



Struggling with coronavirus?
Call 020 7527 8222 or email
weareislington@islington.gov.uk for help
#WeAreIslington

**WE ARE
ISLINGTON**

Food provision during the COVID-19 response

Version Date: 1st May 2020

Introduction

This document outlines how Islington Council and voluntary and community sector organisations are working together as part of the COVID-19 response to ensure that Islington residents have sufficient access to good food, whilst also preventing food waste. This information is relevant to community food projects, elected council members, council officers and mutual aid groups.

Who may need support to access food?

There is already a high level of need in Islington relating to food poverty. The economic and social impacts of COVID-19 means that many more people are likely experience food insecurity as they struggle to afford or access adequate food during this period.

The following groups are particularly vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity if they also experience factors such as social isolation, low income, no internet access, or a combination of these factors:

People who can't leave their home:

- **Very high risk - 'Shielding':** People who are clinically extremely vulnerable who have been strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid face-to-face contact with others. Further information can be found [here](#).
- **Individuals and households with Covid-19 symptoms:** People who are displaying symptoms of coronavirus, or live in a household where someone else is displaying symptoms, need to self-isolate and not leave the house.

People who may choose not to leave their home:

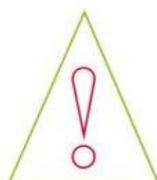
- **High risk:** People who are clinically at high risk from coronavirus who are being advised to be extra stringent in following social distancing measures. This includes people aged 70 or over, those with underlying health conditions (I.e. anyone instructed to get a flu jab each year on medical grounds) and those who are pregnant. Further information can be found [here](#).

People who may struggle to afford food during this time:

- **Others who may struggle to afford or access food during this time:** for example low income families, people whose income has been recently affected by the impact of COVID-19, people with no recourse to public funds, and people who are homeless.



Shielding



High Risk



Individuals & households with symptoms



Others who may struggle to afford or access food

How can residents be supported to help themselves?

In many cases residents may not need emergency food from the council or VCS, and can be redirected to other sources of support, as outlined in the Islington [directory](#):

When residents are unable to leave their home to access food:

- In the first instance, residents are encouraged to ask for support from family, friends and neighbours.
- The directory outlines the local shops which can offer food deliveries and we have pulled together a [directory of local, small independent businesses](#) which can be found.
- Community based groups, called mutual aid groups have been established by residents across the borough also listed in the directory. These groups can assist with necessities such as shopping for people who are self-isolating.

When residents are experiencing financial difficulties:

- The Council's [Resident Support Scheme](#) provides temporary financial support to residents facing severe difficulties or those who find themselves in crisis. The We Are Islington helpline can refer residents if necessary.
- Families on certain benefits can access [Healthy Start Vouchers](#) to spend on milk, fruit and veg, and infant formula.

Food Supply: What additional food is being sourced?

A range of partners are working together to ensure access to food for community food projects and local residents:

- **[The Felix Project](#)** is a charity which redistributes surplus food which was already working with some VCS organisations in the borough, directly supplying these community food projects. As part of the COVID-19 response, The Felix Project has increased its capacity to deliver by working in partnership with Islington Council to distribute additional surplus food to Islington via the Sobell Centre.
- **Arsenal in the Community** has made deliveries of surplus food directly to the Sobell Centre which are then distributed directly to community food projects and to local residents.
- **Islington Council:** The Sobell Centre has been established as a central hub to receive surplus food from The Felix Project and Arsenal in the Community. Council staff are then undertaking onward delivery to community food projects to support their sustainability. Islington Council is currently supplementing this surplus food with a small amount of wholesale purchasing, including from local market traders, to ensure a nutritionally balanced offer of food for residents in need.
- **Local Businesses:** A large number of food donations have been made from local businesses, organisations and local residents directly to community food projects.
- **Community Projects:** A number of community projects are also using grant funding to purchase food from wholesalers where needed.

Food Distribution: How is additional food being distributed?

We Are Islington helpline and emergency food packages

The council's [We Are Islington helpline](#) enables residents who are experiencing difficulties to access a broad range of support, including accessing food. Professionals who need to refer residents for support can also use the We Are Islington helpline.

Depending on the resident's circumstances food-related queries could see the resident:

- signposted to the information held on the [directory](#), which includes information about mutual aid groups and food businesses that are offering home deliveries; or
- offered financial support via the Resident Support Scheme voucher, which can be used to purchase their own food; or
- triaged to receive an emergency food package, where both affordability and accessing food is an urgent issue. These packages are prepared at the Sobell Centre and delivered directly to residents' homes.

Contact details for We Are Islington: 020 7527 8222 or weareislington@islington.gov.uk

Community food projects

Community food projects are operating across the borough to serve local communities and they are well placed to understand local needs to prevent issues from escalating further. Their offer includes:

- Preparing food parcels for families/households who are struggling to afford sufficient food (either delivered or being collected)
- Distributing surplus food
- Providing hot meals

Many of these projects are supported by the Felix Project and local business.

