

# THE HUB COMMUNITY CAFE

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Laying the foundations for a sustainable  
community cafe on the Meadows Estate.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 'Hub Community Cafe Report' contains recommendations and practical suggestions for the development of a Hub Community Cafe that is a friendly and welcoming place to spend time, and enjoy affordable food and drink. It is run by community members and provides opportunities for local people to run their own activities and events. It is a gateway for individuals to access services, whilst providing volunteers with the opportunity to grow in confidence, learn new skills and gain valuable qualifications.

## Brief

To work with the people of the Meadows Estate to put in place the foundations to develop a sustainable community café that works with local businesses to provide opportunities for social connection, employability skills development and community engagement.

## Process

**Best practice research:** visiting cafes and talking to staff, volunteers and customers of community cafes across London;

**Community engagement events:** getting to know the community and engaging local residents in the development of a community cafe;

**Recommendations:** writing up recommendations for the cafe's development over the next year, based on the findings of our research and community engagement.

## Best Practice Research

We researched, visited and interviewed individuals from four types of community cafes: greenspace cafes, youth cafes, training cafes and 'traditional' community cafes.

## Community Engagement

We spent Thursday mornings in the cafe shadowing Tara Sadler, held two community engagement events in the Hub ('Coffee, Cake and Chat' and 'The Great Meadows' Bake Off') and hosted a preliminary Hub cafe board meeting to discuss the cafe's priorities and its role within the community.

## Recommendations: Vision for the Hub Cafe

### People

In order to ensure the success of the cafe, we recommend the following structure (overleaf).

### Layout

Community members have expressed the need for a cafe that is comfortable, relaxed and welcoming. We recommend purchasing comfortable sofas, as well as shelves with books, magazines, games and colouring materials for customers to use. Since the space must remain flexible to accommodate Hub activities, these sofas must be lightweight and moveable, and the shelves tucked in the corner. The suggested layout is overleaf.

### Year Long Plan

We recommend that the next year be divided into three phases. The responsibility for each phase will be divided between LBH, Hub staff, cafe staff and volunteers.

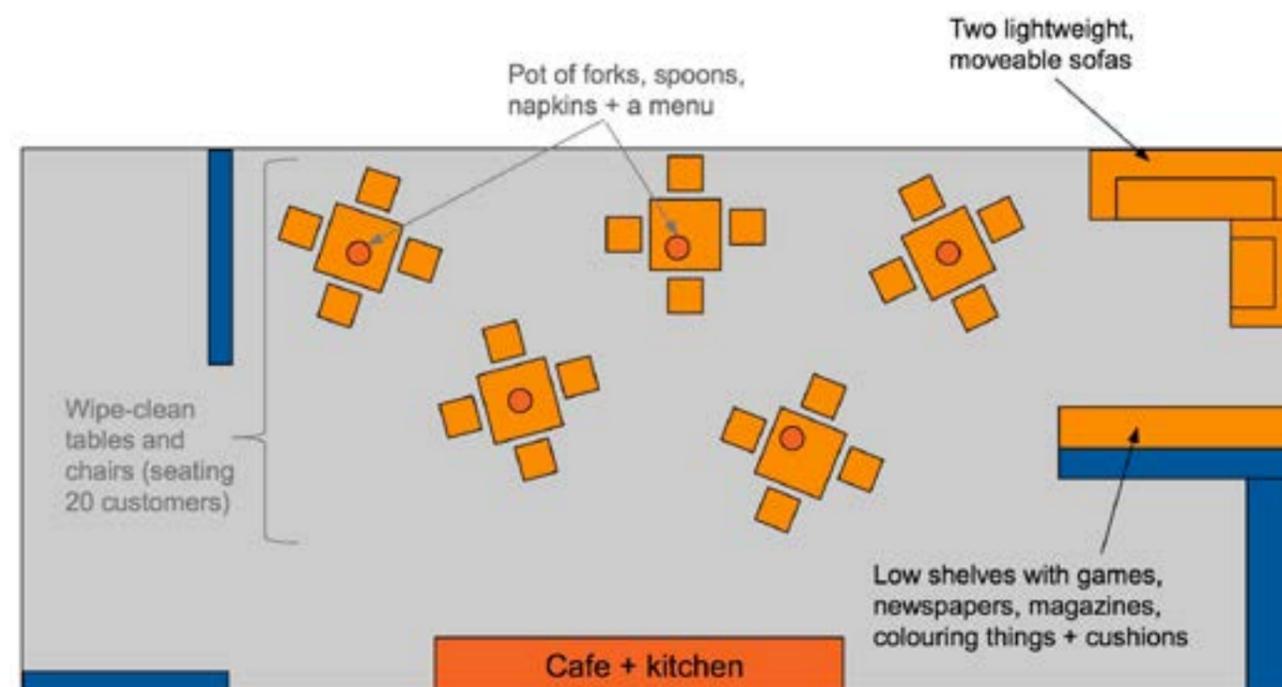
### Priorities and Next Steps

We recommend the following next steps:

- The recruitment of a Community Connector
- Funding applications
- Volunteer recruitment



Cafe staff structure.



Suggested cafe layout.



# INTRODUCTION

The following report and recommendations have been put together following eight weeks of research, prototyping and community engagement with residents of the Meadows' Estate. You will find recommendations and practical suggestions for the development of a Hub Community Cafe that is a friendly and welcoming place to spend time and enjoy affordable food and drink. It is run by community members and provides opportunities for local people to run their own activities and events. It is a gateway for individuals to access services, whilst providing volunteers with the opportunity to grow in confidence, learn new skills and gain valuable qualifications.

## Brief

This consulting project was developed based on the work of Year Here Fellows in April 2017. Their brief was 'to discover, prototype and nurture social enterprise opportunities that are led by local people' on the estate, which led them to recommend the redevelopment of the community-led cafe in the Hub.

Our brief was 'to work with the people of the Meadows Estate to put in place the foundations necessary to develop a sustainable community café that works with local businesses to provide opportunities for social connection, employability skills development and community engagement.'

## Process

The process was divided into three stages.

- Best practice research, which involved visiting cafes and talking to people who have founded, worked in and visited community cafes across London;
- Community engagement events in order to get to know the community, see who currently uses the Hub, and to engage new people and potential volunteers;
- Synthesising our recommendations for the cafe's development over the next year, based on our research and community engagement.

## Documents

As well as the written report of our process, research and recommendations, we have also provided the following documents to support the cafe's development:

- A business model (including a marketing and operations guide)
- A volunteer scheme
- A database of potential volunteers and potential local partnerships
- A best practice scan
- A list of funding opportunities
- A draft funding application
- Inventory
- Profit + Loss
- Marketing materials, including photos, posters and flyers

# BEST PRACTICE

Our best practice research involved visiting a number of community cafes across London; from green space cafes, to youth cafes, training cafes and finally 'traditional' community cafes, located within community centres.

Speaking to the founders, volunteers and customers gave us significant insight into the startup and running of a successful community cafe, as well as the challenges that community cafes face.

You can see an overview of the cafes and their most unique features in the 'Best Practice Scan' provided. Below is a more in-depth look at three examples.

## The Palmers Greenery

Ema and Sarah are co-founders of the Palmers Greenery, a community cafe located in Broomfield Park in Palmers Green. The cafe is open on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. It is staffed by 40-60 volunteers from the local community.

### On sustainability

'We try to find all of our stuff as locally as possible, supporting local businesses and being as eco-friendly as possible. Our cups, lids and stirrers are 100% compostable. Our water is supplied by a company that supports charity work in Africa and the bottles are recyclable. We try to keep our carbon footprint as low as possible.'

'The cafe is self-sustaining. We set up as a Company Ltd by Guarantee (with social objects) in 2011 as that was the best option available to us at the time as doesn't preclude accessing grant funding from most bodies.'

'Forming as a Charity was onerous and had reporting/accountability requirements that were too much for us to handle at the time, despite potential benefits of charitable status.'

### On volunteers

'Getting volunteers is tricky, keeping volunteers is even trickier! Our line for the cafe is 'for the community by the community' and we hope that people volunteer

for us because they want to give something back to their local area. For some of the people who volunteer for us it's the one and only time they get out of the house and do something for themselves.

'We have social events for volunteers throughout the year so that all the new volunteers can meet each other and so we can say thank you, just drinks in a local pub and it's all on us. Occasionally we run mini feedback sessions with a bit of training involved. We are as flexible as possible and try to accommodate their needs wherever we can.'

'If a volunteer pulls out of a shift at the last minute you would hope that they would let you know, then we ask if they could email the whole database and just ask if someone can cover that shift, then we keep an eye on those emails and if within a certain time frame it is not filled we try and get a steering group member to fill it or ask if it can be divided between two volunteers as that sometimes makes it more manageable. As a last resort if we don't have enough volunteers then we will not open, but we haven't had to do that yet.'

