



Poverty reduction

Scrutiny panel April 2023



Poverty reduction



Hackney is a borough where poverty and inequality is becoming more entrenched after a decade of austerity measures and a pandemic.

Tackling Poverty has been a key priority for the Council in recent years and we adopted a poverty reduction framework in March 2022.

Over the last year we have been working to develop a more coordinated emergency support and advice offer, with more preventative help, linking emergency support with income maximisation and advice and supporting frontline services and community partners on the ground who are best placed to support residents. Ultimately we are trying to create one connected system of support, with the Council, statutory partners, food partners and community organisations working together.

This year the Council passed a Right to Food Motion which ensures a continued focus on the joining up of efforts around financial support, food security, healthy and sustainable food.

£840k investment in poverty reduction since 2020

£330k -staff time	2020 - 2024	<p>Ensuring that we have a more coordinated approach to meeting material needs across a system that was disjointed and fragmented- this resource ensured that we were able to work at scale to meet community need during the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working closely with advice providers to make sure their support is more connected to the wider system • improving the way food surplus is distributed via food hubs, maximising take up by diverse organisations and attracting £180k external funding to develop food hubs further • developing local food networks -by working together, to maximise our collective impact, we have sought to cater to diverse cultural and dietary needs, make the case for more funding and make the best use of external funding secured - eg household support fund, GLA funding • strengthening connections on the ground in local areas through two system convenors
£25k to support frontline workers	2021-22	So we offer more effective help, developing digital tools, arranging staff development so staff can offer good help, that respects and empowers residents- support was offered to 100+ frontline workers
£40k -development of fresh food voucher scheme	2020-22	Working with Alexandra Rose fresh food voucher scheme and affordable and independent retailers mainly in markets, thus also boosting the local economy- now being funded by public health.
£60k to develop early help	2020-21	Recognising the importance of early intervention in early years in improving life chances and tackling poverty
£250k - changing the way we work in housing needs	2020-22	Social workers have been embedded into the Benefits and Housing Needs to support clients with holistic, wraparound and psychologically informed services for the most vulnerable residents- to help them secure and maintain housing tenancies.
£135k- staff time / training for system	2023-24	Outstanding balance of £135k from the original £840k will be used to support continued development of partnerships on the ground, in addition to the new £250k that has been committed to in the budget for 23/24

Investment in poverty reduction



The Council has recently identified a further £600k to support poverty reduction. The focus is on either developmental interventions or those that meet the needs of groups that Household Support Fund cannot support, and specifically those with no recourse to public funds (public funds does not mean any council fund, there are specific restrictions as set out [here](#)). In summary resources will support:

- Tackling child poverty in schools- this was in advance of the Mayor of London announcing that the GLA would fund free school meals in all primary schools
- Money Hub support: topping up grant funding support for in home appliances and investing further in income maximisation officers
- Hardship support and preventative help for those who have no recourse to public funds.

Long term prevention	Tackling market drivers	Mitigation
1. Prevention, early years and early help	2. Tackling low wages and cost of living	3. Responding to the material needs of poverty
Aim: to focus on prevention, early years and early help for all ages, as a key way to improve life chances and tackle poverty.	Aim: to take actions to address low wages and the cost of living, as key drivers of poverty in London.	Aim: to better meet people's immediate material needs and offer more preventative help.
Strategic objective: to support children and families in a child's early years and to provide early help to prevent crisis points and needs becoming more complex as someone gets older.	Strategic Objective: to maximise opportunities for affordable housing and good quality employment, making the case for national policy change when needed.	Strategic Objective: to develop a more coordinated emergency support and advice offer, with more preventative help, and to make the case for a better benefits system.
We will focus on identification and prevention of harm, escalation of need and crisis by strengthening our early help offer for residents of all ages.	We will take long term action to address what is driving poverty in London, specifically low wages, housing costs and the cost of living.	We will take action in response to the direct material needs of people already experiencing or at risk of experiencing poverty and destitution.

Cross cutting

4. Prioritising poverty reduction across the system

Aim: to ensure poverty reduction is a priority across the system

Strategic objective: to ensure the needs, drivers and impacts of poverty are understood and that responses are embedded into key strategy

We will influence the whole system so we are better able to tackle poverty because poverty is a complex issue which cuts across many other areas.

