

60 SECOND INTERVIEW

WITH **DIONE SOUTHBY**
OF **WILLESDEN GREEN**

For Mutual Aid Food Willesden (MAFW)

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



PHOTO: Dione

Q Can you tell us about yourself?

I have lived in Willesden Green with my family for 9 years. I sold my business to spend more time with my two young girls and help out more in our community.

Q How did you hear about Mutual Aid Food Willesden?

Councillor Tariq Dar came up with the food hub initiative, he contacted me to help out. We were unaware of how quickly this project would evolve and grow and sadly how much this food hub would be needed.

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

Yes, I have noticed how quickly we can all come together to support each other. There is so much compassion and good will in our communities, it totally overwhelms me. I have noticed how many people are struggling to survive and how difficult it can be sometimes to navigate the system for support. It's important to maintain momentum once this particular project comes to an end and find other ways to help existing food banks, charities and people within our communities.

I have noticed the birds singing and the low-level pollution levels.

Q Can you tell us how you're involved helping provide essential aid?

I have been involved in the MAFW from the very beginning, I am one of the coordinators at the MAFW. I am involved in the admin side of things but I also work in the centre sending out food parcels. I am honoured to be part of the MAFW team and able to help out. I have met so many inspirational people.

Q Are there any stories that you could share?

I don't think anyone could have prepared for this period in time as its new territory, with all the incredible volunteers and local donors Mutual Aid Food Willesden were able to support people in need from the very start of lockdown.

Q How would you sum up what Mutual Aid Food Willesden does?

Providing the food boxes is fundamental to survival but it's so much more, it's making contact with people who feel completely cut off from the rest of the world. It's the phone calls that we make to tell people they are not alone and we are here to help. I have been so touched by the gratitude of people we support and how one act of kindness often sparks another.

As we rely heavily on donations, we need everyone's support for us to continue running this project, none of this would be possible without the amazing people offering their time and money. I am honoured to see such generosity.

No one in this world should ever go hungry or without basic needs.

