# A million moments

Your Local Pantry's impact in 2025-26



# Introduction

In November 2025 Your Local Pantry, one of Britain's biggest community food networks, reached its millionth visit, and at the same time new findings showed Pantry membership is preventing people from falling into acute crisis.

The network began in 2013 in Stockport and has spread to all four nations of the UK, supporting more than 174,000 people in more than 120 neighbourhoods over the past 13 years.

## About Your Local Pantry

A Your Local Pantry is a long-term membership model that makes good food more affordable while creating welcoming community spaces where people can connect, contribute and thrive.

Every Pantry is run by a trusted local organisation and is part of the wider Your Local Pantry network, combining local knowledge with shared standards, training and support.

People join the Pantry as members rather than accessing emergency food. Membership is open to anyone living within the Pantry's defined catchment area, with no means testing, and members can continue to use the Pantry for as long as they wish.

This creates a welcoming and inclusive community, where people shop alongside their neighbours rather than being assessed according to need.

Members pay a regular membership fee in exchange for a shop of good quality food, including fresh produce and ambient groceries. Rather than receiving a pre-packed parcel, members choose the food that best suits their household, creating a dignified shopping experience

**"It has meant that I have been able to eat from month to month. Using the Pantry has helped me to stretch my limited income to be able to make healthy meals, and has relieved my stress and poor mental health."**

Pantry member, Birmingham Riverside Pantry

that reflects choice, preference and independence.

Pantries are more than affordable food shops. They are community spaces where people build relationships, volunteer, participate in activities and access wider support where needed.

Through strong local partnerships, Pantries help connect members with advice, services and opportunities that can improve their health, wellbeing and financial resilience.

**"It has been an absolute blessing... I found friends, connected with people and it improved my mental health and sense of being included and belonging to a local community."** *Pantry member, Bangor Harbour Pantry*

Each Your Local Pantry is hosted and run by an organisation that is known in the community and which is already providing support to people in that community. We partner with this organisation to teach them how to set up a thriving and sustainable Pantry - one that can support members for the medium to long term.

**"We decided to go with Your Local Pantry because it's a perfect package, it's got everything that we need. It had all the support in place, the database, the systems, the IT, so we didn't have to reinvent the wheel."** *Abi, Fresh Start Pantry*



Every Pantry is supported by the Your Local Pantry network through shared training, digital systems, operational guidance and quality standards. This ensures a consistent, high-quality member experience across the network while allowing each Pantry the flexibility to respond to the needs and strengths of its local community.

**"We always knew that if we started a Pantry ... that it would be a springboard for other things. From that springboard, we have a repair cafe every month, repairing electrical goods, or bicycles, or sewing repairs.**

**"The community cafe has developed leaps and bounds because of the Pantry. We have welcomed Communities for Work Plus to the building, and they support people who are looking for work – it's a community hub, everyone in the building is working to make a difference to the lives of people"** *Sian, Ebbw Vale Pantry*

## 2025-26 Pantry stats

- 117 Pantry communities
- 7 new Pantries opened
- 241,000 visits
- 14,000 current members
- 19,000 unique members shopped in this period
- Estimated £6.5 million in savings to members (calculated by £27 x number of visits)
- 52,500 people supported in 2025-26, including 19,000 children[1]

Your Local Pantry theory of change and impact

# Our vision is a UK where everyone can access good food, live with dignity and play a part in a thriving and just community

