



BEYOND THE FOOD BANK

A TOOLKIT FOR SETTING UP AN ALTERNATIVE,
INNOVATIVE MODEL OF SUPPORT

 **Sufra**
FIGHT
POVERTY
LOVE
COMMUNITY



MARCH 2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 01** Introduction
- 02** The CWP Model Explained
- 04** Getting Set Up
- 06** Registering Members
- 07** The Shop
- 09** The Café and Kitchen
- 10** Establishing Integrated Support
- 12** Running Your Project
- 15** Project Budget
- 16** Project Impact
- 17** Policy and Procedure
- 18** Challenges and Lessons Learnt
- 19** Resources
- 20** Conclusion and Thanks

INTRODUCTION

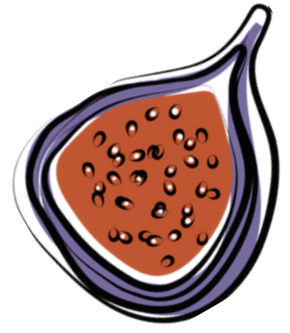
Our Community Wellbeing Project (CWP) was established in February 2023, as an alternative model of holistic support. Rather than distributing food parcels via a typical food bank referral, membership to the CWP provides a whole range of services including access to food, welfare information, advice and guidance, children's activities, community and wellbeing support, and gym memberships.

The weekly membership fee enables you to take home a subsidised shop, catch up with your friends over a free lunch, attend a workshop focused on children's oral health, speak with an advisor about your energy payments and then book on to a Zumba class... all under one roof.

This toolkit outlines how Sufra, together with partners, set up the Community Wellbeing Project, some of the key considerations for others hoping to develop a similar programme, and highlights lessons learned along the way. We hope to provide useful insight to other food aid organisations looking to transition beyond the traditional food bank model.



THE CWP MODEL EXPLAINED



There's a Food Bank on every corner. Do residents need more support options?

Yes, and no. There is much research that clearly demonstrates the many issues with 'traditional' Food Banks, including onerous logistics, stigma, a lack of choice and limited impact. Sufra has been operating a traditional Food Bank for over 10 years. Whilst effective at providing immediate support to those experiencing hunger, it offers little more than a sticky plaster solution.

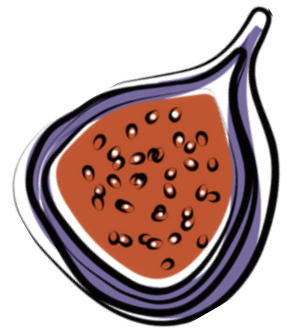
The Community Shop element of the CWP model (often called a pantry, affordable food club or social supermarket) is increasingly prevalent as an alternative to Food Banks. However the shop is just one element of the CWP which offers a far more holistic programme of support. So, what are the benefits of the CWP approach?

- ✓ **Holistic support** where multiple advice agencies, local organisations, groceries, hot food, gym access and wellbeing activities are all available in one space.
- ✓ **More preventative** than emergency food distribution, as the emphasis is on local residents accessing the project before reaching crisis point. Longer term goals are agreed, with financial and personal wellbeing at the fore.
- ✓ **More dignified**, as members choose their items and contribute a nominal fee towards their shop and are in control of their own Personal Development Plan.
- ✓ **More relational support**, as members are encouraged to connect and socialise over food. Members and volunteers build connections and foster a greater sense of belonging to the local area.

A £4 WEEKLY FEE, PAYABLE VIA CASH OR CARD PROVIDES:

- A **subsidised grocery shop** at our Community Shop equivalent to the retail value of £25 including pantry staples, personal care products, cleaning items, fresh and frozen produce, fruit, vegetables and bakery items.
- Free **lunch, refreshments and dinner** at our Community Café and Kitchen.
- Access to a **team of advisors and partners** offering guidance to members on financial welfare, housing, health and wellbeing goals and more.
- **Free gym memberships** to the leisure centre for members and their families, alongside other ad hoc social and wellbeing support.

THE CWP MODEL EXPLAINED



GETTING SET UP



✓ Community Consultation

Before setting up a CWP style model or adapting your current food aid model, we recommend carrying out a **needs assessment** in your community. This might involve hosting **focus groups** asking community members about their interest in shopping at a community shop, what they'd like to buy and how much they'd be willing to pay. **Visit existing services** to see where the gaps in wraparound support are. To capture data, you can use tools such as SurveyMonkey or MS Forms via email, social media, or even WhatsApp Groups.