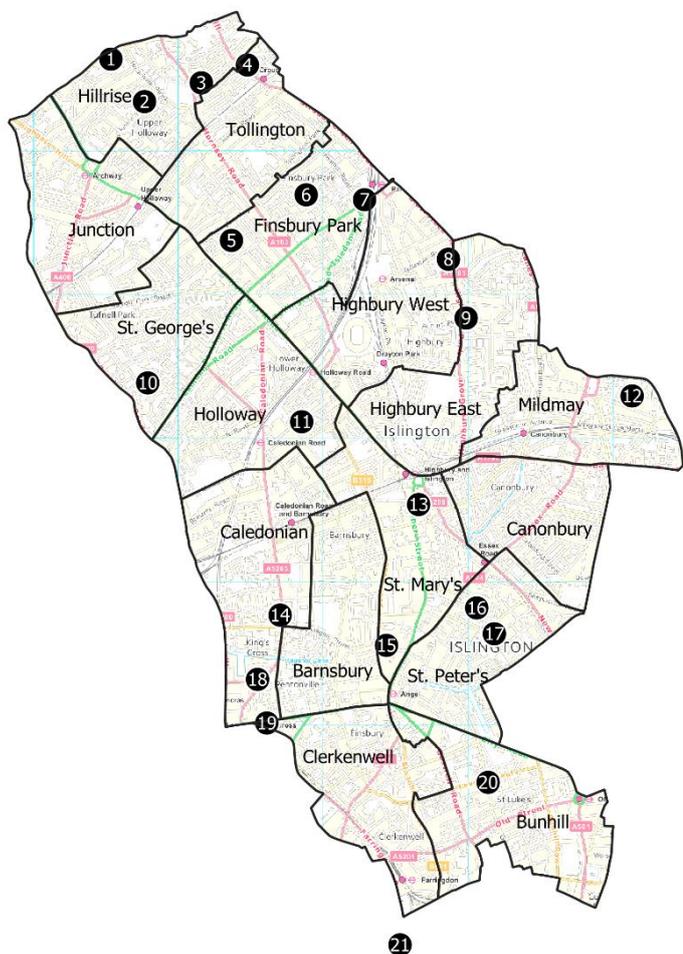
Islington Council is currently providing additional support to a number of community food projects across Islington. This includes some weekly food deliveries from the Sobell hub, support with food hygiene and safety through the Environmental Health Team, help with applying for funding and sourcing additional volunteers through Voluntary Action Islington. Further information and guidance on the support available to community food projects is available on [here](#).

Both the Felix Project and Islington Council have limited capacity to provide food to new community food projects, but organisations who wish to discuss their support needs can contact partnerships@islington.gov.uk.

Professionals who are considering making a referral to a community food project are advised to check directly with them to ensure that they have the capacity to support the request before making a referral.

Where a community food project is unable to meet a need due to resources or hours of operation, requests for emergency food parcel can be redirected through the We Are Islington helpline.

An up-to-date interactive map of community food projects is available [here](#) or by clicking on the map below. If you would like to list a project or update the information on the mapping please contact partnerships@islington.gov.uk.



Food Distribution: How are specific groups of vulnerable residents receiving additional support with food?

Support for people who are clinically extremely vulnerable (shielders)

People with some specific medical conditions should have received a letter from the NHS or been told by their GP that they are clinically extremely vulnerable and should be shielding. They are strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact. The current government guidance on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable from COVID-19 can be found [here](#).

The government has established a weekly delivery of food to support those who cannot ask family, friends, neighbours or access online services to get food. This is delivered directly from the government's appointed wholesaler to the homes of people who are shielding.

People who qualify as shielders can register for this service either online or by phone:

- Online: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-extremely-vulnerable>
- Telephone: 0800 028 8327

Support for vulnerable children, young people and their families

Many families will be affected by the impact of school closures, changes to support services, and reduced income as a result of COVID-19. The following support is available to ensure that vulnerable families have access to food:

- Children's Services are proactively identifying vulnerable families who need a one-off food package. Families in receipt of targeted Early Help or have a Social Worker are being prioritised, and [referrals](#) can only be made via a professional. The referrals are sent to certain community food projects to deliver packages to families who need this support.

Contact details:

Bright Start East: 020 7527 8376 brightstarteast@islington.gov.uk

Bright Start South: 020 7527 8512 brightstartsouth@islington.gov.uk

Bright Start West: 020 7527 8531 brightstartwest@islington.gov.uk

- Children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) can access a voucher (value of £3 per child, per day) or food hamper, dependent on which option the school has chosen. As part of the response to COVID-19, the eligibility criteria for FSM has been expanded nationally.
- Magic Breakfast are working with 10 schools in Islington to provide breakfast hampers to families who have been identified by the school as needing this support.

Contact details for the Family Information Service: 020 7527 5959 or fis@islington.gov.uk.