| What we do | Why we do it | Short-term impact | Long-term impact |
|---|---|---|---|
| Provide affordable, dignified access to good food (choice, membership, low cost food) | Everyone should be able to access good food with dignity and choice, and food can foster community | People can afford healthy food, feel less financial pressure and are treated with dignity. | Less food insecurity, healthier diets and greater financial resilience. |
| Encourage long-term membership and relationships | Trust, belonging and change takes time - and community matters. | People build relationships, feel less isolated and improve their wellbeing. | Confidence, resilience and belonging, repairing social and emotional impacts of food insecurity |
| Create opportunities to get involved/Participation (volunteering, peer support, leadership) | People have skills and experience that can strengthen their communities. | Increased agency and autonomy, learn new skills and have a voice. | Local people and cohesive communities shaping the Pantry, community and wider system. |
| Arrange wrap-around support and local partnerships (based on relationship not referrals) | Trusted relationships make it easier to access the right support. | People have access to advice and support, in a trusted space, when they need it. | People are better able to deal with the wider causes and effects of poverty. |
| Deliver 1:1 support for Pantry hosts (Pantry Portal Software, training, tools and peer learning) | Strong partners deliver more for communities and generate evidence to improve and keep going. | Pantries are well resourced to cater to local needs, with network-wide support | Sustainable Pantries that are part of strong local communities. |
| Conduct research informed by lived experience, and promote collaboration | Working together helps create better solutions, and evidence enables ongoing improvement | Better grasp of people's food insecurity, poverty and marginalisation, and joined up responses. | System change beyond Pantries: Policies and services shaped by lived experience and evidence. |



## Who we work with:

- Members, with lived experience of poverty
- Schools and academy trusts
- Food Banks
- Charities, CIC's and other community groups
- Churches and other faith communities
- Local associations
- Housing associations
- Corporate partners
- Food suppliers including surplus redistributors and bulk buying schemes
- Local and national affordable food networks
- Sign-posting organisations

# Our impact

In 2025, and again in 2026, Your Local Pantry participated in the Affordable Food Alliance survey of members across a variety of affordable food providers across the UK.

The overall survey findings provide insight into the difference food clubs, like Your Local Pantry, make to individuals, families and communities. This short report summarises the specific findings about the difference which Your Local Pantry makes to our members.[2]

## Preventing Food Bank Use and Hunger

The findings give the clearest proof yet that Pantries prevent both food bank use and hunger. More than half of members (58%) who had previously had to use food banks were able to reduce or completely stop their food bank usage, after joining Pantries:

**“It has meant I don’t have to use food banks anymore. My money is able to be stretched more and used for priority bills.”**

76% of respondents said they felt less stressed or worried about food as a result of using the Pantry. Furthermore, 63% of those who used to skip meals now do so less often.

**“It has meant that I have been able to eat meals instead of skipping them while my kids eat every meal. Before, I was skipping an evening meal every other day to make sure that there was food on the table for my children.”**

## Promoting Community Cohesion

But beyond this, Pantries also provide vital points of social connection. In a world that feels increasingly divided, Pantries offer the opportunity to meet together with neighbours, promoting community cohesion and tackling social isolation and loneliness.

76% of members feel more connected to their community:

**“It has been an absolute blessing for many reasons, not just helping with the cost of living on a low income and debt repayment plan, but also I found friends, connected with people and it improved my mental health and sense of being included and belonging to a local community. Everyone who is lucky to be a member of the pantry feels the same. I spoke to people and they are all very grateful”**



## Financial Benefits - saving money on groceries

Pantries save members money: typically £14 to £42 a week compared to supermarket prices, with an average saving of £27 a week. If a member visits every week, that would amount to saving over £1,322 a year.[3]

With 241,000 Pantry visits UK-wide from April 2025 - March 2026, this represents an approximate total saving to members of around £6.5 million - or around £125,000 a week compared with Co-op prices. This means that, at today's prices, Your Local Pantry has saved individuals and households a staggering estimated £20.8 million over the past three years.

**"We've been able to save at least one week's shopping cost per month and use it to cover other expenses."**

**"The support with helping to reduce food bills has been invaluable. I work but am in considerable debt so a large chunk of my wage goes towards paying that back. Without the food pantry, I would not be able to afford a weekly shop in the supermarket. It is a situation that not even close family are aware of, so being part of the food pantry has given me a way to help feed my family without having to ask anyone for money or get into further debt."**

Pantry member, Birmingham Riverside Pantry

## More Than Just Food - access to additional support

But Pantries also help more holistically, connecting members to wider services and wrap-around support that can help to build financial resilience, often offering these services on site. These connections are clearly valued, with 61% of members reporting that they have accessed at least one form of additional support such as debt advice, income maximisation services or social and nutrition activities.

## Not Just Calories - supporting health, dignity and wellbeing

The impact of membership at Your Local Pantry goes far beyond simply saving money or providing food. Regular access is positively associated with enhanced wellbeing, as well as improved diet quality.

