

**Executive Summary and
Tower Hamlets Case paper**

**Year 1 of the CCS programme:
Evaluation and learning**

January 2021



The Children's Society is proud to be working in partnership with the following organisations to deliver the Coordinated Community Support Programme



Year 1 of the Coordinated Community Support Programme, Evaluation Executive Summary

About the Coordinated Community Support Programme

The Children's Society (TCS), in partnership with several organisations including Buttle UK, the Lloyds Bank Foundation, Children in Need, The Church of England, The Legal Education Foundation, The Local Government Association (LGA), Trust for London, Smallwood Trust, Stepchange and Trussell Trust are delivering the Coordinated Community Support (CCS) Programme.

The initial aims of the programme were twofold. Firstly, to address the gap in emergency support provision left following the elimination of Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants through better networking of different local agencies (including the Local Authority) involved in the provision of emergency assistance. Secondly, to reduce repeat instances of financial crisis by addressing underlying causes of crises, as well as the immediate emergency.

Five themes - the programme aims to improve outcomes including:

- Improving **access** to crisis support schemes
- A simpler, supported, **application process**
- Addressing **underlying needs** to prevent the recurrence of crisis
- Providing **aftercare**
- A commitment to ongoing **learning**

Four Pilot Sites selected as the focus

- Norfolk
- Oldham
- Swansea
- Tower Hamlets

Three Theories of Change were developed in the early stages of the programme

- Tier 1 – Impact on people accessing services
- Tier 2 – Impact on local systems
- Tier 3 – Impact on national systems

The CCS Programme works within four different local authority areas to setup pilot projects providing support, guidance and resources to local community organisations to better coordinate crisis provision. The programme invites organisations in each local pilot site to develop workstreams to contribute to the five thematic areas with an overarching coordination objective. A central CCS team, hosted by the Children's Society, provides programme management support.

In addition to the funded workstreams, the programme has delivered facilitation of meetings between organisations and supporting them with responses to Covid-19. Taking a collaborative approach, the programme seeks to develop new ways of supporting people facing financial crisis through the sharing of ideas, direct funding and supporting applications to welfare support. The programme also seeks to influence national systems by bringing policy makers and funders closer to the experiences of local people.

About the evaluation

Cloud Chamber were invited by TCS and partners to conduct an independent formative and summative evaluation of the programme. This report is an account of Year 1 of the programme. The main data sources for this report include workstream case studies, monitoring data, interviews with the CCS Programme team, observation of partnership meetings and facilitation of pilot-site outcome-setting sessions.

A responsive programme: Covid-19

Implementation plans were drafted in each Local Authority in early 2020. However, due Covid-19, many of the workstreams were adapted to respond to the challenges arising within communities. The overall objective of ‘access to crisis support’ has remained constant for the programme while priorities around ‘access’ have changed and workstreams have adapted accordingly:

- Pre-pandemic workstreams had a focus on **improving access** to support and appointments through funding translation, transport and some co-designed services. These workstreams were paused or reconfigured.
- Covid-19 workstreams have a focus on **timely access** through provision of food, furniture and advice in a timely and Covid-safe setting via trusted agencies.

A summary of workstreams is shown in the table below:

| Swansea | Oldham | Norfolk | Tower Hamlets |
|--|---|--|---|
| Citizen’s Advice Swansea Food Parcel Leaflet (£110) | Ancora KeyRing food parcel leaflet (£55) | Leeway: Smallwood funding for homestart packs (£4,500) | Island Advice / Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (NCAN): School referral project (£5,000) |
| Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) Centralised Hardship fund (£9,000)* | Ancora Keyring Emergency hardship fund (£3,125) | Norfolk Citizen’s Advice: Grant Awareness project (£7,600) | Mulberry School food and advice service (£20,000)* |
| Housing Justice Cymru, Citadel (£12,883) | REEL clothing bank (£3,200) | Norfolk Citizen’s Advice: Digital Inclusion project (£1,200) | RSS Training session with Northgate and Tower Hamlets local authority (no cost) |
| The Wallich Home Starter packs (£2,625) | SAWN Furniture and Extended services (£9,650)* | Norfolk Community Law Service: Family Solicitor Expansion (£5,000) | |
| | | Norwich Integration Partnership: joint project (£16,298)* | |
| | | Norfolk Community Advice Network: Development and staffing resource for NCAN system (£6,552) | |

Note: Workstreams in **bold font** are case studies in this evaluation. Those marked with an * have additional resource funding from leveraged sources explained in more detail in the full report.