✓ Identify Suitable Premises

The CWP is hosted at Bridge Park Leisure Centre, leased to us for free by Brent Council. Ideally your premises will be located in the heart of the community, with good transport links. Consider accessibility requirements.

- Explore your community to identify venues that are free or low cost.
- Find local businesses that may host your project, or lease their kitchen for reduced rates.
- Speak to local community centres and local councillors to explore possible venues to host your project.
- Explore empty sites that could be leased by your local authority.

✓ Explore funding options

You may need to generate enough money through membership payments to cover some of your costs such as rent, extra food (if you decide to supplement surplus deliveries) or staff. Additional ways to raise income include:

- Support from your local Council. Is there funding that could support your project?
- Community fundraising. Is there appetite in the local community to fund a local project like this?
- Grants from Trusts and Foundations or other funders, such as:
 - The Greater London Authority
 - Feeding Britain
 - National Lottery Communities Fund
 - King Charles III Charitable Fund
 - Garfield Weston Foundation
 - City Bridge Foundation

....Or speak to your local CVS organisation for fundraising support



✓ Purchasing Equipment

Depending on existing infrastructure and services in your space, you will need a variety of equipment. Much of this can be sourced second-hand from Facebook Marketplace/Gumtree, or donated by community groups and many kitchen items can be leased short term. Below is our initial list of equipment.

Community Shop

- Shop shelving
- Fruit and veg racking
- Storage room shelving
- Card payment system
- Sack barrow for moving crates

Community Café

- Coffee Machine
- Hot water urn
- Crockery and cutlery for 100 covers
- Water jugs
- Table cloths
- Cake display trays
- Sack holder bins

Kitchen

- Refrigerated container for storage
- Chest freezer
- Oven
- Microwave
- Soup warmer
- Large pots and pans
- Pantry storage shelves

Wraparound Support

- Confidentiality dividers
- Laptops for conducting assessments



REGISTERING MEMBERS

When we started registering members onto the CWP, we invited partners, local organisations and community leaders to refer eligible families to the project, or we invited people to self refer. See our registration form in the resource pack, linked at the end of the toolkit. The eligibility criteria for our project included all three of the following:



Why focus on families? Evidence shows that families with children have been hit hardest by the Cost-of-Living crisis. Families with children are often affected by the benefit cap and make up a large portion of the 'working poor', while childcare commitments and benefit restrictions limit their ability to work.



THE SHOP



The shop operates a stars-based pricing system. Items in the shop are categorised with star values between 1 and 4 – the more stars, the more expensive the item. The star model was developed from ideas set out in Feeding Britain's guidance for new Affordable Food Clubs.

With a £4 membership fee, you receive 22 stars worth of produce. This was calculated on the basis that each star is worth around 40p when purchasing wholesale, and therefore the average wholesale basket cost per member is approximately £8. As a result, the membership fee covers 50% of the full basket cost.

No of stars	Average Item Cost (wholesale)	Examples of what's available
1 star items	46p each	Noodles Tinned peas Washing up liquid Baked beans
2 star items	66p each	Baby wipes Pasta Toothbrushes Tinned tuna
3 star items	£1.08 each	Shampoo Sugar Cereal
4 star items	£1.55 each	Coffee Nappies

In addition to their 22 stars (£8 wholesale cost, plus donated non perishable items), members can also access fresh surplus foods (which have been donated for free) in our fridge and freezer including cold meats, dairy products, and frozen meals, as well as a bag full of fresh fruit, vegetables, bread, pastries and cakes.

THE SHOP

Breakdown of the Basket Retail Value = £25



Members access the shop once a week. While there, they are encouraged to spend time in the café, check in with advisors and access any other partner services available on the day. While the average basket of shopping is valued at £25, our members often take away goods worth a lot more.

Shop stock procurement

It is crucial that members can choose from a range of perishable, and non perishable items, including hygiene and cleaning products, mimicking a standard shopping experience as much as possible.

Wholesalers

Morrisons Wholesale delivers the majority of our non perishable stock. We combined orders with the Sufra Food Bank stock and therefore reached the threshold required to place orders. To set up an account with a supplier you might have to give them estimates of the quantities you will be ordering, and it is important to check they can make deliveries that suit your schedule. Most wholesalers, such as Morrisons or Bestway will offer free delivery but have minimum order requirements. Local wholesalers may be willing to negotiate.

