

Hackney Showroom – Friday Lunch Club

Mercers' Charitable Foundation
Older People and Housing Programme

A development space to engage communities in meaningful and memorable ways

Hackney Showroom's Friday Lunch Club offers a free, freshly cooked hot meal to older residents of the Kings Crescent estate in Hackney each week. During lunch club, residents can take part in activities and conversation. One-to-one support is available, such as help with reading, and application forms. They deliver meals direct to homes for those unable to attend, along with befriending check-ins.

"It's about every individual and just making sure that we take time to accommodate each individual's needs... understanding what special needs and interests people have." Project Lead



Why the work is needed

Friday Lunch Club was initiated by residents in response to loneliness, social isolation, rising costs and food poverty, and a lack of other relevant services in the area. These residents are now involved in running the club and see the companionship and social connections gained as critical to their quality of life.

Approach

The person-centred approach focuses on getting to know residents and building trust. They encourage involvement of the local community through volunteering and sharing ideas.

The estate has a diverse population. Friday Lunch club has evolved to integrate some cultural traditions, supporting wider community cohesion.

"Everyone is friendly, and we hug each other... They're different nationalities, but we get on very, very good." Participant

The warm welcoming environment and caring staff are key strengths to the grants' success.

"Our staff, we're really good at being warm and welcoming...but also, it feels quite safe...I think that's just helped in creating the atmosphere that makes people want to come back." Project Lead

Partnerships and support from other local organisations such as Hackney Council are valuable:

"A big enabler has been the relationship with the Tenants & Residents Association" Project Lead

Impact



Growing Reach: Friday Lunch Club has grown significantly since its inception. Over 20 people attend weekly. Mercers' funding has allowed the club to increase the quality, volume, nutrition, and variety of lunches. Take out delivery, and the befriending and door knocking service also help to reduce social isolation and improve health and wellbeing.



Meaningful Change: Lunch clubbers value connecting with other residents, forming new friendships. One resident missed the family meals they used to have and reflected on the value of eating with others again.

"For some of the lunch clubbers... it might be the only time in the week that they leave the house and see other people, ... the impact of that can't be underestimated, really." Project Lead



Challenges

Numbers vary significantly each week and managing capacity has been a challenge. Residents from the estate have been recruited to support with tasks such as door-knocking.

The increased cost of living has posed a significant challenge for both the organisation and project participants. It has impacted on the amount and types of food that can be provided.

There are also concerns about constraints on funding pots and reduction in funding available, especially from the local council.

Learnings

- It became apparent that more regular door knocking was needed to ensure maintenance and growth of the relationships. There is now a planned schedule of follow ups which take place four times each year.
- Policies and strategies have been implemented to better manage boundaries and expectations.
- Hackney Showroom also understands and values its organisational strengths and team expertise.

"We are in the best place we've ever been in terms of resilience... Mercers' was the first multi-year grant that we got, which has helped our ability to sustain ourselves and think long-term."
Project Lead

Organisational Resilience

Hackney Showroom are confident in their resilience. Securing multi-year funding from Mercers' and others has given additional security, enabling them to recruit and retain permanent staff.

There are also efforts to generate income through other activities to ensure a mixed income stream. An example of this has been theatre productions and other commissioned cultural activities.

The Future

Consistency is one of the top priorities and having 3-year funding from Mercers' has ensured regular delivery of Friday lunch club.

They intend to continue to provide the Friday Lunch Club as an ongoing community resource and will seek additional funding beyond this grant.