Members frequently describe Pantries as warm, welcoming communities where dignity is upheld, friendships are built, and support is available. 64% of respondents reported that they feel more confident in themselves since they joined the Pantry.

Your Local Pantries are also supporting healthier habits at home. 68% report that they're more able to afford to eat balanced meals, and 62% are now eating more fruit and vegetables.

**"I'm a fairly decent, but basic cook. Having a weekly top up of fresh fruit and vegetables, often with the availability of some fresh frozen meat, means that I can cook decent, healthy meals that last most of the week. Sometimes the luxury of croissants for breakfast, along with the homemade jams or lemon curd I can make from the fruit I pick up, is fantastic! It's made a fantastic difference to me and I'm deeply grateful for the service"**





# Community story

Members and coordinators in various Pantries have been working together on ways to strengthen local peoples' say in decisions that affect them.

Part of our vision across the Pantry network is to see members empowered to drive change. People always tell us Pantries aren't just about food - they're about reconnecting with the community and building confidence and relatinships too.

We've seen repeatedly that food is a brilliant way to bring a neighbourhood together, with members getting to know each other, and forming friendships.

We believe this could be a springboard to a power shift in communities, with people who have been overlooked becoming drivers of positive local change, in the Pantry and in the wider community. Nationally, polling has shown that 83% of the public think local people have ideas for improving their neighbourhood, but only 29% think local and national governments give residents and community groups the freedom they need to implement those ideas.[4]

This year, we've been running pilot projects to explore what can be done effectively.

At The Core Pantry in Macclesfield, members took part in a project to discuss local issues, and see what progress they might make together.

Across six sessions, they identified and discussed aspects of their community they would like to see changed, and were encouraged to talk with friends and neighbours about issues. They've been identifying priorities for action, and a councillor and the local MP attended one session each.

Participants had a range of experiences, including caring, debt, fostering, disability, bereavement, emergency accommodation, and, abuse social or digital exclusion.

## Key themes that emerged:

- **Community & isolation:** The group said the Pantry had a strong sense of community and provided important connections. Members struggled to identify a similar sense of community in the wider neighbourhood, but identified many groups across Macclesfield.
- **Housing support**: People discussed how housing impacts health, and can lead to isolation. One person spoke about how it can be difficult for people to leave abusive relationships because emergency accommodation might mean being separated from their children. There was discussion about how difficult the system is to navigate.
- **Financial support:** The group discussed debt and credit, the difficulty in accessing reliable support, and the need for financial education from a young age. The group found it difficult to identify many sources of impartial support and advice, and some had closed.
- **Disability support and health care:** People spoke about the need for better support and greater accessibility, including for those with hidden disabilities. They saw a need for a change in social perceptions and understanding about hidden disabilities and mental health.
- **Support for young people:** The group heard of young people dropping out of education because they can't afford laptops or other equipment that they need. There is also a lack of youth groups locally.

## What people said

**"You're sharing your ideas with each other and hoping it will have a positive impact on the local community and the wider community. I've worked in childcare all my life, I think it's important that we make changes for the younger ones as they go into adulthood, so everything's easier for them to access."**

Sam, group member

**"I like having the opportunity to make change. I want to see big change for young people. It can feel overwhelming, but it felt good, hearing how our MP will follow up. It's encouraging to hear what's already being looked at, and the connections we can make. I'd encourage people in other Pantries to get involved. It's felt good connecting and bonding within the local group, and learning what's out there is good."**

Rachel, group member

**"The feedback will lead how we approach our wrap-around care provision going forward.**

**"I would like to look at the areas our members believe there are gaps in support in the community. One area looks to be financial support, I can look at providing wrap-around care in the Pantry to address this. We have other groups regularly attending the Pantry but this could be extended following this feedback."**

Fabienne, Pantry manager

# Member stories



My name is Hannah and I'm a member and volunteer of KingsGate Pantry in Peterborough.

Without the Pantry, I don't know where I would be today. It has helped me not only financially, but also with my mental health.

