Esteem Foundation

Cultural Foodbank Project

Project Report on Project ID: 20333130

Sponsored by

National Lottery Community Fund

August 2026

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1.0 Forward

We would like to express our profound appreciation to The National Lottery Community Fund for the funding provided towards our Cultural Foodbank project.

On behalf of Esteem Foundation, we are very grateful for your support. Through your approval for the third-year running, we continue to make a significant impact within our local communities in the London Borough of Southwark.

Thank you so much.

EEphMedoye
Esther Ephraim-Medoye (Trustee – Esteem Foundation)

August 2026

2.0 Appreciation and Testimonial

Despite the all-time high demand for cultural food support, the feedback and testimonials from the community and beneficiaries have been overwhelmingly positive, encouraging and rewarding. We at Esteem Foundation are therefore very grateful to the National Lottery Community Fund for funding our Community Food Project in Southeast London.

The Cultural Foodbank has been an amazing initiative across our London communities, including Nunhead and New Cross. By providing a variety of food support, we helped financially vulnerable beneficiaries prevent and mitigate the shocks and stresses they face, easing their worries. For most of our recipients, the grant has undoubtedly improved family relationships and nutrition, reduced mental tension, and contributed to better wellbeing. Our beneficiaries feel more confident, happy, supported and very grateful.

2.1 Testimonies:

- *"Coming to the Esteem Foundation foodbank has meant so much to me. I have met wonderful people and made new friends, and every visit I receive cultural foods that truly suit my needs. I am deeply thankful to the National Lottery Community Fund for making this possible, and to Esteem Foundation for the care, quality and consistency of the food they provide. No other foodbank offers anything like it. Please, please continue to support them." (Mrs. Jennifer O. March 2026).*

- *"I wish to formally express my sincere gratitude to the National Lottery Community Fund and to Esteem Foundation. As a retiree, the food provided has been of consistently high quality and has met my cultural needs at a time when I needed it most. I know of no other foodbank that offers this, and it is highly appreciated." (Ms Lola. A. retiree, May 2026).*

- *"What a team! The Esteem Foundation organizers are friendly, welcoming and always happy to see us, and I leave every time with a food bag and a big smile. The food is fresh and tasty, and it is the same high standard every single month. Esteem Foundation is the only BAME-led charity in South-East London doing this, and no other foodbank comes close. Thank you, National Lottery Community Fund, for making it happen!" (Mr. W. A. June 2026).*

- *"The organizers are respectful, accommodating and treat every individual with dignity. The quality and reliability of the cultural foods, month after month, is something I have not found at any other foodbank. My thanks go to Esteem Foundation, and to the National Lottery Community Fund for funding this valuable service." (Mrs. E. O. J. July 2026).*

3.0 Introduction

As of 2024/25, approximately 27% of Londoners (almost 2.5 million people) are living in poverty after housing costs, the highest rate of any region in England, with housing costs being a significant factor. Many of these individuals spend over half their income on housing alone. People, such as single-parent households and those in social housing, are particularly affected, with poverty rates of 53% for single-parent households and high material deprivation rates among children and teenagers leading to crime and truancy in schools. The cost-of-living crisis, exacerbated by inflation, is severely impacting the ability of low-income families to maintain their standard of living in London (Data: Trust for London, Poverty 2026)

Here is some data on poverty in London:

- Poverty rate: In 2024/25, 27% of Londoners lived in poverty after housing costs, the highest rate in England. The West Midlands had the second highest rate at 21%. Before housing costs, London's poverty rate was 15%, which shows the impact of housing costs. (Note: the Department for Work and Pensions changed how poverty is measured in 2024/25, so figures are not directly comparable with earlier years.)
- Poverty by age: In 2024/25, London had the highest child poverty rate in England at 38%. Tower Hamlets (50.3%) and Hackney (50.1%) had the highest local authority rates in the country.
- Poverty by household type: In 2022/23, 50% of households with no one in employment were in poverty. 12% of households where all adults were employed were also in poverty, and 32% of households where at least one adult was employed were in poverty.
- Poverty by ethnicity: 38% of Londoners living in non-white households are living in poverty.
- Poverty by family type: 53% of single parent households in London are living in poverty.