The programme actively brought organisations responding to the Covid-19 crisis together and offered a chance to exchange experiences and understanding the emerging needs resulting from lockdown. Cloud Chamber observed these sessions, and the ways in which Covid-19 prompted rapid adaptation for organisations to be able to help people in financial crisis. While coordination remains the primary objective of the programme, there has been acknowledgement that Covid-19 has had a double-edged impact on this objective:

- Firstly, Covid-19 has catalysed rapid adaptation and relationship building between VCS organisations to identify and implement solutions quickly.
- Secondly, Covid-19 has left some organisations with little time, space or resource to codesign long-term sustainable coordinated projects.

It is possible that the relationships forged between organisations during the Covid-19 pandemic will be sustained.

- *“We forged a relationship with [another VCS org] and I’m hoping it will continue.”* (partner during a partnership call during lockdown Spring 2020)

CCS adding value and capacity

The CCS team has contributed local provision of crisis support and local systems change in the following ways:

- **CCS as a broker:** organisations in the pilot sites, especially VCS organisations, value the brokerage role that the CCS team have played. This has taken place both through facilitating CCS-programme meetings and through direct contact between organisations.
- **CCS as an asset-identifier:** since the ‘bringing together’ of organisations through the programme, further catalysed through the needs arising because of Covid-19, organisations report an improved awareness and understanding of the strengths of other organisations in their local areas.
- **CCS workstreams welcomed as a non-target driven space:** some organisations funded to deliver workstreams report that the CCS programme is a space to ‘try’ new things and is refreshing when compared to the target-driven requirements from other funders. Organisations welcome the spirit of the programme.
- **CCS as a platform, boosting credibility:** there is some early evidence of VCS organisations feeling ‘seen and heard’ because of the facilitation of the CCS programme. Being involved in the programme has raised their profile in their localities and boosted their credibility. This is particularly the case for small, volunteer-led organisations.
- **Flexible, warm and responsive central CCS team is valued:** consulted stakeholders have really welcomed the relationships built with the CCS team and value their flexibility, especially in relation to Covid-19. Partners welcome the collaborative approach the team have taken. The team are increasingly being approached by local authorities for advice.
- **A blended approach of workstream funding and facilitation has been welcome:** The value of workstream funding combined with facilitation has been valued by partners.

Activity and output summary

Much of the energy of the programme in Year 1 has been focused on local systems change. At the time of writing, the programme is working with the four pilot sites to identify the steps needed to make ‘good’ coordination happen.

The CCS programme has delivered the following activities in Year 1 and distributed just over £100,000 of workstream funding:

- Promotion, engagement and partnership development
- Pilot site partnership meetings (26 meetings)
- Online grant awareness training (31 attendees)

- Development of the CCS Charter (26 organisations have signed up to the charter)
- Cross-pilot site partnership learning meetings (three meetings)
- Commissioned research on analysing different perspectives of crisis provision (ongoing)
- Support to develop 17 workstreams funded directly by CCS funding
- Leveraged £68,000 from additional sources to complement and add value

The CCS Team have engaged 368 professionals during Year 1 of the Programme; representing approximately 139 organisations across the four pilot sites. Further statistics demonstrating the level of engagement are shown in the table below.

| | Norfolk | Oldham | Swansea | Tower Hamlets | Total |
|--|---------|--------|---------|---------------|------------|
| Number of people | 142 | 78 | 76 | 72 | 368 |
| Number VCS organisations | 24 | 35 | 31 | 31 | 121 |
| Number local authority, county council or other statutory | 8 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 15 |
| Number of schools | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 |

Workstream case studies

The key lessons from four workstream case studies across each of the pilot sites are summarised in the table below. This research formed a principal input to the evaluation.