Accessing Surplus Food and Donations

The Felix Project and City Harvest deliver the majority of our perishable stock, including bread, cakes fruits, vegetables, bread, dairy products, and meat. The general public can also provide donations – either directly to the project or by organising for an online delivery from any supermarket to your site.





THE CAFE & KITCHEN



Food Hygiene

After registering your food business, the local environmental health department will inspect your premises to check on food hygiene. Some considerations before your inspection takes place:

- There must be access to toilets with a washbasin for washing hands.
- If you use vehicles for transporting food, you need to tell the local authority how many vehicles you use. Vehicles must be kept clean.
- You must not store cleaning chemicals and disinfectants in areas where food is handled.
- If you are going to sell meat or dairy products, there is a much higher risk of problems, so you will need to have strict systems in place to manage food safety. Seek advice from your local environmental health officer.
- Continuous records need to be kept, including fridge temperatures and use by dates.
- Consider enrolling staff and volunteers onto a Level 2 Food Hygiene training course. We use an online provider called highspeedtraining.co.uk

ESTABLISHING INTEGRATED SUPPORT

We realised from the initial pilot that comprehensive wraparound support was the key to ensuring long-term impact on families, and that a standalone Community Shop would not be an effective way to support members.

How did we establish wraparound support?

1. We Identified areas of support to focus on – e.g. individual health and wellbeing support and family support.
2. We worked with our existing Advice Team to identify organisations across the borough to approach.
3. We contacted organisations for initial conversations to gain support for the project and confirm availability before going live.
4. We created a timetable of wraparound support to share with members, ensuring each focus area was covered and that members are aware of which organisations can help with different aspects of their development plan.

Most organisations set up a drop-in station during opening hours. Others supported in other ways, eg. West London Waste established a partnership where we could refer guests to collect refurbished bikes, and Cadent provided slow-cookers that we could distribute during advice appointments to support those with concerns around energy bills.



ESTABLISHING INTEGRATED SUPPORT

Financial	Brent Hubs	Christians Against Poverty
	Green Doctors	Advice4Renters
	The Sherriff Centre	Sufra Advice Team
Mental and Physical Health	Brent Public Health	Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust
	Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust	Hestia
Family	Brent Libraries	Flying Seagulls
	Shaw Trust	Family Wellbeing Centre
Holistic	Mayhew Animal Home	West London Waste
	Brent Libraries	Cadent
Employment	Department for Work and Pensions	Brent Start
	Shaw Trust	



RUNNING YOUR PROJECT

There are a number of different human resourcing models to explore. We opted to employ some core staff and then built a team of volunteers to play an essential role in delivering the various components of the project.

Staffing

- Project Coordinator – 24 hours
- Community Kitchen Session Lead– 16 hours
- Community Chef – 24 hours
- Facilities Assistant – 22 hours

We were keen to recruit from existing Sufra networks, volunteers and local residents that already know the context of the project and are familiar with the area. Adverts were shared in Sufra volunteer WhatsApp groups, local Job Centres' promoted certain roles, and roles were also posted onto [CharityJobs.co.uk](https://www.charityjobs.co.uk).

Job Descriptions for each of the roles are linked in the resource pack.

Volunteers

Roles and Responsibilities

Volunteer roles are distributed between the café, shop and evening kitchen. Although they each have clear definitions, volunteers are encouraged to swap between roles and learn each element of the project. We are flexible with shift times depending on individual availability. Information about volunteering roles were added to our online registration form.

Cafe Assistant	10.00 – 14.30 14.30 – 18.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Serving refreshments and snacks from the café• Supporting the chef in the kitchen with preparation• Speaking and socialising with members• Keeping the café clean and organised
Shop Assistant	10.00 – 14.30 14.30 – 18.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restocking shelves• Helping members find items• Totting up basket content• Socialising and speaking with members
Kitchen Assistant	10.00 – 14.30 14.30 – 17.30 17.30 – 20.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cooking, chopping and prepping food• Preparing the space for the Community Kitchen Session• Plating food and serving guests• Clean-up of all items used during the session, including the kitchen and seating area

Recruitment

Volunteers were recruited initially from the existing Sufra volunteer pool, and using a variety of social media posts on different platforms. Once up and running, an increasing number of project members also asked become volunteers.