5. Ways of working

Aim: to help people on low incomes address all the issues which matter, not just the presenting issue.

Strategic Objective: To offer training, support and resources to all staff across sectors so they can work with residents in a strengths based way.

We need to look at how all services that come into contact with residents understand the impact of poverty and the approaches that are needed to work preventatively and in a strength based way. This work has already started during the pandemic and will be a priority to continue in the first year of this framework to build momentum, and because it underpins the other areas of focus.

Deep dive: priority 1 and priority 3



- The Council alone cannot meet the scale of the challenge facing residents living in poverty in the context of the cost of living crisis
- We have therefore taken a system-wide approach to delivery of support for residents working with key council services and partners across health, voluntary and community sector.
- This work is guided by cross-cutting priorities 4 and 5 of 'ways of working' and 'poverty-proofing' to ensure that the coordinated response lays strong foundations that we can build on in an integrated and asset-based approach
- The two priorities the Policy and Strategic Delivery team have been leading on the coordination of with key Council, health and voluntary sector services in the context of the cost of living crisis are priorities **1: early years, early help and prevention, and priority 3: responding to the material impacts of poverty.**

System-wide approach: actions taken



- Since July 2022 and in response to the cost of living crisis, we have been curating and facilitating fortnightly online sessions to share tools and resources with resident-facing practitioners from Council, voluntary and community sector and NHS and other key services.
- We have also worked with the local place-based partnership that is part of the Integrated Care System to establish a system-wide group to oversee the cost of living crisis response across the borough that now meet monthly.

Health

8 neighbourhoods mapped to PCNs, **MDT meetings** in each neighbourhood, Anticipatory care coordinators and N'hood OD pilots

Trusted referral partners: **Locomotor service, Adult Community Rehabilitation Team, Midwifery, health visiting** and 8x **social prescribers** linked to PCNs

Voluntary sector

20 **community infrastructure organisations** (VCS orgs funded for 3 years to work in partnership to improve preventative help for Hackney communities) - soon to be 25

Hackney **food network** - 40-90 community based orgs providing food and other holistic support for residents in need

Council

20 x **relational leads** from ASC, CFS, Housing, Public Health, Customer services, P&SD

Poverty reduction network and **Money Hub** referrers

Trusted referral partners in CFS, schools, Housing, ASC and day centre, Medical tuition service PAUSE in public health, DAIS,

Grant funded network of **advice providers** (in the community, delivering from children's centres and health settings; **Community navigators** and other services commissioned by health and council services.

Tools for frontline staff working with residents who are struggling sessions, mailing list and newsletter (approx 50-70 attend live session fortnightly, 700 on mailing list and is included in bulletins and newsletters across the system.

System-wide delivery group of senior leads across health, VCS and Council providing oversight to the cost of living response and poverty reduction framework

1. Prevention, early years and early help



Our first priority in the Council's poverty reduction strategic framework is on prevention and early years support which is arguably the most impactful way we can work together to reduce poverty in Hackney

Aim: to focus on prevention, early years and early help for all ages, as a key way to improve life chances and tackle poverty.

Strategic objective: to support children and families in a child's early years and to provide early help to prevent crisis points and needs becoming more complex as someone gets older.

We will focus on identification and prevention of harm, escalation of need and crisis by strengthening our early help offer for residents of all ages.

1a) Early years: actions taken



- Established an affordable childcare commission with independent Chair and a diverse group of parents representing Hackney communities and with experience of a range of childcare provision in Hackney
- Funding VCS groups working with families with children in early years using the Household Support Fund via Hackney Giving and the trusted referral route to enable health visitors to refer families for emergency financial support
- Strengthening outreach between children's centres and voluntary sector organisations working with under 5's and Temporary Accommodation hostel managers

1b) Prevention and early help across the lifecycle: actions taken



- ❖ Launched the 'Money hub' with joint funding from council and health as a single point of access for emergency financial support to prevent homelessness and maximise incomes of residents
- ❖ Developed a well attended fortnightly online open session frontline workers across the system using the 'tools for frontline practitioners working with residents who are struggling' to share live information / bite size training and to strengthen relationships and promote collaborative problem solving to make best use of resources and existing relationships

Food poverty in education and free school meals



A task group was established to review food poverty affecting children in schools. The task group has listened to schools and community organisations to inform thinking about how we might expand the FSM offer in a financially sustainable way to a wider group of children and look at models that reduce unit cost, improve quality, but do not simply rely upon Councils picking up the funding.

