



**The Lunch Club at the Rainbow Centre celebrated its 5<sup>th</sup> birthday in April 2018. Will you help us run it for another year to support children who face holiday hunger?**

## About us



Barnet Community Projects is a local grassroots organisation, founded by local community workers and volunteers in 2010. We are an independent registered charity and run the Rainbow Centre on the Dollis Valley Estate, which serves the estate and surrounding areas in Underhill and East Barnet. One of our main aims is to support struggling families and to provide activities for local children and young people who don't normally have access to positive, healthy and creative things to do outside school. The lunch club is a cornerstone of our programme for them.

The lunch club is part of a national initiative ([www.makelunch.org.uk](http://www.makelunch.org.uk)) set up in response to the struggle that families with children on free school meals face during holidays. It was piloted during the 2013 Easter holidays and has run since then, supported by local and national funding, and since 2017 is part of the Mayor of London's Kitchen Social initiative

([www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/kitchen-social-great-things-to-eat-and-do/](http://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/kitchen-social-great-things-to-eat-and-do/))

Karen Hedges, the founder and project manager, received a Hidden Hero award by Room to Reward in February 2017 in recognition of her work on the project.





## The Lunch Club: the details

The lunch club runs every school holiday, Mondays – Fridays, except during the Christmas holidays when there is an outing only. In the summer holidays it runs four days a week over five weeks.

Each lunch club session of two hours offers a nutritious two-course meal cooked on the premises and a range of art and craft activities, games and outdoor activities, including obstacle course races, football and basketball competitions. We also have puzzles, giant and table games and a

book corner, giving children access to a range of games that they do not get at home. We regularly run workshops such as dance, circus skills, mosaic designing and art. The children are also able to get involved in food-making activities which they can take home at the end of the day. Many are focused around healthy eating and good nutrition.

Children are encouraged to practice their social and team-building skills through helping out with preparing and clearing tables etc, and to become lunch club volunteers once they go into Year 10.

Since 2015, we have taken the children on outings – usually one per holiday (two in the summer). As most of them do not get to go on trips and rarely leave the estate; we seek to give them opportunities to broaden their experience.

Outings have included the Science Museum, London Zoo, forest school, outdoor activity, wildlife and environmental centres and Christmas shows.

## Participating children and their needs

The lunch club is aimed at primary school children, but we accept those up to and including Year 9 (so that siblings can attend). On average, 35 children attend every day, and during any holiday up to 50 individual children attend.

The lunch club takes children from low income families who are on free school meals and we work closely with local schools on referrals and eligibility.



Most children living on the estate come from families battling with poverty and disadvantage due to lack of training/education and secure employment. Some children are from families who do not find it easy to integrate into local community life and where English is the second language – including families from Somalia and other African countries. The estate has a high number of long-term unemployed and single parent families, and many children have unstable home lives. The mix of residents is also leading to community tensions. Up to 50% of children in our local schools are on free school meals. Both on and outside the estate, there are increasing numbers of working families in poverty, struggling to get by.

The recent report by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Hunger has confirmed that holiday hunger remains a major concern and challenge, and this is what the lunch club has been

addressing locally for five years.

Families are also supported in a wider sense by being referred to other support services both at the Rainbow Centre and locally. The lunch club team has in the past carried out home visits and regularly responds to individual families seeking support.

## Outcomes

### Children

- receive a hot, nutritious meal
- learn about nutrition and develop better, healthier eating habits
- engage in positive and creative activities, improving their health and well-being and developing skills and interests
- interact with each other in a safe environment, building positive social relationships, team working, and mix with a diverse group of children from different backgrounds



### Families

- have reduced stress about feeding and looking after their children during the holidays
- get opportunities to build relationships within their community
- get access to support



## Monitoring and Evaluation

We monitor progress towards outcomes through structured observation by the Lunch club team, who debrief after each session. The observation framework is based, in part, on Lunch club rules which were devised together with the children. We have quizzes, mood boards and similar things that track how children are learning about food and nutrition and improvements in their social capabilities. We also carry out an annual survey of both children and families.

In the last two years, monitoring has shown that all children build social capabilities and that for families, their children participating in group activities and mixing with children from different backgrounds is as beneficial as having a hot meal during the holidays.



## The Team

Karen Hedges set up the lunch club, initially as a volunteer, in 2013. She is supported by a chef who is engaged on a freelance basis. The rest of the team is entirely composed of 50 - 60 volunteers. There is a core team of four volunteers who are trained alongside project staff and involved in planning and monitoring. For each lunch club other volunteers help out as much as they can. All team members are DBS checked and core team members receive training in safeguarding and other principles of safe working.

## Costs

Each year, we need to raise £10,000 to run lunch club for nine weeks during the holidays. We have enjoyed the support from local funders like the Eleanor Palmer Trust, Jesus Hospital Charity, Finchley Charities and the Happy Charitable Trust; and the Big Lottery. In 2017, Belazu Ingredient Company provided financial support as well as employee volunteering and this volunteering is continuing. We have also had many generous donations from local congregations and individuals.



In 2018, we are taking part in the Summer Big Give, with the aim of raising £4,000. We hope you will be part of it through a pledge or a donation.

## Thank you!