Knowing I have access to a caring and supportive place during difficult times has taken away so much stress and worry. I have never felt judged — only supported — and that has helped me feel less alone during some very challenging periods in my life.

I started coming here two years ago, it has been a real lifeline. I have made so many friends there! The kindness and understanding shown by everyone is amazing, reminding me that there is hope and that people care - this has had a hugely positive impact on my life.

This improvement also led me to start volunteering there, which has given me a sense of purpose, helped build my confidence, and allowed me to support others who may be going through similar struggles. It has become more than just a Pantry to me — it is a community where people genuinely help and support one another.

**KingsGate Pantry is run by KingsGate Community Church, in partnership with two local schools.**




**We asked members: In your own words, what has being a Pantry member meant for you and the people you live with? Here are some people's answers:**

**It's a lifeline for me, the volunteers are amazing, so friendly and supportive. They listen to any concerns I have. Seeing them every week makes me feel so much brighter.**

**Pantry has been such a help. I pick things which I usually won't pick up in the supermarket and it helps me eat more veggies. I think it is really worth the money. Even my daughter loves it when I shop at the pantry because she gets to try new things too.**

**With my very limited income, being able to access a good variety of food at an affordable cost makes a real difference to my everyday life and helps me manage financially.**

**It has helped me when finances have been short and it doesn't make me feel ashamed as I contribute financially towards it which is more dignified than accessing a food bank.**

**As pensioners with no other income the pantry has made a huge difference to the way we live. Bills can be paid with less difficulty.**

# Looking ahead

Poverty and food insecurity blight the lives of too many people across the UK, contributing to anxiety, poor mental and physical health, social isolation, fear and distrust. Our 2026 Members' Survey tells another side of this story: right across the country, churches and community groups, often run predominantly by volunteers, open their doors each week to provide millions of members with access to affordable food, saving money, reducing stress and anxiety. Beyond this, Pantries offer places for communities to come together around food, combatting social isolation and promoting community cohesion.

Hunger in the UK is not an isolated issue, but a systemic problem - but Your Local Pantries demonstrate that something can be done! On the basis of feedback from our members and Pantries we are calling for:

- **National Government** to take concrete steps to prevent poverty, making the removal of the two-child-limit and implementation of the Child Poverty Strategy the beginning of a national renewal of our shared social security system, so everyone has enough to live on.
- **Local councils** to support community projects that build real connection around food, through proven models such as Your Local Pantry which work with local people to help them to support each other

The power of the Your Local Pantry model is that **churches, community groups and individuals have a part to play too**:

- Consider how your existing community engagement and food provision develops and fosters dignity, agency and choice. The work of the Alliance for Dignified Food Support is a great place to start. See: alliancefordignifiedfoodsupport.org.uk
- Find out if there is a Your Local Pantry or other affordable food club operating in your local area and get on board with supporting them.
- Should there not be member-led community food provision locally, consider joining with others to open a Your Local Pantry in your area.
- Become a Friend of Your Local Pantry and/or support Church Action on Poverty nationally, to sustain and expand the fight against poverty nationally.



## Notes

[1] Numbers larger than 10,000 have been rounded to the nearest 500

[2] Find out more about the Affordable Food Alliance - https://affordablefoodalliance.org
Full details of the survey findings are available at https://79b3075c.flowpaper.com/AFAReport195x265S6SmlFINAL/#page=1
Findings are based on 619 member responses from 96 Your Local Pantries in our Member Survey in Summer 2026. In this summary these "members who responded to our survey" are simply referred to as "members".

[3] Estimates based on data from 13 Pantries from across the Network who provided details of typical baskets of food supplied in May 2025. These were then again matched to the Azure national price database in order to calculate the value of a typical basket of goods from a Pantry, compared to supermarket prices. Annual scaling based on households visiting the Pantry each week, that is 48 or more visits each year

[4] See https://www.ucl.ac.uk/engage/sites/engage/files/the_respect_agenda_ucl_policy_lab-more_in_common_september_2023_1_compressed.pdf

The Your Local Pantry network is coordinated by Church Action on Poverty (charity number 1079986).

info@yourlocalpantry.co.uk

yourlocalpantry.co.uk

@yourlocalpantry