

IMPACT REPORT

Voices for Southwark: Community Organising at Pecan and Southwark Foodbank

Community organising means bringing people together to take action on the issues they care about. From March 2022 – March 2025, Pecan and Southwark Foodbank were part of Trussell's Organising programme to build local campaigns led by people with lived experience of using food banks.

As part of the community organising project, Pecan's Community Engagement Officer met with people who have accessed Southwark Foodbank and Pecan's projects in one-to-one meetings and monthly group discussions to identify a campaign issue and build an organising team. Members of this community organising group decided on the name "Voices for Southwark" and through a creative workshop with local art practitioner "Drawing People Together", developed a logo to represent the group and campaign.



left: Voices for Southwark Logo, right: Group Discussion February 2023, Photo Credit: Julia Hawkins

COMMUNITY ORGANISING AT PECAN IN NUMBERS 2022 – 2025:



KEEP IT SIMPLE SOUTHWARK CAMPAIGN

The one-to-one conversations with clients group discussions on local issues between September 2022 and May 2023, led to a deeper knowledge of the community Pecan support and the issues facing people needing to use a food bank in Southwark. This knowledge alongside further quantitative data gained through a survey allowed the group to identify access to information and support with money matters as a key issue to campaign on. Voices for Southwark developed a campaign strategy and took actions on a campaign “Keep it simple Southwark” for an easy-to-use website for information and support with money matters in the borough.

CAMPAIGN OUTPUTS IN NUMBERS:



The actions resulted in strong links with four community organisations who have supported the campaign and good relationship with two councillors and six council officers. Voices for Southwark held meetings with Councillor Stephanie Cryan and Head of Strategy and Compliance Eugene Nixon, where six members shared about their experience accessing financial advice in Southwark and called for an easy-to-use website for money matters in the borough.

As a response, Southwark Council has recognised the issue and need for action and has significantly improved its website and digital accessibility.



left: Get Involved Meeting February 2024 to write letters to Southwark Council, right: Voices for Southwark members with Councillor Stephanie Cryan May 2024

Commitment to Community Organising and Developing Leadership Skills

Community organising is about identifying and developing the leadership of others to build community, and build power from the resources of that community. Through regular one-to-one meetings, two members with lived experience of accessing Pecan's food projects have become leaders, developing their confidence, and representing Voices for Southwark at events and in a feature piece in Pecan's newsletter. The leaders co-plan and co-facilitate Voices for Southwark meetings, and have practiced their skills in public speaking, as well as in supporting others to develop their ideas and share their stories, through a campaign letter writing action.

Voices for Southwark has enabled members to develop these communication skills, and given them the confidence to convey their point of view to third parties, including, councillors and officers at Southwark Council. One leader was further able to contribute their creative skills by drawing further logo drafts, and selecting a digital logo.

As Voices for Southwark grew, leaders have been able to bring in and support newer members to engage and develop their skills. This highlights the ongoing participation and commitment to organising from within the affected community, as more members have taken on additional responsibilities, including preparing ice-breakers for meetings, and campaign tasks outside of meetings. The ongoing group work with Voices for Southwark contributed to a shared knowledge and improved networking abilities, providing members with the opportunity to make new connections within the community, and learn from the skills and experiences of others.

Additionally, Voices for Southwark have been working with three volunteers, who don't have direct experience of accessing a food bank, but had previously been volunteering with Southwark Foodbank in a different capacity. All three Southwark Foodbank volunteers were able to use and further develop their existing skills from other contexts and expand their experience as volunteers, being part of the bigger picture of the food bank's work.



left: Summer Social 2024 in Peckham Rye Park, right: Voices for Southwark meeting April 2023

STORIES FROM VOICES FOR SOUTHWARK LEADERS

Esther: “From a listener to almost a leader of Voices for Southwark from the first day I joined till today”



Esther (left) with Pecan's Community Engagement Officer Flora

I first joined a group discussion on local issues at Pecan in September 2022. As a Southwark resident and member of the local community, I saw the purpose of the campaign and I'm proud to have my voice heard in a particular change in our environment.