Poverty is defined in diverse ways, but one common measure is relative low income, which is when a household's income is below 60% of the median income for that year. (Data: Trust for London, London's Poverty Profile)

Research into the experiences of UK Black and Minority Ethnic communities shows that poverty falls disproportionately on these households. The Runnymede Trust's Falling Faster briefing found that Black and minority ethnic people are 2.5 times more likely to be in relative poverty than their white counterparts, and 2.2 times more likely to be in deep poverty. Runnymede also reports that 46% of ethnic minority children in Britain are living in poverty.

In their report, A Living Wage Matters, the Living Wage Foundation found that the Covid pandemic revealed not just that minority ethnic workers were disproportionately exposed to the health and economic risks posed by the health crisis, but that they suffered the worst excesses of the economic fallout including a greater average earnings loss. They highlighted that some minority ethnic groups face a much greater risk of earning less than the real Living Wage than others, and that in almost every minority ethnic group, women are more likely than men to earn below the Living Wage. The Foundation's latest Life on Low Pay 2026 report shows that workers paid below the real Living Wage, currently £13.45 across the UK and £14.80 in London, continue to face impossible financial decisions every day.

3.1 Food insecurity and emergency support

Food insecurity is defined as the condition of not having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality, to meet one's basic needs. The Trussell community of food banks distributed more than 2.6 million emergency food parcels across the UK in 2025, including over 900,000 for children. This was 12% fewer than in 2024, largely due to easing inflation, but still 45% higher than before the pandemic, and families with children received 62% of all parcels despite making up 42% of the UK population. Government survey data for 2024/25 shows that 3.8% of people, and 6.6% of children, lived in a household that had used a food bank in the previous 12 months, while the Food Foundation's June 2026 tracker, as reported by foodbanks.co.uk, found 12.2% of UK households, and 16.7% of households with children, experiencing food insecurity.

Esteem Foundation is a Black-led charity with 100% Black leadership.

- Our Cultural Foodbank is based on research within the Black community and has emerged as a vital solution to a pressing need. Existing foodbanks fail to cater for diverse cultural dietary needs, which made a culturally sensitive food source necessary.
- The significance of this project lies in addressing the food scarcity faced by Black communities due to the exorbitant cost of living. By recognising the unique dietary needs of the Black community in Southwark, it not only addresses food scarcity but also builds bridges of understanding and solidarity.
- Our food range continues to bring people joy, because it consists of the foods people like to eat. The foods are predominantly plant-based and carefully sourced from trusted supply chains, while meeting healthy food standards.
- By providing cultural foods with health benefits, we invigorate local neighbourhoods and community spaces, transforming them into inclusive havens.
- The food assistance programme improves health outcomes, reduces the effect of rising food costs and helps to overcome persistent hunger.
- It helps to rebuild the lives and livelihoods of Black people by strengthening the resilience of individuals and communities.

- Food safety and quality 

are a critical part of our mission to alleviate hunger and food insecurity among our Black communities in Southwark. We are committed to providing fresh, nutritious and quality food to those in need, recognising the health implications of consuming substandard or unsafe food.

4.0 Community Involvement

At Esteem Foundation, we focus on Black, African and Caribbean cultures. As part of the BAME group of Black African origin, we live and work within Southwark and carry out a great deal of work in the borough. We are deeply embedded in local Black communities and primarily support Black African and Caribbean initiatives within Southwark. We have collaborated with local communities, Black organisations and cultural hubs.

We continue to run our Cultural Foodbank at the Cossall Tenants and Residents Association Community Hall in Nunhead (SE15), which has helped to elevate our presence in Black communities. We raise awareness through workshops, leaflets and social media, and through partnerships and sustained collaboration with community members, businesses and cultural institutions.