## The Garden Community Cafe

Hannah Binley was the manager of the Garden Community Cafe in New Cross. The Cafe was set up as a response to a local couple wanting to make an impact in a deprived area. Over the last 22 years Hannah says that the cafe has become the centre of the community.

### On sustainability

'The difficulty with being a community cafe is having the right balance between sustainability and community. All too often I see community cafes that are one or the other, very sustainable (sometimes profitable) but with very little going on for the community and it's hard to see how they are actually a community cafe. Or the alternative with a beautiful community heart, but not getting any real trade in to keep it going and giving away so much free food that stupid amounts of money are lost.'

### On staff/volunteers

'It's changing slightly now, but we have two part-time



staff (myself and an assistant manager) and lots of volunteers. If you don't pay someone who's going to do the tremendous amount of legwork it involves to get regular volunteers you'll struggle to get any. Linking up with your local job centre is a good way to get volunteers, as it looks good on people's job seeker forms if they are doing volunteering to keep themselves active and upskill.'

### On customers

'The majority of people who come are regulars. They either live or work in the local area. Where the cafe is located is not very busy, so we don't have much

passing trade. We have good staff and volunteers who are very friendly. If you look up our Tripadvisor rating you'll see we are doing very well, mostly because of our excellent customer service (and good value).'

### On marketing and social media

'When I took over as manager we had no online presence, so that was my first big change. I made sure we were on all the free sites, especially Tripadvisor, and had a website made.'

## Castle Point Community Hub Cafe

The cafe is located in the Castle Point Community Hub, in Barking and Dagenham. It is open on Wednesday afternoons. They serve tea, coffee and a hot meal to around 25 isolated local people each week. The cafe is currently run by Teah Baiden.

### Food

'The cafe mostly sells soup, which costs £1.50 per serving with bread, which pays costs and makes a small profit. Sometimes chilli as well as cakes and

tea are sold for a small price.'

### Customers

'People are referred from the Richmond fellowship to the community hub, GPs, postnatal services and mental health services The church advertises too, but most people come because of word of mouth.'

### Volunteers

'When the cafe is open, volunteers are dotted around to steer conversations, talk to shyer people, introduce people who do not know one another, and welcome people. They also know about services in the area and are trained to signpost people.'



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Our community engagement activities built on the work of the previous Year Here fellows. The aims of these activities were to get to know members of the community, observe who currently attends Hub events and accesses Hub services, engage with new people and discuss local residents' thoughts and feelings on the redevelopment of the cafe in the Hub.

We spent Thursday mornings in the cafe, held two community engagement events and hosted a preliminary Hub cafe board meeting to discuss the cafe's priorities and its role within the community.

## Coffee, Cake and Chat

An event that invited community members to the Hub cafe for free tea, coffee and cake, to discuss their opinions on the cafe's offering.

We used a 'menu of ideas' to identify what local residents would like the cafe to serve, how much they would pay, and how they would like the atmosphere of the cafe to be. We received 18 completed menus.

## The Great Meadows' Bake Off

This event aimed to bring community members to the Hub, attracting potential volunteers and new customers. It was also an opportunity to work out whether there would be interest in the Hub cafe being open after school.

We asked community members to bake something and to come along and help judge the cakes. There were prizes for the top three bakes.

<b>NAME</b> The Hub Community Cafe	<b>COLD DRINKS</b> Freshly made juice £1.00 - £1.50 Soft fizzy drinks 0.50p - 0.80p Lemonade £1.00
<b>ATMOSPHERE</b> Calm Quiet	<b>FACILITIES, EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES</b> Bingo Children's activities, toys and games
<b>SAVOURY FOOD</b> Sandwiches, Soup, Chips £1.00 - £1.50 Pizza £1.00-£2.00	<b>HOT DRINKS</b> Tea and coffee 0.50p - £1.00 Hot chocolate 0.50p - £2.00
<b>SWEET FOOD</b> Cakes and biscuits 0.50p - £1.00 Fresh fruit 0.10p	<b>OTHER COMMENTS</b> 'Cater to your demographic: older generations don't always like change, so you need the good old favourites on the menu but you also have local mums from the school, office people and younger ages to provide for.'  'Food needs to cater to all people of the community—Muslims, Europeans, vegetarians...'  <i>Results from the 'Menu of Ideas'</i>

## Advertising the event

A3 posters were put up around the estate (in bin sheds, noticeboards, local shops and cafes and in the Cooperative Nursery). Flyers were put through all letterboxes on the estate. Shortly before the event, flyers were handed out to parents outside the Beavers' School, and to passers by outside the Hub.