I already do some volunteering in my community at two of my local churches' foodbanks but being involved in Voices for Southwark has hugely impacted me psychologically and professionally. Volunteering with Voices for Southwark has made me discover the hidden talent in me in terms of entertaining a crowd of people with ice-breaker activities.

I have certainly developed these skills together with speaking in public, supporting others in developing ideas and writing life stories. I would not forget to add the skills of thinking, bringing forth ideas, contributing to a positive change in my local community which gives me a sense of fulfilment and achievement. At least even if other areas of my life are proving challenging, this gives me a sense of self-esteem. And not to mention this as the least, this has given me the opportunity to meet new people, make new acquaintances and new friends who have been very supportive not only in the area of volunteering but in other personal aspects of my life especially that I am quite a foreigner in this city.

I am amazed by how God has taken me from a listener to almost a leader of Voices for Southwark from the first day I joined till today. It has been an enriched journey with lots of lessons picked on the way despite my busy schedule as a single mum, I am proud of my input and efforts and output result of this.

Anna: “This project will become a part of my (personal) CV and in the future will help me if I participate in other such campaigns”



Anna's logo drawings for Voices for Southwark and the Keep it Simple Southwark campaign

I joined Voices for Southwark in January 2023 and have attended our meetings regularly, once and sometimes twice monthly.

Some of the things I have been involved in as part of Voices for Southwark include: being invited to City Hall, being involved in drawing a logo to represent our “Keep it simple” Digital Campaign and meeting with Councillor Stephanie Cryan and Southwark Council's Head of Strategy & Compliance.

I've met some interesting local citizens, I have developed my creative artistic skills. I have developed skills in terms of presenting a group campaign.

I have become a core member of the campaign, so I do more presentations and attend more meetings. I present the ground/team rules at meetings and I give feedback along with other core members after meetings.

This project will become a part of my (personal) CV and in the future will help me if I participate in other such campaigns. It has given me insight into organisational, team member and presentational skills.

Simon: “It will continue to bring me into contact with the kind, brilliant and fascinating individuals who we need on board to achieve our campaign’s goals”



Simon (left) with Voices for Southwark

I had been volunteering for Southwark Foodbank in a variety of roles - packing parcels, delivery rounds, signposting - before joining Voices for Southwark gave me an opportunity to contribute in a different way. Working on the campaign has enabled me to deploy skills acquired during my time as a solicitor such as research, analytical thinking and written communication. But more importantly it has allowed me to build on these and develop new attributes including group organising, campaign messaging and strategic planning.

Through Voices for Southwark I have met a diverse range of people from the borough with backgrounds and life experiences that differ from mine. Their stories have affected me and shed light on issues that I might otherwise have been unaware of. As well as building relations with fellow Southwark residents I have engaged with other volunteers, the wider Pecan team, Trussell Trust advisers and people connected to the Council (both Councillors and officers). This has given me a better understanding of the difficulties many local people face and the landscape within which decisions that could make a difference are made.

My time spent with Voices for Southwark and working on the campaign has been enormously fulfilling. I am sure it will continue to provide me with novel experiences and bring me into contact with the kind, brilliant and fascinating individuals who we need on board to achieve our campaign’s goals.

LEGISLATIVE THEATRE PROJECT WITH TRUSSELL

In 2024, Pecan and Southwark Foodbank practiced Legislative Theatre with Trussell, Katy Rubin and Dan Boyden. Legislative Theatre uses games, scenes and discussion to understand everyday experiences of problems, and redesign rules, budgets and laws to address these.

As part of a Trussell event, a group of Voices for Southwark members created and performed a play about issues with housing, social security and work. In a Legislative Theatre workshop in Peckham, members who have accessed Pecan's support explored how to strengthen our local community through social infrastructure and better connection between services.

LEGISLATIVE THEATRE AT PECAN IN NUMBERS:



As a result of the legislative theatre project with Trussell, Southwark Council have invited members to contribute to a new Customer Experience Strategy. Voices for Southwark have decided to further explore the workshop topic of stronger local communities and are planning their next campaign on community centres and spaces to gather in Southwark.



left: Event with Trussell June 2024, right: Pecan workshop at Peckham Methodist Church October 2024