| Workstream | Summary | Learning emerging from case study |
|---|--|---|
| Norwich Integration Partnership (Norfolk) | <p>Norwich Integration Partnership (NIP) is a pre-existing partnership of three organisations (Bridge Plus, New Routes Integration & English+) supporting individuals with NRPF, migrants and asylum-seekers.</p> <p>With an expected reach of 250 clients CCS funding was provided to support a collaborative response to Covid-19. The funding helped proactively and collaboratively identify and support vulnerable clients through information sharing, supermarket vouchers, IT top-ups and other support.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The case study highlights the important role of trust, and wider (non-crisis) related provision, in developing relationships and providing crisis support ○ A wide range of outcomes were seen, linked both to the response to Covid-19, and often in addition to the outcomes outlined in the CCS theory of change ○ <i>“We came closer together as a team of three organisations, with fewer overlaps in delivery; and much closer working - it really enhanced that.” (NIP Staff member)</i> |
| SAWN Furniture Packs and Additional Support (Oldham) | <p>Funding for SAWN to resume safe supply of furniture packs to vulnerable clients illegible for support via the Oldham LWAS (i.e. people with NRPF).</p> <p>SAWN also offer wider holistic and ongoing support, information and guidance. Some funding for fuel top-ups and other emergency costs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The service is providing so much more than providing furniture to vulnerable residents; it is building trusted relationships with people, signposting to other services, helping with applications and informal aftercare. ○ The time taken to provide this service is not something SAWN are remunerated for directly although stakeholders in the borough, including the local authority and other VCS organizations, recognise and value this support. |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o <i>“If we hadn’t had that time with her, those cups of tea, I don’t know what would have happened to her. She’s still alive. That’s an outcome. It’s a soft outcome. She’s come to understand what has happened to her, the trauma she’s experienced. We ask her what she wants. She finds her own solutions.” (SAWN)</i> |
| <p>Centralised Hardship Fund, EYST (Swansea)</p> | <p>The project managed by Ethnic Minorities and Youth Support Team (EYST) is a centralised hardship fund accessible to local organisations to improve the access to crisis support of asylum seekers, refugees and those with no recourse to public funds.</p> <p>The fund focuses on IT equipment, data and phone top-ups, children’s needs (e.g. baby food) and other emergency costs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The need to respond in a focused and rapid way to the Covid-19 crisis has led to stronger working relationships between organisations. o While the Covid-19 pandemic has increased the difficulty of offering face-to-face support, organisations successfully shifted delivery aspects to a remote model. o It was felt that remote approaches developed during the pandemic could be used in the future and would help to reduce, for example, unnecessary client expenditure on bus fares to attend appointments. o Recognising the value of face-to-face contact in building trust and understanding underlying needs, a balanced approach has the potential to improve both co-ordination between organisations and client outcomes in the longer-term. o <i>“I think the project has allowed us and our partners to develop our relationship with each other and more importantly with our clients.” (EYST team member)</i> |
| <p>Mulberry Food and Advice Service, (Tower Hamlets)</p> | <p>At the beginning of lockdown, staff at Mulberry School identified that certain products were disappearing from shops due to stockpiling – nappies, sanitary towels, lentils and flour for example.</p> <p>The service provided food parcels, household necessities, toiletries, and sanitary hygiene kits. The service included welfare referrals to the school social worker and local advice agency, Island Advice.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o The service was successful due to the commitment and dedication of teachers who volunteered their time and the funding leveraged by the CCS programme. o Referring families to Island Advice was new for the school and a successful example of coordination. Need for food and advice remains high in the borough although teachers are back to their “day job” and capacity is low. o <i>“[CCS team member] introduced us to Island Advice. As I understand it, the [CCS] programme brings together organisations that are struggling but all trying to achieve the same thing” (Mulberry School employee)</i> |

Impact on people accessing services

Monitoring data from the programme shows at least 2,000 individuals have been supported directly through the programmes workstreams in 2020. The importance of trust between people who access services and organisations is frequently mentioned during our case study work and our evaluation encourages the programme to identify ways to support the VCS to harness and build upon these trusted relationships. Outcomes for people accessing services in Year 1 for those who have accessed a workstream include:

- o More likely to access support from the right place, quickly (access theme)
- o Access to a wider range of support services (underlying need theme)

- More dignified experience of accessing crisis support and systems (cross cutting theme)
- More able to trust someone who can help me
- Wellbeing is maintained or prevented from entering crisis
- More likely to have had support with additional needs (beyond immediate crisis)
- Mental and/or physical health is maintained
- Children are more likely to be able to engage with education

Impact on local systems

Much of the work in Year 1 of the CCS programme has been focused on building the foundations - the networks and relationships of organisations working at local, pilot site level. The CCS programme has offered a unique opportunity for organisations to communicate with each other in their localities, albeit virtually. In some cases, the CCS-facilitated meetings were the first time that organisations were made aware of one another.