We also informed the Beavers' School and the Cavalry Barracks, and both organisations included information about the event in their newsletters.

## Attendees

The event was well attended, with an estimated 25 people between 3pm and 4.30pm. Most were families on their way home from school, a few had been invited directly and some had seen posters or flyers around the estate.

## 'My community is...'

After trying the cakes, attendees were encouraged to contribute to one or more of the pieces of paper taped to the cafe tables. The titles of these were "My dream community looks like...", "My community is..." and "My favourite place to spend time is...". Many of the children expressed that they liked spending time in the Hub, some because they had once attended baby group there, some because there is more space than at home, and others because of the activities that are offered there.

## Feedback

The event demonstrated that there is a demand for the Hub and the cafe to be open after 3pm. It would be a safe, welcoming place for children to come after school either with or without their parents. The colouring activities provided enough entertainment once their initial engagement with the Bake Off

waned. It also demonstrated that there is demand from the community for more one off events, and that these events needn't be costly.

Events like the Bake Off require community participation in the running of them and minimal energy in the planning, beyond advertising and promoting.

## First Meeting of Community Cafe Stakeholders

A workshop that brought together 13 people from the Meadows' estate, Hub, LBH and Year Here to discuss the development of the Hub cafe. Below are some of the points discussed:

### What makes a good cafe?

- Welcoming and unthreatening—somewhere you can stay without feeling rushed
- Soft background music
- Papers and magazines to read
- Appropriate pricing for the location
- Wifi
- Child-friendly (but no children running around without someone watching them)
- Good quality

### What makes a community cafe?

- Reflects the personality of the area
- Represents the whole community
- Is versatile
- Is visible—everyone knows about it
- Is a community space
- Caters for everyone
- Is not a place where you feel rushed—the pace is slower
- Is relaxed
- Uses community assets and networks
- Feeds community activities—profit is reinvested into the community
- Has appropriate opening times for the community
- Is affordable
- Is friendly and welcoming

### What should the Hub café's priorities be?

1. A place that is friendly and welcoming
2. A feeder to more community activities—opens doors for people to get involved in the community in different ways
3. Affordable and accessible for everyone

During the meeting it was also mentioned how important the cafe has been in building the confidence of the volunteers who have worked there.

Tara Sadler said how much it has helped her and her daughter Shannon to build their confidence. She also mentioned that working at the Hub gave her daughter the confidence to use the children's centre services, which she would not have done before.



# COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Our community engagement activities have given us a broad awareness of the nature of community relationships on the Meadows' Estate, particularly with regards to the Hub and the individuals accessing its services.

As is often the case in communities like the Meadows', there are a number of individuals who are consistently involved in community events, and who can be relied upon to attend and help out at such events and activities. These are generally individuals who look out for posters and flyers and have the confidence to attend events, even if they do not know anyone else attending.

It seems that many of the people on the Meadows estate who fill this role were once members of TW4, and now assist Creative People and Place in their community events. Such people will be especially

valuable in the development of the cafe, owing to their reliability, strong local networks and awareness of community attitudes and relationships.

Our research has shown us to what extent the community, and the activities that go on within it, is made up of complex layers of social politics. These are either based on past experiences, or on strongly held preconceptions and prejudices about individuals or groups. These attitudes are incredibly difficult to change, and an awareness of them is crucial for any community engagement.

Therefore it is important that the cafe's activities are developed and run by a broad cross-section of the community, in order to ensure an awareness of existing relationships and attitudes, and stand a chance of overcoming them.



# CAFE VISION: RECOMMENDATIONS

**B**elow you will find practical recommendations for the development of a cafe that is a friendly and welcoming place to spend time and enjoy affordable food and drink. It is run by community members and provides opportunities for local people to run their own activities and events. It is a gateway for individuals to access local services, whilst providing volunteers the opportunity to grow in confidence, learn new skills and gain qualifications.

## Legal Structure

We have identified three potential legal structures for the community cafe.

