

MARCH - AUGUST 2020

# ACTON GARDENS COVID-19 EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAMME



## PREPARED BY

PROJECT AND IMPACT TEAM - ACTON GARDENS COMMUNITY CENTRE /  
LONDON DEVELOPMENT TRUST

**ACTON GARDENS** | COMMUNITY CENTRE



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2020, the Acton Gardens Community Centre, London Development Trust (LDT) in partnership with the Acton Mutual Aid Group and Bollo Brook Youth Centre launched the "Acton Gardens Emergency Relief and Food Distribution" programme with support from several partners. The programme sought to address the food insecurity amongst households in Acton Gardens, through the provision of food and other relief packages.

The partnership developed a number of projects in response to the crisis and to support residents in Acton Gardens. These included;

1. Food Distribution (Ambient Goods, Fruit & Vegetables and Hot Meals)
2. Creative Art Packs
3. Digital Tablets (Digital Inclusion)
4. Face Masks production

These projects were particularly aimed at local people in need such as low-income families, lone parents, carers and the elderly. To this effect between 300 - 400 households in and around Acton Gardens were reached each Tuesday and Thursday.

The methodology used for this report was primary and secondary data including qualitative and quantitative project data, project documents, and research collected through desk-based research and on-the-ground data collection by our team and from partner organizations.

**Contributors: The Felix Project, Fareshare, Morrisons, Sainsburys, Ealing Council & Food Bank, Paula Watson, Norwegian School (Holland Park), Stitch By Stitch,**

**Funders: Countryside Properties, London Development Trust, Ealing Council, Justgiving Donations (Crowdfunding).**

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# OUR ORGANISATION AND COMMUNITY

Our organisation serves residents living in Acton Gardens previously known as 'the South Acton Estate' and the surrounding areas. Acton Gardens, Ealing is categorised by the ONS as 'Multicultural Metropolitan: Inner City' and is one of the most deprived areas in Ealing. The South Acton Estate is now undergoing a major regeneration programme. However, many residents continue to face multiple challenges associated with poverty, deprivation, social isolation and crime.

We work with people of all ages & backgrounds. Our focus has been on individuals & groups fighting social & economic isolation; the long-term unemployed; individuals with long term sickness; people in temporary accommodation; refugees and migrants; and lone parent households. With our COVID-19 Emergency Relief programmes, our most recent findings have shown that there is a growing need for a continued long term emergency relief response.

## PROJECT OUTCOMES

- 1. Improve food security and nutrition:** The relief packages including ready cooked meals helped alleviate hunger, improved access to healthy and nutritious meals; thereby ensuring improvement in the health and well-being of.
- 2. Reduce social isolation and increase community connections and cohesion:** Delivering services by volunteers from local people and organisations increased the sense of belonging. Also, the digital inclusion project provided devices and helped 25 people and their families to be connected to their friends and family during the lock-down.
- 3. Improved mental health and well-being:** all four aspects of this programme aimed to support and provide services for vulnerable people and reduce their level of stress. The Art Packs had an impact on the mental well-being of children and their parents (334 individuals). Volunteers also reported improved mental health as a result of engaging in meaningful work during the lock-down.
- 4. Adapting Space:** The Acton Gardens community centre was adapted to be flexible, conducive, and responsive to the new and arising situations. This adaptation made it possible for staff and volunteers to do their job in a Covid-19 secure space with adequate social distancing and hygiene protocols.
- 5. Improved Connection and partnership between organisations:** All aspects of this programme were collaborative effort between LDT and multiple local organisations, building on each other's strengths, networks, and resources.

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# RELIEF PACKAGES AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION

The project included both free distribution of groceries, long life items and free cooked meals to families in Acton Gardens and the wider Acton area. Through a local connection, Acton Gardens was able to tap into the resources and continuous delivery capacity of the Felix Project, which allowed for the relief efforts to begin. This meant that families and vulnerable residents were able to receive immediate assistance.

Twice a week, a team of volunteers, most of whom lived around the areas attended the centre to help sort through, repackage and redistribute the much needed packages. Rising from an initial 30 recipients when it started at the end of March, the number of families and households who received assistance ran into the hundreds, with between 300 - 400 households been served by May.

