



## Newham Household Support Fund March 2022



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## 1. Executive Summary

Newham Household Support Fund – **supporting the most vulnerable residents in their time of need** – There was a call to action for VCFS partners wanting to become distribution partners. The Council were tasked by central government to distribute the Household Support Fund (HSF) of £3,339,194.75 to the most financially vulnerable residents. This involved working with a range of distribution partners including the Voluntary, Community and faith Sector (VCFS), Children’s Centres and Schools. The approach builds on the ability to work closely with VCFS partners to distribute hardship funds using a controlled outreach and distribution model based on local knowledge and trusted relationships with the most vulnerable residents in area’s across Newham. In terms of the type of support, the expectation was that the HSF should primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, clothing, household goods (Argos) energy and water bills.

In December 2021 PSBL applied to become a Plaistow distributor and were successful in their application. They were entrusted with £9050 in funding to award to members of Plaistow Community.

There were some challenges faced by staff due to the lack of information and collaterals provided by the council which meant that PSBL had to create their own advertising materials and measuring impact form. There were also some issues encountered when residents didn’t receive the vouchers or some vouchers that were issues were invalid. With Staff capacity low and the extra work PSBL did to ensure we resolve any concerns and queries especially to protect our reputation but more so to provide support and help the applicants.

We managed to help **140 residents in total** and successfully worked in partnership with local organisations including local schools. Working with local schools and education establishments helped us to engage with families most in need as they were referred to us but in doing this it added an extra layer of governance.

Overall this was an excellent opportunity for both PSBL, local residents and the community as a whole as PSBL got to do some very worthwhile outreach and learn about needs our residents are facing following a very difficult couple of years. It was good that this scheme was available to all including people with no recourse to public funds and the application was relatively low key in regards to what was required. Due to the fact a lot of the application was done via a phone call or face to face people learnt about the work of PSBL and allowed us to put our work out there.

This would be a excellent piece of legacy work that PSBL can continue through our ‘Phylis’s Grant Scheme and I am excited to shape this with the whole team including involvement from our Steering Group members.

## 2. Overview

The HSF aims to create financial support **for those most vulnerable residents in their time of need**. Through this project, we are engaging disadvantaged communities in offering financial support.

Our aim over the month was to-

- Reach disadvantaged and vulnerable families
- Enable communities to take an active part in engaging with PSBL
- Work in collaboration with grassroots organisations and schools to help communities outside PS further
- Reach at least 50% of families with children
- Be inclusive and fair in our distribution

Newham is one of the country's most diverse populations- with 107 languages spoken in Newham there are a diverse range of residents with different beliefs and culture.

### How did we do this?

We did this through;

- An assets-based community development methodology, building on the strengths of our partners and wrapping our offers around what's already working well in the community which is their knowledge on the families they already support or know are struggling.
- We want to use what is already working well without creating more work, why change something that is working. Ensuring that our partners are working smarter rather than harder in helping the families they support. We used our key contacts to find out which families need support as well carrying out outreach.
- An iterative, action learning approach, working with what emerges and responding to needs and barriers as they arise.
- It's difficult to have a regime that works well for all so we are tailoring how we approach individuals during outreach as finance and money are a sensitive subject.
- Sharing Best Practice by thinking about how we best serve the local community.
- We used this strategy - **Plan, Prepare, Deliver, Rest and Reflect**- this analogy helped us to improve delivery to the community and ensure we are delivering it right, **approaching the right people, in the right way for the best outcome!**

## 3. Delivery

The focus within our delivery was to plan and establish our links with key local providers across Plaistow South. There was a delay after the initial award from the council. This was due to essential documents being signed & returned. Queries made over the GDPR process as well as waiting for logging on passwords being made available to order



vouchers for recipients. We are glad that during the training that it was actually our Engagement & Partnerships Officer that flagged up the importance of GDPR and the governance required. We were not happy that **all organisations** were able to access information being taken and felt that it was appropriate that measures were put in place to protect our residents and the data we were tasked with collecting. We appreciate that the council not only listened but acted upon this concern.

We were delighted to have worked with organisations known to us but also to establish new connections and through this, reach & help many people within the community of Plaistow.

By offering financial help via food, clothing, energy and household vouchers, we were able to not only support residents but also assist grassroots providers where capacity and resources were limited. This has proved to be mutually beneficial to all parties, allowing us to build trusted networks.

