supporting people in food poverty:

How can we support people to get out of food poverty while also supporting their health and wellbeing needs?

Improving equity in maternity services:

How do we ensure a fairer service for Black and Global Majority families using maternity services?

Improving women's health:

How do we support young women to manage their periods (to tackle inequalities in wellbeing, self-management and adverse outcomes from these)?



Anti-racist commissioning[2]:

Hackney CVS facilitated the co-production of five anti-racist commissioning principles. These principles were then tested through the commissioning of the Young Black People's Mental Wealth Pilot Project run by Hackney CVS.

In year 1 of the programme, we established the MATCH Fund to provide responsive, outcomes-focused funding for areas and ideas for change identified through the programme. We allocated funding to each programme area to run grant schemes co-designed through the MATCH participatory approach, putting system partners at the heart of driving equitable change.

[2] The Anti-Racist Commissioning programme area and grant fund (The Young Black People's Mental Wealth Fund) was delivered by Hackney CVS and is not included in the subsequent sections of this report. Hackney CVS produced their own impact report, which is linked at the end of this report.

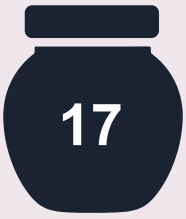
In year 1 MATCH funded:



In each programme area



Average grant size



Community organisations and 1 NHS partner



Average organisational annual income



Awarded in total



Funded community organisations identified as equity-led[3]

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[3] Equity-led organisations are those led by and for marginalised communities, in particular:
led by people from Black and Global Majority communities
led by d/Deaf or disabled communities led by LGBTQI+ communities
led by Women and girls
led by Older people (55+)
led by Younger People (25 and under)
We define 'led by' as at least 51% of an organisation's Trustees/Directors and/or senior staff.

Programme overview: Supporting people in food poverty

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Programme overview: Supporting people in food poverty

How can we support people to get out of food poverty while also supporting their health and wellbeing needs?

The MATCH Food Poverty programme set out to address this question because community groups have seen surges in demand for emergency food provision in Hackney. Just like the rest of the UK, food insecurity in Hackney hits certain groups the hardest - especially children, disabled people, unemployed families, and those from Black and mixed ethnic backgrounds[4]. The MATCH Food Poverty project explored ways to tackle this challenge through system-wide collaboration and identifying ideas for change. The project worked closely with the Hackney Food Network (a network of community organisations that provide food support to residents) and other local public services. While residents didn't attend the planning meetings directly, their voices shaped the process through real-life case studies shared by our community partners.

Together, this group turned their ideas into four key funding areas and set the parameters of the fund, including the grant value, type of funding and eligibility criteria. To support the ambitions of MATCH, partners also agreed that applications from equity-led VCSE organisations would be prioritised within one area of the decision making criteria.



[4] https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/who-is-experiencing-food-insecurity-in-the-uk/

Organisations involved in the MATCH project were invited to apply for grants of up to **£25,000**. To qualify, their projects needed to focus on at least one of these four areas for change:

- Projects that link residents and community food providers with guidance, training and support on nutrition, health and wellbeing.
- Projects delivering cooking classes to youth clubs.
- Projects that gather evidence and research that increases insight into food poverty and/or food pantry models in Hackney.
- Projects that build business models for sustainable food redistribution.

Six applications were made to the fund. A multi-stakeholder panel reviewed the applications - this included partners from the statutory, voluntary, and community sectors as well as residents.

6 applications were made

3 organisations were funded for a total of



All the organisations **identifying as equity-led** with an annual income under



Funded projects

Chatsworth Youth Club ‘Skills for Life’

40 weeks of cooking classes for young people and their families. Awarded £14,980.

‘BLOOM Market’

To source high quality surplus food directly from growers and local markets to create an affordable weekly veg box on a sliding price scale. Awarded £24,878.

H.O.P.E at Morningside ‘Food pantry’

To pilot/establish a sustainable, affordable, culturally appropriate food pantry to reduce reliance on the foodbank. Awarded £9,826.