As well as receiving supplies from the Felix Project, Fairshare, Morrisons and other contributors - London Development Trust was able to draw down vital funding from the developer, Countryside Properties, who gave generously to the relief efforts. Part of the funding was used to purchase additional supplies on a weekly basis, Taking into account the diverse and multinational backgrounds of residents in Acton Gardens, LDT also engaged the services of a volunteer chef (Crystals' Food Bits) - this consideration was important and meant that with the partnership of a local community organization we could provide food that was familiar, reliable, and appealing to households from African and Caribbean backgrounds. This approach was well-received by residents who were from different backgrounds and ensured nobody in the community was left behind

With the help of dedicated volunteers, Crystal was able to cook a total of 1515 additional meals and desserts using the Kitchen facilities in the Acton Gardens Community Centre. The meals were delivered in individual boxes to people in need (particularly families with older people and young children).

Packages distributed every Tuesday and Thursday included groceries, fresh fruit, vegetables, nappies, long-life items and ready cooked meals. The Food Distribution project was organised in collaboration with volunteers and multiple local organisations such as Bollo Brook Youth Centre, Acton Mutual Aid, The packages were delivered to the residents by volunteers and partner organisation.

Examples of type of meals: Jollof rice and red meat, potatoes delight, pasta with meatballs, fried rice and chicken; desserts like swiss roll, homemade cakes with fruits and chocolate rolls.



# CREATIVE ART PACK

With the whole country, including schools going into lock-down, London Development Trust and Acton Gardens Community Centre took steps to ensure that children were not left behind. Through funding from Countryside Properties and London Development Trust, we were able to purchase art equipments and materials, including creative worksheets, drawing templates, pencils, various coloured papers, colouring pens, glue sticks etc.

Each item was put together into a pack and distributed to residents who were identified as having young children in their household. We also provided several packs to the both Berrymede Infant and Junior schools. The aim was to help ensure that recipients were able to stay creative, intellectually engaged and entertained during the lock-down.

A total of 334 individual creative art packs were distributed throughout the programme.



# CREATIVE ART PACKS



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# DIGITAL INCLUSION

Acknowledging the digital divide that exists in various communities across the country, Countryside Properties, London Development Trust and Acton Gardens Community Centre purchased a number of digital tablets, which were then given out to local organisations and residents such as Berrymede Junior school and Acton Youth Association

This initiative was rolled out in a bid to bridge the digital divide gap and foster a more digitally inclusive community. With an average family of 6 experiencing a sudden change and restricted movement, the devices were meant to enable families and their children start connected with other family members living elsewhere. Additionally, the tablets allowed children to learn and stay engaged during the lock-down with access academic and entertainment resources. The devices also proved to be a vital resource as it became a conduit for the transfer of important and vital information regarding the virus.

A total of 25 digital tablet devices were given out throughout the programme.



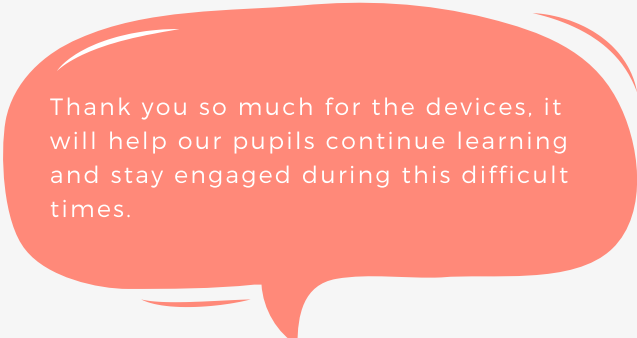
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# DIGITAL INCLUSION

## FINDINGS

**Participants:** The majority of respondents (10 out of 11) were female and 7 out of 11 were of Black-African ethnicity. The average size of their families was 6 with average of 4 children per household. Employment status varied: 4 home parents or carers, 3 employed part-time, 2 students, 1 job seeker, and 1 on maternity leave.

- Comfortable using digital devices and the internet: 8 out of 11 reported that they feel confident using digital devices (e.g., tablets, computers, and mobile phones) themselves without any help or supervision. They easily use the internet including social media, search engines and apps.
- Internet and digital devices used mostly for education: it was a common response that the internet and digital devices help their children study better, do their homework, and explore other educational resources. Having access to tablets was especially crucial during the lock-down and online school sessions. In one respondent's words, "I want my children to have access to internet and digital devices as it will help them stay engaged, read up more about their academic curriculum and learn and expand their knowledge. Having tablet will be good for them".
- Tablets help them access information and stay in touch with family/friends: all respondents agreed that the internet and digital technology has helped them to stay connected to family and friends and helped them to assist their children studying. They also used tablets/the internet for shopping and entertainment.
- Access to digital technology improved their mental health and well-being: 9 out of 11 respondents stated that being connected and informed via the internet had a positive impact on their mental health.



Thank you so much for the devices, it will help our pupils continue learning and stay engaged during this difficult times.

Representative -  
Berrymede Juniouir School



My kids will have lots to do now! They can Skype their cousins in East London ....thank you.