We had until 31 March 2022 to distribute the funding allocation. Due to hold ups from the council, the project began in February. Prior to starting the application process and waiting for the essential log in details, we began early outreach. Unlike a lot of other distributors who allocated on a first come first serve basis, we decided to reach out to as many organisations and residents as possible. We gathered details until just ten days before the close to the programme and input everything at once. In doing this it allowed us to not only engage with as many people as possible but to also allocate the same amount of funding to all.

We advertised the funding via our social media platforms, in our E-News, on local WhatsApp groups, school newsletters as well as attending coffee mornings and local group meetings to present.

We found 30 Newham distributors of which 8 were Plaistow based, unless we had completed this exercise we would not have been aware of other organisations we could work with as distributors of the scheme in Plaistow or, more importantly, groups we could signpost people to if they had come to us for help and were living out of our area.

50% of funding had to be allocated to families with children. In order to reach these residents, we reached out to local schools and family centres and, in a lot of cases, conducted 1-1 face to face meetings or spoke to families referred by the school over the phone. Tollgate provided an interpreter for two of the families, one of which were refugees who had no recourse to public funding. The school helped them with an email so that they could purchase school uniform for their four children.

Working with local schools and education establishments helped us to engage with families most in need as they were referred to us but in doing this it added an extra layer of governance.

Beneficiaries	Reach	Age range	Demographics	Delivery
Individuals and Families with Children		18-80	<p>29 with Children</p> <p>26 From BAME communities</p> <p>26 unemployed</p> <p>16 Employed</p> <p>English is a second language</p> <p>32 Female applicants/ 10 Male applicants</p> <p>Types of vouchers Grant need</p> <p>Total households awarded funding</p> <p>13 Signposted to other area's</p> <p>Total residents helped</p>	<p>29 applicants had children out of 42 total applications</p> <p>26 BAME communities and 7 other</p> <p>26 applicants not in work</p> <p>This includes many part time employed and those on zero hours contracts.</p> <p>33 English as a second language or speak very little English</p> <p>We had a wide range of applicants both female and male.</p> <p>Out of 42 applicants - 36 were awarded food/clothing vouchers, 4 House Hold (Argos) and 2 energy</p> <p>42 household were supported with this scheme.</p> <p>We were not able to help some applicants but we signposted them to other areas which can support them.</p> <p>140 residents were helped.</p>
Capacity building with grassroots Voluntary organisations		N/A	N/A	<p>We have engaged with 11 organisations in Plaistow South, have been involved with sharing HSF info at New City family Centre and various other organisations-</p> <p><b>Please see list below:</b></p> <p>Tollgate school &amp; Family Centre  New City Family centre  Drop in Bereavement Centre  Agewell Drama group  Carers Mental help group  Newham Muslim Forum  Plaistow Residents Group  Four Square Church  Adult Disability Group  Birkberk Uni (although no referrals from Plaistow)  Cumberland Community school</p>

### 3.1 Reaching disadvantaged and vulnerable families

We focused on building presence and establishing relationships, raising awareness of the project by engaging individuals, families, local school and grassroots organisations through outreach. We have been laying the foundations for the HSF to strengthen future PSBL project work and we hope to reengage the recipient to get involved.

In Plaistow South, we used a multi stranded engagement approach, visiting places where we knew families would be, such as New City Family Centre, Schools, libraries and reaching out through existing connections.

### HSF in a snap shot



### 3.2 Enabling our community to take an active part

We are tapping in to the magical power of combining digital technology with community development principles, to support the community. The role of the Engagement and Partnership Worker was integral to the impact of this project because outreach doesn't do itself. Encouraging and being inclusive to all and empowering vulnerable families to feel empowered to have conversation in a safe space.

Having staff on the ground offer a listening ear and create safe spaces, allowing residents to safely discuss their financial issues and get a full picture. There is nothing like human interaction!

Outreach element and having those deep conversation face to face on the ground was pivotal.

### 3.3 Collaborate and Supporting Local Schools and Grassroots Organisations

Capacity has always been a huge issue in schools to really spend time with families especially now that there are fewer children centres meant that families are not always getting the support they need locally. Having any help is very useful for the families that they serve. Working in collaboration with a grassroots organisation to help families was absolutely great as they felt we offered help that was much needed. It was essential that we kept close liaison for referrals with our stakeholders as they are the first point of contact with most families and only point of contact for some.