The announcement that the Mayor of London will be funding universal free school meals for the 2023/24 academic year in primary schools is welcomed and we are taking on board the implications and opportunities for local work to complement this.

Community infrastructure development



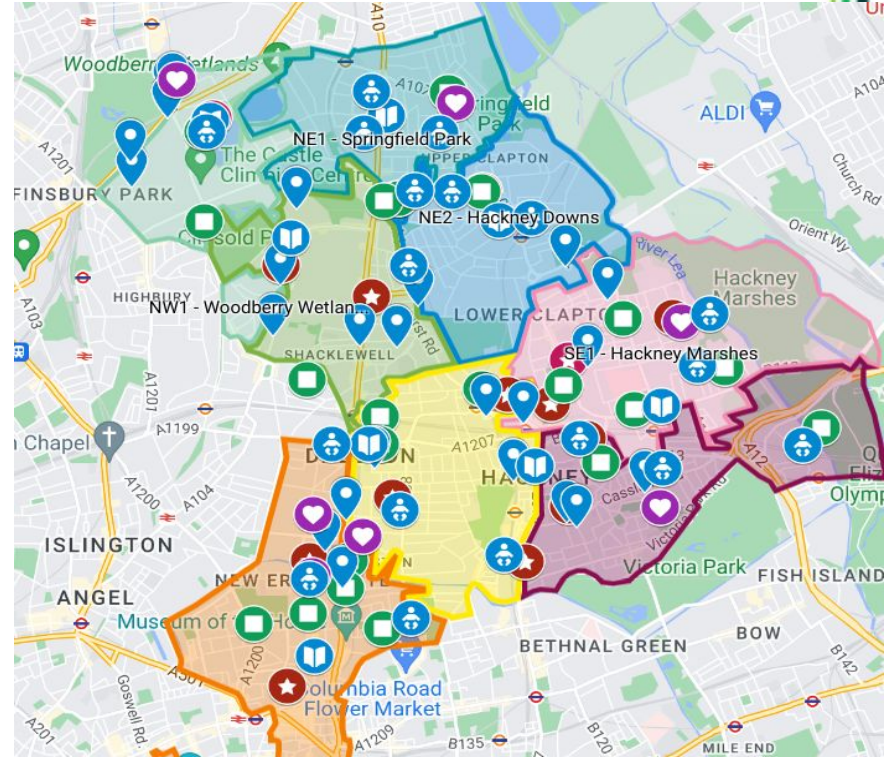
We are doing what we can to support organisations on the ground, who are struggling with rising costs and demands. This is vitally important because it is these organisations that have the greatest reach into diverse communities. For example, we helped secure £180k to invest in the three food hubs that coordinate the distribution of food waste (Woodberry Aid, Hackney City Farm, Morningside). To support the joining up of efforts on the ground, especially in local areas:

- Two members of staff are dedicated to creating a bridge between community activity, health partners and the community and working with local ward councillors.
- Earlier this year we also created [new grant funding](#) for [20 organisations](#), which have good connections to those residents who we all need to reach. Each organisation is linked to a Council officer who will help working between the Council and partners.

Strengthening our community infrastructure

Our two system conveners have been working with partners across the borough since September 2022 to strengthen practical support for residents in communities (through warm hubs) and mapping and taking action to address gaps to strengthen the safety net and eco-system of support to residents via:

- Warm hubs
- Food partners
- Neighbourhood forums



3. Responding to the material needs of people in poverty



Aim: to better meet people's immediate material needs and offer more preventative help.

Strategic Objective: to develop a more coordinated emergency support and advice offer, with more preventative help, and to make the case for a better benefits system.

We will take action in response to the direct material needs of people already experiencing or at risk of experiencing poverty and destitution.

Money hub



The Council has established the Money Hub team within the Council creates a single point of access for emergency funding. Residents in financial distress now only have to fill out one form, instead of four and Money Hub also uses data proactively to contact people we know are in financial difficulty. When offering financial support, we also look for opportunities to maximise income and encourage benefit take up. The Money Hub's outreach workers collaborate with community partners and share their resources, so that they have a wider value and impact. So far:

- 3200 residents have requested support from the team in its first 5 months of operations, double the number who accessed financial support from the Council in all of the previous year. More than half of applicants are already in rent or Council Tax arrears.
- The team has distributed £395k of discretionary funds, and delivered £293k worth of increased incomes through benefits uptake work
- This represents a positive return for residents: for every £1 we've invested in staffing, we've increased annual incomes of our most vulnerable residents by £1.49.