Consulted stakeholders in the pilot sites have welcomed the relationships built with the CCS team and value their flexibility, especially in relation to Covid-19. Partners welcome the collaborative approach that the CCS team have taken. The team are increasingly being approached by local authorities for advice indicating that they have gained trust and credibility in the four pilot sites and have laid a good foundation for improving systems in Years 2 and 3. Outcomes for pilot sites in Year 1 include:

- Increasing levels of communication between organisations
- Increasing levels of trust between organisations
- Increased clarity of responsibilities and strengths of voluntary community sector (VCS) provision
- Agility of VCS is better understood
- Shared vision of the centrality of client journey
- Joint understanding of the importance of referral systems
- Building upon learning within the programme

The CCS programme seeks to influence local eco-systems i.e. relationships between organisations. This model assumes a set of preconditions or assumptions amongst practitioner and organisations for enabling this. These preconditions include willingness, skills and capacity of practitioners and organisations. It also assumes that the pathway to collaboration is inclusive for all organisation types (size, sector, subsector)

Impact on national systems

Much of the impact on national systems has been in direct response to Covid-19, bringing policy makers closer to the experiences of communities with regards to challenges around digital exclusion and access to Free School Meals. It was noted that many of the smaller organisations did not have other routes in to influence policy and practice, so this was an empowering part of the programme for them. TCS, together with others in the sector, have directly influenced some operational systems change at national level in response to Covid-19. Examples include:

- **MHCLG and the Treasury funding:** The Children’s Society was active in engaging with Central Government regarding financial hardship and Covid-19. An additional £63 million was provided by central government in June to be distributed to local authorities in England
- **Discretionary Assistance Fund (Welsh Government):** contribution of evidence to decision regarding provision of additional support to this fund. Subsequently, a further £11 million was allocated in May to the fund which supports individuals and families facing extreme financial hardship.

Looking forward

This full evaluation report invites the CCS Team and partners to ensure that Years 2 and 3 of the programme put emphasis on:

- **Responding to ‘additional’ needs:** we have seen how services have been supported beyond the immediate crisis presented – for example, brokering conversations with housing teams or helping register with a GP. While this does not go so far as addressing an *underlying* need it does address additional, sometimes multifaceted need. At present, this is not represented in the programme Theory of Change and we invite the CCS team to consider it as a valid objective of the programme.
- **Building trusted relationships:** some of the support provided by organisations is informal, relationship building. It shares some characteristics with aftercare although the term does not always resonate with delivery organisations. As a result, some organisations are not requesting funds (both within the CCS programme and beyond) for this work. We recommend shifting the discourse from aftercare to ‘building trusted relationships’ in an attempt to support organisations to do this work. Building these trusted relationships is critical to helping identify and respond to identifying need.
- **Consider where on the ‘ownership continuum’ the project wants to be:** An early aspiration of the programme was for local organisations to own the direction of the programme and come forward with workstream ideas. Evidence suggests that the open nature (i.e., a sense of freedom for organisations to design their own projects without a pre-determined set of outcomes) of the workstreams has been challenging to engage with. We invite the team to consider how realistic true ownership of the programme at pilot site level is likely to be and recognise that full co-production may not be possible. Steps towards ownership (such as local organisations calling meetings, offering to lead on workstreams etc.) should still be regarded as a success especially given the organisational pressures due to Covid-19.

It is also recommended that the programme considers how best to:

- Ensure that system pathways allow space for practitioners to build trust with people accessing services.
- Consider how the programme can improve the ability and confidence of organisations to place value on building trusted relationships.
- Consider ways to better engage smaller, voluntary led organisations in the programme.
- Consider the role of schools in the programme and beyond.

Year 1 of the CCS Programme in Tower Hamlets

Key learning

- The CCS programme has funded two projects in Tower Hamlets – The Mulberry School Food and Advice Service and the Island Advice Referral Project.
- The Mulberry School Food and Advice Service was successful due to the commitment and dedication of teachers who volunteered their time and the funding leveraged by the CCS programme. Referring families to Island Advice was new for the school and a successful example of coordination. Need for food and advice remains high in the borough although teachers are back to their 'day job' and capacity is low.
- There is eagerness amongst several schools, advice agencies and the local authority to develop systems to provide food, advice, and other much-needed support, building upon schools trusted position with the community and ability to identify complex needs.
- Tower Hamlets is unique as there are several advice agencies operating in the borough, each with different strengths. There is a shared understanding of the need to work together.
- ***“Identification, information and coordination. There is a lack of joined up working between agencies leading to duplication and resources not always being delivered to those most in need.” (Source: Cloud Chamber survey, Summer 2020)***
- There is consensus in the borough that a referral system, accessible by several advice agencies, would be a useful tool; allowing professionals to better understand client journeys, understand complex needs and better provide aftercare. It will also minimise the need to clients to repeat their stories.