✓ Consider the following platforms to advertise for volunteers:

- Nextdoor
- Hoplr
- Instagram
- Local area Facebook Groups

✓ Create WhatsApp circular for staff, trustees and volunteers to share on:

- Faith groups
- Local school parent groups
- Neighbourhood/street groups
- Family groups

Volunteers

Induction and Training

- Before starting, volunteers are emailed a welcome pack including policies and procedures, information on the wider organisation, staffing structure and what to expect as part of their role. It is a good idea to share a document with information that volunteers can refer to if needed.
- Each new volunteer should be inducted, so they are aware of the ethos of the project, the difference between this and the Sufra Food Bank, and the key responsibilities of the role.
- Regular training should be provided to ensure volunteers are working to high standards, and also to offer development to individuals looking to upskill. Some training offered to CWP volunteers is listed below:
 - Safeguarding
 - Food Hygiene Level 2
 - Homelessness Awareness Training by Crisis
 - First Aid in the Workplace

Expenses

It is important to Sufra that volunteering is accessible to all. We reimburse oyster travel to and from shifts, ensuring that this is pre-agreed with volunteers and recorded.

Communications and Signing up to Rotas

A new WhatsApp group was created for volunteers. Every week, staff post a poll so that volunteers could sign up to volunteering sessions in the week ahead. This allowed us to post extra shout-outs if we needed more help, and provided a space to share notices about any changes or updates to the project.

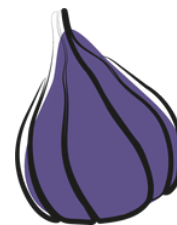


PROJECT BUDGET

Below is an overview of the budget associated with running this project 2 days a week for a year. Donations in kind – particularly for the value of the surplus food donated by partners has not been factored in.

Budget Item	£	Description
Staff Costs	£109k	Salary contributions for Project Coordinator, Chef, Facilities Assistant, Facilities and Logistics Manager, Food Aid Manager, Advisors and Programmes Manager
Food Procurement	£49k	Food purchased for the Community Shop and staples for cafe
Equipment	£3.4k	Cafe and kitchen equipment – cleaning products, packaging, cooking equipment, POS system for shop
Volunteer Expenses	£2k	Volunteer travel reimbursements
Support costs	£25k	Support costs to cover management costs, subscriptions, membership fees, utilities, IT etc
Total expenditure	£188k	Estimate cost of project for 1 year (based on 2 days per week)
Income from memberships	£10k	£4 per shop
Expenditure minus income	£178k	Total project cost

PROJECT IMPACT



- In the project's first year:**
- 436 households enrolled onto a 12 week membership
 - 2,639 shops
 - 3,506 café visits and 6,523 kitchen meals
 - 476 engagements at advice drop ins and workshops

The table below demonstrates potential savings for one member. In reality, multiple household members benefit from the café, kitchen, shop and gym membership and therefore the savings are much larger.

Estimated savings from the project	Saving	Visits	Frequency	Total
Gym membership (3 months)	£18	1	3 months	£54
Grocery shopping	£21.50	1	12 weeks	£258
Café meals and drinks	£5.50	2	12 weeks	£132
Kitchen meals and drinks	£7	2	12 weeks	£168
Money saved for individual membership for 3 months				£612

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

The CWP has a M&E framework with 4 main outcomes areas that we want to achieve for members (listed below). Surveys are conducted with members at the start and end of the project to measure changes. Some impact statistics from these surveys are outlined below from the initial 6 months of the project.

Financial resilience: Only 9% of those asked identified as having sufficient funds to pay for sufficient food for their household at the start of the project. By the end of their memberships, this figure had risen to 44%.

Health and Wellbeing: When asked if members feel optimistic about the future, have energy, and have time to relax, the majority of responses at the start of the project was 'rarely'. By the end, the most common response had improved to 'some of the time'.

Access to other services: Members' confidence in accessing services in the borough grew from an average of 4.3/10 at the start of membership to 6.3/10 at the end.

Access to affordable food: Baseline data showed that 63% of respondents could not afford the food that their household needed. After engaging with the CWP, this figure dropped to 13%.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

✓ **Insurance**

If you're setting up a project that includes volunteers or any staff, and you're inviting members of the public into a community venue then employers liability and public liability insurance is crucial to mitigate risks.

✓ **Data Protection**

In order to comply with GDPR guidelines, steps should be taken to ensure data is handled safely. We have a data sharing agreement with Brent Hubs, which allows both Sufra and Hubs advisors to conduct initial appointments and access this data throughout the membership. Staff laptops are kept locked when not in use, and we are paperless with confidential information.

