Esteem Foundation
Cultural Foodbank Project

Project Report on Project ID: 20290592

Sponsored by

National Lottery Community Fund

July 2025

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1.0 Forward

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

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

Thank you so much.

EEphMedoye

Esther Ephraim-Medoye (Trustee – Esteem Foundation)

July 2025

2.0 Appreciation and Testimonial

Despite the all-time high demand for these cultural food support, the feedback and testimonials from the community and beneficiaries has been most positive, encouraging and rewarding. As such, we at Esteem Foundation are very grateful to National Lottery Community Fund for providing the funding to support our Community Food Project in Southeast London.

The Cultural Foodbank was an amazing initiative across our London Communities in Nunhead, New Cross etc. Being able to provide varieties of food support to prevent and mitigate the shocks and stresses of financially vulnerable beneficiaries has helped ease their stress. With most of our recipients, the grant has undoubtedly improved relationships with family, their food nutritional needs, reduced mental tension, and contributed to improved wellbeing. Our beneficiaries feel more confident, happy, supported and very grateful.

Testimonies:

- *"I am very happy to be part of this when I needed it most. I am very grateful to Community Fund that the varieties of food provided by Esteem Foundation." Its highly appreciated. (Ms B. A. retiree, May 2025).*

- *As one of the beneficiaries of Esteem Foundation foodbank, I am always looking forward to meeting new people and form new friends whilst benefitting from the cultural foods that meets my needs. "This is a very good support and will be beneficial if it can continue, hence I am appealing to National Lottery Community Fund to please continue to support Esteem Foundation with the necessary funding to support people like me" (Mrs. F. O. May 2025).*

- *"The organizers of Esteem Foundation foodbank are very good. They are always happy to attend to all of us each time we visit, and I always leave with food bag feeling much happier. Esteem Foundation is the only BAME led charity in the London South-East with this type of benefit. So, Thank you National Lottery Community Fund for making this possible." (Mr. L. E. May 2025).*

- *"The organizers are very accommodating and respect every individual." (Mrs. M. O. May 2025)*

3.0 Introduction

As of 2024, approximately 24% of Londoners are living in poverty, 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 47% 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: London Datastore)

Here is some data on poverty in London:

- Poverty rate: In 2022/23, 24% of Londoners lived in poverty, which is 3 percentage points higher than the rest of England. This is the third highest poverty rate in England, after the West Midlands and the Northwest.
- Poverty by age: In 2022/23, poverty rates were highest among children and young people in London. 140,000 children under four, 33% of children aged 5–9, and 35–37% of children aged 10–19 lived in poverty.
- 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: 34% of Londoners living in non-white households are living in poverty.
- Poverty by family type: 47% 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: London Datastore)

Research into the experiences of UK Black and Minority Ethnic communities reflect that Black and Minority households experience an average increase in the cost of living 1.6 times higher than their white counterparts.

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.

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. In 2019, the Trussell Trust found that their foodbanks in areas where Universal Credit had been rolled out had seen an average 52% rise in demand compared to the previous year, linking this to the five-week delay for a first payment. A House of Commons research briefing showed that in 2021/22, 4.7 million people, or 7% of the UK population, were experiencing food poverty, including 12% of all children. The Food Foundation's Food Insecurity Tracker found that the number of households where children are experiencing food insecurity doubled between 2022-23.

Esteem Foundation is Black led charity comprising of 100% Black led leadership.

- Our Cultural foodbank is based on research within the Black community. It emerges as a vital solution to a pressing need. Existing foodbanks fail to cater for diverse cultural dietary needs, necessitating the creation of a culturally sensitive food source.
- The significance of this project lies in addressing the food scarcity faced by the Black communities due to the exorbitant cost of living. It helps to recognise the unique dietary needs of the Black community in Southwark, thus not just addressing food scarcity, but building bridges of understanding and solidarity.
- Our food range continue to bring people joy, as they are the types of food that people like to eat. The foods are predominately plant based and carefully sourced from trusted supply chains at the same time meeting healthy food standards.
- As we provide cultural foods with health benefits; we invigorate local neighbourhoods and community spaces; transforming them into inclusive havens.
- The food assistance programme improves health outcomes and minimize the effect of the rising cost of food as well as overcome the persistent hunger.
- It helps rebuild lives and livelihoods of the Black people by strengthening the resilience of people and communities.

- Food safety and quality are critical part of our mission in alleviating hunger and food insecurity among our Black communities in Southwark, hence we are committed to providing fresh, nutritious, and quality foods to those in need, recognising the health implications of consuming substandard or unsafe food.

4.0 Community Involvement

We at Esteem Foundation, focus on Black, African, and Caribbean cultures. As part of the BAME group from Black African origin, living and working and doing a lot of work within Southwark. We are deeply embedded in local Black communities and primarily engage in supporting Black African Caribbean initiatives within the Southwark borough. We collaborated with local communities in Black organisations, and cultural hubs.