CCS activity in Tower Hamlets

Summary of funded workstreams

- **Mulberry School Food and Advice Service:** £20k for food parcels and household necessities provided to support students and families of Mulberry School set up in response to the Covid-19 outbreak. Support includes welfare referrals to school social worker and local advice agency.
 - **Primary target outcome theme: improved access to crisis support**
- **Island Advice Referral Project:** £5k funding for a triage referral role for one day per week for six months. The role will process referrals and triage to organisations within the Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network (THCAN) network.
 - **Primary target outcome theme: addressing underlying need**

The CCS programme has also leveraged additional funds for Tower Hamlets including £20,000 from the Martin Lewis coronavirus fund and £8,000 from the East End Community Fund.

About this paper

In consultation with the TCS team, it was agreed that a useful lens for the Year 1 evaluation would be for Cloud Chamber to conduct workstream case studies in each of the four pilot sites. The questions that workstream case studies aim to answer include:

- What happened in the workstream?
- How did the workstream adapt / respond to Covid-19?
- What have we learned as a result of this workstream?
- What was the impact of the workstream on service users? How many service users were reached?
- What was the impact of the workstream on local systems change?
- How did CCS Programme add value to this area of work?
- To what extent did the workstream contribute to the initial five themes (access, simplified application, underlying need, aftercare, learning)?

Interviews have been completed with the Mulberry Food and Advice Service Lead, the Centre Manager of Island Advice, and a member of the Tackling Poverty Team at London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Our survey delivered in summer 2020 to all contacts invited to participate in CCS received only four responses from Tower Hamlets respondents - three identify as VCS orgs and one from a local authority. Due to the small sample size, only qualitative data from the survey has been used in this paper and triangulated with other data sources.

The remainder of this paper focuses primarily on learning and reflections from the Mulberry Food and Advice Service and pulls out lessons that may be relevant across the borough and for other CCS sites.

About the Mulberry Food and Advice workstream

Rationale

At the beginning of lockdown, staff at Mulberry School identified that certain products were disappearing from shops due to stockpiling – nappies, sanitary towels, lentils and flour for example. There was also evidence of “profiteering” by local shops near to the Mulberry School.

Staff at the school set up a ‘Go Fund Me’ page to raise money to provide food for families and had an excellent response. In April 2020, the school set up a food bank for an expected 200 families identified by colleagues at the school. They built a relationship with Bow Food Bank who put the school in contact with the CCS programme who provided additional funding and support. The service was very well-used with over 400 families accessed the service.

The service provided food parcels, household necessities, toiletries, and sanitary hygiene kits. The CCS programme support included welfare referrals to school social worker and local advice agency, Island Advice. The funding provided by the CCS programme was used alongside money raised by the project and donations from Beaty Bank, Bloody Good Period and Clean Consciousness. The aim of the CCS funding was to empower the project to not only provide much needed products, but to also refer to additional advice and support. Initial funding from the CCS programme for this workstream was £20,000 for food parcels and household necessities provided to support students and families of Mulberry School set up in response to the Covid-19 outbreak.

Outputs

At the time of writing the data for the Mulberry Food and Advice workstream is incomplete and represents just 1 month (May 2020) of a possible four months during which the workstream was delivered. In May alone, Mulberry report¹:

- 1,848 food / toiletry packs were provided per household.
- 482 service users were supported with both underlying needs and aftercare.
- 31 families were successfully referred for information, advice or guidance.

Outcomes for people

- Mulberry School identified a barrier for people to access food – travelling can be costly, time consuming and inaccessible. The Mulberry Food and Advice Service therefore improved access to food and toiletries. Furthermore, for many people, access to advice was improved as some of the service users would not have been aware or considered accessing advice services.
- Island Advice report that many of the referrals received from Mulberry School were in relation to form filling, completing applications and supporting service users through that process. While this was not an intended outcome of the workstream, the Mulberry Food and Advice Service has contributed to improving a simpler, supported application process.
- Accessing fresh fruit, vegetable and culturally appropriate foods for the Mulberry School community has possibly contributed to an unexpected outcome around maintaining healthy, varied diets.
- As many of the beneficiaries of the Food and Advice Service are children and young people, it is possible that a further unexpected outcome has been achieved around enabling Mulberry students to participate in education activities during lockdown.

