

The Meeting Place Project: Learning and Guidance for Community Groups



Executive Summary

<p>Meeting Place Principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be Welcoming • Utilise a Trusted Community Venue • Be Relational • Provide Accessible Advice • Focus on Wellbeing • Promote Dignity in Practices • Share Food • Adapt. 	<p>Key Achievements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of a set of principles for community food provision • Enabling people to access advice, specifically those who are less likely to seek advice outside community settings • Creation of a broad partnership-led support network • Greater engagement with the offers of community venues • Impact on strategy development for partner organisations.
<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing conflicts and different cultures in close communities • Developing a supportive relationship whilst encouraging self-reliance • Support volunteers to change their behaviour to reflect principles • Securing sustainable funding for staff • Managing the COVID-19 pandemic and re-opening safely • Supporting people with economic and wellbeing issues post COVID-19 • Capturing outcomes and collecting data • Responding to a chronic crisis in a sustainable way. 	<p>Areas for Exploration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further fostering of dignified practices • Supporting local farmers • Meeting Places as social enterprises • Implementing Meeting Places across the borough • Partnering with community mental health support providers • Options for supporting rural areas • Developing campaigning infrastructure.
<p>Transferability Meeting Place principles that can be implemented across a broad spectrum of community food provision projects.</p> <p>Guidance for Setting up a Meeting Place</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have gentle opening chats in communities 2. Visit other projects 3. Build up an appropriate network 4. Identify a trusted community venue 5. Secure necessary funding 6. Adapt continuously. 	<p>Tools to Evaluate and Monitor Progress and Impact, and Share Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting Places Progress Reporting tool • Regular staff and volunteer meetings • The Beans on Toast group as an advisory board • Collaborative informative concise videos on each of the principles • Collaborative webinars • One-to-one conversations between people with lived experience and volunteers.