

The Newham Food Alliance

What we do and how we do it



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Introduction

What is this document and who is it for?

This document explains how the Newham Food Alliance (NFA) works and answers frequently asked questions about it. The document is intended for elected members, council staff, NFA partners, and anyone else who is interested in the NFA.

NFA partners can also use this document to describe their work to external stakeholders and are encouraged to draw on its wording for use in their own communications, including websites, reports, and grant applications.

How does the NFA work?

- Surplus food, which is good food that would otherwise go to waste, is delivered by Felix to NFA partners. The partners also receive frozen food, surplus clothing and household essentials delivered from the NFA warehouse. Partners may also buy food, receive donations, or use other hyper-local sources of surplus food.
- NFA partners run food clubs, food banks, and social eating programmes on a regular basis for residents in need of food support. These sessions offer wraparound support on site and/or signposting to wraparound and services.
- Residents can get referred through a referral service, known as the NFA Front Door, where they are directed to the most suitable NFA partner for food support and wraparound activities. It is also normal for residents to just 'walk-in' to a partner where they have an existing community connection.

About the Newham Food Alliance

What is the Newham Food Alliance (NFA)?

- A partnership of over 40 voluntary, community, faith, and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations, Newham Council, 10 Schools and 5 Youth Zones. Supported by regional and national partners including [Felix](#), [Feeding Britain](#), [Sustain](#), [City Harvest](#), and the Greater London Authority (GLA).
- Established in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the Council's crisis response. Six years later, the NFA responds at scale to food security challenges, poverty, and health inequalities.
- NFA partners run food banks, food clubs, community hot meals, and offer wraparound support (benefits, housing, employment, health).
- The goal is for residents in need to access support early whilst challenges are more easily addressed. The NFA partners are well-equipped to support residents to access statutory entitlement and solutions to problems.

How is the NFA resourced and funded?

Some of the central Government's Crisis and Resilience Fund for Councils (which replaced the Household Support Fund in 2026) is used to support the Newham Food Alliance partnership and associated wraparound support provision. This funding is external to the Council and must be spent in line with specific national guidelines, rather than drawn from the Council's core budgets. Historically other pots of money from the Greater London Authority have also supported the NFA. Individual NFA partners have various other funding streams, for example, grants and corporate donations which fund food support and other programmes they run.

Who are the NFA partners?

Partners range from large and long-established charities to smaller grassroots organisations. They span Newham's geography, food cultures and social need, and reflect Newham's rich mix of cultures, faiths, and demographics.

- Some partners specialise in serving specific communities such as Somali, Malayalam, or residents with a language in common such as Portuguese or Spanish.

- Around half of partners are led by people from diverse ethnic backgrounds, reflecting their ability to provide culturally relevant and trusted support.
- Some organisations support particular groups where food security is an issue such as older residents, those with disabilities or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (and the carers who support them), rough sleepers, migrants, and people with No Recourse to Public Funds.

The Council is a partner. What does that mean?

Since first coming together in 2020 the NFA partners have collectively agreed their way of working. As the partnership has developed and needs have changed, these expectations have also been updated. The Council is one of the partners of the NFA. It funds and facilitates the food logistics and provides hosting and coordination support including:

Logistics and funding:

- Contributing to the delivery costs of Felix food distributed to NFA partners across Newham
- Funding the NFA Hub, a warehouse providing additional items to partners, including frozen food, surplus clothing, household essentials
- Funding small grants for capital investment (for example, as of June 2026, 190 fridges and freezers have been distributed since 2020)
- Funding for the Community Hot Meals grant programme

Coordination:

- The Council operates a virtual Front Door to the NFA: this helps to manage incoming need in an organised way, making referrals for food support from NFA partners and signposting wider support to the community, e.g. benefit/financial advice services
- Officer time to support with food logistics, coordination, and organisational development around fundraising, sustainability, wraparound services, and governance, e.g. letters of support for grant applications external to council
- Hosting monthly meetings, maintaining a virtual library of materials, facilitating networking between partners, seeking out opportunities for NFA partners for fundraising and outreach

Are you a food partnership?

Yes, the Newham Food Alliance is one part of Sustainable Food Newham. We are a member of the [Sustainable Food Places \(SFP\) network](#). Alongside food security we are working as a borough to deliver action on Community Wealth Building and a Just Transition on climate.

How to Access Food Support

A resident has come to me and needs access to food support. How do I help them?

The Newham Food Alliance Front Door is a single point of entry to the NFA for anyone experiencing food insecurity. Referrals can be self-referrals or made on behalf of a resident by frontline staff, family member or friend.

Once the Front Door has received a referral, the team will give the resident a call, using translators where needed, to assess their situation and see what support they could benefit from and, if appropriate, refer them to a food bank or food club best placed to meet their need. Residents are also often given contact details for help from other organisations e.g. Our Newham Money for other appropriate support.