Local systems outcomes

- **Project partners have been able to build upon learning:** the experience of partnership working between Mulberry School and Island Advice has led to the development of the referral project at Island Advice. Island Advice were looking for innovative ways of working due to lockdown and recognise that the partnership with Mulberry School has informed their practice.
 - *“After what happened at Mulberry, we realised that a lot of people are not aware they can access advice. So people get in touch with their GP but don’t know about the advice centre. We used to have drop-ins but we can’t now [because of Covid-19] and the most vulnerable people can’t get access. We have worked so differently due to lockdown. We all have to work remotely. The Mulberry project has impact on our organisation. It has informed how we do things.” (Island Advice employee)*
- **Improved trust, collaboration and timely intervention:** the relationship between Mulberry School, Island Advice and food banks has improved because of the CCS programme demonstrating improved trust between providers, improved ability to collaboratively identify solutions and improved ability to ensure timely intervention.

¹ Source: The Children’s Society Monitoring data provided by Mulberry School

Workstream learning

Tower Hamlets specific learning

The Mulberry School Food and Advice project highlights a number of lessons about providing crisis support in a school setting.

- **School as a trusted agency:** stakeholders note that Mulberry School has a unique position within the community where they are already visible, known and trusted by families. Furthermore, teachers have the ability to potentially identify families who may need food and advice support. Schools are uniquely placed to provide crisis support. As well as the trusted relationship, they are able to communicate effectively with vulnerable families using text and email – this is not always possible for other services.
- **The role of volunteer teachers:** during the Covid-19 lockdown, the food service was delivered by teachers who were working in a voluntary capacity. This was unprecedented times and the goodwill of the teachers to volunteer was the only reason that the project was possible. The school only allows employees to volunteer because they require all volunteers to have an enhanced DBS check. Once school reopened and normal teaching duties resumed, the food service was unable to continue - although demand is still high.
- **The welcome relationship with advice services:** advice providers recognise that schools have an important role to play in reaching some of the most vulnerable households especially during social distancing measures. For example, under normal circumstances some advice services were able to have a presence in GP surgeries but are now unable to offer this service safely. Schools, therefore, are one way to reach people who might otherwise be unable to access advice and support.
- **Coordination is time consuming:** the organisation and coordination of the food and advice service was, at times, intense. At Mulberry School, the day-to-day activities of food and care service was managed by a senior staff member, although it falls outside of their ordinary duties. There were occasional bottlenecks to get things agreed as some decisions needed to go through the Head Teacher who was extremely busy and not always able to respond quickly.
- **A learning curve for schools:** Mulberry School were extremely passionate, committed, and skilled in designing and delivering the service. However, during project set-up they did not have the contacts and relationships with local food banks and advice services. The CCS programme is credited with 'brokering' these relationships. Respondents also note that it is not always possible for school representatives to attend various meetings about coordination despite their commitment due to teaching responsibilities.
 - *"It is possible we wouldn't have known to reach out to [CCS]. One of our food bank contacts put us in contact." (Mulberry School employee)*
 - *"The Children's Society have done the signposting [...] I'm a complete non-expert – they know what is needed – they've supported us. They've searched out a lot of grants [...] They've shaped our thinking. We were offering ad hoc benefit support and [CCS team] suggested the referral system with Island Advice. They've signposted us to other organisations who help families." (Mulberry School employee)*
- **Charitable arm of one school is an option for a model:** another school in the borough is loosely engaged with the CCS programme and has a charitable arm which may make it possible for them to leverage external funding and have a dedicated post to providing crisis support.
 - *"We are not a registered charity so we can't go for all the bids." [grant funding] (Mulberry School employee)*

Learning to inform the CCS programme

- **CCS operate as a broker:** as mentioned above, the school team setting up the food bank had little knowledge of other agencies in the borough at the outset. They describe the CCS team as operating as a ‘broker’ – introducing the School to other agencies such as other food banks and advice services.
 - *“[CCS team member] introduced us to Island Advice. As I understand it, the [CCS] programme brings together organisations that are struggling but all trying to achieve the same thing.”
(Mulberry School employee)*
- **Programme is supporting strengths of organisations:** both Mulberry School and Island Advice recognise that they have different strengths and value the fact that the CCS programme is supporting them to make the most of their strengths and, by bringing them together, is maximising this. In Tower Hamlets, there are multiple advice agencies each with different strengths and the CCS programme is an opportunity to build upon these strengths.
- **Demand remains and high and is increasing:** the referral project at Island Advice is currently funding one day a week for an adviser to respond to referrals. This is not thought to be enough as demand is increasing due to Covid-19 implications. Island Advice are keen to build communications with referral organisations (both those who refer to Island Advice and those who are referred by Island Advice) – more resource would be required to do this comprehensively.