We continue to carry out our cultural foodbank was carried out in Cossall Tenants and Resident Association Community Hall, Nunhead (SE15) and has helped to elevate our presence in the Black communities. We raise awareness through workshops; leaflets, social media; and other partnerships and sustained collaboration with community members; businesses; and cultural institutions. The sustainability of cultural foodbank in Southwark encapsulates the essence of inclusivity and empowerment. The 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 supply of essential needs journey; we remain committed to not only addressing the present food shortage but also learning from it to carve a more equitable and nourished future for our community.

The foodbank holds 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 collectively combat the challenge of food insecurity.

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 fund provided support to the struggling and most vulnerable Black and Ethnic minorities who are the targeted beneficiaries of the project.
Our key focus includes provision of cultural foods to vulnerable families in Nunhead and Queens Road area. However, beneficiaries came from wide and far.

The events took place on the last Saturdays of the month starting from November 2024 to May 2025, that is a period of seven months, except in April 2025 for break. All the food distribution events went very wide with great participation within the local community and more than expected turn out of people.

We help beneficiaries to cushion the effect of high-cost of living crisis through the Food project. The project was funded for 6 months, starting November 2024 with end date of April 2025. By the end of the project period, over 600 families would have benefitted from selected community food items. Events took place at Cossall Tenants Association Community Hall in Nunhead and Queens Road area (SE15) within London Borough of Southwark. Each family benefitted from varied cultural food mix. All the food projects took place within Cossall tenants and Residents Association Hall, Mortlock Close, Nunhead SE15 2QE, a local community hall within the Nunhead and Queens Road ward in the London Borough of Southwark.

Our variety of food packs supports families' emotional health and wellbeing and cushion the effect of high cost-of-living crisis. Thus amplify their sense of belonging and respect for cultural diversity.

Esteem Foundation achievements are indicative of the resilience, dedication, hard work, and commitment of our trustees, and volunteers that worked tirelessly throughout the year to support our cause and those in need. We are pleased and committed to continue to offer our support and aim to continue to grow with the capacity needed to be able to help more individuals and families in the future. Working with a restricted income, we were able to provide the following due to our grants, donations and kind gestures from our funder and the community: We will continually assess and adapt our methods; leveraging lessons learnt to bolster future projects.

In terms of publicity, we created awareness via printing and distribution of leaflets, community association display board, social media pages such as WhatsApp, Instagram, as well as Facebook. We employed volunteers to distribute the leaflets in the local community. Words also quickly spread around local community. We used leaflets and social media for publicity within our community, but news went everywhere from person to person.

Following the awareness created, we experienced a large turnout of people within the Black and ethnic community (BAME) as the food project was well tailored to their needs with utmost embracement. In term of diversity of beneficiaries, it cuts across different age brackets ranging from over 16 years to those in around 80 years old and above, both men and women. Although, the original target audience was BAME community, beneficiary eventually cut across wider beneficiaries.

Beneficiaries supported are struggling and vulnerable low-income individuals and families assisted to cushion the effects of high-cost of living which is biting harder within the black and ethnic minority communities in our jurisdiction in Southeast London.

7.0 Recommendation

Packages are given out on first come first served bases. We witnessed significant turnout on monthly basis, far above what was anticipated when the project started. It is hoped that the government will provide more funding for this type of cultural foodbank initiatives across more areas to serve the needs of communities.

8.0 Additional Services

We also provide other non-essential food items like toiletries and personal hygiene products for women's personal care on their monthly period thereby boosting their self-confidence.

In addition, Esteem Foundation support the unemployed into work. The organization’s employment programme helps to up-skill our women into work through employment training for those lacking the skills to secure decent job with fair wages, through CV writing, Interview support, help to complete job applications and signpost to recruiters.

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

The following are planned changes to our activities, as highlighted below:

- Continuation of cultural foodbank to struggling families. We want to reach out to more areas within the London boroughs where the need is the greatest.
- Funding & Donations - We want to continue our work to obtain funding to support our various initiatives in order to help more families.

Based on the feedback from our beneficiaries, we will also continue to carry out the following initiatives within the community including Elderly befriending service to Support the elderly with practical help and reduce the impact of loneliness thereby

promoting community inclusion, continue to Support victims of domestic abuse with safety measures that will reduce their anxiety. And promote mental wellbeing, Children school holiday activities with hot and nourishing meals, Women Cost of Living Support Programme to cushion the effect of increasing cost of living amongst others.

9.0 Conclusion

Engagement with the foodbank beneficiaries indicated many people within that community cannot afford to buy enough to feed themselves and their families in these challenging times. Hence, the news of Cultural food project to support low-income people within BAME communities brought so much joy to the community.

Unfortunately, we continue to prioritize the demand due to large turnout in the six months period. We look forward to the next round of funding approval in order to reach out to 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 the food 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