Fund wide achievements

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Fund wide achievements

There are 3 underpinning impact areas to the MATCH fund:

AWARENESS **ACTION** **ADVOCACY**

Awareness

The funded partners built on the MATCH approach by learning from existing projects and resident insight before testing out new ideas. This careful planning helped them figure out what works best to create long-lasting solutions in the community.



Highlights

Before setting up their own project, H.O.P.E. visited several local food pantries to see how they run. They used these visits to shape their approach, focusing on these key lessons:

SIMPLE AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Keep the offer simple and the same for everyone, no questions asked.

FLEXIBLE, PAY-AS-YOU-GO PRICING

Allow people to pay on a weekly basis, avoiding complex subscription models or long-term commitments unless explicitly requested.

WORK ALONGSIDE FOODBANKS AND REDUCE FOOD WASTE

Run in parallel with the foodbank to reduce food waste, and allow people to see how the pantry works.

SHOPPING EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Make it feel more like a local grocery store. Focus on fun and community, with background music and volunteers on hand.

Bloom Market worked with University of Nottingham PhD researcher Saria Digregorio to facilitate two workshops at Idia's Community Kitchen on the themes of Visible Food Systems and making community-led narratives more visible. Together with **15 local residents, volunteers, and suppliers** in the Bloom Market community, they explored views on food and what people actually want from their food system. More workshops were planned for 2026.



A key success of this fund was improving access to community led provision that is local, affordable and empowering while supporting social connection. Both the food pantry and Bloom Market designed their spaces to offer a warm, social shopping experience - creating a much-needed middle ground between food banks and standard supermarkets. At the same time, popular cooking classes gave parents and kids a space to cook and eat together while learning how to make healthy, budget-friendly meals.

> **80%** of parents we surveyed said they developed new social connections, and made new friends. The project built a community, with **90%** of parents reporting that they felt less isolated and lonely.
>
> Chatsworth Youth Cooking Classes

Action

Improved access to affordable food



households were provided with access to weekly, high quality affordable food



Cost of food is at least **45%** cheaper than supermarkets in the food pantry model



weeks of the cooking club for **148** young people and their parents



of pantry users surveyed said their finances improved after accessing the pantry, and that savings made most often went toward:



paying off/reducing debt



affording basics



buying healthier food

Reducing food waste

126,891 kg of food waste saved in **2024/25**

64,040 kg of surplus food diverted from waste streams

Sustainable models of food provision created

A key aim of the fund was to test and pilot sustainable food models, helping the sector transition away from foodbanks that rely on unpredictable donations (typically through waste streams) and huge amounts of staff and volunteer time. Both H.O.P.E and Bloom Market were able to achieve this, successfully moving to income generating models that have enabled them to build infrastructure and capacity within their organisations and enhance the variety, quality, and accessibility of their food provision. **The Food Pantry at H.O.P.E has generated nearly £5,000 in income and the majority of the regular foodbank users have transitioned onto the food pantry model, driving foodbank usage down by 55%.**

9 new supplier connections at Bloom Market provided a steady stream of **1200kg** of surplus food each week and **6** new local organisations (foodbanks, food cooperatives) mean more fresh food flows to those who need it. Bloom Market has become a hub for surplus food distribution generating **over £45,000 in redistribution income,** funding the model.



Advocacy

Increasing choice and dignity in food

Community food providers often report that foodbanks fail to reach many people they know to be in crisis or long term food poverty, as some individuals would rather go without than queue for food. The choice to pay even a nominal amount and choose from a selection of items removes the stigma associated with the ‘hand out’ of the foodbank. Both H.O.P.E and Bloom Market report reaching beneficiaries who previously went without rather than use a foodbank, but who now choose to pay for the food offer. For H.O.P.E, who were previously overwhelmed with continual increases in foodbank attendance, their new increased operational capacity enables them to support these residents with more food and wrap-around care.