### Company Limited by Guarantee

A Company Limited by Guarantee does not have shares or shareholders, and cannot distribute profits. Members provide a guarantee (typically for a nominal sum), which will be their maximum liability if the company is wound up.

#### Pros:

- Quick and easy to establish with low registration fees.
- Can be either charitable or non-charitable (e.g. as social enterprise). If charitable, all usual charity tax reliefs are available.
- Flexible as to number of members and whether subscriptions charged.

#### Cons:

- No possibility of equity investment—cannot issue shares.
- Although filing with Companies House is straightforward, there are high penalties for delay/failure to file information.
- If charitable, it would be registered with both Companies House and the Charity Commission – need to file information/accounts with two regulators with different requirements.

### Community Interest Company (Limited by Guarantee)

Community Interest Companies (CIC) are limited companies that exist to provide benefits to a community, or a specific section of a community. The

CIC has the flexibility of the familiar company form, and access to a range of financing options. CICs are subject to dual regulations by both the CIC regulator and Companies House.

#### Pros:

- Flexible—can be company either limited by guarantee or by shares (although we would recommend setting up as a company limited by guarantee).
- Flexibility to pay directors.
- If limited by shares it can pay dividends up to a 'dividend cap'; and can also have non-profit shares with no entitlement to dividend. Loan capital possible but with an interest cap.
- Not restricted to objects or purposes that qualify as charitable.

#### Cons:

- Does not receive the tax advantages extended to charities i.e. will not obtain business rate relief but may qualify for discretionary relief.
- The scope of the community interest test can be ambiguous.

### Community Benefit Society

Community Benefit Societies (CBS) conduct business for the benefit of their community. These are not-for-profit organisations with charitable purposes. They must give all members an equal say in the running of the society. The society has corporate status, and can have a share and loan capital, but must pay only moderate interest on any loan capital.

#### Pros:

- Can be good for social investment.
- Can be charitable but cannot be registered with the Charity Commission.
- If charitable, it can obtain many of the tax benefits available to charities e.g. minimum 80% business rates reduction, Gift Aid on donations, etc...

#### Cons:

- Weak 'brand'—the existence of this structure and its key characteristics are poorly understood even in the charity sector. That lack of recognition can be more pronounced (and inconvenient) when dealing with commercial bodies such as banks.





- Administration—registration is with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) rather than Companies House and administration procedures are quite different to those of companies.
- Cost—registration with the FSA can cost between £40 and £950, payable each year.

### Recommendation

Taking into account the pros and cons of the above legal structures, we would recommend setting up as a Company Limited by Guarantee, with a clear mission and set of values established by the cafe board. The process of setting up is quick and easy and, unlike a CIC or CBS, the only regulation is from Companies House.



# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The cafe's structure will be key to its sustained success. As such, we suggest the onboarding of three part-time paid staff, a cafe board, and a pool of at least 12 volunteers.

## Community Connector

Employed by the Hub to build community networks and strengthen community resilience. They will be responsible for coordinating and marketing community events, as well as developing and sustaining local partnerships.

## Cafe Manager

Ensure the running of the cafe in the most efficient and effective manner, delivering high standards of service, whilst being proactive in maintaining and/or improving turnover. They will also oversee stock-taking and restocking of products, finances, and the health, safety and wellbeing of customers and volunteers.

## Volunteer Coordinator

Responsible for the recruitment, supervision and training of volunteers. They will act as a single point of contact for volunteers and organise the volunteer rota.

## Volunteers

Two per shift: one 'back of house' volunteer responsible for preparing and serving the food, and the other 'front of house' volunteer responsible for clearing tables and ensuring everyone feels welcome.

Volunteers are expected to ensure the effective implementation of and adherence to Health and Safety policies and procedures. Committed volunteers will be given the opportunity to work towards a Food Safety and Hygiene qualification.

Please see database of cafe volunteers for interested community members.

## Cafe Board

A diverse board consisting of 5 to 10 passionate, committed and experienced members of the community and other relevant stakeholders, including the Community Connector, members of the Hub steering group and relevant partner organisations. The board is responsible for setting the vision and mission of the cafe and ensuring that these policies are upheld in the cafe's development.