The sustainability of the Cultural Foodbank in Southwark reflects the essence of inclusivity and empowerment. Its positive impact on vulnerable Black individuals and families will resonate beyond the immediate need, fostering community resilience and cohesion. As we continue to expand our foodbank and the supply of essential items, we remain committed to addressing the present food shortage and to learning from it, so that we can build a more equitable and well-nourished future for our community.

The foodbank has the power to foster strong relationships within and across communities. This initiative will continue to create a shared sense of purpose, bringing together community members, volunteers and partners to combat food insecurity collectively.

5.0 Project Sustainability

We work towards the UN 2030 Sustainable Developmental Goals, and we work within the framework of SDG1 (Zero Poverty), SDG2- (Zero Hunger), SDG 3- (Good health and wellbeing), SDG10- (Reduce inequalities). Despite the slow start we had a successful project delivery. We were able to provide support for about 600 families and individuals in many ways.

The main grant that Esteem Foundation received during the period was provided through a grant approval by the Community Fund. The relationship with the Community fund is particularly valuable and unique because they helped us with cash to source Community Food items.

6.0 The Project and Its Impact

This section reports on how the grant from The National Lottery Community Fund (the Community Fund) was used and the difference it made.

Funding approval was received in January 2026 and enabled Esteem Foundation to deliver its Cultural Foodbank to the struggling and most vulnerable Black and ethnic minority families in Southeast London, who were the targeted beneficiaries of the project.

6.1 Project Delivery

The Cultural Foodbank ran on the last Saturday of each month from February 2026 to July 2026, a period of six months. All food distribution events were held at the Cossall Tenants and Residents Association Hall, Mortlock Close, Nunhead SE15 2QE, a local community hall in the Nunhead and Queens Road ward of the London Borough of Southwark.

- Our key focus was the provision of cultural foods to vulnerable families in the Nunhead and Queens Road area, although beneficiaries came from far and wide.
- Each family received a varied cultural food mix, and packages were given out on a first come, first served basis.
- Every event saw great participation from the local community, with a turnout far above what we expected when the project started.

6.2 Who We Supported

The project supported struggling and vulnerable low-income individuals and families who are feeling the high cost of living most sharply within the Black and ethnic minority communities of Southeast London. By the end of the project period, over 600 families had benefitted from selected community food items.

- The original target audience was the Black and ethnic minority (BAME) community, but the project eventually reached a wider range of beneficiaries.
- Beneficiaries cut across age brackets, from over 16 years to around 80 years old and above and included both men and women.

6.3 Impact and Outcomes

Our variety of food packs helped families to cushion the effect of the high cost-of-living crisis. The key impacts of the funding were:

- **Food security:** Over 600 families received culturally appropriate, fresh and nutritious food, easing the pressure of rising food costs.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Beneficiaries reported better nutrition, reduced mental tension and improved wellbeing.
- **Family relationships:** Our food packs supported families' emotional health and improved relationships within households.
- **Belonging and inclusion:** The project amplified beneficiaries' sense of belonging and respect for cultural diversity and helped people to meet new people and form new friendships.
- **Dignity and confidence:** Beneficiaries told us they felt more confident, happy, supported and respected.

These outcomes contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals we work within: SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

6.4 Reach and Community Engagement

We created awareness through printed leaflets, the community association display board and social media pages including WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. Volunteers distributed leaflets in the local community, and word also spread quickly from person to person. This resulted in a large turnout from the Black and ethnic minority community, as the project was well tailored to their needs.

6.5 Evidence of Impact

- Beneficiary testimonials are provided in section 2.0 of this report.
- Photos of successful activities during the period are available on our website (www.esteemfoundation.net) and our social media pages.

6.6 Volunteers, Partnerships and Value for Money

The achievements of Esteem Foundation reflect the resilience, dedication, hard work and commitment of our trustees and volunteers, who worked tirelessly throughout the project to support those in need. Working with a restricted income, we were able to deliver the project thanks to the Community Fund grant, donations and the kind gestures of our funder and the community.