> *“Probably our happiest moment was when a local single mother with a young SEND child told us that although she often needed food-bank support, she avoided queues out of pride. Using the new online shop “felt like real shopping again.” Each week she and her child planned meals together. After finding part-time work, she continued ordering and began volunteering at Streetbox with our SEND students – helping pack and distribute produce for others when her daughter is at school. Seeing her confidence grow has helped our team and has guided us to make sure that while access to affordable food can be online, that we should always be mindful of the importance of maintaining a human connection.”*
>
> *Bloom Market*

Learning

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Learning

- **The lack of control over the quality, quantity, and usability of donated food creates stress for both the organisations providing support and the people facing food insecurity.** Sustainable models can reduce or eliminate this problem by enabling organisations to consistently offer a reliable, high-quality range of food. This improved access reduces the anxiety of food insecurity and boosts overall health and wellbeing.

> *While only **10%** of people reported improvements in their physical health, **100%** said their mental health was better. Knowing that there is consistent access to good quality food and enough of it is a stress relief.*

- Sustainable models enable organisations to move away from resource heavy, reactive approaches and free up resources and capacity to support people in more focused individual ways.
- While the sliding scale model works well, buying food online presents a barrier for those needing the lowest price. The use of cash, trouble with digital access and wanting to touch and feel produce, were all key factors noted as a barrier to adoption.
- While there is a cost attached, using surplus food (that growers expect not to be sold and may go into the waste system) as opposed to waste food (already in the waste system, e.g.



expired food or surplus food no longer able to be sold) gives more control over quality and consistency for essential and seasonal produce while also diverting food away from waste streams.

- Creating programmes around cooking and eating for the

whole family both supports healthy eating in young people and making healthy eating and budgeting a positive, social occasion.

- Stigma surrounding emergency food provision is a barrier for those who need it most. Projects ensured choice, dignity and respect were embedded within their new models by:
  - Ensuring that people can choose from a wide range of options, including ‘luxury’ items like crisps, drinks, and offering free fresh cut flowers to everyone, when available.
  - Offering toiletries.
  - Using ticketing systems and creating dry, warm, social spaces where people can wait their turn to avoid dehumanising queues.
  - Creating a shopping experience similar to that of a supermarket, with a trolley and stations with food categories as well as playing music and creating a fun, social environment.
  - Having a culture of volunteerism that people can buy into.



Considerations for future funding directions:

- Providing funding allows organisations to pilot sustainable models by reducing the risks associated with testing new approaches, which can be daunting if they require radical shifts in both the operational and ideological approach to supporting people experiencing food poverty.
- Funding capital and infrastructure to support organisations to be able to pivot to more sustainable models. Refrigeration and storage can help organisations store food for longer or allow them to buy in bulk when the opportunity arises. Vans and vehicles help organisations to share food with other organisations around the borough that might otherwise go to waste.
- Participatory approaches for this type of work are vital to ensuring the funding is designed equitably and for best impact. However bringing together stakeholders to collaborate on complex issues can take more time than organisations on the frontline have the appetite to engage with. Funders need to balance the need to be clear with organisations on the scope, timeline and suggested engagement levels at the start of programmes.



Case studies

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H.O.P.E at Morningside 'Food Pantry Pilot'

Project Overview

Since opening the foodbank in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the H.O.P.E at Morningside foodbank struggled to cope with surging demand, noting that many regular users had become reliant on the service long-term rather than using it for immediate crises. This increased demand and dependency on the foodbank was not only unsustainable but was also limiting their capacity to respond to urgent needs.