Resident -  
Acton Gardens

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# FACE MASK PRODUCTION

As face masks became a vital personal protective equipment, this led to a surge in demand and subsequent shortage of supply on the open market. Acknowledging this problem, Countryside Properties, London Development Trust and Acton Gardens Community Centre established a partnership drive with 'Stitch By Stitch' - a resident led sewing organisation who volunteered their time to produce reusable masks.

As well as masks purchased online, the partnership ensured there was a steady supply of face masks to meet the unprecedented increase in demand. With the masks made available for volunteers and residents to pickup at the centre, it helped to reduce the risk of transmitting or contracting the virus. In addition to maintaining adequate social distancing and good personal hygiene, the masks also increased the confidence of volunteers to carry on with wider relief programme.

A total of 150 reusable masks were produced and made available.





# CASE STUDIES

## ABDULLAHI ALI: RECIPIENT AND DELIVERY PARTNER

Abdullahi Ali is a British-Somali man in his forties who has been living in South Acton since he was a child. He is a bus driver and lives with his wife and his four children (two currently studying abroad). He also runs the Acton Youth Association, an organisation that started around four years ago to provide football training to children and young residents of the local area. The organisation has now evolved to provide other services such as raising awareness about crucial subjects like knife crime.

During the lockdown, Acton Youth Association (AYA) partnered with London Development Trust (LDT) on the Emergency Relief project. After consultation with all parties involved, AYA started delivering relief packages inclusive of hot meals to families in need.

The project was targeted at people unable to work who were relying on benefits; however, it was quickly realised that so many other residents (e.g., cab drivers, small business owners) were also having financial difficulties; therefore, the project was extended to serve them as well.

Abdullahi and other partners organised a network of local volunteers to help deliver the food, as the number of service users quickly grew. On days when they couldn't find volunteers, Abdullahi delivered the meals himself.

"I asked in our WhatsApp group chat if anyone could help us deliver and support us, a lot of people volunteered and said they can do it on Thursday and Tuesday...so we get the help from a lot of local people...which was wonderful."

He also spoke about some of the challenges they faced whilst delivering the project. One was to understand the kind of food service users needed; they started by giving out fruits and vegetables but then realised not everyone was able to cook at home, especially older people so they moved to serving hot meals.

The delivery also required full coordination and effective communications between the delivery volunteers and partners; some service users were not comfortable opening their doors to stranger (particularly because of a fear of contracting Covid-19), service users had to be informed about the volunteers' arrival time.

Despite the challenges, Abdullahi says he is proud to be part of this project and of how the community came together to help the most vulnerable people in need during the lockdown.



# CASE STUDIES

## CRYSTAL: VOLUNTEER CHEF

Crystal is a local resident in her thirties. Originally from Nigeria, she is from a big family that passed down to her a love of food. This passion for cooking and sharing food prompted Crystal to set up her own food catering business and then during the Covid-19 crisis, to volunteer to cook meals for the Acton Gardens Hot Meals project. She prepared hot meals every Tuesday and Thursday for about two months.

In her words “it was truly fulfilling experience for her as the project literally helped save people’s lives during the peak of the crisis”.

Crystal is a law graduate and a mother to two young children. She had multiple jobs, but she could not hold on to the jobs since her daughter required constant care due to an illness. This led Crystal to start her own business to ensure that she could work according to her schedule. She ran a restaurant in the past, and this experience led Crystal to start her own food business in Acton Business Centre. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 lockdown affected her business and she had to temporarily close it down in early April 2020. However, this meant she had a lot of food stock left from her business which was going to waste, and she decided to help local people.

Initially, Crystal started preparing meals herself and together with a local social worker delivered the meals to local communities in need. After finishing her own stock, she collaborated with Acton Gardens Community Centre in Hot Meals project. Crystal’s warming and nutritious meals could reach more local individuals and families in need.

Crystal shared that she comes from a family which believed in ‘sharing love through food’, even in her restaurant business, she would make sure that leftovers did not go to waste and she used to invite charities to pick up the food and deliver it to someone in need. Helping others has always been important to Crystal but volunteering at the Community Centre was the first time she actually used her time and skills directly to help people in need.

As well as helping others, the volunteering experience helped Crystal with her mental health and well-being during the lock-down. Volunteering helped her feel fulfilled, cooking became a meditative process that gave her time to think and ensure she had breaks from home-schooling. Working as a volunteer provided an opportunity for Crystal to gain new skills, learn to be a good team player. She also practiced the skills of any good employee: commitment, resilience, time-management, and hard work. Despite the concern of contracting Covid-19, she showed up every Tuesday and Thursday to prepare meals, she did not want to let people down.