10 advice partners have been funded to work with the Money Hub to ensure their experience of maximising the incomes of Hackney residents informs the development of this service.

DWP Household Support fund



We welcomed the £5.6m continued support from central government via the Housing Support Fund, and the fact this has been secured for 2023/24. We used this funding to provide support to a wide range of groups identified by professionals, including children and families from 0-19, pensioners, people identified by Housing Needs, Childrens and Adults including Foster Carers. Funding was also distributed via [Hackney Giving](#) - funding community organisations that provide financial support to residents, Citizens Advice and Food Hubs.

Trusted referrers



We have established a trusted referral network of frontline Council and health services to enable workers in participating services including social prescribing (via GPs), health visiting, leaving care service and the adult community rehabilitation service - to identify residents in need of crisis support payments for food and fuel to access financial assistance.

All trusted referral partners are provided with training and support to make sure that residents accessing this emergency assistance are also provided with additional support to access appropriate ongoing support to address root causes.



What have we learnt

Learning by doing, and adapting approaches



- ❖ **Residents experiencing multiple complex and intersecting difficulties may still fall below the threshold** for support from statutory services and there are still communities we are failing to reach early enough with offers of support that work for them
- ❖ Workers in **community based services are well positioned to prevent escalation of need and risk** particularly with minoritised communities and those who lack trust in the state.
- ❖ **Workers want to be as helpful as possible and work more holistically** but need help and expertise to do this safely and often cannot access for residents until things get worse.
- ❖ This can lead to **missed opportunities** to use existing trusted relationships to support resident to access the right help earlier for those who need it most
- ❖ **Lack of capacity (and fatigue) is a major issue** in all resident-facing teams across the system and referrals to adult social care, children's social care, mental health, CAMHS and other specialist services continue to rise significantly
- ❖ **Place-based transformation work** including Neighbourhoods, C&F hubs work, Community hubs provide key opportunities for prevention and early help but service integration and culture change can be hard and services need help to collaborate meaningfully in the current context.
- ❖ Residents and partners **lived experience can help us with service transformation** but this takes time and residents and partners need to be valued for their expertise as consultants

What works well.. For residents who are struggling?



- ❖ **Safe and welcoming places and spaces** :where residents and families with limited resources can get support (money hub outreach sessions) and make social connections (warm spaces tackling social isolation), help with wider needs from practitioners based in health settings.
- ❖ **People who residents can build trusted relationships with:** who they can rely on to be helpful to them and their families and who are community based and able to respond with practical, emotional and social support as and when needed.
- ❖ **Services that are responsive to the needs of their families and communities** as they change according to new needs, challenges and opportunities and who engage them meaningfully in the work and community (beneficiaries to volunteers for example)
- ❖ **Telling their story once** and knowledge, resources and support can be drawn in from where it may be needed (and being supported to prepare for accessing any other services by that trusted relationship)

What works well: for workers?



- ❖ **Knowledge and relationships across the network and wider system** to enable sharing of resources, collaboration mutual support and to problem solve together
- ❖ **Accessible and flexible resources:** physical leaflets, food vouchers, trusted referral route to HSF and money hub,
- ❖ **Live and current service information and shared learning** and reflection through forum discussion, peer support groups or mixed training sessions/ workshops where frontline staff can develop confidence and connections to strengthen the help they can provide
- ❖ **Co-designed training** starting with what the worker is experiencing in their work with residents and what they need to be able to provide or connect residents to better help, is more effective and strengths-based, and has the added benefit of surfacing insight about residents that workers hold from their work on the ground.
- ❖ **Strong relationships and good understanding between services:** through training in mixed groups of workers that helps strengthen relationships and understanding between services. System convening as a way of working and tools for frontline workers sessions enabling collaboration.
- ❖ **Being trusted by their line manager and other services**