Impact achieved

Impact area: Awareness

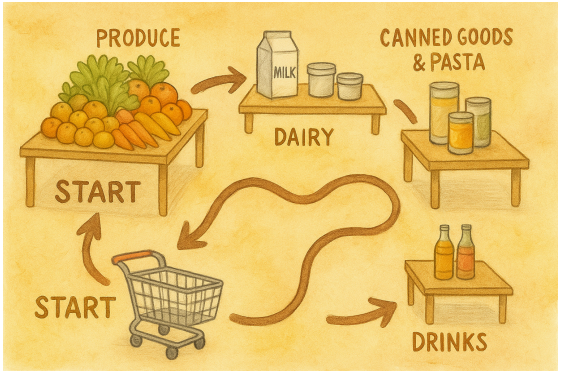
Outcome: Local intelligence of sustainable models of local food provision developed

Before the launch, the team visited other local food pantries to better understand how the model might work, and took home some key learnings:

- Keep the offer simple and the same for everyone, no questions asked.
- Ensure it's flexible, allow people to pay each week and do not complicate this with subscriptions or similar unless asked for.
- Run in parallel to the foodbank to reduce food waste, and enable people to see how the pantry works.
- The shopping experience matters. Keep it fun, local and respectful. Play music, avoid queues (give ticket numbers allowing shoppers to socialise or relax until their turn), provide trolleys and set up tables with categorised items, similar to a grocery store. Volunteers are at each table to chat and help people choose.

Outcome: Improving access to community-led provision and supporting social connection

The community-led model creates a welcoming, social environment. Instead of feeling stigmatised for needing food support, people enjoy a positive space where they are happy to connect with others. Many of the people surveyed reported a 'welcoming feel' and **100% said they felt more connected to their community by coming to the pantry.**



Impact area: Action

Outcome: Sustainable models of food provision created and improved access to affordable food

In the space of a year, H.O.P.E has transitioned **60 of their regular foodbank users alongside 82 other residents into the new food pantry model**. At the time of writing, **134 residents on the surrounding estates were signed up, representing 424 people across** their households.

Between **45-60 weekly residents** pay **£5** per week to access the food pantry and do a shop complete with fruit and vegetables, dairy and fridge items, canned goods, snacks, drinks and often, flowers. They have the option of paying an additional **£2** for meat and **£5** for a toiletries shop once per month.

The pantry has generated nearly **£5,000 in income and is largely self sustainable, with about 50%** of this going immediately into buying more pantry foods, halal meat, cultural foods and monthly toiletries with the rest contributing to the cost of overheads.

> "We are so proud of this, it represented a huge shift in what we were doing and the thinking behind it, that the food bank system was increasingly unsustainable and was creating a culture of dependence."

Outcome: Improving health and wellbeing, and financial resilience

By offering financial assessments and working with the Here to Help Team, **the pantry has seen users of the foodbank go down from 180 to 80 regular users, a decrease of 55%**. This has freed up capacity to support those who are in food crisis and in need of the foodbank in a much more 1-2-1 manner, both in terms of their food offer and wrap-around support.

Residents benefit from the model's stability, paying a single weekly fee for a wide variety of food. Being small and responsive enables H.O.P.E to take a pre-payment for a number of weeks when benefits come in, and to cascade people ‘up’ and ‘down’ the foodbank to the pantry model as needed. **84% of users surveyed said their finances were a lot better** after accessing the pantry, and that **savings made most often went toward paying off/reducing debt (79%)**, followed by **affording basics (21%)** and **buying healthier food (10%)**.



Outcome: Reduction in food waste

The pantry operates before the foodbank, allowing any leftovers to be transferred directly and nearly eliminating waste. Between the two models, **126,891kg of food waste has been saved in 2024/25**. A recently funded van is helping to redistribute any leftover food, but this is still an area for improvement.

Impact area: Advocacy

Voice and choice: Increased choice and dignity in food access

The pantry model not only offers choice, but enables people to access an affordable paid for model. Prior to this, H.O.P.E knew that there were a number of residents without access to enough or healthy food because they would not use the food bank. By bringing choice and dignity into the shopping experience and removing stigma, these residents are now being supported.

> *“We knew of many of our residents, particularly older ones, who were going without rather than using the foodbank. The food pantry means they don’t have to.”*

Chatsworth Youth Club Cooking Club

Project Overview

Chatsworth Youth Club was funded to run a cooking club every Wednesday, bringing together young people, their families and a nutritionist to learn about food choices, and to cook and eat healthy food together.