The Front Door helps to ensure that NFA support is being effectively targeted. The key is to ensure that residents are receiving the right support at the right time and we are helping to reduce the reliance on long-term food bank support.

Referrals can be made via:

The online form (best way to get support quickly):
newham-self.achieveservice.com/service/NFA_Referral

Email: frontdoor@newhamfoodalliance.org

Phone: 07790 975 086



Food Supply and Infrastructure

Where does the food the NFA uses come from?

- [Felix](#)
- [City Harvest](#)
- Corporate donations
- NFA partners also have their own food sources. Some use applications like Neighbourly or FareShare Go and many have relationships with local businesses and retail stores

What is the NFA Hub?

The Newham Food Alliance Hub is the warehouse that receives, organises, and distributes items to partners across the network. Based in Silvertown, the 1,509 ft² site includes industrial-sized shipping container fridges and freezers, a forklift, and an electric vehicle fleet, enabling large volumes of surplus food and other essential goods to be bulk broken and redistributed efficiently. The NFA Hub was launched in August 2020 and has grown over the years to become the key infrastructure underpinning the NFA. Its impact includes:

- In 2025/26, over £2.4 million worth of surplus food, household items and clothing passed through the NFA Hub.
- The NFA Hub also supports wider public health initiatives. For example, the Hub distributes baby formula, Vitamin D and Healthy Start vitamins to VCFSE and NHS partners.

In 2025/26, the NFA Hub completed the solar-powered 'container city' project. This expansion secured additional storage capacity for frozen, chilled, and ambient goods while generating renewable energy to power its operations and electric vehicles. It significantly increases the amount of surplus items that can be distributed, preventing waste and reducing emissions. The projected environmental impact includes:

- 7,800 kWh of renewable electricity generated annually (that's enough to power around 3 small London houses for a year)
- 85% of electricity exported or redistributed, maximising system efficiency.
- Estimated annual carbon savings of 1,750 kg CO₂.
- At least £51,400 in annual energy savings to the Council.

The NFA's Approach to Supporting Residents

What is the 'first we break bread' approach to direct food support?

The 'first we break bread' approach recognises that while residents may initially come to NFA partners for food support, food is often just the starting point. By offering a warm welcome, a food parcel, or a meal, partners can build trust and create a safe, supportive environment. Once this trust is established, food becomes a gateway to wider support. Partners can then work with residents to understand their circumstances and help address the underlying causes of food insecurity.

The NFA partners offer wraparound services to ensure that food becomes a gateway to further support. The aim is to create momentum in residents' lives to improve their health, wellbeing, and quality of life. For the Council, the aim is to make the borough function better.

Wraparound services include:



Benefits advice and income maximisation



Employment advice and CV writing



Debt support, budgeting advice, energy advice



Referrals to welfare rights, housing, adult social care, immigration services



Healthy Start and Vitamin D sign-up support



Form filling



One-to-one advice sessions and pastoral care



English language (ESOL) classes



Digital skills classes and access to laptops, tablets, internet



Support for kids with SEND and for adults with disabilities



Cooking classes and nutrition education



Basic health checks, access to medical services and health literacy activities



Wellbeing and social activities such as exercise, Zumba, yoga, bingo, arts and crafts, singing, poetry, and dance, to combat social isolation and loneliness.



Signposting to specialist services for mental health, domestic violence, and substance misuse.



The NFA describes itself as taking a strategic approach to direct food support. What does that mean?

- The NFA follows a strategic way of working. Food banks, food clubs and community hot meals sessions deliver impactful contact with residents. This ranges from running basic health checks and screening for type 2 diabetes, to reducing loneliness and social isolation, to guiding residents to access all their statutory entitlements.
- In the 2024-2025 Community Hot Meals programme, over 3,300 signposts and referrals were made to other services. This high level of signposting and referring to services demonstrates that NFA partners are actively engaged with residents, are trusted by residents, and are highly knowledgeable about services and support available.
- We continue to work with partners to improve residents' lives and build their financial resilience, in line with aims of the Government's Crisis and Resilience Fund, as well as reducing costs to the NHS, council and other services. This ultimately aims to reduce residents' need for food support.

How many people is the NFA supporting? How much work does that involve?

A typical week in 2026 sees.....

5,039

households supported with a food parcel

2,591

households with children supported; 6,103 children and young people under 18

1,509

residents with No Recourse to Public Funds

889

residents aged 65+

155

pregnant women

82

food bank or food club sessions weekly

Overall, the scale of food moved through the NFA:

- Around 45 tonnes of food are estimated to be distributed every week by the NFA as a whole from Felix, City Harvest, the NFA Hub, and other suppliers. This is equivalent to roughly three and a half London double-decker buses.
- In 2025/26, over £5 million worth of surplus food and household items were distributed through partnerships with Felix and City Harvest, with another £2.4 million passing through the NFA Hub.
- As of April 2026, over 1.25 million surplus food parcels have been distributed since April 2020.





What Programmes do NFA Partners Run?

What is the Community Hot Meals Programme?