## Layout

We brought together our best practice research with the feedback that we received from the community to create a set of criteria for the cafe's layout. We therefore recommend that the Hub community cafe is designed to be:

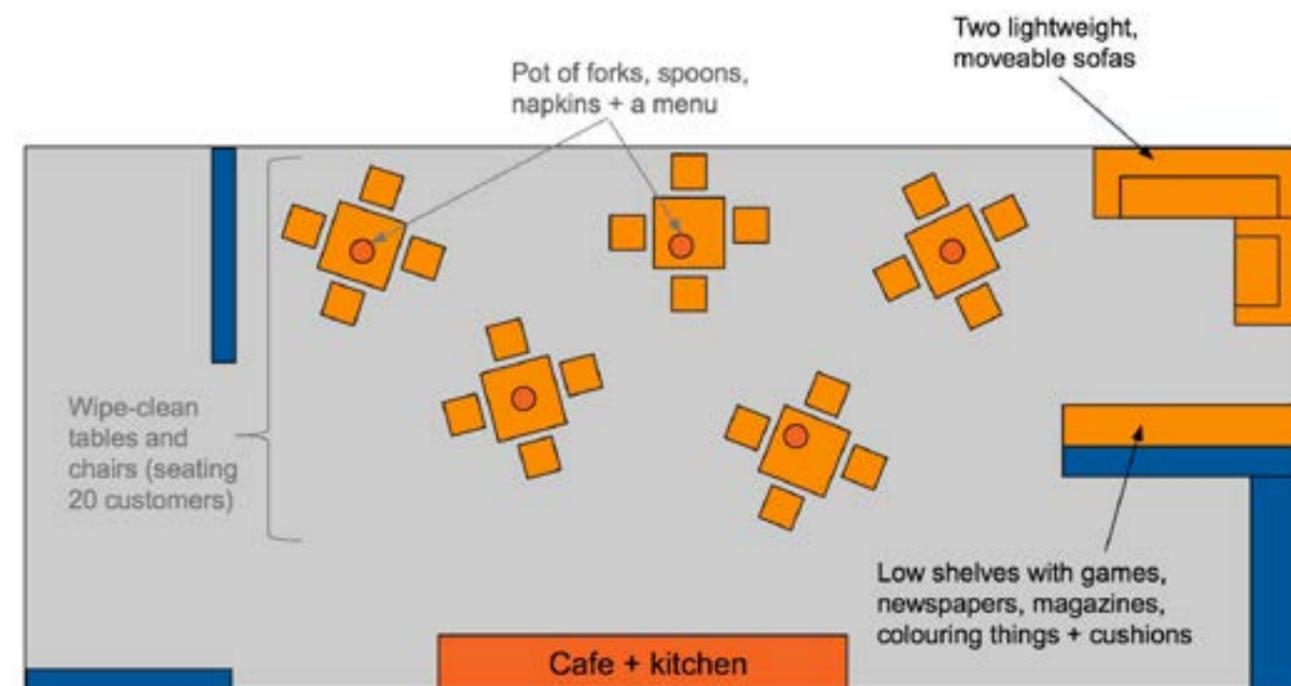
- Comfortable and homey
- A place where you can spend time without feeling rushed
- Accessible
- Flexible, to accommodate the events, clubs and activities that also use the space

We have put together a basic floor plan that we believe encompasses the above characteristics without excessive cost and with maximum flexibility.

## Menu

The following menu has been put together by drawing from our best practice research, the 18 'menus of ideas' filled in by community members, and conversations with cafe volunteers and customers past and present.

Prices have been calculated to ensure the financial sustainability of the cafe, based on the cafe being open 3 times a week and serving an average of 70 people each day (this figure is based on how many the cafe currently serves, the number of people who use the Hub daily, and the projected benefits of being open consistently and having a marketing strategy).



*Suggested cafe layout.*

<p><b>COLD FOOD</b> Sandwich, £1.50 Snacks - crisps, cookies, cakes, fruit, 30 - 50p</p>	<p><b>COLD DRINKS</b> Soft drink, 50p-£1 Oreo milkshake, £2</p>
<p><b>HOT FOOD</b> Soup and bread roll, £2 Jacket potato, £2 Kids meal - nuggets and chips, £2 Toastie, £2 Hot meal (rice and peas, shepherd's pie, curry...) £3</p>	<p><b>HOT DRINKS</b> Tea, coffee, hot chocolate, 50p - £1</p>

*Sample menu.*

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The costs and profit can be seen in the business plan and have been calculated based on the price of purchasing the products from Tesco. Sourcing products from a wholesale supplier would lower costs.