Project Impact

Impact area: Awareness

Increased nutritional knowledge and embedding expertise in community settings

Bringing health expertise into community settings is a key aim for MATCH and a theme that came up a lot during the participatory process is that there is a need to increase access to nutritional information. Once a month a nutritionist led sessions and answered individual questions and concerns. A key aim for the project was to include young people in all aspects of their food choices, including how to cook healthy meals on a budget as a family and community. As part of each session the group would be given a budget for next week's club and tasked with coming up with a recipe and shopping list.

In response to surveys on healthy food choices, **90%** of parents said they now reduce their salt and oil intake in the food. All of them said they learned how to add vegetable portions in the food and better understand the benefits of making healthy food choices.

> "Most of the learners were unaware of the impact of wrong food stuff on their overall health and would be more mindful, especially the ones that were diabetic as they now understood how proper nutrition can mitigate chronic disease."
>
> Project nutritionist

Outcome: Supporting social connection

The essence of the project was to bring families together to cook and eat, building positive relationships with and around food. One parent remarked that the classes have been a great opportunity to cook with their children, and that the kids have been keen to put their knowledge into practice at home.

80% of parents surveyed said they developed new social connections, and made new friends. The survey showed that the project built a community, with 90% of parents reporting that they felt less isolated and lonely.



Impact area: Action

Outcome: Improving access to community-led food provision

Community-led food provision is key to providing supportive, inclusive spaces to come together. For many of Hackney's communities experiencing food poverty, providing young people with opportunities to learn about cooking and eating healthily on a budget is essential prevention of poor nutrition.

Chatsworth provided 3-hour cookery classes every week for 40 weeks for young people attending youth club activities on Kingsmead, Clapton Park and Chatsworth estates. An experienced community cook led the sessions which reached 148 young people (about 25 at each club) and their parents with the aim of educating the whole family to understand healthy cooking, diets, and nutrition.

> "This is very helpful to put food on the table and learn other ways to cook healthy meals on a low budget."
>
> Parent

Streetbox C.I.C - Bloom Market

Project overview

Streetbox is a community interest company (CIC) dedicated to linking people and organisations with surplus food that would otherwise go to waste. They were funded to develop and test a new model where residents would be able to purchase fruit and veg online or through their existing local community food provider on a tiered price system, ranging from supermarket prices to being heavily discounted.



Project Impact

Impact area: Awareness

Outcome: Local intelligence of sustainable models of local food provision developed

Bloom Market worked with University of Nottingham PhD researcher Saria Digregorio to facilitate two workshops at Idia's Community Kitchen on the themes of Visible Food Systems and making community-led narratives more visible. Together with **15 local residents, volunteers, and suppliers** in the Bloom Market community, they explored views on food and what people actually want from their food system. More workshops were planned for 2026

Outcome: Supporting social connection

The project's widening reach across a variety of organisations in Hackney along with the digital and physical shop at Stamford Hill created an environment of volunteerism to support the market and distribution efforts, fostering social connection and building relationships. **25** volunteers logged over **2,300** extra volunteer hours - an average of just over **44** hours weekly. While people shopped online, collecting food at the Stamford Hill base has fostered a strong sense of community. In fact, several regular shoppers now volunteer to help pick, pack, and sort surplus food.

> While access to affordable food can be digital, we should always be mindful of the importance of maintaining a human connection.

Impact area: Action

Outcome: Sustainable models of food provision created and improved access to affordable food



Streetbox sources high quality surplus food every week from local markets and direct from growers, which residents can then access through the Bloom Market shop online from 08.00 to 22.00. Residents can shop for over **50** fresh produce items and over **120** ambient dry goods store items, and pick up at one of **3 community locations**: Idia's Community Kitchen at Fellowes Centre, Homerton, Woodberry Aid close to Manor House and StreetBox at Stamford Hill. There are 3 pricing levels:

- Retail price - about the same as the supermarket, but fresh and local
- Saver price - about **20%** less than supermarket price
- Super saver price - about **45%** less than supermarket price, with a variety of free options. People are either referred to Bloom Market through partner networks, or by self-referral by asking them directly for this pricing tier.