# CASE STUDIES

## OSCAR: VOLUNTEER

Oscar is 18 years old Black-Caribbean young man, who currently lives with his family in Acton Gardens and pursuing his A-Level. Oscar was a volunteer in the Hot Meals project between May and July 2020.

Oscar started volunteering because he thought it would be a great way of helping people and also, he could utilise his time fruitfully during the lockdown. He learned about the volunteering opportunity through his mother who works at Bollo Youth Centre. In his words, "I had the time so I thought it would be good to do this (volunteering)...it was just the sense of helping the community really...doing good for others who are not fortunate".

Oscar volunteered every Tuesday at the community centre for a couple of hours. His role was to assist in the running of the Hot Meals project and was mostly involved in peeling and chopping vegetables, washing dishes, and putting labels on meal packages. Oscar believes the project was crucial as it was reaching people who were in extremely difficult economic conditions during the lockdown, so an extra meal a day was helping them survive in the challenging period.

Oscar also noticed the changes happening in the neighbourhood during the lock-down. People who were used to going to schools, the youth centre or the park on everyday basis, suddenly were confined to their homes which was very difficult for everyone; "it was lock-down, so you have to stay at home and some people who live in South Acton live in crowded houses and don't like being with their families so it's hard for people", Oscar said.

Oscar had been involved in a volunteering project once in the past, this was the first time he volunteered for a long-term on-going project. He said it was very good learning about project management on this scale; additionally, he made meaningful relationships with other volunteers.

I think they were going to people in South Acton...I think it really helped people because you know of course its lock-down and the people there don't necessarily have too much money, so it helps them with their necessities to live, so an extra meal a day could really just help them survive really.

He learned that for a volunteer, punctuality, following instructions carefully, and doing the job with no hesitation are essential traits.

Volunteering was also good for his mental health since he had a sense of purpose during the lock-down, Oscar shares.

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# SUMMARY

Evaluation of Acton Gardens Covid-19 Emergency Relief Programme was an iterative process and methodology, and data collection techniques were adapted to the unique circumstances and challenges faced by the Covid-19 regulations and lock-down and reflected the collaborative nature of the projects involving multiple stakeholders.

**Relief Packages, Food Distribution and Art Packs Programme:** Reaching vulnerable service users and collecting feedback or completing surveys were difficult. However, volunteers and partners' input supplemented the little feedback from service users.

**Digital inclusion project:** Collecting feedback was possible because of in-person interactions between partner organisations/volunteers and service users. Our initial findings suggest that there is a much wider problem with people accessing the internet and this has been further highlighted by the continuous lock-down and a rise in home-schooling.

# PROJECT OUTCOMES

Outcomes of Emergency Response to Covid-19 projects were in line with the broader London Development Trust's (LDT) five keystones: Empowering local people, Connecting organisations, Creating spaces for the community, Influencing the powerful and Building a robust and sustainable organisation.

The table below demonstrates how the outcomes of Emergency Response to Covid-19 projects reflect the organisational objectives and are associated with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

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# SUMMARY

## OUTCOME

Improved service users' food security and nutrition

Reduced social isolation and increased community connections and cohesion.

## HOW THE PROJECT CONTRIBUTED

The pandemic has pushed many people from vulnerable groups into poverty, resulting in malnutrition and hunger. The Hot Meals project directly helped alleviate hunger, improved access to healthy and nutritious meals, thereby ensuring improvement in the health and well-being of the service users.

All four aspect of the relief programme addressed isolation to an extent. Service users received support from local volunteers and organisations. The digital inclusion project especially helped them to be connected to their friends and family with the help of the devices (tablets).

## ASSOCIATED UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

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# SUMMARY

## OUTCOME

Improved residents' mental health and wellbeing

## HOW THE PROJECT CONTRIBUTED

Multiple projects contributed to enhancing the mental well-being of the service users by providing access to healthy food, access to masks which helped them be safe, provision of art packs that helped the children engage creatively and meaningfully, and access to digital devices that helped them stay in touch with their family and friends during the lock-down.

Other stakeholders like volunteers also reported improvement in mental well-being because of having the opportunity to engage in meaningful work during the lock-down.

Adapted and flexible spaced

The Acton Gardens Community Centre was adapted to be conducive and Covid-19 secure for volunteers and staff, helping them respond quickly to the emergency. For the Hot Meals Project, maintenance of social distancing and hygiene protocols were ensured in the kitchen and the centre at large. The main hall was repurposed into a food distribution centre while the kitchens could be used for preparing and cooking the meals.