This approach works because we are increasing the confidence of families that PSBL is putting the community in the heart of what we do. This meant that some families gained access to financial help that was much needed.

*“Parents have quoted the household grant has helped them provide school uniform and a balanced meal for their child. One mother used the grant to support her special needs child with a hot tub”*

**Wendy, Early Help Coordinator- DSL New City Family Centre**

*“Just wanted to say thank you for processing myself and other members of the Centre household support food vouchers. This has supported us tremendously”*

**Olive, Drop in Bereavement Centre**



*“The household support fund had just come at the right time for many families who I work with.*

*At the start of the new financial year, energy prices and the cost of living hit many families out of nowhere.*

*The House Hold Support Fund supported many families in times of need, from food vouchers, clothing and white goods.*

*One family who accessed the funds had no recourse for public funds. A family seeking refuge in Plaistow had no funds for school uniform, they had nowhere to turn except for the school she was due to attend.*

*The payment to the family enabled the child to get brand new uniform, school supplies and the left over amount went on food vouchers for the whole family.*

*The start of a new life here in Plaistow, was made better because she was able to start her new educational journey in the UK with new shoes and uniform.*

*The smile was priceless”.*

**From Shannel, Tollgate Family Centre**

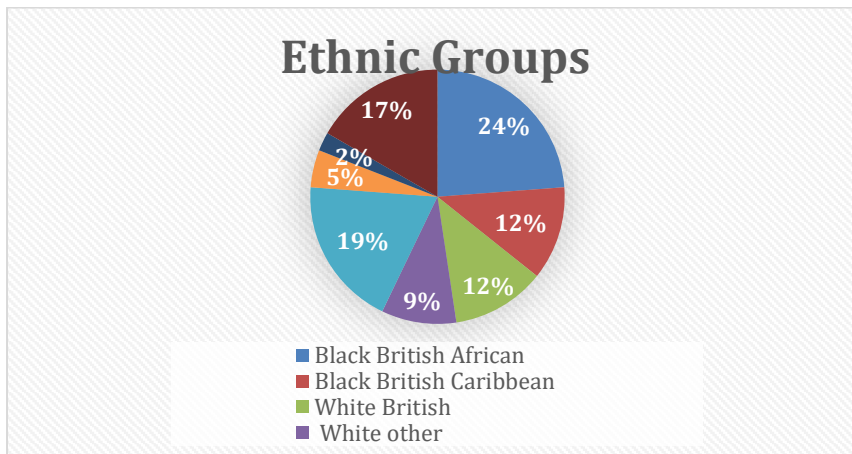
#### **4. Evaluation and impact**

We focused on capturing the impact of this project by creating a mixed method evaluation framework: drawing on data, qualitative interviews, feedback from participants to evaluate success.

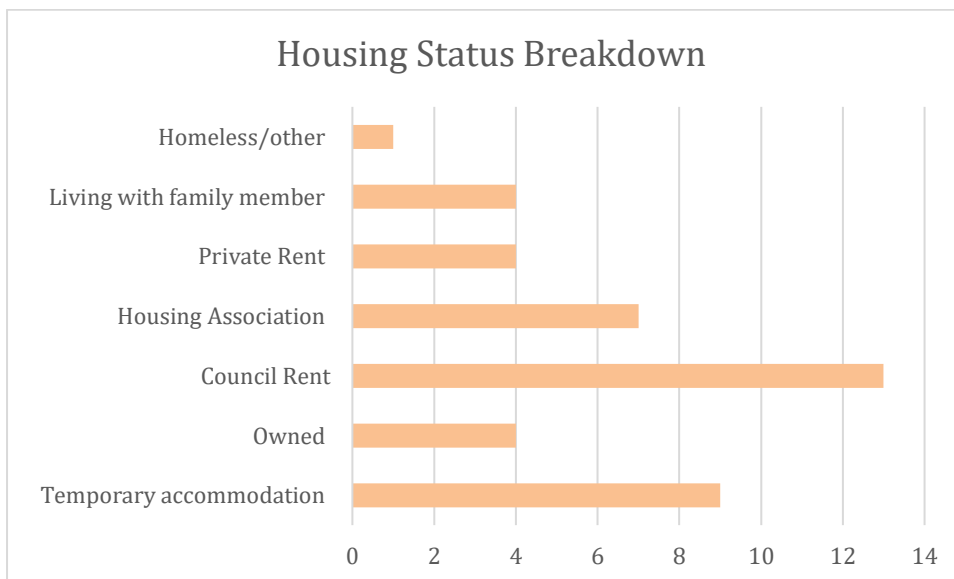
##### **4.1 Data reporting**

Behind HSF sits a rich data capturing form that we created which enabled us to draw information from the capturing data form where we collated all the information from the participants details to the quotes and numbers. We converted the figures in to graphs to illustrate our impact.