Buying food online did present a barrier for those needing the lowest price. The use of cash, trouble with digital access and wanting to touch and feel produce were all noted as barriers to adoption and led to slower than expected uptake of the offer. There were **20** regular customers with the majority on the saver or supersaver price.

Partner organisations have also been rapidly evolving their food offers for residents (e.g. transitioning to pantries) and this led to less individual demand than expected for Bloom Market. Feedback was that people were generally happy with that provision and didn't see a need to spend more or go through an extra step of ordering.

Outcome: Improving access to community led provision and reduction in food waste

Although individual uptake was slower than expected, Bloom Market has seen significant organisational growth. By building distribution networks between local groups, it has increased their access to a reliable supply of high-quality food.

Bloom created a network of suppliers, creating new relationships with **5** wholesalers in New Spitalfields Market and **3** growers in the Lea valley and Kent areas, as well as a number of non-fresh providers (including a bakery providing over **540kg** of bread weekly). Partnerships with Idia's Community Kitchen and Woodberry Aid have been strengthened, both of whom received **23,269kgs** surplus food for redistribution through their pantries, foodbanks or other community projects. Additionally Bloom set up new partnerships with 6 local organisations (pantries and cooperatives) to receive both paid and donated surplus. Overall, they have redistributed an estimated **63,500 kilos** of produce (or approx **151,000** meals worth of produce, based on The Waste and Resources Action Programme's [WRAP] 420g serving size per meal).

Due to the success of their new supplier network, donated produce increased by over **1200 kilos** per week on average, far in excess of their intention. To cope with the excess that could not be redistributed, Streetbox's HQ at Stamford Hill set up The Surplus Shed, where people walking past can purchase the surplus food directly leading to approximately only **5%** of edible food wasted.

Further reading

City & Hackney
Population Health Hub

Overall MATCH Year 1 impact report

Read the full impact report here.

The eMbedding heAlth equiTy in City and Hackney (MATCH) programme aims to identify and reduce inequalities by working together with community, statutory and resident partners across the system. In year 1, we brought to life ideas for change across five programme areas where inequalities were identified among our communities:

- Supporting people in food poverty
- Improving equity in maternity services
- Improving equity in cardiovascular disease outcomes
- Women's health
- Anti-racist commissioning

Using a participatory approach, the programme empowered residents and statutory partners to co-design and decide on funding for projects across these key areas. To test the change ideas that were generated, nearly **£250,000** was awarded to **17** community organisations and one NHS partner to address deep-seated inequalities.

The approach resulted in targeted, fit-for-purpose schemes that delivered high-quality, community-led and culturally tailored provision aligned with our impact areas: awareness, action and advocacy. Significant impacts were recorded, such as transitioning **154** households to sustainable food models - which reduced foodbank dependency by **55%** - and training **30** community doulas who provided support to **30** families, empowering them to make informed care choices. The MATCH programme has demonstrated the value of community-led provision in reaching people experiencing the worst systematic health inequalities. It has also highlighted the vital importance of social connection and building a culture of collaboration between community and clinical settings, yet the report still identifies challenges and room to grow.

The model was expanded into a second year to tackle inequalities in healthy weight outcomes, and mental health in people seeking asylum as well as children and young people. Learnings from this funding programme have since led it to take on an 'Academy' style model with the aim of making the programme more sustainable and scalable, with less reliance on funding and short project timeframes.

Overall, the report shows how we can achieve much more when we work in partnership, rather than in isolation, to achieve our vision of a more equitable City and Hackney.

Improving equity in cardiovascular disease outcomes

Read the full impact report here.

The MATCH Year 1 programme - 'Our Fingers on the Pulse' - set out to understand how fairness in heart health outcomes could be improved for Black populations in Hackney and the City of London.