6.7 Case Study

Background: Ms Lola A. is a retiree who came to the Cultural Foodbank in May 2026 at a time when she needed support most. She was impacted by cost of living due to limitation of her resources and also the need to make new friends through the community gathering event.

Support provided**:** She received culturally appropriate food from the foodbank at our events in Nunhead and also made new friends.

Difference made**:** In her words, the food has been “of consistently high quality” and met her cultural needs when she needed it most, and she knows of no other foodbank that offers this. She is “very grateful to the Community Fund” for making the support possible. She is a regular attendee and made new friends.

6.8 Learning and Next Steps

We will continually assess and adapt our methods and use the lessons learnt to strengthen future projects. Demand consistently exceeded our expectations, and we are committed to growing our capacity so that we can help more individuals and families in the future.

7.0 Recommendation

Based on our experience delivering this project, we make the following recommendations to The Community Fund:

- **Demand:** We witnessed significant turnout every month, far above what was anticipated when the project started. Packages are given out on a first come, first served basis, so continued funding would allow us to reach more families.
- **Wider reach:** We hope that the government and funders will provide more funding for cultural foodbank initiatives of this kind across more areas, so that they can serve the needs of more communities.
- **Continuity:** Continued funding would allow us to build on the quality and consistency of the cultural foods provided and on the trust we have built with beneficiaries.

We are sincerely grateful to the Community Fund for its support and for the difference it has made to our beneficiaries.

8.0 Additional Services

Alongside the Cultural Foodbank, and with the support of our funders and the community, Esteem Foundation provides additional services that address the wider needs of the people we support.

8.1 Personal Care Support for Women

- We provide non-essential items such as toiletries and personal hygiene products for women's personal care during their monthly period.
- This support helps to boost women's self-confidence.

8.2 Employment Support

Esteem Foundation supports unemployed people into work. Our employment programme helps to up-skill women who lack the skills to secure a decent job with fair wages, through:

- Employment training
- CV writing
- Interview support
- Help to complete job applications
- Signposting to recruiters

8.3 Financial Resilience Awareness

We also provided financial resilience awareness support to educate community members on money management skills, social media safety and security, fraud prevention and related topics.

8.4 Planned Developments

Based on the feedback from our beneficiaries, we plan to build on our activities in the following ways:

- Cultural foodbank: Continue the Cultural Foodbank for struggling families and reach out to more areas within the London boroughs where the need is greatest.
- Funding and donations: Continue our work to obtain funding to support our various initiatives so that we can help more families.
- Elderly befriending service: Support the elderly with practical help and reduce the impact of loneliness, promoting community inclusion.
- Support for victims of domestic abuse: Continue to provide safety measures that reduce anxiety and promote mental wellbeing.
- Children's school holiday activities: Provide activities with hot and nourishing meals during school holidays.

- Women's Cost of Living Support Programme: Cushion the effect of the increasing cost of living, among other initiatives.

9.0 Conclusion

Engagement with our beneficiaries showed that many people within the community cannot afford to buy enough to feed themselves and their families in these challenging times. The news of the Cultural Foodbank, which supports low-income people within BAME communities, brought great joy to the community.

Due to the large turnout over the six-month project period, we continue to prioritise meeting demand. On behalf of our trustees, volunteers and beneficiaries, we thank The National Lottery Community Fund for its generous support, which made this impact possible, and we look forward to the next round of funding approval so that we can reach even more people within the community.

Thank you!

Yours sincerely,

Esther Ephraim-Medoye (Trustee for Esteem Foundation)

Note

For your awareness, inserted below are the link to Esteem Foundation website, Instagram and Facebook pages displaying of the pictures of cultural food events and parcels being handed over to the recipients in some of the events.

Please follow link to our website and social media pages for further details.

Esteem Foundation | Facebook

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61554437831312&mibextid=ZbWKwL

https://www.instagram.com/esteem7777

www.esteemfoundation.net