## ASSOCIATED UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

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# SUMMARY

## OUTCOME

Improved connections and partnerships between organisations, businesses and service providers operating in the local area

Increased sense of community belonging, resilience, and support structures

## HOW THE PROJECT CONTRIBUTED

The projects were a collaborative effort between LDT and multiple local organisations and delivered successfully, building on each other's strengths, networks, and resources. It supported local organisations and businesses thereby contributing towards a more holistic and sustainable development.

LDT, partner organisations, and the local volunteers adapted to the public health emergency and promptly responded, thereby improving the resilience of local organisations and residents in need. Volunteers reported a 'sense of giving back', showcasing the importance of 'community belonging' during challenging times. A new network of volunteers has now been set up increasing longer-term community support structures.

## ASSOCIATED UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

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# SUMMARY

## OUTCOME

Increased local environmental awareness and sustainable practices

Increased local access to education and learning and training opportunities

Enabled residents to influence LDT's practices and projects

## HOW THE PROJECT CONTRIBUTED

Through the collaborative efforts between organisations, the Relief Package and food programme ensured that surplus ingredients & food from supermarkets and other sources were re-directed to the programme, that would otherwise have gone to waste. Therefore, the overall project contributed towards sustainable food consumption and reduced food wastage.

The provided tablets increased access to education and learning opportunities when the schools were closed during the lock-down. It helped students learn, explore & stay intellectually engaged during the difficult period.

Many residents and partner organisations and volunteers to deliver the emergency response on a big scale. Volunteers stated that they were heard, respected, valued, and incorporated in the delivery of the programme. Though participation in the evaluation was low, those who received packages & Art Packs were had opportunities to feedback and influence future planning of projects.

## ASSOCIATED UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels



## KEY STATISTICS

### EMERGENCY RELIEF PACKAGES AND FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Including additional Ready cooked meals

300 - 400 HOUSEHOLDS  
EACH TUESDAY AND  
THURSDAY

1515 ADDITIONAL  
COOKED MEALS AND  
DESSERTS

### CREATIVE ART PACKS

334 INDIVIDUAL PACKS  
DELIVERED TO SCHOOLS  
AND RESIDENTS

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### DIGITAL INCLUSION

25 DIGITAL TABLET  
DEVICES GIVING TO  
SCHOOL AND RESIDENTS

-

### FACE MASK PRODUCTION

150 REUSABLE FACE  
MASKS PRODUCED FOR  
VOLUNTEERS AND  
RESIDENTS

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### VOLUNTEERS

AT LEAST 50  
VOLUNTEERS

4 HOURS AVERAGE  
VOLUNTEER TIME SPENT  
EACH TUESDAY AND  
THURSDAY


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# LEARNING

2020 was undoubtedly a challenging year for London Development Trust and Acton Gardens Community Centre. The team and community at large faced new challenges which our strong and dedicated team successfully overcame through forming new partnerships, utilising existing ones and ultimately, hard work. These challenges have helped us to learn and to make improvements to future projects. Some key challenges and learning include:

**Safely recruiting volunteers:** Given the context in which the project was being implemented, we had to work quickly to recruit volunteers who carried out the bulk of the work to prepare, package and deliver food packages. Search for the Initial pool of volunteers was resident led by the Acton Mutual Aid Group, however a borough wide call out led to more volunteer engagement.

**Gathering data:** One of the key challenges has been the collection of data in a pandemic situation, which has seen many people whom we have been targeting in the programme being in isolation. This has led to a difficulty in collecting data and engage with our beneficiaries. Moving forward, London Development Trust will look to strengthen its data collection and analysis, paying particular attention to finding new and innovative ways to capture data and providing our beneficiaries with the tools and skills to provide feedback remotely.



It has been an incredible and rewarding programme, and we are incredibly proud of the work we have done. It is great to know that a lot of residents were reached throughout the relief programme.

Being able to bring joy and excitement to people during such unprecedented times has been amazing. Our partners and amazing volunteers played a very important part in the delivery of the programme and were wonderful. Thank you

Representative -  
Acton Gardens Community Centre and London Development Trust

# PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS



We would like to acknowledge and say a massive thank you to all the volunteers and many partner organisations (**Acton Mutual Aid Group, Bollo Brook Youth Centre, Acton Youth Association etc**) who made such an incredible sacrifice of their time, health and safety during the pandemic to make the relief efforts possible

Special appreciation to Countryside Properties who donated and funded the relief programme.

Thank you.



**ACTON GARDENS** | COMMUNITY CENTRE

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# CONTACT US



To find out more about anything detailed in this report or to volunteer with us, please get in touch:

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