Through the MATCH process, three areas were prioritised for change:

- Projects that utilise existing community infrastructure[5] to deliver activities that improve heart health and build capacity and knowledge within the community to take action
- Projects that take tailored, whole of person approaches to increase communication, awareness and understanding of the barriers and enablers to good heart health and key local support services.
- Projects that provide information and training for people on lower incomes in their workplaces.

Four equity-led community organisations serving Black populations in Hackney and the City of London - STUK CIC, African Community School, Carib Eats and Shepherd Fold Ministry - were selected to deliver tailored, preventative approaches to address the drivers of poor heart health. Their projects offered accessible, trustworthy and culturally tailored services supporting our ambitions to reduce health inequalities in Hackney and the City of London.

Achievements from this work include the delivery of **116** workout sessions and **77** wellbeing workshops, **11** speaker sessions on heart health and **81** people receiving a blood pressure awareness raising check. A significant **707** residents were reached across all projects. A key success was the collaboration with a Specialist Clinical Pharmacist, which bridged the gap between medical expertise and community trust. Ultimately, the programme demonstrated that trust is the primary enabler of engagement; by centering interventions in safe, culturally relatable spaces, this work empowered residents to manage their heart health outside of traditional, often intimidating clinical environments.

[5] Community infrastructure means things like community groups / organisations, relationships, networks, physical and digital spaces.

Improving equity in maternity services

Read the full impact report here.

The MATCH Year 1 maternity programme wanted to understand how to bring about a fairer service for Black and Global Majority families using maternity services by targeting systemic health inequalities.

Engagement with partners throughout the MATCH process led to the generation and prioritisation of the following key change ideas:

- Drop-in information hubs for women in the antenatal and postnatal periods to provide information, support, and connection
- More information provided at initial referrals
- Community doulas
- Compulsory cultural awareness training co-produced with community and staff
- More translation available within maternity units

Funding was awarded to the Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust to pilot two key initiatives: BridgeBirth, which trained **30** community doulas to provide culturally tailored support to women from Global Majority communities, and Multilingual Maternity, which translated vital health information into six priority languages. BridgeBirth received **102** referrals for families requiring support, with **92%** of participants reporting significant improvements in their maternity experience.

The programme highlighted that embedding non-clinical approaches into clinical settings increases the capacity for person-centred care. While the project successfully bridged cultural gaps and empowered women to advocate for themselves, it also identified critical learning points regarding the administrative challenges of onboarding community volunteers into NHS systems and the need for more sustainable resource formats, such as audio and video, for those with lower literacy.

Women's Health

Read the full impact report here.

This MATCH Year 1 programme area on women's health asked 'How can we support young women to manage their periods (to tackle inequalities in wellbeing, self-management and adverse outcomes from these)?'

Through system-wide collaboration, the following areas were identified and prioritised as areas for change:

1. Education for women in the postnatal period to improve women's knowledge of what is normal, what postnatal recovery should entail and when to seek help (and how to advocate for themselves in doing that)
2. Supporting women who experience difficult periods (heavy/painful) via peer support
3. Ensuring that women (especially those who experience barriers to care) are aware of the women's health group consultations that are already in place and feel that the group consultations are accessible, relevant, and trustworthy.

The programme was established in response to data showing that women in City and Hackney spend more of their lives in ill health and disability compared to men. Local insights also revealed a number of other inequalities including barriers to accessing postnatal and women's health services among Black, Jewish, South and East Asian, and migrant communities, stigma around pelvic health, digital exclusion, language barriers, and a lack of culturally safe care.

The projects which were selected for funding as part of the MATCH process piloted models to support women to advocate for themselves, to understand health risks and warning signs, to gain support from other women going through similar issues, and to access services. These were:

- **Safe Spaces for Women:** Culturally tailored postnatal workshops focused on health literacy, pelvic health and navigating services, led by the Women's Health CIC (Stamford Hill) and BodyOwn.
- **Group Coaching:** Trauma-informed creative and movement sessions for those suffering from heavy or painful periods and the wider impacts this can have on emotional and physical wellbeing, delivered by True You Today.
- **Community Health Champions:** Peer-led

advocacy to improve access to NHS group consultations for menopause and menstrual health to be led by the City and Hackney Community Health Champions Programme.