Safeguarding

- ✓ Safeguarding training for staff and volunteers can ensure broad knowledge of your organisational policies, as well as the procedure in the your local authority. As this is a busy environment with adults and children who may be at risk, it is important for everyone to be trained.

Cash Handling and Petty Cash

- ✓ When handling shop and café payments, consider contactless platforms such as SumUp or iZettle. When processing cash, it will need to be stored securely onsite, reconciled against transaction logs, and banked. A petty cash float can be used for expenses, alongside a policy for it's use and a log of payments.

Complaints

- ✓ A complaints policy should be accessible to volunteers and members. We shared this with volunteers electronically, and it is available in the space for members to access if needed.



CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Key Challenges

Scaling up in a manageable way. Starting new project with four different elements, multiple partners, and the recruitment of staff and volunteers, meant a scramble to get everything up and running together. As expected, there were many teething issues.

Capacity amongst partner organisations. Organisations partnering with us had limited capacity, as they were trying to meet increased demand across the borough. At times, this made it challenging to establish schedules that were adhered to.

Lessons learnt

- Starting the project slowly and phasing in different elements gradually, allows for troubleshooting along the way, as well as a more manageable recruitment of volunteers.
- Health and wellbeing support for adults and children must be a priority. These have been the most well attended sessions, and feedback tells us of the transformational difference the gym membership made for members. The link between poverty and mental and physical wellbeing is clear.
- Wraparound support is most effective on a 1-1 basis. Group sessions and workshops garner low attendance, whilst members fed back that they prefer the opportunity for tailored advice, even when accessing advice for non-confidential issues.
- The Community Café has become a place to socialise, meet people and build community. This has had a remarkable impact on the wellbeing for our members.
- The Community Shop must stock more than just food. Sanitary pads, condoms and washing up liquid are amongst our best-sellers.

Other things to keep in mind

- Volunteers from the membership offer incredible value. They have insight into what members want, and support the project become embedded into the community.
- A non stigmatised location is crucial. Feedback has overwhelmingly positive about the leisure centre as a venue, as enjoying lunch here is not associated with 'charity'.

RESOURCES



Find below many of the resources used for the Pilot Phase of the Community Wellbeing Project. While they are far from perfect, we hope they are useful resources if you are considering a similar holistic model of support. For further information, do get in touch: nina@sufra-nwlondon.org.uk.

Click on the links below or scan the QR code to take you to the digital resource pack:

[Initial Community Wellbeing Project Info Poster](#)

[Volunteer Recruitment Social Media Post](#)

[Initial Community Kitchen Info Poster](#)

[Membership FAQ Sheet](#)

[Physical Activity Offer](#)

[Membership Card Example](#)

[Risk Assessment](#)

[Baseline and End of Membership Survey](#)

[Membership Initial Registration Form](#)

[Project Coordinator Job Description](#)

[Personal Development Plan Proforma](#)

[Community Chef Job Description](#)

[Welfare Workshop/Drop-in Support Timetable](#)

[Facilities Assistant Job Description](#)

[Wellbeing Workshop/Drop-in timetable](#)

[Example Community Kitchen Menu](#)



Scan here to access the links

CONCLUSIONS AND THANKS

In a borough where 1 in every 3 people are experiencing poverty, it is evident that there is a need for this project. In the initial three months' pilot, it was clear that there was an appetite and high uptake for this project – not only among community members needing cost of living support, but also among volunteers and partners who were eager to make a positive impact on local families on low incomes.

Holistic models like the CWP are only possible due to intense collaboration with a multitude of partners with expertise across the board, and this collaboration is key to any impact achieved by the CWP. By working in an integrated way, we believe this project is mitigating the impact of the cost-of-living crisis whilst addressing some of the drivers of inequality in Brent: poverty, poor quality of life, and a lack of agency.

Where food bank demand across the country is at an all time high, we clearly need to be working more effectively to support local communities. If we are serious about ending the need for food banks, we need to accept that emergency food aid is not the solution, and explore more effective ways to prevent poverty. Building community and taking a more holistic approach is a step in that direction.

A huge thanks to all of our partners who have collaborated so far. We look forward to taking the next steps in the Community Wellbeing Project, together.



PARTNERS



Department
for Work &
Pensions



Chartwells
So much more than Fantastic Food



shaw trust



LAWSTOP



Central and
North West London
NHS Foundation Trust

Cadent
Your Gas Network



Central London
Community Healthcare
NHS Trust



The Sherriff Centre





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