## Partnerships

Areas in which partnerships with local organisations could help the cafe include:

- Making the volunteer scheme appealing
- Upskilling volunteers
- Lowering the cost of kitchen equipment and food and drink supplies
- Marketing (design skills, printing, etc...)

- Recruiting volunteers
- Furnishing the cafe

When identifying and contacting potential partners, we recommend identifying businesses whose main service could help the cafe in one of these key areas.

A number of organisations have expressed an interest in partnering with the cafe in some capacity. These organisations can be found in a separate spreadsheet.

When talking with potential partners, the value proposition of the cafe should be highlighted, as should the mutual benefit of a potential partnership e.g. offering the local sports club (OHM) increased publicity and marketing within Hub in exchange for discounted training sessions for volunteers.





## THREE CAFE PHASES

In order to ensure the successful development of a sustainable cafe, we have identified three phases, spanning the next twelve months. The responsibility for carrying out these three phases would initially be on LBH and the Community Connector, but as the phases progress, responsibility will be handed over to the cafe manager, volunteer coordinator, the Hub cafe board and volunteers from the local community.

### Phase 1: Pre-Launch

This phase would mostly be driven by LBH and the Community Connector, as it involves significant recruitment and set-up. The Community Connector would be responsible for ensuring continued community engagement events and co-design opportunities ahead of the cafe launch. Ideally the phase would last three months, however this is dependent on grant funding.

- Open one day per week with one-off community events
- Recruitment:
  - Community Connector
  - Cafe manager/volunteer coordinator (either one or two roles)
  - Volunteers (approximately 12)
- Establish the cafe board that will provide leadership, governance and in-kind support
- Volunteer training
- Sourcing kitchen equipment and cafe furniture
- Completing funding applications
- Marketing ahead of launch
- Legal set up

### Phase 2: Launch

This is an opportunity to trial running the cafe, promote its activity and receive feedback to action

in the next phase. It would be an opportunity to trial more frequent opening as well as the full menu, outlined earlier in the report. Responsibility for this stage would lie with the cafe manager and volunteer coordinator, supported by the Community Connector and cafe volunteers.

- Open three days per week
- Serving full menu range
- Continued one off events
- Constant community feedback:
  - on menu and pricing
  - on opening days and times
  - on cafe experience
- Meeting of cafe board to discuss next steps
- Identify and establish appropriate local partnerships

### Phase 3: Grow and Refine

This would be the longest phase (recommended six months). The cafe would continue running as in Phase 2, but with regular opportunities for reflection and experimentation. There should be an emphasis on developing local partnerships and widening the reach of the cafe, through different kinds of community engagement and the trialling of new ideas.

- Trial more frequent opening
- Experiment with more flexible and varied menu
- Hold first 'thank you' event
  - An opportunity to give something back to the community as a way of thanking them for supporting the cafe
- Catering for external events
- Promote and grow partnership opportunities, such as pop-ups restaurants/events in the cafe, run by external individuals or organisations
- Second volunteer recruitment and training drive

# FINAL THOUGHTS

## Next Steps

To ensure that the energy behind the cafe continues, we recommend the following immediate next steps:

### 1. Community Connector

- Complete recruitment of community connector

### 2. Funding applications

- Places for People
- Heathrow Community Fund (before 27th October)
- Near Neighbours (before 17th November)

Remember: make use of draft funding application when applying.

### 3. Volunteer recruitment drive

- Put up 'volunteer at the community cafe' posters around the estate
- Print posters in A5 to post through letter boxes on the estate
- Contact Hestia, Cavalry Barracks and Beavers' School (and other local organisations) to help spread the word.

## To Conclude

Developing a successful community cafe requires the trust and support of the community it serves, which needs time, patience and energy. For the Hub Community Cafe to achieve the success we have outlined in this report and attached business plan, it will require the support of the London Borough of Hounslow, the Hub, local partners and, most importantly, the local community in implementing these recommendations.

Further to the immediate next steps detailed above, the next year should be divided into three phases: pre-launch (recruitment and set-up); launch (co-designing and trialling); development (growth and refining). Recruiting a Community Connector, Cafe Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, Cafe Board and committed volunteers will ensure that these phases are carried out effectively, and with the interests of the community always at heart.



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This project was undertaken by Year Here Fellows on behalf Hub Community Centre in the Meadows Estate, in the London Borough of Hounslow.

Year Here is a full-time post-graduate course in social innovation based in London, designed to cultivate entrepreneurial approaches to entrenched social issues.