Impact was measured across three core pillars and some highlights include:

1. **Awareness**: Participants learned that common postnatal symptoms like urinary leakage are "not normal", leading **91%** to feel more confident in managing their pelvic health.
2. **Action:** Women were empowered to seek clinical help, with many pledging to pursue pelvic floor exercises, consult a GP and practice learned techniques among other pledges.
3. **Advocacy:** The True You Today workshops saw a **30%** increase in life satisfaction and a **95%** reduction in feelings of isolation among participants.

Overall, participants in projects supported by this programme frequently reported increased self-acceptance and emotional resilience. Several participants also reported that group sessions helped them realise they were not alone in their experiences and provided an important sense of belonging.

To effectively support women's health, the findings showed that providers must adopt a holistic, mixed-method approach to supporting learning that balances community support with personalised, one-on-one care, as well as a variety of communication channels or formats. Because women often manage competing responsibilities, services must remain flexible and responsive, offering hybrid options (in-person and digital) that adapt to varying comfort levels and access needs. Furthermore, establishing trust and cultural safety through women-only, inclusive spaces is essential for creating trust, reducing stigma and enabling open discussion, as is staff with shared lived experience. Finally, moving toward empowering, non-judgmental, and creative spaces, and away from medicalised clinical environments, programmes can better equip women to take confident action in managing their own wellbeing.

Anti-Racist Commissioning

Read about this work here.

The Anti-Racist Commissioning (ARC) workstream, led by Hackney CVS and funded by the MATCH programme, developed in response to the belief that global majority-led organisations are best placed to serve their communities but are structurally disadvantaged in accessing public funding. Insights from previous work highlighted that systemic racism in commissioning was often brought up as a barrier to equity.

The work aimed to address systemic racism in public sector funding by testing five co-produced anti-racist commissioning principles. These principles:

- Building trusting relationships
- Trusting community groups to identify needs
- Design simple, flexible and transparent application and decision-making processes
- Support small organisations with core funding and resources
- Use trauma informed approaches.

These principles were tested through the co-developed Young Black People's Mental Wealth Pilot Project. This pilot successfully engaged **155** young people through initiatives delivered by six different Global Majority-led organisations. The initiatives included barbershop-based mentoring and creative expression, peer support, mental health through basketball and music, and developing new community-led mental health interventions - all fostering improved confidence, emotional intelligence, and community belonging.

Despite high participant satisfaction, the project identified critical areas for improvement, including the need for longer delivery timeframes to deepen relationships and increased staff capacity to manage administrative and supporting tasks. To support future systemic change, the report introduces practical tools for commissioners, such as an anti-racist process checklist and proportionality guidelines for monitoring

Appendix

City & Hackney
Population Health Hub

Core anti-racist and structural inequalities statement

Differences shown by characteristics such as ethnicity or deprivation reflect unequal living conditions shaped by structural factors, including poverty, racism, access to housing, education and employment, access to and experience of healthcare, and greater exposure to harm such as crime, environmental risks, unsafe housing, or financial insecurity. As such they should not be interpreted as natural, unavoidable or expected.

When data are broken down by a single characteristic, they show only part of a much more complex picture. For example, patterns by deprivation often reflect a social gradient, meaning that people living in more disadvantaged circumstances tend to experience worse health and shorter lives than those who are more advantaged. Differences by ethnicity frequently reflect the impact of systemic racism and wider structural inequalities, rather than ethnicity itself.

These findings should always be interpreted in context and alongside other evidence, including qualitative insight and lived experience. They are intended not only to support understanding of structural inequality, but to inform action: shaping local public health policy, strategy, service design and decision-making in ways that reduce inequality and target the underlying causes affecting groups most impacted.