## The Numbers



This graphs highlights the ethnic groups we helped, it is evident that we were able to reach a diverse community



This graphs highlights the housing status breakdown. It shows the number of residents we helped and their housing status.

## 4.2 What families told us in outreach sessions

### Feedback from outreach – March 2022

*“Thank you so much, this has come at a perfect time, I’m so grateful, thank you”.*  
**Single mother of three in temporary accommodation.**

*Thank you for going out of your way miss, honestly I’m so thankful for all your help –*  
**Mother of three on zero hour contract.**

*“I can buy some healthy food now! Thank you soooooo much (pray & heart emoji) this was after chasing her vouchers and contacting her on numerous occasion to reassure that all will be rectified”.*  
**Worker at Agewell carers group and mental health group.**

*"Ahhh thank you so much for chasing the vouchers, thank you".*

Single mother living with family.

*Really needed this, will help me a lot with Ramadan shopping, I am so grateful. Thank you –  
Housewife and mother of three.*

## 5. Evaluating our learning

Factor in staff time and be realistic – 200 plus hours spent on this which did have an impact on other project work

Ensuring we have enough time to develop pre and post questionnaire.

The importance of outreach, building trust networks both with local groups, education establishments, faith centres and local

Emotional for staff to process information shared, ensure well-being support in place

### 5.1) what we heard during outreach

Single Parent	Lockdown	Children with Special needs	Finance/ No recourse to public funds	Grief
Refugees	Lack of agency	Low wages	Social Isolation	Living Cost
Unemployed	Losing Job	No financial support	Housing/ Over crowding	Lack of Social Mobility
Domestic Abuse	Immigration Status	lack of access to support	No Job	Language barrier

## 5.2) Issues and Challenges encountered - The Delay and the pause

- Making application simple/easy to use – would have been helpful to have template from council
- Flyers should have been made available by council to show as a recognizable scheme
- Design of a suitable application for website which would be accessible to all
- Application form set up took staff time & knowledge
- Delay in set up/waiting for log in – council
- PSBL staff time taken to organise and research a sign posting list.
- Would have been helpful if the council had connected groups in each area
- Limited time to distribute (due to waiting for log in)
- Staff shortage
- No office/home working
- Funding should have been available to cover staff time. PSBL paid for increased staff hours to work on project therefore it cost **US** to distribute on behalf of the council
- Due to amount of staff time required to work on scheme, other PSBL projects were impacted
- Increment amount of vouchers meant we were unable to have same amounts for all – ie energy £49, therefore maximum could apply was actual £245 not £250
- Each voucher required a separate entry so a family receiving £200 in £50 vouchers needed to be entered into the system 4 times!
- Very emotional exercise for staff team
- Residents received out of date vouchers
- Council very difficult to contact for advice as the scheme came to a close

## 6. Recommendations/Learning/what's next?

- Overall this was an excellent opportunity for both PSBL and local residents. PSBL got to do some very worthwhile outreach and learn about needs our residents are facing following a very difficult couple of years. It was good that this scheme was available to all including people with no recourse to public funds and the application was relatively low key in regards to what was required. Due to the fact a lot of the application was done via a phone call or face to face people learnt about the work of PSBL.
- Important to understand in taking this forward the amount of staff time these type of projects take. Therefore any such proposal in future will need to include this as a costing.
- Partner with a local supermarket – Asda or Morrisons to purchase vouchers. See if supermarket would offer some vouchers for free. Run a similar scheme with connections made to award shopping vouchers.
- Use the learning and evaluation from this project to use for match funding or funding bids in the future.

- It would be great to use a rich data analytical system next time to make it easier to draw information from.
- This would be an excellent piece of legacy work that PSBL can continue through our **'Phyllis's Grant' Scheme** and I am excited to shape this with the whole team including involvement from our Steering Group members.

Sheba Choudhury

May 2022