

## 60 SECOND INTERVIEW WITH RUTH JOSEPH OF BARNARDO'S

### For Mutual Aid Food Willesden (MAFW)

*A food hub offering emergency essential boxes locally during Covid-19*

Q Can you tell us about yourself?

I work for Barnardo's who were commissioned four years ago by Brent Council to provide an early intervention service.

We have a number of connections with families in the community through services such as early education (working with ages 0-4), health and midwifery, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and school and speech therapy. This means we are able to help identify families who may need additional support.

Q How did you hear about Mutual Aid Food Willesden?

Julia, a Mutual Aid Food Willesden volunteer, reached out to me on Good Friday to explain how MAFW is an organisation that can provide short-term food support to local residents and asked whether Barnardo's would be interested in making referrals.

I jumped at the chance on behalf of the vulnerable families we support who are being hit hard in the community because of the current Covid-19 crisis.

Q Have you noticed any changes as a result of Covid-19 lockdown?

Across our services we have seen a large increase in families requiring support. Brent has some of the highest poverty rates in the capital and many of the referrals we have made to Mutual Aid Food Willesden as a result of Covid-19 are from low-income families. They include family members who have been forced to take extended unpaid leave or who have been made redundant. Even though it's a mixture of households, the stories are very similar. Families who were already struggling before the lockdown started have been pushed further into crisis.

Q Are there any stories you could share?

There are so many individual families but the general theme is the same: Every time an administrator calls a family and asks whether they would like help, they take up the support immediately and are very grateful that someone has been in touch and can help. For many it might also be the only time they speak to another adult during a day, it means such a lot to a family when in isolation.

Q How would you sum up the value of Mutual Aid Food Willesden?

“ Mutual Aid Food Willesden is a great service which has come at the time when we need it most. We have a number of families who would not have been helped immediately in any other way. Barnardo's is really grateful for the support. ”

28 April 2020