- The Community Hot Meals (CHM) programme provides warm spaces and meals for residents on a regular basis during the winter period. Community meals allow residents to enjoy a hot meal and get access to support, guidance and signposting to other services including debt and benefits, employment, and mental wellbeing.
- The community spaces also offer activities for children, youth, and adults fostering a warm and inclusive environment.
- The ethos of the CHM programme is that food is the foundation for trusted interactions. Residents feel comfortable, safe, and welcomed in community

spaces where food is the gateway for them to access additional support.

Phase 4 (December 2024 to April 2025) saw 18 NFA partners funded through the Household Support Fund to serve meals across 20 sites.

Over **56,000** meals were served



3,381 signposts or referrals were made





What is a food club?

- Food clubs are membership-based organisations designed for residents on long-term low incomes. For a small weekly fee (£2–£10), members receive food and household items. Food is ‘not-for-sale’ but based on a basket of items the resident selects.
- Food clubs offer access to additional support such as financial advice, digital skills, and training opportunities. They focus on creating a change in people’s lives and reducing dependency by creating a sustainable, community-driven approach to food security.
- The NFA has a London-leading number of food clubs with 17 across Newham as of July 2026.
- A [Food Club Toolkit](#) was first co-produced with NFA partners in 2021 and partners most recently helped update this in 2025.

What is a Food Bank Plus?

- Food banks traditionally support those experiencing an emergency and offer time-limited food support as well as other crisis resolution. Unlike food clubs there is not a member contribution or a longer-term commitment to use the service.
- Reasons why a resident may need to access a food bank include delays with benefits, universal credit, people not knowing or struggling to assert their rights regarding benefits, escaping domestic violence, family break down, sudden life changes – from a sudden loss of job to a broken-down car or boiler.
- All NFA partners are committed to doing more than just address an emergency with a food parcel. All partners are committed to offer a food bank ‘plus’. Alongside the direct food support designed to meet immediate need, they also offer wraparound support to address the issues that draw households into crisis.
- As of July 2026, there are 24 food banks in the NFA, and all are trained on how to signpost and refer residents to further support through the Social Welfare Alliance. Best practice is co-located wraparound support happening alongside a food bank session however venue capacity and other factors means that partners may use alternative approaches.

All About Surplus Food

What is surplus food?

There are different types of food waste and surplus.

Food that supermarkets and other businesses have bought or processed and then don't use.



We expect the cost of getting this food into Newham to be met by these businesses. Reasons why food becomes surplus can include changes in consumer demand, errors in packaging, extensions to Best Before End dates and short Use By dates.

Farm waste where supermarkets do not buy everything that farmers have contractually been asked to grow.



Newham Council is an active buyer of food direct from growers, including through Juniper Ventures, our school meals service. Some reasons why surplus comes from farms are:

- Food is the wrong shape, wrong size, or has the wrong aesthetics
- Contracts where the price on offer has reduced
- Food has been adversely affected by climate, such as excessive rain or heat, which can affect a crop's size, appearance, quality, or harvest time, making it surplus even though it is often still safe and nutritious to eat

Food that becomes surplus before it reaches retail.



Reasons for this include:

- Wholesale food where the prices are too high for independent retailers and uncompetitive when compared to those of supermarket chains
- Gluts of fresh harvested produce flooding the market
- Labour costs too high to pick or pack
- Food taste profile rejected by corporate buyers
- Poor cold storage and transport infrastructure can mean food is not kept at the right temperature, leading to faster spoilage before it reaches retail.

There is a very small amount of waste created in retail stores in the borough itself.





The NFA uses surplus food. How do you make sure you are not just providing a space where big supermarkets can get rid of their waste cheaply without cost?

- The Newham Food Alliance does not exist to help supermarkets offload waste. We are active in national campaigns to highlight the structural and systemic issues that create surplus food. We never pay or contribute to the cost of supermarkets moving on their surplus.
- The UK Government works with all sectors of the food system and encourages them to follow the food waste [hierarchy](#), which are a set of guidelines advocating for prevention of waste through efficient use of resources, and redistribution to people rather than animals.
- By utilising good surplus food and highlighting the large amount of waste the system currently generates,

the Newham Food Alliance uses good food that does not have a commercial outlet to feed people rather than see it fed to pigs or go to landfill. We advocate for a fairer food system, where national policy ensures that sustainably produced surpluses always reach food projects, schools, hospitals and adult residential care where trained chefs can ensure that this food gets eaten.

How much surplus food does Newham use?

- Newham uses more surplus food than any London borough: £7.4m worth in 2025/26.
- Around 45 tonnes of surplus food moved weekly; strong partnerships with The Felix Project and City Harvest.
- 1 tonne of surplus food utilises 1.31 tonnes of embedded CO₂e that was created during food production and would otherwise have been wasted.
- 1 tonne of surplus food avoids 270kg of CO₂e that would have been created had the food been wasted and entered the various waste streams.