What is not working



- ❖ **Signposting is often not the answer and directories don't work on their own:** A resident may not want to work with a new service, workers do not trust a service they haven't experienced especially if they cannot be sure if the service can help (capacity or eligibility)
- ❖ **Workers do not know who to speak to or what to advise:** when a resident shares difficult information about their circumstances, workers often do not know who can help or how and this makes it harder to reassure or encourage the resident to access the support they might need to prevent things getting worse. This can lead to missing opportunities to intervene early or leave the worker trying to help with situations they are not equipped to handle (a risk to worker and resident)
- ❖ **Our training is not always helping:** Training provided and delivered by statutory services to VCS groups or from one stat service to another often positions trainers as experts and fails to draw from or build on the knowledge experiences and skills of those being trained. Trainers report frustration when training fails to result in changes in behaviour (for example, *'we trained them on this!' and yet they still refer the wrong cases to us.. Or advocate for something that is not possible for us to provide.*



Background

Warm hubs



We have already designated libraries as warm hubs and are supporting more organisations to develop warm hubs and get onto the online [map of hubs](#). Housing Services have awarded small grants totalling £39,966.00 to 14 organisations to expand their offer and provide a warm space. Hackney's energy advice contractor - the London Energy Saving Squad (LESS) are running energy advice drop-in sessions at designated hubs across the borough.

Current context: What the City and Hackney Neighbourhoods Programme aims to deliver



- Address local need and reduce health inequalities
- Collaborative, multi-disciplinary partnership working
- Focus on prevention and population health management
- All system partners, the workforce and residents encouraged to think more holistically about what supports good health and wellbeing
- VCS and residents equal partners

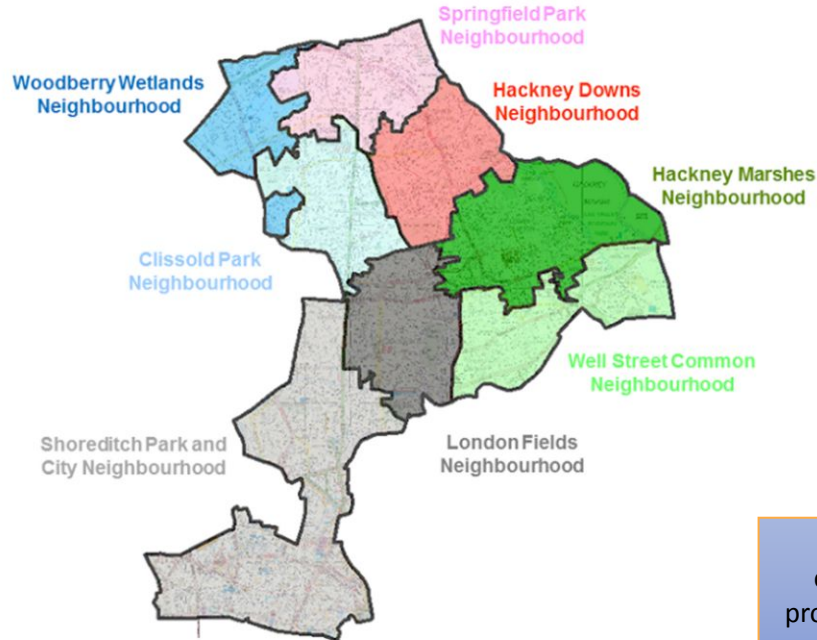


Principles of Neighbourhood working



A focus on preventative approaches and addressing rising needs, including a community development and asset-based approach valuing the contribution of the community and voluntary sector.

A focus on multi-disciplinary working, based on relationship building and team working with a person-centred approach.



A focus on population health and health inequalities, including knowledge of the local area and its strengths and needs.

Ensuring a quality improvement approach, with continuous learning and reflection embedded in all projects.

A commitment to co-production across all projects, valuing the voice of the resident/patient.

Family Hubs Neighbourhood Networks Model

4 Family Hubs aligned to the 8 PCN Neighbourhoods

Local partners and facilities coming together in a 'hub and spoke' configuration

-  Clissold Park & Hackney Downs
-  Springfields Park & Woodberry Wetlands
-  London Fields & Shoreditch Park
-  Well Street Community & Hackney Marshes



- Children's Centres 
- Health Centres 
- Youth Hubs / Green Spaces 
- Voluntary Sector 
- Schools 
- Libraries 
- Faith Sector 

0-19 Early Help System
(25 with SEND)

